

Classic Poetry Series

George MacDonald
- poems -

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George MacDonald(10 December 1824 – 18 September 1905)

George MacDonald was a Scottish author, poet, and Christian minister.

Known particularly for his poignant fairy tales and fantasy novels, George MacDonald inspired many authors, such as [W.H. Auden](http://www.poemhunter.com/wystan-hugh-auden/), [J.R.R. Tolkien](http://www.poemhunter.com/john-ronald-reuel-tolkien/), [C.S. Lewis](http://www.poemhunter.com/clive-staples-c-s-lewis/), [E. Nesbit](http://www.poemhunter.com/edith-nesbit/) and Madeleine L'Engle. It was C.S. Lewis who wrote that he regarded MacDonald as his "master": "Picking up a copy of Phantastes one day at a train-station bookstall, I began to read. A few hours later," said Lewis, "I knew that I had crossed a great frontier." [G.K. Chesterton](http://www.poemhunter.com/gilbert-keith-chesterton/) cited *The Princess and the Goblin* as a book that had "made a difference to my whole existence."

Elizabeth Yates wrote of *Sir Gibbie*, "It moved me the way books did when, as a child, the great gates of literature began to open and first encounters with noble thoughts and utterances were unspeakably thrilling."

Even [Mark Twain](http://www.poemhunter.com/mark-twain/), who initially disliked MacDonald, became friends with him, and there is some evidence that Twain was influenced by MacDonald.

Life and Career

George MacDonald was born on the 10th of December 1824 at Huntly, Aberdeenshire, Scotland. His father, a farmer, was one of the MacDonalds of Glen Coe, and a direct descendant of one of the families that suffered in the massacre of 1692. The Doric dialect of the Aberdeenshire area appears in the dialogue of some of his non-fantasy novels.

MacDonald grew up by his Congregational Church, with an atmosphere of Calvinism. But MacDonald never felt comfortable with some aspects of Calvinist doctrine; indeed, legend has it that when the doctrine of predestination was first explained to him, he burst into tears (although assured that he was one of the elect). Later novels, such as *Robert Falconer* and *Lilith*, show a distaste for the

idea that God's electing love is limited to some and denied to others.

He took his degree at the University of Aberdeen, and then went to London, studying at Highbury College for the Congregational ministry.

In 1850 he was appointed pastor of Trinity Congregational Church, Arundel, but his sermons (preaching God's universal love and the possibility that none would, ultimately, fail to unite with God) met with little favour and his salary was cut in half. Later he was engaged in ministerial work in Manchester. He left that because of poor health, and after a short sojourn in Algiers he settled in London and taught for some time at the University of London. MacDonald was also for a time editor of *Good Words for the Young*, and lectured successfully in the United States during 1872–1873.

His best-known works are *Phantastes*, *The Princess and the Goblin*, *At the Back of the North Wind*, and *Lilith*, all fantasy novels, and fairy tales such as "The Light Princess", "The Golden Key", and "The Wise Woman". "I write, not for children," he wrote, "but for the child-like, whether they be of five, or fifty, or seventy-five." MacDonald also published some volumes of sermons, the pulpit not having proved an unreservedly successful venue.

MacDonald also served as a mentor to Lewis Carroll (the pen-name of Rev. Charles Lutwidge Dodgson); it was MacDonald's advice, and the enthusiastic reception of *Alice* by MacDonald's many sons and daughters, that convinced Carroll to submit *Alice* for publication. Carroll, one of the finest Victorian photographers, also created photographic portraits of several of the MacDonald children.

MacDonald was also friends with John Ruskin and served as a go-between in Ruskin's long courtship with Rose La Touche.

MacDonald was acquainted with most of the literary luminaries of the day; a surviving group photograph shows him with Tennyson, Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Trollope, Ruskin, Lewes, and Thackeray. While in America he was a friend of Longfellow and Walt Whitman.

In 1877 he was given a civil list pension. In 1900 he moved into St George's Wood, Haslemere, a house designed for him by his son, Robert Falconer MacDonald and the building overseen by his eldest son, Greville MacDonald. He died on 18 September 1905 in Ashted (Surrey). He was cremated and buried in Bordighera.

As hinted above, MacDonald's use of fantasy as a literary medium for exploring

the human condition greatly influenced a generation of such notable authors as C. S. Lewis (who featured him as a character in his *The Great Divorce*), J. R. R. Tolkien, and Madeleine L'Engle. MacDonald's non-fantasy novels, such as *Alec Forbes*, had their influence as well; they were among the first realistic Scottish novels, and as such MacDonald has been credited with founding the "kailyard school" of Scottish writing.

His son Greville MacDonald became a noted medical specialist, a pioneer of the Peasant Arts movement and also wrote numerous fairy tales for children. Greville ensured that new editions of his father's works were published. Another son, Ronald MacDonald, was also a novelist. Ronald's son, Philip MacDonald, (George MacDonald's grandson) became a very well known Hollywood screenwriter.

Theology

MacDonald rejected the doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement as developed by John Calvin, which argues that Christ has taken the place of sinners and is punished by God in their place, believing that in turn it raised serious questions about the character and nature of God. Instead, he taught that Christ had come to save people from their sins, and not from a Divine penalty for their sins. The problem was not the need to appease a wrathful God but the disease of cosmic evil itself. George MacDonald frequently described the Atonement in terms similar to the Christus Victor theory. MacDonald posed the rhetorical question, "Did he not foil and slay evil by letting all the waves and billows of its horrid sea break upon him, go over him, and die without rebound—spend their rage, fall defeated, and cease? Verily, he made atonement!"

MacDonald was convinced that God does not punish except to amend, and that the sole end of His greatest anger is the amelioration of the guilty. As the doctor uses fire and steel in certain deep-seated diseases, so God may use hell-fire if necessary to heal the hardened sinner. MacDonald declared, "I believe that no hell will be lacking which would help the just mercy of God to redeem his children."

MacDonald posed the rhetorical question, "When we say that God is Love, do we teach men that their fear of Him is groundless?" He replied, "No. As much as they fear will come upon them, possibly far more. ... The wrath will consume what they call themselves; so that the selves God made shall appear."

However, true repentance, in the sense of freely chosen moral growth, is essential to this process, and, in MacDonald's optimistic view, inevitable for all beings (see universal reconciliation). He recognised the theoretical possibility

that, bathed in the eschatological divine light, some might perceive right and wrong for what they are but still refuse to be transfigured by operation of God's fires of love, but he did not think this likely.

In this theology of divine punishment, MacDonald stands in agreement with the Greek Church Fathers St. Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and St. Gregory of Nyssa, although it is unknown whether MacDonald had a working familiarity with Patristics or Eastern Orthodox Christianity. At least an indirect influence is likely, because F. D. Maurice who influenced MacDonald knew the Greek Fathers, especially Clement, very well. MacDonald states his theological views most distinctly in the sermon Justice found in the third volume of Unspoken Sermons.

In his introduction to *George MacDonald: An Anthology*, C. S. Lewis speaks highly of MacDonald's theology:

"This collection, as I have said, was designed not to revive MacDonald's literary reputation but to spread his religious teaching. Hence most of my extracts are taken from the three volumes of Unspoken Sermons. My own debt to this book is almost as great as one man can owe to another: and nearly all serious inquirers to whom I have introduced it acknowledge that it has given them great help—sometimes indispensable help toward the very acceptance of the Christian faith.

... I know hardly any other writer who seems to be closer, or more continually close, to the Spirit of Christ Himself. Hence his Christ-like union of tenderness and severity. Nowhere else outside the New Testament have I found terror and comfort so intertwined. ...

In making this collection I was discharging a debt of justice. I have never concealed the fact that I regarded him as my master; indeed I fancy I have never written a book in which I did not quote from him. But it has not seemed to me that those who have received my books kindly take even now sufficient notice of the affiliation. Honesty drives me to emphasize it."

In Popular Culture

Rock group The Waterboys titled their album *Room to Roam* after a passage in MacDonald's *Phantastes*, also found in *Lilith*. The title track of the album comprises a MacDonald poem from the text of *Phantastes* set to music by the band. The works *Lilith* and *Phantastes* are both named as books in a library, in the title track of another Waterboys album, *Universal Hall*. The Waterboys have also quoted from C.S. Lewis in several songs including *Church Not Made With Hands* and *Further Up, Further In*, confirming the enduring link in modern pop

culture between Macdonald and Lewis.

A verse from *The Light Princess* is cited in the *Beauty and the Beast* song by Nightwish.

Contemporary new-age musician Jeff Johnson wrote a song titled *The Golden Key* based on George MacDonald's story of the same name. He has also written several other songs inspired by MacDonald and the Inklings.

Christian celtic punk band Ballydowse have a song called "George MacDonald" on their album *Out of the Fertile Crescent*. The song is both taken from MacDonald's poem "My Two Geniuses" and liberally quoted from "Phantastes."

Jazz pianist and recording artist Ray Lyon has a song called "Up The Spiral Stairs" on his CD "Beginning To See" which was released in 2007. The song features lyrics from MacDonald's 26 and 27 September devotional readings from the book "Diary of An Old Soul".

Novelist Patricia Kennealy Morrison has a fictional rock band of the Sixties named "Evenor" in her *Rock & Roll Murders: The Rennie Stride Mysteries* series.

On their 2008 release *A Thousand Shark's Teeth* the band My Brightest Diamond included a track titled "From the Top of the World" that was inspired by "At the Back of the North Wind."

Christian ambient rock band The Sleep Design released their first full-length album titled *All That Is Not Music is Silence*, taken directly from a quote from MacDonald's *Unspoken Sermons*, first series.

Popular Christian author Oswald Chambers (1874-1917) wrote in *Christian Discipline*, vol. 1, (pub. 1934) "it is a striking indication of the trend and shallowness of the modern reading public that George MacDonald's books have been so neglected."

A Baby-Sermon

The lightning and thunder
They go and they come:
But the stars and the stillness
Are always at home.

George MacDonald

A Better Thing

I took it for a bird of prey that soared
High over ocean, battled mount, and plain;
'Twas but a bird-moth, which with limp horns gored
The invisibly obstructing window-pane!

Better than eagle, with far-towering nerve
But downward bent, greedy, marauding eye,
Guest of the flowers, thou art: unhurt they serve
Thee, little angel of a lower sky!

George MacDonald

A Birth-Day Wish

Who know thee, love: thy life be such
That, ere the year be o'er,
Each one who loves thee now so much,
Even God, may love thee more!

George MacDonald

A Book Of Dreams: Part I

1.

I lay and dreamed. The master came
In his old woven dress;
I stood in joy, and yet in shame,
Oppressed with earthliness.

He stretched his arms, and gently sought
To clasp me to his soul;
I shrunk away, because I thought
He did not know the whole.

I did not love him as I would,
Embraces were not meet;
I sank before him where he stood,
And held and kissed his feet.

Ten years have passed away since then,
Oft hast thou come to me;
The question scarce will rise again,
Whether I care for thee.

To every doubt, in thee my heart
An answer hopes to find;
In every gladness, Lord, thou art,
The deeper joy behind.

And yet in other realms of life,
Unknown temptations rise,
Unknown perplexities and strife,
New questions and replies.

And every lesson learnt, anew,
The vain assurance lends
That now I know, and now can do,
And now should see thy ends.

So I forget I am a child,
And act as if a man;

Who through the dark and tempest wild
Will go, because he can.

And so, O Lord, not yet I dare
To clasp thee to my breast;
Though well I know that only there
Is hid the secret rest.

And yet I shrink not, as at first:
Be thou the judge of guilt;
Thou knowest all my best and worst,
Do with me as thou wilt.

Spread thou once more thine arms abroad,
Lay bare thy bosom's beat;
Thou shalt embrace me, O my God,
And I will kiss thy feet.

2.

I stood before my childhood's home,
Outside the belt of trees;
All round, my dreaming glances roam
On well-known hills and leas.

When sudden, from the westward, rushed
A wide array of waves;
Over the subject fields they gushed
From far-off, unknown caves.

And up the hill they clomb and came,
On flowing like a sea:
I saw, and watched them like a game;
No terror woke in me.

For just the belting trees within,
I saw my father wait;
And should the waves the summit win,
I would go through the gate.

For by his side all doubt was dumb,

And terror ceased to foam;
No great sea-billows dared to come,
And tread the holy home.

Two days passed by. With restless toss,
The red flood brake its doors;
Prostrate I lay, and looked across
To the eternal shores.

The world was fair, and hope was nigh,
Some men and women true;
And I was strong, and Death and I
Would have a hard ado.

And so I shrank. But sweet and good
The dream came to my aid;
Within the trees my father stood,
I must not be dismayed.

My grief was his, not mine alone;
The waves that burst in fears,
He heard not only with his own,
But heard them with my ears.

My life and death belong to thee,
For I am thine, O God;
Thy hands have made and fashioned me,
'Tis thine to bear the load.

And thou shalt bear it. I will try
To be a peaceful child,
Whom in thy arms right tenderly
Thou carriest through the wild.

3.

The rich man mourns his little loss,
And knits the brow of care;
The poor man tries to bear the cross,
And seeks relief in prayer.

Some gold had vanished from my purse,
Which I had watched but ill;
I feared a lack, but feared yet worse
Regret returning still.

And so I knelt and prayed my prayer
To Him who maketh strong,
That no returning thoughts of care
Should do my spirit wrong.

I rose in peace, in comfort went,
And laid me down to rest;
But straight my soul grew confident
With gladness of the blest.

For ere the sleep that care redeems,
My soul such visions had,
That never child in childhood's dreams
Was more exulting glad.

No white-robed angels floated by
On slow, reposing wings;
I only saw, with inward eye,
Some very common things.

First rose the scarlet pimpernel,
With burning purple heart;
I saw it, and I knew right well
The lesson of its art.

Then came the primrose, childlike flower;
It looked me in the face;
It bore a message full of power,
And confidence, and grace.

And winds arose on uplands wild,
And bathed me like a stream;
And sheep-bells babbled round the child
Who loved them in a dream.

Henceforth my mind was never crossed
By thought of vanished gold,

But with it came the guardian host
Of flowers both meek and bold.

The loss is riches while I live,
A joy I would not lose:
Choose ever, God, what Thou wilt give,
Not leaving me to choose.

'What said the flowers in whisper low,
To soothe me into rest?'

I scarce have words-they seemed to grow
Right out of God's own breast.

They said, God meant the flowers He made,
As children see the same;
They said the words the lilies said
When Jesus looked at them.

And if you want to hear the flowers
Speak ancient words, all new,
They may, if you, in darksome hours,
Ask God to comfort you.

4.

Our souls, in daylight hours, awake,
With visions sometimes teem,
Which to the slumbering brain would take
The form of wondrous dream.

Thus, once, I saw a level space,
With circling mountains nigh;
And round it grouped all forms of grace,
A goodly company.

And at one end, with gentle rise,
Stood something like a throne;
And thither all the radiant eyes,
As to a centre, shone.

And on the seat the noblest form
Of glory, dim-descried;
His glance would quell all passion-storm,
All doubt, and fear, and pride.

But lo! his eyes far-fixed burn
Adown the widening vale;
The looks of all obedient turn,
And soon those looks are pale.

For, through the shining multitude,
With feeble step and slow,
A weary man, in garments rude,
All falteringly did go.

His face was white, and still-composed,
Like one that had been dead;
The eyes, from eyelids half unclosed,
A faint, wan splendour shed.

And to his brow a strange wreath clung,
And drops of crimson hue;
And his rough hands, oh, sadly wrung!
Were pierced through and through.

And not a look he turned aside;
His eyes were forward bent;
And slow the eyelids opened wide,
As towards the throne he went.

At length he reached the mighty throne,
And sank upon his knees;
And clasped his hands with stifled groan,
And spake in words like these:-

'Father, I am come back-Thy will
Is sometimes hard to do.'
From all the multitude so still,
A sound of weeping grew.

And mournful-glad came down the One,

And kneeled, and clasped His child;
Sank on His breast the outworn man,
And wept until he smiled.

And when their tears had stilled their sighs,
And joy their tears had dried,
The people saw, with lifted eyes,
Them seated side by side.

5.

I lay and dreamed. Three crosses stood
Amid the gloomy air.
Two bore two men-one was the Good;
The third rose waiting, bare.

A Roman soldier, coming by,
Mistook me for the third;
I lifted up my asking eye
For Jesus' sign or word.

I thought He signed that I should yield,
And give the error way.
I held my peace; no word revealed,
No gesture uttered
nay.

Against the cross a scaffold stood,
Whence easy hands could nail
The doomed upon that altar-wood,
Whose fire burns slow and pale.

Upon this ledge he lifted me.
I stood all thoughtful there,
Waiting until the deadly tree
My form for fruit should bear.

Rose up the waves of fear and doubt,
Rose up from heart to brain;
They shut the world of vision out,

And thus they cried amain:

'Ah me! my hands-the hammer's knock-
The nails-the tearing strength!
My soul replied: 'Tis but a shock,
That grows to pain at length.'

'Ah me! the awful fight with death;
The hours to hang and die;
The thirsting gasp for common breath,
That passes heedless by!'

My soul replied: 'A faintness soon
Will shroud thee in its fold;
The hours will go,-the fearful noon
Rise, pass-and thou art cold.

'And for thy suffering, what to thee
Is that? or care of thine?
Thou living branch upon the tree
Whose root is the Divine!

"Tis His to care that thou endure;
That pain shall grow or fade;
With bleeding hands hang on thy cure,
He knows what He hath made.'

And still, for all the inward wail,
My foot was firmly pressed;
For still the fear lest I should fail
Was stronger than the rest.

And thus I stood, until the strife
The bonds of slumber brake;
I felt as I had ruined life,
Had fled, and come awake.

Yet I was glad, my heart confessed,
The trial went not on;
Glad likewise I had stood the test,
As far as it had gone.

And yet I fear some recreant thought,
Which now I all forget,
That painful feeling in me wrought
Of failure, lingering yet.

And if the dream had had its scope,
I might have fled the field;
But yet I thank Thee for the hope,
And think I dared not yield.

6.

Methinks I hear, as I lie slowly dying,
Indulgent friends say, weeping, '
He was good.

I fail to speak, a faint denial trying,-
They answer, '
His humility withstood.

I, knowing better, part with love unspoken;
And find the unknown world not all unknown.
The bonds that held me from my centre broken,
I seek my home, the Saviour's homely throne.

How He will greet me, I walk on and wonder;
And think I know what I will say to Him.
I fear no sapphire floor of cloudy thunder,
I fear no passing vision great and dim.

But He knows all my unknown weary story:
How will He judge me, pure, and good, and fair?
I come to Him in all His conquered glory,
Won from such life as I went dreaming there!

I come; I fall before Him, faintly saying:
'Ah, Lord, shall I thy loving favour win?
Earth's beauties tempted me; my walk was straying-
I have no honour-but may I come in?'

'I know thee well. Strong prayer did keep me stable;
To me the earth is very lovely too.
Thou shouldst have come to me to make thee able
To love it greatly-but thou hast got through.'

George MacDonald

A Book Of Dreams: Part II

1.

Lord of the world's undying youth,
What joys are in thy might!
What beauties of the inner truth,
And of the outer sight!
And when the heart is dim and sad,
Too weak for wisdom's beam,
Thou sometimes makest it right glad
With but a childish dream

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*

Lo! I will dream this windy day;
No sunny spot is bare;
Dull vapours, in uncomely play,
Are weltering through the air.
If I throw wide my windowed breast
To all the blasts that blow,
My soul will rival in unrest
Those tree-tops-how they go!

But I will dream like any child;
For, lo! a mighty swan,
With radiant plumage undented,
And folded airy van,
With serpent neck all proudly bent,
And stroke of swarthy oar,
Dreams on to me, by sea-maids sent
Over the billows hoar.

For in a wave-worn rock I lie;
Outside, the waters foam;
And echoes of old storms go by

Within my sea-built dome.
The waters, half the gloomy way,
Beneath its arches come;
Throbbing to unseen billows' play,
The green gulfs waver dumb.

A dawning twilight through the cave
In moony gleams doth go,
Half from the swan above the wave,
Half from the swan below.
Close to my feet she gently drifts,
Among the glistening things;
She stoops her crowny head, and lifts
White shoulders of her wings.

Oh! earth is rich with many a nest,
Deep, soft, and ever new,
Pure, delicate, and full of rest;
But dearest there are two.
I would not tell them but to minds
That are as white as they;
If others hear, of other kinds,
I wish them far away.

Upon the neck, between the wings,
Of a white, sailing swan,
A flaky bed of shelterings-
There you will find the one.
The other-well, it will not out,
Nor need I tell it you;
I've told you one, and need you doubt,
When there are only two?

Fulfil old dreams, O splendid bird,
Me o'er the waters bear;
Sure never ocean's face was stirred
By any ship so fair!
Sure never whiteness found a dress,
Upon the earth to go,
So true, profound, and rich, unless
It was the falling snow.

With quick short flutter of each wing
Half-spread, and stooping crown,
She calls me; and with one glad spring
I nestle in the down.
Plunges the bark, then bounds aloft,
With lessening dip and rise.
Round curves her neck with motion soft-
Sure those are woman's eyes.

One stroke unseen, with oary feet,
One stroke-away she sweeps;
Over the waters pale we fleet,
Suspended in the deeps.
And round the sheltering rock, and lo!
The tumbling, weltering sea!
On to the west, away we go,
Over the waters free!

Her motions moulded to the wave,
Her billowy neck thrown back,
With slow strong pulse, stately and grave,
She cleaves a rippling track.
And up the mounting wave we glide,
With climbing sweeping blow;
And down the steep, far-sloping side,
To flowing vales below.

I hear the murmur of the deep
In countless ripples pass,
Like talking children in their sleep,
Like winds in reedy grass.
And through some ruffled feathers, I
The glassy rolling mark,
With which the waves eternally
Roll on from dawn to dark.

The night is blue, the stars aglow;
In solemn peace o'erhead
The archless depth of heaven; below,
The murmuring, heaving bed.
A thickened night, it heaveth on,
A fallen earthly sky;

The shadows of its stars alone
Are left to know it by.

What faints across the lifted loop
Of cloud-veil upward cast?
With sea-veiled limbs, a sleeping group
Of Nereids dreaming past.
Swim on, my boat; who knows but I,
Ere night sinks to her grave,
May see in splendour pale float by
The Venus of the wave?

2.

In the night, round a lady dreaming-
A queen among the dreams-
Came the silent sunset streaming,
Mixed with the voice of streams.
A silver fountain springing
Blossoms in molten gold;
And the airs of the birds float ringing
Through harmonies manifold.

She lies in a watered valley;
Her garden melts away
Through foot-path and curving alley
Into the wild wood grey.
And the green of the vale goes creeping
To the feet of the rugged hills,
Where the moveless rocks are keeping
The homes of the wandering rills.

And the hues of the flowers grow deeper,
Till they dye her very brain;
And their scents, like the soul of a sleeper,
Wander and waver and rain.
For dreams have a wealth of glory
That daylight cannot give:
Ah God! make the hope a story-
Bid the dreams arise and live.

She lay and gazed at the flowers,
Till her soul's own garden smiled
With blossom-o'ershaded bowers,
Great colours and splendours wild.
And her heart filled up with gladness,
Till it could only ache;
And it turned aside to sadness,
As if for pity's sake.

And a fog came o'er the meadows,
And the rich hues fainting lay;
Came from the woods the shadows,
Came from the rocks the grey.
And the sunset thither had vanished,
Where the sunsets always go;
And the sounds of the stream were banished,
As if slain by frost and snow.

And the flowers paled fast and faster,
And they crumbled fold on fold,
Till they looked like the stained plaster
Of a cornice in ruin old.
And they blackened and shrunk together,
As if scorched by the breath of flame,
With a sad perplexity whether
They were or were not the same.

And she saw herself still lying,
And smiling on, the while;
And the smile, instead of dying,
Was fixed in an idiot smile.
And the lady arose in sorrow
Out of her sleep's dark stream;
But her dream made dark the morrow,
And she told me the haunting dream.

Alas! dear lady, I know it,
The dream that all is a dream;
The joy with the doubt below it
That the bright things only seem.
One moment of sad commotion,
And one of doubt's withering rule-

And the great wave-pulsing ocean
Is only a gathered pool.

And the flowers are spots of painting,
Of lifeless staring hue;
Though your heart is sick to fainting,
They say not a word to you.
And the birds know nought of gladness,
They are only song-machines;
And a man is a skilful madness,
And the women pictured queens.

And fiercely we dig the fountain,
To know the water true;
And we climb the crest of the mountain,
To part it from the blue.
But we look too far before us
For that which is more than nigh;
Though the sky is lofty o'er us,
We are always in the sky.

And the fog, o'er the roses that creepeth,
Steams from the unknown sea,
In the dark of the soul that sleepeth,
And sigheth constantly,
Because o'er the face of its waters
The breathing hath not gone;
And instead of glad sons and daughters,
Wild things are moaning on.

When the heart knows well the Father,
The eyes will be always day;
But now they grow dim the rather
That the light is more than they.
Believe, amidst thy sorrows,
That the blight that swathes the earth
Is only a shade that borrows
Life from thy spirit's dearth.

God's heart is the fount of beauty;
Thy heart is its visible well;
If it vanish, do thou thy duty,

That necromantic spell;
And thy heart to the Father crying
Will fill with waters deep;
Thine eyes may say,
Beauty is dying
;
But thy spirit,
She goes to sleep
.

And I fear not, thy fair soul ever
Will smile as thy image smiled;
It had fled with a sudden shiver,
And thy body lay beguiled.
Let the flowers and thy beauty perish;
Let them go to the ancient dust.
But the hopes that the children cherish,
They are the Father's trust.

3.

A great church in an empty square,
A place of echoing tones;
Feet pass not oft enough to wear
The grass between the stones.

The jarring sounds that haunt its gates,
Like distant thunders boom;
The boding heart half-listening waits,
As for a coming doom.

The door stands wide, the church is bare,
Oh, horror, ghastly, sore!
A gulf of death, with hideous stare,
Yawns in the earthen floor;

As if the ground had sunk away
Into a void below:
Its shapeless sides of dark-hued clay
Hang ready aye to go.

I am myself a horrid grave,
My very heart turns grey;
This charnel-hole, -will no one save
And force my feet away?

The changing dead are there, I know,
In terror ever new;
Yet down the frightful slope I go,
That downward goeth too.

Beneath the caverned floor I hie,
And seem, with anguish dull,
To enter by the empty eye
Into a monstrous skull.

Stumbling on what I dare not guess,
And wading through the gloom,
Less deep the shades my eyes oppress,
I see the awful tomb.

My steps have led me to a door,
With iron clenched and barred;
Grim Death hides there a ghastrer store,
Great spider in his ward.

The portals shake, the bars are bowed,
As if an earthy wind
That never bore a leaf or cloud
Were pressing hard behind.

They shake, they groan, they outward strain.
What sight, of dire dismay
Will freeze its form upon my brain,
And turn it into clay?

They shake, they groan, they bend, they crack;
The bars, the doors divide:
A flood of glory at their back
Hath burst the portals wide.

Flows in the light of vanished days,
The joy of long-set moons;

The flood of radiance billowy plays,
In sweet-conflicting tunes.

The gulf is filled with flashing tides,
An awful gulf no more;
A maze of ferns clothes all its sides,
Of mosses all its floor.

And, floating through the streams, appear
Such forms of beauty rare,
As every aim at beauty here
Had found its
would be
there.

I said: 'Tis well no hand came nigh,
To turn my steps astray;
'Tis good we cannot choose but die,
That life may have its way.

4.

Before I sleep, some dreams draw nigh,
Which are not fancy mere;
For sudden lights an inward eye,
And wondrous things appear.

Thus, unawares, with vision wide,
A steep hill once I saw,
In faint dream lights, which ever hide
Their fountain and their law.

And up and down the hill reclined
A host of statues old;
Such wondrous forms as you might find
Deep under ancient mould.

They lay, wild scattered, all along,
And maimed as if in fight;
But every one of all the throng
Was precious to the sight.

Betwixt the night and hill they ranged,
In dead composure cast.
As suddenly the dream was changed,
And all the wonder past.

The hill remained; but what it bore
Was broken reedy stalks,
Bent hither, thither, drooping o'er,
Like flowers o'er weedy walks.

For each dim form of marble rare,
Bent a wind-broken reed;
So hangs on autumn-field, long-bare,
Some tall and straggling weed.

The autumn night hung like a pall,
Hung mournfully and dead;
And if a wind had waked at all,
It had but moaned and fled.

5.

I lay and dreamed. Of thought and sleep
Was born a heavenly joy:
I dreamed of two who always keep
Me happy as a boy.

I was with them. My heart-bells rung
With joy my heart above;
Their present heaven my earth o'erhung,
And earth was glad with love.

The dream grew troubled. Crowds went on,
And sought their varied ends;
Till stream on stream, the crowds had gone,
And swept away my friends.

I was alone. A miry road
I followed, all in vain;
No well-known hill the landscape showed,

It was a wretched plain;

Where mounds of rubbish, ugly pits,
And brick-fields scarred the globe;
Those wastes where desolation sits
Without her ancient robe.

A drizzling rain proclaimed the skies
As wretched as the earth;
I wandered on, and weary sighs
Were all my lot was worth.

When sudden, as I turned my way,
Burst in the ocean-waves:
And lo! a blue wild-dancing bay
Fantastic rocks and caves!

I wept with joy. Ah! sometimes so,
In common daylight grief,
A beauty to the heart will go,
And bring the heart relief.

And, wandering, reft of hope or friend,
If such a thing should be,
One day we take the downward bend,
And lo, Eternity!

I wept with joy, delicious tears,
Which dreams alone bestow;
Until, mayhap, from out the years
We sleep, and further go.

6.

Now I will mould a dream, awake,
Which I, asleep, would dream;
From all the forms of fancy take
One that shall also seem;
Seem in my verse (if not my brain),
Which sometimes may rejoice
In airy forms of Fancy's train,

Though nobler are my choice.

Some truth o'er all the land may lie
In children's dreams at night;

They
do not build the charmed sky
That domes them with delight.
And o'er the years that follow soon,
So all unlike the dreams,
Wander their odours, gleams their moon,
And flow their winds and streams.

Now I would dream that I awake
In scent of cool night air,
Above me star-clouds close and break;
Beneath-where am I, where?
A strange delight pervades my breast,
Of ancient pictures dim,
Where fair forms on the waters rest,
Or in the breezes swim.

I rest on arms as soft as strong,
Great arms of woman-mould;
My head is pillowed whence a song,
In many a rippling fold,
O'erfloods me from its bubbling spring:
A Titan goddess bears
Me, floating on her unseen wing,
Through gracious midnight airs.

And I am borne o'er sleeping seas,
O'er murmuring ears of corn,
Over the billowy tops of trees,
O'er roses pale till morn.
Over the lake-ah! nearer float,
Down on the water's breast;
Let me look deep, and gazing doat
On that white lily's nest.

The harebell's bed, as o'er we pass,
Swings all its bells about;

From waving blades of polished grass,
Flash moony splendours out.
Old homes we brush in wooded glades;
No eyes at windows shine;
For all true men and noble maids
Are out in dreams like mine.

And foam-bell-kisses drift and break
From wind-waves of the South
Against my brow and eyes awake,
And yet I see no mouth.
Light laughter ripples down the air,
Light sighs float up below;
And o'er me ever, radiant pair,
The Queen's great star-eyes go.

And motion like a dreaming wave
Wafts me in gladness dim
Through air just cool enough to lave
With sense each conscious limb.
But ah! the dream eludes the rhyme,
As dreams break free from sleep;
The dream will keep its own free time,
In mazy float or sweep.

And thought too keen for joy awakes,
As on the horizon far,
A dead pale light the circle breaks,
But not a dawning star.
No, there I cannot, dare not go;
Pale women wander there;
With cold fire murderous eyeballs glow;
And children see despair.

The joy has lost its dreamy zest;
I feel a pang of loss;
My wandering hand o'er mounds of rest
Finds only mounds of moss.
Beneath the bare night-stars I lie;
Cold winds are moaning past:
Alas! the earth with grief will die,
The great earth is aghast.

I look above-there dawns no face;
Around-no footsteps come;
No voice inhabits this great space;
God knows, but keepeth dumb.
I wake, and know that God is by,
And more than dreams will give;
And that the hearts that moan and die,
Shall yet awake and live.

George MacDonald

A Book Of Strife In The Form Of The Diary Of An Old Soul - April

1.

LORD, I do choose the higher than my will.
I would be handled by thy nursing arms
After thy will, not my infant alarms.
Hurt me thou wilt-but then more loving still,
If more can be and less, in love's perfect zone!
My fancy shrinks from least of all thy harms,
But do thy will with me-I am thine own.

2.

Some things wilt thou not one day turn to dreams?
Some dreams wilt thou not one day turn to fact?
The thing that painful, more than should be, seems,
Shall not thy sliding years with them retract-
Shall fair realities not counteract?
The thing that was well dreamed of bliss and joy-
Wilt thou not breathe thy life into the toy?

3.

I have had dreams of absolute delight,
Beyond all waking bliss-only of grass,
Flowers, wind, a peak, a limb of marble white;
They dwell with me like things half come to pass,
True prophecies:-when I with thee am right,
If I pray, waking, for such a joy of sight,
Thou with the gold, wilt not refuse the brass.

4.

I think I shall not ever pray for such;
Thy bliss will overflow my heart and brain,
And I want no unripe things back again.
Love ever fresher, lovelier than of old-
How should it want its more exchanged for much?
Love will not backward sigh, but forward strain,

On in the tale still telling, never told.

5.

What has been, shall not only be, but is.
The hues of dreamland, strange and sweet and tender
Are but hint-shadows of full many a splendour
Which the high Parent-love will yet unroll
Before his child's obedient, humble soul.
Ah, me, my God! in thee lies every bliss
Whose shadow men go hunting wearily amiss.

6.

Now, ere I sleep, I wonder what I shall dream.
Some sense of being, utter new, may come
Into my soul while I am blind and dumb-
With shapes and airs and scents which dark hours teem,
Of other sort than those that haunt the day,
Hinting at precious things, ages away
In the long tale of us God to himself doth say.

7.

Late, in a dream, an unknown lady I saw
Stand on a tomb; down she to me stepped thence.
'They tell me,' quoth I, 'thou art one of the dead!'
And scarce believed for gladness the yea she said;
A strange auroral bliss, an arctic awe,
A new, outworldish joy awoke intense,
To think I talked with one that verily was dead.

8.

Thou dost demand our love, holy Lord Christ,
And batest nothing of thy modesty;-
Thou know'st no other way to bliss the highest
Than loving thee, the loving, perfectly.
Thou lovest perfectly-that is thy bliss:
We must love like thee, or our being miss-
So, to love perfectly, love perfect Love, love thee.

9.

Here is my heart, O Christ; thou know'st I love thee.
But wretched is the thing I call my love.
O Love divine, rise up in me and move me-
I follow surely when thou first dost move.
To love the perfect love, is primal, mere
Necessity; and he who holds life dear,
Must love thee every hope and heart above.

10.

Might I but scatter interfering things-
Questions and doubts, distrusts and anxious pride,
And in thy garment, as under gathering wings,
Nestle obedient to thy loving side,
Easy it were to love thee. But when thou
Send'st me to think and labour from thee wide,
Love falls to asking many a why and how.

11.

Easier it were, but poorer were the love.
Lord, I would have me love thee from the deeps-
Of troubled thought, of pain, of weariness.
Through seething wastes below, billows above,
My soul should rise in eager, hungering leaps;
Through thorny thicks, through sands unstable press-
Out of my dream to him who slumbers not nor sleeps.

12.

I do not fear the greatness of thy command-
To keep heart-open-house to brother men;
But till in thy God's love perfect I stand,
My door not wide enough will open. Then
Each man will be love-awful in my sight;
And, open to the eternal morning's might,
Each human face will shine my window for thy light.

13.

Make me all patience and all diligence;
Patience, that thou mayst have thy time with me;
Diligence, that I waste not thy expense
In sending out to bring me home to thee.
What though thy work in me transcends my sense-
Too fine, too high, for me to understand-
I hope entirely. On, Lord, with thy labour grand.

14.

Lest I be humbled at the last, and told
That my great labour was but for my peace
That not for love or truth had I been bold,
But merely for a prisoned heart's release;
Careful, I humble me now before thy feet:
Whate'er I be, I cry, and will not cease-
Let me not perish, though favour be not meet.

15.

For, what I seek thou knowest I must find,
Or miserably die for lack of love.
I justify thee: what is in thy mind,
If it be shame to me, all shame above.
Thou know'st I choose it-know'st I would not shove
The hand away that stripped me for the rod-
If so it pleased my Life, my love-made-angry God.

16.

I see a door, a multitude near by,
In creed and quarrel, sure disciples all!
Gladly they would, they say, enter the hall,
But cannot, the stone threshold is so high.
From unseen hand, full many a feeding crumb,
Slow dropping o'er the threshold high doth come:
They gather and eat, with much disputing hum.

17.

Still and anon, a loud clear voice doth call-
'Make your feet clean, and enter so the hall.'

They hear, they stoop, they gather each a crumb.
Oh the deaf people! would they were also dumb!
Hear how they talk, and lack of Christ deplore,
Stamping with muddy feet about the door,
And will not wipe them clean to walk upon his floor!

18.

But see, one comes; he listens to the voice;
Careful he wipes his weary dusty feet!
The voice hath spoken-to him is left no choice;
He hurries to obey-that only is meet.
Low sinks the threshold, levelled with the ground;
The man leaps in-to liberty he's bound.
The rest go talking, walking, picking round.

19.

If I, thus writing, rebuke my neighbour dull,
And talk, and write, and enter not the door,
Than all the rest I wrong Christ tenfold more,
Making his gift of vision void and null.
Help me this day to be thy humble sheep,
Eating thy grass, and following, thou before;
From wolfish lies my life, O Shepherd, keep.

20.

God, help me, dull of heart, to trust in thee.
Thou art the father of me-not any mood
Can part me from the One, the verily Good.
When fog and failure o'er my being brood.
When life looks but a glimmering marshy clod,
No fire out flashing from the living God-
Then, then, to rest in faith were worthy victory!

21.

To trust is gain and growth, not mere sown seed!
Faith heaves the world round to the heavenly dawn,
In whose great light the soul doth spell and read
Itself high-born, its being derived and drawn

From the eternal self-existent fire;
Then, mazed with joy of its own heavenly breed,
Exultant-humble falls before its awful sire.

22.

Art thou not, Jesus, busy like to us?
Thee shall I image as one sitting still,
Ordering all things in thy potent will,
Silent, and thinking ever to thy father,
Whose thought through thee flows multitudinous?
Or shall I think of thee as journeying, rather,
Ceaseless through space, because thou everything dost fill?

23.

That all things thou dost fill, I well may think-
Thy power doth reach me in so many ways.
Thou who in one the universe dost bind,
Passest through all the channels of my mind;
The sun of thought, across the farthest brink
Of consciousness thou sendest me thy rays;
Nor drawest them in when lost in sleep I sink.

24.

So common are thy paths, thy coming seems
Only another phase oft of my me;
But nearer is my I, O Lord, to thee,
Than is my I to what itself it deems;
How better then couldst thou, O master, come,
Than from thy home across into my home,
Straight o'er the marches that I cannot see!

25.

Marches?-'Twixt thee and me there's no division,
Except the meeting of thy will and mine,
The loves that love, the wills that will the same.
Where thine meets mine is my life's true condition;
Yea, only there it burns with any flame.
Thy will but holds me to my life's fruition.

O God, I would-I have no mine that is not thine.

26.

I look for thee, and do not see thee come.-
If I could see thee, 'twere a commoner thing,
And shaller comfort would thy coming bring.
Earth, sea, and air lie round me moveless dumb,
Never a tremble, an expectant hum,
To tell the Lord of Hearts is drawing near:
Lo! in the looking eyes, the looked for Lord is here.

27.

I take a comfort from my very badness:
It is for lack of thee that I am bad.
How close, how infinitely closer yet
Must I come to thee, ere I can pay one debt
Which mere humanity has on me set!
'How close to thee!'-no wonder, soul, thou art glad!
Oneness with him is the eternal gladness.

28.

What can there be so close as making and made?
Nought twinned can be so near; thou art more nigh
To me, my God, than is this thinking I
To that I mean when I by me is said;
Thou art more near me, than is my ready will
Near to my love, though both one place do fill;-
Yet, till we are one,-Ah me! the long until!

29.

Then shall my heart behold thee everywhere.
The vision rises of a speechless thing,
A perfectness of bliss beyond compare!
A time when I nor breathe nor think nor move,
But I do breathe and think and feel thy love,
The soul of all the songs the saints do sing!-
And life dies out in bliss, to come again in prayer.

30.

In the great glow of that great love, this death
Would melt away like a fantastic cloud;
I should no more shrink from it than from the breath
That makes in the frosty air a nimbus-shroud;
Thou, Love, hast conquered death, and I aloud
Should triumph over him, with thy saintly crowd,
That where the Lamb goes ever followeth.

George MacDonald

A Book Of Strife In The Form Of The Diary Of An Old Soul - August

1.

SO shall abundant entrance me be given
Into the truth, my life's inheritance.
Lo! as the sun shoots straight from out his tomb,
God-floated, casting round a lordly glance
Into the corners of his endless room,
So, through the rent which thou, O Christ, hast riven,
I enter liberty's divine expanse.

2.

It will be so-ah, so it is not now!
Who seeks thee for a little lazy peace,
Then, like a man all weary of the plough,
That leaves it standing in the furrow's crease,
Turns from thy presence for a foolish while,
Till comes again the rasp of unrest's file,
From liberty is distant many a mile.

3.

Like one that stops, and drinks, and turns, and goes
Into a land where never water flows,
There travels on, the dry and thirsty day,
Until the hot night veils the farther way,
Then turns and finds again the bubbling pool-
Here would I build my house, take up my stay,
Nor ever leave my Sychar's margin cool.

4.

Keep me, Lord, with thee. I call from out the dark-
Hear in thy light, of which I am a spark.
I know not what is mine and what is thine-
Of branch and stem I miss the differing mark-
But if a mere hair's-breadth me separateth,
That hair's-breadth is eternal, infinite death.

For sap thy dead branch calls, O living vine!

5.

I have no choice, I must do what I can;
But thou dost me, and all things else as well;
Thou wilt take care thy child shall grow a man.
Rouse thee, my faith; be king; with life be one;
To trust in God is action's highest kind;
Who trusts in God, his heart with life doth swell;
Faith opens all the windows to God's wind.

6.

O Father, thou art my eternity.
Not on the clasp Of consciousness-on thee
My life depends; and I can well afford
All to forget, so thou remember, Lord.
In thee I rest; in sleep thou dost me fold;
In thee I labour; still in thee, grow old;
And dying, shall I not in thee, my Life, be bold?

7.

In holy things may be unholy greed.
Thou giv'st a glimpse of many a lovely thing,
Not to be stored for use in any mind,
But only for the present spiritual need.
The holiest bread, if hoarded, soon will breed
The mammon-moth, the having-pride, I find.
'Tis momentarily thy heart gives out heart-quickenings.

8.

It is thyself, and neither this nor that,
Nor anything, told, taught, or dreamed of thee,
That keeps us live. The holy maid who sat
Low at thy feet, choosing the better part,
Rising, bore with her-what a memory!
Yet, brooding only on that treasure, she
Had soon been roused by conscious loss of heart.

9.

I am a fool when I would stop and think,
And lest I lose my thoughts, from duty shrink.
It is but avarice in another shape.
'Tis as the vine-branch were to hoard the grape,
Nor trust the living root beneath the sod.
What trouble is that child to thee, my God,
Who sips thy gracious cup, and will not drink!

10.

True, faithful action only is the life,
The grapes for which we feel the pruning knife.
Thoughts are but leaves; they fall and feed the ground.
The holy seasons, swift and slow, go round;
The ministering leaves return, fresh, large, and rife-
But fresher, larger, more thoughts to the brain:-
Farewell, my dove!-come back, hope-laden, through the rain.

11.

Well may this body poorer, feebler grow!
It is undressing for its last sweet bed;
But why should the soul, which death shall never know,
Authority, and power, and memory shed?
It is that love with absolute faith would wed;
God takes the inmost garments off his child,
To have him in his arms, naked and undefiled.

12.

Thou art my knowledge and my memory,
No less than my real, deeper life, my love.
I will not fool, degrade myself to trust
In less than that which maketh me say Me,
In less than that causing itself to be.
Then art within me, behind, beneath, above-
I will be thine because I may and must.

13.

Thou art the truth, the life. Thou, Lord, wilt see
To every question that perplexes me.
I am thy being; and my dignity
Is written with my name down in thy book;
Thou wilt care for it. Never shall I think
Of anything that thou mightst overlook:-
In faith-born triumph at thy feet I sink.

14.

Thou carest more for that which I call mine,
In same sort-better manner than I could,
Even if I knew creation's ends divine,
Rousing in me this vague desire of good.
Thou art more to me than my desires' whole brood;
Thou art the only person, and I cry
Unto the father I of this my I.

15.

Thou who inspirest prayer, then bend'st thine ear;
It, crying with love's grand respect to hear!
I cannot give myself to thee aright-
With the triumphant uttermost of gift;
That cannot be till I am full of light-
To perfect deed a perfect will must lift:-
Inspire, possess, compel me, first of every might.

16.

I do not wonder men can ill believe
Who make poor claims upon thee, perfect Lord;
Then most I trust when most I would receive.
I wonder not that such do pray and grieve-
The God they think, to be God is not fit.
Then only in thy glory I seem to sit,
When my heart claims from thine an infinite accord.

17.

More life I need ere I myself can be.
Sometimes, when the eternal tide ebbs low,

A moment weary of my life I grow-
Weary of my existence' self, I mean,
Not of its plodding, not its wind and snow
Then to thy knee trusting I turn, and lean:
Thou will'st I live, and I do will with thee.

18.

Dost thou mean sometimes that we should forget thee,
Dropping the veil of things 'twixt thee and us?-
Ah, not that we should lose thee and regret thee!
But that, we turning from our windows thus,
The frost-fixed God should vanish from the pane,
Sun-melted, and a moment, Father, let thee
Look like thyself straight into heart and brain.

19.

For sometimes when I am busy among men,
With heart and brain an open thoroughfare
For faces, words, and thoughts other than mine,
And a pause comes at length-oh, sudden then,
Back throbs the tide with rush exultant rare;
And for a gentle moment I divine
Thy dawning presence flush my tremulous air.

20.

If I have to forget thee, do thou see
It be a good, not bad forgetfulness;
That all its mellow, truthful air be free
From dusty noes, and soft with many a yes;
That as thy breath my life, my life may be
Man's breath. So when thou com'st at hour unknown,
Thou shalt find nothing in me but thine own.

21.

Thou being in me, in my deepest me,
Through all the time I do not think of thee,
Shall I not grow at last so true within
As to forget thee and yet never sin?

Shall I not walk the loud world's busy way,
Yet in thy palace-porch sit all the day?
Not conscious think of thee, yet never from thee stray?

22.

Forget!-Oh, must it be?-Would it were rather
That every sense was so filled with my father
That not in anything could I forget him,
But deepest, highest must in all things set him!-
Yet if thou think in me, God, what great matter
Though my poor thought to former break and latter-
As now my best thoughts; break, before thee foiled, and scatter!

23.

Some way there must be of my not forgetting,
And thither thou art leading me, my God.
The child that, weary of his mother's petting,
Runs out the moment that his feet are shod,
May see her face in every flower he sees,
And she, although beyond the window sitting,
Be nearer him than when he sat upon her knees.

24.

What if, when I at last, at the long last,
Shall see thy face, my Lord, my life's delight,
It should not be the face that hath been glassed
In poor imagination's mirror slight!
Will my soul sink, and shall I stand aghast,
Beggared of hope, my heart a conscious blight,
Amazed and lost-death's bitterness come and not passed?

25.

Ah, no! for from thy heart the love will press,
And shining from thy perfect human face,
Will sink into me like the father's kiss;
And deepening wide the gulf of consciousness
Beyond imagination's lowest abyss,
Will, with the potency of creative grace,

Lord it throughout the larger thinking place.

26.

Thus God-possessed, new born, ah, not for long
Should I the sight behold, beatified,
Know it creating in me, feel the throng
Of speechless hopes out-throbbing like a tide,
And my heart rushing, borne aloft the flood,
To offer at his feet its living blood-
Ere, glory-hid, the other face I spied.

27.

For out imagination is, in small,
And with the making-difference that must be,
Mirror of God's creating mirror; all
That shows itself therein, that formeth he,
And there is Christ, no bodiless vanity,
Though, face to face, the mighty perfectness
With glory blurs the dim-reflected less.

28.

I clasp thy feet, O father of the living!
Thou wilt not let my fluttering hopes be more,
Or lovelier, or greater, than thy giving!
Surely thy ships will bring to my poor shore,
Of gold and peacocks such a shining store
As will laugh all the dreams to holy scorn,
Of love and sorrow that were ever born.

29.

Sometimes it seems pure natural to trust,
And trust right largely, grandly, infinitely,
Daring the splendour of the giver's part;
At other times, the whole earth is but dust,
The sky is dust, yea, dust the human heart;
Then art thou nowhere, there is no room for thee
In the great dust-heap of eternity.

30.

But why should it be possible to mistrust-
Nor possible only, but its opposite hard?
Why should not man believe because he must-
By sight's compulsion? Why should he be scarred
With conflict? worn with doubting fine and long?-
No man is fit for heaven's musician throng
Who has not tuned an instrument all shook and jarred.

31.

Therefore, O Lord, when all things common seem,
When all is dust, and self the centre clod,
When grandeur is a hopeless, foolish dream,
And anxious care more reasonable than God,-
Out of the ashes I will call to thee-
In spite of dead distrust call earnestly:-
Oh thou who livest, call, then answer dying me.

George MacDonald

A Book Of Strife In The Form Of The Diary Of An Old Soul - December

1.

I AM a little weary of my life-
Not thy life, blessed Father! Or the blood
Too slowly laves the coral shores of thought,
Or I am weary of weariness and strife.
Open my soul-gates to thy living flood;
I ask not larger heart-throbs, vigour-fraught,
I pray thy presence, with strong patience rife.

2.

I will what thou will'st-only keep me sure
That thou art willing; call to me now and then.
So, ceasing to enjoy, I shall endure
With perfect patience-willing beyond my ken
Beyond my love, beyond my thinking scope;
Willing to be because thy will is pure;
Willing thy will beyond all bounds of hope.

3.

This weariness of mine, may it not come
From something that doth need no setting right?
Shall fruit be blamed if it hang wearily
A day before it perfected drop plumb
To the sad earth from off its nursing tree?
Ripeness must always come with loss of might.
The weary evening fall before the resting night.

4.

Hither if I have come through earth and air,
Through fire and water-I am not of them;
Born in the darkness, what fair-flashing gem
Would to the earth go back and nestle there?
Not of this world, this world my life doth hem;
What if I weary, then, and look to the door,

Because my unknown life is swelling at the core?

5.

All winged things came from the waters first;
Airward still many a one from the water springs
In dens and caves wind-loving things are nursed:-
I lie like unhatched bird, upfolded, dumb,
While all the air is trembling with the hum
Of songs and beating hearts and whirring wings,
That call my slumbering life to wake to happy things.

6.

I lay last night and knew not why I was sad.
'Tis well with God,' I said, 'and he is the truth;
Let that content me.'-'Tis not strength, nor youth,
Nor buoyant health, nor a heart merry-mad,
That makes the fact of things wherein men live:
He is the life, and doth my life outgive;
In him there is no gloom, but all is solemn-glad,

7.

I said to myself, 'Lo, I lie in a dream
Of separation, where there comes no sign;
My waking life is hid with Christ in God,
Where all is true and potent-fact divine.'
I will not heed the thing that doth but seem;
I will be quiet as lark upon the sod;
God's will, the seed, shall rest in me the pod.

8.

And when that will shall blossom-then, my God,
There will be jubilation in a world!
The glad lark, soaring heavenward from the sod,
Up the swift spiral of its own song whirled,
Never such jubilation wild out-poured
As from my soul will break at thy feet, Lord,
Like a great tide from sea-heart shoreward hurled.

9.

For then thou wilt be able, then at last,
To glad me as thou hungerest to do;
Then shall thy life my heart all open find,
A thoroughfare to thy great spirit-wind;
Then shall I rest within thy holy vast,
One with the bliss of the eternal mind;
And all creation rise in me created new.

10.

What makes thy being a bliss shall then make mind
For I shall love as thou, and love in thee;
Then shall I have whatever I desire,
My every faintest wish being all divine;
Power thou wilt give me to work mightily,
Even as my Lord, leading thy low men nigher,
With dance and song to cast their best upon thy fire.

11.

Then shall I live such an essential life
That a mere flower will then to me unfold
More bliss than now grandest orchestral strife-
By love made and obedience humble-bold,
I shall straight through its window God behold.
God, I shall feed on thee, thy creature blest
With very being-work at one with sweetest rest.

12.

Give me a world, to part for praise and sunder.
The brooks be bells; the winds, in caverns dumb,
Wake fife and flute and flageolet and voice;
The fire-shook earth itself be the great drum;
And let the air the region's bass out thunder;
The firs be violins; the reeds hautboys;
Rivers, seas, icebergs fill the great score up and under!

13.

But rather dost thou hear the blundered words
Of breathing creatures; the music-loving herds
Of thy great cattle; thy soft-bleating sheep;
O'erhovered by the trebles of thy birds,
Whose Christ-praised carelessness song-fills the deep;
Still rather a child's talk who apart doth hide him,
And make a tent for God to come and sit beside him.

14.

This is not life; this being is not enough.
But thou art life, and thou hast life for me.
Thou mad'st the worm-to cast the wormy slough,
And fly abroad-a glory flit and flee.
Thou hast me, statue-like, hewn in the rough,
Meaning at last to shape me perfectly.
Lord, thou hast called me fourth, I turn and call on thee.

15.

'Tis thine to make, mine to rejoice in thine.
As, hungering for his mother's face and eyes,
The child throws wide the door, back to the wall,
I run to thee, the refuge from poor lies:
Lean dogs behind me whimper, yelp, and whine;
Life lieth ever sick, Death's writhing thrall,
In slavery endless, hopeless, and supine.

16.

The life that hath not willed itself to be,
Must clasp the life that willed, and be at peace;
Or, like a leaf wind-blown, through chaos flee;
A life-husk into which the demons go,
And work their will, and drive it to and fro;
A thing that neither is, nor yet can cease,
Which uncreation can alone release.

17.

But when I turn and grasp the making hand,
And will the making will, with confidence

I ride the crest of the creation-wave,
Helpless no more, no more existence' slave;
In the heart of love's creating fire I stand,
And, love-possessed in heart and soul and sense,
Take up the making share the making Master gave.

18.

That man alone who does the Father's works
Can be the Father's son; yea, only he
Who sonlike can create, can ever be;
Who with God wills not, is no son, not free.
O Father, send the demon-doubt that lurks
Behind the hope, out into the abyss;
Who trusts in knowledge all its good shall miss.

19.

Thy beasts are sinless, and do live before thee;
Thy child is sinful, and must run to thee.
Thy angels sin not and in peace adore thee;
But I must will, or never more be free.
I from thy heart came, how can I ignore thee?-
Back to my home I hurry, haste, and flee;
There I shall dwell, love-praising evermore thee.

20.

My holy self, thy pure ideal, lies
Calm in thy bosom, which it cannot leave;
My self unholy, no ideal, hies
Hither and thither, gathering store to grieve-
Not now, O Father! now it mounts, it flies,
To join the true self in thy heart that waits,
And, one with it, be one with all the heavenly mates.

21.

Trusting thee, Christ, I kneel, and clasp thy knee;
Cast myself down, and kiss thy brother-feet-
One self thou and the Father's thought of thee!
Ideal son, thou hast left the perfect home,

Ideal brother, to seek thy brothers come!
Thou know'st our angels all, God's children sweet,
And of each two wilt make one holy child complete.

22.

To a slow end I draw these daily words,
Nor think such words often to write again-
Rather, as light the power to me affords,
Christ's new and old would to my friends unbind;
Through words he spoke help to his thought behind;
Unveil the heart with which he drew his men;
Set forth his rule o'er devils, animals, corn, and wind.

23.

I do remember how one time I thought,
'God must be lonely-oh, so lonely lone!
I will be very good to him-ah, nought
Can reach the heart of his great loneliness!
My whole heart I will bring him, with a moan
That I may not come nearer; I will lie prone
Before the awful loveliness in loneliness' excess.'

24.

A God must have a God for company.
And lo! thou hast the Son-God to thy friend.
Thou honour'st his obedience, he thy law.
Into thy secret life-will he doth see;
Thou fold'st him round in live love perfectly-
One two, without beginning, without end;
In love, life, strength, and truth, perfect without a flaw.

25.

Thou hast not made, or taught me, Lord, to care
For times and seasons-but this one glad day
Is the blue sapphire clasping all the lights
That flash in the girdle of the year so fair-
When thou wast born a man, because alway
Thou wast and art a man, through all the flights

Of thought, and time, and thousandfold creation's play.

26.

We all are lonely, Maker-each a soul
Shut in by itself, a sundered atom of thee.
No two yet loved themselves into a whole;
Even when we weep together we are two.
Of two to make one, which yet two shall be,
Is thy creation's problem, deep, and true,
To which thou only hold'st the happy, hurting clue.

27.

No less than thou, O Father, do we need
A God to friend each lonely one of us.
As touch not in the sack two grains of seed,
Touch no two hearts in great worlds populous.
Outside the making God we cannot meet
Him he has made our brother: homeward, thus,
To find our kin we first must turn our wandering feet.

28.

It must be possible that the soul made
Should absolutely meet the soul that makes;
Then, in that bearing soul, meet every other
There also born, each sister and each brother.
Lord, till I meet thee thus, life is delayed;
I am not I until that morning breaks,
Not I until my consciousness eternal wakes.

29.

Again I shall behold thee, daughter true;
The hour will come when I shall hold thee fast
In God's name, loving thee all through and through.
Somewhere in his grand thought this waits for us.
Then shall I see a smile not like thy last-
For that great thing which came when all was past,
Was not a smile, but God's peace glorious.

30.

Twilight of the transfiguration-joy,
Gleam-faced, pure-eyed, strong-willed, high-hearted boy!
Hardly thy life clear forth of heaven was sent,
Ere it broke out into a smile, and went.
So swift thy growth, so true thy goalward bent,
Thou, child and sage inextricably blent,
Wilt one day teach thy father in some heavenly tent

31.

Go, my beloved children, live your life.
Wounded, faint, bleeding, never yield the strife.
Stunned, fallen-awake, arise, and fight again.
Before you victory stands, with shining train
Of hopes not credible until they are.
Beyond morass and mountain swells the star
Of perfect love-the home of longing heart and brain

George MacDonald

A Book Of Strife In The Form Of The Diary Of An Old Soul - February

1.

I TO myself have neither power nor worth,
Patience nor love, nor anything right good;
My soul is a poor land, plenteous in dearth-
Here blades of grass, there a small herb for food-
A nothing that would be something if it could;
But if obedience, Lord, in me do grow,
I shall one day be better than I know.

2.

The worst power of an evil mood is this-
It makes the bastard self seem in the right,
Self, self the end, the goal of human bliss.
But if the Christ-self in us be the might
Of saving God, why should I spend my force
With a dark thing to reason of the light-
Not push it rough aside, and hold obedient course?

3.

Back still it comes to this: there was a man
Who said, 'I am the truth, the life, the way:'-
Shall I pass on, or shall I stop and hear?-
'Come to the Father but by me none can:'
What then is this?-am I not also one
Of those who live in fatherless dismay?
I stand, I look, I listen, I draw near.

4.

My Lord, I find that nothing else will do,
But follow where thou goest, sit at thy feet,
And where I have thee not, still run to meet.
Roses are scentless, hopeless are the morns,
Rest is but weakness, laughter crackling thorns,
If thou, the Truth, do not make them the true:

Thou art my life, O Christ, and nothing else will do.

5.

Thou art here-in heaven, I know, but not from here-
Although thy separate self do not appear;
If I could part the light from out the day,
There I should have thee! But thou art too near:
How find thee walking, when thou art the way?
Oh, present Christ! make my eyes keen as stings,
To see thee at their heart, the glory even of things.

6.

That thou art nowhere to be found, agree
Wise men, whose eyes are but for surfaces;
Men with eyes opened by the second birth,
To whom the seen, husk of the unseen is,
Descry thee soul of everything on earth.
Who know thy ends, thy means and motions see:
Eyes made for glory soon discover thee.

7.

Thou near then, I draw nearer-to thy feet,
And sitting in thy shadow, look out on the shine;
Ready at thy first word to leave my seat-
Not thee: thou goest too. From every clod
Into thy footprint flows the indwelling wine;
And in my daily bread, keen-eyed I greet
Its being's heart, the very body of God.

8.

Thou wilt interpret life to me, and men,
Art, nature, yea, my own soul's mysteries-
Bringing, truth out, clear-joyous, to my ken,
Fair as the morn trampling the dull night. Then
The lone hill-side shall hear exultant cries;
The joyous see me joy, the weeping weep;
The watching smile, as Death breathes on me his cold sleep.

9.

I search my heart-I search, and find no faith.
Hidden He may be in its many folds-
I see him not revealed in all the world
Duty's firm shape thins to a misty wraith.
No good seems likely. To and fro I am hurled.
I have no stay. Only obedience holds:-
I haste, I rise, I do the thing he saith.

10.

Thou wouldst not have thy man crushed back to clay;
It must be, God, thou hast a strength to give
To him that fain would do what thou dost say;
Else how shall any soul repentant live,
Old griefs and new fears hurrying on dismay?
Let pain be what thou wilt, kind and degree,
Only in pain calm thou my heart with thee.

11.

I will not shift my ground like Moab's king,
But from this spot whereon I stand, I pray-
From this same barren rock to thee I say,
'Lord, in my commonness, in this very thing
That haunts my soul with folly-through the clay
Of this my pitcher, see the lamp's dim flake;
And hear the blow that would the pitcher break.'

12.

Be thou the well by which I lie and rest;
Be thou my tree of life, my garden ground;
Be thou my home, my fire, my chamber blest,
My book of wisdom, loved of all the best;
Oh, be my friend, each day still newer found,
As the eternal days and nights go round!
Nay, nay-thou art my God, in whom all loves are bound!

13.

Two things at once, thou know'st I cannot think.
When busy with the work thou givest me,
I cannot consciously think then of thee.
Then why, when next thou lookest o'er the brink
Of my horizon, should my spirit shrink,
Reproached and fearful, nor to greet thee run?
Can I be two when I am only one.

14.

My soul must unawares have sunk awry.
Some care, poor eagerness, ambition of work,
Some old offence that unforgiving did lurk,
Or some self-gratulation, soft and sly-
Something not thy sweet will, not the good part,
While the home-guard looked out, stirred up the old murk,
And so I gloomed away from thee, my Heart.

15.

Therefore I make provision, ere I begin
To do the thing thou givest me to do,
Praying,-Lord, wake me oftener, lest I sin.
Amidst my work, open thine eyes on me,
That I may wake and laugh, and know and see
Then with healed heart afresh catch up the clue,
And singing drop into my work anew.

16.

If I should slow diverge, and listless stray
Into some thought, feeling, or dream unright,
O Watcher, my backsliding soul affray;
Let me not perish of the ghastly blight.
Be thou, O Life eternal, in me light;
Then merest approach of selfish or impure
Shall start me up alive, awake, secure.

17.

Lord, I have fallen again-a human clod!
Selfish I was, and heedless to offend;

Stood on my rights. Thy own child would not send
Away his shreds of nothing for the whole God!
Wretched, to thee who savest, low I bend:
Give me the power to let my rag-rights go
In the great wind that from thy gulf doth blow.

18.

Keep me from wrath, let it seem ever so right:
My wrath will never work thy righteousness.
Up, up the hill, to the whiter than snow-shine,
Help me to climb, and dwell in pardon's light.
I must be pure as thou, or ever less
Than thy design of me-therefore incline
My heart to take men's wrongs as thou tak'st mine.

19.

Lord, in thy spirit's hurricane, I pray,
Strip my soul naked-dress it then thy way.
Change for me all my rags to cloth of gold.
Who would not poverty for riches yield?
A hovel sell to buy a treasure-field?
Who would a mess of porridge careful hold
Against the universe's birthright old?

20.

Help me to yield my will, in labour even,
Nor toil on toil, greedy of doing, heap-
Fretting I cannot more than me is given;
That with the finest clay my wheel runs slow,
Nor lets the lovely thing the shapely grow;
That memory what thought gives it cannot keep,
And nightly rimes ere morn like cistus-petals go.

21.

'Tis-shall thy will be done for me?-or mine,
And I be made a thing not after thine-
My own, and dear in paltriest details?
Shall I be born of God, or of mere man?

Be made like Christ, or on some other plan?-
I let all run:-set thou and trim my sails;
Home then my course, let blow whatever gales.

22.

With thee on board, each sailor is a king
Nor I mere captain of my vessel then,
But heir of earth and heaven, eternal child;
Daring all truth, nor fearing anything;
Mighty in love, the servant of all men;
Resenting nothing, taking rage and blare
Into the Godlike silence of a loving care.

23.

I cannot see, my God, a reason why
From morn to night I go not gladsome free;
For, if thou art what my soul thinketh thee,
There is no burden but should lightly lie,
No duty but a joy at heart must be:
Love's perfect will can be nor sore nor small,
For God is light-in him no darkness is at all.

24.

'Tis something thus to think, and half to trust-
But, ah! my very heart, God-born, should lie
Spread to the light, clean, clear of mire and rust,
And like a sponge drink the divine sunbeams.
What resolution then, strong, swift, and high!
What pure devotion, or to live or die!
And in my sleep, what true, what perfect dreams!

25.

There is a misty twilight of the soul,
A sickly eclipse, low brooding o'er a man,
When the poor brain is as an empty bowl,
And the thought-spirit, weariful and wan,
Turning from that which yet it loves the best,
Sinks moveless, with life-poverty opprest:-

Watch then, O Lord, thy feebly glimmering coal.

26.

I cannot think; in me is but a void;
I have felt much, and want to feel no more;
My soul is hungry for some poorer fare-
Some earthly nectar, gold not unalloyed:-
The little child that's happy to the core,
Will leave his mother's lap, run down the stair,
Play with the servants-is his mother annoyed?

27.

I would not have it so. Weary and worn,
Why not to thee run straight, and be at rest?
Motherward, with toy new, or garment torn,
The child that late forsook her changeless breast,
Runs to home's heart, the heaven that's heavenliest:
In joy or sorrow, feebleness or might,
Peace or commotion, be thou, Father, my delight.

28.

The thing I would say, still comes forth with doubt
And difference:-is it that thou shap'st my ends?
Or is it only the necessity
Of stubborn words, that shift sluggish about,
Warping my thought as it the sentence bends?-
Have thou a part in it, O Lord, and I
Shall say a truth, if not the thing I try.

29.

Gather my broken fragments to a whole,
As these four quarters make a shining day.
Into thy basket, for my golden bowl,
Take up the things that I have cast away
In vice or indolence or unwise play.
Let mine be a merry, all-receiving heart,
But make it a whole, with light in every part.

A Book Of Strife In The Form Of The Diary Of An Old Soul - January

1.

LORD, what I once had done with youthful might,
Had I been from the first true to the truth,
Grant me, now old, to do-with better sight,
And humbler heart, if not the brain of youth;
So wilt thou, in thy gentleness and ruth,
Lead back thy old soul, by the path of pain,
Round to his best-young eyes and heart and brain.

2.

A dim aurora rises in my east,
Beyond the line of jagged questions hoar,
As if the head of our intombed High Priest
Began to glow behind the unopened door:
Sure the gold wings will soon rise from the gray!-
They rise not. Up I rise, press on the more,
To meet the slow coming of the Master's day.

3.

Sometimes I wake, and, lo! I have forgot,
And drifted out upon an ebbing sea!
My soul that was at rest now resteth not,
For I am with myself and not with thee;
Truth seems a blind moon in a glaring morn,
Where nothing is but sick-heart vanity:
Oh, thou who knowest! save thy child forlorn.

4.

Death, like high faith, levelling, lifteth all.
When I awake, my daughter and my son,
Grown sister and brother, in my arms shall fall,
Tenfold my girl and boy. Sure every one
Of all the brood to the old wings will run.
Whole-hearted is my worship of the man

From whom my earthly history began.

5.

Thy fishes breathe but where thy waters roll;
Thy birds fly but within thy airy sea;
My soul breathes only in thy infinite soul;
I breathe, I think, I love, I live but thee.
Oh breathe, oh think,-O Love, live into me;
Unworthy is my life till all divine,
Till thou see in me only what is thine.

6.

Then shall I breathe in sweetest sharing, then
Think in harmonious consort with my kin;
Then shall I love well all my father's men,
Feel one with theirs the life my heart within.
Oh brothers! sisters holy! hearts divine!
Then I shall be all yours, and nothing mine-
To every human heart a mother-twin.

7.

I see a child before an empty house,
Knocking and knocking at the closed door;
He wakes dull echoes-but nor man nor mouse,
If he stood knocking there for evermore.-
A mother angel, see! folding each wing,
Soft-walking, crosses straight the empty floor,
And opens to the obstinate praying thing.

8.

Were there but some deep, holy spell, whereby
Always I should remember thee-some mode
Of feeling the pure heat-throb momentarily
Of the spirit-fire still uttering this I!-
Lord, see thou to it, take thou remembrance' load:
Only when I bethink me can I cry;
Remember thou, and prick me with love's goad.

9.

If to myself-'God sometimes interferes'-
I said, my faith at once would be struck blind.
I see him all in all, the living mind,
Or nowhere in the vacant miles and years.
A love he is that watches and that hears,
Or but a mist fumed up from minds of men,
Whose fear and hope reach out beyond their ken.

10.

When I no more can stir my soul to move,
And life is but the ashes of a fire;
When I can but remember that my heart
Once used to live and love, long and aspire,-
Oh, be thou then the first, the one thou art;
Be thou the calling, before all answering love,
And in me wake hope, fear, boundless desire.

11.

I thought that I had lost thee; but, behold!
Thou comest to me from the horizon low,
Across the fields outspread of green and gold-
Fair carpet for thy feet to come and go.
Whence I know not, or how to me thou art come!-
Not less my spirit with calm bliss doth glow,
Meeting thee only thus, in nature vague and dumb.

12.

Doubt swells and surges, with swelling doubt behind!
My soul in storm is but a tattered sail,
Streaming its ribbons on the torrent gale;
In calm, 'tis but a limp and flapping thing:
Oh! swell it with thy breath; make it a wing,-
To sweep through thee the ocean, with thee the wind
Nor rest until in thee its haven it shall find.

13.

The idle flapping of the sail is doubt;
Faith swells it full to breast the breasting seas.
Bold, conscience, fast, and rule the ruling helm;
Hell's freezing north no tempest can send out,
But it shall toss thee homeward to thy leas;
Boisterous wave-crest never shall o'erwhelm
Thy sea-float bark as safe as field-borne rooted elm.

14.

Sometimes, hard-trying, it seems I cannot pray-
For doubt, and pain, and anger, and all strife.
Yet some poor half-fledged prayer-bird from the nest
May fall, flit, fly, perch-crouch in the bowery breast
Of the large, nation-healing tree of life;-
Moveless there sit through all the burning day,
And on my heart at night a fresh leaf cooling lay.

15.

My harvest withers. Health, my means to live-
All things seem rushing straight into the dark.
But the dark still is God. I would not give
The smallest silver-piece to turn the rush
Backward or sideways. Am I not a spark
Of him who is the light?-Fair hope doth flush
My east.-Divine success-Oh, hush and hark!

16.

Thy will be done. I yield up everything.
'The life is more than meat'-then more than health;
'The body more than raiment'-then than wealth;
The hairs I made not, thou art numbering.
Thou art my life-I the brook, thou the spring.
Because thine eyes are open, I can see;
Because thou art thyself, 'tis therefore I am me.

17.

No sickness can come near to blast my health;
My life depends not upon any meat;

My bread comes not from any human tilth;
No wings will grow upon my changeless wealth;
Wrong cannot touch it, violence or deceit;
Thou art my life, my health, my bank, my barn-
And from all other gods thou plain dost warn.

18.

Care thou for mine whom I must leave behind;
Care that they know who 'tis for them takes care;
Thy present patience help them still to bear;
Lord, keep them clearing, growing, heart and mind;
In one thy oneness us together bind;
Last earthly prayer with which to thee I cling-
Grant that, save love, we owe not anything.

19.

'Tis well, for unembodied thought a live,
True house to build-of stubble, wood, nor hay;
So, like bees round the flower by which they thrive,
My thoughts are busy with the informing truth,
And as I build, I feed, and grow in youth-
Hoping to stand fresh, clean, and strong, and gay,
When up the east comes dawning His great day.

20.

Thy will is truth-'tis therefore fate, the strong.
Would that my will did sweep full swing with thine!
Then harmony with every spheric song,
And conscious power, would give sureness divine.
Who thinks to thread thy great laws' onward throng,
Is as a fly that creeps his foolish way
Athwart an engine's wheels in smooth resistless play.

21.

Thou in my heart hast planted, gardener divine,
A scion of the tree of life: it grows;
But not in every wind or weather it blows;
The leaves fall sometimes from the baby tree,

And the life-power seems melting into pine;
Yet still the sap keeps struggling to the shine,
And the unseen root clings cramplike unto thee.

22.

Do thou, my God, my spirit's weather control;
And as I do not gloom though the day be dun,
Let me not gloom when earth-born vapours roll
Across the infinite zenith of my soul.
Should sudden brain-frost through the heart's summer run,
Cold, weary, joyless, waste of air and sun,
Thou art my south, my summer-wind, my all, my one.

23.

O Life, why dost thou close me up in death?
O Health, why make me inhabit heaviness?-
I ask, yet know: the sum of this distress,
Pang-haunted body, sore-dismayed mind,
Is but the egg that rounds the winged faith;
When that its path into the air shall find,
My heart will follow, high above cold, rain, and wind.

24.

I can no more than lift my weary eyes;
Therefore I lift my weary eyes-no more.
But my eyes pull my heart, and that, before
'Tis well awake, knocks where the conscience lies;
Conscience runs quick to the spirit's hidden door:
Straightway, from every sky-ward window, cries
Up to the Father's listening ears arise.

25.

Not in my fancy now I search to find thee;
Not in its loftiest forms would shape or bind thee;
I cry to one whom I can never know,
Filling me with an infinite overflow;
Not to a shape that dwells within my heart,
Clothed in perfections love and truth assigned thee,

But to the God thou knowest that thou art.

26.

Not, Lord, because I have done well or ill;
Not that my mind looks up to thee clear-eyed;
Not that it struggles in fast cerements tied;
Not that I need thee daily sorer still;
Not that I wretched, wander from thy will;
Not now for any cause to thee I cry,
But this, that thou art thou, and here am I.

27.

Yestereve, Death came, and knocked at my thin door.
I from my window looked: the thing I saw,
The shape uncouth, I had not seen before.
I was disturbed-with fear, in sooth, not awe;
Whereof ashamed, I instantly did rouse
My will to seek thee-only to fear the more:
Alas! I could not find thee in the house.

28.

I was like Peter when he began to sink.
To thee a new prayer therefore I have got-
That, when Death comes in earnest to my door,
Thou wouldst thyself go, when the latch doth clink,
And lead him to my room, up to my cot;
Then hold thy child's hand, hold and leave him not,
Till Death has done with him for evermore.

29.

Till Death has done with him?-Ah, leave me then!
And Death has done with me, oh, nevermore!
He comes-and goes-to leave me in thy arms,
Nearer thy heart, oh, nearer than before!
To lay thy child, naked, new-born again
Of mother earth, crept free through many harms,
Upon thy bosom-still to the very core.

30.

Come to me, Lord: I will not speculate how,
Nor think at which door I would have thee appear,
Nor put off calling till my floors be swept,
But cry, 'Come, Lord, come any way, come now.'
Doors, windows, I throw wide; my head I bow,
And sit like some one who so long has slept
That he knows nothing till his life draw near.

31.

O Lord, I have been talking to the people;
Thought's wheels have round me whirled a fiery zone,
And the recoil of my words' airy ripple
My heart unheedful has puffed up and blown.
Therefore I cast myself before thee prone:
Lay cool hands on my burning brain, and press
From my weak heart the swelling emptiness.

George MacDonald

A Book Of Strife In The Form Of The Diary Of An Old Soul - July

1.

ALAS, my tent! see through it a whirlwind sweep!
Moaning, poor Fancy's doves are swept away.
I sit alone, a sorrow half asleep,
My consciousness the blackness all astir.
No pilgrim I, a homeless wanderer-
For how canst Thou be in the darkness deep,
Who dwellest only in the living day?

2.

It must be, somewhere in my fluttering tent,
Strange creatures, half tamed only yet, are pent-
Dragons, lop-winged birds, and large-eyed snakes!
Hark! through the storm the saddest howling breaks!
Or are they loose, roaming about the bent,
The darkness dire deepening with moan and scream?-
My Morning, rise, and all shall be a dream.

3.

Not thine, my Lord, the darkness all is mine-
Save that, as mine, my darkness too is thine:
All things are thine to save or to destroy-
Destroy my darkness, rise my perfect joy;
Love primal, the live coal of every night,
Flame out, scare the ill things with radiant fright,
And fill my tent with laughing morn's delight.

4.

Master, thou workest with such common things-
Low souls, weak hearts, I mean-and hast to use,
Therefore, such common means and rescuings,
That hard we find it, as we sit and muse,
To think thou workest in us verily:
Bad sea-boats we, and manned with wretched crews-

That doubt the captain, watch the storm-spray flee.

5.

Thou art hampered in thy natural working then
When beings designed on freedom's holy plan
Will not be free: with thy poor, foolish men,
Thou therefore hast to work just like a man.
But when, tangling thyself in their sore need,
Thou hast to freedom fashioned them indeed,
Then wilt thou grandly move, and Godlike speed.

6.

Will this not then show grandest fact of all-
In thy creation victory most renowned-
That thou hast wrought thy will by slow and small,
And made men like thee, though thy making bound
By that which they were not, and could not be
Until thou mad'st them make along with thee?-
Master, the tardiness is but in me.

7.

Hence come thy checks-because I still would run
My head into the sand, nor flutter aloft
Towards thy home, with thy wind under me.
'Tis because I am mean, thy ways so oft
Look mean to me; my rise is low begun;
But scarce thy will doth grasp me, ere I see,
For my arrest and rise, its stern necessity.

8.

Like clogs upon the pinions of thy plan
We hang-like captives on thy chariot-wheels,
Who should climb up and ride with Death's conqueror;
Therefore thy train along the world's highway steals
So slow to the peace of heart-reluctant man.
What shall we do to spread the wing and soar,
Nor straiten thy deliverance any more?

9.

The sole way to put flight into the wing,
To preen its feathers, and to make them grow,
Is to heed humbly every smallest thing
With which the Christ in us has aught to do.
So will the Christ from child to manhood go,
Obedient to the father Christ, and so
Sweet holy change will turn all our old things to new.

10.

Creation thou dost work by faint degrees,
By shade and shadow from unseen beginning;
Far, far apart, in unthought mysteries
Of thy own dark, unfathomable seas,
Thou wilt thy will; and thence, upon the earth-
Slow travelling, his way through centuries winning-
A child at length arrives at never ending birth.

11.

Well mayst thou then work on indocile hearts
By small successes, disappointments small;
By nature, weather, failure, or sore fall;
By shame, anxiety, bitterness, and smarts;
By loneliness, by weary loss of zest:-
The rags, the husks, the swine, the hunger-quest,
Drive home the wanderer to the father's breast.

12.

How suddenly some rapid turn of thought
May throw the life-machine all out of gear,
Clouding the windows with the steam of doubt,
Filling the eyes with dust, with noise the ear!
Who knows not then where dwells the engineer,
Rushes aghast into the pathless night,
And wanders in a land of dreary fright.

13.

Amazed at sightless whirring of their wheels,
Confounded with the recklessness and strife,
Distract with fears of what may next ensue,
Some break rude exit from the house of life,
And plunge into a silence out of view-
Whence not a cry, no wafture once reveals
What door they have broke open with the knife.

14.

Help me, my Father, in whatever dismay,
Whatever terror in whatever shape,
To hold the faster by thy garment's hem;
When my heart sinks, oh, lift it up, I pray;
Thy child should never fear though hell should gape,
Not blench though all the ills that men affray
Stood round him like the Roman round Jerusalem.

15.

Too eager I must not be to understand.
How should the work the master goes about
Fit the vague sketch my compasses have planned?
I am his house-for him to go in and out.
He builds me now-and if I cannot see
At any time what he is doing with me,
'Tis that he makes the house for me too grand.

16.

The house is not for me-it is for him.
His royal thoughts require many a stair,
Many a tower, many an outlook fair,
Of which I have no thought, and need no care.
Where I am most perplexed, it may be there
Thou mak'st a secret chamber, holy-dim,
Where thou wilt come to help my deepest prayer.

17.

I cannot tell why this day I am ill;
But I am well because it is thy will-

Which is to make me pure and right like thee.
Not yet I need escape-'tis bearable
Because thou knowest. And when harder things
Shall rise and gather, and overshadow me,
I shall have comfort in thy strengthenings.

18.

How do I live when thou art far away?-
When I am sunk, and lost, and dead in sleep,
Or in some dream with no sense in its play?
When weary-dull, or drowned in study deep?-
O Lord, I live so utterly on thee,
I live when I forget thee utterly-
Not that thou thinkest of, but thinkest me.

19.

Thou far!-that word the holy truth doth blur.
Doth the great ocean from the small fish run
When it sleeps fast in its low weedy bower?
Is the sun far from any smallest flower,
That lives by his dear presence every hour?
Are they not one in oneness without stir-
The flower the flower because the sun the sun?

20.

'Dear presence every hour'!-what of the night,
When crumpled daisies shut gold sadness in;
And some do hang the head for lack of light,
Sick almost unto death with absence-blight?-
Thy memory then, warm-lingering in the ground,
Mourned dewy in the air, keeps their hearts sound,
Till fresh with day their lapsed life begin.

21.

All things are shadows of the shining true:
Sun, sea, and air-close, potent, hurtless fire-
Flowers from their mother's prison-dove, and dew-
Every thing holds a slender guiding clue

Back to the mighty oneness:-hearts of faith
Know thee than light, than heat, endlessly nigher,
Our life's life, carpenter of Nazareth.

22.

Sometimes, perhaps, the spiritual blood runs slow,
And soft along the veins of will doth flow,
Seeking God's arteries from which it came.
Or does the ethereal, creative flame
Turn back upon itself, and latent grow?-
It matters not what figure or what name,
If thou art in me, and I am not to blame.

23.

In such God-silence, the soul's nest, so long
As all is still, no flutter and no song,
Is safe. But if my soul begin to act
Without some waking to the eternal fact
That my dear life is hid with Christ in God-
I think and move a creature of earth's clod,
Stand on the finite, act upon the wrong.

24.

My soul this sermon hence for itself prepares:-
'Then is there nothing vile thou mayst not do,
Buffeted in a tumult of low cares,
And treacheries of the old man 'gainst the new.'-
Lord, in my spirit let thy spirit move,
Warning, that it may not have to reprove:-
In my dead moments, master, stir the prayers.

25.

Lord, let my soul o'erburdened then feel thee
Thrilling through all its brain's stupidity.
If I must slumber, heedless of ill harms,
Let it not be but in my Father's arms;
Outside the shelter of his garment's fold,
All is a waste, a terror-haunted wold.-

Lord, keep me. 'Tis thy child that cries. Behold.

26.

Some say that thou their endless love host won
By deeds for them which I may not believe
Thou ever didst, or ever willedst done:
What matter, so they love thee? They receive
Eternal more than the poor loom and wheel
Of their invention ever wove and spun.-
I love thee for I must, thine all from head to heel.

27.

The love of thee will set all notions right.
Right save by love no thought can be or may;
Only love's knowledge is the primal light.
Questions keep camp along love's shining coast-
Challenge my love and would my entrance stay:
Across the buzzing, doubting, challenging host,
I rush to thee, and cling, and cry-
Thou know'st.

28.

Oh, let me live in thy realities,
Nor substitute my notions for thy facts,
Notion with notion making leagues and pacts;
They are to truth but as dream-deeds to acts,
And questioned, make me doubt of everything.-
'O Lord, my God,' my heart gets up and cries,
'Come thy own self, and with thee my faith bring.'

29.

O master, my desires to work, to know,
To be aware that I do live and grow-
All restless wish for anything not thee,
I yield, and on thy altar offer me.
Let me no more from out thy presence go,
But keep me waiting watchful for thy will-
Even while I do it, waiting watchful still.

30.

Thou art the Lord of life, the secret thing.
Thou wilt give endless more than I could find,
Even if without thee I could go and seek;
For thou art one, Christ, with my deepest mind,
Duty alive, self-willed, in me dost speak,
And to a deeper purer being sting:
I come to thee, my life, my causing kind.

31.

Nothing is alien in thy world immense-
No look of sky or earth or man or beast;
'In the great hand of God I stand, and thence'
Look out on life, his endless, holy feast.
To try to feel is but to court despair,
To dig for a sun within a garden-fence:
Who does thy will, O God, he lives upon thy air.

George MacDonald

A Book Of Strife In The Form Of The Diary Of An Old Soul - June

1.

FROM thine, as then, the healing virtue goes
Into our hearts-that is the Father's plan.
From heart to heart it sinks, it steals, it flows,
From these that know thee still infecting those.
Here is my heart-from thine, Lord, fill it up,
That I may offer it as the holy cup
Of thy communion to my every man.

2.

When thou dost send out whirlwinds on thy seas,
Alternatest thy lightning with its roar,
Thy night with morning, and thy clouds with stars
Or, mightier force unseen in midst of these,
Orderest the life in every airy pore;
Guidest men's efforts, rul'st mishaps and jars,-
'Tis only for their hearts, and nothing more.

3.

This, this alone thy father careth for-
That men should live hearted throughout with thee-
Because the simple, only life thou art,
Of the very truth of living, the pure heart.
For this, deep waters whelm the fruitful lea,
Wars ravage, famine wastes, plague withers, nor
Shall cease till men have chosen the better part.

4.

But, like a virtuous medicine, self-diffused
Through all men's hearts thy love shall sink and float;
Till every feeling false, and thought unwise,
Selfish, and seeking, shall, sternly disused,
Wither, and die, and shrivel up to nought;
And Christ, whom they did hang 'twixt earth and skies,

Up in the inner world of men arise.

5.

Make me a fellow worker with thee, Christ;
Nought else befits a God-born energy;
Of all that's lovely, only lives the highest,
Lifing the rest that it shall never die.
Up I would be to help thee-for thou liest
Not, linen-swathed in Joseph's garden-tomb,
But walkest crowned, creation's heart and bloom.

6.

My God, when I would lift my heart to thee,
Imagination instantly doth set
A cloudy something, thin, and vast, and vague,
To stand for him who is the fact of me;
Then up the Will, and doth her weakness plague
To pay the heart her duty and her debt,
Showing the face that hearkeneth to the plea.

7.

And hence it comes that thou at times dost seem
To fade into an image of my mind;
I, dreamer, cover, hide thee up with dream,-
Thee, primal, individual entity!-
No likeness will I seek to frame or find,
But cry to that which thou dost choose to be,
To that which is my sight, therefore I cannot see.

8.

No likeness? Lo, the Christ! Oh, large Enough!
I see, yet fathom not the face he wore.
He is-and out of him there is no stuff
To make a man. Let fail me every spark
Of blissful vision on my pathway rough,
I have seen much, and trust the perfect more,
While to his feet my faith crosses the wayless dark.

9.

Faith is the human shadow of thy might.
Thou art the one self-perfect life, and we
Who trust thy life, therein join on to thee,
Taking our part in self-creating light.
To trust is to step forward out of the night-
To be-to share in the outgoing Will
That lives and is, because outgoing still.

10.

I am lost before thee, Father! yet I will
Claim of thee my birthright ineffable.
Thou lay'st it on me, son, to claim thee, sire;
To that which thou hast made me, I aspire;
To thee, the sun, upflames thy kindled fire.
No man presumes in that to which he was born;
Less than the gift to claim, would be the giver to scorn.

11.

Henceforth all things thy dealings are with me
For out of thee is nothing, or can be,
And all things are to draw us home to thee.
What matter that the knowers scoffing say,
'This is old folly, plain to the new day'?-
If thou be such as thou, and they as they,
Unto thy Let there be, they still must answer Nay.

12.

They will not, therefore cannot, do not know him.
Nothing they could know, could be God. In sooth,
Unto the true alone exists the truth.
They say well, saying Nature doth not show him:
Truly she shows not what she cannot show;
And they deny the thing they cannot know.
Who sees a glory, towards it will go.

13.

Faster no step moves God because the fool
Shouts to the universe God there is none;
The blindest man will not preach out the sun,
Though on his darkness he should found a school.
It may be, when he finds he is not dead,
Though world and body, sight and sound are fled,
Some eyes may open in his foolish head.

14.

When I am very weary with hard thought,
And yet the question burns and is not quenched,
My heart grows cool when to remembrance wrought
That thou who know'st the light-born answer sought
Know'st too the dark where the doubt lies entrenched-
Know'st with what seemings I am sore perplexed,
And that with thee I wait, nor needs my soul be vexed.

15.

Who sets himself not sternly to be good,
Is but a fool, who judgment of true things
Has none, however oft the claim renewed.
And he who thinks, in his great plenitude,
To right himself, and set his spirit free,
Without the might of higher communings,
Is foolish also-save he willed himself to be.

16.

How many helps thou giv'st to those would learn!
To some sore pain, to others a sinking heart;
To some a weariness worse than any smart;
To some a haunting, fearing, blind concern;
Madness to some; to some the shaking dart
Of hideous death still following as they turn;
To some a hunger that will not depart.

17.

To some thou giv'st a deep unrest-a scorn
Of all they are or see upon the earth;

A gaze, at dusky night and clearing morn,
As on a land of emptiness and dearth;
To some a bitter sorrow; to some the sting
Of love misprized-of sick abandoning;
To some a frozen heart, oh, worse than anything!

18.

To some a mocking demon, that doth set
The poor foiled will to scoff at the ideal,
But loathsome makes to them their life of jar.
The messengers of Satan think to mar,
But make-driving the soul from false to feal-
To thee, the reconciler, the one real,
In whom alone the would be and the is are met.

19.

Me thou hast given an infinite unrest,
A hunger-not at first after known good,
But something vague I knew not, and yet would-
The veiled Isis, thy will not understood;
A conscience tossing ever in my breast;
And something deeper, that will not be expressed,
Save as the Spirit thinking in the Spirit's brood.

20.

But now the Spirit and I are one in this-
My hunger now is after righteousness;
My spirit hopes in God to set me free
From the low self loathed of the higher me.
Great elder brother of my second birth,
Dear o'er all names but one, in heaven or earth,
Teach me all day to love eternally.

21.

Lo, Lord, thou know'st, I would not anything
That in the heart of God holds not its root;
Nor falsely deem there is any life at all
That doth in him nor sleep nor shine nor sing;

I know the plants that bear the noisome fruit
Of burning and of ashes and of gall-
From God's heart torn, rootless to man's they cling.

22.

Life-giving love rots to devouring fire;
Justice corrupts to despicable revenge;
Motherhood chokes in the dam's jealous mire;
Hunger for growth turns fluctuating change;
Love's anger grand grows spiteful human wrath,
Hunting men out of conscience' holy path;
And human kindness takes the tattler's range.

23.

Nothing can draw the heart of man but good;
Low good it is that draws him from the higher-
So evil-poison uncreate from food.
Never a foul thing, with temptation dire,
Tempts hellward force created to aspire,
But walks in wronged strength of imprisoned Truth,
Whose mantle also oft the Shame indu'th.

24.

Love in the prime not yet I understand-
Scarce know the love that loveth at first hand:
Help me my selfishness to scatter and scout;
Blow on me till my love loves burningly;
Then the great love will burn the mean self out,
And I, in glorious simplicity,
Living by love, shall love unspeakably.

25.

Oh, make my anger pure-let no worst wrong
Rouse in me the old niggard selfishness.
Give me thine indignation-which is love
Turned on the evil that would part love's throng;
Thy anger scathes because it needs must bless,
Gathering into union calm and strong

All things on earth, and under, and above.

26.

Make my forgiveness downright-such as I
Should perish if I did not have from thee;
I let the wrong go, withered up and dry,
Cursed with divine forgetfulness in me.
'Tis but self-pity, pleasant, mean, and sly,
Low whispering bids the paltry memory live:-
What am I brother for, but to forgive!

27.

'Thou art my father's child-come to my heart:'
Thus must I say, or Thou must say, 'Depart;'
Thus I would say-I would be as thou art;
Thus I must say, or still I work athwart
The absolute necessity and law
That dwells in me, and will me asunder draw,
If in obedience I leave any flaw.

28.

Lord, I forgive-and step in unto thee.
If I have enemies, Christ deal with them:
He hath forgiven me and Jerusalem.
Lord, set me from self-inspiration free,
And let me live and think from thee, not me-
Rather, from deepest me then think and feel,
At centre of thought's swift-revolving wheel.

29.

I sit o'er-canopied with Beauty's tent,
Through which flies many a golden-winged dove,
Well watched of Fancy's tender eyes up bent;
A hundred Powers wait on me, ministering;
A thousand treasures Art and Knowledge bring;
Will, Conscience, Reason tower the rest above;
But in the midst, alone, I gladness am and love.

30.

'Tis but a vision, Lord; I do not mean
That thus I am, or have one moment been-
'Tis but a picture hung upon my wall,
To measure dull contentment therewithal,
And know behind the human how I fall;-
A vision true, of what one day shall be,
When thou hast had thy very will with me.

George MacDonald

A Book Of Strife In The Form Of The Diary Of An Old Soul - March

1.

THE song birds that come to me night and morn,
Fly oft away and vanish if I sleep,
Nor to my fowling-net will one return:
Is the thing ever ours we cannot keep?-
But their souls go not out into the deep.
What matter if with changed song they come back?
Old strength nor yet fresh beauty shall they lack.

2.

Gloriously wasteful, O my Lord, art thou!
Sunset faints after sunset into the night,
Splendorously dying from thy window-sill-
For ever. Sad our poverty doth bow
Before the riches of thy making might:
Sweep from thy space thy systems at thy will-
In thee the sun sets every sunset still.

3.

And in the perfect time, O perfect God,
When we are in our home, our natal home,
When joy shall carry every sacred load,
And from its life and peace no heart shall roam,
What if thou make us able to make like thee-
To light with moons, to clothe with greenery,
To hang gold sunsets o'er a rose and purple sea!

4.

Then to his neighbour one may call out, 'Come!
Brother, come hither-I would show you a thing;'
And lo, a vision of his imagining,
Informed of thought which else had rested dumb,
Before the neighbour's truth-delighted eyes,
In the great æther of existence rise,

And two hearts each to each the closer cling!

5.

We make, but thou art the creating core.
Whatever thing I dream, invent, or feel,
Thou art the heart of it, the atmosphere.
Thou art inside all love man ever bore;
Yea, the love itself, whatever thing be dear.
Man calls his dog, he follows at his heel,
Because thou first art love, self-caused, essential, mere.

6.

This day be with me, Lord, when I go forth,
Be nearer to me than I am able to ask.
In merriment, in converse, or in task,
Walking the street, listening to men of worth,
Or greeting such as only talk and bask,
Be thy thought still my waiting soul around,
And if He come, I shall be watching found.

7.

What if, writing, I always seem to leave
Some better thing, or better way, behind,
Why should I therefore fret at all, or grieve!
The worse I drop, that I the better find;
The best is only in thy perfect mind.
Fallen threads I will not search for-I will weave.
Who makes the mill-wheel backward strike to grind!

8.

Be with me, Lord. Keep me beyond all prayers:
For more than all my prayers my need of thee,
And thou beyond all need, all unknown cares;
What the heart's dear imagination dares,
Thou dost transcend in measureless majesty
All prayers in one-my God, be unto me
Thy own eternal self, absolutely.

9.

Where should the unknown treasures of the truth
Lie, but there whence the truth comes out the most-
In the Son of man, folded in love and ruth?
Fair shore we see, fair ocean; but behind
Lie infinite reaches bathing many a coast-
The human thought of the eternal mind,
Pulsed by a living tide, blown by a living wind.

10.

Thou, healthful Father, art the Ancient of Days,
And Jesus is the eternal youth of thee.
Our old age is the scorching of the bush
By life's indwelling, incorruptible blaze.
O Life, burn at this feeble shell of me,
Till I the sore singed garment off shall push,
Flap out my Psyche wings, and to thee rush.

11.

But shall I then rush to thee like a dart?
Or lie long hours æonian yet betwixt
This hunger in me, and the Father's heart?-
It shall be good, how ever, and not ill;
Of things and thoughts even now thou art my next;
Sole neighbour, and no space between, thou art-
And yet art drawing nearer, nearer still.

12.

Therefore, my brothers, therefore, sisters dear,
However I, troubled or selfish, fail
In tenderness, or grace, or service clear,
I every moment draw to you more near;
God in us from our hearts veil after veil
Keeps lifting, till we see with his own sight,
And all together run in unity's delight.

13.

I love thee, Lord, for very greed of love-
Not of the precious streams that towards me move,
But of the indwelling, outgoing, fountain store.
Than mine, oh, many an ignorant heart loves more!
Therefore the more, with Mary at thy feet,
I must sit worshipping-that, in my core,
Thy words may fan to a flame the low primeval heat.

14.

Oh my beloved, gone to heaven from me!
I would be rich in love to heap you with love;
I long to love you, sweet ones, perfectly-
Like God, who sees no spanning vault above,
No earth below, and feels no circling air-
Infinitely, no boundary anywhere.
I am a beast until I love as God doth love.

15.

Ah, say not, 'tis but perfect self I want
But if it were, that self is fit to live
Whose perfectness is still itself to scant,
Which never longs to have, but still to give.
A self I must have, or not be at all:
Love, give me a self self-giving-or let me fall
To endless darkness back, and free me from life's thrall.

16.

'Back,' said I! Whither back? How to the dark?
From no dark came I, but the depths of light;
From the sun-heart I came, of love a spark:
What should I do but love with all my might?
To die of love severe and pure and stark,
Were scarcely loss; to lord a loveless height-
That were a living death, damnation's positive night.

17.

But love is life. To die of love is then
The only pass to higher life than this.

All love is death to loving, living men;
All deaths are leaps across clefts to the abyss.
Our life is the broken current, Lord, of thine,
Flashing from morn to morn with conscious shine-
Then first by willing death self-made, then life divine.

18.

I love you, my sweet children, who are gone
Into another mansion; but I know
I love you not as I shall love you yet.
I love you, sweet dead children; there are none
In the land to which ye vanished to go,
Whose hearts more truly on your hearts are set-
Yet should I die of grief to love you only so.

19.

'I am but as a beast before thee, Lord.'-
Great poet-king, I thank thee for the word.-
Leave not thy son half-made in beastly guise-
Less than a man, with more than human cries-
An unshaped thing in which thyself cries out!
Finish me, Father; now I am but a doubt;
Oh! make thy moaning thing for joy to leap and shout.

20.

Let my soul talk to thee in ordered words,
O king of kings, O lord of only lords!-
When I am thinking thee within my heart,
From the broken reflex be not far apart.
The troubled water, dim with upstirred soil,
Makes not the image which it yet can spoil:-
Come nearer, Lord, and smooth the wrinkled coil.

21.

O Lord, when I do think of my departed,
I think of thee who art the death of parting;
Of him who crying Father breathed his last,
Then radiant from the sepulchre upstarted.-

Even then, I think, thy hands and feet kept smarting:
With us the bitterness of death is past,
But by the feet he still doth hold us fast.

22.

Therefore our hands thy feet do hold as fast.
We pray not to be spared the sorest pang,
But only-be thou with us to the last.
Let not our heart be troubled at the clang
Of hammer and nails, nor dread the spear's keen fang,
Nor the ghast sickening that comes of pain,
Nor yet the last clutch of the banished brain.

23.

Lord, pity us: we have no making power;
Then give us making will, adopting thine.
Make, make, and make us; temper, and refine.
Be in us patience-neither to start nor cower.
Christ, if thou be not with us-not by sign,
But presence, actual as the wounds that bleed-
We shall not bear it, but shall die indeed.

24.

O Christ, have pity on all men when they come
Unto the border haunted of dismay;
When that they know not draweth very near-
The other thing, the opposite of day,
Formless and ghastly, sick, and gaping-dumb,
Before which even love doth lose his cheer:
O radiant Christ, remember then thy fear.

25.

Be by me, Lord, this day. Thou know'st I mean-
Lord, make me mind thee. I herewith forestall
My own forgetfulness, when I stoop to glean
The corn of earth-which yet thy hand lets fall.
Be for me then against myself. Oh lean
Over me then when I invert my cup;

Take me, if by the hair, and lift me up.

26.

Lord of essential life, help me to die.
To will to die is one with highest life,
The mightiest act that to Will's hand doth lie-
Born of God's essence, and of man's hard strife:
God, give me strength my evil self to kill,
And die into the heaven of thy pure will.-
Then shall this body's death be very tolerable.

27.

As to our mothers came help in our birth-
Not lost in lifing us, but saved and blest-
Self bearing self, although right sorely prest,
Shall nothing lose, but die and be at rest
In life eternal, beyond all care and dearth.
God-born then truly, a man does no more ill,
Perfectly loves, and has whate'er he will.

28.

As our dear animals do suffer less
Because their pain spreads neither right nor left,
Lost in oblivion and foresightlessness-
Our suffering sore by faith shall be bereft
Of all dismay, and every weak excess.
His presence shall be better in our pain,
Than even self-absence to the weaker brain.

29.

'Father, let this cup pass.' He prayed-was heard.
What cup was it that passed away from him?
Sure not the death-cup, now filled to the brim!
There was no quailing in the awful word;
He still was king of kings, of lords the lord:-
He feared lest, in the suffering waste and grim,
His faith might grow too faint and sickly dim.

30.

Thy mind, my master, I will dare explore;
What we are told, that we are meant to know.
Into thy soul I search yet more and more,
Led by the lamp of my desire and woe.
If thee, my Lord, I may not understand,
I am a wanderer in a houseless land,
A weeping thirst by hot winds ever fanned.

31.

Therefore I look again-and think I see
That, when at last he did cry out, 'My God,
Why hast thou me forsaken?' straight man's rod
Was turned aside; for, that same moment, he
Cried 'Father!' and gave up will and breath and spirit
Into his hands whose all he did inherit-
Delivered, glorified eternally.

George MacDonald

A Book Of Strife In The Form Of The Diary Of An Old Soul - May

1.

WHAT though my words glance sideways from the thing
Which I would utter in thine ear, my sire!
Truth in the inward parts thou dost desire-
Wise hunger, not a fitness fine of speech:
The little child that clamouring fails to reach
With upstretched hand the fringe of her attire,
Yet meets the mother's hand down hurrying.

2.

Even when their foolish words they turned on him,
He did not his disciples send away;
He knew their hearts were foolish, eyes were dim,
And therefore by his side needs must they stay.
Thou will not, Lord, send me away from thee.
When I am foolish, make thy cock crow grim;
If that is not enough, turn, Lord, and look on me.

3.

Another day of gloom and slanting rain!
Of closed skies, cold winds, and blight and bane!
Such not the weather, Lord, which thou art fain
To give thy chosen, sweet to heart and brain!-
Until we mourn, thou keep'st the merry tune;
Thy hand unloved its pleasure must restrain,
Nor spoil both gift and child by lavishing too soon.

4.

But all things shall be ours! Up, heart, and sing.
All things were made for us-we are God's heirs-
Moon, sun, and wildest comets that do trail
A crowd of small worlds for a swiftness-tail!
Up from Thy depths in me, my child-heart bring-
The child alone inherits anything:

God's little children-gods-all things are theirs!

5.

Thy great deliverance is a greater thing
Than purest imagination can foregrasp;
A thing beyond all conscious hungering,
Beyond all hope that makes the poet sing.
It takes the clinging world, undoes its clasp,
Floats it afar upon a mighty sea,
And leaves us quiet with love and liberty and thee.

6.

Through all the fog, through all earth's wintery sighs,
I scent Thy spring, I feel the eternal air,
Warm, soft, and dewy, filled with flowery eyes,
And gentle, murmuring motions everywhere-
Of life in heart, and tree, and brook, and moss;
Thy breath wakes beauty, love, and bliss, and prayer,
And strength to hang with nails upon thy cross.

7.

If thou hadst closed my life in seed and husk,
And cast me into soft, warm, damp, dark mould,
All unaware of light come through the dusk,
I yet should feel the split of each shelly fold,
Should feel the growing of my prisoned heart,
And dully dream of being slow unrolled,
And in some other vagueness taking part.

8.

And little as the world I should foreknow
Up into which I was about to rise-
Its rains, its radiance, airs, and warmth, and skies,
How it would greet me, how its wind would blow-
As little, it may be, I do know the good
Which I for years half darkling have pursued-
The second birth for which my nature cries.

9.

The life that knows not, patient waits, nor longs:-
I know, and would be patient, yet would long.
I can be patient for all coming songs,
But let me sing my one monotonous song.
To me the time is slow my mould among;
To quicker life I fain would spur and start
The aching growth at my dull-swelling heart.

10.

Christ is the pledge that I shall one day see;
That one day, still with him, I shall awake,
And know my God, at one with him and free.
O lordly essence, come to life in me;
The will-throb let me feel that doth me make;
Now have I many a mighty hope in thee,
Then shall I rest although the universe should quake.

11.

Haste to me, Lord, when this fool-heart of mine
Begins to gnaw itself with selfish craving;
Or, like a foul thing scarcely worth the saving,
Swoln up with wrath, desireth vengeance fine.
Haste, Lord, to help, when reason favours wrong;
Haste when thy soul, the high-born thing divine,
Is torn by passion's raving, maniac throng.

12.

Fair freshness of the God-breathed spirit air,
Pass through my soul, and make it strong to love;
Wither with gracious cold what demons dare
Shoot from my hell into my world above;
Let them drop down, like leaves the sun doth sear,
And flutter far into the inane and bare,
Leaving my middle-earth calm, wise, and clear.

13.

Even thou canst give me neither thought nor thing,
Were it the priceless pearl hid in the land,
Which, if I fix thereon a greedy gaze,
Becomes not poison that doth burn and cling;
Their own bad look my foolish eyes doth daze,
They see the gift, see not the giving hand-
From the living root the apple dead I wring.

14.

This versing, even the reading of the tale
That brings my heart its joy unspeakable,
Sometimes will softly, unsuspectedly hale
That heart from thee, and all its pulses quell.
Discovery's pride, joy's bliss, take aback my sail,
And sweep me from thy presence and my grace,
Because my eyes dropped from the master's face.

15.

Afresh I seek thee. Lead me-once more I pray-
Even should it be against my will, thy way.
Let me not feel thee foreign any hour,
Or shrink from thee as an estranged power.
Through doubt, through faith, through bliss, through stark dismay,
Through sunshine, wind, or snow, or fog, or shower,
Draw me to thee who art my only day.

16.

I would go near thee-but I cannot press
Into thy presence-it helps not to presume.
Thy doors are deeds; the handles are their doing.
He whose day-life is obedient righteousness,
Who, after failure, or a poor success,
Rises up, stronger effort yet renewing-
He finds thee, Lord, at length, in his own common room.

17.

Lord, thou hast carried me through this evening's duty;
I am released, weary, and well content.

O soul, put on the evening dress of beauty,
Thy sunset-flush, of gold and purple blent!-
Alas, the moment I turn to my heart,
Feeling runs out of doors, or stands apart!
But such as I am, Lord, take me as thou art.

18.

The word he then did speak, fits now as then,
For the same kind of men doth mock at it.
God-fools, God-drunkards these do call the men
Who think the poverty of their all not fit,
Borne humbly by their art, their voice, their pen,
Save for its allness, at thy feet to fling,
For whom all is unfit that is not everything.

19.

O Christ, my life, possess me utterly.
Take me and make a little Christ of me.
If I am anything but thy father's son,
'Tis something not yet from the darkness won.
Oh, give me light to live with open eyes.
Oh, give me life to hope above all skies.
Give me thy spirit to haunt the Father with my cries.

20.

'Tis hard for man to rouse his spirit up-
It is the human creative agony,
Though but to hold the heart an empty cup,
Or tighten on the team the rigid rein.
Many will rather lie among the slain
Than creep through narrow ways the light to gain-
Than wake the will, and be born bitterly.

21.

But he who would be born again indeed,
Must wake his soul unnumbered times a day,
And urge himself to life with holy greed;
Now ope his bosom to the Wind's free play;

And now, with patience forceful, hard, lie still,
Submiss and ready to the making will,
Athirst and empty, for God's breath to fill.

22.

All times are thine whose will is our remede.
Man turns to thee, thou hast not turned away;
The look he casts, thy labour that did breed-
It is thy work, thy business all the day:
That look, not foregone fitness, thou dost heed.
For duty absolute how be fitter than now?
Or learn by shunning?-Lord, I come; help thou.

23.

Ever above my coldness and my doubt
Rises up something, reaching forth a hand:
This thing I know, but cannot understand.
Is it the God in me that rises out
Beyond my self, trailing it up with him,
Towards the spirit-home, the freedom-land,
Beyond my conscious ken, my near horizon's brim?

24.

O God of man, my heart would worship all
My fellow men, the flashes from thy fire;
Them in good sooth my lofty kindred call,
Born of the same one heart, the perfect sire;
Love of my kind alone can set me free;
Help me to welcome all that come to me,
Not close my doors and dream solitude liberty!

25.

A loving word may set some door ajar
Where seemed no door, and that may enter in
Which lay at the heart of that same loving word.
In my still chamber dwell thou always, Lord;
Thy presence there will carriage true afford;
True words will flow, pure of design to win;

And to my men my door shall have no bar.

26.

My prayers, my God, flow from what I am not;
I think thy answers make me what I am.
Like weary waves thought follows upon thought,
But the still depth beneath is all thine own,
And there thou mov'st in paths to us unknown.
Out of strange strife thy peace is strangely wrought;
If the lion in us pray-thou answerest the lamb.

27.

So bound in selfishness am I, so chained,
I know it must be glorious to be free
But know not what, full-fraught, the word doth mean.
By loss on loss I have severely gained
Wisdom enough my slavery to see;
But liberty, pure, absolute, serene,
No freest- visioned slave has ever seen.

28.

For, that great freedom how should such as I
Be able to imagine in such a self?
Less hopeless far the miser man might try
To image the delight of friend-shared self.
Freedom is to be like thee, face and heart;
To know it, Lord, I must be as thou art,
I cannot breed the imagination high.

29.

Yet hints come to me from the realm unknown;
Airs drift across the twilight border land,
Odoured with life; and as from some far strand
Sea-murmured, whispers to my heart are blown
That fill me with a joy I cannot speak,
Yea, from whose shadow words drop faint and weak:
Thee, God, I shadow in that region grand.

30.

O Christ, who didst appear in Judah land,
Thence by the cross go back to God's right hand,
Plain history, and things our sense beyond,
In thee together come and correspond:
How rulest thou from the undiscovered bourne
The world-wise world that laughs thee still to scorn?
Please, Lord, let thy disciple understand.

31.

'Tis heart on heart thou rulest. Thou art the same
At God's right hand as here exposed to shame,
And therefore workest now as thou didst then-
Feeding the faint divine in humble men.
Through all thy realms from thee goes out heart-power,
Working the holy, satisfying hour,
When all shall love, and all be loved again.

George MacDonald

A Book Of Strife In The Form Of The Diary Of An Old Soul - November

1.

THOU art of this world, Christ. Thou know'st it all;
Thou know'st our evens, our morns, our red and gray;
How moons, and hearts, and seasons rise and fall;
How we grow weary plodding on the way;
Of future joy how present pain bereaves,
Rounding us with a dark of mere decay,
Tossed with a drift Of summer-fallen leaves.

2.

Thou knowest all our weeping, fainting, striving;
Thou know'st how very hard it is to be;
How hard to rouse faint will not yet reviving;
To do the pure thing, trusting all to thee;
To hold thou art there, for all no face we see;
How hard to think, through cold and dark and dearth,
That thou art nearer now than when eye-seen on earth.

3.

Have pity on us for the look of things,
When blank denial stares us in the face.
Although the serpent mask have lied before,
It fascinates the bird that darkling sings,
And numbs the little prayer-bird's beating wings.
For how believe thee somewhere in blank space,
If through the darkness come no knocking to our door?

4.

If we might sit until the darkness go,
Possess our souls in patience perhaps we might;
But there is always something to be done,
And no heart left to do it. To and fro
The dull thought surges, as the driven waves fight
In gulfy channels. Oh! victorious one,

Give strength to rise, go out, and meet thee in the night.

5.

'Wake, thou that sleepest; rise up from the dead,
And Christ will give thee light.' I do not know
What sleep is, what is death, or what is light;
But I am waked enough to feel a woe,
To rise and leave death. Stumbling through the night,
To my dim lattice, O calling Christ! I go,
And out into the dark look for thy star-crowned head.

6.

There are who come to me, and write, and send,
Whom I would love, giving good things to all,
But friend-that name I cannot on them spend;
'Tis from the centre of self-love they call
For cherishing-for which they first must know
How to be still, and take the seat that's low:
When, Lord, shall I be fit-when wilt thou call me friend?

7.

Wilt thou not one day, Lord? In all my wrong,
Self-love and weakness, laziness and fear,
This one thing I can say: I am content
To be and have what in thy heart I am meant
To be and have. In my best times I long
After thy will, and think it glorious-dear;
Even in my worst, perforce my will to thine is bent.

8.

My God, I look to thee for tenderness
Such as I could not seek from any man,
Or in a human heart fancy or plan-
A something deepest prayer will not express:
Lord, with thy breath blow on my being's fires,
Until, even to the soul with self-love wan,
I yield the primal love, that no return desires.

9.

Only no word of mine must ever foster
The self that in a brother's bosom gnaws;
I may not fondle failing, nor the boaster
Encourage with the breath of my applause.
Weakness needs pity, sometimes love's rebuke;
Strength only sympathy deserves and draws-
And grows by every faithful loving look.

10.

'Tis but as men draw nigh to thee, my Lord,
They can draw nigh each other and not hurt.
Who with the gospel of thy peace are girt,
The belt from which doth hang the Spirit's sword,
Shall breathe on dead bones, and the bones shall live,
Sweet poison to the evil self shall give,
And, clean themselves, lift men clean from the mire abhorred.

11.

My Lord, I have no clothes to come to thee;
My shoes are pierced and broken with the road;
I am torn and weathered, wounded with the goad,
And soiled with tugging at my weary load:
The more I need thee! A very prodigal
I stagger into thy presence, Lord of me:
One look, my Christ, and at thy feet I fall!

12.

Why should I still hang back, like one in a dream,
Who vainly strives to clothe himself aright,
That in great presence he may seemly seem?
Why call up feeling?-dress me in the faint,
Worn, faded, cast-off nimbus of some saint?
Why of old mood bring back a ghostly gleam-
While there He waits, love's heart and loss's blight!

13.

Son of the Father, elder brother mine,
See thy poor brother's plight; See how he stands
Defiled and feeble, hanging down his hands!
Make me clean, brother, with thy burning shine;
From thy rich treasures, householder divine,
Bring forth fair garments, old and new, I pray,
And like thy brother dress me, in the old home-bred way.

14.

My prayer-bird was cold-would not away,
Although I set it on the edge of the nest.
Then I bethought me of the story old-
Love-fact or loving fable, thou know'st best-
How, when the children had made sparrows of clay,
Thou mad'st them birds, with wings to flutter and fold:
Take, Lord, my prayer in thy hand, and make it pray.

15.

My poor clay-sparrow seems turned to a stone,
And from my heart will neither fly nor run.
I cannot feel as thou and I both would,
But, Father, I am willing-make me good.
What art thou father for, but to help thy son?
Look deep, yet deeper, in my heart, and there,
Beyond where I can feel, read thou the prayer.

16.

Oh what it were to be right sure of thee!
Sure that thou art, and the same as thy son, Jesus!
Oh, faith is deeper, wider than the sea,
Yea, than the blue of heaven that ever flees us!
Yet simple as the cry of sore-hurt child,
Or as his shout, with sudden gladness wild,
When home from school he runs, till morn set free.

17.

If I were sure thou, Father, verily art,
True father of the Nazarene as true,

Sure as I am of my wife's shielding heart,
Sure as of sunrise in the watching blue,
Sure as I am that I do eat and drink,
And have a heart to love and laugh and think,
Meseems in flame the joy might from my body start.

18.

But I must know thee in a deeper way
Than any of these ways, or know thee not;
My heart at peace far loftier proof must lay
Than if the wind thou me the wave didst roll,
Than if I lay before thee a sunny spot,
Or knew thee as the body knows its soul,
Or even as the part doth know its perfect whole.

19.

There is no word to tell how I must know thee;
No wind clasped ever a low meadow-flower
So close that as to nearness it could show thee;
No rainbow so makes one the sun and shower.
A something with thee, I am a nothing fro' thee.
Because I am not save as I am in thee,
My soul is ever setting out to win thee.

20.

I know not how-for that I first must know thee.
I know I know thee not as I would know thee,
For my heart burns like theirs that did not know him,
Till he broke bread, and therein they must know him.
I know thee, knowing that I do not know thee,
Nor ever shall till one with me I know thee-
Even as thy son, the eternal man, doth know thee.

21.

Creation under me, in, and above,
Slopes upward from the base, a pyramid,
On whose point I shall stand at last, and love.
From the first rush of vapour at thy will,

To the last poet-word that darkness chid,
Thou hast been sending up creation's hill,
To lift thy souls aloft in faithful Godhead free.

22.

I think my thought, and fancy I think thee.-
Lord, wake me up; rend swift my coffin-planks;
I pray thee, let me live-alive and free.
My soul will break forth in melodious thanks,
Aware at last what thou wouldst have it be,
When thy life shall be light in me, and when
My life to thine is answer and amen.

23.

How oft I say the same things in these lines!
Even as a man, buried in during dark,
Turns ever where the edge of twilight shines,
Prays ever towards the vague eternal mark;
Or as the sleeper, having dreamed he drinks,
Back straightway into thirstful dreaming sinks,
So turns my will to thee, for thee still longs, still pines.

24.

The mortal man, all careful, wise, and troubled,
The eternal child in the nursery doth keep.
To-morrow on to-day the man heaps doubled;
The child laughs, hopeful, even in his sleep.
The man rebukes the child for foolish trust;
The child replies, 'Thy care is for poor dust;
Be still, and let me wake that thou mayst sleep.'

25.

Till I am one, with oneness manifold,
I must breed contradiction, strife, and doubt;
Things tread Thy court-look real-take proving hold-
My Christ is not yet grown to cast them out;
Alas! to me, false-judging 'twixt the twain,
The Unseen oft fancy seems, while, all about,

The Seen doth lord it with a mighty train.

26.

But when the Will hath learned obedience royal,
He straight will set the child upon the throne;
To whom the seen things all, grown instant loyal,
Will gather to his feet, in homage prone-
The child their master they have ever known;
Then shall the visible fabric plainly lean
On a Reality that never can be seen.

27.

Thy ways are wonderful, maker of men!
Thou gavest me a child, and I have fed
And clothed and loved her, many a growing year;
Lo! now a friend of months draws gently near,
And claims her future-all beyond his ken-
There he hath never loved her nor hath led:
She weeps and moans, but turns, and leaves her home so dear.

28.

She leaves, but not forsakes. Oft in the night,
Oft at mid-day when all is still around,
Sudden will rise, in dim pathetic light,
Some childish memory of household bliss,
Or sorrow by love's service robed and crowned;
Rich in his love, she yet will sometimes miss
The mother's folding arms, the mother's sealing kiss.

29.

Then first, I think, our eldest-born, although
Loving, devoted, tender, watchful, dear,
The innermost of home-bred love shall know!
Yea, when at last the janitor draws near,
A still, pale joy will through the darkness go,
At thought of lying in those arms again,
Which once were heaven enough for any pain.

30.

By love doth love grow mighty in its love:
Once thou shalt love us, child, as we love thee.
Father of loves, is it not thy decree
That, by our long, far-wandering remove
From thee, our life, our home, our being blest,
We learn at last to love thee true and best,
And rush with all our loves back to thy infinite rest?

George MacDonald

A Book Of Strife In The Form Of The Diary Of An Old Soul - October

1.

REMEMBER, Lord, thou hast not made me good.
Or if thou didst, it was so long ago
I have forgotten-and never understood,
I humbly think. At best it was a crude,
A rough-hewn goodness, that did need this woe,
This sin, these harms of all kinds fierce and rude,
To shape it out, making it live and grow.

2.

But thou art making me, I thank thee, sire.
What thou hast done and doest thou know'st well,
And I will help thee:-gently in thy fire
I will lie burning; on thy potter's-wheel
I will whirl patient, though my brain should reel;
Thy grace shall be enough the grief to quell,
And growing strength perfect through weakness dire.

3.

I have not knowledge, wisdom, insight, thought,
Nor understanding, fit to justify
Thee in thy work, O Perfect. Thou hast brought
Me up to this-and, lo! what thou hast wrought,
I cannot call it good. But I can cry-
'O enemy, the maker hath not done;
One day thou shalt behold, and from the sight wilt run.'

4.

The faith I will, aside is easily bent;
But of thy love, my God, one glimpse alone
Can make me absolutely confident-
With faith, hope, joy, in love responsive blent.
My soul then, in the vision mighty grown,
Its father and its fate securely known,

Falls on thy bosom with exultant moan.

5.

Thou workest perfectly. And if it seem
Some things are not so well, 'tis but because
They are too loving-deep, too lofty-wise,
For me, poor child, to understand their laws:
My highest wisdom half is but a dream;
My love runs helpless like a falling stream:
Thy good embraces ill, and lo! its illness dies!

6.

From sleep I wake, and wake to think of thee.
But wherefore not with sudden glorious glee?
Why burst not gracious on me heaven and earth
In all the splendour of a new-day-birth?
Why hangs a cloud betwixt my lord and me?
The moment that my eyes the morning greet,
My soul should panting rush to clasp thy father-feet.

7.

Is it because it is not thou I see,
But only my poor, blotted fancy of thee?
Oh! never till thyself reveal thy face,
Shall I be flooded with life's vital grace.
Oh make my mirror-heart thy shining-place,
And then my soul, awaking with the morn,
Shall be a waking joy, eternally new-born.

8.

Lord, in my silver is much metal base,
Else should my being by this time have shown
Thee thy own self therein. Therefore do I
Wake in the furnace. I know thou sittest by,
Refining-look, keep looking in to try
Thy silver; master, look and see thy face,
Else here I lie for ever, blank as any stone.

9.

But when in the dim silver thou dost look,
I do behold thy face, though blurred and faint.
Oh joy! no flaw in me thy grace will brook,
But still refine: slow shall the silver pass
From bright to brighter, till, sans spot or taint,
Love, well content, shall see no speck of brass,
And I his perfect face shall hold as in a glass.

10.

With every morn my life afresh must break
The crust of self, gathered about me fresh;
That thy wind-spirit may rush in and shake
The darkness out of me, and rend the mesh
The spider-devils spin out of the flesh-
Eager to net the soul before it wake,
That it may slumberous lie, and listen to the snake.

11.

'Tis that I am not good-that is enough;
I pry no farther-that is not the way.
Here, O my potter, is thy making stuff!
Set thy wheel going; let it whir and play.
The chips in me, the stones, the straws, the sand,
Cast them out with fine separating hand,
And make a vessel of thy yielding clay.

12.

What if it take a thousand years to make me,
So me he leave not, angry, on the floor!-
Nay, thou art never angry!-that would break me!
Would I tried never thy dear patience sore,
But were as good as thou couldst well expect me,
Whilst thou dost make, I mar, and thou correct me!
Then were I now content, waiting for something more.

13.

Only, my God, see thou that I content thee-
Oh, take thy own content upon me, God!
Ah, never, never, sure, wilt thou repent thee,
That thou hast called thy Adam from the clod!
Yet must I mourn that thou shouldst ever find me
One moment sluggish, needing more of the rod
Than thou didst think when thy desire designed me.

14.

My God, it troubles me I am not better.
More help, I pray, still more. Thy perfect debtor
I shall be when thy perfect child I am grown.
My Father, help me-am I not thine own?
Lo, other lords have had dominion o'er me,
But now thy will alone I set before me:
Thy own heart's life-Lord, thou wilt not abhor me!

15.

In youth, when once again I had set out
To find thee, Lord, my life, my liberty,
A window now and then, clouds all about,
Would open into heaven: my heart forlorn
First all would tremble with a solemn glee,
Then, whelmed in peace, rest like a man outworn,
That sees the dawn slow part the closed lids of the morn.

16.

Now I grow old, and the soft-gathered years
Have calmed, yea dulled the heart's swift fluttering beat;
But a quiet hope that keeps its household seat
Is better than recurrent glories fleet.
To know thee, Lord, is worth a many tears;
And when this mildew, age, has dried away,
My heart will beat again as young and strong and gay.

17.

