Classic Poetry Series

James Montgomery

- 52 poems -

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James Montgomery (4 November 1771 – 30 April 1854)

James Montgomery was a British editor, hymnwriter and poet. He was particularly associated with humanitarian causes such as the campaigns to abolish slavery and to end the exploitation of child chimney sweeps.

Early Life and Poetry

Montgomery was born at Irvine in Ayrshire, the son of a pastor and missionary of the Moravian Brethren. He was sent to be trained for the ministry at the Moravian School at Fulneck, near Leeds, while his parents left for the West Indies, where both died within a year of each other. At Fulneck, secular studies were banned, but James nevertheless found means of borrowing and reading a good deal of poetry and made ambitious plans to write epics of his own. Failing school, he was apprenticed to a baker in Mirfield, then to a store-keeper at Wath-upon-Dearne. After further adventures, including an unsuccessful attempt to launch himself into a literary career in London, he moved to Sheffield in 1792 as assistant to Joseph Gales, auctioneer, bookseller and printer of the Sheffield Register, who introduced Montgomery into the local Lodge of Oddfellows. In 1794, Gales left England to avoid political prosecution and Montgomery took the paper in hand, changing its name to the Sheffield Iris.

These were times of political repression and he was twice imprisoned on charges of sedition. The first time was in 1795 for printing a poem celebrating the fall of the Bastille; the second in 1796 was for criticising a magistrate for forcibly dispersing a political protest in Sheffield. Turning the experience to some profit, in 1797 he published a pamphlet of poems written during his captivity as Prison Amusements. For some time the 'Iris' was the only newspaper in Sheffield; but beyond the ability to produce fairly creditable articles from week to week, Montgomery was devoid of the journalistic faculties which would have enabled him to take advantage of his position. Other newspapers arose to fill the place which his might have occupied and in 1825 he sold it on to local bookseller John Blackwell.

Meanwhile Montgomery was continuing to write poetry and achieved some fame with The Wanderer of Switzerland (1806), a poem in six parts written in 7-syllable cross-rhymed quatrains. The poem addressed the French annexation of Switzerland and quickly went through two editions. When it was denounced the following year in the conservative Edinburgh Review as a poem that would be speedily forgotten, Lord Byron came to its defence in the satire English Bards and Scotch Reviewers. Nevertheless, within eighteen months a fourth impression of 1500 copies was issued from the very presses that had printed the critique

and several more were to follow. This success brought Montgomery a commission from the printer Bowyer to write a poem on the abolition of the slave trade, to be published along with other poems on the subject in a handsome illustrated volume. The subject appealed at once to the poet's philanthropic enthusiasm and to his own touching associations with the West Indies. The four-part poem in heroic couplets appeared in 1809 as The West Indies.

Montgomery also used heroic couplets for The World before the Flood (1812), a piece of historical reconstruction in ten cantos. Following this he turned to attacking the lottery in Thoughts on Wheels (1817) and taking up the cause of the chimney sweeps' apprentices in The Climbing Boys' Soliloquies. His next major poem was Greenland (1819), a poem in five cantos of heroic couplets. This was prefaced by a description of the ancient Moravian church, its 18th century revival and mission to Greenland in 1733. The poem was noted for the beauty of its descriptions:

The moon is watching in the sky; the stars
Are swiftly wheeling on their golden cars;
Ocean, outstretcht with infinite expanse,
Serenely slumbers in a glorious trance;
The tide, o’er which no troubled spirits breathe,
Reflects a cloudless firmament beneath,
Where poised as in the centre of a sphere
A ship above and ship below appear;
A double image pictured on the deep,
The vessel o’er its shadow seems to sleep;
Yet, like the host of heaven, that never rest,
With evanescent motion to the west,
The pageant glides through loneliness and night,
And leaves behind a rippling wake of light.
(Canto 1, lines 1-14)

Later Career

After retiring from newspaper editorship, Montgomery's only other long poem is The Pelican Island (1828), nine cantos of descriptive blank verse of which he was scarcely a master. But Montgomery himself expected that his name would live, if at all, in his hymns. Some of these, such as "Hail to the Lord's Anointed", "Prayer is the Soul's Sincere Desire" and the carol "Angels from the Realms of Glory", are still sung. The earliest of his hymns dates from his days in Wath on Dearne and he added to their number over the years. The main boost came when the Revd James Cotterill arrived at the parish church (now the cathedral) in 1817. He had compiled and published A Selection of Psalms and Hymns Adapted to the Services of the Church of England in 1810 but to his disappointment and concern he found that his new parishioners did not take kindly to using it. He therefore enlisted the help of James Montgomery to help him revise the collection and improved it by adding some hymns of the poet's own composition. This new edition, meeting with the approval of the Archbishop of York (and eventually of the parishioners of St Paul’s), was finally published in 1820. In 1822 Montgomery published his own Songs of Zion: Being Imitations of Psalms, the first of several more collections of hymns. During his life he composed some 400, although less than a hundred are current today.

From 1835 until his death Montgomery lived at The Mount on Glossop Road in Sheffield. He was very well regarded in the city and played an active part in its philanthropic and religious life. Following his death in 1854, he was honoured by a public funeral. In 1861 a monument designed by John Bell (1811-1895) was erected over his grave in the Sheffield cemetery at the cost of £1000, raised by public subscription at the initiative of the Sheffield Sunday School Union, of which he was among the founding members. On its granite pedestal is inscribed 'Here lies interred, beloved by all who knew him, the Christian poet, patriot, and philanthropist. Wherever poetry is read, or Christian hymns sung, in the English language, 'he being dead, yet speaketh' by the genius, piety and taste embodied in his writings.' There are also extracts from his poems "Prayer" and "The Grave". After it fell into disrepair

the statue was moved to the precinct of Sheffield Cathedral in 1971, where there is also a memorial window.

Elsewhere in Sheffield there are various streets named after Montgomery and a Grade II listed drinking fountain on Broad Lane. The meeting hall of the Sunday Schools Union (now known as the Sheffield Christian Education Council), situated in Surrey Street, was named in his honour in 1886; it houses a small theatre which also bears his name. Elsewhere, Wath on Dearne, flattered by being called 'the queen of villages' in his work, has repaid the compliment by naming after him a community hall, a street and a square. His birthplace in Irving was renamed Montgomery House after he paid the town a return visit in 1841 but has since been demolished.

