

Website Reflections

Monday 20th September 2020

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Last Sunday morning the Radio 4 service included the hymn 'Eternal Father strong to save' and I was immediately transported to my childhood. We lived in a hamlet outside Rochdale, and our neighbour, Nellie, was my great friend. Every Wednesday when I came back from school, I stood outside the church and heard the women's meeting concluding with 'Eternal Father, strong to save'; it was sung with special meaning because Nellie's husband, Eric, had been called up from his work as a decorator to serve in the merchant navy.

Eric was a jolly man, with a smile and a joke for everyone. I later found out that he had been a stoker, working long hours in the bowels of the ship to keep the boiler fuelled with coal. Not only was his ship part of a convoy across the Atlantic, but it was very old indeed and was often left behind, unable to keep up with the protected convoy. An ordinary man with a tough challenge, but strengthened by his belief in God and unshakable Christian faith.



I know that he and my father treasured the familiar hymn of our little Baptist congregation and the words must have resounded in the darkness of the boiler room.

*In heavenly love abiding
No change my heart shall fear
And safe is such confiding
For nothing changes here.
The storm may roar without me
My heart may low be laid
But God is round about me
And can I be afraid?*

*Wherever He may guide me
No want can turn me back
My shepherd is beside me
And nothing can I lack.
His wisdom ever waketh
His sight is never dim
He knows the way He taketh
And I will walk with Him.*

*Green pastures are before me
Which yet I have not seen;
Bright skies will soon be o'er me
Where the dark clouds have been.
My hope I cannot measure,
My path to life is free,
My Saviour has my treasure
And He will walk with me.*