

# Poems

**Nathan Pitchford**

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**This edition of poems includes the complete text  
of four volumes of lyrical and narrative poetry:**

**Early Lyrics**

**Portraits from Scripture**

**Later Lyrics**

**After Darkness, Light**

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Early

Lyrics





## *Dedication: To Tracy*

If you would find a moral in these lines,  
Look not, dear Tracy! on the words alone:  
On all the hopes and fears – symbols and signs –  
Virtues and vices – musings half-unknown: –  
(Even at best, shallow and rudely done  
Yester-ideas); look not! though they be bare  
Of worth, the faults are thick as summer-flies:  
Unless your softer-than-Midas touch of care  
Turn them to gold – your fair look make them fair,  
Reflecting them in softly-glancing eyes, –  
(As the butterfly sheds loveliness abroad –  
Comes on a thistle which *were* grey and bowed,  
Yet is made lovely by its being there).

## *Transience*

‘Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.’  
– *Job 5:7*

The sparks fly upward from the frantic flame,  
And catch the evening breeze, and pass away:  
Born of a moment, passionless and tame  
And impotent, they flee and cannot stay;

The foamy surges fling themselves to shore,  
But cannot hold; reversion counteracts,  
But cannot overcome; the oceans roar  
With helpless rage, and beat the sandy tracts.

We strive! we strain! but powerless to resist,  
We drift as sparks before the slightest breeze.  
We rage! we howl! but scatter as the mist  
Suspended o’er the tempest-driven seas.

O fleeting life! it glimmers, and is gone:  
A gleam, a flicker, compassed by the night,  
Its course no sooner started than is done –  
And by its very brevity less bright.

*Lines: The Sun Spread its Balmy Subsistence*

The sun spread its balmy subsistence;  
The earth lay in silence below;  
The breeze softly murmured its presence;  
We walked where the blue lupines grow.

The day was inviting and warm;  
The sky, stretched out broadly above,  
Little spoke of the hastening storm;  
Thou whispered of laughter and love.

A wisp on the gloomy horizon,  
Late, warned of the fierce squall to come;  
Oh! would I had heeded its lesson  
As we hurried on carelessly home.

Leave me, thou spirit of inconstancy!  
Thy pledges of “Forever” all were vain,  
Thy false heart presaged by Summer’s petulancy;  
Only be not thou like sudden squalls of rain:  
Come not again.

*The Cowhand*

An old cowhand, his face all gnarled and brown,  
For he had seen the dust of many trails  
And scorching drives – the freezing winds had blown,  
The rains had come, as he pushed toward the rails;  
But the rough plains, and wind, and rain, and gales

Had not yet dimmed his eye, nor yet had grown  
His wit less sharp – addressing me once said,  
‘I’d rather one sweet draught from some deep spring  
Than from wide marshes (alkaline and dead  
Because their range is far too broadly spread)  
All of the purest waters I could bring.  
Spread not yourself beyond your narrow bounds:  
The steel-tipped arrow may miss; but though straight-spined  
It strike, the untipped shaft only rebounds.’

### *The Rape of Issus*

Out of the breathless night  
Creeps reluctant Dawn;  
A sickly ray of light  
Glimmers, and is gone.

No scurrying creature slight  
From its nest has stirred;  
No bird is seen in flight;  
No sound is heard.

Ten thousand ranks of men,  
Gaunt, unmoving, stand;  
A spectral blade is seen  
In each bloodless hand.

The gloom begins to wane;  
A cloak of silence falls  
Over the ghastly scene;  
Destiny calls:

A figure rises tall;  
The battle-cry is hurled;  
The hordes begin to fall,  
That shook the world!

## *A Lamentation*

Draw thy bellows o'er the burning coal;  
Skim the dross, mingled with my soul.  
Cast the waste on thy refuse heap;  
Temper thy steel with the tears I weep.  
Rivers run down to the sea,  
Yet seas run dry; – all is vanity!  
Mountains fall; flowers fade;  
And my withered heart has found no shade.  
Through barren lands, through the desert waste,  
Without relent my soul is chased.  
Draw thy bellows o'er the burning coal  
Of the raging fire in my soul!  
Oh! that time might be turned back,  
That I might bask in days of yore;  
Oh! that these years could fall away,  
And Oh! to see my love once more.  
Burn! burn! burn! vent thine ire!  
All my tears but feed the fire.  
Weep, weep, weep. Coals burn on.  
My love is gone. My love is gone.

## *On Returning to Northland*

The day is come; I pause, remembering:  
Once more I walk the narrow halls of brick,  
Pace once again the ways I know so well,  
And thrill to trace fond lineaments of old;  
Too long, too long have I been gone from you!  
Too long walked paths less known, less understood,  
And ah! been far too long left comfortless  
In the cold fields.

Cold, silent Jonah Fields!  
Deserted, windswept crust of ice and dust,  
Floating on oil – dotted here and there

With iron monsters sucking the foul slime  
From deep, vast caverns; there I made my way,  
There toiled and dug and scratched the frozen ground,  
And stamped my feet against the frigid earth,  
And clasped to my bosom implements of steel,  
Locked in an awkward grip, with either hand  
Alternately clutched against the cold.  
I am grown weary: weary of the sight,  
Weary of numbness, weary of travail,  
But mostly weary of the vulgar men  
Who curse and rave and utter blasphemies,  
And vex my poor soul; farewell! For now I leave;  
Let godless men still climb their godless towers,  
And pump their godless oil, till all the earth  
Groan with the insult – heave her icy breast –  
Bring down the rigs; aye! let them topple down,  
And sink into dust.

But I am snatched away,  
And borne again to you, O kinder walls,  
Here to be lighter, warmer – here perchance  
To hap upon (who knows?) laughter and love.  
Here I am happy, and here will I stay,  
Until you have no more a place for me –  
Then either will I sicken, early-plucked,  
Or being fully-ripened, issue forth  
To make my subtle imprint on the world.

### *Ode on a Fruitless Elk Hunt*

#### I

How long this wasteland have I roamed? How long  
Have windblown hilltops, rising stark and bare  
O'er barren, snowswept meadows been my home?  
How long will th' frozen air  
In frozen fury howl her frozen song?  
How long yet will I roam?

For time seems slowed by this bitter cold:  
This desert land of wood and snow and stone  
(A titan world, unheeded and alone)  
Unchanged, untouched by outside worlds, is rolled  
In grand repose along the course of time:  
Awful and stately – frozen and sublime.

## II

Traversing now a wooded, rock-strewn slope,  
Awhile I pause, to let my worn mount blow.  
From out this ridge a panoramic scope  
Unfolds before me; stretching far below  
Mid stands of aspen, flung by august hand  
Amongst far denser stands of stately pine,  
The snowy meadows o'er this frigid land,  
Together with the crags and rocky spine,  
Are scattered, reaching to the pale grey skies:  
The scenes thus manifold before my eyes  
    These hunting-grounds comprise.  
Now restlessly my steed paws in the snow;  
    Slowly, I turn to go.

## III

Another day, and yet I have not seen  
The silent denizens of fields and trees –  
Elusive quarry! Softly now the breeze  
Is dying, now the evening is serene,  
As in the west the red-rimmed sun dips low  
Beneath the cold horizon; but a glow  
Of pale sunlight upon the sky remains:  
A lone ray streaks the night with crimson stains;  
    Softly, I turn to go.  
What though a fruitless search these many days  
Has been my lot, dealt by the heartless fates?  
What though my rifle in my scabbard stays?  
Beyond the hills a cheering fire waits:  
Much greater wealth that warming fire seems

Than scattered prey, and vanished, half-formed dreams.

*The Poet*

An Allegory

He plunged beneath the unfathomable sea,  
Whose waves are strong and dread;  
The mighty billows roaring maddeningly  
Thundered above his head.

He had but faith and an unwavering will;  
He had undying love,  
And a fervent spirit that could brook no ill,  
When he left the storm above.

The Kraken's slime about him grossly wound;  
He battled hard and long;  
Gruesome sea-things beset him all around,  
But he was strong.

The brackish waters all around him swirled,  
And tossed him to and fro;  
In madding tides and currents fierce he whirled,  
And still he plunged below.

At last he touched the sunless, rocky ground;  
Far, far above did the billows roll;  
Alone, untouched, there fathoms deep he found  
The smallness of his soul.

And there bereft of strength and hope and will,  
Bereft of all but faith alone,  
Lost in confusion and blackness – succumbed to ill,  
And made at last his groan:

And that great One in whom all creatures move,

From his high, holy throne,  
Mighty and terrible, was moved with love,  
And heard his groan;

And lift him up, and set him on a cliff,  
Where the briny breezes blow;  
And there he watched the billows skip and skiff,  
Far, far below.

And since, whene'er he walks among the crowd,  
Wond'ring, they stop and turn:  
His look is calm and tender, his shoulders bowed –  
But his searching glances burn;

And when he touched the sacred flame, or how,  
They nor see, nor know it:  
But the name is boldly blazoned on his brow,  
Of 'Poet'.

*To*\_\_\_\_\_

You might have seen the flags unfurled  
In splendor, telling of the fame  
And honor of your well-loved name,  
Through realms and nations of the world,

Or turned your dexterous hand to such  
As lends to one of cunning skill,  
Devout in heart and strong in will,  
Her bounteous treasure overmuch,

And thus immortal in renown –  
Simplicity and greatness wed –  
You might have placed upon your head  
The laurel green, the golden crown;



But you have found the kindlier way –  
Forsaken honor, wealth, and fame,  
And lost your well-deserved acclaim –  
The light of an obscurer day;

To lesser means come nobler ends:  
You sought the best, nor shunned the pain;  
Of double-sacrifice, the gain  
Is triple-love from constant friends.

### *We Weep for You, America*

We weep for you, America,  
Your faded hopes, your broken dreams;  
We see the crumbling of your law,  
Unlit by Justice' dying beams;  
We find no answer, no redress,  
And weep for you – not love you less.

We weep for you! our bitter tears  
Proclaim the long result of sin:  
Our lofty eyes, our heedless ears  
Destroy our nation from within;  
The wicked rage; – the righteous sleep; –  
We quaff the bitter wine – and weep.

We weep for you, America!  
Help, Lord! – our laws, our systems fall.  
We plead for you, America!  
Save, Lord! – hear our despairing call.  
Stretch forth, O God, your mighty hand,  
Forgive our sins, and heal our land!

## *Land of the Free*

God plucked thee from the monarch's brow,  
The brightest jewel in his crown,  
And found in stern oppression's bough  
The fruit of freedom dropping down:  
America! land of the blessed!  
In being watchful, thou art strong;  
Be brave: that patriot's the best  
Who fears not to assail the wrong.  
Land of the free!  
May God preserve thy liberty,  
And keep thee safe from foreign tyranny.

Thy loyal sons who dauntless stood;  
Thy soldiers, resolute and brave,  
Whose hope was in the true, the good,  
Whose only fear the coward's grave;  
Thy masterframers, wise and just,  
The shapers of that blessed year,  
Remember! and take up the trust  
They left for us and all men here,  
Land of the free!  
May God preserve thy liberty,  
Protect thy coasts from foreign tyranny.

That citizen were better dead  
Who careth not for wrong or right;  
More to be feared the sluggard's bed  
Than wielders of all foreign might;  
Wilt thou undo the toil of years?  
Forget the boon thy fathers gave?  
Aye then! forget – and shed thy tears  
Of dissolution o'er their grave.  
Land of the free!  
May God preserve thy liberty,  
Protect thee from domestic tyranny.

When freedom rests on ev'ry brow  
But lightly; when the hero's blood  
Has been forgotten; watch! lest thou  
Forget the God that made thee good;  
'Tis that same God hath made thee great:  
If thou turn not to hear his call,  
Beware! lest heedless then thy state  
Too swiftly rising, stoop and fall.  
Land of the free!  
May God preserve thy liberty,  
Forever keep thy coasts from tyranny.

*To C\_\_\_\_\_*

Concealed within the letters of these lines,  
(Fate, I suppose, has touched my humble pen,  
For mere coincidence, that intertwines  
And interacts with words of common men,  
Will simply not suffice, to thoughtful minds,  
As the solution to this quandary,)  
There dances cunningly, and strangely winds  
The name – sweet name – of her whose legacy  
This crafty work of poetry enfolds:  
For in the **sum** of all these words there lies  
The name that you will find this sonnet holds –  
If you search **zealously** – if you are wise.

*To Rebekah*

**R**ebekah! if the stony hand of Time  
Erase these lines (for what has Time of shame,  
**B**eing careless of the subtleties of rhyme,  
Even daring to efface your well-loved name?),  
**K**ind heart! your name will still be trebly dear:

As you yourself, your name is rich and pure –  
Honest and firm – impassioned and sincere.  
May be the ink will fail, the pages tear  
And fade; but your fond name shall still endure,  
Emblazoned rich, in hues of living art,  
Stainless – upon the fabric of my heart!

*To Nikki*

Dear Nikki, my dear Nikki, – but forgive  
My overboldness thus to call you mine:  
It is but wishfulness; it is a sign  
Of heartfelt longing fed by deep desire,  
A hope that will not die; – oh, let it live!  
Let it spring upward, clearer, brighter, higher,  
Till it become a joy that cannot leave,  
And grow a flame in Love's eternal fire, –

Soon we must part, and I must follow Duty,  
Although I tread the way with weary feet;  
Desire shall bow to Duty, aye! She must:  
Let Honor weep, and turn away from Beauty,  
I with her; oh, but when again we meet,  
Desire shall spring forth and be doubly sweet!  
– Nay, trebly: though she sleep she shall not die,  
But rising up shall firmly clasp the just:  
Thus Love and Duty wedded shall leap high  
And kiss each other, sweet! Ah, by and by.

*To Nikki*

On hearing her sing 'Danny Boy'

O Nikki dear, my heart, my heart is broken:  
I have, alas! no hope, no peace, no joy;  
'Tis not, 'tis not the words that you have spoken,

But that you spoke them, sweet! to Danny boy:

But, oh! how full could be my consolation,  
And, oh! how sweet, how sweet could be my joy,  
To hear you sing your tender admiration, –  
If only I, if only I were Danny boy.

But if you sang those words to me, my dearest,  
No gloom could take away my heart's warm glow:  
In deepest gloom, my peace would be the nearest,  
For then you'd come, and sing, 'I love you so.'

And all the stars would see and smile above me,  
And all my heaviness would turn to joy,  
For you would sing, and tell me that you love me; –  
If only I, if only I were Danny boy!

*To Seth,*

Illustrious director of Camp Grace,  
from the guys in the *Lions* cabin

Dear Seth,

Take heart! We've seen your plight  
And think it still may turn out right:  
If you'll just take some sound advice,  
We'll have you fixed up in a trice,  
All happy with a loving wife  
To brighten up your fading life.  
By many counselors one learns,  
And so we brought a few concerns  
(Like growing age and growing belly)  
To seek help from our dear friend Shelly,  
Who straightens out old bachelor fools  
With long, laborious lists of rules.  
She said with that fine, bearded face  
You're not at all a hopeless case,  
And really, you were doing great

Right up to rule ninety-eight, –  
But then things started getting sticky:  
Ninety-nine was kind of tricky,  
Confirmed one of your greatest fears –  
You'll have to lose the teddy bears.  
No matter your good looks and chivalry,  
A woman just can't take the rivalry,  
So Shelly says they have to go,  
And Shelly's always right, you know:  
It seems you have to make a choice  
Between a wife and cuddly toys...  
Well, happiness, on second thought,  
Is making do with what you've got, –  
And bears are much more easily found  
(Less trouble, too, to keep around),  
So take our last bit of advice,  
This parting 'word unto the wise':  
A woman may be kind of nice,  
But trust me, teddy will suffice.

*Ode to a Crystalline Lake*

Flood my sight,  
Thou my crystalline delight,  
With the early morning light  
Refracted:

Let me see,  
Dancing with a sparkling glee,  
Ev'ry leaf of ev'ry tree  
Reflected

In the surface calm, unbroken,  
All agleam,  
Of thy slumb'ring depths, unwoke  
From a silent dream;

From a vision that I deem  
Will evermore remain unspoken –  
From a silent, wat'ry dream.

Oh! what tranquil mem'ries sleep  
Within the bosom of thy deep,  
    All alone:  
Musings of despondency,  
    Lovesick moan,  
And the tears that I would weep  
Now far beneath thy waters lie: –  
For I was wont to sit and sigh –  
    Sigh alone;

And the laughter, filled with glee,  
    Born of mirth;  
And the times I used to see,  
Gaily dancing, wild and free,  
The thousand moons thy waves would birth  
From out the one hung joyously  
    Above the earth.

I stood upon thy pebbled shore –  
    Thy rock-strewn beach;  
I learned thy murm'ring waters' lore,  
I heard the lessons thou didst teach,  
    And a stone  
Was removed from my soul,  
When I watched thy waters roll  
    All alone.

### *Innocence Lost*

No crime more grievous: no higher cost:  
No wound more bitter than innocence lost.

## I

Sweet little lamb! Innocent child!  
Young and so helpless: meek and so mild:  
What makes thee weep and sigh? why dost thou moan?  
Why art thou lying here sad and alone?  
Innocent lamb! when wilt thou rise?  
When wilt thou wipe all the tears from thine eyes?  
Who will protect thee when daylight is gone?  
Dormouse or rabbit? tender young fawn?  
Surely October's gray ashen skies  
Lend thee no comfort; – wilt thou not rise?  
Or dost thou mourn some unspeakable loss?  
Pillow thy head, then, upon the green moss.  
Gentle light filtered through leaves intertwined  
Falls on thee, child, where thou art reclined –  
Comforted only by badger and hind.

