

Songs of Travel

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894)

1

The Vagabond

Give to me the life I love,
Let the love go by me,
Give the jolly heaven above,
And the byway nigh me.
Bed in the bush with stars to see,
Bread I dip in the river -
There's the life for a man like me,
There's the life for ever.

Let the blow fall soon or late,
Let what will be o'er me;
Give the face of earth around,
And the road before me.
Wealth I seek not, hope nor love,
Nor a friend to know me;
All I seek, the heaven above,
And the road below me.

Or let autumn fall on me
Where afield I linger,
Silencing the bird on tree,
Biting the blue finger.
White as meal the frosty field -
Warm the fireside haven -
Not to autumn will I yield,
Not to winter even!

Let the blow fall soon or late,
Let what will be o'er me;
Give the face of earth around,
And the road before me.
Wealth I ask not, hope nor love,
Nor a friend to know me;
All I ask, the heaven above,
And the road below me.

2

Let Beauty awake

Let Beauty awake in the morn from beautiful dreams,
Beauty awake from rest!
Let Beauty awake

For Beauty's sake
In the hour when the birds awake in the brake
And the stars are bright in the west!

Let Beauty awake in the eve from the slumber of day,
Awake in the crimson eve!
In the day's dusk end
When the shades ascend,
Let her wake to the kiss of a tender friend,
To render again and receive!

3

The Roadside Fire

I will make you brooches and toys for your delight
Of bird-song at morning and star-shine at night,
I will make a palace fit for you and me
Of green days in forests, and blue days at sea.

I will make my kitchen, and you shall keep your room,
Where white flows the river and bright blows the broom;
And you shall wash your linen and keep your body white
In rainfall at morning and dewfall at night.

And this shall be for music when no one else is near,
The fine song for singing, the rare song to hear!
That only I remember, that only you admire,
Of the broad road that stretches and the roadside fire.

4

Youth and Love

To the heart of youth the world is a highwayside.
Passing for ever, he fares; and on either hand,
Deep in the gardens golden pavilions hide,
Nestle in orchard bloom, and far on the level land
Call him with lighted lamp in the eventide.

Thick as stars at night when the moon is down,
Pleasures assail him. He to his nobler fate
Fares; and but waves a hand as he passes on,
Cries but a wayside word to her at the garden gate,
Sings but a boyish stave and his face is gone.

5

In Dreams

In dreams unhappy, I behold you stand as heretofore:
The unremember'd tokens in your hand avail no more.

No more the morning glow, no more the grace, enshrines, endears.
Cold beats the light of time upon your face and shows your tears.

He came and went. Perchance you wept awhile and then forgot.
Ah me! but he that left you with a smile forgets you not.

6

The Infinite Shining Heavens

The infinite shining heavens
Rose, and I saw in the night
Uncountable angel stars
Showering sorrow and light.

I saw them distant as heaven,
Dumb and shining and dead,
And the idle stars of the night
Were dearer to me than bread.

Night after night in my sorrow
The stars looked over the sea,
Till lo! I looked in the dusk
And a star had come down to me.

7

Whither must I wander?

Home no more home to me, whither must I wander?
Hunger my driver, I go where I must.
Cold blows the winter wind over hill and heather:
Thick drives the rain and my roof is in the dust.
Loved of wise men was the shade of my roof-tree,
The true word of welcome was spoken in the door
Dear days of old with the faces in the firelight,
Kind folks of old, you come again no more.

Home was home then, my dear, full of kindly faces,
Home was home then, my dear, happy for the child.
Fire and the windows bright glittered on the moorland;
Song, tuneful song, built a palace in the wild.
Now when day dawns on the brow of the moorland,
Lone stands the house, and the chimney-stone is cold.
Lone let it stand, now the friends are all departed,
The kind hearts, the true hearts, that loved the place of old.

Spring shall come, come again, calling up the moorfowl,
Spring shall bring the sun and the rain, bring the bees and flowers;

Red shall the heather bloom over hill and valley,
Soft flow the stream through the even-flowing hours.
Fair the day shine as it shone on my childhood -
Fair shine the day on the house with open door;
Birds come and cry there and twitter in the chimney -
But I go for ever and come again no more.

8

Bright is the ring of words

Bright is the ring of words
When the right man rings them,
Fair the fall of songs
When the singer sings them,
Still they are carolled and said -
On wings they are carried -
After the singer is dead
And the maker buried.

