

Classic Poetry Series

**Guido Gezelle**  
**- poems -**

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## Guido Gezelle(1830-1899)

Guido Pieter Theodorus Josephus Gezelle (May 1, 1830 - November 27, 1899) was an influential Dutch language writer and poet and a Roman Catholic priest from Belgium.

He was born in Bruges in the province of West Flanders, where he also spent most of his life. He was ordained a priest in 1854, and worked as a teacher and priest in Roeselare. He was always interested in all things in English and was given the prestigious right of being the priest for the 'English Convent' in Bruges. He died there in a small room, where it is still forbidden to enter.

He was the son of Monica Devrieze and Pieter Jan Gezelle, a Flemish gardener in Bruges. Gezelle was the uncle of Flemish writer Stijn Streuvels (Frank Lateur).

There is a museum of his works close by the English convent and also a small bar named after him.

He tried to develop an independent Flemish language, more or less separated from the general Dutch language, which had certain more "Hollandic" aspects. The Dutch he used in his poems was heavily influenced by the local West Flemish dialect. His works are often inspired by his mystic love towards God and Creation. Later, his poetry was associated with literary Impressionism, and he is considered a forerunner of that movement.

Gezelle also was a translator of poetry and prose, most famous now for his translation of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's Song of Hiawatha, published in 1886. He had already read the original at Roeselare in 1856 and was interested in it because on the one hand, the American Indians fascinated him, and, on the other, he liked its portrayal of Christian missionaries.

For his linguistical mastery, Gezelle is till today considered one of the most important poets in Dutch.

# Song Of The Hearth

Welcome Winter, how cracks your ice?  
Fills your snow the valleys?  
I have here spring thaw at the hearth  
And no fire to fetch.  
Blow you storm, through the firmament?  
Wall and roof can bare it.  
Pour you dampness down in streams?  
My glass shall aside it put.

Shrinks the day? then less necessity  
By light to yawn.  
Stretches the night? then suits him well  
Who together will sleep.  
Does the garden no sappy fruit  
On my table shine?  
Dry fare does just as well digest,  
With more ample drink.

Pour then, Winter, with your damp;  
Storm and freeze outside;  
Drive your light flakes around,  
In front of my closed windows;  
Give us but half our rations this day,  
And one dish less;  
High-spirited, with song and wine,  
Of no hinder I complain.

Guido Gezelle

# The Night And The Rose

I have many an hour with you worn out and enjoyed  
and never has an hour with you bored me for a moment.  
I have many a flower for you  
read and given, and, like a bee, with you, with you,  
drank honey from it; but never an hour as sweet with you,  
as long as it could last, but never an hour as sad for you,  
when I had to leave you, as the hour when I close to you,  
that night, sitting down, heard you talking and said to you  
that which our souls know. Never a flower as beautiful from you  
sought, picked, read, like that night that shimmered on you,  
and I could call my own. And just as well, as well for me as you,  
-who will cure this evil?- an hour with me, an hour with you,  
wasn't allowed to be an hour for long;  
And just as well for me, and just as well for you, so endearing and exalted,  
the rose, even if it was a rose from you, wasn't allowed to be a rose for long,  
yet long preserved, this I say to you, even if I'd lose it all,  
my heart three treasured images: you, the night and the rose.

Guido Gezelle