

I Bow My Forehead to the Dust

John G. Whittier, 1867.

Henry Vander Werp, 1911.

I bow my forehead to the dust,
I veil mine eyes for shame,
And urge, in trembling self distrust,
A prayer without a claim.
No offering of mine own I have,
Nor works my faith to prove;
I can but give the gifts He gave,
And plead His love for love.

I dimly guess, from blessings known,
Of greater out of sight;
And, with the chastened psalmist, own
His judgments too are right.
And if my heart and flesh are weak
To bear an untried pain,
The bruised reed He will not break,
But strengthen and sustain.

I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprise,
Assured alone that life and death
His mercy underlies.
And so beside the silent sea
I wait the muffled oar;
No harm from Him can come to me
On ocean or on shore.

I know not where His islands lift
Their fringed palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care;
And Thou, O Lord, by whom are seen
Thy creatures as they be,
Forgive me if too close I lean
My human heart on Thee.