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Horton, Edith

For whom the wine was poured.

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**For Whom the Wine Was Poured  
and Other Poems**

**By Edith Horton**

**1971**

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312 NORTH CAYUGA STREET  
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**DEWITT**

**HISTORICAL SOCIETY of TOMPKINS COUNTY, *Inc.***

**121 East Court St.    Ithaca, N. Y.    14850**

*These poems are dedicated to my Father,*  
JUDGE RANDOLPH HORTON,  
*Mayor of Ithaca, 1909-1912.*

E.H.

## THE WATCHER

White upon white upon white,  
White birches in the snow near a white house  
Winter shadowed;

I know the one who planted them,  
His artist hands moving in rhythm;  
He brought the birches down from Piper Hill  
On a soft day in spring,  
And dug deep holes, and placed the roots  
In the wet earth,  
Certain the angle of each branch against the house  
Was pleasing to his eyes;

And I remember before the birches  
Pear trees were there  
Whose fruit was sweet in season;  
A child, I watched the hands that planted them,  
My grandfather's, strong and scarred,  
Moving in the wet earth  
On a soft day in spring.

## FOR A HONEYSUCKLE VINE

What alchemy is in the wine  
Rising within your slender stem,  
Which keeps green leaves upon your vine  
When frosts the other leaves condemn?

And in your hidden root what strength  
That even in a frozen hour  
Can draw from earth along its length  
Perfume for this persistent flower?

## AUGUST EVENING

The lights go on in houses that I know,  
A coolness rises from the dew-touched ground,  
A cricket sings besides the silent brook  
Whose water is too low to make a sound.

A tree I never planted shelters me,  
And through its branches I can see one star,  
The moon of August rises in the east,  
And far is near, and near is very far.

## AUTUMN AND SPRING

In cool darkness  
I walked through the orchard  
Feeling fallen apples  
Crush beneath my feet.

The moment was not as sweet  
As another in sunshine  
And the fragrance  
Of blossoming trees.



## AND THERE IS WIND

Now I have seen what is beyond the barn  
Which till today shut one horizon in,  
I took a road that went the other way  
And round-about came back where I had been.

There is a curving path through fern-green fields  
Where buttercups and devil's-paint-brush grow,  
And the foundation of a vanished house  
Is sheltered by tall pine trees in a row.

There is a muddy pond where horses drink,  
And one stood motionless against the hill,  
Beside the fence a stretch of woods begins,  
And there is wind that never will be still.

## FRUIT

I have a satisfaction  
In this vine,  
For it was I who, kneeling,  
Placed the root  
Beside the flowing water  
Of a stream,  
And now it bears in autumn  
Mellow fruit.

## BROOK

The little brook which flows beside my door  
Is fed by hidden springs upon a hill  
Placed safely in the legendary time  
Earth trembled into being, and was still.

It knows the wings of butterflies and birds,  
It nourishes the lily and the rose,  
The flesh of apple and of grape is sweet  
Because the soil is sweeter where it goes.

The little brook which flows beside my door  
Absorbs the melting snow, the sudden rain,  
And understands that it must also rise  
When floods again are on the distant plain.

It has an ancient wisdom of its own  
Apart from man; a sense of destiny,  
The little brook which flows beside my door  
Moves down to meet the everlasting sea.

## OH LOVELY MOON

Oh lovely moon, so innocent, so pure,  
Untouched till now by earth's strange human race,  
What crass indignities must you endure  
Upon the silver beauty of your face?

And as you daily pull the ocean's tide,  
What of the wounds upon your earthward side?

## MIRACLES

Each week-day morning  
Before nine  
She hangs her linen  
On the line,  
Then, confident,  
When it is done  
She waits the miracle  
Of sun.

But on the other day  
She goes  
To hear the Word of God  
And knows  
The wonders  
That were Galilee's  
And is as confident  
Of these.

## BRIGHT MORNING

The summer morning  
Is as bright  
As when I knew  
A child's delight.

I do not raise  
My eyes to see  
The plane which circles  
Over me.

Although I hear  
The engine's sound,  
My eyes are looking  
At the ground.

