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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ROSE LEAF AND APPLE LEAF ***

ROSE LEAF AND APPLE LEAF

*By Rennell Rodd with an
Introduction by Oscar Wilde*

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L'ENVOI

Mongst the many young men in England who are seeking along with me to continue and to perfect the English Renaissance—*jeunes guerriers du drapeau romantique*, as Gautier would have called us—there is none whose love of art is more flawless and fervent, whose artistic sense of beauty is more subtle and more delicate—none, indeed, who is dearer to myself—than the young poet whose verses I have brought with me to America; verses full of sweet sadness, and yet full of joy; for the most joyous poet is not he who sows the desolate highways of this world with the barren seed of laughter, but he who makes his sorrow most musical, this indeed being the meaning of joy in art—that incommunicable element of artistic delight which, in poetry, for instance, comes from what Keats called the "sensuous life of verse," the element of song in the singing, made so pleasurable to us by that wonder of motion which often has its origin in mere musical impulse, and in painting is to be sought for, from the subject never, but from the pictorial charm only—the scheme and symphony of the colour, the satisfying beauty of the design: so that the ultimate expression of our artistic movement in painting has been, not in the spiritual visions of the pre-Raphaelites, for all their marvel of Greek legend and their mystery of Italian song, but in the work of such men as Whistler and Albert Moore, who have raised design and colour to the ideal level of poetry and music. For the quality of their exquisite painting comes from the mere inventive and creative handling of lime and colour, from a certain form and choice of beautiful workmanship, which, rejecting all literary reminiscence and all metaphysical idea, is in itself entirely satisfying to the æsthetic sense—is, as the Greeks would say, an end in itself; the effect of their work being like the effect given to us by music; for music is the art in which form and matter are always one—the art whose subject cannot be separated from the method of its expression; the art which most completely realises for us the artistic ideal, and is the condition to which all the other arts are constantly aspiring.

Now, this increased sense of the absolutely satisfying value of beautiful workmanship, this recognition of the primary importance of the sensuous element in art, this love of art for art's sake, is the point in which we of the younger school have made a departure from the teaching of Mr. Ruskin,—a departure definite and different and decisive.

Master indeed of the knowledge of all noble living and of the wisdom of all spiritual things will he be to us ever, seeing that it was he who by the magic of his presence and the music of his lips taught us at Oxford that enthusiasm for beauty which is the secret of Hellenism, and that desire for creation which is the secret of life, and filled some of us, at least, with the lofty and passionate ambition to go forth into far and fair lands with some message for the nations and some mission for the world, and yet in his art criticism, his estimate of the joyous element of art, his whole method of approaching art, we are no longer with him; for the keystone to his æsthetic system is ethical always. He would judge of a picture by the amount of noble moral ideas it expresses; but to us the channels by which all noble work in painting can touch, and does touch, the soul are not those of truths of life or metaphysical truths. To him perfection of workmanship seems but the symbol of pride, and incompleteness of technical resource the image of an imagination too limitless to find within the limits of form its complete expression, or of a love too simple not to stammer in its tale. But to us the rule of art is not the rule of morals. In an ethical system, indeed, of any gentle mercy good intentions will, one is fain to fancy, have their recognition; but of those that would enter the serene House of Beauty the question that we ask is not what they had ever meant to do, but what they have done. Their pathetic intentions are of no value to us, but their realised creations only. *Pour moi je préfère les poètes qui font des vers, les médecins qui savent guérir, les peintres qui savent peindre.*

Nor, in looking at a work of art, should we be dreaming of what it symbolises, but rather loving it for what it is. Indeed, the transcendental spirit is alien to the spirit of art. The metaphysical mind of Asia may create for itself the monstrous and many-breasted idol, but to the Greek, pure artist, that work is most instinct with spiritual life which conforms most closely to the perfect facts of physical life also. Nor, in its primary aspect, has a painting, for instance, any more spiritual message or meaning for us than a blue tile from the wall of Damascus, or a Hitzen vase. It is a beautifully-coloured surface, nothing more, and affects us by no suggestion stolen from philosophy, no pathos pilfered from literature, no feeling filched from a poet, but by its own incommunicable artistic essence—by that selection of truth which we call style, and that relation

of values which is the draughtsmanship of painting, by the whole quality of the workmanship, the arabesque of the design, the splendour of the colour, for these things are enough to stir the most divine and remote of the chords which make music in our soul, and colour, indeed, is of itself a mystical presence on things, and tone a kind of sentiment.

This, then—the new departure of our younger school—is the chief characteristic of Mr. Rennell Rodd's poetry; for, while there is much in his work that may interest the intellect, much that will excite the emotions, and many cadenced chords of sweet and simple sentiment—for to those who love Art for its own sake all other things are added—yet the effect which they preëminently seek to produce is purely an artistic one. Such a poem as "The Sea-King's Grave," with all its majesty of melody as sonorous and as strong as the sea by whose pine-fringed shores it was thus nobly conceived and nobly fashioned; or the little poem that follows it, whose cunning workmanship, wrought with such an artistic sense of limitation, one might liken to the rare chasing of the mirror that is its motive; or "In a Church," pale flower of one of those exquisite moments when all things except the moment itself seem so curiously real, and when the old memories of forgotten days are touched and made tender, and the familiar place grows fervent and solemn suddenly with a vision of the undying beauty of the gods that died; or the scene in "Chartres Cathedral," sombre silence brooding on vault and arch, silent people kneeling on the dust of the desolate pavement as the young priest lifts Lord Christ's body in a crystal star, and then the sudden beams of scarlet light that break through the blazoned window and smite on the carven screen, and sudden organ peals of mighty music rolling and echoing from choir to canopy, and from spire to shaft, and over all the clear glad voice of a singing boy, affecting one as a thing oversweet, and striking just the right artistic keynote for one's emotions; or "At Lanuvium", through the music of whose lines one seems to hear again the murmur of the Mantuan bees straying down from their own green valleys and inland streams to find what honeyed amber the sea-flowers might be hiding; or the poem written "In the Coliseum," which gives one the same artistic joy that one gets watching a handicraftsman at his work, a goldsmith hammering out his gold into those thin plates as delicate as the petals of a yellow rose, or drawing it out into the long wires like tangled sunbeams, so perfect and precious is the mere handling of it; or the little lyric interludes that break in here and there like the singing of a thrush, and are as swift and as sure as the beating of a bird's wing, as light and bright as the apple-blossoms that flutter fitfully down to the orchard grass after a spring shower, and look the lovelier for the rain's tears lying on their dainty veinings of pink and pearl; or the sonnets—for Mr. Rodd is one of those *qui sonnent le sonnet*, as the Ronsardists used to say—that one called "On the Border Hills," with its fiery wonder of imagination and the strange beauty of its eighth line; or the one which tells of the sorrow of the great king for the little dead child,—well, all these poems aim, as I said, at producing a purely artistic effect, and have the rare and exquisite quality that belongs to work of that kind; and I feel that the entire subordination in our æsthetic movement of all merely emotional and intellectual motives to the vital informing poetic principle is the surest sign of our strength.