## II

Sweet little lamb! why all these tears?  
Thou art a child of only five years:  
Thou art too young thus dejected to cry;  
Innocent child – please tell me why.  
Where is thy father? Hast thou no mother?  
Uncle or cousin? sister or brother?  
Why do they leave thee here weeping alone?  
What dost thou tell me? thy father is gone?  
This, then, is why thou didst flee in despair –  
Fled to the forest – fled anywhere –  
Fled because thou wert afraid and alone –  
Fled from thy family – because he is gone?  
Lingering illness hath robbed him of breath?  
Thou art too young to be troubled with death.  
Childish simplicity now hath been lost, –  
Faith and naivety both have been lost; –  
Thou hast gained wisdom – but great was the cost.



### III

Sweet little lamb! Innocent child!  
Young and so helpless: meek and so mild:  
Pillow thy head now upon the cold moss; –  
Pillow thy head as thou mournest thy loss.  
Words cannot comfort, nor reason, nor rhyme:  
Thine only balm is the passage of time.

*No crime more grievous! no higher cost!  
No wound more bitter than innocence lost.*

### *Dance of the Fairies*

It is an evening calm and still,  
With daylight palely ling'ring;  
O'er aspen-gilded mead and hill,  
To mingle with many a flutter and thrill,  
Sweet fairies dance, and softly sing:

*Come hither!  
Come hither!  
As far below, wand'ring,  
The silv'ry streams slither,  
So let us be yond'ring,  
It matters not whither!  
Oh, still let us thither,  
Ne'er pond'ring  
Why thither.  
O'er hilltop  
And hollow,  
Without stop  
We follow  
The breeze's soft sighing;  
The fair meadows call; – O,  
There let us be flying!*

*Make merry!*  
*Make merry!*  
*Now let us be calling*  
*Each wandering fairy!*  
*On mountain*  
*And prairie*  
*Now starlight is falling;*  
*'Round each flowing,*  
*Soft-glowing*  
*Fountain*  
*The sweet scents are cheery:*  
*Then each winged, airy*  
*Fair creature*  
*Be no longer*  
*Weary!*  
*For every feature*  
*Of nightfall grows stronger*  
*As moonlight*  
*Grows brighter,*  
*And soon might*  
*Than snow become clearer*  
*And whiter; –*  
*To fairy hearts dearer!*  
*Come hither,*  
*Each fairy!*  
*Come hither,*  
*Make merry!*

And so they while the night away  
In dancing and in singing;  
My cheerless heart will sigh away,  
For now I have seen spritely fairies at play,  
And naught sweet joy to me may bring.

*Fragment: World of a Dream*

In the world of a dream,  
How unseemly to seem!  
Is that or this real?  
Is Fancy's faint peal  
Or Reason's pale beam  
The better a spirit to thrill?

*The Castaway*

A Fragment

Once again I wander seaward, feel the briny blowing foam,  
See the salt expanse that holds me here, a thousand miles from home;

Pace the sandy desert beaches; watch the seagulls soaring high,  
Wheeling boundless in their cycles through the boundless, barren sky;

Hear the fitful breezes whistle through the endless pounding surf,  
Snatching at the tangled seaweed, pulsing, howling o'er the turf:

Here I sit; and all my senses numb and intertwine with Here;  
Here I sit; and would I could arise and join my fancy There!

There, where people push and jostle fellow people in the throng;  
Where the slow fall to the swift, the weak are trampled by the strong;

Where the orphan roams the streets, besmirched with foul city slime;  
Where the high courts of corruption pave the avenues of crime; –

Yet no creature there so wretched that he cannot gorge his sight,  
And find comfort in another wretched fellow-creature's plight.

Here I sit, nor shed a tear, nor pull my hair, nor utter groan;  
What avail? what were the end? Here I am utterly alone.

Here these fourteen years alone, and there alone a month or so; –  
One month ere this fateful journey and the start of all my woe:

Emily! I can remember in her all-too-lovely eye  
Whisperings of all that's good, traces of everything that's high;

I remember how a shade of darkness crept across that light; –  
Black and stony cold and lustreless they looked that final night;

How I melted, sickened as she turned those heartless eyes on me! –  
Something in me died that night, and I sailed half a man to sea.

Wretched night! I still remember how I cursed this crowded earth,  
Cursed the moment of our meeting, cursed the moment of her birth;

Here today I cursed all that I longed for fourteen years ago:  
Cursed the stillness, the seclusion from the common human woe;

Cursed this island where the wrong is no more plentiful than right;  
Cursed this flower, a breath of beauty sent to mock my ugly plight.

Yesterday I climbed again the high volcano on the north,  
Cursed its sleep, defied it to spew all its fiery vomit forth:

Yet it slept; no invocation could disturb its slothful rest,  
And I cursed it as a likeness of the languor in my breast.

Oh, how many thousand years has it lain passionless and bare?  
And yet once – how long ago! – its shrieks of passion rent the air.

Singled out from all its fellows, tame beneath a lonely sky,  
Sucking comfort from remembrance, half as desolate as I!

Yet less wildly – am I right to sing this importunate song?  
I must cease this: I will not be guilty of the greater wrong.

Singled out? thrust here alone upon this desert island grave?

Aye! for all my fellow sailors sank beneath the briny wave.

I was singled out – for of us all ‘tis I that still have breath:  
I was set apart in mercy, singled out alone from death.

Is it well to curse my island? shake my fist at careless fate?  
Shall I rave and sputter, blinded to the comforts of my state?

‘How I loathe this wretched island!’ – is my memory then so poor?  
Fourteen years ago I called her blessed, and kissed her sandy shore.

It was only for this island I was able to survive; –  
And for fourteen years her ample fruits have kept me here alive.

I have never suffered hunger; I have never been in need;  
I am free to climb the highest hill or walk the greenest mead;

I have gathered fruits and honey; had not crusts sufficed as well?  
On this island I am passing happy; – bah! what lies I tell!

### *Maid Maleen*

#### **The Tower**

The various years from sun to sun  
Lit up the tower black and tall,  
And traced the courses they had run  
In light and shade upon the wall;  
The ivy-moss was thickly grown,  
Unchecked by window-ledge or door:  
The rounding wall, the graying stone  
Stood lonely on the desert moor.

Ambition – thoughtless jealousies –  
Mad groping after petty power –  
And pomp, and pride – alas! ‘twas these

Sprang up and built the cruel tower:  
A king, his greatness to secure,  
Made treaty with another land;  
The deal was struck, the vow was sure,  
The token – his own daughter's hand.

'My daughter! we are blessed,' he said,  
'Our fortune's won this very week;  
The deal is struck – and thou shalt wed.'  
The maiden blush came o'er her cheek; –  
It spread across her pallid brow; –  
With eyes downcast, demure, she spake,  
'My lord, make me not scorn my vow  
And wed, my true love to forsake.'

'What!' cried he: 'And shalt thou refuse?  
What! dost thou scorn my word?' he said;  
By th' holy rood! sure, thou shalt choose,  
In seven years, whom thou shalt wed!  
He swelled in apoplectic rage:  
'Thine – thine shall be a sunless bower; –  
Take seven years' provision, page;  
Ye masons, build a doorless tower!'

Full seven years had crept along;  
Full seven times the maiden spring  
Had woken to the robin's song,  
And flown away on swifter wing;  
And seven years the sun was bright,  
And seven years turned all things green, –  
Yet had no sunbeam pierced the night  
That still enfolded Maid Maleen.

### **The Countryside**

Full seven years had flown away;  
The scant provisions dwindled low;

Maleen spake to her maid one day,  
‘Dear friend, this week our food shall go:  
Ah me! I worry for my life!’  
‘Sooth, mistress! though our food be gone,  
We have this silver butter knife; –  
Perchance we might break loose a stone.’

A week went by; the stores were gone;  
Of water, but a drop was all;  
The mortar crumbles from the stone –  
The stone drops from the tower wall!  
The princess and her maid step through;  
And, ‘Tell me, friend, this is no dream!’  
Dim eyes behold the sky’s deep blue,  
And greet the sun’s first golden beam!

And all around, the countryside  
Lay waste; the towns were overthrown;  
Destruction, roaming far and wide,  
Had spared the lofty tower alone;  
Betimes, some proud imperial state  
Had smote the land, its people strain;  
The maiden’s home was desolate,  
Her kindred gone, her father slain.

And so they roam from place to place;  
Alas! poor stricken Maid Maleen!  
They rest under heaven’s open face,  
And feed upon the nettles green;  
And sometime, in her direst need,  
She labors till she scarce can weep,  
And toils till her soft fingers bleed,  
And earns no wage but food and sleep.

### **The Kitchen**

She wandered, tender Maid Maleen,

Until she found a castle high;  
And there she came to cook and clean,  
And on the hearth by night to lie;  
Poor maiden! she had traveled far,  
And crossed the borders of some state  
She wist not; – for her only care  
Was day by day to toil and wait.

Thus fared she, till it chanced one night  
The news was sounded far and wide,  
‘Long live the king! his reign be bright!  
And joy befall his beauteous bride!’  
And then once more she wept and sighed,  
‘Ah me! and I shall never wed; –  
My love, my own true love,’ she cried,  
‘These seven years must think me dead!’

The bride arrives – O cruel fate!  
As foul a hag as e’er was born,  
But daughter to some head of state;  
She plots to hide the wedding morn:  
‘Sure, I must wait and not be seen;  
Trade places with some maid, but where –’  
She halts; she looks on Maid Maleen,  
And thinks, ‘Ah, she is passing fair.’

### **The Wedding**

Full joyously the wedding bells  
Peal in the long-awaited dawn!  
Full merrily their laughter swells,  
And lingers over lea and lawn!  
The king steps forth: O noble brow –  
O lofty eyes – O handsome face –  
Such regal bearing, mingled too  
With every virtue, every grace!



He steps forth; – lo! his bride he spies;  
He thinks, ‘Ah, she is fair indeed.’  
How timidly she turns her eyes!  
How swiftly she drops down her head!  
And o’er her cheek the crimson glows,  
And scarcely can she brook the tears; –  
For in his noble face she knows  
Her true, true love of seven years!

Now hand-in-hand they make their way  
Through virgin lilies, white and pure,  
And still he thinks, ‘Who can she be,  
This maid so lovely and demure?’  
But she nor speaks, nor meets his eye,  
So that he wonders yet the more,  
And so she treads with stifled sigh  
The pathway to the chapel door.

Anon a nettle she espies,  
All withered, trodden down, and bare,  
And softly to herself she sighs,  
And murmurs to the nettle there,  
‘O nettle, I did eat of thee,  
Out in the lonely countryside;  
Wherefore didst thou not poison me?  
Alas! for I am no true bride.’

Anon she sees a bridge of stone,  
Across a babbling brooklet fair,  
And there she makes a stifled moan,  
And murmurs to the stone bridge there,  
‘O bridge, if I must cross on thee,  
Let me not reach the other side;  
Wilt thou not crumble under me?  
Alas! for I am no true bride.’

Anon they reach the chapel door,

And lo! she groweth pale as death;  
And to herself she sighs full sore,  
And to the door these words she saith:  
‘O door, how can I be so bold  
To pass, though thou be open wide?  
Let me not cross thy broad threshold.  
Alas! for I am no true bride.’

And they were wed that merry day,  
And they who live to tell the tale  
Here pause, and muse awhile, and say  
That never bride so fair and pale,  
And never king so grand and bold,  
And never such a trembling kiss,  
E’er met before; and (it is told)  
No marriage since was like to this.

### **The Betrayal**

Deep tolls at length the evening bell;  
The king ascends to meet his wife;  
She greets him from behind her veil,  
And, ‘Strange!’ he mutters; ‘By my life,  
This voice is not the which I heard  
That charms the sparrows from the trees.’  
He proves her: ‘Tell me, queen, the word  
Thou saidst to the nettle in the leas.’

She flies away on some excuse,  
And finds the weeping Maid Maleen;  
‘Thou wench!’ she hisses, ‘Straightway choose:  
What saidst thou to the nettle green?  
Speak! if thou wouldest keep thy head!’  
‘Mercy!’ the gentle maiden cried;  
‘Have mercy, – for I only said,  
Alas! that I am no true bride.’

Straightway she hastens up the stairs,  
‘My lord,’ she speaks, ‘I only sighed; –  
O whence come all these silly fears? –  
And said I was thy own true bride.’  
Again he said, ‘What didst thou moan, –  
Tell me, O queen, if thou be true –  
When we walked across the bridge of stone?’  
Away, on some false task, she flew.

‘What saidst thou to the bridge of stone?  
Speak, wench, if thou wouldst save thy life!’  
Then hastens back the hideous crone,  
And saith, ‘My lord, why mock thy wife?’  
And tells all. Yet not satisfied,  
‘Speak, queen,’ he saith to her once more,  
‘And tell me, if thou be my bride,  
What saidst thou to the chapel door?’

She cannot tell. ‘Begone!’ he cries,  
‘I see that thou art no true bride!’  
And straightway from his wrath she flies,  
And leaves the door flung open wide.  
Anon she sees a tarnished sword;  
She takes it in her wrathful spleen;  
And, ‘Wretch!’ she cries, and, ‘By my word,  
The end is come for Maid Maleen!’

### **The Recognition**

A piercing scream! He hears her cry,  
And hastens to the kitchen door;  
He sees the hag, her sword raised high;  
He sees his bride shrinking on the floor!  
Ah, noble prince! Ah, lovely maid!  
He rushes in upon the scene:  
The hag is seized; the blow is stayed;  
He cometh unto Maid Maleen.

O blessed thought! O tender grace!  
And again the blush spreads o'er her cheek.  
He looketh long upon her face,  
And trembling scarcely dares to speak:  
'Art thou not dead these seven years?'  
'Nay, lost, my lord.' O happy scene!  
No longer can she stay her tears,  
As soft he whispers, 'My Maleen!'

Full many a year has tripped along;  
Full many a time the maiden spring  
Has woken to the robin's song,  
And flown away on swifter wing;  
And many a year the sun was bright,  
And many a year turned all things green,  
And never again did a shade of night  
Fall on the heart of Maid Maleen.

Portraits

from

Scripture



## *The Preacher*

The sun ariseth every morn,  
    And soon doth set;  
The generation newly born  
    Abideth yet;  
Long history, though, doth forewarn,  
Its hopes, its dreams, will come to scorn:  
The earth beholds man come and pass forlorn,  
    Nor doth abet.

What profit hath a man of all  
    His labor done?  
What toilsome trouble doth befall; –  
    What sorrows run!  
What foolish hope in vain doth call!  
Man's sweetest cup, wormwood and gall;  
The crooked cannot be made straight, of all  
    Under the sun.

All rivers run down to the sea,  
    Yet seas run dry;  
All things that man doth strive to see,  
    Sate not the eye;  
That which is past is what shall be;  
The future holds no memory;  
Eat, drink, be merry, for all is vanity, –  
    And soon we die.

## *Ruth*

I

Surrounded by unvarying rows of corn,  
She gleans in silence; soft her measured tread,  
Her look, her carriage – soft the tender hand

That pauses from its labor to adorn  
Her rustic dress, and tuck a wayward strand  
Behind the band that clasps her mild head;  
From underneath her gently arching brow  
Gleam two dark eyes that, with her raven hair,  
Set off a face made pale with toil and care;  
Her bearing is both innocent and wise:  
Exquisite lips now murmur soft and low,  
And now her chaste bosom heaves with bitter sighs.

## II

Simple faith springing from a tender heart  
That blossomed into firm and solid trust  
And quick became a hope unshakeable;  
A ready intellect embraced by Art;  
A keen awareness of the Good, the Just;  
All folded in a soft, womanly form,  
And clasped by a spirit meek and warm –  
Submissive, unassuming, dutiful,  
Eager to pacify and quick to yield;  
Undying love; domestic gentleness;  
Rare beauty meet within the humble field,  
And quietly crown the tender Moabitess.

## III

What is it in the maiden's graceful motion  
That strikes a wistful vein in Boaz' breast?  
He looks on the form – ah, but can he see the rest –  
The mingling of passive duty with devotion –  
And read in the mien of her all-too-lovely face  
Strength tempered with softness – beauty matched with grace?

## *David*

### I

Mourn, Israel, mourn;



Thine anointed prince is slain.  
All ye tribes of Israel, mourn;  
How fleeting, how treacherous was his reign!

Oh! the bitter death he died:  
Lifted up in scornful pride,  
Whelmed by envy's cruel tide; –  
Life so vain!  
Victim of familial crime,  
Product of a troubled time;  
Underneath a heap of stones,  
In disgrace, his splintered bones  
Now are lain.  
Let all Israel sing his fame;  
Remember not, ye tribes, his shame; –  
Am not I, even I, to blame?  
I laid the course his life would run.  
O Absalom, my son, my son, Absalom, my son!

## II

I held thee once upon my knees, –  
Absalom, my son!  
Thou hearest not my groans, my pleas,  
Thou liest mute beneath the trees;  
Thy destiny hath now been run,  
Thy day of triumph now is done;  
O Absalom, my son, my son!  
I taught thee when thou wast a lad,  
I brought thee up when thou wast young,  
Upheld thee when thy heart was sad;  
Thy jealousy did make thee mad; –  
Now all thy deeds are left unsung.  
Absalom, my son!  
Thine own dear brother did thee wrong,  
And as thy bitterness grew strong  
Thou slewest him ere very long –  
My son, mine own!

I could not punish thee thy crime –  
Was it not but a little time  
Ago that I had done the same,  
Had slain a man to hide my shame?  
    Oh! how my sin hath grown.  
The guilty course hath now been run.  
O Absalom, my son, my son, Absalom, my son!

