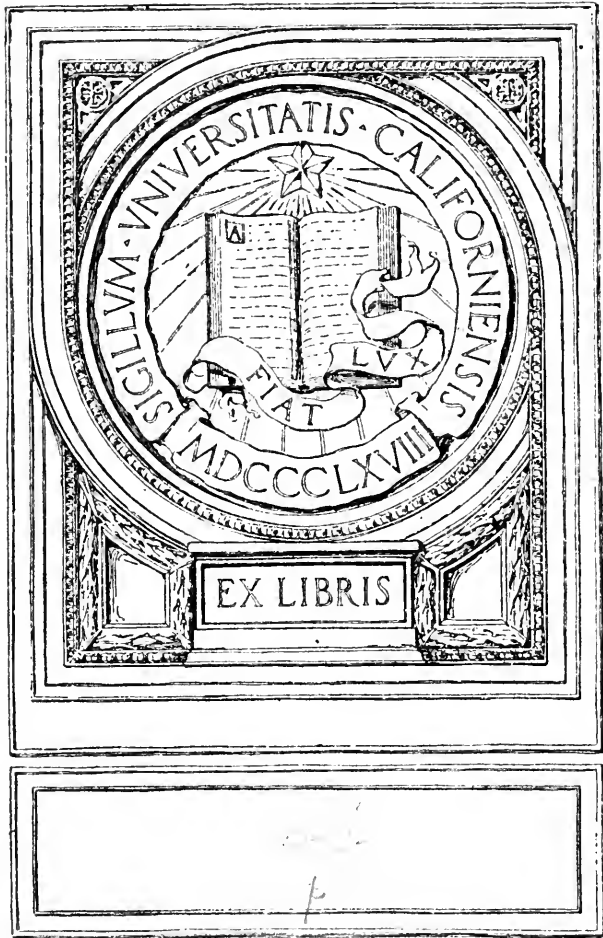


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POEMS: BY  
JOSEPH  
MARY  
PLUNKETT



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THE POEMS OF  
JOSEPH MARY PLUNKETT

The Frontispiece is from a Memory Drawing  
by Mrs. Joseph Plunkett

# LINE OF COLUMBIA

THE ART  
ASSOCIATION



Grace Plunkett  
June  
1916



The Poems of  
Joseph Mary Plunkett

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## FOREWORD

JOSEPH PLUNKETT was the son of Count and Countess Plunkett, and was born in Dublin in November, 1887. He attended the Catholic University School and Belvedere College, but his wide reading did more to educate him than any schools.

He followed the two years Philosophy course at Stonyhurst College when he was eighteen. This made a strong impression on him. He kept up the study of Scholastic Philosophy and was very much influenced by mystical contemplation "or loving inclination towards God." The books that were his most constant companions were St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa, St. Francis, and John Tauler. Their mark on his poetry is very plain, though, as his short article on Obscurity and Poetry will show, he would apply the term "mystic" to but a very small part of his own verse. He showed me two or three poems that he called mystic, but I cannot find these now and must presume them destroyed. Of course he employed the symbolism of the mystics broadcast.

He was obliged by ill-health to spend a great deal of his short life in inactivity and to winter abroad. He and his mother spent a winter

travelling in Italy, Sicily and Malta, where he had a good friend, and another winter was spent in Algiers with a sister, where he studied the Arabic literature and language, enlarging his range of images by what he found there, though it is curious that the only poem which is purely Arabic in imagery is the short poem, "It is her voice that dwells within the emerald walls and sapphire house of flame,"\* which he wrote before he went to Algiers. I also think it possible that the queer, flamboyant and melodramatic happenings which there came his way may have coloured that part of his verse which is more unrestrained and violent than the rest, for instance some of the sonnets in "Occulta."

Before he went to Algiers he had met Thomas MacDonagh—who was teaching at St. Enda's School, Rathfarnham, which he had helped P. H. Pearse to start. My brother wanted someone to teach him Irish for the matriculation of the National University and Thomas MacDonagh taught him for some time, and when he discovered my brother was a poet I think there was more poetry than pedagogy in their relationship. "The Circle and the Sword" was published in 1911, the year my brother was in Algiers. Thomas MacDonagh made the selection himself from my brother's poems, and saw the book through the press.

\* Title from "The Mistress of Vision," by Francis Thompson.

Although there are a good many immature and defective poems in it it is rather remarkable for a first book. The lyric, "White Dove of the Wild Dark Eyes" would be difficult to surpass on its own ground; the sonnet "I saw the sun at midnight, rising red," the poems "1867," "I see his blood upon the rose," "My soul is sick with longing," and "The stars sang in God's garden" are all above the level of first books. I have included these and a few others which I thought worthy in this book, as I know he wished only these few to be considered as part of his mature work.

When he returned from Algiers he had a house of his own in Donnybrook, where we kept house together for two and a half years. With the exception of P. H. Pearse and Thomas MacDonagh he had few other literary friends in Dublin up to the time he became interested in the *Irish Review*. This was started by Professor Houston in 1911, in association with James Stephens, Thomas MacDonagh and Padraic Colum. Mr. Houston edited it himself for some time and Padraic Colum was editor in 1912-13. Two poems of my brother's were printed in it; he got to know the people who were associated with it very well, and in June, 1913, he became editor himself.

Any cause he was interested in was discussed in the *Review*; for instance, the men's case in the strike of summer, 1913, and the Volunteer move-

ment from November of the same year to the date of the seizure of a large number of copies of the *Review* by the police in London in November, 1914. Joseph Campbell, Conal O'Riordan, James Cousins, Lord Dunsany, Darrell Figgis, Arthur Griffith, Mary Hayden, W. M. Letts, Susan Mitchell, Seumas O'Sullivan, M. A. Rathkyle, Frederick Ryan, Sheehy Skeffington, Jack Morrow, John Mac Neill, Peter Mac Brien—these, with Thomas Mac Donagh, James Stephens, Padraic Colum, P. H. Pearse, Edward Martyn, and David Houston are the names of the goodly company who were constant contributors to the *Review*.

Sir Roger Casement, who was my brother's intimate friend, had written articles for the *Review* when Padraic Colum was editor, and continued to write in prose and verse for my brother. The *Review* was not in good financial condition when it came into his hands, and as he had not sufficient capital to put it properly on its feet, he just kept it going in the same way as he found it until the police seizure in London, which I have mentioned, made the loss too great for it to be carried on any longer.

From the time we were in Donnybrook, Thomas MacDonagh and my brother lived and worked in close relationship. Apart from the *Review* they criticised everything each of them wrote in the most vigorous way, and to them criticism was an exact science. My brother published Thomas



MacDonagh's "Lyrical Poems," and they were both keenly interested in the printing and form of the book. He also published P. H. Pearse's "Suantraidhe agus Goltraidhe."

The Irish Theatre was started in 1914 by a partnership consisting of Edward Martyn, Thomas MacDonagh and my brother. Its purpose, as opposed to the purpose of the Abbey Theatre, was to produce Irish plays other than peasant plays, plays in Irish, and foreign masterpieces. They played periodically in Hardwicke Street, and produced plays by Edward Martyn, Eimar O'Duffy, John MacDonagh, Tchekoff, etc., and have been on the whole very successful in carrying out their objects. Towards the last six months my brother disagreed with the other directors for not abiding by the spirit of the agreement and definitely dissociated himself from the Theatre on the production of Strindberg's "Easter." The Irish Theatre is still in existence and is being carried on by Mr. Martyn and Mr. John MacDonagh.

The first section of this volume—"Occulta"—was to have been my brother's next book. He arranged it himself in the order in which it now stands, wherein the sequence of thought is unbroken. I have gathered together in the second part his later verse and those earlier poems which he would have considered worthy of republication, including those from the "Circle and the Sword." Many of his poems have been

destroyed, or at any rate are irrecoverable, and these poems of the second section are fragmentary and disconnected—but I have not included in this book anything I think he thought second rate, and have omitted a fairly long poem that I am sure he intended to be left out.

