

# **The Winding Stair and Other Poems**

William Butler Yeats

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# The Winding Stair and Other Poems

William Butler Yeats

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## In Memory Of Eva Gore-Booth And Con Markiewicz

THE light of evening, Lissadell,  
Great windows open to the south,  
Two girls in silk kimonos, both  
Beautiful, one a gazelle.  
But a raving autumn shears  
Blossom from the summer's wreath;  
The older is condemned to death,  
Pardoned, drags out lonely years  
Conspiring among the ignorant.  
I know not what the younger dreams –  
Some vague Utopia – and she seems,  
When withered old and skeleton-gaunt,  
An image of such politics.  
Many a time I think to seek  
One or the other out and speak  
Of that old Georgian mansion, mix  
pictures of the mind, recall  
That table and the talk of youth,  
Two girls in silk kimonos, both  
Beautiful, one a gazelle.  
Dear shadows, now you know it all,  
All the folly of a fight  
With a common wrong or right.  
The innocent and the beautiful.  
Have no enemy but time;  
Arise and bid me strike a match  
And strike another till time catch;  
Should the conflagration climb,  
Run till all the sages know.  
We the great gazebo built,  
They convicted us of guilt;  
Bid me strike a match and blow.

## Death

NOR dread nor hope attend  
A dying animal;  
A man awaits his end  
Dreading and hoping all;  
Many times he died,  
Many times rose again.  
A great man in his pride  
Confronting murderous men  
Casts derision upon  
Supersession of breath;  
He knows death to the bone –  
Man has created death.

## A Dialogue of Self and Soul

My Soul I summon to the winding ancient stair;  
Set all your mind upon the steep ascent,  
Upon the broken, crumbling battlement,  
Upon the breathless starlit air,  
"Upon the star that marks the hidden pole;  
Fix every wandering thought upon  
That quarter where all thought is done:  
Who can distinguish darkness from the soul

My Self. The consecrated blade upon my knees  
Is Sato's ancient blade, still as it was,  
Still razor-keen, still like a looking-glass  
Unspotted by the centuries;  
That flowering, silken, old embroidery, torn  
From some court-lady's dress and round  
The wooden scabbard bound and wound  
Can, tattered, still protect, faded adorn

My Soul. Why should the imagination of a man  
Long past his prime remember things that are  
Emblematical of love and war?

## The Winding Stair and Other Poems

Think of ancestral night that can,  
If but imagination scorn the earth  
And interlect is wandering  
To this and that and t'other thing,  
Deliver from the crime of death and birth.

My self. Montashigi, third of his family, fashioned it  
Five hundred years ago, about it lie  
Flowers from I know not what embroidery –  
Heart's purple – and all these I set  
For emblems of the day against the tower  
Emblematical of the night,  
And claim as by a soldier's right  
A charter to commit the crime once more.

My Soul. Such fullness in that quarter overflows  
And falls into the basin of the mind  
That man is stricken deaf and dumb and blind,  
For intellect no longer knows  
Is from the Ought, or knower from the Known –  
That is to say, ascends to Heaven;  
Only the dead can be forgiven;  
But when I think of that my tongue's a stone.

### II

My Self. A living man is blind and drinks his drop.  
What matter if the ditches are impure?  
What matter if I live it all once more?  
Endure that toil of growing up;  
The ignominy of boyhood; the distress  
Of boyhood changing into man;  
The unfinished man and his pain  
Brought face to face with his own clumsiness;

The finished man among his enemies? –  
How in the name of Heaven can he escape  
That defiling and disfigured shape  
The mirror of malicious eyes  
Casts upon his eyes until at last  
He thinks that shape must be his shape?  
And what's the good of an escape  
If honour find him in the wintry blast?

I am content to live it all again  
And yet again, if it be life to pitch  
Into the frog-spawn of a blind man's ditch,  
A blind man battering blind men;  
Or into that most fecund ditch of all,  
The folly that man does  
Or must suffer, if he woos

Death

A proud woman not kindred of his soul.

I am content to follow to its source  
Every event in action or in thought;  
Measure the lot; forgive myself the lot!  
When such as I cast out remorse  
So great a sweetness flows into the breast  
We must laugh and we must sing,  
We are blest by everything,  
Everything we look upon is blest.

## Blood And The Moon

I

BLESSED be this place,  
More blessed still this tower;  
A bloody, arrogant power  
Rose out of the race  
Uttering, mastering it,  
Rose like these walls from these  
Storm-beaten cottages –  
In mockery I have set  
A powerful emblem up,  
And sing it rhyme upon rhyme  
In mockery of a time  
Half dead at the top.

