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THOMAS OF KEMPEN

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

BY

JAMES WILLIAMS



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THE brief sermonettes in verse, to which passages from the *Imitatio Christi* are prefixed as Texts, will, the writer hopes, be found to contain something of St Thomas' inspiring thought. None have been taken from the Fourth Book. The reason of this omission will be found in the concluding sonnet.

J. W.

OXFORD,
30th November 1910.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

I

THOU wast named Thomas, still didst thou believe,
Thy life a long denial of thy name,
Disciple of thy Lord thou didst not grieve
That till thy death the world denied thee fame.

Humility and faith—with lamps like these
To light the pathway leading to thy tomb—
Small wonder that thy spirit was at ease
As nearer drew the tardy feet of doom.

Perchance as life ebbed faster day by day
Thou didst gaze wistful to the wondrous West,
And mark beyond the turbid Zuyder Zee
Cloud-palaces in islands of the blest ;

And sloping moors that smiled with purple heath,
And glimmering meads that man hath never trod,
And golden amaranth wherewith to wreath
The martyrs nearest to the throne of God.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

II

OUR minds are bounded by the paltry lust
Of human combat and of human hope,
Ourselves what can we do but blindly grope?
'Tis therefore we believe because we must.
There is no happiness where is no trust;
We know not all, let Kaiser or let Pope
Proclaim what is to come, we cannot cope
With things unseen beyond our world of dust.
We dwell in middle days; we cannot know
Or what hath been or what is still to be,
Or whither footsteps of the future go.
Faith is our substitute for prophecy,
Till science can interpret us with glow
Behind the curtain of eternity.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

QUI SEQUITUR ME NON AMBULAT IN TENEBRIS, i. 1, 1.

THE moon has set, the stars are veiled,
In this deep Devon lane
The beauty of the earth has failed
Before the sleet and rain.

Black skies accord with blacker thought,
The very heaven is hell,
The wind amid the trees has wrought
Their rustling to a knell.

'Tis past ; I step on firmer feet,
My timid heart grows bold,
There is a pause of rain and sleet,
Warmth waxes out of cold.

Redeemer of the world, 'tis Thou
Who smooth'st the road for me,
I walk no more in darkness now
Because I walk with Thee.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

DOCTRINA CHRISTI OMNES DOCTRINAS SANCTORUM
PRAECELLIT, i. i. 2.

OH, teach my spirit, Lord, that I
May learn a new philosophy
And bring Thy kingdom nearer me
Before the hour that I must die.

It is all strange and full of doubt,
The day is indistinct from night,
The wrong is mingled with the right,
And errors compass me about.

The Power that bade the high priest's rod
Burst into blossom in his hand,—
Mayhap for me that Power has planned
Strong keys to fit the locks of God.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

QUID PRODEST TIBI ALTA DE TRINITATE DISPUTARE SI
CAREAS HUMILITATE UNDE DISPLICEAS TRINITATI ?
i. 1, 3.

METHOUGHT it dazzled me, the splendid scene
The Tuscan poet limned, the whirling sheen
Of those three mystic orbs enclasped in one.¹
Methought I saw again the midday sun
Obscured by stronger light whose waves beat round
The great white throne itself. Then came the sound
Of harmony not earthly, and my soul
Was stilled in marvel. So the measured roll
Of sad sea music smites along the chines
And over whispering wheat and answering pines
To mingle with the sheep-bells on the down.
The glory was to me the pearl and crown
Of all that day. To its interpreting
I gave the hours. In vain the eager wing
Of swift or swallow swirled beside my ear.
In vain the trout made circles in the mere
Or cautious vole glanced once and swam the stream.
Then slowly spread a tremor through the gleam,
As in the tropic noon when palm and cane
In Caribbean islands thirst for rain
Along the stony dales, and giant flowers
That languish scentless through the languorous
hours

¹ tre gire
Di tre colori e d'una continenza.
Dante, *Par.*, xxxiii. 116.

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Seem to tired eyes to waver in the heat.
Then brake a voice clear, passionless, and meet
For chiding: "Vain it is for thee, O man,
To seek with finite intellect to scan
The mystery of things. Enough for thee
To know the being of the things that be
Without the how and why. To argument
Save humbleness the veil is never rent,
The bounds of knowledge are defined by fate,
And thou must stoop to enter at the gate."

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

ISTA EST SUMMA SAPIENTIA PER CONTEMPTUM MUNDI
TENDERE AD REGNA CŒLESTIA, i. 1, 3.

WHAT boots it at the hour of death
To found a fame upon the page
Long laboured in a strenuous age
Whereat the world still wondereth ?

The King of terrors must unfurl
His banner ere the day be spent,
And slowly from the eyes is rent
The veil that hides the gates of pearl.

No poet's foot on earth hath trod
The pathway unto true delight,
Humility was out of sight,
The first with men are last with God.

Ah me, could men but learn the lore
That disciplined by art of books
Grows purer with the years and looks
Aspiring unto something more !

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

NAM SEQUENTES SUAM SENSUALITATEM MACULANT
CONSCIENTIAM, i. 1, 5.

As when in vintage hours the gathered fruit
Mule-borne in oozing panniers to the press
Distils green pulp and purple and the dress
Of Douro hinds is splashed from neck to boot ;
So in my ripest thought all resolute
With self-support at times I bear the stress
Of self-contempt, while sin right merciless
Feeds vintage meet with its envenomed root.
The vintagers must cleanse them in the fount,
I need and find a nobler spring than they
To purify the fouler heart within.
For He who died for me upon the mount
Of Calvary on that tremendous day
With stain of blood conceals the stain of sin.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

AMA NESCIRI, i. 2, 3.

AMA nesciri. Like a hammer's beat
The loud earth-struggle smites upon the ear,
Eager to drown those voices pure and clear
That led us upward once to thoughts more meet.

Ama nesciri. Void and incomplete
Is glory loved of man, and prince and peer
Find branches of the tree of gold wax sere
When Death steals nigh with his remorseless
feet.

Ama nesciri. From my humble place
Let me look on and mark the mighty fall
Disconsolate and vanquished in the race.

Ama nesciri. Of a truth the small
Are greater than the great before the face
Of that just Judge who dealeth right to all.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

TAEDET ME SAEPE MULTA LEGERE ET AUDIRE, i. 3, 2.

WE read and hear, we hear and read,
What profit find we there?
Will learning in the hour of need
Do more than speak us fair?

Will Aristotle show the path
That leadeth to the light,
Or all the charm that Plato hath
Direct the soul aright?

The Wisdom that on high is set
Will teach not words but things,
And in that teaching to forget
Man's false imaginings.

Celestial Wisdom, open wide
The golden gates of truth,
Dissolve for evermore the pride
Absorbed from books in youth.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

OMNIS SPECULATIO NOSTRA QUADAM CALIGINE NON
CARET, i. 3, 4.

As a strong eagle in the silent blue
Hangs poised a moment ere he dares to soar
To regions brighter than he knew before,
To heights whence half the world seems broad in
view ;
So have we stood and now we stand anew
High in the heaven of truth, but ah ! with more
Than eagle will and less than eagle store
Of strength to find us what is found by few.
We reach the very battlements of heaven,
So seems it to our sense, then far within
A thousand miles away rise snow-peaks white.
Yea, were it granted to our prayer to even
Scale those long hills 'twere but with tears to win
The knowledge of a hopeless infinite.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

QUAM CITO TRANSIT GLORIA MUNDI! i. 3, 6.

IN that God's acre silent, vast,
The dead lie row on row,
The relics of a hidden past
That none but they can know.

The stately cedars cast their shade
Alike on great and small,
And honour and precedence fade,
The grave is one for all.

None laugh that pass the graveyard door,
The thoughtless hold their breath,
And slanderous tongues are still before
The majesty of death.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

BONA VITA FACIT HOMINEM SAPIENTEM SECUNDUM DEUM
ET EXPERTUM IN MULTIS, i. 4, 2.

I, WISDOM, sit at God's right hand,
I am the mirror of His power,¹
My voice is carried hour by hour
To them who will not understand.

I saw before the life of things
The founding of the firmament,
And by God's own command was sent
To lead the world in golden strings.

But men despised me, and I found
The palm of conquest not for me,
And impotent was I to free
The soul by humbler interests bound.

I, Wisdom, have eternal youth,
Such few as love me are repaid,
Their incoherent visions fade
Before the everlasting truth.

¹ Wisdom vii. 26.

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NON QUAERAS QUIS HOC DIXERIT SED QUID DICATUR
ATTENDE, i. 5, 1.

No matter who has said it,
If but the words be true,
Maybe the brain that sped it
Thought under Syrian blue :

Or pondered by the centre
Of some vast Indian plain,
By pollards of Deventer,
By sun-dried dust of Spain.

The truth is one, but error
Is ever manifold,
The truth implants the terror
Of being overbold.

If one by prayer and fasting
Have trained him in his youth,
To him the Everlasting
Unveils the soul of truth.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

SUPERBUS ET AVARUS NUNQUAM QUIESCUNT, i. 6, 1.

AT once when surged the crowd of courtiers dense
In Shushan, Vashti in her royal pride
Contemned her lord nor throned her by his side,
Refusing indecorous reverence ;
As once promoted by the queen's offence
The maiden Esther came, a fearful bride,
But from her shamefast eyes there never died
The very soul of love and innocence ;
So all the pride I held for lord the day
When I was all and Christ was less than nought
Bears but a diadem of withered palm.
Past monarchs of the soul are put away,
With them go tempests of unrestful thought,
For on the sea of pride there is no calm.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

ALITER SUNT JUDICIA DEI QUAM HOMINUM, i. 7, 3.

