

The Origin of Some Famous Hymns

Their Authors, and When and How They Came to be Written

"O, MY FATHER."

By ELIZA R. SNOW.

O my Father, Thou that dwellest
In the high and glorious place!
When shall I regain Thy presence,
And again behold Thy face?
In Thy holy habitation,
Did my spirit once reside?
In my first princely childhood,
Was I nurtured near Thy side?



THIS poem, probably the best known and most widely sung of any of the "Mormon" collection, was written by the late Eliza Roxey Snow, in the house of Stephen Markham, in Nauvoo, in 1843. It has been sung to many tunes, but the tune to which it was first adapted, was probably "Gentle Annie" to which President Brigham Young often used to ask to have it rendered. During the early pioneer days, however, and up to a few years since, it has been most generally linked with the tune known as "Harwell," found in the American Tune Book. Of late years it took on a new popularity

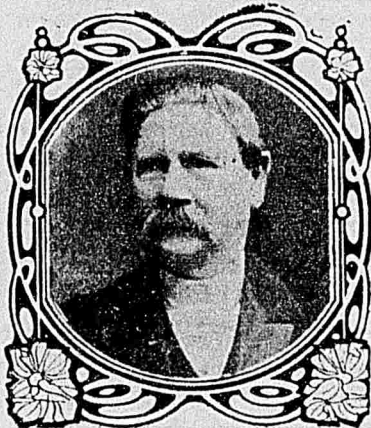
through having been fitted to the hymn found in the Moody and Sankey collection entitled "My Redeemer." R. C. Easton having rendered it to that tune on several eastern tours. It can also be beautifully fitted to the tenor solo in the first act of the opera "Martha." As it is well known, Miss Snow wrote many of her best known hymns in Nauvoo, and the Salt Lake valley. She began writing at an early age, and when she was 22, (in 1826), she wrote a poem on John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, who died the same day in that year, July 4. This poem gave her the first renown she achieved. She was born Jan. 21, 1804, at Becket, Mass., and died in Salt Lake City, Dec. 5, 1887.

"O YE MOUNTAINS HIGH."

By CHARLES W. PENROSE.

O ye mountains high, where the clear blue sky
Arches over the vales of the free,
Where the pure breezes blow and the clear stream-
lets flow,

How I've longed to your bosom to flee.
O Zion, dear Zion! land of the free,
My own mountain home, unto thee I have come—
All my fond hopes are centered in thee.



THIS stirring hymn, which has been a household theme for more than 50 years past, was written by C. W. Penrose of the quorum of the Apostles, when he was traveling along the green lanes of old England, in the county of Essex, in 1853 or 1854. He narrates that he was weary with walking and dusty with travel, but his mind was active and his heart light with hope and the anticipation of going to the mountains to dwell with the saints at some future time unknown. A picture of Zion's retreat in the top of the mountains came before his mental vision; he longed to be there, and the first four lines of the hymn came to his mind, except that the fourth line ran "How I long to your bosom to flee," and was changed to the present version after he arrived in Zion. "Another familiar line of the hymn, 'My own mountain home, unto thee I have come,' originally stood, 'My own mountain home, unto thee I will come,' etc." Mr. Penrose relates how he was familiar with an old song entitled, "O Minnie, Dear Minnie, Come O'er the Sea," and he first set his words to that tune as he walked along the road. He sang it first the same evening at a meeting of saints and strangers, in a small country village. It became quite popular in England, and was sung by Elder W. C. Dunbar, then on a mission to England, who carried it to Utah, where it was particularly favored by President Brigham Young, and immediately taken up by the people.

Elder Penrose, for years editor of the "News," and one of the best known speakers and writers in the Church, is now presiding over the British mission. He was born Feb. 4, 1832, at Camberwell, South-east London.

"COME, COME YE SAINTS."

By WILLIAM CLAYTON.

Come, come, ye Saints, no toil nor labor fear,
But with joy rend your way;
Though hard to you this journey may appear,
Grace shall be as your day.
'Tis better far for us to strive,
Our useless cares from us to drive.
Do this, and joy your hearts will swell—
All is well! all is well!

