

1881

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

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. Miscellaneous Poems (1881) - A collection of Wilde's shorter poems which includes The True knowledge, A Lament, Wasted Days, Lotus Leaves, Impressions Le Jardin, Impressions La Mer, and more.

THE TRUE KNOWLEDGE

Thou knowest all- I seek in vain What lands to till or sow with seed
The land is black with briar and weed, Nor cares for falling
tears or rain.

Thou knowest all- I sit and wait With blinded eyes and hands that
fail, Till the last lifting of the veil, And the first opening of the gate.

Thou knowest all- I cannot see.

I trust I shall not live in vain, I know that we shall meet again, In
some divine eternity.

A LAMENT

O well for him who lives at ease With garnered gold in wide
domain, Nor heeds the splashing of the rain, The crashing down of
forest trees.

O well for him who ne'er hath known The travail of the hungry
years, A father grey with grief and tears, A mother weeping all
alone.

But well for him whose feet hath trod The weary road of toil and
strife, Yet from the sorrows of his life Builds ladders to be nearer
God.

WASTED DAYS

A fair slim boy not made for this world's pain.

With hair of gold thick clustering round his ears, And longing eyes
half veiled by foolish tears Like bluest water seen through mists of
rain: Pale cheeks whereon no kiss hath left its stain, Red under lip
drawn for fear of Love, And white throat whiter than the breast of
dove.

Alas! alas! if all should be in vain.

Behind, wide fields, and reapers all a-row In heat and labour
toiling wearily, To no sweet sound of laughter or of lute.

The sun is shooting wide its crimson glow, Still the boy dreams:
nor knows that night is nigh, And in the night-time no man gathers
fruit.

LOTUS LEAVES

I There is no peace beneath the moon, Ah! in those meadows is there peace Where, girdled with a silver fleece, As a bright shepherd, strays the moon?

Queen of the gardens of the sky, Where stars like lilies, white and fair, Shine through the mists of frosty air, Oh, tarry, for the dawn is nigh!

Oh, tarry, for the envious day Stretches long hands to catch thy feet.

Alas! but thou art overfleet, Alas! I know thou wilt not stay.

II Eastward the dawn has broken red, The circling mists and shadows flee; Aurora rises from the sea, And leaves the crocus-flowered bed.

Eastward the silver arrows fall, Splintering the veil of holy night: And a long wave of yellow light Breaks silently on tower and hall.

And speeding wide across the wold Wakes into flight some fluttering bird; And all the chestnut tops are stirred, And all the branches streaked with gold.

III To outer senses there is peace, A dream-like 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 curlew calling to its mate; The answer from the distant hill.

And, herald of my love to Him Who, waiting for the dawn, doth lie, The orb'd maiden leaves the sky, And the white firs grow more dim.

IV Up sprang the sun to run his race, The breeze blew fair on meadow and lea, But in the west I seemed to see The likeness of a human face.

A linnet on the hawthorn spray Sang of the glories of the spring, And made the flow'ring copses ring With gladness for the new-born day.

A lark from out the grass I trod Flew wildly, and was lost to view In the great seamless veil of blue That hangs before the face of God.

The willow whispered overhead That death is but a newer life And that with idle words of strife We bring dishonour on the dead.

I took a branch from off the tree, And hawthorn branches drenched
with dew, I bound them with a sprig of yew, And made a garland
fair to see.

I laid the flowers where He lies (Warm leaves and flowers on the
stones): What joy I had to sit alone Till evening broke on tired eyes:
Till all the shifting clouds had spun A robe of gold for God to wear
And into seas of purple air Sank the bright galley of the sun.

V Shall I be gladdened for the day, And let my inner heart be
stirred By murmuring tree or song of bird, And sorrow at the wild
winds' play?

Not so, such idle dreams belong To souls of lesser depth than mine;
I feel that I am half divine; I that I am great and strong.

I know that every forest tree By labour rises from the root I know
that none shall gather fruit By sailing on the barren sea.

IMPRESSIONS

I Le Jardin The lily's withered chalice falls Around its rod of dusty
gold, And from the beeh trees on the wold The last wood-pigeon
coos and calls.

The gaudy leonine sunflower Hangs black and barren on its stalk,
And down the windy garden walk The dead leaves scatter,- hour
by hour.

Pale privet-petals white as milk Are blown into a snowy mass; The
roses lie upon the grass, Like little shreds of crimson silk.

II La Mer A white mist drifts across the shrouds, A wild moon in
this wintry sky Gleams like an angry lion's eye Out of a mane of
tawny clouds.

The muffled steersman at the wheel Is but a shadow in the
gloom; And in the throbbing engine room Leap the long rods of
polished steel.

The shattered storm has left its trace Upon this huge and heaving
dome, For the thin threads of yellow foam Float on the waves like
ravelled lace.

UNDER THE BALCONY

O beautiful star with the crimson mouth!
O moon with the brows of gold!
Rise up, rise up, from the odorous south!

