

STORY OF GOSPEL HYMNS

Sankey's Collection of Sacred Songs and Solos

by

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CHAPTER FOUR

~ L – M ~

LEAD KINDLY LIGHT

Words by John H. Newman

Music by John B. Dykes

*“Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on.”*

Dr. Newman wrote this hymn in 1833, just before he entered upon the tractarian movement in the Established Church. He had been at Rome, and stopping at Sicily on his homeward way, he there became dangerously ill of fever. Upon recovery, he took passage on an orange boat for Marseilles, being under the impression that he must return to England and begin a movement for the reformation of the Church in accord with his peculiar views. The sailing vessel was becalmed for a week in the Straits of Bonifacio, between Corsica and Sardinia. It was on this vessel and under such circumstances, his body sweltering in the heat and his mind racked with conflicting views as to his duty in the contemplated mission to the Established Church, that he penned the lines of this now cherished hymn. Its original title was *“The Pillar of the Cloud,”* the hymn appearing first in *“The British Magazine.”*

LET THE LOWER LIGHTS BE BURNING

Words by P. P. Bliss

Music by P. P. Bliss

*“Brightly beams our Father's mercy
From His lighthouse evermore.”*

The words of this hymn were suggested to Mr. Bliss on hearing Mr. Moody tell the following incident:

“On a dark, stormy night, when the waves rolled like mountains and not a star was to be seen, a boat, rocking and plunging, neared the Cleveland harbor. ‘Are you sure this is Cleveland?’ asked the captain, seeing only one light from the lighthouse.

“‘Quite sure, sir,’ replied the pilot.

“‘Where are the lower lights?’

“‘Gone out, sir.’

“‘Can you make the harbor?’

“‘We must, or perish, sir!’

“With a strong hand and a brave heart the old pilot turned the wheel. But alas, in the darkness he missed the channel, and with a crash upon the rocks the boat was shivered, and many a life lost in a watery grave. Brethren, the Master will take care of the great lighthouse; let us keep the lower lights burning!”

LET THE SAVIOUR IN

Words by J. B. Atchinson

Music by E. O. Excell

*“There’s a Stranger at the door;
Let Him in!”*

In Great Britain this favorite hymn brought blessing to a retired colonel of the English army, at one of Mr. Moody’s meetings on the banks of the Thames. The colonel had become anxious about his spiritual condition, and decided to go to London to attend our meetings there. At the conclusion of one of the evening services, as he was about to leave the great building, his attention was arrested by a sweet voice singing, “*Let the Saviour in.*”

On taking the train at Paddington station for Bournemouth, the song remained in his heart and the wheels of the train seemed to repeat in his ears the refrain, “*Let him in! Let the Saviour in!*”

He went again to London and sought out the singer whose voice had so impressed him. She was a lady of high rank, and in the course of a few months became the wife of the gallant colonel. A year later they moved to Florida, where I had the pleasure of visiting them in their home.

On my invitation, they accompanied me to a near-by town where I was holding meetings. At the conclusion of my lecture the lady sang this hymn again, and so sweetly that it moved the audience to tears.

MISSIONARY HYMN

Words by R. Heber

Music by Dr. Lowell

*“From Greenland’s icy mountains.
From India’s coral strand.”*

The author of this hymn was Dean of Hodnet and afterward Bishop of Calcutta. He was visiting his father-in-law, the Vicar of Wrexham, they being together in the Vicar’s study on the Saturday before Whitsunday, 1819. Each was preparing a missionary sermon to be delivered the following day, when the Vicar spoke up:

“Heber, write something appropriate to sing at our services to-morrow.”

Immediately retiring to the other end of the room, Heber sat down by the window and composed the four stanzas which now constitute this hymn. He wanted to add a fifth, but the Vicar said:

“Nay; you will only destroy the beauty and symmetry of the composition; let it stand.”

The song was sung for the first time on that Whit-sunday. Bishop Heber laid down his life, seven years later, on the mission field of India. Of the many hymns which he wrote, nearly all are in common use.