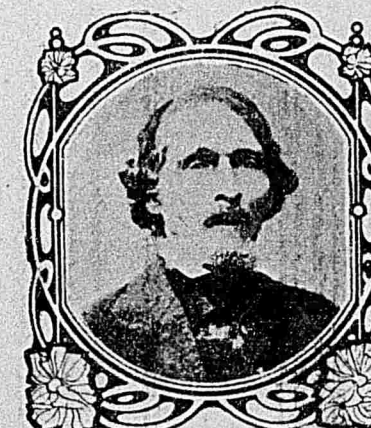


THIS famous hymn, which was written to cheer the hearts of the despairing, on a certain special occasion, and which has done similar service on many later events, was composed by William Clayton, in Winter Quarters, just before the march of the pioneers was undertaken to the Salt Lake valley. The hymn was written at the request of President Young, who knew Mr. Clayton's gifts, and who asked him to write something that would encourage the people. Within two hours, Elder Clayton had written his famous hymn and set it to the music of an old English tune, called "All is Well." Mr. Clayton was the private secretary of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and occupied many responsible positions in the growth of Salt Lake, having been the treasurer of Z. C. M. L. Territorial, auditor and recorder of marks and brands. He was born in Penwortham, Lancashire, England, July 17, 1814, and died in this city Dec. 4, 1879.

"PRAISE TO THE MAN WHO COMMUNED WITH JEHOVAH."

By WILLIAM W. PHELPS.

Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah!
Jesus anointed "that Prophet and Seer"—
Blessed to open the last dispensation;
Kings shall extol him and nations revere.



THE name of William W. Phelps is one often encountered in the early Church history. He was an intimate associate of the Prophet Joseph in Nauvoo, and he was speaker of the house in the First Territorial Assembly of Utah, 1851. He was a man of scientific attainments and in August, 1849, he ascended Mt. Nebo, to make astronomical observations. He was a prolific writer, and many of the hymns in the Latter-day Saints' collection are from his pen. The above, which is probably the best known of his compositions, (unless we except "The Spirit of God, Like a Fire is Burning," which was written as a tribute to the Prophet Joseph soon after his martyrdom; it is a standard of its kind. The familiar tune, with which it is so indissolubly linked, is unknown by name, but pioneer musicians say that it was sung to this hymn both in England and America as long ago as they can remember. Mr. Phelps was born in Dover, N. J., Feb. 7, 1792, and died in this city, March 7, 1872. His widow still lives in Salt Lake and is over 81 years of age.

"Let me write the songs of a people, and I care not who makes their laws."

So said a famous Frenchman years ago. While his remark may sound exaggerated in these days of practical things, no one can truly deny that music has played and does play a wonderful part in forming character and influencing the deeds of men.

How many hearts have been cheered, what hopes have been rekindled, what faith has been aroused, how many sorrowing have been comforted by the familiar hymns grouped on this page, no one can truly estimate. All have played their important part in the history of the Latter-day Saints, and in order that the facts may be permanently recorded before those possessing a knowledge of them, have passed away, the writer has undertaken as a labor of love, to trace the hymns back to their origin, and to set down the circumstances and conditions (many of them trying ones) under which they were composed.

Funeral Hymn of President Young

This hymn was composed by Prof. Geo. Careless, for the funeral of President Brigham Young, and was sung by the Tabernacle Choir on that occasion, Sunday, Sept. 2, 1877, to the words by C. W. Penrose, printed below. The tune was originally called "Parting," and is now printed for the first time since its first rendition.

C. W. Penrose.

PARTING. L. M. D.

G. Careless.



NOTE—This hymn can be effectively rendered as a sacramental tune to the words on page 185 of the Latter-day Saints hymn book.

Lines Sung at the Funeral of President Brigham Young.

Composed for the occasion by Charles W. Penrose, and sung to the music printed above.

Death gathers up thick clouds of gloom
And wounds the soul with anguish deep.
Gaudt sorrow sits upon the tomb,
And round the grave dense shadows creep.

But Faith beams down from God's fair skies
And bids the clouds and shades be gone.
We gaze with brightened, tear-dried eyes
And lo! there stands The Holy One!

"The Resurrection and the Life."
What hope and joy that title brings!
Death's but a myth with horrors rife,
And flees before the King of Kings.

Then shall we mourn and weep today
Because our Chief has gone to rest?
He slumbers not in that cold clay,
He lives and moves among the blest.

We lose a leading Master Mind,
But spirit hosts behind the veil
New strength and added wisdom find,
To make our mutual work prevail.

Hosannas greet his entrance there,
And JOSEPH waits with words of praise,
While here sad thousands bow in prayer,
And funeral notes in grief we raise.

Farewell, dear Brother Brigham Young,
God called thee through th' eternal gate,
Thy fame shall dwell on every tongue,
And Saints thy worth will emulate.

