

Windows of the Soul

by
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Dedication

Sometimes hands never touch, eyes never meet, and words on paper must be the windows of the soul through which God's love radiates. To that Love this book is dedicated.

Preface

I have come to value the privilege of seeing "eye to eye," viewing souls exposed through unveiled eyes. And I have tried, in poetry form, to capture the essence of what I see in the lives of others as well as in my own.

Some poems seem to demand rhyme and measured beat; some naturally fall into a free form.

Some poems are the writer's thoughts and feelings; some are the writer's rendering of the thoughts and feelings of others. But all poetry is written with the desire to find a kindred heart in which an answering chord is sounded, someone who reads with a nod of agreement that affirms, "Yes...those are the feelings I've experienced too."

And perhaps, in a poem here and there, a line will bring a chuckle, an uplifting, a strengthening of conviction. If so, the effort of writing has been rewarded.

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Winona, Mississippi 38967
January 1, 1983

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Windows Of The Soul

In our individual worlds, as long as we are the center of activity, it is impossible to view the whole scene objectively. But do you ever just stand back and look deeply at everyone else? So many people seem so *unawake*, moving like robots without real thought, spending days and years and whole lifetimes with no goal greater than clothing their backs and filling their stomachs and accumulating *things* that they will one day lose in an instant of time. It all seems so useless—senseless—to waste the life of the soul serving the house the soul lives in. Yet they go on from day to day, living so *superficially*, finally to die without ever knowing what living was all about.

But in the sea of eyes, sometimes there is an alertness, a depth, a searching reaching look that is so different it arrests the attention. To me, looking into eyes like that is the most deeply intimate experience one human can have with another, because the soul itself is so completely exposed. At the moment, the expression in those eyes may radiate joy, but it is a joy with vitality that reaches to greater heights than most people ever see; or if the expression is of sorrow, it passes the shallow plane of the average person and becomes an abyss of overwhelming depths; if the expression is one of peace, it is such perfect peace that onlookers cannot understand it and tend to disbelieve it because they have never experienced real peace themselves; or if the expression is of love, that too is doubted because comparatively few people love except in a human selfish sense.

And sometimes, I see eyes that are no longer dull with unawareness, but they are not yet filled with realization either. They are just huge gulfs of emptiness with such silent pleading for help and for answers and for guidance that they haunt me. My heart reaches out to them because I know from my own stumbling steps what growing pains lie in front of them; but I look at them in happiness too because I know, to a small degree, the riches they have in store—riches that satisfy the inner longing of the soul far beyond the power of mere physical wealth or achievement.

Different Kinds Of Self

I have wondered many times why it is that most people are just casual friends, why we rarely reach to the depth of another person's heart.

I think there are several reasons. Maybe sometimes we deliberately avoid getting too deeply involved with another's feelings because that would require giving much more of ourselves to him; maybe we are too selfish to spare the time to get to know others; but I think the real reason is that one must be alone with another person to really get to know him, and people are so seldom alone. With my friends, our husbands and children are almost always present and there is little opportunity to talk simply as one heart to another.

Have you realized that toward each person we are somewhat different because we are affected by the personalities of others? With some people I am always serious; some make me more aware of the ideals I would achieve; some just naturally provoke laughter and light talk; and in a group I become a sort of "cosmopolitan self," usually showing only the lightest of surface feelings.

But when I come to my room and close the door, to myself I am different from what I am with anyone else. I am a dreamer, and dreamers are, I think, of all people the least understood and most often laughed at if they show their true feelings. That is why I seldom allow the dreamer in me to come to the surface before others; yet, that is the best part of me. It thinks the most beautiful thoughts, has the most inspiring views of what *could* be and, unfettered by the worries and wrongs of the world, it is pure ecstasy. I guess that is why I enjoy opportunities to be alone and to live for a little while in a hazy ethereal world.

Dreams...Reality...Memory

Whenever we plan a trip, we enjoy thinking of the various experiences we expect to have, anticipating the details as they will develop, and living out the whole event before it happens. Of course, reality often holds surprises, some happy ones and some that are disappointing. But after we are back home again, we relish remembering all that happened and re-living the experiences again and again through the wonderful tool of memory.

Because the dreaming beforehand and the memories after can cover a much longer period of time than the actual event, I've come to value the "before" and "after" almost as much as the experience. Sometimes it seems a shame to have to separate them into the categories of "dreams", "reality", and "memories".....In its own way each is a very real part of life, and I would like to think of them just flowing together to make up the whole.....

MYSELF

It is so easy to look at people around me and to see their strengths and weaknesses. Sometimes I am amazed at my clarity of vision when my eyes are focused on others, and I wonder why they don't see such obvious points themselves. But then when I turn the searchlight on myself, I begin to realize what a complicated thing "self" is and how difficult it is to make a correct analysis.

Through the years of trying to honestly see myself as I am—not as others see me or as I would like to see myself, but as I really am—I have reached the conclusion that we all wear costumes, displaying ourselves to the world as we would like to be. Early in the morning the costume is fresh, every fold in place. But as the day progresses we lose our disguises, bit by bit, until finally by about one o'clock in the morning we are worn down to being just ourselves. That is the beginning of the "magic hours", when I am too tired to pretend to be what I long to be and am simply myself: as weak in some points as I am strong in others, with a heart that wants to be big and noble and inspiring, but that is plagued with the motley clay of impatience and procrastination and selfishness, an incurable dreamer reaching up for the impossible and the unattainable.

The "magic hours" end in the sweet numbness of sleep, but they arm me for the coming day. I realize that, in growing toward perfection, the goal cannot be reached in this life, but I wake in the mornings ready to

don the costume and try again. My un-muddled view of my countless faults and failures equips me with a new strength in my efforts to grow. I remind myself that there is not one part of my speech or personality or habits of life that cannot be changed and improved with conscious effort. So, I work to make that effort. Often I fail and have a bout with strong disgust for my weaknesses; but the moments of success and of achieving a step in real growth spur me on to try a little harder next time.

Perhaps I wouldn't want so badly to reach my goals if I had not looked into the depths of peoples' eyes around the world. Souls seem to be looking out of those windows of the body, and without words they speak of loneliness and bleakness and of a need for love. I want to grow so that my life will be a spot of light in a dark world, a strength for those who need a shoulder to lean on, an ear for those who have no one to listen, a smile of sunshine for those whose worlds are filled with rain, a word of hope when life looks hopeless.

Through the "magic hours" I can see myself as I am and, step by step, I want to shape myself into the kind of person I long to be. Who knows how far the waves of my influence may spread, or over how many generations they may sweep?

Made In His Image

Whenever we move from one side of the world to the other, I go through the same period of shock that plants have when they are transplanted: for about three months I am numb inside, and though outwardly I try to act and react with my normal ups and downs, I have the odd feeling that a shell is going through a performance while the real me is indifferently standing to one side, looking on with no feeling at all.

I hate those times, hate meeting people I know, and hate looking into the eyes of others because I feel sure they will be able to see the empty gulf inside. So when at last one day I feel a bubble of excitement rising in my throat, I have to say a special prayer of thanksgiving that I am among the living again!

It is so *wonderful* to be human and to be able to *feel* all the emotions of God, placed in token measure in the human body. Why is it that very often people think of God as a Spirit so far above humanity that He merely looks on in cold indifference while the world goes by? But He isn't portrayed that way in the scriptures. He feels joy, sorrow, hurt, anger, hatred, grief, love, pity—all the feelings we have. The only difference is that His joy is always in good things, His hatred is of evil, His love is pure. We are very kin to God in our abilities to feel, and that is a priceless gift reserved only for humanity, made in His image.....

PEACE

Peace is like a river
—Such a silver little stream—
You never miss its sparkle
Till it's just a faded dream;

You never miss its gurgle
Till it murmurs with a sigh
That the day of smiles is over
And the time for tears is nigh.

You never miss the laughter
Till quiet reigns supreme—
Peace is like a river.....
Just a silver little stream.

THE QUESTION

Do you ever, in reflection,
Ask the question of yourself:
What am I, without the trappings?
With the trimmings gone, what's left?

Do I stand secure in proppings,
Bolstered up with what I own,
Finding strength in my possessions,
Daring not to stand alone?

Do my clothes hide inner weakness?
Is my house a crutch to me?
Is the shine of gold and silver
All the sparkle others see?

If my clothes were rags and tatters,
If my house were but a shell,
If I had no proud possessions
Would I fare then quite so well?

If I stood alone, with nothing,
Having neither wealth nor debt,
Could I still by strength of merit
Gain the hearts of those I met?

Even greater is the question
 (I must search my very soul)
If I stood bereft and barren,
Would I, myself, feel whole?

As Myself

It is not with contrived words and planned speeches that I come to you, but just as myself, with an openness of soul that exposes myself to you as I am exposed to my own mind.

HEIGHTS AND DEPTHS

I've walked the mountain crests
Where air is thin
And hearts beat high,
Where all the world seems stretched away
Beneath my feet.
I've known this joy.

I've walked the valleys deep
Where hurt and tears
Constrict the heart with pain
And all the world is dark
With unnamed dread.
I've known this grief.

