

1862

ONLY A WOMAN'S HAIR

Lewis Carroll

Carroll, Lewis (pen name of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson) (1832-1898) - English novelist, poet, photographer, and mathematician, best known for his fantastical childrens' classics. He was a mathematical lecturer at Oxford. Only a Woman's Hair (1862) - One of Lewis Carroll's poems. Opening lines: "Only a woman's hair!" Fling it aside! / A bubble on life's mighty stream:...

ONLY A WOMAN'S HAIR

["After the death of Dean Swift, there was found among his papers a small packet containing a single lock of hair and inscribed with the above words."]

"ONLY a woman's hair!" Fling it aside!

A bubble on Life's mighty stream:

Heed it not, man, but watch the broadening tide
Bright with the western beam.

Nay! In those words there rings from other years
The echo of a long low cry,
Where a proud spirit wrestles with its tears
In loneliest agony.

And, as I touch that lock, strange visions throng
Upon my soul with dreamy grace
Of woman's hair, the theme of poet's song
In every time and place.

A child's bright tresses, by the breezes kissed
To sweet disorder as she flies,
Veiling, beneath a cloud of golden mist,
Flushed cheek and laughing eyes
Or fringing, like a shadow, raven-black,
The glory of a queen-like face
Or from a gipsy's sunny brow tossed back
In wild and wanton grace
Or crown-like on the hoary head of Age,
Whose tale of life is well-nigh told
Or, last, in dreams I make my pilgrimage
To Bethany of old.

I see the feast- the purple and the gold;
The gathering crowd of Pharisees,
Whose scornful eyes are centred to behold
Yon woman on her knees.

The stifled sob rings strangely on mine ears, Wrung from the depth
of sin's despair: And still she bathes the sacred feet with tears, And
wipes them with her hair.

He scorned not then the simple loving deed Of her, the lowest and
the last; Then scorn not thou, but use with earnest heed This relic
of the past.

The eyes that loved it once no longer wake: So lay it by with
reverent care Touching it tenderly for sorrow's sake It is a woman's
hair.

Feb. 17, 1862.

THE END