

**Bay**

**By**

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BAY . . A BOOK OF . . POEMS . . BY D: H: LAWRENCE

To Cynthia Asquith

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**GUARDS!**

A Review in Hyde Park 1913. The Crowd Watches.

WHERE the trees rise like cliffs, proud and blue-tinted in the distance,  
Between the cliffs of the trees, on the grey-green park Rests a still line of  
soldiers, red motionless range of guards Smouldering with darkened  
busbies beneath the bayonets' slant rain.

Colossal in nearness a blue police sits still on his horse Guarding the path;  
his hand relaxed at his thigh, And skyward his face is immobile, eyelids  
aslant In tedium, and mouth relaxed as if smiling--ineffable tedium!

So! So! Gaily a general canters across the space, With white plumes blinking  
under the evening grey sky. And suddenly, as if the ground moved The red  
range heaves in slow, magnetic reply.

## **EVOLUTIONS OF SOLDIERS**

The red range heaves and compulsory sways, ah see! in the flush of a march Softly-impulsive advancing as water towards a weir from the arch Of shadow emerging as blood emerges from inward shades of our night Encroaching towards a crisis, a meeting, a spasm and throb of delight.

The wave of soldiers, the coming wave, the throbbing red breast of approach Upon us; dark eyes as here beneath the busbies glittering, dark threats that broach Our beached vessel; darkened rencontre inhuman, and closed warm lips, and dark Mouth-hair of soldiers passing above us, over the wreck of our bark.

And so, it is ebb-time, they turn, the eyes beneath the busbies are gone. But the blood has suspended its timbre, the heart from out of oblivion Knows but the retreat of the burning shoulders, the red-swift waves of the sweet Fire horizontal declining and ebbing, the twilit ebb of retreat.

## **THE LITTLE TOWN AT EVENING**

THE chime of the bells, and the church clock striking eight Solemnly and distinctly cries down the babel of children still playing in the hay. The church draws nearer upon us, gentle and great In shadow, covering us up with her grey.

Like drowsy children the houses fall asleep Under the fleece of shadow, as in between Tall and dark the church moves, anxious to keep Their sleeping, cover them soft unseen.

Hardly a murmur comes from the sleeping brood, I wish the church had covered me up with the rest In the home-place. Why is it she should exclude Me so distinctly from sleeping with those I love best?

## **LAST HOURS**

THE cool of an oak's unchequered shade Falls on me as I lie in deep grass  
Which rushes upward, blade beyond blade, While higher the darting grass-  
flowers pass Piercing the blue with their crocketed spires And waving flags,  
and the ragged fires Of the sorrel's cresset--a green, brave town Vegetable,  
new in renown.

Over the tree's edge, as over a mountain Surges the white of the moon, A  
cloud comes up like the surge of a fountain, Pressing round and low at first,  
but soon Heaving and piling a round white dome. How lovely it is to be at  
home Like an insect in the grass Letting life pass.

There's a scent of clover crept through my hair From the full resource of  
some purple dome Where that lumbering bee, who can hardly bear His  
burden above me, never has clomb. But not even the scent of insouciant  
flowers Makes pause the hours.

Down the valley roars a townward train. I hear it through the grass Dragging  
the links of my shortening chain Southwards, alas!

## **TOWN**

LONDON Used to wear her lights splendidly, Flinging her shawl-fringe over the River, Tassels in abandon.

And up in the sky A two-eyed clock, like an owl Solemnly used to approve, chime, chiming, Approval, goggle-eyed fowl.

There are no gleams on the River, No goggling clock; No sound from St. Stephen's; No lamp-fringed frock.

Instead, Darkness, and skin-wrapped Fleet, hurrying limbs, Soft-footed dead.

London Original, wolf-wrapped In pelts of wolves, all her luminous Garments gone.

London, with hair Like a forest darkness, like a marsh Of rushes, ere the Romans Broke in her lair.

It is well That London, lair of sudden Male and female darkneses Has broken her spell.



**AFTER THE OPERA**

DOWN the stone stairs Girls with their large eyes wide with tragedy Lift  
looks of shocked and momentous emotion up at me. And I smile.

Ladies Stepping like birds with their bright and pointed feet Peer anxiously  
forth, as if for a boat to carry them out of the wreckage, And among the  
wreck of the theatre crowd I stand and smile.

They take tragedy so becomingly. Which pleases me.

But when I meet the weary eyes The reddened aching eyes of the bar-man  
with thin arms, I am glad to go back to where I came from.

## **GOING BACK**

THE NIGHT turns slowly round, Swift trains go by in a rush of light; Slow trains steal past. This train beats anxiously, outward bound.

But I am not here. I am away, beyond the scope of this turning; There, where the pivot is, the axis Of all this gear.

