

LINES

Spoken by Miss ADA REHAN at the Lyceum Theatre, July 23, 1890, at a performance on behalf of Lady Jeune's Holiday Fund for City Children.

Before we part to alien thoughts and aims,
Permit the one brief word the occasion claims:
- When mumming and grave projects are allied,
Perhaps an Epilogue is justified.

Our under-purpose has, in truth, to-day
Commanded most our musings; least the play:
A purpose futile but for your good-will
Swiftly responsive to the cry of ill:
A purpose all too limited!--to aid
Frail human flowerets, sicklied by the shade,
In winning some short spell of upland breeze,
Or strengthening sunlight on the level leas.

Who has not marked, where the full cheek should be,
Incipient lines of lank flaccidity,
Lymphatic pallor where the pink should glow,
And where the throb of transport, pulses low? -
Most tragical of shapes from Pole to Line,

O wondering child, unwitting Time's design,
Why should Art add to Nature's quandary,
And worsen ill by thus immuring thee?
- That races do despite unto their own,
That Might supernal do indeed condone
Wrongs individual for the general ease,
Instance the proof in victims such as these.

Launched into thoroughfares too thronged before,
Mothered by those whose protest is "No more!"
Vitalized without option: who shall say
That did Life hang on choosing--Yea or Nay -
They had not scorned it with such penalty,
And nothingness implored of Destiny?

And yet behind the horizon smile serene
The down, the cornland, and the stretching green -
Space--the child's heaven: scenes which at least ensure
Some palliative for ill they cannot cure.

Dear friends--now moved by this poor show of ours
To make your own long joy in buds and bowers
For one brief while the joy of infant eyes,
Changing their urban murk to paradise -
You have our thanks!--may your reward include
More than our thanks, far more: their gratitude.

"I LOOK INTO MY GLASS"

I look into my glass,
And view my wasting skin,
And say, "Would God it came to pass
My heart had shrunk as thin!"

For then, I, undistrest
By hearts grown cold to me,
Could lonely wait my endless rest
With equanimity.

But Time, to make me grieve;
Part steals, lets part abide;
And shakes this fragile frame at eve
With throbbings of noontide.