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Christus

A Story of Love

By

Grace Hoffman White

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Dedication

TO MY FATHER AND MOTHER WHOSE
LIVES OF UNSELFED LOVE KINDLED
THE WATCH-FIRES OF CHRIST IN
THE DARK PLACES OF THE EARTH

* * *

"O holy hope! and high humility,
High as the heavens above,
These are your walks, and you have
showed them me,
To kindle my cold love."



Canto the First

THE brooding night yet held the silent land
In that deep stillness of the quiet stars
That lends itself to mystery and awe;
The early scent of honeyed flowers was near,
Rising in incense, filling thought with dreams:
Through the expectant air came consciousness
Of dawn, and tender things springing new born
From out the dark.
When lo! arose a star
Where in the East for long Wise Men had
watched,
And cradled for this rising light old truths.
More luminous by far than all the rest
It hung, God's lamp, above a wayside inn,
A simple kahn, where lay at this high hour
The Christ, with beasts of toil, on lowly bed,
God's truth to earth new born as Virgin's child;
That as the pure in heart see God all gifts
Are theirs, e'en this the crown of Motherhood,
Granting to love a new and higher right.
Now o'er the earth on strains of music comes
The dawn, while trembling shepherds watch and
pray
As heaven opens on their wondering gaze,
With gleam of cherubim and rush of wings,

And chanting of the lyric song of love
And peace, God's will to man, with rapture sung,
Thrilling with ans'ring joy the world's great heart,
That long expectant waited for this hour.
O happy Syrian sky, to bring such dawn!
O blessed town upon thy blossoming hills,
To have fulfilled the cry of every heart!—
Old prophecies of One who there should lie
And in His poverty make all men rich,
Who in the heart of man should find His throne,
A ruler, not alone of Israel,
But of the eternal kingdom of the soul;
Whose goings forth to everlasting reach,
While earth with trembling speech receives her
King.
But thou, fair Bethlehem, mayst not for long
His shelter be; for now to Joseph comes
The warning vision gleaming in the night,
With sheen of silver through celestial blue,
Swift thoughts that flash and burn from Love Di-
vine
In angel forms, of sweet and conscious care,
Bidding him rise and into Egypt flee,
Taking that Mother blest and Holy Child,
Till spoken word of Truth might be fulfilled,
"Lo! out of Egypt have I called my Son!"
Abiding there till once again the stars
Of night their brightness lend to angel forms,

Canto Firſt

When Herod's reign is past as tempest sped;
Whose banners now are rent by onward wind
Of some forgotten prophecy, till he,
Crowned with the woes of men upon his head,
Is held by fear to heed each passing tale.
Now is he troubled by the Wise Men's words,
That they have come long days from distant East,
Led by the star of joy and high portent,
To find the new-born King of Israel;
And when they, vision warned, no more return,
His wrath breaks forth, a fierce and sanguine flood,
And lo! in Rama there is heard a voice
Of lamentation and great mourning,
Women who weep and wail for children dead,
Nor may be comforted for what is not;
For his decree went forth, "All infants slay,"
Lest one perchance, who might to manhood come,
Should outstrip Herod's power and snatch the crown,
Welding the Jewish nation into one;
Such things ere now had crushed a tyrant's reign.
So with vain hands would he hold back God's hour,
That now begins to wake the dreaming soul.

When night with song of stars more faintly sung,
Ere day her matin hymn of praise began,
Behold that Mother blest and Holy Child
On humble beast of toil by Joseph led;

Till, vision guided and by angels watched,
They come into the land of ancient lore,
And there remain until the time is ripe
To turn once more their steps to Palestine.
    In lowly Nazareth Christ finds His home,
And here He lives His life with simple folk,
Learning to see great truths in homely guise.
The leaven in the meal for daily bread
Showed Him life, leavened by a deed of love,
Would larger grow and feed some famished soul;
The women at the mill were types of those
Who blindly toil for earth's uncertain gains,
Nor know when Life's awak'ning hour has come,
Till one is chosen, and the other left;
And so the wayside flowers that clothed the grass,
To Him His Father's love and care revealed.
Thus all the sights and sounds of rural life
Are woven in His mind with hidden dreams
And high communion at the sunset hour.
Here also, 'neath these humble roofs, He learned
With awe the secrets of the human heart,
And finds within the tumult of its waves
The soul's awak'ning to eternal peace.
    But not for long this calm and sweet content;
His mind, receptive, feels the pangs of growth.
The passing caravans that wind their way
From town to town bring news of all the land,
And in the waiting thought of this strange Child

Canto Firſt

Fall seeds of wider truth than rabbis taught.
Some word perhaps of Egypt's dying faiths
And India's growing light were first perchance
To raise a yearning doubt of childhood's lore;
A rift wherein God's light broke in anew,
With wider range of thought than Jew had known.
    But here there comes a silence, deep as that
Which comes to flowers ere blossoms crown the
    dark.
Did He go forth with simple tools of toil,
'Mid other palms and temples find a home?
Did light of India dawn upon His sight,
Or that life-giving flood bring Him anew
God's truths? We only know His spirit grew,
And day by day waxed stronger in the light;
So that from quiet hours, wherever passed,
He brought great restfulness, which to Him clung
Like fragrance of a flower throughout His days,
And gave to weary hearts a sense of peace.

    God's Thought descending one bright night
        Came where a hill-side steep
    Lay silent in the sweet moonlight,
        With flowers at its feet.
    And softly caressing
    The air with a blessing,
    Soothed each bud and blossom
    That lay on earth's bosom.

And there within a happy grove
A maiden knelt in prayer,
The night its glory round her wove,
The stars shone in her hair.
As incense arose
The breath of day's close
From sweet sleeping flowers
That rest in God's bowers.

And lo! God's Thought filled all her breast
With tender, deep emotion,
For here His Son might gently rest
Safe cradled in Love's ocean.
Her spirit serene,
With joy unforeseen,
Forgot now its fear
Or earth's trembling tear.

For there within her came to pass
A strange and holy thing,
To her all lowly on the grass
God's love a Son did bring;
And music celestial
O'erflows all terrestrial,
Earth may inherit
Life by the Spirit.

Canto Firſt

And now there evermore shall dwell
In those of lowly part
The gift of Love His power to tell
Unto the pure in heart:
Within a Virgin's womb
Our blessed Lord found room,
And joy immortal
Enters Love's portal.

Canto the Second

As in a little plant to sapling grown
We see the promise of a spreading tree,
So now returns the Child to manhood come
With promise of the Spirit's greater growth.
In Nazareth again we hear of Him,
Where first He learned the lesson of great pain,
That when our minds and spirits venture forth
From beaten ways, they stand alone, apart,
Till they have learned to fully walk with God;
So His first wounds are given by His friends,
And oft upon those nights of silent thought,
Filled with the angels' lyric song of peace,
Or deeper cadence of some prophet's word,
Did He not wonder when His call would come,
To give His spirit utterance that should live,
And stir the hearts of men to know their God?
  When lo! from out the desert comes a Voice,
The voice of John, crying aloud to all:
"Prepare ye, prepare ye, the way of the Lord,
For after me there cometh One whose shoes
I am not worthy to unloose; 'tis He
Whose glory shall increase as mine grows dim,
He is elect of God, His very Son."
  What echo found that voice in Mary's heart,
What dreams arose that long had silent lain?

