

# THOMAS HARDY

SATIRES OF  
CIRCUMSTANCE, LYRICS  
AND REVERIES, WITH  
MISCELLANEOUS PIECES

Thomas Hardy

**Satires of Circumstance, Lyrics and  
Reveries, with Miscellaneous Pieces**

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# Thomas Hardy

## Satires of Circumstance, Lyrics and Reveries, with Miscellaneous Pieces

### LYRICS AND REVERIES

#### IN FRONT OF THE LANDSCAPE

Plunging and labouring on in a tide of visions,  
Dolorous and dear,  
Forward I pushed my way as amid waste waters  
Stretching around,  
Through whose eddies there glimmered the customed landscape  
Yonder and near,

Blotted to feeble mist. And the coomb and the upland  
Foliage-crowned,  
Ancient chalk-pit, milestone, rills in the grass-flat  
Stroked by the light,  
Seemed but a ghost-like gauze, and no substantial  
Meadow or mound.

What were the infinite spectacles bulking foremost  
Under my sight,  
Hindering me to discern my paced advancement  
Lengthening to miles;  
What were the re-creations killing the daytime  
As by the night?

O they were speechful faces, gazing insistent,  
Some as with smiles,  
Some as with slow-born tears that brinily trundled  
Over the wrecked  
Cheeks that were fair in their flush-time, ash now with anguish,  
Harrowed by wiles.

Yes, I could see them, feel them, hear them, address them —  
Halo-bedecked —  
And, alas, onwards, shaken by fierce unreason,  
Rigid in hate,  
Smitten by years-long wryness born of misprision,  
Dreaded, suspect.

Then there would breast me shining sights, sweet seasons

Further in date;  
Instruments of strings with the tenderest passion  
Vibrant, beside  
Lamps long extinguished, robes, cheeks, eyes with the earth's crust  
Now corporate.

Also there rose a headland of hoary aspect  
Gnawed by the tide,  
Frlled by the nimb of the morning as two friends stood there  
Guilelessly glad —  
Wherefore they knew not – touched by the fringe of an ecstasy  
Scantly descried.

Later images too did the day unfurl me,  
Shadowed and sad,  
Clay cadavers of those who had shared in the dramas,  
Laid now at ease,  
Passions all spent, chiefest the one of the broad brow  
Sepulture-clad.

So did beset me scenes miscalled of the bygone,  
Over the leaze,  
Past the clump, and down to where lay the beheld ones;  
– Yea, as the rhyme  
Sung by the sea-swell, so in their pleading dumbness  
Captured me these.

For, their lost revisiting manifestations  
In their own time  
Much had I slighted, caring not for their purport,  
Seeing behind  
Things more coveted, reckoned the better worth calling  
Sweet, sad, sublime.

Thus do they now show hourly before the intenser  
Stare of the mind  
As they were ghosts avenging their slights by my bypast  
Body-borne eyes,  
Show, too, with fuller translation than rested upon them  
As living kind.

Hence wag the tongues of the passing people, saying  
In their surmise,  
“Ah – whose is this dull form that perambulates, seeing nought  
Round him that looms  
Whithersoever his footsteps turn in his farings,  
Save a few tombs?”

## CHANNEL FIRING

That night your great guns, unawares,  
Shook all our coffins as we lay,  
And broke the chancel window-squares,  
We thought it was the Judgment-day

And sat upright. While drearisome  
Arose the howl of wakened hounds:  
The mouse let fall the altar-crumbs,  
The worms drew back into the mounds,

The glebe cow drooled. Till God called, "No;  
It's gunnery practice out at sea  
Just as before you went below;  
The world is as it used to be:

"All nations striving strong to make  
Red war yet redder. Mad as hatters  
They do no more for Christ's sake  
Than you who are helpless in such matters.

"That this is not the judgment-hour  
For some of them's a blessed thing,  
For if it were they'd have to scour  
Hell's floor for so much threatening.

"Ha, ha. It will be warmer when  
I blow the trumpet (if indeed  
I ever do; for you are men,  
And rest eternal sorely need)."

So down we lay again. "I wonder,  
Will the world ever saner be,"  
Said one, "than when He sent us under  
In our indifferent century!"

And many a skeleton shook his head.  
"Instead of preaching forty year,"  
My neighbour Parson Thirdly said,  
"I wish I had stuck to pipes and beer."

