

A STUDENT'S EVENING HYMN

James Clerk Maxwell

Cambridge, April 25, 1853.

*Now no more the slanting rays
With the mountain summits dally,
Now no more in crimson blaze
Evening's fleecy cloudless rally,
Soon shall Night front off the valley
Sweep that bright yet earthly haze,
And the stars most musically
Move in endless rounds of praise.*

*While the world is growing dim,
And the Sun is slow descending
Past the far horizon's rim,
Earth's low sky to heaven extending,
Let my feeble earth-notes, blending
With the songs of cherubim,
Through the same expanse ascending,
Thus renew my evening hymn.*

*Thou that fill'st our waiting eyes
With the food of contemplation,
Setting in thy darkened skies
Signs of infinite creation,
Grant to nightly meditation
What the toilsome day denies—
Teach me in this earthly station
Heavenly Truth to realise.*

*Give me wisdom so to use
These brief hours of thoughtful leisure,
That I may no instant lose
In mere meditative pleasure,
But with strictest justice measure
All the ends my life pursues,
Lies to crush and truths to treasure,
Wrong to shun and Right to choose.*

*Then, when unexpected Sleep,
O'er my long-closed eyelids stealing,
Opens up that lower deep
Where Existence has no feeling,
May sweet Calm, my languor healing,
Lend me strength at dawn to reap
All that Shadows, world-concealing,
For the bold enquirer keep.*

*Through the creatures Thou hast made
Show the brightness of Thy glory,
Be eternal Truth displayed
In their substance transitory,
Till green Earth and Ocean hoary,
Massy rock and tender blade
Tell the same unending story—
"We are Truth in Form arrayed."*

*When to study I retire,
And from books of ancient sages
Glean fresh sparks of buried fire
Lurking in their ample pages—
While the task my mind engages
Let old words new truths inspire—
Truths that to all after-ages
Prompt the Thoughts that never tire.*

*Yet if, led by shadows fair
I have uttered words of folly,
Let the kind absorbing air
Stifle every sound unholy.
So when Saints with Angels lowly
Join in heaven's unceasing prayer,
Mine as certainly, though slowly,
May ascend and mingle there.*

Two stanzas omitted, the Author knows where, but not to be inserted till he knows how.

*Teach me so Thy works to read
That my faith,—new strength accruing,—
May from world to world proceed,
Wisdom's fruitful search pursuing;
Till, thy truth my mind imbuing,
I proclaim the Eternal Creed,
Oft the glorious theme renewing
God our Lord is God indeed.*

*Give me love aright to trace
Thine to everything created,
Preaching to a ransomed race
By Thy mercy renovated,
Till with all thy fulness sated
I behold thee face to face
And with Ardour unabated
Sing the glories of thy grace.*