

Towards the Light

A Mystic Poem

By

Princess Karadja



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Note

THIS poem which is now brought to the knowledge of the British and American public was originally written in Swedish. It was published in that language a few years ago and met with extraordinary success. Six large editions were rapidly sold out. German, Dutch, and Danish versions soon appeared. French, Italian, and Russian are to follow.

I have myself undertaken the English translation, but am indebted to several friends for many a valuable hint.

It is no easy task to handle poetry in a foreign tongue. I claim the indulgence of my readers for this first attempt at English blank verse.

PRINCESS KARADJA

BOVIGNY CASTLE

GOUVY, BELGIUM

Preface

THE poem that I now publish was composed under strange circumstances.

On midsummer night, 1899, I was alone in the chapel at Bovigny Castle, praying on the tomb of my husband and eldest son, when I suddenly heard a voice whisper: "Fetch pen and paper."

I obeyed. My hand drew automatically a sun, and wrote the words "Mot Ljuset" ("Towards the Light") without help of my personal will. When I took the pen in my hand, I had no idea about what I was going to write, but nevertheless I

Preface

wrote fluently hundreds of verses. I must have become entranced. . . . It seemed to me that the temperature fell quickly. . . . I felt chilled, although the summer heat was oppressive. My soul was detached, all my senses were sharpened and acquired an extraordinary lucidity. I was so distinctly conscious of the spirit voices that it was almost as if I had written under dictation.

Everybody who reads this poem might probably believe it to be the result of long religious meditation, but such is not the case. The soul whose evolution is narrated was an utter stranger to me. Most of the thoughts contained in this poem were not mine five minutes before I wrote them down.

Preface

WHERE DID THEY COME FROM?

No satisfactory answer can be given to that question. Telepathy is the only possible explanation of such phenomena. Telepathy — transmission of thought — must take place in some way similar to wireless telegraphy.

Vibrations of thought flash through the ether as well as electric waves. This now little-known psychic force will probably be mastered in the future. Living men will then, without difficulty, be able to communicate with their disembodied friends. Fifty years ago the idea that two people might exchange thoughts at a distance of a hundred miles, by telephone, would have been considered preposterous. For my part I am absolutely convinced that free intercourse be-

Preface

tween liberated spirits and incarnated souls is simply a question of time.

In every period of history each new idea has to fight its way. Most people consider everything that they have not personally experienced to be more or less incredible. I shall therefore not be in the least surprised if my statement concerning the origin of this poem is doubted, contradicted, or ridiculed; but I have decided to endure with resignation the annoyances to which I may consequently expose myself.

Nobody who is not willing to endure personal inconvenience for the sake of truth is worthy to bear witness of eternal verities.

Towards the Light

Towards the Light



OH! Watcher in the silent
hours of night,
Art thou prepared to greet thy
noiseless guests,
The messengers from distant spirit
worlds?
On rapid wings they now are
speeding hither.
They float around thee; canst
thou not perceive them?
Soon shall thy spirit's eye discern
their forms.

Towards the Light

Hark, child of earth! A chime
of silver bells

Descends to thee from starry
worlds above,

While gentle fragrances enchant
thy sense.

The darkness dies. . . . A radiant
light appears.

Behold the ambient flame en-
circling thee,

That flame of living light — it
is my soul!

My voice now whispers gently
in thine ear:

I too was once a mortal such as
thou.

Towards the Light

I am not dead, although my dust
has lain

Deep in the silent tomb for many
years.

I am not dead! My spirit still
is living,

Serene and strong, robed in im-
mortal garb.

I will to thee my earthly life
unfold,

Then shalt thou comprehend thy
future fate,

For I shall show thee all the path
I trod

From earthly darkness to the
spheres of light.

Towards the Light

Thou art a tool, chosen by
Higher Powers,

To tell the world what thou
shalt here behold.

The gift of words is thine ; thou
shalt express

My mighty thought, which
dominates thy mind.

Unknown to thee I hither led
thy steps ;

Thy destiny I welded link by
link.

My hand, oh woman ! chiselled
out thy soul :

Resist thy Guide no more ! Sub-
mit in peace !