Works:

Verses to the Memory of the Late Richard Reynolds, of Bristol, London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1816
Poetical Works, four editions in 1828, 1836, 1841, and 1854
ed. The Chimney-Sweeper's Friend and Climbing-Boy's Album, London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1824. Garland facsimile, intro. by Donald H. Reiman, 1978
ed. The Christian Psalmist; or, Hymns, Selected and Original, Glasgow: Chalmers and Collins, 1825. 6th edn. 1829
ed. The Christian poet; or, selections in verse on sacred subjects, Wm Collins, Glasgow, 1825
Original Hymns For Public, Private, and Social Devotion, London: Longman, Brown, Green, 1853
Sacred Poems and Hymns: for Public and Private Devotion, New York: Appleton, 1854
Prose by a Poet, 2 vols, London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1824
Lectures on Poetry and General Literature, London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman, 1833
A Practical Detail of the Cotton Manufacture of the United States of America; and the State of the Cotton Manufacture of that Country Contrasted and Compared with that of Great Britain; with Comparative Estimates of the Cost of Manufacturing in both Countries, Glasgow: J. Niven, 1840

A Cry from South Africa

On building a chapel at Cape Town, for the Negro slaves of the colony, in 1828.

Afric, from her remotest strand,
Lifts to high heaven one fetter'd hand,
And to the utmost of her chain
Stretches the other o'er the main:
Then, kneeling 'midst ten thousand slaves,
Utters a cry across the waves,
Of power to reach to either pole,
And pierce, like conscience, through the soul,
Though dreary, faint, and low the sound,
Like life-blood gurgling from a wound,
As if her heart, before it broke,
Had found a human tongue, and spoke.

"Britain! not now I ask of thee
Freedom, the right of bond and free;
Let Mammon hold, while Mammon can,
The bones and blood of living man;
Let tyrants scorn, while tyrants dare,
The shrieks and writhings of despair;
An end will come -- it will not wait,
Bonds, yokes, and scourges have their date,
Slavery itself must pass away,
And be a tale of yesterday.

"But now I urge a dearer claim,
And urge it by a mightier name:
Hope of the world! on thee I call,
By the great Father of us all,
By the Redeemer of our race,
And by the Spirit of all grace;
Turn not, Britannia, from my plea;
-- So help Thee GOD as Thou help'st me!
Mine outcast children come to light
From darkness, and go down in night;
-- A night of more mysterious gloom
Than that which wrapt them in the womb:
Oh! that the womb had been the grave
Of every being born a slave!
Oh! that the grave itself might close
The slave's unutterable woes!
But what beyond that gulf may be,
What portion in eternity,
For those who live to curse their breath,
And die without a hope in death,
I know not, and I dare not think;
Yet, while I shudder o'er the brink
Of that unfathomable deep,
Where wrath lies chain'd and judgments sleep,

To thee, thou paradise of isles!
Where mercy in full glory smiles;
Eden of lands! o'er all the rest
By blessing others doubly blest,
-- To thee I lift my weeping eye;
Send me the Gospel, or I die;
The word of CHRIST's salvation give,
That I may hear his voice and live."

James Montgomery

A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief

A poor wayfaring Man of grief
Hath often crossed me on my way,
Who sued so humbly for relief
That I could never answer nay.
I had not power to ask his name,
Whereto he went, or whence he came;
Yet there was something in his eye
That won my love; I knew not why.

Once, when my scanty meal was spread,
He entered; not a word he spake,
Just perishing for want of bread.
I gave him all; he blessed it, brake,
And ate, but gave me part again.
Mine was an angel's portion then,
For while I fed with eager haste,
The crust was manna to my taste.

I spied him where a fountain burst
Clear from the rock; his strength was gone.
The heedless water mocked his thirst;
He heard it, saw it hurrying on.
I ran and raised the suff'rer up;
Thrice from the stream he drained my cup,
Dipped and returned it running o'er;
I drank and never thirsted more.

'Twas night; the floods were out; it blew
A winter hurricane aloof.
I heard his voice abroad and flew
To bid him welcome to my roof.
I warmed and clothed and cheered my guest
And laid him on my couch to rest;
Then made the earth my bed, and seemed
In Eden's garden while I dreamed.

Stripped, wounded, beaten nigh to death,
I found him by the highway side.
I roused his pulse, brought back his breath,
Revived his spirit, and supplied
Wine, oil, refreshment—he was healed.
I had myself a wound concealed,
But from that hour forgot the smart,
And peace bound up my broken heart.

In pris'n I saw him next, condemned
To meet a traitor's doom at morn.
The tide of lying tongues I stemmed,
And honored him 'mid shame and scorn.
My friendship's utmost zeal to try,
He asked if I for him would die.
The flesh was weak; my blood ran chill,

But my free spirit cried, “I will!”

Then in a moment to my view
The stranger started from disguise.
The tokens in His hands I knew;
The Savior stood before mine eyes.
He spake, and my poor name He named,
“Of Me thou hast not been ashamed.
These deeds shall thy memorial be;
Fear not, thou didst them unto Me.”

James Montgomery

A Sweet Landscape

Sweet was the scene! apart the cedars stood.
A sunny islet open'd in the wood;
With vernal tints the wild-brier as thicket glows,
For here the desert flourish'd as the rose;
From sapling trees with lucid foliage crown'd,
Gay lights and shadows twinkled on the ground:
Up the tall stems luxuriant creepers run
To hang their silver blossoms in the sun;
Deep velvet verdure clad the turf beneath,
Where trodden flowers their richest odours breathe;
O'er all, the bees with murmuring music flew
From bell to bell, to sip the treasured dew;
Whilst insect myriads in their solar gleams,
Glanced to and fro, like intermingling beams;
So fresh, so pure, the woods, the sky, the air,
It seem'd a place where angels might repair,
And tune their harps beneath those tranquil shades,
To morning songs or moonlight serenades!

James Montgomery

All ye nations, praise the Lord,

All ye nations, praise the Lord,
All ye lands your voices raise;
Heaven and earth with loud accord,
Praise the Lord, for ever praise.

For his truth and mercy stand,
Past, and present, and to be,
Like the years of his right hand,
Like his own eternity.

Praise Him, ye who know his love;
Praise Him from the depth beneath;
Praise Him in the heights above;
Praise your Maker, all that breathe.

James Montgomery

Almighty Spirit, Now Behold

Almighty Spirit, now behold
A world by sin destroyed:
Creating Spirit, as of old,
Move on the formless void,
Move on the formless void.

Give Thou the Word: that healing sound
Shall quell the deadly strife;
And earth again, like Eden crowned,
Bring forth the tree of life,
Bring forth the tree of life.

If sang the morning stars for joy,
When nature rose to view,
What strains will angel harps employ,
When Thou shalt all renew,
When Thou shalt all renew!

And if the sons of God rejoice
To hear a Savior's Name,
How will the ransomed raise their voice
To whom that Savior came,
To whom that Savior came!

Lo, every kindred, every tribe,
Assembling round the throne,
The new creation shall ascribe
To sovereign love alone,
To sovereign love alone!

James Montgomery

An Indian Mother About to Destroy Her Child

Awhile she lay all passive to the touch
Of those small fingers, and the soft, soft lips
Soliciting the sweet nutrition thence,
While yearning sympathy crept round her heart,
She felt her spirit yielding to the charm,
That wakes the parent in the fellest bosom,
And binds her to her little one for ever,
If once completed - but she broke - she broke it.

