

Moments of Vision

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MOMENTS OF VISION AND MISCELLANEOUS VERSES

by Thomas Hardy

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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 enthrall

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
silence.

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 crouched, 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 Gloom 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 scrubbings, 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

Enchanting me to gaze again thereat.

III

It was a mirror now,

And in it a long perspective I could trace

Of my begetters, dwindling backward each past each

All with the kindred look,

Whose names had since been inked down in their place

On the recorder's book, Generation and generation of my mien, and build, and
brow.

IV

And then did I divine

That every heave and coil and move I made

Within my brain, and in my mood and speech,

Was in the glass portrayed

As long forestalled by their so making it;

The first of them, the primest fuglemen of my line, Being fogged in far
antiqueness past surmise and reason's reach.

V

Said I then, sunk in tone,

“I am merest mimicker and counterfeit! -

Though thinking, I AM I

AND WHAT I DO I DO MYSELF ALONE.”

—The cynic twist of the page thereat unknit Back to its normal figure, having wrought its purport wry,

The Mage’s mirror left the window-square, And the stained moon and drift retook their places there.

1916.

THIS HEART A WOMAN'S DREAM

At midnight, in the room where he lay dead

Whom in his life I had never clearly read, I thought if I could peer into that
citadel

His heart, I should at last know full and well

What hereto had been known to him alone,

Despite our long sit-out of years foreflown, "And if," I said, "I do this for his
memory's sake,

It would not wound him, even if he could wake."

So I bent over him. He seemed to smile

With a calm confidence the whole long while That I, withdrawing his heart,
held it and, bit by bit,

Perused the unguessed things found written on it.

It was inscribed like a terrestrial sphere

With quaint vermiculations close and clear - His graving. Had I known, would
I have risked the stroke

Its reading brought, and my own heart nigh broke!

Yes, there at last, eyes opened, did I see

His whole sincere symmetric history; There were his truth, his simple
singlemindedness,

Strained, maybe, by time's storms, but there no less.

There were the daily deeds from sun to sun

In blindness, but good faith, that he had done; There were regrets, at instances
wherein he swerved

(As he conceived) from cherishings I had deserved.

There were old hours all figured down as bliss -

Those spent with me—(how little had I thought this!) There those when, at my
absence, whether he slept or waked,

(Though I knew not 'twas so!) his spirit ached.

There that when we were severed, how day dulled

Till time joined us anew, was chronicled: And arguments and battlings in
defence of me

That heart recorded clearly and ruddily.

I put it back, and left him as he lay

While pierced the morning pink and then the gray Into each dreary room and

corridor around,

Where I shall wait, but his step will not sound.

WHERE THEY LIVED

Dishevelled leaves creep down

Upon that bank to-day, Some green, some yellow, and some pale brown;

The wet bents bob and sway; The once warm slippery turf is sodden

Where we laughingly sat or lay.

The summerhouse is gone,

Leaving a weedy space; The bushes that veiled it once have grown

Gaunt trees that interlace, Through whose lank limbs I see too clearly

The nakedness of the place.

And where were hills of blue,

Blind drifts of vapour blow, And the names of former dwellers few,

If any, people know, And instead of a voice that called, "Come in, Dears,"

Time calls, "Pass below!"

THE OCCULTATION

When the cloud shut down on the morning shine,
And darkened the sun, I said, "So ended that joy of mine
Years back begun."

But day continued its lustrous roll
In upper air; And did my late irradiate soul
Live on somewhere?

LIFE LAUGHS ONWARD

Rambling I looked for an old abode Where, years back, one had lived I knew; Its
site a dwelling duly showed,

But it was new.

I went where, not so long ago, The sod had riven two breasts asunder; Daisies
throve gaily there, as though

No grave were under.

I walked along a terrace where Loud children gambolled in the sun; The figure
that had once sat there

Was missed by none.

Life laughed and moved on unsubdued, I saw that Old succumbed to Young:
'Twas well. My too regretful mood

Died on my tongue.

THE PEACE-OFFERING

It was but a little thing, Yet I knew it meant to me Ease from what had given a
sting To the very birdsinging

Latterly.

But I would not welcome it; And for all I then declined O the regrettings infinite
When the night-processions flit

Through the mind!

“SOMETHING TAPPED”

Something tapped on the pane of my room

When there was never a trace Of wind or rain, and I saw in the gloom

My weary Beloved's face.

“O I am tired of waiting,” she said,

“Night, morn, noon, afternoon; So cold it is in my lonely bed,

And I thought you would join me soon!”

I rose and neared the window-glass,

But vanished thence had she: Only a pallid moth, alas,

Tapped at the pane for me.

August 1913.

THE WOUND

I climbed to the crest,

And, fog-festooned, The sun lay west

Like a crimson wound:

Like that wound of mine

Of which none knew, For I'd given no sign

That it pierced me through.

A MERRYMAKING IN QUESTION

“I will get a new string for my fiddle,

And call to the neighbours to come, And partners shall dance down the middle

Until the old pewter-wares hum:

And we'll sip the mead, cyder, and rum!”

From the night came the oddest of answers:

A hollow wind, like a bassoon, And headstones all ranged up as dancers,

And cypresses droning a croon,

And gargoyles that mouthed to the tune.

“I SAID AND SANG HER EXCELLENCE” (Fickle Lover's Song)

I said and sang her excellence:

They called it laud undue.

(Have your way, my heart, O!) Yet what was homage far above
The plain deserts of my olden Love

Proved verity of my new.

“She moves a sylph in picture-land,

Where nothing frosts the air:”

(Have your way, my heart, O!) “To all winged pipers overhead
She is known by shape and song,” I said,

Conscious of licence there.

I sang of her in a dim old hall

Dream-built too fancifully,

(Have your way, my heart, O!) But lo, the ripe months chanced to lead
My feet to such a hall indeed,

Where stood the very She.

Strange, startling, was it then to learn

I had glanced down unborn time,

(Have your way, my heart, O!) And prophesied, whereby I knew
That which the years had planned to do

In warranty of my rhyme.

BY RUSHY-POND.

A JANUARY NIGHT

(1879)

The rain smites more and more, The east wind snarls and sneezes; Through the joints of the quivering door

The water wheezes.

The tip of each ivy-shoot Writhes on its neighbour's face; There is some hid dread afoot

That we cannot trace.

Is it the spirit astray Of the man at the house below Whose coffin they took in to-day?

We do not know.

A KISS

By a wall the stranger now calls his, Was born of old a particular kiss, Without forethought in its genesis; Which in a trice took wing on the air. And where that spot is nothing shows:

There ivy calmly grows,

And no one knows

What a birth was there!

That kiss is gone where none can tell - Not even those who felt its spell: It cannot have died; that know we well. Somewhere it pursues its flight, One of a long procession of sounds

Travelling aethereal rounds

Far from earth's bounds

In the infinite.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT

They came, the brothers, and took two chairs

In their usual quiet way; And for a time we did not think

They had much to say.

And they began and talked awhile

Of ordinary things, Till spread that silence in the room

A pent thought brings.

And then they said: "The end has come.

Yes: it has come at last." And we looked down, and knew that day

A spirit had passed.

THE OXEN

Christmas Eve, and twelve of the clock.

"Now they are all on their knees," An elder said as we sat in a flock

By the embers in hearthside ease.

We pictured the meek mild creatures where

They dwelt in their strawy pen, Nor did it occur to one of us there

To doubt they were kneeling then.

So fair a fancy few would weave

In these years! Yet, I feel, If someone said on Christmas Eve,

“Come; see the oxen kneel

“In the lonely barton by yonder coomb

Our childhood used to know,” I should go with him in the gloom,

Hoping it might be so.

1915.

THE TRESSES

“When the air was damp It made my curls hang slack As they kissed my neck
and back While I footed the salt-aired track

I loved to tramp.

“When it was dry They would roll up crisp and tight As I went on in the light
Of the sun, which my own sprite

Seemed to outvie.

“Now I am old; And have not one gay curl As I had when a girl For dampness
to unfurl

Or sun uphold!”

THE PHOTOGRAPH

The flame crept up the portrait line by line As it lay on the coals in the silence of
night’s profound,

And over the arm’s incline, And along the marge of the silkwork superfine,
And gnawed at the delicate bosom’s defenceless round.

Then I vented a cry of hurt, and averted my eyes; The spectacle was one that I
could not bear,

To my deep and sad surprise; But, compelled to heed, I again looked furtive-
wise Till the flame had eaten her breasts, and mouth, and hair.

“Thank God, she is out of it now!” I said at last, In a great relief of heart when
the thing was done

That had set my soul aghast, And nothing was left of the picture unsheathed
from the past But the ashen ghost of the card it had figured on.

She was a woman long hid amid packs of years, She might have been living or
dead; she was lost to my sight,

And the deed that had nigh drawn tears Was done in a casual clearance of
life’s arrears; But I felt as if I had put her to death that night! ...

*

- Well; she knew nothing thereof did she survive, And suffered nothing if
numbered among the dead;

Yet—yet—if on earth alive Did she feel a smart, and with vague strange
anguish strive? If in heaven, did she smile at me sadly and shake her head?

ON A HEATH

I could hear a gown-skirt rustling

Before I could see her shape, Rustling through the heather

That wove the common’s drape, On that evening of dark weather

When I hearkened, lips agape.

And the town-shine in the distance

Did but baffle here the sight, And then a voice flew forward:

Dear, is't you? I fear the night!" And the herons flapped to norward

In the firs upon my right.

There was another looming

Whose life we did not see; There was one stilly blooming

Full nigh to where walked we; There was a shade entombing

All that was bright of me.

AN ANNIVERSARY

It was at the very date to which we have come,

In the month of the matching name, When, at a like minute, the sun had
upswum,

Its couch-time at night being the same. And the same path stretched here that
people now follow,

And the same stile crossed their way, And beyond the same green hillock and
hollow

The same horizon lay; And the same man pilgrims now hereby who pilgrimed
here that day.

Let so much be said of the date-day's sameness;

But the tree that neighbours the track, And stoops like a pedlar afflicted with
lameness,

Knew of no sogged wound or windcrack. And the joints of that wall were not enshrouded

With mosses of many tones, And the garth up afar was not overcrowded

With a multitude of white stones, And the man's eyes then were not so sunk that you saw the socket-bones.

KINGSTON-MAURWARD EWELEASE.

“BY THE RUNIC STONE” (Two who became a story)

By the Runic Stone

They sat, where the grass sloped down, And chattered, he white-hatted, she in brown,

Pink-faced, breeze-blown.

Rapt there alone

In the transport of talking so In such a place, there was nothing to let them know

What hours had flown.

And the die thrown

By them heedlessly there, the dent It was to cut in their encompassment,

Were, too, unknown.

It might have strown

Their zest with qualms to see, As in a glass, Time toss their history

From zone to zone!

THE PINK FROCK

“O my pretty pink frock, I sha’n’t be able to wear it! Why is he dying just now?

I hardly can bear it!

“He might have contrived to live on; But they say there’s no hope whatever: And must I shut myself up,

And go out never?

