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Title: Behind the Veil. A Poem.

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Author [introduction]: MacMechan, Archibald McKellar (1862-1933)

Illustrator: Anonymous

Date of first publication: 1893

Edition used as base for this ebook: Halifax: T. C. Allen, 1893 [first edition]

Date first posted: 29 October 2010

Date last updated: 17 June 2014

Faded Page ebook#20101013

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Transcriber's Note

As a courtesy to readers not familiar with ancient Greek, we provide the translation by F. J. Church (1854-1888) of the passage from Plato (*Apologia* 22 B) quoted on the poem's title page:

"So I soon found that it is not by wisdom that the poets create their works, but by a certain natural power and by inspiration, like soothsayers and prophets, who say many fine things, but understand nothing of what they say."

We have also corrected a typographical error in the printed edition at the very end of the Greek passage, replacing "ὄν λέγουσι" with "ὄν λέγουσι".



James De Mille

E. A. Reed

BEHIND THE VEIL.

A POEM

BY

JAMES DE MILLE

AUTHOR OF "THE DODGE CLUB," "THE AMERICAN BARON," "A STRANGE MANUSCRIPT FOUND IN A
COPPER CYLINDER," "ELEMENTS OF RHETORIC," ETC., ETC.

ἔγνωσαν οὖν καὶ περὶ τῶν ποιητῶν ἐν ὀλίγῳ τοῦτο, ὅτι οὐ σοφία
ποιοῖεν ἃ ποιοῖεν, ἀλλὰ φύσει τινὶ καὶ ἐνθουσιάζοντες, ὥσπερ
οἱ Θεομάντις καὶ οἱ χρησμῶδοί καὶ γὰρ οὗτοι λέγουσι μὲν
πολλὰ καὶ καλά, ἴσασι δὲ οὐδὲν ὧν λέγουσι.

—*Apologia Socratis.*

HALIFAX, N.S.:
T. C. ALLEN & CO.
1893.

One hundred copies only of this edition have been printed.

This copy is

No. 57
Archibald MacLennan

T. C. ALLEN & CO., HALIFAX
in the office of the Minister of Agriculture in the year 1893.

EDITOR'S NOTE.

The manuscript of this poem was found in Professor De Mille's papers after his death. Even his wife did not know of its existence. It had been prepared for the press with the greatest care; and had apparently been offered for publication in vain. Only the slightest changes in punctuation have been made; otherwise the poem is printed here exactly as it appears in the manuscript. The author's intention was probably to publish anonymously; for the outside page bears, between the title and the passage from the *Apology*, the words "Given to the World by A.K.D.N.", which I have judged better to omit.

A. M.

Dalhousie College, Halifax,

May 24th, 1893.

Behind the Veil.

On a headland hoar and riven
I had fixed my lonely seat,
From my fellow mortals driven,
With the wilderness around me, and the Ocean at my feet,
And the night wind sole companion of that desolate retreat.

He has been driven by grief to dwell in a desolate place.

On that lonely habitation,
On that night of all the years,
Waiting for my Revelation,
I had prayed and I had wrestled with a thousand doubts and fears,
With a longing without voice, and with a sorrow more than tears.

Like a bark upon that Ocean,
All my soul was tempest-tossed
By a passionate commotion,
Driven back;—but pressing on to where no mortal e'er had crossed
In the frenzy of its longing for the Loved and for the Lost.

For he has just One whom he begs to follow and still pursues.

There my fast and vigil keeping,
I had struggled day and night
In my longing and my weeping,
Till the flesh grew faint and feeble, and the spirit rose in might,
And the Invisible stood unfolded to my spiritual sight.

He seeks interview with Spirits, by fasting and prayer.

Through the darkness rose a vision,
Where beneath the night I kneeled,
Dazzling bright with hues Elysian—
Congregated notes of glory circling on an ebon field,
And a form from out that glory to my spirit stood revealed.

At last a Spirit is made
manifest.

