

*This England*

*James Edward Ward*

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JAMES EDWARD WARD

*This England*

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# *To Winston Churchill*

*This man of oak, this son of blended breed,  
This soul that holds an empire in its round,  
This will defensive of our freedom's creed,  
This heart that draws from out the deep profound.  
This vital flame, this passion incarnate  
Caught from the central Fire, this chosen ore,  
This iron, edged to quell the hordes of hate,  
This rugged mind, this mighty counsellor.*

*Churchill, these years were lean had you not fed  
A lagging nation in its hungry need;  
These years were lean had you not bravely led  
Through tears and toil, and taught men how to bleed.  
Britannia knows, and all her serried host,  
How you have given to your uttermost.*



# *This England*

Memory has a power to cross far seas,  
To trim, for sailing, long-beached argosies,  
To turn lost tunes to tempt the merry dance,  
To mend torn silks, to dream, to gaze, perchance  
To quicken scenes long since to silence wed,  
Or open ears to music long since dead.  
Her ways are hallowèd; in maiden grace  
She steals amid the meads to interlace  
Sweet garlands kissed with laughter, and her song,  
A haunting cadence, drifts old paths along.  
Through many lands her way she wends, 'mid shades  
Of friendly roaming, by hills and pleasant glades,  
Yet always homing turns to one fond bourne  
Where England sweetly greets the misty morn.  
All hedged and hawthorn crowned, this merry plot,  
Filling its lap with daisies, ne'er forgot,  
Colours all distant dreams and softly brings  
Home, to its hearth, its child's heart-hoverings.

Where'er the rose has blooming,  
Where'er the oak holds sap,  
Wherever there's a gloaming  
And the embers slowly die,  
Where'er the earth's warm rooming  
Holds harvest in its lap,  
There, memory will go homing  
Beneath an English sky.

By lingering lanes within an evening mist,  
Will live again a long-lost lover's tryst:  
A stile will turn, and gentle fingers cling,  
And lips will utter love's lost whispering,  
As, soft within the dusk, a distant lowing  
Will bring the scents and sounds of England's knowing.

Where'er a sheepdog nestles  
A nose against a knee,  
Where'er adventure wrestles  
With hard won destiny,  
There England will be calling  
Her sons beyond the foam;  
There memory's strange thralling  
Will draw her children home.

Some dancing gnats upon a sun-warmed porch,  
Among cool trees the spire of a church,  
A lingering scent that haunts the new mown hay,  
A glint of blue, within a golden day,  
Where humble speedwell or mild milkwort press  
Their little tendernesses on the grass;  
These wistful thought will rouse, and eyes will gaze  
Knowing that England lives beyond the haze.

So would we sing of England's innocence,  
Of all that's sweet and fair above offence,  
Of all that's lissom, shy, and blithe, and young,  
By her embodied, of her nobly sprung;  
Of sinew strengthened by her ancient creed  
To bear in courage and in beauty breed;  
Of wisdom lipped in song; of blessedness  
That comes of growing age's dear caress. . . .

When tender fingers steal in dusk,  
And all is mist, and all is musk,  
And earth is yielding to a dream,  
Mid murmurings of vale and stream;

When lips from language softly turn  
A sweeter language so to learn,  
And nature needs no searching eyes  
To find life's lovelier paradise;

When dearest drifts of hidden thought  
Are by the purest passion taught  
To merge with muted melody  
Of lispings leaf and whispering tree. . . .

With all else hushed that lingers there,  
Then Love, his own artificer,  
Lays tools aside and only breathes  
Upon the beauty he bequeathes.

If softly so the days confess  
Their hovering thought, shall I do less  
Than gather to a quiet breast  
The peace that comes at thy behest?

Shall I, within the evening dusk,  
When all is mist, and all is musk,  
Hold less of yielding to my dream  
Within the vale, beside the stream?

Shall I, alone, the heart of memory chide  
Because her yearning tempts me o'er the wide  
Expanse of ocean's stern and surging drift  
The curtain of her friendly mists to lift  
Who is forever lovely? Freely she  
Has given, freely shall she have the fee  
Of loyalty. Her whited cliffs, her lanes  
Fresh greening to the spring, her storied fanes  
Soft flooded by the dim of prayer's desire,  
Upreaching from the earth to heaven's fire,  
Her humble roof and garden's open gate  
All welcome proffer and on memory wait.  
Let me go sleep beneath her friendly thatch  
A little dream of England so to snatch. . . .

Once again to wake at dawn  
And hear the morning lark and thrush,  
To look upon an English lawn  
And see the growing, rosy flush  
Of June announce the summer's day  
Along the hedge, among the hay.

