

Smoking
Flax
and other poems

John Wright Follette

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A Book of Poetry by John Wright Follette

First printing 1936

Second printing 1971

A CHRISTMAS WREATH

John Wright Follette's complete collection of Christmas Poems

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CONTENTS

Page

VIII	Foreword and Acknowledgments
1	A Personal Glimpse of the Author
5	Introduction
6	A Word About Poetry

PART I

Poems published in original edition of
SMOKING FLAX

8	Smoking Flax
10	The Poet's Price
11	God Smiles
12	Following The Star (Comments)
13	Following The Star (Poem)
14	My Star
15	Confession
16	The Miracle Of Spring (Comments)
17	The Miracle Of Spring (Poem)
19	To A Bird's Nest On My Wall
20	Old Apple Trees
22	My Dandelion (Comments)
23	My Dandelion (Poem)
24	The Redwood Prophets (Comments)
25	The Redwood Prophets (Poem)
27	Memory
28	In Remembrance Of Me (Comments)
29	In Remembrance of Me (Poem)
30	To My Hills — In Spring
31	In Summer

CONTENTS

Page	
32	To My Hills — In Autumn
33	In Winter
34	The Stroke Of God (Comments)
35	The Stroke Of God (Poem)
36	My Dog Is Dead
38	The Contented Tree (Comments)
39	The Contented Tree (Poem)
40	At Sea (Comments)
41	At Sea (Poem)
43	The Twilight Hour
46	Restless Heart (Comments)
47	Restless Heart (Poem)
49	My Mother's Face
50	An Autumn Meditation
53	Prisoners Of Hope
54	Talking Trees
55	The Red Man's Return
58	The Autumn Of My Heart (Comments)
59	The Autumn Of My Heart (Poem)

PART II

Poems not included in the original printing of
SMOKING FLAX

(Comments extracted from author's own words)

62	The Freer House (History)
65	To An Old Stone House
68	A Parable Of Nature
70	Informal Ways (Comments)

CONTENTS

Page	
71	Informal Ways (Poem)
73	Blessed Hay
74	The Mountains Are Singing(Comments)
75	The Mountains Are Singing (Poem)
77	Christ, My High Tower
78	The Sacrament Of The Hills (Comments)
79	The Sacrament Of The Hills (Poem)
80	Shut Thou The Door
81	Trouble Is A Servant
82	The Singing Plowman (Comments)
83	The Singing Plowman (Poem)
84	Candle-Light Cottage
85	The Price Of Vision
87	To My Missionary Students
88	Friendship Room
89	Out Of The Strong
91	The Call Of Deep Unto Deep
92	Eternal Urge (Comments)
93	Eternal Urge (Poem)
95	Identification
96	Breath Of God (Comments)
97	Breath Of God (Poem)
99	Recompense
100	To A Woodthrush (Comments)
101	To A Woodthrush (Poem)

ILLUSTRATIONS

John Wright Follette	Frontispiece
Freer House — Ancestral Home of the Author	page 63

Foreword

During the last few years of his life the author said to his retreat groups, "I have enough poems to make up another book and friends are asking, why don't you print another edition of *Smoking Flax*? Well, you just won't let me," he replied, and it was true. The call upon his time and strength was too great to allow him to carry out this desire that was on his heart.

This new and enlarged edition is the result of his prayers and the help of some of his "little ones" who knew what was on his heart. It is a joy to see this memorial book in print also, along with his lovely Christmas poems contained in the volume entitled "A Christmas Wreath."

To those who have shared with us and have made this edition possible, our heartfelt thanks. We rejoice with you in sending out this book, knowing that God will be exalted — to Him be all the praise!

S.M.S. & C.S.

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Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., for quotations from Moffatt's translation of the Bible; Zondervan Publishing House for quotations from *The Amplified New Testament*; and *The Gospel Publishing House* for extracts of John Wright Follette's poems from "Broken Bread" and "Arrows of Truth."

A Personal Glimpse of The Author

“Some day, I may write a parable story about a shadow,” reflected the author, John Wright Follette. “Years ago it was suggested to me while visiting one of the old Missions, all enclosed and shut in. I saw there a lovely pepper tree growing outside the high wall throwing its shadow over the wall and moving in such mysterious patterns of lace and figures. As my wandering mind played there, I saw an old monk in the Mission who used to come and sit in the shadow made by the tree, but he never saw the tree. The dear tree never could go over the wall and see and know so much he would like, but he could throw his shadow where he never in the world could go, and the dear monk was blessed.

“As I began to talk to the shadows, the first few lines of this poem came to me:

*“I love the soft, gray shadows
On the ancient mission wall—
Evasive, restless, changing
As they sway and toss and fall
In patterns quite fantastic
Full of poetry and art
Richer far than any sold
In a money-grasping mart.
And when the wind is quiet
And the shadows are at rest
I try to trace their meaning.
And although I do my best,
I never find the secret
For the shadows never tell
What mean the soft, gray patterns
Though I’m sure they know full well.”*

Later, in a personal letter, the author related the following experience, while further reflecting on his poem:

“One day the Lord blessed a verse of scripture to my heart which wove itself into the pattern of this thought about a shadow. It was 2 Corinthians 2:14:

‘Now thanks be to God, which always causeth me to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place . . .’

‘He maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place,’ seemed to ‘come alive,’ and the Holy Spirit began to show me things.

“In looking up *Moffatt’s* translation, it became clearer still: ‘Wherever I go, thank God, he makes my life a constant pageant of triumph in Christ, *diffusing the perfume of his knowledge everywhere by me.*’

The Amplified New Testament, too, is good: ‘But thanks be to God, Who in Christ always leads us in triumph—as trophies of Christ’s victory—and through us spreads and makes evident the fragrance of the knowledge of God everywhere.’

“I was struck dumb at the thought that we may become—and should be—merely the fragrance—never the Source itself. The Holy Spirit made me to sense the wonder and secret joy of being *hidden*. Only the sweetness and fragrance are manifest. That is as it really should be. Christ is the Source and Cause and Reality. We are not seen, only the perfume is evident. Whoever saw or heard a perfume! These scriptures recalled a thought I had years ago.

“I always enjoyed teaching in Bible school because it was not a public ministry. (I never liked

public work). There I had my little group who soon adjusted to me, being understanding and tolerant. We enjoyed a delightful, spiritual atmosphere and the wonderful presence of God. Such cannot be easily created or maintained if the number increases, because then there are too many levels of understanding and receptivity.

“Later on, God took me out of Bible school and my dear student group and put me on the field for a ministry around the world—Europe, India, Africa It was an awful experience to me; it was really a death, for nothing in me ever desired public meetings. Crushed in spirit before the Lord, I prayed:

Dear Lord, I want to help people and feed and teach them, but I just don't like to be seen or known. Please, can't You make me a shadow? Then, where needy, hungry souls are waiting, I could pass over them, like a shadow, and they would be fed, healed, and blessed, but would never know from whence the blessing came. Like the dear Holy Spirit—we don't see Him, but Oh! what help He brings when He passes by and breathes on us, or suddenly sweeps through!

“God gave me victory, as He always does, in adjusting to public meetings. In the days that followed, He blessed in camp meetings, conferences, and retreats and fed thousands that I could never have touched had I stayed in Bible school or college. As I ministered, He lifted me from the natural sense of things into the realm of Spirit, and I was refreshed; my own heart was fed and often helped while He poured His Word through me. Though He never removed the dislike for public ministry, He gave me such a desire to help people and I came to love *all* broken humanity.”

