

THE
Hymns and Hymn Writers
OF
THE CHURCH

AN ANNOTATED EDITION
OF
The Methodist Hymnal

BY
CHARLES S. NUTTER, D.D.
AUTHOR OF "HYMN STUDIES," "HISTORIC HYMNISTS," ETC.
AND
WILBUR F. TILLET, D.D., LL.D.
DEAN OF THE THEOLOGICAL FACULTY OF VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY
AUTHOR OF "OUR HYMNS AND THEIR AUTHORS," "STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE," ETC.

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3 Restraining prayer, we cease to fight;
Prayer keeps the Christian's armor bright;
And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.

4 Were half the breath that's vainly spent,
To heaven in supplication sent,
Our cheerful song would oftener be,
"Hear what the Lord has done for me."
William Cowper.

"*Exhortation to Prayer*" is the title to this in the *Olney Hymns*, 1779. The fourth and fifth stanzas of the original are omitted:

4 While Moses stood with arms spread wide,
Success was found on Israel's side;
But when through weariness they failed,
That moment Amalek prevailed.

5 Have you no words? Ah! think again:
Words flow apace when you complain,
And fill your fellow-creature's ear
With the sad tale of all your care.

Cowper was noted for his power in public prayer. Said one who knew him well: "Of all the men I ever heard pray, no one equaled Mr. Cowper." One who knew the sweetness of closet prayer, as he did, and who was always in his place at the week-night cottage prayer meetings of his pastor, as he was, might be expected to have power in public prayer.

497 C. M.

PRAYER is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed;
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.

2 Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near.

3 Prayer is the simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try;
Prayer the sublimest strains that reach
The Majesty on high.

4 Prayer is the contrite sinner's voice,
Returning from his ways;
While angels in their songs rejoice
And cry, "Behold, he prays!"

5 Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air,
His watchword at the gates of death;
He enters heaven with prayer.

6 O Thou, by whom we come to God,
The Life, the Truth, the Way;
The path of prayer thyself hath trod:
Lord, teach us how to pray!
James Montgomery.

This fine didactic hymn was written in 1818, at the request of the Rev. E. Bickersteth, for his *Treatise on Prayer*. Two stanzas, the sixth and seventh, have been omitted:

6 In prayer, on earth the saints are one,
In word, in deed, and mind;
While with the Father and the Son
Sweet fellowship they find.

7 Nor prayer is made by man alone,
The Holy Spirit pleads,
And Jesus, on the eternal throne
For sinners intercedes.

This is Montgomery's masterpiece. He said himself: "The most attractive hymn I ever wrote is that on prayer." The first part is an elaborate description of the nature of prayer in its various forms. The last stanza is itself a magnificent prayer which illustrates the whole poem.

The authorship of valuable poems is frequently claimed by unprincipled or irresponsible parties. Some years ago a woman claimed this poem on prayer, not knowing its date. It was published in England before she was born.

498 C. M.

I LOVE to steal awhile away
From every cumbering care,
And spend the hours of setting day
In humble, grateful prayer.

2 I love in solitude to shed
The penitential tear,
And all his promises to plead
Where none but God can hear.

3 I love to think on mercies past,
And future good implore,
And all my cares and sorrows cast
On him whom I adore.

4 I love by faith to take a view
Of brighter scenes in heaven;
The prospect doth my strength renew,
While here by tempests driven.

5 Thus, when life's toilsome day is o'er,
May its departing ray
Be calm as this impressive hour,
And lead to endless day.

Phæbe H. Brown.

Few hymns have a more interesting and pathetic history than this "Twilight Hymn." It was not originally written as a hymn. The authoress, beset by the limitations of poverty, and having no place or opportunity for retirement in her humble little house, crowded as it was with little children, was accustomed at the twilight hour to retire to a grove near by for religious meditation and prayer. A wealthy lady neighbor, near whose garden this wooded place of retirement was located, and who totally misinterpreted the object of these visits, meeting Mrs. Brown, accused her of having some evil intent in thus daily prowling about her premises at the twilight hour. Stinging under the accusation, Mrs. Brown went home and wrote the following:

AN APOLOGY FOR MY TWILIGHT RAMBLES,
Addressed to a Lady.

(Ellington, August, 1818.)

Yes, when the toilsome day is gone,
And night with banners gray,
Steals silently the glade along
In twilight's soft array,

I love to steal awhile away
From little ones and care,
And spend the hours of setting day
In gratitude and prayer.

I love to feast on Nature's scenes
When falls the evening dew,
And dwell upon her silent themes,
Forever rich and new.

I love in solitude to shed
The penitential tear,
And all God's promises to plead
Where none can see or hear.

I love to think on mercies past,
And future ones implore,
And all my cares and sorrows cast
On him whom I adore.

I love to meditate on death!
When shall his message come,
With friendly smiles to steal my breath,
And take an exile home?

I love by faith to take a view
Of blissful scenes in Heaven:
The sight doth all my strength renew,
While here by storms I'm driven.