Low as the singer lies
In the field of heather,
Songs of his fashion bring
The swains together.
And when the west is red
With the sunset embers,
The lover lingers and sings
And the maid remembers.

9

I have trod the upward and the downward slope

I have trod the upward and the downward slope;
I have endured and done in days before;
I have longed for all, and bid farewell to hope;
And I have lived and loved, and closed the door.

The House of Life

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882)

10

Love-sight

When do I see thee most, beloved one?
When in the light the spirits of mine eyes
Before thy face, their altar, solemnize
The worship of that Love through thee made known?

Or when in the dusk hours, (we two alone)
Close-kissed and eloquent of still replies
Thy twilight-hidden glimmering visage lies,
And my soul only sees thy soul its own?

O love - my love! if I no more should see Thyself,
nor on the earth the shadow of thee,
Nor image of thine eyes in any spring,
How then should sound upon Life's darkening slope
The groundwhirl of the perished leaves of Hope
The wind of Death's imperishable wing?

11

Silent Noon

Your hands lie open in the long fresh grass, -
The finger-points look through like rosy blooms:
Your eyes smile peace.
The pasture gleams and glooms
'Neath billowing skies that scatter and amass.
All round our nest, far as the eye can pass,
Are golden kingcup fields with silver edge
Where the cow-parsley skirts the hawthorn hedge.
'Tis visible silence, still as the hour glass.

Deep in the sunsearched growths the dragon-fly
Hangs like a blue thread loosened from the sky: -
So this winged hour is dropt to us from above.
Oh! clasp we to our hearts, for deathless dower,
This close-companioned inarticulate hour
When twofold silence was the song of love.

12

Love's Minstrels

One flame-winged brought a white-winged harp-player

Even where my lady and I lay all alone;
Saying: "Behold this minstrel is unknown;
Bid him depart, for I am minstrel here:
Only my songs are to love's dear ones dear."
Then said I "Through thine hautboy's rapturous tone
Unto my lady still this harp makes moan,
And still she deems the cadence deep and clear."
Then said my lady: "Thou art passion of Love,
And this Love's worship: both he plights to me.
Thy mastering music walks the sunlit sea:
But where wan water trembles in the grove,
And the wan moon is all the light thereof,
This harp still makes my name its voluntary."

13

Heart's Haven

Sometimes she is a child within mine arms,
Cow'ring beneath dark wings that love must chase,
With still tears show'ring and averted face,
Inexplicably filled with faint alarms:
And oft from mine own spirit's hurtling harms
I crave the refuge of her deep embrace,
Against all ills the fortified strong place
And sweet reserve of sov'reign counter charms.
And Love, our light at night and shade at noon,
Lulls us to rest with songs, and turns away
All shafts of shelterless tumultuous day.
Like the moon's growth, his face gleams through his tune;
And as soft waters warble to the moon,
Our answ'ring spirits chime one roundelay.

14

Death in Love

There came an image in Life's retinue
That had Love's wings and bore his gonfalon:
Fair was the web, and nobly wrought thereon,
O soul-sequestered face, thy form and hue!
Bewildering sounds, such as Spring wakens to,
Shook in its folds; and through my heart its power
Sped trackless as the memorable hour
When birth's dark portal groaned and all was new
But a veiled woman followed, and she caught
The banner round its staff, to furl and cling,
Then plucked a feather from the bearer's wing,
And held it to his lips that stirred it not,
And said to me, "Behold, there is no breath:

I and this Love are one, and I am Death.”

15

Love's Last Gift

Love to his singer held a glistening leaf,
and said: “The rose-tree and the apple-tree
Have fruits to vaunt or flowers to lure the bee;
And golden shafts are in the feathered sheaf
Of the great harvest marshal, the year's chief
Victorious summer; aye, and 'neath warm sea
Strange secret grasses lurk inviolably
Between the filtering channels of sunk reef...

All are my blooms; and all sweet blooms of love
To thee I gave while spring and summer sang;
But autumn stops to listen, with some pang
From those worse things the wind is moaning of.
Only this laurel dreads no winter days:
Take my last gift; thy heart hath sung my praise.”