Canto Second

What rapture fills the Son, what awe, what peace?
At last the hour of destiny has come,
His soul accepts its fate and forward goes.
The peaceful little town is left behind,
Idyllic scenes of fields and verdant hills
Their lessons gave; now must the desert teach
Unto that soul of poetry and fire
A sterner truth, a higher faith than these.
So now we see Christ's footsteps turned to where
The Jordan in cool greenness winds its way,
Past arid plains and barren cliffs of earth.
Here from Jerusalem and all Judæa
The people flock to hear the prophet John
Upon its banks exhort, and all men warn
To flee the wrath to come, repentance find,
And be baptized to deeds of larger faith.
For even now God's thunder shakes the sky,
And old creeds fall amid their shattered hopes,
That One who after him should come might build,
Whose baptism would be the Spirit's fire,
Burning the chaff of earth from every soul!
An ecstasy the heart of Jesus thrills,
And meekly through the throng to John He goes,
To feel upon His head the water pure,
As symbol of those old creeds washed away.
While from the preacher's soul there comes the cry,

Christus

"Behold the Lamb of God! Behold the Light!"
And from the sky gently as breathing dove
The Spirit brooded on the Father's Son;
And o'er the hills of Moab broke the day.
Now straightway does the Spirit lead Him forth,
To test His strength in dry and bloomless wastes,
Where moans the night wind on the barren slopes
With cry of beasts, that seek abroad for prey,
Seeming to voice from sombre heart of earth
The human hunger that besets the soul,
Till it and earth and God become as one.
There from the well-spring of eternal thought
He draws deep draughts to quench His spirit's thirst,
While in fair visions come the powers of earth
To wake, if there be found, some voice of self,
Or touch some human weakness of the hour.
But they a vanquished host before Him fall,
While He, through victory, gains greater strength,
Knowing that when the Spirit's power has come
It may not for an idle purpose serve,
But for God's higher glory, that His laws
Be in the end fulfilled and mankind freed.
But ways of anchorite could not for long
Fulfil the vision of that deeper soul;
In Him was life, creative life of love,
Which as the Word had come to dwell with men

Canto Second

And find in Him its utterance anew.
So to the Sea of Galilee He comes,
Beside its still deep blueness finds a home.
Here once again with simple folk He dwells,
Proving Himself in human ways their friend;
Here found He those that ever to Him clung,
And in that town that sat as summer's queen,
Decked with the sparkling chain of passing joys,
He taught that higher creed that makes man one
In the true brotherhood of hope and aim;
That man must reconcile himself to God,
Not God to man, for even now His love
Towards them was more than they could under-
stand,
Though having nothing that this world can give,
Yet truest life in Spirit they may find;
That all have power the Spirit to receive
And in its strength to find whate'er they need.
His stern rebuke is only for the false,
Those that dissemble truth with outward deeds,
That in the hidden heart may find no place;
While in His breast was naught but yearning love
For those who bore the burden of their sins.
All men Christ knew,—the poor who gladly
heard,
And from His lips gained strength for daily toil;
And those to whom He bade to hold their wealth
As almoners of God, His gifts to give

With sympathy and love, that they might live,
And know the joy that can from riches flow.
Strong in the power of Spirit now He speaks,
"God is your Father; all ye as brethren are;"
And there beside that placid sea there bloomed,
Like flowers of heaven touched to human shape,
God's law of love in words of sweetness rare,
That rose to chant of high beatitudes,—
Idyllic days when Spirit spake through Him
On grassy, flower-lit hill 'neath fruitful trees,
Or fishing-boat moored to the waiting shore.
Like little children on His words they hung,
As now from days of Nazareth He drew
Those lessons early learnt from daily life,
Weaving great truths in simple parables,
That gave each act a meaning all divine,
And stirred their hearts and upward drew their minds
Unto the kingdom of His Father's love,
Till fear with hate and pain as shadows flee;
And as His thought arose, He gave that prayer
That shows all life is God, and God is Love,
For all might now unto the Father come,
And build the larger kingdom of the soul.

Canto the Third

THE winter now is past, and once again,
With breath of blossoms and of early grape,
On fair wind-sandalled feet behold the spring,
Weaving the tender green on barren slopes;
Where'er her footsteps press, the joyous flowers
Glad greeting give from now awakened earth.
The call to Feast of Passover has come,
When Christ, with others, needs must journey forth
To that proud City resting on her hills,
The pride and joy of every Jewish heart.
It hung like jewel in the morning mist,
Its minarets aflame caught by the sun,
While covered o'er with gold the Temple shone;
It seemed a mystic City from on high,
Discerned alone by dreams and fervent prayer.
Perhaps that other journey filled his mind
When from His Mother as a little child
He wandered forth, filled with the fire of God
That roused the sleeping spirit in the priests.
Mayhap the shadow of that hour when He,
Within the twilight of His great career,
Should to this feast repair, with saddened heart,
There drink His cup of bitterness and woe,
And break the sacramental Bread of Life.
Whate'er His mind, we know that now had come

A higher note, a sterner thought, than that
Which sang itself beside fair Galilee.
Unto the Temple now He wends His way,
But lo! what grief, what anger, stirs His heart,
For there, in all its sordid ways displayed,
He sees the traffic of the public ways
Casting dishonor on God's house of prayer.
A flame of wrath leaps to the lips of Love,
Scorching with words of fire the sordid mind.
As chaff before the wind He drives them forth:
"This is my Father's house, which ye have made
A den of thieves." Heroic scorn, His doom!
For now the people claim Him as their friend,
Elect from God He comes to set them free,
And they, the heavy-laden, turn to Him.
Might this by scribe or rabbi be believed?
They felt God's breath upon the face of time,
And wist not whence it came or whither blew,
For they, full of blind years, would lead the blind,
And make complete the circuit of their days.
As one acclaimed the people's friend Christ comes
Unto the house of Simon, he who loved
To bask within the warm light of success,
Though neither heart nor mind to it respond.
Within his house there often gathered those
Who touched the lyre of time with passing note;
So must he bid this Teacher now to come,

Canto Third

And see if guile or subtlety could catch
Him unaware, and bring the favor craved
Of priests, who feared the dawning of Christ's
power,
And long had tried to trap Him in His speech.
So at this splendid feast arranged for Christ,
Came one in smiling flower of womanhood
And beauty, far renowned for face and form,
But who, not knowing that all beauty speaks
Of God, had thrown to earth her heavenly crown.
With conscious power and supple grace she goes,
And meets the love and pity in His face;
Then all the past before this force stands out,
Her heart dissolves in deep distress and woe,
The flow'ry garland trembles in her hand,
The eternal child in womanhood is touched,
While from her soul springs up a flame of love,
And at His feet she falls with tears of shame
That wash their travel stain, and then anoints
Them with a precious ointment of the East,
Pressing repentant kisses from her heart,
And with her silken hair she wipes them dry.
Christ turns to Simon with majestic grace;
Reading the thought that lay within his mind,
He craves the courtesy of speech with him,
Then tells to him the tale of debtors twain,
Wherein two men, bereft of all save debt,
Had cast themselves for mercy on their lord,

One owing much, the other's debt was small,
Yet both found full forgiveness in his word.
"Now which, think ye, would love their lord the
most?"
And Simon's answer but condemns himself
As he with ready ease makes quick reply,
"He whose need was most to be forgiven."
With tender grace Christ to the woman speaks,
"Thy sins they are forgiven, go in peace.
She hath loved much and thou hast rightly judged.
Behold, with tears, with kisses and rare oil,
My feet by her repentance have been cleansed,
A courtesy thou grantedst not to me.
Her soul is healed, while thou art not aroused."
It was but one of many ways they strove
To take Him as He did His Father's work,
Going from house to house, and place to place,
In simple Eastern way of daily life;
Till now by Sycher's well His thought sublime
On glowing pinions passes earthly bounds,
Winging its way through life's eternal sky.
And lo! the God of Gods is shown to man
In that deep utterance of conscious soul,
"God is Spirit, and they that worship Him
Must worship in the spirit and in truth,
For God is Love." No more may mankind say,
"Thou shalt not," for the Word has thundered
forth

Canto Third

That thou shalt love all men as 't were thyself.
So near unto the Father is He now
That He can truly say, "We are as one."
The blind receive their sight, the dead arise,
The sick are healed, the lame stand forth and
walk;
These are the outward signs of that high love
That binds Him to mankind and God above.
Lo! at His kiss on lips that death had known
Sprang endless life through all the world's dead
soul.