### III

Into the forest thou didst flee;  
Caught by a mighty oaken tree,  
    Thou hung between the earth and sky;  
O Absalom, I mourn for thee!  
Hanging in ignominy,  
    There didst thou die.  
The Mighty wielded his deadly dart,  
Thrust it deep into thine heart,  
Played the treacherous slayer's part,  
    My son, mine own!  
Surrounded by Joab's valiant ten  
Armourbearers, mighty men –  
They raised their swords against thee then –  
    The crime was done.  
Israel mourn! All Judah weep!  
Thine anointed now doth sleep.  
Sing the fallen warrior's fame:  
Honour, honour to his name!  
Tribes of Israel, weep and sigh,  
Lift your voices to the sky,  
Never let his memory die –  
    His course is done.  
My son, my son, O Absalom, my son, –  
O Absalom, my son, my son, Absalom, my son!

*Elijah*

It is enough, O Lord, take now my life:  
My spirit fails within, my parched heart  
Lies panting in the dust; – hear thou my cry,  
And take the breath thou gavest once to me;  
Regard my state, O Lord, it is enough.

Have not I walked uprightly? and have not  
I been most jealous for the Lord of Hosts?  
Greatly the Lord hath used me: through my prayer  
The earth saw neither rain nor dew; the land  
Lay withered by the space of three long years; –  
And by my word a measure of ground meal,  
Meet for a widow and her son – no more,  
Failed not for many days, and strengthened three.  
In all I put my hand to, thee alone  
I sought after, nor ever turned aside  
From walking in thy statutes and thy ways  
With meekness and integrity of heart.

Before the hosts of Israel, on thy mount,  
I called down fire from heaven, and the world  
Confessed that only thou art Lord and God;  
The high places of Baal were broken down,  
And not one priest escaped my hungry sword; –  
Would that my blood were mingled now with theirs.

Alas! how are the righteous turned aside!  
All Israel hath forsaken the right paths,  
And wisdom, judgment, justice, equity –  
Yea! every noble work hath been contemned:  
Thy covenant hath Israel rejected,  
And broken down thine altars, and hath slain  
Thy prophets, so that only I am left.  
I, only I, am left, and even me  
Doth haughty Jezebel seek to destroy;  
I cannot hide forever: though I run,  
And weary not, until I reach the end,

The utmost corner of the very earth,  
Yet even there the fierceness of her wrath  
Will find me and consume me, that I die.  
I roam the desert and the barren waste;  
My bitter tears are all my sustenance,  
And there is none to comfort me, or speak  
With tender words unto my troubled heart.  
The dancing of the satyrs, and the owls  
That wail throughout the nighttime, and the doves  
That moan and sigh when day has come are all  
The company that I have left to me.  
Incline thine ear unto my cry, O Lord,  
And in thy gentle mercy take my life:  
I cannot live; and it were better far  
That I should die by thine own hand, than that  
Thine enemy should have her way with me.

O Israel, ye have wandered from the Lord!  
All ye have gone astray, not one is left  
That understandeth or that seeketh God!  
My people, O my people whom I love,  
My kindred hearts, my very flesh and blood,  
Why seek ye me, thus to destroy my life?  
How oft would I have turned your eyes to God,  
How many times in prayer have I besought  
His mercy, that the hardness of your heart  
Would be made soft, that ye might broken turn  
In sorrow, to obtain once more his grace!  
My flesh is wasted and I am made weak;  
My hand is withered; all my strength is gone;  
My only hope that I have left to me,  
To fade away to nothingness, and sink  
Into the paltry dust, and cease to be:  
To fail, to faint, to sleep; – it is enough.

## *Rahab*

Deep in the valley far below  
A thousand well-worn pathways go  
To meet at ancient Jericho;  
And high on the city's mighty wall  
There sits a house well-known to all:

*It is the home of the harlot;  
There, in the tower's shade,  
She sits, all clad in scarlet,  
Plying her shameless trade.*

Deep in the city two men lie,  
And wait in secrecy to spy  
The mighty walls, the towers high;  
Closely pursued by the guards behind,  
They chance a humble house to find:

*It is the home of the harlot;  
There, in the tower's shade,  
A woman clad in scarlet  
Rises to give them aid.*

Deep in the house the two men bide;  
Far under the flax in which they hide  
They pass the evening undescried;  
The harlot watching from below  
Confounds the men of Jericho,

*There in the home of the harlot  
Far on the city's edge;  
She lowers a cord of scarlet  
Down from the window-ledge.*

Deep in the night the two men drop

From the window-ledge in the high rooftop  
By the slender cord; they only stop  
To tell the woman clad in red  
To hang from her ledge a scarlet thread.

*It is the home of the harlot  
Far on the city's edge;  
A simple thread of scarlet  
Hangs from the window-ledge.*

Deep in the vale below the wall  
A mighty shout, a trumpet call,  
Bring down the gates; the towers fall,  
The mighty city is undone,  
But one small house is saved alone:

*It is the home of the harlot  
There in the desolate town;  
From the window a thread of scarlet  
Still can be seen hanging down.*

Deep in the valley far below  
The violets bloom, the wild vines grow,  
On top of mighty Jericho;  
There in the barren, rocky ground  
An ancient ruin can be found:

*The home of the well-beloved harlot!  
Its stones have sunk into the earth,  
But its humble thread of scarlet  
Is traced to Messiah's birth.*

### *The Crossing of the Sea*

From the bondage of slavery throughout Egypt-land  
God delivered his own with a mighty right hand;

And mocked was Osiris, the Giver of Breath,  
As the firstborn of Egypt were smitten with death.

God delivered his own while in sorrow they toiled,  
And the Pharaoh was humbled, and Egypt was spoiled,  
As the Children of Israel, in ranks upon ranks,  
Fled from Egypt unto the Red Sea's stormy banks.

'The retreat of the Israelites now hath been blocked!  
Oh, but be not deceived, Pharaoh, God is not mocked.  
Stand ye still, Israel, fear not the Gentile horde:  
Stand and watch the salvation that comes of the Lord!

And encouraged was every Israelite heart,  
And they walked on dry land when the waters did part;  
But the armies of Egypt, assaying the same,  
Were destroyed in the deluge, and swallowed in shame!

And the blood-tainted waters that lap on the shore  
Bear a witness to legions that conquer no more;  
And in Egypt a pallor seems sickly to roll  
O'er the land – for bereavement hath smitten each soul;

And no more wild cheers will resound in the streets  
As each child his spoil-laden father he greets; –  
For the glory of Egypt, and Pharaoh's proud might,  
The Saviour of Israel hath stricken from sight!

### *Jesus Welcoming Home a Martyr*

Cast off thine anguish, thy lingering pain;  
Still all the troubles astir in thy breast;  
Hardships long suffered have not been in vain:  
Thou hast been faithful – enter thy rest.

Great was thy love, O dear servant, for me:

And yet thou didst suffer; high was the cost;  
Thou drank of the anguish that I bare for thee,  
When thou wast unseeing, incapable, lost.

Long was thy journey, thy labor most hard:  
Thy gospel was slighted by Adam's fall'n race;  
Thy body was broken and battered and scarred  
By those whom thou strovest to tell of my grace;

But was I not with thee each step of the way,  
Comforting, strengthening in thy distress?  
Gave I not mercy and peace day by day?  
Humbled I not those who strove to oppress?

I savored as incense thy heart's prayers and sighs;  
Upheld thee each time thou didst fall, my dear son;  
I wiped every tear from thy sorrowing eyes;  
I never forsook thee, my child – well done.

Cast off corruption, mortality, death:  
As thou hast labored, so shalt thou be blest.  
What though escapeth thy last gasping breath?  
Thou hast been faithful – enter thy rest.

### *A Millennial Hymn*

Behold the Lord! heed now his might!  
He cometh from his throne on high:  
Surrounded with a robe of light,  
Now he descendeth from the sky.

Zion rejoice! the Shepherd's arm  
Shall ever guide and comfort thee;  
Thy Saviour reigns! then fear no harm;  
He ever will thy Shepherd be.



He holdeth seas within his hand,  
And with his scales he weighs the earth;  
The starry heavens hath he spanned;  
He knoweth all the mountains' worth.

O round of stone, now cease thy groan –  
Slip off the curse, lift up thy voice:  
For Christ hath come into his home;  
Ye kindreds, nations, tongues, rejoice!

The bloody swords of earth's war-lords  
Are beaten into scythes again;  
The young lambs rest on the lion's breast,  
And children play on the serpents' den!

An iron rod – the reign of God –  
And now at last a peaceful earth!  
Let goodness ride a mighty tide –  
Bring in this old world's great rebirth!

*Great God above! thy pow'r and love  
Through all the world are rung:  
Let leap the fame of Jesus' name  
From ev'ry joyous tongue!*

### *Search Me and Know Me*

Search me and know me! My God, thou hast made me:  
Where shall I flee from thy presence divine?  
When shall I stumble, that thou canst not aid me?  
Where can I go, and not know thou art mine?

If I take wings, and arise into heaven;  
If I descend to the depths of the sea;  
What shall I fear? for thy promise is given:  
Thou shalt be there with me!

Search me and know me! Though darkness be falling,  
Quicken my spirit with thy holy ray.  
Grant me thy wisdom; shew me thy calling; –  
Sweet are thy thoughts and eternal thy way.

*Search Me and Know Me (II)*

Search me and know me: though the darkness fall;  
Though I be small against the face of night;  
How am I lost, if I be in thy sight?  
What shall I fear, if thou hast heard my call?  
Search me, my God!

Search me and know me: tempests may arise;  
The gloom may fall upon the darkened sea;  
If I be lost, let me be lost in thee!  
Till thy light break upon the cloudless skies.  
Know me, my God!

Search me, O God! and ever as today,  
Guide me, my Shepherd, in thy perfect will.  
As thou hast known me, ever know me still,  
And lead me in thy everlasting way.  
Know me, my God!

*All For His Great Praise*

*Elect of God!* called by his grace  
To stand before his throne in love,  
We rest in Christ, our dwellingplace,  
We taste all blessings from above:

*Elect according to his will*  
*That we should be to his great praise,*

*How can our quickened tongues be still?  
Sing to the glory of his grace!*

*Redeemed in Christ!* out with his blood  
Poured the full riches of his grace!  
Now we are gathered up to God,  
Christ's heritage from ancient days:

*Redeemed according to his will  
That we should be to his great praise,  
How can our quickened tongues be still?  
Sing to the glory of his grace!*

*Oh, Spirit-sealed!* Our guarantee  
Of glorious gathering unto Christ,  
Blood-bought for all eternity,  
His purchased work, his highly prized:

*Oh, sealed according to his will  
That we should be to his great praise,  
How can our quickened tongues be still?  
Sing to the glory of his grace!*

*The Church of God!* the grand display  
Of God's great power and grace outpoured,  
Put on his resurrection day  
Beneath the feet of Christ our Lord:

*His Church, according to his will  
That we should be to his great praise,  
How can our quickened tongues be still?  
Sing the great glory of his grace!*

### *Our Great High Priest*

Emboldened by my priest, I come

Before the throne of grace,  
And there find mercy to press home  
Through toil-laden days.

Though every step I seem to fall,  
I know I cannot fail:  
My great Forerunner, once for all,  
Has entered now the veil!

This road each weary step he trod,  
That I, a worm of earth,  
Might stand before a holy God,  
Dressed only in his worth;

Thus I (poor, vile son of earth)  
So confident may be,  
For God sees now my Savior's worth,  
And smiles, and welcomes me!

So doubly sure of grace am I,  
That have two things of God,  
Who will not fail and cannot lie –  
His promise and his blood!

### *I Will Praise You*

I will praise you, O Lord, with my whole heart,  
I will sing with lifted hands;  
With the ransomed I will join in part,  
Singing praise throughout the lands!

All the worlds leapt forth at your mighty word,  
Stretching out in ordered days:  
All the awe-struck hosts of heaven heard,  
And poured forth their song of praise;

I will join them, Lord, who sing praise to you,  
For your word is strong and sure:  
All your precious promises are true,  
None shall fail forevermore.

Though the skies be rent in twain, O Lord,  
Though the sun lie paralyzed,  
Your strong oath will not fail – every word  
Is “Amen” and “Yea” in Christ!

In that steadfast oath my hope is placed;  
I am found in Christ my king;  
Reconciled in love and forever graced,  
Now I lift my hands and sing.

Let us worship the Lord with our whole heart,  
Come and sing with lifted hands;  
All you faithful, join with us in part,  
Singing praise throughout the lands!

### *Reflections*

My Lord, my God – if ever thou  
Have been, cease not to be so now,  
When tempests rise and billows roll  
To break upon my weary soul,  
And all the world rise up to make  
My downfall sure; and doubters take  
Their chance to cast a deeper gloom,  
And fickle voices thunder doom,  
And hard-beset I lift my eyes  
And find no op'ning in the skies –  
O Lord, my Lord, to thee I flee,  
If thou wilt still my refuge be,  
And fear no evil; let them rage,  
Let all the chaos of the age

Rain on my head: I shall not fear,  
For thou art ever, ever near;  
The vow still sounds within my ear  
That, 'Till this dust sink into dust,  
In thee, O God, will be my trust.'

In thee my trust! then what my fear?  
Or what my doubt, if thou be near?  
Do I despair? O shallow heart,  
Be not consumed with where thou art,  
But where thou mightest be – or yet  
Where thou hast been before – Oh, let  
The tides and times roll back again,  
The shade reverse, the ceaseless gears  
Groan, halt, slip, slipping with the years –  
Back to the balmier seasons, when  
Thou lifted me from choking dust,  
And made thee (ah, dear Lord) my trust.  
Green were the pastures then, and there  
The waters murmured cool and clear  
From glen to glen; and I was free  
To walk, to run, to rest – in thee!  
The vale was green, the sky was fair,  
And all things whispered, 'Thou art free.'  
Ah, how my heart did trust thee then!  
Thy gentle rod protected me,  
Or chastened, when I strayed from thee:  
And thou wast there, where I have been!  
Ought I now to leave thy side,  
From all thy tender mercies hide,  
For fickle men? I cannot flee,  
Nor could I, since I came to thee –  
'Since I came'? – nay, I ought to say,  
'Since thou didst pluck me from the clay':  
When I as yet knew not thy face,  
Nor loved thy law, I knew thy grace:  
Thou rescued me, and here I am –

Shaped and redeemed by thee – thy lamb,  
And thou my Shepherd; lift me up,  
Fill once again my wasting cup!  
And let the wonder of thy ways  
Fill up my heart with songs of praise:  
For steadily my vow I raise,  
That, ‘Till this dust sink into dust,  
In thee, O God, will be my trust.’

In thee my trust – well, it is well:  
Thou hast redeemed my soul from hell;  
From hell, where fondly I did run,  
Where I had stayed, but for thy Son,  
And for thy undeserved aid:  
Turn back the dial another shade!  
The day was young – and young my heart:  
The substance – form – the whole – the part –  
The essence of all things I sought,  
And scanned the high and low, and brought  
A wand’ring eye, a steadfast soul  
To search out and behold – an ear  
Well-tuned and sensitive, to hear  
The cataclysmic ages roll;  
Being thus equipped, I piled high  
The words and works of days gone by  
And present times – the musings deep  
Of darksome men – and thought to reap  
The wisdom of the world, and keep  
What I could glean from all; I dove  
(Not shallow, as a glassy cove)  
Deep into an unbounded sea  
Of waves and tides and turbulency;  
There tossed and rolled and whirled around  
In that expansive waste, I found  
The briny crest of misery  
Break on the shores of vanity;  
The nothingness of ages, bent

To that great cyclical event,  
All empty came, and empty went.  
O weary toil! O weary rest!  
O foolish worst! O foolish best!  
O thought and reason all unblest!  
Sad state! unknowing, to be blind:  
When I had perished in that sea,  
Unknowing where, or what to find,  
Whom I unknowing sought found me!  
Thou Lord, as good as thou art great,  
Reachest unto the vilest state!

Dost thou yet doubt, O soul? again  
Recall thy Savior's grace, and then  
Thou canst not but lift up thy voice,  
Exalt thy God, give thanks, rejoice  
In him who saves the worst of men.  
My Lord, my God – I yet recall  
When thou, O Light and Life of all,  
Saw my condition, heard my plea,  
Revived my spirit – rescued me!  
I plumbed the depths of self and sin;  
But Lord, my Lord, thou entered in  
And snatched me out – Oh, blessed day!  
The cloud of blackness rolled away,  
I saw that there was naught of good  
Save in thy Son, and in his blood,  
And nothing righteous I could do  
Whereby my penitence to shew;  
That far above, the titan weight  
Of sin's requital, looming great,  
Threatened to crush me where I stood,  
O God! but that the Savior's blood  
Could cleanse my sin and set me free,  
Could cast the darkness far from me,  
Could touch my eyes, that I might see.  
Frail spirit! dost thou doubt him now?



Oh, let me raise again my vow,  
That, 'Till this dust sink into dust,  
In thee, O God, will be my trust.'

Thou shieldest me from fear and doubt;  
Thy goodness hedgeth me about;  
Thou makest soft my mossy bed,  
And pourest blessings on my head;  
Thou givest me my daily food;  
My whole heart knoweth thou art good.  
Aye! thou art good, and I am well,  
For in thy presence, Lord, I dwell,  
Here nevermore to be removed,  
If (as that other, whom thou loved)  
When fears beset me, I might rest  
My weary head upon thy breast,  
And there be happy all my days,  
Secure in God and in his ways;  
Ah, there my peaceful heart shall bow,  
And ever murmur, soft and low,  
That, 'Till this dust sink into dust,  
In thee, O God, will be my trust.'

### *The Nativity*

#### I

How wondrous is the light  
That shineth in the darkness of the world!  
That shineth from above,  
That cometh from the first,  
Before the world's foundations had been laid;  
That scattereth the darkness  
Which comprehendeth not;  
That openeth the eyes of men  
Who will not understand;  
Bright as the image of the Father's glory; –

Bright as the dawn of the day of creation; –  
Brighter than the midnight stars;  
Proclaiming all the promises of God,  
Full of grace and truth.

