

***A Shropshire Lad* by Arthur Somervell**

Text by Alfred Edward Housman

Loveliest of Trees, the Cherry now

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my three score years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.

When I was one-and-twenty

When I was one-and-twenty I hear a wise man say,
'Give crowns and pounds and guineas but not your heart away;
Give pearls away and rubies But keep your fancy free.'
But I was one-and-twenty No use to talk to me.

When I was one-and-twenty I heard him say again,
'The heart out of the bosom Was never given in vain;
'Tis paid with sighs a plenty, And sold for endless rue.'
And I am two-and-twenty, And oh, 'tis true, 'tis true.

There pass the careless People

There pass the careless people That call their souls their own:
Here by the road I loiter, - How idle and alone.
His folly has not fellow Beneath the blue of day,
That gives to man or woman His heart and soul away.

In Summer-time on Bredon

In summertime on Bredon The bells they sound so clear;
Round both the shires they ring them, In steeples far and near,
A happy noise to hear.

Here of a Sunday morning My love and I would lie,
And see the coloured counties, And hear the larks so high
About us in the sky.

The bells would ring to call her In valleys miles away
'Come all to church, good people;
Good people, come and pray' But here my love would stay.

And I would turn and answer Among the springing thyme,
'O peal upon our wedding, And we will hear the chime,
And come to church in time.'

But when the snows at Christmas On Bredon top were strown,
My love rose up so early And stole out unbeknown,
And went to church alone.

They toll'd the one bell only, Groom there was none to see,
The mourners follow'd after, And so to church went she,
And would not wait for me.

The bells they sound on Bredon, And sill the steeples hum.
'Come all to church, good people,' Oh, noisy bells, be dumb;
I hear you, I will come.

The Street sounds to the Soldiers' tread

The street sounds to the soldiers' tread,
And out we come to see:
A single red-coat turns his head,
He turns and looks at me.

My man, from sky to sky's so far
We never cross'd before;
Such leagues apart the world's ends are
We're like to meet no more;
What thoughts at heart have you and I,
We cannot stop to tell,
But, dead or living, drunk or dry,
Soldier, I wish you well. I wish you well!

On the idle hill of Summer

On the idle hill of Summer,
Sleepy with the flow of streams,
Far I hear the steady drummer,
Drumming like a noise in dreams.
Far and near and low and louder
On the roads of earth go by,
Dear to friends and food for powder,
Soldiers marching all to die.

East and west, on fields forgotten
Bleach the bones of comrades slain,
Lovely lads and dead and rotten;
None that go return again.
Far the calling bugles hollo,
High the screaming fife replies,
Gay the files of scarlet follow:
Woman bore me, I will rise.

White in the moon the long road lies

White in the moon the long road lies,
The moon stands blank above;
White in the moon the long road lies
That leads me from my love.
Still hangs the hedge without a gust,
Still still the shadows stay:
My feet upon the moonlit dust
Pursue the ceaseless way.

The world is round, so trav'lers tell,
And straight tho' reach the track,
Trudge on, trudge on, 'twill all be well,
The way will guide one back.
But ere the circle homeward hies,
Far, far must it remove:
White in the moon the long road lies
That leads me from my love.

Think no more, Lad, laugh, be jolly

Think no more, lad; laugh, be jolly;
Why should men make hast to die?
Empty heads and tongues a-talking
Make the rough road easy walking,
And the feather pate of folly Bears the falling sky.

Oh, 'tis jesting, dancing drinking
Spins the heavy world around.
If young hearts were not so clever,
Oh they would be young forever:
Think no more: 'tis only thinking
Lays lads underground.

Into my Heart an Air that kills

Into my heart an air that kills
From yon far country blows:
What are those blue remember'd hills,
What spires, what farms are those?
That is the land of lost content,
I see it shining plain,
The happy highways where I went
And cannot come again.

Knoxville: Summer of 1915 by Samuel Barber

Text by James Agee

“We are talking now of summer evenings in Knoxville, Tennessee in the time that I lived there so successfully disguised to myself as a child.”