MOMENT BY MOMENT

Words by D. W. Whittle
Music by May Whittle Moody

*“Dying with Jesus, by death reckoned mine;
Living with Jesus a new life divine.”*

While I was attending the World’s Fair, in Chicago, Henry Varley, a lay preacher from London, said to Major Whittle: “I do not like the hymn ‘*I need Thee every hour*’ very well, because I need Him every moment of the day.”

Soon after Major Whittle wrote this sweet hymn, having the chorus:

“Moment by moment I’m kept in His love;
Moment by moment I’ve life from above;
Looking to Jesus till glory doth shine;
Moment by moment, O Lord, I am Thine.”

Mr. Whittle brought the hymn to me in manuscript a little later, saying that he would give me the copyright of both the words and music if I would print for him five hundred copies on fine paper, for distributing among his friends.

His daughter, May Whittle, who later became the wife of Will R. Moody, composed the music. I did as Mr. Whittle wished; and I sent the hymn to England, where it was copyrighted on the same day as at Washington.

In England the hymn became very popular. Falling into the hands of the well-known Andrew Murray, of South Africa, then visiting London, he adopted it as his favorite hymn.

A year later Mr. Murray visited Northfield, and while holding a meeting for men in the church he remarked:

“If Sankey only knew a hymn which I found in London, and would sing it, he would find that it embraces my entire creed.”

I was very anxious to know what hymn it was, and when he had recited it I said to him:

“Doctor, that hymn was written within five hundred yards of where we are standing.”

For years Dr. Murray had his wife sing this hymn in nearly all his meetings. It also became a great favorite in South Africa during the war.

MORE TO FOLLOW

Words by P. P. Bliss

Music by P. P. Bliss

*“Have you on the Lord believed?
Still there’s more to follow.”*

The suggestion for this hymn came to Mr. Bliss through hearing Mr. Moody tell the story of a vast fortune which was left in the hands of a minister for one of his poor parishioners.

Fearing that it might be squandered if suddenly bestowed upon the beneficiary, the wise minister sent him a little at the time with a note, saying:

“This is thine; use it wisely; there is more to follow.”

MUST I GO, AND EMPTY-HANDED

Words by C. C. Luther

Music by George C. Stebbins

*“Must I go, and empty-handed?
Thus my dear Redeemer meet?”*

During a series of evangelistic meetings A. G. Upham referred in his sermon to a young man who, dying after only a month of Christian service, said to a friend, “No, I am not afraid; Jesus saves me now. But oh! Must I go, and empty-handed?”

The incident made a strong impression upon C. C. Luther for whom Mr. Upham was preaching – and in a few minutes the words of this hymn had arranged themselves in Mr. Luther’s mind. A few days later he handed them to Mr. Stebbins, who composed the beautiful tune to which they are sung.

* * *

About fifteen years ago a man who was living a reckless, godless life, went to a Sunday morning service in a mission hall in Essex, England. This hymn was used in the service, and as the third verse was rendered,

*“Oh, the years of sinning wasted,
Could I but recall them now,
I would give them to my Saviour,
To His will I’d gladly bow.”*

The man was so forcibly impressed that he could not take part in the singing. He went home miserable, and was unable to eat any dinner. In the afternoon he went to a Bible-class for workingmen, conducted at the other end of the village. As he entered the same hymn was being sung that had made him so miserable in the morning, *“Must I go, and empty-handed?”*

The man was so moved by the words of the hymn, and so impressed by the coincidence of its being sung at both places where he had attended, that it resulted in his conversion. He lived a consistent life thereafter, showing a real change of heart and a strong desire to no longer waste his years in sinning.

MY AIN COUNTRIE

Words by Mary Lee Demarest
Har. by H. P. M.
Music by Mrs. Ione T. Hanns

*“I am far frae my harne,
an’ I’m weary aften-whiles,
For the longed-for hame-bringin’,
an my Faither’s welcome smiles.”*

Many years ago John Macduff and his young bride left Scotland on a sailing vessel for America, there to seek their fortune. After tarrying a few weeks in New York they went west, where they were successful in accumulating a good competence. By-and-by the wife’s health began to fail. The anxious husband said that he feared she was homesick.

