

**Classic Poetry Series**

**Lord Alfred Douglas**  
**- poems -**

**Publication Date:**

2004

**Publisher:**

Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

## Lord Alfred Douglas(1870 - 1945)

Lord Alfred Douglas is remembered today for his tumultuous association with Oscar Wilde and as a minor poet.

Douglas, universally known as Bosie, was born October 22, 1870, the third son of John Sholto Douglas, ninth Marquess of Queensberry, and Sibyl, née Montgomery.

After a boyhood during which his parents separated, Douglas went up from Winchester to Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1889. He met Oscar Wilde through a mutual friend in early summer, 1891, and they became lovers the following spring. Douglas's beauty was "like a narcissus--white and gold," as Wilde told Robert Ross.

Most of Douglas's homoerotic poetry was written between 1893 and 1896 and appeared in undergraduate literary journals such as *The Spirit Lamp*, which he edited, and *The Chameleon*, or in small-circulation magazines like *The Artist*. Poems like "Hymn to Physical Beauty" (with a nod to Shelley), the sonnet "In an Aegean Port," and most famously "Two Loves," one of whom concludes the poem by sighing "I am the Love that dare not speak its name" are typical in their wistful tone.

Some of these poems appeared in a French edition of Douglas's verse in 1896, but most were not republished until the *Sonnets and Lyrics* of 1935, and then, at least in the sonnet mentioned, with the homosexual content revised out.

In 1895, Douglas's father accused Oscar Wilde of "posing as a sodomite," whereupon Wilde (at Bosie's urging) sued him for libel. At the trial, Queensberry was found not guilty and a warrant was promptly issued for Wilde's arrest. His first trial resulted in a hung jury, but at the second Wilde was found guilty and sentenced to two years' hard labor.

Although Douglas and Wilde remained close until the latter's death in 1900, the scandal generated a sheaf of spiteful documents. In prison, Wilde wrote a long and bitter epistle later titled *De Profundis*, accusing Douglas of betraying their friendship. When the full text of *De Profundis* was made public in 1913, Douglas responded with *Oscar Wilde and Myself*, repudiating Wilde and his works.

Soon after Wilde's death, Douglas renounced his homosexuality; he married Olive Custance in 1902, and they had a son, Raymond. Douglas converted to Roman Catholicism in 1911, and he and his wife separated two years later. By his own account, Douglas remained celibate thereafter.

From 1907 to 1910, Douglas edited the journal *The Academy*, assisted by the obnoxious T. W. H. Crosland, who in fact, ghost-wrote most of Oscar Wilde and *Myself*. Douglas revived *The Academy* in 1920 and 1921 as *Plain English*, and the journal had a mild commercial success. Editorially, however, it was nonliterary and virulently antisemitic, simply a forum for Douglas's considerable collection of bigotries.

Douglas's intemperate expression of his views led to his arrest and conviction for writing and publishing a pamphlet libeling Winston Churchill. He spent six months in Wormwood Scrubs prison. There he turned again to poetry, but his prison writing, a sonnet sequence, was called *In Excelsis*.

Douglas spent the remaining twenty-one years of his life quietly, living in Hove or Brighton on allowances provided by his mother and wife. He produced his *Autobiography* during this time, several versions of his collected poems, occasional verse, and in 1940, his most judicious account of his life's central experience, *Oscar Wilde: A Summing Up*.

# A Prayer

Often the western wind has sung to me,  
There have been voices in the streams and meres,  
And pitiful trees have told me, God, of Thee :  
And I heard not. Oh ! open Thou mine ears.

The reeds have whispered low as I passed by,  
' Be strong, O friend, be strong, put off vain fears,  
Vex not they soul with doubts, God cannot lie ' :  
And I heard not. Oh ! open Thou mine ears.

There have been many stars to guide my feet,  
Often the delicate moon, hearing my sighs,  
Has rent the clouds and shown a silver street;  
And I saw not. Oh ! open Thou mine eyes.

Angels have beckoned me unceasingly,  
And walked with me ; and from the sombre skies  
Dear Christ Himself has stretched out hands to me ;  
And I saw not. Oh ! open Thou mine eyes.

Lord Alfred Douglas

## A Song

Steal from the meadows, rob the tall green hills,  
Ravish my orchard's blossoms, let me bind  
A crown of orchard flowers and daffodils,  
Because my love is fair and white and kind.

To-day the thrush has trilled her daintiest phrases,  
Flowers with their incense have made drunk the air,  
God has bent down to gild the hearts of daisies,  
Because my love is kind and white and fair.

To-day the sun has kissed the rose-tree's daughter,  
And sad Narcissus, Spring's pale acolyte,  
Hangs down his head and smiles into the water,  
Because my love is kind and fair and white.

Lord Alfred Douglas

# A Winter Sunset

The frosty sky, like a furnace burning,  
The keen air, crisp and cold,  
And a sunset that splashes the clouds with gold  
But my heart to summer turning.

Come back, sweet summer ! come back again !  
I hate the snow,  
And the icy winds that the north lands blow,  
And the fall of the frozen rain.

I hate the iron ground,  
And the Christmas roses,  
And the sickly day that dies when it closes,  
With never a song or a sound.

Come back ! come back ! with your passionate heat  
And glowing hazes,  
And your sun that shines as a lover gazes,  
And your day with the tired feet.

Lord Alfred Douglas

# Autumn Days

I have been through the woods to-day  
And the leaves were falling,  
Summer had crept away,  
And the birds were not calling.

And the bracken was like yellow gold  
That comes too late,  
When the heart is sad and old,  
And death at the gate.