But it is not enough that a work of art should conform to the æsthetic demands of the age: there should be also about it, if it is to give us any permanent delight, the impress of a distinct individuality. Whatever work we have in the nineteenth century must rest on the two poles of personality and perfection. And so in this little volume, by separating the earlier and more simple work from the work that is later and stronger and possesses increased technical power and more artistic vision, one might weave these disconnected poems, these stray and scattered threads, into one fiery-coloured strand of life, noting first a boy's mere gladness of being young, with all its simple joy in field and flower, in sunlight and in song, and then the bitterness of sudden sorrow at the ending by Death of one of the brief and beautiful friendships of one's youth, with all those unanswered longings and questionings unsatisfied by which we vex, so uselessly, the marble face of death; the artistic contrast between the discontented incompleteness of the spirit and the complete perfection of the style that expresses it forming the chief element of the æsthetic charm of these particular poems;—and then the birth of Love, and all the wonder and the fear and the perilous delight of one on whose boyish brows the little wings of love have beaten for the first time; and the love-songs, so dainty and delicate, little swallow-flights of music, and full of such fragrance and freedom that they might all be sung in the open air and across moving water; and then autumn, coming with its quireless woods and odorous decay and ruined loveliness, Love lying dead; and the sense of the mere pity of it.

One might stop there, for from a young poet one should ask for no deeper chords of life than those that love and friendship make eternal for us; and the best poems in this volume belong clearly to a later time, a time when these real experiences become absorbed and gathered up into a form which seems from such real experiences to be the most alien and the most remote; when the simple expression of joy or sorrow suffices no longer, and lives rather in the stateliness of the cadenced metre, in the music and colour of the linked words, than in any direct utterance; lives, one might say, in the perfection of the form more than in the pathos of the feeling. And yet, after the broken music of love and the burial of love in the autumn woods, we can trace that wandering among strange people, and in lands unknown to us, by which we try so pathetically to heal the hurts of the life we know, and that pure and passionate devotion to Art which one gets when the harsh reality of life has too suddenly wounded one, and is with discontent or sorrow marring one's youth, just as often, I think, as one gets it from any natural joy of living; and that curious intensity of vision by which, in moments of over-mastering sadness and despair ungovernable, artistic things will live in one's memory with a vivid realism caught from the life which they help one to forget—an old gray tomb in Flanders with a strange legend on it, making one think how, perhaps, passion does live on after death, a necklace of blue and amber beads and a broken mirror found in a girl's grave at Rome, a marble image of a boy habited like Erôs, and with the

pathetic tradition of a great king's sorrow lingering about it like a purple shadow,—over all these the tired spirit broods with that calm and certain joy that one gets when one has found something that the ages never dull and the world cannot harm; and with it comes that desire of Greek things which is often an artistic method of expressing one's desire for perfection; and that longing for the old dead days which is so modern, so incomplete, so touching, being, in a way, the inverted torch of Hope, which burns the hand it should guide; and for many things a little sadness, and for all things a great love; and lastly, in the pine-wood by the sea, once more the quick and vital pulse of joyous youth leaping and laughing in every line, the frank and fearless freedom of wave and wind waking into fire life's burnt-out ashes and into song the silent lips of pain,—how clearly one seems to see it all, the long colonnade of pines with sea and sky peeping in here and there like a flitting of silver; the open place in the green deep heart of the wood with the little moss-grown altar to the old Italian god in it; and the flowers all about, cyclamen in the shadowy places, and the stars of the white narcissus lying like snowflakes over the grass, where the quick, bright-eyed lizard starts by the stone, and the snake lies coiled lazily in the sun on the hot sand, and overhead the gossamer floats from the branches like thin tremulous threads of gold,—the scene is so perfect for its motive, for surely here, if anywhere, the real gladness of life might be revealed to one's youth—the gladness that comes, not from the rejection, but from the absorption, of all passion, and is like that serene calm that dwells in the faces of the Greek statues, and which despair and sorrow cannot disturb, but intensify only.

In some such way as this we could gather up these strewn and scattered petals of song into one perfect rose of life, and yet, perhaps, in so doing, we might be missing the true quality of the poems; one's real life is so often the life that one does not lead; and beautiful poems, like threads of beautiful silks, may be woven into many patterns and to suit many designs, all wonderful and all different: and romantic poetry, too, is essentially the poetry of impressions, being like that latest school of painting, the school of Whistler and Albert Moore, in its choice of situation as opposed to subject; in its dealing with the exceptions rather than with the types of life; in its brief intensity; in what one might call its fiery-coloured momentariness, it being indeed the momentary situations of life, the momentary aspects of nature, which poetry and painting now seek to render for us. Sincerity and constancy will the artist, indeed, have always; but sincerity in art is merely that plastic perfection of execution without which a poem or a painting, however noble its sentiment or human its origin, is but wasted and unreal work, and the constancy of the artist cannot be to any definite rule or system of living, but to that principle of beauty only through which the inconstant shadows of his life are in their most fleeting moment arrested and made permanent. He will not, for instance, in intellectual matters, acquiesce in that facile orthodoxy of our day which is so reasonable and so artistically uninteresting, nor yet will he desire that fiery faith of the antique time which, while it intensified, yet limited, the vision, still less will he allow the calm of his culture to be marred by the discordant despair of doubt or the sadness of a sterile skepticism; for the Valley Perilous, where ignorant armies clash by night, is no resting-place meet for her to whom the gods have assigned the clear upland, the serene height, and the sunlit air,—rather will he be always curiously testing new forms of belief, tinging his nature with the sentiment that still lingers about some beautiful creeds, and searching for experience itself, and not for the fruits of experience, when he has got its secret, he will leave without regret much that was once very precious to him. "I am always insincere," says Emerson somewhere, "as knowing that there are other moods:" "*Les émotions*," wrote Théophile Gautier once in a review of Arsène Houssaye, "*Les émotions ne se ressemblent pas, mais être ému—voilà l'important*".

Now, this is the secret of the art of the modern romantic school, and gives one the right keynote for its apprehension; but the real quality of all work which, like Mr. Rodd's, aims, as I said, at a purely artistic effect, cannot be described in terms of intellectual criticism; it is too intangible for that. One can perhaps convey it best in terms of the other arts, and by reference to them; and, indeed, some of these poems are as iridescent and as exquisite as a lovely fragment of Venetian glass; others as delicate in perfect workmanship and as simple in natural motive as an etching by Whistler is, or one of those beautiful little Greek figures which in the olive woods round Tanagra men can still find, with the faint gilding and the fading crimson not yet fled from hair and lips and raiment; and many of them seem like one of Corot's twilights just passing into music, for not merely in visible colour, but in sentiment also—which is the colour of poetry—may there be a kind of tone.

