

When They Ring Those Golden Bells-April's Hymn of the Month 2024

By
Bill Dagle

Do you ever think of Heaven? The song writer penned the words, *How Beautiful Heaven Must Be*; and I know it must be. Jesus is there, first and foremost; and with each passing year, more of the ones I love are going there. When you think about it, it's as far from Hell as you will ever be. Yes, how beautiful Heaven must be. Apparently, Daniel A. Marbelle thought so too because, before he went there, he wrote a poem, added his melody, and left a song about a beautiful place he anticipated seeing very soon. Thanks to my mentor, Dr. Al Smith, we have the story. It goes like this.

Marbelle was born in France. By 1847, we find him in the American Navy fighting Mexico; in 1862, in the Civil War as a musician with the sixth Michigan infantry regiment; and after the war, touring the country in an opera company. Daniel was involved with the Barnum and Bailey Circus for a time and with Colonel William Cody, better known as "Buffalo Bill," and his Wild West Show. And if that wasn't enough, Marbelle was an outstanding public speaker, a poet, a sleight of hand artist, and composer of popular ballads.

With all these talents, Daniel Marbelle should have died as a rich and famous man, but this was not the case. His last years were spent depending on others—his home an abandoned schoolhouse, his neighbors providing sustenance; but as Dr. Al reminds us, "Our extremities become God's opportunities." Each time Marbelle gave his testimony in the little Methodist Church near Elgin, Illinois, where he sang in the choir, he would say, "For years I was too busy. I didn't have time for God and so rich I didn't need Him. God had to slow me down and take my success away so that He could talk to me about the home beyond the river."

With a life of fame and fortune behind him and a promise of a "land beyond the river" before him, Daniel A. Marbelle, a sinner saved by grace, soared far beyond the pull of earth's ties. With pen in hand, he recorded for us who wait in Christ the word picture of how beautiful Heaven must be:

There's a land beyond the river, That we call the sweet forever, And we only reach that shore by faith's decree; One by one we'll gain the portals, There to dwell with the immortals, When they ring those golden bells for you and me.

Chorus

Don't you hear the bells now ringing? Don't you hear the angels singing? Tis the glory hallelujah Jubilee. In that far off sweet forever, Just beyond the shining river, When they ring the golden bells for you and me.

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. I Corinthians 2:9