

“Day by Day” ~ Lina Sandel-Berg

The waves of revival that swept the Scandinavian countries during the latter half of the nineteenth century were greatly influenced by the wealth of fine hymns which flowed from the pen of Lina Sandell, born on October 3, 1832 at Froderyd, Sweden. She was a daughter of the pastor of the parish church of that community. Being a frail youngster, she usually preferred to spend her time in her father's study rather than to join her comrades in play. When she was twenty-six years of age, she accompanied her father on a journey to Gothenburg, but tragedy occurred before the destination was reached. The ship gave a sudden lurch and Lina's father fell overboard and drowned before the eyes of his devoted daughter.

Although she had written hymns prior to this tragic experience, more songs began to flow out of her broken heart which reflect a simple, child-like trust in Christ and a deep sense of His abiding presence in her life.

The remarkable popularity attained by her hymns has been due, to a large extent, to the simple but melodious music written for them by such musicians as Oscar Ahnfelt. He was known as a "spiritual troubadour" in his day. Not only did he possess the gift of writing pleasing melodies that caught the fancy of the Swedish people, but he also traveled from place to place throughout the Scandinavian countries singing these folk-like songs to the accompaniment of his home-made ten-string guitar. Miss Sandell once said, "Ahnfelt has sung my songs into the hearts of the people."

Not only Ahnfelt, but also Jenny Lind, affectionately known as the "Swedish Nightingale," used her sweet voice in the singing of these heart-warming hymns. Though she was internationally known for her formal concertizing, it is said that she would sit with the common work-men at their crude benches and sing these simple hymns about the Savior she loved and served.

It is often true that whenever revival fires begin to glow, there is Satanic opposition. The account is given that at one time King Karl XV was petitioned to forbid Ahnfelt's preaching and singing throughout Scandinavia. The king called for Ahnfelt to appear before him. Being considerably perturbed as to what he should sing to his monarch, Ahnfelt requested Lina Sandell to write a special hymn. She was equal to the occasion, and within a few days the song was ready. With his guitar under his arm and the new hymn in his pocket, Ahnfelt appeared at the palace and sang these words:

Who is it that knocketh upon your heart's door in peaceful eve? Who is it that brings to the wounded and sore the balm that can heal and relieve? Your heart is still restless, it findeth no peace in earth's pleasures; Your soul is still yearning, it seeketh release to rise to the heavenly treasures.

The king listened with moist eyes. When Ahnfelt had finished, King Karl gripped him by the hand and exclaimed, "You may sing as much as you desire in both of my kingdoms."

The name of Andrew L. Skoog, the translator of this hymn, was well-known to the immigrant Swedish community in midwestern America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He was born in Sweden and moved to St. Paul, Minnesota, at the age of twelve. He had only a sixth grade education, yet he edited seven hymnals, numerous works of the masters, and wrote a textbook on theory. For the last fifty years of his life he was active in the religious life of the Minneapolis-St. Paul area where he was associated with the illustrious Pastor E. August Skogsberg. The two men were frequently described as the Swedish counterpart of the Moody and Sankey team.

Lina Sandell was married to a Stockholm merchant, C. O. Berg, in 1867, but she continued to sign her hymns with the initials "L. S." by which she was affectionately known throughout Sweden. She has often been called the "Fanny Crosby of Sweden" for her many fine contributions to gospel hymnody.

Lina Sandell Berg is also the author of the beloved Swedish hymn "More Secure Is No One Ever."

*Day by day, and with each passing moment,
Strength I find, to meet my trials here;
Trusting in my Father's wise bestowment,
I've no cause for worry or for fear.
He Whose heart is kind beyond all measure
Gives unto each day what He deems best—
Lovingly, its part of pain and pleasure,
Mingling toil with peace and rest.*

*Every day, the Lord Himself is near me
With a special mercy for each hour;
All my cares He fain would bear, and cheer me,
He Whose Name is Counselor and Power;
The protection of His child and treasure
Is a charge that on Himself He laid;
"As thy days, thy strength shall be in measure,"*

This the pledge to me He made.

*Help me then in every tribulation
So to trust Thy promises, O Lord,
That I lose not faith's sweet consolation
Offered me within Thy holy Word.
Help me, Lord, when toil and trouble meeting,
Ever to take, as from a father's hand,
One by one, the days, the moments fleeting,
Till I reach the promised land.*