

Classic Poetry Series

**Edward Thomas**  
**- poems -**

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# Edward Thomas(3 March 1878 - 9 April 1917)

Phillip Edward Thomas was an Anglo-Welsh writer of prose and poetry. He is commonly considered a war poet, although few of his poems deal directly with his war experiences. Already an accomplished writer, Thomas turned to poetry only in 1914. He enlisted in the army in 1915, and was killed in action during the Battle of Arras in 1917, soon after he arrived in France.

## <b>Early Life</b>

Thomas was born in Lambeth, London. He was educated at Battersea Grammar School, St Paul's School and Lincoln College, Oxford. His family were mostly Welsh. Unusually, he married while still an undergraduate and determined to live his life by the pen. He then worked as a book reviewer, reviewing up to 15 books every week. He was already a seasoned writer by the outbreak of war, having published widely as a literary critic and biographer, as well as a writer on the countryside. He also wrote a novel, *The Happy-Go-Lucky Morgans* (1913).

Thomas worked as literary critic for the *Daily Chronicle* in London and became a close friend of Welsh tramp poet W. H. Davies, whose career he almost single-handedly developed.

From 1905, Thomas lived with his wife Helen and their family at Elses Farm near Sevenoaks, Kent. He rented a tiny cottage nearby for Davies and nurtured his writing as best he could. On one occasion, Thomas even had to arrange for the manufacture, by a local wheelwright, of a makeshift wooden leg for Davies.

Even though Thomas thought that poetry was the highest form of literature and regularly reviewed it, he only became a poet himself at the end of 1914. Living at Steep, in East Hampshire, he initially published some poetry under the name Edward Eastaway.

By August 1914, the village of Dymock in Gloucestershire had become the residence of a number of literary figures, including Lascelles Abercrombie, Wilfrid Gibson and American poet Robert Frost. Edward Thomas was a visitor at this time.

The (now-abandoned) railway station at Adlestrop in the Cotswolds was immortalised in a well-known poem by Thomas after his train made an unscheduled stop there on 24 June 1914, shortly before the outbreak of the First World War.

## <b>War Service</b>

Thomas enlisted in the Artists Rifles in July 1915, despite being a mature married man who could have avoided enlisting, in part after reading Frost's "The Road Not Taken". He was promoted Corporal and in November 1916 was commissioned into the Royal Garrison Artillery. He was killed in action soon after he arrived in France at Arras on Easter Monday, 9 April 1917. Although he survived the actual battle, he was killed by the concussive blast wave of one of the last shells fired as he stood to light his pipe.

Close friend W. H. Davies was devastated by the death and his commemorative poem "Killed In Action (Edward Thomas)" was included in Davies' 1918 collection "Raptures".

Thomas is buried in the Military Cemetery at Agny in France (Row C, Grave 43).

## <b>Personal Life</b>

Thomas was survived by his wife, Helen, his son Merfyn and his two daughters Bronwen and Myfanwy.

After the war, Helen wrote about her courtship and early married life with Edward in the autobiography *As it Was* (1926); later she added a second volume, *World Without End* (1931). Myfanwy later said the books were written by her mother as a form of therapy to help lift her out of a deep depression to which she succumbed following Edward's death.

Helen's short memoir *My Memory of W. H. Davies* was published in 1973. Her *Under Storm's Wing* was published in 1997 and is a collection of writings including the two earlier autobiographies along with various other writings and letters.

## <b>Commemorations</b>

Thomas is commemorated in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey in London and by memorial windows in the churches at Steep and at Eastbury in Berkshire.

East Hampshire District Council have created a "literary walk" at Shoulder of Mutton Hill in Steep dedicated to Thomas. Which includes the memorial stone erected in 1935. The inscription includes the final line of his essays: "And I rose up and knew I was tired and I continued my journey."

As "Philip Edward Thomas poet-soldier" he is commemorated with "Reginald Townsend Thomas actor-soldier died 1918" (who is buried at the spot) and other family members at the North East Surrey (Old Battersea) Cemetery.

**Poetry**

Thomas's poems are noted for their attention to the English countryside and a certain colloquial style. A short poem of Thomas's serves as an example of how he blends war and countryside throughout his poetry.

On 11 November 1985, Thomas was among 16 Great War poets commemorated on a slate stone unveiled in Westminster Abbey's Poet's Corner. The inscription, written by fellow Great War poet Wilfred Owen, reads: "My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity."

# A Cat

She had a name among the children;  
But no one loved though someone owned  
Her, locked her out of doors at bedtime  
And had her kittens duly drowned.

In Spring, nevertheless, this cat  
Ate blackbirds, thrushes, nightingales,  
And birds of bright voice and plume and flight,  
As well as scraps from neighbours' pails.

