

Classic Poetry Series

Arthur Albert Dawson Bayldon

- poems -

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A Woman's Mood

I think to-night I could bear it all,
Even the arrow that cleft the core, --
Could I wait again for your swift footfall,
And your sunny face coming in at the door.
With the old frank look and the gay young smile,
And the ring of the words you used to say;
I could almost deem the pain worth while,
To greet you again in the olden way!

But you stand without in the dark and cold,
And I may not open the long closed door,
Nor call thro' the night, with the love of old, --
"Come into the warmth, as in nights of yore!"
I kneel alone in the red fire-glow,
And hear the wings of the wind sweep by;
You are out afar in the night, I know,
And the sigh of the wind is like a cry.

You are out afar -- and I wait within,
A grave-eyed woman whose pulse is slow;
The flames round the red coals softly spin,
And the lonely room's in a rosy glow.
The firelight falls on your vacant chair,
And the soft brown rug where you used to stand;
Dear, never again shall I see you there,
Nor lift my head for your seeking hand.

Yet sometimes still, and in spite of all,
I wistful look at the fastened door,
And wait again for the swift footfall,
And the gay young voice as in hours of yore.
It still seems strange to be here alone,
With the rising sob of the wind without;
The sound takes a deep, insisting tone,
Where the trees are swinging their arms about.

Its moaning reaches the sheltered room,
And thrills my heart with a sense of pain;
I walk to the window, and pierce the gloom,
With a yearning look that is all in vain.
You are out in a night of depths that hold
No promise of dawning for you and me,
And only a ghost from the life of old
Has come from the world of memory!

You are out evermore! God wills it so!
But ah! my spirit is yearning yet!
As I kneel alone by the red fire-glow,
My eyes grow dim with the old regret.
O when shall the aching throb grow still,
The warm love-life turn cold at the core!
Must I be watching, against my will,

For your banished face in the opening door?

It may be, dear, when the sequel's told
Of the story, read to its bitter close;
When the inner meanings of life unfold,
And the under-side of our being shows --
It may be then, in that truer light,
When all our knowledge has larger grown,
I may understand why you stray to-night,
And I am left, with the past, alone.

Arthur Albert Dawson Bayldon

An Old Bush Road

Dear old road, wheel-worn and broken,
Winding thro' the forest green,
Barred with shadow and with sunshine,
Misty vistas drawn between.
Grim, scarred bluegums ranged austerely,
Lifting blackened columns each
To the large, fair fields of azure,
Stretching ever out of reach.

See the hardy bracken growing
Round the fallen limbs of trees;
And the sharp reeds from the marshes,
Washed across the flooded leas;
And the olive rushes, leaning
All their pointed spears to cast
Slender shadows on the roadway,
While the faint, slow wind creeps past.

Ancient ruts grown round with grasses,
Soft old hollows filled with rain;
Rough, gnarled roots all twisting queerly,
Dark with many a weather-stain.
Lichens moist upon the fences,
Twiners close against the logs;
Yellow fungus in the thickets,
Vivid mosses in the bogs.

Dear old road, wheel-worn and broken,
What delights in thee I find!
Subtle charm and tender fancy,
Like a fragrance in the mind.
Thy old ways have set me dreaming,
And out-lived illusions rise,
And the soft leaves of the landscape
Open on my thoughtful eyes.

See the clump of wattles, standing
Dead and sapless on the rise;
When their boughs were full of beauty,
Even to uncaring eyes,
I was ever first to rifle
The soft branches of their store.
O the golden wealth of blossom
I shall gather there no more!

Now we reach the dun morasses,
Where the red moss used to grow,
Ruby-bright upon the water,
Floating on the weeds below.
Once the swan and wild-fowl glided
By those sedges, green and tall;
Here the booming bitterns nested;

Here we heard the curlews call.

Climb this hill and we have rambled
To the last turn of the way;
Here is where the bell-birds tinkled
Fairy chimes for me all day.
These were bells that never wearied,
Swung by ringers on the wing;
List! the elfin strains are waking,
Memory sets the bells a-ring!

Dear old road, no wonder, surely,
That I love thee like a friend!
And I grieve to think how surely
All thy loveliness will end.
For thy simple charm is passing,
And the turmoil of the street
Soon will mar thy sylvan silence
With the tramp of careless feet.

And for this I look more fondly
On the sunny landscape, seen
From the road, wheel-worn and broken,
Winding thro' the forest green,
Something still remains of Nature,
Thoughts of other days to bring: --
For the staunch old trees are standing,
And I hear the wild birds sing!

Arthur Albert Dawson Bayldon

Marlowe

With eastern banners flaunting in the breeze
Royal processions, sounding fife and gong
And showering jewels on the jostling throng,
March to the tramp of Marlowe's harmonies.
He drained life's brimming goblet to the lees;
He recked not that a peer superb and strong
Would tune great notes to his impassioned song
And top his cannonading lines with ease.
To the wild clash of cymbals we behold
The tragic ending of his youthful life;
The revelry of kisses bought with gold,
The jest and jealous rival and the strife,
A harlot weeping o'er a corpse scarce cold,
A scullion fleeing with a bloody knife.

Arthur Albert Dawson Bayldon

Sunset

The weary wind is slumbering on the wing:
Leaping from out meek twilight's purpling blue
Burns the proud star of eve as though it knew
It was the big king jewel quivering
On the black turban of advancing night.
In the dim west the soldiers of the sun
Strike all their royal colours one by one,
Reluctantly surrender every height.

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The Sea

Ere Greece soared, showering sovranities of light,
Ere Rome shook earth with her tremendous tread,
Ere yon blue-feasting sun-god burst blood-red,
Beneath thee slept thy prodigy, O Night!
Aeons have ta'en like dreams their strange, slow flight,
And vastest, tiniest, creatures paved her bed,
E'en cities sapped by the usurping spread
Of her imperious waves have sunk from sight
Since she first chanted her colossal psalms
That swell and sink beneath the listening stars;
Oft, as with myriad drums beating to arms,
She thunders out the grandeur of her wars;
Then shifts through moaning moods her wizard charms
Of slow flutes and caressing, gay guitars.

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To Poesy

These vessels of verse, O Great Goddess, are filled with invisible tears,
With the sobs and sweat of my spirit and her desolate brooding for years;
See, I lay them -- not on thine altar, for they are unpolished and plain,
Not rounded enough by the potter, too much burnt in the furnace of pain;
But here in the dust, in the shadow, with a sudden wild leap of the heart
I kneel to tenderly kiss them, then in silence arise to depart.

I linger awhile at the portal with the light of the crimsoning sun
On my wreathless brow bearing the badges of battles I've fought in not won.
At the sound of the trumpet I've ever been found in thy thin fighting line,
And the weapons I've secretly sharpened have flashed in defence of thy shrine.
I've recked not of failure and losses, nor shrunk from the soilure of strife
For thy magical glamour was on me and art is the moonlight of life.

I move from the threshold, Great Goddess, with steps meditative and slow;
Night steals like a dream to the landscape and slips like a pall
 o'er its glow.
I carry no lamp in my bosom and dwindling in gloom is the track,
No token of man's recognition to prompt me to ever turn back.
I strike eastward to meet the great day-dawn with the soul of my soul
 by my side,
My goal though unknown is assured me, and the planet of Love is my guide.

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