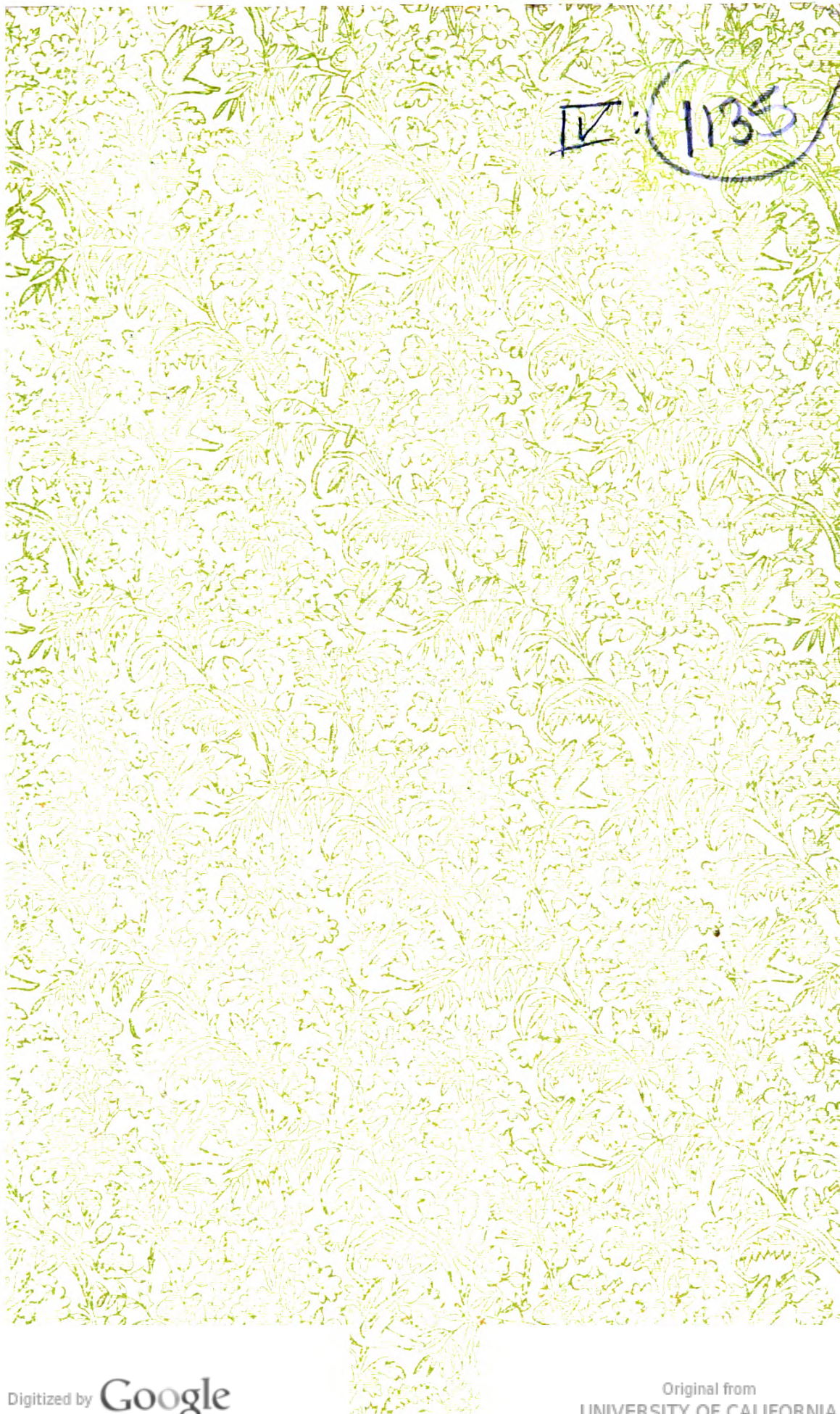




"Where there is no vision the people
perish."



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LYRA CHRISTI.

Lyra Christi:

BEING METRICAL MUSINGS
ON THE LIFE OF OUR LORD.

BY

ALFRED ERNEST KNIGHT.



MORGAN & SCOTT LD.

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MCMXV

**To the
Children of God
scattered abroad
soon to be united
in the
One Flock
these lines
A humble Tribute
of Praise
to the
One Shepherd
are affectionately
Dedicated.**

PREFACE.

IN these days of unwonted pressure and phenomenal unrest, when evil has risen to a head and the destinies of great nations are in the melting-pot, when the minds of many are distraught or their hearts failing them for fear, the Christian has great need to possess his soul in patience, and above all to be kept in living touch with his Lord. It was a deep sense of this need, as something personal to the writer, which suggested the meditations contained in *Lyra Christi*. Musings upon the perfect Master which have comforted the author's heart may also comfort the hearts of others—may lead them even, by spiritual processes not widely different, to deeper exploration in that richest of all mines, the Holy Evangel. His excuse for sending forth the volume is to be found here.

We have many able surveys of the Gospel history, but it seemed to the writer that there was room for a book of simpler pretensions and more strictly devotional character, in which the great outstanding facts of our Lord's life might be spiritually, and at the same time æsthetically presented : and this remark indicates, so far

PREFACE.

as can be indicated in a few lines, the scope and purpose of the book. The meditations therein embodied were the solace of the writer amid circumstances of sorrow, and during a season of prolonged severance from Christian fellowship, leading him often into new and untrodden pastures, where his soul has been refreshed and the Shepherd's gracious care most touchingly experienced. His best hopes will be realised should the perusal of the poem prove a source of spiritual cheer to others, or refresh here and there some weary soul oppressed by the burden and fierce heat of our garish modern day.

How often in these sorrowful and strenuous days would the Lord say to His own, as He said to His disciples in the days of His brief ministry on earth : " Come ye yourselves apart and rest awhile " ! For He is ever thinking for His saints, whose cares and griefs are His deep continual concern ; and it is in resting-times such as these, when heart and mind alike are weary, and there is little or no strength for physical exertion or sustained thinking, that *Lyra Christi* may have its place and mission. To His Name be all the praise !

CONTENTS.

DEDICATION	...	...	...	...	...	...	5
PREFACE	...	...	...	...	...	...	6
THE SON	...	...	...	...	...	...	9
THE BABE	...	...	...	...	...	...	19
THE ANOINTED	...	...	...	...	...	...	33
THE TEMPTED	...	...	...	...	...	...	43
THE SERVANT	...	...	...	...	...	...	59
THE TRANSFIGURED	...	...	...	...	...	...	77
THE CRUCIFIED	...	...	...	...	...	...	89
THE RISEN ONE	...	...	...	...	...	...	121

THE SON.

ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΝ ΥΙΟΝ [ΛΕΓΕΙ].
Ο ΘΡΟΝΟΣ ΣΟΥ, Ο ΘΕΟΣ, ΕΙΣ
ΤΟΝ ΑΙΩΝΑ ΤΟΥ ΑΙΩΝΟΣ.
(Heb. i. 8.)

ΕΞΗΡΕΥΞΑΤΟ Η ΚΑΡΔΙΑ ΜΟΥ
ΛΟΓΟΝ ΑΓΑΘΟΝ, ΛΕΓΩ ΕΓΩ
ΤΑ ΕΡΓΑ ΜΟΥ ΤΩ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙ.
(Psa. xlv. 1.)

THE SON.



MARKING the question, Doth not Wisdom
cry?

My heart by listening learnt, and
Love drew nigh.

Who shall find words to name Thee? who declare?
Wisdom, the Uncreated; one with God;
Eternally existing, His delight;
Son of the Father from before all worlds!
In time, by time conditions, Son of Man;
The Word made flesh; Jesus; Immanuel!

In the beginning—What? Almighty Power,
By will and voice, creating in the Son.
Before Creation—What? Immortal Love
In council, breaking silence to reach forth
Beyond Creation to Creation's crown,
Wisdom's delight, His pearl, the sons of men.

* * * * *

A plain wayfaring man, that only knows
Th' uplifting joy of sitting learner-wise

LYRA CHRISTI.

At His dear feet Who is the Light of life,
The Sent One of the Father, and by Whom
The Father is declared and love expressed,—
I, satiate yet not cloyed with sweets of love
And love's unbosomings, find rest of joy
Musing of Him Who gave it and sustains.

* * * * *

In the beginning of Jehovah's way
Before His works of old, or count of time,
Before the world's foundation—when as yet
There were no depths, no water-springs, no streams
No settled mountains, hills or pleasant fields—
Wisdom from everlasting was set up.
In Him the Image of th' Invisible God,
Objective Deity, took shape. In Him
The brightness of the Father's glory shone;
The Impress of His essence; and assumed,
In fellowship of counsels all divine
Bridging the distance of the creature's lapse,
(Fore-known—O pain of Knowledge!—not fore-planned)
Heirship of universal blessedness
By Sonhood birthright indefeasible.

After Jehovah's *way* Jehovah's *works*,
Love antedating Power; and with the work:
A new beginning—Nature's ordered birth,
And birth of Time that spheres the Ages. So

THE SON.

Wisdom's last word from the uncharted past
Was Time's nativity, and Nature's, too :
A word of pregnant might that woke to being,
Out of the void, a universe of worlds !
Then sang the morning stars together ; then
Shouted for joy consentient sons of God.
And Thou wast there, Supreme Delight of heaven !
The Father's only Son ; and Thine the word.
When He prepared the heavens Thou wast there,
Wisdom and Power co-operant : when He gave
The clouds for covering and a compass set
Upon the deep ; and to the callow earth
Appointed her foundations : yea, and when
The infinite gloom of space grew bright with stars—
World-suns by worlds attended—then, as One
Brought up with Him, we see Thee, hail Thee, own
Thine equal glory by Creator right.

Creator and Redeemer ! Power and Love
In Him united all His works confess.
The firmament His handiwork proclaims,
The heavens His glory ; not in terms alone
Of majesty and vastness, but in speech,
Voiceless and yet articulate, and still
Too some coherent ; and that shrined of old
A message vibrant with new works of Love
Through Him to be effected, when as yet

LYRA CHRISTI.

There was no written Word to tell of Him,
Nor lips, with fire from off the altar touched,
To herald the World-kingdom and its Prince.
He named the stars, and numbers. They were set—
Our sun-bound system of them—cycle-wise,
For signs proleptic, whereof each by turn
Finds centre and circumference in Himself;
Fore-pointing alway to the triumph of Good—
Bright consummation of the works of God—
In Him their Maker, and *for* Him the Heir.
Day utters unto day her speech of Him;
Night unto night shews knowledge. Spoken words
There are not; yet the earth the heavens hears,
Whose line, an ordered testament, goes out
Through all the earth; their voiceless language to
The world's extremity, and so to man.
In them a tabernacle for the sun
Is set; from whence his visible going forth
Is as a bridegroom from his chamber; yea,
As a strong man that joys the race to run.
Orion's bands, the cluster Pleiades,
Arcturus and his sons, what are they all,
And all the constellations, among which
The sun pursues his path, but lamps that mark
The pathway of a clearer brighter Sun—
Forenamed of Righteousness—from sign to sign
Among the Ages to the Rest of God?

THE SON.

Who made the worlds, sustained them, and sustains :
Upholding all things by His word of power.
By Him all things subsist. From age to age
The burden of Creation rests on Him.
Not matter only, but the universe
Of radiant happy beings—the galaxy
Of holy angels; nor less truly when
His lowly birth awoke their jubilant song,
His need their service in the wilderness.
He rules the elements. 'Tis He unlocks
The garner of the snow, and at His word
The hail's full treasures disburse their store.
Within the hollow of His fist He holds
The winds; and for the water-floods He makes
A channel. By His ordinance springs forth
The serviceable grass; and He begets
The drops of dew that gem the nursling blade.
The wild goats of the rock that are with young
He watches over; and the ravens are
His daily pensioners. The eagles seek
The craigs by His intelligence; the horse
Its beauty, grace, and strength from Him derives.
All life is in His hand. Whatever breathes,
Breathes by Him; from the insect pitterer
Heard through the noontide haze in summer fields,
Unto great Behemoth, that wallows prone
Under the lotus-bushes in the fens.

LYRA CHRISTI.

And these do praise Him; though from earth as yet
Full homage is withheld. His soverance here
Is touched with mystery—the King shut out!
The creature most deriving—Man, for whom
His rain descends, on whom His choicest gifts,
Seed-time and harvest, beauty, knowledge, love,
Are lavished royally—disputes His sway!
O wonderment of all things wonderful
Above the sun or under! Saddest thought
Of all sad thoughts, that Man, the work of God
And Crown of all His works; His best bestowed
By dower of largest blessing—should foreswear
Allegiance to the Power that made Him so;
And with persistency of narrow pride,
Push back the myrrh-filled hand stretched forth to bless!

O hand of Love—*His* hand—Immanuel's!
That spans the heav'ns, and in its hollow holds
Th' illimitable sea and wrestling winds—
Long since a piercèd hand! O words of Love
Recorded in the Volume of the Book
Before His works of old!—calm after-words
Of deep eternal counsel: “Lo, I come
“To do Thy will, O God!”—words all fulfilled
When high resolve was ratified by blood,
And from a spotless Victim, lifted up
'Twixt earth and heaven, there fell—yet vainly fell—

THE SON.

That lone cry of a Soul's abandonment :
“ Eloi ! Eloi ! lama sabacthani ! ”

Words from the womb of Time with purpose bright ;
Words at Creation's dawn of light and power ;
Words from the firmament of works to come ;
Words from the Crucified—the key to all !
So varied speech, yet rounding to one end—
God's glory and man's blessing intertwined :
Nor is the preachment finished while as yet
Among the sons of men are some will hear.
For Wisdom crieth still ; and crying, stands
Showing the nail-made scars. And I that am
A plain man of my people, having heard,
And found the words more sweet than wild bird's notes
On summer uplands under sapphire skies ;
And having seen, and pondered wistfully
The dolorous vision, till, like one of old
That also saw and heard, and was convinced,
My faith has pierced beyond the veil of flesh
And touched the Mystery of Godliness—
I, with a strange exultance, not unmixed
With shame of creature slackness, have confessed
Trembling : “ This truly was the Son of God ! ”

THE BABE.

ΟΤΙ ΠΑΙΔΙΟΝ ΕΓΕΝΝΗΘΗ
ΗΜΙΝ, ΥΙΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΕΔΟΘΗ ΗΜΙΝ.
(Isa. ix. 6.)

B2

THE BABE.



STRONG Rome exults. Her iron heel
has crushed
Into a restiff thraldom half mankind.
Hushed is the bruit of War; and
termless Peace

Written in blood, has left the nations dumb.
The victress otherwhere new glory seeks;
And finds it in her shame : her empty heart,
To luxury drawn, becomes the sink of lust.

In distant Jewry—once Immanuel's land,
And still to be—her will speaks unopposed,
From Hermon's shaggy crest to the far bounds
Of Edom, birthland of the king who reigns,
A subject king, usurping David's throne.
God has no throne in Israel; dwells no more
Between the cherubim; is given no meat
In His own house, but suffers base estrep
In tithes and offerings. Discernment fails
(Th' ungodly being judges in the land)
Between the vile and precious; and who serve
With feigned lips o'er-bulk who serve indeed.

LYRA CHRISTI.

*There are that serve ; a lowly waiting few
Unnoted by the great in Israel ;
Meek ones, whom God for purposed ends preserves
In secret from the babble of the world.
Of poor estate, nor craving to be more
While Judah's throne is filled by Cæsar's choice,
And yet how rich in currency of heaven !
Saints of the Lord—elect ones ; some whose names,
Fragrant with gracious thoughts, live in the heart
Like wind-touched violets crannied among roots.
There was the aged Simeon, just, devout,
Expecting God's Salvation out of Zion :
And Anna, full of years, that spake of Him
To all that waited for redemption there :
And Zacharias ; he that somehow served
His course i' the Temple, timely prescient how
The Dayspring from on high should visit them :
With staid Elizabeth, whose blameless walk,
Through years of barrenness, was known in heaven.*

*And there are others : solitary ones
In town and hamlet ; such as fear the Lord
And think upon His Name—as He on theirs !
He holds them in remembrance ; treasures up
The droppings of their lips, their thoughts of Him,
And counts the loyal beatings of their hearts.*

THE BABE.

Northward, among the Galilean hills,
Set in a verdant hollow like a gem,
Mid filigree of olive-clumps and figs,
Is Nazareth, despised of the despised,
The city by a proverb marked for shame.
Here, too, are troubled watchers; hearts that mourn
Israel's departed glory; eyes that weep
For Zion's long estrangement; lips that move
To penitential psalm and contrite prayer.

And here, upon a time, while Herod still
Was king in Jewry, and the Roman yoke
Lay heavy on the people, there appeared
A glorious visitant; a messenger
With tidings out of heaven—Gabriel,
That waiting serves before the face of God.
One only saw Him, she to whom he came,
A maiden of the hills, a virgin pure
As mountain dew, for Heaven's ward was she;
Preserved by special grace from soil and taint.
August the message, wonderful, unique;
Passing man's thought, as bringing into view
The Promise of the Ages, Him of Whom,
In epoch-marking words, the prophet cried :
“ A Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son.”
So—but with imminence of promised Good
That gave a new, strange fulness to the word—

LYRA CHRISTI.

The angel spake, and Mary wondering heard.
“ Hail, favoured one ! The Lord is with thee.” Thus
The greeting ran. And to her troubled look
That marked the rising tide of restless thoughts,
“ Fear not, thou blessed one, for thou hast found
“ Favour with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive
“ And bear a Son : and thou shalt call His name
“ Jesus.” Ah, well I ween did Mary know
The import of that Name ! And now her heart
Thrills to a waking joy too deep for words ;
Mounts with the certitude of hope assured ;
And bows before a grace that overwhelms.

