

TO SHAKESPEARE
AFTER THREE HUNDRED YEARS

Bright baffling Soul, least capturable of themes,
Thou, who display'dst a life of common-place,
Leaving no intimate word or personal trace
Of high design outside the artistry
 Of thy penned dreams,
Still shalt remain at heart unread eternally.

Through human orbits thy discourse to-day,
Despite thy formal pilgrimage, throbs on
In harmonies that cow Oblivion,
And, like the wind, with all-uncared effect
 Maintain a sway
Not fore-desired, in tracks unchosen and unchecked.

And yet, at thy last breath, with mindless note
The borough clocks but samely tongued the hour,
The Avon just as always glassed the tower,
Thy age was published on thy passing-bell
 But in due rote
With other dwellers' deaths accorded a like knell.

And at the strokes some townsman (met, maybe,
And thereon queried by some squire's good dame
Driving in shopward) may have given thy name,
With, "Yes, a worthy man and well-to-do;
 Though, as for me,
I knew him but by just a neighbour's nod, 'tis true.

"I' faith, few knew him much here, save by word,
He having elsewhere led his busier life;
Though to be sure he left with us his wife."
--"Ah, one of the tradesmen's sons, I now recall . . .
 Witty, I've heard . . .
We did not know him . . . Well, good-day. Death comes to all."

So, like a strange bright bird we sometimes find
To mingle with the barn-door brood awhile,
Then vanish from their homely domicile -
Into man's poesy, we wot not whence,
 Flew thy strange mind,
Lodged there a radiant guest, and sped for ever thence.

1916.