What night is this?  
What blessed night is this?  
The stars begin to twinkle through the mist;  
The clouds begin to race across the sky;  
The snow begins to glisten in the fields;  
The breezes cease to sigh;  
The pine trees cease their moan;  
The earth still hurrying on its trackless path  
Through myriad worlds all rolling to decay  
Still cleaves the night, and hastens on its way,  
Tracing its endless course around the sun;  
And the perpetual groan  
Of all creation briefly seems to halt:  
The world slips off her shackles for a space,  
And leaves behind the curse of endless years.  
The stars of dawn rejoice!  
The sons of morning shout!  
The heavens raise their song  
In giddiest exultation,  
And strow their richest chords  
Upon the world beneath;  
All nature lifts a ringing voice of praise!  
It is the night when darkness shall dispel; –  
It is the night when tears shall flee away; –  
It is the night when sin shall be destroyed; –  
Sorrow and mourning shall cease;  
The redeemed of the Lord shall rejoice,  
And come with singing to the holy mount;  
The crooked shall be straight;  
The hills shall be made low;  
And peace shall flourish like a mighty stream.  
Tonight the promised Christ

Shall come upon the earth,  
And God shall dwell among the sons of men;  
Messiah cometh to the world,  
And righteousness shall spring up in his steps!

*Angel I*

‘Four hundred silent years!  
Four hundred silent years, and who could guess  
That God would speak to Israel once more  
Not through the visions of the past; –  
Not through the holy men of old; –  
Not through the prophets; –  
But through his Son, the image of himself?’

*Angel II*

‘Eternal Word!  
Eternal Word of God!  
The glory of the Lord become incarnate!  
The Spirit breathed the word  
Into the tongues of men,  
The life and light of promise from above; –  
But now the Word himself,  
Of everlasting life and light,  
Is manifest in flesh –  
The world can now behold the form of God!’

*Angel III*

‘The world of men:  
Aye! all of mankind now –  
For this is he of whom the prophet spake,  
That all who call upon him shall be blessed;  
The righteous Branch of David;  
The King of all the earth;  
Whose name shall be ‘THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS!’

*Angel IV*

‘The King of all nations!  
The Judge of all peoples!  
Who bringeth a new covenant;  
Who wipeth away all tears;  
Whose kingdom never ends:  
God blessed forever!  
The nations shall bow down before his throne,  
Their swords shall be made ploughshares,  
Their children play upon the serpents’ den,  
Their lambs lie down with wolves and fear no harm!’

*Chorus*

*Hush, ye hills; flow softly, river;  
Shed, ye stars, a gentle light;  
Hush, the Maker of forever  
Cometh on the breast of night:  
Trembling world, receive him!  
Sinful men, believe him!  
Peace! he cometh to dissever  
Life from death – from darkness, light.*

*Hush, O town, so softly sleeping,  
Softly wait thy coming King;  
Hush, the peaceful hours creeping  
To thy streets thy sovereign bring:  
Silent city, meet him!  
King and peasant, greet him!  
Bethlehem! cease now thy weeping,  
Let thy glad hosannas ring!*

II

Behold the shining star  
That glimmers on the night,

And casts her radiance far across the earth!  
Lighting up the fields and forests,  
Shimmering on the streams,  
Glancing through the clouds and mist,  
Dancing with the waves,  
Bathing all the nations of the world  
In a soft effulgence.

But lo! the rays  
Are gathered into one intenser beam;  
The lustre of that whiter, brighter beam  
Pierces the darkness of a humble stall.

*Chorus*

*Star of night, that brightly glowest,  
Shine upon the heart of man;  
Brightly shine! he whom thou knowest  
Knew thee ere the world began;  
Shine, bright star, that, as thou growest,  
Lightest up redemption's plan.*

A humble stall, the residence of beasts:  
Rough-hewn timbers, unworked stone;  
All bare, but for one structure in the midst,  
A rugged, lowly manger,  
Filled with fresh-cut hay; –  
Is this the place  
Made ready for the advent of a king?  
This humble stall  
The birthplace of a king?

*Angel I*

'He cometh to his own –

*Angel II*

‘But his own receive him not.’

*Angel III*

‘The world is made by him –

*Angel IV*

‘But the world hath known him not’

*Angel I*

‘A tender babe –  
Can this be he, this tender, helpless babe?  
Or is this he of whom the prophet spake,  
That he shall rule the earth  
In righteousness and peace,  
And judge the nations with an iron rod?  
That in his perfect reign, mercy and truth  
Shall kiss each other?’

*Angel V*

‘Aye! but this is he  
Of whom that prophet spake, that he shall grow  
Before him as a tender plant,  
Who hath no lovely form,  
No kingly comeliness,  
A man despised, with grief above all men;  
Whose back shall bear men’s stripes  
In payment for men’s sins;  
Who smitten more than any other man  
Shall conquer sin.’

*Angel I*

‘A tender plant –  
And thus he lies  
In yonder stall a tender, helpless babe.’

*Chorus*

*Sweetly sleeps the little child,  
On his little bed of hay;  
Sweetly looks the virgin mild  
On the Saviour tucked away;  
Tenderly the oxen loweth,  
Lovingly the white dove cooeth,  
Reverently the young lamb boweth  
To the Christ child born this day.*

*Gently plays the light around him  
In the stall where he is laid;  
Gently hath the starlight found him,  
Child for whom the star was made!  
Reverently the starlight falleth,  
Tenderly the soft breeze calleth,  
Lovingly his mother lulleth  
Soft to sleep his little head.*

*Angel II*

‘A tender babe –  
The Saviour of the world;  
A lowly stall –  
The dwellingplace of God.’

*Angel III*

‘How small the hand

From which sprang all the morning stars!  
    How black the night  
From which shall issue everlasting light!  
    And from this land  
    That groaneth black and dead –  
    And from these streets  
    Of humble Bethlehem –  
True life hath risen that shall conquer death!'

*Chorus*

*Bethlehem, that liest sleeping  
    In the stillness of the night,  
    Silently thy vigil keeping,  
    Yonder breaks eternal light!  
    Hark! the starry host rejoices,  
    Lifting up their ringing voices,  
Lo! the starry heavens leaping  
    Greet the world in raiment bright!*

*Town of Bethlehem, why groan ye,  
    When the heavenly hosts rejoice?  
Little town, no longer moan ye –  
    Break forth in exulting noise!  
    Peace! for it is he that made thee  
    Cometh down from heav'n to aid thee –  
And the child that doth own thee,  
    Own thy king with one glad voice!*

III

Silent is the night:  
    No movement in the air,  
    No sudden winter breeze,  
Disturbs the slumber of the breathless world;  
    Silent is the tender night –  
But with a nameless air of expectation;  
    Silent is the night:



And cold, and dark;  
Beneath the distant stars,  
In woolly rest,  
Lie peacefully a gentle flock of sheep,  
Dimming the frosty stars with misty breath;  
Their shepherds looking on in calm repose  
Break now and then the stillness  
With a muttered sigh,  
Or stamp their feet against the frozen earth.  
The world awaits the coming of her God.

*Angel I*

‘How silently the city lies!  
No joyous shout,  
No ringing accolade,  
No harbinger of everlasting triumph  
Bears witness to the coming of a King;  
And can it be  
That this most blessed moment of all times  
Should go unnoticed?’

*Angel V*

‘Nay, for there below,  
In silence keeping watch,  
The shepherds wait, to whom we go;  
Arise, and let us hence:  
We bring the message of eternal life,  
The brightness of the land of Israel,  
The blessed hope of all men everywhere;  
The earth awaits the word of God:  
Let us go.’

Tender is the night:

Silent is the world;  
But lo! across the peaceful sky,  
A blaze of glorious light!  
The heavens are riven, and a dreadful form,  
Strowing his splendor o'er the earth  
In terrible brilliance,  
Is manifested to the men below;  
His raiment is as light,  
His countenance like lightning,  
The whole earth trembles at his flashing gaze,  
And shudders at his awe-inspiring voice.

*Angel V*

'Fear not! for behold  
I bring to you good tidings of great joy,  
And peace unto all people everywhere;  
For unto you this day  
In humble Bethlehem  
Is born a Saviour which is Christ the Lord;  
And this shall be the sign:  
The child ye shall find  
All humbly wrapped and in a manger laid.'

*Chorus*

*Glory to God in the highest!  
Goodwill to men on earth;  
Judah, that hitherto sighedst,  
Rejoice in his matchless worth;  
Israel, that languishing liest,  
Arise – 'tis thy Saviour's birth.*

*Glory to God! and forever  
On the earth be peace;  
He hath forsaken thee never –  
Nor shall his goodwill cease;*

*None from his light shall he sever –  
His goodness will only increase.*

The world is dark –  
The sudden bright angelic effulgence,  
As quickly as it came,  
Departing, left the former silent night:  
The wayward flock of sheep  
Are scattered on the hill,  
The shepherds' warming fire  
Has sunken into coals,  
The frosty world is peaceful as before;  
For, lo, the men  
Who sitting spellbound heard the heavenly host,  
Forsaking all their watch,  
Are come to Bethlehem,  
And humbly kneeling in a lowly stall:  
Coarse, rustic men, yet honored over all,  
And chosen from the princes of the world;  
Called out to hear the message of the Lord,  
The hope of all the earth,  
And worship the Redeemer of the world.

#### IV

This is the night of hope,  
That foldeth in its breast the promised seed;  
This is the night of perfect peace:  
The stars  
Shed forth their softest light;  
The breezes gently sigh;  
The river flows in peace;  
The waves leap high with joy;  
All nature greets her God come down to earth,  
And all the calm influences of night

Gather together in a lowly stall,  
To bow before their Lord;  
This is the night of joy –  
    But where are they  
To whom God condescends in mean estate?  
    This is the promised Christ –  
Alone but for a few unlovely men  
    That worship in his stall.  
    Where are the kings,  
When he hath come who is the King of kings?  
    And where are Judah's lords,  
When in her coasts resides the Lord of lords?  
    This is the night of hope,  
Unheeded by the world of stricken men.  
This child is the hope of Israel –  
    The seed of Israel –  
Will Israel in scorn lift up her hand,  
    To slay the King of glory?

*Angel I*

‘Behold the Lamb of God,  
That sinless beareth all the sins of men!  
Behold the spotless Lamb,  
The Saviour of the earth,  
Despised of men, yet come in their behalf!  
Will men reject their Lord,  
Who cometh to make peace for them with God?’

*Angel IV*

‘Behold, I see a day; –  
All of creation groans; –  
The whole earth trembles, and the sun is dimmed:  
The hour of darkness hath arrived,  
When men arise to slay the Lord of Light.’

*Chorus*

*Groan, ye hills, weep forth your story;  
All your tearful homage bring:  
They have slain the Lord of glory –  
They have crucified your king;  
Tremble, earth! Ye fields, be riven!  
Lo! the sun itself grew dim,  
When that darkness strove with him –  
See the place where they have striven.*

*See the grave where they have placed him  
Lifeless in the black of night:  
It is opened! God hath raised him  
Unto everlasting light.  
Sing, ye hills, your wondrous story!  
Darkness' power strove in vain –  
Lo! the veil is rent in twain,  
For he lives the Lord of glory!*

V

In a lowly stable,  
In a humble manger,  
In swaddling clothes all meanly tucked away,  
Liest in a calm repose  
The Maker of the earth,  
The Shaper of the world,  
The craftsman of the womb that gave him birth:  
Master of light!  
Mover of storms!  
Former of man!  
The everlasting Father –  
Almighty God made manifest in flesh,  
Emmanuel.

There he lieth,  
King of glory,  
Spotless lamb of God in servant's form;  
But this is he  
Before whom ev'ry knee shall bow,  
Whom ev'ry tongue shall own as Lord,  
The image of the form of the Most High;  
Redeemer of the world,  
Conqueror of death,  
Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;  
The righteous Judge,  
The everlasting God,  
A tender babe –  
But when his work is done,  
He cometh soon again in all his glory.

*Angel III*

'There he lieth,  
In his manger,  
Shepherd of the flock of God;  
There he lieth on his bed of grass  
Who sendeth rain and causeth grass to grow;  
There graspeth for a straw  
The hand that holds the oceans of the world.'

*Angel IV*

'He made all things –  
And by his word all things consist;  
He formed the world –  
And now he cometh to redeem his own;  
All things were made by him –  
He cometh to make all things right again.'

*Angel V*

‘He cometh to redeem the world,  
And bear the sins of many,  
To win an everlasting name of glory:  
For of him, and through him, and to him are all things:  
To whom be glory forever.’

*Chorus*

*Behold the Lord! heed now his might!  
He cometh from his throne on high:  
Surrounded with a robe of light,  
Now he descendeth from the sky.*

*Zion rejoice! the Shepherd’s arm  
Shall ever guide and comfort thee;  
Thy Saviour reigns! then fear no harm;  
He ever will thy Shepherd be.*

*He holdeth seas within his hand,  
And with his scales he weighs the earth;  
The starry heavens hath he spanned;  
He knoweth all the mountains’ worth.*

*O round of stone, now cease thy groan –  
Slip off the curse, lift up thy voice:  
For Christ hath come into his home;  
Ye kindreds, nations, tongues, rejoice!*

*The bloody swords of earth’s war-lords  
Are beaten into scythes again;  
The young lambs rest on the lion’s breast,  
And children play on the serpents’ den!*

*An iron rod – the reign of God –  
And now at last a peaceful earth!  
Let goodness ride a mighty tide –  
Bring in this old world’s great rebirth!*

*Great God above! thy pow'r and love  
Through all the world are rung:  
Let leap the fame of Jesus' name  
From ev'ry joyous tongue!*



Later

Lyrics



## *Stanzas*

No, I shall not now weep. –  
E'en tears are a comfort that I scarce can bear,  
So deeply do I grieve; profound despair  
I will sit and savor to its bitterest drop:  
And while the calm and weary hours creep,  
I will ask of them nothing, – save not to stop.

No. – I will embrace the gloom  
That even now falls upon my heavy heart,  
Nor let my woes rain from my eyes; – if they should start,  
I will but look again around the room,  
Let my soul drain into the things I see,  
And drink to its dregs the cup of Misery.

And if my sight should fall  
Upon the letter traced by her dear hand: –  
Upon, 'I hope that you can understand,'  
Or, 'Please bear no ill will towards him at all,'  
Or yet, 'I hope we will always be friends:' –  
(Thus starts my circle of passion where hers ends),

I will but look away:  
Soon enough I'll recall rejected love, –  
(When the pale, drunken moon staggers above,  
And night slays the last wan vestige of the day,  
And profoundest heartaches slay my hopes of sleep), –  
Then I shall weep. – Then I shall weep.

## *Two Christmas Songs*

### **Fall Gently, Christmas Flakes**

Fall gently, Christmas flakes,

Upon my form too cold, too cold to care;  
It matters not my poor heart breaks;  
It matters not the chill is in the air:  
Fall gently, Christmas flakes, on me alone: –  
For she is gone.

If I were small and white,  
And careless as a flake of Christmas snow,  
I'd float upon the silent night,  
Far, far away, and not care where I go:  
I'd drift forever through the winter air,  
Far, far from here.

Who knows where I might fall?  
Perhaps upon her still unyielding form:  
Perhaps – it matters not at all,  
For I am cold: who cares if she be warm?  
Fall on her, Christmas flakes, far, far away, –  
Here will I stay.

### **Bring my Christmas Here**

The snow is in the air;  
The lights are on the tree;  
The hearth is full of cheer,  
And blazing merrily;  
But Christmas has not come:  
As soon as you are home,  
Christmas will be here.

The candles' nodding souls  
Wink and disappear;  
The softly-dying coals  
Glimmer on a tear:  
It isn't Christmas day,  
While you are far away:  
Bring my Christmas here.

Come home again, my dear!  
The fire may have died,  
But we'll have Christmas cheer  
Nestled side by side,  
And warm forevermore,  
With love forever sure: –  
Bring my Christmas here!

### *Afterthought*

An acrostic

**G**one are the moments, fall'n to Time's great slaughter!  
**O**nly a few sad memories remain:  
**O**nly dead hope, like puddles after rain,  
**D**issolving as a snowflake on the water;  
**B**ut still one bond not Time or Chance may strain: –  
**Y**es! though our lesser, earthly ties must end,  
*En Cristo hen esmení*. Good bye, my friend.

### *Song*

Oh! the moon is in the sky,  
And the glow is on the lake,  
And the coyote's lonely howl  
Shivers in the starry wake; –  
And you are in my soul,  
And your name is on my sigh.

And ah! would that sigh could tell  
How my throbbing senses ache:  
I sit, – and see your shame  
Gleaming in the lake;  
I hear your false, false name  
On the coyote's sobbing wail.

But the lake will soon be dark,  
And the moon will flee away,  
And the waves will rest in shade,  
And midnight clothe the bay, –  
And your memory will fade  
With the coyote's dying bark.

Aye! soon the last pale glow  
Will leave the lonely lake,  
And the coyote's last lone howl  
Cease, and his great heart break;  
And my desolate soul  
Drown in deepest woe.

*Then Come Away, My Love*

Then come away, my love,  
Let the world rush on by;  
While the heavens are fleeting above,  
Come away, you and I:

For the light fades on the plain,  
And the lark flies to her nest,  
And the fox seeks out his den, –  
And I long for your breast.

The night was made for rest,  
And I am weary of day,  
And would faint on your soft breast: –  
My love, come away.

*Ask Me Not*

Ask me not, my love,

To tell you how I love you. Can the sun  
Tell how he pours out radiance from above?  
The leopard tell you how he has each spot?  
Can greyhounds tell you how they run?  
Then ask me not.

