

# *James Rhoades' mystic verse*



We herewith present a selection of poems by James Rhoades, author of *Poems* (1870), *Timoleon* (1875), *Georgics of Virgil in English Verse* (1883), *Dux Redux* (1887), *Æneid of Virgil in English Verse* (1893), *Teresa and other Poems* (1893), *The Little Flowers of St. Francis in English Verse* (1904), *Out of the Silence* (1907), *The Training of the Imagination* (1908), *O Soul of Mine* (1912), *The City of Five Gates* (1913), *Words by the Wayside* (1915).

James Rhoades' *Collected Poems* were first published by T. Fisher Unwin Ltd., London: Adelphi Terrace, 1925.

### To My Friend in America

In science, letters, art, and song —  
    Whate'er the coming ages can  
By thought untrammelled, pure, and strong,  
    To lift the soul of man.

The future, like a vault divine,  
    To you for firmament is given:  
How should so small a spark as mine  
    Glow in so vast a heaven?

### The Shrine of Truth

In science  
If thou could'st see with thine eyes, O Man, if thou could'st hear  
    with thine ears  
Truth as sheds in very truth, and not as to sense appears,  
Could'st sever the substance from the sign, and learn to perceive and know  
She is not throned in the heavens above, nor housed on the earth, below;  
Could'st thou with thine own heart's key unlock the Kingdom that is within,  
There face to face with thy Maker stand, and fear no shadow of sin,  
But see thyself as indeed thou art — for all that He hath is thine —  
Very breath of His very breath, body and soul divine;  
Then every thought were a waft of wings uplifting from death to life,  
With infinite beauty, endless rapture, uttermost glory rife,  
And e'en on the barren crag thou'ldst cry, or in hut with roof-tree riven,  
"This is none other than the House of God and this is the Gate of Heaven."

## 1 Corinthians xii, 26<sup>1</sup>

If e'er man's pride should stoop to understand  
The law which at his being's base doth lie,  
That, if one suffer, all are maimed thereby,  
How Liberty would leap from land to land!  
Fair earth with peace, as with a rainbow-band,  
Would crown her, a new dawn illumine the sky:  
Is it too fond to hope, too soon to cry,  
"Now is the night far' spent, the day at hand"?

O sovereign soul, made mindful whence thou art,  
How God-empowered to rule the earth and bless,  
Now at the last assume thy destined part,  
Bid lust and falsehood to the abyss be hurled,  
Unseal the frozen fount of righteousness,  
That purity and truth may wash the world!

## "The Hidden Vision and the Inner Voice"

Men call it blindness to be reft  
Of sunlight and the dædal weft  
Of Nature seen through human eyes —  
Meadow and mountain, lake or lawn —  
And dream not that, from sense withdrawn,  
The gates of a diviner dawn  
    Open on Paradise.

There are to whom the world is dumb,  
Who cannot catch the sounds that come  
From voice or viol, beast or bird,  
Loud winds, or billows on the beach,  
Nor know that in the heart of each  
There is a silence fraught with speech,  
    The sweeter as un-heard.

For oft in the hushed gloom of night  
Such radiant visions haunt my sight,  
Such spirit voices speak to me,  
That I could cry, "O, Thou most dear  
Creator of both eye and ear,  
Make Thou me deaf that I may hear,  
    And blind that I may see."

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<sup>1</sup> [i.e., "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." KJV]

## "For the Healing of the Nations"<sup>1</sup>

Though earth be now from her true orbit driven,  
    Though lust and rapine desecrate her sod,  
Though hell defiantly seem threatening heaven;  
    And Mammon in man's soul outfacing God;

Though with despair life's very dome be darkened,  
    No rift to rend it, and no star to shine,  
Yet — for e'en now the world's great heart hath harkened  
    To that which breathes within it of divine —

Come, quenchless Hope, come, Faith that moveth mountains,  
    Come, Love long-suffering, eager to forgive,  
Let flow your threefold everlasting fountains,  
    And bid the dying nations drink and live!

## Easter 1917

Spirit of Love, in this triumphant hour  
    That hails Thee victor over time and space,  
While the long silent earth breaks forth in flower,  
    We pray Thee grant thy suffering children grace.

Not to put off this mortal and go free  
    Like caged birds escaping to the skies,  
But through the veiling flesh to radiate Thee,  
    Whom so to radiate is from death to rise.

## The Shortest Day

“Though this be the dead of the year,  
The shortest day,  
And the sun scarce flaunt his ray  
Ere darkness closes,  
We know there is naught to fear,  
For that spring will again be born,  
And the sap that sleeps in the thorn  
Awake in roses.  
Not a flower of them all shall be missed;  
The aconite first will come, and the snowdrop follow,  
And hyacinth keep her tryst  
In the woodland hollow,  
When river and stream are kissed  
By the skimming swallow.

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<sup>1</sup> [Cf. “. . . and the leaves of the tree (of life were) for the healing of the nations.” *Revelation* xxii, 2, KJV]

But what of the sap that teems  
In the stem of the race? O pray  
That the pulse of love at its root,  
So warm and tender,  
May quicken from shoot to shoot  
As the life-blood streams,  
And blossom, and break from dreams  
Into deeds of splendour!”

**“Pax Vobiscum”<sup>1</sup>**

There is a realm of soul that silent lies,  
    Silent but for one voice which speaketh peace —  
    That voice which bade the heart’s wild tumult cease  
Breathed by His lips, or uttered from His eyes,  
Who walked the world as God in human guise,  
    Teaching time’s loss eternity’s increase.  
    So to the earth-bound captive came release,  
And still to self-imprisoned souls it cries  
I am the Way, the Truth, the Life, and ye,  
    Albeit ye know not, of immortal strain:  
    Die, then, to live; lose all, that ye may gain!  
This is the truth, O man, that maketh free,  
And this the way whereby God’s warriors win  
Peace — peace of soul — amidst the battle din.



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<sup>1</sup> [Peace be with you.]