

# The Poetry Collection of Thomas Hardy - Volume 3

Thomas Hardy

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- THE COMING OF THE END
- AFTERWARDS

## MOMENTS OF VISION

That mirror  
 Which makes of men a transparency,  
 Who holds that mirror  
 And bids us such a breast-bare spectacle see  
 Of you and me?

That mirror  
 Whose magic penetrates like a dart,  
 Who lifts that mirror  
 And throws our mind back on us, and our heart,  
 Until we start?

That mirror  
Works well in these night hours of ache;  
Why in that mirror  
Are tincts we never see ourselves once take  
When the world is awake?

That mirror  
Can test each mortal when unaware;  
Yea, that strange mirror  
May catch his last thoughts, whole life foul or fair,  
Glassing it — where?

## THE VOICE OF THINGS

Forty Augusts — aye, and several more — ago,  
When I paced the headlands loosed from dull employ,  
The waves huzza'd like a multitude below  
In the sway of an all-including joy  
Without cloy.

Blankly I walked there a double decade after,  
When thwarts had flung their toils in front of me,  
And I heard the waters wagging in a long ironic laughter  
At the lot of men, and all the vapoury  
Things that be.

Wheeling change has set me again standing where  
Once I heard the waves huzza at Lammas-tide;  
But they supplicate now — like a congregation there  
Who murmur the Confession — I outside,  
Prayer denied.

## WHY BE AT PAINS?

(Wooer's Song)

Why be at pains that I should know  
You sought not me?  
Do breezes, then, make features glow  
So rosily?  
Come, the lit port is at our back,  
And the tumbling sea;  
Elsewhere the lampless uphill track  
To uncertainty!

O should not we two waifs join hands?  
I am alone,  
You would enrich me more than lands  
By being my own.  
Yet, though this facile moment flies,  
Close is your tone,  
And ere to-morrow's dewfall dries  
I plough the unknown.

## WE SAT AT THE WINDOW

(Bournemouth, 1875)

We sat at the window looking out,  
And the rain came down like silken strings  
That Swithin's day. Each gutter and spout  
Babbled unchecked in the busy way  
Of witless things:  
Nothing to read, nothing to see  
Seemed in that room for her and me  
On Swithin's day.

We were irked by the scene, by our own selves; yes,  
For I did not know, nor did she infer  
How much there was to read and guess  
By her in me, and to see and crown  
By me in her.  
Wasted were two souls in their prime,  
And great was the waste, that July time  
When the rain came down.

AFTERNOON SERVICE AT MELLSTOCK  
(Circa 1850)

On afternoons of drowsy calm  
We stood in the panelled pew,  
Singing one-voiced a Tate-and-Brady psalm  
To the tune of "Cambridge New."

We watched the elms, we watched the rooks,  
The clouds upon the breeze,  
Between the whiles of glancing at our books,  
And swaying like the trees.

So mindless were those outpourings! -  
Though I am not aware  
That I have gained by subtle thought on things  
Since we stood psalming there.

## AT THE WICKET-GATE

There floated the sounds of church-chiming,  
But no one was nigh,  
Till there came, as a break in the loneliness,  
Her father, she, I.  
And we slowly moved on to the wicket,  
And downlooking stood,  
Till anon people passed, and amid them  
We parted for good.

Greater, wiser, may part there than we three  
Who parted there then,  
But never will Fates colder-featured  
Hold sway there again.  
Of the churchgoers through the still meadows  
No single one knew  
What a play was played under their eyes there  
As thence we withdrew.

## IN A MUSEUM

### I

Here's the mould of a musical bird long passed from light,  
Which over the earth before man came was winging;  
There's a contralto voice I heard last night,  
That lodges in me still with its sweet singing.

### II

Such a dream is Time that the coo of this ancient bird  
Has perished not, but is blent, or will be blending  
Mid visionless wilds of space with the voice that I heard,  
In the full-fugued song of the universe unending.

EXETER.

## APOSTROPHE TO AN OLD PSALM TUNE

I met you first — ah, when did I first meet you?  
When I was full of wonder, and innocent,  
Standing meek-eyed with those of choric bent,  
While dimming day grew dimmer  
In the pulpit-glimmer.

Much riper in years I met you — in a temple  
Where summer sunset streamed upon our shapes,  
And you spread over me like a gauze that drapes,  
And flapped from floor to rafters,  
Sweet as angels' laughters.

But you had been stripped of some of your old vesture  
By Monk, or another. Now you wore no frill,  
And at first you startled me. But I knew you still,  
Though I missed the minim's waver,  
And the dotted quaver.

I grew accustomed to you thus. And you hailed me  
Through one who evoked you often. Then at last  
Your raiser was borne off, and I mourned you had passed  
From my life with your late outsetter;  
Till I said, "'Tis better!"

But you waylaid me. I rose and went as a ghost goes,  
And said, eyes-full "I'll never hear it again!  
It is overmuch for scathed and memoried men  
When sitting among strange people  
Under their steeple."

Now, a new stirrer of tones calls you up before me  
And wakes your speech, as she of Endor did  
(When sought by Saul who, in disguises hid,  
Fell down on the earth to hear it)  
Samuel's spirit.

So, your quired oracles beat till they make me tremble  
As I discern your mien in the old attire,  
Here in these turmoiled years of belligerent fire  
Living still on — and onward, maybe,  
Till Doom's great day be!

Sunday, August 13, 1916.

## AT THE WORD “FAREWELL”

She looked like a bird from a cloud  
On the clammy lawn,  
Moving alone, bare-browed  
In the dim of dawn.  
The candles alight in the room  
For my parting meal  
Made all things withoutdoors loom  
Strange, ghostly, unreal.  
The hour itself was a ghost,  
And it seemed to me then  
As of chances the chance furthest  
I should see her again.  
I beheld not where all was so fleet  
That a Plan of the past  
Which had ruled us from birthtime to meet  
Was in working at last:  
No prelude did I there perceive  
To a drama at all,  
Or foreshadow what fortune might weave  
From beginnings so small;  
But I rose as if quickened by a spur  
I was bound to obey,  
And stepped through the casement to her  
Still alone in the gray.  
“I am leaving you . . . Farewell!” I said,  
As I followed her on  
By an alley bare boughs overspread;  
”I soon must be gone!”  
Even then the scale might have been turned  
Against love by a feather,  
- But crimson one cheek of hers burned  
When we came in together.

## FIRST SIGHT OF HER AND AFTER

A day is drawing to its fall  
I had not dreamed to see;  
The first of many to enthrall  
My spirit, will it be?  
Or is this eve the end of all  
Such new delight for me?

I journey home: the pattern grows  
Of moonshades on the way:  
“Soon the first quarter, I suppose,”  
Sky-glancing travellers say;  
I realise that it, for those,  
Has been a common day.

## THE RIVAL

I determined to find out whose it was -  
The portrait he looked at so, and sighed;  
Bitterly have I rued my meanness  
And wept for it since he died!

I searched his desk when he was away,  
And there was the likeness — yes, my own!  
Taken when I was the season's fairest,  
And time-lines all unknown.

I smiled at my image, and put it back,  
And he went on cherishing it, until  
I was chafed that he loved not the me then living,  
But that past woman still.

Well, such was my jealousy at last,  
I destroyed that face of the former me;  
Could you ever have dreamed the heart of woman  
Would work so foolishly!



## HEREDITY

I am the family face;  
Flesh perishes, I live on,  
Projecting trait and trace  
Through time to times anon,  
And leaping from place to place  
Over oblivion.

The years-heired feature that can  
In curve and voice and eye  
Despise the human span  
Of durance — that is I;  
The eternal thing in man,  
That heeds no call to die.

## YOU WERE THE SORT THAT MEN FORGET

You were the sort that men forget;  
Though I — not yet! -  
Perhaps not ever. Your slighted weakness  
Adds to the strength of my regret!

You'd not the art — you never had  
For good or bad -  
To make men see how sweet your meaning,  
Which, visible, had charmed them glad.

You would, by words inept let fall,  
Offend them all,  
Even if they saw your warm devotion  
Would hold your life's blood at their call.

You lacked the eye to understand  
Those friends offhand  
Whose mode was crude, though whose dim purport  
Outpriced the courtesies of the bland.

I am now the only being who  
Remembers you  
It may be. What a waste that Nature  
Grudged soul so dear the art its due!

## SHE, I, AND THEY

I was sitting,  
She was knitting,  
And the portraits of our fore-folk hung around;  
When there struck on us a sigh;  
"Ah — what is that?" said I:  
"Was it not you?" said she. "A sigh did sound."

I had not breathed it,  
Nor the night-wind heaved it,  
And how it came to us we could not guess;  
And we looked up at each face  
Framed and glazed there in its place,  
Still hearkening; but thenceforth was silentness.

Half in dreaming,  
"Then its meaning,"  
Said we, "must be surely this; that they repine  
That we should be the last  
Of stocks once unsurpassed,  
And unable to keep up their sturdy line."

1916

## NEAR LANIVET, 1872

There was a stunted handpost just on the crest,  
Only a few feet high:  
She was tired, and we stopped in the twilight-time for her rest,  
At the crossways close thereby.

She leant back, being so weary, against its stem,  
And laid her arms on its own,  
Each open palm stretched out to each end of them,  
Her sad face sideways thrown.

Her white-clothed form at this dim-lit cease of day  
Made her look as one crucified  
In my gaze at her from the midst of the dusty way,  
And hurriedly "Don't," I cried.

I do not think she heard. Loosing thence she said,  
As she stepped forth ready to go,  
"I am rested now. — Something strange came into my head;  
I wish I had not leant so!"

And wordless we moved onward down from the hill  
In the west cloud's murked obscure,  
And looking back we could see the handpost still  
In the solitude of the moor.

"It struck her too," I thought, for as if afraid  
She heavily breathed as we trailed;  
Till she said, "I did not think how 'twould look in the shade,  
When I leant there like one nailed."

I, lightly: "There's nothing in it. For YOU, anyhow!"  
— "O I know there is not," said she . . .

"Yet I wonder . . . If no one is bodily crucified now,  
In spirit one may be!"

And we dragged on and on, while we seemed to see  
In the running of Time's far glass  
Her crucified, as she had wondered if she might be  
Some day. — Alas, alas!

## JOYS OF MEMORY

When the spring comes round, and a certain day  
Looks out from the brume by the eastern copsetrees  
And says, Remember,  
I begin again, as if it were new,  
A day of like date I once lived through,  
Whiling it hour by hour away;  
So shall I do till my December,  
When spring comes round.

I take my holiday then and my rest  
Away from the dun life here about me,  
Old hours re-greeting  
With the quiet sense that bring they must  
Such throbs as at first, till I house with dust,  
And in the numbness my heartsome zest  
For things that were, be past repeating  
When spring comes round.

## TO THE MOON

    "What have you looked at, Moon,  
In your time,  
Now long past your prime?"  
"O, I have looked at, often looked at  
Sweet, sublime,  
Sore things, shudderful, night and noon  
In my time."

    "What have you mused on, Moon,  
In your day,  
So aloof, so far away?"  
"O, I have mused on, often mused on  
Growth, decay,  
Nations alive, dead, mad, aswoon,  
In my day!"

    "Have you much wondered, Moon,  
On your rounds,  
Self-wrapt, beyond Earth's bounds?"  
"Yea, I have wondered, often wondered  
At the sounds  
Reaching me of the human tune  
On my rounds."

    "What do you think of it, Moon,  
As you go?  
Is Life much, or no?"  
"O, I think of it, often think of it  
As a show  
God ought surely to shut up soon,  
As I go."

## COPYING ARCHITECTURE IN AN OLD MINSTER

(Wimborne)

How smartly the quarters of the hour march by  
That the jack-o'-clock never forgets;  
Ding-dong; and before I have traced a cusp's eye,  
Or got the true twist of the ogee over,  
A double ding-dong ricochetts.

Just so did he clang here before I came,  
And so will he clang when I'm gone  
Through the Minster's cavernous hollows — the same  
Tale of hours never more to be will he deliver  
To the speechless midnight and dawn!

I grow to conceive it a call to ghosts,  
Whose mould lies below and around.  
Yes; the next "Come, come," draws them out from their posts,  
And they gather, and one shade appears, and another,  
As the eve-damps creep from the ground.

See — a Courtenay stands by his quatre-foiled tomb,  
And a Duke and his Duchess near;  
And one Sir Edmund in columned gloom,  
And a Saxon king by the presbytery chamber;  
And shapes unknown in the rear.

Maybe they have met for a parle on some plan  
To better ail-stricken mankind;  
I catch their cheepings, though thinner than  
The overhead creak of a passager's pinion  
When leaving land behind.

Or perhaps they speak to the yet unborn,  
And caution them not to come  
To a world so ancient and trouble-torn,  
Of foiled intents, vain lovingkindness,  
And ardours chilled and numb.

They waste to fog as I stir and stand,  
And move from the arched recess,  
And pick up the drawing that slipped from my hand,  
And feel for the pencil I dropped in the cranny  
In a moment's forgetfulness.

## **TO SHAKESPEARE AFTER THREE HUNDRED YEARS**

Bright baffling Soul, least capturable of themes,  
Thou, who display'dst a life of common-place,  
Leaving no intimate word or personal trace  
Of high design outside the artistry  
Of thy penned dreams,  
Still shalt remain at heart unread eternally.

Through human orbits thy discourse to-day,  
Despite thy formal pilgrimage, throbs on  
In harmonies that cow Oblivion,  
And, like the wind, with all-uncared effect  
Maintain a sway  
Not fore-desired, in tracks unchosen and unchecked.

And yet, at thy last breath, with mindless note  
The borough clocks but samely tongued the hour,  
The Avon just as always glassed the tower,  
Thy age was published on thy passing-bell  
But in due rote

With other dwellers' deaths accorded a like knell.

And at the strokes some townsman (met, maybe,  
And thereon queried by some squire's good dame  
Driving in shopward) may have given thy name,  
With, "Yes, a worthy man and well-to-do;  
Though, as for me,  
I knew him but by just a neighbour's nod, 'tis true.

"T' faith, few knew him much here, save by word,  
He having elsewhere led his busier life;  
Though to be sure he left with us his wife."

— "Ah, one of the tradesmen's sons, I now recall . . .

Witty, I've heard . . .

We did not know him . . . Well, good-day. Death comes to all."

So, like a strange bright bird we sometimes find  
To mingle with the barn-door brood awhile,  
Then vanish from their homely domicile -  
Into man's poesy, we wot not whence,  
Flew thy strange mind,  
Lodged there a radiant guest, and sped for ever thence.

1916

# QUID HIC AGIS?

## I

When I weekly knew  
An ancient pew,  
And murmured there  
The forms of prayer  
And thanks and praise  
In the ancient ways,  
And heard read out  
During August drought  
That chapter from Kings  
Harvest-time brings;  
- How the prophet, broken  
By griefs unspoken,  
Went heavily away  
To fast and to pray,  
And, while waiting to die,  
The Lord passed by,  
And a whirlwind and fire  
Drew nigher and nigher,  
And a small voice anon  
Bade him up and be gone, -  
I did not apprehend  
As I sat to the end  
And watched for her smile  
Across the sunned aisle,  
That this tale of a seer  
Which came once a year  
Might, when sands were heaping,  
Be like a sweat creeping,  
Or in any degree  
Bear on her or on me!

## II

When later, by chance  
Of circumstance,  
It befel me to read  
On a hot afternoon  
At the lectern there  
The selfsame words  
As the lesson decreed,  
To the gathered few  
From the hamlets near -  
Folk of flocks and herds  
Sitting half aswoon,  
Who listened thereto  
As women and men  
Not overmuch  
Concerned at such -  
So, like them then,  
I did not see  
What drought might be  
With me, with her,  
As the Kalendar  
Moved on, and Time  
Devoured our prime.



### III

But now, at last,  
When our glory has passed,  
And there is no smile  
From her in the aisle,  
But where it once shone  
A marble, men say,  
With her name thereon  
Is discerned to-day;  
And spiritless  
In the wilderness  
I shrink from sight  
And desire the night,  
(Though, as in old wise,  
I might still arise,  
Go forth, and stand  
And prophesy in the land),  
I feel the shake  
Of wind and earthquake,  
And consuming fire  
Nigher and nigher,  
And the voice catch clear,  
“What doest thou here?”

The Spectator 1916. During the War.

### ON A MIDSUMMER EVE

I idly cut a parsley stalk,  
And blew therein towards the moon;  
I had not thought what ghosts would walk  
With shivering footsteps to my tune.

I went, and knelt, and scooped my hand  
As if to drink, into the brook,  
And a faint figure seemed to stand  
Above me, with the bygone look.

I lipped rough rhymes of chance, not choice,  
I thought not what my words might be;  
There came into my ear a voice  
That turned a tenderer verse for me.

## TIMING HER

(Written to an old folk-tune)

Lalage's coming:

Where is she now, O?  
Turning to bow, O,  
And smile, is she,  
Just at parting,  
Parting, parting,  
As she is starting  
To come to me?

Where is she now, O,  
Now, and now, O,  
Shadowing a bough, O,  
Of hedge or tree  
As she is rushing,  
Rushing, rushing,  
Gossamers brushing  
To come to me?

Lalage's coming;  
Where is she now, O;  
Climbing the brow, O,  
Of hills I see?  
Yes, she is nearing,  
Nearing, nearing,  
Weather unfearing  
To come to me.

Near is she now, O,  
Now, and now, O;  
Milk the rich cow, O,  
Forward the tea;  
Shake the down bed for her,  
Linen sheets spread for her,  
Drape round the head for her  
Coming to me.

Lalage's coming,  
She's nearer now, O,  
End anyhow, O,  
To-day's husbandry!  
Would a gilt chair were mine,  
Slippers of vair were mine,  
Brushes for hair were mine  
Of ivory!

What will she think, O,  
She who's so comely,  
Viewing how homely  
A sort are we!  
Nothing resplendent,  
No prompt attendant,  
Not one dependent  
Pertaining to me!

Lalage's coming;  
Where is she now, O?  
Fain I'd avow, O,  
Full honestly  
Nought here's enough for her,  
All is too rough for her,  
Even my love for her  
Poor in degree.

She's nearer now, O,  
Still nearer now, O,  
She 'tis, I vow, O,  
Passing the lea.  
Rush down to meet her there,  
Call out and greet her there,  
Never a sweeter there  
Crossed to me!

Lalage's come; aye,  
Come is she now, O! . . .  
Does Heaven allow, O,  
A meeting to be?  
Yes, she is here now,  
Here now, here now,  
Nothing to fear now,  
Here's Lalage!

## BEFORE KNOWLEDGE

When I walked roseless tracks and wide,  
Ere dawned your date for meeting me,  
O why did you not cry Halloo  
Across the stretch between, and say:

“We move, while years as yet divide,  
On closing lines which — though it be  
You know me not nor I know you -  
Will intersect and join some day!”

Then well I had borne  
Each scraping thorn;  
But the winters froze,  
And grew no rose;  
No bridge bestrode  
The gap at all;  
No shape you showed,  
And I heard no call!

## THE BLINDED BIRD

So zestfully canst thou sing?  
And all this indignity,  
With God’s consent, on thee!  
Blinded ere yet a-wing  
By the red-hot needle thou,  
I stand and wonder how  
So zestfully thou canst sing!

Resenting not such wrong,  
Thy grievous pain forgot,  
Eternal dark thy lot,  
Groping thy whole life long;  
After that stab of fire;  
Enjailed in pitiless wire;  
Resenting not such wrong!

Who hath charity? This bird.  
Who suffereth long and is kind,  
Is not provoked, though blind  
And alive ensepulchred?  
Who hopeth, endureth all things?  
Who thinketh no evil, but sings?  
Who is divine? This bird.

## THE WIND BLEW WORDS

The wind blew words along the skies,  
And these it blew to me  
Through the wide dusk: "Lift up your eyes,  
Behold this troubled tree,  
Complaining as it sways and plies;  
It is a limb of thee.

"Yea, too, the creatures sheltering round -  
Dumb figures, wild and tame,  
Yea, too, thy fellows who abound -  
Either of speech the same  
Or far and strange — black, dwarfed, and browned,  
They are stuff of thy own frame."

I moved on in a surging awe  
Of inarticulateness  
At the pathetic Me I saw  
In all his huge distress,  
Making self-slaughter of the law  
To kill, break, or suppress.

## THE FADED FACE

How was this I did not see  
Such a look as here was shown  
Ere its womanhood had blown  
Past its first felicity? -  
That I did not know you young,  
Faded Face,  
Know you young!

Why did Time so ill bestead  
That I heard no voice of yours  
Hail from out the curved contours  
Of those lips when rosy red;  
Weeted not the songs they sung,  
Faded Face,  
Songs they sung!

By these blanchings, blooms of old,  
And the relics of your voice -  
Leavings rare of rich and choice  
From your early tone and mould -  
Let me mourn, — aye, sorrow-wrung,  
Faded Face,  
Sorrow-wrung!

## **THE RIDDLE**

### **I**

Stretching eyes west  
Over the sea,  
Wind foul or fair,  
Always stood she  
Prospect-impressed;  
Solely out there  
Did her gaze rest,  
Never elsewhere  
Seemed charm to be.

### **II**

Always eyes east  
Ponders she now -  
As in devotion -  
Hills of blank brow  
Where no waves plough.  
Never the least  
Room for emotion  
Drawn from the ocean  
Does she allow.

## THE DUEL

"I am here to time, you see;  
The glade is well-screened — eh? — against alarm;  
Fit place to vindicate by my arm  
The honour of my spotless wife,  
Who scorns your libel upon her life  
In boasting intimacy!

"All hush-offerings you'll spurn,  
My husband. Two must come; one only go,'  
She said. 'That he'll be you I know;  
To faith like ours Heaven will be just,  
And I shall abide in fullest trust  
Your speedy glad return."

"Good. Here am also I;  
And we'll proceed without more waste of words  
To warm your cockpit. Of the swords  
Take you your choice. I shall thereby  
Feel that on me no blame can lie,  
Whatever Fate accords."

So stripped they there, and fought,  
And the swords clicked and scraped, and the onsets sped;  
Till the husband fell; and his shirt was red  
With streams from his heart's hot cistern. Nought  
Could save him now; and the other, wrought  
Maybe to pity, said:

"Why did you urge on this?  
Your wife assured you; and 't had better been  
That you had let things pass, serene  
In confidence of long-tried bliss,  
Holding there could be nought amiss  
In what my words might mean."

Then, seeing nor ruth nor rage  
Could move his foeman more — now Death's deaf thrall -  
He wiped his steel, and, with a call  
Like turtledove to dove, swift broke  
Into the copse, where under an oak  
His horse cropt, held by a page.

"All's over, Sweet," he cried  
To the wife, thus guised; for the young page was she.  
"Tis as we hoped and said 't would be.  
He never guessed . . . We mount and ride  
To where our love can reign uneyed.  
He's clay, and we are free."

## AT MAYFAIR LODGINGS

How could I be aware,  
The opposite window eyeing  
As I lay listless there,  
That through its blinds was dying  
One I had rated rare  
Before I had set me sighing  
For another more fair?

Had the house-front been glass,  
My vision unobscuring,  
Could aught have come to pass  
More happiness-insuring  
To her, loved as a lass  
When spouseless, all-alluring?  
I reckon not, alas!

So, the square window stood,  
Steadily night-long shining  
In my close neighbourhood,  
Who looked forth undivining  
That soon would go for good  
One there in pain reclining,  
Unpardoned, unadieu'd.

Silently screened from view  
Her tragedy was ending  
That need not have come due  
Had she been less unbending.  
How near, near were we two  
At that last vital rending, -  
And neither of us knew!



# TO MY FATHER'S VIOLIN

Does he want you down there  
In the Nether Glooms where  
The hours may be a dragging load upon him,  
As he hears the axle grind  
Round and round  
Of the great world, in the blind  
Still profound  
Of the night-time? He might liven at the sound  
Of your string, revealing you had not forgone him.

In the gallery west the nave,  
But a few yards from his grave,  
Did you, tucked beneath his chin, to his bowing  
Guide the homely harmony  
Of the quire  
Who for long years strenuously -  
Son and sire -  
Caught the strains that at his fingering low or higher  
From your four thin threads and eff-holes came outflowing.

And, too, what merry tunes  
He would bow at nights or noons  
That chanced to find him bent to lute a measure,  
When he made you speak his heart  
As in dream,  
Without book or music-chart,  
On some theme  
Elusive as a jack-o'-lanthorn's gleam,  
And the psalm of duty shelved for trill of pleasure.

Well, you can not, alas,  
The barrier overpass  
That screens him in those Mournful Meads hereunder,  
Where no fiddling can be heard  
In the glades  
Of silentness, no bird  
Thrills the shades;  
Where no viol is touched for songs or serenades,  
No bowing wakes a congregation's wonder.

He must do without you now,  
Stir you no more anyhow  
To yearning concords taught you in your glory;  
While, your strings a tangled wreck,  
Once smart drawn,  
Ten worm-wounds in your neck,  
Purflings wan  
With dust-hoar, here alone I sadly con  
Your present dumbness, shape your olden story.  
1916

## THE STATUE OF LIBERTY

This statue of Liberty, busy man,  
Here erect in the city square,  
I have watched while your scrubblings, this early morning,  
Strangely wistful,  
And half tristful,  
Have turned her from foul to fair;  
    With your bucket of water, and mop, and brush,  
Bringing her out of the grime  
That has smeared her during the smokes of winter  
With such glumness  
In her dumbness,  
And aged her before her time.  
    You have washed her down with motherly care -  
Head, shoulders, arm, and foot,  
To the very hem of the robes that drape her -  
All expertly  
And alertly,  
Till a long stream, black with soot,  
    Flows over the pavement to the road,  
And her shape looms pure as snow:  
I read you are hired by the City guardians -  
May be yearly,  
Or once merely -  
To treat the statues so?

”Oh, I’m not hired by the Councilmen  
To cleanse the statues here.  
I do this one as a self-willed duty,  
Not as paid to,  
Or at all made to,  
But because the doing is dear.”

Ah, then I hail you brother and friend!  
Liberty’s knight divine.  
What you have done would have been my doing,  
Yea, most verily,  
Well, and thoroughly,  
Had but your courage been mine!

”Oh I care not for Liberty’s mould,  
Liberty charms not me;  
What’s Freedom but an idler’s vision,  
Vain, pernicious,  
Often vicious,  
Of things that cannot be!

”Memory it is that brings me to this -  
Of a daughter — my one sweet own.  
She grew a famous carver’s model,  
One of the fairest  
And of the rarest:-  
She sat for the figure as shown.

”But alas, she died in this distant place  
Before I was warned to betake  
Myself to her side! . . . And in love of my darling,  
In love of the fame of her,  
And the good name of her,  
I do this for her sake.”

Answer I gave not. Of that form  
The carver was I at his side;  
His child, my model, held so saintly,  
Grand in feature,  
Gross in nature,  
In the dens of vice had died.

## **THE BACKGROUND AND THE FIGURE**

(Lover’s Ditty)

I think of the slope where the rabbits fed,  
Of the periwinks' rockwork lair,  
Of the fuchsias ringing their bells of red -  
And the something else seen there.

Between the blooms where the sod basked bright,  
By the bobbing fuchsia trees,  
Was another and yet more eyesome sight -  
The sight that richened these.

I shall seek those beauties in the spring,  
When the days are fit and fair,  
But only as foils to the one more thing  
That also will flower there!

## THE CHANGE

Out of the past there rises a week -  
Who shall read the years O! -  
Out of the past there rises a week  
Enringed with a purple zone.  
Out of the past there rises a week  
When thoughts were strung too thick to speak,  
And the magic of its lineaments remains with me alone.

In that week there was heard a singing -  
Who shall spell the years, the years! -  
In that week there was heard a singing,  
And the white owl wondered why.  
In that week, yea, a voice was ringing,  
And forth from the casement were candles flinging  
Radiance that fell on the deodar and lit up the path thereby.

Could that song have a mocking note? -  
Who shall unroll the years O! -  
Could that song have a mocking note  
To the white owl's sense as it fell?  
Could that song have a mocking note  
As it trilled out warm from the singer's throat,  
And who was the mocker and who the mocked when two felt all was well?

In a tedious trampling crowd yet later -  
Who shall bare the years, the years! -  
In a tedious trampling crowd yet later,  
When silvery singings were dumb;  
In a crowd uncaring what time might fate her,  
Mid murks of night I stood to await her,  
And the twanging of iron wheels gave out the signal that she was  
come.

She said with a travel-tired smile -  
Who shall lift the years O! -  
She said with a travel-tired smile,  
Half scared by scene so strange;  
She said, outworn by mile on mile,  
The blurred lamps wanning her face the while,  
“O Love, I am here; I am with you!” . . . Ah, that there should have  
come a change!

O the doom by someone spoken -  
Who shall unseal the years, the years! -  
O the doom that gave no token,  
When nothing of bale saw we:  
O the doom by someone spoken,  
O the heart by someone broken,  
The heart whose sweet reverberances are all time leaves to me.

Jan.-Feb. 1913.

## SITTING ON THE BRIDGE

(Echo of an old song)  
Sitting on the bridge  
Past the barracks, town and ridge,  
At once the spirit seized us  
To sing a song that pleased us -  
As “The Fifth” were much in rumour;  
It was “Whilst I’m in the humour,  
Take me, Paddy, will you now?”  
And a lancer soon drew nigh,  
And his Royal Irish eye  
Said, “Willing, faith, am I,  
O, to take you anyhow, dears,  
To take you anyhow.”

But, lo! — dad walking by,  
Cried, “What, you lightheels! Fie!  
Is this the way you roam  
And mock the sunset gleam?”  
And he marched us straightway home,  
Though we said, “We are only, daddy,  
Singing, ‘Will you take me, Paddy?’“  
— Well, we never saw from then  
If we sang there anywhen,  
The soldier dear again,  
Except at night in dream-time,  
Except at night in dream.

Perhaps that soldier’s fighting  
In a land that’s far away,  
Or he may be idly plighting  
Some foreign hussy gay;  
Or perhaps his bones are whiting  
In the wind to their decay! . . .  
Ah! — does he mind him how  
The girls he saw that day  
On the bridge, were sitting singing  
At the time of curfew-ringing,  
“Take me, Paddy; will you now, dear?  
Paddy, will you now?”

GREY’S BRIDGE.

## THE YOUNG CHURCHWARDEN

When he lit the candles there,  
And the light fell on his hand,  
And it trembled as he scanned  
Her and me, his vanquished air  
Hinted that his dream was done,  
And I saw he had begun  
To understand.

When Love's viol was unstrung,  
Sore I wished the hand that shook  
Had been mine that shared her book  
While that evening hymn was sung,  
His the victor's, as he lit  
Candles where he had bidden us sit  
With vanquished look.

Now her dust lies listless there,  
His afar from tending hand,  
What avails the victory scanned?  
Does he smile from upper air:  
"Ah, my friend, your dream is done;  
And 'tis YOU who have begun  
To understand!

## **I TRAVEL AS A PHANTOM NOW**

I travel as a phantom now,  
For people do not wish to see  
In flesh and blood so bare a bough  
As Nature makes of me.

And thus I visit bodiless  
Strange gloomy households often at odds,  
And wonder if Man's consciousness  
Was a mistake of God's.

And next I meet you, and I pause,  
And think that if mistake it were,  
As some have said, O then it was  
One that I well can bear!

1915

## **LINES TO A MOVEMENT IN MOZART'S E-FLAT SYMPHONY**

Show me again the time  
When in the Junetide's prime  
We flew by meads and mountains northerly! -  
Yea, to such freshness, fairness, fulness, fineness, freeness,  
Love lures life on.

Show me again the day  
When from the sandy bay  
We looked together upon the pestered sea! -  
Yea, to such surging, swaying, sighing, swelling, shrinking,  
Love lures life on.

Show me again the hour  
When by the pinnacled tower  
We eyed each other and feared futurity! -  
Yea, to such bodings, broodings, beatings, blanchings, blessings,  
Love lures life on.

Show me again just this:  
The moment of that kiss  
Away from the prancing folk, by the strawberry-tree! -  
Yea, to such rashness, ratheness, rareness, ripeness, richness,  
Love lures life on.

Begun November 1898.

## IN THE SEVENTIES

“Qui deridetur ab amico suo sicut ego.” — JOB.

In the seventies I was bearing in my breast,  
Pinned tight,  
Certain starry thoughts that threw a magic light  
On the worktimes and the soundless hours of rest  
In the seventies; aye, I bore them in my breast  
Pinned tight.

In the seventies when my neighbours — even my friend -  
Saw me pass,  
Heads were shaken, and I heard the words, “Alas,  
For his onward years and name unless he mend!”  
In the seventies, when my neighbours and my friend  
Saw me pass.

In the seventies those who met me did not know  
Of the vision  
That immuned me from the chillings of mis-prision  
And the damps that choked my goings to and fro  
In the seventies; yea, those noddors did not know  
Of the vision.



In the seventies nought could darken or destroy it,  
Locked in me,  
Though as delicate as lamp-worm's lucency;  
Neither mist nor murk could weaken or alloy it  
In the seventies! — could not darken or destroy it,  
Locked in me.

## THE PEDIGREE

### I

I bent in the deep of night  
Over a pedigree the chronicler gave  
As mine; and as I bent there, half-unrobed,  
The uncurtained panes of my window-square let in the watery light  
Of the moon in its old age:  
And green-rheumed clouds were hurrying past where mute and cold it  
globed  
Like a drifting dolphin's eye seen through a lapping wave.

### II

So, scanning my sire-sown tree,  
And the hieroglyphs of this spouse tied to that,  
With offspring mapped below in lineage,  
Till the tangles troubled me,  
The branches seemed to twist into a seared and cynic face  
Which winked and tokened towards the window like a Mage  
Enchanting me to gaze again thereat.

### III

It was a mirror now,  
And in it a long perspective I could trace  
Of my begetters, dwindling backward each past each  
All with the kindred look,  
Whose names had since been inked down in their place  
On the recorder's book,  
Generation and generation of my mien, and build, and brow.

## IV

And then did I divine  
That every heave and coil and move I made  
Within my brain, and in my mood and speech,  
Was in the glass portrayed  
As long forestalled by their so making it;  
The first of them, the primest fuglemen of my line,  
Being fogged in far antiqueness past surmise and reason's reach.

## V

Said I then, sunk in tone,  
"I am merest mimicker and counterfeit! -  
Though thinking, I AM I  
AND WHAT I DO I DO MYSELF ALONE."  
— The cynic twist of the page thereat unknit  
Back to its normal figure, having wrought its purport wry,  
The Mage's mirror left the window-square,  
And the stained moon and drift retook their places there.

1916

## THIS HEART A WOMAN'S DREAM

At midnight, in the room where he lay dead  
Whom in his life I had never clearly read,  
I thought if I could peer into that citadel  
His heart, I should at last know full and well

What hereto had been known to him alone,  
Despite our long sit-out of years foreflown,  
"And if," I said, "I do this for his memory's sake,  
It would not wound him, even if he could wake."

So I bent over him. He seemed to smile  
With a calm confidence the whole long while  
That I, withdrawing his heart, held it and, bit by bit,  
Perused the unguessed things found written on it.

It was inscribed like a terrestrial sphere  
With quaint vermiculations close and clear -  
His graving. Had I known, would I have risked the stroke  
Its reading brought, and my own heart nigh broke!

