

THOMAS HARDY

TIME'S
LAUGHINGSTOCKS, AND
OTHER VERSES

Thomas Hardy

**Time's Laughingstocks,
and Other Verses**

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Thomas Hardy

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PREFACE

In collecting the following poems I have to thank the editors and proprietors of the periodicals in which certain of them have appeared for permission to reclaim them.

Now that the miscellany is brought together, some lack of concord in pieces written at widely severed dates, and in contrasting moods and circumstances, will be obvious enough. This I cannot help, but the sense of disconnection, particularly in respect of those lyrics penned in the first person, will be immaterial when it is borne in mind that they are to be regarded, in the main, as dramatic monologues by different characters.

As a whole they will, I hope, take the reader forward, even if not far, rather than backward. I should add that some lines in the early-dated poems have been rewritten, though they have been left substantially unchanged.

T. H.

September 1909.

TIME'S LAUGHINGSTOCKS

THE REVISITATION

As I lay awake at night-time
In an ancient country barrack known to ancient cannoneers,
And recalled the hopes that heralded each seeming brave and bright
time
Of my primal purple years,

Much it haunted me that, nigh there,
I had borne my bitterest loss – when One who went, came not again;
In a joyless hour of discord, in a joyless-hued July there —
A July just such as then.

And as thus I brooded longer,
With my faint eyes on the feeble square of wan-lit window frame,
A quick conviction sprung within me, grew, and grew yet stronger,
That the month-night was the same,

Too, as that which saw her leave me
On the rugged ridge of Waterstone, the peewits plaining round;
And a lapsing twenty years had ruled that – as it were to grieve me —
I should near the once-loved ground.

Though but now a war-worn stranger
Chance had quartered here, I rose up and descended to the yard.
All was soundless, save the troopers' horses tossing at the manger,
And the sentry keeping guard.

Through the gateway I betook me
Down the High Street and beyond the lamps, across the battered bridge,
Till the country darkness clasped me and the friendly shine forsook me,
And I bore towards the Ridge,

With a dim unowned emotion
Saying softly: "Small my reason, now at midnight, to be here.
Yet a sleepless swain of fifty with a brief romantic notion
May retrace a track so dear."

Thus I walked with thoughts half-uttered
Up the lane I knew so well, the grey, gaunt, lonely Lane of Slyre;
And at whiles behind me, far at sea, a sullen thunder muttered
As I mounted high and higher.

Till, the upper roadway quitting,

I adventured on the open drouthy downland thinly grassed,
While the spry white scuts of conies flashed before me, earthward
flitting,
And an arid wind went past.

Round about me bulged the barrows
As before, in antique silence – immemorial funeral piles —
Where the sleek herds trampled daily the remains of flint-tipt arrows
Mid the thyme and chamomiles;

And the Sarsen stone there, dateless,
On whose breast we had sat and told the zephyrs many a tender vow,
Held the heat of yester sun, as sank thereon one fated mateless
From those far fond hours till now.

Maybe flustered by my presence
Rose the peewits, just as all those years back, wailing soft and loud,
And revealing their pale pinions like a fitful phosphorescence
Up against the cope of cloud,

Where their dolesome exclamations
Seemed the voicings of the self-same throats I had heard when life was
green,
Though since that day uncounted frail forgotten generations
Of their kind had flecked the scene. —

And so, living long and longer
In a past that lived no more, my eyes discerned there, suddenly,
That a figure broke the skyline – first in vague contour, then stronger,
And was crossing near to me.

Some long-missed familiar gesture,
Something wonted, struck me in the figure's pause to list and heed,
Till I fancied from its handling of its loosely wrapping vesture
That it might be She indeed.

'Twas not reasonless: below there
In the vale, had been her home; the nook might hold her even yet,
And the downlands were her father's fief; she still might come and go
there; —
So I rose, and said, "Agnette!"

With a little leap, half-frightened,
She withdrew some steps; then letting intuition smother fear
In a place so long-accustomed, and as one whom thought enlightened,
She replied: "What — *that* voice? – here!"

"Yes, Agnette! – And did the occasion
Of our marching hither make you think I *might* walk where we two – "

“O, I often come,” she murmured with a moment’s coy evasion,
“(Tis not far), – and – think of you.”

