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AT A FRIEND  
WE HAVE IN JESUS

AND OTHER HYMNS

BY

JOSEPH SCRIVEN



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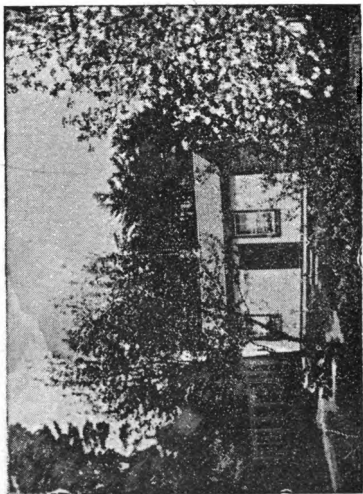
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**RESIDENCE OF MR. SCRIVEN, PORT HOPE.**

0

**WHAT A FRIEND  
WE HAVE IN JESUS**

**AND OTHER HYMNS**

**BY**

**JOSEPH SCRIVEN**

**WITH**

**A SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR**

**BY**

**REV. JAS. CLELAND**

**PORT HOPE  
W. WILLIAMSON, PUBLISHER  
1895**



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**July 24, 1917**

**A CELEBRATED HYMN  
AND  
ITS WRITER.**

In our modern Hymnology, few of our hymns have attained such a wide spread popularity as the one entitled: "What a Friend we Have in Jesus." Without the indorsement of any well known name—in fact without any recognized paternity—its circulation has been world wide and its "unsurpassed excellency," universally

acknowledged. Its high worth is attested by the fact, that it has been attributed, without authority, to Horatius Bonar, and to others of our great hymn writers. A few interesting facts in relation to it are taken from articles which appeared in the *New York Observer*, about a year ago—some mistakes in these are corrected, and some reliable information, both new and important, supplied as to its author. It has been translated into many languages, and “over 50 million impressions of the piece are known to have been made.” Mr. Ira Sankey states, that wherever he has sung it, it is a greater

favourite, with the people, than any other. No doubt one cause of its popularity is due to the music to which it is set, and which was furnished by Mr. C. Converse, an accomplished musician. The tune is one "which the people make their own—a sacred folk song." Criminals on the scaffold have requested to have it sung to them. Mr. Van Meter states that it has been sung, in the sweet Italian tongue, under the walls of the Vatican. It has sung its way to millions and millions of souls; inspiring comfort and hope in the stormy passages of life. In the steerage of the steamer, a traveller

returning from Europe, heard a mixed company, who spoke different languages, united in singing this hymn.

Naturally much interest has been taken in the inquiry—"Who was its author?" In a letter to the *New York Observer*, in March, 1893, it is stated that it was written by Joseph Scriven—an obscure local preacher, blind in his latter years—and found after his death among his papers.

Joseph Scriven *was*, without doubt, the author of this matchless hymn. He was born in Dublin, about 1820, and was a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin. He also spent four years at Addiscombe Military College, near to

London. He emigrated to Canada, over forty years' ago. His family is highly respectable, and his brother is a physician of standing, in Stephens Green, Dublin. The special reasons for his emigration are not known to his friends here, but it may have been his conversion.

About 1850 he came to the neighbourhood of Rice Lake—10 miles from Port Hope, Ontario—and engaged as tutor in the family of Lieut. Pengelly. He at this time was a professedly religious man, having also embraced, to a large extent, the tenets of the Plymouth Brethren, though he did not belong to the body.

He gathered a small Plymouth church at Rice Lake, and was for years a preacher on market and other days, in the streets of Port Hope.

Like his Brethren he refused to join in the services of any of our churches—not recognizing them as such—and only when his peculiar tenets were questioned, was he liable to lose command of an otherwise smooth temper.

When converted, Mr. Scriven probably united with some Separatist Society. The history may have been something like this. About 1840 there was a strong religious movement in Dublin. A number of earnest

Christian men, who desired to see more devotedness to Christ, and closer union among the people of God, associated themselves together for religious fellowship and study, meeting together as disciples of Christ on every Lord's day "to break bread." Before this there had been a Separatist Society founded by John Walker, an ex fellow of Trinity College, on somewhat similar grounds. His society was, he asserted, the One spiritual church in Dublin. He died in 1833. Another Separatist Society, was that of the Rev. J. Kelly, a former minister of the Church of England, and who is well known as the writer



of many choice hymns. He died in 1855. With the keen controversies carried on in Dublin, in connection with the prominent doctrines of these and kindred societies, Joseph Scriven must have been familiar. The members were drawn from the different churches, and as Mr. Scriven states, "there was a unity and love and sweet fellowship among them." When saved, he united with them, though he adds, "I knew nothing, and today I know very little, of the power of the principles which I claimed."