I've walked them both;
I've felt the joy
And all the pain
That mountain crests and depths can bring,
And a question haunts my soul:
 Could there be crests
 Without the valley's depth,
 Or depths without the mountain height?
 —the same wall forms them both, you know!—
So, is it true
That depths must be
If heights arise
For footsteps that would walk the skies?
And, in proportion
To the heights that I would see,
Must I traverse
A valley just as deep?

Looking Out From the Eyes

....There wouldn't be so much that is bad in the world if people felt closer to each other....if everyone had someone to whom he could confidently turn for understanding and support in any circumstance.

....With a deeper searching of myself, I am more perceptive of traits in people I meet

in conversation

and in the tone of the voice

and in the peace or frustration of facial expressions

and in the soul that looks out nakedly from the eyes....

How little of fear

or hurt

or loneliness

or happiness

or sorrow

or jealousy

or smallness

or greatness of heart

or lack of confidence

or deceit

or love can be hidden....

And how much we all need each other to help us grow from our human smallness to become more like God each day.....

IT ISN'T POSSIBLE

To confine
Within the cells of words,
Well-chosen though they be,
The essence
Of the all-pervading
love
softness
gentleness
mistiness
thoughtfulness
industry
selflessness
spirituality
sweetness
goodness
willingness
beauty
of Mother
and what she means to me.

WHEN

When I am rushed
And very tired
I take five minute holidays!

With great deliberation
Every pressure is shut out
And I remember
Beautiful moments,
Or thoughts,
Or things,
Or nothing,
Five
Whole
Minutes.

They seem to stretch until they become
A small eternity
Bundled up
With time on each end;
And when they are gone,
Down to the last second,
I go back to work again,
Renewed.

SOMETIMES, with some music, I like to completely fill the air so that the whole world seems saturated with that beautiful sound.

JUST SUCH A DAY

These days of fall in the air are wonderful,
My friend,

Maybe someday,
On just such a day as this,
When the wildflowers are blooming everywhere
And the insects are singing their songs
To a different tune
Than the one they used in the spring,
And the tangy crispness of fall
Is like a tonic in the air around us——

Maybe someday,
On just such a day as this——
We can go for that long walk
Under the big spreading trees
Somewhere!

TOO FAR AWAY

You are too far away.
Neither my hands nor my voice
Can reach you across the miles;
So I pray for you,
That you will be wrapped each night
In God's protective love,
And that my love can surround you
Through Him.

IN A FOREIGN LAND

How foreign this land is.

Listen

To the knee bells of the camel

As he plods his lonely way

Through the hollow stillness

Of the night:

How foreign this land is.

Listen

To the wail,

Mournful, melodious

Of the mulana,

Breaking the hush of the dawn,

Calling men to prayer

In worship strange to me.

The sound falls

From the minaret

To my waking ears

And I remember again:

This is a foreign land.

WAITING

No...we have not met.
You do not know my name,
Nor does my face in memory's world
Haunt your thoughts
And urge again to burning flame
A love for me—
You know me not.
You do not see my morning's world
—so alien to your own—
Nor feel the hunger and despair,
The hopelessness, the day of care
—the burden—oh, the BURDEN of despair
That I must face
And must endure
When all my strength is gone
And I'm alone
And life goes on....and on....and on...

I know—I KNOW the emptiness
Of empty hope
Of empty gods
That give no life
For they *have* none to give
— *they* never lived—
And when I die
They cannot hear my cry
And breathe again into my dust the breath of life
And make me live.

No....no....
You've never felt my winter's cold
That numbs the hands
And bites the naked feet

And kills the old
And burns away in summer's heat
With no relief;
Nor have you heard with anguished heart
Your children cry
For food you do not have
And watched them die....
....and watched them die....

Yes, friend...I know we have not met,
But I have *heard* of you;
And I have *heard* your house is warm
Through winter's snow and through its storms,
And I have heard *you've* never felt
The weakness
And the burning gnawing pang
That comes again, again, again...
And I have *heard*
—*yes, I have even heard it said—*
That though you have the richness of the world,
(Abundantly are fed)
And could want for nothing more,
You think you're poor....
And I have *heard*
Something of a god
—a greater god than mine—
Who holds within his hands the power
To bless you so
With all these gifts of wealth
And happiness and health
And hope...

When the burning rays of sun
Unclosed my eyes upon this day,
I felt no joy

Of what this day may hold
—the good that may unfold—
This day will be as yesterday
And tomorrow as the day before—
But, friend, *someday*
—*perhaps* a few days more—
You will come
And share your God with me
And teach me what will be
And make my eyes to see
And give me hope
And give me life
Oh, my friend, in a sea of darkness and despair
I grope—
Come soon—come soon—I die....

THE ROAD WE WALK

The road we walk is long, my friend,
We cannot see the way;
We walk by faith, our trust in God,
Toward one eternal day.

Parent Love

Parent love reaches out,
Shielding,
Sparing,
Providing,
Making the way
For the children of love.

God is love.
He had a Son.
All the glory of heaven was His
By right.

It must have hurt God
To have owned all things
And to have had the power
To have swept away
Every obstacle
Every hardship;
It must have hurt God
To have known the glory
His Son had there,
That He should have had
Here,
And to have seen Him live
Day after day
In hardship
And poverty;

Yet, God's hands were bound:
He couldn't
shield
or spare
or protect
or ease the way
For His Son
Because of His love for me....

Ungrateful heart,
that I should ever doubt....

The Walk

Today I walked in the quiet woods alone.
The rustle of leaves under my feet made a lonely sound
And the song of the birds was lonely too
Until I came to the old tree
With its spreading arms
And you came too and sat beside me.
I smiled in silent greeting
And beckoned to show you the thousands
Of tiny blue daisies looking up through the grass.
We marvelled at the lush velvet of the moss up close to the tree
And you hushed my voice to hear
The note of a distant bird's song.
We followed the sound as excuse
To walk under the shading arms of the old trees
Where the world seemed at peace
And quiet and still in its own thoughts.
We felt at peace too as we walked along,
Drinking in the solitude,
Stopping to hear the murmur of a little stream
And to watch the busy working
Of a colony of ants that caught our eye.
You stooped to let one crawl onto your finger
Where we watched his frantic searching
For companionship and security,
And we talked of his likeness with humans
Who sometimes spend a whole lifetime
Searching for something or someone to fill the void
Without ever once being satisfied.



Our steps turned back to the trail again
Under the deep shade of the old trees
And I walked beside you in silence,
Thinking of you,
Feeling a strong surge of happiness
Well up inside with such sweetness it made me ache
In thankfulness to God
For you.
I looked up to see your eyes on mine,
Deep in the same thoughts,
And you reached out to my outstretching hand
To touch my fingers
In a gentle communion of our souls;
One moment of eternity, caught and held in the timelessness of
memory,
To be relived in months and years to come.
—One moment—then we turned and walked again
Into the hurried world.

AS FRIEND WITH FRIEND

Through searching eyes and silent lips
Your soul speaks out to mine;
 I hear no cry,
 No whispered sigh,
And yet our thoughts entwine.

With gentle touch and tender smile
Your fingers brush my hand,
 And more than words
 I might have heard
They say you understand.

The deepest longing of my soul
Is answered by your own;
 You cross the gulf—
 It is enough—
I stand no more alone.

A moment thus I feel your strength
And clasp it to my heart,
 Then life moves on,
 We walk alone
On pathways far apart.

Perhaps again our paths will cross,
Perhaps that cannot be;
 This joy I've had,
 My heart is glad:
I have this memory.

And now throughout the coming days,
Through happiness or tears,
 Two heartbeats blend
 As friend with friend
For all the coming years.

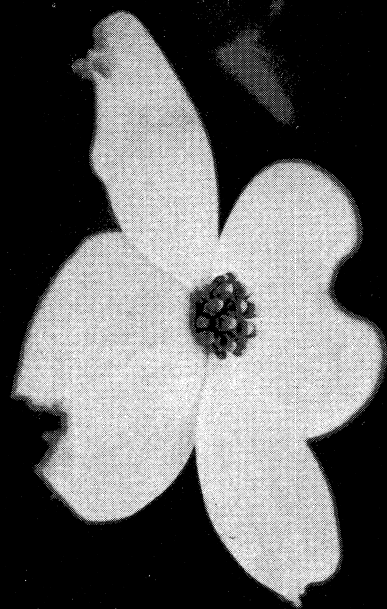
WE HAVE rain today after a long time of dryness. The guns of the thunder sweep across the battlefield, first from the right, then from the left. We are caught in a crossfire of lightning.

EVENING

When you walk in the peace of aloneness,
The night like a shawl folded round,
And inhale the scent of the roses
That fall to the dew-laden ground,
When you turn with the wonder of mortals
To the hush of the deepening blue,
You can hear in the sigh of the wind-song
The whisper of God, "I love you."

SPRING FLURRIES

It is spring
And all along the road
Miniature flurries of dogwood snow
Are caught and held
Among the still bare trees.



THE LONELY PLACES

In the lonely places of my mind
I walk with you,
Down shadowed roads,
Beside a quiet stream,
Beneath the blackened skies
Where stars have disappeared;
I walk with you
In lonely crowds
And where the swirling snowflakes fall,
Where haunting night sounds
Fill the empty air
And trees are bent
Beneath the wind and rain;
I walk with you
And feel the peace
Without, within;
I feel your gentleness
And hear the quiet cadence
Of your voice
In companionship,
Precious, dear to me,
Wording thoughts of beauty and of strength,
Thoughts that lift my soul
And fill the lonely places of my mind.