Ah, mournful Autumn ! Sad,  
Slow death that comes at last,  
I am mad for a yesterday, mad !  
I am sick for a year that is past!

Though the sun be like blood in the sky  
He is cold as the lips of hate,  
And he fires the sere leaves as they lie  
On their bed of earth, too late.

They are dead, and the bare trees weep  
Not loud as a mortal weeping,  
But as sorrow that sighs in sleep,  
And as grief that is still in sleeping.

Lord Alfred Douglas

# Ennui

Alas! and oh that Spring should come again  
Upon the soft wings of desired days,  
And bring with her no anodyne to pain,  
And no discernment of untroubled ways.  
There was a time when her yet distant feet,  
Guessed by some prescience more than half divine,  
Gave to my listening ear such happy warning,  
That fresh, serene, and sweet,  
My thoughts soared up like larks into the morning,  
From the dew-sprinkled meadows crystalline.

Soared up into the heights celestial,  
And saw the whole world like a ball of fire,  
Fashioned to be a monster playing ball  
For the enchantment of my young desire.  
And yesterday they flew to this black cloud,  
(Missing the way to those ethereal spheres.)  
And saw the earth a vision of affright,  
And men a sordid crowd,  
And felt the fears and drank the bitter tears,  
And saw the empty houses of Delight.

The sun has sunk into a moonless sea,  
And every road leads down from Heaven to Hell,  
The pearls are numbered on youth's rosary,  
I have outlived the days desirable.  
What is there left ? And how shall dead men sing  
Unto the loosened strings of Love and Hate,  
Or take strong hands to Beauty's ravishment ?  
Who shall devise this thing,  
To give high utterance to Miscontent,  
Or make indifference articulate ?

Lord Alfred Douglas

# Harmonic Du Soir

Voici venir le temps

Now is the hour when, swinging in the breeze,  
Each flower, like a censer, sheds its sweet.  
The air is full of scents and melodies,  
O languorous waltz ! O swoon of dancing feet!

Each flower, like a censer, sheds its sweet,  
The violins are like sad souls that cry,  
O languorous waltz ! O swoon of dancing feet!  
A shrine of Death and Beauty is the sky.

The violins are like sad souls that cry,  
Poor souls that hate the vast. black night of Death ;  
A shrine of Death and Beauty is the sky.  
Drowned in red blood, the Sun gives up his breath.

This soul that hates the vast black night of Death  
Takes all the luminous past back tenderly,  
Drowned in red blood, the Sun gives up his breath.  
Thine image like a monstrance shines in me.

Lord Alfred Douglas

# Impression De Nuit ( London )

See what a mass of gems the city wears  
Upon her broad live bosom! row on row  
Rubies and emeralds and amethysts glow.  
See! that huge circle like a necklace, stares  
With thousands of bold eyes to heaven, and dares  
The golden stars to dim the lamps below,  
And in the mirror of the mire I know  
The moon has left her image unawares.

That's the great town at night: I see her breasts,  
Pricked out with lamps they stand like huge black towers.  
I think they move! I hear her panting breath.  
And that's her head where the tiara rests.  
And in her brain, through lanes as dark as death,  
Men creep like thoughts...The lamps are like pale flowers

Lord Alfred Douglas

## In Memoriam : Francis Archibald Douglas

Dear friend, dear brother, I have owed you this  
Since many days, the tribute of a song.  
Shall I cheat you who never did a wrong  
To any man ? No, therefore though I miss  
All art, all skill, in this short armistice  
From my soul's war against the bitter throng  
Of present woes, let these poor lines be strong

In love enough to bear a brother's kiss.  
Dear saint, true knight, I cannot weep for you,  
Nor if I could would I call back the breath  
To your dear body ; God is very wise,  
All that this year had in its womb He knew,  
And, loving you, He sent His Son like Death,  
To put His hand over your kind gray eyes.

Lord Alfred Douglas

# Jonquil And Fleur-De-Lys

i

Jonquil was a shepherd lad,  
White he was as the curded cream,  
Hair like the buttercups he had,  
And wet green eyes like a full chalk stream.

ii

His teeth were as white as the stones that lie  
Down in the depths of the sun-bright river,  
And his lashes danced like a dragon-fly  
With drops on the gauzy wings that quiver.

iii

His lips were as red as round ripe cherries,  
And his delicate cheek's and his rose-pink neck  
Were stained with the colour of dog-rose berries  
When they lie on the snow like a crimson fleck.

iv

His feet were all stained with the cowslips and grass  
To amber and verdigris,  
And through his folds one day did pass  
The young prince Fleur-de-lys.

v

Fleur-de-lys was the son of the king.  
He was as white as an onyx stone,  
His hair was curled like a daffodil ring,  
And his eyes were like gems in the queen's blue zone.

vi

His teeth were as white as the white pearls set  
Round the thick white throat of the queen in the hall,

And his lashes were like the dark silk net  
That she binds her yellow hair withal.

vii

His lips were as red as the red rubies  
The king's bright dagger-hilt that deck,  
And pale rose-pink as the amethyst is  
Were his delicate cheeks and his rose-pink neck.

viii

His feet were all shod in shoes of gold,  
And his coat was as gold as a blackbird's bill is,  
With jewel on jewel manifold,  
And wrought with a pattern of golden lilies.

ix

When Fleur-de-lys espied Jonquil  
He was as glad as a bird in May ;  
He tripped right swiftly a-down the hill,  
And called to the shepherd boy to play.