Yes, there at last, eyes opened, did I see  
His whole sincere symmetric history;  
There were his truth, his simple singlemindedness,  
Strained, maybe, by time's storms, but there no less.

There were the daily deeds from sun to sun  
In blindness, but good faith, that he had done;  
There were regrets, at instances wherein he swerved  
(As he conceived) from cherishings I had deserved.

There were old hours all figured down as bliss -  
Those spent with me — (how little had I thought this!)  
There those when, at my absence, whether he slept or waked,  
(Though I knew not 'twas so!) his spirit ached.

There that when we were severed, how day dulled  
Till time joined us anew, was chronicled:  
And arguments and battlings in defence of me  
That heart recorded clearly and ruddily.

I put it back, and left him as he lay  
While pierced the morning pink and then the gray  
Into each dreary room and corridor around,  
Where I shall wait, but his step will not sound.

## WHERE THEY LIVED

Dishevelled leaves creep down  
Upon that bank to-day,  
Some green, some yellow, and some pale brown;  
The wet bents bob and sway;  
The once warm slippery turf is sodden  
Where we laughingly sat or lay.

The summerhouse is gone,  
Leaving a weedy space;  
The bushes that veiled it once have grown  
Gaunt trees that interlace,  
Through whose lank limbs I see too clearly  
The nakedness of the place.

And where were hills of blue,  
Blind drifts of vapour blow,  
And the names of former dwellers few,  
If any, people know,  
And instead of a voice that called, "Come in, Dears,"  
Time calls, "Pass below!"

## THE OCCULTATION

When the cloud shut down on the morning shine,  
And darkened the sun,  
I said, "So ended that joy of mine  
Years back begun."

But day continued its lustrous roll  
In upper air;  
And did my late irradiate soul  
Live on somewhere?

## LIFE LAUGHS ONWARD

Rambling I looked for an old abode  
Where, years back, one had lived I knew;  
Its site a dwelling duly showed,  
But it was new.

I went where, not so long ago,  
The sod had riven two breasts asunder;  
Daisies throve gaily there, as though  
No grave were under.

I walked along a terrace where  
Loud children gambolled in the sun;  
The figure that had once sat there  
Was missed by none.

Life laughed and moved on unsubdued,  
I saw that Old succumbed to Young:  
'Twas well. My too regretful mood  
Died on my tongue.

## THE PEACE-OFFERING

It was but a little thing,  
Yet I knew it meant to me  
Ease from what had given a sting  
To the very birdsinging  
Latterly.

But I would not welcome it;  
And for all I then declined  
O the regrettings infinite  
When the night-processions flit  
Through the mind!

## **SOMETHING TAPPED**

Something tapped on the pane of my room  
When there was never a trace  
Of wind or rain, and I saw in the gloom  
My weary Beloved's face.

“O I am tired of waiting,” she said,  
”Night, morn, noon, afternoon;  
So cold it is in my lonely bed,  
And I thought you would join me soon!”

I rose and neared the window-glass,  
But vanished thence had she:  
Only a pallid moth, alas,  
Tapped at the pane for me.

August 1913.

## **THE WOUND**

I climbed to the crest,  
And, fog-festooned,  
The sun lay west  
Like a crimson wound:

Like that wound of mine  
Of which none knew,  
For I'd given no sign  
That it pierced me through.

## **A MERRYMAKING IN QUESTION**

“I will get a new string for my fiddle,  
And call to the neighbours to come,  
And partners shall dance down the middle  
Until the old pewter-wares hum:  
And we'll sip the mead, cyder, and rum!”

From the night came the oddest of answers:  
A hollow wind, like a bassoon,  
And headstones all ranged up as dancers,  
And cypresses droning a croon,  
And gurgoyles that mouthed to the tune.

## I SAID AND SANG HER EXCELLENCE

(Fickle Lover's Song)

I said and sang her excellence:  
They called it laud undue.  
(Have your way, my heart, O!)  
Yet what was homage far above  
The plain deserts of my olden Love  
Proved verity of my new.

"She moves a sylph in picture-land,  
Where nothing frosts the air:"  
(Have your way, my heart, O!)  
"To all winged pipers overhead  
She is known by shape and song," I said,  
Conscious of licence there.

I sang of her in a dim old hall  
Dream-built too fancifully,  
(Have your way, my heart, O!)  
But lo, the ripe months chanced to lead  
My feet to such a hall indeed,  
Where stood the very She.

Strange, startling, was it then to learn  
I had glanced down unborn time,  
(Have your way, my heart, O!)  
And prophesied, whereby I knew  
That which the years had planned to do  
In warranty of my rhyme.

BY RUSHY-POND.

## A JANUARY NIGHT (1879)

The rain smites more and more,  
The east wind snarls and sneezes;  
Through the joints of the quivering door  
The water wheezes.

The tip of each ivy-shoot  
Writhes on its neighbour's face;  
There is some hid dread afoot  
That we cannot trace.

Is it the spirit astray  
Of the man at the house below  
Whose coffin they took in to-day?  
We do not know.

## A KISS

By a wall the stranger now calls his,  
Was born of old a particular kiss,  
Without forethought in its genesis;  
Which in a trice took wing on the air.  
And where that spot is nothing shows:  
There ivy calmly grows,  
And no one knows  
What a birth was there!

That kiss is gone where none can tell -  
Not even those who felt its spell:  
It cannot have died; that know we well.  
Somewhere it pursues its flight,  
One of a long procession of sounds  
Travelling aethereal rounds  
Far from earth's bounds  
In the infinite.

## THE ANNOUNCEMENT

They came, the brothers, and took two chairs  
In their usual quiet way;  
And for a time we did not think  
They had much to say.

And they began and talked awhile  
Of ordinary things,  
Till spread that silence in the room  
A pent thought brings.  
And then they said: "The end has come.  
Yes: it has come at last."  
And we looked down, and knew that day  
A spirit had passed.

## THE OXEN

Christmas Eve, and twelve of the clock.  
"Now they are all on their knees,"  
An elder said as we sat in a flock  
By the embers in hearthside ease.  
We pictured the meek mild creatures where  
They dwelt in their strawy pen,  
Nor did it occur to one of us there  
To doubt they were kneeling then.  
So fair a fancy few would weave  
In these years! Yet, I feel,  
If someone said on Christmas Eve,  
"Come; see the oxen kneel  
"In the lonely barton by yonder coomb  
Our childhood used to know,"  
I should go with him in the gloom,  
Hoping it might be so.  
1915

## THE TRESSES

"When the air was damp  
It made my curls hang slack  
As they kissed my neck and back  
While I footed the salt-aired track  
I loved to tramp.



”When it was dry  
They would roll up crisp and tight  
As I went on in the light  
Of the sun, which my own sprite  
Seemed to outvie.

”Now I am old;  
And have not one gay curl  
As I had when a girl  
For dampness to unfurl  
Or sun uphold!”

## THE PHOTOGRAPH

The flame crept up the portrait line by line  
As it lay on the coals in the silence of night’s profound,  
And over the arm’s incline,  
And along the marge of the silkwork superfine,  
And gnawed at the delicate bosom’s defenceless round.

Then I vented a cry of hurt, and averted my eyes;  
The spectacle was one that I could not bear,  
To my deep and sad surprise;  
But, compelled to heed, I again looked furtive-wise  
Till the flame had eaten her breasts, and mouth, and hair.

“Thank God, she is out of it now!” I said at last,  
In a great relief of heart when the thing was done  
That had set my soul aghast,  
And nothing was left of the picture unsheathed from the past  
But the ashen ghost of the card it had figured on.

She was a woman long hid amid packs of years,  
She might have been living or dead; she was lost to my sight,  
And the deed that had nigh drawn tears  
Was done in a casual clearance of life’s arrears;  
But I felt as if I had put her to death that night! . . .

\* \* \*

- Well; she knew nothing thereof did she survive,  
And suffered nothing if numbered among the dead;  
Yet — yet — if on earth alive  
Did she feel a smart, and with vague strange anguish strive?  
If in heaven, did she smile at me sadly and shake her head?

## ON A HEATH

I could hear a gown-skirt rustling  
Before I could see her shape,  
Rustling through the heather  
That wove the common's drape,  
On that evening of dark weather  
When I hearkened, lips agape.

And the town-shine in the distance  
Did but baffle here the sight,  
And then a voice flew forward:  
Dear, is't you? I fear the night!"  
And the herons flapped to norward  
In the firs upon my right.

There was another looming  
Whose life we did not see;  
There was one stilly blooming  
Full nigh to where walked we;  
There was a shade entombing  
All that was bright of me.

## AN ANNIVERSARY

It was at the very date to which we have come,  
In the month of the matching name,  
When, at a like minute, the sun had upswum,  
Its couch-time at night being the same.  
And the same path stretched here that people now follow,  
And the same stile crossed their way,  
And beyond the same green hillock and hollow  
The same horizon lay;  
And the same man pilgrims now hereby who pilgrimed here that day.

Let so much be said of the date-day's sameness;  
But the tree that neighbours the track,  
And stoops like a pedlar afflicted with lameness,  
Knew of no sogged wound or windcrack.  
And the joints of that wall were not enshrouded  
With mosses of many tones,  
And the garth up afar was not overcrowded  
With a multitude of white stones,  
And the man's eyes then were not so sunk that you saw the socket-  
bones.

KINGSTON-MAURWARD EWELEASE.

## **BY THE RUNIC STONE**

(Two who became a story)

By the Runic Stone

They sat, where the grass sloped down,  
And chattered, he white-hatted, she in brown,  
Pink-faced, breeze-blown.

Rapt there alone

In the transport of talking so  
In such a place, there was nothing to let them know  
What hours had flown.

And the die thrown

By them heedlessly there, the dent  
It was to cut in their encompassment,  
Were, too, unknown.

It might have strown

Their zest with qualms to see,  
As in a glass, Time toss their history  
From zone to zone!

## **THE PINK FROCK**

“O my pretty pink frock,  
I sha'n't be able to wear it!  
Why is he dying just now?  
I hardly can bear it!

“He might have contrived to live on;  
But they say there’s no hope whatever:  
And must I shut myself up,  
And go out never?

“O my pretty pink frock,  
Puff-sleeved and accordion-pleated!  
He might have passed in July,  
And not so cheated!”

## **TRANSFORMATIONS**

Portion of this yew  
Is a man my grandsire knew,  
Bosomed here at its foot:  
This branch may be his wife,  
A ruddy human life  
Now turned to a green shoot.

These grasses must be made  
Of her who often prayed,  
Last century, for repose;  
And the fair girl long ago  
Whom I often tried to know  
May be entering this rose.

So, they are not underground,  
But as nerves and veins abound  
In the growths of upper air,  
And they feel the sun and rain,  
And the energy again  
That made them what they were!

## **IN HER PRECINCTS**

Her house looked cold from the foggy lea,  
And the square of each window a dull black blur  
Where showed no stir:  
Yes, her gloom within at the lack of me  
Seemed matching mine at the lack of her.

The black squares grew to be squares of light  
As the eyeshade swathed the house and lawn,  
And viols gave tone;  
There was glee within. And I found that night  
The gloom of severance mine alone.

KINGSTON-MAURWARD PARK.

## THE LAST SIGNAL

(Oct. 11, 1886)

A MEMORY OF WILLIAM BARNES

Silently I footed by an uphill road  
That led from my abode to a spot yew-boughed;  
Yellowly the sun sloped low down to westward,  
And dark was the east with cloud.

Then, amid the shadow of that livid sad east,  
Where the light was least, and a gate stood wide,  
Something flashed the fire of the sun that was facing it,  
Like a brief blaze on that side.

Looking hard and harder I knew what it meant -  
The sudden shine sent from the livid east scene;  
It meant the west mirrored by the coffin of my friend there,  
Turning to the road from his green,

To take his last journey forth — he who in his prime  
Trudged so many a time from that gate athwart the land!  
Thus a farewell to me he signalled on his grave-way,  
As with a wave of his hand.

WINTERBORNE-CAME PATH.

## THE HOUSE OF SILENCE

”That is a quiet place -  
That house in the trees with the shady lawn.”  
“ — If, child, you knew what there goes on  
You would not call it a quiet place.  
Why, a phantom abides there, the last of its race,  
And a brain spins there till dawn.”

"But I see nobody there, -  
Nobody moves about the green,  
Or wanders the heavy trees between."  
" — Ah, that's because you do not bear  
The visioning powers of souls who dare  
To pierce the material screen.

"Morning, noon, and night,  
Mid those funereal shades that seem  
The uncanny scenery of a dream,  
Figures dance to a mind with sight,  
And music and laughter like floods of light  
Make all the precincts gleam.

"It is a poet's bower,  
Through which there pass, in fleet arrays,  
Long teams of all the years and days,  
Of joys and sorrows, of earth and heaven,  
That meet mankind in its ages seven,  
An aion in an hour."

## **GREAT THINGS**

Sweet cyder is a great thing,  
A great thing to me,  
Spinning down to Weymouth town  
By Ridgway thirstily,  
And maid and mistress summoning  
Who tend the hostelry:  
O cyder is a great thing,  
A great thing to me!

The dance it is a great thing,  
A great thing to me,  
With candles lit and partners fit  
For night-long revelry;  
And going home when day-dawning  
Peeps pale upon the lea:  
O dancing is a great thing,  
A great thing to me!

Love is, yea, a great thing,  
A great thing to me,  
When, having drawn across the lawn  
In darkness silently,  
A figure flits like one a-wing  
Out from the nearest tree:  
O love is, yes, a great thing,  
A great thing to me!  
Will these be always great things,  
Great things to me? . . .  
Let it befall that One will call,  
"Soul, I have need of thee:"  
What then? Joy-jaunts, impassioned flings,  
Love, and its ecstasy,  
Will always have been great things,  
Great things to me!

## THE CHIMES

That morning when I trod the town  
The twitching chimes of long renown  
Played out to me  
The sweet Sicilian sailors' tune,  
And I knew not if late or soon  
My day would be:  
A day of sunshine beryl-bright  
And windless; yea, think as I might,  
I could not say,  
Even to within years' measure, when  
One would be at my side who then  
Was far away.

When hard utilitarian times  
Had stilled the sweet Saint-Peter's chimes  
I learnt to see  
That bale may spring where blisses are,  
And one desired might be afar  
Though near to me.

## THE FIGURE IN THE SCENE

It pleased her to step in front and sit  
Where the cragged slope was green,  
While I stood back that I might pencil it  
With her amid the scene;  
Till it gloomed and rained;  
But I kept on, despite the drifting wet  
That fell and stained  
My draught, leaving for curious quizzings yet  
The blots engrained.

And thus I drew her there alone,  
Seated amid the gauze  
Of moisture, hooded, only her outline shown,  
With rainfall marked across.  
— Soon passed our stay;  
Yet her rainy form is the Genius still of the spot,  
Immutable, yea,  
Though the place now knows her no more, and has known her not  
Ever since that day.

From an old note.

## WHY DID I SKETCH

Why did I sketch an upland green,  
And put the figure in  
Of one on the spot with me? -  
For now that one has ceased to be seen  
The picture waxes akin  
To a wordless irony.

If you go drawing on down or cliff  
Let no soft curves intrude  
Of a woman's silhouette,  
But show the escarpments stark and stiff  
As in utter solitude;  
So shall you half forget.



Let me sooner pass from sight of the sky  
Than again on a thoughtless day  
Linn, laugh, and sing, and rhyme  
With a woman sitting near, whom I  
Paint in for love, and who may  
Be called hence in my time!  
From an old note.

## CONJECTURE

If there were in my kalendar  
No Emma, Florence, Mary,  
What would be my existence now -  
A hermit's? — wanderer's weary? -  
How should I live, and how  
Near would be death, or far?  
Could it have been that other eyes  
Might have uplit my highway?  
That fond, sad, retrospective sight  
Would catch from this dim byway  
Prized figures different quite  
From those that now arise?  
With how strange aspect would there creep  
The dawn, the night, the daytime,  
If memory were not what it is  
In song-time, toil, or pray-time. -  
O were it else than this,  
I'd pass to pulseless sleep!

## THE BLOW

That no man schemed it is my hope -  
Yea, that it fell by will and scope  
Of That Which some enthrone,  
And for whose meaning myriads grope.  
For I would not that of my kind  
There should, of his unbiassed mind,  
Have been one known  
Who such a stroke could have designed;

Since it would augur works and ways  
Below the lowest that man assays  
To have hurled that stone  
Into the sunshine of our days!  
And if it prove that no man did,  
And that the Inscrutable, the Hid,  
Was cause alone  
Of this foul crash our lives amid,  
I'll go in due time, and forget  
In some deep graveyard's oubliette  
The thing whereof I groan,  
And cease from troubling; thankful yet  
Time's finger should have stretched to show  
No aimful author's was the blow  
That swept us prone,  
But the Immanent Doer's That doth not know,  
Which in some age unguessed of us  
May lift Its blinding incubus,  
And see, and own:  
"It grieves me I did thus and thus!"

## LOVE THE MONOPOLIST

(Young Lover's Reverie)

The train draws forth from the station-yard,  
And with it carries me.  
I rise, and stretch out, and regard  
The platform left, and see  
An airy slim blue form there standing,  
And know that it is she.  
While with strained vision I watch on,  
The figure turns round quite  
To greet friends gaily; then is gone . . .  
The import may be slight,  
But why remained she not hard gazing  
Till I was out of sight?

“O do not chat with others there,”  
I brood. “They are not I.  
O strain your thoughts as if they were  
Gold bands between us; eye  
All neighbour scenes as so much blankness  
Till I again am by!

“A troubled sougning in the breeze  
And the sky overhead  
Let yourself feel; and shadeful trees,  
Ripe corn, and apples red,  
Read as things barren and distasteful  
While we are separated!

“When I come back uncloak your gloom,  
And let in lovely day;  
Then the long dark as of the tomb  
Can well be thrust away  
With sweet things I shall have to practise,  
And you will have to say!”

Begun 1871: finished -

## AT MIDDLE-FIELD GATE IN FEBRUARY

The bars are thick with drops that show  
As they gather themselves from the fog  
Like silver buttons ranged in a row,  
And as evenly spaced as if measured, although  
They fall at the feeblest jog.

They load the leafless hedge hard by,  
And the blades of last year’s grass,  
While the fallow ploughland turned up nigh  
In raw rolls, clammy and clogging lie -  
Too clogging for feet to pass.

How dry it was on a far-back day  
When straws hung the hedge and around,  
When amid the sheaves in amorous play  
In curtained bonnets and light array  
Bloomed a bevy now underground!

BOCKHAMPTON LANE.

## THE YOUTH WHO CARRIED A LIGHT

I saw him pass as the new day dawned,  
Murmuring some musical phrase;  
Horses were drinking and floundering in the pond,  
And the tired stars thinned their gaze;  
Yet these were not the spectacles at all that he conned,  
But an inner one, giving out rays.

Such was the thing in his eye, walking there,  
The very and visible thing,  
A close light, displacing the gray of the morning air,  
And the tokens that the dark was taking wing;  
And was it not the radiance of a purpose rare  
That might ripe to its accomplishing?

What became of that light? I wonder still its fate!  
Was it quenched ere its full apogee?  
Did it struggle frail and frailer to a beam emaciate?  
Did it thrive till matured in verity?  
Or did it travel on, to be a new young dreamer's freight,  
And thence on infinitely?

1915

## THE HEAD ABOVE THE FOG

Something do I see  
Above the fog that sheets the mead,  
A figure like to life indeed,  
Moving along with spectre-speed,  
Seen by none but me.

O the vision keen! -  
Tripping along to me for love  
As in the flesh it used to move,  
Only its hat and plume above  
The evening fog-fleece seen.

In the day-fall wan,  
When nighted birds break off their song,  
Mere ghostly head it skims along,  
Just as it did when warm and strong,  
Body seeming gone.

Such it is I see  
Above the fog that sheets the mead -  
Yea, that which once could breathe and plead! -  
Skimming along with spectre-speed  
To a last tryst with me.

## OVERLOOKING THE RIVER STOUR

The swallows flew in the curves of an eight  
Above the river-gleam  
In the wet June's last beam:  
Like little crossbows animate  
The swallows flew in the curves of an eight  
Above the river-gleam.

Planing up shavings of crystal spray  
A moor-hen darted out  
From the bank thereabout,  
And through the stream-shine ripped his way;  
Planing up shavings of crystal spray  
A moor-hen darted out.

Closed were the kingcups; and the mead  
Dripped in monotonous green,  
Though the day's morning sheen  
Had shown it golden and honeybee'd;  
Closed were the kingcups; and the mead  
Dripped in monotonous green.

And never I turned my head, alack,  
While these things met my gaze  
Through the pane's drop-drenched glaze,  
To see the more behind my back . . .  
O never I turned, but let, alack,  
These less things hold my gaze!

## THE MUSICAL BOX

Lifelong to be  
Seemed the fair colour of the time;  
That there was standing shadowed near  
A spirit who sang to the gentle chime  
Of the self-struck notes, I did not hear,  
I did not see.

Thus did it sing  
To the mindless lyre that played indoors  
As she came to listen for me without:  
“O value what the nonce outpours -  
This best of life — that shines about  
Your welcoming!”

I had slowed along  
After the torrid hours were done,  
Though still the posts and walls and road  
Flung back their sense of the hot-faced sun,  
And had walked by Stourside Mill, where broad  
Stream-lilies throng.

And I descried  
The dusky house that stood apart,  
And her, white-muslined, waiting there  
In the porch with high-expectant heart,  
While still the thin mechanic air  
Went on inside.

At whiles would flit  
Swart bats, whose wings, be-webbed and tanned,  
Whirred like the wheels of ancient clocks:  
She laughed a hailing as she scanned  
Me in the gloom, the tuneful box  
Intoning it.

Lifelong to be  
I thought it. That there watched hard by  
A spirit who sang to the indoor tune,  
“O make the most of what is nigh!”  
I did not hear in my dull soul-swoon -  
I did not see.

## ON STURMINSTER FOOT-BRIDGE (ONOMATOPOEIC)

Reticulations creep upon the slack stream's face  
When the wind skims irritably past,  
The current clucks smartly into each hollow place  
That years of flood have scabbled in the pier's sodden base;  
The floating-lily leaves rot fast.

On a roof stand the swallows ranged in wistful waiting rows,  
Till they arrow off and drop like stones  
Among the eyot-withies at whose foot the river flows;  
And beneath the roof is she who in the dark world shows  
As a lattice-gleam when midnight moans.

## ROYAL SPONSORS

"The king and the queen will stand to the child;  
'Twill be handed down in song;  
And it's no more than their deserving,  
With my lord so faithful at Court so long,  
And so staunch and strong.

"O never before was known such a thing!  
'Twill be a grand time for all;  
And the beef will be a whole-roast bullock,  
And the servants will have a feast in the hall,  
And the ladies a ball.

"While from Jordan's stream by a traveller,  
In a flagon of silver wrought,  
And by caravan, stage-coach, wain, and waggon  
A precious trickle has been brought,  
Clear as when caught."

The morning came. To the park of the peer  
The royal couple bore;  
And the font was filled with the Jordan water,  
And the household awaited their guests before  
The carpeted door.

But when they went to the silk-lined cot  
The child was found to have died.  
"What's now to be done? We can disappoint not  
The king and queen!" the family cried  
With eyes spread wide.

“Even now they approach the chestnut-drive!  
The service must be read.”  
“Well, since we can’t christen the child alive,  
By God we shall have to christen him dead!”  
The marquis said.

Thus, breath-forsaken, a corpse was taken  
To the private chapel — yea -  
And the king knew not, nor the queen, God wot,  
That they answered for one returned to clay  
At the font that day.

## OLD FURNITURE

I know not how it may be with others  
Who sit amid relics of householdry  
That date from the days of their mothers’ mothers,  
But well I know how it is with me  
Continually.

I see the hands of the generations  
That owned each shiny familiar thing  
In play on its knobs and indentations,  
And with its ancient fashioning  
Still dallying:

Hands behind hands, growing paler and paler,  
As in a mirror a candle-flame  
Shows images of itself, each frailer  
As it recedes, though the eye may frame  
Its shape the same.

On the clock’s dull dial a foggy finger,  
Moving to set the minutes right  
With tentative touches that lift and linger  
In the wont of a moth on a summer night,  
Creeps to my sight.

On this old viol, too, fingers are dancing -  
As whilom — just over the strings by the nut,  
The tip of a bow receding, advancing  
In airy quivers, as if it would cut  
The plaintive gut.



And I see a face by that box for tinder,  
Glowing forth in fits from the dark,  
And fading again, as the linden cinder  
Kindles to red at the flinty spark,  
Or goes out stark.

Well, well. It is best to be up and doing,  
The world has no use for one to-day  
Who eyes things thus — no aim pursuing!  
He should not continue in this stay,  
But sink away.

## A THOUGHT IN TWO MOODS

I saw it — pink and white — revealed  
Upon the white and green;  
The white and green was a daisied field,  
The pink and white Ethleen.

And as I looked it seemed in kind  
That difference they had none;  
The two fair bodiments combined  
As varied miens of one.

A sense that, in some mouldering year,  
As one they both would lie,  
Made me move quickly on to her  
To pass the pale thought by.

She laughed and said: "Out there, to me,  
You looked so weather-browned,  
And brown in clothes, you seemed to be  
Made of the dusty ground!"

## THE LAST PERFORMANCE

"I am playing my oldest tunes," declared she,  
"All the old tunes I know, -  
Those I learnt ever so long ago."  
- Why she should think just then she'd play them  
Silence cloaks like snow.

When I returned from the town at nightfall  
Notes continued to pour  
As when I had left two hours before:  
It's the very last time," she said in closing;  
"From now I play no more."  
A few morns onward found her fading,  
And, as her life outflew,  
I thought of her playing her tunes right through;  
And I felt she had known of what was coming,  
And wondered how she knew.  
1912

## YOU ON THE TOWER

### I

"You on the tower of my factory -  
What do you see up there?  
Do you see Enjoyment with wide wings  
Advancing to reach me here?"  
- "Yea; I see Enjoyment with wide wings  
Advancing to reach you here."

### II

"Good. Soon I'll come and ask you  
To tell me again thereon . . .  
Well, what is he doing now? Hoi, there!"  
— "He still is flying on."  
"Ah, waiting till I have full-finished.  
Good. Tell me again anon . . ."

### III

Hoi, Watchman! I'm here. When comes he?  
Between my sweats I am chill."  
— "Oh, you there, working still?  
Why, surely he reached you a time back,  
And took you miles from your mill?  
He duly came in his winging,  
And now he has passed out of view.  
How can it be that you missed him?  
He brushed you by as he flew."

### THE INTERLOPER

"And I saw the figure and visage of Madness seeking for a home."  
There are three folk driving in a quaint old chaise,  
And the cliff-side track looks green and fair;  
I view them talking in quiet glee  
As they drop down towards the puffins' lair  
By the roughest of ways;  
But another with the three rides on, I see,  
Whom I like not to be there!  
No: it's not anybody you think of. Next  
A dwelling appears by a slow sweet stream  
Where two sit happy and half in the dark:  
They read, helped out by a frail-wick'd gleam,  
Some rhythmic text;  
But one sits with them whom they don't mark,  
One I'm wishing could not be there.

No: not whom you knew and name. And now  
I discern gay diners in a mansion-place,  
And the guests dropping wit — pert, prim, or choice,  
And the hostess's tender and laughing face,  
And the host's bland brow;  
I cannot help hearing a hollow voice,  
And I'd fain not hear it there.

No: it's not from the stranger you met once. Ah,  
Yet a goodlier scene than that succeeds;  
People on a lawn — quite a crowd of them. Yes,  
And they chatter and ramble as fancy leads;  
And they say, "Hurrah!"  
To a blithe speech made; save one, mirthless,  
Who ought not to be there.

Nay: it's not the pale Form your imagings raise,  
That waits on us all at a destined time,  
It is not the Fourth Figure the Furnace showed,  
O that it were such a shape sublime;  
In these latter days!  
It is that under which best lives corrode;  
Would, would it could not be there!

## **LOGS ON THE HEARTH A MEMORY OF A SISTER**

The fire advances along the log  
Of the tree we felled,  
Which bloomed and bore striped apples by the peck  
Till its last hour of bearing knelled.

The fork that first my hand would reach  
And then my foot  
In climbings upward inch by inch, lies now  
Sawn, sapless, darkening with soot.

Where the bark chars is where, one year,  
It was pruned, and bled -  
Then overgrew the wound. But now, at last,  
Its growings all have stagnated.

My fellow-climber rises dim  
From her chilly grave -  
Just as she was, her foot near mine on the bending limb,  
Laughing, her young brown hand awake.

December 1915.

## THE SUNSHADE

Ah — it's the skeleton of a lady's sunshade,  
Here at my feet in the hard rock's chink,  
Merely a naked sheaf of wires! -  
Twenty years have gone with their livers and diers  
Since it was silked in its white or pink.

Noonshine riddles the ribs of the sunshade,  
No more a screen from the weakest ray;  
Nothing to tell us the hue of its dyes,  
Nothing but rusty bones as it lies  
In its coffin of stone, unseen till to-day.

Where is the woman who carried that sun-shade  
Up and down this seaside place? -  
Little thumb standing against its stem,  
Thoughts perhaps bent on a love-stratagem,  
Softening yet more the already soft face!

Is the fair woman who carried that sunshade  
A skeleton just as her property is,  
Laid in the chink that none may scan?  
And does she regret — if regret dust can -  
The vain things thought when she flourished this?

SWANAGE CLIFFS.

## THE AGEING HOUSE

When the walls were red  
That now are seen  
To be overspread  
With a mouldy green,  
A fresh fair head  
Would often lean  
From the sunny casement  
And scan the scene,  
While blithely spoke the wind to the little sycamore tree.

But storms have raged  
Those walls about,  
And the head has aged  
That once looked out;  
And zest is suaged  
And trust is doubt,  
And slow effacement  
Is rife throughout,  
While fiercely girds the wind at the long-limbed sycamore tree!

## THE CAGED GOLDFINCH

Within a churchyard, on a recent grave,  
I saw a little cage  
That jailed a goldfinch. All was silence save  
Its hops from stage to stage.

There was inquiry in its wistful eye,  
And once it tried to sing;  
Of him or her who placed it there, and why,  
No one knew anything.

## AT MADAME TUSSAUD'S IN VICTORIAN YEARS

"That same first fiddler who leads the orchestra to-night  
Here fiddled four decades of years ago;  
He bears the same babe-like smile of self-centred delight,  
Same trinket on watch-chain, same ring on the hand with the bow.

"But his face, if regarded, is woefully wanner, and drier,  
And his once dark beard has grown straggling and gray;  
Yet a blissful existence he seems to have led with his lyre,  
In a trance of his own, where no wearing or tearing had sway.

"Mid these wax figures, who nothing can do, it may seem  
That to do but a little thing counts a great deal;  
To be watched by kings, councillors, queens, may be flattering to him

-  
With their glass eyes longing they too could wake notes that appeal."

\* \* \*

Ah, but he played staunchly — that fiddler — whoever he was,  
With the innocent heart and the soul-touching string:  
May he find the Fair Haven! For did he not smile with good cause?  
Yes; gamuts that graced forty years'-flight were not a small thing!

## THE BALLET

They crush together — a rustling heap of flesh -  
Of more than flesh, a heap of souls; and then  
They part, enmesh,  
And crush together again,  
Like the pink petals of a too sanguine rose  
Frightened shut just when it blows.

Though all alike in their tinsel livery,  
And indistinguishable at a sweeping glance,  
They muster, maybe,  
As lives wide in irrelevance;  
A world of her own has each one underneath,  
Detached as a sword from its sheath.

Daughters, wives, mistresses; honest or false, sold, bought;  
Hearts of all sizes; gay, fond, gushing, or penned,  
Various in thought  
Of lover, rival, friend;  
Links in a one-pulsed chain, all showing one smile,  
Yet severed so many a mile!

## THE FIVE STUDENTS

The sparrow dips in his wheel-rut bath,  
The sun grows passionate-eyed,  
And boils the dew to smoke by the paddock-path;  
As strenuously we stride, -  
Five of us; dark He, fair He, dark She, fair She, I,  
All beating by.

The air is shaken, the high-road hot,  
Shadowless swoons the day,  
The greens are sobered and cattle at rest; but not  
We on our urgent way, -  
Four of us; fair She, dark She, fair He, I, are there,  
But one — elsewhere.

Autumn moulds the hard fruit mellow,  
And forward still we press  
Through moors, briar-meshed plantations, clay-pits yellow,  
As in the spring hours — yes,  
Three of us: fair He, fair She, I, as heretofore,  
But — fallen one more.

The leaf drops: earthworms draw it in  
At night-time noiselessly,  
The fingers of birch and beech are skeleton-thin,  
And yet on the beat are we, -  
Two of us; fair She, I. But no more left to go  
The track we know.

Icicles tag the church-aisle leads,  
The flag-rope gibbers hoarse,  
The home-bound foot-folk wrap their snow-flaked heads,  
Yet I still stalk the course, -  
One of us . . . Dark and fair He, dark and fair She, gone:  
The rest — anon.

## THE WIND'S PROPHECY

I travel on by barren farms,  
And gulls glint out like silver flecks  
Against a cloud that speaks of wrecks,  
And bellies down with black alarms.  
I say: "Thus from my lady's arms  
I go; those arms I love the best!"  
The wind replies from dip and rise,  
"Nay; toward her arms thou journeyest."

A distant verge morosely gray  
Appears, while clots of flying foam  
Break from its muddy monochrome,  
And a light blinks up far away.  
I sigh: "My eyes now as all day  
Behold her ebon loops of hair!"  
Like bursting bonds the wind responds,  
"Nay, wait for tresses flashing fair!"



From tides the lofty coastlands screen  
Come smittings like the slam of doors,  
Or hammerings on hollow floors,  
As the swell cleaves through caves unseen.  
Say I: "Though broad this wild terrene,  
Her city home is matched of none!"  
From the hoarse skies the wind replies:  
"Thou shouldst have said her sea-bord one."

The all-prevailing clouds exclude  
The one quick timorous transient star;  
The waves outside where breakers are  
Huzza like a mad multitude.  
"Where the sun ups it, mist-imbued,"  
I cry, "there reigns the star for me!"  
The wind outshrieks from points and peaks:  
"Here, westward, where it downs, mean ye!"

Yonder the headland, vulturine,  
Snores like old Skrymer in his sleep,  
And every chasm and every steep  
Blackens as wakes each pharos-shine.  
"I roam, but one is safely mine,"  
I say. "God grant she stay my own!"  
Low laughs the wind as if it grinned:  
"Thy Love is one thou'st not yet known."  
Rewritten from an old copy.

## DURING WIND AND RAIN

They sing their dearest songs -  
He, she, all of them — yea,  
Treble and tenor and bass,  
And one to play;  
With the candles mooning each face . . .  
Ah, no; the years O!  
How the sick leaves reel down in throngs!

They clear the creeping moss -  
Elders and juniors — aye,  
Making the pathways neat  
And the garden gay;  
And they build a shady seat . . .  
Ah, no; the years, the years;  
See, the white storm-birds wing across!

They are blithely breakfasting all -  
Men and maidens — yea,  
Under the summer tree,  
With a glimpse of the bay,  
While pet fowl come to the knee . . .  
Ah, no; the years O!  
And the rotten rose is ript from the wall.