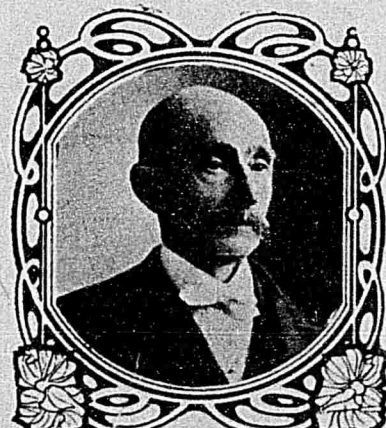
Thy work on earth was nobly done,
And peace smiles sweetly on thee now.
The crown celestial thou hast won,
In splendor waits to deck thy brow.

"When Dark and Drear the Skies Appear."

By EMILY H. WOODMANSEE.

When dark and drear the skies appear,
And doubt and dread would thee enthrall,
Look up, nor fear, the day is near,
And Providence is over all.
From heaven above, His light and love,
God giveth freely when we call,
Our utmost need is oft decreed,
And Providence is over all.

THE well known poet, Mrs. Emily H. Woodmansee, who died in this city, October 19, 1906, wrote many beautiful hymns and poems, but none have been more widely quoted than the hymn from which the above verse is taken. Mrs. Woodmansee's family is not certain as to the precise date when it was written, but they feel sure that the date was in the early eighties, during the famous anti-Mormon crusade. Mrs. Woodmansee was a woman of high talents. She was born at Warminster, England, March 26, 1826, and came to Utah in one of the handcart companies in 1856. The hymn above quoted is sung to a tune by Prof. J. J. Daynes, entitled "Providence," and has a permanent abiding place in the L. D. S. collection of songs.



PROFESSOR GEORGE CARELESS.

PROF. GEORGE CARELESS, the well known musician, who wrote the music to "Parting" (the Brigham Young Funeral Hymn), reproduced on this page, as well as the music to Naisbitt's hymn "Rest, to the Weary Soul," is still living and is actively engaged in the practice of his profession in this city. Prof. Careless was born in London, Sept. 24, 1839, and has thus passed his sixty-ninth birthday. In spite of this, he is hale and hearty, and is still writing occasionally, as well as teaching pupils on the violin, piano, organ and in vocal instruction. In addition to his old record as leader of the Tabernacle choir, the Careless orchestra, and the Philharmonic, Prof. Careless enjoys the distinction of having produced the "Messiah" for the first time in Salt Lake (in 1875), and also having been pioneer director of the Home Opera company, as he first produced "Pinafore," "The Mikado," and "Trial By Jury." His funeral and sacramental hymns contained in the L. D. S. Psalmody, are constantly used wherever the music of the Church is sung.

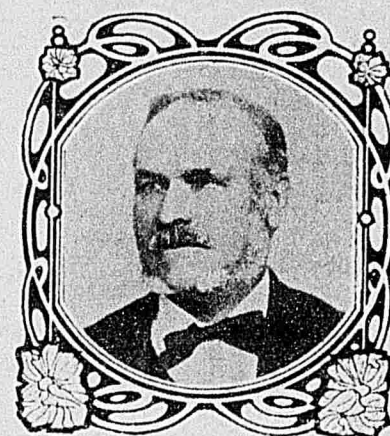


"O, SAY, WHAT IS TRUTH?"

By JOHN JAKUES.

O, say, what is truth? 'Tis the fairest gem
That the riches of worlds can produce;
And priceless the value of truth will be, when
The proud monarch's costliest diadem
Is counted but dross and refuse.

THIS poetic gem, considered by many as one of the choicest in the hymn book, had an appropriate birth place. It was composed by the late John Jaques, at Stratford on Avon—Shakespeare's birth place, when Mr. Jaques was paying a visit to that historic spot. The date was in the year 1859, and the hymn first appeared in the Millennial Star, Aug. 1, of that year. Mr. Jaques was baptized in 1845, in Gresley, Derbyshire, England, and was a missionary for several years. He crossed the plains with the memorable handcart expedition, in 1846. For years he was employed in the Historian's office and was once assistant editor of the "Daily Telegraph," published in this city by T. B. H. Stenhouse. For a time he was also editor of this Deseret News. His "Catechism for Children" was much used as a text book in Sunday schools in former days. He was born at Market Bosworth, Leicestershire, England, Jan. 7, 1827, and died in this city, June 1st, 1900.



