

Classic Poetry Series

**Joseph Mary Plunkett**  
**- poems -**

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# Joseph Mary Plunkett(21 November 1887 – 4 May 1916)

Joseph Mary Plunkett (Irish: Seosamh Máire Pluincéid) was an Irish nationalist, poet, journalist, and a leader of the 1916 Easter Rising.

## <b>Background</b>

Plunkett was born at 26 Upper Fitzwilliam Street in one of Dublin's most affluent neighborhoods. Both his parents came from wealthy backgrounds, and his father, George Noble Plunkett, had been made a papal count. Despite being born into a life of privilege, young Joe Plunkett did not have an easy childhood.

Plunkett contracted tuberculosis at a young age. This was to be a lifelong burden. His mother was unwilling to believe his health was as bad as it was. He spent part of his youth in the warmer climates of the Mediterranean and north Africa. He was educated at the Catholic University School (CUS) and by the Jesuits at Belvedere College in Dublin and later at Stonyhurst College, in Lancashire, where he acquired some military knowledge from the Officers' Training Corps.

Throughout his life, Joseph Plunkett took an active interest in Irish heritage and the Irish language, and also studied Esperanto. Plunkett was one of the founders of the Irish Esperanto League. He joined the Gaelic League and began studying with Thomas MacDonagh, with whom he formed a lifelong friendship. The two were both poets with an interest in theater, and both were early members of the Irish Volunteers, joining their provisional committee. Plunkett's interest in Irish nationalism spread throughout his family, notably to his younger brothers George and John, as well as his father, who allowed his property in Kimmage, south Dublin, to be used as a training camp for young men who wished to escape conscription in England during World War I. Men there were instead trained to fight for Ireland.

## <b>IRB involvement</b>

Sometime in 1915 Joseph Plunkett joined the Irish Republican Brotherhood and soon after was sent to Germany to meet with Roger Casement, who was negotiating with the German government on behalf of Ireland. Casement's role as emissary was self-appointed, and, as he was not a member of the IRB, that organisation's leadership wished to have one of their own contact Germany to negotiate German aid for an uprising the following year. He was seeking (but not limiting himself to) a shipment of arms. Casement, on the other hand, spent

most of his energies recruiting Irish prisoners of war in Germany to form a brigade to fight instead for Ireland. Some nationalists in Ireland saw this as a fruitless endeavor, and preferred to seek weapons. Plunkett successfully got a promise of a German arms shipment to coincide with the rising.

### **<b>The Easter Rising</b>**

Plunkett was one of the original members of the IRB Military Committee that was responsible for planning the rising, and it was largely his plan that was followed. As such he may be held partially responsible for the military disaster that ensued, one should realize that in the circumstances any plan was bound to fail.[citation needed] Shortly before the rising was to begin, Plunkett was hospitalized following a turn for the worse in his health. He had an operation on his neck glands days before Easter and had to struggle out of bed to take part in what was to follow. Still bandaged, he took his place in the General Post Office with several other of the rising's leaders such as [Patrick Pearse](http://www.poemhunter.com/patrick-henry-pearse/) and Tom Clarke, though his health prevented him from being terribly active. His energetic aide de camp was Michael Collins.

### **<b>Marriage and execution</b>**

Following the surrender Plunkett was held in Kilmainham Gaol, and faced a court martial. Hours before his execution by firing squad at the age of 28, he was married in the prison chapel to his sweetheart Grace Gifford, a Protestant convert to Catholicism, whose sister, Muriel, had years before also converted and married his best friend Thomas MacDonagh, who was also executed for his role in the Easter Rising.

### **<b>Aftermath</b>**

His brothers George Oliver Plunkett and Jack Plunkett joined him in the Easter Rising and later became important IRA men. However his father's cousin, Horace Plunkett, was a Protestant Unionist who sought to reconcile both sides. Instead, he witnessed his own home burned down by the Anti-Treaty IRA during the Irish Civil War.

The main railway station in Waterford City is named after him as is Joseph Plunkett tower in Ballymun. Plunkett barracks in the Curragh Camp, County Kildare is also named after him.

## 1841-1891

The wind rose, the sea rose  
A wave rose on the sea,  
It sang the mournful singing  
Of a sad centenary;

It sang the song of an old man  
Whose heart had died of grief,  
Whose soul had dried and withered  
At the falling of the leaf.

It sang the song of a young man  
Whose heart had died of pain  
When Spring was black and withered  
And the winter come again.

The wind rose, the sea rose  
A wave rose on the sea  
Swelled with the mournful singing  
Of a sad centenary.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# 1867

All our best ye have branded  
When the people were choosing them,  
When 'twas Death they demanded  
Ye laughed! Ye were losing them.  
But the blood that ye spilt in the night  
Crieth loudly to God,  
And their name hath the strength and the might  
Of a sword for the sod.

In the days of our doom and our dread  
Ye were cruel and callous,  
Grim Death with our fighters ye fed  
Through the jaws of the gallows;  
But a blasting and blight was the fee  
For which ye had bartered them,  
And we smite with the sword that from ye  
We had gained when ye martyred them!

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# A Wave Of The Sea

I am a wave of the sea  
And the foam of the wave  
And the wind of the foam  
And the wings of the wind.

My soul's in the salt of the sea  
In the weight of the wave  
In the bubbles of foam  
In the ways of the wind.

