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## SEVEN POEMS AND A FRAGMENT BY WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS.

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### TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
All Souls' Night	1
Suggested by a Picture of a Black Centaur	6
Thoughts upon the Present State of the World	7
The New Faces	14
A Prayer for My Son	14

Cuchulain the Girl and the Fool	16
The Wheel	18
A New End for 'The King's Threshold'	18

#### NOTES

Note on 'Thoughts Upon the Present State of the World' Section Six	23
Note on The New End to 'The King's Threshold'	24

## SEVEN POEMS AND A FRAGMENT: BY WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS.

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1

### ALL SOULS' NIGHT

'Tis All Souls' Night and the great Christ Church bell,  
 And many a lesser bell, sound through the room,  
 For it is now midnight;  
 And two long glasses brimmed with muscatel  
 Bubble upon the table. A ghost may come,  
 For it is a ghost's right,  
 His element is so fine  
 Being sharpened by his death,  
 To drink from the wine-breath  
 While our gross palates drink from the whole wine.

I need some mind that, if the cannon sound  
 From every quarter of the world, can stay  
 Wound in mind's pondering,  
 As mummies in the mummy-cloth are wound;  
 Because I have a marvellous thing to say,  
 A certain marvellous thing  
 None but the living mock,  
 Though not for sober ear;  
 It may be all that hear  
 Should laugh and weep an hour upon the clock.

H—'s the first I call. He loved strange thought  
 And knew that sweet extremity of pride  
 That's called platonic love,  
 And that to such a pitch of passion wrought  
 Nothing could bring him, when his lady died,  
 Anodyne for his love.  
 Words were but wasted breath;  
 One dear hope had he:  
 The inclemency  
 Of that or the next winter would be death.

2

Two thoughts were so mixed up I could not tell  
 Whether of her or God he thought the most,  
 But think that his mind's eye,  
 When upward turned, on one sole image fell,  
 And that a slight companionable ghost,  
 Wild with divinity,  
 Had so lit up the whole  
 Immense miraculous house,  
 The Bible promised us,

It seemed a gold-fish swimming in a bowl.

On Florence Emery I call the next,  
Who finding the first wrinkles on a face  
Admired and beautiful,  
And knowing that the future would be vexed  
With 'minished beauty, multiplied commonplace,  
Preferred to teach a school,  
Away from neighbour or friend  
Among dark skins, and there  
Permit foul years to wear  
Hidden from eyesight to the unnoticed end.

3

Before that end much had she ravelled out  
From a discourse in figurative speech  
By some learned Indian  
On the soul's journey. How it is whirled about,  
Wherever the orbit of the moon can reach,  
Until it plunged into the sun;  
And there free and yet fast,  
Being both Chance and Choice,  
Forget its broken toys  
And sink into its own delight at last.

And I call up MacGregor from the grave,  
For in my first hard springtime we were friends,  
Although of late estranged.  
I thought him half a lunatic, half knave,  
And told him so, but friendship never ends;  
And what if mind seem changed,  
And it seem changed with the mind,  
When thoughts rise up unbid  
On generous things that he did  
And I grow half contented to be blind.

4

He had much industry at setting out,  
Much boisterous courage, before loneliness  
Had driven him crazed;  
For meditations upon unknown thought  
Make human intercourse grow less and less;  
They are neither paid nor praised.  
But he'd object to the host,  
The glass because my glass;  
A ghost-lover he was  
And may have grown more arrogant being a ghost.

But names are nothing. What matter who it be,  
So that his elements have grown so fine  
The fume of muscatel  
Can give his sharpened palate ecstasy  
No living man can drink from the whole wine.  
I have mummy truths to tell  
Whereat the living mock,  
Though not for sober ear,  
For maybe all that hear  
Should laugh and weep an hour upon the clock.

5

Such thought—such thought have I that hold it tight  
Till meditation master all its parts,  
Nothing can stay my glance  
Until that glance run in the world's despite  
To where the damned have howled away their hearts,  
And where the blessed dance;  
Such thought, that in it bound

I need no other thing  
Wound in mind's wandering,  
As mummies in the mummy-cloth are wound.

