

Classic Poetry Series

Wilfrid Scawen Blunt

- poems -

Publication Date:

2004

Publisher:

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

Gibraltar

SEVEN weeks of sea, and twice seven days of storm
Upon the huge Atlantic, and once more
We ride into still water and the calm
Of a sweet evening, screen'd by either shore
Of Spain and Barbary. Our toils are o'er,
Our exile is accomplish'd. Once again
We look on Europe, mistress as of yore
Of the fair earth and of the hearts of men.

Ay, this is the famed rock which Hercules
And Goth and Moor bequeath'd us. At this door
England stands sentry. God! to hear the shrill
Sweet treble of her fifes upon the breeze,
And at the summons of the rock gun's roar
To see her red coats marching from the hill!

Wilfrid Scawen Blunt

Laughter And Death

THERE is no laughter in the natural world
Of beast or fish or bird, though no sad doubt
Of their futurity to them unfurled
Has dared to check the mirth-compelling shout.
The lion roars his solemn thunder out
To the sleeping woods. The eagle screams her cry.
Even the lark must strain a serious throat
To hurl his blest defiance at the sky.
Fear, anger, jealousy, have found a voice.
Love's pain or rapture the brute bosoms swell.
Nature has symbols for her nobler joys,
Her nobler sorrows. Who had dared foretell
That only man, by some sad mockery,
Should learn to laugh who learns that he must die?

Wilfrid Scawen Blunt

Song

O FLY not, Pleasure, pleasant-hearted Pleasure;
Fold me thy wings, I prithee, yet and stay:
For my heart no measure
Knows, nor other treasure
To buy a garland for my love to-day.

And thou, too, Sorrow, tender-hearted Sorrow,
Thou gray-eyed mourner, fly not yet away:
For I fain would borrow
Thy sad weeds to-morrow,
To make a mourning for love's yesterday.

The voice of Pity, Time's divine dear Pity,
Moved me to tears: I dared not say them nay,
But passed forth from the city,
Making thus my ditty
Of fair love lost for ever and a day.

Wilfrid Scawen Blunt

St. Valentine's Day

TO-DAY, all day, I rode upon the down,
With hounds and horsemen, a brave company
On this side in its glory lay the sea,
On that the Sussex weald, a sea of brown.
The wind was light, and brightly the sun shone,
And still we gallop'd on from gorse to gorse:
And once, when check'd, a thrush sang, and my horse
Prick'd his quick ears as to a sound unknown.

I knew the Spring was come. I knew it even
Better than all by this, that through my chase
In bush and stone and hill and sea and heaven
I seem'd to see and follow still your face.
Your face my quarry was. For it I rode,
My horse a thing of wings, myself a god.

Wilfrid Scawen Blunt

The Desolate City

DARK to me is the earth. Dark to me are the heavens.

Where is she that I loved, the woman with eyes like stars?
Desolate are the streets. Desolate is the city.

A city taken by storm, where none are left but the slain.

Sadly I rose at dawn, undid the latch of my shutters,
Thinking to let in light, but I only let in love.

Birds in the boughs were awake; I listen'd to their chaunting;
Each one sang to his love; only I was alone.

This, I said in my heart, is the hour of life and of pleasure.

Now each creature on earth has his joy, and lives in the sun,
Each in another's eyes finds light, the light of compassion,
This is the moment of pity, this is the moment of love.

Speak, O desolate city! Speak, O silence in sadness!

Where is she that I loved in my strength, that spoke to my soul?
Where are those passionate eyes that appeal'd to my eyes in passion?
Where is the mouth that kiss'd me, the breast I laid to my own?

Speak, thou soul of my soul, for rage in my heart is kindled.

Tell me, where didst thou flee in the day of destruction and fear?
See, my arms still enfold thee, enfolding thus all heaven,
See, my desire is fulfill'd in thee, for it fills the earth.

Thus in my grief I lamented. Then turn'd I from the window,
Turn'd to the stair, and the open door, and the empty street,
Crying aloud in my grief, for there was none to chide me,
None to mock my weakness, none to behold my tears.