My gift is the depth of the sea  
The strength of the wave  
The lightness of foam  
The speed of the wind.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# Aaron

I am the Seer: for in you I see  
The fair unfolding of a secret flower,  
The pomp and pageant of eternal power,  
The crown and pride of your high destiny.  
I am the Prophet: this your prophecy—  
Your deeds and Heaven's fill the echoing hour,  
The Splendour of all splendours for your dower  
Is given, a witness of the things to be.

I am the Poet, but I cannot sing  
Of your dear worth, or mortal or divine;  
No music hidden in any song of mine  
Can give you praise; yet the trimmed rod I bring  
To you, O Temple, asking, for a sign,  
That in the morn it may be blossoming.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# Arbor Vitae

Beside the golden gate there grows a tree  
Whose heavy fruit gives entrance to the ways  
Of Wonder, and the leaves thereof are days  
Of desolation—nights of agony  
The buds and blossom for the fruits to be:  
Rooted in terror the dead trunk decays,  
The burdened branches drooping to the clays  
Clammy with blood of crushed humanity.

But lo the fruit! Sweet-bitter, red and white,  
Better than wine—better than timely death  
When surfeited with sorrow—Lo the bright  
Mansions beyond the gate! And Love, thy breath  
Fanning our flaming hearts where entereth  
Thy Song of Songs with Love's tumultuous light.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# Before The Glory Of Your Love

Before the glory of your love  
The beauty of the world is bowed  
In adoration, and to prove  
Your praises every Truth is proud:

Each silent witness testifies  
Your wonder by its native worth  
And dumbly its delight denies  
That your wild music may have birth:

Only this madman cannot keep  
Your peace, but flings his bursting heart  
Forth to red battle,—while they weep  
Your music who have held apart.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# Daybreak

As blazes forth through clouds the morning sun,  
So shines your soul, and I must veil my sight  
Lest it be stricken to eternal night  
By too much seeing ere my song be done,  
And I must sing your body's clouds that run  
To hide you with their crimson, green and white  
At sunset dawn and noon—and then the flight  
Of stars that chant your praise in unison.  
But I beneath the planetary choir  
Still as a stone lie dumbly, till the dark  
Lifts its broad wings—then swift as you draw nigher  
I raise Memnonian song, and all must hark,  
For you have flung a brand and fixed a spark  
Deep in the stone, of your immortal fire.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# Die Taube

To-day when I beheld you all alone  
And might have stayed to speak, the watchful love  
Leapt up within my heart—then quick to prove  
New strength, the fruit of sorrow you have sown  
Sank in my stormy bosom like a stone  
Nor dared to rise on flaming plumes above  
Passionless winds, till you, O shining dove  
Far from the range of wounding words had flown.

Far have you flown, and blows of battle cease  
To drape the skies in tapestries of blood,  
Now sinks within my heart the heaving flood  
And Love's long-fluttering pinions I release,  
Bidding them not return till blooms the bud  
On olive branch, borne by the bird of peace.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# Heaven In Hell

If the dread all-seeing stars,  
Ringed Saturn and ruddy Mars  
And their companions all the seven,  
That play before the lord of Heaven,  
Each blossoming nebula and all  
The constellations, were to fall  
Low at my feet and worship me,  
Endow me with all sovranty  
Of their wide kingdom of the blue—  
Yet I would not believe that you  
Could love me—If besides the nine  
Encircling legions all-divine  
Should, chanting, teach me that my worth  
Outshone the souls of men on earth  
And seraphs in Heaven, and as well  
That glittering demons deep in Hell  
Fled at my frown, obeyed my word—  
If every flower and beast and bird  
In God's great earth and splendid sea  
Should live and love and fight, for me  
And my sweet singing and sad art—  
Yet could I not conceive your heart  
Stooping to mine, nor your wild eyes  
Unveiling their deep ecstasies,  
Your tenebrous hair sweep near my lips,  
Your eyelids bring your soul eclipse  
For fear that I should be made blind  
By love's bright image in your mind.  
You are the Standard of high Heaven,  
The Banner brave towards which I've striven  
To force my way—To seize and hold  
The citadel of the city of gold  
I must attain the Flag of love  
Blazoned with the eternal Dove.

Once Immortality, a babe,  
Played with the Future's astrolabe  
And marked a destiny thereon  
More splendid than the morning sun

Leaping to glory from the earth:  
More wondrous than the wonder-birth  
Of the white moon from darkest rock;  
More strange than should the sun unlock  
His leashes and let slip the stars;  
More desperate than the clanging wars  
Twixt Hell and Heaven; still more great  
Than any favourable fate;  
But beyond all things beautiful,  
Beyond Mortality's foot-rule  
Of loveliness, and little words—  
Sometimes, at twilit eve, when birds  
Lapse from dream-silence into song,  
Sometimes when Thunder's rolling note  
Reverberates from his iron throat,  
They speak of such high mysteries  
But no one can interpret these—  
All of this dim and deep design  
If I should choose, its crown were mine  
To win or lose by my sole hand  
And heart. I chose, and joined the band  
Of Heaven's adventurers that seek  
To climb the never-conquered peak  
In solitude by their sole might.  
In the dark innocence of night  
I fought unknown inhuman foes  
And left them in their battle-throes,  
Hacked a way through them and advanced  
To where the stars of morning danced  
In your high honour, there I stood  
To see you, till the morning-flood  
Burst from the sky—but your sunrise  
Striking my unaccustomed eyes  
Smote them to darkness, and I turned  
And stumbled towards the night. There burned  
In heart and eyes a drunken flame  
That sang and clamoured out your name,  
And woke a madness in my head.  
The enemies I had left for dead  
Surrounded me with gibbering cries  
And mocked me for my blinded eyes.  
I curst them till they rose in rage

