

Ya I said to love, op. 19b
(Words by Thomas Hardy)

[1] I need not go

I need not go
I need not go
Through sleet and snow
To where I know
She waits for me;
She will tarry me there
Till I find it fair,
And have time to spare
From company.

When I've overgot
The world somewhat,
When things cost not
Such stress and strain,
Is soon enough
By cypress sough
To tell my Love
I am come again.

And if some day,
When none cries nay,
I still delay
To seek her side,
(Though ample measure
Of fitting leisure
Await my pleasure)
She will not chide.

What - not upbraid me
That I delayed me,
Nor ask what stayed me
So long? Ah, no! -
New cares may claim me,
New loves inflame me,
She will not blame me,
But suffer it so.

[2] At Middle-Field Gate in February

At Middle-Field Gate in February
The bars are thick with drops that show
As they gather themselves from the fog
Like silver buttons ranged in a row,
And as evenly spaced as if measured, although
They fall at the feeblest jog.

They load the leafless hedge hard by,
And the blades of last year's grass,
While the fallow ploughland turned up nigh
In raw rolls, clammy and clogging lie -
Too clogging for feet to pass.

How dry it was on a far-back day
When straws hung the hedge and around,

When amid the sheaves in amorous play
In curtained bonnets and light array
Bloomed a bevy now underground!

[3] Two Lips

Two Lips
I kissed them in fancy as I came
Away in the morning glow:
I kissed them through the glass of her picture-frame:
She did not know.

I kissed them in love, in troth, in laughter,
When she knew all; long so!
That I should kiss them in a shroud thereafter
She did not know.

[4] In five-score summers (Meditation)

In five-score summers (Meditation)
In five-score summers! All new eyes,
New minds, new modes, new fools, new wise;
New woes to weep, new joys to prize;

With nothing left of me and you
In that live century's vivid view
Beyond a pinch of dust or two;

A century which, if not sublime,
Will show, I doubt not, at its prime,
A scope above this blinkered time.

- Yet what to me how far above?
For I would only ask thereof
That thy worm should be my worm, Love!

[5] For Life I had never cared greatly

For Life I had never cared greatly
For Life I had never cared greatly,
As worth a man's while;
Peradventures unsought,
Peradventures that finished in nought,
Had kept me from youth and through manhood till lately
Unwon by its style.

In earliest years - why I know not -
I viewed it askance;
Conditions of doubt,
Conditions that leaked slowly out,
May haply have bent me to stand and to show not
Much zest for its dance.

With symphonies soft and sweet colour
It courted me then,
Till evasions seemed wrong,
Till evasions gave in to its song,
And I warmed, until living aloofly loomed duller
Than life among men.

Anew I found nought to set eyes on,
When, lifting its hand,
It uncloaked a star,
Uncloaked it from fog-damps afar,
And showed its beams burning from pole to horizon
As bright as a brand.

And so, the rough highway forgetting,
I pace hill and dale
Regarding the sky,
Regarding the vision on high,
And thus re-illumed have no humour for letting
My pilgrimage fail.

[6] I said to Love

I said to Love
I said to Love,
"It is not now as in old days
When men adored thee and thy ways
All else above;
Named thee the Boy, the Bright, the One
Who spread a heaven beneath the sun,"
I said to Love.

I said to him,
"We now know more of thee than then;
We were but weak in judgment when,
With hearts abrim,
We clamoured thee that thou would'st please
Inflict on us thine agonies,"
I said to him.

I said to Love,
"Thou art not young, thou art not fair,
No elfin darts, no cherub air,
Nor swan, nor dove
Are thine; but features pitiless,
And iron daggers of distress,"
I said to Love.

"Depart then, Love! ...
- Man's race shall perish, threatenest thou,
Without thy kindling coupling-vow?
The age to come the man of now
Know nothing of? -
We fear not such a threat from thee;
We are too old in apathy!
Mankind shall cease. - So let it be,"
I said to Love.

Let Us Garlands Bring, op. 18
(Words by Shakespeare)

[7] Come away, come away, death

Come away, come away, death
Come away, come away, death,
And in sad cypress let me be laid;

Fly away, fly away, breath;
I am slain by a fair cruel maid.
My shroud of white, stuck all with yew,
O, prepare it!
My part of death, no one so true
Did share it.

Not a flower, not a flower sweet,
On my black coffin let there be strown;
Not a friend, not a friend greet
My poor corpse, where my bones shall be thrown:
A thousand thousand sighs to save,
Lay me, O, where
Sad true lover never find my grave,
To weep there!

[8] Who is Silvia?

Who is Silvia?
Who is Silvia? what is she,
That all our swains commend her?
Holy, fair and wise is she;
The heaven such grace did lend her,
That she might admiréd be.

Is she kind as she is fair?
For beauty lives with kindness.
Love doth to her eyes repair,
To help him of his blindness;
And, being helped, inhabits there.

