

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Schiller Byron Molière
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Kipling Doyle
Baum Henry Flaubert Nietzsche Willis
Leslie Dumas Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Whitman Twain
Darwin Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato
Potter Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Harte
Kant London Descartes Cervantes Voltaire Cooke
Poe Aristotle Wells Bunner Shakespeare Chambers Irving
Hale James Hastings Richter Chekhov da Shaw Wodehouse
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MacDonald in two volumes**

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George MacDonald

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THE POETICAL WORKS

OF

GEORGE MACDONALD

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

1893

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WITHIN AND WITHOUT:

A Dramatic Poem.

What life it is, and how that all these lives do gather —
With outward maker's force, or like an inward father.

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY'S *Arcadia*.

Written December and January, 1850-51.

TO L.P.M.D.

Receive thine own; for I and it are thine.
Thou know'st its story; how for forty days —
Weary with sickness and with social haze,
(After thy hands and lips with love divine
Had somewhat soothed me, made the glory shine,
Though with a watery lustre,) more delays
Of blessedness forbid — I took my ways
Into a solitude, Invention's mine;
There thought and wrote, afar, and yet with thee.
Those days gone past, I came, and brought a book;
My child, developed since in limb and look.
It came in shining vapours from the sea,
And in thy stead sung low sweet songs to me,
When the red life-blood labour would not brook.

May, 1855.

WITHIN AND WITHOUT

PART I.

Go thou into thy closet; shut thy door;
And pray to Him in secret: He will hear.
But think not thou, by one wild bound, to clear
The numberless ascensions, more and more,
Of starry stairs that must be climbed, before
Thou comest to the Father's likeness near,
And bendest down to kiss the feet so dear
That, step by step, their mounting flights passed o'er.
Be thou content if on thy weary need
There falls a sense of showers and of the spring;
A hope that makes it possible to fling
Sickness aside, and go and do the deed;
For highest aspiration will not lead
Unto the calm beyond all questioning.

SCENE I.—*A cell in a convent.* JULIAN *alone.*

Julian.

Evening again slow creeping like a death!
And the red sunbeams fading from the wall,
On which they flung a sky, with streaks and bars
Of the poor window-pane that let them in,
For clouds and shadings of the mimic heaven!
Soul of my cell, they part, no more to come.
But what is light to me, while I am dark!
And yet they strangely draw me, those faint hues,
Reflected flushes from the Evening's face,
Which as a bride, with glowing arms outstretched,
Takes to her blushing heaven him who has left
His chamber in the dim deserted east.
Through walls and hills I see it! The rosy sea!
The radiant head half-sunk! A pool of light,
As the blue globe had by a blow been broken,
And the insphered glory bubbled forth!

Or the sun were a splendid water-bird,
That flying furrowed with its golden feet
A flashing wake over the waves, and home!
Lo there! — Alas, the dull blank wall! — High up,
The window-pane a dead gray eye! and night
Come on me like a thief! — Ah, well! the sun
Has always made me sad! I'll go and pray:
The terror of the night begins with prayer.

(Vesper bell.)

Call them that need thee; I need not thy summons;
My knees would not so pain me when I kneel,
If only at thy voice my prayer awoke.
I will not to the chapel. When I find Him,
Then will I praise him from the heights of peace;
But now my soul is as a speck of life
Cast on the deserts of eternity;
A hungering and a thirsting, nothing more.
I am as a child new-born, its mother dead,
Its father far away beyond the seas.
Blindly I stretch my arms and seek for him:
He goeth by me, and I see him not.
I cry to him: as if I sprinkled ashes,
My prayers fall back in dust upon my soul.

(Choir and organ-music.)

I bless you, sweet sounds, for your visiting.
What friends I have! Prismatic harmonies
Have just departed in the sun's bright coach,
And fair, convolved sounds troop in to me,
Stealing my soul with faint deliciousness.
Would they took shapes! What levees I should hold!
How should my cell be filled with wavering forms!
Louder they grow, each swelling higher, higher;
Trembling and hesitating to float off,
As bright air-bubbles linger, that a boy
Blows, with their interchanging, wood-dove-hues,
Just throbbing to their flight, like them to die.

