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Digital Edition 04/08/2001
By Holiness Data Ministry

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THE STORY OF "CURFEW MUST NOT RING TONIGHT" **By Duane V. Maxey**

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INTRODUCTION

While doing some work on the 2700-Plus Sermon Illustrations today, I came upon the poem, "Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight!" So touched and impressed was I with this poem when I first came across it that I soon incorporated it into our growing collection of digital files. Already the title-clause is found 17 times in the HDM Digital Library in 6 different files -- the word "Tonight" twice being spelled "To-night".

Having already been so impressed with this poem, the reader will not be surprised that when I came across it again today I decided to do some further investigation regarding it. First, my attention was focused only upon the authoress of the poem, but as I did this it was not long until my interest broadened as I followed piece after piece of the story surrounding this moving poem.

I invite the reader to trace with me in order the following 7 parts of this article shown in the Table of Contents below -- all related to the Poem, "Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight."

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01 -- THE PART OF LYDIA H. H. SIGOURNEY

Had it not been for the writings of Lydia Howard (Huntley) Sigourney doubtless "Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight" would never have been written, for even though she herself did not write the poem she greatly influenced its inspiration. Her own story, apart from the moving poem that she inspired, is also interesting.

Lydia H. Huntley was born in Norwich, Connecticut, on September 1, 1791. She died as Lydia H. (Huntley) Sigourney on June 10, 1865 -- 21 years after being selected by an Iowa doctor as the namesake for a tiny community -- Sigourney, Iowa -- located in the center of Keokuk County, Iowa. During the nearly three-quarters of a century of her life she gained a good deal of notoriety, far beyond that of being the namesake of a town in Iowa, for she became one of the most popular poetesses and authors of her time.

In later life known as the "Sweet Singer of Hartford," Connecticut, Lydia H. Huntley was the only child of Ezekiel and Zerviah (Sophia) Huntley. She grew up in well-to-do surroundings on the estate of Daniel Lathrop where her father was employed as the custodian and gardener. After Lathrop's death, his widow, who was the daughter of a former Governor of Connecticut, supervised Lydia's education. Besides instruction in needlework, painting, music, and penmanship, Lydia was required to master more difficult courses such as mathematics, Greek, philosophy, and other subjects more normally offered at that time only for young men.

Her formal education continued only until the death of Mrs. Lathrop, when Lydia was but 14 years of age. The death of her benefactor was apparently quite a blow to her, and in order to help her recover from the loss Lydia was sent to live with relatives of the Lathrops in Hartford. There she had access to a large library, and devoted much of her time to writing prose, poetry, and meditations, that she patterned after sermons. Here too, she was exposed to cultural events and learned as well "how to run a noble household."

At the age of 20, in 1811, Lydia along with a friend began a school for ladies in Norwich, Connecticut, and in 1812 she began holding free classes for poor children. The spiritual aspect of her life is apparent in the fact that in 1814 she opened a seminary for young women -- believing women to be the main source of moral strength in American households. Her curriculum emphasized Biblical and religious studies.

Lydia's moral character can be seen in the following two "Sigourney" quotations that I found: "Whatever you would have your own children become, strive to exhibit in your own lives and conversation." Further, it seems apparent from the following quotation that she did not forget her humble beginnings, even though she lived in privileged surroundings: -- "Prosperity, alas! Is often but another name for pride."

In 1815 Lydia published her first work, entitled: "Moral Pieces in Prose and Verse," and in so doing she began a career that peaked with her becoming "one of America's most popular authors." At the age of 28, in 1819, Lydia H. Huntley became Lydia H. (Huntley) Sigourney with her marriage to Charles Sigourney, a merchant, and after her marriage she devoted her life to writing. The most widely known of her prose writings was "Letters to Young Ladies," published in 1833. Her Illustrated Poems were published in 1849 in a series that included poems of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

So prolific was Lydia H. (Huntley) Sigourney as a writer that her gift books, prose, and poetic publications were turned out at the rate of about one every 8 months -- and that, for almost 50 years! All totaled, she authored some 67 books and over 1,000 articles, many of them widely read in both Europe and the United States. Her autobiography, "Letters of Life," was published in 1866 after her death.

According to one source, Lydia H. (Huntley) Sigourney's name in mid-19th century America "was more prestigious than that of Robert Lowell, John Greenleaf Whittier, Herman Melville, or Edgar Allen Poe. Yet, today she is no more than a footnote in history and "her work is almost unknown."

