

George MacDonald (1824-1905)

3 *The Dead Hand*

The witch lady walked along the strand,
 Heard a roaring of the sea,
On the edge of a pool saw a dead man's hand,
 Good thing for a witch lady!

Lightly she stepped across the rocks, 5
 Came where the dead man lay:
Now pretty maid with your merry mocks,
 Now I shall have my way!

On a finger shone a sapphire blue 10
 In the heart of six rubies red:
Come back to me, my promise true,
 Come back, my ring, she said.

She took the dead hand in the live,
 And at the ring drew she;
The dead hand closed its fingers five, 15
 And it held the witch lady.

She swore the storm was not her deed,
 Dark spells she backward spoke;
If the dead man heard he took no heed,
 But held like a cloven oak. 20

Deathly cold, crept up the tide,
 Sure of her, made no haste;
Crept up to her knees, crept up each side,
 Crept up to her wicked waist.

Over the blue sea sailed the bride 25
 In her love's own sailing ship,
And the witch she saw them across the tide
 As it rose to her lying lip.

1867

(From *The Poetical Works of George MacDonald*. Vol. 2.
London: Chatto & Windus, 1893)