I loathed and hated her for this;  
One speckle on a thrush's breast  
Was worth a million such; and yet  
She lived long, till God gave her rest.

Edward Thomas

# A Gentleman

'He has robbed two clubs. The judge at Salisbury  
Can't give him more than he undoubtedly  
Deserves. The scoundrel! Look at his photograph!  
A lady-killer! Hanging's too good by half  
For such as he.' So said the stranger, one  
With crimes yet undiscovered or undone.  
But at the inn the Gipsy dame began:  
'Now he was what I call a gentleman.  
He went along with Carrie, and when she  
Had a baby he paid up so readily  
His half a crown. Just like him. A crown'd have been  
More like him. For I never knew him mean.  
Oh! but he was such a nice gentleman. Oh!  
Last time we met he said if me and Joe  
Was anywhere near we must be sure and call.  
He put his arms around our Amos all  
As if he were his own son. I pray God  
Save him from justice! Nicer man never trod.'

Edward Thomas

## A Private

This ploughman dead in battle slept out of doors  
Many a frozen night, and merrily  
Answered staid drinkers, good bedmen, and all bores:  
"At Mrs Greenland's Hawthorn Bush," said he,  
"I slept." None knew which bush. Above the town,  
Beyond 'The Drover', a hundred spot the down  
In Wiltshire. And where now at last he sleeps  
More sound in France -that, too, he secret keeps.

Edward Thomas

# Adlestrop

Yes, I remember Adlestrop --  
The name, because one afternoon  
Of heat the express-train drew up there  
Unwontedly. It was late June.

The steam hissed. Someone cleared his throat.  
No one left and no one came  
On the bare platform. What I saw  
Was Adlestrop -- only the name

And willows, willow-herb, and grass,  
And meadowsweet, and haycocks dry,  
No whit less still and lonely fair  
Than the high cloudlets in the sky.

And for that minute a blackbird sang  
Close by, and round him, mistier,  
Farther and farther, all the birds  
Of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire.

Edward Thomas



# After Rain

The rain of a night and a day and a night  
Stops at the light  
Of this pale choked day. The peering sun  
Sees what has been done.  
The road under the trees has a border new  
of purple hue  
Inside the border of bright thin grass:  
For all that has  
Been left by November of leaves is torn  
From hazel and thorn  
And the greater trees. Throughout the copse  
No dead leaf drops  
On grey grass, green moss, burnt-orange fern,  
At the wind's return:  
The leaflets out of the ash-tree shed  
Are thinly spread  
In the road, like little black fish, inlaid,  
As if they played.  
What hangs from the myriad branches down there  
So hard and bare  
Is twelve yellow apples lovely to see  
On one crab-tree.  
And on each twig of every tree in the dell  
Uncountable  
Crystals both dark and bright of the the rain  
That begins again.

Edward Thomas

# After You Speak

After you speak  
And what you meant  
Is plain,  
My eyes  
Meet yours that mean,  
With your cheeks and hair,  
Something more wise,  
More dark,  
And far different.  
Even so the lark  
Loves dust  
And nestles in it  
The minute  
Before he must  
Soar in lone flight  
So far,  
Like a black star  
He seems -  
A mote  
Of singing dust  
Afloat  
Above,  
The dreams  
And sheds no light.  
I know your lust  
Is love.

Edward Thomas

# Ambition

Unless it was that day I never knew  
Ambition. After a night of frost, before  
The March sun brightened and the South-west blew,  
Jackdaws began to shout and float and soar  
Already, and one was racing straight and high  
Alone, shouting like a black warrior  
Challenges and menaces to the wide sky.  
With loud long laughter then a woodpecker  
Ridiculed the sadness of the owl's last cry.  
And through the valley where all the folk astir  
Made only plumes of pearly smoke to tower  
Over dark trees and white meadows happier  
Than was Elysium in that happy hour,  
A train that roared along raised after it  
And carried with it a motionless white bower  
Of purest cloud, from end to end close-knit,  
So fair it touched the roar with silence. Time  
Was powerless while that lasted. I could sit  
And think I had made the loveliness of prime,  
Breathed its life into it and were its lord,  
And no mind lived save this 'twixt clouds and rime.  
Omnipotent was I, nor even deplored  
That I did nothing. But the end fell like a bell:  
The bower was scattered; far off the train roared.  
But if this was ambition I cannot tell.  
What 'twas ambition for I know not well.