His benevolence, in accordance with his principles, was of the extreme kind. In one of the papers, which he

has left behind him, he says:—"The wearing of gold and expensive clothes, made in the world's style, is as much forbidden as stealing. If I spend five cents on some unnecessary thing for ornament, it costs that much money, and that money would buy something for a needy person. Again; the Scriptures, to which I have just referred, speak only of women's clothing, but if a man wears cuffs, that are no part of his shirt, and only put on for ornament, if he wears studs, gold chains and clothing, of a more expensive kind than what would be durable and afford the same comfort, he is as much disobeying the word

of God, as a woman who wears feathers, earrings, bracelets. If we would avoid unnecessary and unscriptural expense, there would be no need of asking the people of the world for money to carry on Christ's work, or of getting up concerts, banquets and other unscriptural means of coaxing money from the people of the world, as though Christ needed to beg from Satan." When Mr. Scriven had means, his hand was open as day to the calls made upon him. He has been known to divest himself of his own clothing, in order to cover the nakedness and relieve the sufferings of destitute ones. He

was always ready to minister in the sick chamber to the suffering, and fear of infectious disease was no hindrance.

He established and managed a dairy, for over twenty years, at Port Hope, in order to afford support to a destitute widow.

When residing at the house of his friend Mr. Sackville, near Rice Lake, he composed this hymn; making two copies, one of which he sent to his mother, in Dublin, and gave the other to Mrs. Sackville, which the old lady, now over eighty years of age, values highly. Probably it was through his mother that the hymn was given to the public.

Mr. Scriven published a small volume of hymns, which was printed at Peterboro, Ontario. The hymn in question is not in it, and was probably written at a later time. Some of them—of which we give specimens—are not inferior in poetic power to this celebrated hymn.

Mr. Scriven resided for over thirty years between Rice Lake and Port Hope. Latterly his mind was much depressed, and he feared being left a burden on his friends. His health also was failing. A dark shadow rests on the closing days of his life, as will be seen in an extract from a preface to some thoughts of his, on

various subjects, by his life long friend, James Sackville, at whose house he died.

He died on the 10th of August, 1886, aged sixty-six, and his body was interred in the family burying ground of Lieut. Pengelly.

Some of the circumstances that cluster around Mr. Scriven's death, are detailed in a preface to papers that he left, by his friend Mr. Sackville.

“His body was just worn down with toil, and his mind was wearied with failure and disappointment in his work during past years. In the end of his days he failed to trust God to provide for his bodily wants,

and to resign himself to the will of God, and to wait patiently till the Lord's time came to release him from the body, and to take him home to Himself." Mr. Sackville, having heard of his illness, hastened to him, and found him "just prostrate in mind and body. His greatest fear appeared to be lest he should do any thing to dishonour God, or bring reproach on the name of Christ. The one desire and prayer of his heart seemed to be expressed in the words which he was heard to speak a few days before his departure, 'I wish the Lord would take me home.' His confidence in the Lord, as to his own

personal safety, and the bright prospect of future glory, were firm and unshaken, to the end. Two scriptures I heard him repeat, during the last hour I was with him, 'I am the the Lord's' and 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.'"

Mr. Sackville brought him to his own house. "We left him," he says, "about midnight. I withdrew to an adjoining room, not to sleep, but to watch and wait, and occupied myself with reading my brother's writings, until about 5 o'clock in the morning. You may imagine my surprise and dismay, when, on visiting his room, I found it empty. All search failed



to find any trace of the missing one, until a little after noon, the body was discovered in a water near by, lifeless and cold in death."

"A veil of mystery hangs over the last hours of my beloved brother's life on earth. What is known, we read with humiliation to profit, the unknown we leave with Him, who knows what is in the darkness. In His own time and way, He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsel of the hearts."

Mr. Scriven left a number of papers on religious topics, such as :—  
"What Church etc.," "The Church

of God," "Priesthood," "The Ministration of the Spirit," "Our Assembly," "The Coming of the Lord," "Discipline," etc., etc., which have been published by Mr. Sackville.

In concluding this biographical sketch, the writer wishes to acknowledge with thanks the courtesy of Mr. Jas. Sackville, in supplying most of the information contained in it, also for the loan of the manuscript containing the hymns now published, with one or two exceptions, for the first time.

WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE  
IN JESUS.

What a Friend we have in Jesus,  
All our sins and griefs to bear !  
What a privilege to carry  
Everything to God in prayer !  
Oh, what peace we often forfeit,  
Oh, what needless pain we bear—  
All because we do not carry  
Ev'rything to God in prayer !

Have we trials and temptations ?  
Is there trouble anywhere ?  
We should never be discouraged :  
Take it to the Lord in prayer !  
Can we find a Friend so faithful,  
Who will all our sorrows share ?  
Jesus knows our every weakness—  
Take it to the Lord in prayer !

Are we weak and heavy-laden,  
Cumbered with a load of care?  
Precious Saviour, still our refuge,—  
Take it to the Lord in prayer!  
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?—  
Take it to the Lord in prayer!  
In His arms He'll take and shield thee,  
Thou wilt find a solace there.

## ST. JOHN II. 16.

Let us go that we may die with Him,  
What words of ardent love!  
Our closet thoughts, our public hymn—  
When tried—as fickle prove.

Firm Thomas faltered, when he met  
The world's religious rage.  
Our prayers and hymns we soon forget,  
If self our minds engage.

