

Classic Poetry Series

**Frederick William (FW)
Harvey
- poems -**

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Frederick William (FW) Harvey(26 March 1888 – 13 February 1957)

Frederick William Harvey was an English poet, known for poems composed in prisoner-of-war camps at Krefeld and Gütersloh that were sent back to England, during World War I.

He was born in Hartpury, Gloucestershire. He was educated at the King's School, Gloucester, where he formed a close friendship with Ivor Gurney, and then at Rossall School. Gurney and Herbert Howells, another local composer, would set a number of his poems to music.

He started on a legal career, which would always be somewhat tentative. He became a Roman Catholic convert in 1914, and shortly after joined the Gloucestershire Regiment as a private soldier, as World War I broke out.

Serving in France, he was awarded the D. C. M. in 1915, and returned to England for officer training. He was captured behind the German lines in 1916, where he began to write more seriously.

He returned home in 1919, and married in 1921. He did not enjoy any sustained success as a writer, and never fully settled.

A Christmas Wish

I CAN NOT give you happiness :
For wishes long have ceased to bring
The Fortune which to page and king
They brought in those good centuries,
When with a quaint and starry wand
Witches turned poor men's thoughts to gold
And Cinderella's carriage rolled
Through moonlight into Fairyland.

I may but wish you happiness :
Not Pleasure's dusty fruit to hnd,
But wines of Mirth and Friendship kind,
And Love, to make with you a home.
But may Our Lord whose Son has come
Now heed the wish and make it true,
Even as elves were wont to do
When wishing could bring happiness.

Frederick William (FW) Harvey

A Rondel Of Gloucestershire

Big glory mellowing on the mellowing hills,
And in the Uttle valleys, thatch and dreams,
Wrought by the manifold and vagrant wills
Of sun and ripening rain and wind ; so gleams
My country, that great magic cup which spills
Into my mind a thousand thousand streams
Of glory mellowing on the mellowing hills
And in the httele valleys, thatch and dreams.

O you dear heights of blue no ploughman tiUs,
O valleys where the curling mist upsteams
White over fields of trembhng daffodils.
And you old dusty little water-mills.
Through all my life, for joy of you, sweet thrills
Shook me, and in my death at last there beams
Big glory mellowing on the mellowing hills
And in the Uttle valleys, thatch and dreams.

Frederick William (FW) Harvey

Autumn In Prison

Here where no tree changes,
Here in a prison of pine,

I think how Autumn ranges
The country that is mine.

There — rust upon the chill breeze—
The woodland leaf now whirls ;

There sway the yellowing birches
Like dainty dancing girls.

Oh, how the leaves are dancing
With Death at Lassington !

And Death is now enhancing
Beauty I walked upon.

The roads with leaves are Uttered,
Yellow, brown, and red.

The homes where robins twittered
Lie ruin ; but instead

Gaunt arms of stretching giants
Stand in the azure air,

Cutting the sky in pattern
So common, yet so fair,

The heart is kindled by it.
And lifted as with wine.

In Lassington and Highnam—
The woodlands that were mine,

Frederick William (FW) Harvey

Ballad Of Army Pay

In general, if you want a man to do a dangerous

job : —

Say, swim the Channel, climb St. Paul's, or break

into and rob

The Bank of England, why, you find his wages

must be higher

Than if you merely wanted him to Fight the kitchen

fire.

But in the British Army, it's just the other

way.

And the maximum of danger means the minimum

of pay.

You put some men inside a trench, and call them

infantrie,

And make them face ten kinds of hell, and face it

cheerfully ;

And hve in holes Uke rats, with other rats, and

hce, and toads,

And in their leisure time, assist the R.E.'s with

their loads.

Then, when they've done it all, you give 'em each

a bob a day !

For the maximum of danger means the minimum

of pay.

We won't run down the A.S.C., nor yet the

R.T.O.

They ration and direct us on the way we've got

to go.

They're very useful people, and it's pretty plain

to see

We couldn't do without 'em, nor yet the

A.P.C.

But comparing risks and wages, — I think they all

will say

That the maximum of danger means the minimum

of pay.

There are men who make munitions — and seventy
bob a week ;

They never see a lousy trench nor hear a big shell
shriek ;

And others sing about the war at high-class music-
halls

Getting heaps and heaps of money and encores
from the stalls.

They ' keep the home fires burning ' and bright
by night and day.

While the maximum of danger means the minimum
of pay.