Then to Silvia let us sing,
That Silvia is excelling;
She excels each mortal thing
Upon the dull earth dwelling:
To her let us garlands bring.

[9] Fear no more the heat o' the sun

Fear no more the heat o' the sun
Fear no more the heat o' the sun,
Nor the furious winter's rages;
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages:
Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

Fear no more the frown o' the great;
Thou art past the tyrant's stroke:
Care no more to clothe and eat;
To thee the reed is as the oak:
The sceptre, learning, physic, must
All follow this, and come to dust.

Fear no more the lightning-flash,
Nor the all-dreaded thunder-stone;
Fear not slander, censure rash;
Thou hast finished joy and moan;

All lovers young, all lovers must
Consign to thee, and come to dust.

No exorciser harm thee!
Nor no witchcraft charm thee!
Ghost unlaid forbear thee!
Nothing ill come near thee!
Quiet consummation have;
And renowned be thy grave!

[10] O mistress mine

O mistress mine
O Mistress mine, where are you roaming?
O stay and hear; your true love's coming
That can sing both high and low.
Trip no further, pretty sweeting;
Journeys end in lovers' meeting,
Ev'ry wise man's son doth know.

What is love? 'tis not hereafter;
Present mirth hath present laughter;
What's to come is still unsure:
In delay there lies no plenty;
Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty,
Youth's a stuff will not endure.

[11] It was a lover and his lass

It was a lover and his lass
It was a lover and his lass,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino
That o'er the green cornfield did pass.
In spring time, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding a ding;
Sweet lovers love the spring.

Between the acres of the rye,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
These pretty country folks would lie,
In spring time, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding a ding:
Sweet lovers love the spring.

This carol they began that hour,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
How that a life was but a flower
In spring time, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding a ding:
Sweet lovers love the spring.

And therefore take the present time
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
For love is crownéd with the prime
In spring time, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding a ding:
Sweet lovers love the spring.

Before and After Summer, op. 16
(Words by Thomas Hardy)

[12] Childhood among the ferns

Childhood among the ferns
I sat one sprinkling day upon the lea,
Where tall-stemmed ferns spread out luxuriantly,
And nothing but those tall ferns sheltered me.

The rain gained strength, and damped each lopping frond,
Ran down their stalks beside me and beyond,
And shaped slow-creeping rivulets as I conned,

With pride, my spray-roofed house. And though anon
Some drops pierced its green rafters, I sat on,
Making pretence I was not rained upon.

The sun then burst, and brought forth a sweet breath
From the limp ferns as they dried underneath:
I said: "I could live on here thus till death";

And queried in the green rays as I sate:
"Why should I have to grow to man's estate,
And this afar-noised World perambulate?"

[13] Before and after summer

Before and after summer
Looking forward to the spring
One puts up with anything.
On this February day
Though the winds leap down the street
Wintry scourgings seem but play,
And these later shafts of sleet
- Sharper pointed than the first -
And these later snows - the worst -
Are as a half-transparent blind
Riddled by rays from sun behind.

Shadows of the October pine
Reach into this room of mine:
On the pine there stands a bird;
He is shadowed with the tree.
Mutely perched he bills no word;
Blank as I am even is he.
For those happy suns are past,
Fore-discerned in winter last.
When went by their pleasure, then?
I, alas, perceived not when.

[14] The self-unseeing

The self-unseeing
Here is the ancient floor,
Footworn and hollowed and thin,
Here was the former door
Where the dead feet walked in.

She sat here in her chair,
Smiling into the fire;
He who played stood there,
Bowing it higher and higher.

Childlike, I danced in a dream;
Blessings emblazoned that day;
Everything glowed with a gleam;
Yet we were looking away!

[15] Overlooking the river

Overlooking the river
The swallows flew in the curves of an eight
Above the river-gleam
In the wet June's last beam:
Like little crossbows animate
The swallows flew in the curve of an eight
Above the river-gleam.

Planing up shavings of crystal spray
A moor-hen darted out
From the bank thereabout,
And through the stream-shine ripped his way;
Planing up shavings of crystal spray
A moor-hen darted out.

Closed were the kingcups; and the mead
Dripped in monotonous green,
Though the day's morning sheen
Had shown it golden and honeybee'd;
Closed were the kingcups; and the mead
Dripped in monotonous green.

And never I turned my head, alack,
While these things met my gaze
Through the pane's drop-drenched glaze,
To see the more behind my back....
O never I turned, but let, alack,
These less things hold my gaze!

