

DARKNESS and DAWN
A Graveyard Reverie

By Rebecca F. Doney

Oh, City of the Dead, what thou couldst tell,
What tales unfold!
Of all the captives thou hast here in hell:
The young, the old.
The soft green waves, the birds above them fly,
And loved ones rend the air with bitter cry;
But here unconscious of it all, they lie
So still and cold.

Oh, City of the Dead, your Master, death,
Claims all the earth,
And sets his mark on Adam's helpless sons
Before their birth.
A little while he may be kept at bay,
And life prolonged, a year, a month, a day:
But sooner or later, he demands his prey,
At every hearth.

Sometimes he warns them of his dread approach,
By racking pain,
'Gainst which, love's watch, combined with skill and power,
Are spent in vain;
Sometimes like the thunderbolt from clearest sky
His victims drop without a word or cry;
And crepe, and hearse, and pall, all testify
To his dread reign.

Oh, City of the Dead, with heads bowed low
They sadly come,
And lay their dear loved ones with tender hands
In their last home.
And then—poor souls—with breaking hearts they go,
And leave them here where storms of rain and snow
And wintry winds beat wildly to and fro
With dreary moan.

As my mind wanders o'er the sin-cursed earth,
I stand appalled:
On ninety thousand new made graves each day,
The hot tears fall.
No wonder Jesus wept at Lazarus' tomb,
When he foresaw how deep would be the gloom,
Ere He, His kingly power could assume
And break sin's thrall.

That long procession moving ever on,
Strikes our hearts dumb:
With anguish keen, we voice our only hope,
Thy Kingdom Come.
Sore need have men of words of hope and cheer,
'Tis ours to tell them that the morn is near,
And all earth's sorrow clouds shall disappear,
Before the Sun.

Death, I have come to have a word with thee,
To tell thee here,
By these still graves, where thy dead victims lie,
Thine end is near.
Man's path thru centuries, thou hast marked with blood,
But, oh! thou Terror, in the Holy Word
Thy doom is written by Almighty God
In language clear.

Jehovah sent His Son as mortal man,
That He might go,
Down in the tomb, he held in bonds by thee,
Man's deadly foe.
That man might be released, brought back again,
To share the blessings of Messiah's reign;
And that to life once lost, he might attain,
Its fullness known.

Think not, oh Death, Christ's new begotten mind,
Could holden be:
The Father quickened Him on highest plane
Immortal, free.
Divine in nature, now, He reigns in power
That shall increase with every passing hour,

He has thy keys, oh Death, He'll make thee cower,
And vanquish thee.

He is thy Master, Death, and when His time
Has fully come,
He who hath power of death, this world's dread prince,
Shall meet his doom.
Those angels who have wreaked on man their hate,
And who have not regained their lost estate,
With hell and thee, grim death, shall meet their fate
Within the tomb.

Dost think, oh Death, that man will shed a tear
Because thou art gone?
The whole glad world will dance upon thy grave,
With joyous song!
Methinks our ancient sires will lead the strain,
And all their children join with might and main,
Until the hosts of Heaven shall catch the strain,
And pass it on.

By faith, I catch a glimpse of that blest day,
Earth's golden age,
Dreamed of by poet, written of by seer,
Sought for by sage.
When eyes long blinded come at least to see
The glorious meaning of earth's Jubilee,
When man no more shall helpless victim be
Of sin's dread wage.

I see the earth made glorious indeed—
Her storms all o'er;
On mountain, valley, over hill and plain,
From shore to shore.
The fields and groves in radiant beauty lay,
Abundantly supplying day by day the needs of all;
Grim want has flown away
From every door.

And there as princes over all the earth,
I see a race
Who look like gods—so grand of form are they,

So full of grace.
In ages past they walked by faith alone,
Earth's holy ones, from Abel down to John;
And now, as rulers on the earthly throne
They take their place of happiness.

