

## GEORGE MATHESON

(Condensed from material available on the internet)

George Matheson was born in Glasgow, Scotland March 27<sup>th</sup>, 1842. He was the eldest of eight children. He excelled at school and entered Glasgow University where he studied Classics, Logic and Philosophy. He graduated with first class honors at 19 but was rapidly going blind. While at the University he met and fell in love with a girl who was a fellow student. They were planning to get married. When he told her of his impending blindness, she sent a verbal dagger into his heart by answering bluntly “I do not want to be the wife of a blind man” – and with that they parted.

Years later the memory of that rejection came flooding back on the evening of his sister’s wedding. Richard Neil Donovan reveals his thoughts at that time: *“My hymn was composed in the manse of Inellan on the evening of June 6, 1882. I was at that time alone. It was the day of my sister’s marriage, and the rest of my family were staying overnight in Glasgow. Something had happened to me which was known only to myself, and which caused me the most severe mental suffering. The hymn was the fruit of that suffering. It was the quickest bit of work I ever did in my life. I had the impression of having it dictated to me by some inward voice than of working it out myself. I am quite sure that the whole work was completed in five minutes, and equally sure that it never received at my hands any retouching or correction. I have no natural gift of rhythm. All the other verses I have written are manufactured articles; this came like a dayspring from on high. I have never been able to gain once more the same fervor in verse.”*

The words of the song are:

O Love that wilt not let me go,  
I rest my weary soul in thee;  
I give thee back the life I owe,  
that in thine ocean depths its flow  
may richer, fuller be.

O Light that follow'st all my way,  
I yield my flick'ring torch to thee;  
my heart restores its borrowed ray,  
that in thy sunshine's blaze its day  
may brighter, fairer be.

O Joy that seekest me through pain,  
I cannot close my heart to thee;  
I trace the rainbow thro' the rain,  
and feel the promise is not vain  
that morn shall tearless be.

O Cross that liftest up my head,  
I dare not ask to fly from thee;  
I lay in dust life's glory dead,  
and from the ground there blossoms red,  
life that shall endless be.

Albert Peace was an organist and also the editor of a journal called *The Scottish Hymnal*. His experience was amazingly like that of Matheson. In only five minutes he was able to adapt the tune of “St. Margaret” to the poignant words of George Matheson. Remember! It is our faith that enables us to: **“Rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character, and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 5:2-5).**