Today, John Wright Follette's ministry still reaches over the wall, bringing refreshment to many around the world. His poem, "Shadows on a Mission Wall" was never finished in his lifetime—it could not be finished then, for it is still being written as the shadows move over the pages of the contemplative sitting on this side of the wall. The fragrance of this rare and humble spirit is still spreading, diffusing "the perfume of His knowledge everywhere" through his writings. Lowly of heart, and desiring that Christ alone be seen, he truly personified the one he depicted in *"Hidden Ministry" who opened wide the door to the Wise Men that came to seek the Christ Child, taking his place *behind* the door that the Radiance be not blurred.

C.S. and S.M.S.

*"Hidden Ministry" is published in another book, "A Christmas Wreath," and is one of 46 of John Wright Follette's Christmas poems.

Introduction

In sending out this little book of poems it is with the prayer that those who read them may be able to see beyond the form of verse and perhaps a pleasing form of imagery the truth which at first reading may not be discerned. I suggest that one read between the lines if he desires to feel the pulse of the poem and trace its spiritual value.

Needless to say, to explain poetry is a contradiction in terms, for if we do not feel its grace and beauty and the uplift of its message, we need never hope to comprehend its meaning. But we are all more or less deaf, dumb and blind to poetry — written or unwritten. Who can always catch and interpret the subtle and everchanging rays of light sifting through nature or flashing from the human heart?

I have been persuaded by friends to combine with these poems some notes or comments. In doing so I know I lay myself open to criticism. Any attempt to explain poetry is likely to kill it, since a critical, intellectual analysis of it is diametrically opposed to the passionate emotion which is its very life and substance. Therefore do not consider these notes as analysis or explanations. They are to serve as suggestions to those who may need or enjoy them. If by their means I am able, even in a measure, to “open the eyes of the blind,” I shall feel amply rewarded.

JOHN WRIGHT FOLLETTE

Candle-light Cottage, New Paltz, New York

This introduction and “A Word About Poetry” which John Wright Follette placed in his book, SMOKING FLAX, published in 1936, is repeated here verbatim.

A Word About Poetry

Poetry does not make its primary appeal to the reason. It has to do with the heart and its emotions. Through scientific deduction and the principles of philosophy we may storm at the reason forever, yet if we do not *feel* the truth, it is never ours.

“Above the reason of the head is the feeling of the heart” (Rousseau).

“The heart has reasons of its own, which the head can never understand” (Pascal).

I do not like the thought that poetry is written. Rather, it is seen, felt, and lived. Poetry is everywhere, and, best of all, it is within the heart—“we have this treasure in earthen vessels.” These verses I trust may act as a stimulus to breathe into life or rouse into flame the poetry of your own soul, which in turn will measure the amount of joy and pleasure you will find in reading what is found in this book.

Some may ask, “What poetry shall I read, and where shall I find it?” The best poetry I know, and that which is pure, unadulterated, and unaffected, is found in two wonderful books opened by God and placed where all may read and steep their souls in the marvel and beauty of their contents. I speak of the book of the human heart and, second, the book of God’s out of doors.

What a pity with these two volumes open before us with pages and pages of living illustrations, so few of us are able to trace their beauty or catch the fleeting and mystical messages they are singing! Do not make the mistake that we are to find poetry in the broad daylight only—open and strong in the full tide of expression throbbing through the basic emotions of the human heart in ecstatic joy or crushing sorrow.

There are a thousand variations of poetry intimated by most commonplace things—the drooping form of a tired mother; the windblown hair of a laughing child; the restless or startled movements of a sleeping babe; the tears on the face of a disappointed boy; the indescribable lovelight in the eyes of a maiden; the brave walk of a little fellow as he leaves mother for the first day at school; the long look (that of a seer) in the mother's eyes as she watches the last little one trudge manfully away stoutly holding to the hand of his big sister. That is poetry.

So it is in nature. Not only in the broad open ways of the earth, but we find it everywhere—in the rolling sea, restless and unsubdued; the broad, sweeping prairie; the towering mountains reaching upward, ever upward; the tawny desert fastness alluring in its magic spell. Nature is lavish in her beauty. She fills the very air with her singing and strews broadcast poems too lovely to be sung. We find them everywhere—in brown leaves huddled in the fence corner like beggars ashamed of other men; a corn shock ragged and torn, leaning against the western sky like a forlorn wigwam; a brush heap gleaming like crystal after the frost and sleet have worked magic there; the delicate fingers of an elm making lace too intricate and delicate for any imitation; the sky answering itself in a pool by the roadside; an ash heap where the “beauty for ashes” has been born from the fires of reduction; the creaking of dry snow under foot, runner, or wheel—have you ever heard a sound just like it? the smell of fresh earth where the farmer turns the sod; an oriole's nest swinging in the elm—a veritable castle in the air; the plaintive, half-human call of the whip-poor-will when twilight spins her dusky curtains of loveliness; the drip, drip, drip of the rain from the eaves when one is snug in bed and the world seems miles away—here is poetry.

SMOKING FLAX

THERE'S a bit of smoking flax in my heart,
But whence it came or why I do not know.
I found it lying there upon the floor
Too weak to make a flame or glow.
At first it seemed to me a useless thing;
The smoke got in my eyes and made me weep.
And still I left it there—I know not why—
Far hidden in my heart a smoking heap.
Some friends—I know they meant to be most kind,
But kindness, when awry, can be most rude—
Discovered it and begged to throw it out
And in its place to store my heart with food.
But finding that I longed to harbor it,
They sought to fan it to a roaring blaze.
They did not know that it was smoking flax,
And never would it flame through all its days.

There must be other flax to make a fire,
If that is all that some may ever need.
My smoking flax may take the room of food—
Upon its curling wisps of smoke I feed.
Some do not like my dingy walls so smoked,
Where shadows play and chase the fleeting light,
But I see castles there, and mountains high,
And laughing streams for which they have no sight.
My frescoed walls are full of life to me—
The sudden dash of birds upon swift wing,
And noble steed that neigh and prance and leap
Across the hills where falling waters sing.
And there are forests deep of towering trees
That melt away into a rolling sea,
Where rushing waves dash high and break in lace
On golden sand widespread o'er sunny lee.

The smoke grows thick at times and blinds my eyes—
 Some wonder why they ever hold a tear;
 Now, I have found that tears but clear the sight.
 And when I'm blind, such lovely things I hear:
 All mingled in the curling smoke a voice
 Comes calling faint from out the sleeping past.
 I answer, and it comes so very near
 That in my hungry heart it rests at last.
 And there I hear so many, many things—
 The thunder booming in the canyon deep
 Rolls on and melts into a song unique
 Loosed by a waterfall in fearless leap.
 The music of the wind refreshes me,
 Whatever key it takes I do not mind;
 The sequel of its laughing song or sigh
 Within some corner of my heart I find.
 I hear the bobolinks and meadowlarks,
 And all the sounds of night I hold so dear,
 The whip-poor-will and chirping crickets too,
 The sounds I used to dread I do not fear.
 And often in the smoke I see and hear
 The little children all in happy play—
 I almost wish that they might ever sing,
 But, then, the world must have its men, they say.
 Oh, let me keep this flax within my heart,
 And do not quench it, since it will not burn.
 For now I love its curling, listless smoke,
 And from my frescoed walls I cannot turn.

The title "Smoking Flax" was suggested by Isaiah 42:3;
 "A bruised reed shall he not break, and *the smoking flax shall*
he not quench . . .! or "*a dimly burning wick he will not*
quench." (A.O.T.)

THE POET'S PRICE

I CAUGHT a flash of truth one day—
How daring ignorance can be!—
And shut it up within my heart,
A flame that danced and sang for me.

It scorched hypocrisy and sham
And from earth bondage set me free;
Its beauty searched my trembling soul
And bared my inner self to me.

In spite the pain, I loved the flame
Which woke within my hungry heart
Ten thousand songs I cannot sing—
Too subtle for my broken art.

