



Fanny Crosby was the greatest hymn writer of the nineteenth century. In her lifetime she wrote over nine thousand hymns,<sup>1</sup> about three thousand more than the great hymn writer, Charles Wesley. She accomplished all of this even though she was blind almost from birth.

Here is a short list of her most famous hymns.

Blessed Assurance

Tell Me the Story of Jesus

To God Be the Glory<sup>2</sup>

Draw Me Nearer

Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross

All the Way My Savior Leads Me

Safe in the Arms of Jesus

Rescue the Perishing

Listen to how she described the process of writing a hymn.

The most enduring hymns are born in the silences of the soul, and nothing must be allowed to intrude while they are being framed into language. Some of the sweetest melodies of the heart never see the light of the printed page. Sometimes the song without words has a deeper meaning than the more elaborate combinations of words and music. But in the majority of instances these two must be joined in marriage; and unless they are mutually complementary the resulting hymn will not please.<sup>3</sup>



FANNY CROSBY IN HER EIGHTY-SIXTH YEAR.

# MEMORIES OF EIGHTY YEARS

BY  
**FANNY J. CROSBY**  
(MRS. ALEXANDER VARALTYEN)

*THE STORY OF HER LIFE, TOLD BY HERSELF  
ANCESTRY, CHILDHOOD, WOMANHOOD  
FRIENDSHIPS, INCIDENTS AND  
HISTORY OF HER SONGS  
AND HYMNS*

ILLUSTRATED

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**JAMES H. EARLE & COMPANY**  
**BOSTON MASSACHUSETTS**

Frances Jane Crosby was born in Southeast, New York in 1820. Most of the details of my biography have directly from Crosby's own autobiography she wrote at age 86<sup>4</sup>. I have gleaned seven principles from her life that I trust will prove beneficial as we look at the story of this amazing woman.

## **1. She was born into generations of Christian legacy.**

Though her father died when she was two years old, she adored her mother<sup>5</sup> and grandmother, the latter whom was exemplified this way. "She was always kind, though firm; and never punished me for ordinary offenses; on the contrary, she would talk to me very gently, and in this way she would convince me of my fault and bring me into a state of real and heartfelt penitence."<sup>6</sup>

Her Christian heritage was obviously deep as one of her relatives was the founder of Harvard College whose mission, at the time, was completely Christ-centered. "Let every Student be plainly instructed, and earnestly pressed to consider well, the main end of his life and studies is, to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life (John 17:3) and therefore to lay Christ in the bottom, as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and Learning."<sup>7</sup>

She not only had a Godly family, but she also had other Christian mentors, like her friend, Mrs. Hawley. The following event happened after she was pressured by a playmate into picking a white rose from her Mrs. Hawley's flower garden.

At the time Mrs. Hawley was sitting by the window and, therefore, saw the whole affair; and during the afternoon she called me to her and said, "Fanny, do you know who picked the pretty white rose from the bush yonder?" "No, madam," I answered meekly. She said

no more and I thought she had forgotten the incident, when she called me to her side and read the story of Ananias and Sapphira; and, from that hour, I told no more falsehoods to my good friend.<sup>8</sup>



MRS. CROSBY, FANNY AND HER TWO YOUNGER SISTERS.

Many of you have similar Christian legacies. You were blessed to have been born into generations of Godly Christians. To you, I would, I would say, thank God for this and continue to build this legacy. Do not let a single generation die out from following Jesus. For those who do not have this Christian legacy, like Karen and me, we need to build this legacy. We need to take the example of Fanny's family and build this into our lives and the lives of our children and grandchildren.

## **2. She embraced suffering at a young age.**

The following is the story of how she became blind.

When I was six weeks of age a slight cold caused an inflammation of the eyes, which appeared to demand the attention of the family physician; but he not being at home, a stranger was called. He recommended the use of hot poultices, which ultimately destroyed the sense of sight. When this sad misfortune became known throughout our neighborhood, the unfortunate man thought it best to leave; and we never heard of him again. But I have not for a moment, in more than eighty-five years, felt a spark of resentment against him because I have always believed from my youth to this very moment that the good Lord, in his infinite mercy, by this means consecrated me to the work that I am still permitted to do.<sup>9</sup>

Not only did she not have bitterness, there was a sense in which she saw her blindness as a blessing in disguise. You can see both her heart and her poetic prowess in this poem she wrote at age eight.

Oh, what a happy soul I am,  
Although I cannot see!  
I am resolved that in this world  
Contented I will be.  
How many blessings I enjoy  
That other people don't,  
To weep and sigh because I'm blind  
I cannot, and I won't!<sup>10</sup>

This fits well with her lifelong sentiment regarding her disability. "It has always been my favorite theory that the blind can accomplish nearly everything that may be done by those who can see."<sup>11</sup>

Like many in her day, Fanny was more accustomed to death than we are today. She watched several of her classmates die from a cholera epidemic in New York City.