For she was brooding o'er her sex's wrongs,
And seem'd to lie among a nest of scorpions,
That stung remorse to frenzy: - forth she sprung,
And with collected might a moment stood,
Mercy and misery struggling in her thoughts,
Yet both impelling her to one dire purpose.
There was a little grave already made,
But two spans long, in the turf floor beside her,
By him who was the father of that child;
Thence he had sallied when the work was done,
To hunt, to fish, to ramble on the hills,
Till all was peace again within that dwelling,
His haunt, - his den, - his anything but home!
Peace? no - till the new-comer was despatch'd.
Whence it should ne'er return, to break the stupor
Of unawaken'd conscience in himself.

She pluck'd the baby from her flowing breast,
And o'er its mouth, yet moist with nature's beverage,
Bound a white lotus-leaf to still its cries;
Then laid it down in that untimely grave,
As tenderly as though 'twere rock'd to sleep
With songs of love, and afraid to wake it;
Soon as she felt it touch the ground she started,
Hurried the damp earth over it; then fell
Flat on the heaving heap, and crush'd it down
With the whole burden of her grief, exclaiming,
'Oh, that my mother had done so to me!'
Then in a swoon forgot, a little while,
Her child, her sex, her tyrant, and herself.

James Montgomery

Angels From the Realms of Glory

1. Angels from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight over all the earth;
Ye who sang creation's story
Now proclaim the Messiah's birth.

Chorus
Come and worship, come and worship
Worship Christ, the newborn King.

2. Shepherds, in the field abiding,
Watching over your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing;1
Yonder shines the infant light: Chorus

3. Sages, leave your contemplations,
Brighter visions beam afar;
Seek the great Desire of nations;
Ye have seen His natal star. Chorus

4. Saints, before the altar bending,
Watching long in hope and fear;
Suddenly the Lord, descending,
In His temple shall appear. Chorus

5. Sinners, wrung with true repentance,
Doomed for guilt to endless pains,
Justice now revokes the sentence,
Mercy calls you, break your chains. Chorus

6.2 Though an infant now we view Him,
He shall fill His Father's throne,
Gather all nations to Him;
Every knee shall then bow down: Chorus

These next verses are later additions, not written by Montgomery:

7.3 Lord of Heaven, we adore Thee,
God the Father, God the Son,
God the Spirit, One in glory,
On the same eternal throne. Chorus

8.4 All creation, join in praising
God, the Father, Spirit, Son,
Evermore your voices raising
To the eternal Three in One. Chorus

James Montgomery

Father of light, and life, and love!

Father of light, and life, and love!
Thyself to us reveal;
As saints below, and saints above,
Thy sacred presence feel.

Not with the eye of mortal sense
By angels round the throne,
Or happy souls departed hence,
Art Thou in glory known.

No sun by day, no moon by night
For this our spirits need;
Who walk by faith, and not by sight,
They feel Thee nigh indeed.

Light in thy light the blind may see,
No more by sin estranged;
Light in the Lord, so let us be
Into thine image changed.

Since Thou Thyself dost still display
Unto the pure in heart,
O make us children of the day
To know Thee as Thou art.

For Thou art light and life and love;
And thy redeemed below
May see Thee as thy saints above,
And know Thee as they know.

James Montgomery

For ever with the Lord!

'For ever with the Lord!'
Amen, so let it be;
Life from the dead is in that word,
'Tis immortality.

Here in the body pent,
Absent from Him I roam;
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent
A day's march nearer home.

My father's house on high,
Home of my soul, how near;
At times to faith's foreseeing eye,
Thy golden gates appear!

In darkness as in light
Hidden alike from view,
I sleep, I wake within his sight
Who looks existence through.

From the dim hour of birth,
Through every changing state
Of mortal pilgrimage on earth,
Till its appointed date;

All that I am, have been,
All that I yet may be,
He sees at once, as He hath seen,
And shall for ever see.

Be Thou at my right hand,
Then can I never fail;
Uphold Thou me, and I shall stand,
Fight, and I must prevail.

James Montgomery

Hail to the Lord's Anointed

Hail to the Lord's Anointed
Great David's greater Son:
Hail, in the time appointed,
His reign on earth begun!

He comes with succour speedy,
To those who suffer wrong;
To help the poor and needy,
And bid the weak be strong.

By such shall He be feared
While sun and moon endure,
Beloved, obeyed, revered,
For He shall judge the poor,

Through changing generations,
With justice, mercy, truth,
While stars maintain their stations
Or moons renew their youth.

He shall come down like showers
Upon the fruitful earth,
And love, hope, joy, like flowers,
Spring in his path to birth.

Before Him, on the mountains,
Shall peace, the herald, go;
And righteousness in fountains,
From hill to valley flow.

With offerings of devotion,
Ships from the Isles shall meet,
To pour the wealth of oceans
In tribute at his feet.

Kings shall fall down before Him,
And gold and incense bring;
All nations shall adore Him,
His praise all people sing;

For He shall have dominion
O'er river, sea, and shore,
Far as the eagle's pinion,
Or dove's light wing can soar.

For Him shall prayer unceasing,
And daily vows ascend;
His kingdom still increasing,
A kingdom without end;

The mountain dews shall nourish
A seed in weakness sown,

Whose fruit shall spread and flourish,
And shake like Lebanon.

The tide of time shall never
His covenant remove;
His name shall stand for ever,
That name to us is Love.

James Montgomery

Home

There is a land, of every land the pride,
Beloved by heaven, o'er all the world beside;
Where brighter suns dispense serener light,
And milder moons emparadise the night;
A land of beauty, virtue, valour, truth,
Time-tutor'd age, and love-exalted youth;
The wand'ring mariner, whose eye explores
The wealthiest isles, the most enchanting shores,
Views not a realm so bountiful and fair,
Nor breathes the spirit of a purer air.
In ev'ry clime the magnet of his soul,
Touch'd by remembrance, trembles to that pole;
For in this land of heaven's peculiar grace,
The heritage of nature's noblest race,
There is a spot of earth, supremely blest,
A dearer, sweeter spot than all the rest,
Where man, creation's tyrant, casts aside
His sword and sceptre, pageantry and pride,
While in his soften'd looks benignly blend
The sire, the son, the husband, brother, friend:
Here woman reigns; the mother, daughter, wife,
Strews with fresh flowers the narrow path of life;
In the clear heaven of her delightful eye
An angel-guard of loves and graces lie;
Around her knees domestic duties meet,
And fire-side pleasures gambol at her feet.
Where shall that land, that spot of earth, be found?
Art thou a man? a patriot? look around;
Oh, thou shalt find, howe'er thy footsteps roam,
That land thy country, and that spot thy home.

James Montgomery

How precious are thy thoughts of peace

How precious are thy thoughts of peace,
O God! to me; how great their sum!
New every morn, they never cease;
They were, they are, and yet shall come,
In number and in compass more
Than ocean's sand, or ocean's shore.