I, who sit in tears, I, whose heart is torn with parting; Who cannot bear to think back to the departure platform; My spirit hears

Voices of men Sound of artillery, aeroplanes, presences, And more than all, the dead-sure silence, The pivot again.

There, at the axis Pain, or love, or grief Sleep on speed; in dead certainty; Pure relief.

There, at the pivot Time sleeps again. No has-been, no here-after; only the perfected Silence of men.

## **ON THE MARCH**

WE are out on the open road. Through the low west window a cold light flows  
On the floor where never my numb feet trode Before; onward the  
strange road goes.

Soon the spaces of the western sky With shutters of sombre cloud will close.  
But we'll still be together, this road and I, Together, wherever the long road  
goes.

The wind chases by us, and over the corn Pale shadows flee from us as if  
from their foes. Like a snake we thresh on the long, forlorn Land, as onward  
the long road goes.

From the sky, the low, tired moon fades out; Through the poplars the night-  
wind blows; Pale, sleepy phantoms are tossed about As the wind asks  
whither the wan road goes.

Away in the distance wakes a lamp. Inscrutable small lights glitter in rows.  
But they come no nearer, and still we tramp Onward, wherever the strange  
road goes.

Beat after beat falls sombre and dull. The wind is unchanging, not one of us  
knows What will be in the final lull When we find the place where this dead  
road goes.

For something must come, since we pass and pass Along in the coiled,  
convulsive throes Of this marching, along with the invisible grass That goes  
wherever this old road goes.

Perhaps we shall come to oblivion. Perhaps we shall march till our tired toes  
Tread over the edge of the pit, and we're gone Down the endless slope where  
the last road goes.

If so, let us forge ahead, straight on If we're going to sleep the sleep with  
those That fall forever, knowing none Of this land whereon the wrong road  
goes.

## **BOMBARDMENT**

THE TOWN has opened to the sun. Like a flat red lily with a million petals  
She unfolds, she comes undone.

A sharp sky brushes upon The myriad glittering chimney-tips  
As she gently exhales to the sun.

Hurrying creatures run Down the labyrinth of the sinister flower. What is it  
they shun?

A dark bird falls from the sun. It curves in a rush to the heart of the vast  
Flower: the day has begun.

**WINTER-LULL**

Because of the silent snow, we are all hushed            Into awe. No sound of  
guns, nor overhead no rushed            Vibration to draw Our attention out of  
the void wherein we are crushed.

A crow floats past on level wings            Noiselessly. Uninterrupted silence  
swings            Invisibly, inaudibly To and fro in our misgivings.

We do not look at each other, we hide            Our daunted eyes. White earth,  
and ruins, ourselves, and nothing beside.            It all belies Our existence;  
we wait, and are still denied.

We are folded together, men and the snowy ground            Into nullity. There  
is silence, only the silence, never a sound            Nor a verity To assist us;  
disastrously silence-bound!

## **THE ATTACK**

WHEN we came out of the wood Was a great light! The night uprisen stood  
In white.

I wondered, I looked around It was so fair. The bright Stubble upon the  
ground Shone white

Like any field of snow; Yet warm the chase Of faint night-breaths did go  
Across my face!

White-bodied and warm the night was, Sweet-scented to hold in my throat.  
White and alight the night was. A pale stroke smote

The pulse through the whole bland being Which was This and me; A pulse  
that still went fleeing, Yet did not flee.

After the terrible rage, the death, This wonder stood glistening? All shapes of  
wonder, with suspended breath, Arrested listening

In ecstatic reverie. The whole, white Night!-- With wonder, every black tree  
Blossomed outright.

I saw the transfiguration And the present Host. Transubstantiation Of the  
Luminous Ghost.

## OBSEQUIAL ODE

SURELY you've trodden straight To the very door! Surely you took your fate  
Faultlessly. Now it's too late To say more.

It is evident you were right, That man has a course to go A voyage to  
sail beyond the charted seas. You have passed from out of sight And my  
questions blow Back from the straight horizon that ends all one sees.

Now like a vessel in port You unlade your riches unto death, And glad  
are the eager dead to receive you there. Let the dead sort Your cargo out,  
breath from breath Let them disencumber your bounty, let them all share.

I imagine dead hands are brighter, Their fingers in sunset shine With  
jewels of passion once broken through you as a prism Breaks light into  
jewels; and dead breasts whiter For your wrath; and yes, I opine They  
anoint their brows with your blood, as a perfect chrism.

On your body, the beaten anvil, Was hammered out That moon-like  
sword the ascendant dead unsheathe Against us; sword that no man will  
Put to rout; Sword that severs the question from us who breathe.

Surely you've trodden straight To the very door. You have surely achieved  
your fate; And the perfect dead are elate To have won once more.

Now to the dead you are giving Your last allegiance. But what of us who  
are living And fearful yet of believing In your pitiless legions.

**SHADES**

SHALL I tell you, then, how it is?-- There came a cloven gleam Like a tongue  
of darkened flame To flicker in me.