Stronger and gayer tenfold!-but, O friends,
Not for itself, nor any hoarded bliss.

I see but vaguely whither my being tends,
All vaguely spy a glory shadow-blent,
Vaguely desire the 'individual kiss';
But when I think of God, a large content
Fills the dull air of my gray cloudy tent.

18.

Father of me, thou art my bliss secure.
Make of me, maker, whatsoe'er thou wilt.
Let fancy's wings hang moulting, hope grow poor,
And doubt steam up from where a joy was spilt-
I lose no time to reason it plain and clear,
But fly to thee, my life's perfection dear:-
Not what I think, but what thou art, makes sure.

19.

This utterance of spirit through still thought,
This forming of heart-stuff in moulds of brain,
Is helpful to the soul by which 'tis wrought,
The shape reacting on the heart again;
But when I am quite old, and words are slow,
Like dying things that keep their holes for woe,
And memory's withering tendrils clasp with effort vain?

20.

Thou, then as now, no less wilt be my life,
And I shall know it better than before,
Praying and trusting, hoping, claiming more.
From effort vain, sick foil, and bootless strife,
I shall, with childness fresh, look up to thee;
Thou, seeing thy child with age encumbered sore,
Wilt round him bend thine arm more carefully.

21.

And when grim Death doth take me by the throat,
Thou wilt have pity on thy handiwork;
Thou wilt not let him on my suffering gloat,
But draw my soul out-gladder than man or boy,

When thy saved creatures from the narrow ark
Rushed out, and leaped and laughed and cried for joy,
And the great rainbow strode across the dark.

22.

Against my fears, my doubts, my ignorance,
I trust in thee, O father of my Lord!
The world went on in this same broken dance,
When, worn and mocked, he trusted and adored:
I too will trust, and gather my poor best
To face the truth-faced false. So in his nest
I shall awake at length, a little scarred and scored.

23.

Things cannot look all right so long as I
Am not all right who see-therefore not right
Can see. The lamp within sends out the light
Which shows the things; and if its rays go wry,
Or are not white, they must part show a lie.
The man, half-cured, did men not trees conclude,
Because he moving saw what else had seemed a wood.

24.

Give me, take from me, as thou wilt. I learn-
Slowly and stubbornly I learn to yield
With a strange hopefulness. As from the field
Of hard-fought battle won, the victor chief
Turns thankfully, although his heart do yearn,
So from my old things to thy new I turn,
With sad, thee-trusting heart, and not in grief.

25.

If with my father I did wander free,
Floating o'er hill and field where'er we would,
And, lighting on the sward before the door,
Strange faces through the window-panes should see,
And strange feet standing where the loved had stood,
The dear old place theirs all, as ours before-

Should I be sorrowful, father, having thee?

26.

So, Lord, if thou tak'st from me all the rest,
Thyself with each resumption drawing nigher,
It shall but hurt me as the thorn of the briar,
When I reach to the pale flower in its breast.
To have thee, Lord, is to have all thy best,
Holding it by its very life divine-
To let my friend's hand go, and take his heart in mine.

27.

Take from me leisure, all familiar places;
Take all the lovely things of earth and air
Take from me books; take all my precious faces;
Take words melodious, and their songful linking;
Take scents, and sounds, and all thy outsides fair;
Draw nearer, taking, and, to my sober thinking,
Thou bring'st them nearer all, and ready to my prayer.

28.

No place on earth henceforth I shall count strange,
For every place belongeth to my Christ.
I will go calm where'er thou bid'st me range;
Whoe'er my neighbour, thou art still my nighest.
Oh my heart's life, my owner, will of my being!
Into my soul thou every moment diest,
In thee my life thus evermore decreeing.

29.

What though things change and pass, nor come again!
Thou, the life-heart of all things, changest never.
The sun shines on; the fair clouds turn to rain,
And glad the earth with many a spring and river.
The hearts that answer change with chill and shiver,
That mourn the past, sad-sick, with hopeless pain,
They know not thee, our changeless heart and brain.

30.

My halting words will some day turn to song-
Some far-off day, in holy other times!
The melody now prisoned in my rimes
Will one day break aloft, and from the throng
Of wrestling thoughts and words spring up the air;
As from the flower its colour's sweet despair
Issues in odour, and the sky's low levels climbs.

31.

My surgent thought shoots lark-like up to thee.
Thou like the heaven art all about the lark.
Whatever I surmise or know in me,
Idea, or but symbol on the dark,
Is living, working, thought-creating power
In thee, the timeless father of the hour.
I am thy book, thy song-thy child would be.

George MacDonald

A Book Of Strife In The Form Of The Diary Of An Old Soul - September

1.

WE are a shadow and a shining, we!
One moment nothing seems but what we see,
Nor aught to rule but common circumstance-
Nought is to seek but praise, to shun but chance;
A moment more, and God is all in all,
And not a sparrow from its nest can fall
But from the ground its chirp goes up into his hall.

2.

I know at least which is the better mood.
When on a heap of cares I sit and brood,
Like Job upon his ashes, sorely vexed,
I feel a lower thing than when I stood
The world's true heir, fearless as, on its stalk,
A lily meeting Jesus in his walk:
I am not all mood-I can judge betwixt.

3.

Such differing moods can scarce to one belong;
Shall the same fountain sweet and bitter yield?
Shall what bore late the dust-mood, think and brood
Till it bring forth the great believing mood?
Or that which bore the grand mood, bald and peeled,
Sit down to croon the shabby sensual song,
To hug itself, and sink from wrong to meaner wrong?

4.

In the low mood, the mere man acts alone,
Moved by impulses which, if from within,
Yet far outside the centre man begin;
But in the grand mood, every softest tone
Comes from the living God at very heart-
From thee who infinite core of being art,

Thee who didst call our names ere ever we could sin.

5.

There is a coward sparing in the heart,
Offspring of penury and low-born fear:-
Prayer must take heed nor overdo its part,
Asking too much of him with open ear!
Sinners must wait, not seek the very best,
Cry out for peace, and be of middling cheer:-
False heart! thou cheatest God, and dost thy life molest.

6.

Thou hungerest not, thou thirstest not enough.
Thou art a temporizing thing, mean heart.
Down-drawn, thou pick'st up straws and wretched stuff,
Stooping as if the world's floor were the chart
Of the long way thy lazy feet must tread.
Thou dreamest of the crown hung o'er thy head-
But that is safe-thou gatherest hairs and fluff!

7.

Man's highest action is to reach up higher,
Stir up himself to take hold of his sire.
Then best I love you, dearest, when I go
And cry to love's life I may love you so
As to content the yearning, making love,
That perfects strength divine in weakness' fire,
And from the broken pots calls out the silver dove.

8.

Poor am I, God knows, poor as withered leaf;
Poorer or richer than, I dare not ask.
To love aright, for me were hopeless task,
Eternities too high to comprehend.
But shall I tear my heart in hopeless grief,
Or rise and climb, and run and kneel, and bend,
And drink the primal love-so love in chief?

9.

Then love shall wake and be its own high life.
Then shall I know 'tis I that love indeed-
Ready, without a moment's questioning strife,
To be forgot, like bursting water-bead,
For the high good of the eternal dear;
All hope, all claim, resting, with spirit clear,
Upon the living love that every love doth breed.

10.

Ever seem to fail in utterance.
Sometimes amid the swift melodious dance
Of fluttering words-as if it had not been,
The thought has melted, vanished into night;
Sometimes I say a thing I did not mean,
And lo! 'tis better, by thy ordered chance,
Than what eluded me, floating too feathery light.

11.

If thou wouldst have me speak, Lord, give me speech.
So many cries are uttered now-a-days,
That scarce a song, however clear and true,
Will thread the jostling tumult safe, and reach
The ears of men buz-filled with poor denays:
Barb thou my words with light, make my song new,
And men will hear, or when I sing or preach.

12.

Can anything go wrong with me? I ask-
And the same moment, at a sudden pain,
Stand trembling. Up from the great river's brim
Comes a cold breath; the farther bank is dim;
The heaven is black with clouds and coming rain;
High soaring faith is grown a heavy task,
And all is wrong with weary heart and brain.

13.

'Things do go wrong. I know grief, pain, and fear.
I see them lord it sore and wide around.'
From her fair twilight answers Truth, star-crowned,
'Things wrong are needful where wrong things abound.
Things go not wrong; but Pain, with dog and spear,
False faith from human hearts will hunt and hound.
The earth shall quake 'neath them that trust the solid ground.'

14.

Things go not wrong when sudden I fall prone,
But when I snatch my upheld hand from thine,
And, proud or careless, think to walk alone.
Then things go wrong, when I, poor, silly sheep,
To shelves and pits from the good pasture creep;
Not when the shepherd leaves the ninety and nine,
And to the mountains goes, after the foolish one.

15.

Lo! now thy swift dogs, over stone and bush,
After me, straying sheep, loud barking, rush.
There's Fear, and Shame, and Empty-heart, and Lack,
And Lost-love, and a thousand at their back!
I see thee not, but know thou hound'st them on,
And I am lost indeed-escape is none.
See! there they come, down streaming on my track!

16.

I rise and run, staggering-double and run.-
But whither?-whither?-whither for escape?
The sea lies all about this long-necked cape-
There come the dogs, straight for me every one-
Me, live despair, live centre of alarms!-
Ah! lo! 'twixt me and all his barking harms,
The shepherd, lo!-I run-fall folded in his arms.

17.

There let the dogs yelp, let them growl and leap;
It is no matter-I will go to sleep.

Like a spent cloud pass pain and grief and fear,
Out from behind it unchanged love shines clear.-
Oh, save me, Christ!-I know not what I am,
I was thy stupid, self-willed, greedy lamb,
Would be thy honest and obedient sheep.

18.

Why is it that so often I return
From social converse with a spirit worn,
A lack, a disappointment-even a sting
Of shame, as for some low, unworthy thing?-
Because I have not, careful, first of all,
Set my door open wide, back to the wall,
Ere I at others' doors did knock and call.

19.

Yet more and more of me thou dost demand;
My faith and hope in God alone shall stand,
The life of law-not trust the rain and sun
To draw the golden harvest o'er the land.
I must not say-'This too will pass and die,'
'The wind will change,' 'Round will the seasons run.'
Law is the body of will, of conscious harmony.

20.

Who trusts a law, might worship a god of wood;
Half his soul slumbers, if it be not dead.
He is a live thing shut in chaos crude,
Hemmed in with dragons-a remorseless head
Still hanging over its uplifted eyes.
No; God is all in all, and nowhere dies-
The present heart and thinking will of good.

21.

Law is our schoolmaster. Our master, Christ,
Lived under all our laws, yet always prayed-
So walked the water when the storm was highest.-
Law is Thy father's; thou hast it obeyed,

And it thereby subject to thee hast made-
To rule it, master, for thy brethren's sakes:-
Well may he guide the law by whom law's maker makes.

22.

Death haunts our souls with dissolution's strife;
Soaks them with unrest; makes our every breath
A throe, not action; from God's purest gift
Wipes off the bloom; and on the harp of faith
Its fretted strings doth slacken still and shift:
Life everywhere, perfect, and always life,
Is sole redemption from this haunting death.

23.

God, thou from death dost lift me. As I rise,
Its Lethe from my garment drips and flows.
Ere long I shall be safe in upper air,
With thee, my life-with thee, my answered prayer
Where thou art God in every wind that blows,
And self alone, and ever, softly dies,
There shall my being blossom, and I know it fair.

24.

I would dig, Master, in no field but thine,
Would build my house only upon thy rock,
Yet am but a dull day, with a sea-sheen!
Why should I wonder then that they should mock,
Who, in the limbo of things heard and seen,
Hither and thither blowing, lose the shine
Of every light that hangs in the firmament divine.

25.

Lord, loosen in me the hold of visible things;
Help me to walk by faith and not by sight;
I would, through thickest veils and coverings,
See into the chambers of the living light.
Lord, in the land of things that swell and seem,
Help me to walk by the other light supreme,

Which shows thy facts behind man's vaguely hinting dream.

26.

I see a little child whose eager hands
Search the thick stream that drains the crowded street
For possible things hid in its current slow.
Near by, behind him, a great palace stands,
Where kings might welcome nobles to their feet.
Soft sounds, sweet scents, fair sights there only go-
There the child's father lives, but the child does not know.

27.

On, eager, hungry, busy-seeking child,
Rise up, turn round, run in, run up the stair.
Far in a chamber from rude noise exiled,
Thy father sits, pondering how thou dost fare.
The mighty man will clasp thee to his breast:
Will kiss thee, stroke the tangles of thy hair,
And lap thee warm in fold on fold of lovely rest.

28.

The prince of this world came, and nothing found
In thee, O master; but, ah, woe is me!
He cannot pass me, on other business bound,
But, spying in me things familiar, he
Casts over me the shadow of his flight,
And straight I moan in darkness-and the fight
Begins afresh betwixt the world and thee.

29.

In my own heart, O master, in my thought,
Betwixt the woolly sheep and hairy goat
Not clearly I distinguish; but I think
Thou knowest that I fight upon thy side.
The how I am ashamed of; for I shrink
From many a blow-am borne on the battle-tide,
When I should rush to the front, and take thy foe by the throat.

30.

The enemy still hath many things in me;
Yea, many an evil nest with open hole
Gapes out to him, at which he enters free.
But, like the impact of a burning coal,
His presence mere straight rouses the garrison,
And all are up in arms, and down on knee,
Fighting and praying till the foe is gone.

George MacDonald

A Broken Prayer

O Lord, my God, how long
Shall my poor heart pant for a boundless joy?
How long, O mighty Spirit, shall I hear
The murmur of Truth's crystal waters slide
From the deep caverns of their endless being,
But my lips taste not, and the grosser air
Choke each pure inspiration of thy will?

I am a denseness 'twixt me and the light;
I cannot round myself; my purest thought,
Ere it is thought, hath caught the taint of earth,
And mocked me with hard thoughts beyond my will.

I would be a wind
Whose smallest atom is a viewless wing,
All busy with the pulsing life that throbs
To do thy bidding; yea, or the meanest thing
That has relation to a changeless truth,
Could I but be instinct with thee—each thought
The lightning of a pure intelligence,
And every act as the loud thunder-clap
Of currents warring for a vacuum.

Lord, clothe me with thy truth as with a robe;
Purge me with sorrow; I will bend my head
And let the nations of thy waves pass over,
Bathing me in thy consecrated strength;
And let thy many-voiced and silver winds
Pass through my frame with their clear influence,
O save me; I am blind; lo, thwarting shapes
Wall up the void before, and thrusting out
Lean arms of unshaped expectation, beckon
Down to the night of all unholy thoughts.

Oh, when at midnight one of thy strong angels
Stems back the waves of earthly influence
That shape unsteady continents around me,
And they draw off with the devouring gush
Of exile billows that have found a home,

Leaving me islanded on unseen points,
Hanging 'twixt thee and chaos-I have seen
Unholy shapes lop off my shining thoughts,
And they have lent me leathern wings of fear,
Of baffled pride and harrowing distrust;
And Godhead, with its crown of many stars,
Its pinnacles of flaming holiness,
And voice of leaves in the green summer-time,
Has seemed the shadowed image of a self!
Then my soul blackened; and I rose to find
And grasp my doom, and cleave the arching deeps
Of desolation.

O Lord, my soul is a forgotten well
Clad round with its own rank luxuriance;
A fountain a kind sunbeam searches for,
Sinking the lustre of its arrowy finger
Through the long grass its own strange virtue
Hath blinded up its crystal eye withal:
Make me a broad strong river coming down
With shouts from its high hills, whose rocky hearts
Throb forth the joy of their stability
In watery pulses from their inmost deeps;
And I shall be a vein upon thy world,
Circling perpetual from the parent deep.

Most mighty One,
Confirm and multiply my thoughts of good;
Help me to wall each sacred treasure round
With the firm battlements of special action.
Alas, my holy happy thoughts of thee
Make not perpetual nest within my soul,
But like strange birds of dazzling colours stoop
The trailing glories of their sunward speed
For one glad moment, filling my blasted boughs
With the sunshine of their wings. Make me a forest
Of gladdest life wherein perpetual spring
Lifts up her leafy tresses in the wind.
Lo, now I see
Thy trembling starlight sit among my pines,
And thy young moon slide down my arching boughs
With a soft sound of restless eloquence!

And I can feel a joy as when thy hosts
Of trampling winds, gathering in maddened bands,
Roar upward through the blue and flashing day
Round my still depths of uncleft solitude.

Hear me, O Lord,
When the black night draws down upon my soul,
And voices of temptation darken down
The misty wind, slamming thy starry doors
With bitter jests: -'Thou fool!' they seem to say,
'Thou hast no seed of goodness in thee; all
Thy nature hath been stung right through and through;
Thy sin hath blasted thee and made thee old;
Thou hadst a will, but thou hast killed it dead,
And with the fulsome garniture of life
Built out the loathsome corpse; thou art a child
Of night and death, even lower than a worm;
Gather the skirts up of thy shadowy self,
And with what resolution thou hast left
Fall on the damned spikes of doom!'

Oh, take me like a child,
If thou hast made me for thyself, my God,
And lead me up thy hills. I shall not fear,
So thou wilt make me pure, and beat back sin
With the terrors of thine eye: it fears me not
As once it might have feared thine own good image,
But lays bold siege at my heart's doors.

Oh, I have seen a thing of beauty stand
In the young moonlight of its upward thoughts,
And the old earth came round it with its gifts
Of gladness, whispering leaves, and odorous plants,
Until its large and spiritual eye
Burned with intensest love: my God, I could
Have watched it evermore with Argus-eyes,
Lest when the noontide of the summer's sun
Let down the tented sunlight on the plain,
His flaming beams should scorch my darling flower;
And through the fruitless nights of leaden gloom,
Of plashing rains, and knotted winds of cold,
Yea, when thy lightnings ran across the sky,

And the loud stumbling blasts fell from the hills
Upon the mounds of death, I could have watched
Guarding such beauty like another life!
But, O my God, it changed!-
Yet methinks I know not if it was not I!
Its beauty turned to ghastly loathsomeness!
Then a hand spurned me backwards from the clouds,
And with the gather of a mighty whirlwind,
Drew in the glittering gifts of life.

How long, O Lord, how long?
I am a man lost in a rocky place!
Lo, all thy echoes smite me with confusion
Of varied speech,-the cry of vanished Life
Rolled upon nations' sighs-of hearts uplifted
Against despair-the stifled sounds of Woe
Sitting perpetual by its grey cold well-
Or wasted Toil climbing its endless hills
With quickening gasps-or the thin winds of Joy
That beat about the voices of the crowd!

Lord, hast thou sent
Thy moons to mock us with perpetual hope?
Lighted within our breasts the love of love
To make us ripen for despair, my God?

Oh, dost thou hold each individual soul
Strung clear upon thy flaming rods of purpose?
Or does thine inextinguishable will
Stand on the steeps of night with lifted hand
Filling the yawning wells of monstrous space
With mixing thought-drinking up single life
As in a cup? and from the rending folds
Of glimmering purpose, do all thy navied stars
Slide through the gloom with mystic melody,
Like wishes on a brow? Oh, is my soul,
Hung like a dewdrop in thy grassy ways,
Drawn up again into the rack of change
Even through the lustre which created it?
-O mighty one, thou wilt not smite me through
With scorching wrath, because my spirit stands
Bewildered in thy circling mysteries!

Oh lift the burdened gloom that chokes my soul
With dews of darkness; smite the lean winds of death
That run with howls around the ruined temples,
Blowing the souls of men about like leaves.

Lo, the broad life-lands widen overhead,
Star-galaxies arise like drifting snow,
And happy life goes whitening down the stream
Of boundless action, whilst my fettered soul
Sits, as a captive in a noisome dungeon
Watches the pulses of his withered heart
Lave out the sparkling minutes of his life
On the idle flags!

Come in the glory of thine excellence,
Rive the dense gloom with wedges of clear light,
And let the shimmer of thy chariot wheels
Burn through the cracks of night! So slowly, Lord,
To lift myself to thee with hands of toil,
Climbing the slippery cliffs of unheard prayer!
Lift up a hand among my idle days-
One beckoning finger: I will cast aside
The clogs of earthly circumstance and run
Up the broad highways where the countless worlds
Sit ripening in the summer of thy love.
Send a clear meaning sparkling through the years;
Burst all the prison-doors, and make men's hearts
Gush up like fountains with thy melody;
Brighten the hollow eyes; fill with life's fruits
The hands that grope and scramble down the wastes;
And let the ghastly troops of withered ones
Come shining o'er the mountains of thy love.

Lord, thy strange mysteries come thickening down
Upon my head like snowflakes, shutting out
The happy upper fields with chilly vapour.
Shall I content my soul with a weak sense
Of safety? or feed my ravenous hunger with
Sore purged hopes, that are not hopes but fears
Clad in white raiment?

The creeds lie in the hollow of men's hearts
Like festering pools glassing their own corruption;
The slimy eyes stare up with dull approval,
And answer not when thy bright starry feet
Move on the watery floors: oh, shake men's souls
Together like the gathering of all oceans
Rent from their hidden chambers, till the waves
Lift up their million voices of high joy
Along the echoing cliffs! come thus, O Lord,
With nightly gifts of stars, and lay a hand
Of mighty peace upon the quivering flood.

O wilt thou hear me when I cry to thee?
I am a child lost in a mighty forest;
The air is thick with voices, and strange hands
Reach through the dusk, and pluck me by the skirts.
There is a voice which sounds like words from home,
But, as I stumble on to reach it, seems
To leap from rock to rock: oh, if it is
Willing obliquity of sense, descend,
Heal all my wanderings, take me by the hand,
And lead me homeward through the shadows.
Let me not by my wilful acts of pride
Block up the windows of thy truth, and grow
A wasted, withered thing, that stumbles on
Down to the grave with folded hands of sloth
And leaden confidence.

George MacDonald

A Christmas Carol

Babe Jesus lay in Mary's lap,
The sun shone in his hair;
And this was how she saw, mayhap,
The crown already there.

For she sang: 'Sleep on, my little king;
Bad Herod dares not come;
Before thee sleeping, holy thing,
The wild winds would be dumb.'

'I kiss thy hands, I kiss thy feet,
My child, so long desired;
Thy hands will never be soiled, my sweet;
Thy feet will never be tired.'

'For thou art the king of men, my son;
Thy crown I see it plain!
And men shall worship thee, every one,
And cry, Glory! Amen!'

Babe Jesus he opened his eyes wide-
At Mary looked her lord.
Mother Mary stinted her song and sighed;
Babe Jesus said never a word.

George MacDonald

A Christmas Carol For 1862

The Year Of The Trouble In Lancashire

The skies are pale, the trees are stiff,
The earth is dull and old;
The frost is glittering as if
The very sun were cold.
And hunger fell is joined with frost,
To make men thin and wan:
Come, babe, from heaven, or we are lost;
Be born, O child of man.

The children cry, the women shake,
The strong men stare about;
They sleep when they should be awake,
They wake ere night is out.
For they have lost their heritage-
No sweat is on their brow:
Come, babe, and bring them work and wage;
Be born, and save us now.

Across the sea, beyond our sight,
Roars on the fierce debate;
The men go down in bloody fight,
The women weep and hate;
And in the right be which that may,
Surely the strife is long!
Come, son of man, thy righteous way,
And right will have no wrong.

Good men speak lies against thine own-
Tongue quick, and hearing slow;
They will not let thee walk alone,
And think to serve thee so:
If they the children's freedom saw
In thee, the children's king,
They would be still with holy awe,
Or only speak to sing.

Some neither lie nor starve nor fight,

Nor yet the poor deny;
But in their hearts all is not right,-
They often sit and sigh.
We need thee every day and hour,
In sunshine and in snow:
Child-king, we pray with all our power-
Be born, and save us so.

We are but men and women, Lord;
Thou art a gracious child!
O fill our hearts, and heap our board,
Pray thee-the winter's wild!
The sky is sad, the trees are bare,
Hunger and hate about:
Come, child, and ill deeds and ill fare
Will soon be driven out.

George MacDonald

A Christmas Prayer

Loving looks the large-eyed cow,
Loving stares the long-eared ass
At Heaven's glory in the grass!
Child, with added human birth
Come to bring the child of earth
Glad repentance, tearful mirth,
And a seat beside the hearth
At the Father's knee-
Make us peaceful as thy cow;
Make us patient as thine ass;
Make us quiet as thou art now;
Make us strong as thou wilt be.
Make us always know and see
We are his as well as thou.

George MacDonald

A Cry

Lord, hear my discontent: all blank I stand,
A mirror polished by thy hand;
Thy sun's beams flash and flame from me-
I cannot help it: here I stand, there he!
To one of them I cannot say,
Go, and on yonder water play;
Nor one poor ragged daisy can I fashion-
I do not make the words of this my limping passion!
If I should say, Now I will think a thought,
Lo, I must wait, unknowing
What thought in me is growing,
Until the thing to birth be brought!
Nor know I then what next will come
From out the gulf of silence dumb:
I am the door the thing will find
To pass into the general mind!
I cannot say
I think
-

I only stand upon the thought-well's brink:
From darkness to the sun the water bubbles up-
lift it in my cup.
Thou only thinkest-I am thought;
Me and my thought thou thinkest. Nought
Am I but as a fountain spout
From which thy water welleteth out.
Thou art the only one, the all in all.-
Yet when my soul on thee doth call
And thou dost answer out of everywhere,
I in thy allness have my perfect share.

George MacDonald

A Dead House

When the clock hath ceased to tick
Soul-like in the gloomy hall;
When the latch no more doth click
Tongue-like in the red peach-wall;
When no more come sounds of play,
Mice nor children romping roam,
Then looks down the eye of day
On a dead house, not a home!

But when, like an old sun's ghost,
Haunts her vault the spectral moon;
When earth's margins all are lost,
Melting shapes nigh merged in swoon,
Then a sound-hark! there again!-
No, 'tis not a nibbling mouse!
'Tis a ghost, unseen of men,
Walking through the bare-floored house!

And with lightning on the stair
To that silent upper room,
With the thunder-shaken air
Sudden gleaming into gloom,
With a frost-wind whistling round,
From the raging northern coasts,
Then, mid sieging light and sound,
All the house is live with ghosts!

Brother, is thy soul a cell
Empty save of glittering motes,
Where no live loves live and dwell,
Only notions, things, and thoughts?
Then thou wilt, when comes a Breath
Tempest-shaking ridge and post,
Find thyself alone with Death
In a house where walks no ghost.

George MacDonald

A Dream Of Waking

A child was born in sin and shame,
Wronged by his very birth,
Without a home, without a name,
One over in the earth.

No wifely triumph he inspired,
Allayed no husband's fear;
Intruder bare, whom none desired,
He had a welcome drear.

Heaven's beggar, all but turned adrift
For knocking at earth's gate,
His mother, like an evil gift,
Shunned him with sickly hate.

And now the mistress on her knee
The unloved baby bore,
The while the servant sullenly
Prepared to leave her door.

Her eggs are dear to mother-dove,
Her chickens to the hen;
All young ones bring with them their love,
Of sheep, or goats, or men!

This one lone child shall not have come
In vain for love to seek:
Let mother's hardened heart be dumb,
A sister-babe will speak!

'Mother, keep baby-keep him
so
;
Don't let him go away.'
'But, darling, if his mother go,
Poor baby cannot stay.'

'He's crying, mother: don't you see
He wants to stay with you?'

'No, child; he does not care for me.'

'Do keep him, mother-

do

.'

'For his own mother he would cry;

He's hungry now, I think.'

'Give him to me, and let

me

try

If I can make him drink.'

'Susan would hurt him! Mother

will

Let the poor baby stay?'

Her mother's heart grew sore, but still

Baby must go away!

The red lip trembled; the slow tears

Came darkening in her eyes;

Pressed on her heart a weight of fears

That sought not ease in cries.

'Twas torture-must not be endured!-

A too outrageous grief!

Was there an ill could

not

be cured?

She

would

find some relief!

All round her universe she pried:

No dawn began to break:

In prophet-agony she cried-

'Mother! when

shall

we wake?'

O insight born of torture's might!-

Such grief

can
only seem.
Rise o'er the hills, eternal light,
And melt the earthly dream.

George MacDonald

A Dream Song

I dreamed of a song-I heard it sung;
In the ear of my soul its strange notes rung.
What were its words I could not tell,
Only the voice I heard right well,
For its tones unearthly my spirit bound
In a calm delirium of mystic sound-
Held me floating, alone and high,
Placeless and silent, drinking my fill
Of dews that from cloudless skies distil
On desert places that thirst and sigh.
'Twas a woman's voice, deep calling to deep,
Rousing old echoes that all day sleep
In cavern and solitude, each apart,
Here and there in the waiting heart;-
A voice with a wild melodious cry
Reaching and longing afar and high.
Sorrowful triumph, and hopeful strife,
Gainful death, and new-born life,
Thrilled in each note of the prophet-song.
In my heart it said: O Lord, how long
Shall we groan and travail and faint and pray,
Ere thy lovely kingdom bring the day!

George MacDonald

A Dream-Song

The stars are spinning their threads,
And the clouds are the dust that flies,
And the suns are weaving them up
For the day when the sleepers arise.

The ocean in music rolls,
The gems are turning to eyes,
And the trees are gathering souls
For the day when the sleepers arise.

The weepers are learning to smile,
And laughter to glean the sighs,
And hearts to bury their care and guile
For the day when the sleepers arise.

Oh, the dews and the moths and the daisy-red,
The larks and the glimmers and flows!
The lilies and sparrows and daily bread,
And the something that nobody knows!

George MacDonald

A Father To A Mother

When God's own child came down to earth,
High heaven was very glad;
The angels sang for holy mirth;
Not God himself was sad!

Shall we, when ours goes homeward, fret?
Come, Hope, and wait on Sorrow!
The little one will not forget;
It's only till to-morrow!

George MacDonald

A Fear

O Mother Earth, I have a fear
Which I would tell to thee-
Softly and gently in thine ear
When the moon and we are three.

Thy grass and flowers are beautiful;
Among thy trees I hide;
And underneath the moonlight cool
Thy sea looks broad and wide;

But this I fear-lest thou shouldst grow
To me so small and strange,
So distant I should never know
On thee a shade of change,

Although great earthquakes should uplift
Deep mountains from their base,
And thy continual motion shift
The lands upon thy face;-

The grass, the flowers, the dews that lie
Upon them as before-
Driven upwards evermore, lest I
Should love these things no more.

Even now thou dimly hast a place
In deep star galaxies!
And I, driven ever on through space,
Have lost thee in the skies!

George MacDonald

A Hidden Life

To My Father

I.

Take of the first fruits, father, of thy care,
Wrapped in the fresh leaves of my gratitude,
Late waked for early gifts ill understood;
Claiming in all my harvests rightful share,
Whether with song that mounts the joyful air
I praise my God, or, in yet deeper mood,
Sit dumb because I know a speechless good,
Needing no voice, but all the soul for prayer.
Thou hast been faithful to my highest need;
And I, thy debtor, ever, evermore,
Shall never feel the grateful burden sore.
Yet most I thank thee, not for any deed,
But for the sense thy living self did breed
Of fatherhood still at the great world's core.

II.

All childhood, reverence clothed thee, undefined,
As for some being of another race;
Ah, not with it, departing-growing apace
As years did bring me manhood's loftier mind,
Able to see thy human life behind-
The same hid heart, the same revealing face-
My own dim contest settling into grace,
Of sorrow, strife, and victory combined!
So I beheld my God, in childhood's morn,
A mist, a darkness, great, and far apart,
Moveless and dim-I scarce could say Thou art:
My manhood came, of joy and sadness born;-
Full soon the misty dark, asunder torn,
Revealed man's glory, God's great human heart.

-

A Hidden Life

Proudly the youth, by manhood sudden crowned,
Went walking by his horses to the plough,
For the first time that morn. No soldier gay
Feels at his side the throb of the gold hilt
(Knowing the blue blade hides within its sheath,
As lightning in the cloud) with more delight,
When first he belts it on, than he that day
Heard still the clank of the plough-chains against
The horses' harnessed sides, as to the field
They went to make it fruitful. O'er the hill
The sun looked down, baptizing him for toil.

A farmer's son he was, and grandson too;
Yea, his great-grandsire had possessed these fields.
Tradition said they had been tilled by men
Who bore the name long centuries ago,
And married wives, and reared a stalwart race,
And died, and went where all had followed them,
Save one old man, his daughter, and the youth
Who ploughs in pride, nor ever doubts his toil;
And death is far from him this sunny morn.
Why should we think of death when life is high?
The earth laughs all the day, and sleeps all night.
Earth, give us food, and, after that, a grave;
For both are good, each better in its time.

The youth knew little; but he read old tales
Of Scotland's warriors, till his blood ran swift
As charging knights upon their death career.
And then he chanted old tunes, till the blood
Was charmed back into its fountain-well,
And tears arose instead. And Robert's songs,
Which ever flow in noises like his name,
Rose from him in the fields beside the kine,
And met the sky-lark's rain from out the clouds.
As yet he sang only as sing the birds,
From gladness simply, or, he knew not why.
The earth was fair-he knew not it was fair;

And he so glad-he knew not he was glad:
He walked as in a twilight of the sense,
Which this one day shall turn to tender light.

For, ere the sun had cleared the feathery tops
Of the fir-thicket on the eastward hill,
His horses leaned and laboured. His great hands
Held both the reins and plough-stilts: he was proud;
Proud with a ploughman's pride; nobler, may be,
Than statesman's, ay, or poet's pride sometimes,
For little praise would come that he ploughed well,
And yet he did it well; proud of his work,
And not of what would follow. With sure eye,
He saw the horses keep the arrow-track;
He saw the swift share cut the measured sod;
He saw the furrow folding to the right,
Ready with nimble foot to aid at need.
And there the slain sod lay, patient for grain,
Turning its secrets upward to the sun,
And hiding in a grave green sun-born grass,
And daisies clipped in carmine: all must die,
That others live, and they arise again.

Then when the sun had clomb to his decline,
And seemed to rest, before his slow descent,
Upon the keystone of his airy bridge,
They rested likewise, half-tired man and horse,
And homeward went for food and courage new;
Whereby refreshed, they turned again to toil,
And lived in labour all the afternoon.
Till, in the gloaming, once again the plough
Lay like a stranded bark upon the lea;
And home with hanging neck the horses went,
Walking beside their master, force by will.
Then through the deepening shades a vision came.

It was a lady mounted on a horse,
A slender girl upon a mighty steed,
That bore her with the pride horses must feel
When they submit to women. Home she went,
Alone, or else the groom lagged far behind.
But, as she passed, some faithless belt gave way;

The saddle slipped, the horse stopped, and the girl
Stood on her feet, still holding fast the reins.

Three paces bore him bounding to her side;
Her radiant beauty almost fixed him there;
But with main force, as one that gripes with fear,
He threw the fascination off, and saw
The work before him. Soon his hand and knife
Replaced the saddle firmer than before
Upon the gentle horse; and then he turned
To mount the maiden. But bewilderment
A moment lasted; for he knew not how,
With stirrup-hand and steady arm, to throne,
Elastic, on her steed, the ascending maid:
A moment only; for while yet she thanked,
Nor yet had time to teach her further will,
Around her waist he put his brawny hands,
That almost zoned her round; and like a child
Lifting her high, he set her on the horse;
Whence like a risen moon she smiled on him,
Nor turned away, although a radiant blush
Shone in her cheek, and shadowed in her eyes.
But he was never sure if from her heart
Or from the rosy sunset came the flush.
Again she thanked him, while again he stood
Bewildered in her beauty. Not a word
Answered her words that flowed, folded in tones
Round which dissolving lambent music played,
Like dropping water in a silver cup;
Till, round the shoulder of the neighbouring hill,
Sudden she disappeared. And he awoke,
And called himself hard names, and turned and went
After his horses, bending too his head.

Ah God! when Beauty passes by the door,
Although she ne'er came in, the house grows bare.
Shut, shut the door; there's nothing in the house.
Why seems it always that it should be ours?
A secret lies behind which Thou dost know,
And I can partly guess.

But think not then,

The holder of the plough had many sighs
Upon his bed that night; or other dreams
Than pleasant rose upon his view in sleep,
Within the magic crystal of the soul;
Nor that the airy castles of his brain
Had less foundation than the air admits.
But read my simple tale, scarce worth the name;
And answer, if he gained not from the fair
Beauty's best gift; and proved her not, in sooth,
An angel vision from a higher world.

Not much of her I tell. Her changeful life
Where part the waters on the mountain ridge,
Flowed down the other side apart from his.
Her tale hath wiled deep sighs on summer eves,
Where in the ancient mysteries of woods
Walketh a man who worships womanhood.
Soon was she orphaned of such parent-haunts;
Surrounded with dead glitter, not the shine
Of leaves in wind and sunlight; while the youth
Breathed on, as if a constant breaking dawn
Sent forth the new-born wind upon his brow;
And knew the morning light was climbing up
The further hill-side-morning light, which most,
They say, reveals the inner hues of earth.
Now she was such as God had made her, ere
The world had tried to spoil her; tried, I say,
And half-succeeded, failing utterly.
Fair was she, frank, and innocent as a child
That stares you in the eyes; fearless of ill,
Because she knew it not; and brave withal,
Because she drank the draught that maketh strong,
The charmed country air. Her father's house-
A Scottish laird was he, of ancient name-
Stood only two miles off amid the hills;
But though she often passed alone as now,
The youth had never seen her face before,
And might not twice. Yet was not once enough?
It left him not. She, as the harvest moon
That goeth on her way, and knoweth not
The fields of grain whose ripening ears she fills
With wealth of life and human joyfulness,

Went on, and knew not of the influence
She left behind; yea, never thought of him;
Save at those times when, all at once, old scenes
Return uncalled, with wonder that they come,
Amidst far other thoughts and other cares;
Sinking again into their ancient graves,
Till some far-whispered necromantic spell
Loose them once more to wander for a space.

Again I say, no fond romance of love,
No argument of possibilities,
If he were some one, and she claimed his aid,
Turned his clear brain into a nest of dreams.
As soon he had sat down and twisted cords
To snare, and carry home for daylight use,
Some woman-angel, wandering half-seen
On moonlight wings, o'er withered autumn fields.
But when he rose next morn, and went abroad,
(The exultation of his new-found rank
Already settling into dignity,)
He found the earth was beautiful. The sky,
Which shone with expectation of the sun,
Somehow, he knew not how, was like her face.
He grieved almost to plough the daisies down;
Something they shared in common with that smile
Wherewith she crowned his manhood; and they fell
Bent in the furrow, sometimes, with their heads
Just out imploringly. A hedgehog ran
With tangled mesh of bristling spikes, and face
Helplessly innocent, across the field:
He let it run, and blessed it as it ran.
At noon returning, something drew his feet
Into the barn. Entering, he gazed and stood.
Through the rent roof alighting, one sunbeam,
Blazing upon the straw one golden spot,
Dulled all the yellow heap, and sank far down,
Like flame inverted, through the loose-piled mound,
Crossing the splendour with the shadow-straws,
In lines innumerable. 'Twas so bright,
The eye was cheated with a spectral smoke
That rose as from a fire. He never knew,
Before, how beautiful the sunlight was;

Though he had seen it in the grassy fields,
And on the river, and the ripening corn,
A thousand times. He threw him on the heap,
And gazing down into the glory-gulf,
Dreamed as a boy half-sleeping by the fire;
And dreaming rose, and got his horses out.

God, and not woman, is the heart of all.
But she, as priestess of the visible earth,
Holding the key, herself most beautiful,
Had come to him, and flung the portals wide.
He entered in: each beauty was a glass
That gleamed the woman back upon his view.

Already in these hours his growing soul
Put forth the white tip of a floral bud,
Ere long to be a crown-like, shadowy flower.
For, by his songs, and joy in ancient tales,
He showed the seed lay hidden in his heart,
A safe sure treasure, hidden even from him,
And notwithstanding mellowing all his spring;
Until, like sunshine with its genial power,
Came the fair maiden's face: the seed awoke.
I need not follow him through many days;
Nor tell the joys that rose around his path,
Ministering pleasure for his labour's meed;
Nor how each morning was a boon to him;
Nor how the wind, with nature's kisses fraught,
Flowed inward to his soul; nor how the flowers
Asserted each an individual life,
A separate being, for and in his thought;
Nor how the stormy days that intervened
Called forth his strength, and songs that quelled their force;
Nor how in winter-time, when thick the snow
Armed the sad fields from gnawing of the frost,
And the low sun but skirted his far realms,
And sank in early night, he took his place
Beside the fire; and by the feeble lamp
Head book on book; and lived in other lives,
And other needs, and other climes than his;
And added other beings thus to his.
But I must tell that love of knowledge grew

Within him to a passion and a power;
Till, through the night (all dark, except the moon
Shone frosty o'er the lea, or the white snow
Gave back all motes of light that else had sunk
Into the thirsty earth) he bent his way
Over the moors to where the little town
Lay gathered in the hollow. There the man
Who taught the children all the shortened day,
Taught other scholars in the long fore-night;
And youths who in the shop, or in the barn,
Or at the loom, had done their needful work,
Came to his schoolroom in the murky night,
And found the fire aglow, the candles lit,
And the good master waiting for his men.
Here mathematics wiled him to their heights;
And strange consent of lines to form and law
Made Euclid like a great romance of truth.
The master saw with wonder how the youth
All eagerly devoured the offered food,
And straightway longed to lead him; with that hope
Of sympathy which urges him that knows
To multiply great knowledge by its gift;
That so two souls ere long may see one truth,
And, turning, see each others' faces shine.
So he proposed the classics; and the youth
Caught at the offer; and for many a night,
When others lay and lost themselves in sleep,
He groped his way with lexicon and rule,
Through ancient deeds embalmed in Latin old,
Or poet-woods alive with gracious forms;
Wherein his knowledge of the English tongue
(Through reading many books) much aided him-
For the soul's language is the same in all.
At length his progress, through the master's word,
Proud of his pupil, reached the father's ears.
Great joy arose within him, and he vowed,
If caring, sparing would accomplish it,
He should to college, and should have his fill
Of that same learning.

So to school he went,
Instead of to the plough; and ere a year,

He wore the scarlet gown with the close sleeves.

Awkward at first, but with a dignity
That soon found fit embodiment in speech
And gesture and address, he made his way,
Not seeking it, to the respect of youths,
In whom respect is of the rarer gifts.
Likewise by the consent of accidents,
More than his worth, society, so called,
In that great northern city, to its rooms
Invited him. He entered. Dazzled first,
Not only by the brilliance of the show,
In lights and mirrors, gems, and crowded eyes;
But by the surface lights of many minds
Cut like rose-diamonds into many planes,
Which, catching up the wandering rays of fact,
Reflected, coloured, tossed them here and there,
In varied brilliance, as if quite new-born
From out the centre, not from off the face-
Dazzled at first, I say, he soon began
To see how little thought could sparkle well,
And turn him, even in the midst of talk,
Back to the silence of his homely toils.
Around him still and ever hung an air
Born of the fields, and plough, and cart, and scythe;
A kind of clumsy grace, in which gay girls
Saw but the clumsiness; while those with light,
Instead of glitter, in their quiet eyes,
Saw the grace too; yea, sometimes, when he talked,
Saw the grace only; and began at last,
As he sought none, to seek him in the crowd
(After a maiden fashion), that they might
Hear him dress thoughts, not pay poor compliments.
Yet seldom thus was he seduced from toil;
Or if one eve his windows showed no light,
The next, they faintly gleamed in candle-shine,
Till far into the morning. And he won
Honours among the first, each session's close.

And if increased familiarity
With open forms of ill, not to be shunned
Where youths of all kinds meet, endangered there

A mind more willing to be pure than most-
Oft when the broad rich humour of a jest,
Did, with its breezy force, make radiant way
For pestilential vapours following-
Arose within his sudden silent mind,
The maiden face that smiled and blushed on him;
That lady face, insphered beyond his earth,
Yet visible to him as any star
That shines unwavering. I cannot tell
In words the tenderness that glowed across
His bosom-burned it clean in will and thought;
'Shall that sweet face be blown by laughter rude
Out of the soul where it has deigned to come,
But will not stay what maidens may not hear?'
He almost wept for shame, that those two thoughts
Should ever look each other in the face,
Meeting in
his
house. Thus he made to her,
For love, an offering of purity.

And if the homage that he sometimes found,
New to the country lad, conveyed in smiles,
Assents, and silent listenings when he spoke,
Threatened yet more his life's simplicity;
An antidote of nature ever came,
Even nature's self. For, in the summer months,
His former haunts and boyhood's circumstance
Received him back within old influences.
And he, too noble to despise the past,
Too proud to be ashamed of manhood's toil,
Too wise to fancy that a gulf lay wide
Betwixt the labouring hand and thinking brain,
Or that a workman was no gentleman,
Because a workman, clothed himself again
In his old garments, took the hoe or spade,
Or sowing sheet, or covered in the grain,
Smoothing with harrows what the plough had ridged.
With ever fresher joy he hailed the fields,
Returning still with larger powers of sight:
Each time he knew them better than before,
And yet their sweetest aspect was the old.

His labour kept him true to life and fact,
Casting out worldly judgments, false desires,
And vain distinctions. Ever, at his toil,
New thoughts arose; which, when still night awoke,
He ever sought, like stars, with instruments;
By science, or by wise philosophy,
Bridging the gulf between them and the known;
And thus preparing for the coming months,
When in the time of snow, old Scotland's sons
Reap wisdom in the silence of the year.

His sire was proud of him; and, most of all,
Because his learning did not make him proud.
A wise man builds not much upon his lore.
The neighbours asked what he would make his son.
'I'll make a man of him,' the old man said;
'And for the rest, just what he likes himself.
But as he is my only son, I think
He'll keep the old farm joined to the old name;
And I shall go to the churchyard content,
Leaving my name amongst my fellow men,
As safe, thank God, as if I bore it still.'
But sons are older than their sires full oft
In the new world that cometh after this.

So four years long his life went to and fro
Betwixt the scarlet gown and rough blue coat;
The garret study and the wide-floored barn;
The wintry city, and the sunny fields.
In each his quiet mind was well content,
Because he was himself, where'er he was.

Not in one channel flowed his seeking thoughts;
To no profession did he ardent turn:
He knew his father's wish-it was his own.
'Why should a man,' he said, 'when knowledge grows,
Leave therefore the old patriarchal life,
And seek distinction in the noise of men?'
And yet he turned his face on every side;
Went with the doctors to the lecture-room,
And saw the inner form of man laid bare;
Went with the chymists, where the skilful hand,

Revering laws higher than Nature's self,
Makes Nature do again, before our eyes,
And in a moment, what, in many years,
And in the veil of vastness and lone deeps,
She laboureth at alway, then best content
When man inquires into her secret ways;
Yea, turned his asking eye on every source
Whence knowledge floweth for the hearts of men,
Kneeling at some, and drinking freely there.
And at the end, when he had gained the right
To sit with covered head before the rank
Of black-gowned senators; and all these men
Were ready at a word to speed him on,
Proud of their pupil, towards any goal
Where he might fix his eye; he took his books,
What little of his gown and cap remained,
And, leaving with a sigh the ancient walls,
With the old stony crown, unchanging, grey,
Amidst the blandishments of airy Spring,
He sought for life the lone ancestral farm.

With simple gladness met him on the road
His grey-haired father, elder brother now.
Few words were spoken, little welcome said,
But much was understood on either side.
If with a less delight he brought him home
Than he that met the prodigal returned,
Yet with more confidence, more certain joy;
And with the leaning pride that old men feel
In young strong arms that draw their might from them,
He led him to the house. His sister there,
Whose kisses were not many, but whose eyes
Were full of watchfulness and hovering love,
Set him beside the fire in the old place,
And heaped the table with best country fare.
And when the night grew deep, the father rose,
And led his son (who wondered why they went,
And in the darkness made a tortuous path
Through the corn-ricks) to an old loft, above
The stable where his horses rested still.
Entering, he saw some plan-pursuing hand
Had been at work. The father, leading on

Across the floor, heaped up with waiting grain,
Opened a door. An unexpected light
Flashed on them from a cheerful lamp and fire,
That burned alone, as in a fairy tale.
And lo! a little room, white-curtained bed,
An old arm-chair, bookshelves, and writing desk,
And some old prints of deep Virgilian woods,
And one a country churchyard, on the walls.
The young man stood and spoke not. The old love
Seeking and finding incarnation new,
Drew from his heart, as from the earth the sun,
Warm tears. The good, the fatherly old man,
Honouring in his son the simple needs
Which his own bounty had begot in him,
Thus gave him loneliness for silent thought,
A simple refuge he could call his own.
He grasped his hand and shook it; said good night,
And left him glad with love. Faintly beneath,
The horses stamped and drew the lengthening chain.

Three sliding years, with gently blending change,
Went round 'mid work of hands, and brain, and heart.
He laboured as before; though when he would,
With privilege, he took from hours of toil,
When nothing pressed; and read within his room,
Or wandered through the moorland to the hills;
There stood upon the apex of the world,
With a great altar-stone of rock beneath,
And looked into the wide abyss of blue
That roofed him round; and then, with steady foot,
Descended to the world, and worthy cares.

And on the Sunday, father, daughter, son
Walked to the country church across the fields.
It was a little church, and plain, almost
To ugliness, yet lacking not a charm
To him who sat there when a little boy.
And the low mounds, with long grass waving on,
Were quite as solemn as great marble tombs.
And on the sunny afternoons, across
This well-sown field of death, when forth they came
With the last psalm still lingering in their hearts,

He looked, and wondered where the heap would rise
That rested on the arch of his dead breast.
But in the gloom and rain he turned aside,
And let the drops soak through the sinking clay-
What mattered it to him?

And as they walked
Together home, the father loved to hear
The new streams pouring from his son's clear well.
The old man clung not only to the old;
Nor bowed the young man only to the new;
Yet as they walked, full often he would say,
He liked not much what he had heard that morn.
He said, these men believed the past alone;
Honoured those Jewish times as they were Jews;
And had no ears for this poor needy hour,
That up and down the centuries doth go,
Like beggar boy that wanders through the streets,
With hand held out to any passer by;
And yet God made it, and its many cries.

He used to say: 'I take the work that comes
All ready to my hand. The lever set,
I grasp and heave withal. Or rather, I
Love where I live, and yield me to the will
That made the needs about me. It may be
I find them nearer to my need of work
Than any other choice. I would not choose
To lack a relish for the thing that God
Thinks worth. Among my own I will be good;
A helper to all those that look to me.
This farm is God's, as much as yonder town;
These men and maidens, kine and horses, his;
And need his laws of truth made rules of fact;
Or else the earth is not redeemed from ill.'
He spoke not often; but he ruled and did.
No ill was suffered there by man or beast
That he could help; no creature fled from him;
And when he slew, 'twas with a sudden death,
Like God's benignant lightning. For he knew
That God doth make the beasts, and loves them well,
And they are sacred. Sprung from God as we,

They are our brethren in a lower kind;
And in their face he saw the human look.
They said: 'Men look like different animals;'
But he: 'The animals are like to men,
Some one, and some another.' Cruelty,
He said, would need no other fiery hell,
Than that the ghosts of the sad beasts should come,
And crowding, silent, all their heads one way,
Stare the ill man to madness.

By degrees,
They knew not how, men trusted in him. When
He spoke, his word had all the force of deeds
That lay unsaid within him. To be good
Is more than holy words or definite acts;
Embodying itself unconsciously
In simple forms of human helpfulness,
And understanding of the need that prays.
And when he read the weary tales of crime,
And wretchedness, and white-faced children, sad
With hunger, and neglect, and cruel words,
He would walk sadly for an afternoon,
With head down-bent, and pondering footstep slow;
And to himself conclude: 'The best I can
For the great world, is, just the best I can
For this my world. The influence will go
In widening circles to the darksome lanes
In London's self.' When a philanthropist
Said pompously: 'With your great gifts you ought
To work for the great world, not spend yourself
On common labours like a common man;'
He answered him: 'The world is in God's hands.
This part he gives to me; for which my past,
Built up on loves inherited, hath made
Me fittest. Neither will He let me think
Primeval, godlike work too low to need,
For its perfection, manhood's noblest powers
And deepest knowledge, far beyond my gifts.
And for the crowds of men, in whom a soul
Cries through the windows of their hollow eyes
For bare humanity, and leave to grow,-
Would I could help them! But all crowds are made

Of individuals; and their grief, and pain,
And thirst, and hunger, all are of the one,
Not of the many. And the power that helps
Enters the individual, and extends
Thence in a thousand gentle influences
To other hearts. It is not made one's own
By laying hold of an allotted share
Of general good divided faithfully.
Now here I labour whole upon the place
Where they have known me from my childhood up.
I know the individual man; and he
Knows me. If there is power in me to help,
It goeth forth beyond the present will,
Clothing itself in very common deeds
Of any humble day's necessity:
-I would not always consciously do good;
Not always feel a helper of the men,
Who make me full return for my poor deeds
(Which I
must
do for my own highest sake,
If I forgot my brethren for themselves)
By human trust, and confidence of eyes
That look me in the face, and hands that do
My work at will-'tis more than I deserve.
But in the city, with a few lame words,
And a few scanty handfuls of weak coin,
Misunderstood, or, at the best, unknown,
I should toil on, and seldom reach the mail.
And if I leave the thing that lieth next,
To go and do the thing that is afar,
I take the very strength out of my deed,
Seeking the needy not for pure need's sake.'
Thus he. The world-wise schemer for the good
Held his poor peace, and left him to his way.

What of the vision now? the vision fair
Sent forth to meet him, when at eve he went
Home from his first day's ploughing? Oft she passed
Slowly on horseback, in all kinds of dreams;
For much he dreamed, and loved his dreaming well.
Nor woke he from such dreams with vain regret;

But, saying, 'I have seen that face once more,'
He smiled with his eyes, and rose to work.
Nor did he turn aside from other maids,
But loved the woman-faces and dear eyes;
And sometimes thought, 'One day I wed a maid,
And make her mine;' but never came the maid,
Or never came the hour, that he might say,
'I wed this maid.' And ever when he read
A tale of lofty aim, or when the page
Of history spoke of woman very fair,
Or wondrous good, her face arose, and stayed,
The face for ever of that storied page.

Meantime how fared the lady? She had wed
One of those common men, who serve as ore
For the gold grains to lie in. Virgin gold
Lay hidden there-no richer was the dross.
She went to gay assemblies, not content;
For she had found no hearts, that, struck with hers,
Sounded one chord. She went, and danced, or sat
And listlessly conversed; or, if at home,
Read the new novel, wishing all the time
For something better; though she knew not what,
Or how to search for it.

What had she felt,
If, through the rhythmic motion of light forms,
A vision, had arisen; as when, of old,
The minstrel's art laid bare the seer's eye,
And showed him plenteous waters in the waste?
If she had seen her ploughman-lover go
With his great stride across some lonely field,
Beneath the dark blue vault, ablaze with stars,
And lift his full eyes to earth's radiant roof
In gladness that the roof was yet a floor
For other feet to tread, for his, one day?
Or the emerging vision might reveal
Him, in his room, with space-compelling mind,
Pursue, upon his slate, some planet's course;
Or read, and justify the poet's wrath,
Or wise man's slow conclusion; or, in dreams,
All gently bless her with a trembling voice

For that old smile, that withered nevermore,
That woke him, smiled him into what he is;
Or, kneeling, cry to God for better still.
Would those dark eyes have beamed with darker light?
Would that fair soul, all tired of emptiness,
Have risen from the couch of its unrest,
And looked to heaven again, again believed
In God's realities of life and fact?
Would not her soul have sung unto itself,
In secret joy too good for that vain throng:
'I have a friend, a ploughman, who is wise,
And knoweth God, and goodness, and fair faith;
Who needeth not the outward shows of things,
But worships the unconquerable truth:
And this man loveth me; I will be proud
And humble-would he love me if he knew?'

In the third year, a heavy harvest fell,
Full filled, beneath the reaping-hook and scythe.
The men and maidens in the scorching heat
Held on their toil, lightened by song and jest;
Resting at mid-day, and from brimming bowl,
Drinking brown ale, and white abundant milk;
Until the last ear fell, and stubble stood
Where waved the forests of the murmuring corn;
And o'er the land rose piled the tent-like shocks,
As of an army resting in array
Of tent by tent, rank following on rank;
Waiting until the moon should have her will
Of ripening on the ears.

And all went well.
The grain was fully ripe. The harvest carts
Went forth broad-platformed for the towering load,
With frequent passage 'twixt homeyard and field.
And half the oats already hid their tops,
Of countless spray-hung grains-their tops, by winds
Swayed oft, and ringing, rustling contact sweet;
Made heavy oft by slow-combining dews,
Or beaten earthward by the pelting rains;
Rising again in breezes to the sun,
And bearing all things till the perfect time-

Had hid, I say, this growth of sun and air
Within the darkness of the towering stack;
When in the north low billowy clouds appeared,
Blue-based, white-topped, at close of afternoon;
And in the west, dark masses, plashed with blue,
With outline vague of misty steep and dell,
Clomb o'er the hill-tops; there was thunder there.
The air was sultry. But the upper sky
Was clear and radiant.

Downward went the sun;
Down low, behind the low and sullen clouds
That walled the west; and down below the hills
That lay beneath them hid. Uprose the moon,
And looked for silence in her moony fields,
But there she found it not. The staggering cart,
Like an o'erladen beast, crawled homeward still,
Returning light and low. The laugh broke yet,
That lightning of the soul, from cloudless skies,
Though not so frequent, now that labour passed
Its natural hour. Yet on the labour went,
Straining to beat the welkin-climbing toil
Of the huge rain-clouds, heavy with their floods.
Sleep, like enchantress old, soon sided with
The crawling clouds, and flung benumbing spells
On man and horse. The youth that guided home
The ponderous load of sheaves, higher than wont,
Daring the slumberous lightning, with a start
Awoke, by falling full against the wheel,
That circled slow after the sleepy horse.
Yet none would yield to soft-suggesting sleep,
Or leave the last few shocks; for the wild rain
Would catch thereby the skirts of Harvest-home,
And hold her lingering half-way in the storm.

The scholar laboured with his men all night.
Not that he favoured quite this headlong race
With Nature. He would rather say: 'The night
Is sent for sleep, we ought to sleep in it,
And leave the clouds to God. Not every storm
That climbeth heavenward, overwhelms the earth.
And if God wills, 'tis better as he wills;

What he takes from us never can be lost.'
But the old farmer ordered; and the son
Went manful to the work, and held his peace.

The last cart homeward went, oppressed with sheaves,
Just as a moist dawn blotted pale the east,
And the first drops fell, overfed with mist,
O'ergrown and helpless. Darker grew the morn.
Upstraining racks of clouds, tumultuous borne
Upon the turmoil of opposing winds,
Met in the zenith. And the silence ceased:
The lightning brake, and flooded all the earth,
And its great roar of billows followed it.
The deeper darkness drank the light again,
And lay unslaked. But ere the darkness came,
In the full revelation of the flash,
He saw, along the road, borne on a horse
Powerful and gentle, the sweet lady go,
Whom years ago he saw for evermore.
'Ah me!' he said; 'my dreams are come for me,
Now they shall have their time.' And home he went,
And slept and moaned, and woke, and raved, and wept.
Through all the net-drawn labyrinth of his brain
The fever raged, like pent internal fire.
His father soon was by him; and the hand
Of his one sister soothed him. Days went by.
As in a summer evening, after rain,
He woke to sweet quiescent consciousness;
Enfeebled much, but with a new-born life.

As slow the weeks passed, he recovered strength;
And ere the winter came, seemed strong once more.
But the brown hue of health had not returned
On his thin face; although a keener fire
Burned in his larger eyes; and in his cheek
The mounting blood glowed radiant (summoning force,
Sometimes, unbidden) with a sunset red.

Before its time, a biting frost set in;
And gnawed with fangs of cold his shrinking life;
And the disease so common to the north
Was born of outer cold and inner heat.

One morn his sister, entering, saw he slept;
But in his hand he held a handkerchief
Spotted with crimson. White with terror, she
Stood motionless and staring. Startled next
By her own pallor, when she raised her eyes,
Seen in the glass, she moved at last. He woke;
And seeing her dismay, said with a smile,
'Blood-red was evermore my favourite hue,
And see, I have it in me; that is all.'
She shuddered; and he tried to jest no more;
And from that hour looked Death full in the face.

When first he saw the red blood outward leap,
As if it sought again the fountain heart,
Whence it had flowed to fill the golden bowl;
No terror, but a wild excitement seized
His spirit; now he pondered mystery
Of the unseen would fling its portals wide,
And he would enter, one of the awful dead;
Whom men conceive as ghosts that fleet and pine,
Bereft of weight, and half their valued lives;-
But who, he knew, must live intenser life,
Having, through matter, all illumed with sense,
Flaming, like Horeb's bush, with present soul,
And by the contact with a thousand souls,
Each in the present glory of a shape,
Sucked so much honey from the flower o' the world,
And kept the gain, and cast the means aside;
And now all eye, all ear, all sense, perhaps;
Transformed, transfigured, yet the same life-power
That moulded first the visible to its use.
So, like a child he was, that waits the show,
While yet the panting lights restrained burn
At half height, and the theatre is full.

But as the days went on, they brought sad hours,
When he would sit, his hands upon his knees,
Drooping, and longing for the wine of life.
Ah! now he learned what new necessities
Come when the outer sphere of life is riven,
And casts distorted shadows on the soul;
While the poor soul, not yet complete in God,

Cannot with inward light burn up the shades,
And laugh at seeming that is not the fact.
For God, who speaks to man on every side,
Sending his voices from the outer world,
Glorious in stars, and winds, and flowers, and waves,
And from the inner world of things unseen,
In hopes and thoughts and deep assurances,
Not seldom ceases outward speech awhile,
That the inner, isled in calm, may clearer sound;
Or, calling through dull storms, proclaim a rest,
One centre fixed amid conflicting spheres;
And thus the soul, calm in itself, become
Able to meet and cope with outward things,
Which else would overwhelm it utterly;
And that the soul, saying
I will the light

,
May, in its absence, yet grow light itself,
And man's will glow the present will of God,
Self-known, and yet divine.

Ah, gracious God!
Do with us what thou wilt, thou glorious heart!
Thou art the God of them that grow, no less
Than them that are; and so we trust in thee
For what we shall be, and in what we are.

Yet in the frequent pauses of the light,
When fell the drizzling thaw, or flaky snow;
Or when the heaped-up ocean of still foam
Reposed upon the tranced earth, breathing low;
His soul was like a frozen lake beneath
The clear blue heaven, reflecting it so dim
That he could scarce believe there was a heaven;
And feared that beauty might be but a toy
Invented by himself in happier moods.
'For,' said he, 'if my mind can dim the fair,
Why should it not enhance the fairness too?'
But then the poor mind lay itself all dim,
And ruffled with the outer restlessness
Of striving death and life. And a tired man
May drop his eyelids on the visible world,

To whom no dreams, when fancy flieth free,
Will bring the sunny excellence of day;
Nor will his utmost force increase his sight.
'Tis easy to destroy, not so to make.
No keen invention lays the strata deep
Of ancient histories; or sweeps the sea
With purple shadows and blue breezes' tracks,
Or rosy memories of the down-gone sun.
And if God means no beauty in these shows,
But drops them, helpless shadows, from his sun,
Ah me, my heart! thou needst another God.
Oh! lack and doubt and fear can only come
Because of plenty, confidence, and love:
Without the mountain there were no abyss.
Our spirits, inward cast upon themselves,
Because the delicate ether, which doth make
The mediator with the outer world,
Is troubled and confused with stormy pain;
Not glad, because confined to shuttered rooms,
Which let the sound of slanting rain be heard,
But show no sparkling sunlight on the drops,
Or ancient rainbow dawning in the west;-
Cast on themselves, I say, nor finding there
The thing they need, because God has not come,
And, claiming all their Human his Divine,
Revealed himself in all their inward parts,
Go wandering up and down a dreary house.
Thus reasoned he. Yet up and down the house
He wandered moaning. Till his soul and frame,
In painful rest compelled, full oft lay still,
And suffered only. Then all suddenly
A light would break from forth an inward well-
God shone within him, and the sun arose.
And to its windows went the soul and looked:-
Lo! o'er the bosom of the outspread earth
Flowed the first waves of sunrise, rippling on.

Much gathered he of patient faith from off
These gloomy heaths, this land of mountains dark,
By moonlight only, like the sorcerer's weeds;
As testify these written lines of his
Found on his table, when his empty chair

Stood by the wall, with yet a history
Clinging around it for the old man's eyes.

I am weary, and something lonely;
And can only think, think.
If there were some water only,
That a spirit might drink, drink!
And rise
With light in the eyes,
And a crown of hope on the brow;
And walk in outgoing gladness,-
Not sit in an inward sadness-
As now!

But, Lord, thy child will be sad,
As sad as it pleaseth thee;
Will sit, not needing to be glad,
Till thou bid sadness flee;
And drawing near
With a simple cheer,
Speak one true word to me.

Another song in a low minor key
From awful holy calm, as this from grief,
I weave, a silken flower, into my web,
That goes straight on, with simply crossing lines,
Floating few colours upward to the sight.

Ah, holy midnight of the soul,
When stars alone are high;
When winds are dead, or at their goal,
And sea-waves only sigh!

Ambition faints from out the will;
Asleep sad longing lies;
All hope of good, all fear of ill,
All need of action dies;

Because God is; and claims the life
He kindled in thy brain;
And thou in Him, rapt far from strife,
Diest and liv'st again.

It was a changed and wintry time to him;
But visited by April airs and scents,
That came with sudden presence, unforecast;
s brushed from off the outer spheres of spring
In the new singing world, by winds of sighs,
That wandering swept across the glad
To be

.
Strange longings that he never knew till now,
A sense of want, yea of an infinite need,
Cried out within him-rather moaned than cried.
And he would sit a silent hour and gaze
Upon the distant hills with dazzling snow
Upon their peaks, and thence, adown their sides,
Streaked vaporous, or starred in solid blue.
And then a shadowy sense arose in him,
As if behind those world-inclosing hills,
There sat a mighty woman, with a face
As calm as life, when its intensity
Pushes it nigh to death, waiting for him,
To make him grand for ever with a kiss,
And send him silent through the toning worlds.

The father saw him waning. The proud sire
Beheld his pride go drooping in the cold
Down, down to the warm earth; and gave God thanks
That he was old. But evermore the son
Looked up and smiled as he had heard strange news,
Across the waste, of primrose-buds and flowers.
Then again to his father he would come
Seeking for comfort, as a troubled child,
And with the same child's hope of comfort there.
Sure there is one great Father in the heavens,
Since every word of good from fathers' lips
Falleth with such authority, although
They are but men as we: God speaks in them.
So this poor son who neared the unknown death,
Took comfort in his father's tenderness,
And made him strong to die. One day he came,
And said: 'What think you, father, is it hard,
This dying?' 'Well, my boy,' he said, 'We'll try

And make it easy with the present God.
But, as I judge, though more by hope than sight,
It seemeth harder to the lookers on,
Than him that dieth. It may be, each breath,
That they would call a gasp, seems unto him
A sigh of pleasure; or, at most, the sob
Wherewith the unclothed spirit, step by step,
Wades forth into the cool eternal sea.
I think, my boy, death has two sides to it,
One sunny, and one dark; as this round earth
Is every day half sunny and half dark.
We on the dark side call the mystery
death

;

They on the other, looking down in light,
Wait the glad birth, with other tears than ours.'
'Be near me, father, when I die;' he said.
'I will, my boy, until a better sire
Takes your hand out of mine, and I shall say:
I give him back to thee; Oh! love him, God;
For he needs more than I can ever be.
And then, my son, mind and be near in turn,
When my time comes; you in the light beyond,
And knowing all about it; I all dark.'

And so the days went on, until the green
Shone through the snow in patches, very green:
For, though the snow was white, yet the green shone.
And hope of life awoke within his heart;
For the spring drew him, warm, soft, budding spring,
With promises. The father better knew.
God, give us heaven. Remember our poor hearts.
We never grasp the zenith of the time;
We find no spring, except in winter prayers.

Now he, who strode a king across his fields,
Crept slowly through the breathings of the spring;
And sometimes wept in secret, that the earth,
Which dwelt so near his heart with all its suns,
And moons, and maidens, soon would lie afar
Across some unknown, sure-dividing waste.
Yet think not, though I fall upon the sad,

And lingering listen to the fainting tones,
Before I strike new chords that seize the old
And waft their essence up the music-stair-
Think not that he was always sad, nor dared
To look the blank unknown full in the void:
For he had hope in God, the growth of years,
Ponderings, and aspirations from a child,
And prayers and readings and repentances.
Something within him ever sought to come
At peace with something deeper in him still.
Some sounds sighed ever for a harmony
With other deeper, fainter tones, that still
Drew nearer from the unknown depths, wherein
The Individual goeth out in God,
And smoothed the discord ever as they grew.
Now he went back the way the music came,
Hoping some nearer sign of God at hand;
And, most of all, to see the very face
That in Judea once, at supper time,
Arose a heaven of tenderness above
The face of John, who leaned upon the breast
Soon to lie down in its last weariness.

And as the spring went on, his budding life
Swelled up and budded towards the invisible,
Bursting the earthy mould wherein it lay.
He never thought of churchyards, as before,
When he was strong; but ever looked above,
Away from the green earth to the blue sky,
And thanked God that he died not in the cold.
'For,' said he, 'I would rather go abroad
When the sun shines, and birds are happy here.
For, though it may be we shall know no place,
But only mighty realms of making thought,
(Not living in creation any more,
But evermore creating our own worlds)
Yet still it seems as if I had to go
Into the sea of air that floats and heaves,
And swings its massy waves around our earth,
And may feel wet to the unclothed soul;
And I would rather go when it is full
Of light and blueness, than when grey and fog

Thicken it with the steams of the old earth.
Now in the first of summer I shall die;
Lying, mayhap, at sunset, sinking asleep,
And going with the light, and from the dark;
And when the earth is dark, they'll say: 'He is dead;'
But I shall say: 'Ah God! I live and love;
The earth is fair, but this is fairer still;
My dear ones, they were very dear; but now
The past is past; for they are dearer still.'
So I shall go, in starlight, it may be,
Or lapt in moonlight ecstasies, to seek
The heart of all, the man of all, my friend;
Whom I shall know my own beyond all loves,
Because he makes all loving true and deep;
And I live on him, in him, he in me.'

The weary days and nights had taught him much;
Had sent him, as a sick child creeps along,
Until he hides him in his mother's breast,
Seeking for God. For all he knew before
Seemed as he knew it not. He needed now
To feel God's arms around him hold him close,
Close to his heart, ere he could rest an hour.
And God was very good to him, he said.

Ah God! we need the winter as the spring;
And thy poor children, knowing thy great heart,
And that thou bearest thy large share of grief,
Because thou lovest goodness more than joy
In them thou lovest,-so dost let them grieve,
Will cease to vex thee with their peevish cries,
Will look and smile, though they be sorrowful;
And not the less pray for thy help, when pain
Is overstrong, coming to thee for rest.
One day we praise thee for, without, the pain.

One night, as oft, he lay and could not sleep.
His soul was like an empty darkened room,
Through which strange pictures pass from the outer world;
While regnant will lay passive and looked on.
But the eye-tube through which the shadows came
Was turned towards the past. One after one

Arose old scenes, old sorrows, old delights.
Ah God! how sad are all things that grow old;
Even the rose-leaves have a mournful scent,
And old brown letters are more sad than graves;
Old kisses lie about the founts of tears,
Like autumn leaves around the winter wells;
And yet they cannot die. A smile once smiled
Is to eternity a smile-no less;
And that which smiles and kisses, liveth still;
And thou canst do great wonders, Wonderful!

At length, as ever in such vision-hours,
Came the bright maiden, riding the great horse.
And then at once the will sprang up awake,
And, like a necromantic sage, forbade
What came unbidden to depart at will.
So on that form he rested his sad thoughts,
Till he began to wonder what her lot;
How she had fared in spinning history
Into a psyche-cradle, where to die;
And then emerge-what butterfly? pure white,
With silver dust of feathers on its wings?
Or that dull red, seared with its ebon spots?
And then he thought: 'I know some women fail,
And cease to be so very beautiful.
And I have heard men rave of certain eyes,
In which I could not rest a moment's space.'
Straightway the fount of possibilities
Began to gurgle, under, in his soul.
Anon the lava-stream burst forth amain,
And glowed, and scorched, and blasted as it flowed.
For purest souls sometimes have direst fears,
In ghost-hours when the shadow of the earth
Is cast on half her children, from the sun
Who is afar and busy with the rest.
'If my high lady be but only such
As some men say of women-very pure
When dressed in white, and shining in men's eyes,
And with the wavings of great unborn wings
Around them in the aether of the souls,
Felt at the root where senses meet in one
Like dim-remembered airs and rhymes and hues;

But when alone, at best a common thing,
With earthward thoughts, and feet that are of earth!
Ah no-it cannot be! She is of God.
But then, fair things may perish; higher life
Gives deeper death; fair gifts make fouler faults:
Women themselves-I dare not think the rest.
And then they say that in her London world,
They have other laws and judgments than in ours.'
And so the thoughts walked up and down his soul,
And found at last a spot wherein to rest,
Building a resolution for the day.

But next day, and the next, he was too worn
With the unrest of this chaotic night-
As if a man had sprung to life before
The spirit of God moved on the waters' face,
And made his dwelling ready, who in pain,
Himself untuned, groaned for a harmony,
For order and for law around his life-
Too tired he was to do as he had planned.
But on the next, a genial south-born wind
Waved the blue air beneath the golden sun,
Bringing glad news of summer from the south.
Into his little room the bright rays shone,
And, darting through the busy blazing fire,
Turning it ghostly pale, slew it almost;
As the great sunshine of the further life
Quenches the glow of this, and giveth death.
He had lain gazing at the wondrous strife
And strange commingling of the sun and fire,
Like spiritual and vital energies,
Whereof the one doth bear the other first,
And then destroys it for a better birth;
And now he rose to help the failing fire,
Because the sunshine came not near enough
To do for both. And then he clothed himself,
And sat him down betwixt the sun and fire,
And got him ink and paper, and began
And wrote with earnest dying heart as thus.
'Lady, I owe thee much. Nay, do not look
To find my name; for though I write it here,
I date as from the churchyard, where I lie

Whilst thou art reading; and thou know'st me not.
I dare to write, because I am crowned by death
Thy equal. If my boldness should offend,
I, pure in my intent, hide with the ghosts,
Where thou wilt never meet me, until thou
Knowest that death, like God, doth make of one.

'But pardon, lady. Ere I had begun,
My thoughts moved towards thee with a gentle flow
That bore a depth of waters. When I took
My pen to write, they rushed into a gulf,
Precipitate and foamy. Can it be,
That death who humbles all hath made me proud?
Lady, thy loveliness hath walked my brain,
As if I were thy heritage in sooth,
Bequeathed from sires beyond all story's reach.
For I have loved thee from afar, and long;
Joyous in having seen what lifted me,
By very power to see, above myself.
Thy beauty hath made beautiful my life;
Thy virtue made mine strong to be itself.
Thy form hath put on every changing dress
Of name, and circumstance, and history,
That so the life, dumb in the wondrous page
Recording woman's glory, might come forth
And be the living fact to longing eyes-
Thou, thou essential womanhood to me;
Afar as angels or the sainted dead,
Yet near as loveliness can haunt a man,
And taking any shape for every need.

'Years, many years, have passed since the first time,
Which was the last, I saw thee. What have they
Made or unmade in thee? I ask myself.
O lovely in my memory! art thou
As lovely in thyself? Thy features then
Said what God made thee; art thou such indeed?
Forgive my boldness, lady; I am dead;
And dead men may cry loud, they make no noise.

'I have a prayer to make thee-hear the dead.
Lady, for God's sake be as beautiful

As that white form that dwelleth in my heart;
Yea, better still, as that ideal Pure
That waketh in thee, when thou prayest God,
Or helpst thy poor neighbour. For myself
I pray. For if I die and find that she,
My woman-glory, lives in common air,
Is not so very radiant after all,
My sad face will afflict the calm-eyed ghosts,
Not used to see such rooted sadness there,
At least in fields where I may hope to walk
And find good company. Upon my knees
I could implore thee-justify my faith
In womanhood's white-handed nobleness,
And thee, its revelation unto me.

'But I bethink me, lady. If thou turn
Thy thoughts upon thyself, for the great sake
Of purity and conscious whiteness' self,
Thou wilt but half succeed. The other half
Is to forget the first, and all thyself,
Quenching thy moonlight in the blaze of day;
Turning thy being full unto thy God;
Where shouldst thou quite forget the name of Truth,
Yet thou wouldst be a pure, twice holy child,
(Twice born of God, once of thy own pure will
Arising at the calling Father's voice,)
Doing the right with sweet unconsciousness;
Having God in thee, a completer soul,
Be sure, than thou alone; thou not the less
Complete in choice, and individual life,
Since that which sayeth
I
, doth call him
Sire.

'Lady, I die-the Father holds me up.
It is not much to thee that I should die;
(How should it be? for thou hast never looked
Deep in my eyes, as I once looked in thine)
But it is much that He doth hold me up.

'I thank thee, lady, for a gentle look
Thou lettest fall upon me long ago.
The same sweet look be possible to thee
For evermore;-I bless thee with thine own,
And say farewell, and go into my grave-
Nay, nay, into the blue heaven of my hopes.'

Then came his name in full, and then the name
Of the green churchyard where he hoped to lie.
And then he laid him back, weary, and said:
'O God! I am only an attempt at life.
Sleep falls again ere I am full awake.
Life goeth from me in the morning hour.
I have seen nothing clearly; felt no thrill
Of pure emotion, save in dreams, wild dreams;
And, sometimes, when I looked right up to thee.
I have been proud of knowledge, when the flame
Of Truth, high Truth, but flickered in my soul.
Only at times, in lonely midnight hours,
When in my soul the stars came forth, and brought
New heights of silence, quelling all my sea,
Have I beheld clear truth, apart from form,
And known myself a living lonely thought,
Isled in the hyaline of Truth alway.
I have not reaped earth's harvest, O my God;
Have gathered but a few poor wayside flowers,
Harebells, red poppies, closing pimpernels-
All which thou hast invented, beautiful God,
To gather by the way, for comforting.
Have I aimed proudly, therefore aimed too low,
Striving for something visible in my thought,
And not the unseen thing hid far in thine?
Make me content to be a primrose-flower
Among thy nations; that the fair truth, hid
In the sweet primrose, enter into me,
And I rejoice, an individual soul,
Reflecting thee; as truly then divine,
As if I towered the angel of the sun.
All in the night, the glowing worm hath given
Me keener joy than a whole heaven of stars:
Thou camest in the worm more near me then.
Nor do I think, were I that green delight,

I'd change to be the shadowy evening star.
Ah, make me, Father, anything thou wilt,
So be thou will it; I am safe with thee.
I laugh exulting. Make me something, God;
Clear, sunny, veritable purity
Of high existence, in itself content,
And in the things that are besides itself,
And seeking for no measures. I have found
The good of earth, if I have found this death.
Now I am ready; take me when thou wilt.'

He laid the letter in his desk, with seal
And superscription. When his sister came,
He said, 'You'll find a note there-afterwards-
Take it yourself to the town, and let it go.
But do not see the name, my sister true-
I'll tell you all about it, when you come.'

And as the eve, through paler, darker shades,
Insensibly declines, and is no more,
The lordly day once more a memory,
So died he. In the hush of noon he died.
Through the low valley-fog he brake and climbed.
The sun shone on-why should he not shine on?
The summer noises rose o'er all the land.
The love of God lay warm on hill and plain.
'Tis well to die in summer.

When the breath,
After a long still pause, returned no more,
The old man sank upon his knees, and said:
'Father, I thank thee; it is over now;
And thou hast helped him well through this sore time.
So one by one we all come back to thee,
All sons and brothers, thanking thee who didst
Put of thy fatherhood in our poor hearts,
That, having children, we might guess thy love.
And at the last, find all loves one in thee.'
And then he rose, and comforted the maid,
Who in her brother lost the pride of life,
Weeping as all her heaven were full of rain.

When that which was so like him-so unlike-
Lay in the churchyard, and the green turf soon
Would grow together, healing up the wounds
Of the old Earth who took her share again,
The sister went to do his last request.
Then found she, with his other papers, this,-
A farewell song, in lowland Scottish tongue:-

Greetna, father, that I'm gaein'.
For fu' weel ye ken the gaet.
I' the winter, corn ye're sawin'-
I' the hairst, again ye hae't.

I'm gaein' hame to see my mither-
She'll be weel acquaint or this,
Sair we'll muse at ane anither,
'Tween the auld word an' new kiss.

Love, I'm doubtin', will be scanty
Roun' ye baith, when I'm awa';
But the kirk has happin' plenty
Close aside me, for you twa.

An' aboon, there's room for mony-
'Twas na made for ane or twa;
But it grew for a' an' ony
Countin' love the best ava'.

Here, aneath, I ca' ye father:
Auld names we'll nor tyne nor spare;
A' my sonship I maun gather,
For the Son is King up there.

Greetna, father, that I'm gaein';
For ye ken fu' weel the gaet:
Here, in winter, cast yer sawin'-
There, in hairst, again ye hae't.

What of the lady? Little more I know.
Not even if, when she had read the lines,
She rose in haste, and to her chamber went,
And shut the door; nor if, when she came forth,

A dawn of holier purpose shone across
The sadness of her brow; unto herself
Convicted; though the great world, knowing all,
Might call her pure as day-yea, truth itself.
Of these things I know nothing-only know
That on a warm autumnal afternoon,
When half-length shadows fell from mossy stones,
Darkening the green upon the grassy graves,
While the still church, like a said prayer, arose
White in the sunshine, silent as the graves,
Empty of souls, as is the tomb itself;
A little boy, who watched a cow near by
Gather her milk from alms of clover fields,
Flung over earthen dykes, or straying out
Beneath the gates upon the paths, beheld
All suddenly-he knew not how she came-
A lady, closely veiled, alone, and still,
Seated upon a grave. Long time she sat
And moved not, 'greetin' sair,' the boy did say;
'Just like my mither whan my father deed.
An' syne she rase, an' pu'd at something sma',
A glintin' gowan, or maybe a blade
O' the dead grass,' and glided silent forth,
Over the low stone wall by two old steps,
And round the corner, and was seen no more.
The clang of hoofs and sound of carriage wheels
Arose and died upon the listener's ear.

George MacDonald

A Lown Nicht

Rose o' my hert,
Open yer leaves to the lampin mune;
Into the curls lat her keek an' dert,
She'll tak the colour but gie ye tune.

Buik o' my brain,
Open yer faulds to the starry signs;
Lat the e'en o' the holy luik an' strain,
Lat them glimmer an' score atween the lines.

Cup o' my soul,
Goud an' diamond an' ruby cup,
Ye're noucht ava but a toom dry bowl
Till the wine o' the kingdom fill ye up.

Conscience-glass,
Mirror the en'less All in thee;
Melt the bounded and make it pass
Into the tideless, shoreless sea.

Warl o' my life,
Swing thee roun thy sunny track;
Fire an' win' an' water an' strife,
Carry them a' to the glory back.

George MacDonald

A Make-Believe

I will think as thinks the rabbit:-

Oh, delight
In the night
When the moon
Sets the tune
To the woods!
And the broods
All run out,
Frisk about,
Go and come,
Beat the drum-
Here in groups,
There in troops!
Now there's one!
Now it's gone!
There are none!
And now they are dancing like chaff!
I look, and I laugh,
But sit by my door, and keep to my habit-
A wise, respectable, clean-furred old rabbit!

Now I'm going,
Business calls me out-
Going, going,
Very knowing,
Slow, long-heeled, and stout,
Loping, lumbering,
Nipping, numbering,
Head on this side and on that,
Along the pathway footed flat,
Through the meadow, through the heather,
Through the rich dusky weather-
Big stars and little moon!

Dews are lighting down in crowds,
Odours rising in thin clouds,
Night has all her chords in tune-
The very night for us, God's rabbits,

Suiting all our little habits!
Wind not loud, but playful with our fur,
Just a cool, a sweet, a gentle stir!
And all the way not one rough bur,
But the dewiest, freshest grasses,
That whisper thanks to every foot that passes!

I, the king the rest call Mappy,
Canter on, composed and happy,
Till I come where there is plenty
For a varied meal and dainty.

Is it cabbage, I grab it;
Is it parsley, I nab it;
Is it carrot, I mar it;
The turnip I turn up
And hollow and swallow;
A lettuce? Let us eat it!
A beetroot? Let's beat it!
If you are juicy,
Sweet sir, I will use you!
For all kinds of corn-crop
I have a born crop!
Are you a green top?
You shall be gleaned up!
Sucking and feazing,
Crushing and squeezing
All that is feathery,
Crisp, not leathery,
Juicy and bruisy-
All comes proper
To my little hopper
Still on the dance,
Driven by hunger and drouth!

All is welcome to my crunching,
Finding, grinding,
Milling, munching,
Gobbling, lunching,
Fore-toothed, three-lipped mouth-
Eating side way, round way, flat way,
Eating this way, eating that way,
Every way at once!

Hark to the rain!-
Pattering, clattering,
The cabbage leaves battering,
Down it comes again!-
Home we hurry
Hop and scurry,
And in with a flurry!
Hustling, jostling
Out of the airy land
Into the dry warm sand;
Our family white tails,
The last of our vitals,
Following hard with a whisk to them,
And with a great sense of risk to them!

Hear to it pouring!
Hear the thunder roaring
Far off and up high,
While we all lie
So warm and so dry
In the mellow dark,
Where never a spark,
White or rosy or blue,
Of the sheeting, fleeting,
Forking, frightening,
Lashing lightning
Ever can come through!

Let the wind chafe
In the trees overhead,
We are quite safe
In our dark, yellow bed!
Let the rain pour!
It never can bore
A hole in our roof-
It is waterproof!
So is the cloak
We always carry,
We furry folk,
In sandhole or quarry!
It is perfect bliss

To lie in a nest
So soft as this,
All so warmly drest!
No one to flurry you!
No one to hurry you!
No one to scurry you!
Holes plenty to creep in!
All day to sleep in!
All night to roam in!
Gray dawn to run home in!
And all the days and nights to come after-
All the to-morrows for hind-legs and laughter!

Now the rain is over,
We are out again,
Every merry, leaping rover,
On his right leg and his wrong leg,
On his doubled, shortened long leg,
Floundering amain!
Oh, it is merry
And jolly-yes, very!

But what-what is that?
What can he be at?
Is it a cat?
Ah, my poor little brother,
He's caught in the trap
That goes-to with a snap!
Ah me! there was never,
Nor will be for ever-
There was never such another,
Such a funny, funny bunny,
Such a frisking, such a whisking,
Such a frolicking brother!
He's screeching, beseeching!
They're going to-

Ah, my poor foot,
It is caught in a root!
No, no! 'tis a trap
That goes-to with a snap!
Ah me, I'm forsaken!

Ah me, I am taken!
I am screeching, beseeching!
They are going to-

No more! no more! I must stop this play,
Be a boy again, and kneel down and pray
To the God of sparrows and rabbits and men,
Who never lets any one out of his ken-
It must be so, though it be bewild'ring-
To save his dear beasts from his cruel children!

George MacDonald

A Mammon-Marriage

The croak of a raven hoar!
A dog's howl, kennel-tied!
Loud shuts the carriage-door:
The two are away on their ghastly ride
To Death's salt shore!

Where are the love and the grace?
The bridegroom is thirsty and cold!
The bride's skull sharpens her face!
But the coachman is driving, jubilant, bold,
The devil's pace.

The horses shivered and shook
Waiting gaunt and haggard
With sorry and evil look;
But swift as a drunken wind they staggered
'Longst Lethe brook.

Long since, they ran no more;
Heavily pulling they died
On the sand of the hopeless shore
Where never swelled or sank a tide,
And the salt burns sore.

Flat their skeletons lie,
White shadows on shining sand;
The crusted reins go high
To the crumbling coachman's bony hand
On his knees awry.

Side by side, jarring no more,
Day and night side by side,
Each by a doorless door,
Motionless sit the bridegroom and bride
On the Dead-Sea-shore.

George MacDonald

A Manchester Poem

'Tis a poor drizzly morning, dark and sad.
The cloud has fallen, and filled with fold on fold
The chimneyed city; and the smoke is caught,
And spreads diluted in the cloud, and sinks,
A black precipitate, on miry streets.
And faces gray glide through the darkened fog.

Slave engines utter again their ugly growl,
And soon the iron bands and blocks of stone
That prison them to their task, will strain and quiver
Until the city tremble. The clamour of bells,
Importunate, keeps calling pale-faced forms
To gather and feed those Samsons' groaning strength
With labour; and among the many come
A man and woman-the woman with her gown
Drawn over her head, the man with bended neck
Submissive to the rain. Amid the jar,
And clash, and shudder of the awful force,
They enter and part-each to a different task,
But each a soul of knowledge to brute force,
Working a will through the organized whole
Of cranks and belts and levers, pinions and screws
Wherewith small man has eked his body out,
And made himself a mighty, weary giant.
In labour close they pass the murky day,
'Mid floating dust of swift-revolving wheels,
And filmy spoil of quick contorted threads,
Which weave a sultry chaos all about;
Until, at length, old darkness, swelling slow
Up from the caves of night to make an end,
Chokes in its tide the clanking of the looms,
The monster-engines, and the flying gear.
'Tis Earth that draws her curtains, and calls home
Her little ones, and sets her down to nurse
Her tired children-like a mother-ghost
With her neglected darlings in the dark.
So out they walk, with sense of glad release,
And home-to a dreary place! Unfinished walls,
Earth-heaps, and broken bricks, and muddy pools

Lie round it like a rampart against the spring,
The summer, and all sieges of the year.

But, Lo, the dark has opened an eye of fire!
The room reveals a temple, witnessed by signs
Seen in the ancient place! Lo, here is light,
Yea, burning fire, with darkness on its skirts;
Pure water, ready to baptize; and bread;
And in the twilight edges of the light,
A book; and, for the cunning-woven veil,
Their faces-hiding God's own holiest place!
Even their bed figures the would-be grave
Where One arose triumphant, slept no more!
So at their altar-table they sit down
To eat their Eucharist; for, to the heart
That reads the live will in the dead command,

He
is the bread, yea, all of every meal.
But as, in weary rest, they silent sit,
They gradually grow aware of light
That overcomes their lamp, and, through the blind,
Casts from the window-frame two shadow-glooms
That make a cross of darkness on the white.
The woman rises, eagerly looks out:
Lo, some fair wind has mown the earth-sprung fog,
And, far aloft, the white exultant moon,
From her blue window, curtained all with white,
Looks greeting them-God's creatures they and she!
Smiling she turns; he understands the smile:
To-morrow will be fair-as holy, fair!
And lying down, in sleep they die till morn,
While through their night throb low aurora-gleams
Of resurrection and the coming dawn.
They wake: 'tis Sunday. Still the moon is there,
But thin and ghostly-clothed upon with light,
As if, while they were sleeping, she had died.
They dress themselves, like priests, in clean attire,
And, through their lowly door, enter God's room.
The sun is up, the emblem on his shield.
One side the street, the windows all are moons
To light the other side that lies in shade.

See, down the sun-side, an old woman come
In a red cloak that makes the whole street glad!
A long-belated autumn-flower she seems,
Dazed by the rushing of the new-born life
Up hidden stairs to see the calling sun,
But in her cloak and smile they know the spring,
And haste to meet her through slow dissolving streets
Widening to larger glimmers of growing green.
Oh, far away the streets repel the spring!
Yet every stone in the dull pavement shares
The life that thrills anew the outworn earth,
A right Bethesda angel-for all, not some!

A street unfinished leads them forth at length
Where green fields bask, and hedgerow trees, apart,
Stand waiting in the air as for some good,
And the sky is broad and blue-and there is all!
No peaceful river meditates along
The weary flat to the less level sea!
No forest brown, on pillared stems, its boughs
Meeting in gothic arches, bears aloft
A groined vault, fretted with tremulous leaves!
No mountains lift their snows, and send their brooks
Down babbling with the news of silent things!
But love itself is commonest of all,
And loveliest of all, in all the worlds!
And he that hath not forest, brook, or hill,
Must learn to read aright what commoner books
Unfold before him. If ocean solitudes-
Then darkness dashed with glory, infinite shades,
And misty minglings of the sea and sky.
If only fields-the humble man of heart
Will revel in the grass beneath his foot,
And from the lea lift his glad eye to heaven,
God's palette, where his careless painter-hand
Sweeps comet-clouds that net the gazing soul;
Streaks endless stairs, and blots half-sculptured blocks;
Curves filmy pallors; heaps huge mountain-crag;
Nor touches where it leaves not beauty's mark.
To them the sun and air are feast enough,
As through field-paths and lanes they slowly walk;
But sometimes, on the far horizon dim

A veil is lifted, and they spy the hills,
Cloudlike and faint, yet sharp against the sky;
Then wakes an unknown want, which asks and looks
As for some thing forgot-loved long ago,
But on the hither verge of childhood dropt:
'Tis but home-sickness roused in the soul by Spring!
Fresh birth and eager growth, reviving life,
Which
is
because it
would be
, fill the world;
The very light is new-born with the grass;
The stones themselves are warm; the brown earth swells,
Filled, sponge-like, with dark beams, which nestle close
And brood unseen and shy, and potent warm
In every little corner, nest, and crack
Where buried lurks a blind and sleepy seed
Waiting the touch of the finger of the sun.
The mossy stems and boughs, where yet no life
Oozes exuberant in brown and green,
Are clad in golden splendours, crossed and lined
With shuttle-shadows weaving lovely change.
Through the tree-tops the west wind rushing goes,
Calling and rousing the dull sap within:
The fine jar down the stem sinks tremulous,
From airy root thrilling to earthy branch.
And though as yet no buddy baby dots
Sparkle the darkness of the hedgerow twigs,
The smoke-dried bark appears to spread and swell
In the soft nurture of the warm light-bath.
The sun had left behind him the keystone
Of his low arch half-way when they turned home,
Filled with pure air, and light, and operant spring:
Back, like the bees, they went to their dark house
To store their innocent spoil in honeyed thought.

But on their way, crossing a field, they chanced
Upon a spot where once had been a home,
And roots of walls still peered out, grown with moss.
'Twas a dead cottage, mouldered quite, where yet
Lay the old shadow of a vanished care;

The little garden's blunt, half-blotted map
Was yet discernible by thinner grass
Upon the walks. There, in the midst of dry
Bushes, dead flowers, rampant, uncomely weeds,
A single snowdrop drooped its snowy drop,
The lonely remnant of a family
That in the garden dwelt about the home-
Reviving with the spring when home was gone:
They see; its spiritual counterpart
Wakes up and blossoms white in their meek souls-
A longing, patient, waiting hopefulness,
The snowdrop of the heart; a heavenly child,
That, pale with the earthly cold, hangs its fair head
As it had nought to say 'gainst any world;
While they in whom it dwells, nor knows itself,
Inherit in their meekness all the worlds.

I love thee, flower, as a slow lingerer
Upon the verge of my humanity.
Lo, on thine inner leaves and in thy heart
The loveliest green, acknowledging the grass-
White-minded memory of lowly friends!
But almost more I love thee for the earth
Which clings to thy transfigured radiancy,
Uplifted with thee from thine abandoned grave;
Say rather the soiling of thy garments pure
Upon thy road into the light and air,
The heaven of thy new birth. Some gentle rain
Will one day wash thee white, and send the earth
Back to the earth; but, sweet friend, while it clings,
I love the cognizance of our family.

With careful hands uprooting it, they bore
The little plant a willing captive home-
Fearless of dark abode, because secure
In its own tale of light. As once of old
The angel of the annunciation shone,
Bearing all heaven into a common house,
It brings in with it field and sky and air.
A pot of mould its one poor tie to earth,
Its heaven an ell of blue 'twixt chimney-tops,
Its world the priests of that small temple-room,

It takes its prophet-place with fire and book,
Type of primeval spring, whose mighty arc
Hath not yet drawn the summer up the sky.
At night, when the dark shadow of the cross
Will enter, clothed in moonlight, still and wan
Like a pale mourner at its foot the flower
Will, drooping, wait the dawn. Then the dark bird
Which holds breast-caged the secret of the sun,
And therefore hangs himself a prisoner caged,
Will break into its song-Lo, God is light!

Weary and hopeful, to their sleep they go;
And all night long the snowdrop glimmers white
Thinning the dark, unknowing it, and unseen.

*

Out of my verse I woke, and saw my room,
My precious books, the cherub-forms above,
And rose, and walked abroad, and sought the woods;
And roving odours met me on my way.
I entered Nature's church, a shimmering vault
Of boughs, and clouded leaves-filmy and pale
Betwixt me and the sun, while at my feet
Their shadows, dark and seeming solid, lay
Like tombstones o'er the vanished flowers of Spring.
The place was silent, save for the broken song
Of some Memnonian, glory-stricken bird
That burst into a carol and was still;
It was not lonely: golden beetles crept,
Green goblins, in the roots; and squirrel things
Ran, wild as cherubs, through the tracery;
And here and yonder a flaky butterfly
Was doubting in the air, scarlet and blue.
But 'twixt my heart and summer's perfect grace,
Drove a dividing wedge, and far away
It seemed, like voice heard loud yet far away
By one who, waking half, soon sleeps outright:-

Where was the snowdrop? where the flower of hope?
In me the spring was throbbing; round me lay
Resting fulfilled, the odour-breathing summer!
My heart heaved swelling like a prisoned bud,
And summer crushed it with its weight of light!

Winter is full of stings and sharp reproofs,
Healthsome, not hurtful, but yet hurting sore;
Summer is too complete for growing hearts-
Too idle its noons, its morns too triumphing,
Too full of slumberous dreams its dusky eves;
Autumn is full of ripeness and the grave;
We need a broken season, where the cloud
Is ruffled into glory, and the dark
Falls rainful o'er the sunset; need a world
Whose shadows ever point away from it;
A scheme of cones abrupt, and flattened spheres,
And circles cut, and perfect laws the while
That marvellous imperfection ever points
To higher perfectness than heart can think;
Therefore to us, a flower of harassed Spring,
Crocus, or primrose, or anemone,
Is lovely as was never rosiest rose;
A heath-bell on a waste, lonely and dry,
Says more than lily, stately in breathing white;
A window through a vaulted roof of rain
Lets in a light that comes from farther away,
And, sinking deeper, spreads a finer joy
Than cloudless noon-tide splendorous o'er the world:
Man seeks a better home than Paradise;
Therefore high hope is more than deepest joy,
A disappointment better than a feast,
And the first daisy on a wind-swept lea
Dearer than Eden-groves with rivers four.

George MacDonald

A Meditation Of St. Eligius

Queen Mary one day Jesus sent
To fetch some water, legends tell;
The little boy, obedient,
Drew a full pitcher from the well;

But as he raised it to his head,
The water lipping with the rim,
The handle broke, and all was shed
Upon the stones about the brim.

His cloak upon the ground he laid
And in it gathered up the pool;
Obedient there the water staid,
And home he bore it plentiful.

Eligius said, 'Tis fabled ill:
The hands that all the world control,
Had here been room for miracle,
Had made his mother's pitcher whole!

'Still, some few drops for thirsty need
A poor invention even, when told
In love of thee the Truth indeed,
Like broken pitcher yet may hold:

'Thy truth, alas, Lord, once I spilt:
I thought to bear the pitcher high;
Upon the shining stones of guilt
I slipped, and there the potsherds lie!

'Master,
I cried,
no man will drink,
No human thirst will e'er be stilled
Through me, who sit upon the brink,
My pitcher broke, thy water spilled!

'What will they do I waiting left?
They looked to me to bring thy law!
The well is deep, and, sin-bereft,
I nothing have wherewith to draw!'

'But as I sat in evil plight,
With dry parched heart and sickened brain,
Uprose in me the water bright,
Thou gavest me thyself again!'

George MacDonald

A Memorial Of Africa

I.

Upon a rock I sat-a mountain-side,
Far, far forsaken of the old sea's lip;
A rock where ancient waters' rise and dip,
Recoil and plunge, eddy, and oscillant tide,
Had worn and worn, while races lived and died,
Involved channels. Where the sea-weed's drip
Followed the ebb, now crumbling lichens sip
Sparse dews of heaven that down with sunset slide.
I sat long-gazing southward. A dry flow
Of withering wind sucked up my drooping strength,
Itself weak from the desert's burning length.
Behind me piled, away and up did go
Great sweeps of savage mountains-up, away,
Where snow gleams ever, panthers roam, they say.

II.

This infant world has taken long to make,
Nor hast Thou done with it, but mak'st it yet,
And wilt be working on when death has set
A new mound in some churchyard for my sake.
On flow the centuries without a break;
Uprise the mountains, ages without let;
The lichens suck; the hard rock's breast they fret;
Years more than past, the young earth yet will take.
But in the dumbness of the rolling time,
No veil of silence shall encompass me-
Thou wilt not once forget and let me be;
Rather wouldst thou some old chaotic prime
Invade, and, moved by tenderness sublime,
Unfold a world, that I, thy child, might see.

George MacDonald

A Mood

My thoughts are like fire-flies, pulsing in moonlight;
My heart like a silver cup, filled with red wine;
My soul a pale gleaming horizon, whence soon light
Will flood the gold earth with a torrent divine.

George MacDonald

A Noonday Melody

Everything goes to its rest;
The hills are asleep in the noon;
And life is as still in its nest
As the moon when she looks on a moon
In the depth of a calm river's breast
As it steals through a midnight in June.

The streams have forgotten the sea
In the dream of their musical sound;
The sunlight is thick on the tree,
And the shadows lie warm on the ground,-
So still, you may watch them and see
Every breath that awakens around.

The churchyard lies still in the heat,
With its handful of mouldering bone,
As still as the long stalk of wheat
In the shadow that sits by the stone,
As still as the grass at my feet
When I walk in the meadows alone.

The waves are asleep on the main,
And the ships are asleep on the wave;
And the thoughts are as still in my brain
As the echo that sleeps in the cave;
All rest from their labour and pain-
Then why should not I in my grave?

George MacDonald

A Prayer

When I look back upon my life nigh spent,
Nigh spent, although the stream as yet flows on,
I more of follies than of sins repent,
Less for offence than Love's shortcomings moan.
With self, O Father, leave me not alone-
Leave not with the beguiler the beguiled;
Besmirched and ragged, Lord, take back thine own:
A fool I bring thee to be made a child.

George MacDonald

A Prayer For The Past: All Sights And Sounds Of Day And Yea

All sights and sounds of day and year,
All groups and forms, each leaf and gem,
Are thine, O God, nor will I fear
To talk to thee of them

.

Too great thy heart is to despise,
Whose day girds centuries about;
From things which we name small, thine eyes
See great things looking out.

Therefore the prayerful song I sing
May come to thee in ordered words:
Though lowly born, it needs not cling
In terror to its chords.

I think that nothing made is lost;
That not a moon has ever shone,
That not a cloud my eyes hath crossed
But to my soul is gone.

That all the lost years garnered lie
In this thy casket, my dim soul;
And thou wilt, once, the key apply,
And show the shining whole.

But were they dead in me, they live
In thee, whose Parable is-Time,
And Worlds, and Forms-all things that give
Me thoughts, and this my rime

.

And after what men call my death,
When I have crossed the unknown sea,
Some heavenly morn, on hopeful breath,

Shall rise this prayer to thee

.

Oh let me be a child once more,
And dream fine glories in the gloom,
Of sun and moon and stars in store
To ceil my humble room.

Oh call again the moons that crossed
Blue gulfs, behind gray vapours crept;
Show me the solemn skies I lost
Because in thee I slept.

Once more let gathering glory swell,
And lift the world's dim eastern eye;
Once more let lengthening shadows tell
Its time is come to die.

But show me first-oh, blessed sight!
The lowly house where I was young;
There winter sent wild winds at night,
And up the snow-heaps flung;

Or soundless brought a chaos fair,
Full, formless, of fantastic forms,
White ghostly trees in sparkling air-
Chamber for slumbering storms.

There sudden dawned a dewy morn;
A man was turning up the mould;
And in our hearts the spring was born,
Crept thither through the cold.

And Spring, in after years of youth,
Became the form of every form
For hearts now bursting into truth,
Now sighing in the storm

.

On with the glad year let me go,
With troops of daisies round my feet;

Flying my kite, or, in the glow
Of arching summer heat,

Outstretched in fear upon a bank,
Lest, gazing up on awful space,
I should fall down into the blank,
From off the round world's face.

And let my brothers come with me
To play our old games yet again,
Children on earth, more full of glee
That we in heaven are men.

If then should come the shadowy death,
Take one of us and go,
We left would say, under our breath,
'It is a dream, you know!'

'And in the dream our brother's gone
Upstairs: he heard our father call;
For one by one we go alone,
Till he has gathered all.'

Father, in joy our knees we bow:
This earth is not a place of tombs:
We are but in the nursery now;
They in the upper rooms

.

For are we not at home in thee,
And all this world a visioned show;
That, knowing what Abroad is, we
What Home is too may know?

And at thy feet I sit, O Lord,
As once of old, in moonlight pale,
I at my father's sat, and heard
Him read a lofty tale

.

On with my history let me go,
And reap again the gliding years,
Gather great noontide's joyous glow,
Eve's love-contented tears;

One afternoon sit pondering
In that old chair, in that old room,
Where passing pigeon's sudden wing
Flashed lightning through the gloom;

There try once more, with effort vain,
To mould in one perplexed things;
There find the solace yet again
Hope in the Father brings;

Or mount and ride in sun and wind,
Through desert moors, hills bleak and high,
Where wandering vapours fall, and find
In me another sky!

For so thy Visible grew mine,
Though half its power I could not know;
And in me wrought a work divine,
Which thou hadst ordered so
;

Giving me cups that would not spill,
But water carry and yield again;
New bottles with new wine to fill
For comfort of thy men.

But if thou thus restore the past
One hour, for me to wander in,
I now bethink me at the last-
O Lord, leave out the sin.

And with the thought comes doubt, my God:
Shall I the whole desire to see,
And walk once more, of that hill-road
By which I went to thee

?

George MacDonald

A Prayer For The Past: Now Far From My Old Northern Land,

Now far from my old northern land,
I live where gentle winters pass;
Where green seas lave a wealthy strand,
And unsown is the grass
;

Where gorgeous sunsets claim the scope
Of gazing heaven to spread their show,
Hang scarlet clouds in the topmost cope,
With fringes flaming low;

With one beside me in whose eyes
Once more old Nature finds a home;
There treasures up her changeful skies,
Her phosphorescent foam.

O'er a new joy this day we bend,
Soft power from heaven our souls to lift;
A wondering wonder thou dost lend
With loan outpassing gift-

A little child. She sees the sun-
Once more incarnates thy old law:
One born of two, two born in one,
Shall into one three draw.

But is there no day creeping on
Which I should tremble to renew?
I thank thee, Lord, for what is gone-
Thine is the future too!

And are we not at home in Thee,
And all this world a visioned show,
That, knowing what Abroad is, we
What Home is too may know
?

George MacDonald

A Prayer In Sickness

Thou foldest me in sickness;
Thou callest through the cloud;
I batter with the thickness
Of the swathing, blinding shroud:
Oh, let me see thy face,
The only perfect grace
That thou canst show thy child.

O father, being-giver,
Take off the sickness-cloud;
Saviour, my life deliver
From this dull body-shroud:
Till I can see thy face
I am not full of grace,
I am not reconciled.

George MacDonald

A Prisoner

The hinges are so rusty
The door is fixed and fast;
The windows are so dusty
The sun looks in aghast:
Knock out the glass, I pray,
Or dash the door away,
Or break the house down bodily,
And let my soul go free!

George MacDonald

A Sang 'O Zion

Ane by ane they gang awa;
The getherer gethers grit and sma':
Ane by ane maks ane and a'!

Aye whan ane sets doon the cup
Ane ahint maun tak it up:
A' thegither they will sup!

Golden-heidit, ripe, and strang,
Shorn will be the hairst or lang:
Syne begins a better sang!

George MacDonald

A Song For Christmas

I.

Hark, in the steeple the dull bell swinging
Over the furrows ill ploughed by Death!
Hark the bird-babble, the loud lark singing!
Hark, from the sky, what the prophet saith!

Hark, in the pines, the free Wind, complaining-
Moaning, and murmuring, 'Life is bare!'
Hark, in the organ, the caught Wind, outstraining,
Jubilant rise in a soaring prayer!

Toll for the burying, sexton tolling!
Sing for the second birth, angel Lark!
Moan, ye poor Pines, with the Past condoling!
Burst out, brave Organ, and kill the Dark!

II.

Sit on the ground, and immure thy sorrow;
I will give freedom to mine in song!
Haunt thou the tomb, and deny the morrow;
I will go watch in the dawning long!

For I shall see them, and know their faces-
Tenderer, sweeter, and shining more;
Clasp the old self in the new embraces;
Gaze through their eyes' wide open door.

Loved ones, I come to you: see my sadness;
I am ashamed-but you pardon wrong!
Smile the old smile, and my soul's new gladness
Straight will arise in sorrow and song!

George MacDonald

A Song In The Night: A Brown Bird Sang On A Blossomy Tre

A brown bird sang on a blossomy tree,
Sang in the moonshine, merrily,
Three little songs, one, two, and three,
A song for his wife, for himself, and me.

He sang for his wife, sang low, sang high,
Filling the moonlight that filled the sky;
'Thee, thee, I love thee, heart alive!
Thee, thee, thee, and thy round eggs five!'

He sang to himself, 'What shall I do
With this life that thrills me through and through!
Glad is so glad that it turns to ache!
Out with it, song, or my heart will break!'

He sang to me, 'Man, do not fear
Though the moon goes down and the dark is near;
Listen my song and rest thine eyes;
Let the moon go down that the sun may rise!'

I folded me up in the heart of his tune,
And fell asleep with the sinking moon;
I woke with the day's first golden gleam,
And, lo, I had dreamed a precious dream!

George MacDonald

A Song In The Night: I Would I Were An Angel Strong,

I would I were an angel strong,
An angel of the sun, hasting along!

I would I were just come awake,
A child outbursting from night's dusky brake!

Or lark whose inward, upward fate
Mocks every wall that masks the heavenly gate!

Or hopeful cock whose clarion clear
Shrills ten times ere a film of dawn appear!

Or but a glowworm: even then
My light would come straight from the Light of Men!

I am a dead seed, dark and slow:
Father of larks and children, make me grow.

George MacDonald

A Song Of Hope

I dinna ken what's come ower me!
There's a how whaur ance was a hert!
I never luik oot afore me,
An' a cry winna gar me stert;
There's naething nae mair to come ower me,
Blaw the win' frae ony airt!

For i' yon kirkyard there's a hillock,
A hert whaur ance was a how;
An' o' joy there's no left a mealock-
Deid aiss whaur ance was a low!
For i' yon kirkyard, i' the hillock,
Lies a seed 'at winna grow.

It's my hert 'at hauds up the wee hillie-
That's hoo there's a how i' my breist;
It's awa doon there wi' my Willie-
Gaed wi' him whan he was releast;
It's doon i' the green-grown hillie,
But I s' be efter it neist!

Come awa, nicht an' mornin,
Come ooks, years, a' Time's clan:
Ye're welcome: I'm no a bit scornin!
Tak me til him as fest as ye can.
Come awa, nicht an' mornin,
Ye are wings o' a mighty span!

For I ken he's luikin an' waitin,
Luikin aye doon as I clim;
An' I'll no hae him see me sit greitin
I'stead o' gaein to him!
I'll step oot like ane sure o' a meetin,
I'll travel an' rin to him.

George MacDonald

A Song Prayer

Lord Jesus,
Oh, ease us
Of Self that oppresses,
Annoys and distresses
Body and brain
With dull pain!
Thou never,
Since ever,
Save one moment only,
Wast left, or wast lonely:
We are alone,
And make moan.

Far parted,
Dull-hearted,
We wander, sleep-walking,
Mere shadows, dim-stalking:
Orphans we roam,
Far from home.

Oh new man,
Sole human,
God's son, and our brother,
Give each to the other-
No one left out
In cold doubt!

High Father,
Oh gather
Thy sons and thy daughters,
Through fires and through waters,
Home to the nest
Of thy breast!

There under
The wonder
Of great wings of healing,
Of love and revealing,
Teach us anew

To sing true.

George MacDonald

A Song-Sermon

Job xiv. 13-15.

RONDEL.

Would that thou hid me in the grave
And kept me with death's gaoler-care;
Until thy wrath away should wear
A sentence fixed thy prisoner gave!
I would endure with patience brave
So thou remembered I was there!
Would that thou hid me in the grave,
And kept me with death's gaoler-care!

To see thy creature thou wouldst crave-
Desire thy handiwork so fair;
Then wouldst thou call through death's dank air
And I would answer from the cave!
Would that thou hid me in the grave,
And kept me with death's gaoler-care!

George MacDonald

A Spiritual Song, Concerning Our Holy Baptism, Wherein Is Briefly, Who Has Instituted, Whereto It Serves &C.

To Jordan when our Lord had gone,
His Father's pleasure willing,
He took his baptism of St. John,
His work and charge fulfilling;
Therein he did appoint a bath
To wash us from defilement,
And there to drown that cruel Death
In his blood of assoilment:
'Twas no less than a new life.

Let all then hear and right receive
The baptism of the Father;
And learn what Christians must believe,
Shunning where heretics gather.
Water indeed, not water mere
Therein can work his pleasure:
His holy Word is also there
With Spirit rich, unmeasured:
He is the one baptizer.

This clearly showed He by his word
Of open recognition;
The Father's voice men plainly heard
At Jordan claim his mission.
God said, This is my own dear Son
In whom I am well contented;
To you I send him, every one-
That all may hear I have sent him,
And follow what he teaches.

Also God's Son himself here stands
In human presentation;
On him the Holy Ghost descends
In dove-like shape and fashion,
That not a doubt should ever rise
That, when we are baptized,

All the three Persons do baptize;
And they be recognized
Themselves come to dwell with us.

Christ to his scholars says: Go forth,
Give to all men acquaintance
That lost in sin lies the whole earth,
And must turn to repentance.
Believe, and be baptized, and then
Each man is blest for ever;
From that hour he's a new-born man,
And thenceforth, dying never,
The kingdom shall inherit.

But who in this grace puts no faith
Abides in sin, life misses;
He is condemned to endless death
Deep down in hell's abysses.
Nothing avails his righteousness,
And lost are all his merits;
Sin original holds its place-
The sin which he inherits;
And help himself he cannot.

The eye but water doth behold
As from man's hand it floweth;
But inward faith the power untold
Of Jesus Christ's blood knoweth:
Faith sees therein a red flood roll,
With Christ's blood dyed and blended,
Which hurt of every kind makes whole,
Whether from Adam heired
Or by ourselves committed.

George MacDonald

A Story Of The Sea-Shore

TO THEM THAT MOURN

Let your tears flow; let your sad sighs have scope;
Only take heed they fan, they water Hope.

A STORY OF THE SEA-SHORE.

INTRODUCTION.

I sought the long clear twilights of my home,
Far in the pale-blue skies and slaty seas,
What time the sunset dies not utterly,
But withered to a ghost-like stealthy gleam,
Round the horizon creeps the short-lived night,
And changes into sunrise in a swoon.
I found my home in homeliness unchanged:
The love that made it home, unchangeable,
Received me as a child, and all was well.
My ancient summer-heaven, borne on the hills,
Once more embraced me; and once more the vale,
So often sighed for in the far-off nights,
Rose on my bodily vision, and, behold,
In nothing had the fancy mocked the fact!
The hasting streams went garrulous as of old;
The resting flowers in silence uttered more;
The blue hills rose and dwelt alone in heaven;
Householding Nature from her treasures brought
Things old and new, the same yet not the same,
For all was holier, lovelier than before;
And best of all, once more I paced the fields
With him whose love had made me long for God
So good a father that, needs-must, I sought
A better still, Father of him and me.

Once on a day, my cousin Frank and I
Sat swiftly borne behind the dear white mare
That oft had carried me in bygone days
Along the lonely paths of moorland hills;

But now we sought the coast, where deep waves foam
'Gainst rocks that lift their dark fronts to the north.
And with us went a girl, on whose kind face
I had not looked for many a youthful year,
But the old friendship straightway blossomed new.
The heavens were sunny, and the earth was green;
The large harebells in families stood along
The grassy borders, of a tender blue
Transparent as the sky, haunted with wings
Of many butterflies, as blue as they.
And as we talked and talked without restraint,
Brought near by memories of days that were,
And therefore are for ever; by the joy
Of motion through a warm and shining air;
By the glad sense of freedom and like thoughts;
And by the bond of friendship with the dead,
She told the tale which here I tell again.

I had returned to childish olden time,
And asked her if she knew a castle worn,
Whose masonry, razed utterly above,
Yet faced the sea-cliff up, and met the waves:-
'Twas one of my child-marvels; for, each year,
We turned our backs upon the ripening corn,
And sought some village on the Moray shore;
And nigh this ruin, was that I loved the best.

For oh the riches of that little port!-
Down almost to the beach, where a high wall
Inclosed them, came the gardens of a lord,
Free to the visitor with foot restrained-
His shady walks, his ancient trees of state;
His river-that would not be shut within,
But came abroad, went dreaming o'er the sands,
And lost itself in finding out the sea;
Inside, it bore grave swans, white splendours-crept
Under the fairy leap of a wire bridge,
Vanished in leaves, and came again where lawns
Lay verdurous, and the peacock's plummy heaven
Bore azure suns with green and golden rays.
It was my childish Eden; for the skies
Were loftier in that garden, and the clouds

More summer-gracious, edged with broader white;
And when they rained, it was a golden rain
That sparkled as it fell-an odorous rain.
And then its wonder-heart!-a little room,
Half-hollowed in the side of a steep hill,
Which rose, with columned, windy temple crowned,
A landmark to far seas. The enchanted cell
Was clouded over in the gentle night
Of a luxuriant foliage, and its door,
Half-filled with rainbow hues of coloured glass,
Opened into the bosom of the hill.
Never to sesame of mine that door
Gave up its sanctuary; but through the glass,
Gazing with reverent curiosity,
I saw a little chamber, round and high,
Which but to see was to escape the heat,
And bathe in coolness of the eye and brain;
For all was dusky greenness; on one side,
A window, half-blind with ivy manifold,
Whose leaves, like heads of gazers, climbed to the top,
Gave a joy-saddened light, for all that came
Through the thick veil was green, oh, kindest hue!
But the heart has a heart-this heart had one:
Still in the midst, the
ever more
of all,
On a low column stood, white, cold, dim-clear,
A marble woman. Who she was I know not-
A Psyche, or a Silence, or an Echo:
Pale, undefined, a silvery shadow, still,
In one lone chamber of my memory,
She is a power upon me as of old.

But, ah, to dream there through hot summer days,
In coolness shrouded and sea-murmurings,
Forgot by all till twilight shades grew dark!
To find half-hidden in the hollowed wall,
A nest of tales, old volumes such as dreams
Hoard up in bookshops dim in tortuous streets!
That wondrous marble woman evermore
Filling the gloom with calm delirium
Of radiated whiteness, as I read!-

The fancied joy, too plenteous for its cup,
O'erflowed, and turned to sadness as it fell.

But the gray ruin on the shattered shore,
Not the green refuge in the bowring hill,
Drew forth our talk that day. For, as I said,
I asked her if she knew it. She replied,
'I know it well. A woman used to live
In one of its low vaults, my mother says.'
'I found a hole,' I said, 'and spiral stair,
Leading from level of the ground above
To a low-vaulted room within the rock,
Whence through a small square window I looked forth
Wide o'er the waters; the dim-sounding waves
Were many feet below, and shrunk in size
To a great ripple.' 'Twas not there,' she said,
'-Not in that room half up the cliff, but one
Low down, within the margin of spring tides:
When both the tide and northern wind are high,
'Tis more an ocean-cave than castle-vault.'
And then she told me all she knew of her.

It was a simple tale, a monotone:
She climbed one sunny hill, gazed once abroad,
Then wandered down, to pace a dreary plain;
Alas! how many such are told by night,
In fisher-cottages along the shore!

Farewell, old summer-day! I turn aside
To tell her story, interwoven with thoughts
Born of its sorrow; for I dare not think
A woman at the mercy of a sea.

THE STORY.

Aye as it listeth blows the listless wind,
Swelling great sails, and bending lordly masts,
Or hurrying shadow-waves o'er fields of corn,
And hunting lazy clouds across the sky:
Now, like a white cloud o'er another sky,
It blows a tall brig from the harbour's mouth,
Away to high-tossed heads of wallowing waves,

'Mid hoverings of long-pinioned arrowy birds.
With clouds and birds and sails and broken crests,
All space is full of spots of fluttering white,
And yet the sailor knows that handkerchief
Waved wet with tears, and heavy in the wind.
Blow, wind! draw out the cord that binds the twain;
Draw, for thou canst not break the lengthening cord.
Blow, wind! yet gently; gently blow, fair wind!
And let love's vision slowly, gently die;
Let the bright sails all solemn-slowly pass,
And linger ghost-like o'er the vanished hull,
With a white farewell to her straining eyes;
For never more in morning's level beams,
Will those sea-shadowing sails, dark-stained and worn,
From the gray-billowed north come dancing in;
Oh, never, gliding home 'neath starry skies,
Over the dusk of the dim-glancing sea,
Will the great ship send forth a herald cry
Of home-come sailors, into sleeping streets!
Blow gently, wind! blow slowly, gentle wind!

Weep not yet, maiden; 'tis not yet thy hour.
Why shouldst thou weep before thy time is come?
Go to thy work; break into song sometimes-
Song dying slow-forgotten, in the lapse
Of dreamy thought, ere natural pause ensue,
Or sudden dropt what time the eager heart
Hurries the ready eye to north and east.
Sing, maiden, while thou canst, ere yet the truth,
Slow darkening, choke the heart-caged singing bird!

The weeks went by. Oft leaving household work,
With bare arms and uncovered head she clomb
The landward slope of the prophetic hill;
From whose green head, as from the verge of time,
Far out on the eternity of blue,
Shading her hope-rapt eyes, seer-like she gazed,
If from the Hades of the nether world,
Slow climbing up the round side of the earth,
Haply her prayers were drawing his tardy sails
Over the threshold of the far sky-sea-
Drawing her sailor home to celebrate,

With holy rites of family and church,
The apotheosis of maidenhood.

Months passed; he came not; and a shadowy fear,
Long haunting the horizon of her soul,
In deeper gloom and sharper form drew nigh;
And growing in bulk, possessed her atmosphere,
And lost all shape, because it filled all space,
And reached beyond the bounds of consciousness-
In sudden incarnations darting swift
From out its infinite a gulfy stare
Of terror blank, of hideous emptiness,
Of widowhood ere ever wedding-day.

On granite ridge, and chalky cliff, and pier,
Far built into the waves along our shores,
Maidens have stood since ever ships went forth;
The same pain at the heart; the same slow mist
Clouding the eye; the same fixed longing look,
As if the soul had gone, and left the door
Wide open-gone to lean, hearken, and peer
Over the awful edge where voidness sinks
Sheer to oblivion-that horizon-line
Over whose edge he vanished-came no more.
O God, why are our souls, waste, helpless seas,
Tortured with such immitigable storm?
What is this love, that now on angel wing
Sweeps us amid the stars in passionate calm;
And now with demon arms fast cincturing,
Drops us, through all gyrations of keen pain,
Down the black vortex, till the giddy whirl
Gives fainting respite to the ghastly brain?
O happy they for whom the Possible
Opens its gates of madness, and becomes
The Real around them!-such to whom henceforth
There is but one to-morrow, the next morn,
Their wedding-day, ever one step removed,
The husband's foot ever upon the verge
Of the day's threshold, in a lasting dream!
Such madness may be but a formless faith-
A chaos which the breath of God will blow
Into an ordered world of seed and fruit.

Shall not the Possible become the Real?
God sleeps not when he makes his daughters dream.
Shall not the morrow dawn at last which leads
The maiden-ghost, confused and half awake,
Into the land whose shadows are our dreams?-
Thus questioning we stand upon the shore,
And gaze across into the Unrevealed.

Upon its visible symbol gazed the girl,
Till earth behind her ceased, and sea was all,
Possessing eyes and brain and shrinking soul-
A universal mouth to swallow up,
And close eternally in one blue smile!
A still monotony of pauseless greed,
Its only voice an endless, dreary song
Of wailing, and of craving from the world!

A low dull dirge that ever rose and died,
Recurring without pause or change or close,
Like one verse chaunted ever in sleepless brain,
Still drew her to the shore. It drew her down,
Like witch's spell, that fearful endless moan;
Somewhere, she thought, in the green abyss below,
His body, at the centre of the moan,
Obeyed the motions whence the moaning grew;
Now, now, in circle slow revolved, and now
Swayed like a wind-swung bell, now swept along
Hither and thither, idly to and fro,
Heedlessly wandering through the heedless sea.
Its fascination drew her onward still-
On to the ridgy rocks that seaward ran,
And out along their furrows and jagged backs,
To the last lonely point where the green mass
Arose and sank, heaved slow and forceful. There
She shuddered and recoiled. Thus, for a time,
Sport-slave of power occult, she came and went,
Betwixt the shore and sea alternating,
Drawn ever to the greedy lapping lip,
Then, terror-stung, driven backward: there it lay,
The heartless, cruel, miserable deep,
Ambushed in horror, with its glittering eye
Still drawing her to its green gulping maw!

