



1890

WIND FLOWERS

by Oscar Wilde

IMPRESSION DU MATIN

The Thames nocturne of blue and gold  
 Changed to a Harmony in gray:  
 A barge with ochre-colored hay  
Dropt from the wharf: and chill and cold

The yellow fog came creeping down  
 The bridges, till the houses' walls  
 Seemed changed to shadows, and St. Paul's  
Loomed like a bubble o'er the town.

Then suddenly arose the clang  
 Of waking life; the streets were stirred  
 With country waggons: and a bird  
Flew to the glistening roofs and sang.

But one pale woman all alone,  
 The daylight kissing her wan hair,  
 Loitered beneath the gas lamp's flare,  
With lips of flame and heart of stone.

MAGDALEN WALKS

The little white clouds are racing over the sky,  
 And the fields are strewn with the gold of the flower  
 of March  
 The daffodil breaks underfoot, and the tasselled larch  
Sways and swings as the thrush goes hurrying by.

A delicate odor is borne on the wings of the morning breeze,  
 The odor of leaves, and of grass, and of newly upturned  
 earth,  
 The birds are singing for joy of the Spring's glad birth,  
Hopping from branch to branch on the rocking trees,

And all the woods are alive with the murmur and sound of  
 Spring,  
 And the rosebud breaks into pink on the climbing brier,  
 And the crocus-bed is a quivering moon of fire  
Girdled round with the belt of an amethyst ring.

And the plane to the pine-tree is whispering some tale of  
 love  
 Till it rustles with laughter and tosses its mantle of  
 green  
 And the gloom of the wych-elm's hollow is lit with the iris  
 sheen  
Of the burnished rainbow throat and the silver breast of a  
 dove.

See! the lark starts up from his bed in the meadow there,  
 Breaking the gossamer threads and the nets of dew,  
 And flashing a-down the river, a flame of blue!  
The kingfisher flies like an arrow, and wounds the air.

## ATHANASIA

To that gaunt House of Art which lacks for naught  
Of all the great things men have saved from Time,  
The withered body of a girl was brought  
Dead ere the world's glad youth had touched its prime,  
And seen by lonely Arabs lying hid  
In the dim wound of some black pyramid.

But when they had unloosed the linen band  
Which swathed the Egyptian's body,- lo! was found  
Closed in the wasted hollow of her hand  
A little seed, which sown in English ground  
Did wondrous snow of starry blossoms bear,  
And spread rich odors through our springtide air.

With such strange arts this flower did allure  
That all forgotten was the asphodel,  
And the brown bee, the lily's paramour,  
Forsook the cup where he was wont to dwell,  
For not a thing of earth it seemed to be,  
But stolen from some heavenly Arcady.

In vain the sad narcissus, wan and white  
At its own beauty, hung across the stream,  
The purple dragon-fly had no delight  
With its gold-dust to make his wings a-gleam,  
Ah! no delight the jasmine-bloom to kiss,  
Or brush the rain-pearls from the eucharis.

For love of it the passionate nightingale  
Forgot the hills of Thrace, the cruel king,  
And the pale dove no longer cared to sail  
Through the wet woods at time of blossoming,  
But round this flower of Egypt sought to float,  
With silvered wing and amethystine throat.

While the hot sun blazed in his tower of blue  
A cooling wind crept from the land of snows,  
And the warm south with tender tears of dew  
Drenched its white leaves when Hesperos uprose  
Amid those sea-green meadows of the sky  
On which the scarlet bars of sunset lie.

But when o'er wastes of lily-haunted field  
The tired birds had stayed their amorous tune,  
And broad and glittering like an argent shield  
High in the sapphire heavens hung the moon,  
Did no strange dream or evil memory make  
Each tremulous petal of its blossoms shake?

Ah no! to this bright flower a thousand years  
Seemed but the lingering of a summer's day,  
It never knew the tide of cankering fears  
Which turn a boy's gold hair to withered gray,  
The dread desire of death it never knew,  
Or how all folk that they were born must rue.

For we to death with pipe and dancing go,  
Nor would we pass the ivory gate again,

As some sad river wearied of its flow  
Through the dull plains, the haunts of common men,  
Leaps lover-like into the terrible sea!  
And counts it gain to die so gloriously.

We mar our lordly strength in barren strife  
With the world's legions led by clamorous care,  
It never feels decay but gathers life  
From the pure sunlight and the supreme air,  
We live beneath Time's wasting sovereignty,  
It is the child of all eternity.