Edward Thomas

## And You, Helen

And you, Helen, what should I give you?  
So many things I would give you  
Had I an infinite great store  
Offered me and I stood before  
To choose. I would give you youth,  
All kinds of loveliness and truth,  
A clear eye as good as mine,  
Lands, waters, flowers, wine,  
As many children as your heart  
Might wish for, a far better art  
Than mine can be, all you have lost  
Upon the travelling waters tossed,  
Or given to me. If I could choose  
Freely in that great treasure-house  
Anything from any shelf,  
I would give you back yourself,  
And power to discriminate  
What you want and want it not too late,  
Many fair days free from care  
And heart to enjoy both foul and fair,  
And myself, too, if I could find  
Where it lay hidden and it proved kind.

Edward Thomas

# April

The sweetest thing, I thought  
At one time, between earth and heaven  
Was the first smile  
When mist has been forgiven  
And the sun has stolen out,  
Peered, and resolved to shine at seven  
On dabbled lengthening grasses,  
Thick primroses and early leaves uneven,  
When earth's breath, warm and humid, far surpasses  
The richest oven's, and loudly rings 'cuckoo'  
And sharply the nightingale's 'tsoo, tsoo, tsoo, tsoo':  
To say 'God bless it' was all that I could do.

But now I know one sweeter  
By far since the day Emily  
Turned weeping back  
To me, still happy me,  
To ask forgiveness, -  
Yet smiled with half a certainty  
To be forgiven, - for what  
She had never done; I knew not what it might be,  
Nor could she tell me, having now forgot,  
By rapture carried with me past all care  
As to an isle in April lovelier  
Than April's self. 'God bless you' I said to her.

Edward Thomas

# As The Clouds That Are So Light

As the clouds that are so light,  
Beautiful, swift, and bright,  
Cast shadows on field and park  
Of the earth that is so dark,

And even so now, light one!  
Beautiful, swift and bright one!  
You let fall on a heart that was dark,  
Unillumined, a deeper mark.

But clouds would have, without earth  
To shadow, far less worth:  
Away from your shadow on me  
Your beauty less would be,

And if it still be treasured  
An age hence, it shall be measured  
By this small dark spot  
Without which it were not.

Edward Thomas

## As The Team's Head- Brass

As the team's head-brass flashed out on the turn  
The lovers disappeared into the wood.  
I sat among the boughs of the fallen elm  
That strewed the angle of the fallow, and  
Watched the plough narrowing a yellow square  
Of charlock. Every time the horses turned  
Instead of treading me down, the ploughman leaned  
Upon the handles to say or ask a word,  
About the weather, next about the war.  
Scraping the share he faced towards the wood,  
And screwed along the furrow till the brass flashed  
Once more.

The blizzard felled the elm whose crest  
I sat in, by a woodpecker's round hole,  
The ploughman said. 'When will they take it away? '  
'When the war's over.' So the talk began –  
One minute and an interval of ten,  
A minute more and the same interval.  
'Have you been out? ' 'No.' 'And don't want to, perhaps? '  
'If I could only come back again, I should.  
I could spare an arm, I shouldn't want to lose  
A leg. If I should lose my head, why, so,  
I should want nothing more...Have many gone  
From here? ' 'Yes.' 'Many lost? ' 'Yes, a good few.  
Only two teams work on the farm this year.  
One of my mates is dead. The second day  
In France they killed him. It was back in March,  
The very night of the blizzard, too. Now if  
He had stayed here we should have moved the tree.'  
'And I should not have sat here. Everything  
Would have been different. For it would have been  
Another world.' 'Ay, and a better, though  
If we could see all all might seem good.' Then  
The lovers came out of the wood again:  
The horses started and for the last time  
I watched the clods crumble and topple over  
After the ploughshare and the stumbling team.





# Aspens

All day and night, save winter, every weather,  
Above the inn, the smithy and the shop,  
The aspens at the cross-roads talk together  
Of rain, until their last leaves fall from the top.

Out of the blacksmith's cavern comes the ringing  
Of hammer, shoe and anvil; out of the inn  
The clink, the hum, the roar, the random singing -  
The sounds that for these fifty years have been.

The whisper of the aspens is not drowned,  
And over lightless pane and footless road,  
Empty as sky, with every other sound  
No ceasing, calls their ghosts from their abode,

A silent smithy, a silent inn, nor fails  
In the bare moonlight or the thick-furred gloom,  
In the tempest or the night of nightingales,  
To turn the cross-roads to a ghostly room.

And it would be the same were no house near.  
Over all sorts of weather, men, and times,  
Aspens must shake their leaves and men may hear  
But need not listen, more than to my rhymes.

Whatever wind blows, while they and I have leaves  
We cannot other than an aspen be  
That ceaselessly, unreasonably grieves,  
Or so men think who like a different tree.