God girded Justice with a flaming sword,
She sits enthroned with Mercy at her side,
God speaketh in her voice, and at her word
The hearts of men are tried.

Man's memory is short but hers is long,
With vengeance for a half-forgotten crime
She strikes some head set high above the throng,
Triumphant over time.

Divinest thing is she of all the state,
Aloof she sits and judges through the years,
Sometimes her stern eyes wax compassionate,
And Mercy smiles through tears.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

IMAGINATIO LOCORUM ET MUTATIO MULTOS FEFELLIT,
i. 9, 1.

Who hath not dreamed of some far different strand
Long ere his voyage thither, with its seas
Surpassing narrow friths of home, its trees
Of broader shade than in his native land?
There longer billows break on sunnier sand,
Through sweeter flowers roam more industrious
bees,
On richer heather falls a softer breeze,
By statelier bridges deeper streams are spanned.
So dreams he till he reckons at the last
With real things and finds the glory past,
And what false thoughts his fancy had devised.
Scarce is a scene that looks as fair as when
'Twas painted by the art of brush or pen,
So loves he more the home that he despised.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

NOS NIMIUM PROPRIIS OCCUPAMUR PASSIONIBUS, i. 11, 2.

To think no thoughts save abject thoughts and
lowly,

To labour not unless for daily bread,
To look on self as something high and holy,
Better dead.

To pay no reverence to things above us,
To fear eternity with hopeless dread,
To mark the years increase with none to love us,
Better dead.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

NON EST ALIQUIS ORDO TAM SANCTUS NEC LOCUS TAM
SECRETUS UBI NON SINT TENTATIONES VEL ADVERSI-
TATES, i. 13, 3.

HIDE thyself away
Cowering in thy basement,
Bid the light of day
Enter not thy casement ;

Join an order strict,
Vowed to scantiest rations,
Still wilt thou be pricked
Ever by temptations.

Evil powers will shape
Thoughts of things unholy,
Thou canst not escape,
Lowliest of the lowly.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

QUIDAM A MAGNIS TENTATIONIBUS CUSTODIUNTUR ET IN
PARVIS QUOTIDIANIS SAEPE VINCUNTUR, i. 13, 8.

We say a Yes, we mean a No,
We rise so high, we sink so low,
And in our ignorance sublime
Neglect what makes or mars the time.
We win great things to lose the small,
Thence comes the error and the fall,
So Alexander, half divine,
Was mortal at the breath of wine.
Behind us lies the mountain sheer,
'Tis then the peril is most near,
Unscathed we suffer toilsome hours
To perish in a land of flowers.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

MULTUM FACIT QUI MULTUM DILIGIT, i. 15, 2.

ALL for love's sake ;

Land, sea, and heaven are come to greet their lord,
For love hath summoned cowslips from the sward
To twine withal his heart-compelling cord.

And the land spake ;

And lo ! like lightning sprang to life her flowers,
Bees poised themselves in deep acacia bowers,
Where love dreamed dream by dream through
fragrant hours.

And the sea spake ;

The curling thunder of the landward wave
Brake into shafts of sheen from cave to cave,
White shafts whereof the sky was architrave.

And the heaven spake ;

The sun's swift car drave westward from the east,
Eternal music rose and fell and ceased,
Divine and human kept their bridal feast.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

AD SERVIENDUM VENISTI NON AD REGENDUM, i. 17, 3.

HARK, hark, the silver trumpet, hark the tread
Of chargers' hoofs, and hark the hoarse com-
mand!

Ah God, what do I? I that here must stand
The servant of the Lord till I am dead.

They come! I see the knightly pennons spread;
White horses! certès, 'tis Dirk Sijver's band—
Forgive me, Lord, but on the quays of Gand—
And where my sword struck home the earth was
red.

That day in June when all the city came
To see the joust 'twixt me and Chevenix,
And from the lists alive one only went!
That other day—avaunt, base thoughts, in shame,
Until I lose before the crucifix
Vile memories of pomp and tournament!

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

HOMO PROPONIT SED DEUS DISPONIT, i. 19, 2.

BEHIND them wound the passes of the Alps,
Before them lay the plain of Lombardy,
And they, a cohort of an alien race,
With tawny beards and sunbrowned cheeks and
eyes

Blue as the water of the Baltic friths
Wherefrom they marched, came suddenly to halt
All marvelling. In faith 'twas marvellous
The fertile fields waxed fainter in the south
Until the earth was mingled with the heaven
Where rose a red church tower. And as they
watched

Behold the sun that sank behind the tower
Transfigured it to gold. Then Hjalmar spake,
The son of Egil of the Skanian land,
“Such light on the eternal city broods,
The city of our quest.” Then turning him
He was aware of one at his right hand,
Stricken in years and weary of the road ;
Withal the delicate lithe limbs were his
Of dwellers in the south, the courtesy,
The deference. His feet were white with dust,
His garments stained with sun and rain and storm,
And in his eyes the look of one who dreams
Such dreams as fate hath made impossible.
Then Hjalmar in imperfect Latin speech

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Spake to the stranger, sloping back his axe
Of iron of the dale lest fear should seize
An old man gazing on its war-notched edge ;
“ Which way doth the eternal city lie,
Or east or west or south ? The wayfarer
Answered with hopeless words, “ These thirty years
I seek and find not what thou seekest now,
For I have never found it nor will ye.
Long have I borne the toil of many roads,
The storms of many seas, the rivers bridged
By many bridges, but I never saw
The lights of the eternal city shine
Save in the stars. Eternal there is nought,
Believe me, but the New Jerusalem,
And none may pass its gates before he die.”

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

IN SECRETO TUTIUS EXERCENTUR PRIVATA, i. 19, 5.

BESIDE the sea-rim on the bird-flecked sands,
Where silence in the marshes reigns complete,
Save for a curlew's wings that beat and beat,
Alone I raised to God my praying hands.
Much need have I to do so when the bands
Of unforgiven sin impede my feet,
And seeds I thought mature for autumn
wheat
Have proved but summer tares that fire
demands.
Ah me, the dream of glory turned to shame !
Alone I dreamed it, and alone I fell
The deeper fall that 'twas a fall from fame.
What prayer I offered then I may not tell,
But when I ended from the sea-rim came
A light of hope to lift my soul from hell.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

OPORTET EUM CUM JESU A TURBA DECLINARE, i. 20, 2.

ALL the world is full of labour,
Brows of men are damp with sweat,
Each is wiser than his neighbour,
Wealth the standard each hath set,
Probity is little worth,
Gold is monarch of the earth.

Weary of the dust of cities,
Get I me in silent mood
Where I hear the songbirds' ditties
Thrilling over wold and wood,
Making music sweet and clear,
Such as cities never hear.

Solitary souls despising
Sordid matters for a time,
Hear, when vesper stars are rising,
Echoes of a heavenly clime,
Till the deep of heaven is shown
Open to the great white throne.

Faint and dreamwise in the glory
Glow the beauty of the King,
Such the widow's son of story
Hailed at his awakening,
When the mourners mourned in vain,
Halting at the gates of Nain.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

CLAUDE SUPER TE OSTIUM TUUM, i. 20, 8.

Idle stand through the night and still
Moss-grown sails of the polder mill,
Leaves and poplars withered and dun
Wait for death with the rising sun ;
Almost come to the vigilant sight
Gentle eyes of the eremite
In the deep of the dawn when grey
Rolls the mist from the Zuyder Zee.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

SINE PECCATO ESSE NON POSSUMUS, i. 22, 5.

SIN hath its gift of anodyne,
It lulls the conscience into sleep,
It bids the eyes no longer weep
With tears of charity divine.

Unhelpful is the gift of tears
When sin with noisome lips hath kissed
Responsive lips and breathed a mist
Athwart the mirror of the years.

It bases all the deeds of men
On dull inevitable law,
And holds for childishness the awe
That guided once the prophet's pen.

It hath its narrow firmament,
Mistrustful where it cannot see,
By self-created formulae
Disproving thoughts that God hath sent.

Lord, open Thou mine eyes that I
May raise them for a space afar
Beyond the boundaries that bar
The gates of heaven to souls that die.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

SI BONAM CONSCIENTIAM HABERES, NON MULTUM MORTEM
TIMERES, i. 23, 1.

FULL blessing have the dead who dying give
No bitter memories for them who live,
Whose death is reason for the genuine tear
And for the strangled sob, "Would he were here!"
Earth holds few such, but after many days
Their heads bear still the wreath of seemly bays.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

MULTA BONA POTES OPERARI DUM SANUS ES, SED
INFIRMATUS NESCIQ QUID POTERIS, i. 23, 4.

THE ears of rye surge westward wave on wave
Before the summer wind, and at the edge
Of that green foam the dense pine forests crave
An equal privilege.

They, like the rye, bend downward graceful boughs,
Their myriad leaves discuss the melody
Of nature music such as warrior prowls
Strike from the swaying sea.

Here would I pause and mark young sunshine shrill
Tremulous through the ranks of terebinth
To nooks brocaded once with daffodil
And rich with hyacinth ;

And live again in thought the hours of youth
When all the world was like these flowers long
dead,
Before experience taught for trust in truth
Suspicion in its stead.

Suns rise and set and rise, and all is nought,
The coast of boyhood farther still recedes,
Age can but marvel why no dreams were brought
By manhood into deeds.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

STUDE NUNC TALITER VIVERE UT IN HORA MORTIS
VALEAS POTIUS GAUDERE QUAM TIMERE, i. 23, 6.