But I think that the best likeness to the quality of this young poet's work I ever saw was in the landscape by the Loire. We were staying once, he and I, at Amboise, that little village with its gray-slate roofs and steep streets and gaunt grim gateway, where the quiet cottages nestle like white pigeons into the sombre clefts of the great bastioned rock, and the stately Renaissance houses stand silent and apart—very desolate now, but with some memory of the old days still lingering about the delicately-twisted pillars, and the carved doorways, with their grotesque animals, and laughing masks, and quaint heraldic devices, all reminding one of a people who could not think life real till they had made it fantastic. And above the village, and beyond the bend of the river, we used to go in the afternoon, and sketch from one of the big barges that bring the wine in autumn and the wood in winter down to the sea, or lie in the long grass and make plans *pour la gloire, et pour ennuyer les philistins*, or wander along the low sedgy banks, "matching our reeds in sportive rivalry," as comrades used in the old Sicilian days; and the land was an ordinary land enough, and bare too when one thought of Italy, and how the oleanders were robbing the hillsides by Genoa in scarlet, and the cyclamen filling with its purple every valley from Florence to Rome; for there was not much real beauty, perhaps, in it, only long white dusty roads, and straight rows of formal poplars; but now and then some little breaking gleam of broken light would lend to the gray field and the silent barn a secret and a mystery that were

hardly their own, would transfigure for one exquisite moment the peasants passing down through the vineyard, or the shepherd watching on the hill, would tip the willows with silver, and touch the river into gold; and the wonder of the effect, with the strange simplicity of the material, always seemed to me to be a little like the quality of these the verses of my friend.

OSCAR WILDE.

ROSE LEAF AND APPLE LEAF

FROM THE HILL OF GARDENS

The outline of a shadowy city spread
Between the garden and the distant hill—
And o'er yon dome the flame-ring lingers still,
Set like the glory on an angel's head:
The light fades quivering into evening blue
Behind the pine-tops on Ianiculum;
The swallow whispered to the swallow "come!"
And took the sunset on her wings, and flew.

One rift of cloud the wind caught up suspending
A ruby path between the earth and sky;
Those shreds of gold are angel wings ascending
From where the sorrows of our singers lie;
They have not found those wandering spirits yet,
But seek for ever in the red sunset.

Pass upward angel wings! Seek not for these,
They sit not in the cypress-planted graves;
Their spirits wander over moonlit waves,
And sing in all the singing of the seas;
And by green places in the spring-tide showers,
And in the re-awakening of flowers.

Some pearl-lipped shell still dewy with sea foam
Bear back to whisper where their feet have trod;
They are the earth's for evermore; fly home!
And lay a daisy at the feet of God.

IN THE COLISEUM

Night wanes; I sit in the ruin alone;
Beneath, the shadow of arches falls
From the dim outline of the broken walls;
And the half-light steals o'er the age-worn stone
From a midway arch where the moon looks through,
A silver shield in the deep, deep blue.

This is the hour of ghosts that rise;
—Line on line of the noiseless dead—
The clouds above are their awning spread;
Look into the shadow with moon-dazed eyes,
You will see the writhing of limbs in pain,
And the whole red tragedy over again.

The ghostly galleys ride out and meet,
The Cæsar sits in his golden chair,
His fingers toy with his women's hair,
The water is blood-red under his feet,—
Till the owl's long cry dies down with the night,
And one star waits for the dawning light.

ROME, 1881.

THE SEA-KING'S GRAVE

High over the wild sea-border, on the
furthest downs to the west,
Is the green grave-mound of the Norseman,
with the yew-tree grove on its crest.
And I heard in the winds his story, as they
leapt up salt from the wave,
And tore at the creaking branches that grow
from the sea-king's grave.
Some son of the old-world Vikings, the wild
sea-wandering lords,
Who sailed in a snake-prowed galley, with a
terror of twenty swords.
From the fiords of the sunless winter, they
came on an icy blast,
Till over the whole world's sea-board the
shadow of Odin passed,
Till they sped to the inland waters and under
the South-land skies,
And stared on the puny princes, with their
blue victorious eyes.
And they said he was old and royal, and a
warrior all his days,
But the king who had slain his brother lived
yet in the island ways.
And he came from a hundred battles, and
died in his last wild quest,
For he said, "I will have my vengeance, and
then I will take my rest."
He had passed on his homeward journey, and
the king of the isles was dead;
He had drunken the draught of triumph, and
his cup was the isle-king's head;
And he spoke of the song and feasting, and
the gladness of things to be,
And three days over the waters they rowed on
a waveless sea.
Till a small cloud rose to the shoreward, and
a gust broke out of the cloud,
And the spray beat over the rowers, and the
murmur of winds was loud,
With the voice of the far-off thunders, till the
shuddering air grew warm,
And the day was as dark as at even, and the
wild god rode on the storm.
But the old man laughed in the thunder as he
set his casque on his brow,
And he waved his sword in the lightnings and
clung to the painted prow.
And the shaft of the storm-god's quiver,
flashed out from the flame-flushed skies,
Rang down on his war-worn harness, and
gleamed in his fiery eyes.
And his mail and his crested helmet, and his
hair, and his beard burned red;
And they said, "It is Odin calls;" and he
fell, and they found him dead.
So here, in his war-guise armoured, they laid
him down to his rest,
In his casque with the rein-deer antlers, and
the long grey beard on his breast:
His bier was the spoil of the islands, with a
sail for a shroud beneath,
And an oar of his blood-red galley, and his
battle brand in the sheath;
And they buried his bow beside him, and
planted the grove of yew,
For the grave of a mighty archer, one tree for
each of his crew;
Where the flowerless cliffs are sheerest, where
the sea-birds circle and swarm,
And the rocks are at war with the waters,
with their jagged grey teeth in the storm;

And the huge Atlantic billows sweep in, and
the mists enclose
The hill with the grass-grown mound where
the Norseman's yew-tree grows.

A ROMAN MIRROR

They found it in her hollow marble bed,
There where the numberless dead cities sleep,
They found it lying where the spade struck deep,
A broken mirror by a maiden dead.

These things—the beads she wore about her throat
Alternate blue and amber all untied,
A lamp to light her way, and on one side
The toll men pay to that strange ferry-boat.

No trace to-day of what in her was fair!
Only the record of long years grown green
Upon the mirror's lustreless dead sheen,
Grown dim at last, when all else withered there.