Edward Thomas

# Beauty

WHAT does it mean? Tired, angry, and ill at ease,  
No man, woman, or child alive could please  
Me now. And yet I almost dare to laugh  
Because I sit and frame an epitaph-  
'Here lies all that no one loved of him  
And that loved no one.' Then in a trice that whim  
Has wearied. But, though I am like a river  
At fall of evening when it seems that never  
Has the sun lighted it or warmed it, while  
Cross breezes cut the surface to a file,  
This heart, some fraction of me, hapily  
Floats through a window even now to a tree  
Down in the misting, dim-lit, quiet vale;  
Not like a pewit that returns to wail  
For something it has lost, but like a dove  
That slants unanswering to its home and love.  
There I find my rest, and through the dusk air  
Flies what yet lives in me. Beauty is there

Edward Thomas

# Birds' Nests

he summer nests uncovered by autumn wind,  
Some torn, others dislodged, all dark,  
Everyone sees them: low or high in tree,  
Or hedge, or single bush, they hang like a mark.

Since there's no need of eyes to see them with  
I cannot help a little shame  
That I missed most, even at eye's level, till  
The leaves blew off and made the seeing no game.

'Tis a light pang. I like to see the nests  
Still in their places, now first known,  
At home and by far roads. Boys knew them not,  
Whatever jays and squirrels may have done.

And most I like the winter nests deep-hid  
That leaves and berries fell into:  
Once a dormouse dined there on hazel-nuts,  
And grass and goose-grass seeds found soil and grew.

Edward Thomas

# Bob's Lane

Women he liked, did shovel-bearded Bob,  
Old Farmer Hayward of the Heath, but he  
Loved horses. He himself was like a cob  
And leather-coloured. Also he loved a tree.

For the life in them he loved most living things,  
But a tree chiefly. All along the lane  
He planted elms where now the stormcock sings  
That travellers hear from the slow-climbing train.

Till then the track had never had a name  
For all its thicket and the nightingales  
That should have earned it. No one was to blame  
To name a thing beloved man sometimes fails.

Many years since, Bob Hayward died, and now  
None passes there because the mist and the rain  
Out of the elms have turned the lane to slough  
And gloom, the name alone survives, Bob's Lane.

Edward Thomas

## But These Things Also

But these things also are Spring's -  
On banks by the roadside the grass  
Long-dead that is greyer now  
Than all the Winter it was;

The shell of a little snail bleached  
In the grass; chip of flint, and mite  
Of chalk; and the small birds' dung  
In splashes of purest white:

All the white things a man mistakes  
For earliest violets  
Who seeks through Winter's ruins  
Something to pay Winter's debts,

While the North blows, and starling flocks  
By chattering on and on  
Keep their spirits up in the mist,  
And Spring's here, Winter's not gone.

Edward Thomas

# Celandine

Thinking of her had saddened me at first,  
Until I saw the sun on the celandines lie  
Redoubled, and she stood up like a flame,  
A living thing, not what before I nursed,  
The shadow I was growing to love almost,  
The phantom, not the creature with bright eye  
That I had thought never to see, once lost.

She found the celandines of February  
Always before us all. Her nature and name  
Were like those flowers, and now immediately  
For a short swift eternity back she came,  
Beautiful, happy, simply as when she wore  
Her brightest bloom among the winter hues  
Of all the world; and I was happy too,  
Seeing the blossoms and the maiden who  
Had seen them with me Februarys before,  
Bending to them as in and out she trod  
And laughed, with locks sweeping the mossy sod.

But this was a dream; the flowers were not true,  
Until I stooped to pluck from the grass there  
One of five petals and I smelt the juice  
Which made me sigh, remembering she was no more,  
Gone like a never perfectly recalled air.

Edward Thomas

## Cock-Crow

OUT of the wood of thoughts that grows by night  
To be cut down by the sharp ax of light,--  
Out of the night, two cocks together crow,  
Cleaving the darkness with a silver blow:  
And brought before my eyes twin trumpeters stand,  
Heralds of splendor, one at either hand,  
Each facing each as in a coat of arms:--  
The milkers lace their boots up at the farms.

Edward Thomas

# Digging

What matter makes my spade for tears or mirth,  
Letting down two clay pipes into the earth?  
The one I smoked, the other a soldier  
Of Blenheim, Ramillies, and Malplaquet  
Perhaps. The dead man's immortality  
Lies represented lightly with my own,  
A yard or two nearer the living air  
Than bones of ancients who, amazed to see  
Almighty God erect the mastodon,  
Once laughed, or wept, in this same light of day.