x

This fell out ere the sheep-shearing,  
That these two lads did sport and toy,  
Fleur-de-lys the son of the king,  
And sweet Jonquil the shepherd boy.

xi

And after they had played awhile,  
Thereafter they to talking fell,  
And full an hour they did beguile  
While each his state and lot did tell.

xii

For Jonquil spake of the little sheep,  
And the tender ewes that know their names,

And he spake of his wattled hut for sleep,  
And the country sports and the shepherds' games.

xiii

And he plucked a reed from the edge that girds  
The river bank, and with his knife  
Made a pipe, with a breath like the singing birds  
When they flute to their loves in a musical strife.

xiv

And he told of the night so long and still  
When he lay awake till he heard the feet  
Of the goat-foot god coming over the hill,  
And the rustling sound as he passed through the wheat.

xv

And Fleur-de-lys told of the king and the court,  
And the stately dames and the slender pages,  
Of his horse and his hawk and his mimic fort,  
And the silent birds in their golden, cages.

xvi

And the jewelled sword with the damask blade  
That should be his in his fifteenth spring ;  
And the silver sound that the gold horns made,  
And the tourney lists and the tilting ring.

xvii

And after that they did devise  
For mirth and sport, that each should wear  
The other's clothes, and in this guise  
Make play each other's parts to bear.

xviii

Whereon they stripped off all their clothes,  
And when they stood up in the sun,

They were as like as one white rose  
On one green stalk, to another one.

xix

And when Jonquil as a prince was shown  
And Fleur-de-lys as a shepherd lad,  
Their mothers' selves would not have known  
That each the other's habit had.

xx

And Jonquil walked like the son of a king  
With dainty steps and proud haut look ;  
And Fleur-de-lys, that sweet youngling,  
Did push and paddle his feet in the brook.

xxi

And while they made play in this wise,  
Unto them all in haste did run,  
Two lords of the court, with joyful cries,  
That long had sought the young king's son.

xxii

And to Jonquil they reverence made  
And said, ' My lord, we are come from the king,  
Who is sore vexed that thou hast strayed  
So far without a following.'

xxiii

Then unto them said Fleur-de-lys  
' You do mistake, my lords, for know  
That I am the son of the king, and this  
Is sweet Jonquil, my playfellow.'

xxiv

Whereat one of these lords replied,  
' Thou lying knave, I'll make thee rue

Such saucy words.' But Jonquil cried,  
' Nay, nay, my lord, 'tis even true.'

xxv

Whereat these lords were sore distressed,  
And one made answer bending knee,  
' My lord the prince is pleased to jest.'  
But Jonquil answered, ' Thou shalt see.'

xxvi

Sure never yet so strange a thing  
As this before was seen,  
That a shepherd was thought the son of a king,  
And a prince a shepherd boy to have been.

xxvii

' Now mark me well, my noble lord,  
A shepherd's feet go bare and cold,  
Therefore they are all green from the sward,  
And the buttercup makes a stain of gold.

xxviii

' That I am Jonquil thus thou shalt know,  
And that this be very Fleur-de-lys  
If his feet be like the driven snow,  
And mine like the amber and verdigris.'

xxix

He lifted up the shepherd's frock  
That clothed the prince, and straight did show  
That his naked feet all under his smock  
Were whiter than the driven snow.

xxx

He doffed the shoes and the clothes of silk  
That he had gotten from Fleur-de-lys,

And all the rest was as white as milk,  
But his feet were like amber and verdigris.

xxxix

With that they each took back his own,  
And when his second change was done,  
As a shepherd boy was Jonquil shown  
And Fleur-de-lys the king's true son.

xxxix

By this the sun was low in the heaven,  
And Fleur-de-lys must ride away,  
But ere he left, with kisses seven,  
He vowed to come another day.

Lord Alfred Douglas

# Le Balcon

Mere des souvenirs, mattresses des mattresses  
Mother of Memories! O mistress-queen !  
Oh ! all my joy and all my duty thou !  
The beauty of caresses that have been,  
The evenings and the hearth remember now,  
Mother of Memories! O mistress-queen !

The evenings burning with the glowing fire,  
And on the balcony, the rose-stained nights!  
How sweet, how kind you were, my soul's desire.  
We said things wonderful as chrysolites,  
When evening burned beside the glowing fire.

How fair the Sun is in the evening !  
How strong the soul, how high the heaven's high tower !  
O first and last of every worshipped thing,  
Your odorous heart's-blood filled me like a flower.  
How fair the sun is in the evening !

The night grew deep between us like a pall,  
And in the dark I guessed your shining eyes,  
And drank your breath, O sweet, O honey-gall!  
Your little feet slept on me sister-wise.  
The night grew deep between us like a pall;

I can call back the days desirable,  
And live all bliss again between your knees,  
For where else can I find that magic spell  
Save in your heart and in your Mysteries ?  
I can call back the days desirable.

These vows, these scents, these kisses infinite,  
Will they like young suns climbing up the skies  
Rise up from some unfathomable pit,  
Washed in the sea from all impurities ?  
O vows, O scents, O kisses infinite !

Lord Alfred Douglas

# Night Coming Into A Garden

Roses red and white,  
Every rose is hanging her head,  
Silently comes the lady Night,  
Only the flowers can hear her tread.

All day long the birds have been calling,  
Calling shrill and sweet,  
They are still when she comes with her long robe falling  
Falling down to her feet.

The thrush has sung to his mate,  
' She is coming ! hush ! she is coming ! '  
She is lifting the latch at the gate,  
And the bees have ceased from their humming.

I cannot see her face as she passes  
Through my garden of white and red ;  
But I know she has walked where the daisies and grasses  
Are curtseying after her tread.

