

Classic Poetry Series

Gerald Gould
- poems -

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Gerald Gould(1885 - 1936)

Gerald Gould (1885 – 1936) was an English writer, known as a journalist and reviewer, essayist and poet.

He was brought up in Norwich, and studied at University College, London and Magdalen College, Oxford. He had a position at University College from 1906, and was a Fellow of Merton College, Oxford from 1909 to 1916.

From 1914 he was an official in Masterman's Wellington House Propaganda Department, which may explain his failure to produce much poetry concerned with the War. He also worked as a journalist on the Daily Herald as one of Lansbury's Lambs — the group of idealistic young men helping with it after George Lansbury purchased it in 1913, and which included Douglas Cole, W. N. Ewer, Harold Laski, William Mellor and Francis Meynell.

It was probably Gould who brought [Siegfried Sassoon](http://www.poemhunter.com/siegfried-sassoon/) to the paper as literary Editor after its relaunch in 1919. Gould regularly contributed poetry to the Herald and gave several sonnets to Millicent Fawcett's Common Cause when it became the Woman's Leader in 1920.

Gould also reviewed novels for the New Statesman, moving to The Observer as fiction editor in 1920. He was also (not coincidentally) made chief reader for Victor Gollancz Ltd., where he was involved in the early publication history of George Orwell.

His poem Wander-thirst is often quoted. Much of his poetry remains buried in the columns of newspapers and periodicals. The few collections that appeared, although well reviewed by contemporaries, are long out of print.

Fallen Cities

I gathered with a careless hand,
There where the waters night and day
Are languid in the idle bay,
A little heap of golden sand;
And, as I saw it, in my sight
Awoke a vision brief and bright,
A city in a pleasant land.

I saw no mound of earth, but fair
Turrets and domes and citadels,
With murmuring of many bells;
The spires were white in the blue air,
And men by thousands went and came,
Rapid and restless, and like flame
Blown by their passions here and there.

With careless hand I swept away
The little mound before I knew;
The visioned city vanished too,
And fall'n beneath my fingers lay.
Ah God! how many hast Thou seen,
Cities that are not and have been,
By silent hill and idle bay!

Gerald Gould

Freedoms

1

Those were our freedoms, and we come to this:
The climbing road that lures the climbing feet
Is lost: there lies no mist above the wheat,
Where-thro' to glimpse the silver precipice,
Far off, about whose base the white seas hiss
In spray; the world grows narrow and complete;
We have lost our perils in the certain sweet;
We have sold our great horizon for a kiss.

To every hill there is a lowly slope,
But some have heights beyond all height--so high
They make new worlds for the adventuring eye.
We for achievement have forgone our hope,
And shall not see another morning ope,
Nor the new moon come into the new sky.

2

Where is our freedom sought, and where to seek?
The voices of the various world agree
The future's ours: to hope is to be free:
Only to doubt, to fear, is to be weak.
Have you not felt upon your calm clear cheek
The kiss of the bright wind of liberty?
What more is there to ask, what more to be?
Peace, peace, my soul, and let the silence speak!

To hope is to be free? Nay, hope's a slave
To every chance; hope is the same as fear;
Hope trembles at the wind, the star, the wave,
The voice, the mood, the music; hope stands near
The chilly threshold of the waiting grave,
And when the silence speaks, hope does not hear.

3

In the old days came freedom with a sword.
Ev'n so; but also freedom came with wings
Fanning the faint and purple bloom that clings
To the great twilight where our dreams are stored.
Freedom was what the waters would afford
That yet obeyed the white moon's whisperings,
And freedom leapt and listened in the strings
Of dulcimer and lute and clavichord.

In the old days? But those old days are now.
O merciful, O bright, O valiant brow,
Can you seek freedom that way and I this?
Not in the single note is music free,
But where creation's climbing fires agree
In multitudes, in nights, in silences.

4

Shall we mark off our little patch of power
From time's compulsive process? Shall we sit
With memory, warming our weak hands at it,
And say: 'So be it; we have had one hour'?
Surely the mountains are a better dower,
With their dark scope and cloudy infinite,
Than small perfection, trivial exquisite;
'Mid all that dark the brightness of a flower!

Lovers are not themselves: they are more, they are all:
For them are past and future spread together
Like a green landscape lit by golden weather:
For them the rhythmic change conjectural
Of time and place is but the question whether
Their God shall stand (as stand he must) or fall.