To live as convicts claimed by death,
To live and know that life is vain,
That we shall never see again
The mirror dimmed with failing breath ;

To live in faith and dare to die,
To live and know that life is not
A little hour and all forgot
But training for eternity.

Which theory will suit thee best ?
Unhappy if thou choose the first
And mark one day the tempest burst
Without a haven for thy rest.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

OMNIUM FINIS MORS, i. 23, 7.

A SHRIVELLED leaf that red upon the ground
 In autumn perisheth,
Could I explain its fall I so might sound
 The mystery of Death.
Why haste thee, Death? Why come with feet so
 fast?
Spare me a space, I must be thine at last.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

QUIS MEMORABITUR TUI POST MORTEM? i. 23, 8.

THRONES and sceptres turn to dust,
Spears and bucklers gather rust,
Fame is like a meteor's flight
Seen athwart an August night,
Even names that now endure
Cannot make these names secure,
Scant the band that finds a lot
Better than to be forgot.
Ruthless are the scythes of fate,
Sparing neither small nor great,
Loftiest prose and verse they reap
Into granaries of sleep,
Grace of painting or of sound
Sleeps a sleep no less profound,
Happy he who not at all
Cares that reputations fall.
What is glory to the heart
Trained to dwell with Christ apart?
Death to him is not the end,
Death to him is but a friend.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

IN OMNIBUS REBUS RESPICE FINEM, i. 24, 1.

THE muffled thunder of the city street
Waxed fainter at the nearing of the dawn,
And one might hear again the melody
Of high hung chimes, the striking of the hour,
The echo rolling on from spire to spire,
From tower to tower. Then silence like the peace
Before a tempest. In the silence I
Inwrapped myself and mused, and reasoning
I failed of reason, for it was to me
As though my reason and my faith fell out,
Eager for battle where the battle-joy
Would be more sad than sorrow. It was mine
To charge myself as an accursed thing,
To find no remedy in heaven or earth ;
And with the voiceless communing of thought
Despair grew ever closer round the soul—
Despair at knowing right and choosing wrong,
Despair at sin that lied itself to good,
Despair at evil spirits masked as gods.
Then slowly mantled on the face of heaven
A gradual blush of dayspring, star by star
The lamps of night were quenched. Meseemed
the sun
Brought music with his rising, and I heard
The ripple of a perfect voice that sang
Beati quorum tecta sunt peccata.

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Such music on the morrow of St John
Some solitary herdsmen of the hills
Hears leaning on his staff in wonderment,
And listens to the surging oaks and knows
That once a year there comes a miracle
To fill the woods with tremor of the sea.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

QUOD JUSTUM EST JUDICABIT, i. 24, 1. (a.)

WE wandered seeking in the night
For justice and the rule of law,
But not the wisest of us saw
God's hand upon the helm of right.

QUOD JUSTUM EST JUDICABIT, i. 24, 1. (b.)

ALL things are greater than we know,
And if to us God seems unjust
The reason is we look too low
And unconvinced can only trust.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

TUNC PLUS VALEBUNT SANCTA OPERA QUAM MULTA
PULCRA VERBA, i. 24, 6.

KING SANCHO walked as a peasant wight;
He will not pass for a King to-night.

Through wine and garlic beladen air
He came at last to Zocodover.

He kneeled on his knee as the host went by
And the shrill bell tinkled for one to die.

Then spake the priest, "Wilt thou go with me
A soul that is parting requireth thee.

And thou must assist at a sacrament
Where the life of the dying is wellnigh spent."

King Sancho followed, for then in the land
A monarch obeyed a priest's command.

Besmirched with his blood Bartolomé
Struck down by a brand of Toledo lay.

A silver lamp threw a ghostly glow,
The oil of the silver lamp was low.

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Bartolomé gazed at the King as one
Whose eyes are dim at the noontide sun.

For once he had plotted an evil thing,
Castile to be free by death of the King.

Then gat he pardon, but plotted still
And hid himself from the alguacil.

Well Sancho knew of the murder plan,
But his face turned not from the sinful man.

“Once more I pardon, for who am I
To dwell on vengeance when death is nigh?”

The Latin froze on the lips of the priest,
The oil in the silver lamp had ceased.

And Sancho homeward gat him again,
A King of himself and a King of men.

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NOLUIT CURIOSÉ INVESTIGARE UT SCIRET QUAE SIBI
ESSENT FUTURA, i. 25, 2.

THE coming hour has secrets of its own,
 Could we but read them now perchance we
 might
Reap scantier crop from that hope-harvest sown
 Wherewith the fields are white.

O happy they who by philosophy—
 Philosophy of heaven, that were the best—
Bear the world's buffets in the panoply
 Of mystic armour dressed.

O happier they who find the morrow bring
 Brief smiles and not long tears, not frost but
 flowers,
Fate hath surprises, and enfolded spring
 Still lives through winter hours.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

IMAGINEM TIBI PROPONE CRUCIFIXI, i. 25, 6.

WITHIN the courtyard of Saint Barnabas
The novice stood disturbed and sick of soul,
And heard through pilèd clouds the thunder roll
And saw the lightning quiver in the pass.

Should he take on him final vows or no?
Should he return to meet the world once more?
Should he go forth and hear the cloister door
Clash harshly on a friend become a foe?

To his Redeemer's semblance looked he up;
"O Thou, dear Lord, made sacrifice for me,
Grant me a sign whereby to learn from Thee
If I may share the sorrow of Thy cup."

Down flashed the lightning with two crooked horns,
One smote upon the crucifix, and there
Was answer to the burden of his prayer,
For at his feet there lay a crown of thorns.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

OMNIA EI VIVUNT, i. 25, 10.

VICISSITUDES of blossoms on the leas
Inspire the teaching of the centuries,
Death is the nurse of life, and spring by spring
New barley smiles afield, new hopbines cling,
Brown roots with snow of winter dank and wet
Wake to anemone and violet ;
So in the world of mystery the wraith
Of things once dead is called to life by faith.
I know that my Redeemer lives forwhy
He is the very Word that cannot die ;
I know that with omniscience so august
He can at once be merciful and just,
His human heart was oft by mercy rent,
His justice orders all the firmament.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

INVENIET ANIMA TUA REQUIEM, ii. 1, 1.

INJUSTICE poisons all the days
That here we spend on earth,
The world has sympathy with praise
Bestowed on little worth.

Brave hearts, be silent, nor complain
But steer your course aright,
Accounting loss as coming gain
And dark as coming light.

So shall ye reach that other life
Of justice and of calm,
Where they who have endured the strife
Are they who bear the palm.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

DISCE EXTERIORA CONTEMNERE, ii. 1, 1.

OF old a pilgrim girt for Rome
I saw—and shall not see again—
The Lombard valleys ripe with rain,
And over all Mount Rosa's dome.

I saw the terraces of vines
In tier on tier to Fiesole,
I saw Siena stern and grey,
And at her back the Apennines.

Ah me, if but once more mine eye
Were satiate with the sense of height
When at the coming of the night
Gaunt mountains mingle with the sky !

If I might see Assisi bear
Her great ones lulled to kindly sleep,
And welcome on the ruddy steep
The towers of Francis and of Clare !

Peace, peace, my heart, for God is near
No less amid the osier fen
Than on the giant cliffs where men
Forbode the avalanche and fear.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

MANET IN AETERNUM, ii. 1, 2.

Love poises him on his immortal wings,
And where he is the clouds are rosy red,
He will not perish till the end of things,
Till death himself be dead.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

SI TU SCIS TACERE ET PATI, VIDEBIS PROCUL DUBIO
AUXILIUM DOMINI, ii. 2, 1. (a.)

NOT void of profit are the days
Of one who will endeavour him,
Though foot be lame and vision dim,
To follow Christ through thorny ways.

His labour is repaid enough
Obtaining intermittent sight
Of something more than earthly light
Beyond the pathway rude and rough.

His heart that once within him died
Can bear whatever may befall,
Afar there rises over all
The figure of the Crucified.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

SI TU SCIS TACERE ET PATI, VIDEBIS PROCUL DUBIO
AUXILIUM DOMINI, ii. 2, 1. (b.)

THERE lies a clue for him that heeds
If he in lowly patience wait,
Acknowledging through mists of fate
The God enthroned behind the creeds.

Submissive will he love and trust
Intelligence more vast than his
Until he learn the lot that is
Appportioned him by hands august.

Those hands are holders of the clue,
They are the wounded hands of Christ ;
Seek with their aid the promised tryst
Though thy companions will be few.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

NON REPUTES TE ALIQUID PROFECISSE NISI OMNIBUS
INFERIOREM TE ESSE SENTIAS, ii. 2, 2.

I TWINE my string of artless words
Untaught as song of artless birds,
I forge my stave of artless rime
Unsuited to the day and time,
Sufficient unto me to find
Amusement for the simple mind
In lowly gardens where I may
Gain quietness and holiday,
And worship beauty in the sloe
Besprinkling all the hedge like snow,
Or in japonicas that fall
Vermilion from a southern wall,
Or in the meadowsweet of June
That dreams of kisses of the moon.
Right simple is my pleasure, such
As would appeal not overmuch
To him who scorns the wood and wold
Unwearied in pursuit of gold,
Nor loves amid the wheat to range
Unless within the Corn Exchange,
Thrice happy I, well satisfied
Since in my soul ambition died !
Wouldst thou have careless days like me ?
Learn first of all humility.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

QUI MELIUS SCIT PATI MAJOREM TENEBIT PACEM,
ii. 3, 3.

