

So passed the days and love's unuttered pain
Ached in the heart of Malcolm; yet he held
His secret long for shame of his unworth;
And Mary did not know her power on him
And took no thought of love. But when at last
The tide of feeling brimmed and flowed beyond
The wonted bounds of will, then Malcolm spoke.
"I love you, Mary: all my hopes, my aims
Recur to you, as to the north recurs
The balanced needle: all I am is yours.
Wherefore, I pray you, let this gladness shine
Upon my life—tell me that I may hope
To gain you, and, some day, to call you wife!"

Surprise, with mingled pain and sweetness, shook
The heart of Mary: it was pain to learn
That unrequited passion: yet 'twas sweet,
'Twas very sweet, to know herself beloved.
A moment and she wavered, but full soon
Sweetness and pain o'ermastered, she replied:
"The plighted troth of fairly mated souls
Is sacred, sacramental, shewing forth
Christ and His Church. Yet marriage is a means
And not an end: a stair whereby the soul
May scale the steep height of the Heavenly Love.
I am a poor, weak girl; often my faith
Faints and cries out for guidance in the path
To that high end: yet there my life must climb.
You are most generous, yet you blame the quest
Whose unseen goal the spirit only sees,
And bid me find in this low vale of death
The motive and reward and sum of all.