

Early Dew

By Julian Scutts

I

By river-banks I saw such scenes
as might enchant an angel's gaze.
They gladdened many a childhood hour
and filled my youthful heart with praise.

Onwards, onwards my bark glided,
where waters flowed by open leas,
past greening woods where lad and lass
cast apple blossoms to the breeze.
Onwards, onwards, my bark glided,
on the gently lilted stream
past fenced gardens, stately houses,
rewards of toil with due esteem.

Past beeches, bays and boughs of ash,
past golden leaves of many a tree,
onwards, onwards, my bark glided,
onwards, onwards, to the sea.

II

Till the last rose fade on a withered stem
and the sun last set in the sky,
abide my love abide though night condemn
that we dream of a day passed by,
when our first love rose with the morning sun
ere the early dew of the dawn
to vapours turned dissolved to one,
and to where by the wind were they borne?

III

The oxen turning at the mill
their master's granary store to fill,
consume the wisps of fallen straw
that lie upon the miller's floor.
And so our loves, our joys, our tears
like sunken pearls beneath the years'
vast deep are lost
save to one in dreamer's sleep,
or else are God's alone to keep.

IV

Where is the substance of our years,
and whither flowed our mortal tears?
In present pain to living eye?
O rose, your beauty gives reply,
your forebears reigned, as you this hour
to bear their praise alone, frail flower.
Alas! Your beauty soon is shed
the seeing eye in dust to wed.
In dust communion, what is dust
but token that all living must
at last be one?

Does not manhood kill the boy,
each falling leaf a tree destroy,
or shall the substance of past things

return to us though memory brings
but shadow forms, unless restored
by us in present living.

V

He built no house
and saw no house decay
He served no gain
and loss could not betray.
No marble tomb,
his resting place a stone.
Here Caesar fell
from Empire's ivory throne.

VI

I walked one morn a well-loved path
where snow's white should before me lay.
Therein were footprints half-erased
as names on weather-beaten graves,
sole tokens of men's transient paths,
through a realm ephemeral,
through dimensions felt. not grasped,
that bore, and bear, and to the last,
shall bear the impress of men's hearts.

One day I'll walk by copse and rill,
up to a mound, a cold green hill,
therefrom the setting sun to see.
I'll rest beneath a spreading tree,
and dream perchance of that past day
when snow's white shroud before me lay.