Edward Thomas



## Digging 2

To-day I think  
Only with scents, - scents dead leaves yield,  
And bracken, and wild carrot's seed,  
And the square mustard field;

Odours that rise  
When the spade wounds the root of tree,  
Rose, currant, raspberry, or goutweed,  
Rhubarb or celery;

The smoke's smell, too,  
Flowing from where a bonfire burns  
The dead, the waste, the dangerous,  
And all to sweetness turns.

It is enough  
To smell, to crumble the dark earth,  
While the robin sings over again  
Sad songs of Autumn mirth.

Edward Thomas

# Early One Morning

Early one morning in May I set out,  
And nobody I knew was about.  
I'm bound away for ever,  
Away somewhere, away for ever.

There was no wind to trouble the weathercocks.  
I had burnt my letters and darned my socks.

No one knew I was going away,  
I thought myself I should come back some day.

I heard the brook through the town gardens run.  
O sweet was the mud turned to dust by the sun.

A gate banged in a fence and banged in my head.  
'A fine morning, sir', a shepherd said.

I could not return from my liberty,  
To my youth and my love and my misery.

The past is the only dead thing that smells sweet,  
The only sweet thing that is not also fleet.  
I'm bound away for ever,  
Away somewhere, away for ever.

Edward Thomas

# Fifty Faggots

There they stand, on their ends, the fifty fag gots  
That once were underwood of hazel and ash  
In Jenny Pink's copse. Now, by the hedge  
Close packed, they make a thicket fancy alone  
Can creep through with the mouse and wren. Next spring  
A blackbird or robin will nest there,  
Accustomed to them, thinking they will remain  
Whatever is for ever to a bird:  
This Spring it is too late; the swift has come.  
'Twas a hot day for carrying them up:  
Better they will never warm me, though they must  
Light several Winters' fires. Before they are done  
The war will have ended, many other things  
Have ended, maybe, that I can no more  
Foresee or more control than robin and wren.

Edward Thomas

# First Known When Lost

I never had noticed it until  
'Twas gone, - the narrow copse  
Where now the woodman lops  
The last of the willows with his bill

It was not more than a hedge overgrown.  
One meadow's breadth away  
I passed it day by day.  
Now the soil is bare as bone,

And black betwixt two meadows green,  
Though fresh-cut fag got ends  
Of hazel made some amends  
With a gleam as if flowers they had been.

Strange it could have hidden so near!  
And now I see as I look  
That the small winding brook,  
A tributary's tributary, rises there.

Edward Thomas

## For These

An acre of land between the shore and the hills,  
Upon a ledge that shows my kingdoms three,  
The lovely visible earth and sky and sea  
Where what the curlew needs not, the farmer tills:

A house that shall love me as I love it,  
Well-hedged, and honoured by a few ash trees  
That linnets, greenfinches, and goldfinches  
Shall often visit and make love in and flit:

A garden I need never go beyond,  
Broken but neat, whose sunflowers every one  
Are fit to be the sign of the Rising Sun:  
A spring, a brook's bend, or at least a pond:

For these I ask not, but, neither too late  
Nor yet too early, for what men call content,  
And also that something may be sent  
To be contented with, I ask of Fate.

Edward Thomas

# Gone, Gone Again

Gone, gone again,  
May, June, July,  
And August gone,  
Again gone by,

Not memorable  
Save that I saw them go,  
As past the empty quays  
The rivers flow.

And now again,  
In the harvest rain,  
The Blenheim oranges  
Fall grubby from the trees

As when I was young  
And when the lost one was here  
And when the war began  
To turn young men to dung.

Look at the old house,  
Outmoded, dignified,  
Dark and untenanted,  
With grass growing instead

Of the footsteps of life,  
The friendliness, the strife;  
In its beds have lain  
Youth. love, age, and pain:

I am something like that;  
Only I am not dead,  
Still breathing and interested  
In the house that is not dark:-

I am something like that:  
Not one pane to reflect the sun,  
For the schoolboys to throw at -  
They have broken every one.

Edward Thomas

# Good-Night

The skylarks are far behind that sang over the down;  
I can hear no more those suburb nightingales;  
Thrushes and blackbirds sing in the gardens of the town  
In vain: the noise of man, beast, and machine prevails.

But the call of children in the unfamiliar streets  
That echo with a familiar twilight echoing,  
Sweet as the voice of nightingale or lark, completes  
A magic of strange welcome, so that I seem a king

Among men, beast, machine, bird, child, and the ghost  
That in the echo lives and with the echo dies.  
The friendless town is friendly; homeless, I am not lost;  
Though I know none of these doors, and meet but strangers' eyes.

Never again, perhaps, after to-morrow, shall  
I see these homely streets, these church windows alight,  
Not a man or woman or child among them all:  
But it is All Friends' Night, a traveller's good-night.