Why does all of the preceding have a connection with the poem, "Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight"? I answer: -- because of a story written by Lydia H. H. Sigourney that is not mentioned in any of the biographical material I found on her life -- and because of a certain magazine that published that story. Read on.

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02 -- THE PART OF PETERSON'S LADIES MAGAZINE

Peterson's Ladies Magazine was published between 1842 and 1898, and it was in this magazine that Lydia H. (Huntley) Sigourney published the story that inspired the writing of "Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight." Following is a brief synopsis regarding the magazine:

"The first issue of Peterson's Magazine was published in 1842 by Charles J. Peterson in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The publication quickly gained a reputation for being the most informative and entertaining resource for women of that time and soon hailed the largest circulation of all monthlies published in the United States.

"In 1866 the publication was improved substantially to attract even more readers. Some of America's top writers were solicited to contribute prose and poetry. Each issue contained a double-size color fashion plate engraved on steel. Each issue also included woodcuts of the newest clothing and accessories available for the entire family and colored patterns for all kinds of fancy needlework. A one year subscription sold for \$2."

Another source wrote:

"In the mid-nineteenth century subscriptions to Peterson's Magazine, an informative and entertaining resource for women, outnumbered all other monthlies published in the United States. In 1866 Peterson's Magazine began to feature double-sized color fashion plates engraved on steel, woodcuts of the newest clothing, and colored patterns for all varieties of needlework."

Thus we can see that "Peterson's Magazine" was a very popular magazine of Lydia Sigourney's day, and she was a very popular writer. Further, I suspect that it may have been the pieces on needlework -- as well as those containing prose and poetry -- in "Peterson's Magazine" that attracted and persuaded her to publish some of her writings in that publication -- including the one which most interested me. Read on.

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03 -- THE PART OF AN ARTICLE TITLED: "LOVE AND LOYALTY"

Had it not been for Lydia H. (Huntley) Sigourney, "Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight" would never have been written. Further, had not Peterson's Magazine published one of Sigourney's stories, entitled "Love and Loyalty," it is also possible that "Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight" would never have been written.

"Love and Loyalty" was published in the September, 1865 issue of Peterson's Magazine -- about 3 months after Sigourney's demise in June of that same year. Yet it was this posthumous publication that may have done more to prolong Sigourney's influence than anything published while she was living.

The setting of "Love and Loyalty" was during the English Civil War under the rule of Oliver Cromwell. In the story, Bessie, the beautiful daughter of a forester, saved her innocent and gallant lover from execution by Cromwell's Puritans. She accomplished this first by clinging to the clapper of the church tower bell to prevent it from ringing curfew at the hour of execution. Then Bessie's appeal to Cromwell won the pardon for her lover. It was thus, after reading Lydia (Huntley) Sigourney's story in the September, 1865 issue of Peterson's Magazine that Rose Alnora Hartwick (later Thorpe) was inspired to rework the tale in Longfellow-like verse into the poem, "Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight."

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04 -- THE PART OF ROSE ALNORA (HARTWICK) THORPE

I know not whether any other poet or poetess has ever been inspired by Sigourney's story to write a poem similar to "Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight," but Rose Alnora Hartwick was inspired to write the poem, and her story too is of interest.

Rose Alnora Hartwick was born July 18, 1850 in Mishawaka, Indiana. The scenes of her childhood and youth included, besides Mishawaka, both Kansas and Litchfield, Michigan, where she graduated from high school in 1868. However, it was while she was still only 15 years of age that she read the story entitled "Love and Loyalty" in the September, 1865 issue of Peterson's



Magazine, and shortly thereafter wrote her well-known poem, "Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight."

The poem was first published locally, and its success is said to have been "immediate and overwhelming." This local publication of "Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight" seems to have continued for some 5 or 6 years in the Litchfield, Michigan area. Then in 1870 she submitted the poem to the Commercial Advertiser of Detroit, which had published some of her earlier writings. Following this, the publication of the poem rapidly spread via newspapers throughout the nation. "Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight" became a popular declamation, and it was widely published in collections of poetry and even translated into other languages. However, Rose Hartwick profited little financially from the poem's great popularity because she had failed to copyright it.

Perhaps some who have criticized HDM for copyrighting our digital publications will think to themselves that she really should not have received any remuneration for the poem's publication because it was Lydia (Huntley) Sigourney's story, "Love and Loyalty," that inspired the poem. Regardless of the correctness or incorrectness of such an opinion, the fact is that the poem has no doubt moved many to tears, as it has me, and has been a blessing, though apparently not the source of a great amount of income to the authoress.

