

Classic Poetry Series

**Cecil Frances Alexander**  
**- poems -**

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# Cecil Frances Alexander (Early April 1818 – 12 October 1895)

Cecil Frances Humphreys Alexander, was a hymn-writer and poet.

Alexander was born in Dublin, the third child and second daughter of Major John Humphreys (of Norfolk, land-agent to 4th Earl of Wicklow and later to the second Marquess of Abercorn), and Elizabeth (née Reed). She began writing verse in her childhood, being strongly influenced by Dr Walter Hook, Dean of Chichester. Her subsequent religious work was strongly influenced by her contacts with the Oxford Movement and in particular with ["The Oxford Movement"](#)

Her book, *Hymns for Little Children* reached its 69th edition before the close of the nineteenth century. Some of her hymns, e.g. "All Things Bright and Beautiful", "There is a Green Hill Far Away" and the Christmas carol "Once in Royal David's City", are known by Christians the world over, as is her translation of "Saint Patrick's Breastplate".

She issued *Verses for Holy Seasons* (1846); *The Lord of the Forest and His Vassals* (1847; a children's allegory); and *Hymns for Little Children* (1848).

In Strabane in October 1850 she married the Anglican clergyman William Alexander, afterwards Bishop of Derry and Archbishop of Armagh. Her husband also wrote several books of poetry, of which the best known is *St. Augustine's Holiday and other Poems*. She was six years older than the clergyman, causing great family concern.

Alexander was involved in charitable work for much of her life. Money from her first publications had helped build the Derry and Raphoe Diocesan Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, which was founded in 1846 in Strabane. The profits from *Hymns for Little Children* were also donated to this school. She was involved with the Derry Home for Fallen Women, and worked to develop a district nurses service. She was an indefatigable visitor to poor and sick.

Seven hymns penned by Alexander were included in the 1873 issue of the *Church of Ireland Hymnal*, and eighteen of her works were contained in *A Supplement to Hymns Ancient and Modern* (1889). They continue to be well-accepted, as nine of her works were contained in both the 1960 and the 1987 editions of the *Church of Ireland Hymnal*. A posthumous collection of her poems was published in 1896 by William Alexander, titled *Poems of the late Mrs*

Alexander.

# Jesus Calls Us

Jesus calls us; o'er the tumult  
of our life's wild, restless sea,  
day by day his clear voice soundeth,  
saying, 'Christian, follow me; '

as, of old, Saint Andrew heart it  
by the Galilean lake,  
turned from home and toil and kindred,  
leaving all for his dear sake.

Jesus calls us from the worship  
of the vain world's golden store;  
from each idol that would keep us,  
saying, 'Christian, love me more.'

In our joys and in our sorrows,  
days of toil and hours of ease,  
still he calls, in cares and pleasures,  
'Christian, love me more than these.'

Jesus calls us! By thy mercies,  
Savior, may we hear thy call,  
give our hearts to thine obedience,  
serve and love thee best of all.

Cecil Frances Alexander

# Maker Of Heaven And Earth (All Things Bright And Beautiful)

All things bright and beautiful,  
All creatures great and small,  
All things wise and wonderful,  
The Lord God made them all.

Each little flower that opens,  
Each little bird that sings,  
He made their glowing colours,  
He made their tiny wings.

The rich man in his castle,  
The poor man at his gate,  
God made them, high or lowly,  
And ordered their estate.

The purple-headed mountain,  
The river running by,  
The sunset, and the morning,  
That brightens up the sky;

The cold wind in the winter,  
The pleasant summer sun,  
The ripe fruits in the garden,  
He made them every one.

The tall trees in the greenwood,  
The meadows where we play,  
The rushes by the water,  
We gather every day;--

He gave us eyes to see them,  
And lips that we might tell,  
How great is God Almighty,  
Who has made all things well.

Cecil Frances Alexander

# Once in Royal David's City

Once in royal David's city  
Stood in a lowly cattle shed,  
Where a mother laid her baby  
In a manger for his bed:  
Mary was that mother mild,  
Jesus Christ her little child.

He came down to earth from heaven,  
Who is God and Lord of all,  
And his shelter was a stable,  
And his cradle was a stall;  
With the poor, and mean, and lowly,  
Lived on earth our Saviour holy.

And through all his wondrous childhood,  
He would honour and obey,  
Love, and watch the lowly maiden  
In whose gentle arms he lay:  
Christian children all must be  
Mild, obedient, good as he.

For he is our childhood's pattern,  
Day by day like us he grew,  
He was little, weak, and helpless,  
Tears and smiles like us he knew,  
And he feeleth for our sadness,  
And he shareth in our gladness.

And our eyes at last shall see him,  
Through his own redeeming love,  
For that child so dear and gentle  
Is our Lord in heaven above;  
And he leads his children on  
To the place where he is gone.

Not in that poor lowly stable,  
With the oxen standing by,  
We shall see him; but in heaven,  
See at God's right hand on high;

When like stars his children crowned,  
All in white shall wait around.

Cecil Frances Alexander

# The Fieldmouse

Where the acorn tumbles down,  
Where the ash tree sheds its berry,  
With your fur so soft and brown,  
With your eye so round and merry,  
Scarcely moving the long grass,  
Fieldmouse, I can see you pass.  
Little thing, in what dark den,  
Lie you all the winter sleeping?  
Till warm weather comes again,  
Then once more I see you peeping  
Round about the tall tree roots,  
Nibbling at their fallen fruits.  
Fieldmouse, fieldmouse, do not go,  
Where the farmer stacks his treasure,  
Find the nut that falls below,  
Eat the acorn at your pleasure,  
But you must not steal the grain  
He has stacked with so much pain.  
Make your hole where mosses spring,  
Underneath the tall oak's shadow,  
Pretty, quiet harmless thing,  
Play about the sunny meadow.  
Keep away from corn and house,  
None will harm you, little mouse.

Cecil Frances Alexander



# There Is A Green Hill

THERE is a green hill far away,  
Without a city wall,  
Where the dear Lord was crucified,  
Who died to save us all.

We may not know, we cannot tell  
What pains he had to bear,  
But we believe it was for us  
He hung and suffer'd there.

He died that we might be forgiven,  
He died to make us good,  
That we might go at last to heaven,  
Sav'd by his precious blood.

There was no other good enough  
To pay the price of sin;  
He only could unlock the gate  
Of heaven, and let us in.

O dearly, dearly has he lov'd,  
And we must love him too,  
And trust in his redeeming blood,  
And try his works to do.

Cecil Frances Alexander