BENT willows shake and whistle in the wind,
The tempest tears the ridges from the wave
And hurls them it may be across the grave
Where I shall lie with never love to mind.

Torn from their bed the long weeds curl and
sway,
Earth sickens at the persevering sea,
And men begin to dread what doom will be
Apportioned them when comes the judgment
day.

Be strong, my heart ; 'tis God's prerogative
To still the storm, to mitigate the doom ;
As calm from storm, so even from the tomb
May spring the rose of hope that bids to live.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

NOLLE CONSOLARI AB ALIQUA CREATURA, ii. 6, 3.

MAN in need of gods to worship framed himself in
faith and fear

Something that surpassed the senses, something
that he might revere.

Nobler minds invented Pallas, daring helmsmen gat
them forth

First creating lordly Odin in the mountains of the
North.

Baser minds conceived them Ares, baser still in
Hindustan

Built a thousand cruel temples whence there flowed
the blood of man.

Even Israel the chosen bowed them unto calves of
gold,

While the voice of thunder downward from
Jehovah's presence rolled.

Vain the work they would accomplish, man-
imagined deities

Waxed more feeble and more futile through the
blinded centuries.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

Vainly priests in trembling cities bade the fires of
Moloch glow,
Vainly for propitiation altars reeked in Mexico.

When at last Supremest Godhead stooping unto
manhood came
Some were there that full of marvel recognised
their sin and shame.

Now in half the world the risen glory of the
Crucified
Parts the shadow that for ages veiled the Spirit and
the Bride.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

SI AUTEM QUAERIS TE IPSUM INVENIES ETIAM TE IPSUM,
ii. 7, 3.

MAN framed a Christ to match his heart
Wherein no real Christ had part,
And confident in self-conceit
He offered to it worship meet.
So vigorous the idol grew
That true was false and false was true.
At last the very Christ became
The echo of a bygone name.
Man eager for the commonplace
Smoothed all the pity from that face,
And half the churches chose for guide
Another than the Crucified.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

QUANDO JESUS ADEST TOTUM BONUM EST, ii. 8, 1.

THE great cathedral bells had ceased to chime,
Upon the mighty masses of the trees
There fell once more the tremor of the breeze
With gentle speech for oak and elm and lime.
The sun in noontide splendour seemed to climb
The ladder of the heavens, by twos and threes
Blithe children gathered cowslips in the leas
Shadowed by turrets marvellous with time.
Faint as the shamefast promise of a bride
Swam through the woods the voice of summertide
And overhead the swift and swallow swirled.
At last there came in musical accord
The chant of men abased before their Lord,
"O God the Son, Redeemer of the world!"

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

SI AUTEM JESUS UNUM TANTUM VERBUM LOQUITUR,
MAGNA CONSOLATIO SENTITUR, ii. 8, 1.

As breathes the murmur of a vesper psalm
By oleander and by thirsty palm,
And brings to them who dwell in topic homes
Refreshment of the soul with peace and calm ;

So breathed the voice of Him who died for me
Soft in mine ear with sweetest mystery,
Until the city, towers and spires and domes,
Waxed glorious red in proud humility.

Magnificently slow the music rolled,
The splendour and the sumptuousness of gold
Were withered into nought before His face,
And man was simple as in days of old.

It is within ourselves if we would hear
The thrill of words celestial, deep and clear,
And find again an earthly dwelling-place
For Him who asks but faith to bring Him near.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

DITISSIMUS QUI BENE EST CUM JESU, ii. 8, 2.

If but our souls are right toward Thee,
Weighed in the balance what are we?
We cannot know what pain was Thine,
The human form, the soul divine.
We fail to recognise the sin
That cankers every thought within.
We cannot even comprehend
A love that hath not bounds nor end.
Our Calvarys are very small,
But Thine—it was the all in all.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

POST HIEMEM SEQUITUR AESTAS, ii. 8, 5.

AFTER midnight cometh noon,
After January June,
After storm the tempest calm,
After martyrdom the palm,
After battle lull of strife,
After death eternal life.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

POST TEMPESTATEM MAGNA SERENITAS, ii. 8, 5.

BEHOLD the soul of horror in thine eyes,
Shipmaster, driving through the hungry sea!
Keen watch and keener hate it has for thee,
And it has sworn to wreck thine enterprise.
Go, grasp thy tiller hard, dismiss thy sighs
And die a man before the enemy,
Once canst thou die, but once, then thou art
free,
Then die not twice by fear an thou art wise.
Rest comes, the Texel beacon shines ahead,
The star-grass bent before the beating gale
Whistles and pipes a thousand mystic tunes.
Firm shore at last, warm hearth and silent bed;
What matter—when the tankards foam with
ale—
Atlantic surges plunging on the dunes?

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

INGRATI SUMUS AUCTORI, ii. 10, 2.

'Tis no hard task to lend away,
Ask back, the debtor answers "Nay."
So stands it in this world of gold
Where virtue's self is bought and sold.
We men are debtors to the Christ,
Are debtors of a debt unpriced ;
Yea, not as money debtors we,
They need but pay and they are free.
But men can never satisfy
The hopeless sum they owe on high,
And worst of all few care to know
How grew the debt, how much they owe.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

PAUCI IGNOMINIAM CRUCIS SEQUUNTUR, ii. 11, 1.

AH! the pity and the shame,
Treason to the Holy Name.
Once of old our Lord and King
Probed the deep of suffering ;
Deepest deep to bear alone
Sorrow other than one's own.
This our King achieved when He
Prostrate in Gethsemane
Saw the shadow of the cross
Fall on olives grey with moss.
Then He won us Paradise
By supremest sacrifice,
Now in heedless hearts of men
Christ is crucified again.
Ah! the pity and the shame,
Treason to the Holy Name.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

IN CRUCE VITA, ii. 12, 2.

ONCE in St Agnes came to me
Beside the reed-embroidered shore
What things in future days will be
When time's vast wheels will drive no more.
The shadow of eternity
Will darken every mortal's door,
And far beyond it some will see
The gates of pearl, the golden floor.
What hope for me? For all was doubt;
In that dim choir I raised a prayer
Before the altar and the pyx.
Then sudden fell one taper out,
And in the momentary flare
Mine eyes descried the crucifix.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

NON EST ALIA VIA AD VITAM, ii. 12, 3.

AMID the Ijssel reeds at eventide
Low from a convent chapel comes the chant
Of *Ave Maris Stella* as the dykes
Reflect with sad farewell the fervent hue
Drawn from the sinking sun. The music floats
From court to court of cloisters echoing
The plash of fountains tinkling in their midst
Till all the sweetness of the melody
Dissolves as gently as the life that glides
Unmarked from earth to heaven in sleep. Thereat
The deep of one great soul is moved, a prayer
Breaks trembling from his lips: "Immaculate,
Regina Cæli, make my days to be
The consecration of laborious time,
Illumined with the light of holiness,
Aspiring even to the gate of heaven.
There is no love beside the love of God,
There are no saints beside the saints of God,
So would I write." The while he speaks there stands
Close at his side the Queen of heaven herself,
In form as of a tall and comely maid,
And in his ear she whispers words of peace:
"Trust me and be thou king as I am queen,
So shalt thou rend the veil of human life,
Commanding all the secrets of the world,
The sorrow and the gladness of the sea,

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

The splendour and the squalor of the land,
And mingling honesty and truth in all.”
Into the placid mirror of her eyes
He looks and finds himself transfigured there.
As once of old the viking of the North,
Sated with barren snow and beachless fjord,
Discovered in the Vineland of the West
A sunnier world than Odin ever ruled
Or Thor with thunder shook, and in his heart
Died all that he had held till then for dear
In Laxdale or in Skalholt; from his heart
So Thomas banishes the memory
Of that unlearned learning of the past.
His fingers quiver with a new desire
To paint in simple words the way of Christ
Through toil and tribulation to its goal.
Eternal love had set his soul aflame
Himself to follow in the path, nor age
Nor sickness hinder till his years are full.
Then like October leaves upon a vine
By Douro or Mondego or the slopes
Of sheer Estrella, or where monks chant tierce
In Alcobaça, tardily his life
Droops into happy death, and with the dawn
He sees the glimmer of the gates august,
He hears the silver trumpets of the guard.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

DONEC DEUS VOLUERIT OPORTET UT SUSTINEAS, ii. 12, 4.

WHAT shall we be when all is lost
Save life and hope of grace divine?
We shall be, Lord, more truly Thine,
More truthful when we sorrow most.

Enough that in the firmament
The courses of the night and day
Fulfilling their appointed way
Unteach the soul its discontent.

And when despairing thoughts besiege
The citadel we deemed so strong,
To yield were doing our heaven a wrong,
To doubt were more than sacrilege.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

CRUX ERGO SEMPER PARATA EST ET UBIQUE TE EXPECTAT,
ii. 12, 4.

