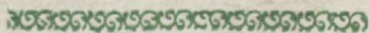


The
RURAL SCENE



by
FRANK PREWETT



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*Signed & sworn
Frank Prewett*



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L O, all the eye sees looking is most fair,
What the ear takes, in mind more
musically breaks,
What the heart lights on leaps up every-
where,
Oh the high thirst he slakes
Who enters in wild-wood, bird-bugle-blown,
Leaf light-laced, how he tempts the air,
Finds it flower-flavour full, who alone
Woos the wild wood, come he glad or
sad there.

WHEN cuckoo first the vale o'erflows
With barks and bubble-blasts of
sound,
And daisies white, or tintured rose,
Make a pleasanter sky the ground,
Then maids are trim and neatly seen
And youth strides godly under green.

Spring is a season we revive
With the upthrusting hedgy things,
When yellowhammers courtship drive
And old cock-pheasants busk their wings,
Then cows dream udder-deep in grass
And hawk over hovers with eye of glass.

Cheevio-chee trills on the spray,
He finds his life so good ;
Oh, now be natural and gay
Like the kind God meant we should,
For all things beautiful, sight and sound,
Love made, and make love to abound.

HEAR them bleat, the new-born lambs!
They stare, but cannot see,
Their minds unfolded still
In the womb's mystery.

The mother bleating stands,
She fumbles her new-born lamb
With her nose, and he his tongue
Puts trembling towards his dam.

I HELD my way up from the sea
Where the first few sand-flowers grow ;
I think no earthly thing could be
More beautiful than these so low
With palms five-finger circle-wise
To shield their faces and bright eyes.

And further, in the pasture-lands
By stream-edge the meadow-sweet,
I saw how it majestic stands
In cream-clump slumber head and feet ;
This is extreme of beauty now,
I cried, and thrush threw back my vow.

Up then I mounted from the dell
Where gorse patched the plough-land
end ;

I fainted its perfume to smell,
I strove to see its colours blend,
But sense and soul unequal were
To grasp the beauty blazing there.

I stood upon the mountain height,
Bleak, barren, blue below ;
About me starry blossoms white
Shone in stone-crevices and snow ;
Lord, Lord, I cried, these pierce my eyes,
They rend with love, they twist with
sighs.

THE waters rustle on, content,
With peaceful heart the pastures
 glow,
The wailing gnats drift up and down,
The river-birds pad to and fro ;
And whether it be sun or rain
They rise in joy or droop in pain.

Oh, whim of time and force and chance,
That fashions the reflective mind,
Let me no more have consciousness
But join my momentary kind,
Who blindly live and have no thought
If life be happiness or not.

IT was the season larks begin
Their second burst of song,
Who have in Summer silent been,
I thoughtful paced along.

Such rapturous crying all birds make
This falling time of year,
I feel that they some joy partake
I am too dense to hear.

And when I passed the priory gate
I met my neighbour John
With long blue pipe to contemplate,
Joyously jaunting on.

It seems the dapple Autumn sky
And softness of the air
Bring men more intimately nigh
Than they in Summer were.

I love you, John, I strove to say—
He, with his jolly eyes,
Regarded me and went his way
List'ning the shrill lark cries.

I feel I never shall express
This love, this love of mine,
Only the birds their dear excess
Let freely from them shine.

NOW spin the speckle-yellow leaves,
Drip, drip, the drops of rain ;
A drabble shroud November weaves
O'er Summer prostrate lain.

The hills of vision lie
Obscure in vapours grey ;
I fail, but braver bird in sky
Trills desperately gay.

Amazed I stand with trembling eyes,
The songs come shining down
Link upon link ; at once the skies
The earth with fragrance crown.

Trilling sweet bird, rise up again,
Heavenly heart, chant on ;
November chills the souls of men,
Sweet bird, shine us upon.

OUT of the night they drop with
troubled cries,
Splitting the keen-tuned freezing air,
Lone travellers through the wind-scut
skies
Instinct propelled to regions harsh and bare.

They settle with loud shuffling midst the
snow,
The pitiless cold hushes all things to peace,
And I reluctant silent homeward go,
But leave my soul to chatter with the
geese.

