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HE GOETH
BEFORE YOU

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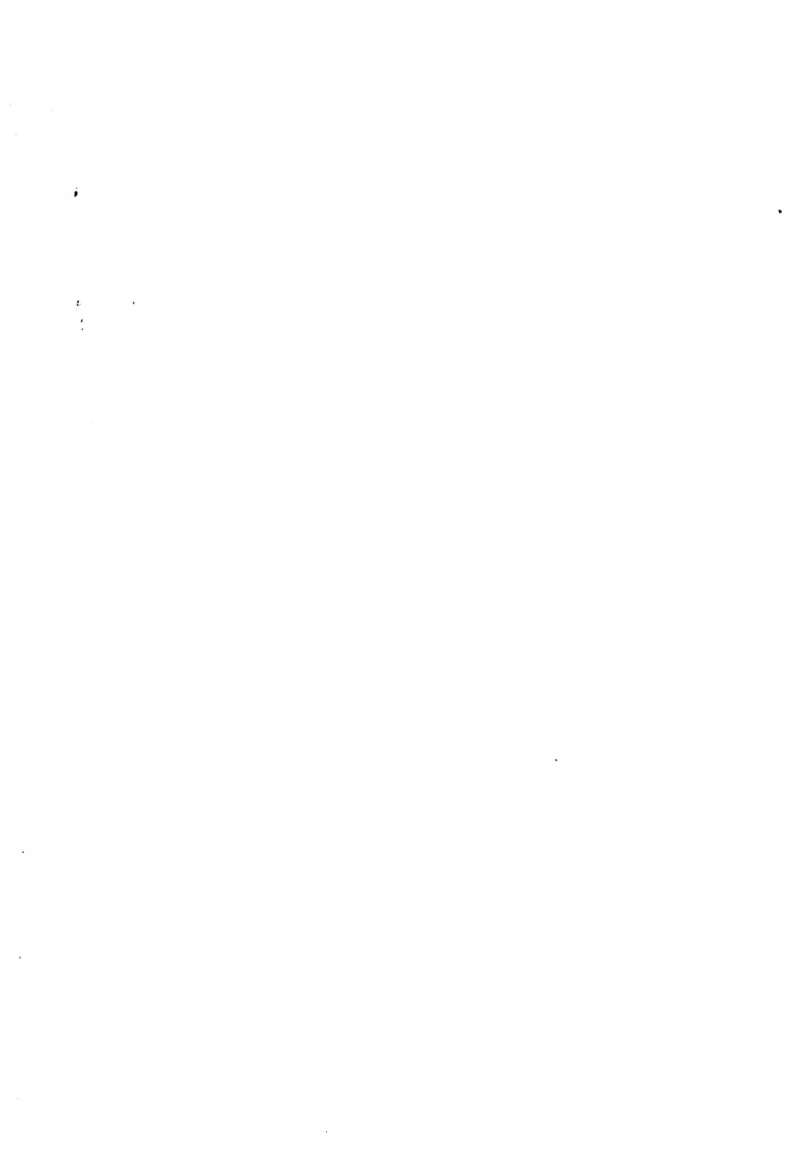
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“BEHOLD HE GOETH
BEFORE YOU”

A Legend of the Risen Lord

BY

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BOSTON
JAMES H. EARLE, PUBLISHER
178 WASHINGTON STREET

P. 2227
M44 B-1

52045

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Dedication

TO

THOSE FOLLOWERS OF THE CHRIST
WHO FEEL THAT THEY ARE BEING LED BY A WAY
THAT THEY KNOW NOT,
AND THROUGH PROVIDENCES THAT THEY CANNOT UNDERSTAND,
THE RECITAL OF THIS BEAUTIFUL LEGEND
IS LOVINGLY DEDICATED,
WITH THE PRAYER THAT EACH HEART WHO THUS READS IT,
MAY FIND IN IT THAT WHICH SHALL BE A
COMFORT AND HELP AND STRENGTH FOR ALL FUTURE DAYS,
KNOWING FULLY THAT

The Goeth Before Us

ALSO TO THE SHORES OF ETERNAL LIFE.

But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.—
Matt. xxvi. 32.

Behold He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall you see
him: lo, I have told you.—Matt. xxviii. 7.

AUTHOR'S NOTE.

THE following beautiful legend, interwoven in the pages of this volume, was told to Rev. Russell H. Conwell, while travelling in Jerusalem, in the year 1868, by an old monk who was acting as his guide in the Holy Land. Some years afterward, when a pastor in Philadelphia, Mr. Conwell told it to the members of his congregation, of whom the present writer was one. He himself said of it :

“ It proved to me a most interesting tradition—a combination, no doubt, of fact and fancy, like many others which he related while showing us over those sacred fields. But this one was so new to me, and so permeated with the clearness of Gospel truth, that I tell it to you this evening as near as I can as it was told to me.”

To one of his hearers it seemed not only full of Gospel truth in the incidents of the Legend itself as he related it then, but also to afford opportunity for so much of beautiful thought connected with the

life of our Lord, the Christ, that she has put it into the present form.

Her first thought was to dedicate her effort to him—her former pastor, her always friend—who had thus brought the story from its far-off home, and made such a writing possible : but her second (which resulted in her present dedication) she believes will be more in accord with any wish he might express were he consulted, and in the prayer of which she feels sure he will most heartily join.

If its perusal can make the loving care and providence of the Master who “goeth before” all of His children, seem more real and precious to any heart, His name will be glorified, and the author will feel that her service, humble though it is, has been accepted of Him whom she would follow.

M. F. McK.

“BEHOLD HE GOETH
BEFORE YOU.”

A LEGEND.

JERUSALEM, the city of the Jews—
The place of which Jehovah, God, had said,
“My name shall dwell there, I have chosen it
That ye may bring your tithes and offerings,
And pay your vows unto the living God ;!—*
The city founded upon holy hills,†
Hallowed by memories of sacred love ;
City of palaces and temple courts
And walls of massive strength ; city of priests,
And priestly ritual, where altar fires
Sent their continual incense heavenward ;
City of learning, where the holy law
Was taught within their schools by doctors
great

* Deut. xii 11. 2 Chron. vii. 12.

† Psa. lxxvii. 68. Gen. xxii. 2.

And read each day in all their synagogues,
 With care punctillious; city of pride,
 Though vassal under Rome—Jerusalem
 Had done her worst!
 For when her Lord had come
 Unto His own, "His own received Him not." *
 With strange infatuation she was blind—†
 Blind with the love of petted wrongs and
 creeds;
 While seeing letter of the law which kills;
 Blind to the spirit which would make alive;
 Blind with the stubbornness that "will not see,"
 And, with deliberate choice, had cast Him
 forth,
 And, asking that a robber be released,
 Had crucified her King without the wall.

Strange things had happened then. ‡ Dark-
 ness of night
 Had settled o'er the land at noon's high hour;
 The temple's veil, from top to bottom rent
 When no man's hand had touched its sacred
 fold;
 The solid earth had quaked, and e'en the
 graves

* John i. 11.

† Rom. xi. 25.

‡ Matt. xxvii. 51-52.

Whose hatred of the conquering law had
found

At last its equal in their fear of Christ.

But 'twas of no avail. The watch, the seal—
Nay, thousand times their power, could not
have kept

The Master of all Life among the Dead!

From ages of eternity the word

Had been decreed: "Thou wilt not suffer now

Thy Holy One to see corruption, Life

Thou wilt reveal, and joy, for evermore" *

So now, the short-lived victory of Death,

Robbed henceforth of its sting, must yield
again

To Life's eternal sway; conquered by Love †

Made manifest from God, Author of Love.

And so, 'twas noised about throughout the
town,

And in the village, that He had risen,

And that His spirit walked abroad 'mong men.

Then those who hated, those who crucified,

And those who knew not, save from rumor's
tale,

* Psa. xv. 10, 11.

† 1 Cor. xv. 55, 57.

Were sore afraid, and, trembling, shrank from
sight,
Starting at shadows, growing faint at sound
Of voices once familiar to their ear,
Refusing to go forth where they might meet
His Spirit, as some dread Avenger, come
To visit on their heads their awful sin.

But those who loved Him, and had followed
Him
In days of dark adversity and storm,
Watched for His coming, and, with eager
hearts,
Prayed earnestly to see Him once again,
Seeking the places that He once had loved,
Hoping in some familiar spot to find
Him whom they knew as living "Son of
Man ;"
Him whom their hearts confessed as "Son of
God."

To some He was revealed—His witnesses
Upon the earth to tell the story o'er :
(For naught of blessing does He give to us,
Except that through it we may bless the
world).

But some lived on, nor knew their answered
 prayer,
 Because He came not as they thought He
 would,
 As some to-day turn from God's sweetest gifts,
 Because they see not through Love's dark dis-
 guise
 To know that Christ Himself is waiting there.

Within the city wall, in the fair home
 Of John, the well-beloved—home now, as well
 Of Mary, gentle mother of our Lord—
 Were gathered, on an early Springtime eve
 A group of seven * men—disciples true
 Who long had followed Him, sharing His lot,
 One day of favor, and the next of scorn ;
 Not understanding all His words and works—
 Dull, slow of heart, perhaps (let the first stone
 Of criticism now be cast by him
 Who hath no sin) needing oft the word
 Of patient warning from their Master's lips ;
 Yet true were they, and honest in their love,
 Striving with minds perplexed to pierce the
 mists
 Of man-made wisdom that had gathered long

* John xxi. 2.

Around the words and symbols of God's love,
Distorting and obstructing the clear view
He would have given, desiring all to know
And do His will.

Most earnestly these men
Pondered events late past, and future plans :
Much had they called to mind that now was
clear
Though all uncomprehended when their hearts
Were filled with doubt and fear. And strange
sweet joy
Possessed their souls as each new evidence
Was thus presented. So, they waited here,
Striving yet more to know the Master's will,
Asking more light on what seemed now so dark.

Then spoke the well-beloved John, and said :
"Rememberest thou not these words of His
While yet with us : 'Behold, when I am risen
I go before you into Galilee,
There shall ye see Me' ? * Let us rise and go
Into the country that He loved so well—
Up to the sea, made bless'd for evermore
By memory of His gentle ministry."

* Matt xxvi. 32. Mark xiv. 28.

"Yes—let us go—He may be waiting there,
 And we the blessing losing by delay.
 Arise—make haste—and let us go at once,"
 Cried Peter, his impetuous heart aglow
 With the new hope of seeing him again.

"Nay," answered Andrew, more conservative,
 "Such haste would make but little speed. We
 need

This night for preparation, and for rest.
 After our day of toil. The morning's sun
 Shall not be risen till we are on our way,
 Refreshed, and ready to endure the walk
 Up to our home—the Sea of Galilee—
 Thus would the Master counsel, were He here."

"I think He would," said James. "Come ye
 and rest' *
 Was what He bade, that we might give full
 strength

And vigor unimpaired to the new task
 That He would give. How kind He ever was,
 Remembering our frame and all our wants!"

And then Nathanael, in reflective mood:
 "'Tis strange we had forgot those words of
 His,

* Mark vi. 31.

Spoken by His own lips before the day—
That fatal day--when He was torn from us—
By all that priestly hate and Roman scorn
Could compass in the hour of darkness' power ;
And brought to mind by words the women
said

When first they learned that He had risen
again—

'Tis strange we should forget so long! But
now——"

" And yet, 'tis ever thus that grief doth blind
Our hearts to hope "—'Twas Thomas who thus
spoke ,

Remembering his own experience.

And in such haste he waited not to hear

All that Nathanael would have said—" But
now—

Now that the bitter grief has passed in part—

('Twill never wholly pass, until 'tis lost

In a more perfect knowledge than we now

Can guess, and all His plans for Israel

Shall be revealed to us)—hope, slow, returns,

And brings this blessed message to our minds.

Let us in haste our preparations make,

Then seek our rest that we may be refreshed,

And start upon our journey's joyous way
As soon as morning's light shall dawn again."

Then eagerly they planned the route to take,
And as they made provisions for the way
They talked of Him whom they had loved so
 well ;
Whom they had hoped would Israel redeem,
And vindicate the power they felt belonged
To them alone.

Had hoped? Again that hope
Arose, as memory recalled His words :
" I go before you into Galilee
And ye shall see Me there." Would this be
 time *
When He the kingdom would restore again
To Israel—their hope so long deferred?

And when their plans were laid, and all was
 done
That could be done to-night, in readiness
For morning's dawn, they laid them down to
 rest.

* Acts I. 6.

And that same spring-time evening, the Christ
With His new-risen body, in whose power
It was to pass through bolted doors, and stand *
At but a moment's notice by the side
Of whom He would ; to whom distance could
 prove
No barrier, and weariness of flesh,
No hindrance ; who revealed Himself at will,
Or stood invisible to those most near,
Or walked, unrecognized by dearest friend ;
The risen Christ who held the mysteries
Of Life, and Death, and Heaven, within His
 grasp—
First fruits of them that slept † who swayed
 e'en now
The power that some time also shall be ours, ‡
Because He wills it so, and will bestow
The gifts Himself has conquered from the
 grave,
On us who have been made alive through
 Him,—
Jesus, the Christ, the risen Lord, now stood
In very midst of them, and yet unseen,
Unheard, His presence all unguessed by them,

* Luke xxiv. 16, 36.

† 1 Cor. xv. 20.

‡ 1 John iii. 2.

He listened to their plans, and saw them make
 The preparations needful for the way,
 And smiled, and sighed, in but a single breath
 To hear their love, yet knew how selfish
 thoughts

(Not theirs alone, but in their nation bred)
 Had blinded them, and led their hopes astray,
 Making them miss the great, grand truths of
 love

To all mankind—not to a single race—
 And greatness measured by great services,
 Not by the world's esteem of pomp and power.

How oft He'd told them that the way to life
 Led downward, first, through death;* that
 honor came †

Through self-forgetful service; that the cross
 For them, His followers, as for Him, their
 Lord,

Was the one road that led to victory,— ‡
 How slow we are e'en yet to learn this truth!

Yet graciously He listened to their words,
 For well he knew the weakness of the flesh,

* John xii. 24.

† Verse 26.

‡ John xii. 32. Matt. x. 38.

And well He'd learned the kindness of their
 hearts
Which struggled blindly, slowly, toward the
 Light,
Yet gave not up the strife, though puzzled oft
And often left in doubt. Not by His will—
But that the mists of years of prejudice
Must first be swept away ere they could see
Their promised King, the Hope of Israel
To be the Man of Sorrow, well acquaint
With grief, despised, esteemed not, smit of
 God,
Afflicted, wounded, bruised.* Was He not
 called
The Sun of Righteousness, † the glorious Star, ‡
The Mighty One, § the Royal Prince of Peace,
The Glory of all Israel. ¶ Nay more,
Of all the nations the Desired One * *
In whom all the families of the earth were
 blessed ! † †
How could this strange thing be ?
Still loved they Truth,
(The Truth they saw in Living Words in Him).

* Isaiah liii.

‡ Numb. xxiv. 17.

|| Isaiah ix. 6.