And so I seem To have you still the same In one world with me.

In the flicker of a flower, In a worm that is blind, yet strives, In a mouse that  
pauses to listen

Glimmers our Shadow; yet it deprives Them none of their glisten.

In every shaken morsel I see our shadow tremble As if it rippled from out of  
us hand in hand.

As if it were part and parcel, One shadow, and we need not dissemble Our  
darkness: do you understand?

For I have told you plainly how it is.



**BREAD UPON THE WATERS.**

SO you are lost to me! Ah you, you ear of corn straight lying, What food is this for the darkly flying Fowls of the Afterwards!

White bread afloat on the waters, Cast out by the hand that scatters Food untowards,

Will you come back when the tide turns? After many days? My heart yearns To know.

Will you return after many days To say your say as a traveller says, More marvel than woe?

Drift then, for the sightless birds And the fish in shadow-waved herds To approach you.

Drift then, bread cast out; Drift, lest I fall in doubt, And reproach you.

For you are lost to me!

## **RUINATION**

THE sun is bleeding its fires upon the mist That huddles in grey heaps  
coiling and holding back. Like cliffs abutting in shadow a drear grey sea  
Some street-ends thrust forward their stack.

On the misty waste-lands, away from the flushing grey Of the morning the  
elms are loftily dimmed, and tall As if moving in air towards us, tall angels  
Of darkness advancing steadily over us all.

**RONDEAU OF A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR.**

THE hours have tumbled their leaden, mono- tonous sands And piled them up in a dull grey heap in the West. I carry my patience sullenly through the waste lands; To-morrow will pour them all back, the dull hours I detest.

I force my cart through the sodden filth that is pressed Into ooze, and the sombre dirt spouts up at my hands As I make my way in twilight now to rest. The hours have tumbled their leaden, monotonous sands.

A twisted thorn-tree still in the evening stands Defending the memory of leaves and the happy round nest. But mud has flooded the homes of these weary lands And piled them up in a dull grey heap in the West.

All day has the clank of iron on iron distressed The nerve-bare place. Now a little silence expands And a gasp of relief. But the soul is still compressed: I carry my patience sullenly through the waste lands.

The hours have ceased to fall, and a star commands Shadows to cover our stricken manhood, and blest Sleep to make us forget: but he understands: To-morrow will pour them all back, the dull hours I detest.

## **TOMMIES IN THE TRAIN**

THE SUN SHINES, The coltsfoot flowers along the railway banks Shine like  
flat coin which Jove in thanks Strews each side the lines.

A steeple In purple elms, daffodils Sparkle beneath; luminous hills Beyond--  
and no people.

England, Oh Danaë To this spring of cosmic gold That falls on your lap of  
mould! What then are we?

What are we Clay-coloured, who roll in fatigue As the train falls league by  
league From our destiny?

A hand is over my face, A cold hand. I peep between the fingers To watch the  
world that lingers Behind, yet keeps pace.

Always there, as I peep Between the fingers that cover my face! Which then  
is it that falls from its place And rolls down the steep?

Is it the train That falls like meteorite Backward into space, to alight Never  
again?

Or is it the illusory world That falls from reality As we look? Or are we Like a  
thunderbolt hurled?

One or another Is lost, since we fall apart Endlessly, in one motion depart  
From each other.

**WAR-BABY**

THE CHILD like mustard-seed Rolls out of the husk of death Into the  
woman's fertile, fathomless lap.

Look, it has taken root! See how it flourisheth. See how it rises with  
magical, rosy sap!

As for our faith, it was there When we did not know, did not care; It fell  
from our husk like a little, hasty seed.

Sing, it is all we need. Sing, for the little weed Will flourish its branches in  
heaven when we slumber beneath.

## **NOSTALGIA**

THE WANING MOON looks upward; this grey night Slopes round the heavens in one smooth curve Of easy sailing; odd red wicks serve To show where the ships at sea move out of sight.

The place is palpable me, for here I was born Of this self-same darkness. Yet the shadowy house below Is out of bounds, and only the old ghosts know I have come, I feel them whimper in welcome, and mourn.

My father suddenly died in the harvesting corn And the place is no longer ours. Watching, I hear No sound from the strangers, the place is dark, and fear Opens my eyes till the roots of my vision seems torn.

Can I go no nearer, never towards the door? The ghosts and I we mourn together, and shrink In the shadow of the cart-shed. Must we hover on the brink Forever, and never enter the homestead any more?

Is it irrevocable? Can I really not go Through the open yard-way? Can I not go past the sheds And through to the mowie?--Only the dead in their beds Can know the fearful anguish that this is so.

I kiss the stones, I kiss the moss on the wall, And wish I could pass impregnate into the place. I wish I could take it all in a last embrace. I wish with my breast I here could annihilate it all.