Oh, ye mysterious creatures swift and high
That beat in angle-flights from land to
land,
Whence came into your breasts your troubled
cry
And strange desire that gathers you like
sand!

With the first streak of dawn they crane their
necks,
Cry out aloud, and rise upon the air,
Taking with them my soul, nor much it recks
Towards what homeless wastes their flight
may bear.

THE butterflies I have for gold,
The fieldling mouse for friend,
I sing for lodging in the cold
Merry till evening end.

Then when the strains of music fail
Shall I, though lingering, rise
To death, who waits with visage pale
And dust upon his eyes.

I WOULD not be a bird
When wind is in the trees ;
I would not be a starling
For all his melodies.

As I went past the orchard
The sun had almost set,
And all aloft the elm tree
A thousand starlings met.

Every tongue was dry,
They whistled kling and gee,
They looked up at the sky
And they looked down at me.

Now strong be starling heart
And ready every wing,
For dark night to shelter
Drives hedger, priest, and king.

I would not be starling,
I would not be a bird,
As they all rose together
And their wings drummed and whirred.

TUNE me to the strings of the air,
No other mind have I
Than might with storms compare,
And the small airs that lie
In the ground, or on high
Earth follow, but in heaven fare.

A melodious multitude
Of instruments I hear
Delicately understood
By the patient ear
Which out of loving and fear
Listens still for good.

Man is the winds as old,
His cry as desolate ;
The first life foretold
More than he dreams of yet,
Dejected in haste and fret,
But still the best will unfold.

HOW happy lives he all his days
Who no higher will obeys
Than the quiet push of thought
His own industry hath taught.

Him no rancourous thrust for fame
Doth cheat, nor hunger makes him tame ;
Uprightly and content lives he
In a blest security.

His own garden hems him round,
Earth out, but heaven in, is found ;
There the surging tempest blows
Hardly a petal from the rose.

IN deep night when friends are gone
Love beckons with distracted hands,
But the soul will to sea alone ;

Love then a weeping woman stands
At the waves' edge in high despair
And the damp wind blows back her hair.

I WAS hurt with my friends' wealth
And went out chanting in grief,
So cramped in desire myself,
And in the wood sought relief.

I saw the uncomplaining earth
Trying for every good there be
Where death is natural to birth
And joy bound in necessity.

Then I was ashamed, and down
I flung, striving at humble heart,
For when arrogance is gone
God lets his peace impart.

So I stripped myself of pride,
Only clinging to this pure desire,
My spirit leaping up from my side
Exquisite to give itself to fire.

OUT of the nothingness of earth
I, being nothing, peep
Up towards the stars, and am not dead
With my presumptuous leap.

Oh, to what end are earth and life
Unknowing where they fly
Or whence, but conjuring a hope
They live, although they die.

The million million suns go on,
Spinning their little turn,
Even as I, till death shall come
And other stars shall burn.

I LAY down close to the earth
Where I might hear what was said
By the mother of life
As she heaved in her bed.

Black night pressed on us down
And darkness, the enemy old
Of light, whose time not yet
Breaks in visions manifold.

So we lay in chilly night
While stars came down to our feet
And the lowly life of earth
Upward swept singing sweet.

Sublimity was ours
Of the free and moving air ;
We merged in the fount of life
Without degree or care.

So I lay down close to earth,
My soul eager, trembling, and dread,
When God, loving my desire,
Raised the veil that clouds his head.

THE passionate oak branches
Extend above my head
Still patiently exploring
The light upon them shed.

The stubborn bind-stem reaches
Some destination too,
He with his fingers feeling
Must in the light burst through.

All things by much desiring
Their perfect order find,
Made equal by their striving
In universal mind.

REJECT me not, oh patient earth
Who hidest the hurt bird,
For I, like bird, had in thee birth
And babbled my first word.

With weeping and with cries I come,
Behold the hope of years,
Of my achievement the full sum,
These bruised hands and these tears.

Despised of men I cling to thee,
Despair his pack alarms,
Oh from their anger comfort me
And brood me in your arms.