** Hag. ii. 7.

† Mat. iv. 2.

§ Isaiah lx. 16.

¶ Isaiah xlvi. 13 ; Luke ii. 32.

† † Gen. xii. 3 ; Psa. lxxii. 17.

And still their love spake to His gentle heart
Till e'en their failures seemed to whisper love.

In silent benediction then He stretched
His viewless hands (out) toward them as they
 talked,
And planned and loved their Lord (so doth
 He yet,
Perchance). And, with a whispered prayer to
 heaven
He passed unseen, unheard, out to the street.

Amid the jostling crowds He hurried on,
Along the ways where His swift, willing feet
Had borne Him oft to deeds of power and
 love ;
Where He had walked unrecognized, a King,
Full of sweet kingly presence which the
 world
Knew not—(nor has it ever learned since then !)
Along the very thoroughfares where once
His childish feet approached the temple gate ;
And when the years had fled, and He had
 reached

To Man's estate—THE MAN of all the world—
He was led captive by the angry mob

Who, in a frenzy of wild fear and rage,
(Surely 'twas true: “They knew not what
they did!”)

Demanded that a robber be released
And He, their Lord, their King, be crucified!

Out through the city's gate, on toward the
North

He took His silent way, unseen by those
Who passed Him by, with minds preoccupied
And hearts on earth intent. Perhaps 'tis so
More often than we think.

The valley, bright
With spring-time's early verdure, not yet
scorched

By summer's withering heat, greeted the eyes
Of Him whose love of nature's beauty knows
No blunt of sin, but sees in every hill

And tree and running stream and budding
flower

A pledge of love, straight from a Father's
hand.

Onward He glided, till the pathway turned
Up toward Emmaus. There a field of grain,

Waving and gleaming in the westering sun,
 Bowed low each heavy head, as if to greet
 The Master of all Life.

He paused to look
 Upon its green and graceful luxury.
 Then, gazing up to Heaven in silent prayer,
 He stretched His hands out toward the nod-
 ding stalks,
 And said, in voice whose tone of gentleness
 Yet bore command from God :

*" Ripen, ye blades !
 Let every grain in all this fruitful field
 Be dry and hard when yonder sun shall set ! "*

Then, on He glided, flitting down the road,
 And through the woodland's sweet and mossy
 shade
 Discerning everywhere His Father's love
 Written on every line of Nature's page,
 Yet seeing in the little groups that passed—
 The workmen on their earthly gains intent,
 The villagers who gossiped of the news,
 Even the children following their play—
 Wherever *man* was found, discovering there

The soul's deep need of God, and holy love,
E'en though they recognized it not themselves.

Near Emmaus, upon a hill-side's slope—
Not far it was from path which He had trod *
With two of His disciples on their way
Up to the village, while, Himself unknown
To them, He had unfolded all the word,
Written long years ago, but now fulfilled
In Him, until their hearts did burn and glow
With a new love's warm flame. Purer it was,
And more intense, since more intelligent,
And more like God's. But yet they knew
Him not

Until they had constrained Him to abide
With them ; for in their earnest talk, the day
Was now far spent, and night was near. 'Twas
then,
When He had yielded to their urgent words,
And broken bread with them, that first they
knew
That they had talked with Jesus by the way,
And learned these lessons straight from lips
divine.

* Luke xxiv. 13-32.

Did He recall these scenes as now He walked
Alone, along the old familiar way ?

Near to the village, close beside the road,
He saw a merchant, wearied by the heat
And travel of the day, who, resting, lay
In shade of spreading tree, near to a spring.
Beneath his head, as pillow for his rest,
Were bags of gold—the profits of his sales,
Which had been prosp'rous in the city's mart
Whither, for many days throughout the feast
Which thronged its walls with wealth from far
and near,
He had been trading in the precious things
Which all the year he had been gathering.

Deep was the traveller's sleep, and as the Christ
Paused for a moment by the crystal spring,
And stooped to quaff of its refreshing stream,
The dreamer heard no step, and felt no hand
Untie the bags of gold, and let the coins,
Shining and precious, scatter through the
grass
And leaves which formed his pleasant wayside
couch.

When it was done, the Christ stood still, erect,
And looked upon the sleeper there, whose rest
Was still unbroken. Pity filled His voice
And made its quivering accents half a sigh
As low He said :

“ Ah soul, thou know’st I bade
Thee give unto the poor—and thou didst not !
Hadst thou obeyed my word, thou wouldst
have known

Earth’s utmost blessedness in the sweet joy
Of an abundant portion shared with God
As Partner in thy life ; for he who gives
Unto the poor, lends to the Lord,* and he
Who shuts his heart and hands against their
cry

Shuts out God’s blessing from his life, and robs
Himself of joy.†

Yet not so does he shut
God’s providence away. My needy ones
Are ever in the world. *They* may not take
What thou withhold—that would be sin as dark
As thine—yet *I*, thy God, and theirs
Have right to take what I commanded thee
Thus to bestow : what never was thine own
Except to hold in trust.

* Prov. xix. 17., xxviii. 27. † Prov. xi. 24, 26.

I have not wronged
Thee of thy right of gold, yet thou hast wronged
Thyself of a supreme and Godlike joy—
For he who gives the most from out his life
Is likest to his Maker—Him Who gave
Thee life itself. And thou hast taken now

A loss. Thou wilt suppose it loss of gold,
Poor, foolish man! Already in thine eyes
The world and all therein is good or ill
As it can be converted into coin
To swell thy hoarded treasure! Thou art blind
Because thou wouldst not see what part was
mine!

Didst think that thou couldst live thy life alone,
Apart from God? apart from mortal men
Except as they contribute to thy gain?
*But in reality thy loss will be
Not shining gold—it has already been,
In Godlike character, in hope, in love,
In joy, in opportunity for good
In all that goes to make the best in man!*"

Then, as He turned away, His bosom heaved,
And something very like a sob escaped
Those gentle lips divine—but not for self—

'Twas at the thought of how the blinding sin
Of covetousness' gainst which He oft had
warned

His true disciples and His followers,
Creeps with insidious power into the heart
And steals life's sweetness ere we are aware

On to the village, then, with noiseless tread
He glided, till He stood beside the door
Of cottage lowly, where the voice of prayer
Arrested Him, and held Him listening there.
For never yet was breathed a prayer in vain;
If from the heart it comes, it reaches Him,
No matter what its want or language is.

As now He listened, all His tender heart
Was moved with a compassion never known
To man. Closer He drew to hear the cry;
Even the door fast-shut no barrier proved;
And as the humble suppliant bent low
Before the throne of grace, above him leaned
The pitying Saviour, though he knew it not

“O Lord! he prayed, “'Tis only work I seek.
Thou'st given me health and strength. Now
send, I pray,

The opportunity to earn my bread
 For daily need, by honest, helpful toil !
 I thank Thee, Lord, for all Thy blessings
 past ;
 But leave me not alone. I cannot live
 Without Thee, Lord ! Hear Thou my prayer !
 Send work,
 Send honest, helpful toil that I may live,
 A blessing, not a burden, on the earth "

He saw not yet the Heavenly visitant.
 But a strange peace within his bosom stole,
 And Faith's sweet voice assured him that his
 prayer
 Had been both heard and answered in God's
 plan ;
 For God doth answer prayer in many ways,
 And oft 'tis done ere yet it is revealed
 By sight to us. He knoweth best when we
 Will be prepared to take the good He sends,
And know He sent it. All too soon would
 we
 Become forgetful of our God, and take
 His richest gifts in silent thanklessness,
 If all were dropped like sunshine on our lives
 Without the asking, ere we knew our need.

With that strange, sweet assurance in his
heart
Faith's whisper that his prayer was heard and
owned,
The suppliant rose, and, supperless,
Alone, and yet not lonely, sought his couch,
And as the evening shadows gathered 'round
Lay down to sweet and dreamless sleep, whose
strength
Should needed be upon the morrow's dawn,
To do the work that he felt sure would come
In answer to his earnest trustful prayer.

Noiseless and viewless as the Master came
He went again out from the cottage door.
His eyes shone with a look of gentle love,
And all His face was radiant with a smile
Whose secret thought was tenderness and
help.

Yes, He had heard, and He would soon relieve
The want of him who trusted in God's care !

Close to the step, without, He saw a tree—
An apricot of young and vigorous growth,
Whose careful tending showed its owner's
love ;

Its bud was promise of a fruitage full,
 Which must have been a joy to that sad heart.
 Its presence seemed more bright because it
 stood

Alone a thing of beauty, where all else
 Was blighted by the breath of poverty.

But Jesus seized it with a powerful grasp,
 And, twisting it, as if it were a twig,
 Crushed it to earth, and left it broken there!
Was this the answer to that prayer of faith?

Then, on He passed, as shades of night grew
 deep,
 And, as He moved, a curious glow of light
 Seemed flitting over valley, hill and field.

As He approached near Shechem, to His ear
 Again was borne the voice of suppliant prayer.
 It was a widow's home from whence it came,
 And straightway Jesus entered as she prayed,
 For ever is He drawing nigh to those
 Who first draw nigh to Him in faith and love.*

A little child, the widow's only son—
 Lay, dying, there; His wan, pinched face up
 turned

* James iv. 8.

Seemed white, as if it were already kissed
By God’s mysterious messenger, whose name
On earth is known as DEATH. Perhaps in
Heaven,

When partings here are lost in meetings there,
And human loneliness is all forgot
In the sweet presence of our Living Lord,
And fullness of a joy we had not guessed
While here below we stayed, will have re-
vealed

The meaning of Life’s solemn mysteries,
With all its sorrows, all its cares and pain;
And of this other mystery, when white
And still, and unresponsive lies the form
We loved before us—*then*, perhaps, in Heaven
We will re-name him LOVE, and call him
FRIEND.

Beside the bed, the widowed mother knelt,
And prayed as only widowed mother-love
Can pray, pleading in agony of heart
That God would spare her son—her only son.

“Send to me now Thy holy Prophet, Lord!
Let Him of Nazareth pass by this way,
And let Him touch my child that he may live.

Now, in mine hour of sorrow, wilt Thou not
Direct His steps to us, that He may bring
The blessings which e'er follow Him from
Thee."

For, in her lonely home, as she had kept
Vigil beside her loved, she had not heard
Of all that had been done by wicked hands
Unto the Lord of Life; nor yet how He
Had gained the last grand victory, and led
Captivity a captive by His power.
Breaking forever Death's cold, cruel sway,
Himself the first-fruits of a life renewed
Whose full maturity should be in Heaven
In presence of the Self-Existent One.

She knew not this—she only thought of Him
As some great Jewish Rabbi, full of love,
Teaching a wondrous doctrine, whose import
As yet was scarcely understood by men
Who talked of king and kingdom with a zeal
Like that of olden times, before the power
Of heathen nations had subdued their land.
'Twas certain He possessed a kingly might
Direct from God, which He could use at will,
Till many a time and oft had rumor come

Of how, by word or touch, He had made
whole
The blind, the lame, the sick. Aye, more than
that

Her neighbor, just beyond the hill, at Nain,
Had mourned the loss of son already dead
And on the way to burial, when He
The Rabbi Jesus, met the funeral train,
And with command which none could disobey,
Had stopped the mournful cortège even then,
And bade her cease to weep. And coming
close

Had touched the bier, and said “*Young Man,
Arise!*”

And lo! the dead arose, and straightway
spoke,

Given back to life and mother-love again,
To be her comfort through declining years.

Could not the power which brought to life the
dead

Restore *her* child, now wasted by disease?

Would not the love in sweet compassion
moved

By sight of lonely sorrow for the dead
Evoke in *her* behalf that gracious word

Completely vanquished by the conqueror, Life,
Stretching them forth in benediction sweet
Above the praying mother bending there,
(Knows earth or Heaven a sight more beautiful?)

One moment paused He, as she asked of God
The granting of her earnest, trustful prayer,
And then He vanished in the night again.

The mother rose. The assurance of a faith
So strong and sweet had come into her heart
That there was now no room for doubt or fear.
Little she knew of how her prayer had made
Her humble cottage shelter for the Guest
Whose home is HEAVEN, and whose name is
LOVE.

Little we know, I ween, how oft our prayers
Bring heavenly visitants to earth, and make
The spot whereon we stand as holy ground.

But this she knew: The face of him she
watched
Had lost its look of pain, and in his eyes
There gleamed the light of knowledge once
again.

“Mother,” he said, “Give me some water,
please ;
I’m better now. I’ve had a lovely dream !
I thought that God was here—here in this
room

And that He kissed me—oh, so tenderly,
And smiled upon me, while you prayed for me.
It was a beauteous smile. I think the years
Of all my life will be more pure and true
Because of that sweet, sacred memory.
The room seemed filled with glory for a time ;
Did you not see it, mother, while you knelt ?
Now it has gone, I wish it might have stayed :
It was not like that olden glory bright
We’re told of in the holy Book of Law,
From which men hid their faces as in fear—
It was as bright and beautiful, and yet
I did not feel afraid ; a gentle peace
And perfect safety seemed its elements ;
And I am stronger now, I feel just here,
The glad assurance that I shall be well
And strong again ere long.”

The mother smiled :

“ That was a pretty dream, my precious one,
And I have prayed for you. I asked that God

Would send His Holy Prophet unto us—
The Rabbi Jesus—He who heals the sick,
And makes the blind to see, the lame to walk,
And all the sad ones to rejoice again.

You know we heard how, when He came to
Nain,

He raised the widow's son to life again,
E'en though he were already dead,
And now I feel that God has heard my prayer.

And soon

I hope to see this wondrous Son of Man
(For so He called Himself, and surely He
Is truest, noblest man the world has seen),
Or, it is said by some, His power is such
That distance is no hindrance to His word—
That He can heal whom He sees not. And so,
Perhaps if He could know, He'd speak the
word

As when He healed the brave centurion's slave,
And you would be restored, even as he.
Yes, I have prayed, and now I will keep
watch

For Him to come, or for some messenger
By whom we may send word and make our
want

Known to the One who never yet refused

A prayer of humble faith. But rest you now
 And sleep, my boy! I feel my prayer was
 heard
 And God will answer as He seeth best."

The boy sank back to rest, and closed his eyes
 In sweet content. Ah, happy child, to know
 A mother's faith and love upholding him!
 And low again the mother bent her head
 In sweet communion with the unseen God.

Out in the night once more the hastening feet
 Of Jesus took their lonely way, still on
 Toward Galilee.

 Above, the beauteous stars
 Kept watch, and silence reigned o'er all the
 earth.

It was the hour when souls attuned to Heaven
 Hold converse high with Heaven's holy King.
 What, then, to Jesus, holy Son of Man,
 And no less Son of God, Master of Life,
 And Victor over Death, the Well-Beloved
 In whom the Father's heart was pleased to
 rest,
 Who oft had passed long nights on mountain-
 tops

Or in the desert plain, in prayer to Him—
What, then, to *Him*, must be this holy hour?