Thus came the Christ to mountains of the North.
Beside the dark cascade of Oxará
All Iceland gathered, and the bearded priests
Looked very thunder. Thor himself no less
Lowered with stern eyes when Loki stole away
The hammer out of Asgard, bringing woe
To gods and men for ever. Reason was
For Odin's priests to tremble. By the cliffs
Sea-smitten, barren, there had passed white sails
From Norway steered. Such sails King Olaf sent
Northward from Nidaros, and every sail
Bore on its front the figure of a cross,
Blood-red, conspicuous, limned by willing hands
Whose faith excelled their craft. So messengers
Told in their headlong haste. King Olaf's men,
Hjalti and Gizur, by the sea abode
Two days and nights; then with their mass-priest
rode
Up to the Mount of Law unfaltering
To meet all Iceland. Face to face they stood
With eyes that threatened them and spears that
flashed.
Thormod the mass-priest swung his censer high
And the sweet vapour lingered on the fell
While spake old Snorri, of the failing gods,

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

The oldest priest, who knew that they had failed.
“O men of Iceland, hearken to my rede!
Unmeet it were for us to fight and fight
And leave our heaths and dwellings desolate.
Rather one law, one faith, for broken laws
Breed broken peace; nay, let the white Christ have
The temples of the land and all with me
Baptized in this new faith; but whoso will
May sacrifice to Odin in his house
Until he die; the middle way is safe.
O men of Iceland, hearken to my rede!”
Then spear struck shield and down the All-men’s-rift
Slow echoed the acclaim. As fell the night
It seemed that on the peak of Hekla burned
Red fire in rolling smoke. And as men gazed
It turned to the similitude of One
Who blessed with hands outspread as on a cross,
And eyes of most divine compassion looked
Beyond the treeless heaths and flowerless plains
Upon a people learning painfully
To guide their footsteps in a nobler path.
So came the Christ to mountains of the North.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

REGIAM VIAM QUAE EST VIA SANCTAE CRUCIS, ii. 12, 6.

THE royal road with mist is white,
Below lies earth and its delight,
No song of land or sob of sea
To break the deep tranquillity
Whose very stillness brings affright.
I stand like Indian eremite
From hopeless dawn to hopeless night,
And still the road is open free,
 The royal road.

My soul is saddened in despite
Of faith and promises, then bright
Descends from heaven's grey canopy
A hand once marred on Calvary
And guides my feet to mount aright
 The royal road.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

EXILII SUA PÆNA EX AMORE CRESCIT, ii. 12, 7.

QUOMODO sedet sola civitas !

I see the banners of an army pass,
I hear the blast of many trumpets peal,
The words whereat the squadrons turn and wheel.
Ah me ! they march to win their fatherland,
And I—I may not follow with the band.
Anon there comes the chant of vested priest,
'Tis his to bear the eucharistic feast
To one who lies before the gate of death,
Whose visage hard with labour softeneth,
For in that solemn hour eternal day
Illuminates the shadow of the way.
Ah me ! I cannot go the road with him
Fanned by the kindly wings of Seraphim.
Too great the love that burns within my breast,
A love that seeks and fails to find its rest.
My Lord doth try my love, my loyal heart
Must needs endure a life from Him apart.
But exiled I am conscious of a voice
That comforts me and bids my heart rejoice ;
“ The Christlike nature evermore must be
Compact of trust and of simplicity,
And one erstwhile by fleeter feet surpassed
Perchance with love for guide may not be last.”

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

CRUCE CHRISTI SIGNATUS, ii. 12, 9.

*DULCIS arbor cælo grata
Vero fructu honorata,
Pomum proferens opimum
Contra morsum Evæ primum,
Paradisi flos novati,
Arcus luminis beati—
Cujus visus in profundo
Pacem publicavit mundo—
Almus ramulus et mitis,
Fertilis et vera vitis,
Moysis tabula secundi,
Lyra David redeundi,
Redde amans peccatorem
Juste meritum favorem,
Nam a te pependit Jesus
Pro peccatis mundi læsus.
Ave Crux ! nam posuisset
Deus vitam si fuisset
Nemo præter me mortalis,
Unde laus debetur qualis !
Tantum Deus non amasset
Tantum homo ni peccasset.¹*

¹ A translation of the beautiful lines in Calderon's drama *La Devocion de la Cruz*, Act iii. Sc. 2, beginning with the words *Arbol donde el cielo quiso*. Of course Calderon lived long after Thomas, but the spirit of the words is in thorough accordance with that of the *Imitatio*.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

PACEM INVENIES, ii. 12, 12. (a.)

LORD, I have loved another law than Thine,
My erring feet have strayed in paths unblest,
Lord, is there mercy for such sin as mine?
“Come unto Me and I will give thee rest.”

Lord, I have scorned with scorn the angels' food,
And sat at other feasts a bidden guest;
Lord, is there grace for such ingratitude?
“Come unto Me and I will give thee rest.”

Lord, I have lived as though this life were all,
No chamber for the future in my breast,
High have I climbed and low must be the fall;
“Come unto Me and I will give thee rest.”

Lord, I have looked for peace and found it not,
It may be I shall perish in the quest,
Doomed to the land where all things are forgot;
“Come unto Me and I will give thee rest.”

Lord, I have marked a cloud of darkness hide
The seaward sun that threatens from the West,
Lord, is there hope for me with morning tide?
“Come unto Me and I will give thee rest.”

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

PACEM INVENIES, ii. 12, 12. (b.)

FROM West to East the storm-clouds tear their way
And carry with them toward the Baltic shore
Wild swans in spreading wedge, and falcons
soar,
Then baffled sink—they dare not strike to-day.
Where Nature leads I follow and obey,
First storm, then peace, first faint and distant
roar,
The monotone of surge, then sails once more
Adventuring in seas disturbed and gray.
Calm as the eyes of one who captains men
Smiles the great vault of heaven, the sun-
edged drifts
That hid its smile from earth disperse and
cease.
I look beyond the reeds, the mere, the fen,
While in the mounts of cloud wax wide the
rifts,
Perchance in those blue depths will be my
peace.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

MORIENTEM TE OPORTET DUCERE VITAM, ii. 12, 14.

IT matters not when we are born,
A little space and we are dead,
The spirit from the corse is fled
As grain is sifted from the corn.

The earth rolls onward mourning not,
Society recovers soon,
Before the waning of a moon
The wisest of us is forgot.

Our hope is this, to live and pray
Although to-morrow we must die,
So shall we die to live and lie
Expectant of the judgment day.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

BEATI QUI INTERNA PENETRANT, iii. 1, 1.

MAN learns by discipline of pain
To estimate his loss as gain,
For loss and gain are near of kin,
The loser loses but to win.
Impatiently each day I mark
The dawn unswaddled from the dark.
The world is all disquieted
Though 'tis no broader than my bed ;
But this at least can sickness do,
It can create a self anew,
'Tis then that for a little space
I meet my own soul face to face.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

MANDATA EDICUNT SED TU JUVAS AD PROFICIENDUM,
iii. 2, 2.

OF old the prophets prophesied,
They prophesied of things to be,
But in their message none might see
A way of life or name of guide.

Till with the centuries there came
A more than prophet to the earth,
Faith sprang equipped to nobler birth
Supported by the Holy Name.

The misdirected faith that veers
Between the poles of Christless creeds
Dies at the touch of Him who speeds
The diapason of the spheres.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

FILI, AMBULA CORAM ME IN VERITATE, iii. 4, 1.

WALK with truth and thou wilt find
Cheerful heart and easy mind,
They who wander from her plough
Furrows on their careless brow.
Surely they who wander worst
Must have loved her at the first,
Guarding not the steps that stray
Farther from her day by day.
As the web of years grows thin
Error past makes present sin.
Not by will do they pursue
What is false for what is true,
Rather do they lose the light
Misinterpreting the right.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

AMOR VULT ESSE SURSUM NEQUE ULLIS INFIMIS
REBUS RETINERI, iii. 5, 3.

It chanced that Love and Faith upon a day
Contended in their speech, and Love spake thus :
“ We rule the life of man, but which of us
Within that life assumes the broader sway ? ”
“ I do,” said Faith, “ I ever watch and pray,
With gaze on worlds unseen and marvellous,
Ennobling hearts of men, not tyrannous
Like Love, whose care is but that men obey.”
“ Not so,” said Love, “ for thou outlivest not
Disproof and disillusion, I endure
Beyond the grave, beyond all mutable things.”
Then gat they them to flight, serene and sure,
Till Faith passed out of ken, but like a spot
Against the sun still showed Love’s purple wings.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

AMOR EX DEO NATUS EST, iii. 5, 3.

By Love we know that God is God,
He was the first created thing,
Faint odours still around Him cling
Of flowers by Eve in Eden trod.

His locks retain their primal gold
For all his life had been so long,
In battle with the hosts of wrong
Love lacks the time for growing old.

God gave command to Love to teach,
Not always gentle master he,
Love hath his art and mystery
And divers discipline for each.

But sorrow doth he most approve,
Strong souls that sorrowed have confessed
That they have learned the lesson best
Distilling out of sorrow love.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

CANTEM AMORIS CANTICUM, iii. 5, 6.

LOVE that lives and love that dies,
Love that comes and love that flies,
Love that wins his way too late,
Even love that turns to hate ;
Thus the evil and the good
All the world hath understood.
Christian, thou hast nought to dread,
Love for thee is daily bread,
Love of Christ constraineth thee,
Wherefore art thou truly free.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

SINE DOLORE NON VIVITUR IN AMORE, iii. 5, 7.

THROUGH tears come gleams of things that are
above,
They that have known not sorrow know not love,
And it may be the dawn of our delight
Is rosier for the weeping of the night.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

QUANDO ENIM GRATIA DEI VENIT AD HOMINEM TUNC
POTENS FIT AD OMNIA, iii. 8, 5.