Then I took her hand, and led her
To the ancient people’s stone whereon I had sat. There now sat we;
And together talked, until the first reluctant shyness fled her,
And she spoke confidingly.

“It is *just* as ere we parted!”
Said she, brimming high with joy. – “And when, then, came you here,
and why?”
“ – Dear, I could not sleep for thinking of our trystings when twin-
hearted.”
She responded, “Nor could I.

“There are few things I would rather
Than be wandering at this spirit-hour – lone-lived, my kindred dead —
On this wold of well-known feature I inherit from my father:
Night or day, I have no dread.

“O I wonder, wonder whether
Any heartstring bore a signal-thrill between us twain or no? —
Some such influence can, at times, they say, draw severed souls
together.”
I said, “Dear, we’ll dream it so.”

Each one’s hand the other’s grasping,
And a mutual forgiveness won, we sank to silent thought,
A large content in us that seemed our rended lives reclasping,
And contracting years to nought.

Till I, maybe overweary
From the lateness, and a wayfaring so full of strain and stress
For one no longer buoyant, to a peak so steep and eery,
Sank to slow unconsciousness.

How long I slept I knew not,
But the brief warm summer night had slid when, to my swift surprise,
A red upedging sun, of glory chambered mortals view not,
Was blazing on my eyes,

From the Milton Woods to Dole-Hill
All the spacious landscape lighting, and around about my feet
Flinging tall thin tapering shadows from the meanest mound and mole-
hill,
And on trails the ewes had beat.

She was sitting still beside me,
Dozing likewise; and I turned to her, to take her hanging hand;

When, the more regarding, that which like a spectre shook and tried me
In her image then I scanned;

That which Time's transforming chisel
Had been tooling night and day for twenty years, and tooled too well,
In its rendering of crease where curve was, where was raven, grizzle —
Pits, where peonies once did dwell.

She had wakened, and perceiving
(I surmise) my sigh and shock, my quite involuntary dismay,
Up she started, and – her wasted figure all throughout it heaving —
Said, “Ah, yes: I am *thus* by day!

“Can you really wince and wonder
That the sunlight should reveal you such a thing of skin and bone,
As if unaware a Death's-head must of need lie not far under
Flesh whose years out-count your own?

“Yes: that movement was a warning
Of the worth of man's devotion! – Yes, Sir, I am *old*,” said she,
“And the thing which should increase love turns it quickly into scorning
—
And your new-won heart from me!”

Then she went, ere I could call her,
With the too proud temper ruling that had parted us before,
And I saw her form descend the slopes, and smaller grow and smaller,
Till I caught its course no more.

True; I might have dogged her downward;
– But it *may* be (though I know not) that this trick on us of Time
Disconcerted and confused me. – Soon I bent my footsteps townward,
Like to one who had watched a crime.

Well I knew my native weakness,
Well I know it still. I cherished her reproach like physic-wine,
For I saw in that emaciate shape of bitterness and bleakness
A nobler soul than mine.

Did I not return, then, ever? —
Did we meet again? – mend all? – Alas, what greyhead perseveres! —
Soon I got the Route elsewhither. – Since that hour I have seen her
never:
Love is lame at fifty years.

A TRAMPWOMAN'S TRAGEDY (182–)

I

From Wynyard's Gap the livelong day,
The livelong day,
We beat afoot the northward way
We had travelled times before.
The sun-blaze burning on our backs,
Our shoulders sticking to our packs,
By fosseway, fields, and turnpike tracks
We skirted sad Sedge-Moor.

II

Full twenty miles we jaunted on,
We jaunted on, —
My fancy-man, and jeering John,
And Mother Lee, and I.
And, as the sun drew down to west,
We climbed the toilsome Poldon crest,
And saw, of landskip sights the best,
The inn that beamed thereby.

III

For months we had padded side by side,
Ay, side by side
Through the Great Forest, Blackmoor wide,
And where the Parret ran.
We'd faced the gusts on Mendip ridge,
Had crossed the Yeo unhelped by bridge,
Been stung by every Marshwood midge,
I and my fancy-man.

IV

Lone inns we loved, my man and I,
My man and I;
“King’s Stag,” “Windwhistle” high and dry,
“The Horse” on Hintock Green,
The cosy house at Wynyard’s Gap,
“The Hut” renowned on Bredy Knap,
And many another wayside tap
Where folk might sit unseen.