"Son of Light,"—I murmured lowly—
"All my heart is known to thee—
Known unto thy vision holy—
All my longing and my yearning for the Loved One lost to me—
May these eyes again behold her?"—and the Shape said, "Come and see."

The Spirit is willing to grant his
desire.

'Twas a voice whose intonation
Through my feeble being thrilled
With a solemn, sweet vibration,
And at once a holy calmness all my wakeful senses stilled;
And my heart beat faint and fainter with a dying languor filled.

Then a sudden sharp convulsion
Seized me with resistless might,
Till before that fierce compulsion
All mortality departed; like a Thought, a thing of Light,
All my spirit darted up to an immeasurable height.

His soul departs from its body.

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I beheld bright visions darting
Past, in long and quick review,
Quick arriving; quick departing;
Mortal sense had grown immortal, and I saw not, but I knew,
And that spiritual sense was Knowledge, Absolute and True.

He encounters strange scenes,
but is cognizant of all things
around him by a new faculty
—*Absolute Knowledge*.

And there came amazement o'er me
In that infinite career,
For the scenes that rushed before me,
Long removed, but long remembered, brought me memories old and dear,
Bearing sweet familiar faces from that far terrestrial sphere.

For the spell of Earth had bound me,
And each quickly gliding scene
Brought the shapes of Earth around me;—
Vales of bright unclouded verdure; hills arrayed in living green;
Limpid lakes in dim recesses overarched by skies serene;

But the spell of Earth is
around him:

Cooling rill and sparkling fountain,
Purple peak, and headland bold,
Precipice and snow-clad mountain;
Lofty summits rising grandly into regions clear and cold,

He sees nothing but earthly
scenes:

And innumerable rivers that majestically rolled;

Endless wastes of wildernesses
Where no creature might abide,
Which deep solitude possesses;

And the giant palm tree waving; and the Ocean rolling wide,
Gemmed with many a foam-set island glancing from the golden tide.

By such wondrous scenes surrounded,
O'er them all mine eyes I ran,
All bewildered and confounded;
Yet I sought amid that wonder all its mystery to scan,
Till amid the forms of Nature I beheld the face of Man.

I beheld fair cities gleaming
White on many a distant shore,
And the battle banners streaming,
And the pomp of mighty armies in the panoply of War,
And the navies of the nations speeding all the Ocean o'er.

But these human form and faces
Older still and older grew,
Races followed fast on races,
Vanished peoples seemed to rise again and robe themselves anew,
And the life and acts of all the ages passed in swift review.

Representations of earthly
things ever going farther back
into the past;

Olden populations swarming
In an onward rushing tide,
Scattering o'er the earth and forming
Lines of march o'er lofty mountains, over deserts wild and wide,
Seeking evermore a country where they might in peace abide.

All past history seems to live
before him;

Then there came unpeopled spaces
Which no human token bore,
And the pathway of the races
Lessened slowly and diminished on the plain and on the shore,
Till at last amid the Vision came the form of Man no more.

And bereaved of man and lonely
Nature showed her aspect fair,
And the brute creation only
Peopled all her wilds and woodlands; lurked the tiger in his lair;
Coiled the serpent; sprang the lion; sped the bird athwart the air.

Myriad scenes in swift succession
Still with earnest gaze I viewed;
But in rapid retrogression
Nature faded;—forms of beauty followed fast by figures rude,
Ending in the dismal prospect of a world-wide solitude.

But my soul the vast procession
Of those countless vistas bore
With a marvellous impression,

He is cognizant of everything
instantaneously;

Like the picture on the tablet by the sunbeam painted o'er
Instantaneous; all embracing; with a power unknown before.

Then my Heavenly Guide addressing—
For a wondrous power had birth
In my nature; all expressing—
"What are these, and where belong they?"—and my Guide responded—"Earth—
For thy spirit turns spontaneous to its own domestic hearth."

And has power of
communicating or
interchanging ideas.

"Where am I, O Radiant Spirit?
Where amid the realms of space?
Distant from the Earth, or near it?"—
"Where the rays projected from it at the birthtime of thy race
Have not yet attained;—a distance more than mortal thought may trace."

