

***SUSAN  
COOLIDGE***

An aerial photograph of an offshore oil rig in the middle of a vast, deep blue ocean. The rig is a complex of metal structures, including a central tower and various platforms. The horizon is visible in the distance under a clear sky.

***LAST  
VERSES***

**Susan Coolidge**

# **Last Verses**

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# HELEN KELLER

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BEHIND her triple prison-bars shut in  
She sits, the whitest soul on earth to-day.  
No shadowing stain, no whispered hint of sin,  
Into that sanctuary finds the way.  
There enters only clear and proven truth  
Apportioned for her use by loving hands  
And winnowed from all knowledge of all lands  
To satisfy her ardent thirst of youth.

Like a strange alabaster mask her face,  
Rayless and sightless, set in patience dumb,  
Until like quick electric currents come  
The signals of life into her lonely place;  
Then, like a lamp just lit, an inward gleam  
Flashes within the mask's opacity,  
The features glow and dimple suddenly,  
And fun and tenderness and sparkle seem  
To irradiate the lines once dull and blind,  
While the white slender fingers reach and cling  
With quick imploring gestures, questioning  
The mysteries and the meanings:—to her mind

The world is not the sordid world we know;  
It is a happy and benignant spot  
Where kindness reigns, and jealousy is not,  
And men move softly, dropping as they go  
The golden fruit of knowledge for all to share.

And Love is King, and Heaven is very near,  
And God to whom each separate soul is dear  
Makes fatherly answer to each whispered prayer.  
Ah, little stainless soul, shut in so close,  
May never hint of doubt creep in to be  
A shadow on the calm security  
Which wraps thee, as its fragrance wraps a rose.

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## **“A CLOUD OF WITNESSES”**

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ON Calais sands the breakers roar  
In fierce and foaming track;  
The screaming sea-gulls dip and soar,  
White seen against the black;  
And shuddering wind and furling sail  
Are making ready for the gale.

Ho, keeper of the Calais Light!  
See that your lamps burn free;  
For, if they should go out to-night,  
There will be wrecks at sea.  
Fill them and trim them with due care,  
For there is tempest in the air.

“Go out? My lamps go out, you say?  
What words are on your lips?  
There, in the offing far away,  
Are sailing countless ships,  
Beyond my ken, beyond my sight,

But all are watching Calais Light.

“If but a single lamp should fail,  
A single flame burn dim,  
How could they ride the gathering gale,  
Or justly steer and trim?  
To right, to left, would equal be,  
There are no road-marks in the sea.

“I should not hear their drowning cry,  
Or see the ship go down,  
And weeks and months might pass us by,  
Ere came to Calais town  
The word—‘A ship was lost one night,  
And all for want of Calais Light.’

“Here in my tower, my lamps in row,  
I sit the long hours through;  
There is no soul to mark or know  
If I my duty do;  
Yet oftentimes I seem to see  
A world of eyes all bent on me!

“Go out! My lamps go out! alas!  
It were a woeful day  
If ever it should come to pass  
That I must live to say,  
A ship went down in storm and night,  
Because there failed it Calais Light.”

Ah, Christian, in your watch-tower set,  
Fill all your lamps and trim;



For though there seem no watchers, yet  
Far in the darkness dim,  
Where souls are tossing out of view,  
A hundred eyes are fixed on you!

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## **COR CORDIUM**

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ALL diamonded with glittering stars  
The vast blue arch of air;  
Pent in behind these mortal bars  
We strain our eyes to where,  
Oh noblest heart, thou walkest apart  
Amid thy heavenly kin.  
Though blinded with the veils of sense,  
We may not look within.

Oh eyes so tender with command!  
Oh eloquent lips and true,  
Whose speech fell like a quickening fire,  
Fell like a healing dew!  
Oh zeal so strong to right the wrong,  
Oh rich, abounding heart!  
Oh stintless, tireless, kindest hand,—  
God bless thee where thou art!

Not thine the common fate to live  
Through life's long weary days,  
And give all that thou had'st to give  
Uncheered by love and praise.

Men did not wait to call thee great  
Till death had sealed thy brow.  
They crowned thy living head with bays;  
What does it matter now?

Thy grave mound is a shrinèd place,  
Where pilgrim hearts may go,  
With loving thoughts and thankful prayers,  
Soft passing to and fro.  
Seldom with word the air is stirred,  
Seldom with sob or sigh;  
All silently and ceaselessly  
The march of hearts goes by.

Now half our lives seems lived on earth,  
And half in heaven with thee.  
Our heart-beats measure out the road  
To where we fain would be,—  
Beyond this strife of mortal life,  
This lonely ache and pain,  
Where we who miss and mourn thee so  
May find thee once again.

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## **MARTHA**

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HOT on the pavement burns the summer sun,  
In the deep shadow of the ilex tree  
The Master rests, while gathering one by one  
The neighbors enter, crowding silently

To hear His words, which drop like honey-dew;  
I may not hear, there is too much to do.

How can I pause? I seem the only one  
To take a thought about this multitude  
Who, the day past and all the preaching done,  
Will need to be refreshed with wine and food;  
We cannot send the people home unfed—  
What words were those? “I am the living bread.”

There is my sister sitting the day long  
Close to His side, serene and free from care,  
Helping me not; and surely it is wrong  
To leave to me the task that she should share.  
Master, rebuke her, just and true Thou art—  
What do I hear? “She hath the better part.”

If all chose thus then all would go unfed—  
Souls hunger, yes! but bodies have their need.  
Some one must grind and mix the daily bread,  
Some one wake early that the rest may feed,  
Some one bear burdens, face the summer sun—  
But must I always, always be the one?

“Cumbered with serving,” thus the Master spake;  
But ’twas to serve Him that I worked so hard  
(And I would serve the year long for His sake).  
I dare not take the rest which is reward  
Lest He should suffer while I stay my hand.  
How hard it is, how hard to understand!

What does a voice say? “He whose power divine