Again the guns disturbed the hour,  
Roaring their readiness to avenge,  
As far inland as Stourton Tower,  
And Camelot, and starlit Stonehenge.

*April 1914.*

## THE CONVERGENCE OF THE TWAIN

(Lines on the loss of the “Titanic”)

### I

In a solitude of the sea  
Deep from human vanity,  
And the Pride of Life that planned her, stilly couches she.

### II

Steel chambers, late the pyres  
Of her salamandrine fires,  
Cold currents thrid, and turn to rhythmic tidal lyres.

### III

Over the mirrors meant  
To glass the opulent  
The sea-worm crawls – grotesque, slimed, dumb, indifferent.

### IV

Jewels in joy designed  
To ravish the sensuous mind  
Lie lightless, all their sparkles bleared and black and blind.

### V

Dim moon-eyed fishes near  
Gaze at the gilded gear  
And query: “What does this vaingloriousness down here?”.

## VI

Well: while was fashioning  
This creature of cleaving wing,  
The Immanent Will that stirs and urges everything

## VII

Prepared a sinister mate  
For her – so gaily great —  
A Shape of Ice, for the time far and dissociate.

## VIII

And as the smart ship grew  
In stature, grace, and hue,  
In shadowy silent distance grew the Iceberg too.

## IX

Alien they seemed to be:  
No mortal eye could see  
The intimate welding of their later history,

## X

Or sign that they were bent  
By paths coincident  
On being anon twin halves of one august event,

## XI

Till the Spinner of the Years  
Said “Now!” And each one hears,  
And consummation comes, and jars two hemispheres.



## THE GHOST OF THE PAST

We two kept house, the Past and I,  
The Past and I;  
I tended while it hovered nigh,  
Leaving me never alone.  
It was a spectral housekeeping  
Where fell no jarring tone,  
As strange, as still a housekeeping  
As ever has been known.

As daily I went up the stair  
And down the stair,  
I did not mind the Bygone there —  
The Present once to me;  
Its moving meek companionship  
I wished might ever be,  
There was in that companionship  
Something of ecstasy.

It dwelt with me just as it was,  
Just as it was  
When first its prospects gave me pause  
In wayward wanderings,  
Before the years had torn old troths  
As they tear all sweet things,  
Before gaunt griefs had torn old troths  
And dulled old rapturings.

And then its form began to fade,  
Began to fade,  
Its gentle echoes faintlier played  
At eves upon my ear  
Than when the autumn's look embrowned  
The lonely chambers here,  
The autumn's settling shades embrowned  
Nooks that it haunted near.

And so with time my vision less,  
Yea, less and less  
Makes of that Past my housemistress,  
It dwindles in my eye;  
It looms a far-off skeleton  
And not a comrade nigh,  
A fitful far-off skeleton  
Dimming as days draw by.

## AFTER THE VISIT (*To F. E. D.*)

Come again to the place  
Where your presence was as a leaf that skims  
Down a drouthy way whose ascent bedims  
The bloom on the farer's face.

Come again, with the feet  
That were light on the green as a thistledown ball,  
And those mute ministrations to one and to all  
Beyond a man's saying sweet.

Until then the faint scent  
Of the bordering flowers swam unheeded away,  
And I marked not the charm in the changes of day  
As the cloud-colours came and went.

Through the dark corridors  
Your walk was so soundless I did not know  
Your form from a phantom's of long ago  
Said to pass on the ancient floors,

Till you drew from the shade,  
And I saw the large luminous living eyes  
Regard me in fixed inquiring-wise  
As those of a soul that weighed,

Scarce consciously,  
The eternal question of what Life was,  
And why we were there, and by whose strange laws  
That which mattered most could not be.

## TO MEET, OR OTHERWISE

Whether to sally and see thee, girl of my dreams,  
Or whether to stay  
And see thee not! How vast the difference seems  
Of Yea from Nay  
Just now. Yet this same sun will slant its beams  
At no far day  
On our two mounds, and then what will the difference weigh!

Yet I will see thee, maiden dear, and make  
The most I can  
Of what remains to us amid this brake Cimmerian  
Through which we grope, and from whose thorns we ache,  
While still we scan  
Round our frail faltering progress for some path or plan.

By briefest meeting something sure is won;  
It will have been:  
Nor God nor Daemon can undo the done,  
Unseen the seen,  
Make muted music be as unbegun,  
Though things terrene  
Groan in their bondage till oblivion supervene.

