

# Selected Poetry

## Easter, 1916

I have met them at close of day  
 Coming with vivid faces  
 From counter or desk among gray  
 Eighteenth-century houses.  
 I have passed with a nod of the head  
 Or polite meaningless words,  
 Or have lingered awhile and said  
 Polite meaningless words,  
 And thought before I had done  
 Of a mocking tale or a gibe  
 To please a companion  
 Around the fire at the club,  
 Being certain that they and I  
 But lived where motley is worn:  
 All changed, changed utterly:  
 A terrible beauty is born.

That woman's days were spent  
 In ignorant good will,  
 Her nights in argument  
 Until her voice grew shrill.  
 What voice more sweet than hers  
 When young and beautiful,  
 She rode to harriers?  
 This man had kept a school  
 And rode our winged horse  
 This other his helper and friend  
 Was coming into his force;  
 He might have won fame in the end,  
 So sensitive his nature seemed,  
 So daring and sweet his thought.  
 This other man I had dreamed  
 A drunken, vainglorious lout.  
 He had done most bitter wrong  
 To some who are near my heart,  
 Yet I number him in the song;  
 He, too, has resigned his part  
 In the casual comedy;  
 He, too, has been changed in his turn,  
 Transformed utterly:  
 A terrible beauty is born.

Hearts with one purpose alone  
 Through summer and winter, seem  
 Enchanted to a stone  
 To trouble the living stream.  
 The horse that comes from the road,  
 The rider, the birds that range  
 From cloud to tumbling cloud,  
 Minute by minute change;  
 A shadow of cloud on the stream  
 Changes minute by minute;  
 A horse-hoof slides on the brim,  
 And a horse plashes within it  
 Where longlegged moor-hens dive,  
 And hens to moor-cocks call.  
 Minute by minute they live;  
 The stone's in the midst of all.

Too long a sacrifice  
 Can make a stone of the heart.  
 O when may it suffice?  
 That is heaven's part, our part  
 To murmur name upon name,  
 As a mother names her child  
 When sleep at last has come  
 On limbs that had run wild.  
 What is it but nightfall?  
 No, no, not night but death;

Was it needless death after all?  
 For England may keep faith  
 For all that is done and said.  
 We know their dream; enough  
 To know they dreamed and are dead,  
 And what if excess of love  
 Bewildered them till they died?  
 I write it out in a verse—  
 MacDonagh and MacBride  
 And Connolly and Pearse  
 Now and in time to be,  
 Wherever green is worn,  
 Are changed, changed utterly:  
 A terrible beauty is born.  
 —W. B. YEATS, in the *New Statesman* (London).

## A Poem

Seeing, it is a gladdening thing:  
 White birds against a morning sky,  
 Blowing poppies, nodding grasses,  
 Light that grows and fades and passes,  
 Young-leaved poplars shining high.

And God be thanked that gave us hearing  
 For children's laughter, sweet and bold,  
 For winds that whisper old hills round,  
 For every intimate sweet sound  
 The quiet golden evenings hold.

But oh, 'tis scent that makes immortal  
 The little lives of mortal men!  
 Roses with haunting sweetness riven,  
 Incense, to lift men's hearts to heaven,  
 Lilaes, to draw them home again.  
 —MARGARET ADELAIDE WILSON, in *The Villager*.

## The Shepherds' Field

From Bethlehem the way runs steep  
 Through Beit Sahour, a town asleep;  
 No lights within the houses keep  
 A welcome for the night.  
 By rocky path we reach the plain  
 To lose our way. Through fragrant grain.  
 Ripe barley-fields, our goal we gain,  
 (May stars were ne'er so bright.)

The Arab boy who guides me there  
 Sees but a field, a tree, the bare  
 Stone wall—(What incense fills the air!  
 Be still, my lad, be still.)  
 He does not hear the chorus swell  
 With strange, unearthly notes—Noel!  
 He deems it but a distant bell  
 That rings on Bethlehem hill.

To him the enchanted melodies  
 Are but the winds in olive-trees,  
 (Be still, my boy; fall on your knees,  
 Look! Look! o'er Bethlehem's tower,  
 A star that flames above them all:  
 See, on the town it seems to fall!)  
 To him 'tis but the star they call  
 In Arab tongue "The Flower."

"Peace and good will." I surely hear  
 Voices long hushed now singing clear;  
 To-night the dead seem very near.

"Peace and good will to men."  
 Not yet—forever must we wait? . . .  
 (Take up your lantern, boy; 'tis late;  
 The star has set. Out through the gate  
 To Bethlehem again.)

—EDWARD BLISS REED, in *The Yale Review*.

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