Edward Thomas



# Haymaking

After night's thunder far away had rolled  
The fiery day had a kernel sweet of cold,  
And in the perfect blue the clouds uncurled,  
Like the first gods before they made the world  
And misery, swimming the stormless sea  
In beauty and in divine gaiety.  
The smooth white empty road was lightly strewn  
With leaves - the holly's Autumn falls in June -  
And fir cones standing up stiff in the heat.  
The mill-foot water tumbled white and lit  
With tossing crystals, happier than any crowd  
Of children pouring out of school aloud.  
And in the little thickets where a sleeper  
For ever might lie lost, the nettle creeper  
And garden-warbler sang unceasingly;  
While over them shrill shrieked in his fierce glee  
The swift with wings and tail as sharp and narrow  
As if the bow had flown off with the arrow.  
Only the scent of woodbine and hay new mown  
Travelled the road. In the field sloping down,  
Park-like, to where its willows showed the brook,  
Haymakers rested. The tosser lay forsook  
Out in the sun; and the long waggon stood  
Without its team: it seemed it never would  
Move from the shadow of that single yew.  
The team, as still, until their task was due,  
Beside the labourers enjoyed the shade  
That three squat oaks mid-feld together made  
Upon a circle of grass and weed uncut,  
And on the hollow, once a chalk pit, but  
Now brimmed with nut and elder-flower so clean.  
The men leaned on their rakes, about to begin,  
But still. And all were silent. All was old,  
This morning time, with a great age untold,  
Older than Clare and Cobbett, Morland and Crome,  
Than, at the field's far edge, the farmer's home,  
A white house crouched at the foot of a great tree.  
Under the heavens that know not what years be  
The men, the beasts, the trees, the implements

Uttered even what they will in times far hence -  
All of us gone out of the reach of change -  
Immortal in a picture of an old grange.

Edward Thomas

# Head And Bottle

The downs will lose the sun, white alyssum  
Lose the bees' hum;  
But head and bottle tilted back in the cart  
Will never part  
Till I am cold as midnight and all my hours  
Are beeless flowers.  
He neither sees, nor hears, nor smells, nor thinks,  
But only drinks,  
Quiet in the yard where tree trunks do not lie  
More quietly.

Edward Thomas

# Health

Four miles at a leap, over the dark hollow land,  
To the frosted steep of the down and its junipers black,  
Travels my eye with equal ease and delight:  
And scarce could my body leap four yards.

This is the best and the worst of it -  
Never to know,  
Yet to imagine gloriously, pure health.

To-day, had I suddenly health,  
I could not satisfy the desire of my heart  
Unless health abated it,  
So beautiful is the air in its softness and clearness, while  
Spring  
Promises all and fails in nothing as yet;  
And what blue and what white is I never knew  
Before I saw this sky blessing the land.

For had I health I could not ride or run or fly  
So far or so rapidly over the land  
As I desire: I should reach Wiltshire tired;  
I should have changed my mind before I could be in Wales.  
I could not love; I could not command love.  
beauty would still be far off  
However many hills I climbed over;  
Peace would still be farther.  
Maybe I should not count it anything  
To leap these four miles with the eye;  
And either I should not be filled almost to bursting with desire,  
Or with my power desire would still keep pace.

Yet I am not satisfied  
Even with knowing I never could be satisfied.  
With health and all the power that lies  
In maiden beauty, poet and warrior,  
In Caesar, Shakespeare, Alcibiades,  
Mazeppa, Leonardo, Michelangelo,  
In any maiden whose smile is lovelier  
Than sunlight upon dew,

I could not be as the wagtail running up and down  
The warm tiles of the roof slope, twittering  
Happily and sweetly as if the sun itself  
Extracted the song  
As the hand makes sparks from the fur of a cat:

I could not be as the sun.  
Nor should I be content to be  
As little as the bird or as mighty as the sun.  
For the bird knows not the sun,  
And the sun regards not the bird.  
But I am almost proud to love both bird and sun,  
Though scarce this Spring could my body leap four yards.

Edward Thomas

# Home 1

Not the end: but there's nothing more.  
Sweet Summer and Winter rude  
I have loved, and friendship and love,  
The crowd and solitude:

But I know them: I weary not;  
But all that they mean I know.  
I would go back again home  
Now. Yet how should I go?

This is my grief. That land,  
My home, I have never seen;  
No traveller tells of it,  
However far he has been.

And could I discover it,  
I fear my happiness there,  
Or my pain, might be dreams of return  
Here, to these things that were.

Remembering ills, though slight  
Yet irremediable,  
Brings a worse, an impurer pang  
Than remembering what was well.