Towards the Light

No blessed crop can grow on
untilled ground ;

Deep furrows have been driven
in thy heart,

And now at last I sow : mine
hour has come !

May God in mercy overshadow us !
I lift thy soul up to the source
of Light ;

Help others as I now am helping
thee.

Write down the message that I
bring to-night

With humble thanks because thy
hand was chosen !

“ Who art thou ? ” — dost thou
ask. — I am a sinner,

Towards the Light

Who through repentance has
atoned his crimes.

My name on earth is utterly
forgotten ;

My race is swept away from off
its face.

I was a man who once had rich
possessions ;

Alas ! A sorry use I made of
all. . . .

No gentle memories of loving
deeds

Survived me in the dismal hour
of death.

Yet once I did possess a thousand
treasures —

Towards the Light

Rank, beauty, health and riches
— all were mine.

Men envied me as fortune's
petted child.

I deemed myself created to enjoy,
And carefully fulfilled that
pleasant mission.

No broken sob could reach my
deadened ear,

Nor raise an echo in my empty
heart,

Where on a throne of ice my
spirit dwelt,

Adoring as supreme Divinity,
As centre of the world, as Lord
and God

Towards the Light

The only being whom I loved —
Myself!

But years rolled on . . . ever the
well-known round!

Earth had no pleasure left for
me to taste.

I was so weary that life's pageant
palled,

And duller, greyer, grew the
lengthening days.

My selfish soul was filled with
blank despair.

I grew to hate the joys that could
not still

My craving after *something* I had
missed,

Towards the Light

A precious *something* I had failed
to win.

What might it be, I knew not —
only this:

Without it life was wasted, drear
and void.

At last when I had emptied to
the dregs

Life's pleasure-cup, I longed for
dreamless sleep.

The chill embrace of death would
cool my brain. . . .

Rest! Rest! Eternal rest — oh,
priceless boon!

I had no terror of the starless
night,

Towards the Light

And scorned the thought of
coming Judgment Day.

Annihilation seemed to me
elysian,

For I was weary — weary unto
death.

But in farewell I first would
summon round me

All that in former days had
charmed me most :

Wine, women, music, light and
fragrant flowers —

And so surrounded I would breathe
my last.

It was a merry night and I the
gayest,

Towards the Light

Because Life's dreary farce so
soon would end.

'T was my last pride to smilingly
approach,

Without a trace of fear, my yawning
tomb.

The flickering lights burned low;
the flowers drooped;

The hour grew late; my noisy
friends had gone.

One guest remained — I was alone
with Death

Whom I had dared to summon
to my feast.

.
.

Towards the Light

A flash — a shot — then deepest
silence reigned.

One thrill of anguish quivered
through my frame —

Then all was still! A sense of
dreary numbness

Crept slowly, surely over all my
limbs.

Around me deepest night . . .

Yea . . . ebon darkness.

If death had come why did it
fail to bring

The blessed sleep for which I
yearned so long?

When would oblivion sweep away
the past?

Towards the Light

Why this delay? At last a dawn-
ing fear

Shook me that something would
begin — but what?

I waited thus with panic-stricken
soul. . . .

Death I had courted to escape
my thoughts;

I had destroyed myself; I must
be dead!

I felt my body growing stiff and
cold;

The heart had ceased to beat, the
pulse stood still.

I was a corpse — mere matter —
nothing more,

Towards the Light

A thing which surely was bereft
of sense —

Yet — after death — how could
my body think?

I was aghast, for now at last I
knew

That I had failed to murder all
in me,

One part was left — *my thought*
was still alive!

.

• No mortal words can ever paint
the terror

That seized me when I grasped
that awful fact.

My senses seemed to whirl in
stormy chaos —

Towards the Light

What would my future be? When
should I know?

The night was dark; nowhere a
ray of light . . .

And I must wait . . . For what?
I dared not guess.

Was it eternity — was it an hour
That I endured this torture of
suspense?

I cannot tell! It seemed a thou-
sand years,

To be alive against my will!
What doom

For me, who hoped the grave to
be the end!

Towards the Light

Could there be truth, then, in
the Devil's creed

Of an avenging God, who, merci-
less,

Condemns all sinners to eternal
hell?