Canto the Fourth

Now nears the hour when He, as Paschal Lamb,
Shall be led forth by priests to touch with blood
The lintels of their doors, that through their night
Still may the angel of His presence come
In mighty power to save and lead them forth.
    So turns He from the city's streets aside
Unto that little town; unknown to fame,
It lay near desert waste, in solitude
As deep as that which lay upon His soul.
He to His own has come, they know Him not,
And pity for their blindness deepens love;
Here came to Him the strength'ning peace of
    God
That in the hour of mortal dread and shame
Bore Him unscathed through realms of pain and
    death.
    With gathered strength to Bethany He goes,
To rest in friendship's calm and pleasant shade
Ere crowns the Great Event the tragic hours;
Here dwelt those sisters who had proved His
    love
When for that brother newly come to life
He had unlocked Death's gates to set him free;
So greet they Him as loved and honored guest.
Martha, who moulded life with daily cares,

Canto Fourth

Makes ready with her gathered skill a feast;
In stillness Mary to her chamber goes
And brings a vase of sweet and costly oil,
And with great love content she pours it o'er
His feet with tender touch and tears of joy,
That cleanse them from the wayside dust and
stain.
Till Judas asks, "Why should there be this
waste?
To better purpose might it have been sold."
But Christ, aware that life's high hour had come,
Accepts the beauty of the service given.
With smile inscrutable rebukes his zeal,
"The poor ye always have, but wist ye not
'T is love's farewell ere I may pass from hence?"
O twice-anointed King on Love's high throne,
With precious ointment on thy feet outpoured;
First by the tears of deep repentance cleansed,
Then tears of joy wipe off the earthly stains!
Thus swiftly goes that last night with His
friends,
Yet dawn's first flush finds Him upon His way
To that last feast of love with chosen twelve;
Alone He walks in high communion lost.
Since when among Philippi's hills He sought
To show His chosen three Truth's greater light,
Upon that Mount where high transfigured thought
Brought larger vision of eternal life,

Whence Moses and Elias showed with Christ
The Prophecies and Law fulfilled in Love,
Till now, He knew His way led to the Cross,
And that through it His path would find and prove
Death but the shadow of eternal day.
    Now come His followers, and some He sends
To find that upper room for Paschal Feast,
While lo, one brings an ass's colt to ride;
So might it be fulfilled as prophet spake,
"Behold, O Zion's children, and fear not,
Riding an ass's foal your King shall come."
Of this they knew not till, in later hours,
Searching they found the prophet's words of Him.
And thus they join the vast and moving throng
That to the feast comes up from all the land;
In every heart, on every tongue, His name
Is heard, and miracles and tales compared.
"Was this the long-expected One, the Hope
Of Israel, who should His people free?"
When o'er them swept a consciousness sublime
Of Christ's deep love and portent of this hour,
And from them broke with loud acclaim the cry,
"All hail, the King of Israel, all hail!"
Hosannas loud they sing, and branches break
Of palms, and strew their garments in His way,
While in the air is heard again the joy
Of those old days long passed in Galilee.
    Just here outside the walls the people pause,

Canto Fourth

At that sharp bend where breaks upon the view
The gleaming city built upon a rock,
Rising from out its gorges to the sky,
And at this sunset hour seeming to float
A jewelled city in a sea of gold.
Here now is changed the spirit of that crowd;
Behold, He weeps, their King but now acclaimed,
While from His lips there fall those words of doom:
"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thy foes
Shall compass thee on every side, till thou
Shalt have no stone upon another left,
And all thy children too shall be brought low,
For thou thine hour of visitation hast
Not known."
Indignant murmurs now are heard.
"Is this indeed the King who should arise,
The hope of Israel's heart and Judah's pride?"
Once more the crowd sweeps on; fainter, more faint,
Hosannas ring and die upon the air,
But hands of children still are waving palms.
Now forth to meet them come from every street
A curious crowd, who cry, "Whom have we here?"
And from the walls a thousand eyes look down.
No longer now the shout, "This is the King
Who cometh in the name of God." They say,

"This is a prophet come of Nazareth."
Then they disperse amid the crowd that throng
The Temple's courts, where now at last Christ stands.
The golden trumpet of God's truth is set
Upon His lips whose blast breaks up the night,
And time and memory and hope are stirred,
While beat of Liberty's far-reaching wings
Are heard. From wastes of loveless years Godward
The nations fly, while on the lips of Greece
Dead words take form and live. "Show us the Christ,"
And breathless space is rent. "Lo, now the hour
In which the Son of Man is glorified;
If I be lifted up from earth I will
Draw all men unto Me by deathless love."
Now do the poignant hours hold them in fear
That on this Son of Man would lay their hands.
When close the petals of the rose of day,
Behold! majestic, grave, He stands alone,
In silence looks on symbols of dead faith,—
Stones which are given children who cry for bread,
That with them they may stone the living Truth.
Then as His spirit's yearning wings droop low,
Hosannas that from lips of children rang
Now fill the Temple's empty space with joy,
And waving palms foretelling victory.
And it was well their voices now should bring

Canto Fourth

A happier strain unto His sore-tried heart,
For He had made them types of highest thought,
And taught that those whose faith was as a child's
Should find the kingdom of Eternal Love.
So with the thought of children pressing near
He from the Temple went with tender smile.

Canto the Fifth

The restful silence of the night has come,
And gathers all the world in its embrace,
Soothing the cares of day and giving peace.
What voice dare break the travail of His soul
To offer once again the crowns of earth?
What echo cries to Him from desert wild?
The priests who long have hated Christ now fear
Lest gathered tribes His leadership proclaim;
But what may priests, clad in the people's pain,
And spirits stricken with the lust of pride,
With leadership of this a new-born world?
Or know of Him, who only Spirit knows,
As Source and Giver of all power to men?
Who wipes from consciousness the sense of self
And all that may the Spirit's way impede?
Truth now must soar a flaming cross to heaven
That shall the thoroughfares of Time make bright
For souls that to great purposes press on.

When comes the day again, with subtle speech
And hearts of darkness try they then Christ's words
That He before them may stand self-accused,
His claim to be Messiah proven false.
Clear as a trumpet call His answers ring,
Waking the echoes of undying truth:
"Render to Cæsar what to him belongs,

Canto Fifth

And unto God what also is His due,"
Setting a higher judge and tribute now
Than e'er may by the pride of Rome be claimed.
Now questions Him one skilled in Moses' law:
"Master, which may the great commandment be?"
With eyes love lit, sphered in calm skies He
speaks:
"Love thou thy God with all thy heart and mind,
And thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.
These two embrace the prophets and all law."
No more they question brooding low desire
That feeds upon the pestilent tree of death;
For now both priests and people He condemns
As fools and hypocrites, not knowing Love,
While forth are justice, faith, and mercy cast,
Driven by greed and pride and blinding hate,
When from the whirlwind of His scorn fall words
Of pity soft as rain that breaks a storm,
Or tears that melt the heart of some deep grief:
"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, O thou
Who dost the prophets kill, and stone thy sons,
How oft would I have gathered thee in love,
As doth a hen that sheltereth her brood,
But thou wouldst not unto this shelter come!
Behold, all desolate is left thy house."
As breath of sea that stirs the longing heart
And rises in pure fragrance of desire,
So now unto this City of His love

Is breathed this tender sigh of sad farewell.
In silence now across the court He goes;
Pausing He sees a widow ~~poor~~ put her all,
Her mite, into the box of trumpet shape
That held the free-will offering of her race;
The beauty of the deed that shone with love
Nor priest nor formal ritual could hide
Wakes joy again within that wearied heart,
And brings the praise, "She hath done what she could,
This woman of the upright heart and pure.
'T is deeds like this that build the kingdom up."

