

Thou, my Lord, openest another way, a way hidden from unspiritual eyes, a way which travels far from the land of shadows and of age and leads through ever-growing light to realms of eternal peace and wisdom and undying love.

On this journey to Thee every movement is an everlasting gain, every effort is an immortal victory and that dear Paradise which is to be the traveler's goal is never wholly hidden but pours its fragrance far down all Thy Seven Valleys to sweeten the toils of the seeker's way.

Thou warnest us it is no easy enterprise. We all travel towards Thee through the same country towards the same Heaven and have the same Guide. But each of us must trace out his particular path little by little with his own eyes and tread it to the end mile after mile, inch by inch, upon his own feet. He cannot accomplish the journey nor travel forth upon it without pain; nor can he so much as find the beginning of the path without patience.

Thou art veiled from Thy servant, O my companion, and the entrance to the true path is hidden likewise. Though he knows it not, Thy servant's own self-love has woven this veil; and much is to be done, much to be suffered, ere he can see the door Thou hast opened before him.

Urged by an inborn need, Thy servant seeks blindly self-satisfaction in this activity and that. He follows in the train of the world, grasping at what he sees others grasp at. He becomes lost among wayward inclinations, among diverse examples and a multitude of counselors. There is no realization of desire in this; only disappointment and disillusion. The vision--the truth--of Something out of the plane of this activity abides with him--holds him. Its influence grows more distinct. This is of Thy Mercy, O Lord, which reaches through every veil! Thy servant knows of a surety there exists a Hidden Reality, and that with which he busies himself is a shadow-life. The stars, the seas, the lonely mountains, the quiet of the countryside, with one voice of ecstasy tell him of that Beauty which eludes him in human life. For lack of knowledge of Thee, my Lord, in ignorant love he makes the wilderness his home. But lo! he is rebuked by the sense of a greater beauty--the beauty of holiness. In the Sacred Writ of ancient days he reads of Beings who walked this earth of ours, full of love for all mankind, and spread about them a glory that outlasts the centuries and even at this distance of time makes all the splendor of dawn and day and night seem temporal and poor. These are the Prophets of Beauty, the Guardians of Perfect Truth, the Messengers to man of deathless Reality.

What, O Mighty Ones, is this earth whereon you walked, this mortality you shared? What is the wisdom of sorrow and wrong and mutability? Where is our deliverance--and why is there a Prison-house from which to be delivered? What is this "Knowledge of God" of which you speak as the great attainment of spiritual man, as the opening of mysteries, the end of illusion and ignorance?

Thy servant seeks for one who has this knowledge and would, if heaven permit, impart it to him.

Years pass; and he finds none.

Thy servant seeks for one who desires this knowledge and who will not rest till he find it. How precious would be a mortal companion in this search!

He tries many openings. Disappointment follows disappointment. He is baffled; and again baffled. He seems to be more completely at a loss, more near to desolation than ever, when lo! in a moment, almost unawares he finds Thee.

A moment of all moments!

At first it was but an echo that came from far away. There is no voice like the voice of the True One; nor is there any intonation of any voice like that of His!

In rapture, transported with delight, Thy servant answered that remote call.

"Child of the darkness that wandered in
gloom but dreamed of the light

Lo, I have seen thy splendor ablaze in the
heavens afar

Showering gladness and glory and shattering
the shadows of night.

And seen no other star.

"Thy words are to me as fragrances borne
from the gardens of heaven,

Beams of a lamp that is hid in the height
of a holier world,

Arrows of fire that pierce and destroy with
the might of the levin

Into our midnight hurled.

"Weak and unworthy my praise. Yet as
from its throbbing throat

Some lone bird pours its song to the flaming
infinite sky

So unto Thee in the zenith I lift from a
depth remote

This broken human cry."

Happiness wrapped Thy servant about, and his mind passed through opening doors of truth from wonder to wonder.

It is as though the few stray filaments of light which had pierced the gloom and saved it from utter darkness now strengthened one by one and slowly spread seeking perchance to join the edges of their rays and to combine at last to make one ocean of all-encompassing light.

By slow degrees there were revealed the outline and the perspective of the land wherein Thy servant dwelled and wandered. He watched and thought and measured and marveled. Change after change came upon him. The old loveliness and sanctitude that had seemed the utmost and the highest lost its supremacy; lost its sufficiency. A great Beauty dawned. A sovereign Glory outshone lesser Thrones. Thy servant's restless heart no longer wandered in uncertainty; it turned from reflected lights to the one source of light.

How little had he within that hall of blackness known of the realities that lay about him all his life! How unimaginably rich and vast this earth and heaven which the Dawn brings out of the Unseen! And this Thy servant, what is he in the midst of it, O Lord!

How little (as he bathed his thoughts in that increasing glory) how little did he grasp the meanings that were unfolded before him! How blind was he to opportunities Thou offeredst him! How deaf to Thy answer to his prayers!

Is he wiser now? What ancient darkness reigns yet in Thy servant's heart steeping his thoughts in error? What illusions still dim and distort his vision? What false affections numb his soul?

Far off the scene grows clear, but not the path at hand. He presses forward and misses the way and stumbles; and recovering presses on. Well has it been said, O Lord, that the path to Thee is narrow as a hair and sharp as a sword... Has light, too, its rhythms and its waves?

Now again it seems to brighten. Ah, it is one thing to greet a dawn that rises on the distant horizon; it is another to welcome it when it stands in fire on your own threshold. It is one thing to dream and to admire; it is one thing to applaud those who challenged terror and with unblenched cheek walked through the horrors of the Pit; it is another to recognize that Truth's sanctuary is guarded eternally by walls of flame through which no doubt or fear can ever pass alive.

Thy servant must go on. He cannot do otherwise. Sooner or later everyone who worships Truth and Thee must face the searing fire. But from him whose heart loves only Thee, the flames will bend back.

And when the Seven Valleys are traversed to the end; and the Goal is won and Thy Paradise attained, what will remain for any servant of Thine, but to begin his journey again and travel on and on for ever through infinitudes of

wisdom and love, passing from light to fuller light, from Truth to further Truth, from Beauty to a more perfect Beauty?

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