LOVE IS

They speak of "loving",
Of "being in love" —
I wonder if they understand.

Love is not a place
Or a verb
Or even a noun;
Love is existence of self.
The deepest part of my being
Is love;
I can offer that part in trust
To others
And bask in the warmth
Of a like offering returned.

But, oh, the gulf of hurt
If that one to whom the offering is made
Proves to be unworthy;
Oh, the searing pain
When that part of my being that was offered
Is crushed by heedless hands
And lies, a bleeding, dying existence
Inside of me,
To remain always there,
A heavy weight of numbness
Forever past being restored to life,
Yet never able to die to the pain.....

TO ONE FAR AWAY

Oh, I wish you could have gone with me to take Sheila to art class just now! On the way home I drove slowly along the roads, just absorbing the beauty everywhere. The sky is bright blue, the sun a blaze of late afternoon glory, and every growing thing is draped with diamonds. Instead of making a solid encasement, the rain froze in billions of drops on every twig, every pine needle, and they catch the sun with a living brilliance of beauty that is almost too perfect for this body to experience.....I thought as I was driving along that we will have to have stronger bodies in the new world because everything there will be utter perfection, and these bodies cannot experience even near-perfection without the joy blending into pain because it is greater than our capacity. I know you have been so happy you have cried from the pain of the happiness; or you have seen such beauty that your heart hurt inside with the aching inability to take it all in.....How God must desire the day when His whole creation can be released from the bondage that sin brought into the world. How He must long to see the perfection restored.....

.....Thank you for letting me share the small things of my heart with you.....

THE GREATEST WORDS

Listen....Hear the words, the greatest words
That mortal man can say;
Hear the blessing breathed by God
To ears of living clay.

Hear them as with rapturous heart
That solitary man
Turned his eyes to lovely Eve
And whispered them again.

Hear them echo far and wide
A bridge to chasms deep,
Binding man in brotherhood,
Embracing you and me.

See them heal the bleeding wounds
That hate has brought about,
Reconciling deadly foes,
Erasing fear and doubt.

Feel them overflow the heart
And sweep from man to man,
Teaching deep compassion
And the will to understand.

There are no words——no sweeter words——
That human lips can say;
The eyes express no nobler thought,
No greater prayer we pray.

These precious words from God Himself
——A solace to the soul——
Can soothe the deepest heartache,
Can make the sinner whole;
Can crumble walls of bitter hate
And build a road between;
Can dry the tears that blur God's eyes
So hate can not be seen;
These words can save our earthly home
From ruin and war and grief;
They bring us back again to God
To worship at His feet,
To whisper low with trembling lips
The greatest words of truth,
The prayer He taught so long ago,
The blessing, "I love you."

IN GLORY OR IN SHAME?

To some, perhaps,
It is an empty emblem,
Outworn and tired—
 that flag there on the staff;
To me, in one small block of color and design
That flag embodies all that's good of homeland
And of country,
Of freedom and of honor,
The upholder of the right,
Defence of those too weak to help themselves,
The symbol of integrity and pride.

The word "America" sounds like that flag,
Pure and strong,
A name to wear
And to be proud of wearing,
Like the country that it stands for,
Strong and good,
A haven in a hostile world,
Where moral right prevails
And conscience toward the helpless
And the weak
Moves men to risk their lives
And walk in selflessness....
 Or so it used to be.

I lift my eyes to see the flag
Unfurled majestically
High, alone,
Above the changing world,
Changeless in its message,
In its pledge to human kind,
And welling tears fill up my eyes:

The men who guide us are betrayers,
Corrupt and selfish,
Selling weaker brothers out
For some imagined gain;
Our word is given to be broken,
Honor and integrity have found their price;
No pride is left, but hauteur,
No moral goodness
Or conviction:

 We wear the name
 Unworthily
 And turn the symbol to a lie.

I lift my eyes to see the flag through tears,
Unfurled above a broken heart;
My hands would reach
To take it gently from the staff,
To fold its stripes and stars
In loving adoration
And lay it quietly in some hidden spot,
Protected from the dirt we have become:

 Let it be kept apart from our dishonor
 And let the name we cherished
 Be forever pure;
 If our nation yet
 Must sink to greater depths of degradation,
 If we yet must feel the scourge
 Transforming wrong to right,
 Let them be spared the shame of our betrayal,
 Let them be spared the traitor's marring touch,
 Let them be kept in careful preservation
 Until

 —Oh, God, please let it be—

 We rise once more above the sin that would destroy us,
 And,
 Worthy of the emblem once again,
 We lift on high the flag we now dishonor
 And wear that name in pride
 Among our fellow men.

(Written during a very low period in 1978, when Americanism had been betrayed and belittled for more than ten years.)

NOW

Yesterday is gone. I have its memories to return to, as sweet dreams. Tomorrow? Our world may crash in and bring all the horrors that sometimes seem to threaten. But I cannot live tomorrow today, and living in dread and fear will not better equip me for those agonies if they do come; that would only wear me down and leave me less able to cope.

But I have NOW. I have *these* loved ones around me; I have *these* possessions that are dear to me; I have *this* security, fleeting though it may be: I have NOW. Yesterday cannot take away from NOW and tomorrow cannot rob me of it. I have NOW. I can hug it to my heart and treasure its richness as my own.

THERE IS A KINGDOM

My friend, there is a kingdom
Where no day or night is known,
Where no distances are measured
And no heart must walk alone;
Where the burden of your sorrow
Fills another's eyes with tears,
And the echo of your laughter
Falls from lips forever dear;
Where each dream you dare to father
Grows within another heart,
And those hands in strength support you
As you reach for goals afar;
Where no triumph or disaster
And no havoc wrought by time,
No poverty or fortune
Could affect the love sublime;
Where the one so gently cherished
As the years have swiftly flown
Only glows with deeper beauty
When the youthfulness is gone;
Where two hearts upon the mountain
Can survey the coming end—
Dear one, there is a kingdom
In the heartbeat of a friend.

DAY OF SHAME

(12/18/78, on the occasion of President Carter's announcement of establishment of diplomatic ties with communist China, and of the cessation of recognition of the Republic of China, the betrayal of friendship and the dishonoring of treaties made in good faith.)

Soft-spoken friend...
I have not heard your name;
I understand no word of what you say,
But your voice,
Falling softly on my ear in lovely Chinese songs,
Has brought me joy
And so I give you thanks.
Tonight I cry for you
And for your people all...
Time will tell what you have lost:
Maybe nothing...
Maybe freedom...
Maybe even life;
I grieve for you, whatever it may be.
And I cry for us.
The friendship we have bought
Has cost us honor
And integrity,
The right to be a friend
Or have a friend.
For my country, I bow my head in shame.
Forgive us....

FRIEND

Once—it seems a long, long time—
I raised my eyes and saw you standing
On a road so near to mine.

I think I did not see the walls, the chasms,
The gulfs between our ways:
I simply saw your eyes, your face,
And reaching out my hand,
I called you, "Friend."

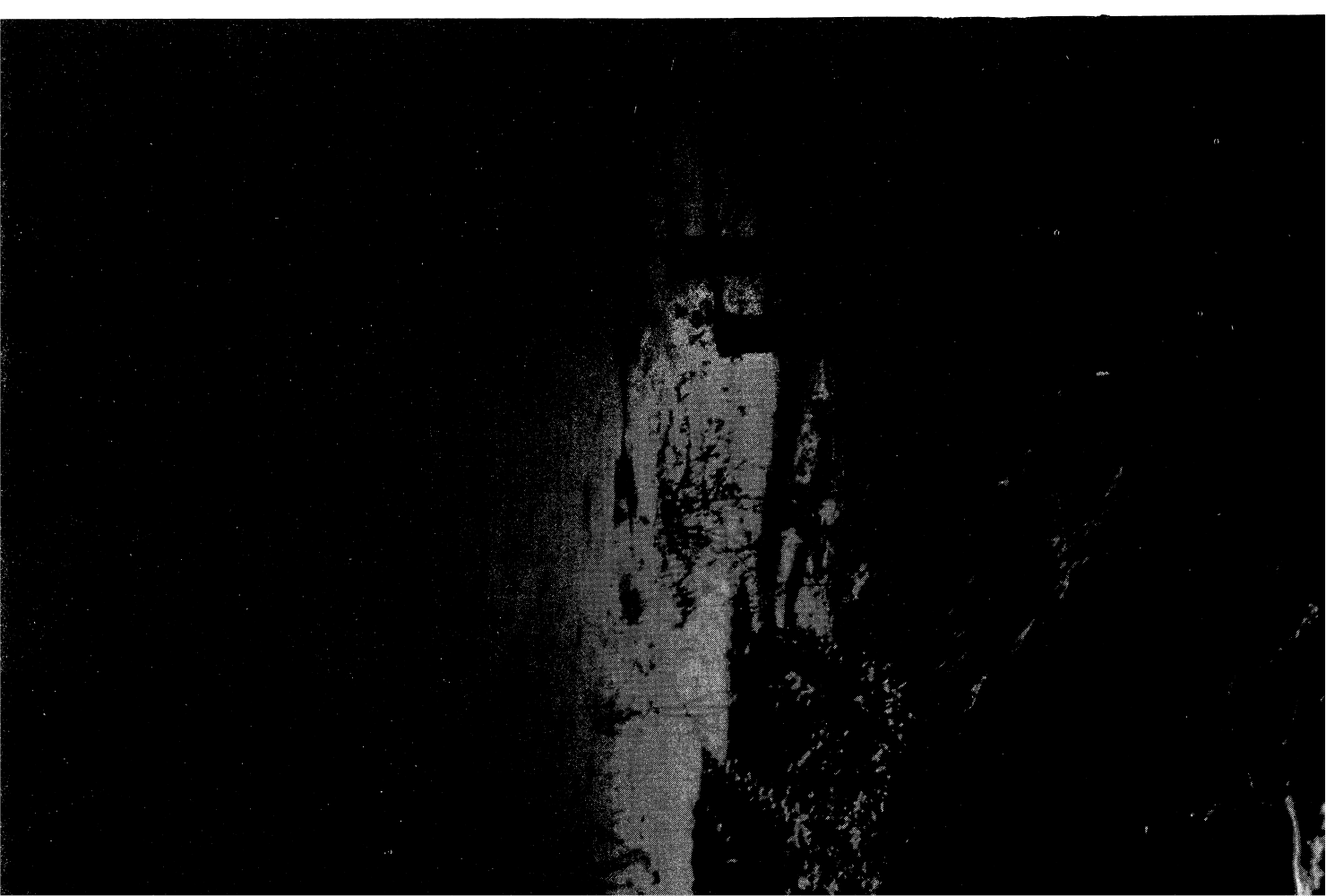
Friend—how rich and full
That word within my heart!
It promised all the goodness, all the virtue
Of the human soul
Multiplied by heaven's love a thousand-fold.