FROM wilderness remote he breaks
With stealthy springing tread,
And in the town a vision makes
Of time and manners dead.

He scorns to see the things we own,
And steadfast stares beyond,
Alone, impassive, cold, unknown ;
With us he feels no bond.

The townsfolk nudging line the street
To see a red-man pass ;
They feel ashamed of toil and heat,
And dream of springs and grass.

They see a breathless dusty town
They had not known before ;
The red-man in his robes is gone,
The townsfolk toil once more.

And whence he came, and whither fled,
And why, is all unknown ;
His ways are strange, his skin is red,
Our ways and skins our own.

WHEN the hot noon-glades
Homeward drive the bees,
And their humming fades
Into silences,
Come the gay butterflies
To the nectarous flowers,
Where they tippie and sip
Through the pleasant hours,
Unaware how the clouds cloak the skies.

Then the leaves drip and fret,
All the bravery spoiled,
The wings wet, wet,
And beaten, and soiled ;
Alas, what end to delight
And nectar-drinking,
When the imps of rain,
Unfeeling, unshrinking,
Drown the glades, and the sharp winds bite.

DAFFY-DILLY laughing strayed
Into the meadow may ;
Her head upon the grass she laid
She was so glad and gay ;
The birds flaunted, flew, and sung,
And all the world in rapture rung.

The meagre reaper, death, came by
Yearning for all things fair ;
With bony hand and blasting sigh
He gathered flowers there ;
Daffy-dilly laughing turned her head,
He amorous grinned, she fainting fled.

—Oh Daffy-dilly, do not run,
Only the flowers I reap
Whose day is ended with the sun
And early droop for sleep ;—
Then Daffy-dilly heard no more for fear
This plaintive wooer win her ear.

MY love is a column of white stone
Set in a wide green grove alone.

Her hair is the darling of small airs
That flit and puff from leafy lairs.

Her eyes are filled cups of desire,
They glow and lighten with soft fire.

Her parted lips on mine efface
To trembling nothingness, earth, time and
space.

Her breasts a refuge, balm of mind
From the outer world I find.

In her ample hips I see
Life leaping up immortally.

And her feet, lest she part from earth away
Are clasped in a green ivy spray.

ALL earth rejoiced at the sun
After many days of rain ;
What a sky when the storm is done,
What lifting of heart again.

But a breeze embracing us foretold
Our transitory day,
A youth in lust, an age in cold,
From golden sky to grey.

Still, our fate is made easy, I said,
And death deprived of his powers,
To know that life has always been led
Much the same way as ours.

It makes us less lonely, she agreed,
And then rebelled and wept,—
The bud, the fading bloom, the seed,
My heart cannot accept.

Henryson's Cresseid speaks—

LOVE I betrayed, yet my love will be
Young when the world is old,
But Troilus remembered not
And filled my bowl with gold.

My leper eyes he could not know,
More than a memory
Of love in Ilium long ago
And battles, clamour by the sea.

My body I yield to earth, my soul
To the virgin huntress,
My clapper and bowl to lepers,
My ring to Troilus.

DEAR love, say not I am unkind
Or seem to cease to love thee,
Who in you every beauty find
And cherish each curve of thee ;
If I explain, you'll not believe,
Nor will you understand me
How, though I yearn to hold thee
A very love compels me leave.

You go but where the path is plain,
One moment fills life for thee ;
Poor butterfly, could you refrain
From sweet set out before thee ?
What though a shrill expedient cry
And cautious thought dissuade thee,
Though grief and sickness wait thee,
Let now be fair, time you defy.

Alas, my sky is covered black,
But for the love you bear me,
With scorned ambition, money-lack,
With fiends of mind that tear me ;
Oh child, ask not I bring thee low,
Happy if sun be o'er thee,
But I, I peer before me
And stare behind, distraught with woe.

COME now, what would you give,
You and I parted, or suddenly
grown old,
And must forever in a no-life live
With love unexploited, frustrate, cold ;
What fervour then to immovable fates
Would you pledge, each again to behold.