II

Alexandria's was a beacon tower, and Babylon's  
An image of the moving heavens, a log-book of the sun's journey and the moon's;  
And Shelley had his towers, thought's crowned powers he called them once.

I declare this tower is my symbol; I declare  
This winding, gyring, spiring treadmill of a stair is my ancestral stair;  
That Goldsmith and the Dean, Berkeley and Burke have travelled there.

Swift beating on his breast in sibylline frenzy blind  
Because the heart in his blood-sodden breast had dragged him down into mankind,  
Goldsmith deliberately sipping at the honey-pot of his mind,

And haughtier-headed Burke that proved the State a tree,  
That this unconquerable labyrinth of the birds, century after century,

Blood And The Moon

## The Winding Stair and Other Poems

Cast but dead leaves to mathematical equality;

And God-appointed Berkeley that proved all things a dream,  
That this pragmatist, preposterous pig of a world, its farrow that so solid seem,  
Must vanish on the instant if the mind but change its theme;

Saeva Indignatio and the labourer's hire,  
The strength that gives our blood and state magnanimity of its own desire;  
Everything that is not God consumed with intellectual fire.

### III

The purity of the unclouded moon  
Has flung its atrowy shaft upon the floor.  
Seven centuries have passed and it is pure,  
The blood of innocence has left no stain.  
There, on blood-saturated ground, have stood  
Soldier, assassin, executioner.  
Whether for daily pittance or in blind fear  
Or out of abstract hatred, and shed blood,  
But could not cast a single jet thereon.  
Odour of blood on the ancestral stair!  
And we that have shed none must gather there  
And clamour in drunken frenzy for the moon.

### IV

Upon the dusty, glittering windows cling,  
And seem to cling upon the moonlit skies,  
Tortoiseshell butterflies, peacock butterflies,  
A couple of night-moths are on the wing.  
Is every modern nation like the tower,  
Half dead at the top? No matter what I said,  
For wisdom is the property of the dead,  
A something incompatible with life; and power,  
Like everything that has the stain of blood,  
A property of the living; but no stain  
Can come upon the visage of the moon  
When it has looked in glory from a cloud.

## Oil And Blood

IN tombs of gold and lapis lazuli  
Bodies of holy men and women exude

Oil And Blood

Miraculous oil, odour of violet.

But under heavy loads of trampled clay  
Lie bodies of the vampires full of blood;  
Their shrouds are bloody and their lips are wet.

## Veronica's Napkin

THE Heavenly Circuit; Berenice's Hair;  
Tent—pole of Eden; the tent's drapery;  
Symbolical glory of the earth and air!  
The Father and His angelic hierarchy  
That made the magnitude and glory there  
Stood in the circuit of a needle's eye.

Some found a different pole, and where it stood  
A pattern on a napkin dipped in blood.

## Symbols

A STORM BEATEN old watch—tower,  
A blind hermit rings the hour.

All—destroying sword—blade still  
Carried by the wandering fool.

Gold—sewn silk on the sword—blade,  
Beauty and fool together laid.

## Spilt Milk

WE that have done and thought,

Veronica's Napkin

That have thought and done,  
Must ramble, and thin out  
Like milk spilt on a stone.

## The Nineteenth Century And After

THOUGH the great song return no more  
There's keen delight in what we have:  
The rattle of pebbles on the shore  
Under the receding wave.

## Statistics

"THOSE Platonists are a curse," he said,  
"God's fire upon the wane,  
A diagram hung there instead,  
More women born than men."

## Three Movements

SHAKESPEAREAN fish swam the sea, far away from land;  
Romantic fish swam in nets coming to the hand;  
What are all those fish that lie gasping on the strand?

## The Seven Sages

## The Winding Stair and Other Poems

**The First.** My great-grandfather spoke to Edmund Burke  
In Grattan's house.

**The Second.** My great-grandfather shared  
A pot-house bench with Oliver Goldsmith once.

**The Third.** My great-grandfather's father talked of music,  
Drank tar-water with the Bishop of Cloyne.

**The Fourth.** But mine saw Stella once.

**The Fifth.** Whence came our thought?

**The Sixth.** From four great minds that hated Whiggery.

**The Fifth.** Burke was a Whig.

**The Sixth.** Whether they knew or not,  
Goldsmith and Burke, Swift and the Bishop of Cloyne  
All hated Whiggery; but what is Whiggery?  
A levelling, rancorous, rational sort of mind  
That never looked out of the eye of a saint  
Or out of drunkard's eye.