ETHEREAL BEAUTY

There's a world outside my window
Far removed from all around
Where I feel a transformation
As a soul when peace is found.

Through the velvet settling darkness
Of the wintry night
Glow the iridescent beauty
Of the city light....
Just enough to create magic,
Making shadows everywhere,
While the sparkling snowflakes glisten
As a blanket lying there.
And the wind in soft caresses
Gently sighs though mourning pines
In a world of melancholy
With a spirit kin to mine.

Or the mood can be so different
On a misty, rainy night
When just dimly through the vapours
Threads the golden touch of light.
So intriguing in the stillness
Is the mood of world a-borning
That I feel this must be Eden
On that distant glorious morning.



And I think that surely angels
Must come here in glad surprise
When they find such perfect beauty
Far away from heaven's skies,
For on balmy summer evenings
Stars be-jewel the azure dome
And the light streams through the branches
Of the sentinels of home,
Bathing everything in gold-dust
From the dewy green below
To the top-most of the needles
Where the breezes whisper low;
And the lacy shadows falling
From the master Artist's hand
Clothe the gentle slopes and valleys
In the garb of wonderland.

As a hesitating mortal,
Undeserving of so much,
I behold ethereal beauty
That has felt the Maker's touch.

THE BEGGAR

Once, somewhere along the way, I saw a beggar who couldn't walk. He had gone to sleep, leaned against a lamp post. The pads he used to protect his hands as he crawled along the streets had dropped off, and so had the expression beggars usually wear. In sleep his face was a mingling of tiredness and emptiness, a longing—perhaps to be like everyone else—and a hopelessness because he can never reach up and out with goals and plans to achieve some worthwhile aim.

I have thought of him so many times since: in pity for him, in deep gratitude for myself that I have been blessed with a healthy mind and body. I know we are never grateful enough for those priceless gifts, but maybe if we looked occasionally at our hands and feet and eyes, and if we thought for just a minute what life would be without one of those vital parts, we wouldn't be so prone to complain about trivial problems.

Letter To A Discouraged Friend

.....I wanted to write a note tonight, hoping that another reminder that I share your feelings and am praying for you will help. I long to be able to do something myself, but I know that God can and will do all that I cannot do, and all that is needed, so I am content to leave it in His hands. Too often people say to us, "I can't do much, but I can at least pray for you." I think that is a terrible attitude. Whenever I speak on the subject of prayer, I make the point that if my father were the President of the United States and some friend came to me with a real need, I wouldn't answer that need with words like these, clothed in the sound of doubt and possible defeat: "Well, I can't do much, but at least I can talk to the President about it..." No, I would be so excited because I would have full confidence that the need would be met, and I would declare with the tone of victory already at hand, "Why, I'll talk to the President for you!" How God must feel hurt and belittled when people are apologetic about not being able to do more for each other than to lay their requests before Him.

So I don't apologize. The King of the kings of the world has promised, "Whatever you ask the Father in my name, He will do it..." That's better than having the President for a father—and that promise encompasses everything that is for our good!

ONE DAY.....

One day,
I know not when or where along the way,
(Perhaps the sun will shine
 or clouds will smoulder gray)
But, one day, when all seems normal in my world,
The flag of mourning lying still and furled,
The word will come....(I know not how
 but word *will* come—I feel it now)
And in the turning of the earth my world will stop,
 Still—unmoving,
A dead weight, numbly dropped,
And part of me will die with you.

Of those around me, none may share my grief,
The stillness of my heart they will not see;
My laugh will echo in their ears—
 They will not see its edges' glist'ning tears;
They will not know that while I move and breathe
A part of you is dead inside of me,
That numbness stills your smile within my breast,
That Silence in its chambers murmurs, "Death."

The sun will shine as brightly,
Or clouds will be as gray in future mornings
 As upon that day,
But, oh dear one, *my* world will grow a haze,
A shroud, diffusing sun and blackened clouds
And shutting out acute awareness of the way,
For part of me will die with you that day.

Or it may be that word will come to you.....

Will my unmoving stillness be your stillness too?

TO BABY

Tiny little shirts
 Made for someone yet to come;
Dainty little dresses
 Just to fit that baby form.

Little coats of flannel
 And bibs for Baby too;
Socks and little booties
 With a blanket made of blue.

A silken brush with comb to match
 And oils for Baby's hair;
Powder sweet and soothing
 To help in Baby's care.

Bottles with the nipples
 And rattles for his play;
Baby bed with tiny sheets
 Where he'll spend his day.

Diapers by the dozen
 And pins of pink and blue
Finish up the wardrobe
 Fashioned just for you!

WHEN CHILDREN GO

...No bickering echoes down the hall
No music
No laughter
No sound at all.

I stand in the silence, a world apart
And listen to teardrops fall in my heart.

THE KIND OF DAY

The wind
Blows the chime
Just outside my window.
It is cold today
— Winter, in the middle of spring —
The kind of day for thinking.....

The Voice Of The Monarch

Mutely it stands there,
A giant in God's world,
Grown to such heights
Through years of wind and rain.

Sometimes in the cold
I've heard it groan
With leaden boughs;
Sometimes its icy coat
Would clinkle in the wind;
But then with spring
I've heard it whisper softly,
Perhaps a lullabye to baby birds
Upon its limbs.
Summer brought the heavy sighs
Sometimes at even,
Like a sadness in its years,
And in the fall I often heard
A sougning moan;
But today I hear the saddest sound of all:
The roaring of a saw
Cuts through the silence
And its back is splintered—broken....
But for one moment more
Time seems to hold those stately limbs
Suspended in God's sky
Before, with crashing impact
And one long resounding cry,
The monarch shudders
And lies silent on the earth.

WINTER HAS COME

Winter has come.

The wind,
Whining through the trees with mournful sound,
Whips the branches
And breaks the hold of trembling leaves.
Winter has come.

From skies overcast
And leaden gray
The rain bursts forth,
Shaping a sodden robe for the freezing day;
The wispy grass,
The heavy limbs,
Creak in their crystal armor
And groan with the wind.
Winter has come.

And now, with silent step,
The falling snow comes mutely on the scene.
She finds the world asleep
And so
With gentle hands
She spreads a blanket
Soft and white
And tucks the sleeper in.

Winter has come.

IN THE WOODS

There
In my woods
God had painted the leaves,
And He made the day just right for walking:
Summer's heat was gone
And the cool pleasantness of fall
Had come.

So I walked in the coolness
Of the woods near our house
To gather a bouquet of leaves;
And
Deep in the woods
Was a little quiet place,
Almost cut off from the rest of the world.....

The minutes I spent there
Feeling the aloneness
Were precious.

TESTIMONY

Is it not ironic that every man in the whole world pays tribute every day to the existence of Christ and to His supremacy among men by the very acknowledgement of the date we live by!

Except by the power of God, how could it be that the One who claimed so much, and was hated so passionately for His claims that He was crucified two thousand years ago, has today conquered the world to the point that everything we do is dated from His birth?

The Sharing Of Inspiration

The utterly selfish pleasure I have from writing to you is that, believing we are kindred minds, I can put my deepest thoughts and moods into words with the confidence that they will be understood just as I felt them. When those deep feelings are there and I cannot write of them to you, it is as though I have been diminished instead of enlarged by the urge of inspiration, because the urge was unanswered. The simple solution at those times would be the personal admonition: "Write them for yourself." But I have found that it is the sharing that gives fruit to the inspiration—to have it for myself alone brings only a greater consciousness of the barrenness.

