

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.