“John,” she replied, “I am wearying for my ain countrie; will ye not taik me to the sea, that I may see the ships sailing to the homeland once more?”

Her husband’s heart was moved with compassion.

In a few weeks he sold their Western home and took his wife east to a pleasant little cottage by the sea, whose further shore broke on the rocks that line the coast of Scotland. She would often sit and gaze wistfully at the ships sailing from the bay, one after another disappearing below the horizon on their way to her ain countrie.

Although she uttered no complaint, it was evident that she was silently pining away. John was afraid that she would die in a foreign land; and as an effort to save her he sold his New England home, and took her back across the ocean. She was speedily recovered by the keen mountain air, the sight of purple heather, nodding bluebells, and hedge-rows white with fragrant hawthorn blossoms in bonnie Scotland, her own dear native land. To her it was home. And there is no sweeter word in any language than home!

A few years prior to this time, in 1838, Mary Lee was born at Croton Falls, New York. At an early age she lost her mother and was left in charge of a Scotch nurse, from whom she learned something of the Scottish dialect. And her grandfather, a native of Scotland, had often sung little Mary to sleep with Scottish lullabies. As a young woman she was refined and highly educated, and she exhibited unusual literary talent. Most of all she was esteemed for her noble Christian character, manifested in daily life.

At the age of twenty-three, Mary Lee wrote this immortal poem after hearing the story of John Macduff and his wife, and published it first in "*The New York Observer*." Later it appeared in a volume of her poems. After her marriage to Mr. Demarest they resided in Pasadena, California, where she died in 1887. While visiting that town a number of years later, I went to the cemetery to see if I could find the grave of the beloved hymn-writer, but was unable to do so. Afterward I learned that her body was brought east and buried in a small town not far from Albany, New York. This hymn was one of my favorite solos, and was much loved by Mr. Moody.

MY COUNTRY, 'TIS OF THEE

Words by S. F. Smith, D. D.
Music by Henry Care,
"*My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty.*"

The words of this popular hymn, now known as the national hymn of America, were written in 1832. Dr. Smith says:

"I found the tune in a German music book, brought to this country by the late William C. Woodbridge, and put into my hands by Lowell Mason, because I could read German books and he could not."

The real origin of the tune is much disputed, but the credit is usually given to Henry Carey. The hymn was first sung at a children's Fourth of July celebration, in the Park Street Church, Boston.

Dr. Samuel Francis Smith was born in Boston, October 21, 1808. He died in the same city, November 16, 1895, at the "New York and New England" depot, while on his way to fulfill an engagement to preach at Readville.

While traveling in Egypt I met the author's son, who is a missionary in that country, and said to him that if I ever got home I would sing his father's song with new interest; for I was now more than ever convinced that my beloved America, the land of liberty, was the dearest of all lands to me.

* * *

Dr. Smith visited the Board of Trade in Chicago in May of 1887. While sitting in the gallery he was pointed out to some of the members. Soon he became the center of considerable notice. All at once the trading on the floor ceased, and from the wheat-pit came the familiar words, "*My country, 'tis of thee.*" After two stanzas had been sung, Dr. Smith arose and bowed. A rousing cheer was given by the men on the floor, to which Dr. Smith was now escorted by the secretary of the Board.

The members flocked around Dr. Smith and grasped his hand. Then they opened a passage through the crowd and led him to the wheat-pit, where they took off their hats and sang the rest of the hymn.

MY FAITH LOOKS UP TO THEE

Words by Ray Palmer
Music by Dr. Lowell Mason

*"My faith looks up to Thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary."*

"I gave form to what I felt," says Dr. Palmer, "by writing, with little effort, the stanzas. I recollect I wrote them with tender emotion and ended the last line with tears."

He placed the manuscript in a pocketbook, and carried it there for some time. One day, in Boston, he met Dr. Lowell Mason, who inquired if Mr. Palmer had not some hymn to contribute to his new book. The pocket-book was produced and the hymn was brought to light. Dr. Mason took a copy of the song, and after reaching home was so much impressed with it that he wrote for it the famous tune "*Olivet*," to which it is usually sung. A short time after he met the author on the street and exclaimed:

"Mr. Palmer, you may live many years and do many good things, but I think you will be best known to posterity as the author of '*My faith looks up to Thee.*'"

The hymn was published in 1832, but did not at first receive much notice. Andrew Reed, D.D., of Scotland – who wrote "Why not to-night?" for which I composed the music-found a copy of the hymn in a religious newspaper while traveling in this country, took it home, and published it anonymously in his hymn-book.

