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# The Gothic Minster

A POEM

—BY—

HARRY LYMAN KOOPMAN

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NEW YORK  
TWENTIETH CENTURY PUBLISHING COMPANY  
7 CLINTON PLACE  
1891

To Miss Sarah E. Holmes,

In memory of the summer  
of 1896, at Wrentham, Mass.,

from her  
friend

# TWENTIETH CENTURY

A WEEKLY RADICAL MAGAZINE.

H. L. Kookman. \_\_\_\_\_  
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A POEM

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HARRY LYMAN KOOPMAN

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Read before the Alumni of Colby University

30 JUNE 1891

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## L'Envoy.

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Colby University in the early morning  
after Commencement, 1891.

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The morning mist enwraps thee like a dream,—  
The river's warm breath whitened by the dawn;  
Still as deep sleep, the elms about thy lawn  
Mix with the vapor; on the veiled stream  
The sliding, slumberous ripples roll and gleam.

The morn shall wake; winds woo and sunbeams fawn  
To rouse thee, vainly, in thy rest withdrawn,  
Where summer's moons of quiet reign supreme.

Meanwhile the woods are storing up their dyes,  
The clematis twines wreaths of later snow,  
The sumacs drain the sunset's fieriest glow,  
The ferns catch every sweetest breath that flies;  
And all, that when thou opest again thine eyes,  
Autumn's romance its web may round thee throw.

Burlington, Vt., 2 July, 1891.

*The following poem is not a study of any one cathedral ; but for the description of the outside it follows somewhat the lines of the minster at Ulm with its single spire, among the spires of earth peerless in height and beauty ; while the colors of the interior it has drawn from the more gorgeous cathedrals of the Ile-de-France, the cradle and the throne of Gothic architecture.*

## The Gothic Minster.

A symphony in stone ; wherein all notes  
Wrung or upleaping from man's ruddy heart,  
The low, the loud, the dull, the penetrating,  
As up to heaven thronging they ascend,  
In labyrinthean intertangement,  
O'ertaken in mid-harmony by form,  
Stand bodied forth, eternized, visible.  
No thin Memnonian murmur, faintly heard  
At dawn or dusk with glad or plaintive strain,  
Here swells a chorus never still, a vast  
Millennial antiphon absolved from sound,  
Which thrills and thunders on the eye alone.  
The music of the world-wide life of man,  
Its hopes and fears and sins and sacrifices,  
Unfaltering faith, rapt adoration,  
Keen questioning, jaw-dropt credulity,  
Death-scorning courage daunted by the dark,  
Love barred with hate, with grossness purity,  
Red-slipping war, the hammering hum of peace,  
Hand-clasping brotherhood and manliness,  
The joy of handiwork, whose rest is toil,  
The joy of breathing, moving, loving life  
Immortalized and eloquent in stone.  
Stand here at night in storm, when, through the  
    gloom,  
The great bulk seems a wall across the world,

Uprising jagged to the very sky,  
And you could deem a hornèd Alp, rebellious  
Against the encircling conclave of his peers,  
Had by their doom been banished here to dwell,  
With all his fretting pines and pinnacles.  
But let the moon break forth, and through swift scud  
Flicker and float upon these carven walls,  
The mountain vanishes, and in its place  
A structure gleams without a stain of earth,  
A temple heaven-descended, or, as if  
A convoy of blest angels chorusing,  
As back to heaven they bore a saint's white soul,  
Had ravished so the moonlight with their song,  
That, where their notes fell, there the beams, trans-  
formed,  
Had stood upstriving, and, as rose the hymn,  
So rose the silver fane, until the sound  
Was muffled by the stars; while far below,  
Though far aloft, to men, the snowy cross  
Hung yearning for that vanished melody.  
But stand before the minster when high noon  
Throws its revealing light on tower and wall,  
The airy structure hardens into stone;  
Not all forgetful of the mountain form  
It wore in darkness, nor the winged grace  
And lightness of that moony masonry;  
Yet plainly work of man, man at his best,  
Highest aspiring and most self-forgetful,  
Therefore most self-revealing. Then, what self?  
The genius of what master intellect  
Shines here by baser hands wrought visibly?  
No mighty genius, and no baser hands,  
But common lives by faith and art exalted;—



Such workmen reared these walls, and carved these  
spires,

And shot yon shaft of beauty into air  
Till the eye aches that follows, and the heart  
Feels itself snatched from earth and swept on high,  
As by the current of a soaring flame.