If so, I meant to bravely meet
my Judge,

And to receive erect the cruel
sentence.

I courage felt to calmly all en-
dure —

If but the torture of suspense
might end.

Still time went on. . . . In vain
I claimed my doom.

Towards the Light

No Judge appeared! A cry of
keen distress

Broke forth at last, deep from
my frenzied heart;

I clamoured wildly: "Oh, have
mercy, Lord!"

A voice at once replied from out
the gloom:

"What is thy wish? What
favour dost thou claim

From God, whom thou hast all
thy life denied?"

I murmured humbly: "Lord, a
ray of Light!"

Towards the Light

At once a flash of Radiance fell
on me,
And I beheld myself! Oh, bitter
shame!
Most ghastly is that moment for
the man
Who lived in utter darkness here
on earth.
Pray for the blind, that they
may not despair
When after death at last their
opened eye
Shrinks from the sight which
they are forced to see,
A human heart in hideous naked-
ness!

Towards the Light

The angels of the Lord behold
it trembling,

And turn away at once their
shuddering glance.

In abject shame the soul attempts
to hide,

And, full of anguish, begs for
solitude.

God grants that grace. The soul
is left alone —

Alone with all the shadows of
the past.

I saw my earthly life glide past
in vision . . .

Scene after scene, forgotten long
ago.

Towards the Light

How blind — insanely blind, had
I not been !

The sight of all my crimes con-
founded me.

They crushed my spirit with their
leaden weight. . . .

At last I whispered : “ Punish me,
oh Lord ! ”

The voice replied : “ God claims
no penalty.

Sin punishes itself. Each evil
seed

Allowed to grow in wanton
liberty

Must bear its bitter crop of pain
and woe.

Towards the Light

The angels of the Lord no anger
feel

At human crime; they see its
fruit and mourn.

Unhappy spirit, thou hast asked
thy sentence!

Learn, then, that long ago thy
fate was sealed.

‘There where thy treasure is,
thy heart will be.’

Thus spake the Christ. These
words contain thy doom.

Each man has something which
he dearest holds—

His God, — a fellow-creature, or
himself.

On earth he is at liberty to choose

Towards the Light

A treasure to be kept eternally.

The soul can after death no more abandon

What during life it found most fit to love.

What was thy treasure? Hapless fool — behold it !”

A flood of light streamed down and I perceived

A lifeless body stretched upon the floor

Amidst a pool of blood. It was my corpse.

“Behold thy treasure! Thou canst claim no other.

Towards the Light

Thou art compelled to keep thy
cherished God.

Thou mad'st an idol of a lump
of clay, —

No more to leave it is thy awful
doom."

"No, no!" I shrieked, "I will
not thus be fettered!

Ah! Loose me from the body I
destroyed!

I love no more this thing. I
hate to see it.

Oh, set me free! In mercy break
my chains!"

"Hark! Thou hast entered spirit
life unbidden;

Towards the Light

No room with us was yet prepared for thee.

The threshold of Eternity no man
May cross before his final hour
has struck.

The plans of God no mortal ever
altered :

He is the Master over Life and
Death.

There is a lesson all on earth
must learn

And none may slip away, the task
undone ;

Nor lightly fling the human garb
aside,

Until the soul is fit to leave its
dwelling.

Towards the Light

Woe to the man who scorns the
gift of life,

Who, greatly daring Heaven,
would extinguish

The spark Divine, which burns
within his soul!

The deed is vain, he only makes
more sure

The fate he has created by his acts.

The sacred tie, uniting soul and
body,

Is only severed at the Lord's
Command.

The will of thy Creator links thy
spirit

Still for a time to this poor clay.

. . . Submit!

Towards the Light

Learn to abide in patience —
captive soul —

The day when liberty shall dawn
for thee.”

“So hope remains? My punish-
ment will end?

I am not chained for all eternity?”

I cried aloud, all thrilled with
gratitude.

The angel answered: “Every
pain will end.

One sin alone can never be for-
given,

The sin of pride that does not
wish for grace,

Towards the Light

For then the spirit dooms itself
to darkness.

God's arms are ever open. Every
soul

That struggles bravely upwards
finds the Light.