For I conceive  
It is my stint  
Upon this day  
To search for mint.

Beside the brook  
In the deep grass  
I watch the little  
Ripples pass.

## NIGHT THOUGHT

This sturdy bed was once a cherry tree  
Within an ancient orchard where the bee  
In early spring amid a cloud of flowers  
Drank of their nectar through the quiet hours;  
Then there were leaves, and then the ruby fruit  
By the strange interchange of earth and root,  
And so the color of the wood was told,  
The grain arranged in darker fold on fold;  
The swinging ax which brought it to the ground  
I do not know, I did not hear the sound.

## SCYTHING

Only the old men now can use a scythe,  
The countrymen, who learned when they were lithe  
And strong upon their father's hard-earned farms,  
The skill they knew still lingers in their arms;  
They have a pride in this, and swing them wide;  
In a slow rhythm, side to certain side.  
The horizontal blade cuts through the grass,  
But old men die, the older customs pass,

And what will all the little meadows know  
When scythes and the old men too soon must go?



## THE POEM

Something went forth from me  
Exultant to be free;  
Neither of paint nor stone,  
But proud to be alone;  
Nearer to flight of birds,  
And soft with feathered words.

## PATHWAYS

Those who in the morning  
When it was early  
Made pathways  
Across my heart,

On their way home  
In the dusk of the evening  
Will pass  
This way again.

## MOMENT

Sometimes when a friend has died  
I did not weep, I scarcely cared,  
Though for an instant I recalled  
The loveliness of earth we shared.

Sometimes when a friend has died  
I had no need to seek relief,  
For long ago we said goodbye,  
That was the moment of my grief.

## MARTHA AND MARY

Part of me is Martha  
Troubled with many things,  
But part of me is Mary  
With shining silver wings.

Today it was that Martha  
Picked warm grapes from a wall,  
But Mary softly spread her wings  
And was not there at all.

## SURVIVAL

I have preserved myself  
Through pestilence and war,  
From those who would defeat  
Who now defeated are.

Frangible flesh and mind  
Have brought the circle full,  
I have preserved myself,  
And mark a miracle.

## AND THE HONEY

All too soon  
The glory goes  
From the apple tree,  
The rose,

And the petals  
Fall to earth  
Which has brought them  
To their birth;

All too soon  
The stars are gone,  
And the dew  
Upon the dawn;

And a world  
Which once was stable,  
And the honey  
From the table;

As the ceaseless  
River flows,  
All too soon  
The glory goes.

## LEAF

It is a leaf  
And not a bird  
Which falls to earth,  
No sound is heard.

If you receive  
A word from me  
Will you respond  
As silently?

## AGE

The mountain peaks and valleys merge  
In the tranquility of age,  
There is not often any urge  
To turn the final unread page.

For soon enough the end will come,  
The harvest season for the grain,  
Gone are the cherry and the plum,  
Only the apples still remain.

Whatever burdens have been there  
When bone and sinew both were stronger,  
Their weight is an accustomed care  
And can be borne a little longer.



## PHANTOM.

I am of late preoccupied with one  
Who walks beside me though I walk alone,  
From youth I was aware that all must die,  
But secretly I asked, "Perhaps not I?"

As he who was felicitous of word  
Wrote of the King when English hearts were stirred,  
Because they sensed the phantom, felt its breath,  
"He knew he walked accompanied by death."

## PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN

She has no sweetness on her mouth  
Nor softness in her eyes,  
There is no gold upon her hair,  
But her breasts fall and rise

Like cream-white petals on the wind,  
Who fashioned her was wise,  
For men will follow where she walks  
Until the time she dies,

## SNAIL

The moving snail  
By twist of fate  
Who cannot turn  
To contemplate,

And has no wisdom  
In his mind,  
Still leaves a silver  
Path behind;

While I, who have  
The power to pause  
And trace my trail  
Through sticks and straws,

Whose convoluted  
Brain can burn  
With all that earth  
Presents to learn,

Perceive upon  
The way I came  
No shining thread  
Of silver flame.

