

POEMS AND PROSE OF
GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

SELECTED WITH AN INTRODUCTION
AND NOTES

BY
W. H. GARDNER

PENGUIN BOOKS

he was interrupted by Hanbury who had returned some time since.

'Well' said he 'I must own, with all my wish for the logical ground I spoke of in discussions of taste, I feel it very unworthy to think that beauty resolves itself into a relation. However, it may be that the particular kind of beauty in a chestnut-fan, which seems after all a geometrical sort of thing, may be explained as you say, and you seem to have pulled it to pieces to exhibit that, so that I am either convinced or I really do not know what to say to the contrary; but I am sure there is in the higher forms of beauty - at least I seem to feel - something mystical, something I don't know how to call it. Is not there now something beyond what you have explained?'

'Oh! my dear friend, when one sets out with *a priori* notions - I am afraid I have lost the only chance of a disciple I ever had.'

'Not at all, I hope,' said Middleton.

'No, no,' said Hanbury; 'if you will explain on your theory what I am now going to put forward I will then believe it will apply to everything else. But now where is the relation you speak of, and the comparison, in this for instance?'

O blithe New-comer! I have heard,

I hear thee and rejoice.

O Cuckoo! Shall I call thee Bird

Or but a wandering Voice?

Now is there not something mystical there, or is it all in plain broad daylight?'

'A mathematical thing, measured by compasses, that is what you think I should make it, do you not?'

'Well yes, if you put the words into my mouth.'

'But' went on the Professor 'if I am to undertake the analysis of so subtle a piece of beauty as you have tasked me with, might I do it by the aid of candlelight? for it is now dark, you see, and wet underfoot and one is almost cold, I think. I hope the tea is not.'

'Ah! the tea' said Hanbury; and they went in . . .

May 2, 1866. We came into these lodgings, Addis² and I, at beginning of this term - 18, New Inn Hall Street.

Weather cold and raw, chestnut leaves touched with frost and limp. Sun today. Swallows playing over Ch. Ch.³ meadows with a wavy and hanging flight and shewing their white bellies. Snakes'-heads. Yellow wagtails. Almost think you can hear the lisp of the swallow's wings.

Coaching with W. H. Pater this term. Walked with him on Monday evening last, April 30. Fine evening bitterly cold. 'Bleak-faced Neology in cap and gown': no cap and gown but very bleak. Same evening Hexameron⁴ met here: Addis read on the Franciscans: laughter. Thought all the next day of the terrible history of Fra Dolcino. Same day, I believe, Case at one of the cricket grounds saw three Ch. Ch. men laughing loudly at a rat with back broken, a most ghastly sight, flying at the dog. He kicked away the dog, put his heel on the rat's head and killed it, and drove away the crowd of cads. Wonder what would be the just statement of the effects of cruelty to animals, cruel sports, etc. Little girls singing abt. May Day under the windows yesterday. Never heard this before the other day -

Violante

In the pantry

Gnawing at a mutton bone,

How she gnawed it,

How she clawed it,

When she felt herself alone.

¹ The text retains G. M. H.'s abbreviations, e.g., 'fr.' = 'from', 'cd.' = 'could', etc.

² William Edward Addis (1844-1917), Snell Exhibitioner at Balliol and one of G. M. H.'s most intimate Oxford friends. See footnote to p. 162 and also Note G, p. 251.

³ Christ Church, Oxford.

⁴ Unidentified Oxford 'paper-reading' or 'essay' club. Cf. below, p. 154.

Reading Maurice de Guéin's Remains, enjoying but without sufficient knowledge of French. This day week brought forward motion in defence of the Femians at the Balliol Debating Society. Wandered about S. Hinksey that day with most sad distracting scruple, as bad as any single one almost ever was.

May 3. Cold. Morning raw and wet, afternoon fine. Walked then with Addis, crossing Bablock Hythe, round by Skinner's Weir through many fields into the Witney Road. Sky sleepy blue without liquidity. Fr. Cunmor Hill saw St. Philip's and the other spires through blue haze rising pale in a pink light. On further side of the Witney road hills, just fleeced with grain or other green growth, by their dips and waves foreshortened here and there and so differentiated in brightness and opacity the green on them, with delicate effect. On left, brow of the near hill glistening with very bright newly turned sods and a scarf of vivid green slanting away beyond the skyline, agst. which the clouds showed the slightest tinge of rose or purple. Copses in grey-red or grey-yellow — the tinges immediately forerunning the opening of hill-leaf. Meadows skirting. Seven-bridge road voluptuous green. Some oaks are out in small leaf. Ashes not out, only tufted with their fringing blooms. Hedges springing richly. Elms in small leaf, with more or less opacity. White poplars most beautiful in small grey crisp spray-like leaf. Cowslips capriciously colouring meadows in creamy drifts. Bluebells, purple orchids. Over the green water of the river passing the slums of the town and under its bridges swallows shooting, blue and purple above and shewing their amber-tinged breasts reflected in the water, their flight unsteady with wagging wings and leaning first to one side then the other. Peewits flying. Towards sunset the sky partly swept, as often, with moist white cloud, tailing off across which are morsels of grey-black woolly clouds. Sun seemed to make a bright liquid hole in this, its texture had an upward northerly sweep or drift fr. the W. marked softly in grey. Dog violets. Eastward after sunset range of clouds rising in bulky heads moulded softly in tufts or bunches of snow — so it looks — and membered somewhat elaborately, rose-coloured. Notice often imperfect fairy