O once again to wander through  
A meadowland 'mid gentle hills,  
Or by a fieldpath moist with dew,  
Among the laughing daffodils,  
Again the scents of England knowing,  
To see the saucy cowslips blowing.

To come upon some gloomy grove  
Where still the azure haunts the haze  
With memories of treasure trove,  
And there, with misty eyes to gaze,  
Remembering the forms that hide  
Within some long-lost eventide

Or on a night, through grassy rooms,  
By silent copse and haunted hedge,  
To steal, 'mid summer's fragrant glooms  
Along a darkling meadow's edge,  
And hear within a friendly vale  
The love call of the nightingale.

By dale or fen or moor or down,  
By pilgrim way or shepherd pass,  
Through village green or gabled town,  
At Hilary or Michaelmas,  
Again, by quiet memory brought,  
To tend old bivouacs of thought.

Dear little land of lusty loves,  
Of songs that sink yet linger on,  
Whence many a heart of courage roves  
To search some earth's receding dawn,  
Breathe on our thought your blessed breeze,  
The poignancy of toil to ease.

She gave me love, did England; but a lad  
She drew me close and gave me all she had.  
She kissed my brow and bade my trembling cease;  
She breathed on me her spirit's sweet release.  
She smiled on me when I was young and shy,  
And soothed my youthful shrinking with her sigh.  
For she was winsome, and her ardour's kiss  
Had something in it of an elfin bliss.  
I could but look on her; I could but yield;  
Could but kiss the bosom she revealed . . .  
Seek through the quiet passion of her eyes  
The opening of love's divine surprise.

A lad must think of something  
And it might as well be love,  
When the breeze is on the bracken  
And the sun is up above,  
And there's gold-brown on the blossom  
Where the common's ringed with furze,  
Where the cuckoo is a-calling  
And a lazy coppice stirs.

Through many a glade we roamed, 'mid leafy rooms,  
Where lofty beeches spread their friendly glooms.

A lad must think of something  
Where the wide-eyed daisies look  
With laughter and with wonder  
On the graylings in the brook;  
Yet what is there of wonder  
Or of laughter for his soul,  
If song there is in heaven  
But love is not his goal?

Ah, she was lovely, yet she had passion too:  
Not all of her was heather kissed with dew.  
She knew the tempest and the surge of tide,  
And sometimes, when her eyes would open wide,  
There'd look from out the wonder of their deeps  
A troubled calm, as when the ocean sleeps  
Aware that in its very bosom lies  
The surge and sweep of mighty destinies,  
And yet is prone in liquid peace to well  
In boundless drift of thought immutable.

Passion she had, not born of heady pride,  
Not such as in a moment flamed and died,  
But such abiding passion, bitter sweet,  
As comes of sorrow suffered in retreat,  
Stilled by the silent alchemy of sooth,  
And held, age long, in patient, gentle ruth;  
The passion of great music, sombre, slow  
And simply told in mood adagio.

Passion she had; the love she gave was strong.  
As love, redeemed from out an age's wrong  
By some high sacrifice upon the cross,  
Is precious, knowing such escape from dross,  
So hers would gather from some boundless thought  
Heartsease; an age's gift its beauty wrought.  
Yet sheltered by the eaves of pastoral peace  
She lived 'mid nature's sounds and sweet release.

O when I think of England,  
I think not of her might;  
When I think of England  
There comes, for my delight,  
A dream of laughing cowslips,  
Of bluebells in a copse,  
Of ruddy haws and rosehips,  
And rainbows in dewdrops.

O when I think of England,  
Not majesty invades  
The vision of her greatness  
Emboldened by parades;  
But, through a pleasant meadow,  
I tread a grassy path,  
Or find, in a hedge's shadow,  
The peace that England hath.

So many tell of England  
As great in storied tale;  
For me a greater England  
Lies sleeping in the vale;  
A land of quiet homing,  
Where pleasant dreams are born;  
A land of quiet roaming  
Through poppies in the corn.

She lived where loamy furrows lined their chart  
In fields that held the forest to their heart.

The glory of Old England  
Lies not in pelf and power;  
Of greatness, dear old England  
Holds yet a richer dower;  
For England is a good land  
Where love may keep its tryst,  
Of song within a woodland,  
Of nightingales and mist.

So when I think of England  
I think of pleasant leas,  
Of dear old dreamy England  
That basks by azure seas,  
Of sheep among the heather  
That browse on purple hills,  
Of balmy April weather,  
And dancing daffodils.