But every ocean hath its isles, each woe
Its scattered comfortings; and this was one
That often came to her-that she, wave-caught,
Must, in the wash of ever-shifting waters,
In some good hour sure-fixed of pitiful fate,

All-conscious still of love, despite the sea

,
Float over some stray bone, some particle,
Which far-diffused sense would know as his:
Heart-glad she would sit down, and watch the tide
Slow-growing-till it reached at length her feet,
When, at its first cold touch, up she would spring,
And, ghastful, flee, with white-rimmed sightless eye.

But still, where'er she fled, the sea-voice followed;
Whisperings innumerable of water-drops
Would grow together to a giant cry;
Now hoarse, half-stifled, pleading, warning tones,
Now thunderous peals of billowy, wrathful shouts,
Called after her to come, and make no pause.
From the loose clouds that mingled with the spray,
And from the tossings of the lifted seas,
Where plunged and rose the raving wilderness,
Outreaching arms, pursuing, beckoning hands,
Came shoreward, lengthening, feeling after her.
Then would she fling her own wild arms on high,
Over her head, in tossings like the waves,
Or fix them, with clasped hands of prayer intense,
Forward, appealing to the bitter sea.
Sometimes she sudden from her shoulders tore
Her garments, one by one, and cast them out
Into the roarings of the heedless surge,
In vain oblation to the hungry waves.
As vain was Pity's will to cover her;
Best gifts but bribed the sea, and left her bare.
In her poor heart and brain burned such a fire
That all-unheeded cold winds lapped her round,
And sleet-like spray flashed on her tawny skin.
Her food she seldom ate; her naked arms
Flung it far out to feed the sea; her hair

Streamed after it, like rooted ocean-weed
In headlong current. But, alas, the sea
Took it, and came again-it would have
her
!
And as the wave importunate, so despair,
Back surging, on her heart rushed ever afresh:
Sickening she moaned-half muttered and half moaned-
'She winna be content; she'll hae mysel!'

But when the night grew thick upon the sea,
Quenching it almost, save its quenchless voice,
Then, half-released until the light, she rose,
And step by step withdrew-as dreaming man,
With an eternity of slowness, drags
His earth-bound, lead-like, irresponsive feet
Back from a sleeping horror, she withdrew.
But when, upon the narrow beach at last,
She turned her back upon her hidden foe,
It blended with her phantom-breeding brain,
And, scared at very fear, she cried and fled-
Fled to the battered base of the old tower,
And round the rock, and through the arched gap
Into the yawning blackness of the vault-
There sank upon the sand, and gasped, and raved.
Close cowering in a nook, she sat all night,
Her face turned to the entrance of the vault,
Through which a pale light shimmered-from the eye
Of the great sleepless ocean-Argus more dread
Than he with hundred lidless watching orbs,
And slept, and dreamed, and dreaming saw the sea.
But in the stormy nights, when all was dark,
And the wild tempest swept with slanting wing
Against her refuge, and the heavy spray
Shot through the doorway serpentine cold arms
To seize the fore-doomed morsel of the sea,
She slept not, evermore stung to new life
By new sea-terrors. Now it was the gull:
His clanging pinions darted through the arch,
And flapped about her head; now 'twas a wave
Grown arrogant: it rushed into her house,
Clasped her waist-high, then out again and away

To swell the devilish laughter in the fog,
And leave her clinging to the rocky wall,
With white face watching. When it came no more,
And the tide ebbed, not yet she slept-sat down,
And sat unmoving, till the low gray dawn
Grew on the misty dance of spouting waves,
That made a picture in the rugged arch;
Then the old fascination woke and drew;
And, rising slowly, forth she went afresh,
To haunt the border of the dawning sea.

Yet all the time there lay within her soul
An inner chamber, quietest place; but she
Turned from its door, and staid out in the storm.
She, entering there, had found a refuge calm
As summer evening, as a mother's arms.
There had she found her lost love, only lost
In that he slept, and she was still awake.
There she had found, waiting for her to come,
The Love that waits and watches evermore.

Thou too hast such a chamber, quietest place,
Where that Love waits for thee. What is it, say,
That will not let thee enter? Is it care
For the provision of the unborn day,
As if thou wert a God that must foresee?
Is it poor hunger for the praise of men?
Is it ambition to outstrip thy fellow
In this world's race? Or is it love of self-
That greed which still to have must still destroy?-
Go mad for some lost love; some voice of old,
Which first thou madest sing, and after sob;
Some heart thou foundest rich, and leftest bare,
Choking its well of faith with thy false deeds-
Unlike thy God, who keeps the better wine
Until the last, and, if he giveth grief,
Giveth it first, and ends the tale with joy:
Such madness clings about the feet of God,
Nor lets them go. Better a thousandfold
Be she than thou! for though thy brain be strong
And clear and workful, hers a withered flower
That never came to seed, her heart is full

Of that in whose live might God made the world;
She is a well, and thou an empty cup.
It was the invisible unbroken cord
Between the twain, her and her sailor-lad,
That drew her ever to the ocean marge.
Better to die for love, to rave for love,
Than not to love at all! but to have loved,
And, loved again, then to have turned away-
Better than that, never to have been born!

But if thy heart be noble, say if thou
Canst ever all forget an hour of pain,
When, maddened with the thought that could not be,
Thou might'st have yielded to the demon wind
That swept in tempest through thy scorching brain,
And rushed into the night, and howled aloud,
And clamoured to the waves, and beat the rocks;
And never found thy way back to the seat
Of conscious self, and power to rule thy pain,
Had not God made thee strong to bear and live!
The tale is now in thee, not thou in it;
But the sad woman, in her wildest mood,
Thou knowest her thy sister! She is fair
No more; her eyes like fierce suns blaze and burn;
Her cheeks are parched and brown; her haggard form
Is wasted by wild storms of soul and sea;
Yet in her very self is that which still
Reminds thee of a story, old, not dead,
Which God has in his keeping-of thyself.

Ah, not forgot are children when they sleep!
The darkness lasts all night, and clears the eyes;
Then comes the morning with the joy of light.
Oh, surely madness hideth not from Him!
Nor doth a soul cease to be beautiful
In his sight, that its beauty is withdrawn,
And hid by pale eclipse from human eyes.
As the chill snow is friendly to the earth,
And pain and loss are friendly to the soul,
Shielding it from the black heart-killing frost;
So madness is but one of God's pale winters;
And when the winter over is and gone,

Then smile the skies, then blooms the earth again,
And the fair time of singing birds is come:
Into the cold wind and the howling night,
God sent for her, and she was carried in
Where there was no more sea.

What messenger
Ran from the door of heaven to bring her home?
The sea, her terror.

In the rocks that stand
Below the cliff, there lies a rounded hollow,
Scooped like a basin, with jagged and pinnacled sides:
Low buried when the wind heaps up the surge,
It lifts in the respiration of the tide
Its broken edges, and, then, deep within
Lies resting water, radiantly clear:
There, on a morn of sunshine, while the wind
Yet blew, and heaved yet the billowy sea
With memories of a night of stormy dreams,
At rest they found her: in the sleep which is
And is not death, she, lying very still,
Absorbed the bliss that follows after pain.
O life of love, conquered at last by fate!
O life raised from the dead by saviour Death!
O love unconquered and invincible!
The enemy sea had cooled her burning brain;
Had laid to rest the heart that could not rest;
Had hid the horror of its own dread face!
'Twas but one desolate cry, and then her fear
Became a blessed fact, and straight she knew
What God knew all the time-that it was well.

O thou whose feet tread ever the wet sands
And howling rocks along the wearing shore,
Roaming the borders of the sea of death!
Strain not thine eyes, bedimmed with longing tears,
No sail comes climbing back across that line.
Turn thee, and to thy work; let God alone,
And wait for him: faint o'er the waves will come
Far-floating whispers from the other shore
To thine averted ears. Do thou thy work,

And thou shalt follow-follow, and find thine own.

And thou who fearest something that may come;
Around whose house the storm of terror breaks
All night; to whose love-sharpened ear, all day,
The Invisible is calling at the door,
To render up a life thou canst not keep,
Or love that will not stay,-open thy door,
And carry out thy dying to the marge
Of the great sea; yea, walk into the flood,
And lay thy dead upon the moaning waves.
Give them to God to bury; float them again,
With sighs and prayers to waft them through the gloom,
Back to the spring of life. Say-'If they die,
Thou, the one life of life, art still alive,
And thou canst make thy dead alive again!'

Ah God, the earth is full of cries and moans,
And dull despair, that neither moans nor cries;
Thousands of hearts are waiting helplessly;
The whole creation groaneth, travailleth
For what it knows not-with a formless hope
Of resurrection or of dreamless death!
Raise thou the dead; restore the Aprils withered
In hearts of maidens; give their manhood back
To old men feebly mournful o'er a life
That scarce hath memory but the mournfulness!
There is no past with thee: bring back once more
The summer eves of lovers, over which
The wintry wind that raveth through the world
Heaps wretched leaves in gusts of ghastly snow;
Bring back the mother-heaven of orphans lone,
The brother's and the sister's faithfulness;-
Bring in the kingdom of the Son of Man.

They troop around me, children wildly crying;
Women with faded eyes, all spent of tears;
Men who have lived for love, yet lived alone;
Yea, some consuming in cold fires of shame!
O God, thou hast a work for all thy strength
In saving these thy hearts with full content-
Except thou give them Lethe's stream to drink,

And that, my God, were all unworthy thee!

Dome up, O heaven, yet higher o'er my head!

Back, back, horizon; widen out my world!

Rush in, O fathomless sea of the Unknown!

For, though he slay me, I will trust in God.

George MacDonald

A Thanksgiving For F. D. Maurice

The veil hath lifted and hath fallen; and him
Who next it stood before us, first so long,
We see not; but between the cherubim
The light burns clearer: come-a thankful song!

Lord, for thy prophet's calm commanding voice,
For his majestic innocence and truth,
For his unswerving purity of choice,
For all his tender wrath and plenteous ruth;

For his obedient, wise, clear-listening care
To hear for us what word The Word would say,
For all the trembling fervency of prayer
With which he led our souls the prayerful way;

For all the heavenly glory of his face
That caught the white Transfiguration's shine
And cast on us the reflex of thy grace-
Of all thy men late left, the most divine;

For all his learning, and the thought of power
That seized thy one Idea everywhere,
Brought the eternal down into the hour,
And taught the dead thy life to claim and share;

For his humility, dove-clear of guile;-
The sin denouncing, he, like thy great Paul,
Still claimed in it the greatest share, the while
Our eyes, love-sharpened, saw him best of all!

For his high victories over sin and fear,
The captive hope his words of truth set free;
For his abiding memory, holy, dear;
Last, for his death and hiding now in thee,

We praise, we magnify thee, Lord of him:
Thou hast him still; he ever was thine own;
Nor shall our tears prevail the path to dim
That leads where, lowly still, he haunts thy throne.

When thou, O Lord, ascendedst up on high
Good gifts thou sentest down to cheer thy men:
Lo, he ascends!-we follow with the cry,
His spirit send thou back in thine again.

George MacDonald

A Vision Of St. Eligius

I.

I see thy house, but I am blown about,
A wind-mocked kite, between the earth and sky,
All out of doors-alas! of thy doors out,
And drenched in dew no summer suns can dry.

For every blast is passion of my own;
The dew cold sweats of selfish agony;
Dank vapour steams from memories lying prone;
And all my soul is but a stifled cry.

II.

Lord, thou dost hold my string, else were I driven
Down to some gulf where I were tossed no more,
No turmoil telling I was not in heaven,
No billows raving on a blessed shore.

Thou standest on thy door-sill, calm as day,
And all my throbs and pangs are pulls from thee;
Hold fast the string, lest I should break away
And outer dark and silence swallow me.

III.

No longer fly thy kite, Lord; draw me home.
Thou pull'st the string through all the distance bleak;
Lord, I am nearing thee; O Lord, I come;
Thy pulls grow stronger and the wind grows weak.

In thy remodelling hands thou tak'st thy kite;
A moment to thy bosom hold'st me fast.
Thou flingest me abroad:-lo, in thy might
A strong-winged bird I soar on every blast!

George MacDonald

A Winter Prayer

Come through the gloom of clouded skies,
The slow dim rain and fog athwart;
Through east winds keen with wrong and lies
Come and lift up my hopeless heart.

Come through the sickness and the pain,
The sore unrest that tosses still;
Through aching dark that hides the gain
Come and arouse my fainting will.

Come through the prate of foolish words,
The science with no God behind;
Through all the pangs of untuned chords
Speak wisdom to my shaken mind.

Through all the fears that spirits bow
Of what hath been, or may befall,
Come down and talk with me, for thou
Canst tell me all about them all.

Hear, hear my sad lone heart entreat,
Heart of all joy, below, above!
Come near and let me kiss thy feet,
And name the names of those I love!

George MacDonald

A Year Song

Sighing above,
Rustling below,
Thorough the woods
The winds go.
Beneath, dead crowds;
Above, life bare;
And the besom tempest
Sweeps the air:

Heart, leave thy woe:
Let the dead things go.

Through the brown
Gold doth push;
Misty green
Veils the bush.
Here a twitter,
There a croak!
They are coming-
The spring-folk!

Heart, be not numb;
Let the live things come.

Through the beech
The winds go,
With gentle speech,
Long and slow.
The grass is fine,
And soft to lie in:
The sun doth shine
The blue sky in:

Heart, be alive;
Let the new things thrive.

Round again!
Here art thou,
A rimey fruit
On a bare bough!
Winter comes,
Winter and snow;
And a weary sighing
To fall and go!

Heart, thy hour shall be;
Thy dead will comfort thee.

George MacDonald

Abu Midjan

'If I sit in the dust
For lauding good wine,
Ha, ha! it is just:
So sits the vine!'

Abu Midjan sang as he sat in chains,
For the blood of the grape ran the juice of his veins.
The Prophet had said, 'O Faithful, drink not!'
Abu Midjan drank till his heart was hot;
Yea, he sang a song in praise of wine,
He called it good names-a joy divine,
The giver of might, the opener of eyes,
Love's handmaid, the water of Paradise!
Therefore Saad his chief spake words of blame,
And set him in irons-a fettered flame;
But he sings of the wine as he sits in his chains,
For the blood of the grape runs the juice of his veins:

'I will not think
That the Prophet said

Ye shall not drink
Of the flowing red!
,

"Tis a drenched brain
Whose after-sting
Cries out,
Refrain:
'Tis an evil thing!

'But I will dare,
With a goodly drought,
To drink, nor spare
Till my thirst be out.

,

I

do not laugh
Like a Christian fool
But in silence quaff
The liquor cool

'At door of tent
'Neath evening star,
With daylight spent,
And Uriel afar!

'Then, through the sky,
Lo, the emerald hills!
My faith swells high,
My bosom thrills:

'I see them hearken,
The Houris that wait!
Their dark eyes darken
The diamond gate!

'I hear the float
Of their chant divine,
And my heart like a boat
Sails thither on wine!

'Can an evil thing
Make beauty more?
Or a sinner bring
To the heavenly door?

'The sun-rain fine
Would sink and escape,
But is drunk by the vine,
Is stored in the grape:

'And the prisoned light
I free again:
It flows in might
Through my shining brain

'I love and I know;
The truth is mine;

I walk in the glow
Of the sun-bred wine.

,

I
will not think
That the Prophet said

Ye shall not drink
Of the flowing red!

'For his promises, lo,
Sevenfold they shine
When the channels o'erflow
With the singing wine!

'But I care not, I!-'tis a small annoy
To sit in chains for a heavenly joy!'

Away went the song on the light wind borne;
His head sank down, and a ripple of scorn
Shook the hair that flowed from his curling lip
As he eyed his brown limbs in the iron's grip.

Sudden his forehead he lifted high:
A faint sound strayed like a moth-wing by!
Like beacons his eyes burst blazing forth:
A dust-cloud he spied in the distant north!
A noise and a smoke on the plain afar?
'Tis the cloud and the clang of the Moslem war!
He leapt aloft like a tiger snared;
The wine in his veins through his visage flared;
He tore at his fetters in bootless ire,
He called the Prophet, he named his sire;
From his lips, with wild shout, the Techir burst;
He danced in his irons; the Giaours he cursed;
And his eyes they flamed like a beacon dun,
Or like wine in the crystal twixt eye and sun.

The lady of Saad heard him shout,
Heard his fetters ring on the stones about

The heart of a warrior she understood,
And the rage of the thwarted battle-mood:
Her name, with the cry of an angry prayer,
He called but once, and the lady was there.

'The Giaour!' he panted, 'the Godless brute!
And me like a camel tied foot to foot!
Let me go, and I swear by Allah's fear
At sunset I don again this gear,
Or lie in a heaven of starry eyes,
Kissed by moon-maidens of Paradise!
O lady, grant me the death of the just!
Hark to the hurtle! see the dust!'

With ready fingers the noble dame
Unlocked her husband's iron blame;
Brought his second horse, his Abdon, out,
And his second hauberk, light and stout;
Harnessed the warrior, and hight him go
An angel of vengeance upon the foe.

With clank of steel and thud of hoof
Away he galloped; she climbed the roof.

She sees the cloud and the flashes that leap
From the scythe-shaped swords inside it that sweep
Down with back-stroke the disordered swath:
Thither he speeds, a bolt of wrath!
Straight as an arrow she sees him go,
Abu Midjan, the singer, upon the foe!
Like an eagle he vanishes in the cloud,
And the thunder of battle bursts more loud,
Mingled of crashes and blows and falls,
Of the wish that severs the throat that calls,
Of neighing and shouting and groaning grim:
Abu Midjan, she sees no more of him!
Northward the battle drifts afar
On the flowing tide of the holy war.

Lonely across the desert sand,
From his wrist by its thong hung his clotted brand,
Red in the sunset's level flame

Back to his bonds Abu Midjan came.

'Lady, I swear your Saad's horse-
The Prophet himself might have rode a worse!
Like the knots of a serpent the play of his flesh
As he tore to the quarry in Allah's mesh!
I forgot him, and mowed at the traitor weeds,
Which fell before me like rushes and reeds,
Or like the tall poppies that sudden drop low
Their heads to an urchin's unstrung bow!
Fled the Giaour; the faithful flew after to kill;
I turned to surrender: beneath me still
Was Abdon unjaded, fresh in force,
Faithful and fearless-a heavenly horse!
Give him water, lady, and barley to eat;
Then haste thee and fetter the wine-bibber's feet.'

To the terrace he went, and she to the stall;
She tended the horse like guest in hall,
Then to the warrior unhasting returned.
The fire of the fight in his eyes yet burned,
But he sat in a silence that might betoken
One ashamed that his heart had spoken-
Though where was the word to breed remorse?
He had lauded only his chief's brave horse!
Not a word she spoke, but his fetters locked;
He watched with a smile that himself bemocked;
She left him seated in caitiff-plight,
Like one that had feared and fled the fight.

But what singer ever sat lonely long
Ere the hidden fountain burst in song!
The battle wine foamed in the warrior's veins,
And he sang sword-tempest who sat in chains.

'Oh, the wine
Of the vine
Is a feeble thing!
In the rattle
Of battle
The true grapes spring!

'When on whir
Of Tecbir
Allah's wrath flies,
And the power
Of the Giaour
A blasted leaf lies!

'When on force
Of the horse
The arm flung abroad
Is sweeping,
And reaping
The harvest of God!

'Ha! they drop
From the top
To the sear heap below!
Ha! deeper,
Down steeper,
The infidels go!

'Azrael
Sheer to hell
Shoots the foul shoals!
There Monker
And Nakir
Torture their souls!

'But when drop
On their crop
The scimitars red,
And under
War's thunder
The faithful lie dead,

'Oh, bright
Is the light
On hero slow breaking!
Rapturous faces
Bent for embraces
Watch for his waking!

'And he hears
In his ears
The voice of Life's river,
Like a song
Of the strong,
Jubilant ever!

'Oh, the wine
Of the vine
May lead to the gates,
But the rattle
Of battle
Wakes the angel who waits!

'To the lord
Of the sword
Open it must!
The drinker,
The thinker
Sits in the dust!

'He dreams
Of the gleams
Of their garments of white;
He misses
Their kisses,
The maidens of light!

'They long
For the strong
Who has burst through alarms-
Up, by the labour
Of stirrup and sabre,
Up to their arms!

'Oh, the wine of the grape is a feeble ghost!
The wine of the fight is the joy of a host!'

When Saad came home from the far pursuit,
An hour he sat, and an hour was mute.
Then he opened his mouth: 'Ah, wife, the fight
Had been lost full sure, but an arm of might

Sudden rose up on the crest of the battle,
Flashed blue lightnings, thundered steel rattle,
Took up the fighting, and drove it on-
Enoch sure, or the good Saint John!
Wherever he leaped, like a lion he,
The battle was thickest, or soon to be!
Wherever he sprang with his lion roar,
In a minute the battle was there no more!
With a headlong fear, the sinners fled,
And we swept them down the steep of the dead:
Before us, not from us, did they flee,
They ceased in the depths of a new Red Sea!
But him who saved us we saw no more;
He went as he came, by a secret door!
And strangest of all-nor think I err
If a miracle I for truth aver-
I was close to him thrice-the holy Force
Wore my silver-ringed hauberk, rode Abdon my horse!

The lady rose up, withholding her word,
And led to the terrace her wondering lord,
Where, song-soothed, and weary with battle strain,
Abu Midjan sat counting the links of his chain:
'The battle was raging, he raging worse;
I freed him, harnessed him, gave him thy horse.'

'Abu Midjan! the singer of love and of wine!
The arm of the battle, it also was thine?
Rise up, shake the irons from off thy feet:
For the lord of the fight are fetters meet?
If thou wilt, then drink till thou be hoar:
Allah shall judge thee; I judge no more!'

Abu Midjan arose; he flung aside
The clanking fetters, and thus he cried:
'If thou give me to God and his decrees,
Nor purge my sin with the shame of these,
Wrath against me I dare not store:
In the name of Allah, I drink no more!'

George MacDonald

After An Old Legend

The monk was praying in his cell,
With bowed head praying sore;
He had been praying on his knees
For two long hours and more.

As of themselves, all suddenly,
His eyelids opened wide;
Before him on the ground he saw
A man's feet close beside;

And almost to the feet came down
A garment wove throughout;
Such garment he had never seen
In countries round about!

His eyes he lifted tremblingly
Until a hand they spied:
A chisel-scar on it he saw,
And a deep, torn scar beside.

His eyes they leaped up to the face,
His heart gave one wild bound,
Then stood as if its work were done-
The Master he had found!

With sudden clang the convent bell
Told him the poor did wait
His hand to give the daily bread
Doled at the convent-gate.

Then Love rose in him passionate,
And with Duty wrestled strong;
And the bell kept calling all the time
With merciless iron tongue.

The Master stood and looked at him
He rose up with a sigh:
'He will be gone when I come back
I go to him by and by!'

He chid his heart, he fed the poor
All at the convent-gate;
Then with slow-dragging feet went back
To his cell so desolate:

His heart bereaved by duty done,
He had sore need of prayer!
Oh, sad he lifted the latch!-and, lo,
The Master standing there!

He said, 'My poor had not to stand
Wearily at thy gate:
For him who feeds the shepherd's sheep
The shepherd will stand and wait.'

Yet, Lord-for thou would'st have us judge,
And I will humbly dare-
If he had staid, I do not think
Thou wouldst have left him there.

Thy voice in far-off time I hear,
With sweet defending, say:
'The poor ye always have with you,
Me ye have not alway!'

Thou wouldst have said: 'Go feed my poor,
The deed thou shalt not rue;
Wherever ye do my father's will
I always am with you.'

George MacDonald

After The Fashion Of An Old Emblem

I have long enough been working down in my cellar,
Working spade and pick, boring-chisel and drill;
I long for wider spaces, airy, clear-dark, and stellar:
Successful labour never the love of it did fill.

More profit surely lies in a holy, pure quiescence,
In a setting forth of cups to catch the heavenly rain,
In a yielding of the being to the ever waiting presence,
In a lifting of the eyes upward, homeward again!

Up to my garret, its storm-windows and skylights!
There I'll lay me on the floor, and patient let the sun,
The moon and the stars, the blueness and the twilights
Do what their pleasure is, and wait till they have done.

But, lo, I hear a waving on the roof of great pinions!
'Tis the labour of a windmill, broad-spreading to the wind!
Lo, down there goes a shaft through all the house-dominions!
I trace it to a cellar, whose door I cannot find.

But there I hear ever a keen diamond-drill in motion,
Now fast and now slow as the wind sits in the sails,
Drilling and boring to the far eternal ocean,
The living well of all wells whose water never fails.

So now I go no more to the cellar to my labour,
But up to my garret where those arms are ever going;
There the sky is ever o'er me, and the wind my blessed neighbour,
And the prayer-handle ready turns the sails to its blowing.

Blow, blow, my blessed wind; oh, keep ever blowing!
Keep the great windmill going full and free;
So shall the diamond-drill down below keep going
Till in burst the waters of God's eternal sea.

George MacDonald

After Thomas Kempis

I.

Who follows Jesus shall not walk
In darksome road with danger rife;
But in his heart the Truth will talk,
And on his way will shine the Life.

So, on the story we must pore
Of him who lives for us, and died,
That we may see him walk before,
And know the Father in the guide.

II.

In words of truth Christ all excels,
Leaves all his holy ones behind;
And he in whom his spirit dwells
Their hidden manna sure shall find.

Gather wouldst thou the perfect grains,
And Jesus fully understand?
Thou must obey him with huge pains,
And to God's will be as Christ's hand.

III.

What profits it to reason high
And in hard questions court dispute,
When thou dost lack humility,
Displeasing God at very root!

Profoundest words man ever spake
Not once of blame washed any clear;
A simple life alone could make
Nathanael to his master dear.

IV.

The eye with seeing is not filled,
The ear with hearing not at rest;
Desire with having is not stilled;
With human praise no heart is blest.

Vanity, then, of vanities
All things for which men grasp and grope!
The precious things in heavenly eyes
Are love, and truth, and trust, and hope.

V.

Better the clown who God doth love
Than he that high can go
And name each little star above
But sees not God below!

What if all things on earth I knew,
Yea, love were all my creed,
It serveth nothing with the True;
He goes by heart and deed.

VI.

If thou dost think thy knowledge good,
Thy intellect not slow,
Bethink thee of the multitude
Of things thou dost not know.

Why look on any from on high
Because thou knowest more?
Thou need'st but look abroad, to spy
Ten thousand thee before.

Wouldst thou in knowledge true advance
And gather learning's fruit,
In love confess thy ignorance,
And thy Self-love confute.

VII.

This is the highest learning,
The hardest and the best-
From self to keep still turning,
And honour all the rest.

If one should break the letter,
Yea, spirit of command,
Think not that thou art better,
Thou may'st not always stand!

We all are weak-but weaker
Hold no one than thou art;
Then, as thou growest meeker,
Higher will go thy heart.

VIII.

Sense and judgment oft indeed
Spy but little and mislead,
Ground us on a shelf!

Happy he whom Truth doth teach,
Not by forms of passing speech,
But her very self!

Why of hidden things dispute,
Mind unwise, howe'er astute,
Making that thy task
Where the Judge will, at the last,
When disputing all is past,
Not a question ask?

Folly great it is to brood
Over neither bad nor good,
Eyes and ears unheedful!
Ears and eyes, ah, open wide
For what may be heard or spied

Of the one thing needful!

George MacDonald

An Autumn Song

Are the leaves falling round about
The churchyard on the hill?
Is the glow of autumn going out?
Is that the winter chill?
And yet through winter's noise, no doubt
The graves are very still!

Are the woods empty, voiceless, bare?
On sodden leaves do you tread?
Is nothing left of all those fair?
Is the whole summer fled?
Well, so from this unwholesome air
Have gone away these dead!

The seasons pierce me; like a leaf
I feel the autumn blow,
And tremble between nature's grief
And the silent death below.
O Summer, thou art very brief!
Where do these exiles go?

Gilesgate, Durham.

George MacDonald

An Evening Prayer

I am a bubble
Upon thy ever-moving, resting sea:
Oh, rest me now from tossing, trespass, trouble!
Take me down into thee.

Give me thy peace.
My heart is aching with unquietness:
Oh, make its inharmonious beating cease!
Thy hand upon it press.

My Night! my Day!
Swift night and day betwixt, my world doth reel:
Potter, take not thy hand from off the clay
That whirls upon thy wheel.

O Heart, I cry
For love and life, pardon and hope and strength!
O Father, I am thine; I shall not die,
But I shall sleep at length!

George MacDonald

An Improvisation

The stars cleave the sky.
Yet for us they rest,
And their race-course high
Is a shining nest!

The hours hurry on.
But where is thy flight,
Soft pavilion
Of motionless night?

Earth gives up her trees
To the holy air;
They live in the breeze;
They are saints at prayer!

Summer night, come from God,
On your beauty, I see,
A still wave has flowed
Of eternity!

George MacDonald

An Old Sermon With A New Text

My wife contrived a fleecy thing
Her husband to infold,
For 'tis the pride of woman still
To cover from the cold:
My daughter made it a new text
For a sermon very old.

The child came trotting to her side,
Ready with bootless aid:
'Lily make veckit for papa,'
The tiny woman said:
Her mother gave the means and ways,
And a knot upon her thread.

'Mamma, mamma!-it won't come through!'
In meek dismay she cried.
Her mother cut away the knot,
And she was satisfied,
Pulling the long thread through and through,
In fabricating pride.

Her mother told me this: I caught
A glimpse of something more:
Great meanings often hide behind
The little word before!
And I brooded over my new text
Till the seed a sermon bore.

Nannie, to you I preach it now-
A little sermon, low:
Is it not thus a thousand times,
As through the world we go?
Do we not tug, and fret, and cry-
Instead of
Yes, Lord-No
?

While all the rough things that we meet
Which will not move a jot,

The hindrances to heart and feet,

The Crook in every Lot

,
Mean plainly but that children's threads
Have at the end a knot.

This world of life God weaves for us,
Nor spares he pains or cost,
But we must turn the web to clothes
And shield our hearts from frost:
Shall we, because the thread holds fast,
Count labour vain and lost?

If he should cut away the knot,
And yield each fancy wild,
The hidden life within our hearts-
His life, the undefiled-
Would fare as ill as I should fare
From the needle of my child.

As tack and sheet unto the sail,
As to my verse the rime,

As mountains to the low green earth-
So hard for feet to climb,
As call of striking clock amid
The quiet flow of time,

As sculptor's mallet to the birth
Of the slow-dawning face,
As knot upon my Lily's thread
When she would work apace,
God's
Nay
is such, and worketh so
For his children's coming grace.

Who, knowing God's intent with him,
His birthright would refuse?
What makes us what we have to be
Is the only thing to choose:

We understand nor end nor means,
And yet his ways accuse!

This is my sermon. It is preached
Against all fretful strife.
Chafe not with anything that is,
Nor cut it with thy knife.
Ah! be not angry with the knot
That holdeth fast thy life.

George MacDonald

An Old Story

I.

In the ancient house of ages,
See, they cannot rest!
With a hope, which awe assuages,
Tremble all the blest.
For the son and heir eternal,
To be son yet more,
Leaves his stately chair supernal
For the earth's low floor;

Leaves the room so high and old,
Leaves the all-world hearth,
Seeks the out-air, frosty-cold,
Of the twilight earth-
To be throned in newer glory
In a mother's lap,
Gather up our broken story,
And right every hap.

II.

There Earth's foster-baby lies,
Sleep-dimmed all his graces,
'Neath four stars of parents' eyes,
And two heavens of faces!
See! the cow and ass, dumb-staring,
Feel the skirts of good
Fold them in dull-blessed sharing
Of infinitude.

Make a little room betwixt you,
Pray you, Ass and Cow!
Sure we shall, if I kneel next you,
Know each other now!
To the pit-fallen comes salvation-
Love is never loath!
Here we are, thy whole creation,

Waiting, Lord, thy growth!

III.

On the slopes of Bethlehem,
Round their resting sheep,
Shepherds sat, and went and came,
Guarding holy sleep;
But the silent, high dome-spaces,
Airy galleries,
Thronged they were with watching faces,
Thronged with open eyes.

Far across the desert floor,
Come, slow-drawing nigher,
Sages deep in starry lore,
Priests of burning Fire.
In the sky they read his story,
And, through starlight cool,
They come riding to the Glory,
To the Wonderful.

IV.

Babe and mother, coming Mage,
Shepherd, ass, and cow!
Angels watching the new age,
Time's intensest Now!
Heaven down-brooding, Earth upstraining,
Far ends closing in!
Sure the eternal tide is gaining
On the strand of sin!

See! but see! Heaven's chapel-master
Signs with lifted hand;
Winds divine blow fast and faster,
Swelling bosoms grand.
Hark the torrent-joy let slip!
Hark the great throats ring!
Glory! Peace! Good-fellowship!

And a Child for king!

George MacDonald

Angels

Came of old to houses lonely
Men with wings, but did not show them:
Angels come to our house, only,
For their wings, they do not know them!

George MacDonald

Annie She's Dowie

Annie she's dowie, and Willie he's wae:
What can be the matter wi' siccan a twae,
For Annie she's fair as the first o' the day,
And Willie he's honest and stalwart and gay?

Oh, the tane has a daddy is poor and is proud,
And the tither a minnie that cleiks at the goud'.
They lo'ed are anither, and said their say,
But the daddy and minnie hae partit the twae!

George MacDonald

Antiphon

Daylight fades away.
Is the Lord at hand
In the shadows gray
Stealing on the land?

Gently from the east
Come the shadows gray;
But our lowly priest
Nearer is than they.

It is darkness quite.
Is the Lord at hand,
In the cloak of night
Stolen upon the land?

But I see no night,
For my Lord is here
With him dark is light,
With him far is near.

List! the cock's awake.
Is the Lord at hand?
Cometh he to make
Light in all the land?

Long ago he made
Morning in my heart;
Long ago he bade
Shadowy things depart.

Lo, the dawning hill!
Is the Lord at hand,
Come to scatter ill,
Ruling in the land?

He hath scattered ill,
Ruling in my mind;
Growing to his will,
Freedom comes, I find.

We will watch all day,
Lest the Lord should come;
All night waking stay
In the darkness dumb.

I will work all day,
For the Lord hath come;
Down my head will lay
All night, glad and dumb.

For we know not when
Christ may be at hand;
But we know that then
Joy is in the land.

For I know that where
Christ hath come again,
Quietness without care
Dwelleth in his men.

George MacDonald

Appeal

If in my arms I bore my child,
Would he cry out for fear
Because the night was dark and wild
And no one else was near?

Shall I then treat thee, Father, as
My fatherhood would grieve?
I will be hopeful, though, alas,
I cannot quite believe!

I had no power, no wish to be:
Thou madest me half blind!
The darkness comes! I cling to thee!
Be thou my perfect mind.

George MacDonald

Approaches

When thou turn'st away from ill,
Christ is this side of thy hill.

When thou turnest toward good,
Christ is walking in thy wood.

When thy heart says, 'Father, pardon!'
Then the Lord is in thy garden.

When stern Duty wakes to watch,
Then his hand is on the latch.

But when Hope thy song doth rouse,
Then the Lord is in the house.

When to love is all thy wit,
Christ doth at thy table sit.

When God's will is thy heart's pole,
Then is Christ thy very soul.

George MacDonald

At My Window After Sunset

Heaven and the sea attend the dying day,
And in their sadness overflow and blend-
Faint gold, and windy blue, and green and gray:
Far out amid them my pale soul I send.

For, as they mingle, so mix life and death;
An hour draws near when my day too will die;
Already I forecast unheaving breath,
Eviction on the moorland of yon sky.

Coldly and sadly lone, unhoused, alone,
Twixt wind-broke wave and heaven's uncaring space!
At board and hearth from this time forth unknown!
Refuge no more in wife or daughter's face!

Cold, cold and sad, lone as that desert sea!
Sad, lonely, as that hopeless, patient sky!
Forward I cannot go, nor backward flee!
I am not dead; I live, and cannot die!

Where are ye, loved ones, hither come before?
Did you fare thus when first ye came this way?
Somewhere there must be yet another door!-
A door in somewhere from this dreary gray!

Come walking over watery hill and glen,
Or stoop your faces through yon cloud perplex;
Come, any one of dearest, sacred ten,
And bring me patient hoping for the next.

Maker of heaven and earth, father of me,
My words are but a weak, fantastic moan!
Were I a land-leaf drifting on the sea,
Thou still wert with me; I were not alone!

I am in thee, O father, lord of sky,
And lord of waves, and lord of human souls!
In thee all precious ones to me more nigh
Than if they rushing came in radiant shoals!

I shall not be alone although I die,
And loved ones should delay their coming long;
Though I saw round me nought but sea and sky,
Bare sea and sky would wake a holy song.

They are thy garments; thou art near within,
Father of fathers, friend-creating friend!
Thou art for ever, therefore I begin;
Thou lov'st, therefore my love shall never end!

Let loose thy giving, father, on thy child;
I pray thee, father, give me everything;
Give me the joy that makes the children wild;
Give throat and heart an old new song to sing.

Ye are my joy, great father, perfect Christ,
And humble men of heart, oh, everywhere!
With all the true I keep a hoping tryst;
Eternal love is my eternal prayer.

George MacDonald

Autumn Song

Autumn clouds are flying, flying
O'er the waste of blue;
Summer flowers are dying, dying,
Late so lovely new.
Labouring wains are slowly rolling
Home with winter grain;
Holy bells are slowly tolling
Over buried men.

Goldener light sets noon a sleeping
Like an afternoon;
Colder airs come stealing, creeping
From the misty moon;
And the leaves, of old age dying,
Earthy hues put on;
Out on every lone wind sighing
That their day is gone.

Autumn's sun is sinking, sinking
Down to winter low;
And our hearts are thinking, thinking
Of the sleet and snow;
For our sun is slowly sliding
Down the hill of might;
And no moon is softly gliding
Up the slope of night.

See the bare fields' pillaged prizes
Heaped in golden glooms!
See, the earth's outworn sunrises
Dream in cloudy tombs!
Darkling flowers but wait the blowing
Of a quickening wind;
And the man, through Death's door going,
Leaves old Death behind.

Mourn not, then, clear tones that alter;
Let the gold turn gray;
Feet, though feeble, still may falter

Toward the better day!
Brother, let not weak faith linger
O'er a withered thing;
Mark how Autumn's prophet finger
Burns to hues of Spring.

George MacDonald

Autumn's Gold

Along the tops of all the yellow trees,
The golden-yellow trees, the sunshine lies;
And where the leaves are gone, long rays surprise
Lone depths of thicket with their brightnesses;
And through the woods, all waste of many a breeze,
Cometh more joy of light for Poet's eyes-
Green fields lying yellow underneath the skies,
And shining houses and blue distances.

By the roadside, like rocks of golden ore
That make the western river-beds so bright,
The briar and the furze are all alight!
Perhaps the year will be so fair no more,
But now the fallen, falling leaves are gay,
And autumn old has shone into a Day!

George MacDonald

Awake!

The stars are all watching;
God's angel is catching
At thy skirts in the darkness deep!
Gold hinges grating,
The mighty dead waiting,
Why dost thou sleep?

Years without number,
Ages of slumber,
Stiff in the track of the infinite One!
Dead, can I think it?
Dropt like a trinket,
A thing whose uses are done!

White wings are crossing,
Glad waves are tossing,
The earth flames out in crimson and green
Spring is appearing,
Summer is nearing-
Where hast thou been?

Down in some cavern,
Death's sleepy tavern,
Housing, carousing with spectres of night?
There is my right hand!
Grasp it full tight and
Spring to the light.

Wonder, oh, wonder!
How the life-thunder
Bursts on his ear in horror and dread!
Happy shapes meet him;
Heaven and earth greet him:
Life from the dead!

George MacDonald

Baby

Where did you come from, baby dear?
Out of the everywhere into here.

Where did you get those eyes so blue?
Out of the sky as I came through.

What makes the light in them sparkle and spin?
Some of the starry twinkles left in.

Where did you get that little tear?
I found it waiting when I got here.

What makes your forehead so smooth and high?
A soft hand stroked it as I went by.

What makes your cheek like a warm white rose?
I saw something better than any one knows.

Whence that three-cornered smile of bliss?
Three angels gave me at once a kiss.

Where did you get this pearly ear?
God spoke, and it came out to hear.

Where did you get those arms and hands?
Love made itself into bonds and bands.

Feet, whence did you come, you darling things?
From the same box as the cherubs' wings.

How did they all just come to be you?
God thought about me, and so I grew.

But how did you come to us, you dear?
God thought about you, and so I am here.

George MacDonald

Bedtime

'Come, children, put away your toys;
Roll up that kite's long line;
The day is done for girls and boys-
Look, it is almost nine!
Come, weary foot, and sleepy head,
Get up, and come along to bed.'

The children, loath, must yet obey;
Up the long stair they creep;
Lie down, and something sing or say
Until they fall asleep,
To steal through caverns of the night
Into the morning's golden light.

We, elder ones, sit up more late,
And tasks unfinished ply,
But, gently busy, watch and wait-
Dear sister, you and I,
To hear the Father, with soft tread,
Coming to carry us to bed.

George MacDonald

Bell Upon Organ

It's all very well,
Said the Bell,
To be the big Organ below!
But the folk come and go,
Said the Bell,
And you never can tell
What sort of person the Organ will blow!
And, besides, it is much at the mercy of the weather
For 'tis all made in pieces and glued together!

But up in my cell
Next door to the sky,
Said the Bell,
I dwell
Very high;
And with glorious go
I swing to and fro;
I swing swift or slow,
I swing as I please,
With summons or knell;
I swing at my ease,
Said the Bell:
Not the tallest of men
Can reach up to touch me,
To smirch me or smutch me,
Or make me do what
I would not be at!
And, then,
The weather can't cause me to shrink or increase:
I chose to be made in one perfect piece!

George MacDonald

Better Things

Better to smell the violet
Than sip the glowing wine;
Better to hearken to a brook
Than watch a diamond shine.

Better to have a loving friend
Than ten admiring foes;
Better a daisy's earthy root
Than a gorgeous, dying rose.

Better to love in loneliness
Than bask in love all day;
Better the fountain in the heart
Than the fountain by the way.

Better be fed by mother's hand
Than eat alone at will;
Better to trust in God, than say,
My goods my storehouse fill.

Better to be a little wise
Than in knowledge to abound;
Better to teach a child than toil
To fill perfection's round.

Better to sit at some man's feet
Than thrill a listening state;
Better suspect that thou art proud
Than be sure that thou art great.

Better to walk the realm unseen
Than watch the hour's event;
Better the
Well done, faithful slave
!
Than the air with shoutings rent.

Better to have a quiet grief
Than many turbulent joys;

Better to miss thy manhood's aim
Than sacrifice the boy's.

Better a death when work is done
Than earth's most favoured birth;
Better a child in God's great house
Than the king of all the earth.

George MacDonald

Bird-Songs

I will sing a song,
Said the owl.
You sing a song, sing-song
Ugly fowl!
What will you sing about,
Night in and day out?

All about the night,
When the gray
With her cloak smothers bright,
Hard, sharp day.
Oh, the moon! the cool dew!
And the shadows!-tu-who!

I will sing a song,
Said the nightingale.
Sing a song, long, long,
Little Neverfail!
What will you sing about,
Day in or day out?

All about the light
Gone away,
Down, away, and out of sight:
Wake up, day!
For the master is not dead,
Only gone to bed.

I will sing a song,
Said the lark.
Sing, sing, Throat-strong,
Little Kill-the-dark!
What will you sing about,
Day in and night out?

I can only call!
I can't think!
Let me up, that's all!
I see a chink!

I've been thirsting all night
For the glorious light!

George MacDonald

Blessed Are The Meek, For They Shall Inherit The Earth

A quiet heart, submissive, meek,
Father, do thou bestow,
Which more than granted, will not seek
To have, or give, or know.

Each little hill then holds its gift
Forth to my joying eyes;
Each mighty mountain then doth lift
My spirit to the skies.

Lo, then the running water sounds
With gladsome, secret things!
The silent water more abounds,
And more the hidden springs.

Live murmurs then the trees will blend
With all the feathered song;
The waving grass low tribute lend
Earth's music to prolong.

The sun will cast great crowns of light
On waves that anthems roar;
The dusky billows break at night
In flashes on the shore.

Each harebell, each white lily's cup,
The hum of hidden bee,
Yea, every odour floating up,
The insect revelry-

Each hue, each harmony divine
The holy world about,
Its soul will send forth into mine,
My soul to widen out.

And thus the great earth I shall hold,
A perfect gift of thine;

Richer by these, a thousandfold,
Than if broad lands were mine.

George MacDonald

Blind Bartimeus

As Jesus went into Jericho town,
Twas darkness all, from toe to crown,
About blind Bartimeus.

He said, 'My eyes are more than dim,
They are no use for seeing him:
No matter-he can see us!'

'Cry out, cry out, blind brother-cry;
Let not salvation dear go by.-
Have mercy, Son of David.'
Though they were blind, they both could hear-
They heard, and cried, and he drew near;
And so the blind were saved.

O Jesus Christ, I am very blind;
Nothing comes through into my mind;
'Tis well I am not dumb:
Although I see thee not, nor hear,
I cry because thou may'st be near:
O son of Mary, come!

I hear it through the all things blind:
Is it thy voice, so gentle and kind-
'Poor eyes, no more be dim'?
A hand is laid upon mine eyes;
I hear, and hearken, see, and rise;-
'Tis He! I follow him!

George MacDonald

Blind Sorrow

'My life is drear; walking I labour sore;
The heart in me is heavy as a stone;
And of my sorrows this the icy core:
Life is so wide, and I am all alone!'

Thou did'st walk so, with heaven-born eyes down bent
Upon the earth's gold-rosy, radiant clay,
That thou had'st seen no star in all God's tent
Had not thy tears made pools first on the way.

Ah, little knowest thou the tender care
In a love-plenteous cloak around thee thrown!
Full many a dim-seen, saving mountain-stair
Toiling thou climb'st-but not one step alone!

Lift but thy languid head and see thy guide;
Let thy steps go in his, nor choose thine own;
Then soon wilt thou, thine eyes with wonder wide,
Cry,
Now I know I never was alone
!

George MacDonald

Born Of Water

Methought I stood among the stars alone,
Watching a grey parched orb which onward flew
Half blinded by the dusty winds that blew,
Empty as Death and barren as a stone,
The pleasant sound of water all unknown!
When, as I looked in wonderment, there grew,
High in the air above, a drop of dew,
Which, gathering slowly through long cycles, shone
Like a great tear; and then at last it fell
Clasping the orb, which drank it greedily,
With a delicious noise and upward swell
Of sweet cool joy that tossed me like a sea;
And then the thick life sprang as from a grave,
With trees, flowers, boats upon the bounding wave!

George MacDonald

Brother Artist

Brother artist, help me; come!
Artists are a maimed band:
I have words but not a hand;
Thou hast hands though thou art dumb.

Had I thine, when words did fail-
Vassal-words their hasting chief,
On the white awaiting leaf
Shapes of power should tell the tale.

Had I hers of music-might,
I would shake the air with storm
Till the red clouds trailed enorm
Boreal dances through the night.

Had I his whose foresight rare
Piles the stones with lordliest art,
From the quarry of my heart
Love should climb a heavenly stair!

Had I his whose wooing slow
Wins the marble's hidden child,
Out in passion undefiled
Stood my Psyche, white as snow!

Maimed, a little help I pray;
Words suffice not for my end;
Let thy hand obey thy friend,
Say for me what I would say.

Draw me, on an arid plain
With hoar-headed mountains nigh,
Under a clear morning sky
Telling of a night of rain,

Huge and half-shaped, like a block
Chosen for sarcophagus
By a Pharaoh glorious,
One rude solitary rock.

Cleave it down along the ridge
With a fissure yawning deep
To the heart of the hard heap,
Like the rent of riving wedge.

Through the cleft let hands appear,
Upward pointed with pressed palms
As if raised in silent psalms
For salvation come anear.

Turn thee now-'tis almost done!-
To the near horizon's verge:
Make the smallest arc emerge
Of the forehead of the sun.

One thing more-I ask too much!-
From a brow which hope makes brave
Sweep the shadow of the grave
With a single golden touch.

Thanks, dear painter; that is all.
If thy picture one day should
Need some words to make it good,
I am ready to thy call.

George MacDonald

Christmas Day And Every Day

Star high,
Baby low:
'Twixt the two
Wise men go;
Find the baby,
Grasp the star-
Heirs of all things
Near and far!

George MacDonald

Christmas Day, 1850

Beautiful stories wed with lovely days
Like words and music:-what shall be the tale
Of love and nobleness that might avail
To express in action what this sweetness says-

The sweetness of a day of airs and rays
That are strange glories on the winter pale?
Alas, O beauty, all my fancies fail!
I cannot tell a story in thy praise!

Thou hast, thou hast one-set, and sure to chime
With thee, as with the days of 'winter wild;'
For Joy like Sorrow loves his blessed feet
Who shone from Heaven on Earth this Christmas-time
A Brother and a Saviour, Mary's child!-
And so, fair day, thou
hast
thy story sweet.

George MacDonald

Christmas Meditation

He who by a mother's love
Made the wandering world his own,
Every year comes from above,
Comes the parted to atone,
Binding Earth to the Father's throne.

Nay, thou comest every day!
No, thou never didst depart!
Never hour hast been away!
Always with us, Lord, thou art,
Binding, binding heart to heart!

George MacDonald

Christmas Prayer

Cold my heart, and poor, and low,
Like thy stable in the rock;
Do not let it orphan go,
It is of thy parent stock!
Come thou in, and it will grow
High and wide, a fane divine;
Like the ruby it will glow,
Like the diamond shine!

George MacDonald

Christmas Song Of The Old Children

Well for youth to seek the strong,
Beautiful, and brave!
We, the old, who walk along
Gently to the grave,
Only pay our court to thee,
Child of all Eternity!

We are old who once were young,
And we grow more old;
Songs we are that have been sung,
Tales that have been told;
Yellow leaves, wind-blown to thee,
Childhood of Eternity!

If we come too sudden near,
Lo, Earth's infant cries,
For our faces wan and drear
Have such withered eyes!
Thou, Heaven's child, turn'st not away
From the wrinkled ones who pray!

Smile upon us with thy mouth
And thine eyes of grace;
On our cold north breathe thy south.
Thaw the frozen face:
Childhood all from thee doth flow-
Melt to song our age's snow.

Gray-haired children come in crowds,
Thee, their Hope, to greet:
Is it swaddling clothes or shrouds
Hampering so our feet?
Eldest child, the shadows gloom:
Take the aged children home.

We have had enough of play,
And the wood grows drear;
Many who at break of day
Companied us here-

They have vanished out of sight,
Gone and met the coming light!

Fair is this out-world of thine,
But its nights are cold;
And the sun that makes it fine
Makes us soon so old!
Long its shadows grow and dim-
Father, take us back with him!

George MacDonald

Christmas, 1873

Christmas-Days are still in store:-
Will they change-steal faded hither?
Or come fresh as heretofore,
Summering all our winter weather?

Surely they will keep their bloom
All the countless pacing ages:
In the country whence they come
Children only are the sages!

Hither, every hour and year,
Children come to cure our oldness-
Oft, alas, to gather sear
Unbelief, and earthy boldness!

Men they grow and women cold,
Selfish, passionate, and plaining!
Ever faster they grow old:-
On the world, ah, eld is gaining!

Child, whose childhood ne'er departs!
Jesus, with the perfect father!
Drive the age from parents' hearts;
To thy heart the children gather.

Send thy birth into our souls,
With its grand and tender story.
Hark! the gracious thunder rolls!-
News to men! to God old glory!

George MacDonald

Christmas, 1880

Great-hearted child, thy very being
The Son

,
Who know'st the hearts of all us prodigals;-
For who is prodigal but he who has gone
Far from the true to heart it with the false?-
Who, who but thou, that, from the animals',
Know'st all the hearts, up to the Father's own,
Can tell what it would be to be alone!

Alone! No father!-At the very thought
Thou, the eternal light, wast once aghast;
A death in death for thee it almost wrought!
But thou didst haste, about to breathe thy last,
And call'dst out
Father
ere thy spirit passed,
Exhausted in fulfilling not any vow,
But doing his will who greater is than thou.

That we might know him, thou didst come and live;
That we might find him, thou didst come and die;
The son-heart, brother, thy son-being give-
We too would love the father perfectly,
And to his bosom go back with the cry,
Father, into thy hands I give the heart
Which left thee but to learn how good thou art!

There are but two in all the universe-
The father and his children-not a third;
Nor, all the weary time, fell any curse!
Not once dropped from its nest an unfledged bird
But thou wast with it! Never sorrow stirred
But a love-pull it was upon the chain
That draws the children to the father again!

O Jesus Christ, babe, man, eternal son,
Take pity! we are poor where thou art rich:
Our hearts are small; and yet there is not one

In all thy father's noisy nursery which,
Merry, or mourning in its narrow niche,
Needs not thy father's heart, this very now,
With all his being's being, even as thou!

George MacDonald

Christmas, 1884

Though in my heart no Christmas glee,
Though my song-bird be dumb,
Jesus, it is enough for me
That thou art come.

What though the loved be scattered far,
Few at the board appear,
In thee, O Lord, they gathered are,
And thou art here.

And if our hearts be low with lack,
They are not therefore numb;
Not always will thy day come back-
Thyself will come!

George MacDonald

Christmas-Day, 1878

I think I might be weary of this day
That comes inevitably every year,
The same when I was young and strong and gay,
The same when I am old and growing sere-
I should grow weary of it every year
But that thou comest to me every day.

I shall grow weary if thou every day
But come to me, Lord of eternal life;
I shall grow weary thus to watch and pray,
For ever out of labour into strife;
Take everlasting house with me, my life,
And I shall be new-born this Christmas-day.

Thou art the Eternal Son, and born no day,
But ever he the Father, thou the Son;
I am his child, but being born alway-
How long, O Lord, how long till it be done?
Be thou from endless years to years the Son-
And I thy brother, new-born every day.

George MacDonald

Come Down

Still am I haunting
Thy door with my prayers;
Still they are panting
Up thy steep stairs!
Wouldst thou not rather
Come down to my heart,
And there, O my Father,
Be what thou art?

George MacDonald

Come To Me

Come to me, come to me, O my God;
Come to me everywhere!
Let the trees mean thee, and the grassy sod,
And the water and the air!

For thou art so far that I often doubt,
As on every side I stare,
Searching within, and looking without,
If thou canst be anywhere.

How did men find thee in days of old?
How did they grow so sure?
They fought in thy name, they were glad and bold,
They suffered, and kept themselves pure!

But now they say-neither above the sphere
Nor down in the heart of man,
But solely in fancy, ambition, and fear
The thought of thee began.

If only that perfect tale were true
Which ages have not made old,
Which of endless many makes one anew,
And simplicity manifold!

But
he
taught that they who did his word
The truth of it sure would know:
I will try to do it: if he be lord
Again the old faith will glow;

Again the old spirit-wind will blow
That he promised to their prayer;
And obeying the Son, I too shall know
His father everywhere!

George MacDonald

Come Unto Me

Come unto me, the Master says:-
But how? I am not good;
No thankful song my heart will raise,
Nor even wish it could.

I am not sorry for the past,
Nor able not to sin;
The weary strife would ever last
If once I should begin!

Hast thou no burden then to bear?
No action to repent?
Is all around so very fair?
Is thy heart quite content?

Hast thou no sickness in thy soul?
No labour to endure?
Then go in peace, for thou art whole;
Thou needest not his cure.

Ah, mock me not! I often sigh;
I have a nameless grief,
A faint sad pain-but such that I
Can look for no relief.

Come, come to him who made thy heart;
Come weary and oppressed;
To come to Jesus is thy part,
His part to give thee rest.

New grief, new hope he will bestow,
Thy grief and pain to quell;
Into thy heart himself will go,
And that will make thee well.

George MacDonald

Coming

When the snow is on the earth
Birds and waters cease their mirth;
When the sunlight is prevailing
Even the night-winds drop their wailing.

On the earth when deep snows lie
Still the sun is in the sky,
And when most we miss his fire
He is ever drawing nigher.

In the darkest winter day
Thou, God, art not far away;
When the nights grow colder, drearer,
Father, thou art coming nearer!

For thee coming I would watch
With my hand upon the latch-
Of the door, I mean, that faces
Out upon the eternal spaces!

George MacDonald

Concerning Jesus

I.

If thou hadst been a sculptor, what a race
Of forms divine had thenceforth filled the land!
Methinks I see thee, glorious workman, stand,
Striking a marble window through blind space-
Thy face's reflex on the coming face,
As dawns the stone to statue 'neath thy hand-
Body obedient to its soul's command,
Which is thy thought, informing it with grace!
So had it been. But God, who quickeneth clay,
Nor turneth it to marble-maketh eyes,
Not shadowy hollows, where no sunbeams play-
Would mould his loftiest thought in human guise:
Thou didst appear, walking unknown abroad,
God's living sculpture, all-informed of God.

II.

If one should say, 'Lo, there thy statue! take
Possession, sculptor; now inherit it;
Go forth upon the earth in likeness fit;
As with a trumpet-cry at morning, wake
The sleeping nations; with light's terror, shake
The slumber from their hearts, that, where they sit,
They leap straight up, aghast, as at a pit
Gaping beneath;' I hear him answer make:
'Alas for me, I cannot nor would dare
Inform what I revered as I did trace!
Who would be fool that he like fool might fare,
With feeble spirit mocking the enorm
Strength on his forehead!' Thou, God's thought thy form,
Didst live the large significance of thy face.

III.

Men have I seen, and seen with wonderment,
Noble in form, 'lift upward and divine,'

In whom I yet must search, as in a mine,
After that soul of theirs, by which they went
Alive upon the earth. And I have bent
Regard on many a woman, who gave sign
God willed her beautiful, when he drew the line
That shaped each float and fold of beauty's tent:
Her soul, alas, chambered in pigmy space,
Left the fair visage pitiful-inane-
Poor signal only of a coming face
When from the penetrale she filled the fane!-
Possessed of thee was every form of thine,
Thy very hair replete with the divine.

IV.

If thou hadst built a temple, how my eye
Had hungering fed thereon, from low-browed crypt
Up to the soaring pinnacles that, tipt
With stars, gave signal when the sun drew nigh!
Dark caverns in and under; vivid sky
Its home and aim! Say, from the glory slipt,
And down into the shadows dropt and dipt,
Or reared from darkness up so holy-high?-
Thou build'st the temple of thy holy ghost
From hid foundation to high-hidden fate-
Foot in the grave, head at the heavenly gate,
From grave and sky filled with a fighting host!
Man is thy temple; man thy work elect;
His glooms and glory thine, great architect!

V.

If thou hadst been a painter, what fresh looks,
What outbursts of pent glories, what new grace
Had shone upon us from the great world's face!
How had we read, as in eternal books,
The love of God in loneliest shiest nooks!
A lily, in merest lines thy hand did trace,
Had plainly been God's child of lower race!
And oh how strong the hills, songful the brooks!

To thee all nature's meanings lie light-bare,
Because thy heart is nature's inner side;
Clear as, to us, earth on the dawn's gold tide,
Her notion vast up in thy soul did rise;
Thine is the world, thine all its splendours rare,
Thou Man ideal, with the unsleeping eyes!

VI.

But I have seen pictures the work of man,
In which at first appeared but chaos wild:
So high the art transcended, they beguiled
The eye as formless, and without a plan.
Not soon, the spirit, brooding o'er, began
To see a purpose rise, like mountain isled,
When God said, Let the Dry appear! and, piled
Above the waves, it rose in twilight wan.
So might thy pictures then have been too strange
For us to pierce beyond their outmost look;
A vapour and a darkness; a sealed book;
An atmosphere too high for wings to range;
And so we could but, gazing, pale and change,
And tremble as at a void thought cannot brook.

VII.

But earth is now thy living picture, where
Thou shadowest truth, the simple and profound
By the same form in vital union bound:
Where one can see but the first step of thy stair,
Another sees it vanish far in air.
When thy king David viewed the starry round,
From heart and fingers broke the psaltery-sound:
Lord, what is man, that thou shouldst mind his prayer!
But when the child beholds the heavens on high,
He babbles childish noises-not less dear
Than what the king sang praying-to the ear
Of him who made the child and king and sky.
Earth is thy picture, painter great, whose eye
Sees with the child, sees with the kingly seer.

VIII.

If thou hadst built some mighty instrument,
And set thee down to utter ordered sound,
Whose faithful billows, from thy hands unbound,
Breaking in light, against our spirits went,
And caught, and bore above this earthly tent,
The far-strayed back to their prime natal ground,
Where all roots fast in harmony are found,
And God sits thinking out a pure consent;-
Nay, that thou couldst not; that was not for thee!
Our broken music thou must first restore-
A harder task than think thine own out free;
And till thou hast done it, no divinest score,
Though rendered by thine own angelic choir,
Can lift one human spirit from the mire.

IX.

If thou hadst been a poet! On my heart
The thought flashed sudden, burning through the weft
Of life, and with too much I sank bereft.
Up to my eyes the tears, with sudden start,
Thronged blinding: then the veil would rend and part!
The husk of vision would in twain be cleft!
Thy hidden soul in naked beauty left,
I should behold thee, Nature, as thou art!
O poet Jesus! at thy holy feet
I should have lien, sainted with listening;
My pulses answering ever, in rhythmic beat,
The stroke of each triumphant melody's wing,
Creating, as it moved, my being sweet;
My soul thy harp, thy word the quivering string.

X.

Thee had we followed through the twilight land
Where thought grows form, and matter is refined

Back into thought of the eternal mind,
Till, seeing them one, Lo, in the morn we stand!-
Then started fresh and followed, hand in hand,
With sense divinely growing, till, combined,
We heard the music of the planets wind
In harmony with billows on the strand!-
Till, one with earth and all God's utterance,
We hardly knew whether the sun outspake,
Or a glad sunshine from our spirits brake-
Whether we think, or winds and blossoms dance!
Alas, O poet leader, for such good
Thou wast God's tragedy, writ in tears and blood!

XI.

Hadst thou been one of these, in many eyes,
Too near to be a glory for thy sheen,
Thou hadst been scorned; and to the best hadst been
A setter forth of strange divinities;
But to the few construct of harmonies,
A sudden sun, uplifting the serene
High heaven of love; and, through the cloudy screen
That 'twixt our souls and truth all wretched lies,
Dawning at length, hadst been a love and fear,
Worshipped on high from Magian's mountain-crest,
And all night long symbolled by lamp-flames clear,
Thy sign, a star upon thy people's breast-
Where that strange arbitrary token lies
Which once did scare the sun in noontide skies.

XII.

But as thou camest forth to bring the poor,
Whose hearts are nearer faith and verity,
Spiritual childhood, thy philosophy-
So taught'st the A B C of heavenly lore;
Because thou sat'st not lonely evermore,
With mighty truths informing language high,
But, walking in thy poem continually,
Didst utter deeds, of all true forms the core-

Poet and poem one indivisible fact;
Because thou didst thine own ideal act,
And so, for parchment, on the human soul
Didst write thine aspirations-at thy goal
Thou didst arrive with curses for acclaim,
And cry to God up through a cloud of shame.

XIII.

For three and thirty years, a living seed,
A lonely germ, dropt on our waste world's side,
Thy death and rising thou didst calmly bide;
Sore companied by many a clinging weed
Sprung from the fallow soil of evil and need;
Hither and thither tossed, by friends denied;
Pitied of goodness dull, and scorned of pride;
Until at length was done the awful deed,
And thou didst lie outworn in stony bower
Three days asleep-oh, slumber godlike-brief
For man of sorrows and acquaint with grief!
Life-seed thou diedst, that Death might lose his power,
And thou, with rooted stem and shadowy leaf,
Rise, of humanity the crimson flower.

XIV.

Where dim the ethereal eye, no art, though clear
As golden star in morning's amber springs,
Can pierce the fogs of low imaginings:
Painting and sculpture are a mockery mere.
Where dull to deafness is the hearing ear,
Vain is the poet. Nought but earthly things
Have credence. When the soaring skylark sings
How shall the stony statue strain to hear?
Open the deaf ear, wake the sleeping eye,
And Lo, musicians, painters, poets-all
Trooping instinctive, come without a call!
As winds that where they list blow evermore;
As waves from silent deserts roll to die
In mighty voices on the peopled shore.

XV.

Our ears thou openedst; mad'st our eyes to see.
All they who work in stone or colour fair,
Or build up temples of the quarried air,
Which we call music, scholars are of thee.
Henceforth in might of such, the earth shall be
Truth's temple-theatre, where she shall wear
All forms of revelation, all men bear
Tapers in acolyte humility.
O master-maker, thy exultant art
Goes forth in making makers! Pictures? No,
But painters, who in love and truth shall show
Glad secrets from thy God's rejoicing heart.
Sudden, green grass and waving corn up start
When through dead sands thy living waters go.

XVI.

From the beginning good and fair are one,
But men the beauty from the truth will part,
And, though the truth is ever beauty's heart,
After the beauty will, short-breathed, run,
And the indwelling truth deny and shun.
Therefore, in cottage, synagogue, and mart,
Thy thoughts came forth in common speech, not art;
With voice and eye, in Jewish Babylon,
Thou taughtest-not with pen or carved stone,
Nor in thy hand the trembling wires didst take:
Thou of the truth not less than all wouldst make;
For Truth's sake even her forms thou didst disown:
Ere, through the love of beauty, truth shall fail,
The light behind shall burn the broidered veil!

XVII.

Holy of holies, my bare feet draw nigh:
Jesus, thy body is the shining veil

By which I look on God, nor grow death-pale.
I know that in my verses poor may lie
Things low, for see, the thinker is not high!
But were my song as loud as saints' all-hail,
As pure as prophet's cry of warning wail,
As holy as thy mother's ecstasy-
He sings a better, who, for love or ruth,
Into his heart a little child doth take.
Nor thoughts nor feelings, art nor wisdom seal
The man who at thy table bread shall break.
Thy praise was not that thou didst know, or feel,
Or show, or love, but that thou didst the truth.

XVIII.

Despised! Rejected by the priest-led roar
Of the multitude! The imperial purple flung
About the form the hissing scourge had stung,
Witnessing naked to the truth it bore!
True son of father true, I thee adore.
Even the mocking purple truthful hung
On thy true shoulders, bleeding its folds among,
For thou wast king, art king for evermore!

I know the Father: he knows me the truth
.
Truth-witness, therefore the one essential king,
With thee I die, with thee live worshipping!
O human God, O brother, eldest born,
Never but thee was there a man in sooth,
Never a true crown but thy crown of thorn!

George MacDonald

Confidence

Lie down upon the ground, thou hopeless one!
Press thy face in the grass, and do not speak.
Dost feel the green globe whirl? Seven times a week
Climbeth she out of darkness to the sun,
Which is her God; seven times she doth not shun
Awful eclipse, laying her patient cheek
Upon a pillow ghost-beset with shriek
Of voices utterless, which rave and run
Through all the star-penumbra, craving light
And tidings of the dawn from East and West.
Calmly she sleepeth, and her sleep is blest
With heavenly visions, and the joy of Night
Treading aloft with moons; nor hath she fright
Though cloudy tempests beat upon her breast.

George MacDonald

Consider The Ravens

Lord, according to thy words,
I have considered thy birds;
And I find their life good,
And better the better understood:
Sowing neither corn nor wheat
They have all that they can eat;
Reaping no more than they sow
They have more than they could stow;
Having neither barn nor store,
Hungry again, they eat more.

Considering, I see too that they
Have a busy life, and plenty of play;
In the earth they dig their bills deep
And work well though they do not heap;
Then to play in the air they are not loath,
And their nests between are better than both.
But this is when there blow no storms,
When berries are plenty in winter, and worms,
When feathers are rife, with oil enough-
To keep the cold out and send the rain off;
If there come, indeed, a long hard frost
Then it looks as thy birds were lost.

But I consider further, and find
A hungry bird has a free mind;
He is hungry to-day, not to-morrow,
Steals no comfort, no grief doth borrow;
This moment is his, thy will hath said it,
The next is nothing till thou hast made it.

Thy bird has pain, but has no fear
Which is the worst of any gear;
When cold and hunger and harm betide him,
He does not take them and stuff inside him;
Content with the day's ill he has got,
He waits just, nor haggles with his lot:
Neither jumbles God's will
With driblets from his own still.

But next I see, in my endeavour,
Thy birds here do not live for ever;
That cold or hunger, sickness or age
Finishes their earthly stage;
The rooks drop in cold nights,
Leaving all their wrongs and rights;
Birds lie here and birds lie there
With their feathers all astare;
And in thy own sermon, thou
That the sparrow falls dost allow.

It shall not cause me any alarm,
For neither so comes the bird to harm
Seeing our father, thou hast said,
Is by the sparrow's dying bed;
Therefore it is a blessed place,
And the sparrow in high grace.

It cometh therefore to this, Lord:
I have considered thy word,
And henceforth will be thy bird.

George MacDonald

Contrition

Out of the gulf into the glory,
Father, my soul cries out to be lifted.
Dark is the woof of my dismal story,
Thorough thy sun-warp stormily drifted!-
Out of the gulf into the glory,
Lift me, and save my story.

I have done many things merely shameful;
I am a man ashamed, my father!
My life is ashamed and broken and blameful-
The broken and blameful, oh, cleanse and gather!
Heartily shame me, Lord, of the shameful!
To my judge I flee with my blameful.

Saviour, at peace in thy perfect purity,
Think what it is, not to be pure!
Strong in thy love's essential security,
Think upon those who are never secure.
Full fill my soul with the light of thy purity:
Fold me in love's security.

O Father, O Brother, my heart is sore aching!
Help it to ache as much as is needful;
Is it you cleansing me, mending, remaking,
Dear potter-hands, so tender and heedful?
Sick of my past, of my own self aching-
Hurt on, dear hands, with your making.

Proud of the form thou hadst given thy vessel,
Proud of myself, I forgot my donor;
Down in the dust I began to nestle,
Poured thee no wine, and drank deep of dishonour!
Lord, thou hast broken, thou mendest thy vessel!
In the dust of thy glory I nestle.

George MacDonald

Cottage-Songs

I.-BY THE CRADLE.

Close her eyes: she must not peep!
Let her little puds go slack;
Slide away far into sleep:
Sis will watch till she comes back!

Mother's knitting at the door,
Waiting till the kettle sings;
When the kettle's song is o'er
She will set the bright tea-things.

Father's busy making hay
In the meadow by the brook,
Not so very far away-
Close its peeps, it needn't look!

God is round us everywhere-
Sees the scythe glitter and rip;
Watches baby gone somewhere;
Sees how mother's fingers skip!

Sleep, dear baby; sleep outright:
Mother's sitting just behind:
Father's only out of sight;
God is round us like the wind.

II.-SWEEPING THE FLOOR.

Sweep and sweep and sweep the floor,
Sweep the dust, pick up the pin;
Make it clean from fire to door,
Clean for father to come in!

Mother said that God goes sweeping,
Looking, sweeping with a broom,
All the time that we are sleeping,
For a shilling in the room:

Did he drop it out of glory,
Walking far above the birds?
Or did parson make the story
For the thinking afterwards?

If I were the swept-for shilling
I would hearken through the gloom;
Roll out fast, and fall down willing
Right before the sweeping broom!

III.-WASHING THE CLOTHES.

This is the way we wash the clo'es
Free from dirt and smoke and clay!
Through and through the water flows,
Carries Ugly right away!

This is the way we bleach the clo'es:
Lay them out upon the green;
Through and through the sunshine goes,
Makes them white as well as clean!

This is the way we dry the clo'es:
Hang them on the bushes about;
Through and through the soft wind blows,
Draws and drives the wetness out!

Water, sun, and windy air
Make the clothes clean, white, and sweet
Lay them now in lavender
For the Sunday, folded neat!

IV.-DRAWING WATER.

Dark, as if it would not tell,
Lies the water, still and cool:
Dip the bucket in the well,
Lift it from the precious pool!

Up it comes all brown and dim,
Telling of the twilight sweet:
As it rises to the brim

See the sun and water meet!

See the friends each other hail!
'Here you are!' cries Master Sun;
Mistress Water from the pail
Flashes back, alive with fun!

Have you not a tale to tell,
Water, as I take you home?
Tell me of the hidden well
Whence you, first of all, did come.

Of it you have kept some flavour
Through long paths of darkling strife:
Water all has still a savour
Of the primal well of life!

Could you show the lovely way
Back and up through sea and sky
To that well? Oh, happy day,
I would drink, and never die!

Jesus sits there on its brink
All the world's great thirst to slake,
Offering every one to drink
Who will only come and take!

Lord of wells and waters all,
Lord of rains and dewy beads,
Unto thee my thirst doth call
For the thing thou know'st it needs!

Come home, water sweet and cool,
Gift of God thou always art!
Spring up, Well more beautiful,
Rise in mine straight from his heart.

V.-CLEANING THE WINDOWS.

Wash the window; rub it dry;
Make the ray-door clean and bright:
He who lords it in the sky

Loves on cottage floors to light!

Looking over sea and beck,
Mountain-forest, orchard-bloom,
He can spy the smallest speck
Anywhere about the room!

See how bright his torch is blazing
In the heart of mother's store!
Strange! I never saw him gazing
So into that press before!

Ah, I see!-the wooden pane
In the window, dull and dead,
Father called its loss a gain,
And a glass one put instead!

What a difference it makes!
How it melts the filmy gloom!
What a little more it takes
Much to brighten up a room!

There I spy a dusty streak!
There a corner not quite clean!
There a cobweb! There the sneak
Of a spider, watching keen!

Lord of suns, and eyes that see,
Shine into me, see and show;
Leave no darksome spot in me
Where thou dost not shining go.

Fill my spirit full of eyes,
Doors of light in every part;
Open windows to the skies
That no moth corrupt my heart.

George MacDonald

De Profundis

When I am dead unto myself, and let,
O Father, thee live on in me,
Contented to do nought but pay my debt,
And leave the house to thee,

Then shall I be thy ransomed-from the cark
Of living, from the strain for breath,
From tossing in my coffin strait and dark,
At hourly strife with death!

Have mercy! in my coffin! and awake!
A buried temple of the Lord!
Grow, Temple, grow! Heart, from thy cerements break!
Stream out, O living Sword!

When I am with thee as thou art with me,
Life will be self-forgetting power;
Love, ever conscious, buoyant, clear, and free,
Will flame in darkest hour.

Where now I sit alone, unmoving, calm,
With windows open to thy wind,
Shall I not know thee in the radiant psalm
Soaring from heart and mind?

The body of this death will melt away,
And I shall know as I am known;
Know thee my father, every hour and day,
As thou know'st me thine own!

George MacDonald

Death

Mourn not, my friends, that we are growing old:
A fresher birth brings every new year in.
Years are Christ's napkins to wipe off the sin.
See now, I'll be to you an angel bold!
My plumes are ruffled, and they shake with cold,
Yet with a trumpet-blast I will begin.
-Ah, no; your listening ears not thus I win!
Yet hear, sweet sisters; brothers, be consoled:-
Behind me comes a shining one indeed;
Christ's friend, who from life's cross did take him down,
And set upon his day night's starry crown!

Death

, say'st thou? Nay-thine be no caitiff creed!-
A woman-angel! see-in long white gown!
The mother of our youth!-she maketh speed.

George MacDonald

Death And Birth

'Tis the midnight hour; I heard
The Abbey-bell give out the word.
Seldom is the lamp-ray shed
On some dwarfed foot-farer's head
In the deep and narrow street
Lying ditch-like at my feet
Where I stand at lattice high
Downward gazing listlessly
From my house upon the rock,
Peak of earth's foundation-block.

There her windows, every story,
Shine with far-off nebulous glory!
Round her in that luminous cloud
Stars obedient press and crowd,
She the centre of all gazing,
She the sun her planets dazing!
In her eyes' victorious lightning
Some are paling, some are brightening:
Those on which they gracious turn,
Stars combust, all tenfold burn;
Those from which they look away
Listless roam in twilight gray!
When on her my looks I bent
Wonder shook me like a tent,
And my eyes grew dim with sheen,
Wasting light upon its queen!
But though she my eyes might chain,
Rule my ebbing flowing brain,
Truth alone, without, within,
Can the soul's high homage win!

He, I do not doubt, is there
Who unveiled my idol fair!
And I thank him, grateful much,
Though his end was none of such.
He from shapely lips of wit
Let the fire-flakes lightly flit,
Scorching as the snow that fell

On the damned in Dante's hell;
With keen, gentle opposition,
Playful, merciless precision,
Mocked the sweet romance of youth
Balancing on spheric truth;
He on sense's firm set plane
Rolled the unstable ball amain:
With a smile she looked at me,
Stung my soul, and set me free.

Welcome, friend! Bring in your bricks.
Mortar there? No need to mix?
That is well. And picks and hammers?
Verily these are no shammers!-
There, my friend, build up that niche,
That one with the painting rich!

Yes, you're right; it is a show
Picture seldom can bestow;
City palaces and towers,
Terraced gardens, twilight bowers,
Vistas deep through swaying masts,
Pennons flaunting in the blasts:
Build; my room it does not fit;
Brick-glaze is the thing for it!

Yes, a window you may call it;
Not the less up you must wall it:
In that niche the dead world lies;
Bury death, and free mine eyes.

There were youths who held by me,
Said I taught, yet left them free:
Will they do as I said then?
God forbid! As ye are men,
Find the secret-follow and find!
All forget that lies behind;
Me, the schools, yourselves, forsake;
In your souls a silence make;
Hearken till a whisper come,
Listen, follow, and be dumb.

There! 'tis over; I am dead!
Of my life the broken thread
Here I cast out of my hand!-
O my soul, the merry land!
On my heart the sinking vault
Of my ruining past makes halt;
Ages I could sit and moan
For the shining world that's gone!

Haste and pierce the other wall;
Break an opening to the All!
Where? No matter; done is best.
Kind of window? Let that rest:
Who at morning ever lies
Pondering how to ope his eyes!

I bethink me: we must fall
On the thinnest of the wall!
There it must be, in that niche!-
No, the deepest-that in which
Stands the Crucifix.

You start?-
Ah, your half-believing heart
Shrinks from that as sacrilege,
Or, at least, upon its edge!
Worse than sacrilege, I say,
Is it to withhold the day
From the brother whom thou knowest
For the God thou never sawest!

Reverently, O marble cold,
Thee in living arms I fold!
Thou who art thyself the way
From the darkness to the day,
Window, thou, to every land,
Wouldst not one dread moment stand
Shutting out the air and sky
And the dayspring from on high!
Brother with the rugged crown,
Gently thus I lift thee down!

Give me pick and hammer; you
Stand aside; the deed I'll do.
Yes, in truth, I have small skill,
But the best thing is the will.

Stroke on stroke! The frescoed plaster
Clashes downward, fast and faster.
Hark, I hear an outer stone
Down the rough rock rumbling thrown!
There's a cranny! there's a crack!
The great sun is at its back!
Lo, a mass is outward flung!
In the universe hath sprung!

See the gold upon the blue!
See the sun come blinding through!
See the far-off mountain shine
In the dazzling light divine!
Prisoned world, thy captive's gone!
Welcome wind, and sky, and sun!

George MacDonald

December 23, 1879

I.

A thousand houses of poesy stand around me everywhere;
They fill the earth and they fill my thought, they are in and above the
air;
But to-night they have shut their doors, they have shut their shining
windows fair,
And I am left in a desert world, with an aching as if of care.

II.

Cannot I break some little nut and get at the poetry in it?
Cannot I break the shining egg of some all but hatched heavenly linnet?
Cannot I find some beauty-worm, and its moony cocoon-silk spin it?
Cannot I find my all but lost day in the rich content of a minute?

III.

I will sit me down, all aching and tired, in the midst of this
never-unclosing
Of door or window that makes it look as if truth herself were dozing;
I will sit me down and make me a tent, call it poetizing or prosing,
Of what may be lying within my reach, things at my poor disposing!

IV.

Now what is nearest?-My conscious self. Here I sit quiet and say:
'Lo, I myself am already a house of poetry solemn and gay!
But, alas, the windows are shut, all shut: 'tis a cold and foggy day,
And I have not now the light to see what is in me the same away!'

V.

Nay, rather I'll say: 'I am a nut in the hard and frozen ground;
Above is the damp and frozen air, the cold blue sky all round;
And the power of a leafy and branchy tree is in me crushed and bound
Till the summer come and set it free from the grave-clothes
in which it is wound!'

VI.

But I bethink me of something better!-something better, yea best!
'I am lying a voiceless, featherless thing in God's own perfect nest;
And the voice and the song are growing within me, slowly lifting my
breast;
And his wide night-wings are closed about me, for his sun is down in the
west!'

VII.

Doors and windows, tents and grave-clothes, winters and eggs and seeds,
Ye shall all be opened and broken and torn; ye are but to serve my needs!
On the will of the Father all lovely things are strung like a string of
beads
For his heart to give the obedient child that the will of the father
heeds.

George MacDonald

December 27, 1879

Every time would have its song
If the heart were right,
Seeing Love all tender-strong
Fills the day and night.

Weary drop the hands of Prayer
Calling out for peace;
Love always and everywhere
Sings and does not cease.

Fear, the caitiff, through the night
Silent peers about;
Love comes singing with a light
And doth cast him out.

Hate and Guile and Wrath and Doubt
Never try to sing;
If they did, oh, what a rout
Anguished ears would sting!

Pride indeed will sometimes aim
At the finer speech,
But the best that he can frame
Is a peacock-screech.

Greed will also sometimes try:
Happiness he hunts!
But his dwelling is a sty,
And his tones are grunts.

Faith will sometimes raise a song
Soaring up to heaven,
Then she will be silent long,
And will weep at even.

Hope has many a gladsome note
Now and then to pipe;
But, alas, he has the throat
Of a bird unripe.

Often Joy a stave will start
Which the welkin rends,
But it always breaks athwart,
And untimely ends.

Grief, who still for death doth long,
Always self-abhorred,
Has but one low, troubled song,

I am sorry, Lord

.

But Love singeth in the vault.
Singeth on the stair;
Even for Sorrow will not halt,
Singeth everywhere.

For the great Love everywhere
Over all doth glow;
Draws his birds up trough the air,
Tends his birds below.

And with songs ascending sheer
Love-born Love replies,
Singing
Father
in his ear
Where she bleeding lies.

Therefore, if my heart were right
I should sing out clear,
Sing aloud both day and night
Every month in the year!

George MacDonald

Dejection

O Father, I am in the dark,
My soul is heavy-bowed:
I send my prayer up like a lark,
Up through my vapoury shroud,
To find thee,
And remind thee
I am thy child, and thou my father,
Though round me death itself should gather.

Lay thy loved hand upon my head,
Let thy heart beat in mine;
One thought from thee, when all seems dead,
Will make the darkness shine
About me
And throughout me!
And should again the dull night gather,
I'll cry again,
Thou art my father

.

George MacDonald

Dorcas

If I might guess, then guess I would
That, mid the gathered folk,
This gentle Dorcas one day stood,
And heard when Jesus spoke.

She saw the woven seamless coat-
Half envious, for his sake:
'Oh, happy hands,' she said, 'that wrought
The honoured thing to make!'

Her eyes with longing tears grow dim:
She never can come nigh
To work one service poor for him
For whom she glad would die!

But, hark, he speaks! Oh, precious word!
And she has heard indeed!
'When did we see thee naked, Lord,
And clothed thee in thy need?'

'The King shall answer, Inasmuch
As to my brethren ye
Did it-even to the least of such-
Ye did it unto me.'

Home, home she went, and plied the loom,
And Jesus' poor arrayed.
She died-they wept about the room,
And showed the coats she made.

George MacDonald

Doubt Heralding Vision

An angel saw me sitting by a brook,
Pleased with the silence, and the melodies
Of wind and water which did fall and rise:
He gently stirred his plumes and from them shook
An outworn doubt, which fell on me and took
The shape of darkness, hiding all the skies,
Blinding the sun, but giving to my eyes
An inextinguishable wish to look;
When, lo! thick as the buds of spring there came,
Crowd upon crowd, informing all the sky,
A host of splendours watching silently,
With lustrous eyes that wept as if in blame,
And waving hands that crossed in lines of flame,
And signalled things I hope to hold although I die!

George MacDonald

Dr. Doddridges Dog

'What! you Dr. Doddridge's dog, and not know who made you?'

My little dog, who blessed you
With such white toothy-pegs?
And who was it that dressed you
In such a lot of legs?

Perhaps he never told you!
Perhaps you know quite well,
And beg me not to scold you
For you can't speak to tell!

I'll tell you, little brother,
In case you do not know:-
One only, not another,
Could make us two just so.

You love me?-Quiet!-I'm proving!-
It must be God above
That filled those eyes with loving:
He was the first to love!

One day he'll stop all sadness-
Hark to the nightingale!
Oh blessed God of gladness!-
Come, doggie, wag your tail!

That's-Thank you, God!-He gave you
Of life this little taste;
And with more life he'll save you,
Not let you go to waste!

He says now, Live together,
And share your bite and sup;
And then he'll say, Come hither-
And lift us both high up.

George MacDonald

Eine Kleine Predigt

Graut Euch nicht, Ihr lieben Leute,
Vor dem ungeheuren Morgen;
Wenn es kommt, es ist das Heute,
Und der liebe Gott zu sorgen.

George MacDonald

Equity

No bird can sing in tune but that the Lord
Sits throned in equity above the heaven,
And holds the righteous balance always even;
No heart can true response to love afford
Wherein from one to eight not every chord
Is yet attuned by the spirits seven:
For tuneful no bird sings but that the Lord
Is throned in equity above high heaven.

Oh heart, by wrong unfilial scathed and scored,
And from thy humble throne with mazedness driven,
Take courage: when thy wrongs thou hast forgiven,
Thy rights in love thy God will see restored:
No bird could sing in tune but that the Lord
Sits throned in equity above the heaven.

George MacDonald

Evening Hymn

O God, whose daylight leadeth down
Into the sunless way,
Who with restoring sleep dost crown
The labour of the day!

What I have done, Lord, make it clean
With thy forgiveness dear;
That so to-day what might have been,
To-morrow may appear.

And when my thought is all astray,
Yet think thou on in me;
That with the new-born innocent day
My soul rise fresh and free.

Nor let me wander all in vain
Through dreams that mock and flee;
But even in visions of the brain,
Go wandering toward thee.

George MacDonald

Evil Influence

'Tis not the violent hands alone that bring
The curse, the ravage, and the downward doom,
Although to these full oft the yawning tomb
Owes deadly surfeit; but a keener sting,
A more immortal agony will cling
To the half fashioned sin which would assume
Fair Virtue's garb; the eye that sows the gloom
With quiet seeds of Death henceforth to spring
What time the sun of passion burning fierce
Breaks through the kindly cloud of circumstance;
The bitter word, and the unkindly glance,
The crust and canker coming with the years,
Are liker Death than arrows and the lance
Which through the living heart at once doth pierce.

George MacDonald

Failure

Farewell, O Arm of the Lord!
Man who hated the sword,
Yet struck and spared not the thing abhorred!
Farewell, O word of the Word!
Man who knew no failure
But the failure of the Lord!

George MacDonald

Faith

'Earth, if aught should check thy race,
Rushing through unfended space,
Headlong, stayless, thou wilt fall
Into yonder glowing ball!'

'Beggard of the universe,
Faithless as an empty purse!
Sent abroad to cool and tame,
Think'st I fear my native flame?'

'If thou never on thy track
Turn thee round and hie thee back,
Thou wilt wander evermore,
Outcast, cold-a comet hoar!'

'While I sweep my ring along
In an air of joyous song,
Thou art drifting, heart awry,
From the sun of liberty!'

George MacDonald

False Prophets

Would-be prophets tell us
We shall not re-know
Them that walked our fellows
In the ways below!

Smoking, smouldering Tophets
Steaming hopeless plaints!
Dreary, mole-eyed prophets!
Mean, skin-pledging saints!

Knowing not the Father
What their prophecies!
Grapes of such none gather,
Only thorns and lies.

Loving thus the brother,
How the Father tell?
Go without each other
To your heavenly hell!

George MacDonald

Far And Near

The fact which suggested this poem is related by Clarke in his Travels.

I.

Blue sky above, blue sea below,
Far off, the old Nile's mouth,
'Twas a blue world, wherein did blow
A soft wind from the south.

In great and solemn heaves the mass
Of pulsing ocean beat,
Unwrinkled as the sea of glass
Beneath the holy feet.

With forward leaning of desire
The ship sped calmly on,
A pilgrim strong that would not tire
Or hasten to be gone.

II.

List!-on the wave!-what can they be,
Those sounds that hither glide?
No lovers whisper tremulously
Under the ship's round side!

No sail across the dark blue sphere
Holds white obedient way;
No far-fled, sharp-winged boat is near,
No following fish at play!

'Tis not the rippling of the wave,
Nor sighing of the cords;
No winds or waters ever gave
A murmur so like words;

Nor wings of birds that northward strain,
Nor talk of hidden crew:
The traveller questioned, but in vain-

He found no answer true.

III.

A hundred level miles away,
On Egypt's troubled shore,
Two nations fought, that sunny day,
With bellowing cannons' roar.

The fluttering whisper, low and near,
Was that far battle's blare;
A lipping, rippling motion here,
The blasting thunder there.

IV.

Can this dull sighing in my breast
So faint and undefined,
Be the worn edge of far unrest
Borne on the spirit's wind?

The uproar of high battle fought
Betwixt the bond and free,
The thunderous roll of armed thought
Dwarfed to an ache in me?

George MacDonald

Fate

Oft, as I rest in quiet peace, am I
Thrust out at sudden doors, and madly driven
Through desert solitudes, and thunder-riven
Black passages which have not any sky:
The scourge is on me now, with all the cry
Of ancient life that hath with murder striven.
How many an anguish hath gone up to heaven,
How many a hand in prayer been lifted high
When the black fate came onward with the rush
Of whirlwind, avalanche, or fiery spume!
Even at my feet is cleft a shivering tomb
Beneath the waves; or else, with solemn hush
The graveyard opens, and I feel a crush
As if we were all huddled in one doom!

George MacDonald

Father

Father, I cry to thee for bread
With hungred longing, eager prayer;
Thou hear'st, and givest me instead
More hunger and a half-despair.

O Lord, how long? My days decline,
My youth is lapped in memories old;
I need not bread alone, but wine-
See, cup and hand to thee I hold!

And yet thou givest: thanks, O Lord,
That still my heart with hunger faints!
The day will come when at thy board
I sit, forgetting all my plaints.

If rain must come and winds must blow,
And I pore long o'er dim-seen chart,
Yet, Lord, let not the hunger go,
And keep the faintness at my heart.

George MacDonald

Fighting

Here is a temple strangely wrought:
Within it I can see
Two spirits of a diverse thought
Contend for mastery.

One is an angel fair and bright,
Adown the aisle comes he,
Adown the aisle in raiment white,
A creature fair to see.

The other wears an evil mien,
And he hath doubtless slipt,
A fearful being dark and lean,
Up from the mouldy crypt.

*

Is that the roof that grows so black?
Did some one call my name?
Was it the bursting thunder crack
That filled this place with flame?

I move-I wake from out my sleep:
Some one hath victor been!
I see two radiant pinions sweep,
And I am borne between.

Beneath the clouds that under roll
An upturned face I see-
A dead man's face, but, ah, the soul
Was right well known to me!

A man's dead face! Away I haste
Through regions calm and fair:
Go vanquish sin, and thou shall taste

The same celestial air.

George MacDonald

First Sight Of The Sea

I do remember how, when very young,
I saw the great sea first, and heard its swell
As I drew nearer, caught within the spell
Of its vast size and its mysterious tongue.
How the floor trembled, and the dark boat swung
With a man in it, and a great wave fell
Within a stone's cast! Words may never tell
The passion of the moment, when I flung
All childish records by, and felt arise
A thing that died no more! An awful power
I claimed with trembling hands and eager eyes,
Mine, mine for ever, an immortal dower.-
The noise of waters soundeth to this hour
When I look seaward through the quiet skies.

George MacDonald

Foolish Children

Waking in the night to pray,
Sleeping when the answer comes,
Foolish are we even at play-
Tearfully we beat our drums!
Cast the good dry bread away,
Weep, and gather up the crumbs!

'Evermore,' while shines the day,
'Lord,' we cry, 'thy will be done!'
Soon as evening groweth gray,
Thy fair will we fain would shun!
'Take, oh, take thy hand away!
See the horrid dark begun!'

'Thou hast conquered Death,' we say,
'Christ, whom Hades could not keep!'
Then, 'Ah, see the pallid clay!
Death it is,' we cry, 'not sleep!
Grave, take all. Shut out the Day.
Sit we on the ground and weep!'

Gathering potsherds all the day,
Truant children, Lord, we roam;
Fret, and longer want to play,
When at cool thy voice doth come!-
Elder Brother, lead the way;
Make us good as we go home.

George MacDonald

For Where Your Treasure Is, There Will Your Heart Be Also

The miser lay on his lonely bed;
Life's candle was burning dim.
His heart in an iron chest was hid
Under heaps of gold and an iron lid;
And whether it were alive or dead
It never troubled him.

Slowly out of his body he crept.
He said, 'I am just the same!
Only I want my heart in my breast;
I will go and fetch it out of my chest!'
Through the dark a darker shadow he leapt,
Saying 'Hell is a fabled flame!'

He opened the lid. Oh, Hell's own night!
His ghost-eyes saw no gold!-
Empty and swept! Not a gleam was there!
In goes his hand, but the chest is bare!
Ghost-fingers, aha! have only might
To close, not to clasp and hold!

But his heart he saw, and he made a clutch
At the fungous puff-ball of sin:
Eaten with moths, and fretted with rust,
He grasped a handful of rotten dust,
And shrieked, as ghosts may, at the crumbling touch,
But hid it his breast within.

And some there are who see him sit
Under the church, apart,
Counting out coins and coins of gold
Heap by heap on the dank death-mould:
Alas poor ghost and his sore lack of wit-
They breed in the dust of his heart!

Another miser has now his chest,
And it hoards wealth more and more;

Like ferrets his hands go in and out,
Burrowing, tossing the gold about-
Nor heed the heart that, gone from his breast,
Is the cold heap's bloodless core.

Now wherein differ old ghosts that sit
Counting ghost-coins all day
From the man who clings with spirit prone
To whatever can never be his own?
Who will leave the world with not one whit
But a heart all eaten away?

George MacDonald

Forgiveness

God gives his child upon his slate a sum-
To find eternity in hours and years;
With both sides covered, back the child doth come,
His dim eyes swollen with shed and unshed tears;
God smiles, wipes clean the upper side and nether,
And says, 'Now, dear, we'll do the sum together!'

George MacDonald

From Home

Some men there are who cannot spare
A single tear until they feel
The last cold pressure, and the heel
Is stamped upon the outmost layer.

And, waking, some will sigh to think
The clouds have borrowed winter's wing,
Sad winter, when the grasses spring
No more about the fountain's brink.

And some would call me coward fool:
I lay a claim to better blood,
But yet a heap of idle mud
Hath power to make me sorrowful.

George MacDonald

From North Wales: To The Mother

When the summer gave us a longer day,
And the leaves were thickest, I went away:
Like an isle, through dark clouds, of the infinite blue,
Was that summer-ramble from London and you.

It was but one burst into life and air,
One backward glance on the skirts of care,
A height on the hills with the smoke below-
And the joy that came quickly was quick to go.

But I know and I cannot forget so soon
How the Earth is shone on by Sun and Moon;
How the clouds hide the mountains, and how they move
When the morning sunshine lies warm above.

I know how the waters fall and run
In the rocks and the heather, away from the sun;
How they hang like garlands on all hill-sides,
And are the land's music, those crystal tides.

I know how they gather in valleys fair,
Meet valleys those beautiful waves to bear;
How they dance through the rocks, how they rest in the pool,
How they darken, how sparkle, and how they are cool.

I know how the rocks from their kisses climb
To keep the storms off with a front sublime;
And how on their platforms and sloping walls
The shadow of oak-tree and fir-tree falls.

I know how the valleys are bright from far,
Rocks, meadows, and waters, the wood and the scaur;
And how the roadside and the nearest hill
The foxglove and heather and harebell fill.

I know-but the joy that was quick to go
Gave more knowledge to me than words can shew;
And
you

know the story, and how they fare
Who love the green earth and the heavenly air.

George MacDonald

From Novalis

Uplifted is the stone
And all mankind arisen!
We are thy very own,
We are no more in prison!
What bitterest grief can stay
Beside thy golden cup,
When earth and life give way
And with our Lord we sup!

To the marriage Death doth call,
The lamps are burning clear,
The virgins, ready all,
Have for their oil no fear.
Would that even now were ringing
The distance with thy throng!
And that the stars were singing
To us a human song!

Courage! for life is hasting
To endless life away;
The inward fire, unwasting,
Transfigures our dull clay!
See the stars melting, sinking
In life-wine golden-bright!
We, of the splendour drinking,
Shall grow to stars of light.

Lost, lost are all our losses!
Love is for ever free!
The full life heaves and tosses
Like an unbounded sea!
One live, eternal story!
One poem high and broad!
And sun of all our glory
The countenance of God!

George MacDonald

Gaein And Comin

Whan Andrew frae Strathbogie gaed
The lift was lowerin dreary,
The sun he wadna raise his heid,
The win' blew laich and eerie.
In's pooch he had a plack or twa-
I vow he hadna mony,
Yet Andrew like a linty sang,
For Lizzie was sae bonny!
O Lizzie, Lizzie, bonny lassie!
Bonny, saucy hizzy!
What richt had ye to luik at me
And drive me daft and dizzy?

Whan Andrew to Strathbogie cam
The sun was shinin rarely;
He rade a horse that pranced and sprang-
I vow he sat him fairly!
And he had gowd to spen' and spare,
And a hert as true as ony;
But his luik was doon, his sigh was sair,
For Lizzie was sae bonny!
O Lizzie, Lizzie, bonny hizzy!
Aih, the sunlicht weary!
Ye're straucht and rare-ye're fause though fair!-
Hech, auld John Armstrong's deary!

George MacDonald

Galileo

'And yet it moves!' Ah, Truth, where wert thou then
When all for thee they racked each piteous limb?
Wert thou in heaven, and busy with thy hymn
When those poor hands convulsed that held thy pen?
Art thou a phantom that deceives! men
To their undoing? or dost thou watch him
Pale, cold, and silent in his dungeon dim?
And wilt thou ever speak to him again?
'It moves, it moves! Alas, my flesh was weak!
That was a hideous dream! I'll cry aloud
How the green bulk wheels sunward day by day!
Ah me! ah me! perchance my heart was proud
That I alone should know that word to speak!
And now, sweet Truth, shine upon these, I pray.'

George MacDonald

General Gordon

I.

Victorious through failure! faithful Lord,
Who for twelve angel legions wouldst not pray
From thine own country of eternal day,
To shield thee from the lanterned traitor horde,
Making thy one rash servant sheathe his sword!-
Our long retarded legions, on their way,
Toiling through sands, and shouldering Nile's down-sway,
To reach thy soldier, keeping at thy word,
Thou sawest foiled-but glorifiedst him,
Over ten cities giving him thy rule!
We will not mourn a star that grew not dim,
A soldier-child of God gone home from school!
A dregless cup, with life brimmed, he did quaff,
And quaffs it now with Christ's imperial staff!

II.

Another to the witnesses' roll-call
Hath answered, 'Here I am!' and so stepped out-
With willingness crowned everywhere about,
Not the head only, but the body all,
In one great nimbus of obedient fall,
His heart's blood dashing in the face of doubt-
Love's last victorious stand amid the rout!
-Silence is left, and the untasted gall.
No chariot with ramping steeds of fire
The Father sent to fetch his man-child home;
His brother only called, 'My Gordon, come!'
And like a dove to heaven he did aspire,
His one wing Death, his other, Heart's-desire.
-Farewell a while! we climb where thou hast clomb!

George MacDonald

George Rolleston

Dead art thou? No more dead than was the maid
Over whose couch the saving God did stand-
'She is not dead but sleepeth,' said,
And took her by the hand!

Thee knowledge never from Life's pathway wiled,
But following still where life's great father led,
He turned, and taking up his child,
Raised thee too from the dead,

O living, thou hast passed thy second birth,
Found all things new, and some things lovely strange;
But thou wilt not forget the earth,
Or in thy loving change!

George MacDonald

God In Growth

I said, I will arise and work some thing,
Nor be content with growth, but cause to grow
A life around me, clear as yes from no,
That to my restless hand some rest may bring,
And give a vital power to Action's spring:
Thus, I must cease to be! I cried; when, lo!
An angel stood beside me on the snow,
With folded wings that came of pondering.
'God's glory flashes on the silence here
Beneath the moon,' he cried, and upward threw
His glorious eyes that swept the utmost blue,
'Ere yet his bounding brooks run forth with cheer
To bear his message to the hidden year
Who cometh up in haste to make his glory new.'

George MacDonald

God; Not Gift

Gray clouds my heaven have covered o'er;
My sea ebbs fast, no more to flow;
Ghastly and dry, my desert shore
Parched, bare, unsightly things doth show.

'Tis thou, Lord, cloudest up my sky;
Stillest the heart-throb of my sea;
Tellest the sad wind not to sigh,
Yea, life itself to wait for thee!

Lord, here I am, empty enough!
My music but a soundless moan!
Blind hope, of all my household stuff,
Leaves me, blind hope, not quite alone!

Shall hope too go, that I may trust
Purely in thee, and spite of all?
Then turn my very heart to dust-
On thee, on thee, I yet will call.

List! list! his wind among the pines
Hark! hark! that rushing is his sea's!
O Father, these are but thy signs!-
For thee I hunger, not for these!

Not joy itself, though pure and high-
No gift will do instead of thee!
Let but my spirit know thee nigh,
And all the world may sleep for me!

George MacDonald

Godly Ballants

I.-THIS SIDE AN' THAT.

The rich man sat in his father's seat-
Purple an' linen, an' a'thing fine!
The puir man lay at his yett i' the street-
Sairs an' tatters, an' weary pine!

To the rich man's table ilk dainty comes,
Mony a morsel gaed frae't, or fell;
The puir man fain wud hae dined on the crumbs,
But whether he got them I canna tell.

Servants prood, saft-fittit, an' stoot,
Stan by the rich man's curtained doors;
Maisterless dogs 'at rin about
Cam to the puir man an' lickit his sores.

The rich man deeit, an' they buried him gran',
In linen fine his body they wrap;
But the angels tuik up the beggar man,
An' layit him doun in Abraham's lap.

The guid upo' this side, the ill upo' that-
Sic was the rich man's waesome fa'!
But his brithers they eat, an' they drink, an' they chat,
An' carena a strae for their Father's ha'!

The trowth's the trowth, think what ye will;
An' some they kenna what they wad be at;
But the beggar man thought he did no that ill,
Wi' the dogs o' this side, the angels o' that!

II.-THE TWA BAUBEES.

Stately, lang-robit, an' steppin at ease,
The rich men gaed up the temple ha';
Hasty, an' grippin her twa baubees,
The widow cam efter, booit an' sma'.

Their goud rang lood as it fell, an' lay
Yallow an' glintin, bonnie an' braw;
But the fowk roun the Maister h'ard him say
The puir body's baubees was mair nor it a'.

III.-WHA'S MY NEIBOUR?

Doon frae Jerus'lem a traveller took
The laigh road to Jericho;
It had an ill name an' mony a crook,
It was lang an' unco how.

Oot cam the robbers, an' fell o' the man,
An' knockit him o' the heid,
Took a' whauron they couth lay their han',
An' left him nakit for deid.

By cam a minister o' the kirk:
'A sair mishanter!' he cried;
'Wha kens whaur the villains may lirk!
I s' haud to the ither side!'

By cam an elder o' the kirk;
Like a young horse he shied:
'Fie! here's a bonnie mornin's wark!
An' he spangt to the ither side.

By cam ane gaed to the wrang kirk;
Douce he trottit alang.
'Puir body!' he cried, an' wi' a yerk
Aff o' his cuddy he sprang.

He ran to the body, an' turnt it ower:
'There's life i' the man!' he cried.

He
wasna ane to stan an' glower,
Nor hand to the ither side!

He doctort his oons, an' heised him then
To the back o' the beastie douce;
An' he heild him on till, twa weary men,

They wan to the half-way hoose.

He ten'd him a' nicht, an' o' the morn did say,
'Lan'lord, latna him lack;
Here's aughteen pence!-an' ony mair ootlay
I'll saddle 't as I come back.'

Sae tak til ye, neibours; read aricht the word;
It's a portion o' God's ain spell!
'Wha is my neighbour?' speirna the Lord,
But, 'Am I a neighbour?' yersel.

IV.-HIM WI' THE BAG.

Ance was a woman wha's hert was gret;
Her love was sae dumb it was 'maist a grief;
She brak the box-it's tellt o' her yet-
The bonny box for her hert's relief.

Ane was there wha's tale's but brief,
Yet was ower lang, the gait he cawed;
He luikit a man, and was but a thief,
Michty the gear to grip and hand.

'What guid,' he cried, 'sic a boxfu to blaud?
Wilfu waste I couth never beir!
It micht hae been sellt for ten poun, I wad-
Sellt for ten poun, and gien to the pair!'

Savin he was, but for love o' the gear;
Carefu he was, but a' for himsel;
He carried the bag to his hert sae near
What fell i' the ane i' the ither fell.

And the strings o' his hert hingit doun to hell,
They war pu'd sae ticht aboot the mou;
And hence it comes that I hae to tell
The warst ill tale that ever was true.

The hert that's greedy maun mischief brew,
And the deils pu'd the strings doon yon'er in hell;
And he sauld, or the agein mune was new,

For thirty shillins the Maister himsel!

Gear i' the hert it's a canker fell:
Brithers, latna the siller ben!
Troth, gien ye du, I warn ye ye'll sell
The verra Maister or ever ye ken!

V.-THE COORSE CRATUR.

The Lord gaed wi' a crood o' men
Throu Jericho the bonny;
'Twas ill the Son o' Man to ken
Mang sons o' men sae mony:

The wee bit son o' man Zacchay
To see the Maister seekit;
He speilt a fig-tree, bauld an' shy,
An' sae his shortness ekit.

But as he thoucht to see his back,
Roun turnt the haill face til 'im,
Up luikit straucht, an' til 'im spak-
His hert gaed like to kill 'im.

'Come doun, Zacchay; bestir yersel;
This nicht I want a lodgin.'
Like a ripe aipple 'maist he fell,
Nor needit ony nudgin.

But up amang the unco guid
There rase a murmurin won'er:
'This is a deemis want o' heed,
The man's a special sinner!'

Up spak Zacchay, his hert ableeze:
'Half mine, the puir, Lord, hae it;
Gien oucht I've taen by ony lees,
Fourfauld again I pay it!'

Then Jesus said, 'This is a man!
His hoose I'm here to save it;
He's are o' Abraham's ain clan,

An' siclike has behavit!

I cam the lost to seek an' win.'-
Zacchay was are he wantit:
To ony man that left his sin
His grace he never scantit.

George MacDonald

Going To Sleep

Little one, you must not fret
That I take your clothes away;
Better sleep you so will get,
And at morning wake more gay-
Saith the children's mother.

You I must unclothe again,
For you need a better dress;
Too much worn are body and brain;
You need everlastingness-
Saith the heavenly father.

I went down death's lonely stair;
Laid my garments in the tomb;
Dressed again one morning fair;
Hastened up, and hied me home-
Saith the elder brother.

Then I will not be afraid
Any ill can come to me;
When 'tis time to go to bed,
I will rise and go with thee-
Saith the little brother.

George MacDonald

Granny Canty

'What maks ye sae canty, granny dear?
Has some kin' body been for ye to speir?
Ye luik as smilin an' fain an' willin
As gien ye had fun a bonny shillin!'

'Ye think I luik canty, my bonny man,
Sittin watchin the last o' the sun sae gran'?
Weel, an' I'm thinkin ye're no that wrang,
For 'deed i' my hert there's a wordless sang!

'Ken ye the meanin o'
canty
, my dow?
It's bein i' the humour o' singin, I trow!
An' though nae sang ever crosses my lips
I'm aye like to sing whan anither sun dips.

'For the time, wee laddie, the time grows lang
Sin' I saw the man wha's sicht was my sang-
Yer gran'father, that's-an' the sun's last glim
Says aye to me, 'Lass, ye're a mile nearer him!

'For he's hame afore me, an' lang's the road!
He fain at my side wud hae timed his plod,
But, eh, he was sent for, an' hurried awa!
Noo, I'm thinkin he's harkin to hear my fit-fa'.'

'But, grannie, yer face is sae lirkie an' thin,
Wi' a doun-luikin nose an' an up-luikin chin,
An' a mou clumpit up oot o' sicht atween,
Like the witherin half o' an auld weary mune!'

'Hoot, laddie, ye needna glower yersel blin'!
The body 'at loos, sees far throu the skin;
An', believe me or no, the hoor's comin amain
Whan ugly auld fowk 'ill be bonny again.

'For there is
ane

-an' it's no my dear man,
Though I loo him as nane but a wife's hert can-
The joy o' beholdin wha's gran' lovely face
Til mak me like him in a' 'at's ca'd grace.

'But what I am like I carena a strae
Sae lang as I'm
his
, an' what
he
wud hae!
Be ye a guid man, John, an' ae day ye'll ken
What maks granny canty yont four score an' ten.'

George MacDonald

Greitna, Father

Greitna, father, that I'm gauin,
For fu' well ye ken the gaet;
I' the winter, corn ye're sawin,
I' the hairst again ye hae't.

I'm gauin hame to see my mither;
She'll be weel acquaint or this!
Sair we'll muse at ane anither
'Tween the auld word an' new kiss!

Love I'm doobtin may be scanty
Roun ye efter I'm awa:
Yon kirkyard has happin plenty
Close aside me, green an' braw!

An' abune there's room for mony;
'Twasna made for ane or twa,
But was aye for a' an' ony
Countin love the best ava.

There nane less ye'll be my father;
Auld names we'll nor tyne nor spare!
A' my sonship I maun gather
For the Son is king up there.

Greitna, father, that I'm gauin,
For ye ken fu' well the gaet!
Here, in winter, cast yer sawin,
There, in hairst, again ye hae't!

George MacDonald

Halloween

Sweep up the flure, Janet;
Put on anither peat.
It's a lown and a starry nicht, Janet,
And nowther cauld nor weet.

It's the nicht atween the Sancts and Souls
Whan the bodiless gang about;
And it's open hoose we keep the nicht
For ony that may be oot.

Set the cheirs back to the wa', Janet;
Mak ready for quaiet fowk.
Hae a'thing as clean as a windin-sheet:
They comena ilka ook.

There's a spale upo' the flure, Janet,
And there's a rowan-berry!
Sweep them intil the fire, Janet,
Or they'll neither come nor tarry.

Syne set open the outer dure-
Wide open for wha kens wha?
As ye come ben to your bed, Janet,
Set baith dures to the wa'.

She set the cheirs back to the wa',
But ane that was o' the birk;
She sweepit the flure, but left the spale-
A lang spale o' the aik.

The nicht was lown; the stars sae still
War glintin doon the sky;
The souls crap oot o' their mooly graves,
A' dank wi' lyin by.

They fand the dure wide to the wa',
And the peats blawn rosy reid:
They war shuneless feet gaed in and oot,
Nor clampit as they gaed.

The mither she keekit but the hoose,
Saw what she ill could say;
Quakin she slidit doon by Janet,
And gaspin a whilie she lay.

There's are o' them sittin afore the fire!
Ye wudna hearken to me!
Janet, ye left a cheir by the fire,
Whaur I tauld ye nae cheir suld be!

Janet she smilit in her minnie's face:
She had brunt the roden reid,
But she left aneth the birken cheir
The spale frae a coffin-lid!

Saft she rase and gaed but the hoose,
And ilka dure did steik.
Three hours gaed by, and her minnie heard
Sound o' the deid nor quick.

Whan the gray cock crew, she heard on the flure
The fa' o' shuneless feet;
Whan the rud cock crew, she heard the dure,
And a sough o' win' and weet.

Whan the goud cock crew, Janet cam back;
Her face it was gray o' ble;
Wi' starin een, at her mither's side
She lay doon like a bairn to dee.

Her white lips hadna a word to lat fa'
Mair nor the soulless deid;
Seven lang days and nights she lay,
And never a word she said.

Syne suddent, as oot o' a sleep, she brade,
Smilin richt winsumly;
And she spak, but her word it was far and strayit,
Like a whisper come ower the sea.

And never again did they hear her lauch,

Nor ever a tear doun ran;
But a smile aye flittit aboot her face
Like the mune on a water wan.

And ilka nicht atween Sancts and Souls
She laid the dures to the wa',
Blew up the fire, and set the cheir,
And loot the spale doon fa'.

And at midnicht she gaed but the hoose
Aye steekin dure and dure.
Whan the goud cock crew, quaiet as a moose
She cam creepin ower the flure.

Mair wan grew her face, and her smile mair sweet
Quhill the seventh Halloweve:
Her mother she heard the shuneless feet,
Said-She'll be ben belyve!

She camna ben. Her minnie rase-
For fear she 'maist cudna stan;
She grippit the wa', and but she gaed,
For the goud cock lang had crawn.

There sat Janet upo' the birk cheir,
White as the day did daw;
But her smile was a sunglint left on the sea
Whan the sun himsel is awa.

George MacDonald

Hame

The warl it's dottit wi' hames
As thick as gowans o' the green,
Aye bonnier ilk ane nor the lave
To him wha there opent his een.

An' mony an' bonny's the hame
That lies neth auld Scotlan's crests,
Her hills an' her mountains they are the sides
O' a muckle nest o' nests.

His lies i' the dip o' a muir
Wi' a twa three elder trees,
A lanely cot wi' a sough o' win',
An' a simmer bum o' bees;

An' mine in a bloomin strath,
Wi' a river rowin by,
Wi' the green corn glintin i' the sun,
An' a lowin o' the kye;

An' yours whaur the chimleys auld
Stan up i' the gloamin pale
Wi' the line o' a gran' sierra drawn
On the lift as sharp's wi' a nail.

But whether by ingle-neuk
On a creepie ye sookit yer thumb,
Dreamin, an' watchin the blue peat-reek
Wamle oot up the muckle lum,

Or yer wee feet sank i' the fur
Afore a bleezin hearth,
Wi' the curtains drawn, shuttin oot the toon-
Aberdeen, Auld Reekie, or Perth,

It's a naething, nor here nor there;
Leal Scots are a'ane thegither!
Ilk ane has a hame, an' it's a' the same
Whether in clover or heather!

An' the hert aye turns to the hame-
That's whaur oor ain folk wons;
An' gien hame binna hame, the hert bauds ayont
Abune the stars an' the suns.

For o' a' the hames there's a hame
Herty an' warm an' wide,
Whaur a' that maks hame ower the big roun earth
Gangs til its hame to bide.

George MacDonald

Hard Times

I am weary, and very lonely,
And can but think-think.
If there were some water only
That a spirit might drink-drink,
And arise,
With light in the eyes
And a crown of hope on the brow,
To walk abroad in the strength of gladness,
Not sit in the house, benumbed with sadness-
As now!

But, Lord, thy child will be sad-
As sad as it pleases thee;
Will sit, not seeking to be glad,
Till thou bid sadness flee,
And, drawing near,
With thy good cheer
Awake thy life in me.

George MacDonald

He Needed Not

Of whispering trees the tongues to hear,
And sermons of the silent stone;
To read in brooks the print so clear
Of motion, shadowy light, and tone-
That man hath neither eye nor ear
Who careth not for human moan.

Yea, he who draws, in shrinking haste,
From sin that passeth helpless by;
The weak antennae of whose taste
From touch of alien grossness fly-
Shall, banished to the outer waste,
Never in Nature's bosom lie.

But he whose heart is full of grace
To his own kindred all about,
Shall find in lowest human face,
Blasted with wrong and dull with doubt,
More than in Nature's holiest place
Where mountains dwell and streams run out.

Coarse cries of strife assailed my ear,
In suburb-ways, one summer morn;
A wretched alley I drew near
Whence on the air the sounds were borne-
Growls breaking into curses clear,
And shrill retorts of keener scorn.

Slow from its narrow entrance came,
His senses drowned with revels dire,
Scarce fit to answer to his name,
A man unconscious save of ire;
Fierce flashes of dull, fitful flame
Broke from the embers of his fire.

He cast a glance of stupid hate
Behind him, every step he took,
Where followed him, like following fate,
An aged crone, with bloated look:

A something checked his listless gait;
She neared him, rating till she shook.

Why stood he still to be disgraced?
What hindered? Lost in his employ,
His eager head high as his waist,
Half-butressed him a tiny boy,
An earnest child, ill-clothed, pale-faced,
Whose eyes held neither hope nor joy.

Perhaps you think he pushed, and pled
For one poor coin to keep the peace
With hunger! or home would have led
And given him up to sleep's release:
Well he might know the good of bed
To make the drunken fever cease!

Not so; like unfledged, hungry bird
He stood on tiptoe, reaching higher,
But no expostulating word
Did in his anxious soul aspire;
With humbler care his heart was stirred,
With humbler service to his sire.

He, sleepless-pale and wrathful red,
Though forward leaning, held his foot
Lest on the darling he should tread:
A misty sense had taken root
Somewhere in his bewildered head
That round him kindness hovered mute.

The words his simmering rage did spill
Passed o'er the child like breeze o'er corn;
Safer than bee whose dodging skill
And myriad eyes the hail-shower scorn,
The boy, absorbed in loving will,
Buttoned his father's waistcoat worn.

Over his calm, unconscious face
No motion passed, no change of mood;
Still as a pool in its own place,
Unsunned within a thick-leaved wood,

It kept its quiet shadowy grace,
As round it all things had been good.

Was the boy deaf-the tender palm
Of him that made him folded round
The little head to keep it calm
With a
hitherto
to every sound-
And so nor curse nor shout nor psalm
Could thrill the globe thus grandly bound?

Or came in force the happy law
That customed things themselves erase?
Or was he too intent for awe?
Did love take all the thinking place?
I cannot tell; I only saw
An earnest, fearless, hopeless face.

George MacDonald

Hom. II. V. 403

If thou art tempted by a thought of ill,
Crave not too soon for victory, nor deem
Thou art a coward if thy safety seem
To spring too little from a righteous will;
For there is nightmare on thee, nor until
Thy soul hath caught the morning's early gleam
Seek thou to analyze the monstrous dream
By painful introversion; rather fill
Thine eye with forms thou knowest to be truth;
But see thou cherish higher hope than this,-
hope hereafter that thou shall be fit
Calm-eyed to face distortion, and to sit
Transparent among other forms of youth
Who own no impulse save to God and bliss.

George MacDonald

Home From The Wars

A tattered soldier, gone the glow and gloss,
With wounds half healed, and sorely trembling knee,
Homeward I come, to claim no victory-cross:
I only faced the foe, and did not flee.

George MacDonald

Hope And Patience

An unborn bird lies crumpled and curled,
A-dreaming of the world.

Round it, for castle-wall, a shell
Is guarding it well.

Hope
is the bird with its dim sensations;
The shell that keeps it alive is
Patience

.

George MacDonald

Hope Deferred

Summer is come again. The sun is bright,
And the soft wind is breathing. Airy joy
Is sparkling in thine eyes, and in their light
My soul is shining. Come; our day's employ
Shall be to revel in unlikely things,
In gayest hopes, fondest imaginings,
And make-believes of bliss. Come, we will talk
Of waning moons, low winds, and a dim sea;
Till this fair summer, deepening as we walk,
Has grown a paradise for you and me.

But ah, those leaves!-it was not summer's mouth
Breathed such a gold upon them. And look there-
That beech how red! See, through its boughs, half-bare,
How low the sun lies in the mid-day south!-
The sweetness is but one pined memory flown
Back from our summer, wandering alone!
See, see the dead leaves falling! Hear thy heart,
Which, with the year's pulse beating swift or slow,
Takes in the changing world its changing part,
Return a sigh, an echo sad and low,
To the faint, scarcely audible sound
With which the leaf goes whispering to the ground!
O love, sad winter lieth at the door-
Behind sad winter, age-we know no more.

Come round me, dear hearts. All of us will hold
Each of us compassed: we are growing old;
And if we be not as a ring enchanted,
Hearts around heart, with love to keep it gay,
The young, who claim the joy that haunted
Our visions once, will push us far away
Into the desolate regions, dim and gray,
Where the sea moans, and hath no other cry,
The clouds hang low, and have no tears,
Old dreams lie mouldering in a pit of years,
And hopes and songs all careless pass us by.
But if all each do keep,
The rising tide of youth will sweep

Around us with its laughter-joyous waves,
As ocean fair some palmy island laves,
To loneliness heaved slow from out the deep;
And our youth hover round us like the breath
Of one that sleeps, and sleepeth not to death.

Thus ringed eternally, to parted graves,
The Sundered doors into one palace home,
Stumbling through age's thickets, we will go,
Faltering but faithful-willing to lie low,
Willing to part, not willing to deny
The lovely past, where all the futures lie.

Oh! if thou be, who of the live art lord,
Not of the dead-Lo, by that self-same word,
Thou art not lord of age, but lord of youth-
Because there is no age, in sooth,
Beyond its passing shows!
A mist o'er life's dimmed lantern grows;
Thou break'st the glass, out streams the light
That knows not youth nor age,
That fears no darkness nor the rage
Of windy tempests-burning still more bright
Than when glad youth was all about,
And summer winds were out!

George MacDonald

How Shall He Sing Who Hath No Song?

How shall he sing who hath no song?
He laugh who hath no mirth?
Will cannot wake the sleeping song!
Yea, Love itself in vain may long
To sing with them that have a song,
Or, mirthless, laugh with Mirth!
He who would sing but hath no song
Must speak the right, denounce the wrong,
Must humbly front the indignant throng,
Must yield his back to Satire's thong,
Nor shield his face from liar's prong,
Must say and do and be the truth,
And fearless wait for what ensueth,
Wait, wait, with patience sweet and strong,
Until God's glory fill the earth;
Then shall he sing who had no song,
He laugh who had no mirth!

Yea, if in land of stony dearth
Like barren rock thou sit,
Round which the phantom-waters flit
Of heart- and brain-mirage
That can no thirst assuage,
Yet be thou still, and wait, wait long;
A right sea comes to drown the wrong;
God's glory comes to fill the earth,
And thou, no more a scathed rock,
Shalt start alive with gladsome shock,
Shalt a hand-clapping billow be,
And shout with the eternal sea!

To righteousness and love belong
The dance, the jubilation, the song,
When the great Right hath quelled the wrong,
And Truth hath stilled the lying tongue!
Then men must sing because of song,
And laugh because of mirth!
And this shall be their anthem strong-
Hallow! the glad God fills the earth,

And Love sits down by every hearth!

George MacDonald

Hymn For A Sick Girl

Father, in the dark I lay,
Thirsting for the light,
Helpless, but for hope always
In thy father-might.

Out of darkness came the morn,
Out of death came life,
I, and faith, and hope, new-born,
Out of moaning strife!

So, one morning yet more fair,
I shall, joyous-brave,
Sudden breathing loftier air,
Triumph o'er the grave.

Though this feeble body lie
Underneath the ground,
Wide awake, not sleeping, I
Shall in him be found.

But a morn yet fairer must
Quell this inner gloom-
Resurrection from the dust
Of a deeper tomb!

Father, wake thy little child;
Give me bread and wine
Till my spirit undefiled
Rise and live in thine.

George MacDonald

I Ken Something

What gars ye sing sae, birdie,
As gien ye war lord o' the lift?
On breid ye're an unco sma' lairdie,
But in hicht ye've a kingly gift!

A' ye hae to coont yersel rich in
'S a wee mawn o' glory-motes!
The whilk to the throne ye're aye hitchin
Wi a lang tow o' sapphire notes!

Ay, yer sang's the sang o' an angel
For a sinfu' thrapple no meet,
Like the pipes til a heavenly braingel
Whaur they dance their herts intil their feet!

But though ye canna behaud, birdie,
Ye needna gar a'thing wheesht!
I'm noucht but a hirplin herdie,
But I hae a sang i' my breist!

Len' me yer throat to sing throu,
Len' me yer wings to gang hie,
And I'll sing ye a sang a laverock to cow,
And for bliss to gar him dee!

George MacDonald

I Know What Beauty Is

I know what beauty is, for thou
Hast set the world within my heart;
Of me thou madest it a part;
I never loved it more than now.

I know the Sabbath afternoons;
The light asleep upon the graves:
Against the sky the poplar waves;
The river murmurs organ tunes.

I know the spring with bud and bell;
The hush in summer woods at night;
Autumn, when trees let in more light;
Fantastic winter's lovely spell.

I know the rapture music gives,
Its mystery of ordered tones:
Dream-muffled soul, it loves and moans,
And, half-alive, comes in and lives.

And verse I know, whose concord high
Of thought and music lifts the soul
Where many a glimmering starry shoal
Glides through the Godhead's living sky.

Yea, Beauty's regnant All I know-
The imperial head, the thoughtful eyes;
The God-imprisoned harmonies
That out in gracious motions go.