I wonder if it's harder to make big shells at a
bench,
Than to face the screaming beggars when they're
crumping up a trench ;

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I wonder if it's harder to sing in mellow tones

Of danger, than to face it — say, in a wood like
Trone's ; *

Is discipline skilled labour, or something children
play ?

Should the maximum of danger mean the mini-
mum of pay ?

Frederick William (FW) Harvey

Ballade

Bodies of comrade soldiers gleaming white
Within the mill-pool where you float and dive

And lounge around part-clothed or naked quite;
Beautiful shining forms of men alive,
O living lutes stringed with the senses five

For Love's sweet fingers; seeing Fate afar,
My very soul with Death for you must strive;

Because of you I loathe the name of War.

But O you piteous corpses yellow-black,

Rotting unburied in the sunbeam's light,
With teeth laid bare by yellow Hps curled back

Most hideously; whose tortured souls took
flight

Leaving your limbs, all mangled by the fight,
In attitudes of horror fouler far

Than dreams which haunt a devil's brain at
night;
Because of you I loathe the name of War.

Mothers and maids who loved you, and the wives
Bereft of your sweet presences; yea, all

Who knew you beautiful; and those small lives
Made of that knowledge; O, and you who call

For life (but vainly now) from that dark hall
Where wait the Unborn, and the loves which are

In future generations to befall;
Because of you I loathe the name of War,

l'envoi

Prince Jesu, hanging stark upon a tree

Crucified as the malefactors are
That man and man henceforth should brothers be;

Because of you I loathe the name of War.

Frederick William (FW) Harvey

Christmas In Prison

Outside, white snow
And freezing mire.
The heart of the house
Is a blazing fire !

Even so whatever hags do ride

His outward fortune, withinside

The heart of a man burns Christmastide !

Frederick William (FW) Harvey

Ducks

(To E.M., Who drew them in Holzminden Prison)

I

From troubles of the world I turn to ducks,
Beautiful comical things
Sleeping or curled
Their heads beneath white wings
By water cool,
Or finding curious things
To eat in various mucks
Beneath the pool,
Tails uppermost, or waddling
Sailor-like on the shores
Of ponds, or paddling
- Left! Right! - with fanlike feet
Which are for steady oars
When they (white galleys) float
Each bird a boat
Rippling at will the sweet
Wide waterway ...
When night is fallen *you* creep
Upstairs, but drakes and dillies
Nest with pale water-stars.
Moonbeams and shadow bars,
And water-lilies:
Fearful too much to sleep
Since they've no locks
To click against the teeth
Of weasel and fox.
And warm beneath
Are eggs of cloudy green
Whence hungry rats and lean
Would stealthily suck
New life, but for the mien
The hold ferocious mien
Of the mother-duck.

II

Yes, ducks are valiant things
On nests of twigs and straws,
And ducks are soothy things
And lovely on the lake
When that the sunlight draws
Thereon their pictures dim
In colours cool.
And when beneath the pool
They dabble, and when they swim
And make their rippling rings,
O ducks are beautiful things!
But ducks are comical things:-
As comical as you.
Quack!
They waddle round, they do.
They eat all sorts of things,
And then they quack.
By barn and stable and stack
They wander at their will,
But if you go too near
They look at you through black
Small topaz-tinted eyes
And wish you ill.
Triangular and clear
They leave their curious track
In mud at the water's edge,
And there amid the sedge
And slime they gobble and peer
Saying 'Quack! quack!'

III

When God had finished the stars and whirl of coloured suns
He turned His mind from big things to fashion little ones;
Beautiful tiny things (like daisies) He made, and then
He made the comical ones in case the minds of men
Should stiffen and become
Dull, humourless and glum,
And so forgetful of their Maker be
As to take even themselves - quite seriously.
Caterpillars and cats are lively and excellent puns:

All God's jokes are good - even the practical ones!
And as for the duck, I think God must have smiled a bit
Seeing those bright eyes blink on the day He fashioned it.
And he's probably laughing still at the sound that came out of its bill!

Frederick William (FW) Harvey

In Flanders

I'm homesick for my hills again -
My hills again!
To see above the Severn plain,
Unscabbarded against the sky,
The blue high blade of Cotswold lie;
The giant clouds go royally
By jagged Malvern with a train
Of shadows. Where the land is low
Like a huge imprisoning O
I hear a heart that's sound and high,
I hear the heart within me cry:
'I'm homesick for my hills again -
My hills again!
Cotswold or Malvern, sun or rain!
My hills again!'