Darling! ask me not, –  
But ask the ocean how he fills his shores.  
Ask of the fire how it stays so hot.  
Ask dolphins how they gambol in the sea.  
Ask of the lion how he roars –  
But ask not me.

How should I tell, sweet?  
Can robins tell you how they chirp and sing?  
Can swift time tell you how his moments fleet?  
Can bluebells tell you what their blue is for?  
Could church bells tell you how they ring?  
I can no more.

Ask but this instead:  
Can time turn back? Can under be above?  
Can spoken words again become unsaid?  
Can true love die? The world may pass away,  
And life and time run out, my love, –  
But love will stay.

*Ao Meu Amor<sup>ii</sup>*

See daylight leap to western skies?  
See all the glories of the night  
Spring up in raptured evening sighs  
To tangle in a soft delight?  
How dull that passioned red romance,  
Those mingled shafts of night and day!  
Ah, but a memory of a glance

Dissolves their beauty fast away.

A glance, a look, a steadfast gaze  
Recalled from one whose love-lit eyes  
Make mockery of day's bright rays,  
And waste to wind night's richest sighs, –  
A glance that thrills, that fills my soul  
As morning's kisses fill with dew  
Her flower-loves – leaves me too full  
To find delight except in you.

You're fair my love, and only fair,  
A treasure-trove of vast delight  
From all that heaven-entrancing hair  
To feet that laugh at angels' flight, –  
Ah, glowing in that tender soul,  
And thrilling in that matchless sight  
Of radiant form and face, Nicole,  
Is the perfection of delight!

### *Stanzas*

Written on a Wyoming mountain top

How still is the hour!  
As numbingly the shades of darkness creep,  
Passionlessly upon each nodding flower  
The night-dews weep.

The lone breeze that wanders  
Now fondles the forlorn clouds in the sky,  
Now teases at the tree-tops, as it ponders  
Its course, ere it die.

My heart on thy breast  
Will wander with thee, passing evening breeze!  
Until thou tire out, and take thy rest



In southern seas:

Ah! there it will be,  
Till it be treasured in a softer breast; –  
Oahu! all my heart has gone to thee,  
Isle of the blest.

Be pleasant to her, –  
The loveliest and dearest on thy shore:  
Care fondly for my darling Jennifer,  
Whom I adore.

Remember me here,  
And know my heart and hopes are with thee, Jen:  
I trust the heart that one time held me dear  
Will change again;

When hearts have once loved,  
Love cannot be forever left unsaid;  
Through storms of doubt it will remain unmoved,  
When God has led:

So Joy! shed thy graces  
Upon each jutting crag and modest cove;  
Embrace the dear, dear isle that embraces  
Her whom I love.

### *To Darla*

Written during a drowsy afternoon session  
on sleep deprivation

Darla! it's time to rest those bloodshot eyes;  
Are you not drowsy? go on, take your rest.  
Relax – it matters not the daylight flies:  
Let it fly on without you, time-oppressed!  
All of your senses thicken to a crawl;  
Listen to Mr. Phil's low-droning voice, –

Yes! is it not a most relaxing drawl?  
Now is the moment – sleep is your best choice –  
Nighttime is far off – let those eyelids fall.

### *The Poet's Last Word*

On being asked why he forsook the composition of poetry,  
and ceaselessly importuned to take up the practice again.

Cease! here a dry-tongued, weeping child sucks his dead mother's  
empty breast;  
Here a soot-blackened street-waif labors, hollow-eyed for want of rest;

Here an unwanted, unloved beggar clutches his rags against the cold:  
See! his empty eyes roll upward, there where myriad worlds have  
rolled –

Can hollowness grow hollow? well might his, if he would learn  
That those worlds of silv'ry promise all roll onward but to burn.

Hope is a cheat in a world of cheats; I will see this cheat Hope dead –  
As empty as all those mocked by her – ere the laurel comes back on my  
head.

Cease! shall I sing you a happy song? it is a mockery:  
If I sing, let it be the way things are – not the way they ought to be.

What shall I sing you? a pretty girl? eyes bright, cheeks rosy, lips full –  
How fair! but alas, it is but a flesh-mask, stretched on a death's-head  
skull.

So would it be if I sang to please you, sang you a happy song –  
Ask me not (Friend!) with my rosy words to paint this death-world  
wrong,

Or ask if you will – this poet is dead; these lips the world's breast has  
left dry:

*En Cristo*<sup>iii</sup> is all my un-poet-like plea, *sola gratia*<sup>v</sup> my last fainting cry.

## ΑΓΩΝ ΠΟΙΗΤΟΥ <sup>v</sup>

As serpent-charmers suck from deadly fangs  
The antidote sought by the world's snake-bit,  
And bitten themselves, cast into racking pangs,  
In seeking the world's cure give their lives for it,  
So I: my pen cast forth a sacred flame,  
Blossoming red and healing from the start:  
– But touching my hand, the deadly gall became  
A festering sore that ate away my heart.

### *The Poet and the Singer*

The Poet dipped his quill into the flame,  
And wrought a fair and finely-crafted thing;  
But no one cared until the Singer came,  
And took it up, and set the truth a-wing.

### *Faith and Melancholy*

Am I sad?  
In this life only:  
Faith apprehends what the heart cannot feel.

Heart-blows add  
To the hopeful lonely  
Bruises Eternity hastens to heal.

### *Sorrowful John*

A Ballad

Well met, well met, good gentleman,  
Why haste you on your way?  
Oh, I flee the scene of a bloody crime,

A crime done but today.

And why does your lancet drip with blood,  
And why does it shine so red?  
Oh, I have killed my truest friend,  
And I have struck him dead.

And what has your true friend done to you,  
That you treated him like this?  
Oh, I heard it said that one like him  
Had stol'n from my love a kiss.

And why do you mourn your false, false friend,  
Who so ill-treated you?  
Oh, I saw my love with one like him,  
And I knew my friend was true.

And what did you give to your false, false love,  
Who slighted you this way?  
Oh, poison in her dainty cup  
I gave to her today.

And why do you weep, good gentleman,  
And why such a mournful look?  
Oh, my true love met with her brother dear,  
And a brother's kiss he took.

And why so pale, good gentleman,  
And why do you reel and sway?  
Oh, I have drunk of the same dainty cup,  
And today is my last day.

### *Paparazzi*

Blood-leaches, swollen grossly fat  
On vital fluids not their own;

The carrion-crow, who strips the bone  
Of rotten flesh; the sewer rat

Who ekes existence from decay;  
Pale maggot-worms, whose foul breath  
Is putrid with the smell of death;  
Dung beetles gorged on sewage; – they

Are nearest kin to these who cry  
And clamor for a moral lapse,  
And peck and scratch for gossip-scrap  
From all who hold the public eye:

“Here’s this one, married yet again,  
And he was with a common whore,  
And this one, whom you all adore, –  
See every private flaw and stain!”

And to the press. Their columns reek  
Of moral filth and gruesome sin,  
And they grow fat, and wallow in  
The things which it is shame to speak.

– “But we print nothing that’s not so,  
And they who acted are to blame,”  
They spew, and clamor in their shame,  
“The public has the right to know!”

Yes, woe to deeds reproachable,  
And woe to him who reads and clucks –  
But trebly woe to him who sucks  
Subsistence from a human soul.

### *When Died the Beautiful?*

When died the beautiful? Above the din

Of modern mock and clamor, Truth's lone voice,  
Once sad and lovely, now but adds the noise  
Of banal chatter – now the poet's pen  
Is silenced by the chatty screen – oh, when  
Did regal Truth, once crowned with solemn joys,  
Go walking out dressed as the peasant boys,  
And royal Right take on the hue of Sin?  
When died the beautiful? Do they not know,  
Nor understand that Truth turned trivial  
Is thus less true by half – that the great Foe  
Of right religion is the cretin soul  
Who damns the truth with jest? When came it so?  
When failed man's heart? When died the beautiful?

*Bittersweet*

There is a joy that is akin to madness,  
And there is a wisdom far removed from mirth;  
But who would trade the giddy lie of gladness  
For all the wretched knowledge on the earth?

*An Insignificant Crisis in the Life of J. Dwight Nelson*

I

'This is all I know of human nature:  
Men have always labored to build walls,  
Definite angles and straight lines,  
Always regular designs,  
Mass-replicated bricks, a singular plural feature;  
It really doesn't matter if one falls,  
For wallness matters more than any wall,  
And humanness is that they build at all.

'Sometimes I doubt  
If they keep things in

Or lock things out,  
Those wall-building men –  
Or maybe neither matters very much,  
They only want the *somethingness* – a wall  
Is a sphere-bridge, point of contact, corporal:  
Walls were made to touch.'

– He thought (with thoughts that no one understands),  
And turned the corner where that white wall bends.

## II

He caught the ray of a bright eye as it dropped,  
And shudderingly felt it not for him;  
Yet transfixed he stopped  
And felt his own eye dim,  
Conjecturing behind her swelling breasts  
Emotions that were the antithesis  
Of all that ever had been his:  
He thought, 'Upon the wall her white hand rests:  
Do I suppose too much  
When I say that walls were made to touch?'

## III

He stared at the monotonous white wall,  
Fearing a door that openly concealed  
The empty darkness of a lightless hall;  
All that the door revealed  
Was naked contrast, blackness fronting whiteness:  
He wondered at the *whatness* of it all  
Until the tearing contrast seized his soul –  
Drowning him in ubiquitous *otherness* –

Groping he gasped, wondering if he dreamed –  
*Silently he screamed.*

## IV

As an ant on a glass globe crawls

In ever-widening circles from the top  
And knows where it must stop  
On the sharply-sloping globe before it falls:

*As an ant on a glass globe crawls*

His mind crawls on the reality-sphere,  
    Cropping for walls,  
    Transfixed by fear,  
    Wishing he were in  
    But pressed against the top,  
Fearing what hand will make the glass globe spin,  
    Terrified to drop.

*As an ant on a glass globe crawls*

*His mind crawls on the reality-sphere.*

V

Say, J. Dwight Nelson, why you're terrified,  
Tell me what you suppose your white walls hide –  
What if the wall conceals the breast of God?

*'There is a fountain filled with blood.'*

*Asahel Croft*

Of tyrants, the most fearsome class of all  
Is those who, leaving goods and bodies whole,  
Usurp dominion in the human soul,  
And slowly kill through means unseen; of these,  
What tyrant is more fierce than sad Regret?  
What power stronger? save that it be Love,  
Which conquers at the last; – but when Regret  
Gives birth to Love – when joining hand-in-hand  
They two hold sway in one unhappy breast,  
What must *that* be? Ah, saddest fate of all,  
And yet most blessed, for in the final sum



Love proves as strong as Death – but of that score,  
The reader may decide. I heard this tale  
From one in whom Regret and late Love strove,  
A widow, whom I saw all dressed in black,  
Adorning in routine display of love  
A simple grave site with a single rose.  
I asked her (for in truth I had been drawn  
Inexorably, by her sad mystique)  
The reason for her long devotion. Thus,  
In broken tones, she, faltering, replied:  
    I knew one once, in childhood, whose soul,  
Was delicate as it was strong; as reeds  
That bow before the slightest breeze, and yet,  
When ravaged by the fiercest gales, that snap  
The mighty oaks around them, are themselves  
Unbroken by the tempest – but so bowed,  
So doubled o'er, storm after frightful storm,  
Become irreparably disfigured, –  
So he, unbroken, was through his long life  
Bent among men, and wearied more than all  
That still have life. His name (if you should care)  
Was this: Asahel Croft. His history  
I tell you know. He was a bright-eyed child  
Whom nature had made more inquisitive  
And tenderer than all his peers; and I,  
Young Mabel Rhodes, the blacksmith's daughter, was  
His childhood friend. He loved me – ah, but now  
I know he loved me! – yet I was too young,  
Alas! I loved him not, but our joint friend,  
A sailor's son, whom I thought stronger, John,  
More bold, more ready to confront the world,  
More fearless in the face of opposition,  
More stolid (I was certain at the time),  
Him, only him, I loved – and Asahel,  
Who never forced his way on anyone,  
Said not a word. I married John La Croix,  
And in the course of time, kind Providence

Gave John and me two children: Reuben first,  
Then Angela – and two children more fair,  
More wonderful, I never could have dreamed  
Than these, my stalwart son and daughter sweet.

I never knew, for many happy years,  
What came of Asahel – he did not say  
(But no, he would not say, not such as he)  
That he had loved me, that he could not bear  
To see me wed to someone else, and so  
He left. Later, I learned that he had gone  
To Yale (bastion of learning!), and had made  
A well-known name, as a professor learned  
In all the subtlest philosophies  
And speculations of the times, – that he  
Was, of the whole of Yale’s famed faculty,  
The most loved and the most learned – but of that,  
It’s not my place to tell. My husband John  
Became a carpenter, and, if I say,  
(You must not disbelieve me) sure he was  
The most skilled carpenter that one might meet  
In all the state of Maine – and yet (O God,  
Be merciful!) an upper-story fall  
Took him from me – Ah, those were cruel years!  
A thousand times I would have starved to death  
(I should have starved to death!) – but every time  
The food began to run low, when I feared  
For Reuben and for Angela, my life,  
My more than everything, there always came  
Enough, and just enough, at just the time  
We needed most. And so, for many years,  
We stayed alive – but how we stayed alive,  
I did not know, until they both were grown,  
And I was old. One day, a messenger,  
A lawyer from the city, came to me  
And told me this: the famed Professor Croft  
(I think you know him – he, at least, knew you)  
Two Mondays past has died; and, in his will,

As in his life he sent to meet your needs  
So oft, has made provision that, from now,  
And on throughout your lifetime, his estate  
Should care for all your needs. O Stranger! how  
Shall I begin to tell the sudden flood  
Of thoughts, regrets, deep fears, sharp conscience-pangs  
That stabbed my soul? Him whom I had despised  
As weak, unworthy of a woman's love,  
Through all his life, day after weary day,  
Had labored with all strength, resolve of will,  
And passion left within him, just to care  
For one poor woman, who, so long ago,  
Had slighted him in favor of a man  
More seeming-masculine. And that is why  
The grave of John, my husband, lies untouched,  
But here, the grave of one I should have loved,  
Asahel Croft, who died unloved and lone,  
I decorate each day that I still live,  
With a red rose.

### *Claribel*

#### I

In the greenest vale of a lovely wood  
A pleasant little cottage stood,  
And no place on earth was more good and fair  
Than the modest hut in the valley there.

The sun, at the close of each happy day,  
Would kiss it to sleep with his last gold ray,  
And, still reluctant to say goodbye,  
Caress its smoke that came curling by.

And he'd hasten around with his first soft beams  
To kiss it awake from its quiet dreams;  
Then, for his own sweet cottage' sake,

He would kiss the rest of the world awake:

First would the red-breasted robin sing,  
Then, in response to her twittering,  
The sparrows, beginning to chirp and sigh,  
Would announce to the world that day is nigh,

And all the sweet spirits of the air  
Would flood with their song the valley fair,  
Till at last soaring high would the skylark sing, –  
And the spirit of morning would drop from her wing,

Stirring awake the green valley beneath:  
The clover would stretch on the springy heath,  
The daisies laugh with their jewels of dew,  
The shy bluebells throw back the sky's own blue,

The white lilies nod at the brook flowing by,  
The red roses bare their sweet breasts to the sky,  
And finally, rising from soft beds of peat,  
The fleecy white lambs wake to gambol and bleat;

And the old man would hear them, and rise from his bed  
To see that his dear flock was tended and fed,  
And he'd work at his pleasant light tasks, until when  
The setting sun kissed him goodnight again.

Nor was he alone in his valley fair,  
For the old man had a daughter there;  
Together they lived in their simple way,  
As day melted into happy day.

She was his darling, his joy, his life,  
And no man loved mother – sister – wife –  
With a love so earnest and selfless and mild  
As the love the man had for his darling child;

And she – she was worthy of all his love:  
As gentle and meek as the softest dove,  
As lovely and pure as the whitest pearl,  
As fresh as the dew, was the tender girl.

Wherever she passed the larks followed along,  
And sought her delight with their merriest song;  
The bluebells all glowed with a happier blue  
Whenever the little maid came into view;

The roses would waken at her lightest tread,  
And tremble and blush a more beautiful red;  
The brook would leap higher at her soft caress,  
And proudly reflect back her sweet loveliness, –

There was never a creature more simple and fair  
Than the maiden that lived in the green valley there,  
And no sun ever shed a more beautiful ray  
Than dropped from her loveliness day after day.

## II

In all this green valley, good and fair,  
There was only one place her sweet smile left bare, –  
A sandstone cliff – and down below,  
Not flowers, but briars and thorns did grow.

Now this crag was the place that the child loved best,  
And she made of that hard ledge her own little nest:  
*There* would she sit, not on soft moss or heath,  
And gaze – not at roses – at sharp thorns beneath;

And so lovely a ray fell from her lovely face,  
And all Spring-like she scattered so charming a grace,  
That in all the green valley so fresh and fair  
No beauty could vie with the loveliness there.

So sweet was this child, so lovely the scene,

So happy the hour, the fair vale so green, –  
That I weep to recall it – shudder to tell  
In this wide-wretched world – of the death-stroke that fell:

For one day as she sat there, far out on the edge,  
That cold cliff deceived her – the murderous ledge,  
It crumbled beneath our seraphic-sweet girl,  
And cast to the briars the world's dearest pearl;

– And why proceed further? what profit to speak  
Of the sad tears that streamed down her pure white cheek,  
Of how her soft bosom was scratched and torn  
As her milky breast strove with the iron thorn,

How her fast-flowing blood ran into the clay,  
Staining it red to this very day: –  
Why seek a cause? why wonder why?  
She was fair while she lived – yet she lived to die.

