



1881

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

by Oscar Wilde

THE TRUE KNOWLEDGE

Thou knowest all- I seek in vain
What lands to till or sow with seed-
The land is black with briar and weed,
Nor cares for falling tears or rain.

Thou knowest all- I sit and wait
With blinded eyes and hands that fail,
Till the last lifting of the veil,
And the first opening of the gate.

Thou knowest all- I cannot see.
I trust I shall not live in vain,
I know that we shall meet again,
In some divine eternity.

A LAMENT

O well for him who lives at ease
With garnered gold in wide domain,
Nor heeds the splashing of the rain,
The crashing down of forest trees.

O well for him who ne'er hath known
The travail of the hungry years,
A father grey with grief and tears,
A mother weeping all alone.

But well for him whose feet hath trod
The weary road of toil and strife,
Yet from the sorrows of his life
Builds ladders to be nearer God.

WASTED DAYS

A fair slim boy not made for this world's pain.
With hair of gold thick clustering round his ears,
And longing eyes half veiled by foolish tears
Like bluest water seen through mists of rain:

Pale cheeks whereon no kiss hath left its stain,
Red under lip drawn for fear of Love,
And white throat whiter than the breast of dove.
Alas! alas! if all should be in vain.

Behind, wide fields, and reapers all a-row
In heat and labour toiling wearily,
To no sweet sound of laughter or of lute.
The sun is shooting wide its crimson glow,
Still the boy dreams: nor knows that night is nigh,
And in the night-time no man gathers fruit.

LOTUS LEAVES

There is no peace beneath the moon,-
Ah! in those meadows is there peace
Where, girdled with a silver fleece,
As a bright shepherd, strays the moon?

Queen of the gardens of the sky,
Where stars like lilies, white and fair,
Shine through the mists of frosty air,
Oh, tarry, for the dawn is nigh!

Oh, tarry, for the envious day
Stretches long hands to catch thy feet.
Alas! but thou art overfleet,
Alas! I know thou wilt not stay.

II

Eastward the dawn has broken red,
The circling mists and shadows flee;
Aurora rises from the sea,
And leaves the crocus-flowered bed.

Eastward the silver arrows fall,
Splintering the veil of holy night:
And a long wave of yellow light
Breaks silently on tower and hall.

And speeding wide across the wold
Wakes into flight some fluttering bird;
And all the chestnut tops are stirred,
And all the branches streaked with gold.

III

To outer senses there is peace,
A dream-like peace on either hand,
Deep silence in the shadowy land,
Deep silence where the shadows cease,

Save for a cry that echoes shrill
From some lone bird disconsolate;
A curlew calling to its mate;
The answer from the distant hill.

And, herald of my love to Him
Who, waiting for the dawn, doth lie,
The orb'd maiden leaves the sky,
And the white firs grow more dim.

IV

Up sprang the sun to run his race,
The breeze blew fair on meadow and lea,
But in the west I seemed to see
The likeness of a human face.

A linnet on the hawthorn spray
Sang of the glories of the spring,
And made the flow'ring copses ring
With gladness for the new-born day.

A lark from out the grass I trod
Flew wildly, and was lost to view

In the great seamless veil of blue
That hangs before the face of God.

The willow whispered overhead
That death is but a newer life
And that with idle words of strife
We bring dishonour on the dead.

I took a branch from off the tree,
And hawthorn branches drenched with dew,
I bound them with a sprig of yew,
And made a garland fair to see.

I laid the flowers where He lies
(Warm leaves and flowers on the stones):
What joy I had to sit alone
Till evening broke on tired eyes:

Till all the shifting clouds had spun
A robe of gold for God to wear
And into seas of purple air
Sank the bright galley of the sun.

V

Shall I be gladdened for the day,
And let my inner heart be stirred
By murmuring tree or song of bird,
And sorrow at the wild winds' play?

Not so, such idle dreams belong
To souls of lesser depth than mine;
I feel that I am half divine;
I that I am great and strong.

I know that every forest tree
By labour rises from the root
I know that none shall gather fruit
By sailing on the barren sea.

IMPRESSIONS

I

Le Jardin

The lily's withered chalice falls
Around its rod of dusty gold,
And from the beeh trees on the wold
The last wood-pigeon coos and calls.

The gaudy leonine sunflower
Hangs black and barren on its stalk,
And down the windy garden walk
The dead leaves scatter,- hour by hour.

Pale privet-petals white as milk
Are blown into a snowy mass;
The roses lie upon the grass,
Like little shreds of crimson silk.

II

La Mer

A white mist drifts across the shrouds,
A wild moon in this wintry sky
Gleams like an angry lion's eye
Out of a mane of tawny clouds.

The muffled steersman at the wheel
Is but a shadow in the gloom;-
And in the throbbing engine room
Leap the long rods of polished steel.

The shattered storm has left its trace
Upon this huge and heaving dome,
For the thin threads of yellow foam
Float on the waves like ravelled lace.