V

Now as we trudged – O deadly day,
O deadly day! —
I teased my fancy-man in play
And wanton idleness.
I walked alongside jeering John,
I laid his hand my waist upon;
I would not bend my glances on
My lover’s dark distress.

VI

Thus Poldon top at last we won,
At last we won,
And gained the inn at sink of sun
Far-famed as “Marshal’s Elm.”
Beneath us figured tor and lea,
From Mendip to the western sea —
I doubt if finer sight there be
Within this royal realm.

VII

Inside the settle all a-row —
All four a-row
We sat, I next to John, to show
That he had wooed and won.
And then he took me on his knee,
And swore it was his turn to be
My favoured mate, and Mother Lee
Passed to my former one.

VIII

Then in a voice I had never heard,
I had never heard,
My only Love to me: "One word,
My lady, if you please!
Whose is the child you are like to bear? —
His? After all my months o' care?"
God knows 'twas not! But, O despair!
I nodded – still to tease.

IX

Then up he sprung, and with his knife —
And with his knife
He let out jeering Johnny's life,
Yes; there, at set of sun.
The slant ray through the window nigh
Gilded John's blood and glazing eye,
Ere scarcely Mother Lee and I
Knew that the deed was done.

X

The taverns tell the gloomy tale,
The gloomy tale,
How that at Ivel-chester jail
My Love, my sweetheart swung;
Though stained till now by no misdeed
Save one horse ta'en in time o' need;
(Blue Jimmy stole right many a steed
Ere his last fling he flung.)

XI

Thereaft I walked the world alone,
Alone, alone!
On his death-day I gave my groan
And dropt his dead-born child.
'Twas nigh the jail, beneath a tree,

None tending me; for Mother Lee
Had died at Glaston, leaving me
Unfriended on the wild.

XII

And in the night as I lay weak,
As I lay weak,
The leaves a-falling on my cheek,
The red moon low declined —
The ghost of him I'd die to kiss
Rose up and said: "Ah, tell me this!
Was the child mine, or was it his?
Speak, that I rest may find!"

XIII

O doubt not but I told him then,
I told him then,
That I had kept me from all men
Since we joined lips and swore.
Whereat he smiled, and thinned away
As the wind stirred to call up day.
— 'Tis past! And here alone I stray
Haunting the Western Moor.

Notes. — "Windwhistle" (Stanza iv.). The highness and dryness of Windwhistle Inn was impressed upon the writer two or three years ago, when, after climbing on a hot afternoon to the beautiful spot near which it stands and entering the inn for tea, he was informed by the landlady that none could be had, unless he would fetch water from a valley half a mile off, the house containing not a drop, owing to its situation. However, a tantalizing row of full barrels behind her back testified to a wetness of a certain sort, which was not at that time desired.

"Marshal's Elm" (Stanza vi.) so picturesquely situated, is no longer an inn, though the house, or part of it, still remains. It used to exhibit a fine old swinging sign.

"Blue Jimmy" (Stanza x.) was a notorious horse-stealer of Wessex in those days, who appropriated more than a hundred horses before he was caught, among others one belonging to a neighbour of the writer's grandfather. He was hanged at the now demolished Ivel-chester or Ilchester jail above mentioned — that building formerly of so many sinister associations in the minds of the local peasantry, and the continual haunt of fever, which at last led to its condemnation. Its site is now an innocent-looking green meadow.

April 1902.

THE TWO ROSALINDS

I

The dubious daylight ended,
And I walked the Town alone, unminding whither bound and why,
As from each gaunt street and gaping square a mist of light ascended
And dispersed upon the sky.

II

Files of evanescent faces
Passed each other without heeding, in their travail, teen, or joy,
Some in void unvisioned listlessness inwrought with pallid traces
Of keen penury's annoy.

III

Nebulous flames in crystal cages
Leered as if with discontent at city movement, murk, and grime,
And as waiting some procession of great ghosts from bygone ages
To exalt the ignoble time.