FOR EMILY DICKINSON

*(Who was writing during the Civil War)*

The world beyond your garden wall  
Grew far away, then not at all;  
You wrote of God and butterflies,  
And of your loves, but not the cries  
Of those who fought, and were afraid  
But fought, with shot and naked blade  
Across a devastated land,  
You saw no farther than your hand,  
Nor knew an anguish not your own,  
Flesh of your flesh, bone of your bone;  
But though your walls were tall and stout  
Could they have kept Walt Whitman out?  
Did you not hear a nation rise,  
“On the deck my Capain lies,”  
Did you not even hear the sound  
Of trumpets over hallowed ground?

## ABYSS

Nothing sadder is than this  
That the earth which once was fair  
Between you and me is bare  
And crumbled into an abyss,

And that where the pathways ran  
Which our eager feet made clean  
Through a world of primal green  
Is a deep we cannot span;

Only now and then to see  
The old gesture of a hand,  
Or hear a voice the wind has fanned,  
For our ancient fealty.

FOR DYLAN THOMAS

The gentle ones who lived in gentleness  
Cannot go raging into that good night,  
With quietness they must accept the dark  
As, being born, they once accepted light.

## THE STRONGEST ONE

My body and my brain  
I constantly attend  
With nourishment and care  
I feed, I teach, I mend;

And yet it is my soul  
Neglected and alone  
Which I expect to rise  
And roll away the stone.

## THE DIFFERENCE

Flesh must return  
That which earth gave,  
So it is small  
To fit a grave;

But soul must grow  
As bread with leaven,  
If it would ever  
Enter heaven.



## UNIVERSAL

Death has come to the house of my friend,  
I go to her, and weep,  
Not as she weeps,  
But for all sorrow.

## THIS MORTAL MUST PUT ON

I do not plan to lie  
Quiescent in a grave,  
I shall awake and rise  
To sing an angel stave;

Then I shall find my own,  
Miraculously whole,  
A fire upon the hearth,  
Red apples in a bowl.

## PRAYER TO EARTH

One by one earth yields to man  
The secrets of its ancient plan,  
But do not yield to man, Oh earth,  
The spark attendant upon birth,  
Nor whisper in his ear what death  
Will bring upon an icy breath.

## TRINITY

Certainly we leave the flesh,  
Certainly we leave the brain,  
Of the earthly trinity  
Only one will then remain;

Fragile spirit which we knew  
Least of all the mystic three  
Unattended you must go  
Searching for eternity.

## GREAT AND SMALL

Do not dread  
To go and see,  
She bore great grief  
Silently;

Unless, perhaps,  
This being smaller,  
She will confide  
In every caller.

## LITTLE GIRL

When walking up that street meant going home  
Beneath the ancient elms and maples there,  
Old ladies leaned from porches to look down  
And speak to one with softly flowing hair.

When walking up that street meant going home,  
The world was filled with sweet simplicity  
Where order made a pattern which she knew,  
And gentleness was round her as a sea.

When walking up that street meant going home,  
It was with greatest eagerness she sped  
And mounted seven steps, and entered in,  
And found embracing love, and buttered bread.

## URBAN RENEWAL

The house I knew has now been swept away,  
It does not stand where for so long it stood  
Beneath great trees upon a narrow street,  
But it was more than masonry and wood.

It was the life which pulsed within the rooms,  
It was the beauty of a sweeter day,  
It was the sun, this is the afterglow,  
This is the epilogue, that was the play.

## BEYOND BELIEF

The world we knew is now beyond belief,  
There were no wars, nor any thought of wars,  
It was a smaller world, of falling leaf,  
And innocence, and sacrament of stars;  
I know what was divisive, and I see  
It will not be forgiven while I live,  
The pattern which it made perplexes me,  
That I, whose lips were still, have words to give  
Which are the treasure lying in my hand  
When I return as from an alien land.



## A CANDLE, OR A STAR

If all I have to give is not enough  
Take what there is and do not ask for more,  
A candle, or a star, gives pleasant light,  
Take what there is, but do not close the door  
Which for so long between us opened wide,  
The little flowers upon the forest floor  
Are fragrant underneath the fallen leaves,  
Take what there is, but do not close the door.

