

The Song of Sir William Thomas

*“Scimus autem quoniam diligentibus
Deum omnia cooperantur
in bonum his qui secundum propositum
vocati sunt sancti”*

My arm was my worth and my boldness my sire
My heart sworn to wealth and to carnal desire
I measured a man by his steel and naught more
I thought that a soul was best tested in war
But then came the cries how Jerusalem fell
How Saracen foe, so like demons from hell,
Had taken the city on God’s holy ground
There infidels held Christians captive and bound

Our king told this sacrilege had we allowed
My arrogance bent in contrition, I vowed
I’d take up the cross and defend Christian creed
In servitude sworn not to glory nor greed
My children I left in the care of Alain
To Mountain’s Keep would I return once again
From Acre I followed my King on the sea
To fight for the cross unto far Sicily

We reached that far shore with no rest from the tide
With Queen Joan imprisoned and ransom denied
Thus Richard demanded his sister be free
But naught would move Tancred act honorably
The men of Messina revolted and raged
Demanding we leave our fair Queen thusly caged
And unquenched the fury of Richard, our liege
For Sicily fell too soon after our siege

This victory won we were ordered e’er on
To loot and to burn those already withdrawn
As Autumn leaves fell to the earth at my feet
So too spilled the blood of a Christian retreat
The weight in my heart shamed me full-sore again
Not thusly compelled by my God but by men
Of all I had pledged this transgression was mine
These trials a test by unholy design

In ashes and peace we bid farewell that shore
And onward to Cyprus we sailed as before
A storm on the ocean we could not avoid
Lo, scattered our ships our great fleet was destroyed
The Emperor of Cyprus had each of us bound
In coin and in treasure he claimed all he found
And harsh were our captors, they Christian as I
I feared by such parallel fate would I die

In prayer did I meditate long on our lot
Remembered with each new cruel day all we wrought
My road it was just! But so sinfully laid
As Christian bled Christian upon this crusade
No hunger or torment could well rouse my ire
My bloody hands merited hell’s lasting fire
I prayed in the darkest of hours I’d known
That merciful God let this poor soul atone

A mem’ry, a mercy, a whispered relief
A scripture my broken heart held in belief
Sang Paul to the Romans, “God’s purpose tread
But love well thy Lord and salvation is bred”
My cell opened wide to the Summer-bright skies
A soldier in crimson and gold bid me rise
I vowed I was able and took up his hand
And next to the Lion and God came to stand

Some forty leagues shy of Jerusalem’s soil
Came news of King Phillip and England’s turmoil
And hastily treated by Saladin’s hand
King Richard returned e’er I saw holy land
I stand now a knight and consider my deeds
I know now the path unbound righteousness leads
The price of one’s passions in penance is paid
If God and not glory guide holy crusade

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*[Modern Translation (not actual, older passage has
pre translated text that changes meaning slightly):
And we know that all things work together for good to
them that love God, to them who are the called
according to his purpose]*