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Some Adventures of the Soul

by C.M. Verschoyle

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SOME ADVENTURES OF THE SOUL
AND
THE DELIVERER

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THE SOUL
AND
THE DELIVERER

BY
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LONDON
JOHN M. WATKINS
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CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE SEVEN THORNS	7
OUT OF EGYPT	9
TEMPTATION	16
A PRAYER	18
QUEST	20
WAYFARING LOVE	22
THE GIFT	26
VISION	29
ILLUMINATION	33
SATIETY	34
THE PRICE	35
THE KING'S SON	37
THE GARDEN	39
THE WAY OF PERFECTION	43
CRUCIFIXION ON THE MOUNTAIN	44
DEPARTURE	50
DIALOGUE	51
AS TO A FEAST	54
THE DIVINE BEAUTY	55
THE SONG CEASES	56
—	
THE DELIVERER	59

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SOME ADVENTURES OF THE SOUL

THE SEVEN THORNS

ON the grassy hillside in the golden morning
Woven thick with gossamer and starred with
diamond dew,
Came a lonely shepherd piping on a reed-flute
Magic songs of dawning and a world made new.
Seven thorns behind him, seven sheep before him,
Seven larks above him, rising in the blue.

Climbs an agèd woman laden with a bundle
Slung across her shoulders, old and sad she seems ;
Age had bent her double, but she chanted softly,
Murmuring of sorrow's solacing in dreams.
Seven hills for climbing, seven joys for missing,
Seven stones for crossing seven running streams.

"Mother with the bundle, let me guide your
footsteps,
Let me help you onward, life is sad alone."
"Gentle son, I thank you ; leaning on your shoulder
I shall travel bravely till my journey's done.
Seven days of wandering, seven nights of weeping,
Seven griefs I carry for stars that never shone."

Over grassy mountains, over purple moorland,
Through the beech and pine woods led the way
they trod ;
Hard she leant upon him, heavy was her bundle,
Heavy seemed their dragging feet, as though
with iron shod.
Seven hours to strive in, seven breaths to die in,
Seven saints to wait for them beside the throne of
God.

Still the young are piping, still the old are passing,
Journeying through Life and Death, and half
across the sky ;
Under clouds or sunshine, under dark or moonlight,
Straggle lonely pilgrims with tattered flags held
high.
Seven circling cycles, seven lordly races,
Seven guides lest they should pass the seven
heavens by.

OUT OF EGYPT

When the soul has received her summons she cannot
but leave all.

I LINGERED at the banquet of the world ;
High revelry
And choric minstrelsy
Surrounded us, but piercing through the music
evermore
Thrilled a faint echo from some far-off shore
That gave a pause
To the guests' loud applause,
And dimmed the torches' steady shine ;
Mingling a vague disquiet with the wine,
A breath of possible magic to the sound
Of all familiar utterance around.
Strange restlessness ! that quickened and was fain
Of suffering to be.
Then, in the plangent minor of a present pain,
The witching music rose and sank again :
Dim I discerned some vanished harmony,
Some blest solution missed in the sad strain :
Meseemed a maimèd part of some great whole,
But every chord struck out,—Come forth, oh Soul !
I raised the goblet to my trembling lips,
Where, wreathed in snow,
The jewelled bubbles floated to and fro

Upon a crimson drink ;
Striving to sink
So wondrous a desire in present bliss,
In the sweet draught and in the stinging kiss
The icy tankard leaves on scented finger-tips.
Yet the taste said to me,—
Not here is ecstasy.
I turned me to loved eyes bent upon mine,
And on a tender breast
I sought for rest,
Weeping warm tears that brought me no relief
From the strange grief,
That knew no comforting for song or wine.
But in the pulse of that dear heart I heard
A hidden word
That told of somewhat distant, more divine ;

And lo ! a more insistent supplication stole,—
Come forth, oh Soul !

The strong appealing of the inner voice
Controlled my choice,
Therefore I left my festal robe, and unclothed,
stark,
Shrinking with dread crept out into the dark ;
And at long last, resistance slain,
I was delivered from those lesser joys
Into the higher mysteries of pain.
Athirst for sight,
A speck of dust blown forth into the night ;

Quitting the tabernacle of my mean abiding,
I set my feet upon the road, to seek
The Hallows none may speak,
The tent unto its maker, Earth, confiding.

Through the darkness hovered there
The legions of the Powers of Air ;
From whose tempting
The pilgrim Soul knows no exempting :
I saw their Prince, with starry eyes
And tortured face,
Whose words were poignant travesties
Of heavenly grace ;
His brow, borne downward with a lurid coronet,
That once with gems was set,
Now held the burnt-out stars that erst shone bright
In Lucifer's great crown of light.
He bore upon his wings the luring of the Earth,
Its opal tears, and bitter, changing mirth ;
With such sad joys he strove to ensnare
The questing Soul,
But distant glimmered fair
The mystic goal.

Hell's mightiest embassies
Around me gathered, smiling,
But oh, the anguish in their loveliness,
The wormwood in the cup of their beguiling.
Grievous the penance on these wretches laid,
Pain they may not confess,

Sharp, tearless agonies ;
 And sore hearts yearning
 Beneath the burning,
 That yet must strive all wanderers to betray,
 And the unslayable to slay.
 God ! that their grieving
 Might find relieving.
 Courage, my brothers ! (thus I cried) I know
 Hell cannot hold that which desires to go,
 Be unafraid :
 I hear the call across these glaciers roll,—
 Come forth, oh Soul !