“O my pretty pink frock, Puff-sleeved and accordion-pleated! He might have passed in July,

And not so cheated!”

TRANSFORMATIONS

Portion of this yew Is a man my grandsire knew, Bosomed here at its foot: This branch may be his wife, A ruddy human life Now turned to a green shoot.

These grasses must be made Of her who often prayed, Last century, for repose; And the fair girl long ago Whom I often tried to know May be entering this rose.

So, they are not underground, But as nerves and veins abound In the growths of upper air, And they feel the sun and rain, And the energy again That made them what they were!

IN HER PRECINCTS

Her house looked cold from the foggy lea, And the square of each window a dull
black blur

Where showed no stir: Yes, her gloom within at the lack of me Seemed
matching mine at the lack of her.

The black squares grew to be squares of light As the eyeshade swathed the house
and lawn,

And viols gave tone; There was glee within. And I found that night The gloom
of severance mine alone.

KINGSTON-MAURWARD PARK.

THE LAST SIGNAL (Oct. 11, 1886) A MEMORY OF WILLIAM BARNES

Silently I footed by an uphill road

That led from my abode to a spot yew-boughed; Yellowly the sun sloped low
down to westward,

And dark was the east with cloud.

Then, amid the shadow of that livid sad east,

Where the light was least, and a gate stood wide, Something flashed the fire of
the sun that was facing it,

Like a brief blaze on that side.

Looking hard and harder I knew what it meant -

The sudden shine sent from the livid east scene; It meant the west mirrored by
the coffin of my friend there,

Turning to the road from his green,

To take his last journey forth—he who in his prime

Trudged so many a time from that gate athwart the land! Thus a farewell to me
he signalled on his grave-way,

As with a wave of his hand.

WINTERBORNE-CAME PATH.

THE HOUSE OF SILENCE

“That is a quiet place - That house in the trees with the shady lawn.” “—If,
child, you knew what there goes on You would not call it a quiet place. Why, a
phantom abides there, the last of its race,

And a brain spins there till dawn.”

“But I see nobody there, - Nobody moves about the green, Or wanders the
heavy trees between.” “—Ah, that’s because you do not bear The visioning
powers of souls who dare

To pierce the material screen.

“Morning, noon, and night, Mid those funereal shades that seem The uncanny
scenery of a dream, Figures dance to a mind with sight, And music and laughter
like floods of light

Make all the precincts gleam.

“It is a poet’s bower, Through which there pass, in fleet arrays, Long teams of
all the years and days, Of joys and sorrows, of earth and heaven, That meet
mankind in its ages seven,

An aion in an hour.”

GREAT THINGS

Sweet cyder is a great thing,

A great thing to me, Spinning down to Weymouth town
By Ridgway thirstily, And maid and mistress summoning
Who tend the hostelry: O cyder is a great thing,
A great thing to me!

The dance it is a great thing,

A great thing to me, With candles lit and partners fit
For night-long revelry; And going home when day-dawning
Peeps pale upon the lea: O dancing is a great thing,
A great thing to me!

Love is, yea, a great thing,

A great thing to me, When, having drawn across the lawn

In darkness silently, A figure flits like one a-wing

Out from the nearest tree: O love is, yes, a great thing,

A great thing to me!

Will these be always great things,

Great things to me? ... Let it befall that One will call,

“Soul, I have need of thee:” What then? Joy-jaunts, impassioned flings,

Love, and its ecstasy, Will always have been great things,

Great things to me!

THE CHIMES

That morning when I trod the town The twitching chimes of long renown

Played out to me The sweet Sicilian sailors’ tune, And I knew not if late or soon

My day would be:

A day of sunshine beryl-bright And windless; yea, think as I might,

I could not say, Even to within years’ measure, when One would be at my side who then

Was far away.

When hard utilitarian times Had stilled the sweet Saint-Peter’s chimes

I learnt to see That bale may spring where blisses are, And one desired might

be afar

Though near to me.

THE FIGURE IN THE SCENE

It pleased her to step in front and sit

Where the cragged slope was green, While I stood back that I might pencil it

With her amid the scene;

Till it gloomed and rained; But I kept on, despite the drifting wet

That fell and stained My draught, leaving for curious quizzings yet

The blots engrained.

And thus I drew her there alone,

Seated amid the gauze Of moisture, hooded, only her outline shown,

With rainfall marked across.

—Soon passed our stay; Yet her rainy form is the Genius still of the spot,

Immutable, yea, Though the place now knows her no more, and has known
her not

Ever since that day.

From an old note.

“WHY DID I SKETCH”

Why did I sketch an upland green,

And put the figure in

Of one on the spot with me? - For now that one has ceased to be seen

The picture waxes akin

To a wordless irony.

If you go drawing on down or cliff

Let no soft curves intrude

Of a woman's silhouette, But show the escarpments stark and stiff

As in utter solitude;

So shall you half forget.

Let me sooner pass from sight of the sky

Than again on a thoughtless day

Linn, laugh, and sing, and rhyme With a woman sitting near, whom I

Paint in for love, and who may

Be called hence in my time!

From an old note.

CONJECTURE

If there were in my kalendar

No Emma, Florence, Mary, What would be my existence now -

A hermit's?—wanderer's weary? -

How should I live, and how

Near would be death, or far?

Could it have been that other eyes

Might have uplit my highway? That fond, sad, retrospective sight

Would catch from this dim byway

Prized figures different quite

From those that now arise?

With how strange aspect would there creep

The dawn, the night, the daytime, If memory were not what it is

In song-time, toil, or pray-time. -

O were it else than this,

I'd pass to pulseless sleep!

THE BLOW

That no man schemed it is my hope - Yea, that it fell by will and scope

Of That Which some enthrone, And for whose meaning myriads grope.

For I would not that of my kind There should, of his unbiassed mind,

Have been one known Who such a stroke could have designed;
Since it would augur works and ways Below the lowest that man assays
To have hurled that stone Into the sunshine of our days!
And if it prove that no man did, And that the Inscrutable, the Hid,
Was cause alone Of this foul crash our lives amid,
I'll go in due time, and forget In some deep graveyard's oubliette
The thing whereof I groan, And cease from troubling; thankful yet
Time's finger should have stretched to show No aimful author's was the blow
That swept us prone, But the Immanent Doer's That doth not know,
Which in some age unguessed of us May lift Its blinding incubus,
And see, and own: "It grieves me I did thus and thus!"

LOVE THE MONOPOLIST (Young Lover's Reverie)

The train draws forth from the station-yard,
And with it carries me. I rise, and stretch out, and regard
The platform left, and see An airy slim blue form there standing,
And know that it is she.
While with strained vision I watch on,
The figure turns round quite To greet friends gaily; then is gone ...
The import may be slight, But why remained she not hard gazing

Till I was out of sight?

“O do not chat with others there,”

I brood. “They are not I. O strain your thoughts as if they were

Gold bands between us; eye All neighbour scenes as so much blankness

Till I again am by!

“A troubled sougning in the breeze

And the sky overhead Let yourself feel; and shade-ful trees,

Ripe corn, and apples red, Read as things barren and distasteful

While we are separated!

“When I come back un-
cloak your gloom,

And let in lovely day; Then the long dark as of the tomb

Can well be thrust away With sweet things I shall have to practise,

And you will have to say!”

Begun 1871: finished -

AT MIDDLE-FIELD GATE IN FEBRUARY

The bars are thick with drops that show

As they gather themselves from the fog Like silver buttons ranged in a row,
And as evenly spaced as if measured, although

They fall at the feeblest jog.

They load the leafless hedge hard by,

And the blades of last year's grass, While the fallow ploughland turned up
nigh In raw rolls, clammy and clogging lie -

Too clogging for feet to pass.

How dry it was on a far-back day

When straws hung the hedge and around, When amid the sheaves in amorous
play In curtained bonnets and light array

Bloomed a bevy now underground!

BOCKHAMPTON LANE.

THE YOUTH WHO CARRIED A LIGHT

I saw him pass as the new day dawned,

Murmuring some musical phrase; Horses were drinking and floundering in the
pond,

And the tired stars thinned their gaze; Yet these were not the spectacles at all
that he conned,

But an inner one, giving out rays.

Such was the thing in his eye, walking there,

The very and visible thing, A close light, displacing the gray of the morning
air,

And the tokens that the dark was taking wing; And was it not the radiance of a
purpose rare

That might ripe to its accomplishing?

What became of that light? I wonder still its fate!

Was it quenched ere its full apogee? Did it struggle frail and frailer to a beam
emaciate?

Did it thrive till matured in verity? Or did it travel on, to be a new young
dreamer's freight,

And thence on infinitely?

1915.

THE HEAD ABOVE THE FOG

Something do I see Above the fog that sheets the mead, A figure like to life
indeed, Moving along with spectre-speed,

Seen by none but me.

O the vision keen! - Tripping along to me for love As in the flesh it used to
move, Only its hat and plume above

The evening fog-fleece seen.

In the day-fall wan, When nighted birds break off their song, Mere ghostly
head it skims along, Just as it did when warm and strong,

Body seeming gone.

Such it is I see Above the fog that sheets the mead - Yea, that which once
could breathe and plead! - Skimming along with spectre-speed

To a last tryst with me.

OVERLOOKING THE RIVER STOUR

The swallows flew in the curves of an eight

Above the river-gleam

In the wet June's last beam: Like little crossbows animate
The swallows flew in the curves of an eight

Above the river-gleam.

Planing up shavings of crystal spray

A moor-hen darted out

From the bank thereabout, And through the stream-shine ripped his way;
Planing up shavings of crystal spray

A moor-hen darted out.

Closed were the kingcups; and the mead

Dripped in monotonous green,

Though the day's morning sheen Had shown it golden and honeybee'd;
Closed were the kingcups; and the mead

Dripped in monotonous green.

And never I turned my head, alack,

While these things met my gaze

Through the pane's drop-drenched glaze, To see the more behind my back ...
O never I turned, but let, alack,

These less things hold my gaze!

THE MUSICAL BOX

Lifelong to be Seemed the fair colour of the time; That there was standing

shadowed near A spirit who sang to the gentle chime Of the self-struck notes, I
did not hear,

I did not see.

Thus did it sing To the mindless lyre that played indoors As she came to listen
for me without: “O value what the nonce outpours - This best of life—that shines
about

Your welcoming!”

I had slowed along After the torrid hours were done, Though still the posts
and walls and road Flung back their sense of the hot-faced sun, And had walked
by Stourside Mill, where broad

Stream-lilies throng.

And I descried The dusky house that stood apart, And her, white-muslined,
waiting there In the porch with high-expectant heart, While still the thin
mechanic air

Went on inside.

At whiles would flit Swart bats, whose wings, be-webbed and tanned, Whirred
like the wheels of ancient clocks: She laughed a hailing as she scanned Me in the
gloom, the tuneful box

Intoning it.

Lifelong to be I thought it. That there watched hard by A spirit who sang to
the indoor tune, “O make the most of what is nigh!” I did not hear in my dull

soul-swoon -

I did not see.