—"Whence these shapes of things terrestrial?"—
"Shadows from the Earth that fall,
Gliding into space celestial."—
"Does the Earth thus tell her story;—thus are all things imaged?"—"All.—
Forms and actions all are imaged; naught is hidden, great or small."

He learns that these scenes
are images of earthly things
thrown off into space.

—"They at last are dissipated,"—
I exclaimed in sorrow sore,
—"At the brink of things created?"—
—"Things created know no limit; infinite space they traverse o'er;
Still the starry vistas open and recede for evermore."—

Once thrown off they pass on
for ever.

Then a mighty woe came o'er me,
Deep despair arose within,
And a thought stood black before me—
—Shall Infinity for ever write the records of my sin?
Is it thus that space shall treasure proofs of all that I have been?

A mighty Woe comes over
him.

—"Tell me, Son of Light, I pray thee,
Am I bound to scenes like these?"—
—"No; Desire alone can sway thee,
For the motion of the Spirit with its Will alone agrees,
And the Soul may seek a journey or a refuge where it please."

He is in despair; but he learns
that he is absolutely free, and
can go wherever he may be
drawn by his own Will.

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Then a new desire came o'er me
Other wonders to behold,
And a mighty impulse bore me
Where the fiery Suns and Systems through the realms of Ether rolled,
Where the Stars and Constellations flamed from out their thrones of gold.

He feels a desire to traverse
the material universe.

Then with mystical vibrations

The murmur of universal Life.

Came a deep and solemn sound,
All its measureless undulations
Penetrating the abyss of Space, and filling the Profound.
—"What is this?"—"It is the murmur of the Life that lives around."

Golden gleams on fields of azure,
Worlds on worlds arose in Space,
Numbers more than thought or measure;
There each Sun careering onward held its planets in their place;
Flashed the meteor; flared the comet; speeding on its headlong race.

Systems evermore increasing,
Still succeeding, rose anew,
Vast assemblages unceasing,—
Systems,—clustered Systems,—congregated Clusters rose to view,
Blending nebulous forms, and starry orbs of every shape and hue.

He is borne on through
countless systems of worlds.

Over space illimitable
Still with speed of thought I passed,
Over voids immeasurable,
Still new Systems thronged before us;—still new Suns their radiance cast;
Forward;—backward;—upward;—downward;—rose Creation wide and vast.

On in one long straight progression
Still we sped along the skies,
Still there came in swift succession
Vaster forms, in vaster groups, with mightier accessories;—
Grander worlds in larger numbers still arose before mine eyes.

But that rapid onset ending
Rose a barrier at last,
Inconceivably extending,
Like a barrier eternal spreading its dimensions vast,
Which exceeded the combined extent of all that I had passed.

He reaches a vast barrier.

Then in swift examination
Far along its face we went,
But it was as though Creation
Here in one stupendous object all remaining forms had blent,
And my Spirit's feeble vision faltered at the vast extent.

Then this endless bound discerning
All my sorrow was renewed,
And to my Companion turning—
"Say—" I cried—"Thou Son of Glory, what is this that I have viewed?"
Crying—"Oh, my Guide and Guardian! Is not this Infinitude?"—

—"Mortal, thou but little knowest
Of the things that lie before,
This is but the least and lowest
'Mid innumerable others, cumulated o'er and o'er,
Systems,—congregated Systems,—rolling on for evermore;—
Worlds on worlds for evermore!"

He learns that this is a world
of dimensions so vast that all
which he has seen before are
as nothing.

—"What, then, is that wide Creation
Through whose centre I have gone;—
What that countless congregation?"—
—"Dust and nothingness to this when brought into comparison,—
Like the motes that float in sunbeams;—atoms passing idly on."—

"Then"—I cried—"these worlds of wonder
Are the end of Nature?"—"Nay,
In the deep abysses yonder
Others measurelessly grander lie before thee far away;
These which thou hast deemed the greatest are but motes to such as they.

