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Gerald Finzi (1901-1956):

A Young Man's Exhortation • Till Earth Outwears • Oh Fair To See

A Young Man's Exhortation

Words by Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

[01] **A Young Man's Exhortation**

Call off your eyes from care
By some determined deftness; put forth joys
Dear as excess without the core that cloy,
And charm Life's lourings fair.

Exalt and crown the hour
That girdles us, and fill it with glee,
Blind glee, excelling aught could ever be,
Were heedfulness in power.

Send up such touching strains
That limitless recruits from Fancy's pack
Shall rush upon your tongue, and tender back
All that your soul contains.

For what do we know best?
That a fresh love-leaf crumpled soon will dry,
And that men moment after moment die,
Of all scope dispossess.

If I have seen one thing
It is the passing preciousness of dreams;
That aspects are within us; and who seems
Most kingly is the King.

[02] **Ditty**

Beneath a knap where flown
Nestlings play,
Within walls of weathered stone,
Far away
From the files of formal houses,
By the bough the firstling browses,
Lives a Sweet: no merchants meet,
No man barter, no man sells
Where she dwells.

Upon that fabric fair
"Here is she!"
Seems written everywhere
Unto me.
But to friends and nodding neighbours,
Fellow-wights in lot and labours,
Who descry the times as I,
No such lucid legend tells
Where she dwells.

Should I lapse to what I was
Ere we met;
(Such will not be, but because
Some forget
Let me feign it) – none would notice
That where she I know by rote is
Spread a strange and withering change,
Like a drying of the wells
Where she dwells.

To feel I might have kissed –
Loved as true –
Otherwhere, nor Mine have missed
My life through,
Had I never wandered near her,
Is a smart severe – severer
In the thought that she is nought,
Even as I, beyond the dells
Where she dwells.

And Devotion droops her glance
To recall
What bond-servants of Chance
We are all.
I but found her in that, going
On my errant path unknowing,
I did not out-skirt the spot
That no spot on earth excels –
Where she dwells!

[03] **Budmouth Dears**

When we lay where Budmouth Beach is,
O, the girls were fresh as peaches,
With their tall and tossing figures and their eyes
of blue and brown!
And our hearts would ache with longing
As we paced from our sing-singing,
With a smart *Clink! Clink!* up the Esplanade
and down.

They distracted and delayed us
By the pleasant pranks they played us,
And what marvel, then, if troopers, even of
regiments of renown,
On whom flashed those eyes divine, O,
Should forget the countersign, O,
As we tore *Clink! Clink!* back to camp above
the town.

Do they miss us much, I wonder,
Now that war has swept us sunder,
And we roam from where the faces smile to
where the faces frown?
And no more behold the features
Of the fair fantastic creatures,
And no more *Clink! Clink!* past the parlours of
the town?

Shall we once again there meet them?
Falter fond attempts to greet them?
Will the gay sling-jacket glow again beside the
muslin gown?
Will they archly quiz and con us
With a sideway glance upon us,
While our spurs *Clink! Clink!* up the Esplanade
and down?

[04] **Her Temple**

Dear, think not that they will forget you:
– If craftsmanly art should be mine
I will build up a temple, and set you
Therein as its shrine.

They may say: "Why a woman such honour?"
– Be told, "O so sweet was her fame,
That a man heaped this splendour upon her;
None now knows his name."

[05] **The Comet at Yell'ham**

It bends far over Yell'ham Plain,
And we, from Yell'ham Height,
Stand and regard its fiery train,
So soon to swim from sight.

It will return long years hence, when
As now its strange swift shine
Will fall on Yell'ham; but not then
On that sweet form of thine.

[06] **Shortening Days**

The first fire since the summer is lit, and is
smoking into the room:
The sun-rays thread it through, like woof-lines
in a loom.
Sparrows spurt from the hedge, whom
misgivings appal
That winter did not leave last year for ever,
after all.
Like shock-headed urchins, spiny-haired,
Stand pollard willows, their twigs just bared.

Who is this coming with pondering pace,
Black and ruddy, with white embossed,
His eyes being black, and ruddy his face
And the marge of his hair like morning frost?
It's the cider-maker,
And appletree-shaker,
And behind him on wheels, in readiness,
His mill, and tubs, and vat, and press.

[07] **The Sigh**

Little head against my shoulder,
Shy at first, then somewhat bolder,
And up-eyed;
Till she, with a timid quaver,
Yielded to the kiss I gave her;
But, she sighed.

That there mingled with her feeling
Some sad thought she was concealing
It implied.
– Not that she had ceased to love me,
None on earth she set above me;
But she sighed.

She could not disguise a passion,
Dread, or doubt, in weakest fasion
If she tried:
Nothing seemed to hold us sundered,
Hearts were victors; so I wondered
Why she sighed.