But now the voice of earthly grief and woe
(Oh, how it follows all mankind, since sin
Has marred the perfect image of Himself
That God first made in clay!) fell on His ear,
And smote His tender heart with instant pain—
Pain such as common mortals never know:
The pain of Love when the beloved one
Endures some torturing grief; the pain of
 Hope
When long, so long deferred, the heart is sick;
The pain of perfect, God-like purity
In presence of dark sin; the pain which brought
The Christ from Heaven to earth, Himself to
 find
In pain we cannot fathom, cure for pain.

It was a pauper's hut by which He paused,
And from within there came the sound of
 moans
As one in hunger cried aloud for bread.

Will Jesus, Son of God, Prince of high Heaven,
On special errand bent—will He now stop

And turn His thoughts from that communion
 sweet
 Which had engrossed His soul, for beggar's
 groan ?

Yea, even so. One moment stands He there
 To listen to that piteous cry for food,
 And then, with walking staff, He reaches up
 Among the cragged rocks above the path
 On which He walked, and, touching one, it
 came
 Rolling and thundering down—a great, huge
 stone
 Until it blocked the way beyond the door.

It seemed a strange, unlikely thing to do,
 And not at all connected with the prayer
 That it was meant to answer. Yet we know
 His love can see beyond our present view
 And so can trust Him that the way He takes
 Is better than the one that we would choose
 If choice were ours.

If choice were ours ? 'Tis well
 It is not ! We who see such *little* way
 Upon life's journey (and e'en that through
 tears

Or smiles, or frowns, or loves, which blind our
eyes)
Could never know to choose the best for us.
We thank Thee, Lord, that Thou dost choose
for us ;
We thank Thee that the choice is not our own !

The midnight hour drew near. The Traveller
Still hastened on, till Nain was almost reached.
Then, on the silent air was borne to Him
The piteous bleating of a straying lamb :
Poor, foolish lamb ! a silly wanderer
That might have known the shepherd's tender-
est care,
Had it but been content to heed His voice,
Instead of seeking in forbidden fields
For pastures green which only *seemeth* good.

From far up 'mong the rocks of the steep hill
Which bordered on that lonely path the cry
Fell upon ears of pity infinite,
And Jesus, Saviour of the world, the King
Immanuel, stood still to hear. Again
That piteous bleating sounded forth, as now
The earth seemed hushed to listen. Then he
turned

And swiftly clambered up the dang'rous cliffs
 Till He could overlook the mountain-path
 He saw the wanderer, shivering and alone
 Caught near the edge of a dark precipice
 In briar bush that, while it seemed a bond
 Of cruel 'prisonment, yet safely kept
 The little foolish lamb from certain death.

(Think you not, friend, that you and I, to-day
 Are sometimes held by that which seems a
 bond

Of wrong or suffering, in love as kind
 As that which in this strange disguise we see
 Protecting it from dangers all unknown?)
 A look of quick compassion overspread
 The Saviour's face, and in His gentle eye
 A pearly tear-drop glistened, and He said
 In voice of love which only heart divine
 Could know or understand:

*

“*Poor little lamb!*

Poor, wandering, shivering, foolish little lamb!
Thou hast strayed far, and suffered much, but
now

I've heard thy pitcous cries, and help shall
come!

Wait, little lamb, until the morning's dawn-

*I will send help and rescue to thee then.
Poor, foolish lamb!—yet one My Father made,
And everything He loved must have My care
And that of My disciples. Wait, poor lamb!"*

Close to the spot, between the craggy rocks
Which jutted just above His sacred head
There grew a large Azalia tree, whose bud
Now bursting from its winter-fetters, stood,
Perpetual mystery, perpetual sign
Of life through death—God's resurrection love
Written in lines infallible and clear
O'er all the page of Nature—God's first book :
Let him who will, but read and understand.

Then, He who held within Himself the power
Of life, full, sweet and free, Jesus, the Christ,
Embodiment of God's own thought of all
That is most pure and true and beautiful
In human life, (for whom all lesser life
Was made, symbol, and servant for his good)
Put forth His hand, and touched the budding
tree
And straight it owned His power, and forthwith
sprang
Into full, perfect blossom, while the air

Of night grew heavy with the rich perfume
Flung out from petals strangely beauteous.

Then turning with swift skill, which no mis-
step

Or blunder made, He took His noiseless way,
Among the rocks and crags and tangled briars,
Down to the path which He but late forsook,
And onward went, passing with easy grace
And an untiring swiftness on His way.

It was toward' Nazareth that now He turned,
While memories of other days possessed
That high, sweet soul.

Not less He loved, but more
Than other men can love the scenes of home ;
Not less His heart was stirred, but more than
yours

Or mine could be, as He revisited,
Now in the solemn hush of night, the old
Familiar places He had known of yore.

Here He had played in boyhood's happy
hours,

And in the glee of childish innocence
His heart, unburdened by a care or sin,

Not realizing yet that heavy load
That rested on the world—that load that since
Had crushed and broken Him—had laughed
and sung,
As only children ever laugh and sing,
Because they know not of this old world's
pain.

There was the synagogue where He had learned
The word of love from out His Father's Book
(Himself the Living Word from God to man),
Revealed in Law and Prophecy and Psalm,
Though many failed to see, or failed to heed
Its meaning—clear to Him who sought to know
And with a perfect heart to do God's will—
Yet blotted o'er by man's obscuring creeds,
Till it were easier to err than not.
And here, where, as a Boy, He daily learned
The law from out their sacred scrolls, attent
With boyish interest in the scenes of school,
Full of the joy and innocence of youth,
Yet sharing not its sin; here they refused
To hear His voice, or to believe on Him.*
Because half knowledge—Satan's deadliest
lie—

*Mark vi. 3.

Had blinded them until they would not see
 Heaven's Messenger in humble, human guise.

Here was the shop where through the weary
 years

He'd earned His daily bread as Carpenter—
 Here worked with plane and saw and hammer's
 stroke,

Honoring God by simply making smooth,
 And true, and firm, and right, the work in
 hand ;

(For *how* we do it, and not *what* we do

Is made the basis of God's reckoning).

While, as He worked, He pondered in His
 heart

The mystery of His "Father's business,"
 Which He must be about throughout His
 life *—

As much in preparation, here alone,
 As in the day of manifested power,
 When Nature owned His sway, Disease and
 Death

Obeded His word, and Heaven itself approved !

What of those silent years? Had He not looked

* Luke ii. 49.

Out on the mars of sin, and longed to make
The image whole again? Had not the days
Seemed long that He must wait, till God's full
time?

Had not His soul within Him stirred to know,
And yet to learn increasingly, that all
Like sheep had gone astray, seeking their own
And not the shepherd's care—seeing their loss
And hopeless 'wilderment, knowing Himself
The Sent of God to call them to the fold
Yet "waiting on the Lord" to learn His will?

O soul, with purpose high, doth sometimes
feel

Impelled to some great work for the lost world,
Yet held by providence to wait God's time?
Remember thou Christ's silent years! And
learn

From Him the force of power gained from
God

Alone, before the hour for action comes.

Wait on the Lord. Wait patiently, yet stand
Ready for action when the time is full!

And now the Christ had reached the narrow
street

Which led up to the humble cottage home,

Where He had knelt beside His mother's knee
 And lisped His earliest prayer ; where He had
 played

With brothers and with sisters 'round the door ;
 Where, as He grew to man's estate, He loved,
 And wept, and prayed, and waxed strong in
 the power

Of knowledge of His holy Father, God.
 O memories ! O surging memories,
 Which swept across Him now, as once again
 He stood within the shadow of that home !

Above Him shone the same bright, distant
 stars,

About Him each familiar spot was known ;
 The very perfume from the early flowers
 Seemed like the greeting of an olden friend ;
 But oh ! the changes that had come since last
 He had beheld this scene !

His work was done—
 The Father's work which He had come to do
 On earth was finished now.* It mattered not
 (Save unto them) whether men scoffed or heard,
 The tragedy of His safe life was o'er :

* John xvii. 4 ; xix. 30.

Only the Father's House in Heaven remained,
And that He soon would gain. "A little
while" *

And men should see Him not with earthly
eyes.

But from His home above, with cords of love
So strong and true, He would draw unto Him †
All that the Father gave, with not one lost. ‡

About the old familiar place He walked,
Unseen and silent in the solemn night,
Till, coming to the store-house for the grain,
He tore a slender board from off its side,
And forthwith poured a flood of golden corn!

One moment still He stood to watch, and then,
Leaving these scenes of early earthly home
His journey He resumed, still toward the north.
The hour was late; but as He travelled on,
Came memories of that sweet wedding feast
At Cana, where He had been honored Guest,
And where He first His wondrous power dis-
played,

More to confirm the faith of those who late
Had left their homes to follow (only) Him

* John xiii. 33.

† John xii. 32.

‡ John xvii. 12.

As His disciples on the way of life,
 Than e'en to do an act so kind for those
 Whose Guest He was—though that His gener-
 ous heart

Prompted at once—and by a single word
 He made of water, pure, rich, luscious wine,
 Till all the many guests were well supplied.*

'Twas three long years since then,
 And much was crowded in His busy life,
 So full of cares for souls of suffering men ;
 So full of deeds of charity and love ;
 So full of pain that hearts were dull to heed
 The lessons He had come to teach from God.

But Jesus never yet forgot a friend—
 He did not then—He does not now forget— →
 And though the hour was late, He turned
 aside

From road the nearest up to Galilee,
 And came again to Cana, there to find
 The home which once had bidden Him, its
 Guest.

Swiftly He took His way until He stood
 Beside the cottage door. Within He saw

* John ii. 1, 11.

A light. Was some one ill that they should
keep

The candle burning till the wee, small hours
Of waning night were here?

With quiet tread

He stepped within the room, but saw no couch
Of suffering there. Instead, in cradle near,
A little child lay sleeping peacefully,
Its tiny up-turned face, unvexed by care,
Was wreathed in smiles, as if its baby dreams
Had been of heavenly visitants, and love
Had been the burden of their message sweet.

Dear little face! If thou couldst keep that
smile!

If thou couldst always hear such messages!
We need such hearts of innocence to draw
Earth nearer Heaven—for up to that pearl gate
A little child oft leads a wandering one.

A smile of radiant beauty lit the face
Of Jesus, as He looked upon that brow,
So sweetly innocent, so full of trust;
And then a strange, unfathomable look
Shone for a moment in His gentle eye,
And a deep sigh that seemed almost a groan

Upheaved His bosom in tumultuous thought.
 For straight there rose before His holy mind
 A vision of the possibilities
 Wrapped up within that tiny sleeping soul!
 To what strange height of blissful, Godlike
 love
 It might soar upward! What mysterious
 depths
 Of woe and suffering—sin's awful doom—
 Yawned in dark ambush, ready to ensnare
 Unthinking victims to their endless death!
 Who, but the One whose calm all-seeing eye
 Had searched the beauty of God's holy hill
 And pierced the gloom of everlasting night;
 Whose soul had known the bliss of Sonship's
 tie,
 And had been crushed, heart-broken 'neath the
 weight
 Of all the world's imputed sin on Him
 Who knew no sin, till e'en the Father's face
 Had been withdrawn;—Who but the One who
 came
Because He knew the height of heavenly love
 And depth of woe to which a soul can sink,
 Could look with such commingled hope and
 fear

On all the possibilities of life
Wrapped in a tiny babe? And who of us
Could fathom to its depths the look with which
He bent above that cradled sleeper there?
But straight He turned from it, to those in
want
Of His more active sympathy and help:
As He would have us, His disciples, turn
From holiest reverie to deeds of love.

There by the candle's glow, He saw those
two—
Husband and wife, whose happiness that day
Three years ago could not have guessed this
hour.
In low, sad tones they talked, while sometimes
tears
Welled from her eyes, and fell unheeded down
Over the cheek which care rather than age
Had robbed of its fair grace of girlhood's
bloom.

"Our lot seems very hard. I cannot see
Why we, who've ever striven to do right,
And keep the law of God, should now be left
To suffer as we do! There's just one sheep

Remaining of the flocks that once were ours.
To-morrow we will kill, and eat—and then—
When that is gone—there's nothing left for us,
And for our babe, but hunger, want and death!"

"Nay, wife, speak not such words. I know
not why

Our lot is thus, but surely God knows all;
And He has promised, if we trust in Him
And do the good we can, we shall be fed,
And I believe it, wife. We both have tried
With earnest hearts and true to do His will.
Now let us comfort take unto our souls:
Sufficient to the day the evils are,
And I believe, sufficient, too, the good.
We've prayed to Him. I feel that He has
heard

And soon will answer in His own best way.
Cheer up, good wife! God's grace has never
failed;

Though He may lead us where the way is dark,
He will not quite forsake, but He will stand
Close by us in the shadow, holding us
By the right hand, as safe as if He led
Through light. Cheer up! I feel that help is
near."

The mother tried her best to look content—
Not for herself she grieved: that she could
bear

But it was hard to look upon her child
And know that to its tender life must come
The pinching want of poverty. Could she
But shield it she would gladly suffer twice;
But listening to her husband's cheering words
She smiled e'en through her tears, and softly
said:

"Ah, if the Rabbi Jesus were but here!—
He who our wedding-feast supplied with wine—
I know that He would find (or make) a way
To help us in our sorrow. He was kind
To all the poor, and help and strength and
hope
Seemed in the very atmosphere He breathed—
I would that He were with us once again!"

"But I have heard," the husband quick
replied,

"This very day strange things concerning
Him:

'Tis said by those returning from the feast
Just celebrated in Jerusalem

That He was there condemned by priest and
scribe

And by the Roman law sentenced to death
As malefactor bold, and one who stirred
Sedition 'mong the people of our race—
Forbidding Cæsar's right to tribute paid,
And holding that Himself was Israel's King."

He paused in thought—not that his tale was
done,

But that his words so ill-befitted Him
Of whom he spoke—the gentle loving Man
Who, day by day, had trod their valleys o'er
Seeking to do men good; forgetting self
In works and words for them; asking no
power

Earth could bestow; seeking no selfish gain;
Even refusing to be crowned a king,
When many would have taken Him by force
And made Him such against His holy will,—
That all His soul was stirred with a strange
thrill

Which kept Him silent for a little space.

Then eagerly his wife took up his words:
"Dost say this of the Rabbi Jesus? *He*

A malefactor proved? *He* stirring up
Seditious? *He* false to any man? *He*
Sentenced by law to death for being King?
Nay! but it cannot be! Thy words are wild!
He seemed not such to me—*He is not such!*
Else could I not have stood close by His side,
And touched His hand, and looked into His
face,

(’Twas the divinest face I ever saw,
And made one think of Heaven and heavenly
joys)

And listened to His words of tenderest Love
And Hope and Truth and Justice unto all,
And not have known Him false!

“For I can feel

Here in my heart the presence of untruth
Ere yet a word is said. An influence
More subtle than the subtlest sense of earth
(’Tis not of earth—it is a relic rare
Of that sweet image when Jehovah said:
‘Let us make Man after our likeness true’)
Speaks to the heart of her who lives near
Heaven

And oft communes with God, giving her
power

Thus to discern the good, the high, the true—

Or to recoil, in knowledge which asks not
 For proof or reason, from a life impure !
 Therefore I say, thy words are wild. 'Tis not
 Within the range of possibility
 That that true Man—the Rabbi Jesus—be
 The malefactor that thou paintest Him !
 Who sayest it, saith false !