And, wretched I, devoid of shame,
Reach out my bony hand for toll
To let the gazing public see
The fleeting shadows of my soul.

And while they gaze, they call for songs
I pipe upon a broken reed,
For I must pipe to earn my bread—
Mine is a hungry heart to feed.

The alms I gather as I pass
The flame consumes both night and day,
My heart gets little for its song
But feeds upon the ashes gray.

O flash of truth, O cleansing flame!
Thy burning cannot do me ill,
Though captive to thy mystic power,
I hold thee as a captive still.

GOD SMILES

I SAW God smile today
In a dash of silver wings,
Flashing 'gainst an azure sky,
Tipping, swaying, sailing high
Over noisy city streets
Crowded with a thousand things.

So may it be some day
When the changing season brings
Trouble to my peaceful sky,
That a song replace the sigh
While His smile my spirit greets
In a dash of silver wings.

FOLLOWING THE STAR

The search of the Magi might have had its inception in scientific curiosity and speculation, but it was made in sincerity so God could lead them through the shadows of astrology to the glorious light of the true Star — even the Light of the world. The marvelous tact and grace of God are seen in the method of dealing with a hungry, seeking heart. No tirade is made against the faulty and feeble approach one may make in his search for truth. Rather, God comes more than half way and meets us where we live. He does not sanction the imperfect means, nor does He condemn—He uses such as stepping-stones to the more perfect revelation of truth. Creeping precedes our tottering steps, and they in turn precede the more certain tread and swiftly running footsteps. God sees what the natural fails to discern and very often in our hearts we are unable to correctly interpret the innate promptings and longings which in expression find but crude and imperfect manifestations. The patient God who reads and “understandeth my thoughts afar off” finally leads to light and truth of which we were not fully aware when first we turned to seek. May He make us tolerant in our dealings and gracious in our attitude toward all who in truth are seeking Him!

J.W.F.

FOLLOWING THE STAR

I DO not know how long the Wise Men sought
The guidance of the star of Bethlehem
Before they worshiped at the Christ Child's feet.
It was an unknown path confronting them.
Half buried lay their hearts in Wise Men's lore
And superstition common to their day.
But underneath and piercing through there came
A call for Him—the Light, the Truth, the Way.
The dangers which they passed I cannot trace;
They had no sacred scroll to give them light.
But, trusting in the guidance of a star,
God saw their faith and brought them through the
night.

So let us trust that God may guide our hearts
Through all the tangled maze of man-made creeds,
O'er rocky roads where dogma would withstand,
Through deserts of tradition with their needs,
Until a fuller revelation dawns.
Our hearts have caught the gleam of Christ our star,
And as we follow on in all its light,
The Lord will bring us even from afar.
Thus with angelic hosts and men below,
Our seeking hearts may be a place made meet
To worship and adore the Holy Child,
And lay our humble gifts at His dear feet.

MY STAR

'TIS gone! I saw it drop from out my sky
Behind that rugged mountain high—
A star that bloomed for me from out the deep
And gave fair light to guide my feet.
Its beams so clear, transcending every light,
Wrought wonders in my dreary night.
It called in language never heard before.
And shall I never hear it more?
My dreams, long gone to dust, all lived again
Now freshly washed in April rain.
And where the winter snow had drifted deep
Fair flowers wakened from their sleep.
'Twas night. But all the shadows dim and gray
Were harmless ghosts of yesterday.
Ten thousand other stars in brightness shone,
But in my heart one shone alone.
It traced an arc across my little sky.
I saw it bloom—I saw it die.
It is not dead! for still in memory
Where I may walk in liberty,
At night I often gaze up in the dark
And bid my weary spirit hark
That I might hear that voice again.
And feel once more the April rain,
And find the little flower-ghosts that grow
Where long has lain the winter snow.
'Tis night again. My thoughts with shadows fill.
Ten thousand stars are shining still.
But one has traced an arc across my sky—
Ten thousand other stars may die.

CONFESSION

ALL silently he paces back and forth
Within the narrow confines of his cell—
A hungry panther hidden in my heart.
I do not hear his steps, but, then, full well
I know he's there, for many, many times
I feel his cushioned feet upon the floor
As wearily he makes his endless round
And sometimes puts his paws against the door.
At night when shadows lurk within his cage,
Two strange lights gleam and glow like balls of fire—
His eyes in fruitless searching penetrate
The darkness with their hunger and desire.
Well-trained, he does not vent his passions fierce
When thoughts of broken dreams would haunt him
sore,
His rage is spent; a captive he is held:
To gain his freedom now he tries no more.
This panther is a phantom in my heart,
And knows no life apart from that I give.
'Tis only as I loose the chains of thought
That he has any power thus to live.

THE MIRACLE OF SPRING

“To him who in the love of Nature holds
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks
A various language.”

—*William Cullen Bryant*

To such an one who knows the delicate sound of her going and divines her moods, certainly there is no need of an almanac to let him know spring has come. The intimations are in the air—there are no exact or fixed impressions confirmed by the senses really definite enough to be reported, yet there is that inner consciousness of her presence. A flurry of snow or sharp wind cannot change it. A subtle vibration, thrilling and penetrating, reaches the heart, which in turn tells us spring has come. “To every man is given a measure of faith.” It is through the exercise of this element in our makeup that we dare to launch out upon the unseen and “with the heart believe” what is impossible to have reported to us through our sense perception. Faith has to do with the heart (fully as important a factor as the head). Often this is the only means of apprehending truths so delicate and spiritual as to wholly escape the analysis of reason, and if ever known at all, must be learned through the heart. Faith refuses to be governed by the things seen, but by the Word of God, and may be likened to a sixth sense, which moves beyond the realm of the seen and penetrates into the realm of the spirit. In the many phases of spiritual development and culture, “it is with the heart man believeth” before there are outward and visible signs to confirm his faith. The divine certitude of faith defies analysis and rests in the heart. It is not the heart’s business either to explain *how*, or substantiate by visible proof.

J.W.F.

THE MIRACLE OF SPRING

BEFORE the face of nature by a sign
Proclaimed its freedom from old winter's power,
A prophecy unable to define
Possessed my heart and wrought there hour by hour
Convictions all analysis defy,
That spite the winter's work so cold and numb
In wreck and ruin nothing could deny,
My heart knew all the time that spring had come.

Then later on the proof was plainly seen,
As o'er the face of nature there was spun
A filmy mistlike veil of tender green.
The distant mountains seemed a curtain hung
In folds of lilac 'gainst a pearly screen
Wherein were wrought in stencil naked trees
In tracings strange and wondrous to be seen.
The gentle breath of spring was in the breeze.

The hillside donned a patchwork garment quaint,
Enlivened by its fields of winter wheat.
Hereto it wore the garment of a saint
Snow-white and pure, a type of sainthood meet.
The sun's most gentle rays wrought changes there.
The snow became a brook set free to run
And make sweet music in the chilly air.
'Twas joy to know its ministry begun.

As strange as was the sense that spring had come
Before the many proofs were manifest,
Was faith which from my inner being sprung
(In spite the old creation's signs and test),
Responsive to the Holy Spirit's touch,
And held in every certitude divine,
When every feeling contradicted such,
The fact that I was Christ's and He was mine.

The miracle of spring was wrought in me.
For in my heart so destitute of light,
A new creation came which set me free
From laws of sin and death and nature's night.
A hope unknown before now dawned so bright
In answer to the wooing of the sun.
A miracle was wrought in open sight,
My heart could naught but sing—for spring had
come!

TO A BIRD'S NEST ON MY WALL

A POEM that I cannot write,
A frail, exquisite thing,
I found one day in snow-blown field,
And heard a spring bird sing.

It was a simple, little nest
Upon a bramble spray,
A home some happy bird had built
In joyous, sunny May.