World-lifting, Time-encircling mystery—
God veiled in human form—the Word made flesh—
True deity in man—How should this be ?
Enigma dark, till God shall intervene.
Who purposed must accomplish : Heaven must move,
So, to her question, Gabriel, fresh from heaven,
Answered : “ The Holy Ghost shall come on thee ;
“ The power of the Highest o’ershadow thee.”
A twofold grace, effectual, one to keep
In holy heavenly state the vessel formed ;
The other—unto which the first inclined—
For that unique, co-terminous event,
Sinless conception in the Virgin’s womb.

THE BABE.

Now was fulfilled Jehovah's high decree,
Voiced in the psalm of old : " Thou art my Son,
" To-day have I begotten Thee " ; for now,
By reason of that great o'ershadowing,
The *Holy Thing* then forming and thus formed,
Was called the Son of God. O mighty stoop,
Unmeasured and immeasurable, when
Th' Eternal Son, in grace beyond all grace,
Emptied Himself of glory, and came down,
And was incarnate in the Virgin's womb !

Now dawned that happy season of pure love
And interchange of restful holy thoughts
Among Judæan hills, where stood the home
Of Zacharias and Elizabeth.
And Mary, guided by the angel sought
Her aged kinswoman ; recipient, too,
Of heavenly favour like in kind to hers
Though lower in degree, and even then
Six months toward completement of her joy.
And as the women kissed each other, lo !
The babe-forerunner of the Christ to be
Leapt in her womb ; and the glad mother knew
Divinely that the greater blessedness
Was to her cousin Mary ; and rejoiced.

Unselfishly she spoke the thing she knew,

LYRA CHRISTI.

And Mary, knowing also, also spoke ;
With lowliness, as one that felt how near
Was God ; and how His nearness humbled her.
The Mighty One had done to her great things ;
And for her people greater things would do.
All Israel should be saved, the lowly raised,
The hungry filled with good, and grace o'erflow,
By virtue of this wonder wrought in her.
And so the generations yet to come,
Blest in that glorious issue, should pronounce
The mother blessed unto all glad time.

Three months they dwelt together, then was born
Elizabeth's babe ; but Mary had gone back
To Nazareth. The wondrous child was named,
Divinely and by glad anticipance,
“ The prophet of the Highest ” being ordained—
His desert training past—to go before
The Lord in power and Spirit, and prepare
His way, Who, though to follow, was before.

And other days went by ; and Mary's time—
Unmarked on earth but surely marked in heaven—
Drew near ; and in her home at Nazareth
She waited watching—not unwatched by God.
He, wise in power that works by human means,
Now bends an emperor's will that moves the world,—

THE BABE.

Or seems to move,—to most unworldly ends :
Th' occasion, Cæsar's half-fledged plan to take
A census of the habitable earth.
Th' accruing edict—proud and ill-matured,
As after shown—sets all the world agog ;
And, drawing Mary from her hillside home
To Bethlehem, where Jesus must be born,
Effectuates so the larger heavenly plan.
The vessel and the place were each decreed :
The time no less—and now the time was come !
All Heaven hung watchful on the great event.
Tense with desire the angel hosts drew near :
In the deep purple of the eastern sky
A star appeared—His star : and God looked down
To see how man would greet His gift of love.
For Him was honour meet no less on earth
Than in those radiant courts from whence He came ;
For He was that predestined Sovereign Lord
Whose shoulders should sustain the government
Of the world-kings and of David's, too.
Of Him the glory-prophet had declared,
In vision of His birth most closely linked
With Israel's weal, established not in law
But mercy : “ He shall be called, Wonderful,
“ Counsellor, Mighty God, the Prince of Peace,
“ The Everlasting Father.” How did man
Account th' august event? How signify

LYRA CHRISTI.

Appreciance of the glory of the grace
Shrined in the mystery—" the Word made Flesh " ?
God has Himself made answer. Shall we tell
The shame-tale o'er again? There was no room
For Jesus in this world ! Too full the inn
To lodge the Hope of Israel and mankind !
The Son of God, in matchless grace become
A lowly Babe, at His inbringing finds
A manger only ! Wrapped in swaddling bands
He lies among the oxen in a stall,
Unknown, unrecognised ; while voiceless night
Is on the earth, whose careless proud ones sleep !

But God will honour whom the proud misprize,
And open heaven to make His pleasure known.
And there are simple ones that number not
Among earth's sleepers. They shall gaze this night
On glories this world's princes wot not of ;
And listen, with a fear-dispelling joy
To words more trancing than all human speech
Spoken or sung : and these shall also know
This new thing come to pass ; that unto them
A Child is born—a Son, Whose goings forth
Have been from everlasting, now revealed
In weakness for the mighty work fore-planned,
The overthrow of evil, and thereby
Their own enlargement, found this way alone.

THE BABE.

Eastward of Bethlehem, where spreads a zone
Of terraced vineyards, wrinkled with ravines
And crowned by fig and olive, lies the field,
Dear to the faithful, where the shepherd band
Keeping their starry watch, the vision saw.
How near is heaven to simple souls that trust !
Lo ! as they watched, an angel of the Lord
Stood by them ; and the glory of the Lord
Shone round them ; and His angel spoke to them.
“ Fear not,” he said, for they were sore amazed,
So swift the vision and so glorious,
“ For lo, I bring glad tidings of great joy
“ To you and all the people.” Israel first,
To whom pertain the promises, must hear
The great Evangel ; afterward the star
Shall point the Gentile wise-ones to their God !
And what the tidings ? Why has heaven come down
And glory broken on a night-wrapped world ?
What is the news shall thrill these lowly hearts
With a great joy, and every lowly heart
From age to age to farthest verge of Time ?
O hear it, ye that sorrow for your sin !
Hear it, who sin yet haply sorrow not !
“ To you, in David’s city, there is born
“ A Saviour, Christ the Lord ” : this Babe no less,
Cradled with beasts, in swaddling birth-clothes wrapped !

LYRA CHRISTI.

Mark how, this token given, the heavenly hosts
Do signalize and celebrate their joy !
A radiant multitude of holy ones
Appears to praise, and on the frosty air
Bursts forth the song that tells to farthest worlds,
No less than to the little world of man,
The scope of the evangel just proclaimed.
“ Glory to God ”—the throned One—“ In the highest,”
For there should be great glory brought to Him
Whose glory had been tarnished by the Fall :
“ On earth ”—where this dishonour had been done,
And moral discord reigns and lawless strife—
“ Peace ”; for the Prince of Peace to earth was come,
And God’s good pleasure now might rest in man.
The shepherds heard, and forthwith came with haste
To see and worship : and great wonder grew
Out of the things they told. But Mary kept
These sayings in her heart, and pondered them,
Dwelling on thoughts of God.

And afterward
From the far east the wise men also came
(For wisdom’s path must alway lead to Christ)
And saw and worshipped, bringing gifts of gold
And myrrh and frankincense. But Herod’s heart,
That could not brook their urgent, “ Where is He ? ”
Was troubled ; for they told how they had seen
The Babe-King’s star i’ the east. And Herod willed

THE BABE.

To slay the Holy Child ; and counsel sought
Of priest and scribe ; yea, raised his impious hand
To strike—and strike again : till rose a cry
In Rama of great mourning : but his hand
Touched not the Lord's Anointed. God had set
This Child for gracious purposes ; a Light
For revelation of the Gentiles, and
The Glory of His people Israel ;
And who should quench the shinings of that Light ?
Nor Light alone ; for Love was now revealed,
Light's melting caloric, the Love of God,
Shown in that Gift of love—Immanuel :
And who could thwart the actings of God's love ?
And yet the will was present to destroy ;
And Satan, raging dragon-wise, would fain
Devour the Man-Child born of Israel,
Whose rise as surely marked his own decline
And ultimate confusion.

Vain, indeed,
The baleful purpose. Watched of Heaven, the Child
Grew and waxed strong in spirit, and was filled
With wisdom ; and, through all, the grace of God
Was on Him. Haply ev'n on earth were some
Whose hearts perceived th' intrinsic loveliness
Of this dear Child ; and felt the blessedness
Of contact with Him—God Himself brought near !
And, like His mother, and, in after years,

LYRA CHRISTI.

Another Mary, found by pondering
His ways and words, o'erflowings of the love
Known in the Father's bosom where He dwelt.

As we may find, that, with anointed eyes,
Do contemplate the Childhood of the Lord,
Not dimly now, but in the fuller light
Shining upon the Pathway, and, full-orbed,
Upon the Cross of shame and empty Tomb :
And, musing thus, approve the righteous end—
“ The Child caught up to God and to His throne.”

THE ANOINTED.

ΚΑΙ ΒΑΠΤΙΣΘΕΙΣ Ο ΙΗΣΟΥΣ
ΑΝΕΒΗ ΕΥΘΥΣ ΑΠΟ ΤΟΥ
ΥΔΑΤΟΣ· ΚΑΙ ΙΔΟΥ ΑΝΕΩΧ-
ΘΗΣΑΝ ΑΥΤΩ ΟΙ ΟΥΡΑΝΟΙ.
(Matt. iii. 16.)

c

THE ANOINTED.



N Jordan's valley, where the palms
grow stunt,
And stream and sky are one
diaphanous blue;
Where wild birds nest and wild flowers
blossom free,

And gathering dusk brings pard and jackal down
From basalt hills across a belt of sward—
Here, on a time, the girded Baptist stood,
Wrapped in his hair-cloth mantle, and in muse
Of Him whose showing forth to Israel,
Marking his own decrease, was near at hand.

In the long service-roll of God's elect
No goodlier name had yet been written down;
Of woman-born no greater yet appeared.
A lion-hearted, solitary man
That knew the mind of Heaven, and also knew,
By heavenly intuition, man's no less;
Nor ever feared to speak the thing he knew.
In the parched places of the wilderness,
Southward from Jericho, where Murder lurked,
And lions prowled, and under sun-baked stones

LYRA CHRISTI.

The cockatrice and scorpion crept for shade,
Had been his training; whence the call of God
To preach repentance for remorse of sin,
And to baptize who came in guilt confessed,
Had drawn him to the tuneful rush-fringed stream.
Spring had put on her mantle; and her voice,
A blend of many voices, rose and died
In restful cadence on the scented air.
Song and sweet scents! The chaff-chaff's lively note
Came from the rills; the black-cap warblers sang
Among the retem bushes, white with bloom;
The crested lark rose jubilant from fields
Brilliant with all bright colours—lavender
Of fragrant wild stock; purest, palest pink
Of cistus, wild geranium, clustered phlox;
Deep red of pheasant's eye; the scarlet fierce
Of frilled anemones; and golden tufts
Of tall hypericum, that hide their leaves.
Insects of tropic splendour came and went,
Tapping the honeyed blooms; sleek field-mice ran
Among the oleanders; giant frogs
Croaked in the reed-beds; and the sandy marge
Showed jewelled flashes as the lizards passed.
Where the deep blue was deepest, overhead
Sailed flights of spotted sand-grouse; and, anon,
A red-tailed buzzard, sluggish, heavy-winged;
Or kite, with tawny breast, on quarry bent;

THE ANOINTED.

Or purple heron from the steamy swamps,
Broke on the plane of vision soundlessly.

Strong in God's strength the prophet-preacher stood,
Fearless by fear of Him. On every side
Pressed a great throng of people; hither drawn
By varied hopes and passions, or as men
That have no object press where passions move.
Great ones of earth were there; Ambition's slaves
And Pleasure's jaded dupes from Herod's court;
With Scribes and Pharisees, whose flowing robes
And broad phylacteries on arm and brow—
Badge of the hypocrite—compel the gaze.
And there were Sadducean rationalists,
Priests, too, in name and vestment, yet to whom
The world of spirits and the life to come
Were idle fancies; matter all in all :
With fawning publicans and gaunt Essenes;
And Cæsar's legionaries, stern of mood;
And many a malcontent, drawn thitherward
Less by remorse than love of lawlessness.

Behold him there—a man raised up by God !
A Nazarite, that scorns the scorn of man,
Nor heeds his threats, nor fears his sullen frown.
Great with the moral greatness that eschews
Ease, affluence, recognition, pomp and power,

LYRA CHRISTI.

And towers above the greatness of the world
As Hermon's peaks above the tented plain.
No misanthrope, but loving well his kind,
For whom, and for the God that loved them more,
He has made all surrenders and become
His embassy—a Voice—the Voice of one
Preaching repentance in the wilderness.
A thrilling herald *Voice*—but not the *Word*;
A messenger of good—but not *the Good*;
A prophet—not *the Prophet*; and what time
The crowds in wrapt expectance stand around
In muse of him and voiceless questionings
If this be not indeed the Christ of God,
Messiah, Jacob's Star, this answer falls :
“ One cometh Whom ye know not. I baptize
“ With water; He, a mightier than I,
“ Shall with the Holy Ghost and fire baptize.
“ To loosen ev'n the latchet of His shoes
“ I am not worthy. Mine the voice alone
“ That cries, ‘ Make straight His way Who comes to
 purge
“ ‘ His threshing-floor, and garner in the wheat ! ’ ”

A feeble few, the poor of Israel's flock,
Repenting, own their sins and are baptized.
Yet still the people linger, faintly stirred
By a new-felt attraction, transient, vague :

THE ANOINTED.

For lo!—the throng again dividing—One,
Unmarked till now, steps forth to be baptized :
At Whose approach the Baptist's stern reserve
Is strangely wrought upon : his searching gaze
Melts into softness—reverence—even awe ;
And by the swift confession : “ I have need
“ To be baptized of Thee ” ; he meekly owns
His mission ending and the New begun.
Messiah stands before him ; Israel's hope
And Heir of David's throne : all which his heart
Perceives assentiently, and more beside :
For David's Son is also David's Lord :
Yon lowly Man is also highest God—
Yea, God in Man—the Saviour of the world ;
The Life and Light of men—his Saviour, too !

This peerless One made answer : “ Suffer it
“ To be so now. For it becometh us
“ Thus to fulfil all righteousness.” Which said,
Into the water straightway stepping down—
O wondrous stoop!—He was baptized of John.
Behold Him thus!—the Ruler of the world!—
Of *all* worlds!—yet a Man—most real Man :
Identified in lowly, lowliest grace
With Jacob's fallen sons. Here—here at last
That question of the Ages answer finds :
“ Lord, what is Man? ” for to the eye of Heaven,

LYRA CHRISTI.

In Mary's Son all perfectness is found,
All white-flower promise of unblemished fruit ;
All latent potency of good to come.
A Father's heart in Jesus contemplates
An Object worthy of its high regard ;
A Daysman mete Whose lonely path shall lead—
Mid selfless, suffering toil that only seeks
God's will in man's relief—to sorrow's goal,
The lonelier Garden and the dust of death.
True Man though very God ; the Mystery
Of Godliness, by angels gazed upon ;
As well by mortal eyes, when faith removes
The filmy scales and gives the vision true.
A Man for Heaven's delight, dependent, meek ;
Uniquely and intrinsically pure ;
On Whom—all righteousness accomplished now,
And Jesus praying—the Holy Ghost descends
In dove-like bodily shape : what time a Voice
From out the wistful blue in witness speaks—
How gladly !—" Thou art My Beloved Son ;
" In Thee is all my pleasure." Holy Love
Looks down and finds an Object : One on Whom
The brooding Spirit of the Holy One,
Alighting, may abide : as homing dove
Folds its white wings upon its nest at eve.

THE ANOINTED.

There rest my soul ! Fold thy poor battered wings
That, often drooping, bore thee in the search—
The weary, unrequited, joyless search—
For rest, amid earth's turbulence and grief.
Rest where the Father rests ! Consider Him
On Whom the heavens were opened, and of Whom
One testified : “ This is the Son of God ” :
And yet again, voicing his own deep joy,
The hidden satisfaction of a soul
Filled full with Christ : “ Behold the Lamb of God ! ”

THE TEMPTED.

EXOMEN APXIEPEA ΠΕ-
ΠΕΙΡΑΜΕΝΟΝ ΚΑΤΑ ΠΑΝΤΑ
ΚΑΘ' ΟΜΟΙΟΤΗΤΑ ΧΩΡΙΣ
ΑΜΑΡΤΙΑΣ. (Heb. iv. 15.)

THE TEMPTED.



HE Who, though God and in the form of
God,
For love of God and man became a
Man,
And took a Servant's form, obedience
learnt

By suffering, being tempted : met as Man
The Strong Man in his strength, and vanquished him,
And after spoiled his goods : by weakness proved
Th' accessible all-sufficiency of God
Under transcendant tests—most surely when
The Spirit drave Him, service-girded, forth
From human haunts and creature solacements
Into the stern Judæan wilderness !

From sunrise unto sundown, forty days,
From sundown unto sunrise, forty nights,—
Man's testing-time twice told,—with tireless strength
Of concentrated malice, undeterred,
The Tempter tempted Him ; reserving still

LYRA CHRISTI.

His keenest, deadliest shafts for the supreme
And culminant attack, the great assault :
Three times, with changed objective, pressing close ;
Three times, by voiced rescription, driven back :
Till, broken like a wave upon the rock,
And silenced by unanswerable Truth,
Evil's mailed strength to unmailed Goodness bowed.

That lone land stretches eastward to the sea,
The Salt Sea ; westward to the Hebron hills :
A barren limestone plateau, spreading out
In tossed and billowing hillocks, deeply scored
By winter torrents and bespread with scrub.
A silent land, cave-riddled and the haunt
Of predatory beasts and wild rock-goats,
Of adders, scorpions and great burrowing owls :
The region named of old the Wilderness ;
Jeshimon also—Wasteness, Solitude.

Full of the Holy Ghost, the Blessed One
Entered the silent lone land—yea, was *driven*—
The very thought of Satan's imminence
Having such horrors for His stainless soul—
And was those forty days abstracted from
Human conditions : not as Moses once
To be with God—Was He not ever thus ?—

THE TEMPTED.

