

THE MUSICAL BOX

Lifelong to be
Seemed the fair colour of the time;
That there was standing shadowed near
A spirit who sang to the gentle chime
Of the self-struck notes, I did not hear,
I did not see.

Thus did it sing
To the mindless lyre that played indoors
As she came to listen for me without:
"O value what the nonce outpours -
This best of life--that shines about
Your welcoming!"

I had slowed along
After the torrid hours were done,
Though still the posts and walls and road
Flung back their sense of the hot-faced sun,
And had walked by Stourside Mill, where broad
Stream-lilies throng.

And I descried

The dusky house that stood apart,
And her, white-muslined, waiting there
In the porch with high-expectant heart,
While still the thin mechanic air
 Went on inside.

At whiles would flit
Swart bats, whose wings, be-webbed and tanned,
Whirred like the wheels of ancient clocks:
She laughed a hailing as she scanned
Me in the gloom, the tuneful box
 Intoning it.

Lifelong to be
I thought it. That there watched hard by
A spirit who sang to the indoor tune,
"O make the most of what is nigh!"
I did not hear in my dull soul-swoon -
 I did not see.

ON STURMINSTER FOOT-BRIDGE
(ONOMATOPOEIC)

Reticulations creep upon the slack stream's face
 When the wind skims irritably past,
The current clucks smartly into each hollow place
That years of flood have scrabbled in the pier's sodden base;
 The floating-lily leaves rot fast.

On a roof stand the swallows ranged in wistful waiting rows,
 Till they arrow off and drop like stones
Among the eyot-withies at whose foot the river flows;
And beneath the roof is she who in the dark world shows
 As a lattice-gleam when midnight moans.