“ Yet I had hoped
 That God through Him had sent again His
 power
 Now to redeem us from the galling bonds
 That long have held us, though we be indeed
 His chosen people, nation of His love ! ”

“ But, listen, wife ! The strangest part of all
 I have not told thee yet ! They also say
 That three days after He was crucified,
 His grave was found by those who sought Him
 there
 To embalm His body for its final rest,
 Open and empty, with the grave-clothes laid
 In folded order where He late had been.
 Some think His body had been stolen thence
 By His disciples who had come at night—
 Though there was seal and watch to guard the
 place.”

“If that were so, 'tis strange they left the clothes—

And such neat order scarce betokens haste,
E'en if they dared to brave a Roman watch ! ”
She interrupted with her woman's thought.

“But some declare that He was raised, alive,
By the same power through which He others
raised,

And that He *did* raise others we well know,
For we ourselves have seen the widow's son
Who dwelt at Nain,* and know that story true
Which says that he was dead, yet lives again.
Nor can we doubt the truth of those who say
That one Jairus † had a daughter fair
Given back to life and love and home again,
Though she were dead and friends were mourn-
ing her.

And, stranger yet, (I heard but yesterday
This news from those who came back from the
feast),

A man who had been four days dead, ‡ He raised
By but a single word. 'Twas one He loved—
But He was absent when they buried him.
Yet when He came, He asked to see the grave,

* Luke vii. 11.

† Mark v. 22.

‡ John xi. 39, 44.

And bade them roll away the sealing stone.
 At first they say He wept. Then looking up
 Even through tears, He prayed. Then gave
 command
 'Come forth!' And straightway he who had
 been dead
 Heard that sweet voice, and answering it,
 arose,
 Restored and well!

Then were the populace
 Divided in their thought; for some believed
 That He was very Christ, the Sent of God.
 But others said, Not so, and from that hour
 Sought how they might betray Him to His
 death.
 And so, to-day, some say that He was raised
 By that same power which showed forth in His
 life
 Healing disease, and conquering death itself.

"And truly, there seems proof of this; for
 those
 Whose word can scarce be doubted, testify
 To having seen Him in the flesh since then.
 And there are those who even yet have hope

That now He will restore to Israel
The kingdom in its olden power and pride.

"I have an awesome feeling that the Man
Was all, and more than all He claimed—a
King,
But not of earth—perhaps the Christ of God!
The very air seems full of mystery.
I fear our nation has done wrong in this,
And that this sin will yet be visited
Upon our heads—I know not how or when."

"'Tis very strange! I would we knew the
truth!

My heart is ready now to own Him King,
And from your words as well as from my
heart

I am assured that He was more than man!
I would that He were here this very night:
He was so kind that naught seemed small to
Him.

And such His power and such His love to men
That He would pause 'midst all these move-
ments great

To find a remedy for just our wants—
For they are life to us! I would we knew

What is the truth!" she said with gentle sigh.
Then Jesus turned from them, and quickly
 passed
Out through the bolted door into the night.

Beside the threshold stood a boiling pot
Such as was used to try the fat of lambs.
Quickly He raised His staff, and thrust it
 through,
Piercing its iron bottom with a hole
So round and smooth one scarce would notice
 it—
Then turned, and quickly vanished in the dark.

O'er hill and vale He crossed, until He came
Just to the entrance of a dangerous pass.
A tree which grew beside the road, He grasped
And plucked it up as if it were a twig,
And planted firmly in the trodden path!

He turned abruptly from the thoroughfare—
The old Arbella Road which straightest led
On to the city of Capernaum—
And took His silent way over the hill
And, though the path was rough and hard to
 climb

He rested not till from its summit, green
With Spring-time's freshening grace, He turned
His face

Straight toward the sweet blue sea of Galilee
Just as the sun, proud ruler of the day,
Sent forth his brightening marshals of the dawn
In steady forward march of his advance,
To warn the world that night-watch now was
o'er,
And waken it to life and light again.

How like the sea is man ! When the winds
blow

And storms disturb its bosom, and the waves
Roll boisterously across its troubled face,
We see the water—nothing more than this.
But when it lies, calmly and quietly
Beneath the silent heavens, its surface still,
Unmoved by wind or storm, we see, 'tis true,
But scarcely heed itself, for mirrored clear
In its calm surface is the arch above—
The sun, or moon and stars, and each fair cloud
Reflected beautifully.

So with the heart :
When 'tis disturbed by doubts, and fears, and
cares,

And the annoyances and storms of earth,
We see itself in its humanity,
Troubled and restless, like the ceaseless wave;
But when it lies at rest beneath the smile
Of heaven—rest learned of Christ—rest undisturbed.

And peace, because the mind is fixed on God—
'Tis then it can reflect in beauty clear
The light Christ brought down from the throne
above.

It is in such a soul that we can see
Not the poor, restless tossings of humanity
But the divinity of God's impress
Upon the quiet heart that trusts in Him.

O beautiful sea! O glorious morning hour!
The Saviour's hastening feet stayed at the
sight
That gently broke upon His vision then:

The lake, in peaceful calmness, lay imperled
By dawning light within its setting rare
Of sandy, wave-washed beach, and emerald hills
Just outlined 'gainst the morning's reddening
sky,
And once again the mem'ries crowd His heart!

How much of *life*, with all that living meant
To such an One, had here been freely given
To those who understood it not, nor sought
To know it in its highest Godlike sense ;
But, for the most part were content with such
Of earthly good as they could make accord
With their traditions and their narrow views
Of favor unto Israel alone !

Yet some there were who loved Him—some
 who sought
To know and do His will. And memory
Recalled them now, as He stood still and
 watched
The growing brightness of the morn's sweet
 dawn.

Nearest to Him lay Magdala, the town
Which once had shelter proved when sorely
 pressed
By those who sought for earthly benefits,*
Yet understood not all the joy and life
That He had come to bring to hungry men :
The native town of her who much forgiven
Loved much, and ministered with gratitude

* Matt. xv. 39.

Which thought no labor hardship if for Him.*
 Just northward, in that miniature bay,
 Was where he taught the people from a boat †
 Which rode upon the waves, the while they sat
 Tier upon tier, upon the rising shore,
 Nor wearied of the gracious words that fell
 From lips that spake as never man before ;
 And then ‡ departing " as he He was," for rest
 He lay upon the boatman's pillow there
 And slept, after that day of weary toil,
 Until the storm arose upon the sea,
 And He was wakened half reproachfully
 To speak the billows into quietness,
 And calm the troubled fears of timid hearts
 Who had not learned how *safely* we are with
Him !

'Twas in that city yonder that He lived
 As one " at home " § through months of weary
 toil :

There had He healed the multitude of those

* Luke viii. 23. The phraseology here used is not intended to confirm the old tradition that the nameless woman who anointed the feet of Jesus in the house of Simon the Pharisee (Luke vii. 36-50) is identical with Mary of Magdala (Luke viii. 2), for which the author finds no sufficient foundation. It is believed, however, that the language applied to one (vii. 47) can be equally applied to the other (viii. 2).

† Mark iv. 1. ‡ Mark iv. 35-41. § Mark ii. 1, Revised Version. Marginal rendering.

Who came from far and near* (or who were
brought,
Too ill to come themselves)—the blind, the
lame,
The halt, the palsied ones, who could but look
Their prayers, even the lepers, from whose
touch
He drew not back, since He Himself could
cleanse
The deeper stain of sin, at which the law
But hinted when it said “*Unclean! Unclean!*”†
Faith made them clean! And gladly He
restored
The outcasts to the joys of home and love.

Here was the “desert place” to which He bade
His followers come and “rest a while.”‡ ’Twas
when
They had returned from preaching in the towns
And villages of Galilee; and now,
Elate with their success, yet wearied sore
From labor that had called for best of heart
And head and nerve and manly strength; and
grieved,

* Mark i. 32-34; ii. 3, etc.; vi. 55, 56. † Lev. xiii. 3, etc.

‡ Mark vi. 31., and connection.

Hurt with an inward pain, at news they bore
 Of John's beheading ; while the passing throng
 Disturbed and interrupted them, He said :
 "Come ye yourselves apart and rest awhile."
 And as they rested, telling Him their griefs
 And triumphs and perplexities. He taught
 Their hearts new lessons of His grace, as
 still
 He teaches those who learn the busy cares
 That oft perplex, and "rest awhile" with Him.

Yonder, near where the upper Jordan flows
 Into the widening lake, upon that slope
 Of grassy verdure there, had been the scene
 Of loaves and fishes quickly multiplied.*
 Until the gathered throng—five thousand
 men,
 Beside the women and the children too—
 Had eaten all they would, and still had left
 Abundance for a future need.

And then,†
 Mistaking means for end, looking at deeds,
 Not love that prompted them, thinking of self
 And selfish gain, uncomprehending yet

* Mark vi. 35-44.

† John vi. 15.

And blind while thinking most they saw, and
knew,
They said with eager boldness each to each :
“ Surely this is that Prophet that should come,
Let us now take Him, if it be by force
And make Him King, to wield for us this
power.”

How little yet they knew His mission high !
How little yet we guess its highest love,
And all the glory He will yet reveal
To those who love His name and live for Him !

And there, beyond, uprose the mountain steep
Where He had gone to pray alone with God.*
Alone with one we love, and who loves us ;
No curious eye to look upon our joy.
ALONE ! no uncongenial presence near
To mar the satisfaction of the hearts
That rest in perfect confidence and love.
There is no need of faltering lips to tell
The dear, sweet secret of our lives, for then
The subtler language of the heart may speak
In soft, mute glance, more eloquent than
words,

* Matt. xiv. 23.

Or gentle pressure of a hand whose touch
 Recalls a hundred tender memories,
 Or in the unspoken sympathy of thought
 Which flies, swift and untrammelled to the
 heart,
 And so conveys a joy too deep for words,
 And which can only be interpreted
 By love as pure and holy as its own.

'Tis by such love that we are lifted near
 To the great heart of Him whose Life *is* Love.
 Oh, earth may hold much, much of joy for us,
 In the sweet converse of the friends we meet
 And hail with gladness in the social hall;
 And dearly do we prize the hour when 'round
 The hearthstone we can gather at the close
 Of the day's duties; but more sacred still
 Is that sweet moment which we spend alone
 With the dear, faithful heart of one we love
 And rest upon, as on our truer self!

Alone with God! My soul, attend this
 thought:
 ALONE WITH GOD! The careless world shut
 out,
 And the freed soul shut in with God, alone.

As with a Father, Friend, Creator, Lord,
No jarring thought dares to intrude its power;
No shadow of the world, but there, alone—
The soul that loves, and God who loves the
soul—

Enter the closet of communion sweet.
By that mysterious power which earthly love
Keeps from the God-life once in Eden given,
By which we know while yet unheralded
The presence of some loved one—by that
power

Intensified, uplifted, purified,
Freed from all dross of earthly contact, now
With solemn joy we enter consciously
Into the sacred presence of our God,
In whom alone are met and satisfied
The higher, nobler cravings of the soul
Which, breathed from God, must rise to Him
again.

Yet never can we touch and feel the thrill
Of His Almighty Presence in the soul
Lifting our lives above the common dust,
Striking new strings upon the harp of love
Whose chords vibrate in thrilling harmony,
Responsive to the Master hand divine,
Until we have withdrawn from earthly scenes—

Leaving its cares, and e'en its sweetest loves—
 Forgetting self—forgetting all save this:
I am alone with God! Alone with Him
 Whom my soul loves! Here let me rest a
 while
 In breathing the sweet strength His love can
 give
 In the communion only known to those
 Who go apart and talk ALONE WITH GOD!

If it be ours to know this sacred bliss
 Of secret prayer, who by adoption's tie
 Are made the sons of God, what, then, to Him,
 THE SON, the Well-Beloved, the Holy One
 In whom He was well pleased, had been this
 hour
 Of sweet communion with His Father there
 In silence on the mountain-top alone?

Late grew the night watch,* till the wind and
 cold
 Beat 'round Him piteously. But not for self
 Did He forsake that mountain trysting-place:
 Not till He saw through storm and darkness
 drear

* Mark. vi. 48.

The need of His disciples, as they toiled
In rowing, yet were like to sink. 'Twas then
He walked upon the boisterous waves to them,
And calmed the storm, and bade them not to
fear,
And proved to them His royal Kingship's
power
Extending over all created things,
Reaching through Life, past Death itself, to
Heaven. *

And there, across the lake, sharply outlined
Against the morning sky, He could discern
The country of the Gadarenes, † whose men
Preferred their swine to Him, and bade Him,
“Go,
Depart from out their shores!” And He had
gone,
Yet, with kind mercy, even to His foes,
He bade the one whom He had healed, remain
And tell the story of a Saviour's power.

How little was He known or understood
By those—His own—whom He had come to
save!

* Matt. xiv. 33.

† Luke viii. 26, 40.

How sadly must His gentle breast have
throbb'd

As He looked on the hurts He would have
healed,

The wrongs He would have righted, and the
sins

He would have fain forgiven, and brought
again

The smile of God into their weary lives!

"But they would not" *—"His own received
Him not." †

He was an Outcast from this sinful world
Which He had come to save!—Outcast by
men,

But, though unrecognized, uncrowned, a KING
Before whom every knee on earth shall bow ‡
In sweet obedience, or in servile fear, •

And every tongue confess that He is King.

Thus, as He stood in early morning dawn,
After the hours of lonely travelling,
Swifter than words can tell recurred the scenes
Which other days had witnessed by the Lake;
And for a little space He lingered there,

* Matt. xxiii. 37.

‡ Rom. xiv. 11.

† John 1, 11.

Grieved for their loss, yet knowing well that
God

Who rules and overrules, makes e'en the wrath
Of rebel man to praise His holy name. *

And then He took His way down to the shore
Whose sands so oft His sacred feet had trod.

There, tossing on the sea He saw a boat—
A fisher's boat, o'erturned and ownerless.
Out on the unyielding waves He quickly
walked,

And drew it to the shore, and anchored it.

Then, wandering on the beach, He found an
oar

And then another, and another still,
And yet a fourth, tossed up by restless waves.
Returning to the boat He left them there ;
And as the sun burst o'er the eastern hills
Flooding the valley with its radiant light,
Kissing each ripple into molten gold,
Changing each dewdrop to a diamond fair
And decking all the earth in beauty new
With every morn's return of welcoming day,
The Saviour's noiseless footsteps turned aside

* Psa. lxxvi. 10.

Seeking the well-known mountain trysting
place,

Where oft He had retired, to pray alone
And spend this day in holy speech with God.

Thus had He gone before them all the way,
Which they must take to follow His command.

PART II.

PART II.