ON STURMINSTER FOOT-BRIDGE (ONOMATOPOEIC)

Reticulations creep upon the slack stream's face

When the wind skims irritably past, The current clucks smartly into each hollow place That years of flood have scabbled in the pier's sodden base;

The floating-lily leaves rot fast.

On a roof stand the swallows ranged in wistful waiting rows,

Till they arrow off and drop like stones Among the eyot-withies at whose foot the river flows; And beneath the roof is she who in the dark world shows

As a lattice-gleam when midnight moans.

ROYAL SPONSORS

“The king and the queen will stand to the child;

‘Twill be handed down in song; And it's no more than their deserving, With my lord so faithful at Court so long,

And so staunch and strong.

“O never before was known such a thing!

‘Twill be a grand time for all; And the beef will be a whole-roast bullock, And the servants will have a feast in the hall,

And the ladies a ball.

“While from Jordan’s stream by a traveller,

In a flagon of silver wrought, And by caravan, stage-coach, wain, and waggon
A precious trickle has been brought,

Clear as when caught.”

The morning came. To the park of the peer

The royal couple bore; And the font was filled with the Jordan water, And the
household awaited their guests before

The carpeted door.

But when they went to the silk-lined cot

The child was found to have died. “What’s now to be done? We can
disappoint not The king and queen!” the family cried

With eyes spread wide.

“Even now they approach the chestnut-drive!

The service must be read.” “Well, since we can’t christen the child alive, By
God we shall have to christen him dead!”

The marquis said.

Thus, breath-forsaken, a corpse was taken

To the private chapel—yea - And the king knew not, nor the queen, God wot,
That they answered for one returned to clay

At the font that day.

OLD FURNITURE

I know not how it may be with others

Who sit amid relics of householdry That date from the days of their mothers'
mothers,

But well I know how it is with me

Continually.

I see the hands of the generations

That owned each shiny familiar thing In play on its knobs and indentations,

And with its ancient fashioning

Still dallying:

Hands behind hands, growing paler and paler,

As in a mirror a candle-flame Shows images of itself, each frailer

As it recedes, though the eye may frame

Its shape the same.

On the clock's dull dial a foggy finger,

Moving to set the minutes right With tentative touches that lift and linger

In the wont of a moth on a summer night,

Creeps to my sight.

On this old viol, too, fingers are dancing -

As whilom—just over the strings by the nut, The tip of a bow receding,
advancing

In airy quivers, as if it would cut

The plaintive gut.

And I see a face by that box for tinder,

Glowing forth in fits from the dark, And fading again, as the linden cinder

Kindles to red at the flinty spark,

Or goes out stark.

Well, well. It is best to be up and doing,

The world has no use for one to-day Who eyes things thus—no aim pursuing!

He should not continue in this stay,

But sink away.

A THOUGHT IN TWO MOODS

I saw it—pink and white—revealed

Upon the white and green; The white and green was a daisied field,

The pink and white Ethleen.

And as I looked it seemed in kind

That difference they had none; The two fair bodiments combined

As varied miens of one.

A sense that, in some mouldering year,

As one they both would lie, Made me move quickly on to her

To pass the pale thought by.

She laughed and said: “Out there, to me,

You looked so weather-browned, And brown in clothes, you seemed to be

Made of the dusty ground!”

THE LAST PERFORMANCE

“I am playing my oldest tunes,” declared she,

“All the old tunes I know, - Those I learnt ever so long ago.” - Why she should think just then she’d play them

Silence cloaks like snow.

When I returned from the town at nightfall

Notes continued to pour As when I had left two hours before: It’s the very last time,” she said in closing;

“From now I play no more.”

A few morns onward found her fading,

And, as her life outflew, I thought of her playing her tunes right through; And I felt she had known of what was coming,

And wondered how she knew.

1912.

“YOU ON THE TOWER”

I

“You on the tower of my factory -

What do you see up there? Do you see Enjoyment with wide wings

Advancing to reach me here?” - “Yea; I see Enjoyment with wide wings

Advancing to reach you here.”

II

“Good. Soon I’ll come and ask you

To tell me again thereon ... Well, what is he doing now? Hoi, there!”

—“He still is flying on.” “Ah, waiting till I have full-finished.

Good. Tell me again anon ...

III

Hoi, Watchman! I’m here. When comes he?

Between my sweats I am chill.”

—“Oh, you there, working still? Why, surely he reached you a time back,

And took you miles from your mill? He duly came in his winging,

And now he has passed out of view. How can it be that you missed him?

He brushed you by as he flew.”

THE INTERLOPER

“And I saw the figure and visage of Madness seeking for a home.”

There are three folk driving in a quaint old chaise, And the cliff-side track looks green and fair; I view them talking in quiet glee As they drop down towards the puffins' lair By the roughest of ways; But another with the three rides on, I see,

Whom I like not to be there!

No: it's not anybody you think of. Next A dwelling appears by a slow sweet stream Where two sit happy and half in the dark: They read, helped out by a frail-wick'd gleam, Some rhythmic text; But one sits with them whom they don't mark,

One I'm wishing could not be there.

No: not whom you knew and name. And now I discern gay diners in a mansion-place, And the guests dropping wit—pert, prim, or choice, And the hostess's tender and laughing face, And the host's bland brow; I cannot help hearing a hollow voice,

And I'd fain not hear it there.

No: it's not from the stranger you met once. Ah, Yet a goodlier scene than that succeeds; People on a lawn—quite a crowd of them. Yes, And they chatter and ramble as fancy leads; And they say, “Hurrah!” To a blithe speech made; save one, mirthless,

Who ought not to be there.

Nay: it's not the pale Form your imagings raise, That waits on us all at a destined time, It is not the Fourth Figure the Furnace showed, O that it were such a shape sublime; In these latter days! It is that under which best lives corrode;

Would, would it could not be there!

LOGS ON THE HEARTH A MEMORY OF A SISTER

The fire advances along the log
Of the tree we felled, Which bloomed and bore striped apples by the peck
Till its last hour of bearing knelled.

The fork that first my hand would reach
And then my foot In climbings upward inch by inch, lies now
Sawn, sapless, darkening with soot.

Where the bark chars is where, one year,
It was pruned, and bled - Then overgrew the wound. But now, at last,
Its growings all have stagnated.

My fellow-climber rises dim
From her chilly grave - Just as she was, her foot near mine on the bending
limb,

Laughing, her young brown hand awake.

December 1915.

THE SUNSHADE

Ah—it's the skeleton of a lady's sunshade,
Here at my feet in the hard rock's chink,
Merely a naked sheaf of wires! -
Twenty years have gone with their livers and diers
Since it was silked in its white or pink.

Noonshine riddles the ribs of the sunshade,
No more a screen from the weakest ray;
Nothing to tell us the hue of its dyes,
Nothing but rusty bones as it lies
In its coffin of stone, unseen till to-day.

Where is the woman who carried that sunshade
Up and down this seaside place? -
Little thumb standing against its stem,
Thoughts perhaps bent on a love-stratagem,
Softening yet more the already soft face!

Is the fair woman who carried that sunshade
A skeleton just as her property is,
Laid in the chink that none may scan?
And does she regret—if regret dust can -

The vain things thought when she flourished this?

SWANAGE CLIFFS.

THE AGEING HOUSE

When the walls were red

That now are seen

To be overspread

With a mouldy green,

A fresh fair head

Would often lean

From the sunny casement

And scan the scene, While blithely spoke the wind to the little sycamore tree.

But storms have raged

Those walls about,

And the head has aged

That once looked out;

And zest is suaged

And trust is doubt,

And slow effacement

Is rife throughout, While fiercely girds the wind at the long-limbed sycamore tree!

THE CAGED GOLDFINCH

Within a churchyard, on a recent grave,

I saw a little cage That jailed a goldfinch. All was silence save

Its hops from stage to stage.

There was inquiry in its wistful eye,

And once it tried to sing; Of him or her who placed it there, and why,

No one knew anything.

AT MADAME TUSSAUD'S IN VICTORIAN YEARS

“That same first fiddler who leads the orchestra to-night

Here fiddled four decades of years ago; He bears the same babe-like smile of self-centred delight, Same trinket on watch-chain, same ring on the hand with the bow.

“But his face, if regarded, is woefully wanner, and drier,

And his once dark beard has grown straggling and gray; Yet a blissful existence he seems to have led with his lyre, In a trance of his own, where no wearing or tearing had sway.

“Mid these wax figures, who nothing can do, it may seem

That to do but a little thing counts a great deal; To be watched by kings,
councillors, queens, may be flattering to him

-

With their glass eyes longing they too could wake notes that appeal.”

*

Ah, but he played staunchly—that fiddler—whoever he was,

With the innocent heart and the soul-touching string: May he find the Fair
Haven! For did he not smile with good cause? Yes; gamuts that graced forty
years’-flight were not a small thing!

THE BALLET

They crush together—a rustling heap of flesh - Of more than flesh, a heap of
souls; and then

They part, enmesh,

And crush together again, Like the pink petals of a too sanguine rose

Frightened shut just when it blows.

Though all alike in their tinsel livery, And indistinguishable at a sweeping
glance,

They muster, maybe,

As lives wide in irrelevance; A world of her own has each one underneath,

Detached as a sword from its sheath.

Daughters, wives, mistresses; honest or false, sold, bought; Hearts of all sizes;
gay, fond, gushing, or penned,

Various in thought

Of lover, rival, friend; Links in a one-pulsed chain, all showing one smile,

Yet severed so many a mile!

THE FIVE STUDENTS

The sparrow dips in his wheel-rut bath,

The sun grows passionate-eyed,

And boils the dew to smoke by the paddock-path;

As strenuously we stride, - Five of us; dark He, fair He, dark She, fair She, I,

All beating by.

The air is shaken, the high-road hot,

Shadowless swoons the day,

The greens are sobered and cattle at rest; but not

We on our urgent way, - Four of us; fair She, dark She, fair He, I, are there,

But one—elsewhere.

Autumn moulds the hard fruit mellow,
And forward still we press
Through moors, briar-meshed plantations, clay-pits yellow,
As in the spring hours—yes, Three of us: fair He, fair She, I, as heretofore,
But—fallen one more.

The leaf drops: earthworms draw it in
At night-time noiselessly,
The fingers of birch and beech are skeleton-thin,
And yet on the beat are we, - Two of us; fair She, I. But no more left to go
The track we know.

Icicles tag the church-aisle leads,
The flag-rope gibbers hoarse,
The home-bound foot-folk wrap their snow-flaked heads,
Yet I still stalk the course, - One of us ... Dark and fair He, dark and fair She,
gone:
The rest—anon.

THE WIND'S PROPHECY

I travel on by barren farms, And gulls glint out like silver flecks
Against a cloud that speaks of wrecks, And bellies down with black alarms. I say: "Thus from
my lady's arms I go; those arms I love the best!" The wind replies from dip and
rise, "Nay; toward her arms thou journeyest."