O Thou recurring Christ,
Strong in all mighty truth,
From sanguine fields, from deeds of might,
Take Thou our youth.

Rejected, outcast, weak,
Sin-stained or blind with strife,
Piercing through all disguise,
Take Thou our life.

For worthy cause like Thee,
We now endure Thy pain,
Our Brother, Comrade, Friend,
We too are slain.

Canto Fifth

Head of us all art Thou,
Triumphant Love Thy sign,
Through deeds of humble men
Dost Thou not shine?

Canto the Sixth

Now draws the quiet evening o'er the land
Her violet robe agleam with sun's last ray,
While flowers distill their love in odors sweet
As through the tender light there walketh One,
Circled within the Spirit's deeper light.
Unto that upper chamber now He goes,
Where His last Paschal supper has been spread,
And here about Him are His chosen come.
Yet still His soul is sorrowful to death
With dull forebodings of distrust and doom;
Were they as yet by love as brethren bound?—
For He would have them one, and only know
The one Eternal Father of them all.
And then He shows by washing of their feet
The dignity of labor done in Love,
Till He, o'erburdened by a sense of grief,
At last exclaims, "Ye all are clean save one."
And each cry out, "Lord, is it I, or I?"
In whisper low John asks, "Which is that one?"
The quiet answer comes, "'T is he that now
Dips in the dish with Me his sop of bread." . . .
"What now thou doest, Judas, quickly do."
The words were meant to set suspicion free,
But Judas rises and goes swiftly out.
Perchance within his traitor heart he thinks

Canto Sixth

That now Christ must His kingly powers pro-
claim.
So quietly has all this come to pass
That none suspect what lies within his mind;
E'en John but thinks that Judas has the bag
And forth has gone to rectify some wrong.
Now took He bread with them and ate,
That they in daily bread might not forget
How He, the Bread of Life, had bid them live;
Then drank He of the purple-fruited vine,
In token that they needs must live in Him
To bear life's perfect fruit of love complete.
Around them seemed to hover unborn years,
Winged with the larger vision of His faith,
While follow quick'ning words of hope and love.
"Let not your hearts be troubled, neither fear,
Because unto the Father I have gone.
But unto you the Comforter shall come,
And teach to you the truth whereof I speak;
Till ye shall see Me with a clearer eye
Than now ye can. The Truth shall make you free,
Clearing your minds with light of risen day.
Mine have ye ever been, yea, from the first;
Great sorrow from the world ye shall receive;
Be of good cheer, I have the world o'ercome.
All these things have I spoken that with you
There might remain the strength'ning joy of love.
That your joy may be full, abide in Me,

As I within the Father's love abide;
And what ye ask the Father shall be done,
For I have manifested Him o'er flesh,
And unto all have shown this grace divine
That they in Him eternal life should know."
Then lifted He His eyes to God, and prayed:
"O Father, now to me the hour has come;
Thee have I glorified, my work is done;
Let but Thy glory rest upon Thy Son.
O Holy Father, keep through Thy love those
Thou hast given Me. May they be one in Me
As I in Thee, that all may see Thy love.
O Heavenly Father, keep them in this world,
And may they by Thy truth be sanctified!"
So flows this prayer of prayers from His great soul.
Then they together sing a psalm of praise,
And at His words, "Arise, let us go hence,"
They pass into the night o'er Kedron's brook,
Unto the Mount of Olives.

On the way
He tells them how He shall offend them all
That night, that they shall be as scattered sheep
When smitten is the shepherd by the foe;
But on the third day He will rise again,
And go before them into Galilee.
Here Peter all aflame with zeal breaks forth,
"Though all deny Thee, Lord, yet shall not I."
O hasty love that measures not its strength!

Canto Sixth

"E'er crow of cock thou shalt deny Me thrice"—
Prophetic words that speak the coming hours.
At last they reach the Mount by olives crowned;
In depth of sadness leaves He them save three,—
Peter, James, and John He takes with Him;
With these He seeks the Garden that He loves.
They go within its silent shade to pray;
But now the hour when Christ must stand alone,
The depth of human agony to know,
So even these He leaves to silent watch,
And further goes into the Garden ways,
Where on His face He falls in agony
Of this His greatest struggle of the flesh.
"O My Father, if it be possible,
Let pass from Me this cup; but, Father, not
As I will, but as Thou wilt, be it done."
Then turns He where His friends now sleeping
lie.
"What, could ye not watch with Me one hour?
Watch
Ye and pray, lest trial take ye unware;
Willing the spirit, but the flesh is weak."
Sadly he turns to pray again that prayer:
"O My Father, if this cup may not pass
From Me except I drink, Thy will be done."
Then in dumb anguish turns unto the three
To ease if might be His last human need;
They sleep, nor know the birth-pangs of this hour.

Sphered now in solitude once more He prays,
"O My Father, if this cup may not pass
From Me except I drink, Thy will be done."
Now may His grief scarce ease itself in speech,
But in great drops of blood it seeks relief.
When stirs the pulse of night to throb of wings,
Parting her purple ways of woven stars,
Comes from beginning of all time a host
Celestial whom Love through suffering found.
Clothed now in woven robes of light they bring
Hope's rainbow cup sparkling and pure filled with
Love's crystal water from the throne of God.
And lo! the cup o'erflows as deep He quaffs,
Renewing faith, till undismayed He cries,
"O Father, not My will, but Thine be done."
And from the ground He rises up divine.
Seeking them where they lie, He bids them rise,
For he that doth betray the Son of Man
Is well upon them with a multitude
Of men armed by the priests, to take Him forth.
E'en while He speaks Judas with friendly guise
Steps from the throng and hails Him with a kiss.
Sadly with gentle word he is rebuked:
"Friend, wherefore art thou come with all this
power?"
What blow could equal strength of these few
words?
No wonder that in deep repentant rage

Canto Sixth

He flings before the priests the guilty price,
And in deep agony of spirit cries,
"Lo! I have sinned, and innocence betrayed!"
Then forth in suicidal madness rushed,
And hanged himself for deed he ne'er forgave.
So lay they hands on Christ, but not before
With love that sheathed forever Peter's sword
An act of human pity He must do,—
By healing touch upon a servant's ear
Which had been shorn by Peter's over-zeal
Ere forth unto the High Priest's house they go,
And only Peter followed Him afar.

Now see we, Lord, Thy life as chalice fair
Filled to o'erflowing with Thy deeds of love,
That from life's bitterness
Drew forth a sweetness born in darkest night;
Touched with Thy quickening morn
A strength'ning wine of Spirit now distill
Thy thirst to quench, Thy life renew
In that hushed hour of deepest woe,
When man crowned Love with thorns of shame,
Till earth ensanguined trembling woke and called
In mighty thunders to her sleeping dead.

To each, dear Christ of Love,
Thou giv'st a Holy Grail
To fill and cherish day by day and so

Chriſtus

Renew Love's Sacrament,
With thoughts divine of Thee who symbolized
In daily bread of common need
The body broken and the Spirit freed
To take Love's Sacrament to hungry souls.
E'en so, dear Christ,
Thy life for us becomes
The blood by which all live
In Thy new Testament
Of brotherhood divine.
In reverence we bow
Before each day, and take anew the cup
From Thy love-kindling hands that flame
Afresh our failing hearts.
So lift our lives that when this little hour
Of troubled life shall as a dream be past,
Let naught be found within its quiet depths
But strength'ning wine of Spirit purified.