Dead, broken, lustreless! It keeps for me
One picture of that immemorial land,
For oft as I have held thee in my hand
The dull bronze brightens, and I dream to see

A fair face gazing in thee wondering wise,
And o'er one marble shoulder all the while
Strange lips that whisper till her own lips smile,
And all the mirror laughs about her eyes.

It was well thought to set thee there, so she
Might smooth the windy ripples of her hair
And knot their tangled waywardness, or ere
She stood before the queen Persephone.

And still it may be where the dead folk rest
She holds a shadowy mirror to her eyes,
And looks upon the changelessness, and sighs
And sets the dead land lilies in her breast.

1879.

BY THE SOUTH SEA

So here we have sat by the sea so late,
And you with your dreaming eyes
Have argued well what I know you hate,
Till even my own dream dies.

Yet why will you smile at my old white years
When love was a gift divine,
When songs were laughter and hope and tears,
And art was a people's shrine?

Must I change the burdens I loved to sing,
The words of my worn-out song?
The old fair thoughts have a hollow ring,
My faiths have been dead so long.

And yet,—to have known that one did not know!
To have dreamed with the poet priest!
To have hope to feel that it might be so!
And theirs was a faith at least.

When the priest was poet, and hearts were fain
Of marvellous things to dream,
To see God's tears in a cloud of rain,

And his hair on a gold sunbeam;

To know that the sons of the old Sea King
Roamed under their waves at will,
To have heard a song that the wood gods sing
On the other side of the hill!

And so I had held it,—for all things blend
In the world's great harmony,—
That they served an end to an after-end,
And were of the things that be.

But now ye are bidding *your* God god-speed
With his lore upon dusty shelves;
So wise ye are grown, ye have found no need
For any god but yourselves.

Ye have learnt the riddle of seas and sand,
Of leaves in the spring uncurled;
There is no room left for my wonderland
In the whole of the great wide world.

And what have ye left for a song to say?
What now is a singer's fame?
He may startle the ear with a word one day,
And die,—and live in a name.

But the world has heed unto no fair thing,
Men pass on their soulless ways,
They give no faith unto those who sing,
—Give hardly a heartless praise.

But you say, Let us go unto all wide lands,
Let us speak to the people's heart!
Let us make good use of our lips and hands,
There is hope for the world in art!

Will the dull ears hear, will the dead souls see?
Will they know what we hardly know?
The chords of the wonderful harmony
Of the earth and the skies?—if so—

We have talked too long till it all seems vain,
The desire and the hopes that fired,
The triumphs won and the needless pain,
And the heart that has hoped is tired.

Do you see down there where the high cliffs shrink,
And the ripples break on the bay,
Our old sea boat at the white foam brink
With the sail slackened down half-way?

Shall we get hence? O fair heart's brother!
You are weary at heart with me,
We two alone in the world, no other:
Shall we go to our wide kind sea?

Shall we glide away in this white moon's track?
Does it not seem fair in your eyes!
—To drift and drift with our white sail black
In the dreamful light of the skies,

Till the pale stars die, and some far fair shore
Comes up through the morning haze,
And wandering hearts shall not wander more
Far off from the mad world's ways.

Or still more fair—when the dim scared night
Grows pale from the east to the west—
If the waters gather us home, and the light
Break through on the waves' unrest,

And there in the gleam of the gold-washed sea,
Which the smile of the morning brings,
Our souls shall fathom the mystery,

And the riddle of all these things.

1879.

IN A CHURCH

This was the first shrine lit for Queen Marie;
And I will sit a little at her feet,
For winds without howl down the narrow street
And storm-clouds gather from the westward sea.

Sweet here to watch the peasant people pray,
While through the crimson-shrouded window falls
Low light of even, and the golden walls
Grow dim and dreamful at the end of day,

Till from these columns fades their marble sheen,
And lines grow soft and mystical,—these wraiths
That watch the service of the changing faiths,
To Mary mother from the Cyprian queen.

But aye for me this old-word colonnade
Seems open to blue summer skies once more,
These altars pass, and on the polished floor
I see the lines of chequered light and shade;

I seem to see the dark-browed Lybian lean
To cool the tortured burning of the lash,
I see the fountains as they leap and flash,
The rustling sway of cypress set between.

And now yon friar with the bare feet there,
Is grown the haunting spirit of the place;
Ah! brown-robed friar with the shaven face,
The saints are weary of thy mumbled prayer.

From matins' bell to the slow day's decline
He sits and thumbs his endless round of beads,
Drawls out the dreary cadence of his creeds
And nods assent to each familiar line.

But she the goddess whose white star is set,
Whose fane was pillaged for this sombre shrine,
Could she look down upon those lips of thine,
And hear thee mutter, would she still regret?

There came a sound of singing on my ear,
And slowly glided through the far-off door
A glimmer of grey forms like ghosts, they bore
A dead man lying on his purple bier.

Some poor man's soul, so little candle smoke
Went curling upwards by the uncased shroud,
And then a sudden thunder-clap broke loud,
And drowned the droning of the priest who spoke.

So all the shuffling feet passed out again
To lightnings flashing through the wet and wind,
And while I lingered in the gate behind
The dead man travelled through the storm and rain.

ROME, 1881.

AT LANUVIUM

" *Festo quid potius die
Neptuni faciam.*"

HORACE, *Odes*, iii. 28.

Spring grew to perfect summer in one day,
And we lay there among the vines, to gaze
Where Circe's isle floats purple, far away
Above the golden haze:

And on our ears there seemed to rise and fall
The burden of an old world song we knew,
That sang, "To-day is Neptune's festival,
And we, what shall we do?"

Go down brown-armed Campagna maid of mine,
And bring again the earthen jar that lies
With three years' dust above the mellow wine;
And while the swift day dies,

You first shall sing a song of waters blue,
Paphos and Cnidos in the summer seas,
And one who guides her swan-drawn chariot through
The white-shored Cyclades;

And I will take the second turn of song,
Of floating tresses in the foam and surge
Where Nereid maids about the sea-god throng;
And night shall have her dirge.

1881.

"IF ANY ONE RETURN"

I would we had carried him far away
To the light of this south sun land.
Where the hills lean down to some red-rocked bay
And the sea's blue breaks into snow-white spray
As the wave dies out on the sand.

Not there, not there, where the winds deface!
Where the storm and the cloud race by!
But far away in this flowerful place
Where endless summers retouch, retrace,
What flowers find heart to die.

And if ever the souls of the loved, set free,
Come back to the souls that stay,
I could dream he would sit for a while with me
Where I sit by this wonderful tideless sea
And look to the red-rocked bay,

By the high cliff's edge where the wild weeds twine,
And he would not speak or move,
But his eyes would gaze from his soul at mine,
My eyes that would answer without one sign,
And that were enough for love.