So, to the one long-sweeping symphony  
From times remote  
Till now, of human tenderness, shall we  
Supply one note,  
Small and untraced, yet that will ever be  
Somewhere afloat  
Amid the spheres, as part of sick Life's antidote.

## THE DIFFERENCE

### I

Sinking down by the gate I discern the thin moon,  
And a blackbird tries over old airs in the pine,  
But the moon is a sorry one, sad the bird's tune,  
For this spot is unknown to that Heartmate of mine.

### II

Did my Heartmate but haunt here at times such as now,  
The song would be joyous and cheerful the moon;  
But she will see never this gate, path, or bough,  
Nor I find a joy in the scene or the tune.

## THE SUN ON THE BOOKCASE (*Student's Love-song*)

Once more the cauldron of the sun  
Smears the bookcase with winy red,  
And here my page is, and there my bed,  
And the apple-tree shadows travel along.  
Soon their intangible track will be run,  
And dusk grow strong  
And they be fled.

Yes: now the boiling ball is gone,  
And I have wasted another day.  
But wasted —*wasted*, do I say?  
Is it a waste to have imaged one  
Beyond the hills there, who, anon,  
My great deeds done  
Will be mine always?

## “WHEN I SET OUT FOR LYONNESSE”

When I set out for Lyonesse,  
A hundred miles away,  
The rime was on the spray,  
And starlight lit my lonesomeness  
When I set out for Lyonesse  
A hundred miles away.

What would bechance at Lyonesse  
While I should sojourn there  
No prophet durst declare,  
Nor did the wisest wizard guess  
What would bechance at Lyonesse  
While I should sojourn there.

When I came back from Lyonesse  
With magic in my eyes,  
None managed to surmise  
What meant my godlike gloriousness,  
When I came back from Lyonesse  
With magic in my eyes.

## **A THUNDERSTORM IN TOWN** *(A Reminiscence)*

She wore a new “terra-cotta” dress,  
And we stayed, because of the pelting storm,  
Within the hansom’s dry recess,  
Though the horse had stopped; yea, motionless  
    We sat on, snug and warm.

Then the downpour ceased, to my sharp sad pain,  
And the glass that had screened our forms before  
Flew up, and out she sprang to her door:  
I should have kissed her if the rain  
    Had lasted a minute more.

## THE TORN LETTER

### I

I tore your letter into strips  
No bigger than the airy feathers  
That ducks preen out in changing weathers  
Upon the shifting ripple-tips.

### II

In darkness on my bed alone  
I seemed to see you in a vision,  
And hear you say: “Why this derision  
Of one drawn to you, though unknown?”

### III

Yes, eve’s quick mood had run its course,  
The night had cooled my hasty madness;  
I suffered a regretful sadness  
Which deepened into real remorse.

### IV

I thought what pensive patient days  
A soul must know of grain so tender,  
How much of good must grace the sender  
Of such sweet words in such bright phrase.

### V

Uprising then, as things unpriced  
I sought each fragment, patched and mended;  
The midnight whitened ere I had ended  
And gathered words I had sacrificed.

## VI

But some, alas, of those I threw  
Were past my search, destroyed for ever:  
They were your name and place; and never  
Did I regain those clues to you.

## VII

I learnt I had missed, by rash unheed,  
My track; that, so the Will decided,  
In life, death, we should be divided,  
And at the sense I ached indeed.

## VIII

That ache for you, born long ago,  
Throbs on; I never could outgrow it.  
What a revenge, did you but know it!  
But that, thank God, you do not know.

## **BEYOND THE LAST LAMP (Near Tooting Common)**

### **I**

While rain, with eve in partnership,  
Descended darkly, drip, drip, drip,  
Beyond the last lone lamp I passed  
Walking slowly, whispering sadly,  
Two linked loiterers, wan, downcast:  
Some heavy thought constrained each face,  
And blinded them to time and place.

### **II**

The pair seemed lovers, yet absorbed  
In mental scenes no longer orb'd  
By love's young rays. Each countenance  
As it slowly, as it sadly  
Caught the lamplight's yellow glance  
Held in suspense a misery  
At things which had been or might be.

### **III**

When I retr'd that watery way  
Some hours beyond the droop of day,  
Still I found pacing there the twain  
Just as slowly, just as sadly,  
Heedless of the night and rain.  
One could but wonder who they were  
And what wild woe detained them there.