He had outgrown all *tours de force*, all false standards, and gone to the desperate simplicity which is so hard to reach.

He wrote verse with difficulty, but, once written, rarely made any alteration. In this he differed in an extraordinary degree from Thomas MacDonagh, who suffered in equal measure from a too great facility in verse writing, and would alter a completed poem repeatedly till he was satisfied that it approximated to the poem of his imagination. The poems in this book have an appearance of ease, but they were written after the author had mastered his medium and the very labour that went to their making has but made them flow more evenly and contributed to the effect. He did not consider the versifying, but the thought expressed, to be of importance, and did not put much value on his best lyrics, as *e.g.*, the poem called "O Lovely Heart!"

Though my brother and Thomas MacDonagh differed widely in their methods of writing, their critical standards and judgments were alike. In the article "Obscurity and Poetry," reprinted here, there is a great likeness to the character of

Thomas MacDonagh's last book, both in the matter, that is in the aspects of the subject discussed, and the curiously painstaking method of discussion, due, I believe, to the fact that they were dealing with what was to them an exact science for which they had no exact terms.

Their spoken criticism also had the same characteristics—both of them as quick, to construct as to destroy, to praise as to blame, not sparing in either, though Thomas MacDonagh was the more severe of the two.

. . . . .

There are a few verses which, while out of place in the text, I do not care to omit, and there is one ballad, better than either of these which follow, that it is perhaps too soon to publish. The ballad of the "Foot and Mouth" is an extremely good imitation of the old topical ballad, with all its beautiful badnesses. It is sung to "The Groves of Blarney."

As I walked over to Magheraroarty  
On a summer's evening not long ago,  
I met a maiden most sadly weeping,  
Her cheeks down streaming with the signs of woe.  
I asked what ailed her, as sure became me  
In manner decent with never a smile  
She said I'll tell thee, O youthful stranger,  
What is my danger at the present time.

One last fragment, written for his sister Moya, in Algiers, in 1911, where sounds like this occurred so often that they were part of the place :

## MURDER

The clatter of blades and the clear  
Cold shiver of steel in the night—  
Blood spurts in the strange moonlight—  
The pattering footsteps of fear,  
A little thud and a sigh—  
The babbling whispers are still,  
Clouds come over the hill  
Silence comes over the sky.

GERALDINE PLUNKETT.

*30th June, 1916.*

# OCCULTA

JOSEPH M. PLUNKETT

These were written between  
Nov., 1911, and July, 1915



To  
THE LADY ELECT

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

FOR BY THE GREATNESS OF THE BEAUTY  
AND OF THE CREATURE THE CREATOR OF  
THEM MAY BE SEEN SO AS TO BE KNOWN  
THEREBY

SAP. XIII. 5.

MOREOVER, BY MEANS OF HER I SHALL  
HAVE IMMORTALITY AND SHALL LEAVE  
BEHIND ME AN EVERLASTING MEMORY TO  
THOSE THAT COME AFTER ME

SAP. VIII. 13.





## SEALS OF THUNDER

They say I sing in secrets—they have  
ears

But do not hear ; have eyes but do not  
see

Truth's naked beauty is her panoply,  
Their eyes are blinded with its splendid  
spears.

With shadowy symbols fitted to their  
fears

Now will I clothe a visible mystery,  
Yet none shall understand the prophecy  
Save you, nor pay the tribute of their  
tears.

But you will understand me, for I speak  
First to your heart, then to your soul in  
song

Spreading its golden pennons for the  
strong,

Smiting like sunrise on the snowy peak  
Of glory—and to you the stars belong  
And all the glowing splendours that I  
seek.

## INVOCATION

Sing all ye mouths of music, sing her  
praise  
All stars and birds and flowers, all lovely  
things  
Living in Earth and Heaven, Eyes and  
Wings  
Of Cherubim and Seraphim that raise  
Vision and Love Eternal ; all her ways  
Fill with your music, let no wind that  
sings  
Of sorrow wither Joy's young blossom-  
ings :  
Prepare her paths against the fateful  
days  
When she shall need flower-lamps before  
her feet  
And herald-birds and all the stars to hold  
Her heart upon the difficult laughter-  
sweet  
Blood-salt and sorrow-bitter ways of gold  
That she must tread, until her heart un-  
fold  
Its quivering pinions for the Paraclete.

## DAYBREAK

As blazes forth through clouds the morn-  
ing sun  
So shines your soul, and I must veil my  
sight  
Lest it be stricken to eternal night  
By too much seeing ere my song be done,  
And I must sing your body's clouds that  
run  
To hide you with their crimson, green  
and white  
At sunset dawn and noon—and then the  
flight  
Of stars that chant your praise in unison.

But I beneath the planetary choir  
Still as a stone lie dumbly, till the dark  
Lifts its broad wings—then swift as you  
draw nigher  
I raise Memnonian song, and all must  
hark,  
For you have flung a brand and fixed a  
spark  
Deep in the stone, of your immortal fire.

## THE SPLENDOUR OF GOD

The drunken stars stagger across the sky,  
The moon wavers and sways like a wind-  
blown bud,  
Beneath my feet the earth like drifting  
scud  
Lapses and slides, wallows and shoots  
on high ;  
Immovable things start suddenly flying  
by,  
The city shakes and quavers, a city of  
mud  
And ooze—a brawling cataract is my  
blood  
Of molten metal and fire—like God am I.

When God crushes his passion-fruit for  
our thirst  
And the universe totters—I have burst  
the grape  
Of the world, and let its powerful blood  
escape

Untasted — crying whether my vision  
durst  
See God's high glory in a girl's soft  
shape—  
God ! Is my worship blesséd or accurst ?

## THE LIVING TEMPLE

O Covenant! O Temple! O frail  
pride  
Of God's high glory! Set your snowy  
feet  
On the Red Mountain, while the pinions  
beat  
Of proximate apocalypse. Uncried  
Halloos of havoc, prophecies denied  
Fulfilment till the Dawn of Wonder, fleet  
In songs precursive down the glittering  
street  
Where dripped the blood from wounded  
brows and side.

And you must walk the mountain tops  
where rode  
Gabriel, Raphael, Michael, when the  
stars  
Fell from their places, and where Satan  
strode

To make his leap. Now bend the crack-  
ing spars  
Athwart the mast of the world—and five  
deep scars  
From that strong Cross call you to their  
abode.

## INITIATION

Our lips can only stammer, yet we chant  
High things of God. We do not hope  
to praise

The splendour and the glory of his ways  
Nor light up Heaven with our low de-  
scant :

But we will follow thee, his hierophant  
Filling with secret canticles the days  
To shadow forth in symbols for their  
gaze

What crowns and thrones await his mili-  
tant.

For all his beauty showered on the earth  
Is summed in thee, O thou most perfect  
flower ;

His dew has filled thy chalice, and his  
power

Blows forth the fragrance of thy mystic  
worth :

White blossom of his Tree, behold the  
hour !

Fear not ! thy fruit is Love's most lovely  
birth.



## AARON

I am the Seer : for in you I see  
The fair unfolding of a secret flower,  
The pomp and pageant of eternal power,  
The crown and pride of your high  
destiny.

I am the Prophet : this your prophecy—  
Your deeds and Heaven's fill the echoing  
hour,  
The Splendour of all splendours for your  
dower  
Is given, a witness of the things to be.

I am the Poet, but I cannot sing  
Of your dear worth, or mortal or divine ;  
No music hidden in any song of mine  
Can give you praise ; yet the trimmed rod  
I bring  
To you, O Temple, asking, for a sign,  
That in the morn it may be blossoming.

## IN THE WILDERNESS

Gaunt windy moons bedraggled in the  
dusk  
Have drifted by and withered in their  
shame,  
The once-proud Thunder-Terror, fallen  
tame,  
Noses for truffles with unwhetted tusk;  
A sickening scent of civet and of musk  
Has clogged the nostrils of the Hound  
of Fame—  
But flickering stars are blown to vivid  
flame  
When leaps your beauty from its blazing  
husk.

