

Oscar Wilde (1856-1900)

3 *The Dole of the King's Daughter*

(BRETON)

Seven stars in the still water,  
And seven in the sky;  
Seven sins on the King's daughter,  
Deep in her soul to lie.

Red roses are at her feet, 5  
(Roses are red in her red-gold hair)  
And O where her bosom and girdle meet  
Red roses are hidden there.

Fair is the knight who lieth slain 10  
Amid the rush and reed,  
See the lean fishes that are fain  
Upon dead men to feed.

Sweet is the page that lieth there, 15  
(Cloth of gold is goodly prey,)  
See the black ravens in the air,  
Black, O black as the night are they.

What do they there so stark and dead? 20  
(There is blood upon her hand)  
Why are the lilies flecked with red?  
(There is blood on the river sand.)

There are two that ride from the south and east,  
And two from the north and west,  
For the black raven a goodly feast,  
For the King's daughter rest.

There is one man who loves her true, 25  
(Red, O red, is the stain of gore!)  
He hath duggen a grave by the darksome yew,  
(One grave will do for four.)

No moon in the still heaven,  
In the black water none,  
The sins on her soul are seven,  
The sin upon his is one.

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*1876*

(From *Poems by Oscar Wilde, with the Ballad of Reading Gaol*. London: Methuen & Co., 1908)