### **IV**

Though thirty years of blur and blot  
Have slid since I beheld that spot,  
And saw in curious converse there

Moving slowly, moving sadly  
That mysterious tragic pair,  
Its olden look may linger on —  
All but the couple; they have gone.

V

Whither? Who knows, indeed.. And yet  
To me, when nights are weird and wet,  
Without those comrades there at tryst  
Creeping slowly, creeping sadly,  
That lone lane does not exist.  
There they seem brooding on their pain,  
And will, while such a lane remain.

## THE FACE AT THE CASEMENT

If ever joy leave  
An abiding sting of sorrow,  
So befell it on the morrow  
Of that May eve.

The travelled sun dropped  
To the north-west, low and lower,  
The pony's trot grew slower,  
And then we stopped.

“This cosy house just by  
I must call at for a minute,  
A sick man lies within it  
Who soon will die.

“He wished to marry me,  
So I am bound, when I drive near him,  
To inquire, if but to cheer him,  
How he may be.”

A message was sent in,  
And wordlessly we waited,  
Till some one came and stated  
The bulletin.

And that the sufferer said,  
For her call no words could thank her;  
As his angel he must rank her  
Till life's spark fled.

Slowly we drove away,  
When I turned my head, although not  
Called; why so I turned I know not  
Even to this day.

And lo, there in my view  
Pressed against an upper lattice  
Was a white face, gazing at us  
As we withdrew.

And well did I divine  
It to be the man's there dying,  
Who but lately had been sighing  
For her pledged mine.

Then I deigned a deed of hell;  
It was done before I knew it;  
What devil made me do it  
I cannot tell!

Yes, while he gazed above,  
I put my arm about her  
That he might see, nor doubt her  
My plighted Love.

The pale face vanished quick,  
As if blasted, from the casement,  
And my shame and self-abasement  
Began their prick.

And they prick on, ceaselessly,  
For that stab in Love's fierce fashion  
Which, unfired by lover's passion,  
Was foreign to me.

She smiled at my caress,  
But why came the soft embowment  
Of her shoulder at that moment  
She did not guess.

Long long years has he lain  
In thy garth, O sad Saint Cleather:  
What tears there, bared to weather,  
Will cleanse that stain!

Love is long-suffering, brave,  
Sweet, prompt, precious as a jewel;  
But O, too, Love is cruel,  
Cruel as the grave.

## LOST LOVE

I play my sweet old airs —  
The airs he knew  
When our love was true —  
But he does not balk  
His determined walk,  
And passes up the stairs.

I sing my songs once more,  
And presently hear  
His footstep near  
As if it would stay;  
But he goes his way,  
And shuts a distant door.

So I wait for another morn  
And another night  
In this soul-sick blight;  
And I wonder much  
As I sit, why such  
A woman as I was born!

## “MY SPIRIT WILL NOT HAUNT THE MOUND”

My spirit will not haunt the mound  
Above my breast,  
But travel, memory-possessed,  
To where my tremulous being found  
Life largest, best.

My phantom-footed shape will go  
When nightfall grays  
Hither and thither along the ways  
I and another used to know  
In backward days.

And there you'll find me, if a jot  
You still should care  
For me, and for my curious air;  
If otherwise, then I shall not,  
For you, be there.

## WESSEX HEIGHTS (1896)

There are some heights in Wessex, shaped as if by a kindly hand  
For thinking, dreaming, dying on, and at crises when I stand,  
Say, on Ingpen Beacon eastward, or on Wyls-Neck westwardly,  
I seem where I was before my birth, and after death may be.

In the lowlands I have no comrade, not even the lone man's friend —  
Her who suffereth long and is kind; accepts what he is too weak to  
mend:

Down there they are dubious and askance; there nobody thinks as I,  
But mind-chains do not clank where one's next neighbour is the sky.

In the towns I am tracked by phantoms having weird detective ways —  
Shadows of beings who followed with myself of earlier days:  
They hang about at places, and they say harsh heavy things —  
Men with a frigid sneer, and women with tart disparagings.

Down there I seem to be false to myself, my simple self that was,  
And is not now, and I see him watching, wondering what crass cause  
Can have merged him into such a strange continuator as this,  
Who yet has something in common with himself, my chrysalis.