IV

In a colonnade high-lighted,
By a thoroughfare where stern utilitarian traffic dinned,
On a red and white emblazonment of players and parts, I sighted
The name of "Rosalind,"

V

And her famous mates of "Arden,"
Who observed no stricter customs than "the seasons' difference" bade,
Who lived with running brooks for books in Nature's wildwood garden,
And called idleness their trade.

VI

Now the poster stirred an ember
Still remaining from my ardours of some forty years before,
When the selfsame portal on an eve it thrilled me to remember
A like announcement bore;

VII

And expectantly I had entered,
And had first beheld in human mould a Rosalind woo and plead,
On whose transcendent figuring my speedy soul had centred
As it had been she indeed.

VIII

So; all other plans discarding,
I resolved on entrance, bent on seeing what I once had seen,
And approached the gangway of my earlier knowledge, disregarding
The tract of time between.

IX

“The words, sir?” cried a creature
Hovering mid the shine and shade as ’twixt the live world and the tomb;
But the well-known numbers needed not for me a text or teacher
To revive and re-illuminate.

X

Then the play.. But how unfitted
Was *this* Rosalind! – a mammet quite to me, in memories nurst,
And with chilling disappointment soon I sought the street I had quitted,
To re-ponder on the first.

XI

The hag still hawked, – I met her
Just without the colonnade. “So you don’t like her, sir?” said she.
“Ah —*I* was once that Rosalind! – I acted her – none better —
Yes – in eighteen sixty-three.

XII

“Thus I won Orlando to me
In my then triumphant days when I had charm and maidenhood,
Now some forty years ago. – I used to say, *Come woo me, woo me!*”
And she struck the attitude.

XIII

It was when I had gone there nightly;
And the voice – though raucous now – was yet the old one. – Clear
as noon
My Rosalind was here.. Thereon the band withinside lightly
Beat up a merry tune.

A SUNDAY MORNING TRAGEDY (*circa 186–*)

I bore a daughter flower-fair,
In Pydel Vale, alas for me;
I joyed to mother one so rare,
But dead and gone I now would be.

Men looked and loved her as she grew,
And she was won, alas for me;
She told me nothing, but I knew,
And saw that sorrow was to be.

I knew that one had made her thrall,
A thrall to him, alas for me;
And then, at last, she told me all,
And wondered what her end would be.

She owned that she had loved too well,
Had loved too well, unhappy she,
And bore a secret time would tell,
Though in her shroud she'd sooner be.

I plodded to her sweetheart's door
In Pydel Vale, alas for me:
I pleaded with him, pleaded sore,
To save her from her misery.

He frowned, and swore he could not wed,
Seven times he swore it could not be;
"Poverty's worse than shame," he said,
Till all my hope went out of me.

"I've packed my traps to sail the main" —
Roughly he spake, alas did he —
"Wessex beholds me not again,
'Tis worse than any jail would be!"

— There was a shepherd whom I knew,
A subtle man, alas for me:
I sought him all the pastures through,
Though better I had ceased to be.

I traced him by his lantern light,
And gave him hint, alas for me,
Of how she found her in the plight
That is so scorned in Christendie.

“Is there an herb.. ?” I asked. “Or none?”
Yes, thus I asked him desperately.
“ – There is,” he said; “a certain one.. ”
Would he had sworn that none knew he!

“To-morrow I will walk your way,”
He hinted low, alas for me. —
Fieldwards I gazed throughout next day;
Now fields I never more would see!

The sunset-shine, as curfew strook,
As curfew strook beyond the lea,
Lit his white smock and gleaming crook,
While slowly he drew near to me.

He pulled from underneath his smock
The herb I sought, my curse to be —
“At times I use it in my flock,”
He said, and hope waxed strong in me.

“‘Tis meant to balk ill-motherings” —
(Ill-motherings! Why should they be?) —
“If not, would God have sent such things?”
So spoke the shepherd unto me.

That night I watched the poppling brew,
With bended back and hand on knee:
I stirred it till the dawnlight grew,
And the wind whiffled wailfully.

“This scandal shall be slain,” said I,
“That lours upon her innocency:
I’ll give all whispering tongues the lie;” —
But worse than whispers was to be.

“Here’s physic for untimely fruit,”
I said to her, alas for me,
Early that morn in fond salute;
And in my grave I now would be.