Blossom of burning solitude! High  
things  
Are lit with splendour—Love your glim-  
mering ray  
Smites them to glory—below them and  
away  
A little song floats upward on the wings  
Of daring, and the thunders of the Day  
Clamour to God the messages it brings.

## ARBOR VITAE

Beside the golden gate there grows a tree  
Whose heavy fruit gives entrance to the  
    ways  
Of Wonder, and the leaves thereof are  
    days  
Of desolation—nights of agony  
The buds and blossom for the fruits to  
    be :  
Rooted in terror the dead trunk decays,  
The burdened branches drooping to the  
    clays  
Clammy with blood of crushed humanity.

But lo the fruit ! Sweet-bitter, red and  
    white,  
Better than wine — better than timely  
    death  
When surfeited with sorrow — Lo the  
    bright

Mansions beyond the gate! And Love,  
thy breath  
Fanning our flaming hearts where entereth  
Thy Song of Songs with Love's tumultuous  
light.

## LA PUCELLE

She walks the azure meadows where the  
stars  
Shed glowing petals on her moon-white  
feet,  
The planets sing to see her, and to greet  
Her, nebulae unfold like nenuphars.  
No dread eclipse the morn of Heaven  
mars  
But fades before her fearing, lest she  
meet  
With darkness, while the reckless comets  
beat  
A path of gold with flickering scimitars.

The battle-ranks of Heaven are march-  
ing past  
Squadron by squadron, battalion, and  
brigade,  
Both horse and foot—Soundless their  
swift parade,

Silent till she appears—then quick they  
cast

Upon the wind the banner of the Maid  
And Heaven rocks with Gabriel's trum-  
pet-blast.

## OCCULTA

Crowns and imperial purple, thrones of  
gold,  
Onyx and sard and blazing diadems,  
Lazuli and hyacinth and powerful gems  
Undreamt of even in Babylon of old  
May for a price be given, bought and  
sold,  
Bartered for silver as was Bethlehem's—  
And yet a Splendour lives that price  
contemns  
Since Five loud Tongues a deeper worth  
have told.

Braver is she than ruby, far more wise  
Even than burning sapphire, than emerald  
Anchored more strongly to impalpable  
skies—  
Upon a diamond pinnacle enwalled  
The banners blaze, and "Victor" she is  
called,  
Youthful, with laughter in her twilit eyes.

## HEAVEN IN HELL

If the dread all-seeing stars  
Ringed Saturn and ruddy Mars  
And their companions all the seven,  
That play before the lord of heaven,  
Each blossoming nebula and all  
The constellations, were to fall  
Low at my feet and worship me,  
Endow me with all sovranly  
Of their wide kingdom of the blue—  
Yet I would not believe that you  
Could love me—If besides the nine  
Encircling legions all-divine  
Should, chanting, teach me that my worth  
Outshone the souls of men on earth  
And seraphs in Heaven, and as well  
That glittering demons deep in Hell  
Fled at my frown, obeyed my word—  
If every flower and beast and bird  
In God's great earth and splendid sea  
Should live and love and fight for me



And my sweet singing and sad art—  
Yet could I not conceive your heart  
Stooping to mine, nor your wild eyes  
Unveiling their deep ecstasies,  
Your tenebrous hair sweep near my lips,  
Your eyelids bring your soul eclipse  
For fear that I should be made blind  
By love's bright image in your mind.  
You are the Standard of high Heaven,  
The Banner brave towards which I've  
    striven  
To force my way—To seize and hold  
The citadel of the city of gold  
I must attain the Flag of love  
Blazoned with the eternal Dove.

Once Immortality, a babe,  
Played with the Future's astrolabe  
And marked a destiny thereon  
More splendid than the morning sun  
Leaping to glory from the earth :  
More wondrous than the wonder-birth  
Of the white moon from darkest rock ;  
More strange than should the sun un-  
    lock  
His leashes and let slip the stars ;

More desperate than the clanging wars  
'Twixt Hell and Heaven; still more  
great

Than any favourable fate;  
But beyond all things beautiful,  
Beyond Mortality's foot-rule  
Of loveliness, and little words—  
Sometimes, at twilit eve, when birds  
Lapse from dream-silence into song,  
Sometimes when Thunder's rolling note  
Reverberates from his iron throat,  
They speak of such high mysteries  
But no one can interpret these—  
All of this dim and deep design  
If I should choose, its crown were mine  
To win or lose by my sole hand  
And heart. I chose, and joined the band  
Of Heaven's adventurers that seek  
To climb the never-conquered peak  
In solitude by their sole might.  
In the dark innocence of night  
I fought unknown inhuman foes  
And left them in their battle-throes,

Hacked a way through them and ad-  
vanced  
To where the stars of morning danced

In your high honour, there I stood  
To see you, till the morning-flood  
Burst from the sky—but your sunrise  
Striking my unaccustomed eyes  
Smote them to darkness, and I turned  
And stumbled towards the night. There  
burned

In heart and eyes a drunken flame  
That sang and clamoured out your name  
And woke a madness in my head.  
The enemies I had left for dead  
Surrounded me with gibbering cries  
And mocked me for my blinded eyes.  
I curst them till they rose in rage  
And flung me down a battle-gage  
To fight them on the floors of Hell  
Where solely they're assailable.  
I took the challenge straightaway  
And leaped—and that was yesterday  
Or was last year, but every hour  
For weary years to break their power  
Still must I fight, but now a gleam  
Of hope comes to me like a dream,  
To-day, though dimly, I do see,  
My vision has come back to me.  
And I have learnt in deepest Hell

Of Heavenly mysteries to tell,  
I with terror-twisted eyes  
Have watched you play in Paradise,  
Tortured and torn by demons seven  
Have kept my heart's gaze fixed on  
    Heaven,  
Save when the smoky mists of blood  
Have blinded me with their fell flood.  
My desert heart all desolate  
Lit with the mirage of your hate  
I searched, my vision held above,  
For green oasis of your love.  
My heart's dry desert, hot and wide,  
Bounded by flames on every side,  
So dim and old no song can tell,  
Covers the tombs where dead kings  
    dwell :  
Now demons dance upon their tombs,  
Shut with the seals of lasting dooms,  
For them until the world be riven  
No hope of Hell, no fear of Heaven.  
But I, alas ! am torn between  
The things unseen and the things seen,  
I alone of the souls I know  
In Hell and Heaven am high and low,  
High in Heaven and low in Hell :

From pit and peak inaccessible  
To all but Satan and seraphim  
My song gains power and grows more  
grim.

Only the straining of my vision  
Toward the playing-fields elysian  
Where you with starry comrades fling  
Your fervours over eye and wing,  
With deep and happy subtlety  
Flavouring the wine-bag of the bee ;  
Thrones, principalities and powers  
Showering with Eden-flowers ;  
With Michael's sword and Raphael's lute  
Slaying and singing, making bruit  
Of lovely laughter with your lips  
Sounding as where the honey drips  
At reaping-time by rippling brooks  
Twining between the barley-stooks ;  
Only your shape that holds my sight,  
Your ways that fill it with delight,  
Your steps that blossom where you've  
trod,  
Your laughter like the breath of God,  
And all the braveries that extol  
The living sword that is your soul :

Only your passion-haunted eyes  
Interpreting your mysteries :  
These are to me and my desire  
For pillar of cloud and pillar of fire,  
A gleam and gloom of heaven, in hell  
A high continuous miracle.

## YOUR SONGS

If I have you then I have everything  
In One, and that One nothing of them all  
Nor all compounded, and within the wall  
Beneath the tower I wait to hear you sing :  
*Love breathing low above the breast of  
Spring,  
Pressing her heart with baby heart and  
small  
From baby lips love-syllables lets fall  
And strokes with gentle hand her quiver-  
ing wing.*

You come rejoicing all the wilderness,  
Filling with praise the land to joy un-  
known,  
Fresh from that garden whose perfumes  
have blown  
Down through the valley of the cyp-  
resses—  
O heart, you know not your own loveli-  
ness,  
Nor these your songs, for they are yours  
alone.

