

### Who am I?

She was one of the most prolific hymn writers of all time. And yet I can confidently say that she never saw one of those hymns in print and never saw anyone sing even *one* of them in her lifetime. If you said her name was Cora Adrienne, you'd be correct. You'd also be correct if you said it was Alice Armstrong or Eleanor Craddock. In fact, you would be right again if you said it was Lizzie Edmonds; or Mrs. Kate Grinley, Ruth Harmon, Minnie B. Lowry, Sallie Martin, Laura Miller, Mary Tilden, Victoria Sterling, "The Children's Friend," or Carrie Wilson. All of those answers are correct. You could even add about 75 more names to the list, including symbols (##, ###, '\*', and \*\*\*) which she used instead of her name. But her REAL name was Frances Jane Crosby, better known as

### *Fanny Crosby.*

I do not know why she wrote hymns and poems under such a bewildering collection of noms de plume and aliases, but I do know that in our meetings we sing *many* of her hymns. Here is just a partial list:

All the Way My Saviour Leads Me	Behold Me Standing at the Door
Blessed Assurance	Close to Thee
He Hideth My Soul	I Am Thine, O Lord
I Must Have the Saviour with Me	Jesus is Passing this Way
Jesus is Tenderly Calling Thee Home	Meet Me There
My Saviour First of All	Near the Cross
O Be Saved	Only a Step to Jesus
Pass Me Not, O Gentle Saviour	Praise Him, Praise Him
Redeemed How I Love to proclaim it!	Rescue the Perishing
Safe in the Arms of Jesus	Saved By Grace
Saviour, More than Life	Take the World, but Give Me Jesus
Tell Me the Story of Jesus	Tenderly He Leads Us
Though Your Sins Be as Scarlet	'Tis the Blessed Hour of Prayer
To the Work	To God Be the Glory
When My Life Work Is Ended	Will You Come?

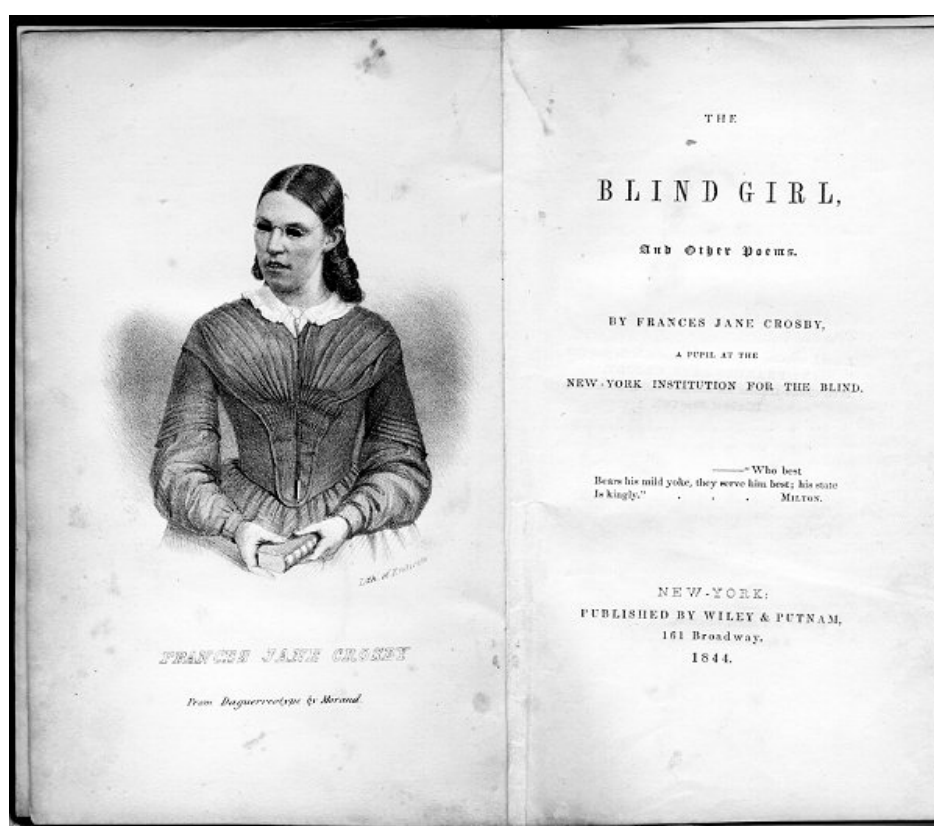
Fanny Crosby was born on March 24, 1820, in the town of Southeast, NY, near Brewster. She was not born blind, but when she was only 6 weeks old her eyes were improperly treated by a doctor and she was blinded for life. Rather than growing up morose and pessimistic, her exuberance and contentment shone out clearly when, at the age of 8, she wrote:

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!

She entered the New York Institution for the Blind sometime around 1834. Lessons were taught by lecture, since the Braille system was not widely used at that time. Fanny's encyclopedic memory helped her retain the information she heard. She went on to work there as a teacher of rhetoric and history for many years. Her gracious spirit and amiable disposition made her a faculty favorite. She was often asked to entertain visitors with her poems and she frequently met with presidents, generals and other dignitaries. She was asked to play at President Grant's Funeral and she had the honor of being the first woman whose voice was ever heard in the United States Senate Chamber, where she recited a poem, by invitation, to a distinguished audience.

When she left the Institution for the Blind, she became deeply involved in mission and charity work, as well as producing countless hymns of the Christian faith and experience. Occasionally she wrote both words and music, but as she grew older she devoted her efforts almost exclusively to literary composition, dictating to an amanuensis. In 1858 she married Alexander Van Alstyne, a teacher who was also blind, and whom she had met while at the Institute.