But that the Evil One might be with Him.
From sunrise unto sundown, forty days,—
Withdrawn from man and Nature's restful moods,
The creature springs that solace and restore,
And having, in divine excess of love,
Emptied Himself as God to serve as Man—
He trod the pathless waste; day following day
In cheerless iteration. The fierce sun,
Beating with blistering heat on peak and knoll,
And pinking the bare rocks at day's decline
With deeper pink, beat also upon Him.
The feverous chilly mists that creep at dusk
Along the black ravines, and hide from view
The gaping fissures of the torrent beds,
Crept round Him also; wrapped Him like a cloak,
And chilled His sacred Body; and the winds
Loosed from their darkening chambers suddenly,
Assailed Him, blowing shrewly from the peaks.

And still, week in, week out, with tireless craft
The Tempter tempted Him; and every day,
And all day long by ever varying arts,
And wisdom gleaned among the ruin and waste
Of ages of man's lustful yieldingness,
The foe of God and man applied his tests
And waited watching, eager, unashamed,

LYRA CHRISTI.

Till Faith, victorious all along the line,
Ev'n in the place of weakness, silenced him.
No carnal weapons had the Lord in fee;
Nor was His Godhead power put forth to fend.
By help of God, though not, I ween, as God,
He entered on the conflict, and again
By help of God, though not as God, endured.
Always obedient to the Father's will,
And living by His precepts momentarily,
Th' indwelling Word was food and strength. His heart,
Replenished constantly therefrom, became
A watered garden and an armoury.

And yet the test was real; real, too,
The pain of testing : for He shrank from sin—
Abhorred it—suffered *being tempted*. We,
Coquetting with temptation, are seduced
By secret lusts, nor feel the prick of pain
Till yielding brings defeat and sorrow's fruit.

How precious were the Oracles of God
To Him Whose weakness was the focal point
Of Satan's finished arts and blandishments !
Mark how His voice still thrills from out the deeps
To David's harp ! “ Unless Thy law had been
“ My solace, I had perished utterly

THE TEMPTED.

“ In Mine affliction. . . . Through Thy precepts, Thou
“ Hast made me wiser than Mine enemies. . . .
“ Thy words are sweet unto My taste ; more sweet
“ Than honey to My mouth : than finest gold
“ More precious. . . . Let Thy mercies come to Me,
“ God of My help, according to Thy word ;
“ So shall I have wherewith to answer him
“ That in his arrogance reproacheth Me.”

The Wicked One digged pits for Him, and spread
His snares with practised cunning ; but in vain.
Under all tests the Son of Man stood firm.
At all points tempted there was no response.
His heart was proof 'gainst every veiled attack,
Nor lodgment found for one corrosive doubt ;
And though His holy soul did somewhat melt
For heaviness,—yea, clave unto the dust—
Th' infallible Word, that was His meat and drink,
Shed comfort and, in God's time, quickened Him.

What time the darkness wrapped as with a cloud
The pathless waste, and half of Nature slept,
The conflict, though abating, did not cease.
From sundown unto sunrise, forty nights,
The Saviour of Mankind was tempted still.
Behold Him, treading with weak steps and slow
The dark ravines and thorn-bound shaggy steeps,

LYRA CHRISTI.

Under the solemn, star-filled, Syrian sky !
The white moon looked upon Him : the wild beasts
Came out to gaze, and slunk in awe away.
All doleful creatures of the wilderness
That steal by night from cleft and ledge and hole
Were sentient of His nearness and grew still.
The wonder of His great humility—
Perchance the pity of His loneliness—
Was vaguely felt where untamed lawlessness
Held pitiless sway. Only the Lawless One—
Author of Nature's anarchy and shame—
Withstood the gracious influence, and, grown bold
By urgency of passion, pressed more close,
Congenial darkness aiding his designs.
Yet, strong in weakness that drew strength from God,
The Lord endured : obedience marking still—
Not less in the night watches than by day
His every act, His simplest word and thought.
One voiced of old His constancy of zeal
In words that haunt and throb : “ Mine eyes prevent
“ The dawn that I may muse upon Thy word. . . .
“ Thou in the night hast visited my soul,
“ And tried Me, and found nothing.” Thus to God
His heart welled up, delighting in His law :
And—like the tree beside the brimming stream
Whose greenness faded not, and pleasant fruit

THE TEMPTED.

Matured in season—nurtured by the beams
From heav'n, and by the Spirit's fount within,
His moral graces grew to flower and fruit.

Once, mid conditions of a milder hue,
Israel was tempted in the wilderness :
For forty years was tried as Christ was tried,
And failed where Christ was Victor. In like kind
Though not in like degree (His forty days
Were as the marrow of those forty years)
Jehovah proved them ; found them prone to err,
And filled with all perverseness ; breaking down
Under all tests of spirit, body, soul.
Not waiting for His counsels, heeding not
The mercy-rounded covenant, they rebelled ;
Lusting exceedingly, and tempting God.
He was their Keeper, as He was their Guide,
And gave them tents to dwell in ; welcome shade
From the fierce Syrian sun and moon's wan beams :
He led their feet to fruitful oases
And bounteous springing wells ; and, night by night,
At falling of the dew the manna fell—
The morrow's food preparing while they slept !

Yet Israel murmured. Not alone the tests
Of thirst or hunger—tardy visitants—

LYRA CHRISTI.

Provoked to insubjection. Ev'n the flow
Of mercies, by its very constancy
Drew forth the plainings of satiety.
Weeping they came to Moses : " Give us flesh
" That we may eat. Our soul is dried away.
" Our famished eyes are cheated evermo'
" With this light food." This way, with loathing, they
Spake of the dew-bright manna—angels' bread.

Thus, through the avenues of fleshly lust
The *body* was assailed, and conquest made
Of the scarred outworks of tripartite man. . . .
At Hormah 'twas the *soul*. Presumption there
Wrought ruin, when, abandoning the ark,
And under prohibition sternly voiced,
The armed camp, by fleshly courage spurred,
Went forth unto the hill-top, and engaged
With Amalek, and were discomfited.
The independence of idolatry.
By which man's *spirit* was perverted most,
(For worship true and false has issuance there,)
Brake bounds at Horeb, when the people cried :
" Up, make us gods ! " and ceded shamefully
That inmost fortalice : as well rehearsed
The baleful Eden-drama of the Fall.

THE TEMPTED.

O strange unlikeness to the ways of Him
Who in the desert path was quite withdrawn
From every creature comfort and support !
Who wandered homeless, foodless, waterless,
A tempted Man, shut out from human kind,
Yet still was faithful ! Whose sole meat and drink
Was evermore to do the Father's will,
The living Father's Who had sent Him, and
By Whom He lived. In Him the Wicked One
Found nothing : was by Him in each assault
Defeated, silenced ; His one weapon being
The Spirit's own, the keen-edged Word of God.

So passed those forty days and forty nights
Of Spirit-wrapt abstraction unto God,
And corporal sustainment. " Afterward
" He was an hungered." Is there who could gauge
The measureless exhaustion capsule
In that Divine apprisement ? One there was
Whose watchful eye the hour of weakness marked,
The strenuous hour when, in their gnawing strength,
The pangs of hunger came with suddenness
Upon the Blessed One. The Tempter marked
Th' occasion, saying : " If Thou be Son of God
" Speak to this stone that it be changed to bread."
If Thou be Son of God—and was He not ?

LYRA CHRISTI.

Had He not power to change a stone to bread?
To speak the powerful word that presently
Should make the clods His servant"? Surely, yes.
Who multiplied by miracle the loaves
And fed to fulness Israel's famished crowds,
By a brief word, a sign, an unvoiced thought
Could i' the wilderness a table spread
For His own pitiful needs. But what he *could*
As highest God, He *would* not, being Man—
Yea, subject Man, bound by the Written Word.
To Him the Father had commandment given
For this stern juncture, and to extricate
Himself from present straits by miracle
Was not in that commandment. When of old
The Lord His people fed, they murmured oft.
What time the One that fed them lacked for bread,
Bread was withholden: yet He murmured not—
Yea, justified the ways of Providence
Ev'n in withholding. "It is written," He said,
"That by the words proceeding from God's mouth,
"And not by bread alone is life sustained."
Thus did His Manhood stand the fiery test;
And the foiled Tempter, broken by defeat,
Retired; albeit, with venomous will to hurt,
Contriving still some instant new assault.

Again the conflict stirs. The Evil One,

THE TEMPTED.

Inoperant through the body, concentrates
For subtler ends; the taintless soul of Christ
Its changed objective. Satan now conducts
The Blessed One into Jerusalem
(Perchance as afterward the Spirit brought
Evangel-preaching Phillip on his way
Unto Azotus) and did straightway set
His sacred feet upon a pinnacle
Of Herod's burnished fane, and thus, with craft
Well measured, spake. "If Thou be Son of God
"Cast Thyself down from hence; for it is written,
"Jehovah shall give charge concerning Thee
"Unto His angels, who shall bear Thee up,
"Lest Thou at any time shalt dash Thy foot
"Against a stone" . . . Right words by ill design
May serve wrong ends; and even Holy Writ
Be wrested to seduce unwary souls.
The Man of God's high purpose, challenged now
From Scripture to exploit His living faith
In Scripture by fanatical excess,
Would not presume on God, as Israel once
At Hormah, but in Scripture answer finds :
"Thou shalt not tempt the Lord Thy God"—and so
Turns back the Spoiler's weapon on himself.

The last assault remains : most dire of all,
And most elusive in its mystery.

LYRA CHRISTI.

The subject spirit of the Lowly One,
Attuned to holiest worship, highest praise,
Sustains the final shock : the foe, meanwhile
Not by a golden calf or “ thing of brass,”
Seductive snares to Jacob’s stiff-necked sons,—
Seeking to work his will, but by *himself*,—
Himself, hard ruler of man’s wide domain.
What time—that Christ in all points, sin apart,
Might like ourselves be tempted, He is shown,
One after one, yet in a moment’s flash,
The kingdoms of the world, their pomp and power,
By the world’s prince and god ; who proudly makes
Offer of all if Christ will worship him.

“ If Thou wilt worship me all shall be Thine.”
For this the Tempter led those weary feet
By desolate Quarantania’s beetling cliffs,
Among the winding galleries of rock,
Giddy and hazardous ; along the steep
And crumbling ledges, whence in startled crowds
The rock-doves issued, hardly knowing perchance
Whether to flee or follow, being repelled
By Satan’s presence, or by Christ’s allured.
Transported to those heights, and gazing forth,
Might not the Holy One by sovereign right
Have claimed the world as His inheritance?
Or in swift holy anger have rebuked

THE TEMPTED.

And shattered by a word the blasphemy
Couched in the foul suggestion : “ Worship me ” ;
Commanding rather worship of Himself
By virtue of His Godhead majesty ?

He *could* as God ; He *would* not, being Man :
Again this way the test resolves itself.
The heavenly man through all vicissitudes
Derives from heaven—has no other will
Than that which speaks from heaven ; and to God
For counsel looks and strength. So Jesus now,
Perfect in heavenly-mindedness, paused not
For answer ; but with tenser zeal, that seemed
An augury of final triumph near
And Satan’s full discomfiture and shame,
Hurled back the Tempter while He met the test
With the pride-scorching mandate : “ Get thee hence !
“ For it is written : ‘ Thou the Lord thy God
“ ‘ Shalt worship, and Him only shalt thou serve.’ ”

Thus did the Son of Man through weakness, based
On fixed obedience, bind the Strong Man fast ;
Fitting Himself for the great after-work
Of spoliation of the Strong Man’s goods.
Approved in all He now comes forth to serve ;
To inaugurate that ministry of love
Begun in deeds of mercy, words of grace,

LYRA CHRISTI.

And consummated in the gloom and pain
Of Golgotha; whereby the thralls of sin,
Delivered wholly from the Tempter's power,
Might enter Christ's own kingdom and have rest.

Meanwhile the Devil, broken by defeat,
Departed for awhile; and angels came—
God's holy watchers that do wait on man—
And ministered unto the Blessed One.

THE SERVANT.

ΕΓΩ ΕΙΜΙ ΕΝ ΜΕΣΩ
ΥΜΩΝ ΩΣ Ο ΔΙΑΚΟΝΩΝ.

(Luke xxii. 27.)

THE SERVANT.



OW name Him Servant Who is Lord
of all?

How sing His service Whom to serve
is bliss?

The Servant Who is Master to all time

In hearts that have been kindled into love
By Love's high ministry that stooped to bless !
O for anointed vision !—eyes to see,
As saw the prophet, when Jehovah drew
The veil awhile aside, revealing Christ !
O for anointed lips to speak of Him
As spake the prophet, when the Spirit moved
His lips to holy utterance, words of fire,
“ Behold My Servant ! Mine Elect, in Whom
“ My soul delighteth : upon Whom I put
“ My Spirit. To the Gentiles He shall bring
“ Forth judgment unto truth. His doctrine shall
“ Drop as the rain and as the dew distil,
“ Yea, as the small rain on the tender herb.
“ He shall not cry, nor lift His voice, nor strive.
“ A bruised reed He shall not break ; nor quench
“ The smoking flax ; and though He sow in tears,
“ Spending His strength for nought, and the lone path
“ Of service in rejection end at last,

LYRA CHRISTI.

“ He shall not faint nor be discouraged, till
“ His rule is in the earth, and all the isles
“ Wait with a glad expectance for His law.”
In this wise He Who yet was highest God,
Maker of all things, universal Lord,
Came forth at the appointed time to serve,
And, by the way of service, gained a Throne.

The Servant of Jehovah's choice was first
A subject Child : His true humanity
Sweetly expressed by orderly increase
In wisdom as in stature. First the Child
And then the Man. No feverous excess,
Born of the wish to rise beyond Himself,
Beyond the seemliness of docent youth.
He stood among the doctors of the law
To listen, not to prove them ; yet, I ween,
His questions than their answers were more wise ;
His wisdom taking shape by stimulus
Of swift heart-knowledge clothed in modesty.
The sapience of His questions roused their own,
And His replies ; in which nor haste, nor pride,
Nor error, nor confusedness was found.
Out of a Wise Child's bright simplicity
He spake the words of wisdom, and who heard
His answers were astonished, found in them
An understanding, deep, ineffable.

THE SERVANT.

He served by *waiting* then : the waiting term
Closed with the Baptist's witness, when the Dove
Descended, and a Voice from heaven declared
The Father's deep complaisance in the Son.
The path of *active* service opened when
The Victor of the Forty days went forth
Beyond the Jordan to Bethabara,
Where John, his brief day lessening, baptized.
He, looking upon Jesus as He walked,
Was lost in contemplation ; and a joy,
Born of the certitude of Good possessed,
Broke into speech : " Behold the Lamb of God ! "

O willingness of service ! " Lo, I come
" To do Thy will, O God ! " His meat and drink,
His constant sweet employ, His one delight,
Were living by the Father ; doing His will
On earth, where man was lawless, as 'tis done
In heaven, where all is rhythmic with God's praise.
Was ever servant emptied so to serve ?
Was ever service so unmarred by self ?
Equal with God, He took a bondsman's place,
Veiling His glory 'neath a robe of flesh ;
And being found in fashion as a Man
He went right on, a downward, losing path,
From lowly step to lowlier, till—how soon !—
Obedience brought Him to the dust of death.

The impress of almighty, sovereign power

LYRA CHRISTI.

Was on His every work : He never used
That power to exalt Himself. The deed
That left the people wondering left Him calm ;
Ready in watchful grace to supplement
The greater act by lesser, miracle
By any added touch of loveliness.
When eager crowds acclaimed Him David's Son,
With shouts of glad Hosanna, and the way
Was green with waving fronds, so free His heart
Ev'n then from mere elation, that the sight
Of Zion's desolations, then so near,
Woke only sorrow, and the meek King wept
Over the guilty city as He gazed.
When by His mighty power He brought from death
The ruler's daughter, with what calm reserve
Of selfless quick solicitude He notes
Her bodily exhaustion, and commands
That meat be giv'n her. Honour for Himself
Is neither sought nor thought of. He had made
Himself of no repute that He might serve :
The *girded* not *arrayed* One, full of grace.

There was a time—the heart approves it well—
When the effulgence of His glory brake
Through the white shrine of His humanity,
And others than His loved disciples saw.
They on the holy mount indeed beheld

THE SERVANT.

The glory of His majesty, and He
No recognition claimed; yea, charged them not
To make the matter known. The jostling crowds
Thronging the plain below saw somewhat, too—
Some traces of the glory glistening yet,—
And ran to Him amazed, saluting Him.
Again His self-effacing lowliness
Passed by the act of homage; while He turned,
At the first trembling call of need to heal
A poor afflicted child, His heart more cheered
In serving others than in being served.

He *was* the things He spake : the life men saw
Sprang from a hidden source, the life within :
In heart He was the meek and lowly One.
Though slighted and contemned when serving most
Resentment never stayed His bounteous hand,
Nor checked the healing flow of gracious words.
A Jonah might complain of service spoilt;
A Moses strike the rock in hasty wrath;
A Peter use the sword in peril's hour;
A Paul give stinging word for lawless blow :
And these were honoured servants, great with God,
By whom the great ones of the earth show small.
There was but One exceeded—yon lone Man
Whose joy was serving even them that served.
He was the song of drunkards. They that sat

LYRA CHRISTI.

I' the gate spake ill of Him. Whose cry was that,
“ Because for Thy sake I have borne reproach
“ My face with shame is covered ”? It was His.
Did He not feel reproach?—aye, deeply feel.
It broke His heart at last. He looked—He yearned
For some that would take pity; there was none :
For comforters and found them not. How oft
The scornful question passed from lip to lip,
“ Is not this Mary's Son, the carpenter? ”
He heard without relenting; was but grieved
They did not understand His lowliness,
And thrust the blessing from them while they scorned.