A distant verge morosely gray Appears, while clots of flying foam Break from
its muddy monochrome, And a light blinks up far away. I sigh: "My eyes now as
all day Behold her ebon loops of hair!" Like bursting bonds the wind responds,
"Nay, wait for tresses flashing fair!"

From tides the lofty coastlands screen Come smittings like the slam of doors, Or
hammerings on hollow floors, As the swell cleaves through caves unseen. Say I:
"Though broad this wild terrene, Her city home is matched of none!" From the
hoarse skies the wind replies: "Thou shouldst have said her sea-bord one."

The all-prevailing clouds exclude The one quick timorous transient star; The
waves outside where breakers are Huzza like a mad multitude. "Where the sun
ups it, mist-imbued," I cry, "there reigns the star for me!" The wind outshrieks
from points and peaks: "Here, westward, where it downs, mean ye!"

Yonder the headland, vulturine, Snores like old Skrymer in his sleep, And every
chasm and every steep Blackens as wakes each pharos-shine. "I roam, but one is
safely mine," I say. "God grant she stay my own!" Low laughs the wind as if it
grinned: "Thy Love is one thou'st not yet known."

Rewritten from an old copy.

DURING WIND AND RAIN

They sing their dearest songs -

He, she, all of them—yea,

Treble and tenor and bass,

And one to play;

With the candles mooning each face ...

Ah, no; the years O! How the sick leaves reel down in throngs!

They clear the creeping moss -

Elders and juniors—aye,

Making the pathways neat

And the garden gay;

And they build a shady seat ...

Ah, no; the years, the years; See, the white storm-birds wing across!

They are blithely breakfasting all -

Men and maidens—yea,

Under the summer tree,

With a glimpse of the bay,

While pet fowl come to the knee ...

Ah, no; the years O! And the rotten rose is ript from the wall.

They change to a high new house,

He, she, all of them—aye,

Clocks and carpets and chairs

On the lawn all day,

And brightest things that are theirs ...

Ah, no; the years, the years; Down their carved names the rain-drop ploughs.

HE PREFERS HER EARTHLY

This after-sunset is a sight for seeing, Cliff-heads of craggy cloud surrounding it.

—And dwell you in that glory-show? You may; for there are strange strange things in being,

Stranger than I know.

Yet if that chasm of splendour claim your presence Which glows between the ash cloud and the dun,

How changed must be your mortal mould! Changed to a firmament-riding earthless essence

From what you were of old:

All too unlike the fond and fragile creature Then known to me ... Well, shall I say it plain?

I would not have you thus and there, But still would grieve on, missing you, still feature

You as the one you were.

THE DOLLS

“Whenever you dress me dolls, mammy,

Why do you dress them so, And make them gallant soldiers,
When never a one I know; And not as gentle ladies
With frills and frocks and curls, As people dress the dollies
Of other little girls?"

Ah—why did she not answer:-

“Because your mammy’s heed Is always gallant soldiers,
As well may be, indeed. One of them was your daddy,
His name I must not tell; He’s not the dad who lives here,
But one I love too well.”

MOLLY GONE

No more summer for Molly and me;
There is snow on the tree,
And the blackbirds plump large as the rooks are, almost,
And the water is hard Where they used to dip bills at the dawn ere her figure
was lost
To these coasts, now my prison close-barred.

No more planting by Molly and me
Where the beds used to be

Of sweet-william; no training the clambering rose

By the framework of fir Now bowering the pathway, whereon it swings gaily
and blows

As if calling commendment from her.

No more jauntings by Molly and me

To the town by the sea,

Or along over Whitesheet to Wynyard's green Gap,

Catching Montacute Crest To the right against Sedgmoor, and Corton-Hill's
far-distant cap,

And Pilsdon and Lewsdon to west.

No more singing by Molly to me

In the evenings when she

Was in mood and in voice, and the candles were lit,

And past the porch-quoin The rays would spring out on the laurels; and
dumbledores hit

On the pane, as if wishing to join.

Where, then, is Molly, who's no more with me?

—As I stand on this lea,

Thinking thus, there's a many-flamed star in the air,

That tosses a sign That her glance is regarding its face from her home, so that there

Her eyes may have meetings with mine.

A BACKWARD SPRING

The trees are afraid to put forth buds, And there is timidity in the grass; The plots lie gray where gouged by spuds,

And whether next week will pass Free of sly sour winds is the fret of each bush

Of barberry waiting to bloom.

Yet the snowdrop's face betrays no gloom, And the primrose pants in its heedless push, Though the myrtle asks if it's worth the fight

This year with frost and rime

To venture one more time On delicate leaves and buttons of white From the selfsame bough as at last year's prime, And never to ruminate on or remember What happened to it in mid-December.

April 1917.

LOOKING ACROSS

I

It is dark in the sky, And silence is where Our laughs rang high; And recall do I That One is out there.

II

The dawn is not nigh, And the trees are bare, And the waterways sigh That a year has drawn by, And Two are out there.

III

The wind drops to die Like the phantom of Care Too frail for a cry, And heart brings to eye That Three are out there.

IV

This Life runs dry That once ran rare And rosy in dye, And fleet the days fly, And Four are out there.

V

Tired, tired am I Of this earthly air, And my wraith asks: Why, Since these calm lie, Are not Five out there?

December 1915.

AT A SEASIDE TOWN IN 1869 (Young Lover's Reverie)

I went and stood outside myself,

Spelled the dark sky

And ship-lights nigh, And grumbling winds that passed thereby.

Then next inside myself I looked,

And there, above

All, shone my Love, That nothing matched the image of.

Beyond myself again I ranged;

And saw the free

Life by the sea, And folk indifferent to me.

O 'twas a charm to draw within

Thereafter, where

But she was; care For one thing only, her hid there!

But so it chanced, without myself

I had to look,

And then I took More heed of what I had long forsook:

The boats, the sands, the esplanade,

The laughing crowd;

Light-hearted, loud Greetings from some not ill-endowed;

The evening sunlit cliffs, the talk,

Hailings and halts,

The keen sea-salts, The band, the Morgenblatter Waltz.

Still, when at night I drew inside

Forward she came,

Sad, but the same As when I first had known her name.

Then rose a time when, as by force,

Outwardly wooed

By contacts crude, Her image in abeyance stood ...

At last I said: This outside life

Shall not endure;

I'll seek the pure Thought-world, and bask in her allure.

Myself again I crept within,

Scanned with keen care

The temple where She'd shone, but could not find her there.

I sought and sought. But O her soul

Has not since thrown

Upon my own One beam! Yea, she is gone, is gone.

From an old note.

THE GLIMPSE

She sped through the door And, following in haste, And stirred to the core, I entered hot-faced; But I could not find her, No sign was behind her. "Where is she?" I said: - "Who?" they asked that sat there; "Not a soul's come in sight." - "A maid with red hair." - "Ah." They paled. "She is dead. People see her at night, But you are the first On whom she has burst In the keen common light."

It was ages ago, When I was quite strong: I have waited since,—O, I have waited so long! - Yea, I set me to own The house, where now lone I dwell in void rooms Booming hollow as tombs! But I never come near her, Though nightly I hear her. And my cheek has grown thin And my hair has grown gray With this waiting therein; But she still keeps away!

THE PEDESTRIAN AN INCIDENT OF 1883

“Sir, will you let me give you a ride? Nox Venit, and the heath is wide.” - My phaeton-lantern shone on one

Young, fair, even fresh,

But burdened with flesh: A leathern satchel at his side, His breathings short, his coat undone.

‘Twas as if his corpulent figure slopped With the shake of his walking when he stopped, And, though the night’s pinch grew acute,

He wore but a thin

Wind-thridded suit, Yet well-shaped shoes for walking in, Artistic beaver, cane gold-topped.

“Alas, my friend,” he said with a smile, “I am daily bound to foot ten mile - Wet, dry, or dark—before I rest.

Six months to live

My doctors give Me as my prospect here, at best, Unless I vamp my sturdiest!”

His voice was that of a man refined, A man, one well could feel, of mind, Quite winning in its musical ease;

But in mould maligned

By some disease; And I asked again. But he shook his head; Then, as if more were due, he said:-

“A student was I—of Schopenhauer, Kant, Hegel,—and the fountained bower Of the Muses, too, knew my regard:

But ah—I fear me

The grave gapes near me! ... Would I could this gross sheath discard, And rise an ethereal shape, unmarred!”

How I remember him!—his short breath, His aspect, marked for early death, As

he dropped into the night for ever;

One caught in his prime

Of high endeavour; From all philosophies soon to sever Through an
unconscienced trick of Time!

“WHO’S IN THE NEXT ROOM?”

“Who’s in the next room?—who?

I seemed to see Somebody in the dawning passing through,

Unknown to me.” “Nay: you saw nought. He passed invisibly.”

“Who’s in the next room?—who?

I seem to hear Somebody muttering firm in a language new

That chills the ear.” “No: you catch not his tongue who has entered there.”

“Who’s in the next room?—who?

I seem to feel His breath like a clammy draught, as if it drew

From the Polar Wheel.” “No: none who breathes at all does the door conceal.”

“Who’s in the next room?—who?

A figure wan With a message to one in there of something due?

Shall I know him anon?" "Yea he; and he brought such; and you'll know him anon."

AT A COUNTRY FAIR

At a bygone Western country fair I saw a giant led by a dwarf
With a red string like a long thin scarf; How much he was the stronger there

The giant seemed unaware.

And then I saw that the giant was blind, And the dwarf a shrewd-eyed little
thing; The giant, mild, timid, obeyed the string As if he had no independent
mind,

Or will of any kind.

Wherever the dwarf decided to go At his heels the other trotted meekly, (Perhaps
—I know not—reproaching weakly) Like one Fate bade that it must be so,

Whether he wished or no.

Various sights in various climes I have seen, and more I may see yet, But that
sight never shall I forget, And have thought it the sorriest of pantomimes,

If once, a hundred times!

THE MEMORIAL BRASS: 186-

"Why do you weep there, O sweet lady,

Why do you weep before that brass? - (I'm a mere student sketching the
mediaeval)

Is some late death lined there, alas? - Your father's? ... Well, all pay the debt that paid he!"

"Young man, O must I tell!—My husband's! And under

His name I set mine, and my DEATH! - Its date left vacant till my heirs should fill it,

Stating me faithful till my last breath." - "Madam, that you are a widow wakes my wonder!"

"O wait! For last month I—remarried!

And now I fear 'twas a deed amiss. We've just come home. And I am sick and saddened

At what the new one will say to this; And will he think—think that I should have tarried?

"I may add, surely,—with no wish to harm him -

That he's a temper—yes, I fear! And when he comes to church next Sunday morning,

And sees that written ... O dear, O dear! - "Madam, I swear your beauty will disarm him!"

HER LOVE-BIRDS

When I looked up at my love-birds

That Sunday afternoon,

There was in their tiny tune A dying fetch like broken words, When I looked
up at my love-birds

That Sunday afternoon.

When he, too, scanned the love-birds

On entering there that day,

'Twas as if he had nought to say Of his long journey citywards, When he, too,
scanned the love-birds,

On entering there that day.

