

It hardly falls within the scope of our article to deal with Luther as a hymn-writer ; yet one cannot help remarking how truly his hymns re-echo the Reformer's own great spirit. As Dr. Bayne, his latest biographer, has said, "No heart of modern man has rung so true to that grand note of Hebrew song, the faith of Israel in his God, as Luther's. . . . It may be said of Luther's hymns generally that they are characterised by a rugged but fundamentally melodious rhythm, a piercing intensity and expressiveness, with tender, lovely, picturesque touches here and there. Above all, they are sincere. They seem to thrill with an intensity of feeling beyond their power of expression, like the glistening of stars whose silence speaks of God." As Spangenberg, in his Preface to the *Cithara Lutheri*, 1545, remarks, there is nothing forced, nothing foisted in or patched up, nothing fragmentary in Luther's hymns. "The rhymes are easy and good, the words choice and proper, the meaning clear and intelligible, the melodies lovely and hearty, and *in summa* all is so rare and majestic, so full of pith and power, so cheering and comforting, that, in sooth, you will not find his equal, much less his master." Every warmth of expression, every kind of imagery, every variety of metre was employed by this bold and fervent man to arouse the attention and kindle the affection of his people. Incomparably the finest, as it is the most celebrated, of all his hymns is the noble "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott," founded on the forty-sixth Psalm. This was the true war-song of the Reformation in Germany. It breathes the force of battles, and thrills in every line with unconquerable faith and Christian heroism. As Carlyle has said, "There is something in it like the sound of Alpine avalanches, or the first murmur of earthquakes, in the very vastness of which dissonance a higher unison is revealed to us. Luther wrote this song in times of blackest threatenings, which, however, could in no sense become a time of despair." . . . It is evident enough that to the author "all popes, cardinals, emperors, devils, all hosts and nations were weak as the forest with all its strong trees might be to the smallest spark of electric fire." "Ein feste Burg"