

Classic Poetry Series

Marian Osborne
- poems -

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Marian Osborne(14 May 1871 - 5 September 1931)

Marian Osborne was a Canadian poet and dramatist.

Life

Osborne was born Marian Francis in Montreal, Quebec, and educated at the Collegiate Institute in London, Ontario, and Trinity College in Toronto, Ontario. She married Charles Bath at seventeen, and lived in Wales until his death five years later, bearing him two sons and a daughter. In 1902 she married Charles Osborne, a lawyer and member of the Toronto Stock Exchange. She was an accomplished athlete, winning championships in swimming and fencing.

Writing

The Times: These poems are all graceful and melodious.... The author tries many metres, both regular and irregular, ... they are well-controlled and lend variety to her muse. For the most part the verses are of love and contemplative moods..... The author's gift of dignified and harmonious verse is at its best in the sonnets; and there is a life given briefly and illuminatingly in 'The Professor's Story,' a little poem in the manner of Browning.

Despair

The darkness of the night bewildering
Falls on a world of chaos, and alone
I lie, and listen for the single string
Of Hope, with strained ears, but hear no moan
Nor any sound, save only the dull beat
Of my starved heart, that totters on the brink
Of abjectness, reason dethroned, her seat
Usurped by folly. Dear God! let me sink
Forever out of sight in nothingness,
As crazed stars fall from heaven. Woe is me!
Is death too merciful for my distress?
Or does my pain mean nothing unto Thee?
Life's stony road I've suffered passing well,
Now its lone sign-post points to my soul's hell.

Marian Osborne

If I Were Fair

If only I were fair,
Or had some charm to bind
In tender loving ways
The passing of the days,
Life would seem less unkind
Less hard at times to bear,
If I were only fair.

If only I were fair
And had blest Beauty's dower
I should hear flutterings
Of Love's mysterious wings
And feel his kisses shower
On lips and brow and hair,
If I were only fair.

If only I were fair,
A child, whose heart beat free,
Would lay its cheek on mine,
Our arms would intertwine,
Sweetly, caressingly-
A child that I might bear,
If I were only fair.

If only I were fair,
As I passed down the street
Some weary waiting eyes
Might smile in glad surprise,
As though the sun to greet
How I could banish care,
If I were only fair!

If only I were fair,
I would be generous too;
In my love-laden eyes
Forgiving tears would rise.
And, finding one man true,
I might then all things dare,
If I were only fair.

Marian Osborne

Love's Anguish

Shall I with lethal draughts drowse every thought
And let the days pass by with silent tread,–
Dream that the vanished hour I long have sought
Is once more mine, and you no longer dead?
How shall I grasp the skirts of happy chance
And calm my spirit in adventurous ways,
Like bold Don Quixote hold aloft my lance
Against the world without thy meed of praise?
How can I live through long discordant days,
How cheat despair, or speed Time's lagging feet,
Since I have lost the fragrance of love's ways
That turned life's winter into springtime sweet?
Come to me, Death, come, ere it be too late;
Thy kiss alone can draw the sting of Fate.

Marian Osborne

Love's Enchantment

As when two children, hand clasped fast in hand,
Explore the dimness of a fairy bower
In tremulous encroachment, each one fanned
To ardour by his playmate's fancied power;
Then see with wondering eyes the thing they sought,
Half feared, half hoped for, suddenly in view,
So we on tip-toe came, and dear Love wrought
Enchantments for us, long before we knew

Each other's heart; then led us gaily o'er
The flower-starred meadows, onward, eagerly,
Until we reached at length the open door
Of his domain—for thus it was to be;
There in one brimming kiss soul cried to soul
And found completion 'neath Love's aureole.

Marian Osborne

Love's Gifts

Beloved, can I make return to thee
For all the gifts which thy rich heart doth hold,
Gifts that have turned my life's gloom into gold
And opened wisdom's door with magic key.
My eyes enchanted see love's mystery,
And though I fear, yet would I fain be bold,
For thy voice thrills on ears no longer cold
And murmurs wondrous music, tenderly.
And though my hands hold naught, yet would I part
The curtains of my soul to give thee bliss,
Answer thee in the throbbing of my heart
And soothe thy fevered lips with one deep kiss.
Ah! let no shadow fall our souls athwart,
For life holds nothing greater, love,—than this.

Marian Osborne

The Song Of Israfel

Fair Israfel, the sweetest singer of Heaven,
Shook back his burning curls, and from his seven
Stringed lute swept an impassioned prayer
So full of yearning that the very air
Celestial seemed surcharged with pleading love.
Importunate it throbbed and swelled above
Each diamond star-lit crevice of the skies
That oped to hearken, and from shimmering eyes
Let down their tear-spun rainbows for the song.
Eager it sped, and trembling pulsed along
Craving a shelter and a sanctuary
To weave anew on earth Heaven's harmony.

The dying sun had laid his hand of splendour
Upon the watching lake. Burning, yet tender,
His parting kiss enraptured all the night.
A mystic barque seemed in the golden light
Like some pale ghostly moth, that flies away
With fluttering wings out-drooped from circling day.
Onward she came, borne by the music's breath,
Unearthly as an image after death.
Rhythmic she swooned and dreamed,

And ever idly seemed
To float, as lilies float upon a stream
Whose slackened pulses halt awhile to dream.

Then to the soul of those whose eager ears
Were not clay-sealed, came music born of tears,
Far wingèd memories,
Angelic harmonies,
Haunting as dear dead loves for which men mourn,
Sweet as remembered joys to hearts forlorn.
The melody was fraught with dreams of Spring
Poured from uplifted throats of birds who sing
In silvery ecstasy of lover's sighs
And of the panted darkness in love's eyes,
While over all the azure vaulted height

Of heaven circled a world's delight.

The silences made music. The still air
Breathed incense-laden consecrated prayer,
The grave and cowlèd Night knelt, listening,
And hushed the restless winds, that whispering,
Creep on the borderland of sleep.
Stilled were earth's murmurings deep.
The garrulous waves ceased playing by the shore
In bubbling laughter, and the leaves forbore
Their mirthful dancing, while the rustling grass
Sighed, and was silent, lest the song should pass.
The chords majestic swept the soul. Unrest
Was stilled to peace in fevered hearts distressed.

Wearied of alien ears, and solitude,
The deathless strain soared upwards, to the nude
And silvery sentinel of Paradise,
The patient Moon, that watches o'er the skies.
She turned the song to tears of gentle rain
That washed the earth in loveliness, and Pain
Which like a cold and cruel snake lies curled
In the grim arms of Night, himself unfurled
And sought a refuge in the depths of Hell.
But even there, these tears of Israfael
Found the sad eyes of those whom hope had fled
And as they wept,... so were they comforted.

Marian Osborne