Who taught him how to build his nest?
Who gave to him his song?
Who kept these arts preserved for us
The many ages long?

This was his home, here sat his mate,
The nest was blest with young,
This bramble was a holy place,
And love the song he sung.

O could I tell in simple words
What mysteries you wake,
That flood my heart with ecstasy
And leave a strange, dull ache.

Upon the wall of memory
I hung the bramble spray
With nest of subtle artistry,
A gem I prize today.

O could I make my life a gem
Upon a bramble spray
That I might leave to sing for me
When I have gone away.

The winter snow has drifted deep.
My heart, where is the spring?
I see a nest upon my wall,
And hear a spring bird sing.

OLD APPLE TREES

I LOVE old apple trees in bloom,
Old trees aslant and bent,
Replete with strength from every storm
The many years have sent.

It matters not how very gnarled
Each branch and limb may be,
It is the place that spring loves best
It always seems to me.

She hangs her softest colors there,
Pale green and pink and white,
A mist of floating loveliness
Baptized in golden light.

Their beauty is so delicate,
And yet so wondrous strong
It binds and holds my trembling heart
As with a magic thong.

And oh, that sweetest, liquid note
That only robins bring
When to the apple trees they come
To mate and build and sing!

Dear apple trees, abloom with life,
You make my heart to break.
For you have caused another spring
Within my heart to wake.

I love old apple trees in bloom
When songsters all have fled,
Abloom in white on winter nights
When spring lies cold and dead.

The ghostly moon makes shadows then
Across the crusted snow,
And nestling in the branches bare
The restless wind sighs low.

I love old apple trees in bloom
With every blossom gone.
Then, when my heart is nearest them,
They sing their sweetest song.

Old apple trees abloom, you know,
Not only bloom, but sing.
The flowers and birds may come and go,
Theirs is eternal spring!

MY DANDELION

There is an old Chinese proverb which runs something like this: "Anybody can criticize, but it takes a noble soul to appreciate."

Often our first judgment is an adverse criticism of a person, situation, or condition concerning which we are really blind. Charity is needed if we are to help those about us. Remember, there is always a background and a past, however striking the foreground and the present may be. Who knows how many have suffered a severe jostling of life's seasons when they have bravely faced the storm which blew some months clean off life's calendar pad? Some seem to have absolutely lost their spring season and yet are able to adjust themselves wonderfully to life and people with no self-pity and but little sympathy from understanding hearts. They may never have been privileged what nature might count the proper arrangement of seasons, and yet a hidden grace and strength have been theirs to look the world in the face, and even sing. We need song and music to help us along the dusty road. Often I think the music of such hearts has a depth and meaning (shall I say tone-quality?) lacking in those who have passed smoothly and blithely through each season, correctly and in perfect order. Sacrifice mellows the tone and gives it a rich, deep, understanding quality.

—J.W.F.

MY DANDELION

LAZY little dandelion,
Lone blooming in November,
With mayflowers gone and birds all flown,
You've nothing to remember.

You missed the pageantry of spring,
And mystery of waking
To life and light when hope and joy
Were busy in its making.

You never heard the robins sing
Before an April shower;
You never knew the faith one finds
In nest in leafy bower.

Ecstatic joys belong to spring
Ethereal and fleeting—
But never lost to memory,
If granted her a meeting.

In autumn's golden pageantry
Your mellow voice is waking
Sweet songs and flowers when the earth
Her winter bed is making.

How brave to sing without a spring—
And have no note of sorrow,
Contented thus to sing today
And stand a ghost tomorrow!

Royal little dandelion,
Lone blooming in November,
Spring may come and spring may go—
To sing I must remember.

THE REDWOOD PROPHETS

Many times we are willing to take a rebuke from Nature which we would resent did it come from almost any other source. We know very well that the inanimate manifestation about us is not prejudiced or biased in any personal way. Nature is faithful even to the fearful exactness of her laws—cruel at times and again marvelously tender. How hard it would be to reconcile her extreme, radically opposed manifestations, did we not remember Romans 8:22: "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." This bondage is seen everywhere. Nature is impersonal, and when we are honest enough to receive them, her warnings and rebukes are ever to our profit. Her methods are unique—always screening herself behind the strength and beauty of her message. She is greater than any one or the sum total of the accidents and expressions of her manifold moods. The universe of visible things has no faculty of speech—no articulate language, and yet she has power to declare the glory of God and admonish by rebuke the careless heart of a human being. It is the silent witness appealing to the heart of man in a way not less, but, when understood, even more forcible than any audible voice which drives conviction home to our hearts.

—J.W.F.

THE REDWOOD PROPHETS

MAJESTIC silence crowns them as they stand,
The waiting, ancient prophets of the earth.
One has no thought of classing them with trees
That deck the land and serve men by their death.
Base sacrilege to mention ax or saw;
Let not their presence e'er insulted be
By cruel weapons man would stoop to use.
Disciples, we should bow in deep respect.
With heads uncovered we can well afford
To pause a while and listen to their voice.
How gracious that they do not speak in words!
Our hearts would miss their message if they did.
As silently I dare to open wide
My heart and gaze upon their mighty forms,
Their noble mien invites my confidence,
And I am conscious they are helping me.
It is not that they speak about themselves,
Although I notice scars and twisted limbs
And hear them chanting music sweet and strange.
There is no harking back to days now past—
The golden day of song or battle hymn.
The whole is but an accident of life
And they are lifted far above it all.
In passing they have weathered many storms
And songs are tangled in each swaying branch.
But these are never mentioned in their song,
For they themselves are greater than them all.
Their strength and beauty rising thus from life
Convict me of the sordid ways of self.
Their strength crowds out my weakness and I hate
The selfishness which cramps me in its hold.
Their beauty, born of pain so bravely met,
Confounds self-pity which would wreck my soul.
I hate my littleness and long to be
All that I may in brave response to life.

And, strange to say, that while they speak to me
My heart is still and unafraid.

Their greatness makes them gentle in their art.
Rebuking me, they make me love them more.

They are my friends because they tell the truth,
And make me want to side against myself.

The food of fools 'tis said is flattery.
Who knows no weakness need never hope to grow.

Subdued I listen to these prophets old,
Rebuked and helped without a word from man.

Now let me gather as I journey on,
The bitter and the sweet and live apart.

I also long to know the gentle art
Of helping others by a silent strength

I gather from the joy and pain of life.
Their might and beauty do not cow me down;

They gently shame and challenge me to prayer.
Our hearts are one in mystic fellowship,

God makes us brothers in the cosmic whole.

MEMORY
A TWO-EDGED SWORD

TURNING, turning, ever turning in my trembling
heart,
Flashing in the noonday splendor, gleaming in the
dark—

Memory, a sword is buried where no man may walk,
Phantoms of sweet dreams still linger and grim specters
stalk.

Two keen edges ever whetted by my thoughts that cling
Press the honey from the flowers mid the thorns that
sting.

One blade opens up sweet vistas through a woodland
fair

Where the music love is making fills the fragrant air.
But the other blade is whetted and must cut its way
To a prison-house of captives of another day—
Disappointments, blindly waiting, starving for a crumb,
Dare not moan, but sing in silence — pain has made
them dumb.

