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GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

Gerard Manley Hopkins was born on 28 July 1844, at Stratford in Essex. His family was prosperous and cultivated. His father, a Consul-General for Hawaii, wrote a history of Hawaii, several books on his profession and three volumes of verse; he also enjoyed music and delighted in word-play and puns. Other members of the family and relatives had talents in music and drawing. The family were High Anglicans.

The eldest of nine children, Gerard Manley Hopkins was a precocious and exceptionally gifted boy: and at Highgate School he won the school Poetry Prize when he was sixteen. Already his poetic gifts were rapidly developing, along with an unusual ability in painting and drawing. In 1863 he went up to Balliol College, Oxford, to read Classics.

At Oxford Hopkins felt liberated sufficiently to give much time to the study and writing of poetry; to his painting and drawing; and to prove himself in Jowett's estimation to be the best classical scholar of his year. His diaries written at Oxford are full of detailed, accurate notes on nature and architecture, accompanied by exquisite drawings and paintings showing a vivid response to the world around him. Always in these sketches and drafts of poems and notes there is a passionate desire to arrive at the inwardness of the object or the form contemplated, to know and realize afresh in terms of art, its essential nature, its 'self'.

Hopkins' thought and writing was influenced by Walter Pater whose pupil he became. A stronger influence was that of Newman. By upbringing a High Anglican, Hopkins, strongly influenced by the Oxford High Church movement, felt his position as an Anglican to be untenable. In October 1866 he was received by Newman into the Roman Catholic Church, to the great distress of his family. He remained in Oxford for a further year, adding a First in 'Greats' to his First in 'Mods', and then took a teaching post at the Oratory School in Birmingham. In 1868 he resolved to become a priest and a Jesuit. In May of the same year he destroyed his poems.

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For two years he studied at Roehampton and then, after taking his first vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, he went to Stonyhurst to study Philosophy. There followed a further period at Roehampton where Hopkins taught Rhetoric before he went to St Beuno's College in North Wales to study Theology. During these seven years Hopkins wrote no poetry 'except for two or three little presentation pieces which occasion called for'. But in 1875, having read and been deeply moved by an account of the death by drowning of five Franciscan nuns in the shipwreck of the *Deutschland* in the mouth of the Thames, he spoke of this to his rector who said that he wished 'someone would write a poem on the subject'. 'On this hint', writes Hopkins, 'I set to work and, though my hand was out at first, produced one.' The poem that Hopkins produced proved to be one of the greatest religious poems in the language. The Catholic periodical, *The Month*, accepted it, but after a time they withdrew and dared not print it.

On 23 September 1877, Hopkins was ordained priest. The conditions he encountered in parishes in Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow shocked and appalled him, and his health suffered. It was with relief that he came back to Roehampton for his 'Tertianship' (his third year of probation as a Jesuit). After the vice and horrors he had seen in the northern industrial cities, he welcomed the opportunity for renewal and restoration.

After two years' teaching at Stonyhurst, Hopkins became Professor of Greek and Fellow of the Royal University at University College, Dublin, a post he retained until his death from typhoid fever in 1889, seven weeks before his forty-fifth birthday.

Hopkins entrusted his poems to his friend, Robert Bridges, for safe-keeping until he thought the time opportune for their publication. Judging them to be in advance of their time, Bridges published a few poems in *Poets and Poetry of the Century* (1893), and a further few in his own anthology *The Spirit of Man* (1915). It was not until 1918 that the first full edition of Hopkins' *Poems* was published and, though slow to sell (it was 1928 before the 750 copies of the first edition were sold), Hopkins' reputation has grown steadily with the passing of time.

As a poet, his reputation and his effect belong particularly to the twentieth century. That is why he is included in this anthology.

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Winter with the Gulf Stream

The boughs, the boughs are bare enough
But earth has never felt the snow.
Frost-furred our ivies are and rough

With bills of rime the brambles shew.
The hoarse leaves crawl on hissing ground
Because the sighing wind is low.

But if the rain-blasts be unbound
And from dank feathers wring the drops
The clogged brook runs with choking sound

Kneading the mounded mire that stops
His channel under clammy coats
Of foliage fallen in the copse.

