

May Rowland's Extended Membership

May A. Rowland (1870-1959) won The Hymn Society's first hymn contest, which sought a "Hymn for Airmen" in 1927. She was elected to membership in the following year on the basis of her entry, "God of the shining hosts that range on high," which appears in Chapter 1. A subsequent text, "Where winds of heaven's sweet freedom blow" was selected for inclusion in Paper XI, *Twelve New Hymns of Christian Patriotism* (1947).

In 1956, Rowland sent the following handwritten letter to THS.

25 Bedford Grove
Eastbourne. England.

May 15th 1956

Dear Secretary,

I am now 85 years old & must be, I think, one of your oldest English members! I was the one who was given the Prize for the "Hymn for Airmen." Ever since then, the Hymn Society of America made me a member & has sent all the latest literature of its activities which I have enjoyed reading. But I feel now that they ought not to send me the papers any longer, as I cannot compete or take part in what they want. I would like to thank the Society for their long years of kindness & thought for me & I am sorry to say farewell to them. I am still well & active.

God bless you all,
May A. Rowland

Following the next meeting of the Executive Committee, Deane Edwards dictated this pastoral reply.

June 15, 1956

Miss May A. Rowland
25 Bedford Grove
Eastbourne, England

My dear Miss Rowland:

We deeply appreciate your thoughtful and kind letter of May 15th, suggesting that we discontinue sending you the material of the Hymn Society as it is published.

I took up the matter with the Executive Committee of the Society on Monday and we were all enthusiastically unanimous in the desire to keep you on our rolls as a member of the Society as long as God may spare you to us. So put out of your mind any thought that you have reached the point where you are no longer worthy to receive these small attentions which the Society has been giving.

We are delighted to hear that you are still well and active and hope that you have many more years of happy life ahead of you.

We all join in sending warmest greetings and good wishes. It is an honor to us to have you continue as a member of the Society.

Cordially yours,
Deane Edwards

DE:hrt [Harriet R. Terry]