

Classic Poetry Series

Dinah Maria Mulock Craik

- poems -

Publication Date:

2004

Publisher:

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

A Lancashire Doxology

"PRAISE God from whom all blessings flow."
Praise Him who sendeth joy and woe.
The Lord who takes, -- the Lord who gives, --
O praise Him, all that dies, and lives.
He opens and He shuts his hand,
But why, we cannot understand:
Pours and dries up his mercies' flood,
And yet is still All-perfect Good.
We fathom not the mighty plan,
The mystery of God and man;
We women, when afflictions come,
We only suffer and are dumb.
And when, the tempest passing by,
He gleams out, sun-like, through our sky,
We look up, and through black clouds riven,
We recognize the smile of Heaven.
Ours is not wisdom of the wise,
We have no deep philosophies:
Childlike we take both kiss and rod,
For he who loveth knoweth God.

Dinah Maria Mulock Craik

Mortality

"And we shall be changed." "And we shall be changed."

Ye dainty mosses, lichens grey,
 Pressed each to each in tender fold,
And peacefully thus, day by day,
 Returning to their mould;
Brown leaves, that with aerial grace
 Slip from your branch like birds a-wing,
Each leaving in the appointed place
 Its bud of future spring; --
If we, God's conscious creatures, knew
 But half your faith in our decay,
We should not tremble as we do
 When summoned clay to clay.
But with an equal patience sweet
 We should put off this mortal gear,
In whatsoe'er new form is meet
 Content to reappear.
Knowing each germ of life He gives
 Must have in Him its source and rise,
Being that of His being lives
 May change, but never dies.
Ye dead leaves, dropping soft and slow,
 Ye mosses green and lichens fair,
Go to your graves, as I will go,
 For God is also there.

Dinah Maria Mulock Craik

Only a Woman

"She loves with love that cannot tire:
And if, ah, woe! she loves alone,
Through passionate duty love flames higher,
As grass grows taller round a stone."
Coventry Patmore.

SO, the truth's out. I 'll grasp it like a snake, --
It will not slay me. My heart shall not break
Awhile, if only for the children's sake.
For his too, somewhat. Let him stand unblamed;
None say, he gave me less than honor claimed,
Except -- one trifle scarcely worth being named --
The heart. That 's gone. The corrupt dead might be
As easily raised up, breathing -- fair to see,
As he could bring his whole heart back to me.
I never sought him in coquettish sport,
Or courted him as silly maidens court,
And wonder when the longed-for prize falls short.
I only loved him -- any woman would:
But shut my love up till he came and sued,
Then poured it o'er his dry life like a flood.
I was so happy I could make him blest!
So happy that I was his first and best,
As he mine -- when he took me to his breast.

Ah me! If only then he had been true!
If for one little year, a month or two,
He had given me love for love, as was my due!
Or had he told me, ere the deed was done,
He only raised me to his heart's dear throne --
Poor substitute -- because his queen was gone!
O, had he whispered, when his sweetest kiss
Was warm upon my mouth in fancied bliss,
He had kissed another woman even as this, --
It were less bitter! Sometimes I could weep
To be thus cheated, like a child asleep: --
Were not my anguish far too dry and deep.
So I built my house upon another's ground;
Mocked with a heart just caught at the rebound --
A cankered thing that looked so firm and sound.
And when that heart grew colder -- colder still,
I, ignorant, tried all duties to fulfil,
Blaming my foolish pain, exacting will,
All -- anything but him. It was to be:
The full draught others drink up carelessly
Was made this bitter Tantalus-cup for me.
I say again -- he gives me all I claimed,
I and my children never shall be shamed:
He is a just man -- he will live unblamed.
Only -- O God, O God, to cry for bread,
And get a stone! Daily to lay my head
Upon a bosom where the old love's dead!
Dead? -- Fool! It never lived. It only stirred

Galvanic, like an hour-cold corpse. None heard:
So let me bury it without a word.
He 'll keep that other woman from my sight.
I know not if her face be foul or bright;
I only know that it was his delight --
As his was mine: I only know he stands
Pale, at the touch of their long-severed hands,
Then to a flickering smile his lips commands,
Lest I should grieve, or jealous anger show.
He need not. When the ship 's gone down, I trow,
We little reck whatever wind may blow.
And so my silent moan begins and ends.
No world's laugh or world's taunt, not pity of friends
Or sneer of foes with this my torment blends.
None knows -- none heeds. I have a little pride;
Enough to stand up, wife-like, by his side,
With the same smile as when I was a bride.
And I shall take his children to my arms;
They will not miss these fading, worthless charms;
Their kiss -- ah! unlike his -- all pain disarms.
And haply, as the solemn years go by,
He will think sometimes with regretful sigh,
The other woman was less true than I.