## LEGACY

There is this  
I wish to say  
Before the time  
I go away,

All the wonder  
Which I knew  
Was given to me  
Once by you.

## THE BLESSED DAMOZEL

I had three lilies in my hand  
When we met yesterday  
Within the leaf-encrusted church  
But never did you say,

“It is the blessed damozel  
Who leans from heaven’s bars,”  
Nor see upon my shining hair  
The seven golden stars.

## DESTINY

There is an age a woman needs  
A daughter or a son  
For her to lean upon.

There is an age a woman needs  
Someone who still condones  
When strength flows from her bones.

In spring, which fragrant air concedes,  
She knew the final kiss,  
But did not think of this.

## THREE SEASONS

### I.

#### SPRING

I think it was in April, or in May,  
But that it was spring I'm certain of,  
And that a night or two before that day  
We met for the first time, and fell in love;  
I'd gone to see a friend, you came to call,  
I still remember how you climbed the hill  
And threw your cigarette, I watched it fall,  
Then I looked up and you looked down until  
We mutually drowned; but this was day,  
Its golden sun descending to the west,  
I came upon a field with boys at play,  
(Having swift feet that never were at rest;)  
And as I passed I was amazed to see  
You drop your bat, and shyly follow me.

## II

### SUMMER

Hearing the music through my open door  
You said, "I won't go in, tonight was mine,"  
And turned upon an angry heel before  
I could entreat you it was not design;  
I watched you walking down the silvered street  
Toward Helen's house; enraged at stupid chance  
I meekly went inside as it was meet,  
And you took Helen to the summer dance.  
We met upon the boat, you would not smile,  
Nor in the dim pavilion dance with me,  
I leaned to read the legend on the dial,  
You walked with her beneath the willow tree;  
But it was you who heard my little cry,  
And came and took the cinder from my eye.

### III

#### AUTUMN

In the sweet coolness of the summer rain  
We stood upon the steps to say goodbye,  
Two children filled with unaccustomed pain,  
Frightened to watch the precious moments fly;  
(So hard it was that never ever after  
But parting would be easier for this,)  
Our uninstructed lips forgot their laughter,  
Our hearts were emptied of their wonted bliss.  
You went abroad, and I to my steep orchard  
Enveloped still in its soft roseate haze,  
And now and then you sent a picture post-card  
To tell me how you were, and of your days;  
And when fall came and we returned, you ran  
To bring me gloves from Paris, and a fan.

## DEER IN SUMMER

We wandered down the road and saw the deer  
Which nightly stepped between the forest's trees  
To feed upon a meadow near the fern,  
And people came to watch the sight of these,  
The deer, the setting sun, the rising moon,  
The gentle beauty of the quiet place.  
And yet I knew earth held no water there  
To give the field its final touch of grace.  
But deer remembered in their flesh, their heart,  
Where they would drink at last before they slept,  
In forest springs beneath the moss and leaves,  
And were content with images they kept;  
While I, remembering a constant spring,  
Knew what the night might bring, and would not bring.



## GREEN STREET

All of Green Street will be  
Up in heaven presently,  
For in the rain and in the snowing  
I have seen them going . . . going . . .

When Mrs. Jones arrives today  
Will someone run to her and say,  
“You come from Green Street, Faragay?”  
And beg her for the news she knows  
Of how the world of Green Street goes,  
And will there be a little stir  
In heaven when they welcome her?

## AT NIGHT

Two of us are walking  
Down the quiet street,  
One goes very darkly  
With silent feet.

One of us is humming  
A gay little tune,  
The other is a shadow  
Made by the moon.

## FOR WHOM THE WINE WAS POURED

It was not you I poured my love upon,  
If we should meet, as we may well have done,  
I should not recognize your ambience,  
You would be as a stranger to my sense  
As I to yours, no stab of mutual pain  
Would pierce our hearts until there was a stain  
Upon the flesh; there was a certain season  
We have forgotten now, and for a reason  
It was not you I poured my love upon,  
It was not you, for always there was one  
So dear, so unforgotten, it was he  
Who stood among the shadows silently,  
And though we spoke no penitential word,  
He was the one for whom the wine was poured.