Turning, turning, ever turning in my trembling heart
Memory may bless or grieve me with her subtle art.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

We are by nature needy people. We are so created that we are to find the true satisfaction of our spiritual being in Him who has declared Himself the Life. We must have bread—that is our economic need; we must have friendship—that is our social need; we must have faith in the spiritual meaning of life—that is our religious need. In spiritual communion the three find a beautiful and vital reality. We feast upon the true Bread from heaven and live; our personalities find highest vocation in expression of fellowship with the infinite; and the spiritual side of life finds its sequel and correct interpretation in Him. The communion must not be limited to the mere act of partaking of the physical elements. This is needed, but is only an outward sign of a spiritual and inner grace. The actual communion may follow days or weeks later when the broken bread of life's experience and the cup of sorrow are offered in deeper fellowship. Then it is that we are to hear Him say, "In remembrance of Me." Why? Is it not that as we thus partake of the broken bread and drink of His cup that grace, His grace, the more abundant grace, may be manifest and that we may enter more fully into the deeper meaning of His ministry? Thus He speaks for the heart's encouragement and uplift.

J.W.F.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

I HUNGRED long; my heart cried out for food.
Unsatisfied, I turned from stores of earth,
For they had naught to give to feed my soul.
The earth with barns well filled lay sore in dearth.
The pangs of hunger bid me cry to God.
He heard and fed me in His way benign
With portions from His hands—most costly food—
None other than immortal bread and wine.

The food was not preserved in well-shaped loaves.
The bread must needs be broken if it feeds
And truly ministers the life divine.
So, broken, I must follow where He leads
In paths from which by nature I would shrink.
And know His grace sufficient is for me.
Now as I eat the broken bread, He says,
“Take, this do ye in remembrance of Me.”

He also gives me drink whene'er I thirst.
A full-wrung cup He holds with tender hand.
My trembling lips now press it and I drink—
The bitterness I do not understand.
The mystery of pain is mine to share
With Him who giveth grace so full and free.
A secret joy is mine to hear Him say,
“This drink ye all in memory of Me.”

TO MY HILLS

IN SPRING

I LOVE thee, distant hills, guard of the west,
It matters not in what choice garment dressed.
When springtime wraps thee in her veil of green,
Lest working miracles she might be seen,
I find thee in thy resurrection hour,
And faith springs up to see such wondrous power.
The gentle winds have come again to blow
The flowers into bloom where late the snow
Had wrapped them snugly in for winter's rest.
And now a song comes pouring from thy breast—
Sweet music from the dancing brook, set free
From icy fetters, rushing on to sea.
The leaves and buds come back to thee again,
The birds have sung them here through sun and rain.
So full of promise thou dost lie
Kissed by the sun and blest with warming sky.

IN SUMMER

WHEN clothed in quiet garb of summer sheen
My heart delights to view the restful scene,
While o'er thy wooded sides I fondly gaze
And note the open fields where cattle graze.
I like to trace the fence-rows of the farms
Which lie so restful in thy sweeping arms,
The woodlots and the fields of corn and wheat
And waving grain and dells of flowers sweet.
With all thy trees 'tis hard for thee to hide
The rocky scar where men have pierced thy side.
The lichen covered crags so green and gray,
Grim tokens of earth's early, bygone day,
Thy summit crown, and there in trysting meet,
While all in amethystine shadows sleep,
The first kiss, rosy with the morning sun,
And rays of fading light when day is done.

IN AUTUMN

WHEN autumn flings her mantle o'er thy side
And tries with purple mist and haze to hide
The marks of death which daily work in thee,
I love to look again that I might see
How bravely and how gladly thou dost yield
While being stripped in meadow, wood, and field.
Responsive to the call to sacrifice
Thou givest all that in thy power lies.
Thy broad sides make an altar where are brought
Thy fruits and grain and all our hearts e'er sought.
A fire is kindled, and afar the blaze
Is seen to sweep thy fields and woods for days.
In mystic fire thou dost all fear disdain
So glorious in death — till naught remain
To trace where summer days with sun and song
And gentle winds had blest thee all day long.

IN WINTER

FULL well I love thee in the winter days,
At noonday rising pale through sunny haze
A symphony in pearl—a jewel rare.
Bewitching are the charms I find when bare
And rugged stretch thy woods and meadows bleak—
To find them one would scarcely need to seek.
Marine and turquois are the changing blues
Which paint thy sides with such entrancing hues
At twilight hour when daylight softly dies
And palest amber curtains drape the skies.
A mystery when on a winter's night
December's moon o'erflows with ghostly light.
A distant dream thou seemest then to be
Of faintest blue within a dark blue sea.
When winter winds have stripped thy every part,
I love thee, for I know thee as thou art.

THE STROKE OF GOD

*"Then welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three-part pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never
Grudge the throe!"*

—Robert Browning.

We are by nature creatures of sense. The natural man thus limits his findings of truth to such matters as can be appreciated only through sense perception. He must see, feel, hear, etc., before he will believe, thus closing the door to the realm of the spirit, where faith moves, discovering truths of higher, spiritual value. The faculties which operate in the realm of the natural are God-given and are intended to function for the comfort of man in the realm of his nature and the physical world. But these absolutely fail when he tries to use them to discern God or His spiritual relations and manifestations. God has provided faith for this purpose, that through its exercise we may enter into a new realm where there are spiritual verities and spiritual laws operative. The life of the Christian is supernatural—that is, above the natural. It is neither entered nor lived by natural means. The process of weaning man from the limitations of the human and introducing him to the life of the spirit and faith is extremely trying to the flesh. There must be this necessary process of adjustment if we truly live the spiritual life and fully enter into the possibilities of development that God has provided for us. Let us welcome each stroke which sets us free, and like bold adventurers in faith let us discover and possess the rich prospects in God.

—J.W.F.

THE STROKE OF GOD

STRUCK dumb by God! how cruel seem the words!
And yet thrice blest the heart where falls the blow.
A life transformed is his who suffers thus,
For it is given only such to know
The rapture of the mighty wings of faith
Which elevate the soul to realms above,
Where pain is sweet and wounds give only joy.
His soul is charmed—a captive held by love.

No more to trace the path by signs he sees,
Be they beneath the noonday sun most clear—
Or dim because at dusk the shadows fall.
For blinded thus by God he knows no fear.
His eyes are closed, and yet his vision fills
With things celestial in transcendent light.
The glory of the unseen world is his
Whom God makes blind to earth's fair day or night.

His ears are deaf, no longer does he hear
Earth voices calling him from every side.
It matters not how sweet and clear they be—
Or rough with threats—he does not turn aside.
To every sound made deaf—that he might hear
The music of the infinite and know
The harmonies of God, for such are his
Whom God makes deaf to voices here below.

Struck dumb! no longer is there gift of song,
A silence fills his soul serene and deep.
The music of *his* lips is wasted breath.
In place of song 'tis given him to weep.
His trembling lips are mute—and yet they speak.
Healed now to sing because they kissed God's rod.
The song must live since it is born from death.
Thrice blest indeed the man struck dumb by God.

MY DOG IS DEAD

TRAGEDY IN THE LIFE OF A LITTLE BOY

MY dog is dead, the best dog in the world.
And I shall never say again, "Come, Ned,"
And see him jump and wag his tail and grin
And blink his eyes—he knew just what I said.
I found him in the grass behind the barn
And thought he was asleep, he was so still.
And when he didn't answer to my call
I ran and called for Jim up on the hill.
Jim works for us and always liked Ned too.
He laid him in a box and dug a grave;
And put his arm around me when I cried,
And said, "Why, Ned's all right—you just be brave."
I tried to be real brave and not to cry;
I guess Jim knew just how I felt inside.
He didn't say so much but held me tight
And stroked my head until my tears were dried.
But when the sun went down and it was dusk
I thought of Ned and went back by his grave.
And then a lump got swelling in my throat
And I felt awful, trying to be brave.
If being brave is holding back my tears
And having feelings that I have to hide,
Then I don't always want to be so brave—
And so I crawled up by his grave and cried.
I didn't feel the lump so after that;
It melted into tears and ran away.
And then I thought of when I first found Ned,
I'm sure I never shall forget that day.
I looked at him, and then he looked at me
And wagged his tail and then began to smile—
We just belonged together, that was all,
Since then we've been together all the while.