– Next Sunday came, with sweet church chimes
In Pydel Vale, alas for me:
I went into her room betimes;
No more may such a Sunday be!

“Mother, instead of rescue nigh,”
She faintly breathed, alas for me,
“I feel as I were like to die,

And underground soon, soon should be.”

From church that noon the people walked
In twos and threes, alas for me,
Showed their new raiment – smiled and talked,
Though sackcloth-clad I longed to be.

Came to my door her lover's friends,
And cheerly cried, alas for me,
“Right glad are we he makes amends,
For never a sweeter bride can be.”

My mouth dried, as 'twere scorched within,
Dried at their words, alas for me:
More and more neighbours crowded in,
(O why should mothers ever be!)

“Ha-ha! Such well-kept news!” laughed they,
Yes – so they laughed, alas for me.
“Whose banns were called in church to-day?” —
Christ, how I wished my soul could flee!

“Where is she? O the stealthy miss,”
Still bantered they, alas for me,
“To keep a wedding close as this.”
Ay, Fortune worked thus wantonly!

“But you are pale – you did not know?”
They archly asked, alas for me,
I stammered, “Yes – some days-ago,”
While coffined clay I wished to be.

“'Twas done to please her, we surmise?”
(They spoke quite lightly in their glee)
“Done by him as a fond surprise?”
I thought their words would madden me.

Her lover entered. “Where's my bird? —
My bird – my flower – my picotee?
First time of asking, soon the third!”
Ah, in my grave I well may be.

To me he whispered: “Since your call – ”
So spoke he then, alas for me —
“I've felt for her, and righted all.”
– I think of it to agony.

“She's faint to-day – tired – nothing more – ”
Thus did I lie, alas for me.

I called her at her chamber door
As one who scarce had strength to be.

No voice replied. I went within —
O women! scourged the worst are we.
I shrieked. The others hastened in
And saw the stroke there dealt on me.

There she lay – silent, breathless, dead,
Stone dead she lay – wronged, sinless she! —
Ghost-white the cheeks once rosy-red:
Death had took her. Death took not me.

I kissed her colding face and hair,
I kissed her corpse – the bride to be! —
My punishment I cannot bear,
But pray God *not* to pity me

.January 1904.

THE HOUSE OF HOSPITALITIES

Here we broached the Christmas barrel,
Pushed up the charred log-ends;
Here we sang the Christmas carol,
And called in friends.

Time has tired me since we met here
When the folk now dead were young,
Since the viands were outset here
And quaint songs sung.

And the worm has bored the viol
That used to lead the tune,
Rust eaten out the dial
That struck night's noon.

Now no Christmas brings in neighbours,
And the New Year comes unlit;
Where we sang the mole now labours,
And spiders knit.

Yet at midnight if here walking,
When the moon sheets wall and tree,
I see forms of old time talking,
Who smile on me.

BEREFT

In the black winter morning
No light will be struck near my eyes
While the clock in the stairway is warning
For five, when he used to rise.
 Leave the door unbarred,
 The clock unwound,
 Make my lone bed hard —
 Would 'twere underground!

When the summer dawns clearly,
And the appletree-tops seem alight,
Who will undraw the curtain and cheerly
Call out that the morning is bright?

When I tarry at market
No form will cross Durnover Lea
In the gathering darkness, to hark at
Grey's Bridge for the pit-pat o' me.

When the supper crock's steaming,
And the time is the time of his tread,
I shall sit by the fire and wait dreaming
In a silence as of the dead.
 Leave the door unbarred,
 The clock unwound,
 Make my lone bed hard —
 Would 'twere underground!

1901.

JOHN AND JANE

I

He sees the world as a boisterous place
Where all things bear a laughing face,
And humorous scenes go hourly on,
Does John.

II

They find the world a pleasant place
Where all is ecstasy and grace,
Where a light has risen that cannot wane,
Do John and Jane.

III

They see as a palace their cottage-place,
Containing a pearl of the human race,
A hero, maybe, hereafter styled,
Do John and Jane with a baby-child.

IV

They rate the world as a gruesome place,
Where fair looks fade to a skull's grimace, —
As a pilgrimage they would fain get done —
Do John and Jane with their worthless son.