Linden Lea*William Barnes (1801-1886)*

Within the woodlands, flow'ry gladed,
By the oak trees' mossy moot,
The shining grass blades, timber-shaded,
Now do quiver underfoot;
And birds do whistle overhead,
And water's bubbling in its bed;
And there, for me, the apple tree
Do lean down low in Linden Lea.

When leaves, that lately were a-springing,
Now do fade within the copse,
And painted birds do hush their singing,
Up upon the timber tops;
And brown-leaved fruits a-turning red,
In cloudless sunshine overhead,
With fruit for me, the apple tree
Do lean down low in Linden Lea.

Let other folk make money faster
In the air of dark-roomed towns;
I don't dread a peevish master,
Though no man may heed my frowns.
I be free to go abroad,
Or take again my homeward road
To where, for me, the apple tree
Do lean down low in Linden Lea.

Four Poems by Fredegond Shove
(1889-1949)

17

Motion and Stillness

The sea-shells lie as cold as death
Under the sea;
The clouds move in a wasted wreath
Eternally;
The cows sleep on the tranquil slopes
Above the bay;
The ships like evanescent hopes
Vanish away.

18

Four Nights

O when I shut my eyes in spring
A choir of heaven's swans I see,
They sail on lakes of blue, and sing
Or shelter in a willow tree:
They sing of peace in heart and mind
Such as on earth you may not find.

When I lie down in summer-time
I still can hear the scythes that smite
The ripened flowers in their prime,
And still can see the meadows white.
In summer-time my rest is small,
If any rest I find at all.

In autumn when my eyes I close
I see the yellow stars ablaze
Among the tangled winds that rose
At sunset in a circled maze;
Like armoured knights, they ride the skies
And prick the closed lids of my eyes.

But when in wintertime I sleep
I nothing see, nor nothing hear;
The angels in my spirit keep
A silent watch and being there,
They cause my soul to lie as dead-
A stream enchanted in her bed.

19

The New Ghost

And he, casting away his garment, rose and came to Jesus.

And he cast it down, down, on the green grass,
Over the young crocuses, where the dew was --
He cast the garment of his flesh that was full of death,
And like a sword his spirit showed out of the cold sheath.

He went a pace or two, he went to meet his Lord,
And, as I said, his spirit looked like a clean sword,
And seeing him the naked trees began shivering,
And all the birds cried out aloud as it were late spring.

And the Lord came on, He came down, and saw
That a soul was waiting there for Him, one without flaw,
And they embraced in the churchyard where the robins play,
And the daffodils hang down their heads, as they burn away.

The Lord held his head fast, and you could see
That he kissed the unsheathed ghost that was gone free --
As a hot sun, on a March day, kisses the cold ground;
And the spirit answered, for he knew well that his peace was found.

The spirit trembled, and sprang up at the Lord's word --
As on a wild, April day, springs a small bird --
So the ghost's feet lifting him up, he kissed the Lord's cheek,
And for the greatness of their love neither of them could speak.

But the Lord went then, to show him the way,
Over the young crocuses, under the green may
That was not quite in flower yet -- to a far-distant land;
And the ghost followed, like a naked cloud holding the sun's hand.

20

The Water Mill

There is a mill, an ancient one,
Brown with rain, and dry with sun,
The miller's house is joined with it
And in July the swallows flit
To and from, in and out,
Round the windows, all about.
The mill wheel whirrs and the waters roar
Out of the dark arch by the door,
The willows toss their silver heads,
And the phloxes in the garden beds
 Turn red, turn grey,
 with the time of day,

And smell sweet in the rain, then die away.
The miller's cat is a tabby, she
Is as lean as a healthy cat can be,
She plays in the loft, where the sunbeams stroke
The sacks' fat backs, and beetles choke in the floury dust.
The wheel goes round
And the miller's wife sleeps fast and sound.
There is a clock inside the house,
Very tall and very bright,
It strikes the hour when shadows drowse
Or showers make the windows white;
Loud and sweet, in rain and sun,
The clock strikes, and the work is done.
The miller's wife and his eldest girl
Clean and cook while the mill wheels whirl.
The children take their meat to school,
And at dusk they play by the twilit pool;
 Barefoot, barehead,
 till the day is dead,
And their mother calls them in to bed.
The supper stands on the clean-scrubbed board,
And the miller drinks like a thirst lord;
The young men come for his daughter's sake,
But she never knows which one to take:
She drives her needle and pins her stuff,
While the moon shines gold, and the lamp shines buff.