And flung me down a battle-gage  
To fight them on the floors of Hell  
Where solely they're assailable.  
I took the challenge straightaway  
And leaped—and that was yesterday  
Or was last year, but every hour  
For weary years to break their power  
Still must I fight, but now a gleam  
Of hope comes to me like a dream,  
To-day, though dimly, I do see,  
My vision has come back to me.  
And I have learnt in deepest Hell  
I with terror-twisted eyes  
Have watched you play in Paradise,  
Tortured and torn by demons seven  
Have kept my heart's gaze fixed on Heaven,  
Save when the smoky mists of blood  
Have blinded me with their fell flood.  
My desert heart all desolate  
Lit with the mirage of your hate  
I searched, my vision held above,  
For green oasis of your love.  
My heart's dry desert, hot and wide,  
Bounded by flames on every side,  
So dim and old no song can tell,  
Covers the tombs where dead kings dwell:  
Now demons dance upon their tombs,  
Shut with the seals of lasting dooms,  
For them until the world be riven  
No hope of Hell, no fear of Heaven.  
But I, alas! am torn between  
The things unseen and the things seen,  
I alone of the souls I know  
In Hell and Heaven am high and low,  
High in Heaven and low in Hell:  
From pit and peak inaccessible  
To all but Satan and seraphim  
My song gains power and grows more grim.

Only the straining of my vision  
Toward the playing-fields elysian  
Where you with starry comrades fling

Your fervours over eye and wing,  
With deep and happy subtlety  
Flavouring the wine-bag of the bee;  
Thrones, principalities and powers  
Showering with Eden-flowers:  
With Michael's sword and Raphael's lute  
Slaying and singing, making bruit  
Of lovely laughter with your lips  
Sounding as where the honey drips  
At reaping-time by rippling brooks  
Twining between the barley-stocks:  
Only your shape that holds my sight,  
Your ways that fill it with delight,  
Your steps that blossom where you've trod,  
Your laughter like the breath of God,  
And all the braveries that extol  
The living sword that is your soul:  
Only your passion-haunted eyes  
Interpreting your mysteries:  
These are to me and my desire  
For pillar of cloud and pillar of fire,  
A gleam and gloom of Heaven, in Hell  
A high continuous miracle.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# I Love You With My Every Breath

I love you with my every breath,  
I make you songs like thunder birds,  
Give you my life—you give me death  
And stab me with your dreadful words.

You laid my head against your heart  
Last night, my lips upon your breast  
And now you say that we must part  
For fear your heart should be oppressed:

You cannot go against the world  
For my sake only—thus your phrase,  
But I—God's beauty is unfurled  
In your gold hair, and in your gaze

The wisdom of God's bride—each soul  
That shares his love, and yours and mine,  
Two lovers share your aureole  
And one is mortal, one divine:

One came on earth that you might know  
His love for you—that you deny,  
Now you give me this equal blow:  
One died for you, and one will die.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# I Saw The Sun At Midnight

I saw the Sun at midnight, rising red,  
Deep-hued yet glowing, heavy with the stain  
Of blood-compassion, and I saw It gain  
Swiftly in size and growing till It spread  
Over the stars; the heavens bowed their head  
As from Its heart slow dripped a crimson rain,  
Then a great tremor shook It, as of pain—  
The night fell, moaning, as It hung there dead.

O Sun, O Christ, O bleeding Heart of flame!  
Thou givest Thine agony as our life's worth,  
And makest it infinite, lest we have dearth  
Of rights wherewith to call upon Thy Name;  
Thou pawnest Heaven as a pledge for Earth  
And for our glory sufferest all shame.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# I See His Blood Upon The Rose

I see his blood upon the rose  
And in the stars the glory of his eyes,  
His body gleams amid eternal snows,  
His tears fall from the skies.

I see his face in every flower;  
The thunder and the singing of the birds  
Are but his voice—and carven by his power  
Rocks are his written words.

All pathways by his feet are worn,  
His strong heart stirs the ever-beating sea,  
His crown of thorns is twined with every thorn,  
His cross is every tree.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# If I Should Need To Tear Aside

If I should need to tear aside  
The veils that hide both Heaven and Hell  
To tell you that a soul had died  
That once but tried to love you well  
No breath should blow those veils aside.

But if I found your soul could save  
From hell's deep grave my sinking soul  
Only if willingly you gave  
I'd take—and then I'd crave the whole  
Knowing you generous and brave.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

## In The Wilderness

Gaunt windy moons bedraggled in the dusk  
Have drifted by and withered in their shame,  
The once-proud Thunder-Terror, fallen tame,  
Noses for truffles with unwhetted tusk;  
A sickening scent of civet and of musk  
Has clogged the nostrils of the Hound of Fame—  
But flickering stars are blown to vivid flame  
When leaps your beauty from its blazing husk.

Blossom of burning solitude! High things  
Are lit with splendour—Love your glimmering ray  
Smites them to glory—below them and away  
A little song floats upward on the wings  
Of daring, and the thunders of the Day  
Clamour to God the messages it brings.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# Initiation

Our lips can only stammer, yet we chant  
High things of God. We do not hope to praise  
The splendour and the glory of his ways,  
Nor light up Heaven with our low descant:  
But we will follow thee, his hierophant  
Filling with secret canticles the days  
To shadow forth in symbols for their gaze  
What crowns and thrones await his militant.