On the following Monday we had our first case. One of the youngest girls was taken; she called me to her and asked me to hold her in my lap, as I had been accustomed to do.

"Miss Crosby, I am going home," she said, "and I just wanted to bid you good-bye and to tell you I love you. Now lay me down again." Toward evening she died.<sup>12</sup>

This embracing of suffering no doubt assisted her in her own grief when her only child died while still an infant. "Now I am going to tell you of something that only my closest friends know. I became a mother and knew a mother's love. God gave us a tender babe but the angels came down and took our infant up to God and to His throne"<sup>13</sup>

Interestingly, she did not mention the birth and death of her child in her autobiography. I don't know if she had a son or a daughter. So many of her hymns deal with death and Heaven so it is surprising that she did not share her own story in the context of her hymns, or write a poem for her infant child. It is somewhat of a mystery to me.

I read a quote this past week that summarizes Fanny's view of suffering. "Pain is inevitable. Misery is not."<sup>14</sup>

### **3. She had compassion for the poor and the downcast.**

One of my favorite stories in her book describes a walk through the school garden with James Polk, the eleventh president of the United States.

We had not gone many yards before I heard the familiar voice



THE INSTITUTION FOR THE BLIND, NEW YORK.

of an old domestic to whom I was indebted for many favors. The dear old woman was not at that time in the employ of the Institution, but had just returned for a few minutes to speak with some of us; and I knew that I might not see her again for months to come. This thought was uppermost in my mind at that moment; and so I turned impulsively to President Polk and said, "Will you please excuse me a minute?" "Certainly," he replied; and so I left the chief man of the nation standing alone while I ran to greet my friend. Realizing my discourtesy on my return, I made all manner of apologies; and tried to explain the circumstance as best I might. To my surprise, however, the great and good man said,

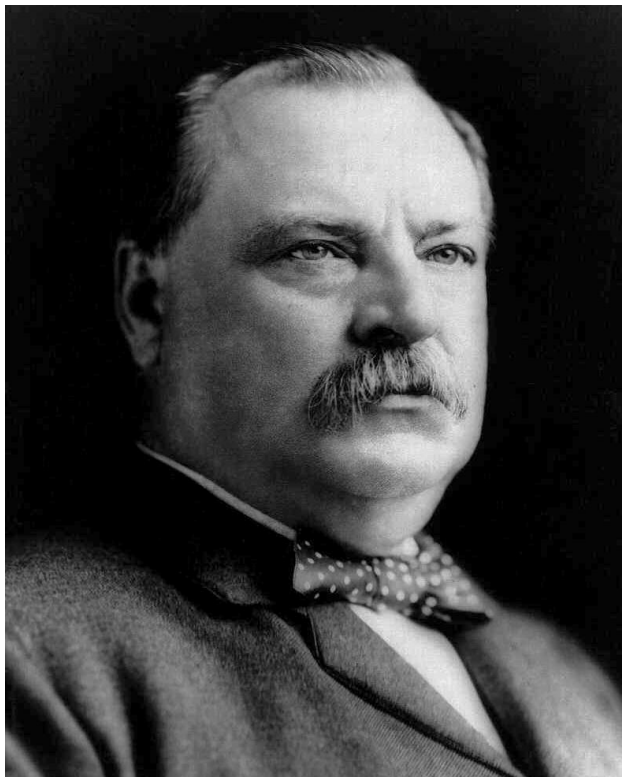
"You have done well, and I commend you for it. Kindness, even to those in the humblest capacity of life, should be our rule of conduct; and by this act you have won not only my respect but also my esteem."<sup>15</sup>

I believe that this "domestic," as Fanny called her, was probably an old, free black woman.

This happened to be the third time she had met President Polk. She had the opportunity to meet people like this because she was one of the first students accepted into the Institution for the Blind in New York City.<sup>16</sup>

Educating the blind was a brand new idea at the time and the school attracted famous people<sup>17</sup> from all over the world who came to see what was happening at the school.

President Polk was not the first president Fanny had met. When President Harrison died after only 32 days in office, Fanny wrote a poem for him. That summer, the school superintendant found her and said that President Tyler was in the waiting room and wanted to see her. She recited her poem for him.



During her second visit to Washington D.C., she listened to the final speech ever given by the sixth president of the U.S., John Quincy Adams.

She twice recited poems before the joint session of Congress. During her first visit, they applauded wildly and many wept when she read her poem during her second visit.

She had a type of friendship with President Polk but she actually had an even closer friendship with a young man of seventeen whom she called "Grove." On her 85<sup>th</sup> birthday, this man wrote a lovely letter to her.