—Gone now! Gone to the Hades of dead loves!
Is it for this that I have left the world? —
Left what, poor fool? Is this, then, all that comes
Of that night when the closing door fell dumb
On music and on voices, and I went
Forth from the ordered tumult of the dance,
Under the clear cope of the moonless night,
Wandering away without the city-walls,
Between the silent meadows and the stars,
Till something woke in me, and moved my spirit,
And of themselves my thoughts turned toward God;
When straight within my soul I felt as if
An eye was opened; but I knew not whether
'Twas I that saw, or God that looked on me?
It closed again, and darkness fell; but not
To hide the memory; that, in many failings
Of spirit and of purpose, still returned;
And I came here at last to search for God.
Would I could find him! Oh, what quiet content
Would then absorb my heart, yet leave it free!

A knock at the door. Enter Brother ROBERT with a light.

Robert.

Head in your hands as usual! You will fret
Your life out, sitting moping in the dark.
Come, it is supper-time.

Julian.

I will not sup to-night.

Robert.

Not sup? You'll never live to be a saint.

Julian.

A saint! The devil has me by the heel.

Robert.

So has he all saints; as a boy his kite,
Which ever struggles higher for his hold.
It is a silly devil to gripe so hard;—
He should let go his hold, and then he has you.
If you'll not come, I'll leave the light with you.
Hark to the chorus! Brother Stephen sings.

*Chorus. Always merry, and never drunk.
That's the life of the jolly monk.*

SONG.

They say the first monks were lonely men,
Praying each in his lonely den,
Rising up to kneel again,
Each a skinny male Magdalene,
Peeping scared from out his hole
Like a burrowing rabbit or a mole;
But years ring changes as they roll—

Cho. Now always merry, &c.

When the moon gets up with her big round face,
Like Mistress Poll's in the market-place,
Down to the village below we pace;—
We know a supper that wants a grace:
Past the curtsyng women we go,
Past the smithy, all a glow,
To the snug little houses at top of the row—

Cho. For always merry, &c.

And there we find, among the ale,
The fragments of a floating tale:
To piece them together we never fail;
And we fit them rightly, I'll go bail.
And so we have them all in hand,

The lads and lasses throughout the land,
And we are the masters, — you understand?

Cho. *So always merry, &c.*

Last night we had such a game of play
With the nephews and nieces over the way,
All for the gold that belonged to the clay
That lies in lead till the judgment-day!
The old man's soul they'd leave in the lurch,
But we saved her share for old Mamma Church.
How they eyed the bag as they stood in the porch!

Cho. *Oh! always merry, and never drunk.*
That's the life of the jolly monk!

Robert.

The song is hardly to your taste, I see!
Where shall I set the light?

Julian.

I do not need it.

Robert.

Come, come! The dark is a hot-bed for fancies.
I wish you were at table, were it only
To stop the talking of the men about you.
You in the dark are talked of in the light.

Julian.

Well, brother, let them talk; it hurts not me.

Robert.

No; but it hurts your friend to hear them say,
You would be thought a saint without the trouble;
You do no penance that they can discover.

You keep shut up, say some, eating your heart,
Possessed with a bad conscience, the worst demon.
You are a prince, say others, hiding here,
Till circumstance that bound you, set you free.
To-night, there are some whispers of a lady
That would refuse your love.

Julian.

Ay! What of her?

Robert.

I heard no more than so; and that you came
To seek the next best service you could find:
Turned from the lady's door, and knocked at God's.

Julian.

One part at least is true: I knock at God's;
He has not yet been pleased to let me in.
As for the lady – that is – so far true,
But matters little. Had I less to think,
This talking might annoy me; as it is,
Why, let the wind set there, if it pleases it;
I keep in-doors.

Robert.

