

## ST. JOHN, THE AGED

I'm growing very old. This weary head That hath so often leaned on Jesus' breast, In days long past that seem almost a dream, Is bent and hoary with its weight of years. These limbs that followed Him—my Master—oft From Galilee to Judea! yea, that stood Beneath the cross and trembled with His groans, Refuse to bear me even through the streets To preach unto my children. E'en my lips Refuse to form the words my heart sends forth. My ears are dull, they scarcely hear the sobs Of my dear children gathered round my couch: God lays His hand upon me—yea, His *hand*, And not His *rod*—the gentle hand that I Felt those three years, so often pressed in mine, In friendship, such as passeth woman's love. I'm old; so old I cannot recollect The faces of my friends; and I forget The words and deeds that make up daily life; But that dear face, and every word *He* spoke, Grow more distinct as others fade away, So that I live with Him and holy dead More than with living. Some seventy years ago I was a fisher by the sacred sea. It was at sunset. How the tranquil tide Bathed dreamily the pebbles! How the light Crept up the distant hills, and in its wake Soft purple shadows wrapped the dewy fields! And then *He* came and called me. Then I gazed For the first time, on that sweet face. These eyes From out of which, as from a window, shone Divinity, looked on my inmost soul, And lighted it forever. Then his words Broke on the silence of my heart, and made The whole world musical. Incarnate love Took hold of me and claimed me for its own. I followed in the twilight, holding fast His mantle.

O, what holy walks we had Through harvest fields, and desolate, dreary wastes! And oftentimes He leaned upon my arm, Wearied and wayworn, I was young and strong, And so upbore Him. Lord, now I am weak And old, and feeble! Let me rest on Thee! So, put thine arm around me. Closer still! How strong Thou art! The twilight draws space Come let us leave these noisy streets and take The path to Bethany; for Mary's smile Awaits us at the gate, and Martha's hands Have long prepared the cheerful evening meal. Come, James, the Master waits; and Peter, see Has gone some steps before.

What say you, friends? That this is Ephesus, and Christ has gone Back to the heavenly kingdom! Ay, 'tis so, 'tis so, I know it all; and yet, just now, I seemed To stand once more upon my native hills, And touch my Master. O, how oft I've seen The touching of His garments bring back strength To palsied limbs! I feel it has to mine. Up! bear me once more to my flock! Once more There let me tell them of the Saviour's love; For, by the sweetness of my Master's voice Just now, I think He must be very near. Coming, I trust, to break the veil, which time Has worn so thin that I can see beyond, And watch His footsteps.

So, raise up my head, How dark it is! I cannot seem to see The faces of my flock. Is that the sea That murmurs so, or is it weeping? Hush, My little children. God so loved the world He gave His Son: So, love ye one another. Love God and man. Amen. Now bear me back My legacy unto an angry world is this. I feel my work is finished. Are the streets so full? What, call the folk my name? The holy John; Nay, write me rather, Jesus Christ's beloved, And lover of my children.

Lay me down Once more upon my couch, and open wide The eastern window. See, there comes a light Like that which broke upon my soul at eve, When in the dreary isle of Patmos, Gabriel came And touched me. See, it grows! And hark! It is the song the ransomed sang Of glory to the Lamb! How loud it sounds! And that unwritten one! Methinks my soul Can join it now. But who are those who crowd The shining way? Say!—joy! 'tis the eleven, With Peter first! How eagerly he looks! How bright the smile on James' face! I am the last. Once more we are complete To gather round the paschal feast. My place Is next my Master. O, my Lord, my Lord! How bright Thou art! and yet the very same I loved in Galilee. 'Tis worth the hundred years To feel this bliss! So, lift me up, dear Lord, Unto Thy bosom. There shall I abide. —Sel.

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— July, 1884 —