But I leave all, O Son of man,
Put off my shoes, and come to thee!
Most lovely thou of all I see,
Most potent thou of all that can!

As child forsakes his favourite toy,
His sisters' sport, his new-found nest,
And, climbing to his mother's breast,
Enjoys yet more his late-left joy-

I lose to find. On fair-browed bride
Fair pearls their fairest light afford;
So, gathered round thy glory, Lord,
All glory else is glorified.

George MacDonald

I See Thee Not

Yes, Master, when thou comest thou shalt find
A little faith on earth, if I am here!
Thou know'st how oft I turn to thee my mind.
How sad I wait until thy face appear!

Hast thou not ploughed my thorny ground full sore,
And from it gathered many stones and sherds?
Plough, plough and harrow till it needs no more-
Then sow thy mustard-seed, and send thy birds.

I love thee, Lord; and if I yield to fears,
Nor trust with triumph that pale doubt defies,
Remember, Lord, 'tis nigh two thousand years,
And I have never seen thee with mine eyes!

And when I lift them from the wondrous tale,
See, all about me hath so strange a show!
Is that thy river running down the vale?
Is that thy wind that through the pines doth blow?

Could'st thou right verily appear again,
The same who walked the paths of Palestine,
And here in England teach thy trusting men
In church and field and house, with word and sign?

Here are but lilies, sparrows, and the rest!
My hands on some dear proof would light and stay!
But my heart sees John leaning on thy breast,
And sends them forth to do what thou dost say.

George MacDonald

I Would I Were A Child

I would I were a child,
That I might look, and laugh, and say, My Father!
And follow thee with running feet, or rather
Be led through dark and wild!

How I would hold thy hand,
My glad eyes often to thy glory lifting!
Should darkness 'twixt thy face and mine come drifting,
My heart would but expand.

If an ill thing came near,
I would but creep within thy mantle's folding,
Shut my eyes close, thy hand yet faster holding,
And soon forget my fear.

O soul, O soul, rejoice!
Thou art God's child indeed, for all thy sinning;
A poor weak child, yet his, and worth the winning
With saviour eyes and voice.

Who spake the words? Didst Thou?
They are too good, even for such a giver:
Such water drinking once, I should feel ever
As I had drunk but now.

Yet sure the Word said so,
Teaching our lips to cry with his, Our Father!
Telling the tale of him who once did gather
His goods to him, and go!

Ah, thou dost lead me, God!
But it is dark and starless, the way dreary;
Almost I sleep, I am so very weary
Upon this rough hill-road.

Almost
! Nay, I
do

sleep;
There is no darkness save in this my dreaming;
Thy fatherhood above, around, is beaming;
Thy hand my hand doth keep.

With sighs my soul doth teem;
I have no knowledge but that I am sleeping;
Haunted with lies, my life will fail in weeping;
Wake me from this my dream.

How long shall heavy night
Deny the day? How long shall this dull sorrow
Say in my heart that never any morrow
Will bring the friendly light?

Lord, art thou in the room?
Come near my bed; oh, draw aside the curtain!
A child's heart would say
Father
, were it certain
That it would not presume.

But if this dreary sleep
May not be broken, help thy helpless sleeper
To rest in thee; so shall his sleep grow deeper-
For evil dreams too deep.

Father
! I dare at length;
My childhood sure will hold me free from blaming:
Sinful yet hoping, I to thee come, claiming
Thy tenderness, my strength.

George MacDonald

If I Were A Monk, And If Thou Wert A Nun

If I were a monk, and thou wert a nun,
Pacing it wearily, wearily,
Twixt chapel and cell till day were done-
Wearily, wearily-
How would it fare with these hearts of ours
That need the sunshine, and smiles, and flowers?

To prayer, to prayer, at the matins' call,
Morning foul or fair!-
Such prayer as from weary lips might fall-
Words, but hardly prayer-
The chapel's roof, like the law in stone,
Caging the lark that up had flown!

Thou, in the glory of cloudless noon,
The God-revealing,
Turning thy face from the boundless boon-
Painfully kneeling;
Or, in brown-shadowy solitude,
Bending thy head o'er the legend rude!

I, in a bare and lonely nook,
Gloomily, gloomily,
Poring over some musty book,
Thoughtfully, thoughtfully;
Or painting pictures of things of old
On parchment-margin in purple and gold!

Perchance in slow procession to meet,
Wearily, wearily,
In antique, narrow, high-gabled street,
Wearily, wearily;
Thine eyes dark-lifted to mine, and then
Heavily sinking to earth again!

Sunshine and air! bird-music and spring!
Merrily, merrily!-
Back to its cell each weary thing,
Wearily, wearily!

Our poor hearts, withered and dry and old,
Most at home in the cloister cold!

Thou slow rising at vespers' call,
Wearily, wearily;
I looking up on the darkening wall,
Wearily, wearily;
The chime so sweet to the boat at sea,
Listless and dead to thee and me!

At length for sleep a weary assay,
On the lone couch wearily!
Rising at midnight again to pray,
Wearily, wearily!
And if through the dark dear eyes looked in,
Sending them far as a thought of sin!

And at last, thy tired soul passing away,
Dreamily, dreamily-
Its worn tent fluttering in slow decay,
Sleepily, sleepily-
Over thee held the crucified Best,
But no warm cheek to thy cold cheek pressed!

And then my passing from cell to clay,
Dreamily, dreamily!
My gray head lying on ashes gray,
Sleepily, sleepily!
But no woman-angel hovering above,
Ready to clasp me in deathless love!

Now, now, ah, now! thy hand in mine,
Peacefully, peacefully;
My arm round thee, and my lips on thine,
Lovingly, lovingly-
Oh! is not a better thing to us given
Than wearily going alone to heaven?

George MacDonald

In A Churchyard

There may be seeming calm above, but no!-
There is a pulse below which ceases not,
A subterranean working, fiery hot,
Deep in the million-hearted bosom, though
Earthquakes unlock not the prodigious show
Of elemental conflict; and this spot
Nurses most quiet bones which lie and rot,
And here the humblest weeds take root and grow.
There is a calm upon the mighty sea,
Yet are its depths alive and full of being,
Enormous bulks that move unwieldily;
Yet, pore we on it, they are past our seeing!-
From the deep sea-weed fields, though wide and ample,
Comes there no rushing sound:
these
do not trample!

George MacDonald

In Bonds

Of the poor bird that cannot fly
Kindly you think and mournfully;
For prisoners and for exiles all
You let the tears of pity fall;
And very true the grief should be
That mourns the bondage of the free.

The soul-
she
has a fatherland;
Binds
her
not many a tyrant's hand?
And the winged spirit has a home,
But can she always homeward come?
Poor souls, with all their wounds and foes,
Will you not also pity those?

George MacDonald

In February

Now in the dark of February rains,
Poor lovers of the sunshine, spring is born,
The earthy fields are full of hidden corn,
And March's violets bud along the lanes;

Therefore with joy believe in what remains.
And thou who dost not feel them, do not scorn
Our early songs for winter overworn,
And faith in God's handwriting on the plains.

'Hope' writes he, 'Love' in the first violet,
'Joy,' even from Heaven, in songs and winds and trees;
And having caught the happy words in these
While Nature labours with the letters yet,
Spring cannot cheat us, though her
hopes
be broken,
Nor leave us, for we know what God hath spoken.

George MacDonald

In Memorium: Lady Caroline Charteris

The mountain-stream may humbly boast
For her the loud waves call;
The hamlet feeds the nation's host,
The home-farm feeds the hall;

And unto earth heaven's Lord doth lend
The right, of high import,
The gladsome privilege to send
New courtiers to Love's court.

Not strange to thee, O lady dear,
Life in that palace fair,
For thou while waiting with us here
Didst just as they do there!

Thy heart still open to receive,
Open thy hand to give,
God had thee graced with more than leave
In heavenly state to live!

And though thou art gone up so high
Thou art not gone so far
But that thy love to us comes nigh,
As starlight from a star.

And ours must reach where'er thou art,
In far or near abode,
For God is of all love the heart,
And we are all in God.

George MacDonald

In The Night

As to her child a mother calls,
'Come to me, child; come near!'
Calling, in silent intervals,
The Master's voice I hear.

But does he call me verily?
To have me does he care?
Why should he seek my poverty,
My selfishness so bare?

The dear voice makes his gladness brim,
But not a child can know
Why that large woman cares for him,
Why she should love him so!

Lord, to thy call of me I bow,
Obey like Abraham:
Thou lov'st me because thou art thou,
And I am what I am!

Doubt whispers,
Thou art such a blot
He cannot love poor thee
:
If what I am he loveth not,
He loves what I shall be.

Nay, that which can be drawn and wooed,
And turned away from ill,
Is what his father made for good:
He loves me, I say still!

George MacDonald

In The Winter

In the winter, flowers are springing;
In the winter, woods are green,
Where our banished birds are singing,
Where our summer sun is seen!
Our cold midnights are coeval
With an evening and a morn
Where the forest-gods hold revel,
And the spring is newly born!

While the earth is full of fighting,
While men rise and curse their day,
While the foolish strong are smiting,
And the foolish weak betray-
The true hearts beyond are growing,
The brave spirits work alone,
Where Love's summer-wind is blowing
In a truth-irradiate zone!

While we cannot shape our living
To the beauty of our skies,
While man wants and earth is giving-
Nature calls and man denies-
How the old worlds round Him gather
Where their Maker is their sun!
How the children know the Father
Where the will of God is done!

Daily woven with our story,
Sounding far above our strife,
Is a time-enclosing glory,
Is a space-absorbing life.
We can dream no dream Elysian,
There is no good thing might be,
But some angel has the vision,
But some human soul shall see!

Is thy strait horizon dreary?
Is thy foolish fancy chill?
Change the feet that have grown weary

For the wings that never will.
Burst the flesh, and live the spirit;
Haunt the beautiful and far;
Thou hast all things to inherit,
And a soul for every star.

George MacDonald

King Cole

King Cole he reigned in Aureoland,
But the sceptre was seldom in his hand

Far oftener was there his golden cup-
He ate too much, but he drank all up!

To be called a king and to be a king,
That is one thing and another thing!

So his majesty's head began to shake,
And his hands and his feet to swell and ache,

The doctors were called, but they dared not say
Your majesty drinks too much Tokay;

So out of the king's heart died all mirth,
And he thought there was nothing good on earth.

Then up rose the fool, whose every word
Was three parts wise and one part absurd.

Nuncle, he said, never mind the gout;
I will make you laugh till you laugh it out.

King Cole pushed away his full gold plate:
The jester he opened the palace gate,

Brought in a cold man, with hunger grim,
And on the dais-edge seated him;

Then caught up the king's own golden plate,
And set it beside him: oh, how he ate!

And the king took note, with a pleased surprise,
That he ate with his mouth and his cheeks and his eyes,

With his arms and his legs and his body whole,
And laughed aloud from his heart and soul.

Then from his lordly chair got up,
And carried the man his own gold cup;

The goblet was deep and wide and full,
The poor man drank like a cow at a pool.

Said the king to the jester-I call it well done
To drink with two mouths instead of one!

Said the king to himself, as he took his seat,
It is quite as good to feed as to eat!

It is better, I do begin to think,
To give to the thirsty than to drink!

And now I have thought of it, said the king,
There might be more of this kind of thing!

The fool heard. The king had not long to wait:
The fool cried aloud at the palace-gate;

The ragged and wretched, the hungry and thin,
Loose in their clothes and tight in their skin,

Gathered in shoals till they filled the hall,
And the king and the fool they fed them all;

And as with good things their plates they piled
The king grew merry as a little child.

On the morrow, early, he went abroad
And sought poor folk in their own abode-

Sought them till evening foggy and dim,
Did not wait till they came to him;

And every day after did what he could,
Gave them work and gave them food.

Thus he made war on the wintry weather,
And his health and the spring came back together.

But, lo, a change had passed on the king,
Like the change of the world in that same spring!

His face had grown noble and good to see,
And the crown sat well on his majesty.

Now he ate enough, and ate no more,
He drank about half what he drank before,

He reigned a real king in Aureoland,
Reigned with his head and his heart and his hand.

All this through the fool did come to pass.
And every Christmas-eve that was,

The palace-gates stood open wide
And the poor came in from every side,

And the king rose up and served them duly,
And his people loved him very truly.

George MacDonald

Legend Of The Corrievrechan

Prince Breacan of Denmark was lord of the strand
And lord of the billowy sea;
Lord of the sea and lord of the land,
He might have let maidens be!

A maiden he met with locks of gold,
Straying beside the sea:
Maidens listened in days of old,
And repented grievously.

Wiser he left her in evil wiles,
Went sailing over the sea;
Came to the lord of the Western Isles:
Give me thy daughter, said he.

The lord of the Isles he laughed, and said:
Only a king of the sea
May think the Maid of the Isles to wed,
And such, men call not thee!

Hold thine own three nights and days
In yon whirlpool of the sea,
Or turn thy prow and go thy ways
And let the isle-maiden be.

Prince Breacan he turned his dragon prow
To Denmark over the sea:
Wise women, he said, now tell me how
In yon whirlpool to anchor me.

Make a cable of hemp and a cable of wool
And a cable of maidens' hair,
And hie thee back to the roaring pool
And anchor in safety there.

The smiths of Greydule, on the eve of Yule,
Will forge three anchors rare;
The hemp thou shalt pull, thou shalt shear the wool,
And the maidens will bring their hair.

Of the hair that is brown thou shalt twist one strand,
Of the hair that is raven another;
Of the golden hair thou shalt twine a band
To bind the one to the other!

The smiths of Greydule, on the eve of Yule,
They forged three anchors rare;
The hemp he did pull, and he shored the wool,
And the maidens brought their hair.

He twisted the brown hair for one strand,
The raven hair for another;
He twined the golden hair in a band
To bind the one to the other.

He took the cables of hemp and wool.
He took the cable of hair,
He hied him back to the roaring pool,
He cast the three anchors there.

The whirlpool roared, and the day went by,
And night came down on the sea;
But or ever the morning broke the sky
The hemp was broken in three.

The night it came down, the whirlpool it ran,
The wind it fiercely blew;
And or ever the second morning began
The wool it parted in two.

The storm it roared all day the third,
The whirlpool wallowed about,
The night came down like a wild black bird,
But the cable of hair held out.

Round and round with a giddy swing
Went the sea-king through the dark;
Round went the rope in the swivel-ring,
Round reeled the straining bark.

Prince Breacan he stood on his dragon prow,

A lantern in his hand:
Blest be the maidens of Denmark now,
By them shall Denmark stand!

He watched the rope through the tempest black
A lantern in his hold:
Out, out, alack! one strand will crack!
It is the strand of gold!

The third morn clear and calm came out:
No anchored ship was there!
The golden strand in the cable stout
Was not all of maidens' hair.

George MacDonald

Lessons For A Child

I.

There breathes not a breath of the summer air
But the spirit of love is moving there;
Not a trembling leaf on the shadowy tree,
Flutters with hundreds in harmony,
But that spirit can part its tone from the rest,
And read the life in its beetle's breast.
When the sunshiny butterflies come and go,
Like flowers paying visits to and fro,
Not a single wave of their fanning wings
Is unfelt by the spirit that feeleth all things.
The long-mantled moths that sleep at noon
And rove in the light of the gentler moon;
And the myriad gnats that dance like a wall,
Or a moving column that will not fall;
And the dragon-flies that go burning by,
Shot like a glance from a seeking eye-
There is one being that loves them all:
Not a fly in a spider's web can fall
But he cares for the spider, and cares for the fly;
He cares for you, whether you laugh or cry,
Cares whether your mother smile or sigh.
How he cares for so many, I do not know,
But it would be too strange if he did not so-
Dreadful and dreary for even a fly:
So I cannot wait for the
how
and
why
,
But believe that all things are gathered and nursed
In the love of him whose love went first
And made this world-like a huge great nest
For a hen to sit on with feathery breast.

II.

The bird on the leafy tree,

The bird in the cloudy sky,
The hart in the forest free,
The stag on the mountain high,
The fish inside the sea,
The albatross asleep
On the outside of the deep,
The bee through the summer sunny
Hunting for wells of honey-
What is the thought in the breast
Of the little bird in its nest?
What is the thought in the songs
The lark in the sky prolongs?
What mean the dolphin's rays,
Winding his watery ways?
What is the thought of the stag,
Stately on yonder crag?
What does the albatross think,
Dreaming upon the brink
Of the mountain billow, and then
Dreaming down in its glen?
What is the thought of the bee
Fleeting so silently,
Or flitting-with busy hum,
But a careless go-and-come-
From flower-chalice to chalice,
Like a prince from palace to palace?
What makes them alive, so very-
Some of them, surely, merry.
And others so stately calm
They might be singing a psalm?

I cannot tell what they think--
Only know they eat and drink,
And on all that lies about
With a quiet heart look out,
Each after its kind, stately or coy,
Solemn like man, gamesome like boy,
Glad with its own mysterious joy.

And God, who knows their thoughts and ways
Though his the creatures do not know,
From his full heart fills each of theirs:

Into them all his breath doth go;
Good and better with them he shares;
Content with their bliss while they have no prayers,
He takes their joy for praise.

If thou wouldst be like him, little one, go
And be kind with a kindness undefiled;
Who gives for the pleasure of thanks, my child,
God's gladness cannot know.

III.

Root met root in the spongy ground,
Searching each for food:
Each turned aside, and away it wound.
And each got something good.

Sound met sound in the wavy air-
That made a little to-do!
They jostled not long, but were quick and fair;
Each found its path and flew.

Drop dashed on drop, as the rain-shower fell;
They joined and sank below:
In gathered thousands they rose a well,
With a singing overflow.

Wind met wind in a garden green,
They began to push and fret:
A tearing whirlwind arose between:
There love lies bleeding yet.

George MacDonald

Let Your Light So Shine

Sometimes, O Lord, thou lightest in my head
A lamp that well might pharos all the lands;
Anon the light will neither rise nor spread:
Shrouded in danger gray the beacon stands!

A pharos? Oh dull brain! poor dying lamp
Under a bushel with an earthy smell!
Mouldering it stands, in rust and eating damp,
While the slow oil keeps oozing from its cell!

For me it were enough to be a flower
Knowing its root in thee, the Living, hid,
Ordained to blossom at the appointed hour,
And wake or sleep as thou, my Nature, bid;

But hear my brethren in their darkling fright!
Hearten my lamp that it may shine abroad
Then will they cry-Lo, there is something bright!
Who kindled it if not the shining God?

George MacDonald

Life Or Death?

Is there a secret Joy, that may not weep,
For every flower that ends its little span,
For every child that groweth up to man,
For every captive bird a cage doth keep,
For every aching eye that went to sleep
Long ages back, when other eyes began
To see and know and love as now they can,
Unravelling God's wonders heap by heap?
Or doth the Past lie 'mid Eternity
In charnel dens that rot and reek alway,
A dismal light for those that go astray,
A pit of foul deformity-to be,
Beauty, a dreadful source of growth for thee
When thou wouldst lift thine eyes to greet the day?

George MacDonald

Life-Weary

O Thou that walkest with nigh hopeless feet
Past the one harbour, built for thee and thine.
Doth no stray odour from its table greet,
No truant beam from fire or candle shine?

At his wide door the host doth stand and call;
At every lattice gracious forms invite;
Thou seest but a dull-gray, solid wall
In forest sullen with the things of night!

Thou cravest rest, and Rest for thee doth crave,
The white sheet folded down, white robe apart.-
Shame, Faithless! No, I do not mean the grave!
I mean Love's very house and hearth and heart.

George MacDonald

Lines To A Steamboat

Dark stranger on the teeming map of fate
Fabric, that seem'st a thing alike apart
From aught that nature or that art create;
To me a mystery thou ever art;
And awe and wonder stir me when thy frame
I view, strange birth of water and of flame.

How can'st thou here? A scarce distinguished speck
I saw thee on the distant wave, but now—
And yet no busy crew upon thy deck
Nor bellying sail, nor labouring oar hast thou—
What power propels thee? beats what viewless heart
Within thy tall planks, marvel as thou art?

Nor wind or tide thy onward path perplex,
Blow east, blow west, it seems alike to thee,
While meaner barks each varying breeze can vex
Hurl from their course, or on the slumbering sea
Chain motionless—thou glidst stately on,
Unchecked, unchanged—majestic and alone.

I gaze perchance around me—thou art there;
I gaze again, and thou art there no more,
Though fix'd there still thy lingering mates appear—
Where art thou fled? to what far wave or shore
Hast vanish'd dream like bark, if bark thou be,
And not some basking monster of the sea!

I love thee not, strange fabric, love who may
There's something vague and phantom-like about thee
I dare not trust to—and methinks that they
Who most admire, e'en in admiring doubt thee;
Proudly thou showest now—yet who can tell
One horrid moment shall not break the spell!

And hurl thee, gilded sides and painted wheels,
In shiver'd atoms upwards to the sky—
Dearer to me the tough old gallant keels
Their snow white sails, and masts as forest high,

Time honour'd bulwarks on whose wood wall dread,
A Duncan conquer'd and a Nelson bled.

George MacDonald

Little Bo-Peep

Little Bo-Peep, she has lost her sheep,
And will not know where to find them;
They are over the height and out of sight,
Trailing their tails behind them!

Little Bo-Peep woke out of her sleep,
Jump'd up and set out to find them:
'The silly things! they've got no wings,
And they've left their trails behind them!

'They've taken their tails, but they've left their trails,
And so I shall follow and find them!'
For wherever a tail had dragged a trail
The grass lay bent behind them.

She washed in the brook, and caught up her crook.
And after her sheep did run
Along the trail that went up the dale
Across the grass in the sun.

She ran with a will, and she came to a hill
That went up steep like a spire;
On its very top the sun seemed to stop,
And burned like a flame of fire.

But now she went slow, for the hill did go
Up steeper as she went higher;
When she reached its crown, the sun was down,
Leaving a trail of fire.

And her sheep were gone, and hope she had none.
For now was no trail behind them.
Yes, there they were! long-tailed and fair!
But to see was not to find them!

Golden in hue, and rosy and blue,
And white as blossom of pears,
Her sheep they did run in the trail of the sun,
As she had been running in theirs!

After the sun like clouds they did run,
But she knew they were her sheep:
She sat down to cry and look up at the sky,
But she cried herself to sleep.

And as she slept the dew down wept,
And the wind did blow from the sky;
And doings strange brought a lovely change:
She woke with a different cry!

Nibble, nibble, crop, without a stop!
A hundred little lambs
Did pluck and eat the grass so sweet
That grew in the trail of their dams!

She gave one look, she caught up her crook,
Wiped away the sleep that did blind her;
And nibble-nibble-crop, without a stop
The lambs came nibbling behind her.

Home, home she came, both tired and lame,
With three times as large a stock;
In a month or more, they'll be sheep as before,
A lovely, long-wooled flock!

But what will she say, if, one fine day,
When they've got their bushiest tails,
Their grown-up game should be just the same,
And again she must follow mere trails?

Never weep, Bo-Peep, though you lose your sheep,
Tears will turn rainbow-laughter!
In the trail of the sun if the mothers did run,
The lambs are sure to run after;

But a day is coming when little feet drumming
Will wake you up to find them-
All the old sheep-how your heart will leap!-
With their big little lambs behind them!

Little Boy Blue

Little Boy Blue lost his way in a wood-
Sing apples and cherries, roses and honey:
He said, 'I would not go back if I could,
It's all so jolly and funny!'

He sang, 'This wood is all my own-
Apples and cherries, roses and honey!
Here I will sit, a king on my throne,
All so jolly and funny!'

A little snake crept out of a tree-
Apples and cherries, roses and honey:

'Lie down at my feet, little snake,' said he-
All so jolly and funny!

A little bird sang in the tree overhead-
'Apples and cherries, roses and honey:'

'Come and sing your song on my finger,' he said,
All so jolly and funny.

Up coiled the snake; the bird came down,
And sang him the song of Birdie Brown.

But little Boy Blue found it tiresome to sit
Though it was on a throne: he would walk a bit!

He took up his horn, and he blew a blast:
'Snake, you go first, and, birdie, come last.'

Waves of green snake o'er the yellow leaves went;
The snake led the way, and he knew what he meant:

But by Boy Blue's head, with flutter and dart,
Flew Birdie Brown, her song in her heart.

Boy Blue came where apples grew fair and sweet:

'Tree, drop me an apple down at my feet.'

He came where cherries hung plump and red:
'Come to my mouth, sweet kisses,' he said.

And the boughs bow down, and the apples they dapple
The grass, too many for him to grapple;

And the cheeriest cherries, with never a miss,
Fall to his mouth, each a full-grown kiss.

He met a little brook singing a song:
'Little brook,' he said, 'you are going wrong,

'You must follow me, follow me, follow, I say,
Do as I tell you, and come this way.'

And the song-singing, sing-songing forest brook
Leapt from its bed and after him took;

And the dead leaves rustled, yellow and wan,
As over their beds the water ran.

He called every bird that sat on a bough;
He called every creature with poop and prow-

I mean, with two ends, that is, nose and tail:
With legs or without, they followed full sail;

Squirrels that carried their tails like a sack,
Each his own on his little brown humpy back;

Snails that drew their own caravans,
Poking out their own eyes on the point of a lance,

And houseless slugs, white, black, and red-
Snails too lazy to build a shed;

And butterflies, flutterbys, weasels, and larks,
And owls, and shrew-mice, and harkydarks,

Cockchafers, henchafers, cockioli-birds,

Cockroaches, henroaches, cuckoos in herds;

The dappled fawns fawning, the fallow-deer following;
The swallows and flies, flying and swallowing-

All went flitting, and sailing, and flowing
After the merry boy running and blowing.

The spider forgot, and followed him spinning,
And lost all his thread from end to beginning;

The gay wasp forgot his rings and his waist-
He never had made such undignified haste!

The dragon-flies melted to mist with their hurrying;
The mole forsook his harrowing and burrowing;

The bees went buzzing, not busy but beesy,
And the midges in columns, upright and easy.

But Little Boy Blue was not content,
Calling for followers still as he went,

Blowing his horn, and beating his drum,
And crying aloud, 'Come all of you, come!'

He said to the shadows, 'Come after me;'
And the shadows began to flicker and flee,

And away through the wood went flattering and fluttering,
Shaking and quivering, quavering and muttering.

He said to the wind, 'Come, follow; come, follow
With whistle and pipe, with rustle and hollo;'

And the wind wound round at his desire,
As if Boy had been the gold cock on the spire;

And the cock itself flew down from the church
And left the farmers all in the lurch.

Everything, everything, all and sum,

They run and they fly, they creep and they come;

The very trees they tugged at their roots,
Only their feet were too fast in their boots-

After him leaning and straining and bending,
As on through their boles the army kept wending,

Till out of the wood Boy burst on a lea,
Shouting and calling, 'Come after me,'

And then they rose with a leafy hiss
And stood as if nothing had been amiss.

Little Boy Blue sat down on a stone,
And the creatures came round him every one.

He said to the clouds, 'I want you there!'
And down they sank through the thin blue air.

He said to the sunset far in the west,
'Come here; I want you; 'tis my behest!'

And the sunset came and stood up on the wold,
And burned and glowed in purple and gold.

Then Little Boy Blue began to ponder:
'What's to be done with them all, I wonder!'

He thought a while, then he said, quite low,
'What to do with you all, I am sure I don't know!'

The clouds clodded down till dismal it grew;
The snake sneaked close; round Birdie Brown flew;

The brook, like a cobra, rose on its tail,
And the wind sank down with a
what-will-you
wail,

And all the creatures sat and stared;
The mole opened the eyes that he hadn't, and glared;

And for rats and bats, and the world and his wife
Little Boy Blue was afraid of his life.

Then Birdie Brown began to sing,
And what he sang was the very thing:

'Little Boy Blue, you have brought us all hither:
Pray, are we to sit and grow old together?'

'Go away; go away,' said Little Boy Blue;
'I'm sure I don't want you! get away-do.'

'No, no; no, no; no, yes, and no, no,'
Sang Birdie Brown, 'it mustn't be so!

'If we've come for no good, we can't go away.
Give us reason for going, or here we stay!'

They covered the earth, they darkened the air,
They hovered, they sat, with a countless stare.

'If I do not give them something to do,
They will stare me up!' said Little Boy Blue.

'Oh dear! oh dear!' he began to cry,
'They're an awful crew, and I feel so shy!'

All of a sudden he thought of a thing,
And up he stood, and spoke like a king:

'You're the plague of my life! have done with your bother!
Off with you all: take me back to my mother!'

The sunset went back to the gates of the west.

'Follow

me

' sang Birdie, 'I know the way best!'

'I am going the same way as fast as I can!'
Said the brook, as it sank and turned and ran.

To the wood fled the shadows, like scared black ghosts:
'If we stay, we shall all be missed from our posts!'

Said the wind, with a voice that had changed its cheer,
'I was just going there when you brought me here!'

'That's where I live,' said the sack-backed squirrel,
And he turned his sack with a swing and a swirl.

Said the gold weather-cock, 'I'm the churchwarden!'
Said the mole, 'I live in the parson's garden!'

Said they all, 'If that's where you want us to steer for,
What on earth or in air did you bring us here for?'

'You are none the worse!' said Boy. 'If you won't
Do as I tell you, why, then, don't;

'I'll leave you behind, and go home without you;
And it's time I did: I begin to doubt you!'

He jumped to his feet. The snake rose on his tail,
And hissed three times, a hiss full of bale,

And shot out his tongue at Boy Blue to scare him,
And stared at him, out of his courage to stare him.

'You ugly snake,' Little Boy Blue said,
'Get out of my way, or I'll break your head!'

The snake would not move, but glared at him glum;
Boy Blue hit him hard with the stick of his drum.

The snake fell down as if he was dead.
Little Boy Blue set his foot on his head.

'Hurrah!' cried the creatures, 'hurray! hurrah!
Little Boy Blue, your will is a law!'

And away they went, marching before him,
And marshalled him home with a high cockolorum.

And Birdie Brown sang,
'Twirrr twitter, twirrr twee!
In the rosiest rose-bush a rare nest!
Twirrr twitter, twirrr twitter, twirrr twitter, twirrrrr tweeeee!
In the fun he has found the earnest!'

George MacDonald

Little Elfie

I have a puppet-jointed child,
She's but three half-years old;
Through lawless hair her eyes gleam wild
With looks both shy and bold.

Like little imps, her tiny hands
Dart out and push and take;
Chide her-a trembling thing she stands,
And like two leaves they shake.

But to her mind a minute gone
Is like a year ago;
And when you lift your eyes anon,
Anon you must say
No
!

Sometimes, though not oppressed with care,
She has her sleepless fits;
Then, blanket-swathed, in that round chair
The elfish mortal sits;-

Where, if by chance in mood more grave,
A hermit she appears
Propped in the opening of his cave,
Mummied almost with years;

Or like an idol set upright
With folded legs for stem,
Ready to hear prayers all the night
And never answer them.

But where's the idol-hermit thrust?
Her knees like flail-joints go!
Alternate kiss, her mother must,
Now that, now this big toe!

I turn away from her, and write
For minutes three or four:

A tiny spectre, tall and white,
She's standing by the door!

Then something comes into my head
That makes me stop and think:
She's on the table, the quadruped,
And dabbling in my ink!

O Elfie, make no haste to lose
Thy ignorance of offence!
Thou hast the best gift I could choose,
A heavenly confidence.

'Tis time, long-white-gowned Mrs. Ham,
To put you in the ark!
Sleep, Elfie, God-infolded lamb,
Sleep shining through the dark.

George MacDonald

Little White Lily

Little White Lily
Sat by a stone,
Drooping and waiting
Till the sun shone.

Little White Lily
Sunshine has fed;
Little White Lily
Is lifting her head.

Little White Lily
Said: "It is good
Little White Lily's
Clothing and food."
Little White Lily
Dressed like a bride!
Shining with whiteness,
And crownèd beside!

Little White Lily
Drooping with pain,
Waiting and waiting
For the wet rain.
Little White Lily
Holdeth her cup;
Rain is fast falling
And filling it up.

Little White Lily
Said: "Good again,
When I am thirsty
To have the nice rain.
Now I am stronger,
Now I am cool;
Heat cannot burn me,
My veins are so full."

Little White Lily
Smells very sweet;
On her head sunshine,

Rain at her feet.
Thanks to the sunshine,
Thanks to the rain,
Little White Lily
Is happy again.

George MacDonald

Longing

My heart is full of inarticulate pain,
And beats laborious. Cold ungenial looks
Invade my sanctuary. Men of gain,
Wise in success, well-read in feeble books,
No nigher come, I pray: your air is drear;
'Tis winter and low skies when ye appear.

Beloved, who love beauty and fair truth,
Come nearer me; too near ye cannot come;
Make me an atmosphere with your sweet youth;
Give me your souls to breathe in, a large room;
Speak not a word, for, see, my spirit lies
Helpless and dumb; shine on me with your eyes.

O all wide places, far from feverous towns;
Great shining seas; pine forests; mountains wild;
Rock-bosomed shores; rough heaths, and sheep-cropt downs;
Vast pallid clouds; blue spaces undefiled-
Room! give me room! give loneliness and air-
Free things and plenteous in your regions fair!

White dove of David, flying overhead,
Golden with sunlight on thy snowy wings,
Outspeeding thee my longing thoughts are fled
To find a home afar from men of things;
Where in his temple, earth o'erarched with sky,
God's heart to mine may speak, my heart reply.

O God of mountains, stars, and boundless spaces,
O God of freedom and of joyous hearts,
When thy face looketh forth from all men's faces,
There will be room enough in crowded marts!
Brood thou around me, and the noise is o'er,
Thy universe my closet with shut door.

Heart, heart, awake! The love that loveth all
Maketh a deeper calm than Horeb's cave.
God in thee, can his children's folly gall?
Love may be hurt, but shall not love be brave?-

Thy holy silence sinks in dews of balm;
Thou art my solitude, my mountain-calm!

George MacDonald

Lost And Found

I missed him when the sun began to bend;
I found him not when I had lost his rim;
With many tears I went in search of him,
Climbing high mountains which did still ascend,
And gave me echoes when I called my friend;
Through cities vast and charnel-houses grim,
And high cathedrals where the light was dim,
Through books and arts and works without an end,
But found him not-the friend whom I had lost.
And yet I found him-as I found the lark,
A sound in fields I heard but could not mark;
I found him nearest when I missed him most;
I found him in my heart, a life in frost,
A light I knew not till my soul was dark.

George MacDonald

Lost But Safe

Lost the little one roams about,
Pathway or shelter none can find;
Blinking stars are coming out;
No one is moving but the wind;
It is no use to cry or shout,
All the world is still as a mouse;
One thing only eases her mind:
'Father knows I'm not in the house!'

George MacDonald

Love Is Home

Love is the part, and love is the whole;
Love is the robe, and love is the pall;
Ruler of heart and brain and soul,
Love is the lord and the slave of all!
I thank thee, Love, that thou lov'st me;
I thank thee more that I love thee.

Love is the rain, and love is the air,
Love is the earth that holdeth fast;
Love is the root that is buried there,
Love is the open flower at last!
I thank thee, Love all round about,
That the eyes of my love are looking out.

Love is the sun, and love is the sea;
Love is the tide that comes and goes;
Flowing and flowing it comes to me;
Ebbing and ebbing to thee it flows!
Oh my sun, and my wind, and tide!
My sea, and my shore, and all beside!

Light, oh light that art by showing;
Wind, oh wind that liv'st by motion;
Thought, oh thought that art by knowing;
Will, that art born in self-devotion!
Love is you, though not all of you know it;
Ye are not love, yet ye always show it!

Faithful creator, heart-longed-for father,
Home of our heart-inkfolded brother,
Home to thee all thy glories gather-
All are thy love, and there is no other!
O Love-at-rest, we loves that roam-
Home unto thee, we are coming home!

George MacDonald

Love Is Strength

Love alone is great in might,
Makes the heavy burden light,
Smooths rough ways to weary feet,
Makes the bitter morsel sweet:
Love alone is strength!

Might that is not born of Love
Is not Might born from above,
Has its birthplace down below
Where they neither reap nor sow:
Love alone is strength!

Love is stronger than all force,
Is its own eternal source;
Might is always in decay,
Love grows fresher every day:
Love alone is strength!

Little ones, no ill can chance;
Fear ye not, but sing and dance;
Though the high-heaved heaven should fall
God is plenty for us all:
God is Love and Strength!

George MacDonald

Love's History

Love, the baby,
Crept abroad to pluck a flower:
One said, Yes, sir; one said, Maybe;
One said, Wait the hour.

Love, the boy,
Joined the youngsters at their play:
But they gave him little joy,
And he went away.

Love, the youth,
Roamed the country, quiver-laden;
From him fled away in sooth
Many a man and maiden!

Love, the man,
Sought a service all about;
But they called him feeble, one
They could do without.

Love, the aged,
Walking, bowed, the shadeless miles,
Read a volume many-paged,
Full of tears and smiles.

Love, the weary,
Tattered down the shelving road:
At its foot, lo, Night, the starry,
Meeting him from God!

'Love, the holy,'
Sang a music in her dome,
Sang it softly, sang it slowly,
'Love is coming home!'

George MacDonald

Love's Ordeal

'Hear'st thou that sound upon the window pane?'
Said the youth softly, as outstretched he lay
Where for an hour outstretched he had lain-
Softly, yet with some token of dismay.
Answered the maiden: 'It is but the rain
That has been gathering in the west all day!
Why shouldst thou hearken so? Thine eyelids close,
And let me gather peace from thy repose.'

'Hear'st thou that moan creeping along the ground?'
Said the youth, and his veiling eyelids rose
From deeps of lightning-haunted dark profound
Ruffled with herald blasts of coming woes.
'I hear it,' said the maiden; 'tis the sound
Of a great wind that here not seldom blows;
It swings the huge arms of the dreary pine,
But thou art safe, my darling, clasped in mine.'

'Hear'st thou the baying of my hounds?' said he;
'Draw back the lattice bar and let them in.'
From a rent cloud the moonlight, ghostily,
Slid clearer to the floor, as, gauntly thin,
She opening, they leaped through with bound so free,
Then shook the rain-drops from their shaggy skin.
The maiden closed the shower-bespattered glass,
Whose spotted shadow through the room did pass.

The youth, half-raised, was leaning on his hand,
But, when again beside him sat the maid,
His eyes for one slow minute having scanned
Her moonlit face, he laid him down, and said,
Monotonous, like solemn-read command:
'For Love is of the earth, earthy, and is laid
Lifeless at length back in the mother-tomb.'
Strange moanings from the pine entered the room.

And then two shadows like the shadow of glass,
Over the moonbeams on the cottage floor,
As wind almost as thin and shapeless, pass;

A sound of rain-drops came about the door,
And a soft sighing as of plummy grass;
A look of sorrowing doubt the youth's face wore;
The two great hounds half rose; with aspect grim
They eyed his countenance by the taper dim.

Shadow nor moaning sound the maiden noted,
But on his face dwelt her reproachful look;
She doubted whether he the saying had quoted
Out of some evil, earth-begotten book,
Or up from his deep heart, like bubbles, had floated
Words which no maiden ever yet could brook;
But his eyes held the question, 'Yea or No?'
Therefore the maiden answered, 'Nay, not so;

'Love is of heaven, eternal.' Half a smile
Just twinned his lips: shy, like all human best,
A hopeful thought bloomed out, and lived a while;
He looked one moment like a dead man blest-
His soul a bark that in a sunny isle
At length had found the haven of its rest;
But he could not remain, must forward fare:
He spoke, and said with words abrupt and bare,

'Maiden, I have loved other maidens.' Pale
Her red lips grew. 'I loved them, yes, but they
Successively in trial's hour did fail,
For after sunset clouds again are gray.'
A sudden light shone through the fringy veil
That drooping hid her eyes; and then there lay
A stillness on her face, waiting; and then
The little clock rung out the hour of ten.

Moaning once more the great pine-branches bow
To a soft plaining wind they would not stem.
Brooding upon her face, the youth said, 'Thou
Art not more beautiful than some of them,
But a fair courage crowns thy peaceful brow,
Nor glow thine eyes, but shine serene like gem
That lamps from radiant store upon the dark
The light it gathered where its song the lark.

'The horse that broke this day from grasp of three,
Thou sawest then the hand thou holdest, hold:
Ere two fleet hours are gone, that hand will be
Dry, big-veined, wrinkled, withered up and old!-
No woman yet hath shared my doom with me.'
With calm fixed eyes she heard till he had told;
The stag-hounds rose, a moment gazed at him,
Then laid them down with aspect yet more grim.

Spake on the youth, nor altered look or tone:
"Tis thy turn, maiden, to say no or dare.'-
Was it the maiden's, that importunate moan?-
'At midnight, when the moon sets, wilt thou share
The terror with me? or must I go alone
To meet an agony that will not spare?'
She answered not, but rose to take her cloak;
He staid her with his hand, and further spoke.

'Not yet,' he said; 'yet there is respite; see,
Time's finger points not yet to the dead hour!
Enough is left even now for telling thee
The far beginnings whence the fearful power
Of the great dark came shadowing down on me:
Red roses crowding clothe my love's dear bower-
Nightshade and hemlock, darnel, toadstools white
Compass the place where I must lie to-night!'

Around his neck the maiden put her arm
And knelt beside him leaning on his breast,
As o'er his love, to keep it strong and warm,
Brooding like bird outspread upon her nest.
And well the faith of her dear eyes might charm
All doubt away from love's primeval rest!
He hid his face upon her heart, and there
Spake on with voice like wind from lonely lair.

A drearier moaning through the pine did go
As if a human voice complained and cried
For one long minute; then the sound grew low,
Sank to a sigh, and sighing sank and died.
Together at the silence two voices mow-
His, and the clock's, which, loud grown, did divide

The hours into live moments-sparks of time
Scorching the soul that trembles for the chime.

He spoke of sins ancestral, born in him
Impulses; of resistance fierce and wild;
Of failure weak, and strength reviving dim;
Self-hatred, dreariness no love beguiled;
Of storm, and blasting light, and darkness grim;
Of torrent paths, and tombs with mountains piled;
Of gulfs in the unsunned bosom of the earth;
Of dying ever into dawning birth.

'But when I find a heart whose blood is wine;
Whose faith lights up the cold brain's passionless hour;
Whose love, like unborn rose-bud, will not pine,
But waits the sun and the baptizing shower-
Till then lies hid, and gathers odours fine
To greet the human summer, when its flower
Shall blossom in the heart and soul and brain,
And love and passion be one holy twain-

'Then shall I rest, rest like the seven of yore;
Slumber divine will steep my outworn soul
And every stain dissolve to the very core.
She too will slumber, having found her goal.
Time's ocean o'er us will, in silence frore,
Aeonian tides of change-filled seasons roll,
And our long, dark, appointed period fill.
Then shall we wake together, loving still.'

Her face on his, her mouth to his mouth pressed,
Was all the answer of the trusting maid.
Close in his arms he held her to his breast
For one brief moment-would have yet assayed
Some deeper word her heart to strengthen, lest
It should though faithful be too much afraid;
But the clock gave the warning to the hour-
And on the thatch fell sounds not of a shower.

One long kiss, and the maiden rose. A fear
Lay, thin as a glassy shadow, on her heart;
She trembled as some unknown thing were near,

But smiled next moment-for they should not part!
The youth arose. With solemn-joyous cheer,
He helped the maid, whose trembling hands did thwart
Her haste to wrap her in her mantle's fold;
Then out they passed into the midnight cold.

The moon was sinking in the dim green west,
Curled upward, half-way to the horizon's brink,
A leaf of glory falling to its rest,
The maiden's hand, still trembling, sought to link
Her arm to his, with love's instinctive quest,
But his enfolded her; hers did not sink,
But, thus set free, it stole his body round,
And so they walked, in freedom's fetters bound.

Pressed to his side, she felt, like full-toned bell,
A mighty heart heave large in measured play;
But as the floating moon aye lower fell
Its bounding force did, by slow loss, decay.
It throbbed now like a bird; now like far knell
Pulsed low and faint! And now, with sick dismay,
She felt the arm relax that round her clung,
And from her circling arm he forward hung.

His footsteps feeble, short his paces grow;
Her strength and courage mount and swell amain.
He lifted up his head: the moon lay low,
Nigh the world's edge. His lips with some keen pain
Quivered, but with a smile his eyes turned slow
Seeking in hers the balsam for his bane
And finding it-love over death supreme:
Like two sad souls they walked met in one dream.[A]

In a lovely garden walking
Two lovers went hand in hand;
Two wan, worn figures, talking
They sat in the flowery land.

On the cheek they kissed one another,
On the mouth with sweet refrain;
Fast held they each the other,

And were young and well again.

Two little bells rang shrilly-
The dream went with the hour:
She lay in the cloister stilly,
He far in the dungeon-tower!

Hanging his head, behind each came a hound,
Padding with gentle paws upon the road.
Straight silent pines rose here and there around;
A dull stream on the left side hardly flowed;
A black snake through the sluggish waters wound.
Hark, the night raven! see the crawling toad!
She thinks how dark will be the moonless night,
How feeblest ray is yet supernal light.

The moon's last gleam fell on dim glazed eyes,
A body shrunken from its garments' fold:
An aged man whose bent knees could not rise,
He tottered in the maiden's tightening hold.
She shivered, but too slight was the disguise
To hide from love what never yet was old;
She held him fast, with open eyes did pray,
Walked through the fear, and kept the onward way.

Toward a gloomy thicket of tall firs,
Dragging his inch-long steps, he turned aside.
There Silence sleeps; not one green needle stirs.
They enter it. A breeze begins to chide
Among the cones. It swells until it whirs,
Vibrating so each sharp leaf that it sighed:
The grove became a harp of mighty chords,
Wing-smote by unseen creatures wild for words.

But when he turned again, toward the cleft
Of a great rock, as instantly it ceased,
And the tall pines stood sudden, as if reft
Of a strong passion, or from pain released;
Again they wove their straight, dark, motionless weft
Across the moonset-bars; and, west and east,
Cloud-giants rose and marched up cloudy stairs;

And like sad thoughts the bats came unawares.

'Twas a drear chamber for thy bridal night,
O poor, pale, saviour bride! An earthen lamp
With shaking hands he kindled, whose faint light
Mooned out a tiny halo on the damp
That filled the cavern to its unseen height,
Dim glimmering like death-candle in a swamp.
Watching the entrance, each side lies a hound,
With liquid light his red eyes gleaming round.

A heap rose grave-like from the rocky floor
Of moss and leaves, by many a sunny wind
Long tossed and dried-with rich furs covered o'er
Expectant. Up a jealous glory shined
In her possessing heart: he should find more
In her than in those faithless! With sweet mind
She, praying gently, did herself unclothe,
And lay down by him, trusting, and not loath.

Once more a wind came, flapping overhead;
The hounds pricked up their ears, their eyes flashed fire.
The trembling maiden heard a sudden tread-
Dull, yet plain dinted on the windy gyre,
As if long, wet feet o'er smooth pavement sped-
Come fiercely up, as driven by longing dire
To enter; followed sounds of hurried rout:
With bristling hair, the hounds stood looking out.

Then came, half querulous, a whisper old,
Feeble and hollow as if shut in a chest:
'Take my face on your bosom; I am cold.'
She bared her holy bosom's truth-white nest,
And forth her two hands instant went, love-bold,
And took the face, and close against her pressed:
Ah, the dead chill!-Was that the feet again?-
But her great heart kept beating for the twain.

She heard the wind fall, heard the following rain
Swelling the silent waters till their sound
Went wallowing through the night along the plain.
The lamp went out, by the slow darkness drowned.

Must the fair dawn a thousand years refrain?
Like centuries the feeble hours went round.
Eternal night entombed her with decay:
To her live soul she clasped the breathless clay.

The world stood still. Her life sank down so low
That but for wretchedness no life she knew.
A charnel wind moaned out a moaning-
No
;
From the devouring heart of earth it blew.
Fair memories lost all their sunny glow:
Out of the dark the forms of old friends grew
But so transparent blanched with dole and smart
She saw the pale worm lying in each heart.

And, worst of all-Oh death of keep-fled life!
A voice within her woke and cried: In sooth
Vain is all sorrow, hope, and care, and strife!
Love and its beauty, its tenderness and truth
Are shadows bred in hearts too fancy-rife,
Which melt and pass with sure-decaying youth:
Regard them, and they quiver, waver, blot;
Gaze at them fixedly, and they are not.

And all the answer the poor child could make
Was in the tightened clasp of arms and hands.
Hopeless she lay, like one Death would not take
But still kept driving from his empty lands,
Yet hopeless held she out for his dear sake;
The darksome horror grew like drifting sands
Till nought was precious-neither God nor light,
And yet she braved the false, denying night.

So dead was hope, that, when a glimmer weak
Stole through a fissure somewhere in the cave,
Thinning the clotted darkness on his cheek,
She thought her own tired eyes the glimmer gave:
He moved his head; she saw his eyes, love-mEEK,
And knew that Death was dead and filled the Grave.
Old age, convicted lie, had fled away!
Youth, Youth eternal, in her bosom lay!

With a low cry closer to him she crept
And on his bosom hid a face that glowed:
It was his turn to comfort-he had slept!
Oh earth and sky, oh ever patient God,
She had not yielded, but the truth had kept!
New love, new bliss in weeping overflowed.
I can no farther tell the tale begun;
They are asleep, and waiting for the sun.

George MacDonald

Lycabas

A name of the Year. Some say the word means
a march of wolves,
which wolves, running in single file, are the Months of the Year.
Others say the word means
the path of the light

O ye months of the year,
Are ye a march of wolves?
Lycabas! Lycabas! twelve to growl and slay?
Men hearken at night, and lie in fear,
Some men hearken all day!

Lycabas, verily thou art a gallop of wolves,
Gaunt gray wolves, gray months of the year, hunting in twelves,
Running and howling, head to tail,
In a single file, over the snow,
A long low gliding of silent horror and fear!
On and on, ghastly and drear,
Not a head turning, not a foot swerving, ye go,
Twelve making only a one-wolf track!
Onward ye howl, and behind we wail;
Wail behind your narrow and slack
Wallowing line, and moan and weep,
As ye draw it on, straight and deep,
Thorough the night so swart!
Behind you a desert, and eyes a-weary,
A long, bare highway, stony and dreary,
A hungry soul, and a wolf-cub wrapt,
A live wolf-cub, sharp-toothed, steel-chapt,
In the garment next the heart!

Lycabas!
One of them hurt me sore!
Two of them hurt and tore!
Three of them made me bleed!
The fourth did a terrible deed,
Rent me the worst of the four!
Rent me, and shook me, and tore,

And ran away with a growl!
Lycabas, if I feared you a jot,
You, and your devils running in twelves,
Black-mouthed, hell-throated, straight-going wolves,
I would run like a wolf, I too, and howl!
I live, and I fear you not.

But shall I not hate you, low-galloping wolves
Hunting in ceaseless twelves?
Ye have hunted away my lambs!
Ye ran at them open-mouthed,
And your mouths were gleamy-toothed,
And their whiteness with red foam frothed,
And your throats were a purple-black gulf:
My lambs they fled, and they came not back!
Lovely white lambs they were, alack!
They fled afar and they left a track
Which at night, when the lone sky clears,
Glistens with Nature's tears!
Many a shepherd scarce thinks of a lamb
But he hears behind it the growl of a wolf,
And behind that the wail of its dam!

They ran, nor cried, but fled
From day's sweet pasture, from night's soft bed:
Ah me, the look in their eyes!
For behind them rushed the swallowing gulf,
The maw of the growl-throated wolf,
And they fled as the thing that speeds or dies:
They looked not behind,
But fled as over the grass the wind.

Oh my lambs, I would drop away
Into a night that never saw day
That so in your dear hearts you might say,
,
All is well for ever and aye!
,
Yet it was well to hurry away,
To hurry from me, your shepherd gray:
I had no sword to bite and slay,
And the wolfy Months were on your track!

It was well to start from work and play,
It was well to hurry from me away-
But why not once look back?

The wolves came panting down the lea-
What was left you but somewhere flee!
Ye saw the Shepherd that never grows old,
Ye saw the great Shepherd, and him ye knew,
And the wolves never once came near to you;
For he saw you coming, threw down his crook,
Ran, and his arms about you threw;
He gathered you into his garment's fold,
He kneeled, he gathered, he lifted you,
And his bosom and arms were full of you.
He has taken you home to his stronghold:
Out of the castle of Love ye look;
The castle of Love is now your home,
From the garden of Love you will never roam,
And the wolves no more shall flutter you.

Lycabas! Lycabas!

For all your hunting and howling and cries,
Your yelling of

woe

! and

alas

!

For all your thin tongues and your fiery eyes,
Your questing thorough the windy grass,
Your gurgling gnar, and your horrent hair,
And your white teeth that will not spare-
Wolves, I fear you never a jot,
Though you come at me with your mouths red-hot,
Eyes of fury, and teeth that foam:
Ye can do nothing but drive me home!
Wolves, wolves, you will lie one day-
Ye are lying even now, this very day,
Wolves in twelves, gaunt and gray,
At the feet of the Shepherd that leads the dams,
At the feet of the Shepherd that carries the lambs!

And now that I see you with my mind's eye,

What are you indeed? my mind revolves.
Are you, are you verily wolves?
I saw you only through twilight dark,
Through rain and wind, and ill could mark!
Now I come near-are you verily wolves?
Ye have torn, but I never saw you slay!
Me ye have torn, but I live to-day,
Live, and hope to live ever and aye!
Closer still let me look at you!-
Black are your mouths, but your eyes are true!-
Now, now I know you!-the Shepherd's sheep-dogs!
Friends of us sheep on the moors and bogs,
Lost so often in swamps and fogs!
Dear creatures, forgive me; I did you wrong;
You to the castle of Love belong:
Forgive the sore heart that made sharp the tongue!
Your swift-flying feet the Shepherd sends
To gather the lambs, his little friends,
And draw the sheep after for rich amends!
Sharp are your teeth, my wolves divine,
But loves and no hates in your deep eyes shine!
No more will I call you evil names,
No more assail you with untrue blames!
Wake me with howling, check me with biting,
Rouse up my strength for the holy fighting:
Hunt me still back, nor let me stray
Out of the infinite narrow way,
The radiant march of the Lord of Light
Home to the Father of Love and Might,
Where each puts Thou in the place of I,
And Love is the Law of Liberty.

George MacDonald

Marriage Songs

'They have no more wine!' she said.
But they had enough of bread;
And the vessels by the door
Held for thirst a plenteous store:
Yes,
enough
; but Love divine
Turned the water into wine!

When should wine like water flow,
But when home two glad hearts go!
When, in sacred bondage bound,
Soul in soul hath freedom found!
Such the time when, holy sign,
Jesus turned the water wine.

Good is all the feasting then;
Good the merry words of men;
Good the laughter and the smiles;
Good the wine that grief beguiles;-
Crowning good, the Word divine
Turning water into wine!

Friends, the Master with you dwell!
Daily work this miracle!
When fair things too common grow,
Bring again their heavenly show!
Ever at your table dine,
Turning water into wine!

So at last you shall descry
All the patterns of the sky:
Earth a heaven of short abode;
Houses temples unto God;
Water-pots, to vision fine,
Brimming full of heavenly wine.

George MacDonald

Martha

With joyful pride her heart is high:
Her humble house doth hold
The man her nation's prophecy
Long ages hath foretold!

Poor, is he? Yes, and lowly born:
Her woman-soul is proud
To know and hail the coming morn
Before the eyeless crowd.

At her poor table will he eat?
He shall be served there
With honour and devotion meet
For any king that were!

'Tis all she can; she does her part,
Profuse in sacrifice;
Nor dreams that in her unknown heart
A better offering lies.

But many crosses she must bear;
Her plans are turned and bent;
Do what she can, things will not wear
The form of her intent.

With idle hands and drooping lid,
See Mary sit at rest!
Shameful it was her sister did
No service for their guest!

Dear Martha, one day Mary's lot
Must rule thy hands and eyes;
Thou, all thy household cares forgot,
Must sit as idly wise!

But once more first she set her word
To bar her master's ways,
Crying, 'By this he stinketh, Lord,
He hath been dead four days!'

Her housewife-soul her brother dear
Would fetter where he lies!
Ah, did her buried best then hear,
And with the dead man rise?

George MacDonald

Mary

I.

She sitteth at the Master's feet
In motionless employ;
Her ears, her heart, her soul complete
Drinks in the tide of joy.

Ah! who but she the glory knows
Of life, pure, high, intense,
In whose eternal silence blows
The wind beyond the sense!

In her still ear, God's perfect grace
Incarnate is in voice;
Her thoughts, the people of the place,
Receive it, and rejoice.

Her eyes, with heavenly reason bright,
Are on the ground cast low;
His words of spirit, life, and light-

They
set them shining so.

But see! a face is at the door
Whose eyes are not at rest;
A voice breaks on divinest lore
With petulant request.

'Master,' it said, 'dost thou not care
She lets me serve alone?
Tell her to come and take her share.'
But Mary's eyes shine on.

She lifts them with a questioning glance,
Calmly to him who heard;
The merest sign, she'll rise at once,
Nor wait the uttered word.

His 'Martha, Martha!' with it bore
A sense of coming
nay
;
He told her that her trouble sore
Was needless any day.

And he would not have Mary chid
For want of needless care;
The needful thing was what she did,
At his feet sitting there.

Sure, joy awoke in her dear heart
Doing the thing it would,
When he, the holy, took her part,
And called her choice the good!

Oh needful thing, Oh Mary's choice,
Go not from us away!
Oh Jesus, with the living voice,
Talk to us every day!

II.

Not now the living words are poured
Into one listening ear;
For many guests are at the board,
And many speak and hear.

With sacred foot, refrained and slow,
With daring, trembling tread,
She comes, in worship bending low
Behind the godlike head.

The costly chrism, in snowy stone,
A gracious odour sends;
Her little hoard, by sparing grown,
In one full act she spends.

She breaks the box, the honoured thing!
See how its riches pour!

Her priestly hands anoint him king
Whom peasant Mary bore.

*

Not so does John the tale repeat:
He saw, for he was there,
Mary anoint the Master's feet,
And wipe them with her hair.

Perhaps she did his head anoint,
And then his feet as well;
And John this one forgotten point
Loved best of all to tell.

'Twas Judas called the splendour waste,
'Twas Jesus said-Not so;
Said that her love his burial graced:
'Ye have the poor; I go.'

Her hands unwares outsped his fate,
The truth-king's felon-doom;
The other women were too late,
For he had left the tomb.

George MacDonald

Mary Magdalene

With wandering eyes and aimless zeal,
She hither, thither, goes;
Her speech, her motions, all reveal
A mind without repose.

She climbs the hills, she haunts the sea,
By madness tortured, driven;
One hour's forgetfulness would be
A gift from very heaven!

She slumbers into new distress;
The night is worse than day:
Exulting in her helplessness,
Hell's dogs yet louder bay.

The demons blast her to and fro;
She has no quiet place,
Enough a woman still, to know
A haunting dim disgrace.

A human touch! a pang of death!
And in a low delight
Thou liest, waiting for new breath.
For morning out of night.

Thou risest up: the earth is fair,
The wind is cool; thou art free!
Is it a dream of hell's despair
Dissolves in ecstasy?

That man did touch thee! Eyes divine
Make sunrise in thy soul;
Thou seest love in order shine:-
His health hath made thee whole!

Thou, sharing in the awful doom,
Didst help thy Lord to die;
Then, weeping o'er his empty tomb,
Didst hear him

Mary
cry.

He stands in haste; he cannot stop;
Home to his God he fares:
'Go tell my brothers I go up
To my Father, mine and theirs.'

Run, Mary! lift thy heavenly voice;
Cry, cry, and heed not how;
Make all the new-risen world rejoice-
Its first apostle thou!

What if old tales of thee have lied,
Or truth have told, thou art
All-safe with him, whate'er betide-
Dwell'st with him in God's heart!

George MacDonald

Master And Boy

'WHO is this little one lying,'
Said Time, 'at my garden-gate,
Moaning and sobbing and crying,
Out in the cold so late?'

'They lurked until we came near,
Master and I,' the child said,
'Then caught me, with 'Welcome, New-year!
Happy Year! Golden-head!'

'See Christmas-day, my Master,
On the meadow a mile away!
Father Time, make me run faster!
I'm the Shadow of Christmas-day!'

'Run, my child; still he's in sight!
Only look well to his track;
Little Shadow, run like the light,
He misses you at his back!'

Old Time sat down in the sun
On a grave-stone-his legs were numb:
'When the boy to his master has run,'
He said, 'Heaven's New Year is come!'

George MacDonald

Mirls

The stars are steady abune;
I' the water they flichter and flee;
But, steady aye, luikin doon
They ken theirsels i' the sea.

A' licht, and clear, and free,
God, thou shonest abune;
Yet luik, and see thysel in me,
Aye on me luikin doon.

^ ^ ^ ^ ^

Throu the heather an' how gaed the creepin thing,
But abune was the waff o' an angel's wing.

^ ^ ^ ^ ^

Hither an' thither, here an' awa,
Into the dub ye maunna fa';
Oot o' the dub wad ye come wi' speed,
Ye maun lift yer han's abune yer heid.

^ ^ ^ ^ ^

Whaur's nor sun nor mune,
Laigh things come abune.

*

My thought's are like worms in a starless gloamin
My hert's like a sponge that's fillit wi' gall;
My soul's like a bodiless ghaist sent a roamin
I' the haer an' the mirk till the trumpet call.

Lord, turn ilk worm til a butterfly,

Wring oot my hert, an' fill 't frae thy ain;
My soul syne in patience its weird will dree,
An' luik for the mornin throu the rain.

George MacDonald

Morning Hymn

O Lord of life, thy quickening voice
Awakes my morning song!
In gladsome words I would rejoice
That I to thee belong.

I see thy light, I feel thy wind;
The world, it is thy word;
Whatever wakes my heart and mind,
Thy presence is, my Lord.

The living soul which I call me
Doth love, and long to know;
It is a thought of living thee,
Nor forth of thee can go.

Therefore I choose my highest part,
And turn my face to thee;
Therefore I stir my inmost heart
To worship fervently.

Lord, let me live and will this day-
Keep rising from the dead;
Lord, make my spirit good and gay-
Give me my daily bread.

Within my heart, speak, Lord, speak on,
My heart alive to keep,
Till comes the night, and, labour done,
In thee I fall asleep.

George MacDonald

Mother Nature

Beautiful mother is busy all day,
So busy she neither can sing nor say;
But lovely thoughts, in a ceaseless flow,
Through her eyes, and her ears, and her bosom go-
Motion, sight, and sound, and scent,
Weaving a royal, rich content.

When night is come, and her children sleep,
Beautiful mother her watch doth keep;
With glowing stars in her dusky hair
Down she sits to her music rare;
And her instrument that never fails,
Is the hearts and the throats of her nightingales.

George MacDonald

Much And More

When thy heart, love-filled, grows graver,
And eternal bliss looks nearer,
Ask thy heart, nor show it favour,
Is the gift or giver dearer?

Love, love on; love higher, deeper;
Let love's ocean close above her;
Only, love thou more love's keeper,
More, the love-creating lover.

George MacDonald

My Heart

I.

Night, with her power to silence day,
Filled up my lonely room,
Quenching all sounds but one that lay
Beyond her passing doom,
Where in his shed a workman gay
Went on despite the gloom.

I listened, and I knew the sound,
And the trade that he was plying;
For backwards, forwards, bound on bound,
A shuttle was flying, flying-
Weaving ever-till, all unwound,
The weft go out a sighing.

II.

As hidden in thy chamber lowest
As in the sky the lark,
Thou, mystic thing, on working goest
Without the poorest spark,
And yet light's garment round me throwest,
Who else, as thou, were dark.

With body ever clothing me,
Thou mak'st me child of light;
I look, and, Lo, the earth and sea,
The sky's rejoicing height,
A woven glory, globed by thee,
Unknowing of thy might!

And when thy darkling labours fail,
And thy shuttle moveless lies,
My world will drop, like untied veil
From before a lady's eyes;
Or, all night read, a finished tale
That in the morning dies.

III.

Yet not in vain dost thou unroll
The stars, the world, the seas-
A mighty, wonder-painted scroll
Of Patmos mysteries,
Thou mediator 'twixt my soul
And higher things than these!

Thy holy ephod bound on me,
I pass into a seer;
For still in things thou mak'st me see,
The unseen grows more clear;
Still their indwelling Deity
Speaks plainer in mine ear.

Divinely taught the craftsman is
Who waketh wonderings;
Whose web, the nursing chrysalis
Round Psyche's folded wings,
To them transfers the loveliness
Of its inwoven things.

Yet joy when thou shalt cease to beat!-
For a greater heart beats on,
Whose better texture follows fleet
On thy last thread outrun,
With a seamless-woven garment, meet
To clothe a death-born son.

George MacDonald

My Heart Thy Lark

Why dost thou want to sing
When thou hast no song, my heart?
If there be in thee a hidden spring,
Wherefore will no word start?

On its way thou hearest no song,
Yet flutters thy unborn joy!
The years of thy life are growing long-
Art still the heart of a boy?-

Father, I am thy child!
My heart is in thy hand!
Let it hear some echo, with gladness wild,
Of a song in thy high land.

It will answer-but how, my God,
Thou knowest; I cannot say:
It will spring, I know, thy lark, from thy sod-
Thy lark to meet thy day!

George MacDonald

My Room

To G.E.M.

'Tis a little room, my friend-
Baby walks from end to end;
All the things look sadly real
This hot noontide unideal;
Vaporous heat from cope to basement
All you see outside the casement,
Save one house all mud-becrusted,
And a street all drought-bedusted!
There behold its happiest vision,
Trickling water-cart's derision!
Shut we out the staring space,
Draw the curtains in its face!

Close the eyelids of the room,
Fill it with a scarlet gloom:
Lo, the walls with warm flush dyed!
Lo, the ceiling glorified,
As when, lost in tenderest pinks,
White rose on the red rose thinks!
But beneath, a hue right rosy,
Red as a geranium-posy,
Stains the air with power estranging,
Known with unknown clouding, changing.
See in ruddy atmosphere
Commonplaceness disappear!
Look around on either hand-
Are we not in fairyland?

On that couch, inwrapt in mist
Of vaporized amethyst,
Lie, as in a rose's heart:
Secret things I would impart;
Any time you would believe them-
Easier, though, you will receive them
Bathed in glowing mystery
Of the red light shadowy;

For this ruby-hearted hue,
Sanguine core of all the true,
Which for love the heart would plunder
Is the very hue of wonder;
This dissolving dreamy red
Is the self-same radiance shed
From the heart of poet young,
Glowing poppy sunlight-stung:
If in light you make a schism
'Tis the deepest in the prism.

This poor-seeming room, in fact
Is of marvels all compact,
So disguised by common daylight
By its disenchanting gray light,
Only eyes that see by shining,
Inside pierce to its live lining.
Loftiest observatory
Ne'er unveiled such hidden glory;
Never sage's furnace-kitchen
Magic wonders was so rich in;
Never book of wizard old
Clasped such in its iron hold.

See that case against the wall,
Darkly-dull-purpureal!-
A piano to the prosy,
But to us in twilight rosy-
What?-A cave where Nereids lie,
Naiads, Dryads, Oreads sigh,
Dreaming of the time when they
Danced in forest and in bay.
In that chest before your eyes
Nature self-enchanted lies;-
Lofty days of summer splendour;
Low dim eyes of opal tender;
Airy hunts of cloud and wind;
Brooding storm-below, behind;
Awful hills and midnight woods;
Sunny rains in solitudes;
Babbling streams in forests hoar;
Seven-hued icebergs; oceans frore.-

Yes; did I not say
enchanted

,
That is, hid away till wanted?
Do you hear a low-voiced singing?
'Tis the sorceress's, flinging
Spells around her baby's riot,
Binding her in moveless quiet:-
She at will can disenchant them,
And to prayer believing grant them.

You believe me: soon will night
Free her hands for fair delight;
Then invoke her-she will come.
Fold your arms, be blind and dumb.
She will bring a book of spells
Writ like crabbed oracles;
Like Sabrina's will her hands
Thaw the power of charmed bands.
First will ransomed music rush
Round thee in a glorious gush;
Next, upon its waves will sally,
Like a stream-god down a valley,
Nature's self, the formless former,
Nature's self, the peaceful stormer;
She will enter, captive take thee,
And both one and many make thee,
One by softest power to still thee,
Many by the thoughts that fill thee.-
Let me guess three guesses where
She her prisoner will bear!

On a mountain-top you stand
Gazing o'er a sunny land;
Shining streams, like silver veins,
Rise in dells and meet in plains;
Up yon brook a hollow lies
Dumb as love that fears surprise;
Moorland tracts of broken ground
O'er it rise and close it round:
He who climbs from bosky dale
Hears the foggy breezes wail.

Yes, thou know'st the nest of love,
Know'st the waste around, above!
In thy soul or in thy past,
Straight it melts into the vast,
Quickly vanishes away
In a gloom of darkening gray.

Sinks the sadness into rest,
Ripple like on water's breast:
Mother's bosom rests the daughter-
Grief the ripple, love the water;
And thy brain like wind-harp lies
Breathed upon from distant skies,
Till, soft-gathering, visions new
Grow like vapours in the blue:
White forms, flushing hyacinthine,
Move in motions labyrinthine;
With an airy wishful gait
On the counter-motion wait;
Sweet restraint and action free
Show the law of liberty;
Master of the revel still
The obedient, perfect will;
Hating smallest thing awry,
Breathing, breeding harmony;
While the god-like graceful feet,
For such mazy marvelling meet,
Press from air a shining sound,
Rippling after, lingering round:
Hair afloat and arms aloft
Fill the chord of movement soft.

Gone the measure polyhedral!
Towers aloft a fair cathedral!
Every arch-like praying arms
Upward flung in love's alarms,
Knit by clasped hands o'erhead-
Heaves to heaven a weight of dread;
In thee, like an angel-crowd,
Grows the music, praying loud,
Swells thy spirit with devotion
As a strong wind swells the ocean,

Sweeps the visioned pile away,
Leaves thy heart alone to pray.

As the prayer grows dim and dies
Like a sunset from the skies,
Glides another change of mood
O'er thy inner solitude:
Girt with Music's magic zone,
Lo, thyself magician grown!
Open-eyed thou walk'st through earth
Brooding on the aeonian birth
Of a thousand wonder-things
In divine dusk of their springs:
Half thou seest whence they flow,
Half thou seest whither go-
Nature's consciousness, whereby
On herself she turns her eye,
Hoping for all men and thee
Perfected, pure harmony.

But when, sinking slow, the sun
Leaves the glowing curtain dun,
I, of prophet-insight reft,
Shall be dull and dreamless left;
I must hasten proof on proof,
Weaving in the warp my woof!

What are those upon the wall,
Ranged in rows symmetrical?
Through the wall of things external
Posterns they to the supernal;
Through Earth's battlemented height
Loopholes to the Infinite;
Through locked gates of place and time,
Wickets to the eternal prime
Lying round the noisy day
Full of silences away.

That, my friend? Now, it is curious
You should hit upon the spurious!
'Tis a door to nowhere, that;
Never soul went in thereat;

Lies behind, a limy wall
Hung with cobwebs, that is all.

Do not open that one yet,
Wait until the sun is set.
If you careless lift its latch
Glimpse of nothing will you catch;
Mere negation, blank of hue,
Out of it will stare at you;
Wait, I say, the coming night,
Fittest time for second sight,
Then the wide eyes of the mind
See far down the Spirit's wind.
You may have to strain and pull,
Force and lift with cunning tool,
Ere the rugged, ill-joined door
Yield the sight it stands before:
When at last, with grating sweep,
Wide it swings-behold, the deep!

Thou art standing on the verge
Where material things emerge;
Hoary silence, lightning fleet,
Shooteth hellward at thy feet!
Fear not thou whose life is truth,
Gazing will renew thy youth;
But where sin of soul or flesh
Held a man in spider-mesh,
It would drag him through that door,
Give him up to loreless lore,
Ages to be blown and hurled
Up and down a deedless world.

Ah, your eyes ask how I brook
Doors that are not, doors to look!
That is whither I was tending,
And it brings me to good ending.

Baby is the cause of this;
Odd it seems, but so it is;-
Baby, with her pretty prate
Molten, half articulate,

Full of hints, suggestions, catches,
Broken verse, and music snatches!
She, like seraph gone astray,
Must be shown the homeward way;
Plant of heaven, she, rooted lowly,
Must put forth a blossom holy,
Must, through culture high and steady,
Slow unfold a gracious lady;
She must therefore live in wonder,
See nought common up or under;
She the moon and stars and sea,
Worm and butterfly and bee,
Yea, the sparkle in a stone,
Must with marvel look upon;
She must love, in heaven's own blueness,
Both the colour and the newness;
Must each day from darkness break,
Often often come awake,
Never with her childhood part,
Change the brain, but keep the heart.

So, from lips and hands and looks,
She must learn to honour books,
Turn the leaves with careful fingers,
Never lean where long she lingers;
But when she is old enough
She must learn the lesson rough
That to seem is not to be,
As to know is not to see;
That to man or book,
appearing

Gives no title to revering;
That a pump is not a well,
Nor a priest an oracle:
This to leave safe in her mind,
I will take her and go find
Certain no-books, dreary apes,
Tell her they are mere mock-shapes
No more to be honoured by her
But be laid upon the fire;
Book-appearance must not hinder

Their consuming to a cinder.

Would you see the small immortal
One short pace within Time's portal?
I will fetch her.-Is she white?
Solemn? true? a light in light?
See! is not her lily-skin
White as whitest ermelin
Washed in palest thinnest rose?
Very thought of God she goes,
Ne'er to wander, in her dance,
Out of his love-radiance!

But, my friend, I've rattled plenty
To suffice for mornings twenty!
I should never stop of course,
Therefore stop I will perforce.-
If I led them up, choragic,
To reveal their nature magic,
Twenty things, past contradiction,
Yet would prove I spoke no fiction
Of the room's belongings cryptic
Read by light apocalyptic:
There is that strange thing, glass-masked,
With continual questions tasked,
Ticking with untiring rock:
It is called an eight-day clock,
But to me the thing appears
Busy winding up the years,
Drawing on with coiling chain
The epiphany again.

George MacDonald

My Two Geniuses

I.

One is a slow and melancholy maid;
I know not if she cometh from the skies
Or from the sleepy gulfs, but she will rise
Often before me in the twilight shade,
Holding a bunch of poppies and a blade
Of springing wheat: prostrate my body lies
Before her on the turf, the while she ties
A fillet of the weed about my head;
And in the gaps of sleep I seem to hear
A gentle rustle like the stir of corn,
And words like odours thronging to my ear:
'Lie still, beloved-still until the morn;
Lie still with me upon this rolling sphere-
Still till the judgment; thou art faint and worn.'

II.

The other meets me in the public throng;
Her hair streams backward from her loose attire;
She hath a trumpet and an eye of fire;
She points me downward, steadily and long:-
'There is thy grave-arise, my son, be strong!
Hands are upon thy crown-awake, aspire
To immortality; heed not the lyre
Of the Enchantress, nor her poppy-song,
But in the stillness of the summer calm
Tremble for what is Godlike in thy being.
Listen a while, and thou shall hear the psalm
Of victory sung by creatures past thy seeing;
And from far battle-fields there comes the neighing
Of dreadful onset, though the air is balm.'

III.

Maid with the poppies, must I let thee go?
Alas, I may not; thou art likewise dear!
I am but human, and thou hast a tear

When she hath nought but splendour, and the glow
Of a wild energy that mocks the flow
Of the poor sympathies which keep us here:
Lay past thy poppies, and come twice as near,
And I will teach thee, and thou too shalt grow;
And thou shalt walk with me in open day
Through the rough thoroughfares with quiet grace;
And the wild-visaged maid shall lead the way,
Timing her footsteps to a gentler pace
As her great orbs turn ever on thy face,
Drinking in draughts of loving help alway.

George MacDonald

Nannie Braw

I like ye weel upo Sundays, Nannie,
I' yer goon and yer ribbons and a';
But I like ye better on Mondays, Nannie,
Whan ye're no sae buskit and braw.

For whan we're sittin sae douce, Nannie,
Wi' the lave o' the worshippin fowk,
That aneth the haly hoose, Nannie,
Ye micht hear a moudiwarp howk,

It
will
come into my heid, Nannie,
O' yer braws ye are thinkin a wee;
No alane o' the Bible-seed, Nannie,
Nor the minister nor me!

Syne hame athort the green, Nannie,
Ye gang wi' a toss o' yer chin;
And there walks a shadow atween 's, Nannie,
A dark ane though it be thin!

But noo, whan I see ye gang, Nannie,
Eident at what's to be dune,
Liltin a haiveless sang, Nannie,
I wud kiss yer verra shune!

Wi' yer silken net on yer hair, Nannie,
I' yer bonnie blue petticoat,
Wi' yer kin'ly arms a' bare, Nannie,
On yer ilka motion I doat.

For, oh, but ye're canty and free, Nannie,
Airy o' hert and o' fit!
A star-beam glents frae yer ee, Nannie-
O' yersel ye're no thinkin a bit!

Fillin the cogue frae the coo, Nannie,
Skimmin the yallow ream,

Pourin awa the het broo, Nannie,
Lichtin the lampie's leme,

Turnin or steppin alang, Nannie,
Liftin and layin doon,
Settin richt what's aye gaein wrang, Nannie,
Yer motion's baith dance and tune!

I' the hoose ye're a licht and a law, Nannie,
A servan like him 'at's abune:
Oh, a woman's bonniest o' a', Nannie,
Doin what
maun
be dune!

Cled i' yer Sunday claes, Nannie,
Fair kythe ye to mony an ee;
But cled i' yer ilka-day's, Nannie,
Ye draw the hert frae me!

George MacDonald

Nature: A Moral Power

Nature, to him no message dost thou bear
Who in thy beauty findeth not the power
To gird himself more strongly for the hour
Of night and darkness. Oh, what colours rare
The woods, the valleys, and the mountains wear
To him who knows thy secret, and, in shower,
And fog, and ice-cloud, hath a secret bower
Where he may rest until the heavens are fair!
Not with the rest of slumber, but the trance
Of onward movement steady and serene,
Where oft, in struggle and in contest keen,
His eyes will opened be, and all the dance
Of life break on him, and a wide expanse
Roll upward through the void, sunny and green.

George MacDonald

New Year's Eve: A Waking Dream

I have not any fearful tale to tell
Of fabled giant or of dragon-claw,
Or bloody deed to pilfer and to sell
To those who feed, with such, a gaping maw;
But what in yonder hamlet there befell,
Or rather what in it my fancy saw,
I will declare, albeit it may seem
Too simple and too common for a dream.

Two brothers were they, and they sat alone
Without a word, beside the winter's glow;
For it was many years since they had known
The love that bindeth brothers, till the snow
Of age had frozen it, and it had grown
An icy-withered stream that would not flow;
And so they sat with warmth about their feet
And ice about their hearts that would not beat.

And yet it was a night for quiet hope:-
A night the very last of all the year
To many a youthful heart did seem to ope
An eye within the future, round and clear;
And age itself, that travels down the slope,
Sat glad and waiting as the hour drew near,
The dreamy hour that hath the heaviest chime,
Jerking our souls into the coming time.

But they!-alas for age when it is old!
The silly calendar they did not heed;
Alas for age when in its bosom cold
There is not warmth to nurse a bladed weed!
They thought not of the morrow, but did hold
A quiet sitting as their hearts did feed
Inwardly on themselves, as still and mute
As if they were a-cold from head to foot.

O solemn kindly night, she looketh still
With all her moon upon us now and then!
And though she dwelleth most in craggy hill,

She hath an eye unto the hearts of men!
So past a corner of the window-sill
She thrust a long bright finger just as ten
Had struck, and on the dial-plate it came,
Healing each hour's raw edge with tender flame.

There is a something in the winds of heaven
That stirreth purposely and maketh men;
And unto every little wind is given
A thing to do ere it is still again;
So when the little clock had struck eleven,
The edging moon had drawn her silver pen
Across a mirror, making them aware
Of something ghostlier than their own grey hair.

Therefore they drew aside the window-blind
And looked upon the sleeping town below,
And on the little church which sat behind
As keeping watch upon the scanty row
Of steady tombstones-some of which inclined
And others upright, in the moon did show
Like to a village down below the waves-
It was so still and cool among the graves.

But not a word from either mouth did fall,
Except it were some very plain remark.
Ah! why should such as they be glad at all?
For years they had not listened to the lark!
The child was dead in them!-yet did there crawl
A wish about their hearts; and as the bark
Of distant sheep-dog came, they were aware
Of a strange longing for the open air.

Ah! many an earthy-weaving year had spun
A web of heavy cloud about their brain!
And many a sun and moon had come and gone
Since they walked arm in arm, these brothers twain!
But now with tim#39200;pace their feet did stun
The village echoes into quiet pain:
The street appear#39200;very short and white,
And they like ghosts unquiet for the light.

'Right through the churchyard,' one of them did say
-I knew not which was elder of the two-
'Right through the churchyard is our better way.'
'Ay,' said the other, 'past the scrubby yew.
I have not seen her grave for many a day;
And it is in me that with moonlight too
It might be pleasant thinking of old faces,
And yet I seldom go into such places.'

Strange, strange indeed to me the moonlight wan
Sitting about a solitary stone!
Stranger than many tales it is to scan
The earthy fragment of a human bone;
But stranger still to see a grey old man
Apart from all his fellows, and alone
With the pale night and all its giant quiet;
Therefore that stone was strange and those two by it.

It was their mother's grave, and here were hid
The priceless pulses of a mother's soul.
Full sixty years it was since she had slid
Into the other world through that deep hole.
But as they stood it seemed the coffin-lid
Grew deaf with sudden hammers!-'twas the mole
Niddering about its roots.-Be still, old men,
Be very still and ye will hear again.

Ay, ye will hear it! Ye may go away,
But it will stay with you till ye are dead!
It is but earthy mould and quiet clay,
But it hath power to turn the oldest head.
Their eyes met in the moon, and they did say
More than a hundred tongues had ever said.
So they passed onwards through the rapping wicket
Into the centre of a firry thicket.

It was a solemn meeting of Earth's life,
An inquest held upon the death of things;
And in the naked north full thick and rife
The snow-clouds too were meeting as on wings
Shorn round the edges by the frost's keen knife;
And the trees seemed to gather into rings,

Waiting to be made blind, as they did quail
Among their own wan shadows thin and pale.

Many strange noises are there among trees,
And most within the quiet moony light,
Therefore those aged men are on their knees
As if they listened somewhat:-Ye are right-
Upwards it bubbles like the hum of bees!
Although ye never heard it till to-night,
The mighty mother calleth ever so
To all her pale-eyed children from below.

Ay, ye have walked upon her paven ways,
And heard her voices in the market-place,
But ye have never listened what she says
When the snow-moon is pressing on her face!
One night like this is more than many days
To him who hears the music and the bass
Of deep immortal lullabies which calm
His troubled soul as with a hushing psalm.

I know not whether there is power in sleep
To dim the eyelids of the shining moon,
But so it seemed then, for still more deep
She grew into a heavy cloud, which, soon
Hiding her outmost edges, seemed to keep
A pressure on her; so there came a swoon
Among the shadows, which still lay together
But in their slumber knew not one another.

But while the midnight grop餠for the chime
As she were heavy with excess of dreams,
She from the cloud's thick web a second time
Made many shadows, though with minished beams;
And as she look餠eastward through the rime
Of a thin vapour got of frosty steams,
There fell a little snow upon the crown
Of a near hillock very bald and brown.

And on its top they found a little spring,
A very helpful little spring indeed,
Which evermore unwound a tiny string

Of earnest water with continual speed-
And so the brothers stood and heard it sing;
For all was snowy-still, and not a seed
Had struck, and nothing came but noises light
Of the continual whitening of the night.

There is a kindness in the falling snow-
It is a grey head to the spring time mild;
So as the creamy vapour bow餠low
Crowning the earth with honour undefiled,
Within each withered man arose a glow
As if he fain would turn into a child:
There was a gladness somewhere in the ground
Which in his bosom nowhere could be found!

Not through the purple summer or the blush
Of red voluptuous roses did it come
That silent speaking voice, but through the slush
And snowy quiet of the winter numb!
It was a barren mound that heard the gush
Of living water from two fountains dumb-
Two rocky human hearts which long had striven
To make a pleasant noise beneath high heaven!

Now from the village came the onward shout
Of lightsome voices and of merry cheer;
It was a youthful group that wandered out
To do obeisance to the glad new year;
And as they passed they sang with voices stout
A song which I was very fain to hear,
But as they darkened on, away it died,
And the two men walked homewards side by side.

George MacDonald

No End Of No-Story

There is a river
whose waters run asleep
run run ever
singing in the shallows
dumb in the hollows
sleeping so deep
and all the swallows
that dip their feathers
in the hollows
or in the shallows
are the merriest swallows
and the nests they make
with the clay they cake
with the water they shake
from their wings that rake
the water out of the shallows
or out of the hollows
will hold together
in any weather
and the swallows
are the merriest fellows
and have the merriest children
and are built very narrow
like the head of an arrow
to cut the air
and go just where
the nicest water is flowing
and the nicest dust is blowing
and each so narrow
like the head of an arrow
is a wonderful barrow
to carry the mud he makes
for his children's sakes
from the wet water flowing
and the dry dust blowing
to build his nest
for her he loves best
and the wind cakes it
the sun bakes it

into a nest
for the rest
of her he loves best
and all their merry children
each little fellow
with a beak as yellow
as the buttercups growing
beside the flowing
of the singing river
always and ever
growing and blowing
as fast as the sheep
awake or asleep
crop them and crop
and cannot stop
their yellowness blowing
nor yet the growing
of the obstinate daisies
the little white praises
they grow and they blow
they spread out their crown
and they praise the sun
and when he goes down
their praising is done
they fold up their crown
and sleep every one
till over the plain
he is shining amain
and they're at it again
praising and praising
such low songs raising
that no one can hear them
but the sun so near them
and the sheep that bite them
but do not fright them
are the quietest sheep
awake or asleep
with the merriest bleat
and the little lambs
are the merriest lambs
forgetting to eat
for the frolic in their feet

and the lambs and their dams
are the whitest sheep
with the woolliest wool
for the swallow to pull
when he makes his nest
for her he loves best
and they shine like snow
in the grasses that grow
by the singing river
that sings for ever
and the sheep and the lambs
are merry for ever
because the river
sings and they drink it
and the lambs and their dams
would any one think it
are bright and white
because of their diet
which gladdens them quiet
for what they bite
is buttercups yellow
and daisies white
and grass as green
as the river can make it
with wind as mellow
to kiss it and shake it
as never was known
but here in the hollows
beside the river
where all the swallows
are the merriest fellows
and the nests they make
with the clay they cake
in the sunshine bake
till they are like bone
and as dry in the wind
as a marble stone
dried in the wind
the sweetest wind
that blows by the river
flowing for ever
and who shall find

whence comes the wind
that blows on the hollows
and over the shallows
where dip the swallows
and comes and goes
and the sweet life blows
into the river
that sings as it flows
and the sweet life blows
into the sheep
awake or asleep
with the woolliest wool
and the trailingest tails
and never fails
gentle and cool
to wave the wool
and to toss the grass
as the lambs and the sheep
over it pass
and tug and bite
with their teeth so white
and then with the sweep
of their trailing tails
smooth it again
and it grows amain
and amain it grows
and the wind that blows
tosses the swallows
over the hollows
and over the shallows
and blows the sweet life
and the joy so rife
into the swallows
that skim the shallows
and have the yellowest children
and the wind that blows
is the life of the river
that flows for ever
and washes the grasses
still as it passes
and feeds the daisies
the little white praises

and buttercups sunny
with butter and honey
that whiten the sheep
awake or asleep
that nibble and bite
and grow whiter than white
and merry and quiet
on such good diet
watered by the river
and tossed for ever
by the wind that tosses
the wool and the grasses
and the swallow that crosses
with all the swallows
over the shallows
dipping their wings
to gather the water
and bake the cake
for the wind to make
as hard as a bone
and as dry as a stone
and who shall find
whence comes the wind
that blows from behind
and ripples the river
that flows for ever
and still as it passes
waves the grasses
and cools the daisies
the white sun praises
that feed the sheep
awake or asleep
and give them their wool
for the swallows to pull
a little away
to mix with the clay
that cakes to a nest
for those they love best
and all the yellow children
soon to go trying
their wings at the flying
over the hollows

and over the shallows
with all the swallows
that do not know
whence the wind doth blow
that comes from behind
a blowing wind.

George MacDonald

No Sign

O Lord, if on the wind, at cool of day,
I heard one whispered word of mighty grace;
If through the darkness, as in bed I lay,
But once had come a hand upon my face;

If but one sign that might not be mistook
Had ever been, since first thy face I sought,
I should not now be doubting o'er a book,
But serving thee with burning heart and thought.

So dreams that heart. But to my heart I say,
Turning my face to front the dark and wind:
Such signs had only barred anew his way
Into thee, longing heart, thee, wildered mind.

They asked the very Way, where lies the way?
The very Son, where is the Father's face?
How he could show himself, if not in clay,
Who was the lord of spirit, form, and space!

My being, Lord, will nevermore be whole
Until thou come behind mine ears and eyes,
Enter and fill the temple of my soul
With perfect contact-such a sweet surprise,

Such presence as, before it met the view,
The prophet-fancy could not once foresee,
Though every corner of the temple knew
By very emptiness its need of thee.

When I keep
all
thy words, no favoured some,
Heedless of worldly winds or judgment's tide,
Then, Jesus, thou wilt with thy father come-
Oh, ended prayers!-and in my soul abide.

Ah, long delay! ah, cunning, creeping sin!
I shall but fail, and cease at length to try:

O Jesus, though thou wilt not yet come in,
Knock at my window as thou passest by!

George MacDonald

Noontide Hymn

I love thy skies, thy sunny mists,
Thy fields, thy mountains hoar,
Thy wind that bloweth where it lists-
Thy will, I love it more.

I love thy hidden truth to seek
All round, in sea, on shore;
The arts whereby like gods we speak-
Thy will to me is more.

I love thy men and women, Lord,
The children round thy door;
Calm thoughts that inward strength afford-
Thy will than these is more.

But when thy will my life doth hold
Thine to the very core,
The world, which that same will doth mould,
I love, then, ten times more!

George MacDonald

Not Understood

Tumultuous rushing o'er the outstretched plains;
A wildered maze of comets and of suns;
The blood of changeless God that ever runs
With quick diastole up the immortal veins;
A phantom host that moves and works in chains;
A monstrous fiction, which, collapsing, stuns
The mind to stupor and amaze at once;
A tragedy which that man best explains
Who rushes blindly on his wild career
With trampling hoofs and sound of mailed war,
Who will not nurse a life to win a tear,
But is extinguished like a falling star;-
Such will at times this life appear to me
Until I learn to read more perfectly.

George MacDonald

November, 1851

What dost thou here, O soul,
Beyond thy own control,
Under the strange wild sky?
O stars, reach down your hands,
And clasp me in your silver bands,
I tremble with this mystery!-
Flung hither by a chance
Of restless circumstance,
Thou art but here, and wast not sent;
Yet once more mayest thou draw
By thy own mystic law
To the centre of thy wonderment.

Why wilt thou stop and start?
Draw nearer, oh my heart,
And I will question thee most wistfully;
Gather thy last clear resolution
To look upon thy dissolution.

The great God's life throbs far and free,
And thou art but a spark
Known only in thy dark,
Or a foam-fleck upon the awful ocean,
Thyself thy slender dignity,
Thy own thy vexing mystery,
In the vast change that is not change but motion.

'Tis not so hard as it would seem;
Thy life is but a dream-
And yet thou hast some thoughts about the past;
Let go, let go thy memories,
They are not things but wandering cries-
Wave them each one a long farewell at last:
I hear thee say-'Take them, O tide,
And I will turn aside,
Gazing with heedlessness, nay, even with laughter!
Bind me, ye winds and storms,
Among the things that once had forms,
And carry me clean out of sight thereafter!'

Thou hast lived long enough
To know thy own weak stuff,
Laughing thy fondest joys to utter scorn;
Give up the idle strife-
It is but mockery of life;
The fates had need of thee and thou wast born!
They are, in sooth, but thou shalt die.
O wandering spark! O homeless cry!
O empty will, still lacking self-intent!
Look up among the autumn trees:
The ripened fruits fall through the breeze,
And they will shake thee even like these
Into the lap of an Accomplishment!

Thou hadst a faith, and voices said:-
'Doubt not
that
truth, but bend thy head
Unto the God who drew thee from the night:'
Thou liftedst up thy eyes-and, lo!
A host of voices answered-'No;
A thousand things as good have seen the light!'
Look how the swarms arise
From every clod before thy eyes!
Are thine the only hopes that fade and fall
When to the centre of its action
One purpose draws each separate fraction,
And nothing but effects are left at all?
Aha, thy faith! what is thy faith?
The sleep that waits on coming death-
A blind delirious swoon that follows pain.
'True to thy nature!'-well! right well!
But what that nature is thou canst not tell-
It has a thousand voices in thy brain.
Danced all the leaflets to and fro?
-Thy feet have trod them long ago!
Sprung the glad music up the blue?
-The hawk hath cut the song in two.
All the mountains crumble,
All the forests fall,
All thy brethren stumble,

And rise no more at all!
In the dim woods there is a sound
When the winds begin to moan;
It is not of joy or yet of mirth,
But the mournful cry of our mother Earth,
As she calleth back her own.
Through the rosy air to-night
The living creatures play
Up and down through the rich faint light-
None so happy as they!
But the blast is here, and noises fall
Like the sound of steps in a ruined hall,
An icy touch is upon them all,
And they sicken and fade away.

The child awoke with an eye of gladness,
With a light on his head and a matchless grace,
And laughed at the passing shades of sadness
That chased the smiles on his mother's face;
And life with its lightsome load of youth
Swam like a boat on a shining lake-
Freighted with hopes enough, in sooth,
But he lived to trample on joy and truth,
And change his crown for a murder-stake!

Oh, a ruddy light went through the room,
Till the dark ran out to his mother Night!
And that little chamber showed through the gloom
Like a Noah's ark with its nest of light!
Right glad was the maiden there, I wis,
With the youth that held her hand in his!
Oh, sweet were the words that went and came
Through the light and shade of the leaping flame
That glowed on the cheerful faces!
So human the speech, so sunny and kind,
That the darkness danced on the wall behind,
And even the wail of the winter wind
Sang sweet through the window-cases!

But a mournful wail crept round and round,
And a voice cried:-'Come!' with a dreary sound,
And the circle wider grew;

The light flame sank, and sorrow fell
On the faces of those that loved so well;
Darker and wilder grew the tone;
Fainter and fainter the faces shone;
The wild night clasped them, and they were gone-
And thou art passing too!

Lo, the morning slowly springs
Like a meek white babe from the womb of night!
One golden planet sits and stings
The shifting gloom with his point of light!
Lo, the sun on its throne of flame!
-Wouldst thou climb and win a crown?
Oh, many a heart that pants for the same
Falls to the earth ere he goes down!
Thy heart is a flower with an open cup-
Sit and watch, if it pleaseth thee,
Till the melting twilight fill it up
With a crystal of tender sympathy;
So, gently will it tremble
The silent midnight through,
And flocks of stars assemble
By turns in its depths of dew;-
But look! oh, look again!
After the driving wind and rain!
When the day is up and the sun is strong,
And the voices of men are loud and long,
When the flower hath slunk to its rest again,
And love is lost in the strife of men!

Let the morning break with thoughts of love,
And the evening fall with dreams of bliss-
So vainly panteth the prisoned dove
For the depths of her sweet wilderness;
So stoops the eagle in his pride
From his rocky nest ere the bow is bent;
So sleeps the deer on the mountain-side
Ere the howling pack hath caught the scent!

The fire climbs high till its work is done;
The stalk falls down when the flower is gone;
And the stars of heaven when their course is run

Melt silently away!
There was a footfall on the snow,
A line of light on the ocean-flow,
And a billow's dash on the rocks below
That stand by the wintry bay:-
The snow was gone on the coming night;
Another wave arose in his might,
Uplifted his foaming breast of white,
And died like the rest for aye!

Oh, the stars were bright! and thyself in thee
Yearned for an immortality!
And the thoughts that drew from thy busy brain
Clasped the worlds like an endless chain-
When a moon arose, and her moving chime
Smote on thy soul, like a word in time,
Or a breathless wish, or a thought in rime,
And the truth that looked so gloomy and high
Leapt to thy arms with a joyful cry!
But what wert thou when a soulless Cause
Opened the book of its barren laws,
And thy spirit that was so glad and free
Was caught in the gin of necessity,
And a howl arose from the strife of things
Vexing each other with scorpion stings?
What wert thou but an orphan child
Thrust from the door when the night was wild?
Or a sailor on the toiling main
Looking blindly up through the wind and rain
As the hull of the vessel fell in twain!

Seals are on the book of fate,
Hands may not unbind it;
Eyes may search for truth till late,
But will never find it-!
Rising on the brow of night
Like a portent of dismay,
As the worlds in wild affright
Track it on its direful way;
Resting like a rainbow bar
Where the curve and level meet,
As the children chase it far

O'er the sands with blistered feet;
Sadly through the mist of ages
Gazing on this life of fear,
Doubtful shining on its pages,
Only seen to disappear!
Sit thee by the sounding shore
-Winds and waves of human breath!-
Learn a lesson from their roar,
Swelling, bursting evermore:
Live thy life and die thy death!
Die not like the writhing worm,
Rise and win thy highest stake;
Better perish in the storm
Than sit rotting on the lake!
Triumph in thy present youth,
Pulse of fire and heart of glee;
Leap at once into the truth,
If there is a truth for thee.

Shapeless thoughts and dull opinions,
Slow distinctions and degrees,-
Vex not thou thy weary pinions
With such leaden weights as these-
Through this mystic jurisdiction
Reaching out a hand by chance,
Resting on a dull conviction
Whetted but by ignorance;
Living ever to behold
Mournful eyes that watch and weep;
Spirit suns that flashed in gold
Failing from the vasty deep;
Starry lights that glowed like Truth
Gazing with unnumbered eyes,
Melting from the skies of youth,
Swallowed up of mysteries;
Cords of love that sweetly bound thee;
Faded writing on thy brow;
Presences that came around thee;
Hands of faith that fail thee now!

Groping hands will ever find thee
In the night with loads of chains!

Lift thy fetters and unbind thee,
Cast thee on the midnight plains:
Shapes of vision all-providing-
Famished cheeks and hungry cries!
Sound of crystal waters sliding-
Thirsty lips and bloodshot eyes!
Empty forms that send no gleaming
Through the mystery of this strife!-
Oh, in such a life of seeming,
Death were worth an endless life!

Hark the trumpet of the ocean
Where glad lands were wont to be!
Many voices of commotion
Break in tumult over thee!
Lo, they climb the frowning ages,
Marching o'er their level lands!
Far behind the strife that rages
Silence sits with clasped hands;
Undivided Purpose, freeing
His own steps from hindrances,
Sending out great floods of being,
Bathes thy steps in silentness.
Sit thee down in mirth and laughter-
One there is that waits for thee;
If there is a true hereafter
He will lend thee eyes to see.

Like a snowflake gently falling
On a quiet fountain,
Or a weary echo calling
From a distant mountain,
Drop thy hands in peace,-
Fail-falter-cease.

George MacDonald

O Do Not Leave Me

O do not leave me, mother, lest I weep;
Till I forget, be near me in that chair.
The mother's presence leads her down to sleep-
Leaves her contented there.

O do not leave me, lover, brother, friends,
Till I am dead, and resting in my place.
Love-compassed thus, the girl in peace ascends,
And leaves a raptured face.

Leave me not, God, until-nay, until when?
Not till I have with thee one heart, one mind;
Not till the Life is Light in me, and then
Leaving is left behind.

George MacDonald

O Lassie Ayont The Hill!

O lassie ayont the hill,
Come ower the tap o' the hill,
Come ower the tap wi' the breeze o' the hill,
Bidena ayont the hill!
I'm needin ye sair the nicht,
For I'm tired and sick o' mysel.
A body's sel 's the sairest weicht:
O lassie, come ower the hill!

Gien a body could be a thocht o' grace,
And no a sel ava!
I'm sick o' my heid and my ban's and my face,
O' my thouchts and mysel and a';

I'm sick o' the warl' and a';
The win' gangs by wi' a hiss;
Throu my starin een the sunbeams fa'
But my weary hert they miss!
O lassie ayont the hill,
Come ower the tap o' the hill,
Come ower the tap wi' the breeze o' the hill,
Bidena ayont the hill! &c.

For gien I but saw yer bonnie heid,
And the sunlicht o' yer hair,
The ghaist o' mysel wud fa' doun deid,
I wud be mysel nae mair.
I wud be mysel nae mair,
Filled o' the sole remeid,
Slain by the arrows o' licht frae yer hair,
Killed by yer body and heid!
O lassie ayont the hill, &c.

My sel micht wauk up at the saft fitfa'
O' my bonnie departin dame;
But gien she lo'ed me ever sae sma'
I micht bide it-the weary same!
Noo, sick o' my body and name
Whan it lifts its upsettin heid,

I turn frae the cla'es that cover my frame
As gien they war roun the deid.
O lassie ayont the hill, &c.

But gien ye lo'ed me as I lo'e you
I wud ring my ain deid knell;
The spectre wud melt, shot through and through
Wi' the shine o' your sunny sel!
By the shine o' yer sunny sel,
By the licht aneth yer broo
I wud dee to mysel, ring my ain deid-bell,
And live again in you!

O lassie ayont the hill,
Come ower the tap o' the hill,
Come ower the tap wi' the breeze o' the hill,
For I want ye sair the nicht!
I'm needin ye sair the nicht,
For I'm tired and sick o' mysel.
A body's sel 's the sairest weicht:
O lassie, come ower the hill!

George MacDonald

O Lord, How Happy!

From the German of Dessler

O Lord, how happy is the time
When in thy love I rest!
When from my weariness I climb
Even to thy tender breast!
The night of sorrow endeth there-
Thou art brighter than the sun;
And in thy pardon and thy care
The heaven of heaven is won.

Let the world call herself my foe,
Or let the world allure-
I care not for the world; I go
To this dear friend and sure.
And when life's fiercest storms are sent
Upon life's wildest sea,
My little bark is confident
Because it holds by thee.

When the law threatens endless death
Upon the dreadful hill,
Straightway from her consuming breath
My soul goeth higher still-
Goeth to Jesus, wounded, slain,
And maketh him her home,
Whence she will not go out again,
And where death cannot come.

I do not fear the wilderness
Where thou hast been before;
Nay rather will I daily press
After thee, near thee, more!
Thou art my food; on thee I lean,
Thou makest my heart sing;
And to thy heavenly pastures green
All thy dear flock dost bring.

And if the gate that opens there
Be dark to other men,
It is not dark to those who share
The heart of Jesus then:
That is not losing much of life
Which is not losing thee,
Who art as present in the strife
As in the victory.

Therefore how happy is the time
When in thy love I rest!
When from my weariness I climb
Even to thy tender breast!
The night of sorrow endeth there-
Thou art brighter than the sun!
And in thy pardon and thy care
The heaven of heaven is won!

George MacDonald

O Wind Of God

O wind of God, that blowest in the mind,
Blow, blow and wake the gentle spring in me;
Blow, swifter blow, a strong warm summer wind,
Till all the flowers with eyes come out to see;
Blow till the fruit hangs red on every tree,
And our high-soaring song-larks meet thy dove-
High the imperfect soars, descends the perfect love!

Blow not the less though winter cometh then;
Blow, wind of God, blow hither changes keen;
Let the spring creep into the ground again,
The flowers close all their eyes and not be seen:
All lives in thee that ever once hath been!
Blow, fill my upper air with icy storms;
Breathe cold, O wind of God, and kill my cankerworms.

George MacDonald

Obedience

Trust him in the common light;
Trust him in the awesome night;

Trust him when the earth doth quake:
Trust him when thy heart doth ache;

Trust him when thy brain doth reel
And thy friend turns on his heel;

Trust him when the way is rough,
Cry not yet,
It is enough
!

But obey with true endeavour,
Else the salt hath lost his savour.

George MacDonald

Of One Who Died In Spring

Loosener of springs, he died by thee!
Softness, not hardness, sent him home;
He loved thee-and thou mad'st him free
Of all the place thou comest from!

George MacDonald

Of The Son Of Man

I. I honour Nature, holding it unjust
To look with jealousy on her designs;
With every passing year more fast she twines
About my heart; with her mysterious dust
Claim I a fellowship not less august
Although she works before me and combines
Her changing forms, wherever the sun shines
Spreading a leafy volume on the crust
Of the old world; and man himself likewise
Is of her making: wherefore then divorce
What God hath joined thus, and rend by force
Spirit away from substance, bursting ties
By which in one great bond of unity
God hath together bound all things that be?

II. And in these lines my purpose is to show
That He who left the Father, though he came
Not with art-splendour or the earthly flame
Of genius, yet in that he did bestow
His own true loving heart, did cause to grow,
Unseen and buried deep, whate'er we name
The best in human art, without the shame
Of idle sitting in most real woe;
And that whate'er of Beautiful and Grand
The Earth contains, by him was not despised,
But rather was so deeply realized
In word and deed, though not with artist hand,
That it was either hid or all disguised
From those who were not wise to understand.

III. Art is the bond of weakness, and we find
Therein acknowledgment of failing power:
A man would worship, gazing on a flower-
Onward he passeth, lo his eyes are blind!
The unenlivened form he left behind
Grew up within him only for an hour!
And he will grapple with Nature till the dower
Of strength shall be retreasured in his mind.
And each form-record is a high protest

Of treason done unto the soul of man,
Which, striving upwards, ever is oppress'd
By the old bondage, underneath whose ban
He, failing in his struggle for the best,
Must live in pain upon what food he can.

IV. Moreover, were there perfect harmony
'Twixt soul and Nature, we should never waste
The precious hours in gazing, but should haste
To assimilate her offerings, and we
From high life-elements, as doth the tree,
Should grow to higher; so what we call Taste
Is a slow living as of roots encased
In the grim chinks of some sterility
Both cramping and withholding. Art is Truth,
But Truth dammed up and frozen, gagged and bound
As is a streamlet icy and uncouth
Which pebbles hath and channel but no sound:
Give it again its summer heart of youth
And it will be a life upon the ground.

V. And Love had not been prisoned in cold stone,
Nor Beauty smeared on the dead canvas so,
Had not their worshipper been forced to go
Questful and restless through the world alone,
Searching but finding not, till on him shone
Back from his own deep heart a chilly glow
As of a frost-nipped sunbeam, or of snow
Under a storm-dodged crescent which hath grown
Wasted to mockery; and beneath such gleam
His wan conceits have found an utterance,
Which, had they found a true and sunny beam,
Had ripened into real touch and glance-
Nay more, to real deed, the Truth of all,
To some perfection high and personal.

VI. 'But yet the great of soul have ever been
The first to glory in all works of art;
For from the genius-form would ever dart
A light of inspiration, and a sheen
As of new comings; and ourselves have seen
Men of stern purpose to whose eyes would start

Sorrow at sight of sorrow though no heart
Did riot underneath that chilly, screen;
And hence we judge such utterance native to
The human soul-expression highest-best.'
-Nay, it is by such sign they will pursue,
Albeit unknowing, Beauty, without rest;
And failing in the search, themselves will fling
Speechless before its shadow, worshipping.

VII. And how shall he whose mission is to bring
The soul to worship at its rightful shrine,
Seeing in Beauty what is most divine,
Give out the mightiest impulse, and thus fling
His soul into the future, scattering
The living seed of wisdom? Shall there shine
From underneath his hand a matchless line
Of high earth-beauties, till the wide world ring
With the far clang that tells a missioned soul,
Kneeling to homage all about his feet?
Alas for such a gift were this the whole,
The only bread of life men had to eat!
Lo, I behold them dead about him now,
And him the heart of death, for all that brow!

VIII. If
Thou
didst pass by Art, thou didst not scorn
The souls that by such symbol yearned in vain
From Truth and Love true nourishment to gain:
On thy warm breast, so chilly and forlorn
Fell these thy nurslings little more than born
That thou wast anguished, and there fell a rain
From thy blest eyelids, and in grief and pain
Thou partedst from them yet one night and morn
To find them wholesome food and nourishment
Instead of what their blindness took for such,
Laying thyself a seed in earthen rent
From which, outspringing to the willing touch,
Riseth for all thy children harvest great,
For which they will all learn to bless thee yet.

IV. Thou sawest Beauty in the streaking cloud

When grief lift up those eyelids; nor in scorn
Broke ever on thine eyes the purple morn
Along the cedar tops; to thee aloud
Spake the night-solitude, when hushed and bowed
The earth lay at thy feet stony and worn;
Loving thou markedst when the lamb unshorn
Was glad before thee, and amongst the crowd
Famished and pent in cities did thine eye
Read strangest glory-though in human art
No record lives to tell us that thy heart
Bowed to its own deep beauty: deeper did lie
The burden of thy mission, even whereby
We know that Beauty liveth where Thou art.

X. Doubtless thine eyes have watched the sun aspire
From that same Olivet, when back on thee
Flushed upwards after some night-agony
Thy proper Godhead, with a purer fire
Purpling thy Infinite, and in strong desire
Thou sattest in the dawn that was to be
Uplifted on our dark perplexity.
Yea in thee lay thy soul, a living lyre,
And each wild beauty smote it, though the sound
Rung to the night-winds oft and desert air;
Beneath thine eyes the lily paled more fair,
And each still shadow slanting on the ground
Lay sweetly on thee as commissioned there,
So full wast thou of eyes all round and round.

XI. And so thou neededst not our human skill
To fix what thus were transient-there it grew
Wedded to thy perfection; and anew
With every coming vision rose there still
Some living principle which did fulfil
Thy most legitimate manhood; and unto
Thy soul all Nature rendered up its due
With not a contradiction; and each hill
And mountain torrent and each wandering light
Grew out divinely on thy countenance,
Whereon, as we are told, by word and glance
Thy hearers read an ever strange delight-So
strange to them thy Truth, they could not tell

What made thy message so unspeakable.

XII. And by such living witness didst thou preach:
Not with blind hands of groping forward thrust
Into the darkness, gathering only dust,
But by this real sign-that thou didst reach,
In natural order, rising each from each,
Thy own ideals of the True and Just;
And that as thou didst live, even so he must
Who would aspire his fellow-men to teach,
Looking perpetual from new heights of Thought
On his old self. Of art no scorner thou!
Instead of leafy chaplet, on thy brow
Wearing the light of manhood, thou hast brought
Death unto Life! Above all statues now,
Immortal Artist, hail! thy work is wrought!

XIII. Solemn and icy stand ye in my eyes,
Far up into the niches of the Past,
Ye marble statues, dim and holden fast
Within your stony homes! nor human cries
Had shook you from your frozen phantasies
Or sent the life-blood through you, till there passed
Through all your chilly bulks a new life-blast
From the Eternal Living, and ye rise
From out your stiffened postures rosy-warm,
Walking abroad a goodly company
Of living virtues at that wondrous charm,
As he with human heart and hand and eye
Walked sorrowing upon our highways then,
The Eternal Father's living gift to men!

XIV. As the pent torrent in uneasy rest
Under the griping rocks, doth ever keep
A monstrous working as it lies asleep
In the round hollow of some mountain's breast,
Till where it hideth in its sweltering nest
Some earthquake finds it, and its waters leap
Forth to the sunshine down the mighty steep,
So in thee once was anguished forth the quest
Whereby man sought for life-power as he lay
Under his own proud heart and black despair

Wedged fast and stifled up with loads of care,
Yet at dumb struggle with the tyrant clay;
Thou wentest down below the roots of prayer,
And he hath cried aloud since that same day!

XV. As he that parts in hatred from a friend
Mixing with other men forgets the woe
Which anguished him when he beheld and lo
Two souls had fled asunder which did bend
Under the same blue heaven! yet ere the end,
When the loud world hath tossed him to and fro,
Will often strangely reappear that glow
At simplest memory which some chance may send,
Although much stronger bonds have lost their power:
So thou God-sent didst come in lowly guise,
Striking on simple chords,-not with surprise
Or mightiest recollectings in that hour,
But like remembered fragrance of a flower
A man with human heart and loving eyes.

March
, 1852.

George MacDonald

Oh That A Wind

Oh that a wind would call
From the depths of the leafless wood!
Oh that a voice would fall
On the ear of my solitude!

Far away is the sea,
With its sound and its spirit tone;
Over it white clouds flee;
But I am alone, alone.

Straight and steady and tall
The trees stand on their feet;
Fast by the old stone wall
The moss grows green and sweet;
But my heart is full of fears,
For the sun shines far away;
And they look in my face through tears,
And the light of a dying day.

My heart was glad last night
As I pressed it with my palm;
Its throb was airy and light
As it sang some spirit psalm;
But it died away in my breast
As I wandered forth to-day,-
As a bird sat dead on its nest,
While others sang on the spray.

O weary heart of mine,
Is there ever a Truth for thee?
Will ever a sun outshine
But the sun that shines on me?
Away, away through the air
The clouds and the leaves are blown;
And my heart hath need of prayer,
For it sitteth alone, alone.

George MacDonald

Oh Thou Of Little Faith

Sad-hearted, be at peace: the snowdrop lies
Buried in sepulchre of ghastly snow;
But spring is floating up the southern skies,
And darkling the pale snowdrop waits below.

Let me persuade: in dull December's day
We scarce believe there is a month of June;
But up the stairs of April and of May
The hot sun climbeth to the summer's noon.

Yet hear me: I love God, and half I rest.
O better! God loves thee, so all rest thou.
He is our summer, our dim-visioned Best;-
And in his heart thy prayer is resting now.

George MacDonald

On A December Day

I.

This is the sweetness of an April day;
The softness of the spring is on the face
Of the old year. She has no natural grace,
But something comes to her from far away

Out of the Past, and on her old decay
The beauty of her childhood you can trace.-
And yet she moveth with a stormy pace,
And goeth quickly.-Stay, old year, oh, stay!

We do not like new friends, we love the old;
With young, fierce, hopeful hearts we ill agree;
But thou art patient, stagnant, calm, and cold,
And not like that new year that is to be;-
Life, promise, love, her eyes may fill, fair child!
We know the past, and will not be beguiled.

II.

Yet the free heart will not be captive long;
And if she changes often, she is free.
But if she changes: One has mastery
Who makes the joy the last in every song.
And so to-day I blessed the breezes strong
That swept the blue; I blessed the breezes free
That rolled wet leaves like rivers shinningly;
I blessed the purple woods I stood among.

'And yet the spring is better!' Bitterness
Came with the words, but did not stay with them.
'Accomplishment and promise! field and stem
New green fresh growing in a fragrant dress!
And we behind with death and memory!'
-Nay, prophet-spring! but I will follow thee.

George MacDonald

On A Midge

Whence do ye come, ye creatures? Each of you
Is perfect as an angel! wings and eyes
Stupendous in their beauty-gorgeous dyes
In feathery fields of purple and of blue!
Would God I saw a moment as ye do!
I would become a molecule in size,
Rest with you, hum with you, or slanting rise
Along your one dear sunbeam, could I view
The pearly secret which each tiny fly-
Each tiny fly that hums and bobs and stirs
Hides in its little breast eternally
From you, ye prickly, grim philosophers
With all your theories that sound so high:
Hark to the buz a moment, my good sirs!

George MacDonald

On A Movement Of Beethoven's

Ave! Once more touch the strings
That Memory may feed upon the strain,
And over-live again
The days,
When the heart gloried in the golden lays
That give the spirit wings.

Simple—yet how profound
The feeling that induces this deathless air!
Did heart-ache—or despair,
Or dream,
Inspire its notes, that spread so charm'd a stream
Of harmony around?

Sometimes the deep notes swell
Soft as a sigh—the semitone of thought;
Yet sometimes seem they fraught
With fate—
Storm-toned, spirit rousing, jarr'd with hate,
And booming like a knell.

Wild, massy, swift and dark,
The clashing strains of harmony unite,
While o'er their solemn flight,
One note
Of wandering sweetness doth serenely float,
Like love-call of the lark.

Those gloomy chords at last,
Roll wave-like through the caverns of the mind,
And mystically wind
Their way
Into dark thoughts, that rise in drear array—
The ghost-dreams of the past.

And then the plaintive tone
Of pastoral pipe, or mountain brook, or bird,
In tranced thought is heard,
Until

The faint heart fails beneath the Master's skill,
And yearns to be alone.

Yet, lady! yet once more,
Bring back that branded train of hopes and fears,
The passion of past years,
The spell
That ruled my being in its inmost cell
And then sweet friend! give o'er.

George MacDonald

On The Source Of The Arve

Hears't thou the dash of water, loud and hoarse,
With its perpetual tidings upward climb,
Struggling against the wind? Oh, how sublime!
For not in vain from its portentous source
Thy heart, wild stream, hath yearned for its full force,
But from thine ice-toothed caverns, dark as time,
At last thou issuest, dancing to the rime
Of thy outvolleying freedom! Lo, thy course
Lies straight before thee as the arrow flies!
Right to the ocean-plains away, away!
Thy parent waits thee, and her sunset dyes
Are ruffled for thy coming, and the gray
Of all her glittering borders flashes high
Against the glittering rocks!-oh, haste, and fly!

George MacDonald

One With Nature

I have a fellowship with every shade
Of changing nature: with the tempest hour
My soul goes forth to claim her early dower
Of living princedom; and her wings have staid
Amidst the wildest uproar undismayed!
Yet she hath often owned a better power,
And blessed the gentle coming of the shower,
The speechless majesty of love arrayed
In lowly virtue, under which disguise
Full many a princely thing hath passed her by;
And she from homely intercourse of eyes
Hath gathered visions wider than the sky,
And seen the withered heart of man arise
Peaceful as God, and full of majesty.

George MacDonald

Our Ship

Had I a great ship coming home,
With big plunge o'er the sea,
What bright things, hid from star and foam,
Lay in her heart for thee!

The stormy billows heave and dip,
The wild winds veer and play;
But, regnant all, God's stately ship
Is steering home this way!

George MacDonald

Ower The Hedge

I.

'Bonny lassie, rosy lassie,
Ken ye what is care?
Had ye ever a thought, lassie,
Made yer hertie sair?'

Johnnie said it, Johnnie seekin
Sicht o' Mally's face,
Keekin i' the hedge o' holly
For a thinner place.

'Na,' said Mally, pawky smilin,
'Nought o' care ken I;
Gien I meet the gruesome carline,
I s' hand weel ootby!'

'Lang be licht o' hert, Mally,
As o' fut and ban!'
Lang be ready wi' sic answer
To ony speirin man!'

'Ay, the men 'll aye be speirin!
Troth, it's naething new!
There's yersel wi' queston, queston-
And there's mair like you!'

'Deed ye wadna mock me, Mally,
Wi' yer lauchin ee,
Gien ye saw the thing aye muvin
I' the hert o' me!'

'Troth, I'm no sae pryin, laddie,
Yon's no my concern!
Jist as sune I wud gang speirin
What's intil yon cairn!'

'Still and on, there's ae thing, Mally,
Yont yer help, my doo-

That's to haud my hert frae lo'in
At the hert o' you!

II.

Johnnie turned and left her,
Listit for the war;
In a year cam limpin
Hame wi' mony a scar.

Wha was that was sittin
On the brae, sae still?
Worn and wan and alert,
Could it be hersel?

Cled in black, her eelids
Reid wi' greitin sair-
Was she wife and widow
In a towmond bare?

Mally's hert played wallop,
Kenned him or he spak:
'Are ye no deid, Johnnie?
Is't yersel come back?'

'Are ye wife or widow?
Tell me in a breath;
Lanely life is fearsome,
Waur nor ony death!'

'Wha cud be a widow
Wife was never nane?
Noo, gien ye will hae me,
Noo I will be ane!'

Crutch awa he flang it,
Clean forgot his hairms,
Cudna stan' withoot it,
Fell in Mally's airms.

George MacDonald

Picture Songs

I.

A pale green sky is gleaming;
The steely stars are few;
The moorland pond is steaming
A mist of gray and blue.

Along the pathway lonely
My horse is walking slow;
Three living creatures only,
He, I, and a home-bound crow!

The moon is hardly shaping
Her circle in the fog;
A dumb stream is escaping
Its prison in the bog.

But in my heart are ringing
Tones of a lofty song;
A voice that I know, is singing,
And my heart all night must long.

II.

Over a shining land-
Once such a land I knew-
Over its sea, by a soft wind fanned,
The sky is all white and blue.

The waves are kissing the shores,
Murmuring love and for ever;
A boat gleams green, and its timeful oars
Flash out of the level river.

Oh to be there with thee
And the sun, on wet sands, my love!
With the shining river, the sparkling sea,
And the radiant sky above!

III.

The autumn winds are sighing
Over land and sea;
The autumn woods are dying
Over hill and lea;
And my heart is sighing, dying,
Maiden, for thee.

The autumn clouds are flying
Homeless over me;
The nestless birds are crying
In the naked tree;
And my heart is flying, crying,
Maiden, to thee.

The autumn sea is crawling
Up the chilly shore;
The thin-voiced firs are calling
Ghostily evermore:
Maiden, maiden! I am falling
Dead at thy door.

IV.

The waters are rising and flowing
Over the weedy stone-
Over it, over it going:
It is never gone.

Waves upon waves of weeping
Went over the ancient pain;
Glad waves go over it leaping-
Still it rises again!

George MacDonald

Pilate's Wife

Why came in dreams the low-born man
Between thee and thy rest?
In vain thy whispered message ran,
Though justice was its quest!

Did some young ignorant angel dare-
Not knowing what must be,
Or blind with agony of care-
To fly for help to thee?

I know not. Rather I believe,
Thou, nobler than thy spouse,
His rumoured grandeur didst receive,
And sit with pondering brows,

Until thy maidens' gathered tale
With possible marvel teems:
Thou sleepest, and the prisoner pale
Returneth in thy dreams.

Well mightst thou suffer things not few
For his sake all the night!
In pale eclipse he suffers, who
Is of the world the light.

Precious it were to know thy dream
Of such a one as he!
Perhaps of him we, waking, deem
As poor a verity.

George MacDonald

Power

Power that is not of God, however great,
Is but the downward rushing and the glare
Of a swift meteor that hath lost its share
In the one impulse which doth animate
The parent mass: emblem to me of fate!
Which through vast nightly wastes doth onward fare,
Wild-eyed and headlong, rent away from prayer-
A moment brilliant, then most desolate!
And, O my brothers, shall we ever learn
From all the things we see continually
That pride is but the empty mockery
Of what is strong in man! Not so the stern
And sweet repose of soul which we can earn
Only through reverence and humility!

George MacDonald

Prayer

We doubt the word that tells us: Ask,
And ye shall have your prayer;
We turn our thoughts as to a task,
With will constrained and rare.

And yet we have; these scanty prayers
Yield gold without alloy:
O God, but he that trusts and dares
Must have a boundless joy!

George MacDonald

Professor Noctutus

Nobody knows the world but me.
The rest go to bed; I sit up and see.
I'm a better observer than any of you all,
For I never look out till the twilight fall,
And never then without green glasses,
And that is how my wisdom passes.

I never think, for that is not fit:

I observe.
I have seen the white moon sit
On her nest, the sea, like a fluffy owl,
Hatching the boats and the long-legged fowl!
When the oysters gape-you may make a note-
She drops a pearl into every throat.

I can see the wind: can you do that?
I see the dreams he has in his hat,
I see him shaking them out as he goes,
I see them rush in at man's snoring nose.
Ten thousand things you could not think,
I can write down plain with pen and ink!

You know that I know; therefore pull off your hat,
Whether round and tall, or square and flat:
You cannot do better than trust in me;
You may shut your eyes in fact-I\ see!
Lifelong I will lead you, and then, like the owl,
I will bury you nicely with my spade and shawl.

George MacDonald

Provision

Above my head the great pine-branches tower;
Backwards and forwards each to the other bends,
Beckoning the tempest-cloud which hither wends
Like a slow-laboured thought, heavy with power:
Hark to the patter of the coming shower!
Let me be silent while the Almighty sends
His thunder-word along-but when it ends
I will arise and fashion from the hour
Words of stupendous import, fit to guard
High thoughts and purposes, which I may wave,
When the temptation cometh close and hard,
Like fiery brands betwixt me and the grave
Of meaner things-to which I am a slave,
If evermore I keep not watch and ward.

George MacDonald

Punishment

Mourner, that dost deserve thy mournfulness,
Call thyself punished, call the earth thy hell;
Say, 'God is angry, and I earned it well-
I would not have him smile on wickedness:'

Say this, and straightway all thy grief grows less:-
'God rules at least, I find as prophets tell,
And proves it in this prison!'-then thy cell
Smiles with an unsuspected loveliness.

-'A prison-and yet from door and window-bar
I catch a thousand breaths of his sweet air!
Even to me his days and nights are fair!
He shows me many a flower and many a star!
And though I mourn and he is very far,
He does not kill the hope that reaches there!'

George MacDonald

Quiet Dead!

Quiet, quiet dead,
Have ye aught to say
From your hidden bed
In the earthy clay?

Fathers, children, mothers,
Ye are very quiet;
Can ye shout, my brothers?
I would know you by it!