She has passed me by with a rustle and sweep  
Of her robe (as she passed I heard it sweeping),  
And all my red roses have fallen asleep,  
And all my white roses are sleeping.

Lord Alfred Douglas

# Night Coming Out Of A Garden

Through the still air of night  
Suddenly comes, alone and shrill,  
Like the far-off voice of the distant light,  
The single piping trill  
Of a bird that has caught the scent of the dawn,  
And knows that the night is over ;  
(She has poured her dew on the velvet lawn  
And drenched the long grass and the clover),  
And now with her naked white feet  
She is silently passing away,  
Out of the garden and into the street,  
Over the long yellow fields of the wheat,  
Till she melts in the arms of the day.  
And from the great gates of the East,  
With a clang and a brazen blare,  
Forth from the rosy wine and the feast  
Comes the god with the flame-flaked hair ;  
The hoofs of his horses ring  
On the golden stones, and the wheels  
Of his chariot burn and sing,  
And the earth beneath him reels;  
And forth with a rush and a rout  
His myriad angels run,  
And the world is awake with a shout,  
' He is coming ! The sun ! The sun ! '

Lord Alfred Douglas

# Not All The Singers Of A Thousand Years

Not all the singers of a thousand years  
Can open English prisons. No. Though hell  
Opened for Tracian Orpheus, now the spell  
Of song and art is powerless as the tears  
That love has shed. You that were full of fears,  
And mean self-love, shall live to know full well  
That you yourselves, not he, were pitiable  
When you met mercy's voice with frowns or jeers.

And did you ask who signed the plea with you?  
Fools! It was signed already with the sign  
Of great dead men, of God-like Socrates,  
Shakespeare and Plato and the Florentine  
Who conquered form. And all your pretty crew  
Once, and once only, might have stood with these.

Lord Alfred Douglas

# Ode To Autumn

Thou sombre lady of down-bended head,  
And weary lashes drooping to the cheek,  
With sweet sad fold of lips uncomforted,  
And listless hands more tired with strife than meek ;  
Turn here thy soft brown feet, and to my heart,  
Unmatched to Summer's golden minstrelsy,  
Or Spring's shrill pipe of joy, sing once again  
Sad songs, and I to thee  
Well tuned, will answer that according part  
That jarred with those young seasons' gladder strain.

Give me thy empty branches for the biers  
Of perished joys, thy winds to sigh my sighs,  
Thy falling leaves to count my falling tears,  
And all thy mists to dim my aching eyes.  
There is no comfort in thy lips, and none  
In thy cold arms, nor pity in thy breast,  
But better 'tis in gray hours to have grief,  
Than to affront the sun  
With sunless woe, when every flower and leaf  
Conspires to make the season merriest.

The drip of rain-drops on the sodden earth,  
The trampled mud-stained grass, the shifting leaves,  
The silent hurrying birds, the sickly birth  
Of the red sun in misty skies, the sheaves  
Of rotting ruined corn, the sudden gusts  
Of angry winds, the clouds that fly all night  
Before the stormy moon, thy desolate moans,  
All thy decays and rusts,  
Thy deaths and dirges, these are tuned aright  
To my unquiet soul that sorrow owns.

But ah ! thy gentler mood, the honeyed kiss  
Of thy faint watery sunshine, thy pale gold,  
Thy dark red berries, and the ambergris  
That paints the lingering leaves, while on the mould,  
Their dead make bronze and sepia carpetings  
That lightly rustle in thy quiet breath.

These are the shadows of departed smiles,  
The ghosts of happy things ;  
These break again the broken heart, the whiles  
Thou goest onto winter, I to Death.

Lord Alfred Douglas

# Perkin Warbeck

i

At Turney in Flanders I was born  
Fore-doomed to splendour and sorrow,  
For I was a king when they cut the corn,  
And they strangle me to-morrow.

ii

Oh ! why was I made so red and white,  
So fair and straight and tall ?  
And why were my eyes so blue and bright,  
And my hands so white and small ?

iii

And why was my hair like the yellow silk,  
And curled like the hair of a king ?  
And my body like the soft new milk  
That the maids bring from milking ?

iv

I was nothing but a weaver's son,  
I was born in a weaver's bed ;  
My brothers toiled and my sisters spun,  
And my mother wove for our bread.

v

I was the latest child she had,  
And my mother loved me the best.  
She would laugh for joy and anon be sad  
That I was not as the rest.

vi

For my brothers and sisters were black as the gate  
Whereby I shall pass to-morrow,

But I was white and delicate,  
And born to splendour and sorrow.

vii

And. my father the weaver died full soon,  
But my mother lived for me ;  
And I had silk doublets and satin shoon  
And was nurtured tenderly.

viii

And the good priests had much joy of me,  
For I had wisdom and wit;  
And there was no tongue or subtlety  
But I could master it.

ix

And when I was fourteen summers old  
There came an English knight,  
With purple cloak and spurs of gold,  
And sword of chrysolite.

x

He rode through the town both sad and slow,  
And his hands lay in his lap ;  
He wore a scarf as white as the snow,  
And a snow-white rose in his cap.

xi

And he passed me by in the market-place,  
And he reined his horse and stared,  
And I looked him fair and full in the face,  
And he stayed with his head all bared.

xii

And he leaped down quick and bowed his knee,  
And took hold on my hand,

And he said, ' Is it ghost or wraith that I see,  
Or the White Rose of England .? '

xiii

And I answered him in the Flemish tongue,  
' My name is Peter Warbeckke,  
From Katharine de Faro I am sprung,  
And my father was John Osbeckke.

