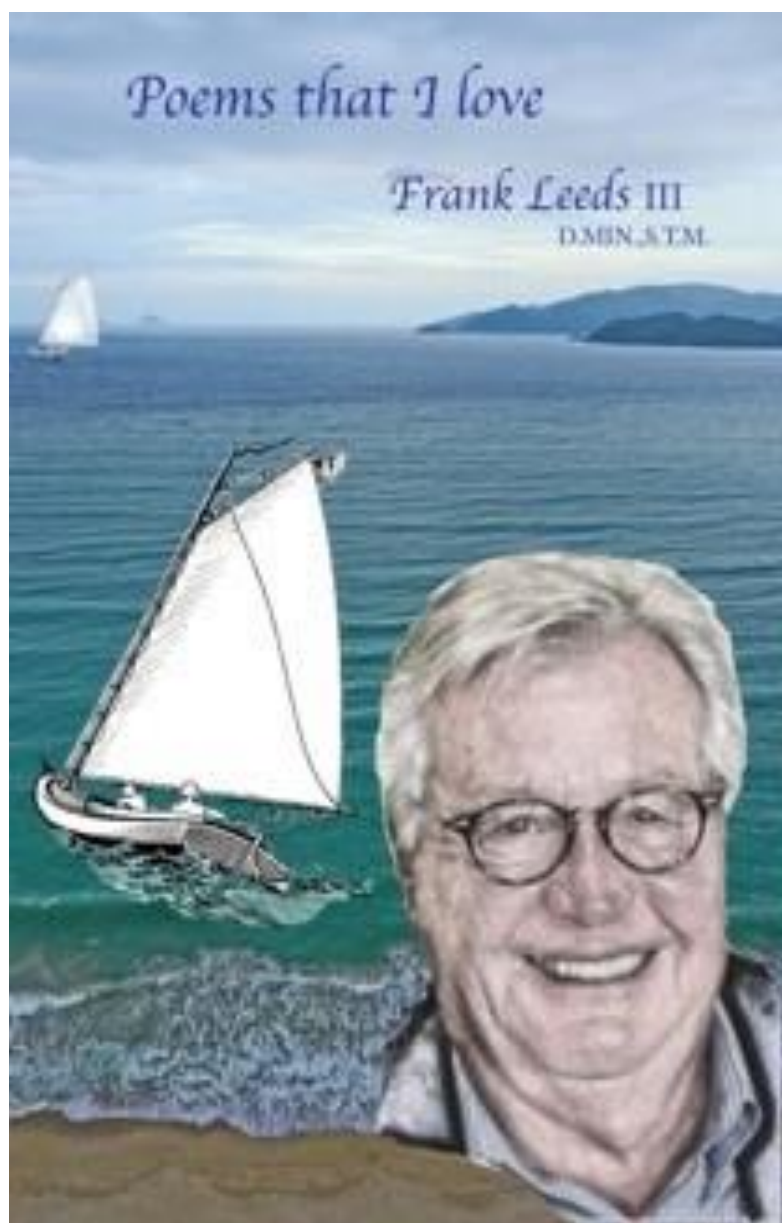
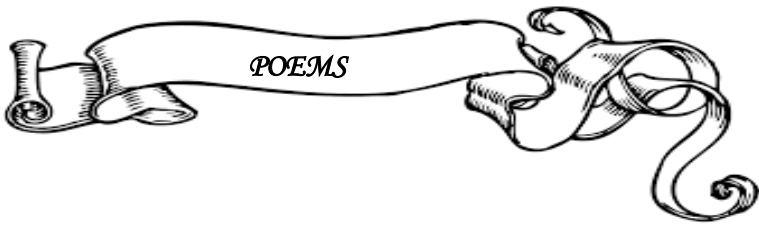


Poems that I love

Frank Leeds III

DMIN.ATM





Poetry may not have the power of love but the love of life has certainly yielded some great poetry. My educational training has been concentrated more on philosophy, psychology, languages and preaching. But it is the medium of story-telling that I try to put it all together. I do not possess the sufficiency in skills to be a poet; though I wish I did. Therefore, none of the poems are from my pen. Rather, they are 'merely' a collection that I share with you.