Frederick William (FW) Harvey

Loneliness

On Where's the use to write ?

What can I tell you, dear ?

Just that I want you so

Who are not near.

Just that I miss the lamp whose blessed light
Was God's own moon to shine upon my night,
And newly mourn each new day's lost delight
Just — oh, it will not ease my pain —

That I am lonely

Until I see you once again,

You — you only.

Frederick William (FW) Harvey

Solitary Confinement

No mortal comes to visit me to-day,

Only the gay and early-rising Sun
Who strolled in nonchalantly, just to say,

' Good morrow, and despair not, foolish one ! '
But like the tune which comforted King Saul
Sounds in my brain that sunny madrigal.

Anon the playful Wind arises, swells
Into vague music, and departing, leaves

A sense of blue bare heights and tinkling bells,
Audible silences which sound achieves

Through music, mountain streams, and hinted
heather,

And drowsy flocks drifting in golden weather.

Lastly, as to my bed I turn for rest,
Comes Lady Moon herself on silver feet

To sit with one white arm across my breast,
Talking of elves and haunts where they do
meet.

No mortal comes to see me, yet I say

' Oh, I have had fine visitors to-day ! '

Frederick William (FW) Harvey

Sonnet

Comrades of risk and rigour long ago
Who have done battle under honour's name,
Hoped (living or shot down) some meed of fame,
And wooed bright Danger for a thrilling kiss, —
Laugh, oh laugh well, that we have come to this !

Laugh, oh laugh loud, all ye who long ago
Adventure found in gallant company !
Safe in Stagnation, laugh, laugh bitterly.
While on this filthiest backwater of Time's flow
Drift we and rot, till something set us free !

Laugh like old men with senses atrophied,
Heeding no Present, to the Future dead,
Nodding quite foolish by the warm fireside
And seeing no flame, but only in the red
And flickering embers, pictures of the past : —
Life like a cinder fading black at last.

Frederick William (FW) Harvey

The Bond

Once, I remember, when we were at home
I had come into church, and waited late,
Ere lastly kneeling to communicate
Alone : and thinking that you would not come.

Then, with closed eyes (having received the Host)
I prayed for your dear self, and turned to rise ;
When lo ! beside me like a blessed ghost —
Nay, a grave sunbeam — you I Scarcely my eyes
Could credit it, so softly had you come
Beside me as I thought I walked alone.

Thus long ago ; but now, when fate bereaves
Life of old joys, how often as I'm kneeling
To take the Blessed Sacrifice that weaves
Life's tangled threads, so broken to man's seeing,
Into one whole ; I have the sudden feeling
That you are by, and look to see a face
Made in fair flesh beside me, and all my being
Thrills with the old sweet wonder and faint fear
As in that sabbath hour — how long ago ! —
When you had crept so lightly to your place.
Then, then, I know
(My heart can always tell) that you are near.

Frederick William (FW) Harvey

The Bugler

God dreamed a man;
Then, having firmly shut
Life like a precious metal in his fist
Withdrew, His labour done. Thus did begin
Our various divinity and sin.
For some to ploughshares did the metal twist,
And others—dreaming empires—straightway cut
Crowns for their aching foreheads. Others beat
Long nails and heavy hammers for the feet
Of their forgotten Lord. (Who dares to boast
That he is guiltless?) Others coined it: most
Did with it—simply nothing. (Here again
Who cries his innocence?) Yet doth remain
Metal unmarred, to each man more or less,
Whereof to fashion perfect loveliness.

For me, I do but bear within my hand
(For sake of Him our Lord, now long forsaken)
A simple bugle such as may awaken
With one high morning note a drowsing man:
That wheresoe'er within my motherland
That sound may come, 'twill echo far and wide
Like pipes of battle calling up a clan,
Trumpeting men through beauty to God's side.

Frederick William (FW) Harvey

The Hateful Road

Oh pleasant things there be
Without this prison yard :

Fields green, and many a tree
With shadow on the sward,

And drifting clouds that pass

Sailing above the grass.

All lovely things that be

Beyond this strong abode
Send comfort back to me ;
Yea, everything I see

Except the hateful road ;
The road that runs so free

With many a dip and rise,
That waves and beckons me
And mocks and calls at me
And will not let me be

Even when I close my eyes.