ON that same morn that Jesus reached the
 sea,
After His night of travel all the way
Which led up from Jerusalem, the home
Of John, disciple well-beloved and true,
Was early made astir by busy men
Preparing for their journey they had planned
To Galilee, where soon they hoped to meet
The Master whom they loved

Little they knew
That He had stood, invisible to them,
Within these very walls but yester eve,
And listened to their plans, and heard them
 tell
Of all their love to Him, and all their hope.

'Tis often so to-day. We think of Christ
 As in some far-off land of blissful rest,
 When He is close beside us, hearing all
 We even think ; and planning for our good ;
 Going the way before us on the road
 Of life ; knowing, before we know ourselves,
 The path that we will take, and all the scenes
 Which lie between to-day and that glad time
 When we shall meet Him on the further shore.
 " He is not far from any one of us,
 And we shall find Him if we seek for Him." *
 Nay more, this is His precious word :
 " In Him that hath my words and keepeth them
 I will abide, and though the world sees not.
 He sees, because He lives, and I will come
 And manifest myself to Him in love." †

'Tis full a two days' journey to the sea
 As these must travel o'er the weary way
 (For not to them is given th' untiring speed
 With which their Master glided o'er the path,
 His feet scarce touching it, save where He
 willed)
 And so they start betimes, and well supplied

* Acts xvii. 27.

† John xiv. 18-23.

With meal, and fish, and oil, and staves, and
cloaks,

For all the way's necessities.

And thus

We see this company of burdened men
Set forth at solemn hour of morn's gray dawn
Along the narrow streets, where busy life
Was scarcely yet astir.

Silent they walked

As each familiar form brought to their minds
The strange contrasting scenes—one day of
praise

And loud hosannas and of waving palms
As from a thousand throats arose the cry:
"Blessed is He that cometh in the name
Of Israel's God! All praise to David's Son!
Hosannah in the highest! In Heaven peace
And glory evermore! Blessed be the King!"*

And then, when five short days had passed,
these streets

Were filled again, but now the cry arose,
"We have no king but Cæsar! If thou let
This man to go thou art not Cæsar's friend!"†
And Pilate had delivered Him to them

Luke xix. 38, and paraletta

† John xix. 12, 15.

To do with Him according to their will.
 And these, His followers—what could they do
 Against that raging insurrectious mob?
 So 'twas not strange that they walked silently
 Along these old familiar streets to-day,
 Saluting none until the gate was reached.

Then, down the valley's slope, on toward the
 plain
 Their hastening footsteps stay not on the
 way,
 As if escaped from some oppressing power—
 That subtle influence, like an atmosphere
 Which tells of love or hate in those about—

(And it was hate within those city walls
 Hatred for Christ and all his followers)
 Felt in the heart, and yet scarce recognized
 Save now in its withdrawal.

Free from this,
 And safely past the scenes whose presence
 brought
 Afresh the memories of their Master's cross,
 They strode along in early morning dawn,
 And took in full, sweet breaths of God's pure
 air,

The while their souls were lifted to commune
With Him, as well befitted time and place.
Did John, who had drunk deeply at Love’s
fount,*

And fair Nathanael, who was given to thought
And meditation upon holy themes,†
Then draw together by a common bond,
And question of these mysteries of God?
What meant this dawning after hours of night?

What meant this spring-time after winter’s
death?

Were they not Nature’s teaching to the soul
Telling the truth the Christ had now revealed
Of resurrection power—life after death—
Nay, more than that—of life *because* of death?
We see it now; but did they see it then?

Down in the plain they saw a field of grain,
Yellow and hard and ripe before its time,
And as they looked upon a sight so strange,
And marvelled much, the owner called to them:

“Stay travellers, stay! My field of waving
grain,
Which yesterday stood green and nodding here,

* John’s entire writings.

† John 1, 47-50.

Has ripened suddenly within a night,
And I must haste to harvest it to-day.
Come now, I pray, and help me gather it
Into my barns. The work is pressing sore,
And I will pay large wages for thy toil!"

But the disciples turned not from their course.
"We cannot tarry now," they said, "We go
On errand so important and so sweet
That double wages have no charm for us.
But if we find a laborer free to serve
We will remember thee, and send him hence."

Then, on they strode, till the ascending sun,
Made them to long for shelter and for rest,
And water pure, where they might slake their
 thirst

And cool their brows, and wash their dusty
 feet

In crystal spring—one of God's sweetest gifts
Which He bestows so freely that we take
Its bounty from His hand, but seldom pause
To thank Him for the priceless boon, which
 love,

With foresight of our human wants, provides.
Seldom we pause even to think how much

We owe to it, until we feel its need
As these did now, though bravely struggling
on.

Near where the path branched off to Emmaus
They found a fountain clear, close to a rock
Within whose shade welled up the crystal tide
Whose onward flow, first as a tiny stream.
Cross which a child could step with perfect
ease,
Increased until a dancing, babbling brook
Refreshed and gladdened all the weary land.

"Here let us stop a while and rest!" they cried;
And letting down their burdens, each one
sought
After his own device, refreshment there.

James, stooping down to drink, lifted the cool
Sweet limpid water to his thirsty lips
In hand-made cup, with brimming rim o'er-
run
And, as he lingered still, to dash the spray
Of grateful cleansing to his dusty brow,
And watch the sunlight turn each falling drop
Into a gem, he saw close to his knee,

Half covered from his sight among the grass
 And rustling leaves, a shining disk of gold!
 "See what I've found!" he cried. "Some
 traveller
 Has here sought rest before us, and has lost
 This golden coin!"

"Here is another one!" said John.
 Close by his side.

"And here are more—and more,"
 They, eager, cried, as search among the grass
 Revealed the hidden treasure lying there.

"Now we can cast aside our load of meal.
 And oil, and fish—these things which burden
 us,
 And make our journey slow and wearisome.
 For we have now the gold to pay our way!"
 Said the impetuous Peter, eagerly.

"Not so!" cried Andrew, as he laid a hand
 Upon his brother's arm. "Dost thou forget
 So soon, the lessons that our Master taught,
 Of frugal care and wise economy?
 Think of the fragments that we gathered up! *
 Those days His grace had multiplied the loaves
 And fishes till we had abundant store

* John vi. 12. Mark vi. 43; viii. 8.

For all who would partake. He is not pleased
With needless waste, when all about, are poor
And hungry ones who starve for want of bread.
We may not need this food ourselves, but who
Can tell where there may be a child of God
Whose want He now has given us the means
In His dear name to meet and satisfy?"

"Perhaps you're right! For I remember well
How He did say to us: 'Ye have received
Of me most freely—freely give in turn; '*
And at another time 'It is more bless'd
To give than to receive.' † And this: 'The
poor
Ye have with you at all times; Whensoe'er
Ye will, ye may do good to them.' ‡ Perhaps
He sent this gold to us that we may know
The blessedness of giving to His poor!"
Thus urged they took their burdens up again.
And hasted on their way up toward the north.

But not far had they travelled when they saw
Beside a cottage-door close to the road,
A man who seemed intent on binding fast
A broken tree. It was an apricot

* Matt. x. 8.

† Acts xx. 35.

‡ Mark xiv. 7.

Whose boughs, so lately full of promises
Of fruitful harvest, withered hung and dry,
Nor tried to lift their hopeless heads again.

"'Tis hard luck, strangers!" said the cottager,
As the disciples paused to lend a hand
And show how best to bind the wounded tree,
"I am alone and poor, and but last night
I prayed the God of Heaven to think on me
And send me toil wherewith to earn my bread,
And as I prayed I felt an holy peace
Steal in my heart, as if his messenger
Had whispered sweet assurance that my prayer
Was heard in Heaven, and would be granted
me.

And as I laid me down to quiet sleep
I thought to rise this morn, refreshed for toil
That He would send.

But *this* is what I find—

The only tree I owned, broken and bent,
And this year's fruit at least completely lost,
Now when I needed it the most of all!
Almost have I lost faith and hope in prayer;
For why should God deal thus with one who
serves

And fain would earn an honest livelihood?"

“Nay, say not so!” (’Twas John who cried in haste)

“Doubt not God’s mercy or His wisdom thus.
But know that what seems ill in His own time
May prove the greatest good—Nay, more, *must*
prove

If we are truly serving Him!

I would

Thou couldst have heard the words our Master
said

(He who is called—and *is*—the Son of God—
Though Rabbi Jesus was His earthly name),
Upon that last sad night before He went
From us. Never will we forget that night,
Or all the precious, holy words He spoke,
Though at the time we understood them
not, *

Nor do we understand them fully now;
But as we ponder them in loving hearts,
And talk them o’er, as one by one we call
To memory the things which mystified
And troubled us, because we did not know
All that was written, and should come to pass.
To-day we see the meaning clear of much †
Hid from us then because we had not faith

* John xii. 16.

† John xiv. 29.

To reach beyond our timid human sight ;
 But much is mystery still : only we know
 He spake in tender, loving tones to us
 (Who are His followers, though faithless oft—
 Not the defenders bold we should have been)
 And said : " Ask what ye will, if in My name,*
 And for My sake it shall be given you,
 And thus your joy shall be fulfilled in me.
 Therefore we know the Father heareth prayer
 And answereth for Jesus' holy sake,
 E'en though the good shall come to us in
 guise
 Which hides from us at first its mission true."

" Of *that* we are the living witnesses
 To-day!" Nathanael said. " For that same
 night
 Our Master said to us. ' I will not leave
 You comfortless.' † To that word our hearts
 clung
 With the tenacity of hopeless love ;
 But much He said to impress upon our minds
 Our coming grief, and warn us of His death,
 And bid us look beyond the grave and see
 That He would rise again (As He *has* now).

* John xiv. 14.

† John xiv. 18.

But this we heeded not, and when the power
Of Satan held his temporary sway,
We sat in dumb despair, and thought all lost.
We said: 'What did He mean?' For He *has*
left

Us comfortless! What comfort now for us
When He in whom we trusted to redeem
Our chosen nation, lieth cold in death
Within the hopeless grave?

And it was not
Until He, risen from the dead, revealed
Himself, and called to mind those words, that
we

Could realize the blessing He had wrought
In what to us seemed only hopeless loss.*
But now—His power proved—His Kingship
owned—

(By some—not yet by all—though it would
seem

All soon must own so wonderful a sign—
Greater indeed than that for which they asked),
We trust that now He will restore again
The kingdom unto Israel.† Indeed,
We go to meet Him now where He Him-
self

* Luke, xxiv. 45, 46.

† Acts i. 6.

Hath made appointment that we follow Him.
 Seest thou not how He can swiftly bring
 Good out of that which at the first seems ill?
 And that He may be answering our need.
 Better than we can ask, when yet we know
 Not what the answer is, or how 'tis good?"

"Why, yes," said James. "Thou seest that
 to-day—

Even this broken tree may answer be
 Unto thine earnest prayer of yester eve :
 'Twas but for that we paused upon our way,
 Although we haste up to the distant sea,
 As he hath told, to meet our risen Lord.
 But now that we have learned of thy sad
 plight

We can direct thee to a harvest field
 Where extra wages will be paid for work
 Such as ye seek.

"'Tis yonder—down the road
 Which leads from Emmaus up to the North
 Gate

Of the fair city of Jerusalem ;
 We passed a farmer there, whose rolling fields
 Of golden wheat had ripened suddenly,
 And he wants men to harvest it to-day.

It may be that the loving will of God
Directed us to thee, in this thine hour
Of need. He has more ways of answering
prayer
Than thou and I can fathom now, my friend."

"It may be so. Thy words seem just and
true.

God may be answering when we know it not.
I thank thee for thy help and for thy news
Of honest toil. I will arise and seek
The harvest field of early ripened grain."

And so the poor man found the work he
sought,
And the disciples hasted on their way
Up to the distant sea of Galilee.

The sun had well-nigh reached his zenith
height

As they were nearing Shechem, and his beams,
Burning as only Oriental suns can burn,
Fell on the shadeless path, and on their heads,
And seemed to close them in, as if escape
From his o'ercoming power there could not be.

Vainly they looked for shelter on their way :
 Half-blinded by the dazzling light ; with blood
 Leaping at fever-heat through tired brains
 And arms that ached beneath their weary load,
 They bravely struggled on, with many a prayer
 Sent up to Heaven's Throne from hearts
 devout
 For sheltered rest, or strength to battle on.

Then came a welcome sound—A woman's
 voice

Made tender by its love, was calling them.
 “Strangers!” she said. “Stay, weary travellers!
 Art seeking rest and shelter? Come this way;
 But tell me first—for this I haste to know—
 Is the great Prophet, Jesus, one of thee?
 For it is He I seek. Last night I prayed
 That God would send Him to my humble
 home

As once, in time agone, He came to Nain,
 That He might heal my child. For surely He
 Who spake the dead to life again, could now
 Restore at once my boy to joyous health,
 If He but spoke the word and looked on him.
 Therefore, since I have prayed, I've watched
 this path,

Hoping, expecting, soon to welcome Him.
Tell me, Is Jesus here?"

Then eagerly
She scanned each sun-browned face, though
pausing not
In leading them straight to her humble home,
So hid they scarcely would have found it there
But for her watch and guidance to the spot.

"The Rabbi Jesus? Hast thou then not
heard
All the strange things that late have come to
pass?"
They asked in solemn, awed bewilderment.

"'Strange things'? I have not heard of them.
For days
I've watched beside my boy, and know naught
else;
What has befallen Him? Tell me. I beg;
Is my prayer vain? Can He not come to me,
With that sweet healing power that once was
His."

"'Tis a sad story—scarcely it seems true
Even to us who've watched it day by day,

But we will tell it thee, that thou mayest
know

How that the leaders of our nation came
Where He was wont to pray, and seizing Him,
Tried Him³ in their Sanhedrim court, and
found

Him guilty of blasphemous words, and deeds
Destructive to the law (or so they said).
Then straight they hurried Him to Pilate's
hall,

And though three times the Procurator said :
' I find no fault at all in Him,' * and tried
In feeble fashion to release Him thus,
The mob, persuaded by their leaders' wills
And frenzied by excitement till they knew
Scarce what they asked, † called loudly for
His death. ‡

And he—the servile Roman Governor—
Afraid of them, afraid as well of Rome,—
Rather than brave the sentiment of those
Who cried : ' Prove now if thou art Cæsar's
friend ! ' §

Weakly delivered Him, || though innocent,
To die upon the cruel Roman cross.

* John xviii. 38; xix. 4, 6. † Luke xxiii. 34. ‡ Matt xxvii. 23, etc.
§ John xix. 12. || John xix. 6.

" But three days scarce had passed when from
the grave
He rose triumphant, for not even death
With all his powers could hold the Son of God !

" Then we remembered how, when yet with us,
He told us all the things which now were
done,*
And we have seen Him in Jerusalem,
And He hath comforted our hearts with
peace. †

But now we go, as He appointed us,
To Galilee, and He will meet us there,
For thus He saith : ' Behold I go before,
There shall ye see me, as I said to you.' " ‡

While thus conversing they had reached her
home,
And she had set before them food and drink,
And brought forth water for their dusty feet :
And she had pondered in her heart, the while,
Now with a throb of wild despair, and now
With thought of joyous hope, the tidings
strange

* John xiv. 29.