Canto the Seventh

Low in the heavens hang the lamps of God,
Gray clouds of portent hurry o'er the sky,
In fitful gusts comes breath of restless wind,
While Christ in peace abiding walketh calm.
    At last they reach that house in gardens set
High-terraced and deep-canopied with shade,
Where fountains splash and upward catch the
    gleam
Of vagrant moon o'erblown by drifting clouds.
Here waited Caiaphas with scribes and priests
For that mock trial of the Son of God
Who comes before them in majestic peace.
And all the night they questioned of His words,
Till He in answer justice now demands:
"Before the world I openly have taught
In synagogue and market where men came,
Nor may I be accused of secret speech.
Why asketh thou? Ask them who heard my words
What said I unto them. Behold, they know."
Now when injustice mounteth high it finds
Those of an evil mind to walk with it,
So there was one about the court who cried,
"What! Thinkest Thou to answer High Priest
    so?"
And struck Him on the face with open palm.

Then showeth Christ a Hebrew's sense of right:
"If I have spoken evil, witness bear;
If well, why smitest thou?"—and holds His peace.
So now are witness called, well known to them,
And ere the morning breaks full council meets.
Then in the servants' seats there came to pass,
As Christ had said, that thrice was He denied
By him whose love protested at the thought
In heated words of vehement surprise,
For Peter now declares to mocking jibes,
"I know Him not, why ask?"—when crowed the cock,
And full on Peter Jesus turned His eyes,
Who fled in bitter consciousness of love.
While still they wait, the priests fling forth their words
As pestilence of hell by hatred bred,
Till come their witnesses against the Truth;
But when the solemn oath of death is read,
Behold are some who fear to speak that lie,
Lest for all time it lay on them the blood
Of Him who now they falsely would accuse;
For so it runs, and further goes to say,
"That as in Adam all men first were made,
So may one man stand forth for all the world."
They may not dally with such words nor look
Upon those clear deep-visioned eyes of love;
While others, proud importance now to find,

Canto Seventh

Cluck out their words with strut of foolish fowl:
"This fellow said, 'Destroy the Temple, then
Will I in three days build it up anew.'"
Here might not all agree, save in that He
Had taken to himself the power of God
And thus blasphemed,—this charge the priests
had sought,—
So with one voice they cry, "Art thou the Christ?"
Now may the Spirit of His claim divine
With grave serenity the silence break,
As one who watched upon the brink of time,
Yet caught the sound of idle questioning:
"If this I tell you, ye will not believe,
And if I ask of you, ye will not say."
The words transfigured, shone with wistful love
That gave assertion greater than His speech,
And filled with dull alarm the hate of priests,
Who, as lean birds of prey that pendant swoop,
Now harshly cry, "Art thou the Son of God?"
And from their midst the High Priest Annas rose.
Imperious silence hung upon His words,
While he, the judge supreme, with hand upraised
Abjures Him by the living God to tell
If He indeed be Christ, the Son of God.
Then as the starred and silent sky glows with
The dawn, so now He makes His last reply:
"It is as thou hast said, and thou shalt see
The Son in power and glory yet appear."

Then did the High Priest rend his clothes and say,
"Blasphemy! need we further witness seek?
Ye all have heard. What think ye now of Him?"
And as one voice they answer, "*Ish Maveth*—
He is a man of death," and tear their robes.
    Then comes a scene of deep disgrace and
        shame,—
They buffet Him and spit upon His face;
With unclean lips thrust out and mocking blows
They rail upon Him through the weary night.
A fearsome scene, that hall by torches lit,
That flamed across the face of angry men,
The loud uproar and clamor of their feet.
Incarnate hate and envy they appear!
Lo! He, the people's friend, the Nazarene,
In whom the Son of Man and God were one,
Is with derision hailed to feed the scorn
Of those who late had loud Hosannas sung!
    And what of him, alas, beloved of Christ,—
Why waits John there in shameful silence, why?
He hears false words, yet utters not the truth,
He sees the cruel blows, yet offereth not
Defence. What keeps that loving spirit dumb?
The tears of deep remorse which Judas shed,
And those of penitence from Peter's eyes,
He might not shed to ease so great a love,
Nor could those dews of life relieve the hour.
His spirit quivers in its sheath and would

Canto Seventh

Leap forth, a sword of truth, to save his Lord;
Yet now in silence does he bear with Christ
The mocking insults and outrageous blows,
For with his steadfast faith and spirit pure
He sees the larger issues of the hour;
Sees from that form divine a radiance
That meets his ever understanding love:
"The cup My Father gives, shall I not drink?
For only by the Spirit do we live."
Again these words from out the days just past,
The larger vision brought to ease his pain,
And love reliant loyal silence keeps,
Drawing him closer to that thought divine.
  Then as the day with doubtful fervor breaks,
They bind and lead Him to the Judgment Seat,
For they must have Him tried by laws of Rome.
And so to Pilate now they come,—a man
To be obeyed, relentless, stern, and one
Who cared not for the Jew or his strange faith,
But only cared to keep the province still,
And gather taxes without needless war,
That he might favor find and so advance.
He stood a bulwark of material power
'Twixt Rome and phantoms of the Jewish mind.
While now drew near that artisan of man,
That builder of a world not made with hands,
Whose feet were shod with love and on whose
  brow

Rested the crown of labor sanctified.
When Pilate first from the Prætorium comes,
He with his lictors meets them at the gate,
For here no priest nor doctor of the law
May come, while yet they keep their Paschal week.
So when he sees the Man before him bound
He asks, "What accusation do ye make?"
An outraged justice weakens their reply:
"If He had not a malefactor been
Why should we bring Him here?" Their answer comes
With calm contempt: "Then take ye Him and judge
According to your law." Not this their wish,
For by their law they might not put to death.
With craft they now their accusation make.
"He doth pervert the nation, for He said
That none shall tribute unto Cæsar pay,
And, too, He hath proclaimed Himself a King."
Now Pilate needs must heed so grave a charge.
He goes unto the Judgment Hall; there bids
Them send this Man whom they accuse,
And he will see if any guilt be His.
Calm with a majesty divine Christ comes,
In simple robes of white before him stands,
And from Him shines a light, a radiance pure
As seen at early morn before the sun
Breaks the white stillness with the rush of dawn,

Canto Seventh

While from His eyes, luminous as still stars,
There shines the vision of the law fulfilled
In love, and ages joined in brotherhood.
    At once with quick directness Pilate asks,
"Art thou a King?" And calm the answer falls,
"Thou sayest." Then in silent strength Christ
    waits,
Confronting worlds invisible, whose fate
Hangs on the faith and patience of this hour;
While from without loudly the priests accuse,
Till Pilate marvels, asks if He has heard,
And still that silence waits above His calm.
So he again in wonder questions Him:
"What hast thou done?" As music in the night
Presses upon the dark, so now Christ's words
Fall with disturbing beauty on the heart:
"My kingdom is not of this world, or else
If of this world, then were I not brought here.
To this end was I born, for this I came
Into the world, a witness of the Truth,
And he who is of Truth will know My voice."
    E'en now the splendor of that kingdom vast
The mind of Pilate strangely seems to stir,
And so, perplexed, that vital question asks:
"What is truth?" The conscious silence waits
Before Incarnate Truth, Light of the World.
What need of speech while Christ in patience
    stands?

