

Poetry Series

John Yaws
- poems -

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John Yaws(06/03/1953)

An old man from Texas who writes about life, as it is, as it should be, and as it rarely is.

a prolific reader and teller of tales.

A Different Kind Of Lonely

It is a different kind of lonely-
You encounter as you age.
All the scars and wrinkles on me-
Are the type on my front page.

They are road maps I have traveled-
They are the stops along the way-
All the plans that came unraveled,
Of both today and yesterday.

It's a different kind of lonely-
Sometimes better, often worse-
And you think, "If I could only-
Turn around and lift this curse."

But, alas, that's gone forever-
It seems we just go on and on-
Old acquaintances we sever-
In a crowd we're all alone.

It is a different kind of lonely-
It hurts worse with every breath-
I am persuaded that we'll only-
Escape the pain with coming Death

John Yaws

All The World's A Stage

All the world's a stage-
Is what Sir William said,
I guess that every actor
Approaches it with dread.
The poet like the actor-
To audience does play..
Will they applaud his efforts?
Or will they say him, "Nay! Nay!";
To touch the hearts of fickle fans-
Takes more than merely skill.
For one must play to moods you know?
And vagaries of will.
For what, one time, will draw applause
The next time gets a yawn-
Oh, what to do? Oh, what to say?
Dilemma lingers on.
Dost seem that one could specialize
In love, or ode, or prose-
Describe the grace of yonder maid-
The smell of yonder rose...
Perhaps I'd best be versatile-
Like artiste with a brush-
Instead of merely being me-
'Tis better if I'm us.
Sometime my heart is far afield-
In foreign land and clime-
Perusing long dead warrior's tales
In far and distant time.
At other times I woo some lass-
In shady, summer bower-
And toast her beauty with my words
Bestow upon her flowers.
And yet at other times you know
My thoughts go drifting back-
Mistakes I've made, friends I've known
Along life's weary track.
Ah, what to write? a question that-
And who can really say?
For what might hit the spot tonight-

The morning finds blase'.

John Yaws

Do You Love Me?

"Do you love me? " was your question-
In the middle of the night-
"Why, my dear, how could you doubt it? "
Was my frivolous reply.

You told me, "Hon, I missed you."
I smiled and said, "I know.
For the last time that I kissed you-
Was almost seven years ago."

You wondered, "What has kept you? "
I said, "Now listen here!
Are you gonna make a mountain-
Of a paltry seven years? "

As your eyes began to moisten-
I said, "You silly loon!
If I'd known that you react like this-
I'd not be home this soon."

John Yaws

Every Man

I ask myself more often-
With every passing year...
The point of my existence,
What am I doing here?

Nobody ever thought that I
Would live past twenty-five...
That was over twenty years ago
And, somehow I survive.

Survival isn't living
I guess it's marking time-
I try to ease another's load-
By giving them my rhyme.

People often ask me-
What's true? and what is not?
To be completely honest-
I guess that I forgot...

I've lived a lot of what I write-
I've known a lot of pain-
I've known the feel of hunger-
And sleeping in the rain.

I've seen my share of country-
Experienced some grief.
I know a bit of heartache-
And bitter disbelief...

If I must be identified...
Then this is where I stand-
I am your conscience, and your guide:
I guess I'm "Every Man";.

John Yaws

From Day To Day

They tell me I am jaded- Dreams long ago have faded...
Of what most people call the normal life.
A job, a home, a family; it seems are not for me
I guess I've made a stranger of my wife.

They say I am a selfish man, and many do not understand.
I'll give a man the shirt right off my back.
What I once thought was living free, now has proved a cage to be.
Somewhere along the way I lost the track.

I do my talking with my pen, 'tis only then you see within,
And find somewhere deep inside there lies a heart.
My solitary ways, I guess, have really made my home a mess-
It looks like things will finally come apart.

But I don't know a way to be, except the way that makes me, me-
So I'll just let the chips fall where they may...
And if I get the worst of it, the punishment's the one that fits.
And I'll try to live my life from day to day.

John Yaws

Here's To Robert

Ah, here's to Robert, King of Scots-
Whose rhyme surpassed them all..
So lightly from his silver tongue
Did weighty matters fall.
The bard to laud the common folk
Like poor old Souther' Johnny
His drinking friend when poor auld Tam
Found witches wa'nt so fonny!
And ghouls and goblins were his meat
And her with Cutty Sark-
He very near his end did meet from
Ridin' in the dark.
A poet, was the Bonnie Burns-
A Scotsman through and through-
Perhaps a bit of Welsh thrown in
To gi' the de'il 'is due.
For bluff and bold, be we Scots
And loud our claymores rung
But comes to music beautiful
Give me a Welshman's tongue.
An Irish fancy, Scotsman's heart
A Welshman's tongue to boot-
I'd charm the ladies into swoons
I vow I would! an' Hoot!
I'd tell of Glencoe's bloody past
An' Charlie Stuart, too-
They shed the red of Scottish blood
Ah, we drew English blue!
Ah! Lift a glass to Robert Burns
That bonnie, rhymin' man-
We'll drink his health a score o' times
When gatherin' the Clans.

John Yaws

I Thought I Wanted Fortune

I thought I wanted to Fortune-
Then I thought I wanted fame,
For everyone to know me-
My accomplishments proclaim.
I thought I wanted honor-
But the price I found too high.
And I found all that I wanted
When I gazed into your eyes.
When I saw within their depths, dear-
A love so strong and true-
Twas more than I could stand, girl
After all that I'd been through.
I thought that life had ended-
With all those painful words
And those recriminations-
which so often I had heard.
I thought myself beyond the place-
Of hearing Cupid's song-
Until you came into my life-
I found that I was wrong.