Have ye any words
That are like to ours?
Have ye any birds?
Have ye any flowers?

Could ye rise a minute
When the sun is warm?
I would know you in it,
I would take no harm.

I am half afraid
In the ghostly night;
If ye all obeyed
I should fear you quite.

But when day is breaking
In the purple east
I would meet you waking-
One of you at least-

When the sun is tipping
Every stony block,
And the sun is slipping
Down the weathercock.

Quiet, quiet dead,
I will not perplex you;
What my tongue hath said
Haply it may vex you!

Yet I hear you speaking
With a quiet speech,
As if ye were seeking
Better things to teach:

'Wait a little longer,
Suffer and endure
Till your heart is stronger
And your eyes are pure-

A little longer, brother,
With your fellow-men:
We will meet each other
Otherwhere again.'

George MacDonald

Reciprocity

Her mother, Elfie older grown,
One evening, for adieu,
Said, 'You'll not mind being left alone,
For God takes care of you!'

In child-way her heart's eye did see
The correlation's node:
'Yes,' she said, 'God takes care o' me,
An' I take care o' God.'

The child and woman were the same,
She changed not, only grew;
'Twixt God and her no shadow came:
The true is always true!

As daughter, sister, promised wife,
Her heart with love did brim:
Now, sure, it brims as full of life,
Hid fourteen years in him!

George MacDonald

Rejoice

'Rejoice,' said the Sun; 'I will make thee gay
With glory and gladness and holiday;
I am dumb, O man, and I need thy voice!
But man would not rejoice.

'Rejoice in thyself,' said he, 'O Sun,
For thy daily course is a lordly one;
In thy lofty place rejoice if thou can:
For me, I am only a man.'

'Rejoice,' said the Wind; 'I am free and strong,
And will wake in thy heart an ancient song;
Hear the roaring woods, my organ noise!
But man would not rejoice.

'Rejoice, O Wind, in thy strength,' said he,
'For thou fulfilllest thy destiny;
Shake the forest, the faint flowers fan;
For me, I am only a man.'

'Rejoice,' said the Night, 'with moon and star,
For the Sun and the Wind are gone afar;
I am here with rest and dreaming choice!
But man would not rejoice;

For he said-'What is rest to me, I pray,
Whose labour leads to no gladsome day?
He only can dream who has hope behind:
Alas for me and my kind!'

Then a voice that came not from moon or star,
From the sun, or the wind that roved afar,
Said, 'Man, I am with thee-hear my voice!
And man said, 'I rejoice.'

George MacDonald

Rest

I.

When round the earth the Father's hands
Have gently drawn the dark;
Sent off the sun to fresher lands,
And curtained in the lark;
'Tis sweet, all tired with glowing day,
To fade with fading light,
And lie once more, the old weary way,
Upfolded in the night.

If mothers o'er our slumbers bend,
And unripe kisses reap,
In soothing dreams with sleep they blend,
Till even in dreams we sleep.
And if we wake while night is dumb,
'Tis sweet to turn and say,
It is an hour ere dawning come,
And I will sleep till day.

II.

There is a dearer, warmer bed,
Where one all day may lie,
Earth's bosom pillowing the head,
And let the world go by.
There come no watching mother's eyes,
The stars instead look down;
Upon it breaks, and silent dies,
The murmur of the town.

The great world, shouting, forward fares:
This chamber, hid from none,
Hides safe from all, for no one cares
For him whose work is done.
Cheer thee, my friend; bethink thee how
A certain unknown place,
Or here or there, is waiting now,

To rest thee from thy race.

III.

Nay, nay, not there the rest from harms,
The still composed breath!
Not there the folding of the arms,
The cool, the blessed death!

That
needs no curtained bed to hide
The world with all its wars,
No grassy cover to divide
From sun and moon and stars.

It is a rest that deeper grows
In midst of pain and strife;
A mighty, conscious, willed repose,
The death of deepest life.
To have and hold the precious prize
No need of jealous bars;
But windows open to the skies,
And skill to read the stars!

IV.

Who dwelleth in that secret place,
Where tumult enters not,
Is never cold with terror base,
Never with anger hot.
For if an evil host should dare
His very heart invest,
God is his deeper heart, and there
He enters in to rest.

When mighty sea-winds madly blow,
And tear the scattered waves,
Peaceful as summer woods, below
Lie darkling ocean caves:
The wind of words may toss my heart,

But what is that to me!
Tis but a surface storm-thou art
My deep, still, resting sea.

George MacDonald

Reverence Waking Hope

A power is on me, and my soul must speak
To thee, thou grey, grey man, whom I behold
With those white-headed children. I am bold
To commune with thy setting, and to wreak
My doubts on thy grey hair; for I would seek
Thee in that other world, but I am told
Thou goest elsewhere and wilt never hold
Thy head so high as now. Oh I were weak,
Weak even to despair, could I forego
The tender vision which will give somehow
Thee standing brightly one day even as now!
Thou art a very grey old man, and so
I may not pass thee darkly, but bestow
A look of reverence on thy wrinkled brow.

George MacDonald

Riddles

I.

I have only one foot, but thousands of toes;
My one foot stands well, but never goes;
I've a good many arms, if you count them all,
But hundreds of fingers, large and small;
From the ends of my fingers my beauty grows;
I breathe with my hair, and I drink with my toes;
I grow bigger and bigger about the waist
Although I am always very tight laced;
None e'er saw me eat-I've no mouth to bite!
Yet I eat all day, and digest all night.
In the summer, with song I shake and quiver,
But in winter I fast and groan and shiver.

II.

There is a plough that hath no share,
Only a coulter that parteth fair;
But the ridges they rise
To a terrible size
Or ever the coulter comes near to tear:
The horses and ridges fierce battle make;
The horses are safe, but the plough may break.

Seed cast in its furrows, or green or sear,
Will lift to the sun neither blade nor ear:
Down it drops plumb
Where no spring-times come,
Nor needeth it any harrowing gear;
Wheat nor poppy nor blade has been found
Able to grow on the naked ground.

For My Grandchildren

Who is it that sleeps like a top all night,
And wakes in the morning so fresh and bright

That he breaks his bed as he gets up,
And leaves it smashed like a china cup?

IV.

I've a very long nose, but what of that?
It is not too long to lie on a mat!
I have very big jaws, but never get fat:
I don't go to church, and I'm not a church rat!

I've a mouth in my middle my food goes in at,
Just like a skate's-that's a fish that's a flat.

In summer I'm seldom able to breathe,
But when winter his blades in ice doth sheathe

I swell my one lung, I look big and I puff,
And I sometimes hiss.-There, that's enough!

George MacDonald

Rondel

I follow, tottering, in the funeral train
That bears my body to the welcoming grave.
As those I mourn not, that entomb the brave,
But smile as those that lay aside the vain;

To me it is a thing of poor disdain,
A clod I would not give a sigh to save!
I follow, careless, in the funeral train,
My outworn raiment to the cleansing grave.

I follow to the grave with growing pain-
Then sudden cry: Let Earth take what she gave!
And turn in gladness from the yawning cave-
Glad even for those whose tears yet flow amain:
They also follow, in their funeral train,
Outworn necessities to the welcoming grave!

George MacDonald

Room To Roam

Strait is the path? He means we must not roam?
Yes; but the strait path leads into a boundless home.

George MacDonald

Russell Gurney

In that high country whither thou art gone,
Right noble friend, thou walkest with thy peers,
The gathered great of many a hundred years!
Few are left like thee-few, I say, not none,
Else were thy England soon a Babylon,
A land of outcry, mockery, and tears!
Higher than law, a refuge from its fears,
Wast thou, in whom embodied Justice shone.
The smile that gracious broke on thy grand face
Was like the sunrise of a morn serene
Among the mountains, making sweet their awe.
Thou both the gentle and the strong didst draw;
Thee childhood loved, and on thy breast would lean,
As, whence thou cam'st, it knew the lofty place.

George MacDonald

Sabbath Bells

Oh holy Sabbath bells,
Ye have a pleasant voice!
Through all the land your music swells,
And man with one commandment tells
To rest and to rejoice.

As birds rejoice to flee
From dark and stormy skies
To brighter lands beyond the sea
Where skies are calm, and wings are free
To wander and to rise;

As thirsty travellers sing,
Through desert paths that pass,
To hear the welcome waters spring,
And see, beyond the spray they fling
Tall trees and waving grass;

So we rejoice to know
Your melody begun;
For when our paths are parched below
Ye tell us where green pastures glow
And living waters run.

LONDON,
December
15, 1840.

George MacDonald

Said And Did

Said the boy as he read, 'I too will be bold,
I will fight for the truth and its glory!'
He went to the playground, and soon had told
A very cowardly story!

Said the girl as she read, 'That was grand, I declare!
What a true, what a lovely, sweet soul!'
In half-an-hour she went up the stair,
Looking as black as a coal!

'The mean little wretch, I wish I could fling
This book at his head!' said another;
Then he went and did the same ugly thing
To his own little trusting brother!

Alas for him who sees a thing grand
And does not fit himself to it!
But the meanest act, on sea or on land,
Is to find a fault, and then do it!

George MacDonald

Saint Peter

O Peter, wherefore didst thou doubt?
Indeed the spray flew fast about,
But he was there whose walking foot
Could make the wandering hills take root;
And he had said, 'Come down to me,'
Else hadst thou not set foot on sea!
Christ did not call thee to thy grave!
Was it the boat that made thee brave?

'Easy for thee who wast not there
To think thou more than I couldst dare!
It hardly fits thee though to mock
Scared as thou wast that railway shock!
Who saidst this morn, 'Wife, we must go-
The plague will soon be here, I know!'
Who, when thy child slept-not to death-
Saidst, 'Life is now not worth a breath!'"

Saint Peter, thou rebukest well!
It needs no tempest me to quell,
Not even a spent lash of its spray!
Things far too little to affray
Will wake the doubt that's worst of all-
Is there a God to hear me call?
But if he be, I never think
That he will hear and let me sink!

Lord of my little faith, my Lord,
Help me to fear nor fire nor sword;
Let not the cross itself appall
Which bore thee, Life and Lord of all;
Let reeling brain nor fainting heart
Wipe out the soreness that thou art;
Dwell farther in than doubt can go,
And make
I hope
become
I know

.

Then, sure, if thou should please to say,
'Come to my side,' some stormy way,
My feet, atoning to thy will,
Shall, heaved and tossed, walk toward thee still;
No heart of lead shall sink me where
Prudence lies crowned with cold despair,
But I shall reach and clasp thy hand,
And on the sea forget the land!

George MacDonald

Second Sight

Rich is the fancy which can double back
All seeming forms, and from cold icicles
Build up high glittering palaces where dwells
Summer perfection, moulding all this wrack
To spirit symmetry, and doth not lack
The power to hear amidst the funeral bells
The eternal heart's wind-melody which swells
In whirlwind flashes all along its track!
So hath the sun made all the winter mine
With gardens springing round me fresh and fair;
On hidden leaves uncounted jewels shine;
I live with forms of beauty everywhere,
Peopling the crumbling waste and icy pool
With sights and sounds of life most beautiful.

George MacDonald

Shadows

All things are shadows of thee, Lord;
The sun himself is but thy shade;
My spirit is the shadow of thy word,
A thing that thou hast said.

Diamonds are shadows of the sun,
They gleam as after him they hark:
My soul some arrows of thy light hath won.
And feebly fights the dark!

All knowledges are broken shades,
In gulfs of dark a scattered horde:
Together rush the parted glory-grades-
Then, lo, thy garment, Lord!

My soul, the shadow, still is light
Because the shadow falls from thee;
I turn, dull candle, to the centre bright,
And home flit shadowy.

Shine, Lord; shine me thy shadow still;
The brighter I, the more thy shade!
My motion be thy lovely moveless will!
My darkness, light delayed!

George MacDonald

Shall The Dead Praise Thee?

I cannot praise thee. By his instrument
The master sits, and moves nor foot nor hand;
For see the organ-pipes this, that way bent,
Leaning, o'erthrown, like wheat-stalks tempest-fanned!

I well could praise thee for a flower, a dove,
But not for life that is not life in me;
Not for a being that is less than love-
A barren shoal half lifted from a sea!

Unto a land where no wind bloweth ships
Thy wind one day will blow me to my own:
Rather I'd kiss no more their loving lips
Than carry them a heart so poor and prone!

I bless thee, Father, thou art what thou art,
That thou dost know thyself what thou dost know-
A perfect, simple, tender, rhythmic heart,
Beating its blood to all in bounteous flow.

And I can bless thee too for every smart,
For every disappointment, ache, and fear;
For every hook thou fixest in my heart,
For every burning cord that draws me near.

But prayer these wake, not song. Thyself I crave.
Come thou, or all thy gifts away I fling.
Thou silent, I am but an empty grave:
Think to me, Father, and I am a king!

My organ-pipes will then stand up awake,
Their life soar, as from smouldering wood the blaze;
And swift contending harmonies shall shake
Thy windows with a storm of jubilant praise.

George MacDonald

Sharing

On the far horizon there
Heaps of cloudy darkness rest;
Though the wind is in the air
There is stupor east and west.

For the sky no change is making,
Scarce we know it from the plain;
Droop its eyelids never waking,
Blinded by the misty rain;

Save on high one little spot,
Round the baffled moon a space
Where the tumult ceaseth not:
Wildly goes the midnight race!

And a joy doth rise in me
Upward gazing on the sight,
When I think that others see
In yon clouds a like delight;

How perchance an aged man
Struggling with the wind and rain,
In the moonlight cold and wan
Feels his heart grow young again;

As the cloudy rack goes by,
How the life-blood mantles up
Till the fountain deep and dry
Yields once more a sparkling cup.

Or upon the gazing child
Cometh down a thought of glory
Which will keep him undefiled
Till his head is old and hoary.

For it may be he hath woke
And hath raised his fair young form;
Strangely on his eyes have broke
All the splendours of the storm;

And his young soul forth doth leap
With the storm-clouds in the moon;
And his heart the light will keep
Though the vision passeth soon.

Thus a joy hath often laughed
On my soul from other skies,
Bearing on its wings a draught
From the wells of Paradise,

For that not to me alone
Comes a splendour out of fear;
Where the light of heaven hath shone
There is glory far and near.

George MacDonald

Shew Us The Father

'Shew us the Father.' Chiming stars of space,
And lives that fit the worlds, and means and powers,
A Thought that holds them up reveal to ours-
A Wisdom we have been made wise to trace.
And, looking out from sweetest Nature's face,
From sunsets, moonlights, rivers, hills, and flowers,
Infinite love and beauty, all the hours,
Woo men that love them with divinest grace;
And to the depths of all the answering soul
High Justice speaks, and calls the world her own;
And yet we long, and yet we have not known
The very Father's face who means the whole!
Shew us the Father! Nature, conscience, love
Revealed in beauty, is there One above?

George MacDonald

Sir Lark And King Sun

'Good morrow, my lord!' in the sky alone
Sang the lark as the sun ascended his throne.
'Shine on me, my lord: I only am come,
Of all your servants, to welcome you home!
I have shot straight up, a whole hour, I swear,
To catch the first gleam of your golden hair.'

'Must I thank you then,' said the king, 'sir Lark,
For flying so high and hating the dark?
You ask a full cup for half a thirst:
Half was love of me, half love to be first.
Some of my subjects serve better my taste:
Their watching and waiting means more than your haste.'

King Sun wrapt his head in a turban of cloud;
Sir Lark stopped singing, quite vexed and cowed;
But higher he flew, for he thought, 'Anon
The wrath of the king will be over and gone;
And, scattering his head-gear manifold,
He will change my brown feathers to a glory of gold!'

He flew, with the strength of a lark he flew,
But as he rose the cloud rose too;
And not one gleam of the flashing hair
Brought signal of favour across the air;
And his wings felt withered and worn and old,
For their feathers had had no chrism of gold.

Outwearied at length, and throbbing sore,
The strong sun-seeker could do no more;
He faltered and sank, then dropped like a stone
Beside his nest, where, patient, alone,
Sat his little wife on her little eggs,
Keeping them warm with wings and legs.

Did I say alone? Ah, no such thing!
There was the cloudless, the ray-crowned king!
'Welcome, sir Lark!-You look tired!' said he;
,

Up

is not always the best way to me:

While you have been racing my turban gray,
I have been shining where you would not stay!

He had set a coronet round the nest;
Its radiance foamed on the wife's little breast;
And so glorious was she in russet gold
That sir Lark for wonder and awe grew cold;
He popped his head under her wing, and lay
As still as a stone till king Sun went away.

George MacDonald

Sleep

Oh! is it Death that comes
To have a foretaste of the whole?
To-night the planets and the stars
Will glimmer through my window-bars
But will not shine upon my soul!

For I shall lie as dead
Though yet I am above the ground;
All passionless, with scarce a breath,
With hands of rest and eyes of death,
I shall be carried swiftly round.

Or if my life should break
The idle night with doubtful gleams,
Through mossy arches will I go,
Through arches ruinous and low,
And chase the true and false in dreams.

Why should I fall asleep?
When I am still upon my bed
The moon will shine, the winds will rise
And all around and through the skies
The light clouds travel o'er my head!

O busy, busy things,
Ye mock me with your ceaseless life!
For all the hidden springs will flow
And all the blades of grass will grow
When I have neither peace nor strife.

And all the long night through
The restless streams will hurry by;
And round the lands, with endless roar,
The white waves fall upon the shore,
And bit by bit devour the dry.

Even thus, but silently,
Eternity, thy tide shall flow,
And side by side with every star

Thy long-drawn swell shall bear me far,
An idle boat with none to row.

My senses fail with sleep;
My heart beats thick; the night is noon;
And faintly through its misty folds
I hear a drowsy clock that holds
Its converse with the waning moon.

Oh, solemn mystery
That I should be so closely bound
With neither terror nor constraint,
Without a murmur of complaint,
And lose myself upon such ground!

George MacDonald

Smoke

Lord, I have laid my heart upon thy altar
But cannot get the wood to burn;
It hardly flares ere it begins to falter
And to the dark return.

Old sap, or night-fallen dew, makes damp the fuel;
In vain my breath would flame provoke;
Yet see-at every poor attempt's renewal
To thee ascends the smoke!

'Tis all I have-smoke, failure, foiled endeavour,
Coldness and doubt and palsied lack:
Such as I have I send thee!-perfect Giver,
Send thou thy lightning back.

George MacDonald

Somnium Mystici

A Microcosm In Terza Rima

I.

Quiet I lay at last, and knew no more
Whether I breathed or not, so worn I lay
With the death-struggle. What was yet before
Neither I met, nor turned from it away;
My only conscious being was the rest
Of pain gone dead-dead with the bygone day,
And long I could have lingered all but blest
In that half-slumber. But there came a sound
As of a door that opened-in the west
Somewhere I thought it. As the hare the hound,
The noise did start my eyelids and they rose.
I turned my eyes and looked. Then straight I found
It was my chamber-door that did unclose,
For a tall form up to my bedside drew.
Grand was it, silent, its very walk repose;
And when I saw the countenance, I knew
That I was lying in my chamber dead;
For this my brother-brothers such are few-
That now to greet me bowed his kingly head,
Had, many years ago, like holy dove
Returning, from his friends and kindred sped,
And, leaving memories of mournful love,
Passed vanishing behind the unseen veil;
And though I loved him, all high words above.
Not for his loss then did I weep or wail,
Knowing that here we live but in a tent,
And, seeking home, shall find it without fail.
Feeble but eager, toward him my hands went-
I too was dead, so might the dead embrace!
Taking me by the shoulders down he bent,
And lifted me. I was in sickly case,
But, growing stronger, stood up on the floor,
There turned, and once regarded my dead face
With curious eyes: its brow contentment wore,
But I had done with it, and turned away.

I saw my brother by the open door,
And followed him out into the night blue-gray.
The houses stood up hard in limpid air,
The moon hung in the heavens in half decay,
And all the world to my bare feet lay bare.

II.

Now I had suffered in my life, as they
Must suffer, and by slow years younger grow,
From whom the false fool-self must drop away,
Compact of greed and fear, which, gathered slow,
Darkens the angel-self that, evermore,
Where no vain phantom in or out shall go,
Moveless beholds the Father-stands before
The throne of revelation, waiting there,
With wings low-drooping on the sapphire-floor,
Until it find the Father's ideal fair,
And be itself at last: not one small thorn
Shall needless any pilgrim's garments tear;
And but to say I had suffered I would scorn
Save for the marvellous thing that next befell:
Sudden I grew aware I was new-born;
All pain had vanished in the absorbent swell
Of some exalting peace that was my own;
As the moon dwelt in heaven did calmness dwell
At home in me, essential. The earth's moan
Lay all behind. Had I then lost my part
In human griefs, dear part with them that groan?
'Tis weariness!' I said; but with a start
That set it trembling and yet brake it not,
I found the peace was love. Oh, my rich heart!
For, every time I spied a glimmering spot
Of window pane, 'There, in that silent room,'
Thought I, 'mayhap sleeps human heart whose lot
Is therefore dear to mine!' I cared for whom
I saw not, had not seen, and might not see!
After the love crept prone its shadow-gloom,
But instant a mightier love arose in me,
As in an ocean a single wave will swell,
And heaved the shadow to the centre: we
Had called it prayer, before on sleep I fell.

It sank, and left my sea in holy calm:
I gave each man to God, and all was well.
And in my heart stirred soft a sleeping psalm.

III.

No gentlest murmur through the city crept;
Not one lone word my brother to me had spoken;
But when beyond the city-gate we stept
I knew the hovering silence would be broken.
A low night wind came whispering: through and through
It did baptize me with the pledge and token
Of that soft spirit-wind which blows and blew
And fans the human world since evermore.
The very grass, cool to my feet, I knew
To be love also, and with the love I bore
To hold far sympathy, silent and sweet,
As having known the secret from of yore
In the eternal heart where all things meet,
Feelings and thinkings, and where still they are bred.
Sudden he stood, and with arrested feet
I also. Like a half-sunned orb, his head
Slow turned the bright side: lo, the brother-smile
That ancient human glory on me shed
Cloth餠in which Jesus came forth to wile
Unto his bosom every labouring soul,
And all dividing passions to beguile
To winsome death, and then on them to roll
The blessed stone of the holy sepulchre!
'Thank God,' he said, 'thou also now art whole
And sound and well! For the keen pain, and stir
Uneasy, and sore grief that came to us all,
In that we knew not how the wine and myrrh
Could ever from the vinegar and gall
Be parted, are deep sunk, yea drowned in God;
And yet the past not folded in a pall,
But breathed upon, like Aaron's withered rod,
By a sweet light that brings the blossoms through,
Showing in dreariest paths that men have trod
Another's foot-prints, spotted of crimson hue,
Still on before wherever theirs did wend;
Yea, through the desert leading, of thyme and rue,

The desert souls in which young lions rend
And roar-the passionate who, to be blest,
Ravin as bears, and do not gain their end,
Because that, save in God, there is no rest.'

IV.

Something my brother said to me like this,
But how unlike it also, think, I pray:
His eyes were music, and his smile a kiss;
Himself the word, his speech was but a ray
In the clear nimbus that with verity
Of absolute utterance made a home-born day
Of truth about him, lamping solemnly;
And when he paused, there came a swift repose,
Too high, too still to be called ecstasy-
A purple silence, lanced through in the close
By such keen thought that, with a sudden smiling,
It grew sheen silver, hearted with burning rose.
He was a glory full of reconciling,
Of faithfulness, of love with no self-stain,
Of tenderness, and care, and brother-wiling
Back to the bosom of a speechless gain.

V.

I cannot tell how long we joyous talked,
For from my sense old time had vanished quite,
Space dim-remaining-for onward still we walked.
No sun arose to blot the pale, still night-
Still as the night of some great spongy stone
That turns but once an age betwixt the light
And the huge shadow from its own bulk thrown,
And long as that to me before whose face
Visions so many slid, and veils were blown
Aside from the vague vast of Isis' grace.
Innumerable thoughts yet throng that infinite hour,
And hopes which greater hopes unceasing chase,
For I was all responsive to his power.
I saw my friends weep, wept, and let them weep;
I saw the growth of each grief-nurtured flower;
I saw the gardener watching-in their sleep

Wiping their tears with the napkin he had laid
Wrapped by itself when he climbed Hades' steep;
What wonder then I saw nor was dismayed!
I saw the dull, degraded monsters nursed
In money-marshes, greedy men that preyed
Upon the helpless, ground the feeblest worst;
Yea all the human chaos, wild and waste,
Where he who will not leave what God hath cursed
Now fruitless wallows, now is stung and chased
By visions lovely and by longings dire.
'But who believeth, he shall not make haste,
Even passing through the water and the fire,
Or sad with memories of a better lot!
He, saved by hope, for all men will desire,
Knowing that God into a mustard-jot
May shut an aeon; give a world that lay
Wombed in its sun, a molten unorb'd clot,
One moment from the red rim to spin away
Librating-ages to roll on weary wheel
Ere it turn homeward, almost spent its day!
Who knows love all, time nothing, he shall feel
No anxious heart, shall lift no trembling hand;
Tender as air, but clothed in triple steel,
He for his kind, in every age and land,
Hoping will live; and, to his labour bent,
The Father's will shall, doing, understand.'
So spake my brother as we onward went:
His words my heart received, as corn the lea,
And answered with a harvest of content.
We came at last upon a lonesome sea.

VI.

And onward still he went, I following
Out on the water. But the water, lo,
Like a thin sheet of glass, lay vanishing!
The starry host in glorious twofold show
Looked up, looked down. The moment I saw this,
A quivering fear thorough my heart did go:
Unstayed I walked across a twin abyss,
A hollow sphere of blue; nor floor was found
Of questing eye, only the foot met the kiss

Of the cool water lightly crisping round
The edges of the footsteps! Terror froze
My fallen eyelids. But again the sound
Of my guide's voice on the still air arose:
'Hast thou forgotten that we walk by faith?
For keenest sight but multiplies the shows.
Lift up thine eyelids; take a valiant breath;
Terrified, dare the terror in God's name;
Step wider; trust the invisible. Can Death
Avail no more to hearten up thy flame?'
I trembled, but I opened wide mine eyes,
And strode on the invisible sea. The same
High moment vanished all my cowardice,
And God was with me. The well-pleased stars
Threw quivering smiles across the gulfy skies,
The white aurora flashed great scimitars
From north to zenith; and again my guide
Full turned on me his face. No prison-bars
Latticed across a soul I there descried,
No weather-stains of grief; quiet age-long
Brooded upon his forehead clear and wide;
Yet from that face a pang shot, vivid and strong,
Into my heart. For, though I saw him stand
Close to me in the void as one in a throng,
Yet on the border of some nameless land
He stood afar; a still-eyed mystery
Caught him whole worlds away. Though in my hand
His hand I held, and, gazing earnestly,
Searched in his countenance, as in a mine,
For jewels of contentment, satisfy
My heart I could not. Seeming to divine
My hidden trouble, gently he stooped and kissed
My forehead, and his arms did round me twine,
And held me to his bosom. Still I missed
That ancient earthly nearness, when we shared
One bed, like birds that of no morrow wist;
Roamed our one father's farm; or, later, fared
Along the dusty highways of the old clime.
Backward he drew, and, as if he had bared
My soul, stood reading there a little time,
While in his eyes tears gathered slow, like dew
That dims the grass at evening or at prime,

But makes the stars clear-goldener in the blue:
And on his lips a faint ethereal smile
Hovered, as hangs the mist of its own hue
Trembling about a purple flower, the while
Evening grows brown. 'Brother! brother!' I cried;
But straight outbursting tears my words beguile,
And in my bosom all the utterance died.

VII.

A moment more he stood, then softly sighed.
'I know thy pain; but this sorrow is far
Beyond my help,' his voice at length replied
To my beseeching tears. 'Look at yon star
Up from the low east half-way, all ablaze:
Think'st thou, because no cloud between doth mar
The liquid glory that from its visage rays,
Thou therefore knowest that same world on high,
Its people and its orders and its ways?'
'What meanest thou?' I said. 'Thou know'st that
Would hold, not thy dear form, but the self-thee!
Thou art not near me! For thyself I cry!'
'Not the less near that nearer I shall be.
I have a world within thou dost not know-
Would I could make thee know it! but all of me
Is thine, though thou not yet canst enter so
Into possession that betwixt us twain
The frolic homeliness of love should flow
As o'er the brim of childhood's cup again:
Away the deeper childhood first must wipe
That clouded consciousness which was our pain.
When in thy breast the godlike hath grown ripe,
And thou, Christ's little one, art ten times more
A child than when we played with drum and pipe
About our earthly father's happy door,
Then-' He ceased not; his holy utterance still
Flowing went on, like spring from hidden store
Of wasteless waters; but I wept my fill,
Nor heeded much the comfort of his speech.
At length he said: 'When first I clomb the hill-
With earthly words I heavenly things would reach-
Where dwelleth now the man we used to call

Father, whose voice, oh memory dear! did teach
Us in our beds, when straight, as once a stall
Became a temple, holy grew the room,
Prone on the ground before him I did fall,
So grand he towered above me like a doom;
But now I look into the well-known face
Fearless, yea, basking blessed in the bloom
Of his eternal youthfulness and grace.'
'But something separates us,' yet I cried;
'Let light at least begin the dark to chase,
The dark begin to waver and divide,
And clear the path of vision. In the old time,
When clouds one heart did from the other hide,
A wind would blow between! If I would climb,
This foot must rise ere that can go up higher:
Some big A teach me of the eternal prime.'
He answered me: 'Hearts that to love aspire
Must learn its mighty harmony ere they can
Give out one perfect note in its great quire;
And thereto am I sent-oh, sent of one
Who makes the dumb for joy break out and sing:
He opens every door 'twixt man and man;
He to all inner chambers all will bring.'

VIII.

It was enough; Hope waked from dreary swound,
And Hope had ever been enough for me,
To kennel driving grim Tomorrow's hound;
From chains of school and mode she set me free,
And urged my life to living.-On we went
Across the stars that underlay the sea,
And came to a blown shore of sand and bent.
Beyond the sand a marshy moor we crossed
Silent-I, for I pondered what he meant,
And he, that sacred speech might not be lost-
And came at length upon an evil place:
Trees lay about like a half-buried host,
Each in its desolate pool; some fearful race
Of creatures was not far, for howls and cries
And gurgling hisses rose. With even pace
Walking, 'Fear not,' he said, 'for this way lies

Our journey.' On we went; and soon the ground
Slow from the waste began a gentle rise;
And tender grass in patches, then all round,
Came clouding up, with its fresh homely tinge
Of softest green cold-flushing every mound;
At length, of lowly shrubs a scattered fringe;
And last, a gloomy forest, almost blind,
For on its roof no sun-ray did impinge,
So that its very leaves did share the mind
Of a brown shadowless day. Not, all the year,
Once part its branches to let through a wind,
But all day long the unmoving trees appear
To ponder on the past, as men may do
That for the future wait without a fear,
And in the past the coming present view.

IX.

I know not if for days many or few
Pathless we thrid the wood; for never sun,
Its sylvan-traceried windows peeping through,
Mottled with brighter green the mosses dun,
Or meted with moving shadows Time the shade.
No life was there-not even a spider spun.
At length we came into a sky-roofed glade,
An open level, in a circle shut
By solemn trees that stood aside and made
Large room and lonely for a little hut
By grassy sweeps wide-margined from the wood.
'Twas built of saplings old, that had been cut
When those great trees no larger by them stood;
Thick with an ancient moss, it seemed to have grown
Thus from the old brown earth, a covert rude,
Half-house, half-grave; half-lifted up, half-prone.
To its low door my brother led me. 'There
Is thy first school,' he said; 'there be thou shown
Thy pictured alphabet. Wake a mind of prayer,
And praying enter.' 'But wilt thou not come,
Brother?' I said. 'No,' said he. And I, 'Where
Then shall I find thee? Thou wilt not leave me dumb,
And a whole world of thoughts unuttered?'
With half-sad smile and dewy eyes, and some

Conflicting motions of his kingly head,
He pointed to the open-standing door.
I entered: inward, lo, my shadow led!
I turned: his countenance shone like lightning hoar!
Then slow he turned from me, and parted slow,
Like one unwilling, whom I should see no more;
With voice nor hand said,
Farewell, I must go!

But drew the clinging door hard to the post.
No dry leaves rustled 'neath his going; no
Footfalls came back from the departing ghost.
He was no more. I laid me down and wept;
I dared not follow him, restrained the most
By fear I should not see him if I leapt
Out after him with cries of pleading love.
Close to the wall, in hopeless loss, I crept;
There cool sleep came, God's shadow, from above.

X.

I woke, with calmness cleansed and sanctified-
The peace that filled my heart of old, when I
Woke in my mother's lap; for since I died
The past lay bare, even to the dreaming shy
That shadowed my yet gathering unborn brain.
And, marvelling, on the floor I saw, close by
My elbow-pillowed head, as if it had lain
Beside me all the time I dreamless lay,
A little pool of sunlight, which did stain
The earthen brown with gold; marvelling, I say,
Because, across the sea and through the wood,
No sun had shone upon me all the way.
I rose, and through a chink the glade I viewed,
But all was dull as it had always been,
And sunless every tree-top round it stood,
With hardly light enough to show it green;
Yet through the broken roof, serenely glad,
By a rough hole entered that heavenly sheen.
Then I remembered in old years I had
Seen such a light-where, with dropt eyelids gloomed,
Sitting on such a floor, dark women sad

In a low barn-like house where lay entombed
Their sires and children; only there the door
Was open to the sun, which entering plumed
With shadowy palms the stones that on the floor
Stood up like lidless chests-again to find
That the soul needs no brain, but keeps her store
In hidden chambers of the eternal mind.
Thence backward ran my roused Memory
Down the ever-opening vista-back to blind
Anticipations while my soul did lie
Closed in my mother's; forward thence through bright
Spring morns of childhood, gay with hopes that fly
Bird-like across their doming blue and white,
To passionate summer noons, to saddened eves
Of autumn rain, so on to wintred night;
Thence up once more to the dewy dawn that weaves
Saffron and gold-weaves hope with still content,
And wakes the worship that even wrong bereaves
Of half its pain. And round her as she went
Hovered a sense as of an odour dear
Whose flower was far-as of a letter sent
Not yet arrived-a footstep coming near,
But, oh, how long delayed the lifting latch!-
As of a waiting sun, ready to peer
Yet peering not-as of a breathless watch
Over a sleeping beauty-babbling rime
About her lips, but no winged word to catch!
And here I lay, the child of changeful Time
Shut in the weary, changeless Evermore,
A dull, eternal, fadeless, fruitless clime!
Was this the dungeon of my sinning sore-
A gentle hell of loneliness, foredoomed
For such as I, whose love was yet the core
Of all my being? The brown shadow gloomed
Persistent, faded, warm. No ripple ran
Across the air, no roaming insect boomed.
'Alas,' I cried, 'I am no living man!
Better were darkness and the leave to grope
Than light that builds its own drear prison! Can
This be the folding of the wings of Hope?'

XI.

That instant-through the branches overhead
No sound of going went-a shadow fell
Isled in the unrippled pool of sunlight fed
From some far fountain hid in heavenly dell.
I looked, and in the low roofs broken place
A single snowdrop stood-a radiant bell
Of silvery shine, softly subdued by grace
Of delicate green that made the white appear
Yet whiter. Blind it bowed its head a space,
Half-timid-then, as in despite of fear,
Unfolded its three rays. If it had swung
Its pendent bell, and music golden clear-
Division just entrancing sounds among-
Had flickered down as tender as flakes of snow,
It had not shed more influence as it rung
Than from its look alone did rain and flow.
I knew the flower; perceived its human ways;
Dim saw the secret that had made it grow:
My heart supplied the music's golden phrase.
Light from the dark and snowdrops from the earth,
Life's resurrection out of gross decays,
The endless round of beauty's yearly birth,
And nations' rise and fall-were in the flower,
And read themselves in silence. Heavenly mirth
Awoke in my sad heart. For one whole hour
I praised the God of snowdrops. But at height
The bliss gave way. Next, faith began to cower;
And then the snowdrop vanished from my sight.

XII.

Last, I began in unbelief to say:
'No angel this! a snowdrop-nothing more!
A trifle which God's hands drew forth in play
From the tangled pond of chaos, dank and frore,
Threw on the bank, and left blindly to breed!
A wilful fancy would have gathered store
Of evanescence from the pretty weed,
White, shapely-then divine! Conclusion lame
O'erdriven into the shelter of a creed!
Not out of God, but nothingness it came:

Colourless, feeble, flying from life's heat,
It has no honour, hardly shunning shame!
When, see, another shadow at my feet!
Hopeless I lifted now my weary head:
Why mock me with another heavenly cheat?-
A primrose fair, from its rough-blanketed bed
Laughed, lo, my unbelief to heavenly scorn!
A sun-child, just awake, no prayer yet said,
Half rising from the couch where it was born,
And smiling to the world! I breathed again;
Out of the midnight once more dawned the morn,
And fled the phantom Doubt with all his train.

XIII.

I was a child once more, nor pondered life,
Thought not of what or how much. All my soul
With sudden births of lovely things grew rife.
In peeps a daisy: on the instant roll
Rich lawny fields, with red tips crowding the green,
Across the hollows, over ridge and knoll,
To where the rosy sun goes down serene.
From out of heaven in looks a pimpernel:
I walk in morning scents of thyme and bean;
Dewdrops on every stalk and bud and bell
Flash, like a jewel-orchard, many roods;
Glow ruby suns, which emerald suns would quell;
Topaz saint-glories, sapphire beatitudes
Blaze in the slanting sunshine all around;
Above, the high-priest-lark, o'er fields and woods-
Rich-hearted with his five eggs on the ground-
The sacrifice bore through the veil of light,
Odour and colour offering up in sound.-
Filled heart-full thus with forms of lowly might
And shapeful silences of lovely lore,
I sat a child, happy with only sight,
And for a time I needed nothing more.

XIV.

Supine to the revelation I did lie,
Passive as prophet to his dreaming deep,

Or harp Aeolian to the breathing sky,
And blest as any child whom twilight sleep
Holds half, and half lets go. But the new day
Of higher need up-dawned with sudden leap:
'Ah, flowers,' I said, 'ye are divinely gay,
But your fair music is too far and fine!
Ye are full cups, yet reach not to allay
The drought of those for human love who pine
As the hart for water-brooks!' At once a face
Was looking in my face; its eyes through mine
Were feeding me with tenderness and grace,
And by their love I knew my mother's eyes.
Gazing in them, there grew in me apace
A longing grief, and love did swell and rise
Till weeping I brake out and did bemoan
My blameful share in bygone tears and cries:
'O mother, wilt thou plead for me?' I groan;
'I say not, plead with Christ, but plead with those
Who, gathered now in peace about his throne,
Were near me when my heart was full of throes,
And longings vain alter a flying bliss,
Which oft the fountain by the threshold froze:
They must forgive me, mother! Tell them this:
No more shall swell the love-dividing sigh;
Down at their feet I lay my selfishness.'
The face grew passionate at this my cry;
The gathering tears up to its eyebrims rose;
It grew a trembling mist, that did not fly
But slow dissolved. I wept as one of those
Who wake outside the garden of their dream,
And, lo, the droop-winged hours laborious close
Its opal gates with stone and stake and beam.

XV.

But glory went that glory more might come.
Behold a countless multitude-no less!
A host of faces, me besieging, dumb
In the lone castle of my mournfulness!
Had then my mother given the word I sent,
Gathering my dear ones from the shining press?
And had these others their love-aidance lent

For full assurance of the pardon prayed?
Would they concentrate love, with sweet intent,
On my self-love, to blast the evil shade?
Ah, perfect vision! pledge of endless hope!
Oh army of the holy spirit, arrayed
In comfort's panoply! For words I grope-
For clouds to catch your radiant dawn, my own,
And tell your coming! From the highest cope
Of blue, down to my roof-breach came a cone
Of faces and their eyes on love's will borne,
Bright heads down-bending like the forward blown,
Heavy with ripeness, golden ears of corn,
By gentle wind on crowded harvest-field,
All gazing toward my prison-hut forlorn
As if with power of eyes they would have healed
My troubled heart, making it like their own
In which the bitter fountain had been sealed,
And the life-giving water flowed alone!

XVI.

With what I thus beheld, glorified then,
'God, let me love my fill and pass!' I sighed,
And dead, for love had almost died again.
'O fathers, brothers, I am yours!' I cried;
'O mothers, sisters. I am nothing now
Save as I am yours, and in you sanctified!
O men, O women, of the peaceful brow,
And infinite abysses in the eyes
Whence God's ineffable gazes on me, how
Care ye for me, impassioned and unwise?
Oh ever draw my heart out after you!
Ever, O grandeur, thus before me rise
And I need nothing, not even for love will sue!
I am no more, and love is all in all!
Henceforth there is, there can be nothing new-
All things are always new!' Then, like the fall
Of a steep avalanche, my joy fell steep:
Up in my spirit rose as it were the call
Of an old sorrow from an ancient deep;
For, with my eyes fixed on the eyes of him
Whom I had loved before I learned to creep-

God's vicar in his twilight nursery dim
To gather us to the higher father's knee-
I saw a something fill their azure rim
That caught him worlds and years away from me;
And like a javelin once more through me passed
The pang that pierced me walking on the sea:
'O saints,' I cried, 'must loss be still the last?'

XVII.

When I said this, the cloud of witnesses
Turned their heads sideways, and the cloud grew dim
I saw their faces half, but now their bliss
Gleamed low, like the old moon in the new moon's rim.
Then as I gazed, a better kind of light
On every outline 'gan to glimmer and swim,
Faint as the young moon threadlike on the night,
Just born of sunbeams trembling on her edge:
'Twas a great cluster of profiles in sharp white.
Had some far dawn begun to drive a wedge
Into the night, and cleave the clinging dark?
I saw no moon or star, token or pledge
Of light, save that manifold silvery mark,
The shining title of each spirit-book.
Whence came that light? Sudden, as if a spark
Of vital touch had found some hidden nook
Where germs of potent harmonies lay prest,
And their outbursting life old Aether shook,
Rose, as in prayer to lingering promised guest,
From that great cone of faces such a song,
Instinct with hope's harmonical unrest,
That with sore weeping, and the cry 'How long?'
I bore my part because I could not sing.
And as they sang, the light more clear and strong
Bordered their faces, till the glory-sting
I could almost no more encounter and bear;
Light from their eyes, like water from a spring,
Flowed; on their foreheads reigned their flashing hair;
I saw the light from eyes I could not see.
'He comes! he comes!' they sang, 'comes to our prayer!'
'Oh my poor heart, if only it were
He!

I cried. Thereat the faces moved! those eyes
Were turning on me! In rushed ecstasy,
And woke me to the light of lower skies.

XVIII.

'What matter,' said I, 'whether clank of chain
Or over-bliss wakes up to bitterness!'
Stung with its loss, I called the vision vain.
Yet feeling life grown larger, suffering less,
Sleep's ashes from my eyelids I did brush.
The room was veiled, that morning should not press
Upon the slumber which had stayed the rush
Of ebbing life; I looked into the gloom:
Upon her brow the dawn's first grayest flush,
And on her cheek pale hope's reviving bloom,
Sat, patient watcher, darkling and alone,
She who had lifted me from many a tomb!
One then was left me of Love's radiant cone!
Its light on her dear face, though faint and wan,
Was shining yet-a dawn upon it thrown
From the far coming of the Son of Man!

XIX.

In every forehead now I see a sky
Catching the dawn; I hear the wintriest breeze
About me blow the news the Lord is nigh.
Long is the night, dark are the polar seas,
Yet slanting suns ascend the northern hill.
Round Spring's own steps the oozy waters freeze
But hold them not. Dreamers are sleeping still,
But labourers, light-stung, from their slumber start:
Faith sees the ripening ears with harvest fill
When but green blades the clinging earth-clods part.

XX.

Lord, I have spoken a poor parable,
In which I would have said thy name alone
Is the one secret lying in Truth's well,

Thy voice the hidden charm in every tone,
Thy face the heart of every flower on earth,
Its vision the one hope; for every moan
Thy love the cure! O sharer of the birth
Of little children seated on thy knee!
O human God! I laugh with sacred mirth
To think how all the laden shall go free;
For, though the vision tarry, in healing ruth
One morn the eyes that shone in Galilee
Will dawn upon them, full of grace and truth,
And thy own love-the vivifying core
Of every love in heart of age or youth,
Of every hope that sank 'neath burden sore!

George MacDonald

Song

I was very cold
In the summer weather;
The sun shone all his gold,
But I was very cold-
Alas, we were grown old,
Love and I together!
Oh, but I was cold
In the summer weather!

Sudden I grew warmer
Though the brooks were frozen:
'Truly, scorn did harm her!'
I said, and I grew warmer;
'Better men the charmer
Knows at least a dozen!'
I said, and I grew warmer
Though the brooks were frozen.

Spring sits on her nest,
Daisies and white clover;
And my heart at rest
Lies in the spring's young nest:
My love she loves me best,
And the frost is over!
Spring sits on her nest,
Daisies and white clover!

George MacDonald

Song Of A Poor Pilgrim

Roses all the rosy way!
Roses to the rosier west
Where the roses of the day
Cling to night's unrosy breast!

Thou who mak'st the roses, why
Give to every leaf a thorn?
On thy rosy highway I
Still am by thy roses torn!

Pardon! I will not mistake
These good thorns that make me fret!
Goads to urge me, stings to wake,
For my freedom they are set.

Yea, on one steep mountain-side,
Climbing to a fancied fold,
Roses grasped had let me slide
But the thorns did keep their hold.

Out of darkness light is born,
Out of weakness make me strong:
One glad day will every thorn
Break into a rose of song.

Though like sparrow sit thy bird
Lonely on the house-top dark,
By the rosy dawning stirred
Up will soar thy praising lark;

Roses, roses all his song!
Roses in a gorgeous feast!
Roses in a royal throng,
Surging, rosing from the east!

George MacDonald

Song Of The Innocents

Merry, merry we well may be,
For Jesus Christ is come down to see:
Long before, at the top of the stair,
He set our angels a waiting there,
Waiting hither and thither to fly,
Tending the children of the sky,
Lest they dash little feet against big stones,
And tumble down and break little bones;
For the path is rough, and we must not roam;
We have learned to walk, and must follow him home!

George MacDonald

Song Of The Saints And Angels

January 26, 1885

Gordon, the self-refusing,
Gordon, the lover of God,
Gordon, the good part choosing,
Welcome along the road!

Thou knowest the man, O Father!
To do thy will he ran;
Men's praises he did not gather:
There is scarce such another man!

Thy black sheep's faithful shepherd
Who knew not how to flee,
Is torn by the desert leopard,
And comes wounded home to thee!

Home he is coming the faster
That the way he could not miss:
In thy arms, oh take him, Master,
And heal him with a kiss!

Then give him a thousand cities
To rule till their evils cease,
And their wailing minor ditties
Die in a psalm of peace.

George MacDonald

Song Of The Waiting Dead

With us there is no gray fearing,
With us no aching for lack!
For the morn it is always nearing,
And the night is at our back.
At times a song will fall dumb,
A thought-bell burst in a sigh,
But no one says, 'He will not come!'
She says, 'He is almost nigh!'

The thing you call a sorrow
Is our delight on its way:
We know that the coming morrow
Comes on the wheels of to-day!
Our Past is a child asleep;
Delay is ripening the kiss;
The rising tear we will not weep
Until it flow for bliss.

George MacDonald

Song-Prayer: After King David

I shall be satisfied
With the seeing of thy face.
When I awake, wide-eyed,
I shall be satisfied
With what this life did hide,
The one supernal grace!
I shall be satisfied
With the seeing of thy face.

George MacDonald

Songs Of The Autumn Days

I.

We bore him through the golden land,
One early harvest morn;
The corn stood ripe on either hand-
He knew all about the corn.

How shall the harvest gathered be
Without him standing by?
Without him walking on the lea,
The sky is scarce a sky.

The year's glad work is almost done;
The land is rich in fruit;
Yellow it floats in air and sun-
Earth holds it by the root.

Why should earth hold it for a day
When harvest-time is come?
Death is triumphant o'er decay,
And leads the ripened home.

II.

And though the sun be not so warm,
His shining is not lost;
Both corn and hope, of heart and farm,
Lie hid from coming frost.

The sombre woods are richly sad,
Their leaves are red and gold:
Are thoughts in solemn splendour clad
Signs that we men grow old?

Strange odours haunt the doubtful brain
From fields and days gone by;
And mournful memories again
Are born, are loved, and die.

The mornings clear, the evenings cool
Foretell no wintry wars;
The day of dying leaves is full,
The night of glowing stars.

III.

'Tis late before the sun will rise,
And early he will go;
Gray fringes hang from the gray skies,
And wet the ground below.

Red fruit has followed golden corn;
The leaves are few and sere;
My thoughts are old as soon as born,
And chill with coming fear.

The winds lie sick; no softest breath
Floats through the branches bare;
A silence as of coming death
Is growing in the air.

But what must fade can bear to fade-
Was born to meet the ill:
Creep on, old Winter, deathly shade!
We sorrow, and are still.

IV.

There is no longer any heaven
To glorify our clouds;
The rising vapours downward driven
Come home in palls and shrouds.

The sun himself is ill bested
A heavenly sign to show;
His radiance, dimmed to glowing red,
Can hardly further go.

An earthy damp, a churchyard gloom,
Pervade the moveless air;
The year is sinking to its tomb,
And death is everywhere.

But while sad thoughts together creep,
Like bees too cold to sting,
God's children, in their beds asleep,
Are dreaming of the spring.

George MacDonald

Songs Of The Autumn Nights

I.

O night, send up the harvest moon
To walk about the fields,
And make of midnight magic noon
On lonely tarns and wealds.

In golden ranks, with golden crowns,
All in the yellow land,
Old solemn kings in rustling gowns,
The shocks moon-charmed stand.

Sky-mirror she, afloat in space,
Beholds our coming morn:
Her heavenly joy hath such a grace,
It ripens earthly corn;

Like some lone saint with upward eyes,
Lost in the deeps of prayer:
The people still their prayers and sighs,
And gazing ripen there.

II.

So, like the corn moon-ripened last,
Would I, weary and gray,
On golden memories ripen fast,
And ripening pass away.

In an old night so let me die;
A slow wind out of doors;
A waning moon low in the sky;
A vapour on the moors;

A fire just dying in the gloom;
Earth haunted all with dreams;
A sound of waters in the room;
A mirror's moony gleams;

And near me, in the sinking night,
More thoughts than move in me-
Forgiving wrong, and loving right,
And waiting till I see.

III.

Across the stubble glooms the wind;
High sails the lated crow;
The west with pallid green is lined;
Fog tracks the river's flow.

My heart is cold and sad; I moan,
Yet care not for my grief;
The summer fervours all are gone;
The roses are but leaf.

Old age is coming, frosty, hoar;
The snows of time will fall;
My jubilation, dream-like, no more
Returns for any call!

O lapsing heart! thy feeble strain
Sends up the blood so spare,
That my poor withering autumn brain
Sees autumn everywhere!

IV.

Lord of my life! if I am blind,
I reckon not-thou canst see;
I will wait my summer mind,
When I am sure of thee!

I
made no brave bright suns arise,
Veiled up no sweet gray eyes;

I

hung no rose-lamps, lit no eyes,
Sent out no windy leaves!

I said not 'I will cast a charm
These gracious forms around;'
My heart with unwilled love grew warm;
I took but what I found!

When cold winds range my winter-night,
Be thou my summer-door;
Keep for me all my young delight,
Till I am old no more.

George MacDonald

Songs Of The Spring Days

I.

A gentle wind, of western birth
On some far summer sea,
Wakes daisies in the wintry earth,
Wakes hopes in wintry me.

The sun is low; the paths are wet,
And dance with frolic hail;
The trees-their spring-time is not yet-
Swing sighing in the gale.

Young gleams of sunshine peep and play;
Clouds shoulder in between;
I scarce believe one coming day
The earth will all be green.

The north wind blows, and blasts, and raves,
And flaps his snowy wing:
Back! toss thy bergs on arctic waves;
Thou canst not bar our spring.

II.

Up comes the primrose, wondering;
The snowdrop droopeth by;
The holy spirit of the spring
Is working silently.

Soft-breathing breezes woo and wile
The later children out;
O'er woods and farms a sunny smile
Is flickering about.

The earth was cold, hard-hearted, dull;
To death almost she slept:
Over her, heaven grew beautiful,
And forth her beauty crept.

Showers yet must fall, and waters grow
Dark-wan with furrowing blast;
But suns will shine, and soft winds blow,
Till the year flowers at last.

III.

The sky is smiling over me,
Hath smiled away the frost;
White daisies star the sky-like lea,
With buds the wood's embossed.

Troops of wild flowers gaze at the sky
Up through the latticed boughs;
Till comes the green cloud by and by,
It is not time to house.

Yours is the day, sweet bird-sing on;
The winter is forgot;
Like an ill dream 'tis over and gone:
Pain that is past, is not.

Joy that was past is yet the same:
If care the summer brings,
'Twill only be another name
For love that broods, not sings.

IV.

Blow on me, wind, from west and south;
Sweet summer-spirit, blow!
Come like a kiss from dear child's mouth,
Who knows not what I know.

The earth's perfection dawneth soon;
Ours lingereth alway;
We have a morning, not a noon;
Spring, but no summer gay.

Rose-blotted eve, gold-branded morn
Crown soon the swift year's life:
In us a higher hope is born,
And claims a longer strife.

Will heaven be an eternal spring
With summer at the door?
Or shall we one day tell its king
That we desire no more?

George MacDonald

Songs Of The Spring Nights

I.

The flush of green that dyed the day
Hath vanished in the moon;
Flower-scents float stronger out, and play
An unborn, coming tune.

One southern eve like this, the dew
Had cooled and left the ground;
The moon hung half-way from the blue,
No disc, but conglobed round;

Light-leaved acacias, by the door,
Bathed in the balmy air,
Clusters of blossomed moonlight bore,
And breathed a perfume rare;

Great gold-flakes from the starry sky
Fell flashing on the deep:
One scent of moist earth floating by,
Almost it made me weep.

II.

Those gorgeous stars were not my own,
They made me alien go!
The mother o'er her head had thrown
A veil I did not know!

The moon-blanced fields that seaward went,
The palm-flung, dusky shades,
Bore flowering grasses, knotted, bent,
No slender, spear-like blades.

I longed to see the starry host
Afar in fainter blue;
But plenteous grass I missed the most,
With daisies glimmering through.

The common things were not the same!
I longed across the foam:
From dew-damp earth that odour came-
I knew the world my home.

III.

The stars are glad in gulfy space-
Friendly the dark to them!
From day's deep mine, their hiding-place,
Night woeth every gem.

A thing for faith 'mid labour's jar,
When up the day is furled,
Shines in the sky a light afar,
Mayhap a home-filled world.

Sometimes upon the inner sky
We catch a doubtful shine:
A mote or star? A flash in the eye
Or jewel of God's mine?

A star to us, all glimmer and glance,
May teem with seraphim:
A fancy to our ignorance
May be a truth to Him.

IV.

The night is damp and warm and still,
And soft with summer dreams;
The buds are bursting at their will,
And shy the half moon gleams.

My soul is cool, as bathed within
By dews that silent weep-
Like child that has confessed his sin,
And now will go to sleep.

My body ages, form and hue;
But when the spring winds blow,
My spirit stirs and buds anew,
Younger than long ago.

Lord, make me more a child, and more,
Till Time his own end bring,
And out of every winter sore
I pass into thy spring.

George MacDonald

Songs Of The Summer Days

I.

A glory on the chamber wall!
A glory in the brain!
Triumphant floods of glory fall
On heath, and wold, and plain.

Earth lieth still in hopeless bliss;
She has, and seeks no more;
Forgets that days come after this,
Forgets the days before.

Each ripple waves a flickering fire
Of gladness, as it runs;
They laugh and flash, and leap and spire,
And toss ten thousand suns.

But hark! low, in the world within,
One sad aeolian tone:
'Ah! shall we ever, ever win
A summer of our own?'

II.

A morn of winds and swaying trees-
Earth's jubilation rushing out!
The birds are fighting with the breeze;
The waters heave about.

White clouds are swept across the sky,
Their shadows o'er the graves;
Purpling the green, they float and fly
Athwart the sunny waves.

The long grass-an earth-rooted sea-
Mimics the watery strife.
To boat or horse? Wild motion we
Shall find harmonious life.

But whither? Roll and sweep and bend
Suffice for Nature's part;
But motion to an endless end
Is needful for our heart.

III.

The morn awakes like brooding dove,
With outspread wings of gray;
Her feathery clouds close in above,
And roof a sober day.

No motion in the deeps of air!
No trembling in the leaves!
A still contentment everywhere,
That neither laughs nor grieves!

A film of sheeted silver gray
Shuts in the ocean's hue;
White-winged feluccas cleave their way
In paths of gorgeous blue.

Dream on, dream on, O dreamy day,
Thy very clouds are dreams!
Yon child is dreaming far away-
He is not where he seems.

IV.

The lark is up, his faith is strong,
He mounts the morning air;
Lone voice of all the creature throng,
He sings the morning prayer.

Slow clouds from north and south appear,
Black-based, with shining slope;
In sullen forms their might they rear,
And climb the vaulted cope.

A lightning flash, a thunder boom!-

Nor sun nor clouds are there;
A single, all-pervading gloom
Hangs in the heavy air.

A weeping, wasting afternoon
Weighs down the aspiring corn;
Amber and red, the sunset soon
Leads back to golden morn.

George MacDonald

Songs Of The Summer Nights

I.

The dreary wind of night is out,
Homeless and wandering slow;
O'er pale seas moaning like a doubt,
It breathes, but will not blow.

It sighs from out the helpless past,
Where doleful things abide;
Gray ghosts of dead thought sail aghast
Across its ebbing tide.

O'er marshy pools it faints and flows,
All deaf and dumb and blind;
O'er moor and mountain aimless goes-
The listless woesome wind!

Nay, nay!-breathe on, sweet wind of night!
The sigh is all in me;
Flow, fan, and blow, with gentle might,
Until I wake and see.

II.

The west is broken into bars
Of orange, gold, and gray;
Gone is the sun, fast come the stars,
And night infolds the day.

My boat glides with the gliding stream,
Following adown its breast
One flowing mirrored amber gleam,
The death-smile of the west.

The river moves; the sky is still,
No ceaseless quest it knows:
Thy bosom swells, thy fair eyes fill
At sight of its repose.

The ripples run; all patient sit
The stars above the night.
In shade and gleam the waters flit:
The heavens are changeless bright!

III.

Alone I lie, buried amid
The long luxurious grass;
The bats flit round me, born and hid
In twilight's wavering mass.

The fir-top floats, an airy isle,
High o'er the mossy ground;
Harmonious silence breathes the while
In scent instead of sound.

The flaming rose glooms swarthy red;
The borage gleams more blue;
Dim-starred with white, a flowery bed
Glimmers the rich dusk through.

Hid in the summer grass I lie,
Lost in the great blue cave;
My body gazes at the sky,
And measures out its grave.

IV.

What art thou, gathering dusky cool,
In slow gradation fine?
Death's lovely shadow, flickering full
Of eyes about to shine.

When weary Day goes down below,
Thou leanest o'er his grave,
Revolving all the vanished show
The gracious splendour gave.

Or art thou not she rather-say-
Dark-browed, with luminous eyes,
Of whom is born the mighty Day,
That fights and saves and dies?

For action sleeps with sleeping light;
Calm thought awakes with thee:
The soul is then a summer night,
With stars that shine and see.

George MacDonald

Songs Of The Winter Days

I.

The sky has turned its heart away,
The earth its sorrow found;
The daisies turn from childhood's play,
And creep into the ground.

The earth is black and cold and hard;
Thin films of dry white ice,
Across the rugged wheel-tracks barred,
The children's feet entice.

Dark flows the stream, as if it mourned
The winter in the land;
With idle icicles adorned,
That mill-wheel soon will stand.

But, friends, to say 'tis cold, and part,
Is to let in the cold;
We'll make a summer of the heart,
And laugh at winter old.

II.

With vague dead gleam the morning white
Comes through the window-panes;
The clouds have fallen all the night,
Without the noise of rains.

As of departing, unseen ghost,
Footprints go from the door;
The man himself must long be lost
Who left those footprints hoar!

Yet follow thou; tread down the snow;
Leave all the road behind;
Heed not the winds that steely blow,
Heed not the sky unkind;

For though the glittering air grow dark,
The snow will shine till morn;
And long ere then one dear home-spark
Will winter laugh to scorn.

III.

Oh wildly wild the roaring blast
Torments the fallen snow!
The wintry storms are up at last,
And care not how they go!

In foam-like wreaths the water hoar,
Rapt whistling in the air,
Gleams through the dismal twilight frore;
A region in despair,

A spectral ocean lies outside,
Torn by a tempest dark;
Its ghostly billows, dim descried,
Leap on my stranded bark.

Death-sheeted figures, long and white,
Rave driving through the spray;
Or, bosomed in the ghastly night,
Shriek doom-cries far away.

IV.

A morning clear, with frosty light
From sunbeams late and low;
They shine upon the snow so white,
And shine back from the snow.

Down tusks of ice one drop will go,
Nor fall: at sunny noon
'Twill hang a diamond-fade, and grow
An opal for the moon.

And when the bright sad sun is low

Behind the mountain-dome,
A twilight wind will come and blow
Around the children's home,

And puff and waft the powdery snow,
As feet unseen did pass;
While, waiting in its bed below,
Green lies the summer grass.

George MacDonald

Songs Of The Winter Nights

I.

Back shining from the pane, the fire
Seems outside in the snow:
So love set free from love's desire
Lights grief of long ago.

The dark is thinned with snow-sheen fine,
The earth bedecked with moon;
Out on the worlds we surely shine
More radiant than in June!

In the white garden lies a heap
As brown as deep-dug mould:
A hundred partridges that keep
Each other from the cold.

My father gives them sheaves of corn,
For shelter both and food:
High hope in me was early born,
My father was so good.

II.

The frost weaves ferns and sultry palms
Across my clouded pane;
Weaves melodies of ancient psalms
All through my passive brain.

Quiet ecstasy fills heart and head:
My father is in the room;
The very curtains of my bed
Are from Love's sheltering loom!

The lovely vision melts away;
I am a child no more;
Work rises from the floor of play;
Duty is at the door.

But if I face with courage stout
The labour and the din,
Thou, Lord, wilt let my mind go out
My heart with thee stay in.

III.

Up to my ear my soul doth run-
Her other door is dark;
There she can see without the sun,
And there she sits to mark.

I hear the dull unheeding wind
Mumble o'er heath and wold;
My fancy leaves my brain behind,
And floats into the cold.

Like a forgotten face that lies
One of the speechless crowd,
The earth lies spent, with frozen eyes,
White-folded in her shroud.

O'er leafless woods and cornless farms,
Dead rivers, fireless thorps,
I brood, the heart still throbbing warm
In Nature's wintered corpse.

IV.

To all the world mine eyes are blind:
Their drop serene is-night,
With stores of snow piled up the wind
An awful airy height.

And yet 'tis but a mote in the eye:
The simple faithful stars
Beyond are shining, careless high,
Nor heed our storms and jars.

And when o'er storm and jar I climb-

Beyond life's atmosphere,
I shall behold the lord of time
And space-of world and year.

Oh vain, far quest!-not thus my heart
Shall ever find its goal!
I turn me home-and there thou art,
My Father, in my soul!

George MacDonald

Song-Sermon

Lord, what is man
That thou art mindful of him!
Though in creation's van,
Lord, what is man!
He wills less than he can,
Lets his ideal scoff him!
Lord, what is man
That thou art mindful of him!

George MacDonald

Sonnet: A. M. D.

Methinks I see thee, lying straight and low,
Silent and darkling, in thy earthy bed,
The mighty strength in which I trusted, fled,
The long arms lying careless of kiss or blow;
On thy tall form I see the night-robe flow
Down from the pale, composed face-thy head
Crowned with its own dark curls: though thou wast dead,
They dressed thee as for sleep, and left thee so!
My heart, with cares and questionings oppressed,
Not oft since thou didst leave us turns to thee;
But wait, my brother, till I too am dead,
And thou shalt find that heart more true, more free,
More ready in thy love to take its rest,
Than when we lay together in one bed.

George MacDonald

Spoken Of Several Philosophers

I pray you, all ye men who put your trust
In moulds and systems and well-tackled gear,
Holding that Nature lives from year to year
In one continual round because she must-
Set me not down, I pray you, in the dust
Of all these centuries, like a pot of beer-
A pewter-pot disconsolately clear,
Which holds a potful, as is right and just!
I will grow clamorous-by the rood, I will,
If thus ye use me like a pewter pot!
Good friend, thou art a toper and a sot-
will not be the lead to hold thy swill,
Nor any lead: I will arise and spill
Thy silly beverage-spill it piping hot!

George MacDonald

Spring Song

Days of old,
Ye are not dead, though gone from me;
Ye are not cold,
But like the summer-birds fled o'er some sea.

The sun brings back the swallows fast
O'er the sea;
When he cometh at the last,
The days of old come back to me.

George MacDonald

Steadfast

Here stands a giant stone from whose far top
Comes down the sounding water: let me gaze
Till every sense of man and human ways
Is wrecked and quenched for ever, and I drop
Into the whirl of time, and without stop
Pass downward thus! Again my eyes I raise
To thee, dark rock; and through the mist and haze
My strength returns when I behold thy prop
Gleam stern and steady through the wavering wrack.
Surely thy strength is human, and like me
Thou bearest loads of thunder on thy back!
And, lo, a smile upon thy visage black-
A breezy tuft of grass which I can see
Waving serenely from a sunlit crack!

George MacDonald

Subsidy

If thou wouldst live the Truth in very deed,
Thou hast thy joy, but thou hast more of pain.
Others will live in peace, and thou be fain
To bargain with despair, and in thy need
To make thy meal upon the scantiest weed.
These palaces, for thee they stand in vain;
Thine is a ruinous hut, and oft the rain
Shall drench thee in the midnight; yea, the speed
Of earth outstrip thee, pilgrim, while thy feet
Move slowly up the heights. Yet will there come
Through the time-rents about thy moving cell,

Shot from the Truth's own bow, and flaming sweet,

An arrow for despair, and oft the hum
Of far-off populous realms where spirits dwell.

George MacDonald

Sudden Calm

There is a bellowing in me, as of might
Unfleshed and visionless, mangling the air
With horrible convulse, as if it bare
The cruel weight of worlds, but could not fight
With the thick-dropping clods, and could but bite
A vapour-cloud! Oh, I will climb the stair
Of the great universe, and lay me there
Even at the threshold of his gate, despite
The tempest, and the weakness, and the rush
Of this quick crowding on me!-Oh, I dream!
Now I am sailing swiftly, as we seem
To do in sleep! and I can hear the gush
Of a melodious wave that carries me
On, on for ever to eternity!

George MacDonald

Summer

Summer, sweet Summer, many-fingered Summer!
We hold thee very dear, as well we may:
It is the kernel of the year to-day-
All hail to thee! thou art a welcome comer!
If every insect were a fairy drummer,
And I a fifer that could deftly play,
We'd give the old Earth such a roundelay
That she would cast all thought of labour from her.-
Ah! what is this upon my window-pane?
Some sulky, drooping cloud comes pouting up,
Stamping its glittering feet along the plain!-
Well, I will let that idle fancy drop!
Oh, how the spouts are bubbling with the rain!
And all the earth shines like a silver cup!

George MacDonald

Summer Song

'Murmuring, 'twixt a murmur and moan,
Many a tune in a single tone,
For every ear with a secret true-
The sea-shell wants to whisper to you.'

'Yes-I hear it-far and faint,
Like thin-drawn prayer of drowsy saint;
Like the muffled sounds of a summer rain;
Like the wash of dreams in a weary brain.'

'By smiling lip and fixed eye,
You are hearing a song within the sigh:
The murmurer has many a lovely phrase-
Tell me, darling, the words it says.'

'I hear a wind on a boatless main
Sigh like the last of a vanishing pain;
On the dreaming waters dreams the moon-
But I hear no words in the doubtful tune.'

'If it tell thee not that I love thee well,
'Tis a senseless, wrinkled, ill-curved shell:
If it be not of love, why sigh or sing?
'Tis a common, mechanical, stupid thing!'

'It murmurs, it whispers, with prophet voice
Of a peace that comes, of a sealed choice;
It says not a word of your love to me,
But it tells me I love you eternally.'

George MacDonald

Sun And Moon

First came the red-eyed sun as I did wake;
He smote me on the temples and I rose,
Casting the night aside and all its woes;
And I would spurn my idleness, and take
My own wild journey even like him, and shake
The pillars of all doubt with lusty blows,
Even like himself when his rich glory goes
Right through the stalwart fogs that part and break.
But ere my soul was ready for the fight,
His solemn setting mocked me in the west;
And as I trembled in the lifting night,
The white moon met me, and my heart confess'd
A mellow wisdom in her silent youth,
Which fed my hope with fear, and made my strength a truth.

George MacDonald

Sunday

December 28, 1879

A dim, vague shrinking haunts my soul,
My spirit bodeth ill-
As some far-off restraining bank
Had burst, and waters, many a rank,
Were marching on my hill;

As if I had no fire within
For thoughts to sit about;
As if I had no flax to spin,
No lamp to lure the good things in
And keep the bad things out.

The wind, south-west, raves in the pines
That guard my cottage round;
The sea-waves fall in stormy lines
Below the sandy cliffs and chines,
And swell the roaring sound.

The misty air, the bellowing wind
Not often trouble me;
The storm that's outside of the mind
Doth oftener wake my heart to find
More peace and liberty.

Why is not such my fate to-night?
Chance is not lord of things!
Man were indeed a hapless wight
Things, thoughts occurring as they might-
Chaotic wallowings!

The man of moods might merely say
As by the fire he sat,
'I am low spirited to-day;
I must do something, work or play,
Lest care should kill the cat!'

Not such my saw: I was not meant

To be the sport of things!
The mood has meaning and intent,
And my dull heart is humbly bent
To have the truth it brings.

This sense of needed shelter round,
This frequent mental start
Show what a poor life mine were found,
To what a dead self I were bound,
How feeble were my heart,

If I who think did stand alone
Centre to what I thought,
A brain within a box of bone,
A king on a deserted throne,
A something that was nought!

A being without power to be,
Or any power to cease;
Whom objects but compelled to see,
Whose trouble was a windblown sea,
A windless sea his peace!

This very sadness makes me think
How readily I might
Be driven to reason's farthest brink,
Then over it, and sudden sink
In ghastly waves of night.

It makes me know when I am glad
'Tis thy strength makes me strong;
But for thy bliss I should be sad,
But for thy reason should be mad,
But for thy right be wrong.

Around me spreads no empty waste,
No lordless host of things;
My restlessness but seeks thy rest;
My little good doth seek thy best,
My needs thy ministerings.

'Tis this, this only makes me safe-

I am, immediate,
Of one that lives; I am no waif
That haggard waters toss and chafe,
But of a royal fate,

The born-child of a Power that lives
Because it will and can,
A Love whose slightest motion gives,
A Freedom that forever strives
To liberate his Man.

I live not on the circling air,
Live not by daily food;
I live not even by thinkings fair,
I hold my very being there
Where God is pondering good.

Because God lives I live; because
He thinks, I also think;
I am dependent on no laws
But on himself, and without pause;
Between us hangs no link.

The man that lives he knows not how
May well fear any mouse!
I should be trembling this same now
If I did think, my Father, thou
Wast nowhere in the house!

O Father, lift me on thine arm,
And hold me close to thee;
Lift me into thy breathing warm,
Then cast me, and I fear no harm,
Into creation's sea!

George MacDonald

Sweet Peril

Alas, how easily things go wrong!
A sigh too much, a kiss too long,
And there follows a mist and weeping rain,
And life is never the same again.

Alas, how hardly things go right!
Tis hard to watch in the summer night,
For the sigh will come, and the kiss will stay,
And the summer night is a winter day.

And yet how easily things to right,
If the sigh and a kiss of a summer's night
Come deep from the soul in the stronger ray
That is born in the light of a winter's day.

And things can never go badly wrong
If the heart be true and the love be strong.
For the mist, if it comes, or the weeping rain
Will be changed by the love into sunshine again.

George MacDonald

Sympathy

Grief held me silent in my seat;
I neither moved nor smiled:
Joy held her silent at my feet,
My shining lily-child.

She raised her face and looked in mine;
She deemed herself denied;
The door was shut, there was no shine;
Poor she was left outside!

Once, twice, three times, with infant grace
Her lips my name did mould;
Her face was pulling at my face-
She was but ten months old.

I saw; the sight rebuked my sighs;
It made me think-Does God
Need help from his poor children's eyes
To ease him of his load?

Ah, if he did, how seldom then
The Father would be glad!
If comfort lay in the eyes of men,
He little comfort had!

We cry to him in evil case,
When comfort sore we lack;
And when we troubled seek his face,
Consoled he sends us back;

Nor waits for prayer to rise and climb-
He wakes the sleeping prayer;
He is our father all the time,
And servant everywhere.

I looked not up; foreboding hid
Kept down my heart the while;
'Twas he looked up; my Father did
Smile in my infant's smile.

George MacDonald

Tell Me

'Traveller, what lies over the hill?
Traveller, tell to me:
Tip-toe-high on the window-sill
Over I cannot see.'

'My child, a valley green lies there,
Lovely with trees, and shy;
And a tiny brook that says, 'Take care,
Or I'll drown you by and by!''

'And what comes next?'-'A little town,
And a towering hill again;
More hills and valleys up and down,
And a river now and then.'

'And what comes next?'-'A lonely moor
Without one beaten way,
And slow clouds drifting dull before
A wind that will not stay.'

'And then?'-'Dark rocks and yellow sand,
Blue sea and a moaning tide.'
'And then?'-'More sea, and then more land,
With rivers deep and wide.'

'And then?'-'Oh, rock and mountain and vale,
Ocean and shores and men,
Over and over, a weary tale,
And round to your home again!'

'And is that all? From day to day,
Like one with a long chain bound,
Should I walk and walk and not get away,
But go always round and round?'

'No, no; I have not told you the best,
I have not told you the end:
If you want to escape, away in the west
You will see a stair ascend,

'Built of all colours of lovely stones,
A stair up into the sky
Where no one is weary, and no one moans,
Or wishes to be laid by.'

'Is it far away?'-'I do not know:
You must fix your eyes thereon,
And travel, travel through thunder and snow,
Till the weary way is gone.

'All day, though you never see it shine,
You must travel nor turn aside,
All night you must keep as straight a line
Through moonbeams or darkness wide.'

'When I am older!'-'Nay, not so!'
'I have hardly opened my eyes!'
'He who to the old sunset would go,
Starts best with the young sunrise.'

'Is the stair right up? is it very steep?'
'Too steep for you to climb;
You must lie at the foot of the glorious heap
And patient wait your time.'

'How long?'-'Nay, that I cannot tell.'
'In wind, and rain, and frost?'
'It may be so; and it is well
That you should count the cost.

'Pilgrims from near and from distant lands
Will step on you lying there;
But a wayfaring man with wounded hands
Will carry you up the stair.'

George MacDonald

That Holy Thing

They all were looking for a king
To slay their foes, and lift them high:
Thou cam'st a little baby thing
That made a woman cry.

O son of man, to right my lot
Nought but thy presence can avail;
Yet on the road thy wheels are not,
Nor on the sea thy sail!

My fancied ways why shouldst thou heed?
Thou com'st down thine own secret stair:
Com'st down to answer all my need,
Yea, every bygone prayer!

George MacDonald

The Asthmatic To The Satan That Binds Him

Satan, avaunt!
Nay, take thine hour,
Thou canst not daunt,
Thou hast no power;
Be welcome to thy nest,
Though it be in my breast.

Burrow amain;
Dig like a mole;
Fill every vein
With half-burnt coal;
Puff the keen dust about,
And all to choke me out.

Fill music's ways
With creaking cries,
That no loud praise
May climb the skies;
And on my labouring chest
Lay mountains of unrest.

My slumber steep
In dreams of haste,
That only sleep,
No rest, I taste-
With stiflings, rimes of rote,
And fingers on my throat.

Satan, thy might
I do defy;
Live core of night
I patient lie:
A wind comes up the gray
Will blow thee clean away.

Christ's angel, Death,
All radiant white,
With one cold breath
Will scare thee quite,

And give my lungs an air
As fresh as answered prayer.

So, Satan, do
Thy worst with me
Until the True
Shall set me free,
And end what he began,
By making me a man.

George MacDonald

The Auld Fisher

There was an auld fisher, he sat by the wa',
An' luikit oot ower the sea;
The bairnies war playin, he smil't on them a',
But the tear stude in his e'e.

An' it's-oh to win awa, awa!
An' it's, oh to win awa
Whaur the bairns come hame, an' the wives they bide,
An' God is the father o' a'!

Jocky an' Jeamy an' Tammy oot there
A' i' the boatie gaed doon;
An' I'm ower auld to fish ony mair,
Sae I hinna the chance to droon!

An' it's-oh to win awa, awa! &c.

An' Jeannie she grat to ease her hert,
An' she easit hersel awa;
But I'm ower auld for the tears to stert,
An' sae the sighs maun blaw.

An' it's-oh to win awa, awa! &c.

Lord, steer me hame whaur my Lord has steerit,
For I'm tired o' life's rockin sea;
An' dinna be lang, for I'm growin that fearit
'At I'm ablins ower auld to dee!

An' it's-oh to win awa, awa!
An' it's, oh to win awa
Whaur the bairns come hame, an' the wives they bide,

An' God is the father o' a'!

George MacDonald

The Auld Man's Prayer

Lord, I'm an auld man,
An' I'm deein!
An' do what I can
I canna help bein
Some feart at the thoucht!
I'm no what I oucht!
An' thou art sae gran',
Me but an auld man!

I haena gotten muckle
Guid o' the warld;
Though siller a puckle
Thegither I hae harlt,
Noo I maun be rid o' 't,
The ill an' the guid o' 't!
An' I wud-I s' no back frae 't-
Rather put til 't nor tak frae 't!

It's a pity a body
Coudna haud on here,
Puttin cloddy to cloddy
Till he had a bit lan' here!-
But eh I'm forgettin
Whaur the tide's settin!
It'll pusion my prayer
Till it's no worth a hair!

It's awfu, it's awfu
To think 'at I'm gaein
Whaur a' 's ower wi' the lawfu,
Whaur's an en' til a' haein!
It's gruesome to en'
The thing 'at ye ken,
An' gang to begin til
What ye canna see intil!

Thou may weel turn awa,
Lord, an' say it's a shame
'At noo I suld ca'

On thy licht-giein name
Wha my lang life-time
Wud no see a stime!
An' the fac' there's no fleein-
But hae pity-I'm deein!

I'm thine ain efter a'-
The waur shame I'm nae better!
Dinna sen' me awa,
Dinna curse a puir cratur!
I never jist cheatit-
I own I defeatit,
Gart his poverty tell
On him 'at maun sell!

Oh that my probation
Had lain i' some region
Whaur was less consideration
For gear mixt wi' religion!
It's the mixin the twa
'At jist ruins a'!
That kirk's the deil's place
Whaur gear glorifees grace!

I hae learnt nought but ae thing
'At life's but a span!
I hae warslet for naething!
I hae noucht i' my han'!
At the fut o' the stairs
I'm sayin my prayers:-
Lord, lat the auld loon
Confess an' lie doon.

I hae been an ill man-
Micht hae made a guid dog!
I could rin though no stan-
Micht hae won throu a bog!
But 't was ower easy gaein,
An' I set me to playin!
Dinna sen' me awa
Whaur's no licht ava!

Forgie me an' hap me!
I hae been a sharp thorn.
But, oh, dinna drap me!
I'll be coothie the morn!
To my brither John
Oh, lat me atone-
An' to mair I cud name
Gien I'd time to tak blame!

I hae wullt a' my gear
To my cousin Lippit:
She needs 't no a hair,
An' wud haud it grippit!
But I'm thinkin 't 'll be better
To gie 't a bit scatter
Whaur it winna canker
But mak a bit anchor!

Noo I s'try to sit loose
To the warld an' its thrang!
Lord, come intil my hoose,
For Sathan sall gang!
Awa here I sen' him-
Oh, haud the hoose agane him,
Or thou kens what he'll daur-
He'll be back wi' seven waur!

Lord, I knock at thy yett!
I hear the dog yowlin!
Lang latna me wait-
My conscience is growlin!
Whaur but to thee
Wha was broken for me,
But to thee, Lord, sae gran',
Can flee an auld man!

George MacDonald

The Aurora Borealis

Now have I grown a sharpness and an edge
Unto my future nights, and I will cut
Sheer through the ebon gates that yet will shut
On every set of day; or as a sledge
Drawn over snowy plains; where not a hedge
Breaks this Aurora's dancing, nothing but
The one cold Esquimaux' unlikely hut
That swims in the broad moonlight! Lo, a wedge
Of the clean meteor hath been brightly driven
Right home into the fastness of the north!
Anon it quickeneth up into the heaven!
And I with it have clomb and spreaded forth
Upon the crisp and cooling atmosphere!
My soul is all abroad: I cannot find it here!

George MacDonald

The Beloved Disciple

I.

One do I see and twelve; but second there
Methinks I know thee, thou beloved one;
Not from thy nobler port, for there are none
More quiet-featured: some there are who bear
Their message on their brows, while others wear
A look of large commission, nor will shun
The fiery trial, so their work is done;
But thou hast parted with thine eyes in prayer-
Unearthly are they both; and so thy lips
Seem like the porches of the spirit land;
For thou hast laid a mighty treasure by
Unlocked by Him in Nature, and thine eye
Burns with a vision and apocalypse
Thy own sweet soul can hardly understand.

II.

A Boanerges too! Upon my heart
It lay a heavy hour: features like thine
Should glow with other message than the shine
Of the earth-burrowing levin, and the start
That cleaveth horrid gulfs! Awful and swart
A moment stoodest thou, but less divine-
Brawny and clad in ruin-till with mine
Thy heart made answering signals, and apart
Beamed forth thy two rapt eyeballs doubly clear
And twice as strong because thou didst thy duty,
And, though affianced to immortal Beauty,
Hiddest not weakly underneath her veil
The pest of Sin and Death which maketh pale:
Henceforward be thy spirit doubly dear!

George MacDonald

The Bonny, Bonny Dell

Oh! the bonny, bonny dell, whaur the yorlin sings,
Wi' a clip o' the sunshine atween his wings;
Whaur the birks are a' strakit wi' fair munelicht,
And the brume hings its lamps by day and by nicht;
Whaur the burnie comes trottin ower shingle and stane
Liltin bonny havers til 'tsel its lane;
And the sliddery troot wi' ae soop o' its tail
Is ahint the green weed's dark swingin veil!
Oh, the bonny, bonny dell, whaur I sang as I saw
The yorlin, the brume, and the burnie, and a'!

Oh! the bonny, bonny dell, whaur the primroses won,
Luikin oot o' their leaves like wee sons o' the sun;
Whaur the wild roses hing like flickers o' flame,
And fa' at the touch wi' a dainty shame;
Whaur the bee swings ower the white-clovery sod,
And the butterfly flits like a stray thocht o' God;
Whaur, like arrow shot frae life's unseen bow,
The dragon-fly burns the sunlicht throu!
Oh, the bonny, bonny dell, whaur I sang to see
The rose and the primrose, the draigon and bee!

Oh! the bonny, bonny dell, whaur the mune luiks doon
As gien she war hearin a soughless tune,
Whan the flooers and the birdies are a' asleep,
And the verra burnie gangs creepy-creep;
Whaur the corn-craik craiks i' the lang-heidit rye,
And the nicht is the safter for his rouch cry;
Whaur the win' wud fain lie doon on the slope,
And the gloamin waukens the high-reachin hope!
Oh, the bonny, bonny dell, whaur, silent, I felt
The mune and the darkness baith into me melt!

Oh! the bonny, bonny dell, whaur the sun luiks in
Sayin, 'Here awa, there awa, hand awa, Sin!'
Sayin darkness and sorrow a' work for the licht,
And the will o' God was the hert o' the nicht;
Whaur the laverock hings hie, on his ain sang borne,
Wi' bird-shout and tirralee hailin the morn;

Whaur my hert ran ower wi' the lusive bliss
That, come winter, come weather, nocht gaed amiss!
Oh, the bonny, bonny dell, whaur the sun luikit in
Sayin, 'Here awa, there awa, hand awa, Sin!'

Oh! the bonny, bonny dell, whaur aft I wud lie,
Wi' Jeanie aside me sae sweet and sae shy;
Whaur the starry gowans wi' rose-dippit tips
War as white as her cheek and as reid as her lips;
Whaur she spread her gowd hert till she saw that I saw,
Syne fauldit it up and gied me it a';
Whaur o' sunlicht and munelicht she was the queen,
For baith war but middlin without my Jean!
Oh, the bonny, bonny dell, whaur aft I wud lie,
Wi' Jeanie aside me sae sweet and sae shy!

Oh! the bonny, bonny dell, whaur the kirkyard lies
A' day and a' nicht luikin up to the skies;
Whaur the sheep wauken up i' the simmer nicht,
Tak a bite and lie doon, and await the licht;
Whaur the psalms roll ower the grassy heaps;
Whaur the win' comes and moans, and the rain comes and weeps;
Whaur my Jeanie's no lyin in a' the lair,
For she's up and awa up the angels' stair!
Oh, the bonny, bonny dell, whaur the kirkyard lies,
Whaur the stars luik doon, and the nicht-wind sighs!

George MacDonald

The Burnt Offering

Thrice-happy he whose heart, each new-born night,
When old-worn day hath vanished o'er earth's brim,
And he hath laid him down in chamber dim,
Straightway begins to tremble and grow bright,
And loose faint flashes toward the vaulted height
Of the great peace that overshadoweth him:
Keen lambent flames of hope awake and swim
Throughout his soul, touching each point with light!
The great earth under him an altar is,
Upon whose top a sacrifice he lies,
Burning in love's response up to the skies
Whose fire descended first and kindled his:
When slow the flickering flames at length expire,
Sleep's ashes only hide a glowing fire.

George MacDonald

The Carpenter

O Lord, at Joseph's humble bench
Thy hands did handle saw and plane;
Thy hammer nails did drive and clench,
Avoiding knot and humouring grain.

That thou didst seem, thou wast indeed,
In sport thy tools thou didst not use;
Nor, helping hind's or fisher's need,
The labourer's hire, too nice, refuse.

Lord, might I be but as a saw,
A plane, a chisel, in thy hand!-
No, Lord! I take it back in awe,
Such prayer for me is far too grand.

I pray, O Master, let me lie,
As on thy bench the favoured wood;
Thy saw, thy plane, thy chisel ply,
And work me into something good.

No, no; ambition, holy-high,
Urges for more than both to pray:
Come in, O gracious Force, I cry-
O workman, share my shed of clay.

Then I, at bench, or desk, or oar,
With knife or needle, voice or pen,
As thou in Nazareth of yore,
Shall do the Father's will again.

Thus fashioning a workman rare,
O Master, this shall be thy fee:
Home to thy father thou shall bear
Another child made like to thee.

George MacDonald

The Child-Mother

Heavily slumbered noonday bright
Upon the lone field, glory-dight,
A burnished grassy sea:
The child, in gorgeous golden hours,
Through heaven-descended starry flowers,
Went walking on the lea.

Velvety bees make busy hum;
Green flies and striped wasps go and come;
The butterflies gleam white;
Blue-burning, vaporous, to and fro
The dragon-flies like arrows go,
Or hang in moveless flight:-

Not one she followed; like a rill
She wandered on with quiet will;
Received, but did not miss;
Her step was neither quick nor long;
Nought but a snatch of murmured song
Ever revealed her bliss.

An almost solemn woman-child,
Not fashioned frolicsome and wild,
She had more love than glee;
And now, though nine and nothing more,
Another little child she bore,
Almost as big as she.

No silken cloud from solar harms
Had she to spread; with shifting arms
She dodged him from the sun;
Mother and sister both in heart,
She did a gracious woman's part,
Life's task even now begun!

They came upon a stagnant ditch,
The slippery sloping banks of which
More varied blossoms line;
Some ragged-robins baby spies,

Stretches his hands, and crows and cries,
Plain saying, 'They are mine!'

What baby wants, that baby has-
A law unalterable as
The poor shall serve the rich:
They are beyond her reach-almost!
She kneels, she strains, and, too engrossed,
Topples into the ditch.

Adown the side she slanting rolled,
But her two arms convulsive hold
The precious baby tight;
She lets herself sublimely go,
And in the ditch's muddy flow
Stands up, in evil plight.

'Tis nothing that her feet are wet,
But her new shoes she can't forget-
They cost five shillings bright!
Her petticoat, her tippet blue,
Her frock, they're smeared with slime like glue!
But baby is all right!

And baby laughs, and baby crows;
And baby being right, she knows
That nothing can be wrong;
So, with a troubled heart yet stout,
She plans how
ever
to get out
With meditation long.

The high bank's edge is far away,
The slope is steep, and made of clay;
And what to do with baby?
For even a monkey, up to run,
Would need his four hands, every one:-
She is perplexed as may be.

And all her puzzling is no good!
Blank-staring up the side she stood,

Which, settling she, grew higher.
At last, seized with a fresh dismay
Lest baby's patience should give way,
She plucked her feet from the mire,

And up and down the ditch, not glad,
But patient, very, did promenade-
Splash, splash, went her small feet!
And baby thought it rare good fun,
Sucking his bit of pulpy bun,
And smelling meadow-sweet.

But, oh, the world that she had left-
The meads from her so lately left-
Poor infant Proserpine!
A fabled land they lay above,
A paradise of sunny love,
In breezy space divine!

Frequent from neighbouring village-green
Came sounds of laughter, faintly keen,
And barks of well-known dogs,
While she, the hot sun overhead,
Her lonely watery way must tread
In mud and weeds and frogs!

Sudden, the ditch about her shakes;
Her little heart, responsive, quakes
With fear of uncouth woes;
She lifts her boding eyes perforce-
To see the huge head of a horse
Go past upon its nose.

Then, hark, what sounds of tearing grass
And puffing breath!-With knobs of brass
On horns of frightful size,
A cow's head through the broken hedge
Looks awful from the other edge,
Though mild her pondering eyes.

The horse, the cow are passed and gone;
The sun keeps going on and on,

And still no help comes near.-
At misery's last-oh joy, the sound
Of human footsteps on the ground!
She cried aloud, '
I
'm here!'

It was a man-oh, heavenly joy!
He looked amazed at girl and boy,
And reached his hand so strong:
'Give me the child,' he said; but no!
Care would not let the burden go
Which Love had borne so long.

Smiling he kneels with outstretched hands,
And them unparted safely lands
In the upper world again.
Her low thanks feebly murmured, she
Drags her legs homeward painfully-
Poor, wet, one-chickened hen!

Arrived at length-Lo, scarce a speck
Was on the child from heel to neck,
Though she was sorely mired!
No tear confessed the long-drawn rack,
Till her mother took the baby back,
And the she cried, 'I'm tired!'

And, intermixed with sobbing wail,
She told her mother all the tale,
Her wet cheeks in a glow:
'But, mother, mother, though I fell,
I kept the baby pretty well-
I did not let him go!'

George MacDonald

The Children's Heaven

The infant lies in blessed ease
Upon his mother's breast;
No storm, no dark, the baby sees
Invade his heaven of rest.
He nothing knows of change or death-
Her face his holy skies;
The air he breathes, his mother's breath;
His stars, his mother's eyes!

Yet half the soft winds wandering there
Are sighs that come of fears;
The dew slow falling through that air-
It is the dew of tears;
And ah, my child, thy heavenly home
Hath storms as well as dew;
Black clouds fill sometimes all its dome,
And quench the starry blue!

'My smile would win no smile again,
If baby saw the things
That ache across his mother's brain
The while to him she sings!
Thy faith in me is faith in vain-
I am not what I seem:
O dreary day, O cruel pain,
That wakes thee from thy dream!'

Nay, pity not his dreams so fair,
Fear thou no waking grief;
Oh, safer he than though thou were
Good as his vague belief!
There is a heaven that heaven above
Whereon he gazes now;
A truer love than in thy kiss;
A better friend than thou!

The Father's arms fold like a nest
Both thee and him about;
His face looks down, a heaven of rest,

Where comes no dark, no doubt.
Its mists are clouds of stars that move
On, on, with progress rife;
Its winds, the goings of his love;
Its dew, the dew of life.

We for our children seek thy heart,
For them we lift our eyes:
Lord, should their faith in us depart,
Let faith in thee arise.
When childhood's visions them forsake,
To women grown and men,
Back to thy heart their hearts oh take,
And bid them dream again.

George MacDonald

The Christmas Child

'Little one, who straight hast come
Down the heavenly stair,
Tell us all about your home,
And the father there.'

'He is such a one as I,
Like as like can be.
Do his will, and, by and by,
Home and him you'll see.'

George MacDonald

The Chrysalis

Methought I floated sightless, nor did know
That I had ears until I heard the cry
As of a mighty man in agony:
'How long, Lord, shall I lie thus foul and slow?
The arrows of thy lightning through me go,
And sting and torture me-yet here I lie
A shapeless mass that scarce can mould a sigh!'
The darkness thinned; I saw a thing below
Like sheeted corpse, a knot at head and feet.
Slow clomb the sun the mountains of the dead,
And looked upon the world: the silence broke!
A blinding struggle! then the thunderous beat
Of great exulting pinions stroke on stroke!
And from that world a mighty angel fled.

George MacDonald

The Clock Of The Universe

A clock aeonian, steady and tall,
With its back to creation's flaming wall,
Stands at the foot of a dim, wide stair.
Swing, swang, its pendulum goes,
Swing-swang-here-there!
Its tick and its tack like the sledge-hammer blows
Of Tubal Cain, the mighty man!
But they strike on the anvil of never an ear,
On the heart of man and woman they fall,
With an echo of blessing, an echo of ban;
For each tick is a hope, each tack is a fear,
Each tick is a
Where
, each tack a
Not here
,
Each tick is a kiss, each tack is a blow,
Each tick says
Why
, each tack
I don't know
.
Swing, swang, the pendulum!
Tick and tack, and
go
and
come
,
With a haunting, far-off, dreamy hum,
With a tick, tack, loud and dumb,
Swings the pendulum.

Two hands, together joined in prayer,
With a roll and a volley of spheric thunder;
Two hands, in hope spread half asunder,
An empty gulf of longing embrace;
Two hands, wide apart as they can fare
In a fear still coasting not touching Despair,
But turning again, ever round to prayer:

Two hands, human hands, pass with awful motion
From isle to isle of the sapphire ocean.

The silent, surfaceless ocean-face
Is filled with a brooding, hearkening grace;
The stars dream in, and sink fainting out,
And the sun and the moon go walking about,
Walking about in it, solemn and slow,
Solemn and slow, at a thinking pace,
Walking about in it to and fro,
Walking, walking about.

With open beak and half-open wing
Ever with eagerness quivering,
On the peak of the clock
Stands a cock:
Tip-toe stands the cock to crow-
Golden cock with silver call
Clear as trumpet tearing the sky!
No one yet has heard him cry,
Nor ever will till the hour supreme
When Self on itself shall turn with a scream,
What time the hands are joined on high
In a hoping, despairing, speechless sigh,
The perfect groan-prayer of the universe
When the darkness clings and will not disperse
Though the time is come, told ages ago,
For the great white rose of the world to blow:
-Tick, tack, to the waiting cock,
Tick, tack, goes the aeon-clock!

A polar bear, golden and gray,
Crawls and crawls around the top.
Black and black as an Ethiop
The great sea-serpent lies coiled beneath,
Living, living, but does not breathe.
For the crawling bear is so far away
That he cannot hear, by night or day,
The bourdon big of his deep bear-bass
Roaring atop of the silent face,
Else would he move, and none knows then
What would befall the sons of men!

Eat up old Time, O raging Bear;
Take Bald-head, and the children spare!
Lie still, O Serpent, nor let one breath
Stir thy pool and stay Time's death!
Steady, Hands! for the noon is nigh:
See the silvery ghost of the Dawning shy
Low on the floor of the level sky!
Warn for the strike, O blessed Clock;
Gather thy clarion breath, gold Cock;
Push on the month-figures, pale, weary-faced Moon;
Tick, awful Pendulum, tick amain;
And soon, oh, soon,
Lord of life, and Father of boon,
Give us our own in our arms again!

Then the great old clock to pieces will fall
Sans groaning of axle or whirring of wheel.
And away like a mist of the morning steal,
To stand no more in creation's hall;
Its mighty weights will fall down plumb
Into the regions where all is dumb;
No more will its hands, in horror or prayer,
Be lifted or spread at the foot of the stair
That springs aloft to the Father's room;
Its tick and its tack,
When?-Not now
,
Will cease, and its muffled groan below;
Its sapphire face will dissolve away
In the dawn of the perfect, love-potent day;
The serpent and bear will be seen no more,
Growling atop, or prone on the floor;
And up the stair will run as they please
The children to clasp the Father's knees.

O God, our father, Allhearts' All,
Open the doors of thy clockless hall!

George MacDonald

The Conselor

On An Engraving of Scheffer's
Christus Consolator

I.

What human form is this? what form divine?
And who are these that gaze upon his face
Mild, beautiful, and full of heavenly grace,
With whose reflected light the gazers shine?
Saviour, who does not know it to be thine?
Who does not long to fill a gazer's place?
And yet there is no time, there is no space
To keep away thy servants from thy shrine!
Here if we kneel, and watch with faithful eyes,
Thou art not too far for faithful eyes to see,
Thou art not too far to turn and look on me,
To speak to me, and to receive my sighs.
Therefore for ever I forget the skies,
And find an everlasting Sun in thee.

II.

Oh let us never leave that happy throng!
From that low attitude of love not cease!
In all the world there is no other peace,
In all the world no other shield from wrong.
But chiefly, Saviour, for thy feet we long-
For no vain quiet, for no pride's increase-
But that, being weak, and Thou divinely strong,
Us from our hateful selves thou mayst release.
We wander from thy fold's free holy air,
Forget thy looks, and take our fill of sin!
But if thou keep us evermore within,
We never surely can forget thee there-
Breathing thy breath, thy white robe given to wear,
And loving thee for all thou diedst to win!

III.

To speak of him in language of our own,
Is not for us too daringly to try;
But, Saviour, we can read thy history
Upon the faces round thy humble throne;
And as the flower among the grass makes known
What summer suns have warmed it from the sky,
As every human smile and human sigh
Is witness that we do not live alone,
So in that company-in those sweet tears,
The first-born of a rugged melted heart,
In those gaunt chains for ever torn apart,
And in the words that weeping mother hears,
We read the story of two thousand years,
And know thee somewhat, Saviour, as thou art.

George MacDonald

The Dawn

And must I ever wake, gray dawn, to know
Thee standing sadly by me like a ghost?
I am perplexed with thee that thou shouldst cost
This earth another turning! All aglow
Thou shouldst have reached me, with a purple show
Along far mountain-tops! and I would post
Over the breadth of seas, though I were lost
In the hot phantom-chase for life, if so
Thou earnest ever with this numbing sense
Of chilly distance and unlovely light,
Waking this gnawing soul anew to fight
With its perpetual load: I drive thee hence!
I have another mountain-range from whence
Bursteth a sun unutterably bright!

George MacDonald

The Dead Hand

The witch lady walked along the strand,
Heard a roaring of the sea,
On the edge of a pool saw a dead man's hand,
Good thing for a witch lady!

Lightly she stepped across the rocks,
Came where the dead man lay:
Now pretty maid with your merry mocks,
Now I shall have my way!

On a finger shone a sapphire blue
In the heart of six rubies red:
Come back to me, my promise true,
Come back, my ring, she said.

She took the dead hand in the live,
And at the ring drew she;
The dead hand closed its fingers five,
And it held the witch lady.

She swore the storm was not her deed,
Dark spells she backward spoke;
If the dead man heard he took no heed,
But held like a cloven oak.

Deathly cold, crept up the tide,
Sure of her, made no haste;
Crept up to her knees, crept up each side,
Crept up to her wicked waist.

Over the blue sea sailed the bride
In her love's own sailing ship,
And the witch she saw them across the tide
As it rose to her lying lip.

Oh, the heart of the dead and the hand of the dead
Are strong hasps they to hold!
Fled the true dove with the kite's new love,
And left the false kite with the old.

George MacDonald

The Deil's Forhooit His Ain

The Deil's forhooit his ain, his ain!
The Deil's forhooit his ain!
His bairns are greitin in ilka neuk,
For the Deil's forhooit his ain.

The Deil he tuik his stick and his hat,
And his yallow gluves on he drew:
'The coal's sae dear, and the preachin sae flat.
And I canna be aye wi' you!'

The Deil's, &c.

'But I'll gie ye my blessin afore I gang,
Wi' jist ae word o' advice;
And gien onything efter that gaes wrang
It'll be yer ain wull and ch'ice!

'Noo hark: There's diseases gaein aboot,
Whiles are, and whiles a' thegither!
Ane's ca'd Repentance-haith, hand it oot!
It comes wi' a change o' weather.

'For that, see aye 'at ye're gude at the spune
And tak yer fair share o' the drink;
Gien ye dinna, I wadna won'er but sune
Ye micht 'maist begin to think!

'Neist, luik efter yer liver; that's the place
Whaur Conscience gars ye fin'!
Some fowk has mair o' 't, and some has less-
It comes o' breedin in.

'But there's waur nor diseases gaein aboot,
There's a heap o' fair-spoken lees;
And there's naething i' natur, in or oot,
'At waur with the health agrees.

'There's what they ca' Faith, 'at wad aye be fain;
And Houp that glowers, and tynes a';

And Love, that never yet found its ain,
But aye turnt its face to the wa'.

'And Trouth-the sough o' a sickly win';
And Richt-what needna be;
And Beauty-nae deeper nor the skin;
And Blude-that's naething but bree.

'But there's ae gran' doctor for a' and mair-
For diseases and lees in a breath:-
My bairns, I lea' ye wi'oot a care
To yer best freen, Doctor Death.

'He'll no distress ye: as quaiet's a cat
He grips ye, and a'thing's ower;
There's naething mair 'at ye wad be at,
There's never a sweet nor sour!

'They ca' 't a sleep, but it's better bliss,
For ye wauken up no more;
They ca' 't a mansion-and sae it is,
And the coffin-lid's the door!

'Jist ae word mair--and it's
verbum sat

-

I hae preacht it mony's the year:
Whaur there's naething ava to be frictit at
There's naething ava to fear.

'I dinna say 'at there isna a hell-
To lee wad be a disgrace!
I bide there whan I'm at hame mysel,
And it's no sic a byous ill place!

'Ye see yon blue thing they ca' the lift?
It's but hell turnt upside down,
A whummilt bossie, whiles fou o' drift,
And whiles o' a rumlin soun!

'Lat auld wives tell their tales i' the reek,
Men hae to du wi' fac's:

There's naebody there to watch, and keek
Intil yer wee mistaks.

'But nor ben there's naebody there
Frae the yird to the farthest spark;
Ye'll rub the knees o' yer breeks to the bare
Afore ye'll pray ye a sark!

'Sae fare ye weel, my bonny men,
And weel may ye thrive and the!
Gien I dinna see ye some time again
It'll be 'at ye're no to see.'

He cockit his hat ower ane o' his cheeks,
And awa wi' a halt and a spang-
For his tail was doun ae leg o' his breeks,
And his butes war a half ower lang.

The Deil's forhooit his ain, his ain!
The Deil's forhooit his ain!
His bairns are greitin in ilka neuk,
For the Deil's forhooit his ain.

George MacDonald

The Diary Of An Old Soul - Dedication

Sweet friends, receive my offering. You will find
Against each worded page a white page set:-
This is the mirror of each friendly mind
Reflecting that. In this book we are met.
Make it, dear hearts, of worth to you indeed:-
Let your white page be ground, my print be seed,
Growing to golden ears, that faith and hope shall feed.

YOUR OLD SOUL

George MacDonald

The Disciple

I.

The times are changed, and gone the day
When the high heavenly land,
Though unbeheld, quite near them lay,
And men could understand.

The dead yet find it, who, when here,
Did love it more than this;
They enter in, are filled with cheer,
And pain expires in bliss.

All glorious gleams the blessed land!-
O God, forgive, I pray:
The heart thou holdest in thy hand
Loves more this sunny day!

I see the hundred thousand wait
Around the radiant throne:
Ah, what a dreary, gilded state!
What crowds of beings lone!

I do not care for singing psalms;
I tire of good men's talk;
To me there is no joy in palms,
Or white-robed, solemn walk.

I love to hear the wild winds meet,
The wild old winds at night;
To watch the cold stars flash and beat,
The feathery snow alight.

I love all tales of valiant men,
Of women good and fair:
If I were rich and strong, ah, then
I would do something rare!

But for thy temple in the sky,
Its pillars strong and white-

I cannot love it, though I try,
And long with all my might.

Sometimes a joy lays hold on me,
And I am speechless then;
Almost a martyr I could be,
To join the holy men.

Straightway my heart is like a clod,
My spirit wrapt in doubt:-

A pillar in the house of God,
And never more go out
!

No more the sunny, breezy morn;
All gone the glowing noon;
No more the silent heath forlorn,
The wan-faced waning moon!

My God, this heart will never burn,
Must never taste thy joy!
Even Jesus' face is calm and stern:
I am a hapless boy!

II.

I read good books. My heart despairs.
In vain I try to dress
My soul in feelings like to theirs-
These men of holiness.

My thoughts, like doves, abroad I fling
Into a country fair:
Wind-baffled, back, with tired wing,

They to my ark repair.

Or comes a sympathetic thrill
With long-departed saint,
A feeble dawn, without my will,
Of feelings old and quaint,

As of a church's holy night,
With low-browed chapels round,
Where common sunshine dares not light
On the too sacred ground,-

One glance at sunny fields of grain,
One shout of child at play-
A merry melody drives amain
The one-toned chant away!

My spirit will not enter here
To haunt the holy gloom;
I gaze into a mirror mere,
A mirror, not a room.

And as a bird against the pane
Will strike, deceived sore,
I think to enter, but remain
Outside the closed door.

Oh, it will call for many a sigh
If it be what it claims-
This book, so unlike earth and sky,
Unlike man's hopes and aims!-

To me a desert parched and bare-
In which a spirit broods
Whose wisdom I would gladly share
At cost of many goods!

III.

O hear me, God! O give me joy
Such as thy chosen feel;
Have pity on a wretched boy;
My heart is hard as steel.

I have no care for what is good;
Thyself I do not love;
I relish not this Bible-food;
My heaven is not above.

Thou wilt not hear: I come no more;
Thou heedest not my woe.
With sighs and tears my heart is sore.
Thou comest not: I go.

IV.

Once more I kneel. The earth is dark,
And darker yet the air;
If light there be, 'tis but a spark
Amid a world's despair-

One hopeless hope there yet may be
A God somewhere to hear;
The God to whom I bend my knee-
A God with open ear.

I know that men laugh still to scorn
The grief that is my lot;
Such wounds, they say, are hardly borne,
But easily forgot.

What matter that my sorrows rest
On ills which men despise!
More hopeless heaves my aching breast
Than when a prophet sighs.

AEons of griefs have come and gone-
My grief is yet my mark.
The sun sets every night, yet none
Sees therefore in the dark.

There's love enough upon the earth,
And beauty too, they say:
There may be plenty, may be dearth,
I care not any way.

The world hath melted from my sight;
No grace in life is left;
I cry to thee with all my might,
Because I am bereft.

In vain I cry. The earth is dark,
And darker yet the air;
Of light there trembles now no spark
In my lost soul's despair.

V.

I sit and gaze from window high
Down on the noisy street:
No part in this great coil have I,
No fate to go and meet.

My books unopened long have lain;
In class I am all astray:
The questions growing in my brain,

Demand and have their way.

Knowledge is power, the people cry;
Grave men the lure repeat:
After some rarer thing I sigh,
That makes the pulses beat.

Old truths, new facts, they preach aloud-
Their tones like wisdom fall:
One sunbeam glancing on a cloud
Hints things beyond them all.

VI.

But something is not right within;
High hopes are far gone by.
Was it a bootless aim-to win
Sight of a loftier sky?

They preach men should not faint, but pray,
And seek until they find;
But God is very far away,
Nor is his countenance kind.

Yet every night my father prayed,
Withdrawing from the throng!
Some answer must have come that made
His heart so high and strong!

Once more I'll seek the God of men,
Redeeming childhood's vow.-
-I failed with bitter weeping then,
And fail cold-hearted now!

VII.

Why search for God? A man I tread
This old life-bearing earth;
High thoughts awake and lift my head-
In me they have their birth.

The preacher says a Christian must
Do all the good he can:-
I must be noble, true, and just,
Because I am a man!

They say a man must watch, and keep
Lamp burning, garments white,
Else he shall sit without and weep
When Christ comes home at night:-

A man must hold his honour free,
His conscience must not stain,
Or soil, I say, the dignity
Of heart and blood and brain!

Yes, I say well-said words are cheap!
For action man was born!
What praise will my one talent reap?
What grapes are on my thorn?

Have high words kept me pure enough?
In evil have I no part?
Hath not my bosom 'perilous stuff
That weighs upon the heart'?

I am not that which I do praise;
I do not that I say;
I sit a talker in the ways,
A dreamer in the day!

VIII.

The preacher's words are true, I know-
That man may lose his life;
That every man must downward go

Without the upward strife.

'Twere well my soul should cease to roam,
Should seek and have and hold!
It may be there is yet a home
In that religion old.

Again I kneel, again I pray:

Wilt thou be God to me?
Wilt thou give ear to what I say,
And lift me up to thee
?

Lord, is it true? Oh, vision high!
The clouds of heaven dispart;
An opening depth of loving sky
Looks down into my heart!

There
is
a home wherein to dwell-
The very heart of light!
Thyself my sun immutable,
My moon and stars all night!

I thank thee, Lord. It must be so,
Its beauty is so good.
Up in my heart thou mad'st it go,
And I have understood.

The clouds return. The common day
Falls on me like a
No
;
But I have seen what might be-may,
And with a hope I go.

IX.

I am a stranger in the land;

It gives no welcome dear;
Its lilies bloom not for my hand,
Its roses for my cheer.

The sunshine used to make me glad,
But now it knows me not;
This weight of brightness makes me sad-
It isolates a blot.

I am forgotten by the hills,
And by the river's play;
No look of recognition thrills
The features of the day.

Then only am I moved to song,
When down the darkening street,
While vanishes the scattered throng,
The driving rain I meet.

The rain pours down. My thoughts awake,
Like flowers that languished long;
From bare cold hills the night-winds break,
From me the unwonted song.

X.

I read the Bible with my eyes,
But hardly with my brain;
Should this the meaning recognize,
My heart yet reads in vain.

These words of promise and of woe
Seem but a tinkling sound;
As through an ancient tomb I go,
With dust-filled urns around.

Or, as a sadly searching child,
Afar from love and home,
Sits in an ancient chamber, piled
With scroll and musty tome,

So I, in these epistles old
From men of heavenly care,
Find all the thoughts of other mould
Than I can love or share.

No sympathy with mine they show,
Their world is not the same;
They move me not with joy or woe,
They touch me not with blame.

I hear no word that calls my life,
Or owns my struggling powers;
Those ancient ages had their strife,
But not a strife like ours.

Oh, not like men they move and speak,
Those pictures in old panes!
They alter not their aspect meek
For all the winds and rains!

Their thoughts are full of figures strange,
Of Jewish forms and rites:
A world of air and sea I range,
Of mornings and of nights!

XI.

I turn me to the gospel-tale:-
My hope is faint with fear
That hungriest search will not avail
To find a refuge here.

A misty wind blows bare and rude
From dead seas of the past;
And through the clouds that halt and brood,
Dim dawns a shape at last:

A sad worn man who bows his face,
And treads a frightful path,
To save an abject hopeless race
From an eternal wrath.

Kind words he speaks-but all the time
As from a formless height
To which no human foot can climb-
Half-swathed in ancient night.

Nay, sometimes, and to gentle heart,
Unkind words from him go!
Surely it is no saviour's part
To speak to women so!

Much rather would I refuge take
With Mary, dear to me,
To whom that rough hard speech he spake-

What have I to do with thee
?

Surely I know men tenderer,
Women of larger soul,
Who need no prayer their hearts to stir,
Who always would make whole!

Oftenest he looks a weary saint,
Embalmed in pallid gleam;
Listless and sad, without complaint,
Like dead man in a dream.

And, at the best, he is uplift
A spectacle, a show:-
The worth of such an outworn gift
I know too much to know!

How find the love to pay my debt?-
He leads me from the sun!-
Yet it is hard men should forget
A good deed ever done!-

Forget that he, to foil a curse,
Did, on that altar-hill,
Sun of a sunless universe,
Hang dying, patient, still!

But what is He, whose pardon slow
At so much blood is priced?-
If such thou art, O Jove, I go
To the Promethean Christ!

XII.

A word within says I am to blame,
And therefore must confess;
Must call my doing by its name,
And so make evil less.

'I could not his false triumph bear,
For he was first in wrong.'
'Thy own ill-doings are thy care,
His to himself belong.'

'To do it right, my heart should own
Some sorrow for the ill.'
'Plain, honest words will half atone,
And they are in thy will.'

The struggle comes. Evil or I
Must gain the victory now.
I am unmoved and yet would try:
O God, to thee I bow.

The skies are brass; there falls no aid;
No wind of help will blow.
But I bethink me:-I am made
A man: I rise and go.

XIII.

To Christ I needs must come, they say;
Who went to death for me:
I turn aside; I come, I pray,
My unknown God, to thee.

He is afar; the story old

Is blotted, worn, and dim;
With thee, O God, I can be bold-
I cannot pray to him.

Pray

! At the word a cloudy grief
Around me folds its pall:
Nothing I have to call belief!
How can I pray at all?

I know not if a God be there
To heed my crying sore;
If in the great world anywhere
An ear keeps open door!

An unborn faith I will not nurse,
Pursue an endless task;
Loud out into its universe
My soul shall call and ask!

Is there no God-earth, sky, and sea
Are but a chaos wild!
Is there a God-I know that he
Must hear his calling child!

XIV.

I kneel. But all my soul is dumb
With hopeless misery:
Is he a friend who will not come,
Whose face I must not see?

I do not think of broken laws,
Of judge's damning word;
My heart is all one ache, because
I call and am not heard.

A cry where there is none to hear,
Doubles the lonely pain;
Returns in silence on the ear,

In torture on the brain.

No look of love a smile can bring,
No kiss will back the breath
To cold lips: I no answer bring
From this great face of death.

XV.

Yet sometimes when the agony
Dies of its own excess,
A dew-like calm descends on me,
A shadow of tenderness;

A sense of bounty and of grace,
A cool air in my breast,
As if my soul were yet a place
Where peace might one day rest.

God! God! I say, and cry no more,
But rise, and think to stand
Unwearied at the closed door
Till comes the opening hand.

XVI.

But is it God?-Once more the fear
Of
No God
loads my breath:
Amid a sunless atmosphere
I fight again with death.

Such rest may be like that which lulls
The man who fainting lies:
His bloodless brain his spirit dulls,
Draws darkness o'er his eyes.

But even such sleep, my heart responds,
May be the ancient rest

Rising released from bodily bonds,
And flowing unrepent.

The o'ertasked will falls down aghast
In individual death;
God puts aside the severed past,
Breathes-in a primal breath.

For how should torture breed a calm?
Can death to life give birth?
No labour can create the balm
That soothes the sleeping earth!

I yet will hope the very One
Whose love is life in me,
Did, when my strength was overdone,
Inspire serenity.

XVII.

When the hot sun's too urgent might
Hath shrunk the tender leaf,
Water comes sliding down the night,
And makes its sorrow brief.

When poet's heart is in eclipse,
A glance from childhood's eye,
A smile from passing maiden's lips,
Will clear a glowing sky.

Might not from God such influence come
A dying hope to lift?
Might he not send to poor heart some
Unmediated gift?

My child lies moaning, lost in dreams,
Abandoned, sore dismayed;
Her fancy's world with horror teems,
Her soul is much afraid:

I lay my hand upon her breast,
Her moaning dies away;

She does not wake, but, lost in rest,
Sleeps on into the day.

And when my heart with soft release
Grows calm as summer-sea,
Shall I not hope the God of peace
Hath laid his hand on me?

XVIII.

But why from thought should fresh doubt start-
An ever-lengthening cord?
Might he not make my troubled heart
Right sure it was the Lord?

God will not let a smaller boon
Hinder the coming best;
A granted sign might all too soon
Rejoice thee into rest.

Yet could not any sign, though grand
As hosts of fire about,
Though lovely as a sunset-land,
Secure thy soul from doubt.

A smile from one thou lovedst well
Gladdened thee all the day;
The doubt which all day far did dwell
Came home with twilight gray.

For doubt will come, will ever come,
Though signs be perfect good,
Till heart to heart strike doubting dumb,
And both are understood.

XIX.

I shall behold him, one day, nigh.
Assailed with glory keen,
My eyes will open wide, and I

Shall see as I am seen.

Of nothing can my heart be sure
Except the highest, best
When God I see with vision pure,
That sight will be my rest.

Forward I look with longing eye,
And still my hope renew;
Backward, and think that from the sky

Did
come that falling dew.

XX.

But if a vision should unfold
That I might banish fear;
That I, the chosen, might be bold,
And walk with upright cheer;

My heart would cry: But shares my race
In this great love of thine?
I pray, put me not in good case
Where others lack and pine.

Nor claim I thus a loving heart
That for itself is mute:
In such love I desire no part
As reaches not my root.

But if my brothers thou dost call
As children to thy knee,
Thou givest me my being's all,
Thou sayest child to me.

If thou to me alone shouldst give,
My heart were all beguiled:
It would not be because I live,
And am my Father's child!

XXI.

As little comfort would it bring,
Amid a throng to pass;
To stand with thousands worshipping
Upon the sea of glass;

To know that, of a sinful world,
I one was saved as well;
My roll of ill with theirs upfurl'd,
And cast in deepest hell;

That God looked bounteously on one,
Because on many men;
As shone Judea's earthly sun
On all the healed ten.

No; thou must be a God to me
As if but me were none;
I such a perfect child to thee
As if thou hadst but one.

XXII.

Oh, then, my Father, hast thou not
A blessing just for me?
Shall I be, barely, not forgot?-
Never come home to thee?

Hast thou no care for this one child,
This thinking, living need?
Or is thy countenance only mild,
Thy heart not love indeed?

For some eternal joy I pray,
To make me strong and free;
Yea, such a friend I need alway
As thou alone canst be.

Is not creative infinitude

Able, in every man,
To turn itself to every mood
Since God man's life began?

Art thou not each man's God-his own,
With secret words between,
As thou and he lived all alone,
Insphered in silence keen?

Ah, God, my heart is not the same
As any heart beside;
My pain is different, and my blame,
My pity and my pride!

My history thou know'st, my thoughts
Different from other men's;
Thou knowest all the sheep and goats
That mingle in my pens.

Thou knowest I a love might bring
By none beside me due;
One praiseful song at least might sing
Which could not but be new.

XXIII.

Nor seek I thus to stand apart,
In aught my kind above;
My neighbour, ah, my troubled heart
Must rest ere thee it love!

If God love not, I have no care,
No power to love, no hope.
What is life here or anywhere?
Or why with darkness cope?

I scorn my own love's every sign,
So feeble, selfish, low,
If his love give no pledge that mine
Shall one day perfect grow.

But if I knew Thy love even such,
As tender and intense
As, tested by its human touch,
Would satisfy my sense

Of what a father never was
But should be to his son,
My heart would leap for joy, because
My rescue was begun.

Oh then my love, by thine set free,
Would overflow thy men;
In every face my heart would see
God shining out again!

There are who hold high festival
And at the board crown Death:
I am too weak to live at all
Except I breathe thy breath.

Show me a love that nothing bates,
Absolute, self-severe-
Even at Gehenna's prayerless gates
I should not 'taint with fear.'

XXIV.

I cannot brook that men should say-
Nor this for gospel take-
That thou wilt hear me if I pray
Asking for Jesus' sake.

For love to him is not to me,
And cannot lift my fate;
The love is not that is not free,
Perfect, immediate.

Love is salvation: life without
No moment can endure.
Those sheep alone go in and out
Who know thy love is pure.

XXV.

But what if God requires indeed,
For cause yet unrevealed,
Assent to one fixed form of creed,
Such as I cannot yield?

Has God made
for Christ's sake
a test-
To take or leave the crust,
That only he may have the best
Who licks the serpent-dust?

No, no; the words I will not say
With the responding folk;
I at his feet a heart would lay,
Not shoulders for a yoke.

He were no lord of righteousness
Who subjects such would gain
As yield their birthright for a mess
Of liberty from pain!

'And wilt thou bargain then with Him?'
The priest makes answer high.
'Tis thou, priest, makest the sky dim:
My hope is in the sky.

XXVI.

But is my will alive, awake?
The one God will not heed
If in my lips or hands I take
A half-word or half-deed.

Hour after hour I sit and dream,
Amazed in outwardness;
The powers of things that only seem

The things that are oppress;

Till in my soul some discord sounds,
Till sinks some yawning lack;
Then turn I from life's rippling rounds,
And unto thee come back.

Thou seest how poor a thing am I,
Yet hear, whate'er I be;
Despairing of my will, I cry,
Be God enough to me.

My spirit, low, irresolute,
I cast before thy feet;
And wait, while even prayer is mute,
For what thou judgest meet.

XXVII.

My safety lies not, any hour,
In what I generate,
But in the living, healing power
Of that which doth create.

If he is God to the incomplete,
Fulfilling lack and need,
Then I may cast before his feet
A half-word or half-deed.

I bring, Lord, to thy altar-stair,
To thee, love-glorious,
My very lack of will and prayer,
And cry-*Thou seest me thus!*

From some old well of life they flow!
The words my being fill!-
'Of me that man the truth shall know
Who wills the Father's will.'

XXVIII.

What is his will?-that I may go
And do it, in the hope
That light will rise and spread and grow,
As deed enlarges scope.

I need not search the sacred book
To find my duty clear;
Scarce in my bosom need I look,
It lies so very near.

Henceforward I must watch the door
Of word and action too;
There's one thing I must do no more,
Another I must do.

Alas, these are such little things!
No glory in their birth!
Doubt from their common aspect springs-
If God will count them worth.

But here I am not left to choose,
My duty is my lot;
And weighty things will glory lose
If small ones are forgot.

I am not worthy high things yet;
I'll humbly do my own;
Good care of sheep may so beget
A fitness for the throne.

Ah fool! why dost thou reason thus?
Ambition's very fool!
Through high and low, each glorious,
Shines God's all-perfect rule.

'Tis God I need, not rank in good:
'Tis Life, not honour's meed;
With him to fill my every mood,
I am content indeed.

XXIX.

Will do: shall know
: I feel the force,
The fullness of the word;
His holy boldness held its course,
Claiming divine accord.

What if, as yet, I have never seen
The true face of the Man!
The named notion may have been
A likeness vague and wan;

A thing of such unblended hues
As, on his chamber wall,
The humble peasant gladly views,
And
Jesus Christ
doth call.

The story I did never scan
With vision calm and strong;
Have never tried to see the Man,
The many words among.

Pictures there are that do not please
With any sweet surprise,
But gain the heart by slow degrees
Until they feast the eyes;

And if I ponder what they call
The gospel of God's grace,
Through mists that slowly melt and fall
May dawn a human face.

What face? Oh, heart-uplifting thought,
That face may dawn on me
Which Moses on the mountain sought,
God would not let him see!

XXX.

All faint at first, as wrapt in veil
Of Sinai's cloudy dark,
But dawning as I read the tale,
I slow discern and mark

A gracious, simple, truthful man,
Who walks the earth erect,
Nor stoops his noble head to one
From fear or false respect;

Who seeks to climb no high estate,
No low consent secure,
With high and low serenely great,
Because his love is pure.

Oh not alone, high o'er our reach,
Our joys and griefs beyond!
To him 'tis joy divine to teach
Where human hearts respond;

And grief divine it was to him
To see the souls that slept:
'How often, O Jerusalem!'
He said, and gazed, and wept.

Love was his very being's root,
And healing was its flower;
Love, human love, its stem and fruit,
Its gladness and its power.

Life of high God, till then unseen!
Undreamt-of glorious show!
Glad, faithful, childlike, love-serene!-
How poor am I! how low!

XXXI.

As in a living well I gaze,
Kneeling upon its brink:

What are the very words he says?
What did the one man think?

I find his heart was all above;
Obedience his one thought;
Reposing in his father's love,
His father's will he sought.

XXXII.

Years have passed o'er my broken plan
To picture out a strife,
Where ancient Death, in horror wan,
Faced young and fearing Life.

More of the tale I tell not so-
But for myself would say:
My heart is quiet with what I know,
With what I hope, is gay.

And where I cannot set my faith,
Unknowing or unwise,
I say 'If this be what
he
saith,
Here hidden treasure lies.'

Through years gone by since thus I strove,
Thus shadowed out my strife,
While at my history I wove,
Thou wovest in the life.

