

On Love

TO the assembled folk
At great St. Kevin's spoke
Young Brother Amiel on Christmas Eve;
I give you joy, my friends,
That as the round year ends,
We meet once more for gladness by God's leave.

On other festal days
For penitence or praise
Or prayer we meet, or fullness of thanksgiving;
To-night we calendar
The rising of that star
Which lit the old world with new joy of living.

Ah, we disparage still
The Tidings of Good Will,
Discrediting Love's gospel now as then!
And with the verbal creed
That God is love indeed,
Who dares make Love his god before all men?

Shall we not, therefore, friends,
Resolve to make amends
To that glad inspiration of the heart;
To grudge not, to cast out
Selfishness, malice, doubt,
Anger and fear; and for the better part,

To love so much, so well,
The spirit cannot tell
The range and sweep of her own boundary!
There is no period
Between the soul and God;
Love is the tide, God the eternal sea....

To-day we walk by love;
To strive is not enough,
Save against greed and ignorance and might.
We apprehend peace comes
Not with the roll of drums,
But in the still processions of the night.

And we perceive, not awe
But love is the great law
That binds the world together safe and whole.
The splendid planets run
Their courses in the sun;
Love is the gravitation of the soul.

In the profound unknown,
Illumined, fair, and lone,
Each star is set to shimmer in its place.

In the profound divine
Each soul is set to shine,
And its unique appointed orbit trace.

There is no near nor far,
Where glorious Algebar
Swings round his mighty circuit through the night,
Yet where without a sound
The winged seed comes to ground,
And the red leaf seems hardly to alight.

One force, one lore, one need
For satellite and seed,
In the serene benignity for all.
Letting her time-glass run
With star-dust, sun by sun,
In Nature's thought there is no great nor small.

There is no far nor near
Within the spirit's sphere.
The summer sunset's scarlet-yellow wings
Are tinged with the same dye
That paints the tulip's ply.
And what is colour but the soul of things?

(The earth was without form;
God moulded it with storm,
Ice, flood, and tempest, gleaming tint and hue;
Lest it should come to ill
For lack of spirit still,
He gave it colour,—let the love shine through.)...

Of old, men said, 'Sin not;
By every line and jot
Ye shall abide; man's heart is false and vile.'
Christ said, 'By love alone
In man's heart is God known;
Obey the word no falsehood can defile.'...

And since that day we prove
Only how great is love,
Nor to this hour its greatness half believe.
For to what other power
Will life give equal dower,
Or chaos grant one moment of reprieve!

Look down the ages' line,
Where slowly the divine
Evinces energy, puts forth control;
See mighty love alone
Transmuting stock and stone,
Infusing being, helping sense and soul.

And what is energy,
In-working, which bids be
The starry pageant and the life of earth?
What is the genesis
Of every joy and bliss,
Each action dared, each beauty brought to birth?

What hangs the sun on high?
What swells the growing rye?
What bids the loons cry on the Northern lake?
What stirs in swamp and swale,
When April winds prevail,
And all the dwellers of the ground awake?...

What lurks in the deep gaze
Of the old wolf? Amaze,
Hope, recognition, gladness, anger, fear.
But deeper than all these
Love muses, yearns, and sees,
And is the self that does not change nor veer.

Not love of self alone,
Struggle for lair and bone,
But self-denying love of mate and young,
Love that is kind and wise,
Knows trust and sacrifice,
And croons the old dark universal tongue....

And who has understood
Our brothers of the wood,
Save he who puts off guile and every guise
Of violence,—made truce
With panther, bear, and moose,
As beings like ourselves whom love makes wise?

For they, too, do love's will,
Our lesser clansmen still;
The House of Many Mansions holds us all;
Courageous, glad and hale,
They go forth on the trail,
Hearing the message, hearkening to the call....

Open the door to-night
Within your heart, and light
The lantern of love there to shine afar.
On a tumultuous sea
Some straining craft, maybe,
With bearings lost, shall sight love's silver star.

About the Author

Bliss Carman (1861 - 1929) Born April 15, 1861 in Fredericton, New Brunswick. Son of William Carman and Sophia Mary Bliss (Sophia Mary Bliss was a descendent of Daniel Bliss of Concord, Massachusetts, the great-grandfather of Ralph Waldo Emerson; and was the aunt of...