† John xx. 19. 21.

‡ Matt. xxviii. 7.

They brought of the good Rabbi—Him for
 whom
 All through the day she'd strained her weary
 eyes,
 Scanning the pathway from Jerusalem,
 Believing He would come as she had prayed.

But now, the Christ she'd seen in former days
 Would come no more, and He whom now they
 sought
 Had passed already by her humble home.
 No hope remained of seeing Him to-day;
 And if she should send word to Him by these
 Who soon would meet Him by fair Galilee,
 Who knows but press of cares would make Him
 late—
Too late to save her only boy from death?

Nay, she had not forgotten Nain. She knew
 That Death had met his conqueror;
 But with a mother's love, and fear, and hope,
 How could she wait and see that lovely form
 Tortured by fever, yield at last to Death,
 E'en though she *knew* he would be given back
 When He—the Rabbi Jesus—should return?
 For such her faith, not only in His power

But in His love and willingness to bless
Those who but trust in Him, that in her heart
No longer was a doubt that in the end
Her son should live, restored to health again
Could He but know her sorrow and her faith.

'Tis true that since that quiet, restful sleep
Of the last night, the fever burned less fierce,
And much of pain had left his weakened
frame,
And he had known her when she spoke to
him,
And asked for water, and for food again ;
Yes, he was better ; that was evident,—
And yet she wished the Rabbi Jesus there
To speak the word and make him strong again ;
Longed for His presence and His sympathy.
For none had ever come to Him in vain.

Then, as she came and went ; now ministering
With gentle hospitality to them,
And now beside the bedside of her child,
The wonder grew within her loving heart :
Could not these men who were His followers,
Who seemed to know the secrets of their Lord,
To whom He had revealed Himself alive

After His cruel death by wicked men,
Who, even now, by His appointed word
Were on their way to meet Him—could not
these
Restore her child, as He would, were He here ?

At least, she would make known her want to
them—

And so, when they were rested and refreshed,
With all a mother's gentle arts she told
Again the story of her need and prayer,
And asked: "Have ye not power, by Jesus
given,
To heal my son, and make him strong again?"

Then to the tiny darkened room they went,
And knelt in prayer beside that humble couch,
And asked that God, for Jesus' sake would give
Youth's ruddy health in place of fever's hue,
And native strength of boyhood's active years
Instead of languor from his long disease !

And as they spoke, the blood grew rich and
strong,
And coursed through well-filled veins, from
glowing heart

Whose throb was firm and steady. Every
nerve
Forgot its jarring pain and sank to rest.
The flaccid muscles knew their olden strength,
While health with its mysterious influence
thrilled
His being's fibre to its inmost core.

With what sweet rapture then the mother
clasped
Her child in loving arms! How warm her thanks
To Jesus' followers, who brought the boon
She'd craved from God! How high the note of
praise
As her glad heart made melody to Him
Who knoweth all our wants, and heareth prayer.
And who more ready is to give, than we
To ask for all the sweetest things in life!

"How glad I am that I was led to watch
For the great Rabbi out along the way
Up to the sea! For, seeking Him, I found
His faithful followers when needing rest
And entertainment such as I could give;
And now my little deed of kindness proves
Blessed for His dear sake; while on my life

Ye have returned the kindness thousand-fold!
 Long as I live my heart shall follow thee,
 In grateful prayer, for mercy done this day.
 And when ye see the Master, tell Him how
 I sought for Him, and seeking Him found
 thee,
 And how thou wrought for me that which I
 prayed
 That He would do; and how I blessed His name,
 'Tis well! God knoweth best! He answereth
 prayer
 As seemeth best to Him who knoweth all!"

The fervid heat of midday now had passed,
 And, leaving joy within the little home,
 They found new joys themselves in journeying
 on,
 Conversing by the way of words forgot
 By some of them till now—about a cup
 Of water only, given in His name
 To a disciple in an hour of need:
 "It shall not lose"—it was the Master's voice
 Which spoke it—"shall not lose its own re-
 ward."*

* Matt. x. 42. Mark ix. 41.

Near Shechem, where the narrow pathway
grew
More narrow for their feet—on this side hedged
By rising mountains steep, and on that side
Sloping a-sudden to a deep ravine—
They found their onward way completely
barred
By a huge boulder which had been dislodged
From the rough mountain's craggy side, and
caught
Here on the path.

All the united strength
Of seven sturdy shoulders failed to move
The great obstruction from its resting-place—
Nor could they clamber 'round, or over it.
It was so high and wide. What should they
do?
Could yonder path be gained best by the
way
That led across the mountain's rugged side ;
Or by the other one down the ravine?
Some thought one way, and some the other
chose,
Until, to settle the dispute, James said :
" 'Twas but a few rods back we passed a hut

Built on the mountain side. Now wait ye
 here,
 While I turn back and ask ; for surely, they—
 The inmates there—must know, and soon shall
 . we."

But as he neared the house, he heard low
 groans
 And then the weak, despairing cry of one,
 Who seemed about to die for want of food.
 Forgetting his own errand then, he ran
 Back to his fellow-travellers in haste :

"Methinks 'tis well we happened here to-day—
 If hap it be—. Here we may leave our meal,
 For in this hut is one who needs it sore—
 A woman, dying for the food that we
 Only this morning thought to throw away!"

"'Tis worth the heavy burden of the day
 And glad are we that God hath sent us gold.
 That now we may supply her pinching want,"
 Said Andrew, as he took the oil and fish,
 And followed after James who bore the meal,
 While Peter hurried with an honeycomb,
 And John who carried only sympathy

Of heart, and gentle, willing hands, to make
The simple preparation for her need.
(And after all, the sympathy and help
Were needed, even as the food had been.)
The best of gifts material oft fail
To touch the heart, and make us truly blest,
Enriching giver and receiver too,
Because they stand alone, accompanied
By naught of love and tenderness and prayer.
The truest gift, whate'er its cost in coin,
Is that which represents the heart of him
Who gives, as one of thoughtfulness and care
For him to whom he doth the offering make.
And so, this suffering woman, who but late
Lay in despair, almost in doubt of God
And of His loving care, relieved of want,
Took heart again, and, even through her tears,
Looked up to see the Giver of all Good
Who had not failed her in her hour of need.

Then, gladly showing them the path they
sought,
They parted company—she to rejoice
Over a bounty to which her poor life
Had long been stranger—they to wend their
way

Not only with their burdens lightened now
 But with light hearts as well ; with conscious-
 ness

That they had exercised the frugal care
 That He—their Master—would approve—the
 same

That He, Himself, would do had He been there
 To bear them company upon their way !

Oh, blessed thought ! With joy it filled their
 hearts

And made the path seem easy to their feet,
 As with sweet converse now they hurried on,
 Catching new scenes of beauty on their way,
 As now the westering sun sent level beams
 Athwart the landscape, lighting up the sky
 With the rare colors only seen at eve.

They came to Shechem as the shades of night
 Folded the earth within its soft embrace.
 Weary with travel then they sought an inn,
 And with the magic power of shining gold
 Obtained a resting-place until the morn.

Then, early, ere the sun had kissed the hills,
 Or yet had waked the valleys from their rest,

Our travellers resumed their onward way,
Refreshed by sleep, urged forward by the
 hope
That ere the sun should set that night, they'd
 reach
Fair Galilee—perhaps would meet their Lord
Whom every hour of absence seemed to make
More dear. They started with a quickened
 pace
And as they walked, conversed with eager
 words
Of Him they loved, and hoped through life to
 serve.

The road led up toward Nain. Familiar scenes
Were these, and as they passed village or hut,
Or often only stream, or hillock low,
Or winding by-path from some ancient town,
They would recall a former day, * when they,
With Jesus in their favored company,
Had met a leper here who had been cleansed
By word of power divine. There a lame man
Had hobbled out to meet them, and had gone
Back to his home erect and whole and strong.
Here had He spoken words of living truth

* Matt. iv. 23, 24; ix. 35, etc.

Unto a company who thronged His way ;
 'Twas near this town that a blind beggar sat
 And asked for bread from every passer-by,
 But Jesus gave him better than he sought :
 He gave him sight and bade him go, restored
 To bless the waiting world. Yonder a child
 Had been laid low by fever's smiting breath,
 Until she seemed to lie at Death's dark door,
 Simply to wait the summons to depart
 And leave disconsolate the saddened hearts,
 Whose life seemed bound in hers. But He
 had come,
 And placed His gentle hand upon her head,
 And the disease had left her, and she rose
 And followed Him.

 Sweet memories like these
 Thronged every mind ; and as they walked,
 they talked
 Of Him with eager hearts that glowed afresh,
 And the past stirred half-unsuspected hopes
 Of what the future still might hold for them
 When they should meet Him—they, His
 · chosen few—
 By His divine appointment by the sea.
 For how could they who knew not Jesus' words
 Of prophecy, save as fulfilment true

Revealed them to their darkened minds, yet
not

More dark, I ween, than yours or mine, had we
Stood in their steads ; nor yet more dark than
oft

Our understandings are to-day, when God
Sends to our lives some new strange plan of
His

Which we have not yet fathomed ; no, nor can
Until He gives us grace to *live* it out,
Solving the mystery day by day, with Him
Close at our sides, to show us by results
The meaning of the way that He has led,
Way that we understood not ; not more dark,
Perhaps, than yours or mine concerning things
As yet involved in prophecy alone—
Things that shall come to pass.—How could
they

Hope to unravel this strange mystery
Which He Himself had placed before them
now

And know for what to hope, or what to fear
Until His Spirit should be given to lead
Then into truth of daily living? Till
He should reveal to them things that till
now

They could not bear, and would not understand? *

Till it, in part, at least, should come to pass?

Thus,

Engaged with memory and love and hope,
The earliest morning hours sped on, and earth
Emerged from the gray mists of dawn to meet
The sun's fair flush of roseate hue, as feet
Unwearied, bore them swiftly on toward Nain.

Before the city quite was reached, they saw
Far up the steep hillside, a flaming bush—
A wild azalea tree in blossom full,
Though all its neighbors in the country wide
Bore still but tiny buds—or scarcely that
If on the bleak slope of the mountain's face
As this one stood, braving the wind and cold
While little of the Spring-time's gentler grace
Had reached its cragged home.

They paused to gaze
At sight so strange, and wonder "How?" and
"Why?"

As if in human wisdom they could grasp
All of the secrets of the Master's power,
Until Nathanael, with his ardent love

* John xvi. 12.

Of all things beautiful upon God's earth
(Seeing in them the tender, loving thought
Of Him who “gave us all things to enjoy” *),
Declared that he must have a spray of these,
The first sweet flowers of Spring.

So, while the rest
Waited upon the path below, he climbed
The rugged mountain steep, until he stood
(Though all unconscious) where his Lord had
 been,
Led by the love of Beauty to the spot
Where Beauty's first Creator oped the way.

Then, as he gathered handfuls of the blooms,
Admiring each, as if 'twere made for him
And for no other eye, his guileless soul †
Stirred with an artist's keen and pure delight,
As well he marked the dainty tracery
From Nature's faultless pencil, matching shade
With shade, yet blending all in harmony
Of color that as far outrivals art,
As the strange mystery of living force
In sap, and root, and leaf, and flower, out-ranks
The dead materials that we gather up
To make their imitation.

* 1 Timothy vi. 17.

* John i. 47.

With a touch

Of reverence he held the blossoms close
 And murmured as he looked into each cup
 Yet heavy with the early morning dew:
 "How God must love the Beautiful, to hide
 So much—so much within a flower's heart!
 Lord, make me pure and beautiful within,
 That Thou, who lookest only on the heart,
 Rather than formal deeds, may own me,
 Thine!"

But as he stood intent, he heard a faint
 Low piteous bleat, as if a lamb
 Had strayed away from tender shepherd's care.
 He listened then, to catch the cry once more,
 And note the way from which it reached his
 ear.

Then, led by sound, he clambered to the edge
 Of a deep, wild ravine, and looking o'er
 He saw a tiny lamb, alone and lost.

"Poor little lamb!" Unconsciously the words
 His Master spoke came to Nathanael's lips:
 'Tis thus, indeed we are to follow Him—
 Not to conform our acts to rigid laws,

But to “be transformed!” * changed from grace
to grace †

Until with unveiled heart we will reflect ‡
The character of Him whose life was love,
Whose every thought was one of helpfulness,
Whose heart was full of pity for the lost.

Nathanael called to Peter, and the two
Clambered among the rocks down to the cave
Where it was caught, and, counting it a joy
To rescue from its peril and its pain
One of God’s living creatures, as they turned,
They carried it in gentle fashion down,
Revolving in their hearts this problem old:
What did God mean by sacrifice of blood?
Why must a lamb be slain for human sin?
(For yet they knew not, understood not, how
The “Lamb of God” Fulfiller of all type
Had at the last and “once for all” been slain
That on Him might be laid the whole world’s
sin.)

Then they resumed their walk, now talking
low

About the words their ancient prophet spake :§

* Rom. xii. 2.

‡ Cor. iii. 18; Rev. Ver.

† John 1.16.

§ Isaiah liii.

"All ye, like wandering sheep, have gone
 astray ;
 To his own way each one has turned, and now
 The Lord hath made the iniquity of all
 To meet on Him, who, when afflicted sore
 Oped not His mouth, but as a lamb was dumb.
 Before his shearers, so was even He."

Had not this olden prophecy come true
 Before their very eyes? Had not their Lord—
 (He whom the world called Jesus, Joseph's
 son,*

The lowly Carpenter of Nazareth,
 Or, dignified as best they could, when earth
 Alone supplied the knowledge scant,
 As Jewish Rabbi with a prophet's power †)—
 Been heralded by John as "Lamb of God
 Who takes away the sin of all the world?" ‡
 Had they not seen Him stand with gentle mien
 Before His wild accusers, silent, dumb? §

And He had looked upon the multitude
 Who daily thronged His pathway, Has e passed
 Now up, now down, these hills and valleys fair,

* John vi. 42.
 ‡ John i. 29.

† John vi. 14 ; vii. 40.
 § John xix. 9.

And with a sweet compassion in His eye
While love and pity which no words can tell
Gave sweetness to His tone, and thrilled their
 hearts

With tenderness akin to that He felt,
(Though scarcely yet they understood its
 depth).

And said: "As sheep they lack a shepherd's
 care,*

Pray ye the Lord to send forth laborers."

And forthwith called He them, and gave them
 power †

To heal, and help, and minister, and teach
Those who had wandered far from God's pure
 law,

And lost their way in man's bewildering maze
Of the hard letter which but kills the soul.

And they remembered other words of His:

"The whole need not my care." ‡ "I came to
 seek

And save that which was lost." § What meant
 all this

If He were not the very Christ of God?

* Matt. ix. 36.

‡ Matt. ix. 12.

† Matt. x. i.

§ Matt. xviii. 11.

And then they walked awhile in silence on,
 With thoughtful heads bowed low, and rev'rent
 hearts,
 Remembering the wondrous life of Him
 Who spake as never man yet spake ; * who loved
 As only God could love †—God who *is* Love, ‡
 Though they but dimly yet discerned this
 truth.