This merry sod that taunts the sun to glee  
Holds mingling rare of dust and deity. . . .  
But no mean dust, for still sweet Avon flows,  
And there are banks whereon the wild thyme grows.

Does he still wander through her meads  
Who Avon's limpid waters blessed?  
Does he still dream of England's deeds  
Who Arden's gentle land caressed?

No other happy scenes he knew,  
No other hills or valley green,  
No other dawn, no other dew  
His muse from Warwick's lanes to wean.

He wrote of Caesar and the Dane,  
Of tiltings on a 'cloth of gold',  
Of Crecy and the Spanish Main,  
But only wandered Warwick's wold.

Here he had seen the fairies dance,  
Watched Puck, and Adon's hunted boar,  
And blended with such high romance  
The daisy's and the cuckoo's lore.

For anxious gods had brought to birth  
A soul so tuned to high desire  
That it must have impassioned earth  
And well they chose fair Warwickshire.

O Will of Avon, who didst within thy breast  
The tempest carry, or the peace of stars;  
Couldst bring, in service to thy quill's behest,  
The blush of Venus, or outbattle Mars;  
Couldst weave a stave to give a summer zest,  
Or with thy snow outwinter winter's frost;  
Pipe with Pan a meadow's floral quest,  
Or blatantly the ribald night accost:

How didst thou so contrive that love should live  
Though Romeo should die? How glibly tap  
Old Falstaff as a butt and make him give,  
Even in debauchery, rare wisdom's sap?  
How through a Goneril establish ruth,  
Or from Iago's lying lips tear truth?



Yes, he was England's, and she freely gave  
Him all that human heart could dearly crave.  
It was her way. It ever shall be so  
In this fair Isle of beauty's ebb and flow.  
Beauty, passion, truth and love, all these  
She dearly holds in holy treasures  
Of act and thought. Each jewelled syllable,  
Each sigh that from a hidden sorrow fell  
In some far searching past, each hope's desire  
That gleams as gold from the Refiner's fire  
All these she opens, and we fondly gaze  
Held by their warmth and humbled with amaze.  
No oak that suckles for its sturdy worth  
Draws moisture from the clay of holier earth.  
No rose that softly breathes a budding sigh  
Unfolds its bloom to more contented sky  
Than that whose azure looks on England's heart,  
Knowing itself of her fair life a part.

By Windermere does Wordsworth still  
Hold converse on a lowly hill?  
Do thrushes from a copse take wing  
In nature's friendly neighbouring,  
And give him pause that he may say  
What they have carolled in their lay?

Do primrose clusters, soft and sweet,  
In friendly homage crowd his feet  
Or, for the feasting of his eyes,  
Do fairy-frail anemones  
Bespeak for him, in faith, the whole  
Fair unity of sod and soul?

Are there such intimations given  
Him, of that indwelling heaven  
Which nature warms within her breast,  
That he must move more softly, lest  
He startle, on his little mound,  
The life that makes earth holy ground?

I've trod the greening meadows Shelley trod,  
Lain lazily upon the very sod  
His boyhood dreams inhabited; I've heard  
The measures of his azure mounting bird  
Flood waking dawn with golden ecstasy;  
In Autumn breasted there the wild west wind  
A wilder passion for my heart to find;  
In Spring, have opened wide my senses' dearth  
To hear his 'clarion o'er the dreaming earth'.

'Mad Shelley'! (Mad, as wisdom oft is mad  
That music makes of all that's free and glad)  
A wraith, ethereal, no longer bound,  
Soars with his lark from his beloved ground  
With thought full-winged as for celestial song,  
A ready guest the happy host among.

I've stood in peace beneath the cottage thatch  
Where Milton, blind, was fondly wont to watch  
The heavens constellate, and seen but half the beam  
That, sightless, he could conjure in his dream,  
Yet learned enough to know beneath those skies  
I'd found at last some long-lost paradise.

She has not changed, nor will she say him nay  
Who in a haunt sequestered seeks the play  
Of thought's own hallowed searching; she herself  
Has ever harboured fairy, gnome and elf.  
By some dim path still will the poet roam  
Where soft the coulter turns the moistened loam,  
Still view green rushes round a moss-bound moat,  
Still hear the lay from out some fluted throat.

What strange mysterious stuff this dust we tread—  
Eyeless now, but once with eyes that gazed  
On lovelinesses long, oh, long since dead;  
Lipless now but once with lips that praised  
Dim hues of floating mist, or contours seen  
Through evening's ruddy glooms, as to the west  
Some ancient sun, old friendly hills between,  
Roamed slowly down the valley of its quest!  
Could it but wake again, what flight would wing  
In joyous thrill of song long sepulchred!  
Could it but sigh, what seasons would it bring  
Of buried pain, what poignancy of dread!  
What echo, lifting o'er an ancient lea,  
Would drift to us, of some still ecstasy!