And billed and billed the love-birds,

As 'twere in fond despair

At the stress of silence where Had once been tones in tenor thirds, And billed
and billed the love-birds

As 'twere in fond despair.

O, his speech that chilled the love-birds,

And smote like death on me,

As I learnt what was to be, And knew my life was broke in sherds! O, his
speech that chilled the love-birds,

And smote like death on me!

PAYING CALLS

I went by footpath and by stile

Beyond where bustle ends, Strayed here a mile and there a mile

And called upon some friends.

On certain ones I had not seen

For years past did I call, And then on others who had been

The oldest friends of all.

It was the time of midsummer

When they had used to roam; But now, though tempting was the air,

I found them all at home.

I spoke to one and other of them

By mound and stone and tree Of things we had done ere days were dim,

But they spoke not to me.

THE UPPER BIRCH-LEAVES

Warm yellowy-green In the blue serene, How they skip and sway On this
autumn day! They cannot know What has happened below, - That their boughs
down there Are already quite bare, That their own will be When a week has
passed, - For they jig as in glee To this very last.

But no; there lies At times in their tune A note that cries What at first I fear I did
not hear: "O we remember At each wind's hollo - Though life holds yet - We go
hence soon, For 'tis November; - But that you follow You may forget!"

"IT NEVER LOOKS LIKE SUMMER"

“It never looks like summer here

On Beeny by the sea.” But though she saw its look as drear,

Summer it seemed to me.

It never looks like summer now

Whatever weather’s there; But ah, it cannot anyhow,

On Beeny or elsewhere!

BOSCASTLE, March 8, 1913.

EVERYTHING COMES

“The house is bleak and cold

Built so new for me! All the winds upon the wold

Search it through for me; No screening trees abound, And the curious eyes
around

Keep on view for me.”

“My Love, I am planting trees

As a screen for you Both from winds, and eyes that tease

And peer in for you. Only wait till they have grown, No such bower will be
known

As I mean for you.”

“Then I will bear it, Love,

And will wait," she said. - So, with years, there grew a grove.

"Skill how great!" she said. "As you wished, Dear?"—"Yes, I see! But—I'm dying; and for me

'Tis too late," she said.

THE MAN WITH A PAST

There was merry-making

When the first dart fell

As a heralding, - Till grinned the fully bared thing,

And froze like a spell -

Like a spell.

Innocent was she,

Innocent was I,

Too simple we! Before us we did not see,

Nearing, aught wry -

Aught wry!

I can tell it not now,

It was long ago;

And such things cow; But that is why and how

Two lives were so -

Were so.

Yes, the years matured,

And the blows were three

That time ensured On her, which she dumbly endured;

And one on me -

One on me.

HE FEARS HIS GOOD FORTUNE

There was a glorious time At an epoch of my prime; Mornings beryl-bespread,
And evenings golden-red;

Nothing gray: And in my heart I said, “However this chanced to be, It is too
full for me, Too rare, too rapturous, rash, Its spell must close with a crash

Some day!”

The radiance went on Anon and yet anon, And sweetness fell around Like
manna on the ground.

“I’ve no claim,” Said I, “to be thus crowned: I am not worthy this:- Must it not
go amiss? - Well ... let the end foreseen Come duly!—I am serene.”

—And it came.

HE WONDERS ABOUT HIMSELF

No use hoping, or feeling vexed, Tugged by a force above or under Like some
fantocine, much I wonder What I shall find me doing next!

Shall I be rushing where bright eyes be? Shall I be suffering sorrows seven?
Shall I be watching the stars of heaven, Thinking one of them looks like thee?

Part is mine of the general Will, Cannot my share in the sum of sources Bend a
digit the poise of forces, And a fair desire fulfil?

Nov. 1893.

JUBILATE

“The very last time I ever was here,” he said, “I saw much less of the quick than
I saw of the dead.” - He was a man I had met with somewhere before, But how
or when I now could recall no more.

“The hazy mazy moonlight at one in the morning Spread out as a sea across the
frozen snow, Glazed to live sparkles like the great breastplate adorning The
priest of the Temple, with Urim and Thummim aglow.

“The yew-tree arms, glued hard to the stiff stark air, Hung still in the village sky
as theatre-scenes When I came by the churchyard wall, and halted there At a
shut-in sound of fiddles and tambourines.

“And as I stood hearkening, dulcimers, haut-boys, and shawms, And
violoncellos, and a three-stringed double-bass, Joined in, and were intermixed
with a singing of psalms; And I looked over at the dead men’s dwelling-place.

“Through the shine of the slippery snow I now could see, As it were through a
crystal roof, a great company Of the dead minueting in stately step underground
To the tune of the instruments I had before heard sound.

“It was ‘Eden New,’ and dancing they sang in a chore, ‘We are out of it all!—
yea, in Little-Ease cramped no more!’ And their shrouded figures pacing with
joy I could see As you see the stage from the gallery. And they had no heed of
me.

“And I lifted my head quite dazed from the churchyard wall And I doubted not
that it warned I should soon have my call. But—” ... Then in the ashes he
emptied the dregs of his cup, And onward he went, and the darkness swallowed
him up.

HE REVISITS HIS FIRST SCHOOL

I should not have shown in the flesh, I ought to have gone as a ghost; It was
awkward, unseemly almost, Standing solidly there as when fresh,

Pink, tiny, crisp-curled,

My pinions yet furled

From the winds of the world.

After waiting so many a year To wait longer, and go as a sprite From the tomb at
the mid of some night Was the right, radiant way to appear;

Not as one wanzing weak

From life’s roar and reek,

His rest still to seek:

Yea, beglimpsed through the quaint quarried glass Of green moonlight, by me
greener made, When they’d cry, perhaps, “There sits his shade In his olden haunt
—just as he was

When in Walkingame he

Conned the grand Rule-of-Three

With the bent of a bee.”

But to show in the afternoon sun, With an aspect of hollow-eyed care, When
none wished to see me come there, Was a garish thing, better undone.

Yes; wrong was the way;

But yet, let me say,

I may right it—some day.

“I THOUGHT, MY HEART”

I thought, my Heart, that you had healed Of those sore smartings of the past,
And that the summers had oversealed

All mark of them at last. But closely scanning in the night I saw them standing
crimson-bright

Just as she made them:

Nothing could fade them;

Yea, I can swear

That there they were -

They still were there!

Then the Vision of her who cut them came, And looking over my shoulder said,
“I am sure you deal me all the blame

For those sharp smarts and red; But meet me, dearest, to-morrow night, In the
churchyard at the moon’s half-height,

And so strange a kiss

Shall be mine, I wis,
That you'll cease to know
If the wounds you show
Be there or no!"

FRAGMENT

At last I entered a long dark gallery,

Catacomb-lined; and ranged at the side

Were the bodies of men from far and wide Who, motion past, were nevertheless not dead.

"The sense of waiting here strikes strong;

Everyone's waiting, waiting, it seems to me;

What are you waiting for so long? - What is to happen?" I said.

"O we are waiting for one called God," said they,

"(Though by some the Will, or Force, or Laws;

And, vaguely, by some, the Ultimate Cause;) Waiting for him to see us before we are clay. Yes; waiting, waiting, for God TO KNOW IT" ...

"To know what?" questioned I. "To know how things have been going on earth and below it:

It is clear he must know some day."

I thereon asked them why.

“Since he made us humble pioneers
Of himself in consciousness of Life’s tears,
It needs no mighty prophecy
To tell that what he could mindlessly show
His creatures, he himself will know.

“By some still close-cowled mystery
We have reached feeling faster than he, But
he will overtake us anon,

If the world goes on.”

MIDNIGHT ON THE GREAT WESTERN

In the third-class seat sat the journeying boy,

And the roof-lamp’s oily flame
Played down on his listless form and face,
Bewrapt past knowing to what he was going,

Or whence he came.

In the band of his hat the journeying boy

Had a ticket stuck; and a string
Around his neck bore the key of his box, That
twinkled gleams of the lamp’s sad beams

Like a living thing.

What past can be yours, O journeying boy

Towards a world unknown, Who calmly, as if incurious quite
On all at stake,
can undertake

This plunge alone?

Knows your soul a sphere, O journeying boy,

Our rude realms far above, Whence with spacious vision you mark and mete

This region of sin that you find you in,

But are not of?

HONEYMOON TIME AT AN INN

At the shiver of morning, a little before the false dawn,

The moon was at the window-square,

Deedily brooding in deformed decay -

The curve hewn off her cheek as by an adze; At the shiver of morning a little before the false dawn

So the moon looked in there.

Her speechless eyeing reached across the chamber,

Where lay two souls opprest,

One a white lady sighing, "Why am I sad!"

To him who sighed back, "Sad, my Love, am I!" And speechlessly the old moon coned the chamber,

And these two reft of rest.

While their large-pupilled vision swept the scene there,

Nought seeming imminent,

Something fell sheer, and crashed, and from the floor

Lay glittering at the pair with a shattered gaze, While their large-pupilled vision swept the scene there,

And the many-eyed thing outleant.

With a start they saw that it was an old-time pier-glass

Which had stood on the mantel near,

Its silvering blemished,—yes, as if worn away

By the eyes of the countless dead who had smirked at it Ere these two ever
knew that old-time pier-glass

And its vague and vacant leer.

As he looked, his bride like a moth skimmed forth, and kneeling

Quick, with quivering sighs,

Gathered the pieces under the moon's sly ray,

Unwitting as an automaton what she did; Till he entreated, hasting to where
she was kneeling,

Let it stay where it lies!"

"Long years of sorrow this means!" breathed the lady

As they retired. "Alas!"

And she lifted one pale hand across her eyes.

"Don't trouble, Love; it's nothing," the bridegroom said. "Long years of
sorrow for us!" murmured the lady,

"Or ever this evil pass!"

And the Spirits Ironic laughed behind the wainscot,

And the Spirits of Pity sighed.

It's good," said the Spirits Ironic, "to tickle their minds

With a portent of their wedlock's after-grinds." And the Spirits of Pity sighed behind the wainscot,

"It's a portent we cannot abide!

"More, what shall happen to prove the truth of the portent?"

—"Oh; in brief, they will fade till old,

And their loves grow numbed ere death, by the cark of care." - "But nought see we that asks for portents there? - 'Tis the lot of all."—"Well, no less true is a portent

That it fits all mortal mould."

THE ROBIN

When up aloft I fly and fly, I see in pools The shining sky, And a happy bird Am I, am I!

When I descend Towards their brink I stand, and look, And stoop, and drink, And bathe my wings, And chink and prink.

When winter frost Makes earth as steel I search and search But find no meal, And most unhappy Then I feel.

But when it lasts, And snows still fall, I get to feel No grief at all, For I turn to a cold stiff Feathery ball!

"I ROSE AND WENT TO ROU'TOR TOWN" (She, alone)

I rose and went to Rou'tor Town

With gaiety and good heart,

And ardour for the start, That morning ere the moon was down That lit me off
to Rou'tor Town

With gaiety and good heart.