The lowest place was His; nor did He seek
At any time to excuse or vindicate
His ways to man, though often harshly judged.
When wind and wave beat round the little boat
One dark remembered night on Galilee,
And His disciples, waking Him from sleep,
Challenged with querulous fear His watchful care,
He did not answer the implied rebuke,
Or shew *how He was* caring : but He rose
Responsive to the need and stilled the storm,
And, in the peace ensuing, probed their hearts.
When Martha plained, “ If Thou, Lord, hadst been here
My brother had not died,” He did not seek
To justify His absence, but He used

THE SERVANT.

Th' occasion to instruct her slow sad heart
In larger matters, life that lies beyond
Death's cruel dark enclosure—endless life.
And when, by Jacob's well, the Teacher once,
Weary and thirsty, in the noontide heat,
Talked to a fallen daughter of the town,
He did not render reasons for the act,
Though His disciples marvelled, and He knew
The question of their hearts, "Why talketh He
"With her?" But when they urged Him, "Master
eat,"

His answer laid the springs of action bare.
God's holy service, meat they knew not of,
Had been His portion : He had passed that way
That He might entrance gain in one dark heart ;
That He might draw one weary soul to God :
This was God's will, and doing it His meat.

He sought no rank with men. He might have held
A first place 'mong the lettered rabbi class,
And taught as from a guarded eminence
The cultured few. Instead, He went right down
Where need was greatest ; talked and ate and drank
With publicans and sinners ; seeking out
A hard world's castaways, abandoned souls,
The drift and scum of cities, wastrel lives.
The *needs-be* for that harvest faring forth

LYRA CHRISTI.

Which led Him through defiled Samaria,
To Sychar, cactus-girt at Ebal's foot,
What was it but the needs-be of desire?
The will to help the helpless, raise the fall'n,
And fill with heaven's own joy one empty heart?
And when, a half-neglected Guest He sat
In Simon's house, what think you, cheered Him most?
Was it the prudent Pharisee's desire
To do Him measured kindness? or the love,
Born of a "much forgiveness," dumbly poured
Like precious ointment on Him, and by one
That "was a sinner"—all her heart's full store?

"A gluttonous man and winebibber"—for so
In empty futile spite some railed of Him,
Daring the wrath of heaven. He was too great
In character to controvert the lie,
Too lowly to resent it. Mark His words,
Under worse testing, in that supreme hour
Of His humiliation at men's hands:
"I am a Worm, and no man; a reproach
"Of men; despised of the people"? Here
Thoughts fail for very pain of thinking. Who
Could gauge the depths of such humility?—
Such Selfhood abjurance? So great a stoop
Touches the infinite. There are no words
In human speech to shrine it worthily;
The seeing heart but wonders and is dumb.

THE SERVANT.

Swerveless dependance, lowliest lowliness—
These were the root and white flower of His life :
He nourished both by prayer. Transcendently—
Beyond all witnesses, before or since—
He was the praying Servant. At all times,—
By day, by night; amid the busy throng;
In desert places; on the lonely mount;
In Herod's temple; under Mary's roof;
Beside the populous lake; in Peter's boat—
He gave Himself to secret, frequent prayer.
It was while praying by the river's marge
At His baptism, that the Holy Ghost
Came and abode upon Him. While He prayed
Upon the Holy mount, His countenance
Shone as the sun—His very raiment glowed
As with a snow-bright radiance. While He prayed
In anguish of anticipated wrath,
Mid the dark olives of Gethsemane,
An angel came from heaven to strengthen Him.
Prayer was the prelude to each act of grace;
The power that wrought; the seal of good achieved;
His chief employ in interludes of rest.

None ever prayed *with* Him. All were too far
From heaven in spirit for such fellowship;
Though there were times when favoured ones were
brought

LYRA CHRISTI.

Within a love-marked radius, and might catch
His heart's deep breathings in the Father's ear.
He prayed *for* men, not *with* them. Not the least
For Jacob's children, unto whom pertained
The promises, by ancient covenant.
His love yearned over them. How oft He would
Have gathered them together, as the hen
Her brood beneath her feathers! Who shall doubt
He breathed this yearning wish to heaven as oft?
He prayed for His disciples; reaching forth
Beyond the present, and the feeble few
That loved Him, and continued with Him through
His manifold temptations, to the time
When the last errant soul should find its path,
And, all needs ceasing, need of prayer should cease.

He prayed for *all* His own; He prayed for *each*.
The sins, woes, wants and cares of everyone
Oppressed His heart, engaged His willing mind,
And had their issue in long nights of prayer.
When Peter fell, he fell to rise again :
His courage failed but not his faith : for One,
That knew him better than he knew himself,
Had been before with God; forestalling so
The dark, sad hour of treachery and shame.
Satan might seize and sift, "but I," he said,
"Have prayed that thy faith fail not." So prevails
Christ's intercession for the feeblest saint.

THE SERVANT.

A noon-clear wisdom, nourished most by prayer
And rooted deep in faith, marked all His speech.
“Never man spake like this Man,” witnessed those
That came to seize Him, to the baffled priests.
The common people heard Him eagerly,
And wondered at the gracious words that fell
Like manna from His lips. He never stooped
To compromise; nor dulled the edge of truth
To humour any; neither was He moved
By praise or flattery, nor turned aside
By others’ softness or solicitude.
A Peter, savouring not the things of God,
Might seek to urge Him from the thorn-marked way
Which led to shame and death: He does but turn,
With the swift, pregnant answer, probing deep,
“Get thee behind me, Satan!” and lays bare
The sin of Peter’s softness and its source.
His was discerning wisdom. Not men’s speech
But the unspoken thought behind the speech,
The heart’s enquiry, oft too deep for words—
He fathomed by a prescience swift and true.
Degrees of faith, of love, of faithlessness,
He measured to a hair-line and appraised.
“Great faith” was marked in the centurion,
And greatly honoured; “little faith” was owned,
Though not with honour, in that chosen band
Whose doubts He stilled by homely Nature-talk

LYRA CHRISTI.

Of ravens, lilies, grasses, eloquent
In witness of a Father's constant care.
"No faith"—hard faithlessness—incur'd rebuke
During the calm He brought upon the Lake
Responsive to their hopeless frightened cry,
"Save, Lord, we perish!" when the wind-wrought waves
Brake o'er the boat in angry confluence,
And the disciples were in jeopardy.

Obedient, prayerful, lowly, faithful, wise,
This serving Lord was also marked by power;
By strenuous fearlessness; intensity;
The holy courage that sustains the soul
Through a dull gleaning-time or days of drought,
And leaves the stamp of greatness on defeat.
At His first showing forth to Israel
He was refused; His own received Him not:
Yet did the banked-up grace as sweetly run
In narrower channels. If the many turned
With scorning from Him, He would seek the few;
And to the weary heart that welcomed Him
Give more than covenanted largesses,
Even the Gift of gifts—Himself—the Life.
Demons, disease and death all owned His power,
As wind and water on the stormy Lake—
His Manhood power, in subjection used
For God Who gave it, and that went not forth

THE SERVANT.

Except by prayer and fasting. What He saw
The Father do, He did—His limit this : *
What things He heard the Father speak He spake.
“ Of Mine own Self,” said He, “ I nothing do ;
“ And as My Father taught me, so I speak.”

A holy zeal consumed Him : zeal for God,
And zeal for man : intensity the mark.
What emphasis of fervour, ev’n to tears,
Dwells in the iteration of a name !
Intensity of love’s solicitude
Throbs in His “ Martha, Martha ! ” that reproves
A too much carefulness in worldly things.
Intensity of pent-up grief inspired
Th’ apostrophe to Zion, twice invoked,
When Jesus, gazing on the City of God,
Foresaw its long estrangement, writ in blood.
And, yet again, in one remembered hour,
His “ Simon, Simon ! ” spoke in thrilling tones,
That searched the depths of Peter’s self-strong heart,
Th’ intensity of warning—vainly given !

What depths of thoughtful love and kindliness
His deeds express, and live in all His words !
No measured pity His, aloof and cold,
But boundless tenderness, the grace that stoops

* The limit set by His own standard of perfect obedience.

LYRA CHRISTI.

To comfort while it works the needed good.
Moved with compassion—window-words of heaven,
That bring ev'n now the Blessed One so near !
The heart of Christ was gentle as a child's,
And felt the miseries His love assuaged.
He groaned in spirit o'er the spoils of sin,
Weeping with Mary at her brother's grave.
He marked the rich young ruler, and His heart
Embraced him with a love that understood,
Completely, feelingly, his dark estate—
The gilded barrier 'twixt his soul and rest.
When, in a desert place, the hungry crowds
Broke on His own brief rest, He chided not,
But bade them welcome, thought of rest *for them*—
Jehovah's sheep that lacked a shepherd's care—
And, while they rested, fed them like a flock.

The *manner* of His service gave to it
An added preciousness, as flowers that fold
The serviceable fruit add loveliness,
Making Utility a crownèd joy.
'Twas not alone the act of mercy done,
But *how* 'twas done ; not merely *what* was said—
Though all His words were pearls—but *how* He spake.
The tone, the look, the touch, the troubled sigh
Revealed the heart behind the voice and hand ;
The motive power of love within the work.

THE SERVANT.

And since the manner of His grace was such
He was the most accessible of men.
Much people came to Him; and of them all
Was never one cast out. He drew by love
Whom sense of sin or worthlessness restrained;
Himself so human that His holiness
Was less expressed than subtly realised.
When Simon Peter, in a sinking boat,
Under great stress of sin, to Jesus cried,
“ Depart from me, a sinful man, O Lord ! ”
That moment, as by strong impulsion drawn
Towards Him, he “ fell down at Jesu’s knees ”—
A clinging suppliant, crying still, “ Depart ! ”
Thus love lured on whom holiness repelled,
And faith found anchor where that love was felt.
When she that came to Jesus in the crowd,
And touched His garment secretly, was healed,
He would not let her leave as secretly,
Fearing and trembling; but with cheery words
Confirmed the blessing; adding grace to grace
By that more full acquittance, “ Go in peace.”
And once, when Salem’s mothers brought to Him
Their children, mark the way His kindness took.
No all-inclusive, general word sufficed :
Each little one was taken in His arms;
On each He placed His hands; on each he breathed
The blessing that should make them blessed for aye.

LYRA CHRISTI.

His touch is often mentioned by the Four,
The touch of healing, cleansing, life, help, power—
Bright chaplet of redundancies of grace
That give an added beauty to the Life.
His look was as His touch. The gleam of love,
The glance of welcome, the tense gaze of grief,
Enhanced His marvellous words, as those His deeds.
By these He sealed divine instruction home;
And hearts that only dimly understood
His wondrous message were drawn out to Him
Beyond the mind's perception : loving much
By learning *Him*. This way His simple ones
Were made to feel His thrilling humanness,
And taught to cling to Him. Which lesson learnt,
He gently led them on, by pastures green
And pleasant water-courses, step by step,
To the full knowledge of the *Father's* love.

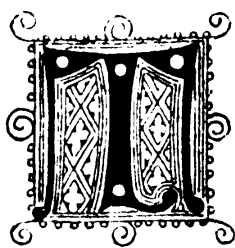
Would that we, too, were willing to be led !
To lay our knowledge by and learn of Him;
To sit, as Mary sat, at His dear feet;
To feed upon Himself, the living Bread !
So should our lives run rhythmical and free;
So should we wear with ease His easy yoke;
So serve Him gladly Who so gladly served !

THE TRANSFIGURED.

ΦΩΝΗ ΕΓΕΝΕΤΟ ΕΚ ΤΗΣ
ΝΕΦΕΛΗΣ ΛΕΓΟΥΣΑ, ΟΥΤΟΣ
ΕΣΤΙΝ Ο ΥΙΟΣ ΜΟΥ Ο ΑΓΑ-
ΠΗΤΟΣ· ΑΥΤΟΥ ΑΚΟΥΕΤΕ.

(Luke ix. 35.)

THE TRANSFIGURED.



HE King has been on earth, and been
refused.

Messiah, born of David's royal line,
And by anointing of the Holy Ghost
King under seal of Heav'n; fulfilling
here,

By virtue of that same anointing, all
Prophetical requirements; having preached
Glad tidings to the poor, as well dispensed
His saving health throughout Immanuel's land—
This lowly ministrant of Princely good
To Jacob's favoured race, of Jacob's race
Had never Princely welcome. Not alone
Rulers and priests refused Him : the blind mass
Of Israë'l, the burdened shiftless poor,
Hearers of the glad tidings; witnesses
Of deeds of mercy that were miracles;
These also, being gross and carnal, saw
No more than temporal relief therein,
Or themes for speculative vapouring
And idle wonderment. The king their hearts conceived
Was of a fleshly order : one that should

LYRA CHRISTI.

Excite and gratify their untamed lusts ;
A Saul and not a David. Wherefore Christ,
That must be King according to God's thoughts
Or else no king—and being also set
For larger ends, no merely local throne,
But empire co-extensive with the world
(Ambition's fateful lodestar—His by right)—
He charges His disciples, who both knew,
And by their spokesman Peter had confessed
That He was verily the Christ of God,
Jehovah's crownless yet anointed King—
To publish not the fact, but this to mark :
“ The Son of Man must suffer many things
“ And be rejected of chief priests and scribes
“ And elders, and be slain, and out of death
“ On the third day be raised.” So Christhood fades
Into the larger concept Son of Man ;
Big with the thought of universal rule,
Yet with a *Via Crucis* broadening first.

And who would follow after must perforce
The same path travel ; would most surely find
The world arrayed against him ; not alone
The base and ribald, but whatever is
Respectable by culture—office—age—
Artistic coteries, the lettered class,
Soldiers and statesmen and religionists ;

THE TRANSFIGURED.

As well all schools of all philosophies,
And smooth professors who reject the Cross.
He that would follow Whom the world refused,
Must be refused; nor less, deny himself;
Counting his own life nought, and loss of it
The door to larger life. A hard word this
To those that nursed the hope of nearing dawn
For Zion, and in Jesus dimly saw
The great Deliverer. Was the Kingdom, then,
That never saw its prime, for ever past?
Unworthy thought! Fulfilment yet should be
To every promise,—yet by way of death.
The Kingdom should in *mystery* subsist
During the King's rejection; afterward
In manifested glory be revealed.
And then should One, like to the Son of Man,
Come with the clouds of heaven; and on Him
A Kingdom and dominion be bestowed,
Wide as the earth and steadfast as the stars,
With glory and great power; so that all
From every nation and of every tongue
Should serve Him, or in swift destruction pass.

Such were the Path and Prospect—and for all
That shared the King's rejection and His shame,
High honour in the Kingdom was reserved.
Wherefore, for stay of hope and joy of faith,

LYRA CHRISTI.

There came a moment in that waiting time
When Heav'n vouchsafed a brief, uplifting glimpse
Into the Kingdom-glory, and the Lord,
Being transfigured on the Holy Mount
In presence of His own, made plain to them,
In terms of august majesty, His power
And coming, ere the triumph-day should dawn. . . .
O for chaste thoughts and vision clear and true,
As now we also turn to peer and muse !

Northward of Philippi, in Ituræa,
Is triple-crownèd Hermon, where the Lord
After discourse of death and earthly loss,
And interval of six completed days,
Fulfilled His prescient " Verily " that some
That heard the discourse should not taste of death
Until they saw the Kingdom come with power.

The Three were with Him, Peter, James, and John,
And as they clomb with Him the silent mount,
Perchance their hearts drew closer, while the world
Of man receded from them, and the calm
Of His blest presence filled them. All around
Was unpolluted nature. Laden trees—
Walnut and almond, apricot and fig,
Olive and mulberry; with dew-bright belts
Of trailing vines that told of vintage near.

THE TRANSFIGURED.

And higher, fields of wheat, already white
To harvest, or perchance in reaping stage :
With presently long lines of stone-built walls
O'er which more vines were trailing, mounting up
To old moraines, that melted back to green
In slopes of thick oak coppice. Higher yet,
Low tuft-like flowering shrubs and scattered clumps
Of rose-pure pink astragalus; with wealth
Of tulips, fritillarias, irises,
Pale primulas, and crocuses and rue;
All sweet as unspoilt flowers of Paradise
Fresh from the hand of God, nor owning less
Their Maker in the outcast Son of Man.

At length, some lofty spur of Hermon reached,
They pause, though not to rest. The lovely blush
Of evening, and the pallor that succeeds,
Like death to hectic beauty, both are past,
And night has fallen on the weary group.
The Three would fain have slept : the Blessed One,
Whose holy communings no surcease knew
In whatsoe'er vicissitudes, addressed
Himself to prayer. What burdens pressed His heart,
Or what divine elations solaced Him,
We know not; nor how long in ecstacy
Of suppliance He knelt : but, as He prayed,
(The Three, 'twixt sleep and waking, crouching near,)

LYRA CHRISTI.

A change came over Him. His countenance
Grew radiant with a glory like the sun;
His raiment became white and glistening
As crystal snow new fall'n on Libanus;
And by the rays of that transfiguring light,
The sleep-weighed Three, uplifting heavy eyes,
Saw, and by intuition recognised,
Th' illustrious representatives of Law
And Prophets, Moses and Elias. These,
With added lustre of the Kingdom, (thus
Proleptically come, and come with power)
Held converse with the King; yet not of things
Touching His might and sovereignty. They spake
Of His decease—how near!—His exodus
Out of this world, and place of issuance—
The Kingdom capital, Jerusalem!