Softly, Brother, breathe a bated breath,  
And what thou breathest utter with a sigh.  
Thou knowest not what spirit hovereth,  
What wraith unhoused and mutely floating by,  
Inhabits so the pale and phantom flush  
Of evening . . . This English evening's hush.

A little mead within a little Isle,  
A little river lazing to the sea,  
A little path, a hedge, a weathered stile,  
A haze, a star . . . a hushed immensity  
Of thought transfigured in the friendly gloom,  
Woven in the woof of memory's loom.

She is a maiden in whose yielding kiss  
The passion of the centuries abides,  
Within whose shy disarming artifice  
There lurks a pregnant meaning. She confides  
Her secret only to those patient eyes  
That seek, in beauty, truth's celestial prize.

Her warriors have fought, her poets dreamed;  
No right she has that has not been redeemed  
By thought and thew, 'mid earnest watches mute,  
No grace unrescued from the fearsome bruit  
Of pagan strife. Long-sunk, the centuries  
Still minister her unassailed decrees:  
Fearless, her children come, through feast and fast,  
To pledge the golden chalice of the past. . . .  
A living past that on the present waits  
To spur to life and spurn all opiates.

Within her quiet land there lies  
The ardour of all time.  
The dream of agelong verities  
And tragedy sublime.

Primeval terrors have their lair  
Far in her hidden deep;  
Unuttered wonders slumber there,  
And beauties latent sleep.

As waves that curl within the sun  
Encrust a vaster wide,  
As through each timorous swell there run  
The tremors of the tide,

So here, within each sun-taught gleam,  
Caught from the spume of life,  
There thrills the cadence of a theme  
Won from our tidal strife,

And we its ancient glories show  
Upon our cross-bound shield,  
And we our duty learn to know,  
Our homage learn to yield.

Yes, England lives—and in her soul a fire,  
Warming her tender life to love's desire.  
Here is no hearth unhallowèd by flame,  
No house unpassioned, no dearth, no hollow name;  
No chimney mute for unaspiring smoke  
The blessing of the friendly stars to invoke;  
Here is no door unhinged to heart's desire,  
No lonely corner for an untouched lyre. . . .  
Here is home, and song, and heart of kindred love,  
The wassail bowl, and golden thatch above  
The welcome of an entrance undenied,  
A beaten path, a gate that's open wide.  
Here men have lived and roystered in their joy;  
Have thanked the gods for beauty's sweet employ;  
Known laughter and the season's merry rout  
Of yule or harvest, the May-pole danced about;  
All floral crowned have ushered in the Spring  
With song, and pledged earth's ruddy autumning.

Hey nonny, her harvest is heavy;  
Hey nonny, her harvest is glad;  
For her maids in a bevy  
Claim kisses for levy  
If any dull soul would be sad.

Hey nonny, her harvest is merry;  
Hey nonny, her harvest is gay;  
For when lips are of cherry  
What lad would be wary  
Of song on a high harvest day?

Are not her shadows peopled yet with those  
Who came to age-old loves through age-old throes?  
On dusky hillsides still are clustering  
Flares of some torch-illuminated mustering  
To guard her wattled towns. Brave banners rise  
To follow where some saintly crusade cries  
And, there, where whited cliffs stand stark and whist,  
Tense archers speed their arrows through the mist.  
Still, Sainted Bede an hour will beguile  
With holy parchment in his Holy Isle.  
There is no glade within a bosky wood  
That is not haunted by its Robin Hood,  
And Arthur still does grace his table round  
With presences that are full knightly found.

Time cannot mar this countenance,  
Nor fleshly lust, nor worldly chance.  
Beyond this glory, glory lies  
Of deeper joy, of bluer skies,  
And heady din or waste of strife  
Cannot annul this Love, this Life.

Time cannot smirch the heart's desire  
Of her for whom the gods conspire;  
Beyond the singer is a Song  
Untouched by sorrow, pain or wrong,  
And she who harbours Beauty's elf  
Harbours likewise Beauty's self.