A change came over the valley green,  
(Now Is can only mock Has Been),  
For when from the Life of the countryside  
The life-blood flowed – that valley died.

The robins lost their will to sing,  
The sparrows ceased their twittering,  
The mute lark fled from the grey-grown sky,  
The laughing brook began to cry,

The roses folded their red breasts up,  
And one by one began to drop;  
The blueness from every bluebell fled,  
As lower dropped each lifeless head;

The clover died, and the lonely peat,  
Now pressed no more by white lambs' feet;  
And after every tone and hue

Had fled the vale – the man died too.

Now the sunless vale is dark and dead,  
Save one glowing spot of red, –  
For there where the cruel briar grows,  
Where the fair maid died, – sprang up a rose.

### III

I will not say, 'It was best you know,  
She had to die for the rose to grow' –  
Each hair on that darling head was worth  
More than every rose on this loveless earth; –

This is all I know: she was kind and fair;  
When she died that day, my heart died there;  
I'll shed my tear and sigh my sigh,  
And trust she died in her great God's eye, –

And so will I live from day to day:  
This morning, when I passed by that way,  
In the red-stained earth I dropped a tear,  
And stooped to kiss the red rose there: –

Sorrow comes and beauty goes,  
But lovely is the crimson rose:  
I will not ask more, nor wonder why,  
But live (like her) in my Maker's eye,

Till I too, struggling and pale and worn,  
Shall burst my heart on some great thorn,  
And panting in the red-stained clay  
Bleed all my little life away,

Moaning until my sweetheart, Death,  
Shall ease me of my labored breath,  
And lead me to where all is rest,

(Ah!) folded in my Savior's breast.

*The Red Leaf*

Or,

*What the Uncertain Suitor Sent Back to his Love*

*I—The Relic*

1

Remember this red leaf?  
You gave it to me one time, long ago;  
(I think you never knew that I would care;  
But I *did* care, my dearest: now you know –  
See it lying there?)  
I pressed it fondly; (it grew darker though –  
Such red is always brief.)

2

Why did it change its hue?  
The darling hand that held it is as white,  
Those eyes still sparkle just as purely blue  
As when they watched it fall a flame of red,  
And lent it light;  
You caught it up then, tossed it to me, said,  
Laughingly, 'It's for you.'

3

And how could I have known  
The deathless nature of that fiery red?  
The leaf has faded, but its soul has grown,  
And flames more brilliantly than at the start;  
The leaf is dead,  
But oh! the red has crept into my heart,



Where it lives ever on.

4

Why *did* it change its hue?  
I think the radiance never was its own,  
I think it only borrowed life from you:  
Suffused with color from that hand, those eyes,  
    How brilliant it had grown!  
Now kindled in *my* breast the brilliance lies, –  
    Moment-wrought, timeless-true.

5

So let me speak: – but stay,  
For I would disburden all my soul:  
Will you listen, Becky? I've not much to say –  
I'll only take a moment of your time –  
    There is no risk at all:  
For if you care not for my silly rhyme,  
    It too will fade away.

## *II—The Memory*

I

We played at cards that night, with one  
(Remember we were not alone)  
    To both of us true friend;  
I talked with her when night was done,  
    When play had end.

2

She saw the leaf fall; it was she  
Who importuned to talk to me;  
    I acquiesced: she said  
She knew me well, – that she could see  
    The color spread;

3

That she knew few for whom it's so,  
But could she see that first spark grow,  
    She would thrill to watch; –  
She loved that hand, but could not know  
    If it would match.

4

These pretty hopes came all unsought:  
I stood confused by what they brought,  
    Those doubtful dreams, to me:  
By what I wished, but what I thought  
    Could never be.

5

And could they – *can* they ever be?  
Can love flame unexpectedly  
    And set *two* hearts on fire?  
Or did the flame scorch only me –  
    A vain desire?

6

Answer me, darling! I must know:  
May I let the fire grow, –  
    Or must it be put out?  
Only say which, that will I do,  
    Dear, make no doubt.

### *III—Restless Thoughts*

I

*It happened late one night:  
    We were side by side,  
Conversing as we might  
    To while away the ride;  
The atmosphere was light:*

2

*I think it was in jest:  
As you were sitting there  
(Perhaps it was not best)  
I softly tugged your hair:  
You recoiled at the test;*

3

*I paused; instinctively  
My spirit seemed to say,  
'If she shrank to me,  
Did not shrink away,  
Ah! what would that be?'*

#### *IV—An Awakening*

1

Bear with me a moment: these restless thoughts darken my mind;  
Old memories sap the vitality, stagnate the will;  
The red leaf is faded and dead; let it blow in the wind: –  
One flame is extinguished, a thousand are blossoming still.

2

Why mourn? The leaf flamed for a moment – that moment is gone:  
'Tis a moment, a part of our lives – it is fled on the wing;  
Mourn not, let it go – the decayed leaf can only hang on  
Till it's thrust from its place by the gold bud of hastening Spring.

3

To decay with the leaves of the past, dear – such fate is not ours:  
Ours is the Spring! – we are young – let us seize on the store;  
Let the leaves flame and fade, blossom crimson, pass by with the hours:  
We may yet see the Dawn blossom crimson ten thousand times more.

4

Let us live – let us breathe – let us *feel* every one of those dawns!

One may laugh (as I laughed), 'It is vain, we have failed from the start,  
Men are pawns.' But remember, dear Becky, that we are *His* pawns;  
We will live in God's hand; – let him feast on his own little heart.

5

I too used to rage: 'I am sick of small minds, feeble hands!  
With balanced imbalances, steeped in their blankness from birth,  
Everybody's still saying the dead things that none understands: –  
Excellence, deference, image – what's all of it worth?

6

'We seize the dead forms of the past – ah, but where is the rest?  
The bird's flown; – we still guard the cage, goaded on by mute fears: –  
Move onward! Old man, take your lips off your dead mother's breast:  
You have sucked all you can from a breast that's been empty for  
years.'

7

So I raged: but what profit to rage, dear, if never to *do*?  
Idle ragers-at-wrongs are the littlest breed of them all:  
Arise! take the wrong, make it right, change the false for the true;  
Let us strive, let us do, let us wake to the nobler call.

8

Is there not a cause? We are written in God's timeless plan: –  
We have looked in the fair face of one who has nothing to prove;  
We have gazed on the infinite, transcendent God bound in man; –  
With all power, all reason to wield it, – he conquered *in love*.

9

Let us love – we are Christ's: it is all that we have left to give;  
We are pawns in God's hand – let us thrill to be playing our part;  
We are given a lifetime – through ten thousand dawns let us live;  
The leaves fade: but the crimson will ever flame on in our heart.

*V—Lingering Desire*

I

The red flames on:

Gone are those hours that I spent with you, dear, when my heart was  
light;

Their laughter has fled on the wings of Time, like a bird they have  
flown;

And the leaf you caught up when it fell, the red leaf that flamed so  
bright,

It is faded away, its outward form is decayed and gone, —

*But the red flames on.*

2

Let the red flame!

The slow sands of Time still run, the ceaseless gears still move,

And all things are borne along in the never-ending tide:

Let us dance on the press of Time, dear, tread out the wine of Love!

We will drink the delight of that moment still when Time has died, —

*And the red will flame on.*

3

The red flames on:

They wandered away, that white hand, and ah! those bright-beaming  
eyes; —

They are gone, but they still haunt my mind like old familiar refrains,

And my heart, my heart leaps up, and my lonely spirit sighs,

And Time itself takes Love's harp, and echoes the soul-deep strains, —

*And the red flames on.*

*VI—An Incident*

I

I was walking alone through the winter wood,

In the lonely time of year;

And the stark trees stood in the desolate wood,

And they shivered, gaunt and bare:  
I was walking and thinking, and all my thoughts  
Were thoughts of you, my dear.

2

And the wind came down with a chilling sound,  
And the breeze made a chilling moan;  
And I walked where the wind came howling down,  
And I heard the bare trees groan:  
I heard the wind in the lonely wood,  
As I walked through the wood alone.

3

The cold winds blew and the snow came down,  
And it fell on the frozen ground;  
The cold snow fell in the leafless wood,  
And it covered the bareness it found:  
I walked alone in the chilling snow,  
And it stifled the wood's sad sound.

4

I was walking alone through the winter wood,  
And my heart was a leafless tree;  
And as I walked through the lonely wood,  
The cold snow fell on me:  
I walked alone in the wood, all alone,  
And the cold wind blew on me.

5

I walked through the wood, and the cold snow fell  
On the last late leaf of the wood;  
And the wind came down with a moaning sound  
On the last late leaf of the wood:  
And the lone tree groaned, and the red leaf fell, –  
Fell at my feet where I stood.

I was in the winter wood alone,  
     And the last leaf fell from above;  
 The last red leaf of Autumn fell,  
     And the coming Spring did prove:  
 And my cold heart flamed when I saw the leaf,  
     And my lonely heart did move,  
 For I knew the red leaf marked the Spring, –  
     And the Spring was a Spring of Love.

*VII—Love's Song*

Tender is that hand,  
     Pure and snowy white;  
 Beautiful those eyes,  
     Beaming oh so bright;  
 Brilliant are those lips,  
     Red and ah how rare;  
 Ivory those teeth,  
     And how gold that hair!  
 Colors 'round her swirl  
     When all else is grey;  
 When the world is night,  
     In her look is day;  
 When the brown leaf fell,  
     Passionless and tame,  
 Then she did but glance,  
     Set the leaf aflame!  
 When the sea grew dull,  
     Lost its living sheen,  
 Dangled in her toes,  
     Once more turned it green;  
 When she closed her eyes,  
     Stars looked down and leapt;  
 Pale moon turned to gold,  
     Seeing where she slept!

Becky, look on me!  
All my world is grey;  
Becky, look on me!  
Bathe me in your day;  
Ah, my darling, look, –  
Drive the gloom away.

*VIII—A Final Plea*

1

*So, Becky, you have heard my rhyme:  
If I have taken too much time, –  
Be patient, for what can I do  
To end a poem begun with you?  
Well, – if begun with you (sweet dove),  
What wonder if it end in love?*

2

O what is love? what can it be  
That joins two hearts in unity,  
That takes two lives and makes them one;  
When all the world is rushing on,  
That makes a haven, safe and warm  
Amid the all-engulfing storm,  
And through all changes does not move,  
As strong as death? O is it love  
When there is one to whom the soul  
Bends constant, as the planets roll  
Unceasingly around their Sun?  
Is it when there is only one  
For whom the sad heart ever yearns,  
And follows, as the compass turns  
And ever follows its true North?  
O is it of a higher worth  
(As I have always heard it said)  
Than costly rubies, rare and red?



If it be so, dear, let us prove  
For all of time, dear, what is love!

3

O what is love? can this be so?  
Perhaps, dear, we may never know,  
But maybe we can find it out –  
Aha! I have the perfect thought;  
This pretty question we will prove:  
Let's *pretend* that we're in love.  
Let us make believe, my dear,  
'Tis only you for whom I care,  
That you are all my heart's desire,  
None other whom my soul holds higher;  
When troubles come, I'll calm your fears,  
And wipe away your pretty tears;  
When nighttime overtakes the day,  
Through gloom I'll help you find your way; –  
And when the gloom in *my* breast lies,  
I'll look for comfort in your eyes:  
And I know I will find it there,  
For you will love me too, my dear!  
O what a pretty game, to prove,  
By this sweet trial, what is love!

4

O what is love? let's make a trial,  
Let's be lovers for a while,  
And then, dear, if we like it still,  
Let us be in love for real.

5

Let's not leap into romance,  
But may we take a step, perchance?  
And after that, – fear not, my friend!  
The sum is in our Father's hand.



After  
Darkness,  
Light



## *The Dragon and the Whore*

or

### **A Parable for America in the Twenty-First Century**

The death-stroke fell; still reeling at the blow,  
The Dragon roared in mortal agony  
And spewed hot venom at the woman's seed,  
Contesting fiercely him who crushed him so.  
Ah, vainly! for his people straight did flee  
Into the arms that stripped their ancient Foe:  
Yes, he was strong to save the falt'ring least,  
And he was fairer than the Dragon dread,  
And his sweet strength prevailed against the Beast.

Arose the Dragon's whore; lips full and red  
Dripped honied sweets into the perfumed air,  
Hot overtures suffused with fragrant breath;  
Her silken robes with playful hands she spread,  
Enrapturing white breasts thus laying bare:  
Could no one smell the burning hell beneath?  
None but the wisest. Look! the nation races  
To throw themselves upon her hot embraces;  
"How blessed we are!" they laugh, – "The Beast is dead!"  
Is all the world come thronging to her bed?

### *De Profundis*<sup>xi</sup>

3 Sonnets

Out of the depths, O Lord, I cry to thee:  
Carest thou not, nor markest how I grieve?  
The pangs of loneliness rack cruelly:  
My friends have left; my God, wilt thou too leave?  
With one unyielding hand thou tearest me,  
Preservest with the other, so that I

Can neither love life, nor yet senseless be:  
God! only let me live or let me die.  
For I thy handiwork, Lord, am not mine:  
Thou hast redeemed me at how dear! a price;  
Thou loved me, called me, saved me, – I am thine:  
Dost thou not care for thine own sacrifice?  
Wherefore lift up my soul from its soul-grave,  
And rend no longer whom thou shouldest save.

\*

Thou makest me to hope upon thy word;  
I search it night and day, for there I find  
Thy mercies are all true, of which I heard:  
Thou art indeed, Lord, pitiful and kind.  
Why are they happy, then, who love not thee,  
And I cast down, who thee alone do love?  
Why dost thou bless them, when thou breakest me?  
Yet will I trust: thy righteous judgments prove.  
Thou wilt not cast them off who are thine own:  
Am not I thine, O Merciful and Just?  
Rejoice! my soul; thou art not left alone:  
Therefore I lift my mouth out of the dust,  
And though my heart lie mute and overawed,  
I murmur, 'Thou art good, and thou art God.'

\*

And thou art God: what answer need I more?  
Or with my Maker how shall I contend?  
Thou woundest; yet I trust thee as before:  
Heal whom thou wilt, and rend whom thou wilt rend,  
It matters not; for I will trust forever:  
Thou, being God, art loving, tender, just;  
Judge me in love, thou mighty Mercy-Giver!  
Quicken my soul – O lift me from the dust!  
My heart is bowed down, but I hope in thee:

Wilt thou not help a vile, sinful worm?  
Almighty God! stoop from infinity,  
And bind up tenderly my broken form;  
So trusting thou my God art thou my friend,  
I meekly wait for the desired end.

*Post Tenebras Lux<sup>vii</sup>*

In the night watches, in the night watches,  
When the gloom of the know-less falls like a numbing chill,  
And the ghost-breath of sad confusion sudden touches  
The quick of the soul, and life and time grow still, –  
My God! I cry to you.

In the night watches, in the night watches,  
O God who needs not sleep, come visit me!  
My God, whose midnight-piercing eye well matches  
My luster-need, as wetness matches sea,  
I cry alone to you.

In the night watches, in the night watches, –  
Come shatter darkness with all-conquering sight,  
Illume my spirit-cave, show where the latch is  
Upon the door that leads to life and light:  
My God! I cry to you.

In the night watches, in the night watches,  
I meditate upon the lustrous King,  
And look! in the wannish East my soul-eye catches  
Again a glimpse of Light's true ordering:  
Jesus! I cry to you.

*My Savior and my God*

Come to me, darling of my soul,

My spirit's truest gain;  
Your touch alone, which made me whole,  
Can thrill my heart again.

Where are my dreams of yesterday,  
That I had loved so much?  
I find them all dissolved away  
Beneath your gentle touch:

But I find in their vacancy  
Far greater riches poured:  
What blessings have been shed on me  
By your dear hand, O Lord!

So come, my sweet Redeemer, come;  
Prepare for me my rest,  
And waft me ever gently home,  
All pillowed on your breast:

For since I knew the wondrous grace  
Found in your precious blood,  
I only long to see your face,  
My Savior, and my God!

*An Image of the Savior*

From the book of Hebrews

The far-flung echoes die:  
We who the prophet-whispers long have heard  
Now tune our ears to the fuller voice on high,  
Now hear the mind of God in one live Word.  
*We bow, O Christ, at your glorious name.*

The ancient splendors fade:  
The brightness of glory gleams in the Son's fair face,  
The true form of God by whom all things are made



Reveals to us now the form of truth and grace.

*We bow, O Christ, at your glorious name*

The torn veil-fragments fall:

Behold! sitting on the right hand of God above

The image of very God, the all in all,

Pours out on us his full redeeming love!

*We bow, O Christ, at your glorious name*

The highest angels bow,

In splendid-meek form your favor to entreat:

We who have glimpsed your glory join them now,

Casting ourselves down with them at your feet!

*We bow, O Christ, at your glorious name.*

### *Lovely Progression*

Jesus, how sweet your virgin birth,

Deep, lovely mystery:

Out from the unsewn womb sprang forth

God of eternity!

I kneel before your bed so rough,

My Savior in a feeding trough,

Divine before the world began,

And now in time become a man.

Jesus, how sweet your life on earth,

Your public ministry,

Your miracles of saving worth

O'er sin and misery;

I hear in reverential awe

Your thund'rous utt'rance of the Law,

And offer in my own defense

Your life of pure obedience.

Jesus, how sweet your saving death,

The atoning sacrifice!  
My plea rose up on your last breath  
Like incense to the skies;  
I weep before that blessed tree  
Where priceless blood was spilled for me,  
Where all the wrath of God was poured  
On the Beloved of the Lord.

