

Classic Poetry Series

**Arthur William Edgar
O'Shaughnessy
- poems -**

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Arthur William Edgar O'Shaughnessy(14 March 1844 – 30 January 1881)

O'Shaughnessy was born on May 14, 1844 in London, England. At the age of seventeen he received the post of transcriber in the library of the British Museum. Two years later at the age of nineteen he was appointed to be an assistant in the natural history department, where he specialized in ichthyology. However, his true passion was for literature. He published his Epic of Women in 1870, his first collection. He printed three collections of poetry between 1870 and 1874. When he was thirty he married and did not print any more volumes of poetry for the last seven years of his life. His last volume, Songs of a worker was published after his death the same year.

By far the most noted of any his works are the initial lines of the Ode from his book Music and Moonlight (1874):

*We are the music makers,
And we are the dreamers of dreams,
Wandering by lone sea-breakers,
And sitting by desolate streams;—
World-losers and world-forsakers,
On whom the pale moon gleams:
Yet we are the movers and shakers
Of the world for ever, it seems.*

Sir Edward Elgar set the ode to music in 1912 in his work entitled The Music Makers, Op 69. The work was dedicated to Elgar's old friend Nicholas Kilburn and the first performance took place at the Birmingham Triennial Music Festival in 1912. Performances available include: The Music Makers, with Sir Adrian Boult conducting the London Philharmonic Orchestra in 1975 (reissued 1999), paired with Elgar's Dream of Gerontius; and the 2006 album Sea Pictures paired with The Music Makers, Simon Wright conducting the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967) also set the ode to music in his work Music Makers, dedicated to Merton College, Oxford on the occasion of its 700th anniversary in 1964.

The artists Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Ford Madox Brown were among O'Shaughnessy's circle of friends, and in 1873 he married Eleanor Marston, the daughter of author John Westland Marston and sister of the poet Philip Bourke Marston. Together, he and his wife wrote a book of children's stories titled Toy-

land (1875). They had two children together, both of whom died in infancy. Eleanor died in 1879, and O'Shaughnessy himself died in London two years later from the effects of a "chill." He is buried in Kensal Green Cemetery.

The anthologist Francis Turner Palgrave in his work *The Golden Treasury* declared that of the modern poets, despite his limited output, O'Shaughnessy had a gift in some ways second only to ["a href="](#)

Cultural usage

The line "We are the music makers / and we are the dreamers of the dreams" has been quoted or used in many different media. A few examples include:

spoken by Willy Wonka (Gene Wilder) in *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*.

used as the opening line of Living Legends song "Nothing Less (ft. Slug)".

included in motivation speech by Herb Brooks before the U.S. Hockey Team beat the Russian team in the 1980 Winter Olympics.

used in the Aphex Twin song, "We are the Music Makers" from the album *Selected Ambient Works 85-92*.

the first two lines were used by Kuffdam & Plant as lyrics on their single "We are the Dream Makers"

used in the 2003 High Contrast remix of "Barcelona," originally produced by & Epsilon.

quoted by the character Roger in season 5, episode 6 of the television series *American Dad!*

used in the Buckethead song "Seaside" from "Blueprints", the first line is a quote of Gene Wilder's line.

often quoted in the Church of Scientology's Celebrity Centre's *Celebrity Magazine*.

spoken by King Unique in "Tyra - King Of The Invisible Land (Henry Saiz's We Are The Music Makers 303 Remix)" in the 2011 CD *Balance 019 Mixed by Henry Saiz*

The entire ode is quoted in the opening of "Dreamers of Dreams: An Anthology of Webfiction" (2011), an ebook anthology series of fiction, as well as inspiring the name of the series.

"One man with a dream, at pleasure, Shall go forth and conquer a crown; And three with a new song's measure Can trample an empire down" was used by Mack Reynolds as the opening dedication (and title to) his novel "Trample an Empire Down" (1978).

A Love Symphony

Along the garden ways just now
I heard the flowers speak;
The white rose told me of your brow,
The red rose of your cheek;
The lily of your bended head,
The bindweed of your hair:
Each looked its loveliest and said
You were more fair.

I went into the wood anon,
And heard the wild birds sing
How sweet you were; they warbled on,
Piped, trilled the self-same thing.
Thrush, blackbird, linnet, without pause,
The burden did repeat,
And still began again because
You were more sweet.

And then I went down to the sea,
And heard it murmuring too,
Part of an ancient mystery,
All made of me and you.
How many a thousand years ago
I loved, and you were sweet--
Longer I could not stay, and so
I fled back to your feet.

Arthur William Edgar O'Shaughnessy

Barcarolle

The stars are dimly seen among the shadows of the bay,
And lights that win are seen in strife with lights that die away.

The wave is very still -- the rudder loosens in our hand,
The zephyr will not fill our sail and waft us to the land;
O precious is the pause between the winds that come and go,
And sweet the silence of the shores between the ebb and flow.

No sound but sound of rest is on the bosom of the deep,
Soft as the breathing of a breast serenely hushed with sleep:
Lay by the ear; there is a voice at heart to sing or sigh --
O what shall be the choice of barcarolle or lullaby?

Say shall we sing of day or night, fair land or mighty ocean,
Of any rapturous delight or any dear emotion,
Of any joy that is on earth, or hope that is above--
The holy country of our birth, or any song of love?

Our heart in all our life is like the hand of one who steers
A bark upon an ocean rife with dangers and with fears;
The joys, the hopes, like waves or wings, bear up this life of ours --
Short as a song of all these things that make up all its hours.