## THE VIGIL OF LOVE

ILLA CANTAT : NOS TACEMUS : QUANDO VER  
VENIT MEUM ?

QUANDO FIAM UTI CHELIDON, UT TACERE  
DESINAM ?

PERDIDI MUSAM TACENDO, NEC ME  
PHŒBUS RESPICIT.

SIC AMYCLAS, CUM TACERENT, PERDIDIT  
SILENTIUM.

CRAS AMET QUI NUNQUAM AMAVIT :  
QUIQUE AMAVIT CRAS AMET.

She sings, but we are silent : when shall  
Spring

Of mine come to me ? I as the swallow  
make

Me vocal, and this desolate silence break ?  
The Muse has left me for I cannot sing ;  
Nor does Apollo now his splendour bring  
To aid my vision, blinded for her sake—  
Thus mute Amyclas would not silence  
wake

And perished in the shadow of its wing.



The wings of the imperishable Dove  
Unfold for flight, and we shall cease from  
    sorrow ;  
Song shall the beauty of dead Silence  
    borrow  
When lips once mute now raise this chant  
    above :  
Love to the loveless shall be given to-  
    morrow,  
To-morrow for the lover shall be love.

## THE LIONS

Her hair's the canopy of heaven,  
Her eyes the pools of healing are,  
Her words wild prophecies whose seven  
Thunders resound from star to star.

Her hands and feet are jewels fine  
Wrought for the edifice of all grace,  
Her breath inebriates like wine—  
The blinding beauty of her face

Is lovelier than the primal light  
And holds her lover's pride apart  
To tame the lions of the night  
That range the wilderness of his heart.

## THE WORM JOSEPH

(I am a worm and no man—DAVID)

The worm is clad in plated mail  
And rides upon the envious Earth  
His power prevails and shall prevail  
When Death gleans in the fields of Birth.

He sips the purple wine of kings  
From burnished skulls and bumper  
    hearts,  
Of fat and famine years he sings  
And fills his granaries from the marts.

His brethren that have sold his name,  
Denied him to his ancient Sire,  
Shall seek him when they feel his fame  
Shall find him when they fear his fire.

But you, O Benjamin, beloved,  
Dove-like and young, with him shall sup  
And then departing unreprieved  
Bear with you his divining cup.

## THE WHITE FEATHER

I've watched with Death a dreadful year  
Nor flinched until you plucked apart  
A feather from the wings of Fear—  
Your innocence has stabbed my heart.

I took your terrible trust to keep,  
Deep in my heart it flames and sears,  
And what I've sown I dare not reap  
For bitterness of blinding tears.

I have not scattered starry seed  
On windy ridges of the skies  
But I have ploughed my heart indeed  
And sown the secrets of your eyes.

And now I cannot reap the grain  
Growing above that stony sod  
Because a shining plume lies plain  
Fallen from following wings of God.

## YOUR FEAR

I try to blame  
When from your eyes the battle-flame  
Leaps : when cleaves my speech the spear  
For fear lest I should speak your name :

Your name that's known  
But to your heart, your fear has flown  
To mine : you've heard not any bird,  
No wings have stirred save yours alone.

Alone your wings  
Have fluttered : half-forgotten things  
Come crowding home into your heart,  
Filling your heart with other Springs,

Springs when you've sung  
Your secret name with happy tongue  
Loudly and innocent as the flowers  
Through hours of laughter proudly  
young.

Young is the year  
And other wings are waking : near  
Your heart my name is knocking loud,  
Ah, be not proud ! You need not fear.

Fearing lest I  
Should wrest your secret from on high  
You will not listen to my name,  
I cannot blame you though I try.

## THE MASK

What have I dared to claim  
That you should thus deny?  
If I have used your name  
My songs to beautify  
Mine is the greater fame.

And I have ever sought  
But to proclaim your praise,  
I have regarded naught  
When wandering by your ways  
But truth, my only thought.

What favour did I ask  
That might constrain your heart  
Or heavier make your task?  
But now that you depart  
Wearing a dreadful mask.

And those accusing eyes  
As still as death and cold  
Making my soul surmise  
My song grown overbold  
And all my words unwise—

Now is my claim from thence  
That you should hear your heart's  
Pleading in my defence  
Before your praise departs  
And all your grace goes hence.



## NO SONG

I loose the secrets of my soul  
And mint my heart to heavy words  
Lest you should need to ask a dole  
Of singing from the winds and birds—  
You will not heed nor bear my soul.

I coin again a greater sum  
Of silence, and you will not heed:  
The fallow spaces call you "Come,  
The season's ripe to sow the seed"—  
Both I and these are better dumb.

I have no way to make you hear,  
No song will echo in your heart;  
Now must I with the fading year  
Fade. Without meeting we must part—  
No song nor silence you will hear.

## THE CLOUD

(O cloud well appointed!—BLAKE)

I do not know how you can shun  
His sight who sees himself a clod  
Whose blindness still outstares the sun  
And gazes on the hidden God.

I do not know how you can hate  
A heart so set about with fire,  
A sword so linked with heavy fate  
And broken with unknown desire.

I see your eyes with glory blaze  
And splendour bind your dusky hair,  
And ever through the nights and days  
My soul must struggle with despair.

Your beauty must forever be  
My cloud of anguish, and your breath  
Raise sorrow like the surging sea  
Around the windy wastes of death.

## MORITURUS TE SALUTAT

These words that may not reach your  
heart

Are wrong from mine in bitter pain,  
You, reading, but despise their art  
That is not art but blood—in vain  
The blood is ebbing from my heart.

The passions of my tortured mind  
Trouble but lightly your calm soul—  
No ugliness besets the blind—  
A shadow on darkness is the whole  
Of my misfortune in your mind.

And yet I love you that you say  
You will not love me—truth is hard,  
'Twere so much easier to give way  
And stay the death-stroke, my reward—  
Courage, brave heart ! 'tis Love you slay.

## THE DARK WAY

Rougher than Death the road I choose  
Yet shall my feet not walk astray,  
Though dark, my way I shall not lose  
For this way is the darkest way.

Set but a limit to the loss  
And something shall at last abide  
The blood-stained beams that form the  
    cross  
The thorns that crown the crucified ;

But who shall lose all things in One,  
Shut out from heaven and the pit  
Shall lose the darkness and the sun  
The finite and the infinite ;

And who shall see in one small flower  
The chariots and the thrones of might  
Shall be in peril from that hour  
Of blindness and the endless night ;

And who shall hear in one short name  
Apocalyptic thunders seven  
His heart shall flicker like a flame  
'Twixt hell's gates and the gates of  
    heaven.

For I have seen your body's grace,  
The miracle of the flowering rod,  
And in the beauty of your face  
The glory of the face of God,

And I have heard the thunderous roll  
Clamour from heights of prophecy  
Your splendid name, and from my soul  
Uprose the clouds of minstrelsy.

Now I have chosen in the dark  
The desolate way to walk alone  
Yet strive to keep alive one spark  
Of your known grace and grace unknown.

And when I leave you lest my love  
Should seal your spirit's ark with clay,  
Spread your bright wings, O shining  
    dove,—  
But my way is the darkest way.

## TOIHTHE

No hungry star ascendant at my birth  
Foretold the famine that consumes my  
    days,  
No flaming sword prohibited the ways  
Of vision where I parch through beauty's  
    dearth,  
Alas ! no flower of heaven or of earth  
Yields loveliness to fill your meed of  
    praise,  
Within my heart no spark divine betrays  
The power to tell of your immortal worth.

You say you are unworthy—how can I  
Fend from your truth the self-destroying  
    dart ?  
Within my shield of vision is no part  
Of mirrored certitude you can deny ;  
You are what God has made you—and  
    my heart,  
And in this faith at least I'll live and die.

