

**1881**

**THE FOURTH MOVEMENT**

**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. Fourth Movement (1881) - A collection of Wilde's shorter poems which includes At Verona, Apologia, Quia Multum Amavi, Silentium Amoris, Her Voice, my Voice, and Taedium Vitae.*

## **IMPRESSION Le Reveillon**

The sky is laced with fitful red, The circling mists and shadows flee,  
The dawn is rising from the sea, Like a white lady from her bed.

And jagged brazen arrows fall Athwart the feathers of the night,  
And a long wave of yellow light Breaks silently on tower and hall,  
And spreading wide across the wold Wakes into flight some  
fluttering bird, And all the chestnut tops are stirred, And all the  
branches streaked with gold.

## **AT VERONA**

How steep the stairs within Kings' houses are For exile-wearied  
feet as mine to tread, And O how salt and bitter is the bread Which  
falls from this Hound's table,- better far That I had died in the red  
ways of war, Or that the gate of Florence bare my head, Than to  
live thus, by all things comraded Which seek the essence of my  
soul to mar.

"Curse God and die: what better hope than this? He hath forgotten  
thee in all the bliss Of his gold city, and eternal day" Nay peace:  
behind my prison's blinded bars I do possess what none can take  
away, My love, and all the glory of the stars.

## **APOLOGIA**

Is it thy will that I should wax and wane, Barter my cloth of gold  
for hodden gray, And at thy pleasure weave that web of pain  
Whose brightest threads are each a wasted day?

Is it thy will- Love that I love so well That my Soul's House should  
be a tortured spot Wherein, like evil paramours, must dwell The  
quenchless flame, the worm that dieth not?

Nay, if it be thy will I shall endure, And sell ambition at the  
common mart, And let dull failure be my vestiture, And sorrow  
dig its grave within my heart.

Perchance it may be better so- at least I have not made my heart a  
heart of stone, Nor starved my boyhood of its goodly feast, Nor  
walked where Beauty is a thing unknown.

Many a man hath done so; sought to fence In straitened bonds the  
soul that should be free, Trodden the dusty road of common sense,  
While all the forest sang of liberty, Not marking how the spotted

hawk in flight Passed on wide pinion through the lofty air, To  
where the steep untrodden mountain height Caught the last tresses  
of the Sun God's hair.

Or how the little flower he trod upon, The daisy, that white-  
feathered shield of gold, Followed with wistful eyes the wandering  
sun Content if once its leaves were aureoled.

But surely it is something to have been The best beloved for a little  
while, To have walked hand in hand with Love, and seen His  
purple wings flit once across thy smile.

Ay! though the gorged asp of passion feed On my boy's heart, yet  
have I burst the bars, Stood face to face with Beauty, known indeed  
The Love which moves the Sun and all the stars!

### ***QUIA MULTUM AMAVI***

Dear heart I think the young impassioned priest When first he  
takes from out the hidden shrine His God imprisoned in the  
Eucharist, And eats the Bread, and drinks the Dreadful Wine, Feels  
not such awful wonder as I felt When first my smitten eyes beat  
full on thee, And all night long before thy feet I knelt Till thou wert  
wearied of Idolatry.

Ah! had'st thou liked me less and loved me more, Through all  
those summer days of joy and rain, I had not now been sorrow's  
heritor, Or stood a lackey in the House of Pain.

Yet, though remorse, youth's white-faced seneschal Tread on my  
heels with all his retinue, I am most glad I loved thee- think of all  
The sums that go to make one speedwell blue!

### ***SILENTIUM AMORIS***

As oftentimes the too resplendent sun Hurries the pallid and  
reluctant moon Back to her sombre cave, ere she hath won A single  
ballad from the nightingale, So doth thy Beauty make my lips to  
fail, And all my sweetest singing out of tune.

And as at dawn across the level mead On wings impetuous some  
wind will come, And with its too harsh kisses break the reed  
Which was its only instrument of song, So my too stormy passions  
work me wrong, And for excess of Love my Love is dumb.

But surely unto thee mine eyes did show Why I am silent, and my  
lute unstrung; Else it were better we should part, and go, Thou to  
some lips of sweeter melody, And I to nurse the barren memory Of  
unkissed kisses, and songs never sung.

**HER VOICE**

The wild bee reels from bough to bough With his furry coat and his gauzy wing.

Now in a lily-cup, and now Setting a jacinth bell a-swing, In his wandering; Sit closer love: it was here I trow I made that vow, Swore that two lives should be like one As long as the sea-gull loved the sea, As long as the sunflower sought the sun It shall be, I said, for eternity 'Twixt you and me!

Dear friend, those times are over and done, Love's web is spun.

Look upward where the poplar trees Sway and sway in the summer air, Here in the valley never a breeze Scatters the thistledowns, but there Great winds blow fair From the mighty murmuring mystical seas, And the wave-lashed leas.

Look upward where the white gull screams What does it see that we do not see? Is that a star? or the lamp that gleams On some outward voyaging argosy, Ah! can it be We have lived our lives in land of dreams!

How sad it seems.

Sweet, there is nothing left to say But this, that love is never lost.

Keen winter stabs the breasts of May Whose crimson roses burst his frost, Ships tempest-tossed Will find a harbour in some bay, And so we may.

And there is nothing left to do But to kiss once again, and part, Nay, there is nothing we should rue, I have my beauty,- you your Art.

Nay, do not start, One world was not enough for two Like me and you.

**MY VOICE**

Within this restless, hurried, modern world We took our heart's full pleasure- You and I, And now the white sails of our ship are furled, And spent the lading of our argosy.

Wherefore my cheeks before their time are wan, For very weeping is my gladness fled Sorrow hath paled my lip's vermilion, And Ruin draws the curtains of my bed.

But all this crowded life has been to thee No more than lyre, or lute, or subtle spell Of viols, or the music of the sea That sleeps, a mimic echo, in the shell.

**TAEDIUM VITAE**

To stab my youth with desperate knife, to wear This paltry age's  
gaudy livery, To let each base hand filch my treasury, To mesh my  
soul within a woman's hair, And be mere Fortune's lackeyed  
groom,- I swear, I love it not! these things are less to me Than the  
thin foam that frets upon the sea, Less than the thistle-down of  
summer air Which hath no seed: better to stand aloof Far from  
these slanderous fools who mock my life Knowing me not, better  
the lowliest roof Fit for the meanest hind to sojourn in, Than to go  
back to that hoarse cave of strife Where my white soul first kissed  
the mouth of sin.

**THE END**