But, if the greatness was not theirs that wrought  
What mastering motive so informed their lives  
As through such lowly means to win expression?  
Religion 'twas, and art its ministrant,  
The records answer; but the question comes,  
If unto them the word religion spake  
As in our ears today? In every age  
Bears not the word its new significance,  
Or meanings manifold, though under all  
Abide the root and spring of all religion,  
The loneliness and longing of the soul  
Orphaned of its ideal? The eye within  
Beholds an image of perfection;  
But in the outer and embodied world  
Sees only crudeness, failure, death, decay;  
No circle round, no angle true, no life  
But bears within the seeds of its own death;  
The redeless riddle of the universe:  
The rain descending on the evil man  
As on the good, and on the good as oft  
The hail and lightning; nothing justified  
Within the span of life; the heart awarding  
Men's lot by merit, and aggrieved to find  
That force on earth usurps the place of right;  
Nor satisfied that with the ages' lapse  
Wrong slowly is made right, if this man's hurt

Is never healed, nor that man's pride put down.  
The heart has vision in its inmost shrine  
Of love illimitable, its native air,  
Its birthplace and its bourne; but sees on earth  
Man's hand against his brother, hate and greed  
Making the world a shambles, or a den  
Of famine and of torture; yea! the lesson,  
Learned after centuries, that 'tis thriftier  
To coin a brother's heart's-blood, drop by drop,  
Than spill it wastefully by the swift sword.

But heart and mind refuse to answer no  
To the enigma of the universe.  
Though earth and air and sea and human life,  
With all their voices, howl a negative,  
Deep in the soul resounds eternal yea.  
Therefore the soul back on itself returns,  
And through itself, as though a glass, beholds  
The infinite brought down to human ken,  
The dateless, boundless, beauty, goodness, truth.  
But not in all its hours can the soul scale  
Those dizzy heights of contemplation,  
Descend those depths and breathe with mortal breath;  
Nor have all souls that strength to climb and dive.  
So, that the blind might share the seer's sight,  
And that the seer in his hours of gloom  
Might not forget the vision wonderful,  
Men wrought them symbols that should reproduce  
The shadowed glory, as the picture's lines  
Recall the absent loved one. Yea, they strove  
By strong suggestions so to realize  
The world unseen, that o'er the symbol seen  
The unseen through the parted heaven should burst

Many the symbols that in many lands  
 Throughout the ages have moved human hearts  
 With heavenly persuasion; but with some  
 An age, a race, drank all the meaning dry,  
 And left a rocky channel to our thirst.  
 Yet other symbols spake to all men's hearts  
 And speak to after ages. Such are those  
 Vast emblems of the life of man in God  
 And of God's life with men, that, long perfecting,  
 After the opening of the new millennium  
 For half a thousand years ceased not to break  
 Flower-like on Europe's air, as if the rocks  
 Had risen in worship, and the forest aisles  
 Had joined them in uplifted adoration.

For him who from our naked shore brings eyes  
 Of unblest innocence, which never saw  
 Beauty in stone or vaulted awfulness,  
 Yet brings a heart that thrills to grace and gloom,  
 What ravishment awaits! On him unwarned,  
 In all their beauty and their fragrance, burst  
 These fadeless blossoms of the centuries.  
 Upon his ears not dulled by frequency  
 The mighty chords of these vast instruments  
 Shatter full diapason. O'er his soul  
 The symbol once again breaks up the depths  
 Of the unfathomed blue to melt beneath  
 The glory of the infinite descending.  
 Man's life in God, so mounts the soaring pile;  
 Foundations vast and broad laid far below  
 In sunless depths of unseen sacrifice;  
 The walls arising, buttressed all about  
 With ~~mutual~~ support; oft scarcely more

