

could say, "Oh, the soul-thrilling rapture when I view His blessed face, and the luster of His kindly beaming eye; . . ." Or, "I know I shall see in His beauty the King in whose law I delight; . . ." And we cannot leave out, "And I shall see Him face to face, And tell the story—Saved by grace."

Some of her most appreciated hymns were written within the time of an hour or less. One day William H. Doane from Ohio came to her door and, when admitted, hurried over to her and said, "Fanny, in forty minutes I must catch the train to Cincinnati, and I need a new song for a great Sunday school convention there." After discussing it he said, "Thirty minutes left." She turned to her desk and after a bit handed him a paper, telling him to read it on the train. It turned out to be what many regard as her greatest hymn, "Safe in the Arms of Jesus." It was played by the band at the funeral of General U.S. Grant.

On a number of occasions, as with "Safe in the Arms of Jesus," Fanny was asked to listen to a tune by such composers as Doane or Ira D. Sankey and frame words to fit the music, which she did most acceptably.

Her poetic gift manifests itself in early published volumes of verse before she wrote hymns. She soon became widely recognized, meeting President James K. Polk in the White House, and speaking before the U.S. Congress in words that glorified her Savior. She traveled in many parts of the country, lecturing or giving Chautauqua talks and ministering at Christian conferences, as she did for D. L. Moody and others. She lived to be ninety-five.

After her testimony became appreciated, she visited slum missions where her words were eagerly received. Sensing the need in such places, she often frequented the missions and on one occasion after a young man was converted wrote "Rescue the Perishing."

The following story of her conversion is taken from her *Memories of Eighty Years* (Hodder & Stoughton edition, London, 1908):

"Turn to the class meeting at the Eighteenth Street Methodist Church. Some of us used to go down there regularly, and on Thursday evening of each week a leader came from that church to conduct a class in the Blind Institution. In those days I was timid and never spoke in public when I could possibly avoid it. I attended meetings and played for them on the condition that they should not call on me to speak.

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FANNY CROSBY: *Blind Visionary for Christ*

Fanny Crosby is recognized as one of the most popular hymn writers of all time. Who is not familiar with "Blessed Assurance," "Safe in the Arms of Jesus," "Rescue the Perishing," "Saved By Grace" and others of her compositions? It is said she wrote over 9,000 hymns (Hefley, Sandville), "more than eight thousand of them appearing in print" (Lillenas). I find that Charles Wesley, the great British hymn writer, is reported to have published 4,100 hymns and to have left 2,000 in manuscript. E.K. Emurian is authority for the statement that Fanny Crosby has "written more hymns, songs and poems than anyone else since the beginning of the Christian era"!

Yet Fanny Crosby (Mrs. Alexander Van Alstyne) did not begin writing hymns until the age of forty-four. Even more remarkable is the fact that she was totally blind, having lost her sight through a tragic doctor's error at the age of six weeks. And her father died before she was one year old.

In spite of blindness, she often referred in her hymns to the sight which she was denied but which she anticipated when she would be released from mortal ties. How many of us when singing "Blessed Assurance" recall that it was one blind who exclaimed, "Visions of rapture now burst on my sight"? And looking forward by faith she

"One evening the leader brought a young man with him who was destined to have an important influence in my life. He was a Mr. Camp, a teacher in the city schools and a man noted for his generous public spirit. I found him a true friend. We used to attend the class meetings together, but he never urged me in religious matters. And yet I owe my conversion to that same friend, in so far as I owe it to any mortal. By a strange dream I was aroused—not that the dream had any particular effect in itself except as a means of setting me to thinking. It seemed that the sky had been cloudy for a number of days, and finally (in the dream) someone came to me and said that Mr. Camp desired to see me at once. Then I thought I entered the room and found him very ill.

"'Fanny,' he asked, 'will you meet me in Heaven?'

"'Yes, I will, God helping me,' I replied; and I thought his last words were, 'Remember you promise a dying man!' Then the clouds seemed to roll from my spirit, and I awoke. I could not forget those words, 'Will you meet me in Heaven?' and although my friend was perfectly well, I began to consider whether I could really meet him or any other acquaintance in the Better Land, if called to do so.

"The weeks sped on until revival meetings were being held in the Thirtieth Street Methodist Church. Some of us went down every evening. On two occasions I sought peace but did not find the joy I craved until one evening it seemed to me that light must indeed come then or never; and so I arose and went forward alone. After prayer, the congregation began to sing the grand old hymn:

Alas, and did my Saviour bleed,

And did my Sovereign die?

And when they reached the third line of the fourth stanza,

Here Lord, I give myself away,

my very soul was flooded with celestial light. I sprang to my feet, shouting "Hallelujah!" and then for the first time I realized that I had been trying to hold the world in one hand and the Lord in the other.

"The next Thursday evening I gave a public testimony at our class meeting. I promised to do my duty whenever the dear Lord should make it plain to me.

"Not many weeks later, Mr. Stephen Merritt asked me to close

one of our class meetings with a brief prayer. My first thought was, 'I cannot'; then the voice of conscience said, 'But your promise!' and from that hour I believe I have never refused to pray or speak in a public service, with the result that I have been richly blessed."