Though far the Goal — yet it is
reached at last !”

I murmured low : “ Most merci-
ful thou art.

Oh, glorious angel, let me know
thy name.”

“ Canst thou not guess it? Often
I approached

Thy stony heart and strove to
gain admittance,

Towards the Light

But was repelled as soon as I
drew near.

I am the mournful angel men
call Grief!

The Lord of Mercy sends me
down to earth

To show the way, which leads
men up to Him.

I sow in sinful hearts contrition's
seed,

Then buds humility from burn-
ing shame.

The yearning soul strives hard to
leave the mire;

Though weak and trembling still
it bravely seeks

Towards the Light

To climb the thorny path to
which I point.

Then hasten to his aid the Radiant
Host,

Who, in the name of Christ,
work deeds of love.

Their gentle hands cannot remove
all pain,

But they give strength to bear
the heavy cross.

They fill the weary soul with
hope and courage,

And whisper promises of coming
bliss.

The pilgrim soon is taught to
fix his gaze

Towards the Light

Above the darkness of this present
world,
Up to the distant home where
all is peace.
For thee there still remains thy
crown to earn
Of Faith and Hope and Charity
entwined.
These thou must tend and nourish
in thy heart,
But first the arduous task of
'Patience' learn!"

How desolate and cold the grave-
yard seemed!
My only home in dismal winter-
nights

Towards the Light

If I had better used the gift of
life

Preparing me a nest in faithful
hearts,

My frozen soul might now have
been their guest,

And found relief and warmth at
friendly hearths.

Alas! On earth was none of
human kind

Whose grief attracted with mag-
netic power

My wretched soul, by all alive
forgotten.

I was alone in solitary gloom,

The one companion left — my
lifeless frame.

Towards the Light

Despairingly I searched a thousand graves

In hope to find another living soul
Chained to the empty forms that
mouldered here

Beneath the snow. . . . Alas! It
was in vain!

Each soul had left the worn-out
shell of dust

In former days the object of its
pride.

Each one had gladly flown. I
— I alone

Was still a captive in this place
of dread,

Indissolubly fettered to my
corpse.

Towards the Light

No thing on earth e'er filled me
with such loathing!

My ghastly treasure! . . . With
intense disgust

Day after day I watched its slow
decay.

Sometimes the broken eyes would
seem to weep

As though, attempting to express
my grief,

They fain would bring me the
relief of tears. . . .

One night I wandered round the
dreary grounds

And reached the gate. Then in
the dismal darkness

Towards the Light

I heard a broken sob, a feeble
wailing.

Who could it be? Who broke
the ghastly silence?

A living being? If so — why
came he here?

It was a child, a small deserted
child,

Left here to perish in the winter
snow.

I felt compassion for the tiny
waif

Who softly sobbed himself to
sleep forever,

And anger 'gainst the mother
who could leave

Towards the Light

Her child alone to meet a frozen
death.

What punishment too great for
such a sin?

What could atone for such a cruel
deed?

In righteous wrath I cried:

“Accurst be she

Who has abandoned this defence-
less child!”

Like clap of thunder rang the
answer forth:

“Man, who art thou, who darest
thus call down

The holy wrath of God upon thy
sister?

Towards the Light

The sinner thou hast recklessly
condemned

Thou shalt behold! Repent thy
malediction!

Leave to thy God, the Strong
Avenger's hands

The care of vindicating martyr's
blood!"

Beside me stood an angel. Sad
and stern

I found his look, which seemed
to pierce my soul.

He grasped the hand I tremblingly
outstretched,

Then, swift as thought, he swept
away with me.

Towards the Light

He took me to the city where I
lived

In former days. We reached a
den of vice,

Where during life I was a con-
stant guest.

At his command I entered it
again. . . .

How weird, how strange appeared
the house of sin!

Aghast, I saw among the shame-
less crowd

Unnoticed guests from silent spirit-
worlds

Stand dark and threat'ning close
behind the living.

Towards the Light

I saw how evil souls with deadly
hate

Urge fallen men to ever darker
deeds ;

I saw God's angels struggling hard
to save

The sparks of virtue, not extin-
guished yet.