"WE THANK THEE, O GOD FOR A PROPHET"

By WILLIAM FOWLER.

We thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet
To guide us in these latter days;
We thank Thee for sending the Gospel
To lighten our minds with its rays;
We thank Thee for every blessing
Bestowed by Thy bounteous hand;
We feel it a pleasure to serve Thee,
And love to obey Thy command.

IT is regrettable that no picture of any kind is obtainable of William W. Fowler, the author of this well known hymn. Mr. Fowler was a traveling elder in the British mission, and so far as known, never came to this country. The hymn was written between 1855, and 1860, and thus, contrary to the general belief, was not printed in the earlier editions of the hymn book. A brother of Mr. Fowler, named Henry C. Fowler, was a well known citizen of Salt Lake and was employed at the General Tithing office. William Fowler, the author, died about 1860. He was by trade a cutter, and was born in Sheffield, about 1830; while he was a highly educated, he was a deep thinker, and a man of many gifts, as no one can doubt who reads the famous hymn he composed. The tune to which the hymn has always been sung was adapted from "The Officer's Funeral March."

"THE SEER, THE SEER, JOSEPH THE SEER"

By JOHN TAYLOR.

The Seer, the Seer, Joseph the Seer!
I'll sing of the Prophet ever dear;
His equal now cannot be found,
By searching the wide world around.
With Gods he soared in the realms of day,
And men he taught the heavenly way.
The earthly Seer! the heavenly Seer!
I love to dwell on his memory dear:
The chosen of God and the friend of man,
He brought the Priesthood back again,
He gazed on the past, and the future too,
And opened the heavenly world to view.

THOUGH the precise date is not known, this hymn was doubtless written by President John Taylor in Nauvoo, soon after the martyrdom of the Prophet in 1844. It was fitted to the tune of "The Sea, the Open Sea," and no doubt was suggested by the frequent rendition of that song by John Kay, one of the best remembered of the pioneer singers. At the recent celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of President Taylor's birth, an endeavor was made to ascertain from members of his family, the date of the composition of the hymn, but no record seems to have been preserved. President Taylor did a great deal of literary work during his early years, having been editor and publisher of several volumes of the "Times and Seasons," and "The Nauvoo Neighbor," and later in New York, of the paper called the "Mormon." He was a great lover of hymns and frequently sang them, and as students of Church history are aware, he sang the hymn, "A Poor Way Faring Man of Grief," in prison, where he was confined with the Prophet and his brother Hyrum, a few minutes only before the martyrdom. President Taylor was born Nov. 1, 1808, in Milnthorpe, England and died July 25, 1887, at Kaysville, Utah.



"REST, FOR THE WEARY SOUL."

By HENRY W. NAISBITT.

Rest, for the weary soul,
Rest, for the aching head,
Rest, on the hill-side rest,
With the great uncounted dead.

THE late Henry W. Naisbitt, whose death occurred Feb. 26, 1908, wrote this beautiful hymn for the funeral of President Joseph Young, (brother of President Brigham Young,) who died July 16, 1881. The music, entitled "Repose," was written by Prof. George Careless, words and music both being composed and furnished the Tabernacle choir, which prepared the hymn at one rehearsal and sang it at the funeral, where it created a wonderful impression. That impression has lasted ever since, and the hymn is one of the most widely sung among the funeral collection. Mr. Naisbitt was born in England, Nov. 7, 1827.



"THE MORNING BREAKS, THE SHADOWS FLEE."

By PARLEY P. PRATT.

The morning breaks, the shadows flee;
Lo! Zion's standard is unfurled.
The dawning of a brighter day
Majestic rises on the world.

PARLEY P. Pratt, is closely identified with much of the literary history of the Church, having written "The Voice of Warning," and "The Key to Theology." On April 15, 1840, at a conference in Preston, England, he, Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball, were appointed a publishing committee for the Church, and at the same time Parley P. Pratt was appointed editor and publisher of the Millennial Star, the first number of which was issued in May, 1840. The well known hymn "The Morning Breaks," was written by Mr. Pratt, especially for the introduction of this periodical. He assisted in selecting, compiling and publishing the first edition of the Latter-day Saints' hymn book, which was completed and accepted by the unanimous vote of a general conference, held in Carpenter Hall, Manchester, July 6, 1840. This edition contained about 48 of Elder Pratt's original hymns. Elder Pratt was born April 12, 1807, at Burlington, New York, and died May 13, 1857.