* * *

Dr. Palmer wrote me the following incident:

“During the Civil War, and on the evening preceding a terrible battle, six or eight Christian young men, who were looking forward to deadly strife, met together in one of their tents for prayer. After spending some time in committing themselves to God, and in Christian conversation, and freely speaking together of the probability that they would not all survive the morrow, it was suggested by one of the number that they should draw up a paper expressive of the feelings with which they went to stand face to face with death, and all sign it; and that this should be left as a testimony to the friends of such of them as might fall. This was unanimously agreed to.

After consultation, it was decided that a copy of ‘*My faith looks up to Thee*’ should be written out, and that each man should subscribe his name to it, so that father, mother, sister or brother might know in what spirit they laid down their lives. Of course, they did not all meet again. The incident was related afterward by one who survived the battle.”

MY JESUS, I LOVE THEE

Anonymous
Music by A. J. Gordon

*“My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine,
For Thee all the follies of sin I resign.”*

A Protestant Episcopal Bishop of Michigan once related the following incident to a large audience in one of E. P. Hammond’s meetings in St. Louis.

“A young, talented and tender-hearted actress was passing along the street of a large city. Seeing a pale, sick girl lying upon a couch just within the half-open door of a beautiful dwelling, she entered, with the thought that by her vivacity and pleasant conversation she might cheer the young invalid.

“The sick girl was a devoted Christian, and her words, her patience, her submission and heavenlit countenance, so demonstrated the spirit of her religion that the actress was led to give some earnest thought to the claims of Christianity, and was thoroughly converted, and became a true follower of Christ.

“She told her father, the leader of the theater troupe, of her conversion, and of her desire to abandon the stage, stating that she could not live a consistent Christian life and follow the life of an actress.

“Her father was astonished beyond measure, and told his daughter that their living would be lost to them and their business ruined, if she persisted in her resolution. Loving her father dearly, she was shaken somewhat in her purpose, and partially consented to fill the published engagement to be met in a few days. She was the star of the troupe, and a general favorite. Every preparation was made for the play in which she was to appear.

“The evening came and the father rejoiced that he had won back his daughter, and that their living was not to be lost. The hour arrived; a large audience had assembled. The curtain rose, and the young actress stepped forward firmly amid the applause of the multitude. But an unwonted light beamed from her beautiful face. Amid the breathless silence of the audience she repeated:

“*My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine;
For thee all the follies of sin I resign;
My gracious Redeemer, my Saviour art Thou;
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.*”

“This was all. Through Christ she had conquered, and, leaving her audience in tears, she retired from the stage, never to appear upon it again. Through her influence her father was converted, and through their united evangelistic labors many were led to God.”

* * *

This selection was sung by a thousand voices at the funeral of the Scotch missionary hero, Robert Annan, who was drowned in the bay of Dundee while attempting to rescue a drowning child, in 1867.

Under the hymn “*Eternity*,” previously mentioned in this book, more will be found concerning Robert Annan.

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NEARER, MY GOD, TO THEE

Words by Sarah F. Adams
Music by Dr. Lowell Mason

“*Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee.*”

One of my last lectures on “*Sacred Song and Story*” was delivered before a large audience in the Church of the Covenant, in Washington, D. C., at which the late Secretary of State, John Hay, members of Congress, and Judges of the Supreme Court were present.

The favorite hymn, “*Nearer, my God, to Thee*,” was sung very heartily by the congregation. I requested the pastor, Dr. Hamlin, to make an appointment for an interview with President McKinley. Two days later we visited the White House. The President greeted me warmly, saying he was very glad to meet me, as he had often heard me sing in Ohio.

“I understand that you are quite a fine singer yourself,” I replied.