Groping I went, as blind. I sought her house, my beloved's.

There I stopp'd at the silent door, and listen'd and tried the
latch.

Love, I cried, dost thou slumber? This is no hour for slumber,
This is the hour of love, and love I bring in my hand.

I knew the house, with its windows barr'd, and its leafless fig-tree,
Climbing round by the doorstep, the only one in the street;

I knew where my hope had climb'd to its goal and there encircled
All that those desolate walls once held, my beloved's heart.

There in my grief she consoled me. She loved me when I loved not.

She put her hand in my hand, and set her lips to my lips.
She told me all her pain and show'd me all her trouble.
I, like a fool, scarce heard, hardly return'd her kiss.

Love, thy eyes were like torches. They changed as I beheld them.

Love, thy lips were like gems, the seal thou settest on my life.
Love, if I loved not then, behold this hour thy vengeance;
This is the fruit of thy love and thee, the unwise grown wise.

Weeping strangled my voice. I call'd out, but none answer'd;

Blindly the windows gazed back at me, dumbly the door;
See whom I love, who loved me, look'd not on my yearning,
Gave me no more her hands to kiss, show'd me no more her soul.

Therefore the earth is dark to me, the sunlight blackness,
Therefore I go in tears and alone, by night and day;
Therefore I find no love in heaven, no light, no beauty,
A heaven taken by storm, where none are left but the slain!

Wilfrid Scawen Blunt

The Old Squire

I LIKE the hunting of the hare
Better than that of the fox;
I like the joyous morning air,
And the crowing of the cocks.

I like the calm of the early fields,
The ducks asleep by the lake,
The quiet hour which Nature yields
Before mankind is awake.

I like the pheasants and feeding things
Of the unsuspecting morn;
I like the flap of the wood-pigeon's wings
As she rises from the corn.

I like the blackbird's shriek, and his rush
From the turnips as I pass by,
And the partridge hiding her head in a bush,
For her young ones cannot fly.

I like these things, and I like to ride,
When all the world is in bed,
To the top of the hill where the sky grows wide,
And where the sun grows red.

The beagles at my horse heels trot
In silence after me;
There 's Ruby, Roger, Diamond, Dot,
Old Slut and Margery,—

A score of names well used, and dear,
The names my childhood knew;
The horn, with which I rouse their cheer,
Is the horn my father blew.

I like the hunting of the hare
Better than that of the fox;
The new world still is all less fair
Than the old world it mocks.

I covet not a wider range
Than these dear manors give;
I take my pleasures without change,
And as I lived I live.

I leave my neighbors to their thought;
My choice it is, and pride,
On my own lands to find my sport,
In my own fields to ride.

The hare herself no better loves
The field where she was bred,

Than I the habit of these groves,
My own inherited.

I know my quarries every one,
The meuse where she sits low;
The road she chose to-day was run
A hundred years ago.

The lags, the gills, the forest ways,
The hedgerows one and all,
These are the kingdoms of my chase,
And bounded by my wall;

Nor has the world a better thing,
Though one should search it round,
Than thus to live one's own sole king,
Upon one's own sole ground.

I like the hunting of the hare;
It brings me, day by day,
The memory of old days as fair,
With dead men passed away.

To these, as homeward still I ply
And pass the churchyard gate,
Where all are laid as I must lie,
I stop and raise my hat.

I like the hunting of the hare;
New sports I hold in scorn.
I like to be as my fathers were,
In the days e'er I was born.

Wilfrid Scawen Blunt

The Two Highwaymen

I LONG have had a quarrel set with Time
Because he robb'd me. Every day of life
Was wrested from me after bitter strife:
I never yet could see the sun go down
But I was angry in my heart, nor hear
The leaves fall in the wind without a tear
Over the dying summer. I have known
No truce with Time nor Time's accomplice, Death.

The fair world is the witness of a crime
Repeated every hour. For life and breath
Are sweet to all who live; and bitterly
The voices of these robbers of the heath
Sound in each ear and chill the passer-by.
--What have we done to thee, thou monstrous Time?
What have we done to Death that we must die?