I cannot go to the great grey Plain; there's a figure against the moon,  
Nobody sees it but I, and it makes my breast beat out of tune;  
I cannot go to the tall-spired town, being barred by the forms now  
passed  
For everybody but me, in whose long vision they stand there fast.

There's a ghost at Yell'ham Bottom chiding loud at the fall of the night,  
There's a ghost in Froom-side Vale, thin lipped and vague, in a shroud  
of white,  
There is one in the railway-train whenever I do not want it near,  
I see its profile against the pane, saying what I would not hear.

As for one rare fair woman, I am now but a thought of hers,  
I enter her mind and another thought succeeds me that she prefers;  
Yet my love for her in its fulness she herself even did not know;  
Well, time cures hearts of tenderness, and now I can let her go.

So I am found on Ingpen Beacon, or on Wyls-Neck to the west,  
Or else on homely Bulbarrow, or little Pilsdon Crest,  
Where men have never cared to haunt, nor women have walked with  
me,  
And ghosts then keep their distance; and I know some liberty.

## IN DEATH DIVIDED

### I

I shall rot here, with those whom in their day  
You never knew,  
And alien ones who, ere they chilled to clay,  
Met not my view,  
Will in your distant grave-place ever neighbour you.

### II

No shade of pinnacle or tree or tower,  
While earth endures,  
Will fall on my mound and within the hour  
Steal on to yours;  
One robin never haunt our two green covertures.

### III

Some organ may resound on Sunday noons  
By where you lie,  
Some other thrill the panes with other tunes  
Where moulder I;  
No selfsame chords compose our common lullaby.

### IV

The simply-cut memorial at my head  
Perhaps may take  
A Gothic form, and that above your bed  
Be Greek in make;  
No linking symbol show thereon for our tale's sake.

### V

And in the monotonous moils of strained, hard-run  
Humanity,  
The eternal tie which binds us twain in one  
No eye will see  
Stretching across the miles that sever you from me.

## THE PLACE ON THE MAP

### I

I look upon the map that hangs by me —  
Its shires and towns and rivers lined in varnished artistry —  
And I mark a jutting height  
Coloured purple, with a margin of blue sea.

### II

– 'Twas a day of latter summer, hot and dry;  
Ay, even the waves seemed drying as we walked on, she and I,  
By this spot where, calmly quite,  
She informed me what would happen by and by.

### III

This hanging map depicts the coast and place,  
And resuscitates therewith our unexpected troublous case  
All distinctly to my sight,  
And her tension, and the aspect of her face.

### IV

Weeks and weeks we had loved beneath that blazing blue,  
Which had lost the art of raining, as her eyes to-day had too,  
While she told what, as by sleight,  
Shot our firmament with rays of ruddy hue.

### V

For the wonder and the wormwood of the whole  
Was that what in realms of reason would have joyed our double soul  
Wore a torrid tragic light  
Under order-keeping's rigorous control.

## VI

So, the map revives her words, the spot, the time,  
And the thing we found we had to face before the next year's prime;  
The charted coast stares bright,  
And its episode comes back in pantomime.

## WHERE THE PICNIC WAS

Where we made the fire,  
In the summer time,  
Of branch and briar  
On the hill to the sea  
I slowly climb  
Through winter mire,  
And scan and trace  
The forsaken place  
Quite readily.

Now a cold wind blows,  
And the grass is gray,  
But the spot still shows  
As a burnt circle – aye,  
And stick-ends, charred,  
Still strew the sward  
Whereon I stand,  
Last relic of the band  
Who came that day!

Yes, I am here  
Just as last year,  
And the sea breathes brine  
From its strange straight line  
Up hither, the same  
As when we four came.  
– But two have wandered far  
From this grassy rise  
Into urban roar  
Where no picnics are,  
And one – has shut her eyes  
For evermore.

**THE SCHRECKHORN**  
*(With thoughts of Leslie Stephen)*

**(June 1897)**

Aloof, as if a thing of mood and whim;  
Now that its spare and desolate figure gleams  
Upon my nearing vision, less it seems  
A looming Alp-height than a guise of him  
Who scaled its horn with ventured life and limb,  
Drawn on by vague imaginings, maybe,  
Of semblance to his personality  
In its quaint glooms, keen lights, and rugged trim.

At his last change, when Life's dull coils unwind,  
Will he, in old love, hitherward escape,  
And the eternal essence of his mind  
Enter this silent adamant shape,  
And his low voicing haunt its slipping snows  
When dawn that calls the climber dyes them rose?

