

Keep Me True.

(A PRAYER FOR THE NEW YEAR.)

1. THE DEAR DEAD.

This is the Prayer I make: God keep me true
To the Dear Dead—Ah, heart, they are not few!
Who dwell with Thee above the Starry Blue.

Tho' long the Seasons since they passed away
At Thy blest Call, beyond the shadows grey,
When Thou saidst, "Come to me, My child, to-day."

My meagre hoard of gold I'll lightly lose,
Or what poor wealth the world may not refuse,
Their thought the fame, their love the wealth I choose.

Sweet beyond Song were they, methought, while here,
And Love fails not tho' year may add to year,
With Love and God there is no Far nor Near.

Oh, who would live if Love's sweet self could die!
And is Love less than Love beyond the Sky?
So think who will, Such thought abhor shall I.

Who walk the changeful earth may whiles forget,
So fickle we, e'en Love's most blessed debt,
But all who are with God are faithful yet.

In that Far Land, so near the feet of God,
We know them fairer even than when they trod,
Hand in our hand, with us the common sod.

For Death makes fair. How passing sweet they seemed
When in that last White Slumber sunk they dreamed!
God's Smile had risen upon their eyes, we deemed.

This is the Prayer I make: God keep me true
To the Dear Dead—Ah, heart, they are not few!
Who dwell with Thee above the Starry Blue.

2. THE DEAR DISTANT.

This is the Prayer I make: God keep me true
To the Dear Distant Ones I may not view,
Dear are they yet, tho' wide is Ocean's Blue.

So many years have fled since in their face
I saw Love glow, and won their warm embrace;
But still to-day I have them of Thy Grace.

Tho' thrice a thousand leagues between us lie,
Thought lightly leaps the Void. A common Sky
Of Sun and Stars enfolds and makes us nigh.

Hand in my hand by meadow and by sea
In Sabbaths of White Peace they walked with me
To House of God in joyous company:

Or watched with me beneath youth's happy skies
The fair Day fade, and the fair Night arise,
The Stars that shone more tender for their eyes;

Or stood with me where the Dear Dead were laid
Mid snowy bloom, in snowy vest arrayed,
In that deep hush the Hand of God had made.

Their Grief with mine, with mine their Joy was blent,
Their Face my Morn, their Smile my deep content,
Their Love my Life, their Tears my Sacrament.

When the red embers glow medreams I see
Again yon breezy slopes, yon daisied lea,
Yon good green wood ye wandered oft with me.

Already on our heads the years have spent
Their silver rime. How far the day is spent!
How soon the evening and the low green tent!

The low green tent! Nay, yonder azure dome,
Where myriad myriad worlds unjoining roam,
Is none too wide if God shall make it Home.

Long, long the roads, nor smooth, our feet have trod,
And wide divergent on the Planet broad,
Yet may they all lead Home, the Home of God!

This is the Prayer I make: God keep me true
To the Dear Distant ones I may not view,
Dear are they still, tho' wide the Ocean Blue.

3. NEAR AND DEAR.

This is the Prayer I make: God keep me true
To the Dear Ones who still with me pursue
Their why this side the Sky and Ocean Blue.

No Death has crowned them with a halo bright,
No purple distance covers up from sight
That they are less than perfect or than white.

In the plain noonday of the present hour,
Not glamorous dusks of yore, your graces flower,
In whose true Love is my sufficient Dower.

Who dwell beyond the stars, beyond the sea,
Tho' white their names as whitest saints to me,
Were not more fair, are not more dear than ye.

These haply had their faults, and haply those,
Perchance have ye, for cut of Eden flows
Even in friendship's field no thornless rose.

Their love and trust in faithful memory stored
Rich fragrance yield, but at life's common board
Yours is the daily bread His hands afford.

There are the evening shadows, when apart
Withdrawn from roaring street and vexing mart
I hear their voices echo in my heart.

Yours are the hours of all the dark and light,
The rosy morn, the sober noon of white,
The crimson eve, the sable vested night.