A simple passage of weak notes
Is all the winter bird dare try.
The bugle moon by daylight floats

So glassy white about the sky,
So like a berg of hyaline,
And pencilled blue so daintily,

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I never saw her so divine.
But through black branches, rarely drest
In scarves of silky shot and shine,

The webbed and the watery west
Where yonder crimson fireball sits
Looks laid for feasting and for rest.

I see long reefs of violets
In beryl-covered fens so dim,
A gold-water Pactolus frets

Its brindled wharves and yellow brim,
The waxen colours weep and run,
And slendering to his burning rim

Into the flat blue mist the sun
Drops out and all our day is done.

The Habit of Perfection

Elected Silence, sing to me
And beat upon my whorlèd ear,
Pipe me to pastures still and be
The music that I care to hear.

Shape nothing, lips; be lovely-dumb:
It is the shut, the curfew sent
From there where all surrenders come
Which only makes you eloquent.

Be shellèd, eyes, with double dark
And find the uncreated light:
This ruck and reel which you remark
Coils, keeps, and teases simple sight.

Palate, the hutch of tasty lust,
Desire not to be rinsed with wine:
The can must be so sweet, the crust
So fresh that come in fasts divine!

Nostrils, your careless breath that spend
Upon the stir and keep of pride,
What relish shall the censers send
Along the sanctuary side!

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O feel-of-primrose hands, O feet
That want the yield of plushy sward,
But you shall walk the golden street
And you unhouse and house the Lord.

And, Poverty, be thou the bride
And now the marriage feast begun,
And lily-coloured clothes provide
Your spouse not laboured-at nor spun.

God's Grandeur

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

The Starlight Night

Look at the stars! look, look up at the skies!
O look at all the fire-folk sitting in the air!
The bright boroughs, the circle-citadels there!
Down in dim woods the diamond delves! the elves'-eyes!
The grey lawns cold where gold, where quickgold lies!
Wind-beat whitebeam! airy abeles set on a flare!
Flake-doves sent floating forth at a farmyard scare!—
Ah well! it is all a purchase, all is a prize.

Buy then! bid then!—What?—Prayer, patience, alms, vows.
Look, look: a May-mess, like on orchard boughs!
Look! March-bloom, like on mealed-with-yellow sallows!

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These are indeed the barn; withindoors house
The shocks. This piece-bright paling shuts the spouse
Christ home, Christ and his mother and all his hallows.

The Windhover:

To Christ our Lord

I caught this morning morning's minion, king-
dom of daylights' dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding
Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding
High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,
As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and gliding
Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding
Stirred for a bird,—the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!

Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here
Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion
Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!

No wonder of it: shéer plód makes plough down sillion
Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.

The Lantern out of Doors

Sometimes a lantern moves along the night,
That interests our eyes. And who goes there?
I think; where from and bound, I wonder, where,
With, all down darkness wide, his wading light?

Men go by me whom either beauty bright
In mould or mind or what not else makes rare:
They rain against our much-thick and marsh air
Rich beams, till death or distance buys them quite.

Death or distance soon consumes them: wind
What most I may eye after, be in at the end
I cannot, and out of sight is out of mind.

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Christ minds; Christ's interest, what to avow or amend
There, éyes them, heart wánts, care haúnts, foot fóllows kind,
Their ránsom, théir rescue, ánd first, fást, last friénd.

The Candle Indoors

Some candle clear burns somewhere I come by.
I muse at how its being puts blissful back
With yellowy moisture mild night's blear-all black,
Or to-fro tender trambeams truckle at the eye.
By that window what task what fingers ply,
I plod wondering, a-wanting, just for lack
Of answer the eagerer a-wanting Jessy or Jack
There / God to aggrándise, God to glorify.—

Come you indoors, come home; your fading fire
Mend first and vital candle in close heart's vault:
You there are master, do your own desire;
What hinders? Are you beam-blind, yet to a fault
In a neighbour deft-handed? are you that liar
And, cast by conscience out, spendsavour salt?

Felix Randal

Felix Randal the farrier, O he is dead then? my duty all ended,
Who have watched his mould of man, big-boned and hardy-handsome
Pining, pining, till time when reason rambled in it and some
Fatal four disorders, fleshed there, all contended?

