

Classic Poetry Series

Edith Nesbit

- poems -

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A Tragedy

Among his books he sits all day
To think and read and write;
He does not smell the new-mown hay,
The roses red and white.

I walk among them all alone,
His silly, stupid wife;
The world seems tasteless, dead and done -
An empty thing is life.

At night his window casts a square
Of light upon the lawn;
I sometimes walk and watch it there
Until the chill of dawn.

I have no brain to understand
The books he loves to read;
I only have a heart and hand
He does not seem to need.

He calls me "Child" - lays on my hair
Thin fingers, cold and mild;
Oh! God of Love, who answers prayer,
I wish I were a child!

And no one sees and no one knows
(He least would know or see),
That ere Love gathers next year's rose
Death will have gathered me.

Edith Nesbit

Appeal

Daphnis dearest, wherefore weave me
Webs of lies lest truth should grieve me?
I could pardon much, believe me:
Dower me, Daphnis, or bereave me,
Kiss me, kill me, love me, leave me,-
Damn me, dear, but don't deceive me!

Edith Nesbit

In Trouble

1 It's all for nothing: I've lost im now.
2 I suppose it ad to be:
3 But oh I never thought it of im,
4 Nor e never thought it of me.
5 And all for a kiss on your evening out
6 An a field where the grass was down ...
7 And e as gone to God-knows-where,
8 And I may go on the town.

9 The worst of all was the thing e said
10 The night that e went away:
11 He said e'd a married me right enough
12 If I adn't a been so gay.
13 Me, gay! When I'd cried, and I'd asked him not,
14 But e said e loved me so;
15 An whatever e wanted seemed right to me ...
16 An how was a girl to know?

17 Well, the river is deep, and drowned folk sleep sound,
18 An it might be the best to do;
19 But when he made me a light-o-love
20 He made me a mother too.
21 I've ad enough sin to last my time,
22 If twas sin as I got it by,
23 But it aint no sin to stand by his kid
24 An work for it till I die.

25 But oh the long days and the death-long nights
26 When I feel it move and turn,
27 And cry alone in my single bed
28 And count what a girl can earn
29 To buy the baby the bits of things
30 He ought to a bought, by rights;
31 And wonder whether e thinks of Us ...
32 And if e sleeps sound o' nights.

Edith Nesbit

St. Valentine's Day

The South is a dream of flowers
With a jewel for sky and sea,
Rose-crowns for the dancing hours,
Gold fruits upon every tree;
But cold from the North The wind blows forth
That blows my love to me.
The stars in the South are gold
Like lamps between sky and sea;
The flowers that the forests hold.
Like stars between tree and tree;
But little and white Is the pale moon's light
That lights my love to me.
In the South the orange grove
Makes dusk by the dusky sea,
White palaces wrought for love
Gleam white between tree and tree,
But under bare boughs Is the little house
Warm-lit for my love and me.

Edith Nesbit

The Despot

1 The garden mould was damp and chill,
2 Winter had had his brutal will
3 Since over all the year's content
4 His devastating legions went.

5 Then Spring's bright banners came: there woke
6 Millions of little growing folk
7 Who thrilled to know the winter done,
8 Gave thanks, and strove towards the sun.

9 Not so the elect; reserved, and slow
10 To trust a stranger-sun and grow,
11 They hesitated, cowered and hid
12 Waiting to see what others did.

13 Yet even they, a little, grew,
14 Put out prim leaves to day and dew,
15 And lifted level formal heads
16 In their appointed garden beds.

17 The gardener came: he coldly loved
18 The flowers that lived as he approved,
19 That duly, decorously grew
20 As he, the despot, meant them to.

21 He saw the wildlings flower more brave
22 And bright than any cultured slave;
23 Yet, since he had not set them there,
24 He hated them for being fair.

25 So he uprooted, one by one
26 The free things that had loved the sun,
27 The happy, eager, fruitful seeds
28 That had not known that they were weeds.

Edith Nesbit

The Island

Does the wind sing in your ears at night, in the town,
Rattling the windows and doors of the cheap-built place?
Do you hear its song as it flies over marsh and down?
Do you feel the kiss that the wind leaves here on my face?
Or, wrapt in a lamplit quiet, do you restrain
Thoughts that would take the wind's way hither to me,
And bid them rest safe-anchored, nor tempt again
The tumult, and torment, and passion that live in the sea?

I, for my part, when the wind sings loud in its might,
I bid it hush---nor awaken again the storm
That swept my heart out to sea on a moonless night,
And dashed it ashore on an island wondrous and warm
Where all things fair and forbidden for ever flower,
Where the worst of life is a dream, and the best comes true,
Where the harvest of years was reaped in a single hour
And the gods, for once, were honest with me and you.

I will not hear when the wind and the sea cry out,
I will not trust again to the hurrying wind,
I will not swim again in a sea of doubt,
And reach that shore with the world left well behind;
But you,---I would have you listen to every call
Of the changing wind, as it blows over marsh and main,
And heap life's joys in your hands, and offer them all,
If only your feet might touch that island again!

Edith Nesbit

The Kiss

The snow is white on wood and wold,
The wind is in the firs,
So dead my heart is with the cold,
No pulse within it stirs,
Even to see your face, my dear,
Your face that was my sun;
There is no spring this bitter year,
And summer's dreams are done.

The snakes that lie about my heart
Are in their wintry sleep;
Their fangs no more deal sting and smart,
No more they curl and creep.
Love with the summer ceased to be;
The frost is firm and fast.
God keep the summer far from me,
And let the snakes' sleep last!

Touch of your hand could not suffice
To waken them once more;
Nor could the sunshine of your eyes
A ruined spring restore.
But ah-your lips! You know the rest:
The snows are summer rain,
My eyes are wet, and in my breast
The snakes' fangs meet again.

Edith Nesbit

Villeggiature

My window, framed in pear-tree bloom,
White-curtained shone, and softly lighted:
So, by the pear-tree, to my room
Your ghost last night climbed uninvited.

Your solid self, long leagues away,
Deep in dull books, had hardly missed me;
And yet you found this Romeo's way,
And through the blossom climbed and kissed me.

I watched the still and dewy lawn,
The pear-tree boughs hung white above you;
I listened to you till the dawn,
And half forgot I did not love you.

Oh, dear! what pretty things you said,
What pearls of song you threaded for me!
I did not-till your ghost had fled-
Remember how you always bore me!

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