SERENADE

For Music

The western wind is blowing fair  
Across the dark Aegean sea,  
And at the secret marble stair  
My Tyrian galley waits for thee.  
Come down! the purple sail is spread,  
The watchman sleeps within the town.  
O leave thy lily-flowered bed,  
O lady mine come down, come down!

She will not come, I know her well,  
Of lover's vows she hath no care,  
And little good a man can tell  
Of one so cruel and so fair.  
True love is but a woman's toy,  
They never know the lover's pain,  
And I who loved as loves a boy.  
Must love in vain, must love in vain.

O noble pilot tell me true  
Is that the sheen of golden hair?  
Or is it but the tangled dew  
That binds the passion-flowers there?  
Good sailor come and tell me now  
Is that my lady's lily hand?  
Or is it but the gleaming prow,  
Or is it but the silver sand?

No! no! 'tis not the tangled dew,  
'Tis not the silver-fretted sand,  
It is my own dear Lady true  
With golden hair and lily hand!  
O noble pilot steer for Troy,  
Good sailor ply the laboring oar,  
This is the Queen of life and joy  
Whom we must bear from Grecian shore!

The waning sky grows faint and blue,  
It wants an hour still of day,  
Aboard! aboard! my gallant crew,  
O Lady mine away! away!  
O noble pilot steer for Troy,  
Good sailor ply the laboring oar,  
O loved as only loves a boy!  
O loved for ever evermore!

ENDYMION

For Music

The apple trees are hung with gold,  
And birds are loud in Arcady,  
The sheep lie bleating in the fold,  
The wild goat runs across the wold,  
But yesterday his love he told,  
I know he will come back to me.  
O rising moon! O Lady moon!  
Be you my lover's sentinel,  
You cannot choose but know him well,  
For he is shod with purple shoon,  
You cannot choose but know my love,  
For he a shepherd's crook doth bear,  
And he is soft as any dove,  
And brown and curly is his hair.

The turtle now has ceased to call  
Upon her crimson-footed groom,  
The gray wolf prowls about the stall,  
The lily's singing seneschal  
Sleeps in the lily-bell, and all  
The violet hills are lost in gloom.  
O risen moon! O holy moon!  
Stand on the top of Helice,  
And if my own true love you see,  
Ah! if you see the purple shoon,  
The hazel crook, the lad's brown hair,  
The goat-skin wrapped about his arm,  
Tell him that I am waiting where  
The rushlight glimmers in the Farm.

The falling dew is cold and chill,  
And no bird sings in Arcady,  
The little fauns have left the hill,  
Even the tired daffodil  
Has closed its gilded doors, and still  
My lover comes not back to me.  
False moon! False moon! O waning moon!  
Where is my own true lover gone,  
Where are the lips vermilion,  
The shepherd's crook, the purple shoon?  
Why spread that silver pavilion,  
Why wear that veil of drifting mist?  
Ah! thou hast young Endymion,  
Thou hast the lips that should be kissed!  
LA BELLA DONNA DEL MIA MENTE

My limbs are wasted with a flame,  
My feet are sore with travelling,  
For calling on my Lady's name  
My lips have now forgot to sing.

O Linnet in the wild-rose brake  
Strain for my Love thy melody,  
O Lark sing louder for love's sake  
My gentle Lady passeth by.

She is too fair for any man

To see or hold his heart's delight,  
Fairer than Queen or courtezan  
Or moon-lit water in the night.

Her hair is bound with myrtle leaves,  
(Green leaves upon her golden hair!)  
Green grasses through the yellow sheaves  
Of autumn corn are not more fair.

Her little lips, more made to kiss  
Than to cry bitterly for pain,  
Are tremulous as brook-water is,  
Or roses after evening rain.

Her neck is like white melilote  
Flushing for pleasure of the sun,  
The throbbing of the linnet's throat  
Is not so sweet to look upon.

As a pomegranate, cut in twain,  
White-seeded, is her crimson mouth,  
Her cheeks are as the fading stain  
Where the peach reddens to the south.

O twining hands! O delicate  
White body made for love and pain!  
O House of Love! O desolate  
Pale flower beaten by the rain!

CHANSON

A ring of gold and a milk-white dove  
Are goodly gifts for thee,  
And a hempen rope for your own love  
To hang upon a tree.

For you a House of Ivory  
(Roses are white in the rose-bower)!  
A narrow bed for me to lie  
(White, O white is the hemlock flower)!

Myrtle and jessamine for you  
(O the red rose is fair to see)!  
For me the cypress and the rue  
(Fairest of all is rosemary)!

For you three lovers of your hand  
(Green grass where a man lies dead)!  
For me three paces on the sand  
(Plant lilies at my head)!

THE END