THE CURATE'S KINDNESS A WORKHOUSE IRONY

I

I thought they'd be strangers aroun' me,
But she's to be there!
Let me jump out o' waggon and go back and drown me
At Pummery or Ten-Hatches Weir.

II

I thought: "Well, I've come to the Union —
The workhouse at last —
After honest hard work all the week, and Communion
O' Zundays, these fifty years past.

III

"Tis hard; but," I thought, "never mind it:
There's gain in the end:
And when I get used to the place I shall find it
A home, and may find there a friend.

IV

"Life there will be better than t'other.
For peace is assured.
The men in one wing and their wives in another
Is strictly the rule of the Board."

V

Just then one young Pa'son arriving
Steps up out of breath
To the side o' the waggon wherein we were driving

To Union; and calls out and saith:

VI

“Old folks, that harsh order is altered,
Be not sick of heart!
The Guardians they poohed and they pished and they paltered
When urged not to keep you apart.

VII

“‘It is wrong,’ I maintained, ‘to divide them,
Near forty years wed.’
‘Very well, sir. We promise, then, they shall abide them
In one wing together,’ they said.”

VIII

Then I sank – knew ’twas quite a foredone thing
That misery should be
To the end!.. To get freed of her there was the one thing
Had made the change welcome to me.

IX

To go there was ending but badly;
’Twas shame and ’twas pain;
“But anyhow,” thought I, “thereby I shall gladly
Get free of this forty years’ chain.”

X

I thought they’d be strangers aroun’ me,
But she’s to be there!
Let me jump out o’ waggon and go back and drown me
At Pummery or Ten-Hatches Weir.

THE FLIRT'S TRAGEDY (17–)

Here alone by the logs in my chamber,
Deserted, decrepit —
Spent flames limning ghosts on the wainscot
Of friends I once knew —

My drama and hers begins weirdly
Its dumb re-enactment,
Each scene, sigh, and circumstance passing
In spectral review.

– Wealth was mine beyond wish when I met her —
The pride of the lowland —
Embowered in Tintinhull Valley
By laurel and yew;

And love lit my soul, notwithstanding
My features' ill favour,
Too obvious beside her perfections
Of line and of hue.

But it pleased her to play on my passion,
And whet me to pleadings
That won from her mirthful negations
And scornings undue.

Then I fled her disdain and derisions
To cities of pleasure,
And made me the crony of idlers
In every purlieu.

Of those who lent ear to my story,
A needy Adonis
Gave hint how to grizzle her garden
From roses to rue,

Could his price but be paid for so purging
My scorner of scornings:
Thus tempted, the lust to avenge me
Germed inly and grew.

I clothed him in sumptuous apparel,
Consigned to him coursers,
Meet equipage, liveried attendants
In full retinue.

So dowered, with letters of credit
He wayfared to England,
And spied out the manor she goddessed,
And handy thereto,

Set to hire him a tenantless mansion
As coign-stone of vantage
For testing what gross adulation
Of beauty could do.

He laboured through mornings and evens,
On new moons and sabbaths,
By wiles to enmesh her attention
In park, path, and pew;

And having afar played upon her,
Advanced his lines nearer,
And boldly outleaping conventions,
Bent briskly to woo.

His gay godlike face, his rare seeming
Anon worked to win her,
And later, at noontides and night-tides
They held rendezvous.

His tarriance full spent, he departed
And met me in Venice,
And lines from her told that my jilter
Was stooping to sue.

Not long could be further concealment,
She pled to him humbly:
“By our love and our sin, O protect me;
I fly unto you!”

A mighty remorse overgat me,
I heard her low anguish,
And there in the gloom of the *calle*
My steel ran him through.

A swift push engulfed his hot carrion
Within the canal there —
That still street of waters dividing
The city in two.

– I wandered awhile all unable
To smother my torment,
My brain racked by yells as from Tophet

Of Satan's whole crew.

A month of unrest brought me hovering
At home in her precincts,
To whose hiding-hole local story
Afforded a clue.

Exposed, and expelled by her people,
Afar off in London
I found her alone, in a sombre
And soul-stifling mew.

Still burning to make reparation
I pleaded to wive her,
And father her child, and thus faintly
My mischief undo.

She yielded, and spells of calm weather
Succeeded the tempest;
And one sprung of him stood as scion
Of my bone and thew.