And beyond this are others
proportionally greater.

—"So this thought throws terror o'er thee!
Dost thou falter? This is naught.
Know that all behind, before thee,
All beyond of which I tell thee, when in one grand unit wrought,
Sink to nothingness compared to other worlds beyond thy thought."—

Then he breathed new courage through me,
And my suffering was gone,
And I asked as strength came to me,
—"Who can comprehend Creation?"—"One—" he said—"and One alone,—
The All-Wise, and the All-Knowing; the All-Dominating One,—
The Unutterable One!"

He falters; but is sustained by
his Guide.

"Can no soul in all the Heaven
All the works of God survey?"—
—"No; to none that power is given;
Though their life has been coeval with Creation's earliest day,
That Creation's mighty progress moves beyond them far away;
Moves for evermore away—

—"For in infinite gradations
Larger luminaries burn,—
Vaster spheres and constellations."—
—"Are there bounds to things created?"—"None, that finite minds discern."
—"Was there ever a beginning?"—"None, that finite minds may learn;—
None for evermore may learn."—

—"Will Creation thus for ever,
Through the ages yet in store,
Baffle all the mind's endeavor?"—
—"Yes; Creation, new arising, foils the Spirit o'er and o'er,
And its progress ever onward passes thought for evermore;—
Mind and thought for evermore."—

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Then that grief of mine grew stronger,
And my spiritual sight
Could endure these scenes no longer;
And Desire impelled me on to where Intelligences bright
People all the abysmal spaces of the soundless Infinite.

He grieves; and then his Will
leads him to seek the Living
Beings of the Universe.

Life eternal,—Life all-glowing,
Burst to light before my gaze,—
Spirit forms in splendor flowing,
Thronging myriads rose around me speeding on their starry ways,
And the sun-bright hosts of glory flamed in radiant arrays.

All the light of life eternal
Rose before my vision there,
All the gloom of grief infernal,
Endless forms of joy and sorrow; good and evil; foul and fair;—
Souls of blessedness and glory; souls of anguish and despair.

And like thoughts came onward darting
Soaring soul; despairing ghost;—
Quick arriving; quick departing;—
All the worldless void was peopled by that spiritual host,
But the rolling stars were centres where they congregated most;

He views the orders of Being:
—their ranks and gradations.

Souls there were of low gradation,
Thronging forth before me then,
Souls so lowly in creation,
That they hardly were apparent to my spiritual ken,
Like the lowest earthborn species which elude the eyes of men;

Souls whose kindred form and feeling
With my own might well agree,
Sympathetic power revealing,
With capacities that placed them on an even plane with me,
With desires and hopes resembling what my own desires might be;

Souls of nature more capacious
Moved amid the others here,
With an air benign and gracious,
Whose serene, impressive presence I might lovingly revere,
Childlike wait upon their utterance, and their words of wisdom hear;

Souls of nature all transcendent
Unto whom all these were nought,
Robed in majesty resplendent,
Into whose sublime communion I might nevermore be brought,
With ideas beyond conception, and desires surpassing thought.

And I was moved, as moves some friendless
Stranger in some city cast,
Where, in countless throngs and endless,
All the multitudinous hosts of people hurry swiftly past,
And he moves along unnoticed 'mid that concourse wide and vast.

And I stopped, as stops some trembling
Youth who first his eloquence tries,
When the multitude assembling
Rank on rank, a sea of faces, o'er his faltering senses rise,
And he stands to dumbness stricken by the spell of steadfast eyes.

And I mourned, as mourns some straying
Child on public pathway thrown,
Who, all passers-by surveying,
Through his tears, beholds no visage which unto his sight is known,—
So I mourned, in that vast concourse, feeling desolate and lone:—

Till, all other forms unheeding,
One my spirit's vision caught,—
One all others far exceeding,—
One to whom the grandest spirits seen before were all as nought,—
Strong, and Wise, and Pure, and Holy, in degrees surpassing thought.