How from thy presence should I go
Or whither from thy spirit flee,
Since all above, around, below,
Exists in thine immensity?
I feel thine all-controlling will,
And thy right hand upholds me still.

Search me, O God! and know my heart;
Try me; my secret soul survey;
And warn thy servant to depart
From every false and evil way:
So shall thy truth my guidance be
To life and immortality.

James Montgomery

In the Hour of Trial

In the hour of trial, Jesus, plead for me,
Lest by base denial I depart from Thee.
When Thou seest me waver, with a look recall,
Nor for fear or favor suffer me to fall.

With forbidden pleasures would this vain world charm,
Or its sordid treasures spread to work me harm,
Bring to my remembrance sad Gethsemane,
Or, in darker semblance, cross-crowned Calvary.

Should Thy mercy send me sorrow, toil and woe,
Or should pain attend me on my path below,
Grant that I may never fail Thy hand to see;
Grant that I may ever cast my care on Thee.

When my last hour cometh, fraught with strife and pain,
When my dust returneth to the dust again,
On Thy truth relying, through that mortal strife,
Jesus, take me, dying, to eternal life.

James Montgomery

Inscription under the Picture of an Aged Negro-woman

Art thou a woman? -- so am I; and all
That woman can be, I have been, or am;
A daughter, sister, consort, mother, widow.
Whiche'er of these thou art, O be the friend
Of one who is what thou canst never be!
Look on thyself, thy kindred, home, and country,
Then fall upon thy knees, and cry "Thank GOD,
An English woman cannot be a SLAVE!"

Art thou a man? -- Oh! I have known, have loved,
And lost, all that to woman man can be;
A father, brother, husband, son, who shared
My bliss in freedom, and my woe in bondage.
-- A childless widow now, a friendless slave,
What shall I ask of thee, since I have nought
To lose but life's sad burden; nought to gain
But heaven's repose? -- these are beyond thy power;
Me thou canst neither wrong nor help; -- what then?
Go to the bosom of thy family,
Gather thy little children round thy knees,
Gaze on their innocence; their clear, full eyes,
All fix'd on thine; and in their mother, mark
The loveliest look that woman's face can wear,
Her look of love, beholding them and thee:
Then, at the altar of your household joys,
Vow one by one, vow altogether, vow
With heart and voice, eternal enmity
Against oppression by your brethern's hands:
Till man nor woman under Britain's laws,
Nor son nor daughter born within her empire,
Shall buy, or sell, or hold, or be, a slave.

James Montgomery

Instruction

From heaven descend the drops of dew,
From heaven the gracious showers,
Earth's winter aspect to renew,
And clothe the spring with flowers;
From heaven the beams of morning flow,
That melt the gloom of night;
From heaven the evening breezes blow
Health, fragrance, and delight.

Like genial dew, like fertile showers,
The words of wisdom fall,
Awaken man's unconscious powers,
Like morning beams, they strike the mind,
Its loveliness reveals;
And softly then the evening wind
The wounded spirit heals.

As dew and rain, as light and air,
From heaven instruction came;
The waste of nature to repair,
Kindle a sacred flame;
A flame to purify the earth,
Exalt her sons on high,
And train them for their second birth,
Their birth beyond the sky.

James Montgomery

Lift up your heads, ye gates of brass;

Lift up your heads, ye gates of brass;
Ye bars of iron, yield!
And let the King of glory pass;
The Cross is in the field!

A holy war his servants wage,
Mysteriously at strife;
The powers of heaven and hell engage
For more than death or life.

Ye armies of the living God,
His sacramental host,
Where hallowed footstep never trod,
Take your appointed post.

Follow the Cross; the ark of Peace
Accompany your path:
To souls imprisoned bring release
From bondage and from wrath.

Uplifted are the gates of brass;
The bars of iron yield;
Behold the King of glory pass!
The Cross has won the field!

James Montgomery

Lord, Teach Us How to Pray Aright

Lord, teach us how to pray aright,
With reverence and with fear;
Though dust and ashes in Thy sight,
We may, we must draw near.

We perish if we cease from prayer;
O grant us power to pray;
And when to meet Thee we prepare,
Lord, meet us by the way.

God of all grace, we come to Thee
With broken, contrite hearts;
Give what Thine eye delights to see,
Truth in the inward parts.

Faith is the only sacrifice
That can for sin atone;
To cast our hopes, to fix our eyes,
On Christ, on Christ alone.

Patience to watch, and wait, and weep,
Though mercy long delay;
Courage our fainting souls to keep,
And trust Thee though Thou slay.

Give these, and then Thy will be done,
Thus, strengthened with all might,
We, through Thy Spirit and Thy Son,
Shall pray, and pray aright.

James Montgomery

Morning Thoughts

What secret hand at morning light,
By stealth unseals mine eye,
Draws back the curtain of the night,
And opens earth and sky?

'Tis Thine, my God - the same that kept
My resting hours from harm;
No ill came nigh me, for I slept
Beneath th' Almighty's arm.

'Tis Thine - my daily bread that brings,
Like manna scatter'd round,
And clothes me, as the lily springs
In beauty from the ground.

This is the hand that shaped my frame,
And gave me pulse to beat;
That bears me oft through flood and flame,
Through tempest, cold, and heat.

In death's dark valley though I stray,
'Twould there my steps attend;
Guide with the staff my lonely way,
And with the rod defend.

May that dear hand uphold me still,
Through life's uncertain race,
To bring me to Thine holy hill,
And to Thy dwelling-place.

James Montgomery

Night

Night is the time for rest;
How sweet, when labors close,
To gather round an aching breast
The curtain of repose,
Stretch the tired limbs, and lay the head
Down on our own delightful bed!

Night is the time for dreams;
The gay romance of life,
When truth that is, and truth that seems,
Blend in fantastic strife;
Ah! visions, less beguiling far
Than waking dreams by daylight are!

Night is the time for toil;
To plough the classic field,
Intent to find the buried spoil
Its wealthy furrows yield;
Till all is ours that sages taught,
That poets sang, or heroes wrought.

Night is the time to weep;
To wet with unseen tears
Those graves of Memory, where sleep
The joys of other years;
Hopes, that were Angels at their birth,
But perished young, like things of earth.

Night is the time to watch;
O'er ocean's dark expanse,
To hail the Pleiades, or catch
The full moon's earliest glance,
That brings into the homesick mind
All we have loved and left behind.

Night is the time for care;
Brooding on hours misspent,
To see the spectre of Despair
Come to our lonely tent;
Like Brutus, 'midst his slumbering host,
Summoned to die by Caesar's ghost.

Night is the time to think;
When, from the eye, the soul
Takes flight; and, on the utmost brink,
Of yonder starry pole
Descries beyond the abyss of night
The dawn of uncreated light.

Night is the time to pray;
Our Saviour oft withdrew
To desert mountains far away;

So will his followers do, -
Steal from the throng to haunts untrod,
And hold communion there with God.