Whereat, by sudden fear, eventuant
On that great sight, as well by daze of sleep
Confounded, Peter wist not what to say,
Till unweighed words his tremulence of dread
Relieved. “ ’Tis good for us that we be here :
“ And let us, Lord, three tabernacles make,
“ For Thee, for Moses, for Elias : ” thus
Exalting to an eminence with Christ
His messengers, the favoured harbingers
Of glory which the Son alone may bear.

THE TRANSFIGURED.

The words were still in utterance when a Cloud,
Unseen till now, descended on the mount :
And as the three disciples wondering gazed,
Straightway there entered into it and passed
From human count and ken those pillar-saints
Of the Old Order—soon itself to pass—
And lo ! a Voice from out the enfolding Cloud
Proclaimed : “ This—this is My beloved Son,
“ In Whom is all My pleasure. Hear ye Him ! ”
O words transcending ev’n the Kingdom thought !
O moment big with more than Kingdom hopes !
The three disciples—fearful, yet how blessed !—
O’er shadowed by the Cloud, and out of it
The Father’s Voice heard speaking ! Once again
The true Shekinah, bright with light of heaven,
Is found with men on earth : and these go in,
And there of Love are taught inductively,—
As well of Love’s glad home and Love’s employ—
By that swift witness of the Father’s heart
To Jesus—dimly, vaguely known in theirs.*

* The reading of the Textus Receptus, ἐφοβήθησαν δὲ ἐν τῷ ἐκείνους εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν νεφέλην, “and they feared as *those* (i.e., Moses and Elias) entered into the cloud,” is regarded as doubtful, and most modern editors, following the two oldest Uncials (Sinaiticus and Vaticanus) substitute αὐτούς, “they,” for ἐκείνους, “those.” This reading implies that the apostles also were overshadowed by the glory-cloud, and is the sense in which the author has understood the passage.

LYRA CHRISTI.

And when the Voice was past, lo, Jesus came
And gently bade them rise; for they had fall'n
Upon their faces, being sore afraid :
And, gazing round them presently, they saw—
Save for His gracious Presence—no man near.
The Two were gone—those Two that must not find
A place (though they were chief ones) with the Son.
The Cloud was gone. The pregnant “Hear ye Him,”
Had throbb'd away : *but Jesus still was there.*
He also might have gone, and by twin right
Of Deity and Manhood perfectness
Have passed straight into heaven, had His delight
Been centred less in man, and that great Work
Of which the Two had spoken, and by which
Man's blessing should be righteously assured
In spite of man's defection—His decease,
To be accomplished at Jerusalem.

He must remain awhile and drink the cup
Of sorrow to the dregs; for so alone
The new-wine joys of deathless life might flow
To the sad earth-bound hearts of those He loved.
And He Who might have claimed Him for Himself,
For love of those He loved, preferred no claim;
Though leaving precious witness of His worth
To those that needed it. No withering word
Like that which came from Horeb, when the mount

THE TRANSFIGURED.

Smoked as a furnace and quaked terribly;
But a most love-warm witness, dropping grace
On peaceful Hermon like her plenteous dew.
He did not claim by trumpet call of power
Allegiance to the Lord as King of Kings,
The only Potentate, the conquering Word,
Though this had been most just; but touched instead
The fresh springs of their hearts; exhibiting
His own undimmed ineffable delight
In Jesus. It was mete God's love should flow
To man, since Man was laying down His life
To serve God's glory : mete that witness fall
From glory, " This is My beloved Son " : *
And not less mete the preachment, " Hear ye Him ! "
Which brought who heard it, and which brings who hears
Into the same blest fellowship of love.

* * * * *

Such are the lessons of the Glory-mount
Which whoso, being subject, still may read.
A Kingdom to be reached by way of death :
A King rejected, and a cross bequeathed
To such as serve Him faithfully. This King
Uniquely owned of God, and ev'n on earth
His infinite delight : as God's dear Son

* " *Therefore* doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My
life, that I might take it again."—*John x. 17.*

LYRA CHRISTI.

**Proposed for man's regard : and, in the end,
The Mystery finished ; glory found with men ;
God's ways approved ; the righteous saved and blessed ;
And the world-kingsdoms, long estranged from God,
Become the great World-kingsdom of His Christ.**

THE CRUCIFIED.

ΟΥΤΟΣ ΕΣΤΙΝ Ο ΛΙΘΟΣ Ο
ΕΞΟΥΘΕΝΗΘΕΙΣ ΥΦ' ΥΜΩΝ ΤΩΝ
ΟΙΚΟΔΟΜΟΥΝΤΩΝ, Ο ΓΕΝΟ-
ΜΕΝΟΣ ΕΙΣ ΚΕΦΑΛΗΝ ΓΩΝΙΑΣ.

(Acts iv. 11.)

THE CRUCIFIED.



HIS stands among the certitude of things :

All earthward-reaching purposes of God

Fulfil themselves in Christ; all promises

To man, in Him are Yea, in Him, Amen ;
All types and shadows have their links with Him :
All prophecies, in terms remote or near,
Point to Him, herald Him, or backward trace
Each hope of stable blessing to His Cross.

In eldest time Jehovah Elohim
Spake to the Serpent, by whose subtle arts
Eve was seduced and ruin brought on man,
After this wise : “ Between her seed and thine
“ There shall be enmity; and out of it
“ Great conflict; with determinate result,
“ The bruising of thy head; to be achieved,
“ With pains commutual, by the conquering Seed.”
That Seed was Christ, Who, in the Wilderness,
Joined issue first with Satan; binding him,

LYRA CHRISTI.

By strength of His own scatheless purity,
And spoiling so his goods. For three brief years
He worked the works of God : then (bound Himself
By man's perverseness,) in the gathering gloom
Of Calvary the conflict was renewed.
Again the Serpent raised his venomous head,
And struck; and, striking bruised the Victor's heel;
Yet was himself more bruised. . . . This way at last
The ancient prophecy was brought to pass,
And Sin's dark mystery solution found.

Man was the willing tool; in Judas first,
That gave the traitor's kiss, and set the lead—
Apostle of the Lost, that sold his God!
Whose plaint was that : " Mine own familiar friend
" In whom I trusted, which did eat my bread,
" Hath lifted up his heel against Me " ? Whose
That question, tense with tears and pain, " If ye
" Think good, give me My price : if not, forbear? "
With the dark solemn issue, when they weighed
Those thirty silver pieces—Israel's calm
Cold valuation of the Son of God !

Amid the olives of Gethsemane,
Under the Pascal moon, the kiss was given.
Apostate Israel's fateful hour was come ;
Nor less the Power of Darkness, Satan's power ;

THE CRUCIFIED.

The tide of frenzied Evil which should yet,
In ways pre-shadowed by Omniscience,
Perform the sovereign will of patient Good.
Betrayed and Betrayer together there
For the last time, until the Trump of Doom !
Lanterns and torches cast a lurid light
Upon their faces ; on the faces, too,
Of the armed band of officers, convened
To seize their Maker ; thither sent therefor
By priests athirst to judge Him ! As they stood
Waiting the recreant sign, perchance they marked
The blood-limned traces in that sacred face
Of the great Agony : for Christ but now—
After strong crying that it might not be—
Had, in obedience, from His Father's hand—
Received the cup of judgment. “ Not my will
“ But Thine be done,” His thrice-repeated prayer ;
Albeit in very prospect of the cup
His holy soul recoiled instinctively.

They bind Him—bind those sensitive gracious hands
That touched the blind and lepers, and were wont
To linger lovingly on the young heads
Of children, while He blessed them—and, so bound,
They bring Him to the house of Caiaphas
Within the city, where, like ravenous wolves
That scent their prey, the scribes and elders sit
Ready to rend Him ere the dawn grows red.

LYRA CHRISTI.

Afar off followed Peter, drawn by love
And an o'erweening stout self-confidence,
Soon to be tested in the devil's sieve.
One followed with Him; John, who, being known
Unto the high priest, passed into the court
With Jesus and the guard: but Peter stood,
Having no right of entry, at the door.
Then that disciple, since the night was cold,
As well for weightier cause, brought Peter in,
Who mingled with the guard; for in the court
The servitors had lit a fire of coals.
And Peter sat with them, and warmed himself
At the world's fire, intent to see the end. . . .
Observant eyes were on him. "Art not thou
"One of this man's disciples?" thus with scorn
Asked she that kept the door: and answer came
(His fleshly courage failing ere the words)
"Woman, I know Him not": while, near at hand,
In a thronged upper room that faced the court,
Stood Peter's Lord that warned him; knowing all,
And haply seeing all,—and yet, how calm!

The murderous inquisition had begun—
Mankind arraigns his Maker! Jesus stands
Like sheep before her shearers, patient, meek;
By voluntary weakness strong in God.
One asks of His disciples, but in vain.

THE CRUCIFIED.

No answer falls : His silence shelters them.
Yet, questioned of His doctrine, " Ask," said He
" Of those that heard Me what I said to them.
" I' the temple and the synagogues I taught
" The Jews, and to the world spake openly :
" Why questionest thou Me? Behold, they know."
Whereat an officer, his impious hand
Uplifting, smote the Judge of Israel,
Demanding, " Answerest Thou the high priest so? "
And Jesus answered : " If I evil spake
" Bear witness of the evil; but if well
" Why smite Me? " Thus the hideous drama grows.

Then there arose false witnesses, suborned
By divers of the Council; and, in turn,
Each spake his measured lie : but neither so
Was witness in agreement. Dead to shame,
The Council heard and sanctioned : and again,
The Sinless One was silent—held His peace :
Perfection marking thus His silences
No less than the ripe wisdom of His lips.
And when once more He deigned to speak, His words
Were touched to graver issues. The high priest
Adjured Him by the living God to say
If He indeed were Christ, the Son of God.
And Jesus answered, " Though I tell you, ye
" Will not believe : and were I now to ask

LYRA CHRISTI.

“ Of you this question, ye would neither tell—
“ Though knowing that I am, nor let Me go.”
Then, passing from the local Jewish thought,
To which their pride was clinging, in this wise
Spake He : “ Hereafter shall the Son of Man
“ Sit on the right hand of the power of God,
“ And ye shall see Him coming with the clouds.”
Whereat the high priest rent his clothes, and said,
“ What need we any further witnesses?
“ How think ye? Ye have heard the blasphemy.”
And at the prompt-word, all with one consent
Adjudged Him guilty—death His righteous due!

How much of this, if any, Peter saw;
How much he heard, the record sayeth not.
Too dazed his mind, I ween, to take account;
Too weighed his eyes, perchance, with shame to see;
Too dulled his ears by nearer questionings
To hear. For on this night of chilly gloom,
Around the fire, within the palace court,
Questions had been; quick challenges that shook
The citadel of his self-confidence,
And laid it in the dust in ruin and tears.
“ Ere the cock crow thou shalt deny Me thrice ”;
So Christ had warned him thoroughly. Peter heard,
And braved the warning : yea, when urged to watch
One brief hour with his Master, and to pray

THE CRUCIFIED.

In view of dark storms threatening, he had slept.
A weak girl's speech had dashed his high resolve
And driv'n him craven-hearted to the porch;
Where for a second time 'neath test as frail
His lusty courage failed. Another maid
Marking, perchance, his fear-born moodishness,
Or prompted by some tell-tale memory,
Affirmed that he was a disciple too.
But Peter, with a strenuous oath, avowed
" I do not know the Man " . . .

An hour went by—

For Peter what an hour!—and then again
The sifter sifted him. Another came,
That knew him by his Galilean speech
As one of Christ's disciples, and declared,
" Thou certainly art of them." Whereupon
The hunted fearful man again denied
All knowledge of the Lord—yea, hedged denial
By lurid circumstance.

Each word of shame,
From grief's dumb vantage-ground the Master heard—
The lie, the oaths, the curses—yet His heart
Not for one instant faltered in its love,—
Yea, rather, beat the kindlier : and what time
Denial still was hot on Peter's lips,
And Hell's pre-purposed triumph seemed most near,
He turned and looked upon him. Precious grace,

LYRA CHRISTI.

And yet more precious love!—effectual,
Beyond all other means, to break the heart
And heal it, and defeat the powers of ill.
No word was needed. On the ears of both
The cock's shrill crow had sounded, witnessing
Of Christ's unfailing prescience, and not less
Of Peter's self-bound darkness. 'Twas a time
When eyes had larger utterance than lips,
When silence had a voice beyond all sounds. . . .
So Peter looked on Christ, that looked on him,
And in the thrill of glances understood.
“ Ere the cock crow thou shalt deny Me thrice;
“ But I have prayed for thee ”—and as his heart
Recalled the pregnant warning, and drank in
The tenderness that hardly spoke reproach,
A great grief came upon him, and he wept.

O wondrous, magnanimity of love,
That sets itself to bless when wounded most!
O tragic greatness of the calm of Christ,
Who turns to comfort when most sorely pressed!
For Him, that looked for comfort, there was none.
Th' assembly of the wicked closed Him round;
The bulls of Bashan compassed Him. No ruth
Had man for the All-merciful. His guard,
Apeing the malice of the Sanhedrin,
Threw all restraint away; and by base words

THE CRUCIFIED.

Of ribald reckless blasphemy, enforced
By deeds as base, gave their own vileness voice.
They smote—they hustled Him : they jibed and mocked :
They plucked the hair from off His sacred cheeks :
They spat upon Him, covering His eyes
And crying insolently : “ Prophecy,
“ Thou Christ, who is it smote Thee? ” Afterward—
The morning being come, and death decreed,—
They sent Him bound unto the judgment hall
Of Pilate, procurator of Judea,
Proud Gentile symbol of Imperial Rome.

The world’s decision waits. What will they do
With Christ, the Faithful Witness, God’s Elect?
Israel has made her choice : “ We will not have
“ This Man to have dominion over us ” !
The all-world Gentile power has now to choose.

In times of sudden stress, when duty fronts
Self-interest, first thoughts are always best.
Which maxim, marked betimes and firmly voiced,
With swift support of calm judicial act,
Had kept the courtly Roman’s hands as clean
From innocent blood, as later symboling
Of washen hands in empty semblance made.
Behold Him, thronèd in the judge’s seat !
A Jew-despiser, sensitive of the right,

LYRA CHRISTI.

And yet more sensitive of Rome's regard.
Urged by the vehement accusing priests,
His judgment nimbly pierced their screen of lies,
And marked the hate behind it. Here was One
Indubitably blameless, harmless, meek;
The crystal-clear antithesis of all
Their envy painted. Should their will be wrought
On such an One?—great Pilate looking on,
The puppet of the piece, their helpless tool!
O infamy! And yet—"If thou release
"This Man—this King-pretender—thou'rt no friend
Of Cæsar"—pitiless alternative!
The friend of Cæsar Cæsar's friends must please,
And these were of them, or had friends at court.
How should the right be done, and malice foiled?

There was one outlet only—last resource
Of timorous, hunted Virtue—Compromise.
Christ was a Galilean, and belonged
To Herod's jurisdiction. Unto Herod
Let Him be therefore sent. The Gordian knot
That would not be untied, might thus be cut.
So Pilate passed his rubicon, and pawned
For present ease the guerdon of the just.

In Herod's treacherous presence Christ was dumb.
There was a time when His forerunner spake
The words of God unto the sensuous king.

THE CRUCIFIED.

Herod had choked that Voice. How then should He
Of Whom the Baptist spake have words for him—
This envoy-murderer that *would* not hear?
Though priest and scribe with vehemence accused,
Christ answered not; yea, with a strange deep calm,
That shewed the calmer as their clamour rose,
Most patiently endured. The garish pomp
Of Herod's court distracted not His thoughts.
The boisterous insults of the soldiery,
The railing taunts of perjured legalists
Left Him unshaken and unshakeable.
Yet in that meek resolve no anger lurked,
Nor in His firmness aught of hardihood :
But love was there contumely could not quench,
And grace that yearned to gather and to bless :
And in His o'er-charged heart He realized
As never human heart before or since,
The pain that comes of proffered favours scorned,
The sapping grief of unrequited love.
“ Reproach My heart hath broken. I am full
“ Of heaviness ”—thus in the silences
Of dole too deep for speech His spirit cried.

When Herod's men of war had set at nought
Jehovah's King, they flung a royal robe
In mockery about Him; and, forthwith,
The Idumean monarch sent Him back

LYRA CHRISTI.

To Pilate, with a greeting; for till now
The men were enemies. And so it fell,
That Jew with Gentile making common cause
Against the Sinless One joined guilty hands,
Sealing the world's rejection of its God.

There was a Jew, who, for seditious acts,
With robbery and murder, lay in bonds
Within the city fortress, waiting death :
His name Barabbas—bodeful patronym !—
“ Son of the father.” And, indeed, he was,
By moral geniture, a child of him
Who from the dusk beginning bore the brand
Of murderer; man's enemy and God's;
Apollyon, the Destroyer. This doomed son
Of Belial, by the Governor's command
(Who still would fend the right, if easy terms,
Without self-sacrifice, might be devised)
Was taken from his prison-house and set
Before the people, side by side with Christ,
The true Bar-Abbas, God's beloved Son;
And proposition made : “ Whom will ye now
That I release to you ? ” . . . Thus, uncondemned,
And by His judges publicly propugned,
The Blessed One was offered to the crowd
On common terms of suffrage with a thief !
Christ or Barabbas ! “ Whether of the twain

THE CRUCIFIED.

“ Will ye that I release ? ” To which appeal
The people, stirred to frenzy by the priests,
Gave choice against the Holy and the True,
Shouting “ Barabbas ! ” till their will prevailed.