Spread sail! For it is Hope today that like a wind new-risen
Doth waft us on a golden wing towards a new horizon,
That is the sun before our sight, the beacon for us burning,
That is the star in all our night of watching and of yearning.

Love is this thing that we pursue today, tonight, for ever,
We care not whither, know not who shall be at length the giver:
For Love, -- our life and all our years are cast upon the waves;
Our heart is as the hand that steers; -- but who is He that saves?

We ply with oars, we strive with every sail upon our mast --
We never tire, never fail -- and Love is seen at last:
A low and purple mirage like a coast where day is breaking --
Sink sail! for such a dream of Love is lost before the waking.

Arthur William Edgar O'Shaughnessy

I Made Another Garden

I made another garden, yea,
For my new love;
I left the dead rose where it lay,
And set the new above.
Why did the summer not begin?
Why did my heart not haste?
My old love came and walked therein,
And laid the garden waste.

She entered with her weary smile,
Just as of old;
She looked around a little while,
And shivered at the cold.
Her passing touch was death to all,
Her passing look a blight:
She made the white rose-petals fall,
And turned the red rose white.

Her pale robe, clinging to the grass,
Seemed like a snake
That bit the grass and ground, alas!
And a sad trail did make.
She went up slowly to the gate;
And there, just as of yore,
She turned back at the last to wait,
And say farewell once more.

Arthur William Edgar O'Shaughnessy

Ode

We are the music-makers,
And we are the dreamers of dreams,
Wandering by lone sea-breakers,
And sitting by desolate streams;
World-losers and world-forsakers,
On whom the pale moon gleams:
Yet we are the movers and shakers
Of the world for ever, it seems.

With wonderful deathless ditties
We build up the world's great cities,
And out of a fabulous story
We fashion an empire's glory:
One man with a dream, at pleasure,
Shall go forth and conquer a crown;
And three with a new song's measure
Can trample an empire down.

We, in the ages lying
In the buried past of the earth,
Built Nineveh with our sighing,
And Babel itself with our mirth;
And o'erthrew them with prophesying
To the old of the new world's worth;
For each age is a dream that is dying,
Or one that is coming to birth.

Arthur William Edgar O'Shaughnessy

Song

I made another garden, yea,
For my new Love:
I left the dead rose where it lay
And set the new above.
Why did my Summer not begin?
Why did my heart not haste?
My old Love came and walk'd therein,
And laid the garden waste.
She enter'd with her weary smile,
Just as of old;
She look'd around a little while
And shiver'd with the cold:
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Arthur William Edgar O'Shaughnessy

Summer Has Come Without The Rose

Has summer come without the rose,
Or left the bird behind?
Is the blue changed above thee,
O world! or am I blind?
Will you change every flower that grows,
Or only change this spot,
Where she who said, I love thee,
Now says, I love thee not?

The skies seemed true above thee,
The rose true on the tree;
The bird seemed true the summer through,
But all proved false to me.

Arthur William Edgar O'Shaughnessy

The Fountain Of Tears

If you go over desert and mountain,
Far into the country of Sorrow,
To-day and to-night and to-morrow,
And maybe for months and for years;
You shall come with a heart that is bursting
For trouble and toiling and thirsting,
You shall certainly come to the fountain
At length,—to the Fountain of Tears.

Very peaceful the place is, and solely
For piteous lamenting and sighing,
And those who come living or dying
Alike from their hopes and their fears;
Full of cypress-like shadows the place is,
And statues that cover their faces:
But out of the gloom springs the holy
And beautiful Fountain of Tears.

And it flows and it flows with a motion
So gentle and lovely and listless,
And murmurs a tune so resistless
To him who hath suffer'd and hears—
You shall surely—without a word spoken,
Kneel down there and know your heart broken,
And yield to the long-curb'd emotion
That day by the Fountain of Tears.

For it grows and it grows, as though leaping
Up higher the more one is thinking;
And ever its tunes go on sinking
More poignantly into the ears:
Yea, so blessèd and good seems that fountain,
Reach'd after dry desert and mountain,
You shall fall down at length in your weeping
And bathe your sad face in the tears.

Then alas! while you lie there a season
And sob between living and dying,
And give up the land you were trying

To find 'mid your hopes and your fears;
—O the world shall come up and pass o'er you,
Strong men shall not stay to care for you,
Nor wonder indeed for what reason
Your way should seem harder than theirs.

But perhaps, while you lie, never lifting
Your cheek from the wet leaves it presses,
Nor caring to raise your wet tresses
And look how the cold world appears—
O perhaps the mere silences round you—
All things in that place Grief hath found you—
Yea, e'en to the clouds o'er you drifting,
May soothe you somewhat through your tears.

You may feel, when a falling leaf brushes
Your face, as though some one had kiss'd you,
Or think at least some one who miss'd you
Had sent you a thought,—if that cheers;
Or a bird's little song, faint and broken,
May pass for a tender word spoken:
—Enough, while around you there rushes
That life-drowning torrent of tears.

And the tears shall flow faster and faster,
Brim over and baffle resistance,
And roll down blear'd roads to each distance
Of past desolation and years;
Till they cover the place of each sorrow,
And leave you no past and no morrow:
For what man is able to master
And stem the great Fountain of Tears?

But the floods and the tears meet and gather;
The sound of them all grows like thunder:
—O into what bosom, I wonder,
Is pour'd the whole sorrow of years?
For Eternity only seems keeping
Account of the great human weeping:
May God, then, the Maker and Father—
May He find a place for the tears!

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