You will not love, but quiz me still ;
I am sick of the moon's deceptive pace,
Worn with freedom, or not, of will,
And bored disputing time and space ;
I weary of words denying what I see,
And anchor my ideas in a beauteous face.

While the tongue rambles, life glides by
And we, with all our strife, will not
agree,
Yet might have tried a kiss or sigh
Ere this, though they illusion be,
And the strong stirring of your heart
No proof of constancy.

I HASTENED to find my love
Through the evening settling grey,
And I found her seated by her fire,
Hand-folded in a thoughtful way.

I knelt and buried my head
In her lap, for I was pained and sad,
Then at length rested and arose
And we silent stayed and glad.

This little time, how happy, love and I!
Sweet odours each on each flower-like
exhale,
She is all conquest, I all ardours try,
The world fades back, impotent and pale.

As when a spirit moves in secret grove
He rouses faint harmonious accord,
To which the dreaming infant yearns and
smiles,
Such melody mysterious we adored.

L OVE hath not magic, but can spring
A flower upon despair ;
She needs no music, would she sing
Nor beauty to be fresh and fair,
And those who die young, she'll explain
And those a century who share,
And how all ways to equal ends attain.

Love is a happy alchemy
Whose particles judicious met,
Straight they dissolve, join, and agree,
And new Being thence beget ;
Atlantis rising, grove and glade
Still with the salt waves hoar and wet,
But swiftly freshen they, fair arch and shade.

ONE love both great and small pervades,
Earth to high heaven cleaves,
And with a love intense the glades
Push up their buds and leaves.

The trees and hills together stoop,
They mingle in the sky,
And we with equal passion droop
Down, and together lie.

Heaven is our canopy,
And minstrelsy the air ;
Ardent and mystic we agree
With all love everywhere.

SEEING my love but lately come,
And unexpected she should be found,
I trembled, I was dumb,
And fell upon the ground ;
Her only thus in distance to see
Was to me pain so profound
I fell down in an agony.

Oh, who is he often has told
What joy in his love he had,
Oh, he never loved, but grew old
Indulging fancy or fad
No more than to tease desire
Or make him romantical sad,
But his heart never shrunk in the fire.

Oh, she does not know what possess,
What despairs ride me every day ;
For her vexed, or in slight distress
I am mad, I must fly away,
Or the whole world crack with my rage
And scatter it out of her way,
But she cannot know, or assuage.

Oh, now I see why true love is pale
With no desire but he should die ;
Most willing lips are no avail
For not all that is, will satisfy ;
Its limit mind cannot entertain,
Love like a madness is for wide and high,
And weep would, though it all might gain.

I WANDERED all along the road,
I did not see the cloud,
I did not feel the winter rain
Nor hear the whistling loud
Of the sorrowful wind
In his damp shroud.

Oh, where do you go, friend,
The road so alone,
Night settling so early,
Now the harvest is home
And no man in the fields
Turns furrow or stone.

No seasons have I now,
No set of sun, nor rise,
All roads run equally
Where heaven is the prize,
And life is nothing worth
Save light before the eyes.

WHEN the last melancholy of my brain,
The final groan, left me faint and
bleeding,
I then substanceless and vain,
Only relief, not disaster, heeding,
Had such joy as a man who has lost
A limb that long pained him,
Mirth, hollow-sounding, and crossed
With an in-burning pleading.

But I laughed and knew, if dead
I was free, and the bold sun shining
And the burly wind wrapping my head
Made brighter my peace after repining :
I will think no more of it, I cried,
But if I think not of her, what thought
Have I, whose utter self died
When love died, to limbo resigning.

NOW with dreaming grown mad
I stand in the night alone ;
Knowledge obstructs my mind,
Silence chills blood and bone.

Yea, winds of the night, I know
There is neither time nor space
Nor meaning or design,
But I stand in this place.

O'erwhelmed in mysteries
The mind grapples and pains ;
Sways rhythmically earth,
Silence on silence gains.

Tubney Farm,
Abingdon,
Berks.

Oct 25/24

My dear Miss Fildes -

I have very great pleasure
in sending you a copy of my book.
I hope its quality will not
disappoint you.

Yours
J.P.