One of my favorites, that I did not include, is from Samuel Taylor Coleridge 1773-1834 who was more interested in the invisible things of this life than the visible. My favorite of his is "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." That is a rather long poem and one that I "translated?" if that be the proper term, into one of my stories. It can be found in a previous booklet.

It may seem strange, my selection of this first poem by Frost. In addition to his being a great poet, I happen to be feeling the diminishment of which he writes.

'Diminishment' is a fancy term for "feeling your age"...but he says it better than I.

The Oven Bird By Robert Frost 1874–1963

There is a singer everyone has heard,
Loud, a mid-summer and a mid-wood bird,
Who makes the solid tree trunks sound again.
He says that leaves are old and that for flowers
Mid-summer is to spring as one to ten.
He says the early petal-fall is past
When pear and cherry bloom went down in showers
On sunny days a moment overcast;
And comes that other fall we name the fall.
He says the highway dust is over all.
The bird would cease and be as other birds
But that he knows in singing not to sing.
The question that he frames in all but words
Is what to make of a diminished thing.

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Henry Van Dyke [1854-1933] was the American Princeton scholar, author, professor, and because of President Woodrow Wilson, diplomat to the Netherlands and Luxembourg. These poems are amongst my favorite. I think everyone knows Beethoven's Ninth Symphony but I doubt that many know that the poems to that music was written by Henry Van Dyke.

Time Is



Time is
Too Slow for those who Wait,
Too Swift for those who Fear,
Too Long for those who Grieve,
Too Short for those who Rejoice;
But for those who Love,
Time is not.

=====

Big Sun

Oh, why are you shining so bright, big Sun,
Departure

And why is the garden so gay?
Do you know that my days of delight are done,
Do you know I am going away?
If you covered your face with a cloud, I 'd dream
You were sorry for me in my pain,
And the heads of the flowers all bowed would seem
To be weeping with me in the rain.

But why is your head so low, sweet heart,
And why are your eyes overcast?
Are they clouded because you know we must part,
Do you think this embrace is our last?
Then kiss me again, and again, and again,
Look up as you bid me good-bye!
For your face is too dear for the stain of a tear,
And your smile is the sun in my sky.

=====

Doors of Daring

[What are the doors that are holding you back?]

The mountains that enfold the vale
With walls of granite, steep and high,

Invite the fearless foot to scale
Their stairway toward the sky.

The restless, deep, dividing sea
That flows and foams from shore to shore,
Calls to its sunburned chivalry,
"Push out, set sail, explore!"

And all the bars at which we fret,
That seem to prison and control,
Are but the doors of daring, set
Ajar before the soul.

Say not, "Too poor," but freely give;
Sigh not, "Too weak," but boldly try,
You never can begin to live
Until you dare to die.

=====

Holland

The laggard winter ebbed so slow
With freezing rain and melting snow,
It seemed as if the earth would stay
Forever where the tide was low,
In sodden green and watery gray.

But now from depths beyond our sight,
The tide is turning in the night,
And floods of color long concealed
Come silent rising toward the light,
Through garden bare and empty field.

And first, along the sheltered nooks,
The crocus runs in little brooks
Of joyance, till by light made bold
They show the gladness of their looks
In shining pools of white and gold.

The tiny scilla, sapphire blue,
Is gently seeping in, to strew
The earth with heaven; and sudden rills
Of sunlit yellow, sweeping through,
Spread into lakes of daffodils.

The hyacinths, with fragrant heads,
Have overflowed their sandy beds,
And fill the earth with faint perfume,
The breath that Spring around her sheds.
And now the tulips break in bloom!

A sea, a rainbow-tinted sea,
A splendor and a mystery,
Floods o'er the fields of faded gray:
The roads are full of folks in glee,
For lo, - to-day is Easter Day!

=====

Four Things

Four things a man must learn to do
If he would make his record true:
To think without confusion clearly;
To love his fellow man sincerely;

To act from honest motives purely;
To trust in God and Heaven securely.

=====

God Of The Open Air



I.