**The Seventh.** All's Whiggery now,  
But we old men are massed against the world.

**The First.** American colonies, Ireland, France and India  
Harried, and Burke's great melody against it.

**The Second.** Oliver Goldsmith sang what he had seen,  
Roads full of beggars, cattle in the fields,  
But never saw the trefoil stained with blood,  
The avenging leaf those fields raised up against it.

**The Fourth.** The tomb of Swift wears it away.

**The Third.** A voice  
Soft as the rustle of a reed from Cloyne  
That gathers volume; now a thunder-clap.

**The Sixth.** What schooling had these four?

**The Seventh.** They walked the roads  
Mimicking what they heard, as children mimic;  
They understood that wisdom comes of beggary.

## The Crazy Moon

CRAZED through much child-bearing  
The moon is staggering in the sky;  
Moon-struck by the despairing  
Glances of her wandering eye  
We grope, and grope in vain,  
For children born of her pain.

Children dazed or dead!  
When she in all her virginal pride  
First trod on the mountain's head  
What stir ran through the countryside  
Where every foot obeyed her glance!  
What manhood led the dance!

Fly-catchers of the moon,  
Our hands are blenched, our fingers seem  
But slender needles of bone;  
Blenched by that malicious dream  
They are spread wide that each  
May rend what comes in reach.

## Coole Park, 1929

I MEDITATE upon a swallow's flight,  
Upon a aged woman and her house,  
A sycamore and lime-tree lost in night  
Although that western cloud is luminous,  
Great works constructed there in nature's spite  
For scholars and for poets after us,  
Thoughts long knitted into a single thought,  
A dance-like glory that those walls begot.

There Hyde before he had beaten into prose  
That noble blade the Muses buckled on,  
There one that ruffled in a manly pose  
For all his timid heart, there that slow man,  
That meditative man, John Synge, and those  
Impetuous men, Shawe-Taylor and Hugh Lane,  
Found pride established in humility,  
A scene well Set and excellent company.

They came like swallows and like swallows went,  
And yet a woman's powerful character  
Could keep a Swallow to its first intent;  
And half a dozen in formation there,  
That seemed to whirl upon a compass-point,  
Found certainty upon the dreaming air,  
The intellectual sweetness of those lines  
That cut through time or cross it withershins.

Here, traveller, scholar, poet, take your stand  
When all those rooms and passages are gone,  
When nettles wave upon a shapeless mound  
And saplings root among the broken stone,  
And dedicate – eyes bent upon the ground,  
Back turned upon the brightness of the sun  
And all the sensuality of the shade –  
A moment's memory to that laurelled head.

## Coole Park And Ballylee, 1931

UNDER my window–ledge the waters race,  
Otters below and moor–hens on the top,  
Run for a mile undimmed in Heaven's face  
Then darkening through "dark' Raftery's "cellar' drop,  
Run underground, rise in a rocky place  
In Coole demesne, and there to finish up  
Spread to a lake and drop into a hole.  
What's water but the generated soul?

Upon the border of that lake's a wood  
Now all dry sticks under a wintry sun,  
And in a copse of beeches there I stood,  
For Nature's pulled her tragic buskin on  
And all the rant's a mirror of my mood:  
At sudden thunder of the mounting swan  
I turned about and looked where branches break  
The glittering reaches of the flooded lake.

Another emblem there! That stormy white  
But seems a concentration of the sky;  
And, like the soul, it sails into the sight  
And in the morning's gone, no man knows why;  
And is so lovely that it sets to right  
What knowledge or its lack had set awry,  
So atrogantly pure, a child might think  
It can be murdered with a spot of ink.

Sound of a stick upon the floor, a sound  
From somebody that toils from chair to chair;  
Beloved books that famous hands have bound,  
Old marble heads, old pictures everywhere;  
Great rooms where travelled men and children found  
Content or joy; a last inheritor  
Where none has reigned that lacked a name and fame  
Or out of folly into folly came.

A spot whereon the founders lived and died  
Seemed once more dear than life; ancestral trees,  
Or gardens rich in memory glorified  
Marriages, alliances and families,  
And every bride's ambition satisfied.  
Where fashion or mere fantasy decrees  
We shift about – all that great glory spent –  
Like some poor Arab tribesman and his tent.

We were the last romantics – chose for theme  
Traditional sanctity and loveliness;  
Whatever's written in what poets name  
The book of the people; whatever most can bless  
The mind of man or elevate a rhyme;  
But all is changed, that high horse riderless,  
Though mounted in that saddle Homer rode  
Where the swan drifts upon a darkening flood.