For all his beauty showered on the earth  
Is summed in thee, O thou most perfect flower;  
His dew has filled thy chalice, and his power  
Blows forth the fragrance of thy mystic worth:  
White blossom of his Tree, behold the hour!  
Fear not! thy fruit is Love's most lovely birth.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# It Is Her Voice Who Dwells Within The Emerald Wall And Sapphire House Of Flame

Behold! a white Hawk tangled in a twisted net of dreams  
Struggles no more, but lines the cords with feathers from her breast  
Seeing herself within the mystic circle of my voice,  
Whereat forthwith its music turns to blades and tongues of fire  
Rending the bonds and weaving round the Hawk a skein of light  
Raising the work and the Toiler to the never-ending Day.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# La Pucelle

She walks the azure meadows where the stars  
Shed glowing petals on her moon-white feet,  
The planets sing to see her, and to greet  
Her, nebulae unfold like nenuphars.  
No dread eclipse the morn of Heaven mars  
But fades before her fearing, lest she meet  
With darkness, while the reckless comets beat  
A path of gold with flickering scimitars.

The battle-ranks of Heaven are marching past  
Squadron by squadron, battalion, and brigade,  
Both horse and foot—Soundless their swift parade,  
Silent till she appears—then quick they cast  
Upon the wind the banner of the Maid,  
And Heaven rocks with Gabriel's trumpet-blast.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# Moriturus Te Salutat

These words that may not reach your heart  
Are wrung from mine in bitter pain,  
You, reading, but despise their art  
That is not art but blood—in vain  
The blood is ebbing from my heart.

The passions of my tortured mind  
Trouble but lightly your calm soul—  
No ugliness besets the blind—  
A shadow on darkness is the whole  
Of my misfortune in your mind.

And yet I love you that you say  
You will not love me—truth is hard,  
'Twere so much easier to give way  
And stay the death-stroke, my reward—  
Courage, brave heart! 'tis Love you slay.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# My Lady Has The Grace Of Death

My lady has the grace of Death  
Whose charity is quick to save,  
Her heart is broad as heaven's breath,  
Deep as the grave.

She found me fainting by the way  
And fed me from her babeless breast  
Then played with me as children play,  
Rocked me to rest.

When soon I rose and cried to heaven  
Moaning for sins I could not weep,  
She told me of her sorrows seven  
Kissed me to sleep.

And when the morn rose bright and ruddy  
And sweet birds sang on the branch above  
She took my sword from her side all bloody  
And died for love.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# My Soul Is Sick With Longing

My soul is sick with longing, shaken with loss,  
Yea, shocked with love lost sudden in a dream,  
Dream-love dream-taken, swept upon the stream  
Of dreaming Truth, dreamt true, yet deemed as dross:  
Dreamt Truth that is to waking Truth a gloss,  
Dream-love that is to the life of loves that seem  
To bear the rood of love's eternal theme,  
The strength that brings to Calvary their cross.

I dreamt that love had lit, a burning bird  
On one green bough of Time, of that dread tree  
Whereto my soul was crucified: that he  
Sang with a seraphs voice some wondrous word  
Blotting out pain, but swift the branch I heard  
Break, withered, and the song ceased suddenly.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

## New Love

The day I knew you loved me we had lain  
Deep in Coill Doraca down by Gleann na Scath  
Unknown to each till suddenly I saw  
You in the shadow, knew oppressive pain  
Stopping my heart, and there you did remain  
In dreadful beauty fair without a flaw,  
Blinding the eyes that yet could not withdraw  
Till wild between us drove the wind and rain.

Breathless we reached the brugh before the west  
Burst in full fury—then with lightning stroke  
The tempest in my heart roared up and broke  
Its barriers, and I swore I would not rest  
Till that mad heart was worthy of your breast  
Or dead for you—and then this love awoke.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# No Song

I loose the secrets of my soul  
And mint my heart to heavy words  
Lest you should need to ask a dole  
Of singing from the winds and birds—  
You will not heed nor bear my soul.

I coin again a greater sum  
Of silence, and you will not heed:  
The fallow spaces call you "Come,  
The season's ripe to sow the seed"—  
Both I and these are better dumb.

I have no way to make you hear,  
No song will echo in your heart;  
Now must I with the fading year  
Fade. Without meeting we must part—  
No song nor silence you will hear.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# Nomina Sunt Consequentia Rerum

I felt within my heart awake and glow  
A spirit of Love's excellence that slept,  
Then I beheld Love as from afar he stept  
So joyful that his face I scarce could know.  
He said: Now think all honour me to show  
And through each word of his Love's laughter crept;  
Then as my lord awhile his splendour kept,  
Gazing there whence he came, where he would go,

Nuala and Columba did I see  
Come towards the place where I was lingering,  
One marvel first, the other following,  
And, even as retelleth memory,  
Love said: That one who follows this our Spring  
Hath Love for name, so like is she to me.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# O Bright! The Stateliness And Grace

O Bright! thy stateliness and grace  
Thy bearing and thy dignity  
Bring intuition of the place  
That still is native unto thee.

Solely thy native airs delight  
Can still thy silences embalm,  
Solely thy native leaven smite  
Through thunders of unbroken calm.

A twyfold presence is and seems  
To emanate from thine atmosphere,  
Clothed in reality and dreams  
It is in heaven, and it is here.

The forms of love enfolding thee  
To flowers of earth and heaven belong,  
Whose roots take hold in mystery  
Too deep for song, too deep for song.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# O Lovely Heart

O lovely heart! O Love  
No more be sorrowful  
Blue are the skies above  
The Spring is beautiful  
And all the flowers  
Are blest with gentle showers.