They change to a high new house,  
He, she, all of them — aye,  
Clocks and carpets and chairs  
On the lawn all day,  
And brightest things that are theirs . . .  
Ah, no; the years, the years;  
Down their carved names the rain-drop ploughs.

## HE PREFERS HER EARTHLY

This after-sunset is a sight for seeing,  
Cliff-heads of craggy cloud surrounding it.  
— And dwell you in that glory-show?  
You may; for there are strange strange things in being,  
Stranger than I know.

Yet if that chasm of splendour claim your presence  
Which glows between the ash cloud and the dun,  
How changed must be your mortal mould!  
Changed to a firmament-riding earthless essence  
From what you were of old:

All too unlike the fond and fragile creature  
Then known to me . . . Well, shall I say it plain?  
I would not have you thus and there,  
But still would grieve on, missing you, still feature  
You as the one you were.

## THE DOLLS

“Whenever you dress me dolls, mammy,  
Why do you dress them so,  
And make them gallant soldiers,  
When never a one I know;  
And not as gentle ladies  
With frills and frocks and curls,  
As people dress the dollies  
Of other little girls?”

Ah — why did she not answer:-  
”Because your mammy’s heed  
Is always gallant soldiers,  
As well may be, indeed.  
One of them was your daddy,  
His name I must not tell;  
He’s not the dad who lives here,  
But one I love too well.”

## MOLLY GONE

No more summer for Molly and me;  
There is snow on the tree,  
And the blackbirds plump large as the rooks are, almost,  
And the water is hard  
Where they used to dip bills at the dawn ere her figure was lost  
To these coasts, now my prison close-barred.

No more planting by Molly and me  
Where the beds used to be  
Of sweet-william; no training the clambering rose  
By the framework of fir  
Now bowing the pathway, whereon it swings gaily and blows  
As if calling commendment from her.

No more jauntings by Molly and me  
To the town by the sea,  
Or along over Whitesheet to Wynyard’s green Gap,  
Catching Montacute Crest  
To the right against Sedgmoor, and Corton-Hill’s far-distant cap,  
And Pilsdon and Lewsdon to west.

No more singing by Molly to me  
In the evenings when she  
Was in mood and in voice, and the candles were lit,  
And past the porch-quoin  
The rays would spring out on the laurels; and dumbledores hit  
On the pane, as if wishing to join.

Where, then, is Molly, who's no more with me?  
— As I stand on this lea,  
Thinking thus, there's a many-flamed star in the air,  
That tosses a sign  
That her glance is regarding its face from her home, so that there  
Her eyes may have meetings with mine.

## A BACKWARD SPRING

The trees are afraid to put forth buds,  
And there is timidity in the grass;  
The plots lie gray where gouged by spuds,  
And whether next week will pass  
Free of sly sour winds is the fret of each bush  
Of barberry waiting to bloom.

Yet the snowdrop's face betrays no gloom,  
And the primrose pants in its heedless push,  
Though the myrtle asks if it's worth the fight  
This year with frost and rime  
To venture one more time  
On delicate leaves and buttons of white  
From the selfsame bough as at last year's prime,  
And never to ruminare on or remember  
What happened to it in mid-December.

April 1917.

## LOOKING ACROSS

I

It is dark in the sky,  
And silence is where  
Our laughs rang high;  
And recall do I  
That One is out there.

## II

The dawn is not nigh,  
And the trees are bare,  
And the waterways sigh  
That a year has drawn by,  
And Two are out there.

## III

The wind drops to die  
Like the phantom of Care  
Too frail for a cry,  
And heart brings to eye  
That Three are out there.

## IV

This Life runs dry  
That once ran rare  
And rosy in dye,  
And fleet the days fly,  
And Four are out there.

## V

Tired, tired am I  
Of this earthly air,  
And my wraith asks: Why,  
Since these calm lie,  
Are not Five out there?  
December 1915.

## AT A SEASIDE TOWN IN 1869

(Young Lover's Reverie)  
I went and stood outside myself,  
Spelled the dark sky  
And ship-lights nigh,  
And grumbling winds that passed thereby.

Then next inside myself I looked,  
And there, above  
All, shone my Love,  
That nothing matched the image of.

Beyond myself again I ranged;  
And saw the free  
Life by the sea,  
And folk indifferent to me.

O 'twas a charm to draw within  
Thereafter, where  
But she was; care  
For one thing only, her hid there!

But so it chanced, without myself  
I had to look,  
And then I took  
More heed of what I had long forsook:

The boats, the sands, the esplanade,  
The laughing crowd;  
Light-hearted, loud  
Greetings from some not ill-endowed;

The evening sunlit cliffs, the talk,  
Hailings and halts,  
The keen sea-salts,  
The band, the Morgenblatter Waltz.

Still, when at night I drew inside  
Forward she came,  
Sad, but the same  
As when I first had known her name.

Then rose a time when, as by force,  
Outwardly wooed  
By contacts crude,  
Her image in abeyance stood . . .

At last I said: This outside life  
Shall not endure;  
I'll seek the pure  
Thought-world, and bask in her allure.

Myself again I crept within,  
Scanned with keen care  
The temple where  
She'd shone, but could not find her there.

I sought and sought. But O her soul  
Has not since thrown  
Upon my own  
One beam! Yea, she is gone, is gone.  
From an old note.

## THE GLIMPSE

She sped through the door  
And, following in haste,  
And stirred to the core,  
I entered hot-faced;  
But I could not find her,  
No sign was behind her.  
“Where is she?” I said:  
- “Who?” they asked that sat there;  
“Not a soul’s come in sight.”  
- “A maid with red hair.”  
- “Ah.” They paled. “She is dead.  
People see her at night,  
But you are the first  
On whom she has burst  
In the keen common light.”

It was ages ago,  
When I was quite strong:  
I have waited since, — O,  
I have waited so long!  
- Yea, I set me to own  
The house, where now lone  
I dwell in void rooms  
Booming hollow as tombs!  
But I never come near her,  
Though nightly I hear her.  
And my cheek has grown thin  
And my hair has grown gray  
With this waiting therein;  
But she still keeps away!

## THE PEDESTRIAN AN INCIDENT OF 1883

“Sir, will you let me give you a ride?  
Nox Venit, and the heath is wide.”  
- My phaeton-lantern shone on one  
Young, fair, even fresh,  
But burdened with flesh:  
A leathern satchel at his side,  
His breathings short, his coat undone.  
‘Twas as if his corpulent figure slopped  
With the shake of his walking when he stopped,  
And, though the night’s pinch grew acute,  
He wore but a thin  
Wind-thridded suit,  
Yet well-shaped shoes for walking in,  
Artistic beaver, cane gold-topped.  
“Alas, my friend,” he said with a smile,  
“I am daily bound to foot ten mile -  
Wet, dry, or dark — before I rest.  
Six months to live  
My doctors give  
Me as my prospect here, at best,  
Unless I vamp my sturdiest!”  
His voice was that of a man refined,  
A man, one well could feel, of mind,  
Quite winning in its musical ease;  
But in mould maligned  
By some disease;  
And I asked again. But he shook his head;  
Then, as if more were due, he said:-  
“A student was I — of Schopenhauer,  
Kant, Hegel, — and the fountained bower  
Of the Muses, too, knew my regard:  
But ah — I fear me  
The grave gapes near me! . . .  
Would I could this gross sheath discard,  
And rise an ethereal shape, unmarred!”



How I remember him! — his short breath,  
His aspect, marked for early death,  
As he dropped into the night for ever;  
One caught in his prime  
Of high endeavour;  
From all philosophies soon to sever  
Through an unconscinded trick of Time!

## WHO'S IN THE NEXT ROOM?

"Who's in the next room? — who?

I seemed to see  
Somebody in the dawning passing through,  
Unknown to me."

"Nay: you saw nought. He passed invisibly."

"Who's in the next room? — who?

I seem to hear  
Somebody muttering firm in a language new  
That chills the ear."

"No: you catch not his tongue who has entered there."

"Who's in the next room? — who?

I seem to feel  
His breath like a clammy draught, as if it drew  
From the Polar Wheel."

"No: none who breathes at all does the door conceal."

"Who's in the next room? — who?

A figure wan  
With a message to one in there of something due?  
Shall I know him anon?"

"Yea he; and he brought such; and you'll know him anon."

## AT A COUNTRY FAIR

At a bygone Western country fair  
I saw a giant led by a dwarf  
With a red string like a long thin scarf;  
How much he was the stronger there  
The giant seemed unaware.

And then I saw that the giant was blind,  
And the dwarf a shrewd-eyed little thing;  
The giant, mild, timid, obeyed the string  
As if he had no independent mind,  
Or will of any kind.

Wherever the dwarf decided to go  
At his heels the other trotted meekly,  
(Perhaps — I know not — reproaching weakly)  
Like one Fate bade that it must be so,  
Whether he wished or no.

Various sights in various climes  
I have seen, and more I may see yet,  
But that sight never shall I forget,  
And have thought it the sorriest of pantomimes,  
If once, a hundred times!

## **THE MEMORIAL BRASS: 186-**

"Why do you weep there, O sweet lady,  
Why do you weep before that brass? -  
(I'm a mere student sketching the mediaeval)  
Is some late death lined there, alas? -  
Your father's? . . . Well, all pay the debt that paid he!"

"Young man, O must I tell! — My husband's! And under  
His name I set mine, and my DEATH! -  
Its date left vacant till my heirs should fill it,  
Stating me faithful till my last breath."  
- "Madam, that you are a widow wakes my wonder!"

"O wait! For last month I — remarried!  
And now I fear 'twas a deed amiss.  
We've just come home. And I am sick and saddened  
At what the new one will say to this;  
And will he think — think that I should have tarried?"

"I may add, surely, — with no wish to harm him -  
That he's a temper — yes, I fear!  
And when he comes to church next Sunday morning,  
And sees that written . . . O dear, O dear!  
- "Madam, I swear your beauty will disarm him!"

## HER LOVE-BIRDS

When I looked up at my love-birds  
That Sunday afternoon,  
There was in their tiny tune  
A dying fetch like broken words,  
When I looked up at my love-birds  
That Sunday afternoon.

When he, too, scanned the love-birds  
On entering there that day,  
'Twas as if he had nought to say  
Of his long journey citywards,  
When he, too, scanned the love-birds,  
On entering there that day.

And billed and billed the love-birds,  
As 'twere in fond despair  
At the stress of silence where  
Had once been tones in tenor thirds,  
And billed and billed the love-birds  
As 'twere in fond despair.

O, his speech that chilled the love-birds,  
And smote like death on me,  
As I learnt what was to be,  
And knew my life was broke in sherds!  
O, his speech that chilled the love-birds,  
And smote like death on me!

## PAYING CALLS

I went by footpath and by stile  
Beyond where bustle ends,  
Strayed here a mile and there a mile  
And called upon some friends.

On certain ones I had not seen  
For years past did I call,  
And then on others who had been  
The oldest friends of all.

It was the time of midsummer  
When they had used to roam;  
But now, though tempting was the air,  
I found them all at home.

I spoke to one and other of them  
By mound and stone and tree  
Of things we had done ere days were dim,  
But they spoke not to me.

## **THE UPPER BIRCH-LEAVES**

Warm yellowy-green  
In the blue serene,  
How they skip and sway  
On this autumn day!  
They cannot know  
What has happened below, -  
That their boughs down there  
Are already quite bare,  
That their own will be  
When a week has passed, -  
For they jig as in glee  
To this very last.

But no; there lies  
At times in their tune  
A note that cries  
What at first I fear  
I did not hear:  
“O we remember  
At each wind’s hollo -  
Though life holds yet -  
We go hence soon,  
For ‘tis November;  
- But that you follow  
You may forget!”

## **IT NEVER LOOKS LIKE SUMMER**

“It never looks like summer here  
On Beeny by the sea.”  
But though she saw its look as drear,  
Summer it seemed to me.

It never looks like summer now  
Whatever weather's there;  
But ah, it cannot anyhow,  
On Beeny or elsewhere!

BOSCASTLE,  
March 8, 1913.

## EVERYTHING COMES

"The house is bleak and cold  
Built so new for me!  
All the winds upon the wold  
Search it through for me;  
No screening trees abound,  
And the curious eyes around  
Keep on view for me."

"My Love, I am planting trees  
As a screen for you  
Both from winds, and eyes that tease  
And peer in for you.  
Only wait till they have grown,  
No such bower will be known  
As I mean for you."

"Then I will bear it, Love,  
And will wait," she said.  
- So, with years, there grew a grove.  
"Skill how great!" she said.  
"As you wished, Dear?" — "Yes, I see!  
But — I'm dying; and for me  
'Tis too late," she said.

## THE MAN WITH A PAST

There was merry-making  
When the first dart fell  
As a heralding, -  
Till grinned the fully bared thing,  
And froze like a spell -  
Like a spell.

Innocent was she,  
Innocent was I,  
Too simple we!  
Before us we did not see,  
Nearing, aught wry -  
Aught wry!

I can tell it not now,  
It was long ago;  
And such things cow;  
But that is why and how  
Two lives were so -  
Were so.

Yes, the years matured,  
And the blows were three  
That time ensured  
On her, which she dumbly endured;  
And one on me -  
One on me.

## **HE FEARS HIS GOOD FORTUNE**

There was a glorious time  
At an epoch of my prime;  
Mornings beryl-bespread,  
And evenings golden-red;  
Nothing gray:  
And in my heart I said,  
“However this chanced to be,  
It is too full for me,  
Too rare, too rapturous, rash,  
Its spell must close with a crash  
Some day!”

The radiance went on  
Anon and yet anon,  
And sweetness fell around  
Like manna on the ground.  
"I've no claim,"  
Said I, "to be thus crowned:  
I am not worthy this:-  
Must it not go amiss? -  
Well . . . let the end foreseen  
Come duly! — I am serene."  
— And it came.

## HE WONDERERS ABOUT HIMSELF

No use hoping, or feeling vexed,  
Tugged by a force above or under  
Like some fantocine, much I wonder  
What I shall find me doing next!

Shall I be rushing where bright eyes be?  
Shall I be suffering sorrows seven?  
Shall I be watching the stars of heaven,  
Thinking one of them looks like thee?

Part is mine of the general Will, Cannot my share in the sum of sources Bend a  
digit the poise of forces, And a fair desire fulfil?

Nov. 1893.

## JUBILATE

"The very last time I ever was here," he said,  
"I saw much less of the quick than I saw of the dead."  
- He was a man I had met with somewhere before,  
But how or when I now could recall no more.

"The hazy mazy moonlight at one in the morning  
Spread out as a sea across the frozen snow,  
Glazed to live sparkles like the great breastplate adorning  
The priest of the Temple, with Urim and Thummim aglow.

"The yew-tree arms, glued hard to the stiff stark air,  
Hung still in the village sky as theatre-scenes  
When I came by the churchyard wall, and halted there  
At a shut-in sound of fiddles and tambourines.

“And as I stood hearkening, dulcimers, haut-boys, and shawms,  
And violoncellos, and a three-stringed double-bass,  
Joined in, and were intermixed with a singing of psalms;  
And I looked over at the dead men’s dwelling-place.

“Through the shine of the slippery snow I now could see,  
As it were through a crystal roof, a great company  
Of the dead minueting in stately step underground  
To the tune of the instruments I had before heard sound.

“It was ‘Eden New,’ and dancing they sang in a chore,  
‘We are out of it all! — yea, in Little-Ease cramped no more!’  
And their shrouded figures pacing with joy I could see  
As you see the stage from the gallery. And they had no heed of me.

“And I lifted my head quite dazed from the churchyard wall  
And I doubted not that it warned I should soon have my call.  
But — ” . . . Then in the ashes he emptied the dregs of his cup,  
And onward he went, and the darkness swallowed him up.

## HE REVISITS HIS FIRST SCHOOL

I should not have shown in the flesh,  
I ought to have gone as a ghost;  
It was awkward, unseemly almost,  
Standing solidly there as when fresh,  
Pink, tiny, crisp-curved,  
My pinions yet furled  
From the winds of the world.

After waiting so many a year  
To wait longer, and go as a sprite  
From the tomb at the mid of some night  
Was the right, radiant way to appear;  
Not as one wanzing weak  
From life’s roar and reek,  
His rest still to seek:

Yea, beglimpsed through the quaint quarried glass  
Of green moonlight, by me greener made,  
When they’d cry, perhaps, “There sits his shade  
In his olden haunt — just as he was  
When in Walkingame he  
Conned the grand Rule-of-Three  
With the bent of a bee.”



But to show in the afternoon sun,  
With an aspect of hollow-eyed care,  
When none wished to see me come there,  
Was a garish thing, better undone.  
Yes; wrong was the way;  
But yet, let me say,  
I may right it — some day.

## I THOUGHT, MY HEART

I thought, my Heart, that you had healed  
Of those sore smartings of the past,  
And that the summers had oversealed  
All mark of them at last.  
But closely scanning in the night  
I saw them standing crimson-bright  
Just as she made them:  
Nothing could fade them;  
Yea, I can swear  
That there they were -  
They still were there!

Then the Vision of her who cut them came,  
And looking over my shoulder said,  
“I am sure you deal me all the blame  
For those sharp smarts and red;  
But meet me, dearest, to-morrow night,  
In the churchyard at the moon’s half-height,  
And so strange a kiss  
Shall be mine, I wis,  
That you’ll cease to know  
If the wounds you show  
Be there or no!”

## FRAGMENT

At last I entered a long dark gallery,  
Catacomb-lined; and ranged at the side  
Were the bodies of men from far and wide  
Who, motion past, were nevertheless not dead.

“The sense of waiting here strikes strong;  
Everyone’s waiting, waiting, it seems to me;  
What are you waiting for so long? -  
What is to happen?” I said.

“O we are waiting for one called God,” said they,  
”(Though by some the Will, or Force, or Laws;  
And, vaguely, by some, the Ultimate Cause;)  
Waiting for him to see us before we are clay.  
Yes; waiting, waiting, for God TO KNOW IT” . . .

”To know what?” questioned I.  
“To know how things have been going on earth and below it:  
It is clear he must know some day.”  
I thereon asked them why.

“Since he made us humble pioneers  
Of himself in consciousness of Life’s tears,  
It needs no mighty prophecy  
To tell that what he could mindlessly show  
His creatures, he himself will know.

“By some still close-cowled mystery  
We have reached feeling faster than he,  
But he will overtake us anon,  
If the world goes on.”

## MIDNIGHT ON THE GREAT WESTERN

In the third-class seat sat the journeying boy,  
And the roof-lamp’s oily flame  
Played down on his listless form and face,  
Bewrapt past knowing to what he was going,  
Or whence he came.

In the band of his hat the journeying boy  
Had a ticket stuck; and a string  
Around his neck bore the key of his box,  
That twinkled gleams of the lamp’s sad beams  
Like a living thing.

What past can be yours, O journeying boy  
Towards a world unknown,  
Who calmly, as if incurious quite  
On all at stake, can undertake  
This plunge alone?

Knows your soul a sphere, O journeying boy,  
Our rude realms far above,  
Whence with spacious vision you mark and mete  
This region of sin that you find you in,  
But are not of?

## HONEYMOON TIME AT AN INN

At the shiver of morning, a little before the false dawn,  
The moon was at the window-square,  
Deedily brooding in deformed decay -  
The curve hewn off her cheek as by an adze;  
At the shiver of morning a little before the false dawn  
So the moon looked in there.

Her speechless eyeing reached across the chamber,  
Where lay two souls opprest,  
One a white lady sighing, "Why am I sad!"  
To him who sighed back, "Sad, my Love, am I!"  
And speechlessly the old moon conned the chamber,  
And these two reft of rest.

While their large-pupilled vision swept the scene there,  
Nought seeming imminent,  
Something fell sheer, and crashed, and from the floor  
Lay glittering at the pair with a shattered gaze,  
While their large-pupilled vision swept the scene there,  
And the many-eyed thing outleant.

With a start they saw that it was an old-time pier-glass  
Which had stood on the mantel near,  
Its silvering blemished, — yes, as if worn away  
By the eyes of the countless dead who had smirked at it  
Ere these two ever knew that old-time pier-glass  
And its vague and vacant leer.

As he looked, his bride like a moth skimmed forth, and kneeling  
Quick, with quivering sighs,  
Gathered the pieces under the moon's sly ray,  
Unwitting as an automaton what she did;  
Till he entreated, hasting to where she was kneeling,  
Let it stay where it lies!"

“Long years of sorrow this means!” breathed the lady  
As they retired. “Alas!”  
And she lifted one pale hand across her eyes.  
“Don’t trouble, Love; it’s nothing,” the bridegroom said.  
“Long years of sorrow for us!” murmured the lady,  
”Or ever this evil pass!”

And the Spirits Ironic laughed behind the wainscot,  
And the Spirits of Pity sighed.  
It’s good,” said the Spirits Ironic, “to tickle their minds  
With a portent of their wedlock’s after-grinds.”  
And the Spirits of Pity sighed behind the wainscot,  
”It’s a portent we cannot abide!

“More, what shall happen to prove the truth of the portent?”  
— ”Oh; in brief, they will fade till old,  
And their loves grow numbed ere death, by the cark of care.”  
- “But nought see we that asks for portents there? -  
‘Tis the lot of all.” — ”Well, no less true is a portent  
That it fits all mortal mould.”

## THE ROBIN

When up aloft  
I fly and fly,  
I see in pools  
The shining sky,  
And a happy bird  
Am I, am I!

When I descend  
Towards their brink  
I stand, and look,  
And stoop, and drink,  
And bathe my wings,  
And chink and prink.

When winter frost  
Makes earth as steel  
I search and search  
But find no meal,  
And most unhappy  
Then I feel.

But when it lasts,  
And snows still fall,  
I get to feel  
No grief at all,  
For I turn to a cold stiff  
Feathery ball!

## I ROSE AND WENT TO ROU'TOR TOWN

(She, alone)

I rose and went to Rou'tor Town  
With gaiety and good heart,  
And ardour for the start,  
That morning ere the moon was down  
That lit me off to Rou'tor Town  
With gaiety and good heart.

When sojourn soon at Rou'tor Town  
Wrote sorrows on my face,  
I strove that none should trace  
The pale and gray, once pink and brown,  
When sojourn soon at Rou'tor Town  
Wrote sorrows on my face.

The evil wrought at Rou'tor Town  
On him I'd loved so true  
I cannot tell anew:  
But nought can quench, but nought can drown  
The evil wrought at Rou'tor Town  
On him I'd loved so true!

## THE NETTLES

This, then, is the grave of my son,  
Whose heart she won! And nettles grow  
Upon his mound; and she lives just below.

How he upbraided me, and left,  
And our lives were cleft, because I said  
She was hard, unfeeling, caring but to wed.

Well, to see this sight I have fared these miles,  
And her firelight smiles from her window there,  
Whom he left his mother to cherish with tender care!

It is enough. I'll turn and go;  
Yes, nettles grow where lone lies he,  
Who spurned me for seeing what he could not see.

## IN A WAITING-ROOM

On a morning sick as the day of doom  
With the drizzling gray  
Of an English May,  
There were few in the railway waiting-room.  
About its walls were framed and varnished  
Pictures of liners, fly-blown, tarnished.  
The table bore a Testament  
For travellers' reading, if suchwise bent.

I read it on and on,  
And, thronging the Gospel of Saint John,  
Were figures — additions, multiplications -  
By some one scrawled, with sundry emendations;  
Not scoffingly designed,  
But with an absent mind, -  
Plainly a bagman's counts of cost,  
What he had profited, what lost;  
And whilst I wondered if there could have been  
Any particle of a soul  
In that poor man at all,  
To cypher rates of wage  
Upon that printed page,  
There joined in the charmless scene  
And stood over me and the scribbled book  
(To lend the hour's mean hue  
A smear of tragedy too)  
A soldier and wife, with haggard look  
Subdued to stone by strong endeavour;  
And then I heard  
From a casual word  
They were parting as they believed for ever.

But next there came  
Like the eastern flame  
Of some high altar, children — a pair -  
Who laughed at the fly-blown pictures there.  
“Here are the lovely ships that we,  
Mother, are by and by going to see!  
When we get there it’s ‘most sure to be fine,  
And the band will play, and the sun will shine!”  
It rained on the skylight with a din  
As we waited and still no train came in;  
But the words of the child in the squalid room  
Had spread a glory through the gloom.

## THE CLOCK-WINDER

It is dark as a cave,  
Or a vault in the nave  
When the iron door  
Is closed, and the floor  
Of the church relaid  
With trowel and spade.  
But the parish-clerk  
Cares not for the dark  
As he winds in the tower  
At a regular hour  
The rheumatic clock,  
Whose dilatory knock  
You can hear when praying  
At the day’s decaying,  
Or at any lone while  
From a pew in the aisle.

Up, up from the ground  
Around and around  
In the turret stair  
He clambers, to where  
The wheelwork is,  
With its tick, click, whizz,  
Reposefully measuring  
Each day to its end  
That mortal men spend  
In sorrowing and pleasuring  
Nightly thus does he climb  
To the trackway of Time.

Him I followed one night  
To this place without light,  
And, ere I spoke, heard  
Him say, word by word,  
At the end of his winding,  
The darkness unminding:-

“So I wipe out one more,  
My Dear, of the sore  
Sad days that still be,  
Like a drying Dead Sea,  
Between you and me!”

Who she was no man knew:  
He had long borne him blind  
To all womankind;  
And was ever one who  
Kept his past out of view.

## OLD EXCURSIONS

“What’s the good of going to Ridgeway,  
Cerne, or Sydling Mill,  
Or to Yell’ham Hill,  
Blithely bearing Casterbridge-way  
As we used to do?  
She will no more climb up there,  
Or be visible anywhere  
In those haunts we knew.”



But to-night, while walking weary,  
Near me seemed her shade,  
Come as 'twere to upbraid  
This my mood in deeming dreary  
Scenes that used to please;  
And, if she did come to me,  
Still solicitous, there may be  
Good in going to these.

So, I'll care to roam to Ridgeway,  
Cerne, or Sydling Mill,  
Or to Yell'ham Hill,  
Blithely bearing Casterbridge-way  
As we used to do,  
Since her phasm may flit out there,  
And may greet me anywhere  
In those haunts we knew.

April 1913.

## THE MASKED FACE

I found me in a great surging space,  
At either end a door,  
And I said: "What is this giddy place,  
With no firm-fixed floor,  
That I knew not of before?"  
"It is Life," said a mask-clad face.

I asked: "But how do I come here,  
Who never wished to come;  
Can the light and air be made more clear,  
The floor more quiet some,  
And the doors set wide? They numb  
Fast-locked, and fill with fear."

The mask put on a bleak smile then,  
And said, "O vassal-wight,  
There once complained a goosequill pen  
To the scribe of the Infinite  
Of the words it had to write  
Because they were past its ken."

## IN A WHISPERING GALLERY

That whisper takes the voice  
Of a Spirit's compassionings  
Close, but invisible,  
And throws me under a spell  
At the kindling vision it brings;  
And for a moment I rejoice,  
And believe in transcendent things  
That would mould from this muddy earth  
A spot for the splendid birth  
Of everlasting lives,  
Whereto no night arrives;  
And this gaunt gray gallery  
A tabernacle of worth  
On this drab-aired afternoon,  
When you can barely see  
Across its hazed lacune  
If opposite aught there be  
Of fleshed humanity  
Wherewith I may commune;  
Or if the voice so near  
Be a soul's voice floating here.

## THE SOMETHING THAT SAVED HIM

It was when  
Whirls of thick waters laved me  
Again and again,  
That something arose and saved me;  
Yea, it was then.

In that day  
Unseeing the azure went I  
On my way,  
And to white winter bent I,  
Knowing no May.

Reft of renown,  
Under the night clouds beating  
Up and down,  
In my needfulness greeting  
Cit and clown.

Long there had been  
Much of a murky colour  
In the scene,  
Dull prospects meeting duller;  
Nought between.

Last, there loomed  
A closing-in blind alley,  
Though there boomed  
A feeble summons to rally  
Where it gloomed.

The clock rang;  
The hour brought a hand to deliver;  
I upsprang,  
And looked back at den, ditch and river,  
And sang.

## **THE ENEMY'S PORTRAIT**

He saw the portrait of his enemy, offered  
At auction in a street he journeyed nigh,  
That enemy, now late dead, who in his life-time  
Had injured deeply him the passer-by.  
"To get that picture, pleased be God, I'll try,  
And utterly destroy it; and no more  
Shall be inflicted on man's mortal eye  
A countenance so sinister and sore!"

And so he bought the painting. Driving homeward,  
"The frame will come in useful," he declared,  
"The rest is fuel." On his arrival, weary,  
Asked what he bore with him, and how he fared,  
He said he had bid for a picture, though he cared  
For the frame only: on the morrow he  
Would burn the canvas, which could well be spared,  
Seeing that it portrayed his enemy.

Next day some other duty found him busy;  
The foe was laid his face against the wall;  
But on the next he set himself to loosen  
The straining-strips. And then a casual call  
Prevented his proceeding therewithal;  
And thus the picture waited, day by day,  
Its owner's pleasure, like a wretched thrall,  
Until a month and more had slipped away.

And then upon a morn he found it shifted,  
Hung in a corner by a servitor.  
"Why did you take on you to hang that picture?  
You know it was the frame I bought it for."  
"It stood in the way of every visitor,  
And I just hitched it there." — "Well, it must go:  
I don't commemorate men whom I abhor.  
Remind me 'tis to do. The frame I'll stow."

But things become forgotten. In the shadow  
Of the dark corner hung it by its string,  
And there it stayed — once noticed by its owner,  
Who said, "Ah me — I must destroy that thing!"  
But when he died, there, none remembering,  
It hung, till moved to prominence, as one sees;  
And comers pause and say, examining,  
"I thought they were the bitterest enemies?"

## IMAGININGS

She saw herself a lady  
With fifty frocks in wear,  
And rolling wheels, and rooms the best,  
And faithful maidens' care,  
And open lawns and shady  
For weathers warm or drear.

She found herself a striver,  
All liberal gifts debarred,  
With days of gloom, and movements stressed,  
And early visions marred,  
And got no man to wive her  
But one whose lot was hard.

Yet in the moony night-time  
She steals to stile and lea  
During his heavy slumberous rest  
When homecome wearily,  
And dreams of some blest bright-time  
She knows can never be.

## ON THE DOORSTEP

The rain imprinted the step's wet shine  
With target-circles that quivered and crossed  
As I was leaving this porch of mine;  
When from within there swelled and paused  
A song's sweet note;  
And back I turned, and thought,  
"Here I'll abide."

The step shines wet beneath the rain,  
Which prints its circles as heretofore;  
I watch them from the porch again,  
But no song-notes within the door  
Now call to me  
To shun the dripping lea  
And forth I stride.

Jan. 1914.

## SIGNS AND TOKENS

Said the red-cloaked crone  
In a whispered moan:  
"The dead man was limp  
When laid in his chest;  
Yea, limp; and why  
But to signify  
That the grave will crimp  
Ere next year's sun  
Yet another one  
Of those in that house -  
It may be the best -  
For its endless drowse!"

Said the brown-shawled dame  
To confirm the same:

“And the slothful flies  
On the rotting fruit  
Have been seen to wear  
While crawling there  
Crape scarves, by eyes  
That were quick and acute;  
As did those that had pitched  
On the cows by the pails,  
And with flaps of their tails  
Were far away switched.”

Said the third in plaid,  
Each word being weighed:

“And trotting does  
In the park, in the lane,  
And just outside  
The shuttered pane,  
Have also been heard -  
Quick feet as light  
As the feet of a sprite -  
And the wise mind knows  
What things may betide  
When such has occurred.”

Cried the black-craped fourth,  
Cold faced as the north:

“O, though giving such  
Some head-room, I smile  
At your falterings  
When noting those things  
Round your domicile!  
For what, what can touch  
One whom, riven of all  
That makes life gay,  
No hints can appal  
Of more takings away!”

## PATHS OF FORMER TIME

No; no;  
It must not be so:  
They are the ways we do not go.  
Still chew  
The kine, and moo  
In the meadows we used to wander through;  
Still purl  
The rivulets and curl  
Towards the weirs with a musical swirl;  
Haymakers  
As in former years  
Rake rolls into heaps that the pitchfork rears;  
Wheels crack  
On the turfy track  
The waggon pursues with its toppling pack.  
"Why then shun -  
Since summer's not done -  
All this because of the lack of one?"  
Had you been  
Sharer of that scene  
You would not ask while it bites in keen  
Why it is so  
We can no more go  
By the summer paths we used to know!  
1913

## THE CLOCK OF THE YEARS

"A spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up."  
And the Spirit said,  
"I can make the clock of the years go backward,  
But am loth to stop it where you will."  
And I cried, "Agreed  
To that. Proceed:  
It's better than dead!"

He answered, "Peace";  
And called her up — as last before me;  
Then younger, younger she freshed, to the year  
I first had known  
Her woman-grown,  
And I cried, "Cease! -  
"Thus far is good -  
It is enough — let her stay thus always!"  
But alas for me. He shook his head:  
No stop was there;  
And she waned child-fair,  
And to babyhood.  
Still less in mien  
To my great sorrow became she slowly,  
And smalled till she was nought at all  
In his checkless griff;  
And it was as if  
She had never been.  
"Better," I plained,  
"She were dead as before! The memory of her  
Had lived in me; but it cannot now!"  
And coldly his voice:  
"It was your choice  
To mar the ordained."  
1916

## AT THE PIANO

A woman was playing,  
A man looking on;  
And the mould of her face,  
And her neck, and her hair,  
Which the rays fell upon  
Of the two candles there,  
Sent him mentally straying  
In some fancy-place  
Where pain had no trace.



A cowed Apparition  
Came pushing between;  
And her notes seemed to sigh,  
And the lights to burn pale,  
As a spell numbed the scene.  
But the maid saw no bale,  
And the man no monition;  
And Time laughed awry,  
And the Phantom hid nigh.

## THE SHADOW ON THE STONE

I went by the Druid stone  
That broods in the garden white and lone,  
And I stopped and looked at the shifting shadows  
That at some moments fall thereon  
From the tree hard by with a rhythmic swing,  
And they shaped in my imagining  
To the shade that a well-known head and shoulders  
Threw there when she was gardening.

I thought her behind my back,  
Yea, her I long had learned to lack,  
And I said: "I am sure you are standing behind me,  
Though how do you get into this old track?"  
And there was no sound but the fall of a leaf  
As a sad response; and to keep down grief  
I would not turn my head to discover  
That there was nothing in my belief.

Yet I wanted to look and see  
That nobody stood at the back of me;  
But I thought once more: "Nay, I'll not unvision  
A shape which, somehow, there may be."  
So I went on softly from the glade,  
And left her behind me throwing her shade,  
As she were indeed an apparition -  
My head unturned lest my dream should fade.

Begun 1913: finished 1916.

## IN THE GARDEN (M. H.)

We waited for the sun  
To break its cloudy prison  
(For day was not yet done,  
And night still unbegun)  
Leaning by the dial.

After many a trial -  
We all silent there -  
It burst as new-arisen,  
Throwing a shade to where  
Time travelled at that minute.

Little saw we in it,  
But this much I know,  
Of lookers on that shade,  
Her towards whom it made  
Soonest had to go.