UNDER THE BALCONY

O beautiful star with the crimson mouth!
O moon with the brows of gold!
Rise up, rise up, from the odorous south!
And light for my love her way,
Lest her feet should stray
On the windy hill and the wold!
O beautiful star with the crimson mouth!
O moon with the brows of gold!

O ship that shakes on the desolate sea!
O ship with the wet, white sail!
Put in, put in, to the port to me!
For my love and I would go
To the land where the daffodils blow
In the heart of a violet dale!
O ship that shakes on the desolate sea!
O ship with the wet, white sail!

O rapturous bird with the low, sweet note!
O bird that sits on the spray!
Sing on, sing on, from your soft brown throat!
And my love in her little bed
Will listen, and lift her head
From the pillow, and come my way!
O rapturous bird with the low, sweet note!
O bird that sits on the spray!

O blossom that hangs in the tremulous air!
O blossom with lips of snow!
Come down, Come down, for my love to wear!
You will die in her head in a crown,
You will die in a fold of her gown,
To her little light heart you will go!
O blossom that hangs in the tremulous air!
O blossom with lips of snow!

A FRAGMENT

Beautiful star with the crimson lips
And flagrant daffodil hair,
Come back, come back, in the shaking ships
O'er the much-overrated sea,
To the hearts that are sick for thee
With a woe worse than mal de mer-
O beautiful stars with the crimson lips

And the flagrant daffodil hair.

O ship that shakes on the desolate sea,
Neath the flag of the wan White Star,
Thou bringest a brighter star with thee
From the land of the Philistine,
Where Niagara's reckoned fine
And Tupper is popular-

O ship that shakes on the desolate sea,
Neath the flag of the wan White Star.

LE JARDIN DES TUILERIES

This winter air is keen and cold,
And keen and cold this winter sun,
But round my chair the children run
Like little things of dancing gold.

Sometimes about the painted kiosk
The mimic soldiers strut and stride,
Sometimes the blue-eyed brigands hide
In the bleak tangles of the bosk.

And sometimes, while the old nurse cons
Her book, they steal across the square
And launch their paper navies where
Huge Triton writhes in greenish bronze.

And now in mimic flight they flee,
And now they rush, a boisterous band-
And, tiny hand on tiny hand,
Climb up the black and leafless tree.

Ah! cruel tree! if I were you,
And children climbed me, for their sake
Though it be winter I would break
Into spring blossoms white and blue!

SONNET

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On the Sale by Auction of Keats' Love Letters

These are the letters which Endymion wrote
To one he loved in secret and apart,
And now the brawlers of the auction-mart
Bargain and bid for each tear-blotted note,
Aye! for each separate pulse of passion quote
The merchant's price! I think they love not art
Who break the crystal of a poet's heart,
That small and sickly eyes may glare or gloat.

Is it not said, that many years ago,
In a far Eastern town some soldiers ran
With torches through the midnight, and began
To wrangle for mean raiment, and to throw
Dice for the garments of a wretched Man,
Not knowing the God's wonder, or His woe?

THE NEW REMORSE

The sin was mine; I did not understand.
So now is music prisoned in her cave,

Save where some ebbing desultory wave
Frets with its restless whirls this meagre strand.
And in the withered hollow of this land
Hath Summer dug herself so deep a grave,
That hardly can the leaden willow crave
One silver blossom from keen Winter's hand.
But who is this that cometh by the shore?
(Nay, love, look up and wonder!) Who is this
Who cometh in dyed garments from the South?
It is thy new-found Lord, and he shall kiss
The yet unravished roses of thy mouth,
And I shall weep and worship, as before.

AN INSCRIPTION

Go, little book,
To him who, on a lute with horns of pearl,
Sang of the white feet of the Golden Girl:
And bid him look
Into thy pages: it may hap that he
May find that golden maidens dance through thee.

THE HARLOT'S HOUSE

We caught the tread of dancing feet,
We loitered down the moonlit street,
And stopped beneath the Harlot's House.
Inside, above the din and fray,
We heard the loud musicians play
The "Treues Liebes," of Strauss.

Like strange mechanical grotesques,
Making fantastic arabesques,
The shadows raced across the blind.
We watched the ghostly dancers spin,
To sound of horn and violin,
Like black leaves wheeling in the wind.

Like wire-pulled Automatons,
Slim silhouetted skeletons
Went sidling through the slow quadrille,
Then took each other by the hand,
And danced a stately saraband;
Their laughter echoed thin and shrill.

Sometimes a clock-work puppet pressed
A phantom lover to her breast,
Sometimes they seemed to try and sing.
Sometimes a horrible Marionette
Came out, and smoked its cigarette
Upon the steps like a live thing.

Then turning to my love I said,
"The dead are dancing with the dead,
The dust is whirling with the dust."
But she, she heard the violin,
And left my side and entered in:
Love passed into the House of Lust.

Then suddenly the tune went false,
The dancers wearied of the waltz,
The shadows ceased to wheel and whirl,

And down the long and silent street,
The dawn with silver-sandalled feet,
Crept like a frightened girl.

THE END