In this I think I understand the reason for the creation. Within God was the inspiration for all of the awesome wonders that make up this world—and for all of the deep love and feelings and emotions that exist. But all of that, without a kindred mind as recipient, only made an emptiness and a barrenness where there should have been fulness and completeness. So God spoke His thoughts into tangibility—every particle of matter that makes up the world is an amazing thought of God that can be seen and touched—and then He made man in His own image, giving him the capacity for likemindedness so that there could be that precious fruitful sharing between them. It is true that as sin entered the world and man has grown further and further from the creation, few men continue to have kindred minds with God. But it is with those few that God shares and rejoices; it is those few who are the "fulness of him that filleth all in all." Ephesians 1:23

MY PRAYER

I pray
That God will grant me
The enduring trust in people,
And the stamina always
To share myself,
The faith always
To ask for His direction
And to wait with patience
To see
The end of the road
He has set my feet upon.

Defenseless Love

I love so deeply, Father,
Your children whom I meet;
I love without reserve.
I want pure love
And trust
To flow between us.
But, often—oh often—
I have been,
I am,
Betrayed
And my love returns to the caverns
Of my own heart
Battered,
Bruised,
By hands
That knew no kindred love.

But, Father,
What am I to do?
The love is there,
Welling up inside, and longing
For worthy ones to love.

Must it be with me as with our Lord
Who loved implicitly
But trusted Himself to no man
For He knew man?

Must I, too,
Love without the trust,
Unprotected,
Expecting
To be betrayed?

Oh—but, Father—
That way holds pain!
Must I walk that way?

My feet will stumble
For tears will blind my eyes....
I cannot see.

Father, take my hand....
Show me the way....

(Note: As a missionary, one finds that especially in working among those who have no background in the love of Christ, often there is disappointment and hurt when people begin to live in that love and then eventually leave it. The balm that enables one to survive is the beautiful love that grows to maturity in the hearts of the few.)

TRUTH

and Tolerance

and Intolerance

Is it true that all men are walking toward one goal, though their paths may be a little different? Are we really like two rivers flowing toward the same ocean, that the waters may someday be merged into one?

Is TRUTH varied as it appears throughout the world? Is *tolerance* in religion a virtue to be admired? Is *intolerance* a strait-lacedness to be abhorred? One who has been taught tolerance to a point of spiritual unconcern would not be readily able to understand seeming intolerance in the attitude of another. Perhaps this illustration would help:

Once there was a teacher who had a large group of beginning students in his class. One day he gave them their math books, assigned them a page of study, and left the room with the warning that each student must spend his time learning the lesson in preparation for a test when he returned. A few of the students did study, but most of them played and talked and did not think about the coming test until they heard the teacher's footsteps in the hall. Of course they did not know even the simple problems. Some wrote 2 plus 2 equals 5; some wrote 2 plus 2 equals 8; some thought 2 plus 2 equals 1; only the few who had studied knew that 2 plus 2 equals 4.

When the papers were turned in, the teacher was very disappointed because he was a good teacher and he really loved his students and he wanted them to do well. But truth was truth, and even he could not change it so that all of the wrong answers would seem to be right.

The teacher was not the only one who was disappointed. One of the students longed so deeply to please the teacher that he had studied very carefully and earnestly all the time the teacher was out. His special friend sat near him in the class, and when he saw that his friend was not studying, he reminded him that the teacher would soon be coming and that he needed to learn the lesson.

When the papers were turned in, the two friends had written different answers. But there was only *one true answer*, and *nobody*—not the teacher, or the student who had studied, or the special friend—could change truth so that both answers could be right.

So what of us?—of your tolerance and my seeming intolerance? If I am convicted of truth, do you see the problem I have to live with? I didn't *make* truth and then declare that everyone who doesn't agree with me is wrong. My tolerance or intolerance concerning religion is not the standard by which it is accepted or discarded. Nothing matters except the *immovable, enduring truth*. **THAT IS THERE AND IT WILL NOT CHANGE.** Even God Himself cannot change it because He is committed to **BE Truth**. And your tolerance of it has no more effect than my intolerance has. Whatever truth is, it is **ONE**, it is not **CONTRADICTORY**, and it is **ETERNAL**. Whether I accept it or deny it, it remains the same....

I love Christianity, but I love it only because I believe it to be truth. If ever I find that it is not truth, I could love it no longer because my allegiance is not to religion but to truth.

Is this not the attitude all of us should have?

GOD'S LOVE

Except when man's wrongs have demanded justice and not mercy, God's whole relationship with men has been one of giving and giving and giving, of thoughtfulness and concern and mercy and longing and desire to bestow happiness and life on the unworthy objects of His love.

The Bible is one long love story, God's love letter to us that lays bare His heart and His immense longing for us. When we read in those pages of all that His love causes Him to do for us, *we learn that kind of love* from Him.

And this is the difference between the love in the heart of a Christian and the love in the hearts of those who follow other gods: the Christian's love is active, demanding that he consider others before himself, because he learned of love from God....

READYING A SOUL

You must know that if the precious substances of the earth—gold, silver, diamonds, marble—were endowed with the ability to feel, their shaping into objects of exquisite beauty and usefulness would be most painful experiences.

So it is with men: The process of shaping and purifying and readying a soul for use in God's hands cannot be accomplished without pain. On sunny days, remember to thank God for a renewal of strength; and when the whole world seems dark and full of storms, remember to thank God for His continued care in your molding.....and wait with patience to see the end of the road. Walk in faith, confident of His love.....and the whole road will be a path of inner happiness, even the lonely painful stretches.....

GOD TAKING CARE

Because I know
That I want to be God's child
And I want to please Him,
I trust my life
And my soul
In His hands.
He has promised
That He will take care,
That all things will work together
For my good because I love Him
And I want to obey Him.

With that trust,
When the way is easy, I know that God overrules
And that all is well.
When the way is not easy
And the chapter has so many dark pages,
I can know one of two things:
Either I have been disobedient to God
And I have brought about
My own troubles
From which He will rescue me
If I turn to Him;
Or, seemingly dark days are necessary
To teach a lesson
Or to bring about some good thing
That could be accomplished
In no other way;

So, if I try to walk
Close to Him
I can *know* that I live
Under His care
And protection,
Through the easy days
And through the difficult days.
And knowing that there is purpose
In all the days,
That my life is under His control,
I have no fear, because He has promised
That the last page of the last chapter
Will be bright.
There is no room in my heart
For doubt
Or worry,
And all of life is beautiful,
Meaningful.

SUCH A SAVIOUR!

I think it is an interesting commentary on the religions of the world that all of them are willing to admit that Christ *can* be followed as a spiritual leader; but, at the same time, the broad statement is made that anything, everything in religion is all right as long as it is covered by the canopy of "love" or "sincerity" or "honesty".

So, while other leaders teach their own religious doctrines, they lack the courage to completely deny the right and authority of Christ in the spiritual realm. There has been only one man who has ever walked the face of this earth who has allowed room for no other authority and who has had the audacity to make the claim, "*I am the way, the truth, the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.*" That is a claim that every human being is going to have to deal with. A man may choose to live in ignorance of it; he may ignore it after he knows of it; he may ridicule it; or he may find peace and security in it—but *every* man has to face that claim and react to it in some way.

For myself, I have faced it and accepted it as truth, because I have not been able to deny the mountainous evidence that supports it.

For yourself...you can continue to ignore His claim and to hold yourself in willful ignorance of its veracity. Nobody can *make* you do otherwise. And all of the desire, in the heart of someone who loves you, for you to make spiritual decisions knowledgeably will accomplish nothing for you until you have the desire yourself.....

.....but the claim is still there. Christ is still looking in defiance at *every* man who has ever taught *any other form of religion*, and He is still saying, "I am the way...." And He backed His claim with the resurrection. Unbelievers from the first century down to today have tried to discredit the resurrection, but the proofs are there and the honest person who investigates *has* to be convinced by them. No other man has broken the bonds of death, holding out firm assurance to all those who sleep.....

That Depth Of Love

Not long ago I was reading Paul's letter to the Romans, and as I read the beginning of the ninth chapter, I was stunned by the statement he made. In the first verse he told of how he had searched his heart and that Christ was witness of the fact that what he was about to say was the truth; in the second verse he said that he had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart; in the third verse he told the cause of his sorrow: that his people had never accepted Christ as their saviour, and that his love for them was so great that if it could mean their salvation, he could wish himself accursed from Christ!

Paul knew that God will not allow one human to go to hell in the place of another, yet he knew the seriousness of the statement he was making, and he weighed it earnestly before he declared it to be the truth. He had already written in Philippians 1:23-24 of the conflict in his desires: on the one hand he longed to die and be with Christ; on the other, he knew they needed him. He had also written in II Thessalonians 1:7-9 of hell and the horrors awaiting those who are accursed from Christ, so he knew full well what he was vowing to be truth, what he was willing to give up, and what he would have endured because of his love for his people.

After reading those verses I sat for a long time, trying to comprehend the size of such love. Not many people would die even physically to save the life of another person, but to suffer *eternally* in hell for someone else—? Since then, I have searched my heart many times to see if I honestly have that depth of love for anyone else.....



