

Fanny Crosby's Life-Story.

we could not see with the eye those objects of interest, we could with the imagination: which, like other faculties, grows stronger the more it is used.

CHAPTER XV.—1844-1897.

COLLECT POEMS AND PUBLISH A BOOK—"THE BLIND GIRL AND OTHER POEMS"—MY "DECLINING HEALTH"—DELIVERING A POEM BEFORE THE NEW JERSEY LEGISLATURE—ANOTHER VOLUME, "MONTEREY AND OTHER POEMS"—MY "DECLINING YEARS" FIFTY-TWO YEARS AGO—STILL ANOTHER BOOK, "A WREATH OF COLUMBIA'S FLOWERS"—PROSE STORIES—"BELLS AT EVENING."

IN 1844, I was induced to collect a number of my poems, for the purpose of publishing them in a volume.

The idea seemed to me at first presumptuous!—the thought of being styled an "author" was almost too much for my nerves. But after awhile, the matter was arranged—partly in spite of me, and partly in accordance with my gradually growing desires: and the book was finally published, by the firm of Wiley & Putnam, who then occupied offices at 161 Broadway.

The name of this book, which contained 160

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pages—exactly the same number as this story of my life—was mentioned, on the title-page, as “The Blind Girl and Other Poems: By Frances Jane Crosby, a Pupil at the New York Institution for the Blind.” (It will be noticed that my original name, Frances Jane, was soon modified into the more diminutive and more easily wielded one, of Fanny.) Upon the title-page were these lines from Milton:

“—who best
Bears his mild yoke, they serve him best; his
state
Is kingly.”

The Preface was written by Hamilton Murray, a good friend of mine, mentioned elsewhere in this book, and bespoke in eloquent terms the favor of a discriminating public. It traced my career thus far, such as it was, vouched for the fact that all the compositions were “the unaided productions of the authoress”, apologized for some peculiarities of punctuation which might, it thought, have served the purpose better if I could only have seen, so as to attend to it myself—and stated that my “declining health” rendered its financial avails all the more important. So strange are the decrees of the Master of the

Early Poems in Book Form.

Universe!—I have outlived my good friend for thirty-five years, and, although then in delicate health, do not consider myself so at present.

After a dedication in rhyme to the officers of the Institution, the first poem was the one that gave its title to the book—“The Blind Girl.” It commenced with the following lines, which were to some extent descriptive of my own birthplace,

“Her home was near an ancient wood,
Where many an oak gigantic stood,
And fragrant flowers of lovely hue
In that sequestered valley grew”;

and went on for several lines to picture that little home, as well as I could do it with my imagination. The heroine of the poem was “Anna”; she lost her mother at an early age, and, in addition to the physical affliction that had fallen upon her, a mental blindness gradually came. Just as she was yielding to despair, a stranger appeared, who conducted her to our “home erected for the blind”—where she, happily, received “Education’s glorious light.”

This poem was suggested by an incident that occurred while we were upon one of our trips to the interior of New York State.

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The next poem was "The Rise and Progress of the New York Institution for the Blind", and contained a short history of its career. Then followed "Dedication of the Chapel", then an "Address", delivered to the Senate of New York, upon the occasion of its visiting our Institution; and then "The Blind Girl's Lament", and "The Desolate."

My next poem in the book was of a patriotic nature, and was "To the Heroes of Bunker Hill." Then followed "Reflections on the Closing year" (1843), "The Captive", "Thoughts at Midnight", etc., etc.

My first hymn was published in this book. It was entitled "An Evening Hymn", and is printed on another page.

There was also one that had been delivered before the Governor, Council, and Assembly of the State of New Jersey, Jan. 29, 1844; and two that were recited at several exhibitions on our tours in August, 1842.

In 1851, another volume was published—this one by R. Craighead, of 112 Fulton Street. It was entitled "Monterey and Other Poems", and had for its motto these lines from Milton:

"As the wakeful bird
Sings darkling, and in shadiest covert hid
Tunes her nocturnal note."

Other Poems.

This motto, it may be needless to say, was selected by one of my friends, and not myself. In the Preface of this book I spoke of my continued bad health, and my "declining years": little thinking that I would be issuing my autobiography a little matter of *fifty-two years afterward*. I was under a feeling of sadness and depression at this time, but, happily, the good Lord at last gave me the power to shake it off and commence life with new zest and courage.

This book had in it some of the echoes of the war between United States and Mexico, which had recently been in progress. It contained, besides the initial poem, lines on the death of Maj. Ringgold, Col. Clay, and Gen. Taylor, who had been elevated to the Presidency on account of his being one of the heroes of this same Mexican War.

In 1858 came another book, "A Wreath of Columbia's Flowers"—published by H. Dayton, at 107 Nassau Street.

This work was partly in prose: commencing with a story, "The Mountain Chief; or, the Home of Medora." "Annie Herbert" was another; "Philip Synclare; or, the Traitor's Reward", and "Magerie; or, the Sibyl of the Revolution" were additional ones.

These books are now out of print.

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In 1897, appeared "Bells at Evening and Other Verses", with a short biographical sketch by Rev. Robert Lowry, the famous composer. This book was issued for me, by the Biglow & Main Company, New York: who have also published many of my hymns, and with whom I have maintained most cordial and even affectionate relations, for many years past.

CHAPTER XVI.—1844-1902.

A NEW CHARGE—A PROMISING STUDENT—HIS CAREER IN SCHOOL—MARRIAGE—SYMPATHY IN PROFESSIONAL WORK—CHARACTERISTICS OF MY HUSBAND—HIS MANY GOOD QUALITIES—HIS DEATH.

WHEN we were at Oswego, upon the canal-trip mentioned in a previous chapter, a lady came to us, bringing a blind boy, just about to enter the years of manhood. I little thought, then, that my destiny would be indissolubly linked with his own.

His name was Alexander Van Alstyne. The mother appealed to me in particular, as I was one of the teachers, although, it must be confessed, young for such a position, and asked me to take her "boy" especially under my personal charge, and see that no harm came to him.

I consented, perhaps rather thoughtlessly: but the responsibility was fated to have more important results than I supposed.