Still on I fared, where all the tempests rest,
 Till at some great conductor's signal they arise
 To bear their part in Heaven's symphonies :
 They coil about the purple deeps
 Where, shot with vivid Lightning, sleeps
 Dull black-palled Thunder
 In a sullen wonder ;
 On whose breast
 Drips liquid fire, aflame with violet stars,
 Leaving deep scars
 Upon the shrinking denizens of night,—
 God's messengers of light.

Then did I slough
 This pitiful garment of mortality ;
 And piercing through
 The rending veil that some have called the sky,

I climbed the swinging ladder of Love's bands,
Held fast in angel-hands,
Through dizzying cloud-wrack, where
Like swathes of meadow-grass lie layer on
layer
Those monstrous billowy shapes, servants of God,
That sink in moisture,
Or, in foamy vesture,
Spread a baptismal mantle at His nod :
Or gather, soft and white,
Harboured, a mighty fleet,
Riding at anchor at His Feet ;
Or, by the waking winds
Driven from their serried ranks at His intent,
About the violet vaults of the deep firmament,
For His delight.
Still as they sailed across each starry shoal,
The crying ceased not, — Come thou forth, oh
Soul !

I passed where Watchmen of the Towers of Heaven
rehearse
In gallant verse,
The weary Knight to rouse,
Of the besieging of the Royal Treasure-house,
The building of the City of the Soul ;
And the strange questing of the pilgrim, drawn
Out of the flesh, toward lands beyond the
dawn,
Cheered and sustained by a celestial Dole.

I saw across the worlds the secret Sign,
And wondering heard
The echoes of the Word,
Such great astonishment was mine,
That I, of all men least, should now behold
The things divine,
And see the Life unfold,
And the dross turn to Gold ;
Should know that Nature's Ritual conceals
A myriad Sacraments,
Whose sevenfold sanctified Contents
Only the Light within reveals ;
A flame clear-burning yet,
Though with enclosing flesh its shining is
beset.
Here, too, the great command rings out from pole
to pole—
Come forth, oh Soul !

I lingered, less in dread than half in doubt,
Whether a beggar, travel-stained and worn,
Should enter where the Lords of Heaven adorn
With their begemmed serenity
The Palace of Eternity.
Their sceptres, trailing light across the sky,
Made a wide causeway, as of unreaped corn ;
While joyously the white-robed reapers' shout
Of triumph thrilled the festival about :
The plumes that edged their raiment brushed
the heights

Of distant worlds, and mingled with the breeze
Faint scents, as from celestial argosies ;
And their deep joy adds ardour to the lights
Illumining the homely tasks of earthly nights,
And their soft laughter brims the measure
Of earthly treasure.

Then in my hesitation I was 'ware
Of a great Chord of Light
Bewildering my sight ;
And lo ! even there,
I knew encircling Arms,
And pierced Hands raised to bless
The world's distress ;
Till in the ensphering of a measureless content,
Truth filled me with divine astonishment.

“ No sinking back
For thee into the black
Of long-endured division ;
Thine to see the Vision,
Who followedst My call across the world ;
Holding all harms,
All Powers and Principalities of Hell,
Only incitements further to impel
Thy Soul upon the Quest,—
Enter, and be My guest ;
The ship has anchored, all her sails are furled.
Leave part, regain the Whole,
I bid thee welcome home,—Come in, oh Soul ! ”

TEMPTATION

The soul, invoking the beauty of wounded holiness, drives away temptation, and thereby opens the gates of heaven to the tempter.

DARKNESS had slipped its myriad widening rings
Over the glittering joy of earthly things.

The wind had sunk, the land seemed paralysed,

The stars were dead.

And overhead

A barrier grew, shutting out things most prized.
A dreadful silence, perilous to break
Was stifling me, and still I could not wake.

Then I was tempted of the devil,

Who showed me lurking beauty in things evil,
And loveliness in all that was most vile.

He took all loathsomeness and showed it fair,
Shining with phosphorescence of decay,
And in the tortured wonder of his smile
Enchantment of strange sins had sway.

Then I said,—

Show me the jewelled lights that play
About the feet and hands and head,
And flicker round the piercèd side
Of my sweet Guide.

And as I spoke I wept
For pity, and dawn crept

Distant and faint upon the hill ;
Whereupon night and ill
Drew off their sable swathes deliberately,
And mild forgiveness warmed them, till
They thinned and melted silently,
And heaven, opening wide
Received them, purified.
So, at the last, the age-old earth I trod
Became a garden flowery from the feet of God.

A PRAYER

The soul in prayer becomes as a little child.

FORGIVE me that I cannot find
Words wonderful and deep,
To tell Thee all that stirs my mind
And makes me smile or weep.

Only I so desire to give
Thanks to the Lord on high,
That taught me, dying, how to live,
And living, how to die.

Teach me to take both good and ill
As gifts from Thy dear hand,
And to accept the holy will
I cannot understand.

Help me to help some child of Thine,
Help me to pray aright,
And strengthen with Thy fire divine
My restless wavering light.

Grant me Thy grace, that I may do
Thy service everywhere ;
Upon Thy great adventure go,
And Thy sweet banner bear.

Give me a heart both warm and pure,
And strengthen by Thy grace
Mine eyes, lest they should not endure
The glory of Thy face.

QUEST

The soul, being conscious that she is among things alien, doubts her high destiny ; but even in this state of dimness climbs towards the Light.

How can I struggle still ? The elusive future
 That fancy painted in such gleaming gold,
 No longer shines, e'en faintly, through the suture
 O'er whose thin outlines darkling clouds have
 rolled.