Nevertheless, in doing my research today, I found that one vintage copy of her poem was advertised for \$1,000.00!! -- perhaps more than Rose (Hartwick) Thorpe ever received from the countless thousands of copies of the poem that were published during her lifetime! One source did write:

"Mrs. Thorpe explains that she has had to charge \$5.00 for every copy of the poem she writes out and goes on to describe other publications of hers and the prices. The letter, written one year after her husband's death, shows a writer who obviously had supported herself and her family for some time."

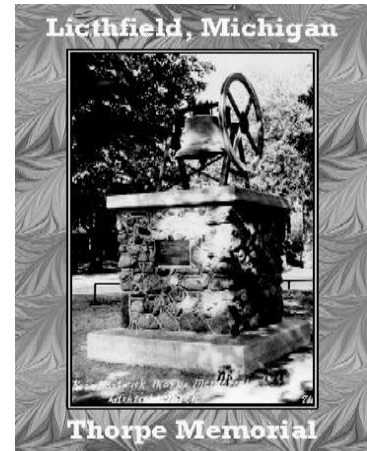
So -- the authoress apparently did obtain some income from her famous poem, and she did even support herself and her family for some time with income from her writings.

In 1871 Rose Alnora Hartwick married Edmund C. Thorpe, a carriage maker. She continued to write and publish poetry in the publications: Youth's Companion, St. Nicholas, Wide Awake, and Well-Spring.

In 1881, Mr. Thorpe's carriage business failed, and in that same year Rose (Hartwick) Thorpe began writing and publishing "a series of moralistic monthlies" that were published by Fleming H. Revell -- the most successful religious publisher of the day. She authored and edited Temperance Tales, Well-Spring, and Words of Life -- all devoted to the causes of Temperance and the Sunday School. Besides "Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight," a second popular success was her publication entitled, "Remember The Alamo." She also wrote books of verse as well as works of children's fiction.

After her husband's death in 1916 and following her move to California, Rose (Hartwick) Thorpe became an active worker for Women's Suffrage and for the Y.W.C.A. worker. "Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight" was published also in a book by Thorpe in 1887 entitled "Ringing Ballads," and it became one of the most popular poems of the 19th century -- likely, writes one, "because of its Christian morality." (Gray, "She Wields a Pen, pp. 229-232) Rose (Hartwick) Thorpe died in San Diego, California, on July 19, 1939.

How did it Rose (Hartwick) Thorpe's famous poem become part of the HDM Library? Read on.



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05 -- THE PART OF L. G. BROUGHTON

My investigation surrounding "Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight" next took me to L. G. Broughton. I remembered that I had come upon the poem when I was first creating my collection of Illustrations, now known as 2700-Plus Sermon Illustrations -- way back during the earliest beginnings of Holiness Data Ministry -- perhaps as early as 1992.

I had bought a book at a second-hand store which, as I recall, may have been titled something like: "The Dictionary of Illustrations," containing possibly 1,001 Sermon Illustrations. As I was later digitizing many of those illustrations I came across the following illustration, attributed to L. G. Broughton which contained the first lines I ever read from "Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight." What the original title of the illustration was, I know not, I will simply present it under the title now used for it in the 2700-Plus collection:

* * *

LOVE FOUND A WAY

Who has not read with thrilling interest the story of old curfew? A young soldier, for some offense, was condemned to die, and the time of his death was fixed "at the ringing of the curfew." Naturally, such a doom would be fearful and bitter to one in the years of his hope and prime; but to this unhappy youth, death was doubly terrible since he was soon to marry a beautiful, young lady whom he had long loved. The lady, who loved him ardently in return, had used her utmost efforts to avert his fate, pleading with the judges, and even with Cromwell himself; but all in vain. In her despair, she tried to get the old sexton not to ring the bell, but she found that to be impossible.

The hour for the execution drew near. The preparations were completed. The officers of the law brought forth the prisoner, and waited while the sun was setting for the signal from the distant bell tower. To the wonder of everybody, curfew did not ring! Only one human being, at that moment, knew the reason. The poor girl, half wild with the thought of her lover's peril, had rushed unseen up the winding stairs, and climbed the ladders into the belfry loft, and seized the tongue of

the bell. The old sexton was in his place, prompt to the fatal moment. He threw his weight upon the rope, and the bell, obedient to his practiced hand, reeled and swung to and fro in the tower. But the brave girl kept her hold, and no sound issued from its metallic lips.