Although the morning skies  
Are heavy now with rain  
And your incredulous eyes  
Are wondering at your pain,  
Let them but weep.  
And after give them sleep.

O sorrowful! O heart  
Whose joy is difficult  
Though we two are apart—  
Know you shall yet exult  
And all the years  
Be fresher for your tears.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# Occulta

Crowns and imperial purple, thrones of gold,  
Onyx and sard and blazing diadems,  
Lazuli and hyacinth and powerful gems  
Undreamt of even in Babylon of old  
May for a price be given, bought and sold,  
Bartered for silver as was Bethlehem's—  
And yet a Splendour lives that price contemns  
Since Five loud Tongues a deeper worth have told.

Braver is she than ruby, far more wise  
Even than burning sapphire, than emerald  
Anchored more strongly to impalpable skies—  
Upon a diamond pinnacle enwalled  
The banners blaze, and "Victor" she is called,  
Youthful, with laughter in her twilit eyes.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# Prothalamion

Now a gentle dusk shall fall  
Slowly on the world, and all  
The singing voices softly cease  
And a silence and great peace  
Cover all the blushing earth  
Free from sadness as from mirth  
While with willing feet but shy  
She shall tremble and draw nigh  
To the bridal chamber decked  
With darkness by the architect  
Of the seven starry spheres  
And the pit's eternal fires  
Of the nine angelic choirs  
And her happy hopes and fears.  
Then this magic dusk of even  
Shall give way before the night—  
Close the curtains of delight!  
Silence is the only song  
That can speak such mysteries  
As the earth and heaven belong  
When one flesh has compassed these.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# Seals Of Thunder

They say I sing in secrets—they have ears  
But do not hear; have eyes but do not see  
Truth's naked beauty is her panoply,  
Their eyes are blinded with its splendid spears.  
With shadowy symbols fitted to their fears  
Now will I clothe a visible mystery,  
Yet none shall understand the prophecy  
Save you, nor pay the tribute of their tears.

But you will understand me, for I speak  
First to your heart, then to your soul in song  
Spreading its golden pennons for the strong,  
Smiting like sunrise on the snowy peak  
Of glory—and to you the stars belong  
And all the glowing splendours that I seek.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

## See The Crocus' Golden Cup

See the crocus' golden cup  
Like a warrior leaping up  
At the summons of the spring,  
"Guard turn out!" for welcoming  
Of the new elected year.  
The blackbird now with psalter clear  
Sings the ritual of the day  
And the lark with bugle gay  
Blows reveille to the morn,  
Earth and heaven's latest born.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# Signs And Wonders

The bread is mine  
Unmixed with leaven  
And the purple wine  
Of the Vines of Heaven;  
I have asked to see  
If my love shall be  
At the Throne of Three  
With the splendid Seven.

To a blinding car  
Four living creatures  
Enhamessed are,  
Whence One whose features  
Outshone the skies  
At noon, replies  
With her burning eyes—  
The eternal teachers—

“Thy love is a sword  
In the heart of slaughter,  
Thy love is a word  
Of the high-king’s daughter,  
A song that is sung  
In a mystic tongue,  
A fountain sprung  
From the Living Water.

“And thy love shall stand  
In the courts of splendour  
At the King’s left hand,  
Where she shall render  
The gifts of Love  
To the throne above,  
And a shining dove  
Shall there attend her.

“For thy love is a sign  
In the Book of Wonder,  
A mark divine

On the seals of thunder  
That Spirit's light  
And the Water's might  
And the Blood, red-bright  
Have witnessed under."

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# The Claim That Has The Canker On The Rose

The claim that has the canker on the rose  
Is mine on you, man's claim on Paradise  
Hopelessly lost that ceaselessly he sighs  
And all unmerited God still bestows;  
The claim on the invisible wind that blows  
The flame of charity to enemies  
Not to the deadliest sinner, God denies—  
Less claim than this have I on you, God knows.

I cannot ask for any thing from you  
Because my pride is eaten up with shame  
That you should think my poverty a claim  
Upon your charity, knowing it is true  
That all the glories formerly I knew  
Shone from the cloudy splendour of your name.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# The Cloud

I do not know how you can shun  
His sight who sees himself a clod  
Whose blindness still outstares the sun  
And gazes on the hidden God.

I do not know how you can hate  
A heart so set about with fire,  
A sword so linked with heavy fate  
And broken with unknown desire.

I see your eyes with glory blaze  
And splendour bind your dusky hair,  
And ever through the nights and days  
My soul must struggle with despair.

Your beauty must forever be  
My cloud of anguish, and your breath  
Raise sorrow like the surging sea  
Around the windy wastes of death.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# The Dark Way

Rougher than Death the road I choose  
Yet shall my feet not walk astray,  
Though dark, my way I shall not lose  
For this way is the darkest way.

Set but a limit to the loss  
And something shall at last abide  
The blood-stained beams that form the cross  
The thorns that crown the crucified;

But who shall lose all things in One,  
Shut out from heaven and the pit  
Shall lose the darkness and the sun  
The finite and the infinite;

And who shall see in one small flower  
The chariots and the thrones of might  
Shall be in peril from that hour  
Of blindness and the endless night;

And who shall hear in one short name  
Apocalyptic thunders seven  
His heart shall flicker like a flame  
Twixt hell's gates and the gates of heaven.

For I have seen your body's grace,  
The miracle of the flowering rod,  
And in the beauty of your face,  
The glory of the face of God,

And I have heard the thunderous roll  
Clamour from heights of prophecy  
Your splendid name, and from my soul  
Uprose the clouds of minstrelsy.