How the hopes sink
 When doubting voices question, fears enfold,
 Breaking the link
 Betwixt me and the surety of my Quest,
 Slaying my rest.

Was it a mood, the certainty of morning ?
 Was it but courage, attribute of youth,
 Nature's fair lure, that age and weakness scorning
 I might still climb, and hold deceit the truth ?
 But for her snare
 I might have looked Life in the eyes, forsooth,
 And found Death there ;
 And having seen that unsurmised guest,
 Had I pursued my Quest ?

Yet I still travel in unchanged endeavour,
 The stars are hid, the lantern's flame burns low ;
 Faith went long since, and hope too soon will sever,
 Quenchless endurance bids me onward go.

So till the end—

Perchance that wondrous End I thought to know—

I shall ascend

Those strange scarped rocks that all the ways invest

Toward the Quest.

WAYFARING LOVE

Love seeks in vain among those who have great possessions,
but takes the outcast and neglected for friends.

WHEN Day stretched forth his shining arms to
Night,

And her star-kisses broke above his brow

That sunk below the thrill of all caresses

Saving the scented sway of her soft tresses ;

Immortal radiance pierced and seemed to glow

About a Wayfarer, whom lambent light

Encircled like a glory :

A Wayfarer who sobbed to rocks and trees

Some piteous story

That echoed in the breeze,

Still prevailing

With the sad burden of its wailing,—

“ Who, who will love me ? ”

And through the twilight's glamour

Came answering clamour :

“ I, for thy starry crown,

I, for thy future glory,

And for our sure renown

When men shall tell our story.”

Yet still the cry uprose

Above all human woes,—

“ Who, who will love me ? ”

“ Lord, I walk lonely,
Like unto thee,
Companied only
Fair One, by me,
Pass the world by,
Heeding no sigh.”

And the wind moaned and wailed
About the way, for Love's friends failed ;

And still one cried above me,—

“ Who, who will love me ? ”

“ I, for the fairest dream

That played about my slumber,

Less lovely fair doth seem

Than thou. Shining One, number

Me too among thy saints, and be my pains

Duly requited with celestial gains.”

There fell a silence, then fresh crying sounded
As of a grief unbounded,—

“ Who, who will love me ? ”

“ I will, for I am strong

To bear Earth's wrong,

And set her evils right,

Bringing true light

To those who in a chosen darkness dwell.”

Lo, through the vaults of hell

Echoed the sad petition,

Manifold, without intermission,—

“ Who, who will love me ? ”

Last of all a voice,

Pitiful, broken as with weeping sore,

Rose from the stony path that lay before

The traveller's bleeding feet.—

“ Help, sir, I perish. Without thee

My day is dark, my night is hell,

Lying unshriven where I fell

Pursuing Joy right heedlessly ;

Whose fluting sweet

Has lured me far from playmates of my youth

To die on stony wastes, my ardent mouth

All unassuaged with her draught of pleasure.

Wayfarer, measure

Thy splendour against my unworthiness,

And of thy boundless charity befriend

A helpless outcast, banned by all save thee.

Love, condescend,

That I may share thy cross eternally :

Canst thou so bless

A beggar, whose deep love, felt, ah, too late,

Is but an insult to thy high estate ? ”

The dimness broke into a golden flower

Whose jewelled centre seemed a perfumed song ;

And soft wings beat above the starry shower

Strewn as a pathway for the angel throng.

But silence echoed round the lazar's bed

As the Wayfarer bent, and said,

“ Son, take thy wish ; my love supplies

The utter anguish life denies ;

Thy striving hands with wounds be numb,
Thy unslaked mouth from thirsting dumb ;
 And for thy lamèd feet
 Be set a stony street.

Dark, dark shall seem thy soul's abyss
 Save when the fires of anguish rise,
 Whose light shall teach thy frightened eyes
 What boundless gloom within thee lies.

Now are we brothers by the kiss
 That on thy throbbing brow I press ;
 No lesser boon could bless
Thy pride and my humility.

“ Rise, Son, and walk with me,
Thou, thou shalt love me.”

THE GIFT

The soul, having dissipated much treasure, returns with shame ; but her Lord ceases not patiently to entrust her with more.

God woke me early, ere the sun
Had cleared the mountain's rim ;
I felt so glad, I fain would pray,
And, sleep but partly brushed away,
I knelt to worship Him.

He smiled, and hosts of little birds
Straightway began to sing,
But silenced when they heard His voice—
“ Arise, My child ; My son, rejoice,
For thee a gift I bring.

“ A golden gift, a royal gift,
No emperor has more ;
Wide as the sky, deep as the sea,
An unspoiled day I give to thee,
Fresh from My heavenly store.

“ Three angels brought it, white and clear,
And laid it at My feet ;
While from great Gabriel's altar came
Four angels wrapped in living flame,
Swinging their censers sweet.

“So, with celestial perfume mixed,
Receive My loving gift ;
 And render it again to Me
 Spotless and fair, if that may be,
When evening shadows drift.”

I took the gift with thankful heart,
Meet words to find I strove,
 For thanking God that He did bring
 To me so heavenly a thing,
So dear a gift of love.

And now the day before me stretched,
Its hours before me lay
 Golden and perfect, like a stream
 That widens to some sea of dream,
Foaming with opal spray.

But soon a little wind uprose ;
I saw with troubled eyes
 How clouds obscured the sun's bright track,
 Covered the sky, and flecked with black
My day from Paradise.

And others scoffed and mocked at me,
And I made harsh replies ;
 While deeper grew the stain of sin,
 And hosts of demons, pressing in,
Profaned my sanctuaries.

