

In Provenance and Lyrical Epigrams

Edith Wharton

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I. Mistral in the Maquis

Roofed in with creaking pines we lie
And see the waters burn and whiten,
The wild seas race the racing sky,
The tossing landscape gloom and lighten.

With emerald streak and silver blotch
The white wind paints the purple sea.
Warm in our hollow dune we watch
The honey-orchis nurse the bee.

Gold to the keel the startled boats
Beat in on palpitating sail,
While overhead with many throats
The choral forest hymns the gale.

'Neath forest-boughs the templed air
Hangs hushed as when the Host is lifted,
While, flanks astrain and rigging bare,
The last boat to the port has drifted.

Nought left but the lost wind that grieves
On darkening seas and furling sails,
And the long light that Beauty leaves
Upon her fallen veils. . .

II. The Young Dead

Ah, how I pity the young dead who gave
All that they were, and might become, that we
With tired eyes should watch this perfect sea
Re-weave its patterning of silver wave
Round scented cliffs of arbutus and bay.

No more shall any rose along the way,
The myrtled way that wanders to the shore,
Nor jonquil-twinkling meadow any more,
Nor the warm lavender that takes the spray,
Smell only of sea-salt and the sun,

But, through recurring seasons, every one
Shall speak to us with lips the darkness closes,
Shall look at us with eyes that missed the roses,
Clutch us with hands whose work was just begun,
Laid idle now beneath the earth we tread

And always we shall walk with the young dead.
Ah, how I pity the young dead, whose eyes
Strain through the sod to see these perfect skies,
Who feel the new wheat springing in their stead,
And the lark singing for them overhead!

Lyrical Epigrams

I

My little old dog:
A heart-beat
At my feet.

II

Spring

In Provence and Lyrical Epigrams

A winter wind,
Primroses,
And the new furrow.

III
Friendship

The silence of midnight,
A dying fire,
And the best unsaid. . . .

IV

A pointed steeple
Above square trees
Rustic France.

V

A blunt steeple
Over round trees
Rural England.

VI
Soluntum

Across these giant ruins
The greatest cloud–shadows
Dart like little lizards.