Then, in solemn adoration,
I beheld this wondrous One
Moving in his exaltation,
Soaring in his lofty nature all surrounding forms beyond,
As a sage with lisping children passing all comparison.

—"Oh, thou Guardian and Attendant!"—
Then I cried—"Oh, Spirit Bright!
Knowest thou, then, this form resplendent?
This who comes across my vision, robed in majesty and might,
Is not this the Lord of Glory?—Is not this the Infinite?"—

—"Lightly thou the Infinite seekest,
He who moves thy thought before
Ranks among the least and weakest,
And looks humbly up to others, who, his vision passing o'er,
In degrees ascending endlessly, advance for evermore;—
Souls on souls for evermore.—"

Then a mortal weakness filled me,
And despair my spirit stirred,
And a nameless terror thrilled me;
But my Guide restored my courage with a sweet and mystic word,
And again my strengthened Spirit wandered onward undeterred.

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Then, unto myself returning,
I forgot all things but one,
And desire intensely burning

A Wondrous One comes upon
his spiritual view.

The infinite gradations of
Being appall him. He again
falters, but is restored by his
Guide.

Love conquers curiosity. All
his Desire now turns to the
One whom he has lost.

With a swift resistless impulse, all absorbing, bore me on,—
Bore my sad and longing Spirit to the place where she had gone.

And my yearning and my longing
Came, as ne'er they came of old,
All my olden memories thronging
Filled my soul, and fired its impulse to a passion uncontrolled,
That the Loved One and the Lost One I might once again behold;—

Over him comes all the
recollection of the Past.

See her, as in seasons olden,
When with souls together blent,
Under skies serene and golden,
Childish hands together clasping, all the morn of life we spent,
And with Love's sweet sunshine o'er us up to life maturer went.

He recalls the life and death
of that nameless one whom he
seeks.

Speaking oft in that communion
Voiceless words by touch or glance,
With such sympathetic union
That each soul could read the other in the eloquent countenance,
And the thought of each burst forth to simultaneous utterance.

Nature took the cup of pleasure,
And a thousand charms distilled
In illimitable measure,—
Nature held that cup before us with unnumbered transports filled,
And we quaffed that cup of rapture till our blended being thrilled.

With one common heart adoring,
With one common soul in prayer,
And in thought sublimely soaring
Through the Universe, while Fancy framed our future dwelling there,
And in rapture sought communion with the All-Perfect and All-Fair.

But, with larger love and patience,
She attained a loftier height,
And with grander aspirations
She outsped my feebler strivings, entering into purer light,
Joined in a divine communion with Intelligences bright.

Then I saw her slowly languish,
Slowly from my aching eyes,
And I stood in all my anguish
Through the long month of that summer, watching under leaden skies,
While the darkened face of Nature seemed with me to sympathize:

For the surf in thunderous motion
Beat with melancholy roar,
And a heavy mist from Ocean,
Drear and dark, for ever rolling, swept along the sombre shore,
And those thick clouds never lessened till the night, when all was o'er,—

Till that hour, when crushed and riven
By that life-destroying blow,

That sorrow once destroyed
his reason.

Forth amid the tempest driven,
'Mid the Ocean crags I wandered, where the tide was rolling low,
And my reason reeled and quivered in that grief's great overflow.

And the Ocean with its surges
Sounded out a monotone,—
Sounding melancholy dirges,
Which the wailing winds repeated through the cliffs' deep caverns blown,
And the voice of Wind and Ocean murmured Death, and Death alone.

Then I thought, with stern persistence,
It were better far to die
Than prolong a wrecked existence
With a yearning deep and sleepless, and a grief without a cry,
With the longing and the craving of a voiceless agony.—

Oh! to bid farewell for ever
To a life now lost in gloom;
By a single stroke to sever
All that binds me here, to leap beyond the borders of the tomb!—
—But a wiser thought recurring stayed that self-inflicted doom.