This noisy palace was a battlefield,
Where little recked the mortals
that their fate

Hung on the silent fight 'twixt
light and darkness.

But many gloomy spirits, too, I
marked,

Who did not fight, but wandered
round the place

Towards the Light

In dismal watchfulness and dumb
despair.

These were the souls, who once
had thriven there.

Mortals, who spend their lives in
wanton revels,

Mourn bitterly, when solemn
death appears,

And sternly summons them to
leave this world.

They strive against their lot. . . .

They fain would linger
Still on this earth, whose vilest
pleasures

Emprison after death their hapless
souls.

Towards the Light

They have no strength to rend
the loathsome fetters,

That vice has forged. Earth's
joys they still remember. . . .

Alas, poor slaves! They love and
miss them yet.

Their evil lusts remain and torture
them

Since they no longer can be satisfied.

Thus they remain until desire is
dead,

Compelled to watch the sins of
living men.

At length they loathe the very
sight of vice.

Then slowly they forget their
low delights:

Towards the Light

Unclean remembrances are swept
away. . . .

The soul begins to long for purer
air

And lifts its weary glance from
dismal earth.

'Till lo! It sees a ray of distant
heaven

And stretches unaccustomed arms
in prayer. . . .

The heavy chains slip off: the
soul is free!

Magnetic force attracts it up to
God.

When no regrets enchain the soul
to earth

Towards the Light

Then it is lifted up by ardent
longing
To radiant spheres, that it can-
not approach
Until it learns that Death means
— Liberty.

I noticed then a spirit standing
by,
With wistful gaze intently bent
on me.
How well I knew the form. . . .
It was my mother!
I flew to greet her with a cry of
joy,
But she drew back avoiding my
embrace.

Towards the Light

On earth my mother's arms were
never closed

Against the son she tenderly
adored.

Now — mournfully she pointed
to the crowd

Surrounding us. . . . With burn-
ing shame I cried:

“Oh, Mother! Mother! Have I
brought you here?”

She bowed her head in silent,
tearless sorrow. . . .

Then brokenly she whispered:

“Oh, my son!

You were my idol — dearer than
my God,

Towards the Light

Who granted me the gift of
motherhood.

Enthralled by trammels of an
earthly love,

No soul can rise. The tie must
first be broken —

The clay we worship from its
altar flung.

When death approached, I
yearned to stay with you.

I had my wish! I was no longer
free.

My love had grown a chain at-
taching me

Close to your side. Invisible I
stood

Towards the Light

And read within your heart your
guilty thoughts. —

I followed you with horror to
this place. . . .

My son! My son! You were
my pride and joy,

But now my head is bent in
shame for you.

You added grievous burden to my
cross

By dragging me with you to
degradation.”

I stood amazed and overcome
with grief:

“Oh! Mother! Dearest mother
— pardon me!

Towards the Light

I did not know. . . . Oh! had
I only guessed
That your pure eyes could see
my darkest deeds,
My evil angel should not have
prevailed.
Nay, I had fought him then with
might and main.
No man on earth can surely be
so fallen,
That he would plunge in vice, if
but he knew
His mother's eyes could follow
him. . . . Each one
Would shudder at the thought
that the departed,

Towards the Light

Dear to his heart, was thus compelled to be

A silent witness to his hidden sins!

Atrocious is my doom! Yet — well deserved. . . .

But you! What crime is yours? Your love for me?

Are mothers punished for their deep devotion?

Unjust is He, who such a verdict passed.”

The shade of holy wrath, which long had darkened

My mother's tender features, vanished now.

Towards the Light

She gently smiled: "Do not so
quickly judge

The sacred laws, you fail to un-
derstand.

If keener pain is measured out
to me

Than I deserve — I suffer not in
vain!

It is for your dear sake . . . I
murmur not.

One day, my grief shall be your
gain, my child.

When once you truly grasp the
love of Christ,

Who suffered meek a thousand
pangs for us,

Towards the Light

Then at the mem'ry of your
mother's grief
You will adore the mercy of the
Lord."

"You love me still—although
you now have gazed
Into the deep abyss, down which
I fell?"

I cried, all trembling with sur-
prise and joy.