xiv

' My father toiled and weaved with his hand  
And bare neither sword nor shield  
And the White Rose of fair England  
Turned red on Bosworth field.'

xv

And he answered, ' What matter for anything ?  
For God hath given to thee  
The voice of the king and the face of the king,  
And the king thou shalt surely be.'

xvi

And he wrought on me till the vesper bell,  
And I rode forth out of the town :  
And I might not bid my mother farewell,  
Lest her love should seem more than a crown.

xvii

And the sun went down, and the night waxed black,  
And the wind sang wearily ;  
And I thought on my mother, and would have gone back,  
But he would not suffer me.

xviii

And we rode, and we rode, was it nine days or three ?  
Till we heard the bells that ring

For ' my cousin Margaret of Burgundy,'  
And I was indeed a king.

xix

For I had a hundred fighting men '  
To come at my beck and call,  
And I had silk and fine linen  
To line my bed withal.

xx

They dressed me all in silken dresses,  
And little I wot did they reck  
Of the precious scents for my golden tresses,  
And the golden chains for my neck.

xxi

And all the path for ' the rose ' to walk  
Was strewn with flowers and posies,  
I was the milk-white rose of York,  
The rose of all the roses.

xxii

And the Lady Margaret taught me well,  
Till I spake without lispig  
Of Warwick and Clarence and Isabel,  
And ' my father ' Edward the King.

xxiii

And I sailed to Ireland and to France,  
And I sailed to fair Scotland,  
And had much honour and pleasaunce,  
And Katharine Gordon's hand.

xxiv

And after that what brooks it to say  
Whither I went or why ?

I was as loath to leave my play  
And fight, as now to die.

xxv

For I was not made for wars and strife  
And blood and slaughtering,  
I was but a boy that loved his life,  
And I had not the heart of a king.

xxvi

Oh ! why hath God dealt so hardly with me,  
That such a thing should be done,  
That a boy should be born with a king's body  
And the heart of a weaver's son ?

xxvii

I was well pleased to be at the court,  
Lord of the thing that seems;  
It was merry to be a prince for sport,  
A king in a kingdom of dreams.

xxviii

But ever they said I must strive and fight  
To wrest away the crown,  
So I came to England in the night  
And I warred on Exeter town.

xxix

And the King came up with a mighty host  
And what could I do but fly ?  
I had three thousand men at the most,  
And I was most loath to die.

xxx

And they took me and brought me to London town,  
And I stood where all men might see ;

I, that had well-nigh worn a crown,  
In a shameful pillory !

xxxix

And I cried these words in the English tongue,  
' I am Peter Warbecke,  
From Katharine de Faro I am sprung  
And my father was John Osbecke.

xxxix

' My father toiled and weaved with his hand,  
And bare neither sword nor shield ;  
And the White Rose of fair England  
Turned red on Bosworth field.'

xxxix

And they gave me my life, but they held me fast  
Within this weary place ;  
But I wrought on my guards ere a month was past,  
With my wit and my comely face.

xxxix

And they were ready to set me free,  
But when it was almost done,  
And I thought I should gain the narrow sea '  
And look on the face of the sun,

xxxix

The lord of the tower had word of it,  
And, alas! for my poor hope,  
For this is the end of my face and my wit  
That to-morrow I die by the rope.

xxxix

And the time draws nigh and the darkness closes,  
And the night is almost done.

What had I to do with their roses,  
I, the poor weaver's son ?

xxxvii

hey promised me a bed so rich  
And a queen to be my bride,  
And I have gotten a narrow ditch  
And a stake to pierce my side.

xxxviii

They promised me a kingly part  
And a crown my head to deck,  
And I have gotten the hangman's cart  
And a hempen cord for my neck.

xxxix

Oh ! I would that I had never been born,  
To splendour and shame and sorrow,  
For it's ill riding to grim Tiborne,  
Where I must ride to-morrow.

xl

I shall dress me all in silk and scarlet,  
And the hangman shall have my ring,  
For though I be hanged like a low-born varlet  
They shall know I was once a king.

xli

And may I not fall faint or sick  
Till I reach at last to the goal,  
And I pray that the rope may choke me quick  
And Christ receive my soul.

Lord Alfred Douglas

# Plainte Eternelle

The sun sinks down, the tremulous daylight dies.  
(Down their long shafts the weary sunbeams glide.)  
The white-winged ships drift with the falling tide,  
Come back, my love, with pity in your eyes!

The tall white ships drift with the falling tide.  
(Far, far away I hear the seamews' cries.)  
Come back, my love, with pity in your eyes !  
There is no room now in my heart for pride.

Come back, come back ! with pity in your eyes.  
(The night is dark, the sea is fierce and wide.)  
There is no room now in my heart for pride,  
Though I become the scorn of all the wise.

I have no place now in my heart for pride.  
(The moon and stars have fallen from the skies.)  
Though I become the scorn of all the wise,  
Thrust, if you will, sharp arrows in my side.

Let me become the scorn of all the wise.  
(Out of the East I see the morning ride.)  
Thrust, if you will, sharp arrows in my side,  
Play with my tears and feed upon my sighs.

Wound me with swords, put arrows in my side.  
(On the white sea the haze of noon-day lies.)  
Play with my tears and feed upon my sighs,  
But come, my love, before my heart has died.

Drink my salt tears and feed upon my sighs.  
(Westward the evening goes with one red stride.)  
Come back, my love, before my heart has died,  
Down sinks the sun, the tremulous daylight dies.