And then I got to wond'ring where he'd gone
And how he liked it up there all alone,
For he has gone to heaven I am sure—
I wonder if he tried to come back home.
And then I said a little prayer for him
And told the Lord just what was on my mind—
That if He had a little boy up there
Who wanted Ned and would be very kind,
Why, he could borrow him just for a while
With him to play there on the golden street.
For he would surely want a dog like Ned
If paradise for him were real complete.
I wonder if we have to play on harps,
For I could never learn to play I know,
And flying round a throne forevermore
And wearing crowns of gold would tire me so.
I wonder if the Lord would really mind
If I had Ned and not the other things?
I'm sure that we would both be very glad
And God could keep the harp, and crown, and wings.
I told Him I would only lend my dog—
I really think that way is only fair;
The other little boy could borrow him,
But give him back to me when I get there.

THE CONTENTED TREE

How versatile Nature is in her ministry!—having a message for every needy occasion—encouragement and refreshment when our spirits lag, and when we are overbold in self-strength, a warning or rebuke. The question of contentment—what it is and how it may be found, has long been material for philosophers to ponder. There is a divine discontent which is to be encouraged. This is a stimulus to urge us from the good to the better and the best in life. But the discontent and stubbornness in circumstances which are but parts of the whole plan and development, are a sign of shortsightedness and lead to defeat. We go far afield when we seek contentment “in the abundance of things possessed” or in ever-changing stimulus to new sensations. Contentment is a nearer neighbor than that. We are not honest or humble enough to make friends and yield to the conditions necessary for the cultivation of nature’s friendship. There is a false contentment which is a sort of martyrdom to conditions. That is not what we desire, for one may submit to almost any condition and yet absolutely fail to find the subtle joy of acquiescence and contentment. How refreshing to meet a person who has no quarrel with God, man, or devil! One who has no pout in his spirit, but having grasped the whole situation (life in purpose and objective) is able to sing while his contented heart passes through all phases of spiritual culture and growth.

J.W.F.

THE CONTENTED TREE

I 'M glad to know that I may be
Contented as a goodly tree.
A tree that stands so straight and strong—
A lovely poem or a song.
A poem framed without a word,
A song our ears have never heard.
Contentment is a grace it knows—
'Tis pleased to be where'er it grows.
'Tis happy in the rain of spring
To shelter birds and hear them sing,
Or in the sultry summer air
To fold its hands in quiet prayer.
When autumn strips each branch and limb
It chants a sacrificial hymn.
Fierce winter winds can harm no part—
Contentment rules within its heart.
The snows that weigh it down in May—
Sweet blossoms held but for a day—
Are no more coveted and sought
Than snows the cruel winter brought.
It reaches out its arms the same
To wind or sunshine, dew or rain.
It takes and folds within its heart
The simple portion they impart.
'Tis satisfied to stand and grow
In loveliness I long to know.
So I am praying I may be
Contented as a yielded tree.

AT SEA

We are not courageous by nature, but, rather, cowards. We are too great self-lovers to side against the clamor and self-pity of the old creation. Self-pity will ruin one quicker than many so-called outbreaking sins. It takes courage to face life and its failures, the old creation with its propensities, the peculiar temperament and its frailties, and not indulge in some subtle form of excuse. Many times we are conscious of the failure and become discouraged. Why? Because we try to remodel and build up what God does not want restored. Or we sit down under self-condemnation which is not of the Spirit. God neither condemns us nor blames us for what we are by nature. We need not excuse it or explain it. We confess it; name it by its name; side against it; let it alone and sing. Faith can sing, sight cannot carry a tune. We must not tarry in the positive relations of life with its golden morning-light and youth, nor again, in the negative aspect, with its thunder and storm. We sail on, ever on. The sea is wide. God waits to hear the song of faith, triumphant over things seen—the song born from the wreckage of the old. It is not the vessel but the song which counts.

J.W.F.

AT SEA

I DID not ask to sail this sea so broad and deep,
Whose restless waves forever rise and fall
And know no peace, but murmur even in their sleep
The answer to some dim and far-off call.

At times it bares its bosom to the morning light
And ravishes itself in wealth of gold,
And seems to seek the embrace of the morning's might
And yearns to keep such strength within its hold.

Again when o'er its deep a storm sweeps fierce and wild,
Is all the booming and the high-tossed wave
Resistance to the storm? Or is it, like a child,
So helpless that it has no strength to save?

I cannot trace its moods, its temper, or its life.
Enough to know it stretches far and wide—
To me an unsolved mystery of peace and strife,
And I must sail an unknown path whate'er betide.

The tiny boat in which I sail is very frail,
No other sailor knows this shallow bark,
I must not look upon its worn and tattered sail,
But bravely man it while I sing through all the dark.

This little craft is but a wreck—I found it so.
I've seen its caving hold, and know its bending bow.
I've walked its creaking deck and viewed its beams
below,
But I must sing while waves dash high against its
prow.

Ships come and go. Some laden with most costly gifts,
While others seem like dream-ships frail and fair,
With perfect mast and full-blown sails where sunlight
sifts,
And passing, one hears music in the air.

I try to clear my deck of phantoms who would seek
To pace these well-worn planks and question me.
What broke this vessel so and made it leak?
And whither go these ships, and whence this strange,
deep sea?

So frail my ship, it cannot bear their weight along,
Self-pity soon would join and sink us low.
So I must clear my deck and lift my song,
I must not ask why ships may come or go.

L'ENVOI

If sweeter music may be made through tattered sail,
And ships be helped, though stronger they may be,
Lift high your song, O heart of mine, you must not fail,
Though wrecked, you have a voyage to make upon
this sea.

THE TWILIGHT HOUR

HOW filled with worship is the morning hour
Which brings a holy hush o'er all the earth,
When early dawn comes trailing o'er the hills
And fainting night gives to the day its birth!
When still the morning stars together sing
Nor fail as lamps of heaven to give their light.
The heart is awed in silence, and in faith
Awaits earth's freedom from the shades of night.

The morning comes and hastens on to noon,
The day is crowded full of work and song.
Desires, morning held in buds of hope,
Bloomed brightly 'neath the sun the road along.
The air is full of singing and there's joy
In service, for the heart scarce feels the weight
Of burdens bravely borne—since there is strength.
So bright the day—the hour seems never late.

But ere we know the shades of night come on
And drop their silent curtains over all.
The world which hitherto I knew so well
Has vanished quite and gone beyond my call.
The velvet sky is hung with quivering stars.
The beauty of the night defies all art—
A mystic silence lives and breathes in all
And finds response within the seeking heart.

The early dawn which gave us vision clear
And taught our hearts to worship in its hush
Brought needed portion to our hungry hearts
And girded us to meet the throng and rush.
The happy hours of the day have also served—
Like gold their wealth of privilege has been.
And now the friendly shadows of the night
Would rest us as they gently fold us in.

But it is not the morning, noon, or night
Which prompts my heart to sing to you this way.
It is the hour of dusky loveliness
Which steals upon us at the end of day.
So changing is the light, so faint and dim,
The heart is hushed and charmed in mystic power,
Rare beauty lurks in shadows everywhere.
It is of this I sing—the twilight hour.

A beauty haunts the handiwork of God—
The rocks and trees so motionless and still,
The long, gray reaches of the restless sea,
The cool, dark wandering winds from off the hill,
The pungent smell of earth where men have plowed,
The paling light of sunset fading gray,
The forest reaching out its countless arms—
There's beauty here not found in light of day.

A beauty born of mystery pervades.
Distinctness is not known. I do not trace
In angles and in lines such loveliness—
To see would rob it of its hidden grace.
The dipping bat, a shadow now on wings,
Which only for a moment may be seen,
Suggests some moment which my heart has known
Now likewise lost with darkness in between.