He smiled and said: “I don’t know as to that, but I try to sing with the spirit and with the understanding.”

He seemed very bright and happy, and he gave me his autograph.

The next day the President went to New York and attended service at the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, during which "*Nearer, my God, to Thee*" was sung. The President's voice was heard, as he joined heartily in his favorite hymn. A reporter took a photograph of the President as he was singing, which appeared the next day in one of the New York papers. In 1902, in Buffalo, as he lay dying by the hand of an assassin, the martyred President was heard singing faintly,

*"Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee;
E' en though it be a cross
That raiseth me!
Still all my song shall be
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee!"*

And thus passed away one of the noblest men of our age.

On the day of his funeral, at Canton, Ohio, all trains, trolley cars and nearly all machinery in the United States were stopped for five minutes, and "*Nearer, my God, to Thee*" was sung in nearly every church in the land.

* * *

Bishop Marvin, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, was traveling during the Civil War in the wilds of Arkansas. He was feeling much depressed, for the Union troops had driven him from his home. As he approached a dilapidated old log cabin he heard some one singing, "*Nearer, my God, to Thee.*"

He alighted and entered the house. There he found a poor woman, widowed and old, who was singing in the midst of such poverty as he had never seen before. His despondency vanished and he went on his way happy and trustful, because of the faith which he had seen and the hymn which he had heard.

* * *

A little drummer boy was found, after the battle of Fort Donelson, by one who visited the field. The poor lad had lost an arm, which had been carried away by a cannon ball, but even as he lay there dying he was singing, "*Nearer, my God, to Thee.*"

NO HOPE IN JESUS

Words by W. O. Cushing
Music by Robert Lowry

*"Oh, to have no Christ, no Saviour!
No Rock, no Refuge nigh!"*

From the “Rescue Mission,” of Syracuse, New York, comes this incident.

“One of the workers at the Rescue Mission sat at the window sewing. She is not a grand singer, in fact, scarcely ever sings in the meeting; but alone by herself she sings the Gospel songs. She was singing:

*‘Oh, to have no Christ, no Saviour . . .
How dark this world must be!’*

“When she had finished she heard some one calling, and saw two girls looking over a neighboring fence.

“One said: ‘Won’t you please sing that again?’

“I am afraid some of us would have begun to make excuse, and say we were not singers. But this soul sang it over again, praying God to bless the song, and then went to talk with them. She recognized them as inmates of a house of evil resort, and asked permission to call on them. They would not grant this, but the next day one came to the mission and threw herself weeping, into the arms of the singer, saying:

“‘I have been so unhappy since I heard you sing! You remind me of my mother and the days when I was innocent and good. I had a good home, but quarreled with my mother, ran away and got into a life of sin; I am tired of it, won’t you pray for me?’ They had prayer, and the poor wandering one was led to the Saviour. She said: ‘I’ll never go back to that place again. I’m going to the poor-master and ask him to send me home.’”

“The worker furnished the money to pay her fare to her home in a neighboring city, and she went away rejoicing. This was some time ago. One evening the girl, accompanied by her father, paid a visit to the mission. She was happy in Christ, and had led eleven souls to him, her father and mother being among the number. Her father was full of praise and thanksgiving to God for what he had done for his erring child, and tears ran down his cheeks as he thanked the singer for the song, and for the help she had been to his daughter. Her desire is to work among the fallen ones from among whom she was rescued.”

NOT HALF HAS EVER BEEN TOLD

Words by J. B. Atchinson

Music by O. F. Presbrey

*“I have read of a beautiful city,
Far away in the kingdom of God.”*

“A young skeptic in Ohio,” writes Dr. O. F. Presbrey, “was wasting away with consumption. His family was greatly distressed, for nothing seemed to awaken in him an interest regarding his soul. One day, as he lay on the sofa, his sister, sitting at the organ, sang, *‘Not half has ever been told.’*”

“He seemed much affected and said, ‘Oh, sister, sing that hymn again, I never had anything touch my heart like that before.’