## THE LIVING WIRE

I thought I'd never hear your tongue  
Again in this dead world of shame  
As once when heart and world were young  
And then—you spoke my name.

The barriers of space were spread  
Widely between us, when a shaft  
Of driven lightning broke their dread,  
Leaping—and you had laughed.

The harp-strings in the house of gold  
Vibrate when chants the heavenly choir,  
My heart bound to your heart you hold  
With love—and a living wire.

We are not separate, we two,  
(Alas, not one) beneath our feet  
The blessed earth binds me to you,  
The stones upon the street.

The very stones cry out: No more  
Seek separate paths, each step you've trod  
Brings you but nearer than before  
Home to your heart—and God.

## DIE TAUBE

To-day when I beheld you all alone  
And might have stayed to speak, the  
watchful love  
Leapt up within my heart,—then quick  
to prove  
New strength, the fruit of sorrow you  
have sown  
Sank in my stormy bosom like a stone  
Nor dared to rise on flaming plumes  
above  
Passionless winds, till you, O shining  
dove  
Far from the range of wounding words  
had flown.

Far have you flown, and blows of battle  
cease  
To drape the skies in tapestries of blood,  
Now sinks within my heart the heaving  
flood



And Love's long-fluttering pinions I  
release,  
Bidding them not return till blooms the  
bud  
On olive branch, borne by the bird of  
peace.

## THE SPARK

Because I used to shun  
Death and the mouth of hell  
And count my battle won  
If I should see the sun  
The blood and smoke dispel,

Because I used to pray  
That living I might see  
The dawning light of day  
Set me upon my way  
And from my fetters free,

Because I used to seek  
Your answer to my prayer  
And that your soul should speak  
For strengthening of the weak  
To struggle with despair,

Now I have seen my shame  
That I should thus deny  
My soul's divinest flame,  
Now shall I shout your name.  
Now shall I seek to die

By any hands but these  
In battle or in flood,  
On any lands or seas,  
No more shall I share ease,  
No more shall I spare blood

When I have need to fight  
For heaven or for your heart,  
Against the powers of light  
Or darkness I shall smite  
Until their might depart,

Because I know the spark  
Of God has no eclipse,  
Now Death and I embark  
And sail into the dark  
With laughter on our lips.



EARLIER AND  
LATER POEMS

JOSEPH M. PLUNKETT



To HIS GODSON  
DONAGH MACDONAGH





## THE NEW JUDAS

Thee, Christ, I sought to sell all day  
And hurried to the mart to hold  
A hundred heavy coins of gold  
And lo! they would not pay.

But " thirty pieces of silver " cried  
(Thine ancient price), and I agreed,  
Six for each of the wounds that bleed  
In hands and feet and side.

" Including cross and crown " we priced,  
Is now their claim and I refuse,  
I will not bargain all to lose,  
I will not sell Thee, Christ !

I SEE HIS BLOOD UPON THE  
ROSE

I see his blood upon the rose  
And in the stars the glory of his eyes,  
His body gleams amid eternal snows,  
His tears fall from the skies.

I see his face in every flower ;  
The thunder and the singing of the birds  
Are but his voice—and carven by his  
power  
Rocks are his written words.

All pathways by his feet are worn,  
His strong heart stirs the ever-beating  
sea,  
His crown of thorns is twined with every  
thorn,  
His cross is every tree.

## THE STARS SANG IN GOD'S GARDEN

The stars sang in God's garden ;  
The stars are the birds of God ;  
The night-time is God's harvest,  
Its fruits are the words of God.

God ploughed His fields at morning,  
God sowed His seed at noon,  
God reaped and gathered in His corn  
With the rising of the moon.

The sun rose up at midnight,  
The sun rose red as blood,  
It showed the Reaper, the dead Christ,  
Upon His cross of wood.

For many live that one may die,  
And one must die that many live—  
The stars are silent in the sky  
Lest my poor songs be fugitive.

## I SAW THE SUN AT MIDNIGHT

I saw the Sun at midnight, rising red,  
Deep-hued yet glowing, heavy with the  
stain

Of blood-compassion, and I saw It gain  
Swiftly in size and growing till It spread  
Over the stars ; the heavens bowed their  
head

As from Its heart slow dripped a crimson  
rain,

Then a great tremor shook It, as of pain—  
The night fell, moaning, as It hung there  
dead.

O Sun, O Christ, O bleeding Heart of  
flame !

Thou givest Thine agony as our life's  
worth,

And makest it infinite, lest we have dearth  
Of rights wherewith to call upon Thy  
Name ;

Thou pawnest Heaven as a pledge for  
Earth

And for our glory sufferest all shame.

IT IS HER VOICE WHO DWELLS  
WITHIN THE EMERALD WALL  
AND SAPPHIRE HOUSE OF  
FLAME :

Behold! a white Hawk tangled in a  
twisted net of dreams  
Struggles no more, but lines the cords  
with feathers from her breast  
Seeing herself within the mystic circle of  
my voice,  
Whereat forthwith its music turns to  
blades and tongues of fire  
Rending the bonds and weaving round  
the Hawk a skein of light  
Raising the work and the Toiler to the  
never-ending Day.

## A WAVE OF THE SEA

I am a wave of the sea  
And the foam of the wave  
And the wind of the foam  
And the wings of the wind.

My soul's in the salt of the sea  
In the weight of the wave  
In the bubbles of foam  
In the ways of the wind.

My gift is the depth of the sea  
The strength of the wave  
The lightness of foam  
The speed of the wind.

## WHITE WAVES ON THE WATER

White waves on the water,  
Gold leaves on the tree,  
As Mananan's daughter  
Arose from her sea.

The bud and the blossom,  
The fruit of the foam  
From Ocean's dark bosom  
Arose, from the home.

She came at your calling,  
O winds of the world,  
When the ripe fruit was falling  
And the flowers unfurled.

She came at your crying  
O creatures of earth,  
And the sound of your sighing  
Made music and mirth.

She came at your keening  
O dreamers of doom,  
And your sleep had new dreaming  
And splendour and bloom.

## THIS HERITAGE TO THE RACE OF KINGS

This heritage to the race of kings  
Their children and their children's seed  
Have wrought their prophecies in deed  
Of terrible and splendid things.

The hands that fought, the hearts that  
    broke  
In old immortal tragedies,  
These have not failed beneath the skies,  
Their children's heads refuse the yoke.

And still their hands shall guard the sod  
That holds their father's funeral urn,  
Still shall their hearts volcanic burn  
With anger of the sons of God.

No alien sword shall earn as wage  
The entail of their blood and tears,  
No shameful price for peaceful years  
Shall ever part this heritage.



1841—1891

The wind rose, the sea rose  
A wave rose on the sea,  
It sang the mournful singing  
Of a sad centenary ;

It sang the song of an old man  
Whose heart had died of grief,  
Whose soul had dried and withered  
At the falling of the leaf.

It sang the song of a young man  
Whose heart had died of pain  
When Spring was black and withered  
And the winter come again.

The wind rose, the sea rose  
A wave rose on the sea  
Swelled with the mournful singing  
Of a sad centenary.

1867

All our best ye have branded  
When the people were choosing them,  
When 'twas Death they demanded  
Ye laughed! Ye were losing them.  
But the blood that ye spilt in the night  
Crieth loudly to God,  
And their name hath the strength and  
the night  
Of a sword for the sod.

In the days of our doom and our dread  
Ye were cruel and callous,  
Grim Death with our fighters ye fed  
Through the jaws of the gallows;  
But a blasting and blight was the fee  
For which ye had bartered them,  
And we smite with the sword that from ye  
We had gained when ye martyred them!