Some died believing that their spirits would,
In heaven dwell;
Some died with shrieks and curses on their lips
In fear of hell.
Some welcome death as sweet release from pain,
Some that forever dead they would remain;
All stand amazed, to find themselves again,
Alive and well.

But greater wonder stirs them at the change,
Since they lay down,
No sickness or disease in all the earth
Can now be found.
Sweet peace and plenty, both, have come to stay,
And none have power to harm in that blest day.
The righteous kingdom laws all must obey
The world around.

In righteousness they rule with iron rod;
And justice lays,
Her lines and angles straight, and true, and plain,
While love surveys,
The fallen race; and then with tender hands
She leads them day by day, in paths so grand;
Until with joy, they choose to walk, and stand,
In wisdom's ways.

Grim war has ceased, its signs are nowhere found
The whole world thru;
And all the deadly instruments of strife
Are shaped anew,
And used to till the garden, and the field;
The onetime sword as pruning hooks they wield
To dress the groves, whose bending boughs rich yield
The orchards strew.

Man's curse, laborious and incessant toil,
First fruits of sin,
And Eve's dread sentence on her daughters laid,
Have lifted been.
Instead of sweat of face with groans and sighs,
With magic ease, he, every want supplies;
And long sweet hours are left for exercise
Oh heart and mind.

The world's blind eyes are being opened now,
The deaf ears hear;
And truth long hidden, shines o'er all the earth,
With radiance clear.
They learn of God's great love, his wisdom grand,
His justice stern, the power of his command,
And as they view it all, in awe they stand;
And Him revere.

And as they study Nature's open book,
New light is thrown
Upon the mighty powers that round them lay,
So long unknown.
With perfect minds new visions they attain,
O'er nature's forces they the mastery gain,
And claim their own.

But oh, the crowning joy of all, is this,
Those who have lain
Within the silent tombs, thru all the years,
Of death's dark reign:
Those whose bleached bones upon the desert lie,
Those whom old ocean thinks to hold for aye,
And those whose ashes with the winds do fly,
Come back again.

What cries of joy are heard on every side,
As loved ones press
Their long lost friends to hearts, that overflow,
With thankfulness.
And all the anguish of the bitter years,
The loneliness, the pain, the awful fears
That wrung the heart are washed away in tears.

The Princes tell how Christ the ransom paid,
And doth now reign;
That Adam's race enslaved so long in sin,
Might all obtain
One chance for life, one chance for every one,
To hear the Gospel of God's blessed Son,
And hearing, gain the perfect life, upon
The human plane.

As on the broad Highway of Holiness
They all are led,
In answer to their prayers, still others come
Back from the dead.
One generation, then another comes,
To find warm loving hearts, and waiting homes,
Till over all the earth from zone to zone,
The gladness spreads.

At last there comes a day when all are raised,
At last the pair
Who once went forth from Eden's blest abode,
In deep despair;
For everything was lost—dominion, home,
The right to live, as convicts doomed to roam,
Death following, pursued them to the tomb;
And held them there.

But their long sleep of centuries is past,
And death has fled;
And o'er their graves the voice of power rings out
And wakes the dead.
As they come forth the air resounds with song
That floats on every breeze, from every tongue,
And Adam stands among that mighty throng
Its primal head.

With that grand song still ringing in my ears,
And thrilling me,
I awaken from my reverie, and lo!
Once more I see,
The silent graves, and so I lift my eyes,

I see the clouds of trouble higher rise
And hear the poor creation's groans and cries
Of misery.

But looking farther still beyond the clouds,
I see the rays
Of that Millennial Dawn which ushers in
Earth's glory day.
The storm comes on with an increasing roar,
But yonder light streams brighter than before;
With heart of faith, I worship and adore,
And humbly pray.

Our Father, God, in reverent love we kneel
Above these tombs,
And thank thee that we see within thy word,
This dreadful gloom shall flee away
As mists before the sun;
And on this earth thy will shall yet be done,
And thy great love be known by every one,
Beneath these stones.