No: I cannot go back,  
And would not if I could.  
Until blindness come, I must wait  
And blink at what is not good.

Edward Thomas

## Home 2

Fair was the morning, fair our tempers, and  
We had seen nothing fairer than that land,  
Though strange, and the untrodden snow that made  
Wild of the tame, casting out all that was  
Not wild and rustic and old; and we were glad.

Fair too was afternoon, and first to pass  
Were we that league of snow, next the north wind.

There was nothing to return for, except need,  
And yet we sang nor ever stopped for speed,  
As we did often with the start behind.  
Faster still strode we when we came in sight  
Of the cold roofs where we must spend the night.  
Happy we had not been there, nor could be,  
Though we had tasted sleep and food and fellowship  
Together long.

'How quick', to someone's lip  
The words came, 'will the beaten horse run home!'

The word 'home' raised a smile in us all three,  
And one repeated it, smiling just so  
That all knew what he meant and none would say.  
Between three counties far apart that lay  
We were divided and looked strangely each  
At the other, and we knew we were not friends  
But fellows in a union that ends  
With the necessity for it, as it ought.

Never a word was spoken, not a thought  
Was thought, of what the look meant with the word  
'Home' as we walked and watched the sunset blurred.  
And then to me the word, only the word,  
'Homesick', as it were playfully occurred:  
No more.

If I should ever more admit  
Than the mere word I could not endure it

For a day longer: this captivity  
Must somehow come to an end, else I should be  
Another man, as often now I seem,  
Or this life be only an evil dream.

Edward Thomas



## Home 3

Often I had gone this way before  
But now it seemed I never could be  
And never had been anywhere else;  
'Twas home; one nationality  
We had, I and the birds that sang,  
One memory.

They welcomed me. I had come back  
That eve somehow from somewhere far:  
The April mist, the chill, the calm,  
Meant the same thing familiar  
And pleasant to us, and strange too,  
Yet with no bar.

The thrush on the oaktop in the lane  
Sang his last song, or last but one;  
And as he ended, on the elm  
Another had but just begun  
His last; they knew no more than I  
The day was done.

Then past his dark white cottage front  
A labourer went along, his tread  
Slow, half with weariness, half with ease;  
And, through the silence, from his shed  
The sound of sawing rounded all  
That silence said.

Edward Thomas

# House And Man

One hour: as dim he and his house now look  
As a reflection in a rippling brook,  
While I remember him; but first, his house.  
Empty it sounded. It was dark with forest boughs  
That brushed the walls and made the mossy tiles  
Part of the squirrels' track. In all those miles  
Of forest silence and forest murmur, only  
One house - 'Lonely!' he said, 'I wish it were lonely' -  
Which the trees looked upon from every side,  
And that was his.

He waved good-bye to hide  
A sigh that he converted to a laugh.  
He seemed to hang rather than stand there, half  
Ghost-like, half like a beggar's rag, clean wrung  
And useless on the brier where it has hung  
Long years a-washing by sun and wind and rain.

But why I call back man and house again  
Is there now a beech-tree's tip I see  
As then I saw - I at the gate, and he  
In the house darkness, - magpie veering about,  
A magpie like a weathercock in doubt.

Edward Thomas

## How At Once

How at once should I know,  
When stretched in the harvest blue  
I saw the swift's black bow,  
That I would not have that view  
Another day  
Until next May  
Again it is due?

The same year after year -  
But with the swift alone.  
With other things I but fear  
That they will be over and done  
Suddenly  
And I only see  
Them to know them gone.

Edward Thomas

# I Built Myself A House Of Glass

I built myself a house of glass:  
It took my years to make it:  
And I was proud. But now, alas!  
Would God someone would break it.

But it looks too magnificent.  
No neighbour casts a stone  
From where he dwells, in tenement  
Or palace of glass, alone.

Edward Thomas

# I Never Saw That Land Before

I never saw that land before,  
And now can never see it again;  
Yet, as if by acquaintance hoar  
Endeared, by gladness and by pain,  
Great was the affection that I bore

To the valley and the river small,  
The cattle, the grass, the bare ash trees,  
The chickens from the farmsteads, all  
Elm-hidden, and the tributaries  
Descending at equal interval;

The blackthorns down along the brook  
With wounds yellow as crocuses  
Where yesterday the labourer's hook  
Had sliced them cleanly; and the breeze  
That hinted all and nothing spoke.

I neither expected anything  
Nor yet remembered: but some goal  
I touched then; and if I could sing  
What would not even whisper my soul  
As I went on my journeying,

I should use, as the trees and birds did,  
A language not to be betrayed;  
And what was hid should still be hid  
Excepting from those like me made  
Who answer when such whispers bid.