Jesus, how sweet your rising up  
Victorious from the dead  
To fill my upheld mercy cup,  
To crush the Tempter's head!  
I come by grace before your throne  
And there in trembling joy bow down,  
Before my King who now must reign  
Till he make all things new again.

### *Diversely Excellent*

*Revelation 5:5-6 "...Behold, the **Lion** of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a **Lamb** as it had been slain..."*

True Son of God, true Son of Man,  
Both terrible and fair,  
What various attributes you span!  
Perfections ah! how rare,  
How vast are in your person blent,  
And all diversely excellent.

You only are the sovereign King,  
And you the Servant mild;  
Artificer of everything,  
And made a human child;  
You held the world up in your hand,

Even while you walked its sinful land!

You judge the world in holy fire,  
Avenge the merest vice:  
And you became what you require –  
The bloody sacrifice!  
O wonder! that you hate all sin,  
Yet spread your arms to take it in.

And ah, the wonder does appear  
Most glorious on the cross:  
I see you, Savior, hanging there,  
And in your deepest loss,  
The greatest victory and gain  
That ever flowed from God to man.

The mighty wrath of God there meets  
Redemptive love his own;  
There God the desperate sinner greets,  
Who there forsook his Son;  
Your God-like wrath, your mercy free  
Clasp hands, Redeemer, on that tree!

My God! you are surpassing great:  
Trembling, I bow in fear;  
My Savior! you are wondrous sweet,  
And gently draw me near.  
I find no joy but in your name,  
Jesus! the Lion and the Lamb.

*I Timothy 3:16*

Great is the mystery,  
The godly-fashioned plan  
That God should stoop from heaven on high  
To take the form of man!

*In flesh he was made known,  
In spirit justified,  
By angels he was seen;*

*Among the nations shown,  
Believed on far and wide,  
In glory raised again.*

This is the solid ground  
That cannot sway or lurch,  
The pillar on which God did found  
His living house, the Church:

*In flesh he was made known,  
In spirit justified,  
By angels he was seen;*

*Among the nations shown,  
Believed on far and wide,  
In glory raised again.*

Apostates well may come;  
This creed they will deny:  
God, grant that it may bring us home,  
Triumphant o'er the lie!

*In flesh he was made known,  
In spirit justified,  
By angels he was seen;*

*Among the nations shown,  
Believed on far and wide,  
In glory raised again.*

We soon shall see your face,  
And while the ages roll,

We'll sing this story of your grace,  
Emblazoned on the scroll:

*In flesh he was made known,  
In spirit justified,  
By angels he was seen;*

*Among the nations shown,  
Believed on far and wide,  
In glory raised again.*

### *Gethsemane*

Here is the riddle of eternity,  
And here the mighty conflict of the ages:  
Shall God contend with God in unity  
With God's own will? How fierce a war he wages!

What hellish sorrows fling him rudely down,  
And wring the bloody sweat from every pore,  
Which glistens on his brow, a crimson crown  
Forged in God's fire, of fleshy human ore!

Behold him shudder at the thorny path,  
And groan at the divine eternal plan:  
Ah, shall my God drink down my God's own wrath,  
And reel and stagger like a drunken man?

Mark how the bitter precious springs well up,  
Full fountain-orbs that flow in speechless grief,  
As from my hands he takes the bitter cup,  
And steals away my sin, ah, blessed Thief!

Oh, matchless wonder, that it should be so!  
Shall boundless God in stricken Man be bound,  
Humility's heel crush the world's proud Foe,

And mercy free in cruel wrath be found?

*Golgotha*

He breathed his last, –  
And died.  
And the beat of the rain came hard and fast,  
And the lightnings writhed in the sudden blast,  
And the fierce winds cried.

Is he then dead?  
But no –  
For, “In him was life,” the beloved said,  
And then, “Before Abraham”  
(So his own words rang out long ago),  
“I Am.”

But there he hangs –  
Ah! red  
And bloody his lifeless, ghastly form,  
And the legions of darkness around him swarm,  
And they gnash on him with their death-glutting fangs,  
And he is dead.

But what is this – what stir, what rush?  
In the pounding rain,  
The rocks are split, the very heavens blush,  
The temple-veil drops powerless, rent in twain –  
And look! from their graves the godly slain  
Come out, to live again.

Yes, “It is done!”  
And after the storm, a breath  
Kisses to life, while the demons still howl on.  
*His death is the death of death.*  
The minions of hell, that shrieked in horrid glee,

Now lift their voices in hopeless moans,  
And, terror-stricken, flee.  
And Sunday dawns.

*Toil and Rest*

Once more I take my pen in hand, once more  
I lay it down, and still the page is bare.  
A dullness seeps into my soul. I fear  
That I have nothing left to say. I fear  
My heart will finally be left as blank  
As this blank page. – No, blanker yet (alas!)  
As blank as these poor, naked, labored words  
Betraying naked thoughts.

  There was a time,  
When, teeming with a thousand grand designs,  
And fueled by a passion not to waste  
My fleeting life, I had but one complaint, –  
That time was short; each moment rushing by  
I wrested to my purpose, to speak forth,  
With pen and ink, the glories of the King.  
I wonder – did I love in very truth  
The One of whom I sang, or did I love  
That I *could* sing? Did I delight to rest  
In him, and so find strength to labor still; –  
Or was my true delight to act, to do,  
To labor, to paint o'er my emptiness  
With lying scenes of toil for his sake,  
When all it ever was (peel back the lie!)  
Was toil to hide my nakedness? Fig leaves!  
And all the more deceptive, that they bear  
The name of Grace. But take from me my words,  
And who am I? Dark thoughts! dark fearful thoughts! –  
Whence coming? whence arising? my own heart?  
Some evil power? or yet (may it not be!)  
The *truth*? The truth is that my soul is dark

And heavy with a stunned timidity,  
Which, seeing frantic deeds once more dissolve  
As mists before the breeze, must seek again  
A surer hiding-place.

Oh! yet once more,  
My Savior and my God, come – run to me –  
Deliver me from these oppressive thoughts –  
Free me to work not “so that” but “because” –  
Teach me again (O Christ!) to rest in you!

### *My Credo*

Trace the sunbeam to the sun;  
Trace the river to the sea;  
Trace all pleasures to the One  
Who is Pleasure perfectly.

### *Songs of Redemption*

#### *I. Christ Promised*

Standing in my shame,  
Naked and alone;  
No one left to blame;  
The fault was all my own.

The Serpent sowed the lie,  
Mine only was the fall;  
Now cursed is all my race,  
Now death has come on all.

Is this to be the end,  
Forever lost and dead?  
But no! the promise comes,  
“I send a conq’ring Seed.”



*So send the Seed,  
Look from above,  
Behold our need,  
Send forth your Love –*

*Bruise under us  
The Serpent's head;  
We hope in Christ and Christ alone,  
So send the Seed!*

Living without God,  
Idols in my hand –  
Then mercy's promise comes:  
“Get unto a land

“Where I will be your God,  
And with you I shall dwell;  
All nations will be blessed.”  
So come Immanuel!

*So send the Seed,  
Look from above,  
Behold our need,  
Send forth your Love –*

*Bruise under us  
The Serpent's head;  
We hope in Christ and Christ alone,  
So send the Seed!*

In God's own time the Seed was lifted on a cross  
To crush the Serpent's head and to reverse our loss!

*You sent the Seed,  
From up above,  
You saw our need,*

*You sent your Love –*

*Bruise under us  
The Serpent's head;  
We hope in Christ and Christ alone,  
Our conq'ring Seed!*

## II. *Christ Suffering*

Behold the man condemned to die –  
Behold him broken, bruised, and battered on the tree!  
No common criminal, he hangs upon his cross  
Beneath the wrath of God that should have come on me.

*He was wounded for my sins,  
Poured out his soul, what more was left for him to give?  
His bloody side flows with my peace and righteousness –  
And in his death I live!*

Behold the Lamb, our sacrifice –  
Behold him spotless, pure, acceptable to God!  
He has conquered hell and set the captives free,  
And he has bought my perfect pardon with his blood.

*He was wounded for my sins,  
Poured out his soul, what more was left for him to give?  
His bloody side flows with my peace and righteousness –  
And in his death I live!*

For your body, thank you, Jesus!  
Thank you, Jesus, for your shed blood!  
In your death I live!

You have bled for me,  
You gave your life for me, and  
You have won my peace, and

I have died with you and now I live!

### III. *Christ Triumphant*

Men's Chorus: He is risen again,  
He is risen indeed,  
He is Lord of the living,  
Lord of the dead!

Ladies' Chorus: He is risen again,  
He is risen indeed,  
He is Lord of the living,  
Lord of the dead!

Men: O Death, where is your sting?  
Ladies: *He has broken it!*  
Men: O Grave, where is your victory?  
Ladies: *He has conquered it!*

Men: O Death, where is your sting?  
Ladies: *He has broken it!*  
Men: O Grave, where is your victory?  
Ladies: *He has conquered it!*

Men: He is risen again –  
Ladies: *He is alive, he is alive!*  
Men: He is risen indeed  
Ladies: *He is alive, he is alive!*

All: He is risen again,  
He is risen indeed,  
He is Lord of the living,  
Lord of the dead!

Men: The Serpent lost at his own game –  
Ladies: *He is alive!*

Men: Put him to an open shame –

Ladies: *He is alive!*

Men: The Serpent lost at his own game –

Ladies: *He is alive!*

Men: Put him to an open shame –

Ladies: *He is alive!*

Men: He is risen again –

Ladies: *He is alive, he is alive!*

Men: He is risen indeed

Ladies: *He is alive, he is alive!*

All: He is risen again,  
He is risen indeed,  
He is Lord of the living,  
Lord of the dead!

Men: Made the universe his own –

Ladies: *He made it all!*

Men: Put all things beneath his throne –

Ladies: *He bought it all!*

Men: Raised his church up from the dead –

Ladies: *And gave us peace!*

Men: Praise to our exalted Head –

Ladies: *For we are his!*

Men: He is risen again –

Ladies: *He is alive, he is alive!*

Men: He is risen indeed

Ladies: *He is alive, he is alive!*

All: He is risen again,  
He is risen indeed,  
He is Lord of the living,  
Lord of the dead!

All:       He is risen again,  
          He is risen indeed,  
          He is Lord of the living,  
          Lord of the dead!

Men:       He is risen again –  
Ladies:     *He is alive, he is alive!*  
Men:       He is risen indeed  
Ladies:     *He is alive, he is alive!*

All:       He is alive, he is alive!

#### IV. *Christ Interceding*

Covered in my shame and stained by sin,  
How did I sink into this pit again?  
Like a dog to its vomit, like a sow to the mud –  
Who will plead my case before the holy God?

*I will come before my God,  
He will shower grace on me;  
How can he refuse my cries,  
When he hears my Savior's plea?*

When the Devil comes accusing me before the throne,  
I will rest my soul in righteousness that's not my own;  
Who can condemn me? Christ will intercede –  
By his wounds from sin and guilt I have been freed!

No one evermore can lay to my account my sin,  
Now that Jesus Christ my Savior died and rose again;  
When the Tempter whispers judgment on my sinful soul,  
These three words will send him back to hell: Paid in full!

*I will come before my God,*

*He will shower grace on me;  
How can he refuse my cries,  
When he hears my Savior's plea?*

I will come to God, Jesus is my plea –  
I will come to God, Jesus is my plea –  
I will come to God, Jesus is my plea –  
*I will come to God, Jesus is my plea!*

*I will come before my God,  
He will shower grace on me;  
How can he refuse my cries,  
When he hears my Savior's plea?*

I will come before my God.

*Basileus<sup>viii</sup>*

## **Prologue**

*The Argument*

*Apostrophe to Nebuchadnezzar<sup>ix</sup> – Reflection upon the same – Petition to the Spirit of Truth – The theme laid out in brief*

O Head of gold<sup>x</sup>! whose Babylonian might  
Subdued the nations, at whose outstretched hand  
Innumerable minions, scarlet-clad<sup>xi</sup>,  
O'erswept earth's mighty kingdoms, riding forth  
Conquering and to conquer, till the world  
Came trembling forth to stoop before your throne,  
Entreating mercy; nor, O gracious king,  
Were they rejected; thus your kingdom grew  
And far excelled all others that had been  
Or yet would be, as Bashan's mighty oak<sup>xii</sup>  
Excels the flowers of the field – free grace,

Administered in royal wisdom, worked  
 Together with unswayed dominion  
 And made the tree no human hand could fell<sup>xiii</sup>  
 A haven for all creatures of the earth, –  
 Fair haven! splendor as had not been seen  
 Since cherubs barred the gates of Paradise<sup>xiv</sup>  
 Against mankind decked Babylon the Great;  
 Unconquerable city! This you made  
 A garden fit for gods<sup>xv</sup>, your sovereign sway  
 Adorned in splendor fitted for a king.  
 Tell me, O King, what wisdom did you learn  
 When in the flush of splendor and mad pride  
 The kingdom and the glory and the might,  
 Aye! even human reason fled from you,  
 And driven out you made your home with beasts?  
 At this he started: from his furrowed brow  
 The color fled, and he was grim and pale,  
 His lips long-frozen in a sickly smile  
 Bespeaking sorrow mixed with wisdom; thus,  
 For some long moments bitter memories,  
 Breaking upon the floodgate of his lips  
 As waters rise against a weakened dam  
 And cannot overflow it, till at once,  
 Resistance overcome, they thunder forth,  
 So suddenly his thoughts gave way to speech:<sup>xvi</sup>  
 ‘Why do you call me king? Those seven years  
 I crept upon the earth, wet with the dew,  
 My food the grass, my hair my covering  
 (Crown thick as eagles’ plumage), as the ox,  
 Walking in ways marked out for me, no more  
 A ruler of my own base passions than  
 I ever had been over other men, –  
 I was then what I was, and I am now  
 No more, no less a king than I was then.  
 What wisdom? – here he flung his arm across  
 The city’s wide expanse – One man is born  
 To conquer nations, one to gather crusts

Until he find no more and fade away,  
Alone, unloved – Are they then different? No,  
Each one according to his nature lives  
And dies; as are the cattle, so is man,  
Except that cattle will not mock themselves,  
And madly clamor, “I have done this thing.”  
All are corrupt, and so will all admit  
Of one another, but in each man’s heart,  
He is the one exception. I have learned  
But this: that man who madly goes astray  
Can never thereby frustrate God’s design.  
Each thinks he is a king, but so to think  
Does not make him a king. There is but One  
Who reigns in earth and heaven, whose sure will  
Cannot be hindered: to the Lord on high  
Belongs the Kingdom; he alone is King,  
And sets men up or takes down as he will.’

He spoke and he was still; and at his word  
Warriors and mighty men, high kings of old,  
Heroes, and names of great renown, fond tales  
Of romance and high passion, daring deeds,  
Illustrious acts, fierce wars, wise statesmanship,  
Beauty that launched a thousand ships, dark wrath  
That burned a hundred towers, histories  
Of all things great, high, noble, lofty, good,  
Were shattered as one dashes on a rock  
A crystal mirror, but there still gleam forth  
Flashes of glory, traces darting out  
Of what was once both whole and fair, but now  
Can only tell the glory that once was  
In broken fragments.

Thus earth’s broken kings

Give broken witness to the King of kings;  
And thus must I, whose nature is to sing  
Of what is good, now turn my theme to him.<sup>xvii</sup>  
Spirit of Truth!<sup>xviii</sup> who speak not of yourself,  
But open blinded eyes to see the King,<sup>xix</sup>



Anoint my heart that I may know all things,<sup>xx</sup>  
Anoint my pen to pour forth what I know  
In floods that heal the nations, take hot coals  
From off the sacred altar, touch my lips,  
That I, mere man, mere *sinful* man, undone  
Before the presence of the King of kings,  
In blood-bought purity may take the theme  
That burning seraphs, veiled before your throne,  
Scarce dare to speak, as meek and worshipful  
They thunder your thrice-holy.<sup>xxi</sup> Theme too high,  
Too high for dust of dust! but dust once touched  
By grace and glory, how can it not sing?  
O take these broken offerings, Most High,  
These broken shards that, broken though they be,  
Reflect in broken rays unbroken Light,  
The glory of the King above all kings!

The Most High spoke: and at his mighty Word  
The worlds sprang into being and were good;<sup>xxii</sup>  
The kingdom was his own, his workmanship,  
He reigned, and all was light, until the Foe,  
In serpentine deception, sowed the lie  
And darkness came.

But darkness was a lie,  
And could not reign. In righteousness and wrath  
The Most High thundered judgment from his throne,  
Still ruling o'er the world, though marred by sin,  
Still ruling o'er the lying treachery  
That worked his will:<sup>xxiii</sup> for in the ages past  
The Most High covenanted with the Word  
To give to him an everlasting throne,  
A Kingdom of Redemption,<sup>xxiv</sup> to outshine  
The kingdom of creation, as the sun  
Outshines the moon; rejoicing at his word,  
The Eternal Son took on himself the task  
To recreate, repair, restore, renew  
The rebel broken by his treachery,  
Display the riches of his glorious grace,<sup>xxv</sup>

And win an everlasting Kingdom. Fierce  
And furious was the warfare of the Foe,  
And of that war, and of the promised King,  
And of the victory so hardly won  
Long ages after, this is now the tale.