1915

## THE TREE AND THE LADY

I have done all I could  
For that lady I knew! Through the heats I have shaded her,  
Drawn to her songsters when summer has jaded her,  
Home from the heath or the wood.

At the mirth-time of May,  
When my shadow first lured her, I'd donned my new bravery  
Of greenh: 'twas my all. Now I shiver in slavery,  
Icicles grieving me gray.

Plumed to every twig's end  
I could tempt her chair under me. Much did I treasure her  
During those days she had nothing to pleasure her;  
Mutely she used me as friend.

I'm a skeleton now,  
And she's gone, craving warmth. The rime sticks like a skin to me;  
Through me Arcturus peers; Nor'lights shoot into me;  
Gone is she, scorning my bough!

## AN UPBRAIDING

Now I am dead you sing to me  
The songs we used to know,  
But while I lived you had no wish  
Or care for doing so.

Now I am dead you come to me  
In the moonlight, comfortless;  
Ah, what would I have given alive  
To win such tenderness!

When you are dead, and stand to me  
Not differenced, as now,  
But like again, will you be cold  
As when we lived, or how?

## THE YOUNG GLASS-STAINER

“These Gothic windows, how they wear me out  
With cusp and foil, and nothing straight or square,  
Crude colours, leaden borders roundabout,  
And fitting in Peter here, and Matthew there!

“What a vocation! Here do I draw now  
The abnormal, loving the Hellenic norm;  
Martha I paint, and dream of Hera’s brow,  
Mary, and think of Aphrodite’s form.”

Nov. 1893.

## LOOKING AT A PICTURE ON AN ANNIVERSARY

But don’t you know it, my dear,  
Don’t you know it,  
That this day of the year  
(What rainbow-rays embow it!)  
We met, strangers confessed,  
But parted — blest?

Though at this query, my dear,  
There in your frame  
Unmoved you still appear,  
You must be thinking the same,  
But keep that look demure  
Just to allure.

And now at length a trace  
I surely vision  
Upon that wistful face  
Of old-time recognition,  
Smiling forth, "Yes, as you say,  
It is the day."

For this one phase of you  
Now left on earth  
This great date must endue  
With pulsings of rebirth? -  
I see them vitalise  
Those two deep eyes!

But if this face I con  
Does not declare  
Consciousness living on  
Still in it, little I care  
To live myself, my dear,  
Lone-labouring here!

Spring 1913.

## THE CHOIRMASTER'S BURIAL

He often would ask us  
That, when he died,  
After playing so many  
To their last rest,  
If out of us any  
Should here abide,  
And it would not task us,  
We would with our lutes  
Play over him  
By his grave-brim  
The psalm he liked best -  
The one whose sense suits  
"Mount Ephraim" -  
And perhaps we should seem  
To him, in Death's dream,  
Like the seraphim.

As soon as I knew  
That his spirit was gone  
I thought this his due,  
And spoke thereupon.  
"I think," said the vicar,  
"A read service quicker  
Than viols out-of-doors  
In these frosts and hoars.  
That old-fashioned way  
Requires a fine day,  
And it seems to me  
It had better not be."

Hence, that afternoon,  
Though never knew he  
That his wish could not be,  
To get through it faster  
They buried the master  
Without any tune.

But 'twas said that, when  
At the dead of next night  
The vicar looked out,  
There struck on his ken  
Thronged roundabout,  
Where the frost was graying  
The headstoned grass,  
A band all in white  
Like the saints in church-glass,  
Singing and playing  
The ancient stave  
By the choirmaster's grave.  
Such the tenor man told  
When he had grown old.

## THE MAN WHO FORGOT

At a lonely cross where bye-roads met  
I sat upon a gate;  
I saw the sun decline and set,  
And still was fain to wait.  
A trotting boy passed up the way  
And roused me from my thought;  
I called to him, and showed where lay  
A spot I shyly sought.  
"A summer-house fair stands hidden where  
You see the moonlight thrown;  
Go, tell me if within it there  
A lady sits alone."  
He half demurred, but took the track,  
And silence held the scene;  
I saw his figure rambling back;  
I asked him if he had been.  
"I went just where you said, but found  
No summer-house was there:  
Beyond the slope 'tis all bare ground;  
Nothing stands anywhere.  
"A man asked what my brains were worth;  
The house, he said, grew rotten,  
And was pulled down before my birth,  
And is almost forgotten!"

My right mind woke, and I stood dumb;  
Forty years' frost and flower  
Had fled since I'd used to come  
To meet her in that bower.

## WHILE DRAWING IN A CHURCH-YARD

"It is sad that so many of worth,  
Still in the flesh," sougled the yew,  
"Misjudge their lot whom kindly earth  
Secludes from view.

"They ride their diurnal round  
Each day-span's sum of hours  
In peerless ease, without jolt or bound  
Or ache like ours.

"If the living could but hear  
What is heard by my roots as they creep  
Round the restful flock, and the things said there,  
No one would weep."

"Now set among the wise,  
They say: 'Enlarged in scope,  
That no God trumpet us to rise  
We truly hope.'"

I listened to his strange tale  
In the mood that stillness brings,  
And I grew to accept as the day wore pale  
That show of things.

## FOR LIFE I HAD NEVER CARED GREATLY

For Life I had never cared greatly,  
As worth a man's while;  
Peradventures unsought,  
Peradventures that finished in nought,  
Had kept me from youth and through manhood till lately  
Unwon by its style.

In earliest years — why I know not -  
I viewed it askance;  
Conditions of doubt,  
Conditions that leaked slowly out,  
May haply have bent me to stand and to show not  
Much zest for its dance.

With symphonies soft and sweet colour  
It courted me then,  
Till evasions seemed wrong,  
Till evasions gave in to its song,  
And I warmed, until living aloofly loomed duller  
Than life among men.

Anew I found nought to set eyes on,  
When, lifting its hand,  
It uncloaked a star,  
Uncloaked it from fog-damps afar,  
And showed its beams burning from pole to horizon  
As bright as a brand.

And so, the rough highway forgetting,  
I pace hill and dale  
Regarding the sky,  
Regarding the vision on high,  
And thus re-illumed have no humour for letting  
My pilgrimage fail.

## **MEN WHO MARCH AWAY (SONG OF THE SOLDIERS)**

What of the faith and fire within us  
Men who march away  
Ere the barn-cocks say  
Night is growing gray,  
Leaving all that here can win us;  
What of the faith and fire within us  
Men who march away?



Is it a purblind prank, O think you,  
Friend with the musing eye,  
Who watch us stepping by  
With doubt and dolorous sigh?  
Can much pondering so hoodwink you!  
Is it a purblind prank, O think you,  
Friend with the musing eye?

Nay. We well see what we are doing,  
Though some may not see -  
Dalliers as they be -  
England's need are we;  
Her distress would leave us rueing:  
Nay. We well see what we are doing,  
Though some may not see!

In our heart of hearts believing  
Victory crowns the just,  
And that braggarts must  
Surely bite the dust,  
Press we to the field ungrieving,  
In our heart of hearts believing  
Victory crowns the just.

Hence the faith and fire within us  
Men who march away  
Ere the barn-cocks say  
Night is growing gray,  
Leaving all that here can win us;  
Hence the faith and fire within us  
Men who march away.

September 5, 1914.

## HIS COUNTRY

[He travels southward, and looks around;]  
I journeyed from my native spot  
Across the south sea shine,  
And found that people in hall and cot  
Laboured and suffered each his lot  
Even as I did mine.

[and cannot discern the boundary]  
Thus noting them in meads and marts  
It did not seem to me  
That my dear country with its hearts,  
Minds, yearnings, worse and better parts  
Had ended with the sea.

[of his native country;]  
I further and further went anon,  
As such I still surveyed,  
And further yet — yea, on and on,  
And all the men I looked upon  
Had heart-strings fellow-made.

[or where his duties to his fellow-creatures end;]  
I traced the whole terrestrial round,  
Homing the other side;  
Then said I, “What is there to bound  
My denizenship? It seems I have found  
Its scope to be world-wide.”

[nor who are his enemies]  
I asked me: “Whom have I to fight,  
And whom have I to dare,  
And whom to weaken, crush, and blight?  
My country seems to have kept in sight  
On my way everywhere.”

1913

## ENGLAND TO GERMANY IN 1914

“O England, may God punish thee!”  
- Is it that Teuton genius flowers  
Only to breathe malignity  
Upon its friend of earlier hours?  
- We have eaten your bread, you have eaten ours,  
We have loved your burgs, your pines’ green moan,  
Fair Rhine-stream, and its storied towers;  
Your shining souls of deathless dowers  
Have won us as they were our own:

We have nursed no dreams to shed your blood,  
We have matched your might not rancorously,  
Save a flushed few whose blatant mood  
You heard and marked as well as we  
To tongue not in their country's key;  
But yet you cry with face aflame,  
"O England, may God punish thee!"  
And foul in onward history,  
And present sight, your ancient name.  
Autumn 1914.

## **ON THE BELGIAN EXPATRIATION**

I dreamt that people from the Land of Chimes  
Arrived one autumn morning with their bells,  
To hoist them on the towers and citadels  
Of my own country, that the musical rhymes  
Rung by them into space at meted times  
Amid the market's daily stir and stress,  
And the night's empty star-lit silentness,  
Might solace souls of this and kindred climes.  
Then I awoke; and lo, before me stood  
The visioned ones, but pale and full of fear;  
From Bruges they came, and Antwerp, and Ostend,  
No carillons in their train. Foes of mad mood  
Had shattered these to shards amid the gear  
Of ravaged roof, and smouldering gable-end.  
October 18, 1914.

## **AN APPEAL TO AMERICA ON BEHALF OF THE BELGIAN DESTITUTE**

Seven millions stand  
Emaciate, in that ancient Delta-land:-  
We here, full-charged with our own maimed and dead,  
And coiled in throbbing conflicts slow and sore,  
Can poorly soothe these ails unmerited  
Of souls forlorn upon the facing shore! -  
Where naked, gaunt, in endless band on band  
Seven millions stand.

No man can say  
To your great country that, with scant delay,  
You must, perforce, ease them in their loud need:  
We know that nearer first your duty lies;  
But — is it much to ask that you let plead  
Your lovingkindness with you — wooing-wise -  
Albeit that aught you owe, and must repay,  
No man can say?  
December 1914.

## THE PITY OF IT

I walked in loamy Wessex lanes, afar  
From rail-track and from highway, and I heard  
In field and farmstead many an ancient word  
Of local lineage like “Thu bist,” “Er war,”  
“Ich woll,” “Er sholl,” and by-talk similar,  
Nigh as they speak who in this month’s moon gird  
At England’s very loins, thereunto spurred  
By gangs whose glory threats and slaughters are.  
Then seemed a Heart crying: “Whosoever they be  
At root and bottom of this, who flung this flame  
Between kin folk kin tongued even as are we,  
“Sinister, ugly, lurid, be their fame;  
May their familiars grow to shun their name,  
And their brood perish everlastingly.”  
April 1915.

## IN TIME OF WARS AND TUMULTS

“Would that I’d not drawn breath here!” some one said,  
“To stalk upon this stage of evil deeds,  
Where purposelessly month by month proceeds  
A play so sorely shaped and blood-bespread.”  
Yet had his spark not quickened, but lain dead  
To the gross spectacles of this our day,  
And never put on the proffered cloak of clay,  
He had but known not things now manifested;

Life would have swirled the same. Morns would have dawned  
On the uprooting by the night-gun's stroke  
Of what the yester noonshine brought to flower;  
Brown martial brows in dying throes have wanned  
Despite his absence; hearts no fewer been broke  
By Empery's insatiate lust of power.  
1915

## IN TIME OF "THE BREAKING OF NATIONS"

### I

Only a man harrowing clods  
In a slow silent walk  
With an old horse that stumbles and nods  
Half asleep as they stalk.

### II

Only thin smoke without flame  
From the heaps of couch-grass;  
Yet this will go onward the same  
Though Dynasties pass.

### III

Yonder a maid and her wight  
Come whispering by:  
War's annals will cloud into night  
Ere their story die.  
1915

## **CRY OF THE HOMELESS AFTER THE PRUSSIAN INVASION OF BELGIUM**

“Instigator of the ruin -  
Whichsoever thou mayst be  
Of the masterful of Europe  
That contrived our misery -  
Hear the wormwood-worded greeting  
From each city, shore, and lea  
Of thy victims:

”Conqueror, all hail to thee!”

“Yea: ‘All hail!’ we grimly shout thee  
That wast author, fount, and head  
Of these wounds, whoever proven  
When our times are throughly read.  
‘May thy loved be slighted, blighted,  
And forsaken,’ be it said  
By thy victims,  
’And thy children beg their bread!’

“Nay: a richer malediction! -  
Rather let this thing befall  
In time’s hurling and unfurling  
On the night when comes thy call;  
That compassion dew thy pillow  
And bedrench thy senses all  
For thy victims,  
Till death dark thee with his pall.”

August 1915.

## **BEFORE MARCHING AND AFTER (in Memoriam F. W. G.)**

Orion swung southward aslant  
Where the starved Egdon pine-trees had thinned,  
The Pleiads aloft seemed to pant  
With the heather that twitched in the wind;  
But he looked on indifferent to sights such as these,  
Unswayed by love, friendship, home joy or home sorrow,  
And wondered to what he would march on the morrow.

The crazed household-clock with its whirr  
Rang midnight within as he stood,  
He heard the low sighing of her  
Who had striven from his birth for his good;  
But he still only asked the spring starlight, the breeze,  
What great thing or small thing his history would borrow  
From that Game with Death he would play on the morrow.

When the heath wore the robe of late summer,  
And the fuchsia-bells, hot in the sun,  
Hung red by the door, a quick comer  
Brought tidings that marching was done  
For him who had joined in that game overseas  
Where Death stood to win, though his name was to borrow  
A brightness therefrom not to fade on the morrow.  
September 1915.

## OFTEN WHEN WARRING

Often when warring for he wist not what,  
An enemy-soldier, passing by one weak,  
Has tendered water, wiped the burning cheek,  
And cooled the lips so black and clammed and hot;  
Then gone his way, and maybe quite forgot  
The deed of grace amid the roar and reek;  
Yet larger vision than loud arms bespeak  
He there has reached, although he has known it not.

For natural mindsight, triumphing in the act  
Over the throes of artificial rage,  
Has thuswise muffled victory's peal of pride,  
Rended to ribands policy's specious page  
That deals but with evasion, code, and pact,  
And war's apology wholly stultified.

1915

## THEN AND NOW

When battles were fought  
With a chivalrous sense of Should and Ought,  
In spirit men said,  
"End we quick or dead,  
Honour is some reward!  
Let us fight fair — for our own best or worst;  
So, Gentlemen of the Guard,  
Fire first!"

In the open they stood,  
Man to man in his knightlihood:  
They would not deign  
To profit by a stain  
On the honourable rules,  
Knowing that practise perfidy no man durst  
Who in the heroic schools  
Was nurst.

But now, behold, what  
Is warfare wherein honour is not!  
Rama laments  
Its dead innocents:  
Herod breathes: "Sly slaughter  
Shall rule! Let us, by modes once called accurst,  
Overhead, under water,  
Stab first."

1915

## A CALL TO NATIONAL SERVICE

Up and be doing, all who have a hand  
To lift, a back to bend. It must not be  
In times like these that vaguely linger we  
To air our vaunts and hopes; and leave our land  
Untended as a wild of weeds and sand.  
- Say, then, "I come!" and go, O women and men  
Of palace, ploughshare, easel, counter, pen;  
That scareless, scathless, England still may stand.

Would years but let me stir as once I stirred  
At many a dawn to take the forward track,  
And with a stride plunged on to enterprize,



I now would speed like yester wind that whirred  
Through yielding pines; and serve with never a slack,  
So loud for promptness all around outcries!  
March 1917.

## THE DEAD AND THE LIVING ONE

The dead woman lay in her first night's grave,  
And twilight fell from the clouds' concave,  
And those she had asked to forgive forgave.

The woman passing came to a pause  
By the heaped white shapes of wreath and cross,  
And looked upon where the other was.

And as she mused there thus spoke she:  
"Never your countenance did I see,  
But you've been a good good friend to me!"

Rose a plaintive voice from the sod below:  
"O woman whose accents I do not know,  
What is it that makes you approve me so?"

"O dead one, ere my soldier went,  
I heard him saying, with warm intent,  
To his friend, when won by your blandishment:

"I would change for that lass here and now!  
And if I return I may break my vow  
To my present Love, and contrive somehow

"To call my own this new-found pearl,  
Whose eyes have the light, whose lips the curl,  
I always have looked for in a girl!"

" — And this is why that by ceasing to be -  
Though never your countenance did I see -  
You prove you a good good friend to me;

"And I pray each hour for your soul's repose  
In gratitude for your joining those  
No lover will clasp when his campaigns close."

Away she turned, when arose to her eye  
A martial phantom of gory dye,  
That said, with a thin and far-off sigh:

"O sweetheart, neither shall I clasp you,  
For the foe this day has pierced me through,  
And sent me to where she is. Adieu! -

“And forget not when the night-wind’s whine  
Calls over this turf where her limbs recline,  
That it travels on to lament by mine.”

There was a cry by the white-flowered mound,  
There was a laugh from underground,  
There was a deeper gloom around.

1915

## A NEW YEAR’S EVE IN WAR TIME

### I

Phantasmal fears,  
And the flap of the flame,  
And the throb of the clock,  
And a loosened slate,  
And the blind night’s drone,  
Which tiredly the spectral pines intone!

### II

And the blood in my ears  
Strumming always the same,  
And the gable-cock  
With its fitful grate,  
And myself, alone.

### III

The twelfth hour nears  
Hand-hid, as in shame;  
I undo the lock,  
And listen, and wait  
For the Young Unknown.

### IV

In the dark there careers -  
As if Death astride came  
To numb all with his knock -  
A horse at mad rate  
Over rut and stone.

## V

No figure appears,  
No call of my name,  
No sound but "Tic-toc"  
Without check. Past the gate  
It clatters — is gone.

## VI

What rider it bears  
There is none to proclaim;  
And the Old Year has struck,  
And, scarce animate,  
The New makes moan.

## VII

Maybe that "More Tears! -  
More Famine and Flame -  
More Severance and Shock!"  
Is the order from Fate  
That the Rider speeds on  
To pale Europe; and tiredly the pines intone.  
1915-1916.

## I MET A MAN

I met a man when night was nigh,  
Who said, with shining face and eye  
Like Moses' after Sinai:-

"I have seen the Moulder of Monarchies,  
Realms, peoples, plains and hills,  
Sitting upon the sunlit seas! -  
And, as He sat, soliloquies  
Fell from Him like an antiphonic breeze  
That pricks the waves to thrills.

"Meseemed that of the maimed and dead  
Mown down upon the globe, -  
Their plenteous blooms of promise shed  
Ere fruiting-time — His words were said,  
Sitting against the western web of red  
Wrapt in His crimson robe.

”And I could catch them now and then:  
— ’Why let these gambling clans  
Of human Cockers, pit liege men  
From mart and city, dale and glen,  
In death-mains, but to swell and swell again  
Their swollen All-Empery plans,

”When a mere nod (if my malign  
Compeer but passive keep)  
Would mend that old mistake of mine  
I made with Saul, and ever consign  
All Lords of War whose sanctuaries enshrine  
Liberticide, to sleep?

”With violence the lands are spread  
Even as in Israel’s day,  
And it repenteth me I bred  
Chartered armipotents lust-led  
To feuds . . . Yea, grieves my heart, as then I said,  
To see their evil way!’

— ”The utterance grew, and flapped like flame,  
And further speech I feared;  
But no Celestial tongued acclaim,  
And no huzzas from earthlings came,  
And the heavens mutely masked as ‘twere in shame  
Till daylight disappeared.”

Thus ended he as night rode high -  
The man of shining face and eye,  
Like Moses’ after Sinai.

1916

## I LOOKED UP FROM MY WRITING

I looked up from my writing,  
And gave a start to see,  
As if rapt in my inditing,  
The moon’s full gaze on me.

Her meditative misty head  
Was spectral in its air,  
And I involuntarily said,  
”What are you doing there?”

“Oh, I’ve been scanning pond and hole  
And waterway hereabout  
For the body of one with a sunken soul  
Who has put his life-light out.

“Did you hear his frenzied tattle?  
It was sorrow for his son  
Who is slain in brutish battle,  
Though he has injured none.

“And now I am curious to look  
Into the blinkered mind  
Of one who wants to write a book  
In a world of such a kind.”

Her temper overwrought me,  
And I edged to shun her view,  
For I felt assured she thought me  
One who should drown him too.

## THE COMING OF THE END

How it came to an end!  
The meeting afar from the crowd,  
And the love-looks and laughters unpenned,  
The parting when much was avowed,  
How it came to an end!

It came to an end;  
Yes, the outgazing over the stream,  
With the sun on each serpentine bend,  
Or, later, the luring moon-gleam;  
It came to an end.

It came to an end,  
The housebuilding, furnishing, planting,  
As if there were ages to spend  
In welcoming, feasting, and jaunting;  
It came to an end.

It came to an end,  
That journey of one day a week:  
“It always goes on,” said a friend,  
“Just the same in bright weathers or bleak;”  
But it came to an end.

"HOW will come to an end  
This orbit so smoothly begun,  
Unless some convulsion attend?"  
I often said. "What will be done  
When it comes to an end?"

Well, it came to an end  
Quite silently — stopped without jerk;  
Better close no prevision could lend;  
Working out as One planned it should work  
Ere it came to an end.

## AFTERWARDS

When the Present has latched its postern behind my tremulous stay,  
And the May month flaps its glad green leaves like wings,  
Delicate-filmed as new-spun silk, will the neighbours say,  
"He was a man who used to notice such things"?

If it be in the dusk when, like an eyelid's soundless blink,  
The dewfall-hawk comes crossing the shades to alight  
Upon the wind-warped upland thorn, a gazer may think,  
"To him this must have been a familiar sight."

If I pass during some nocturnal blackness, mothy and warm,  
When the hedgehog travels furtively over the lawn,  
One may say, "He strove that such innocent creatures should come to  
no harm,  
But he could do little for them; and now he is gone"?

If, when hearing that I have been stilled at last, they stand at the  
door,  
Watching the full-starred heavens that winter sees,  
Will this thought rise on those who will meet my face no more,  
"He was one who had an eye for such mysteries"?

And will any say when my bell of quittance is heard in the gloom,  
And a crossing breeze cuts a pause in its outrollings,  
Till they rise again, as they were a new bell's boom,  
"He hears it not now, but used to notice such things"?

# LATE LYRICS AND EARLIER WITH MANY OTHER VERSES

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## **APOLOGY**

About half the verses that follow were written quite lately. The rest are older, having been held over in MS. when past volumes were published, on considering that these would contain a sufficient number of pages to offer readers at one time, more especially during the distractions of the war. The unusually far back poems to be found here are, however, but some that were overlooked in gathering previous collections. A freshness in them, now unattainable, seemed to make up for their inexperience and to justify their inclusion. A few are dated; the dates of others are not discoverable.

The launching of a volume of this kind in neo-Georgian days by one who began writing in mid-Victorian, and has published nothing to speak of for some years, may seem to call for a few words of excuse or explanation. Whether or no, readers may feel assured that a new book is submitted to them with great hesitation at so belated a date. Insistent practical reasons, however, among which were requests from some illustrious men of letters who are in sympathy with my productions, the accident that several of the poems have already seen the light, and that dozens of them have been lying about for years, compelled the course adopted, in spite of the natural disinclination of a writer whose works have been so frequently regarded askance by a pragmatic section here and there, to draw attention to them once more.

I do not know that it is necessary to say much on the contents of the book, even in deference to suggestions that will be mentioned presently. I believe that those readers who care for my poems at all - readers to whom no passport is required - will care for this new instalment of them, perhaps the last, as much as for any that have preceded them. Moreover, in the eyes of a less friendly class the pieces, though a very mixed collection indeed, contain, so far as I am able to see, little or nothing in technic or teaching that can be considered a Star-Chamber matter, or so much as agitating to a ladies' school; even though, to use Wordsworth's observation in his Preface to Lyrical Ballads, such readers may suppose "that by the act of writing in verse an author makes

a formal engagement that he will gratify certain known habits of association: that he not only thus apprises the reader that certain classes of ideas and expressions will be found in his book, but that others will be carefully excluded.”

It is true, nevertheless, that some grave, positive, stark, delineations are interspersed among those of the passive, lighter, and traditional sort presumably nearer to stereotyped tastes. For - while I am quite aware that a thinker is not expected, and, indeed, is scarcely allowed, now more than heretofore, to state all that crosses his mind concerning existence in this universe, in his attempts to explain or excuse the presence of evil and the incongruity of penalising the irresponsible - it must be obvious to open intelligences that, without denying the beauty and faithful service of certain venerable cults, such disallowance of “obstinate questionings” and “blank misgivings” tends to a paralysed intellectual stalemate. Heine observed nearly a hundred years ago that the soul has her eternal rights; that she will not be darkened by statutes, nor lullabied by the music of bells. And what is to-day, in allusions to the present author’s pages, alleged to be “pessimism” is, in truth, only such “questionings” in the exploration of reality, and is the first step towards the soul’s betterment, and the body’s also.

If I may be forgiven for quoting my own old words, let me repeat what I printed in this relation more than twenty years ago, and wrote much earlier, in a poem entitled “In Tenebris”:

If way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst:

that is to say, by the exploration of reality, and its frank recognition stage by stage along the survey, with an eye to the best consummation possible: briefly, evolutionary meliorism. But it is called pessimism nevertheless; under which word, expressed with condemnatory emphasis, it is regarded by many as some pernicious new thing (though so old as to underlie the Christian idea, and even to permeate the Greek drama); and the subject is charitably left to decent silence, as if further comment were needless.

Happily there are some who feel such Levitical passing-by to be, alas, by no means a permanent dismissal of the matter; that comment on where the world stands is very much the reverse of needless in these disordered years of our prematurely afflicted century: that amendment and not madness lies that way. And looking down the future these few hold fast to the same: that whether the human and kindred animal races survive till the exhaustion or destruction of the globe, or whether these races perish and are succeeded by others before that conclusion comes, pain to all upon it, tongued or dumb, shall be kept down to a minimum by lovingkindness, operating through scientific knowledge, and actuated by the modicum of free will conjecturally possessed by organic life when the mighty necessitating forces - unconscious or other - that have “the balancings of the clouds,” happen to be in equilibrium, which may or may not be often.

To conclude this question I may add that the argument of the so-called optimists is neatly summarized in a stern pronouncement against me by my friend Mr. Frederic Harrison in a late essay of his, in the words: “This view of life is not mine.” The solemn declaration does not seem to me to be so annihilating to the said “view” (really a series

of fugitive impressions which I have never tried to co-ordinate) as is complacently assumed. Surely it embodies a too human fallacy quite familiar in logic. Next, a knowing reviewer, apparently a Roman Catholic young man, speaks, with some rather gross instances of the *suggestio falsi* in his article, of "Mr. Hardy refusing consolation," the "dark gravity of his ideas," and so on. When a Positivist and a Catholic agree there must be something wonderful in it, which should make a poet sit up. But . . . O that 'twere possible!

I would not have alluded in this place or anywhere else to such casual personal criticisms - for casual and unreflecting they must be - but for the satisfaction of two or three friends in whose opinion a short answer was deemed desirable, on account of the continual repetition of these criticisms, or more precisely, quizzings. After all, the serious and truly literary inquiry in this connection is: Should a shaper of such stuff as dreams are made on disregard considerations of what is customary and expected, and apply himself to the real function of poetry, the application of ideas to life (in Matthew Arnold's familiar phrase)? This bears more particularly on what has been called the "philosophy" of these poems - usually reproved as "queer." Whoever the author may be that undertakes such application of ideas in this "philosophic" direction - where it is specially required - glacial judgments must inevitably fall upon him amid opinion whose arbiters largely decry individuality, to whom ideas are oddities to smile at, who are moved by a yearning the reverse of that of the Athenian inquirers on Mars Hill; and stiffen their features not only at sound of a new thing, but at a restatement of old things in new terms. Hence should anything of this sort in the following adumbrations seem "queer" - should any of them seem to good Panglossians to embody strange and disrespectful conceptions of this best of all possible worlds, I apologize; but cannot help it.

Such divergences, which, though piquant for the nonce, it would be affectation to say are not saddening and discouraging likewise, may, to be sure, arise sometimes from superficial aspect only, writer and reader seeing the same thing at different angles. But in palpable cases of divergence they arise, as already said, whenever a serious effort is made towards that which the authority I have cited - who would now be called old-fashioned, possibly even parochial - affirmed to be what no good critic could deny as the poet's province, the application of ideas to life. One might shrewdly guess, by the by, that in such recommendation the famous writer may have overlooked the cold-shouldering results upon an enthusiastic disciple that would be pretty certain to follow his putting the high aim in practice, and have forgotten the disconcerting experience of Gil Blas with the Archbishop.

To add a few more words to what has already taken up too many, there is a contingency liable to miscellanies of verse that I have never seen mentioned, so far as I can remember; I mean the chance little shocks that may be caused over a book of various character like the present and its predecessors by the juxtaposition of unrelated, even discordant, effusions; poems perhaps years apart in the making, yet facing each other. An odd result of this has been that dramatic anecdotes of a satirical and humorous

intention (such, e.g., as “Royal Sponsors”) following verse in graver voice, have been read as misfires because they raise the smile that they were intended to raise, the journalist, deaf to the sudden change of key, being unconscious that he is laughing with the author and not at him. I admit that I did not foresee such contingencies as I ought to have done, and that people might not perceive when the tone altered. But the difficulties of arranging the themes in a graduated kinship of moods would have been so great that irrelation was almost unavoidable with efforts so diverse. I must trust for right note-catching to those finely-touched spirits who can divine without half a whisper, whose intuitiveness is proof against all the accidents of inconsequence. In respect of the less alert, however, should any one’s train of thought be thrown out of gear by a consecutive piping of vocal reeds in jarring tonics, without a semiquaver’s rest between, and be led thereby to miss the writer’s aim and meaning in one out of two contiguous compositions, I shall deeply regret it.

Having at last, I think, finished with the personal points that I was recommended to notice, I will forsake the immediate object of this Preface; and, leaving Late Lyrics to whatever fate it deserves, digress for a few moments to more general considerations. The thoughts of any man of letters concerned to keep poetry alive cannot but run uncomfortably on the precarious prospects of English verse at the present day. Verily the hazards and casualties surrounding the birth and setting forth of almost every modern creation in numbers are ominously like those of one of Shelley’s paper-boats on a windy lake. And a forward conjecture scarcely permits the hope of a better time, unless men’s tendencies should change. So indeed of all art, literature, and “high thinking” nowadays. Whether owing to the barbarizing of taste in the younger minds by the dark madness of the late war, the unabashed cultivation of selfishness in all classes, the plethoric growth of knowledge simultaneously with the stunting of wisdom, “a degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation” (to quote Wordsworth again), or from any other cause, we seem threatened with a new Dark Age.

I formerly thought, like so many roughly handled writers, that so far as literature was concerned a partial cause might be impotent or mischievous criticism; the satirizing of individuality, the lack of whole-seeing in contemporary estimates of poetry and kindred work, the knowingness affected by junior reviewers, the overgrowth of meticulousness in their peerings for an opinion, as if it were a cultivated habit in them to scrutinize the tool-marks and be blind to the building, to hearken for the key-creaks and be deaf to the diapason, to judge the landscape by a nocturnal exploration with a flash-lantern. In other words, to carry on the old game of sampling the poem or drama by quoting the worst line or worst passage only, in ignorance or not of Coleridge’s proof that a versification of any length neither can be nor ought to be all poetry; of reading meanings into a book that its author never dreamt of writing there. I might go on interminably.

But I do not now think any such temporary obstructions to be the cause of the hazard, for these negligences and ignorances, though they may have stifled a few true poets in the run of generations, disperse like stricken leaves before the wind of next



week, and are no more heard of again in the region of letters than their writers themselves. No: we may be convinced that something of the deeper sort mentioned must be the cause.

In any event poetry, pure literature in general, religion - I include religion because poetry and religion touch each other, or rather modulate into each other; are, indeed, often but different names for the same thing - these, I say, the visible signs of mental and emotional life, must like all other things keep moving, becoming; even though at present, when belief in witches of Endor is displacing the Darwinian theory and "the truth that shall make you free, men's minds appear, as above noted, to be moving backwards rather than on. I speak, of course, somewhat sweepingly, and should except many isolated minds; also the minds of men in certain worthy but small bodies of various denominations, and perhaps in the homely quarter where advance might have been the very least expected a few years back - the English Church - if one reads it rightly as showing evidence of "removing those things that are shaken," in accordance with the wise Epistolary recommendation to the Hebrews. For since the historic and once august hierarchy of Rome some generation ago lost its chance of being the religion of the future by doing otherwise, and throwing over the little band of neo-Catholics who were making a struggle for continuity by applying the principle of evolution to their own faith, joining hands with modern science, and outflanking the hesitating English instinct towards liturgical reform (a flank march which I at the time quite expected to witness, with the gathering of many millions of waiting agnostics into its fold); since then, one may ask, what other purely English establishment than the Church, of sufficient dignity and footing, and with such strength of old association, such architectural spell, is left in this country to keep the shreds of morality together?

It may be a forlorn hope, a mere dream, that of an alliance between religion, which must be retained unless the world is to perish, and complete rationality, which must come, unless also the world is to perish, by means of the interfusing effect of poetry - "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; the impassioned expression of science," as it was defined by an English poet who was quite orthodox in his ideas. But if it be true, as Comte argued, that advance is never in a straight line, but in a looped orbit, we may, in the aforesaid ominous moving backward, be doing it *pour mieux sauter*, drawing back for a spring. I repeat that I forlornly hope so, notwithstanding the supercilious regard of hope by Schopenhauer, von Hartmann, and other philosophers down to Einstein who have my respect. But one dares not prophesy. Physical, chronological, and other contingencies keep me in these days from critical studies and literary circles

Where once we held debate, a band  
Of youthful friends, on mind and art

(if one may quote Tennyson in this century of free verse). Hence I cannot know how things are going so well as I used to know them, and the aforesaid limitations must quite prevent my knowing hence-forward.

I have to thank the editors and owners of The Times, Fortnightly, Mercury, and other periodicals in which a few of the poems have appeared for kindly assenting to their being reclaimed for collected publication. T. H.

February 1922.

## WEATHERS

### I

This is the weather the cuckoo likes,  
And so do I;  
When showers betumble the chestnut spikes,  
And nestlings fly:  
And the little brown nightingale bills his best,  
And they sit outside at "The Travellers' Rest,"  
And maids come forth sprig-muslin drest,  
And citizens dream of the south and west,  
And so do I.

### II

This is the weather the shepherd shuns,  
And so do I;  
When beeches drip in browns and duns,  
And thresh, and ply;  
And hill-hid tides throb, throe on throe,  
And meadow rivulets overflow,  
And drops on gate-bars hang in a row,  
And rooks in families homeward go,  
And so do I.

## THE MAID OF KEINTON MANDEVILLE

(A TRIBUTE TO SIR H. BISHOP)

I hear that maiden still  
Of Keinton Mandeville  
Singing, in flights that played  
As wind-wafts through us all,  
Till they made our mood a thrall  
To their aery rise and fall,  
"Should he upbraid."