Night is the time for Death;
When all around is peace,
Calmly to yield the weary breath,
From sin and suffering cease,
Think of heaven's bliss, and give the sign
To parting friends; - such death be mine!

James Montgomery

O God! Thou art my God alone;

O God! Thou art my God alone;
Early to Thee my soul shall cry;
A pilgrim in a land unknown,
A thirsty land whose springs are dry.

O that it were as it hath been,
When praying in the holy place,
Thy power and glory I have seen,
And marked the footsteps of thy grace.

Yet through this rough and thorny maze,
I follow hard on Thee, my God:
Thy hand unseen upholds my ways:
I safely tread where Thou hast trod.

Thee, in the watches of the night,
When I remember on my bed,
Thy presence makes the darkness light;
Thy guardian wings are round my head.

Better than life itself thy love,
Dearer than all beside to me;
For whom have I in heaven above,
Or what on earth, compared with Thee?

Praise with my heart, my mind, my voice,
For all thy mercy I will give:
My soul shall still in God rejoice,
My tongue shall bless Thee while I live.

James Montgomery

O Spirit of the Living God

O Spirit of the living God,
In all Thy plenitude of grace,
Where’er the foot of man hath trod,
Descend on our apostate race.

Give tongues of fire and hearts of love
To preach the reconciling Word,
Give power and unction from above,
Whene’er the joyful sound is heard.

Be darkness, at Thy coming, light;
Confusion, order in Thy path;
Souls without strength inspire with might;
Bid mercy triumph over wrath.

O Spirit of the Lord, prepare
All the round earth her God to meet;
Breathe Thou abroad like morning air,
Till hearts of stone begin to beat.

Baptize the nations; far and nigh
The triumphs of the cross record;
The Name of Jesus glorify,
Till every kindred call Him Lord.

God from eternity hath willed
All flesh shall His salvation see:
So be the Father’s love fulfilled,
The Savior’s sufferings crowned through Thee.

James Montgomery

One prayer I have -- all prayers in one, --

One prayer I have - all prayers in one, -
When I am wholly thine;
Thy will, my God, thy will be done,
And let that will be mine.

All-wise, almighty, and all-good!
In Thee I firmly trust;
Thy ways, unknown or understood,
Are merciful and just.

May I remember, that to Thee
Whate'er I have I owe;
And back, in gratitude from me,
May all thy bounties flow.

Thy gifts are only then enjoyed
When used as talents lent;
Those talents only well employed
When in thy service spent.

James Montgomery

Pentecost

Lord God, the Holy Ghost,
In this accepted hour,
As on the day of Pentecost,
Descend in all thy power.
We meet with one accord
Within this hallowed place,
And wait the promise of our Lord,
The Spirit of all grace.

Like mighty rushing wind
Upon the waves beneath,
Move with one impulse every mind;
One soul, one feeling breathe;
The young, the old inspire
With wisdom from above;
And give us hearts and tongues of fire,
To pray, and praise, and love.

Spirit of light, explore
And chase our gloom away,
With lustre shining more and more
Unto the perfect day.
Spirit of truth, be Thou,
In life and death, our guide:
O Spirit of adoption, now
May we be sanctified.

James Montgomery

People of the Living God

People of the living God,
I have sought the world around;
Paths of sin and sorrow trod,
Peace and comfort nowhere found:
Now to you my spirit turns—
Turns a fugitive unblest;
Brethren, where your altar burns,
Oh, receive me into rest.

Lonely I no longer roam
Like the cloud, the wind, the wave;
Where you dwell shall be my home,
Where you die shall be my grave;
Mine the God Whom you adore;
Your Redeemer shall be mine;
Earth can fill my soul no more—
Every idol I resign.

Tell me not of gain and loss,
Ease, enjoyment, pomp, and pow'r;
Welcome poverty and cross,
Shame reproach, affliction's hour.
"Follow Me"—I know Thy voice;
Jesus, Lord, Thy steps I see;
Now I take Thy yoke by choice,
Light Thy burden now to me.

James Montgomery

Prayer Is the Soul's Sincere Desire

Prayer is the soul’s sincere desire,
Unuttered or expressed;
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear
The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near.

Prayer is the simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try;
The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near.

Prayer is the Christian’s vital breath,
The Christian’s native air,
His watchword at the gates of death;
He enters heaven with prayer.

O Thou, by Whom we come to God,
The Life, the Truth, the Way;
The path of prayer Thyself hast trod:
Lord, teach us how to pray!

Prayer is the contrite sinner’s voice,
Returning from his ways,
While angels in their songs rejoice
And cry, “Behold, he prays!”

The saints in prayer appear as one
In word, in deed, and mind,
While with the Father and the Son
Sweet fellowship they find.

No prayer is made by man alone
The Holy Spirit pleads,
And Jesus, on th’eternal throne,
For sinners intercedes.

O Thou by Whom we come to God,
The Life, the Truth, the Way,
The path of prayer Thyself hast trod:
Lord, teach us how to pray.

James Montgomery

Servants of God, in Joyful Lays

Servants of God, in joyful lays,
Sing ye the Lord Jehovah's praise;
His glorious Name let all adore,
From age to age, forevermore.

Blest be that Name, supremely blest,
From the sun's rising to its rest;
Above the heav'ns His pow'r is known,
Through all the earth His goodness shown.

Who is like God? so great, so high,
He bows Himself to view the sky;
And yet, with condescending grace,
Looks down upon the human race.

He hears the uncomplaining moan
Of those who sit and weep alone;
He lifts the mourner from the dust;
In Him the poor may safely trust.

O then, aloud, in joyful lays,
Sing to the Lord Jehovah's praise;
His saving Name let all adore,
From age to age, forevermore.

James Montgomery

Songs of Praise the Angels Sang

Songs of praise the angels sang,
Heav’n with alleluias rang,
When creation was begun,
When God spoke and it was done.

Songs of praise awoke the morn
When the Prince of Peace was born;
Songs of praise arose when He
Captive led Captivity.

Heav’n and earth must pass away!
Songs of praise shall crown that day!
God will make new heav’ns and earth;
Songs of praise shall hail their birth.

And can man alone be dumb,
Till that glorious kingdom come?
No: the church delights to raise
Psalms, and hymns, and songs of praise.

Saints below, with heart and voice,
Still in songs of praise rejoice,
Learning here, by faith and love,
Songs of praise to sing above.

Borne upon their latest breath,
Songs of praise shall conquer death;
Then amidst eternal joy,
Songs of praise their powers employ.

Hymns of glory, songs of praise,
Father, unto Thee we raise;
Jesus, glory unto Thee,
With the Spirit, ever be.

James Montgomery

Sow in the Morn Thy Seed

Sow in the morn thy seed,
At eve hold not thy hand;
To doubt and fear give thou no heed,
Broadcast it o’er the land.

Thou know’st not which may thrive,
The late or early sown;
God keeps His precious seed alive,
When and wherever thrown.

Thou canst not toil in vain;
Cold, heat, and moist, and dry,
Shall foster and mature the grain
For garners in the sky.