Now Peter, in his strong and stalwart arms
 Carried the trembling lamb so safe and warm
 Next to his loyal heart, till it forgot
 Its wanderings and its loss ; and resting there,
 It seemed th' embodiment of trust and peace.

Then once again the words of Jesus came
 Fresh to their minds : § " I the Good Shepherd
 am,
 I know My sheep, and I lay down My life
 For them. No man can take it but I lay
 It down Myself. And now I have the power
 Both to lay down and to take up My life,
 That I may do my Father's holy will.
 I call My sheep with voice that they all know

* John vii. 46.

† John iv. 8.

‡ John xv. 13, comp. Rom. v. 78.

§ John x. 1-18.

And follow after me to the great fold
Where all shall be united in My love."
Did not the words gleam forth with sudden
light
They had not guessed when first they heard
them fall
E'en from His lips upon their troubled hearts
That day in winter * in the Temple porch
When all around were those who hated Him,
And called Him mad † and asked: "Why hear
ye Him?"
And some would even stone Him for His
words? ‡

How long ago that seemed! Then the thick
clouds
Of darkness and uncertainty shut out
From their dim visions things they saw to-day!
But now they thought they understood it all!
And silently they coned its sweetness o'er,
As they recalled their Master's gentle care,
E'en as a tender shepherd bears his sheep
In loving arms, protecting it from all
From which its gentle nature would recoil,
Leading it safely to the pastures green,

* John x. 22.

† Vs. 20.

‡ Vs. 31.

Not leaving it content with lesser good—
 Or seeming good—upon the pathway there.
 How strange had been the leadings of their
 lives!

How kindly He had shielded them from ill!
 What were the unguessed blessings yet to be?

And so they conned it o'er, yet knew they not
 That that same gentle, loving care had planned
 The very incidents which called their thoughts
 To Him that He might thus reveal His love
 More fully to their opening minds and hearts.
 Blessed are they who "follow on to know,"*
 For 'tis in following His holy will
 That we may know more fully of His love—
 Love to the whole wide world—oh, wondrous
 thought!

But still more wondrous—love to humble ME!

Near Nain they found the shepherd from whose
 fold

The little lamb had strayed; and joy once more
 Was left behind them, greater for the joy
 They carried on in consciousness of right
 Done for the Master's sake and in His name.

* Hosea vi. 3.

Soon they drew near to Cana, and they turned
Off from the road—the highway to the sea—
To climb a gently sloping hill, which stood
Near to the city. As they reached the brow
They paused a moment to survey the scene,
Rich in its varied beauty, and yet fresh
From the night-dews still sparkling in the sun
Not yet ascended high.

As thus they stood,
A column of black smoke was seen to rise,
Dense and forbidding, from a cottage yard
Near them, below; and cries of sore distress
Broke of a sudden on their listening ears.

“They may have need of help that we can
give,”

They said in haste, and quickly sought the way
Down to the humble home from whence the
signs

Of sorrow came. “Were Jesus here, we know
Such cries to reach His heart, need but to
reach

His gracious ear, and of the things He taught
Unto His followers, none were more blessed
than this:

That we should do to others as we would

That they should do to us,* were we the ones
 In need of friendly aid—do and hope not
 That aught shall be returned to us again."

'Twas a strange sight they saw as they ap-
 proached ;

And stranger yet the tale of woe they heard ;
 Husband and wife were there, bewailing fate
 Because their one last sheep—the only thing
 That stood between them and starvation's
 pain—

Had now been killed, and dressed, and put to
 boil

In pot in which, by some mysterious means,
 A small round hole, straight through its iron
 side,

With clean incision had been made since last
 It had been used. And through that to the
 fire

Had run the fat, which flaming, up had burned
 Not only what had found escape, but all
 Within the pot—and so it all was lost !

And they who prayed, and trusted in their
 God

Believing that *to them* was promise given

* Matt. vii. 12.

† Luke vi. 35.

“Bread shall be found thee, and thy water
sure,”*

Now sat beside the ashes, blackening fast
O'er all the little store they'd called their own!

It seemed a sorry plight, and words were cold
To comfort them in time of such distress;
And even gold, with all its magic power
Could give relief but for a few short days.
Yet the disciples were most glad that still
Within their script they found some yellow coin,
And freely gave they full the worth of all
That had been lost; and spoke in cheerful words
Of trust in God who loves, and still doth care
For every creature He hath made on earth:
And from their own experience they told
How oft the darkest hour precedes the light.

But as they turned to go, 'twas with a sense
Of pain that wheresoever sin had been,
There followed want and woe and misery—
Not special pain for special sin.† Their Lord
Had taught them not to judge this true,
though held
By many of their wisest councillors—

* Isaiah xxxiii. 16.

† John ix. 23.

But the great blot of sin upon the race,
Whose wages *—Death—are ever being paid
In some degree to all beneath its ban.

But as they reached the gate, and would have
passed,

Some object of familiar grace was seen
Which stirred their tardy memories to recall
A time three years ago, when, on a day
Far happier than this, they visited
The town of Cana—yea, this very house
In company with Jesus—came as guests
Unto the marriage-feast of this same pair,
Whom now they saw so desolate and poor.
'Twas at that feast that first of all was shown
The Master's glory,† and the timid hearts
Of those who late had heard His gracious call,
And had left all to follow after Him,
Had been assured that He was come from
God.

'Twas strange they had forgotten! Stranger
still,
It seemed to them, that this young, happy
pair

† Rom. vi. 23.

* John ii. 11.

Upon whose early wedded life He smiled,
And by His presence hallowed the sweet scene
Which made another home on earth, should
now

Be found in such sad plight! Yet, questioning
not

God's sovereign right to lead as He sees best,
They turned them back again, and by the
bond

Of Jesus' friendship for them both, renewed
The old acquaintance, and fresh interest took
Each in the other's plans.

Much was to ask
Concerning Jesus—much to tell of Him.
Had the strange rumors which had reached
their ears,

About His death as malefactor bold,
Been false, or true? And what could mean
the tale

About His Spirit (or some said Himself),
Having been seen of men, and talked with
them?

Then Love and Hope lent swiftmess to their
tongues
As eagerly they told the story o'er—

Though interrupted oft—now with a thought
 Of indignation 'gainst His enemies—
 Now as some fuller light showed them the
 truth
 They had not grasped before;—and now to
 urge
 No more delay upon their journey's course.

But ere they said farewell, this much was
 planned:

Peter stilled owned the fishing-boats and nets
 Upon the Sea of Galilee, and still
 The eager, hungry world was glad to pay
 Its shining gold for treasures of the deep;
 And so, before the coin already given
 Should be exhausted for their meagre wants,
 The little family should move their home
 Down to Capernaum, and in employ
 Of Peter's fishery, there was no need
 To dread the future.

So their trials sore

Became the pathway to a greater good,
 And they took courage in their God again,
 While the disciples started on their way,
 Discoursing of the providence that led
 To this most timely meeting, and the joy

'Twould be to Jesus when they told Him all.
Ay, greater joy than they could guess, since
 He
Had planned this meeting for their helpful-
 ness!

Near Nazareth once more they slacked their
 pace :

"Let us now go up to his Home again—
His home and Mary's. When we see her next .
She will be glad to know we thought of Him
And it ; and she will wish to learn how now
The old place looks ; and even He, perhaps,
Will care to find we sought it for His sake,"
Said Peter as he led the way.

 And John
Made answer thoughtfully, "Yes, let us go.
For we remember how He notice took
Of e'en the smallest thing that showed forth
 LOVE.

And how—we see it now as we did not
Before—His gentle spirit was most pained
By our indifference and want of thought."

But e'er they came in sight of it, they saw
Great flocks of doves flying about their heads,

Coming from all directions, speeding straight
Toward the old home they sought, until the
sky

Seemed darkened, and the soft whirr of wings
Fell on their ears with a strange solemn sound.

Nearer approached, they found a multitude
Had gathered 'round the house, and in hushed
awe,

With voices low, they talked of this new
thing

Which now had come to pass: How e'en the
birds

Acknowledged Him whom they had long ago
Rejected, driven from their midst, refused
To hear, or own, even despised the good
Of earthly benefits He would have brought!
And now that He had been rejected, too,
By all the world—had even suffered death
As if His were a malefactor's heart,
And His pure, noble deeds (dimly they saw
It now) were magic of a conjurer
Used for self-exaltation, and His words
Of high and holy doctrine but the vain
Babble of a mind diseased, claiming undue
And dangerous power, making Himself a King.

Yea, more—the very Son of God Most High—
Now that 'twas said, despite the Roman seal
And nightly guard, that He had risen again
And had been seen by many witnesses,
(Though many yet believed it not, but said
His body had been stolen while they slept—
Ah, Hate! How credulous thou art! How
blind

To clearest evidence of noon-day truth!)
And thus had proved His claim and kept His
word—

Now that all this had come to pass, the birds
Of heaven had come, and by mysterious power
Had opened for themselves a passage-way
Into the granary which He had built,
When, as a Carpenter, He, lowly, dwelt
With them in Nazareth—among His own,
And yet unknown, unrecognized, as Son
Of God. Surely 'twas omen sent from heaven,

For in their old traditions it was said
That thus God indicated where He willed
A synagogue to be! And so they cried:
“Let us arise and build! The doves have
come

And added this new evidence to all

The strange, unheard of signs that do show
forth

In Him who claimed to be the Son of God!
Thus hath He set His seal upon the truth!
Thus hath He sent the birds of Heaven to us
To bid us haste and build a synagogue
Here on the spot where as a Man He wrought
So like to other men we knew Him not!
Thus will we honor Him whom e'en the birds
Own as their Lord! They are His Mes-
sengers!"

For such was then, and such is now, the power
Of superstition that the very minds
Which are the quickest to reject the truth,
Though shown by clearest evidence as such,
Are quickest also to believe a farce
Of silliest fabric, in which neither sense
Nor reason have the slightest part. So now
They who rejected Christ, the Son of God,
Calling Him Joseph's son, the Carpenter,
Their townsman whom they knew *—(why
honor him?)

Driving Him forth with words of cruel hate,
Blocking His power by their unbelief,

* Luke iv. 22, 29. Mark vi. 23.

Rejoicing in His downfall, now beheld
In doves who sought but food (prepared for
them,
Although they knew it not, by Christ Him-
self),

A messenger from God, bidding them build
A synagogue in honor of the One
Whom they had helped to slay! They were
"His own" *

In closer sense than Jews at large were held,
And yet His very own "received Him not!"

Alas! that history doth repeat itself
In such sad constant strain! Alas that we,
Blind to the Way, the Truth, the Life, which
God

In full sweet measure grants to us to-day,
Slight the best gifts He would bestow, had we
But faith to take them, following on to know
The possibilities He would reveal—
Perhaps through trials sore, and bitter loss,
But certainly to an eternal gain
And "weight of glory" which our earthly
sense

Can never estimate, or even guess

* John i. 11.

In wildest fancy of our wildest dream;
 And, then, when, opportunity withdrawn,
 We look upon "what might have been," and
 sigh,
 And turn away, refusing yet, perhaps,
 The deepest lesson and the highest good,
 We think to rectify the past by deeds
 Of formal honor seen and known of men.

Or, more apparent—since we oftener see
 The surface facts of lives, than prove the depths
 E'en of our own—Alas! that we so oft
 Slight and neglect a friend, until, too late,
 We call to mind the sweetness and the love
 That might have 'riched our lives while blessing
 theirs,

And then, with tears, we bend above a face
 While with the shadow of the mystery
 Of death upon it—(mystery now solved
 By the still sleeping one who needs no joy,
 And heeds no sorrow of this narrow life
 Left for the wider one above our ken)—
 And bring sweet flowers to put in his cold
 hand,
 And speak kind words in gentle tones and low,
 And raise a monument of grief for him—

And then pass on to treat some other friend
The self-same way! Ah, me! that this is true,
Alas, too often in your life and mine!

But God, who makes the wrath of man to bless
His name, oft takes our failures, and the deeds
That we in weakness do for Him (yet mar
In very doing, since we know not how
To do aright), and from them brings forth praise
Unto Himself!

So now, the synagogue
Built from a superstitious awe, by those
Who loved not Christ in life, became the
shield

And refuge in the years to come, of those
Who with mistaken zeal, it may have been,
(Though better that than with no zeal at all,
Better a blundering, inconsistent love
Than criticising, cold indifference),
Sought in the crusades to redeem the land,
Made holy in their eyes by Jesus' life,
From power of infidels who knew Him not.

'Tis true, the kingdom of our Master, Christ,
Is not dependent upon holy place,
But those who worship Him must honor give

In spirit and in truth where'er they be.*
 But much that we of years mature think
 plain

And easy in its simple truthfulness,
 Seems dark, and difficult to comprehend
 By little children who have just begun
 To learn the alphabet of wisdom's love:
 But do we blame them that their waking
 minds

Grasp not within a single hour the things
 It took us years of toil and growth to learn?

And so, I think, it was in early years
 Of this great Kingdom of our Lord, the
 Christ;

So is it still, sometimes, with those who stand
 As children in the Kingdom (though mayhap
 They count full many years), knowing not
 yet

The strength of manhood and of womanhood
 In Christ; whose growth in grace, fettered by
 fears

And ignorance—fears because ignorant,
 And ignorant because of binding fears—
 Is not the strong, full, free and happy growth

* John iv. 24.

That God designed. Not yet have they
attained

That knowledge of the Truth that sets men
free

From place, and form, and creed, and ritual
And centres all on Christ, the Holy One,
The Son of God, who bids the humblest come
To Him and rest. But shall we chide e'en
these ?

Shall we not rather show them by our lives
And by our words the way more excellent ?

Toward the Arbella Valley now they turned—
Those men who followed Christ along the way,
Though knowing not that He had gone be-
fore—

And soon they came to sight so strange and
new

That all stopped in amaze to view it o'er ;
For in the centre of the beaten path
There was a sturdy bush, firm as if years
Of growth had fixed it there. Yet they had
passed

This way before, and many times had trod
This well-worn road, till now obstructionless,
And there, beside the way, was the loose earth

Upturned but freshly from its rocky mould,
 Thus showing clearly where the shrub had
 grown.

They walked around it, noting the firm earth
 And smooth unbroken surface 'round its stem,
 And as they looked they questioned each of
 each :

"What could it mean?" "How came it
 there?" and "Why?"

One thought it set to mark some danger new
 Down on the Valley Road—perhaps a rock
 From some o'erhanging cliff had blocked the
 way,
 Or storm had washed away the old, safe track.

Another thought not so—'twas but the play
 Of idle children, and it nothing meant—
 Or nothing that effected them to know.
 Another said 'twas "strange," "mysterious,"
 A "scientific wonder,"—nothing more.