When sojourn soon at Rou'tor Town

Wrote sorrows on my face,

I strove that none should trace The pale and gray, once pink and brown, When
sojourn soon at Rou'tor Town

Wrote sorrows on my face.

The evil wrought at Rou'tor Town

On him I'd loved so true

I cannot tell anew: But nought can quench, but nought can drown The evil
wrought at Rou'tor Town

On him I'd loved so true!

THE NETTLES

This, then, is the grave of my son,

Whose heart she won! And nettles grow Upon his mound; and she lives just
below.

How he upbraided me, and left,

And our lives were cleft, because I said She was hard, unfeeling, caring but to

wed.

Well, to see this sight I have fared these miles,

And her firelight smiles from her window there, Whom he left his mother to
cherish with tender care!

It is enough. I'll turn and go;

Yes, nettles grow where lone lies he, Who spurned me for seeing what he
could not see.

IN A WAITING-ROOM

On a morning sick as the day of doom

With the drizzling gray

Of an English May, There were few in the railway waiting-room. About its
walls were framed and varnished Pictures of liners, fly-blown, tarnished. The
table bore a Testament For travellers' reading, if suchwise bent.

I read it on and on,

And, thronging the Gospel of Saint John,

Were figures—additions, multiplications - By some one scrawled, with sundry
emendations;

Not scoffingly designed,

But with an absent mind, -

Plainly a bagman's counts of cost,

What he had profited, what lost; And whilst I wondered if there could have been

Any particle of a soul

In that poor man at all,

To cypher rates of wage

Upon that printed page,

There joined in the charmless scene And stood over me and the scribbled book

(To lend the hour's mean hue

A smear of tragedy too) A soldier and wife, with haggard look Subdued to stone by strong endeavour;

And then I heard

From a casual word They were parting as they believed for ever.

But next there came

Like the eastern flame Of some high altar, children—a pair - Who laughed at the fly-blown pictures there. "Here are the lovely ships that we, Mother, are by and by going to see! When we get there it's 'most sure to be fine, And the band will play, and the sun will shine!"

It rained on the skylight with a din As we waited and still no train came in; But the words of the child in the squalid room Had spread a glory through the gloom.

THE CLOCK-WINDER

It is dark as a cave, Or a vault in the nave When the iron door Is closed, and the floor
Of the church relaid With trowel and spade.

But the parish-clerk Cares not for the dark As he winds in the tower At a regular
hour The rheumatic clock, Whose dilatory knock You can hear when praying At
the day's decaying, Or at any lone while From a pew in the aisle.

Up, up from the ground Around and around In the turret stair He clambers, to
where The wheelwork is, With its tick, click, whizz, Reposefully measuring
Each day to its end That mortal men spend In sorrowing and pleasuring Nightly
thus does he climb To the trackway of Time.

Him I followed one night To this place without light, And, ere I spoke, heard
Him say, word by word, At the end of his winding, The darkness unminding:-

“So I wipe out one more, My Dear, of the sore Sad days that still be, Like a
drying Dead Sea, Between you and me!”

Who she was no man knew: He had long borne him blind To all womankind;
And was ever one who Kept his past out of view.

OLD EXCURSIONS

“What's the good of going to Ridgeway,

Cerne, or Sydling Mill,

Or to Yell'ham Hill, Blithely bearing Casterbridge-way

As we used to do? She will no more climb up there, Or be visible anywhere

In those haunts we knew.”

But to-night, while walking weary,

Near me seemed her shade,

Come as 'twere to upbraid This my mood in deeming dreary

Scenes that used to please; And, if she did come to me, Still solicitous, there
may be

Good in going to these.

So, I'll care to roam to Ridgeway,

Cerne, or Sydling Mill,

Or to Yell'ham Hill, Blithely bearing Casterbridge-way

As we used to do, Since her phasm may flit out there, And may greet me
anywhere

In those haunts we knew.

April 1913.

THE MASKED FACE

I found me in a great surging space,

At either end a door, And I said: "What is this giddy place,

With no firm-fixed floor,

That I knew not of before?"

"It is Life," said a mask-clad face.

I asked: "But how do I come here,

Who never wished to come; Can the light and air be made more clear,
The floor more quiet some,
And the doors set wide? They numb
Fast-locked, and fill with fear.”

The mask put on a bleak smile then,

And said, “O vassal-wight, There once complained a goosequill pen
To the scribe of the Infinite
Of the words it had to write
Because they were past its ken.”

IN A WHISPERING GALLERY

That whisper takes the voice Of a Spirit's compassionings Close, but invisible,
And throws me under a spell At the kindling vision it brings; And for a moment
I rejoice, And believe in transcendent things That would mould from this muddy
earth A spot for the splendid birth Of everlasting lives, Whereto no night arrives;
And this gaunt gray gallery A tabernacle of worth On this drab-aired afternoon,
When you can barely see Across its hazed lacune If opposite aught there be Of
fleshed humanity Wherewith I may commune; Or if the voice so near Be a soul's
voice floating here.

THE SOMETHING THAT SAVED HIM

It was when Whirls of thick waters laved me

Again and again, That something arose and saved me;
Yea, it was then.

In that day Unseeing the azure went I
On my way, And to white winter bent I,
Knowing no May.

Reft of renown, Under the night clouds beating
Up and down, In my needfulness greeting
Cit and clown.

Long there had been Much of a murky colour
In the scene, Dull prospects meeting duller;
Nought between.

Last, there loomed A closing-in blind alley,
Though there boomed A feeble summons to rally
Where it gloomed.

The clock rang; The hour brought a hand to deliver;
I upsprang, And looked back at den, ditch and river,

And sang.

THE ENEMY'S PORTRAIT

He saw the portrait of his enemy, offered At auction in a street he journeyed
nigh, That enemy, now late dead, who in his life-time Had injured deeply him
the passer-by. "To get that picture, pleased be God, I'll try, And utterly destroy it;
and no more Shall be inflicted on man's mortal eye A countenance so sinister
and sore!"

And so he bought the painting. Driving homeward, "The frame will come in
useful," he declared, "The rest is fuel." On his arrival, weary, Asked what he
bore with him, and how he fared, He said he had bid for a picture, though he
cared For the frame only: on the morrow he Would burn the canvas, which could
well be spared, Seeing that it portrayed his enemy.

Next day some other duty found him busy; The foe was laid his face against the
wall; But on the next he set himself to loosen The straining-strips. And then a
casual call Prevented his proceeding therewithal; And thus the picture waited,
day by day, Its owner's pleasure, like a wretched thrall, Until a month and more
had slipped away.

And then upon a morn he found it shifted, Hung in a corner by a servitor. "Why
did you take on you to hang that picture? You know it was the frame I bought it
for." "It stood in the way of every visitor, And I just hitched it there."—"Well, it
must go: I don't commemorate men whom I abhor. Remind me 'tis to do. The
frame I'll stow."

But things become forgotten. In the shadow Of the dark corner hung it by its
string, And there it stayed—once noticed by its owner, Who said, "Ah me—I
must destroy that thing!" But when he died, there, none remembering, It hung,
till moved to prominence, as one sees; And comers pause and say, examining, "I
thought they were the bitterest enemies?"

IMAGININGS

She saw herself a lady
With fifty frocks in wear, And rolling wheels, and rooms the best,
And faithful maidens' care,
And open lawns and shady
For weathers warm or drear.

She found herself a striver,
All liberal gifts debarred, With days of gloom, and movements stressed,
And early visions marred,
And got no man to wive her
But one whose lot was hard.

Yet in the moony night-time
She steals to stile and lea During his heavy slumberous rest
When homecome wearily,
And dreams of some blest bright-time
She knows can never be.

ON THE DOORSTEP

The rain imprinted the step's wet shine With target-circles that quivered and
crossed As I was leaving this porch of mine; When from within there swelled
and paused

A song's sweet note;

And back I turned, and thought,

“Here I'll abide.”

The step shines wet beneath the rain, Which prints its circles as heretofore; I
watch them from the porch again, But no song-notes within the door

Now call to me

To shun the dripping lea

And forth I stride.

Jan. 1914.

SIGNS AND TOKENS

Said the red-cloaked crone In a whispered moan:

“The dead man was limp When laid in his chest; Yea, limp; and why But to
signify That the grave will crimp Ere next year's sun Yet another one Of those in
that house - It may be the best - For its endless drowse!”

Said the brown-shawled dame To confirm the same:

“And the slothful flies On the rotting fruit Have been seen to wear While
crawling there Crape scarves, by eyes That were quick and acute; As did those
that had pitched On the cows by the pails, And with flaps of their tails Were far
away switched.”

Said the third in plaid, Each word being weighed:

“And trotting does In the park, in the lane, And just outside The shuttered pane,
Have also been heard - Quick feet as light As the feet of a sprite - And the wise
mind knows What things may betide When such has occurred.”

Cried the black-craped fourth, Cold faced as the north:

“O, though giving such Some head-room, I smile At your falterings When noting
those things Round your domicile! For what, what can touch One whom, riven
of all That makes life gay, No hints can appal Of more takings away!”

PATHS OF FORMER TIME

No; no;

It must not be so: They are the ways we do not go.

Still chew

The kine, and moo In the meadows we used to wander through;

Still purl

The rivulets and curl Towards the weirs with a musical swirl;

Haymakers

As in former years Rake rolls into heaps that the pitchfork rears;

Wheels crack

On the turfy track The waggon pursues with its toppling pack.

“Why then shun -

Since summer’s not done - All this because of the lack of one?”

Had you been

Sharer of that scene You would not ask while it bites in keen

Why it is so

We can no more go By the summer paths we used to know!

1913.

THE CLOCK OF THE YEARS

“A spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up.”

And the Spirit said, “I can make the clock of the years go backward, But am loth to stop it where you will.”

And I cried, “Agreed

To that. Proceed:

It’s better than dead!”

He answered, “Peace”; And called her up—as last before me; Then younger, younger she freshed, to the year

I first had known

Her woman-grown,

And I cried, “Cease! -

“Thus far is good - It is enough—let her stay thus always!” But alas for me. He shook his head:

No stop was there;

And she waned child-fair,

And to babyhood.

Still less in mien To my great sorrow became she slowly, And smalled till she
was nought at all

In his checkless griff;

And it was as if

She had never been.

“Better,” I plained, “She were dead as before! The memory of her Had lived in
me; but it cannot now!”

And coldly his voice:

“It was your choice

To mar the ordained.”

1916.

AT THE PIANO

A woman was playing,

A man looking on;

And the mould of her face,

And her neck, and her hair,

Which the rays fell upon

Of the two candles there, Sent him mentally straying

In some fancy-place

Where pain had no trace.

A cowed Apparition

Came pushing between;

And her notes seemed to sigh,

And the lights to burn pale,

As a spell numbed the scene.

But the maid saw no bale, And the man no monition;

And Time laughed awry,

And the Phantom hid nigh.

THE SHADOW ON THE STONE

I went by the Druid stone

That broods in the garden white and lone, And I stopped and looked at the shifting shadows

That at some moments fall thereon

From the tree hard by with a rhythmic swing,

And they shaped in my imagining To the shade that a well-known head and shoulders

Threw there when she was gardening.