Thence, when the glorious end,
The day of God is come,
The angels reapers shall descend,
And heav’n cry, “Harvest Home.”

James Montgomery

Stand Up and Bless the Lord

Stand up and bless the Lord
Ye people of His choice;
Stand up and bless the Lord your God
With heart and soul and voice.

Though high above all praise,
Above all blessing high,
Who would not fear His holy Name,
And laud and magnify?

O for the living flame
From His own altar brought,
To touch our lips, our minds inspire,
And wing to heaven our thought!

There, with benign regard,
Our hymns He deigns to hear;
Though unrevealed to mortal sense,
Our spirits feel Him near.

God is our Strength and Song,
And His salvation ours;
Then be His love in Christ proclaimed
With all our ransomed powers.

Stand up and bless the Lord;
The Lord your God adore;
Stand up and bless His glorious Name;
Henceforth forevermore.

James Montgomery

Thank and Praise Jehovah's Name

Thank and Praise Jehovah’s Name;
For His mercies, firm and sure,
From eternity the same
To eternity endure.

Let the ransomed thus rejoice,
Gathered out of every land,
As the people of His choice,
Plucked from the destroyer’s hand.

Praise Him, ye who know His love;
Praise Him from the depths beneath;
Praise Him in the heights above;
Praise your Maker all that breathe.

For His truth and mercy stand,
Past, and present, and to be,
Like the years of His right hand—
Like His own eternity.

James Montgomery

The bird that soars on highest wing

The bird that soars on highest wing
Builds on the ground her lowly nest;
And she that doth most sweetly sing
Sings in the shade when all things rest:
In lark and nightingale we see
What honour hath humility.

The saint that wears heaven's brightest crown
In deepest adoration bends;
The weight of glory bows him down
Then most when most his soul ascends.
Nearest the throne itself must be
The footstool of humility.

James Montgomery

The Bridal And The Burial

I saw thee young and beautiful,
I saw thee rich and gay,
In the first blush of womanhood,
Upon thy wedding-day;
The church-bells rang,
And the little children sang:
'Flowers, flowers, kis her feet;
Sweets to the sweet;
The winter's past, the rains are gone--
Bless'd is the bride whom the sun shines on.'

I saw thee poor and desolate,
I saw thee fade away,
In broken-hearted widowhood,
Before thy locks were grey;
The death-bell rang,
And the little children sang:
'Lilies, dress her winding-sheet;
Sweets to the sweet:
The summer's past, the sunshine gone;
Bless'd is the corpse which the rain rains on.'

James Montgomery

The Daisy - On Finding one in Bloom on Christmas-day

There is a flower, a little flower
With silver crest and golden eye,
That welcomes every changing hour,
And weathers every sky.

The prouder beauties of the field
In gay but quick succession shine;
Race after race their honors yield,
They flourish and decline.

But this small flower, to Nature dear,
While moons and stars their courses run,
Wreathes the whole circle of the year,
Companion of the Sun.

It smiles upon the lap of May,
To sultry August spreads its charms,
Lights pale October on his way,
And twines December's arms.

The purple heath and golden broom
On moory mountains catch the gale;
O'er lawns the lily sheds perfume,
The violet in the vale.

But this bold floweret climbs the hill,
Hides in the forest, haunts the glen,
Plays on the margin of the rill,
Peeps round the fox's den.

Within the garden's cultured round
It shares the sweet carnation's bed;
And blooms on consecrated ground
In honor of the dead.

The lambkin crops its crimson gem;
The wild bee murmurs on its breast;
The blue-fly bends its pensile stem
Light o'er the skylark's nest.

'Tis Flora's page, - in every place,
In every season, fresh and fair;
It opens with perennial grace,
And blossoms everywhere.

On waste and woodland, rock and plain,
Its humble buds unheeded rise;
The Rose has but a summer reign;
The Daisy never dies!

James Montgomery

The Field of the World

Sow in the morn thy seed,
At eve hold not thy hand;
To doubt and fear give thou no heed,
Broadcast it o’er the land.

Beside all waters sow;
The highway furrows stock;
Drop it where thorns and thistles grow;
Scatter it on the rock.

The good and fruitful ground,
Expect not here nor there;
O'er hill and dale, by plots, 'tis found;
Go forth, then, everywhere.

Thou know’st not which may thrive,
The late or early sown;
God keeps His precious seed alive,
When and wherever strown.

And duly shall appear,
In verdure, beauty, strength,
The tender blade, the stalk, the ear,
And the full corn at length.

Thou canst not toil in vain:
Cold, heat, and moist, and dry,
Shall foster and mature the grain
For garners in the sky.

Thence, when the glorious end,
The day of God is come,
The angels reapers shall descend,
And heav’n cry - 'Harvest Home.'

James Montgomery

The Flash at Midnight

The flash at midnight! - 'twas a light
That gave the blind a moment's sight
Then sank in tenfold gloom;
Loud, deep, and long, the thunder broke,
The deaf ear instantly awoke,
Then closed as in the tomb:
An angel might have passed my bed,
Sounded the trump of God, and fled.

So life appears; - a sudden birth,
A glance revealing heaven and earth
It is - and it is not!
So fame the poet's hope deceives,
Who sings for after time, and leaves
A name - to be forgot,
Life - is a lightning-flash of breath;
Fame - but a thunder clap at death.

James Montgomery

The Laurustinus

Fair tree of winter! fresh and flowering,
When all around is dead and dry;
Whose ruby buds, though storms are louring,
Spread their white blossoms to the sky.
Green are thy leaves, more purely green
Through every changing period seen;
And when the gaudy months are past,
Thy loveliest season is the last.
Be thou an emblem - thus unfolding
The history of that maiden's mind,
Whose eye, these humble lines beholding,
In them her future lot may find:
Through life's mutations may she be
A modest evergreen like thee;
Though bless'd in youth, in age more bless'd,
Still be her latest days the best.

James Montgomery

The Lord Is My Shepherd

The Lord is my Shepherd, no want shall I know;
I feed in green pastures, safe folded I rest;
He leadeth my soul where the still waters flow,
Restores me when wand'ring, redeems when oppressed.

Through valley and shadow of death though I stray,
Since Thou art my Guardian, no evil I fear;
Thy rod shall defend me, Thy staff be my stay;
No harm can befall, with my Comforter near.

In midst of affliction my table is spread;
With blessings unmeasured my cup runneth o'er;
With perfume and oil Thou anointest my head;
O what shall I ask of Thy providence more?

Let goodness and mercy, my bountiful God,
Still follow my steps till I meet Thee above;
I seek, by the path which my forefathers trod,
Through land of their sojourn, Thy Kingdom of love.

