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# The Law of S



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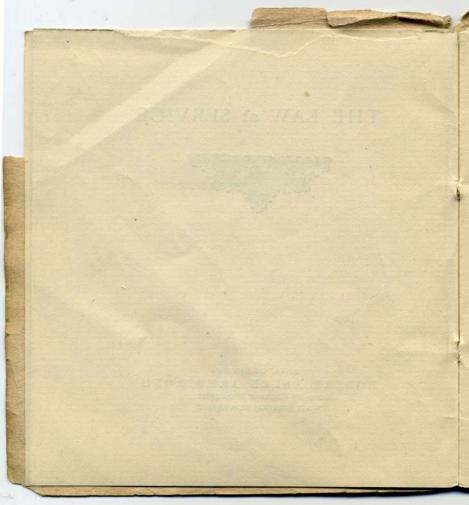




## THE LAW of SERVICE



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### The Law of Service

A Fundamental Law

There can be no such thing as a life which serves no other life. There can be no such thing as an organism which is unrelated to any other organism. It would have no meaning by itself. Suppose we try to frame a definition of the petal of a flower. Can it be isolated from the other parts? Is it possible to form any conception of it except in its connection with the flower? Its definition must include a statement of its relations and its function. Not only its definition, but its life depends upon its relations. It lives by responding to the demands of its relationship. The petal does not unfold for itself; the heart does not work for itself; the lungs do not breathe for themselves; the condition of life to them is ministry. They exist not by themselves, but by service and for service.

This is a fundamental law in the world. All good, all progress, comes out of self-sacrificing service—service even unto the death. This seems to be a law that God has laid at the very foundation of things in the world. The grass, the trees, the flower's, must send their roots down into the mold that has been formed by the death and decay of multitudes of other plants and trees and flowers that once grew and rejoiced in the light. The leaf waves, the grass springs up, the flower opens its beauty to the sun because and only because other leaves and grass and flowers have lived, have served, have died; life has come out of death.

Scientists tell us that in the lower forms of life the duration is determined by this same law. There is really no fixed ratio between the period of growth and the prolongation of life. As soon as the individual has performed his work in perpetuating the species, he dies; he is no longer of value. In some cases he dies at once; however, if external conditions are hard for the young, and his care is needed in tending and

training them, his life is extended. It would seem from this that length of life is measured by the amount of service necessary to preserve and develop the species—that the true measure and

purpose of life is not self, but service.

The history of the world shows us that political liberty has always paid its price of service—has always been bought at the sacrifice of ease, of comfort, of home, of life itself. Spiritual liberty was purchased by the devoted service of One who willingly paid the dearest price. The best things in life are the fruit of vicarious suffering. All progress must pay its price. The good of today springs from the devoted service of yesterday. The grandest results that can come from any life are results seen in the lives of others.

It is this law that makes the mother love stronger than the love of life. It is this law that makes the father and mother dig and delve and save that their children may have the means to go to college. It is this law that makes even the wild beast give her life for her young—service founded upon the law of love. Yea, this

law of service is written by the powerful finger of God in the very constitution of things, and any arrangement of the social order which would put some other principle above it, is a perversion of the divine order.

#### Selfishness Degrading

If any calling, any business, in which men engage, runs contrary to this great law, it is a perversion of the intended order of things, and cannot develop the highest type of life and character. Those callings in which there is great opportunity for helpful service are the ones which really pay best, though payment may not be made in commercial coin. Any business which makes it impossible for a man to serve his fellows, must necessarily pervert and dwarf his better nature. Some one has said that selfishness is the root of all evil. That may be an exaggerated statement, but it is certainly true that he who cannot get beyond himself robs his life of its charm and defeats the very end he

has in view, his own happiness. It is a well known law in the natural world that whatever serves no purpose loses its vitality—shrivels up. So it is a law of our being that he who makes himself of no use to others grows smaller in soul and sympathy. He that will not serve shall lose his power to serve, for "from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." But he who forgets himself in the service of others finds his own nature expanding, growing; his life becomes strong, rich, beautiful.