BENEATH man's weakness lies the strength of God
If by His grace the perilous paths are trod.
Lift up thine head, O man, and thou wilt see
Celestial light accompanying thee.
So will be shown thee in the darkest gorge
The flame where thou wilt hammer in this forge
Deeds linked with deeds until the chain be
wrought
To such design as thou hast never thought.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

DATUR AUTEM CONSOLATIO DIVINA UT HOMO FORTIOR
SIT AD SUSTINENDUM ADVERSA, iii, 9, 8.

*Quum lugemus in dolore
Tristi supplicantes ore,
Panis vitæ, miserere.
Majus onus Tu tulisti,
Quanquam Deus Tu fuisti,
Vera Vitis, miserere.*

*Quum amatos nos deflemus,
Audi, Jesu, quid oremus,
Fili David, miserere.
Olim Lazaro abundas
Oculis fudisti undas,
Radix Jesse, miserere.*

*Quum jacemus onerati
Magno pondere peccati,
Bone Pastor, miserere.
Morituri cor latronis
Tranquillasti verbis bonis,
Agnus Dei, miserere.*

*Quum calcamus leti vias
Gladius et scutum fias,
Leo Juda, miserere.
Nostra requies sit grata
Apud beatorum prata,
Princeps Pacis, miserere.*

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

QUID RETRIBUAM TIBI PRO GRATIA ISTA? iii. 10, 2.

WHAT palace of the sons of Shem
Compares with thee, Jerusalem?
But 'tis not for themselves we prize
The domes and minarets that rise
In all their beauty to outlast
The dead who knew a nobler past.
It is not for themselves, it is
That place and scene stand wholly His
Whose eyes with tears divine were wet
When lingered He on Olivet,
Prophetic of appointed fate
And alien cohorts at the gate.
For us the sinless life was spent,
For us the seamless robe was rent,
For us the bitter cup was quaffed,
For us the form of God was doffed.
And it was here; Jerusalem,
Thou hast no memories like them.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

ECCE OMNIA TUA SUNT QUAE HABEO ET UNDE TIBI
SERVIO, iii. 10, 3.

For league on league inexorable space,
For league on league illimitable sand,
Sahara calls and with her fiery hand
She beckons, 'tis for us to ride apace.
Southward we hie us with obedient face,
Accomplishing her unexpressed command,
Into the mystic splendour of a land
Where God is all and man holds lowly place.
Nought save the Lord—the desert mountains gleam
With colour such as in a poet's dream
The golden age outspread on earth and sea.
Nought save the Lord—faint clouds that swim the
skies
Are shadows of the gates of Paradise ;
In this wild silence, Lord, remember me.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

QUID DABO TIBI PRO OMNIBUS ISTIS
MILLIBUS BONIS? iii. 10. 4.

*O VERI fons honoris,
Refugium doloris,
Spes grata peccatoris,
Tu ipsam vitam dabas,
Tu tantum me amabas
Piaculumque stabas
Pro me ad thronum Dei
Qua omnes timent rei
Splendorem faciei.
Nequitia sum natus,
Quid Tibi reddam gratus?
“Da Cor,” Tu es effatus.
Do Tibi cor, indignus
Ad hoc præbendum pignus,
Sed semper Tu benignus.
O misere pudendum,
O penitus deslendum
Hoc donum offerendum!
At accipe, nam quale
Nunc possum fero tale,
O cor antiquum, vale!
En summi peccatoris
Beatum cor amoris
In sempiternis oris!*

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

*Delicta quam immunda !
Sed fluit quam profunda
Cruoris Christi unda !
Laus Tibi, alma stella,
Laus, portus in procella,
Laus, scutum inter bella !*

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

O AMPECTENDUM ET SEMPER OPTANDUM SERVITIUM!

iii. 10, 6.

My footsteps trod the drift of ocean weed,
Brown border of the treacherous Zuyder Zee,
The while the glory of the strong young day
Smote downward on the low and level mead.
Two broad-beamed cobbles tacked with tardy speed,
Conveying shoreward herring, cod, and ray,
For fisher folk must labour while they may,
If nights be chill 'tis not for them to heed.
Methought their honest faces bore the mark
Of such as fished for men in Galilee,
Fulfilling Christ's commandment, "Follow Me."
His chosen followers were brave and stark,
So would I be, could I on sea or lake
Become the humblest fisher for His sake.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

O SACER STATUS RELIGIOSI FAMULATUS iii. 10, 6.

I see the birthday of romance,
I hear the glorious coursers prance,
 But not for me.

I see the gleam of spear and shield,
I hear the trumpet on the field,
 But not for me.

I see the splendid tournament,
I hear the tear of armour rent,
 But not for me.

I see the banners of the East,
I hear the tumult of the feast,
 But not for me.

I see the cloister damp and gray,
I hear the reapers in the hay,
 Enough for me.

I see the crucifix on high,
I hear the contrite sinner sigh,
 Enough for me.

I see the gates of pearl all dim,
I hear the song of Seraphim,
 Enough for me.

I see new light on mead and mere,
I hear what once I could not hear,
 Enough for me.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

UTINAM VEL UNO DIE DIGNUM SERVITIUM EXHIBERE
SUFFICEREM ! iii. 11, 4.

EARTH hath her splendour of the meads of May
When wealth of hawthorn opens tree by tree,
And from it draws the sage and prudent bee
His sweet provision for a winter day.
The soul hath too her spring what time the gray
Of heavy thoughts disperses full and free
Before the sun of hope and sympathy
Until she goes rejoicing on her way.
Too few the weeks she wears the fragile flower
Of worship and of charity ; alas,
The gayest flower must fill the deepest tomb !
Her spring endures no more than earth's, each hour
She mourns to mark the marvellous beauty pass,
The brief May morning vigil of her doom.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

HOC SIGNUM CRUCIS ERIT IN CÆLO, iii. 12, 1.

UPON the headland stood I, all its face
Was lighted with the laughing of the sea,
What time the sun beneath the canopy
Of Ocean seemed to seek his nightly place.
Before me swirled the eddies of the race,
Behind me whispered storm-bent tree to tree,
The West was all appalled gorgeously
In trembling hues of pearl and chrysoprase.
The little fishing town that lined the beach
Glowed like a fairy city, and the hoofs
Of wondering riders halted on the down.
Majestic as a thought surpassing speech
Twin stars arose that poised above the roofs
Assumed the semblage of a cross and crown.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

DE DUOBUS MALIS MINUS EST SEMPER ELIGENDUM,
iii. 12, 2.

Its myriad eyes disarming mine,
That watchful and prophetic sea
Hath smiles and tears in sympathy,
Providing joy or anodyne.

“There are two woes thou hast to dread,
Myself and earth,” so murmurs it,
“Oh let my soul with thine be knit,”
So answered I, “when I am dead.”

Its murmur is to me a song ;
If I must choose between two ills,
I choose as my old comrade wills,
If I do else I choose awrong.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

NIHIL ET NIHIL, iii. 14, 8.

THERE is One Judge whose sentences are just,
One realm where all the citizens are leal,
One throne where men appear because they must,
One court without appeal.

Away, O man, with all thy vain defence !
'Tis futile to have been no homicide
When on the earth thou hadst no shameful sense
Of envy or of pride.

Thou didst not steal, but thou didst speak no word
To save thy friend when grasping hands were
nigh,
Thou didst not lie, but wast thou ever heard
To thwart another's lie ?

Supremest Wisdom and divinest Love
Will find a way where human justice fails,
For in the judgment of the court above
'Tis mercy that prevails.

Abandon all, O man, save humbleness,
Unveil thyself to thy most secret thought,
Abased beneath the scornful stars confess
That thou art nought and nought.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

MAJOR EST SOLLICITUDO TUA PRO ME QUAM OMNIS
CURA QUAM EGO GERERE POSSUM PRO ME, iii. 17, 2.

“Such is the nature of the Gods that they
Enjoy unbroken peace in endless day ;
Remote from things of men they find relief
In ignorance of peril and of grief ;
Man’s aid is nought to Gods who are so strong,
Pleased not by merit, angered not by wrong.”¹

So spake the pagan poet, for to him
The world was chaos and the truth was dim.
Like toilers dazzled by a tropic sun
He found the many while he missed the One.
Unhappy he, compose he verse or not,
Who tells the world he is by heaven forgot !
Sufficient is the heart of man to cope
With all disasters if he hold to hope,
But dark the path of him who dares to crave
Annihilation in a hopeless grave,
Who dares the jeopardy of death alone
With never hand to help him save his own.

¹ Lucretius, ii. 645.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

SI PATI NON VIS RECUSAS CORONARI, iii. 19, 4.

I SAW beneath the bridge of life the dead,
The dead that are and shall be, dim and dun
Long rain-clouds rolled forsaken by the sun,
And daffodils bent low for drearihead.
Some of the hosts were virgin, some were wed,
Some ceased from days ere days were well begun,
Some hardly ere a century had run,
Some heaped up treasure, some made prayer
for bread.
In this were all alike that all laid down
The sorrow of their mortal years with sorrow
As one forgoes a joy that may not be.
The cross is near and visible, the crown
Far off to such as must assume to-morrow
The burden of their immortality.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

NAM PATI ET VEXARI PRO TE VALDE SALUBRE EST
ANIMAE MEAE, iii. 19, 5.

For thy soul's health, unheeding man, beware
Lest thou refuse the stripes appointed thee
In pride disguised to seem humility
That in the judgment will be pride laid bare.

For thy soul's health. Who art thou that dost dare
Decline the burden of the chains to be
The instruments whereby thou wilt be free
From thoughts that are thy standing sin and
snare ?

For thy soul's health. Look upward till thy gaze
Beholds the vision of the Crucified
And light celestial tints the years and days.

