Classic Poetry Series

William Watson

- poems -

Publication Date:

2004

Publisher:

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

England and Her Colonies

SHE stands, a thousand-wintered tree,
 By countless morns impearled;
Her broad roots coil beneath the sea,
 Her branches sweep the world;
Her seeds, by careless winds conveyed,
 Clothe the remotest strand
With forests from her scatterings made,
New nations fostered in her shade,
 And linking land with land.

O ye by wandering tempest sown
 ’Neath every alien star,
Forget not whence the breath was blown
 That wafted you afar!
For ye are still her ancient seed
 On younger soil let fall—
Children of Britain’s island-breed,
To whom the Mother in her need
 Perchance may one day call.

William Watson

Ode in May

LET me go forth, and share
   The overflowing Sun
   With one wise friend, or one
Better than wise, being fair,
Where the pewit wheels and dips
   On heights of bracken and ling,
And Earth, unto her leaflet tips,
   Tingles with the Spring.

What is so sweet and dear
   As a prosperous morn in May,
   The confident prime of the day,
And the dauntless youth of the year,
When nothing that asks for bliss,
   Asking aright, is denied,
And half of the world a bridegroom is,
   And half of the world a bride?

The Song of Mingling flows,
   Grave, ceremonial, pure,
   As once, from lips that endure,
The cosmic descant rose,
When the temporal lord of life,
   Going his golden way,
Had taken a wondrous maid to wife
   That long had said him nay.

For of old the Sun, our sire,
   Came wooing the mother of men,
   Earth, that was virginal then,
Vestal fire to his fire.
Silent her bosom and coy,
   But the strong god sued and press'd;
And born of their starry nuptial joy
   Are all that drink of her breast.

And the triumph of him that begot,
   And the travail of her that bore,
   Behold they are evermore
As warp and weft in our lot.
We are children of splendour and flame,
   Of shuddering, also, and tears.
Magnificent out of the dust we came,
   And abject from the Spheres.

O bright irresistible lord!
   We are fruit of Earth's womb, each one,
   And fruit of thy loins, O Sun,
Whence first was the seed outpour'd.
To thee as our Father we bow,
   Forbidden thy Father to see,
Who is older and greater than thou, as thou

Art greater and older than we.

Thou art but as a word of his speech;
Thou art but as a wave of his hand;
Thou art brief as a glitter of sand
'Twixt tide and tide on his beach;
Thou art less than a spark of his fire,
Or a moment's mood of his soul:
Thou art lost in the notes on the lips of his choir
That chant the chant of the Whole.

William Watson

Song

APRIL, April,
Laugh thy girlish laughter;
Then, the moment after,
Weep thy girlish tears!
April, that mine ears
Like a lover greetest,
If I tell thee, sweetest,
All my hopes and fears,
April, April,
Laugh thy golden laughter,
But, the moment after,
Weep thy golden tears!

William Watson

The Great Misgiving

'NOT ours,' say some, 'the thought of death to dread;
   Asking no heaven, we fear no fabled hell:
Life is a feast, and we have banqueted--
   Shall not the worms as well?

'The after-silence, when the feast is o'er,
   And void the places where the minstrels stood,
Differs in nought from what hath been before,
   And is nor ill nor good.'

Ah, but the Apparition--the dumb sign--
   The beckoning finger bidding me forgo
The fellowship, the converse, and the wine,
   The songs, the festal glow!

And ah, to know not, while with friends I sit,
   And while the purple joy is pass'd about,
Whether 'tis ampler day divinelier lit
   Or homeless night without;

And whether, stepping forth, my soul shall see
   New prospects, or fall sheer--a blinded thing!
There is, O grave, thy hourly victory,
   And there, O death, thy sting.

William Watson