And I think I should feel as the sun went round
That he was not there any more,
But dews were wet on the grass-grown mound
On the bed of my love lying underground,
And evening pale on the shore.

1879.

"UNE HEURE VIENDRA QUI TOUT PAIERA"

It was a tomb in Flanders, old and grey,
A knight in armour, lying dead, unknown
Among the long-forgotten, yet the stone
Cried out for vengeance where the dead man lay;

No name was chiselled at his side to say
What wrongs his spirit thirsted to atone,
Only the armour with green moss o'ergrown,
And those grim words no years had worn away.

It may be haply in the songs of old
His deeds were wonders to sweet music set,
His name the thunder of a battle call,
Among the things forgotten and untold;
His only record is the dead man's threat,—
"An hour will come that shall atone for all!"

1879.

ACTEA

When the last bitterness was past, she bore
Her singing Cæsar to the Garden Hill,
Her fallen pitiful dead emperor.
She lifted up the beggar's cloak he wore
—The one thing living he would not kill—
And on those lips of his that sang no more,
That world-loathed head which she found lovely still,
Her cold lips closed, in death she had her will.

Oh wreck of the lost human soul left free
To gorge the beast thy mask of manhood screened!
Because one living thing, albeit a slave,
Shed those hot tears on thy dishonoured grave,
Although thy curse be as the shoreless sea,
Because she loved, thou art not wholly fiend.

1881.

IMPERATOR AUGUSTUS

Is this the man by whose decree abide
The lives of countless nations, with the trace
Of fresh tears wet upon the hard cold face?
—He wept, because a little child had died.

They set a marble image by his side,
A sculptured Eros, ready for the chase;
It wore the dead boy's features, and the grace
Of pretty ways that were the old man's pride.

And so he smiled, grown softer now, and tired
Of too much empire, and it seemed a joy
Fondly to stroke and pet the curly head,
The smooth round limbs so strangely like the dead,
To kiss the white lips of his marble boy
And call by name his little heart's-desired.

1879.

"ATQUE IN PERPETUUM FRATER AVE ATQUE VALE"

This was the end love made,—the hard-drawn breath,
The last long sigh that ever man sighs here;
And then for us, the great unanswered fear,
Will love live on,—the other side of death?

Only a year, and I had hoped to spend
A life of pleasant communing, to be
A kindred spirit holding fast to thee,
We never thought that love had such an end.

This was the end love made, for our delight,
For one sweet year he cannot take away;—
Those tapers burning in the dim half-light,
Those kneeling women with a cross that pray,
And there, beneath green leaves and lilies white,
Beyond the reach of love, our loved one lay.

1879.

ON THE BORDER HILLS

So the dark shadows deepen in the trees
That crown the border mountains, all the air
Is filled with mist-begotten phantasies,
Shaped and transfigured in the sunset glare.
What wildly spurring warrior-wraiths are these?
What tossing headgear, and what red-gold hair?
What lances flashing, what far trumpet's blare
That dies along the desultory breeze?

Slow night comes creeping with her misty wings
Up to the hill's crest, where the yew trees grow;
About their shadow-haunted circle clings
The rumour of an unrecorded woe,
Old as the battle of those border kings
Slain in the darkling hollow-lands below.

1881.

SONGS

LONG AFTER

I see your white arras gliding,
In music o'er the keys,
Long drooping lashes hiding
A blue like summer seas:
The sweet lips wide asunder,
That tremble as you sing,
I could not choose but wonder,
You seemed so fair a thing.

For all these long years after
The dream has never died,
I still can hear your laughter,
Still see you at my side;
One lily hiding under
The waves of golden hair;
I could not choose but wonder,
You were so strangely fair.

I keep the flower you braided
Among those waves of gold,
The leaves are sere and faded,

And like our love grown old.
Our lives have lain asunder,
The years are long, and yet,
I could not choose but wonder.
I cannot quite forget.

1880.

"WHERE THE RHONE GOES DOWN TO THE SEA"

A sweet still night of the vintage time,
Where the Rhone goes down to the sea;
The distant sound of a midnight chime
Comes over the wave to me.
Only the hills and the stars o'erhead
Bring back dreams of the days long dead,
While the Rhone goes down to the sea.

The years are long, and the world is wide,
And we all went down to the sea;
The ripples splash as we onward glide,
And I dream they are here with me—
All lost friends whom we all loved so,
In the old mad life of long ago,
Who all went down to the sea.

So we passed in the golden days
With the summer down to the sea.
They wander still over weary ways,
And come not again to me.
I am here alone with the night wind's sigh,
The fading stars, and a dream gone by,
And the Rhone going down to the sea.

1880.

A SONG OF AUTUMN

All through the golden weather
Until the autumn fell,
Our lives went by together
So wildly and so well.—

But autumn's wind uncloses
The heart of all your flowers,
I think as with the roses,
So hath it been with ours.

Like some divided river
Your ways and mine will be,
—To drift apart for ever,
For ever till the sea.

And yet for one word spoken,
One whisper of regret,
The dream had not been broken
And love were with us yet.

1880.

"Ερωτος" Ανδος

The autumn wind goes sighing
Through the quivering aspen tree,
The swallows will be flying
Toward their summer sea;

The grapes begin to sweeten
On the trellised vine above,
And on my brows have beaten
The little wings of love.
Oh wind if you should meet her
You will whisper all I sing!
Oh swallow fly to greet her,
And bring me word in spring!

1881.

ATALANTA

Wait not along the shore, they will not come;
The suns go down beyond the windy seas,
Those weary sails shall never wing them home
O'er this white foam;
No voice from these
On any landward wind that dies among the trees.

Gone south, it may be, rudderless, astray,
Gone where the winds and ocean currents bore,
Out of all tracks along the sea's highway
This many a day,
To some far shore
Where never wild seas break, or any fierce winds roar.

For there are lands ye never recked of yet
Between the blue of stormless sea and sky,
Beyond where any suns of yours have set,
Or these waves fret;
And loud winds die
In cloudless summertime, where those far islands lie.

They will not come! for on the coral shore
The good ship lies, by little waves caressed,
All stormy ways and wanderings are o'er,
No more, no more!
But long sweet rest,
In cool green meadow-lands, that lie along the West.

Or if beneath far fathom depths of waves
She lies heeled over by the slow tide's sweep,
Deep down where never any swift sea raves,
Through ocean caves,
A dreaming deep
Of softly gliding forms, a glimmering world of sleep.

Then have they passed beyond the outer gate
Through death to knowledge of all things, and so
From out the silence of their unknown fate
They bid us wait,
Who only know
That twixt their loves and ours the great seas ebb and flow.

THE DAISY

With little white leaves in the grasses,
Spread wide for the smile of the sun,
It waits till the daylight passes,
And closes them one by one.