Rose-necked, in sky-gray gown,  
From a stage in Stower Town  
Did she sing, and singing smile  
As she blent that dexterous voice  
With the ditty of her choice,  
And banished our annoys  
Thereawhile.

One with such song had power  
To wing the heaviest hour  
Of him who housed with her.  
Who did I never knew  
When her spoused estate ondrew,  
And her warble flung its woo  
In his ear.

Ah, she's a beldame now,  
Time-trenched on cheek and brow,  
Whom I once heard as a maid  
From Keinton Mandeville  
Of matchless scope and skill  
Sing, with smile and swell and trill,  
"Should he upbraid!"

1915 or 1916.

## SUMMER SCHEMES

When friendly summer calls again,  
Calls again  
Her little fifers to these hills,  
We'll go - we two - to that arched fane  
Of leafage where they prime their bills  
Before they start to flood the plain  
With quavers, minims, shakes, and trills.  
" - We'll go," I sing; but who shall say  
What may not chance before that day!

And we shall see the waters spring,  
Waters spring  
From chinks the scrubby copses crown;  
And we shall trace their oncreeping  
To where the cascade tumbles down  
And sends the bobbing growths aswing,  
And ferns not quite but almost drown.  
" - We shall," I say; but who may sing  
Of what another moon will bring!

## EPEISODIA

### I

Past the hills that peep  
Where the leaze is smiling,  
On and on beguiling  
Crisply-cropping sheep;  
Under boughs of brushwood  
Linking tree and tree  
In a shade of lushwood,  
There caressed we!

### II

Hemmed by city walls  
That outshut the sunlight,  
In a foggy dun light,  
Where the footstep falls  
With a pit-pat wearisome  
In its cadency  
On the flagstones drearisome  
There pressed we!

### III

Where in wild-winged crowds  
Blown birds show their whiteness  
Up against the lightness  
Of the clammy clouds;  
By the random river  
Pushing to the sea,  
Under bents that quiver  
There rest we.

### FAINTHEART IN A RAILWAY TRAIN

At nine in the morning there passed a church,  
At ten there passed me by the sea,  
At twelve a town of smoke and smirch,  
At two a forest of oak and birch,  
And then, on a platform, she:

A radiant stranger, who saw not me.  
I queried, "Get out to her do I dare?"  
But I kept my seat in my search for a plea,  
And the wheels moved on. O could it but be  
That I had alighted there!

### AT MOONRISE AND ONWARDS

I thought you a fire  
On Heron-Plantation Hill,  
Dealing out mischief the most dire  
To the chattels of men of hire  
There in their vill.

But by and by  
You turned a yellow-green,  
Like a large glow-worm in the sky;  
And then I could descry  
Your mood and mien.

How well I know  
Your furtive feminine shape!  
As if reluctantly you show  
You nude of cloud, and but by favour throw  
Aside its drape . . .

- How many a year  
Have you kept pace with me,  
Wan Woman of the waste up there,  
Behind a hedge, or the bare  
Bough of a tree!

No novelty are you,  
O Lady of all my time,  
Veering unbid into my view  
Whether I near Death's mew,  
Or Life's top cyme!

## THE GARDEN SEAT

Its former green is blue and thin,  
And its once firm legs sink in and in;  
Soon it will break down unaware,  
Soon it will break down unaware.

At night when reddest flowers are black  
Those who once sat thereon come back;  
Quite a row of them sitting there,  
Quite a row of them sitting there.

With them the seat does not break down,  
Nor winter freeze them, nor floods drown,  
For they are as light as upper air,  
They are as light as upper air!

## BARTHÉLÉMON AT VAUXHALL

François Hippolite Barthélémon, first-fiddler at Vauxhall Gardens, composed what was probably the most popular morning hymn-tune ever written. It was formerly sung, full-voiced, every Sunday in most churches, to Bishop Ken's words, but is now seldom heard.

He said: "Awake my soul, and with the sun," . . .  
And paused upon the bridge, his eyes due east,  
Where was emerging like a full-robed priest  
The irradiate globe that vouched the dark as done.

It lit his face - the weary face of one  
Who in the adjacent gardens charged his string,  
Nightly, with many a tuneful tender thing,  
Till stars were weak, and dancing hours outrun.

And then were threads of matin music spun  
In trial tones as he pursued his way:  
"This is a morn," he murmured, "well begun:  
This strain to Ken will count when I am clay!"  
And count it did; till, caught by echoing lyres,  
It spread to galleried naves and mighty quires.

## I SOMETIMES THINK

(FOR F. E. H.)

I sometimes think as here I sit  
Of things I have done,  
Which seemed in doing not unfit  
To face the sun:  
Yet never a soul has paused a whit  
On such - not one.

There was that eager strenuous press  
To sow good seed;  
There was that saving from distress  
In the nick of need;  
There were those words in the wilderness:  
Who cared to heed?

Yet can this be full true, or no?  
For one did care,  
And, spiriting into my house, to, fro,  
Like wind on the stair,  
Cares still, heeds all, and will, even though  
I may despair.

## JEZREEL

ON ITS SEIZURE BY THE ENGLISH UNDER ALLENBY, SEPTEMBER 1918

Did they catch as it were in a Vision at shut of the day -  
When their cavalry smote through the ancient Esdraelon Plain,  
And they crossed where the Tishbite stood forth in his enemy's way -  
His gaunt mournful Shade as he bade the King haste off amain?

On war-men at this end of time - even on Englishmen's eyes -  
Who slay with their arms of new might in that long-ago place,  
Flashed he who drove furiously? . . . Ah, did the phantom arise  
Of that queen, of that proud Tyrian woman who painted her face?

Faintly marked they the words "Throw her down!" rise from Night eerily,  
Spectre-spots of the blood of her body on some rotten wall?  
And the thin note of pity that came: "A King's daughter is she,"  
As they passed where she trodden was once by the chargers' footfall?  
    Could such be the hauntings of men of to-day, at the cease  
Of pursuit, at the dusk-hour, ere slumber their senses could seal?  
Enghosted seers, kings - one on horseback who asked "Is it peace?" . . .  
Yea, strange things and spectral may men have beheld in Jezreel!  
    September 24, 1918.

## A JOG-TROT PAIR

Who were the twain that trod this track  
So many times together  
Hither and back,  
In spells of certain and uncertain weather?  
    Commonplace in conduct they  
Who wandered to and fro here  
Day by day:  
Two that few dwellers troubled themselves to know here.  
    The very gravel-path was prim  
That daily they would follow:  
Borders trim:  
Never a wayward sprout, or hump, or hollow.  
    Trite usages in tamest style  
Had tended to their plighting.  
"It's just worth while,  
Perhaps," they had said. "And saves much sad good-nighting."  
    And petty seemed the happenings  
That ministered to their joyance:  
Simple things,  
Onerous to satiate souls, increased their buoyance.  
    Who could those common people be,  
Of days the plainest, barest?  
They were we;  
Yes; happier than the cleverest, smartest, rarest.

## THE CURTAINS NOW ARE DRAWN

(SONG)



## I

The curtains now are drawn,  
And the spindrift strikes the glass,  
Blown up the jagged pass  
By the surly salt sou'-west,  
And the sneering glare is gone  
Behind the yonder crest,  
While she sings to me:  
"O the dream that thou art my Love, be it thine,  
And the dream that I am thy Love, be it mine,  
And death may come, but loving is divine."

## II

I stand here in the rain,  
With its smite upon her stone,  
And the grasses that have grown  
Over women, children, men,  
And their texts that "Life is vain";  
But I hear the notes as when  
Once she sang to me:  
"O the dream that thou art my Love, be it thine,  
And the dream that I am thy Love, be it mine,  
And death may come, but loving is divine."  
1913

# ACCORDING TO THE MIGHTY WORKING

## I

When moiling seems at cease  
In the vague void of night-time,  
And heaven's wide roomage stormless  
Between the dusk and light-time,  
And fear at last is formless,  
We call the allurement Peace.

## II

Peace, this hid riot, Change,  
This revel of quick-cued mumming,  
This never truly being,  
This evermore becoming,  
This spinner's wheel onfleeing  
Outside perception's range.

1917

## I WAS NOT HE

(SONG)

I was not he - the man  
Who used to pilgrim to your gate,  
At whose smart step you grew elate,  
And rosed, as maidens can,  
For a brief span.

It was not I who sang  
Beside the keys you touched so true  
With note-bent eyes, as if with you  
It counted not whence sprang  
The voice that rang . . .

Yet though my destiny  
It was to miss your early sweet,  
You still, when turned to you my feet,  
Had sweet enough to be  
A prize for me!

## THE WEST-OF-WESSEX GIRL

A very West-of-Wessex girl,  
As blithe as blithe could be,  
Was once well-known to me,  
And she would laud her native town,  
And hope and hope that we  
Might sometime study up and down  
Its charms in company.

But never I squired my Wessex girl  
In jaunts to Hoe or street  
When hearts were high in beat,  
Nor saw her in the marbled ways  
Where market-people meet  
That in her bounding early days  
Were friendly with her feet.

Yet now my West-of-Wessex girl,  
When midnight hammers slow  
From Andrew's, blow by blow,  
As phantom draws me by the hand  
To the place - Plymouth Hoe -  
Where side by side in life, as planned,  
We never were to go!

Begun in Plymouth, March 1913.

## WELCOME HOME

To my native place  
Bent upon returning,  
Bosom all day burning  
To be where my race  
Well were known, 'twas much with me  
There to dwell in amity.

Folk had sought their beds,  
But I hailed: to view me  
Under the moon, out to me  
Several pushed their heads,  
And to each I told my name,  
Plans, and that therefrom I came.

"Did you? . . . Ah, 'tis true  
I once heard, back a long time,  
Here had spent his young time,  
Some such man as you . . .  
Good-night." The casement closed again,  
And I was left in the frosty lane.

# GOING AND STAYING

## I

The moving sun-shapes on the spray,  
The sparkles where the brook was flowing,  
Pink faces, plightings, moonlit May,  
These were the things we wished would stay;  
But they were going.

## II

Seasons of blankness as of snow,  
The silent bleed of a world decaying,  
The moan of multitudes in woe,  
These were the things we wished would go;  
But they were staying.

## III

Then we looked closelier at Time,  
And saw his ghostly arms revolving  
To sweep off woeful things with prime,  
Things sinister with things sublime  
Alike dissolving.

# READ BY MOONLIGHT

I paused to read a letter of hers  
By the moon's cold shine,  
Eyeing it in the tenderest way,  
And edging it up to catch each ray  
Upon her light-penned line.  
I did not know what years would flow  
Of her life's span and mine  
Ere I read another letter of hers  
By the moon's cold shine!

I chance now on the last of hers,  
By the moon's cold shine;  
It is the one remaining page  
Out of the many shallow and sage  
Whereto she set her sign.  
Who could foresee there were to be  
Such letters of pain and pine  
Ere I should read this last of hers  
By the moon's cold shine!

## AT A HOUSE IN HAMPSTEAD

SOMETIME THE DWELLING OF JOHN KEATS

O poet, come you haunting here  
Where streets have stolen up all around,  
And never a nightingale pours one  
Full-throated sound?

Drawn from your drowse by the Seven famed Hills,  
Thought you to find all just the same  
Here shining, as in hours of old,  
If you but came?

What will you do in your surprise  
At seeing that changes wrought in Rome  
Are wrought yet more on the misty slope  
One time your home?

Will you wake wind-wafts on these stairs?  
Swing the doors open noisily?  
Show as an unbraced ghost beside  
Your ancient tree?

Or will you, softening, the while  
You further and yet further look,  
Learn that a laggard few would fain  
Preserve your nook? . . .

- Where the Piazza steps incline,  
And catch late light at eventide,  
I once stood, in that Rome, and thought,  
"Twas here he died."

I drew to a violet-sprinkled spot,  
Where day and night a pyramid keeps  
Uplifted its white hand, and said,  
"Tis there he sleeps."

Pleasanter now it is to hold  
That here, where sang he, more of him  
Remains than where he, tuneless, cold,  
Passed to the dim.

July 1920.

## A WOMAN'S FANCY

"Ah Madam; you've indeed come back here?  
'Twas sad - your husband's so swift death,  
And you away! You shouldn't have left him:  
It hastened his last breath."

"Dame, I am not the lady you think me;  
I know not her, nor know her name;  
I've come to lodge here - a friendless woman;  
My health my only aim."

She came; she lodged. Wherever she rambled  
They held her as no other than  
The lady named; and told how her husband  
Had died a forsaken man.

So often did they call her thuswise  
Mistakenly, by that man's name,  
So much did they declare about him,  
That his past form and fame

Grew on her, till she pitied his sorrow  
As if she truly had been the cause -  
Yea, his deserter; and came to wonder  
What mould of man he was.

"Tell me my history!" would exclaim she;  
"Our history," she said mournfully.  
"But you know, surely, Ma'am?" they would answer,  
Much in perplexity.

Curious, she crept to his grave one evening,  
And a second time in the dusk of the morrow;  
Then a third time, with crescent emotion  
Like a bereaved wife's sorrow.

No gravestone rose by the rounded hillock;  
- "I marvel why this is?" she said.  
- "He had no kindred, Ma'am, but you near."  
- She set a stone at his head.

She learnt to dream of him, and told them:  
"In slumber often uprises he,  
And says: 'I am joyed that, after all, Dear,  
You've not deserted me!"

At length died too this kinless woman,  
As he had died she had grown to crave;  
And at her dying she besought them  
To bury her in his grave.

Such said, she had paused; until she added:  
"Call me by his name on the stone,  
As I were, first to last, his dearest,  
Not she who left him lone!"

And this they did. And so it became there  
That, by the strength of a tender whim,  
The stranger was she who bore his name there,  
Not she who wedded him.

## HER SONG

I sang that song on Sunday,  
To witch an idle while,  
I sang that song on Monday,  
As fittest to beguile;  
I sang it as the year outwore,  
And the new slid in;  
I thought not what might shape before  
Another would begin.

I sang that song in summer,  
All unforeknowingly,  
To him as a new-comer  
From regions strange to me:  
I sang it when in afteryears  
The shades stretched out,  
And paths were faint; and flocking fears  
Brought cup-eyed care and doubt.

Sings he that song on Sundays  
In some dim land afar,  
On Saturdays, or Mondays,  
As when the evening star  
Glimpsed in upon his bending face  
And my hanging hair,  
And time untouched me with a trace  
Of soul-smart or despair?

## **A WET AUGUST**

Nine drops of water bead the jessamine,  
And nine-and-ninety smear the stones and tiles:  
- 'Twas not so in that August - full-rayed, fine -  
When we lived out-of-doors, sang songs, strode miles.

Or was there then no noted radiancy  
Of summer? Were dun clouds, a dribbling bough,  
Gilt over by the light I bore in me,  
And was the waste world just the same as now?

It can have been so: yea, that threatenings  
Of coming down-drip on the sunless gray,  
By the then possibilities in things  
Were wrought more bright than brightest skies to-day.

1920

## **THE DISSEMBLERS**

"It was not you I came to please,  
Only myself," flipped she;  
"I like this spot of phantasies,  
And thought you far from me."  
But O, he was the secret spell  
That led her to the lea!

"It was not she who shaped my ways,  
Or works, or thoughts," he said.  
"I scarcely marked her living days,  
Or missed her much when dead."  
But O, his joyance knew its knell  
When daisies hid her head!



## TO A LADY PLAYING AND SINGING IN THE MORNING

Joyful lady, sing!  
And I will lurk here listening,  
Though nought be done, and nought begun,  
And work-hours swift are scurrying.

Sing, O lady, still!  
Aye, I will wait each note you trill,  
Though duties due that press to do  
This whole day long I unfulfil.

” - It is an evening tune;  
One not designed to waste the noon,”  
You say. I know: time bids me go -  
For daytide passes too, too soon!

But let indulgence be,  
This once, to my rash ecstasy:  
When sounds nowhere that carolled air  
My idled morn may comfort me!

## A MAN WAS DRAWING NEAR TO ME

On that gray night of mournful drone,  
A part from aught to hear, to see,  
I dreamt not that from shires unknown  
In gloom, alone,  
By Halworthy,  
A man was drawing near to me.

I'd no concern at anything,  
No sense of coming pull-heart play;  
Yet, under the silent outspreading  
Of even's wing  
Where Otterham lay,  
A man was riding up my way.

I thought of nobody - not of one,  
But only of trifles - legends, ghosts -  
Though, on the moorland dim and dun  
That travellers shun  
About these coasts,  
The man had passed Tresparret Posts.

There was no light at all inland,  
Only the seaward pharos-fire,  
Nothing to let me understand  
That hard at hand  
By Hennett Byre  
The man was getting nigh and nigher.

There was a rumble at the door,  
A draught disturbed the drapery,  
And but a minute passed before,  
With gaze that bore  
My destiny,  
The man revealed himself to me.

## THE STRANGE HOUSE

(MAX GATE, A.D. 2000)

“I hear the piano playing -  
Just as a ghost might play.”  
“ - O, but what are you saying?  
There’s no piano to-day;  
Their old one was sold and broken;  
Years past it went amiss.”  
“ - I heard it, or shouldn’t have spoken:  
A strange house, this!  
“I catch some undertone here,  
From some one out of sight.”  
“ - Impossible; we are alone here,  
And shall be through the night.”  
“ - The parlour-door - what stirred it?”  
” - No one: no soul’s in range.”  
“ - But, anyhow, I heard it,  
And it seems strange!  
“Seek my own room I cannot -  
A figure is on the stair!”  
“ - What figure? Nay, I scan not  
Any one lingering there.  
A bough outside is waving,  
And that’s its shade by the moon.”  
“ - Well, all is strange! I am craving  
Strength to leave soon.”

“ - Ah, maybe you’ve some vision  
Of showings beyond our sphere;  
Some sight, sense, intuition  
Of what once happened here?  
The house is old; they’ve hinted  
It once held two love-thralls,  
And they may have imprinted  
Their dreams on its walls?

“They were - I think ‘twas told me -  
Queer in their works and ways;  
The teller would often hold me  
With weird tales of those days.  
Some folk can not abide here,  
But we - we do not care  
Who loved, laughed, wept, or died here,  
Knew joy, or despair.”

## **AS ‘TWERE TO-NIGHT**

(SONG)

As ‘twere to-night, in the brief space  
Of a far eventime,  
My spirit rang achime  
At vision of a girl of grace;  
As ‘twere to-night, in the brief space  
Of a far eventime.

As ‘twere at noontide of to-morrow  
I airily walked and talked,  
And wondered as I walked  
What it could mean, this soar from sorrow;  
As ‘twere at noontide of to-morrow  
I airily walked and talked.

As ‘twere at waning of this week  
Broke a new life on me;  
Trancings of bliss to be  
In some dim dear land soon to seek;  
As ‘twere at waning of this week  
Broke a new life on me!

## THE CONTRETEMPS

A forward rush by the lamp in the gloom,  
And we clasped, and almost kissed;  
But she was not the woman whom  
I had promised to meet in the thawing brume  
On that harbour-bridge; nor was I he of her tryst.

So loosening from me swift she said:

"O why, why feign to be  
The one I had meant! - to whom I have sped  
To fly with, being so sorrily wed!"  
- 'Twas thus and thus that she upbraided me.

My assignation had struck upon  
Some others' like it, I found.  
And her lover rose on the night anon;  
And then her husband entered on  
The lamplit, snowflaked, sloppiness around.

"Take her and welcome, man!" he cried:  
"I wash my hands of her.

I'll find me twice as good a bride!"  
- All this to me, whom he had eyed,  
Plainly, as his wife's planned deliverer.

And next the lover: "Little I knew,  
Madam, you had a third!  
Kissing here in my very view!"  
- Husband and lover then withdrew.  
I let them; and I told them not they erred.

Why not? Well, there faced she and I -  
Two strangers who'd kissed, or near,  
Chancewise. To see stand weeping by  
A woman once embraced, will try  
The tension of a man the most austere.

So it began; and I was young,  
She pretty, by the lamp,  
As flakes came waltzing down among  
The waves of her clinging hair, that hung  
Heavily on her temples, dark and damp.

And there alone still stood we two;  
She one cast off for me,  
Or so it seemed: while night on drew,  
Forcing a parley what should do  
We twain hearts caught in one catastrophe.

In stranded souls a common strait  
Wakes latencies unknown,  
Whose impulse may precipitate  
A life-long leap. The hour was late,  
And there was the Jersey boat with its funnel agroan.  
"Is wary walking worth much pother?"  
It grunted, as still it stayed.  
"One pairing is as good as another  
Where all is venture! Take each other,  
And scrap the oaths that you have aforesaid." . . .

- Of the four involved there walks but one  
On earth at this late day.  
And what of the chapter so begun?  
In that odd complex what was done?  
Well; happiness comes in full to none:  
Let peace lie on lulled lips: I will not say.

WEYMOUTH.

## **A GENTLEMAN'S EPITAPH ON HIMSELF AND A LADY, WHO WERE BURIED TOGETHER**

I dwelt in the shade of a city,  
She far by the sea,  
With folk perhaps good, gracious, witty;  
But never with me.

Her form on the ballroom's smooth flooring  
I never once met,  
To guide her with accents adoring  
Through Weippert's "First Set."

I spent my life's seasons with pale ones  
In Vanity Fair,  
And she enjoyed hers among hale ones  
In salt-smelling air.

Maybe she had eyes of deep colour,  
Maybe they were blue,  
Maybe as she aged they got duller;  
That never I knew.

She may have had lips like the coral,  
But I never kissed them,  
Saw pouting, nor curling in quarrel,  
Nor sought for, nor missed them.

Not a word passed of love all our lifetime,  
Between us, nor thrill;  
We'd never a husband-and-wife time,  
For good or for ill.

Yet as one dust, through bleak days and vernal,  
Lie I and lies she,  
This never-known lady, eternal  
Companion to me!

## THE OLD GOWN

(SONG)

I have seen her in gowns the brightest,  
Of azure, green, and red,  
And in the simplest, whitest,  
Muslined from heel to head;  
I have watched her walking, riding,  
Shade-flecked by a leafy tree,  
Or in fixed thought abiding  
By the foam-fingered sea.

In woodlands I have known her,  
When boughs were mourning loud,  
In the rain-reek she has shown her  
Wild-haired and watery-browed.  
And once or twice she has cast me  
As she pumped along the street  
Court-clad, ere quite she had passed me,  
A glance from her chariot-seat.

But in my memoried passion  
For evermore stands she  
In the gown of fading fashion  
She wore that night when we,  
Doomed long to part, assembled  
In the snug small room; yea, when  
She sang with lips that trembled,  
"Shall I see his face again?"

## A NIGHT IN NOVEMBER

I marked when the weather changed,  
And the panes began to quake,  
And the winds rose up and ranged,  
That night, lying half-awake.

Dead leaves blew into my room,  
And alighted upon my bed,  
And a tree declared to the gloom  
Its sorrow that they were shed.

One leaf of them touched my hand,  
And I thought that it was you  
There stood as you used to stand,  
And saying at last you knew!

(?) 1913.

## A DUETTIST TO HER PIANOFORTE

### SONG OF SILENCE

(E. L. H. - H. C. H.)

Since every sound moves memories,  
How can I play you  
Just as I might if you raised no scene,  
By your ivory rows, of a form between  
My vision and your time-worn sheen,  
As when each day you  
Answered our fingers with ecstasy?  
So it's hushed, hushed, hushed, you are for me!

And as I am doomed to counterchord  
Her notes no more  
In those old things I used to know,  
In a fashion, when we practised so,  
"Good-night! - Good-bye!" to your pleated show  
Of silk, now hoar,  
Each nodding hammer, and pedal and key,  
For dead, dead, dead, you are to me!

I fain would second her, strike to her stroke,  
 As when she was by,  
 Aye, even from the ancient clamorous "Fall  
 Of Paris," or "Battle of Prague" withal,  
 To the "Roving Minstrels," or "Elfin Call"  
 Sung soft as a sigh:  
 But upping ghosts press achefully,  
 And mute, mute, mute, you are for me!  
 Should I fling your polyphones, plaints, and quavers  
 Afresh on the air,  
 Too quick would the small white shapes be here  
 Of the fellow twain of hands so dear;  
 And a black-tressed profile, and pale smooth ear;  
 - Then how shall I bear  
 Such heavily-haunted harmony?  
 Nay: hushed, hushed, hushed you are for me!

## WHERE THREE ROADS JOINED

Where three roads joined it was green and fair,  
 And over a gate was the sun-glazed sea,  
 And life laughed sweet when I halted there;  
 Yet there I never again would be.

I am sure those branchways are brooding now,  
 With a wistful blankness upon their face,  
 While the few mute passengers notice how  
 Spectre-beridden is the place;

Which nightly sighs like a laden soul,  
 And grieves that a pair, in bliss for a spell  
 Not far from thence, should have let it roll  
 Away from them down a plumbless well

While the phasm of him who fared starts up,  
 And of her who was waiting him sobs from near,  
 As they haunt there and drink the wormwood cup  
 They filled for themselves when their sky was clear.

Yes, I see those roads - now rutted and bare,  
 While over the gate is no sun-glazed sea;  
 And though life laughed when I halted there,  
 It is where I never again would be.



# AND THERE WAS A GREAT CALM

(ON THE SIGNING OF THE ARMISTICE, Nov. 11, 1918)

## I

There had been years of Passion - scorching, cold,  
And much Despair, and Anger heaving high,  
Care whitely watching, Sorrows manifold,  
Among the young, among the weak and old,  
And the pensive Spirit of Pity whispered, "Why?"

## II

Men had not paused to answer. Foes distraught  
Pierced the thinned peoples in a brute-like blindness,  
Philosophies that sages long had taught,  
And Selflessness, were as an unknown thought,  
And "Hell!" and "Shell!" were yapped at Lovingkindness.

## III

The feeble folk at home had grown full-used  
To "dug-outs," "snipers," "Huns," from the war-adept  
In the mornings heard, and at evetides perused;  
To day - dreamt men in millions, when they mused -  
To nightmare-men in millions when they slept.

## IV

Waking to wish existence timeless, null,  
Sirius they watched above where armies fell;  
He seemed to check his flapping when, in the lull  
Of night a boom came thencewise, like the dull  
Plunge of a stone dropped into some deep well.

## V

So, when old hopes that earth was bettering slowly  
Were dead and damned, there sounded "War is done!"  
One morrow. Said the bereft, and meek, and lowly,  
"Will men some day be given to grace? yea, wholly,  
And in good sooth, as our dreams used to run?"

## VI

Breathless they paused. Out there men raised their glance  
To where had stood those poplars lank and lopped,  
As they had raised it through the four years' dance  
Of Death in the now familiar flats of France;  
And murmured, "Strange, this! How? All firing stopped?"

## VII

Aye; all was hushed. The about-to-fire fired not,  
The aimed-at moved away in trance-lipped song.  
One checkless regiment slung a clinching shot  
And turned. The Spirit of Irony smirked out, "What?  
Spoil peradventures woven of Rage and Wrong?"

## VIII

Thenceforth no flying fires inflamed the gray,  
No hurtlings shook the dewdrop from the thorn,  
No moan perplexed the mute bird on the spray;  
Worn horses mused: "We are not whipped to-day";  
No weft-winged engines blurred the moon's thin horn.

## IX

Calm fell. From Heaven distilled a clemency;  
There was peace on earth, and silence in the sky;  
Some could, some could not, shake off misery:  
The Sinister Spirit sneered: "It had to be!"  
And again the Spirit of Pity whispered, "Why?"

# HAUNTING FINGERS

## A PHANTASY IN A MUSEUM OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

"Are you awake,  
Comrades, this silent night?  
Well 'twere if all of our glossy gluey make  
Lay in the damp without, and fell to fragments quite!"

"O viol, my friend,  
I watch, though Phosphor nears,  
And I fain would drowse away to its utter end  
This dumb dark stowage after our loud melodious years!"

And they felt past handlers clutch them,  
Though none was in the room,  
Old players' dead fingers touch them,  
Shrunk in the tomb.

"Cello, good mate,  
You speak my mind as yours:  
Doomed to this voiceless, crippled, corpselike state,  
Who, dear to famed Amphion, trapped here, long endures?"

"Once I could thrill  
The populace through and through,  
Wake them to passionate pulsings past their will." . . .  
(A contra-basso spake so, and the rest sighed anew.)

And they felt old muscles travel  
Over their tense contours,  
And with long skill unravel  
Cunningest scores.

"The tender pat  
Of her aery finger-tips  
Upon me daily - I rejoiced thereat!"  
(Thuswise a harpsicord, as from dampered lips.)

"My keys' white shine,  
Now sallow, met a hand  
Even whiter. . . . Tones of hers fell forth with mine  
In sowings of sound so sweet no lover could withstand!"

And its clavier was filmed with fingers  
Like tapering flames - wan, cold -  
Or the nebulous light that lingers  
In charnel mould.

"Gayer than most  
 Was I," reverbed a drum;  
 "The regiments, marchings, throngs, hurrahs! What a host  
 I stirred - even when crape muffings gagged me well-nigh dumb!"  
 Trilled an aged viol:  
 "Much tune have I set free  
 To spur the dance, since my first timid trial  
 Where I had birth - far hence, in sun-swept Italy!"  
 And he feels apt touches on him  
 From those that pressed him then;  
 Who seem with their glance to con him,  
 Saying, "Not again!"  
 "A holy calm,"  
 Mourned a shawm's voice subdued,  
 "Steeped my Cecilian rhythms when hymn and psalm  
 Poured from devout souls met in Sabbath sanctitude."  
 "I faced the sock  
 Nightly," twanged a sick lyre,  
 "Over ranked lights! O charm of life in mock,  
 O scenes that fed love, hope, wit, rapture, mirth, desire!"  
 Thus they, till each past player  
 Stroked thinner and more thin,  
 And the morning sky grew grayer  
 And day crawled in.

## THE WOMAN I MET

A stranger, I threaded sunken-hearted  
 A lamp-lit crowd;  
 And anon there passed me a soul departed,  
 Who mutely bowed.  
 In my far-off youthful years I had met her,  
 Full-pulsed; but now, no more life's debtor,  
 Onward she slid  
 In a shroud that furs half-hid.

“Why do you trouble me, dead woman,  
Trouble me;  
You whom I knew when warm and human?  
- How it be  
That you quitted earth and are yet upon it  
Is, to any who ponder on it,  
Past being read!”  
”Still, it is so,” she said.

“These were my haunts in my olden sprightly  
Hours of breath;  
Here I went tempting frail youth nightly  
To their death;  
But you deemed me chaste - me, a tinselled sinner!  
How thought you one with pureness in her  
Could pace this street  
Eyeing some man to greet?

“Well; your very simplicity made me love you  
Mid such town dross,  
Till I set not Heaven itself above you,  
Who grew my Cross;  
For you’d only nod, despite how I sighed for you;  
So you tortured me, who fain would have died for you!  
- What I suffered then  
Would have paid for the sins of ten!

“Thus went the days. I feared you despised me  
To fling me a nod  
Each time, no more: till love chastised me  
As with a rod  
That a fresh bland boy of no assurance  
Should fire me with passion beyond endurance,  
While others all  
I hated, and loathed their call.

“I said: ‘It is his mother’s spirit  
Hovering around  
To shield him, maybe!’ I used to fear it,  
As still I found  
My beauty left no least impression,  
And remnants of pride withheld confession  
Of my true trade  
By speaking; so I delayed.

“I said: ‘Perhaps with a costly flower  
He’ll be beguiled.’  
I held it, in passing you one late hour,  
To your face: you smiled,  
Keeping step with the throng; though you did not see there  
A single one that rivalled me there! . . .  
Well: it’s all past.  
I died in the Lock at last.”

So walked the dead and I together  
The quick among,  
Elbowing our kind of every feather  
Slowly and long;  
Yea, long and slowly. That a phantom should stalk there  
With me seemed nothing strange, and talk there  
That winter night  
By flaming jets of light.

She showed me Juans who feared their call-time,  
Guessing their lot;  
She showed me her sort that cursed their fall-time,  
And that did not.  
Till suddenly murmured she: “Now, tell me,  
Why asked you never, ere death befell me,  
To have my love,  
Much as I dreamt thereof?”

I could not answer. And she, well weeting  
All in my heart,  
Said: “God your guardian kept our fleeting  
Forms apart!”  
Sighing and drawing her furs around her  
Over the shroud that tightly bound her,  
With wafts as from clay  
She turned and thinned away.

LONDON, 1918.

## **IF IT’S EVER SPRING AGAIN**

(SONG)

If it's ever spring again,  
Spring again,  
I shall go where went I when  
Down the moor-cock splashed, and hen,  
Seeing me not, amid their flounder,  
Standing with my arm around her;  
If it's ever spring again,  
Spring again,  
I shall go where went I then.

If it's ever summer-time,  
Summer-time,  
With the hay crop at the prime,  
And the cuckoos - two - in rhyme,  
As they used to be, or seemed to,  
We shall do as long we've dreamed to,  
If it's ever summer-time,  
Summer-time,  
With the hay, and bees achime.

## THE TWO HOUSES

In the heart of night,  
When farers were not near,  
The left house said to the house on the right,  
"I have marked your rise, O smart newcomer here."

Said the right, cold-eyed:  
"Newcomer here I am,  
Hence haler than you with your cracked old hide,  
Loose casements, wormy beams, and doors that jam.

"Modern my wood,  
My hangings fair of hue;  
While my windows open as they should,  
And water-pipes thread all my chambers through.

"Your gear is gray,  
Your face wears furrows untold."  
" - Yours might," mourned the other, "if you held, brother,  
The Presences from aforetime that I hold.

"You have not known  
Men's lives, deaths, toils, and teens;  
You are but a heap of stick and stone:  
A new house has no sense of the have-beens.

"Void as a drum  
You stand: I am packed with these,  
Though, strangely, living dwellers who come  
See not the phantoms all my substance sees!

"Visible in the morning  
Stand they, when dawn drags in;  
Visible at night; yet hint or warning  
Of these thin elbowers few of the inmates win.

"Babes new-brought-forth  
Obsess my rooms; straight-stretched  
Lank corpses, ere outborne to earth;  
Yea, throng they as when first from the 'Byss upfetched.

"Dancers and singers  
Throb in me now as once;  
Rich-noted throats and gossamered fingers  
Of heels; the learned in love-lore and the dunce.

"Note here within  
The bridegroom and the bride,  
Who smile and greet their friends and kin,  
And down my stairs depart for tracks untried.

"Where such inbe,  
A dwelling's character  
Takes theirs, and a vague semblancy  
To them in all its limbs, and light, and atmosphere.

"Yet the blind folk  
My tenants, who come and go  
In the flesh mid these, with souls unwoke,  
Of such sylph-like surrounders do not know."

" - Will the day come,"  
Said the new one, awestruck, faint,  
"When I shall lodge shades dim and dumb -  
And with such spectral guests become acquaint?"

" - That will it, boy;  
Such shades will people thee,  
Each in his misery, irk, or joy,  
And print on thee their presences as on me."



## ON STINSFORD HILL AT MIDNIGHT

I glimpsed a woman's muslined form  
Sing-singing airily  
Against the moon; and still she sang,  
And took no heed of me.

Another trice, and I beheld  
What first I had not scanned,  
That now and then she tapped and shook  
A timbrel in her hand.