My dear friend:

It is more than fifty years ago that our acquaintance and friendship began; and ever since that time I have watched your continuous

and disinterested labor in uplifting humanity, and pointing out the way to an appreciation of God's goodness and mercy.

Though these labors have, I know, brought you abundant rewards in your consciousness of good accomplished, those who have known of your works and sympathized with your noble purposes owe it to themselves that you are apprized of their remembrance of these things. I am, therefore, exceedingly gratified to learn that your eighty-fifth birthday is to be celebrated with a demonstration of this remembrance. As one proud to call you an old friend, I desire to be early in congratulating you on your long life of usefulness, and wishing you in the years yet to be added to you, the peace and comfort born of the love of God.

Yours very sincerely, Grover Cleveland<sup>18</sup>

Fanny made a decent amount of money in her lifetime but her compassion for the poor meant that the money went from her hands almost immediately into the hands of someone who needed it more than her. She summed up her philosophy this way. "I had other priorities and gave away anything that was not necessary to their daily survival"<sup>19</sup> In her ninety four year lifetime, she never owned her own home. Not only did she not own a home, she chose to rent apartments in some of the worst, poorest neighborhoods in Manhattan. For three decades of her life she ministered among several missions in these decrepit parts of the city.<sup>20</sup> Interestingly, one of the mission homes was called Door of Hope and it was a place "for unprotected girls." During about three decades of her life, she saw herself as more of a mission worker than a hymn writer, even though that is why we are familiar with her today.



One of her most famous hymns, Rescue the Perishing, was borne out of her mission work.

As I was addressing a large company of working men one hot August evening, the thought kept forcing itself on my mind that some mother's boy must be rescued that very night or perhaps not at all. So I requested that, if there was any boy present, who had wandered away from mother's teaching, he would come to the platform at the conclusion of the service. A young man of eighteen came forward and said,

"Did you mean me? I have promised my mother to meet her in heaven; but as I am now living that will be impossible."

We prayed for him; he finally arose with a new light in his eyes; and exclaimed triumphantly,

"Now, I can meet mother in heaven; for I have found her God." A few days before, Mr. Doane had sent me the subject "Rescue the Perishing," and while I sat there that evening the line came to me,

"Rescue the perishing, care for the dying."

I could think of nothing else that night. When I arrived at my

home I went to work on it at once; and before I retired the entire hymn was ready for a melody. The next day my words were written and forwarded to Mr. Doane, who wrote the beautiful and touching music as it now stands.<sup>21</sup>

Amazingly, Fanny met this same boy thirty five years later.<sup>22</sup>



#### **4. She was naturally gifted by God.**

Fanny had a natural intellect and a remarkable memory.

Mrs. Hawley, a kind Christian lady, in whose house we resided, and who had no children of her own, became deeply interested in me, and under her supervision I acquired a thorough knowledge of the Bible. She gave me a number of chapters each week to learn, sometimes as many as five, if they were short ones, and so at the end of the first twelve months I could repeat a large portion of the first four books of the Old Testament and the four Gospels. Had my growing pride been unchecked by my friends at home, it might have proven a stumbling block in after years; and yet the habit of thoroughly learning my lessons helped me many times when I was obliged to commit long passages as a pupil, and afterward as a teacher, in the New York Institute for the Blind.

In our congregation, we have many Bible quizzers and AWANA participant, all of whom memorize Scripture regularly.

She would compose her hymns entirely in her mind before someone would record them for her. One time she had forty hymns rolling in her mind before they were written down.<sup>23</sup> Some hymns just came to her in a matter of minutes.