visions (non-committal) / faintly
rings. Apple and other fruit trees blossomed beautifully. ^{Apple} ~~Apple~~ talking about the whole story of the home affairs. His idea was (when he went down three years ago and was all the Long? preparing for confession) that 7 yrs. was a moderate time during wh. to fast within the boundaries of life and abstain from communicating. Being not allowed to read he took long walks, and it must have been on one of these that he fainted as he once told me.

May 6. Grey. A little time ago on much such another day noticed Trinity gardens. Much distinctness, charm, and suggestiveness abt. the match of white grey sky, solid smooth lawn, firs and yews, dark trees, below, and chestnuts and other brighter-hued trees above, the young green having a fresh moist opaque look and there being in the whole picture an absence of projection, and apprehension of colour. On such a day also last Friday week boated with H. Dugmore to Godstow, but the warm greyness of the day, the river, the spring green, and the cuckoo wanted a canon by wh. to harmonise and round them in — e.g. one of feeling.

June 30. Thunderstorms all day, great claps and lightning running up and down. When it was bright between times great towering clouds behind which the sun put out his shaded horns very clearly and a longish way. Level curds and whey sky after sunset. — Graceful growth of Etkolizias³ or however those unhappy flowers are spelt. Yews and evergreen trees now very thin and putting out their young pale shoots.

July 1. Sharp showers, bright between. Late in the afternoon, the light and shade being brilliant snowy blocks of cloud were fling over the sky, and under the sun hanging above and along the earth-line were those multitudinous up-and-down crispy sparkling chains with pearly shadows up to the edges. At sunset, wh. was in a grey bank with moist gold dabs and racks, the whole round of skyline had level clouds naturally lead-colour but the

¹ W. E. Addis. See Note G, p. 291.

² Eckscholtzia.

³ i.e. the Long Vacation.

upper parts ruddled, some more, some less, rosy. Spirs or beams braided or built in with slanting pellet flakes made their way. Through such clouds anvil-shaped pink ones and up-blown fleecy-of-wool flat-topped dangerous-looking pieces.

June
read

July 11. . . . Oaks: hoary blue-green sheaths and stalks, prettily shadow-stroked spikes of pale green grain. Oaks: the organisation of this tree is difficult. Speaking generally no doubt the determining planes are concentric, a system of brief contiguous and continuous tangents, whereas those of the cedar wd. roughly be called horizontals and those of the beech radiating but modified by droop and by a screw-set towards jutting points. But beyond this since the normal growth of the boughs is radiating and the leaves grow some way in there is of course a system of spoke-wise clubs of green - sleeve-pieces. And since the end shoots curl and carry young and scanty leaf-stars these clubs are tapered, and I have seen also the pieces in profile with chiselled outlines, the blocks thus made detached and lessening towards the end. However the star knot is the chief thing: it is whorled, worked round, a little and this is what keeps up the illusion of the tree: the leaves are rounded inwards and figure out ball-knots. Oaks differ much, and much turns on the broadness of the leaf, the narrower giving the crisped and starry and catharine-wheel forms, the broader the flat-pieced matted or shard-covered ones, in wh. it is possible to see composition in dips, etc., on wider bases than the single knot or cluster. But I shall study them further. See the 10th.

July 17. . . . It was this night I believe but possibly the next that I saw clearly the impossibility of staying in the Church of England, but resolved to say nothing to anyone till three months are over, that is the end of the Long, and then of course to take no step till after my Degree.

July 18. Bright. Sunset over oaks a dapple of rosy clouds blotted with purple, sky round confused pale green and blue with faint horned rays, crimson sparkles through the leaves below . . .

* Cf. poem No. 39, l. 3.

read
cloud

July 19. . . . Alone in the woods and in Mr. Nelthorpe's park, whence one gets such a beautiful view southwards over the country. I have now found the law of the oak leaves. It is of platter-shaped stars altogether; the leaves lie close like pages, packed, and as if drawn tightly to. But these old packs, wh. lie at the end of their twigs, throw out now long shoots alternately and slimly leaved, looking like bright keys. All the sprays but markedly these ones shape out and as it were embrace greater circles and the dip and toss of these make the wider and less organic articulations of the tree.

Aug. 23, 1867. Fine and cloudless; fiery sunset. - Some wych-elm seem to have leaves smaller, others bigger, than the common elm: . . .

