

**Classic Poetry Series**

# **William Baylebridge**

**- poems -**

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## **After the Storm**

The storm is done--the lightning with its lust  
To rend the unhallowed dome in ruin dire;  
The purple heaps, from the rank chaos thrust  
On sheets of fell and inauspicious fire;  
The thunder bellowing loud on every bound;  
The hissing bolt, so tossed as to complete  
All permutations of Satanic sound;  
The flood that opened heaven and ransomed it.  
Benign now is that beatific blue.  
The flame that fires the hill is now remote  
From aught in evil. Clemency anew  
--Crowns every leaf, and sings in every throat.  
Shall, then, the rage of earth and heaven depart,  
And not the rancour of the unsensing heart?

William Baylebridge

## **Flesh and Spirit**

No! 'twas the questing dream that first achieved her--  
More sensed for knowing no material part,  
More real that no false outward eye perceived her,  
Too gross, but that pure eye within my heart.  
Nor feigned I, as my spirit so embraced her,  
These arms encumbered might; ah! could they too,  
Would she not fade as vision e'er effaced her,  
As loves in this weak flesh so often do?  
In flesh she might escape me, might expire  
In the vicissitudes through flesh that range;  
But, being the shadow of my heart's desire,  
She could not pass beyond me, could not change.  
O paradox! Want food--you are richer fed!  
Lack the coarse crumbs--you find diviner bread!

William Baylebridge

## Life and death

This world is driven by two contending powers--  
Love, that coerceth Heaven to dwell with dust,  
And that dire pledge of Hell's self-perjured Lust--  
And as we list must Heaven and Hell be ours.  
Not light the election runs: lo, each devours  
That savour set in each, while equal gust  
Each uses; yet our choice support we must--  
Blest wine or, this rejected, sweat that sours.  
Love, oft through Hell that seems, acclaims what Heaven!  
But Lust, through seeming Heaven, with easy breath  
Slides on to Hell, how soon, how richly given!  
If Love to heavenly state so quickeneth,  
While Lust must e'er in cheating Hell be shriven,  
They sponsor what, these powers, but Life and Death?

William Baylebridge

## Love's Saint

Some lip will use her name--a rapt surprise,  
Passing the heart's set ward, upon me steals.  
One word, to me, doth one saint canonize;  
And all the acquiescence of earth and heaven it seals.  
I name that name, and doubt for me has ending,  
And Sorrow, strong of old, forgets her part;  
The battle-cry it is, to God ascending,  
For all the triumphs of my labouring heart.  
Ah, what is beauty's charge, what true, what dearest,  
But that one lovely word will speak it home?  
To splendour, to humility, 'tis nearest;  
And the last depths of longing it can plumb.  
The plaudit of all joy, all good it bears;  
I breathe it, and a breath completes my prayers.

William Baylebridge

## Proverbs

One continent, one creed, one skin -  
Our health and savour lie therein.  
From wars and heavy things this grace is won -  
They urge our pulse to unison.  
Shall this remoteness hinder thee?  
Pluck thence a call to sovereignty -  
Thou centre of the world to be!  
The servile State is what? a prison - one  
For superseded life or, strictly, none.  
Where the ignoble State is sanctified  
See universal suicide.  
Not numbers shall the State exalt  
If civic virtue be at fault.  
If virtue grounds but on negation,  
Seek other ground on which to build a nation.  
The larger good, supplanting this, is gall -  
How else? - to the overreaching of the small.  
A "fortune" won: a speciousness the State  
Will blot as illegitimate.  
National growth how presses! Shall it be  
For creed or caste put off whose prophets see  
No virtue in the essential unity?  
That knife for thee - thou help'st them sharpen it.  
Where is thy spirit? where thy wit?  
'Tis better, much! But who has felt and proved,  
Till hate the foe hath grappled, how he loved?  
What takes its stature, whole, erect,  
Till measured in the opposed effect?  
Too much we can respect the fence  
Of aptness and expedience.  
Why, pledged there, of the sepulchre complain?  
Earth shall fling out its flower again.  
Creation, life's one satisfaction,  
Stumbles first in the abstraction.  
Who move not to a goal defined  
Will speed as do their next of kin, the blind.  
What makes the compromising bosom sure  
Hath the ordained investiture.  
What here is visioned, fact will prove -  
As we put on the means, and move.

William Baylebridge

## **To winter in the Midst of his Reign**

Thou grim physician, armed with septic shears,  
Thou that dissemblest even in death's repose  
Earth's quiet pulse and her remedial throes,  
How dull thy visage on this day appears!  
Let now the dismal heaven give vent, its tears  
Come frozen ever; no gale coeval blows  
Filled with the ravaged perfume of the rose;  
And keep not all fair things forsaken biers?  
O haste, then, spiritless minister, thy pains  
To charge the sources of the unfruitful earth  
For harvests blest in wood, in plot and lawn!  
O laggard, on! till fire re-flood the veins  
Of Spring here, ay, to trip the vales with Mirth,  
As, long night over, does the exulting dawn!

William Baylebridge

## True Being

True Being

Rich hour! is not thy gift a radiant thing?  
The truth here blazoned in this marble and gold,  
Here writ in this refulgence manifold,  
Hath sunned my groped redemption: lo, I fling--  
How lightly!--off ungraced desire; I cling  
To that faith firm this splendour hath retold:  
My spirit, towered, doth its sheer track behold,  
And shakes the dust of chaos from its wing.  
Life that is death, riches named with a lie,  
This fane would, that the sum of both employs,  
Your tears unseal if ignorance could weep.  
Is not true being locked in tombs? and die  
Must not we in death ere life's innater joys  
We may, as I now, clasp as in a sleep?

William Baylebridge