Favorite Hymn for August 23, 2020
"Jesus Loves Me"
A favorite of Barbara Balseiro.

This "children's" hymn, as *Jesus Loves Me* is often known, is so much more than that. Anna Bartlett Warner, the author of the original poem, was born (various dates of birth range from 1822-1827) to a wealthy New York City lawyer, Henry W. Warner, and Anna Bartlett, a member of a wealthy, fashionable New York City family. Anna Bartlett died when her daughters (Anna and Susan) were young children. Shortly afterwards, Anna and Susan's father lost most of his fortune in the Panic of 1837 and through lawsuits and poor investments. It was then that the family moved to Constitution Island, across from West Point, New York and the military academy. Here, Anna, and Susan's, life, took a turn that would follow them to their final resting place.

To earn money for the family, Anna and Susan both began to write novels. Between them, they wrote 106 books for children and adults, 18 together. It was in Susan's book of 1860, titled *Say and Seal,* that we first find the words to *Jesus Loves Me*. Susan asked Anna to write a poem to be read to a dying child.

At this same time, the sisters began to hold Bible study classes for the cadets at West Point. Their uncle was the academy chaplain. Anna wrote a new hymn each month for the cadets. On the brink of the Civil War, Anna was concerned that some of her students would die without knowing Christ. Though neither sister ever married, they continued to teach the cadets until their deaths. Anna outlived Susan by thirty years, and it is believed that Dwight D. Eisenhower was a cadet in one of her last classes. Both sisters were buried in the West Point Cemetery with full military honors, the only civilians ever honored in such a way.

The cadets would sing many of Anna's songs while out in the field. The following story has been recorded about an incident with John F. Kennedy and the sinking of his PT-109 boat:

In 1943 in the Solomon Islands, John F. Kennedy's PT-109 was rammed and sunk. Islanders Biuku Gasa and Eroni Kumana who found Kennedy and the survivors remember that when they rode on PT boats to retrieve the survivors, the Marines sang this song with the natives, who had learned it from Seventh-day Adventist missionaries.

The original verses in the novel were these:

Jesus loves me—this I know,
For the Bible tells me so;
Little ones to him belong,—
They are weak, but he is strong.

Jesus loves me—loves me still,
Though I'm very weak and ill;
From his shining throne on high,
Comes to watch me where I lie.

Jesus loves me—he will stay,
Close beside me all the way.
Then his little child will take,
Up to heaven for his dear sake"
Say and Seal pages 115-116

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TUNE: The tune was added in 1862 by William Batchelder Bradbury (1816–1868). Bradbury loved the sound of children's choirs and when he read Anna's poem in 1862, decided to put it to a simple tune suitable for children. Along with his tune, Bradbury added his own chorus "Yes, Jesus loves me, Yes, Jesus Loves me..." After publication as a song it became one of the most popular Christian hymns in churches around the world, especially among children.
An accomplished organist, Dr. William Batchelder Bradbury dedicated himself to teaching, writing and publishing his music including 59 collections of sacred and secular music. He wrote hymns such as "He Leadeth Me", "Just As I Am" and "Sweet Hour of Prayer". "Jesus Loves Me" appeared in his hymnal "The Golden Sower".

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Over the years, other verses have been added, but here are the words we sing:

1 Jesus loves me! this I know,
For the bible tells me so;
Little ones to Him belong;
They are weak but He is strong.

Refrain:
Yes, Jesus loves me,
Yes, Jesus loves me,
Yes, Jesus loves me,
The bible tells me so.

2 Jesus loves me! He who died,
Heaven's gate to open wide;
He will wash away my sin,
Let His little child come in. *[Refrain]*

3 Jesus take this heart of mine,
Make it pure and wholly thine;
On the cross you died for me,
I will try to live for thee. *[Refrain]*