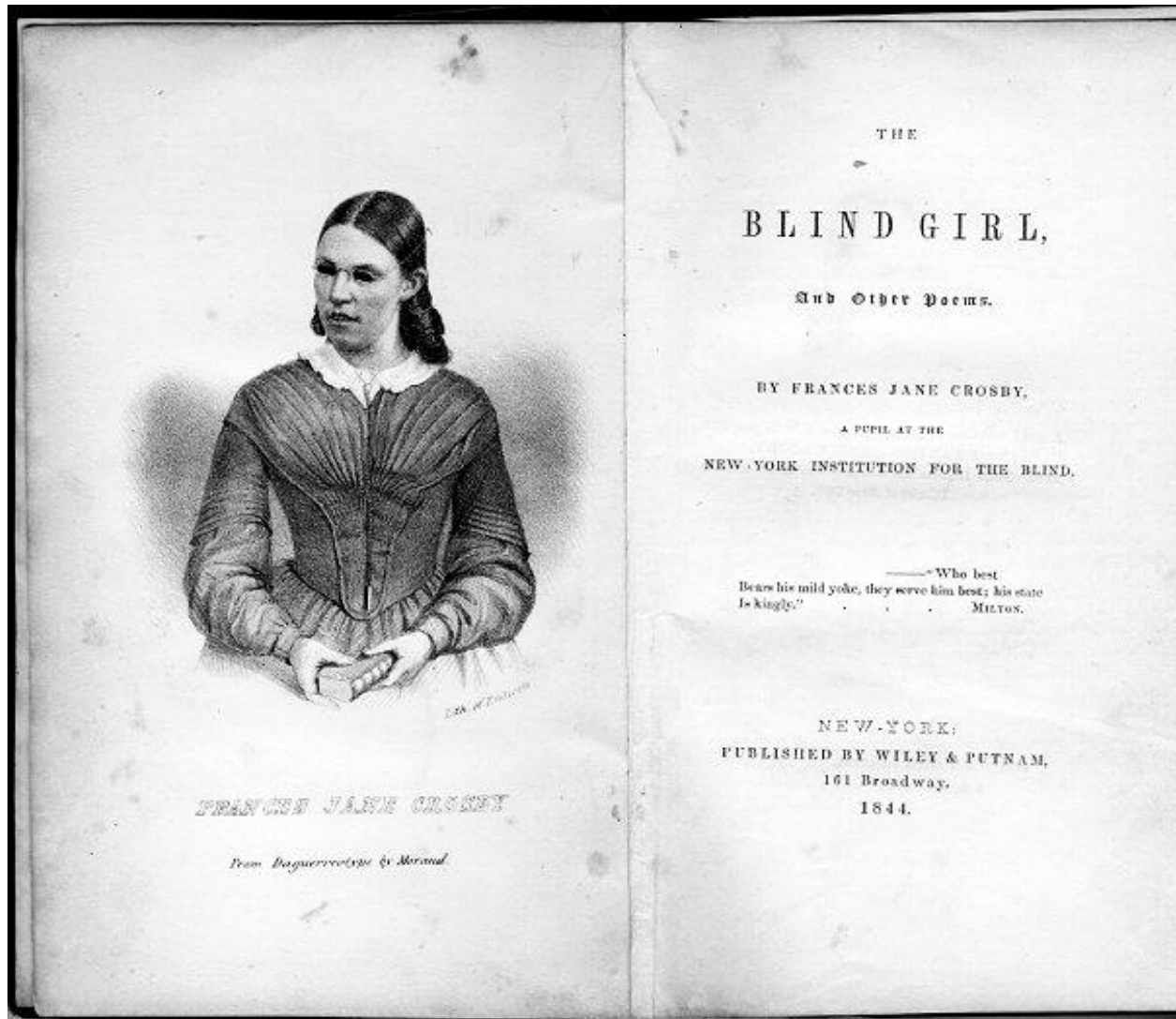
On April 30, 1868, Dr. W. H. Doane came into my house, and said, "I have exactly forty minutes before my train leaves for Cincinnati. Here is a melody. Can you write words for it?" I replied that I would see what I could do. Then followed a space of twenty minutes during which I was wholly unconscious of all else except the work I was doing. At the end of that time I recited the words to "Safe in the Arms of Jesus." Mr. Doane copied them, and had time to catch his train.<sup>24</sup>

As highly intelligent as she was, she thoroughly abhorred math.

I simply could not learn arithmetic, although I tried my best; finally, in utter despair, I said to my teacher, "I suppose you regard me as a very inattentive pupil." To my surprise, she replied, "No, I do not, for you can never learn mathematics. Let us go to the superintendent and tell him so!" He was glad to excuse me from other requirements, and it was arranged that I should take an extra study. From that hour I was a new creature: what a nightmare I was escaping! I thoroughly appreciated a parody in one of our arithmetics, which runs as follows:

Multiplication is vexation,  
Division is as bad;  
The rule of three puzzles me,  
And fractions make me mad.<sup>25</sup>

#### **5. She knew her own heart well.**



While a student at the Institute for the Blind, her gift for poetry led to the publishing of her first book of poetry. She started to become a minor celebrity within the halls of this already celebrated school. One day the superintendant of the school gave her a warning.

Fanny, I am sorry you have allowed yourself to be carried away by what others have said about your verses. True, you have written a number of poems of real merit; but how far do they fall short of the standard that you might attain. Shun a flatterer, Fanny, as you would a viper; for no true friend would deceive you with words of flattery. Remember that whatever talent you possess belongs wholly to God; and that you ought to give Him the credit for all that you do.<sup>26</sup>

Fanny's response to this stern warning tells us a lot about her. The superintendant suddenly caught himself and asked Fanny if he had wounded her too much by his words.

No, sir. On the contrary, you have talked to me like a father, and I thank you very much for it."