I have asked why it closed at even,
And I know what it wished to say:
There are stars all night in the heaven,
And I am the star of day.

1881.

"WHEN I AM DEAD"

When I am dead, my spirit
Shall wander far and free,
Through realms the dead inherit
Of earth and sky and sea;
Through morning dawn and gloaming,
By midnight moons at will,
By shores where the waves are foaming,
By seas where the waves are still.
I, following late behind you,
In wingless sleepless flight,
Will wander till I find you,
In sunshine or twilight;
With silent kiss for greeting
On lips and eyes and head,
In that strange after-meeting
Shall love be perfected.
We shall lie in summer breezes
And pass where whirlwinds go,
And the Northern blast that freezes
Shall bear us with the snow.
We shall stand above the thunder,
And watch the lightnings hurled
At the misty mountains under,
Of the dim forsaken world.
We shall find our footsteps' traces,
And passing hand in hand
By old familiar places,
We shall laugh, and understand.

1881.

AFTER HEINE

The leaves are falling, falling,
The yellow treetops wave,
Ah, all delight and beauty
Is drawing to the grave.

About the wood's crest flicker
The wan sun's laggard rays,
They are the parting kisses
Of fleeting summer days.

Meseems I should be shedding
The heart's-tears from my eyes,
The day will keep recalling
The time of our good-byes:

I knew that you were dying
And I must pass away,
Oh I was the waning summer,
And you were the wood's decay.

1881.

"THOSE DAYS ARE LONG DEPARTED"

Those days are long departed,
Gone where the dead dreams are,
Since we two children started
To look for the morning star.

We asked our way of the swallow
In his language that we knew,
We were sad we could not follow
So swift the blue bird flew.

We set our wherry drifting
Between the poplar trees,
And the banks of meadows shifting
Were the shores of unknown seas.

We talked of the white snow prairies
That lie by the Northern lights,
And of woodlands where the fairies
Are seen in the moonlit nights.

Till one long day was over
And we grew too tired to roam,
And through the corn and clover
We slowly wandered home.

Ah child! with love and laughter
We had journeyed out so far;
We who went in the big years after
To look for another star;

But I go unbefriended
Through wind and rain and foam,—
One day was hardly ended
When the angel took you home.

1881.

A STAR-DREAM

There was a night when you and I
Looked up from where we lay,
When we were children, and the sky
Was not so far away.

We looked toward the deep dark blue
Beyond our window bars,
And into all our dreaming drew
The spirit of the stars.

We did not see the world asleep—
We were already there!
We did not find the way so steep
To climb that starry stair.

And faint at first and fitfully,
Then sweet and shrill and near,
We heard the eternal harmony
That only angels hear;

And many a hue of many a gem
We found for you to wear,
And many a shining diadem
To bind about your hair;

We saw beneath us faint and far
The little cloudlets strewn,
And I became a wandering star,
And you became my moon.

Ah! have you found our starry skies?
Where are you all the years?
Oh, moon of many memories!
Oh, star of many tears!

1881.

AFTER HEINE

Beautiful fisherman's daughter,
Steer in your bark to the land!
Come down to me over the water
And talk to me hand in hand!
Lay here on my heart those tresses,
For look, what have you to fear
Who are bold with the sea's caresses
Every day in the year?
My heart is at one with the deep
In its storm, in its ebb and flow,
And ah! There are pearls asleep
In cavernous depths below.

1880.

AFTER HEINE

How the mirrored moonbeams quiver
On the waters' fall and rise,
Yet the moon serene as ever
Wanders through the quiet skies.

Like the mirrored moonlight's fretting
Are the dreams I have of you,
For my heart will beat, forgetting
You are ever calm and true.

ENDYMION

She came upon me in the middle day,
Bowed o'er the waters of a mountain mere;
Where dimly mirrored in the ripple's play
I saw some fair thing near.

I saw the waters lapping round her feet,
The widening rings spread, follow out and die,
I saw the mirror and the mirrored meet,
And heard a voice hard by.

So I, Endymion, who lay bathing there,
Half-hidden in the coolness of the lake,
Looked up and swept away my long wild hair,
And knew a goddess spake;

A form white limbed and peerless, far above
The very fairest of imagined things,
The perfect vision of a dream of love
Stepped through the water-rings;

That breathed soft names and drew me to her arms,
White arms and clinging in a long caress,
And won me willing, by the magic charms
Of perfect loveliness:

Till on my breast a throbbing bosom lies;
The dim hills waver and the dark woods roll,
For all the longing of two glorious eyes
Takes hold upon my soul.

Then only when the sudden darkness fell
Upon the silver of the mountain mere,
And through the pine trees of the slanting dell,
The moon rose cold and clear,

I seemed alone upon the dewy shore,—
For she had left me as she came unwarned;—
And fell from sighing into sleep, before
The summer morning dawned.

What wonder now I find no maiden fair
Who dwells between these mountains and the seas?
And go unloving and unloved, or ere
I turn to such as these.

What wonder if the light of those wide eyes
Makes other eyes seem cold; for that loud laughter
Lost love has nothing left but sighs
For all the time hereafter.

Yet better so, far better, no regret
Can touch my heart for that sweet memory's sake,
But only sighing for the sun that set
Behind the summer lake.

* * * * *

But yestermorn it was, the second night
Comes softly stealing over yon blue steep;
The world grows silent in the fading light,
There is no joy but sleep.

—I cannot bear her fair face in the skies
Beyond the drowsy waving of the trees,—
A soft breeze kisses round my heavy eyes,
A restful summer breeze.

What means this dreamless apathy of sleep?
—A mist steals over the dim lake, the shore,
Until my closing eyes forget to weep—
Oh, let me wake no more!

DISILLUSION

Ah! what would youth be doing
To hoist his crimson sails,
To leave the wood-doves cooing,
The song of nightingales;
To leave this woodland quiet
For murmuring winds at strife,
For waves that foam and riot
About the seas of life?

From still bays silver sanded
Wild currents hasten down,
To rocks where ships are stranded
And eddies where men drown.
Far out, by hills surrounded,
Is the golden haven gate,
And all beyond unbounded
Are shoreless seas of fate.

They steer for those far highlands
Across the summer tide,
And dream of fairy islands
Upon the further side.
They only see the sunlight,
The flashing of gold bars,
But the other side is moonlight
And glimmer of pale stars.

They will not heed the warning
Blown back on every wind,
For hope is born with morning,
The secret is behind.
Whirled through in wild confusion
They pass the narrow strait,

To the sea of disillusion
That lies beyond the gate.

REQUIESCAT

He had the poet's eyes,
—Sing to him sleeping,—
Sweet grace of low replies,
—Why are we weeping?

