To Father Louis -

in friendship

and gratitude

and in prayer

on the occasion of his ordination

Robert Girod

Ascension Day

2 6 4 9

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## CONTENTS

**INTRODUCTION TO THE THIRD EDITION** ........................................ xiii
**DEDICATION OF THE FIRST EDITION** ........................................... 3
**AUTHOR'S PREFACE (WITH EXPLANATORY NOTES AND EXAMPLES BY THE EDITOR)** ..................................................... 5

**EARLY POEMS (1860–75?)**

1. The Escorial ......................................................... 13
2. A Vision of the Mermaids ........................................ 18
3. Winter with the Gulf Stream .................................... 23
4. Spring and Death .................................................. 24
5. A Soliloquy of One of the Spies left in the Wilderness .... 25
6. New Readings ......................................................... 28
7. 'He hath abolished the old drouth,' ............................ 28
8. 'Where art thou friend, whom I shall never see,' ......... 29
9. Three Sonnets: The Beginning of the End ..................... 30
10. The Alchemist in the City ......................................... 31
11. 'Myself unholy, from myself unholy' ......................... 33
12. Two Sonnets: To Oxford .......................................... 33
13. Easter Communion .................................................. 35
14. 'See how Spring opens with disabling cold,' ............... 35
15. 'My prayers must meet a brazen heaven' ..................... 36
16. 'Let me be to Thee as the circling bird' ...................... 37
17. The Half-way House ................................................ 37
18. Barnfloor and Winepress ......................................... 38
19. For a Picture of St. Dorothea ................................... 39
20. Heaven-Haven ....................................................... 40
21. The Nightingale .................................................... 41
22. Nondum ............................................................. 43
23. Easter ............................................................. 45
24. The Habit of Perfection .......................................... 46
25. Lines for a Picture of St. Dorothea ............................ 47
26. Ad Mariam .......................................................... 49
27. Rosa Mystica ........................................................ 50

~ vii ~
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>The Wreck of the Deutschland</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Penmaen Pool</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>The Silver Jubilee</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>God's Grandeur</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>The Starlight Night</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>The Lantern out of Doors</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>The Sea and the Skylark</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>The Windhover</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>Pied Beauty</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>Hurrahing in Harvest</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>The Caged Skylark</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>In the Valley of the Elwy</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>The Loss of the Eurydice</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>The May Magnificat</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>Binsey Poplars</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>Duns Scotus's Oxford</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>Henry Purcell</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>Peace</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>The Bugler's First Communion</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>Morning Midday and Evening Sacrifice</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49.</td>
<td>Andromeda</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>The Candle Indoors</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51.</td>
<td>The Handsome Heart</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52.</td>
<td>At the Wedding March</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53.</td>
<td>Felix Randal</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54.</td>
<td>Brothers</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55.</td>
<td>Spring and Fall</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56.</td>
<td>Inversnaid</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57.</td>
<td>'As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;'</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58.</td>
<td>Ribblesdale</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59.</td>
<td>The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60.</td>
<td>The Blessed Virgin compared to the Air we Breathe</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61.</td>
<td>To what serves Mortal Beauty?</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62.</td>
<td>Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63.</td>
<td>(The Soldier)</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64.</td>
<td>(Carrion Comfort)</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
65. 'No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief,' 106
66. Tom's Garland 107
67. Harry Ploughman 108
68. 'To seem the stranger lies my lot, my life' 109
69. 'I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day.' 109
70. 'Patience, hard thing! the hard thing but to pray,' 110
71. 'My own heart let me have more pity on; let' 110
72. That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the comfort of the Resurrection 111
73. St. Alphonsus Rodriguez 112
74. 'Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I contend' 113
75. To R. B. 114

UNFINISHED POEMS, FRAGMENTS, LIGHT VERSE, ETC.