*rallying*

Than buttresses, so precious is the room  
For inward light; then shrinking in the roof,  
Then, as if taking heart, once more the walls  
Rise heavenward, many-windowed, through a maze  
Of buttresses that spring to meet the lower,  
Then leap in upward flame for very joy  
Of help received and given; while, through all  
The length and breadth of the vast edifice,  
No line but upward strives, no stone but lifts,  
No smallest spire and finial but stands  
On tiptoe to ascend. But not so broad  
Can mount the highest life. The roof shuts in;  
And all the upward impulse of the pile  
Narrows into the tower, which climbs and climbs,  
But though so far from earth not yet finds heaven;  
Too earthly still, it throws more weight away;  
A flying cloud is scarce so airy now;  
But still the vision waits, and still the spire,  
Now narrowed to a staff, holds on its aim,  
Will not give o'er until the blessing fall;  
And see, the stone begins to bud with hope;  
Swifter the spire shoots up, then suddenly  
Stops, and in the rose-cross blossoms forth  
For rapture of the beatific vision.

So finds the life of man its rest in God,  
After long toil, repose, long warfare, peace.  
Where finds it? Yonder, never here on earth,  
The upward-pointing answers. Finds what life?  
The heart still urges, and for answer given  
Receives the beckoning of the sculptured portal.  
With heart upturned and chastened soul go in;  
The world shuts down behind, and thou art left

Alone in presence of the ineffable.  
The very light is not the light of day ;  
For here the sun shines not, but living light  
With its effulgence glorifies the air,  
As if the rainbow's promise filled the world.  
All vistas end in light; past range on range  
Of columns down the illimitable aisle  
A glory shuts the vision; while, above,  
From gloom to splendor soar the vaulted heights.  
To right, to left, the air is dyed with hues,  
Rich, darkling, solemnly magnificent,  
Like the deep organ tones that from aloft  
Roll under the huge vaults, and die away  
Along the lessening arches dim and far.  
Hours here are ages; time has oped his hand  
And let the soul fly free; the bounds of space  
Hem its light wings no longer. Where and when  
Have lost their meaning to the mind entranced.  
Yea, self itself is lost; the weary soul,  
After long flight, within the bosom rests  
Of the eternal, as the spray-flung drop  
Sinks back in ocean's immensity.

What shall bring back the soul to earthly life,  
After such heavenly ravishment, lest it faint,  
Being clothed upon with flesh, in that fine air?  
Beauty: which links the human and divine,  
And lures the soul on heavenly meads astray,  
Down its bright pathways to humanity.  
At last the eye begins with separate sight  
To mark what wholly had but dazzled it.  
The mind, by suddenness of the splendor stunned,  
Now step by step and slowly traverses

The strange new world revealed ; and finds it all  
Not wholly new or strange. The forms are here  
That build the forest's awe, the cavern's dread,  
And, more familiar still, the lowlier shapes  
Of leaf and bud and flower, with vines that cling  
And coil and twine and creep and nestle or climb ;  
All wrought with faithfulness that comes alone  
To love, a love that cherishes the life,  
Not merely the dead forms. Then the mind's eye  
Pictures the workman of that elder time  
On Sunday with his children wandering  
In wood and field, and noting form and poise  
Of flower and leaf and stem, while constantly  
His children bring him brighter, sweeter blooms  
For his approval. Wearying at last,  
They lighten with their songs the homeward way  
No man might hope to see the pile complete,  
But yet his daily, weekly, yearly task  
He wrought and finished, and in doing it  
Found happiness. Toil might his body tire,  
But in his heart was never any wish  
Save to renew his task with the new day ;  
So much he loved the work. His toil to him  
Was recreation, for it ministered  
To mind and heart ; in it his thought and will  
Wrought their creative impulse, and he knew  
The artist's joy, finding in art his life.

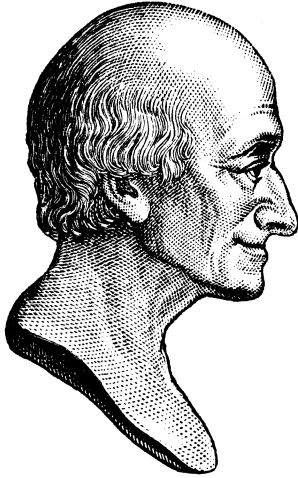
Men build no more cathedrals ;—walls may rise,  
With tower and window, and be consecrate  
To the old purpose, but the soul is fled.  
Small need the cause to question. Who toils now  
For love of art, with high creative joy ?