James Montgomery

The Pelican Island

Light as a flake of foam upon the wind,
Keel-upward from the deep emerged a shell,
Shaped like the moon ere half her horn is fill'd;
Fraught with young life, it righted as it rose,
And moved at will along the yielding water.
The native pilot of this little bark
Put out a tier of oars on either side,
Spread to the wafting breeze a twofold sail,
And mounted up and glided down the billow
In happy freedom, pleased to feel the air,
And wander in the luxury of light.
Worth all the dead creation, in that hour,
To me appeared this lonely Nautilus,
My fellow-being, like myself,
alive.

Entranced in contemplation, vague yet sweet,
I watched its vagrant course and rippling wake,
Till I forgot the sun amidst the heavens.

IT closed, sunk, dwindled to a point, then nothing;
While the last bubble crown'd the dimpling eddy,
Through which mine eyes still giddily pursued it,
A joyous creature vaulted through the air, -
The aspiring fish that fain would be a bird,
On long, light wings, that flung a diamond-shower
Of dew-drops round its evanescent form,
Sprang into light, and instantly descended.
Ere I could greet the stranger as a friend,
Or mourn his quick departure on the surge,
A shoal of dolphins tumbling in wild glee,
Glow'd with such orient tints, they might have been
The rainbow's offspring, when it met the ocean
In that resplendent vision I had seen.
While yet in ecstasy I hung o'er these,
With every motion pouring out fresh beauties,
As though the conscious colours came and went
At pleasure, glorying in their subtile changes, -
Enormous, o'er the flood, Leviathan
Look'd forth, and from his roaring nostrils sent
Two fountains to the sky, then plunged amain
In headlong pastime through the closing gulf.

James Montgomery

The Prisoner to a Robin Who Came to His Window

Welcome! welcome! little stranger,
Welcome to my lone retreat,
Here, secure from every danger,
Hop about, and chirp, and eat.
Robin! how I envy thee,
Happy child of liberty.

Hunger never shall distress thee,
While my meals one crumb afford,
Colds and cramps shall ne'er oppress thee,
Come and share my humble board:
Robin, come and live with me,
Live, yet still at liberty.

Soon shall spring, with smiles and blushes,
Steal upon the blooming year;
Then, amid the verdant bushes,
Thy sweet song shall warble clear;
Then shall I too, joined with thee,
Taste the sweets of liberty.

Should some rough, unfeeling Dobbin,
In this iron-hearted age,
Seize thee on thy nest, my robin,
And confine thee in a cage;
Then, poor robin, think of me,
Think - and sigh for liberty.

Liberty! thou brightest treasure
In the crown of earthly joys,
Source of gladness, soul of pleasure,
All delights besides are toys:
None but prisoners like me
Know the worth of liberty.

James Montgomery

The Recluse

A fountain issuing into light
Before a marble palace, threw
To heaven its column, pure and bright,
Returning thence in showers of dew;
But soon a humbler course it took,
And glide away a nameless brook.

Flowers on its grassy margin sprang,
Flies o'er its eddying surface play'd,
Birds 'midst the alder-branches sang,
Flocks through the verdant meadows stray'd;
The weary there lay down to rest,
And there the halcyon built her nest.

'Twas beautiful to stand and watch
The fountain's crystal turn to gems,
And from the sky such colours catch
As if 'twere raining diadems;
Yet all was cold and curious art,
That charm'd the eye, but miss'd the heart.

Dearer to me the little stream
Whose unimprison'd waters run,
Wild as the changes of a dream,
By rock and glen, through shade and sun.
Its lovely links had power to bind
In welcome chains my wandering mind.

So thought I when I saw the face
By happy portraiture reveal'd
Of one adorn'd with every grace,
Her name and date from me conceal'd,
But not her story; she had been
The pride of many a splendid scene.

She cast her glory round a court,
And frolick'd in the gayest ring,
Where fashion's high-born minions sport
Like sparkling fire-flies on the wing;
But thence when love had touch'd her soul,
To nature and to truth she stole.

From din, and pageantry, and strife,
'Midst woods and mountains, vales and plains,
She treads the paths of lowly life,
Yet in a bosom-circle reigns,
No fountain scattering diamond-showers,
But the sweet streamlet watering flowers.

James Montgomery

The Scene Around me Disappears

1. The scene around me disappears,
   And, borne to ancient regions,
While time recalls the flight of years,
   I see angelic legions
Descending in an orb of light:
Amidst the dark and silent night
I hear celestial voices.
2. Tidings, glad tidings from above,
   To every age and nation!
Tidings, glad tidings! God is Love,
   To man He sends salvation!
His Son beloved, His only Son,
The work of mercy hath begun;
Give to His Name the Glory!
3. Through David's city I am led;
   Here all around are sleeping;
A Light directs to yon poor shed;
   There lonely watch is keeping:
I enter; ah! what glories shine!
Is this Immanuel's earthly shrine,
Messiah's infant Temple?
4. It is, it is; and I adore
   This Stranger meek and lowly,
As saints and angels bow before
   The throne of God thrice Holy!
Faith through the veil of flesh can see
The Face of Thy Divinity,
My Lord, my God, my Saviour!

James Montgomery

The Sunflower

Eagle of flowers! I see thee stand,
And on the sun's noon-glory gaze:
With eye like his thy lids expand,
And fringe their disk with golden rays;
Though fix'd on earth, in darkness rooted there,
Light is thine element, thy dwelling air,
Thy prospect heaven.

So would mine eagle-soul descry,
Beyond the path where planets run,
The light of immortality,
The splendour of creation's sun;
Though sprung from earth, and hast'ning to the tomb
In hope a flower of paradise to bloom,
I took to heaven.

James Montgomery

The Valentine Wreath

Rosy red the hills appear
With the light of morning,
Beauteous clouds, in aether clear,
All the east adorning;
White through the mist the meadows shine
Wake, my love, my Valentine!

For thy locks of raven hue,
Flowers of hoar-frost pearly,
Crocus-cups of gold and blue,
Snow-drops drooping early,
With Mezereon sprigs combine
Rise, my love, my Valentine!

O'er the margin of the flood,
Pluck the daisy peeping;
Through the covert of the wood,
Hunt the sorrel creeping;
With the little celandine
Crown my love, my Valentine.

Pansies, on their lowly stems
Scatter'd o'er the fallows;
Hazel-buds with crimson gems,
Green and glossy sallows;
Tufted moss and ivy-twine,
Deck my love, my Valentine.

Few and simple flow'rets these;
Yet, to me, less glorious
Garden-beds and orchard-trees!
Since this wreath victorious
Binds you now for ever mine,
O my Love, my Valentine.

James Montgomery

The Visible Creation

The God of nature and of grace
In all His works appears;
His goodness through the earth we trace,
His grandeur in the spheres.

Behold this fair and fertile globe,
By Him in wisdom plann'd;
'Twas He who girded, like a robe,
The ocean round the land.

Life to the firmament your eye
Thither His path pursue;
His glory, boundless as the sky,
O'erwhelms the wond'ring view.

He bows the heavens - the mountains stand
A highway for their God;
He walks amidst the desert land,
'Tis Eden where He trod!