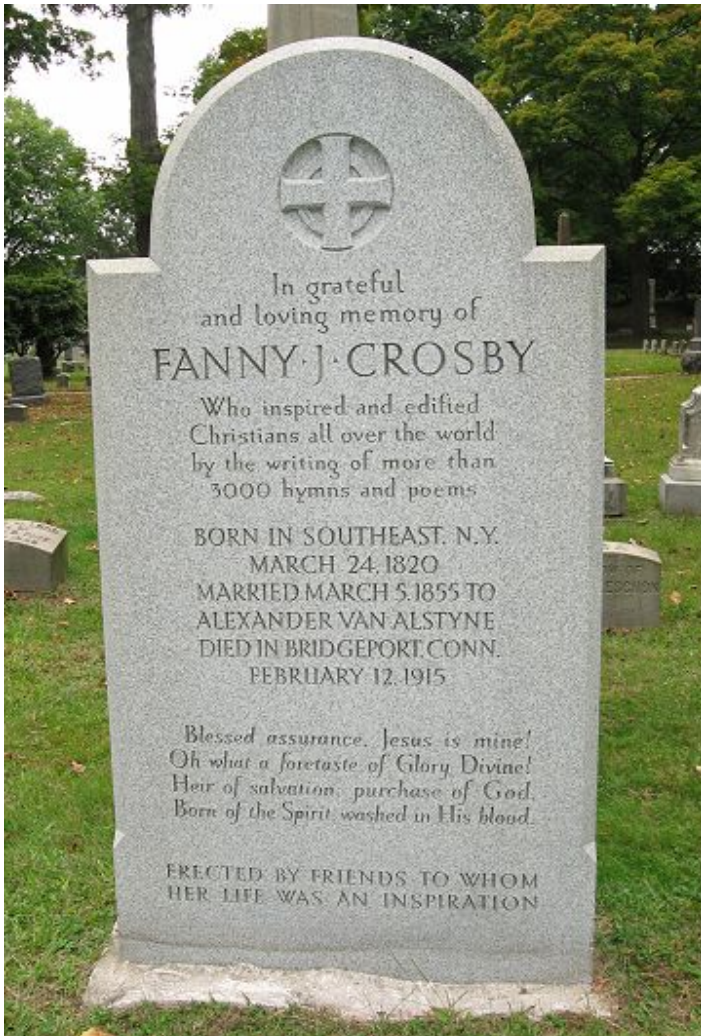
Ira D. Sankey often collaborated with her in the creation of Gospel hymns. At times, Fanny would have an inspiration that would result in a new poem. She would ask Mr. Sankey to set it to music. On other occasions, Sankey would have a tune for which he wanted suitable words. As a result, hundreds of new hymns were produced. It was at this period of greatest productivity that Fanny Crosby employed numerous pennames, perhaps motivated by modesty and humility. While her hymns do not soar like the hymns of Charles Wesley, and rarely delve into deep theological truths as his do, she wrote in a captivating and easy-to-remember style that lent great popularity to her compositions.



She and the veteran composer Hubert P. Main often worked together also. Main wrote the music to many of Fanny Crosby's hymns. Occasionally, though, the order would be reversed; Main would play for her some new piece, explaining what idea or emotion he was trying to convey. Fanny Crosby would sit with hands clasped, concentrating (praying?), frequently asking him to repeat certain passages, so she could get them fixed in her mind. And then, almost without fail, she would compose words to fit the tune, words that were suitably wedded to what Main had written.

One biographer noted: "For more than twenty years Fanny Crosby was the warm friend and patron of the Bowery Mission. On more than one occasion she visited the Mission hall in New York, and such visits were marked by great outpourings of the unemployed and destitute, who almost worshiped the blind hymn-writer, and sang her songs in her presence with an energy and earnestness that she used to say 'almost carried me off my feet.' Regularly as her birthday came around, the men of the Mission remembered her with some kindly souvenir, to which she would respond with a helpful letter or a

poem. When she spoke at the Mission, which she did at times, the rough audience was hushed, so that they might not miss a syllable of the feeble voice they loved to hear."



During her long life of almost 95 years she met many prominent Americans and counted among her friends Presidents Van Buren, Tyler, Polk, Cleveland and McKinley, Secretary William H. Seward, singer Jenny Lind, Henry Clay, Horace Greeley, and General Winfield Scott. President Cleveland copied her poems and was a life-long friend. Her last public appearance was in May, 1911 (she was then 91 years old), when she attended a meeting held by the Evangelistic Committee in Carnegie Hall, New York.

Once a well-intentioned minister said to her: "I think it's a great pity that the Master, when He showered so many gifts on you, did not give you sight." Fanny Crosby replied, "Do you know if at birth I had been able to make one petition to my Creator, it would have been that I should be born blind." "Why?" he asked in surprise. "Because when I get to heaven, the first sight that shall ever gladden my eyes will be that of my Savior!" She gave expression to that wonderful thought in her hymn: "When my life work is ended and I cross the swelling tide, when the bright and glorious morning I shall see, I shall know

*my Redeemer when I reach the other side, and His smile will be the first to welcome me."*



After a long life of Christian service Fanny Crosby, known and loved throughout the civilized world as "the blind hymn writer," passed away in her ninety-fifth year at her home in Bridgeport, CT, on February 12, 1915. She had long been in failing health, but her mind was clear and she maintained her interest in her great life-work of hymnology to the last. Buried in the same cemetery are the remains of many notable people: P. T. Barnum, Tom Thumb, statesmen, congressmen, inventors, and decorated soldiers. But only one tombstone has these words:

*"Blessed assurance! Jesus is mine! Oh what a foretaste of Glory Divine!  
Heir of salvation, purchase of God, born of His Spirit,  
washed in His blood."*