

In the Sweet By and By

The gifted Christian musician Joseph T. Webster was often tormented by deep feelings of depression. On one occasion, when he was in a melancholy mood, he received a visit from his close acquaintance, Sanford Fillmore Bennett.

Knowing that one way to keep Webster from brooding over his problems was to interest him in writing a hymn tune, Bennett decided he would try to pen some lyrics that would direct his friend's thoughts heavenward.

The despondent man himself unwittingly supplied the theme, for when he was asked, "What's the matter now?" he replied, "It's no matter. It will be all right by and by!"

"That's true," exclaimed Bennett. "Trials do generate great glory for us in the sweet by and by!"

Inspired by this thought, Bennett immediately sat down and wrote several poetic verses on the subject. When his friend read them, a new look of hope came into his eyes, and his whole attitude changed.

After jotting down some musical notes, Webster took up his violin and played the melody he had composed to fit the words. Within half an hour, the enduring hymn *In the Sweet By and By* was born. It was published in 1868. Immensely popular in the 19th century, the hymn became a standard and has appeared in hymnals ever since.

In the Sweet By and By continues to be regularly performed. Noteworthy recordings over the years have been made by Elvis Presley, Louis Armstrong, Johnny Cash, Dolly Parton, Willie Nelson and Loretta Lynn. The hymn is also heard in films, including *Sergeant York*, *Benny and Joon*, and *Django Unchained*. Here are the lyrics:

*There's a land that is fairer than day,
And by faith we can see it afar;
For the Father waits over the way
To prepare us a dwelling place there.*

Refrain:

*In the sweet by and by,
We shall meet on that beautiful shore;
In the sweet by and by,
We shall meet on that beautiful shore.*

*We shall sing on that beautiful shore
The melodious song of the blessed;
And our spirits shall sorrow no more,
Not a sigh for the blessing of rest.*

(more)

*To our bountiful Father above,
We will offer our tribute of praise
For the glorious gift of His love
And the blessings that hallow our days.*

No matter what circumstances you may be facing, or what emotional state you may be in, perhaps the message of this song, written so long ago, can bring you assurance and perspective of this journey we call life.

In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you (John 14:2 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter