

1881

FLOWERS OF GOLD

Oscar Wilde

Wilde, Oscar (1854-1900) - An Irish-born English poet, novelist, and playwright. Considered an eccentric, he was the leader of the aesthetic movement that advocated "art for art's sake" and was once imprisoned for two years with hard labor for homosexual practices. Flowers of Gold (1881) - A collection of Wilde's shorter poems which includes The Grave of Keats, Theocritus, In the Gold Room - A Harmony, Ballade de Marguerite, The Dole of the King's Daughter, and more.

IMPRESSIONS I Les Silhouettes

The sea is flecked with bars of gray, The dull dead wind is out of tune,
And like a withered leaf the moon Is blown across the stormy bay.

Etched clear upon the pallid sand The black boat lies: a sailor boy
Clambers aboard in careless joy With laughing face and gleaming hand.

And overhead the curlews cry, Where through the dusky upland grass
The young brown-throated reapers pass, Like silhouettes against the sky.

IMPRESSIONS II La Fuite de la Lune

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

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

And suddenly the moon withdraws Her sickle from the lightening skies,
And to her sombre cavern flies, Wrapped in a veil of yellow gauze.

THE GRAVE OF KEATS

Rid of the world's injustice, and his pain, He rests at last beneath
God's veil of blue: Taken from life when life and love were new
The youngest of the martyrs here is lain, Fair as Sebastian, and as early slain.

No cypress shades his grave, no funeral yew, But gentle violets
weeping with the dew Weave on his bones an ever-blossoming chain.

O proudest heart that broke for misery!

O sweetest lips since those of Mitylene!

O poet-painter of our English land!

Thy name was writ in water— it shall stand: And tears like mine
will keep thy memory green, As Isabella did her Basil tree.

Rome

THEOCRITUS A Villanelle

O singer of Persephone!

In the dim meadows desolate Dost thou remember Sicily?

Still through the ivy flits the bee Where Amaryllis lies in state; O
Singer of Persephone!
Simaetha calls on Hecate And hears the wild dogs at the gate:

Dost thou remember Sicily?

Still by the light and laughing sea Poor Polypheme bemoans his
fate: O Singer of Persephone!
And still in boyish rivalry Young Daphnis challenges his mate:

Dost thou remember Sicily?

Slim Lacon keeps a goat for thee, For thee the jocund shepherds
wait, O Singer of Persephone!

Dost thou remember Sicily?

IN THE GOLD ROOM A Harmony Her ivory hands on the ivory
keys Strayed in a fitful fantasy, Like the silver gleam when the
poplar trees Rustle their pale leaves listlessly, Or the drifting foam
of a restless sea When the waves show their teeth in the flying
breeze.

Her gold hair fell on the wall of gold Like the delicate gossamer
tangles spun On the burnished disk of the marigold, Or the sun-
flower turning to meet the sun When the gloom of the jealous night
is done, And the spear of the lily is aureoled.

And her sweet red lips on these lips of mine Burned like the ruby
fire set In the swinging lamp of a crimson shrine, Or the bleeding
wounds of the pomegranate, Or the heart of lotus drenched and
wet With the spilt-out blood of the rose-red wine.

BALLADE DE MARGUERITE Normande I am weary of lying
within the chase When the knights are meeting in market-place.

Nay, go not thou to the red-roofed town Lest the hooves of the
war-horse tread thee down.

But I would not go where the Squires ride, I would only walk by
my Lady's side.

Alack! and alack! thou art over bold, A Forester's son may not eat
off gold.

Will she love me the less that my Father is seen Each Martinmas
day in a doublet green?

Perchance she is sewing at tapestrie, Spindle and loom are not meet for thee.

Ah, if she is working the arras bright I might ravel the threads by the firelight.

Perchance she is hunting of the deer, Flow could you follow o'er hill and mere?

Ah, if she is riding with the court, I might run beside her and wind the morte.

Perchance she is kneeling in S. Denys, (On her soul may our Lady have gramercy!)

Ah, if she is praying in lone chapelle, I might swing the censer and ring the bell.

Come in my son, for you look sae pale, Thy father shall fill thee a stoup of ale.

But who are these knights in bright array? Is it a pageant the rich folks play?

'Tis the King of England from over sea, Who has come unto visit our fair countrie.

But why does the curfew tool sae low And why do the mourners walk a-row?

O 'tis Hugh of Amiens my sister's son Who is lying stark, for his day is done.

Nay, nay, for I see white lilies clear, It is no strong man who lies on the bier.

O 'tis old Dame Jeannette that kept the hall, I knew she would die at the autumn fall.

Dame Jeannette had not that gold-brown hair, Old Jeannette was not a maiden fair.

O 'tis none of our kith and none of our kin, (Her soul may our Lady assoil from sin!)

But I hear the boy's voice chanting sweet, "Elle est morte, la Marguerite."

Come in my son and lie on the bed, And let the dead folk bury their dead.

