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THE MIRACLE SONGS
OF JESUS

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BY WILSON MACDONALD

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FOREWORD

MR. WILSON MACDONALD is already well-known to students of Canadian verse through his volume *The Song of the Prairie Land*, published in 1918, and also through various poems which have appeared from time to time in magazines in Canada and abroad. The poem, *The Miracle Songs of Jesus*, hitherto unpublished, shows Mr. MacDonald's distinguished gift in a new form, and will be welcomed as an important contribution to religious verse.

THE MIRACLE SONGS OF JESUS

JESUS, the poet of Galilee,
Fashioned the light in His lyric hands,
And held it up for all men to see:
The Publican and the Pharisee,
The merchant rich and the robber bands
On the outcast fringe of Galilee.
But all of the wise men sneered at Him;
And the gay young fellows jeered at Him;
And only a fisherman fool or two
Looked up at the Light with its liquid hue
And drank its beauty of red and blue.

Jesus, the poet of Galilee,
Sang that the weary might be free;
Sang of the lilies—how their glory
Shamed the best at a king's command;
Sang His truths in a lyric story
Even the poor could understand.
And the wise men heard and they tried to scan
The rhymes of the poet Son-of-Man.
But, every time that He sang, they found
Some cherished rule of their pedant school
Was killed in his poem's strange, new sound.

And Jesus, the poet, grew sick at heart
And fled from the halls where learning kills;

And took His verse from the fear of art
To the bold delight of the rain-washed hills.
And the songs He sang to the desert sea
Were far too sweet for the ears of men ;
But the gray-white dunes of Galilee
Have blown with a fairer flower since then.

A learned group of dons will gloat
At a fool's last word in a high priest's throat.
But the song of God in a Carpenter's saw
Could never hold wise men in awe.
And whenever Christ, the bard, would sing
They lost His truth in a hammer's ring.

The wilderness called with her silent lure:
"O poet of thoughtless Nazareth
Come out to me with your starry breath."
And His white reed yearned for the moon-chilled
sands

Where the frayed flowers cure
With their gypsy hands.
But He turned His face
From the silent place,
With the comrade stars above,
As we all have done,
As we all have done
From a maid we dare not love.

And the silent desert called again:
"O poet of thoughtless Nazareth,

Come out to me with your fragrant breath,
And walk with me in the moon's white rain."
But a blind man's stick on a hollow stone,
As it slowly tapped through a distant city,
And a broken woman's hopeless moan
Called out to Him with a deeper tone;
And the heart of the Lord was pity.

And back to the town the poet came,
And took His feet to the temple's hall,
And heard the boast of a man named Saul;
And He heard Saul mock,
In a fiery tongue,
The sweetest songs which His heart had sung.
But Jesus of Nazareth, then and there,
Could scarce forbear
From a fond embrace,
Knowing the beauty the man should wear
At another time, in another place.

The critics were many in Jesus' day;
And His songs were scorned by the caustic pen.
He did not write in the Grecian way;
And He knew not how to preach or pray
In a way approved of men.
His themes were bad by the Roman chart,
And His metres all were wrong;
For all of the High Priests had their art,
And He had only His song.

Now few of the people cared to hear
The Poet blow on His starry reeds ;
So He took His gift from the soul's high sphere—
The miracle song that few would hear—
And lowered His power,
In a hopeless hour,
And made men cower
At His miracle deeds.

A miracle deed is a simple thing
To a miracle song or a miracle truth.
Yet they marvelled not that a song could bring
To the veins of Time the world's lost youth.
And two were gathered and sometimes three
To hear the poet of Galilee.
But the mob swept down like leaves in a storm
When they heard the miracle man would
perform.

And the lame men walked and the blind men
saw ;
And the dead men breathed by a strange, new
law.
But they were few to the far-flung throng
Who saw and breathed through the poet's song.
When they sat and fed on the fish and bread
Five thousand men was an easy count ;
And the deed was done ;
But to-morrow's sun
Will still bring throngs to the Pulpit-Mount.

And I am sure that John or Mary
Cared not a whit when He walked the sea.
But I am sure that they loved to tarry
And hear the Poet of Galilee.
And of the throng that around Him pressed
'Twas John and Mary that He loved best.

And when the Poet sat down, to choose
The men to take to the world His news,
He sought no men who had held their dishes
To catch His gift of the loaves and fishes.
But He chose them out of the purer throngs
Who came to hear His miracle songs.

And when at last He went up a Hill,
To seal His songs with the seal of Death,
Whose were the hands that were raised to kill
This brave young poet of Nazareth?
The man who thrust at His side I find
Was a man who saw Him heal the blind.
And the men who fed on the fish and bread
Were cheering the deed in the ranks behind.
But in a group which had drawn apart,
To pour their tears for His broken heart,
Were the ones who heard
His miracle word.

If all of the miracle deeds of Christ
Had proven birth in a womb of lies

My spirit would still with Him keep tryst
With faith as deep as the sun-washed skies.
But why should I doubt so simple a thing
As a miracle deed from a man who could sing
A miracle song that sheds its power
In a pure, white light to the world's last hour.

The temple bells ring out to-day
And the Pharisees pray
In their ancient way.
And the lips of the preachers love to tarry
On the virgin birth and the miracle deed ;
But the temple bells I shall not heed ;
For I am going with John and Mary
Out on the hills with the slender throngs
Who love to hear the Miracle Songs.