Again and again, the sexton drew the rope, but with desperate strength the young heroine held on. Every moment made her position more fearful; every sway of the mighty bell threatened to fling her through the high tower window; but she would not let go. At last, the sexton went away. Old and deaf, he had not noticed that the curfew gave no peal. The brave girl descended from the belfry, wounded and trembling. She hurried from the church to the place of execution. Cromwell himself was there, and, just as he was sending to demand why the bell was silent, she saw him:

"...and her brow, Lately white with sorrow, glows with hope and courage now.
At his feet she told her story, showed her hands all bruised and torn,
And her young face, still haggard with the anguish it had worn,
Touched his heart with sudden pity, lit his eyes with misty light --
'Go; your lover lives,' cried Cromwell; Curfew shall not ring tonight."

Think you that this young man, redeemed by that sacrifice of love from the clutches of the law, would regard any service to the fair woman who redeemed him a hardship? Nay, he would have been willing to have laid his life upon the altar for her!

Now, let us listen to another story of love. The scene is laid at Calvary. Jesus is upon the cross. The brow, once crowned with glory, is now crowned with thorns. The hands, so often outstretched in love and mercy, are now pinioned to the cross. The heart that throbbed and ached with human sorrow is now pierced with a spear. Oh, it is a sad moment in the history of the world! The earth trembles; the mountains quake; and the sun veils itself in darkness, for God's Son is dying. But listen! "It is finished! It is finished! It is finished!" The great plan of redemption, born in the heart of love, has now received its finishing touch, and God and the world stand reconciled!

Oh, dear friends, this was for us! Shall we not respond, not only with our hearts but with our substance, yea with all that we have, to gladden His dear heart and spread His kingdom from pole to pole? -- L. G. Broughton

* * *

Before presenting the original version of the entire poem, I shall next present some of my findings regarding L. G. Broughton. "Just WHO was this man," I wondered. So, I did some research on the man who first introduced me to "Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight."

In his book, "Some Chapters Of My Life Story," hdm0139, H. C. Morrison gives us some good insights regarding L. G. Broughton:

"I remember when we met in Atlanta, Dr. Len G. Broughton, one of the greatest Baptist preachers of the South who had a large tabernacle in Atlanta, with several thousand members, sent a note to the Committee asking them to have H. C. Morrison preach in his tabernacle on Sunday afternoon and explain the doctrine for which we stood and promulgated. I did so and the message

seemed to have a gracious effect and those Baptist people gave me a glad hand. Dr. White, one of the famous Baptist preachers of the South who was, for many years, pastor of First Baptist Church in Miami, was pastor in Atlanta. He was absent until just before the close of the meetings. When he came home he came up to our convention and spoke to us very kindly. This does not mean he gave our views and doctrines his endorsement but, it does mean that he showed us a very beautiful, Christian spirit. Many of the Methodist pulpits were open to us in Atlanta on Sunday, and several of the brethren tarried and held revival meetings. We were graciously blessed and wonderfully encouraged in the good work. Could this work have been continued, it would have had a wide, powerful, and most gracious influence in any of the cities and communities where we came together in beautiful fellowship to preach and witness to the power of our blessed Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, to save and keep from sin."

Broughton was a Baptist, but apparently a godly man and minister. There are no fewer than 7 really-good illustrations by Dr. Len G. Broughton in the 2700-Plus Sermon Illustrations collection. I was planning on presenting all of them in this article, but I forbear, lest doing so would prove to be too tedious. I will only present one more of his illustrations that I found among our CD files. I do not know who related it.

* * *

Dr. L. G. Broughton once said to an ignorant member of his congregation: "Why don't you speak to someone about Jesus Christ?"

"I will," he said.. He walked down the aisle and sat beside a brilliant young lawyer. "Do you want to go to Haven when you die?" he commenced.

"I don't know whether I do or not," answered the man.

"All right, then, go to Hell." He rose and left him.

Needless to say, the lawyer was piqued, but the shaft went home. When visiting Dr. Broughton a few days later he confessed: "I hate to acknowledge it, but that remark of that blundering fool of yours kept ringing in my ears, and I could not get rid of it. At last I got down on my knees, and said: 'Lord, give me the faith of that blundering fool who made me so mad,' and Jesus saved me."

They went together to the home of the "blundering fool," and, with tears streaming down his face, the lawyer wrung his hand, saying: "You are the man who led me to Christ."