## For Anne Gregory

"NEVER shall a young man,  
Thrown into despair  
By those great honey-coloured  
Ramparts at your ear,  
Love you for yourself alone  
And not your yellow hair."

"But I can get a hair-dye  
And set such colour there,  
Brown, or black, or carrot,  
That young men in despair  
May love me for myself alone  
And not my yellow hair."

"I heard an old religious man  
But yesternight declare  
That he had found a text to prove  
That only God, my dear,  
Could love you for yourself alone  
And not your yellow hair."

## Swift's Epitaph

SWIFT has sailed into his rest;  
Savage indignation there  
Cannot lacerate his breast.  
Imitate him if you dare,  
World-besotted traveller; he  
Served human liberty.

## At Algeciras – A Meditaton Upon Death

THE heron-billed pale cattle-birds  
That feed on some foul parasite  
Of the Moroccan flocks and herds  
Cross the narrow Straits to light  
In the rich midnight of the garden trees  
Till the dawn break upon those mingled seas.

Often at evening when a boy  
Would I carry to a friend –  
Hoping more substantial joy  
Did an older mind commend –  
Not such as are in Newton's metaphor,  
But actual shells of Rosses' level shore.

Greater glory in the Sun,  
An evening chill upon the air,  
Bid imagination run  
Much on the Great Questioner;  
What He can question, what if questioned I  
Can with a fitting confidence reply.

## The Choice

The intellect of man is forced to choose  
perfection of the life, or of the work,  
And if it take the second must refuse  
A heavenly mansion, raging in the dark.  
When all that story's finished, what's the news?  
In luck or out the toil has left its mark:  
That old perplexity an empty purse,  
Or the day's vanity, the night's remorse.

## Mohini Chatterjee

I ASKED if I should pray.  
But the Brahmin said,  
`pray for nothing, say  
Every night in bed,  
"I have been a king,  
I have been a slave,  
Nor is there anything.  
Fool, rascal, knave,  
That I have not been,  
And yet upon my breast  
A myriad heads have lain."

That he might Set at rest  
A boy's turbulent days  
Mohini Chatterjee  
Spoke these, or words like these,  
I add in commentary,  
"Old lovers yet may have  
All that time denied –  
Grave is heaped on grave  
That they be satisfied –  
Over the blackened earth  
The old troops parade,  
Birth is heaped on Birth  
That such cannonade  
May thunder time away,  
Birth–hour and death–hour meet,  
Or, as great sages say,  
Men dance on deathless feet.'

## Byzantium

THE unpurged images of day recede;  
The Emperor's drunken soldiery are abed;  
Night resonance recedes, night walkers' song  
After great cathedral gong;  
A starlit or a moonlit dome disdains  
All that man is,  
All mere complexities,  
The fury and the mire of human veins.

Before me floats an image, man or shade,  
Shade more than man, more image than a shade;  
For Hades' bobbin bound in mummy–cloth  
May unwind the winding path;  
A mouth that has no moisture and no breath  
Breathless mouths may summon;  
I hail the superhuman;

Byzantium

I call it death—in–life and life—in–death.

Miracle, bird or golden handiwork,  
More miracle than bird or handiwork,  
Planted on the star–lit golden bough,  
Can like the cocks of Hades crow,  
Or, by the moon embittered, scorn aloud  
In glory of changeless metal  
Common bird or petal  
And all complexities of mire or blood.

At midnight on the Emperor's pavement flit  
Flames that no faggot feeds, nor steel has lit,  
Nor storm disturbs, flames begotten of flame,  
Where blood–begotten spirits come  
And all complexities of fury leave,  
Dying into a dance,  
An agony of trance,  
An agony of flame that cannot singe a sleeve.

Astraddle on the dolphin's mire and blood,  
Spirit after Spirit! The smithies break the flood.  
The golden smithies of the Emperor!  
Marbles of the dancing floor  
Break bitter furies of complexity,  
Those images that yet  
Fresh images beget,  
That dolphin–torn, that gong–tormented sea.

## The Mother Of God

THE threefold terror of love; a fallen flare  
Through the hollow of an ear;  
Wings beating about the room;  
The terror of all terrors that I bore  
The Heavens in my womb.

Had I not found content among the shows  
Every common woman knows,  
Chimney corner, garden walk,  
Or rocky cistern where we tread the clothes  
And gather all the talk?

What is this flesh I purchased with my pains,  
This fallen star my milk sustains,  
This love that makes my heart's blood stop  
Or strikes a Sudden chill into my bones  
And bids my hair stand up?

The Mother Of God

## Vacillation

I

BETWEEN extremities  
Man runs his course;  
A brand, or flaming breath.  
Comes to destroy  
All those antinomies  
Of day and night;  
The body calls it death,  
The heart remorse.  
But if these be right  
What is joy?