Then Pilate turns unto the Jews who wait:
"I find no fault in Him,"—as if he said,
"Why waste the time of Rome on idle dreams?"
He knows not of the temper of that crowd,
That all this while had been so much increased
Is now a sea by dark'ning tempest tossed,
Remorseless, surging, by quick lightnings lit
Of passions all aflame, and keen to mark
The sign of indecision in his voice.
When in the tumult of their words he hears
The name of Galilee, he quickly turns,
And asks of them, "Is He from Galilee?
Then must He go to Herod. Lead Him forth."
So straightway take they Him with Roman guard
Unto that "Fox," the murderer of John,
Whose voice had called to men on Jordan's shore.
With subtle smile Christ is received by him,
And smooth his words, for long he had desired
To meet Him and His wonder-working see,
Of which he hoped He now would give him proof;
And close he questioned Him of many things.
To priest and Pilate answer might Christ make,
But now, before this man of guile, is dumb;
He knew the depth of falseness in his heart.
And chilling silence creeps on Herod's soul,
A silence that rebukes and fills with fear,
Till Herod, touched as by a wind of death,
Turns now his words of insult into hate.

Canto Seventh

With cruel smile and lips thrust out he vies
With jibes the mocking soldiers to outdo;
In purple robes of scorn he decks Him forth,
Then straightway unto Pilate sends Him back,
Who now but finds himself in harder pass,
And hesitates anew, the while he says:
"No fault I find in Him that He should die,
Nor was there any fault by Herod found.
Therefore, whip Him with cords and let Him go."
The soldiers roughly plait a Crown of Thorns,
And press it on Christ's head, scourging the while
With mocking cries of, "Hail, King of the Jews!"
Till Pilate leads Him forth unto the priests
With half-contemptuous words, "Behold, the Man!"
But when did dalliance with the fires of hate
Bring aught but a devouring flame? So now
The quick relentless cry "Crucify Him!
Crucify Him!" shows how their hate has spread.
Impatient now comes Pilate's quick reply:
"Take Him yourselves and crucify. I find
No crime in Him!" If Pilate find no guilt,
Why stand the soldiers idle at their posts?
Why waits the word that bids them clear the court?
No, they would have their will, and He must die.
Then say those Jews, who stood without the gate,
"We have a law by which He ought to die,

For He hath made Himself the Son of God."
Of this was Pilate sore afraid. He turns
And asks, "Whence art Thou?" When no answer comes,
With boast proved vain in that last hour, he said,
"Dost Thou not know my power to crucify
Or set Thee free? Speak now, whence art Thou come?"
As breath of love there comes to those calm lips
The words that judge the weakness of His judge:
"Thou hadst not power were it not given thee,
But he that brought me here hath greater sin."
Then Pilate wished the more to set Him free.
As one sore vexed in dreams who gropes about,
So Pilate offereth another way
To set this dreamer free. A custom 'twas
At Paschal Feast to liberate some Jew,
Whate'er his crime, who then in prison lay.
So grasping now this thought does Pilate ask:
"Which will ye I at once release to you,
Barabbas or this Christ, King of the Jews?"
And at that word they cry, "Barabbas free!
Not Christ our wish. Barabbas we will have!"
Now he like quick-grown weed in pregnant soil
Had tried by crimes to choke the power of Rome.
But yet again would Pilate justice show;
He speaks and tries once more their rage to quell.
"Barabbas!" still the cry. "Give us no Christ!"

Canto Seventh

Here a swift message comes from Pilate's wife,
Who lay like jewel in this heart of steel,
Its point of fire melting where'er it touched.
She knew the Scriptures, Jesus, too, had seen,
So writes her lord of omens and of dreams,
And begs, lest evil on his head should fall,
That he have naught to do with this just man.
The message troubles Pilate, what to think,
For omens are a part of Roman faith;
Then to his mind there comes that custom old
Of Moses' law, his wife mayhap have read,
That those who would a murder disavow
May by the washing of their hands in court
All guilt or party to the crime dissolve.
He tries again to free this Man.
Too late,
While still he hesitates the deed is done,
For they declare that he may not be friend
Of Cæsar's or of Rome if this man does
Not die. Hath He not said, "I am a King"?
And will he risk his place in Rome for this?
But ere he speaks the tumult louder grows
From priests who cry:
"It is our wish He dies.
He shall be crucified! Hang Him on high!"
The people catch the word and back they shout:
"Hang Him on high. Crucify! Crucify!"
Then was there water unto Pilate brought.

"Now by your customs ye shall have your will,
I wash before ye all; see ye to it,
For He is innocent. No guilt I find!"
Then from that throng there breaks that awful cry
Whose echoes through the ages lead to death,
"Upon us and our children be His blood!"
Then Pilate gives them Christ to crucify.
Crowned with the Crown of Thorns they lead
Him forth,
A reed as sceptre in His hand they place,
And round His wounds a scarlet robe they throw.
Now is that robe of scarlet worn by priests
To show that they their blood would shed for
Truth,
And once again they mock and call Him King!
The travesty of justice now is done,
Nor priest, nor king, nor minion of great Rome
Aught can condemn. His soul's high destiny,
With majesty beyond their carnal minds,
Moves as a Victor onward to the end.

Canto the Eighth

With lagging steps now comes the gentle Spring
Her sacred touch unfolding bud and leaf,
While full streams sing and ripple with her smile,
Bringing the joy of winter overcome;
On tireless wings earth's choristers return,
And fill with songs of love the leafy boughs,
While all await the blossoms' promised hour.

What blast is this that sweeps Esraldin's plains,
Blighting the Rose of Sharon with its touch?
What winter chill has seized the heart of man,
With breath of coming woe and misery?

Lo! now their evil minds their lust fulfils!
Crowned still with sanguine crown of cruel thorns,
Bearing on scourgéd back the Cross of shame,
Through winding city ways they lead the Christ,
Drawing the idle curious of the street,—
They that as chaff are blown before the deep
Slow winnowings of time; dead to all joy,
Upon the earth they lie as scattered hopes.
'Twas meet that they should follow Him who leaves
The tares and wheat until their hour is come.

So in procession march they to that hill,
The Hill of Execution; like a skull
It lies outside Damascus Gate, where meet

As one the many winding roads of men.
But here, perchance to pity stirred, they pause,
Compelling one to take from Christ the cross
Ere that last upward climb of burdened Love.
Then give they gall and vinegar to drink,
To ease the thirst of those last mortal hours;
But Christ within that garden hour has quaffed
Too deep His Father's cup to need aught now.
'T is but their blindness brings to Him distress!
Then do they part His garments, casting lots,
And ancient prophecies are now fulfilled:
"My garments parted they among them all,
And for my vesture then did they cast lots."
With tragic tumult press they on the deed,
Till they aloft have raised their King to die,
And once again are words of old fulfilled:
"He shall be lifted up from earth, and draw
All men to Him by very strength of love."
Above His head is writ in every tongue,
"Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews!"
From that great hour behold all men have brought
Their deepest love and homage to the Cross.
That sign of shame, one man alone hath made
The symbol of an everlasting love!

In patience and majestic calm He waits,
Orbed in pure love that mists of earth dispel.
He sees His Mother weeping at His feet;
With loving words He gives her to the care

Canto Eighth

Of John, whom ever did His spirit love;
Here showing that man's true relations are
Not ties of flesh, but those that spirit bind,
Or else to other sons had Mary gone.
Now to the wailing women comes His voice:
"O daughters of Jerusalem, weep not
For me, but for yourselves and children weep."
Then godlike by the Spirit breathes one prayer,
"Father, forgive. They know not what they do."
But ere His spirit passes to its own,
It waits in love to heal one anguished soul.
On either side two thieves with Christ are hung,
That they may to this hour bring greater shame,
The one from clouds of dazzling pain cries out
With fierce and scoffing words that bite the heart,
"If Thou be Christ, now save thyself and us!"
So challenges the spirit of man's doubt,
Rising from misty caverns of the earth
Where hangs the heart-strung lyre of broken chords,
That wails and sighs with breath of all men's woes.
It called to Him, Love's Herald of the day,
About whom dawn's pale brilliance glowed,
That brighter shone till rose the ancient dead
And followed to eternal realms of life.
Now burns that light to penitential fire
The other's heart, who shares this bitter hour.