He had the gentle ways,
—Fair dreams befall him!—
Beauty through all his days,
—Then why recall him?—

That which in him was fair
Still shall be ours:
Yet, yet my heart lies there
Under the flowers.

1881.

IN CHARTRES CATHEDRAL

Through yonder windows stained and old
Four level rays of red and gold
Strike down the twilight dim,
Four lifted heads are aureoled
Of the sculptured cherubim,
And soft like sounds on faint winds blown
Of voices dying far away,
The organ's dreamy undertone,
The murmur while they pray;
And I sit here alone alone
And have no word to say;
Cling closer shadows, darker yet,
And heart be happy to forget.

And now, the mystic silence—and they kneel
A young priest lifts a star of gold,—
And then the sudden organ peal!
Ave and Ave! and the music rolled
Along the carven wonder of the choir
Thrilled canopy and spire,
Up till the echoes mingled with the song;
And now a boy's flute note that rings
Shrill sweet and long,
Ave and Ave, louder and more loud
Rises the strain he sings,
Upon the angel's wings!
Right up to God!

And you that sit there in the lowliest place,
With lips that hardly dare to move,
You with the old sad furrowed face
Dream on your dream of love!
For you, glide down the music's swell
The folding arms of peace,
For me wild thoughts, I dare not tell
Desires that never cease.
For you the calm, the angel's breast
Whose dim foreknowledge is at rest;
For me the beat of broken wings
The old unanswered questionings.

HIC JACET

Did you play here child
The whole spring through
And smiled and smiled
And never knew?—
Where the shade is cool
And the grass grows deep,
One that was beautiful
Lies in his sleep.

Ah no child, never
Will he arise,
The sleep was for ever
That closed his eyes.
And his bed is strewn
Deep underground,
He was tired so soon,
And now sleeps sound.

When the first birds sing
We can hear them, dear,
And in early spring
There are snowdrops here.
For the flowers love him
That lies below,
And ever above him
The daisies grow.

"Shall we look down deep
Where he hides away?
Shall we find him asleep?"
Yes child, some day.
But his palace gate
Is so hard to see,
We two must wait
For the angel's key.

AT TIBER MOUTH

The low plains stretch to the west with a glimmer of rustling weeds,
Where the waves of a golden river wind home by the marshy meads;
And the strong wind born of the sea grows faint with a sickly breath,
As it stays in the fretting rushes and blows on the dews of death.
We came to the silent city, in the glare of the noontide heat,
When the sound of a whisper rang through the length of the lonely street;
No tree in the clefted ruin, no echo of song nor sound,
But the dust of a world forgotten lay under the barren ground.
There are shrines under these green hillocks to the beautiful gods that
sleep,
Where they prayed in the stormy season for lives gone out on the deep;
And here in the grave street sculptured, old record of loves and tears,
By the dust of the nameless slave, forgotten a thousand years.
Not ever again at even shall ship sail in on the breeze,
Where the hulls of their gilded galleys came home from a hundred seas,
For the marsh plants grow in her haven, the marsh birds breed in her bay,
And a mile to the shoreless westward the water has passed away.
But the sea-folk gathering rushes come up from the windy shore,
So the song that the years have silenced grows musical there once more;
And now and again unburied, like some still voice from the dead,
They light on the fallen shoulder and the lines of a marble head.
But we went from the sorrowful city and wandered away at will,
And thought of the breathing marble and the words that are music still.
How full were their lives that laboured, in their fetterless strength
and far
From the ways that our feet have chosen as the sunlight is from the star,
They clung to the chance and promise that once while the years are free
Look over our life's horizon as the sun looks over the sea,
But we wait for a day that dawns not, and cry for unclouded skies,
And while we are deep in dreaming the light that was o'er us dies;
We know not what of the present we shall stretch out our hand to save
Who sing of the life we long for, and not of the life we have;
And yet if the chance were with us to gather the days misspent,

Should we change the old resting-places, the wandering ways we went?
They were strong, but the years are stronger; they are grown but a name
that thrills,
And the wreck of their marble glory lies ghost-like over their hills.
So a shadow fell o'er our dreaming for the weary heart of the past,
For the seed that the years have scattered, to reap so little at last.

And we went to the sea-shore forest, through a long colonnade of pines,
Where the skies peep in and the sea, with a flitting of silver lines.
And we came on an open place in the green deep heart of the wood
Where I think in the years forgotten an altar of Faunus stood;
From a spring in the long dark grasses two rivulets rise and run
By the length of their sandy borders where the snake lies coiled in
the sun.

And the stars of the white narcissus lie over the grass like snow,
And beyond in the shadowy places the crimson cyclamens grow;
Far up from their wave home yonder the sea-winds murmuring pass,
The branches quiver and creak and the lizard starts in the grass.
And we lay in the untrod moss and pillowed our cheeks with flowers,
While the sun went over our heads, and we took no count of the hours;
From the end of the waving branches and under the cloudless blue
Like sunbeams chained for a banner the thread-like gossamers flew.
And the joy of the woods came o'er us, and we felt that our world was
young

With the gladness of years unspent and the sorrow of life unsung.
So we passed with a sound of singing along to the seaward way,
Where the sails of the fishermen folk came homeward over the bay;
For a cloud grew over the forest and darkened the sea-god's shrine,
And the hills of the silent city were only a ruby line.
But the sun stood still on the waves as we passed from the fading shores,
And shone on our boat's red bulwarks and the golden blades of the oars,
And it seemed as we steered for the sunset that we passed through a
twilight sea,
From the gloom of a world forgotten to the light of a world to be.

ROME, 1881.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

"It is fair to accept the statement of his [Wilde's] own ground, in his preface to the decorative verse of his friend Rennell Rodd, though one doubts whether Gautier would not have dubbed the twain *joints brodeurs*, rather than *jeunes guerriers, du drapeau romantique*. The apostles of our Lord were filled, like them, with a 'passionate ambition to go forth into far and fair lands with some message for the nations and some mission for the world.' But not until many centuries had passed were their texts illuminated to the extent displayed by Mr. Rodd and his printer, with their resources of India-paper, apple-green tissue, vellum, and all the rarities desired by those who die of a rose in aromatic pain. Yet the verse of *Rose Leaf and Apple Leaf* is not so effeminate as one would suppose."

E.C. STEDMAN

Victorian Poets. (1889,) pp. 467-8.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

I

1. ROSE LEAF / AND APPLE LEAF / BY / RENNELL RODD / WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY / OSCAR WILDE (SEAL DEVICE IN RED.) / PHILADELPHIA / J.M. STODDART & CO. / 1882.

12mo. Vellum. Pp. 115. Interleaved with green tissue throughout, and printed in brown ink on thin handmade parchment paper on one side of the leaf.