John Yaws

I Would Rather Have The Pen

"Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing..."
Or words to that effect-
How well I understand that wish
When striving to perfect-
The thoughts which all unbidden come
And I would write them down-
They come so easy to the tongue-
It seems my pen is bound.
I long to paint a picture-
Of lonely desert land-
And it as virginal today
As from Creation's hand.
Or tell the grace and symmetry
Of some great mountain lion-
Who makes a kill and carries back
The bounty to its scion.
Depict the dreaminess of youth-
When all the world is roses-
Ere time and tragedy the truth
Which comes with life, discloses.-
Or paint a tapestry of love-
Faithful and unyielding-
Ever bearing precious fruit-
And from all heartache shielding.
The beauty of the golden rays
Of summer's healing sun.
Nobility of venerated age-
Whose race is nearly run.
Ah, for a thousand tongues- but nay
I'd rather have the pen-
Which reads the mind, and delves the heart
And write's what lies within.

John Yaws

Ten Cents Worth

I still recall, when, as a child,
I dreamed of grown-up things.
Then after I discovered books-
My fancy did take wings.

I was one with legionnaires-
Who marched to Caesars whim:
Or pioneers at some stockade-
A warrior's charge to stem.

I dreamed of love as boys do-
But love eluded me.
I tried to tell myself 'twas best-
That I be fancy free.

While searching near, and searching far-
I could not find the way-
That led me to true happiness,
And cannot to this day.

When asked if I were happy,
I had to think a bit-
And contemplate my feelings-
For an answer that would fit.

I'm not "unhappy" I replied-
I guess I am content-
To get ten cents worth out of life-
For every dime I've spent.

John Yaws

The Stranger In The Mirror

I looked into the mirror just this morning-
To my surprise a stranger stared at me.
A man as hard and scarred as any warrior
I wondered to myself, "who could this be?"

I tried a smile to see just what would happen
The face which sneered at me made my blood cold
No humor could I see in his expression
Just bitterness and anger to behold.

I tried to shrug it off in desperation
The stranger made a mockery of me.
I wondered how to flee his cynicism
And how to make the stranger let me be.

I asked myself, "what is the explanation?"
Why do I see such dread and fearful sights
I seemed to realize at last my fancy
Had turned into a true and natural light-

That what I saw was how that others saw me
My smile had turned to pain some time before
That all the dew of youth had long since left me
And scars and marks of life were all I bore.

I asked myself "Oh, what's to be my portion?"
What price to bring cessation of my strife?
And a silky whisper seemed to haunt the shadows
The price which you must pay will be your life.

I fled the sanctuary of my bedroom
And hurried off to meet the coming day
Yet I know the stranger's there to wait the evening
And I fear what other word's I'll hear him say.

John Yaws

The Time We Waste

If I could make my pen a brush-
Express myself in art
I'd paint the breadth of human mind,
The depth of human heart.

The tenderness of maiden's love,
The glamor she can see-
Alas, in such a little while,
Comes stark reality.

The tragic unwed mother-
So sure, she'd be a wife,
The man "most likely to succeed"-
Now lives a drunkards life.

The clock of life is wound but once-
Or so I've heard it said:
Just a few remorseless ticks,
And they will find you dead.

To die is not a horrid thing-
It's cup we all must taste.
The greatest tragedy of all-
Is precious time we waste.

John Yaws

Walk With Me As I Age

They say that you can measure age-
By the way you feel.
That growing old is optional,
That old age isn't real...

I have a hard time grasping that,
As my hair turns grey and thin:
And joints that once were supple,
Today will hardly bend.

My strength from other, better days-
Has sprouted wings and flown,
And nearly all my family-
I find are dead and gone.

But I'm not mourning; not at all-
Life does reciprocate.
And beauties oft amaze me-
Especially here of late.

My fading strength has slowed me down-
So now I take the time,
To smell the roses that I pass,
Enjoy life sublime.

Relationships mean so much more-
As I draw near the end-
And family more precious,
As well as every friend.

So slow your step, yea, take your time-
Ere we pass off the stage...
Won't you walk a mile with me,
As I so quickly age?

John Yaws

What Christmas Means To Me

"Unto us a child is born", the prophet spake in days of yore.
A virgin bringing forth a Son, the like was never seen before.
The lowly stall, the manger bed, no room for them within the inn,
This pauper Child would one day say, to men, "Ye must be born
again".

The smoking flax He did not quench, a bruised reed he never broke-
A Lamb, before His slayers dumb; none ever spake as this Man spoke.
He raised the dead, made blind eyes see, and made the wretched leper clean,
He healed the lame, made dumb men speak, delivered Mary Magdalene...

He turned plain water into wine, and then came walking on the sea-
And granted Simon his request, when he said, "Bid me come to
thee".
And still the invitation, "Come"! Goes out to "whosoever
will"-
He'll save them to the uttermost, and hearts will peace and joy fill.

But tarry lest we run ahead, the prophet said in his next breath-
"A Son is given unto us"! This time he's speaking of His death..
A Son, not child, with full consent, then bore the Cross up Calvary's hill-
His face was set, just like a flint. He came to do His Father's will.

That you and I, who had no hope... might live with Him eternally.
I see a cross upon a hill, not some cheap, tinsel-covered tree.
The greatest gift God ever gave, was when He gave His Son, you see-
Salvation for a hell-bound soul, that is what Christmas means to me!

John Yaws