GOD'S ABUNDANCE

Aren't wild flowers amazing little things? They grow everywhere even under the most adverse conditions, with no one to weed and water them, and they seem not to know that anything beautiful should also be scarce.

There they stretch across a hill or a valley, coloring it purple or red or yellow or a general mixture of all colors, and they are so plentiful that it is easy to see them as a mass and never to stop to appreciate the individual bloom. But when I hold such miniature perfection between the tips of my fingers and look closely at the design and detail of that tiny, tiny bit of life and then look across the covered field to realize that God has scattered that perfection in such wild profusion, I am reminded of the difference between God and us: If human hands had made just *one* such perfect specimen, that man would be acclaimed as an outstanding artist. But God repeats His perfection in such abundance that we count it as nothing....just wild flowers.

So Many Kinds Of Love

Of all the types of love, physical love is the weakest because it is of short duration and is limited to the confines of the physical. Physical love, absolutely alone, without the added strength of emotional love and mental love and spiritual love, is a very small tie between humans. If it stands alone, parents and children grow away from each other as they go their separate ways; adult brothers and sisters can live in the same city and rarely see each other because the fleshly ties have lost their meaning; even husbands and wives can lose that physical attraction they once had for each other. And when the mortal body is changed to immortality and those physical ties, that people sometimes continue to hold only because of duty, are gone, there will be no place for that type of love in that world. That realization would have seemed a loss to me if I had not begun to understand the depth of the other types of love that are not so short-lived.

There are people with whom I have no physical ties that I love emotionally because of their personalities. Friends are in this group.

There are others that I love mentally because of the way their minds function. People in this category are often strangers to me, physically and emotionally; I don't know them in these areas at all; but I hear them speak or I read something that they have written, and I love the way their intellect leads mine along.

And there is spiritual love. I don't mean just a word...or pity for strangers...or shallow concern...or compassion. I mean a love that reaches to the depth of the soul and demands that one be willing to give, whether or not anything is given in return, a love that is a working motivating force in one's life, a love fashioned of the very love of God. It is possible to feel in the human heart this spiritual love, this love that pulsates from the heart of God Himself. He loves us when we have done nothing to warrant the love, when we ignore Him, when we don't love Him in return. And He goes on loving and longing for us because there is only love in His heart.

Through these years of growing in the capacity for spiritual love, of practicing that love, how much I have come to understand of the

heart of God! I know now from my own experiences the deep concern He feels for us, such a concern that He has not spared Himself of any effort or any sacrifice that was for our good. I know to a small degree the hurt we inflict on Him when we regard His gift as nothing, and when nothing He says or does creates reciprocal love in our hearts for Him. And I am learning, too, that the giving of this spiritual love that is unasked for and often unwanted becomes a rich treasured gift to one's self. It is the common thing to give what is due, or to give back what one receives. But the agonies of offering a fragile gift that is refused finally end in the joyful realization of the wonder of having such a gift to offer in the first place. With the passing of time, and with the enduring of the agonies and the ecstasies of giving spiritual love to both the worthy and the unworthy, I have learned that, unlike physical love, spiritual love can and must live whether it is nourished and cared for and returned or not. I know now that such love once born must live on. No one can take away the beauty and the gentleness and the sensitivity of it; these continue to live with the years, to make one a more beautiful and gentle and sensitive person, and the gift of love—whether received or rejected—will grow through the years and never die.

How often people use the word "love" and define as one meaning every feeling of attachment in the human heart. The realization that there are many different kinds of love, separate from one another, demanding different things of the bearer of the love, has been an awakening in understanding—in my understanding of myself, and in my ability to feel for others and to help them. I grew up with a very deep physical love, interwoven with all of the other types of love, for my family. In God's family I felt closeness... attachment...friendship. But it was not until we lived and worked among people in foreign fields who had no other possible link with God, except the link we formed, that I began to separate the different kinds of love in my heart and to realize that what I felt for those people who were eternally dependent on me was the deep abiding spiritual love that grows first in the heart of God. This can live, strongly, dominatingly, when there are no other ties. It can live eternally.

REFLECTION

Here in the woods it is so peaceful.
Moss and pine needles form a carpet
And overhead
Is the pure, pure blue of the sky.
Birds whistle
And an ant crawls beside my foot,
Dragging a protesting many-legged worm to his "home".
How can there be so much activity
And yet such a still peacefulness?

I think of the dead hush
Everywhere
When God made the heavens and the earth
—had readied the world for life—
But there was no movement yet.
If, just now, those natural sounds
Of the small things of creation
Were completely still,
I think the beauty
Of the stillness
Would become unbearable very soon.

How pleasant must have been the sounds
Of the first fish
Flopping in the water;
How exquisite the first notes of the birds
When He formed them in His hand
And gave them life
And song!

All that is beautiful
Comes from the heart of God.
Even the ability to appreciate sound
Is a human measure
Of His own love for the songs He made.
Ah! When He looked in His rest
On that day of completed work
And said, "It is good!"
What joy God felt in His heart
At the sight of the fruit
Of the work of His mind and His hands!

And even more.....
When He who is Love,
Heard for the first time,
"Father,"
Innocent and pure,
Falling from human lips,
Overflowing with love for Him,
What must have been His joy!

"Oh, Father....."

Thoughts, and then reflections....

I will put my inner feelings into thoughts and the thoughts into words.

I look into your eyes and I see a reflection of my own soul, a soul I have studied and that I understand because of long familiarity with it. When you speak I can tell by small facial and body movements, by subtle voice inflections, the feelings beneath the words. When you write, so much of your thinking is scattered in little signs along the way. I know you deeply, as though our minds could be one. I feel that basically I could live in your body and not feel a stranger there: the attitudes, feelings, emotions, the physical expressions would be as familiar as my own.

But we are different. We have different backgrounds and as much at home as I would feel in your body, I would cringe and hurt at some of the things to which you would subject me: at the liquor you would have me consume, at the cigarette smoke you would have me take into myself, at the parties of gambling and other forms of worldliness you would entertain me with, at the idols you would have me bow down before....These things would strangle and stifle me.

Feeling this oneness with you so strongly, I am made to think of what it must mean to God, to Christ, to the Holy Spirit, when God lives within His children and they subject Him to things so foreign to His nature. How we must grieve Him, what anguish must wring His heart, when we use the bodies that are His habitation for deeds He abhors. The abuse, the trampling He must feel.....

BALM

Sometimes

There is a deep restlessness within;

I search for the cause

But I find no answer,

Nor can I find a solution.

Every happiness is mine,

Every day should be bright with sunshine

But sometimes the sun disappears behind unnamed clouds.

Then I feel the deep need

—no, more than a need,

the urgent necessity—

To be completely alone with God.

Sometimes I just talk to Him.

I ask Him to help me

To search my heart

And to see things from His viewpoint again.

Sometimes I kneel for a long time,

Saying nothing,

Gaining strength from feeling that special nearness with

Him.

And when I am overcome with loneliness

Then,

Because I know that He is with those that I love

As much as He is with me,

I feel through Him

A sweet closeness with them.

This communion of love

With Him

And with them

Is healing balm to my restless soul

And I have peace.

I SANCTIFY MYSELF FOR YOU...

John 17:19

I know our God,
I know His word,
I know His will for man...
But, Friend of mine, you have not known,
You walk alone;
Reaching, as through a veil, for Him
Unable yet to see His face,
Almost you feel His hand,
His touch on yours,
And yet the veil remains in place.

I know of Him,
I know of you,
And, oh, I want our God to be your Father, too.
What can I do?

I pray....but will my prayers be heard?
I teach....but do I know His word
Well enough
To convince you of the truth?
Is my life in Him
So spotless and unstained
That you will see His life in me
As clearly as His name?

Who can pray for you?

Only.....I.

Who can teach you truth?

Only.....I.

What burden on my shoulders rests????

Your soul.

And I am blessed to be entrusted so.

If, my friend, between your God and you
Stands me and my frail grasping of the truth
How sternly I must watch,
And guard my soul from sin,
Be pure from deep within,
Must learn His will,
And do His will,
And walk each step with Him
So He will hear *my* prayers for *you*
And *help* me share His truth.

If, between His love and you,
I stand,
How careful I must be
To cling to both your hands
And help you see
Your God through me.
I would not—oh, I cannot—
Divide you as a wall
And blind your eyes
And keep your heart too far away
To hear His call.
For your dear sake
I sanctify myself,
Sure that each step I take
Draws you nearer to Himself.

Oh, Friend, I'm longing for that day,
That happy day,
When you will be His son
And we can bow as one
Before our God.

SNOWFLAKES

They fell,
Swirling to silent music
Against the black contrast of my coat,
And I stood there
Smiling
With music in my heart
And marveled
At the perfection,
At the beauty and design
Of each white flake.

Falling snow,
Filling the air by nature's law
On a wintry day:
But within this thing—the commonplace—
Was testimony,
Mute and multiplied
Of Creation's Mind and fashioning Hands:
Each small flake as it fell
Unheralded
(Most of them unnoticed, except en masse)
To the ground
Bore the mark of artistry,
Individuality, its own,
Impermanent,
Unimportant in its beauty,
Yet the design and the beauty
Were there for human eyes to see,
Or fail to see.