What is Death? 'Tis but the portal
Unto Life, and Death is nought;—
Dead she is not, but Immortal;—
And she lives; and in her presence I shall yet again be brought:—
Soft amid the storm of sorrow came this still consoling thought.

So I chose to live; and found me
A remote and lonely shore,
With the wilderness around me,
Crying—"Love, through life I seek thee, and, when earthly life is o'er,
I will seek thee till I find thee, though I seek for evermore—"

Then I lived apart and lonely,
And I lived a life of tears,
With a single passion only,
Wearing down my mortal nature 'mid a thousand doubts and fears,
That I so might find communion with the Spirits of the Spheres.

He sought and found
communion with the Spirits.

And the pitying souls descended,
When I sought their circles bright,
And revealed their presence splendid,
Till my soul became accustomed to their forms of glorious light,
Till the Invisible was unfolded to my spiritual sight.

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—"Lo, thy search at last is ended,
Thou hast gained thy spirit's quest,—
Lo, before thee, bright and splendid,
Moves thy Loved One and thy Lost One through the Regions of the Blest,"—
So he spake; but all my being sank by sudden fear oppressed.

I beheld a radiant Spirit
In sublime seclusion go,
With no kindred being near it,
Throwing out long floods of glory in a rare and luminous flow,
And bewildering all my vision with a pure celestial glow:

He finds her in Glory.

With no thought or contemplation
Of so poor a thing as I,
Lost in holy meditation,
All her nature soaring upward to the Holiest One on high,
In the fervor and the rapture of a solemn ecstasy.

But she is beyond his reach.

For that high-aspiring nature
Found a fair, congenial clime,
Where her spiritual stature
Had advanced in swift progression, and attained that height sublime,
Though our separation measured but a year of earthly time.

Like twin children dedicated,
One to toil, and one to thought,—
Each through life with equals mated,
At the close of life-long labor if together they are brought,
By the Sage and by the Peasant no communion may be sought;

So her grandeur placed before me
An insuperable bar,
For I saw her rising o'er me
Inaccessible in glory; she appeared remote and far,
As to some poor earthborn mortal glows the radiant Morning Star.

But I sought her, and I prayed her,
Moving o'er her presence there,
By her love for Him who made her,
By the olden love she showed me, by its memories sweet and fair,
That my love might not be driven to a measureless despair.

He cannot make himself
known.

And a thousand times I crossed her
Moving on her Heavenly way,
Vainly striving to accost her,
Crying—"Oh, thou Loved and Lost One, wilt thou not one moment stay?"—
But she knew not of my presence, for beneath her thought I lay.

So I strove to stop and stay her,
And with vehement sorrow torn—
Shaped all thought to one strong prayer—
Forcing all that thought before her, by a passionate force upborne;
But 'twas all as though some night-bird strove to stay the march of Morn.

Then my spirit sank despairing
In a nameless agony;
'Twas for this, all terrors daring,
I had forced the earthly barriers, with no end but to descry
How exalted was her station, and how mean a creature I!

For my soul from Earth departing
Keener sensitiveness bore,—
And I found a grief upstarting
Deeper than the deepest anguish that I e'er had known before,
Seeing how the Loved and Lost One thus was lost for evermore.

Stronger grew my grief and fuller,
And I cried—"Why came I here!
Better far to bear the duller,
And the feebler, and the coarser sorrows of that earthly sphere,
Than to feel these pangs of anguish which my spirit cannot bear—"

Dreading in that desolation
So to live and linger on,
And amid my soul's prostration
Crying—"Oh, that souls might perish, so that mine might now be gone;
Pass into eternal night, and sink into oblivion!"—

Grief and Despair overwhelm
him utterly.

As some fear-bewildered stranger,
Scaling some great precipice,
Shrinking from the sight of danger,
Reeling o'er the marge of ruin, will his trembling foothold miss,—
So I reeled, and seemed descending to a fathomless abyss.

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But a potent force restrained me,
Overmastering all my will,
And a gentle power sustained me;
'Twas as though a touch had changed me with a quick electric thrill,
And a voice had hushed my passion, calmly saying—"Peace, be still,"—

His Guide sustains him.