Come back ! my love, before my heart has died.  
(Out of the South I see the pale moon rise.)  
Down sinks the sun, the tremulous daylight dies,  
The white-winged ships drift with the falling tide.

Lord Alfred Douglas

# Rejected

Alas ! I have lost my God,  
My beautiful God Apollo.  
Wherever his footsteps trod  
My feet were wont to follow.

But Oh ! it fell out one day  
My soul was so heavy with weeping,  
That I laid me down by the way ;  
And he left me while I was sleeping.

And my soul awoke in the night,  
And I bowed my ear for his fluting,  
And I heard but the breath of the flight  
Of wings and the night-birds hooting.

And night drank all her cup,  
And I went to the shrine in the hollow,  
And the voice of my cry went up :  
' Apollo ! Apollo ! Apollo ! '

But he never came to the gate,  
And the sun was hid in a mist,  
And there came one walking late,  
And I knew it was Christ,

He took my soul and bound it  
With cords of iron wire,  
Seven times round He wound it  
With the cords of my desire.

The cords of my desire,  
While my desire slept, ,  
Were seven bands of wire  
To bind my soul that wept.

And He hid my soul at last  
In a place of stones and (ears,  
Where the hours like days went past  
And the days went by like years.

And after many days  
That which had slept awoke,  
And desire burnt in a blaze,  
And my soul went up in the smoke.

And we crept away from the place  
And would not look behind,  
And the angel that hides his face  
Was crouched on the neck of the wind.

And I went to the shrine in the hollow  
Where the lutes and the flutes were playing,  
And cried : ' I am come, Apollo,  
Back to thy shrine, from my straying.'

But he would have none of my soul  
That was stained with blood and with tears,  
That had lain in the earth like a mole,  
In the place of great stones and fears.

And now I am lost in the mist  
Of the things that can never be,  
For I will have none of Christ  
And Apollo will none of me.

Lord Alfred Douglas

## Sonnet On The Sonnet

To see the moment holds a madrigal,  
To find some cloistered place, some hermitage  
For free devices, some deliberate cage  
Wherein to keep wild thoughts like birds in thrall;  
To eat sweet honey and to taste black gall,  
To fight with form, to wrestle and to rage,  
Till at the last upon the conquered page  
The shadows of created Beauty fall.

This is the sonnet, this is all delight  
Of every flower that blows in every Spring,  
And all desire of every desert place;  
This is the joy that fills a cloudy night  
When bursting from her misty following,  
A perfect moon wins to an empty space.

Lord Alfred Douglas

# Spring

Wake up again, sad heart, wake up again !  
(I heard the birds this morning singing sweet.)  
Wake up again ! The sky was crystal clear,  
And washed quite clean with rain ;  
And tar below my heart stirred with the year,  
Stirred with the year and sighed. O pallid feet  
Move now at last, O heart that sleeps with pain  
Rise up and hear  
The voices in the valleys, run to meet  
The songs and shadows. O wake up again !

Put out green leaves, dead tree, put out green leaves t  
(Last night the moon was soft and kissed the air.)  
Put out green leaves ! The moon was in the skies,  
All night she wakes and weaves.  
The dew was on the grass like fairies' eyes,  
Like fairies' eyes. O trees so black and bare,  
Remember all the fruits, the full gold sheaves;  
For nothing dies,  
The songs that are, are silences that were,  
Summer was Winter. O put but green leaves!

Break through the earth, pale flower, break through the earth !  
(All day the lark has sung a madrigal.)  
Break through the earth that lies not lightly yet  
And waits thy patient birth,  
Waits for the jonquil and the violet,  
The violet. Full soon the heavy pall  
Will be a bed, and in the noon of mirth  
Some rivulet  
Will bubble in my wilderness, some call  
Will touch my silence. O break through the earth.

Lord Alfred Douglas

# The Ballad Of Saint Vitus

Vitus came tripping over the grass  
When all the leaves in the trees were green,  
Through the green meadows he did pass  
On the day he was full seventeen.

The lark was singing up over his head,  
As he went by so lithe and fleet,  
And the flowers danced in white and red  
At the treading of his nimble feet.

His neck was as brown as the brown earth is  
When first the young brown plough-boys delve it,  
And his lips were as red as mulberries  
And his eyes were like the soft black velvet.

His silk brown hair was touched with bronze,  
And his brown cheeks had the tender hue  
That like a dress the brown earth dons  
When the pink carnations bloom anew.

He was slim as the reeds that sway all along  
The banks of the lake, and as straight as a rush,  
And as he passed he sang a song,  
And his voice was as sweet as the voice of a thrush,

He sang of the Gardens of Paradise,  
And the light of God that never grows dim,  
And the cherubim with their radiant eyes,  
And the rainbow wings of the Seraphim.

And the host as countless as all days,  
That worships there, and ceases not,  
Singing and praising God always,  
With lute and flute and angelot.

And the blessed light of Mary's face  
As she sits among these pleasant sounds,  
And Christ that is the Prince of Grace,  
And the five red flowers that be His wounds.

And so he went till he came to the doors  
Of the ivory house of his father the King,  
And all through the golden corridors,  
As he passed along, he ceased to sing.

But a pagan priest had seen him pass,  
And heard his voice as he went along  
Through the fields of the bending grass, -  
And he heard the words of the holy song.

And he sought the King where he sat on his throne,  
And the tears of wrath were in his eyes,  
And he said, ' O Sire, be it known  
That thy son singeth in this wise ;

'Of the blessed light of Mary's face  
As she sits amidst sweet pleasant sounds,  
And how that Christ is the Prince of Grace,  
And hath five flowers that be His wounds.'