## *Basileus*

### *Book I – The Coming of the King*

#### *The Argument*

*The covenant made with David – the decline of the Kingdom – the promise of the prophets – the rise of Rome and the Idumean king – 1<sup>st</sup> portent: the Star of the East – 2<sup>nd</sup> portent: Gabriel's message to Mary and Joseph – 3<sup>rd</sup> portent: the conception of John – 4<sup>th</sup> portent: Gabriel's appearance to the shepherds – the birth of the King – his humility considered – his greatness considered – the conjunction of greatness and humility evidenced by his first visitors – the testimony of Simeon and Anna – the wrath of the Idumean – the flight to Egypt – the rage of the Dragon*

King David meant to build the Lord a house<sup>xxvi</sup>,  
And this is how it happened: after that  
The Lord had given rest on every side,  
And made secure the kingdom in his hand,  
And so confirmed the promises he made  
By Samuel the prophet (this is he  
Who by divine decree made David king,  
Anointing him with oil when a boy<sup>xxvii</sup>) –  
After all this, enriched by victory,  
And pleased that God should dwell in Israel  
As he had told their father Abraham<sup>xxviii</sup>,  
He set aside a vast and plenteous store  
To make the temple where might ever dwell

God's presence. So he purposed, but that night  
The Lord appeared to Nathan in a dream,  
Commanding thus: Tell David now, your king  
And my servant, that what he purposes  
He shall not do. Have I commanded this,  
Or do I need a house in which to dwell,  
When all the earth is mine, and all the heavens  
Cannot contain me<sup>xxix</sup>? Tell him this instead:  
I took him from the pasture, for I planned  
To give to him a kingdom that should be  
Eternal as the heavens; I decreed,  
And will not take it back, that I should have  
A people and a kingdom, priests to me,  
And I will be their God forever; when  
The first man, Adam, turned away from me  
And cleaved unto the Serpent, then I spoke,  
And will fulfill it, that of Adam's race  
I still will have my people – from his seed  
Will rise One who shall crush the Serpent's head,  
And win redemption<sup>xxx</sup>. Now, will David build  
A house for me? No, I will build for him  
A house that cannot fall, for of his seed  
I will raise up the King of whom I spoke,  
The everlasting King, who shall destroy  
The Serpent's work, and win a glorious name  
And people as the stars of heaven. He  
Will sit upon the throne that I have given  
To David, my beloved servant; of  
His kingdom and increase shall be no end<sup>xxxi</sup>.  
So Nathan spoke, and David was content,  
And Solomon, his son, then built the house.

Many long years then passed, after this oath,  
And many kings arose from David's line,  
And sat upon his throne; but nevermore  
Was found a king as fit to rule as he,  
Nor was the kingdom ever as it was  
In David's reign. For after Solomon

Had turned away his heart to other gods,  
God took from him ten tribes<sup>xxxii</sup>, and many times  
The two tribes, Benjamin and Judah, were  
Hard-pressed by enemies, and plague and drought  
Oppressed the land, for they had turned aside  
To wickedness, until there finally came  
Proud Babylon, which toppled David's throne,  
Broke down his city walls, and carried off  
The people captive, and took the temple gold<sup>xxxiii</sup>.  
The nation was in exile, and the King  
For which they waited almost was forgot.

In the beginning, Darkness covered all  
The vast and trackless earth, and o'er its deep  
And turbid waters, Chaos reigned supreme;  
But hovering above its swirling depths,  
As broods a mother hen above her chicks,  
The Spirit of God was working out his will,  
And drawing out of grim Confusion's lair  
His wise, well-ordered principles and plans:  
Darkness gave birth to Light, and sterile waves  
Soon teemed with life by a creative grace<sup>xxxiv</sup>;  
But in the vaster, wilder waste of sin,  
What greater grace will bring forth life again?  
Spirit of prophecy! come brood once more  
Upon this waste and trackless land, where now  
Confusion reigns again. For light is lost:  
It is become a region of deep gloom,  
And all its people dwell in shades of death<sup>xxxv</sup>.

How paltry are man's purposes, how weak  
His will, how short his memory! But so  
It is not with the Lord. The promised King  
He still had not forgotten, nor would let  
His scattered people yet forget; and so,  
Through many dark years, his prophets raised a voice  
In witness to the King that still should come<sup>xxxvi</sup>,

A King and more, for he should be the Son  
Of God and Man, the Lord of heaven and earth,  
And David's God, although his Son<sup>xxxvii</sup>; for this  
The prophets call his name – Immanuel  
(For he shall be God with us)<sup>xxxviii</sup>; and, though God,  
As man should suffer more than any man,  
And, being numbered with transgressors, smite  
That old Serpent a mighty blow, from which  
He never should recover; but his own,  
The people God had given him, ah, them  
In triumph he should lead beyond the world,  
And give them an eternal kingdom<sup>xxxix</sup>. Yet,  
For all their labors, they were only mocked,  
And some put into stocks, and some in pits  
Cast down, and some were beaten, stoned, and killed<sup>xl</sup>.

*Long have your people lain in darkness deep;  
When will the darkness give way to the Sun,  
And Morning dry the eyes of them who weep?*

*O Sun of Righteousness, make haste to dawn,  
That we may go out as the calves and leap,  
That we may see your light, and rise, and run<sup>xli</sup>!*

O iron feet, O cruel iron feet!  
How have you trodden down the world of men,  
How have you crushed all kingdoms that opposed,  
And wrought your iron will upon them all!  
Cold iron feet! beware, lest, mixed with clay,  
You lose your strength, and, while you are at ease,  
The Stone unmade with hands come hurling down,  
And grind to powder you and all your hosts<sup>xlii</sup>!  
So arose Rome, a monstrous, ten-horned beast<sup>xliii</sup>,  
Whose kingdom spread o'er all the earth. Judah,  
Who these six hundred years have had no throne,  
Who will arise to take up David's crown?  
Who will be set up, once again to rule

Your nation with a firm and gentle rod?  
Will David's Branch<sup>xliv</sup> now come? But no, the throne  
Is given to your older brother; he,  
The Idumean<sup>xlv</sup>, Rome's puppet of blood,  
Will rise to spill the blood of many sons,  
And sate his cruelty with your daughters' bones.

*O Sun of Righteousness, make haste to dawn!  
Oh, how we languish in this darkness deep,  
Oh, how we stumble, and there is no Sun.*

'What star is this that lights the midnight sky?'  
So did they wonder, they who heard of old  
The Jewish prophecies, that there should rise  
A King that evermore should rule the earth –  
'What star is this? in truth it is a star  
That shines with glory, shines as it had been  
In God's own counsel.' Then they understood,  
And said, 'It is a portent.' So they came  
With gifts fit for a king, and sought its source,  
The child for whom the star did shine, as this  
Should be the King of kings. And thus they made  
Their journey westward, following ever on,  
Till they should know this portent's fiery tale<sup>xlvi</sup>.

And who is this, that, brighter than the star,  
Shines brilliantly before a humble maid,  
The Lord's young servant? It is Gabriel,  
God's mighty warrior<sup>xlvii</sup>; hear his thundering voice:

'Hail, highly favored, you that have been graced  
Above all women, hail! for you shall bear  
A Son to whom the Lord shall give the throne  
Of David; he shall reign forevermore,  
And never shall his kingdom end. His name  
Shall be called "Jesus," because he shall save  
His people from their sins<sup>xlviii</sup>. He shall be high,  
For he shall be the Son of the Most High.

Think not, "How shall this be? I am a maid  
That have not known a man." – the Holy Ghost  
Will come upon you, so the Son you bear,  
Your seed, shall have no father, but the Lord,  
The God of heaven shall be his Father; thus,  
He will be holy, God and man, and he  
Alone will reign exalted<sup>xliv</sup>.'

He was gone,  
And Mary, left alone then, treasured up  
These sayings in her heart. To her betrothed,  
Joseph (with whom she had not come together),  
The angel likewise in a dream appeared<sup>l</sup>,  
And this too was a portent, as the star.

The highest angel and the highest star  
In all the heavens thus their task fulfilled  
To go before the King of kings, presage  
His soon arrival, and make straight his way.  
Nor were they all, these glorious presages,  
For soon there came out from a barren womb  
One who should be the greatest among men<sup>li</sup>,  
A prophet such as never had been known,  
The Forerunner; now, this was John, who came  
Into the world to baptize, and prepare  
A people for the King. Of his glad task,  
Hear now Isaiah, God's great prophet, speak:

'The voice of one in desert places cries!  
What cries he? Make the highest mountains plains,  
Fill up the lowest valleys, and prepare  
The way by which the King of kings shall come.'

So John the Baptist came, as Gabriel  
Had told his father, Zechariah, who,  
While disbelieving, was struck dumb, until  
The child was born to her who was called barren,  
And that in old age<sup>lii</sup>. This miracle of birth,

And John, the child who made straight the way,  
Was a third portent, great and terrible.  
Such portents, various and wonderful,  
What could they mean, but that the One of whom  
They told should be the greatest King of all,  
The Ruler of the universe, the sum  
Of history, the Reason for the world! –  
So great, so terrible, that mankind's great  
And noble kings, creation's highest stars,  
Bear witness to him, he must surely be  
Too great to condescend to lowly men!  
But Gabriel's work is not yet done: to men  
Poor and despised, who watch their little flock  
In the cold hills of Judah he is sent  
To bring the message. Look! how flashes round  
His brilliance, so that all at once fall down,  
As if dead; so to reassure their hearts  
He tells them,

‘Fear not, shepherds, for behold,  
I bring to you good tidings of great joy,  
And peace to men of God's goodwill; take heart,  
For unto you is born in Bethlehem,  
In David's city, David's Son and Heir,  
The Savior, the Messiah, God and King!  
This is how you shall know him: wrapped about  
In swaddling clothes, he shall be laid to rest  
In a coarse feeding-trough for beasts.’

And then,  
The world ignited with the matchless light  
Of many angels, shouting with their might,  
‘Glory to God in the highest!’ Thundering  
Across the night, resounding through the hills,  
It finally faded from the earth, and yet,  
Within the shepherds' hearts it echoes still.  
At this last portent came the shepherds rude,



To bow before the long-awaited King<sup>liii</sup>.  
O world of men, the day has finally come,  
That day for which the saints so long have yearned –  
Oh, longed-for since that first great Fall had brought  
Death and destruction, sickness, pain, and tears,  
The venom of the Serpent's bite – desired  
And blessed day, how do we love your light!  
For in your breast there lies the promised Seed,  
The King of history, the Conqueror  
Of that old Serpent, the Deliverer  
Of those who bear his venom in their souls.  
O blessed night, the King has now been born!  
But what is this, what humble place is this,  
To shelter him so highly testified  
By angels, men, and creatures? what rough place  
In which to hide the King above all kings?  
How humble is this King surpassing great!  
He made the world, and came a man despised  
Among the men he made<sup>liv</sup>; he came to rule,  
And took up residence within a stall,  
A shelter for the beasts of humble men:  
How humble, yet how great! Oh, paradox  
More sweetly strange than all the riddles dark  
Of all the wisest men who ever lived!  
And so this babe, more humble than the least  
And lowliest of all that walked the earth,  
Yet greater far than all the highest kings  
Who ever ruled in puffed-up majesty –  
Before this babe within his trough, there bow  
Both kings and peasants, shepherds and magi.  
Yes, he is great so we might bow in fear,  
And he is meek, that we might dare to come<sup>lv</sup>.

‘He came unto his own, and was despised’:  
Ah! wonder greater than all wonders yet  
Conceived of Lust and brought to birth by Sin,  
More monstrous than all that misshapen race

Of Guilt, the bastard children of the Snake:  
Will men despise their Maker? will the pot  
Deride the Potter<sup>lvi</sup>? That were cause enough  
For all the pangs of fieriest hell; –  
But when the Potter breaks upon the wheel  
His own self for his self-willed shards, and when  
The Maker pours out to the bloody ground  
His very soul, to bring back to himself  
The men who had despised his royal word –  
When thus such condescension meets such grace,  
And even God's dear Love is so despised,  
What punishment awaits so gross a sin<sup>lvii</sup>?  
What grim fate lurks beyond that ringing cry  
Of damning reprobation so severe?

'He came unto his own, and was despised' ...

But not by all, for in the Temple mount  
There dwelt a faithful priest, old Simeon,  
Who long had waited for Messiah's birth,  
And knew from God that he would not see death  
Until he saw the King. This Simeon,  
Beholding Jesus coming the eighth day  
After his birth, took up the babe, and said,

'O Master, you may now let go in peace  
Your servant, for my eyes have seen the King,  
The Savior of the world, Israel's Hope  
And Glory, and the Light of all the world!'

And so too Anna, that old prophetess,  
A widow eighty years and four, who kept  
Always within the Temple, to await  
The promised Christ, when she saw Jesus come,  
Praised God, and told all Judah she had seen  
The Lord's redemption<sup>lviii</sup>.

Thus it was that Christ,

The long-awaited Kings of kings was born,  
Surrounded by all great and glorious signs,  
And wrapped in meekness, yet unrecognized  
By all but just a few rough peasant men,  
Some Eastern kings, a prophetess, and a priest.

So he came, and though the world knew not, yet knew  
That Dragon dread, the ancient Serpent; he,  
Inciting Herod, poured out all the blood  
Of many innocents, and Rachel wept,  
And got no comfort<sup>lix</sup>. Fierce and furious  
Was his mad onslaught, and the child's father  
Was forced to flee to Egypt with the babe.  
And how they fared, and how the Father called  
His Son from Egypt, and how, finally,  
This long-awaited Seed took up his arms  
And struck the death-blow to the Dragon fierce,  
Requires another tale.

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<sup>i</sup> Greek: "In Christ we are one"

<sup>ii</sup> Portuguese: "To My Love"

<sup>iii</sup> Greek: "In Christ"

<sup>iv</sup> Latin: "grace alone"

<sup>v</sup> Greek: "A Poet's Struggle". Transliterated: "Agon Poietou".

<sup>vi</sup> Latin: "Out of the Depths"

<sup>vii</sup> Latin: "After Darkness, Light"

<sup>viii</sup> Greek: "King"

<sup>ix</sup> An "apostrophe" is an address made to an object or a person who is incapable of answering. In this instance, the proposed answer is formulated on the basis of Nebuchadnezzar's decree as given in Daniel chapter four. The author is here dialoguing with an account left by Nebuchadnezzar as if he were dialoguing with him in person.

<sup>x</sup> In Daniel chapter two, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of a statue with a head of gold, which Daniel interpreted for him as King Nebuchadnezzar himself, the ruler of the highest and most glorious of the world empires of history.

<sup>xi</sup> Cf. Nahum 2:3, where the Babylonians prophesied to destroy Nineveh are described as "valiant men in scarlet".

<sup>xii</sup> Cf. Isaiah 2:13

<sup>xiii</sup> Cf. Daniel 4:10-12

<sup>xiv</sup> Cf. Genesis 3:24

<sup>xv</sup> The hanging gardens which Nebuchadnezzar built for his wife are considered one of

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the seven wonders of the world.

<sup>xvi</sup>The basic premise of the following monologue is adapted from Daniel chapter four.

<sup>xvii</sup>All of us have been so designed that we must worship that which appears to us most beautiful. When our eyes have been opened to see the glory of Christ, we cannot but worship him.

<sup>xviii</sup>It has been conventional to begin epic poetry with an invocation to a Muse, a Greek divinity of the Arts supposed to have power to assist the poet to sing; in this case, the author, having touched upon a theme too high for such superstition, is moved instead to petition the Spirit of God who delights to open hearts to embrace the knowledge of the King who is to be the poem's protagonist.

<sup>xix</sup>Cf. John 16:13

<sup>xx</sup>As the Spirit is said to do in I John 2:20

<sup>xxi</sup>The preceding has been adapted from the account of the prophet Isaiah's commission, recorded in Isaiah chapter six.

<sup>xxii</sup>Cf. Genesis 1:1; John 1:1

<sup>xxiii</sup>Cf. Acts 4:26-28

<sup>xxiv</sup>Cf. Psalm 2:7-8

<sup>xxv</sup>Cf. Ephesians 1:3-7; Ephesians 2:4-7

<sup>xxvi</sup> The following is adapted from 2 Samuel 7.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Cf. 1 Samuel 16:1-13

<sup>xxviii</sup>Cf. Genesis 17:3-8

<sup>xxix</sup> Cf. 2 Chronicles 6:18

<sup>xxx</sup> Cf. Genesis 3:15

<sup>xxxi</sup> Cf. Isaiah 9:6-7

<sup>xxxii</sup> Cf. 1 Kings 11:31-36

<sup>xxxiii</sup>Cf. 2 Kings 25

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Cf. Genesis 1:1-3, 20-21

<sup>xxxv</sup> Cf. Isaiah 24:1-12; 8:21-9:2

<sup>xxxvi</sup> E.g. Isaiah 16:5; Jeremiah 33:15-17; Ezekiel 37:24-27

<sup>xxxvii</sup>Cf. Isaiah 9:6-7; Psalm 110

<sup>xxxviii</sup>Cf. Isaiah 7:14

<sup>xxxix</sup> Cf. Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Isaiah 66:19-24

<sup>xl</sup> Cf. Hebrews 11:32-40

<sup>xli</sup> Cf. Malachi 4:2

<sup>xlii</sup> Cf. Daniel 2:34-35

<sup>xliii</sup> Cf. Daniel 7:7-9

<sup>xliv</sup> Cf. Isaiah 11:1

<sup>xlv</sup> The Idumeans were descended from Esau, the older brother of Israel.

<sup>xlvi</sup> Cf. Matthew 2:1-12

<sup>xlvii</sup> "Gabriel" means "mighty warrior of God".

<sup>xlviii</sup> "Jesus" means "savior".

<sup>xlix</sup> Cf. Luke 1:26-35

<sup>l</sup> Cf. Matthew 1:18-25

<sup>li</sup> Cf. Matthew 11:11

<sup>lii</sup> Cf. Luke 1:5-25

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- liii Cf. Luke 2:8-18
  - liv Cf. John 1:10-11
  - lv Cf. Psalm 2:11
  - lvi Cf. Isaiah 45:9-11
  - lvii Cf. Hebrews 10:28-29
  - lviii Cf. Luke 2:21-30
  - lix Cf. Matthew 2:13-18