* * *

You will find another excellent story from L. G. Broughton on our CD in "The Palm Tree Blessing," hdm1562, by William Edward Shepard. You will also find a quotation from him in "Rubies From Ruth," hdm1580, by W. G. Heslop. Further, I found online that he is the author of at least two books: "Revival in Soul Winning," and "The Kingdom Parables and Their Teaching," New York and Chicago, 1910.

How did you discover the entire poem, "Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight"? Read on.

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06 -- THE PART OF INCREASED DISCOVERIES ABOUT THE POEM

Just how I found the full version of the poem I do not now recall, but at some point I sought and found the entire poem, and have published all of it in the HDM Library for some years now. However, it was only today during my research that I discovered that I apparently did not get "THE" original version which I will present shortly for the first time. In at least one place, the words are slightly different, but with very little difference in meaning.

Before my research about Rose Alnora (Hartwick) Thorpe began today, I had decided to publish via email the illustration using the poem. After discovering that I did not have the original version, I replaced my own copy with a copy of the poem as originally written. I present that version of the poem below, used in an illustration that I had titled:

"JESUS MUFFLED THE DEATH-KNELL OF DOOM AT CALVARY."

A poem by Rose Hartwick Thorpe [1850-1939] published in 1887 entitled "Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight," beautifully illustrates the self-sacrificial love of Christ at Calvary Who there muffled the Death-Knell of Man's Doom. It is said that the love and pathos of the heroine of this poem "Lit [Cromwell's] eyes with misty light," and its sentiments likewise nearly always do the same to mine when I read the poem. Like the heroine, Bessie, when Jesus brings pardon to fallen Man,

He "comes with flying footsteps, eyes aglow with love-light sweet;
[Then] Kneeling on the turf beside him, lays his pardon at his feet."

But to get the full impact of the story and its spiritual comparison to the heroic sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, read on:

During the time when Oliver Cromwell ruled England, a young soldier named Basil Underwood was found guilty of some offense and sentenced to die at the sounding of the evening curfew. Bessie, the young woman he was soon to have married, passionately interceded for his life, even to Cromwell himself, but all to no avail. Finally, in loving desperation she went to the old, deaf sexton who was to toll the huge bell which would sound Basil's death-knell. As "Old Curfew," the sexton, made his way to the church where he had faithfully rung that bell for many years, Bessie tried to persuade him not to ring the bell that night:

Slowly England's sun was setting oe'r the hilltops far away,
Filling all the land with beauty at the close of one sad day;
And its last rays kissed the forehead of a man and maiden fair,--
He with steps so slow and weary; she with sunny, floating hair;
He with bowed head, sad and thoughtful, she, with lips all cold and white,

Struggling to keep back the murmur, "Curfew must not ring to-night!"

"Sexton," Bessie's white lips faltered, pointing to the prison old,
With its walls tall and gloomy, moss-grown walls dark, damp and cold,--
"I've a lover in the prison, doomed this very night to die
At the ringing of the curfew, and no earthly help is nigh.
Cromwell will not come till sunset;" and her lips grew strangely white,
As she spoke in husky whispers, "Curfew must not ring to-night!"

"Bessie," calmly spoke the sexton (every word pierced her young heart
Like a gleaming death-winged arrow, like a deadly poisoned dart),
"Long, long years I've rung the curfew from that gloomy, shadowed tower;
Every evening, just at sunset, it has tolled the twilight hour.
I have done my duty ever, tried to do it just and right:
Now I'm old, I will not miss it. Curfew bell must ring to-night!"

Wild her eyes and pale her features, stern and white her thoughtful brow,
As within her secret bosom, Bessie made a solemn vow.
She had listened while the judges read, without a tear or sigh,
"At the ringing of the curfew, Basil Underwood must "die.
And her breath came fast and faster, and her eyes grew large and bright;
One low murmur, faintly spoken. "Curfew must not ring to-night!"

She with quick step bounded forward, sprang within the old church-door,
Left the old man coming slowly, paths he'd trod so oft before.
Not one moment paused the maiden, but with eye and cheek aglow,
Staggered up the gloomy tower, where the bell swung to and fro;
As she climbed the slimy ladder, on which fell no ray of light,
Upward still, her pale lips saying, "Curfew shall not ring to-night!"

She has reached the topmost ladder, o'er her hangs the great dark bell;
Awful is the gloom beneath her, like the pathway down to hell.
See! the ponderous tongue is swinging; 'tis the hour of curfew now,
And the sight has chilled her bosom, stopped her breath, and paled her brow.
Shall she let it ring? No, never! Her eyes flash with sudden light,
As she springs, and grasps it firmly: "Curfew shall not ring to-night!"