And when the King had heard this thing,  
His brow grew black as a winter night,  
And he bade the pages seek and bring  
Straightway the prince before his sight.

And Vitus came before the King,  
And the King cried out, ' I pray thee, son,  
Sing now the song that thou didst sing  
When thou cam'st through the fields anon.'

And the face of the prince grew white as milk,  
And he answered nought, but under the band  
That held his doublet of purple silk  
Round his slight waist, he thrust his hand.

And the King picked up a spear, and cried,  
' What hast thou there ? by the waters of Styx,  
Speak or I strike,' and the boy replied,  
' Sweet Sire, it is a crucifix.' .

And the King grew black with rage and grief,

And for a full moment he spake no word.  
And the spear in his right hand shook like a leaf,  
And the vein on his brow was a tight blue cord.

Then he laughed and said, in bitter scorn,  
' Take me this Christian fool from my sight,  
Lock him in the turret till the morn,  
And let him dance alone to-night.

'He shall sit in the dark while the courtly ball  
All the gay night sweeps up and down  
On the polished floor of the golden hall,  
And thus shall he win his martyr's crown.'

Thus spake the King, and the courtiers smiled,  
And Vitus hung his head for shame ;  
And he thought, ' I am punished like a child,  
That would have died for Christ's dear Name.'

And so 'twas done, and on that night,  
While silk and sword, with fan and flower,  
Danced in the hall in the golden light,  
Prince Vitus sat in the lone dark tower.

But the King bethought him, and was moved,  
Ere the short summer night was done,  
And his heart's blood yearned for the son he loved,  
His dainty prince, his only son.

And all alone he climbed the stair,  
With the tired feet of a sceptred King,  
And came to the door, and lo ! he was 'ware  
Of the sound of flute and lute-playing.

And as the King stood there amazed,  
The iron door flew open wide,  
And the King fell down on his knees as he gazed  
At the wondrous thing he saw inside.

For the room was filled with a soft sweet light  
Of ambergris and apricot,  
And round the walls were angels bright,

With lute and flute and angelot.

On lute and angelot they played,  
With their gold heads bowed upon the strings,  
And the soft wind that the slim flutes made,  
Stirred in the feathers of their wings.

And in the midst serene and sweet  
With God's light on his countenance  
Was Vitus, with his gold shod feet,  
Dancing in a courtly dance.

And round him were archangels four,  
Michael, who guards God's citadel,  
Raphael, whom children still implore,  
And Gabriel and Uriel.

Thus long ago was Christ's behest,  
And the saving grace that His red wounds be,  
Unto this king made manifest,  
And all his land of Sicily.

God sits within the highest Heaven,  
His mercy neither tires nor faints,  
All good gifts that may be given,  
He gives unto His holy Saints.

This was the joy that Vitus gat;  
To dance with Angels knee by knee,  
Before he came to man's estate :  
God send us all such Company.  
Amen.

Lord Alfred Douglas

## The City Of The Soul: Ii

What shall we do, my soul, to please the King?  
Seeing he hath no pleasure in the dance,  
And hath condemned the honeyed utterance  
Of silver flutes and mouths made round to sing.  
Along the wall red roses climb and cling,  
And oh! my prince, lift up thy countenance,  
For there be thoughts like roses that entrance  
More than the languors of soft lute-playing.

Think how the hidden things that poets see  
In amber eves or mornings crystalline,  
Hide in the soul their constant quenchless light,  
Till, called by some celestial alchemy,  
Out of forgotten depths, they rise and shine  
Like buried treasure on Midsummer night.

Lord Alfred Douglas

# The Dead Poet

I dreamed of him last night, I saw his face  
All radiant and unshadowed of distress,  
And as of old, in music measureless,  
I heard his golden voice and marked his trace  
Under the common thing the hidden grace,  
And conjure wonder out of emptiness,  
Till mean things put on beauty like a dress  
And all the world was an enchanted place.

And then methought outside a fast locked gate  
I mourned the loss of unrecorded words,  
Forgotten tales and mysteries half said,  
Wonders that might have been articulate,  
And voiceless thoughts like murdered singing birds.  
And so I woke and knew that he was dead.

Lord Alfred Douglas

# The Garden Of Death

There is an isle in an unfurrowed sea  
That I wot of, whereon the whole year round  
The apple-blossoms and the rosebuds be  
In early blooming ; and a many sound  
Of ten-stringed lute, and most mellifluous breath  
Of silver flute, and mellow half-heard horn,  
Making unmeasured music. Thither Death  
Coming like Love, takes all things in the morn  
Of tenderest life, and being a delicate god,  
In his own garden takes each delicate thing  
Unstained, unmellowed, immature, untrod,  
Tremulous betwixt the summer and the spring :  
The rosebud ere it come to be a rose,  
The blossom ere it win to be a fruit,  
The virginal snowdrop, and the dove that knows  
Only one dove for lover ; all the loot  
Of young soft things, and all the harvesting  
Of unripe flowers. Never comes the moon  
To matron fulness, here no child-bearing  
Vexes desire, and the sun knows no noon.  
But all the happy dwellers of that place  
Are reckless children gotten on Delight  
By Beauty that is thrall to Death ; no grace,  
No natural sweet they lack, a chrysolite  
Of perfect beauty each. No wisdom comes  
To mar their early folly, no false laws  
Man-made for man, no mouthing prudence numbs  
Their green unthought, or gives their licence pause ;  
Young animals, young flowers, they live and grow,  
And die before their sweet emblossomed breath  
Has learnt to sigh save like a lover's. Oh !  
How sweet is Youth, how delicate is Death !