Thou who hast made thy dwelling fair
With flowers beneath, above with starry lights,
And set thine altars everywhere,--
On mountain heights,
In woodlands dim with many a dream,
In valleys bright with springs,
And on the curving capes of every stream:
Thou who hast taken to thyself the wings
Of morning, to abide
Upon the secret places of the sea,
And on far islands, where the tide
Visits the beauty of untrodden shores,
Waiting for worshippers to come to thee
In thy great out-of-doors!
To thee I turn, to thee I make my prayer,
God of the open air.

II.

Seeking for thee, the heart of man
Lonely and longing ran,
In that first, solitary hour,
When the mysterious power
To know and love the wonder of the morn
Was breathed within him, and his soul was born;
And thou didst meet thy child,

Not in some hidden shrine,
But in the freedom of the garden wild,
And take his hand in thine,--
There all day long in Paradise he walked,
And in the cool of evening with thee talked.

III.

Lost, long ago, that garden bright and pure,
Lost, that calm day too perfect to endure,
And lost the childlike love that worshipped and was
sure!

For men have dulled their eyes with sin,
And dimmed the light of heaven with doubt,
And built their temple walls to shut thee in,
And framed their iron creeds to shut thee out.
But not for thee the closing of the door,
O Spirit unconfined!
Thy ways are free
As is the wandering wind,
And thou hast wooed thy children, to restore
Their fellowship with thee,
In peace of soul and simpleness of mind.

IV.

Joyful the heart that, when the flood rolled by,
Leaped up to see the rainbow in the sky;
And glad the pilgrim, in the lonely night,
For whom the hills of Haran, tier on tier,
Built up a secret stairway to the height
Where stars like angel eyes were shining clear.
From mountain-peaks, in many a land and age,
Disciples of the Persian seer
Have hailed the rising sun and worshipped thee;

And wayworn followers of the Indian sage
Have found the peace of God beneath a spreading
tree.

But One, but One,--ah, child most dear,
And perfect image of the Love Unseen,--
Walked every day in pastures green,
And all his life the quiet waters by,
Reading their beauty with a tranquil eye.

To him the desert was a place prepared
For weary hearts to rest;
The hillside was a temple blest;
The grassy vale a banquet-room
Where he could feed and comfort many a guest.
With him the lily shared
The vital joy that breathes itself in bloom;
And every bird that sang beside the nest
Told of the love that broods o'er every living thing.
He watched the shepherd bring
His flock at sundown to the welcome fold,
The fisherman at daybreak fling
His net across the waters gray and cold,
And all day long the patient reaper swing
His curving sickle through the harvest-gold.
So through the world the foot-path way he trod,
Drawing the air of heaven in every breath;
And in the evening sacrifice of death
Beneath the open sky he gave his soul to God.
Him will I trust, and for my Master take;
Him will I follow; and for his dear sake,
God of the open air,
To thee I make my prayer.

V.

From the prison of anxious thought that greed has
builded,
From the fetters that envy has wrought and pride
has gilded,
From the noise of the crowded ways and the fierce
confusion,
From the folly that wastes its days in a world of
illusion,
(Ah, but the life is lost that frets and languishes
there!)

I would escape and be free in the joy of the open air.

By the breadth of the blue that shines in silence o'er
me,
By the length of the mountain-lines that stretch
before me,
By the height of the cloud that sails, with rest in
motion,
Over the plains and the vales to the measureless
ocean,
(Oh, how the sight of the things that are great
enlarges the eyes!)

Lead me out of the narrow life, to the peace of the
hills
and the skies.

While the tremulous leafy haze on the woodland is
spreading,
And the bloom on the meadow betrays where May
has been treading;
While the birds on the branches above, and the
brooks flowing under,

Are singing together of love in a world full of wonder,
(Lo, in the marvel of Springtime, dreams are
changed into truth!)
Quicken my heart, and restore the beautiful hopes of
youth.

By the faith that the flowers show when they bloom
unbidden,
By the calm of the river's flow to a goal that is
hidden,
By the trust of the tree that clings to its deep
foundation,
By the courage of wild birds' wings on the long
migration,
(Wonderful secret of peace that abides in Nature's
breast!)
Teach me how to confide, and live my life, and rest.