Afterwards I knew her thoroughly,
And she loved me staunchly, truly,
Till she died;
But she never made confession
Why, at that first sweet concession,
She had sighed.

It was in our May, remember;
And though now I near November
And abide
Till my appointed change, unfretting,
Sometimes I sit half regretting
That she sighed.

[08] **Former Beauties**

These market-dames, mid-aged, with lips thin-
drawn,
And tissues sere,
Are they the ones we loved in years ago,
And courted here?

Are these the muslined pink young things to
whom
We vowed and swore
In nooks on summer Sundays by the Froom,
Or Budmouth shore?

Do they remember those gay tunes we trod
Clasped on the green;
Aye; trod till moonlight set on the beaten sod
A satin sheen?

They must forget, forget! They cannot know
What once they were,
Or memory would transfigure them, and show
Them always fair.

[09] **Transformations**

Portions of this yew
Is a man my grandsire knew,
Bosomed here at its foot:
This branch may be his wife,
A ruddy human life
Now turned to a green shoot.

These grasses must be made
Of her who often prayed,
Last century, for repose;
And the fair girl long ago
Whom I often tried to know
May be entering this rose.

So, they are not underground,
But as nerves and veins abound
In the growths of upper air,
And they feel the sun and rain,
And the energy again
That made them what they were!

[10] **The Dance continued (Regret not me)**

Regret not me;
Beneath the sunny tree
I lie uncaring, slumbering peacefully.

Swift as the light
I flew my faery flight;
Ecstatically I moved, and feared no night.

I did not know
That heydays fade and go,
But deemed that what was would be always so.

I skipped at morn
Between the yellowing corn,
Thinking it good and glorious to be born.

I ran at eves
Among the piled-up sheaves,
Dreaming, 'I grieve not, therefore nothing
grieves'

Now soon will come
The apple, pear, and plum,
And hinds will sing, and autumn insects hum.

Again you will fare
To cider-makings rare,
And junketings; but I shall not be there.

Yet gaily sing
Until the pewter ring
Those songs we sang when we went gipsying.

And lightly dance
Some triple-timed romance
In coupled figures, and forget mischance;

And mourn not me
Beneath the yellowing tree;
For I shall mind not, slumbering peacefully.

Till Earth Outwears

Words by Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

[11] **Let me enjoy the Earth**

Let me enjoy the earth no less
Because the all-enacting Might
That fashioned forth its loveliness
Had other aims than my delight.

About my path there flits a Fair,
Who throws me not a word or sign;
I'll charm me with her ignoring air,
And laud the lips not meant for mine.

From manuscripts of moving song
Inspired by scenes and dreams unknown
I'll pour out raptures that belong
To others, as they were my own.

And some day hence, towards Paradise
And all its blest – if such should be –
I will lift glad, afar-off eyes,
Though it contain no place for me.

[12] **In years defaced**

In years defaced and lost,
Two sat here, transport-tossed,
Lit by a living love
The wilted world knew nothing of:
Scared momentarily
By gaingivings,
Then hoping things
That could not be...

Of love and us no trace
Abides upon the place;
The sun and shadows wheel,
Season and season sereward steal:
Foul days and fair
Here, too, prevail,
And gust and gale
As everywhere.

But lonely shepherd souls
Who bask amid these knolls
May catch a faery sound
On sleepy noontides from the ground:
"O not again
Till Earth outwears
Shall love like theirs
Suffuse this glen!"

[13] **The Market-Girl**

Nobody took any notice of her as she stood on
the causey kerb,
All eager to sell her honey and apples and
bunches of garden herb;
And if she had offered to give her wares and
herself with them too that day,
I doubt if a soul would have cared to take a
bargain so choice away.

But chancing to trace her sunburnt grace that
morning as I passed nigh,
I went and I said, "Poor maiddy dear! – and will
none of the people buy?"
And so it began; and soon we knew what the
end of it all must be,
And I found that though no others had bid, a
prize had been won by me.

[14] **"I look into my Glass"**

I look into my glass,
And view my wasting skin,
And say, "Would God it came to pass
My heart had shrunk as thin!"

For then, I, undistrest
By hearts grown cold to me,
Could lonely wait my endless rest
With equanimity.
But Time, to make me grieve,
Part steals, lets part abide;
And shakes this fragile frame at eve
With throbbings of noontide.

[15] **"It never looks like summer"**

"It never looks like summer here
On Beeny by the sea."
But though she saw its look as drear,
Summer it seemed to me.

It never looks like summer now
Whatever weather's there;
But ah, it cannot anyhow,
On Beeny or elsewhere!

[16] **At a Lunar Eclipse**

Thy shadow, Earth, from Pole to Central Sea,
Now steals along upon the Moon's meek shine
In even monochrome and curving line
Of imperturbable serenity.

