

Classic Poetry Series

John Boyle O'Reilly

- poems -

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A White Rose

THE red rose whispers of passion,
And the white rose breathes of love;
O, the red rose is a falcon,
And the white rose is a dove.

But I send you a cream-white rosebud
With a flush on its petal tips;
For the love that is purest and sweetest
Has a kiss of desire on the lips

John Boyle O'Reilly

At Best

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The faithful helm commands the keel,
From port to port fair breezes blow;
But the ship must sail the convex sea,
Nor may she straighter go.

So, man to man; in fair accord,
On thought and will the winds may wait;
But the world will bend the passing word,
Though its shortest course be straight.

From soul to soul the shortest line
At best will bended be:
The ship that holds the straightest course
Still sails the convex sea.

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John Boyle O'Reilly

Experience

THE world was made when a man was born,
He must taste for himself the forbidden springs;
He can never take warning from old-fashion'd things;
He must fight as a boy, he must drink as a youth,
Of the friend of his soul; he must laugh to scorn
The hints of deceit in a woman's eyes--
They are clear as the wells of Paradise.

And so he goes on till the world grows old,
Till his tongue has grown cautious, his heart has grown cold,
Till the smile leaves his mouth, till the ring leaves his laugh,
And he shirks the bright headache you ask him to quaff.
He grows formal with men, and with women polite,
And distrustful of both when they're out of his sight.
Then he eats for his palate and drinks for his head,
And loves for his pleasure,--and 'tis time he was dead.

John Boyle O'Reilly