II

A tree there is that from its topmost bough  
Is half all glittering flame and half all green  
Abounding foliage moistened with the dew;  
And half is half and yet is all the scene;  
And half and half consume what they renew,  
And he that Attis' image hangs between  
That staring fury and the blind lush leaf  
May know not what he knows, but knows not grief

III

Get all the gold and silver that you can,  
Satisfy ambition, animate  
The trivial days and ram them with the sun,  
And yet upon these maxims meditate:  
All women dote upon an idle man  
Although their children need a rich estate;  
No man has ever lived that had enough  
Of children's gratitude or woman's love.

No longer in Lethean foliage caught  
Begin the preparation for your death  
And from the fortieth winter by that thought  
Test every work of intellect or faith,  
And everything that your own hands have wrought  
And call those works extravagance of breath  
That are not suited for such men as come  
proud, open-eyed and laughing to the tomb.

IV

My fiftieth year had come and gone,  
I sat, a solitary man,  
In a crowded London shop,

Vacillation

## The Winding Stair and Other Poems

An open book and empty cup  
On the marble table-top.  
While on the shop and street I gazed  
My body of a sudden blazed;  
And twenty minutes more or less  
It seemed, so great my happiness,  
That I was blessed and could bless.

V

Although the summer Sunlight gild  
Cloudy leafage of the sky,  
Or wintry moonlight sink the field  
In storm-scattered intricacy,  
I cannot look thereon,  
Responsibility so weighs me down.

Things said or done long years ago,  
Or things I did not do or say  
But thought that I might say or do,  
Weigh me down, and not a day  
But something is recalled,  
My conscience or my vanity appalled.

VI

A rivery field spread out below,  
An odour of the new-mown hay  
In his nostrils, the great lord of Chou  
Cried, casting off the mountain snow,  
'Let all things pass away.'

Wheels by milk-white asses drawn  
Where Babylon or Nineveh  
Rose; some conquer drew rein  
And cried to battle-weary men,  
'Let all things pass away.'

From man's blood-sodden heart are sprung  
Those branches of the night and day  
Where the gaudy moon is hung.  
What's the meaning of all song?  
'Let all things pass away.'

VII

The Soul. Seek out reality, leave things that seem.  
The Heart. What, be a singer born and lack a theme?  
The Soul. Isaiah's coal, what more can man desire?  
The Heart. Struck dumb in the simplicity of fire!  
The Soul. Look on that fire, salvation walks within.  
The Heart. What theme had Homer but original sin?

VIII

Vacillation

Must we part, Von Hugel, though much alike, for we  
Accept the miracles of the saints and honour sanctity?  
The body of Saint Teresa lies undecayed in tomb,  
Bathed in miraculous oil, sweet odours from it come,  
Healing from its lettered slab. Those self-same hands perchance  
Eternalised the body of a modern saint that once  
Had scooped out pharaoh's mummy. I – though heart might find relief  
Did I become a Christian man and choose for my belief  
What seems most welcome in the tomb – play a pre-destined part.  
Homer is my example and his unchristened heart.  
The lion and the honeycomb, what has Scripture said?  
So get you gone, Von Hugel, though with blessings on your head.

## Quarrel In Old Age

WHERE had her sweetness gone?  
What fanatics invent  
In this blind bitter town,  
Fantasy or incident  
Not worth thinking of,  
put her in a rage.  
I had forgiven enough  
That had forgiven old age.

All lives that has lived;  
So much is certain;  
Old sages were not deceived:  
Somewhere beyond the curtain  
Of distorting days  
Lives that lonely thing  
That shone before these eyes  
Targeted, trod like Spring.

## The Results Of Thought

ACQUAINTANCE; companion;  
One dear brilliant woman;  
The best-endowed, the elect,  
All by their youth undone,  
All, all, by that inhuman  
Bitter glory wrecked.

But I have straightened out  
Ruin, wreck and wrack;

I toiled long years and at length  
Came to so deep a thought  
I can summon back  
All their wholesome strength.

What images are these  
That turn dull-eyed away,  
Or Shift Time's filthy load,  
Straighten aged knees,  
Hesitate or stay?  
What heads shake or nod?

## **Gratitude To The Unknown Instructors**

WHAT they undertook to do  
They brought to pass;  
All things hang like a drop of dew  
Upon a blade of grass.

## **Remorse For Intemperate Speech**

I RANTED to the knave and fool,  
But outgrew that school,  
Would transform the part,  
Fit audience found, but cannot rule  
My fanatic heart.