Then evening came, and starry eyes
Sought for the beauty flown ;
 Weeping with sorrow and with shame
 Then with my ruined day I came,
To lay it at God's throne.

I dared not raise my eyes to Him,
I felt so deep disgraced ;
 And all the lovely angels sighed
 When they the blots and stains espied,
That God's sweet day defaced.

Then I spoke, tremblingly and low,
I could make no excuse,
 But only murmur how I grieved
 For love betrayed and hope deceived,
And the bright hours' misuse.

I ceased. His voice like a caress
Revived me through and through :
 “ Weep not, My treasure-stores enfold
 More bliss than all thy days could hold—
Lo ! I make all things new.”

So the next morn another gift
God of His bounty gave ;
 Its hours with grace and hope bedight,
 From earliest dawn till darkest night,
 And love withal to be my light
In life and through the grave.

VISION

The soul would know the answer to life's problem ; but having been shown where the solution lies, she asks no more, and is content day by day to follow the clue.

LORD, I have knelt here praying many hours,
While thoughts, that should have been celestial
flowers,

Unfolded, floated, rose

About my head,

And fell back dead ;

Never to reach the heaven of their desiring,

Or perfect my aspiring

With the solution of these human woes.

Lord, I would learn

The secret of the soul's return,

The surety of the great arriving,

The far-off goal of all man's striving.

While day by day the world's sad face

Turns on the thread of life impaled ;

Say, is it nearer to Thy grace,

Or has it failed

To reach the outstretched arms of Thy compassion ?

See where these wavering tapers burn,

Lit by the children of Thy hand, who yearn

Toward Thee, distant ; each in his fashion

Bearing the imprint of his Master's passion.

.

Man opened wondering eyes,
 And saw the shadows flying from immortal hills,
 And for one glorious heart-beat heard
 A distant echo of the Word.

Arise !

Be not content
 To have thy habitation in this tent
 Pitched in the desert, when thy house is made
 In heaven ; and thy birthright, greater far
 Than all the angels' glories are,
 Centres about a secret Name,
 Whose flame
 When first Life's corner-stone was laid,
 Was graven with a hidden art
 Upon thy heart ;
 And written in transcendent duplicate
 Upon the white cube by the Temple gate.

And lest to those who wait God's sign grow dim,
 The angels, pitying, over heaven's rim
 Fling snowy wafers from the heavenly board,
 Each marked with the insignia of His mint—
 A cross, deep scored ;
 Which He did print,
 Token of honour on the colt that carried Him,
 And on his humble house from age to age :
 Still wheresoe'er man's eyes may turn
 He sees the mystic symbol burn,
 His very limbs a constant cross afford
 Where he is crucified beside his Lord.

Oh, dreamer, wake ! and follow still
The paths of pain that bear His mark,
Accept His will
As rudder to thy wandering bark.
And day by day His manna take,
Nor for the morn provision make ;
For doubtless He shall give thee from His store
The daily bread that pilgrim souls implore,
And each day more ;
A better nourishment, a stronger meat—
The food of yesterday, though sweet,
For yesterday alone had power,
And souls starve, hearts grow cold
Who treasure stores grown old,
Feeding on manna of an outgrown hour.

Hold fast the age-long clue whose spirals ran
So far, thou mayst not see where they began ;
Lost in the mists of Time they lie.
But follow through the grave, the womb,
O'er mountain peaks, in chasms' gloom,
For where the summits of Eternity
In changeless beauty stand,
The end rests, in God's hand.

.

So, holding now the clue, I rose and went
About the common tasks of every day
Full of a grave content,
A deep trust that the way,

Veiled or revealed, is His, and that our feet,
 Though they may err, can never stray
Beyond the appointed term, where they must turn
 again,
In joy or pain ;
 And slowly climbing, rise
 To their predestined place above the skies.
Thus, full of thoughts most sweet,
I gained fresh courage, and I onward trod,
Serene, in God.

ILLUMINATION

The soul, having drunk of that Cup, is inebriated
with the divine beauty.

THE Earth, wrapped in the purple cloak of night,
Stirs in her sleep, roused by the prick of fire
Whose starry shining is dawn's pledge, desire
Of vision that should melt into clear sight.
Now dark's illumined ministers take flight
Upon the solemn sounding of the lyre
That heralds all the morning stars' glad choir,
When manifests from Heaven the Royal Light.

Mighty, invisible, the hands that raise
Above the trembling Earth the Cup of Gold,
The consecration of her daily bread
Into that Host whereby her soul is fed.
Awake! soon comes High Noon, the hour of
praise,
The glowing Chalice of the Graal behold.

SATIETY

The soul, having entreated her Lord for earthly joys, becomes satiated, and beseeches Him for the purging sharpness of deprivation.

WEARY of all the darling earthly joys
And charming toys,
For which I urgently and long implored
My patient Lord,
I turned to soar on unaccustomed wings ;
But when I would have flown,
Heavy with cloying sweetness, such as brings
Earth's joy alone,
They bore me down, and shamefast, standing there
And weeping, I besought my Lord in prayer.

Oh Lord, remove this barrier that I stretchèd,
Sinner most wretched ;
Betwixt my soul and Thy desirous love,
That I might rove
With vain delight, who ever luring sings
The siren song
Whose call seduced me from immortal things
To do Thee wrong.
Give me sharp thorns, bedewèd with Thy grace,
Bereaving me of all that hides Thy face.

THE PRICE

The soul learns of a solitude most sweet, suffers a wounding which is pure joy, and enters into a desolation which is more dear than Paradise.