The forests in His strength rejoice;
Hark! on the evening breeze,
As once of old, the Lord God's voice,
Is heard among the trees.

Here on the hills He feeds His herds.
His flocks on yonder plains;
His praise is warbled by the birds;
Oh could we catch their strains!

Mount with the lark and bear our song
Up to the gates of light;
Or, with the nightingale prolong
Our numbers through the night!

In every stream His bounty flows,
Diffusing joy and wealth;
In every breeze His spirit blows
The breath of life and health.

His blessings fall in plenteous showers
Upon the lap of earth,
That teems with foliage, fruit, and flowers,
And rings with infant mirth.

If God hath made this world so fair,
Where sin and death abound,
How beautiful beyond compare
Will paradise be found!

James Montgomery

Thee will I praise, O Lord, in light,

Thee will I praise, O Lord, in light,
Where seraphim surround thy throne;
With heart and soul, with mind and might,
Thee will I worship, Thee alone.

Thou, Lord, above all height art high
Yet with the lowly wilt Thou dwell;
The proud far off, thy jealous eyes
Shall mark, and with a look repel.

Though in the depth of trouble thrown,
With grief I shall not always strive;
Thou wilt thy suffering servants own,
And Thou the contrite heart revive.

Thy purpose then in me fulfil;
Forsake me not, for I am thine;
Perfect in me thine utmost will;
Whate'er it be, that will be mine.

James Montgomery

There is a calm for those who weep - 2

There is a calm for those who weep,
A rest for weary pilgrims found:
They softly lie, and sweetly sleep,
Low in the ground.

The soul, of origin divine,
God's glorious image freed from clay,
In heaven's eternal sphere shall shine,
A star of day!

The sun is but a spark of fire,
A transient meteor in the sky;
The soul, immortal as its Sire,
Shall never die!

James Montgomery

There is a calm for those who weep,

There is a calm for those who weep,
A rest for weary pilgrims found:
They softly lie, and sweetly sleep,
Low in the ground.

The storm that wrecks the winter sky
No more disturbs their deep repose
Than summer evening's latest sigh
That shuts the rose.

A bruised reed God will not break;
Afflictions all his children feel;
He wounds them for his mercy's sake.
He wounds to heal!

O traveller in the vale of tears!
To realms of everlasting light,
Through time's dark wilderness of years,
Pursue thy flight.

James Montgomery

To the Autumn

Sweet Sabbath of the year!
While evening lights decay,
Thy parting steps methinks I hear
Steal from the world away.

Amid thy silent bowers,
'Tis sad, but sweet, to dwell;
Where falling leaves and drooping flowers
Around me breathe farewell.

Along thy sunset skies
Their glories melt in shade,
And like the things we fondly prize,
Seem lovelier as they fade.

A deep and crimson streak
Thy dying leaves disclose;
As on consumption's waning cheek
'Mid ruin blooms the rose.

Thy scene each vision brings
Of beauty in decay;
Of fair and early faded things
Too exquisite to stay.

Of joys that come no more;
Of flowers whose bloom is fled;
Of farewells wept upon the shore;
Of friends estranged or dead.

Of all that now may seem
To memory's tearful eye,
The vanish'd beauty of a dream,
O'er which we gaze and sigh!

James Montgomery

To the Temple I Repair

To Thy temple I repair;
Lord, I love to worship there
When within the veil I meet
Christ before the mercy seat.

I through Him am reconciled,
I through Him become Thy child.
Abba, Father, give me grace
In Thy courts to seek Thy face.

While Thy glorious praise is sung,
Touch my lips, unloose my tongue,
That my joyful soul may bless
Christ the Lord, my Righteousness.

While the prayers of saints ascend,
God of Love, to mine attend.
Hear me, for Thy Spirit pleads;
Hear, for Jesus intercedes.

While I hearken to Thy law,
Fill my soul with humble awe
Till Thy Gospel bring to me
Life and immortality.

While Thy ministers proclaim
Peace and pardon in Thy Name,
Through their voice, by faith, may I
Hear Thee speaking from the sky.

From Thy house when I return,
May my heart within me burn,
And at evening let me say,
“I have walked with God today."

James Montgomery

Twilight

I love thee, Twilight! as thy shadows roll,
The calm of evening steals upon my soul,
Sublimely tender, solemnly serene,
Still as the hour, enchanting as the scene.
I love thee, Twilight! for thy gleams impart
Their dear, their dying influence to my heart.
When o'er the harp of thought thy passing wind
Awakens all the music of the mind,
And joy and sorrow, as the spirit burns,
And hope and memory sweep the chords by turns
While contemplation, on seraphic wings,
Mounts with the flame of sacrifice, and sings.
Twilight! I love thee; let thy glooms increase,
Till every feeling, every pulse, is peace.
Slow from the sky the light of day declines,
Clearer within, the dawn of glory shines,
Revealing, in the hour of nature's rest,
A world of wonders in the poet's breast;
Deeper, O Twilight! then thy shadows roll, -
An awful vision opens on my soul.

James Montgomery

What Is Prayer?

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Unuttered or expressed;
The motion of a hidden fire,
That trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear;
The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near.

Prayer is the simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try;
Prayer, the sublimest strains that reach
The Majesty on high.

Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air;
His watchword at the gates of death -
He enters heaven with prayer.

Prayer is the contrite sinner's voice,
Returning from his ways;
While angels in their songs rejoice
And cry, 'Behold, he prays!'

The saints in prayer appear as one,
In word, in deed, and mind;
While with the Father and the Son,
Sweet fellowship they find.

No prayer is made by man alone
The Holy Spirit pleads;
And Jesus, on th' eternal throne
For sinners intercedes.

O Thou! by Whom we come to God,
The Life, the Truth, the Way;
The path of prayer Thyself hast trod:
Lord, teach us how to pray.

As fail the waters from the deep,
As summer brooks run dry,
Man lieth down in dreamless sleep,
His life is vanity.

Man lieth down, no more to wake,
Till yonder arching sphere
Shall with a roll of thunder break,
And nature disappear.

Oh! hide me till Thy wrath be past,
Thou, who canst slay or save!

Hide me where hope may anchor fast,
In my Redeemer's grave!

James Montgomery

When Jesus Left His Father's Throne

When Jesus left His Father’s throne,
He chose a humble birth;
Like us, unhonored and unknown,
He came to dwell on earth.
Like Him may we be found below,
In wisdom’s path of peace;
Like Him in grace and knowledge grow,
As years and strength increase.

Sweet were His words and kind His look,
When mothers round Him pressed;
Their infants in His arms He took,
And on His bosom blessed.
Safe from the world’s alluring harms,
Beneath His watchful eye,
Thus in the circle of His arms
May we forever lie.

When Jesus into Zion rode,
The children sang around;
For joy they plucked the palms and strewed
Their garments on the ground.
Hosanna our glad voices raise,
Hosanna to our King!
Should we forget our Savior’s praise,
The stones themselves would sing.

James Montgomery