---

## SUGGESTED BY A PICTURE OF A BLACK CENTAUR

6

Your hooves have stamped at the black margin of the wood,  
Even where the horrible green parrots call and swing.  
My works are all stamped down into the sultry mud.  
I knew that horse play, knew it for a murderous thing.  
What wholesome sun has ripened is wholesome food to eat  
And that alone, yet I being driven half insane  
Because of some green wing, gathered old mummy wheat  
In the mad abstract dark and ground it grain by grain  
And after baked it slowly in an oven; but now  
I bring full flavoured wine out of a barrel found  
Where seven Ephesian topers slept and never knew  
When Alexander's empire past, they slept so sound.  
Stretch out your limbs and sleep a long Saturnian sleep;  
I have loved you better than my soul for all my words,  
And there is none so fit to keep a watch and keep  
Unwearied eyes upon those horrible green birds.

---

## THOUGHTS UPON THE PRESENT STATE OF THE WORLD.

7

### I

Many ingenious lovely things are gone  
That seemed sheer miracle to the multitude;  
Above the murderous treachery of the moon  
Or all that wayward ebb and flow. There stood  
Amid the ornamental bronze and stone  
An ancient image made of olive wood;  
And gone are Phidias' carven ivories  
And all his golden grasshoppers and bees.

We too had many pretty toys when young;  
A law indifferent to blame or praise  
To bribe or threat; habits that made old wrong  
Melt down, as it were wax in the sun's rays;  
Public opinion ripening for so long  
We thought it would outlive all future days.  
O what fine thought we had because we thought  
That the worst rogues and rascals had died out.

8

All teeth were drawn, all ancient tricks unlearned,  
And a great army but a showy thing;  
What matter that no cannon had been turned  
Into a ploughshare; parliament and king  
Thought that unless a little powder burned  
The trumpeters might burst with trumpeting  
And yet it lack all glory; and perchance  
The guardsmen's drowsy chargers would not prance.

Now days are dragon-ridden, the nightmare  
Rides upon sleep: a drunken soldiery  
Can leave the mother, murdered at her door,  
To crawl in her own blood, and go scot-free;  
The night can sweat with terror as before  
We pieced our thoughts into philosophy,  
And planned to bring the world under a rule  
Who are but weasels fighting in a hole.

He who can read the signs nor sink unmanned  
Into the half-deceit of some intoxicant  
From shallow wits, who knows no work can stand,  
Whether health, wealth or peace of mind were spent  
On master work of intellect or hand,  
No honour leave its mighty monument,  
Has but one comfort left: all triumph would  
But break upon his ghostly solitude.

9

And other comfort were a bitter wound:  
To be in love and love what vanishes.  
Greeks were but lovers; all that country round  
None dared admit, if such a thought were his,  
Incendiary or bigot could be found  
To burn that stump on the Acropolis,  
Or break in bits the famous ivories  
Or traffic in the grasshoppers or bees?

## II

When Loie Fuller's Chinese dancers enwound  
A shining web, a floating ribbon of cloth,  
It seemed that a dragon of air  
Had fallen among dancers, had whirled them round  
Or hurried them off on its own furious path;  
So the platonic year  
Whirls out new right and wrong  
Whirls in the old instead;  
All men are dancers and their tread  
Goes to the barbarous clangour of gong.

10

## III

Some moralist or mythological poet  
Compares the solitary soul to a swan;  
I am content with that,  
Contented that a troubled mirror show it  
Before that brief gleam of its life be gone,  
An image of its state;  
The wings half spread for flight,  
The breast thrust out in pride  
Whether to play or to ride  
Those winds that clamour of approaching night.

A man in his own secret meditation  
Is lost amid the labyrinth that he has made  
In art or politics;  
Some platonist affirms that in the station  
Where we should cast off body and trade  
The ancient habit sticks,  
And that if our works could  
But vanish with our breath  
That were a lucky death,

11

For triumph can but mar our solitude.