NOT till thy heart is broken canst thou love me,
Not till thou diest, outcast and alone,
Imploring the unpitying sky above thee
Because thy Lord, forsaking thee, is gone.

See, I have taken all thy youthful pleasure,
Thy smiles, thy beauty, harshly I withdrew,
Laid heavy burdens on thee, filled thy leisure
With weary tasks that scarce an ending knew.

I sent cold doubt to touch thee, and thy spirit
Shivered beside thine inmost altar's fire,
Lest at the last his will should disinherit
The royal Prince of my supreme desire.

I flung across thy mind the veil delusion,
And peopled all the caverns of thy brain
With writen shapes of madness and confusion
That pity could not bind, nor will restrain.

Say, art thou angered ? naught at all is left thee,
A shrunken body and a wandering soul ;
Softly of all thy joys I have bereft thee,
Untwisting thread by thread the patterned whole.

Now, at the last, I turn me to forsake thee,
Ploughing thy heart with superhuman pain,
Nor shall thy sweat and agony awake me—
Thy heart must break, or else thy love is vain.

Alas! thou deemest me unfeeling, cruel,
Thinkest that through thine anguish I can sleep,
Or, scatheless, to thy torment add fresh fuel—
O child, I did but turn aside to weep.

THE KING'S SON

The prince, to learn the secrets of the Kingdom, must
share the sufferings of the King.

CHILD of my burning joy,
Come, enter here ;
Leave every gaud and toy,
Pass without fear,
Thou art flame no fire can sear.
Child of my burning joy,
Come, enter here.

Child of my bitter pain,
Anguish is past ;
No pang was felt in vain,
Nothing was lost.
Since thou art rent in twain,
Child of my bitter pain,
Anguish is past.

Child of my golden heart,
Lie closer yet ;
Over the throb and smart,
Wake and forget
Lost dreams and eyes tear-wet.
Child of my golden heart,
Lie closer yet.

SOME ADVENTURES

Child, by the three days' death

That we have tasted,

Child, by the Spirit's breath

That toward us hasted.

Love, wounded, sank beneath

Life, to death's portal,

Risen now, it wears the wreath,

Starry, immortal.

THE GARDEN

The soul, becoming greedy of spiritual refreshment, finds dryness and disappointment ; even the Holy of Holies becomes a burying-place. But when in her despair she looks into the tomb, she finds it full of lilies, emblem of the Resurrection.

I SAID—

Let me go forth into the garden where the lilies
grow.

(For it was summer, and I would have laid
Me down beneath the sweet trees' shade

And dreamed ; while to and fro
The waving shadows lengthened in the breeze,
And flickered on smooth grass.)

I said—

Let no man pass ;
Let solitude enfold my heart,
That resting thus apart,
Stillness may gather round my Lord and me.

So I uprose and went
Along the quiet road beside the sea,
Where the tall cypress murmurs, and the palm
Beckons to peace, and the pale sky pours balm
By heaven sent
To comfort tired pilgrims travelling,
And echoes fall of songs the angels sing.

So I came to the wicket in the wall
And raised the latch, and entered softly there
Into the garden of the King,
Where in the twilight His dear footsteps fall
Among the bowing lilies. It grew dim,
And 'mid the flowers there was no trace of
Him.

I said—

(For I was half afraid),
He is within,
Where no alarm disturbs He lies,
Beside the spraying fountain's radiant symphonies.

So I passed on, and came
To an arcade of rosy porphyry
Which the great flame
Of the sun's noonday fire seemed to entice
And tame from its fierce empery
To a soft flush upon the tracery,
Whose fair device
Fine as frost flowers upon a cobweb strung,
So lace-like seemed as it above me hung,
I thought I saw it quiver.
Still on I went, and evening round me fell,
And now I heard a sound, the knell
That heralds death, insistent, terrible,
Beneath which all the flowers seemed to shiver
And droop as at the kiss of winter, dead.
I said—
Lo! all things perish when the King is gone.

I will go further yet, beside the shrine,
Where royal clusters of red roses twine,
Hid in the garden's heart He stays alone.
And being now in terror, I began
To sing aloud of how my gracious Lord,
According to His word,
Should never leave the trusting soul of man,
But by the pleasant waters lead His sheep,
And guard them whether they should wake or
sleep.

But sadly sank the melody
To strains of melancholy,
And notes of joyous confidence declined
To sighs of fear on the pursuing wind ;
And minor echoes of the tune
Were strewn
Like timorous leaves upon a rising gale—
And still about me all the flowers were dead.
Then I fled
Panic-struck down the vale,
And crossed the stream and climbed the
stair
Before the inmost shrine, and found it bare ;
Stripped of the roses, and untenanted,
Grim as the house of the forgotten dead.
And as I gazed again,
No shrine I saw before my startled eyes,
But pallid loomed a gaunt grey sepulchre.

I was fain

To look within, yet hardly dared to stir,
Like one who, nightmare-holden, cannot rise ;
And while I crouched swooped night,
Heavy with the battalions of the dead,
Weighting my shrinking soul with dread.

I said—

Lord, whither these my ways
Have wandered, by what charnel-house I lie
I know not, but I trust Thy clemency ;
And even in these dwellings of the dead
I sing Thy praise.
Forthwith a scent of heavenly meadows
Stole through the shadows,
And rays of golden light soothed all my fear.
So, rising, I drew near,
And looking boldly down into the gloom
No corpse I saw, but lilies in the tomb.

THE WAY OF PERFECTION

The soul is greatly troubled by the day of small things.

To struggle on after high ecstasy—

No, 'tis not easy ; difficult to bear

The fret of burdens that we may not share,
Suffering with patience our mortality.