(A) 1864–6?
76. Fragments of Pilate 117
77. A Voice from the World 121
78. 'I must hunt down the prize' 127
79. 'Why should their foolish bands, their hopeless hearse' 128
80. 'Why if it be so, for the dismal morn' 128
81. 'It was a hard thing to undo this knot.' 128
82. Six Epigrams:
   (i) 'Of virtues I most warmly bless,' 129
   (ii) Modern Poets 129
   (iii) On a Poetess 129
   (iv) 'You ask why can't Clarissa hold her tongue.' 130
   (v) On one who borrowed his sermons 130
   (vi) 'Boughs being pruned, birds preened, show more fair;' 130
83. 'I am like a slip of comet,' 130
84. 'No, they are come; their horn is lifted up;' 131
85. 'Now I am minded to take pipe in hand' 131
86. 'The cold whip-adder unespied' 132
87. Fragments of Richard 132
88. The Queen's Crowning 135
89. 'Tomorrow meet you? O not tomorrow.' 141
90. The Summer Malison 141
91. From Floris in Italy 142
92. 'How looks the night? There does not miss a star.' 144

~ ix ~
93. Shakspere
94. 'Trees by their yield'
95. A Complaint
96. 'Moonless darkness stands between.'
97. 'The earth and heaven, so little known,'
98. Summa
(B) 1876–89
100. The Woodlark
101. 'What being in rank-old nature should earlier have that breath been'
102. Cheery Beggar
103. 'Denis, whose motionable, alert, most vaulting wit'
104. 'The furl of fresh-leaved dogrose down'
105. St. Winefred's Well
106. On St. Winefred.
107. (Margaret Clitheroe)
108. 'Repeat that, repeat,'
109. 'The child is father to the man,'
110. On a Piece of Music
111. (Ash-boughs)
112. 'The times are nightfall, look, their light grows less,'
113. 'Hope holds to Christ the mind's own mirror out'
114. To his Watch
115. 'Strike, churl; hurl, cheerless wind, then; heltering hail'
116. 'Thee, God, I come from, to thee go,'
117. 'To him who ever thought with love of me'
118. 'What shall I do for the land that bred me,'
119. On the Portrait of Two Beautiful Young People
120. 'The sea took pity; it interposed with doom:'
121. Epithalamion
122. 'The shepherd's brow, fronting forked lightning, owns'

TRANSLATIONS, LATIN AND WELSH POEMS, ETC.
123. Aeschylus: from Prometheus Desmotes
124. 'Love me as I love thee. O double sweet!'  
125. Inundatio Oxoniana
126. Elegiacs: 'Tristi tu, memini, virgo'
127. Elegiacs: after The Convent Threshold
128. Horace: 'Persicos odi, puer, apparatus'

~ X ~
| 129. | Horace: 'Odi profanum volgus et arceo' | 183 |
| 130. | Jesu Dulcis Memoria | 185 |
| 131. | S. Thomae Aquinatis Rhythmus | 186 |
| 132. | Oratio Patris Condren | 187 |
| 133. | O Deus, ego amo te | 188 |
| 134. | The Same (Welsh version) | 189 |
| 135. | Cywydd | 190 |
| 136. | Ad Episcopum Salopiensem | 191 |
| 137. | Ad Rev. Patrem Fratrem Thomam Burke O.P. | 192 |
| 138. | Ad Matrem Virginem | 193 |
| 139. | (May Lines) | 195 |
| 140. | Latin Version of Dryden's Epigram on Milton | 196 |
| 141. | Songs from Shakespeare, in Latin and Greek: |
| (i) | 'Come unto these yellow sands' | 196 |
| (ii) | 'Full fathom five thy father lies' | 197 |
| (iii) | 'While you here do snoring lie' | 197 |
| (iv) | 'Tell me where is Fancy bred' | 198 |
| (v) | The Same (Greek version) | 198 |
| (vi) | 'Orpheus with his lute made trees' | 199 |
| (vii) | The Same (Greek version) | 200 |

EDITORS' NOTES | 201 |

APPENDIX: *The Convent Threshold*, by CHRISTINA ROSSETTI | 280 |

INDEX OF TITLES, ETC. | 286 |

INDEX OF FIRST LINES | 288 |
When the thing we freely forfeit is kept with fonder a care,
Fonder a care kept than we could have kept it, kept
Far with fonder a care (and we, we should have lost it) finer,
fonder
A care kept.—Where kept? Do but tell us where kept,
where.—
Yonder.—What high as that! We follow, now we follow.—
Yonder, yes yonder, yonder,
Yonder.

