

Classic Poetry Series

William Clark Falkner
- poems -

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William Clark Falkner()

A Poplar

Why do you shiver there
Between the white river and the road?
You are not cold,
With the sun light dreaming about you;
And yet you lift your pliant supplicating arms as though
To draw clouds from the sky to hide your slenderness.

You are a young girl
Trembling in the throes of ecstatic modesty,
A white objective girl
Whose clothing has been forcibly taken away from her.

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After Fifty Years

Her house is empty and her heart is old,
And filled with shades and echoes that deceive
No one save her, for still she tries to weave
With blind bent fingers, nets that cannot hold.
Once all men's arms rose up to her, 'tis told,
And hovered like white birds for her caress:
A crown she could have had to bind each tress
Of hair, and her sweet arms the Witches' Gold.

Her mirrors know her witnesses, for there
She rose in dreams from other dreams that lent
Her softness as she stood, crowned with soft hair.
And with his bound heart and his young eyes bent
And blind, he feels her presence like shed scent,
Holding him body and life within its snare.

William Clark Falkner

Sapphics

So it is: sleep comes not on my eyelids.
Nor in my eyes, with shaken hair and white
Aloof pale hands, and lips and breasts of iron,
So she beholds me.

And yet though sleep comes not to me, there comes
A vision from the full smooth brow of sleep,
The white Aphrodite moving unbounded
By her own hair.

In the purple beaks of the doves that draw her,
Beaks straight without desire, necks bent backward
Toward Lesbos and the flying feet of Loves
Weeping behind her.

She looks not back, she looks not back to where
The nine crowned muses about Apollo
Stand like nine Corinthian columns singing
In clear evening.

She sees not the Lesbians kissing mouth
To mouth across lute strings, drunken with singing,
Nor the white feet of the Oceanides
Shining and unsandalled.

Before her go cryings and lamentations
Of barren women, a thunder of wings,
While ghosts of outcast Lethean women, lamenting,
Stiffen the twilight.

William Clark Falkner