For thy soul's health. Yea, shame thee of thy
pride
And let thy breath be sweet with songs of praise
That thou by stripes and chains are fully tried.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

SÆPE PARVA RES EST QUAE ME DEJICIT ET
CONTRISTAT, iii. 20, 1.

THE little wounds devise the pain,
The little thoughts disturb the brain,
Through them we pay our scot ;
Disasters of heroic mould
One bears, and still one's brow is bold
As though one suffered not.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

SINE TE NULLA ERIT LAETA DIES ET HORA, iii. 21, 4.

FOR me, O Lord, there is outspread
The earth and all its lustihead,
The hue of flower and butterfly,
The glory of the sea and sky.
Still evermore they whisper me,
“The joy of all is joy of Thee.”
No perfect rose of perfect days
But breathes forth incense to Thy praise,
No autumn wood but writes Thy name
In maple leaves that die aflame;
The kindly lips of Nature call,
“Without Thee nothing, with Thee all.”

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

LAUS ERGO TIBI ET GLORIA, O PATRIS SAPIENTIA,
iii. 21, 7.

DIVINE omnipotence created me,
Primeval love and wisdom infinite,
Whence burn in me faint embers of the light
From heaven's high portal and its golden key.
Then on my youth, as on the autumn sea
The stammering thunder breaks, so smote the
 blight
Of world and life and sin, and what was bright
Grew dark with shadows of the years to be.
Still are there days wherein the silent heart
Communing imperceptibly with God
Marks good and bad to choose the better part.
Then weary feet that so long time have trod
The dusty floors of factory or mart
Step strong and free as on the mountain sod.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

NON TIBI SIT CURAE DE MAGNI NOMINIS UMBRA,
iii. 24, 2.

DEEP strikes his share who ploughs the field of fame,
Wherein is shed the seed that tardily
Through rigour of the winter grows to be
Divine surprise of flowers that bear a name.
A name of such as limneth bold of aim
The glow and gleam and glamour of the sea
Or culls in song the immortality
Of infinite sweetness from the world's great frame.
A frame, ah me! that sometimes holds the grave
Of them who sowed the seed and held the plough
While others reaped the fulness of the field.
The field where sickle-ripe the harvests wave
More fertile for the tombs beneath and yield
The heaviest ears hard by the burial howe.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

PACEM OMNES DESIDERANT, iii. 25, 1.

O HILLS that guard the glory of the sea
Where round smooth rowans mountain ivy twines,
 Speak comfort unto me
 By voice of swaying pines.

O river meadows ringed with reed and moss
Where glow young blossoms fed with April dew,
 Help me to bear my cross
 By memory of you.

O waterfalls that leap from height to height
Where rainbows ever vanish and appear,
 To my dark day be light
 And set your rainbow here.

O world that art but God's reflected face,
Fulfil what thou didst promise in the past,
 And from thy store of grace
 Bring peace to me at last.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

ABUNDANTIA PACIS PERFRUERIS, iii. 25, 5.

IN this ambrosial sense of peace
I feel the world's great passion cease,
Nought but the chariot wheels of God
Cut tracks upon the springing sod ;
The balsam of the kingly pines,
The odour of the hedgerow bines
Restore with artless force and skill
The doubting soul and wavering will,
And haunting ghosts of thought are laid
In silence of a sunny glade.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

HOC OPUS EST PERFECTI VIRI, iii. 26, 1.

NOT lightly did the ancients say
To labour is indeed to pray,
And he who with a single heart
Enriches earth by pen or art
Perchance is on a higher shelf
Than cloistered cowl that saves itself.
Work with thy hand and with thy brain,
By work rose tower and hall and fane,
Proclaiming in their sculptured page
The patience of a simpler age ;
'Twas lives that passed away unknown
That stamped its beauty on Cologne,
And daily labour waxed sublime
In handicraft of Hildesheim.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

NISI QUIS AB OMNIBUS CREATURIS FUERIT EXPEDITUS,
NON POTERIT LIBERE INTENDERE DIVINIS, iii. 31, 1.

PROVIDE thee time to set thine eyes
On some right worthy enterprise,
It will avail to turn thy thought
From what is sold and what is bought,
To hide the meanness of the mart
Beneath the golden dome of art,
And with a nobler music drown
The sordid clamour of the town.
So day by day thy spirit train
To echo an immortal strain,
So wilt thou cease to fall and fall
Until thou sink to be the thrall
Of humble aims and selfish things
And profitless imaginings
Uncertain as Atlantic seas
Tumultuous in the Orcades.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

STAT SUPER HAEC MUTABILIA SAPIENS ET BENE DOCTUS
IN SPIRITU, iii. 34, 1.

HE is not bound by our conventions planned
To gird all genius with an iron band,
He hath respect to laws, but only laws
Whereof the good of man is final cause.
He bears no malice if one do him wrong,
Forgiveness is the token of the strong,
And if one give him aid he doth not let
His conscience slumber or his mind forget.
He is so strong he will not brook a nay,
And when he speaks his way becomes our way,
His words convince for they are true and right,
The simple truth has not yet lost its might.
He stands resolved like Dionysius
When Paul was mocked in Areopagus,
Or as among sere woods where leaves have been
The hardy laurel still stands evergreen,
Of coming spring it bears the hue and sign
When snows of Yule lie piled upon the pine.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

O LUX PERPETUA, CUNCTA CREATA TRANSCENDENS
LUMINA, iii. 34, 3.

As once Ezekiel, sad with captive shame,
Saw dazzling wheels and whirling tires of flame,
Until the tawny torrent of Chebar
Waxed limpid and each ripple was a star ;
As once beside the stream of Eunoë
The Tuscan singer saw the mystery
Of golden candlesticks that seemed to glide .
With movement slower than a shamefast bride ;
So man may see on some autumnal night
The heaven of heavens lie naked to his sight,
And deem that on the barren down he feels
The rumble of immortal chariot wheels.
Then with the tears that eyes are moved to shed
When hearts are full of joy, he holds his head
Bowed eastward like Ravenna's labouring pines
Before a tempest from the Apennines.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

HUMILEM IN PUNCTO ELEVO MENTEM UT PLURES
AETERNAE VERITATIS CAPIAT RATIONES, iii. 43, 3.

A LIFE that has no history,
A death that has no mystery,
A passing with celerity
To the eternal verity,
Fulfilling such conditions
I satisfy ambitions.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

MULTA ETIAM OPORTET SURDA AURE PERTRANSIRE ET
QUAE TUAE PACIS SUNT MAGIS COGITARE, iii. 44, 1.

NOUGHT but Thy praises, Lord, shall fill my mouth,
I gaze on Thee, Thee only, casting forth
The visions of the roses of the South,
The visions of the lilies of the North.

Mine ears wait but for Thine encouragement,
What matter that the lark along the height
Of heaven will voice his song and grey-stoled Lent
Will doff her weeds to wear the Paschal white ?

My soul expects the Spirit and the Bride ;
The glories of the earth in spring attire,
The sunlit splendour of the Eastertide,
Divert not eyes that upward still aspire.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

IBI SUM UBI COGITATIO MEA EST, iii. 45, 8.

THE moments of intolerable thought
Gain vigour with the passing of the years,
Love dies amid inexorable tears,
Of once ambitious youth survives there nought.
At price too high maturity is bought,
For what were hopes transform themselves to fears,
Life's music smites on dull and careless ears,
Imagination fails to come unsought.
Long, long the road hath been that leads at last
To that deep wood where gleams the sword of fate
Amid the hopelessness of yew and pine.
Around me float dim figures from the past ;
They darken earth and sky and dominate
The sombre sea that hath its moods like mine.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

INSPICE TE MELIUS, iii. 46, 2.

THERE fell a rain of petals to the earth
And stored the air with sweets ; a cuckoo broke
With his monotonous soliloquy
The peace of summertide, his note was borne
Through pendent willows and majestic elms
Out to the long blue mountains. Then the
world

Again was silent. All the anchorite
Within me rose and blessed the voiceless calm.
Alone I ruled that fruitful country side,
Alone I set its laws that all should keep,
The abbot of a convent roofed with leaves,
Its cloisters framed of chestnut avenues,
Its cells of bracken glades. There hour by
hour

I mused the long sweet day and laid my heart
Unclad to heaven, and in its nakedness
How mean it seemed and paltry, all its thoughts
Terrestrial and its inspiration self !
Then came a quiver of the topmost oaks
And waked the flowers from sleep ; it seemed as
though

The chariot of the Lord imperiously
Drove onward to the East and with it drew
Mean things and base, till looking once again
Within my heart I found a little space,

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

Alas, how little ! occupied with God
Instead of self. Far up the mountain side
There crept a light as of the smile of God,
It was the promise of a nobler hope.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

LUCET QUIDEM SANCTIS PERPETUA CLARITATE SPLEN-
DIDA, SED NONNISI A LONGE ET PER SPECULUM
PEREGRINANTIBUS IN TERRA, iii. 48, 1.

O GATES of pearl that hold within
The righteous doers purged of sin,
When comes the day that through the bars
Of prison men will see the stars,
The day in some dim future clime
That earth will shine with light sublime,
The day that all with one accord
Will tread the highway of the Lord?
Perchance 'tis nearer than we think,
The water rises to the brink,
Ignoble things are swept aside
Before the Spirit and the Bride,
And individual voices cease
Before the world's great song of peace.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

OPTO INHAERERE CÆLESTIBUS, iii, 48, 4.

