

THOMAS HARDY

MOMENTS OF VISION
AND MISCELLANEOUS
VERSES

Thomas Hardy
Moments of Vision and
Miscellaneous Verses

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Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses:*

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Thomas Hardy

Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses

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 enthral
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 realize 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.

“I’ 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,
 Penned 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
 Penned 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-prison
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

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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