

**THE CRUCIFIXION  
OF MAN, A  
NARRATIVE POEM**

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The crucifixion of man, a narrative poem by George Barlow

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OF MAN, A  
NARRATIVE POEM**





# THE CRUCIFIXION OF MAN

A Narrative Poem

BY

GEORGE BARLOW

*Author of "The Pageant of Life" and "From Dawn to Sunset"*



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Dedication.

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TO MY FRIEND,  
ARTHUR HERVEY.

THIS book, now bright with dawn, now dark with doom,  
Now full of midday song, I bring you, friend—  
Not all conceived in light, nor yet in gloom,  
But in a sphere where light and darkness blend.

I strive in verse to render forth the song  
Of life, to life's strange message I give heed:  
But where my Art is faulty, yours is strong,  
And where I fail, you triumph and succeed.

For you in music render forth the psalm  
Of life, aye all its passion, all its power;  
Music can reproduce June's heavenliest calm  
When no breath stirs the frailest cliff-side flower.

And music too can thunder like the seas:  
The world's emotion music can express;  
The saint's thoughts praying on his bended knees,  
The lover's thrill at beauty's first caress.

Music will lead some stricken soul to seek  
Eternal refuge in a Saviour's arms,  
Stablish the doubting and uplift the weak,  
Expounding heaven's imperishable charms:



Music will lead a lover to decide  
That this night's starry fires shall point the way  
To the sweet robbery of another's bride,  
The sin that cries for blood at dawn of day.

For music stirs in one the lust to storm  
Heaven's breachless walls and unattempted gates,  
But draws another towards the perfect form  
Whose sovereign whiteness in the darkness waits.

At music's trumpet one man climbs the skies  
And gathers strength the untrodden heights to win ;  
Another dares to meet the queenly eyes  
Whose light makes sinning pure and virtue sin.

The same sweet strain in one girl's heart will wake  
Desire for heavenly joys that never pall,  
Possess another, till her swift steps take  
The rose-hung road that leads her to her fall.

One girl will muse : " Is this the heavenly strain  
That sun-bright angels round their Master sing ? "  
Another whisper : " In the moonlit lane  
Again to-night my eyes will greet their king ! "

Through music the one Spirit who sways the whole,  
Creates, pulls down, refashions and destroys,  
Speaks—ever music is the world's deep soul  
Uttering its giant sorrows, giant joys.

From the first hour when on our planet-home  
Love spake, in depths of moonlit forest heard  
Or by some far-off sea's forgotten foam,  
Its priceless first unfathomable word,

From that first hour hath music reigned supreme,  
For music's soul and passion's soul are one ;  
And music still will reign while young hearts dream  
And while sweet darkness follows on the sun.

All dim strange thoughts we struggle, and in vain,  
To utter—pangs and joys, and hopes and fears—  
In music their impassioned utterance gain ;  
All human longings sound in human ears.

The past grows vocal, history speaks once more.  
Above dense war-ranks nods Achilles' plume :  
Pale Dido weeps upon the loveless shore :  
Masked murder dogs love's steps through Venice' gloom.

At music's touch man's visions all grow real ;  
We see the matchless face that Bothwell saw :—  
We enter too the realms of the ideal,  
The mist-clad land where genius' will is law.

A thousand fairies throng the wood-glades, white  
Beneath the rays of an enchanted moon ;  
Their elfin cohorts flash upon our sight,  
Armoured in gems that mock the glittering noon.

At music's summons Oberon's snowy steed  
Tramples the clover, jingling silver reins :  
When music sounds, an unseen world gives heed ;  
Its starlight waxes as our sunlight wanes.

While music sounds, what heart can ever doubt  
That life eternal waits beyond the tomb ?  
For music shuts cold slow-foot reason out,  
And what our souls desire our souls assume.

While music sounds, no barrier to our hope  
Looms dark and threatening on the heavenward way,  
For music gives the glad soul boundless scope  
And points beyond the night to endless day.

Religion owes to music all its power :  
In man's form Jesus on the pale earth trod,  
But music round him made the pale earth flower  
And changed the mortal man to deathless God.

Death conquered life? Nay, music's eager heart  
Repels the thought with everlasting scorn,  
And with the sunlight of triumphant Art  
Transmutes to stainless gold the crown of thorn !

The Christian Church through music scales the skies :  
The humblest chapel built where wild waves foam  
On Cornish rocks, or where Welsh mountains rise,  
Through music conquers, even as mighty Rome.

And love through music conquers—when we hear  
The haunting magic of some wondrous tune,  
Lost loves on golden wings come glimmering near  
And life's December is as passion's June.

Dark eyes we never thought to see again  
In life shine forth, and speechless joys are won :  
Music can crowd with life death's ghostly plain  
And make night's dreams more cogent than the sun.

Words—even Shakespeare's words—must sometimes fail,  
But music never fails : where man has trod  
It follows, gathering up life's tragic tale,  
Blending with man's the language of a god.