TO CAITILÍN NÍ NUILLACHÁIN

THE LITTLE BLACK ROSE SHALL BE RED  
AT LAST

Because we share our sorrows and our  
joys  
And all your dear and intimate thoughts  
are mine  
We shall not fear the trumpets and the  
noise  
Of battle, for we know our dreams divine,  
And when my heart is pillowed on your  
heart  
And ebb and flowing of their passionate  
flood  
Shall beat in concord love through every  
part  
Of brain and body—when at last the  
blood  
O'er leaps the final barrier to find  
Only one source wherein to spend its  
strength

And we two lovers, long but one in mind  
And soul, are made one only flesh at  
length ;  
Praise God if this my blood fulfils the  
doom  
When you, dark rose, shall redden into  
bloom.

NOMINA SUNT CONSEQUENTIA  
RERUM

I felt within my heart awake and glow  
A spirit of Love's excellence that slept,  
Then I beheld Love as from afar he  
stept  
So joyful that his face I scarce could  
know.

He said: Now think all honour me to  
show  
And through each word of his Love's  
laughter crept;  
Then as my lord awhile his splendour  
kept,  
Gazing there whence he came, where he  
would go,

Nuala and Columba did I see  
Come towards the place where I was  
lingering,  
One marvel first, the other following,  
And, even as retelleth memory,  
Love said: That one who follows this  
our Spring  
Hath Love for name, so like is she to me.

*(From the Vita Nuova of Dante, translated)*

MY LADY HAS THE GRACE OF  
DEATH

My lady has the grace of Death  
Whose charity is quick to save,  
Her heart is broad as heaven's breath,  
Deep as the grave.

She found me fainting by the way  
And fed me from her babeless breast  
Then played with me as children play,  
Rocked me to rest.

When soon I rose and cried to heaven  
Moaning for sins I could not weep,  
She told me of her sorrows seven  
Kissed me to sleep.

And when the morn rose bright and ruddy  
And sweet birds sang on the branch  
above  
She took my sword from her side all  
bloody  
And died for love.

## O LOVELY HEART

O lovely heart! O Love  
No more be sorrowful  
Blue are the skies above  
The Spring is beautiful  
And all the flowers  
Are blest with gentle showers.

Although the morning skies  
Are heavy now with rain  
And your incredulous eyes  
Are wondering at your pain,  
Let them but weep.  
And after give them sleep.

O sorrowful! O heart  
Whose joy is difficult  
Though we two are apart—  
Know you shall yet exult  
And all the years  
Be fresher for your tears.

I LOVE YOU WITH MY EVERY  
BREATH

I love you with my every breath,  
I make you songs like thunder birds,  
Give you my life—you give me death  
And stab me with your dreadful words.

You laid my head against your heart  
Last night, my lips upon your breast  
And now you say that we must part  
For fear your heart should be oppressed :

You cannot go against the world  
For my sake only—thus your phrase,  
But I—God's beauty is unfurled  
In your gold hair, and in your gaze

The wisdom of God's bride—each soul  
That shares his love, and yours and mine,  
Two lovers share your aureole  
And one is mortal, one divine :

One came on earth that you might know  
His love for you—that you deny,  
Now you give me this equal blow :  
One died for you, and one will die.



O BRIGHT! THY STATELINESS  
AND GRACE

O Bright! thy stateliness and grace  
Thy bearing and thy dignity  
Bring intuition of the place  
That still is native unto thee.

Solely thy native airs delight  
Can still thy silences embalm,  
Solely thy native leven smite  
Through thunders of unbroken calm.

A twyfold presence is and seems  
To emanate from thine atmosphere,  
Clothed in reality and dreams  
It is in heaven, and it is here.

The forms of love enfolding thee  
To flowers of earth and heaven belong,  
Whose roots take hold in mystery  
Too deep for song, too deep for song.

WHITE DOVE OF THE WILD  
DARK EYES

White Dove of the wild dark eyes  
Faint silver flutes are calling  
From the night where the star-mists rise  
And fire-flies falling  
Tremble in starry wise,  
Is it you they are calling ?

White Dove of the beating heart  
Shrill golden reeds are thrilling  
In the woods where the shadows start,  
While moonbeams, filling  
With dreams the floweret's heart  
Its dreams are thrilling.

White Dove of the folded wings,  
Soft purple night is crying  
With the voice of fairy things  
For you, lest dying  
They miss your flashing wings,  
Your splendorous flying.

MY SOUL IS SICK WITH  
LONGING



My soul is sick with longing, shaken  
with loss,  
Yea, shocked with love lost sudden in a  
dream,  
Dream-love dream-taken, swept upon the  
stream  
Of dreaming Truth, dreamt true, yet  
deemed as dross :  
Dreamt Truth that is to waking Truth  
a gloss,  
Dream-love that is to the life of loves  
that seem  
To bear the rood of love's eternal theme,  
The strength that brings to Calvary their  
cross.

I dreamt that love had lit, a burning bird  
On one green bough of Time, of that  
dread tree  
Whereto my soul was crucified : that he

68 MY SOUL IS SICK WITH LONGING

Sang with a seraph's voice some wondrous word  
Blotting out pain, but swift the branch I heard  
Break, withered, and the song ceased suddenly.

WHEN ALL THE STARS BECOME  
A MEMORY

When all the stars become a memory  
Hid in the heart of heaven ; when the sun  
At last is resting from his weary run  
Sinking to glorious silence in the sea  
Of God's own glory : when the immensity  
Of Nature's universe its fate has won  
And its reward : when death to death is  
done  
And deathless Being's all that is to  
be—

Your praise shall 'scape the grinding of  
the mills :  
My songs shall live to drive their blind-  
ing cars  
Through fiery apocalypse to Heaven's  
bars !  
When God's loosed might the prophet's  
word fulfils,  
My songs shall see the ruin of the hills,  
My songs shall sing the dirges of the  
stars.

## YOUR PRIDE

I sit and beg beside the gate,  
I watch and wait to see you pass,  
You never pass the portals old,  
That gate of gold like gleaming glass.

Yet you have often wandered by,  
I've heard you sigh, I've seen you smile,  
You never smile now as you stray—  
You can but stay a little while.

And now you know your task is hard,  
You must discard your jewelled gear,  
You must not fear to crave a dole  
From any soul that waits you here.

And you have still your regal pride  
And you have sighed that I should see  
Your gifts to me beside the gate,  
Your pride, your great humility.

IF I SHOULD NEED TO TEAR  
ASIDE

If I should need to tear aside  
The veils that hide both Heaven and  
Hell  
To tell you that a soul had died  
That once but tried to love you well  
No breath should blow those veils aside.

But if I found your soul could save  
From hell's deep grave my sinking soul  
Only if willingly you gave  
I'd take—and then I'd crave the whole  
Knowing you generous and brave.

## WHEN I AM DEAD

When I am dead let not your murderous  
tears  
Deface with their slow dropping my sad  
tomb  
Lest your grey head grow greyer for my  
doom  
And fill its echoing corridors with fears :  
Your heart that my stone monument  
appears  
While yet I live—O give it not to gloom  
When I am dead, but let some joy illumine  
The ultimate Victory that stings and  
sears.

Already I can hear the stealthy tread  
Of sorrow breaking through the hush of  
day ;  
I have no hope you will avert my dread,  
Too well I know, that soon am mixed  
with clay,  
They mourn the body who the spirit slay  
And those that stab the living weep the  
dead.



THE CLAIM THAT HAS THE  
CANKER ON THE ROSE

The claim that has the canker on the  
rose

Is mine on you, man's claim on Paradise  
Hopelessly lost that ceaselessly he sighs  
And all unmerited God still bestows ;  
The claim on the invisible wind that  
blows

The flame of charity to enemies  
Not to the deadliest sinner, God denies—  
Less claim than this have I on you, God  
knows.

I cannot ask for any thing from you  
Because my pride is eaten up with shame  
That you should think my poverty a  
claim

Upon your charity, knowing it is true  
That all the glories formerly I knew  
Shone from the cloudy splendour of your  
name.