I thought her behind my back,

Yea, her I long had learned to lack, And I said: "I am sure you are standing behind me,

Though how do you get into this old track?"

And there was no sound but the fall of a leaf

As a sad response; and to keep down grief I would not turn my head to discover

That there was nothing in my belief.

Yet I wanted to look and see

That nobody stood at the back of me; But I thought once more: "Nay, I'll not unvision

A shape which, somehow, there may be.”

So I went on softly from the glade,

And left her behind me throwing her shade, As she were indeed an apparition

-

My head unturned lest my dream should fade.

Begun 1913: finished 1916.

IN THE GARDEN (M. H.)

We waited for the sun To break its cloudy prison (For day was not yet done, And
night still unbegun) Leaning by the dial.

After many a trial - We all silent there - It burst as new-arisen, Throwing a shade
to where Time travelled at that minute.

Little saw we in it, But this much I know, Of lookers on that shade, Her towards
whom it made Soonest had to go.

1915.

THE TREE AND THE LADY

I have done all I could For that lady I knew! Through the heats I have shaded
her, Drawn to her songsters when summer has jaded her,

Home from the heath or the wood.

At the mirth-time of May, When my shadow first lured her, I'd donned my
new bravery Of greenth: 'twas my all. Now I shiver in slavery,

Icicles grieving me gray.

Plumed to every twig's end I could tempt her chair under me. Much did I
treasure her During those days she had nothing to pleasure her;

Mutely she used me as friend.

I'm a skeleton now, And she's gone, craving warmth. The rime sticks like a
skin to me; Through me Arcturus peers; Nor'lights shoot into me;

Gone is she, scorning my bough!

AN UPBRAIDING

Now I am dead you sing to me

The songs we used to know, But while I lived you had no wish
Or care for doing so.

Now I am dead you come to me

In the moonlight, comfortless; Ah, what would I have given alive
To win such tenderness!

When you are dead, and stand to me

Not differenced, as now, But like again, will you be cold
As when we lived, or how?

THE YOUNG GLASS-STAINER

“These Gothic windows, how they wear me out With cusp and foil, and nothing
straight or square, Crude colours, leaden borders roundabout, And fitting in Peter
here, and Matthew there!

“What a vocation! Here do I draw now The abnormal, loving the Hellenic norm;
Martha I paint, and dream of Hera’s brow, Mary, and think of Aphrodite’s form.”

Nov. 1893.

LOOKING AT A PICTURE ON AN ANNIVERSARY

But don’t you know it, my dear,

Don’t you know it, That this day of the year (What rainbow-rays embow it!)
We met, strangers confessed,

But parted—blest?

Though at this query, my dear,

There in your frame Unmoved you still appear, You must be thinking the same, But keep that look demure

Just to allure.

And now at length a trace

I surely vision Upon that wistful face Of old-time recognition, Smiling forth, “Yes, as you say,

It is the day.”

For this one phase of you

Now left on earth This great date must endue With pulsings of rebirth? - I see them vitalize

Those two deep eyes!

But if this face I con

Does not declare Consciousness living on Still in it, little I care To live myself, my dear,

Lone-labouring here!

Spring 1913.

THE CHOIRMASTER’S BURIAL

He often would ask us That, when he died, After playing so many To their last rest, If out of us any Should here abide, And it would not task us, We would with our lutes Play over him By his grave-brim The psalm he liked best - The one

whose sense suits "Mount Ephraim" - And perhaps we should seem To him, in
Death's dream, Like the seraphim.

As soon as I knew That his spirit was gone I thought this his due, And spoke
thereupon. "I think," said the vicar, "A read service quicker Than viols out-of-
doors In these frosts and hoars. That old-fashioned way Requires a fine day, And
it seems to me It had better not be."

Hence, that afternoon, Though never knew he That his wish could not be, To get
through it faster They buried the master Without any tune.

But 'twas said that, when At the dead of next night The vicar looked out, There
struck on his ken Thronged roundabout, Where the frost was graying The
headstoned grass, A band all in white Like the saints in church-glass, Singing
and playing The ancient stave By the choirmaster's grave.

Such the tenor man told When he had grown old.

THE MAN WHO FORGOT

At a lonely cross where bye-roads met

I sat upon a gate; I saw the sun decline and set,

And still was fain to wait.

A trotting boy passed up the way

And roused me from my thought; I called to him, and showed where lay

A spot I shyly sought.

"A summerhouse fair stands hidden where

You see the moonlight thrown; Go, tell me if within it there

A lady sits alone."

He half demurred, but took the track,

And silence held the scene; I saw his figure rambling back;

I asked him if he had been.

“I went just where you said, but found

No summerhouse was there: Beyond the slope ‘tis all bare ground;

Nothing stands anywhere.

“A man asked what my brains were worth;

The house, he said, grew rotten, And was pulled down before my birth,

And is almost forgotten!”

My right mind woke, and I stood dumb;

Forty years’ frost and flower Had fled since I’d used to come

To meet her in that bower.

WHILE DRAWING IN A CHURCHYARD

“It is sad that so many of worth,

Still in the flesh,” soughed the yew, “Misjudge their lot whom kindly earth

Secludes from view.

“They ride their diurnal round

Each day-span’s sum of hours In peerless ease, without jolt or bound

Or ache like ours.

“If the living could but hear

What is heard by my roots as they creep Round the restful flock, and the things said there,

No one would weep.”

“‘Now set among the wise,’

They say: ‘Enlarged in scope, That no God trumpet us to rise

We truly hope.’”

I listened to his strange tale

In the mood that stillness brings, And I grew to accept as the day wore pale

That show of things.

“FOR LIFE I HAD NEVER CARED GREATLY”

For Life I had never cared greatly,

As worth a man’s while;

Peradventures unsought,

Peradventures that finished in nought, Had kept me from youth and through manhood till lately

Unwon by its style.

In earliest years—why I know not -

I viewed it askance;

Conditions of doubt,

Conditions that leaked slowly out, May haply have bent me to stand and to
show not

Much zest for its dance.

With symphonies soft and sweet colour

It courted me then,

Till evasions seemed wrong,

Till evasions gave in to its song, And I warmed, until living aloofly loomed
duller

Than life among men.

Anew I found nought to set eyes on,

When, lifting its hand,

It uncloaked a star,

Uncloaked it from fog-damps afar, And showed its beams burning from pole
to horizon

As bright as a brand.

And so, the rough highway forgetting,

I pace hill and dale

Regarding the sky,

Regarding the vision on high, And thus re-illumed have no humour for letting

My pilgrimage fail.

“MEN WHO MARCH AWAY” (SONG OF THE SOLDIERS)

What of the faith and fire within us

Men who march away

Ere the barn-cocks say

Night is growing gray, Leaving all that here can win us; What of the faith and fire within us

Men who march away?

Is it a purblind prank, O think you,

Friend with the musing eye,

Who watch us stepping by

With doubt and dolorous sigh? Can much pondering so hoodwink you! Is it a purblind prank, O think you,

Friend with the musing eye?

Nay. We well see what we are doing,

Though some may not see -

Dalliers as they be -

England's need are we; Her distress would leave us rueing: Nay. We well see
what we are doing,

Though some may not see!

In our heart of hearts believing

Victory crowns the just,

And that braggarts must

Surely bite the dust, Press we to the field ungrieving, In our heart of hearts
believing

Victory crowns the just.

Hence the faith and fire within us

Men who march away

Ere the barn-cocks say

Night is growing gray, Leaving all that here can win us; Hence the faith and
fire within us

Men who march away.

September 5, 1914.

HIS COUNTRY

[He travels southward, and looks around;] I journeyed from my native spot

Across the south sea shine, And found that people in hall and cot
Laboured and suffered each his lot

Even as I did mine.

[and cannot discern the boundary] Thus noting them in meads and marts

It did not seem to me That my dear country with its hearts, Minds, yearnings,
worse and better parts

Had ended with the sea.

[of his native country;] I further and further went anon,

As such I still surveyed, And further yet—yea, on and on, And all the men I
looked upon

Had heart-strings fellow-made.

[or where his duties to his fellow-creatures end;] I traced the whole terrestrial
round,

Homing the other side; Then said I, “What is there to bound My denizenship?
It seems I have found

Its scope to be world-wide.”

[nor who are his enemies] I asked me: “Whom have I to fight,

And whom have I to dare, And whom to weaken, crush, and blight? My
country seems to have kept in sight

On my way everywhere.”

1913.

ENGLAND TO GERMANY IN 1914

“O England, may God punish thee!” - Is it that Teuton genius flowers
Only to breathe malignity Upon its friend of earlier hours? - We have eaten your bread,
you have eaten ours, We have loved your burghs, your pines’ green moan, Fair
Rhine-stream, and its storied towers; Your shining souls of deathless dowers
Have won us as they were our own:

We have nursed no dreams to shed your blood, We have matched your might not
rancorously, Save a flushed few whose blatant mood You heard and marked as
well as we To tongue not in their country’s key; But yet you cry with face
aflame, “O England, may God punish thee!” And foul in onward history, And
present sight, your ancient name.

Autumn 1914.

ON THE BELGIAN EXPATRIATION

I dreamt that people from the Land of Chimes Arrived one autumn morning with
their bells, To hoist them on the towers and citadels Of my own country, that the
musical rhymes

Rung by them into space at meted times Amid the market’s daily stir and stress,
And the night’s empty star-lit silentness, Might solace souls of this and kindred
climes.

Then I awoke; and lo, before me stood The visioned ones, but pale and full of
fear; From Bruges they came, and Antwerp, and Ostend,

No carillons in their train. Foes of mad mood Had shattered these to shards amid

the gear Of ravaged roof, and smouldering gable-end.

October 18, 1914.

AN APPEAL TO AMERICA ON BEHALF OF THE BELGIAN DESTITUTE

Seven millions stand Emaciate, in that ancient Delta-land:- We here, full-charged with our own maimed and dead, And coiled in throbbing conflicts slow and sore, Can poorly soothe these ails unmerited Of souls forlorn upon the facing shore! - Where naked, gaunt, in endless band on band

Seven millions stand.

No man can say To your great country that, with scant delay, You must, perforce, ease them in their loud need: We know that nearer first your duty lies; But—is it much to ask that you let plead Your lovingkindness with you—wooing-wise - Albeit that aught you owe, and must repay,

No man can say?

December 1914.

THE PITY OF IT

I walked in loamy Wessex lanes, afar From rail-track and from highway, and I heard In field and farmstead many an ancient word Of local lineage like “Thubist,” “Er war,”

“Ich woll,” “Er sholl,” and by-talk similar, Nigh as they speak who in this month’s moon gird At England’s very loins, thereunto spurred By gangs whose glory threats and slaughters are.

Then seemed a Heart crying: “Whosoever they be At root and bottom of this,
who flung this flame Between kin folk kin tongued even as are we,

“Sinister, ugly, lurid, be their fame; May their familiars grow to shun their name,
And their brood perish everlastingly.”

April 1915.