I sought my betters: though in each  
Fine manners, liberal speech,  
Turn hatred into sport,  
Nothing said or done can reach  
My fanatic heart.

Out of Ireland have we come.  
Great hatred, little room,  
Maimed us at the start.  
I carry from my mother's womb  
A fanatic heart.

## **Stream And Sun At Glendalough**

THROUGH intricate motions ran  
Stream and gliding sun  
And all my heart seemed gay:  
Some stupid thing that I had done  
Made my attention stray.

Repentance keeps my heart impure;  
But what am I that dare  
Fancy that I can  
Better conduct myself or have more  
Sense than a common man?

What motion of the sun or stream  
Or eyelid shot the gleam  
That pierced my body through?  
What made me live like these that seem  
Self-born, born anew?

## Words For Music Perhaps

### I. Crazy Jane And The Bishop

BRING me to the blasted oak  
That I, midnight upon the stroke,  
(All find safety in the tomb.)  
May call down curses on his head  
Because of my dear Jack that's dead.  
Coxcomb was the least he said:  
The solid man and the coxcomb.

Nor was he Bishop when his ban  
Banished Jack the Journeyman,  
(All find safety in the tomb.)  
Nor so much as parish priest,  
Yet he, an old book in his fist,  
Cried that we lived like beast and beast:  
The solid man and the coxcomb.

The Bishop has a skin, God knows,  
Wrinkled like the foot of a goose,  
(All find safety in the tomb.)  
Nor can he hide in holy black  
The heron's hunch upon his back,

But a birch–tree stood my Jack:  
The solid man and the coxcomb.

Jack had my virginity,  
And bids me to the oak, for he  
(all find safety in the tomb.)  
Wanders out into the night  
And there is shelter under it,  
But should that other come, I spit:  
The solid man and the coxcomb.

## II. Crazy Jane Reproved

I CARE not what the sailors say:  
All those dreadful thunder–stones,  
All that storm that blots the day  
Can but show that Heaven yawns;  
Great Europa played the fool  
That changed a lover for a bull.  
Fol de rol, fol de rol.

To round that shell's elaborate whorl,  
Adorning every secret track  
With the delicate mother–of–pearl,  
Made the joints of Heaven crack:  
So never hang your heart upon  
A roaring, ranting journeyman.  
Fol de rol, fol de rol.

## III. Crazy Jane On The Day Of Judgment

"LOVE is all  
Unsatisfied  
That cannot take the whole  
Body and soul';  
And that is what Jane said.

"Take the sour  
If you take me  
I can scoff and lour  
And scold for an hour.'  
"That's certainly the case,' said he.

"Naked I lay,  
The grass my bed;  
Naked and hidden away,  
That black day';  
And that is what Jane said.

"What can be shown?  
What true love be?  
All could be known or shown  
If Time were but gone.'  
"That's certainly the case,' said he.

#### **IV. Crazy Jane And Jack The Journeyman**

I KNOW, although when looks meet  
I tremble to the bone,  
The more I leave the door unlatched  
The sooner love is gone,  
For love is but a skein unwound  
Between the dark and dawn.

A lonely ghost the ghost is  
That to God shall come;  
I – love's skein upon the ground,  
My body in the tomb –  
Shall leap into the light lost  
In my mother's womb.

But were I left to lie alone  
In an empty bed,  
The skein so bound us ghost to ghost  
When he turned his head  
passing on the road that night,  
Mine must walk when dead.

#### **V. Crazy Jane On God**

THAT lover of a night  
Came when he would,

Went in the dawning light  
Whether I would or no;  
Men come, men go;  
All things remain in God.

Banners choke the sky;  
Men—at—arms tread;  
Armoured horses neigh  
In the narrow pass:  
All things remain in God.

Before their eyes a house  
That from childhood stood  
Uninhabited, ruinous,  
Suddenly lit up  
From door to top:  
All things remain in God.

I had wild Jack for a lover;  
Though like a road  
That men pass over  
My body makes no moan  
But sings on:  
All things remain in God.

## VI. Crazy Jane Talks With The Bishop

I MET the Bishop on the road  
And much said he and I.  
"Those breasts are flat and fallen now,  
Those veins must soon be dry;  
Live in a heavenly mansion,  
Not in some foul sty."

"Fair and foul are near of kin,  
And fair needs foul," I cried.  
"My friends are gone, but that's a truth  
Nor grave nor bed denied,  
Learned in bodily lowliness  
And in the heart's pride.

"A woman can be proud and stiff  
When on love intent;  
But Love has pitched his mansion in  
The place of excrement;

For nothing can be sole or whole  
That has not been rent.'