2. ROSE LEAF / AND / APPLE LEAF / BY / RENNELL RODD / WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY / OSCAR WILDE. (SEAL DEVICE IN RED.) / J.M. STODDART & CO. / 1882.

12mo. Cloth. Pp. 115. Printed in black ink on cream laid book paper, without interleaving of tissue.

This edition must have been re-imposed as it is here printed on both sides of the leaf.

3. ROSE LEAF AND APPLE LEAF / L'ENVOI / BY / OSCAR WILDE / LONDON / PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION / MDCCCCIII.

12mo. Wrappers. Pp. 32 (including half-title and blanks). 200 numbered copies issued.

4. ROSE LEAF AND APPLE LEAF: L'ENVOI BY WILDE.

Sq. 16mo. Printed in *The Bibelot* for July, 1905. Pp. 221-237.

5. LECTURE ON THE ENGLISH RENAISSANCE: ROSE LEAF AND APPLE LEAF: L'ENVOI BY OSCAR WILDE. PORTLAND, MAINE, THOMAS B. MOSHER. MDCCCCV.

Small quarto (5-1/8 x 7). Pp. x: 1-42. 50 copies on Japan vellum, with portrait of Wilde as frontispiece.

II

In taking an assignment of copyright from the surviving member of the firm of J.M. Stoddart & Co. it has been thought desirable to ascertain how *Rose Leaf and Apple Leaf* came into existence in the peculiar *format* which has long since set it apart as one of the choicest specimens of applied æsthetics in book-making that America has to offer the collector. Under date of August 17, 1905, Mr. Stoddart wrote as follows:

"I gladly furnish you with such information regarding this book as my memory of a quarter of a century permits.

The paper used in the *édition de luxe* was a remainder which we found in the possession of a Philadelphia paper dealer, (Charles Megargee, if I remember correctly), and was made at the famous Rittenhouse Mill on the Wissahickon, (near Philadelphia and said to be the first paper mill in America), for the (new) Government of the United States at the time of the first issue of bonds or paper money. It therefore has a historical interest as well as a unique character.

I think this edition was not over 250 copies and price \$1.75, but Brentano sold many of these for \$3.00 and more, after having secured Wilde's autograph on the cover. This edition is now certainly out of print and so far as I know impossible to procure anywhere. I have heard of copies changing hands at \$5.00.

The cheaper edition was issued at \$1.00 but comparatively few sold as I was interested in greater matters and transferred the stock to J.B. Lippincott & Co., where the lot was consumed in their fire.

I think the whole credit for the green leaves, and the general oddity of the make-up of the book belongs to our office altho' Wilde may have been consulted. Of course you recognize the reproduction of his seal."

All the circumstances connected with the publication of *Rose Leaf and Apple Leaf* are confessedly not entirely clear to us. It is undoubtedly true, as stated in the *N.Y. Tribune*, (November 25, 1882,) that "Mr. Rennell Rodd, the young English poet whose verses were brought out here in apple-green and rose-red under the enthusiastic auspices of Mr. Oscar Wilde, has altered in his faith. He now disclaims any connection with the æsthetic school, and lets it be known that he had nothing to do with the amazing dress in which his verses appeared. He intends to publish a new volume." This "newsy" note was based on a briefer one made just two weeks earlier in *The Academy*, (London, November 11, 1882,) viz.: "We understand that Mr. Rennell Rodd has a new volume of poems in the press. He is anxious to disclaim any connection with the "Æsthetic" school, with which he has been identified."

It may here be said that Mr. Rodd's first impressions were somewhat different from what the above implies. In a letter dated October 6, 1882, he wrote the American publisher:

"I had not till lately seen the little edition,—which is charming. I have seen no *édition de luxe* in England to compare with it.... I have to thank you for the great care and delicacy with which this little book has been published."

What undoubtedly precipitated the trouble was not the *format*, "amazing" though it may have seemed to the nameless scribe of the *Tribune*, but the proposal by the Stoddart firm to bring out an English edition. This could not be done, as Mr. Rodd pointed out, because the poems had already been published in London, and as he held the copyright, they could not be reissued save with his consent. Furthermore: "Since I have read the introduction I am not over pleased at the way in which I find myself identified with much that I have no sympathy with." Last of all, probably first of all, "there is one thing in it that has annoyed me excessively, and had I had a proof I should not have allowed it to stand. The dedication is too effusive. I have written to Mr. Wilde on this score, but if he does not write to you, I must ask you as a personal favour to see to it. I want to have it removed from all copies that go out for the future."

Unfortunately Mr. Rodd's request could not well be complied with: the book had been published, and as it turned out no other edition was ever called for by a more or less undiscerning public.

A few other facts are in evidence. The original title of the work as published by Rodd through David Bogue, London, 1881, was *Songs in the South* and the dedication read "To My Father." It is conjectured that the dedication in the American edition was either based on, or copied from an

inscription written by the author in the copy Wilde brought over with him. It read as follows: *To Oscar Wilde—/ "Hearts Brother"—/ These few songs and many songs to come.* It may have been "too effusive." It is seldom, indeed, that we have the time and the place and the loved one all together! It is not denied that this inscription was written by Mr. Rodd, however effusive, and somehow, after the lapse of years one wishes he had not so completely discountenanced the kindly offices of one who later on fell into such desperate extremes. It is quite likely that the evident editing bestowed upon the poems by Wilde may have added to the displeasure of the poet. If so, we cannot, after an acquaintance with the original London text of 1881 agree with him. Two poems, "Lucciole" and "Maidenhair," omitted by Wilde attest to his critical acumen, and nine additional poems derived, we may suppose from manuscript sources, do not lessen our respect for his supervising care.

The introduction itself was without question a matter of the greatest regret to Mr. Rodd. It credited him "with much that annoys me excessively." It is conceded however, that "it has been kindly meant"—but if a second edition should be in request—it must be "with no introduction"—there were available other poems that could be made to take its place.

Admitting that Wilde went beyond the spirit, if not the letter of his friend's intent, it is a relief to find Rodd's admission that "where a thing has been kindly meant, one cannot find fault.—On reflection I see how foolish it was to make no reservations and restrictions of any kind—For that very reason I have no excuse to make any complaint." But still harping on the supposedly bad effects of Wilde's *L'Envoi*: "It did not occur to me at the time that I should be so completely identified with a lot of opinions with which I have no sympathy whatever." With this disclaimer our quotations from the Rodd letters come to an end.

Well, after all is said what does it matter? The thing we care for most is just this brief, brilliant essay; as for the verse it is in the main well and good, despite benefits forgot. Some of it we feel assured will survive, has indeed, lived to find its way into many anthologies. As for the exquisite little *causerie* it remains to us safe and secure, veritable treasure-trove of unsullied gold against the years that the locust hath eaten.

T.B.M.

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