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THE POEMS OF
JOSEPH MARY PLUNKETT

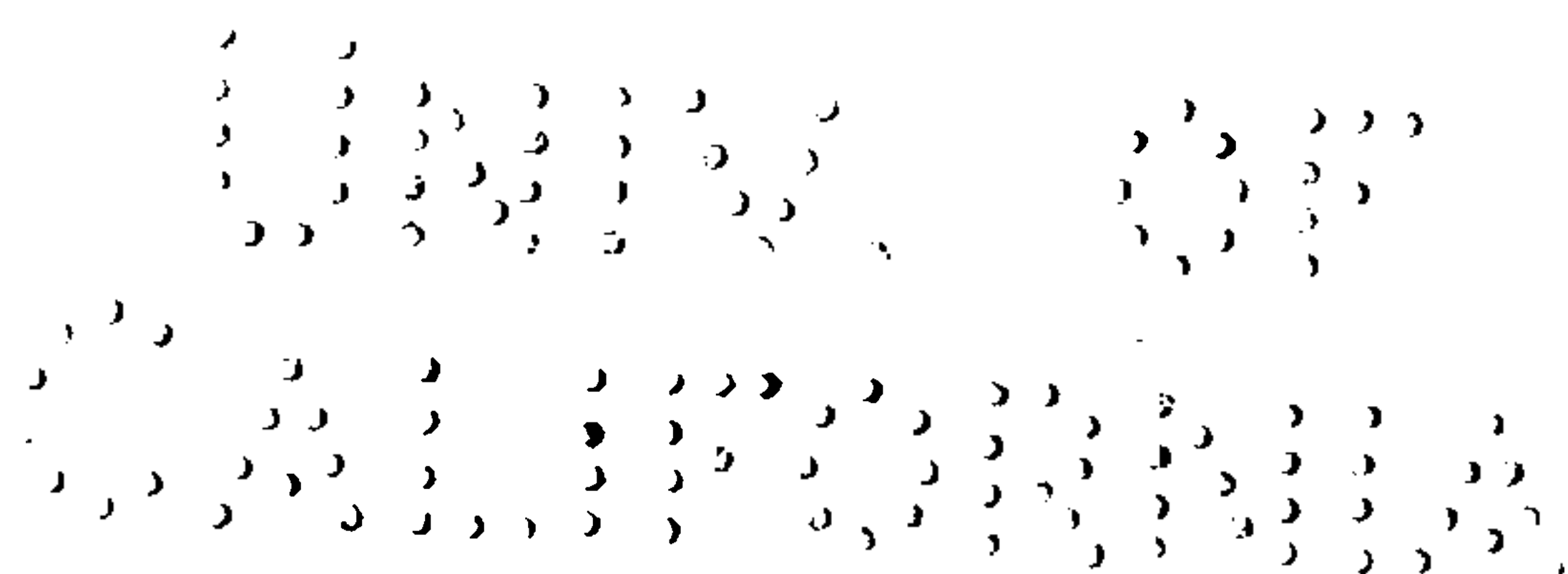
The Frontispiece is from a Memory Drawing
by Mrs. Joseph Plunkett



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. Euda'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 sovranity
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 VIGIL OF LOVE

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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 unproved
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.

TO THE

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.

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.

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 NULACHÁIN

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.

While 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.

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

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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 Æ., 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 in 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 all who have experienced the divine vision ; for the flowers of heaven and earth are the same flowers.



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