

an innovation and corruption of later times. Several of his works have survived, and one hymn of which he is the author. This venerable composition, the most ancient hymn whose author is known, is entitled "A Hymn to Christ the Saviour," and is a catalogue of images, illustrating how precious he had found Christ to be. Some idea of its spirit may be gathered from the opening stanza, though what it was when pealed sixteen hundred years ago in the great Church of Alexandria, and in the mellifluous tongue of Greece, a translation can furnish but a poor conception:—

"Mouth of babes who cannot speak,
Wing of nestlings who cannot fly,
Sure guide of babes,
Shepherd of royal sheep,
Gather Thine own
Artless children
To praise in holiness,
To sing in guilelessness
With blameless lips,
Thee, O Christ, Guide of children."

I can do little more than name one or two other Greek hymnists. Gregory of Nazianzum claims special mention. He studied first at Alexandria, and afterwards at Athens, where he had for a fellow-student Julian, afterwards known as the apostate, and where he formed a tender friendship with Basil, which proved to be lifelong. He was first associated with his father as Bishop of Nazianzum in Cappadocia; and, when fifty years of age, was called to Constantinople to stem the torrent of Arianism there. In this mission he was completely successful, and afterwards retired into private life. Though living in troublous times, and often engaged in sharp conflicts, Gregory found time to compose many hymns—some of them discovering, even in translations, no little power and beauty, and all of them bearing testimony to the life hid with Christ in God.

Greek Hymnology reached its zenith in the days of Andrew of Crete, (712), John the Damascene, (750), and, Cosman of Maiuma. Corruptions of all kinds were spreading rapidly in the Eastern Church at this time; and at length the desolating sword of Mahomet swept over her territories, and rudely severed her harp strings. An able writer, who has carefully studied

these Oriental, Greek hymns, bears this testimony regarding them,—“These hymns may not be so full and elaborate in doctrine as many that we know, but Christ is in them; they are inspired by Him, they are sung to Him; they preach not themselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord. They are full of that living Saviour Jesus, Son of Mary and Son of God.”

Syriac Hymnology is reported to be specially rich and varied; but, as yet, the field is all but unexplored. It is to be hoped that the veil which conceals this portion of Syriac literature, will soon be withdrawn, and that these treasures of sacred poetry will speedily be rendered accessible by translations, to English readers. The land of Syria itself has undying claims on our regards, as being that in which christianity achieved some of its earliest triumphs and as the centre of the first christian missions. “The disciples were called christians first at Antioch,” its capital. Into the Syriac tongue the New Testament was first translated. This was the language of the chosen people, at the time of our Lord’s appearing; and consequently that in which “He spake as man never spake.” A vast number of christian hymns were composed in this dialect, the few translated by Dr. Burgess and Mr. Morris, presenting some specimens exceedingly beautiful. By far the most distinguished of the Syriac hymnists, was Ephraem Syrus, a monk and deacon who lived in the fourth century, at Edessa, in Mesopotamia, “the land beyond the flood” from which Abraham was called to be a pilgrim, and a stranger in the land of promise. The Syrians attribute no less than 12000 songs to him. He is reported to have been a man of considerable learning; and though a monk, and cut off from domestic life, his hymns have a fragrance of home about them, and are sweetly natural and tender, many of them being on the subject of childhood and children. I regret that the space at my disposal will not permit me to quote a specimen from good old Ephraem Syrus.

We must pass on to the better known and more extensive class of Latin Hymns. The fourth century of the christian era was