So late the hour, so white her drape,  
So strange the look it lent  
To that blank hill, I could not guess  
What phantastroy it meant.

Then burst I forth: "Why such from you?  
Are you so happy now?"  
Her voice swam on; nor did she show  
Thought of me anyhow.

I called again: "Come nearer; much  
That kind of note I need!"  
The song kept softening, loudening on,  
In placid calm unheed.

"What home is yours now?" then I said;  
"You seem to have no care."  
But the wild wavering tune went forth  
As if I had not been there.

"This world is dark, and where you are,"  
I said, "I cannot be!"  
But still the happy one sang on,  
And had no heed of me.

## THE FALLOW DEER AT THE LONELY HOUSE

One without looks in to-night  
Through the curtain-chink  
From the sheet of glistening white;  
One without looks in to-night  
As we sit and think  
By the fender-brink.

We do not discern those eyes  
Watching in the snow;  
Lit by lamps of rosy dyes  
We do not discern those eyes  
Wondering, aglow,  
Fourfooted, tiptoe.

## **THE SELFSAME SONG**

A bird bills the selfsame song,  
With never a fault in its flow,  
That we listened to here those long  
Long years ago.

A pleasing marvel is how  
A strain of such rapturous rote  
Should have gone on thus till now  
Unchanged in a note!

- But it's not the selfsame bird. -  
No: perished to dust is he . . .  
As also are those who heard  
That song with me.

## **THE WANDERER**

There is nobody on the road  
But I,  
And no beseeming abode  
I can try  
For shelter, so abroad  
I must lie.

The stars feel not far up,  
And to be  
The lights by which I sup  
Glimmeringly,  
Set out in a hollow cup  
Over me.

They wag as though they were  
Panting for joy  
Where they shine, above all care,  
And annoy,  
And demons of despair -  
Life's alloy.

Sometimes outside the fence  
Feet swing past,  
Clock-like, and then go hence,  
Till at last  
There is a silence, dense,  
Deep, and vast.

A wanderer, witch-drawn  
To and fro,  
To-morrow, at the dawn,  
On I go,  
And where I rest anon  
Do not know!

Yet it's meet - this bed of hay  
And roofless plight;  
For there's a house of clay,  
My own, quite,  
To roof me soon, all day  
And all night.

## **A WIFE COMES BACK**

This is the story a man told me  
Of his life's one day of dreamery.

A woman came into his room  
Between the dawn and the creeping day:  
She was the years-wed wife from whom  
He had parted, and who lived far away,  
As if strangers they.

He wondered, and as she stood  
She put on youth in her look and air,  
And more was he wonderstruck as he viewed  
Her form and flesh bloom yet more fair  
While he watched her there;

Till she freshed to the pink and brown  
That were hers on the night when first they met,  
When she was the charm of the idle town  
And he the pick of the club-fire set . . .  
His eyes grew wet,

And he stretched his arms: "Stay - rest! - "  
He cried. "Abide with me so, my own!"  
But his arms closed in on his hard bare breast;  
She had vanished with all he had looked upon  
Of her beauty: gone.

He clothed, and drew downstairs,  
But she was not in the house, he found;  
And he passed out under the leafy pairs  
Of the avenue elms, and searched around  
To the park-pale bound.

He mounted, and rode till night  
To the city to which she had long withdrawn,  
The vision he bore all day in his sight  
Being her young self as pondered on  
In the dim of dawn.

" - The lady here long ago -  
Is she now here? - young - or such age as she is?"  
" - She is still here." - "Thank God. Let her know;  
She'll pardon a comer so late as this  
Whom she'd fain not miss."

She received him - an ancient dame,  
Who hemmed, with features frozen and numb,  
"How strange! - I'd almost forgotten your name! -  
A call just now - is troublesome;  
Why did you come?"

## **A YOUNG MAN'S EXHORTATION**

Call off your eyes from care  
By some determined deftness; put forth joys  
Dear as excess without the core that cloys,  
And charm Life's lourings fair.

Exalt and crown the hour  
That girdles us, and fill it full with glee,  
Blind glee, excelling aught could ever be  
Were heedfulness in power.

Send up such touching strains  
That limitless recruits from Fancy's pack  
Shall rush upon your tongue, and tender back  
All that your soul contains.

For what do we know best?  
That a fresh love-leaf crumpled soon will dry,  
And that men moment after moment die,  
Of all scope dispossess.

If I have seen one thing  
It is the passing preciousness of dreams;  
That aspects are within us; and who seems  
Most kingly is the King.

1867: WESTBOURNE PARK VILLAS.

## AT LULWORTH COVE A CENTURY BACK

Had I but lived a hundred years ago  
I might have gone, as I have gone this year,  
By Warmwell Cross on to a Cove I know,  
And Time have placed his finger on me there:  
"You see that man?" - I might have looked, and said,  
"O yes: I see him. One that boat has brought  
Which dropped down Channel round Saint Alban's Head.  
So commonplace a youth calls not my thought."

"You see that man?" - "Why yes; I told you; yes:  
Of an idling town-sort; thin; hair brown in hue;  
And as the evening light scants less and less  
He looks up at a star, as many do."

"You see that man?" - "Nay, leave me!" then I plead,  
"I have fifteen miles to vamp across the lea,  
And it grows dark, and I am weary-kneed:  
I have said the third time; yes, that man I see!

"Good. That man goes to Rome - to death, despair;  
And no one notes him now but you and I:  
A hundred years, and the world will follow him there,  
And bend with reverence where his ashes lie."

September 1920.

Note. - In September 1820 Keats, on his way to Rome, landed one day on the Dorset coast, and composed the sonnet, "Bright star! would I were steadfast as thou art." The spot of his landing is judged to have been Lulworth Cove.

## A BYGONE OCCASION

(SONG)

That night, that night,  
That song, that song!  
Will such again be evened quite  
Through lifetimes long?

No mirth was shown  
To outer seers,  
But mood to match has not been known  
In modern years.

O eyes that smiled,  
O lips that lured;  
That such would last was one beguiled  
To think ensured!

That night, that night,  
That song, that song;  
O drink to its recalled delight,  
Though tears may throng!

## TWO SERENADES

### I - On Christmas Eve

Late on Christmas Eve, in the street alone,  
Outside a house, on the pavement-stone,  
I sang to her, as we'd sung together  
On former eves ere I felt her tether. -  
Above the door of green by me  
Was she, her casement seen by me;  
But she would not heed  
What I melodied  
In my soul's sore need -  
She would not heed.

Cassiopeia overhead,  
And the Seven of the Wain, heard what I said  
As I bent me there, and voiced, and fingered  
Upon the strings. . . . Long, long I lingered:  
Only the curtains hid from her  
One whom caprice had bid from her;  
But she did not come,  
And my heart grew numb  
And dull my strum;  
She did not come.

## **II - A Year Later**

I skimmed the strings; I sang quite low;  
I hoped she would not come or know  
That the house next door was the one now dittied,  
Not hers, as when I had played unpitied;  
- Next door, where dwelt a heart fresh stirred,  
My new Love, of good will to me,  
Unlike my old Love chill to me,  
Who had not cared for my notes when heard:  
Yet that old Love came  
To the other's name  
As hers were the claim;  
Yea, the old Love came

My viol sank mute, my tongue stood still,  
I tried to sing on, but vain my will:  
I prayed she would guess of the later, and leave me;  
She stayed, as though, were she slain by the smart,  
She would bear love's burn for a newer heart.  
The tense-drawn moment wrought to bereave me  
Of voice, and I turned in a dumb despair  
At her finding I'd come to another there.  
Sick I withdrew  
At love's grim hue  
Ere my last Love knew;  
Sick I withdrew.

From an old copy.

## THE WEDDING MORNING

Tabitha dressed for her wedding:-

"Tabby, why look so sad?"

" - O I feel a great gloominess spreading, spreading,  
Instead of supremely glad! . . .

"I called on Carry last night,  
And he came whilst I was there,  
Not knowing I'd called. So I kept out of sight,  
And I heard what he said to her:

" - Ah, I'd far liefer marry  
You, Dear, to-morrow!' he said,  
'But that cannot be.' - O I'd give him to Carry,  
And willingly see them wed,

"But how can I do it when  
His baby will soon be born?  
After that I hope I may die. And then  
She can have him. I shall not mourn!"

## END OF THE YEAR 1912

You were here at his young beginning,  
You are not here at his aged end;  
Off he coaxed you from Life's mad spinning,  
Lest you should see his form extend  
Shivering, sighing,  
Slowly dying,  
And a tear on him expend.

So it comes that we stand lonely  
In the star-lit avenue,  
Dropping broken lipwords only,  
For we hear no songs from you,  
Such as flew here  
For the new year  
Once, while six bells swung thereto.



## THE CHIMES PLAY LIFE'S A BUMPER!

“Awake! I’m off to cities far away,”  
I said; and rose, on peradventures bent.  
The chimes played “Life’s a Bumper!” on that day  
To the measure of my walking as I went:  
Their sweetness frisked and floated on the lea,  
As they played out “Life’s a Bumper!” there to me.

“Awake!” I said. “I go to take a bride!”  
- The sun arose behind me ruby-red  
As I journeyed townwards from the countryside,  
The chiming bells saluting near ahead.  
Their sweetness swelled in tripping tings of glee  
As they played out “Life’s a Bumper!” there to me.

“Again arise.” I seek a turfy slope,  
And go forth slowly on an autumn noon,  
And there I lay her who has been my hope,  
And think, “O may I follow hither soon!”  
While on the wind the chimes come cheerily,  
Playing out “Life’s a Bumper!” there to me.

1913

## I WORKED NO WILE TO MEET YOU

(SONG)

I worked no wile to meet you,  
My sight was set elsewhere,  
I sheered about to shun you,  
And lent your life no care.  
I was unprimed to greet you  
At such a date and place,  
Constraint alone had won you  
Vision of my strange face!  
You did not seek to see me  
Then or at all, you said,  
- Meant passing when you neared me,  
But stumblingblocks forbade.  
You even had thought to flee me,  
By other mindings moved;  
No influent star endeared me,  
Unknown, unrecked, unproved!

What, then, was there to tell us  
The flux of flustering hours  
Of their own tide would bring us  
By no device of ours  
To where the daysprings well us  
Heart-hydromels that cheer,  
Till Time enearth and swing us  
Round with the turning sphere.

## **AT THE RAILWAY STATION, UPWAY**

"There is not much that I can do,  
For I've no money that's quite my own!"  
Spoke up the pitying child -  
A little boy with a violin  
At the station before the train came in, -  
"But I can play my fiddle to you,  
And a nice one 'tis, and good in tone!"  
The man in the handcuffs smiled;  
The constable looked, and he smiled, too,  
As the fiddle began to twang;  
And the man in the handcuffs suddenly sang  
Uproariously:  
"This life so free  
Is the thing for me!"  
And the constable smiled, and said no word,  
As if unconscious of what he heard;  
And so they went on till the train came in -  
The convict, and boy with the violin.

## **SIDE BY SIDE**

So there sat they,  
The estranged two,  
Thrust in one pew  
By chance that day;  
Placed so, breath-nigh,  
Each comer unwitting  
Who was to be sitting  
In touch close by.

Thus side by side  
Blindly alighted,  
They seemed united  
As groom and bride,  
Who'd not communed  
For many years -  
Lives from twain spheres  
With hearts distuned.

Her fringes brushed  
His garment's hem  
As the harmonies rushed  
Through each of them:  
Her lips could be heard  
In the creed and psalms,  
And their fingers neared  
At the giving of alms.

And women and men,  
The matins ended,  
By looks commended  
Them, joined again.  
Quickly said she,  
"Don't undeceive them -  
Better thus leave them:"  
"Quite so," said he.

Slight words! - the last  
Between them said,  
Those two, once wed,  
Who had not stood fast.  
Diverse their ways  
From the western door,  
To meet no more  
In their span of days.

## **DREAM OF THE CITY SHOPWOMAN**

'Twere sweet to have a comrade here,  
Who'd vow to love this garreteer,  
By city people's snap and sneer  
Tried oft and hard!

We'd rove a truant cock and hen  
To some snug solitary glen,  
And never be seen to haunt again  
This teeming yard.

Within a cot of thatch and clay  
We'd list the flitting pipers play,  
Our lives a twine of good and gay  
Enwreathed discreetly;

Our blithest deeds so neighbouring wise  
That doves should coo in soft surprise,  
"These must belong to Paradise  
Who live so sweetly."

Our clock should be the closing flowers,  
Our sprinkle-bath the passing showers,  
Our church the alleyed willow bowers,  
The truth our theme;

And infant shapes might soon abound:  
Their shining heads would dot us round  
Like mushroom balls on grassy ground . . .  
- But all is dream!

O God, that creatures framed to feel  
A yearning nature's strong appeal  
Should writhe on this eternal wheel  
In rayless grime;

And vainly note, with wan regret,  
Each star of early promise set;  
Till Death relieves, and they forget  
Their one Life's time!

WESTBOURNE PARK VILLAS, 1866.

## A MAIDEN'S PLEDGE

(SONG)

I do not wish to win your vow  
To take me soon or late as bride,  
And lift me from the nook where now  
I tarry your farings to my side.  
I am blissful ever to abide  
In this green labyrinth - let all be,  
If but, whatever may betide,  
You do not leave off loving me!

Your comet-comings I will wait  
With patience time shall not wear through;  
The yellowing years will not abate  
My largened love and truth to you,  
Nor drive me to complaint undue  
Of absence, much as I may pine,  
If never another 'twixt us two  
Shall come, and you stand wholly mine.

## THE CHILD AND THE SAGE

You say, O Sage, when weather-checked,  
"I have been favoured so  
With cloudless skies, I must expect  
This dash of rain or snow."

"Since health has been my lot," you say,  
"So many months of late,  
I must not chafe that one short day  
Of sickness mars my state."

You say, "Such bliss has been my share  
From Love's unbroken smile,  
It is but reason I should bear  
A cross therein awhile."

And thus you do not count upon  
Continuance of joy;  
But, when at ease, expect anon  
A burden of annoy.

But, Sage - this Earth - why not a place  
Where no reprisals reign,  
Where never a spell of pleasantness  
Makes reasonable a pain?

December 21, 1908.

# MISMET

## I

He was leaning by a face,  
He was looking into eyes,  
And he knew a trysting-place,  
And he heard seductive sighs;  
But the face,  
And the eyes,  
And the place,  
And the sighs,  
Were not, alas, the right ones - the ones meet for him -  
Though fine and sweet the features, and the feelings all abrim.

## II

She was looking at a form,  
She was listening for a tread,  
She could feel a waft of charm  
When a certain name was said;  
But the form,  
And the tread,  
And the charm  
Of name said,  
Were the wrong ones for her, and ever would be so,  
While the heritor of the right it would have saved her soul to know!

# AN AUTUMN RAIN-SCENE

There trudges one to a merry-making  
With a sturdy swing,  
On whom the rain comes down.  
To fetch the saving medicament  
Is another bent,  
On whom the rain comes down.  
One slowly drives his herd to the stall  
Ere ill befall,  
On whom the rain comes down.  
This bears his missives of life and death  
With quickening breath,  
On whom the rain comes down.

One watches for signals of wreck or war  
From the hill afar,  
On whom the rain comes down.  
No care if he gain a shelter or none,  
Unhired moves one,  
On whom the rain comes down.  
And another knows nought of its chilling fall  
Upon him at all,  
On whom the rain comes down.  
October 1904.

## MEDITATIONS ON A HOLIDAY

(A NEW THEME TO AN OLD FOLK-JINGLE)

'Tis May morning,  
All-adorning,  
No cloud warning  
Of rain to-day.  
Where shall I go to,  
Go to, go to? -  
Can I say No to  
Lyonnesse-way?  
Well - what reason  
Now at this season  
Is there for treason  
To other shrines?  
Tristram is not there,  
Isolt forgot there,  
New eras blot there  
Sought-for signs!  
Stratford-on-Avon -  
Poesy-paven -  
I'll find a haven  
There, somehow! -  
Nay - I'm but caught of  
Dreams long thought of,  
The Swan knows nought of  
His Avon now!

What shall it be, then,  
I go to see, then,  
Under the plea, then,  
Of votary?  
I'll go to Lakeland,  
Lakeland, Lakeland,  
Certainly Lakeland  
Let it be.

But - why to that place,  
That place, that place,  
Such a hard come-at place  
Need I fare?  
When its bard cheers no more,  
Loves no more, fears no more,  
Sees no more, hears no more  
Anything there!

Ah, there is Scotland,  
Burns's Scotland,  
And Waverley's. To what land  
Better can I hie? -  
Yet - if no whit now  
Feel those of it now -  
Care not a bit now  
For it - why I?

I'll seek a town street,  
Aye, a brick-brown street,  
Quite a tumbledown street,  
Drawing no eyes.  
For a Mary dwelt there,  
And a Percy felt there  
Heart of him melt there,  
A Claire likewise.

Why incline to that city,  
Such a city, that city,  
Now a mud-bespat city! -  
Care the lovers who  
Now live and walk there,  
Sit there and talk there,  
Buy there, or hawk there,  
Or wed, or woo?



Laughters in a volley  
Greet so fond a folly  
As nursing melancholy  
In this and that spot,  
Which, with most endeavour,  
Those can visit never,  
But for ever and ever  
Will now know not!

If, on lawns Elysian,  
With a broadened vision  
And a faint derision  
Conscious be they,  
How they might reprove me  
That these fancies move me,  
Think they ill behoove me,  
Smile, and say:

“What! - our hoar old houses,  
Where the past dead-drownses,  
Nor a child nor spouse is  
Of our name at all?  
Such abodes to care for,  
Inquire about and bear for,  
And suffer wear and tear for -  
How weak of you and small!”

May 1921.

## **AN EXPERIENCE**

Wit, weight, or wealth there was not  
In anything that was said,  
In anything that was done;  
All was of scope to cause not  
A triumph, dazzle, or dread  
To even the subtlest one,  
My friend,  
To even the subtlest one.

But there was a new afflation -  
An aura zephyring round,  
That care infected not:  
It came as a salutation,  
And, in my sweet astound,  
I scarcely witted what  
Might pend,  
I scarcely witted what.

The hills in samewise to me  
Spoke, as they grayly gazed,  
- First hills to speak so yet!  
The thin-edged breezes blew me  
What I, though cobwebbed, crazed,  
Was never to forget,  
My friend,  
Was never to forget!

## THE BEAUTY

O do not praise my beauty more,  
In such word-wild degree,  
And say I am one all eyes adore;  
For these things harass me!

But do for ever softly say:  
"From now unto the end  
Come weal, come wanzing, come what may,  
Dear, I will be your friend."

I hate my beauty in the glass:  
My beauty is not I:  
I wear it: none cares whether, alas,  
Its wearer live or die!

The inner I O care for, then,  
Yea, me and what I am,  
And shall be at the gray hour when  
My cheek begins to clam.

Note. - "The Regent Street beauty, Miss Verrey, the Swiss confectioner's daughter, whose personal attractions have been so mischievously exaggerated, died of fever on Monday evening, brought on by the annoyance she had been for some time subject to."  
- London paper, October 1828.

## THE COLLECTOR CLEANS HIS PICTURE

Fili hominis, ecce ego tollo a te desiderabile oculorum tuorum in plaga. - EZECH.  
xxiv. 16.

How I remember cleaning that strange picture!  
I had been deep in duty for my sick neighbour -  
His besides my own - over several Sundays,  
Often, too, in the week; so with parish pressures,  
Baptisms, burials, doctorings, conjugal counsel -  
All the whatnots asked of a rural parson -  
Faith, I was well-nigh broken, should have been fully  
Saving for one small secret relaxation,  
One that in mounting manhood had grown my hobby.

This was to delve at whiles for easel-lumber,  
Stowed in the backmost slums of a soon-reached city,  
Merely on chance to uncloak some worthy canvas,  
Panel, or plaque, blacked blind by uncouth adventure,  
Yet under all concealing a precious art-feat.  
Such I had found not yet. My latest capture  
Came from the rooms of a trader in ancient house-gear  
Who had no scent of beauty or soul for brushcraft.  
Only a tittle cost it - murked with grime-films,  
Gatherings of slow years, thick-varnished over,  
Never a feature manifest of man's painting.

So, one Saturday, time ticking hard on midnight  
Ere an hour subserved, I set me upon it.  
Long with coiled-up sleeves I cleaned and yet cleaned,  
Till a first fresh spot, a high light, looked forth,  
Then another, like fair flesh, and another;  
Then a curve, a nostril, and next a finger,  
Tapering, shapely, significantly pointing slantwise.  
"Flemish?" I said. "Nay, Spanish . . . But, nay, Italian!"  
- Then meseemed it the guise of the ranker Venus,  
Named of some Astarte, of some Cotytto.  
Down I knelt before it and kissed the panel,  
Drunk with the lure of love's inhibited dreamings.

Till the dawn I rubbed, when there gazed up at me  
A hag, that had slowly emerged from under my hands there,  
Pointing the slanted finger towards a bosom  
Eaten away of a rot from the lusts of a lifetime . . .  
- I could have ended myself in heart-shook horror.  
Stunned I sat till roused by a clear-voiced bell-chime,  
Fresh and sweet as the dew-fleece under my luthern.  
It was the matin service calling to me  
From the adjacent steeple.

## THE WOOD FIRE

(A FRAGMENT)

“This is a brightsome blaze you’ve lit good friend, to-night!”  
“ - Aye, it has been the bleakest spring I have felt for years,  
And nought compares with cloven logs to keep alight:  
I buy them bargain-cheap of the executioners,  
As I dwell near; and they wanted the crosses out of sight  
By Passover, not to affront the eyes of visitors.

“Yes, they’re from the crucifixions last week-ending  
At Kranion. We can sometimes use the poles again,  
But they get split by the nails, and ‘tis quicker work than mending  
To knock together new; though the uprights now and then  
Serve twice when they’re let stand. But if a feast’s impending,  
As lately, you’ve to tidy up for the corners’ ken.

“Though only three were impaled, you may know it didn’t pass off  
So quietly as was wont? That Galilee carpenter’s son  
Who boasted he was king, incensed the rabble to scoff:  
I heard the noise from my garden. This piece is the one he was on . . .  
Yes, it blazes up well if lit with a few dry chips and shroff;  
And it’s worthless for much else, what with cuts and stains thereon.”

## SAYING GOOD-BYE

(SONG)

We are always saying  
"Good-bye, good-bye!"  
In work, in playing,  
In gloom, in gaying:  
At many a stage  
Of pilgrimage  
From youth to age  
We say, "Good-bye,  
Good-bye!"

We are undiscerning  
Which go to sigh,  
Which will be yearning  
For soon returning;  
And which no more  
Will dark our door,  
Or tread our shore,  
But go to die,  
To die.

Some come from roaming  
With joy again;  
Some, who come homing  
By stealth at gloaming,  
Had better have stopped  
Till death, and dropped  
By strange hands propped,  
Than come so fain,  
So fain.

So, with this saying,  
"Good-bye, good-bye,"  
We speed their waying  
Without betraying  
Our grief, our fear  
No more to hear  
From them, close, clear,  
Again: "Good-bye,  
Good-bye!"

## ON THE TUNE CALLED THE OLD-HUNDRED-AND-FOURTH

We never sang together  
Ravenscroft's terse old tune  
On Sundays or on weekdays,  
In sharp or summer weather,  
At night-time or at noon.

Why did we never sing it,  
Why never so incline  
On Sundays or on weekdays,  
Even when soft wafts would wing it  
From your far floor to mine?

Shall we that tune, then, never  
Stand voicing side by side  
On Sundays or on weekdays? . . .  
Or shall we, when for ever  
In Sheol we abide,

Sing it in desolation,  
As we might long have done  
On Sundays or on weekdays  
With love and exultation  
Before our sands had run?

## THE OPPORTUNITY

(FOR H. P.)

Forty springs back, I recall,  
We met at this phase of the Maytime:  
We might have clung close through all,  
But we parted when died that daytime.

We parted with smallest regret;  
Perhaps should have cared but slightly,  
Just then, if we never had met:  
Strange, strange that we lived so lightly!

Had we mused a little space  
At that critical date in the Maytime,  
One life had been ours, one place,  
Perhaps, till our long cold daytime.

- This is a bitter thing  
For thee, O man: what ails it?  
The tide of chance may bring  
Its offer; but nought avails it!

## EVELYN G. OF CHRISTMINSTER

I can see the towers  
In mind quite clear  
Not many hours'  
Faring from here;  
But how up and go,  
And briskly bear  
Thither, and know  
That are not there?

Though the birds sing small,  
And apple and pear  
On your trees by the wall  
Are ripe and rare,  
Though none excel them,  
I have no care  
To taste them or smell them  
And you not there.

Though the College stones  
Are smit with the sun,  
And the graduates and Dons  
Who held you as one  
Of brightest brow  
Still think as they did,  
Why haunt with them now  
Your candle is hid?

Towards the river  
A pealing swells:  
They cost me a quiver -  
Those prayerful bells!  
How go to God,  
Who can reprove  
With so heavy a rod  
As your swift remove!

The chorded keys  
Wait all in a row,  
And the bellows wheeze  
As long ago.  
And the psalter lingers,  
And organist's chair;  
But where are your fingers  
That once wagged there?  
Shall I then seek  
That desert place  
This or next week,  
And those tracks trace  
That fill me with cark  
And cloy; nowhere  
Being movement or mark  
Of you now there!

## **THE RIFT**

(SONG: Minor Mode)

'Twas just at gnat and cobweb-time,  
When yellow begins to show in the leaf,  
That your old gamut changed its chime  
From those true tones - of span so brief! -  
That met my beats of joy, of grief,  
As rhyme meets rhyme.

So sank I from my high sublime!  
We faced but chancewise after that,  
And never I knew or guessed my crime. . .  
Yes; 'twas the date - or nigh thereat -  
Of the yellowing leaf; at moth and gnat  
And cobweb-time.



# VOICES FROM THINGS GROWING IN A CHURCHYARD

These flowers are I, poor Fanny Hurd,  
Sir or Madam,  
A little girl here sepultured.  
Once I flit-fluttered like a bird  
Above the grass, as now I wave  
In daisy shapes above my grave,  
All day cheerily,  
All night eerily!

- I am one Bachelor Bowring, "Gent,"  
Sir or Madam;  
In shingled oak my bones were pent;  
Hence more than a hundred years I spent  
In my feat of change from a coffin-thrall  
To a dancer in green as leaves on a wall.  
All day cheerily,  
All night eerily!
- I, these berries of juice and gloss,  
Sir or Madam,  
Am clean forgotten as Thomas Voss;  
Thin-urned, I have burrowed away from the moss  
That covers my sod, and have entered this yew,  
And turned to clusters ruddy of view,  
All day cheerily,  
All night eerily!
- The Lady Gertrude, proud, high-bred,  
Sir or Madam,  
Am I - this laurel that shades your head;  
Into its veins I have stilly sped,  
And made them of me; and my leaves now shine,  
As did my satins superfine,  
All day cheerily,  
All night eerily!

- I, who as innocent withwind climb,  
Sir or Madam.  
Am one Eve Greensleeves, in olden time  
Kissed by men from many a clime,  
Beneath sun, stars, in blaze, in breeze,  
As now by glowworms and by bees,  
All day cheerily,  
All night eerily!
- I'm old Squire Audeley Grey, who grew,  
Sir or Madam,  
Aweary of life, and in scorn withdrew;  
Till anon I clambered up anew  
As ivy-green, when my ache was stayed,  
And in that attire I have longtime gayed  
All day cheerily,  
All night eerily!
- And so they breathe, these masks, to each  
Sir or Madam  
Who lingers there, and their lively speech  
Affords an interpreter much to teach,  
As their murmurous accents seem to come  
Thence hitheraround in a radiant hum,  
All day cheerily,  
All night eerily!

## ON THE WAY

The trees fret fitfully and twist,  
Shutters rattle and carpets heave,  
Slime is the dust of yestereve,  
And in the streaming mist  
Fishes might seem to fin a passage if they list.  
But to his feet,  
Drawing nigh and nigher  
A hidden seat,  
The fog is sweet  
And the wind a lyre.

A vacant sameness grays the sky,  
A moisture gathers on each knop  
Of the bramble, rounding to a drop,  
That greets the goer-by  
With the cold listless lustre of a dead man's eye.

But to her sight,  
Drawing nigh and nigher  
Its deep delight,  
The fog is bright  
And the wind a lyre.

## **SHE DID NOT TURN**

She did not turn,  
But passed foot-faint with averted head  
In her gown of green, by the bobbing fern,  
Though I leaned over the gate that led  
From where we waited with table spread;  
But she did not turn:  
Why was she near there if love had fled?

She did not turn,  
Though the gate was whence I had often sped  
In the mists of morning to meet her, and learn  
Her heart, when its moving moods I read  
As a book - she mine, as she sometimes said;  
But she did not turn,  
And passed foot-faint with averted head.

## **GROWTH IN MAY**

I enter a daisy-and-buttercup land,  
And thence thread a jungle of grass:  
Hurdles and stiles scarce visible stand  
Above the lush stems as I pass.

Hedges peer over, and try to be seen,  
And seem to reveal a dim sense  
That amid such ambitious and elbow-high green  
They make a mean show as a fence.

Elsewhere the mead is possessed of the neats,  
That range not greatly above  
The rich rank thicket which brushes their teats,  
And her gown, as she waits for her Love.

NEAR CHARD.

## THE CHILDREN AND SIR NAMELESS

Sir Nameless, once of Athelhall, declared:  
“These wretched children romping in my park  
Trample the herbage till the soil is bared,  
And yap and yell from early morn till dark!  
Go keep them harnessed to their set routines:  
Thank God I’ve none to hasten my decay;  
For green remembrance there are better means  
Than offspring, who but wish their sires away.”

Sir Nameless of that mansion said anon:  
“To be perpetuate for my mightiness  
Sculpture must image me when I am gone.”  
- He forthwith summoned carvers there express  
To shape a figure stretching seven-odd feet  
(For he was tall) in alabaster stone,  
With shield, and crest, and casque, and word complete:  
When done a statelier work was never known.

Three hundred years hied; Church-restorers came,  
And, no one of his lineage being traced,  
They thought an effigy so large in frame  
Best fitted for the floor. There it was placed,  
Under the seats for schoolchildren. And they  
Kicked out his name, and hobnailed off his nose;  
And, as they yawn through sermon-time, they say,  
“Who was this old stone man beneath our toes?”

## AT THE ROYAL ACADEMY

These summer landscapes - clump, and copse, and croft -  
Woodland and meadowland - here hung aloft,  
Gay with limp grass and leafery new and soft,

Seem caught from the immediate season's yield  
I saw last noonday shining over the field,  
By rapid snatch, while still are uncongealed  
The saps that in their live originals climb;  
Yester's quick greenage here set forth in mime  
Just as it stands, now, at our breathing-time.

But these young foils so fresh upon each tree,  
Soft verdures spread in sprouting novelty,  
Are not this summer's, though they feign to be.

Last year their May to Michaelmas term was run,  
Last autumn browned and buried every one,  
And no more know they sight of any sun.

## HER TEMPLE

Dear, think not that they will forget you:  
- If craftsmanly art should be mine  
I will build up a temple, and set you  
Therein as its shrine.

They may say: "Why a woman such honour?"  
- Be told, "O, so sweet was her fame,  
That a man heaped this splendour upon her;  
None now knows his name."

## A TWO-YEARS' IDYLL

Yes; such it was;  
Just those two seasons unsought,  
Sweeping like summertide wind on our ways;  
Moving, as straws,  
Hearts quick as ours in those days;  
Going like wind, too, and rated as nought  
Save as the prelude to plays  
Soon to come - larger, life-fraught:  
Yes; such it was.

"Nought" it was called,  
Even by ourselves - that which springs  
Out of the years for all flesh, first or last,  
Commonplace, scrawled  
Dully on days that go past.  
Yet, all the while, it upbore us like wings  
Even in hours overcast:  
Aye, though this best thing of things,  
"Nought" it was called!

What seems it now?  
Lost: such beginning was all;  
Nothing came after: romance straight forsook  
Quickly somehow  
Life when we sped from our nook,  
Primed for new scenes with designs smart and tall . . .  
- A preface without any book,  
A trumpet uplipped, but no call;  
That seems it now.

## **BY HENSTRIDGE CROSS AT THE YEAR'S END**

(From this centuries-old cross-road the highway leads east to London, north to Bristol and Bath, west to Exeter and the Land's End, and south to the Channel coast.)

Why go the east road now? . . .  
That way a youth went on a morrow  
After mirth, and he brought back sorrow  
Painted upon his brow  
Why go the east road now?  
Why go the north road now?  
Torn, leaf-strewn, as if scoured by foemen,  
Once edging fiefs of my forefolk yeomen,  
Fallows fat to the plough:  
Why go the north road now?  
Why go the west road now?  
Thence to us came she, bosom-burning,  
Welcome with joyousness returning . . .  
- She sleeps under the bough:  
Why go the west road now?

Why go the south road now?  
That way marched they some are forgetting,  
Stark to the moon left, past regretting  
Loves who have falsed their vow . . .  
Why go the south road now?  
Why go any road now?  
White stands the handpost for brisk on-bearers,  
“Halt!” is the word for wan-cheeked farers  
Musing on Whither, and How . . .  
Why go any road now?  
”Yea: we want new feet now”  
Answer the stones. “Want chit-chat, laughter:  
Plenty of such to go hereafter  
By our tracks, we trow!  
We are for new feet now.  
During the War.

## **PENANCE**

“Why do you sit, O pale thin man,  
At the end of the room  
By that harpsichord, built on the quaint old plan?  
- It is cold as a tomb,  
And there’s not a spark within the grate;  
And the jingling wires  
Are as vain desires  
That have lagged too late.”  
“Why do I? Alas, far times ago  
A woman lyred here  
In the evenfall; one who fain did so  
From year to year;  
And, in loneliness bending wistfully,  
Would wake each note  
In sick sad rote,  
None to listen or see!

“I would not join. I would not stay,  
But drew away,  
Though the winter fire beamed brightly . . . Aye!  
I do to-day  
What I would not then; and the chill old keys,  
Like a skull’s brown teeth  
Loose in their sheath,  
Freeze my touch; yes, freeze.”

## **I LOOK IN HER FACE**

(SONG: Minor)

I look in her face and say,  
“Sing as you used to sing  
About Love’s blossoming”;  
But she hints not Yea or Nay.  
“Sing, then, that Love’s a pain,  
If, Dear, you think it so,  
Whether it be or no;”  
But dumb her lips remain.  
I go to a far-off room,  
A faint song ghosts my ear;  
Which song I cannot hear,  
But it seems to come from a tomb.

## **AFTER THE WAR**

Last Post sounded  
Across the mead  
To where he loitered  
With absent heed.  
Five years before  
In the evening there  
Had flown that call  
To him and his Dear.  
“You’ll never come back;  
Good-bye!” she had said;  
“Here I’ll be living,  
And my Love dead!”



Those closing minims  
Had been as shafts darting  
Through him and her pressed  
In that last parting;  
They thrilled him not now,  
In the selfsame place  
With the selfsame sun  
On his war-seamed face.  
“Lurks a god’s laughter  
In this?” he said,  
“That I am the living  
And she the dead!”