In years afterward I gradually came to realize that his advice was worth more than the price of rubies; and if I am justified in drawing any analogy from my own experience, I would say that a little kindly advice is better than a great deal of scolding. For a single word, if



spoken in a friendly spirit, may be sufficient to turn one from a dangerous error. In the same way, a single syllable, if spoken from a hard heart, may be just enough to drive another from the true path. This principle has been the foundation of my work among the missions of New York. I find that the confidence of the sinner is all that one needs for the beginning of the work of grace. A man can be won if he knows that somebody trusts him; and I firmly believe that faith and love go hand in hand through the dark places of this world, seeking the lost, and we not infrequently find them where we least expect them to be.<sup>27</sup>

Even as a child, she was aware of the motives of her heart. She loved her grandmother dearly, but she did not always receive correction in the right manner, but even in her sin she had a deeper realization of her heart than most children ever will.

On one occasion grandmother slapped my hands for some breach of good behavior. This grieved me greatly; and at once bitter resentment sprang up in my heart. Thinking to soothe me, a little companion called me out to play with him, but, as I went, something within said, "Yes, I will play with you but I will hurt you, for grandma has hurt me." And so I threw a stone at him, but missed my aim; and the cloud soon passed and all was sunny again.<sup>28</sup>

She spent a total of 23 years at the Institute for the blind, eight as a student and fifteen as a teacher and most of that time she was not yet converted.<sup>29</sup> She was not saved until age thirty seven and did not even write her first hymn until she was almost forty years old<sup>30</sup>, which makes her prolific writing of hymns all the more impressive.

During those hymn writing years, she became friends with the famous evangelist D.L. Moody and even closer friends with Moody's musical partner in ministry, Ira Sankey. You can see the impression Fanny made on Sankey in this letter he wrote to her.

Dear Fanny, co-laborer in the blessed service of sacred song for so many years:  
I wish that when you get to heaven (as you may before I will) that you will watch for me at the pearly gate at the eastern side of the city; and when I get there I'll take you by the hand and lead you along the golden street, up to the throne of God, and there we'll stand before the lamb, and say to him: And now we see thee face to face, saved by thy matchless, boundless grace, and we are satisfied.  
Yours, till the day dawn and the shadows flee away,  
Ira D. Sankey<sup>31</sup>



FANNY CROSBY AND MR. SANKEY AT WORK FITTING WORDS AND MUSIC.

Her growing fame as a sacred hymn writer made her many lifelong friends .One of them was the Phoebe Knapp, whose husband founded the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. Knapp herself wrote over 500 hymns in her lifetime and one day had a melody that she brought to Fanny to see if she could be inspired to write a hymn. She played the melody on the piano and when she finished, she saw that Fanny was kneeling in prayer, so she played it again. Fanny recalls, “My friend, Mrs. Knapp, composed a melody and played it over to me two or three times on the piano. She then asked me what it said and I immediately replied, Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine. O what a foretaste of glory divine.”<sup>32</sup> Her most famous hymn came to her in a brief moment of prayer.<sup>33</sup>

Apparently, this was her lifelong patten, which leads to our sixth principle.

## 6. She was prayerful.

“It may seem a little old-fashioned, always to begin one's work with prayer, but I never undertake a hymn without first asking the good Lord to be my inspiration.”<sup>34</sup>

Once again, we see the influence of her grandmother in her life.

My grandmother was a woman of exemplary piety and from her I learned many useful and abiding lessons. She was a firm believer in prayer; and, when I was very young, taught me to believe that our Father in heaven will always give us whatever is for our good; and therefore that we should be careful not to ask him anything that is not consistent with his holy will.<sup>35</sup>

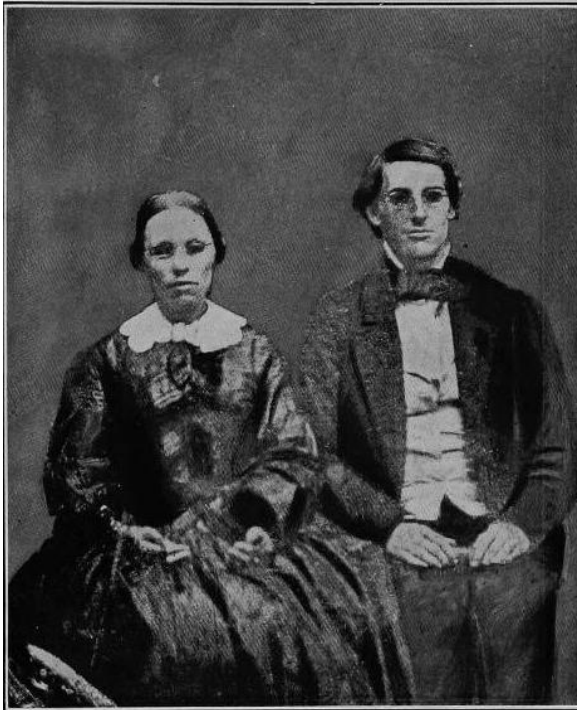
In a day when blind children never received an education,<sup>36</sup> she prayed her way into school.