This her strength and this her greatness is,  
Herein lies her splendour, grace and bliss,  
That she has gone, full ardent-eyed and free,  
To each sweet several spring in zeal or glee,  
And drawn from it of water for her thirst . . .  
In storied love and storied lore immersed,  
Each Austral beauty, or each Orient grace,  
Has found her waiting with a welcome place  
Of holy havening. Her songs have sung  
Of far-flung garnerings; her very tongue  
Is quickened by the speech of other lands  
Self mellowed to her lips; her strands  
Have listened to the choric interchange  
Of tone and antitone, at first full strange  
But soon in native rhythm made her own,  
Until her warp and woof of life, from serf to throne,  
Is found all intermeshed with threads of gold  
Won from distant climes and ages old.

This her strength, her beauty likewise this,  
On whom so wills, freely she'll breathe her bliss  
If he but dedicate an equal vow  
To what is fair. If truth he has betrayed  
He need not come, or if he is afraid,  
Or if he hatred hold, or any lust;  
With him she will not share her treasure's trust.  
Yet only will she shrink the shallow hour  
Of those who seek her freedom to deflower.



Her heart is everywhere, but much it dwells  
In little native bournes, on native fells.

Here still a man may wander o'er the rise  
And see a shepherd leading home his sheep  
From pastures green, to fearless fold and sleep  
Within a quiet vale, 'neath quiet skies.  
Here sounds still come from pastoral emprise,  
Or from the home that feeds the evening brood.  
Here still, within an evening interlude,  
A hush along the misty upland lies. . . .  
A hush oft breathed about the plodding sound  
That tells the weary tread of patient feet  
Moving homeward o'er such holy ground  
To peace and rest, a kindred love to greet.  
What holier coming has there ever been  
To cloistered welcome, amid a pastoral scene?

Ah, little land, a torch did glow with flame,  
When first the gods awakened to thy name.

Sing then thy heart, and let thy lips employ  
Such liquid notes of beauteous melody  
That Earth shall rise impassioned by thy joy  
And dancing sway, sway to thy ecstasy  
Made vocal. Hill and mead and vale shall tread  
Such measure as that laughing tears shall well  
From eyes that late have held a heavy bed,  
And thy own rhythm in the dance shall tell,  
Forth-tripping in the beauty of delight.  
Sing, till the very soul of Nature start;  
For with his music Love hath filled thy night,  
And thou hast in his melody thy part.

Her heart is everywhere, but one fair bourne  
I came to, once, upon a summer morn,  
Where most I found her fair, where most she gave  
Her very self, holy, gay and grave.  
Here, where the Isis overflowed its bank  
Among the bending rushes, rank on rank,  
I crossed the grey old bridge by Magdalen's wall  
To enter on a sweet and holy thrall.  
I came in diffidence, and came alone,  
And England claimed me, claimed me as her own.

Ah, when now I look, o'er far-borne seas  
Usurped by fear and man's idolatries,  
What counter beauty floods my pensive breast  
With memories that mark a youthful quest!  
How joy will come aknocking at the pane  
Of windows that have looked upon the slain!

Laughter for the glory of our dream;  
Tears for dampened passion dimly lit;  
Tears that we have failed the glowing gleam,  
Nor given it our beauty, nor our wit;  
These I hold commingled in distress  
Yet listen for her song of loveliness.

If I could tread the meadowland  
That nestles near the dreamy Thames  
By Oxford's gentle breezes fanned,  
Where many a laughing daisy hems  
The broidery of nature's grace;  
If I could see her smiling face,

See it once more as once I saw  
It wake to laughter in the sun,  
Acknowledging her innate law  
That heart may woo what heart has won;  
If I could walk that shady path  
With nothing of war's aftermath;

If I could once more search the sky  
For liquid music from a wing  
Unseen and azure bound, or, nigh,  
Listen where freshened cresses cling  
The violet-laden banks, to hear  
The stream glide blithely o'er the weir—

O, at such memories the mind will leap  
With love that grows so fathomlessly deep!

Could I but roam where Iffley's tower,  
Foursquare within the sunset mist,  
Chimes forth in peace the vesper hour  
And all the pastoral rise is kissed  
To quietude; knowing no stress,  
But conscious of earth's loveliness—

If I could tread again the grass  
Of that fair stream-entthreaded land . . .  
But life has no such hourglass  
To turn again the selfsame sand  
In patient thread of time, to run  
The selfsame silting it has won.

Does any water flow so richly banked?  
Do any ways steal forth so richly flanked?

The stream flows on its misty way;  
The boatman deftly plies his pole;  
Spring comes again with hedge-clad May;  
The fields are full of song. The whole  
Wide valley land, with copse-bound hills,  
Holds every feature beauty wills.