Then in a whisper soft the
answer came:

"I love you still — but now with
tender pity.

My blind devotion helped to ruin
you.

Towards the Light

No mortal man is fit to be adored;
I worship you no more! My
broken idol

Has lost the power to enthrall
my heart.

Woe unto me! . . . I knew not,
in my blindness,

That women harm the men they
long to serve

By giving all and claiming nothing. Love

Must be the recompense of noble
strife;

A price to victory — then it is
precious!

The love a man deserves — he
values high;

Towards the Light

The love unearned, despises wan-
tonly.

Once I was weak — the slave of
my own heart ;

Now I am strong : the ruler of
my love.

It has no more the power to hold
me down ;

Strength from above is granted
it — to raise !”

“ Oh, mother dear ! Do not
abandon me !

I am unworthy of your love”
— I cried.

“ But do not leave me, hopeless
and alone !

Towards the Light

You have your liberty : I still am
chained. . . .

Remain with me, though you at
last are free !”

She answered gently : “Such a
sacrifice

Would bring no benefit to you,
my son.

My mother-heart would gladly
share your woe

If, by the sharing, I might rend
your bonds.

Alas ! Each spirit has to fight
alone

The strenuous battle with the
lower self.

Towards the Light

No other back than ours may
bear our load;

No human aid can drag for us
our cross.

The only help I can bestow —
is prayer.

Allow no hopeless sorrows to
consume you,

Because I am compelled to leave
your side.

My yearning lifts me upward:
you will follow

When you have learned to meekly
bear your fate.

Be brave! For every victory you
gain

Towards the Light

You will receive sweet comfort
from above."

My mother vanished. I was left
alone. . . .

No friend in all this crowd! I
felt myself

Abandoned, lost and utterly for-
lorn,

My heart was filled with bitter-
ness intense.

Then to the angel at my side I
turned:

"Behold! Oh Lord! Even my
mother shuns me. . . .

Let me return unto my lonely
grave!

Towards the Light

I will not linger in this noisy
crowd :

Abhorrent to me is the sight
of sin,

I suffered less in my dark solitude.”

“Remember thy companion at
thy grave,”

The angel gently said. “Fulfil
thy mission!

The child is still alive. Go —
find its mother

And crush her with thy righteous
malediction!

Behold the woman in that corner
crouching. . . .

Towards the Light

Draw near! 'Tis she — go and
observe her well."

In silence I reluctantly obeyed.
The pangs of grief had cooled
my earlier wrath;
Revengeful thoughts within me
long had died.
What could I have to do with
that poor creature
Her shocking sin was no concern
of mine.
I could not clearly see the woman's
face,
For she had hidden it with both
her hands,

Towards the Light

And 'gainst the table rested
warily.

Exhausted, desperate, she seemed
to be

A wounded animal that yearns to
die. . . .

She could not laugh, as others of
her trade,

Nor weep. . . . The fountain of
her tears had dried.

I watched the hapless creature
till my heart

Grew soft to her. The angel
whispered low:

“This is the woman, thou hast
dared to curse!

Towards the Light

Remembrance of her child now
tortures her. . . .

Behold her grief! What pang
hast thou to add

To crush more utterly that broken
heart?

Why art thou silent? Dost thou
fear to judge

The fallen sister, who before thee
stands?

God's justice she shall not con-
front alone:

There is a man whose sin is
greater still.

That babe a father had! It was
his duty

Towards the Light

To give protection unto child and
mother.

He cast them both aside! This
coward deed

For vengeance cries to heaven,
though on earth

Such acts are not condemned by
human laws.

God made man strong that he
might help the weak

Whom now he ruins, careless
of remorse.

Behold this woman here, so deeply
sunken!

There was a time when she was
sweet and pure ;

Towards the Light

Her only treasure — her chaste
innocence —

She, thoughtless, gave away with
lavish hands.

The man she loved and trusted
took the gift

And in return gave lifelong shame
and grief.

He needed not her love. . . . An
idle hour

It gratified a passing whim — no
more!

Cold scorn and mockery assailed
her steps

Wherever with her nameless child
she went.