I love this silent twilight hour
Far better than the rest;
It is, of all the twenty-four,
The happiest and the best.

Thus, when life's toilsome day is o'er,
May its departing ray
Be calm as this impressive hour,
And lead to endless day.

The following is Mrs. Brown's own account of the origin of this beautiful and popular hymn:

It was in Ellington that I wrote the "Twilight Hymn." My baby daughter was in my arms when I wrote it. I had been out on a visit to Dr. Hyde's, and several were present. After tea one of my neighbors, who I had ever felt was my superior in every way, came and sat down near me, chatting with another lady without noticing me. Just as I was rising to go home, she turned suddenly upon me and said: "Mrs. Brown, why do you come up at evening so near our house and then go back without coming in? If you want anything, why don't you come in and ask for it? I could not think who it was, and sent my girl down to the garden to see; and she said it was you—that you came to the fence, but, seeing her, turned quickly away, muttering something to yourself." There was something in her manner, more than her words, that grieved me. I went home, and that evening was left alone. After my children were all in bed except my baby, I sat down in the kitchen with my child in my arms, when the grief of my heart burst forth in a flood of tears. I took pen and paper and gave vent to my oppressed heart in what I called "My Apology for My Twilight Rambles, Addressed to a Lady." It will be found in its original form in an old manuscript among my papers. In preparing it (some years after) for Nettleton's *Village Hymns* (1824), some three or four verses were suppressed and a few expressions altered. In the original the first stanza was:

"I love to steal awhile away
From little ones and care."

This was strictly true. I had four little children, a small, unfinished house, a sick sister in the only finished room, and there was not a place, above or below, where I could retire for devotion without a liability to be interrupted. There was no retired room, rock, or grove where I could go as in former days, but there was no dwelling between our house and the one where that lady lived. Her garden extended down a good way below her house, which stood on a beautiful eminence. The garden was highly cultivated, with fruits and flowers. I loved to smell the fragrance of both (though I could not see them), when I could do so without neglecting duty; and I used to steal away from all within doors, and, going out of our gate, stroll along under the elms that were planted for shade on each side of the road. And as there was seldom any one passing that way after dark, I felt quite retired and alone with God. I often walked quite up that beautiful garden, and snuffed the fragrance of the peach, the grape, and the ripening apple, if not the flowers. I never saw any one in the garden, and felt that I could have the privilege of that walk and those few moments of uninterrupted communion with God without encroaching upon any one; but after once knowing that my steps were watched and made the subject of remark and censure, I never could enjoy it as I had done. I have often thought Satan had tried his best to prevent me from prayer by depriving me of a place to pray.

For this hymn her son wrote the tune called "Monson," and William B. Bradbury the tune called "Brown." One of these "little ones" became Rev. S. R. Brown, D.D., the first Christian missionary from America to Japan. Two of Mrs. Brown's grandchildren are now (1911) missionaries in Japan.

499 C. M.

TALK with us, Lord, thyself reveal,
While here o'er earth we rove;
Speak to our hearts, and let us feel
The kindling of thy love.

2 With thee conversing, we forget
All time, and toil, and care;
Labor is rest, and pain is sweet,
If thou, my God, art here.

3 Here, then, my God, vouchsafe to stay,
And bid my heart rejoice;
My bounding heart shall own thy sway,
And echo to thy voice.

4 Thou callest me to seek thy face—
'Tis all I wish to seek;
To attend the whispers of thy grace,
And hear thee inly speak.

5 Let this my every hour employ,
Till I thy glory see;
Enter into my Master's joy,
And find my heaven in thee.

Charles Wesley.

A recent writer quaintly and truly says: "He that talks with God will hear something worth while."

Author's title: "*On a Journey.*" The first stanza of the original has been omitted:

1 Saviour, who ready art to hear,
(Readier than I to pray,)
Answer my scarcely uttered prayer,
And meet me on the way.

Verses one and two were written in the singular number: "Talk with *me*," etc.

In the second stanza the author, perhaps unconsciously, quoted Milton:

"With thee conversing, I forget all time,"
is what Eve says to Adam in *Paradise Lost*, Book iv., line 639.

From *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, 1740.

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SAVIOUR, when, in dust, to thee
Low we bend the adoring knee;
When, repentant, to the skies
Scarce we lift our weeping eyes;
O by all thy pains and woe
Suffered once for man below,
Bending from thy throne on high,
Hear our solemn litany!

2 By thy helpless infant years;
By thy life of want and tears;
By thy days of sore distress,
In the savage wilderness;
By the dread mysterious hour
Of the insulting tempter's power;
Turn, O turn a favoring eye,
Hear our solemn litany!

3 By the sacred griefs that wept
O'er the grave where Lazarus slept;
By the boding tears that flowed
Over Salem's loved abode;
By the anguished sigh that told
Treachery lurked within thy fold;
From thy seat above the sky,
Hear our solemn litany!