The swan has leaped into the desolate heaven:  
That image can bring wildness, bring a rage  
To end all things, to end  
What my laborious life imagined, even  
The half imagined, the half written page;  
O but we dreamed to mend  
Whatever mischief seemed  
To afflict mankind, but now  
That winds of winter blow  
Learn that we were crack-pated when we dreamed.

#### IV

We, who seven years ago  
Talked of honour and of truth,  
Shriek with pleasure if we show  
The weasel's twist, the weasel's tooth.

#### V

Come let us mock at the great  
That had such burdens on the mind  
And toiled so hard and late  
To leave some monument behind,  
Nor thought of the levelling wind.

Come let us mock at the wise;  
With all those calendars whereon  
They fixed old aching eyes,  
They never saw how seasons run,  
And now but gape at the sun.

Come let us mock at the good  
That fancied goodness might be gay,  
Grown tired of their solitude,  
Upon some brand-new happy day:  
Wind shrieked—and where are they?

Mock mockers after that  
That would not lift a hand maybe  
To help good, wise or great  
To bar that foul storm out, for we  
Traffic in mockery.

#### VI

Violence upon the roads: violence of horses;  
Some few have handsome riders, are garlanded  
On delicate sensitive ear or tossing mane,  
But wearied running round and round in their courses  
All break and vanish, and evil gathers head:  
Herodias' daughters have returned again  
A sudden blast of dusty wind and after  
Thunder of feet, tumult of images,  
Their purpose in the labyrinth of the wind;

And should some crazy hand dare touch a daughter  
All turn with amorous cries, or angry cries,  
According to the wind, for all are blind.

But now wind drops, dust settles; thereupon  
There lurches past, his great eyes without thought  
Under the shadow of stupid straw-pale locks,  
That insolent fiend Robert Artisson  
To whom the love-lorn Lady Kyteler brought  
Bronzed peacock feathers, red combs of her cocks.

---

## THE NEW FACES

14

If you, that have grown old were the first dead  
Neither Caltapa tree nor scented lime  
Should hear my living feet, nor would I tread  
Where we wrought that shall break the teeth of time.  
Let the new faces play what tricks they will  
In the old rooms; night can outbalance day,  
Our shadows rove the garden gravel still,  
The living seem more shadowy than they.

---

## A PRAYER FOR MY SON

Bid a strong ghost stand at the head  
That my Michael may sleep sound,  
Nor cry, nor turn in the bed  
Till his morning meal come round;  
And may departing twilight keep  
All dread afar till morning's back  
That his mother may not lack  
Her fill of sleep.

15

Bid the ghost have sword in hand:  
There are malicious things, although  
Few dream that they exist,  
Who have planned his murder, for they know  
Of some most haughty deed or thought  
That waits upon his future days,  
And would through hatred of the bays  
Bring that to nought.

Though You can fashion everything  
From nothing every day, and teach  
The morning stars to sing,  
You have lacked articulate speech  
To tell Your simplest want, and known,  
Wailing upon a woman's knee,  
All of that worst ignominy  
Of flesh and bone;

And when through all the town there ran  
The servants of Your enemy  
A woman and a man,  
Unless the Holy Writings lie,  
Have borne You through the smooth and rough  
And through the fertile and waste,  
Protecting till the danger past

16

## CUCHULAIN THE GIRL AND THE FOOL

### THE GIRL.

I am jealous of the looks men turn on you  
For all men love your worth; and I must rage  
At my own image in the looking-glass  
That's so unlike myself that when you praise it  
It is as though you praise another, or even  
Mock me with praise of my mere opposite;  
And when I wake towards morn I dread myself  
For the heart cries that what deception wins  
My cruelty must keep; and so begone  
If you have seen that image and not my worth.

### CUCHULAIN.

All men have praised my strength but not my worth.

### THE GIRL.

If you are no more strength than I am beauty  
I will find out some cavern in the hills  
And live among the ancient holy men,  
For they at least have all men's reverence  
And have no need of cruelty to keep  
What no deception won.