“The hymn was sung again, and day by day he listened to it. Within two months his spirit took its singing as it went,

*‘Not half of that city’s bright glory,
To mortals has ever been told.’”*

* * *

A clergyman had a son who was sent up into the north woods of Canada in search of health. After a few weeks his father was summoned, and found him in a dying condition. On the evening before his death they sang together “*Not half has ever been told.*” The father says that he can never forget the joy and peace which filled the soul of his dying boy as they sang of that beautiful city of which he was so soon to be an inhabitant.

NOT NOW, MY CHILD

Words by Mrs. Pennefather

Music by Ira D. Sankey

*“Not now, my child, – a little more rough tossing,
A little longer on the billows’ foam.”*

Mrs. Pennefather, the author of this hymn, was the wife of one of the ministers who invited Mr. Moody and me to England in 1873. She was one of the founders of the Mildmay Conference, in the north of London, and also organized the famous Deaconess Society, composed of many ladies of distinction who therein seek a field for religious effort. I arranged her hymn to music, and often used to sing it as a solo.

A young lady of a titled family, walking one day along the Strand, saw crowds pushing into the large building where we were holding meetings. Following the crowd, she soon found herself seated and listening to a stirring sermon by Mr. Moody. I also sang this hymn as a solo. The whole service much impressed the young lady.

At the conclusion of the meeting, when Mr. Moody invited all who desired to become Christians to rise, she stood up with hundreds of others, and later went into the inquiry-room and there gave her heart to God. When she went home she announced to her family that she had become a Christian, and they laughed her to scorn. After a few weeks she decided to leave her home and cast in her lot with those who were living for Christ. She went to Mrs. Pennefather, and put on the dress of a deaconess. There she continued for over a year.

One day, more than a year later, she received a letter from her father, a Lord of the realm, asking her to accompany him on his yachting trip to the north of Scotland.

While on the trip she was successful in leading her father to the Saviour. Landing in Scotland, they found some friends from London in a little fishing village. On Sunday the question arose as to where they would attend service. They finally agreed to go to a neighboring village where a visiting clergyman was to give an address. The young lady and her father were greatly impressed with the sermon. The next day when they returned to the yacht, his Lordship remarked that he would like to have that clergyman preach his funeral sermon.

On the return trip the old gentleman caught a severe cold, and died soon afterward. The young lady communicated her father's wish to the clergyman, and he conducted the funeral services. The clergyman became interested in the young lady, and sought her hand in marriage. After their wedding they moved to Scotland, residing on a large estate to which the clergyman had fallen heir.

When Mr. Moody and I were carrying on the campaign in Scotland we were invited to visit their castle. During our visit there we held meetings in the neighborhood for the miners. At the suggestion of our host we used to go into the forest and cut down trees for exercise. Before leaving the estate each of us planted a tree near the castle gate, and the clergyman named one of them "Moody," and the other "Sankey."

NOTHING BUT LEAVES

Words by L. E. Akerman

Music by Silas J. Vau

*"Nothing but leaves!
The Spirit grieves O'er years of wasted life."*

Mrs. Lucy Evelina Akerman, the author of this hymn, died in Providence, Rhode Island, 1874, at the age of twenty-four.

The hymn was a special favorite at the early Moody and Sankey meetings. I often sang it as a solo for Mr. Moody's lecture on "The Holy Spirit."

While singing it in Birmingham a lady was convinced, as she wrote me afterwards, that her life had been nothing but leaves; and she then decided to devote the rest of her life to rescuing her lost sisters. She secured a building, which she called "The Rescue Home," and for years she gathered in poor, wretched girls from the streets of the city, gave them employment, and taught them the way of life.

Through her efforts hundreds of girls were saved. After her death the city officials took up her work, employing other women, who are still engaged in seeking the lost ones. On my last visit to England I had the pleasure of visiting this rescue home and singing for the inmates.

* * *

"During the mission in 1884," writes M. C. Boardman, of Stratford, East London, "the hymn 'Nothing but leaves' was often sung.

“It brought conviction to one of the stewards. He said that this song disturbed him. For years he had been a professor of religion, but with personal interest in view. He said he trusted that henceforth there would be fruit as well as leaves in his life. From that time he has been an ardent Christian worker.”

~ end of chapter 4 ~

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