Thus pressed on every side, the Governor
Was swept adown the current of the hour,
Feebly protesting still. In vain his wife
Sent warning message, “ Have thou nought to do
With that just Man ; for I in a dream this day
Have suffered many things because of Him.”
In vain he urged, “ What evil hath He done ? ”
And, yet again, “ I find no fault in Him.”
In vain he strove to stay th’ impending crime
By charging home the guilt upon the Jews ;
Washing his hands before the populace,
And saying, “ I am guiltless of the blood
“ Of this just Person, see ye to it.” All
The moral strength of protest was annulled
By previous yielding ; and their fateful cry
“ On us and on our children be His blood,”
Lent no force to the plea of innocence.

With savage prelude of wild cries for death,
The Blessed One was scourged. The plowers plowed
Long furrows on His sacred back : the while
(As formerly within the high priest’s house)

LYRA CHRISTI.

Urging each other on by oath and jest.
Then, having brought Him to the Common Hall,
Pretorium, they gathered unto Him
A larger band of soldiers, the full guard;
To whom the meekness of His majesty
Became the butt of bolder blasphemies.

All pain must centre in the Holy One
All sorrows meet in Him : for not alone
Must Justice strike, but man's injustice, too—
His creature's violence the handsel blow.
Upon His brow they pressed a crown of thorns,—
Unpurposed symbol of the curse of God—
And in His hand for sceptre placed a reed—
Emblem of weakness that a wind might crush.
His scarlet robe of mockery, that told
Of Israel's kingship, they exchanged for one
Of purple, witnessing of Gentile power—
The power He yet should wield as Son of Man :
And with affected pomp they bowed the knee
Before Him, and saluted, saying : “ Hail !
“ King of the Jews ! ” and, snatching back the reed,
They smote Him with it; while in futile hate
Of so great goodness, they did spit on Him !

Thereat went Pilate forth again; his mind
Perturbed and anxious. He would shew the crowd

THE CRUCIFIED.

The bleeding Victim, and again proclaim
His guiltlessness. Perchance th' unwonted sight
Of so much suffering would satiate
Their blood-lust, and this way relief be found
For Jesus and his own now fearful heart.
So once again he stood before the crowd
And spake, "Behold, I bring Him forth to you,
"That ye may know I find no fault in Him."
And at the words, the Lowly One came forth,
Wearing the crown of thorns and purple robe;
And Pilate cried again, "Behold the Man!"
'Twas but a spur to passion. Instantly
The shout arose tumultuous, "Crucify!"
The chief priests leading the demand for death.
Then Pilate: "Take ye Him and crucify,
"For I have found Him blameless": fiercely met
By the half truth that yet the Truth would quench,
"We have a law, and by it He should die,
"Because He made Himself the Son of God."

On the closed door of Pilate's heart, that word
Smote with a sudden terror. *Son of God!*
If that might be much else were also clear—
His wife's ill-boding dream, its cryptic Source:
The Victim's majesty of lowliness,
Shown in His speech, His silences, His calm;
A self-effacement marking psychic depths

LYRA CHRISTI.

Beyond the merely human. Never man
Under like stress and pressure acted so.
What if the controverted claim were true?
If Jesus really were the Son of God? . . .
But Pilate's day was past, and when he asked,
“ Whence art Thou? ” Christ ignored him, answered
not.

The hours dragged slowly; and throughout the land
The preparation for the Paschal feast
Spoke of another Passover—God's Lamb
That soon must be prepared! Some paces off
The Temple shone white-breasted in the sun:
Beyond to eastward stretched the rounded slopes
Of Olivet, where one dark mass of trees
Told of the Agony of yesternight:
Northward, not far from the Damascus Gate,
Rose Golgotha's gloom-haunted rocky knoll—
How soon to be the Altar of the world!
For the last time the Roman Governor
Mounted the judgment-seat—a thwarted man
That knew and feared the True, yet dared not break
(His own proud schemes forbidding) with the False.
Around him thronged the priests, alert to mark
His changing moods and press advantage home;
And at their skirts a seething furious mob,
Set for revolt, and not to be appeased

THE CRUCIFIED.

Till Murder had been canonised by law.
Then Pilate hedged no longer. With a scorn
That searched and stung them, and was meant to sting,
He said unto the Jews : “ Behold, your King ! ”
And at the challenge, instantly, a shout
Went up, “ Away with Him ! Away with Him ! ”
Linked with their fiendish mandate, “ Crucify ! ”
Then Pilate : “ Shall I crucify your King ? ”
And their brief disavowal, sealing up
(By wanton recognition of a yoke
That galled and fretted while it told their shame)
The national rejection of their Prince—
“ We have no king but Cæsar.”

Therewith the Blessed One, resisting not
By word or sign, was led away to die.
Nor purple robe nor scarlet now He wore :
Though what man gave in sport, and snatched away
In brutal impulse or in reasoned scorn,
Was only laid aside in God’s account
For later re-investment, when the King
Should enter on His own, and all the earth,
Gentile and Jew, confess Him Lord and Christ.
But first, the *Via Coronæ* must be
The *Via Crucis*, and the Son of God,
Creator and Sustainer of the world,
Having in grace assumed humanity,

LYRA CHRISTI.

With ultimate objective, man's release
From penal death by death, must bear the cross.
Pilate had given sentence : and, anon,
Bearing His ghastly burden, and hemmed in
By Pilate's guard and followed by the crowd,
The Sinless One went forth to Calvary.
True God and yet true Man, His human frame,
Weakened by suffering, could ill sustain
The dolorous heavy load that soon must bear
The Bearer : whereupon a passer-by,
One Simon, a Cyrenean, being seized
By the rough soldiery was made to share—
Transcendent privilege !—the cruel weight.

The sultry way was thronged. Jerusalem
Was full of people, gathered for the Feast :
And as the slow procession wound along
The narrow ill-paved streets of whited walls,
Under a crooked ribbon of blue sky,
Perchance were many gazing on the Lord
Who had on other, happier days looked on,
And felt the drawings of His tenderness ;
Or watched His healing acts of grace and love ;
Or hung in mute observance on His words.
That there were women who compassioned Him,
Weeping impetuous tears, th' Evangel tells :
Yet of the secret thoughts behind the tears—

THE CRUCIFIED.

The inmost hidden springs—we nothing know.
The thoughts of Christ we know; His prescience clear
That saw beyond the Green Tree to the dry,
Beyond His own to barren Judah's woes,
Darkly impending; and this warning fell :
“ Daughters of Solyma, weep not for Me,
“ But for yourselves and children.” And He told
Of trials imminent, unparalleled,
Jerusalem should know; in stress of which
Mothers should wish their children had not been,
And men importunate the rocks and hills
To fall and hide them from impending wrath.

The Skull-Hill, Golgotha, is reached; the cross
Lies on the arid ground : and, as a lamb,
The Blessed One is led to slaughter. All
The ghastly torture-tools affront Him now;
The torturers, too, who, at a signal, strip
Their Victim, and await the word to strike.
And as, one after one, the cruel nails
Transfix those sacred hands and feet, a prayer,
Full of strange import unto all that hear,
(As now of heart's ease unto all that heed)
Escapes His lips : “ Father, forgive them, for
“ They know not what they do ! ” O Love of love,
That finds its objects among bloody men
Who do the deeds of Hate by murdering Love !

LYRA CHRISTI.

O Selflessness unparalleled, unique,
That pleads from its own personnel of pain
For others who inflict it !

As the cross,
Bearing its precious Burden is uplift
The people laugh and jeer. With lips out-thrust
And scornful wagging heads, they challenge Him,
Who trusted in Jehovah's power and love,
To prove His trust—yea, bid Him call on God,
So He were God's Delight, to intervene.
And as, like ravening beasts athirst for blood
And hungry to devour, they press around
The Holy One—Gentile and Jew alike—
There falls this soul-cry : “ Dogs encompass Me :
“ Th' assembly of the wicked Me enclose.
“ They look, they stare upon Me.”

O'er His head
In Hebrew, Greek and Latin there is writ
The sum of His offence ; nor truer word
Had ever man's endorsement, nor could have :
“ JESUS THE NAZAREAN ” ; and beneath,
“ KING OF THE JEWS.” This title many read
With queasy disapproval, and the priests,
That most opposed, and therefore burned the more,
Made protest unto Pilate, urging him
To qualify the writing, but in vain.
“ What I have written, I have written ” ; thus

THE CRUCIFIED.

He answered them ; and so—strange irony !—
Through that dark day the scrip proclaimed unchanged
To all the world the Lone One's majesty.

Meanwhile His executioners, to whom
Pertained as perquisite His raiment, had
Division made thereof ; by ordered course
Selecting : But His seamless inner robe
They gambled for, that it might not be torn ;
Fulfilling so an ancient prophecy.
Then seated on the ground they ate and drank,
Relaxing not their guard ; and as they watched,
Some offered wine to Him in mockery,
Some sported with His pains, and some were still.

There were two others crucified that day,
Condemned for robbery ; on each side one ;
Who, when the chief priests railed upon the Lord,
Railed also, taking up their challenge-cry :
“ Save now Thyself, as Thou hast others saved ! ”
With other taunts and blasphemies. How long
They mocked Him thus we know not ; but at length
One of the thieves grew silent. There had flashed
Into his muddled soul a sudden dread,
A consciousness of Goodness imminent,—
Yea, glory as of Godhood veiled beneath
The Lord's humanity ; and while he gazed

LYRA CHRISTI.

In contemplative awe upon that Face
More marred than any man's, the fear grew less
By reason of a bright arresting hope
That touched with light the gloom of his remorse,
And grew to a great certainty and calm.
So when his fellow thief, still railing, cried :
“ Save, if Thou be the Christ, Thyself and us ! ”
He said, reproving : “ Does not thou fear God
“ Who art in like attainment? We, indeed,
“ Receiving for our deeds the due reward ;
“ But this Man hath not sinned.” Then, to the Lord,
Whose power had drawn him, and Whose grace had
 saved,
And Whom as God's Anointed now he knew,
He cried in kindlement of Jewish hopes
Of earthly blessedness new wakened, “ Lord,
“ Remember me, when in Thy kingdom Thou
“ Dost come.” To whom the Gracious One, Who gives
Abundantly beyond our poor requests,
Made answer : “ Verily, I say to thee,
“ To-day ”—for Kingdom joys must wait—“ thou shalt
“ Be with Me in the Paradise of God.”
Thus man by man forsaken yet should share
With the God-Man, Whose piercèd hands of love
Had beckoned him ; Whose pain-racked arms were spread
To symbol love's full welcome ; Whose calm voice,

THE CRUCIFIED.

Out of the weakness of impending death,
Spoke life and solace to a soul in pain.

O matchlessness of love that stoops so low
To lift a mangled worm to its bright heights !
O miracle of love that draws to heaven
By links of mercy whom the world casts out !
The thief appealed to Christ. In His deep need
The Lord appeals to none. The grief, the pain
He bears alone. Among the gaping throng
Foregathered for His death there was not one
That pitied Him. He looked for comforters,
And found them not. They gave Him gall for meat,
And in His thirst they offered Him for drink
The thirst-provoking *homec* of the poor.
“ I am poured out like water,” thus He plained
Unto His full soul in the silences,
“ And all My bones are out of joint. Like wax
“ My heart melts in My bowels ; and My strength
“ Is dried up like a potsherd. I am faint
“ By reason of My crying ; and My tongue
“ Cleaves to My jaws. My throat is dried : Mine eyes
“ Fail with a long expectance still prolonged ;
“ And swelling floods of waters overwhelm My soul.”

Noon was approaching. The fierce Syrian sun
For three full hours had poured his pitiless beams

LYRA CHRISTI.

Upon the Holy One. For three tense hours
The Prince of Life, Creator, Sovereign Lord,
Lifted twixt earth and heaven, had been the song
Of drunkards, scorn of perjured legalists,
Meek gazing-stock of lewd unfeeling men,
And butt of ribald soldiers; yet, sustained
As perfect Man by perfect trust in God
In fellowship unbroken, and consoled
By love—His love Whose bosom ever was
His dwelling-place—all yet was light within.
Three hours of shame; three hours of bitter pain;
By man inflicted, suffered patiently
Out of great love for man, and in the strength
Of the uplifting solace of a joy
Proceeding not from man but love's pure Source—
These passed, and at the sixth hour came a change.

Lo, o'er the blue noon-sky a pall-like veil
Of darkness swiftly spreads. The sun is lost
In dire eclipse. The pallid air grows still.
A tremulous bodeful silence falls on all.
The birds fly startled to their nests : the beasts
Slink to their sheltered haunts in sullen fear.
All Nature pulses to one sympathy.
What thing is this enacting? What strange work
Grows to accomplishment? Ah! who can tell
What is beyond the telling? Jesus now—

THE CRUCIFIED.

The Righteous One of God, Who knew no sin—
Takes up sin's heavy burden, and endures
Its awful penalty, the wrath of Heaven
And hiding of God's face. So Nature marks
The great occasion; and what time God's light
Is by judicial act withdrawn from Him
Whose home it was, and o'er His holy soul
Sweeps the black horror of the judgment cloud,
The sun withdraws his beams, till darkness lies
Like a foul incubus on all the land.

The sorrows of the Sinless One, made sin—
Theme of the Ages, culminant event
Of all events that have been or shall be—
Speak from the Sacred Page; the griefs of One,
Perfect in holiness, cast out by man,
And in rejection's hour shut out from God!
“ My soul is full of troubles, and my life
“ Draws near unto the grave. Thou hast removed
“ My soul far off from peace. My strength and hope
“ Are perished. Thou hast laid me in the deeps—
“ In darkness—in the lowest pit. Thy wrath
“ Lies hard upon Me, and with all Thy waves
“ Hast Thou afflicted Me.” In travail thus
The desolate heart of Christ, amazed, o'erwhelmed,
Told out its heavy grief, and was not heard,
Jehovah shutting out its cry and prayer.

LYRA CHRISTI.

Tremendous moment, passing human thought,
When Jesus was abandoned on the cross,
And the deep gloom was broken by that cry
Of anguish measureless : “ My God, My God,
“ Why—why hast *Thou* forsaken me ? ” O depths
Of woe, unfathomed, fathomless, endured
In those three hours of darkness—and from God !
O depths, O heights of love laid open then !
O righteousness, inexorable, stern,
That smote and spared not though its shieldless ward
Was Love’s dear object, Heaven’s supreme Delight !

O limitless obedience, unalloyed
By doubt or murmur ; vindicating God
Out of the dark in that extenuant word,
“ But Thou art holy ” ! In the scroll of Time
This is the central, all-eclipsing fact—
The pivot-truth of every hope for man—
The Holy One made Sin ; God’s righteous wrath
Poured out—exhausted—on a Substitute ;
Jesus of God forsaken ! Well, indeed,
May angels seek to look into those things.
Well may His taught elect ones, who rejoice
In affluence of blessings flowing thence,
Extol His worthiness Whose soul was made
In those dark hours an offering for sin.
Well may the heavenly choir of His redeemed

THE CRUCIFIED.

Encompassing the rainbow-circled throne,
Break forth in ecstasy of well-tuned song :
“Thou—Thou art worthy ! Power and praise be Thine !”

The ninth hour passes ; and with it the dark.
Creation breathes again. The pallid sun,—
By joy of the recovered light of God
In the crushed heart of Christ—shines forth anew
And dissipates the gloom. Anear the cross,
Drawn under friendly cover of the dark,
A little group is waiting, gracious souls
To whom the Name of Jesus, ever dear,
Is dearer now by sorrow—theirs and His.
Among the band is John, whom Jesus loved,
And Mary, honoured mother of the Lord,
Of whom prediction said : “ A sword shall pierce
“ Through thine own soul ”—fulfilled how clearly now !
As Jesus looked on her, His human heart,
Perfect in sympathy and tender thought
For lowliest claims as loftiest, recognised
The unique isolation of her grief ;
And marking the disciple whom He loved
Among those waiting ones, He said to her :
“ Woman, behold thy son ! ” Then, to St. John,
Whose deep attachment and confidingness
Commended him for this high privilege,
“ Behold thy mother ! ” And from that time forth,

LYRA CHRISTI.

Blessed in the glad commission thus received,
John was a son to her in Jesus' stead.

This deed of love performed, there yet remained
One prophecy uncompassed; whereupon
That all by Heav'n decreed might be fulfilled
And every word approved, the Saviour cried,
" I thirst." Now there was set at hand, or near,
A vessel full of *posec*, the sour wine
Drunk by the common soldiers : and one ran
And filled a sponge with it, and, on a reed,
Offered the sop to Christ; who drank, and then,
In token of the consummation reached,
Uttered the words whereon from Age to Age
Hang the high destinies of all the Race,
Those precious key-words of victorious Love,
Tetelestai !—" 'Tis finished ! "

At that cry
The Temple vail, prefiguring His Flesh,
By unseen hands was suddenly rent in twain—
Not from the bottom roofward, humanwise,
But God-wise, from the top; that man might know
The way was open to the Mercy-seat
And the o'ershadowing Presence dwelling there.

Uplifting prelude of the final act—
The act of death, ev'n then accomplishing !

THE CRUCIFIED.

Once more the Saviour speaks : no longer now
From the thick darkness and the water-floods ;
Nor yet in physical extremity
As though death crept upon Him : but as One
Having the power to lay down His life,
And power again to take it. Unto God
He now commits His spirit—Love with Love,
Father and Son, co-operant in death !
This calm commendment made, He bowed His head
And yielded up the ghost.

This is the story of the Cross of Shame.
Which whoso runs may read, and whoso reads
May learn, as nowhere else, the depths of sin ;
Its measure in the holy light of God ;
As well of man's defection from the True ;
Of Mercy, founded on the precious blood ;
Of Love, that wounds itself for others' wounds ;
And heaven thrown open to mankind at will.

THE RISEN ONE.

ΝΥΝΙ ΔΕ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΕΓΗΓΕΡΤΑΙ
ΕΚ ΝΕΚΡΩΝ, ΑΠΑΡΧΗ ΚΕΚΟΙ-
ΜΗΜΕΝΩΝ ΕΓΕΝΕΤΟ.