There is the pensive twilight of the year,
Yule's embers fading into ashes. There
The Dear Dead live, and sit the Absent near.

Yours all the rolling seasons,—Spring's green flush,
The various bloom of Summer, Autumn's blush
On wood and orchard, Winter's snowy hush.

They are the starlight, far and faint and fair,
The moonbeam soft on Vesper's dusky hair,
Ye the hearthglow beside my easy chair.

Tho' laborous hands should win the world my fee,
Lost! your Love how deep my Penalty!
How mean Toil's wage! How large His bounty free

This is the Prayer I make: God keep me true
To the Dear Ones who still with me pursue
Their way this side the Sky and Ocean Blue.

POSTLOG.

God keep me true to Dead and Far and Near,
Until shall break for all Thy Glad New Year,
And we be gathered in Thy Hall of Cheer.

For what were life but vain and empty breath,
Without love's shining presence? What is death?
The going to Our Father's Home, He saith.

God keep me true to Love and true to Thee
Until beyond the sunset I shall see
Thy blessed Face, a face of love to me.

Thou Who art Highest Love, for Love's sweet sake
To all I love who sleep, to all who wake,
God keep me true. This is the Prayer I make.

C. K. HARRINGTON.

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Christ's Reception.

BY JUDSON KEMPTON.

He came unto his own, and his own received him not; but as many as received him to them gave he the power to become the Sons of God.

Let me repeat that text again. . . . I do not often speak from such an one. There are not many such. There are not many sentences in literature in which there roll such swellings of emotion, as in this text which tells us of the Christ's coming, of the Christ's rejection, and the Christ's reception. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." Those words, as I meditated on them, played upon my soul, as the sad solemn notes of a mighty organ might play on the spirit of one who sat alone in the nave of a great cathedral, until he should bow his head and press his hands upon his willing eyes; "He came unto his own and his own received him not"—and then as the organ music might grow grander until it was sublime, and it would lift up the head of the solitary listener—so that the light from the Cathedral window would stream upon his countenance, so I lifted up my spirit as this mighty text went marching through my mind, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the Sons of God."—POWER to become the SONS OF GOD. His coming, think of Christ's coming.

Did you ever read the story which is older than the gospels of how the Greek hero Ulysses returned to his home in Ithica, from the nine years war in Troy? He came in disguise, as a beggar, clothed in coarse and ragged garments. But his dog, Argus, knew his master, as soon as he put his nose against his hand, and died with excessive joy. His aged nurse recognized him, and called him her boy and her King. When he revealed himself to his son, Telemachus, they wept tears of joy together, and Penelope, his faithful Queen, who believing that he would return, had used many devices to keep off all other suitors, when she was convinced that the beggars clothes concealed her Lord, first fainted away,

"And then recovering to his arms she flew

And strained him close as to his breast she grew"

and the Gods held back the steeds of day that their joy might be prolonged.

Ulysses came unto his own, and his own received him. Christ, too, came unto his own. "His own received him not." The most pathetic and sorrowful note in all the Bible, in all the earth, the minor key of all nature seems to wail it, "His own received him not." If there is any sadness in heaven, it might be expressed in these words, "His own received him not."

Oh! if his own had only received him! Paul would not then have groined in spirit for the salvation of Israel. The heaven would come down to earth, if his own would but receive him. The mists would roll in splendor from the beauty of the hills. The wind of God's spirit would scatter the clouds of sin, and sorrow and sickness. The dark and bloody pages of history would be a fair record, there would have been no dark ages. Cruelty, oppression, man's inhumanity to man, would have ceased. Satan would have fallen a second time from a second heaven, and the stampings of his cloven hoof, would have been no more seen in the gardens of the Lord.