No laborer. Then in vain the master plans,  
Or, rather, vain his plan, and void of soul.  
Art knows no sundering of the hand and brain ;  
The two as one must labor, for in art  
The greater sinks or rises with the less.  
But, given the art, should we be able still  
To lift such clouds of incense to the sky,  
By marble less than faith made permanent ?  
The question holds its answer ; for the faith  
That bade these mountains be removed and wrought  
Into new shapes of heavenlier loveliness,  
Is dead on earth, never to live again.  
That faith is dead ; light slew it ; when men came  
To know the world they live in, and themselves,  
The faith that pointed them away from earth  
And bade them scorn and flee it, could not live.  
With all the beauty and the nameless charm  
And soothing of the soul and inspiration  
And lessons, which their monuments retain,  
The old beliefs of twilight, when day dawned,  
Must needs grow thin and vanish like the night.  
That faith is dead which made the earth a waste,  
And man's life but a desert pilgrimage  
O'er burning sands and flinty shards to find  
Beyond its bounds a Paradise and rest.  
That faith is dead which in the body saw  
Only the spirit's prison, a house of sin,  
To be escaped from, not indwelt with joy.  
That faith is dead, with its black pessimism,  
Which deemed this world the devil's world, and then,  
That men might not die wholly in despair,  
Fashioned a heaven for earth's apology.  
That faith is dead, but its dark influence

At last, with change of times, the order changed:  
 The windows robbed the wall's supremacy,  
 Grown wider, yet aspiring far aloft  
 In slender shafts that broke the restful lines  
 Of level, broken further by supports  
 To prop the weakened sides. The roof, upheaved  
 As by a strong convulsion, cleft the air  
 A wedge, no more a shelter. Losing power  
 To lift great domes in air, men reared instead  
 Dizzy and toppling spires. Even the round  
 Of the strong arch was broken, and the whole,  
 To hide its death, was draped with carven flowers.  
 So, when at Amiens change had wrought its worst,  
 In the completed pile no trace was left  
 Of the old meaning; and to eyes that saw  
 After the ancient order seemed alone  
 Ruin, where we behold the full-blown rose  
 Of Gothic beauty, and discern therein  
 Meanings that more transcend what they displaced  
 Than those the coldness of the Roman hall.  
 The elder order built with lifeless weight  
 Of stone on stone against the outer light;  
 With all its strength it perished; but the new  
 Abides, which builds with life and light and ~~joy~~ love.



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HARRY Lyman Koopman.

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"THE ANOINTED". -Reprint from Ariel, Burlington. Vt. May, 1891.  
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\*\*\*\*\*  
Letter written to Benj.R.Tucker from Harry Lyman Koopman, of  
Burlington. Vt. dated January 26th. 1892. in which he sends his trans-  
lat ion of a poem on page 30 of " STURM". This is the poem " ANARCHIE."  
by John Henry Mackay.

This poem as ~~thra~~translated by Harry Lyman Koopman is printed in "LIBERTY"  
January 30th. 1892. ( Vol. VIII. No 34. Whole no. 216) It is traslated  
from the Germna.

Tucker , thereupon showed his skill at ~~translating from~~ the German, and  
"LIBERTY" for February 6th, 1892, ( Whole number217) published another  
poem from "STURM" entitled " THE POETRY of the FUTURE".#####

"LIBERTY" February 13th. 1892, ( Vol.VIII. No. 36 Whole no. 218)  
reprints " WORLD- CITIZENSHIP" by John Henry Mackay. translated from  
the German by Harry Lyman Koopman.

\*\*\*\*\*  
Follwing these translations LIBERTY prints a poem entitled " WHEN"  
by Harry Lyman Koopman. \*\*\*\*\* " LIBERTY" June 4th. 1892. ( Vol.VIII.  
No. 42 . Whole no. 224)

A Review of Harry Lyman Koopman's " GOTHIC MINSTER " written by  
Miriam Daniell appears in "LIBERTY" July 2, 1892. (Vol.VIII. No. 42.  
Whole no, 228)

A few other poems p##### follow written by Harry Lyman Koopman. as  
in July 23, and July 30th and Sept. 17th.