Till a soothing influence stealing
O'er, my spirit slowly rose,
And a soft and gentle feeling
Penetrated all my being, bringing a serene repose,
Bringing peacefulness and respite from the torment of my woes.

Then a sad and homesick longing
All my mournful soul possessed,
And the thoughts of Earth came thronging,—
There a home might yet receive me, smitten, stricken, and oppressed,—

He longs to go back to Earth.

There the soul might cease from trouble, and the weary be at rest.

So the traveller, fever-stricken,
Who in foreign lands may roam,
When the powers of nature sicken,
Casts his eyes, with wistful gazing, ever o'er the Ocean's foam,
And the one thought ever present is the yearning thought of home.

Oh! once more that home attaining,
On that melancholy steep,
And that mortal form regaining,
E'en its frailties might bring solace;—in my anguish I could weep;
And, since Death was all denied me, I might know the bliss of Sleep.

But that Will again restraining,
All its force my Guide removed,
All my feeble soul sustaining;—
—"Easily Despair assails thee, since thy trust has weakness proved;
Yet all Heaven is filled for ever with the Loving and the Loved.

His Guide restrains his Will
and retains his spirit for a
time.

"Seest thou not, in long procession,
Soul with soul in union wrought,
Move in infinite progression?
Seest thou not from that communion what an ecstasy is caught?
Yet the love of the All-Loving is a love surpassing thought.

Souls blended in affinity are all
around. Joy arises, but the
highest joy is union with the
Infinite.

—"So that love of thine has left thee,
Soaring to the Infinite,
And of thy sweet hope bereft thee;
That new bliss all else expelleth, as the day expels the night,
And she knows alone the abstraction of a rapturous delight."—

—"Other souls may seek communion,
Mine is desolate and destroyed;
Neither kin it seeks, nor union:
I will move alone for ever with my loneliness oppressed,
Wandering in my grief for ever, with no hope of peace or rest."—

The Seer is in despair, and is
overwhelmed by his littleness.

—"Mortal! One before thee liveth,
One there is, and One alone;
To created souls He giveth
Joy and peace in infinite measure where His wondrous love is known,—
The All-Pitying,—the All-Loving,—the All-Sympathizing One,—
The Unutterable One!"—

—"Pity, for the souls adoring,
For the loftier spirits,—yes;—
Those high natures, upward soaring,
Far above my thought arising, He may condescend to bless;—
But for me, in that bright presence I descend to nothingness.

Son of Heaven, full well thou knowest
What a thing of nought am I,—

'Mid created beings lowest,—
I, most humble, far beneath the thoughts of loftier spirits lie;
I, most lowly, am excluded from the glance of the Most High."—

—"Ah, unthinking, and unseeing!
Life lies infinite below,
And unnumbered forms of being
In a viewless, never-ending series ever downward flow,
In gradations far descending all those forms of being go.

But his Guide teaches him that
beneath him are infinite
gradations inferior to himself.

Thine own Earth holds forms of wonder
Deep within its substance wrought,
Thought immeasurably under,
Lesser than the ultimate atoms forth from which that Earth is brought;
Systems evermore descending down to depths beneath thy thought,—
Worlds on worlds beneath thy thought.

Thou dost stand between two Oceans,
Each a sea without a shore,
Moving on to different motions;
And while wonders lie around thee, and above thee, and before,
Far beneath lie worlds of wonder lessening downward evermore—
Worlds on worlds for evermore;

And for ever and for ever
All the Universe is rife
With perpetual endeavor,
Made by souls of all gradations, in a stern persistent strife,
To ascend to higher stages and to grander planes of life:—

And for ever and for ever
The Eternal One comes down,
And in love He ceaseth never
To assist each aspiration, and to make His presence known,—
The All-Pitying, the All-Loving, the All-Sympathizing One,—
The Unutterable One!"—

—"Glorious Spirit! Radiant Angel!
There is Heaven upon thy brow,
From that fair, divine Evangel:—
Unto thee, above all others, all my soul is clinging now;
By the love that thou hast shown me;—tell me:—Who, and what art thou?"—

He is cheered, and wishes to
know his Guide.

