The Prophet

E'er since the time the Judge on high
Conferred on me a prophet's vision,
I read in ev'ry passing eye
Whole tomes of malice and derision.

When I proclaimed love to the world
And revelation's pure injunction
My kin as one in fury hurled
Sharp stones at me without compunction.

I sprinkled ashes on my head,
In poverty all towns avoided
And live in wastelands here instead,
Like birds, my food by God provided.

The Everlasting Law I keep,
The brute creation is obedient:
The stars hark unto me like sheep,
And play there, joyously and radiant.

Whenever I must make my way
Through noisy towns with hurried paces,
The elders to their children say
With self-possessed, complacent faces:

"Just look there, what do you perceive?
To live among us never deigning,

The proud fool wished us to believe
That God spoke through his lips disdain'd."

Mark well, then, children, look at him:
How sad he is, how thin and haggard!
Look well, and see how poor and ragged.
How everyone despises him!

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