“Dear Lord, please show me how I can learn like other children.”At this moment the weight of anxiety that had burdened my heart was changed to the sweet consciousness that my prayer would be answered in due time.<sup>37</sup>

Keep in mind that up until that time, she had received no formal education. Her family and her friend, Mrs. Hawley, were the only one to have taught her anything. Finally, at age fourteen she was admitted to the Institute.

O, thank God, he has answered my prayer, just as I knew he would.

That was the happiest day of my life; for the dark intellectual maze in which I had been living seemed to yield to hope and the promise of the light that was about to dawn. Not that I craved physical vision, for it was mental enlightenment that I sought; and now my quest seemed almost actually rewarded.<sup>38</sup>



Even though she was a prayerful, Godly woman, she was not perfect. She was married<sup>39</sup> at age 38 and even though the marriage lasted over forty years, during the first half of their marriage they only occasionally lived together and by 1880, after 22 years of marriage, they were separated until her husband's death. He rarely ministered with her and she always vacationed without him. In her autobiography, she listed well over one hundred friends and acquaintances, but her husband was only mentioned one time. After he died, she made her only public comments about the marriage. "He had his faults—and so have I mine, but notwithstanding these, we loved each other to the last".<sup>40</sup>

Much like the death of her infant child, her marriage remains a mystery.

### **7. She was a hard worker.<sup>41</sup>**

Though some hymns came to her within mere minutes, that was not always the case.

Some poems, it is true, come as a complete whole, and need no revision—indeed the best seem to come that way—but the great majority do not. "Safe in the Arms of Jesus" was composed and written in less than thirty minutes; but I have often spent three or four hours on half as many lines, and then cast them aside as worthless.<sup>42</sup>

You certainly could not call anyone "lazy" who wrote 9000 hymns!

Since she wrote so many hymns, it could result in some humorous conversation, this one with Ira Sankey.

Among the great number of hymns that I have written—eight thousand perhaps—it is not always possible for me to remember even the best of them. For this reason I have made laughable mistakes. One morning, for example, at Northfield the audience sang "Hide Me, O My Savior, Hide Me." But I did not recognize this hymn as my own production; and therefore I may be pardoned for saying that I was much pleased with it. Turning to Mr. Sankey, I asked, "Where did you get that piece?" He paid no particular attention to my question, for he supposed I was merely joking; and at that moment the bell called us to

dinner—so both of us forgot about the hymn. But it was again used at the afternoon service; and then I was determined to know who wrote it.

“Mr. Sankey,” I said, “now you must tell me who is the author of ‘Hide Me, O My Savior.’”

“Really,” he replied, “don’t you recall who wrote that hymn? You ought to remember, for you are the guilty one.”<sup>43</sup>



FANNY CROSBY IN HER BRIDGEPORT HOME.  
SHE LIKES TO HOLD A BOOK IN HER HAND WHILE COMPOSING HER HYMNS.

### Compassionate to the end

Fanny Crosby wrote hymns of worship, poems of praise as well as hundreds of letters to friends in their time of need. Her friend’s daughter, Ruth, had just died so she wrote one more letter of condolence. On February 12, 1915 at 9 PM she sat down and wrote the following.

“My dear friends: What shall I say? How shall I comfort you in this hour of your bereavement? I can scarcely realize that the white robed angel has ebtere3d your home and left you desolate; yet no, you are not desolate, for there comes a message of inspiration that whispers to you all: ‘What I do ye know not now, but you shall know hereafter.’” And you know that your precious Ruth is ‘Safe in the arms of Jesus.’”

She closed the letter with a poem she wote.

You will reach the river brink,  
Some sweet day, bye and bye;  
You will find your broken link,  
Some sweet day, bye and bye.  
O the loved one waiting there  
By the tree of life so fair,  
Till you come their joy to share  
Some sweet day bye and bye.

Six hours later, Fanny Crosby also reached the river brink and passed away quietly in her sleep. She no longer merely had a foretaste of glory divine, but instead, she tasted, and saw, the Real Thing. She herself was finally ‘Safe in the arms of Jesus.’

Her tombstone is inscribed with her most enduring hymn.

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine.  
O what a foretaste of glory divine.  
Heir of salvation, purchase of God.  
Born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.

Rich Maurer  
November 4, 2012

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<sup>1</sup> “How many hymns have you written?” is a question I often hear. The exact number has never been recorded but the Biglow and Main Company inform me that I have written five thousand five hundred for them alone; and I may have composed half as many more for several authors of music” (Fanny J. Crosby: An Autobiography, Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, Peabody, Massachusetts (Fanny J. Crosby: An Autobiography is gently edited and updated from the original edition published under the title, Memories of Eighty Years by James H. Earle and Company, in 1906,.p. 130).