“Why?” I asked,
“Should such intricacy go into
Miniscule
Unappreciated
Flakes of snow?
Where is the awareness to warrant such a plan
When billions fall
Through the year,
Through the world,
And few are really ‘seen’
Why such work?”

And then I thought of Him
Who planned it all,
Who sees them formed
And sees them fall,
And I smiled again in wonder,
Feeling a sharing with Him
Because I knew that this marvel of design
Is His private show,
His “playtime”,
Making this shape
And that one
And another,
Then swirling them down
In wanton plentitude among unseeing men,
Joying in His private show
Of beauty and design,
Joying even in this,
The plaything of Creation!

SUCH A LOVE

One soul, longing
For the safety of another soul,
Much loved,
Cries,
“Oh, God,
If prayers and tears
—if hurt—
Could do it,
He would have been won
So long ago.”

With burning tears
Falling in the heart,
The answer comes
Unspoken:
“Yes...
If even death itself
Could do it,
He would have been won
So long ago—
You see...I love him even more:
I gave my Son.”

The Gift

I think God must have taken
Of the love within His heart,
Then He wrote our names upon it
And He gave us both a part;

I would take His priceless treasure
As a gift He'd have me share
So that hearts that beat around me
Feel a new and deeper care,
So that out of mortal frailness
Shines the nurtured bond He made:
A little bit of heaven
that no time can ever fade.

GROWTH IN PRAYER

When I was much younger in my relationship with God, and hadn't analyzed very deeply my thinking concerning prayer, and hadn't learned much about the way prayer works, I usually prayed with the desire to bend God's will to fit my own wishes. I was unaware that that was my intention, but when I looked closely, I realized that it was so. It seemed to me that the things I wanted of Him were good, so my responsibility was to pray so fervently that God would be persuaded to agree with me.

In time I learned that what seemed good to me was not always best—and I also learned that God, as our heavenly Father, will sometimes do as our earthly fathers do and grant what we are stubbornly insisting on having, even though He knows it is not best. Sometimes we will allow ourselves to learn lessons only in the hard way.

So, now I pray that God will overrule in the forming of my desires so that they will be bent to His thinking, rather than the other way around.

As we live from day to day, we could pray and then try our best to accomplish our desires, with determination to succeed....but would we not be trying to persuade God to bend His will to ours? And would not that be throwing away our guarantee of His guidance and oversight? Do you remember in Romans 8:31, 32 the question is asked:

“If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” No one had to persuade God to give His Son for us, though there is nothing more precious that we could ask, nothing more costly for Him to give. But He loved us, and He knew that without the giving of His Son there could be no forgiveness, no restoration to His presence.

If I loved some friend so much that I would willingly allow my son to die in his place (none of us love anyone that much, do we?), would I withhold anything else of mine from him that he really needed? So, we don't have to persuade God to do things for us that are for our good, because He freely gives us all things with Christ. We pray because He wants His children to talk to Him, just as we want our children to talk to us and to ask us for the things they want and need, and we pray earnestly and fervently and repeatedly when the requests are precious to us—but we must always be sure that we really want God to overrule according to His wisdom, and not to act solely on our will.

MEMORY

Isn't memory a wonderful gift? How easy it is to close my eyes and to be with people I have loved or to be in places that I have cherished through the years.....

.....to suddenly be standing on the edge of the Merced River, watching the water boil in white foam and spray over the gray granite boulders that choke it; to look straight up past the pale green buds of new spring leaves and to see the sheer rise of the bare granite mountains all around me; to feel the soft movement of the wind; to stand high on the mountain trail, heart and lungs cramping from the hike and the thin air, and to be slowly dampened through and through by the mist of Vernal Falls as it thunders endlessly and mercilessly on the broken rocks where the river drops over the edge of the precipice; to stand quietly and reverently in the still silence of the night, surrounded by towering trees, and watch as the firefall traces a path of glowing red down the side of Glacier Point, recalling, "Now the day is over, Night is drawing nigh, Shadows of the evening steal across the sky. Jesus, give the weary calm and sweet repose...."

.....or I can walk again among the oldest living things in the world, suddenly feeling the distance between me and those thousands of years since the beginning bridged by the tortured but triumphant Bristlecones. I can feel the frightening loneliness of the place, as though intruding in a forbidden world where human feet should not walk. Everything is so parched and barren..nothing moves or seems to live except the twisted, mutilated, and grotesque

trees scattered over the dry wastes. They have been ravaged by storms and lightning; the elements have heaped every cruelty on them to deprive them of life but the very hardship has made them strong in resistance and they stand silhouetted against the evening sky, battered monuments of defiance and perseverance.

.....or I can feel once more the cool green softness of moss under my feet as I wander in awe among the fallen ruins of Ta Prom. Sounds of chattering monkeys and jungle birds float in the air and I have the feeling of one who has stumbled out of the dense growth to find unexpectedly a lost world of a decayed civilization. All around me rise the monolithic stones of broken walls and arches. The face of a god looks down on me with a passive stare, unmindful of the strong network of roots that strangle and stifle like bands of iron. Almost I can feel the presence and the whispers of the people who worshipped here in centuries past....but, no, they have long been gone, leaving only the ruins of their work to remind the world that they once lived.

.....or I can go back to the days when I could hear the familiar step of a brother on the porch, with the happy sound of his whistle, and I can hear his voice again as he calls, "Mama," coming through the door, glad to be home.....

Memory is called the midway world between earth and paradise. How true that description is! And how much of every day is spent wandering somewhere in that world, along pleasant or painful paths.

BORN INTO POVERTY

When a child is born into poverty,
Illiteracy,
Starvation,
The consuming goal of a lifetime
Is to escape such existence;
And if he succeeds
He reaches out in turn,
Grasping opportunities,
To help the ones he loves.

When a child is born into a religion
Of poverty,
Illiteracy,
Starvation,
Often—too often—
He refuses to lift his eyes
To see what could be his,
What God would give
To opened, out-stretched hands,
But, duty-bound,
He clings his whole life through
To death,
And never sees.

The Elements Of Love

The love that I have
Chooses to endure
Whatever neglect
 and disappointment
 and hurt are necessary,
Rather than to risk being the instrument
Of bringing any sorrow to you.

The love that I have demands kindness
 and thoughtfulness;
I *want* to please you,
I *want* to bring happy thoughts,
 beautiful thoughts,
 to your days;
If it is possible for me to enrich your days
 I *want* to do that for you.
I look for ways to give of myself,
 for things I can do for you,
Because love has to find expression
In giving
And doing.

Love, then, is kindness,
 the desire to spare one from pain,
 the longing to share one's thoughts,
 the concern for the physical
 and emotional
 and spiritual well-being
 of the one who is loved;
it is the desire to give of oneself,
the thoughtfulness enabling one to see little things
to be done to add to happiness.

These are the elements that make love,
Not just the four letters that spell the word.

COMMUNION

Oh, Lord,
For these few minutes
Let me stop my work
And sit here in this quiet place,
Alone
With myself,
Alone with You;
Let me feel my thoughts
And look within
To see the self
I sometimes do not know;
Let me stop
In utter stillness
To feel Your presence
Permeate
This quiet room;
Let me be filled
For this short span of time
With heaven's peace,
With sweet contentment in my soul,
With all the fulness
Of eternity;
And, Lord, when
Reluctantly
I leave this room
To cope again
With Life's distractions
And preoccupations,
Keep vivid in my mind
This place of peace
And bring me here again.

OH, FATHER, GIVE US

Oh, Father,
Give us eyes to see
The vastness of horizons
You would open up before us;
Give us strength
To walk the nearer plains,
The endurance
To scale the mountain peaks
That bring new vistas into sight;
Give us songs
Worthy of the singing
On brilliant days
When everywhere is sunshine
And skies so blue
The heart must ache in gratitude
To be alive;
Give us, within ourselves,
Capacity for love
For all mankind,
That we may radiate Your love
And be Your greatest gift
—except Your Son—
To dying men.

HE'S A CLOWN!

He's a clown!

With a grin of sheer delight
From the morning until night,
Just an impish little elf
That cannot contain himself.

He's a clown!

The kind to spring across the room
Like a jumping jack in tune,
Or to "squirt right out of bed" —
That's really what he said!

He's a clown!

Not a moment is he still
But the house with laughter fills
As he "cowboys" all day long,
Or stops to sing a Hindi song!

He's a clown!

Such a garb he finds to wear —
I can only stop and stare
And then wonder with surprise
What will next come to my eyes?

He's a clown!

As a clown he brings us joy
For you see, he is our boy —
But every clown laughs with a sigh
Even when he's "just so high".

And the somber side of him,
Though it sometimes flickers dim,
Makes my heart so full inside
That I fear I'll burst with pride,
For no one else could ever say
Sweeter prayers than Stevie prays
Whether asking God to bless
All the ones he loves the best,
Or that "our school may go all right" —
That God will watch throughout the night —
Or that the work may be "established"
(Use of big words is quite lavish),
And he is so much concerned
That his lessons be well-learned —
That he do his very best,
No matter what may be the test.

How I pray my little clown
May never let his standard down,
May never lose his happy laugh,
May not forget the sober half,
May make the world a better place
For having walked along this way,
May take to God in Heaven high
The kiss I'll treasure till I die.

Ta Prom

(Part of the ruins of Ankor Wat, Cambodia)

In the gloom of an evening twilight
I come to a broken wall;
Dark monoliths guard the crumbling arch
That leads to a shadowed hall.