Now I have chosen in the dark  
The desolate way to walk alone  
Yet strive to keep alive one spark  
Of your known grace and grace unknown.

And when I leave you lest my love  
Should seal your spirit's ark with clay,  
Spread your bright wings, O shining dove,—  
But my way is the darkest way.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# The Heritage To The Race Of Kings

This heritage to the race of kings  
Their children and their children's seed  
Have wrought their prophecies in deed  
Of terrible and splendid things.

The hands that fought, the hearts that broke  
In old immortal tragedies,  
These have not failed beneath the skies,  
Their children's heads refuse the yoke.

And still their hands shall guard the sod  
That holds their father's funeral urn,  
Still shall their hearts volcanic burn  
With anger of the sons of God.

No alien sword shall earn as wage  
The entail of their blood and tears,  
No shameful price for peaceful years  
Shall ever part this heritage.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# The Lions

Her hair's the canopy of heaven,  
Her eyes the pools of healing are,  
Her words wild prophecies whose seven  
Thunders resound from star to star.

Her hands and feet are jewels fine  
Wrought for the edifice of all grace,  
Her breath inebriates like wine—  
The blinding beauty of her face

Is lovelier than the primal light  
And holds her lover's pride apart  
To tame the lions of the night  
That range the wilderness of his heart.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# The Little Black Rose Shall Be Red At Last

Because we share our sorrows and our joys  
And all your dear and intimate thoughts are mine  
We shall not fear the trumpets and the noise  
Of battle, for we know our dreams divine,  
And when my heart is pillowed on your heart  
And ebb and flowing of their passionate flood  
Shall beat in concord love through every part  
Of brain and body—when at last the blood  
O'erleaps the final barrier to find  
Only one source wherein to spend its strength  
And we two lovers, long but one in mind  
And soul, are made one only flesh at length;  
Praise God if this my blood fulfils the doom  
When you, dark rose, shall redden into bloom.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# The Living Temple

O Covenant! O Temple! O trail pride  
Of God's high glory! Set your snowy feet  
On the Red Mountain, while the pinions beat  
Of proximate apocalypse. Uncried  
Halloos of havoc, prophecies denied  
Fulfilment till the Dawn of Wonder, fleet  
In songs precursive down the glittering street  
Where dripped the blood from wounded brows and side.

And you must walk the mountain tops where rode  
Gabriel, Raphael, Michael, when the stars  
Fell from their places, and where Satan strode  
To make his leap. Now bend the cracking spars  
Athwart the mast of the world—and five deep scars  
From that strong Cross call you to their abode.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# The Living Wire

I thought I'd never hear your tongue  
Again in this dead world of shame  
As once when heart and world were young  
And then—you spoke my name.

The barriers of space were spread  
Widely between us, when a shaft  
Of driven lightning broke their dread,  
Leaping—and you had laughed.

The harp-strings in the house of gold  
Vibrate when chants the heavenly choir,  
My heart bound to your heart you hold  
With love—and a living wire.

We are not separate, we two,  
(Alas, not one) beneath our feet  
The blessed earth binds me to you,  
The stones upon the street.

The very stones cry out: No more  
Seek separate paths, each step you've trod  
Brings you but nearer than before  
Home to your heart—and God.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# The Mask

What have I dared to claim  
That you should thus deny?  
If I have used your name  
My songs to beautify  
Mine is the greater fame.

And I have ever sought  
But to proclaim your praise,  
I have regarded naught  
When wandering by your ways  
But truth, my only thought.

What favour did I ask  
That might constrain your heart  
Or heavier make your task?  
But now that you depart  
Wearing a dreadful mask.

And those accusing eyes  
As still as death and cold  
Making my soul surmise  
My song grown overbold  
And all my words unwise—

Now is my claim from thence  
That you should hear your heart's  
Pleading in my defence  
Before your praise departs  
And all your grace goes hence.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# The New Judas

Thee, Christ, I sought to sell all day  
And hurried to the mart to hold  
A hundred heavy coins of gold  
And lo! they would not pay.

But "thirty pieces of silver" cried  
(Thine ancient price), and I agreed,  
Six for each of the wounds that bleed  
In hands and feet and side.

"Including cross and crown" we priced,  
Is now their claim and I refuse,  
I will not bargain all to lose,  
I will not sell Thee, Christ!

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# The Spark

Because I used to shun  
Death and the mouth of hell  
And count my battle won  
If I should see the sun  
The blood and smoke dispel,

Because I used to pray  
That living I might see  
The dawning light of day  
Set me upon my way  
And from my fetters free,

Because I used to seek  
Your answer to my prayer  
And that your soul should speak  
For strengthening of the weak  
To struggle with despair,

Now I have seen my shame  
That I should thus deny  
My soul's divinest flame,  
Now shall I shout your name.  
Now shall I seek to die

By any hands but these  
In battle or in flood,  
On any lands or seas,  
No more shall I share ease,  
No more shall I spare blood

When I have need to fight  
For heaven or for your heart,  
Against the powers of light  
Or darkness I shall smite  
Until their might depart,

Because I know the spark  
Of God has no eclipse,  
Now Death and I embark

And sail into the dark  
With laughter on our lips.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# The Splendour Of God

The drunken stars stagger across the sky,  
The moon wavers and sways like a wind-blown bud,  
Beneath my feet the earth like drifting scud  
Lapses and slides, wallows and shoots on high;  
Immovable things start suddenly flying by,  
The city shakes and quavers, a city of mud  
And ooze—a brawling cataract is my blood  
Of molten metal and fire—like God am I.