Through poverty that had no lack
For friends divinely good;
Through pain that not too long did rack,

Through love that understood;

Through light that taught me what to hold
And what to cast away;
Through thy forgiveness manifold,
And things I cannot say,

Here thou hast brought me-able now
To kiss thy garment's hem,
Entirely to thy will to bow,
And trust thee even for them

Who in the darkness and the mire
Walk with rebellious feet,
Loose trailing, Lo, their soiled attire
For heavenly floor unmeet!

Lord Jesus Christ, I know not how-
With this blue air, blue sea,
This yellow sand, that grassy brow,
All isolating me-

Thy thoughts to mine themselves impart,
My thoughts to thine draw near;
But thou canst fill who mad'st my heart,
Who gav'st me words must hear.

Thou mad'st the hand with which I write,
The eye that watches slow
Through rosy gates that rosy light
Across thy threshold go;

Those waves that bend in golden spray,
As if thy foot they bore:
I think I know thee, Lord, to-day,
Shall know thee evermore.

I know thy father thine and mine:
Thou the great fact hast bared:
Master, the mighty words are thine-
Such I had never dared!

Lord, thou hast much to make me yet-
Thy father's infant still:
Thy mind, Son, in my bosom set,
That I may grow thy will.

My soul with truth clothe all about,
And I shall question free:
The man that feareth, Lord, to doubt,
In that fear doubteth thee.

George MacDonald

The Diver

From Schiller

'Which of you, knight or squire, will dare
Plunge into yonder gulf?
A golden beaker I fling in it-there!
The black mouth swallows it like a wolf!
Who brings me the cup again, whoever,
It is his own-he may keep it for ever!'

'Tis the king who speaks. He flings from the brow
Of the cliff, that, rugged and steep,
Hangs out o'er the endless sea below,
The cup in the whirlpool's howling heap:-
'Again I ask, what hero will follow,
What hero plunge into yon dark hollow?'

The knights and the squires the king about
Hear, and dumbly stare
Into the wild sea's tumbling rout;
To win the beaker they hardly care!
The king, for the third time, round him glaring-
'Not one soul of you has the daring?'

Speechless all, as before, they stand.
Then a squire, young, gentle, gay,
Steps from his comrades' shrinking band,
Flinging his girdle and cloak away;
And all the women and men that surrounded
Gazed on the noble youth, astounded.

And when he stepped to the rock's rough brow
And looked down on the gulf so black,
The waters which it had swallowed, now
Charybdis bellowing rendered back;
And, with a roar as of distant thunder,
Foaming they burst from the dark lap under.

It wallows, seethes, hisses in raging rout,

As when water wrestles with fire,
Till to heaven the yeasty tongues they spout;
And flood upon flood keeps mounting higher:
It will never its endless coil unravel,
As the sea with another sea were in travail!

But, at last, slow sinks the writhing spasm,
And, black through the foaming white,
Downward gapes a yawning chasm-
Bottomless, cloven to hell's wide night;
And, sucked up, see the billows roaring
Down through the whirling funnel pouring!

Then in haste, ere the out-rage return again,
The youth to his God doth pray,
And-ascends a cry of horror and pain!-
Already the vortex hath swept him away,
And o'er the bold swimmer, in darkness eternal,
Close the great jaws of the gulf infernal!

Then the water above grows smooth as glass,
While, below, dull roarings ply;
And trembling they hear the murmur pass-
'High-hearted youth, farewell, good-bye!'
And hollower still comes the howl affraying,
Till their hearts are sick with the frightful delaying.

If the crown itself thou in should fling,
And say, 'Who back with it hies
Himself shall wear it, and shall be king,'
I would not covet the precious prize!
What Ocean hides in that howling hell of it
Live soul will never come back to tell of it!

Ships many, caught in that whirling surge,
Shot sheer to their dismal doom:
Keel and mast only did ever emerge,
Shattered, from out the all-gulping tomb!-
Like the bluster of tempest, clearer and clearer,
Comes its roaring nearer and ever nearer!

It wallows, seethes, hisses, in raging rout,

As when water wrestles with fire,
Till to heaven the yeasty tongues they spout,
Wave upon wave's back mounting higher;
And as with the grumble of distant thunder,
Bellowing it bursts from the dark lap under.

And, see, from its bosom, flowing dark,
Something heave up, swan-white!
An arm and a shining neck they mark,
And it rows with never relaxing might!
It is he! and high his golden capture
His left hand waves in success's rapture!

With long deep breaths his path he ploughed,
And he hailed the heavenly day;
Jubilant shouted the gazing crowd,
'He lives! he is there! he broke away!
Out of the grave, the whirlpool uproarious,
The hero hath rescued his life victorious!'

He comes; they surround him with shouts of glee;
At the king's feet he sinks on the sod,
And hands him the beaker upon his knee;
To his lovely daughter the king gives a nod:
She fills it brim-full of wine sparkling and playing,
And then to the king the youth turned him saying:

'Long live the king!-Well doth he fare
Who breathes in this rosy light,
But, ah, it is horrible down there!
And man must not tempt the heavenly Might,
Or ever seek, with prying unwholesome,
What he graciously covers with darkness dolesome!

'It tore me down with a headlong swing;
Then a shaft in a rock outpours,
Wild-rushing against me, a torrent spring;
It seized me, the double stream's raging force,
And like a top, with giddy twisting,
It spun me round-there was no resisting!

'Then God did show me, sore beseeching

In deepest, frightfullest need,
Up from the bottom a rock-ledge reaching-
At it I caught, and from death was freed!
And, behold, on spiked corals the beaker suspended,
Which had else to the very abyss descended!

'For below me it lay yet mountain-deep
The purple darksome maw;
And though to the ear it was dead asleep,
The ghasted eye, down staring, saw
How with dragons, lizards, salamanders crawling,
The hell-jaws horrible were sprawling.

'Black swarming in medley miscreate,
In masses lumped hideously,
Wallowed the conger, the thorny skate,
The lobster's grisly deformity;
And bared its teeth with cruel sheen a
Terrible shark, the sea's hyena.

'And there I hung, and shuddering knew
That human help was none;
One thinking soul mid the horrid crew,
In the ghastly solitude I was alone-
Deeper than man's speech ever sounded,
By the waste sea's dismal monsters surrounded.

'I thought and shivered. Then something crept near,
Moved at once a hundred joints!
Now it will have me!-Frantic with fear
I lost my grasp of the coral points!
Away the whirl in its raging tore me,
But it was my salvation, and upward bore me!'

The king at the tale is filled with amaze:-
'The beaker, well won, is thine;
And this ring I will give thee too,' he says,
'Precious with gems that are more than fine,
If thou dive yet once, and bring me the story-
What thou sawst in the sea's lowest repertory.'

His daughter she hears with a tender dismay,

And her words sweet-suasive plead:
'Father, enough of this cruel play!
For you he has done an unheard-of deed!
And can you not master your soul's desire,
'Tis the knights' turn now to disgrace the squire!'

The king he snatches and hurls the cup
Into the swirling pool:-
'If thou bring me once more that beaker up,
My best knight I hold thee, most worshipful;
And this very day to thy home thou shall lead her
Who there for thee stands such a pitying pleader.'

A heavenly passion his being invades,
His eyes dart a lightning ray;
He sees on her beauty the flushing shades,
He sees her grow pallid and sink away!
Determination thorough him flashes,
And downward for life or for death he dashes!

They hear the dull roar!-it is turning again,
Its herald the thunderous brawl!
Downward they bend with loving strain:
They come! they are coming, the waters all!-
They rush up!-they rush down!-up, down, for ever!
The youth again bring they never.

George MacDonald

The Donkey In The Cart To The Horse In The Carriage

I.

I say! hey! cousin there! I mustn't call you brother!
Yet you have a tail behind, and I have another!
You pull, and I pull, though we don't pull together:
You have less hardship, and I have more weather!

II.

Your legs are long, mine are short; I am lean, you are fatter;
Your step is bold and free, mine goes pitter-patter;
Your head is in the air, and mine hangs down like lead-
But then my two great ears are so heavy on my head!

III.

You need not whisk your stump, nor turn away your nose;
Poor donkeys ain't so stupid as rich horses may suppose!
I could feed in any manger just as well as you,
Though I don't despise a thistle-with sauce of dust and dew!

IV.

T'other day a bishop's cob stopped before me in a lane,
With a tail as broad as oil-cake, and a close-clipped hoggy mane;
I stood sideways to the hedge, but he did not want to pass,
And he was so full of corn he didn't care about the grass.

V.

Quoth the cob, 'You are a donkey of a most peculiar breed!
You've just eaten up a thistle that was going fast to seed!
If you had but let it be, you might have raised a crop!
To many a coming dinner you have put a sad stop!'

VI.

I told him I was hungry, and to leave one of ten
Would have spoiled my best dinner, the one I wanted then.

Said the cob, '
I
ought to know the truth about dinners,

I
don't eat on roadsides like poor tramping sinners!'

VII.

'Why don't you take it easy? You are working much too hard!
In the shafts you'll die one day, if you're not upon your guard!
Have pity on your friends: work seems to you delectable,
But believe me such a cart-excuse me-'s not respectable!'

VIII.

I told him I must trot in the shafts where I was put,
Nor look round at the cart, but set foremost my best foot;
It
was
rather rickety, and the axle wanted oil,
But I always slept at night with the deep sleep of toil!

IX.

'All very fine,' he said, 'to wag your ears and parley,
And pretend you quite despise my bellyfuls of barley!
But with blows and with starving, and with labour over-hard,
By spurs! a week will see you in the knacker's yard.'

X.

I thanked him for his counsel, and said I thought I'd take it, really,
If he'd spare me half a feed out of four feeds daily.
He tossed his head at that: 'Now don't be cheeky!' said he;
'When I find I'm getting fat, I'll think of you: keep steady.'

XI.

'Good-bye!' I said-and say, for you are such another!
Why, now I look at you, I see you are his brother!
Yes, thank you for your kick: 'twas all that you could spare,

For, sure, they clip and singe you very, very bare!

XII.

My cart it is upsets you! but in that cart behind
There's no dirt or rubbish, no bags of gold or wind!
There's potatoes there, and wine, and corn, and mustard-seed,
And a good can of milk, and some honey too, indeed!

XIII.

Few blows I get, some hay, and of water many a draught:
I tell you he's no coster that sits upon my shaft!
And for the knacker's yard-that's not my destined bed:
No donkey ever yet saw himself there lying dead.

George MacDonald

The Dwellers Within

Down a warm alley, early in the year,
Among the woods, with all the sunshine in
And all the winds outside it, I begin
To think that something gracious will appear,
If anything of grace inhabit here,
Or there be friendship in the woods to win.
Might one but find companions more akin
To trees and grass and happy daylight clear,
And in this wood spend one long hour at home!
The fairies do not love so bright a place,
And angels to the forest never come,
But I have dreamed of some harmonious race,
The kindred of the shapes that haunt the shore
Of Music's flow and flow for evermore.

George MacDonald

The Early Bird

A little bird sat on the edge of her nest;
Her yellow-beaks slept as sound as tops;
Day-long she had worked almost without rest,
And had filled every one of their gibbous crops;
Her own she had filled just over-full,
And she felt like a dead bird stuffed with wool.

'Oh dear!' she sighed, as she sat with her head
Sunk in her chest, and no neck at all,
Looking like an apple on a feather-bed
Poked and rounded and fluffed to a ball,
'What's to be done if things don't reform?
I cannot tell where there is one more worm!

'I've had fifteen to-day, and the children five each,
Besides a few flies, and some very fat spiders:
Who will dare say I don't do as I preach?
I set an example to all providers!
But what's the use? We want a storm:
I don't know where there's a single worm!'

'There's five in my crop,' chirped a wee, wee bird
Who woke at the voice of his mother's pain;
'I know where there's five!' And with the word
He tucked in his head and went off again.
'The folly of childhood,' sighed his mother,
'Has always been my especial bother!'

Careless the yellow-beaks slept on,
They never had heard of the boggy, Tomorrow;
The mother sat outside making her moan-
'I shall soon have to beg, or steal, or borrow!
I have always to say, the night before,
Where shall I find one red worm more!'

Her case was this, she had gobbled too many,
And sleepless, had an attack she called foresight:
A barn of crumbs, if she knew but of any!
Could she but get of the great worm-store sight!

The eastern sky was growing red
Ere she laid her wise beak in its feather-bed.

Just then, the fellow who knew of five,
Nor troubled his sleep with anxious tricks,
Woke, and stirred, and felt alive:
'To-day,' he said, 'I am up to six!
But my mother feels in her lot the crook-
What if I tried my own little hook!'

When his mother awoke, she winked her eyes
As if she had dreamed that she was a mole:
Could she believe them? 'What a huge prize
That child is dragging out of its hole!
The fledgeling indeed had just caught his third!

And here is a fable to catch the bird!

George MacDonald

The Failing Track

Where went the feet that hitherto have come?
Here yawns no gulf to quench the flowing past!
With lengthening pauses broke, the path grows dumb;
The grass floats in; the gazer stands aghast.

Tremble not, maiden, though the footprints die;
By no air-path ascend the lark's clear notes;
The mighty-throated when he mounts the sky
Over some lowly landmark sings and floats.

Be of good cheer. Paths vanish from the wave;
There all the ships tear each its track of gray;
Undaunted they the wandering desert brave:
In each a magic finger points the way.

No finger finely touched, no eye of lark
Hast thou to guide thy steps where footprints fail?
Ah, then, 'twere well to turn before the dark,
Nor dream to find thy dreams in yonder vale!

The backward way one hour is plain to thee,
Hard hap were hers who saw no trace behind!
Back to confession at thy mother's knee,
Back to the question and the childlike mind!

Then start afresh, but toward unending end,
The goal o'er which hangs thy own star all night;
So shalt thou need no footprints to befriend,
Child-heart and shining star will guide thee right.

George MacDonald

The Father's Worshippers

'Tis we, not in thine arms, who weep and pray;
The children in thy bosom laugh and play.

George MacDonald

The Flower-Angels

Of old, with goodwill from the skies-
God's message to them given-
The angels came, a glad surprise,
And went again to heaven.

But now the angels are grown rare,
Needed no more as then;
Far lowlier messengers can bear
God's goodwill unto men.

Each year, the snowdrops' pallid dawn
Breaks from the earth below;
Light spreads, till, from the dark updrawn,
The noontide roses glow.

The snowdrops first-the dawning gray;
Then out the roses burn!
They speak their word, grow dim-away
To holy dust return.

Of oracles were little dearth,
Should heaven continue dumb;
From lowliest corners of the earth
God's messages will come.

In thy face his we see, O Lord,
And are no longer blind;
Need not so much his rarer word,
In flowers even read his mind.

George MacDonald

The Foolish Harebell

A harebell hung her wilful head:
'I am tired, so tired! I wish I was dead.'

She hung her head in the mossy dell:
'If all were over, then all were well!'

The Wind he heard, and was pitiful,
And waved her about to make her cool.

'Wind, you are rough!' said the dainty Bell;
'Leave me alone-I am not well.'

The Wind, at the word of the drooping dame,
Sighed to himself and ceased in shame.

'I am hot, so hot!' she moaned and said;
'I am withering up; I wish I was dead!'

Then the Sun he pitied her woeful case,
And drew a thick veil over his face.

'Cloud go away, and don't be rude,'
She said; 'I do not see why you should!'

The Cloud withdrew. Then the Harebell cried,
'I am faint, so faint!-and no water beside!'

The Dew came down its millionfold path:
She murmured, 'I did not want a bath!'

The Dew went up; the Wind softly crept;
The Night came down, and the Harebell slept.

A boy ran past in the morning gray,
Plucked the Harebell, and threw her away.

The Harebell shivered, and sighed, 'Oh! oh!
I am faint indeed! Come, dear Wind, blow.'

The Wind blew gently, and did not speak.
She thanked him kindly, but grew more weak.

'Sun, dear Sun, I am cold!' she said.
He shone; but lower she drooped her head.

'O Rain, I am withering! all the blue
Is fading out of me!-come, please do!'

The Rain came down as fast as he could,
But for all his good will he could do her no good.

She shuddered and shrivelled, and moaning said,
'Thank you all kindly!' and then she was dead.

Let us hope, let us hope when she comes next year
She'll be simple and sweet! But I fear, I fear!

George MacDonald

The Girl That Lost Things

There was a girl that lost things-
Nor only from her hand;
She lost, indeed-why, most things,
As if they had been sand!

She said, 'But I must use them,
And can't look after all!
Indeed I did not lose them,
I only let them fall!'

That's how she lost her thimble,
It fell upon the floor:
Her eyes were very nimble
But she never saw it more.

And then she lost her dolly,
Her very doll of all!
That loss was far from jolly,
But worse things did befall.

She lost a ring of pearls
With a ruby in them set;
But the dearest girl of girls
Cried only, did not fret.

And then she lost her robin;
Ah, that was sorrow dire!
He hopped along, and-bob in-
Hopped bob into the fire!

And once she lost a kiss
As she came down the stair;
But that she did not miss,
For sure it was somewhere!

Just then she lost her heart too,
But did so well without it
She took that in good part too,
And said-not much about it.

But when she lost her health
She did feel rather poor,
Till in came loads of wealth
By quite another door!

And soon she lost a dimple
That was upon her cheek,
But that was very simple-
She was so thin and weak!

And then she lost her mother,
And thought that she was dead;
Sure there was not another
On whom to lay her head!

And then she lost her self-
But that she threw away;
And God upon his shelf
It carefully did lay.

And then she lost her sight,
And lost all hope to find it;
But a fountain-well of light
Came flashing up behind it.

At last she lost the world:
In a black and stormy wind
Away from her it whirled-
But the loss how could she mind?

For with it she lost her losses,
Her aching and her weeping,
Her pains and griefs and crosses,
And all things not worth keeping;

It left her with the lost things
Her heart had still been craving;
'Mong them she found-why, most things,
And all things worth the saving.

She found her precious mother,

Who not the least had died;
And then she found that other
Whose heart had hers inside.

And next she found the kiss
She lost upon the stair;
'Twas sweeter far, I guess,
For ripening in that air.

She found her self, all mended,
New-drest, and strong, and white;
She found her health, new-blended
With a radiant delight.

She found her little robin:
He made his wings go flap,
Came fluttering, and went bob in,
Went bob into her lap.

So, girls that cannot keep things,
Be patient till to-morrow;
And mind you don't bewep things
That are not worth such sorrow;

For the Father great of fathers,
Of mothers, girls, and boys,
In his arms his children gathers,
And sees to all their toys.

George MacDonald

The Giver

To give a thing and take again
Is counted meanness among men;
To take away what once is given
Cannot then be the way of heaven!

But human hearts are crumbly stuff,
And never, never love enough,
Therefore God takes and, with a smile,
Puts our best things away a while.

Thereon some weep, some rave, some scorn,
Some wish they never had been born;
Some humble grow at last and still,
And then God gives them what they will.

George MacDonald

The Goal

In God alone, the perfect end,
Wilt thou find thyself or friend.

George MacDonald

The Golden Key

From off the earth the vapours curled,
Went up to meet their joy;
The boy awoke, and all the world
Was waiting for the boy!

The sky, the water, the wide earth
Was full of windy play-
Shining and fair, alive with mirth,
All for his holiday!

The hill said 'Climb me;' and the wood
'Come to my bosom, child;
Mine is a merry gamboling brood,
Come, and with them go wild.'

The shadows with the sunlight played,
The birds were singing loud;
The hill stood up with pines arrayed-
He ran to join the crowd.

But long ere noon, dark grew the skies,
Pale grew the shrinking sun:
'How soon,' he said, 'for clouds to rise
When day was but begun!'

The wind grew rough; a wilful power
It swept o'er tree and town;
The boy exulted for an hour,
Then weary sat him down.

And as he sat the rain began,
And rained till all was still:
He looked, and saw a rainbow span
The vale from hill to hill.

He dried his tears. 'Ah, now,' he said,
'The storm was good, I see!
Yon pine-dressed hill, upon its head
I'll find the golden key!'

He thrid the copse, he climbed the fence,
At last the top did scale;
But, lo, the rainbow, vanished thence,
Was shining in the vale!

'Still, here it stood! yes, here,' he said,
'Its very foot was set!
I saw this fir-tree through the red,
This through the violet!'

He searched and searched, while down the skies
Went slow the slanting sun.
At length he lifted hopeless eyes,
And day was nearly done!

Beyond the vale, above the heath,
High flamed the crimson west;
His mother's cottage lay beneath
The sky-bird's rosy breast.

'Oh, joy,' he cried, 'not
all
the way
Farther from home we go!
The rain will come another day
And bring another bow!'

Long ere he reached his mother's cot,
Still tiring more and more,
The red was all one cold gray blot,
And night lay round the door.

But when his mother stroked his head
The night was grim in vain;
And when she kissed him in his bed
The rainbow rose again.

Soon, things that are and things that seem
Did mingle merrily;
He dreamed, nor was it all a dream,
His mother had the key.

George MacDonald

The Grace Of Grace

Had I the grace to win the grace
Of some old man in lore complete,
My face would worship at his face,
And I sit lowly at his feet.

Had I the grace to win the grace
Of childhood, loving shy, apart,
The child should find a nearer place,
And teach me resting on my heart.

Had I the grace to win the grace
Of maiden living all above,
My soul would trample down the base,
That she might have a man to love.

A grace I had no grace to win
Knocks now at my half open door:
Ah, Lord of glory, come thou in!-
Thy grace divine is all, and more.

George MacDonald

The Haunted House

Suggested by a drawing of Thomas Moran, the American painter

This must be the very night!
The moon knows it!-and the trees!
They stand straight upright,
Each a sentinel drawn up,
As if they dared not know
Which way the wind might blow!
The very pool, with dead gray eye,
Dully expectant, feels it nigh,
And begins to curdle and freeze!
And the dark night,
With its fringe of light,
Holds the secret in its cup!

II. What can it be, to make
The poplars cease to shiver and shake,
And up in the dismal air
Stand straight and stiff as the human hair
When the human soul is dizzy with dread-
All but those two that strain
Aside in a frenzy of speechless pain,
Though never a wind sends out a breath
To tunnel the foggy rheum of death?
What can it be has power to scare
The full-grown moon to the idiot stare
Of a blasted eye in the midnight air?
Something has gone wrong;
A scream will come tearing out ere long!

III. Still as death,
Although I listen with bated breath!
Yet something is coming, I know-is coming!
With an inward soundless humming
Somewhere in me, or if in the air
I cannot tell, but it is there!
Marching on to an unheard drumming
Something is coming-coming-

Growing and coming!
And the moon is aware,
Aghast in the air
At the thing that is only coming
With an inward soundless humming
And an unheard spectral drumming!

IV. Nothing to see and nothing to hear!
Only across the inner sky
The wing of a shadowy thought flits by,
Vague and featureless, faceless, drear-
Only a thinness to catch the eye:
Is it a dim foreboding unborn,
Or a buried memory, wasted and worn
As the fading frost of a wintry sigh?
Anon I shall have it!-anon!-it draws nigh!
A night when-a something it was took place
That drove the blood from that scared moon-face!
Hark! was that the cry of a goat,
Or the gurgle of water in a throat?
Hush! there is nothing to see or hear,
Only a silent something is near;
No knock, no footsteps three or four,
Only a presence outside the door!
See! the moon is remembering!-what?
The wail of a mother-left, lie-alone brat?
Or a raven sharpening its beak to peck?
Or a cold blue knife and a warm white neck?
Or only a heart that burst and ceased
For a man that went away released?
I know not-know not, but something is coming
Somehow back with an inward humming!

V. Ha! look there! look at that house,
Forsaken of all things, beetle and mouse!
Mark how it looks! It must have a soul!
It looks, it looks, though it cannot stir!
See the ribs of it, how they stare!
Its blind eyes yet have a seeing air!
It
knows
it has a soul!

Haggard it hangs o'er the slimy pool,
And gapes wide open as corpses gape:
It is the very murderer!
The ghost has modelled himself to the shape
Of this drear house all sodden with woe
Where the deed was done, long, long ago,
And filled with himself his new body full-
To haunt for ever his ghastly crime,
And see it come and go-
Brooding around it like motionless time,
With a mouth that gapes, and eyes that yawn
Blear and blintering and full of the moon,
Like one aghast at a hellish dawn!-
The deed! the deed! it is coming soon!

VI. For, ever and always, when round the tune
Grinds on the barrel of organ-Time,
The deed is done. And it comes anon:
True to the roll of the clock-faced moon,
True to the ring of the spheric chime,
True to the cosmic rhythm and rime,
Every point, as it first fell out,
Will come and go in the fearsome bout.
See! palsied with horror from garret to core,
The house cannot shut its gaping door;
Its burst eye stares as if trying to see,
And it leans as if settling heavily,
Settling heavy with sickness dull:

It
also is hearing the soundless humming
Of the wheel that is turning-the thing that is coming!
On the naked rafters of its brain,
Gaunt and wintred, see the train
Of gossiping, scandal-mongering crows
That watch, all silent, with necks a-strain,
Wickedly knowing, with heads awry
And the sharpened gleam of a cunning eye-
Watch, through the cracks of the ruined skull,
How the evil business goes!-
Beyond the eyes of the cherubim,
Beyond the ears of the seraphim,

Outside, forsaken, in the dim
Phantom-haunted chaos grim
He stands, with the deed going on in him!

VII. O winds, winds, that lurk and peep
Under the edge of the moony fringe!
O winds, winds, up and sweep,
Up and blow and billow the air,
Billow the air with blow and swinge,
Rend me this ghastly house of groans!
Rend and scatter the skeleton's bones
Over the deserts and mountains bare!
Blast and hurl and shiver aside
Nailed sticks and mortared stones!
Clear the phantom, with torrent and tide,
Out of the moon and out of my brain,
That the light may fall shadowless in again!

VIII. But, alas, then the ghost
O'er mountain and coast
Would go roaming, roaming! and never was swine
That, grubbing and talking with snork and whine
On Gadarene mountains, had taken him in
But would rush to the lake to unhouse the sin!
For any charnel
This ghost is too carnal;
There is no volcano, burnt out and cold,
Whose very ashes are gray and old,
But would cast him forth in reviving flame
To blister the sky with a smudge of shame!

IX. Is there no help? none anywhere
Under the earth or above the air?-
Come, sad woman, whose tender throat
Has a red-lipped mouth that can sing no note!
Child, whose midwife, the third grim Fate,
Shears in hand, thy coming did wait!
Father, with blood-bedabbled hair!
Mother, all withered with love's despair!
Come, broken heart, whatever thou be,
Hasten to help this misery!
Thou wast only murdered, or left forlorn:

He is a horror, a hate, a scorn!
Come, if out of the holiest blue
That the sapphire throne shines through;
For pity come, though thy fair feet stand
Next to the elder-band;
Fling thy harp on the hyaline,
Hurry thee down the spheres divine;
Come, and drive those ravens away;
Cover his eyes from the pitiless moon,
Shadow his brain from her stinging spray;
Droop around him, a tent of love,
An odour of grace, a fanning dove;
Walk through the house with the healing tune
Of gentle footsteps; banish the shape
Remorse calls up thyself to ape;
Comfort him, dear, with pardon sweet;
Cool his heart from its burning heat
With the water of life that laves the feet
Of the throne of God, and the holy street!

X. O God, he is but a living blot,
Yet he lives by thee-for if thou wast not,
They would vanish together, self-forgot,
He and his crime:-one breathing blown
From thy spirit on his would all atone,
Scatter the horror, and bring relief
In an amber dawn of holy grief!
God, give him sorrow; arise from within,
His primal being, deeper than sin!

XI. Why do I tremble, a creature at bay?
'Tis but a dream-I drive it away.
Back comes my breath, and my heart again
Pumps the red blood to my fainting brain
Released from the nightmare's nine-fold train:
God is in heaven-yes, everywhere,
And Love, the all-shining, will kill Despair!-
To the wall's blank eyeless space
I turn the picture's face.

XII. But why is the moon so bare, up there?
And why is she so white?

And why does the moon so stare, up there-
Strangely stare, out of the night?
Why stand up the poplars
That still way?
And why do those two of them
Start astray?
And out of the black why hangs the gray?
Why does it hang down so, I say,
Over that house, like a fringed pall
Where the dead goes by in a funeral?-
Soul of mine,
Thou the reason canst divine:
Into
thee
the moon doth stare
With pallid, terror-smitten air!
Thou, and the Horror lonely-stark,
Outcast of eternal dark,
Are in nature same and one,
And
thy
story is not done!
So let the picture face thee from the wall,
And let its white moon stare!

George MacDonald

The Healer

They come to thee, the halt, the maimed, the blind,
The devil-torn, the sick, the sore;
Thy heart their well of life they find,
Thine ear their open door.

Ah, who can tell the joy in Palestine-
What smiles and tears of rescued throngs!
Their lees of life were turned to wine,
Their prayers to shouts and songs!

The story dear our wise men fable call,
Give paltry facts the mighty range;
To me it seems just what should fall,
And nothing very strange.

But were I deaf and lame and blind and sore,
I scarce would care for cure to ask;
Another prayer should haunt thy door-
Set thee a harder task.

If thou art Christ, see here this heart of mine,
Torn, empty, moaning, and unblest!
Had ever heart more need of thine,
If thine indeed hath rest?

Thy word, thy hand right soon did scare the bane
That in their bodies death did breed;
If thou canst cure my deeper pain
Then art thou lord indeed.

George MacDonald

The Herd And The Mavis

'What gars ye sing,' said the herd-laddie,
'What gars ye sing sae lood?'
'To tice them oot o' the yerd, laddie,
The worms for my daily food.'

An' aye he sang, an' better he sang,
An' the worms creepit in an' oot;
An' ane he tuik, an' twa he loot gang,
An' still he carolled stoot.

'It's no for the worms, sir,' said the herd;
'They comena for your sang!'
'Think ye sae, sir?' answered the bird,
'Maybe ye're no i' the wrang!'

But aye &c.

'Sing ye young Sorrow to beguile,
Or to gie auld Fear the flegs?'
'Na,' quo' the mavis, 'I sing to wile
My wee things oot o' her eggs.'

An' aye &c.

'The mistress is plenty for that same gear
Though ye sangna air nor late!'
'I wud draw the deid frae the moul sae drear.
An' open the kirkyard-gate.'

An' aye &c.

'Better ye sing nor a burn i' the mune,
Nor a wave ower san' that flows,
Nor a win' wi' the glintin stars abune,
An' aneth the roses in rows;

An' aye &c.

But a better sang it wud tak nor yer ain,
Though ye hae o' notes a feck,
To mak the auld Barebanes there sae fain
As to lift the muckle sneck!

An' aye &c.

An' ye wudna draw ae bairnie back
Frae the arms o' the bonny man
Though its minnie was greitin alas an' alack,
An' her cries to the bairnie wan!

An' aye &c.

An' I'll speir ye nae mair, sir,' said the herd,
'I fear what ye micht say neist!'
'I doobt ye wud won'er, sir,' said the bird,
'To see the thouchts i' my breist!'

An' aye he sang, an' better he sang,
An' the worms creepit in an' oot;
An' ane he tuik, an' twa he loot gang,
An' still he carolled stoot.

George MacDonald

The Hills

Behind my father's cottage lies
A gentle grassy height
Up which I often ran-to gaze
Back with a wondering sight,
For then the chimneys I thought high
Were down below me quite!

All round, where'er I turned mine eyes,
Huge hills closed up the view;
The town 'mid their converging roots
Was clasped by rivers two;
From, one range to another sprang
The sky's great vault of blue.

It was a joy to climb their sides,
And in the heather lie!
A joy to look at vantage down
On the castle grim and high!
Blue streams below, white clouds above,
In silent earth and sky!

And now, where'er my feet may roam,
At sight of stranger hill
A new sense of the old delight
Springs in my bosom still,
And longings for the high unknown
Their ancient channels fill.

For I am always climbing hills,
From the known to the unknown-
Surely, at last, on some high peak,
To find my Father's throne,
Though hitherto I have only found
His footsteps in the stone!

And in my wanderings I did meet
Another searching too:
The dawning hope, the shared quest
Our thoughts together drew;

Fearless she laid her band in mine
Because her heart was true.

She was not born among the hills,
Yet on each mountain face
A something known her inward eye
By inborn light can trace;
For up the hills must homeward be,
Though no one knows the place.

Clasp my hand close, my child, in thine-
A long way we have come!
Clasp my hand closer yet, my child,
Farther we yet must roam-
Climbing and climbing till we reach
Our heavenly father's home.

George MacDonald

The Holy Midnight

Ah, holy midnight of the soul,
When stars alone are high;
When winds are resting at their goal,
And sea-waves only sigh!

Ambition faints from out the will;
Asleep sad longing lies;
All hope of good, all fear of ill,
All need of action dies;

Because God is, and claims the life
He kindled in thy brain;
And thou in him, rapt far from strife,
Diest and liv'st again.

George MacDonald

The Home Of Death

'Death, whaur do ye bide, auld Death?'
'I bide in ilka breath,'
Quo' Death;
'No i' the pyramids,
No whaur the wormie rids
'Neth coffin-lids;
I bidena whaur life has been,
An' whaur's nae mair to be dune.'

'Death, whaur do ye bide, auld Death?'
'Wi' the leevin, to dee 'at are laith,'
Quo' Death;
'Wi' the man an' the wife
'At loo like life,
Bot strife;
Wi' the bairns 'at hing to their mither,
Wi' a' 'at loo ane anither.'

'Death, whaur do ye bide, auld Death?'
'Abune an' about an' aneth,'
Quo' Death;
'But o' a' the airts
An' o' a' the pairts,
In herts-
Whan the tane to the tither says, Na,
An' the north win' begins to blaw.'

George MacDonald

The Homeless Ghost

Still flowed the music, flowed the wine.
The youth in silence went;
Through naked streets, in cold moonshine,
His homeward way he bent,
Where, on the city's seaward line,
His lattice seaward leant.

He knew not why he left the throng,
But that he could not rest;
That something pained him in the song,
And mocked him in the jest;
And a cold moon-glitter lay along
One lovely lady's breast.

He sat him down with solemn book
His sadness to beguile;
A skull from off its bracket-nook
Threw him a lipless smile;
But its awful, laughter-mocking look,
Was a passing moonbeam's wile.

An hour he sat, and read in vain,
Nought but mirrors were his eyes;
For to and fro through his helpless brain,
Went the dance's mysteries;
Till a gust of wind against the pane,
Mixed with a sea-bird's cries,
And the sudden spatter of drifting rain
Bade him mark the altered skies.

The moon was gone, intombed in cloud;
The wind began to rave;
The ocean heaved within its shroud,
For the dark had built its grave;
But like ghosts brake forth, and cried aloud,
The white crests of the wave.

Big rain. The wind howled out, aware
Of the tread of the watery west;

The windows shivered, back waved his hair,
The fireside seemed the best;
But lo! a lady sat in his chair,
With the moonlight across her breast.

The moonbeam passed. The lady sat on.
Her beauty was sad and white.
All but her hair with whiteness shone,
And her hair was black as night;
And her eyes, where darkness was never gone,
Although they were full of light.

But her hair was wet, and wept like weeds
On her pearly shoulders bare;
And the clear pale drops ran down like beads,
Down her arms, to her fingers fair;
And her limbs shine through, like thin-filmed seeds,
Her dank white robe's despair.

She moved not, but looked in his wondering face,
Till his blushes began to rise;
But she gazed, like one on the veiling lace,
To something within his eyes;
A gaze that had not to do with place,
But thought and spirit tries.

Then the voice came forth, all sweet and clear,
Though jarred by inward pain;
She spoke like one that speaks in fear
Of the judgment she will gain,
When the soul is full as a mountain-mere,
And the speech, but a flowing vein.

'Thine eyes are like mine, and thou art bold;
Nay, heap not the dying fire;
It warms not me, I am too cold,
Cold as the churchyard spire;
If thou cover me up with fold on fold,
Thou kill'st not the coldness dire.'

Her voice and her beauty, like molten gold,
Thrilled through him in burning rain.

He was on fire, and she was cold,
Cold as the waveless main;
But his heart-well filled with woe, till it rolled
A torrent that calmed him again.

'Save me, Oh, save me!' she cried; and flung
Her splendour before his feet;-
'I am weary of wandering storms among,
And I hate the mouldy sheet;
I can dare the dark, wind-vexed and wrung,
Not the dark where the dead things meet.

'Ah! though a ghost, I'm a lady still-'
The youth recoiled aghast.
With a passion of sorrow her great eyes fill;
Not a word her white lips passed.
He caught her hand; 'twas a cold to kill,
But he held it warm and fast.

'What can I do to save thee, dear?'
At the word she sprang upright.
To her ice-lips she drew his burning ear,
And whispered-he shivered-she whispered light.
She withdrew; she gazed with an asking fear;
He stood with a face ghost-white.

'I wait-ah, would I might wait!' she said;
'But the moon sinks in the tide;
Thou seest it not; I see it fade,
Like one that may not bide.
Alas! I go out in the moonless shade;
Ah, kind! let me stay and hide.'

He shivered, he shook, he felt like clay;
And the fear went through his blood;
His face was an awful ashy grey,
And his veins were channels of mud.
The lady stood in a white dismay,
Like a half-blown frozen bud.

'Ah, speak! am I so frightful then?
I live; though they call it death;

I am only cold-say
dear
again'-
But scarce could he heave a breath;
The air felt dank, like a frozen fen,
And he a half-conscious wraith.

'Ah, save me!' once more, with a hopeless cry,
That entered his heart, and lay;
But sunshine and warmth and rosiness vie
With coldness and moonlight and grey.
He spoke not. She moved not; yet to his eye,
She stood three paces away.

She spoke no more. Grief on her face
Beauty had almost slain.
With a feverous vision's unseen pace
She had flitted away again;
And stood, with a last dumb prayer for grace,
By the window that clanged with rain.

He stood; he stared. She had vanished quite.
The loud wind sank to a sigh;
Grey faces without paled the face of night,
As they swept the window by;
And each, as it passed, pressed a cheek of fright
To the glass, with a staring eye.

And over, afar from over the deep,
Came a long and cadenced wail;
It rose, and it sank, and it rose on the steep
Of the billows that build the gale.
It ceased; but on in his bosom creep
Low echoes that tell the tale.

He opened his lattice, and saw afar,
Over the western sea,
Across the spears of a sparkling star,
A moony vapour flee;
And he thought, with a pang that he could not bar,
The lady it might be.

He turned and looked into the room;
And lo! it was cheerless and bare;
Empty and drear as a hopeless tomb,-
And the lady was not there;
Yet the fire and the lamp drove out the gloom,
As he had driven the fair.

And up in the manhood of his breast,
Sprang a storm of passion and shame;
It tore the pride of his fancied best
In a thousand shreds of blame;
It threw to the ground his ancient crest,
And puffed at his ancient name.

He had turned a lady, and lightly clad,
Out in the stormy cold.
Was she a ghost?-Divinely sad
Are the guests of Hades old.
A wandering ghost? Oh! terror bad,
That refused an earthly fold!

And sorrow for her his shame's regret
Into humility wept;
He knelt and he kissed the footprints wet,
And the track by her thin robe swept;
He sat in her chair, all ice-cold yet,
And moaned until he slept.

He woke at dawn. The flaming sun
Laughed at the bye-gone dark.
'I am glad,' he said, 'that the night is done,
And the dream slain by the lark.'
And the eye was all, until the gun
That boomed at the sun-set-hark!

And then, with a sudden invading blast,
He knew that it was no dream.
And all the night belief held fast,
Till thinned by the morning beam.
Thus radiant mornings and pale nights passed
On the backward-flowing stream.

He loved a lady with heaving breath,
Red lips, and a smile alway;
And her sighs an odour inhabiteth,
All of the rose-hued may;
But the warm bright lady was false as death,
And the ghost is true as day.

And the spirit-face, with its woe divine,
Came back in the hour of sighs;
As to men who have lost their aim, and pine,
Old faces of childhood rise:
He wept for her pleading voice, and the shine
Of her solitary eyes.

And now he believed in the ghost all night,
And believed in the day as well;
And he vowed, with a sorrowing tearful might,
All she asked, whate'er befel,
If she came to his room, in her garment white,
Once more at the midnight knell.

She came not. He sought her in churchyards old
That lay along the sea;
And in many a church, when the midnight tolled,
And the moon shone wondrously;
And down to the crypts he crept, grown bold;
But he waited in vain: ah me!

And he pined and sighed for love so sore,
That he looked as he were lost;
And he prayed her pardon more and more,
As one who had sinned the most;
Till, fading at length, away he wore,
And he was himself a ghost.

But if he found the lady then,
The lady sadly lost,
Or she had found 'mongst living men
A love that was a host,
I know not, till I drop my pen,
And am myself a ghost.

The Human

Within each living man there doth reside,
In some unrifled chamber of the heart,
A hidden treasure: wayward as thou art
I love thee, man, and bind thee to my side!
By that sweet act I purify my pride
And hasten onward-willing even to part
With pleasant graces: though thy hue is swart,
I bear thee company, thou art my guide!
Even in thy sinning wise beyond thy ken
To thee a subtle debt my soul is owing!
I take an impulse from the worst of men
That lends a wing unto my onward going;
Then let me pay them gladly back again
With prayer and love from Faith and Duty flowing!

George MacDonald

The Journey

I.

Hark, the rain is on my roof!
Every murmur, through the dark,
Stings me with a dull reproof
Like a half-extinguished spark.
Me! ah me! how came I here,
Wide awake and wide alone!
Caught within a net of fear,
All my dreams undreamed and gone!

I will rise; I will go forth.
Better dare the hideous night,
Better face the freezing north
Than be still, where is no light!
Black wind rushing round me now,
Sown with arrowy points of rain!
Gone are there and then and now-
I am here, and so is pain!

Dead in dreams the gloomy street!
I will out on open roads.
Eager grow my aimless feet-
Onward, onward something goads!
I will take the mountain path,
Beard the storm within its den;
Know the worst of this dim wrath
Harassing the souls of men.

Chasm 'neath chasm! rock piled on rock!
Roots, and crumbling earth, and stones!
Hark, the torrent's thundering shock!
Hark, the swaying pine tree's groans!
Ah! I faint, I fall, I die,
Sink to nothingness away!-
Lo, a streak upon the sky!
Lo, the opening eye of day!

II.

Mountain summits lift their snows
O'er a valley green and low;
And a winding pathway goes
Guided by the river's flow;
And a music rises ever,
As of peace and low content,
From the pebble-paven river
Like an odour upward sent.

And the sound of ancient harms
Moans behind, the hills among,
Like the humming of the swarms
That unseen the forest throng.
Now I meet the shining rain
From a cloud with sunny weft;
Now against the wind I strain,
Sudden burst from mountain cleft.

Now a sky that hath a moon
Staining all the cloudy white
With a faded rainbow-soon
Lost in deeps of heavenly night!
Now a morning clear and soft,
Amber on the purple hills;
Warm blue day of summer, oft
Cooled by wandering windy rills!

Joy to travel thus along
With the universe around!
Every creature of the throng,
Every sight and scent and sound
Homeward speeding, beauty-laden,
Beelike, to its hive, my soul!
Mine the eye the stars are made in!
Mine the heart of Nature's whole!

III.

Hills retreating on each hand
Slowly sink into the plain;
Solemn through the outspread land

Rolls the river to the main.
In the glooming of the night
Something through the dusky air
Doubtful glimmers, faintly white,
But I know not what or where.

Is it but a chalky ridge
Bared of sod, like tree of bark?
Or a river-spanning bridge
Miles away into the dark?
Or the foremost leaping waves
Of the everlasting sea,
Where the Undivided laves
Time with its eternity?

Is it but an eye-made sight,
In my brain a fancied gleam?
Or a faint aurora-light
From the sun's tired smoking team?
In the darkness it is gone,
Yet with every step draws nigh;
Known shall be the thing unknown
When the morning climbs the sky!

Onward, onward through the night
Matters it I cannot see?
I am moving in a might
Dwelling in the dark and me!
End or way I cannot lose-
Grudge to rest, or fear to roam;
All is well with wanderer whose
Heart is travelling hourly home.

IV.

Joy! O joy! the dawning sea
Answers to the dawning sky,
Foretaste of the coming glee
When the sun will lord it high!
See the swelling radiance growing
To a dazzling glory-might!
See the shadows gently going

'Twixt the wave-tops wild with light!

Hear the smiting billows clang!
See the falling billows lean
Half a watery vault, and hang
Gleaming with translucent green,
Then in thousand fleeces fall,
Thundering light upon the strand!-
This the whiteness which did call
Through the dusk, across the land!

See, a boat! Out, out we dance!
Fierce blasts swoop upon my sail!
What a terrible expanse-
Tumbling hill and heaving dale!
Stayless, helpless, lost I float,
Captive to the lawless free!
But a prison is my boat!
Oh, for petrel-wings to flee!

Look below: each watery whirl
Cast in beauty's living mould!
Look above: each feathery curl
Dropping crimson, dropping gold!-
Oh, I tremble in the flush
Of the everlasting youth!
Love and awe together rush:
I am free in God, the Truth!

George MacDonald

The Lark And The Wind

In the air why such a ringing?
On the earth why such a droning?

In the air the lark is singing;
On the earth the wind is moaning.

'I am blest, in sunlight swinging!'
'Sad am I: the world lies groaning!'

In the sky the lark kept singing;
On the earth the wind kept moaning.

George MacDonald

The Last Woin

'O lat me in, my bonny lass!
It's a lang road ower the hill,
And the flauchterin snaw begud to fa'
On the brig ayont the mill!'

'Here's nae change-hoose, John Munro!
'I'll ken that to my cost
Gien ye gar me tak the hill the nicht,
Wi' snaw o' the back o' frost!

But tell me, lass, what's my offence.'
'Weel ken ye! At the fair
Ye lichtlied me! Ay, twasna ance!-
Ye needna come nae mair!'

'I lichtlied ye?'-'Ay, ower the glass!'
'Foul-fa' the ill-faured mou
'At made the leein word to pass
By rowin 't i' the true!

The trouth is this: I docht na bide
To hear yer bonnie name
Whaur lawless mous war openit wide
Wi' ill-tongued scoff and blame;

And what I said was: 'Hoot, lat sit!
She's but a bairn, the lass!'
It turnt the spait o' words a bit,
And loot yer fair name pass.'

'Thank ye for naething, John Munro!
My name it needna hide;
It's no a drucken sough wud gar
Me turn my heid aside!'

'O Elsie, lassie, be yersel!
The snaw-stour's driftin thrang!
O tak me in, the win' 's sae snell,
And in an hour I'll gang.'

'I downa pay ye guid for ill,
Ye heedna fause and true!
Gang back to Katie at the mill-
She loos sic like as you!'

He turnt his fit; she heardna mair.
The lift was like to fa';
And Elsie's hert grew grit and sair
At sicht o' the drivin snaw.

She laid her doon, but no to sleep,
Her verra hert was cauld;
And the sheets war like a frozen heap
O' drift aboot her faul'd.

She rase fu' air; the warl lay fair
And still in its windin-sheet;
At door-cheek, or at winnock-lug,
Was never a mark o' feet!

She crap for days aboot the hoose,
Dull-futtit and hert-sair,
Aye keekin oot like a hungert moose-
But Johnnie was na there!

Lang or the spring begoud to thow
The waesome, sick-faced snaw,
Her hert was saft a' throu and throu,
Her pride had ta'en a fa'.

And whan the wreaths war halflins gane,
And the sun was blinkin bonnie,
Oot ower the hill she wud gang her lane
To speir aboot her Johnnie.

Half ower, she cam intil a lair
O' snaw and slush and weet:
The Lord hae mercy! what's that there?
It was Johnnie at her feet.

Aneth the snaw his heid was smorit,

But his breist was maistly bare,
And twixt his richt ban' and his hert
Lay a lock o' gouden hair.

The warm win' blew, the blackcock flew,
The lerrick muntit the skies;
The burnie ran, and a baein began,
But Johnnie wudna rise.

The sun was clear, the lift was blue,
The winter was awa;
Up cam the green gerse plentifu,
The better for the snaw;

And warm it happit Johnnie's grave
Whaur the ae lock gouden lay;
But on Elsie's hingin heid the lave
Was afore the barley gray.

George MacDonald

The Laverock

The Man says:

Laverock i' the lift,
Hae ye nae sang-thrift,
'At ye scatter 't sae heigh, and lat it a' drift?
Wasterfu laverock!

Dinna ye ken
'At ye hing ower men
Wha haena a sang or a penny to spen?
Hertless laverock!

But up there you,
I' the bow o' the blue,
Haud skirlin on as gien a' war new!
Toom-heidit laverock!

Haith, ye're ower blythe!
I see a great scythe
Swing whaur yer nestie lies, doon i' the lythe,
Liltin laverock!

Eh, sic a soun!
Birdie, come doun,
Ye're fey to sing sic a merry tune!
Gowkit laverock!

Come to yer nest;
Yer wife's sair prest,
She's clean worn oot wi' duin her best!
Rovin laverock!

Winna ye haud?
Ye're surely mad!
Is there naebody there to gie ye a dad,
Menseless laverock?

Come doon and conform,
Pyke an honest worm,

And hap yer bairns frae the comin storm,
Spendrife laverock!

The Bird sings:

My nestie it lieth
I' the how o' a ban';
The swing o' the scythe
'Ill miss 't by a span.

The lift it's sae cheery!
The win' it's sae free!
I hing ower my dearie,
And sing 'cause I see.

My wifie's wee breistie
Grows warm wi' my sang,
And ilk crumpled-up beastie
Kens no to think lang.

Up here the sun sings, but
He only shines there!
Ye haena nae wings, but
Come up on a prayer.

The man sings:

Ye wee daurin cratur,
Ye rant and ye sing
Like an oye o' auld Natur
Ta'en hame by the king!

Ye wee feathert priestie,
Yer bells i' yer thro't,
Yer altar yer breistie,
Yer mitre forgot-

Offerin and Aaron,

Ye burn hert and brain;
And dertin and daurin,
Flee back to yer ain!

Ye wee minor prophet,
It's 'maist my belief
'At I'm doon in Tophet,
And you abune grief!

Ye've deavt me and daudit
And ca'd me a fule:
I'm nearhan' persuaudit
To gang to your schule!

For, birdie, I'm thinkin
Ye ken mair nor me-
Gien ye haena been drinkin,
And sing as ye see.

Ye maun hae a sicht 'at
Sees gay and far ben,
And a hert, for the micht o' 't,
Wad sair for nine men!

There's somebody's been til
Roun saft to ye wha
Said birdies are seen til,
And e'en whan they fa'!

George MacDonald

The Lily Of The Valley

There is not any weed but hath its shower,
There is not any pool but hath its star;
And black and muddy though the waters are
We may not miss the glory of a flower,
And winter moons will give them magic power
To spin in cylinders of diamond spar;
And everything hath beauty near and far,
And keepeth close and waiteth on its hour!
And I, when I encounter on my road
A human soul that looketh black and grim,
Shall I more ceremonious be than God?
Shall I refuse to watch one hour with him
Who once beside our deepest woe did bud
A patient watching flower about the brim?

George MacDonald

The Lost House

Out of thy door I run to do the thing
That calls upon me. Straight the wind of words
Whoops from mine ears the sounds of them that sing
About their work, 'My God, my father-king!'

I turn in haste to see thy blessed door,
But, lo, a cloud of flies and bats and birds,
And stalking vapours, and vague monster-herds
Have risen and lighted, rushed and swollen between!

Ah me! the house of peace is there no more.
Was it a dream then?-Walls, fireside, and floor,
And sweet obedience, loving, calm, and free,
Are vanished-gone as they had never been!

I labour groaning. Comes a sudden sheen!-
And I am kneeling at my father's knee,
Sighing with joy, and hoping utterly.

George MacDonald

The Lost Soul

Look! look there!
Send your eyes across the gray
By my finger-point away
Through the vaporous, fummy air.
Beyond the air, you see the dark?
Beyond the dark, the dawning day?
On its horizon, pray you, mark
Something like a ruined heap
Of worlds half-uncreated, that go back:
Down all the grades through which they rose
Up to harmonious life and law's repose,
Back, slow, to the awful deep
Of nothingness, mere being's lack:
On its surface, lone and bare,
Shapeless as a dumb despair,
Formless, nameless, something lies:
Can the vision in your eyes
Its idea recognize?

'Tis a poor lost soul, alack!-
Half he lived some ages back;
But, with hardly opened eyes,
Thinking him already wise,
Down he sat and wrote a book;
Drew his life into a nook;
Out of it would not arise
To peruse the letters dim,
Graven dark on his own walls;
Those, he judged, were chance-led scrawls,
Or at best no use to him.
A lamp was there for reading these;
This he trimmed, sitting at ease,
For its aid to write his book,
Never at his walls to look-
Trimmed and trimmed to one faint spark
Which went out, and left him dark.-
I will try if he can hear
Spirit words with spirit ear!

Motionless thing! who once,
Like him who cries to thee,
Hadst thy place with thy shining peers,
Thy changeful place in the changeless dance
Issuing ever in radiance
From the doors of the far eternity,
With feet that glitter and glide and glance
To the music-law that binds the free,
And sets the captive at liberty-
To the clang of the crystal spheres!
O heart for love! O thirst to drink
From the wells that feed the sea!
O hands of truth, a human link
'Twixt mine and the Father's knee!
O eyes to see! O soul to think!
O life, the brother of me!
Has Infinitude sucked back all
The individual life it gave?
Boots it nothing to cry and call?
Is thy form an empty grave?

It heareth not, brothers, the terrible thing!
Sounds no sense to its ear will bring!
Let us away, 'tis no use to tarry;
Love no light to its heart will carry!
Sting it with words, it will never shrink;
It will not repent, it cannot think!
Hath God forgotten it, alas!
Lost in eternity's lumber-room?
Will the wind of his breathing never pass
Over it through the insensate gloom?
Like a frost-killed bud on a tombstone curled,
Crumbling it lies on its crumbling world,
Sightless and deaf, with never a cry,
In the hell of its own vacuity!

See, see yon angel crossing our flight
Where the thunder vapours loom,
From his upcast pinions flashing the light
Of some outbreaking doom!
Up, brothers! away! a storm is nigh!
Smite we the wing up a steeper sky!

What matters the hail or the clashing winds,
The thunder that buffets, the lightning that blinds!
We know by the tempest we do not lie
Dead in the pits of eternity!

George MacDonald

The Man Of Songs

'Thou wanderest in the land of dreams,
O man of many songs!
To thee what is, but looks and seems;
No realm to thee belongs!'

'Seest thou those mountains, faint and far,
O spirit caged and tame?'
'Blue clouds like distant hills they are,
And like is not the same.'

'Nay, nay; I know each mountain well,
Each cliff, and peak, and dome!
In that cloudland, in one high dell,
Nesteth my little home.'

George MacDonald

The Mermaid

Up cam the tide wi' a burst and a whush,
And back gaed the stanes wi' a whurr;
The king's son walkit i' the evenin hush,
To hear the sea murmur and murr.

Straucht ower the water slade frae the mune
A glimmer o' cauld weet licht;
Ane o' her horns rase the water abune,
And lampit across the nicht.

Quhat's that, and that, far oot i' the gray,
The laich mune bobbin afore?
It's the bonny sea-maidens at their play-
Haud awa, king's son, frae the shore.

Ae rock stude up like an auld aik-root,
The king's son he steppit ahin';
The bonny sea-maidens cam gambolin oot,
Kaimin their hair to the win'.

O merry their lauch whan they fan the warm san',
For the lichtsme reel sae meet!
Ilk are flang her kaim frae her pearly ban',
And tuik til her pearly feet.

But are, wha's beauty was dream and spell,
Her kaim on the rock she cuist;
Her back was scarce turnt whan the munelicht shell
Was lyin i' the prince's breist!

The cluds grew grim as he watched their game,
Th' win' blew up an angry tune;
Ane efter are tuik up her kaim,
And seaward gaed dancin doon.

But are, wi' hair like the mune in a clud,
Was left by the rock her lane;
Wi' flittin ban's, like a priest's, she stude,
'Maist veiled in a rush o' rain.

She spied the prince, she sank at his feet,
And lay like a wreath o' snaw
Meltin awa i' the win' and weet
O' a wastin wastlin thaw.

He liftit her, trimlin wi' houp and dreid,
And hame wi' his prize he gaed,
And laid her doon, like a witherin weed,
Saft on a gowden bed.

A' that nicht, and a' day the neist,
She never liftit heid;
Quaiet lay the sea, and quaiet lay her breist,
And quaiet lay the kirkyard-deid.

But quhan at the gloamin a sea-breeze keen
Blew intil the glimsome room,
Like twa settin stars she opened her een,
And the sea-floer began to bloom.

And she saw the prince kneelin at her bed,
And afore the mune was new,
Careless and cauld she was wooed and wed-
But a winsome wife she grew.

And a' gaed weel till their bairn was born,
And syne she cudna sleep;
She wud rise at midnicht, and wan'er till morn,
Hark-harkin the sough o' the deep.

Ae nicht whan the win' gaed ravin aboot,
And the winnocks war speckled wi' faem,
Frae room to room she strayt in and oot,
And she spied her pearly kaim.

She twined up her hair wi' eager ban's,
And in wi' the rainbow kaim!
She's oot, and she's aff ower the shinin san's
And awa til her moanin hame!

The prince he startit whaur he lay,

He waukit, and was himlane!
He soucht far intil the mornin gray,
But his bonny sea-wife was gane!

And ever and aye, i' the mirk or the mune,
Whan the win' blew saft frae the sea,
The sad shore up and the sad shore doon
By the lanely rock paced he.

But never again on the sands to play
Cam the maids o' the merry, cauld sea;
He heard them lauch far oot i' the bay,
But hert-alane gaed he.

George MacDonald

The Mistletoe

Kiss me: there now, little Neddy,
Do you see her staring steady?
There again you had a chance of her!
Didn't you catch the pretty glance of her?
See her nest! On any planet
Never was a sweeter than it!
Never nest was such as this is:
Tis the nest of all the kisses,
With the mother kiss-bird sitting
All through Christmas, never flitting,
Kisses, kisses, kisses hatching,
Sweetest birdies, for the catching!
Oh, the precious little brood
Always in a loving mood!-
There's one under Mamy's hood!

There, that's one I caught this minute,
Musical as any linnnet!
Where it is, your big eyes question,
With of doubt a wee suggestion?
There it is-upon mouth merry!
There it is-upon cheek cherry!
There's another on chin-chinnie!
Now it's off, and lights on Minnie!
There's another on nose-nosey!
There's another on lip-rosy!
And the kissy-bird is hatching
Hundreds more for only catching.

Why the mistletoe she chooses,
And the Christmas-tree refuses?
There's a puzzle for your mother?
I'll present you with another!
Tell me why, you question-asker,
Cruel, heartless mother-tasker-
Why, of all the trees before her,
Gathered round, or spreading o'er her,
Jenny Wren should choose the apple
For her nursery and chapel!

Or Jack Daw build in the steeple
High above the praying people!
Tell me why the limping plover
O'er moist meadow likes to hover;
Why the partridge with such trouble
Builds her nest where soon the stubble
Will betray her hop-thumb-cheepers
To the eyes of all the reapers!-
Tell me, Charley; tell me, Janey;
Answer all, or answer any,
And I'll tell you, with much pleasure,
Why this little bird of treasure
Nestles only in the mistletoe,
Never, never goes the thistle to.

Not an answer? Tell without it?
Yes-all that I know about it:-
Mistletoe, then, cannot flourish,
Cannot find the food to nourish
But on other plant when planted-
And for kissing two are wanted.
That is why the kissy-birdie
Looks about for oak-tree sturdy
And the plant that grows upon it
Like a wax-flower on a bonnet.

But, my blessed little mannie,
All the birdies are not cannie
That the kissy-birdie hatches!
Some are worthless little patches,
Which indeed if they don't smutch you,
'Tis they're dead before they touch you!
While for kisses vain and greedy,
Kisses flattering, kisses needy,
They are birds that never waddled
Out of eggs that only addled!
Some there are leave spots behind them,
On your cheek for years you'd find them:
Little ones, I do beseech you,
Never let such birdies reach you.

It depends what net you venture

What the sort of bird will enter!
I will tell you in a minute
What net takes kiss-lark or linnet-
Any bird indeed worth hatching
And just therefore worth the catching:
The one net that never misses
Catching at least some true kisses,
Is the heart that, loving truly,
Always loves the old love newly;
But to spread out would undo it-
Let the birdies fly into it.

George MacDonald

The Moon

She comes! again she comes, the bright-eyed moon!
Under a ragged cloud I found her out,
Clasping her own dark orb like hope in doubt!
That ragged cloud hath waited her since noon,
And he hath found and he will hide her soon!
Come, all ye little winds that sit without,
And blow the shining leaves her edge about,
And hold her fast-ye have a pleasant tune!
She will forget us in her walks at night
Among the other worlds that are so fair!
She will forget to look on our despair!
She will forget to be so young and bright!
Nay, gentle moon, thou hast the keys of light-
I saw them hanging by thy girdle there!

George MacDonald

The Mother Mary

I.

Mary, to thee the heart was given
For infant hand to hold,
And clasp thus, an eternal heaven,
The great earth in its fold.

He seized the world with tender might
By making thee his own;
Thee, lowly queen, whose heavenly height
Was to thyself unknown.

He came, all helpless, to thy power,
For warmth, and love, and birth;
In thy embraces, every hour,
He grew into the earth.

Thine was the grief, O mother high,
Which all thy sisters share
Who keep the gate betwixt the sky
And this our lower air;

But unshared sorrows, gathering slow,
Will rise within thy heart,
Strange thoughts which like a sword will go
Thorough thy inward part.

For, if a woman bore a son
That was of angel brood,
Who lifted wings ere day was done,
And soared from where she stood,

Wild grief would rave on love's high throne;
She, sitting in the door,
All day would cry: 'He was my own,
And now is mine no more!'

So thou, O Mary, years on years,
From child-birth to the cross,

Wast filled with yearnings, filled with fears,
Keen sense of love and loss.

His childish thoughts outsoared thy reach;
His godlike tenderness
Would sometimes seem, in human speech,
To thee than human less.

Strange pangs await thee, mother mild,
A sorer travail-pain;
Then will the spirit of thy child
Be born in thee again.

Till then thou wilt forebode and dread;
Loss will be still thy fear-
Till he be gone, and, in his stead,
His very self appear.

For, when thy son hath reached his goal,
And vanished from the earth,
Soon wilt thou find him in thy soul,
A second, holier birth.

II.

Ah, there he stands! With wondering face
Old men surround the boy;
The solemn looks, the awful place
Bestill the mother's joy.

In sweet reproach her gladness hid,
Her trembling voice says-low,
Less like the chiding than the chid-
'How couldst thou leave us so?'

But will her dear heart understand
The answer that he gives-
Childlike, eternal, simple, grand,
The law by which he lives?

'Why sought ye me?' Ah, mother dear,

The gulf already opes
That will in thee keep live the fear,
And part thee from thy hopes!

'My father's business-that ye know
I cannot choose but do.'
Mother, if he that work forego,
Not long he cares for you.

Creation's harder, better part
Now occupies his hand:
I marvel not the mother's heart
Not yet could understand.

III.

The Lord of life among them rests;
They quaff the merry wine;
They do not know, those wedding guests,
The present power divine.

Believe, on such a group he smiled,
Though he might sigh the while;
Believe not, sweet-souled Mary's child
Was born without a smile.

He saw the pitchers, high upturned,
Their last red drops outpour;
His mother's cheek with triumph burned,
And expectation wore.

He knew the prayer her bosom housed,
He read it in her eyes;
Her hopes in him sad thoughts have roused
Ere yet her words arise.

'They have no wine!' she, halting, said,
Her prayer but half begun;
Her eyes went on, 'Lift up thy head,
Show what thou art, my son!'

A vision rose before his eyes,
The cross, the waiting tomb,
The people's rage, the darkened skies,
His unavowed doom:

Ah woman dear, thou must not fret
Thy heart's desire to see!
His hour of honour is not yet-
'Twill come too soon for thee!

His word was dark; his tone was kind;
His heart the mother knew;
His eyes in hers looked deep, and shined;
They gave her heart the cue.

Another, on the word intent,
Had read refusal there;
She heard in it a full consent,
A sweetly answered prayer.

'Whate'er he saith unto you, do.'
Out flowed his grapes divine;
Though then, as now, not many knew
Who makes the water wine.

IV.

'He is beside himself!' Dismayed,
His mother, brothers talked:
He from the well-known path had strayed
In which their fathers walked!

With troubled hearts they sought him. Loud
Some one the message bore:-
He stands within, amid a crowd,
They at the open door:-

'Thy mother and thy brothers would
Speak with thee. Lo, they stand
Without and wait thee!' Like a flood
Of sunrise on the land,

A new-born light his face o'erspread;
Out from his eyes it poured;
He lifted up that gracious head,
Looked round him, took the word:

'My mother-brothers-who are they?'
Hearest thou, Mary mild?
This is a sword that well may slay-
Disowned by thy child!

Ah, no! My brothers, sisters, hear-
They are our humble lord's!
O mother, did they wound
thy
ear?-

We
thank him for the words.

'Who are my friends?' Oh, hear him say,
Stretching his hand abroad,
'My mother, sisters, brothers, are they
That do the will of God!'

My brother
! Lord of life and me,
If life might grow to this!-
Would it not, brother, sister, be
Enough for all amiss?

Yea, mother, hear him and rejoice:
Thou art his mother still,
But may'st be more-of thy own choice
Doing his Father's will.

Ambition for thy son restrain,
Thy will to God's will bow:
Thy son he shall be yet again.
And twice his mother thou.

O humble man, O faithful son!
That woman most forlorn
Who yet thy father's will hath done,
Thee, son of man, hath born!

V.

Life's best things gather round its close
To light it from the door;
When woman's aid no further goes,
She weeps and loves the more.

She doubted oft, feared for his life,
Yea, feared his mission's loss;
But now she shares the losing strife,
And weeps beside the cross.

The dreaded hour is come at last,
The sword hath reached her soul;
The hour of tortured hope is past,
And gained the awful goal.

There hangs the son her body bore,
The limbs her arms had prest!
The hands, the feet the driven nails tore
Had lain upon her breast!

He speaks; the words how faintly brief,
And how divinely dear!
The mother's heart yearns through its grief
Her dying son to hear.

'Woman, behold thy son.-Behold
Thy mother.' Blessed hest
That friend to her torn heart to fold
Who understood him best!

Another son-ah, not instead!-
He gave, lest grief should kill,
While he was down among the dead,
Doing his father's will.

No, not
instead
! the coming joy
Will make him hers anew;
More hers than when, a little boy,
His life from hers he drew.

George MacDonald

The Mother Of Zebedee's Children

She knelt, she bore a bold request,
Though shy to speak it out:
Ambition, even in mother's breast,
Before him stood in doubt.

'What is it?' 'Grant thy promise now,
My sons on thy right hand
And on thy left shall sit when thou
Art king, Lord, in the land.'

'Ye know not what ye ask.' There lay
A baptism and a cup
She understood not, in the way
By which he must go up.

Her mother-love would lift them high
Above their fellow-men;
Her woman-pride would, standing nigh,
Share in their grandeur then!

Would she have joyed o'er prosperous quest,
Counted her prayer well heard,
Had they, of three on Calvary's crest,
Hung dying, first and third?

She knoweth neither way nor end:
In dark despair, full soon,
She will not mock the gracious friend
With prayer for any boon.

Higher than love could dream or dare
To ask, he them will set;
They shall his cup and baptism share,
And share his kingdom yet!

They, entering at his palace-door,
Will shun the lofty seat;
Will gird themselves, and water pour,
And wash each other's feet;

Then down beside their lowly Lord
On the Father's throne shall sit:
For them who godlike help afford
God hath prepared it.

George MacDonald

The New Year

Be welcome, year! with corn and sickle come;
Make poor the body, but make rich the heart:
What man that bears his sheaves, gold-nodding, home,
Will heed the pain rubbed from his groaning cart!

Nor leave behind thy fears and holy shames,
Thy sorrows on the horizon hanging low-
Gray gathered fuel for the sunset-flames
When joyous in death's harvest-home we go.

George MacDonald

The Old Castle

The brother knew well the castle old,
Every closet, each outlook fair,
Every turret and bartizan bold,
Every chamber, garnished or bare.
The brother was out in the heavenly air;
Little ones lost the starry way,
Wandered down the dungeon stair.
The brother missed them, and on the clay
Of the dungeon-floor he found them all.
Up they jumped when they heard him call!
He led the little ones into the day-
Out and up to the sunshine gay,
Up to the father's own door-sill-
In at the father's own room door,
There to be merry and work and play,
There to come and go at their will,
Good boys and girls to be lost no more!

George MacDonald

The Old Garden

I.

I stood in an ancient garden
With high red walls around;
Over them grey and green lichens
In shadowy arabesque wound.

The topmost climbing blossoms
On fields kine-haunted looked out;
But within were shelter and shadow,
With daintiest odours about.

There were alleys and lurking arbours,
Deep glooms into which to dive.
The lawns were as soft as fleeces,
Of daisies I counted but five.

The sun-dial was so aged
It had gathered a thoughtful grace;
'Twas the round-about of the shadow
That so had furrowed its face.

The flowers were all of the oldest
That ever in garden sprung;
Red, and blood-red, and dark purple
The rose-lamps flaming hung.

Along the borders fringed
With broad thick edges of box
Stood foxgloves and gorgeous poppies
And great-eyed hollyhocks.

There were junipers trimmed into castles,
And ash-trees bowed into tents;
For the garden, though ancient and pensive,
Still wore quaint ornaments.

It was all so stately fantastic
Its old wind hardly would stir;

Young Spring, when she merrily entered,
Scarce felt it a place for her.

II.

I stood in the summer morning
Under a cavernous yew;
The sun was gently climbing,
And the scents rose after the dew.

I saw the wise old mansion,
Like a cow in the noon-day heat,
Stand in a lake of shadows
That rippled about its feet.

Its windows were oriel and latticed,
Lowly and wide and fair;
And its chimneys like clustered pillars
Stood up in the thin blue air.

White doves, like the thoughts of a lady,
Haunted it all about;
With a train of green and blue comets
The peacock went marching stout.

The birds in the trees were singing
A song as old as the world,
Of love and green leaves and sunshine,
And winter folded and furled.

They sang that never was sadness
But it melted and passed away;
They sang that never was darkness
But in came the conquering day.

And I knew that a maiden somewhere,
In a low oak-panelled room,
In a nimbus of shining garments,
An aureole of white-browed bloom,

Looked out on the garden dreamy,
And knew not it was old;

Looked past the gray and the sombre,
Saw but the green and the gold,

III.

I stood in the gathering twilight,
In a gently blowing wind;
Then the house looked half uneasy,
Like one that was left behind.

The roses had lost their redness,
And cold the grass had grown;
At roost were the pigeons and peacock,
The sun-dial seemed a head-stone.

The world by the gathering twilight
In a gauzy dusk was clad;
Something went into my spirit
And made me a little sad.

Grew and gathered the twilight,
It filled my heart and brain;
The sadness grew more than sadness,
It turned to a gentle pain.

Browned and brooded the twilight,
Pervaded, absorbed the calm,
Till it seemed for some human sorrows
There could not be any balm.

IV.

Then I knew that, up a staircase
Which untrod will yet creak and shake,
Deep in a distant chamber
A ghost was coming awake-

In the growing darkness growing,
Growing till her eyes appear
Like spots of a deeper twilight,
But more transparent clear:

Thin as hot air up-trembling,
Thin as sun-molten crape,
An ethereal shadow of something
Is taking a certain shape;

A shape whose hands hang listless,
Let hang its disordered hair;
A shape whose bosom is heaving
But draws not in the air.

And I know, what time the moonlight
On her nest of shadows will sit,
Out on the dim lawn gliding
That shadowy shadow will flit.

V.

The moon is dreaming upward
From a sea of cloud and gleam;
She looks as if she had seen me
Never but in a dream.

Down the stair I know she is coming,
Bare-footed, lifting her train;
It creaks not-she hears it creaking
Where once there was a brain.

Out at yon side-door she's coming,
With a timid glance right and left;
Her look is hopeless yet eager,
The look of a heart bereft.

Across the lawn she is flitting,
Her thin gown feels the wind;
Are her white feet bending the grasses?
Her hair is lifted behind!

VI.

Shall I stay to look on her nearer?
Would she start and vanish away?
Oh, no, she will never see me,

Stand I near as I may!

It is not this wind she is feeling,
Not this cool grass below;
'Tis the wind and the grass of an evening
A hundred years ago.

She sees no roses darkling,
No stately hollyhocks dim;
She is only thinking and dreaming
The garden, the night, and him,

The unlit windows behind her,
The timeless dial-stone,
The trees, and the moon, and the shadows
A hundred years ago!

'Tis a night for a ghostly lover
To haunt the best-loved spot:
Is he come in his dreams to this garden?
I gaze, but I see him not.

VII.

I will not look on her nearer,
My heart would be torn in twain;
From my eyes the garden would vanish
In the falling of their rain.

I will not look on a sorrow
That darkens into despair,
On the surge of a heart that cannot
Yet cannot cease to bear.

My soul to hers would be calling:
She would hear no word it said!
If I cried aloud in the stillness
She would never turn her head!

She is dreaming the sky above her,
She is dreaming the earth below:-
This night she lost her lover

A hundred years ago.

George MacDonald

The Pinafore

When peevish flaws his soul have stirred
To fretful tears for crossed desires,
Obedient to his mother's word
My child to banishment retires.

As disappears the moon, when wind
Heaps miles of mist her visage o'er,
So vanisheth his face behind
The cloud of his white pinafore.

I cannot then come near my child-
A gulf between of gainful loss;
He to the infinite exiled-
I waiting, for I cannot cross.

Ah then, what wonder, passing show,
The Isis-veil behind it brings-
Like that self-coffined creatures know,
Remembering legs, foreseeing wings!

Mysterious moment! When or how
Is the bewildering change begun?
Hid in far deeps the awful now
When turns his being to the sun!

A light goes up behind his eyes,
A still small voice behind his ears;
A listing wind about him sighs,
And lo the inner landscape clears!

Hid by that screen, a wondrous shine
Is gathering for a sweet surprise;
As Moses grew, in dark divine,
Too radiant for his people's eyes.

For when the garment sinks again,
Outbeams a brow of heavenly wile,
Clear as a morning after rain,
And sunny with a perfect smile.

Oh, would that I the secret knew
Of hiding from my evil part,
And turning to the lovely true
The open windows of my heart!

Lord, in thy skirt, love's tender gaol,
Hide thou my selfish heart's disgrace;
Fill me with light, and then unveil
To friend and foe a friendly face.

George MacDonald

The Prism

I.

A pool of broken sunbeams lay
Upon the passage-floor,
Radiant and rich, profound and gay
As ever diamond bore.

Small, flitting hands a handkerchief
Spread like a cunning trap:
Prone lay the gorgeous jewel-sheaf
In the glory-gleaner's lap!

Deftly she folded up the prize,
With lovely avarice;
Like one whom having had made wise,
She bore it off in bliss.

But ah, when for her prisoned gems
She peeped, to prove them there,
No glories broken from their stems
Lay in the kerchief bare!

For still, outside the nursery door,
The bright persistency,
A molten diadem on the floor,
Lay burning wondrously.

II.

How oft have I laid fold from fold
And peered into my mind-
To see of all the purple and gold
Not one gleam left behind!

The best of gifts will not be stored:
The manna of yesterday
Has filled no sacred miser-hoard
To keep new need away.

Thy grace, O Lord, it is thyself;
Thy presence is thy light;
I cannot lay it on my shelf,
Or take it from thy sight.

For daily bread we daily pray-
The want still breeds the cry;
And so we meet, day after day,
Thou, Father in heaven, and I.

Is my house dreary, wall and floor,
Will not the darkness flit,
I go outside my shadowy door
And in thy rainbow sit.

George MacDonald

The Prophet

Speak, Prophet of the Lord! We may not start
To find thee with us in thine ancient dress,
Haggard and pale from some bleak wilderness,
Empty of all save God and thy loud heart,
Nor with like rugged message quick to dart
Into the hideous fiction mean and base;
But yet, O prophet man, we need not less
But more of earnest, though it is thy part
To deal in other words, if thou wouldst smite
The living Mammon, seated, not as then
In bestial quiescence grimly dight,
But
robed as priest, and honoured of good men
Yet
thrice as much an idol-god as when
He stared at his own feet from morn to night.

George MacDonald

The Sang O' The Auld Fowk

Doon cam the sunbeams, and up gaed the stour,
As we spangt ower the road at ten mile the hoor,
The horse wasna timmer, the cart wasna strae,
And little cared we for the burn or the brae.

We war young, and the hert in's was strang i' the loup,
And deeper in yet was the courage and houp;
The sun was gey aft in a clood, but the heat
Cam throu, and dried softly the doon fa'en weet.

Noo, the horsie's some tired, but the road's nae sae lang;
The sun comes na oot, but he's no in a fang:
The nicht's comin on, but hame's no far awa;
We hae come a far road, but hae payit for a'.

For ane has been wi' us-and sometimes 'maist seen,
Wha's cared for us better nor a' oor four e'en;
He's cared for the horsie, the man, and the wife,
And we're gaein hame to him for the rest o' oor life.

Doon comes the water, and up gangs nae stour;
We creep ower the road at twa mile the hoor;
But oor herts they are canty, for ane's to the fore
Wha was and wha is and will be evermore.

George MacDonald

The Sangreal

A Part Of The Story Omitted In The Old Romances

How sir Galahad despaired of finding the Grail

Through the wood the sunny day
Glimmered sweetly glad;
Through the wood his weary way
Rode sir Galahad.

All about stood open porch,
Long-drawn cloister dim;
'Twas a wavering wandering church
Every side of him.

On through columns arching high,
Foliage-vaulted, he
Rode in thirst that made him sigh,
Longing miserably.

Came the moon, and through the trees
Glimmered faintly sad;
Withered, worn, and ill at ease
Down lay Galahad;

Closed his eyes and took no heed
What might come or pass;
Heard his hunger-busy steed
Cropping dewy grass.

Cool and juicy was the blade,
Good to him as wine:
For his labour he was paid,
Galahad must pine!

Late had he at Arthur's board,
Arthur strong and wise,
Pledged the cup with friendly lord,
Looked in ladies' eyes;

Now, alas! he wandered wide,
Resting never more,
Over lake and mountain-side,
Over sea and shore!

Swift in vision rose and fled
All he might have had;
Weary tossed his restless head,
And his heart grew sad.

With the lowliest in the land
He a maiden fair
Might have led with virgin hand
From the altar-stair:

Youth away with strength would glide,
Age bring frost and woe;
Through the world so dreary wide
Mateless he must go!

Lost was life and all its good,
Gone without avail!
All his labour never would
Find the Holy Grail!

II.

How sir Galahad found and lost the Grail

.

Galahad was in the night,
And the wood was drear;
But to men in darksome plight
Radiant things appear:

Wings he heard not floating by,
Heard no heavenly hail;
But he started with a cry,
For he saw the Grail.

Hid from bright beholding sun,

Hid from moonlight wan,
Lo, from age-long darkness won,
It was seen of man!

Three feet off, on cushioned moss,
As if cast away,
Homely wood with carven cross,
Rough and rude it lay!

To his knees the knight rose up,
Loosed his gauntlet-band;
Fearing, daring, toward the cup
Went his naked hand;

When, as if it fled from harm,
Sank the holy thing,
And his eager following arm
Plunged into a spring.

Oh the thirst, the water sweet!
Down he lay and quaffed,
Quaffed and rose up on his feet,
Rose and gayly laughed;

Fell upon his knees to thank,
Loved and lauded there;
Stretched him on the mossy bank,
Fell asleep in prayer;

Dreamed, and dreaming murmured low
Ave, pater, creed;
When the fir-tops gan to glow
Waked and called his steed;

Bitted him and drew his girth,
Watered from his helm:
Happier knight or better worth
Was not in the realm!

Belted on him then his sword,
Braced his slackened mail;
Doubting said: 'I dreamed the Lord

Offered me the Grail.'

III.

How sir Galahad gave up the Quest for the Grail

Ere the sun had cast his light
On the water's face,
Firm in saddle rode the knight
From the holy place,

Merry songs began to sing,
Let his matins bide;
Rode a good hour pondering,
And was turned aside,

Saying, 'I will henceforth then
Yield this hopeless quest;
Tis a dream of holy men
This ideal Best!'

'Every good for miracle
Heart devout may hold;
Grail indeed was that fair well
Full of water cold!

'Not my thirst alone it stilled
But my soul it stayed;
And my heart, with gladness filled,
Wept and laughed and prayed!

'Spectral church with cryptic niche
I will seek no more;
That the holiest Grail is, which
Helps the need most sore!'

And he spake with speech more true
Than his thought indeed,
For not yet the good knight knew
His own sorest need.

IV.

How sir Galahad sought yet again for the Grail

.

On he rode, to succour bound,
But his faith grew dim;
Wells for thirst he many found,
Water none for him.

Never more from drinking deep
Rose he up and laughed;
Never more did prayerful sleep
Follow on the draught.

Good the water which they bore,
Plenteously it flowed,
Quenched his thirst, but, ah, no more
Eased his bosom's load!

For the
Best
no more he sighed;
Rode as in a trance;
Life grew poor, undignified,
And he spake of chance.

Then he dreamed through Jesus' hand
That he drove a nail-
Woke and cried, 'Through every land,
Lord, I seek thy Grail!'

V.

That sir Galahad found the Grail

.

Up the quest again he took,
Rode through wood and wave;

Sought in many a mossy nook,
Many a hermit-cave;

Sought until the evening red
Sunk in shadow deep;
Sought until the moonlight fled;
Slept, and sought in sleep.

Where he wandered, seeking, sad,
Story doth not say,
But at length sir Galahad
Found it on a day;

Took the Grail with holy hand,
Had the cup of joy;
Carried it about the land,
Gleesome as a boy;

Laid his sword where he had found
Boot for every bale,
Stuck his spear into the ground,
Kept alone the Grail.

VI.

How sir Galahad carried about the Grail

.

Horse and crested helmet gone,
Greaves and shield and mail,
Caroling loud the knight walked on,
For he had the Grail;

Caroling loud walked south and north,
East and west, for years;
Where he went, the smiles came forth,
Where he left, the tears.

Glave nor dagger mourned he,
Axe nor iron flail:
Evil might not brook to see

Once the Holy Grail.

Wilds he wandered with his staff,
Woods no longer sad;
Earth and sky and sea did laugh
Round sir Galahad.

Bitter mere nor trodden pool
Did in service fail,
Water all grew sweet and cool
In the Holy Grail.

Without where to lay his head,
Chanting loud he went;
Found each cave a palace-bed,
Every rock a tent.

Age that had begun to quail
In the gathering gloom,
Counselled he to seek the Grail
And forget the tomb.

Youth with hope or passion pale,
Youth with eager eyes,
Taught he that the Holy Grail
Was the only prize.

Maiden worn with hidden ail,
Restless and unsure,
Taught he that the Holy Grail
Was the only cure.

Children rosy in the sun
Ran to hear his tale
How twelve little ones had won
Each of them the Grail.

VII.

How sir Galahad hid the Grail

.

Very still was earth and sky
When he passing lay;
Oft he said he should not die,
Would but go away.

When he passed, they reverent sought,
Where his hand lay prest,
For the cup he bare, they thought,
Hidden in his breast.

Hope and haste and eager thrill
Turned to sorrowing wail:
Hid he held it deeper still,
Took with him the Grail.

George MacDonald

The Shadows

My little boy, with smooth, fair cheeks,
And dreamy, large, brown eyes,
Not often, little wisehead, speaks,
But hearing, weighs and tries.

'God is not only in the sky,'
His sister said one day-
Not older much, but she would cry
Like Wisdom in the way-

'He's in this room.' His dreamy, clear,
Large eyes look round for God:
In vain they search, in vain they peer;
His wits are all abroad!

'He is not here, mamma? No, no;
I do not see him at all!
He's not the shadows, is he?' So
His doubtful accents fall-

Fall on my heart, no babble mere!
They rouse both love and shame:
But for earth's loneliness and fear,
I might be saying the same!

Nay, sometimes, ere the morning break
And home the shadows flee,
In my dim room even yet I take
Those shadows, Lord, for thee!

George MacDonald

The Sheep And The Goat

The thousand streets of London gray
Repel all country sights;
But bar not winds upon their way,
Nor quench the scent of new-mown hay
In depth of summer nights.

And here and there an open spot,
Still bare to light and dark,
With grass receives the wanderer hot;
There trees are growing, houses not-
They call the place a park.

Soft creatures, with ungentle guides,
God's sheep from hill and plain,
Flow thitherward in fitful tides,
There weary lie on woolly sides,
Or crop the grass amain.

And from dark alley, yard, and den,
In ragged skirts and coats,
Come thither children of poor men,
Wild things, untaught of word or pen-
The little human goats.

In Regent's Park, one cloudless day,
An overdriven sheep,
Come a hard, long, and dusty way,
Throbbing with thirst and hotness lay,
A panting woollen heap.

But help is nearer than we know
For ills of every name:
Ragged enough to scare the crow,
But with a heart to pity woe,
A quick-eyed urchin came.

Little he knew of field or fold,
Yet knew what ailed; his cap
Was ready cup for water cold;

Though creased, and stained, and very old,
'Twas not much torn, good hap!

Shaping the rim and crown he went,
Till crown from rim was deep;
The water gushed from pore and rent,
Before he came one half was spent-
The other saved the sheep.

O little goat, born, bred in ill,
Unwashed, half-fed, unshorn,
Thou to the sheep from breezy hill
Wast bishop, pastor, what you will,
In London dry and lorn!

And let priests say the thing they please,
My faith, though poor and dim,
Thinks he will say who always sees,
In doing it to one of these
Thou didst it unto him.

George MacDonald

The Sleepless Jesus

'Tis time to sleep, my little boy:
Why gaze thy bright eyes so?
At night our children, for new joy
Home to thy father go,
But thou art wakeful! Sleep, my child;
The moon and stars are gone;
The wind is up and raving wild,
But thou art smiling on!

My child, thou hast immortal eyes
That see by their own light;
They see the children's blood-it lies
Red-glowing through the night!
Thou hast an ever-open ear
For sob or cry or moan:
Thou seemest not to see or hear,
Thou only smilest on!

When first thou camest to the earth,
All sounds of strife were still;
A silence lay about thy birth,
And thou didst sleep thy fill:
Thou wakest now-why weep'st thou not?
Thy earth is woe-begone;
Both babes and mothers wail their lot,
But still thou smilest on!

I read thy face like holy book;
No hurt is pictured there;
Deep in thine eyes I see the look
Of one who answers prayer.
Beyond pale grief and wild uproars,
Thou seest God's will well done;
Low prayers, through chambers' closed doors,
Thou hear'st-and smilest on.

Men say: 'I will arise and go;'
God says: 'I will go meet:'
Thou seest them gather, weeping low,

About the Father's feet;
And each for each begin to bear,
And standing lonely none:
Answered, O eyes, ye see all prayer!
Smile, Son of God, smile on.

George MacDonald

The Souls' Rising

See how the storm of life ascends
Up through the shadow of the world!
Beyond our gaze the line extends,
Like wreaths of vapour tempest-hurled!
Grasp tighter, brother, lest the storm
Should sweep us down from where we stand,
And we may catch some human form
We know, amongst the straining band.

See! see in yonder misty cloud
One whirlwind sweep, and we shall hear
The voice that waxes yet more loud
And louder still approaching near!

Tremble not, brother, fear not thou,
For yonder wild and mystic strain
Will bring before us strangely now
The visions of our youth again!

Listen! oh listen!
See how its eyeballs roll and glisten
With a wild and fearful stare
Upwards through the shining air,
Or backwards with averted look,
As a child were gazing at a book
Full of tales of fear and dread,
When the thick night-wind came hollow and dead.

Round about it, wavering and light.
As the moths flock round a candle at night,
A crowd of phantoms sheeted and dumb
Strain to its words as they shrilly come:
Brother, my brother, dost thou hear?
They pierce through the tumult sharp and clear!

'The rush of speed is on my soul,
My eyes are blind with things I see;
I cannot grasp the awful whole,
I cannot gird the mystery!

The mountains sweep like mist away;
The great sea shakes like flakes of fire;
The rush of things I cannot see
Is mounting upward higher and higher!
Oh! life was still and full of calm
In yonder spot of earthly ground,
But now it rolls a thunder-psalm,
Its voices drown my ear in sound!
Would God I were a child again
To nurse the seeds of faith and power;
I might have clasped in wisdom then
A wing to beat this awful hour!
The dullest things would take my marks-

They
took my marks like drifted snow-
God! how the footsteps rise in sparks,
Rise like myself and onward go!
Have pity, O ye driving things
That once like me had human form!
For I am driven for lack of wings
A shreddy cloud before the storm!

How its words went through me then,
Like a long forgotten pang,
Till the storm's embrace again
Swept it far with sudden clang!-
Ah, methinks I see it still!
Let us follow it, my brother,
Keeping close to one another,
Blessing God for might of will!
Closer, closer, side by side!
Ours are wings that deftly glide
Upwards, downwards, and crosswise
Flashing past our ears and eyes,
Splitting up the comet-tracks
With a whirlwind at our backs!

How the sky is blackening!
Yet the race is never slackening;
Swift, continual, and strong,
Streams the torrent slope along,

Like a tidal surge of faces
Molten into one despair;
Each the other now displaces,
A continual whirl of spaces;
Ah, my fainting eyesight reels
As I strive in vain to stare
On a thousand turning wheels
Dimly in the gloom descending,
Faces with each other blending!-
Let us beat the vapours back,
We are yet upon his track.

Didst thou see a spirit halt
Upright on a cloudy peak,
As the lightning's horrid fault
Smote a gash into the cheek
Of the grinning thunder-cloud
Which doth still besiege and crowd
Upward from the nether pits
Where the monster Chaos sits,
Building o'er the fleeing rack
Roofs of thunder long and black?
Yes, I see it! I will shout
Till I stop the horrid rout.
Ho, ho! spirit-phantom, tell
Is thy path to heaven or hell?
We would hear thee yet again,
What thy standing amongst men,
What thy former history,
And thy hope of things to be!
Wisdom still we gain from hearing:
We would know, we would know
Whither thou art steering-
Unto weal or woe!

Ah, I cannot hear it speaking!
Yet it seems as it were seeking
Through our eyes our souls to reach
With a quaint mysterious speech,
As with stretched and crossing palms
One were tracing diagrams

On the ebbing of the beach,
Till with wild unmeasured dance
All the tiptoe waves advance,
Seize him by the shoulder, cover,
Turn him up and toss him over:
He is vanished from our sight,
Nothing mars the quiet night
Save a speck of gloom afar
Like the ruin of a star!

Brother, streams it ever so,
Such a torrent tide of woe?
Ah, I know not; let us haste
Upwards from this dreary waste,
Up to where like music flowing
Gentler feet are ever going,
Streams of life encircling run
Round about the spirit-sun!
Up beyond the storm and rush
With our lesson let us rise!
Lo, the morning's golden flush
Meets us midway in the skies!
Perished all the dream and strife!
Death is swallowed up of Life!

George MacDonald

The Sparrow

O Lord, I cannot but believe
The birds do sing thy praises then, when they sing to one another,
And they are lying seed-sown land when the winter makes them grieve,
Their little bosoms breeding songs for the summer to unsmother!

If thou hadst finished me, O Lord,
Nor left out of me part of that great gift that goes to singing,
I sure had known the meaning high of the songster's praising word,
Had known upon what thoughts of thee his pearly talk he was stringing!

I should have read the wisdom hid
In the storm-inspired melody of thy thrush's bosom solemn:
I should not then have understood what thy free spirit did
To make the lark-soprano mount like to a geyser-column!

I think I almost understand
Thy owl, his muffled swiftness, moon-round eyes, and intoned hooting;
I think I could take up the part of a night-owl in the land,
With yellow moon and starry things day-dreamers all confuting.

But 'mong thy creatures that do sing
Perhaps of all I likest am to the housetop-haunting sparrow,
That flies brief, sudden flights upon a dumpy, fluttering wing,
And chirps thy praises from a throat that's very short and narrow.

But if thy sparrow praise thee well
By singing well thy song, nor letting noisy traffic quell it,
It may be that, in some remote and leafy heavenly dell,
He may with a trumpet-throat awake, and a trumpet-song to swell it!

George MacDonald

The Sweeper Of The Floor

Methought that in a solemn church I stood.
Its marble acres, worn with knees and feet,
Lay spread from door to door, from street to street.
Midway the form hung high upon the rood
Of him who gave his life to be our good;
Beyond, priests flitted, bowed, and murmured meet,
Among the candles shining still and sweet.
Men came and went, and worshipped as they could-
And still their dust a woman with her broom,
Bowed to her work, kept sweeping to the door.
Then saw I, slow through all the pillared gloom,
Across the church a silent figure come:
'Daughter,' it said, 'thou sweepest well my floor!'
It is the Lord! I cried, and saw no more.

George MacDonald

The Syrophenician Woman

'Grant, Lord, her prayer, and let her go;
She crieth after us.'
Nay, to the dogs ye cast it so;
Serve not a woman thus.

Their pride, by condescension fed,
He shapes with teaching tongue:
'It is not meet the children's bread
To little dogs be flung.'

The words, for tender heart so sore,
His voice did seem to rue;
The gentle wrath his countenance wore,
With her had not to do.

He makes her share the hurt of good,
Takes what she would have lent,
That those proud men their evil mood
May see, and so repent;

And that the hidden faith in her
May burst in soaring flame:
With childhood deeper, holier,
Is birthright not the same?

Ill names, of proud religion born-
She'll wear the worst that comes;
Will clothe her, patient, in their scorn,
To share the healing crumbs!

'Truth, Lord; and yet the puppies small
Under the table eat
The crumbs the little ones let fall-
That is not thought unmeet.'

The prayer rebuff could not amate
Was not like water spilt:
'O woman, but thy faith is great!
Be it even as thou wilt.'

Thrice happy she who yet will dare,
Who, baffled, prayeth still!
He, if he may, will grant her prayer
In fulness of
her
will!

George MacDonald

The Talk Of The Echoes: A Fragment

When the cock crows loud from the glen,
And the moor-cock chirrs from the heather,
What hear ye and see ye then,
Ye children of air and ether?

1st Echo

.
A thunder as of waves at the rising of the moon,
And a darkness on the graves though the day is at its noon.

2nd Echo

. A springing as of grass though the air is damp and chill,
And a glimmer from the river that winds about the hill.

1st Echo

. A lapse of crags that leant from the mountain's earthen
sheath,
And a shock of ruin sent on the river underneath.

2nd Echo

. A sound as of a building that groweth fair and good,
And a piping of the thrushes from the hollow of the wood.

1st Echo

. A wailing as of lambs that have wandered from the flock,
And a bleating of their dams that was answered from the rock.

2nd Echo

. A breathing as of cattle in the shadow where they dream,
And a sound of children playing with the pebbles in the stream.

1st Echo

. A driving as of clouds in the kingdom of the air,
And a tumult as of crowds that mingle everywhere.

2nd Echo

. A waving of the grass, and a passing o'er the lakes,

And a shred of tempest-cloud in the glory when it breaks.

George MacDonald

The Temple Of God

In the desert by the bush,
Moses to his heart said
Hush

David on his bed did pray;
God all night went not away.

From his heap of ashes foul
Job to God did lift his soul,

God came down to see him there,
And to answer all his prayer.

On a dark hill, in the wind,
Jesus did his father find,

But while he on earth did fare,
Every spot was place of prayer;

And where man is any day,
God can not be far away.

But the place he loveth best,
Place where he himself can rest,

Where alone he prayer doth seek,
Is the spirit of the meek.

To the humble God doth come;
In his heart he makes his home.

George MacDonald

The Thankless Lady

It is May, and the moon leans down at night
Over a blossomy land;
Leans from her window a lady white,
With her cheek upon her hand.

'Oh, why in the blue so misty, moon?
Why so dull in the sky?
Thou look'st like one that is ready to swoon
Because her tear-well is dry.

'Enough, enough of longing and wail!
Oh, bird, I pray thee, be glad!
Sing to me once, dear nightingale,
The old song, merry mad.

'Hold, hold with thy blossoming, colourless, cold,
Apple-tree white as woe!
Blossom yet once with the blossom of old,
Let the roses shine through the snow!'

The moon and the blossoms they gloomily gleam,
The bird will not be glad:
The dead never speak when the mournful dream,
They are too weak and sad.

Listened she listless till night grew late,
Bound by a weary spell;
Then clanked the latch of the garden-gate,
And a wondrous thing befell:

Out burst the gladness, up dawned the love.
In the song, in the waiting show;
Grew silver the moon in the sky above.
Blushed rosy the blossom below.

But the merry bird, nor the silvery moon,
Nor the blossoms that flushed the night
Had one poor thanks for the granted boon:
The lady forgot them quite!

George MacDonald

The Thank-Offering

My Lily snatches not my gift;
Glad is she to be fed,
But to her mouth she will not lift
The piece of broken bread,
Till on my lips, unerring, swift,
The morsel she has laid.

This is her grace before her food,
This her libation poured;
Even thus his offering, Aaron good
Heaved up to thank the Lord,
When for the people all he stood,
And with a cake adored.

So, Father, every gift of thine
I offer at thy knee;
Else take I not the love divine
With which it comes to me;
Not else the offered grace is mine
Of sharing life with thee.

Yea, all my being I would bring,
Yielding it utterly,
Not yet a full-possessed thing
Till heaved again to thee:
Away, my self! away, and cling
To him that makes thee be!

George MacDonald

The Thorn In The Flesh

Within my heart a worm had long been hid.
I knew it not when I went down and chid
Because some servants of my inner house
Had not, I found, of late been doing well,
But then I spied the horror hideous
Dwelling defiant in the inmost cell-
No, not the inmost, for there God did dwell!
But the small monster, softly burrowing,
Near by God's chamber had made itself a den,
And lay in it and grew, the noisome thing!
Aghast I prayed-'twas time I did pray then!
But as I prayed it seemed the loathsome shape
Grew livelier, and did so gnaw and scrape
That I grew faint. Whereon to me he said-
Some one, that is, who held my swimming head,
'Lo, I am with thee: let him do his worst;
The creature is, but not his work, accurst;
Thou hating him, he is as a thing dead.'
Then I lay still, nor thought, only endured.
At last I said, 'Lo, now I am inured
A burgess of Pain's town!' The pain grew worse.
Then I cried out as if my heart would break.
But he, whom, in the fretting, sickening ache,
I had forgotten, spoke: 'The law of the universe
Is this,' he said: 'Weakness shall be the nurse
Of strength. The help I had will serve thee too.'
So I took courage and did bear anew.
At last, through bones and flesh and shrinking skin,
Lo, the thing ate his way, and light came in,
And the thing died. I knew then what it meant,
And, turning, saw the Lord on whom I leant.

George MacDonald

The Three Horses

What shall I be?-I will be a knight
Walled up in armour black,
With a sword of sharpness, a hammer of might.
And a spear that will not crack-
So black, so blank, no glimmer of light
Will betray my darkling track.

Saddle my coal-black steed, my men,
Fittest for sunless work;
Old Night is steaming from her den,
And her children gather and lurk;
Bad things are creeping from the fen,
And sliding down the murk.

Let him go!-let him go! Let him plunge!-Keep away!
He's a foal of the third seal's brood!
Gaunt with armour, in grim array
Of poitrell and frontlet-hood,
Let him go, a living castle, away-
Right for the evil wood.

I and Ravenwing on the course,
Heavy in fighting gear-
Woe to the thing that checks our force,
That meets us in career!
Giant, enchanter, devil, or worse-
What cares the couched spear!

Slow through the trees zigzag I ride.
See! the goblins!-to and fro!
From the skull of the dark, on either side,
See the eyes of a dragon glow!
From the thickets the silent serpents glide-
I pass them, I let them go;

For somewhere in the evil night
A little one cries alone;
An aged knight, outnumbered in fight,
But for me will be stricken prone;

A lady with terror is staring white,
For her champion is overthrown.

The child in my arms, to my hauberk prest,
Like a trembling bird will cling;
I will cover him over, in iron nest,
With my shield, my one steel wing,
And bear him home to his mother's breast,
A radiant, rescued thing.

Spur in flank, and lance in rest,
On the old knight's foes I flash;
The caitiffs I scatter to east and west
With clang and hurtle and crash;
Leave them the law, as knaves learn it best,
In bruise, and breach, and gash.

The lady I lift on my panting steed;
On the pommel she holds my mace;
Hand on bridle I gently lead
The horse at a gentle pace;
The thickets with martel-axe I heed,
For the wood is an evil place.

What treasure is there in manly might
That hid in the bosom lies!
Who for the crying will not fight
Had better be he that cries!
A man is a knight that loves the right
And mounts for it till he dies.

Alas, 'tis a dream of ages hoar!
In the fens no dragons won;
No giants from moated castles roar;
Through the forest wide roadways run;
Of all the deeds they did of yore
Not one is left to be done!

If I should saddle old Ravenwing
And hie me out at night,
Scared little birds away would spring
An ill-shot arrow's flight:

The idle fancy away I fling,
Now I will dream aright!

Let a youth bridle Twilight, my dapple-gray,
With broad rein and snaffle bit;
He must bring him round at break of day
When the shadows begin to flit,
When the darkness begins to dream away,
And the owls begin to sit.

Ungraithed in plate or mail I go,
With only my sword-gray-blue
Like the scythe of the dawning come to mow
The night-sprung shadows anew
From the gates of the east, that, fair and slow,
Maid Morning may walk through.

I seek no forest with darkness grim,
To the open land I ride;
Low light, from the broad horizon's brim,
Lies wet on the flowing tide,
And mottles with shadows dun and dim
The mountain's rugged side.

Steadily, hasteless, o'er valley and hill.
O'er the moor, along the beach,
We ride, nor slacken our pace until
Some city of men we reach;
There, in the market, my horse stands still,
And I lift my voice and preach.

Wealth and poverty, age and youth
Around me gather and throng;
I tell them of justice, of wisdom, of truth,
Of mercy, and law, and wrong;
My words are moulded by right and ruth
To a solemn-chanted song.

They bring me questions which would be scanned,
That strife may be forgot;
Swerves my balance to neither hand,
The poor I favour no jot;

If a man withstand, out sweeps my brand.
I slay him upon the spot.

But what if my eye have in it a beam
And therefore spy his mote?
Righteousness only, wisdom supreme
Can tell the sheep from the goat!
Not thus I dream a wise man's dream,
Not thus take Wrong by the throat!

Lead Twilight home. I dare not kill;
The sword myself would scare.-
When the sun looks over the eastern hill,
Bring out my snow-white mare:
One labour is left which no one will
Deny me the right to share!

Take heed, my men, from crest to heel
Snow-white have no speck;
No curb, no bit her mouth must feel,
No tightening rein her neck;
No saddle-girth drawn with buckle of steel
Shall her mighty breathing check!

Lay on her a cloth of silver sheen,
Bring me a robe of white;
Wherever we go we must be seen
By the shining of our light-
A glistening splendour in forest green,
A star on the mountain-height.

With jar and shudder the gates unclose;
Out in the sun she leaps!
A unit of light and power she goes
Levelling vales and steeps:
The wind around her eddies and blows,
Before and behind her sleeps.

Oh joy, oh joy to ride the world
And glad, good tidings bear!
A flag of peace on the winds unfurled
Is the mane of my shining mare:

To the sound of her hoofs, lo, the dead stars hurled
Quivering adown the air!

Oh, the sun and the wind! Oh, the life and the love!
Where the serpent swung all day
The loud dove coos to the silent dove;
Where the web-winged dragon lay
In its hole beneath, on the rock above
Merry-tongued children play.

With eyes of light the maidens look up
As they sit in the summer heat
Twining green blade with golden cup-
They see, and they rise to their feet;
I call aloud, for I must not stop,
'Good tidings, my sisters sweet!'

For mine is a message of holy mirth
To city and land of corn;
Of praise for heaviness, plenty for dearth,
For darkness a shining morn:
Clap hands, ye billows; be glad, O earth,
For a child, a child is born!

Lo, even the just shall live by faith!
None argue of mine and thine!
Old Self shall die an ecstatic death
And be born a thing divine,
For God's own being and God's own breath
Shall be its bread and wine.

Ambition shall vanish, and Love be king,
And Pride to his darkness hie;
Yea, for very love of a living thing
A man would forget and die,
If very love were not the spring
Whence life springs endlessly!

The myrtle shall grow where grew the thorn;
Earth shall be young as heaven;
The heart with remorse or anger torn
Shall weep like a summer even;

For to us a child, a child is born,
Unto us a son is given!

Lord, with thy message I dare not ride!
I am a fool, a beast!
The little ones only from thy side
Go forth to publish thy feast!
And I, where but sons and daughters abide,
Would have walked about, a priest!

Take Snow-white back to her glimmering stall;
There let her stand and feed!-
I am overweening, ambitious, small,
A creature of pride and greed!
Let me wash the hoofs, let me be the thrall,
Jesus, of thy white steed!

George MacDonald

The Tree's Prayer

Alas, 'tis cold and dark!
The wind all night hath sung a wintry tune!
Hail from black clouds that swallowed up the moon
Beat, beat against my bark.

Oh! why delays the spring?
Not yet the sap moves in my frozen veins;
Through all my stiffened roots creep numbing pains,
That I can hardly cling.

The sun shone yester-morn;
I felt the glow down every fibre float,
And thought I heard a thrush's piping note
Of dim dream-gladness born.

Then, on the salt gale driven,
The streaming cloud hissed through my outstretched arms,
Tossed me about in slanting snowy swarms,
And blotted out the heaven.

All night I brood and choose
Among past joys. Oh, for the breath of June!
The feathery light-flakes quavering from the moon
The slow baptizing dews!

Oh, the joy-frantic birds!-
They are the tongues of us, mute, longing trees!
Aha, the billowy odours! and the bees
That browse like scattered herds!

The comfort-whispering showers
That thrill with gratefulness my youngest shoot!
The children playing round my deep-sunk root,
Green-caved from burning hours!

See, see the heartless dawn,
With naked, chilly arms latticed across!
Another weary day of moaning loss
On the thin-shadowed lawn!

But icy winter's past;
Yea, climbing suns persuade the relenting wind:
I will endure with steadfast, patient mind;
My leaves
will
come at last!

George MacDonald

The True

I envy the tree-tops that shake so high
In winds that fill them full of heavenly airs;
I envy every little cloud that shares
With unseen angels evening in the sky;
I envy most the youngest stars that lie
Sky-nested, and the loving heaven that bears,
And night that makes strong worlds of them unawares;
And all God's other beautiful and nigh!

Nay, nay, I envy not! And these are dreams,
Fancies and images of real heaven!
My longings, all my longing prayers are given
For that which is, and not for that which seems.
Draw me, O Lord, to thy true heaven above,
The Heaven of thy Thought, thy Rest, thy Love.

George MacDonald

The Twa Gordons

I.

There was John Gordon an' Archibold,
An' a yerl's twin sons war they;
Quhan they war are an' twenty year auld
They fell oot on their ae birthday.

'Turn ye, John Gordon, nae brither to me!
Turn ye, fause an' fell!
Or doon ye s' gang, as black as a lee,
To the muckle deevil o' hell.'

'An' quhat for that, Archie Gordon, I pray?
Quhat ill hae I dune to thee?'
'Twa-faced loon, ye sail rue this day
The answer I'm gauin to gie!

'For it'll be roucher nor lady Janet's,
An' loud i' the braid daylight;
An' the wa' to speil is my iron mail,
No her castle-wa' by nicht!'

'I speilt the wa' o' her castle brow
I' the roarin win' yestreen;
An' I sat in her bower till the gloamin sta'
Licht-fittit ahint the mune.'

'Turn ye, John Gordon-the twasum we s' twin!
Turn ye, an' haud yer ain;
For ane sall lie on a cauld weet bed-
An' I downa curse again!'

'O Archie, Janet is my true love-
notna speir leave o' thee!'
'Gien that be true, the deevil's a sanct,
An' ye are no tellin a lee!'

Their suerds they drew, an' the fire-flauchts flew,
An' they shiftit wi' fendin feet;

An' the blude ran doon, till the grun a' roun
Like a verra bog was weet.

'O Archie, I hae gotten a cauld supper-
O' steel, but shortest grace!
Ae grip o' yer han' afore ye gang!
An' turn me upo' my face.'

But he's turnit himsel upon his heel,
An' wordless awa he's gane;
An' the corbie-craw i' the aik abune
Is roupin for his ain.

II.

Lady Margaret, her hert richt gret,
Luiks ower the castle wa';
Lord Archibold rides oot at the yett,
Ahint him his merry men a'.

Wi' a' his band, to the Holy Land
He's boune wi' merry din,
His shouther's doss a Christ's cross,
In his breist an ugsome sin.

But the cross it brunt him like the fire.
Its burnin never ceast;
It brunt in an' in, to win at the sin
Lay cowerin in his breist.

A mile frae the shore o' the Deid Sea
The army haltit ae nicht;
Lord Archie was waukrife, an' oot gaed he
A walkin i' the munelicht.

Dour-like he gaed, wi' doon-hingin heid,
Quhill he cam, by the licht o' the mune,
Quhaur mighty stanes lay scattert like sheep,
An' ance they worshipt Mahoun.

The scruff an' scum o' the deid shore gleamt
An' glintit a sauty gray;

The banes o' the deid stack oot o' its bed,
The sea lickit them as they lay.

He sat him doon on a sunken stane,
An' he sighit sae dreary an' deep:
'I can thole ohn grutten, lyin awauk,
But he comes whan I'm asleep!

'I wud gie my soul for ever an' aye
Intil en'less dule an' smert,
To sleep a' nicht like a bairn again,
An' cule my burnin hert!'

Oot frae ahint a muckle stane
Cam a voice like a huddy craw's:
'Behaud there, Archibold Gordon!' it said,
'Behaud-ye hae ower gude cause!'

'I'll say quhat I like,' quod Archibold,
'Be ye ghaist or deevil or quhat!'
'Tak tent, lord Archie, gien ye be wise-
The tit winna even the tat!'

Lord Archibold leuch wi' a loud ha, ha,
Eerisome, grousum to hear:
'A bonny bargain auld Cloots wad hae,
It has ilka faut but fear!'

'Dune, lord Archibold?' craikit the voice;
'Dune, Belzie!' cried he again.-
The gray banes glimmert, the white saut shimmert-
Lord Archie was him lane.

Back he gaed straught, by the glowerin mune,
An' doun in his plaid he lay,
An' soun' he sleepit.-A ghaist-like man
Sat by his heid quhill the day.

An' quhanever he moanit or turnit him roun,
Or his broo gae token o' plycht,
The waukin man i' the sleepin man's lug
Wud rown a murgeon o' micht.

An' the glint o' a smile wud quaver athort
The sleepin cheek sae broun,
An' a tear atween the ee-lids wud stert,
An' whiles rin fairly doun.

An' aye by his lair sat the ghaist-like man,
He watchit his sleep a' nicht;
An' in mail rust-broun, wi' his visorne doun,
Rade at his knee i' the fecht.

Nor anis nor twyis the horn-helmit chiel
Saved him frae deidly dad;
An' Archie said, 'Gien this be the deil
He's no sac black as he's ca'd.'

But wat ye fu' weel it wasna the deil
That tuik lord Archie's pairt,
But his twin-brother John he thocht deid an' gone,
Wi' luve like a lowe in his hert.

III.

Hame cam lord Archibold, weary wicht,
Hame til his ain countree;
An' he cried, quhan his castle rase in sicht,
'Noo Christ me sain an' see!'

He turnit him roun: the man in rust-broun
Was gane, he saw nocht quhair!
At the ha' door he lichtit him doun,
Lady Margaret met him there.

Reid, reid war her een, but hie was her mien,
An' her words war sharp an' sair:
'Welcome, Archie, to dule an' tene,
An' welcome ye s' get nae mair!

Quhaur is yer twin, lord Archibold,
That lay i' my body wi' thee?
I miss my mark gien he liesna stark
Quhaur the daylight comesna to see!'

Lord Archibold docht na speik a word
For his hert was like a stane;
He turnt him awa-an' the huddy craw
Was roupin for his ain.

'Quhaur are ye gaein, lord Archie,' she said,
'Wi' yer lips sae white an' thin?'
'Mother, gude-bye! I'm gaein to lie
Ance mair wi' my body-twin.'

Up she brade, but awa he gaed
Straucht for the corbie-tree;
For quhaur he had slain he thocht to slay,
An' cast him doon an' dee.

'God guide us!' he cried wi' gastit rair,
'Has he lien there ever sin' syne?'
An' he thocht he saw the banes, pykit an' bare,
Throu the cracks o' his harness shine.

'Oh Johnnie! my brither!' quo' Archibold
Wi' a hert-upheavin mane,
'I wad pit my soul i' yer wastit corp
To see ye alive again!'

'Haud ye there!' quod a voice frae oot the helm,
'A man suld heed quhat he says!'
An' the closin joints grippit an' tore the gerse
As up the armour rase:-

'Soul ye hae nane to ca' yer ain
An' its time to hand yer jaw!
The sleep it was thine, an' the soul it is mine:
Deil Archie, come awa!'

'Auld Hornie,' quo' Archie, 'twa words to that:
My burnin hert burns on;
An' the sleep, weel I wat, was nae reek frae thy pat,
For aye I was dreamin o' John!

'But I carena a plack for a soul sae black-

Wae's me 'at my mither bore me!
Put fire i' my breist an' fire at my back,
But ae minute set Johnnie afore me!

The gantlets grippit the helm sae stoot
An' liftit frae chin an' broo:
An' Johnnie himsel keekit smilin oot:-
'O Archie, I hae ye noo!

'O' yer wee bit brod I was little the waur,
I crap awa my lane;
An' never a deevil cam ye nar,
'Cep ye coont yer Johnnie ane!

Quhare quhylum his brither Johnnie lay,
Fell Archie upon his knees;
The words he said I dinna say,
But I'm sure they warnae lees.

George MacDonald

The Unseen Face

'I do beseech thee, God, show me thy face.'
'Come up to me in Sinai on the morn!
Thou shall behold as much as may be borne.'
And on a rock stood Moses, lone in space.
From Sinai's top, the vaporous, thunderous place,
God passed in cloud, an earthy garment worn
To hide, and thus reveal. In love, not scorn,
He put him in a clift of the rock's base,
Covered him with his hand, his eyes to screen-
Passed-lifted it: his back alone appears!
Ah, Moses, had he turned, and hadst thou seen
The pale face crowned with thorns, baptized with tears,
The eyes of the true man, by men belied,
Thou hadst beheld God's face, and straightway died!

George MacDonald

The Unseen Model

Forth to his study the sculptor goes
In a mood of lofty mirth:
'Now shall the tongues of my carping foes
Confess what my art is worth!
In my brain last night the vision arose,
To-morrow shall see its birth!'

He stood like a god; with creating hand
He struck the formless clay:
'Psyche, arise,' he said, 'and stand;
In beauty confront the day.
I have sought nor found thee in any land;
I call thee: arise; obey!'

The sun was low in the eastern skies
When spoke the confident youth;
Sweet Psyche, all day, his hands and eyes
Wiled from the clay uncouth,
Nor ceased when the shadows came up like spies
That dog the steps of Truth.

He said, 'I will do my will in spite
Of the rising dark; for, see,
She grows to my hand! The mar-work night
Shall hurry and hide and flee
From the glow of my lamp and the making might
That passeth out of me!'

In the flickering lamplight the figure swayed,
In the shadows did melt and swim:
With tool and thumb he modelled and made,
Nor knew that feature and limb
Half-obeying, half-disobeyed,
And mocking eluded him.

At the dawning Psyche of his brain
Joyous he wrought all night:
The oil went low, and he trimmed in vain,
The lamp would not burn bright;

But he still wrought on: through the high roof-pane
He saw the first faint light!

The dark retreated; the morning spread;
His creatures their shapes resume;
The plaster stares dumb-white and dead;
A faint blue liquid bloom
Lies on each marble bosom and head;
To his Psyche clings the gloom.

Backward he stept to see the clay:
His visage grew white and sear;
No beauty ideal confronted the day,
No Psyche from upper sphere,
But a once loved shape that in darkness lay,
Buried a lonesome year!

From maidenhood's wilderness fair and wild
A girl to his charm had hied:
He had blown out the lamp of the trusting child,
And in the darkness she died;
Now from the clay she sadly smiled,
And the sculptor stood staring-eyed.

He had summoned Psyche-and Psyche crept
From a half-forgotten tomb;
She brought her sad smile, that still she kept,
Her eyes she left in the gloom!
High grace had found him, for now he wept,
And love was his endless doom!

Night-long he pined, all day did rue;
He haunted her form with sighs:
As oft as his clay to a lady grew
The carvers, with dim surmise,
Would whisper, 'The same shape come to woo,
With its blindly beseeching eyes!'

George MacDonald

The Waesome Carl

There cam a man to oor toon-en',
And a waesome carl was he,
Snipie-nebbit, and crookit-mou'd,
And gleyt o' a blinterin ee.
Muckle he spied, and muckle he spak,
But the owercome o' his sang,
Whatever it said, was aye the same:-
There's nane o' ye a' but's wrang!
Ye're a' wrang, and a' wrang,
And a'thegither a' wrang:
There's no a man about the toon
But's a'thegither a' wrang.

That's no the gait to fire the breid,
Nor yet to brew the yill;
That's no the gait to haud the pleuch,
Nor yet to ca the mill;
That's no the gait to milk the coo,
Nor yet to spean the calf,
Nor yet to tramp the girnel-meal-
Ye kenna yer wark by half!
Ye're a' wrang, &c.

The minister wasna fit to pray
And lat alane to preach;
He nowther had the gift o' grace
Nor yet the gift o' speech!
He mind't him o' Bala's ass,
Wi' a differ we nicht ken:
The Lord he opened the ass's mou,
The minister opened's ain!
He was a' wrang, and a' wrang,
And a'thegither a' wrang;
There wasna a man about the toon
But was a'thegither a' wrang!

The puir precentor couldna sing,
He gruntit like a swine;
The verra elders couldna pass

The ladles til his min'.
And for the rulin' elder's grace
It wasna worth a horn;
He didna half uncurse the meat,
Nor pray for mair the morn!
He was a' wrang, &c.

And aye he gied his nose a thraw,
And aye he crook't his mou;
And aye he cockit up his ee
And said, Tak tent the noo!
We snichert hint oor loof, my man,
But never said him nay;
As gien he had been a prophet, man,
We loot him say his say:
Ye're a' wrang, &c.

Quo oor gudeman: The crater's daft!
Heard ye ever sic a claik?
Lat's see gien he can turn a ban',
Or only luik and craik!
It's true we maunna lippin til him-
He's fairly crack wi' pride,
But he maun live-we canna kill him!
Gien he can work, he s' bide.
He was a' wrang, and a' wrang,
And a'thegither a' wrang;
There, troth, the gudeman o' the toon
Was a'thegither a' wrang!

Quo he, It's but a laddie's turn,
But best the first be a sma' thing:
There's a' thae weyds to gether and burn,
And he's the man for a' thing!-
We yokit for the far hill-moss,
There was peats to cast and ca;
O' 's company we thocht na loss,
'Twas peace till gloamin-fa'!
We war a' wrang, and a' wrang,
And a'thegither a' wrang;
There wasna man about the toon
But was a'thegither a' wrang!

For, losh, or it was denner-time
The toon was in a low!
The reek rase up as it had been
Frae Sodom-flames, I vow.
We lowst and rade like mad, for byre
And ruck bleezt a' thegither,
As gien the deil had broucht the fire
Frae's hell to mak anither!
'Twas a' wrang, and a' wrang,
And a'thegither a' wrang,
Stick and strae about the place
Was a'thegither a' wrang!

And luikin on, ban's neth his tails,
The waesome carl stude;
To see him wagglin at thae tails
'Maist drave 's a' fairly wud.
Ain wite! he cried; I tauld ye sae!
Ye're a' wrang to the last:
What gart ye burn thae deevilich weyds
Whan the win' blew frae the wast!
Ye're a' wrang, and a' wrang,
And a'thegither a' wrang;
There's no a man i' this fule warl
But's a'thegither a' wrang!

George MacDonald

The Wakeful Sleeper

When things are holding wonted pace
In wonted paths, without a trace
Or hint of neighbouring wonder,
Sometimes, from other realms, a tone,
A scent, a vision, swift, alone,
Breaks common life asunder.

Howe'er it comes, whate'er its door,
It makes you ponder something more-
Unseen with seen things linking:
To neighbours met one festive night,
Was given a quaint and lovely sight,
That set some of them thinking.

They stand, in music's fetters bound
By a clear brook of warbled sound,
A canzonet of Haydn,
When the door slowly comes ajar-
A little further-just as far
As shows a tiny maiden.

Softly she enters, her pink toes
Daintily peeping, as she goes,
Her long nightgown from under.
The varied mien, the questioning look
Were worth a picture; but she took
No notice of their wonder.

They made a path, and she went through;
She had her little chair in view
Close by the chimney-corner;
She turned, sat down before them all,
Stately as princess at a ball,
And silent as a mourner.

Then looking closer yet, they spy
What mazedness hid from every eye
As ghost-like she came creeping:
They see that though sweet little Rose

Her settled way unerring goes,
Plainly the child is sleeping.

'Play on, sing on,' the mother said;
'Oft music draws her from her bed.'-
Dumb Echo, she sat listening;
Over her face the sweet concert
Like winds o'er placid waters went,
Her cheeks like eyes were glistening.

Her hands tight-clasped her bent knees hold
Like long grass drooping on the wold
Her sightless head is bending;
She sits all ears, and drinks her fill,
Then rising goes, sedate and still,
On silent white feet wending.

Surely, while she was listening so,
Glad thoughts in her went to and fro
Preparing her 'gainst sorrow,
And ripening faith for that sure day
When earnest first looks out of play,
And thought out of to-morrow.

She will not know from what fair skies
Troop hopes to front anxieties-
In what far fields they gather,
Until she knows that even in sleep,
Yea, in the dark of trouble deep,
The child is with the Father.

George MacDonald

The Watcher

From out a windy cleft there comes a gaze
Of eyes unearthly, which go to and fro
Upon the people's tumult, for below
The nations smite each other: no amaze
Troubles their liquid rolling, or affrays
Their deep-set contemplation; steadily glow
Those ever holier eyeballs, for they grow
Liker unto the eyes of one that prays.
And if those clasped hands tremble, comes a power
As of the might of worlds, and they are holden
Blessing above us in the sunrise golden;
And they will be uplifted till that hour
Of terrible rolling which shall rise and shake
This conscious nightmare from us, and we wake.

George MacDonald

The Widow Of Nain

Forth from the city, with the load
That makes the trampling low,
They walk along the dreary road
That dust and ashes go.

The other way, toward the gate
Their trampling strong and loud,
With hope of liberty elate,
Comes on another crowd.

Nearer and nearer draw the twain-
One with a wailing cry!
How could the Life let such a train
Of death and tears go by!

'Weep not,' he said, and touched the bier:
They stand, the dead who bear;
The mother knows nor hope nor fear-
He waits not for her prayer.

'Young man, I say to thee, arise.'
Who hears, he must obey:
Up starts the body; wide the eyes
Flash wonder and dismay.

The lips would speak, as if they caught
Some converse sudden broke
When the great word the dead man sought,
And Hades' silence woke.

The lips would speak: the eyes' wild stare
Gives place to ordered sight;
The murmur dies upon the air;
The soul is dumb with light.

He brings no news; he has forgot,
Or saw with vision weak:
Thou sees! all our unseen lot,
And yet thou dost not speak.

Hold'st thou the news, as parent might
A too good gift, away,
Lest we should neither sleep at night,
Nor do our work by day?

The mother leaves us not a spark
Of her triumph over grief;
Her tears alone have left their mark
Upon the holy leaf:

Oft gratitude will thanks benumb,
Joy will our laughter quell:
May not Eternity be dumb
With things too good to tell?

Her straining arms her lost one hold;
Question she asketh none;
She trusts for all he leaves untold;
Enough, to clasp her son!

The ebb is checked, the flow begun,
Sent rushing to the gate:
Death turns him backward to the sun,
And life is yet our fate!

George MacDonald

The Widow With The Two Mites

Here much and little shift and change,
With scale of need and time;
There more and less have meanings strange,
Which the world cannot rime.

Sickness may be more hale than health,
And service kingdom high;
Yea, poverty be bounty's wealth,
To give like God thereby.

Bring forth your riches; let them go,
Nor mourn the lost control;
For if ye hoard them, surely so
Their rust will reach your soul.

Cast in your coins, for God delights
When from wide hands they fall;
But here is one who brings two mites,
And thus gives more than all.

I think she did not hear the praise-
Went home content with need;
Walked in her old poor generous ways,
Nor knew her heavenly meed.

George MacDonald

The Wind And The Moon

Said the Wind to the Moon, 'I will blow you out!

You stare

In the air

As if crying

Beware

,

Always looking what I am about:

I hate to be watched; I will blow you out!

The Wind blew hard, and out went the Moon.

So, deep

On a heap

Of clouds, to sleep

Down lay the Wind, and slumbered soon,

Muttering low, 'I've done for that Moon!'

He turned in his bed: she was there again!

On high

In the sky

With her one ghost-eye

The Moon shone white and alive and plain:

Said the Wind, 'I will blow you out again!'

The Wind blew hard, and the Moon grew slim.