(1 Cor. xv. 20.)

THE RISEN ONE.



IS work accomplished, through a
Sabbath day,
And days contiguous, the Prince of
Life,
Lord of the Sabbath (abrogated so,)
Lay in the bands of death. Through those blank days
His holy Body, incorruptible,
Reposed in Joseph's rock-hewn sepulchre—
A sealèd tomb, round which a watch was set.
Man had essayed his worst, but out of it
God's best should issue glorious—life from death.
The Corn of Wheat had fallen in the ground ;
Cast out as a light husk by lawless man,
But sown as precious Seed by Sovereign Good,
For Love's foreplanned supreme accomplishment,
The “ much fruit ” springing from the dust of death.

Not far beyond the city's northern wall,
Ringed by a garden, fragrant with the scent

LYRA CHRISTI.

Of early blooms and aromatic shrubs,
And chequered by the cool empurpled shade.
Of glossy citrons and broad walnut-trees,
Within the darkened Tomb the Body lay.
Here, at the Sabbath's close, while pensive dusk
Was melting into night, two eager ones,
Fear-holden, yet impelled by deathless love
That neutralized the fear, came furtively
To mark the hallowed spot; and having seen,
Returned into the city, and did buy
Unguent and aromatic spices, purposing
To pay with these love's last informal dues.

So fell the night; and a sin-weary world—
That knew not, Whom by knowledge of the heart
Those seeking women knew, nor cared to know—
Slept on, untaught by the great happenings
That had been; nor more prescient of the things
That should be while they slept—the power of God
(Mighty as when the universe of worlds
Sprang into being) now, through Death's grim gates,
Entering invincible, and summoning
Out of His pale death-sleep the Son of God.

Forth from the Tomb the Risen Saviour passed,
Firstfruits of them that slept; nor mortal eye
Witnessed the triumph of His going forth.

THE RISEN ONE.

No hand essayed to roll the stone away
To set Him free; unbroken was the seal.
Emancipate from all material laws,
The solid rock was not less permeable
To His true manhood Body incorrupt,
Than the thin air of night that fanned the leaves
Of the rock-garden and His blessed face.
By glory of the Father raised to life,
(Swift attestation of the mighty work
Wrought in obedience on the shameful Cross,)
The Bridegroom from His chamber had gone forth,
Victorious over sin and death and hell;
Declared to be the Son of God in power,
According to the spirit of Holiness,
By deathless resurrection out of death.

Or then, or later, Nature's forces stirred;
And from the silent unimpassioned heights
A holy presence angel issuing,
With herald sound of earthquake terrible,
Alighted on the earth, and, rolling back,
By puissant word or touch the ponderous stone,
Sat on it: in amaze of whom the watch
Became as dead men; for his countenance
Was as the lightning, and his raiment shone
With an unearthly radiance. Precious sign
To man, that needed it, of judgment past

LYRA CHRISTI.

**For such as, marked for judgment, yet look back
To Him who bore it for them, and embrace
The peace-crowned purpose of His finished work.**

**Life from the Cross ; assurance from the Tomb,
Despoiled for man by sovereign righteous Power,
That erstwhile smote in wrath as righteously
When Jesus died ! This way the holy God,
Inflexible in justice, yet might be
(The Victim being still His Holy One,)
A Justifier stintlessly of all
That trust in Jesus ; and the empty Tomb
A springing well of joy.**

**There was a time
When Jacob, journeying through th' uncharted wastes
Where dwelt the nomad children of the East,
Came to a spring shut up, a fountain sealed,
Round which were gathered Laban's drooping flocks.
What time the heavy stone was rolled away
The flocks had water ; yet might none essay
To move it till the ordered time was come,
As well the hand appointed. So around
The sealèd Tomb of Christ, the hopes of man
Were gathered, and, in figure, the full flock
Of His Redeemed, that had been or should be
Unto the utmost cycle of His love ;**

THE RISEN ONE.

Till, on the third day, out of heaven itself
Came forth the hand that flung the portal wide.

The shades of night still hung around the Tomb
When the first group of love-drawn ministrants
Came with their gifts of spices : Mary first,
Called Magdalene, from whom, th' evangel saith,
Seven demons were expelled. Her eager feet
Outran the other women, while her heart
Throbb'd to the anxious question, oft renewed :
“ Who shall roll back the stone that bars the Tomb ? ”
Of all the troubled ones most troubled she ;
And as she neared the sepulchre, and peered
Through the swift-lifting veil of night, she saw
An open grave, unbarred and tenantless.

Her Lord, the dear, dead Object of her quest
Was gone. His Body was not there. Or friend,
Or foe had been before, and taken it.
This way her thoughts ran wildly ; for as yet
She knew Him not as risen, and her faith,
Untutored in the purposes of God,
Lagged like a wounded thing behind her love.
Then a new thought possessed her. There were those
To whom, in this dilemma of desire,
Her weakness might with some assurance turn—

LYRA CHRISTI.

Peter and John, who companied with Christ
In His temptations, and who knew His heart
By love's unfoldings, as she also knew.
To these, in mute resolve (nor heeding much
The other women of the company,
Arriving one by one) she bent her way;
Foot-weary, yet with heart that, wearying not,
Was strong to all endurance. In what stress
Of tremulous fear, what ardency of hope,
Her bodeful, "They have taken away my Lord,"
Fell on their ears we know not : but straitway
The two disciples rose, and sallying forth
With quickening steps that soon outdistanced hers.
John first, then Peter, reached the sepulchre.

Morn was already breaking; and its white
Chill shafts of light, that made more white and chill
The plain rock Tomb, brought into sharp relief
Its dark and narrow portal, stoneless now
And flecked by lacing shadows of the trees.
Here, duty-held, the scared and baffled guard
In whispering groups still kept their futile watch,
Yet with a lax obedience that allowed
The prying boldness of whoever came.
And first, of John. He, stooping quickly down,
Looked in the open sepulchre and saw—
In hasty view that left him wondering still,

THE RISEN ONE.

As least within his thoughts—the linen clothes
Lying where once the sacred body lay.
He went not in : but Peter, following close,
Entered the Tomb, and gazing on the clothes
More narrowly, to unriddle what he saw,
Perceived the napkin lying by itself,
Still folded where the sacred head had lain
Yet of its own weight flattened. Afterward
John also entered, and surveying all
Like Peter, yet with deeper, inward gaze,
Attained to truer light and understood.*
There was a voice more eloquent than speech
In those white folded cere-clothes, lying there
So empty and by weight of powdered myrrh
And aloes pressed ; yet taking still the form
In outline of the body of the Lord :
A voice that told him (as the shrivelled scales
Tell of the crocus risen to greet the spring)
That God had been before Him in that place !

* There are three words used for "seeing" in John xx. 5-8, viz., βλέπω, θεωρέω, and εἶδον ; and a careful study of the distinctive meanings of those words throws much interesting light on the passage.

Βλέπω expresses the simple act of looking, even though nothing be seen ; to use the eyes ; to look at. This is the word in verse 5.

Θεωρέω = to be a spectator of ; to gaze at, or on, as a spectacle (ver. 6).

Εἶδον = to see intelligently ; implying not merely the act of looking, but the actual perception of the object (ver. 8).

LYRA CHRISTI.

Who laid Him down and slept had wakened now,
Jehovah Him sustaining. Christ had risen.
Grave-clothes and spices, all the Tomb might hold--
Of the earth, earthy—undisturbed remained.
But *He* was gone, the Tenant of the Tomb;
And the disciples grew to comprehend
The message of the grave-clothes, while an awe,
Commingled with great hopes stole on their hearts.

Not long they lingered undertermined there.
The grave had borne its witness, and for them
Had nothing more could hold them. Did their hearts
Recall a time when, on the Glory-mount,
The Blessed One, upon Whose peaceful brow
The radiance of that glory lingered yet,
Had warned them they should let none other know
What things their eyes had seen, their ears had heard,
Till from the dead the Son of Man was risen?
Or yea or nay we know not; yet we know
That there had been great questionings that day,
Both what the rising from the dead should mean,
And of the coming of that prophet, who
Should herald Israel's national re-birth
And rising from the grave of unbelief.
Which things, I ween, seemed nearer to them now
Than formerly : and haply Christ's own words

THE RISEN ONE.

That where the " twos " and " threes " should be convened

In His dear Name, He also would be found.
Remembered now, gave fire to their resolve
To seek the Company His love would seek.

What time their feet turned homewards Mary stood
A desolate weeping one before the Tomb.
The sun, new-risen, bathed in amber glow
The garden's rainbow glories, which exhaled
A languid fragrance; while from bush and tree
Came bursts of song and stirrings of young life,
That spoke the season's fulness and its joy.
But Mary stood unmindful of them all,
A love-blind aimless seeker, gazing still
Upon the empty Tomb, as mourners gaze
Upon some dear memento of the dead,
Prized for his sake who prized it, and adjudged
Sacred by benediction of a touch.
Her thoughts are on her Lord, Whose cleansing word
Had made her heart, that once had been a hell
By sevenfold power of ill, a home of rest;
Whose love had made His presence heaven for her,
His absence a great blank and weariness.
Where is He? Where the body of her Lord,
Entombed but yesterday before her eyes?
Where have they borne Him? Love had right of quest.

LYRA CHRISTI.

Ah ! weeping one, look not again within
The vacant chamber : comfort lies not there.
If thou might'st find His body, that were cause
To weep indeed ; since Hope were also dead.
And yet thou shalt be comforted. *Who seek
The Crucified shall find the Risen Lord :*
This is the preachment of the Empty Tomb :
As thou shalt find. Stoop thee, poor child, and learn !

So Mary stooped and looked into the Tomb.
There lay the grave-clothes on the limestone ledge ;
The napkin by itself ; the spices, too,
Half hidden in the wounden linen bands.
Nor these alone, nor chief. For at the head
Of the rock shelf whereon the Lord had lain
And at the foot, two radiant angels sat ;
White-vestured both, and of a man-like mien,
Benign and pitiful ; who marked her tears
And questioned helpfully : “ Why weepest thou ? ”
To whom, in wrapt abstraction of her grief
That knew nor fear nor wonder, she made moan
That they (a vague impeachment, branding none)
Had taken away her Lord, and (sadder plaint)
She wist not where they'd laid Him.

Was it the footfall breaking on her ear
Of Him she sought, or some spontaneous act

THE RISEN ONE.

Of homage rendered by the shining ones,
Who, outward gazing, witnessed His approach,
Which caused her at that moment to look back?
No cartulary tells : albeit we know
That Mary, by some impulse of the soul
That spoke a waking prescience, turned and saw
Through the distorting medium of her tears,
As well through blurred soul-windows, Jesus stand;
Yet knew not it was Jesus : rather thought
It was the gardener, and, conceivably,
The Tomb's despoiler. Wherefore, peering round
As though still seeking elsewhere her Lord,
She faltered : " Sir, if thou have borne Him hence
" Tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will "—
O blind inconsequence of baffled love !—
" Take Him away."

Then He, Whose Shepherd voice
Calls His own sheep by name, said unto her,
In doubt-dispelling tones that thrilled her heart
To wondering recognition, " Mary ! " . . . She,
In the quick stir of soul-enlightenment,
As well by impulse of recovered joy,
Turned with a glad, " Rabboni ! " and outstretched
Her trembling hands to hold Him : but the Lord
As though to lead her mind to thoughts beyond
The scope of earth-banked blessings, emblemized

LYRA CHRISTI.

In her emotionèd clinging, gently checked
The too fond fondness, saying, " Touch Me not,
" For I have not unto My Father yet
" Ascended." Then, in gracious words that reached
The culminant of creature blessedness,
" Go, tell My brethren," said He, " I ascend
" Unto My Father and your Father "—full
Associate favour, yet that kept unique
The Son's own portion, doubly certified
By added favour, linking love with power—
" Unto My God and yours." Are not the words
Heaven's sun-fringed answer to the earthly thought
In Mary's heart that would have held her still
To chartered Jewish hopes? uplifting words
That drew her to the Pisgah heights of love—
Yea, touched the fringe of that high Mystery,
Hid in the womb of time since time began,
Of sainthood fellowship with highest God,
And heirship with the Son in His own house.
No answer made the Magdalene; or if
Words came to ease the tension of her joy,
Their record, save in heaven, lives not now.
Deep adoration must have filled her soul,
More eloquent in speechlessness than speech,
And signalized by Love's impetuous will
To execute her mission instantly.

THE RISEN ONE.

So, with the words still throbbing in her brain,
“Go, tell My brethren,” Mary went her way,
The gladdest of the glad that Easter morn,
To find the Company and spread her joy.

Nor she alone. With varying mede of joy,
Commensurate with light to each vouchsafed
By angel premonstration at the Tomb,
The other women, in divided groups,
Had left the garden during Mary’s quest
For John and Peter; and of these one band,
Speeding to tell the news, was met anon
By Jesus; Who, with heartening words of cheer,
Silenced their trembling doubts; nor did He seek--
Using a new-framed precedent—to check
Their sudden impulse to lay hold of Him.
With knowledge of the heart, unerring, swift,
He weighed in each the motive with the act;
An ordered wisdom ruling all His ways.
Perchance the feverous impulse savoured less
Of license than of homage; when, in awe,
Commixed with ecstasy of hope attained,
They held Him by the feet and worshipped Him.
Perchance a moral fitness shaped the act,
Or import dispensational, or both;
The message of the Risen Lord to them
Restoring, not dissolving earthly links.

LYRA CHRISTI.

So Israel's Shepherd takes His place anew
To lead by untrod ways the " little flock "
For whom the Father's Kingdom is reserved.
" Fear not; but tell My brethren that they go
" To Galilee, where they shall see Me." Thus
He charged them, and confirmed the angel's word,
" He goeth before you into Galilee."
Yea, voiced again in His new, risen life
The teaching of those treasure-words of grace,
" When He (the Shepherd) putteth forth His sheep
" He goeth before them, and they follow Him,
" Because they know His voice." Full well, indeed,
They recognized Who spake; and, filled with joy,
In which some fear still mingled, sallied forth
To tell unto th' Eleven all these things.

Among those earliest missionaries were some
To whom the angel's mandate, " Go your way
" Tell His disciples," struck a tenderer chord,
By reason of the added grace which said,
" *And Peter* "—Peter, who had greatly failed
And now, oppressed by weight of numbing grief,
Fruit of a great repentance, needed most
The Shepherd's solacements and shepherding.
Who brought the message, or if any brought,
Is not revealed; nor have we hint or word
What time the sacred tryst was kept, nor where.

THE RISEN ONE.

We know but this—that the All-Gracious One,
In tenderness that speaks itself divine,
Met Peter, who had wronged Him, quite alone,
And in th' ensuing secret conference
Probed him with love, in words that reassured
His stricken, shame-crushed heart, and left him healed.
Till this was done, and flagging confidence
Restored completely, He would not confront
His poor disciple with the Company.
As wheat the Rock-man had been sifted, and
The chaff had been exposed to all the world.
The Lord had seen the wheat, and valued it
At highest valuation, for He knew
The wherefore of the sifting, and approved
In Peter's brokenness the end achieved,
As well the state for noblest service fit.

This scene enacted, in another form,
Veiling identity, the Lord appeared
To two of His disciples as they walked
Together to a village, situate
Some threescore stadia from Jerusalem—
The village of Emmaus, where they dwelt.
Not distraught seekers these, but reasoners,
Alertful, grave, who willed to plumb the depths
Of those strange happenings : not pillar-men
Reserved for some great service, but plain souls,

LYRA CHRISTI.

Moulded of common clay; and yet whose hearts
Had felt the mystic drawings of His love,
And saw, or trusted they had seen in Him
The promised Hope of Israel—shattered now !

For now their eyes were holden. Souls that doubt
Until the scales drop off by clearer light
Know not the Blessor, though their hearts may glean
The purposed stowings of His benefits.
So when the Lord drew near and went with them
They knew Him not : and when anon He asked
The nature of their discourse (as a man
Might question kindly of a stranger's grief),
They wondered greatly that His mind was blank
To happenings so much the common talk ;
Yet felt attracted to Him, and impelled
To trust Him with their secret doubts and griefs.
Noon had already passed. The way they went
Led over hill and valley, and was bright
With verdure and the rainbow hues of Spring
Here the arbutus spread its glabrous leaves,
Through which the red bark glowed like coals of fire ;
Yonder the carob-tree and scented bay ;
The myrtle, terebinth, and guelder-rose ;
Olive, and hawthorn, and wild service-tree ;
The storax, too, whose wealth of snowy bloom
Sent forth a perfumed tribute like a cloud ;

THE RISEN ONE.

And that red-kirtled glory of the East,
Just donning green attire, the Judas-tree.
Also, in wayside places white with dust
Were flowers of lowlier growth : the holly-hock
Valerian, pheasant's-eye, convolvulus ;
Red-cupped ranunculi, and purple tufts
Of quivering cyclamen. All Nature's heart
Seemed pulsing with the jubilation of life—
Life out of winter's death ; and the glad birds
Caught up the joy, and told to listening hearts,
The truth by Nature mirrored—*Christ is risen !*

Yet those disciples had not eyes to read
The new-life message of the lanes and hills,
Nor ears to hear the preachment of the birds ;
Because their hearts were slow to understand
By faith's tuition, what in older days
Their prophets had foretold. They did not see
That death's cold shadow lay athwart the path
That led to glory ; nor that Judah's King
Of David's line, must taste as David did
The sorrows of rejection, ere the throne—
Established in the purposes of God—
Should for the light of nations be set up.
In lowly grace He listened to their tale
Of recent happenings, in which Himself
Was the prime Mover, though they knew it not :

LYRA CHRISTI.