Cool dampness encircles my feet as a mist
And I walk on a carpet of moss;
Through the archway I see as a shrouded tomb,
The splendor, enveloped and lost.

Stark columns, engraved and erected with sweat
Reach up toward the deepening sky;
From temples, half-fallen in ruin and decay
Comes the murmuring breath of a sigh.

Great faces carved from the ageless stone
Stare down with unseeing eyes;
Roots of the trees like a meshwork of iron
Strangle and stifle their cries.

Surrounded by glory suspended in time,
Half broken, half fallen, yet held—
Captives confined in living chains,
An ages-old story they tell.



And it seems through the gloom of the jungle night
Move the spectres of long, long ago—
A people with heads raised gallantly high—
A people now fallen and low.

Backward but once they glance through the night
To their kingdom of aeons past
Where living and loving, they fought and died,
Dreaming of peace at last.

They move as in mourning with dark shrouded heads,
Their sighs like a breath of the wind;
Their footsteps in silence tread over the stone
And on to eternity wend.

GOODBYE, HOUSE

I turn at the door of the room that is mine,
Survey every feature,
Make note of each line.....
Goodbye, House.

I walk down the hall, past rooms that are bare;
How lonely they look
With no occupants there.....
Goodbye, House.

I stop in the kitchen, refreshingly clean
And think of the good times,
The laughter it's seen.....
Goodbye, House.

The windows are closed, the curtains are drawn,
The doors are all locked,
It's time to be gone.....
Goodbye, House.

Wait for us.
Don't change while we're gone.
Welcome us back one day
Into the sanctity
Of your walls again.
Goodbye, House.

HE'S THERE

With the strength

The knowledge

The answer

To help

Whatever

Whoever needs helping.

Thank you, Father,

For Daddy,

For the one who fills the role, physically,

That you fill for us, spiritually,

So that we can be whole.

Thank you.

Come——

See Where He Lay

He was the Son of God
Yet He was born in a stable
And that soft baby form
Left its first imprint
In a bed of straw.
Come——see where He lay.

Little boy feet pattered around
In the dust of Nazareth.
Then leaving that home
With its childish mat,
The noble head of the Man
Found rest with friends
In Cana of Galilee,
At Peter's house,
Then in a boat, storm-swept and dark.
Judean roads knew His footprints
And the way to Bethlehem;
Mary and Martha made a place,
Simon and others too,
But all were borrowed,
No house was His own.
Come——see where He lay.

Then later—

After the dark,
After the cross
that was mine,
not His,
His body was lowered
With gentle hands
To the grieving earth He'd made
And friends brought spices
And linen cloth
And laid Him in Joseph's tomb.
Come—see where He lay.

How did He feel,
This King of Kings,
Living a pauper's life
Leaving His footprints
On borrowed ground
In the world His hands had made?

Come—see where He lay.

When the World is Asleep

How often, dear one, when the world is asleep
Does the hurt of my heart, unendingly deep,
Overflow to my soul in agonized cries
With prayers on my lips and tears in my eyes.

Dreams

The day is born with the rising sun
And dies in the west when the glow is done,
And ever so quietly, on wings of night,
As hushed as the stars, so silent and white,
Come the dreams that live in a lonely breast,
Dreams that may die like the sun in the west.

LOVE

Love?
It should begin like a seed
Dropped on the earth
To germinate
And to spread roots slowly,
Building a slender trunk
And small branches,
Growing at pace with itself,
So that, like a great oak
Growing to maturity,
Love will have grown
From a small nothingness
To the fulness of the heart's capacity
As that capacity has grown.
And, like the oak,
Such love sways and bends
With storms of adversity
But weathers them all
And lives on
For a hundred years.

But your love?
With no gentle sprouting and growth
Did it come,
But suddenly,
As a full-grown tree,
Thrusting trunk and branches
Through the earth of my heart,

Breaking and tearing its way
To heaven's light,
Forcing root space,
Unmindful of the upheaval;
And where nothing had been,
Suddenly the proud trunk
And sweeping limbs
Were there,
Warmed in the smile of God's sunlight,
Washed by the rain of His tears,
And the earth and sky
Of my heart space
Had to grow
To make room for you.

Yes, that was long ago.
The tears and the breaks
—So painful at first—
Mended with the years.
Washing rains and sun
Healed the earth of my heart
And brought the grass
And the flowers
To grow at your feet.
The pain has gone,
The space has grown
To fit you now,
And I wonder if such love,
So uniquely born,
Will weather stormy winds
And live eternally?

Something

to

Think About...

When you go to meet your Maker
Will your heart be justly proud?
When He brings out your life record
Will you want it read aloud?

Daddy And Mother

To my childish mind
They always seemed mature,
With all the answers,
Knowing what to do
And how to do,
And I felt secure:
They walked the road before me.

Even today,
Though I am grown up
With children of my own,
I wonder how much of my confidence
And sense of direction
Comes from the knowledge
That they are there,
Walking the road before me?

Prayer

He stood alone for a minute more
Thinking of one on a distant shore,
One whose heart, overflowing with love,
Had bowed that night to the God above
And breathed his name in earnest prayer,
Asking for him His tenderest care;
And he felt, as he turned from the starry night
The gentle stirring, feathery light,
Of the breeze on his arm, in caressing sigh,
Like the wing of an angel brushing by...

Hebrews 1:13-14

The Glow of Autumn Fire

Did you ever see such splendor,
Such majestic beauty strewn
Through all the woods and hillsides
Through all the trails and roadsides
In such fiery glowing tone?

FEAR

He didn't come
And the time was past,
Yet he didn't come.
I watched the road for lights,
My ears strained for the motor sound
But there was only darkness,
Silence,
And a fear began.
Slowly at first,
A nagging uneasiness in my heart,
An ache for the anxiety to be ended,
Yet there was no end
And the fear grew.
A nervous edginess filled me up inside,
Creeping over my arms and legs,
Taking away their strength
And a numbness began to build,
A coldness
A deadness
Invading every tissue of my body
With paralyzing fear
So that, at last,
My thoughts, my being,
Were reduced to the hugeness
Of one
Engulfing
Overwhelming
All-pervading
Fear.

Yes, he came
And relief came
And thankfulness came.

And a thought came:
I had been so deeply afraid
That every part of my body
Was totally given over to the fear,
Yet, my dread,
My agony,
Had not swept me to the extreme
Of "sweating, as it were,
Great drops of blood."

What must have been His horror
That night
Alone in the garden
When He, one with God,
Eternally pure,
Struggled in mortal fear
Of "being made sin"?

You say it was the cross He dreaded?
—No—
Don't call Him coward in the face of pain:
Since that day
How many for His name
Have died a martyr's death
And died with joy?

No—
Don't call Him coward.
It was not pain He feared
Or death—
But He knew,
As you and I can never know,
The divineness of being wholly pure;
And He knew
The alien ugliness of sin;
And He knew
What it would cost
To be "made sin";
And the horror
And the dread
And the all-consuming fear
Of that knowledge
Swept over His body
With a coldness
And a paralyzing numbness
Of sweat
As great drops of blood.

I wonder...
Is sin really that bad?
and am I really worth that much to Him?
and if it is,
and if I am,
God have mercy on my smallness.....

But A Friend?

An acquaintance says,
 "How are you?"
 "It looks like rain."
 "Politics is dirty business."
And we answer of surface thoughts.

But a friend?
 Only a friend
 Has the right to ask,
 "What are you thinking?"
And wherever we are
In the private rooms of our mind
We open the door
And bid him in
To share our thoughts,
Our moods,
Our secret world of self.

GOODBYE

Every parting of our ways
Through all these years
Has had its own goodbye to ease the pain—
The big goodbyes
When we married and left home,
When the kids spent summer weeks away,
When college came,
And later when they married
And they turned with tears and waved again,
Starting “on their own”.

The little goodbyes, too,
Goodnights,
A visit to a friend’s,
Going off to work each morning
And to school...

Separations,
Each one with its own goodbye
To fill the need of coming emptiness.
That little moment of a prayer together,
One last kiss,
Perhaps, “I’m sorry,”
Restoring precious peace,
A hug, tighter for the parting.
“I love you”
With a searching, telling look,
And all the words that somehow
Needed to be said
Before “goodbye”.

Still, the loneliness was there:
I don't deny it—
But not so heavy,
Not so hopeless
Because the words,
The lingering memory of the touch,
Were there to give us strength.

Last week
You went outside to do some work
While I made a little lunch.
I waited, thinking you would come,
And wondering
—Suddenly fearing
 With a coldness and a dread—
I ran outside to find you fallen,
Lying in a stillness
That no frantic cry would move.

Oh, my love,
I am bereft

empty

But perhaps—
Perhaps
I wouldn't feel so wholly lost,
So overwhelmed with grief
If we had been allowed
That little time,
That last goodbye.

Skies Too Blue

With skies too blue to stay inside
And spring winds calling me,
I must climb to vistas wide
God's glorious world to see.

And I must breath the pine-scent air
And feel the emerald green
While winging birds fly overhead
To distant lands of dream.

And I must stop and dream awhile
Of sharing this with you,
For nothing in my world is whole
Till, Love, you share it, too.