And some among their number scarcely gave
 A moment's heed, but would have hasted on,
 Intently thinking of their journey's *end*,
 As if the *end* were *all*, the *way* were *naught*,

As if the message had not said "*Behold,
He goeth up before thee to the Sea.*"*
But only, "Go, and He will meet thee there!"
As if the Lord had not prepared each step
Of all the journey to the very end,
Preventing † with His love (love infinite,
And matched with power whose bound is
never reached)
Each little turn that comes to us as new ;
Untried and strange, we think, because we
know
Not of the love which has already proved
Its wisdom, planning for our following.
Ah me ! How many a blessing thus we miss ;
Forgetting the sweet mission of the *way*
Forgetting 'tis the *path* † and not the *end*
Of righteousness that brighter grows, till lost
In day whose perfectness we cannot guess.

And so, alas ! it is transgression's *way* §
Is hard, though filled with promises of joy.
The promised *end* of Life or Death is not
Reward or punishment, dealt out by Fate :

* Mark xvi. 28 ; xiv. 7.

† Psa. xxi. 3. The former, and correct, use of this word is gained from its derivation. *Pre* "before," and *venire* "to go;" literally "going before."

‡ Prov. iv. 18.

§ Prov. xiii. 15 ; iv. 19.

'Tis the result of *ways* that we have trod
 With consciousness and choice deliberate,
 Leading to one or to the other's gate.

We live our lives by days, and each one brings
 Its duties, and its warnings, and its rest,
 Prepared by Love. How shall we honor Him,
 And honor life itself, and find the best
 That He has planned for us in it and Him,
 If we neglect its duties, and refuse
 To heed its warnings turning us from wrong,
 Or from a path of danger that we know
 Not of ourselves; or if we miss the rest
 And sweet refreshment He would gladly give,
 Preserving all our powers for future work
 That He will yet reveal to those who love
 And wait upon Him with true loyal hearts?

Is now thy way obstructed in the path
 That thou wouldst choose for thine own walk-
 ing in?

It may be that the Christ's own loving hand
 Has placed that barrier there! Ah, then, fret
 not,
 Nor sigh at Fate; nor seek in Nature's realm
 An explanation that she cannot give;

Nor with indifferent heedlessness pass on,
As if thou couldst thyself mark out thy way !
But with obedient grace, see in each step
Thy Master's leading for thy following.
Ask Him for light, and He will grant thy
prayer.

He will direct thee, leading by the hand
Down to life's very close, and even then
Walk with thee through the vale of shadows
dark,

Into the sunny presence of thy Lord.

There is no cause to fear what Death can do.
'Tis but his “ shadow ” * that can fall on thee,
Since Christ hath borne the penalty alone,
And we who but believe have passed from
death †

To life in Him who triumphed o'er the grave.

But, to return to the disciples now :

Brave Peter said :

“ Where others dare to go,

Dare I. This is the path we used to take

When Jesus was among us ; why not now ?

'Twill lead us nearest to Capernaum,

Where, no doubt, friends will be to welcome us.

* *Psa. xxiii. 4.*

† *Rom. viii. 1.. 2.*

And entertain us through the approaching
night,

Then, on the morrow, we will seek for Him.

Though where I wot not now; for He but said:

'In Galilee.' But surely it will be

Near to the city of His later home

That we shall find Him. Come. I know not
how

This strange thing came to pass; but it shall
not

Hinder my way, nor make me change my
course.

Do as you please—I take the beaten track!"

Nay, not so fast, my brother!" Andrew said,

'Tis utter folly to be over-wise,

That none can teach thee what thou knowest
not.

Discretion is of bravery the part

Which wins the greater honor. Be not rash

In headlong purposes to carry out

Thine own designs. Listen to reason now:

Why this strong tree is here in place so
strange

I know not; but if set for a defence,

Why not now turn aside, and take the path

Across this hill? 'Tis quite as near the sea.
The gain is on our side by making sure
Of a safe way—and if there be a loss
'Twill not be ours if we the warning heed."

"Yes," Matthew said, "where there is doubt,
I think
The Master would advise the path that leads
Straightest from danger, nearest to the goal.
For while in all His life He never turned
Aside from duty's call, He was not rash
To encounter needless danger anywhere,
And even taught us how we ought to pray,*
'Into temptation lead us not, O Lord,
And from the evil one deliver us.'"

Then John, the well-beloved, took up the
strain :

"Matthew and Andrew both are right," he said ;
"I think it is the Master's will that we
Should take the safest path down to the sea,
Unless in doing so we shirk some task
Of helpfulness, or deed of tender love
Such as He found, and bids us still to find
On every hand : for life is full of pain

* Matt. vi. 13.

Which we may ease. But here I see not such ;
 I think that we should take the path, un-
 blocked,
 Across the mountain road—'Tis just beyond
 Its eastern slope that lies the dear old sea."

And so they all agreed, and turning, left
 (Although they knew it not) the path which
 led
 Down where a band of robbers were concealed
 Among the rocks and caves, waiting their
 prey—
 Turned from their danger by the unseen
 Christ,
 Who had gone on before o'er all the way,
 Nor once forgot the wants of those He loved,
 Who would come after Him up to the sea.

Just as the setting sun in radiance threw
 Its splendor o'er the land, the shore, the lake,
 Touching with flashing gold each quiet scene
 Rich with the memories of Him they loved,
 (Yet guessed not half His love and care for
 them),
 They stood—those seven men—upon the hill
 Where He, the Christ, had stood at early dawn

Of yestermorn. Each with his different
thought,
Born of his different nature, wisdom, mood,
Yet centred all in common love for Him
Who first had taught them how to truly love—
Him who had shown to them the Father's
heart ;
Who was Himself God's Word of Love to
man—
Heaven's thought translated to the human
tongue—
Though not yet understood, even by those
Who knew Him, loved Him, served Him, truest,
best.

So for a little space they silent stood,
Viewing the old familiar scenes ; for words
But ill-befitted time and place like this.
Indeed what words could tell the memories
Which clustered now around each sacred spot,
Where He had been, revealing grace and truth *
And mercy from His Father, God, to man,
Who all had sinned, and come far short—so
far!—
Of what God meant him to be—perfect, pure—

* John i. 14.

Like unto God Himself—Thus was he made :
 "After our likeness?" *

Or what words could speak
 Half of the fear and pain and hopelessness
 That had been crowded in the days since He
 Had walked with them by that same sea?
 How dark
 The cloud had been! How ached their hearts
 e'en yet
 As they recalled those days of suffering!
 And now, what words in all the world can tell
 One-half their hopes—of what, they scarcely
 knew,
 But something high, and great, and good, and
 true
 For Israel, the nation of God's choice.

Ah, there were times when it were mockery
 To speak the choicest words! When heart
 communes
 With heart, not in the language of the earth,
 But with a subtler, sweeter, nobler sense,
 Heaven-born, and sacred unto those we love.
 Or, higher yet, when heart of man communes
 With God, Author, Embodiment of Love.

* Gen. i. 26.

Yet speaks no word with faltering human lips,
Though understanding more than words could
say.

Slowly the radiant, westering sunlight died,
Slowly the colors—amber, crimson, gold,
Deepened to purple dark, and sombre gray
Along the broken line of mountain tops,
And left the limpid sea in twilight shade,
As, weary with the long day's journeying
'Mid heat and dust, they—the disciples—now
Approached the shore and watched the restless
waves,
Whose merry dance seemed welcoming them
home,
And listened to the ripples whose glad voice
Made softest music to their olden friends,
The fishermen of sunny Galilee.

Upon the shore, drawn up beyond the waves,
There was a fisher's boat, and four strong oars
Rested beside it, while upon the grass
Back from the beach a net was spread to dry,
Though all now seemed deserted.

A quick glance
Along the shore revealed these to their gaze,

And then 'twas Peter who the silence broke :
 "I go a fishing.* Come, here is a boat
 All ready to our hands. And here a net
 That we may surely take. We know not where
 To seek the Master now. Let us this night
 Be fishermen again upon the sea.
 To-morrow we will seek to find the Christ."

There was dissent from some at first, for all
 Had not been trained to brave, and even love
 The long night-watch upon the sea; but soon
 They all agreed, and, following Peter's lead
 They presently embarked, and pushed the boat
 From shore, out to the places where they oft
 Had found fish in abundance, and had felt
 In taking them the fisherman's true joy.

But through the hours of weary night they
 toiled
 In vain.† The arts of fishery seemed lost,
 And all their patient labor brought them
 nought
 Save weariness and disappointed hopes.
 Again they thought of other days, when He,
 Their Master—was with them in calm or storm,

* John xxi. 3.

† John xxi. 3

And desolate aloneness seized them now,
Made more apparent by their former joy.

Perhaps as Peter rested on his oar,
Disheartened by their ill-success, he thought
Of how the Lord had said: * "Ye will I make
Fishers of men." And, in his blindness then
And want of knowledge of the Master's plan,
And sadness in the failure of his own,
Was ready to exclaim: "'Twas a mistake—
Those words that Jesus spake: 'Fishers of
men?'

This night has proved that it can never be.
Though scarcely yet I know what He did
mean."

Perhaps the loving John sighed for the day
When he had lent their boat unto the Lord; †
And though his heart still whispered of sweet
joy

That yet should come to them, recalled the
past

With thankfulness that was akin to pain.
Perhaps the doubting ‡ heart of Thomas then
(Though brave he was, for we must not forget

* Matt. iv. 19.

† Mark iv. 1.

‡ John xx. 25.

'Twas he who said : " Lord, if thou goest now
 Straight to thy death at hands of Jewish hate,
 We will go with Thee and will share Thy
 lot. ")*

Fought out in that still darkness once again
 The olden conflict between Love and Fear—
 And Love now won the victor's glorious palm.

Perhaps—aye, surely—as the hours dragged on,
 They asked : " Why did the Son of Man choose

us

To be His followers ? Why show to *us*
 His power and mercy, all His tender love,
 While many know them not, or but to fear,
 Or mock, not to obey ? And why, indeed,
 Show them to any one, if He would leave
 Us now ? Where shall we meet Him ? Where
 and when

Will He reveal Himself to us, and show
 His gracious purpose to redeem our land ? "

Sadly and wearily, as dawned the day,
 They rowed toward shore ; when, on the beach
 they saw

A stranger†—walking now, or pausing oft

* John xi. 8, 16.

† John xxi. 4.

To watch their movements as they nearer came,
Guiding their boat around the well-known
shoals

Of shallow water. Presently He spoke,
Addressing them :

“ *Children !* ” He said, in voice
So clear and bell-like that it carried far
Across the waves through the sweet morning
air,

“ *Have ye any meat ?* ” *

And they answered, “ No ! ”
Though with a sense of shame at the one word
Which told their failure through the weary
hours.

And then He called to them again :

“ *Cast now
Thy net upon the right side of the ship
Just where ye are,* ” He said. “ *There shall ye
find !* ” †

“ Perhaps He sees them in the morning light,”
Was now their thought, as they prepared to
cast

Their net again, as He had bidden them.

* John xxi 5.

† John xxi. 6.

But when they would have drawn it to themselves,

They were not able for the multitude
Of finny treasure which it now enclosed !

'Twas then that John, disciple best beloved
By Christ, since in his humble heart was
found

Those qualities of manhood likest God,
Responsive to the perfect life of Him
Who was God's Image (such the Son had said
He would draw unto Him from all the earth).*
Disciple who most loved, and who had learned
Much of life's myst'ry through Love's magic
power,

With heart and mind attent to know his Lord,
Had from the first surveyed the Stranger there
With growing interest in his face ; and now
He leaned towards Peter, and in whispered
tones

Eager yet reverent, and full of joy,
Part questioning, but more asserting truth :
*" Look thou ! It is the Lord—our Master—He
Whom we have come to meet, yet knew Him
not ! "*

* John xii. 32.

Then Peter, all his ardent heart aglow
With Love's quick impulse toward the one
beloved,
Forgetting net and boat, forgetting too
The helpfulness due from his arm of strength
Unto his comrades now, hastily girt
His fisher's coat about him, as he leaped
Into the shallow water of the sea,
And hurried to the shore where Jesus stood.

But Christ is honored more by deeds of love
And thoughtfulness from man to fellow-man,
Than by the loftiest forms of praise to Him,
With these neglected. So He bade him turn
And help his brethren bring the net to land.

Would'st worship God? Then serve they
neighbor well!
Who is thy neighbor? He who needs thy
help.
Wherever on God's footstool he may dwell!

'Twas then they saw a fire of coals, and fish
Made ready for a morning meal, and bread:
“*Bring of thy fish,*” He said.

And they obeyed.

And then the gracious invitation gave
Unto them all. "*Come ye and dine with me.*"
And no man dared to ask Him "WHO ART
THOU?"

For in their hearts they knew He was *the
Lord.**

Who can describe that simple meal? And
who

Can tell the joys which the disciples felt
As in this pledge of trusted fellowship
They saw again their Master's mindfulness,
As in the days of yore, of human wants—
Ay, more than that—they saw His latest
gift—

Memorial of a love that did not fail
E'en when the shadow of the cross lay dark
Athwart His path, as when He first took bread
And blessing, brake, and gave to them, and
said:

"*Eat this, and think of Me; for thus I give
My body for your sakes; believe ye this?*"
And now they learned from His own sacred lips
The story of the way o'er which He came

* John xxi. 12.

Before them, planning and preparing it ;
And then He asked of each detail, and how
They had fulfilled His plan, praising them oft,
And sometimes warning them, as now He
showed

The lessons of the way, and taught to them
The meaning of the things they had not known
Until revealed in light of His dear love.

The Legend has been told. What teaches it
Unto our hearts? Is't not the same old truth
That David sung when God had led him forth
To victory, and to a kingly crown?

"The king, O Lord, shall joy but in Thy
strength,

For Thou hast given him his heart's desire ;
Thou goest forth before him all the day
With blessings of Thy goodness ; giving more
Than he had asked, because he trusted Thee."*

So doth He go before us on the way.
And twill be sweet, I think, when you and I
Have travelled all the path Love planned for
us,
To meet the Christ upon th' eternal shore,

* Ps. xxi.

And sup with Him in feast He will prepare
 For those who follow Him, and do His will
 With an unquestioning faith.

Then shall we learn

With an intensity of knowledge, now
 Withheld even from faithful loving hearts,
 How He, our Saviour, Master, Friend Divine,
 Has gone before us in each little step,
 Preparing all the way for us to come,
 Showing His love and care as well in that
 Which seemed disaster and misfortune sad
 (Seemed only, since we knew not all His plan),
 As that which brought us gay and pleasant
 smiles,
 And happy laughter in the way we trod.
 Then in His sacred presence, we shall learn
 The holy lessons which our hearts are dull
 To catch from Providence. Then shall we see,
 By Heaven's light illumined, what seemed dark
 Upon the lonely way. Then shall we rest
 From each perplexing doubt or sudden fear
 Which now, unbidden, thrusts its questionings
 For a brief space into our trembling hearts,
 Then shall we thank Him, as we cannot now,
 For all His tender love and watchful care
 Which trod each step before us, knowing all

And knowing us as even we know not
Ourselves. Then shall we find God's ways are
right ;
Then shall we bless His name for evermore.

THE END.



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