#### The Primary Law of the Gospel

The law of service is the primary law of the gospel. This may be abundantly attested by Rible texts.

"He that loveth his life shall lose it." "For whosoever shall save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake the same shall save it." "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant." "It is more blessed to give than to receive." "There is that scattereth

and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet but it tendeth to poverty."

The Bible gives but one description of the last judgment. This account puts the law or

service before every other consideration.

"When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say to them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and feet thee, or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

"Then shall he say also unto them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not.

"Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."

The question is, "What have you done?" The

test is service. Apparently the righteous ones did not know that they were followers of Christ. They must have thought that entrance into Christ's kingdom came by ceremonies and creeds, and not by right conduct. Thus are we taught the vital truth that unselfish, sympathetic service is the best passport to God's favor and presence. When our lives and destinies are finally passed upon, the question will not be:

Do you believe in the perseverance of the saints? Do you believe in the apostolic succession? Do you believe in sprinkling, or pouring, or immersion? Do you believe in falling from grace? The question is not whether you have believed in this dogma or that, but ,"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me;" or "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."

Some one has said that the greatest thing a man can do for God is to be kind to some of his other children. A great many people are very anxious to do something for God, solicitous about serving him. To them service means singing songs and shouting hallelujahs. This is, indeed, proper in its place; but helping others to a better life, helping them to get bread to eat, or helping them to the bread of life, is to these persons only incidental service. I once knew a man who spent so much of his time attending religious exercises, "protracted meetings," that he had no time left to care for his family; he didn't have time to work for their support; he said he was serving the Lord; he was of an excitable temperament and was, a great deal of the time, in a state of joyous ecstasy. He would get so ecstatically happy that he wanted to spend all his time praising the Lord and boarding with his neighbors. Such worshippers picture God as a great self-complacent Being, seated on a great throne thinking only of himself and the honors due him. If God were such a being it might do for a man to substitute praying, for plowing, and shouting, for honest toil; but there is no gospel authority for any such substitution: "He that says he loves God and loves not his fellow men, is a liar; and the truth is not in him." Love always leads to service. Service to God's children is counted as service to him.

On a certain Sabbath morning in Nazareth, our great Exemplar declared to the world the purpose of his life: "To preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the brokenhearted; to proclaim liberty to the captive and opening of the prison doors to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God. To comfort all them that mourn in Zion, to give joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." What an ideal of noble, self-sacrificing service!

It is doubtful whether this purpose receives its proper emphasis in all the pulpits of today. While it is true that the clergy, with rare exceptions, give themselves in thorough self-devotion and full service to their fellow men, occasionally there is one who would rather publish his outgrown church creed than this great proclamation, and who gives to his starving people dry, antiquated dogmas instead of the bread of life. In

his characteristic way the late evangelist, Samuel Jones, once upbraided the regular ministers for their attitude toward the essential things and the

dogmatic things of the gospel. He said:

"Your little Presbyterian preacher will talk and talk about 'the perseverance of the saints,'-'the perseverance of the saints,'-and two-thirds of his congregation haven't got anything to persevere on. Your little Episcopalian preacher will keep crying about the 'apostolic succession,' 'the apostolic succession,' and not one-third of his congregation have succeeded to anything that the apostles ever had or wrote about. Your little Baptist preacher will cry, 'water, water, water,' and more than half his congregation going where they can't get a drop. And your little Methodist preacher will cry himself hoarse about 'infant baptism,' 'infant baptism,' and all the babies in the town sleeping peacefully in their cribs at home, and two-thirds of the congregation doing the same in their pews."

This may not be very elegant preaching; but it is possible for us to get a wholesome lesson from it. It emphasizes the fact that vital and essential things are neglected sometimes for the husks of religion. Doing is really more important than believing; creed without conduct will never save the world. The law of service is the fundamental law of the gospel.