## VII. Crazy Jane Grown Old Looks At The Dancers

I FOUND that ivory image there  
Dancing with her chosen youth,  
But when he wound her coal-black hair  
As though to strangle her, no scream  
Or bodily movement did I dare,  
Eyes under eyelids did so gleam;  
Love is like the lion's tooth.

When She, and though some said she played  
I said that she had danced heart's truth,  
Drew a knife to strike him dead,  
I could but leave him to his fate;  
For no matter what is said  
They had all that had their hate;  
Love is like the lion's tooth.

Did he die or did she die?  
Seemed to die or died they both?  
God be with the times when I  
Cared not a thraneen for what chanced  
So that I had the limbs to try  
Such a dance as there was danced –  
Love is like the lion's tooth.

## VIII. Girl's Song

I WENT out alone  
To sing a song or two,  
My fancy on a man,  
And you know who.

Another came in sight  
That on a stick relied  
To hold himself upright;  
I sat and cried.

And that was all my song –  
When everything is told,  
Saw I an old man young

Or young man old?

## IX. Young Man's Song

"SHE will change,' I cried.  
"Into a withered crone.'  
The heart in my side,  
That so still had lain,  
In noble rage replied  
And beat upon the bone:

"Uplift those eyes and throw  
Those glances unafraid:  
She would as bravely show  
Did all the fabric fade;  
No withered crone I saw  
Before the world was made.'

Abashed by that report,  
For the heart cannot lie,  
I knelt in the dirt.  
And all shall bend the knee  
To my offended heart  
Until it pardon me.

## X. Her Anxiety

EARTH in beauty dressed  
Awaits returning spring.  
All true love must die,  
Alter at the best  
Into some lesser thing.  
Prove that I lie.

Such body lovers have,  
Such exacting breath,  
That they touch or sigh.  
Every touch they give,  
Love is nearer death.  
Prove that I lie.

## **XI. His Confidence**

UNDYING love to buy  
I wrote upon  
The corners of this eye  
All wrongs done.  
What payment were enough  
For undying love?

I broke my heart in two  
So hard I struck.  
What matter? for I know  
That out of rock,  
Out of a desolate source,  
Love leaps upon its course.

## **XII. Love's Loneliness**

OLD fathers, great-grandfathers,  
Rise as kindred should.  
If ever lover's loneliness  
Came where you stood,  
Pray that Heaven protect us  
That protect your blood.

The mountain throws a shadow,  
Thin is the moon's horn;  
What did we remember  
Under the ragged thorn?  
Dread has followed longing,  
And our hearts are torn.

## **XIII. Her Dream**

I DREAMED as in my bed I lay,  
All night's fathomless wisdom come,  
That I had shorn my locks away  
And laid them on Love's lettered tomb:  
But something bore them out of sight  
In a great tumult of the air,  
And after nailed upon the night  
Berenice's burning hair.

#### XIV. His Bargain

WHO talks of Plato's spindle;  
What set it whirling round?  
Eternity may dwindle,  
Time is unwound,  
Dan and Jerry Lout  
Change their loves about.  
However they may take it,  
Before the thread began  
I made, and may not break it  
When the last thread has run,  
A bargain with that hair  
And all the windings there.

#### XV. Three Things

`O CRUEL Death, give three things back,'  
Sang a bone upon the shore;  
`A child found all a child can lack,  
Whether of pleasure or of rest,  
Upon the abundance of my breast':  
A bone wave-whitened and dried in the wind.

`Three dear things that women know,'  
Sang a bone upon the shore;  
`A man if I but held him so  
When my body was alive  
Found all the pleasure that life gave':  
A bone wave-whitened and dried in the wind.

`The third thing that I think of yet,'  
Sang a bone upon the shore,  
`Is that morning when I met  
Face to face my rightful man  
And did after stretch and yawn':  
A bone wave-whitened and dried in the wind.

## **XVI. Lullaby**

BELOVED, may your sleep be sound  
That have found it where you fed.  
What were all the world's alarms  
To mighty Paris when he found  
Sleep upon a golden bed  
That first dawn in Helen's arms?

Sleep, beloved, such a sleep  
As did that wild Tristram know  
When, the potion's work being done,  
Roe could run or doe could leap  
Under oak and beechen bough,  
Roe could leap or doe could run;

Such a sleep and sound as fell  
Upon Eurotas' grassy bank  
When the holy bird, that there  
Accomplished his predestined will,  
From the limbs of Leda sank  
But not from her protecting care.