Papa, Mamma, and Millicent¹ went off to Britany. I went down to call on Mrs. Cunliffe, who was out, and walked a little in Hyde Park, where I noticed a fine oblate chestnut-tree with noble long ramping boughs more like an oak. Then to the chapel of the poor Clares,² where I made my resolution "if it is better", but now, Sept. 4, nothing is decided. For the evening to Aunt Kate's. See *infra* May 2 and 11. . . .

Aug. 30. Fair; in afternoon fine; the clouds had a good deal of crisping and mottling. - A round by Plumley,³ - Stands of ash in a copse: they consisted of two or three rods most gracefully leaved, for each wing or comb finally curled inwards, that is upwards. - Putting my hand up against the sky whilst we lay on the grass I saw more richness and beauty in the blue than I had known of before, not brilliance but glow and colour.⁴ It was not transparent and sapphire-like, but turquoise-like, swarming and blushing round the edge of the hand and in the pieces clipped in by the fingers, the flesh being sometimes sunlit, sometimes glassy

¹ G. M. H.'s eldest sister (1849-1947). She became an Anglican nun.
² i.e. Poor Clares, nuns of the order founded by St. Clare of Assisi.
³ Village in Devonshire.
⁴ Cf. poem No. 37, ll. 73-8.

with reflected light, sometimes lightly shadowed in that violet one makes with cobalt and Indian red.

Apr. 27, 1868. Generally fine betw. hard showers; some hail, wh. made the evening very cold, a flash of lightning, a clap of thunder, and a bright rainbow; some grey cloud betw. showers ribbed and draped and some wild bright big brown flix at the border of a great rack with blue rising behind — though it was too big in character to be called flix. To Roehampton into retreat.¹

May 2. Fine, with some haze, and warm. This day, I think, I resolved. See *supra* last 23rd August and *infra* May 11.

May 3. Bright, with haze — dark-in-bright —, hot, and like summer; when cloud formed it was delicately barred. — Cuckoo singing all day. Oaks out, wych-elms not, except a few leaves.

May 4. Dull; then fine; cold, esp. in wind. — Note the elm here on one side of beautiful build with one great limb overhanging the sunk fence into the Park and headed like the one near the house at Shanklin but when seen fr. the opposite side to this limb uninteresting or clumsy.

May 5. Cold. Resolved to be a religious.

May 6. Fine but rather thick and with a very cold N.E. wind.

May 7. Warm; misty morning; then beautiful torquoise sky. Home, after having decided to be a priest and religious but still doubtful betw. St. Benedict and St. Ignatius. . . .

May 11. Dull; afternoon fine. Slaughter of the innocents.² See above, the 2nd.

June 27. Silver mottled clouding, and clearer; else like yesterday.

¹ i.e. to Manresa House, Roehampton, the Jesuit Novitiate which G. M. H. eventually entered as a novice on September 7, 1868. The present retreat was undertaken by him as a Catholic layman seeking spiritual guidance.

² This probably refers to the burning of his poems. See below, p. 187, and also *Journals and Papers of G. M. H.* (2nd edn., 1959), p. 357.

At the Nat. Gallery. That Madonna by Bellafico. OY has not Giotto the instress¹ of loveliness? Mantegna's draperies.

July 3. . . . Started with Ed. Bond² for Switzerland. We went by Dover and Ostende to Brussels. . . .

July 5. To mass at the cathedral [Cologne]. Then up the Rhine to Mainz. The Rhine hills are shaped in strict planes and coigns.³ Where the banks are flat mossy or velvet eyots of poplar edged with osier rise plump from the river.

The day was, I think, dull.

Watching from close the motion of a flag in the wind.

July 6. Rainy till lately (5 o'clock), when a low rainbow backed by the Black Forest hills, which were partly dimmed out with wet mist, appeared, and — what I never saw before — rays of shadow crossed it, all its round, and where they crossed it paled the colour. It was a "blue bow". That evening saw a shepherd leading his flock through the town.

By railway to Basel. Beautiful view from the train of the hills near Mülheim etc. They were clothed with wood and at the openings in this and indeed all upward too they were characterised by vertical stemming, dim in the distance. Villages a little bare like Brill rise in blocks of white and deep russet tiling. The nearer hills terraced with vineyards deep and vertical, the pale grey shaven poles close on the railway leaning capriciously towards one another. — Here we met the young Englishman who had been to see Charlotte Brontë's school in Brussels. . . .

But Basel at night! with a full moon waking the river and sending up straight beams from the heavy clouds that overhung it. We saw this from the bridge. The river runs so strong that it keeps the bridge shaking. Then we walked about the place and first of all had the adventure of the little Englishwoman with her hat off. We went through great spacious streets and places dead

¹ For 'instress' see Introduction, p. xx.

² See below, p. 114, footnote 2.

³ Cf. the word 'quans' on p. 112 and Note B, p. 249.