'With my sledge

And my wedge

I have knocked off her edge!

I will blow,' said the Wind, 'right fierce and grim,

And the creature will soon be slimmer than slim!'

He blew and he blew, and she thinned to a thread.

'One puff

More's enough

To blow her to snuff!

One good puff more where the last was bred,

And glimmer, glimmer, glum will go that thread!'

He blew a great blast, and the thread was gone.

In the air

Nowhere
Was a moonbeam bare;
Larger and nearer the shy stars shone:
Sure and certain the Moon was gone!

The Wind he took to his revels once more;
On down
And in town,
A merry-mad clown,
He leaped and holloed with whistle and roar-
When there was that glimmering thread once more!

He flew in a rage-he danced and blew;
But in vain
Was the pain
Of his bursting brain,
For still the Moon-scrap the broader grew
The more that he swelled his big cheeks and blew.

Slowly she grew-till she filled the night,
And shone
On her throne
In the sky alone
A matchless, wonderful, silvery light,
Radiant and lovely, the queen of the night.

Said the Wind, 'What a marvel of power am I!
With my breath,
In good faith,
I blew her to death!-
First blew her away right out of the sky,
Then blew her in: what a strength am I!'

But the Moon she knew nought of the silly affair;
For, high
In the sky
With her one white eye,
Motionless miles above the air,
She never had heard the great Wind blare.

George MacDonald

The Wind Of The World

Chained is the Spring. The Night-wind bold
Blows over the hard earth;
Time is not more confused and cold,
Nor keeps more wintry mirth.

Yet blow, and roll the world about-
Blow, Time, blow, winter's Wind!
Through chinks of time heaven peepeth out,
And Spring the frost behind.

George MacDonald

The Woman In The Temple

A still dark joy! A sudden face!
Cold daylight, footsteps, cries!
The temple's naked, shining space,
Aglare with judging eyes!

All in abandoned guilty hair,
With terror-pallid lips,
To vulgar scorn her honour bare,
To lewd remarks and quips,

Her eyes she fixes on the ground
Her shrinking soul to hide,
Lest, at uncurtained windows found,
Its shame be clear descried.

All idle hang her listless hands,
They tingle with her shame;
She sees not who beside her stands,
She is so bowed with blame.

He stoops, he writes upon the ground,
Regards nor priests nor wife;
An awful silence spreads around,
And wakes an inward strife.

Then comes a voice that speaks for thee,
Pale woman, sore aghast:
'Let him who from this sin is free
At her the first stone cast!'

Ah then her heart grew slowly sad!
Her eyes bewildered rose;
She saw the one true friend she had,
Who loves her though he knows.

He stoops. In every charnel breast
Dead conscience rises slow:
They, dumb before that awful guest,
Turn, one by one, and go.

Up in her deathlike, ashy face
Rises the living red;
No greater wonder sure had place
When Lazarus left the dead!

She is alone with him whose fear
Made silence all around;
False pride, false shame, they come not near,
She has her saviour found!

Jesus hath spoken on her side,
Those cruel men withstood!
From him her shame she will not hide!
For him she
will
be good!

He rose; he saw the temple bare;
They two are left alone!
He said unto her, 'Woman, where
Are thine accusers gone?'

'Hath none condemned thee?' 'Master, no,'
She answers, trembling sore.
'Neither do I condemn thee. Go,
And sin not any more.'

She turned and went.-To hope and grieve?
Be what she had not been?
We are not told; but I believe
His kindness made her clean.

Our sins to thee us captive hale-
Ambitions, hatreds dire;
Cares, fears, and selfish loves that fail,
And sink us in the mire:

Our captive-cries with pardon meet;
Our passion cleanse with pain;
Lord, thou didst make these miry feet-
Oh, wash them clean again!

George MacDonald

The Woman Of Samaria

In the hot sun, for water cool
She walked in listless mood:
When back she ran, her pitcher full
Forgot behind her stood.

Like one who followed straying sheep,
A weary man she saw,
Who sat upon the well so deep,
And nothing had to draw.

'Give me to drink,' he said. Her hand
Was ready with reply;
From out the old well of the land
She drew him plenteously.

He spake as never man before;
She stands with open ears;
He spake of holy days in store,
Laid bare the vanished years.

She cannot still her throbbing heart,
She hurries to the town,
And cries aloud in street and mart,
'The Lord is here: come down.'

Her life before was strange and sad,
A very dreary sound:
Ah, let it go-or good or bad:
She has the Master found!

George MacDonald

The Woman Of Whom Satan Had Bound

For years eighteen she, patient soul,
Her eyes had graveward sent;
Her earthly life was lapt in dole,
She was so bowed and bent.

What words! To her? Who can be near?
What tenderness of hands!
Oh! is it strength, or fancy mere?
New hope, or breaking bands?

The pent life rushes swift along
Channels it used to know;
Up, up, amid the wondering throng,
She rises firm and slow-

To bend again in grateful awe-
For will is power at length-
In homage to the living Law
Who gives her back her strength.

Uplifter of the down-bent head!
Unbinder of the bound!
Who seest all the burdened
Who only see the ground!

Although they see thee not, nor cry,
Thou watchest for the hour
To lift the forward-beaming eye,
To wake the slumbering power!

Thy hand will wipe the stains of time
From off the withered face;
Upraise thy bowed old men, in prime
Of youthful manhood's grace!

Like summer days from winter's tomb,
Shall rise thy women fair;
Gray Death, a shadow, not a doom,
Lo, is not anywhere!

All ills of life shall melt away
As melts a cureless woe,
When, by the dawning of the day
Surprised, the dream must go.

I think thou, Lord, wilt heal me too,
Whate'er the needful cure;
The great best only thou wilt do,
And hoping I endure.

George MacDonald

The Woman That Lifted Up Her Voice

Filled with his words of truth and right,
Her heart will break or cry:
A woman's cry bursts forth in might
Of loving agony.

'Blessed the womb, thee, Lord, that bare!
The bosom that thee fed!'
A moment's silence filled the air,
All heard the words she said.

He turns his face: he knows the cry,
The fountain whence it springs-
A woman's heart that glad would die
For woman's best of things.

Good thoughts, though laggard in the rear,
He never quenched or chode:
'Yea, rather, blessed they that hear
And keep the word of God!'

He would uplift her, not rebuke.
The crowd began to stir.
We miss how she the answer took;
We hear no more of her.

George MacDonald

The Woman That Was A Sinner

His face, his words, her heart awoke;
Awoke her slumbering truth;
She judged him well; her bonds she broke,
And fled to him for ruth.

With tears she washed his weary feet;
She wiped them with her hair;
Her kisses-call them not unmeet,
When they were welcome
there

What saint a richer crown could throw
At his love-royal feet!
Her tears, her lips, her hair, down go,
His reign begun to greet.

His holy manhood's perfect worth
Owns her a woman still;
It is impossible henceforth
For her to stoop to ill.

Her to herself his words restore,
The radiance to the day;
A horror to herself no more,
Not yet a cast-away!

Her hands and kisses, ointment, tears,
Her gathered wiping hair,
Her love, her shame, her hopes, her fears,
Mingle in worship rare.

Thou, Mary, too, thy hair didst spread
To wipe the anointed feet;
Nor didst thou only bless his head
With precious spikenard sweet.

But none say thou thy tears didst pour
To wash his parched feet first;
Of tears thou couldst not have such store

As from this woman burst!

If not in love she first be read,
Her queen of sorrow greet;
Mary, do thou anoint his head,
And let her crown his feet.

Simon, her kisses will not soil;
Her tears are pure as rain;
The hair for him she did uncoil
Had been baptized in pain.

Lo, God hath pardoned her so much,
Love all her being stirs!
His love to his poor child is such
That it hath wakened hers!

But oh, rejoice, ye sisters pure,
Who scarce can know her case-
There is no sin but has its cure,
Its all-consuming grace!

He did not leave her soul in hell,
'Mong shards the silver dove;
But raised her pure that she might tell
Her sisters how to love!

She gave him all your best love can!
Despised, rejected, sad-
Sure, never yet had mighty man
Such homage as he had!

Jesus, by whose forgiveness sweet,
Her love grew so intense,
Earth's sinners all come round thy feet:
Lord, make no difference!

George MacDonald

The Woman Who Came Behind Him In The Crowd

Near him she stole, rank after rank;
She feared approach too loud;
She touched his garment's hem, and shrank
Back in the sheltering crowd.

A shame-faced gladness thrills her frame:
Her twelve years' fainting prayer
Is heard at last! she is the same
As other women there!

She hears his voice. He looks about.
Ah! is it kind or good
To drag her secret sorrow out
Before that multitude?

The eyes of men she dares not meet-
On her they straight must fall!-
Forward she sped, and at his feet
Fell down, and told him all.

To the one refuge she hath flown,
The Godhead's burning flame!
Of all earth's women she alone
Hears there the tenderest name:

'Daughter,' he said, 'be of good cheer;
Thy faith hath made thee whole:'
With plenteous love, not healing mere,
He comforteth her soul.

George MacDonald

The Women Who Ministered Unto Him

Enough he labours for his hire;
Yea, nought can pay his pain;
But powers that wear and waste and tire,
Need help to toil again.

They give him freely all they can,
They give him clothes and food;
In this rejoicing, that the man
Is not ashamed they should.

High love takes form in lowly thing;
He knows the offering such;
To them 'tis little that they bring,
To him 'tis very much.

George MacDonald

The Word Of God

Where the bud has never blown
Who for scent is debtor?
Where the spirit rests unknown
Fatal is the letter.

In thee, Jesus, Godhead-stored,
All things we inherit,
For thou art the very Word
And the very Spirit!

George MacDonald

The Yerl O' Waterydeck

The wind it blew, and the ship it flew,
And it was 'Hey for hame!
But up an' cried the skipper til his crew,
'Haud her oot ower the saut sea faem.'

Syne up an' spak the angry king:
'Haud on for Dumferline!
Quo' the skipper, 'My lord, this maunna be-

I
'm king on this boat o' mine!

He tuik the helm intil his han',
He left the shore un'er the lee;
Syne croodit sail, an', east an' south,
Stude awa richt oot to sea.

Quo' the king, 'Leise-majesty, I trow!
Here lies some ill-set plan!
'Bout ship!' Quo' the skipper, 'Yer grace forgets
Ye are king but o' the lan'!

Oot he heild to the open sea
Quhill the north wind flaughtered an' fell;
Syne the east had a bitter word to say
That waukent a watery hell.

He turnt her heid intil the north:
Quo' the nobles, 'He s' droon, by the mass!
Quo' the skipper, 'Haud afif yer lady-ban's
Or ye'll never see the Bass.'

The king creepit down the cabin-stair
To drink the gude French wine;
An' up cam his dochter, the princess fair,
An' luikit ower the brine.

She turnt her face to the drivin snaw,
To the snaw but and the weet;

It claucht her snood, an' awa like a dud
Her hair drave oot i' the sleet.

She turnt her face frae the drivin win'-
'Quhat's that aheid?' quo' she.
The skipper he threw himsel frae the win'
An' he brayt the helm alee.

'Put to yer han', my lady fair!
Haud up her heid!' quo' he;
'Gien she dinna face the win' a wee mair
It's faurweel to you an' me!'

To the tiller the lady she laid her han',
An' the ship brayt her cheek to the blast;
They joukit the berg, but her quarter scraped,
An' they luikit at ither aghast.

Quo' the skipper, 'Ye are a lady fair,
An' a princess gran' to see,
But war ye a beggar, a man wud sail
To the hell i' yer company!'

She liftit a pale an' a queenly face,
Her een flashed, an' syne they swam:
'An' what for no to the hevin?' she says,
An' she turnt awa frae him.

Bot she tuik na her han' frae the gude ship's helm
Till the day begouth to daw;
An' the skipper he spak, but what was said
It was said atween them twa.

An' syne the gude ship she lay to,
Wi' Scotlan' hyne un'er the lee;
An' the king cam up the cabin-stair
Wi' wan face an' bluidshot ee.

Laigh loutit the skipper upo' the deck;
'Stan' up, stan' up,' quo' the king;
'Ye're an honest loun-an' beg me a boon
Quhan ye gie me back this ring.'

Lowne blew the win'; the stars cam oot;
The ship turnt frae the north;
An' or ever the sun was up an' aboot
They war intil the firth o' Forth.

Quhan the gude ship lay at the pier-heid,
And the king stude steady o' the lan',-
'Doon wi' ye, skipper-doon!' he said,
'Hoo daur ye afore me stan'!

The skipper he loutit on his knee;
The king his blade he drew:
Quo' the king, 'Noo mynt ye to centre me!
I'm aboard
my
vessel noo!

'Gien I hadna been yer verra gude lord
I wud hae thrawn yer neck!
Bot-ye wha loutit Skipper o' Doon,
Rise up Yerl o' Waterydeck.'

The skipper he rasena: 'Yer Grace is great,
Yer wull it can heize or ding:
Wi' ae wee word ye hae made me a yerl-
Wi' anither mak me a king.'

'I canna mak ye a king,' quo' he,
'The Lord alane can do that!
I snowk leise-majesty, my man!
Quhat the Sathan wad ye be at?'

Glowert at the skipper the doutsum king
Jalousin aneth his croon;
Quo' the skipper, 'Here is yer Grace's ring-
An' yer dochter is my boon!'

The black blude shot intil the king's face
He wasna bonny to see:
'The rascal skipper! he lichtlies oor grace!-
Gar hang him heigh on yon tree.'

Up sprang the skipper an' aboard his ship,
Cleikit up a bytin blade
An' hackit at the cable that held her to the pier,
An' thocht it 'maist ower weel made.

The king he blew shill in a siller whustle;
An' tramp, tramp, doon the pier
Cam twenty men on twenty horses,
Clankin wi' spur an' spear.

At the king's fute fell his dochter fair:
'His life ye wadna spill!'
'Ye daur stan' twixt my hert an' my hate?'
'I daur, wi' a richt gude will!'

'Ye was aye to yer faither a thrawart bairn,
But, my lady, here stan's the king!
Luikna
him
i' the angry face-
A monarch's anither thing!'

'I lout to my father for his grace
Low on my bendit knee;
But I stan' an' luik the king i' the face,
For the skipper is king o' me!'

She turnt, she sprang upo' the deck,
The cable splashed i' the Forth,
Her wings sae braid the gude ship spread
And flew east, an' syne flew north.

Now was not this a king's dochter-
A lady that feared no skaith?
A woman wi' quhilk a man nicht sail
Prood intil the Port o' Death?

George MacDonald

They Are Blind

They are blind, and they are dead:
We will wake them as we go;
There are words have not been said,
There are sounds they do not know:
We will pipe and we will sing-
With the Music and the Spring
Set their hearts a wondering!

They are tired of what is old,
We will give it voices new;
For the half hath not been told
Of the Beautiful and True.
Drowsy eyelids shut and sleeping!
Heavy eyes oppressed with weeping!
Flashes through the lashes leaping!

Ye that have a pleasant voice,
Hither come without delay;
Ye will never have a choice
Like to that ye have to-day:
Round the wide world we will go,
Singing through the frost and snow
Till the daisies are in blow.

Ye that cannot pipe or sing,
Ye must also come with speed;
Ye must come, and with you bring
Weighty word and weightier deed-
Helping hands and loving eyes!
These will make them truly wise-
Then will be our Paradise.

March 27, 1852

George MacDonald

This World

Thy world is made to fit thine own,
A nursery for thy children small,
The playground-footstool of thy throne,
Thy solemn school-room, Father of all!
When day is done, in twilight's gloom,
We pass into thy presence-room.

Because from selfishness and wrath,
Our cold and hot extremes of ill,
We grope and stagger on the path-
Thou tell'st us from thy holy hill,
With icy storms and sunshine rude,
That we are all unripe in good.

Because of snaky things that creep
Through our soul's sea, dim-undulant,
Thou fill'st the mystery of thy deep
With faces heartless, grim, and gaunt;
That we may know how ugly seem
The things our spirit-oceans teem.

Because of half-way things that hold
Good names, and have a poisonous breath-
Prudence that is but trust in gold,
And faith that is but fear of death-
Amongst thy flowers, the lovely brood,
Thou sendest some that are not good.

Thou stay'st thy hand from finishing things
To make thy child love the complete;
Full many a flower comes up thy springs
Unshamed in imperfection sweet;
That through good all, and good in part,
Thy work be perfect in the heart.

Because, in careless confidence,
So oft we leave the narrow way,
Its borders thorny hedges fence,
Beyond them marshy deeps affray;

But farther on, the heavenly road
Lies through the gardens of our God.

Because thy sheep so often will
Forsake the meadow cool and damp
To climb the stony, grassless hill,
Or wallow in the slimy swamp,
Thy sicknesses, where'er they roam,
Go after them to bring them home.

One day, all fear, all ugliness,
All pain, all discord, dumb or loud,
All selfishness, and all distress,
Will melt like low-spread morning cloud,
And heart and brain be free from thrall,
Because thou, God, art all in all!

George MacDonald

Thou Also

Cry out upon the crime, and then let slip
The dogs of hate, whose hanging muzzles track
The bloody secret; let the welkin crack
Reverberating, while ye dance and skip
About the horrid blaze! or else ye strip,
More secretly, for the avenging rack,
Him who hath done the deed, till, oozing black
Ye watch the anguish from his nostrils drip,
And all the knotted limbs lie quivering!
Or, if your hearts disdain such banqueting,
With wide and tearless eyes go staring through
The murder cells! but think-that, if your knees
Bow not to holiness, then even in you
Lie deeper gulfs and blacker crimes than these.

George MacDonald

Thy Heart

Make not of thy heart a casket,
Opening seldom, quick to close;
But of bread a wide-mouthed basket,
Or a cup that overflows.

George MacDonald

Time

A lang-backit, spilgie, fuistit auld carl
Gangs a' nicht rakin athort the warl
Wi' a pock on his back, luikin hungry an' lean,
His crook-fingert han' aye followin his e'en:
He gathers up a'thing that canna but fa'-
Intil his bag wi' 't, an' on, an' awa!
Soot an' snaw! soot an' snaw!-
Intil his bag wi' 't, an' on, an' awa!

But whan he comes to the wa' o' the warl,
Spangs up it, like lang-leggit spider, the carl;
Up gangs his pock wi' him, humpit ahin,
For naething fa's oot 'at ance he pat in;
Syne he warstles doon outside the flamin wa',
His bag 'maist the deith o' him, pangt like a ba';
Soot an' snaw! soot an' snaw!
His bag 'maist throttlin him, pangt like a ba'!

Doon he draps weary upon a laigh rock,
Flingin aside him his muckle-mou'd pock:
An' there he sits, his heid in his han',
Like a broken-hertit, despairin man;
Him air his pock no bonny, na, na!
Him an' his pock an ugsome twa!
Soot an' snaw! soot an' snaw!
Him an' his pock an ugsome twa!

But sune 's the first ray o' the sunshine bare
Lichts on the carl, what see ye there?
An angel set on eternity's brink,
Wi' e'en to gar the sun himsel blink;
By his side a glintin, glimmerin urn,
Furth frae wha's mou rins a liltin burn:-
Soot an' snaw! soot an' snaw!
The dirt o' the warl rins in glory awa!

George MacDonald

Time And Time

As I was walkin on the strand,
I spied ane auld man sit
On ane auld black rock; and aye the waves
Cam washin up its fit.
His lips they gaed as gien they wad lilt,
But o' liltin, wae's me, was nane!
He spak but an owercome, dreary and dreigh,
A burden wha's sang was gane:
'Robbie and Jeanie war twa bonnie bairns;
They playt thegither i' the gloamin's hush:
Up cam the tide and the mune and the sterns,
And pairtit the twa wi' a glint and a gush.'

'What can the auld man mean,' quod I,
'Sittin o' the auld black rock?
The tide creeps up wi' a moan and a cry,
And a hiss 'maist like a mock!
The words he mutters maun be the en'
O' some weary auld-warl' sang-
A deid thing floatin aboot in his brain,
'At the tide 'ill no lat gang!'
'Robbie and Jeanie war twa bonnie bairns;
They playt thegither i' the gloamin's hush:
Up cam the tide and the mune and the sterns,
And pairtit the twa wi' a glint and a gush.'

'Hoo pairtit it them, auld man?' I said;
'Was't the sea cam up ower strang?
Oh, gien thegither the twa o' them gaed
Their pairtin wasna lang!
Or was are ta'en, and the ither left-
Ane to sing, are to greit?
It's sair, I ken, to be sae bereft-
But there's the tide at yer feet!'
'Robbie and Jeanie war twa bonnie bairns,
And they playt thegither i' the gloamin's hush:
Up cam the tide and the mune and the sterns,
And pairtit the twa wi' a glint and a gush.'

'Was't the sea o' space wi' its storm o' time
That wadna lat things bide?
But Death's a diver frae heavenly clime
Seekin ye neth its tide,
And ye'll gaze again in ither's ee,
Far abune space and time!
Never ae word he answered me,
But changed a wee his rime:
'Robbie and Jeanie war twa bonnie bairns,
And they playt thegither upo' the shore;
Up cam the tide and the mune and the sterns,
And pairtit the twa for evermore.'

'May be, auld man, 'twas the tide o' change
That crap atween the twa?
Hech! that's a droonin fearsome strange,
Waur, waur nor are and a'!
He said nae mair. I luikit, and saw
His lips they couldna gang:
Death, the diver, had ta'en him awa,
To gie him a new auld sang.
Robbie and Jeanie war twa bonnie bairns,
And they playt thegither upo' the shore:
Up cam the tide and the mune and the sterns,
And souft them awa throu a mirksome door!

George MacDonald

To ----

I cannot write old verses here,
Dead things a thousand years away,
When all the life of the young year
Is in the summer day.

The roses make the world so sweet,
The bees, the birds have such a tune,
There's such a light and such a heat
And such a joy this June,

One must expand one's heart with praise,
And make the memory secure
Of sunshine and the woodland days
And summer twilights pure.

Oh listen rather! Nature's song
Comes from the waters, beating tides,
Green-margined rivers, and the throng
Of streams on mountain-sides.

So fair those water-spirits are,
Such happy strength their music fills,
Our joy shall be to wander far
And find them on the hills.

George MacDonald

To A Certain Critic

Such guests as you, sir, were not in my mind
When I my homely dish with care designed;
'Twas certain humble souls I would have fed
Who do not turn from wholesome milk and bread:
You came, slow-trotting on the narrow way,
O'erturned the food, and trod it in the clay;
Then low with discoid nostrils sniffing curt,
Cried, 'Sorry cook! why, what a mess of dirt!'

George MacDonald

To A February Primrose

I know not what among the grass thou art,
Thy nature, nor thy substance, fairest flower,
Nor what to other eyes thou hast of power
To send thine image through them to the heart;
But when I push the frosty leaves apart
And see thee hiding in thy wintry bower
Thou growest up within me from that hour,
And through the snow I with the spring depart.

I have no words. But fragrant is the breath,
Pale beauty, of thy second life within.
There is a wind that cometh for thy death,
But thou a life immortal dost begin,
Where in one soul, which is thy heaven, shall dwell
Thy spirit, beautiful Unspeakable!

George MacDonald

To A Sister

A fresh young voice that sings to me
So often many a simple thing,
Should surely not unanswered be
By all that I can sing.

Dear voice, be happy every way
A thousand changing tones among,
From little child's unfinished lay
To angel's perfect song.

In dewy woods-fair, soft, and green
Like morning woods are childhood's bower-
Be like the voice of brook unseen
Among the stones and flowers;

A joyful voice though born so low,
And making all its neighbours glad;
Sweet, hidden, constant in its flow
Even when the winds are sad.

So, strengthen in a peaceful home,
And daily deeper meanings bear;
And when life's wildernesses come
Be brave and faithful there.

Try all the glorious magic range,
Worship, forgive, console, rejoice,
Until the last and sweetest change-
So live and grow, dear voice.

George MacDonald

To A Thunder-Cloud

Oh, melancholy fragment of the night
Drawing thy lazy web against the sun,
Thou shouldst have waited till the day was done
With kindred glooms to build thy fane aright,
Sublime amid the ruins of the light!
But thus to shape our glories one by one
With fearful hands, ere we had well begun
To look for shadows-even in the bright!
Yet may we charm a lesson from thy breast,
A secret wisdom from thy folds of thunder:
There is a wind that cometh from the west
Will rend thy tottering piles of gloom asunder,
And fling thee ruinous along the grass,
To sparkle on us as our footsteps pass!

George MacDonald

To A.J. Scott

I walked all night: the darkness did not yield.
Around me fell a mist, a weary rain,
Enduring long. At length the dawn revealed

A temple's front, high-lifted from the plain.
Closed were the lofty doors that led within;
But by a wicket one might entrance gain.

'Twas awe and silence when I entered in;
The night, the weariness, the rain were lost
In hopeful spaces. First I heard a thin

Sweet sound of voices low, together tossed,
As if they sought some harmony to find
Which they knew once, but none of all that host

Could wile the far-fled music back to mind.
Loud voices, distance-low, wandered along
The pillared paths, and up the arches twined

With sister arches, rising, throng on throng,
Up to the roof's dim height. At broken times
The voices gathered to a burst of song,

But parted sudden, and were but single rimes
By single bells through Sabbath morning sent,
That have no thought of harmony or chimes.

Hopeful confusion! Who could be content
Looking and hearkening from the distant door?
I entered further. Solemnly it went-

Thy voice, Truth's herald, walking the untuned roar,
Calm and distinct, powerful and sweet and fine:
I loved and listened, listened and loved more.

May not the faint harp, tremulous, combine
Its ghostlike sounds with organ's mighty tone?
Let my poor song be taken in to thine.

Will not thy heart, with tempests of its own,
Yet hear aeolian sighs from thin chords blown?

George MacDonald

To A.J. Scott, May, 1857

When, long ago, the daring of my youth
Drew nigh thy greatness with a little thing,
Thou didst receive me; and thy sky of truth

Has domed me since, a heaven of sheltering,
Made homely by the tenderness and grace
Which round thy absolute friendship ever fling

A radiant atmosphere. Turn not thy face
From that small part of earnest thanks, I pray,
Which, spoken, leaves much more in speechless case.

I see thee far before me on thy way
Up the great peaks, and striding stronger still;
Thy intellect unrivalled in its sway,

Upheld and ordered by a regnant will;
Thy wisdom, seer and priest of holy fate,
Searching all truths its prophecy to fill;

But this my joy: throned in thy heart so great,
High Love is queen, and sits without a mate.

George MacDonald

To An Autograph-Hunter

Seek not my name-it doth no virtue bear;
Seek, seek thine own primeval name to find-
The name God called when thy ideal fair
Arose in deeps of the eternal mind.

When that thou findest, thou art straight a lord
Of time and space-art heir of all things grown;
And not my name, poor, earthly label-word,
But I myself thenceforward am thine own.

Thou hearest not? Or hearest as a man
Who hears the muttering of a foolish spell?
My very shadow would feel strange and wan
In thy abode:-I say
No
, and
Farewell
.

Thou understandest? Then it is enough;
No shadow-deputy shall mock my friend;
We walk the same path, over smooth and rough,
To meet ere long at the unending end.

George MacDonald

To Any Friend

If I did seem to you no more
Than to myself I seem,
Not thus you would fling wide the door,
And on the beggar beam!

You would not don your radiant best,
Or dole me more than half!
Poor palmer I, no angel guest;
A shaking reed my staff!

At home, no rich fruit, hanging low,
Have I for Love to pull;
Only unripe things that must grow
Till Autumn's maund be full!

But I forsake my niggard leas,
My orchard, too late hoar,
And wander over lands and seas
To find the Father's door.

When I have reached the ancestral farm,
Have clomb the steepy hill,
And round me rests the Father's arm,
Then think me what you will

George MacDonald

To Any One

Go not forth to call Dame Sorrow
From the dim fields of Tomorrow;
Let her roam there all unheeded,
She will come when she is needed;
Then, when she draws near thy door,
She will find God there before.

George MacDonald

To Aubrey De Vere

Ray of the Dawn of Truth, Aubrey de Vere,
Forgive my play fantastic with thy name,
Distilling its true essence by the flame
Which Love 'neath Fancy's limbeck lighteth clear.
I know not what thy semblance, what thy cheer;
If, as thy spirit, hale thy bodily frame,
Or furthering by failure each high aim;
If green thy leaf, or, like mine, growing sear;
But this I think, that thou wilt, by and by-
Two journeys stoutly, therefore safely trod-
We laying down the staff, and He the rod-
So look on me I shall not need to cry-
'We must be brothers, Aubrey, thou and I:
We mean the same thing-will the will of God!'

George MacDonald

To Aurelio Saffi

To God and man be simply true;
Do as thou hast been wont to do;
Bring out thy treasures, old and new

-

Mean all the same when said to you.

I love thee: thou art calm and strong;
Firm in the right, mild to the wrong;
Thy heart, in every raging throng,
A chamber shut for prayer and song.

Defeat thou know'st not, canst not know,
Although thy aims so lofty go
They need as long to root and grow
As infant hills to reach the snow.

Press on and prosper, holy friend!
I, weak and ignorant, would lend
A voice, thee, strong and wise, to send
Prospering onward without end.

George MacDonald

To E.G., Dedicating A Book

A broken tale of endless things,
Take, lady: thou art not of those
Who in what vale a fountain springs
Would have its journey close.

Countless beginnings, fair first parts,
Leap to the light, and shining flow;
All broken things, or toys or hearts,
Are mended where they go.

Then down thy stream, with hope-filled sail,
Float faithful fearless on, loved friend;
'Tis God that has begun the tale
And does not mean to end.

George MacDonald

To G. M. T.

The sun is sinking in the west,
Long grow the shadows dim;
Have patience, sister, to be blest,
Wait patiently for Him.

Thou knowest love, much love hast had,
Great things of love mayst tell,
Ought'st never to be very sad
For thou too hast lov'd well.

His house thou know'st, who on the brink
Of death loved more than thou,
Loved more than thy great heart can think,
And just as then loves now-

In that great house is one who waits
For thy slow-coming foot;
Glad is he with his angel-mates
Yet often listens mute,

For he of all men loves thee best:
He haunts the heavenly clock;
Ah, he has long been up and drest
To open to thy knock!

Fear not, doubt not because of those
On whom earth's keen winds blow;
God's love shames all our pitying woes,
Be ready thou to go.

Forsaken dream not hearts which here
Bask in no sunny shine;
Each shall one coming day be dear
To love as good as thine.

George MacDonald

To Garibaldi--With A Book

When at Philippi, he who would have freed
Great Rome from tyrants, for the season brief
That lay 'twixt him and battle, sought relief
From painful thoughts, he in a book did read,
That so the death of Portia might not breed
Unmanful thoughts, and cloud his mind with grief:
Brother of Brutus, of high hearts the chief,
When thou at length receiv'st thy heavenly meed,
And I have found my hoping not in vain,
Tell me my book has wiled away one pang
That out of some lone sacred memory sprang,
Or wrought an hour's forgetfulness of pain,
And I shall rise, my heart brimful of gain,
And thank my God amid the golden clang.

George MacDonald

To Gordon Leaving Khartoum

The silence of traitorous feet!
The silence of close-pent rage!
The roar, and the sudden heart-beat!
And the shot through the true heart going,
The truest heart of the age!
And the Nile serenely flowing!

Carnage and curses and cries!
He utters never a word;
Still as a child he lies;
The wind of the desert is blowing
Across the dead man of the Lord;
And the Nile is softly flowing.

But the song is stilled in heaven
To welcome one more king:
For the truth he hath witnessed and striven,
And let the world go crowing,
And Mammon's church-bell go ring,
And the Nile blood-red go flowing!

Man who hated the sword
Yet wielded the sword and axe-
Farewell, O arm of the Lord,
The Lord's own harvest mowing-
With a wind in the smoking flax
Where our foul rivers are flowing!

In war thou didst cherish peace,
Thou slewest for love of life:
Hail, hail thy stormy release
Go home and await thy sowing,
The patient flower of thy strife,
Thy bread on the Nile cast flowing.

Not thy earth to our earth alone,
Thy spirit is left with us!
Thy body is victory's throne,
And our hearts around it are glowing:

Would that we others died thus
Where the Thames and the Clyde are flowing!

George MacDonald

To Greville Matheson Macdonald

First, most, to thee, my son, I give this book
In which a friend's and brother's verses blend
With mine; for not son only-brother, friend,
Art thou, through sonship which no veil can brook
Between the eyes that in each other look,
Or any shadow 'twixt the hearts that tend
Still nearer, with divine approach, to end
In love eternal that cannot be shook
When all the shakable shall cease to be.
With growing hope I greet the coming day
When from thy journey done I welcome thee
Who sharest in the names of all the three,
And take thee to the two, and humbly say,

Let this man be the fourth with us, I pray.

CASA CORAGGIO:

May, 1883.

George MacDonald

To June

Ah, truant, thou art here again, I see!
For in a season of such wretched weather
I thought that thou hadst left us altogether,
Although I could not choose but fancy thee
Skulking about the hill-tops, whence the glee
Of thy blue laughter peeped at times, or rather
Thy bashful awkwardness, as doubtful whether
Thou shouldst be seen in such a company
Of ugly runaways, unshapely heaps
Of ruffian vapour, broken from restraint
Of their slim prison in the ocean deeps.
But yet I may not chide: fall to thy books-
Fall to immediately without complaint-
There they are lying, hills and vales and brooks.

George MacDonald

To Lady Noel Byron

Men sought, ambition's thirst to slake,
The lost elixir old
Whose magic touch should instant make
The meaner metals gold.

A nobler alchymy is thine
Which love from pain doth press:
Gold in thy hand becomes divine,
Grows truth and tenderness.

George MacDonald

To My Aging Friends

It is no winter night comes down
Upon our hearts, dear friends of old;
But a May evening, softly brown,
Whose wind is rather cold.

We are not, like yon sad-eyed West,
Phantoms that brood o'er Time's dust-hoard,
We are like yon Moon-in mourning drest,
But gazing on her lord.

Come nearer to the hearth, sweet friends,
Draw nigher, closer, hand and chair;
Ours is a love that never ends,
For God is dearest there!

We will not talk about the past,
We will not ponder ancient pain;
Those are but deep foundations cast
For peaks of soaring gain!

We, waiting Dead, will warm our bones
At our poor smouldering earthly fire;
And talk of wide-eyed living ones
Who have what we desire.

O Living, ye know what is death-
We, by and by, shall know it too!
Humble, with bated, hoping breath,
We are coming fast to you!

George MacDonald

To My God

Oh how oft I wake and find
I have been forgetting thee!
I am never from thy mind:
Thou it is that wakest me.

George MacDonald

To My Lord And Master

Imagination cannot rise above thee;
Near and afar I see thee, and I love thee;
My misery away from me I thrust it,
For thy perfection I behold, and trust it.

George MacDonald

To My Mother Earth

O Earth, Earth, Earth,
I am dying for love of thee,
For thou hast given me birth,
And thy hands have tended me.

I would fall asleep on thy breast
When its swelling folds are bare,
When the thrush dreams of its nest
And the life of its joy in the air;

When thy life is a vanished ghost,
And the glory hath left thy waves,
When thine eye is blind with frost,
And the fog sits on the graves;

When the blasts are shivering about,
And the rain thy branches beats,
When the damps of death are out,
And the mourners are in the streets.

Oh my sleep should be deep
In the arms of thy swiftening motion,
And my dirge the mystic sweep
Of the winds that nurse the ocean.

And my eye would slowly ope
With the voice that awakens thee,
And runs like a glance of hope
Up through the quickening tree;

When the roots of the lonely fir
Are dipt in thy veining heat,
And thy countless atoms stir
With the gather of mossy feet;

When the sun's great censer swings
In the hands that always be,
And the mists from thy watery rings
Go up like dust from the sea;

When the midnight airs are assembling
With a gush in thy whispering halls,
And the leafy air is trembling
Like a stream before it falls.

Thy shadowy hand hath found me
On the drifts of the Godhead's will,
And thy dust hath risen around me
With a life that guards me still.

O Earth! I have caught from thine
The pulse of a mystic chase;
O Earth! I have drunk like wine
The life of thy swiftening race.

Wilt miss me, mother sweet,
A life in thy milky veins?
Wilt miss the sound of my feet
In the tramp that shakes thy plains

When the jaws of darkness rend,
And the vapours fold away,
And the sounds of life ascend
Like dust in the blinding day?

I would know thy silver strain
In the shouts of the starry crowd
When the souls of thy changing men
Rise up like an incense cloud.

I would know thy brightening lobes
And the lap of thy watery bars
Though space were choked with globes
And the night were blind with stars!

From the folds of my unknown place,
When my soul is glad and free,
I will slide by my God's sweet grace
And hang like a cloud on thee.

When the pale moon sits at night

By the brink of her shining well,
Laving the rings of her widening light
On the slopes of the weltering swell,

I will fall like a wind from the west
On the locks of thy prancing streams,
And sow the fields of thy rest
With handfuls of sweet young dreams.

When the sound of thy children's cry
Hath stricken thy gladness dumb,
I will kindle thine upward eye
With a laugh from the years that come.

Far above where the loud wind raves,
On a wing as still as snow
I will watch the grind of the curly waves
As they bite the coasts below;

When the shining ranks of the frost
Draw down on the glistening wold
In the mail of a fairy host,
And the earth is mossed with cold,

Till the plates that shine about
Close up with a filmy din,
Till the air is frozen out,
And the stars are frozen in.

I will often stoop to range
On the fields where my youth was spent,
And my feet shall smite the cliffs of change
With the rush of a steep descent;

And my glowing soul shall burn
With a love that knows no pall,
And my eye of worship turn
Upon him that fashioned all-

When the sounding waves of strife
Have died on the Godhead's sea,
And thy life is a purer life

That nurses a life in me.

George MacDonald

To My Sister: On Her Twenty-First Birthday

I.

Old fables are not all a lie
That tell of wondrous birth,
Of Titan children, father Sky,
And mighty mother Earth.

Yea, now are walking on the ground
Sons of the mingled brood;
Yea, now upon the earth are found
Such daughters of the Good.

Earth-born, my sister, thou art still
A daughter of the sky;
Oh, climb for ever up the hill
Of thy divinity!

To thee thy mother Earth is sweet,
Her face to thee is fair;
But thou, a goddess incomplete,
Must climb the starry stair.

II.

Wouldst thou the holy hill ascend,
Wouldst see the Father's face?
To all his other children bend,
And take the lowest place.

Be like a cottage on a moor,
A covert from the wind,
With burning fire and open door,
And welcome free and kind.

Thus humbly doing on the earth
The things the earthly scorn,
Thou shalt declare the lofty birth
Of all the lowly born.

III.

Be then thy sacred womanhood
A sign upon thee set,
A second baptism-understood-
For what thou must be yet.

For, cause and end of all thy strife,
And unrest as thou art,
Still stings thee to a higher life
The Father at thy heart.

George MacDonald

To One Threatened With Blindness

I.

Lawrence, what though the world be growing dark,
And twilight cool thy potent day inclose!
The sun, beneath the round earth sunk, still glows
All the night through, sleepless and young and stark.
Oh, be thy spirit faithful as the lark,
More daring: in the midnight of thy woes,
Dart through them, higher than earth's shadow goes,
Into the Light of which thou art a spark!
Be willing to be blind-that, in thy night,
The Lord may bring his Father to thy door,
And enter in, and feast thy soul with light.
Then shall thou dream of darksome ways no more,
Forget the gloom that round thy windows lies,
And shine, God's house, all radiant in our eyes.

II.

Say thou, his will be done who is the good!
His will be borne who knoweth how to bear!
Who also in the night had need of prayer,
Both when awoke divinely longing mood,
And when the power of darkness him withstood.
For what is coming take no jot of care:
Behind, before, around thee as the air,
He o'er thee like thy mother's heart will brood.
And when thou hast wearied thy wings of prayer,
Then fold them, and drop gently to thy nest,
Which is thy faith; and make thy people blest
With what thou bring'st from that ethereal height,
Which whoso looks on thee will straightway share:
He needs no eyes who is a shining light!

George MacDonald

To S. F. S.

They say that lonely sorrows do not chance:
More gently, I think, sorrows together go;
A new one joins the funeral gliding slow
With less of jar than when it breaks the dance.
Grief swages grief, and joy doth joy enhance;
Nature is generous to her children so.
And were they quick to spy the flowers that blow,
As quick to feel the sharp-edged stones that lance
The foot that must walk naked in life's way,-
Blest by the roadside lily, free from fear,
Oftener than hurt by dash of flinty spear,
They would walk upright, bold, and earnest-gay;
And when the soft night closed the weary day,
Would sleep like those that far-off music hear.

George MacDonald

To The Clouds

Through the unchanging heaven, as ye have sped,
Speed onward still, a strange wild company,
Fleet children of the waters! Glorious ye,
Whether the sun lift up his shining head,
High throned at noontide and established
Among the shifting pillars, or we see
The sable ghosts of air sleep mournfully
Against the sunlight, passionless and dead!
Take thus a glory, oh thou higher Sun,
From all the cloudy labour of man's hand-
Whether the quickening nations rise and run,
Or in the market-place we idly stand
Casting huge shadows over these thy plains-
Even thence, O God, draw thy rich gifts of rains.

George MacDonald

To The Same

Dead, why defend thee, who in life
For thy worst foe hadst died;
Who, thy own name a word of strife,
Didst silent stand aside?

Grand in forgiveness, what to thee
The big world's puny prate!
Or thy great heart hath ceased to be
Or loveth still its mate!

George MacDonald

To-Morrow

My TO-MORROW is but a flitting
Fancy of the brain;
God's TO-MORROW an angel sitting,
Ready for joy or pain.

My TO-MORROW has no soul,
Dead as yesterdays;
God's-a brimming silver bowl
Of life that gleams and plays.

My TO-MORROW, I mock you away!
Shadowless nothing, thou!
God's TO-MORROW, come, dear day,
For God is in thee now.

George MacDonald

Traveller's Song

Bands of dark and bands of light
Lie athwart the homeward way;
Now we cross a belt of Night,
Now a strip of shining Day!

Now it is a month of June,
Now December's shivering hour;
Now rides high loved memories' Moon,
Now the Dark is dense with power!

Summers, winters, days, and nights,
Moons, and clouds, they come and go;
Joys and sorrows, pains, delights,
Hope and fear, and
yes
and
no
.

All is well: come, girls and boys,
Not a weary mile is vain!
Hark-dim laughter's radiant noise!
See the windows through the rain!

George MacDonald

Triolet

Oh that men would praise the Lord
For his goodness unto men!
Forth he sends his saving word,
-Oh that men would praise the Lord!-
And from shades of death abhorred
Lifts them up to light again:
Oh that men would praise the Lord
For his goodness unto men!

George MacDonald

Truth, Not Form!

I came upon a fountain on my way
When it was hot, and sat me down to drink
Its sparkling stream, when all around the brink
I spied full many vessels made of clay,
Whereon were written, not without display,
In deep engraving or with merely ink,
The blessings which each owner seemed to think
Would light on him who drank with each away.
I looked so hard my eyes were looking double
Into them all, but when I came to see
That they were filthy, each in his degree,
I bent my head, though not without some trouble,
To where the little waves did leap and bubble,
And so I journeyed on most pleasantly.

George MacDonald

Two In One

Were thou and I the white pinions
On some eager, heaven-born dove,
Swift would we mount to the old dominions,
To our rest of old, my love!

Were thou and I trembling strands
In music's enchanted line,
We would wait and wait for magic hands
To untwist the magic twine.

Were we two sky-tints, thou and I,
Thou the golden, I the red;
We would quiver and glow and darken and die,
And love until we were dead!

Nearer than wings of one dove,
Than tones or colours in chord,
We are one-and safe, and for ever, my love,
Two thoughts in the heart of one Lord.

George MacDonald

Two Rondels

I.

When, in the mid-sea of the night,
I waken at thy call, O Lord,
The first that troop my bark aboard
Are darksome imps that hate the light,
Whose tongues are arrows, eyes a blight-
Of wraths and cares a pirate horde-
Though on the mid-sea of the night
It was thy call that waked me, Lord.

Then I must to my arms and fight-
Catch up my shield and two-edged sword,
The words of him who is thy word-
Nor cease till they are put to flight;
Then in the mid-sea of the night
I turn and listen for thee, Lord.

II.

There comes no voice from thee, O Lord,
Across the mid-sea of the night!
I lift my voice and cry with might:
If thou keep silent, soon a horde
Of imps again will swarm aboard,
And I shall be in sorry plight
If no voice come from thee, my Lord,
Across the mid-sea of the night.

There comes no voice; I hear no word!
But in my soul dawns something bright:-
There is no sea, no foe to fight!
Thy heart and mine beat one accord:
I need no voice from thee, O Lord,
Across the mid-sea of the night.

George MacDonald

Unrest

Comes there, O Earth, no breathing time for thee,
No pause upon thy many-chequered lands?
Now resting on my bed with listless hands
I mourn thee resting not. Continually
Hear I the plashing borders of the sea
Answer each other from the rocks and sands!
Troop all the rivers seawards; nothing stands,
But with strange noises hasteth terribly!
Loam-eared hyenas go a moaning by;
Howls to each other all the bloody crew
Of Afric's tigers! but, O men, from you
Comes this perpetual sound more loud and high
Than aught that vexes air! I hear the cry
Of infant generations rising too!

George MacDonald

Up And-Down

The sun is gone down
And the moon's in the sky
But the sun will come up
And the moon be laid by.

The flower is asleep.
But it is not dead,
When the morning shines
It will lift its head.

When winter comes
It will die! No, no,
It will only hide
From the frost and snow.

Sure is the summer,
Sure is the sun;
The night and the winter
Away they run.

George MacDonald

Up In The Tree

What would you see, if I took you up
My little aerie-stair?
You would see the sky like a clear blue cup
Turned upside down in the air.

What would you do, up my aerie-stair
In my little nest on the tree?
With cry upon cry you would ripple the air
To get at what you would see.

And what would you reach in the top of the tree
To still your grasping grief?
Not a star would you clutch of all you would see,
You would gather just one green leaf.

But when you had lost your greedy grief,
Content to see from afar,
Your hand it would hold a withering leaf,
But your heart a shining star.

George MacDonald

Waiting

I waited for the Master
In the darkness dumb;
Light came fast and faster-
My light did not come!

I waited all the daylight,
All through noon's hot flame:
In the evening's gray light,
Lo, the Master came!

George MacDonald

Were I A Skilful Painter

Were I a skilful painter,
My pencil, not my pen,
Should try to teach thee hope and fear,
And who would blame me then?-
Fear of the tide of darkness
That floweth fast behind,
And hope to make thee journey on
In the journey of the mind.

Were I a skilful painter,
What should I paint for thee?-
A tiny spring-bud peeping out
From a withered wintry tree;
The warm blue sky of summer
O'er jagged ice and snow,
And water hurrying gladsome out
From a cavern down below;

The dim light of a beacon
Upon a stormy sea,
Where a lonely ship to windward beats
For life and liberty;
A watery sun-ray gleaming
Athwart a sullen cloud
And falling on some grassy flower
The rain had earthward bowed;

Morn peeping o'er a mountain,
In ambush for the dark,
And a traveller in the vale below
Rejoicing like a lark;
A taper nearly vanished
Amid the dawning gray,
And a maiden lifting up her head,
And lo, the coming day!

I am no skilful painter;
Let who will blame me then
That I would teach thee hope and fear

With my plain-talking pen!-
Fear of the tide of darkness
That floweth fast behind,
And hope to make thee journey on
In the journey of the mind.

George MacDonald

What Makes Summer?

Winter froze both brook and well;
Fast and fast the snowflakes fell;
Children gathered round the hearth
Made a summer of their mirth;
When a boy, so lately come
That his life was yet one sum
Of delights-of aimless rambles.
Romps and dreams and games and gambols,
Thought aloud: 'I wish I knew
What makes summer-that I do!'
Father heard, and it did show him
How to write a little poem.

What makes summer, little one,
Do you ask? It is the sun.
Want of heat is all the harm,
Summer is but winter warm.
'Tis the sun-yes, that one there,
Dim and gray, low in the air!
Now he looks at us askance,
But will lift his countenance
Higher up, and look down straighter.
Rise much earlier, set much later,
Till we sing out, 'Hail, Well-comer,
Thou hast brought our own old Summer!'

When the sun thus rises early
And keeps shining all day rarely,
Up he draws the larks to meet him,
Earth's bird-angels, wild to greet him;
Up he draws the clouds, and pours
Down again their shining showers;
Out he draws the grass and clover,
Daisies, buttercups all over;
Out he wiles all flowers to stare
At their father in the air-
He all light, they how much duller,
Yet son-suns of every colour!
Then he draws their odours out,

Sends them on the winds about.
Next he draws out flying things-
Out of eggs, fast-flapping wings;
Out of lumps like frozen snails,
Butterflies with splendid sails;
Draws the blossoms from the trees,
From their hives the buzzy bees,
Golden things from muddy cracks-
Beetles with their burnished backs;
Laughter draws he from the river
Gleaming back to the gleam-giver;
Light he sends to every nook
That no creature be forsook;
Draws from gloom and pain and sadness,
Hope and blessing, peace and gladness,
Making man's heart sing and shine
With his brilliancy divine:
Summer, thus it is he makes it,
And the little child he takes it.

Day's work done, adown the west
Lingering he goes to rest;
Like a child, who, blissful yet,
Is unwilling to forget,
And, though sleepy, heels and head,
Thinks he cannot go to bed.
Even when down behind the hill
Back his bright look shineth still,
Whose keen glory with the night
Makes the lovely gray twilight-
Drawing out the downy owl,
With his musical bird-howl;
Drawing out the leathery bats-
Mice they are, turned airy cats-
Noiseless, sly, and slippery things
Swimming through the air on wings;
Drawing out the feathery moth,
Lazy, drowsy, very loath;
Drawing children to the door
For one goodnight-frolic more;
Drawing from the glow-worms' tails
Glimmers green in grassy dales;

Making ocean's phosphor-flashes
Glow as if they were sun-ashes.

Then the moon comes up the hill,
Wide awake, but dreaming still,
Soft and slow, as if in fear
Lest her path should not be clear.
Like a timid lady she
Looks around her daintily,
Begs the clouds to come about her,
Tells the stars to shine without her,
Then unveils, and, bolder grown,
Climbs the steps of her blue throne:
Stately in a calm delight,
Mistress of a whole fair night,
Lonely but for stars a few,
There she sits in silence blue,
And the world before her lies
Faint, a round shade in the skies!

But what fun is all about
When the humans are shut out!
Shadowy to the moon, the earth
Is a very world of mirth!
Night is then a dream opaque
Full of creatures wide awake!
Noiseless then, on feet or wings,
Out they come, all moon-eyed things!
In and out they pop and play,
Have it all their own wild way,
Fly and frolic, scamper, glow;
Treat the moon, for all her show,
State, and opal diadem,
Like a nursemaid watching them.
And the nightingale doth snare
All the merry tumult rare,
All the music and the magic,
All the comic and the tragic,
All the wisdom and the riot
Of the midnight moonlight diet,
In a diamond hoop of song,
Which he trundles all night long.

What doth make the sun, you ask,
Able for such mighty task?
He is not a lamp hung high
Sliding up and down the sky,
He is carried in a hand:
That's what makes him strong and grand!
From that hand comes all his power;
If it set him down one hour,
Yea, one moment set him by,
In that moment he would die,
And the winter, ice, and snow
Come on us, and never go.

Need I tell you whose the hand
Bears him high o'er sea and land?

George MacDonald

What Man Is There Of You?

The homely words how often read!
How seldom fully known!
'Which father of you, asked for bread,
Would give his son a stone?'

How oft has bitter tear been shed,
And heaved how many a groan,
Because thou wouldst not give for bread
The thing that was a stone!

How oft the child thou wouldst have fed,
Thy gift away has thrown!
He prayed, thou heard'st, and gav'st the bread:
He cried, 'It is a stone!'

Lord, if I ask in doubt and dread
Lest I be left to moan,
Am I not he who, asked for bread,
Would give his son a stone?

George MacDonald

What The Auld Fowk Are Thinkin

The bairns i' their beds, worn oot wi' nae wark,
Are sleepin, nor ever an eelid winkin;
The auld fowk lie still wi' their een starin stark,
An' the mirk pang-fou o' the things they are thinkin.

Whan oot o' ilk corner the bairnies they keek,
Lauchin an' daffin, airms loosin an' linkin,
The auld fowk they watch frae the warm ingle-cheek,
But the bairns little think what the auld fowk are thinkin.

Whan the auld fowk sit quaiet at the reet o' a stook,
I' the sunlicht their washt een blinterin an' blinkin,
Fowk scythin, or bin'in, or shearin wi' heuk
Carena a strae what the auld fowk are thinkin.

At the kirk, whan the minister's dreich an' dry,
His fardens as gien they war gowd guineas chinkin,
An' the young fowk are noddin, or fidgetin sly,
Naebody kens what the auld fowk are thinkin.

Whan the young fowk are greitin about the bed
Whaur like water throu san' the auld life is sinkin,
An' some wud say the last word was said,
The auld fowk smile, an' ken what they're thinkin

George MacDonald

What The Lord Saith

Trust my father, saith the eldest-born;
I did trust him ere the earth began;
Not to know him is to be forlorn;
Not to love him is-not to be man.

He that knows him loves him altogether;
With my father I am so content
That through all this dreary human weather
I am working, waiting, confident.

He is with me; I am not alone;
Life is bliss, because I am his child;
Down in Hades will I lay the stone
Whence shall rise to Heaven his city piled.

Hearken, brothers, pray you, to my story!
Hear me, sister; hearken, child, to me:
Our one father is a perfect glory;
He is light, and there is none but he.

Come then with me; I will lead the way;
All of you, sore-hearted, heavy-shod,
Come to father, yours and mine, I pray;
Little ones, I pray you, come to God

George MacDonald

When The Storm Was Proudest

When the storm was proudest,
And the wind was loudest,
I heard the hollow caverns drinking down below;
When the stars were bright,
And the ground was white,
I heard the grasses springing underneath the snow.

Many voices spake-
The river to the lake,
And the iron-ribbed sky was talking to the sea;
And every starry spark
Made music with the dark,
And said how bright and beautiful everything must be.

When the sun was setting,
All the clouds were getting
Beautiful and silvery in the rising moon;
Beneath the leafless trees
Wrangling in the breeze,
I could hardly see them for the leaves of June.

When the day had ended,
And the night descended,
I heard the sound of streams that I heard not through the day,
And every peak afar
Was ready for a star,
And they climbed and rolled around until the morning gray.

Then slumber soft and holy
Came down upon me slowly,
And I went I know not whither, and I lived I know not how;
My glory had been banished,
For when I woke it vanished;
But I waited on its coming, and I am waiting now.

George MacDonald

Who Lights The Fire?

Who lights the fire-that forth so gracefully
And freely frolicketh the fairy smoke?
Some pretty one who never felt the yoke-
Glad girl, or maiden more sedate than she.

Pedant it cannot, villain cannot be!
Some genius, may-be, his own symbol woke;
But puritan, nor rogue in virtue's cloke,
Nor kitchen-maid has done it certainly!

Ha, ha! you cannot find the lighter out
For all the blue smoke's pantomimic gesture-
His name or nature, sex or age or vesture!
The fire was lit by human care, no doubt-
But now the smoke is Nature's tributary,
Dancing 'twixt man and nothing like a fairy.

George MacDonald

Who Would Have Thought?

Who would have thought that even an idle song
Were such a holy and celestial thing
That wickedness and envy cannot sing-
That music for no moment lives with wrong?
I know this, for a very grievous throng,
Dark thoughts, low wishes, round my bosom cling,
And, underneath, the hidden holy spring
Stagnates because of their enchantment strong.

Blow, breath of heaven, on all this poison blow!
And, heart, glow upward to this gracious breath!
Between them, vanish, mist of sin and death,
And let the life of life within me flow!
Love is the green earth, the celestial air,
And music runs like dews and rivers there!

George MacDonald

Wild Flowers

Content Primroses,
With hearts at rest in your thick leaves' soft care,
Peeping as from his mother's lap the child
Who courts shy shelter from his own open air!-
Hanging Harebell,
Whose blue heaven to no wanderer ever closes,
Though thou still lookest earthward from thy domed cell!-
Fluttering-wild
Anemone, so well
Named of the Wind, to whom thou, fettered-free,
Yieldest thee, helpless-wilfully,
With
Take me or leave me,
Sweet Wind, I am thine own Anemone
!-
Thirsty Arum, ever dreaming
Of lakes in wildernesses gleaming!-
Fire-winged Pimpernel,
Communing with some hidden well,
And secrets with the sun-god holding,
At fixed hour folding and unfolding!-
How is it with you, children all,
When human children on you fall,
Gather you in eager haste,
Spoil your plenty with their waste-
Fill and fill their dropping hands?
Feel you hurtfully disgraced
By their injurious demands?
Do you know them from afar,
Shuddering at their merry hum,
Growing faint as near they come?
Blind and deaf they think you are-
Is it only ye are dumb?
You alive at least, I think,
Trembling almost on the brink
Of our lonely consciousness:
If it be so,
Take this comfort for your woe,
For the breaking of your rest,

For the tearing in your breast,
For the blotting of the sun,
For the death too soon begun,
For all else beyond redress-
Or what seemeth so to be-
That the children's wonder-springs
Bubble high at sight of you,
Lovely, lowly, common things:
In you more than you they see!
Take this too-that, walking out,
Looking fearlessly about,
Ye rebuke our manhood's doubt,
And our childhood's faith renew;
So that we, with old age nigh,
Seeing you alive and well
Out of winter's crucible,
Hearing you, from graveyard crept,
Tell us that ye only slept-
Think we die not, though we die.

Thus ye die not, though ye die-
Only yield your being up,
Like a nectar-holding cup:
Deaf, ye give to them that hear,
With a greatness lovely-dear;
Blind, ye give to them that see-
Poor, but bounteous royally.
Lowly servants to the higher,
Burning upwards in the fire
Of Nature's endless sacrifice,
In great Life's ascent ye rise,
Leave the lowly earth behind,
Pass into the human mind,
Pass with it up into God,
Whence ye came though through the clod-
Pass, and find yourselves at home
Where but life can go and come;
Where all life is in its nest,
At loving one with holy Best;-
Who knows?-with shadowy, dawning sense
Of a past, age-long somnolence!

Willie's Question

I.

Willie speaks.

Is it wrong, the wish to be great,
For I do wish it so?
I have asked already my sister Kate;
She says she does not know.

Yestereve at the gate I stood
Watching the sun in the west;
When I saw him look so grand and good
It swelled up in my breast.

Next from the rising moon
It stole like a silver dart;
In the night when the wind began his tune
It woke with a sudden start.

This morning a trumpet blast
Made all the cottage quake;
It came so sudden and shook so fast
It blew me wide awake.

It told me I must make haste,
And some great glory win,
For every day was running to waste,
And at once I must begin.

I want to be great and strong,
I want to begin to-day;
But if you think it very wrong
I will send the wish away.

II.

The Father answers.

Wrong to wish to be great?
No, Willie; it is not wrong:
The child who stands at the high closed gate
Must wish to be tall and strong!

If you did not wish to grow
I should be a sorry man;
I should think my boy was dull and slow,
Nor worthy of his clan.

You are bound to be great, my boy:
Wish, and get up, and do.
Were you content to be little, my joy
Would be little enough in you.

Willie speaks.

Papa, papa! I'm so glad
That what I wish is right!
I will not lose a chance to be had;
I'll begin this very night.

I will work so hard at school!
I will waste no time in play;
At my fingers' ends I'll have every rule,
For knowledge is power, they say.

I
would
be a king and reign,
But I can't be that, and so
Field-marshal I'll be, I think, and gain
Sharp battles and sieges slow.

I shall gallop and shout and call,
Waving my shining sword:
Artillery, cavalry, infantry, all
Hear and obey my word.

Or admiral I will be,
Wherever the salt wave runs,
Sailing, fighting over the sea,
With flashing and roaring guns.

I will make myself hardy and strong;
I will never, never give in.

I
am
so glad it is not wrong!
At once I will begin.

The Father speaks.

Fighting and shining along,
All for the show of the thing!
Any puppet will mimic the grand and strong
If you pull the proper string!

Willie speaks.

But indeed I want to
be
great,
I should despise mere show;
The thing I want is the glory-state-
Above the rest, you know!

The Father answers.

The harder you run that race,
The farther you tread that track,
The greatness you fancy before your face
Is the farther behind your back.

To be up in the heavens afar,

Miles above all the rest,
Would make a star not the greatest star,
Only the dreariest.

That book on the highest shelf
Is not the greatest book;
If you would be great, it must be in yourself,
Neither by place nor look.

The Highest is not high
By being higher than others;
To greatness you come not a step more high
By getting above your brothers.

III.

Willie speaks.

I meant the boys at school,
I did not mean my brother.
Somebody first, is there the rule-
It must be me or another.

The Father answers.

Oh, Willie, it's all the same!
They are your brothers all;
For when you say, 'Hallowed be thy name!'
Whose Father is it you call?

Could you pray for such rule to
him
?
Do you think that he would hear?
Must he favour one in a greedy whim
Where all are his children dear?

It is right to get up and do,

But why outstrip the rest?
Why should one of the many be one of the few?
Why should
you
think to be best?

Willie speaks.

Then how am I to be great?
I know no other way;
It would be folly to sit and wait,
I must up and do, you say!

The Father answers.

I do not want you to wait,
For few before they die
Have got so far as begin to be great,
The lesson is so high.

I will tell you the only plan
To climb and not to fall:
He who would rise and be greater than
He is, must be servant of all.

Turn it each way in your mind,
Try every other plan,
You may think yourself great, but at length you'll find
You are not even a man.

Climb to the top of the trees,
Climb to the top of the hill,
Get up on the crown of the sky if you please,
You'll be a small creature still.

Be admiral, poet, or king,
Let praises fill both your ears,
Your soul will be but a windmill thing

Blown round by its hopes and fears.

IV.

Willie speaks.

Then put me in the way,
For you, papa, are a man:
What thing shall I do this very day?-
Only be sure I
can

.

I want to know-I am willing,
Let me at least have a chance!
Shall I give the monkey-boy my shilling?-
I want to serve at once.

The Father answers.

Give all your shillings you might
And hurt your brothers the more;
He only can serve his fellows aright
Who goes in at the little door.

We must do the thing we
must

Before the thing we
may;

We are unfit for any trust
Till we can and do obey.

Willie speaks.

I will try more and more;
I have nothing now to ask;

Obedience

I know is the little door:
Now set me some hard task.

The Father answers.

No, Willie; the father of all,
Teacher and master high,
Has set your task beyond recall,
Nothing can set it by.

Willie speaks.

What is it, father dear,
That he would have me do?
I'd ask himself, but he's not near,
And so I must ask you!

The Father answers.

Me 'tis no use to ask,
I too am one of his boys!
But he tells each boy his own plain task;
Listen, and hear his voice.

Willie speaks.

Father, I'm listening
so

To hear him if I may!

His voice must either be very low,
Or very far away!

The Father answers.

It is neither hard to hear,
Nor hard to understand;
It is very low, but very near,
A still, small, strong command.

Willie answers.

I do not hear it at all;
I am only hearing you!

The Father speaks.

Think: is there nothing, great or small,
You ought to go and do?

Willie answers.

Let me think:-I ought to feed
My rabbits. I went away
In such a hurry this morning! Indeed
They've not had enough to-day!

The Father speaks.

That is his whisper low!
That is his very word!
You had only to stop and listen, and so

Very plainly you heard!

That duty's the little door:
You must open it and go in;
There is nothing else to do before,
There is nowhere else to begin.

Willie speaks.

But that's so easily done!
It's such a trifling affair!
So nearly over as soon as begun.
For that he can hardly care!

The Father answers.

You are turning from his call
If you let that duty wait;
You would not think any duty small
If you yourself were great.

The nearest is at life's core;
With the first, you all begin:
What matter how little the little door
If it only let you in?

V.

Willie speaks.

Papa, I am come again:
It is now three months and more
That I've tried to do the thing that was plain,
And I feel as small as before.

The Father answers.

Your honour comes too slow?
How much then have you done?
One foot on a mole-heap, would you crow
As if you had reached the sun?

Willie speaks.

But I cannot help a doubt
Whether this way be the true:
The more I do to work it out
The more there comes to do;

And yet, were all done and past,
I should feel just as small,
For when I had tried to the very last-
'Twas my duty, after all!

It is only much the same
As not being liar or thief!

The Father answers.

One who tried it found even, with shame,
That of sinners he was the chief!

My boy, I am glad indeed
You have been finding the truth!

Willie speaks.

But where's the good? I shall never speed-
Be one whit greater, in sooth!

If duty itself must fail,
And that be the only plan,
How shall my scarce begun duty prevail
To make me a mighty man?

The Father answers.

Ah, Willie! what if it were
Quite another way to fall?
What if the greatness itself lie there-
In knowing that you are small?

In seeing the good so good
That you feel poor, weak, and low;
And hungrily long for it as for food,
With an endless need to grow?

The man who was lord of fate,
Born in an ox's stall,
Was great because he was much too great
To care about greatness at all.

Ever and only he sought
The will of his Father good;
Never of what was high he thought,
But of what his Father would.

You long to be great; you try;
You feel yourself smaller still:
In the name of God let ambition die;
Let him make you what he will.

Who does the truth, is one
With the living Truth above:
Be God's obedient little son,
Let ambition die in love.

George MacDonald

Win' That 'Blaws

Win' that blaws the simmer plaid
Ower the hie hill's shooters laid,
Green wi' gerse, an' reid wi' heather-
Welcome wi' yer sowl-like weather!
Mony a win' there has been sent
Oot aneth the firmament-
Ilka ane its story has;
Ilka ane began an' was;
Ilka ane fell quaiet an' mute
Whan its angel wark was oot:
First gaed are oot throu the mirk
Whan the maker gan to work;
Ower it gaed an' ower the sea,
An' the warl begud to be.
Mony are has come an' gane
Sin' the time there was but ane:
Ane was grit an' strong, an' rent
Rocks an' muntains as it went
Afore the Lord, his trumpeter,
Waukin up the prophet's ear;
Ane was like a stepping soun
I' the mulberry taps abune-
Them the Lord's ain steps did swing,
Walkin on afore his king;
Ane lay dune like scoldit pup
At his feet, an' gatna up-
Whan the word the Maister spak
Drave the wull-cat billows back;
Ane gaed frae his lips, an' dang
To the yird the sodger thrang;
Ane comes frae his hert to mine
Ilka day to mak it fine.
Breath o' God, eh! come an' blaw
Frae my hert ilk fog awa;
Wauk me up an' mak me strang,
Fill my hert wi' mony a sang,
Frae my lips again to stert
Fillin sails o' mony a hert,
Blawin them ower seas dividin

To the only place to bide in.

George MacDonald

Winter Song

They were parted then at last?
Was it duty, or force, or fate?
Or did a worldly blast
Blow-to the meeting-gate?

An old, short story is this!
A glance, a trembling, a sigh,
A gaze in the eyes, a kiss-
Why will it not go by!

George MacDonald

Within And Without: Part I: A Dramatic Poem

What life it is, and how that all these lives do gather-
With outward maker's force, or like an inward father.

Sir Philip Sidney's
Arcadia

To L.P.M.D.

Receive thine own; for I and it are thine.
Thou know'st its story; how for forty days-
Weary with sickness and with social haze,
(After thy hands and lips with love divine
Had somewhat soothed me, made the glory shine,
Though with a watery lustre,) more delays
Of blessedness forbid-I took my ways
Into a solitude, Invention's mine;
There thought and wrote, afar, and yet with thee.
Those days gone past, I came, and brought a book;
My child, developed since in limb and look.
It came in shining vapours from the sea,
And in thy stead sung low sweet songs to me,
When the red life-blood labour would not brook.

May 1855

Part I

Go thou into thy closet; shut thy door;
And pray to Him in secret: He will hear.
But think not thou, by one wild bound, to clear
The numberless ascensions, more and more,
Of starry stairs that must be climbed, before
Thou comest to the Father's likeness near,
And bendest down to kiss the feet so dear
That, step by step, their mounting flights passed o'er.
Be thou content if on thy weary need
There falls a sense of showers and of the spring;

A hope that makes it possible to fling
Sickness aside, and go and do the deed;
For highest aspiration will not lead
Unto the calm beyond all questioning.

SCENE I.-

A cell in a convent

. JULIAN

alone

.

Julian

.

Evening again slow creeping like a death!
And the red sunbeams fading from the wall,
On which they flung a sky, with streaks and bars
Of the poor window-pane that let them in,
For clouds and shadings of the mimic heaven!
Soul of my cell, they part, no more to come.
But what is light to me, while I am dark!
And yet they strangely draw me, those faint hues,
Reflected flushes from the Evening's face,
Which as a bride, with glowing arms outstretched,
Takes to her blushing heaven him who has left
His chamber in the dim deserted east.
Through walls and hills I see it! The rosy sea!
The radiant head half-sunk! A pool of light,
As the blue globe had by a blow been broken,
And the insphered glory bubbled forth!
Or the sun were a splendid water-bird,
That flying furrowed with its golden feet
A flashing wake over the waves, and home!
Lo there!-Alas, the dull blank wall!-High up,
The window-pane a dead gray eye! and night
Come on me like a thief!-Ah, well! the sun
Has always made me sad! I'll go and pray:
The terror of the night begins with prayer.

(

Vesper bell

.)

Call them that need thee; I need not thy summons;
My knees would not so pain me when I kneel,
If only at thy voice my prayer awoke.
I will not to the chapel. When I find Him,
Then will I praise him from the heights of peace;
But now my soul is as a speck of life
Cast on the deserts of eternity;
A hungering and a thirsting, nothing more.
I am as a child new-born, its mother dead,
Its father far away beyond the seas.
Blindly I stretch my arms and seek for him:
He goeth by me, and I see him not.
I cry to him: as if I sprinkled ashes,
My prayers fall back in dust upon my soul.

(
Choir and organ-music
.)

I bless you, sweet sounds, for your visiting.
What friends I have! Prismatic harmonies
Have just departed in the sun's bright coach,
And fair, convolved sounds troop in to me,
Stealing my soul with faint deliciousness.
Would they took shapes! What levees I should hold!
How should my cell be filled with wavering forms!
Louder they grow, each swelling higher, higher;
Trembling and hesitating to float off,
As bright air-bubbles linger, that a boy
Blows, with their interchanging, wood-dove-hues,
Just throbbing to their flight, like them to die.
-Gone now! Gone to the Hades of dead loves!
Is it for this that I have left the world?-
Left what, poor fool? Is this, then, all that comes
Of that night when the closing door fell dumb
On music and on voices, and I went
Forth from the ordered tumult of the dance,
Under the clear cope of the moonless night,
Wandering away without the city-walls,
Between the silent meadows and the stars,
Till something woke in me, and moved my spirit,
And of themselves my thoughts turned toward God;
When straight within my soul I felt as if

An eye was opened; but I knew not whether
'Twas I that saw, or God that looked on me?
It closed again, and darkness fell; but not
To hide the memory; that, in many failings
Of spirit and of purpose, still returned;
And I came here at last to search for God.
Would I could find him! Oh, what quiet content
Would then absorb my heart, yet leave it free!

A knock at the door. Enter Brother ROBERT with a light

.

Robert

.

Head in your hands as usual! You will fret
Your life out, sitting moping in the dark.
Come, it is supper-time.

Julian

.

I will not sup to-night.

Robert

.

Not sup? You'll never live to be a saint.

Julian

.

A saint! The devil has me by the heel.

Robert

.

So has he all saints; as a boy his kite,
Which ever struggles higher for his hold.
It is a silly devil to gripe so hard;-
He should let go his hold, and then he has you.

If you'll not come, I'll leave the light with you.
Hark to the chorus! Brother Stephen sings.

Chorus.

Always merry, and never drunk.
That's the life of the jolly monk

.

SONG.

They say the first monks were lonely men,
Praying each in his lonely den,
Rising up to kneel again,
Each a skinny male Magdalene,
Peeping scared from out his hole
Like a burrowing rabbit or a mole;
But years ring changes as they roll-

Cho.

Now always merry, &c

.

When the moon gets up with her big round face,
Like Mistress Poll's in the market-place,
Down to the village below we pace;-
We know a supper that wants a grace:
Past the curtsyng women we go,
Past the smithy, all a glow,
To the snug little houses at top of the row-

Cho.

For always merry, &c

.

And there we find, among the ale,
The fragments of a floating tale:
To piece them together we never fail;
And we fit them rightly, I'll go bail.
And so we have them all in hand,
The lads and lasses throughout the land,
And we are the masters,-you understand?

Cho.

So always merry, &c

.

Last night we had such a game of play
With the nephews and nieces over the way,
All for the gold that belonged to the clay
That lies in lead till the judgment-day!
The old man's soul they'd leave in the lurch,
But we saved her share for old Mamma Church.
How they eyed the bag as they stood in the porch!

Cho.

Oh! always merry, and never drunk.

That's the life of the jolly monk!

Robert

.

The song is hardly to your taste, I see!

Where shall I set the light?

Julian

.

I do not need it.

Robert

.

Come, come! The dark is a hot-bed for fancies.

I wish you were at table, were it only

To stop the talking of the men about you.

You in the dark are talked of in the light.

Julian

.

Well, brother, let them talk; it hurts not me.

Robert

.

No; but it hurts your friend to hear them say,
You would be thought a saint without the trouble;
You do no penance that they can discover.
You keep shut up, say some, eating your heart,
Possessed with a bad conscience, the worst demon.
You are a prince, say others, hiding here,
Till circumstance that bound you, set you free.
To-night, there are some whispers of a lady
That would refuse your love.

Julian

.

Ay! What of her?

Robert

.

I heard no more than so; and that you came
To seek the next best service you could find:
Turned from the lady's door, and knocked at God's.

Julian

.

One part at least is true: I knock at God's;
He has not yet been pleased to let me in.
As for the lady-that is-so far true,
But matters little. Had I less to think,
This talking might annoy me; as it is,
Why, let the wind set there, if it pleases it;
I keep in-doors.

Robert

.

Gloomy as usual, brother!
Brooding on fancy's eggs. God did not send
The light that all day long gladdened the earth,
Flashed from the snowy peak, and on the spire
Transformed the weathercock into a star,
That you should gloom within stone walls all day.

At dawn to-morrow, take your staff, and come:
We will salute the breezes, as they rise
And leave their lofty beds, laden with odours
Of melting snow, and fresh damp earth, and moss-
Imprisoned spirits, which life-waking Spring
Lets forth in vapour through the genial air.
Come, we will see the sunrise; watch the light
Leap from his chariot on the loftiest peak,
And thence descend triumphant, step by step,
The stairway of the hills. Free air and action
Will soon dispel these vapours of the brain.

Julian

.
My friend, if one should tell a homeless boy,
'There is your father's house: go in and rest;'
Through every open room the child would pass,
Timidly looking for the friendly eye;
Fearing to touch, scarce daring even to wonder
At what he saw, until he found his sire;
But gathered to his bosom, straight he is
The heir of all; he knows it 'mid his tears.
And so with me: not having seen Him yet,
The light rests on me with a heaviness;
All beauty wears to me a doubtful look;
A voice is in the wind I do not know;
A meaning on the face of the high hills
Whose utterance I cannot comprehend.
A something is behind them: that is God.
These are his words, I doubt not, language strange;
These are the expressions of his shining thoughts;
And he is present, but I find him not.
I have not yet been held close to his heart.
Once in his inner room, and by his eyes
Acknowledged, I shall find my home in these,
'Mid sights familiar as a mother's smiles,
And sounds that never lose love's mystery.
Then they will comfort me. Lead me to Him.

Robert

(pointing to the Crucifix in a recess). See, there
is God revealed in human form!

Julian

(kneeling and crossing).

Alas, my friend!-revealed-but as in nature:

I see the man; I cannot find the God.

I know his voice is in the wind, his presence

Is in the Christ. The wind blows where it listeth;

And there stands Manhood: and the God is there,

Not here, not here!

(Pointing to his bosom.)

[

Seeing Robert's bewildered look, and changing his tone

-]

You do not understand me.

Without my need, you cannot know my want.

You will all night be puzzling to determine

With which of the old heretics to class me.

But you are honest; will not rouse the cry

Against me. I am honest. For the proof,

Such as will satisfy a monk, look here!

Is this a smooth belt, brother? And look here!

Did one week's scourging seam my side like that?

I am ashamed to speak thus, and to show

Things rightly hidden; but in my heart I love you,

And cannot bear but you should think me true.

Let it excuse my foolishness. They talk

Of penance! Let them talk when they have tried,

And found it has not even unbarred heaven's gate,

Let out one stray beam of its living light,

Or humbled that proud

I

that knows not God!

You are my friend:-if you should find this cell

Empty some morning, do not be afraid

That any ill has happened.

Robert

.

Well, perhaps

'Twere better you should go. I cannot help you,

But I can keep your secret. God be with you.

Goes

.

Julian

.

Amen.-A good man; but he has not waked,

And seen the Sphinx's stony eyes fixed on him.

God veils it. He believes in Christ, he thinks;

And so he does, as possible for him.

How he will wonder when he looks for heaven!

He thinks me an enthusiast, because

I seek to know God, and to hear his voice

Talk to my heart in silence; as of old

The Hebrew king, when, still, upon his bed,

He lay communing with his heart; and God

With strength in his soul did strengthen him, until

In his light he saw light. God speaks to men.

My soul leans toward him; stretches forth its arms,

And waits expectant. Speak to me, my God;

And let me know the living Father cares

For me, even me; for this one of his children.-

Hast thou no word for me? I am thy thought.

God, let thy mighty heart beat into mine,

And let mine answer as a pulse to thine.

See, I am low; yea, very low; but thou

Art high, and thou canst lift me up to thee.

I am a child, a fool before thee, God;

But thou hast made my weakness as my strength.

I am an emptiness for thee to fill;

My soul, a cavern for thy sea. I lie

Diffused, abandoning myself to thee....

-I will look up, if life should fail in looking.

Ah me! A stream cut from my parent-spring!

Ah me! A life lost from its father-life!

SCENE II.-

The refectory. The monks at table. A buzz of conversation.

ROBERT enters, wiping his forehead, as if he had just come in

.

Stephen

(speaking across the table).

You see, my friend, it will not stand to logic;

Or, if you like it better, stand to reason;

For in this doctrine is involved a

cause

Which for its very being doth depend

Upon its own

effect

. For, don't you see,

He tells me to have faith and I shall live!

Have faith for what? Why, plainly, that I shall

Be saved from hell by him, and ta'en to heaven;

What is salvation else? If I believe,

Then he will save me! But, so, this his

will

Has no existence till that I believe;

And there is nothing for my faith to rest on,

No object for belief. How can I trust

In that which is not? Send the salad, Cosmo.

Besides, 'twould be a plenary indulgence;

To all intents save one, most plenary-

And that the Church's coffer. 'Tis absurd.

Monk

.

'Tis most absurd, as you have clearly shown.

And yet I fear some of us have been nibbling

At this same heresy. 'Twere well that one

Should find it poison. I have no pique at him-

But there's that Julian!-

Stephen

.

Hush! speak lower, friend.

Two Monks

farther down the table-in a low tone.

1st Monk

.

Where did you find her?

2nd Monk

.

She was taken ill

At the Star-in-the-East. I chanced to pass that way,

And so they called me in. I found her dying.

But ere she would confess and make her peace,

She begged to know if I had ever seen,

About this neighbourhood, a tall dark man,

Moody and silent, with a little stoop

As if his eyes were heavy for his shoulders,

And a strange look of mingled youth and age,-

1st Monk

.

Julian, by-

2nd Monk

.

'St-no names! I had not seen him.

I saw the death-mist gathering in her eyes,

And urged her to proceed; and she began;

But went not far before delirium came,

With endless repetitions, hurryings forward,

Recoverings like a hound at fault. The past

Was running riot in her conquered brain;
And there, with doors thrown wide, a motley group
Held carnival; went freely out and in,
Meeting and jostling. But withal it seemed
As some confused tragedy went on;
Till suddenly the light sank, and the pageant
Was lost in darkness; the chambers of her brain
Lay desolate and silent. I can gather
So much, and little more:-This Julian
Is one of some distinction; probably rich,
And titled Count. He had a love-affair,
In good-boy, layman fashion, seemingly.-
Give me the woman; love is troublesome!-
She loved him too, but falsehood came between,
And used this woman for her minister;
Who never would have peached, but for a witness
Hidden behind some curtain in her heart-
An unsuspected witness called Sir Conscience,
Who has appeared and blabbed-but must conclude
His story to some double-ghostly father,
For she is ghostly penitent by this.
Our consciences will play us no such tricks;
They are the Church's, not our own. We must
Keep this small matter secret. If it should
Come to his ears, he'll soon bid us good-bye-
A lady's love before ten heavenly crowns!
And so the world will have the benefit
Of the said wealth of his, if such there be.
I have told you, old Godfrey; I tell none else
Until our Abbot comes.

1st Monk

.

That is to-morrow.

Another group near the bottom of the table, in which
is
ROBERT.

1st Monk

.
'Tis very clear there's something wrong with him.
Have you not marked that look, half scorn, half pity,
Which passes like a thought across his face,
When he has listened, seeming scarce to listen,
A while to our discourse?-he never joins.

2nd Monk

.
I know quite well. I stood beside him once,
Some of the brethren near; Stephen was talking:
He chanced to say the words,
Our Holy Faith

.
'Their faith indeed, poor fools!' fell from his lips,
Half-muttered, and half-whispered, as the words
Had wandered forth unbidden. I am sure
He is an atheist at the least.

3rd Monk

(pale-faced and large-eyed).

And I

Fear he is something worse. I had a trance
In which the devil tempted me: the shape
Was Julian's to the very finger-nails.

Non nobis, Domine

! I overcame.

I am sure of one thing-music tortures him:

I saw him once, amid the

Gloria Patri

,
When the whole chapel trembled in the sound,
Rise slowly as in ecstasy of pain,
And stretch his arms abroad, and clasp his hands,
Then slowly, faintingly, sink on his knees.

2nd Monk

.
He does not know his rubric; stands when others
Are kneeling round him. I have seen him twice
With his missal upside down.

4th Monk

(plethoric and husky).

He blew his nose

Quite loud on last Annunciation-day,

And choked our Lady's name in the Abbot's throat.

Robert

.
When he returns, we must complain; and beg
He'll take such measures as the case requires.

SCENE III.-Julian's cell. An open chest. The lantern on a stool,
its candle nearly burnt out. JULIAN lying on his bed, looking at
the light.

Julian

.
And so all growth that is not toward God
Is growing to decay. All increase gained
Is but an ugly, earthy, fungous growth.
'Tis aspiration as that wick aspires,
Towering above the light it overcomes,
But ever sinking with the dying flame.
O let me
live
, if but a daisy's life!
No toadstool life-in-death, no efflorescence!
Wherefore wilt thou not hear me, Lord of me?
Have I no claim on thee? True, I have none
That springs from me, but much that springs from thee.
Hast thou not made me? Liv'st thou not in me?
I have done naught for thee, am but a want;
But thou who art rich in giving, canst give claims;
And this same need of thee which thou hast given,
Is a strong claim on thee to give thyself,

And makes me bold to rise and come to thee.
Through all my sinning thou hast not recalled
This witness of thy fatherhood, to plead
For thee with me, and for thy child with thee.

Last night, as now, I seemed to speak with him;
Or was it but my heart that spoke for him?
'Thou mak'st me long,' I said, 'therefore wilt give;
My longing is thy promise, O my God!
If, having sinned, I thus have lost the claim,
Why doth the longing yet remain with me,
And make me bold thus to besiege thy doors?'
Methought I heard for answer: 'Question on.
Hold fast thy need; it is the bond that holds
Thy being yet to mine. I give it thee,
A hungering and a fainting and a pain,
Yet a God-blessing. Thou art not quite dead
While this pain lives in thee. I bless thee with it.
Better to live in pain than die that death.'

So I will live, and nourish this my pain;
For oft it giveth birth unto a hope
That makes me strong in prayer. He knows it too.
Softly I'll walk the earth; for it is his,
Not mine to revel in. Content I wait.
A still small voice I cannot but believe,
Says on within: God
will
reveal himself.

I must go from this place. I cannot rest.
It boots not staying. A desire like thirst
Awakes within me, or a new child-heart,
To be abroad on the mysterious earth,
Out with the moon in all the blowing winds.

'Tis strange that dreams of her should come again.
For many months I had not seen her form,
Save phantom-like on dim hills of the past,
Until I laid me down an hour ago;
When twice through the dark chamber full of eyes,
The memory passed, re clothed in verity:

Once more I now behold it; the inward blaze
Of the glad windows half quenched in the moon;
The trees that, drooping, murmured to the wind,
'Ah! wake me not,' which left them to their sleep,
All save the poplar: it was full of joy,
So that it could not sleep, but trembled on.
Sudden as Aphrodite from the sea,
She issued radiant from the pearly night.
It took me half with fear-the glimmer and gleam
Of her white festal garments, haloed round
With denser moonbeams. On she came-and there
I am bewildered. Something I remember
Of thoughts that choked the passages of sound,
Hurrying forth without their pilot-words;
Of agony, as when a spirit seeks
In vain to hold communion with a man;
A hand that would and would not stay in mine;
A gleaming of white garments far away;
And then I know not what. The moon was low,
When from the earth I rose; my hair was wet,
Dripping with dew-

Enter

ROBERT cautiously.

Why, how now, Robert?

[
Rising on his elbow

.]

Robert (glancing at the chest).

I see; that's well. Are
you nearly ready?

Julian

.

Why? What's the matter?

Robert

.
You must go this night,
If you would go at all.

Julian

.
Why must I go?
[
Rises
.]
Robert (turning over the things in the chest).
Here, put
this coat on. Ah! take that thing too.
No more such head-gear! Have you not a hat,

[
Going to the chest again
.]

Or something for your head? There's such a hubbub
Got up about you! The Abbot comes to-morrow.

Julian

.
Ah, well! I need not ask. I know it all.

Robert

.
No, you do not. Nor is there time to tell you.
Ten minutes more, they will be round to bar
The outer doors; and then-good-bye, poor Julian!

[
JULIAN has been rapidly changing his clothes
.]

Julian

.

Now I am ready, Robert. Thank you, friend.
Farewell! God bless you! We shall meet again.

Robert

.
Farewell, dear friend! Keep far away from this.

[
Goes
.]

[
JULIAN follows him out of the cell, steps along a narrow
passage to a door, which he opens slowly. He goes out,
and closes the door behind him
.]

SCENE IV.-Night. The court of a country-inn. The Abbot,
while
his horse is brought out

.

Abbot

.
Now for a shrine to house this rich Madonna,
Within the holiest of the holy place!
I'll have it made in fashion as a stable,
With porphyry pillars to a marble stall;
And odorous woods, shaved fine like shaken hay,
Shall fill the silver manger for a bed,
Whereon shall lie the ivory Infant carved
By shepherd hands on plains of Bethlehem.
And over him shall bend the Mother mild,
In silken white and coroneted gems.
Glorious! But wherewithal I see not now-
The Mammon of unrighteousness is scant;
Nor know I any nests of money-bees
That could yield half-contentment to my need.
Yet will I trust and hope; for never yet

In journeying through this vale of tears have I
Projected pomp that did not blaze anon.

SCENE V.-After midnight. JULIAN
seated under a tree by the
roadside

Julian

So lies my journey-on into the dark!
Without my will I find myself alive,
And must go forward. Is it God that draws
Magnetic all the souls unto their home,
Travelling, they know not how, but unto God?
It matters little what may come to me
Of outward circumstance, as hunger, thirst,
Social condition, yea, or love or hate;
But what shall

I
be, fifty summers hence?
My life, my being, all that meaneth
me

,
Goes darkling forward into something-what?
O God, thou knowest. It is not my care.
If thou wert less than truth, or less than love,
It were a fearful thing to be and grow
We know not what. My God, take care of me;
Pardon and swathe me in an infinite love,
Pervading and inspiring me, thy child.
And let thy own design in me work on,
Unfolding the ideal man in me;
Which being greater far than I have grown,
I cannot comprehend. I am thine, not mine.
One day, completed unto thine intent,
I shall be able to discourse with thee;
For thy Idea, gifted with a self,
Must be of one with the mind where it sprang,
And fit to talk with thee about thy thoughts.
Lead me, O Father, holding by thy hand;
I ask not whither, for it must be on.

This road will lead me to the hills, I think;
And there I am in safety and at home.

SCENE VI.-The Abbot's room. The Abbot
and one of the
Monks.

Abbot

.
Did she say
Julian
? Did she say the name?

Monk

.
She did.

Abbot

.
What did she call the lady? What?

Monk

.
I could not hear.

Abbot

.
Nor where she lived?

Monk

.
Nor that.
She was too wild for leading where I would.

Abbot

.

So! Send Julian. One thing I need not ask:
You have kept this matter secret?

Monk

.

Yes, my lord.

Abbot

.

Well, go and send him hither.

[Monk

goes

.]

Said I well,

That prayer would burgeon into pomp for me?

That God would hear his own elect who cried?

Now for a shrine, so glowing in the means

That it shall draw the eyes by power of light!

So tender in conceit, that it shall draw

The heart by very strength of delicateness,

And move proud thought to worship!

I must act

With caution now; must win his confidence;

Question him of the secret enemies

That fight against his soul; and lead him thus

To tell me, by degrees, his history.

So shall I find the truth, and lay foundation

For future acts, as circumstance requires.

For if the tale be true that he is rich,

And if--

Re-enter Monk in haste and terror

.

Monk

.
He's gone, my lord! His cell is empty.

Abbot

(starting up).

What! You are crazy! Gone?

His cell is empty?

Monk

.
'Tis true as death, my lord. Witness, these eyes!

Abbot

.
Heaven and hell! It shall not be, I swear!

There is a plot in this! You, sir, have lied!

Some one is in his confidence!-who is it?

Go rouse the convent.

[Monk

goes

.]

He must be followed, found.

Hunt's up, friend Julian! First your heels, old stag!

But by and by your horns, and then your side!

'Tis venison much too good for the world's eating.

I'll go and sift this business to the bran.

Robert and him I have sometimes seen together!-God's

curse! it shall fare ill with any man

That has connived at this, if I detect him.

SCENE VII.-

Afternoon. The mountains

. JULIAN.

Julian

.

Once more I tread thy courts, O God of heaven!
I lay my hand upon a rock, whose peak
Is miles away, and high amid the clouds.
Perchance I touch the mountain whose blue summit,
With the fantastic rock upon its side,
Stops the eye's flight from that high chamber-window
Where, when a boy, I used to sit and gaze
With wondering awe upon the mighty thing,
Terribly calm, alone, self-satisfied,
The
hitherto
of my child-thoughts. Beyond,
A sea might roar around its base. Beyond,
Might be the depths of the unfathomed space,
This the earth's bulwark over the abyss.
Upon its very point I have watched a star
For a few moments crown it with a fire,
As of an incense-offering that blazed
Upon this mighty altar high uplift,
And then float up the pathless waste of heaven.
From the next window I could look abroad
Over a plain unrolled, which God had painted
With trees, and meadow-grass, and a large river,
Where boats went to and fro like water-flies,
In white and green; but still I turned to look
At that one mount, aspiring o'er its fellows:
All here I saw-I knew not what was there.
O love of knowledge and of mystery,
Striving together in the heart of man!
'Tell me, and let me know; explain the thing.'-
Then when the courier-thoughts have circled round:
'Alas! I know it all; its charm is gone!'
But I must hasten; else the sun will set
Before I reach the smoother valley-road.
I wonder if my old nurse lives; or has
Eyes left to know me with. Surely, I think,
Four years of wandering since I left my home,
In sunshine and in snow, in ship and cell,
Must have worn changes in this face of mine
Sufficient to conceal me, if I will.

SCENE VIII.-

A dungeon in the monastery. A ray of the moon on the floor

. ROBERT.

Robert

.
One comfort is, he's far away by this.
Perhaps this comfort is my deepest sin.
Where shall I find a daysman in this strife
Between my heart and holy Church's words?
Is not the law of kindness from God's finger,
Yea, from his heart, on mine? But then we must
Deny ourselves; and impulses must yield,
Be subject to the written law of words;
Impulses made, made strong, that we might have
Within the temple's court live things to bring
And slay upon his altar; that we may,
By this hard penance of the heart and soul,
Become the slaves of Christ.-I have done wrong;
I ought not to have let poor Julian go.
And yet that light upon the floor says, yes-
Christ would have let him go. It seemed a good,
Yes, self-denying deed, to risk my life
That he might be in peace. Still up and down
The balance goes, a good in either scale;
Two angels giving each to each the lie,
And none to part them or decide the question.
But still the
words
come down the heaviest
Upon my conscience as that scale descends;
But that may be because they hurt me more,
Being rough strangers in the feelings' home.
Would God forbid us to do what is right,
Even for his sake? But then Julian's life
Belonged to God, to do with as he pleases!
I am bewildered. 'Tis as God and God
Commanded different things in different tones.
Ah! then, the tones are different: which is likest
God's voice? The one is gentle, loving, kind,
Like Mary singing to her mangled child;

The other like a self-restrained tempest;
Like-ah, alas!-the trumpet on Mount Sinai,
Louder and louder, and the voice of
words

.
O for some light! Would they would kill me! then
I would go up, close up, to God's own throne,
And ask, and beg, and pray to know the truth;
And he would slay this ghastly contradiction.
I should not fear, for he would comfort me,
Because I am perplexed, and long to know.
But this perplexity may be my sin,
And come of pride that will not yield to him!
O for one word from God! his own, and fresh
From him to me! Alas, what shall I do!

George MacDonald

Within And Without: Part Ii: A Dramatic Poem

Hark, hark, a voice amid the quiet intense!
It is thy Duty waiting thee without.
Rise from thy knees in hope, the half of doubt;
A hand doth pull thee-it is Providence;
Open thy door straightway, and get thee hence;
Go forth into the tumult and the shout;
Work, love, with workers, lovers, all about:
Of noise alone is born the inward sense
Of silence; and from action springs alone
The inward knowledge of true love and faith.
Then, weary, go thou back with failing breath,
And in thy chamber make thy prayer and moan:
One day upon
His
bosom, all thine own,
Thou shall lie still, embraced in holy death.

SCENE I.-A room in Julian's castle. JULIAN
and the old
Nurse.

Julian

.
Nembroni? Count Nembroni?-I remember:
A man about my height, but stronger built?
I have seen him at her father's. There was something
I did not like about him:-ah! I know:
He had a way of darting looks at you,
As if he wished to know you, but by stealth.

Nurse

.
The same, my lord. He is the creditor.
The common story is, he sought the daughter,
But sought in vain: the lady would not wed.
'Twas rumoured soon they were in grievous trouble,
Which caused much wonder, for the family
Was always reckoned wealthy. Count Nembroni

Contrived to be the only creditor,
And so imprisoned him.

Julian

.

Where is the lady?

Nurse

.

Down in the town.

Julian

.

But where?

Nurse

.

If you turn left,
When you go through the gate, 'tis the last house
Upon this side the way. An honest couple,
Who once were almost pensioners of hers,
Have given her shelter: still she hopes a home
With distant friends. Alas, poor lady! 'tis
A wretched change for her.

Julian

.

Hm! ah! I see.
What kind of man is this Nembroni, nurse?

Nurse

.

Here he is little known. His title comes
From an estate, they say, beyond the hills.
He looks ungracious: I have seen the children
Run to the doors when he came up the street.

Julian

.

Thank you, nurse; you may go. Stay-one thing more:
Have any of my people seen me?

Nurse

. None

But me, my lord.

Julian

.

And can you keep it secret?-
know you will for my sake. I will trust you.
Bring me some supper; I am tired and faint. [Nurse goes.]
Poor and alone! Such a man has not laid
His plans for nothing further! I will watch him.
Heaven may have brought me hither for her sake.
Poor child! I would protect thee as thy father,
Who cannot help thee. Thou wast not to blame;
My love had no claim on like love from thee.-How
the old tide comes rushing to my heart!

I know not what I can do yet but watch.
I have no hold on him. I cannot go,
Say,
I suspect
; and,
Is it so or not
?
I should but injure them by doing so.
True, I might pay her father's debts; and will,
If Joseph, my old friend, has managed well
During my absence.
I
have not spent much.
But still she'd be in danger from this man,
If not permitted to betray himself;
And I, discovered, could no more protect.

Or if, unseen by her, I yet could haunt
Her footsteps like an angel, not for long
Should I remain unseen of other eyes,
That peer from under cowls-not angel-eyes-
Hunting me out, over the stormy earth.
No; I must watch. I can do nothing better.

SCENE II.-A poor cottage. An old Man
and
Woman
sitting together

.

Man

.

How's the poor lady now?

Woman

.

She's poorly still.

I fancy every day she's growing thinner.

I am sure she's wasting steadily.

Man

.

Has the count

Been here again to-day?

Woman

.

No. And I think

He will not come again. She was so proud

The last time he was here, you would have thought

She was a queen at least.

Man

.

Remember, wife,
What she has been. Trouble like that throws down
The common folk like us all of a heap:
With folks like her, that are high bred and blood,
It sets the mettle up.

Woman

.
All very right;
But take her as she was, she might do worse
Than wed the Count Nembroni.

Man

.
Possible.
But are you sure there is no other man
Stands in his way?

Woman

.
How can I tell? So be,
He should be here to help her. What she'll do
I am sure I do not know. We cannot keep her.
And for her work, she does it far too well
To earn a living by it. Her times are changed-
She should not give herself such prideful airs.

Man

.
Come, come, old wife! you women are so hard
On one another! You speak fair for men,
And make allowances; but when a woman
Crosses your way, you speak the worst of her.
But where is this you're going then to-night?
Do they want me to go as well as you?

Woman

.
Yes, you must go, or else it is no use.
They cannot give the money to me, except
My husband go with me. He told me so.

Man

.
Well, wife, it's worth the going-but to see:
I don't expect a goat to come of it.

SCENE III.-

Kitchen of a small inn

. Host
and
Hostess.

Host

.
That's a queer customer you've got upstairs!
What the deuce is he?

Hostess

.
What is that to us?
He always pays his way, and handsomely.
I wish there were more like him.

Host

.
Has he been
At home all day?

Hostess

.
He has not stirred a foot
Across the threshold. That's his only fault-
He's always in the way.

Host

.

What does he do?

Hostess

.

Paces about the room, or sits at the window.
I sometimes make an errand to the cupboard,
To see what he's about: he looks annoyed,
But does not speak a word.

Host

.

He must be crazed,
Or else in hiding for some scrape or other.

Hostess

.

He has a wild look in his eye sometimes;
But sure he would not sit so much in the dark,
If he were mad, or anything on his conscience;
And though he does not say much, when he speaks
A civiller man ne'er came in woman's way.

Host

.

Oh! he's all right, I warrant. Is the wine come?

SCENE IV.-The inn; a room upstairs. JULIAN
at the window, half
hidden by the curtain

.

Julian

.

With what profusion her white fingers spend

Delicate motions on the insensate cloth!
It was so late this morning ere she came!
I fear she has been ill. She looks so pale!
Her beauty is much less, but she more lovely.
Do I not love her? more than when that beauty
Beamed out like starlight, radiating beyond
The confines of her wondrous face and form,
And animated with a present power
Her garment's folds, even to the very hem!

Ha! there is something now: the old woman drest
In her Sunday clothes, and waiting at the door,
As for her husband. Something will follow this.
And here he comes, all in his best like her.
They will be gone a while. Slowly they walk,
With short steps down the street. Now I must wake
The sleeping hunter-eagle in my eyes!

SCENE V.-A back street. Two Servants
with a carriage and pair

.

1st Serv

.

Heavens, what a cloud! as big as Aetna! There!
That gust blew stormy. Take Juno by the head,
I'll stand by Neptune. Take her head, I say;
We'll have enough to do, if it should lighten.

2nd Serv

.

Such drops! That's the first of it. I declare
She spreads her nostrils and looks wild already,
As if she smelt it coming. I wish we were
Under some roof or other. I fear this business
Is not of the right sort.

1st Serv

.

He looked as black
As if he too had lightning in his bosom.
There! Down, you brute! Mind the pole, Beppo!

SCENE VI.-Julian's room. JULIAN
standing at the window, his face
pressed against a pane. Storm and gathering darkness without
.

Julian
.

Plague on the lamp! 'tis gone-no, there it flares!
I wish the wind would leave or blow it out.
Heavens! how it thunders! This terrific storm
Will either cow or harden him. I'm blind!
That lightning! Oh, let me see again, lest he
Should enter in the dark! I cannot bear
This glimmering longer. Now that gush of rain
Has blotted all my view with crossing lights.
'Tis no use waiting here. I must cross over,
And take my stand in the corner by the door.
But if he comes while I go down the stairs,
And I not see? To make sure, I'll go gently
Up the stair to the landing by her door.

[
He goes quickly toward the door
.]

Hostess
(opening the door and looking in).
If you please, sir-

[
He hurries past
]

The devil's in the man!

SCENE VII.-The landing.

Voice within

.
If you scream, I must muffle you.

Julian

(rushing up the stair).

He

is

there!

His hand is on her mouth! She tries to scream!

[
Flinging the door open, as NEMBRONI springs
forward on the other side
.]

Back!

Nembroni

.
What the devil!-Beggar!

[
Drawing his sword, and making a thrust at JULIAN, which
he parries with his left arm, as, drawing his dagger, he
springs within NEMBRONI'S guard
.]

Julian

(taking him by the throat).

I have faced worse
storms than you.

[
They struggle
.]

Heart point and hilt strung on the line of force,

[
He stabs him
.]

Your ribs will not mail your heart!

[NEMBRONI
falls dead
. JULIAN
wipes his dagger on the
dead man's coat
.]

If men
will
be devils,
They are better in hell than here.

[
Lightning flashes on the blade
.]

What a night
For a soul to go out of doors! God in heaven!

[
Approaches the lady within
.]

Ah! she has fainted. That is well. I hope
It will not pass too soon. It is not far
To the half-hidden door in my own fence,
And that is well. If I step carefully,
Such rain will soon wash out the tell-tale footprints.
What! blood?
He
does not bleed much, I should think!
Oh, I see! it is mine-he has wounded me.
That's awkward now.

[
Takes a handkerchief from the floor by the window
.]

Pardon me, dear lady;

[
Ties the handkerchief with hand and teeth round his arm
.]

'Tis not to save my blood I would defile
Even your handkerchief.

[
Coming towards the door, carrying her
.]

I am pleased to think
Ten monkish months have not ta'en all my strength.

[
Looking out of the window on the landing
.]

For once, thank darkness! 'Twas sent for us, not him.

[
He goes down the stair
]

SCENE VIII.-A room in the castle. JULIAN
and the
Nurse.

Julian

.
Ask me no questions now, my dear old nurse.
You have put your charge to bed?

Nurse

.

Yes, my dear lord.

Julian

.

And has she spoken yet?

Nurse

.

After you left,
Her eyelids half unclosed; she murmured once:

Where am I, mother
?-then she looked at me,
And her eyes wandered over all my face,
Till half in comfort, half in weariness,
They closed again. Bless her, dear soul! she is
As feeble as a child.

Julian

.

Under your care
She'll soon be well again. Let no one know
She is in the house:-blood has been shed for her.

Nurse

.

Alas! I feared it; blood is on her dress.

Julian

.

That's mine, not his. But put it in the fire.
Get her another. I'll leave a purse with you.

Nurse

.
Leave?

Julian

.
Yes. I am off to-night, wandering again
Over the earth and sea. She must not know
I have been here. You must contrive to keep
My share a secret. Once she moved and spoke
When a branch caught me, but she could not see me.
She thought, no doubt, it was Nembroni had her;
Nor would she have known me. You must hide her, nurse.
Let her on no pretense guess where she is,
Nor utter word that might suggest the fact.
When she is well and wishes to be gone,
Then write to this address-but under cover

[
Writing
.]

To the Prince Calboli at Florence. I
Will see to all the rest. But let her know
Her father is set free; assuredly,
Ere you can say it is, it will be so.

Nurse

.
How shall I best conceal her, my good lord?

Julian

.
I have thought of that. There's a deserted room
In the old west wing, at the further end
Of the oak gallery.

Nurse

.

Not deserted quite.

I ventured, when you left, to make it mine,
Because you loved it when a boy, my lord.

Julian

.
You do not know, nurse, why I loved it though:
I found a sliding panel, and a door
Into a room behind. I'll show it you.
You'll find some musty traces of me yet,
When you go in. Now take her to your room,
But get the other ready. Light a fire,
And keep it burning well for several days.
Then, one by one, out of the other rooms,
Take everything to make it comfortable;
Quietly, you know. If you must have your daughter,
Bind her to be as secret as yourself.
Then put her there. I'll let her father know
She is in safety.-I must change attire,
And be far off or ever morning break.

[Nurse
goes
.]

My treasure-room! how little then I thought,
Glad in my secret, one day it would hold
A treasure unto which I dared not come.
Perhaps she'd love me now-a very little!-
But not with even a heavenly gift would I
Go begging love; that should be free as light,
Cleaving unto myself even for myself.
I have enough to brood on, joy to turn
Over and over in my secret heart:-
She lives, and is the better that I live!

Re-enter
Nurse.

Nurse

.

My lord, her mind is wandering; she is raving;
She's in a dreadful fever. We must send
To Arli for the doctor, else her life
Will be in danger.

Julian

(rising disturbed).

Go and fetch your daughter.

Between you, take her to my room, yours now.

I'll see her there. I think you can together!

Nurse

.

O yes, my lord; she is so thin, poor child!

[Nurse

goes

.]

Julian

.

I ought to know the way to treat a fever,
If it be one of twenty. Hers has come
Of low food, wasting, and anxiety.
I've seen enough of that in Prague and Smyrna!

SCENE IX.-The Abbot's room in the monastery. The Abbot.

Abbot

.

'Tis useless all. No trace of him found yet.
One hope remains: that fellow has a head!

Enter

STEPHEN.

Stephen, I have sent for you, because I am told
You said to-day, if I commissioned you,
You'd scent him out, if skulking in his grave.

Stephen

.
I did, my lord.

Abbot

.
How would you do it, Stephen?

Stephen

.
Try one plan till it failed; then try another;
Try half-a-dozen plans at once; keep eyes
And ears wide open, and mouth shut, my lord:
Your bull-dog sometimes makes the best retriever.
I have no plan; but, give me time and money,
I'll find him out.

Abbot

.
Stephen, you're just the man
I have been longing for. Get yourself ready.

SCENE X.-Towards morning. The Nurse's room. LILIA
in bed

.
JULIAN
watching

.
Julian

I think she sleeps. Would God it be so; then
She will do well. What strange things she has spoken!
My heart is beating as if it would spend
Its life in this one night, and beat it out.
And well it may, for there is more of life
In one such moment than in many years!
Pure life is measured by intensity,
Not by the how much of the crawling clock.
Is that a bar of moonlight stretched across
The window-blind? or is it but a band
Of whiter cloth my thrifty dame has sewed
Upon the other?-'Tis the moon herself,
Low in the west. 'Twas such a moon as this-

Lilia

(half-asleep, wildly).
If Julian had been here, you dared not do it!-
Julian! Julian!

[
Half-rising
.]

Julian

(forgetting his caution, and going up to her).
I am here, my Lilia.
Put your head down, my love. 'Twas all a dream,
A terrible dream. Gone now-is it not?

[
She looks at him with wide restless eyes; then sinks back on
the pillow. He leaves her.]

How her dear eyes bewildered looked at me!
But her soul's eyes are closed. If this last long
She'll die before my sight, and Joy will lead
In by the hand her sister, Grief, pale-faced,
And leave her to console my solitude.

Ah, what a joy! I dare not think of it!
And what a grief! I will not think of that!
Love? and from her? my beautiful, my own!
O God, I did not know thou wast so rich
In making and in giving; did not know
The gathered glory of this earth of thine.
What! wilt thou crush me with an infinite joy?
Make me a god by giving? Wilt thou take
Thy centre-thought of living beauty, born
In thee, and send it home to dwell with me?

[
He leans on the wall
.]

Lilia

(softly).
Am I in heaven? There's something makes me glad,
As if I were in heaven! Yes, yes, I am.
I see the flashing of ten thousand glories;
I hear the trembling of a thousand wings,
That vibrate music on the murmuring air!
Each tiny feather-blade crushes its pool
Of circling air to sound, and quivers music!-
What is it, though, that makes me glad like this?
I knew, but cannot find it-I forget.
It must be here-what was it?-Hark! the fall,
The endless going of the stream of life!-
Ah me! I thirst, I thirst,-I am so thirsty!

[
Querulously
.]

[JULIAN gives her drink, supporting her. She looks at him
again, with large wondering eyes.]

Ah! now I know-I was so very thirsty!

[

He lays her down. She is comforted, and falls asleep. He
extinguishes the light, and looks out of the window
.]

Julian

.
The gray earth dawning up, cold, comfortless;
With its obtrusive
I am
written large
Upon its face!

[
Approaches the bed, and gazes on
LILIA
silently with
clasped hands; then returns to the window
.]

She sleeps so peacefully!
O God, I thank thee: thou hast sent her sleep.
Lord, let it sink into her heart and brain.

Enter
Nurse

.
Oh, nurse, I'm glad you're come! She is asleep.
You must be near her when she wakes again.
I think she'll be herself. But do be careful-
Right cautious how you tell her I am here.
Sweet woman-child, may God be in your sleep!

[JULIAN
goes
.]

Nurse

.
Bless her white face, she looks just like my daughter,

That's now a saint in heaven! Just those thin cheeks,
And eyelids hardly closed over her eyes!-
Dream on, poor darling! you are drinking life
From the breast of sleep. And yet I fain would see
Your shutters open, for I then should know
Whether the soul had drawn her curtains back,
To peep at morning from her own bright windows.
Ah! what a joy is ready, waiting her,
To break her fast upon, if her wild dreams
Have but betrayed her secrets honestly!
Will he not give thee love as dear as thine!

SCENE XI.-A hilly road. STEPHEN,
trudging alone, pauses to look
around him

.

Stephen

.

Not a footprint! not a trace that a blood-hound
would nose at! But Stephen shall be acknowledged
good dog and true. If I had him within stick-length-mind
thy head, brother Julian! Thou hast not
hair enough to protect it, and thy tonsure shall not.
Neither shalt thou tarry at Jericho.-It is a poor man
that leaves no trail; and if thou wert poor, I would not
follow thee.

[

Sings

]

Oh, many a hound is stretching out
His two legs or his four,
And the saddled horses stand about
The court and the castle door,
Till out come the baron, jolly and stout,
To hunt the bristly boar!

The emperor, he doth keep a pack

In his antechambers standing,
And up and down the stairs, good lack!
And eke upon the landing:
A straining leash, and a quivering back,
And nostrils and chest expanding!

The devil a hunter long hath been,
Though Doctor Luther said it:
Of his canon-pack he was the dean,
And merrily he led it:
The old one kept them swift and lean
On faith-that's devil's credit!

Each man is a hunter to his trade,
And they follow one another;
But such a hunter never was made
As the monk that hunted his brother!
And the runaway pig, ere its game be played,
Shall be eaten by its mother!

Better hunt a flea in a woolly blanket, than a leg-bail
monk in this wilderness of mountains, forests, and
precipices! But the flea
may
be caught, and so
shall

the monk. I have said it. He is well spotted, with
his silver crown and his uncropped ears. The rascally
heretic! But his vows shall keep him, though he won't
keep his vows. The whining, blubbering idiot! Gave
his plaything, and wants it back!-I wonder whereabouts
I am.

SCENE XII.-The Nurse's room. LILIA
sitting up in bed
. JULIAN

seated by her; an open note in his hand
.

Lilia

.

Tear it up, Julian.

Julian

.

No; I'll treasure it
As the remembrance of a by-gone grief:
I love it well, because it is
not
yours.

Lilia.

Where have you been these long, long years away?
You look much older. You have suffered, Julian!

Julian

.

Since that day, Lilia, I have seen much, thought much,
Suffered a little. When you are quite yourself,
I'll tell you all you want to know about me.

Lilia

.

Do tell me something now. I feel quite strong;
It will not hurt me.

Julian

.

Wait a day or two.
Indeed 'twould weary you to tell you all.

Lilia

.

And I have much to tell you, Julian. I
Have suffered too-not all for my own sake.

[
Recalling something
.]

Oh, what a dream I had! Oh, Julian!-
I don't know when it was. It must have been
Before you brought me here! I am sure it was.

Julian

.
Don't speak about it. Tell me afterwards.
You must keep quiet now. Indeed you must.

Lilia

.
I will obey you, will not speak a word.

Enter Nurse.

Nurse

.
Blessings upon her! she's near well already.
Who would have thought, three days ago, to see
You look so bright! My lord, you have done wonders.

Julian

.
My art has helped a little, I thank God.-
To please me, Lilia, go to sleep a while.

[JULIAN
goes
.]

Lilia

.

Why does he always wear that curious cap?

Nurse

.

I don't know. You must sleep.

Lilia

.

Yes. I forgot.

SCENE XIII.-The Steward's room. JULIAN

and the

Steward.

Papers

on the table, which

JULIAN

has just finished examining

.

Julian

.

Thank you much, Joseph; you have done well for me.

You sent that note privately to my friend?

Steward

.

I did, my lord; and have conveyed the money,

Putting all things in train for his release,

Without appearing in it personally,

Or giving any clue to other hands.

He sent this message by my messenger:

His hearty thanks, and God will bless you for it.

He will be secret. For his daughter, she

Is safe with you as with himself; and so

God bless you both! He will expect to hear

From both of you from England.

Julian

.

Well, again.

What money is remaining in your hands?

Steward

.

Two bags, three hundred each; that's all.

I fear To wake suspicion, if I call in more.

Julian

.

One thing, and I have done: lest a mischance

Befall us, though I do not fear it much-

have been very secret-is that boat

I had before I left, in sailing trim?

Steward

.

I knew it was a favorite with my lord;

I've taken care of it. A month ago,

With my own hands I painted it all fresh,

Fitting new oars and rowlocks. The old sail

I'll have replaced immediately; and then

'Twill be as good as new.

Julian

.

That's excellent.

Well, launch it in the evening. Make it fast

To the stone steps behind my garden study.

Stow in the lockers some sea-stores, and put

The money in the old desk in the study.

Steward

.
I will, my lord. It will be safe enough.

SCENE XIV.-A road near the town.

A
Waggoner. STEPHEN,
in lay
dress, coming up to him

.
Stephen

.
Whose castle's that upon the hill, good fellow?

Waggoner

.
Its present owner's of the Uglia;
They call him Lorenzino.

Stephen

.
Whose is that
Down in the valley?

Waggoner

.
That is Count Lamballa's.

Stephen

.
What is his Christian name?

Waggoner

.
Omfredo. No,

That was his father's; his is Julian.

Stephen

.

Is he at home?

Waggoner

.

No, not for many a day.

His steward, honest man, I know is doubtful

Whether he be alive; and yet his land

Is better farmed than any in the country.

Stephen

.

He is not married, then?

Waggoner

.

No. There's a gossip

Amongst the women-but who would heed their talk!-

That love half-crazed, then drove him out of doors,

To wander here and there, like a bad ghost,

Because a silly wench refused him:-fudge!

Stephen

.

Most probably. I quite agree with you.

Where do you stop?

Waggoner

.

At the first inn we come to;

You'll see it from the bottom of the hill.

There is a better at the other end,

But here the stabling is by far the best.

Stephen

.

I must push on. Four legs can never go
Down-hill so fast as two. Good morning, friend.

Waggoner

.

Good morning, sir.

Stephen

(aside)

I take the further house.

SCENE XV.-The Nurse's room. JULIAN

and

LILIA

standing near the
window

.

Julian

.

But do you really love me, Lilia?

Lilia

.

Why do you make me say it so often, Julian?

You make me say

I love you

, oftener far

Than you say you love me.

Julian

.

To love you seems

So much a thing of mere necessity!
I can refrain from loving you no more
Than keep from waking when the sun shines full
Upon my face.

Lilia

.
And yet I love to say
How, how I love you, Julian!

[
Leans her head on his arm
. JULIAN
winces a little. She
raises her head and looks at him
.]

Did I hurt you?
Would you not have me lean my head on you?

Julian

.
Come on this side, my love; 'tis a slight hurt Not yet quite healed.

Lilia

.
Ah, my poor Julian! How-
I am so sorry!-Oh, I
do
remember!
I saw it all quite plain! It was no dream!
I saw you fighting!-Surely you did not kill him?

Julian

(calmly, but drawing himself up).
I killed him as I would a dog that bit you.

Lilia

(turning pale, and covering her face with her hands.)

Oh, that was dreadful! there is blood on you!

Julian

.

Shall I go, Lilia?

Lilia

.

Oh no, no, no, do not.-

I shall be better presently.

Julian

.

You shrink

As from a murderer!

Lilia

.

Oh no, I love you-

Will never leave you. Pardon me, my Julian;

But blood is terrible.

Julian

(drawing her close to him).

My own sweet Lilia,

'Twas justly shed, for your defense and mine,

As it had been a tiger that I killed.

He had no right to live. Be at peace, darling;

His blood lies not on me, but on himself;

I do not feel its stain upon my conscience.

[A tap at the door.]

Enter Nurse.

Nurse

.

My lord, the steward waits on you below.

[JULIAN

goes

.]

You have been standing till you're faint, my lady!
Lie down a little. There!-I'll fetch you something.

SCENE XVI.-The Steward's room. JULIAN.

The Steward

.

Julian

.

Well, Joseph, that will do. I shall expect
To hear from you soon after my arrival.
Is the boat ready?

Steward

.

Yes, my lord; afloat
Where you directed.

Julian

.

A strange feeling haunts me,
As of some danger near. Unlock it, and cast
The chain around the post. Muffle the oars.

Steward

.
I will, directly.

[
Goes
.]

Julian

.
How shall I manage it?
I have her father's leave, but have not dared
To tell her all; and she must know it first!
She fears me half, even now: what will she think
To see my shaven head? My heart is free-
I know that God absolves mistaken vows.
I looked for help in the high search from those
Who knew the secret place of the Most High.
If I had known, would I have bound myself
Brother to men from whose low, marshy minds
Never a lark springs to salute the day?
The loftiest of them dreamers, and the best
Content with goodness growing like moss on stones!
It cannot be God's will I should be such.
But there was more: they virtually condemned
Me in my quest; would have had me content
To kneel with them around a wayside post,
Nor heed the pointing finger at its top?
It was the dull abode of foolishness:
Not such the house where God would train his children!
My very birth into a world of men
Shows me the school where he would have me learn;
Shows me the place of penance; shows the field
Where I must fight and die victorious,
Or yield and perish. True, I know not how
This will fall out: he must direct my way!
But then for her-she cannot see all this;
Words will not make it plain; and if they would,
The time is shorter than the words would need:
This overshadowing bodes nearing ill.-
It
may

be only vapour, of the heat
Of too much joy engendered; sudden fear
That the fair gladness is too good to live:
The wider prospect from the steep hill's crest,
The deeper to the vale the cliff goes down;
But how will she receive it? Will she think
I have been mocking her? How could I help it?
Her illness and my danger! But, indeed,
So strong was I in truth, I never thought
Her doubts might prove a hindrance in the way.
My love did make her so a part of me,
I never dreamed she might judge otherwise,
Until our talk of yesterday. And now
Her horror at Nembroni's death confirms me:
To wed a monk will seem to her the worst
Of crimes which in a fever one might dream.
I cannot take the truth, and, bodily,
Hold it before her eyes. She is not strong.
She loves me-not as I love her. But always
-There's Robert for an instance-I have loved
A life for what it might become, far more
Than for its present: there's a germ in her
Of something noble, much beyond her now:
Chance gleams betray it, though she knows it not.

This evening must decide it, come what will.

SCENE XVII.-The inn; the room which had been JULIAN'S. STEPHEN,
Host,
and
Hostess.
Wine on the table

.

Stephen

.

Here, my good lady, let me fill your glass;
Then send the bottle on, please, to your husband.

Hostess

.
I thank you, sir; I hope you like the wine;
My husband's choice is praised. I cannot say
I am a judge myself.

Host

.
I'm confident
It needs but to be tasted.

Stephen

(tasting critically, then nodding).
That is wine!
Let me congratulate you, my good sir,
Upon your exquisite judgment!

Host

.
Thank you, sir.

Stephen

(
to the
Hostess).
And so this man, you say, was here until
The night the count was murdered: did he leave
Before or after that?

Hostess

.
I cannot tell;
He left, I know, before it was discovered.
In the middle of the storm, like one possessed,
He rushed into the street, half tumbling me
Headlong down stairs, and never came again.

He had paid his bill that morning, luckily;
So joy go with him! Well, he was an odd one!

Stephen

.

What was he like, fair Hostess?

Hostess

.

Tall and dark,
And with a lowering look about his brows.
He seldom spoke, but, when he did, was civil.
One queer thing was, he always wore his hat,
Indoors as well as out. I dare not say
He murdered Count Nembroni; but it was strange
He always sat at that same window there,
And looked into the street. 'Tis not as if
There were much traffic in the village now;
These are changed times; but I have seen the day-

Stephen

.

Excuse me; you were saying that the man
Sat at the window-

Hostess

.

Yes; even after dark
He would sit on, and never call for lights.
The first night, I brought candles, as of course;
He let me set them on the table, true;
But soon's my back was turned, he put them out.

Stephen

.

Where is the lady?

Hostess

.

That's the strangest thing
Of all the story: she has disappeared,
As well as he. There lay the count, stone-dead,
White as my apron. The whole house was empty,
Just as I told you.

Stephen

.

Has no search been made?

Host

.

The closest search; a thousand pieces offered
For any information that should lead
To the murderer's capture. I believe his brother,
Who is his heir, they say, is still in town,
Seeking in vain for some intelligence.

Stephen

.

'Tis very odd; the oddest thing I've heard
For a long time. Send me a pen and ink;
I have to write some letters.

Hostess

(rising).

Thank you, sir,
For your kind entertainment.

[
Exeunt Host and Hostess
.]

Stephen

.
We've found the badger's hole; we'll draw
him next. He couldn't have gone far with her and not
be seen. My life on it, there are plenty of holes and
corners in the old house over the way. Run off with a
wench! Holy brother Julian! Contemptuous brother
Julian! Stand-by-thyself brother Julian! Run away
with a wench at last! Well, there's a downfall! He'll
be for marrying her on the sly, and away!-I know the
old fox!-for her conscience-sake, probably not for his!
Well, one comfort is, it's damnation and no reprieve.
The ungrateful, atheistical heretic! As if the good old
mother wasn't indulgent enough to the foibles of her
children! The worthy lady has winked so hard at her
dutiful sons, that she's nearly blind with winking. There's
nothing in a little affair with a girl now and then; but to
marry, and knock one's vows on the head! Therein is
displayed a little ancestral fact as to a certain respectable
progenitor, commonly portrayed as the knight of the
cloven foot.

Keep back thy servant

, &c.-Purgatory

couldn't cleanse that; and more, 'twill never have the
chance. Heaven be about us from harm! Amen. I'll
go find the new count. The Church shall have the
castle and estate; Revenge, in the person of the new
count, the body of Julian; and Stephen may as well
have the thousand pieces as not.

SCENE XVIII.-Night. The Nurse's room. LILIA;

to her

JULIAN.

Lilia

.
How changed he is! Yet he looks very noble.

Enter JULIAN.

Julian

.
My Lilia, will you go to England with me?

Lilia

.
Julian, my father!

Julian

.
Not without his leave.
He says, God bless us both.

Lilia

.
Leave him in prison?

Julian

.
No, Lilia; he's at liberty and safe,
And far from this ere now.

Lilia

.
You have done this,
My noble Julian! I will go with you
To sunset, if you will. My father gone!
Julian, there's none to love me now but you.
You
will
love me, Julian?-always?

Julian

.
I but fear
That your heart, Lilia, is not big enough
To hold the love wherewith my heart would fill it.

Lilia

.

I know why you think that; and I deserve it.
But try me, Julian. I was very silly.
I could not help it. I was ill, you know;
Or weak at least. May I ask you, Julian,
How your arm is to-day?

Julian

.

Almost well, child.
Twill leave an ugly scar, though, I'm afraid.

Lilia

.

Never mind that, if it be well again.

Julian

.

I do not mind it; but when I remember
That I am all yours, then I grudge that scratch
Or stain should be upon me-soul, body, yours.
And there are more scars on me now than I
Should like to make you own, without confession.

Lilia

.

My poor, poor Julian! never think of it;

[

Putting her arms round him

.]

I will but love you more. I thought you had
Already told me suffering enough;
But not the half, it seems, of your adventures.

You have been a soldier!

Julian

.

I have fought, my Lilia.

I have been down among the horses' feet;

But strange to tell, and harder to believe,

Arose all sound, unmarked with bruise, or blood

Save what I lifted from the gory ground.

[

Sighing

.]

My wounds are not of such.

[LILIA,

loosening her arms, and drawing back a little with a
kind of shrinking, looks a frightened interrogation

.]

No. Penance, Lilia;

Such penance as the saints of old inflicted

Upon their quivering flesh. Folly, I know;

As a lord would exalt himself, by making

His willing servants into trembling slaves!

Yet I have borne it.

Lilia

(

laying her hand on his arm

).