...It has become the time of evening when people sit on their porches,
rocking gently and talking gently and watching the street and the standing up
into their sphere of possession of the trees, of birds' hung havens, hangers.
People go by; things go by.
A horse, drawing a buggy, breaking his hollow iron music on the asphalt;
a loud auto; a quiet auto; people in pairs, not in a hurry,
scuffling, switching their weight of aestival body, talking casually,
the taste hovering over them of vanilla, strawberry, pasteboard and starched milk,
the image upon them of lovers and horsemen, squared with clowns in hueless amber.
A streetcar raising its iron moan: stopping, belling and starting; stertorous;
rousing and raising again its iron increasing moan
and swimming its gold windows and straw seats on past and past and past,
the bleak spark crackling and cursing above it like a small malignant spirit set to dog its tracks;
the iron whine rises on rising speed; still risen, faints; halts; the faint stinging bell;
rises again, still fainter, fainter, lifting, lifts, faints foregone: forgotten.

Now is the night one blue dew, my father has drained, he has coiled the hose.
Low on the length of lawns, a frailing of fire who breathes ...
Parents on porches: rock and rock. From damp strings morning glories hang their ancient faces.
The dry and exalted noise of the locusts from all the air at once enchants my eardrums.

On the rough wet grass of the backyard my father and mother have spread quilts.
We all lie there, my mother, my father, my uncle, my aunt, and I too am lying there ...
They are not talking much, and the talk is quiet, of nothing in particular, of nothing at all in particular,
of nothing at all.
The stars are wide and alive, they seem each like a smile of great sweetness, and they seem very near.
All my people are larger bodies than mine,
...with voices gentle and meaningless like the voice of sleeping birds.

The Lads in their Hundreds

The lads in their hundreds to Ludlow come in to the fair,
There's men from the barn and the forge and the mill and the fold,
The lads for the girl, and the lads for the liquor are there,
And there with the rest are the lads that will never be old.

There's chaps from the town and the field and the cart,
And many to count are the stalwart and many the brave,
And many the handsome of face and handsome of heart;
And few that will carry their looks or their truth to the grave.

I wish one could know them, I wish there were tokens to tell
The fortunate fellows that now you can never discern;
And then one could talk them friendly and wish them fare well,
And watch them depart on the way that they will not return.

But now you may stare as you like but there's nothing to scan;
And brushing your elbow unguessed at and not to be told
They carry back bright to the coiner the mintage of men, -
The lads that will die in their glory, and never be old.

One is an artist, he is living at home. One is a musician, she is living at home.
One is my mother who is good to me. One is my father who is good to me.
By some chance, here they are, all on this earth;
and who shall ever tell the sorrow of being on this earth,
lying, on quilts, on the grass, in a summer evening, among the sounds of the night.
May God bless my people, my uncle, my aunt, my mother, my good father,
oh, remember them kindly in their time of trouble; and in the hour of their taking away.
After a little I am taken in and put to bed.
Sleep, soft smiling, draws me unto her: and those receive me, who quietly treat me,
as one familiar and well-beloved in that home: but will not, no, will not, not now, not ever;
but will not ever tell me who I am.

Pharoah Songs by Libby Larsen

translated from the ancient Egyptian by John L. Foster

My love is one and only, without peer

Papyrus Chester Beatty I: Verso

My love is one and only, without peer,
lovely above all Egypt's lovely girls.
On the horizon of my seeing,
see her, rising,
Glistening goddess of the sunrise star
bright in the forehead of a lucky year.
So there she stands, epitome
of shining, shedding light,
Her eyebrows, gleaming darkly, marking
eyes which dance and wander.
Sweet are those lips, which chatter
(but never a word too much),
To young breasts firm in the bouncing light which shimmers that blueshadowed side fall of hair.
And slim are those arms, overtone with gold, those fingers which touch like a brush of lotus.
And (ah) how the curve of her back slips gently by a whisper of waist to god's plenty below.
(such thighs as hers pass knowledge of loveliness known in the old days.)