—"Be it so; that wish is granted,
All my nature I unfold;—
But, that thou may'st gaze undaunted,
I will strengthen and sustain thee for the ordeal:—Behold!"—
—And at once a solemn wonder over all my being rolled.

For his nature all unveiling,
Rose a soul of majesty,
Towering up with force unfailing,
Till all else seemed far beneath him in dark nothingness to lie;

His Guide unfolds his Glory.

Till, to my bewildered soul, he seemed to equal the Most High.

By that mighty revelation
All surrounding life grew nought,
Fading out of observation;
'Twas as though some planet rolling onward o'er my head was brought:
As the one surpasses vision, so the other baffles thought.

Like the bright Aurora flashes
Darting from a single beam,
Which from out the darkness dashes,
Till innumerable others in a blended splendor stream,
And the whole broad Heaven o'erarching reddens in that luminous gleam.

Yet, amid that might and splendor
Which my spirit overawed,
Pity, Truth, and Mercy tender,
And the Love that passeth knowledge, shed their radiance all abroad;—
So I faltered, and I trembled, and my only thought was—GOD!—

He thinks his Guide is Deity.

—"Mortal, by thy feeble nature
Thou hast thought a thought of sin;
I am but thy fellow-creature,
Though from out a past eternity I draw my origin,
Though among the first created of the Spirits I have been."—

But learns that he is a created being only.

—"How, O Wondrous One, forsaking
Thine original majesty,
And the countless barriers breaking
That divide the lowest Spirits from the loftiest ones on high,
Hast thou thus so far descended as to stoop to such as I?"—

—"Mortal, by long aspirations
It was once my thought to go
Upward through the long gradations,
But the acts of the All-Loving in a downward motion flow,
And I turned with my Creator to the infinite worlds below,—

Who has left Greatness to seek the world of Man.

"There, 'mid lesser forms of being,
To alleviate distress;—
There, from selfish purpose fleeing,
While I sought increase of wisdom, others could gain happiness;
While advancing, I could comfort; while I labored, I could bless."—

—"How, O Wondrous One, descending
From that fair original height,
Downward through degrees unending,
Couldst thou for as dark a thing as Earth forsake thy glorious light,
And bestow thine holy commune on the children of the night?"—

—"Oh, unthinking and unknowing,—
Earth is dark to thee alone,—
For its glories, ever flowing,

Through the hosts of Spirits living far beyond thy thought are known,
And the bright rays of its splendor through the farthest worlds have flown;

For thy Earth its rays of glory
O'er the Universe hath flung;
With its sad, mysterious story
Worlds on Worlds innumerable through the Universe have rung,
And the song of man's Redemption all the angelic hosts have sung;

The Earth has great fame and
glory on the Universe.

For the All-Loving, once descending,
On its hallowed surface trod,
And the Souls, in hosts unending,
Gazed upon that scene in wonder, while He made it His abode,
And its name for ever blendeth with the awful name of God.

So the All-Loving His creation
Loves, and pities, and befriends,
Helping every aspiration;
And the glory of the Highest with the lowest ever blends,—
As the soul soars up for ever, God for evermore descends."—

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—"Now, oh, mortal, I release thee,
Back to Earth, if thou consent;
Take thy flight where'er it please thee:
Moments few of Earthly time upon thy journey thou hast spent,
And thy heart still feebly flutters in its soulless tenement."—

The Seer is released. His
journey has occupied but a
moment. There is no Time in
the Spirit world.

* * * * *

Then, alone of refuge thinking,
At this hope of home I caught,
And my spirit, faint and shrinking,
Borne through measureless abysses, hurried backward like a thought,
And the immortal to the mortal by its own quick Will was brought.

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THE END.

[End of *Behind the Veil* by James De Mille]