Wilfrid Scawen Blunt

To Manon

Hi There! I see you're enjoying the site, and just wanted to extend an invitation to register for our free site. The members of oldpoetry strive to make this a fun place to learn and share - hope you join us! - Kevin

Wilfrid Scawen Blunt

To Manon, on his Fortune in loving Her

I DID not choose thee, dearest. It was Love
That made the choice, not I. Mine eyes were blind
As a rude shepherd's who to some lone grove
His offering brings and cares not at what shrine
He bends his knee. The gifts alone were mine;
The rest was Love's. He took me by the hand,
And fired the sacrifice, and poured the wine,
And spoke the words I might not understand.

I was unwise in all but the dear chance
Which was my fortune, and the blind desire
Which led my foolish steps to Love's abode,
And youth's sublime unreason'd prescience
Which raised an altar and inscribed in fire
Its dedication To the Unknown God.

Wilfrid Scawen Blunt

To the Same

I WOULD I had thy courage, dear, to face
This bankruptcy of love, and greet despair
With smiling eyes and unconcerned embrace,
And these few words of banter at "dull care."
I would that I could sing and comb my hair
Like thee the morning through, and choose my dress,
And gravely argue what I best should wear,
A shade of ribbon or a fold of lace.
I would I had thy courage and thy peace,
Peace passing understanding; that mine eyes
Could find forgetfulness like thine in sleep;
That all the past for me like thee could cease
And leave me cheerfully, sublimely wise,
Like David with washed face who ceased to weep.

Wilfrid Scawen Blunt

With Esther

HE who has once been happy is for aye
Out of destruction's reach. His fortune then
Holds nothing secret; and Eternity,
Which is a mystery to other men,
Has like a woman given him its joy.
Time is his conquest. Life, if it should fret.
Has paid him tribute. He can bear to die,
He who has once been happy! When I set
The world before me and survey its range,
Its mean ambitions, its scant fantasies,
The shreds of pleasure which for lack of change
Men wrap around them and call happiness,
The poor delights which are the tale and sum
Of the world's courage in its martyrdom;

When I hear laughter from a tavern door,
When I see crowds agape and in the rain
Watching on tiptoe and with stifled roar
To see a rocket fired or a bull slain,
When misers handle gold, when orators
Touch strong men's hearts with glory till they weep,
When cities deck their streets for barren wars
Which have laid waste their youth, and when I keep
Calmly the count of my own life and see
On what poor stuff my manhood's dreams were fed
Till I too learn'd what dole of vanity
Will serve a human soul for daily bread,
--Then I remember that I once was young
And lived with Esther the world's gods among.

Wilfrid Scawen Blunt

Written at Florence

O WORLD, in very truth thou art too young;
When wilt thou learn to wear the garb of age?
World, with thy covering of yellow flowers,
Hast thou forgot what generations sprung
Out of thy loins and loved thee and are gone?
Hast thou no place in all their heritage
Where thou dost only weep, that I may come
Nor fear the mockery of thy yellow flowers?

O world, in very truth thou art too young.
The heroic wealth of passionate emprise
Built thee fair cities for thy naked plains:
How hast thou set thy summer growth among
The broken stones which were their palaces!
Hast thou forgot the darkness where he lies
Who made thee beautiful, or have thy bees
Found out his grave to build their honeycombs?

O world, in very truth thou art too young:
They gave thee love who measured out thy skies,
And, when they found for thee another star,
Who made a festival and straightway hung
The jewel on thy neck. O merry world,
Hast thou forgot the glory of those eyes
Which first look'd love in thine? Thou hast not furl'd
One banner of thy bridal car for them.

O world, in very truth thou art too young.
There was a voice which sang about thy spring,
Till winter froze the sweetness of his lips,
And lo, the worms had hardly left his tongue
Before thy nightingales were come again.
O world, what courage hast thou thus to sing?
Say, has thy merriment no secret pain,
No sudden weariness that thou art young?

Wilfrid Scawen Blunt