### CUCHULAIN.

I have heard them say  
That men have reverence for their holiness  
And not their worth.

### THE GIRL.

God loves us for our worth;  
But what care I that long for a man's love.

### THE FOOL BY THE ROADSIDE.

When my days that have  
From cradle run to grave  
From grave to cradle run instead;  
When thoughts that a fool  
Has wound upon a spool  
Are but loose thread, are but loose thread;

When cradle and spool are past  
And I mere shade at last  
Coagulate of stuff  
Transparent like the wind,  
I think that I may find  
A faithful love, a faithful love.

---





That cried him towards his death.

YOUNGEST PUPIL.

Dead faces laugh!

The ancient right is gone, the new remains

And that is death.

(They go towards the king holding out their halters)

We are impatient men,

So gather up the halters in your hands.

KING.

Drive them away.

(He goes into the palace. The soldiers block the way before the pupils.)

SOLDIER.

Here is no place for you,

For he and his pretensions now are finished.

Begone before the men at arms are bidden

To hurl you from the door.

21

OLDEST PUPIL.

Take up his body

And cry that driven from the populous door

He seeks high waters and the mountain birds

To claim a portion of their solitude.

(They make a litter with cloak and staffs and lay Seanchan on it.)

YOUNGEST PUPIL.

And cry that when they took his ancient right

They took all common sleep; therefore he claims

The mountain for his mattress and his pillow.

OLDEST PUPIL.

And there he can sleep on, not noticing

Although the world be changed from worse to worse,

Amid the changeless clamour of the curlew.

(They raise the litter on their shoulders and move a few steps)

YOUNGEST PUPIL.

(motioning to them to stop)

Yet make triumphant music; sing aloud

For coming times will bless what he has blessed

And curse what he has cursed.

22

OLDEST PUPIL.

No, no, be still;

Or pluck a solemn music from the strings.

You wrong his greatness speaking so of triumph.

YOUNGEST PUPIL.

O silver trumpets, be you lifted up

And cry to the great race that is to come.

Long-throated swans upon the waves of time

Sing loudly, for beyond the wall of the world

That race may hear our music and awake.

OLDEST PUPIL.

(motioning the musicians to lower their trumpets)

Not what it leaves behind it in the light  
But what it carries with it to the dark  
Exalts the soul; nor song nor trumpet-blast  
Can call up races from the worsening world  
To mend the wrong and mar the solitude  
Of the great shade we follow to the tomb.  
(Fedelm and the pupils go out carrying the litter. Some play  
a mournful music.)

---

### **NOTE ON 'THOUGHTS UPON THE PRESENT STATE OF THE WORLD' SECTION SIX.**

23

The country people see at times certain apparitions whom they name now 'fallen angels' now 'ancient inhabitants of the country,' and describe as riding at whiles 'with flowers upon the heads of the horses.' I have assumed in the sixth poem that these horsemen, now that the times worsen, give way to worse. My last symbol Robert Artisson was an evil spirit much run after in Kilkenny at the start of the fourteenth century. Are not those who travel in the whirling dust also in the Platonic Year?—W. B. Y.

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### **NOTE ON THE NEW END TO 'THE KING'S THRESHOLD'**

24

Upon the revival of this play at the Abbey Theatre a few weeks ago it was played with this new end. There were a few other changes. I had originally intended to end the play tragically and would have done so but for a friend who used to say 'O do write comedy & have a few happy moments in the Theatre.' My unhappy moments were because a tragic effect is very fragile and a wrong intonation, or even a wrong light or costume will spoil it all. However the play remained always of the nature of tragedy and so subject to vicissitude.

Here ends, 'Seven Poems and a Fragment:' by William Butler Yeats: with a decoration by T. Sturge Moore. Five hundred copies of this book have been printed and published by Elizabeth Corbet Yeats on paper made in Ireland, at the Cuala Press, Churchtown, Dundrum, in the County of Dublin, Ireland. Finished in the third week of April in the year nineteen hundred and twenty-two.

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25

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SEVEN POEMS AND A FRAGMENT \*\*\*

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