Ah, alas, my Julian,

You have been guilty!

Julian

.

Not what men call guilty,

Save it be now; now you will think I sin.
Alas, I have sinned! but not in this I sin.-
Lilia, I have been a monk.

Lilia

A monk?

[
Turningpale
.]

I thought-

[
Faltering
.]

Julian,-I thought you said.... did you not say... ?

[
Very pale, brokenly
.]

I thought you said...

[
With an effort
.]

I was to be your wife!

[
Covering her face with her hands, and bursting into tears
.]

Julian

(
speaking low and in pain

).
And so I did.

Lilia

(
hopefully, and looking up
).
Then you've had dispensation?

Julian

.
God has absolved me, though the Church will not.
He knows it was in ignorance I did it.
Rather would he have men to do his will,
Than keep a weight of words upon their souls,
Which they laid there, not graven by his finger.
The vow was made to him-to him I break it.

Lilia

(
weeping bitterly
).
I would... your words were true... but I do know...
It never can... be right to break a vow;
If so, men might be liars every day;
You'd do the same by me, if we were married.

Julian

(
in anguish
).
'Tis ever so. Words are the living things!
There is no spirit-save what's born of words!
Words are the bonds that of two souls make one!
Words the security of heart to heart!

God, make me patient! God, I pray thee, God!

Lilia

(not heeding him).

Besides, we dare not; you would find the dungeon
Gave late repentance; I should weep away
My life within a convent.

Julian

.
Come to England,
To England, Lilia.

Lilia

.
Men would point, and say:

There go the monk and his wife
; if they, in truth,
Called me not by a harder name than that.

Julian

.
There are no monks in England.

Lilia

.
But will that
Make right what's wrong?

Julian

.
Did I say so, my Lilia?
I answered but your last objections thus;
I had a different answer for the first.

Lilia

.

No, no; I cannot, cannot, dare not do it.

Julian

.

Lilia, you will not doubt my love; you cannot.

-I would have told you all before, but thought,

Foolishly, you would feel the same as I;-

I have lived longer, thought more, seen much more;

I would not hurt your body, less your soul,

For all the blessedness your love can give:

For love's sake weigh the weight of what I say.

Think not that

must

be right which you have heard

From infancy-it may--

[Enter the

Steward in haste, pale, breathless, and bleeding

.]

Steward

.

My lord, there's such an uproar in the town!

They call you murderer and heretic.

The officers of justice, with a monk,

And the new Count Nembroni, accompanied

By a fierce mob with torches, howling out

For justice on you, madly cursing you!

They caught a glimpse of me as I returned,

And stones and sticks flew round me like a storm;

But I escaped them, old man as I am,

And was in time to bar the castle-gates.-

Would heaven we had not cast those mounds, and shut

The river from the moat!

[

Distant yells and cries
.]

Escape, my lord!

Julian

(
calmly
).

Will the gates hold them out awhile, my Joseph?

Steward

.
A little while, my lord; but those damned torches!
Oh, for twelve feet of water round the walls!

Julian

.
Leave us, good Joseph; watch them from a window,
And tell us of their progress.

[JOSEPH goes. Sounds approach.]

Farewell, Lilia!

[
Putting his arm round her. She stands like stone
.]

Fear of a coward's name shall not detain me.
My presence would but bring down evil on you,
My heart's beloved; yes, all the ill you fear,
The terrible things that you have imaged out
If you fled with me. They will not hurt you,
If you be not polluted by my presence.

[
Light from without flares on the wall

.]

They've fired the gate.

[

An outburst of mingled cries

.]

Steward

(entering).

They've fired the gate, my lord!

Julian

.

Well, put yourself in safety, my dear Joseph.

You and old Agata tell all the truth,

And they'll forgive you. It will not hurt me;

I shall be safe-you know me-never fear.

Steward

.

God grant it may be so. Farewell, dear lord!

[

Is going

.]

Julian

.

But add, it was in vain; the signorina

Would not consent; therefore I fled alone.

[LILIA

stands as before

.]

Steward

.

Can it be so? Good-bye, good-bye, my master!

[Goes.]

Julian

.

Put your arms round me once, my Lilia.

Not once?-not once at parting?

[

Rushing feet up the stairs, and along the galleries

.]

O God! farewell!

[

He clasps her to his heart; leaves her; pushes back the panel, flings open a door, enters, and closes both behind him

. LILIA

starts suddenly from her fixed bewilderment, and flies after him, but forgets to close the panel

.]

Lilia

.

Julian! Julian!

[

The trampling offset and clamour of voices. The door of the room is flung open. Enter the foremost of the mob

.]

1st

.

I was sure I saw light here! There it is, burning still!

2nd

.
Nobody here? Praise the devil! he minds his
own. Look under the bed, Gian.

3rd

.
Nothing there.

4th

.
Another door! another door! He's in a trap
now, and will soon be in hell! (
Opening the door with
difficulty
.) The devil had better leave him, and make up
the fire at home-he'll be cold by and by. (
Rushes into
the inner room
.) Follow me, boys! [The rest follow.]

Voices from within

.
I have him! I have him! Curse
your claws! Why do you fix them on me, you crab? You
won't pick up the fiend-spawn so easily, I can tell you.
Bring the light there, will you? (
One runs out for the
light
.) A trap! a trap! and a stair, down in the wall!
The hell-faggot's gone! After him, after him, noodles!

[
Sound of descending footsteps. Others rush in with
torches and follow
.]

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^

SCENE XIX.-The river-side. LILIA
seated in the boat
; JULIAN

handing her the bags
.

Julian

.
There! One at a time!-Take care, love; it
is heavy.-
Put them right in the middle, of the boat:
Gold makes good ballast.

[
A loud shout. He steps in and casts the chain loose,
then pushes gently off
.]

Look how the torches gleam
Among the trees. Thank God, we have escaped!

[
He rows swiftly off. The torches come nearer, with
cries of search
.]

(
In a low tone
.) Slip down, my Lilia; lie at full length
In the bottom of the boat; your dress is white,
And would return the torches' glare. I fear
The damp night-air will hurt you, dressed like this.

[
Pulling off his coat, and laying it over her
.]

Now for a strong pull with my muffled oars!
The water mutters Spanish in its sleep.
My beautiful! my bride! my spirit's wife!
God-given, and God-restored! My heart exults,
Hovering about thee, beautiful! my soul!-
Once round the headland, I will set the sail;
The fair wind bloweth right adown the stream.
Dear wind, dear stream, dear stars, dear heart of all,
White angel lying in my little boat!
Strange that my boyhood's skill with sail and helm,
Oft steering safely 'twixt the winding banks,
Should make me rich with womanhood and life!

[The boat rounds the headland, JULIAN singing.]

SONG.

Thou hast been blowing leaves, O wind of strife,
Wan, curled, boat-like leaves, that ran and fled;
Unresting yet, though folded up from life;
Sleepless, though cast among the unwaking dead!
Out to the ocean fleet and float;
Blow, blow my little leaf-like boat.

O wind of strife, to us a wedding wind,
O cover me with kisses of her mouth;
Blow thou our souls together, heart and mind;
To narrowing northern lines, blow from the south!
Out to the ocean fleet and float;
Blow, blow my little leaf-like boat.

Thou hast been blowing many a drifting thing
From circling cove down to the unsheltered sea;
Thou blowest to the sea my blue sail's wing,
Us to a new love-lit futurity:
Out to the ocean fleet and float;
Blow, blow my little leaf-like boat.

George MacDonald

Within And Without: Part Iii: A Dramatic Poem

And weep not, though the Beautiful decay
Within thy heart, as daily in thine eyes;
Thy heart must have its autumn, its pale skies,
Leading, mayhap, to winter's dim dismay.
Yet doubt not. Beauty doth not pass away;
Her form departs not, though her body dies.
Secure beneath the earth the snowdrop lies,
Waiting the spring's young resurrection-day,
Through the kind nurture of the winter cold.
Nor seek thou by vain effort to revive
The summer-time, when roses were alive;
Do thou thy work-be willing to be old:
Thy sorrow is the husk that doth infold
A gorgeous June, for which thou need'st not strive.

Time:

Five years later

.

SCENE I.-Night. London.

A large meanly furnished room; a single
candle on the table; a child asleep in a little crib

. JULIAN

sits by the table, reading in a low voice out of a book. He looks
older, and his hair is lined with grey; his eyes look clearer

.

Julian

.

What is this? let me see; 'tis called The Singer:

'Melchah stood looking on the corpse of his son, and spoke not. At
length he broke the silence and said: 'He hath told his tale to the
Immortals.' Abdiel, the friend of him that was dead, asked him what
he meant by the words. The old man, still regarding the dead body,
spake as follows:-'

'Three years ago, I fell asleep on the summit of the hill Yarib; and there I dreamed a dream. I thought I lay at the foot of a cliff, near the top of a great mountain; for beneath me were the clouds, and above me, the heavens deep and dark. And I heard voices sweet and strong; and I lifted up my eyes, and, Lo! over against me, on a rocky slope, some seated, each on his own crag, some reclining between the fragments, I saw a hundred majestic forms, as of men who had striven and conquered. Then I heard one say: 'What wouldst thou sing unto us, young man?' A youthful voice replied, tremblingly: 'A song which I have made for my singing.' 'Come, then, and I will lead thee to the hole in the rock: enter and sing.' From the assembly came forth one whose countenance was calm unto awfulness; but whose eyes looked in love, mingled with doubt, on the face of a youth whom he led by the hand toward the spot where I lay. The features of the youth I could not discern: either it was the indistinctness of a dream, or I was not permitted to behold them. And, Lo! behind me was a great hole in the rock, narrow at the entrance, but deep and wide within; and when I looked into it, I shuddered; for I thought I saw, far down, the glimmer of a star. The youth entered and vanished. His guide strode back to his seat; and I lay in terror near the mouth of the vast cavern. When I looked up once more, I saw all the men leaning forward, with head aside, as if listening intently to a far-off sound. I likewise listened; but, though much nearer than they, I heard nothing. But I could see their faces change like waters in a windy and half-cloudy day. Sometimes, though I heard nought, it seemed to me as if one sighed and prayed beside me; and once I heard a clang of music triumphant in hope; but I looked up, and, Lo! it was the listeners who stood on their feet and sang. They ceased, sat down, and listened as before. At last one approached me, and I ventured to question him. 'Sir,' I said, 'wilt thou tell me what it means?' And he answered me thus: 'The youth desired to sing to the Immortals. It is a law with us that no one shall sing a song who cannot be the hero of his tale—who cannot live the song that he sings; for what right hath he else to devise great things, and to take holy deeds in his mouth? Therefore he enters the cavern where God weaves the garments of souls; and there he lives in the forms of his own tale; for God gives them being that he may be tried. The sighs which thou didst hear were his longings after his own Ideal; and thou didst hear him praying for the Truth he beheld, but could not reach. We sang, because, in his first great battle, he strove well and overcame. We await the next.' A deep sleep seemed to fall upon me; and when I awoke, I saw the Immortals standing with their

eyes fixed on the mouth of the cavern. I arose and turned toward it likewise. The youth came forth. His face was worn and pale, as that of the dead man before me; but his eyes were open, and tears trembled within them. Yet not the less was it the same face, the face of my son, I tell thee; and in joy and fear I gazed upon him. With a weary step he approached the Immortals. But he who had led him to the cave hastened to meet him, spread forth his arms, and embraced him, and said unto him: 'Thou hast told a noble tale; sing to us now what songs thou wilt.' Therefore said I, as I gazed on my son: 'He hath told his tale to the Immortals.'

[
He puts the book down; meditates awhile; then rises and
walks up and down the room
.]

And so five years have poured their silent streams,
Flowing from fountains in eternity,
Into my soul, which, as an infinite gulf,
Hath swallowed them; whose living caves they feed;
And time to spirit grows, transformed and kept.
And now the day draws nigh when Christ was born;
The day that showed how like to God himself
Man had been made, since God could be revealed
By one that was a man with men, and still
Was one with God the Father; that men might
By drawing nigh to him draw nigh to God,
Who had come near to them in tenderness.
O God! I thank thee for the friendly eye
That oft hath opened on me these five years;
Thank thee for those enlightenings of my spirit
That let me know thy thought was toward me;
Those moments fore-enjoyed from future years,
Telling what converse I should hold with God.
I thank thee for the sorrow and the care,
Through which they gleamed, bright phosphorescent sparks
Crushed from the troubled waters, borne on which
Through mist and dark my soul draws nigh to thee.
Five years ago, I prayed in agony
That thou wouldst speak to me. Thou wouldst not then,
With that close speech I craved so hungrily.
Thy inmost speech is heart embracing heart;

And thou wast all the time instructing me
To know the language of thy inmost speech.
I thought thou didst refuse, when every hour
Thou spakest every word my heart could hear,
Though oft I did not know it was thy voice.
My prayer arose from lonely wastes of soul;
As if a world far-off in depths of space,
Chaotic, had implored that it might shine
Straightway in sunlight as the morning star.
My soul must be more pure ere it could hold
With thee communion. 'Tis the pure in heart
That shall see God. As if a well that lay
Unvisited, till water-weeds had grown
Up from its depths, and woven a thick mass
Over its surface, could give back the sun!
Or, dug from ancient battle-plain, a shield
Could be a mirror to the stars of heaven!
And though I am not yet come near to him,
I know I am more nigh; and am content
To walk a long and weary road to find
My father's house once more. Well may it be
A long and weary-I had wandered far.
My God, I thank thee, thou dost care for me.
I am content, rejoicing to go on,
Even when my home seems very far away;
For over grief, and aching emptiness,
And fading hopes, a higher joy arises.
In cloudiest nights, one lonely spot is bright,
High overhead, through folds and folds of space;
It is the earnest-star of all my heavens;
And tremulous in the deep well of my being
Its image answers, gazing eagerly.

Alas, my Lilia!-But I'll think of Jesus,
Not of thee now; him who hath led my soul
Thus far upon its journey home to God.
By poor attempts to do the things he said,
Faith has been born; free will become a fact;
And love grown strong to enter into his,
And know the spirit that inhabits there.
One day his truth will spring to life in me,
And make me free, as God says 'I am free.'

When I am like him, then my soul will dawn
With the full glory of the God revealed-
Full as to me, though but one beam from him;
The light will shine, for I shall comprehend it:
In his light I shall see light. God can speak,
Yea,
will
speak to me then, and I shall hear.
Not yet like him, how can I hear his words?

[
Stopping by the crib, and bending over the child
.]

My darling child! God's little daughter, drest
In human clothes, that light may thus be clad
In shining, so to reach my human eyes!
Come as a little Christ from heaven to earth,
To call me
father
, that my heart may know
What father means, and turn its eyes to God!
Sometimes I feel, when thou art clinging to me,
How all unfit this heart of mine to have
The guardianship of a bright thing like thee,
Come to entice, allure me back to God
By flitting round me, gleaming of thy home,
And radiating of thy purity
Into my stained heart; which unto thee
Shall ever show the father, answering
The divine childhood dwelling in thine eyes.
O how thou teachest me with thy sweet ways,
All ignorant of wherefore thou art come,
And what thou art to me, my heavenly ward,
Whose eyes have drunk that secret place's light
And pour it forth on me! God bless his own!

[
He resumes his walk, singing in a low voice
.]

My child woke crying from her sleep;

I bended o'er her bed,
And soothed her, till in slumber deep
She from the darkness fled.

And as beside my child I stood,
A still voice said in me-
'Even thus thy Father, strong and good,
Is bending over thee.'

SCENE II.-Rooms in Lord Seaford's house. A large company; dancers;
gentlemen looking on.

1st Gentleman

.
Henry, what dark-haired queen is that? She moves
As if her body were instinct with thought,
Moulded to motion by the music's waves,
As floats the swan upon the swelling lake;
Or as in dreams one sees an angel move,
Sweeping on slow wings through the buoyant air,
Then folding them, and turning on his track.

2nd

.
You seem inspired; nor can I wonder at it;
She is a glorious woman; and such eyes!
Think-to be loved by such a woman now!

1st

.
You have seen her, then, before: what is her name?

2nd

.
I saw her once; but could not learn her name.

3rd

.
She is the wife of an Italian count,
Who for some cause, political I think,
Took refuge in this country. His estates
The Church has eaten up, as I have heard:
Mephisto says the Church has a good stomach.

2nd

.
How do they live?

3rd

.
Poorly, I should suppose;
For she gives Lady Gertrude music-lessons:
That's how they know her.-Ah, you should hear her sing!

2nd

.
If she sings as she looks or as she dances,
It were as well for me I did not hear.

3rd

.
If Count Lamballa followed Lady Seafood
To heaven, I know who'd follow her on earth.

SCENE III.-Julian's room. LILY
asleep

.

Julian

.
I wish she would come home. When the child wakes,
I cannot bear to see her eyes first rest
On me, then wander searching through the room,

And then return and rest. And yet, poor Lilia!
'Tis nothing strange thou shouldst be glad to go
From this dull place, and for a few short hours
Have thy lost girlhood given back to thee;
For thou art very young for such hard things
As poor men's wives in cities must endure.

I am afraid the thought is not at rest,
But rises still, that she is not my wife-
Not truly, lawfully. I hoped the child
Would kill that fancy; but I fear instead,
She thinks I have begun to think the same-
Thinks that it lies a heavy weight of sin
Upon my heart. Alas, my Lilia!
When every time I pray, I pray that God
Would look and see that thou and I be one!

Lily

(starting up in her cri .
Oh, take me! take me!

Julian

(
going up to her with a smil
).
What is the matter with my little child?

Lily

.
I don't know, father; I was very frightened.

Julian

.
'Twas nothing but a dream. Look-I am with you.

Lily

.
I am wake now; I know you're there; but then
I did not know it.

[
Smiling
.]

Julian

.
Lie down now, darling. Go to sleep again.

Lily

(beseechingly).
Not yet. Don't tell me go to sleep again;
It makes me so, so frightened! Take me up,
And let me sit upon your knee.-Where's mother?
I cannot see her.

Julian

.
She's not at home, my child;
But soon she will be back.

Lily

.
But if she walk
Out in the dark streets-so dark, it will catch her.

Julian

.
She will not walk-but what would catch her, sweet?

Lily

.
I don't know. Tell me a story till she comes.

Julian

(taking her, and sitting with her on his knees by the fire).

Come then, my little Lily, I will tell you
A story I have read this very night.

[
She looks in his face
.]

There was a man who had a little boy,
And when the boy grew big, he went and asked
His father to give him a purse of money.
His father gave him such a large purse full!
And then he went away and left his home.
You see he did not love his father much.

Lily

.
Oh! didn't he?-If he had, he wouldn't have gone!

Julian

.
Away he went, far far away he went,
Until he could not even spy the top
Of the great mountain by his father's house.
And still he went away, away, as if
He tried how far his feet could go away;
Until he came to a city huge and wide,
Like London here.

Lily

.
Perhaps it was London.

Julian

.
Perhaps it was, my child. And there he spent
All, all his father's money, buying things
That he had always told him were not worth,
And not to buy them; but he would and did.

Lily

.
How very naughty of him!

Julian

.
Yes, my child.
And so when he had spent his last few pence,
He grew quite hungry. But he had none left
To buy a piece of bread. And bread was scarce;
Nobody gave him any. He had been
Always so idle, that he could not work.
But at last some one sent him to feed swine.

Lily

.
Swine
! Oh!

Julian

.
Yes, swine: 'twas all that he could do;
And he was glad to eat some of their food.

[
She stares at him
.]

But at the last, hunger and waking love

Made him remember his old happy home.
'How many servants in my father's house
Have plenty, and to spare!' he said. 'I'll go
And say, 'I have done very wrong, my father;
I am not worthy to be called your son;
Put me among your servants, father, please.'
Then he rose up and went; but thought the road
So much, much farther to walk back again,
When he was tired and hungry. But at last
He saw the blue top of the great big hill
That stood beside his father's house; and then
He walked much faster. But a great way off,
His father saw him coming, lame and weary
With his long walk; and very different
From what he had been. All his clothes were hanging
In tatters, and his toes stuck through his shoes-

[
She bursts into tears
.]

Lily

(sobbing).
Like that poor beggar I saw yesterday?

Julian

.
Yes, my dear child.

Lily

.
And was he dirty, too?

Julian

.
Yes, very dirty; he had been so long
Among the swine.

Lily

.

Is it all true though, father?

Julian

.

Yes, my darling; all true, and truer far
Than you can think.

Lily

.

What was his father like?

Julian

.

A tall, grand, stately man.

Lily

.

Like you, dear father?

Julian

.

Like me, only much grander.

Lily

.

I love you
The best though.

[

Kissing him

.]

Julian

.

Well, all dirty as he was,
And thin, and pale, and torn, with staring eyes,
His father knew him, the first look, far off,
And ran so fast to meet him! put his arms
Around his neck and kissed him.

Lily

.

Oh, how dear!
I love him too;-but not so well as you.

[

Sound of a carriage drawing up

.]

Julian

.

There is your mother.

Lily

.

I am glad, so glad!

Enter LILIA,

looking pale

.

Lilia

.

You naughty child, why are you not in bed?

Lily

(pouting).

I am not naughty. I am afraid to go,
Because you don't go with me into sleep;
And when I see things, and you are not there,
Nor father, I am so frightened, I cry out,
And stretch my hands, and so I come awake.
Come with me into sleep, dear mother; come.

Lilia

.
What a strange child it is! There! (
kissing her
) go to bed.

[
Lays her down
.]

Julian

(gazing on the child).
As thou art in thy dreams without thy mother,
So are we lost in life without our God.

SCENE IV.-LILIA in bed.

The room lighted from a gas-lamp in the
street; the bright shadow of the window on the wall and ceiling

.

Lilia

.
Oh, it is dreary, dreary! All the time
My thoughts would wander to my dreary home.
Through every dance, my soul walked evermore
In a most dreary dance through this same room.
I saw these walls, this carpet; and I heard,
As now, his measured step in the next chamber,
Go pacing up and down, and I shut out!
He is too good for me, I weak for him.
Yet if he put his arms around me once,

And held me fast as then, kissed me as then,
My soul, I think, would come again to me,
And pass from me in trembling love to him.
But he repels me now. He loves me, true,-
Because I am his wife: he ought to love me!
Me, the cold statue, thus he drapes with duty.
Sometimes he waits upon me like a maid,
Silent with watchful eyes. Oh, would to Heaven,
He used me like a slave bought in the market!
Yes, used me roughly! So, I were his own;
And words of tenderness would falter in,
Relenting from the sternness of command.
But I am not enough for him: he needs
Some high-entranced maiden, ever pure,
And thronged with burning thoughts of God and him.
So, as he loves me not, his deeds for me
Lie on me like a sepulchre of stones.
Italian lovers love not so; but he
Has German blood in those great veins of his.
He never brings me now a little flower.
He sings low wandering sweet songs to the child;
But never sings to me what the voice-bird
Sings to the silent, sitting on the nest.
I would I were his child, and not his wife!
How I should love him then! Yet I have thoughts
Fit to be women to his mighty men;
And he would love them, if he saw them once.

Ah! there they come, the visions of my land!
The long sweep of a bay, white sands, and cliffs
Purple above the blue waves at their feet!
Down the full river comes a light-blue sail;
And down the near hill-side come country girls,
Brown, rosy, laden light with glowing fruits;
Down to the sands come ladies, young, and clad
For holiday; in whose hearts wonderment
At manhood is the upmost, deepest thought;
And to their side come stately, youthful forms,
Italy's youth, with burning eyes and hearts:-
Triumphant Love is lord of the bright day.
Yet one heart, under that blue sail, would look
With pity on their poor contentedness;

For he sits at the helm, I at his feet.
He sung a song, and I replied to him.
His song was of the wind that blew us down
From sheltered hills to the unsheltered sea.
Ah, little thought my heart that the wide sea,
Where I should cry for comforting in vain,
Was the expanse of his wide awful soul,
To which that wind was helpless drifting me!
I would he were less great, and loved me more.
I sung to him a song, broken with sighs,
For even then I feared the time to come:
'O will thine eyes shine always, love, as now?
And will thy lips for aye be sweetly curved?'
Said my song, flowing unrhymed from my heart.
'And will thy forehead ever, sunlike bend,
And suck my soul in vapours up to thee?
Ah love! I need love, beauty, and sweet odours.
Thou livest on the hoary mountains; I
In the warm valley, with the lily pale,
Shadowed with mountains and its own great leaves;
Where odours are the sole invisible clouds,
Making the heart weep for deliciousness.
Will thy eternal mountain always bear
Blue flowers upspringing at the glacier's foot?
Alas! I fear the storms, the blinding snow,
The vapours which thou gatherest round thy head,
Wherewith thou shuttest up thy chamber-door,
And goest from me into loneliness.'
Ah me, my song! it is a song no more!
He is alone amid his windy rocks;
I wandering on a low and dreary plain!

[
She weeps herself asleep
.]

SCENE V.-LORD SEAFORD,
alternately writing at a table and
composing at his pianoforte

SONG.

Eyes of beauty, eyes of light,
Sweetly, softly, sadly bright!
Draw not, ever, o'er my eye,
Radiant mists of ecstasy.

Be not proud, O glorious orbs!
Not your mystery absorbs;
But the starry soul that lies
Looking through your night of eyes.

One moment, be less perfect, sweet;
Sin once in something small;
One fault to lift me on my feet
From love's too perfect thrall!

For now I have no soul; a sea
Fills up my caverned brain,
Heaving in silent waves to thee,
The mistress of that main.

O angel! take my hand in thine;
Unfold thy shining silver wings;
Spread them around thy face and mine,
Close curtained in their murmurings.

But I should faint with too much bliss
To be alone in space with thee;
Except, O dread! one angel-kiss
In sweetest death should set me free.

O beauteous devil, tempt me, tempt me on,
Till thou hast won my soul in sighs;
I'll smile with thee upon thy flaming throne,
If thou wilt keep those eyes.

And if the meanings of untold desires
Should charm thy pain of one faint sting,
I will arise amid the scorching fires,
I will arise and sing.

O what is God to me? He sits apart
Amid the clear stars, passionless and cold.
Divine! thou art enough to fill my heart;
O fold me in thy heaven, sweet love, infold.

With too much life, I fall before thee dead.
With holding thee, my sense consumes in storm.
Thou art too keen a flame, too hallowed
For any temple but thy holy form.

SCENE VI.-Julian's room next morning; no fire. JULIAN
stands at
the window, looking into a London fog

Julian

And there are mountains on the earth, far-off;
Steep precipices laved at morn in wind
From the blue glaciers fresh; and falls that leap,
Springing from rock to pool abandonedly;
And all the spirit of the earth breathed out,
Bearing the soul, as on an altar-flame,
Aloft to God! And there is woman-love-
Far off, ah me!

[
Sitting down wearily
.]

-the heart of earth's delight
Withered from mine! O for a desert sea,
The cold sun flashing on the sailing icebergs!
Where I might cry aloud on God, until
My soul burst forth upon the wings of pain,
And fled to him. A numbness as of death
Infolds me. As in sleep I walk. I live,
But my dull soul can hardly keep awake.
Yet God is here as on the mountain-top,
Or on the desert sea, or lonely isle;
And I should know him here, if Lilia loved me,

As once I thought she did. But can I blame her?
The change has been too much for her to bear.
Can poverty make one of two hearts cold,
And warm the other with the love of God?
But then I have been silent, often moody,
Drowned in much questioning; and she has thought
That I was tired of her, while more than all
I pondered how to wake her living soul.
She cannot think why I should haunt my chamber,
Except a goaded conscience were my grief;
Thinks not of aught to gain, but all to shun.
Deeming, poor child, that I repent me thus
Of that which makes her mine for evermore,
It is no wonder if her love grow less.
Then I am older much than she; and this
Fever, I think, has made me old indeed
Before my fortieth year; although, within,
I seem as young as ever to myself.
O my poor Lilia! thou art not to blame;
I'll love thee more than ever; I will be
So gentle to thy heart where love lies dead!
For carefully men ope the door, and walk
With silent footfall through the room where lies,
Exhausted, sleeping, with its travail sore,
The body that erewhile hath borne a spirit.
Alas, my Lilia! where is dead Love's child?

I must go forth and do my daily work.
I thank thee, God, that it is hard sometimes
To do my daily labour; for, of old,
When men were poor, and could not bring thee much,
A turtle-dove was all that thou didst ask;
And so in poverty, and with a heart
Oppressed with heaviness, I try to do
My day's work well to thee,-my offering:
That he has taught me, who one day sat weary
At Sychar's well. Then home when I return,
I come without upbraiding thoughts to thee.
Ah! well I see man need not seek for penance-
Thou wilt provide the lamb for sacrifice;
Thou only wise enough to teach the soul,
Measuring out the labour and the grief,

Which it must bear for thy sake, not its own.
He neither chose his glory, nor devised
The burden he should bear; left all to God;
And of them both God gave to him enough.
And see the sun looks faintly through the mist;
It cometh as a messenger to me.
My soul is heavy, but I will go forth;
My days seem perishing, but God yet lives
And loves. I cannot feel, but will believe.

[
He rises and is going
. LILIA
enters, looking weary
.]

Look, my dear Lilia, how the sun shines out!

Lilia
.
Shines out indeed! Yet 'tis not bad for England.
I would I were in Italy, my own!

[
Weeps
.]

Julian
.
'Tis the same sun that shines in Italy.

Lilia
.
But never more will shine upon us there!
It is too late; all wishing is in vain;
But would that we had not so ill deserved
As to be banished from fair Italy!

Julian

.

Ah! my dear Lilia, do not, do not think
That God is angry when we suffer ill.
'Twere terrible indeed, if 'twere in anger.

Lilia

.

Julian, I cannot feel as you. I wish
I felt as you feel.

Julian

.

God will hear you, child,
If you will speak to him. But I must go.
Kiss me, my Lilia.

[

She kisses him mechanically. He goes with a sigh
.]

Lilia

.

It is plain to see
He tries to love me, but is weary of me.

[

She weeps
.]

Enter LILY.

Lily

.

Mother, have you been naughty? Mother, dear!

[

Pulling her hand from her face

.]

SCENE VII.-Julian's room. Noon. LILIA

at work

; LILY

playing in

a closet

.

Lily

(running up to her mother).

Sing me a little song; please, mother dear.

[LILIA,

looking off her work, and thinking with
fixed eyes for a few moments, sings

.]

SONG.

Once I was a child,

Oime!

Full of frolic wild;

Oime!

All the stars for glancing,

All the earth for dancing;

Oime! Oime!

When I ran about,

Oime!

All the flowers came out,

Oime!

Here and there like stray things,

Just to be my playthings.

Oime! Oime!

Mother's eyes were deep,

Oime!

Never needing sleep.

Oime!
Morning-they're above me!
Eventide-they love me!
Oime! Oime!

Father was so tall!
Oime!
Stronger he than all!
Oime!
On his arm he bore me,
Queen of all before me.
Oime! Oime!

Mother is asleep;
Oime!
For her eyes so deep,
Oime!
Grew so tired and aching,
They could not keep waking.
Oime! Oime!

Father, though so strong,
Oime!
Laid him down along-
Oime!
By my mother sleeping;
And they left me weeping,
Oime! Oime!

Now nor bird, nor bee,
Oime!
Ever sings to me!
Oime!
Since they left me crying,
All things have been dying.
Oime! Oime!

[LILY
looks long in her mother's face, as if wondering
what the song could be about; then turns away to the closet.
After a little she comes running with a box in her hand
.]

Lily

.
O mother, mother! there's the old box I had
So long ago, and all my cups and saucers,
And the farm-house and cows.-Oh! some are broken.
Father will mend them for me, I am sure.
I'll ask him when he comes to-night-I will:
He can do everything, you know, dear mother.

SCENE VIII.-A merchants counting-house. JULIAN
preparing to go
home

Julian

.
I would not give these days of common toil,
This murky atmosphere that creeps and sinks
Into the very soul, and mars its hue-
Not for the evenings when with gliding keel
I cut a pale green track across the west-
Pale-green, and dashed with snowy white, and spotted
With sunset crimson; when the wind breathed low,
So low it hardly swelled my xebec's sails,
That pointed to the south, and wavered not,
Erect upon the waters.-Jesus said
His followers should have a hundred fold
Of earth's most precious things, with suffering.-
In all the labourings of a weary spirit,
I have been bless'd with gleams of glorious things.
The sights and sounds of nature touch my soul,
No more look in from far.-I never see
Such radiant, filmy clouds, gathered about
A gently opening eye into the blue,
But swells my heart, and bends my sinking knee,
Bowing in prayer. The setting sun, before,
Signed only that the hour for prayer was come,
But now it moves my inmost soul to pray.

On this same earth He walked; even thus he looked
Upon its thousand glories; read them all;
In splendour let them pass on through his soul,
And triumph in their new beatitude,
Finding a heaven of truth to take them in;
But walked on steadily through pain to death.

Better to have the poet's heart than brain,
Feeling than song; but better far than both,
To be a song, a music of God's making;
A tablet, say, on which God's finger of flame,
In words harmonious, of triumphant verse,
That mingles joy and sorrow, sets down clear,
That out of darkness he hath called the light.
It may be voice to such is after given,
To tell the mighty tale to other worlds.

Oh! I am blest in sorrows with a hope
That steeps them all in glory; as gray clouds
Are bathed in light of roses; yea, I were
Most blest of men, if I were now returning
To Lilia's heart as presence. O my God,
I can but look to thee. And then the child!-
Why should my love to her break out in tears?
Why should she be only a consolation,
And not an added joy, to fill my soul
With gladness overflowing in many voices
Of song, and prayer-and weeping only when
Words fainted 'neath the weight of utterance?

SCENE IX.-LILIA

preparing to go out

. LILY.

Lily

.

Don't go to-night again.

Lilia

.

Why, child, your father
Will soon be home; and then you will not miss me.

Lily

.
Oh, but I shall though! and he looks so sad
When you're not here!

Lilia

(aside).
He cannot look much sadder
Than when I am. I am sure 'tis a relief
To find his child alone when he returns.

Lily

.
Will you go, mother? Then I'll go and cry
Till father comes. He'll take me on his knee,
And tell such lovely tales: you never do-
Nor sing me songs made all for my own self.
He does not kiss me half so many times
As you do, mother; but he loves me more.
Do you love father, too? I love him
so
!

Lilia

(ready).
There's such a pretty book! Sit on the stool,
And look at the pictures till your father comes.

[
Goes
.]

Lily

(putting the book down, and going to the window).
I wish he would come home. I wish he would.

Enter JULIAN.

Oh, there he is!

[
Running up to him
.]

Oh, now I am so happy!

[
Laughing
.]

I had not time to watch before you came.

Julian

(taking her in his arms).
I am very glad to have my little girl;
I walked quite fast to come to her again.

Lily

.
I do,
do
love you. Shall I tell you something?
Think I should like to tell you. Tis a dream
That I went into, somewhere in last night.
I was alone-quite;-you were not with me,
So I must tell you. 'Twas a garden, like
That one you took me to, long, long ago,
When the sun was so hot. It was not winter,
But some of the poor leaves were growing tired
With hanging there so long. And some of them

Gave it up quite, and so dropped down and lay
Quiet on the ground. And I was watching them.
I saw one falling-down, down-tumbling down-
Just at the earth-when suddenly it spread
Great wings and flew.-It was a butterfly,
So beautiful with wings, black, red, and white-

[
Laughing heartily
.]

I thought it was a crackly, withered leaf.
Away it flew! I don't know where it went.
And so I thought, I have a story now
To tell dear father when he comes to Lily.

Julian

.
Thank you, my child; a very pretty dream.
But I am tired-will you go find another-
Another dream somewhere in sleep for me?

Lily

.
O yes, I will.-Perhaps I cannot find one.

[
He lays her down to sleep; then sits musing
.]

Julian

.
What shall I do to give it life again?
To make it spread its wings before it fall,
And lie among the dead things of the earth?

Lily

.

I cannot go to sleep. Please, father, sing
The song about the little thirsty lily.

[JULIAN
sings
.]

SONG.

Little white Lily
Sat by a stone,
Drooping and waiting
Till the sun shone.
Little white Lily
Sunshine has fed;
Little white Lily
Is lifting her head.

Little white Lily
Said, 'It is good:
Little white Lily's
Clothing and food!
Little white Lily
Drest like a bride!
Shining with whiteness,
And crowned beside!'

Little white Lily
Droopeth in pain,
Waiting and waiting
For the wet rain.
Little white Lily
Holdeth her cup;
Rain is fast falling,
And filling it up.

Little white Lily
Said, 'Good again,
When I am thirsty
To have nice rain!
Now I am stronger,

Now I am cool;
Heat cannot burn me,
My veins are so full!

Little white Lily
Smells very sweet:
On her head sunshine,
Rain at her feet.
'Thanks to the sunshine!
Thanks to the rain!
Little white Lily
Is happy again!'

[
He is silent for a moment; then goes and looks at her
.]

Julian

.
She is asleep, the darling! Easily
Is Sleep enticed to brood on childhood's heart.
Gone home unto thy Father for the night!

[
He returns to his seat
.]

I have grown common to her. It is strange-
This commonness-that, as a blight, eats up
All the heart's springing corn and promised fruit.

[
Looking round
.]

This room is very common: everything
Has such a well-known look of nothing in it;
And yet when first I called it hers and mine,
There was a mystery inexhaustible
About each trifle on the chimney-shelf:
The gilding now is nearly all worn off.

Even she, the goddess of the wonder-world,
Seems less mysterious and worshipful:
No wonder I am common in her eyes.
Alas! what must I think? Is this the true?
Was that the false that was so beautiful?
Was it a rosy mist that wrapped it round?
Or was love to the eyes as opium,
Making all things more beautiful than they were?
And can that opium do more than God
To waken beauty in a human brain?
Is this the real, the cold, undraped truth-
A skeleton admitted as a guest
At life's loud feast, wearing a life-like mask?
No, no; my heart would die if I believed it.
A blighting fog uprises with the days,
False, cold, dull, leaden, gray. It clings about
The present, far dragging like a robe; but ever
Forsakes the past, and lets its hues shine out:
On past and future pours the light of heaven.
The Commonplace is of the present mind.
The Lovely is the True. The Beautiful
Is what God made. Men from whose narrow bosoms
The great child-heart has withered, backward look
To their first-love, and laugh, and call it folly,
A mere delusion to which youth is subject,
As childhood to diseases. They know better!
And proud of their denying, tell the youth,
On whom the wonder of his being shines,
That will be over with him by and by:
'I was so when a boy-look at me now!'
Youth, be not one of them, but love thy love.
So with all worship of the high and good,
And pure and beautiful. These men are wiser!
Their god, Experience, but their own decay;
Their wisdom but the gray hairs gathered on them.
Yea, some will mourn and sing about their loss,
And for the sake of sweet sounds cherish it,
Nor yet believe that it was more than seeming.
But he in whom the child's heart hath not died,
But grown a man's heart, loveth yet the Past;
Believes in all its beauty; knows the hours
Will melt the mist; and that, although this day

Cast but a dull stone on Time's heaped-up cairn,
A morning light will break one morn and draw
The hidden glories of a thousand hues
Out from its diamond-depths and ruby-spots
And sapphire-veins, unseen, unknown, before.
Far in the future lies his refuge. Time
Is God's, and all its miracles are his;
And in the Future he overtakes the Past,
Which was a prophecy of times to come:

There
lie great flashing stars, the same that shone
In childhood's laughing heaven; there lies the wonder
In which the sun went down and moon arose;
The joy with which the meadows opened out
Their daisies to the warming sun of spring;
Yea, all the inward glory, ere cold fear
Froze, or doubt shook the mirror of his soul:
To reach it, he must climb the present slope
Of this day's duty—here he would not rest.
But all the time the glory is at hand,
Urging and guiding—only o'er its face
Hangs ever, pledge and screen, the bridal veil:
He knows the beauty radiant underneath;
He knows that God who is the living God,
The God of living things, not of the dying,
Would never give his child, for God-born love,
A cloud-made phantom, fading in the sun.
Faith vanishes in sight; the cloudy veil
Will melt away, destroyed of inward light.

If thy young heart yet lived, my Lilia, thou
And I might, as two children, hand in hand,
Go home unto our Father.—I believe
It only sleeps, and may be wakened yet.

SCENE X.—Julian's room. Christmas Day; early morn. JULIAN.

Julian

.

The light comes feebly, slowly, to the world

On this one day that blesses all the year,
Just as it comes on any other day:
A feeble child he came, yet not the less
Brought godlike childhood to the aged earth,
Where nothing now is common any more.
All things had hitherto proclaimed God:
The wide spread air; the luminous mist that hid
The far horizon of the fading sea;
The low persistent music evermore
Flung down upon the sands, and at the base
Of the great rocks that hold it as a cup;
All things most common; the furze, now golden, now
Opening dark pods in music to the heat
Of the high summer-sun at afternoon;
The lone black tarn upon the round hill-top,
O'er which the gray clouds brood like rising smoke,
Sending its many rills, o'erarched and hid,
Singing like children down the rocky sides;-
Where shall I find the most unnoticed thing,
For that sang God with all its voice of song?
But men heard not, they knew not God in these;
To their strange speech unlistening ears were strange;
For with a stammering tongue and broken words,
With mingled falsehoods and denials loud,
Man witnessed God unto his fellow man:
How then himself the voice of Nature hear?
Or how himself he heeded, when, the leader,
He in the chorus sang a discord vile?
When prophet lies, how shall the people preach?
But when He came in poverty, and low,
A real man to half-unreal men,
A man whose human thoughts were all divine,
The head and upturned face of human kind-
Then God shone forth from all the lowly earth,
And men began to read their maker there.
Now the Divine descends, pervading all.
Earth is no more a banishment from heaven;
But a lone field among the distant hills,
Well ploughed and sown, whence corn is gathered home.
Now, now we feel the holy mystery
That permeates all being: all is God's;
And my poor life is terribly sublime.

Where'er I look, I am alone in God,
As this round world is wrapt in folding space;
Behind, before, begin and end in him:
So all beginnings and all ends are hid;
And he is hid in me, and I in him.

Oh, what a unity, to mean them all!-
The peach-dyed morn; cold stars in colder blue
Gazing across upon the sun-dyed west,
While the dank wind is running o'er the graves;
Green buds, red flowers, brown leaves, and ghostly snow;
The grassy hills, breeze-haunted on the brow;
And sandy deserts hung with stinging stars!
Half-vanished hangs the moon, with daylight sick,
Wan-faced and lost and lonely: daylight fades-
Blooms out the pale eternal flower of space,
The opal night, whose odours are gray dreams-
Core of its petal-cup, the radiant moon!
All, all the unnumbered meanings of the earth,
Changing with every cloud that passes o'er;
All, all, from rocks slow-crumbling in the frost
Of Alpine deserts, isled in stormy air,
To where the pool in warm brown shadow sleeps,
The stream, sun-ransomed, dances in the sun;
All, all, from polar seas of jewelled ice,
To where she dreams out gorgeous flowers-all, all
The unlike children of her single womb!
Oh, my heart labours with infinitude!
All, all the messages that these have borne
To eyes and ears, and watching, listening souls;
And all the kindling cheeks and swelling hearts,
That since the first-born, young, attempting day,
Have gazed and worshipped!-What a unity,
To mean each one, yet fuse each in the all!
O centre of all forms! O concord's home!
O world alive in one condensed world!
O face of Him, in whose heart lay concealed
The fountain-thought of all this kingdom of heaven!
Lord, thou art infinite, and I am thine!

I sought my God; I pressed importunate;
I spoke to him, I cried, and in my heart

It seemed he answered me. I said-'Oh! take
Me nigh to thee, thou mighty life of life!
I faint, I die; I am a child alone
'Mid the wild storm, the brooding desert-night.'

'Go thou, poor child, to him who once, like thee,
Trode the highways and deserts of the world.'

'Thou sendest me then, wretched, from thy sight!
Thou wilt not have me-I am not worth thy care!'

'I send thee not away; child, think not so;
From the cloud resting on the mountain-peak,
I call to guide thee in the path by which
Thou may'st come soonest home unto my heart.
I, I am leading thee. Think not of him
As he were one and I were one; in him
Thou wilt find me, for he and I are one.
Learn thou to worship at his lowly shrine,
And see that God dwelleth in lowliness.'

I came to Him; I gazed upon his face;
And Lo! from out his eyes God looked on me!
Yea, let them laugh! I
will
sit at his feet,
As a child sits upon the ground, and looks
Up in his mother's face. One smile from him,
One look from those sad eyes, is more to me
Than to be lord myself of hearts and thoughts.
O perfect made through the reacting pain
In which thy making force recoiled on thee!
Whom no less glory could make visible
Than the utter giving of thyself away;
Brooding no thought of grandeur in the deed,
More than a child embracing from full heart!
Lord of thyself and me through the sore grief
Which thou didst bear to bring us back to God,
Or rather, bear in being unto us
Thy own pure shining self of love and truth!
When I have learned to think thy radiant thoughts,
To love the truth beyond the power to know it,

To bear my light as thou thy heavy cross,
Nor ever feel a martyr for thy sake,
But an unprofitable servant still,-
My highest sacrifice my simplest duty
Imperative and unavoidable,
Less than which
All
, were nothingness and waste;
When I have lost myself in other men,
And found myself in thee-the Father then
Will come with thee, and will abide with me.

^ ^ ^ ^ ^

SCENE XI.-LILIA

teaching

LADY GERTRUDE. Enter LORD SEAFORD.

LILIA

rises

.

He places her a chair, and seats himself at the
instrument; plays a low, half-melancholy, half-defiant prelude, and
sings

.

SONG.

Look on the magic mirror;
A glory thou wilt spy;

Be with thine heart a sharer,
But go not thou too nigh;
Else thou wilt rue thine error,
With a tear-filled, sleepless eye.

The youth looked on the mirror,
And he went not too nigh;
And yet he rued his error,
With a tear-filled, sleepless eye;
For he could not be a sharer
In what he there did spy.

He went to the magician
Upon the morrow morn.
'Mighty,' was his petition,
'Look not on me in scorn;
But one last gaze elision,
Lest I should die forlorn!'

He saw her in her glory,
Floating upon the main.
Ah me! the same sad story!
The darkness and the rain!
If I live till I am hoary,
I shall never laugh again.

She held the youth enchanted,
Till his trembling lips were pale,
And his full heart heaved and panted
To utter all its tale:
Forward he rushed, undaunted-
And the shattered mirror fell.

[
He rises and leaves the room. LILIA weeping
.]

George MacDonald

Within And Without: Part Iv: A Dramatic Poem

And should the twilight darken into night,
And sorrow grow to anguish, be thou strong;
Thou art in God, and nothing can go wrong
Which a fresh life-pulse cannot set aright.
That thou dost know the darkness, proves the light.
Weep if thou wilt, but weep not all too long;
Or weep and work, for work will lead to song.
But search thy heart, if, hid from all thy sight,
There lies no cause for beauty's slow decay;
If for completeness and diviner youth,
And not for very love, thou seek'st the truth;
If thou hast learned to give thyself away
For love's own self, not for thyself, I say:
Were God's love less, the world were lost, in sooth!

SCENE I.-Summer. Julian's room. JULIAN
is reading out of a book of
poems

Love me, beloved; the thick clouds lower;
A sleepiness filleth the earth and air;
The rain has been falling for many an hour;
A weary look the summer doth wear:
Beautiful things that cannot be so;
Loveliness clad in the garments of woe.

Love me, beloved; I hear the birds;
The clouds are lighter; I see the blue;
The wind in the leaves is like gentle words
Quietly passing 'twixt me and you;
The evening air will bathe the buds
With the soothing coolness of summer floods.

Love me, beloved; for, many a day,
Will the mist of the morning pass away;
Many a day will the brightness of noon

Lead to a night that hath lost her moon;
And in joy or in sadness, in autumn or spring,
Thy love to my soul is a needful thing.

Love me, beloved; for thou mayest lie
Dead in my sight, 'neath the same blue sky;
Love me, O love me, and let me know
The love that within thee moves to and fro;
That many a form of thy love may be
Gathered around thy memory.

Love me, beloved; for I may lie
Dead in thy sight, 'neath the same blue sky;
The more thou hast loved me, the less thy pain,
The stronger thy hope till we meet again;
And forth on the pathway we do not know,
With a load of love, my soul would go.

Love me, beloved; for one must lie
Motionless, lifeless, beneath the sky;
The pale stiff lips return no kiss
To the lips that never brought love amiss;
And the dark brown earth be heaped above
The head that lay on the bosom of love.

Love me, beloved; for both must lie
Under the earth and beneath the sky;
The world be the same when we are gone;
The leaves and the waters all sound on;
The spring come forth, and the wild flowers live,
Gifts for the poor man's love to give;
The sea, the lordly, the gentle sea,
Tell the same tales to others than thee;
And joys, that flush with an inward morn,
Irradiate hearts that are yet unborn;
A youthful race call our earth their own,
And gaze on its wonders from thought's high throne;
Embraced by fair Nature, the youth will embrace.
The maid beside him, his queen of the race;
When thou and I shall have passed away
Like the foam-flake thou looked'st on yesterday.

Love me, beloved; for both must tread
On the threshold of Hades, the house of the dead;
Where now but in thinkings strange we roam,
We shall live and think, and shall be at home;
The sights and the sounds of the spirit land
No stranger to us than the white sea-sand,
Than the voice of the waves, and the eye of the moon,
Than the crowded street in the sunlit noon.
I pray thee to love me, belov'd of my heart;
If we love not truly, at death we part;
And how would it be with our souls to find
That love, like a body, was left behind!

Love me, beloved; Hades and Death
Shall vanish away like a frosty breath;
These hands, that now are at home in thine,
Shall clasp thee again, if thou still art mine;
And thou shall be mine, my spirit's bride,
In the ceaseless flow of eternity's tide,
If the truest love that thy heart can know
Meet the truest love that from mine can flow.
Pray God, beloved, for thee and me,
That our souls may be wedded eternally.

[
He closes the book, and is silent for some moments
.]

Ah me, O Poet! did
thy
love last out
The common life together every hour?
The slumber side by side with wondrousness
Each night after a day of fog and rain?
Did thy love glory o'er the empty purse,
And the poor meal sometimes the poet's lot?
Is she dead, Poet? Is thy love awake?

Alas! and is it come to this with me?

I
might have written that! where am I now?

Yet let me think: I love less passionately,
But not less truly; I would die for her-
A little thing, but all a man can do.
O my beloved, where the answering love?
Love me, beloved. Whither art thou gone?

^ ^ ^ ^ ^

SCENE II.-

Lilia's room

. LILIA.

Lilia

.

He grows more moody still, more self-withdrawn.
Were it not better that I went away,
And left him with the child; for she alone
Can bring the sunshine on his cloudy face?
Alas, he used to say to me,
my child
!

Some convent would receive me in my land,
Where I might weep unseen, unquestioned;
And pray that God in whom he seems to dwell,
To take me likewise in, beside him there.

Had I not better make one trial first
To win again his love to compass me?
Might I not kneel, lie down before his feet,
And beg and pray for love as for my life?
Clasping his knees, look up to that stern heaven,
That broods above his eyes, and pray for smiles?
What if endurance were my only meed?
He would not turn away, but speak forced words,
Soothing with kindness me who thirst for love,
And giving service where I wanted smiles;
Till by degrees all had gone back again
To where it was, a slow dull misery.
No. 'Tis the best thing I can do for him-
And that I will do-free him from my sight.
In love I gave myself away to him;

And now in love I take myself again.
He will not miss me; I am nothing now.

^ ^ ^ ^ ^

SCENE III.-Lord Seaford's garden. LILIA; LORD SEAFORD.

Lord S

.
How the white roses cluster on the trellis!
They look in the dim light as if they floated
Within the fluid dusk that bathes them round.
One could believe that those far distant tones
Of scarce-heard music, rose with the faint scent,
Breathed odorous from the heart of the pale flowers,
As the low rushing from a river-bed,
Or the continuous bubbling of a spring
In deep woods, turning over its own joy
In its own heart luxuriously, alone.
'Twas on such nights, after such sunny days,
The poets of old Greece saw beauteous shapes
Sighed forth from out the rooted, earth-fast trees,
With likeness undefinable retained
In higher human form to their tree-homes,
Which fainting let them forth into the air,
And lived a life in death till they returned.
The large-limbed, sweepy-curved, smooth-rounded beech
Gave forth the perfect woman to the night;
From the pale birch, breeze-bent and waving, stole
The graceful, slight-curved maiden, scarcely grown.
The hidden well gave forth its hidden charm,
The Naiad with the hair that flowed like streams,
And arms that gleamed like moonshine on wet sands.
The broad-browed oak, the stately elm, gave forth
Their inner life in shapes of ecstasy.
All varied, loveliest forms of womanhood
Dawned out in twilight, and athwart the grass
Half danced with cool and naked feet, half floated
Borne on winds dense enough for them to swim.
O what a life they lived! in poet's brain-
Not on this earth, alas!-But you are sad;

You do not speak, dear lady.

Lilia

.

Pardon me.

If such words make me sad, I am to blame.

Lord S

.

Ah, no! I spoke of lovely, beauteous things:

Beauty and sadness always go together.

Nature thought Beauty too golden to go forth

Upon the earth without a meet alloy.

If Beauty had been born the twin of Gladness,

Poets had never needed this dream-life;

Each blessed man had but to look beside him,

And be more blest. How easily could God

Have made our life one consciousness of joy!

It is denied us. Beauty flung around

Most lavishly, to teach our longing hearts

To worship her; then when the soul is full

Of lovely shapes, and all sweet sounds that breathe,

And colours that bring tears into the eyes-

Steeped until saturated with her essence;

And, faint with longing, gasps for some one thing

More beautiful than all, containing all,

Essential Beauty's self, that it may say:

'Thou art my Queen-I dare not think to crown thee,

For thou art crowned already, every part,

With thy perfection; but I kneel to thee,

The utterance of the beauty of the earth,

As of the trees the Hamadryades;

I worship thee, intense of loveliness!

Not sea-born only; sprung from Earth, Air, Ocean,

Star-Fire; all elements and forms commingling

To give thee birth, to utter each its thought

Of beauty held in many forms diverse,

In one form, holding all, a living Love,

Their far-surpassing child, their chosen queen

By virtue of thy dignities combined!'-

And when in some great hour of wild surprise,
She floats into his sight; and, rapt, entranced,
At last he gazes, as I gaze on thee,
And, breathless, his full heart stands still for joy,
And his soul thinks not, having lost itself
In her, pervaded with her being; strayed
Out from his eyes, and gathered round her form,
Clothing her with the only beauty yet
That could be added, ownness unto him;-
Then falls the stern, cold

No

with thunder-tone.

Think, lady,-the poor unresisting soul
Clear-burnished to a crystalline abyss
To house in central deep the ideal form;
Led then to Beauty, and one glance allowed,
From heart of hungry, vacant, waiting shrine,
To set it on the Pisgah of desire;-
Then the black rain! low-slanting, sweeping rain!
Stormy confusions! far gray distances!
And the dim rush of countless years behind!

[
He sinks at her feet
.]

Yet for this moment, let me worship thee!

Lilia

(agitated).
Rise, rise, my lord; this cannot be, indeed.
I pray you, cease; I will not listen to you.
Indeed it must not, cannot, must not be!

[
Moving as to go
.]

Lord S

.

(rising).

Forgive me, madam. Let me cast myself
On your good thoughts. I had been thinking thus,
All the bright morning, as I walked alone;
And when you came, my thoughts flowed forth in words.
It is a weakness with me from my boyhood,
That if I act a part in any play,
Or follow, merely intellectually,
A passion or a motive-ere I know,
My being is absorbed, my brain on fire;
I am possessed with something not myself,
And live and move and speak in foreign forms.
Pity my weakness, madam; and forgive
My rudeness with your gentleness and truth.
That you are beautiful is simple fact;
And when I once began to speak my thoughts,
The wheels of speech ran on, till they took fire,
And in your face flung foolish sparks and dust.
I am ashamed; and but for dread of shame,
I should be kneeling now to beg forgiveness.

Lilia

.

Think nothing more of it, my lord, I pray.
-What is this purple flower with the black spot
In its deep heart? I never saw it before.

SCENE IV.-Julian's room.

The dusk of evening

. JULIAN

standing

with his arms folded, and his eyes fixed on the floor

Julian

.

I see her as I saw her then. She sat
On a low chair, the child upon her knees,
Not six months old. Radiant with motherhood,

Her full face beamed upon the face below,
Bent over it, as with love to ripen love;
Till its intensity, like summer heat,
Gathered a mist across her heaven of eyes,
Which grew until it dropt in large slow tears,
The earthly outcome of the heavenly thing!

[

He walks toward the window, seats himself at a
little table, and writes

.]

THE FATHER'S HYMN FOR THE MOTHER TO SING.

My child is lying on my knees;
The signs of heaven she reads:
My face is all the heaven she sees,
Is all the heaven she needs.

And she is well, yea, bathed in bliss,
If heaven is in my face-
Behind it, all is tenderness,
And truthfulness and grace.

I mean her well so earnestly.
Unchanged in changing mood;
My life would go without a sigh
To bring her something good.

I also am a child, and I
Am ignorant and weak;
I gaze upon the starry sky,
And then I must not speak;

For all behind the starry sky,
Behind the world so broad,
Behind men's hearts and souls doth lie
The Infinite of God.

If true to her, though troubled sore,
I cannot choose but be;
Thou, who art peace for evermore,
Art very true to me.

If I am low and sinful, bring
More love where need is rife;

Thou
knowest what an awful thing
It is to be a life.

Hast thou not wisdom to enwrap
My waywardness about,
In doubting safety on the lap
Of Love that knows no doubt?

Lo! Lord, I sit in thy wide space,
My child upon my knee;
She looketh up unto my face,
And I look up to thee.

SCENE V.-Lord Seaford's house; Lady Gertrude's room. LADY
GERTRUDE

lying on a couch

; LILIA

seated beside her, with the
girl's hand in both hers

.

Lady Gertrude

.

How kind of you to come! And you will stay
And be my beautiful nurse till I grow well?
I am better since you came. You look so sweet,
It brings all summer back into my heart.

Lilia

.

I am very glad to come. Indeed, I felt
No one could nurse you quite so well as I.

Lady Gertrude

.

How kind of you! Do call me sweet names now;
And put your white cool hands upon my head;
And let me lie and look in your great eyes:
'Twill do me good; your very eyes are healing.

Lilia

.
I must not let you talk too much, dear child.

Lady Gertrude

.
Well, as I cannot have my music-lesson,
And must not speak much, will you sing to me?
Sing that strange ballad you sang once before;
'Twill keep me quiet.

Lilia

.
What was it, child?

Lady Gertrude

.
It was
Something about a race-Death and a lady-

Lilia

.
Oh! I remember. I would rather sing
Some other, though.

Lady Gertrude

.
No, no, I want that one.
Its ghost walks up and down inside my head,
But won't stand long enough to show itself.
You must talk Latin to it-sing it away,

Or when I'm ill, 'twill haunt me.

Lilia

.

Well, I'll sing it.

SONG.

Death and a lady rode in the wind,
In a starry midnight pale;
Death on a bony horse behind,
With no footfall upon the gale.

The lady sat a wild-eyed steed;
Eastward he tore to the morn.
But ever the sense of a noiseless speed,
And the sound of reaping corn!

All the night through, the headlong race
Sped to the morning gray;
The dew gleamed cold on her cold white face-
From Death or the morning? say.

Her steed's wide knees began to shake,
As he flung the road behind;
The lady sat still, but her heart did quake,
And a cold breath came down the wind.

When, Lo! a fleet bay horse beside,
With a silver mane and tail;
A knight, bareheaded, the horse did ride,
With never a coat of mail.

He never lifted his hand to Death,
And he never couched a spear;
But the lady felt another breath,
And a voice was in her ear.

He looked her weary eyes through and through,
With his eyes so strong in faith:

Her bridle-hand the lady drew,
And she turned and laughed at Death.

And away through the mist of the morning gray,
The spectre and horse rode wide;
The dawn came up the old bright way,
And the lady never died.

Lord Seaford

(who has entered during the song).
Delightful! Why, my little pining Gertrude,
With such charm-music you will soon be well.
Madam, I know not how to speak the thanks
I owe you for your kindness to my daughter:
She looks as different from yesterday
As sunrise from a fog.

Lilia

.
I am but too happy
To be of use to one I love so much.

SCENE VI.-A rainy day. LORD SEAFORD
walking up and down his room,
murmuring to himself

.

Oh, my love is like a wind of death,
That turns me to a stone!
Oh, my love is like a desert breath,
That burns me to the bone!

Oh, my love is a flower with a purple glow,
And a purple scent all day!
But a black spot lies at the heart below,
And smells all night of clay.

Oh, my love is like the poison sweet

That lurks in the hooded cell!
One flash in the eyes, one bounding beat,
And then the passing bell!

Oh, my love she's like a white, white rose!
And I am the canker-worm:
Never the bud to a blossom blows;
It falls in the rainy storm.

SCENE VII.-JULIAN
reading in his room

.

'And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.'

[
He closes the book and kneels
.]

SCENE VIII.-Lord Seaford's room. LILIA
and
LORD SEAFORD.

Her hand lies in his

.

Lilia

.

It may be true. I am bewildered, though.
I know not what to answer.

Lord S

.

Let me answer:-
You would it were so-you would love me then?

[
A sudden crash of music from a brass band in the street,
melting away in a low cadence

.]

Lilia

(starting up).

Let me go, my lord!

Lord S

.

(retaining her hand).

Why, sweetest! what is this?

Lilia

(vehemently, and disengaging her hand).

Let me go. My husband! Oh, my white child!

[

She hurries to the door, but falls

.]

Lord S

.

(raising her).

I thought you trusted me, yes, loved me, Lilia!

Lilia

.

Peace! that name is his! Speak it again-I rave.

He thought I loved him-and I did-I do.

Open the door, my lord!

[

He hesitates. She draws herself up erect, with flashing eyes

.]

Once more, my lord-

Open the door, I say.

[
He still hesitates. She walks swiftly to the window, flings it
wide, and is throwing herself out
.]

Lord S

.
Stop, madam! I will.

[
He opens the door. She leaves the window, and walks slowly
out. He hears the house-door open and shut, flings himself
on the couch, and hides his face
.]

Enter

LADY GERTRUDE.

Lady Gertrude

.
Dear father, are you ill? I knocked
three times; You did not speak.

Lord S

.
I did not hear you, child.
My head aches rather; else I am quite well.

Lady Gertrude

.
Where is the countess?

Lord S

.
She is gone. She had
An urgent message to go home at once.
But, Gertrude, now you seem so well, why not
Set out to-morrow? You can travel now;
And for your sake the sooner that we breathe
Italian air the better.

Lady Gertrude

.
This is sudden!
I scarcely can be ready by to-morrow.

Lord S

.
It will oblige me, child. Do what you can.
Just go and order everything you want.
I will go with you. Ring the bell, my love;
I have a reason for my haste. We'll have
The horses to at once. Come, Gertrude, dear.

SCENE IX.-Evening. Hampstead Heath. LILIA
seated

.
Lilia

.
The first pale star! braving the rear of Day!
And all heaven waiting till the sun has drawn
His long train after him! then half creation
Will follow its queen-leader from the depths.
O harbinger of hope! O star of love!
Thou hast gone down in me, gone down for ever;
And left my soul in such a starless night,
It has not love enough to weep thy loss.
O fool! to know thee once, and, after years,
To take a gleaming marsh-light for thy lamp!
How could I for one moment hear him speak!

O Julian! for my last love-gift I thought
To bring that love itself, bound and resigned,
And offering it a sacrifice to thee,
Lead it away into the wilderness;
But one vile spot hath tainted this my lamb;
Unoffered it must go, footsore and weary,
Not flattering itself to die for thee.
And yet, thank God, it was one moment only,
That, lapt in darkness and the loss of thee,
Sun of my soul, and half my senses dead
Through very weariness and lack of love,
My heart throbb'd once responsive to a ray
That glimmered through its gloom from other eyes,
And seemed to promise rest and hope again.
My presence shall not grieve thee any more,
My Julian, my husband. I will find
A quiet place where I will seek thy God.
And-in my heart it wakens like a voice
From him-the Saviour-there are other worlds
Where all gone wrong in this may be set right;
Where I, made pure, may find thee, purer still,
And thou wilt love the love that kneels to thee.
I'll write and tell him I have gone, and why.
But what to say about my late offence,
That he may understand just what it was?
For I must tell him, if I write at all.
I fear he would discover where I was;
Pitiful duty would not let him rest
Until he found me; and I fain would free
From all the weight of mine, that heart of his.

[
Sound of a coach-horn
.]

It calls me to rise up and go to him,
Leading me further from him and away.
The earth is round; God's thoughts return again;
And I will go in hope. Help me, my God!

SCENE X.-Julian's room. JULIAN

reading. A letter is brought in.

He reads it, turns deadly pale, and leans his arms and head on the table, almost fainting. This lasts some time; then starting up, he paces through the room, his shoulders slightly shrugged, his arms rigid by his sides, and his hands clenched hard, as if a net of pain were drawn tight around his frame. At length he breathes deep, draws himself up, and walks erect, his chest swelling, but his teeth set

Julian

Me! My wife! Insect, didst thou say
my
wife?

[
Hurriedly turning the letter on the table to see the address
.]

Why, if she love him more than me, why then
Let her go with him!-Gone to Italy!
Pursue, says he?
Revenge
?-Let the corpse crush
The slimy maggot with its pulpy fingers!-
What if I stabbed-

[
Taking his dagger, and feeling its point
.]

Whom? Her-what then?-Or him-
What yet? Would that give back the life to me?
There is one more-myself! Oh, peace! to feel
The earthworms crawling through my mouldering brain!-
But to be driven along the windy wastes-
To hear the tempests, raving as they turn,
Howl
Lilia, Lilia
-to be tossed about
Beneath the stars that range themselves for ever
Into the burning letters of her name-

'Twere better creep the earth down here than that,
For pain's excess here sometimes deadens pain.

[
He throws the dagger on the floor
.]

Have I deserved this? Have I earned it? I?
A pride of innocence darts through my veins.
I stand erect. Shame cannot touch me. Ha!
I laugh at insult.
I
? I am myself-

Why starest thou at me? Well, stare thy fill;
When devils mock, the angels lend their wings:-
But what their wings? I have nowhere to fly.
Lilia! my worship of thy purity!
Hast thou forgotten-ah! thou didst not know
How, watching by thee in thy fever-pain,
When thy white neck and bosom were laid bare,
I turned my eyes away, and turning drew
With trembling hand white darkness over thee,
Because I knew not thou didst love me then.
Love me! O God in heaven! Is love a thing
That can die thus? Love me! Would, for thy penance,
Thou saw'st but once the heart which thou hast torn-
Shaped all about thy image set within!
But that were fearful! What rage would not, love
Must then do for thee-in mercy I would kill thee,
To save thee from the hell-fire of remorse.
If blood would make thee clean, then blood should flow;
Eager, unwilling, this hand should make thee bleed,
Till, drop by drop, the taint should drop away.
Clean! said I? fit to lie by me in sleep,
My hand upon thy heart!-not fit to lie,
For all thy bleeding, by me in the grave!

[
His eye falls on that likeness of Jesus said to be copied from an
emerald engraved for Tiberius. He gazes, drops on his knees, and

covers his face; remains motionless a long time; then rises very pale,
his lips compressed, his eyes filled with tears
.]

O my poor Lilia! my bewildered child!
How shall I win thee, save thee, make thee mine?
Where art thou wandering? What words in thine ears?
God, can she never more be clean? no more,
Through all the terrible years? Hast thou no well
In all thy heaven, in all thyself, that can
Wash her soul clean? Her body will go down
Into the friendly earth-would it were lying
There in my arms! for there thy rains will come,
Fresh from the sky, slow sinking through the sod,
Summer and winter; and we two should lie
Mouldering away together, gently washed
Into the heart of earth; and part would float
Forth on the sunny breezes that bear clouds
Through the thin air. But her stained soul, my God!
Canst thou not cleanse it? Then should we, when death
Was gone, creep into heaven at last, and sit
In some still place together, glory-shadowed.
None would ask questions there. And I should be
Content to sorrow a little, so I might
But see her with the darling on her knees,
And know that must be pure that dwelt within
The circle of thy glory. Lilia! Lilia!
I scorn the shame rushing from head to foot;
I would endure it endlessly, to save
One thought of thine from his polluting touch;
Saying ever to myself: this is a part
Of my own Lilia; and the world to me
Is nothing since I lost the smiles of her:
Somehow, I know not how, she faded from me,
And this is all that's left of her. My wife!
Soul of my soul! my oneness with myself!
Come back to me; I will be all to thee:
Back to my heart; and we will weep together,
And pray to God together every hour,
That he would show how strong he is to save.
The one that made is able to renew-

I know not how.-I'll hold thy heart to mine,
So close that the defilement needs must go.
My love shall ray thee round, and, strong as fire,
Dart through and through thy soul, till it be cleansed.-
But if she love him? Oh my heart-beat! beat!
Grow not so sick with misery and life,
For fainting will not save thee.-Oh no! no!
She cannot love him as she must love me.
Then if she love him not-oh horrible!-oh God!

[
He stands in a stupor for some minutes
.]

What devil whispered that vile word,
unclean
?
I care not-loving more than that can touch.
Let me be shamed, ay, perish in my shame,
As men call perishing, so she be saved.
Saved! my beloved! my Lilia!-Alas,
Would she were here! oh, I would make her weep,
Till her soul wept itself to purity!
Far, far away! where my love cannot reach.
No, no; she is not gone!

[
Starting and facing wildly through the room
.]

It is a lie-
Deluding blind revenge, not keen-eyed love.
I must do something.-

[
Enter
LILY.]

Ah! there's the precious thing
That shall entice her back.

[

Kneeling and clasping the child to his heart

.]

My little Lily,

I have lost your mother.

Lily

.

Oh!

[

Beginning to weep

.]

She was so pretty,

Somebody has stolen her.

Julian

.

Will you go with me,

And help me look for her?

Lily

.

O yes, I will.

[

Clasping him round the neck

.]

But my head aches so! Will you carry me?

Julian

.

Yes, my own darling. Come, we'll get your bonnet.

Lily

.
Oh! you've been crying, father. You're so white!

[
Putting her finger to his cheek
.]

SCENE XI.-A table in a club-room. Several Gentlemen
seated round
it. To them enter another

.
1st Gentleman

.
Why, Bernard, you look heated! what's the matter?

Bernard

.
Hot work, as looked at; cool enough, as done.

2nd G

.
A good antithesis, as usual, Bernard,
But a shell too hard for the vulgar teeth
Of our impatient curiosity.

Bernard

.
Most unexpectedly I found myself
Spectator of a scene in a home-drama
Worth all stage-tragedies I ever saw.

All

.
What was it? Tell us then. Here, take this seat.

[
He sits at the table, and pours out a glass of wine
.]

Bernard

.
I went to call on Seaford, and was told
He had gone to town. So I, as privileged,
Went to his cabinet to write a note;
Which finished, I came down, and called his valet.
Just as I crossed the hall I heard a voice-
'The Countess Lamballa-is she here to-day?'
And looking toward the door, I caught a glimpse
Of a tall figure, gaunt and stooping, drest
In a blue shabby frock down to his knees,
And on his left arm sat a little child.
The porter gave short answer, with the door
For period to the same; when, like a flash,
It flew wide open, and the serving man
Went reeling, staggering backward to the stairs,
'Gainst which he fell, and, rolling down, lay stunned.
In walked the visitor; but in the moment
Just measured by the closing of the door,
Heavens, what a change! He walked erect, as if
Heading a column, with an eye and face
As if a fountain-shaft of blood had shot
Up suddenly within his wasted frame.
The child sat on his arm quite still and pale,
But with a look of triumph in her eyes.
He glanced in each room opening from the hall,
Set his face for the stair, and came right on-
In every motion calm as glacier's flow,
Save, now and then, a movement, sudden, quick,
Of his right hand across to his left side:
'Twas plain he had been used to carry arms.

3rd G

.
Did no one stop him?

Bernard

.
Stop him? I'd as soon
Have faced a tiger with bare hands. 'Tis easy
In passion to meet passion; but it is
A daunting thing to look on, when the blood
Is going its wonted pace through your own veins.
Besides, this man had something in his face,
With its live eyes, close lips, nostrils distended,
A self-reliance, and a self-command,
That would go right up to its goal, in spite
Of any
no
from any man. I would
As soon have stopped a cannon-ball as him.
Over the porter, lying where he fell,
He strode, and up the stairs. I heard him go-
I listened as it were a ghost that walked
With pallid spectre-child upon its arm-
Along the corridors, from door to door,
Opening and shutting. But at last a sting
Of sudden fear lest he should find the lady,
And mischief follow, shot me up the stairs.
I met him at the top, quiet as at first;
The fire had faded from his eyes; the child
Held in her tiny hand a lady's glove
Of delicate primrose. When he reached the hall,
He turned him to the porter, who had scarce
Recovered what poor wits he had, and saying,
'The count Lamballa waited on lord Seaford,'
Turned him again, and strode into the street.

1st G

.
Have you learned anything of what it meant?

Bernard

.
Of course he had suspicions of his wife:

For all the gifts a woman has to give,
I would not rouse such blood. And yet to see
The gentle fairy child fall kissing him,
And, with her little arms grasping his neck,
Peep anxious round into his shaggy face,
As they went down the street!-it almost made
A fool of me.-I'd marry for such a child!

SCENE XII.-A by-street. JULIAN
walking home very weary. The
child in his arms, her head lying on his shoulder. An Organ-boy
with a monkey, sitting on a door-step. He sings in a low voice

Julian

Look at the monkey, Lily.

Lily

No, dear father;
I do not like monkeys.

Julian

Hear the poor boy sing.

[
They listen. He sings
.]

SONG.

Wenn ich hoere dich mir nah',
Stimmen in den Blaettern da;
Wenn ich fuehl' dich weit und breit,
Vater, das ist Seligkeit.

Nun die Sonne liebend scheint,

Mich mit dir und All vereint;
Biene zu den Blumen fliegt,
Seel' an Lieb' sich liebend schmiegt.

So mich voellig lieb du hast,
Daseyn ist nicht eine Last;
Wenn ich seh' und hoere dich,
Das genuegt mir inniglich.

Lily

.
It sounds so curious. What is he saying, father?

Julian

.
My boy, you are not German?

Boy

.
No; my mother
Came from those parts. She used to sing the song.
I do not understand it well myself,
For I was born in Genoa.-Ah! my mother!

[
Weeps
.]

Julian

.
My mother was a German, my poor boy;
My father was Italian: I am like you.

[
Giving him money
.]

You sing of leaves and sunshine, flowers and bees,

Poor child, upon a stone in the dark street!

Boy

.
My mother sings it in her grave; and I
Will sing it everywhere, until I die.

SCENE XIII.-LILIA'S

room

. JULIAN

enters with the child;
undresses her, and puts her to bed

.

Lily

.
Father does all things for his little Lily.

Julian

.
My own dear Lily! Go to sleep, my pet.

[
Sitting by her
.]

'Wenn ich seh' und hoere dich,
Das genuegt mir inniglich.'

[
Falling on his knees
.]

I come to thee, and, lying on thy breast,
Father of me, I tell thee in thine ear,
Half-shrinking from the sound, yet speaking free,
That thou art not enough for me, my God.
Oh, dearly do I love thee! Look: no fear
Lest thou shouldst be offended, touches me.

Herein I know thy love: mine casts out fear.
O give me back my wife; thou without her
Canst never make me blessed to the full.

[
Silence
.]

O yes; thou art enough for me, my God;
Part of thyself she is, else never mine.
My need of her is but thy thought of me;
She is the offspring of thy beauty, God;
Yea of the womanhood that dwells in thee:
Thou wilt restore her to my very soul.

[
Rising
.]

It may be all a lie. Some needful cause
Keeps her away. Wretch that I am, to think
One moment that my wife could sin against me!
She will come back to-night. I know she will.
I never can forgive my jealousy!
Or that fool-visit to lord Seaford's house!

[
His eyes fall on the glove which the child still holds in her
sleeping hand. He takes it gently away, and hides it in
his bosom
.]

It will be all explained. To think I should,
Without one word from her, condemn her so!
What can I say to her when she returns?
I shall be utterly ashamed before her.
She will come back to-night. I know she will.

[
He throws himself wearily on the bed
.]

SCENE XIV.-Crowd about the Italian Opera-House. JULIAN. LILY

in his arms
. Three Students.

1st Student

.
Edward, you see that long, lank, thread-bare man?
There is a character for that same novel
You talk of thunder-striking London with,
One of these days.

2nd St

.
I scarcely noticed him;
I was so taken with the lovely child.
She is angelic.

3rd St

.
You see angels always,
Where others, less dim-sighted, see but mortals.
She is a pretty child. Her eyes are splendid.
I wonder what the old fellow is about.
Some crazed enthusiast, music-distract,
That lingers at the door he cannot enter!
Give him an obol, Frank, to pay old Charon,
And cross to the Elysium of sweet sounds.
Here's mine.

1st St

.
And mine.

2nd St

.

And mine.

[3rd Student
offers the money to
JULIAN.]

Julian

(very quietly).
No, thank you, sir.

Lily

.
Oh! there is mother!

[
Stretching-her hands toward a lady stepping out of a carriage
.]

Julian

.
No, no; hush, my child!

[
The lady looks round, and
LILY
clings to her father

.
Women
talking
.]

1st W

.
I'm sure he's stolen the child. She can't be his.

2nd W

.
There's a suspicious look about him.

3rd W

True;
But the child clings to him as if she loved him.

[JULIAN
moves on slowly
.]

SCENE XV.-JULIAN
seated in his room, his eyes fixed on the floor

.
LILY
playing in a corner
.

Julian

.
Though I am lonely, yet this little child-
She understands me better than the Twelve
Knew the great heart of him they called their Lord.
Ten times last night I woke in agony,
I knew not why. There was no comforter.
I stretched my arm to find her, and her place
Was empty as my heart. Sometimes my pain
Forgets its cause, benumbed by its own being;
Then would I lay my aching, weary head
Upon her bosom, promise of relief:
I lift my eyes, and Lo, the vacant world!

[
He looks up and sees the child playing with his dagger
.]

You'll hurt yourself, my child; it is too sharp.
Give it to me, my darling. Thank you, dear.

[
He breaks the hilt from the blade and gives it her
.]

'Here, take the pretty part. It's not so pretty
As it was once!

[
Thinking aloud
.]

I picked the jewels out
To buy your mother the last dress I gave her.
There's just one left, I see, for you, my Lily.
Why did I kill Nembroni? Poor saviour I,
Saving thee only for a greater ill!
If thou wert dead, the child would comfort me;-
Is she not part of thee, and all my own?
But now--

Lily

(
throwing down the dagger-hilt and running up to him
).
Father, what is a poetry?

Julian

.
A beautiful thing,-of the most beautiful
That God has made.

Lily

.
As beautiful as mother?

Julian

.
No, my dear child; but very beautiful.

Lily

.

Do let me see a poetry.

Julian

(opening a book).

There, love!

Lily

(disappointedly).

I don't think that's so very pretty, father.

One side is very well-smooth; but the other

[

Rubbing her finger up and down the ends of the lines

.]

Is rough, rough; just like my hair in the morning,

[

Smoothing her hair down with both hands

.]

Before it's brushed. I don't care much about it.

Julian

(putting the book down, and taking her on his knee).

You do not understand it yet, my child.

You cannot know where it is beautiful.

But though you do not see it very pretty,

Perhaps your little ears could hear it pretty.

[

He reads

.]

Lily

(looking pleased).

Oh! that's much prettier, father. Very pretty.

It sounds so nice!-not half so pretty as mother.

Julian

.

There's something in it very beautiful,

If I could let you see it. When you're older

You'll find it for yourself, and love it well.

Do you believe me, Lily?

Lily

.

Yes, dear father.

[

Kissing him, then looking at the book

.]

I wonder where its prettiness is, though;

I cannot see it anywhere at all.

[

He sets her down. She goes to her corner

.]

Julian

(musing).

True, there's not much in me to love, and yet

I feel worth loving. I am very poor,

But that I could not help; and I grow old,

But there are saints in heaven older than I.

I have a world within me; there I thought

I had a store of lovely, precious things
Laid up for thinking; shady woods, and grass;
Clear streams rejoicing down their sloping channels;
And glimmering daylight in the cloven east;
There morning sunbeams stand, a vapoury column,
'Twixt the dark boles of solemn forest trees;
There, spokes of the sun-wheel, that cross their bridge,
Break through the arch of the clouds, fall on the earth,
And travel round, as the wind blows the clouds:
The distant meadows and the gloomy river
Shine out as over them the ray-pencil sweeps.-
Alas! where am I? Beauty now is torture:
Of this fair world I would have made her queen;-
Then led her through the shadowy gates beyond
Into that farther world of things unspoken,
Of which these glories are the outer stars,
The clouds that float within its atmosphere.
Under the holy might of teaching love,
I thought her eyes would open-see how, far
And near, Truth spreads her empire, widening out,
And brooding, a still spirit, everywhere;
Thought she would turn into her spirit's chamber,
Open the little window, and look forth
On the wide silent ocean, silent winds,
And see what she must see, I could not tell.
By sounding mighty chords I strove to wake
The sleeping music of her poet-soul:
We read together many magic words;
Gazed on the forms and hues of ancient art;
Sent forth our souls on the same tide of sound;
Worshipped beneath the same high temple-roofs;
And evermore I talked. I was too proud,
Too confident of power to waken life,
Believing in my might upon her heart,
Not trusting in the strength of living truth.
Unhappy saviour, who by force of self
Would save from selfishness and narrow needs!
I have not been a saviour. She grew weary.
I began wrong. The infinitely High,
Made manifest in lowliness, had been
The first, one lesson. Had I brought her there,
And set her down by humble Mary's side,

He would have taught her all I could not teach.
Yet, O my God! why hast thou made me thus
Terribly wretched, and beyond relief?

[
He looks up and sees that the child has taken the book
to her corner. She peeps into it; then holds it to her ear;
then rubs her hand over it; then puts her tongue on it
.]

Julian
(bursting into tears).
Father, I am thy
child
. .
Forgive me this:
Thy poetry is very hard to read.

SCENE XVI.-JULIAN
walking with
LILY
through one of the squares
. .

Lily
. .
Wish we could find her somewhere. 'Tis so sad
Not to have any mother! Shall I ask
This gentleman if he knows where she is?

Julian
. .
No, no, my love; we'll find her by and by.

BERNARD. and another Gentleman talking together.

Bernard

.

Have you seen Seaford lately?

Gentleman

.

No. In fact,
He vanished somewhat oddly, days ago.
Sam saw him with a lady in his cab;
And if I hear aright, one more is missing-
Just the companion for his lordship's taste.
You've not forgot that fine Italian woman
You met there once, some months ago?

Bern

.

Forgot her!
I have to try though, sometimes-hard enough:
Her husband is alive!

Lily

.

Mother was Italy, father,-was she not?

Julian

.

Hush, hush, my child! you must not say a word.

Gentleman

.

Oh, yes; no doubt!
But what of that?-a poor half-crazy creature!

Bern

.

Something quite different, I assure you, Harry.

Last week I saw him-never to forget him-
Ranging through Seaford's house, like the questing beast.

Gentleman

.
Better please two than one, he thought-and wisely.
'Tis not for me to blame him: she is a prize
Worth sinning for a little more than little.

Lily

(whispering).
Why don't you ask them whether it was mother?
I am sure it was. I am quite sure of it.

Gentleman

.
Look what a lovely child!

Bern

.
Harry! Good heavens!
It is the Count Lamballa. Come along.

SCENE XVII.-Julian's room. JULIAN. LILY
asleep

.

Julian

.
I thank thee. Thou hast comforted me, thou,
To whom I never lift my soul, in hope
To reach thee with my thinking, but the tears
Swell up and fill my eyes from the full heart
That cannot hold the thought of thee, the thought
Of him in whom I live, who lives in me,
And makes me live in him; by whose one thought,

Alone, unreachable, the making thought,
Infinite and self-bounded, I am here,
A living, thinking will, that cannot know
The power whereby I am-so blest the more
In being thus in thee-Father, thy child.
I cannot, cannot speak the thoughts in me.
My being shares thy glory: lay on me
What thou wouldst have me bear. Do thou with me
Whate'er thou wilt. Tell me thy will, that I
May do it as my best, my highest joy;
For thou dost work in me, I dwell in thee.

Wilt thou not save my wife? I cannot know
The power in thee to purify from sin.
But Life
can
cleanse the life it lived alive.
Thou knowest all that lesseneth her fault.
She loves me not, I know-ah, my sick heart!-
I will love her the more, to fill the cup;
One bond is snapped, the other shall be doubled;
For if I love her not, how desolate
The poor child will be left!
he
loves her not.

I have but one prayer more to pray to thee:-
Give me my wife again, that I may watch
And weep with her, and pray with her, and tell
What loving-kindness I have found in thee;
And she will come to thee to make her clean.
Her soul must wake as from a dream of bliss,
To know a dead one lieth in the house:
Let me be near her in that agony,
To tend her in the fever of the soul,
Bring her cool waters from the wells of hope,
Look forth and tell her that the morn is nigh;
And when I cannot comfort, help her weep.
God, I would give her love like thine to me,

Because
I love her, and her need is great.

Lord, I need her far more than thou need'st me,
And thou art Love down to the deeps of hell:
Help me to love her with a love like thine.

How shall I find her? It were horrible
If the dread hour should come, and I not near.
Yet pray I not she should be spared one pang,
One writhing of self-loathing and remorse,
For she must hate the evil she has done;
Only take not away hope utterly.

Lily
(in her sleep).
Lily means me-don't throw it over the wall.

Julian
(going to her).
She is so flushed! I fear the child is ill.
I have fatigued her too much, wandering restless.
To-morrow I will take her to the sea.

[
Returning
.]

If I knew where, I would write to her, and write
So tenderly, she could not choose but come.
I will write now; I'll tell her that strange dream
I dreamed last night: 'twill comfort her as well.

[
He sits down and writes
.]

My heart was crushed that I could hardly breathe.
I was alone upon a desolate moor;
And the wind blew by fits and died away-
I know not if it was the wind or me.
How long I wandered there, I cannot tell;
But some one came and took me by the hand.

I gazed, but could not see the form that led me,
And went unquestioning, I cared not whither.
We came into a street I seemed to know,
Came to a house that I had seen before.
The shutters were all closed; the house was dead.
The door went open soundless. We went in,
And entered yet again an inner room.
The darkness was so dense, I shrank as if
From striking on it. The door closed behind.
And then I saw that there was something black,
Dark in the blackness of the night, heaved up
In the middle of the room. And then I saw
That there were shapes of woe all round the room,
Like women in long mantles, bent in grief,
With long veils hanging low down from their heads,
All blacker in the darkness. Not a sound
Broke the death-stillness. Then the shapeless thing
Began to move. Four horrid muffled figures
Had lifted, bore it from the room. We followed,
The bending woman-shapes, and I. We left
The house in long procession. I was walking
Alone beside the coffin-such it was-
Now in the glimmering light I saw the thing.
And now I saw and knew the woman-shapes:
Undine clothed in spray, and heaving up
White arms of lamentation; Desdemona
In her night-robe, crimson on the left side;
Thekla in black, with resolute white face;
And Margaret in fetters, gliding slow-
That last look, when she shrieked on Henry, frozen
Upon her face. And many more I knew-
Long-suffering women, true in heart and life;
Women that make man proud for very love
Of their humility, and of his pride
Ashamed. And in the coffin lay my wife.
On, on, we went. The scene changed, and low hills
Began to rise on each side of the path
Until at last we came into a glen,
From which the mountains soared abrupt to heaven,
Shot cones and pinnacles into the skies.
Upon the eastern side one mighty summit
Shone with its snow faint through the dusky air;

And on its sides the glaciers gave a tint,
A dull metallic gleam, to the slow night.
From base to top, on climbing peak and crag,
Ay, on the glaciers' breast, were human shapes,
Motionless, waiting; men that trod the earth
Like gods; or forms ideal that inspired
Great men of old-up, even to the apex
Of the snow-spear-point.

Morning

had arisen

From Giulian's tomb in Florence, where the chisel
Of Michelangelo laid him reclining,
And stood upon the crest.

A cry awoke

Amid the watchers at the lowest base,
And swelling rose, and sprang from mouth to mouth,
Up the vast mountain, to its aerial top;

And '

Is God coming

?' was the cry; which died

Away in silence; for no voice said

No

.

The bearers stood and set the coffin down;
The mourners gathered round it in a group;
Somewhat apart I stood, I know not why.
So minutes passed. Again that cry awoke,
And clomb the mountain-side, and died away
In the thin air, far-lost. No answer came.

How long we waited thus, I cannot tell-
How oft the cry arose and died again.

At last, from far, faint summit to the base,
Filling the mountain with a throng of echoes,
A mighty voice descended: '

God is coming

!'

Oh! what a music clothed the mountain-side,
From all that multitude's melodious throats,
Of joy and lamentation and strong prayer!
It ceased, for hope was too intense for song.

A pause.-The figure on the crest flashed out,
Bordered with light. The sun was rising-rose
Higher and higher still. One ray fell keen
Upon the coffin 'mid the circling group.

What God did for the rest, I know not; it
Was easy to help them.-I saw them not.-
I saw thee at my feet, my wife, my own!
Thy lovely face angelic now with grief;
But that I saw not first: thy head was bent,
Thou on thy knees, thy dear hands clasped between.
I sought to raise thee, but thou wouldst not rise,
Once only lifting that sweet face to mine,
Then turning it to earth. Would God the dream
Had lasted ever!-No; 'twas but a dream;
Thou art not rescued yet.

Earth's morning came,
And my soul's morning died in tearful gray.
The last I saw was thy white shroud yet steeped
In that sun-glory, all-transfiguring;
The last I heard, a chant break suddenly
Into an anthem. Silence took me like sound:
I had not listened in the excess of joy.

SCENE XVIII.-Portsmouth.

A bedroom

. LORD SEAFORD. LADY GERTRUDE.

Lord S

.
Tis for your sake, my Gertrude, I am sorry.
If you could go alone, I'd have you go.

Lady Gertrude

.
And leave you ill? No, you are not so cruel.
Believe me, father, I am happier
In your sick room, than on a glowing island
In the blue Bay of Naples.

Lord S

.

It was so sudden!

'Tis plain it will not go again as quickly.

But have your walk before the sun be hot.

Put the ice near me, child. There, that will do.

Lady Gertrude

.

Good-bye then, father, for a little
while.

[

Goes

.]

Lord S

.

I never knew what illness was before.

O life! to think a man should stand so little

On his own will and choice, as to be thus

Cast from his high throne suddenly, and sent

To grovel beast-like. All the glow is gone

From the rich world! No sense is left me more

To touch with beauty. Even she has faded

Into the far horizon, a spent dream

Of love and loss and passionate despair!

Is there no beauty? Is it all a show

Flung outward from the healthy blood and nerves,

A reflex of well-ordered organism?

Is earth a desert? Is a woman's heart

No more mysterious, no more beautiful,

Than I am to myself this ghastly moment?

It must be so-it

must

, except God is,

And means the meaning that we think we see,

Sends forth the beauty we are taking in.
O Soul of nature, if thou art not, if
There dwelt not in thy thought the primrose-flower
Before it blew on any bank of spring,
Then all is untruth, unreality,
And we are wretched things; our highest needs
Are less than we, the offspring of ourselves;
And when we are sick, they
are
not; and our hearts
Die with the voidness of the universe.

But if thou art, O God, then all is true;
Nor are thy thoughts less radiant than our eyes
Are filmy, and the weary, troubled brain
Throbs in an endless round of its own dreams.
And she
is
beautiful-and I have lost her!

O God! thou art, thou art; and I have sinned
Against thy beauty and thy graciousness!
That woman-splendour was not mine, but thine.
Thy thought passed into form, that glory passed
Before my eyes, a bright particular star:
Like foolish child, I reached out for the star,
Nor kneeled, nor worshipped. I will be content
That she, the Beautiful, dwells on in thee,
Mine to revere, though not to call my own.
Forgive me, God! Forgive me, Lilia!

My love has taken vengeance on my love.
I writhe and moan. Yet I will be content.
Yea, gladly will I yield thee, so to find
That thou art not a phantom, but God's child;
That Beauty is, though it is not for me.
When I would hold it, then I disbelieved.
That I may yet believe, I will not touch it.
I have sinned against the Soul of love and beauty,
Denying him in grasping at his work.

SCENE XIX.-A country churchyard. JULIAN
seated on a tombstone

.
LILY

gathering flowers and grass among the grass
.

Julian

.
O soft place of the earth! down-pillowed couch,
Made ready for the weary! Everywhere,
O Earth, thou hast one gift for thy poor children-
Room to lie down, leave to cease standing up,
Leave to return to thee, and in thy bosom
Lie in the luxury of primeval peace,
Fearless of any morn; as a new babe
Lies nestling in his mother's arms in bed:
That home of blessedness is all there is;
He never feels the silent rushing tide,
Strong setting for the sea, which bears him on,
Unconscious, helpless, to wide consciousness.
But thou, thank God, hast this warm bed at last
Ready for him when weary: well the green
Close-matted coverlid shuts out the dawn.
O Lilia, would it were our wedding bed
To which I bore thee with a nobler joy!
-Alas! there's no such rest: I only dream
Poor pagan dreams with a tired Christian brain.

How couldst thou leave me, my poor child? my heart
Was all so tender to thee! But I fear
My face was not. Alas! I was perplexed
With questions to be solved, before my face
Could turn to thee in peace: thy part in me
Fared ill in troubled workings of the brain.
Ah, now I know I did not well for thee
In making thee my wife! I should have gone
Alone into eternity. I was
Too rough for thee, for any tender woman-
Other I had not loved-so full of fancies!
Too given to meditation. A deed of love

Is stronger than a metaphysic truth;
Smiles better teachers are than mightiest words.
Thou, who wast life, not thought, how couldst thou help it?
How love me on, withdrawn from all thy sight-
For life must ever need the shows of life?
How fail to love a man so like thyself,
Whose manhood sought thy fainting womanhood?
I brought thee pine-boughs, rich in hanging cones,
But never white flowers, rubied at the heart.
O God, forgive me; it is all my fault.
Would I have had dead Love, pain-galvanized,
Led fettered after me by gaoler Duty?
Thou gavest me a woman rich in heart,
And I have kept her like a caged seamew
Starved by a boy, who weeps when it is dead.
O God, my eyes are opening-fearfully:
I know it now-'twas pride, yes, very pride,
That kept me back from speaking all my soul.
I was self-haunted, self-possessed-the worst
Of all possessions. Wherefore did I never
Cast all my being, life and all, on hers,
In burning words of openness and truth?
Why never fling my doubts, my hopes, my love,
Prone at her feet abandonedly? Why not
Have been content to minister and wait;
And if she answered not to my desires,
Have smiled and waited patient? God, they say,
Gives to his aloe years to breed its flower:
I gave not five years to a woman's soul!
Had I not drunk at last old wine of love?
I shut her love back on her lovely heart;
I did not shield her in the wintry day;
And she has withered up and died and gone.
God, let me perish, so thy beautiful
Be brought with gladness and with singing home.
If thou wilt give her back to me, I vow
To be her slave, and serve her with my soul.
I in my hand will take my heart, and burn
Sweet perfumes on it to relieve her pain.
I, I have ruined her-O God, save thou!

[

His bends his head upon his knees
. LILY
comes running up
to him, stumbling over the graves
.]

Lily

.
Why do they make so many hillocks, father?
The flowers would grow without them.

Julian

.
So they would.

Lily

.
What are they for, then?

Julian

(aside).
I wish I had not brought her;
She
will
ask questions. I must tell her all.

(
Aloud
).

'Tis where they lay them when the story's done.

Lily

.
What! lay the boys and girls?

Julian

.

Yes, my own child-

To keep them warm till it begin again.

Lily

.

Is it dark down there?

[

Clinging to

JULIAN,

and pointing down

.]

Julian

.

Yes, it is dark; but pleasant-oh, so sweet!

For out of there come all the pretty flowers.

Lily

.

Did the church grow out of there, with the long stalk

That tries to touch the little frightened clouds?

Julian

.

It did, my darling.-There's a door down there

That leads away to where the church is pointing.

[

She is silent for some time, and keeps looking first down and
then up

. JULIAN

carries her away

.]

SCENE XX.-Portsmouth. LORD SEAFORD,
partially recovered
. Enter
LADY GERTRUDE
and
BERNARD.

Lady Gertrude

.
I have found an old friend, father. Here he is!

Lord S

.
Bernard! Who would have thought to see you here!

Bern

.
I came on Lady Gertrude in the street.
I know not which of us was more surprised.

[LADY GERTRUDE
goes
.]

Bern

.
Where is the countess?

Lord S

.
Countess! What do you mean? I do not know.

Bern

.
The Italian lady.

Lord S

.

Countess Lamballa, do you mean? You frighten me!

Bern

.

I am glad indeed to know your ignorance;
For since I saw the count, I would not have you
Wrong one gray hair upon his noble head.

[LORD SEAFORD

covers his eyes with his hands

.]

You have not then heard the news about yourself?
Such interesting echoes reach the last
A man's own ear. The public has decreed
You and the countess run away together.
'Tis certain she has balked the London Argos,
And that she has been often to your house.
The count believes it-clearly from his face:
The man is dying slowly on his feet.

Lord S

. (starting up and ringing the bell)
O God! what am I? My love burns like hate,
Scorching and blasting with a fiery breath!

Bern

.

What the deuce ails you, Seaford? Are you raving?

Enter

Waiter

.

Lord S

.
Post-chaise for London-four horses-instantly.

[
He sinks exhausted in his chair
.]

SCENE XXI.-LILY

in bed

. JULIAN

seated by her

.

Lily

.
O father, take me on your knee, and nurse me.
Another story is very nearly done.

[
He takes her on his knees
.]

I am so tired! Think I should like to go
Down to the warm place that the flowers come from,
Where all the little boys and girls are lying
In little beds-white curtains, and white tassels.
-No, no, no-it is so dark down there!
Father will not come near me all the night.

Julian

.
You shall not go, my darling; I will keep you.

Lily

.
O will you keep me always, father dear?
And though I sleep ever so sound, still keep me?
Oh, I should be so happy, never to move!

'Tis such a dear well place, here in your arms!
Don't let it take me; do not let me go:
I cannot leave you, father-love hurts so.

Julian

.
Yes, darling; love does hurt. It is too good
Never to hurt. Shall I walk with you now,
And try to make you sleep?

Lily

.
Yes-no; for I should leave you then. Oh, my head!
Mother, mother, dear mother!-Sing to me, father.

[
He tries to sing
.]

Oh the hurt, the hurt, and the hurt of love!
Wherever the sun shines, the waters go.
It hurts the snowdrop, it hurts the dove,
God on his throne, and man below.

But sun would not shine, nor waters go,
Snowdrop tremble, nor fair dove moan,
God be on high, nor man below,
But for love-for the love with its hurt alone.

Thou knowest, O Saviour, its hurt and its sorrows;
Didst rescue its joy by the might of thy pain:
Lord of all yesterdays, days, and to-morrows,
Help us love on in the hope of thy gain;

Hurt as it may, love on, love for ever;
Love for love's sake, like the Father above,
But for whose brave-hearted Son we had never
Known the sweet hurt of the sorrowful love.

[

She sleeps at last. He sits as before, with the child
leaning on his bosom, and falls into a kind of stupor, in
which he talks
.]

Julian

.
A voice comes from the vacant, wide sea-vault:

Man with the heart, praying for woman's love,
Receive thy prayer; be loved; and take thy choice:
Take this or this

. O Heaven and Earth! I see-What
is it? Statue trembling into life
With the first rosy flush upon the skin?
Or woman-angel, richer by lack of wings?
I see her-where I know not; for I see
Nought else: she filleth space, and eyes, and brain-
God keep me!-in celestial nakedness.
She leaneth forward, looking down in space,
With large eyes full of longing, made intense
By mingled fear of something yet unknown;
Her arms thrown forward, circling half; her hands
Half lifted, and half circling, like her arms.

O heavenly artist! whither hast thou gone
To find my own ideal womanhood-
Glory grown grace, divine to human grown?

I hear the voice again:

Speak but the word:

She will array herself and come to thee.
Lo, at her white foot lie her daylight clothes,
Her earthly dress for work and weary rest
!

-I see a woman-form, laid as in sleep,
Close by the white foot of the wonderful.
It is the same shape, line for line, as she.
Long grass and daisies shadow round her limbs.
Why speak I not the word?---Clothe thee, and come,
O infinite woman! my life faints for thee.

Once more the voice:
Stay! look on this side first:
I spake of choice. Look here, O son of man!
Choose then between them
. Ah! ah!

[
Silence
.]

Her I knew
Some ages gone; the woman who did sail
Down a long river with me to the sea;
Who gave her lips up freely to my lips,
Her body willingly into my arms;
Came down from off her statue-pedestal,
And was a woman in a common house,
Not beautified by fancy every day,
And losing worship by her gifts to me.
She gave me that white child-what came of her?
I have forgot.-I opened her great heart,
And filled it half-way to the brim with love-
With love half wine, half vinegar and gall-
And so-and so-she-went away and died?
O God! what was it?-something terrible-
I will not stay to choose, or look again
Upon the beautiful. Give me my wife,
The woman of the old time on the earth.
O lovely spirit, fold not thy parted hands,
Nor let thy hair weep like a sunset-rain

If thou descend to earth, and find no man
To love thee purely, strongly, in his will,
Even as he loves the truth, because he will,
And when he cannot see it beautiful-
Then thou mayst weep, and I will help thee weep.
Voice, speak again, and tell my wife to come.

'Tis she, 'tis she, low-kneeling at my feet!
In the same dress, same flowing of the hair,
As long ago, on earth: is her face changed?

Sweet, my love rains on thee, like a warm shower;
My dove descending rests upon thy head;
I bless and sanctify thee for my own:
Lift up thy face, and let me look on thee.

Heavens, what a face! 'Tis hers! It is not hers!
She rises-turns it up from me to God,
With great rapt orbs, and such a brow!-the stars
Might find new orbits there, and be content.
O blessed lips, so sweetly closed that sure
Their opening must be prophecy or song!
A high-entranced maiden, ever pure,
And thronged with burning thoughts of God and Truth!

Vanish her garments; vanishes the silk
That the worm spun, the linen of the flax;-
O heavens! she standeth there, my statue-form,
With the rich golden torrent-hair, white feet,
And hands with rosy palms-my own ideal!
The woman of
my
world, with deeper eyes
Than I had power to think-and yet my Lilia,
My wife, with homely airs of earth about her,
And dearer to my heart as my lost wife,
Than to my soul as its new-found ideal!
Oh, Lilia! teach me; at thy knees I kneel:
Make me thy scholar; speak, and I will hear.
Yea, all eternity-

[
He is roused by a cry from the child
.]

Lily
.
Oh, father! put your arms close round about me.
Kiss me. Kiss me harder, father dear.
Now! I am better now.

[

She looks long and passionately in his face. Her eyes close; her head drops backward. She is dead .]

SCENE XXII.-

A cottage-room

. LILIA

folding a letter

.

Lilia

.

Now I have told him all; no word kept back
To burn within me like an evil fire.
And where I am, I have told him; and I wait
To know his will. What though he love me not,
If I love him!-I will go back to him,
And wait on him submissive. Tis enough
For one life, to be servant to that man!
It was but pride-at best, love stained with pride,
That drove me from him. He and my sweet child
Must miss my hands, if not my eyes and heart.
How lonely is my Lily all the day,
Till he comes home and makes her paradise!

I go to be his servant. Every word
That comes from him softer than a command,
I'll count it gain, and lay it in my heart,
And serve him better for it.-He will receive me.

SCENE XXIII.-LILY

lying dead

. JULIAN

bending over her

.

Julian

.

The light of setting suns be on thee, child!
Nay, nay, my child, the light of rising suns
Is on thee! Joy is with thee-God is Joy;
Peace to himself, and unto us deep joy;
Joy to himself, in the reflex of our joy.
Love be with thee! yea God, for he is Love.
Thou wilt need love, even God's, to give thee joy.

Children, they say, are born into a world
Where grief is their first portion: thou, I think,
Never hadst much of grief-thy second birth
Into the spirit-world has taught thee grief,
If, orphaned now, thou know'st thy mother's story,
And know'st thy father's hardness. O my God,
Let not my Lily turn away from me.

Now I am free to follow and find her.
Thy truer Father took thee home to him,
That he might grant my prayer, and save my wife.
I thank him for his gift of thee; for all
That thou hast taught me, blessed little child.
I love thee, dear, with an eternal love.
And now farewell!

[
Kissing her
.]

-no, not farewell; I come.
Years hold not back, they lead me on to thee.
Yes, they will also lead me on to her.

Enter a Jew

.

Jew

.

What is your pleasure with me? Here I am, sir.

Julian

.
Walk into the next room; then look at this,
And tell me what you'll give for everything.

[
Jew goes
.]

My darling's death has made me almost happy.
Now, now I follow, follow. I'm young again.
When I have laid my little one to rest
Among the flowers in that same sunny spot,
Straight from her grave I'll take my pilgrim-way;
And, calling up all old forgotten skill,
Lapsed social claims, and knowledge of mankind,
I'll be a man once more in the loud world.
Revived experience in its winding ways,
Senses and wits made sharp by sleepless love,
If all the world were sworn to secrecy,
Will guide me to her, sure as questing Death.
I'll follow my wife, follow until I die.
How shall I face the Shepherd of the sheep,
Without the one ewe-lamb he gave to me?
How find her in great Hades, if not here
In this poor little round O of a world?
I'll follow my wife, follow until I find.

Re-enter
Jew.

Well, how much? Name your sum. Be liberal.

Jew

.
Let me see this room, too. The things are all
Old-fashioned and ill-kept. They're worth but little.

Julian

.

Say what you will-only make haste and go.

Jew

.

Say twenty pounds?

Julian

.

Well, fetch the money at once,
And take possession. But make haste, I pray.

SCENE XXIV.-The country-churchyard. JULIAN
standing by
LILY'S

new-filled grave. He looks very worn and ill

.

Julian

.

Now I can leave thee safely to thy sleep;
Thou wilt not wake and miss me, my fair child!
Nor will they, for she's fair, steal this ewe-lamb
Out of this fold, while I am gone to seek
And find the wandering mother of my lamb.
I cannot weep; I know thee with me still.
Thou dost not find it very dark down there?
Would I could go to thee; I long to go;
My limbs are tired; my eyes are sleepy too;
And fain my heart would cease this beat, beat, beat.
O gladly would I come to thee, my child,
And lay my head upon thy little heart,
And sleep in the divine munificence
Of thy great love! But my night has not come;
She is not rescued yet. Good-bye, little one.

[

He turns, but sinks on the grave. Recovering and rising

.]

Now for the world-that's Italy, and her!

SCENE XXV.-The empty room, formerly Lilia's.

Enter

JULIAN.

Julian

.

How am I here? Alas! I do not know.

I should have been at sea.-Ah, now I know!

I have come here to die.

[

Lies down on the floor

.]

Where's Lilia?

I cannot find her. She is here, I know.

But oh these endless passages and stairs,

And dreadful shafts of darkness! Lilia!

Lilia! wait for me, child; I'm coming fast,

But something holds me. Let me go, devil!

My Lilia, have faith; they cannot hurt you.

You are God's child-they dare not touch you, wife.

O pardon me, my beautiful, my own!

[

Sings

.]

Wind, wind, thou blowest many a drifting thing

From sheltering cove, down to the unsheltered sea;

Thou blowest to the sea ray blue sail's wing-

Us to a new, love-lit futurity:

Out to the ocean fleet and float-

Blow, blow my little leaf-like boat.

[
While he sings, enter
LORD SEAFORD,
pale and haggard
.]

JULIAN
descries him suddenly

.
What are you, man? O brother, bury me-
There's money in my pocket-

[
Emptying the Jew's gold on the floor
.]

by my child.

[
Staring at him
.]

Oh! you are Death. Go, saddle the pale horse-
I will not walk-I'll ride. What, skeleton!

I cannot sit him
! ha! ha! Hither, brute!
Here, Lilia, do the lady's task, my child,
And buckle on my spurs. I'll send him up
With a gleam through the blue, snorting white foam-flakes.
Ah me! I have not won my golden spurs,
Nor is there any maid to bind them on:

I will not ride the horse, I'll walk with thee.
Come, Death, give me thine arm, good slave!-we'll go.

Lord Seaford
(stooping over him).
I am Seaford, Count.

Julian

.

Seaford! What Seaford?

[
Recollecting
.]

-Seaford
!

[
Springing to his feet
.]

Where is my wife?

[
He falls into SEAFORD'S arms. He lays him down
.]

Lord S

.

Had I seen
him
, she had been safe for me.

[
Goes
.]

[JULIAN
lies motionless. Insensibility passes into sleep. He
wakes calm, in the sultry dusk of a summer evening
.]

Julian

.

Still, still alive! I thought that I was dead.
I had a frightful dream. 'Tis gone, thank God!

[
He is quiet a little
.]

So then thou didst not take the child away
That I might find my wife! Thy will be done.
Thou wilt not let me go. This last desire
I send away with grief, but willingly.
I have prayed to thee, and thou hast heard my prayer:
Take thou thine own way, only lead her home.
Cleanse her, O Lord. I cannot know thy might;
But thou art mighty, with a power unlike
All, all that we know by the name of power,
Transcending it as intellect transcends
'The stone upon the ground-it may be more,
For these are both created-thou creator,
Lonely, supreme.

Now it is almost over,
My spirit's journey through this strange sad world;
This part is done, whatever cometh next.
Morning and evening have made out their day;
My sun is going down in stormy dark,
But I will face it fearless.
The first act Is over of the drama.-Is it so?
What means this dim dawn of half-memories?

There's something I knew once and know not now!-
A something different from all this earth!
It matters little; I care not-only know
That God will keep the living thing he made.
How mighty must he be to have the right
Of swaying this great power I feel I am-
Moulding and forming it, as pleaseth him!
O God, I come to thee! thou art my life;
O God, thou art my home; I come to thee.

Can this be death? Lo! I am lifted up
Large-eyed into the night. Nothing I see

But that which
is
, the living awful Truth-
All forms of which are but the sparks flung out
From the luminous ocean clothing round the sun,
Himself all dark. Ah, I remember me:
Christ said to Martha-'Whosoever liveth,
And doth believe in me, shall never die'!
I wait, I wait, wait wondering, till the door
Of God's wide theatre be open flung
To let me in. What marvels I shall see!
The expectation fills me, like new life
Dancing through all my veins.

Once more I thank thee
For all that thou hast made me-most of all,
That thou didst make me wonder and seek thee.
I thank thee for my wife: to thee I trust her;
Forget her not, my God. If thou save her,
I shall be able then to thank thee so
As will content thee-with full-flowing song,
The very bubbles on whose dancing waves
Are daring thoughts flung faithful at thy feet.

My heart sinks in me.-I grow faint. Oh! whence
This wind of love that fans me out of life?
One stoops to kiss me!-Ah, my lily child!
God hath not flung thee over his garden-wall.

[
Re-enter
LORD SEAFORD
with the doctor
. JULIAN
takes no
heed of them. The doctor shakes his head
.]

My little child, I'll never leave thee more;
We are both children now in God's big house.
Come, lead me; you are older here than I
By three whole days, my darling angel-child!

[
A letter is brought in
. LORD SEAFORD
holds it before

JULIAN'S
eyes. He looks vaguely at it
.]

Lord S
.
It is a letter from your wife, I think.

Julian
(feebly).
A letter from my Lilia! Bury it with me-
I'll read it in my chamber, by and by:
Dear words should not be read with others nigh.
Lilia, my wife! I am going home to God.

Lord S
. (pending over him)
Your wife is innocent. I
know
she is.

JULIAN
gazes at him blankly. A light begins to grow in his
eyes. It grows till his face is transfigured. It vanishes.
He dies
.

George MacDonald

Within And Without: Part V: A Dramatic Poem

AND do not fear to hope. Can poet's brain
More than the Father's heart rich good invent?
Each time we smell the autumn's dying scent,
We know the primrose time will come again;
Not more we hope, nor less would soothe our pain.
Be bounteous in thy faith, for not mis-spent
Is confidence unto the Father lent:
Thy need is sown and rooted for his rain.
His thoughts are as thine own; nor are his ways
Other than thine, but by pure opulence
Of beauty infinite and love immense.
Work on. One day, beyond all thoughts of praise,
A sunny joy will crown thee with its rays;
Nor other than thy need, thy recompense.

A DREAM.

SCENE I.-'

A world not realized

.' LILY.

To her

JULIAN.

Lily

.

O father, come with me! I have found her-mother!

SCENE II.-A room in a cottage. LILIA

on her knees before a

crucifix. Her back only is seen, for the Poet dares not look on her
face. On a chair beside her lies a book, open at CHAPTER VIII.

Behind her stands an Angel, bending forward, as if to protect her
with his wings partly expanded. Appear

JULIAN,

with

LILY

in his

arms

. LILY

looks with love on the angel, and a kind of longing
fear on her mother

.

Julian

.

Angel, thy part is done; leave her to me.

Angel

.

Sorrowful man, to thee I must give place;

Thy ministry is stronger far than mine;

Yet have I done my part.-She sat with him.

He gave her rich white flowers with crimson scent,

The tuberose and datura ever burning

Their incense to the dusky face of night.

He spoke to her pure words of lofty sense,

But tinged with poison for a tranced ear.

He bade low music sound of faint farewells,

Which fixed her eyes upon a leafy picture,

Wherein she wandered through an amber twilight

Toward a still grave in a sleepy nook.

And ever and anon she sipped pale wine,

Rose-tinged, rose-odoured, from a silver cup.

He sang a song, each pause of which closed up,

Like a day-wearied daisy for the night,

With these words falling like an echo low:

'Love, let us love and weep and faint and die.'

With the last pause the tears flowed at their will,

Without a sob, down from their cloudy skies.

He took her hand in his, and it lay still.-

blast of music from a wandering band

Billowed the air with sudden storm that moment.

The visible rampart of material things

Was rent-the vast eternal void looked in

Upon her awe-struck soul. She cried and fled.

It was the sealing of her destiny.

A wild convulsion shook her inner world;
Its lowest depths were heaved tumultuously;
Far unknown molten gulfs of being rushed
Up into mountain-peaks, rushed up and stood.
The soul that led a fairy life, athirst
For beauty only, passed into a woman's:
In pain and tears was born the child-like need
For God, for Truth, and for essential Love.
But first she woke to terror; was alone,
For God she saw not;-woke up in the night,
The great wide night alone. No mother's hand,
To soothe her pangs, no father's voice was near.
She would not come to thee; for love itself
Too keenly stung her sad, repentant heart,
Giving her bitter names to give herself;
But, calling back old words which thou hadst spoken,
In other days, by light winds borne afar,
And now returning on the storm of grief,
Hither she came to seek her Julian's God.
Farewell, strange friend! My care of her is over.

Julian

.
A heart that knows what thou canst never know,
Fair angel, blesseth thee, and saith, farewell.

[
The
Angel
goes
. JULIAN
and
LILY
take his place
.
LILIA
is praying, and they hear parts of her prayer
.]

Lilia

.
O Jesus, hear me! Let me speak to thee.
No fear oppresses me; for misery
Fills my heart up too full for any fear.

Is there no help, O Holy? Am I stained
Beyond release?

Julian

.
Lilia, thy purity
Maketh thy heart abuse thee. I, thy husband,
Sinned more against thee, in believing ill,
Than thou, by ten times what thou didst, poor child,
Hadst wronged thy husband.

Lilia

.
Pardon will not do:
I need much more, O Master. That word
go

Surely thou didst not speak to send away
The sinful wife thou wouldst not yet condemn!
Or was that crime, though not too great for pardon,
Too great for loving-kindness afterward?
Might she not too have come behind thy feet,
And, weeping, wiped and kissed them, Mary's son,
Blessed for ever with a heavenly grief?
Ah! she nor I can claim with her who gave
Her tears, her hair, her lips, her precious oil,
To soothe feet worn with Galilean roads:-
She sinned against herself, not against-Julian.

My Lord, my God, find some excuse for me.
Find in thy heart something to say for me,
As for the crowd that cried against thee, then,
When heaven was dark because thy lamp burned low.

Julian

.

Not thou, but I am guilty, Lilia.
I made it possible to tempt thee, child.
Thou didst not fall, my love; only, one moment,
Beauty was queen, and Truth not lord of all.

Lilia

.

O Julian, my husband, is it strange,
That, when I think of Him, he looks like thee?
That, when he speaks to comfort me, the voice
Is like thy voice, my husband, my beloved?
Oh! if I could but lie down at thy feet,
And tell thee all-yea, every thought-I know
That thou wouldst think the best that could be thought,
And love and comfort me. O Julian,
I am more thine than ever.-Forgive me, husband,
For calling me, defiled and outcast, thine.
Yet may I not be thine as I am His?
Would I might be thy servant-yes, thy slave,
To wash thy feet, and dress thy lovely child,
And bring her at thy call-more wife than I.
But I shall never see thee, till the earth
Lies on us both-apart-oh, far apart!
How lonely shall I lie the long, long years!

Lily

.

O mother, there are blue skies here, and flowers,
And blowing winds, and kisses, mother dear!
And every time my father kisses me,
It is not father only, but another.
Make haste and come. My head never aches here.

Lilia

.

Can it be that they are dead? Is it possible?
I feel as if they were near me!-Speak again,

Beloved voices; comfort me; I need it.

Julian
(singing).

Come to us: above the storm
Ever shines the blue.
Come to us: beyond its form
Ever lies the True.

Lily
(singing).

Mother, darling, do not weep-
All I cannot tell:
By and by you'll go to sleep,
And you'll wake so well.

Julian
(singing).

There is sunshine everywhere
For thy heart and mine:
God, for every sin and care,
Is the cure divine.

Lily
(singing).

We're so happy all the day,
Waiting for another!
All the flowers and sunshine stay,
Watching for my mother.

Julian
.
My maiden! for true wife is always maiden
To the true husband: thou art mine for ever.

Lilia

.
What gentle hopes keep passing to and fro!
Thou shadowest me with thine own rest, my God;
A cloud from thee stoops down and covers me.

[
She falls asleep on her knees
]

SCENE III.-JULIAN

on the summit of a mountain-peak. The stars are
brilliant around a crescent moon, hanging half-way between the
mountain and the zenith. Below lies a sea of vapour. Beyond rises a
loftier pinnacle, across which is stretched a bar of cloud

. LILY

lies on the cloud, looking earnestly into the mist below

.

Julian

(gazing upward).

And thou wast with me all the time, my God,
Even as now! I was not far from thee.
Thy spirit spoke in all my wants and fears,
And hopes and longings. Thou art all in all.
I am not mine, but thine. I cannot speak
The thoughts that work within me like a sea.
When on the earth I lay, crushed down beneath
A hopeless weight of empty desolation,
Thy loving face was lighted then, O Christ,
With expectation of my joy to come,
When all the realm of possible ill should lie
Under my feet, and I should stand as now
Heart-sure of thee, true-hearted, only One.
Was ever soul filled to such overflowing
With the pure wine of blessedness, my God!
Filled as the night with stars, am I with joys;
Filled as the heavens with thee, am I with peace;
For now I wait the end of all my prayers-

Of all that have to do with old-world things:
What new things come to wake new prayers, my God,
Thou know'st; I wait on thee in perfect peace.

[
He turns his gaze downward.-From the fog-sea
below half-rises a woman-form, which floats toward him.
]

Lo, as the lily lifts its shining bosom
From the lone couch of waters where it slept,
When the fair morn toucheth and waketh it;
So riseth up my lily from the deep
Where human souls are vexed in awful dreams!

[LILY
spies her mother, darts down, and is caught in
her arms. They land on
JULIAN'S
peak, and
climb
, LILY
leading her mother
.]

Lily
.
Come faster, mother dear; father is waiting.

Lilia
.
Have patience with me, darling. By and by,
I think, I shall do better.-Oh my Julian!

Julian
.
I may not help her. She must climb and come.

[

He reaches his hand, and the three are clasped in
an infinite embrace

.]

O God, thy thoughts, thy ways, are not as ours:
They fill our longing hearts up to the brim.

[
The moon and the stars and the blue night close
around them; and the poet awakes from his dream

.]

George MacDonald

Words In The Night

I woke at midnight, and my heart,
My beating heart, said this to me:
Thou seest the moon, how calm and bright!
The world is fair by day and night,
But what is that to thee?
One touch to me, down dips the light
Over the land and sea.
All is mine, all is my own!
Toss the purple fountain high!
The breast of man is a vat of stone;
I am alive, I, only I!

One little touch and all is dark-
The winter with its sparkling moons,
The spring with all her violets,
The crimson dawns and rich sunsets,
The autumn's yellowing noons!
I only toss my purple jets,
And thou art one that swoons
Upon a night of gust and roar,
Shipwrecked among the waves, and seems
Across the purple hills to roam:
Sweet odours touch him from the foam,
And downward sinking still he dreams
He walks the clover fields at home
And hears the rattling teams.
All is mine, all is my own!
Toss the purple fountain high!
The breast of man is a vat of stone;
I am alive, I, only I!

Thou hast beheld a throated fountain spout
Full in the air, and in the downward spray
A hovering Iris span the marble tank,
Which, as the wind came, ever rose and sank,
Violet and red; so my continual play
Makes beauty for the Gods with many a prank
Of human excellence, while they,
Weary of all the noon, in shadows sweet,

Supine and heavy-eyed rest in the boundless heat.
Let the world's fountain play!
Beauty is pleasant in the eyes of Jove;
Betwixt the wavering shadows where he lies
He marks the dancing column with his eyes
Celestial, and amid his inmost grove
Ungathers all his limbs, serenely blest,
Lulled by the mellow noise of the great world's unrest.

One heart beats in all nature, differing
But in the work it works; its doubts and clamours
Are but the waste and brunt of instruments
Wherewith a work is done, or as the hammers
On forge Cyclopean plied beneath the rents
Of lowest Etna, conquering into shape
The hard and scattered ore;
Choose thou narcotics, and the dizzy grape
Outworking passion, lest with horrid crash
Thy life go from thee in a night of pain;
So tutoring thy vision, shall the flash
Of dove white-breasted be to thee no more
Than a white stone heavy upon the plain.

Hark, the cock crows loud!
And without, all ghastly and ill,
Like a man uplift in his shroud,
The white, white morn is propped on the hill;
And adown from the eaves, pointed and chill
The icicles 'gin to glitter
And the birds with a warble short and shrill
Pass by the chamber-window still-
With a quick, uneasy twitter!
Let me pump warm blood, for the cold is bitter;
And wearily, wearily, one by one,
Men awake with the weary sun!
Life is a phantom shut in thee:
I am the master and keep the key;
So let me toss thee the days of old
Crimson and orange and green and gold;
So let me fill thee yet again
With a rush of dreams from my spout amain;
For all is mine, all is my own:

Toss the purple fountain high!
The breast of man is a vat of stone,
And I am alive, I only, I!

George MacDonald

Written For One In Sore Pain

Shepherd, on before thy sheep,
Hear thy lamb that bleats behind!
Scarce the track I stumbling keep!
Through my thin fleece blows the wind!

Turn and see me, Son of Man!
Turn and lift thy Father's child;
Scarce I walk where once I ran:
Carry me-the wind is wild!

Thou art strong-thy strength wilt share;
My poor weight thou wilt not feel;
Weakness made thee strong to bear,
Suffering made thee strong to heal!

I were still a wandering sheep
But for thee, O Shepherd-man!
Following now, I faint, I weep,
Yet I follow as I can!

Shepherd, if I fall and lie
Moaning in the frosty wind,
Yet, I know, I shall not die-
Thou wilt miss me-and wilt find!

George MacDonald

Written On A Stormy Night

O wild and dark! a night hath found me now
Wherein I mingle with that element
Sent madly loose through the wide staring rent
In yon tormented branches! I will bow
A while unto the storm, and thenceforth grow
Into a mighty patience strongly bent
Before the unconquering Power which hither sent
These winds to fight their battles on my brow!-
Again the loud boughs thunder! and the din
Licks up my footfall from the hissing earth!
But I have found a mighty peace within,
And I have risen into a home of mirth!
Wildly I climb above the shaking spires,
Above the sobbing clouds, up through the steady fires!

George MacDonald

Zacchaeus

To whom the heavy burden clings,
It yet may serve him like a staff;
One day the cross will break in wings,
The sinner laugh a holy laugh.

The dwarfed Zacchaeus climbed a tree,
His humble stature set him high;
The Lord the little man did see
Who sought the great man passing by.

Up to the tree he came, and stopped:
'To-day,' he said, 'with thee I bide.'
A spirit-shaken fruit he dropped,
Ripe for the Master, at his side.

Sure never host with gladder look
A welcome guest home with him bore!
Then rose the Satan of rebuke
And loudly spake beside the door:

'This is no place for holy feet;
Sinners should house and eat alone!
This man sits in the stranger's seat
And grinds the faces of his own!'

Outspoke the man, in Truth's own might:
'Lord, half my goods I give the poor;
If one I've taken more than right
With four I make atonement sure!'

'Salvation here is entered in;
This man indeed is Abraham's son!'
Said he who came the lost to win-
And saved the lost whom he had won

George MacDonald