All this I know, but I am far  
Away. It may be vision dims,  
Or, like an overwearied star  
Found lone where dawn the morning rims,  
With misty eyes, my quivering thought  
Measures a mind that's overwrought,

For through that daisy patterned woof  
I trace the shuttle of distress.  
I see the years that hold aloof  
Flash through its web in bitterness,  
And all its sweet and silver stream  
Flows darkly through a lampless dream.

Such mingled sounds, so many tones  
Come now when Iffley's tower chimes,  
I wonder how their blood atones  
Who lie so still in other climes,  
Who once shared youth's own laughter here  
Along the stream, beside the weir.

She gave me friends, yet friends she took away.  
Never a sorrow bended to such sway  
Of sweeter breath. Never a joy was fraught  
With deeper pain—

And yet when I awake in May  
I tread again that lovely shire,  
Thinking it was but yesterday  
I heard at dawn old Magdalen's choir,  
Thinking that "Hilary" is past,  
That fritillaries bloom at last,

That copses are with bluebell strewn,  
That lanes, through flower-laden thorn,  
Wend fragrantly to summer's noon.  
I hear the lark again at morn  
In deathless lyric, skyward bound,  
Pour liquid notes upon the ground.

The friendly ferryman I hail;  
The lapping waters lave the prow;  
I watch a little urchin sail  
His playtime craft, . . . until the bow  
Is thrust upon the other shore,  
And I can loiter there no more.

Ah, this was England! high sea-wind or sigh,  
A tempest or a honeysuckle nigh;  
The moorland's gloomy glory fondly kissed  
With heather purple and with amethyst;  
Wild, weathered rocks and by the tempest grooved,  
Yet, too, by fragrant zephyrs warmly loved;  
Here a desolation, here a dream,  
Here a thicket, here a grayling stream  
Threading its mossbound way, here huddled towns  
(But human), here the sweep of rolling downs . . .

If nature in her growth from primal thought  
Still harbours in her bosom, dearly brought  
Through aeons of distress, some warmth indwelling,  
Surely it is here we see it welling  
In England's meads of peace. Here in sweet  
Solitude might those fair dryads greet  
Who once gave Greece her laughter and her song.  
Even her hamlets gray, old trees among,  
Weathered by winter storms and silvered o'er  
By moons of summer, have their ancient lore.

From Haworth's village, black on Yorkshire's roof  
And drear, as though the very Devil's hoof  
Had spurned it, to London's gray old ghostly town,  
No footworn flag, no sod for harvest sown  
But whispers, "Softly Brother, softly tread;  
Lest you disturb the slumbers of the dead . . ."  
The living dead; for Haworth, bleak and drear,  
Is heather crowned and holds her Brontes dear,  
And London's very sounds and sighings steep  
With memories of those whose slumbers keep  
A vital vigilance of thought to guard  
Her hoary plot. They hold a glorious ward  
Who haunt her glooms. There, too, does memory find  
Sure sanctuary, holy, sweet and kind.

Dream of Cumberland or dream of Kent,  
Of Durham or of Devon, if you will;  
Courage you will find with beauty blent  
In every valley and on every hill.

This the England was that once I knew;  
Salt with the tang of seas, sweet with the dew.  
She had contentment dreamed; song and mirth  
Were as her fragrant garland plucked from earth.  
Her springs led on to summer, and the round  
Of seed and harvest blessed her fertile ground.  
Her mien was knightly, and there still must be  
For her a golden age of chivalry.

She will withstand the winter of her rain,  
The hungry dread, the anguish and the pain.  
A little while may vision be denied,  
The cliffs be gray, and heaven heavy skied,  
Yet she will hold her peace within her heart,  
A thing unseen, but waiting and alert  
Once more to sow the seed and reap the swath  
Of all the harvest beauty nature hath.

It must be so; Love has not lost his cloak.  
The heart of things is kindly, holy, pure;  
Love's not annulled. But we are simple folk  
And want to see the form, and feel the sure  
Sweet kiss of lip on lip, and hear the low  
Familiar word once more invade the blest  
Precincts of our peace. We want to know  
Possession sweet and sweetly be possessed.  
This is our right, that life should dearly grow  
From twig to bough and bough to tender bloom,  
Until, through autumn to the timely snow,  
We give relinquishment its seasoned room.  
We were not given yearnings to be taught  
That all that's lovely is with anguish fraught.

If all else fail, a lilt of merry song  
Shall hold us to the rhythm of the spheres,  
Shall well annul the sadness and the wrong,  
Shall well enhance the beauty that endears.

All that is sweet and fair and nobly sired,  
All that has kissed adventure on the brow,  
Of tempest strength, by passion nobly fired,  
That swifts as may an arrow from the bow . . .