**A SINGER ASLEEP**  
*(Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1837–1909)*

**I**

In this fair niche above the unslumbering sea,  
That sentrys up and down all night, all day,  
From cove to promontory, from ness to bay,  
The Fates have fitly bidden that he should be Pillowed eternally.

**II**

– It was as though a garland of red roses  
Had fallen about the hood of some smug nun  
When irresponsibly dropped as from the sun,  
In fulth of numbers freaked with musical closes,  
Upon Victoria's formal middle time  
His leaves of rhythm and rhyme.

**III**

O that far morning of a summer day  
When, down a terraced street whose pavements lay  
Glassing the sunshine into my bent eyes,  
I walked and read with a quick glad surprise  
New words, in classic guise, —

**IV**

The passionate pages of his earlier years,  
Fraught with hot sighs, sad laughters, kisses, tears;  
Fresh-fluted notes, yet from a minstrel who  
Blew them not naïvely, but as one who knew  
Full well why thus he blew.

## V

I still can hear the brabble and the roar  
At those thy tunes, O still one, now passed through  
That fitful fire of tongues then entered new!  
Their power is spent like spindrift on this shore;  
Thine swells yet more and more.

## VI

– His singing-mistress verily was no other  
Than she the Lesbian, she the music-mother  
Of all the tribe that feel in melodies;  
Who leapt, love-anguished, from the Leucadian steep  
Into the rambling world-encircling deep  
Which hides her where none sees.

## VII

And one can hold in thought that nightly here  
His phantom may draw down to the water's brim,  
And hers come up to meet it, as a dim  
Lone shine upon the heaving hydrosphere,  
And mariners wonder as they traverse near,  
Unknowing of her and him.

## VIII

One dreams him sighing to her spectral form:  
“O teacher, where lies hid thy burning line;  
Where are those songs, O poetess divine  
Whose very arts are love incarnadine?”  
And her smile back: “Disciple true and warm,  
Sufficient now are thine.”.

## IX

So here, beneath the waking constellations,

Where the waves peal their everlasting strains,  
And their dull subterrene reverberations  
Shake him when storms make mountains of their plains —  
Him once their peer in sad improvisations,  
And deft as wind to cleave their frothy manes —  
I leave him, while the daylight gleam declines  
    Upon the capes and chines.

*Bonchurch, 1910.*

## A PLAINT TO MAN

When you slowly emerged from the den of Time,  
And gained percipience as you grew,  
And fleshed you fair out of shapeless slime,

Wherefore, O Man, did there come to you  
The unhappy need of creating me —  
A form like your own – for praying to?

My virtue, power, utility,  
Within my maker must all abide,  
Since none in myself can ever be,

One thin as a shape on a lantern-slide  
Shown forth in the dark upon some dim sheet,  
And by none but its showman vivified.

“Such a forced device,” you may say, “is meet  
For easing a loaded heart at whiles:  
Man needs to conceive of a mercy-seat

Somewhere above the gloomy aisles  
Of this wailful world, or he could not bear  
The irk no local hope beguiles.”

– But since I was framed in your first despair  
The doing without me has had no play  
In the minds of men when shadows scare;

And now that I dwindle day by day  
Beneath the deicide eyes of seers  
In a light that will not let me stay,

And to-morrow the whole of me disappears,  
The truth should be told, and the fact be faced  
That had best been faced in earlier years:

The fact of life with dependence placed  
On the human heart’s resource alone,  
In brotherhood bonded close and graced

With loving-kindness fully blown,  
And visioned help unsought, unknown.

*1909–10.*

## GOD'S FUNERAL

### I

I saw a slowly-stepping train —  
Lined on the brows, scoop-eyed and bent and hoar —  
Following in files across a twilit plain  
A strange and mystic form the foremost bore.

### II

And by contagious throbs of thought  
Or latent knowledge that within me lay  
And had already stirred me, I was wrought  
To consciousness of sorrow even as they.

### III

The fore-borne shape, to my blurred eyes,  
At first seemed man-like, and anon to change  
To an amorphous cloud of marvellous size,  
At times endowed with wings of glorious range.

### IV

And this phantasmal variousness  
Ever possessed it as they drew along:  
Yet throughout all it symbolled none the less  
Potency vast and loving-kindness strong.