Dinah Maria Mulock Craik

Resigning

"Poor heart, what bitter words we speak
When God speaks of resigning!"

Children, that lay their pretty garlands by
So piteously, yet with a humble mind;
Sailors, who, when their ship rocks in the wind,
Cast out her freight with half-averted eye,
Riches for life exchanging solemnly,
Lest they should never gain the wished-for shore;--
Thus we, O Father, standing Thee before,
Do lay down at Thy feet without a sigh
Each after each our precious things and rare,
Our dear heart-jewels and our garlands fair.
Perhaps Thou knewest that the flowers would die,
And the long-voyaged boards be found but dust:
So took'st them, while unchanged. To Thee we trust
For incorruptible treasure: Thou art just.

Dinah Maria Mulock Craik

The House of Clay

THERE was a house, a house of clay,
Wherein the inmate sat all day,
Merry and poor;
For Hope sat with her, heart to heart,
Fond and kind, fond and kind,
Vowing he never would depart, --
Till all at once he changed his mind:
"Sweetheart, good by!" He slipped away
And shut the door.
But Love came past, and, looking in,
With smile that pierced like sunbeam thin
Through wall, roof, floor,
Stood in the midst of that poor room,
Grand and fair, grand and fair,
Making a glory out of gloom: --
Till at the window mocked cruel Care:
Love sighed; "All lose, and nothing win?" --
He shut the door.
Then o'er the close-barred house of clay
Kind clematis and woodbine gay
Crept more and more;
And bees hummed merrily outside,
Loud and strong, loud and strong,
The inner silentness to hide,
The patient silence all day long;
Till evening touched with finger gray
The bolted door.
Most like, the next step passing by
Will be the Angel's, whose calm eye
Marks rich, marks poor:
Who, fearing not, at any gate
Stands and calls, stands and calls;
At which the inmate opens straight, --
Whom, ere the crumbling clay-house falls,
He takes in kind arms silently,
And shuts the door.

Dinah Maria Mulock Craik

The Human Temple

The Temple in Darkness

Darkness broods upon the temple,
Glooms along the lonely aisles,
Fills up all the orient window,
Whence, like little children's wiles,
Shadows—purple, azure, golden—
Broke upon the floor in smiles.

From the great heart of the organ
Bursts no voice of chant or psalm;
All the air, by music-pulses
Stirred no more, is deathly calm;
And no precious incense rising,
Falls, like good men's prayer, in balm.

Not a sound of living footstep
Echoes on the marble floor;
Not a sigh of stranger passing
Pierces through the closed door;
Quenched the light upon the altar:
Where the priest stood, none stands more.

Lord, why hast Thou left Thy temple
Scorned of man, disowned by Thee!
Rather let Thy right hand crush it,
None its desolation see!
List—'He who the temple builded
Doth His will there. Let it be!'

A Light in the Temple

Lo, a light within the temple!
Whence it cometh no man knows;
Barred the doors: the night-black windows
Stand apart in solemn rows,
All without seems gloom eternal,
Yet the glimmer comes and goes—

As if silent-footed angels
Through the dim aisles wandered fair,
Only traced amid the darkness,
By the glory in their hair,
Till at the forsaken altar
They all met, and praised God there.

Now the light grows—fuller, clearer;
Hark, the organ 'gins to sound.
Faint, like broken spirit crying
Unto Heaven from the ground;
While the chorus of the angels
Mingles everywhere around.

See, the altar shines all radiant,
Though no mortal priest there stands,
And no earthly congregation
Worships with uplifted hands:
Yet they gather, slow and saintly,
In innumerable bands.

And the chant celestial rises
Where the human prayers have ceased:
No tear-sacrifice is offered,
For all anguish is appeased,
Through its night of desolation,
To His temple comes the Priest.

Dinah Maria Mulock Craik