



1890

IMPRESSIONS DE THEATRE

by Oscar Wilde

FABIEN DEI FRANCHI

To My Friend Henry Irving

The silent room, the heavy creeping shade,
The dead that travel fast, the opening door,
The murdered brother rising through the floor,
The ghost's white fingers on thy shoulders laid,
And then the lonely duel in the glade,
The broken swords, the stifled scream, the gore,
Thy grand revengeful eyes when all is o'er,-
These things are well enough,- but thou wert made
For more august creation! frenzied Lear
Should at thy bidding wander on the heath
With the shrill fool to mock him, Romeo
For thee should lure his love, and desperate fear
Pluck Richard's recreant dagger from its sheath-
Thou trumpet set for Shakespeare's lips to blow!

PHEBRE

To Sarah Bernhardt

How vain and dull this common world must seem
To such a One as thou, who should'st have talked
At Florence with Mirandola, or walked
Through the cool olives of the Academe:
Thou should'st have gathered reeds from a green stream
For goat-foot Pan's shrill piping, and have played
With the white girls in that Phaeacian glade
Where grave Odysseus wakened from his dream.

Ah! surely once some urn of Attic clay
Held thy wan dust, and thou hast come again
Back to this common world so dull and vain,
For thou wert weary of the sunless day,
The heavy fields of scentless asphodel,
The loveless lips with which men kiss in Hell.

I. - PORTIA

To Ellen Terry

I marvel not Bassanio was so bold
To peril all he had upon the lead,
Or that proud Aragon bent low his head,
Or that Morocco's fiery heart grew cold:
For in that gorgeous dress of beaten gold
Which is more golden than the golden sun,
No woman Veronese looked upon
Was half so fair as thou whom I behold.
Yet fairer when with wisdom as your shield
The sober-suited lawyer's gown you donned
And would not let the laws of Venice yield
Antonio's heart to that accursed Jew-
O Portia! take my heart; it is thy due:
I think I will not quarrel with bond.

Written at the Lyceum Theatre

II. - QUEEN HENRIETTA MARIA
To Ellen Terry

In the lone tent, waiting for victory,
She stands with eyes marred by the mists of pain,
Like some wan lily overdrenched with rain;
The clamorous clang of arms, the ensanguined sky,
War's ruin, and the wreck of chivalry,
To her proud soul no common fear can bring:
Bravely she tarrieth for her Lord the King,
Her soul a-flame with passionate ecstasy.
O Hair of Gold! O crimson lips! O Face
Made for the luring and the love of man!
With thee I do forget the toil and stress.
The loveless road that knows no resting place,
Time's straitened pulse, the soul's dread weariness,
My freedom and my life republican!

Written at the Lyceum Theatre
III.
CAMMA
To Ellen Terry

As one who poring on a Grecian urn
Scans the fair shapes some Attic hand hath made,
God with slim goddess, goodly man with maid,
And for their beauty's sake is loath to turn
And face the obvious day, must I not yearn
For many a secret moon of indolent bliss,
When is the midmost shrine of Artemis
I see thee standing, antique-limbed, and stern?

And yet- methinks I'd rather see thee play
That serpent of old Nile, whose witchery
Made Emperors drunken,- come, great Egypt, shake
Our stage with all thy mimic pageants! Nay,
I am growing sick of unreal passions, make
The world thine Actium, me thine Anthony!

Written at the Lyceum Theatre

THE END