## IF YOU HAD KNOWN

If you had known  
When listening with her to the far-down moan  
Of the white-selvaged and empurpled sea,  
And rain came on that did not hinder talk,  
Or damp your flashing facile gaiety  
In turning home, despite the slow wet walk  
By crooked ways, and over stiles of stone;  
If you had known

    You would lay roses,  
Fifty years thence, on her monument, that discloses  
Its graying shape upon the luxuriant green;  
Fifty years thence to an hour, by chance led there,  
What might have moved you? - yea, had you foreseen  
That on the tomb of the selfsame one, gone where  
The dawn of every day is as the close is,  
You would lay roses!

1920

## THE CHAPEL-ORGANIST

(A.D. 185-)

I’ve been thinking it through, as I play here to-night, to play never again,  
By the light of that lowering sun peering in at the window-pane,  
And over the back-street roofs, throwing shades from the boys of the chore  
In the gallery, right upon me, sitting up to these keys once more . . .

How I used to hear tongues ask, as I sat here when I was new:  
 "Who is she playing the organ? She touches it mightily true!"  
 "She travels from Havenpool Town," the deacon would softly speak,  
 "The stipend can hardly cover her fare hither twice in the week."  
 (It fell far short of doing, indeed; but I never told,  
 For I have craved minstrelsy more than lovers, or beauty, or gold.)  
 'Twas so he answered at first, but the story grew different later:  
 "It cannot go on much longer, from what we hear of her now!"  
 At the meaning wheeze in the words the inquirer would shift his place  
 Till he could see round the curtain that screened me from people below.  
 "A handsome girl," he would murmur, upstaring, (and so I am).  
 "But - too much sex in her build; fine eyes, but eyelids too heavy;  
 A bosom too full for her age; in her lips too voluptuous a look."  
 (It may be. But who put it there? Assuredly it was not I.)  
 I went on playing and singing when this I had heard, and more,  
 Though tears half-blinded me; yes, I remained going on and on,  
 Just as I used me to chord and to sing at the selfsame time! . . .  
 For it's a contralto - my voice is; they'll hear it again here to-night  
 In the psalmody notes that I love more than world or than flesh or than life.  
 Well, the deacon, in fact, that day had learnt new tidings about me;  
 They troubled his mind not a little, for he was a worthy man.  
 (He trades as a chemist in High Street, and during the week he had sought  
 His fellow-deacon, who throve as a book-binder over the way.)  
 "These are strange rumours," he said. "We must guard the good name of the chapel.  
 If, sooth, she's of evil report, what else can we do but dismiss her?"  
 " - But get such another to play here we cannot for double the price!"  
 It settled the point for the time, and I triumphed awhile in their strait,  
 And my much-beloved grand semibreves went living on under my fingers.  
 At length in the congregation more head-shakes and murmurs were rife,  
 And my dismissal was ruled, though I was not warned of it then.  
 But a day came when they declared it. The news entered me as a sword;  
 I was broken; so pallid of face that they thought I should faint, they said.  
 I rallied. "O, rather than go, I will play you for nothing!" said I.  
 'Twas in much desperation I spoke it, for bring me to forfeit I could not  
 Those melodies chorded so richly for which I had laboured and lived.  
 They paused. And for nothing I played at the chapel through Sundays anon,  
 Upheld by that art which I loved more than blandishments lavished of men.

But it fell that murmurs again from the flock broke the pastor's peace.  
 Some member had seen me at Havenpool, comrading close a sea-captain.  
 (Yes; I was thereto constrained, lacking means for the fare to and fro.)  
 Yet God knows, if aught He knows ever, I loved the Old-Hundredth, Saint Stephen's,  
 Mount Zion, New Sabbath, Miles-Lane, Holy Rest, and Arabia, and Eaton,  
 Above all embraces of body by wooers who sought me and won! . . .  
 Next week 'twas declared I was seen coming home with a lover at dawn.  
 The deacons insisted then, strong; and forgiveness I did not implore.  
 I saw all was lost for me, quite, but I made a last bid in my throbs.  
 High love had been beaten by lust; and the senses had conquered the soul,  
 But the soul should die game, if I knew it! I turned to my masters and said:  
 "I yield, Gentlemen, without parlance. But - let me just hymn you once more!  
 It's a little thing, Sirs, that I ask; and a passion is music with me!"  
 They saw that consent would cost nothing, and show as good grace, as knew I,  
 Though tremble I did, and feel sick, as I paused thereat, dumb for their words.  
 They gloomily nodded assent, saying, "Yes, if you care to. Once more,  
 And only once more, understand." To that with a bend I agreed.  
 - "You've a fixed and a far-reaching look," spoke one who had eyed me awhile.  
 "I've a fixed and a far-reaching plan, and my look only showed it," said I.

This evening of Sunday is come - the last of my functioning here.  
 "She plays as if she were possessed!" they exclaim, glancing upward and round.  
 "Such harmonies I never dreamt the old instrument capable of!"  
 Meantime the sun lowers and goes; shades deepen; the lights are turned up,  
 And the people voice out the last singing: tune Tallis: the Evening Hymn.  
 (I wonder Dissenters sing Ken: it shows them more liberal in spirit  
 At this little chapel down here than at certain new others I know.)  
 I sing as I play. Murmurs some one: "No woman's throat richer than hers!"  
 "True: in these parts, at least," ponder I. "But, my man, you will hear it no more."  
 And I sing with them onward: "The grave dread as little do I as my bed."

I lift up my feet from the pedals; and then, while my eyes are still wet  
 From the symphonies born of my fingers, I do that whereon I am set,  
 And draw from my "full round bosom," (their words; how can I help its heave?)  
 A bottle blue-coloured and fluted - a vinaigrette, they may conceive -  
 And before the choir measures my meaning, reads aught in my moves to and fro,  
 I drink from the phial at a draught, and they think it a pick-me-up; so.  
 Then I gather my books as to leave, bend over the keys as to pray.  
 When they come to me motionless, stooping, quick death will have whisked me away.

“Sure, nobody meant her to poison herself in her haste, after all!”  
The deacons will say as they carry me down and the night shadows fall,  
“Though the charges were true,” they will add. “It’s a case red as scarlet withal!”  
I have never once minced it. Lived chaste I have not. Heaven knows it above! . . .  
But past all the heavings of passion - it’s music has been my life-love! . . .  
That tune did go well - this last playing! . . . I reckon they’ll bury me here . . .  
Not a soul from the seaport my birthplace - will come, or bestow me . . . a tear.

## FETCHING HER

An hour before the dawn,  
My friend,  
You lit your waiting bedside-lamp,  
Your breakfast-fire anon,  
And outing into the dark and damp  
You saddled, and set on.

Thuswise, before the day,  
My friend,  
You sought her on her surfy shore,  
To fetch her thence away  
Unto your own new-built door  
For a staunch lifelong stay.

You said: “It seems to be,  
My friend,  
That I were bringing to my place  
The pure brine breeze, the sea,  
The mews - all her old sky and space,  
In bringing her with me!”

- But time is prompt to expugn,  
My friend,  
Such magic-minted conjurings:  
The brought breeze fainted soon,  
And then the sense of seamews’ wings,  
And the shore’s sibilant tune.

So, it had been more due,  
My friend,  
Perhaps, had you not pulled this flower  
From the craggy nook it knew,  
And set it in an alien bower;  
But left it where it grew!

## COULD I BUT WILL

(SONG: Verses 1, 3, key major; verse 2, key minor)

Could I but will,  
Will to my bent,  
I'd have afar ones near me still,  
And music of rare ravishment,  
In strains that move the toes and heels!  
And when the sweethearts sat for rest  
The unbetrothed should foot with zest  
Ecstatic reels.

Could I be head,  
Head-god, "Come, now,  
Dear girl," I'd say, "whose flame is fled,  
Who liest with linen-banded brow,  
Stirred but by shakes from Earth's deep core - "  
I'd say to her: "Unshroud and meet  
That Love who kissed and called thee Sweet! -  
Yea, come once more!"

Even half-god power  
In spinning dooms  
Had I, this frozen scene should flower,  
And sand-swept plains and Arctic glooms  
Should green them gay with waving leaves,  
Mid which old friends and I would walk  
With weightless feet and magic talk  
Uncounted eves.

## SHE REVISITS ALONE THE CHURCH OF HER MARRIAGE

I have come to the church and chancel,  
Where all's the same!  
- Brighter and larger in my dreams  
Truly it shaped than now, meseems,  
Is its substantial frame.  
But, anyhow, I made my vow,  
Whether for praise or blame,  
Here in this church and chancel  
Where all's the same.

Where touched the check-floored chancel  
My knees and his?  
The step looks shyly at the sun,  
And says, "‘Twas here the thing was done,  
For bale or else for bliss!"  
Of all those there I least was ware  
Would it be that or this  
When touched the check-floored chancel  
My knees and his!

Here in this fateful chancel  
Where all's the same,  
I thought the culminant crest of life  
Was reached when I went forth the wife  
I was not when I came.  
Each commonplace one of my race,  
Some say, has such an aim -  
To go from a fateful chancel  
As not the same.

Here, through this hoary chancel  
Where all's the same,  
A thrill, a gaiety even, ranged  
That morning when it seemed I changed  
My nature with my name.  
Though now not fair, though gray my hair,  
He loved me, past proclaim,  
Here in this hoary chancel,  
Where all's the same.

## **AT THE ENTERING OF THE NEW YEAR**

### **I (OLD STYLE)**

Our songs went up and out the chimney,  
And roused the home-gone husbandmen;  
Our allemands, our heys, poussettings,  
Our hands-across and back again,  
Sent rhythmic throbbings through the casements  
On to the white highway,  
Where nighted farers paused and muttered,  
"Keep it up well, do they!"

The contrabasso's measured booming  
Sped at each bar to the parish bounds,  
To shepherds at their midnight lambings,  
To stealthy poachers on their rounds;  
And everybody caught full duly  
The notes of our delight,  
As Time unrobed the Youth of Promise  
Hailed by our sanguine sight.

## II (NEW STYLE)

We stand in the dusk of a pine-tree limb,  
As if to give ear to the muffled peal,  
Brought or withheld at the breeze's whim;  
But our truest heed is to words that steal  
From the mantled ghost that looms in the gray,  
And seems, so far as our sense can see,  
To feature bereaved Humanity,  
As it sighs to the imminent year its say:-

"O stay without, O stay without,  
Calm comely Youth, untasked, untired;  
Though stars irradiate thee about  
Thy entrance here is undesired.  
Open the gate not, mystic one;  
Must we avow what we would close confine?  
With thee, good friend, we would have converse none,  
Albeit the fault may not be thine."

December 31. During the War.

## THEY WOULD NOT COME

I travelled to where in her lifetime  
She'd knelt at morning prayer,  
To call her up as if there;  
But she paid no heed to my suing,  
As though her old haunt could win not  
A thought from her spirit, or care.

I went where my friend had lectioned  
The prophets in high declaim,  
That my soul's ear the same  
Full tones should catch as aforesaid;  
But silenced by gear of the Present  
Was the voice that once there came!  
Where the ocean had sprayed our banquet  
I stood, to recall it as then:  
The same eluding again!  
No vision. Shows contingent  
Affrighted it further from me  
Even than from my home-den.  
When I found them no responders,  
But fugitives prone to flee  
From where they had used to be,  
It vouched I had been led hither  
As by night wisps in bogland,  
And bruised the heart of me!

## **AFTER A ROMANTIC DAY**

The railway bore him through  
An earthen cutting out from a city:  
There was no scope for view,  
Though the frail light shed by a slim young moon  
Fell like a friendly tune.  
Fell like a liquid ditty,  
And the blank lack of any charm  
Of landscape did no harm.  
The bald steep cutting, rigid, rough,  
And moon-lit, was enough  
For poetry of place: its weathered face  
Formed a convenient sheet whereon  
The visions of his mind were drawn.

## **THE TWO WIVES**

(SMOKER'S CLUB-STORY)



I waited at home all the while they were boating together -  
My wife and my near neighbour's wife:  
Till there entered a woman I loved more than life,  
And we sat and sat on, and beheld the uprising dark weather,  
With a sense that some mischief was rife.

Tidings came that the boat had capsized, and that one of the ladies  
Was drowned - which of them was unknown:  
And I marvelled - my friend's wife? - or was it my own  
Who had gone in such wise to the land where the sun as the shade is?  
- We learnt it was his had so gone.

Then I cried in unrest: "He is free! But no good is releasing  
To him as it would be to me!"  
" - But it is," said the woman I loved, quietly.  
"How?" I asked her. " - Because he has long loved me too without ceasing,  
And it's just the same thing, don't you see."

## I KNEW A LADY

(CLUB SONG)

I knew a lady when the days  
Grew long, and evenings goldened;  
But I was not emboldened  
By her prompt eyes and winning ways.  
And when old Winter nipt the haws,  
"Another's wife I'll be,  
And then you'll care for me,"  
She said, "and think how sweet I was!"  
And soon she shone as another's wife:  
As such I often met her,  
And sighed, "How I regret her!  
My folly cuts me like a knife!"  
And then, to-day, her husband came,  
And moaned, "Why did you flout her?  
Well could I do without her!  
For both our burdens you are to blame!"

## A HOUSE WITH A HISTORY

There is a house in a city street  
Some past ones made their own;  
Its floors were criss-crossed by their feet,  
And their babblings beat  
From ceiling to white hearth-stone.

And who are peopling its parlours now?  
Who talk across its floor?  
Mere freshlings are they, blank of brow,  
Who read not how  
Its prime had passed before

Their raw equipments, scenes, and says  
Afflicted its memoried face,  
That had seen every larger phase  
Of human ways  
Before these filled the place.

To them that house's tale is theirs,  
No former voices call  
Aloud therein. Its aspect bears  
Their joys and cares  
Alone, from wall to wall.

## A PROCESSION OF DEAD DAYS

I see the ghost of a perished day;  
I know his face, and the feel of his dawn:  
'Twas he who took me far away  
To a spot strange and gray:  
Look at me, Day, and then pass on,  
But come again: yes, come anon!

Enters another into view;  
His features are not cold or white,  
But rosy as a vein seen through:  
Too soon he smiles adieu.  
Adieu, O ghost-day of delight;  
But come and grace my dying sight.

Enters the day that brought the kiss:  
He brought it in his foggy hand  
To where the mumbling river is,  
And the high clematis;  
It lent new colour to the land,  
And all the boy within me manned.

Ah, this one. Yes, I know his name,  
He is the day that wrought a shine  
Even on a precinct common and tame,  
As 'twere of purposed aim.  
He shows him as a rainbow sign  
Of promise made to me and mine.

The next stands forth in his morning clothes,  
And yet, despite their misty blue,  
They mark no sombre custom-growths  
That joyous living loathes,  
But a meteor act, that left in its queue  
A train of sparks my lifetime through.

I almost tremble at his nod -  
This next in train - who looks at me  
As I were slave, and he were god  
Wielding an iron rod.  
I close my eyes; yet still is he  
In front there, looking mastery.

In the similitude of a nurse  
The phantom of the next one comes:  
I did not know what better or worse  
Chancings might bless or curse  
When his original glossed the thrums  
Of ivy, bringing that which numbs.

Yes; trees were turning in their sleep  
Upon their windy pillows of gray  
When he stole in. Silent his creep  
On the grassed eastern step . . .  
I shall not soon forget that day,  
And what his third hour took away!

## HE FOLLOWS HIMSELF

In a heavy time I dogged myself  
Along a louring way,  
Till my leading self to my following self  
Said: "Why do you hang on me  
So harassingly?"

"I have watched you, Heart of mine," I cried,  
"So often going astray  
And leaving me, that I have pursued,  
Feeling such truancy  
Ought not to be."

He said no more, and I dogged him on  
From noon to the dun of day  
By prowling paths, until anew  
He begged: "Please turn and flee! -  
What do you see?"

"Methinks I see a man," said I,  
"Dimming his hours to gray.  
I will not leave him while I know  
Part of myself is he  
Who dreams such dree!"

"I go to my old friend's house," he urged,  
"So do not watch me, pray!"  
"Well, I will leave you in peace," said I,  
"Though of this poignancy  
You should fight free:

"Your friend, O other me, is dead;  
You know not what you say."  
- "That do I! And at his green-grassed door  
By night's bright galaxy  
I bend a knee."

- The yew-plumes moved like mockers' beards,  
Though only boughs were they,  
And I seemed to go; yet still was there,  
And am, and there haunt we  
Thus bootlessly.

## THE SINGING WOMAN

There was a singing woman  
Came riding across the mead  
At the time of the mild May weather,  
Tameless, tireless;  
This song she sung: "I am fair, I am young!"  
And many turned to heed.

And the same singing woman  
Sat crooning in her need  
At the time of the winter weather;  
Friendless, fireless,  
She sang this song: "Life, thou'rt too long!"  
And there was none to heed.

## WITHOUT, NOT WITHIN HER

It was what you bore with you, Woman,  
Not inly were,  
That throned you from all else human,  
However fair!

It was that strange freshness you carried  
Into a soul  
Whereon no thought of yours tarried  
Two moments at all.

And out from his spirit flew death,  
And bale, and ban,  
Like the corn-chaff under the breath  
Of the winnowing-fan.

## O I WON'T LEAD A HOMELY LIFE

(To an old air)  
"O I won't lead a homely life  
As father's Jack and mother's Jill,  
But I will be a fiddler's wife,  
With music mine at will!  
Just a little tune,  
Another one soon,  
As I merrily fling my fill!"

And she became a fiddler's Dear,  
And merry all day she strove to be;  
And he played and played afar and near,  
But never at home played he  
Any little tune  
Or late or soon;  
And sunk and sad was she!

## IN THE SMALL HOURS

I lay in my bed and fiddled  
With a dreamland viol and bow,  
And the tunes flew back to my fingers  
I had melodied years ago.  
It was two or three in the morning  
When I fancy-fiddled so  
Long reels and country-dances,  
And hornpipes swift and slow.

And soon anon came crossing  
The chamber in the gray  
Figures of jigging fieldfolk -  
Saviours of corn and hay -  
To the air of "Haste to the Wedding,"  
As after a wedding-day;  
Yea, up and down the middle  
In windless whirls went they!

There danced the bride and bridegroom,  
And couples in a train,  
Gay partners time and travail  
Had longwhiles stilled amain! . . .  
It seemed a thing for weeping  
To find, at slumber's wane  
And morning's sly increeping,  
That Now, not Then, held reign.

## THE LITTLE OLD TABLE

Creak, little wood thing, creak,  
When I touch you with elbow or knee;  
That is the way you speak  
Of one who gave you to me!

You, little table, she brought -  
Brought me with her own hand,  
As she looked at me with a thought  
That I did not understand.

- Whoever owns it anon,  
And hears it, will never know  
What a history hangs upon  
This creak from long ago.

## VAGG HOLLOW

Vagg Hollow is a marshy spot on the old Roman Road near Ilchester, where “things” are seen. Merchandise was formerly fetched inland from the canal-boats at Load-Bridge by waggons this way.

“What do you see in Vagg Hollow,  
Little boy, when you go  
In the morning at five on your lonely drive?”  
“ - I see men’s souls, who follow  
Till we’ve passed where the road lies low,  
When they vanish at our creaking!

“They are like white faces speaking  
Beside and behind the waggon -  
One just as father’s was when here.  
The waggoner drinks from his flagon,  
(Or he’d flinch when the Hollow is near)  
But he does not give me any.

“Sometimes the faces are many;  
But I walk along by the horses,  
He asleep on the straw as we jog;  
And I hear the loud water-courses,  
And the drops from the trees in the fog,  
And watch till the day is breaking.

“And the wind out by Tintinhull waking;  
I hear in it father’s call  
As he called when I saw him dying,  
And he sat by the fire last Fall,  
And mother stood by sighing;  
But I’m not afraid at all!”

## THE DREAM IS - WHICH?

I am laughing by the brook with her,  
Splashed in its tumbling stir;  
And then it is a blankness looms  
As if I walked not there,  
Nor she, but found me in haggard rooms,  
And treading a lonely stair.

With radiant cheeks and rapid eyes  
We sit where none espies;  
Till a harsh change comes edging in  
As no such scene were there,  
But winter, and I were bent and thin,  
And cinder-gray my hair.

We dance in heys around the hall,  
Weightless as thistleball;  
And then a curtain drops between,  
As if I danced not there,  
But wandered through a mounded green  
To find her, I knew where.

March 1913.

## THE COUNTRY WEDDING

(A FIDDLER’S STORY)

Little fogs were gathered in every hollow,  
But the purple hillocks enjoyed fine weather  
As we marched with our fiddles over the heather  
- How it comes back! - to their wedding that day.

Our getting there brought our neighbours and all, O!  
Till, two and two, the couples stood ready.  
And her father said: “Souls, for God’s sake, be steady!”  
And we strung up our fiddles, and sounded out “A.”



The groomsman he stared, and said, "You must follow!"  
But we'd gone to fiddle in front of the party,  
(Our feelings as friends being true and hearty)  
And fiddle in front we did - all the way.

Yes, from their door by Mill-tail-Shallow,  
And up Styles-Lane, and by Front-Street houses,  
Where stood maids, bachelors, and spouses,  
Who cheered the songs that we knew how to play.

I bowed the treble before her father,  
Michael the tenor in front of the lady,  
The bass-viol Reub - and right well played he! -  
The serpent Jim; ay, to church and back.

I thought the bridegroom was flurried rather,  
As we kept up the tune outside the chancel,  
While they were swearing things none can cancel  
Inside the walls to our drumstick's whack.

"Too gay!" she pleaded. "Clouds may gather,  
And sorrow come." But she gave in, laughing,  
And by supper-time when we'd got to the quaffing  
Her fears were forgot, and her smiles weren't slack.

A grand wedding 'twas! And what would follow  
We never thought. Or that we should have buried her  
On the same day with the man that married her,  
A day like the first, half hazy, half clear.

Yes: little fogs were in every hollow,  
Though the purple hillocks enjoyed fine weather,  
When we went to play 'em to church together,  
And carried 'em there in an after year.

## FIRST OR LAST

(SONG)

If grief come early  
Joy comes late,  
If joy come early  
Grief will wait;  
Aye, my dear and tender!

Wise ones joy them early  
While the cheeks are red,  
Banish grief till surly  
Time has dulled their dread.

And joy being ours  
Ere youth has flown,  
The later hours  
May find us gone;  
Aye, my dear and tender!

## LONELY DAYS

Lonely her fate was,  
Environed from sight  
In the house where the gate was  
Past finding at night.  
None there to share it,  
No one to tell:  
Long she'd to bear it,  
And bore it well.

Elsewhere just so she  
Spent many a day;  
Wishing to go she  
Continued to stay.  
And people without  
Basked warm in the air,  
But none sought her out,  
Or knew she was there.  
Even birthdays were passed so,  
Sunny and shady:  
Years did it last so  
For this sad lady.  
Never declaring it,  
No one to tell,  
Still she kept bearing it -  
Bore it well.

The days grew chillier,  
And then she went  
To a city, familiar  
In years forespent,  
When she walked gaily  
Far to and fro,  
But now, moving frailly,  
Could nowhere go.  
The cheerful colour  
Of houses she'd known  
Had died to a duller  
And dingier tone.  
Streets were now noisy  
Where once had rolled  
A few quiet coaches,  
Or citizens strolled.  
Through the party-wall  
Of the memoried spot  
They danced at a ball  
Who recalled her not.  
Tramlines lay crossing  
Once gravelled slopes,  
Metal rods clanked,  
And electric ropes.  
So she endured it all,  
Thin, thinner wrought,  
Until time cured it all,  
And she knew nought.

Versified from a Diary.

Versified from a Diary.

## WHAT DID IT MEAN?

What did it mean that noontide, when  
You bade me pluck the flower  
Within the other woman's bower,  
Whom I knew nought of then?

I thought the flower blushed deeper - aye,  
And as I drew its stalk to me  
It seemed to breathe: "I am, I see,  
Made use of in a human play."

And while I plucked, upstarted sheer  
As phantom from the pane thereby  
A corpse-like countenance, with eye  
That iced me by its baleful peer -  
Silent, as from a bier . . .

When I came back your face had changed,  
It was no face for me;  
O did it speak of hearts estranged,  
And deadly rivalry

In times before  
I darked your door,  
To seise me of  
Mere second love,  
Which still the haunting first deranged?

## **AT THE DINNER-TABLE**

I sat at dinner in my prime,  
And glimpsed my face in the sideboard-glass,  
And started as if I had seen a crime,  
And prayed the ghastly show might pass.

Wrenched wrinkled features met my sight,  
Grinning back to me as my own;  
I well-nigh fainted with affright  
At finding me a haggard crone.

My husband laughed. He had slyly set  
A warping mirror there, in whim  
To startle me. My eyes grew wet;  
I spoke not all the eve to him.

He was sorry, he said, for what he had done,  
And took away the distorting glass,  
Uncovering the accustomed one;  
And so it ended? No, alas,

Fifty years later, when he died,  
I sat me in the selfsame chair,  
Thinking of him. Till, weary-eyed,  
I saw the sideboard facing there;

And from its mirror looked the lean  
Thing I'd become, each wrinkle and score  
The image of me that I had seen  
In jest there fifty years before.

## THE MARBLE TABLET

There it stands, though alas, what a little of her  
Shows in its cold white look!  
Not her glance, glide, or smile; not a tittle of her  
Voice like the purl of a brook;  
Not her thoughts, that you read like a book.

It may stand for her once in November  
When first she breathed, witless of all;  
Or in heavy years she would remember  
When circumstance held her in thrall;  
Or at last, when she answered her call!

Nothing more. The still marble, date-graven,  
Gives all that it can, tersely lined;  
That one has at length found the haven  
Which every one other will find;  
With silence on what shone behind.

St. Juliot: September 8, 1916.

## THE MASTER AND THE LEAVES

### I

We are budding, Master, budding,  
We of your favourite tree;  
March drought and April flooding  
Arouse us merrily,  
Our stemlets newly studding;  
And yet you do not see!

### II

We are fully woven for summer  
In stuff of limpest green,  
The twitterer and the hummer  
Here rest of nights, unseen,  
While like a long-roll drummer  
The nightjar thrills the treen.

### III

We are turning yellow, Master,  
And next we are turning red,  
And faster then and faster  
Shall seek our rooty bed,  
All wasted in disaster!  
But you lift not your head.

### IV

- “I mark your early going,  
And that you’ll soon be clay,  
I have seen your summer showing  
As in my youthful day;  
But why I seem unknowing  
Is too sunk in to say!”

1917

## LAST WORDS TO A DUMB FRIEND

Pet was never mourned as you,  
Purrer of the spotless hue,  
Plummy tail, and wistful gaze  
While you humoured our queer ways,  
Or outshrilled your morning call  
Up the stairs and through the hall -  
Foot suspended in its fall -  
While, expectant, you would stand  
Arched, to meet the stroking hand;  
Till your way you chose to wend  
Yonder, to your tragic end.

Never another pet for me!  
Let your place all vacant be;  
Better blankness day by day  
Than companion torn away.  
Better bid his memory fade,  
Better blot each mark he made,  
Selfishly escape distress  
By contrived forgetfulness,  
Than preserve his prints to make  
Every morn and eve an ache.

From the chair whereon he sat  
Sweep his fur, nor wince thereat;  
Rake his little pathways out  
Mid the bushes roundabout;  
Smooth away his talons' mark  
From the claw-worn pine-tree bark,  
Where he climbed as dusk embrowned,  
Waiting us who loitered round.

Strange it is this speechless thing,  
Subject to our mastering,  
Subject for his life and food  
To our gift, and time, and mood;  
Timid pensioner of us Powers,  
His existence ruled by ours,  
Should - by crossing at a breath  
Into safe and shielded death,  
By the merely taking hence  
Of his insignificance -  
Loom as largened to the sense,  
Shape as part, above man's will,  
Of the Imperturbable.

As a prisoner, flight debarred,  
Exercising in a yard,  
Still retain I, troubled, shaken,  
Mean estate, by him forsaken;  
And this home, which scarcely took  
Impress from his little look,  
By his faring to the Dim  
Grows all eloquent of him.

Housemate, I can think you still  
Bounding to the window-sill,  
Over which I vaguely see  
Your small mound beneath the tree,  
Showing in the autumn shade  
That you moulder where you played.

October 2, 1904.

## **A DRIZZLING EASTER MORNING**

And he is risen? Well, be it so . . .  
And still the pensive lands complain,  
And dead men wait as long ago,  
As if, much doubting, they would know  
What they are ransomed from, before  
They pass again their sheltering door.

I stand amid them in the rain,  
While blusters vex the yew and vane;  
And on the road the weary wain  
Plods forward, laden heavily;  
And toilers with their aches are fain  
For endless rest - though risen is he.

## **ON ONE WHO LIVED AND DIED WHERE HE WAS BORN**

When a night in November  
Blew forth its bleared airs  
An infant descended  
His birth-chamber stairs  
For the very first time,  
At the still, midnight chime;  
All unapprehended  
His mission, his aim. -  
Thus, first, one November,  
An infant descended  
The stairs.



On a night in November  
Of weariful cares,  
A frail aged figure  
Ascended those stairs  
For the very last time:  
All gone his life's prime,  
All vanished his vigour,  
And fine, forceful frame:  
Thus, last, one November  
Ascended that figure  
Upstairs.

On those nights in November -  
Apart eighty years -  
The babe and the bent one  
Who traversed those stairs  
From the early first time  
To the last feeble climb -  
That fresh and that spent one -  
Were even the same:  
Yea, who passed in November  
As infant, as bent one,  
Those stairs.

Wise child of November!  
From birth to blanched hairs  
Descending, ascending,  
Wealth-wantless, those stairs;  
Who saw quick in time  
As a vain pantomime  
Life's tending, its ending,  
The worth of its fame.  
Wise child of November,  
Descending, ascending  
Those stairs!

## THE SECOND NIGHT

(BALLAD)

I missed one night, but the next I went;  
It was gusty above, and clear;  
She was there, with the look of one ill-content,  
And said: "Do not come near!"

- “I am sorry last night to have failed you here,  
And now I have travelled all day;  
And it’s long rowing back to the West-Hoe Pier,  
So brief must be my stay.”
- “O man of mystery, why not say  
Out plain to me all you mean?  
Why you missed last night, and must now away  
Is - another has come between!”
- “ O woman so mocking in mood and mien,  
So be it!” I replied:  
“And if I am due at a differing scene  
Before the dark has died,

“‘Tis that, unresting, to wander wide  
Has ever been my plight,  
And at least I have met you at Cremyll side  
If not last eve, to-night.”

- “You get small rest - that read I quite;  
And so do I, maybe;  
Though there’s a rest hid safe from sight  
Elsewhere awaiting me!”

A mad star crossed the sky to the sea,  
Wasting in sparks as it streamed,  
And when I looked to where stood she  
She had changed, much changed, it seemed:  
The sparks of the star in her pupils gleamed,  
She was vague as a vapour now,  
And ere of its meaning I had dreamed  
She’d vanished - I knew not how.  
I stood on, long; each cliff-top bough,  
Like a cynic nodding there,  
Moved up and down, though no man’s brow  
But mine met the wayward air.  
Still stood I, wholly unaware  
Of what had come to pass,  
Or had brought the secret of my new Fair  
To my old Love, alas!

I went down then by crag and grass  
To the boat wherein I had come.  
Said the man with the oars: "This news of the lass  
Of Edgcumbe, is sharp for some!

"Yes: found this daybreak, stiff and numb  
On the shore here, whither she'd sped  
To meet her lover last night in the glum,  
And he came not, 'tis said.

"And she leapt down, heart-hit. Pity she's dead:  
So much for the faithful-bent!" . . .  
I looked, and again a star overhead  
Shot through the firmament.

## **SHE WHO SAW NOT**

"Did you see something within the house  
That made me call you before the red sunsetting?  
Something that all this common scene endows  
With a richened impress there can be no forgetting?"

" - I have found nothing to see therein,  
O Sage, that should have made you urge me to enter,  
Nothing to fire the soul, or the sense to win:  
I rate you as a rare misrepresenter!"

" - Go anew, Lady, - in by the right . . .  
Well: why does your face not shine like the face of Moses?"

" - I found no moving thing there save the light  
And shadow flung on the wall by the outside roses."

" - Go yet once more, pray. Look on a seat."

" - I go . . . O Sage, it's only a man that sits there  
With eyes on the sun. Mute, - average head to feet."

" - No more?" - "No more. Just one the place befits there,

"As the rays reach in through the open door,  
And he looks at his hand, and the sun glows through his fingers,  
While he's thinking thoughts whose tenour is no more  
To me than the swaying rose-tree shade that lingers."

No more. And years drew on and on  
Till no sun came, dank fogs the house enfolding;  
And she saw inside, when the form in the flesh had gone,  
As a vision what she had missed when the real beholding.

## THE OLD WORKMAN

“Why are you so bent down before your time,  
Old mason? Many have not left their prime  
So far behind at your age, and can still  
Stand full upright at will.”

He pointed to the mansion-front hard by,  
And to the stones of the quoin against the sky;  
“Those upper blocks,” he said, “that there you see,  
It was that ruined me.”

There stood in the air up to the parapet  
Crowning the corner height, the stones as set  
By him - ashlar whereon the gales might drum  
For centuries to come.

“I carried them up,” he said, “by a ladder there;  
The last was as big a load as I could bear;  
But on I heaved; and something in my back  
Moved, as ‘twere with a crack.

“So I got crookt. I never lost that sprain;  
And those who live there, walled from wind and rain  
By freestone that I lifted, do not know  
That my life’s ache came so.

“They don’t know me, or even know my name,  
But good I think it, somehow, all the same  
To have kept ‘em safe from harm, and right and tight,  
Though it has broke me quite.

“Yes; that I fixed it firm up there I am proud,  
Facing the hail and snow and sun and cloud,  
And to stand storms for ages, beating round  
When I lie underground.”

## THE SAILOR’S MOTHER

”O whence do you come,  
Figure in the night-fog that chills me numb?”

“I come to you across from my house up there,  
And I don’t mind the brine-mist clinging to me  
That blows from the quay,  
For I heard him in my chamber, and thought you unaware.”

”But what did you hear,  
That brought you blindly knocking in this middle-watch so drear?”

“My sailor son’s voice as ‘twere calling at your door,  
And I don’t mind my bare feet clammy on the stones,  
And the blight to my bones,  
For he only knows of this house I lived in before.”

”Nobody’s nigh,  
Woman like a skeleton, with socket-sunk eye.”

“Ah - nobody’s nigh! And my life is drearisome,  
And this is the old home we loved in many a day  
Before he went away;  
And the salt fog mops me. And nobody’s come!”  
From “To Please his Wife.”

## OUTSIDE THE CASEMENT

(A REMINISCENCE OF THE WAR)

We sat in the room  
And praised her whom  
We saw in the portico-shade outside:  
She could not hear  
What was said of her,  
But smiled, for its purport we did not hide.

Then in was brought  
That message, fraught  
With evil fortune for her out there,  
Whom we loved that day  
More than any could say,  
And would fain have fenced from a waft of care.

And the question pressed  
Like lead on each breast,  
Should we cloak the tidings, or call her and tell?  
It was too intense  
A choice for our sense,  
As we pondered and watched her we loved so well.

Yea, spirit failed us  
At what assailed us;  
How long, while seeing what soon must come,  
Should we counterfeit  
No knowledge of it,  
And stay the stroke that would blanch and numb?