Lord Alfred Douglas

# The Green River

I know a green grass path that leaves the field,  
And like a running river, winds along  
Into a leafy wood where is no throng  
Of birds at noon-day, and no soft throats yield  
Their music to the moon. The place is sealed,  
An unclaimed sovereignty of voiceless song,  
And all the unravished silences belong  
To some sweet singer lost or unrevealed.  
So is my soul become a silent place.  
Oh, may I wake from this uneasy night  
To find a voice of music manifold.  
Let it be shape of sorrow with wan face,  
Or Love that swoons on sleep, or else delight  
That is as wide-eyed as a marigold.

Lord Alfred Douglas

# The Shark

A treacherous monster is the Shark  
He never makes the least remark.

And when he sees you on the sand,  
He doesn't seem to want to land.

He watches you take off your clothes,  
And not the least excitement shows.

His eyes do not grow bright or roll,  
He has astonishing self-control.

He waits till you are quite undressed,  
And seems to take no interest.

And when towards the sea you leap,  
He looks as if he were asleep.

But when you once get in his range,  
His whole demeanour seems to change.

He throws his body right about,  
And his true character comes out.

It's no use crying or appealing,  
He seems to lose all decent feeling.

After this warning you will wish  
To keep clear of this treacherous fish.

His back is black, his stomach white,  
He has a very dangerous bite.

Lord Alfred Douglas

# The Travelling Companion

Into the silence of the empty night  
I went, and took my scorned heart with me,  
And all the thousand eyes of heaven were bright;  
But Sorrow came and led me back to thee.

I turned my weary eyes towards the sun,  
Out of the leaden East like smoke came he.  
I laughed and said, ' The night is past and done ' ;  
But sorrow came and led me back to thee.

I turned my face towards the rising moon,  
Out of the south she came most sweet to see,  
She smiled upon my eyes that loathed the noon ;  
But sorrow came and led me back to thee.

I bent my eyes upon the summer land,  
And all the painted fields were ripe for me,  
And every flower nodded to my hand ;  
But Sorrow came and led me back to thee.

O Love ! O Sorrow ! O desired Despair !  
I turn my feet towards the boundless sea,  
Into the dark I go and heed not where,  
So that I come again at last to thee,

Lord Alfred Douglas

## To L —

Thou that wast once my loved and loving friend,  
A friend no more, I had forgot thee quite,  
Why hast thou come to trouble my delight  
With memories ? Oh ! I had clean made end  
Of all that time, I had made haste to send  
My soul into red places, and to light  
A torch of pleasure to burn up my night.  
What I have woven hast thou come to rend ?

In silent acres of forgetful flowers,  
Crowned as of old with happy daffodils,  
Long time my wounded soul has been a-straying,  
Alas! it has chanced now on sombre hours  
Of hard remembrances and sad delaying,  
Leaving green valleys for the bitter hills

Lord Alfred Douglas

# To Shakespeare

Most tuneful singer, lover tenderest,  
Most sad, most piteous, and most musical,  
Thine is the shrine more pilgrim-worn than all  
The shrines of singers; high above the rest  
Thy trumpet sounds most loud, most manifest.  
Yet better were it if a lonely call  
Of woodland birds, a song, a madrigal,  
Were all the jetsam of thy sea's unrest.

For now thy praises have become too loud  
On vulgar lips, and every yelping cur  
Yaps thee a paeon ; the whiles little men,  
Not tall enough to worship in a crowd,  
Spit their small wits at thee. Ah ! better then  
The broken shrine, the lonely worshipper.

Lord Alfred Douglas

# To Sleep

Ah, Sleep, to me thou com'st not in the guise  
Of one who brings good gifts to weary men,  
Balm for bruised hearts and fancies alien  
To unkind truth, and drying for sad eyes.  
I dread the summons to that fierce assize  
Of all my foes and woes, that waits me when  
Thou mak'st my soul the unwilling denizen  
Of thy dim troubled house where unrest lies.

My soul is sick with dreaming, let it rest.  
False Sleep, thou hast conspired with Wakefulness,  
I will not praise thee, I too long beguiled  
With idle tales. Where is thy soothing breast ?  
Thy peace, thy poppies, thy forgetfulness ?  
Where is thy lap for me so tired a child ?

Lord Alfred Douglas

# Vae Victis!

Here in this isle  
The summer still lingers,  
And Autumn's brown fingers  
So busy the while  
With the leaves in the north;  
Are scarcely put forth  
In this land where the sun still glows like an ember,  
In mid-November.

In England it's cold,  
And the yellow and red  
Of October have fled ;  
And the sun is wet gold  
Like an emperor weeping,  
When Death goes a-reaping  
All through his empire, merciless comer  
The dead things of summer.

The sky has cried so  
That the earth is all sodden,  
With dead leaves in-trodden,  
And the trees to and fro  
Wave their arms in the air  
In despair, in despair :  
They are thinking of all the hot days that are over,  
And the cows in the clover.

Here the roses are out,  
And the sun at high noon  
Makes the birds faint and swoon.  
But the cricket's about  
With his song, and the hum  
Of the bees as they come  
To feast at the honey-board laden and groaning,  
Makes musical droning.

But vainly, alas !  
Do I hide in the south,  
Kiss close with my mouth

Red flowers, green grass,  
For Autumn has found me  
And thrown her arms around me.  
She has breathed on my lips and I wander apart,  
Dead leaves in my heart.

Lord Alfred Douglas