(Clinging to the ponderous tongue, Bessie muffled its sound with her hands as she hung
suspended beneath the bell swinging to and fro.)

Out she swung,-- far out. The city seemed a speck of light below,--
There twixt heaven and earth suspended, as the bell swung to and fro.
And the sexton at the bell-rope, old and deaf, heard not the bell,
Sadly thought that twilight curfew rang young Basil's funeral knell.
"Still the maiden, clinging firmly, quivering lip and fair face white,
Stilled her frightened heart's wild throbbing: "Curfew shall not ring tonight!"

It was o'er, the bell ceased swaying; and the maiden stepped once more
Firmly on the damp old ladder, where, for hundred years before,
Human foot had not been planted. The brave deed that she had done
Should be told long ages after. As the rays of setting sun
Light the sky with golden beauty, aged sires, with heads of white,
Tell the children why the curfew did not ring that one sad night.

O'er the distant hills comes Cromwell. Bessie sees him; and her brow,
Lately white with sickening horror, has no anxious traces now.
At his feet she tells her story, shows her hands, all bruised and torn;
And her sweet young face, still haggard, with the anguish it had worn,
Touched his heart with sudden pity, lit his eyes with misty light.
"Go! your lover lives," said Cromwell. "Curfew shall not ring to-night!"

Wide they flung the massive portals, led the prisoner forth to die,
All his bright young life before him. Neath the darkening English sky,
Bessie came, with flying footsteps, eyes aglow with lovelight sweet;
Kneeling on the turf beside him, laid his pardon at his feet.
In his brave, strong arms he clasped her, kissed the face upturned and white,
Whispered, "Darling, you have saved me, curfew will not ring to-night."

Like Justice, deaf to mercy's plea, the old sexton did what Law demanded. Like Jesus, Who
muffled in His hands on the cross, the death-knell of our eternal doom, Bessie did what Love
designed to save the one she loved. And, like Basil, whose liberty was love-bought, we all, though
totally unworthy, may escape the just Curfew of Eternal Death through Jesus' death in our behalf.

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07 -- THE PART OF A "TAKE-OFF" ON THE POEM, "HANG ON THE BELL"

I will not accuse the authors the following poem of plagiarism. Sometimes striking
coincidences do happen. Perhaps thousands of times, if not millions of times, it has already
happened that two people have written, invented, or presented, something so strikingly identical
to that of someone else that it seems that one must have copied the other -- when, in fact, they were
completely separate in their origin.

Having said this, I confess that I still wonder if the poem, "Hang On The Bell," is not a
"take-off" on "Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight." I shall readily admit that it too is an original if I
find this is so.

If I have it right, the poem/song was presented online as by the following three
individuals: T. Connor, C. Erard, and R. Parker. Without further remarks, I present the poem in
question:

* * *

HANG ON THE BELL

The scene was in the jailhouse, and if curfew rang that night
The guy in number 13 cell would go out like a light.
She knew her Dad was innocent, and so Poor Little Nell
Has tied her tender torso to the clapper of the bell.

Chorus:

Oh, hang on the bell, Nelly, hang on the bell
Your poor Daddy's locked in a cold prison cell.
As you swing to the left, and you swing to the right
Remember that curfew must never ring tonight.

It all began when Nelly said, "No! No!" to Handsome Jack
And struggled as he tried to kiss her by the railroad track;
Her Dad rushed up to save her as the train came down the line,
And Jack fell back across the track and paid the price of crime.

Dear Daddy was arrested, and brought up before the Law,
The P'liceman said, "Old Handsome Jack ain't handsome any more!"
Then Nelly came and pleaded, but the jury did not care--
They didn't have a sofa, so they offered him the chair.

Well, they pulled upon the bellrope, but there was no ting-a-ling
They could not get their business done, the curfew would not ring!
Upstairs, poor Nell was swinging, while below they pulled and heaved,
When suddenly a voice cried "Stop! Your father's been reprieved!"

Now, that's the bedtime story that the wardens love to tell
The convicts listen to this tale of Plucky Little Nell,
And how she saved her Dad that night -- the curfew did not ring!
And tears run down their faces, while in harmony they sing:

Apparently the words of the preceding poem were words of a song recorded by different artists -- one in the 30's or early 40's, another in late 50's and by yet a third singer in the 60's. I saw no indication that the words of the poem/song are currently copyrighted.

Thus concludes my research, and "THE STORY OF "CURFEW MUST NOT RING TONIGHT."

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THE END