#### Time and Place for Service

The time for the best service is always now; the best place is here. James Russell Lowell has taught us the lesson of opportune time and place most beautifully in his poem "The Vision of Sir Launfal." Sir Launfal, the hero of the story, is anxious to do the best service for his master. He has heard that the Knight who shall find the Holy Grail shall become a saint. The possession of that precious cup from which the Savior drank at the last supper, means purity and peace. Such a quest must surely be the highest service. To care for the poor and needy who are around his own castle, to attend them in their sickness, comfort them in their sorrow, and aid them in their distress, would

be work too petty and mean for a great nobleman. Service suitable to a worthy knight must be sought in distant lands, and in an honorable and dangerous quest. So he prepares himself for his departure; his golden spurs and his richest mail are brought, and as was the ancient custom with knights starting on a quest, in full armor he lies on the rushes, without blanket or pillow, in order that a vision may bring him a message concerning his vow and his mission. Slumber falls on him and the vision comes. He seems to see himself go forth from the gloomy castle to seek for the Holy Grail. There is the breath of spring in the air and spring in the young knight's heart. As he passes out of his castle gate a poor beggar in humility asks him for alms. A loathing comes over Sir Launfal; the sunshine goes out of his soul; his flesh shrinks and crawls; the sight of the unkempt beggar rasps on his dainty nature; and in scorn he tosses him a piece of gold, and rides on out into the world where he may find service suitable to his rank and dignity.

The years have gone by, and Sir Launfal is again at his castle gate. He does not come on his spirited charger, decked in gilded trappings. He is an old man now, bent, grayhaired, poor, coming afoot and for very weakness must lean upon his staff. It is Christmas time and his "raiment thin and spare is idle mail 'gainst the barbed air." He has been turned from his own hard gate, for he is no longer master of the castle. As he sits at the gate meditating over his weary and fruitless search for the Holy Grail, there appears before him the same needy and loathsome leper whom he scorned on that bright morning long ago as he hurried forth in his eager desire to do his Master's service. The cry of the leper is the same: "For Christ's sweet sake I beg an alms."

"The happy camels may reach the spring,
But Sir Launfal sees only the grewsome thing,
The leper, lank as the rain-blanched bone,
That cowers beside him, a thing as lone
And white as the ice-isles of Northern seas
In the desolate horror of his disease.

"And Sir Launfal said, 'I behold in thee
An image of him who died on the tree;
Thou also hast had thy crown of thorns,
Thou also hast had thy buffets and scorns,
And to thy life were not denied
The wounds in the hands and feet and side;
Mild Mary's son, acknowledge me;
Behold, through him, I give to thee!'

"Then the soul of the leper stood up in his eyes
And looked at Sir Launfal, and straightway he
Remembered in what a haughtier guise
He had flung an alms to leprosie,
When he girt his young life up in gilded mail
And set forth in search of the Holy Grail.

"The heart within him was ashes and dust;
He parted in twain his single crust,
He broke the ice on the streamlet's brink,
And gave the leper to eat and drink,
"Twas a moldy crust of coarse, brown bread,
"Twas water out of a wooden bowl,—
Yet with fine wheaten bread was the leper fed,
And 'twas red wine he drank with his thirsty soul.

"As Sir Launfal mused with a downcast face, A light shone round about the place; The leper no longer crouched at his side, But stood before him glorified, Shining and tall and fair and straight As the pillar that stood by the Beautiful Gate,— Himself the Gate whereby men can Enter the temple of God in man.

"And the voice that was calmer than shence sald, Lo it is I, be not afraid,
In many climes without avail,
Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy Grail;
Behold, it is here, this cup which thou
Didst fill at the streamlet for me but now;
This crust is my body broken for thee,
This water his blood that died on the tree;
The holy supper is kept, indeed,
In whatso we share with another's need;
Not what we give, but what we share,—
For the gift without the giver is bare;
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three,—
Himself, his hungering neighbor, and me."