Sickness broke him. Impatient he cursed at first, but mended
Being anointed and all; though a heavenlier heart began some
Months earlier, since I had our sweet reprieve and ransom
Tendered to him. Ah well, God rest him all road ever he offended!

This seeing the sick endears them to us, us too it endears.
My tongue had taught thee comfort, touch had quenched thy tears,
Thy tears that touched my heart, child, Felix, poor Felix Randal;

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How far from then forethought of, all thy more boisterous
years,
When thou at the random grim forge, powerful amidst peers,
Didst fettle for the great grey drayhorse his bright and
battering sandal!

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies dráw fláme;
As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;
Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
Selves—goes itself; *myself* it speaks and spells;
Crying *Whát I dó is me: for that I came.*

Í say móre: the just man justices;
Kéeps gráce: thát keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is—
Chríst—for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men's faces.

Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves

Earnest, earthless, equal, attuneable, / vaulty, voluminous, . . .
stupendous
Evening strains to be tíme's vást, / womb-of-all, home-of-all,
hearse-of-all night.
Her fond yellow hornlight wound to the west, / her wild
hollow hoarlight hung to the height
Waste; her earliest stars, earl-stars, / stárs principal, overbend
us,
Fíre-féaturing heaven. For earth / her being has unbound, her
dapple is at an end, as-
tray or aswarm, all throughther, in throngs; / self ín self
steepèd and páshed—qúite
Disremembering, dísmémbering / áll now. Heart, you round
me right

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With: Óur évening is over us; óur night / whélms, whélms, ánd will end us.
Only the beak-leaved boughs dragonish / damask the tool-smooth bleak light; black,
Ever so black on it. Óur tale, O óur oracle! / Lét life, wáned, ah lét life wind
Off hér once skéined stained véined varíety / upon, áll on twó spools; párt, pen, páck
Now her áll in twó flocks, twó folds—black, white; / right, wrong; reckon but, reck but, mind
But thése two; wáre of a wórld where bút these / twó tell, each off the óther; of a rack
Where, selfwrung, selfstrung, sheathe-and shelterless, / thóughts against thoughts ín groans grínd.

(Carrion Comfort)

Not, I'll not, carrion comfort, Despair, not feast on thee;
Not untwist—slack they may be—these last strands of man
In me ór, most weary, cry *I can no more*. I can;
Can something, hope, wish day come, not choose not to be.
But ah, but O thou terrible, why wouldst thou rude on me
Thy wring-world right foot rock? lay a lionlimb against me? scan
With darksome devouring eyes my bruisèd bones? and fan,
O in turns of tempest, me heaped there; me frantic to avoid thee and flee?

Why? That my chaff might fly; my grain lie, sheer and clear.
Nay in all that toil, that coil, since (seems) I kissed the rod,
Hand rather, my heart lo! lapped strength, stole joy, would laugh, chéer.
Cheer whom though? the hero whose heaven-handling flung me, fóot tród
Me? or me that fought him? O which one? is it each one? That night, that year
Of now done darkness I wretch lay wrestling with (my God!) my God.

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No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief,
More pangs will, schooled at forepangs, wilder wring.
Comforter, where, where is your comforting?
Mary, mother of us, where is your relief?

My cries heave, herds-long; huddle in a main, a chief
Woe, world-sorrow; on an age-old anvil wince and sing—
Then lull, then leave off. Fury had shrieked 'No ling-
ering! Let me be fell: force I must be brief'.

O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
May who ne'er hung there. Nor does long our small
Durance deal with that steep or deep. Here! creep,
Wretch, under a comfort serves in a whirlwind: all
Life death does end and each day dies with sleep.

I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day.
What hours, O what black hoürs we have spent
This night! what sights you, heart, saw; ways you went!
And more must, in yet longer light's delay.
With witness I speak this. But where I say
Hours I mean years, mean life. And my lament
Is cries countless, cries like dead letters sent
To dearest him that lives alas! away.

I am gall, I am heartburn. God's most deep decree
Bitter would have me taste: my taste was me;
Bones built in me, flesh filled, blood brimmed the curse.
Selfyeast of spirit a dull dough sours. I see
The lost are like this, and their scourge to be
As I am mine, their sweating selves; but worse.

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