5

O cold remembrance, careful-careless kiss,
That does not wake to hope with waking day,
And at the hour of bed-time does not say:

'That was for rapture, that for peace, but this
Burns for the night's more terrible auspices,
And pangs and sweets of doubt and disarray!'--
Yet in one kiss two hearts found once the way
From perfect ignorance to perfect bliss.

Love has so many voices, low and high.
Such range of reason, such delight of rhyme!
Yet when I asked love such a simple thing
As why the autumn comes where came the spring,
The only soul that answered me was I,
And love was silent then for the first time.

6

Our love is hurt, and the bad world goes on
Moving to its conclusion: in a year
This corn now reaped will come again to ear,
The moon will shine as last night the moon shone;
The tide, whose thought is the moon's thought, will don
The silver livery of subjection. Dear,
Is it not strange that hearts will hope and fear
And break, when our hearts, broken now, are gone?

If this were true, life's movement would rebel,
And curdle to its source, as blood to the heart
When the cold fires of indignation start
From their obscure lair in the body.--Well,
If for us two to part were just to part
All years would have one pointless tale to tell.

7

The little things, the little restless things,
The base and barren things, the things that spite
The day, and trail processions through the night
Of sad remembrances and questionings;
The poverties, stupidities and stings,
The silted misery, the hovering blight;
The things that block the paths of sound and sight;

The things that snare our thought and break its wings--

How shall we bear these?--we who suffer so
The shattering sacrifice, the huge despair,
The terrors loosed like lightnings on the air,
To leave all nature blackened from that curse!
The big things are the enemies we know,
The little things the traitors. Which are worse?

8

Now must we gather up and comprehend
The volume of vicissitude, and take
Account of loving, for each other's sake,
And ask how love began and how will end
(If there be any end of love, O friend
Of my worst hours and best desires!)--and stake
Our all upon the sweetness and the ache
Of what men's stories and God's stars intend.

You have my all: you are my all: you give,
Out of your bounty and content of soul,
The only strength that makes me fit to live--
Since earth of spirit takes such heavy toll:
Yet I, the weak, the faint, the fugitive,
Stand here, an equal part of the great whole.

Gerald Gould

Oxford

I came to Oxford in the light
Of a spring-coloured afternoon;
Some clouds were grey and some were white,
And all were blown to such a tune
Of quiet rapture in the sky,
I laughed to see them laughing by.

I had been dreaming in the train
With thoughts at random from my book;
I looked, and read, and looked again,
And suddenly to greet my look
Oxford shone up with every tower
Aspiring sweetly like a flower.

Home turn the feet of men that seek,
And home the hearts of children turn,
And none can teach the hour to speak
What every hour is free to learn;
And all discover, late or soon,
Their golden Oxford afternoon.

Gerald Gould

This Is The Horror That, Night After Night

This is the horror that, night after night,
Sits grinning on my pillow -- that I meant
To mix the peace of being innocent
With the warm thrill of seeking out delight:
This is the final blasphemy, the blight
On all pure purpose and divine intent --
To dress the selfish thought, the indolent,
In the priest's sable or the angel's white.

For God's sake, if you sin, take pleasure in it,
And do it for the pleasure. Do not say:
'Behold the spirit's liberty! -- a minute
Will see the earthly vesture break away
And God shine through.' Say: 'Here's a sin -- I'll sin it;
And there's the price of sinning -- and I'll pay.'

Gerald Gould

Tis But A Week

'Tis but a week since down the glen
The trampling horses came
--Half a hundred fighting men
With all their spears aflame!
They laughed and clattered as they went,
And round about their way
The blackbirds sang with one consent
In the green leaves of May.

Never again shall I see them pass;
They'll come victorious never;
Their spears are withered all as grass,
Their laughter's laid for ever;
And where they clattered as they went,
And where their hearts were gay,
The blackbirds sing with one consent
In the green leaves of May.

Gerald Gould

Wander-Thirst

BEYOND the East the sunrise, beyond the West the sea,
And East and West the wander-thirst that will not let me be;
It works in me like madness, dear, to bid me say good-bye;
For the seas call, and the stars call, and oh! the call of the sky!

I know not where the white road runs, nor what the blue hills are;
But a man can have the sun for a friend, and for his guide a star;
And there's no end of voyaging when once the voice is heard,
For the rivers call, and the roads call, and oh! the call of the bird!

Yonder the long horizon lies, and there by night and day
The old ships draw to home again, the young ships sail away;
And come I may, but go I must, and, if men ask you why,
You may put the blame on the stars and the sun and the white road and the sky.

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