### V

Almost before I knew I bent  
Towards the moving columns without a word;  
They, growing in bulk and numbers as they went,  
Struck out sick thoughts that could be overheard: —

## VI

“O man-projected Figure, of late  
Imaged as we, thy knell who shall survive?  
Whence came it we were tempted to create  
One whom we can no longer keep alive?”

## VII

“Framing him jealous, fierce, at first,  
We gave him justice as the ages rolled,  
Will to bless those by circumstance accurst,  
And longsuffering, and mercies manifold.”

## VIII

“And, tricked by our own early dream  
And need of solace, we grew self-deceived,  
Our making soon our maker did we deem,  
And what we had imagined we believed.”

## IX

“Till, in Time’s stayless stealthy swing,  
Uncompromising rude reality  
Mangled the Monarch of our fashioning,  
Who quavered, sank; and now has ceased to be.”

## X

“So, toward our myth’s oblivion,  
Darkling, and languid-lipped, we creep and grope  
Sadlier than those who wept in Babylon,  
Whose Zion was a still abiding hope.”

## XI

“How sweet it was in years far hied  
To start the wheels of day with trustful prayer,  
To lie down liegely at the eventide  
And feel a blest assurance he was there!

## XII

“And who or what shall fill his place?  
Whither will wanderers turn distracted eyes  
For some fixed star to stimulate their pace  
Towards the goal of their enterprise?”.

## XIII

Some in the background then I saw,  
Sweet women, youths, men, all incredulous,  
Who chimed as one: “This figure is of straw,  
This requiem mockery! Still he lives to us!”

## XIV

I could not prop their faith: and yet  
Many I had known: with all I sympathized;  
And though struck speechless, I did not forget  
That what was mourned for, I, too, once had prized.

## XV

Still, how to bear such loss I deemed  
The insistent question for each animate mind,  
And gazing, to my growing sight there seemed  
A pale yet positive gleam low down behind,

## XVI

Whereof to lift the general night,  
A certain few who stood aloof had said,  
“See you upon the horizon that small light —  
Swelling somewhat?” Each mourner shook his head.

## XVII

And they composed a crowd of whom  
Some were right good, and many nigh the best.  
Thus dazed and puzzled 'twixt the gleam and gloom  
Mechanically I followed with the rest.

*1908–10.*

## SPECTRES THAT GRIEVE

“It is not death that harrows us,” they lipped,  
“The soundless cell is in itself relief,  
For life is an unfenced flower, benumbed and nipped  
At unawares, and at its best but brief.”

The speakers, sundry phantoms of the gone,  
Had risen like filmy flames of phosphor dye,  
As if the palest of sheet lightnings shone  
From the sward near me, as from a nether sky.

And much surprised was I that, spent and dead,  
They should not, like the many, be at rest,  
But stray as apparitions; hence I said,  
“Why, having slipped life, hark you back distressed?”

“We are among the few death sets not free,  
The hurt, misrepresented names, who come  
At each year’s brink, and cry to History  
To do them justice, or go past them dumb.

“We are stript of rights; our shames lie unredressed,  
Our deeds in full anatomy are not shown,  
Our words in morsels merely are expressed  
On the scripted page, our motives blurred, unknown.”

Then all these shaken slighted visitants sped  
Into the vague, and left me musing there  
On fames that well might instance what they had said,  
Until the New-Year’s dawn strode up the air.

## “AH, ARE YOU DIGGING ON MY GRAVE?”

“Ah, are you digging on my grave  
My loved one? – planting rue?”  
– “No: yesterday he went to wed  
One of the brightest wealth has bred.  
‘It cannot hurt her now,’ he said,  
‘That I should not be true.’”

“Then who is digging on my grave?  
My nearest dearest kin?”  
– “Ah, no; they sit and think, ‘What use!  
What good will planting flowers produce?  
No tendance of her mound can loose  
Her spirit from Death’s gin.’”

“But some one digs upon my grave?  
My enemy? – prodding sly?”  
– “Nay: when she heard you had passed the Gate  
That shuts on all flesh soon or late,  
She thought you no more worth her hate,  
And cares not where you lie.”

“Then, who is digging on my grave?  
Say – since I have not guessed!”  
– “O it is I, my mistress dear,  
Your little dog, who still lives near,  
And much I hope my movements here  
Have not disturbed your rest?”

