

**THE TOILING OF
FELIX: AND
OTHER POEMS**

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The Toiling of Felix: And Other Poems by Henry Van Dyke

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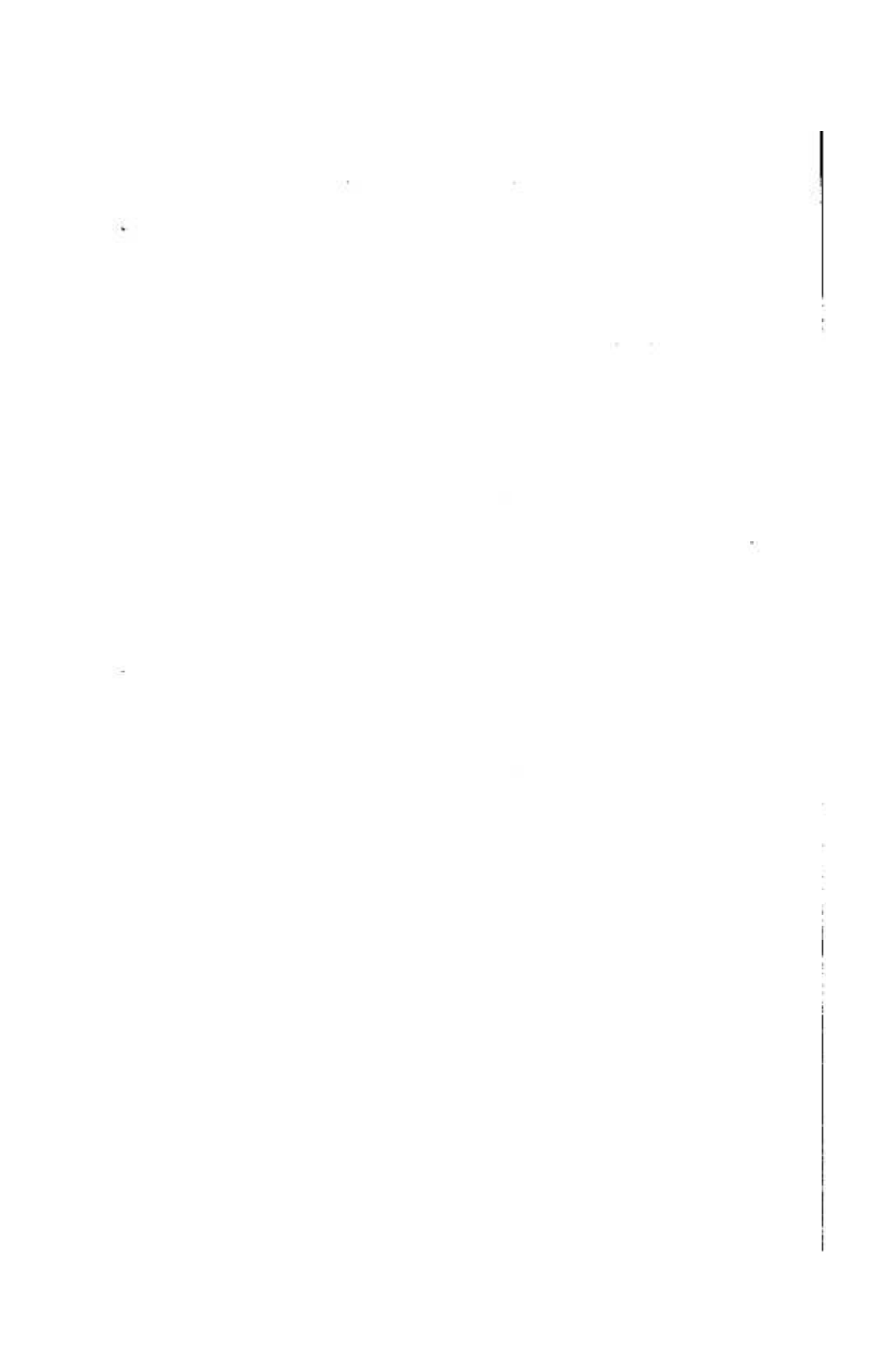
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HENRY VAN DYKE

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THE TOILING OF FELIX

A LEGEND

ON A NEW SAYING OF JESUS

*I*N the rubbish heaps of the ancient city of Oxyrhynchus, near the river Nile, a party of English Explorers, in the winter of 1897, discovered a fragment of a papyrus book, written in the Second or Third Century, and hitherto unknown. This single leaf contained parts of seven short sentences of Christ, each introduced by the words, "Jesus says:" It is to the fifth of these Sayings of Jesus that the following poem refers.

PRELUDE

A LOST WORD OF JESUS

HEAR a word that Jesus spake
Eighteen centuries ago,
Where the crimson lilies blow
Round the blue Tiberian lake :
There the bread of life he brake,
Through the fields of harvest walking
With His lowly comrades, talking
Of the secret thoughts that feed
Weary hearts in time of need.
Art thou hungry? Come and take ;
Hear the word that Jesus spake :
'T is the sacrament of labour ; meat and drink
divinely blest ;
Friendship's food, and sweet refreshment ;
strength and courage, joy and rest.

Yet this word the Master said,
Long ago and far away,
Silent and forgotten lay
Buried with the silent dead,—
Where the sands of Egypt spread,
Sea-like, tawny billows heaping
Over ancient cities sleeping ;
While the River Nile between
Rolls its summer flood of green,
Rolls its autumn flood of red,—
There the word the Master said,
Written on a frail papyrus, scorched by fire,
wrinkled, torn,
Hidden in God's hand, was waiting for its
resurrection morn.

Hear the Master's risen word!
Delving spades have set it free,—
Wake! the world has need of thee,—
Rise, and let thy voice be heard,
Like a fountain disinterred,
Upward springing, singing, sparkling;
Through the doubtful shadows darkling;
Till the clouds of pain and rage
Brooding o'er the toiling age,
As with rifts of light are stirred
By the music of the Word;
Gospel for the heavy-laden, answer to the
labourer's cry;
*“Raise the stone, and thou shalt find Me; cleave the
wood, and there am I.”*