Heard, too, the artless story of their hopes,
Their fears, their doubts, their questionings ; until,
At a fit moment, when their listening hearts—
Won by His grace and emptied of their griefs—
Were most disposed for teaching, thus He spake :
“ O fools and slow of heart ! Ought not the Christ
“ To have suffered, in the righteous ways of God,
“ These things ye marvel at, and afterward
“ Enter into His Glory ? Chided thus
Their hearts grew closer to Him, strangely warmed
They knew not why : and when He now began
To expound the Scriptures to them ; setting forth
From Moses and the Prophets, line on line,
In soul-illuminating words the things
Predicted of Himself, their faith grew firm ;
Reports and misreports were all forgot ;
And Truth, interpreted in living power
By Him Who is the Truth, laid hold of them.
This way, by constant nurturing of grace,
The “ slow of heart ” grew quickly teachable,
And, willing learners in the school of love,
Tasting the new-wine wisdom of His words,
Their thirst for deeper draughts grew momentarily.

Conversing thus the journey's end was reached,
The restful hill-girt village ; and the Lord,
Yielding to custom-bound propriety,

THE RISEN ONE.

As well for needed proving, made pretence
Of going farther, waiting on their will.
Of His good pleasure He had linked with them ;
And now 'twas seemly, discourse being done,
The choice of separation should be theirs.
But they constrained Him, saying, " Abide with us ;
" For eve approaches and the day declines."
And at that word He yielded and went in
To eat with them, a willing welcome Guest.
Thus faith, rekindled at the sacred fire,
Clung to the unknown Strengtheners of faith :
And urgent love, still groping weetlessly,
Joined hands with greater Love, and touched its God !
So, too, in larger operance of grace,
To the closed heart of man the Saviour comes,
(His locks dew-dropping and His hands myrrh-filled)
With greeting : " Lo, I stand before the door
" And knock. If any open to My voice
" I will come in to him, and sup with him,
" And he shall sup with Me."

Who shall portray
That simple village home-scene when the Lord,
Fresh from His mighty triumph, deigned to share
The meal by rustic hospitality
Provided? Who describe the holy calm
Of those disciples as they sat with Him?

LYRA CHRISTI.

The palpitating joy, but half repressed
By the deep awe that was itself a joy
Lifted to adoration? and, anon,
When He had blessed the bread and broken it,
The thrill of wonder as they recognised
The Blesser, and so watched Him presently
Evanish from their eyes? There are no words
To shrine the story worthily. The heart
Forms its own heaven-lit picture; and, as theirs
Burned when He reasoned with them, feels no less
The joy of contemplation; while the lips
That cannot frame the story, yet express
The bliss of gazing by their praise of Him!

“ He vanished from their sight.” Our corporal frames,
Corrupt, material, are circumscribed
By the gross laws of matter, like a stone.
The resurrection body of the Lord
Was bound by no conditions save Himself.
It was subservient to Him; and was used
(Though not to dissipate the confidence
Before subsisting in His people’s hearts)
As something in His power; an instrument
Under His hands, that might be loosed at will
From all restraints of matter; or, at will
Conformed to them : a body knowable
By human senses—hearing, vision, touch—

THE RISEN ONE.

Or hid from human ken, as He might choose.
And yet a real body. The thing seen
Was not an apparition of the mind;
An unsubstantial, visionary form
Subjectively conceived. What many saw
In divers places, and at divers times,
Under all moral phases, moods and states
Of weak faith, faith, or no-faith, this was not
A phantom, but a great objective fact;
A something verily existent, and
Not less existent though no mortal eye
Had seen the Lord, no hand reached out to touch.

Meanwhile the tidings spread. From lip to lip
Passed the new watchword of His people's faith,
"The Lord is risen!"—and still, from heart to heart
By thrilling glance or sob, "The Lord is risen!"
Mary had seen Him; Simon, too, had seen;
And other women of the Company.
And some that had not seen had heard the news
From angel lips, whose stimulant "Fear not,"
And tidings that the Crucified had left
The Tomb, and entered on the Path of Life,
Formed the glad burden of a humbler tale.

Of those that heard that day from human lips
The message, marked for special fostering

LYRA CHRISTI.

Were the apostles, who, as rumour grew,
Had come together, urged by common fear
Of Jewish violence, or drawn by hope
Of something faintly imaged in their minds
Of inchoate good that yet might grow to more.
Remorse and doubt had thinned the little band.
Judas was dead, self-murdered in his sin,
And gone to his own place ; his bishopric
For nobler use reserved. Incredulous
Beyond the others, Thomas held aloof.
Type of the nation that withhold their trust
And all confession of Messiah's claims,
Till gazing on the glory-bearing cloud
That brings Him back to them, and on the scars
In feet and hands, they hail him *Lord* and *God*.
The doors were shut : the evening light streamed in
On troubled faces. Even Peter's word
That he had seen and spoken with the Lord
Had not convinced them ; nor the faith of John
For whom the witness of the linen clothes
Had silenced every question. Some, I ween,
Sat speechless and desponding : others talked
In furtive whispers, weighing fears with hopes ;
And some were merely passive.

Suddenly

The Lord was present with them ! Not a bolt
Shot back that He might enter : not a door

THE RISEN ONE.

Swung on its hinge to give Him right of way,
“ He came ”—O brevity of God !—“ and stood
“ I’ the midst, and said to them, ‘ Peace unto you ! ’ ”
No force could bar His way. In silent might
Mysteriously put forth, He willed, and came.
At first they were confounded and afraid,
Supposing they had seen a spirit; but
With grace ineffable He drew their gaze
To the love-tokens in His hands and side,
And doubt and terror fled. It was Himself.
No spirit, but a Being of flesh and bones :
The Jesus they had known before the Cross ;
Their Teacher and Consoler; and at once
A deep joy filled them, for at last they knew
The worth of that report : “ The Lord is risen ! ”
Again the benediction of His words
(For all had left Him in His hour of need)
Fell like an absolution on their hearts,
“ Peace unto you ! ” yet having wider scope
By reason of the mandate closely linked,
“ Ev’n as the Father sent Me forth to serve,
“ I also now send you.” And thereupon
He breathed in them an unction from Himself
(A pre-libation of the Spirit, soon
In Pentecostal fullness to be known),
And gave them, in respect of other’s sins,
The power to remit them or retain.

LYRA CHRISTI.

Then, while for very wonder of their joy
They even yet half doubted, He enquired
If they had aught to eat; and being given
Part of a broiled fish and an honeycomb,
He took it and did eat before them.

So

The revelation of the Risen Lord
Came to the Company; a trembling few
Gathered in weakness to His sheltering Name—
The first to test His promise to keep tryst
With such as own its all-sufficiency.
This was the nuclear prototypal Church,
Soon to be clothed with power from on high :
And yet—(His peace, His Name, Himself, and strength
To be and do for Him breathed into them)—
Though greater *measure* of the gift might be,
What *character* of blessing could exceed,
This side of glory?—What in kind compare?

An eight days after Jesus showed Himself
Again to the apostles; and again
The doors were shut; while Nature's laws were stayed
That He might enter. Thomas, who had lost
Through unbelief the first-day usufruct
Of Resurrection, had rejoined them now,
Humbled by memory of a headstrong vow
Made in the flush of faithless hardihood.

THE RISEN ONE.

“ Not till I see the nail-prints in His hands
“ And with my finger probe them—yea, and thrust
“ My hand into His side, will I believe.”
How must his eyes have met the Master’s look
(Knowing how much He knew) when Jesus said :
“ Stretch forth and touch the nail-prints in My hands ;
“ And hither thrust thy hand into My side ;
“ And be no longer faithless, but believe ! ”
For Thomas learnt by sight ; as Israel yet
Shall learn, when Jesus (coming with the clouds
In manifested glory and with power)
Shall be the cynosure of every eye,
And they which pierced Him, gazing too, shall weep.
More blessed they who have not seen, and yet,
In the long waiting time, this night of tears,
Commit their souls to Him, confess His Name,
And wait believing, till they also see !

The scene is changed. Directed by the word,
First spoken at the Paschal board, and then
In resurrection graciously re-voiced :
“ I go before you into Galilee,”
A few of the disciples left Judæa,
And, journeying northward, found themselves again
Amid the fishing-boats beside the Lake.
Here, on a time, by force of habit drawn,
Peter would go a-fishing ; and with him

LYRA CHRISTI.

Six others, old companions in the craft—
Apostles all, of whom the chief was John.
These straightway launching out toiled a long night,
Yet toiled in vain; and as the dawn grew red,
Made for the shore again with empty nets.
Westward the grassy slopes of Naphtali,
Dear to their eyes, were streaked with emerald light;
And rugged Hermon, mounting to the blue,
Unveiled its snowy diadem. The Lake,
A pool of liquid gold, stirred peacefully
Around the nearing bark, and rippling broke
Upon the peat-hued gravel of the beach,
Which, strewn with crumbling wealth of wave-washed
shells.
Shone opalescent in the morning sun.

One stood upon the shore regarding them
With silent interest, Whose grave kind eyes
Attracted theirs : One Who had often sat
In the same boat with them, and knew them all
Far better than they knew themselves; yet Who,
Though also known of them, they knew not now.
'Twas Jesus : yet a Stranger : for their eyes
Were holden, and His person veiled to them,
As erstwhile to those troubled ones who trod
The white road to Emmaus, when He drew
Their hearts by gentle blame to light and rest.

THE RISEN ONE.

Anon, in terms of homely grace, the Lord
Addressed them : “ Children, have ye any meat ? ”
And when they told Him, “ No,” He bade them cast
Their net upon the right side of the ship
And they should find. *The right side*, for till now
Their hands had lacked direction ; and His grace
Would teach them there were other fish to catch
In places of His showing—souls of men
In the vexed sea of nations, to be brought
To the firm shores of everlasting bliss,
Where He should wait for them ; th’ effectual means
The Gospel-net, directed by His power,
And drawn by chosen human instruments.
Obedient to the word they cast the net ;
Nor urged as formerly their night-long toil
And blank results in veiled extenuance
Of a too tardy willingness to act.
Gladly and silently they stretched their arms
Over the boat-side, eager to draw in
The net-lines, limply tossing on the swell,
As well th’ enfolding meshes deeper down,
Yet were not able, for at once the cords,
With weight of new resistance grew more taut—
And lo ! the empty net was filling fast !

Then John, with prescience sure that works by love,
Calling to Peter, said, “ It is the Lord ! ”

LYRA CHRISTI.

Yet waited, as the contemplative wait
Upon the less discerning, whom they lead
To their own plane of vision, being in turn
By action drawn to action, rounding so
The ordered sum of service. Thus His grace
Who, as the Head, distributes lavishly
In wisdom of administrative power
To each his purposed gift, is shed abroad ;
And by a manifold diversity
Of operations, gift with gift promotes
The common end, each supplementing each.
If John by deeper insight knew the Lord,
Peter was first to reach Him. Throwing aside
His fisher's coat he sprang into the sea,
And swimming, wading, stumbling, made the shore ;
Leaving his brother-fishers to draw in
The mesh-bound draught,—in wonder of the haul,
And not less wonder of th' unbroken net.
“ Bring now,” said Jesus straightway, “ of the fish
“ Which ye have caught ” : and Peter, at the word,
Took up their half-done task and drew the net,
Full of great fish, to land, and counted them ;
The while not unobservant that the Lord
Had made His own provision for their needs.
For lo ! already in the sight of all
A fire of coals was burning on the beach ;
And fish, not of their catching, lay thereon ;

THE RISEN ONE.

And there was bread (whence brought they could not
guess,
And durst not ask) made ready to their hand.

First catching, then partaking. They that fish
In fellowship with Jesus also feast;
Himself the meal providing. Precious grace
Impearled in that new welcome, "Come and dine"!
Rare fellowship of service that ascribes
The good encompassed to the instruments!—
"The fish that *ye* have caught"—and while they toil
Prepares a meal against the resting time!

None asked, "Who art Thou?" for their hearts perceived—
Howe'er their eyes might question,—'twas the Lord;
The spirit's keener vision reaching so
Th' essential fact ere Nature pierced the veil. . . .
Few words, I ween, were spoken while His hands
Distributed as Host the simple fare;
And fewer while they ate: but holy joy
And awe beyond expression ruled their thoughts,
For on the bread of love they feasted too.
What time the meal was ended, Jesus turned
To Peter,—who, forgiven and restored
After the thrice denial, rested now
In warmth of His affection, unconstrained,—

LYRA CHRISTI.

And thrice, for Love's high purpose, challenged him.
Like a forgiven child that leans his head
Upon her breast to whom the wrong was done,
And feels the probe of reasoned tenderness
In the low words that pierce but do not pain,
So Peter met the challenge. Self was gone,
And all the vaunting pride of yesterday.
He knew his failure—and that Jesus knew.
He thought he loved the Lord, yet, challenged thus,
Would but profess attachment—yea, threw back
The proof of this to Christ—" *Thou knowest, Lord.*"
How well the Master knew—how well appraised
The work of grace in Peter's sifted soul,
And fitness of the vessel for *His* work,
His threefold charge bears witness, " *Feed My lambs* "—
" *Shepherd and feed My sheep* "; which precious trust
The great apostle cherished faithfully,
Through good report and ill, in a long life
Fulfilled with ardent service; nor resigned
Till the Chief Shepherd called him home to rest.

The theme still broadens as it leaves its source,
The Empty Tomb, and nears the Heavenly Plains.
The revelations of the Risen Lord
Vouchsafed to His true friends, and only those,
During the Forty Days, had each its note
Of specialized instruction, based on love.

THE RISEN ONE.

Nor less those two appearings—one to James
The other to five hundred gathered saints--
Of which no fuller record lives than this.
Nor that more formal mountain rendezvous
In Galilee, confined to the Eleven;
When He, by grace of delegated power,
Commissioned them to teach and to baptize.
Nor yet the meeting with those chosen ones
In the beloved city, where He bade
Them tarry till that promised *charisma*,
The Paraclete, the Comforter was come,
And with His power they were all endued.
'Twas after these injunctions, and while yet
The solemn burden of those closing words,
“ Ye shall in this place be My witnesses,
“ And in Judæa, and in Samaria,
“ And to the utmost parts of the wide earth,”
That Jesus, in fulfilment of that word,
“ It is expedient that I go away,”
Now led them out as far as Bethany,
Unto the place of parting, nigh the town.

Wild uplands overhang the narrow streets,
In plateau-like seclusion, and the ridge
Of Olivet to westward hides from view
The walls and roofs of Zion, and the streams
Of busy life that flow within her gates.

LYRA CHRISTI.

Only to eastward, where a rolling waste
Of hills and glens outstretches to the line
Of Jordan and the dim mysterious lake,
The prospect opens; yet the view imparts
No warmer life-glow to the silent spot,
But only gloom and deeper solitude.
The Forty Days had passed. The hour was come
Of His departure; fore-announced to them
In sorrow-moving words: "I leave the world
"And go unto the Father;" and again,
In joy of Resurrection, "I ascend
"Unto My Father"; and His winnowing love
Had lifted them to higher thoughts of God
Than Kingdom blessings; plenishing their hearts
With hopes that reached to heaven, whence He came,—
Yea, whither, for their joy, He would return.
Whom they had known in servitude of grace
Before the Cross—a selfless, lowly Man,
Full of compassion; helpful, patient, kind;
The most approachable of men—they now,
As taught by happenings of the Forty Days,
Knew in His risen life to be the same.
Their chastened hearts and not their hopes alone
Were knit to Him. They loved with such a love
As Jonathan to outcast David bore,
Whose hand had slain the champion of Gath,
And who, though honoured for his victory,

THE RISEN ONE.

Was cherished more for his love-worthiness.
They loved Him for Himself : and, standing now
Alone with Him in that wild silent place,
Above the hum and bustle of a world
That knew Him not and had rejected Him,
The thought of His departure must have lain
Full heavy on their hearts ; for were not they,
As clinging thus to Him, participants
In His rejection ? and when He was gone—
Their spring of comfort, their one theme of joy
The source of all their strength—how should they face
A hostile world and tread their path alone ?
Perchance their drooping spirits yet were raised
By grace of that assurance, lately given
“ Lo, I am with you alway ” ; and the hope
Built on the mystic promise gathered strength
By faith’s deep insight when the parting came.
We know not. Yet the better thing we know,
As they the better thing were given to taste.
For as they stood around Him on the cliff
Too sad for words, He lifted up His hands
And blessed them : and, in act of blessing, lo !
Was parted from them and was taken up
A cloud which passed between receiving Him
Out of their sight !

And yet He still was near.
The manner of His vanishing was not,

LYRA CHRISTI.

As painters dream and poets fondly sing,
A gradual receding into space.
He passed indeed from view, and still is hid;
Yet not far off; the mystery-cloud which veils
The elemental forces and their God
Concealing Him, until the purposed time
Of Restitution fore-announced of old
By holy men of God, His oracles.

They watched Him going, and they sought Him gone,
Still peering where He vanished; nor refrained
Till, suddenly, two shining ones stood by—
Unseen till now, though near them—who enquired
“ Why stand ye gazing up so stedfastly ?
“ Lo ! this same Jesus ye have seen ascend
“ To heaven, shall in like manner come again.”
Then vanished : and, as Summer winds that pass
O'er drooping flowers leave fragrance, left behind
A spiritual aroma as of thoughts
Breathed on by love.

 This way was rounded up
The broken story of the Forty Days;
Triumphant sequel to the Cross of shame
And prelude to Redemption's fuller song.
And in that message the disciples saw
The seal of promise, the last pledge of love,
The “ Amen ” of *His* blessing just pronounced.

THE RISEN ONE.

Their minds were reassured ; their faith confirmed ;
The cloke of heaviness dropped from their hearts ;
And in the joy of worship they went forth
To work, and preach, and suffer for His Name.



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