The purple hills fast fading into night
Like giants stretch their lengths across the West,
While houselights gleaming faintly from their sides
Make friendly signs which tell of home and rest.
Like slowly moving shadows in the gloom
Half seen, the weary men are homeward bound.
The patient cattle plod along the lane.
It is the homing hour when rest is found.

Unseen, the little birds in branches dark
Have found a resting place so cool and still.
While from the dusky thicket in the glen
There comes the lonesome call of whip-poor-will.
The heart is strangely moved by loneliness
And sickens at the thought of finite things.
It hungers for the infinite and life
Which immortality alone now brings.

The little world in which I spent the day
Will-o'-the-wisp is proving now to be.
What seemed so firm and strong 'neath noonday sun
E'en while I look now melts and fades away.
I do not find my heart grieved by the loss;
To have it back my heart no cry would give.
A secret joy is found in losing all,
For this is not the world in which I live.

I try to look beyond the purple gloom.
The dark'ning sky and wood no answer give.
How little is the life my body knows,
How infinite the One in whom I live!
The hills are dark and in the silent sky
The evening star gives out its gleaming light.
Then for a moment darkness fills the air,
And twilight hour is lost in still, blue night.

RESTLESS HEART

The first vocation of personality is expression. We are forever getting out from the tangled confines of our nature. No one is happy even in the natural until he finds adequate and proper channels through which he may express himself. The subtle joy of moving out and putting into manifestation the emotions of our hearts and thoughts of our minds is the release each one seeks, and not too many find. All of us suffer more or less because we cannot express our feelings. Some have capacity for various emotional experiences and suffer for the lack of power to voice them. The reaction in some temperaments amounts to habitual restlessness and heartache. There are too many round pegs in square holes. The pain and tragedy of misfits in life have become chronic in the race. But the desire to get out and away must not be indulged to the neglect of finding the satisfaction and acquaintance of our own hearts. We must first learn to live with ourselves. So few know the art of sharing life and its problems with their own hearts. Youth is deluded in thinking the Elysian fields are yonder—ever yonder. No, they are in your own heart. But they must be discovered and traveled. Rest is not in things or people, but in the heart at home in God.

J.W.F.

RESTLESS HEART

O HEART of mine, thou restless one,
Past finding out are all thy ways.
At times thou cheerest me with songs
From fields I trod in other days.

What distant region dost thou know
From whence so often thou hast come
All trembling with the mystery
Of songs whose beauty strike the dumb.
And whither dost thou go in quest
Of minor notes that fill with pain—
Dim haunting tones I almost fear,
I dread and long to hear again?

What tidings wilt thou have for me
Of joys that flee and hopes that yearn?
Such painful lessons are thy lot;
So costly is thy toll to learn.
No warning dost thou seem to heed.
A lone and restless spirit thou,
In fruitless quest in realms afar
With no regard for wish or vow.

O foolish heart, some day, some day,
The freedom thou dost now enjoy
Will prove but prison bars of iron.
Thy zeal doth but thy peace destroy.
How long, how long, ere thou wilt find
The distant islands are not real,
But phantoms calling thee afar
Their only thought thy peace to steal?

I wait alone on yesterhill,
I know that thou wilt come again
To find me waiting patiently,
My windblown spirit drenched with rain.
O do not keep me waiting long,
Come, climb the hill and rest with me.
Together let us share our lot,
And find at home our liberty.

MY MOTHER'S FACE

MY mother's life is like the year
Whose seasons I can trace
In lines and lights and shadows dim
Reflected in her face.
The spring still lingers on her cheeks
Like boughs of apple blooms
Which dress the windows of her life
And freshen up its rooms.
These tokens fair were given her
When springtime left her land,
That when she saw spring bloom elsewhere,
Her heart might understand.
Her eyes are like the summer time;
In them how much I see!
It seems a thousand summers shine
Whene'er she looks at me.
Those days of toil were long and hot
And filled with joy and pain.
Now summer's faith shines in her eyes
In spite the darkest rain.
The autumn sits upon her lips—
The vintage of her years.
The wine press that she trod is gone,
And hidden are the tears.
Now words of wisdom does she speak,
Good council, safe and meet,
The harvest of life's testings sore
In fruitage ripe and sweet.
The winter crowns her lovely brow;
A snowdrift soft and white
Rests gently there and seems to make
A halo shining bright.
The seasons four—I see them all—
Nor would I one erase.
They make the mystery and charm
I find in mother's face.

AN AUTUMN MEDITATION

THE autumn days return again
And with them Nature's changing moods.
How lovely does she seem today
As o'er the dreamy fields she broods,
Contented thus to acquiesce
In mystic solitude and rest!
For Summer's passion now is spent—
Her strength is weakness at its best.

There is a tenderness that yearns
And seeks expression everywhere—
Within the woods or open field,
In misty skies or fragrant air.
The heart is strangely moved by pain
Not born of sorrow or of fears,
But, rather, from a hidden spring
Close neighbor to the place of tears.

The sumac lifts her flaming torch
To light the Autumn's altar fire,
Consuming with its eager flame
Fair Summer's wealth and heart's desire.
How freely Nature yields her store
Of gold upon each bending rod,
And offers to the passing breeze
A leafy mantle for the sod.

All through the sunny summer hours
The patient milkweed deftly spun
And stored away her costly silk.
And now in answer to the sun
She clears her looms and sends abroad
All that she has—to gladly give
In sacrifice her summer's work,
In faith that it but dies to live.

The cornfield, which in other days
So proudly stood with sabers drawn
To clash them wildly in the wind
That swept them in the early dawn,
Has gathered all his soldiers brave
Into an Indian village quaint
Of wigwams, and grotesque tepees,
To rest—for they are tired and faint.

And, strange to say, they take delight
To let their fighting strength go out,
And all their natural beauty fade.
They yield in faith nor know a doubt,
So gladly do they gather there
In weakness—with their strength all shorn,
Their swords surrendered—now they yield
A prize much dearer—golden corn.

Down in the leafy woodland glen,
From giant oak and beeches high,
A wondrous tapestry is hung,
With which the Eastern looms might vie.
For it has colorings most rare,
Of richest tones and softest light.
For there are caught and woven in
The dawn of day and shades of night.

Dim shadows, and the rain clouds dark,
And gorgeous colorings of the west
Displayed in perfect harmony
When evening touches earth with rest,
The paling light of stars and moon,
And leaves all touched by autumn's frost,
Have all been fitly woven in—
We find again what we have lost.

And while the sacrifice consumed
Devouring all her gifts so fair,
My heart could hear an autumn hymn
Which rose and filled the tranquil air.
So many voices seemed to blend
In harmony—yet each apart,
For each a special message sang
Born from the secret of his heart.

I heard the rushing of the Wind
In mighty gusts go sweeping by.
An ever restless song was his
Which softly died into a sigh.
He made the music of a harp
As through the branches bleak and bare
With restless speed he moved, or stopped
To croon some quiet, soothing air.

And still another song was heard—
The joyous song of running Brook.
Out from his heart he sang his song—
He knew too well to need a book.
He told of days in early spring
When broad and deep the water flowed,
And silently he moved along
While secretly with joy he glowed.

But through the summer's scorching heat
He failed and weakened, till at length
He found himself a feeble stream,
Quite shorn of beauty and of strength.
The rocks and stones which formed his bed,
Like trials causing hearts to ache,
Made possible the song he sang
In joy with all—"I break, I break."