For the comforting warmth of the sun that my body
embraces,
For the cool of the waters that run through the
shadowy places,
For the balm of the breezes that brush my face with
their fingers,
For the vesper-hymn of the thrush when the twilight
lingers,
For the long breath, the deep breath, the breath
of a heart without care,--
I will give thanks and adore thee, God of the open
air!

VI.

These are the gifts I ask
Of thee, Spirit serene:
Strength for the daily task,
Courage to face the road,
Good cheer to help me bear the traveller's load,
And, for the hours of rest that come between,
An inward joy in all things heard and seen.
These are the sins I fain
Would have thee take away:
Malice, and cold disdain,
Hot anger, sullen hate,
Scorn of the lowly, envy of the great,
And discontent that casts a shadow gray
On all the brightness of the common day.

These are the things I prize
And hold of dearest worth:
Light of the sapphire skies,
Peace of the silent hills,
Shelter of forests, comfort of the grass,
Music of birds, murmur of little rills,
Shadow of clouds that swiftly pass,
And, after showers,
The smell of flowers
And of the good brown earth,--
And best of all, along the way, friendship and mirth.
So let me keep
These treasures of the humble heart
In true possession, owning them by love;
And when at last I can no longer move
Among them freely, but must part
From the green fields and from the waters clear,

Let me not creep
Into some darkened room and hide
From all that makes the world so bright and dear;
But throw the windows wide
To welcome in the light;
And while I clasp a well-beloved hand,
Let me once more have sight
Of the deep sky and the far-smiling land,--
Then gently fall on sleep,
And breathe my body back to Nature's care,
My spirit out to thee, God of the open air.

=====

Gone From My Sight

I am standing upon the seashore. A ship, at my side,
spreads her white sails to the moving breeze and
starts
for the blue ocean. She is an object of beauty and
strength.
I stand and watch her until, at length, she hangs like
a speck
of white cloud just where the sea and sky come to
mingle with each other.

Then, someone at my side says, 'There, she is gone'

Gone where?

Gone from my sight. That is all. She is just as large
in mast,
hull and spar as she was when she left my side.

And, she is just as able to bear her load of living
freight to her destined port.

Her diminished size is in me - not in her.
And, just at the moment when someone says,
'There, she is gone,'
there are other eyes watching her coming, and other
voices
ready to take up the glad shout, 'Here she comes!'

And that is dying...

Death comes in its own time, in its own way.
Death is as unique as the individual experiencing it.

=====

Do you give thanks for this? -- or that?"

Gratitude

No, God be thanked
I am not grateful
In that cold, calculating way, with blessing ranked
As one, two, three, and four, -- that would be hateful.

I only know that every day brings good above"
My poor deserving;
I only feel that, in the road of Life, true Love
Is leading me along and never swerving.

Whatever gifts and mercies in my lot may fall,
I would not measure

As worth a certain price in praise, or great or small;
But take and use them all with simple pleasure.

For when we gladly eat our daily bread, we bless
The Hand that feeds us;
And when we tread the road of Life in cheerfulness,
Our very heart-beats praise the Love that leads us.

=====

To the music of Beethoven's ninth symphony

Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee,
God of glory, Lord of love;
Hearts unfold like flowers before Thee,
Praising Thee their sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness;
Drive the dark of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness,
Fill us with the light of day!



All Thy works with joy surround Thee,
Earth and heaven reflect Thy rays,
Stars and angels sing around Thee,
Centre of unbroken praise:
Field and forest, vale and mountain,
Blooming meadow, flashing sea,
Chanting bird and flowing fountain,
Call us to rejoice in Thee.

Thou art giving and forgiving,
Ever blessing, ever blest,
Well-spring of the joy of living,

Ocean-depth of happy rest!
Thou our Father, Christ our Brother, --
All who live in love are Thine:
Teach us how to love each other,
Lift us to the Joy Divine.

Mortals join the mighty chorus,
Which the morning stars began;
Father-love is reigning o'er us,
Brother-love binds man to man.
Ever singing march we onward,
Victors in the midst of strife;
Joyful music lifts us sunward
In the triumph song of life.