“ THEN like a rose of purest white there stood
Revealed to me the blessed host whom Christ
Won and espoused with His most precious
blood.”¹

So wrote the master, from himself enticed
To splendid visions by his fancy wrought
Of emerald and pearl and amethyst ;
Of thrones and realms created out of nought,
Of ancient music and of song austere,
Of mysteries made definite in thought.
Ah me ! the master speaks, I can but hear
And bow in homage, it is not for me
To summon for my verse a tone as clear ;
A tone as of the chanting of the sea,
That ruffled by the breezes of the West
Draws from the rocks their hidden harmony.
This can I do, my soul can be possessed
Undoubtedly with that magnificence
That Dante saw and find therein her rest.
My soul can sail on wings of fancy hence
Until she make her harbour in that rose,
Transformed into celestial excellence,
A petal of the flower that cannot fade.

¹ Dante, *Par.*, xxxi. 1.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

ADVENI, CŒLESTIS SUAVITAS, ET FUGIAT A FACIE TUA
OMNIS IMPURITAS, iii, 58, 5.

LORD of the earth and Ruler of the ocean,
The spheres are but the effluence of Thy thought,
And sun and planets in their daily motion
Proclaim the perfectness that Thou hast wrought.

Perchance that in our souls degenerated
That thought supreme may mix with sordid
things
And hold the lamp of glory uncreated
Amid the gloom of base imaginings.

We are not wholly vile where Thou hast lighted
In humble hearts the semblance of a flame
That shines a beacon to the feet benighted
And loth to quit the pathway of their shame.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

FILI, SAEPE IGNIS ARDET SED SINE FUMO FLAMMA
NON ASCENDIT, iii. 49, 2.

MAN labours only in the light,
But Nature's rule is not the same,
And in the hills volcanic flame
Outshines the very stars by night.

Alike in March and August hours
Earth marvels at the constant fire
That glows from Hekla like a pyre
And smites to death the puny flowers.

As is the smoke of Hekla such
Are they who spread a veil before
The landscape of the heavenly shore
And knowing nought are sure of much.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

HABEBIS SEMPER VOLUNTATEM TUAM IN CÆLIS,
iii. 49, 6.

AUTUMNAL mists were lifted for a space,
And in the highest heaven arose afar
The silver splendour of the vesper star
With the last sunset warm upon its face.

The scant leaves folded them to nightly rest,
They saw not what was granted me to see,
Towers whose foundations is eternity,
A fairy city builded in the West.

The roof within her palisades was trod
By feet of them I loved, some gone before,
Some saved for earth, still never one but bore
A face the mirror of the smile of God.

Beyond them shone the marble steps whereby
The way lies upward to the great white throne,
'Twas but the nether steps I saw, for none
May see their crown and summit ere he die.

Light after light brake forth till all the gray
Of that October eventide grew like
To summer noon, what time the mowers strike
The whetstone on the scythe, knee-deep in hay.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

A sound of voices more than mortal came
In musical accord, and from the trees
Shook brown and yellow leaves; the memories
Of that soft song still stir my heart to flame.

The great gates opened once and gave to view
A colour as of some enchanted rose
That in its every petal doth enclose
A haunting sweetness matching well its hue.

The great gates closed and it was dark again,
And all was silence; to my heart there crept
The comfort of the Son of Man who wept,
For He had pity on the sons of men.

Ah God, was this Thy city? Was it mine
To gaze upon the palace of the King
Girt with its mystic pinnacles, and fling
Forth from myself all thought that was not Thine?

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

SPLENDEBAT LUCERNA TUA SUPER CAPUT EJUS, iii. 50, 2.

As in some vast cathedral choir in Spain
The solemn wailing of the Tenebrae
Swims through the orange groves, and tower and
tree
Show dim through incense on the arid plain ;
Then with the psalms the lights wax few and wane,
Each timed to each, till burn at last but three—
And two—and one—one respited to be
Chief altar flame of Easter in the fane ;
So Thou, O Lord, my one and only light,
Art beacon to the mystic Easter land
Where feet of man may stand above the night.
Methinks I see upon the glowing strand
Of that fair country gates serene and white
Illumed for ever by a piercèd hand.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

CÆLESTIS MEDICUS ANIMARUM, iii. 50, 5.

CAN these bones live, O Son of Man?
O Lord, if Thou dost animate
The dust to what it was of late,
In very truth they can, they can.

The Great Physician ever hath
A skill denied to human hand,
Attaining even to the land
Where death stores up his aftermath.

So did the Christ to earth recall
The life entombed at Bethany,
What time He marked on Calvary
The shadow of the future fall.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

NATURA INVITE VULT MORI, iii. 54, 3.

Love is the gate of liberty,
Through it the free ascend,
For they are blind who will not see
And death is not the end.

And love endures beyond the tomb,
Forgetting none whose trust
Is in the King of love, by whom
Death means not dust to dust.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

GRATIA AD DEUM CUNCTA REDUCIT UNDE ORIGINALITER
EMANANT, iii. 54, 16.

THERE is a sense of right in human kind,
It answers to the good that seekers find
 In every mortal heart by digging deep,
As a great forest answers to the wind.

From heaven at birth of every man there fell
A spark from God's own fire, ofttimes the spell
 Of that high marvel stirs the souls that sleep,
And then heart signals heart that all is well.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

NAM MODICA VIS QUAE REMANSIT EST TANQUAM
SCINTILLA QUAEDAM LATENS IN CINERE, iii. 55, 2.

The chains of God have strength to link
Experience with the age of youth
When guileless hearts were fond to think
That they who listen hear the truth.

The seal of God hath stamped on man
His image that will long outlast
The arches built of time that span
The stream of present and of past.

The torch of God is red with flame
That lights the way of life unsought,
And even in the hour of shame
Is beacon unto nobler thought.

The love of God is deep and wide,
Therein is such abundant grace
That while in man its seeds abide
He cannot fall to wholly base.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

QUAE EST FIDUCIA MEA? iii. 59, 1.

'Tis of ourselves that we are fools or wise,
Faith stands before us with her honest eyes,
There is a speech in them for all to read,
A speech interpreted by them that heed.
Alas! 'tis granted unto few to know
The road that searchers after Faith should go.
Thus shall ye know it. In the tower about
The gate that opens on the road stands Doubt,
And there in silence sits she days on days
With passionless unsympathetic gaze,
Whereby she awes weak souls who in her view
Faith's very self not Faith's own handmaid true.
Strong souls put questions to her, knowing well
How none but she the way to Faith can tell.
Through Doubt it is that we Faith's grace receive,
For if one doubt not, how shall he believe?

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

TOTUM INFIRMUM ET INSTABILE INVENIO QUIDQUID
EXTRA TE CONSPICIO, iii. 59, 3.

I PACED the dunes and sandy shores,
The fringes of the Zuyder Zee,
And heard beyond the driving spray
The monotone of galley oars.

Awhile upon my ear there fell
Above the gannet's mournful scream
The groaning of the belfry beam
Down-weighted by the convent bell.

A night prophetic of despair!
I, Thomas, of the ominous name
Had wandered far and to my shame
Deemed things that were not things that were.

I saw the horror of the day
Wherein I doubted of the Christ,
And kept again the awful tryst
With such as stole my heart away.

But, God be thanked, the shadows pass,
Again I grasp the cross of old,
And in repentant hands I hold
The wafer of the blessed mass.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

God hath been kinder unto me
Than was my doubting heart, at last
I know that all my doubt is past,
Doubt is the root of certainty.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

DIRIGE PER VIAM PACIS AD PATRIAM PERPETUAE
CLARITATIS, iii. 59, 4.

BETWIXT the midnight and the morning came
Sublimest thoughts that bore me far away
Beyond the dimness of the rising day
And touched the common things of life with flame.
Perchance my dreams had been of love and fame,
Perchance of loss of them—I dare not say—
The thoughts that followed were so high that they
Imperious put all meaner dreams to shame.
The spiritual realm where Christ is King
Appeared a space, then vanished all too soon,
Until once more clanged fast the prison bars.
I saw the hem of God's own garment swing
Athwart the glory of the sun and moon,
Bejewelled with the planets and the stars.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

AMEN, iii. 59, 4.

THE book is finished, with it go
Things more and deeper than I know,
My soul unveiled in page on page
Perchance may speak to age on age
So distant that the critical
May doubt if I have lived at all.
Ah me, a book has power indeed !
For good or ill they read who read,
Completed it is like a light,
Here burning low, there strong at height,
Or like the sea in varying form,
Here calm and there the smiting storm.
'Tis thus in life ; none dare to say
If vice or virtue win the day
Until the hour of death be come,
When strife of slanderous tongues grows dumb.
Life struggles blindly to its goal
Condemned or pardoned by its whole.
May He, the Lord of pity, send
Solace and peace before the end !
May He from whom no thought is hid
Show mercy to the deeds I did !
In mercy I have put my trust,
In mercy, handmaid of the just.

THOMAS OF KEMPEN

O INEFFABILIS GRATIA, iv. 13, 3.

*(Reasons for not writing on texts taken from the
Fourth Book).*

WORDS fit the plain but fail upon the height,
Then knowing well how words are limited
I would avoid the judgment on my head
For such as write what man should never write.
One day upon my soul may break the light
When I have portion with the blessed dead,
The answer why the chalice and the bread
Bring hidden strength to them who fight the
fight.
Till then I dare not smirch the mystery
By halting words of mine, or still pretend
To knowledge that is ignorance indeed.
The eucharistic feast, the One in Three,
The Three in One ; would heaven that I might rend
The veil that hangs beyond the Christian creed !

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