Sir Launfal awoke and found that it was all a dream. He had not really gone in quest of the Holy Grail, but was lying on the rushes in his own castle equipped for the journey which was to begin that morning. But he did not sally forth. He removed his armor and ordered it hung on the wall. Henceforth it was to be idle

and useless. For Sir Launfal had learned his lesson. The vision taught him something that revolutionized his life; it taught him the truth about the Holy Grail. Henceforth he knew that this charmed cup was not to be found in foreign lands. All the long weary years that, in his dream, he sought the precious cup afar from home, it rested unrecognized at his own castle gate; for it was the rude wooden bowl in which he gave the leper the water which quenched his thirst. How well he had learned his lesson is shown by what he did on the very morning when he awoke from his dream. He threw wide open his castle gates, and now—

"The meanest serf in Sir Launfal's land
Has hall and bower at his command;
And there's no poor man in the North Countree
But is lord of the earldom as much as he."

#### Service and Happiness

The search for happiness is a universal quest. All the world is seeking it, and yet no plain, direct road to it has been marked out; indeed, it always eludes the search of those who would go straight to it. In the land back of the looking-glass, Alice, in order to reach a given point, had to walk directly away from it. This paradox holds true in the search for happiness; he who would find it must have no solicitude for the thing he seeks. Indeed, he must go further: the renunciation of the claims to happiness is the beginning of happiness. As Emerson says:

For gods delight in gods,

And thrust the weak aside;

To him who scorns their charities

Their arms fly open wide.

Happiness is distinctly the by-product of a life devoted to service, and comes in full measure to him only who is strong enough and great enough to do without it.

#### Service Being Its Reward

Honor and praise, too, come to him who does not seek them. The praise of men universally goes out to a hero. The world is always looking for some one upon whose brow it may place a wreath and at whose feet it may scatter flowers. But who is a hero? One who does something notable for himself? No! One who has sacrificed himself for others. Did you ever see a monument erected to a man who died working for himself? Never! The monuments of the world are built to those who were great enough to sink themselves in the service of others, who have been true to the great law, that we find our own lives in losing them in the service of others. Yes, the honors of the world come to him who does not seek them.

There is a story that upon the perpendicular side of a mountain among the White Hills of New Hampshire, nature had sculptured a gigantic human face. Seen from a distance with the clouds and glorified vapor of the mountain

around it, it seemed to be a wondrous human face full of all its original divinity. All the features of this great stone face and the expression were

at once grand and sweet.

There was a legend about it which declared that at some future day a child should be born in that valley who should become the greatest and noblest personage of his time and whose countenance in manhood should bear an exact resemblance to the great stone face. There was born in that valley a boy named Ernest. His mother told him this story and he always had it in mind when he looked upon that benignant face turned to him from the mountain. He would gaze upon it for hours together until he began to imagine that those vast features recognized him and gave him & smile of kindness and encouragement. How he longed for the coming of the great man wno should fulfill the prophecy. He lived with this hope always before him. It was the inspiration of his life; the thought that he should live to see a man so grand and noble as the one who was to fulfill the prophecy.

Now there had gone out from this valley four boys who all returned great men and Ernest as each came back in his grandeur and glory, · hoped to see the noble features of the great stone face in the hero's countenance, and thus to see the fulfillment of the prophecy. First there came old Gathergold, who astonished the people with his wealth; then came old General Bloodandthunder, who had won renown on many a hard fought battle field; after him came old Stonyphiz, a great politician who was then a candidate before the people for the highest honor which they could bestow upon him, the presidency of the United States; and last came a poet of pure life and gentle spirit, but with no great genius to recommend him to the attention of the world. As each one of these great men came back to his old home he was greeted by large enthusiastic crowds who declared that he was just the image of the Old Man of the Mountain. One after another of the four was greeted with

the same honors, the same plaudits. But Ernest looked at the face of each new-comer and then at the noble features of the great stone face, became sad at heart, and waited on. But while he waited he lived a noble life. He lived a life of unselfish love, of generous service, of good deeds. Until one day as he was standing in a niche of the mountain speaking to a large company of the people, exhorting them to purity of life and nobility of character, his face of a sudden was lit up with such a benevolent grandeur that the whole assembly looked and shouted, "Behold, Ernest is himself the very likeness of the Great Stone Face!" And it was true. He who had waited and longed for the fulfillment of the prophecy in such simple trust, in such devout unconscious greatness, was himself the hero of the legend.