But Time unveils sorrows and secrets,
And so it befell now:
By inches the curtain was twitched at,
And slowly undrew.

As we lay, she and I, in the night-time,
We heard the boy moaning:
"O misery mine! My false father
Has murdered my true!"

She gasped: yea, she heard; understood it.
Next day the child fled us;
And nevermore sighted was even
A print of his shoe.

Thenceforward she shunned me, and languished;
Till one day the park-pool
Embraced her fair form, and extinguished
Her eyes' living blue.

– So; ask not what blast may account for
This aspect of pallor,
These bones that just prison within them
Life's poor residue;

But pass by, and leave unregarded
A Cain to his suffering,

For vengeance too dark on the woman
Whose lover he slew.

THE REJECTED MEMBER'S WIFE

We shall see her no more
On the balcony,
Smiling, while hurt, at the roar
As of surging sea
From the stormy sturdy band
Who have doomed her lord's cause,
Though she waves her little hand
As it were applause.

Here will be candidates yet,
And candidates' wives,
Fervid with zeal to set
Their ideals on our lives:
Here will come market-men
On the market-days,
Here will clash now and then
More such party assays.

And the balcony will fill
When such times are renewed,
And the throng in the street will thrill
With to-day's mettled mood;
But she will no more stand
In the sunshine there,
With that wave of her white-gloved hand,
And that chestnut hair

.January 1906.

THE FARM-WOMAN'S WINTER

I

If seasons all were summers,
And leaves would never fall,
And hopping casement-comers
Were foodless not at all,
And fragile folk might be here
That white winds bid depart;
Then one I used to see here
Would warm my wasted heart!

II

One frail, who, bravely tilling
Long hours in gripping gusts,
Was mastered by their chilling,
And now his ploughshare rusts.
So savage winter catches
The breath of limber things,
And what I love he snatches,
And what I love not, brings.

AUTUMN IN KING'S HINTOCK PARK

Here by the baring bough
Raking up leaves,
Often I ponder how
Springtime deceives, —
I, an old woman now,
Raking up leaves.

Here in the avenue
Raking up leaves,
Lords' ladies pass in view,
Until one heaves
Sighs at life's russet hue,
Raking up leaves!

Just as my shape you see
Raking up leaves,
I saw, when fresh and free,
Those memory weaves
Into grey ghosts by me,
Raking up leaves.

Yet, Dear, though one may sigh,
Raking up leaves,
New leaves will dance on high —
Earth never grieves! —
Will not, when missed am I
Raking up leaves.

1901.

SHUT OUT THAT MOON

Close up the casement, draw the blind,
Shut out that stealing moon,
She wears too much the guise she wore
Before our lutes were strewn
With years-deep dust, and names we read
On a white stone were hewn.

Step not out on the dew-dashed lawn
To view the Lady's Chair,
Immense Orion's glittering form,
The Less and Greater Bear:
Stay in; to such sights we were drawn
When faded ones were fair.

Brush not the bough for midnight scents
That come forth lingeringly,
And wake the same sweet sentiments
They breathed to you and me
When living seemed a laugh, and love
All it was said to be.

Within the common lamp-lit room
Prison my eyes and thought;
Let dingy details crudely loom,
Mechanic speech be wrought:
Too fragrant was Life's early bloom,
Too tart the fruit it brought!

1904.

REMINISCENCES OF A DANCING MAN

I

Who now remembers Almack's balls —
Willis's sometime named —
In those two smooth-floored upper halls
For faded ones so famed?
Where as we trod to trilling sound
The fancied phantoms stood around,
Or joined us in the maze,
Of the powdered Dears from Georgian years,
Whose dust lay in sightless sealed-up biers,
The fairest of former days.

II

Who now remembers gay Cremorne,
And all its jaunty jills,
And those wild whirling figures born
Of Jullien's grand quadrilles?
With hats on head and morning coats
There footed to his prancing notes
Our partner-girls and we;
And the gas-jets winked, and the lustres clinked,
And the platform throbbed as with arms enlinked
We moved to the minstrelsy.

III

Who now recalls those crowded rooms
Of old yclept "The Argyle,"
Where to the deep Drum-polka's booms
We hopped in standard style?
Whither have danced those damsels now!
Is Death the partner who doth moue

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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