Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

11   *Her Immortality*

Upon a noon I pilgrimed through
　　A pasture, mile by mile,
Unto the place where last I saw
　　My dead Love's living smile.

And sorrowing I lay me down   5
　　Upon the heated sod:
It seemed as if my body pressed
　　The very ground she trod.

I lay, and thought; and in a trance
　　She came and stood thereby —   10
The same, even to the marvellous ray
　　That used to light her eye.

"You draw me, and I come to you,
　　My faithful one," she said,
In voice that had the moving tone   15
　　It bore ere she was wed.

"Seven years have circled since I died:
　　Few now remember me;
My husband clasps another bride:
　　My children's love has she.   20

'My brethren, sisters, and my friends
　　Care not to meet my sprite:
Who prized me most I did not know
　　Till I passed down from sight."

I said: "My days are lonely here;   25
　　I need thy smile alway:

I'll use this night my ball or blade,
    And join thee ere the day."

A tremor stirred her tender lips,
    Which parted to dissuade: 30
"That cannot be, O friend," she cried;
    "Think, I am but a Shade!

"A Shade but in its mindful ones
    Has immortality;
By living, me you keep alive,   35
    By dying you slay me.

"In you resides my single power
    Of sweet continuance here;
On your fidelity I count
    Through many a coming year."   40

— I started through me at her plight,
    So suddenly confessed:
Dismissing late distaste for life,
    I craved its bleak unrest.

"I will not die, my One of all! —   45
    To lengthen out thy days
I'll guard me from minutest harms
    That may invest my ways!"

She smiled and went.   Since then she comes
    Oft when her birth-moon climbs,   50
Or at the seasons' ingresses,
    Or anniversary times;

But grows my grief.   When I surcease,
    Through whom alone lives she,

Her spirit ends its living lease,   55
    Never again to be!

1898

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