And light for my love her way, Lest her feet should stray On the
 windy hill and the wold!
 O beautiful star with the crimson mouth!
 O moon with the brows of gold!
 O ship that shakes on the desolate sea!
 O ship with the wet, white sail!
 Put in, put in, to the port to me!
 For my love and I would go To the land where the daffodils blow
 In the heart of a violet dale!
 O ship that shakes on the desolate sea!
 O ship with the wet, white sail!
 O rapturous bird with the low, sweet note!
 O bird that sits on the spray!
 Sing on, sing on, from your soft brown throat!
 And my love in her little bed Will listen, and lift her head From the
 pillow, and come my way!
 O rapturous bird with the low, sweet note!
 O bird that sits on the spray!
 O blossom that hangs in the tremulous air!
 O blossom with lips of snow!
 Come down, Come down, for my love to wear!
 You will die in her head in a crown, You will die in a fold of her
 gown, To her little light heart you will go!
 O blossom that hangs in the tremulous air!
 O blossom with lips of snow!

A FRAGMENT

Beautiful star with the crimson lips And flagrant daffodil hair,
 Come back, come back, in the shaking ships O'er the much-
 overrated sea, To the hearts that are sick for thee With a woe worse
 than mal de mer O beautiful stars with the crimson lips And the
 flagrant daffodil hair.

O ship that shakes on the desolate sea, Neath the flag of the wan
 White Star, Thou bringest a brighter star with thee From the land
 of the Philistine, Where Niagara's reckoned fine And Tupper is
 popular O ship that shakes on the desolate sea, Neath the flag of the
 wan White Star.

LE JARDIN DES TUILERIES

This winter air is keen and cold, And keen and cold this winter
 sun, But round my chair the children run Like little things of
 dancing gold.

Sometimes about the painted kiosk The mimic soldiers strut and stride,
 Sometimes the blue-eyed brigands hide In the bleak tangles of the bosk.

And sometimes, while the old nurse cons Her book, they steal across the square
 And launch their paper navies where Huge Triton writhes in greenish bronze.

And now in mimic flight they flee, And now they rush, a boisterous band
 And, tiny hand on tiny hand, Climb up the black and leafless tree.

Ah! cruel tree! if I were you, And children climbed me, for their sake
 Though it be winter I would break Into spring blossoms white and blue!

SONNET On the Sale by Auction of Keats' Love Letters

These are the letters which Endymion wrote To one he loved in secret and apart,
 And now the brawlers of the auction-mart Bargain and bid for each tear-blotted note,
 Aye! for each separate pulse of passion quote The merchant's price! I think they love not art
 Who break the crystal of a poet's heart, That small and sickly eyes may glare or gloat.

Is it not said, that many years ago, In a far Eastern town some soldiers ran
 With torches through the midnight, and began To wrangle for mean raiment, and to throw
 Dice for the garments of a wretched Man, Not knowing the God's wonder, or His woe?

THE NEW REMORSE

The sin was mine; I did not understand.

So now is music prisoned in her cave, Save where some ebbing desultory wave
 Frets with its restless whirls this meagre strand.

And in the withered hollow of this land Hath Summer dug herself so deep a grave,
 That hardly can the leaden willow crave One silver blossom from keen Winter's hand.

But who is this that cometh by the shore? (Nay, love, look up and wonder!)
 Who is this Who cometh in dyed garments from the South? It is thy new-found Lord,
 and he shall kiss The yet unravished roses of thy mouth,
 And I shall weep and worship, as before.

AN INSCRIPTION

Go, little book, To him who, on a lute with horns of pearl, Sang of
the white feet of the Golden Girl: And bid him look Into thy pages:
it may hap that he May find that golden maidens dance through
thee.

THE HARLOT'S HOUSE

We caught the tread of dancing feet, We loitered down the moonlit
street, And stopped beneath the Harlot's House.

Inside, above the din and fray, We heard the loud musicians play
The "Treues Liebes," of Strauss.

Like strange mechanical grotesques, Making fantastic arabesques,
The shadows raced across the blind.

We watched the ghostly dancers spin, To sound of horn and violin,
Like black leaves wheeling in the wind.

Like wire-pulled Automatons, Slim silhouetted skeletons Went
sidling through the slow quadrille, Then took each other by the
hand, And danced a stately saraband; Their laughter echoed thin
and shrill.

Sometimes a clock-work puppet pressed A phantom lover to her
breast, Sometimes they seemed to try and sing.

Sometimes a horrible Marionette Came out, and smoked its
cigarette Upon the steps like a live thing.

Then turning to my love I said, "The dead are dancing with the
dead, The dust is whirling with the dust." But she, she heard the
violin, And left my side and entered in: Love passed into the
House of Lust.

Then suddenly the tune went false, The dancers wearied of the
waltz, The shadows ceased to wheel and whirl, And down the long
and silent street, The dawn with silver-sandalled feet, Crept like a
frightened girl.

THE END