All shall in essence bide its sunny day  
In seed that will a golden harvest bring,  
Through testing storms of peril and dismay,  
To wait upon a merry winnowing.

Though all else fail, there haunts the heart of man  
An echo of that inborn melody,  
Long uttered ere his sordid strife began,  
Sung by the stars, immersed in the gleaming sea.

Though barren earth come to a dusty shrift,  
Or winds sweep only round a sailless mast,  
The soul shall answer the Eternal Drift;  
There shall be song and laughter at the last.

For her, to crown the glory of her worth,  
Shall come the homage of a fairer earth.

Man's soul shall still outlast his sorrow;  
    Past autumn's wintering  
Sere leafage shall find budding morrow;  
    Laughter shall wait on spring.

Man's vision still shall wear out weeping;  
    Sunset and night's descent  
Bring many a sob, but after sleeping,  
    A sigh, and sweet content.

Man's peace shall still outrun his passion;  
    For him there shall befall,  
After nature's quiet fashion,  
    A lovelier pastoral.

Then England, even England's heart shall know  
A richer dawn, a rarer sunset's glow.



# *Sonnets*

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Swing wide wild bells above earth's Easter hour;  
Heave high and lowly sweep, in festal faith.  
Swing full and wide with undulating power;  
Ring joyously despite war's gloomy wraith.  
Spill merry tenors with your tonguèd wands,  
In answer to the heavenly Ringer's hand;  
Grave bourdons pour from out your urns of bronze,  
To hover and to brood above the land.

Swing full and wide, as love is full and wide;  
Swing high and low, with deep to answer deep,  
As love holds high and low and shall abide.  
Chime through the earth, assault the celestial steep,  
Nor let your holy convocation cease  
Until you've won for earth immortal peace.

*Easter in Wartime*

Beauty is not banished from our age;  
'Tis we who swoon in soft forgetful sleep  
Before we see her lovely fingers creep  
To draw the curtain of our heritage.  
In ill-consorted dream we toss and rage  
With shadow vultures hovering about  
Our puny griefs, so impotent to rout  
Our fears, oblivious of her tender gauge.

Could we but rise to greet the smiling dawn  
And look where, through the casement of our dearth,  
The glorious East reorients our lawn,  
There we would see her, plucking from our earth  
Her blooms of gently tended loveliness,  
Still kind, still waiting with her dear caress.

Ah Ploughman, holding so your simple rite,  
Know you what memories around you wing,  
Ancient as autumn, fresh as that first spring  
When verdure budded in the cosmic night  
And claimed fair seeding from the wind's delight?  
Is it for Ceres homage you prepare?  
Are you, perchance, of some dark Ruth aware  
Who'll come, in harvest days, her troth to plight?

Know you what soilsmen in your line have trod  
Down furrows brown and pipèd once by Pan  
To turn through time the meadowland of God  
Into the golden kernelled bread of Man?  
If you but knew you'd even more blithely breast  
The winds of autumn in your golden quest.

*On Seeing an Autumn Ploughman*

Equipt as Hermes yet unwooed to flight,  
So heavy footed on so heavy ground,  
With nymphs and dryads dancing all around  
Unapprehended by our blinded sight,  
We look at Ida and behold no white  
Of snows upon a fair and holy mount;  
In Tempe's vale we find no crystal fount  
To cool or sooth our melancholy plight.

We starve upon a surfeit unabsorbed,  
Of colour, melody and rhythmic word,  
Uncharmed, unconquered, unamazed, unheld,  
Untouched, though heaven and earth be golden orb'd;  
And though our drifting tide be island shored,  
Our barque by Beauty's breezes unimpelled.

How oft in that strange realm of imagery,  
Where Mind may play at ease divorced from fact,  
Where Love, alone, her all-sufficient pact  
Makes with desire and seals with ecstasy,  
I've wandered far with sanguine hearted glee,  
Tuning such pipe as Pan in lustier days  
Would tune to tempt fair Syrinx from her ways,  
Wild notes to sound, and lovely dreams to see!

How often then, no more with bitter bread,  
But with such feasting as the Gods of old  
Upon the floral green have sweetly spread,  
I, too, have quaffed an ancient cup of gold,  
I, too, have pledged the wine of Love's desire  
And felt the flame of life's undying fire.

Now is our hour, this dawn, this only air,  
This orient light that wakes us in its quest  
To lure us gladly to the golden west,  
This breathing of high hope to quench despair,  
This time, this day. No other can impair  
The vision that is ours alone. We soar  
On our self-pinions; no ancient lore  
Will guide or make us of our star aware.