=====

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

{While in prison, people thought one thing of him
and he thought something else about himself. To
that, he writes the following poem on March 4th,
1945}

“Who Am I”

Who am I? They often tell me
I would step from my cell's confinement
calmly, cheerfully, firmly,
like a squire from his country-house.
Who am I? They often tell me
I would talk to my warders

freely and friendly and clearly,
as though it were mine to command.
Who am I? They also tell me
I would bear the days of misfortune
equably, smilingly, proudly,
like one accustomed to win.
Am I then really all that which other men tell of?
Or am I only what I know of myself?
restless and longing and sick, like a bird in a cage,
struggling for breath, as though hands were
compressing my throat,
yearning for colours, for flowers, for the voices of
birds,
thirsting for words of kindness, for neighborliness,
trembling in expectation of great events,
powerlessly trembling for friends at an infinite
distance,
weary and empty at praying, at thinking, at making,
faint, and ready to say farewell to it all?
Who am I? This or the other?
Am I one person today, and tomorrow another?
Am I both at once? A hypocrite before others,
and before myself a contemptibly woebegone
weakling?
Or is something within me still like a beaten army,
fleeing in disorder from victory already achieved?
Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions of
mine.
Whoever I am, Thou knowest, O God, I am Thine.

=====

Charles Wesley 1707-1788

Wesley is known as a hymn writer, more than a poet, but his hymns are poetry put to music. He was a world class poet and Latin scholar, and churches worldwide from various denominations sing his poetry.

Here are two that you know. They are hard to read without singing the words isn't it?

Can It Be

And can it be that I should gain
an interest in the Savior's blood!
Died he for me? who caused his pain!
For me? who him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be
that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?
Amazing love! How can it be
that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?
2.

'Tis mystery all: th' Immortal dies!
Who can explore his strange design?
In vain the firstborn seraph tries
to sound the depths of love divine.
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore;
let angel minds inquire no more.
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore;
let angel minds inquire no more.
3.

He left his Father's throne above

(so free, so infinite his grace!),
emptied himself of all but love,
and bled for Adam's helpless race.
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
for O my God, it found out me!
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
for O my God, it found out me!

4.

Long my imprisoned sprit lay,
fast bound in sin and nature's night;
thine eye diffused a quickening ray;
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
my chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.

5.

No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in him, is mine;
alive in him, my living Head,
and clothed in righteousness divine,
bold I approach th' eternal throne,
and claim the crown, through Christ my own.
Bold I approach th' eternal throne,
and claim the crown, through Christ my own.

=====



1. Hark! The Herald Angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations, rise.

Join the triumph of the skies.
With th' Angelic Hosts proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"¹
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born King."

2. Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting lord
Late in time behold Him come,
Off-spring of a² Virgin's womb³
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
Hail, the incarnate deity
Pleased as Man with men to dwell,⁴
Jesus, our Emmanuel.

Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the New-born king!"

3. Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace,⁵
Hail, the Sun⁶ of Righteousness
Light and life to all He brings,
Risen with healing in His Wings.
Now He lays His Glory by,⁷
Born that man no more may die
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.

Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the New-born king!"

4. Come, Desire of nations come,
Fix in us Thy humble home;
Oh, to all Thyself impart,
Formed in each believing heart!
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born king;
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the New-born king!"

5. Adam's likeness, Lord, efface,
Stamp Thine image in its place:
Second Adam from above,
Reinstate us in Thy love.
Let us Thee, though lost, regain,
Thee, the Life, the inner man:
O, to all Thyself impart,
Formed in each believing heart.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the New-born king!"

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In as much as I began this little collection with Robert Frost, I end it with him. This is considered his most popular one. Ironically, it was amongst his least favorites. According to his biographer, the poem was not about taking the lesser road, but rather about making a decision to take a road. Frost would often go walking with his friend who was so indecisive about life that he could not make a decision; always looking at the path he did not take.

Frost wrote this poem to him to encourage him to make decisions because “way leads on to way.” The following is this beloved poem...



The Road Less Traveled

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim
Because it was grassy and wanted wear,
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.