“Ah, yes! *You* dig upon my grave.  
Why flashed it not on me  
That one true heart was left behind!  
What feeling do we ever find  
To equal among human kind  
A dog’s fidelity!”

“Mistress, I dug upon your grave  
To bury a bone, in case  
I should be hungry near this spot  
When passing on my daily trot.  
I am sorry, but I quite forgot  
It was your resting-place.”

## **SATIRES OF CIRCUMSTANCES IN FIFTEEN GLIMPSSES**

### **I AT TEA**

The kettle descants in a cozy drone,  
And the young wife looks in her husband's face,  
And then at her guest's, and shows in her own  
Her sense that she fills an envied place;  
And the visiting lady is all abloom,  
And says there was never so sweet a room.

And the happy young housewife does not know  
That the woman beside her was first his choice,  
Till the fates ordained it could not be so.  
Betraying nothing in look or voice  
The guest sits smiling and sips her tea,  
And he throws her a stray glance yearningly.

## II IN CHURCH

“And now to God the Father,” he ends,  
And his voice thrills up to the topmost tiles:  
Each listener chokes as he bows and bends,  
And emotion pervades the crowded aisles.  
Then the preacher glides to the vestry-door,  
And shuts it, and thinks he is seen no more.

The door swings softly ajar meanwhile,  
And a pupil of his in the Bible class,  
Who adores him as one without gloss or guile,  
Sees her idol stand with a satisfied smile  
And re-enact at the vestry-glass  
Each pulpit gesture in deft dumb-show  
That had moved the congregation so.

### III

## BY HER AUNT'S GRAVE

“Sixpence a week,” says the girl to her lover,  
“Aunt used to bring me, for she could confide  
In me alone, she vowed. ’Twas to cover  
The cost of her headstone when she died.  
And that was a year ago last June;  
I’ve not yet fixed it. But I must soon.”

“And where is the money now, my dear?”  
“O, snug in my purse.. Aunt was *so* slow  
In saving it – eighty weeks, or near.”  
“Let’s spend it,” he hints. “For she won’t know.  
There’s a dance to-night at the Load of Hay.”  
She passively nods. And they go that way.

## IV IN THE ROOM OF THE BRIDE-ELECT

“Would it had been the man of our wish!”  
Sighs her mother. To whom with vehemence she  
In the wedding-dress – the wife to be —  
“Then why were you so mollyish  
As not to insist on him for me!”  
The mother, amazed: “Why, dearest one,  
Because you pleaded for this or none!”

“But Father and you should have stood out strong!  
Since then, to my cost, I have lived to find  
That you were right and that I was wrong;  
This man is a dolt to the one declined.  
Ah! – here he comes with his button-hole rose.  
Good God – I must marry him I suppose!”

V  
**AT A WATERING-PLACE**

They sit and smoke on the esplanade,  
The man and his friend, and regard the bay  
Where the far chalk cliffs, to the left displayed,  
Smile sallowly in the decline of day.  
And saunterers pass with laugh and jest —  
A handsome couple among the rest.

“That smart proud pair,” says the man to his friend,  
“Are to marry next week.. How little he thinks  
That dozens of days and nights on end  
I have stroked her neck, unhooked the links  
Of her sleeve to get at her upper arm.  
Well, bliss is in ignorance: what’s the harm!”

## VI IN THE CEMETERY

“You see those mothers squabbling there?”  
Remarks the man of the cemetery.  
One says in tears, *“Tis mine lies here!*  
Another, *‘Nay, mine, you Pharisee!’*  
Another, *‘How dare you move my flowers*  
*And put your own on this grave of ours!’*  
But all their children were laid therein  
At different times, like sprats in a tin.

“And then the main drain had to cross,  
And we moved the lot some nights ago,  
And packed them away in the general foss  
With hundreds more. But their folks don’t know,  
And as well cry over a new-laid drain  
As anything else, to ease your pain!”

## VII OUTSIDE THE WINDOW

“My stick!” he says, and turns in the lane  
To the house just left, whence a vixen voice  
Comes out with the firelight through the pane,  
And he sees within that the girl of his choice  
Stands rating her mother with eyes aglare  
For something said while he was there.

“At last I behold her soul undraped!”  
Thinks the man who had loved her more than himself;  
“My God – ’tis but narrowly I have escaped. —  
My precious porcelain proves it delf.”  
His face has reddened like one ashamed,  
And he steals off, leaving his stick unclaimed.

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