The scoffer he rebukes with failing words,
Made strong by Truth's first impulse in the heart:
"We justly suffer, but not so this Man;
Hast thou no fear of God now thou art here?"
Then to the Christ he turns with passing breath,
"Remember me, O Lord, when Thou shalt come
Into Thy kingdom!" Not in vain his cry;
Like balm there falls upon his anxious heart,
"I tell thee truly thou shalt be with Me
This day in Paradise." Then from that soul
Fell off the squalid garments of the past,
In peace profound unto the last he rests.
Now over all the land deep darkness broods,
As if the wings of doubt were outward spread,
Circling for that last flight to outer void,
As from the Son of Man burst forth that cry,
"My God, my God, hast Thou forsaken Me?"
Till now above the weakness of His doubt
The Spirit proves that Love is all in all,
When in a voice of strong, triumphant faith
The Son with God united speaks, "Father,
Into Thy hands My spirit I commend."
Then as that spirit onward wings its way,
One in its Father's love and proven faith,
To higher thought of God's immortal Truth,
Lo! at its breath the heavens of earth dissolve
In flame, the thunders crash, the earth is rent,
The dead rise at the trumpet call of Life,

Canto Eighth

And earth is as a raging, seething sea;
As if the powers of darkness knew their King,
And immortality by man was won,
And forth had belched the horror of each deed
Of those long hours, when hate had wreaked its spleen!
Triumphant Truth rolls back the Temple's gates,
And at its touch the veil is rent in twain,
That there may nothing stand 'twixt God and Man,
While those that near Him keep, in solemn awe
And fear exclaimed, "This is the Son of God!"
When drew the evening in with sullen gloom
The blood-stained garments of the passing day,
There came from Pilate at the priests' request
Soldiers, to see that life had fled from each
Cross-tortured body, that no sign remain
Of their ill deed to stir the people's hearts
When dawns the high feast of their Sabbath morn.
So hasten they ere darkness gathers in
To free the anguished flesh; but when to Christ
They come, they find His spirit pure has fled.
A soldier with a spear then pierced His side
From out of which both blood and water flowed;
To John a precious symbol of His life,
Washing the blood of sacrifice away
By Truth's pure water from the heart of Love.
O Love that ever does the world uplift,

May we each day within Thy kingdom dwell,
Finding our cross a cross of light, to shine
And clear the night unto Thy perfect day!
    Seeing that all is o'er, there goeth one,
Christ's friend, to beg that Pilate give him now
The body of his Lord, that it may rest
In that unfinished tomb of his, near by,
Which like a pearl in that fair garden lay
At foot of the high hill where stood the Cross;
And to the place came one to Truth new born
With myrrh and aloes sweet and precious oil.
That body fair together they anoint,
And wind in linen fine with spices rare,
Till love's last rite by gentle hands is done.
    Then came the guard to set the massive stone,
And seal with Cæsar's own imperial sign,
To quiet Fear, who heads the hosts of earth,
Lest Love, the Great Deliverer, arise
And be proclaimed the Lord of Life and Death.
Three days the soldiers in that garden watched,
Till weary nights, heavy with omens grave,
Silenced their words: vague, pitiless thoughts arose,
Then passed in restless wonder at the task.
Great stars swung in their ordered way on high
To rhythm of the music of those feet
Who do the Highest's bidding. Still they watched,
While day took up the vigil of the night.
With breathless awe the sun moved on his way,

Canto Eighth

And lo! within that silent tomb came Death,
But dared not on the glory of Christ's face
Look, lest in brightness Death itself be slain.
Eternal Love had won Eternal Life!

Canto the Ninth

And now behold the dawn that brings to earth
Through man the first great Resurrection Morn!
From Life's dim-vistaed way Immortal Mind
Rolls back the stone for Him, the Lord of All,
While Love's eternal antiphone peals forth,
That shakes with primal joy the heart of earth.
As when in that first morn God walked with man,
So now her vast serenity is stirred
As from her womb He rises, Man Supreme,
Strong with the deathless passion of His deed.
The soldiers on their faces fall as dead,
Then flee with conscience-stricken hearts before
The dread and glory of that solemn hour.
Deserted is that garden tomb and drear
When sadly cometh one to weep and pray.
And lo! with fear she sees the stone is gone,
And at the entrance of the empty tomb
The angel of the presence waiting stands.
As lightning is his face, his raiment gleams
White as the snow, smiting her eyes with night,
While as remembered music fall his words,
"Fear not. I know 'tis Jesus whom ye seek.
He is not here, but risen, as He said.
Come, see the place wherein the Lord did lie,
Then to the others go, and to them say:

Canto Ninth

‘Behold, our Lord is risen from the dead!’”
Love’s star of faith shone dim through clouds of
doubt,
As back unto the others now she speeds,
And findeth John and Peter watching long:
“O quickly come! They’ve taken away our Lord
I know not where; but quickly come and see.”
And John, outrunning Peter, is the first
To reach that silent tomb, yet waits in awe,
Till Peter entering finds no form within,
But folded near the garments of His Lord.
Then in bewilderment he stands, but John
With joy beholds triumphant Love revealed.
Afar had Mary strayed in garden ways,
In quest of Him Who now before her stood;
From eyes made dim by grief the slow tears fell,
So knew she not the presence of her Lord,
But thought it one who cared for this sweet place.
“Oh, sir, I pray thee tell where He is laid,
Hold Him not back, for I would take Him hence.”
The little flowers send out their sweetest scent,
Nor comes the wind of dawn to stir a leaf,
In depths of stillness glows the early morn,
When speaks that Voice of Love its deepest note,
“Mary!” She turns with outstretched hands and
cries,
“Master!” Again that Voice falls on her ear:
“Touch me not, for I am not ascended

Yet unto the Father; but go and say
To those my brethren that I go unto
My Father and to theirs."
With joy she goes;
From wellsprings of her love the message pours
Sparkling and clear; touched with eternal spring
It falls on doubting hearts, with grief o'erborne,
That have not yet that Higher Vision seen.
But that same evening comes He to them all
Where they are gathered in bewildered talk;
As fragrance wafted from a heavenly shore
His presence fills the room: "Peace be to you."
Upon their wounded hearts His words as balm
Fall with a healing strength that faith renews.
And then He leaves them — they can bear no more.
But once again He comes with those same words
Of peace; with breath of love on them He
breathes
The inspiration of His spirit, till,
More firm their faith, now bids He them to teach
And heal the sick, the dead to raise. Then come
Those words of power, "Whose sins soever
Ye do remit, they are remitted them,
And whose soever sins ye do retain,
They are retained." Again with breath of peace
He passes from their sight, that now their hearts
May feel and learn in silence of His words.
O gift of Christ, that man for long has kept

Canto Ninth

Crystalled within a form of passing power,
That as a child he might a fault confess
And absolution gain by word of priest;
But now, with love anew, has Spirit breathed,
And each, as High Priest of a heavenly love,
May hold or set at naught all earthly sin,
By patient faith that may impute no ill,
But knows the deep abiding of all good.
    Still did the clouds of earth their vision dim,
The witness of the outer eye as yet
Seemed more than what the light within them
    showed,
As when succeeding day drives shadows forth,
Yet, o'er the dawn, night trails her purple robe;
So may the soul awake, though not as yet
Are lost the lingering shadows of her night.
Once more on that same day when from the
    tomb
Christ rose a victor o'er the powers of death,
Behold, we find Him on a country road,
Where talk and reason of the strange events
Of those last days two of his chosen twelve.
Now as a stranger Christ draws near and asks
Whereof they speak.
    With sad surprise they stand
To give more full importance to their words:
"Dost thou live in Jerusalem nor know
The things which came to pass in these last days?"