## YOUR FAULT.

It is of her virtues you evade the snare,  
Then for her faults you'll fall in love with her.

—FRANCIS THOMPSON.

Your fault, Lady, is to be  
Womankind's epitome ;  
No girl's, but girl essential is your being  
Could we but see beyond our mortal  
seeing,  
Could we but hear beyond our mortal  
song  
The song immortal of seraphic throng,  
Could we but know upon each mortal  
sign  
The seal of immortality divine.

'Tis no virtue that you are  
Virtuous—nor for the star  
To shine, nor flowers to array  
Themselves in glory from the clay ;  
That yours is wisdom old and new  
For this we praise your God—not you ;  
Yet there is something we can still  
Sing in your praise—your wayward will ;  
Something there is that you may own,  
Your faults, thank God, are yours alone

Not heaven's, nor ever may we doubt  
If these from heaven can shut you out  
Ourselves shall storm the desperate road  
And welcome you to your abode.

'Tis for this fault we love you, that your  
eyes

Regard not unattainable Paradise,  
That not amid the fiery stars you spread  
The nets of your hair, not ever towards  
the dead

Set your unwavering feet, your gentle  
words

Clothe not in thunders that make mute  
the birds,

Nor yet perplex your pentecostal tongue  
With songs too crazy to be said or sung,  
Never make moan of other's joys and  
fears

And see all Nature weeping through your  
tears,

Fly not, Icarian-wingéd, to the sun  
Leaving the many to pursue the one,  
Chasing, yet hooded hawk, a Shining  
Dove,

Nor break your heart about the feet of  
Love.

THERE IS NO DEED I WOULD  
NOT DARE

There is no deed I would not dare,  
Unloving, but to gain your smile,  
No shame or sorrow I would not share  
(Though withering in a wintry while)  
If I could win your friendship's grace  
While Time's slow pace is lagging still  
Though my lost heart should leave no  
trace  
Of Love on Heaven's immortal will.

There is no death I would not crave  
If thus I'd save your heart from tears ;  
To snatch your glory from the grave  
I'd brave all fates and feel no fears  
Although my heart be calm and cold  
And feel no flame nor mirth of Love,  
Nor buoyed with hope be overbold  
To seize and hold the shining Dove.

But I do love you and I know  
Nor any deed nor difficult quest  
To try to compass, that would show

THERE IS NO DEED I WOULD NOT DARE

The fire that burns within my breast ;  
I cannot draw the dazzling blade  
My body sheathes, Love's splendid sword,  
Lest you be blinded—and dismayed  
To silence fall my wounded word.

If I would do each desperate thing  
Only to bring you ease or mirth  
What pinnacle for Love's strong wing  
Towers above the heights of Earth ?  
I cannot give your soul belief  
In the great visions of my heart,  
I cannot, and it is my grief  
Do aught to please you—but depart.

## NEW LOVE

The day I knew you loved me we had  
lain  
Deep in Coill Doraca down by Gleann  
na Scath  
Unknown to each till suddenly I saw  
You in the shadow, knew oppressive pain  
Stopping my heart, and there you did  
remain  
In dreadful beauty fair without a flaw,  
Blinding the eyes that yet could not  
withdraw  
Till wild between us drove the wind and  
rain.

Breathless we reached the brugh before  
the west  
Burst in full fury—then with lightning  
stroke  
The tempest in my heart roared up and  
broke  
Its barriers, and I swore I would not rest  
Till that mad heart was worthy of your  
breast  
Or dead for you — and then this love  
awoke.

BEFORE THE GLORY OF YOUR  
LOVE

Before the glory of your love  
The beauty of the world is bowed  
In adoration, and to prove  
Your praises every Truth is proud :

Each silent witness testifies  
Your wonder by its native worth  
And dumbly its delight denies  
That your wild music may have birth :

Only this madman cannot keep  
Your peace, but flings his bursting heart  
Forth to red battle,—while they weep  
Your music who have held apart.

## TO GRACE

ON THE MORNING OF HER CHRISTENING,  
APRIL 7TH, 1916

The powerful words that from my heart  
Alive and throbbing leap and sing  
Shall bind the dragon's jaws apart  
Or bring you back a vanished spring ;  
They shall unseal and seal again  
The fount of wisdom's awful flow,  
So this one guerdon they shall gain  
That your wild beauty still they show.

The joy of Spring leaps from your eyes,  
The strength of dragons in your hair,  
In your young soul we still surprise  
The secret wisdom flowing there ;  
But never word shall speak or sing  
Inadequate music where above  
Your burning heart now spreads its wing  
In the wild beauty of your Love.



## PROTHALAMION

Now a gentle dusk shall fall  
Slowly on the world, and all  
The singing voices softly cease  
And a silence and great peace  
Cover all the blushing earth  
Free from sadness as from mirth  
While with willing feet but shy  
She shall tremble and draw nigh  
To the bridal chamber decked  
With darkness by the architect  
Of the seven starry spheres  
And the pit's eternal fires  
Of the nine angelic choirs  
And her happy hopes and fears.  
Then this magic dusk of even  
Shall give way before the night—  
Close the curtains of delight!  
Silence is the only song  
That can speak such mysteries  
As to earth and heaven belong  
When one flesh has compassed these.

SEE THE CROCUS' GOLDEN  
CUP

See the crocus' golden cup  
Like a warrior leaping up  
At the summons of the spring,  
"Guard turn out!" for welcoming  
Of the new elected year.  
The blackbird now with psalter clear  
Sings the ritual of the day  
And the lark with bugle gay  
Blows reveillé to the morn,  
Earth and heaven's latest born.

## SIGNS AND WONDERS

The bread is mine  
Unmixed with leaven  
And the purple wine  
Of the Vines of Heaven ;  
I have asked to see  
If my love shall be  
At the Throne of Three  
With the splendid Seven.

To a blinding car  
Four living creatures  
Enharnessed are,  
Whence One whose features  
Outshine the skies  
At noon, replies  
With her burning eyes—  
The eternal teachers—

“ Thy love is a sword  
In the heart of slaughter,  
Thy love is a word  
Of the high-king's daughter,  
A song that is sung  
In a mystic tongue,  
A fountain sprung  
From the Living Water.

“ And thy love shall stand  
In the courts of splendour  
At the King’s left hand,  
Where she shall render  
The gifts of Love  
To the throne above,  
And a shining dove  
Shall there attend her.

“ For thy love is a sign  
In the Book of Wonder,  
A mark divine  
On the seals of thunder  
That the Spirit’s light  
And the Water’s might  
And the Blood, red-bright  
Have witnessed under.”

OBSCURITY AND POETRY



## OBSCURITY AND POETRY.\*

By JOSEPH PLUNKETT

There are two kinds of obscurity—the obscurity of Art and the obscurity of Nature. They may be called the obscurity of mist and the obscurity of mystery. They have nothing in common. They are as opposed as the poles.

A thing may be hidden by Art in two ways. It may be overlaid with irrelevancies, or its expression may be restrained to the point of poverty. The effect is the same. The essentials are hidden. In Nature also (but by Nature we mean not so much apparent Nature as real Nature) there are two ways by which things may be hidden. They may become so common as not to be regarded, or they may be so uncommon as not to permit regard. They may be as universal as light or as unique as the sun. Observation involves comparison, and that which is entirely universal or absolutely unique—or both—cannot be compared with anything.

\*From a Critical Notice of Verses which appeared in "The Irish Review," February, 1914, Collected Poems by A., and Lyrical Poems by Thomas MacDonagh.

An artist is one who has the power of unveiling Nature, only to substitute the veils of Art. Indeed it is by imposing the veils of Art that he is enabled to show the real qualities and relations of things. For the veils of Art need not be obscure. The vision of the artist is of such a kind that it penetrates these veils and thus can view the realities underlying them that otherwise could not be confronted. It is through his Art that the artist sees.