Gloomy as usual, brother!
Brooding on fancy's eggs. God did not send
The light that all day long gladdened the earth,
Flashed from the snowy peak, and on the spire
Transformed the weathercock into a star,
That you should gloom within stone walls all day.
At dawn to-morrow, take your staff, and come:
We will salute the breezes, as they rise
And leave their lofty beds, laden with odours
Of melting snow, and fresh damp earth, and moss –
Imprisoned spirits, which life-waking Spring
Lets forth in vapour through the genial air.

Come, we will see the sunrise; watch the light
Leap from his chariot on the loftiest peak,
And thence descend triumphant, step by step,
The stairway of the hills. Free air and action
Will soon dispel these vapours of the brain.

Julian.

My friend, if one should tell a homeless boy,
"There is your father's house: go in and rest;"
Through every open room the child would pass,
Timidly looking for the friendly eye;
Fearing to touch, scarce daring even to wonder
At what he saw, until he found his sire;
But gathered to his bosom, straight he is
The heir of all; he knows it 'mid his tears.
And so with me: not having seen Him yet,
The light rests on me with a heaviness;
All beauty wears to me a doubtful look;
A voice is in the wind I do not know;
A meaning on the face of the high hills
Whose utterance I cannot comprehend.
A something is behind them: that is God.
These are his words, I doubt not, language strange;
These are the expressions of his shining thoughts;
And he is present, but I find him not.
I have not yet been held close to his heart.
Once in his inner room, and by his eyes
Acknowledged, I shall find my home in these,
'Mid sights familiar as a mother's smiles,
And sounds that never lose love's mystery.
Then they will comfort me. Lead me to Him.

Robert

(*pointing to the Crucifix in a recess*). See, there
is God revealed in human form!

Julian (kneeling and crossing).

Alas, my friend! — revealed — but as in nature:
I see the man; I cannot find the God.
I know his voice is in the wind, his presence
Is in the Christ. The wind blows where it listeth;
And there stands Manhood: and the God is there,
Not here, not here!

(Pointing to his bosom.)

[Seeing Robert's bewildered look, and changing his tone —]

You do not understand me.
Without my need, you cannot know my want.
You will all night be puzzling to determine
With which of the old heretics to class me.
But you are honest; will not rouse the cry
Against me. I am honest. For the proof,
Such as will satisfy a monk, look here!
Is this a smooth belt, brother? And look here!
Did one week's scourging seam my side like that?
I am ashamed to speak thus, and to show
Things rightly hidden; but in my heart I love you,
And cannot bear but you should think me true.
Let it excuse my foolishness. They talk
Of penance! Let them talk when they have tried,
And found it has not even unbarred heaven's gate,
Let out one stray beam of its living light,
Or humbled that proud *I* that knows not God!
You are my friend: — if you should find this cell
Empty some morning, do not be afraid
That any ill has happened.

Robert.]

Well, perhaps
'Twere better you should go. I cannot help you,
But I can keep your secret. God be with you. [*Goes.*]

Julian.

Amen. — A good man; but he has not waked,
And seen the Sphinx's stony eyes fixed on him.
God veils it. He believes in Christ, he thinks;
And so he does, as possible for him.
How he will wonder when he looks for heaven!
He thinks me an enthusiast, because
I seek to know God, and to hear his voice
Talk to my heart in silence; as of old
The Hebrew king, when, still, upon his bed,
He lay communing with his heart; and God
With strength in his soul did strengthen him, until
In his light he saw light. God speaks to men.
My soul leans toward him; stretches forth its arms,
And waits expectant. Speak to me, my God;
And let me know the living Father cares
For me, even me; for this one of his children. —
Hast thou no word for me? I am thy thought.
God, let thy mighty heart beat into mine,
And let mine answer as a pulse to thine.
See, I am low; yea, very low; but thou
Art high, and thou canst lift me up to thee.
I am a child, a fool before thee, God;
But thou hast made my weakness as my strength.
I am an emptiness for thee to fill;
My soul, a cavern for thy sea. I lie
Diffused, abandoning myself to thee....
—I will look up, if life should fail in looking.
Ah me! A stream cut from my parent-spring!
Ah me! A life lost from its father-life!