Here, hemmed in by small things perpetually,

Harassed by vanities, beset by care—

How hard to live, in such a murky air,
By the large measure of infinity.

Yet to endure, as meet is, day by day,

Shall crown us with a glory to transcend

That moment on the heights ; when, as we pray,

We may afar perceive renouncement's end,

Nor from high thoughts to lesser deeds descend—
Help us, oh God, to tread this difficult way.

CRUCIFIXION ON THE MOUNTAIN

The soul would endure splendid martyrdoms, but her Lord lays
upon her the ultimate reward of failure and of death.

I FOUND full many a hindrance on the road
That led up to the summit of desire,
Sharp rocks and wounding thorns ; and in the
mire

I fell, and soiled the garment I had care
To keep so fair

For the great rites awaiting me in Love's abode.

Yet on I pressed,
Dreaming of rest

That should be sweeter for toil undergone,
When on my Saviour's breast
Divine and human should be one.

Deep ran the chasms across the way,

Chasms my wilfulness had made,

But Love had cast a bridge above the spray

Flung by the roaring waters far below ;

And with the cross my strength, the cross my guide,

My worser self for ever crucified,

I climbed toward the line of snow

That Love had laid

Far up, to mark the final stage

Of chill forlorn desertion, that should close

My pilgrimage.

High on the summit shone the mystic cross
Beside which life is death, and riches dross ;
 Not such the cross that companies my way,
 A harsh rude copy meet for every day,
Beauty it lacks, untrimmed and harsh the wood,
And bitter as Christ's rood ;
Heavy as death, no staff to life is this,
 But such a weight
 As leaves the soul unsoothed, disconsolate,
And drags the body down to the abyss.

Upward I crawl, the dream of joy is past,
 I, that would share the sorrow of my Lord
 And feel the piercing sword
Divide my flesh and spirit, now at last
 Discern the failure I am forced to share,
 And see the garment I would keep so fair,
Foul from the dirt of many a foolish fall
 The world might mock at. When I set my feet
 Upon the path I said—
 A martyrdom were sweet ;
Come sword, come fire,
All tortures are less sharp than my desire.
 Let me have flints for bed,
And thorns, such as once wove my Master's crown,
Spurring me on to share in His renown.
 And lo ! I faint
Beneath a common cross I cannot raise.
Mankind might jeer, but on celestial praise
 Free from all envious taint

I counted ; wherefore then this loneliness
 Weighted with death ?
Give me the nails, the spear, oppress
 My soul with every pang till my last breath,
 And then, the victor's wreath.

Yet I climbed still, the bitter words I spoke
Fell into silence and no echoes woke ;
 But in my heart a small voice murmuring
 Whispered,—thy King
Humbly exchanged celestial gain for loss,
 Requiring no place to lay Him down,
 No victor's crown,
But only wood enough to make a cross.

I bowed my head in shame, and upward went
Slowly, beneath my burden bent ;
 Deep in the snow my bleeding feet
 Sank at each step, and on the sheet
Of dazzling white left scarlet stains.
My eyes grew blind, my trembling knees gave
 way,
My body was a mass of fiery pains :
 And still I rose and fell,
 And struggled on a space,
Half dreaming broken words from far away
The heavenward way,—
 The pains of hell,—
 And murmuring, weeping, falling,
 Upon my Master calling,

Unconscious now of all save agony,
I still endured, until I lay
 On the appointed place
Upon the summit, faint and like to die.

So, I thought, heaven is won,
 Gone is the burden that so long I carried ;
 Yet still the summoning angels tarried.

I lay alone,
Almost desiring back the fardel gone,
 That was my bliss and bale ;
And so methought a thousand years
 Of silence passed.
At last

 I raised my eyes to see
Some angel that should bind my wounds and wipe
 my tears,
 But there was Calvary,
And black and gaunt three crosses rose
Untenanted, among the snows.

Then, deep within, the silence spoke,—
 Now thou hast left Gethsemane,
 Stretch thy rebellious limbs upon the tree,
 Giving thy body up for Me.

And I obeyed,
And laid

 My feet and hands to bear the stroke
Of piercing nails.

 And so I hung another thousand years.

The wind arose, and far below me tossed

A sea of sombre-crested pines ; the cloudy skies
Burst with the gale, and showed an orange rent,
And heavy clouds, like boats with tattered sails,
Flapped low, and dipped and raced about the
height

Until they sank in mist that swathed my sight.
Then I closed my eyes,
And tore my way from the poor earthly tent,
And free, I knew my labours all well spent,
And no pang lost.

Abandoned hung the earthly form
While round it swayed and shrieked the storm ;
But my soul, being free,
Rejoiced most thankfully,
Until a voice cried,—nay,
Still must thou lay
Thy soul upon the rood.
So my stripped soul was fastened there,
And that cross stood
Beside the centre, towering gaunt and bare
While other thousand years went by ;
Till my purged spirit burst its sheath,
And free of soul and body knelt beneath
The triple emblem of a conquered death.

Now let my spirit rise to God who gave—
Not through the grave,
But upward into light.

Aye, chanted seraphs with their dulcimers,
The ladder it prefers
 Is the great midmost cross.
My spirit trembled, but I clomb—
 Ah, then fell night ;
This, this is not my home.
 And in a horror far too deep to tell
 I knew the pains of hell,
And for a thousand years I drank this bitter cup,
Until my spirit yielded itself up,
 And hands of love
 Stretched from above
Upraised me in a most delicious rest,
 Upon that cross and ladder of delight,
Which now I knew was but my Master's breast.

