

**THE POEMS OF
JOSEPH
MARY PLUNKETT**

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The poems of Joseph Mary Plunkett by Joseph Mary Plunkett

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JOSEPH MARY PLUNKETT

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MARY PLUNKETT**

TO THE
ADMISSION



Grace Plunkett
June 1910

The Poems of
Joseph Mary Plunkett

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
FOREWORD	vii.
OCCULTA	
Seals of Thunder	1
Invocation	2
Daybreak	3
The Splendour of God	4
The Living Temple	6
Initiation	8
Aaron	9
In the Wilderness	10
Arbor Vitae	11
La Pucelle	13
Occulta	15
Heaven in Hell	16
Your Songs	23
The Vigil of Love	24
The Lions	26
The Worm Joseph	27
The White Feather	28
Your Fear	29
The Mask	31
No Song	33
The Cloud	34
Moriturus Te Salutat	35
The Dark Way	36
Toi!the	38
The Living Wire	39
Die Taube	40
The Spark	42

v.

EARLIER AND LATER POEMS		PAGE
The New Judas		49
I see His Blood upon the Rose		50
The Stars sang in God's Garden		51
I saw the Sun at Midnight		52
It is her Voice who dwells within the Emerald Wall and Sapphire House of Flame		53
A Wave of the Sea		54
White Waves on the Water		55
This Heritage to the Race of Kings		56
1841-1891		57
1867		58
To <i>Caitilín ní huallacháin</i> —The Little Black Rose shall be Red at last		59
<i>Nomina Sunt Consequentia Rerum</i>		61
My Lady has the Grace of Death		62
O Lovely Heart		63
I love you with my every Breath		64
O Bright! thy Stateliness and Grace		65
White Dove of the Wild Dark Eyes		66
My Soul is Sick with Longing		67
When all the Stars become a Memory		69
Your Pride		70
If I should need to tear aside		71
When I am Dead		72
The Claim that has the Canker on the Rose		73
Your Fault		74
There is no Deed I would not dare		76
New Love		78
Before the Glory of your Love		79
To Grace—On the morning of her christening, April 7th, 1916		80
Prothalamion		81
See the Crocus' Golden Cup		82
Signs and Wonders		83
OBSCURITY AND POETRY		85

FOREWORD

JOSEPH PLUNKETT was the son of Count and Countess Plunkett, and was born in Dublin in November, 1887. He attended the Catholic University School and Belvedere College, but his wide reading did more to educate him than any schools.

He followed the two years Philosophy course at Stonyhurst College when he was eighteen. This made a strong impression on him. He kept up the study of Scholastic Philosophy and was very much influenced by mystical contemplation "or loving inclination towards God." The books that were his most constant companions were St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa, St. Francis, and John Tauler. Their mark on his poetry is very plain, though, as his short article on Obscurity and Poetry will show, he would apply the term "mystic" to but a very small part of his own verse. He showed me two or three poems that he called mystic, but I cannot find these now and must presume them destroyed. Of course he employed the symbolism of the mystics broadcast.

He was obliged by ill-health to spend a great deal of his short life in inactivity and to winter abroad. He and his mother spent a winter

travelling in Italy, Sicily and Malta, where he had a good friend, and another winter was spent in Algiers with a sister, where he studied the Arabic literature and language, enlarging his range of images by what he found there, though it is curious that the only poem which is purely Arabic in imagery is the short poem, "It is her voice that dwells within the emerald walls and sapphire house of flame,"* which he wrote before he went to Algiers. I also think it possible that the queer, flamboyant and melodramatic happenings which there came his way may have coloured that part of his verse which is more unrestrained and violent than the rest, for instance some of the sonnets in "Occulta."

Before he went to Algiers he had met Thomas MacDonagh—who was teaching at St. Enda's School, Rathfarnham, which he had helped P. H. Pearse to start. My brother wanted someone to teach him Irish for the matriculation of the National University and Thomas MacDonagh taught him for some time, and when he discovered my brother was a poet I think there was more poetry than pedagogy in their relationship. "The Circle and the Sword" was published in 1911, the year my brother was in Algiers. Thomas MacDonagh made the selection himself from my brother's poems, and saw the book through the press.

* Title from "The Mistress of Vision," by Francis Thompson.

Although there are a good many immature and defective poems in it it is rather remarkable for a first book. The lyric, "White Dove of the Wild Dark Eyes" would be difficult to surpass on its own ground; the sonnet "I saw the sun at midnight, rising red," the poems "1867," "I see his blood upon the rose," "My soul is sick with longing," and "The stars sang in God's garden" are all above the level of first books. I have included these and a few others which I thought worthy in this book, as I know he wished only these few to be considered as part of his mature work.

When he returned from Algiers he had a house of his own in Donnybrook, where we kept house together for two and a half years. With the exception of P. H. Pearse and Thomas MacDonagh he had few other literary friends in Dublin up to the time he became interested in the *Irish Review*. This was started by Professor Houston in 1911, in association with James Stephens, Thomas MacDonagh and Padraic Colum. Mr. Houston edited it himself for some time and Padraic Colum was editor in 1912-13. Two poems of my brother's were printed in it; he got to know the people who were associated with it very well, and in June, 1913, he became editor himself.

Any cause he was interested in was discussed in the *Review*; for instance, the men's case in the strike of summer, 1913, and the Volunteer move-