PRISONERS OF HOPE

WHILE dwelling in this prison-house of flesh,
And bound by limitations of its clay,
My longing spirit waits to take its flight
To realms beyond this little life and day.
My spirit used to beat against the bars
And long for freedom from this dreary cell,
Until one day a tender dove found room
Within my heart and settled there to dwell.
This Guest who shares this prison-house with me
Has come to tell me of a home above,
And daily makes me ready for that place,
And tells me secret things of One I love.
He is so very quiet in His ways,
By gentle wooing He has won my heart.
My lonely cell would be a cheerless place
Had He not liberty in every part.
And when the prison-door shall open swing,
He will not flee and leave me here to roam,
For I could never find my Father's house—
Together we shall make the flight back home.

TALKING TREES

DISCOVERY IN THE LIFE OF A LITTLE BOY

I 'M sure I know that trees can talk,
Although they never run or walk.
For there are some that I have seen
That turn and bend and even lean
Together like old women do
When one has found some gossip new.
Now, deaf and dumb folks talk, I know,
By making finger signs—just so.
And trees can talk that very way,
I stopped and watched them most all day.
Their slender hands they gently swayed
Then folded still—I think they prayed.
Their finger twigs then made such signs
'Twas hard to follow out their lines
They talked so fast. Their fingers flew
When happy, singing breezes blew.
At times I understood quite well,
But I shall never, never tell
Just what the trees told me that day,
With words like ours 'tis hard to say.
So trees can talk, if we could hear,
But we must listen right in here (*pointing
to his heart*).

THE RED MAN'S RETURN

PALE FACE is in need. Pale Face is troubled.

My ear is quick, long have I heard a cry
From hearts of men denied the right to live,
From children robbed of childhood's happy days,
And from the land itself slain and plundered.

The cry has reached the Happy Hunting ground—
So, Pale Face, I have come. I cannot rest.

Have you no shame? Has culture lost the word?
Not only would you drive me from my home,

Wipe from the face of earth those of my race,
Insult the land, but haunt me still in death.

I am the spirit of the Red Man's race.

I am spirit, do not try to see me—

Too long your eyes have looked upon things seen,
The glint of gold and flash of sword make blind.

I am spirit, do not try to hold me—

Your selfish grasp already holds my land,

Be satisfied to hold the things of earth.

I am spirit, pray do not deny me.

To say I do not live, deceives your heart,
Long has it fed upon deception's bread.

The Red Man did not bid you come to us.

But you had dreams and sought to make them true.

It mattered not that you should crush my race
To build one of your own of greater worth.

Your cities gleam in splendor on my blood,
Your buildings stand in arrogance and pride.

Why count how many stories high they rise
While in the street below a bread line waits

Unfed, in rags—a contradiction bold
To wisdom that can build a city strong

And cannot lift her fellow men from need?

Our fathers dwelt in wigwams and tepees,

They did not pride themselves on buildings tall,
But they had food to eat, and that for all.

Our fair prairie land has long been plowed,
Deep furrows have you torn upon my back,
And rich the yield of corn and golden wheat.
The Mother Earth has given of her wealth
That all her children might be clothed and fed.
And, thankless, you insult her and would tear
Her wounds afresh and burn her wheat and corn,
A wilful waste of food and wherewithal.
While ragged men by thousands starve for food.
What strange philosophy of life is this?
Our children played in happy childhood sports,
They fished the streams and knew the forest's lore.
While young we trained them to be stalwart braves,
And taught them truth and honesty of heart.
So busy you have been in making things—
Machines and implements of war to kill,
That you have made no men to carry on.
Men are of greater worth than many things.
By thousands do your children stand and wait
Before your schools all closed for lack of funds.
While millions are poured out in sacrifice
Before the god of war. A god we hate.
You call us savages uncivilized,
Because in self-defense we dared to fight
To save our land, our homes and very life.
Our children and our squaws are dear to us,
You forced us to a fight to save their lives.
The many years have passed, and in that time
Our land has given you its richest store
Of power, food, and blessings manifold.
It is not that you need more of its wealth;
Your eyes are blind; your foolish hearts are drunk;
Too deeply have you slaked your thirst for power.
The things that you could do and make and build
Have run ahead of what you should have been.

A schoolboy now you stand, all hedged about
With all the million things which you have made,
Your body overgrown and mind untrained.
You have not fed your heart on bread of truth.
Pale Face is troubled. Pale Face must be brave.
Brave, not to fight and kill his fellow men,
But brave to look within his needy heart.
He must be strong and learn to love the truth.
The best of plans and schemes but only fail
If honesty and truth are set aside.
Pale Face is blind. The splendor of his work
Has dimmed his eyes to beauty of the stars,
The changing lights upon the distant hills,
The mystery and glory of earth's face
Where Red Men's hearts could trace a thousand joys.
Pale Face is deaf. The noise of many wheels
Has dulled his ears to sounds the Red Man heard.
He could not hear the music of the streams,
He never knew the song of rain and wind,
He did not hear the cry of agony
The forests made when Pale Face struck them down,
He did not hear the prairie sigh and moan
When plowed and torn to yield her corn and wheat.
He did not hear the groans from ancient hills
When drilled and blasted to the heart for gold.
Pale Face must make him men who hear and see,
Who value truth and honesty above
All things his wisdom makes with skillful hands.
Pale Face must make him men to carry on.

THE AUTUMN OF MY HEART

As one moves into the summer of the Christian experience there opens before him many wonderful and charming vistas of possibilities in the new life. Truly, the heart sings and the sweet flowers are in great profusion. The heart rests and basks in the sunlight of God's tender love, and is contented to know only songbirds and flowers and the sound of many waters. He delights to feast and rejoice in the Well-beloved. Later, as God leads the heart on, a time of proving or testing comes. He begins to withdraw His conscious presence and, as it were, hides His face. However, He is very near, and as our faith is tested and tried we learn to abide in Him and in His faithfulness and not to depend upon any natural frame of feeling or emotion. The heart enters a process of weaning from all pleasing or delightful experiences, that it may mature in deeper and richer phases of fruitfulness. Many times the heart inexperienced or untaught is at a loss to know the meaning of the detachment from conscious and delightful relations to find in place a dead and forlorn yet not hopeless state. The heart at first desires to retrace the steps and again find the comfort of earlier and first-found joys. But God in tenderness and love must wean the soul from the experiences of summer and teach it to rejoice in the less spectacular manifestations of autumn. The sequel of May and the reward of summer toil are now manifest.

J.W.F.

THE AUTUMN OF MY HEART

I WALKED one day in summer through the fields
And found on every hand sweet flowers fair.
The sun-kissed buds had broken all their seals
And breathed upon the breeze rich perfume rare.

The little brook sang rippling on his way,
And mirrored oft' the blueness of the sky.
The feathered choirs were pouring forth a lay,
O'erhead were floating canopies hung high.

The mountains in the distance, bathed in light,
A campus made where shadows came to play.
The rocks, the hills, the meadows—all in sight
Bespoke a bright, a happy summer day.

I walked again in autumn through the field,
But, oh, the change that nature there had wrought!
No blossoms now—instead a glorious yield
Of fruitage rare where I had flowers sought.

And there I found in every fruit again
The tender kisses of the summer sun,
The gentle wind, and e'en the summer rain,
And in the air—songs summer birds had sung.

The autumn of my heart I know has come,
For where I found sweet flowers every day,
And where the little songbirds ever sung,
The fields are bare, and songsters flown away.

My heart was filled with sorrow and with pain
As eagerly I looked for summer sun,
To find that all my searching was in vain,
For now the autumn of my heart had come.

Afresh my heart goes out in earnest quest,
But now, instead of flowers, fruit I see.
And though the frosts are keen, I know 'tis best,
For truly ripe and sweet the fruit will be.

I will not grieve, since God my heart can see,
But humbly look with joy, nor know a fear,
So choice the fruit the spirit bears in me.
Thank God! The autumn of my heart is here.