But how, if all men had received Christ? Could the necessary sacrifice have been made for sin? Satan would gladly have yielded the earth and his power upon it, if by that bait he could have prevented the death of Christ, which makes propitiation for our sin, and not for ours only, but for the whole world. That thought, we know, came into the mind of the crafty archonemy, and he tried to carry it into execution. Then he took Jesus up into an exced-

ing high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and said, "All these will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." I will let your own receive you. He pointed to a path of roses, with no thorns, or crown of thorns—to a hill on the horizon that was topped by no cross, to a victory without a battle. But Christ saw that such a victory would be more humiliating than utter defeat. It were better for him to do God's will if not a single soul were saved than to receive the homage and adulation of the whole human race, to be received by them at the instigation, or by the permission of the devil. So he answered sharply, "Thou shalt worship the Lord, thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

But if the race had received Christ, of their own accord, exercising their own God-given free wills, in spite of the temptations of Satan, and their own carnal minds, if all nations had come to the brightness of his rising—if all men had been gathered, of their own accord, by him, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, if they had all exclaimed, as the aged prophetess, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation," or even the less degree of devotion, which Thomas had when he cried, My Lord, and My God!—would not Christ's very chief object have been frustrated? If Judas had received him, who would have betrayed him? If Pilate had had the courage of his convictions, who would have condemned him? If before, instead of after the crucifixion the Roman soldiers and Centurions had cried out, "Truly, this was the Son of God," who would have pierced him? If the thousands of the Jerusalem mob with the chief priests and Pharisees had gladly received him, who, with wicked hands would have crucified and slain him? And how, without being slain could he be the Lamb of God, the sacrifice which taketh away the sin of the world?

Ah, the God who found a way, who discovered to Abraham the ram caught in the thicket, would have been able to have carried out his decree concerning the Lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world.

Let us never say it is necessary for any man to sin in order to carry out God's good purposes. I believe in God's decrees, but I believe that God's omniscience is not dependent on human sin to have those decrees carried into effect. It was necessary that Christ should die, but it was not necessary that his own should receive him not. If they had only received him! "Of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are, 'It might have been.'"

I see him standing with outstretched arms, and up turned face, on the mount that overlooked the city of Jerusalem, and as, through his tears, he sees in the spirit of prophecy, the awful scenes of the destruction,—scenes which the pen of Josephus would describe, and which succeeding ages would pronounce the most terrible that were ever recorded on the pages of history, bloody as those pages are. I hear him cry, not in anger, but in deepest sorrow, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not,—ye would not."

Flow gently, sweet Cedron, by thy silver stream
My Saviour at midnight, when moonlight's pale beam,
Shone bright o'er thy waters, did frequently stray
And lose in thy murmurs the toils of the day.

O, do you not think, children of God, that on some of those nights when, "cold mountains and the midnight air, that witnessed the fervor of his prayer? when his disciples slept, and there was no eye to see him, except the eye of his God, he stood on the mountain top, beneath the stars of heaven, with outstretched arms and upturned face, with eyes filled with tears, and soul baptized in anguish, moaning—as he looked with prophetic spirit, to the "great and terrible day of the Lord," when he, himself, should be compelled to divide those who would not hear his voice, from those that received him as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats, and say to them, "Depart, ye cursed," and send them away into everlasting punishment—"Ye would not come unto me that ye might have life. Ye would not—ye would not!" He came unto his own, and his own received him not! But as many as received him, to them gave he power to be called the sons of God.

There were some that received him. There are some that believe on his name, who were born, not of the blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man,—but of God.

Do not ask me how to look into the deep mysteries of regeneration, do not ask me whether there be many that be saved or few. All your questions shall be answered one day, when your enraptured eye shall gaze on ten thousand times ten thousand and thousand thousands, who have washed their robes and made them white in his blood, and the great multitude of his saints, which no man can number. Sufficient now for us to know that there are some who receive him; some who believe on his name; some who are born of God, and to be sure that we, and all we can influence belong to that number.

How came these to receive him? Because they could not do without him. He was to their souls what the sunshine is to the flower, what the rain is to the herbage. He was the light of the world.

He came to their thirsty souls as the rain on the mown grass, and as the showers that water the earth. Lord Alfred Tennyson was a man who talked little about his reli-