Towards the Light

Each door was closed. . . . This
one alone was open ;
So in despair the little one she left.
Who for this crime should justly
bear the blame?"

Impulsively I cried: "The heart-
less father !
He murdered both the mother
and the child.
So base a scoundrel is not fit
to live!"

The angel murmured : " Look at
her once more
And beg thy God to be a lenient
Judge!"

Towards the Light

I looked — and looked again —
with wonder filled. . . .

And suddenly it seemed to me I
knew her. . . .

Her bended form familiar was
to me.

I sought 'mid half forgotten
memories :

I must have known her — surely,
ah ! But where ?

She raised her face : I saw the
pallid features. . . .

Oh God ! 't was she — the happy,
playful child,

Whose rosy lips — alas — had
tempted me.

Towards the Light

I recognised the spot beneath the
curls,

Where I had kissed her last with
languid lips.

I sank together with a shuddering
cry.

The angel sternly said: "Thou
art the man!

The helpless infant, flung away
to perish,

Whom thou hast deigned to pity
— is thy son.

The tiny victim waits. . . . Come,
watch him die!"

Once more I stood beside the
lonely spot,

Towards the Light

Where — on his bed of snow —
the boy was resting.
He was alive as yet, although the
breathing
Could scarcely be perceived, so
faint it was.
I bent despairing o'er the pros-
trate form
And cried aloud in bitter help-
lessness:
“Oh, could I purchase with a
thousand pangs
One hour of life — that life I
once disdained,
How quickly I would fly to
summon help.

Towards the Light

My hapless child, thou wouldst
not perish thus!"

My sigh no echo raised. . . . It
died unheard.

The howling gale alone gave me
response

By heaping higher drifts of
glitt'ring snow

All round that fragile wreck of
human life.

The child would perish if no
help arrived. . . .

No *hope* was possible — yet still
I hoped!

It could not — should not be . . .
I must prevent

Towards the Light

My crime from reaping such a
bitter harvest.

Alas! I had no power to help.

I felt

My utter nothingness. My very
soul

Rose up to God in ardent suppli-
cation.

In that dark hour of anguish
faith was born —

Faith in the mighty Lord, whose
hand can snatch

Away from death its victims. I
attempted

To lift my being on the wings
of prayer,

Towards the Light

Humbly imploring God to spare
my child.

I then perceived a multitude of
angels;

Their silver voices chanted—

“Pray as we:

Thy will be done in heaven and
on earth,

Oh God of love, forever and for-
ever!”

I sank again down from the
dazzling worlds

To which my ardent thought
had tried to soar;

Half blinded by the glories there
perceived

Towards the Light

I never dared to stammer forth
my prayer.

How dismal, cold and dark the
earth appeared.

Poor child! Why had I wished
to chain him there?

No! No! I ought no longer to
prevent

His pure, white soul from taking
instant flight

Straight to the arms of Christ
—the children's friend.

A martyr's crown waits those
who meekly suffer

For others' guilt. . . . My son
had won that crown.

Towards the Light

“Ah! What is this? Whence
comes this wondrous light
Which now illuminates the night
with brilliance?”

It emanates from me!” I saw
a flame,
Which issued from my icy heart
— ’t was *love*.

That spark from heaven, kindled
by my child,
Was fed with burning fuel of
repentance.

All thrilled with joy, I felt a
stream of warmth,
Of radiant light, all through my
being glow.

Towards the Light

At last I knew how sweet it is
to love,
And felt most grateful to have
learned that lesson.

The end drew near. . . . A snow-
white childish soul
Emerged from out its broken
fragile shell ;
And I drew back, not daring to
approach,
Lest he in terror should recoil
from me,
And shun the father who had
given him
The wretched gift of life, — and
nothing else.

Towards the Light

The child was gazing out. . . .

He felt alone

There on the threshold of that
unknown world

To which he had been sum-
moned. Would he still

No father find, with sheltering
arms outstretched?

On earth his greeting was a
mother's tears. . . .

Though innocent, he was the
child of shame.

He had been born. . . . That
was his only crime!

Was not that crime by death
atoned in full?

Towards the Light

Now that to spirit life he had
returned,

Was there no father who his
duty knew?