## **XVII. After Long Silence**

SPEECH after long silence; it is right,  
All other lovers being estranged or dead,  
Unfriendly lamplight hid under its shade,  
The curtains drawn upon unfriendly night,  
That we descant and yet again descant  
Upon the supreme theme of Art and Song:  
Bodily decrepitude is wisdom; young  
We loved each other and were ignorant.

## **XVIII. Mad As The Mist And Snow**

BOLT and bar the shutter,  
For the foul winds blow:  
Our minds are at their best this night,  
And I seem to know  
That everything outside us is  
Mad as the mist and snow.

Horace there by Homer stands,  
Plato stands below,  
And here is Tully's open page.  
How many years ago  
Were you and I unlettered lads  
Mad as the mist and snow?

You ask what makes me sigh, old friend,  
What makes me shudder so?  
I shudder and I sigh to think  
That even Cicero  
And many-minded Homer were  
Mad as the mist and snow.

## **XIX. Those Dancing Days Are Gone**

COME, let me sing into your ear;  
Those dancing days are gone,  
All that silk and satin gear;  
Crouch upon a stone,  
Wrapping that foul body up  
In as foul a rag:  
I carry the sun in a golden cup.  
The moon in a silver bag.

Curse as you may I sing it through;  
What matter if the knave  
That the most could pleasure you,  
The children that he gave,  
Are somewhere sleeping like a top  
Under a marble flag?  
I carry the sun in a golden cup.  
The moon in a silver bag.

I thought it out this very day.  
Noon upon the clock,  
A man may put pretence away  
Who leans upon a stick,  
May sing, and sing until he drop,  
Whether to maid or hag:  
I carry the sun in a golden cup,  
The moon in a silver bag.

## XX. 'I Am Of Ireland'

I AM of Ireland,  
And the Holy Land of Ireland,  
And time runs on,' cried she.  
"Come out of charity,  
Come dance with me in Ireland.'

One man, one man alone  
In that outlandish gear,  
One solitary man  
Of all that rambled there  
Had turned his stately head.  
That is a long way off,  
And time runs on,' he said,  
"And the night grows rough.'

I am of Ireland,  
And the Holy Land of Ireland,  
And time runs on,' cried she.  
"Come out of charity  
And dance with me in Ireland.'

The fiddlers are all thumbs,  
Or the fiddle-string accursed,  
The drums and the kettledrums  
And the trumpets all are burst,  
And the trombone,' cried he,  
"The trumpet and trombone,'  
And cocked a malicious eye,  
"But time runs on, runs on.'

I am of Ireland,  
And the Holy Land of Ireland,  
And time runs on,' cried she.  
"Come out of charity  
And dance with me in Ireland.'

## XXI. The Dancer At Cruachan And Cro-Patrick

I, PROCLAIMING that there is  
Among birds or beasts or men  
One that is perfect or at peace.  
Danced on Cruachan's windy plain,

Upon Cro-patrick sang aloud;  
All that could run or leap or swim  
Whether in wood, water or cloud,  
Acclaiming, proclaiming, declaiming Him.

## XXII. Tom The Lunatic

SANG old Tom the lunatic  
That sleeps under the canopy:  
"What change has put my thoughts astray  
And eyes that had s-o keen a sight?  
What has turned to smoking wick  
Nature's pure unchanging light?

"Huddon and Duddon and Daniel O'Leary.  
Holy Joe, the beggar-man,  
Wenching, drinking, still remain  
Or sing a penance on the road;  
Something made these eyeballs weary  
That blinked and saw them in a shroud.

"Whatever stands in field or flood,  
Bird, beast, fish or man,  
Mare or stallion, cock or hen,  
Stands in God's unchanging eye  
In all the vigour of its blood;  
In that faith I live or die."

## XXIII. Tom At Cruachan

ON Cruachan's plain slept he  
That must sing in a rhyme  
What most could shake his soul:  
"The stallion Eternit  
Mounted the mare of Time,  
'Gat the foal of the world.'

## XXIV. Old Tom Again

THINGS out of perfection sail,  
And all their swelling canvas wear,

Nor shall the self-begotten fail  
Though fantastic men suppose  
Building-yard and stormy shore,  
Winding-sheet and swaddling – clothes.

## **XXV. The Delphic Oracle Upon Plotinus**

BEHOLD that great Plotinus swim,  
Buffeted by such seas;  
Bland Rhadamanthus beckons him,  
But the Golden Race looks dim,  
Salt blood blocks his eyes.  
Scattered on the level grass  
Or winding through the grove  
plato there and Minos pass,  
There stately Pythagoras  
And all the choir of Love.