There is a glory that will gild our wings  
As, swift in the roseate light of dawn,  
In our own freedom our own spirit springs  
Heavenward, there amazed to gaze upon  
The beauty of our earth, with those same eyes  
Which waked the golden age to glad surmise.

Here as little children in the sun,  
So little knowing how or caring why,  
We play our little games of hide and spy  
Until the darkness comes, then homeward run,  
Still knowing little, weary and content.  
Our dreams come willy nilly; whither or whence  
We question not, until with sleep they're blent  
Beneath the roof of Love's dear Providence.

Happy the heart that from Life's high romance  
Comes free of care, contented in its glee,  
With song and laughter amid the winds of chance,  
Bearing its childlike laurels gloriously.  
Happy the childlike soul that, in its growing,  
Plays on, only the Sun of Beauty knowing.

No more we set our sails by island seas;  
No more within the grove a happy chance  
Brings us the vision of the floral dance;  
Great Pan is dead; there are no Arcadys  
Where mists of song veil still and roseate leas  
And dryads bathe within the golden light.  
Our noons are grey; no more our moons delight;  
With rusty chains are moored our argosies.

But not by deprivation are we dulled:  
Our sin to sit as sated at a feast,  
All heavy paunched, with appetites annulled,  
Beside a board where Beauty's very least  
Out-features what was once with glory crowned;  
Blind to her dream, deaf to her sweetest sound.

*On Returning from a Discussion on Greece*



O there are times when I could write with ease  
Such lyric ditties to the ancient moon  
That she would wake from out her misty swoon  
To sigh in ecstasy; or I could tease  
A joyous lilt more musical than these,  
Of tender tune, so to intrigue the stars  
That Venus would be found embracing Mars.  
Thus many an ancient hunger I'd appease.

But when to earth I must my muse entice  
To round a rhythmic garland for your dream  
I find no lyric measure to suffice  
Nor kindred music for your lovely theme.  
For you yourself are fairest poesy,  
A Song of Love, from floral Arcady.

Our thought a fire is, upon whose forge  
The mind will heat its own prefigured ends,  
Needing no other breath than Beauty's urge.  
In its creative flame each feature bends  
To its imagined form. Here in ourselves  
And native so, there dwells the self-same Gleam  
That in the universal realm nor builds nor delves,  
But of itself embodies forth its dream.

This loveliness that in our day encloaks  
Us round, this dawn emerging from our dark,  
Enfeatures only what our mind invokes.  
All else is crude, unquickened, cold and stark.  
Within desire's womb we form our fate,  
And slowly grow like that we contemplate.

So while I live and while this merry rhyme  
Laughs upon April and her gentle hues  
You'll hold assurance of abiding time  
To wait upon your beauty with its dues.  
April who yearly tells her heart's degree  
In fragrant humours of the verdant dell  
Will weave with ours her own heart's history  
In yearly constancy naught else can tell.

In every vale where warming breezes blow  
Shall bloom fresh flowers of remembered thought;  
With song the tendrils of your love shall grow  
As once again they are by April taught,  
And this my rhyme like her, fresh, fair and blithe,  
Shall laugh at Time and shame his rusty scythe.

We know so little more than those of old  
Who wove sweet stories round the drifting stars.  
We battle without grace of blaming Mars.  
Like them we love and hate, are hot or cold,  
But unlike, wonder not that there unfold  
Such mystic beauties in the tranquil vale.  
Our touch untender to the pipèd scale,  
We hymn no more the lyric Age of Gold.

How little do we tend Prometheus' fire;  
How little share the search of Demeter  
For beauty ravished from the earth! Our hire  
The livery of craven coin to wear!  
Their little sails welled to a lesser sigh:  
Their lesser summits touched a loftier sky.

So do they measure out the vaulted sky,  
And draught the way elliptical of star  
With star, marking each ancient symmetry  
That they may know the coming from afar,  
In certitude, of some red comet sweep;  
So do they trace, with poise of calipers,  
A circling lost in some lone azure deep  
In presage of the hidden course it bears.

But I, not knowing whither, whence or how,  
May only gaze at gleamings in the mist  
That ripple where the evening zephyrs blow  
And round to beauty where some beam has kissed.  
For me no map of contours for the night;  
I do but gaze in wonder and delight.

*The Astronomers*

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### **Transcriber's Notes:**

Table of Contents was not present in the original book and has been added for reader convenience. Spelling and punctuation are presented as in the original book.

[The end of *This England* by James Edward Ward]