O mother, you know I loved her true:

O mother, hath one grave room for two?

THE DOLE OF THE KING'S DAUGHTER Breton Seven stars in
the still water, And seven in the sky; Seven sins on the King's
daughter, Deep in her soul to lie.

Red roses are at her feet, (Roses are red in her red-gold hair,) And
O where her bosom and girdle meet Red roses are hidden there.

Fair is the knight who lieth slain Amid the rush and reed, See the
lean fishes that are fain Upon dead men to feed.

Sweet is the page that lieth there, (Cloth of gold is goodly prey,)
See the black ravens in the air, Black, O black as the night are they.

What do they there so stark and dead? (There is blood upon her
hand) Why are the lilies flecked with red, (There is blood on the
river sand.)

There are two that ride from the south and east, And two from the
north and west, For the black raven a goodly feast, For the King's
daughter rest.

There is one man who loves her true (Red, O red, is the stain of
gore!

He hath duggen a grave by the darksome yew, (One grave will do
for four.)

No moon in the still heaven, In the black water none, The sins on
her soul are seven, The sin upon his is one.

AMOR INTELLECTUALIS

Oft have we trod the vales of Castaly And heard sweet notes of
sylvan music blown From antique reeds to common folk unknown
And often launched our bark upon that sea Which the nine muses
hold in empery, And plowed free furrows through the wave and
foam, Nor spread reluctant sail for more safe home Till we had
freighted well our argosy.

Of which despoiled treasures these remain, Sordello's passion, and
the honeyed line Of young Endymion, lordly Tamburlaine Driving
him pampered jades, and more than these, The seven-fold vision of
the Florentine, And grave-browed Milton's solemn harmonics.

SANTA DECCA

THE Gods are dead: no longer do we bring To gray-eyed Pallas
crowns of olive-leaves!

Demeter's child no more hath tithes of sheaves, And in the noon the
careless shepherds sing, For Pan is dead, and all the wantoning
By secret glade and devious haunt is o'er: Young Hylas seeks the
water-springs no more; Great Pan is dead, and Mary's Son is King.

And yet- perchance in this sea-tranced isle, Chewing the bitter fruit
of memory, Some God lies hidden in the asphodel.

Ah Love! if such there be then it were well For us to fly his anger:
nay, but see The leaves are stirring: let us watch a-while.

Corfu

A VISION

Two crowned Kings and One that stood alone With no green
weight of laurels round his head, But with sad eyes as one
uncomforted, And wearied with man's never-ceasing moan For
sins no bleating victim can atone, And sweet long lips with tears
and kisses fed.

Girt was he in a garment black and red, And at his feet I marked a
broken stone Which sent up lilies, dove-like, to his knees, Now at
their sight, my heart being lit with flame I cried to Beatrice, "Who
are these?" "Aeschylus first, the second Sophocles, And last (wide
stream of tears!) Euripides."

IMPRESSION DE VOYAGE

The sea was sapphire colored, and the sky Burned like a heated
opal through the air, We hoisted sail; the wind was blowing fair
For the blue lands that to the eastward lie.

From the steep prow I marked with quickening eye Zakynthos,
every olive grove and creek, Ithaca's cliff, Lycaon's snowy peak,
And all the flower-strewn hills of Arcady.

The flapping of the sail against the mast, The ripple of the water on
the side, The ripple of girls' laughter at the stern, The only sounds:-
when 'gan the West to burn, And a red sun upon the seas to ride, I
stood upon the soil of Greece at last!

Katakolo

THE GRAVE OF SHELLEY

Like burnt-out torches by a sick man's bed Gaunt cypress-trees
stand round the sun-bleached stone; Here doth the little night-owl
make her throne, And the slight lizard show his jewelled head.

And, where the chaliced poppies flame to red, In the still chamber
of yon pyramid Surely some Old-World Sphinx lurks darkly hid,
Grim warder of this pleasaunce of the dead.

Ah! sweet indeed to rest within the womb Of Earth great mother of
eternal sleep, But sweeter far for thee a restless tomb In the blue
cavern of an echoing deep, Or where the tall ships founder in the
gloom Against the rocks of some wave-shattered steep.

Rome

BY THE ARNO

The oleander on the wall Grows crimson in the dawning light,
Though the gray shadows of the night Lie yet on Florence like a
pall.

The dew is bright upon the hill, And bright the blossoms overhead,
But ah! the grasshoppers have fled, The little Attic song is still.

Only the leaves are gently stirred By, the soft breathing of the gale,
And in the almond-scented vale The lonely nightingale is heard
The day will make thee silent soon, O nightingale sing on for love!

While yet upon the shadowy grove Splinter the arrows of the
moon.

Before across the silent lawn In sea-green mist the morning steals,
And to love's frightened eyes reveals The long white fingers of the
dawn.

Fast climbing up the eastern sky, To grasp and slay the shuddering
night, All careless of my heart's delight, Or if the nightingale
should die.

THE END