Where are the circumcised in heart,—  
Who sorrow, Lord, with Thee,  
That sin one human soul should part,  
From love that set us free?

Who bear reproach and suffer toil,  
And weep when thou wouldst weep,  
Till conquering love divide the spoil,  
And win the wandering sheep?

Up, up! spend not in pleasure's dream  
Your ransomed energies!  
The precious fleeting time redeem,  
The golden moments seize!

Arrest the gentle soul, beguiled  
By Satan's slimy coils!  
Dispute his claims, and do not yield—  
The loved one to his toils!

## JESUS AT THE WELL.

Man of sorrows, thirsty, weary,  
Lord of all, without a home ;  
Stranger in this desert dreary,  
To the well had come.  
Strange that he should ask for water  
From a rival creed and race ;  
Such the thought of Sychar's daughter,  
Stranger still to grace.

## CHORUS.

Oh the gift of God so precious,  
Oh the victory of Love,  
Oh the Just one, still so gracious,  
Now enthroned above.

Oh the love of that soft answer :  
If she knew what God would give,  
If she knew this thirsting stranger,  
She would drink and live.

Oh ! that water, richly flowing,  
Oh ! that sweet subduing love,  
Yes that love wherever tasted—  
Must victorious prove.

Oh ! the cross that shows how justice,  
Can redeem the soul undone,  
There, O there, the only trust is  
For the guilty one !  
Yes the cross is our foundation,  
Through the ages yet to come,  
In no other is salvation,  
But in Christ alone.

I JOHN II. 28.

Little children love to utter  
Little words in parents' ears ;  
Tell the little things they suffer,  
Tell them of their little fears ;

Talk of all their little pleasures,  
Come with all their little joys,  
Show them all their little treasures,  
Bring them all their little toys.

Sweet the place of little children  
Trusting in the Father's love ;  
All our childish troubles bringing  
To where Jesus sits above.

There it is we view our folly,  
There it is we see our sin ;  
There we learn more wonderfully  
What thy grace to us has been.

Oh the confidence we owe Thee ;  
Oh the sweet simplicity !  
Lord how precious thus to know Thee,  
In the children's liberty.



## I CORINTHIANS XIII.

When gifts no more required, shall cease;  
And partial knowledge fade away,  
As moonlight, precious in its place,  
Is lost amid the opening day ;  
Unfailing love will then endure  
Triumphant in its own abode,  
Where naught unseemly or impure  
Will mar the presence of our God.

Then let us breathe our native air,  
And learn to live as heavenly ones,  
Jesus, Thy sweet reproach to bear ;—  
Servants, because we first were sons.  
With lowly mind, and heavenly grace,  
Let nought unseemly dim the light  
That we reflect from Jesus' Face,  
Amid the dark and stormy night.

The love which seeketh not her own,  
Delights another to prefer,  
Dwells not on things that I have done,  
Glad that another, praise should bear.  
More excellent than any gift,  
Oh let the love of Jesus rule ;  
And every heart with fervour lift  
To God Who trains us in His school.

I COR. X., AND HEBREWS III. AND IV.

This rest is glorious ; it is mine,—  
'Tis ours who have believed ;  
Then let us learn to know the joy  
Of what we have received.

Each Israelite passed thro' the flood,  
Who marched from Egypt's land ;  
And yet how few in Canaan stood,  
Of all that ransomed band.

Through unbelief they turned away ;  
They could not enter in :  
Beware lest we, o'ercome as they,  
Fall by that very sin.

As thousands in the desert died,  
And entered not the land,  
Though safe beyond that rolling tide—  
The grave of Pharaoh's band ;

So we, forever saved from wrath,  
Oft scourged for wilful sin,  
May lay our bodies in a grave  
Of faithful discipline.

The Jews who fell, regarded not  
Their heritage unseen ;  
And therefore used no diligence  
That they might enter in.

But Joshua and Caleb loved  
Their heritage afar,—

In hope, toiled through the wilderness,  
Nor feared the foe in war :

Then Jordan's bed, the type of death  
The many thousands trod ;  
In figure, soon, of risen life,  
On Canaan's soil they stood ;

Then battle after battle fought,  
As Joshua led them on,  
Until they rested from the war,  
And found the conquest won.

Type of the rest that Jesus gives  
Within the veil above ;  
There, dead and risen now with Him,  
Our home is in His love.

Gird on the armour ; face the foe :  
Labour to enter in,  
And day by day enjoy still more  
Our holy rest unseen.

## ON JOHN III. 13.

No man has ever yet  
Ascended up to heaven,  
Except the Son of man, whose death  
Eternal life has given.

Then dream not, step by step,  
To make your way to God :  
'Tis but religiously to tread  
The dark and downward road.

None ever go to heaven,  
Who are not heavenly born :  
Is man then doomed as unforgiven,  
Eternally to mourn ?

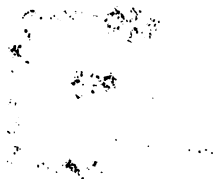
No : He Who came from heaven  
Would not remain alone :  
The Holy One, His life has given :  
This only can atone.



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