#### Service and Wages-Renunciation

Carlyle has compared life to a fraction. The numerator stands for the service we perform; the denominator, for the wages we ask; and the value of the fraction, for our worth in the world. It is clear, of course, that the value of the fraction may be increased by increasing the numerator or by lessening the denominator. "The Fraction of Life." says Carlyle, "can be increased in value not so much by increasing your Numerator, as by lessening your Denominator. Nay, unless my Algebra deceive me, Unity itself divided by Zero will give infinity. Make thy claim of wages a zero, then: thou hast the world under thy feet. There is in man a Higher than the Love of Happiness: he can do without happiness, and instead thereof find Blessedness. \* \* \* 'Do the Duty that lies nearest thee!"

Here are two pictures illustrating two very different "life-fractions"—contrasting the life of

selfishness and the life of service.

On a lonely island in the Atlantic lies a man

breathing his life away. Without, the tempest rages as if it would mingle heaven and earthbut that is nothing to the tempest that rages in the soul of him who lies waiting the summons of the dark angel of death. There seems to pass before him a vision of his country strong and prosperous as he might have made it if he had only stopped in his mad career of conquest before the world joined against him. There passes before him a long procession of orphans, made so by his unholy wars; he heeds them not. There pass a multitude of mothers and widows mourning their sons and husbands, their loved ones who were sacrificed to his insatiable ambition. They touch no sympathetic chord in his There appears in deep mourning the form of the only woman he ever loved, and whom he pushed from him with the cold hand of ambition, but he cares not for her presence. No remorse fills his soul for all the wreck and ruin he has wrought in the world-wreck and ruin which are the awful price of his glory and his fame. Surely his life will not go out without

one kind thought for those whom he has wronged. Suddenly he raises his head from his pillow, a strange light comes into his eyes, he lifts his arm with a commanding gesture and cries with his last breath, "At the head of the army, at the head of the army." His last thought

is of vengeance and slaughter.

Another picture: Let us go into a certain cemetery in the city of Memphis, Tenn., and there in an obscure corner we shall find a small monument of peculiar structure. There are many magnificent monuments about it, tributes of love to those who have gone forever, but this little monument is a striking one even among them all. It seems to be made of small bits of marble fastened together in some marvelous way, and yet it is one solid block of marble. The inscription, too, interests us. While we are gazing and wondering, we see a man and woman approach the grave, lovingly lay flowers upon the mound and drop on their knees beside it. Then there comes a woman in deep mourning, a girl with sad hollow eyes, a man leading a child, until

almost a score of people are gathered around the grave, all showing the deepest grief and uttering fervent whispered prayers. We ask what all this means, and we get the following story:

Mary was a poor girl who offered her services as a nurse in the city of Memphis when the vellow fever scourge was raging. She did not live in the city, but when she heard of the distress of the poor who were stricken, but who could not pay for the services of professional nurses, she resolved to leave her pleasant country home and do what she could to help them. As she entered the city thousands were leaving, fleeing from the plague, but her heart never faltered. She went at once to the hovels of the poor and there she ministered to them with loving hands. So skilful did she show herself to be-so faithful was she, that many wealthy families hearing of her work and sacrifice, offered her large sums of money if she would come and care for their loved ones who had fallen victims to the plague. But she would not go. "You are able to get other nurses," she said, "but these poor people cannot pay for such service—I will stay with them." So she went about her duties a very ministering angel. There was healing in her touch, there was comfort in her presence, there was heaven in her face. Many were the lives she saved, many the hearts she comforted, and many a dying pillow she softened. For, Mary, besides having the medicine which heals the body, could administer that medicine of the soul which cures everlastingly. She was a loving follower of Him who spent his whole life in trying to soothe and heal the sorrows of this dark grief-stricken, sin-burdened world.