"What things?" Christ asks. With wonder now
they say,
"Concerning Jesus, who, a Nazarene,
Yet was a prophet great in word and deed."
And glad to ease their minds they tell Him all.
Thoughtful He waits, searching with inward gaze
Their troubled hearts; then as a Father speaks:
"O thoughtless ones, and slow of heart are ye
To rest your faith on all the prophets say.
Was not it needful that these things should be?"
Beginning now from Moses He explained
All things in Scriptures that concerned Himself,
And shows how still such suffering must be,
Till all have come into that perfect love
That holds men in eternal brotherhood
And comradeship of minds divinely set,
To make the social highway clear for God,
And bring with peace the kingdom of the soul.
Now burn their hearts aglow with heavenly
fire,
Lighting dim ways of soul's unfettered range
That stretch beyond the horizons of thought,
Till as day sinks to restful calm, they come
Where in the sunset's glow Emmaus stands.
Here seemed to part the Stranger's way from
theirs,
But they, thrilled with the Great Companionship,
Entreat Him now to stay, for night draws near:

Canto Ninth

"Abide with us, for day is now far spent."
And so constrained, He seeks with them the inn.
There as they sat at meat it came to pass
That bread He broke and blessed and gave it
them.
Then was their Lord revealed, all blindness fled;
One simple act in daily usage found,
And lo! the Christ once more stood in their midst.
With opened eyes they would detain Him now,
But, as before, He passes from their sight,
And they unto Jerusalem return,
That quickly might their brethren know of Him,
And learn how they that day had talked with
Christ.
They find the chosen few together drawn,
Lost midst the shadows of the great events.
And they assure them of a risen Lord,
When lo! He is among them as they speak.
That not one heart may question of the truth,
With gentle words Christ turns where Thomas
stands
Aside in doubt, and bids him come and prove
That as he knew Him, so he now may see
No phantom of the mind, but risen Christ:
"Behold the marks upon My hands and feet,
Arise and touch the wound upon my side,
That thy last doubt may flee before thy sight.
Be thou not faithless, but believe in Me."

And Thomas overpowered may scarce exclaim,
"My Lord, my God!" Then sadly speaks the Christ,
"Because thou seest Me, thou hast believed,
But blessed they that have not seen as thou,
Yet have believed, and by their simple faith
Know that the Christ is Lord of Life and Death."
In silence and strange peace they go their ways,
Returning once again to daily tasks;
And those who in the waters cast their nets,
We find again beside fair Galilee.
A night when all in vain, wearied they toil,
Casting their nets; yet empty now they lie,
While o'er the violet hills with tender glow
Lightly the day draws near. With gentle breath
She rocks the idle boat. The tired men,
Soothed as a child by mother softly swung,
In slumber rest till labor calls them forth;
When falls on consciousness that voice
Whose mingling tones reflect with gentle strength
God's fatherhood and motherhood of love.
It calls them "Children," asks what they have caught,
And waits the weary answer from their lips,
Then bids them on the right side cast their net.
The sea its store releases at His word,

Canto Ninth

And lo! their nets they scarce can pull for weight.
Then with one voice they cry, "It is the Lord."
And Peter, filled with instant faith, springs forth
Upon the sea, but now by fear o'ercome,
"Save, Master, or I perish!" loudly cries.
With love whose strength may weakness bear,
    Christ saves,
In faith unbroken leads o'er quiet seas
Where in the smile of morning lies the land.
Upon its welcome shore a fire of coals
Bears witness of an omnipresent Love
That meets and makes our human needs divine.
Again He breaks for them the daily bread;
But see what joy is at this morning meal,
That supper at the evening hour how sad!
Then knew they not, but now the Light has
    come,
And always with them will this Light abide.
    The little waves low ripple on the shore,
And still and calm the sea as Love's own smile;
The dew-filled chalice of the flowers o'erbrim
With light and odor, and the wings of dawn
Fan from the mountain-side the veil of night,
While earth new born sends up her hymn of
    praise.
Now half in morning peace and half in awe,
Within His spirit's radiance they rest,
Till Christ with searching tones to Peter turns.

Three times He asks, lest impulse lead astray:
"Simon, thou son of Jonas, lov'st thou Me,
Yea, more than these?" pointing to o'erfilled boat,
As symbol of the world that calls to men,
Till Peter, grieved at heart, falls at his feet.
"Thou know'st, Lord, all things, so must Thou know
My love for Thee." "Then feed My sheep, lest thou
By others should be led where thou wouldst not;
When these first fires of early love are past,
Keep thou thy burning zeal, and follow Me."
But Peter ever hasty turns and sees
John standing near. "And what wouldst Thou with him?"
Christ's quiet look brings shame for idle words.
"What 's this to thee? I said, 'Feed thou My sheep.'"
Now shows Christ how true fishers they must be,
Drawing all men within the Spirit's net
By cords made strong with gentleness and love;
And so with pregnant words their minds He fills,
Till each goes gladly on his daily way.
Then leaves He them, once more to reappear
To open wide new gates of life for them,
With promise of the Comforter to come,
That would as flame of Love upon them rest,
Consuming fear, giving new tongue to speech,

Canto Ninth

Kindling the souls of men with grace of God,
Till blind and dumb get light and speech again.

Where, Church of God, has fled thy dear-bought
power,
Where squanderest thou thy dower?
For what pale forms and earthly crowns of gold
Hast thou thy birthright sold?
See how in shadowy terrors at thy gate
The stricken people wait.
Stirs not thy spirit's chalice to o'erbrim
With healing love of Him?
Or, leaving all, in wilderness dost seek
One starving, poor or weak?
Where is thy faith that Truth alone makes free,
Why bend the servile knee,
And, robed in purple, where thy balm of peace
That bids men's pain to cease?
Forgettest thou Whose robes with purple stained
By love the world regained?
Thou hast the golden key of life to ope
The hidden door of hope,
Let it no longer rust in silken fold,
Nor thy great gifts withhold,
But open throw thy Gate of Beauty wide,
Let Love, a healing tide,
Cleanse all thy courts, and joy return to earth,
Till each heart feel thy worth,

And thou through love, man's brotherhood con-
fessed,
Find Christ thy constant guest.

Awake, O earth, for former things are passed!
Behold the light that shall Eternity
Rejoice, for lo! upon His love-paved way
Christ comes. From out thy urn of starry dew
Anoint His feet that now with beauty press
Upon thy Mount by peaceful olives crowned,
For now His spirit leaves the ways of earth.
Here where in stillness came the voice of God,
When day on amethystine altars burned
The golden incense of her passing hours,—
Here found that larger freedom of the will
Within the Will Divine that made them one,
And once again the Lamp of Truth renewed
That dim had burned for many ages past,
Hid 'neath the bushel of the world's dull thought;
And with this Lamp had to His people come
To show the flower or weed of every act.
That they had cast Him forth, nor would receive
The Light of Lights, broke forth in bitter cry
When on the Cross doubt's passing shadow fell.
As wind of memory passes o'er His heart,
Touching the lyre of earthly pains and joys,
Again is heard the Shepherds' song of old,
Chanting the glad refrain of peace and love,

Canto Ninth

With rhythmic pulse of strong archangels' wings
Beating across the sea of liberty;
And on this strain higher His thought ascends,
His path through Mind's exalted realm grows
bright,
As He, the Son of Life, breaks through earth's
clouds,
Their rainbow splendor lost in flame of Love
That kindles Time's yet formless years with Hope,
And floods with light the void abysm of death.
Love rules! The Man Supreme unveils His power;
Within its glory, beautiful and free,
He passes from the veiléd sight of earth,
Triumphant in eternal victory!

The End