[16] Channel firing

Channel firing
That night your great guns, unawares,
Shook all our coffins as we lay,
And broke the chancel window-squares;
We thought it was the Judgment-day

And sat upright. While drearisome
Arose the howl of wakened hounds:
The mouse let fall the altar-crumb,
The worms drew back into the mounds,

The glebe cow drooled. Till God called, "No;
It's gunnery practice out at sea
Just as before you went below;
The world is as it used to be:

"All nations striving strong to make
Red war yet redder. Mad as hatters
They do no more for Christés sake
Than you who are helpless in such matters.

"That this is not the judgment-hour
For some of them's a blessed thing;
For if it were they'd have to scour
Hell's floor for so much threatening. ...

"Ha, ha. It will be warmer when
I blow the trumpet (if indeed
I ever do; for you are men,
And rest eternal sorely need)."

So down we lay again. "I wonder,
Will the world ever saner be,"
Said one, "than when He sent us under
In our indifferent century!"

And many a skeleton shook his head.
"Instead of preaching forty year,"
My neighbour Parson Thirdly said,
"I wish I had stuck to pipes and beer."

Again the guns disturbed the hour,
Roaring their readiness to avenge,
As far inland as Stourton Tower,
And Camelot, and starlit Stonehenge.

[17] In the mind's eye

In the mind's eye
That was once her casement,
And the taper nigh,
Shining from within there,
Beckoned, "Here am I!"

Now, as then, I see her
Moving at the pane;
Ah; 'tis but her phantom
Borne within my brain!

Foremost in my vision
Everywhere goes she;
Change dissolves the landscapes,
She abides with me.

Shape so sweet and shy, Dear,
Who can say thee nay?
Never once do I, Dear,
Wish thy ghost away.

[18] The too short time

The too short time
Nine leaves a minute
Swim down shakily;
Each one fain would spin it

Straight to earth; but, see,
How the sharp airs win it
Slantwise away! Hear it say,
"Now we have finished our summer show
Of what we knew the way to do:
Alas, not much! But, as things go,
As fair as any. And night-time calls,
And the curtain falls!"

Sunlight goes on shining
As if no frost were here,
Blackbirds seem designing
Where to build next year;
Yet is warmth declining:
And still the day seems to say,
"Saw you how Dame Summer drest?
Of all God taught her she bethought her!
Alas, not much! And yet the best
She could, within the too short time
Granted her prime."

[19] Epeisodia

Epeisodia
Past the hills that peep
Where the leaze is smiling,
On and on beguiling
Crisply-cropping sheep;
Under boughs of brushwood
Linking tree and tree
In a shade of lushwood,
There caressed we!

Hemmed by city walls
That outshut the sunlight,
In a foggy dun light,
Where the footstep falls
With a pit-pat wearisome
In its cadency
On the flagstones drearisome
There pressed we!

Where in wild-winged crowds
Blown birds show their whiteness
Up against the lightness
Of the clammy clouds;
By the random river
Pushing to the sea,
Under bents that quiver
There shall rest we.

[20] Amabel

Amabel
I marked her ruined hues,
Her custom-straitened views,
And asked, "Can there indwell
My Amabel?"

I looked upon her gown,
Once rose, now earthen brown;
The change was like the knell
Of Amabel.

Her step's mechanic ways
Had lost the life of May's;
Her laugh, once sweet in swell,
Spoilt Amabel.
I mused: "Who sings the strain
I sang ere warmth did wane?
Who thinks its numbers spell
His Amabel?" -

Knowing that, though Love cease,
Love's race shows no decrease;
All find in dorp or dell
An Amabel.

- I felt that I could creep
To some housetop, and weep,
That Time the tyrant fell
Ruled Amabel!

I said (the while I sighed
That love like ours had died),
"Fond things I'll no more tell
To Amabel,

"But leave her to her fate,
And fling across the gate,
'Till the Last Trump, farewell,
O Amabel!"

[21] He abjures Love

He abjures Love
At last I put off love,
For twice ten years
The daysman of my thought,
And hope, and doing;
Being ashamed thereof,
And faint of fears
And desolations, wrought
In his pursuing.

Since first in youthtime those
Disquietings
That heart-enslavement brings
To hale and hoary,
Became my housefellows,
And, fool and blind,
I turned from kith and kind
To give him glory.

I was as children be
Who have no care;
I did not shrink or sigh,

I did not sicken;
But lo, Love beckoned me,
And I was bare,
And poor, and starved, and dry,
And fever-stricken.

Too many times ablaze
With fatuous fires,
Enkindled by his wiles
To new embraces,
Did I, by wilful ways
And baseless ires,
Return the anxious smiles
Of friendly faces.

No more will now rate I
The common rare,
The midnight drizzle dew,
The gray hour golden,
The wind a yearning cry,
The faulty fair,
Things dreamt, of comelier hue
Than things beholden!...

- I speak as one who plumbs
Life's dim profound,
One who at length can sound
Clear views and certain.
But - after love what comes?
A scene that lours,
A few sad vacant hours,
And then, the Curtain.