At last the pall lifted from the city, the plague was broken, and only a few lingering cases remained. The people came flocking back to their homes. Mary's work was done and she thought of rest. But, alas, she was so weakened by her long vigils, by her arduous ministrations, that she, too, was stricken with fever, and fell an easy victim to the plague. They buried her in this obscure corner of the cemetery with no stone to mark her resting place. But those

whom she had helped soon found the neglected grave, and they said, "Let us build a monument to her." They asked contributions from those only whom she had befriended. The sum was collected in dimes and quarters and half-dollars—for they were very poor. And when they came to choose the design for the monument, they chose this composite, this mosaic structure to represent the many small sums which made up the love-prompted gift.

"And do you think," they said, "we did not give our mites with joy? It was indeed a contribution offered in sweetest love." "Ah," said a father, "my daughter breathed out her life in Mary's arms." Said a wife, "My husband did not fear to tread the distant, unknown way because she had brought him to the light." A mother said, "She brought back the light of life into the face of my darling child." "Yes," said they all, "she was to us an angel of light, the sweet spirit of consolation, a lovely ministering angel." And when they came to select the in-

scription for the monument, they chose these words:

"Mary Lewis. She died for us."

Service can go no further than this. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend. But God commendeth his love to us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

Rev. Henry Harbaugh has written a number of verses which bring together in a very pleasing way several striking illustrations of the spirit of self-sacrificing service. They are not faultless in figure, form, and phrase, but the truth they tell makes them worth repeating.

#### Supreme Self Sacrifice

Have you heard the tale of the Aloe plant, That grows in the sunny clime? By the humble growth of an hundred years It reaches its blooming time; And then a wondrous bud at its crown, Bursts into a thousand flowers.

This floral queen in its blooming seen
Is the pride of the tropical bowers.
But the plant to the flower is a sacrifice,
For it blooms but once and in blooming dies.

Have you further heard of this Aloe plant
That grows in the sunny clime—
How every one of the thousand flowers
As they drop in the blooming time,
Is an infant tree that fastens its roots
In the place where it falls to the ground;
And fast as they drop from the dying stem
Grow lively and lovely around?
By dying it liveth a thousand fold
In the young that spring from the death of the old.

Have you heard the tale of the Pelican,
The Arab's Gimel el Bahr,
That lives in the African solitudes,
Where the birds that love loneliness are?
Have you heard how it loves its tender young
And toils and cares for their good?
It brings them water from fountains afar
And fishes the seas for their food.
In famine it feeds them—what but love can devise!
The blood of its bosom; and feeding them dies.

Have you heard the tale they tell of the swan— The snow-white bird of the lake? It noiselessly floats on the silvery wave, Or silently sits in the brake; For it saves its song till the close of life, And then in the soft still even,
'Mid the golden light of the setting sun,
It sings as it soars to heaven;
And the blessed notes fall back from the skies—
'Tis its only song—for in singing it dies.

You have heard these tales—shall I tell you one, A greater and better than all?
Have you heard of Him whom the heavens adore—And before whom the hosts of them fail?
How he left the choirs and anthems above, For earth in its wallings and woes,
To suffer the pain and the shame of the cross, And die for the life of his foes?
O Prince of the noble! O sufferer divine!
What sorrow and sacrifice equal to thine?

You have heard this tale—the best of them all, The tale of the holy and true, He dies but his life in untold souls, Lives on in the world anew.
His seed prevails and is filling the earth. As the stars fill the skies above, He taught us to yield up the love of life, For the sake of the life of love.
His death is our life, His life is our garn, The joy for the tear, the peace for the pain.