When God crushes his passion-fruit for our thirst  
And the universe totters—I have burst the grape  
Of the world, and let its powerful blood escape  
Untasted—crying whether my vision durst  
See God's high glory in a girl's soft shape—  
God! Is my worship blessed or accurst?

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# The Stars Sang In God's Garden

The stars sang in God's garden;  
The stars are the birds of God;  
The night-time is God's harvest,  
Its fruits are the words of God.

God ploughed His fields at morning,  
God sowed His seed at noon,  
God reaped and gathered in His corn  
With the rising of the moon.

The sun rose up at midnight,  
The sun rose red as blood,  
It showed the Reaper, the dead Christ,  
Upon His cross of wood.

For many live that one may die,  
And one must die that many live—  
The stars are silent in the sky  
Lest my poor songs be fugitive.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# The Vigil Of Love

ILLA CANTAT: NOS TACEMUS: QUANDO VER VENIT MEUM?  
QUANDO FIAM UTI CHELIDON, UT TACERE DESINAM?  
PERDIDI MUSAM TACENDO, NEC ME PHOEBUS RESPICIT.  
SIC AMYCLAS, CUM TACERENT, PERDIDIT SILENTIUM.  
CRAS AMET QUI NUNQUAM AMAVIT: QUIQUE AMAVIT CRAS AMET.

She sings, but we are silent: when shall Spring  
Of mine come to me? I as the swallow make  
Me vocal, and this desolate silence break?  
The Muse has left me for I cannot sing;  
Nor does Apollo now his splendour bring  
To aid my vision, blinded for her sake—  
Thus mute Amyclas would not silence wake  
And perished in the shadow of its wing.

The wings of the imperishable Dove  
Unfold for flight, and we shall cease from sorrow;  
Song shall the beauty of dead Silence borrow  
When lips once mute now raise this chant above:  
Love to the loveless shall be given to-morrow,  
To-morrow for the lover shall be love.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# The White Feather

I've watched with Death a dreadful year  
Nor flinched until you plucked apart  
A feather from the wings of Fear—  
Your innocence has stabbed my heart.

I took your terrible trust to keep,  
Deep in my heart it flames and sears,  
And what I've sown I dare not reap  
For bitterness of blinding tears.

I have not scattered starry seed  
On windy ridges of the skies,  
But I have ploughed my heart indeed  
And sown the secrets of your eyes.

And now I cannot reap the grain  
Growing above that stony sod  
Because a shining plume lies plain  
Fallen from following wings of God.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# The Worm Joseph

The worm is clad in plated mail  
And rides upon the envious Earth  
His power prevails and shall prevail  
When Death gleans in the fields of Birth.

He sips the purple wine of kings  
From burnished skulls and bumper hearts,  
Of fat and famine years he sings  
And fills his granaries from the marts.

His brethren that have sold his name,  
Denied him to his ancient Sire,  
Shall seek him when they feel his fame  
Shall find him when they fear his fire.

But you, O Benjamin, beloved,  
Dove-like and young, with him shall sup  
And then departing unreprieved  
Bear with you his divining cup.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# There Is No Deed I Would Not Dare

There is no deed I would not dare,  
Unloving, but to gain your smile,  
No shame or sorrow I would not share  
(Though withering in a wintry while)  
If I could win your friendship's grace  
While Time's slow pace is lagging still  
Though my lost heart should leave no trace  
Of Love on Heaven's immortal will.

There is no death I would not crave  
If thus I'd save your heart from tears;  
To snatch your glory from the grave  
I'd brave all fates and feel no fears  
Although my heart be calm and cold  
And feel no flame nor mirth of Love,  
Nor buoyed with hope be overbold  
To seize and hold the shining Dove.

But I do love you and I know  
Nor any deed nor difficult quest  
To try to compass, that would show  
The fire that burns within my breast;  
I cannot draw the dazzling blade  
My body sheathes. Love's splendid sword,  
Lest you be blinded—and dismayed  
To silence fall my wounded word.

If I would do each desperate thing  
Only to bring you ease or mirth  
What pinnacle for Love's strong wing  
Towers above the heights of Earth?  
I cannot give your soul belief  
In the great visions of my heart,  
I cannot, and it is my grief  
Do aught to please you—but depart.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

## To Grace

The powerful words that from my heart  
Alive and throbbing leap and sing  
Shall bind the dragon's jaws apart  
Or bring you back a vanished spring;  
They shall unseal and seal again  
The fount of wisdom's awful flow,  
So this one guerdon they shall gain  
That your wild beauty still they show.

The joy of Spring leaps from your eyes,  
The strength of dragons in your hair,  
In your young soul we still surprise  
The secret wisdom flowing there;  
But never word shall speak or sing  
Inadequate music where above  
Your burning heart now spreads its wing  
In the wild beauty of your Love.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# Toihte

No hungry star ascendant at my birth  
Foretold the famine that consumes my days,  
No flaming sword prohibited the ways  
Of vision where I parch through beauty's dearth,  
Alas! no flower of heaven or of earth  
Yields loveliness to fill your meed of praise,  
Within my heart no spark divine betrays  
The power to tell of your immortal worth.