DEPARTURE

The soul, ready to leave all, would depart in silence
and unnoticed.

So let me go, without leave-taking ;
Let no hand press my hand, no smile pursue ;
Let them dance on, though dawn be breaking,
And wan the false light shows beside the true.

Set but the door ajar, and I, long ready,
Will slip forth swiftly, leaving all behind ;
I am prepared, heart high and pulses steady,
To face the morning star, the morning wind.

Only let silence fall about my spirit,
Let no one mingle tears with life's warm wine,
Because I leave these shadows to inherit
Those deeper joys inalienably mine.

So let me go, with my unanswered singing
Drowned by the festival I watched so long,
But like an angel's pinions round me clinging
Let me go hence on echoes of that song.

DIALOGUE

The messenger entreats the soul to depart with him to the place prepared for her ; but she, being fearful, and blinded by the things of earth, refuses until he unveils to her the beauty of his face.

Messenger

GIVE me thy hand, I waited for thee long,
Now lay aside the lute and cease the song,
Those dreams are done.

Soul

Alas ! but just begun
My day of sunshine ; let me stay awhile
And smile
And dance among the dewdrops merrily,
For all things pass,
And I would make them mine before they go.
I have but sipped life's goblet, it is sweet,
And I would tread with happy flying feet
Among the scented clover and the grass
Full many a tripping measure.
To and fro
Clothed with the purple shadows I would move
When night descends upon the orchard's treasure,
And dream of love
And find him too, perchance,
Counting his golden charms
Within the arms
Of some dear dark-eyed sharer of my dance.

Messenger

Come, I have waited long, give me thy hand,
Down by the sea the other travellers stand.

Soul

Ah no, the curtain of the night hangs low
Over the shore,
And darkness on the lonely water lies.

Messenger

I have my argosies
That evermore
Through all the dimness safely come and go.
Give me thy hand, no more delay.

Soul

Spare me some hours yet ; so short my day,
Unworthy of thy transport is such gain
As I have gathered, let me glean awhile
Where others reaped and harvested their grain,
Nor wholly empty-handed hence depart.

Messenger

Not with such promises canst thou beguile
Thy long appointed hour ; come forth.

Soul

Nay, be not wroth,
Wait yet a moment. All my throbbing heart
Is full of lovely songs as yet unsung,

And all thy songs are silence : mine eyes crave
For light, and thou wouldst seal them in the grave,
Where love decays, and youth and beauty change
Into a pinch of dust. I will not come,
For I am choked with music : I will make
Songs that shall stir mankind ; and range
Over the changing world, until I slake
My thirst for joy.

Messenger

Earth's pleasures cloy ;
Nay, do not struggle, but come home,
Where thy desires interlace
And melt in rapture. Canst thou bear pure light ?
Behold my face.

Soul

Lord of my life, I come.
Call me not back, you fair delights ;
Earth's miracles of days and nights
Are but the dreaming veil through which the soul
Perceives her goal.
I see the inner meaning of the flowers,
The truth behind the stars ; the dream
Has broken into iridescent showers,
Life's long stream
Has parted, as for Israel of old
The sea, and piled on either hand I now behold
Dark Jordan's flood. Angel of life, I come,
My hands no longer tremble, lead me home.

AS TO A FEAST

Overmuch sorrow dims the glory of heaven to
the new-born soul.

UPON the wind that's blowing,
He sighed out his last breath ;
With proud demeanour going
To the festival of death.

No more our love may bind him,
Or from his path restrain ;
Now he has left behind him
The panoply of pain.

Great Michael for him tarried,
Prince of God's chivalry ;
And Christopher, who carried
His Saviour faithfully.

The hero wakes from sleeping—
Let us God's ways extol ;
Nor mar with too much weeping
The birthday of a soul.

THE DIVINE BEAUTY

The secret of the soul is incommunicable.

How shall I tell the marvel ? circling flame
Has blinded me, and hid in fire I grope,
Burned by the brightness of my hidden name,
Bewildered with fulfilment of all hope.
Slight is the vision that the seer tells
In fluent song ;
Too deeply have I drunk of heavenly wells
To do such wrong.

Far more than rest, reunion, joy or peace,
Echoes of earth it lies so far above ;
Or, if I must compare with such as these,
I think of beauty, melody, and love.
Yet here doth silence honour Him the most,
That bid me come
And see things hidden from the angel host,
So, I am dumb
Save for the Hallelujahs that I raise
Incessantly in my dear Master's praise.

THE SONG CEASES

The soul finds no words to tell of her vision.

I WOULD sing
Of all the glory that surrounds my King.

Of melody in crystal goblets stored
That ever sweetly brimming is outpoured ;
 Of light, so far transcending all we know,
 In which transfigured souls move to and fro ;
Of warmth, that fills the grateful heart with
 joy,
Of bliss delicious and without alloy ;
 Of singing birds, of flowers, and scented air,
 Of cooling breezes and of beauty rare—
These are but things
Vainly imagined for our earthly kings.

I am ashamed that I have tried to sing
Of all the glory that surrounds my King.

Silence were best, so was I rapt away
Beyond the circling change of night and day.
 Or if His glory may at all be told,
 A hint of it will linger in the gold

That clings about my garments, and the glow
That through the windows of my soul I show,
 Lightening the shadowy valleys of the earth
 With bright reflections from my land of birth.

No longer will I sing
In words the glory that surrounds my King.

THE DELIVERER

(THE city quakes, the earth is filled with blood—
I, I that love Thee raised Thee on this Rood !)