Dressed in the perfect flesh of woman (heart would run captive to such slim arms),
she ladies it over the earth,
Schooling the neck of each schoolboy male to swing on a swivel to see her move.
(He who could hold that body tight would know at last perfection of delight –
Best of the bully boys, first among lovers.)
Look you, all men, at the golden going, like Our Lady of Love, without peer.

If I could just be the washerman

Cairo Ostrakon 25218, Augmented by Ostrakon Deir el Medineh 1266

If I could just be the washerman doing her laundry for one month only,
I would be faithful to pick up the bundles, sturdy to beat clean the heavy linens,
But gentle to touch those finespun things lying closest the body I love.
I would rinse with pure water the perfumes that linger still in her tunics
And I'd dry my own flesh with the towels she yesterday held to her face.
The touch of her clothes, their textures, her softness in them...
Thank god for the body its youthful vigor!

Ho, what she's done to me – that girl

Papyrus Chester Beatty I: Recto

Ho, what she's done to me – that girl!!! And I'm to grin and just bear it?
Letting me stand there huge in her door while she goes catfoot inside.
Not even a word: "Have a quiet walk home!" (dear god give me relief)
Stopping her ears the whole damned night and me only whispering, "Share!"

I love you through the daytimes

Cairo Ostrakon 25218, Augmented by Ostrakon Deir el Medineh 1266

I love you through the daytimes, in the dark,
Through all the long divisions of the night, those hours
spendthrift I waste away alone, and lie, and turn, awake till dawn.

And with the shape of you I people night,
thoughts of hot desire grow live within me.
What magic was in your voice to bring such singing to my flesh,
To limbs that now lie listless on my bed without you?

Thus I beseech the darkness: Where gone, O love?
Why gone from me whose love can pace you, step by step, to your desire?

No loving voice replies. And I perceive how much I am alone.

My love is back, let me shout out the news

Cairo Ostrakon 25218, Augmented by Ostrakon Deir el Medineh 1266

My love is back, let me shout out the news!
My arms swing wide to embrace her,
And hear pirouettes in its dark chamber
glad as a fish when night shades the pool.
You are mine, my mistress, mine to eternity,
mine from the day you first whispered my name!

When I hold my love close

Cairo Ostrakon 25218, Augmented by Ostrakon Deir el Medineh 1266

When I hold my love close (and her arms steal around me),
I'm like a man translated to Punt or like someone out in the reedflats
When the whole world suddenly burst into flower
In this dreamland of South Sea fragrances,
My love, you are essence of roses.

***Too few the mornings be* by Ricky Ian Gordon**

Texts by Emily Dickinson

Too few the mornings be

Too few the mornings be,
Too scant the nights.
No lodging can be had
For the delights
That come to earth to stay,
But no apartment find
And ride away.

If all the griefs I am to have

If all the griefs I am to have
Would only come today,
I am so happy I believe
They'd laugh and run away.

If all the joys I am to have
Would only come today,
They could not be so big as this
That happens to me now.

The Bustle in a house

The bustle in a house
The morning after death
Is solemnest of industries
Enacted upon earth, -

The sweeping up the heart,
And putting love away
We shall not want to use again
Until eternity.

This is my letter to the world

This is my letter to the world,
That never wrote to me, -
The simple news that nature told,
With tender magesty.

Her message is committed
To hands I cannot see;
For love of her, sweet countrymen,
Judge tenderly of me!

You cannot put a fire out

You cannot put a Fire out -
A Thing that can ignite
Can go, itself, without a Fan -
Upon the slowest night -

You cannot fold a Flood -
And put it in a Drawer -
Because the Winds would find it out -
And tell your Cedar Floor -

Estranged from beauty

Estranged from Beauty - none can be -
For Beauty is Infinity -
And power to be finite ceased
Before Identity was leased -

Will there really be a morning

Will there really be a morning?
Is there such a thing as day?
Could I see it from the mountains
If I were as tall as they?

Has it feet like water-lilies?
Has it feathers like a bird?
Is it brought from famous countries
Of which I have never heard?

Oh, some scholar! Oh, some sailor!
Oh, some wise man from the skies!
Please to tell a little pilgrim
Where the place called morning lies!