

Poems by W.B. Yeats featured by The Yeats Project

The Lake Isle of Innisfree

I WILL arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

The Choice

The intellect of man is forced to choose
perfection of the life, or of the work,
And if it take the second must refuse
A heavenly mansion, raging in the dark.
When all that story's finished, what's the news?
In luck or out the toil has left its mark:
That old perplexity an empty purse,
Or the day's vanity, the night's remorse.

A Coat

I MADE my song a coat
Covered with embroideries
Out of old mythologies

From heel to throat;
 But the fools caught it,
 Wore it in the world's eyes
 As though they'd wrought it.
 Song, let them take it,
 For there's more enterprise
 In walking naked.

Stream and Sun at Glendalough

Through intricate motions ran
 Stream and gliding sun
 And all my heart seemed gay:
 Some stupid thing that I had done
 Made my attention stray.

Repentance keeps my heart impure;
 But what am I that dare
 Fancy that I can
 Better conduct myself or have more
 Sense than a common man?

What motion of the sun or stream
 Or eyelid shot the gleam
 That pierced my body through?
 What made me live like these that seem
 Self-born, born anew?

He Wishes For the Cloths of Heaven

HAD I the heavens' embroidered cloths,
 Enwrought with golden and silver light,
 The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
 Of night and light and the half-light,
 I would spread the cloths under your feet:
 But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
 I have spread my dreams under your feet;
 Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

Death

NOR dread nor hope attend
 A dying animal;
 A man awaits his end
 Dreading and hoping all;
 Many times he died,
 Many times rose again.
 A great man in his pride
 Confronting murderous men
 Casts derision upon
 Supersession of breath;
 He knows death to the bone --
 Man has created death.

The Stolen Child

WHERE dips the rocky highland
 Of Sleuth Wood in the lake,
 There lies a leafy island
 Where flapping herons wake
 The drowsy water rats;
 There we've hid our faery vats,
 Full of berrys
 And of reddest stolen cherries.
 Come away, O human child!
 To the waters and the wild
 With a faery, hand in hand,
 For the world's more full of weeping than you can understand.

Where the wave of moonlight glosses
 The dim gray sands with light,
 Far off by furthest Rosses
 We foot it all the night,
 Weaving olden dances
 Mingling hands and mingling glances
 Till the moon has taken flight;
 To and fro we leap
 And chase the frothy bubbles,
 While the world is full of troubles
 And anxious in its sleep.

Come away, O human child!
 To the waters and the wild
 With a faery, hand in hand,
 For the world's more full of weeping than you can understand.

Where the wandering water gushes
 From the hills above Glen-Car,
 In pools among the rushes
 That scarce could bathe a star,
 We seek for slumbering trout
 And whispering in their ears
 Give them unquiet dreams;
 Leaning softly out
 From ferns that drop their tears
 Over the young streams.
 Come away, O human child!
 To the waters and the wild
 With a faery, hand in hand,
 For the world's more full of weeping than you can understand.

Away with us he's going,
 The solemn-eyed:
 He'll hear no more the lowing
 Of the calves on the warm hillside
 Or the kettle on the hob
 Sing peace into his breast,
 Or see the brown mice bob
 Round and round the oatmeal chest.
 For he comes, the human child,
 To the waters and the wild
 With a faery, hand in hand,
 For the world's more full of weeping than he can understand.

Meru

Civilisation is hooped together, brought
 Under a rule, under the semblance of peace
 By manifold illusion; but man's life is thought,
 And he, despite his terror, cannot cease
 Ravening through century after century,
 Ravening, raging, and uprooting that he may come
 Into the desolation of reality:

Egypt and Greece, good-bye, and good-bye, Rome!
 Hermits upon Mount Meru or Everest,
 Caverned in night under the drifted snow,
 Or where that snow and winter's dreadful blast
 Beat down upon their naked bodies, know
 That day bring round the night, that before dawn
 His glory and his monuments are gone.

To A Friend Whose Work Has Come To Nothing

NOW all the truth is out,
 Be secret and take defeat
 From any brazen throat,
 For how can you compete,
 Being honour bred, with one 5
 Who, were it proved he lies,
 Were neither shamed in his own
 Nor in his neighbours' eyes?
 Bred to a harder thing
 Than Triumph, turn away 10
 And like a laughing string
 Whereon mad fingers play
 Amid a place of stone,
 Be secret and exult,
 Because of all things known 15
 That is most difficult.

Adam's Curse

We sat together at one summer's end,
 That beautiful mild woman, your close friend,
 And you and I, and talked of poetry.
 I said, 'A line will take us hours maybe;
 Yet if it does not seem a moment's thought,
 Our stitching and unstitching has been naught.
 Better go down upon your marrow-bones
 And scrub a kitchen pavement, or break stones
 Like an old pauper, in all kinds of weather;
 For to articulate sweet sounds together
 Is to work harder than all these, and yet

Be thought an idler by the noisy set
 Of bankers, schoolmasters, and clergymen
 The martyrs call the world.'
 And thereupon
 That beautiful mild woman for whose sake
 There's many a one shall find out all heartache
 On finding that her voice is sweet and low
 Replied, 'To be born woman is to know –
 Although they do not talk of it at school –
 That we must labour to be beautiful.'
 I said, 'It's certain there is no fine thing
 Since Adam's fall but needs much labouring.
 There have been lovers who thought love should be
 So much compounded of high courtesy
 That they would sigh and quote with learned looks
 Precedents out of beautiful old books;
 Yet now it seems an idle trade enough.'

We sat grown quiet at the name of love;
 We saw the last embers of daylight die,
 And in the trembling blue-green of the sky
 A moon, worn as if it had been a shell
 Washed by time's waters as they rose and fell
 About the stars and broke in days and years.

I had a thought for no one's but your ears:
 That you were beautiful, and that I strove
 To love you in the old high way of love;
 That it had all seemed happy, and yet we'd grown
 As weary-hearted as that hollow moon.