<sup>2</sup> “To God be the Glory” – 1875 (music by William Doane) During a campaign in England, D. L. Moody’s song leader, Ira Sankey used this song. It caught on. But the American public didn’t become familiar with it until after a Billy Graham crusade in England in 1952. After he began using the song in the United States, it became a favorite here as well. This song does not even appear in her autobiography, which shows that it was not popular at that time.

<sup>3</sup> Crosby, p. 138.

<sup>4</sup> Her book begins, “Many of the flowers that I planted in the garden of memory during a happy childhood are still blooming sweet and fair after a lapse of more than eighty years. Those that are somewhat faded because they have not recently been watered, and those which have been crushed in the press of a long and busy life, I will try to revive until I am finished the life story I am about to tell” (Crosby, p. 10).

<sup>5</sup> “My mother came of a very hardy race; earnest and devout people; noted for their longevity. She herself lived till past ninety-one; and her great-grandmother attained the goodly age of one hundred and three years, and after she was eighty-two she rode from Putnam County, New York, to Cape Cod and back again, through the half-cleared wilderness” (Crosby, p. 10).

<sup>6</sup> Crosby, p. 12.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.hcs.harvard.edu/~gsascf/shield.html>

<sup>8</sup> Crosby, p. 25.

<sup>9</sup> Crosby, p. 17. Apparently, she was not completely blind and was able to make out shadows and occasionally, colors. “My sight was not totally destroyed and I could distinguish, though very faintly, any vivid color placed on the right kind of background” (p. 20).

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/131christians/poets/crosby.html>

<sup>11</sup> Crosby, p. 15

<sup>12</sup> Crosby, p. 78.

<sup>13</sup> Darlene Neptune, *Fanny Crosby Still Lives* (Pelican Publishing, 2002), p. 93.

<sup>14</sup> Wayne Cordeiro, *Leading on Empty*, Bethany House, Minneapolis, Minnesota, © 2009, p. 98

<sup>15</sup> Crosby, p. 74. This was the third time she had met President Polk. Her first meeting was in 1945 when President James Polk visited the school and Fanny recited one of her poems to him. Her second meeting was in Washington D.C. *While we were in Washington, in 1847, President Polk invited us to the White House, and during the course of the conversation, he said,*

*“Well, Miss Crosby, have you made any poetry since I saw you last year?”*

*“Yes sir,” I promptly replied, “I have composed a song and dedicated it to you.”*

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*My announcement was as much of a surprise to my friends as to Mr. Polk himself; for I had kept my own counsel; but he appeared to be much gratified and asked me to take his arm and proceed to the music room, where we held an impromptu recital* (p. 66).

<sup>16</sup> Though she longed to learn so badly, she nearly lost her courage as she was leaving.

“Finally, my companion turned to me and said, “Fanny, if you don’t want to go to New York, we will get out at the next station, and take the returning stage home. Your mother will be lonesome without you, anyway.”

It was a sore temptation to return. I hesitated for a time, but, after a good cry, I felt better and said,

“No, I will go on to New York.”

That decision I never for a moment regretted, for, had I returned to my mother that morning I would have cast away my pearl of great price, for it is not probable that I should ever have been brave enough to start again for the Institution” (Crosby, p. 35).

<sup>17</sup> More famous people she met and/or befriended

Count Henri Gratien Bertrand, the faithful field marshal of the great Napoleon

“Oh,” he exclaimed, “how did you know that I sat with my head in my hands and wept as the life of the great general slowly ebbed away?”

“I did not know it,” I replied, “but described the circumstance from imagination.” Then he gave me a box containing a piece of the willow that grew above Napoleon’s grave. “God bless you,” he said in a husky voice, “how I wish you could have known the Emperor!” (Crosby, p. 50)

William Cullen Bryant, greatest living American poet—“To my astonishment, however, Mr. Bryant warmly grasped my hand; and said a few words in commendation of my verses, urging me to press bravely on in my work as teacher and writer. By those few words he did inestimable good to a young girl, who had not dared even fancy that she would be able to touch the robe of such a great poetic genius” (Crosby, p. 85).

Horace Greeley, founder and editor of the New York tribune, the most powerful newspaper in the U.S. Greeley ran for president in 1872 but died before the electoral votes were counted.

When Charles Spurgeon died, his wife wrote Fanny for a copy of one of her poems.

<sup>18</sup> Crosby, pp, 92-93.

<sup>19</sup> "Fanny Crosby; America's Hymn Queen", *Glimpses of Christian History* 198,

<http://www.christianhistorytimeline.com/GLIMPSEF/Glimpses2/>

<sup>20</sup> I love the way she ministered to the downcast. “Never to chide the erring has always been my policy, for I firmly believe that harsh words only serve to harden hearts that might otherwise be softened into repentance” (p. 122).