You say you are unworthy—how can I  
Fend from your truth the self-destroying dart?  
Within my shield of vision is no part  
Of mirrored certitude you can deny;  
You are what God has made you—and my heart,  
And in this faith at least I'll live and die.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# When All The Stars Become A Memory

When all the stars become a memory  
Hid in the heart of heaven: when the sun  
At last is resting from his weary run  
Sinking to glorious silence in the sea  
Of God's own glory: when the immensity  
Of Nature's universe its fate has won  
And its reward: when death to death is done  
And deathless Being's all that is to be—

Your praise shall 'scape the grinding of the mills:  
My songs shall live to drive their blinding cars  
Through fiery apocalypse to Heaven's bars!  
When God's loosed might the prophet's word fulfils,  
My songs shall see the ruin of the hills,  
My songs shall sing the dirges of the stars.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# When I Am Dead

When I am dead let not your murderous tears  
Deface with their slow dropping my sad tomb  
Lest your grey head grow greyer for my doom  
And fill its echoing corridors with fears:  
Your heart that my stone monument appears  
While yet I live—O give it not to gloom  
When I am dead, but let some joy illumine  
The ultimate Victory that stings and sears.

Already I can hear the stealthy tread  
Of sorrow breaking through the hush of day;  
I have no hope you will avert my dread,  
Too well I know, that soon am mixed with clay,  
They mourn the body who the spirit slay  
And those that stab the living weep the dead.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# White Dove Of The Wild Dark Eyes

White Dove of the wild dark eyes  
Faint silver flutes are calling  
From the night where the star-mists rise  
And fire-flies falling  
Tremble in starry wise,  
Is it you they are calling?

White Dove of the beating heart  
Shrill golden reeds are thrilling  
In the woods where the shadows start,  
While moonbeams, filling  
With dreams the floweret's heart  
Its dreams are thrilling.

White Dove of the folded wings,  
Soft purple night is crying  
With the voice of fairy things  
For you, lest dying  
They miss your flashing wings,  
Your splendorous flying.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# White Waves On The Water

White waves on the water,  
Gold leaves on the tree,  
As Mananan's daughter  
Arose from the sea.

The bud and the blossom,  
The fruit of the foam  
From Ocean's dark bosom  
Arose, from her home.

She came at your calling,  
O winds of the world,  
When the ripe fruit was falling  
And the flowers unfurled.

She came at your crying  
O creatures of earth,  
And the sound of your sighing  
Made music and mirth.

She came at your keening  
O dreamers of doom,  
And your sleep had new dreaming  
And splendour and bloom.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# Your Fault

Your fault, Lady, is to be  
Womankind's epitome;  
No girl's, but girl essential is your being  
Could we but see beyond our mortal seeing,  
Could we but hear beyond our mortal song  
The song immortal of seraphic throng,  
Could we but know upon each mortal sign  
The seal of immortality divine.

'Tis no virtue that you are  
Virtuous—nor for the star  
To shine, nor flowers to array  
Themselves in glory from the clay;  
That yours is wisdom old and new  
For this we praise your God—not you;  
Yet there is something we can still  
Sing in your praise—your wayward will;  
Something there is that you may own,  
Your faults, thank God, are yours alone  
Not heaven's, nor ever may we doubt  
If these from heaven can shittit you out  
Ourselves shall storm the desperate road  
And welcome you to your abode.

'Tis for this fault we love you, that your eyes  
Regard not unattainable Paradise,  
That not amid the fiery stars you spread  
The nets of your hair, not ever towards the dead  
Set your unwavering feet, your gentle words  
Clothe not in thunders that make mute the birds,  
Nor yet perplex your pentecostal tongue  
With songs too crazy to be said or sung,  
Never make moan of other's joys and fears  
And see all Nature weeping through your tears,  
Fly not, Icarian-wingéd, to the sun  
Leaving the many to pursue the one,  
Chasing, yet hooded hawk, a Shining Dove,  
Nor break your heart about the feet of Love.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

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Nor break your heart about the feet of Love.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# Your Fear

I try to blame  
When from your eyes the battle-flame  
Leaps: when cleaves my speech the spear  
For fear lest I should speak your name:

Your name that's known  
But to your heart, your fear has flown  
To mine: you've heard not any bird,  
No wings have stirred save yours alone.

Alone your wings  
Have fluttered: half-forgotten things  
Come crowding home into your heart,  
Filling your heart with other Springs,

Springs when you've sung  
Your secret name with happy tongue  
Loudly and innocent as the flowers  
Through hours of laughter proudly young.

Young is the year  
And other wings are waking: near  
Your heart my name is knocking loud,  
Ah, be not proud! You need not fear.

Fearing lest I  
Should wrest your secret from on high  
You will not listen to my name,  
I cannot blame you though I try.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

# Your Pride

I sit and beg beside the gate,  
I watch and wait to see you pass,  
You never pass the portals old,  
That gate of gold like gleaming glass.

Yet you have often wandered by,  
I've heard you sigh, I've seen you smile,  
You never smile now as you stray—  
You can but stay a little while.

And now you know your task is hard,  
You must discard your jewelled gear,  
You must not fear to crave a dole  
From any soul that waits you here.

And you have still your regal pride  
And you have sighed that I should see  
Your gifts to me beside the gate,  
Your pride, your great humility.

Joseph Mary Plunkett

## Your Songs

If I have you then I have everything  
In One, and that One nothing of them all  
Nor all compounded, and within the wall  
Beneath the tower I wait to hear you sing:  
Love breathing low above the breast of Spring,  
Pressing her heart with baby heart and small  
From baby lips love-syllables lets fall  
And strokes with gentle hand her quivering wing.

You come rejoicing all the wilderness,  
Filling with praise the land to joy unknown,  
Fresh from that garden whose perfumes have blown  
Down through the valley of the cypresses—  
O heart, you know not your own loveliness,  
Nor these your songs, for they are yours alone.

Joseph Mary Plunkett