IN TIME OF WARS AND TUMULTS

“Would that I’d not drawn breath here!” some one said, “To stalk upon this stage
of evil deeds, Where purposelessly month by month proceeds A play so sorely
shaped and blood-bespread.”

Yet had his spark not quickened, but lain dead To the gross spectacles of this our
day, And never put on the proffered cloak of clay, He had but known not things
now manifested;

Life would have swirled the same. Morns would have dawned On the uprooting
by the night-gun’s stroke Of what the yester noonshine brought to flower;

Brown martial brows in dying throes have wanned Despite his absence; hearts
no fewer been broke By Empery’s insatiate lust of power.

1915.

IN TIME OF “THE BREAKING OF NATIONS” {1}

I

Only a man harrowing clods

In a slow silent walk With an old horse that stumbles and nods

Half asleep as they stalk.

II

Only thin smoke without flame

From the heaps of couch-grass; Yet this will go onward the same

Though Dynasties pass.

III

Yonder a maid and her wight

Come whispering by: War’s annals will cloud into night

Ere their story die.

1915.

CRY OF THE HOMELESS AFTER THE PRUSSIAN INVASION OF
BELGIUM

“Instigator of the ruin -

Whichsoever thou mayst be Of the masterful of Europe

That contrived our misery - Hear the wormwood-worded greeting

From each city, shore, and lea

Of thy victims:

“Conqueror, all hail to thee!”

“Yea: ‘All hail!’ we grimly shout thee

That wast author, fount, and head Of these wounds, whoever proven

When our times are throughly read. ‘May thy loved be slighted, blighted,

And forsaken,’ be it said

By thy victims,

‘And thy children beg their bread!’

“Nay: a richer malediction! -

Rather let this thing befall In time’s hurling and unfurling

On the night when comes thy call; That compassion dew thy pillow

And bedrench thy senses all

For thy victims,

Till death dark thee with his pall.”

August 1915.

BEFORE MARCHING AND AFTER (in Memoriam F. W. G.)

Orion swung southward aslant

Where the starved Egdon pine-trees had thinned,

The Pleiads aloft seemed to pant

With the heather that twitched in the wind; But he looked on indifferent to sights such as these, Unswayed by love, friendship, home joy or home sorrow, And wondered to what he would march on the morrow.

The crazed household-clock with its whirr

Rang midnight within as he stood,

He heard the low sighing of her

Who had striven from his birth for his good; But he still only asked the spring starlight, the breeze, What great thing or small thing his history would borrow From that Game with Death he would play on the morrow.

When the heath wore the robe of late summer,

And the fuchsia-bells, hot in the sun,

Hung red by the door, a quick comer

Brought tidings that marching was done For him who had joined in that game
overseas Where Death stood to win, though his name was to borrow A
brightness therefrom not to fade on the morrow.

September 1915.

“OFTEN WHEN WARRING”

Often when warring for he wist not what, An enemy-soldier, passing by one
weak, Has tendered water, wiped the burning cheek, And cooled the lips so black
and clammed and hot;

Then gone his way, and maybe quite forgot The deed of grace amid the roar and
reek; Yet larger vision than loud arms bespeak He there has reached, although he
has known it not.

For natural mindsight, triumphing in the act Over the throes of artificial rage,
Has thuswise muffled victory's peal of pride, Rended to ribands policy's
specious page That deals but with evasion, code, and pact, And war's apology
wholly stultified.

1915.

THEN AND NOW

When battles were fought With a chivalrous sense of Should and Ought,
In spirit men said,
“End we quick or dead,
Honour is some reward! Let us fight fair—for our own best or worst;
So, Gentlemen of the Guard,
Fire first!”

In the open they stood, Man to man in his knightlihood:
They would not deign
To profit by a stain
On the honourable rules, Knowing that practise perfidy no man durst
Who in the heroic schools
Was nurst.

But now, behold, what Is warfare wherein honour is not!
Rama laments
Its dead innocents:

Herod breathes: “Sly slaughter Shall rule! Let us, by modes once called
accurst,

Overhead, under water,

Stab first.”

1915.

A CALL TO NATIONAL SERVICE

Up and be doing, all who have a hand To lift, a back to bend. It must not be In times like these that vaguely linger we To air our vaunts and hopes; and leave our land

Untended as a wild of weeds and sand. - Say, then, "I come!" and go, O women and men Of palace, ploughshare, easel, counter, pen; That scareless, scathless, England still may stand.

Would years but let me stir as once I stirred At many a dawn to take the forward track, And with a stride plunged on to enterprize,

I now would speed like yester wind that whirred Through yielding pines; and serve with never a slack, So loud for promptness all around outcries!

March 1917.

THE DEAD AND THE LIVING ONE

The dead woman lay in her first night's grave, And twilight fell from the clouds' concave, And those she had asked to forgive forgave.

The woman passing came to a pause By the heaped white shapes of wreath and cross, And looked upon where the other was.

And as she mused there thus spoke she: "Never your countenance did I see, But you've been a good good friend to me!"

Rose a plaintive voice from the sod below: "O woman whose accents I do not

know, What is it that makes you approve me so?"

"O dead one, ere my soldier went, I heard him saying, with warm intent, To his friend, when won by your blandishment:

"I would change for that lass here and now! And if I return I may break my vow To my present Love, and contrive somehow

"To call my own this new-found pearl, Whose eyes have the light, whose lips the curl, I always have looked for in a girl!"

"—And this is why that by ceasing to be - Though never your countenance did I see - You prove you a good good friend to me;

"And I pray each hour for your soul's repose In gratitude for your joining those No lover will clasp when his campaigns close."

Away she turned, when arose to her eye A martial phantom of gory dye, That said, with a thin and far-off sigh:

"O sweetheart, neither shall I clasp you, For the foe this day has pierced me through, And sent me to where she is. Adieu! -

"And forget not when the night-wind's whine Calls over this turf where her limbs recline, That it travels on to lament by mine."

There was a cry by the white-flowered mound, There was a laugh from underground, There was a deeper gloom around.

1915.

A NEW YEAR'S EVE IN WAR TIME

I

Phantasmal fears,

And the flap of the flame,

And the throb of the clock,

And a loosened slate,

And the blind night's drone, Which tiredly the spectral pines intone!

II

And the blood in my ears Strumming always the same, And the gable-cock With its fitful grate, And myself, alone.

III

The twelfth hour nears Hand-hid, as in shame; I undo the lock, And listen, and wait For the Young Unknown.

IV

In the dark there careers - As if Death astride came To numb all with his knock - A horse at mad rate Over rut and stone.

V

No figure appears, No call of my name, No sound but "Tic-toc" Without check. Past the gate It clatters—is gone.

VI

What rider it bears There is none to proclaim; And the Old Year has struck, And,
scarce animate, The New makes moan.

VII

Maybe that "More Tears! -

More Famine and Flame -

More Severance and Shock!"

Is the order from Fate

That the Rider speeds on To pale Europe; and tiredly the pines intone.

1915-1916.

"I MET A MAN"

I met a man when night was nigh,

Who said, with shining face and eye

Like Moses' after Sinai:-

"I have seen the Moulder of Monarchies,

Realms, peoples, plains and hills,

Sitting upon the sunlit seas! -

And, as He sat, soliloquies Fell from Him like an antiphonic breeze

That pricks the waves to thrills.

“Meseemed that of the maimed and dead

Mown down upon the globe, -

Their plenteous blooms of promise shed

Ere fruiting-time—His words were said, Sitting against the western web of red

Wrapt in His crimson robe.

“And I could catch them now and then:

—‘Why let these gambling clans

Of human Cockers, pit liege men

From mart and city, dale and glen, In death-mains, but to swell and swell
again

Their swollen All-Empery plans,

““When a mere nod (if my malign

Compeer but passive keep)

Would mend that old mistake of mine

I made with Saul, and ever consign All Lords of War whose sanctuaries
enshrine

Liberticide, to sleep?

““With violence the lands are spread

Even as in Israel’s day,

And it repenteth me I bred

Chartered armipotents lust-led To feuds ... Yea, grieves my heart, as then I
said,

To see their evil way!’

—“The utterance grew, and flapped like flame,

And further speech I feared;

But no Celestial tongued acclaim,

And no huzzas from earthlings came, And the heavens mutely masked as
‘twere in shame

Till daylight disappeared.”

Thus ended he as night rode high - The man of shining face and eye, Like
Moses’ after Sinai.

1916.

“I LOOKED UP FROM MY WRITING”

I looked up from my writing,

And gave a start to see, As if rapt in my inditing,

The moon’s full gaze on me.

Her meditative misty head

Was spectral in its air, And I involuntarily said,

“What are you doing there?”

“Oh, I’ve been scanning pond and hole

And waterway hereabout For the body of one with a sunken soul

Who has put his life-light out.

“Did you hear his frenzied tattle?

It was sorrow for his son Who is slain in brutish battle,

Though he has injured none.

“And now I am curious to look

Into the blinkered mind Of one who wants to write a book

In a world of such a kind.”

Her temper overwrought me,

And I edged to shun her view, For I felt assured she thought me

One who should drown him too.

THE COMING OF THE END

How it came to an end! The meeting afar from the crowd, And the love-looks
and laughters unpenned, The parting when much was avowed,

How it came to an end!

It came to an end; Yes, the outgazing over the stream, With the sun on each
serpentine bend, Or, later, the luring moon-gleam;

It came to an end.

It came to an end, The housebuilding, furnishing, planting, As if there were
ages to spend In welcoming, feasting, and jaunting;

It came to an end.

It came to an end, That journey of one day a week: (“It always goes on,” said
a friend, “Just the same in bright weathers or bleak;”)

But it came to an end.

“HOW will come to an end This orbit so smoothly begun, Unless some
convulsion attend?” I often said. “What will be done

When it comes to an end?”

Well, it came to an end Quite silently—stopped without jerk; Better close no
prevision could lend; Working out as One planned it should work

Ere it came to an end.

AFTERWARDS

When the Present has latched its postern behind my tremulous stay,

And the May month flaps its glad green leaves like wings, Delicate-filmed as
new-spun silk, will the neighbours say,

“He was a man who used to notice such things”?

If it be in the dusk when, like an eyelid’s soundless blink,

The dewfall-hawk comes crossing the shades to alight Upon the wind-warped
upland thorn, a gazer may think,

“To him this must have been a familiar sight.”

If I pass during some nocturnal blackness, mothy and warm,

When the hedgehog travels furtively over the lawn, One may say, “He strove
that such innocent creatures should come to no harm,

But he could do little for them; and now he is gone”?

If, when hearing that I have been stilled at last, they stand at the door,

Watching the full-starred heavens that winter sees, Will this thought rise on
those who will meet my face no more,

“He was one who had an eye for such mysteries”?

And will any say when my bell of quittance is heard in the gloom,

And a crossing breeze cuts a pause in its outrollings, Till they rise again, as
they were a new bell's boom,

“He hears it not now, but used to notice such things”?

Footnotes:

{1} Jer. li. 20.

End of Project Gutenberg's Etext of Moments of Vision, by Thomas Hardy