And thus, before  
For evermore  
Joy left her, we practised to beguile  
Her innocence when  
She now and again  
Looked in, and smiled us another smile.

## **THE PASSER-BY**

(L. H. RECALLS HER ROMANCE)

He used to pass, well-trimmed and brushed,  
My window every day,  
And when I smiled on him he blushed,  
That youth, quite as a girl might; aye,  
In the shyest way.

Thus often did he pass hereby,  
That youth of bounding gait,  
Until the one who blushed was I,  
And he became, as here I sate,  
My joy, my fate.

And now he passes by no more,  
That youth I loved too true!  
I grieve should he, as here of yore,  
Pass elsewhere, seated in his view,  
Some maiden new!

If such should be, alas for her!  
He'll make her feel him dear,  
Become her daily comforter,  
Then tire him of her beauteous gear,  
And disappear!

## **I WAS THE MIDMOST**

I was the midmost of my world  
When first I frisked me free,  
For though within its circuit gleamed  
But a small company,  
And I was immature, they seemed  
To bend their looks on me.

She was the midmost of my world  
When I went further forth,  
And hence it was that, whether I turned  
To south, east, west, or north,  
Beams of an all-day Polestar burned  
From that new axe of earth.

Where now is midmost in my world?  
I trace it not at all:  
No midmost shows it here, or there,  
When wistful voices call  
“We are fain! We are fain!” from everywhere  
On Earth’s bewildering ball!

## A SOUND IN THE NIGHT

(WOODSFORD CASTLE: 17-)

“What do I catch upon the night-wind, husband? -  
What is it sounds in this house so eerily?  
It seems to be a woman’s voice: each little while I hear it,  
And it much troubles me!”

“‘Tis but the eaves dripping down upon the plinth-slopes:  
Letting fancies worry thee! - sure ‘tis a foolish thing,  
When we were on’y coupled half-an-hour before the noontide,  
And now it’s but evening.”

“Yet seems it still a woman’s voice outside the castle, husband,  
And ‘tis cold to-night, and rain beats, and this is a lonely place.  
Didst thou fathom much of womankind in travel or adventure  
Ere ever thou sawest my face?”

“It may be a tree, bride, that rubs his arms acrosswise,  
If it is not the eaves-drip upon the lower slopes,  
Or the river at the bend, where it whirls about the hatches  
Like a creature that sighs and mopes.”

“Yet it still seems to me like the crying of a woman,  
And it saddens me much that so piteous a sound  
On this my bridal night when I would get agone from sorrow  
Should so ghost-like wander round!”

“To satisfy thee, Love, I will strike the flint-and-steel, then,  
And set the rush-candle up, and undo the door,  
And take the new horn-lantern that we bought upon our journey,  
And throw the light over the moor.”

He struck a light, and breeched and booted in the further chamber,  
And lit the new horn-lantern and went from her sight,  
And vanished down the turret; and she heard him pass the postern,  
And go out into the night.

She listened as she lay, till she heard his step returning,  
And his voice as he unclothed him: "'Twas nothing, as I said,  
But the nor'-west wind a-blowing from the moor ath'art the river,  
And the tree that taps the gurgoyle-head."

"Nay, husband, you perplex me; for if the noise I heard here,  
Awaking me from sleep so, were but as you avow,  
The rain-fall, and the wind, and the tree-bough, and the river,  
Why is it silent now?"

"And why is thy hand and thy clasping arm so shaking,  
And thy sleeve and tags of hair so muddy and so wet,  
And why feel I thy heart a-thumping every time thou kissest me,  
And thy breath as if hard to get?"

He lay there in silence for a while, still quickly breathing,  
Then started up and walked about the room resentfully:  
"O woman, witch, whom I, in sooth, against my will have wedded,  
Why castedst thou thy spells on me?"

"There was one I loved once: the cry you heard was her cry:  
She came to me to-night, and her plight was passing sore,  
As no woman . . . Yea, and it was e'en the cry you heard, wife,  
But she will cry no more!"

"And now I can't abide thee: this place, it hath a curse on't,  
This farmstead once a castle: I'll get me straight away!"  
He dressed this time in darkness, unspeaking, as she listened,  
And went ere the dawn turned day.

They found a woman's body at a spot called Rocky Shallow,  
Where the Froom stream curves amid the moorland, washed aground,  
And they searched about for him, the yeoman, who had darkly known her,  
But he could not be found.

And the bride left for good-and-all the farmstead once a castle,  
And in a county far away lives, mourns, and sleeps alone,  
And thinks in windy weather that she hears a woman crying,  
And sometimes an infant's moan.



## ON A DISCOVERED CURL OF HAIR

When your soft welcomings were said,  
This curl was waving on your head,  
And when we walked where breakers dinned  
It sported in the sun and wind,  
And when I had won your words of grace  
It brushed and clung about my face.  
Then, to abate the misery  
Of absentness, you gave it me.

Where are its fellows now? Ah, they  
For brightest brown have donned a gray,  
And gone into a caverned ark,  
Ever unopened, always dark!

Yet this one curl, untouched of time,  
Beams with live brown as in its prime,  
So that it seems I even could now  
Restore it to the living brow  
By bearing down the western road  
Till I had reached your old abode.

February 1913.

## AN OLD LIKENESS

(RECALLING R. T.)

Who would have thought  
That, not having missed her  
Talks, tears, laughter  
In absence, or sought  
To recall for so long  
Her gamut of song;  
Or ever to waft her  
Signal of aught  
That she, fancy-fanned,  
Would well understand,  
I should have kissed her  
Picture when scanned  
Yawning years after!

Yet, seeing her poor  
Dim-outlined form  
Chancewise at night-time,  
Some old allure  
Came on me, warm,  
Fresh, pleadful, pure,  
As in that bright time  
At a far season  
Of love and unreason,  
And took me by storm  
Here in this blight-time!

And thus it arose  
That, yawning years after  
Our early flows  
Of wit and laughter,  
And framing of rhymes  
At idle times,  
At sight of her painting,  
Though she lies cold  
In churchyard mould,  
I took its feinting  
As real, and kissed it,  
As if I had wist it  
Herself of old.

## HER APOTHEOSIS

“Secretum meum mihi”  
(FADED WOMAN’S SONG)

There was a spell of leisure,  
No record vouches when;  
With honours, praises, pleasure  
To womankind from men.

But no such lures bewitched me,  
No hand was stretched to raise,  
No gracious gifts enriched me,  
No voices sang my praise.

Yet an iris at that season  
Amid the accustomed slight  
From denseness, dull unreason,  
Ringed me with living light.

## SACRED TO THE MEMORY

(MARY H.)

That "Sacred to the Memory"  
Is clearly carven there I own,  
And all may think that on the stone  
The words have been inscribed by me  
In bare conventionality.

They know not and will never know  
That my full script is not confined  
To that stone space, but stands deep lined  
Upon the landscape high and low  
Wherein she made such worthy show.

## TO A WELL-NAMED DWELLING

Glad old house of lichen'd stonework,  
What I owed you in my lone work,  
Noon and night!  
Whensoever faint or ailing,  
Letting go my grasp and failing,  
You lent light.

How by that fair title came you?  
Did some forward eye so name you  
Knowing that one,  
Sauntering down his century blindly,  
Would remark your sound, so kindly,  
And be won?

Smile in sunlight, sleep in moonlight,  
Bask in April, May, and June-light,  
Zephyr-fanned;  
Let your chambers show no sorrow,  
Blanching day, or stuporing morrow,  
While they stand.

## THE WHIPPER-IN

My father was the whipper-in, -  
Is still - if I'm not misled?  
And now I see, where the hedge is thin,  
A little spot of red;  
Surely it is my father  
Going to the kennel-shed!

"I cursed and fought my father - aye,  
And sailed to a foreign land;  
And feeling sorry, I'm back, to stay,  
Please God, as his helping hand.  
Surely it is my father  
Near where the kennels stand?"

" - True. Whipper-in he used to be  
For twenty years or more;  
And you did go away to sea  
As youths have done before.  
Yes, oddly enough that red there  
Is the very coat he wore.

"But he - he's dead; was thrown somehow,  
And gave his back a crick,  
And though that is his coat, 'tis now  
The scarecrow of a rick;  
You'll see when you get nearer -  
'Tis spread out on a stick.

"You see, when all had settled down  
Your mother's things were sold,  
And she went back to her own town,  
And the coat, ate out with mould,  
Is now used by the farmer  
For scaring, as 'tis old."

## A MILITARY APPOINTMENT

(SCHERZANDO)

"So back you have come from the town, Nan, dear!  
And have you seen him there, or near -  
That soldier of mine -  
Who long since promised to meet me here?"

“ - O yes, Nell: from the town I come,  
And have seen your lover on sick-leave home -  
That soldier of yours -  
Who swore to meet you, or Strike-him-dumb;  
“But has kept himself of late away;  
Yet, - in short, he’s coming, I heard him say -  
That lover of yours -  
To this very spot on this very day.”  
“ - Then I’ll wait, I’ll wait, through wet or dry!  
I’ll give him a goblet brimming high -  
This lover of mine -  
And not of complaint one word or sigh!”  
“ - Nell, him I have chanced so much to see,  
That - he has grown the lover of me! -  
That lover of yours -  
And it’s here our meeting is planned to be.”

## **THE MILESTONE BY THE RABBIT-BURROW**

(ON YELL’HAM HILL)

In my loamy nook  
As I dig my hole  
I observe men look  
At a stone, and sigh  
As they pass it by  
To some far goal.  
Something it says  
To their glancing eyes  
That must distress  
The frail and lame,  
And the strong of frame  
Gladden or surprise.  
Do signs on its face  
Declare how far  
Feet have to trace  
Before they gain  
Some blest champaign  
Where no gins are?

## THE LAMENT OF THE LOOKING-GLASS

Words from the mirror softly pass  
To the curtains with a sigh:  
“Why should I trouble again to glass  
These smileless things hard by,  
Since she I pleased once, alas,  
Is now no longer nigh!”

“I’ve imaged shadows of coursing cloud,  
And of the plying limb  
On the pensive pine when the air is loud  
With its aerial hymn;  
But never do they make me proud  
To catch them within my rim!

“I flash back phantoms of the night  
That sometimes flit by me,  
I echo roses red and white -  
The loveliest blooms that be -  
But now I never hold to sight  
So sweet a flower as she.”

## CROSS-CURRENTS

They parted - a pallid, trembling I pair,  
And rushing down the lane  
He left her lonely near me there;  
- I asked her of their pain.

“It is for ever,” at length she said,  
”His friends have schemed it so,  
That the long-purposed day to wed  
Never shall we two know.”

“In such a cruel case,” said I,  
”Love will contrive a course?”  
“- Well, no . . . A thing may underlie,  
Which robs that of its force;

“A thing I could not tell him of,  
Though all the year I have tried;  
This: never could I have given him love,  
Even had I been his bride.

“So, when his kinsfolk stop the way  
Point-blank, there could not be  
A happening in the world to-day  
More opportune for me!

“Yet hear - no doubt to your surprise -  
I am sorry, for his sake,  
That I have escaped the sacrifice  
I was prepared to make!”

## THE OLD NEIGHBOUR AND THE NEW

‘Twas to greet the new rector I called I here,  
But in the arm-chair I see  
My old friend, for long years installed here,  
Who palely nods to me.

The new man explains what he’s planning  
In a smart and cheerful tone,  
And I listen, the while that I’m scanning  
The figure behind his own.

The newcomer urges things on me;  
I return a vague smile thereto,  
The olden face gazing upon me  
Just as it used to do!

And on leaving I scarcely remember  
Which neighbour to-day I have seen,  
The one carried out in September,  
Or him who but entered yestreen.

## THE CHOSEN

“‘Ä¹Å± µÄ¹Å ±»»·³;Á;Ä½µ½±

“A woman for whom great gods might strive!”

I said, and kissed her there:  
And then I thought of the other five,  
And of how charms outwear.

I thought of the first with her eating eyes,  
And I thought of the second with hers, green-gray,  
And I thought of the third, experienced, wise,  
And I thought of the fourth who sang all day.

And I thought of the fifth, whom I'd called a jade,  
And I thought of them all, tear-fraught;  
And that each had shown her a passable maid,  
Yet not of the favour sought.

So I traced these words on the bark of a beech,  
Just at the falling of the mast:

"After scanning five; yes, each and each,  
I've found the woman desired - at last!"

" - I feel a strange benumbing spell,  
As one ill-wished!" said she.  
And soon it seemed that something fell  
Was starving her love for me.

"I feel some curse. O, five were there?"  
And wanly she swerved, and went away.  
I followed sick: night numbed the air,  
And dark the mournful moorland lay.

I cried: "O darling, turn your head!"  
But never her face I viewed;  
"O turn, O turn!" again I said,  
And miserably pursued.

At length I came to a Christ-cross stone  
Which she had passed without discern;  
And I knelt upon the leaves there strown,  
And prayed aloud that she might turn.

I rose, and looked; and turn she did;  
I cried, "My heart revives!"  
"Look more," she said. I looked as bid;  
Her face was all the five's.

All the five women, clear come back,  
I saw in her - with her made one,  
The while she drooped upon the track,  
And her frail term seemed well-nigh run.

She'd half forgot me in her change;  
"Who are you? Won't you say  
Who you may be, you man so strange,  
Following since yesterday?"

I took the composite form she was,  
And carried her to an arbour small,  
Not passion-moved, but even because  
In one I could atone to all.



And there she lies, and there I tend,  
Till my life's threads unwind,  
A various womanhood in blend -  
Not one, but all combined.

## THE INSCRIPTION

(A TALE)

Sir John was entombed, and the crypt was closed, and she,  
Like a soul that could meet no more the sight of the sun,  
Inclined her in weepings and prayings continually,  
As his widowed one.

And to pleasure her in her sorrow, and fix his name  
As a memory Time's fierce frost should never kill,  
She caused to be richly chased a brass to his fame,  
Which should link them still;

For she bonded her name with his own on the brazen page,  
As if dead and interred there with him, and cold, and numb,  
(Omitting the day of her dying and year of her age  
Till her end should come;)

And implored good people to pray "Of their Charytie  
For these twaine Soules," - yea, she who did last remain  
Forgoing Heaven's bliss if ever with spouse should she  
Again have lain.

Even there, as it first was set, you may see it now,  
Writ in quaint Church text, with the date of her death left bare,  
In the aged Estminster aisle, where the folk yet bow  
Themselves in prayer.

Thereafter some years slid, till there came a day  
When it slowly began to be marked of the standers-by  
That she would regard the brass, and would bend away  
With a drooping sigh.

Now the lady was fair as any the eye might scan  
Through a summer day of roving - a type at whose lip  
Despite her maturing seasons, no meet man  
Would be loth to sip.

And her heart was stirred with a lightning love to its pith  
For a newcomer who, while less in years, was one  
Full eager and able to make her his own forthwith,  
Restrained of none.

But she answered Nay, death-white; and still as he urged  
She adversely spake, overmuch as she loved the while,  
Till he pressed for why, and she led with the face of one scourged  
To the neighbouring aisle,

And showed him the words, ever gleaming upon her pew,  
Memorizing her there as the knight's eternal wife,  
Or falsing such, debarred inheritance due  
Of celestial life.

He blenched, and reproached her that one yet undeceased  
Should bury her future - that future which none can spell;  
And she wept, and purposed anon to inquire of the priest  
If the price were hell

Of her wedding in face of the record. Her lover agreed,  
And they parted before the brass with a shudderful kiss,  
For it seemed to flash out on their impulse of passionate need,  
"Mock ye not this!"

Well, the priest, whom more perceptions moved than one,  
Said she erred at the first to have written as if she were dead  
Her name and adjuration; but since it was done  
Nought could be said

Save that she must abide by the pledge, for the peace of her soul,  
And so, by her life, maintain the apostrophe good,  
If she wished anon to reach the coveted goal  
Of beatitude.

To erase from the consecrate text her prayer as there prayed  
Would aver that, since earth's joys most drew her, past doubt,  
Friends' prayers for her joy above by Jesu's aid  
Could be done without.

Moreover she thought of the laughter, the shrug, the jibe  
That would rise at her back in the nave when she should pass  
As another's avowed by the words she had chosen to inscribe  
On the changeless brass.

And so for months she replied to her Love: "No, no";  
While sorrow was gnawing her beauties ever and more,  
Till he, long-suffering and weary, grew to show  
Less warmth than before.

And, after an absence, wrote words absolute:  
That he gave her till Midsummer morn to make her mind clear;  
And that if, by then, she had not said Yea to his suit,  
He should wed elsewhere.

Thence on, at unwonted times through the lengthening days  
She was seen in the church - at dawn, or when the sun dipt  
And the moon rose, standing with hands joined, blank of gaze,  
Before the script.

She thinned as he came not; shrank like a creature that cowers  
As summer drew nearer; but still had not promised to wed,  
When, just at the zenith of June, in the still night hours,  
She was missed from her bed.

“The church!” they whispered with qualms; “where often she sits.”  
They found her: facing the brass there, else seeing none,  
But feeling the words with her finger, gibbering in fits;  
And she knew them not one.

And so she remained, in her handmaids’ charge; late, soon,  
Tracing words in the air with her finger, as seen that night -  
Those incised on the brass - till at length unwatched one noon,  
She vanished from sight.

And, as talebearers tell, thence on to her last-taken breath  
Was unseen, save as wraith that in front of the brass made moan;  
So that ever the way of her life and the time of her death  
Remained unknown.

And hence, as indited above, you may read even now  
The quaint church-text, with the date of her death left bare,  
In the aged Estminster aisle, where folk yet bow  
Themselves in prayer.

October 30, 1907.

## **THE MARBLE-STREETED TOWN**

I reach the marble-streeted town,  
Whose “Sound” outbreathes its air  
Of sharp sea-salts;  
I see the movement up and down  
As when she was there.  
Ships of all countries come and go,  
The bandsmen boom in the sun  
A throbbing waltz;  
The schoolgirls laugh along the Hoe  
As when she was one.

I move away as the music rolls:  
The place seems not to mind  
That she - of old  
The brightest of its native souls -  
Left it behind!  
Over this green aforesays she  
On light treads went and came,  
Yea, times untold;  
Yet none here knows her history -  
Has heard her name.

PLYMOUTH (1914?).

## A WOMAN DRIVING

How she held up the horses' heads,  
Firm-lipped, with steady rein,  
Down that grim steep the coastguard treads,  
Till all was safe again!

With form erect and keen contour  
She passed against the sea,  
And, dipping into the chine's obscure,  
Was seen no more by me.

To others she appeared anew  
At times of dusky light,  
But always, so they told, withdrew  
From close and curious sight.

Some said her silent wheels would roll  
Rutless on softest loam,  
And even that her steeds' footfall  
Sank not upon the foam.

Where drives she now? It may be where  
No mortal horses are,  
But in a chariot of the air  
Towards some radiant star.

## A WOMAN'S TRUST

If he should live a thousand years  
He'd find it not again  
That scorn of him by men  
Could less disturb a woman's trust  
In him as a steadfast star which must  
Rise scathless from the nether spheres:  
If he should live a thousand years  
He'd find it not again.

She waited like a little child,  
Unchilled by damps of doubt,  
While from her eyes looked out  
A confidence sublime as Spring's  
When stressed by Winter's loiterings.  
Thus, howsoever the wicked wiled,  
She waited like a little child  
Unchilled by damps of doubt.

Through cruel years and crueller  
Thus she believed in him  
And his aurore, so dim;  
That, after fenweeds, flowers would blow;  
And above all things did she show  
Her faith in his good faith with her;  
Through cruel years and crueller  
Thus she believed in him!

## BEST TIMES

We went a day's excursion to the stream,  
Basked by the bank, and bent to the ripple-gleam,  
And I did not know  
That life would show,  
However it might flower, no finer glow.

I walked in the Sunday sunshine by the road  
That wound towards the wicket of your abode,  
And I did not think  
That life would shrink  
To nothing ere it shed a rosier pink.

Unlooked for I arrived on a rainy night,  
And you hailed me at the door by the swaying light,  
And I full forgot  
That life might not  
Again be touching that ecstatic height.

And that calm eve when you walked up the stair,  
After a gaiety prolonged and rare,  
No thought soever  
That you might never  
Walk down again, struck me as I stood there.

Rewritten from an old draft.

## THE CASUAL ACQUAINTANCE

While he was here in breath and bone,  
To speak to and to see,  
Would I had known - more clearly known -  
What that man did for me

When the wind scraped a minor lay,  
And the spent west from white  
To gray turned tiredly, and from gray  
To broadest bands of night!

But I saw not, and he saw not  
What shining life-tides flowed  
To me-ward from his casual jot  
Of service on that road.

He would have said: "'Twas nothing new;  
We all do what we can;  
'Twas only what one man would do  
For any other man."

Now that I gauge his goodliness  
He's slipped from human eyes;  
And when he passed there's none can guess,  
Or point out where he lies.

## INTRA SEPULCHRUM

What curious things we said,  
What curious things we did  
Up there in the world we walked till dead  
Our kith and kin amid!

How we played at love,  
And its wildness, weakness, woe;  
Yes, played thereat far more than enough  
As it turned out, I trow!

Played at believing in gods  
And observing the ordinances,  
I for your sake in impossible codes  
Right ready to acquiesce.

Thinking our lives unique,  
Quite quainter than usual kinds,  
We held that we could not abide a week  
The tether of typic minds.

- Yet people who day by day  
Pass by and look at us  
From over the wall in a casual way  
Are of this unconscious.

And feel, if anything,  
That none can be buried here  
Removed from commonest fashioning,  
Or lending note to a bier:

No twain who in heart-heaves proved  
Themselves at all adept,  
Who more than many laughed and loved,  
Who more than many wept,

Or were as sprites or elves  
Into blind matter hurled,  
Or ever could have been to themselves  
The centre of the world.

## THE WHITEWASHED WALL

Why does she turn in that shy soft way  
Whenever she stirs the fire,  
And kiss to the chimney-corner wall,  
As if entranced to admire  
Its whitewashed bareness more than the sight  
Of a rose in richest green?  
I have known her long, but this raptured rite  
I never before have seen.

- Well, once when her son cast his shadow there,  
A friend took a pencil and drew him  
Upon that flame-lit wall. And the lines  
Had a lifelike semblance to him.  
And there long stayed his familiar look;  
But one day, ere she knew,  
The whitener came to cleanse the nook,  
And covered the face from view.

“Yes,” he said: “My brush goes on with a rush,  
And the draught is buried under;  
When you have to whiten old cots and brighten,  
What else can you do, I wonder?”  
But she knows he’s there. And when she yearns  
For him, deep in the labouring night,  
She sees him as close at hand, and turns  
To him under his sheet of white.

## JUST THE SAME

I sat. It all was past;  
Hope never would hail again;  
Fair days had ceased at a blast,  
The world was a darkened den.

The beauty and dream were gone,  
And the halo in which I had hied  
So gaily gallantly on  
Had suffered blot and died!



I went forth, heedless whither,  
In a cloud too black for name:  
- People frisked hither and thither;  
The world was just the same.

## THE LAST TIME

The kiss had been given and taken,  
And gathered to many past:  
It never could reawaken;  
But you heard none say: "It's the last!"  
The clock showed the hour and the minute,  
But you did not turn and look:  
You read no finis in it,  
As at closing of a book.  
But you read it all too rightly  
When, at a time anon,  
A figure lay stretched out whitely,  
And you stood looking thereon.

## THE SEVEN TIMES

The dark was thick. A boy he seemed at that time  
Who trotted by me with uncertain air;  
"I'll tell my tale," he murmured, "for I fancy  
A friend goes there? . . . "  
Then thus he told. "I reached - 'twas for the first time -  
A dwelling. Life was clogged in me with care;  
I thought not I should meet an eyesome maiden,  
But found one there.  
"I entered on the precincts for the second time -  
'Twas an adventure fit and fresh and fair -  
I slackened in my footsteps at the porchway,  
And found her there.  
"I rose and travelled thither for the third time,  
The hope-hues growing gayer and yet gayer  
As I hastened round the boscage of the outskirts,  
And found her there.

“I journeyed to the place again the fourth time  
(The best and rarest visit of the rare,  
As it seemed to me, engrossed about these goings),  
And found her there.

“When I bent me to my pilgrimage the fifth time  
(Soft-thinking as I journeyed I would dare  
A certain word at token of good auspice),  
I found her there.

“That landscape did I traverse for the sixth time,  
And dreamed on what we purposed to prepare;  
I reached a tryst before my journey’s end came,  
And found her there.

“I went again - long after - aye, the seventh time;  
The look of things was sinister and bare  
As I caught no customed signal, heard no voice call,  
Nor found her there.

“And now I gad the globe - day, night, and any time,  
To light upon her hiding unaware,  
And, maybe, I shall nigh me to some nymph-niche,  
And find her there!”

“ But how,” said I, “has your so little lifetime  
Given roomage for such loving, loss, despair?  
A boy so young!” Forthwith I turned my lantern  
Upon him there.

His head was white. His small form, fine aforetime,  
Was shrunken with old age and battering wear,  
An eighty-years long plodder saw I pacing  
Beside me there.

## **THE SUN’S LAST LOOK ON THE COUNTRY GIRL**

(M. H.)

The sun threw down a radiant spot  
On the face in the winding-sheet -  
The face it had lit when a babe’s in its cot;  
And the sun knew not, and the face knew not  
That soon they would no more meet.

Now that the grave has shut its door,  
And lets not in one ray,  
Do they wonder that they meet no more -  
That face and its beaming visitor -  
That met so many a day?  
December 1915.

## IN A LONDON FLAT

### I

“You look like a widower,” she said  
Through the folding-doors with a laugh from the bed,  
As he sat by the fire in the outer room,  
Reading late on a night of gloom,  
And a cab-hack’s wheeze, and the clap of its feet  
In its breathless pace on the smooth wet street,  
Were all that came to them now and then . . .  
“You really do!” she quizzed again.

### II

And the Spirits behind the curtains heard,  
And also laughed, amused at her word,  
And at her light-hearted view of him.  
“Let’s get him made so - just for a whim!”  
Said the Phantom Ironic. “‘Twould serve her right  
If we coaxed the Will to do it some night.”  
“O pray not!” pleaded the younger one,  
The Sprite of the Pities. “She said it in fun!”

### III

But so it befell, whatever the cause,  
That what she had called him he next year was;  
And on such a night, when she lay elsewhere,  
He, watched by those Phantoms, again sat there,  
And gazed, as if gazing on far faint shores,  
At the empty bed through the folding-doors  
As he remembered her words; and wept  
That she had forgotten them where she slept.

## DRAWING DETAILS IN AN OLD CHURCH

I hear the bell-rope sawing,  
And the oil-less axle grind,  
As I sit alone here drawing  
What some Gothic brain designed;  
And I catch the toll that follows  
From the lagging bell,  
Ere it spreads to hills and hollows  
Where the parish people dwell.

I ask not whom it tolls for,  
Incurious who he be;  
So, some morrow, when those knolls for  
One unguessed, sound out for me,  
A stranger, loitering under  
In nave or choir,  
May think, too, "Whose, I wonder?"  
But care not to inquire.

## RAKE-HELL MUSES

Yes; since she knows not need,  
Nor walks in blindness,  
I may without unkindness  
A true thing tell:

Which would be truth, indeed,  
Though worse in speaking,  
Were her poor footsteps seeking  
A pauper's cell.

I judge, then, better far  
She now have sorrow,  
Than gladness that to-morrow  
Might know its knell. -

It may be men there are  
Could make of union  
A lifelong sweet communion -  
A passioned spell;

But I, to save her name  
And bring salvation  
By altar-affirmation  
And bridal bell;

I, by whose rash unshame  
These tears come to her:-  
My faith would more undo her  
Than my farewell!

Chained to me, year by year  
My moody madness  
Would wither her old gladness  
Like famine fell.

She'll take the ill that's near,  
And bear the blaming.  
'Twill pass. Full soon her shaming  
They'll cease to yell.

Our unborn, first her moan,  
Will grow her guerdon,  
Until from blot and burden  
A joyance swell;

In that therein she'll own  
My good part wholly,  
My evil staining solely  
My own vile vell.

Of the disgrace, may be  
"He shunned to share it,  
Being false," they'll say. I'll bear it;  
Time will dispel

The calumny, and prove  
This much about me,  
That she lives best without me  
Who would live well.

That, this once, not self-love  
But good intention  
Pleads that against convention  
We two rebel.

For, is one moonlight dance,  
One midnight passion,  
A rock whereon to fashion  
Life's citadel?

Prove they their power to prance  
Life's miles together  
From upper slope to nether  
Who trip an ell?

- Years hence, or now apace,  
May tongues be calling  
News of my further falling  
Sinward pell-mell:

Then this great good will grace  
Our lives' division,  
She's saved from more misprision  
Though I plumb hell.

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## THE COLOUR

(The following lines are partly made up, partly remembered from a Wessex folk-rhyme)

“What shall I bring you?

Please will white do  
Best for your wearing  
The long day through?”

“ - White is for weddings,  
Weddings, weddings,  
White is for weddings,  
And that won't do.”

“What shall I bring you?

Please will red do  
Best for your wearing  
The long day through?”

“ - Red is for soldiers,  
Soldiers, soldiers,  
Red is for soldiers,  
And that won't do.”

“What shall I bring you?

Please will blue do  
Best for your wearing  
The long day through?”

“ - Blue is for sailors,  
Sailors, sailors,  
Blue is for sailors,  
And that won't do.

“What shall I bring you?  
Please will green do  
Best for your wearing  
The long day through?”  
“ - Green is for mayings,  
Mayings, mayings,  
Green is for mayings,  
And that won't do.”

“What shall I bring you  
Then? Will black do  
Best for your wearing  
The long day through?”  
“ - Black is for mourning,  
Mourning, mourning,  
Black is for mourning,  
And black will do.”

## MURMURS IN THE GLOOM

(NOCTURNE)

I wayfared at the nadir of the sun  
Where populations meet, though seen of none;  
And millions seemed to sigh around  
As though their haunts were nigh around,  
And unknown throngs to cry around  
Of things late done.

“O Seers, who well might high ensample show”  
(Came throbbing past in plainsong small and slow),  
”Leaders who lead us aimlessly,  
Teachers who train us shamelessly,  
Why let ye smoulder flamelessly  
The truths ye trow?”

“Ye scribes, that urge the old medicament,  
Whose fusty vials have long dried impotent,  
Why prop ye meretricious things,  
Denounce the sane as vicious things,  
And call outworn factitious things  
Expedient?”

“O Dynasties that sway and shake us so,  
Why rank your magnanimities so low  
That grace can smooth no waters yet,  
But breathing threats and slaughters yet  
Ye grieve Earth’s sons and daughters yet  
As long ago?

“Live there no heedful ones of searching sight,  
Whose accents might be oracles that smite  
To hinder those who frowardly  
Conduct us, and untowardly;  
To lead the nations vawardly  
From gloom to light?”

September 22, 1899.

## **EPITAPH**

I never cared for Life: Life cared for me,  
And hence I owed it some fidelity.  
It now says, “Cease; at length thou hast learnt to grind  
Sufficient toll for an unwilling mind,  
And I dismiss thee - not without regard  
That thou didst ask no ill-advised reward,  
Nor sought in me much more than thou couldst find.”

## **AN ANCIENT TO ANCIENTS**

Where once we danced, where once sang,  
Gentlemen,  
The floors are sunken, cobwebs hang,  
And cracks creep; worms have fed upon  
The doors. Yea, sprightlier times were then  
Than now, with harps and tabrets gone,  
Gentlemen!

Where once we rowed, where once we sailed,  
Gentlemen,  
And damsels took the tiller, veiled  
Against too strong a stare (God wot  
Their fancy, then or anywhen!)  
Upon that shore we are clean forgot,  
Gentlemen!



We have lost somewhat, afar and near,  
Gentlemen,  
The thinning of our ranks each year  
Affords a hint we are nigh undone,  
That we shall not be ever again  
The marked of many, loved of one,  
Gentlemen.

In dance the polka hit our wish,  
Gentlemen,  
The paced quadrille, the spry schottische,  
“Sir Roger.” - And in opera spheres  
The “Girl” (the famed “Bohemian”),  
And “Trovatore,” held the ears,  
Gentlemen.

This season’s paintings do not please,  
Gentlemen,  
Like Ety, Mulready, Maclise;  
Throbbing romance has waned and wanned;  
No wizard wields the witching pen  
Of Bulwer, Scott, Dumas, and Sand,  
Gentlemen.

The bower we shrined to Tennyson,  
Gentlemen,  
Is roof-wrecked; damps there drip upon  
Sagged seats, the creeper-nails are rust,  
The spider is sole denizen;  
Even she who read those rhymes is dust,  
Gentlemen!

We who met sunrise sanguine-souled,  
Gentlemen,  
Are wearing weary. We are old;  
These younger press; we feel our rout  
Is imminent to Aides’ den, -  
That evening’s shades are stretching out,  
Gentlemen!

And yet, though ours be failing frames,  
Gentlemen,  
So were some others’ history names,  
Who trode their track light-limbed and fast  
As these youth, and not alien  
From enterprise, to their long last,  
Gentlemen.

Sophocles, Plato, Socrates,  
Gentlemen,  
Pythagoras, Thucydides,  
Herodotus, and Homer, - yea,  
Clement, Augustin, Origen,  
Burnt brightlier towards their setting-day,  
Gentlemen.

And ye, red-lipped and smooth-browed; list,  
Gentlemen;  
Much is there waits you we have missed;  
Much lore we leave you worth the knowing,  
Much, much has lain outside our ken:  
Nay, rush not: time serves: we are going,  
Gentlemen.

## AFTER READING PSALMS

### XXXIX., XL., ETC.

Simple was I and was young;  
Kept no gallant tryst, I;  
Even from good words held my tongue,  
Quoniam Tu fecisti!

Through my youth I stirred me not,  
High adventure missed I,  
Left the shining shrines unsought;  
Yet - me deduxisti!

At my start by Helicon  
Love-lore little wist I,  
Worldly less; but footed on;  
Why? Me suscepisti!

When I failed at fervid rhymes,  
"Shall," I said, "persist I?"  
"Dies" (I would add at times)  
"Meos posuisti!"

So I have fared through many suns;  
Sadly little grist I  
Bring my mill, or any one's,  
Domine, Tu scisti!

And at dead of night I call:  
"Though to prophets list I,  
Which hath understood at all?  
Yea: Quem elegisti?"

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## SURVIEW

"Cogitavi vias meas"

A cry from the green-grained sticks of the fire  
Made me gaze where it seemed to be:  
'Twas my own voice talking therefrom to me  
On how I had walked when my sun was higher -  
My heart in its arrogancy.

"You held not to whatsoever was true,"

Said my own voice talking to me:  
"Whatsoever was just you were slack to see;  
Kept not things lovely and pure in view,"  
Said my own voice talking to me.

"You slighted her that endureth all,"

Said my own voice talking to me;  
"Vaunteth not, trusteth hopefully;  
That suffereth long and is kind withal,"  
Said my own voice talking to me.

"You taught not that which you set about,"

Said my own voice talking to me;  
"That the greatest of things is Charity. . . "  
- And the sticks burnt low, and the fire went out,  
And my voice ceased talking to me.

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Thomas Hardy  
The Poetry Collection of Thomas Hardy - Volume 3

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