60

The Blessed Virgin compared to the Air we Breathe

Wild air, world-mothering air,
Nestling me everywhere,
That each eyelash or hair
Girdles; goes home betwixt
The fleeciest, frailest-flixed
Snowflake; that's fairly mixed
With, riddles, and is rife
In every least thing's life;
This needful, never spent,
And nursing element;
My more than meat and drink,
My meal at every wink;
This air, which, by life's law,
My lung must draw and draw
Now but to breathe its praise,
Minds me in many ways

~ 99 ~
Of her who not only
Gave God's infinity
Dwindled to infancy
Welcome in womb and breast,
Birth, milk, and all the rest
But mothers each new grace
That does now reach our race—
Mary Immaculate,
Merely a woman, yet
Whose presence, power is
Great as no goddess's
Was deemèd, dreamèd; who
This one work has to do—
Let all God's glory through,
God's glory which would go
Through her and from her flow
Off, and no way but so.

I say that we are wound
With mercy round and round
As if with air: the same
Is Mary, more by name.
She, wild web, wondrous robe,
Mantles the guilty globe,
Since God has let dispense
Her prayers his providence:
Nay, more than almoner,
The sweet alms' self is her
And men are meant to share
Her life as life does air.
If I have understood,

~ 100 ~
She holds high motherhood
Towards all our ghostly good
And plays in grace her part
About man's beating heart,
Laying, like air's fine flood,
The deathdance in his blood;
Yet no part but what will
Be Christ our Saviour still.
Of her flesh he took flesh:
He does take fresh and fresh,
Though much the mystery how,
Not flesh but spirit now
And makes, O marvellous!
New Nazareths in us,
Where she shall yet conceive
Him, morning, noon, and eve;
New Bethlems, and he born
There, evening, noon, and morn—
Bethlem or Nazareth,
Men here may draw like breath
More Christ and baffle death;
Who, born so, comes to be
New self and nobler me
In each one and each one
More makes, when all is done,
Both God's and Mary's Son.
    Again, look overhead
How air is azurèd;
O how! nay do but stand
Where you can lift your hand
Skywards: rich, rich it laps

~ 101 ~
Round the four fingergaps.
Yet such a sapphire-shot,
Charged, steepèd sky will not
Stain light. Yea, mark you this:
It does no prejudice.
The glass-blue days are those
When every colour glows,
Each shape and shadow shows.
Blue be it: this blue heaven
The seven or seven times seven
Hued sunbeam will transmit
Perfect, not alter it.
Or if there does some soft,
On things aloof, aloft,
Bloom breathe, that one breath more
Earth is the fairer for.
Whereas did air not make
This bath of blue and slake
His fire, the sun would shake,
A blear and blinding ball
With blackness bound, and all
The thick stars round him roll
Flashing like flecks of coal,
Quartz-fret, or sparks of salt,
In grimy vasty vault.

So God was god of old:
A mother came to mould
Those limbs like ours which are
What must make our daystar
Much dearer to mankind;
Whose glory bare would blind

~ 102 ~
Or less would win man's mind.
Through her we may see him
Made sweeter, not made dim,
And her hand leaves his light
Sifted to suit our sight.

Be thou then, O thou dear
Mother, my atmosphere;
My happier world, wherein
To wend and meet no sin;
Above me, round me lie
Fronting my froward eye
With sweet and scarless sky;
Stir in my ears, speak there
Of God's love, O live air,
Of patience, penance, prayer:
World-mothering air, air wild,
Wound with thee, in thee isled,
Fold home, fast fold thy child.

61

To what serves Mortal Beauty?

To what serves mortal beauty —dangerous; does set dancing blood—the O-seal—that-so feature, flung prouder form Than Purcell tune lets tread to? See: it does this: keeps warm Men's wits to the things that are; what good means—where a glance
Master more may than gaze, gaze out of countenance.
Those lovely lads once, wet-fresh windfalls of war's storm,