Lord, I am least of all Thy followers,
Yet greatest in my love : devotion spurs
 Me on to strange deep thoughts and stranger deeds
My roughness planned not erst,
For all unversed

 In ways of love I would content Thy needs,
Delight Thee with a flower, a word, a song,
Striving to make Thy toilsome way less long,
 Its stones less bitter, its rebuffs less rude,
 To guard Thee 'gainst the sharp ingratitude
Of those who beg Time and Eternity,
Both worlds at once, abusing clemency.

Dazzle them, Master, with a word
Such as the universe has never heard ;
 Whisper it till the earth's foundations quake,
 And fiery worlds awake
 And shake
Their burning pinions, and ring out the cry
 That shrilly echoes

Where between whirling planets flows
The ardent stream of palpitating light.

 Destroy the worlds, Oh Lord,
 With the one whispered word,
And with consuming flame illumine the sight
 Of all those muddy souls who love Thee not :
Or bid the flying circles cease
And a great peace
 Thunder across immensity,
Enwrapping heaven and earth and sky.
 Bid the air cease to hum
 And all the murmuring orbs be dumb,
Suddenly, utterly,
 And shatter them with silence—

Yea, Master, I have borne to see Thee weep,
More deep

 The iron scarce could pierce my suffering soul ;
Have seen Thee fast and pray,
 Struggle and sweat.

While the eleven slept the night away

 My brow was wet,
My heart beat high,
 For, lo, I read
 The scroll of Heaven emblazonèd,
And knew Thy triumph nigh—

(The city quakes, the air is full of blood—
I, I that love Thee raised Thee on this Rood !)

Scourged, spit upon, denied,
I suffered all with Thee ;
Raising Thee high that all should bend the knee.
That very royal crown of thorns
That crimsoneth Thy brow—
So might gleam rubies set on snow,—
I offered it ; dear Master, look on me,
Say, have I not done well ?
How my poor heart would swell
At praise from Thee—
For see, without my deed,
Thy deed had not been done ;
This be my meed
Thy battle won—
And that down future ages, lighted by the torch
That Thou dost kindle, men shall say—

(The city quaked, the air was full of blood,
Judas that loved Him raised Him on the Rood !)

Peter in the porch

Warmed his chilled hands as he denied,
While Judas' teeth did chatter before Caiaphas ;
My darkness seemed a heavy monstrous mass
With but one quivering light—Thy tortured
death—

Ay, for it pierced beneath
My heart into my spirit—yet I knew
Before the worlds the task I had to do ;
God set it me, let me fulfil
His very bitter will—

Master, my voice is harsh, mine eyes are dim,
I should rejoice and hymn

Thy great uplifting, high above all towers—

Follow the circle round, there Judas cowers,
Lonely, forsaken, outcast, anguish-swayed ;
Yet we are one, betrayer and Betrayed ;

Thou drinkest of my cup, I drink of Thine,

Thou art immortal, I shall be divine ;

Dreaming, Thou risest from Thy painful Throne,
Waking, Thou drawest to Thee me, Thine own.

I kissed Thee gently—Thou hast understood ?
Out on the silly cowards who deserted Thee,
Whom men call good.

Thou and I are free,

We see not as the others see,

We dream—

And that is times away.

Far down the stream

Of heavenly ways we see our paths unite

Where the veils fall, and day

For me replaces night—

(The city quakes, the earth is full of blood—
I, I that love Thee raised Thee on this Rood !)

Farewell, my Love, my Master, I have dared

For Thee that lesser men had left undone,

Be my love hereby proved, I have not spared

To give my God where God but gave His
Son.

I bear such pains, my body was not formed
To see the struggles of a dying God,
Or hold the terror of a prisoned soul
Striving for freedom : I am fain
Of silence, and the peace of night again.
Night brooding over Galilee,
And our small company
Each with his portioned dole
Quietly laid about Thee on the sod,
Beneath which, now, there is no peace for
me,
For Thou and I have work to do—Oh God !
Forsaken, helpless, therefore doubly to be loved—
See how I yearn o'er Thee !

Yet are Thy throes soon past,
And mine, æonial, scarce begun,
For where Thy name is honoured, I am cursed ;
Outcast, reviled, I down the ages go,
Death but delivers me to greater woe.
But where Thy passion is rehearsed
Our names are linkèd still,
And Thine shall such a heavenly dew distil
That mine shall be washed pure and sweet some
day,
And children's lips sing " Judas," like a kiss,
But in no softer way
Than fell that kiss with which I did betray
Thy sad humanity,
Freeing the Godhead for eternity—

(The city quakes, the air is full of blood,—
 Judas that loves Thee raised Thee on this Rood !)

These triumphs are too keen, we die,
 So sharp the sacrifice, the agony.

Keep Thou the hapless Judas in Thy heart,
 Nor fail me on that far-off day
 When all that erred in my sad deed is purged away.

My lowly part
 Was just to make the sacrifice complete,
 Adding to heavenly stature earthly feet :
 Thou art uplifted, I shall be cast down,
 Master, farewell, until my destined crown
 Is won, and all Thou strivest for fulfilled.
 I am not worthy that my blood be spilled
 Like Thine : in grosser pangs be spirit torn
 From my gross body, let the wide world scorn
 So I but join Thee æons after

Where the soft laughter
 Of the redeemed echoes about the heavenly
 space ;
 And find, crouched at Thy feet, a little quiet
 place.

Then, when my courage grows, after awhile,
 Murmur to me, with Thy celestial smile—

Judas ! for the great love I bear to Thee
 I grant thee to be crucified with Me !

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