

Classic Poetry Series

Ernest Myers

- poems -

Publication Date:

2012

Publisher:

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

Ernest Myers (13 October 1844 - 25 November 1921)

Ernest James Myers was a poet, Classicist and author.

Early Life

Ernest James Myers was born October 13th, 1844 at Keswick to Frederic Myers and Susan Harriet Myers. He studied at Balliol College Oxford and Cheltenham. He taught for three years at Wadham College, before moving to London for twenty years. While in London, Myers worked as a translator an editor, and also wed Nora Margaret Lodge, with whom he had five children.

From 1876 to 1881, he served as Secretary of the London Society for the Extension of University Teaching. Myers also worked as a volunteer for both the Charity Organization Society and the Society for Protection of Women and Children. In 1891, the Myers family left London for Chislehurst. Their elder son - who may have been the subject of Myers' poem *Infant Eyes* - died as a soldier in France in 1918, the last year of World War I.

Myers maintained a love of physical exercise throughout his life, including swimming, riding, lawn tennis, walking, and golf. He died on 25 November 1921 at Etchingham, Sussex, aged 77.

Writing

Myers published poetry in *The Puritans* (1869), translated the *Odes of Pindar* (1874), followed in 1877 by a volume entitled *Poems*. A further, larger volume of his own poetry followed in 1880, *The Defence of Rome and Other Poems*, and he contributed an article on Aeschylus to a collection of Classical essays edited by Evelyn Abbott.

In 1882 he collaborated with Andrew Lang and Walter Leaf on books XVII-XXIV of Homer's *Iliad* (a companion volume to a translation of the *Odyssey*).

Further volumes of poetry followed in the coming years: *The Judgement of Prometheus* (1886); and *Gathered Poems* (1904). He also wrote *Lord Althorp: a biography* (1890).

Etsi Omnes, Ego Non

HERE where under earth his head
Finds a last and lonely bed,
Let him speak upon the stone:
Etsi omnes, ego non.

Here he shall not know the eyes
Bent upon their sordid prize
Earthward ever, nor the beat
Of the hurrying faithless feet.

None to make him perfect cheer
Join'd him on his journey drear;
Some too soon, who fell away;
Some too late, who mourn to-day.

Yet while comrades one by one
Made denial and were gone,
Not the less he labor'd on:
Etsi omnes, ego non.

Surely his were heart and mind
Meet for converse with his kind,
Light of genial fancy free,
Grace of sweetest sympathy.

But his soul had other scope,
Holden of a larger hope,
Larger hope and larger love.
Meat to eat men knew not of:

Knew not, know not—yet shall sound
From this place of holy ground
Even this legend thereupon,
Etsi omnes, ego non.

Ernest Myers

Gordon

I

ON through the Libyan sand
Rolls ever, mile on mile,
League on long league, cleaving the rainless land,
Fed by no friendly wave, the immemorial Nile.

II

Down through the cloudless air,
Undimm'd, from heaven's sheer height,
Bend their inscrutable gaze, austere and bare,
In long-proceeding pomp, the stars of Libyan night.

III

Beneath the stars, beside the unpausing flood,
Earth trembles at the wandering lion's roar;
Trembles again, when in blind thirst of blood
Sweep the wild tribes along the startled shore.

IV

They sweep and surge and struggle, and are gone:
The mournful desert silence reigns again,
The immemorial River rolleth on,
The order'd stars gaze blank upon the plain.

V

O awful Presence of the lonely Nile,
O awful Presence of the starry sky,
Lo, in this little while
Unto the mind's trueseeing inward eye
There hath arisen there
Another haunting Presence as sublime,
As great, as sternly fair;
Yea, rather fairer far
Than stream, or sky, or star,
To live while star shall burn or river roll,
Unmarr'd by marring Time,
The crown of Being, a heroic soul.

VI

Beyond the weltering tides of worldly change
He saw the invisible things, 30
The eternal Forms of Beauty and of Right;
Wherewith well pleas'd his spirit wont to range,
Rapt with divine delight,
Richer than empires, royaler than kings.

VII

Lover of children, lord of fiery fight,
Saviour of empires, servant of the poor,
Not in the sordid scales of earth, unsure,
Deprav'd, adulterate,
He measur'd small and great,

But by some righteous balance wrought in heaven,
To his pure hand by Powers empyreal given;
Therewith, by men unmov'd, as God he judged aright.

VIII

As on the broad sweet-water'd river tost
Falls some poor grain of salt,
And melts to naught, nor leaves embittering trace;
As in the o'er-arching vault
With unrepell'd assault
A cloudy climbing vapor, lightly lost,
Vanisheth utterly in the starry space;
So from our thought, when his enthron'd estate
We inly contemplate,
All wrangling phantoms fade, and leave us face to face.

IX

Dwell in us, sacred spirit, as in thee
Dwelt the eternal Love, the eternal Life,
Nor dwelt in only thee; not thee alone
We honor reverently,
But in thee all who in some succoring strife,
By day or dark, world-witness'd or unknown,
Crush'd by the crowd, or in late harvest hail'd,
Warring thy war have triumph'd, or have fail'd.

X

Nay, but not only there
Broods thy great Presence, o'er the Libyan plain.
It haunts a kindlier clime, a dearer air,
The liberal air of England, thy lov'd home.
Thou through her sunlit clouds and flying rain
Breathe, and all winds that sweep her island shore—
Rough fields of riven foam,
Where in stern watch her guardian breakers roar.
Ay, thron'd with all her mighty memories,
Wherefrom her nobler sons their nurture draw,
With all of good or great
For aye incorporate
That rears her race to faith and generous shame,
To high-aspiring awe,
To hate implacable of thick thronging lies,
To scorn of gold and gauds and clamorous fame;
With all we guard most dear and most divine,
All records rank'd with thine,
Here be thy home, brave soul, thy undecaying shrine.

Ernest Myers

Infant Eyes

Blood of my blood, bone of my bone,
Heart of my being's heart,
Strange visitant, yet very son;
All this, and more, thou art.

In thy soft lineaments I trace,
More winning daily grown,
The sweetness of thy mother's face
Transfiguring my own.

That grave but all untroubled gaze,
So rapt yet never dim,
Seems following o'er their starry ways
The wings of cherubim.

Two worlds man hardly may descry,
(For manhood clouds them o'er),
Commingled to mine inward eye
Are shadowed forth once more:

That lost world, whither man's regret
With fictive fancy turns;
That world to come, where brighter yet
The star of promise burns.

Time and his weary offspring Care
Fade in that gaze away;
One moment mystically fair
Lives on, one timeless day.

Ernest Myers

The Seamaids' Music

One moment the boy, as he wander'd by night
Where the far spreading foam in the moonbeam was white,
One moment he caught on the breath of the breeze
The voice of the sisters that sing in the seas.

One moment, no more: though the boy linger'd long,
No more might he hear of the mermaidens' song,
But the pine-woods behind him moan'd low from the land,
And the ripple gush'd soft at his feet on the sand.

Yet or ever they ceas'd, the strange sound of their joy
Had lighted a light in the breast of the boy:
And the seeds of a wonder, a splendor to be
Had been breath'd through his soul from the songs of the sea.

Ernest Myers