

DRINKWATER

JOHN

TIDES

John Drinkwater

Tides

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Содержание

DEDICATION	5
A MAN'S DAUGHTER	6
VENUS IN ARDEN	8
COTSWOLD LOVE	9
THE MIDLANDS	10
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	12

John Drinkwater

Tides / A Book of Poems

DEDICATION

TO GENERAL SIR IAN HAMILTON

*Because the darling chivalries,
That light your battle-line, belong
To music's heart no less than these,
I bring you my campaigns of song.*

A MAN'S DAUGHTER

There is an old woman who looks each night
Out of the wood.
She has one tooth, that isn't too white.
She isn't too good.

She came from the north looking for me,
About my jewel.
Her son, she says, is tall as can be;
But, men say, cruel.

My girl went northward, holiday making,
And a queer man spoke
At the woodside once when night was breaking,
And her heart broke.

For ever since she has pined and pined,
A sorry maid;
Her fingers are slack as the wool they wind,
Or her girdle-braid.

So now shall I send her north to wed,
Who here may know
Only the little house of the dead
To ease her woe?

Or keep her for fear of that old woman,
As a bird quick-eyed,
And her tall son who is hardly human,
At the woodside?

She is my babe and my daughter dear,
How well, how well.
Her grief to me is a fourfold fear,
Tongue cannot tell.

And yet I know that far in that wood
Are crumbling bones,
And a mumble mumble of nothing that's good,
In heathen tones.

And I know that frail ghosts flutter and sigh
In brambles there,
And never a bird or beast to cry —
Beware, beware, —

While threading the silent thickets go
Mother and son,
Where scrupulous berries never grow,
And airs are none.

And her deep eyes peer at eventide
Out of the wood,
And her tall son waits by the dark woodside,
For maidenhood.

And the little eyes peer, and peer, and peer;
And a word is said.
And some house knows, for many a year,
But years of dread.

VENUS IN ARDEN

Now love, her mantle thrown,
Goes naked by,
Threading the woods alone,
Her royal eye
Happy because the primroses again
Break on the winter continence of men.

I saw her pass to-day
In Warwickshire,
With the old imperial way,
The old desire,
Fresh as among those other flowers they went,
More beautiful for Adon's discontent.

Those other years she made
Her festival
When the blue eggs were laid
And lambs were tall,
By the Athenian rivers while the reeds
Made love melodious for the Ganymedes.

And now through Cantlow brakes,
By Wilmcote hill,
To Avon-side, she makes
Her garlands still,
And I who watch her flashing limbs am one
With youth whose days three thousand years are done.

COTSWOLD LOVE

Blue skies are over Cotswold
And April snows go by,
The lasses turn their ribbons
For April's in the sky,
And April is the season
When Sabbath girls are dressed,
From Rodboro' to Campden,
In all their silken best.

An ankle is a marvel
When first the buds are brown,
And not a lass but knows it
From Stow to Gloucester town.
And not a girl goes walking
Along the Cotswold lanes
But knows men's eyes in April
Are quicker than their brains.

It's little that it matters,
So long as you're alive,
If you're eighteen in April,
Or rising sixty-five,
When April comes to Amberley
With skies of April blue,
And Cotswold girls are bridging
With slyly tilted shoe.

THE MIDLANDS

Black in the summer night my Cotswold hill
Aslant my window sleeps, beneath a sky
Deep as the bedded violets that fill
March woods with dusky passion. As I lie
Abed between cool walls I watch the host
Of the slow stars lit over Gloucester plain,
And drowsily the habit of these most
Beloved of English lands moves in my brain,
While silence holds dominion of the dark,
Save when the foxes from the spinneys bark.

I see the valleys in their morning mist
Wreathed under limpid hills in moving light,
Happy with many a yeoman melodist:
I see the little roads of twinkling white
Busy with fieldward teams and market gear
Of rosy men, cloth-gaitered, who can tell
The many-minded changes of the year,
Who know why crops and kine fare ill or well;
I see the sun persuade the mist away,
Till town and stead are shining to the day.

I see the wagons move along the rows
Of ripe and summer-breathing clover-flower,
I see the lissom husbandman who knows
Deep in his heart the beauty of his power,
As, lithely pitched, the full-heaped fork bids on
The harvest home. I hear the rickyard fill
With gossip as in generations gone,
While wagon follows wagon from the hill.
I think how, when our seasons all are sealed,
Shall come the unchanging harvest from the field.

I see the barns and comely manors planned
By men who somehow moved in comely thought,
Who, with a simple shippon to their hand,
As men upon some godlike business wrought;
I see the little cottages that keep
Their beauty still where since Plantaganet
Have come the shepherds happily to sleep,
Finding the loaves and cups of cider set;
I see the twisted shepherds, brown and old,
Driving at dusk their glimmering sheep to fold.

And now the valleys that upon the sun

Broke from their opal veils, are veiled again,
And the last light upon the wolds is done,
And silence falls on flocks and fields and men;
And black upon the night I watch my hill,
And the stars shine, and there an owly wing
Brushes the night, and all again is still,

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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