How shall I link such sun-cast symmetry
With the torn troubled form I know as thine,
That profile, placid as a brow divine,
With continents of moil and misery?

And can immense Mortality but throw
So small a shade, and Heaven's high human
scheme
Be hemmed within the coasts yon arc implies?

Is such the stellar gauge of earthly show,
Nation at war with nation, brains that teem,
Heroes, and women fairer than the skies?

[17] **Life laughs onwards**

Rambling I looked for an old abode
Where, years back, one had lived I knew;
Its site a dwelling duly showed,
But it was new.

I went where, not so long ago,
The sod had riven two breasts asunder;
Daisies throve gaily there, as though
No grave were under.

I walked along a terrace where
Loud children gambolled in the sun:
The figure that had once sat there
Was missed by none.

Life laughed and moved on unsubdued,
I saw that Old succumbed to Young:
'Twas well. My too regretful mood
Died on my tongue.

Oh Fair to See Op. 13b

- [18] **'I say I'll seek her side'**
Words by Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

I say "I'll seek her side
 Ere hindrance interposes;"
 But eve in midnight closes
 And here I still abide.

When darkness wears I see
 Her sad eyes in a vision:
 They ask, "What indecision
 Detains you, Love, from me? -

"The creaking hinge is oiled,
 I have unbarred the backway,
 But you tread not the trackway
 And shall the thing be spoiled?

"Far cockcrows echo shrill,
 The shadows are abating,
 And I am waiting, waiting;
 But O, you tarry still!"

- [19] **Oh fair to see**
Words by Christina Georgina Rossetti (1830-1894)

Oh, fair to see
 Blossom-laden cherry tree,
 Arrayed in sunny white;
 An April day's delight,
 Oh, fair to see!

Oh, fair to see
 Fruit-laden cherry tree,
 With balls of shining red
 Decking a leafy head,
 Oh, fair to see!

- [20] **As I lay in the early sun**
 (Tempo comodo)
Words by Edward Shanks (1892-1953)

As I lay in the early sun,
 Stretched in the grass, I thought upon
 My true love, my dear love,
 Who has my heart forever
 Who is my happiness when we meet,
 My sorrow when we sever.
 She is all fire when I do burn,
 Gentle when I moody turn,
 Brave when I am sad and heavy
 And all laughter when I am merry.
 And so I lay and dreamed and dreamed,
 And so the day wheeled on,
 While all the birds with thoughts like mine
 Were singing to the sun.

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- [21] **Only the wanderer**
from Song by Ivor Gurney (1890-1937)

Only the wanderer
 Knows England's graces,
 Or can anew see clear
 Familiar faces.

And who loves joy as he
 That dwells in shadows?
 Do not forget me quite,
 O Severn meadows.

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- [22] **To Joy**
Words by Edmund Charles Blunden (1896-1974)

Is not this enough for moan
 To see this babe all motherless –
 A babe beloved – thrust out all alone
 Upon death's wilderness?
 Out tears fall, fall, fall – I would weep
 My blood away to make her warm,
 Who never went on earth one step,
 Nor heard the breath of the storm.
 How shall you go, my little child,
 Alone on that most wintry wild.

[23] Harvest

*Words by Edmund Charles Blunden
(1896-1974)*

So there's my year, the twelvemonth duly told
 Since last I climbed this brow and gloated
 round
 Upon the lands heaped with their wheaten
 gold,
 And now again they spread with wealth
 imbrowned –
 And thriftless I meanwhile,
 What honeycombs have I to take, what
 sheaves to pile?

I see some shrivelled fruits upon my tree,
 And gladly would self-kindness feign them
 sweet;
 The bloom smelled heavenly, can these
 stragglers be
 The fruit of that bright birth and this wry wheat,
 Can this be from those spires
 Which I, or fancy, saw leap to the spring sun's
 fires?

I peer, I count, but anxious is not rich,
 My harvest is not come, the weeds run high;
 Even poison-berries, ramping from the ditch
 Have stormed the undefended ridges by;
 What Michaelmass is mine!
 The fields I sought to serve, for sturdier tillage
 pine.

But, hush – Earth's valleys sweet in leisure lie;
 And I among them wandering up and down
 Will taste their berries, like the bird or fly,
 And of their gleanings make both feast and
 crown.
 The Sun's eye laughing looks.
 And Earth accuses none that goes among her
 stooks.

*The text of both 'To Joy' and 'Harvest' by Edmund
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[24] Since we loved

*Words by Robert Seymour Bridges
(1844-1930)*

Since we loved, - (the earth that shook
 As we kissed, fresh beauty took) –
 Love hath been as poets paint,
 Life as heaven is to a saint;

All my joys my hope excel,
 All my work hath prosper'd well,
 All my songs have happy been,
 O my love, my life, my queen.