<sup>21</sup> Crosby, p. 121.

<sup>22</sup> Here is another of example, of many, of her care for the lost and wayward souls.

“In one of Mr. Sankey’s meetings a man came forward and requested that someone offer a prayer for him. He appeared to be deeply distressed in spirit; and when they said that he might come again the next night, he cried earnestly,

“No, it must be settled tonight; for tomorrow may be too late.” They listened to his appeal, and before he left the church he felt that he was saved. The next day there was an explosion in the mine where he worked, and he was among the slain. This story was related to me by Mr. Sankey and I wrote the hymn “Shall I Be Saved Tonight?”

(Crosby, p. 146)

<sup>23</sup> "Next Sunday Will be 'Fanny Crosby' Day", *The Pittsburgh Press* (March 19, 1905):40.

<sup>24</sup> Crosby, p. 142. This song was played on August 8, 1885, when U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant was laid to rest in Riverside Park, on the banks of the Hudson River.

<sup>25</sup> Crosby, p. 38. Leading up to this incident, she wrote, “Well, then,” said the superintendent, “I shall come again tomorrow; and if Fanny Crosby does not know them at that time, I shall put her on the mantle.” I took his jest in earnest; and the next day all of the tables were learned. Then we went on as far as long division and there my patience failed.”

<sup>26</sup> Crosby, p. 39-40.

<sup>27</sup> Crosby, p. 40.



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<sup>28</sup> Crosby, pp. 12-13.

<sup>29</sup> Crosby, p. 80. "The weeks sped on until the autumn of 1850 when revival meetings were being held in the Thirtieth Street Methodist Church. Some of us went down every evening; and, on two occasions, I sought peace at the altar, but did not find the joy I craved, until one evening, November 20, 1850, it seemed to me that the light must indeed come then or never; and so I arose and went to the altar alone. After a prayer was offered, they began to sing the grand old consecration hymn,  
Alas, and did my Savior 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 a 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."

<sup>30</sup> On March 2, 1858, I left the New York Institution for the Blind; and my parting from those familiar surroundings was indeed sad; for I had been nearly twenty-three years, eight as a pupil, and fifteen as a teacher. Prior to this I had written no hymns...(Crosby, p. 95).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p. 112.

<sup>32</sup> E. Michael and Sharon Rusten, *The One Year Book of Christian History*, Tyndale House publishers, Wheaton, IL, © 2003.

<sup>33</sup> A similar story: "A little child, between four and five years of age, on retiring knelt down to say her evening prayer and was heard to say,  
"Dear Jesus, I thank you for being punished instead of me." She had heard her mother talking of Jesus taking our place. This incident inspired the hymn, "Instead of Me."  
Good news from the gospel is sounding today;  
I haste to receive it, how can I delay?  
It tells me from bondage my soul may be free,  
Through Jesus who suffered instead of me" (Crosby, p. 151).

<sup>34</sup> "Fanny Crosby; America's Hymn Queen", *Glimpses of Christian History* 198,

<sup>35</sup> Crosby, p. 11

<sup>36</sup> My heart sank within me, however, when I realized that there was no way for me to learn; and thus, not being satisfied, my longing for knowledge became a passion from which there was seldom any rest. A great barrier seemed to rise before me, shutting away from me some of the best things of which I dreamed in my sleeping and waking hours. Crosby, p, 25.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p. 26.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p. 34.

<sup>39</sup> "In 1858 I was married to Mr. Alexander Van Alstyne whom I had known as pupil and teacher in the Institution for almost fifteen years." Crosby, p. 95.

<sup>40</sup> Edith Blumhofer, *Her Heart Can See: The Life and Hymns of Fanny J. Crosby*, 2005, p. 314.

<sup>41</sup> If I had time, I would have added an eighth category—she had sense of humor and adventure.

"Early and late I played with the children of my own age; and our elders were in the habit of remarking that Fanny Crosby was certain to be interested in any mischief that occurred. With the agility of a squirrel I used to climb trees, and ride horses as fleet as the wind, while I hung on to their manes for dear life, and climb stone fences, in every respect, just like other children" (p. 16).

"There is one place I would like so much to see."

"What is that?" I asked, for we had been the round of all that I thought of interest to strangers.

"Why I am very anxious to see your children eat; how do they find the way to their mouths?"

"O well," I replied quickly, "if that is all, you shall see; send out and get me a piece of cake and I will show you." The same question was put to one of our boys; and he answered it as follows:

"We take a string, tie one end of it to the table leg; the other to our tongue; and then we take the food in our left hand, and feel up the string with our right until we come to our mouth" (p. 53).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p. 139.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, p. 139.