

"The Old, Old Path"

How It Came to Be Written

By Vida E. Smith Yates

I was teaching at that time in the primary department of the Sunday school in the Old Brick Church in Lamoni. It was then our place of worship there—now it lies in ashes, and even the historic old bell lies in the ruins, melted beyond recognition.

That morning I had conducted a review on the life and works of Christ. It had been most gratifying, even inspirational to me. After Sunday school I mounted the wide back stairs and sat down in one of the front seats, as it was cool and inviting there to me. Above me the window was open and birds were flitting about outside or just quietly sitting on the deep casement, while the branches of the green trees swayed in the summer breeze.

I joined in the songs, for song has ever been a happy part of my worship, and listened to the invocation, then settled myself for the service. The minister read his text, which I had used in my review, and which is a great favorite with all members of the Restoration: "Ask for the old paths, . . . and walk therein."

Immediately my mind went again into my review. I saw the upturned faces and heard the replies, marveling at the keen perception of some of them.

From my seat I could see the blue of the summer sky, and I thought on its beauty; how often, too, I had seen it dark and stormy! But following the old path was as sweet then, for I knew the blue would come to me.

I reflected on the thought I had stressed in the review, that when Jesus came to earth, this old path was the one he walked in; that for ages and ages it had been there, and was still here, and Jesus chose to walk in it. That made it easier for us to understand, for we all find in the old path understanding and kindness and the love of Christ. Sometimes the shadows are so dark and the mountains so steep that we almost forget to follow; but there are the shining footprints of Jesus, and we reach for his hand and look up and find light and comfort.

I thought of the dear friends who had gone all the way with me, and always would; for in this path is that which makes friends true, considerate and understanding. It takes all these things, with love, to keep friends, and if we are in the old path we shall be like Him, whose feet have made it sacred.

I seized my pencil, and into my quarterly went the little verses—my expression of gratitude for that "old path," and for the story of Jesus which makes it so sweet and enjoyable as well as abiding.

After the meeting closed I walked a way with Sister Alice Cobb, a charming friend who was the author of much lovely verse. She spoke of the sermon and asked my opinion. Reluctantly I replied, and with some embarrassment, that I had not heard it, and as an excuse passed to her my quarterly. She read the stanzas with tear-wet eyes and said, "You must show that to Audentia and get a tune."

I had not thought of such, but consented. As we came to the door of my cousin, Mrs. Anderson, I went in. She met me with a sick babe in her arms. After some discussion of the baby, I repeated to her

what I had done and the proposal of Sister Cobb. Audentia and I had often cooperated in these things and she, like myself, attached no great concern, saying, "All right, lay it on the piano."

After lunch in my quiet hour, I sat down to the piano, and the words of the verse came to me clearly. This was unusual, for my little verses often slipped from my mind; but I strummed out a melody with quick action—the words and melody coming clear while I was at the piano. The telephone called me. It was Audentia saying she had a melody, and she sang it to me. It was the same melody that we sing today and the same one that had come to me. Still it did not seem strange to me, just an ordinary incident in my busy life. Still it was sweet with the thought of my expression of thankfulness for Jesus in the old, *old* path.

May it continue its blessing many years, I pray, going, as many a song has gone, into eternity, where I hope to meet it and its record.



There is no adequate substitute for childhood religion. Nothing in later life can take the place of the shaping of Christian character at home.—Halford E. Luccock.



Patriotism and loyalty, closely akin, like others of the social virtues, grow by being utilized and practiced.

*I should be glad of loneliness
And hours that go on broken wings.
A thirsty body, a tired heart
And the unchanging ache of things,
If I could make a single song
As lovely and as full of light,
As hushed and brief as a falling star
On a winter night.*

—Sara Teasdale