The artist's task, however, is to make others see ; for all Art is revelation. This he does chiefly by the great instrument of inspiration, Choice. He chooses the portion or phase of Truth that he is to reveal, and he chooses the veils that he must impose in order to make that Truth visible. Here it is that the artist is liable to obscurity. He is apt to lose the consciousness of his purpose of revelation to others in the overwhelming devotion that the vision requires. Then it is that the quality of his inspiration decides the nature of the obscurity that is certain to result. If this vision be powerful and his inspiration deep he will choose to scale the topless peaks of beauty and attempt to set down the splendour of the spreading plains of Truth. He will fail to clothe his vision with the necessary veils. His work will have the obscurity of Nature. If, on the other hand, his inspiration be more subtle and superficial, running hither and thither in intricate mazes of wonder, he will



multiply veils on detailed portions of his subject, adding one to another according as the various points of view and possible relations of parts come within his cognizance. His work will have the obscurity of Art.

As the principle of all Art can be exemplified in the production of any Art, and as poetry is the most satisfying of all the Arts, better examples could not be chosen to demonstrate the obscurities of Mist and Mystery than two poets in whose works these opposite tendencies exist. It so happens that something of one of each of these tendencies to obscurity may be observed in two books of poems that have just been issued.

Æ. has followed the two Arts of painting and poetry, and in both of these has manifested the rhythmic creation of beauty. If sometimes we have been in doubt as to which of these arts we ought to attribute some of his work, our confusion is not an arraignment of his methods, but rather an assertion that by means of the two arts sprung from the same necessity, and appealing to like faculties of appreciation he has contrived to satisfy us of their unity and origin and essential identity of purpose. Though many have remarked on the unusual similarity of Æ.'s poetry and his painting—a similarity which leaves his poetry easily the superior from the point of view of craft, as it never has the faulty draughtsmanship nor the glaring crudities of colour occasionally visible in his

pictures—none seem to have mentioned the outstanding difference always and everywhere observable on comparison of these two media of expression. It is simply this, that one is never in doubt as to what is on the canvas, but one is very frequently in doubt as to what is included in Æ.'s poems. Now let us be very careful and very clear. One might say, "We know that there is on the canvas a certain amount of paint, and in the poems a certain number of syllables." But we know much more of what is on the canvas. We may not know the ulterior meaning of the picture, if it have one; we may not know whether the figures wading in the light-flooded sea are illusions of flesh and blood or realities of the spirit; we may not know the secrets of the symbols, but we do know the symbols. But in the poems we sometimes know nothing more than the suite of the syllables. We taste the honey of their sound, but we get no milk of their meaning. They may call up flashes of colour and shape, but these always fade and pass.

And burning multitudes pour through my  
 heart too bright, too blind,  
 Too swift and hurried in their flight to leave  
 their tale behind.

*(The Winds of Angus).*

We do not know these symbols—if they are symbols. We could not be trusted to recognise

them again. This may be due in some measure to our limitations, but it is these limitations that the artist must take into account. We have, however, some reason to believe that much of Æ.'s obscurity is deliberate, or at least conscious. For when he is roused to rage he becomes cold and clear. When he wishes to express anger or disgust towards men and conditions, all his immutable immensities go by the board. He ceases to be the prophet of pantheism, seeing the universal in the smallest of things and the immortality of Nothingness at the end of all. He denies the kingship of the beggar and the divinity of the worm. He becomes Nietzschean in his contempt for humility :

He does not love the bended knees  
The soul made worm-like in his sight.

*(Faith).*

He asks with the Old Aristocrat :

How came this pigmy rabble spun,  
After the gods and kings of old ?

*(The Iron Age).*

He feels the reality and hates the oppression of death :

The worship of the dead is not  
A worship that our hearts allow.

*(On behalf of some Irishmen not followers of  
Tradition)*

The portion of Truth that he will have is that which seems to be cut off from the body of Truth, and then he prefers to hold it as a heresy—which is the last cold profanity of Pride :

No blazoned banner we unfold—  
 One charge alone we give to youth  
 Against the sceptred myth to hold  
 The golden heresy of Truth.

*(Ibid).*

With the withdrawal of his superimposed beauties of imagery, his obscurity vanishes and his meaning stands clearly forth, freed from the mist of his Art.

As this is the first issue of Thomas MacDonagh's Lyrical Poems, it is primarily necessary to tell something of its quality. There is a quiet depth of meaning and a calm splendour of expression throughout the great poems in this book that unquestionably raise them to the region of essential poetry. Tried by any of the touchstones of criticism, clarity, lyrical beauty, perfection of imagery, effortless rapture, sympathy of human feeling, profundity of Vision—everywhere we catch the glint of perfect gold. Witness this passage from *The Golden Joy* :

It is the Spring and these the songs of Spring,  
 Songs of the rathe rose and the lily's hope—  
 For now the Poet hears the lily call

That came to Christ from beauty's natural shrine  
And, through his lips, soared sacred out and up  
Into the space beyond of holiness,  
The aether of the rapture of High God.  
Oh! it steals to us like the breath of dawn  
That fills the pipes of Nature with sweet sounds,  
Steals low and swells anon into chant  
To throb and triumph through the heart of Spring  
With the clear canticle of Love that hails  
The orient Epiphany of Joy.  
And now the poet heart is calling too  
And called aloud by every voice divine  
Behind our wall out through the lattices.\*  
Now is the season of the Golden Joy,  
Now is the season of the birth of Love—  
The perfect passion of the heart of God,  
The rapture of the beauty of the world,  
The rapture of eternity of bliss!  
For all our Winters pass and all rains go,  
And all the flowers of Joy appear again,  
And spring is green with figs more beautiful  
And sweet with odours of the mystic Tree  
That droops its branches over Heaven and Earth,  
Scattering flowers and fruit and passionate wine  
Down into all the places of the sun,  
And into all the nether places dim  
Fragrant with ecstasy of Joy and Peace,  
And who will steep his senses in the flowers  
And who will feed his spirit on the fruit  
And who will fill his veins with the great wine

Shall see no Winters and shall feel no rains  
But Joy perpetual in the Land of God.

In his essay on Coleridge, Francis Thompson says :  
“ There is not one great poet who has escaped the charge of obscurity, fantasticalness, or affectation of utterance,” but we may ask, Is there one great poet who has not deserved the charge of obscurity ? If we limit the charge to that kind of obscurity that we have called the obscurity of Nature or of Mystery, then to our knowledge there is none. Certainly is some of his poems Mr. MacDonagh deserves the charge. Much of *The Book of Images* is difficult if not impossible to interpret, but the Vision is not less clear for that, and the one thing that we must insist on is clarity of Vision. Without clarity of Vision there can be no certainty of inspiration. It is only in utterance that the great poet is obscure. And it is only in utterance that Mr. MacDonagh is obscure. That is not because he does not speak plainly, it is because he speaks too plainly to be understood. Nor is it because all utterance is inadequate. It is not that his words do not mean enough. It is that they mean too much. When he says :

The phases of the might  
Of God in mortal sight  
I saw, in God's forethought  
Fashioned and wrought,

Now wrought in spirit and clay,  
In rare and common day,  
And shown in symbol and sign  
Of power divine,

he is claiming inspiration and prophecy as it is claimed in the Book of Wisdom. He is like Blake, holding infinity in the palm of his hand. He is stating his Vision of all Being in eight short lines. He makes a verse of the Universe. He fills all the heavens with a syllable and with a word holds the gates of hell. His is the true dominion of the mystic. In his symbolism Mr. MacDonagh shows the same power :

The flowers of heaven and earth,  
The moons of death and birth,  
The seasons of the soul,

are three clear images which illustrate and illuminate the obscurity of his form and the precision and plenitude of his meaning. And indeed the first of these serves to remind us of the essential teaching of all the great mystical poets from Solomon to Francis Thompson—the doctrine that binds Æ. and Thomas MacDonagh in the same service of beauty, the creed subscribed to by<sup>4</sup> all who have experienced the divine vision ; for the flowers of heaven and earth are the same flowers.







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