Frederick William (FW) Harvey

The Oldest Inhabitant Hears Far Off The Drums Of Death

Sometimes 'tis far off, and sometimes 'tis nigh,
Such drummerdery noises too they be !
'Tis odd — oh, I do hope I baint to die
Just as the summer months be coming on,
And buffly chicken out, and bumble-bee :
Though, to be sure, I cannot hear 'em plain
For this drat row as goes a-drumming on.
Just like a little soldier in my brain.

And oh, I've heard we got to go through flame
And water-floods — but maybe 'tisn't true !
I alius were a-frightened o' the sea.
And burning fires — oh, it would be a shame
And all the garden ripe, and sky so blue.
Such drummerdery noises, too, they be.

Frederick William (FW) Harvey

To R.E.K.

Dear, rash, warm-hearted friend.

So careless of the end,

So worldly-foolish, so divinely-wise,

Who, caring not one jot

For place, gave all you'd got

To help your lesser fellow-men to rise.

Swift-footed, fleeter yet

Of heart. Swift to forget

The petty spite that life or men could show you :

Your last long race is won.

But beyond the sound of gun

You laugh and help men onward — if I know you.

Oh still you laugh, and walk,

And sing and frankly talk

(To angels) of the matters that amused you

In this bitter-sweet of life,

And we who keep its strife,

Take comfort in the thought how God has used
you.

Frederick William (FW) Harvey

To The Old Year

Old year, farewell !

Much have you given which was ill to bear :
Much have taken which was dear, so dear :
Much have you spoken which was ill to hear ;
Echoes of speech first uttered deep in hell.

Pass now like some grey harlot to the tomb !
Yet die in child-birth, and from out your womb
Leap the young year unsullied ! He perchance
Shall bring to man his lost inheritance.

Frederick William (FW) Harvey

To The Unknown Nurse

Moth-like at night you flit or fly
To where the other patients lie ;
I hear, as you brush by my door
The flutter of your wings, no more.

Shall I now call you in and see
The phantom vanish instantly ?
Perhaps some sixteen stone or worse.
Suddenly falling through my verse !

Nay, be you sour, or be you sweet,
I'd see you not. Life's wisdom is
To keep one's dreams. Oh never quiz
The lovely lady in the street !

I knew a man who went large-eyed
And happy, till he bought pince-nez
And saw things as they were. He died
— A pessimist — the other day.

Frederick William (FW) Harvey

To You, Unsung

How should I sing you ? — you who dwell unseen
Within the darkest chamber of my heart.
What picturesque and inward-turning art

Could shadow forth the image of my queen.

Sweet, world aloof, ineffably serene
Like holy dawn, yet so entirely part
Of what am I, as well a man might start

To paint his breathing, or his red blood's sheen.

Nay, seek yourself, who are their truest breath,
In these my songs made for delight of men.

Oh, where they fail, 'tis I that am in blame.
But, where the words loom larger than my pen.
Be sure they ring glad echoes of your name,
And Love that triumphs over Life and Death.

Frederick William (FW) Harvey

Warning

A man there was, a gentle soul,
Of mild enquiring mind,
Who came into this neighbourhood
Its wonders for to find [...]

They told him who had put the lid
On Lydney; who the ale
Misspelt in Aylburton. And he
Delighted in the tale.

And still, like little Oliver,
He softly asked for more;
And with the utmost courtesy
Was answered as before.

Until one sleepy summer's eve
He came all unaware
Unto a place called Ruardean,
And asked 'Who killed the bear?'

The man arose and punched him flat;
Another punched his head,
And when the rest had done with him
Our gentle friend was dead.

The moral of this simple tale
Is plain. Dear friend, beware!
If you should visit Ruardean
Don't mention any bear.

If you should climb to Yorkley Slad
Pause not to question why
They put a pig upon the wall
To see the band go by.

And if your feet so far should stray
As Dymock, lest some hurt
Befall you, make no mention of
The man without a shirt.

Nine lives have cats, and you but one:
Risk not that gift of God!
It's better to be ignorant
Than dead beneath the sod.

Frederick William (FW) Harvey

What We Think Of

Walking round our cages like the lions at the

Zoo,

We think of things that we have done, and things

we mean to do :

Of girls we left behind us, of letters that are due,

Of boating on the river beneath a sky of blue,

Of hills we climbed together — not always for the

view.

Walking round our cages like the lions at the Zoo,

We see the phantom faces of you, and you, and
you,

Faces of those we loved or loathed — oh every one
we knew !

And deeds we wrought in carelessness for happiness or rue.

And dreams we broke in folly, and seek to build
anew, —

Walking round our cages like the lions at the Zoo.

Frederick William (FW) Harvey