He looked around and then per-
ceived at last

The flame, which from my soul
leapt forth to meet him :

“I missed thee, whom I never
knew on earth!”

He whispered, nestling in my
hungry arms—

“Oh father, where thou stayest,
let me stay!”

“No! No! Around me all is
cold and dreary. . . .

Towards the Light

Poor child, I will not share with
thee my woe.

My crime against thee would still
more oppress me

If I delayed thy luminous ascent.

Look up! Behold the thousand
stars of heaven :

Thy home is there! Spread out
thy snowy wings!

I love thee. Gladly will I now
renounce

The joy thy presence would have
given me.

Farewell, we soon shall meet. I
follow thee,

When in His mercy, God my
pardon seals."

Towards the Light

The child then cried: "See, see
thy chain is broken!

Oh father! Thou art free! What
blessed joy. . . .

Now, hand in hand to heaven we
can rise

We two — together — always.
God is good!"

What glorious bliss it was at last
to fly

Away from cloudy earth in liberty
And to approach the sun, whose
golden rays

Surrounded us with roseate bril-
liancy.

Divinely fair is the eternal dawn,

Towards the Light

Which greets the first ascension
of the soul.

Its wondrous splendour mirrors
faintly forth

The great Creator's own magnifi-
cence.

Praise, glory and thanksgiving
unto God,

Who made the sun — an emblem
of Himself.

The human eye cannot endure
its radiance ;

When spirits lift their glance to
it they tremble

And reverently bend in adoration
Of that sun's origin, the Source
of Life.

Towards the Light

Man can by virtue of his thoughts
create

A tiny world of beauty for him-
self.

The thoughts of God gave birth
to lustrous heavens ;

The stars are a reflection of His
glory.

Life, Love and Light compose
the Trinity.

A myriad sparks proceeded from
that source.

Each spark must grow till it
becomes a flame,

Which through Eternity will not
be quenched.

Towards the Light

How is the soul to grow? Through
sorrow only,

For grief makes man grow greater
than himself.

Affliction winnows tares from out
the wheat. . . .

The wheat grows up. . . . It is
the crop of God.

Behold the drops of rain, which
fall from heaven ;

• They mingle briefly with the
dust of earth,

Until the sun recalls them from
the clay,

And lifts each sparkling drop up
to the skies.

Towards the Light

So shall at last each wand'ring
soul return

Unto the Source of Life from
which it flowed,

There to enjoy communion with
the Christ

And merge in perfect unison with
God.

There is no Paradise of idle rest,
Where blessed spirits dwell in
aimless joy.

The highest goal to which we
can aspire

Is to resemble God. To reach
that end

We struggle upwards through a
million years.

Towards the Light

Eternal hope brings us eternal
joy:

We paradise create within our
breast.

When Sorrow comes to visit
human hearts,

That Angel's mission is to sweep
the Temple

Where God Himself elects in
grace to dwell.

We follow in the mighty steps
of Grief

With gentle tread and cool the
burning wound;

We kiss away the tear which hides
the sky.

Towards the Light

Another Angel comes. . . . His
name is PEACE.

He finds in broken hearts a
resting place.

To ev'ry spot on earth where
prayers rise

We quickly fly and carry them
to heaven,

Descending swift with blessing
from above.

We watch in patience by the bed
of pain

And guide the falt'ring steps of
infant souls;

We fill the poet's dreams with
wondrous beauty,

Towards the Light

And bid him hear a strain of
angels' songs.

His silent sobs we melt in
harmony. . . .

His highest thought is but a gift
from us.

Say! Can there be a fairer paradise?
Can mortals dream a joy exceed-
ing ours?

Like Christ, we always sacrifice
ourselves,

Yet keep eternally more than we
give.

Now dawn is near. . . . Thy lamp
is burning low!

Towards the Light

Thy weary head sinks down in
lassitude.

Thy task is done: Our spirit
child created!

Fruit of my thought—it has
grown up in thee;

In pain brought forth, but yet of
love begotten.

The seed he bears within is Life
Eternal.

That seed will germinate in
bleeding hearts

And ripen to a crop of richest
blessing.

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BOVIGNY CHAPEL, BELGIUM.
Midsummernight, 1899.