

QUID HIC AGIS?

I

When I weekly knew  
An ancient pew,  
And murmured there  
The forms of prayer  
And thanks and praise  
In the ancient ways,  
And heard read out  
During August drought  
That chapter from Kings  
Harvest-time brings;  
- How the prophet, broken  
By griefs unspoken,  
Went heavily away  
To fast and to pray,  
And, while waiting to die,  
The Lord passed by,  
And a whirlwind and fire  
Drew nigher and nigher,  
And a small voice anon  
Bade him up and be gone, -

I did not apprehend  
As I sat to the end  
And watched for her smile  
Across the sunned aisle,  
That this tale of a seer  
Which came once a year  
Might, when sands were heaping,  
Be like a sweat creeping,  
Or in any degree  
Bear on her or on me!

II

When later, by chance  
Of circumstance,  
It befel me to read  
On a hot afternoon  
At the lectern there  
The selfsame words  
As the lesson decreed,  
To the gathered few  
From the hamlets near -  
Folk of flocks and herds  
Sitting half aswoon,  
Who listened thereto  
As women and men

Not overmuch  
Concerned at such -  
So, like them then,  
I did not see  
What drought might be  
With me, with her,  
As the Kalendar  
Moved on, and Time  
Devoured our prime.

### III

But now, at last,  
When our glory has passed,  
And there is no smile  
From her in the aisle,  
But where it once shone  
A marble, men say,  
With her name thereon  
Is discerned to-day;  
And spiritless  
In the wilderness  
I shrink from sight  
And desire the night,  
(Though, as in old wise,  
I might still arise,

Go forth, and stand  
And prophesy in the land),  
I feel the shake  
Of wind and earthquake,  
And consuming fire  
Nigher and nigher,  
And the voice catch clear,  
"What doest thou here?"

The Spectator 1916. During the War.