Edward Thomas

# If I Should Ever By Chance

IF I should ever by chance grow rich  
I'll buy Codham, Cockridden, and Childerditch,  
Roses, Pyrgo, and Lapwater,  
And let them all to my eldest daughter.  
The rent I shall ask of her will be only  
Each year's first violets, white and lonely,  
The first primroses and orchises--  
She must find them before I do, that is.  
But if she finds a blossom on furze  
Without rent they shall all forever be hers,  
Codham, Cockridden, and Childerditch,  
Roses, Pyrgo, and Lapwater,--  
I shall give them all to my elder daughter.

Edward Thomas

## If I Were To Own

f I were to own this countryside  
As far as a man in a day could ride,  
And the Tyes were mine for giving or letting, -  
Wingle Tye and Margaretting  
Tye, - and Skreens, Gooshays, and Cockerells,  
Shellow, Rochetts, Bandish, and Pickerells,  
Martins, Lambkins, and Lillyputs,  
Their copses, ponds, roads, and ruts,  
Fields where plough-horses steam and plovers  
Fling and whimper, hedges that lovers  
Love, and orchards, shrubberies, walls  
Where the sun untroubled by north wind falls,  
And single trees where the thrush sings well  
His proverbs untranslatable,  
I would give them all to my son  
If he would let me any one  
For a song, a blackbird's song, at dawn.  
He should have no more, till on my lawn  
Never a one was left, because I  
Had shot them to put them into a pie, -  
His Essex blackbirds, every one,  
And I was left old and alone.

Then unless I could pay, for rent, a song  
As sweet as a blackbird's, and as long -  
No more - he should have the house, not I  
Margaretting or Wingle Tye,  
Or it might be Skreens, Gooshays, or Cockerells,  
Shellow, Rochetts, Bandish, or Pickerells,  
Martins, Lambkins, or Lillyputs,  
Should be his till the cart tracks had no ruts.

Edward Thomas

# In Memoriam

The flowers left thick at nightfall in the wood  
This Eastertide call into mind the men,  
Now far from home, who, with their sweethearts, should  
Have gathered them and will do never again.

Edward Thomas



## In Memoriam (Easter, 1915)

The flowers left thick at nightfall in the wood  
This Eastertide call into mind the men,  
Now far from home, who, with their sweethearts, should  
Have gathered them and will do never again.

Edward Thomas

# Interval

Gone the wild day:  
A wilder night  
Coming makes way  
For brief twilight.

Where the firm soaked road  
Mounts and is lost  
In the high beech-wood  
It shines almost.

The beeches keep  
A stormy rest,  
Breathing deep  
Of wind from the west.

The wood is black,  
With a misty steam.  
Above, the cloud pack  
Breaks for one gleam.

But the woodman's cot  
By the ivied trees  
Awakens not  
To light or breeze.

It smokes aloft  
Unwavering:  
It hunches soft  
Under storm's wing.

It has no care  
For gleam or gloom:  
It stays there  
While I shall roam,

Die, and forget  
The hill of trees,  
The gleam, the wet,  
This roaring peace.

Edward Thomas

# It Was Upon

It was upon a July evening.  
At a stile I stood, looking along a path  
Over the country by a second Spring  
Drenched perfect green again. 'The lattermath  
Will be a fine one.' So the stranger said,  
A wandering man. Albeit I stood at rest,  
Flushed with desire I was. The earth outspread,  
Like meadows of the future, I possessed.

And as an unaccomplished prophecy  
The stranger's words, after the interval  
Of a score years, when those fields are by me  
Never to be recrossed, now I recall,  
This July eve, and question, wondering,  
What of the lattermath to this hoar Spring?

Edward Thomas

# Liberty

The last light has gone out of the world, except  
This moonlight lying on the grass like frost  
Beyond the brink of the tall elm's shadow.  
It is as if everything else had slept  
Many an age, unforgotten and lost -  
The men that were, the things done, long ago,  
All I have thought; and but the moon and I  
Live yet and here stand idle over a grave  
Where all is buried. Both have liberty  
To dream what we could do if we were free  
To do some thing we had desired long,  
The moon and I. There's none less free than who  
Does nothing and has nothing else to do,  
Being free only for what is not to his mind,  
And nothing is to his mind. If every hour  
Like this one passing that I have spent among  
The wiser others when I have forgot  
To wonder whether I was free or not,  
Were piled before me, and not lost behind,  
And I could take and carry them away  
I should be rich; or if I had the power  
To wipe out every one and not again  
Regret, I should be rich to be so poor.  
And yet I still am half in love with pain,  
With what is imperfect, with both tears and mirth,  
With things that have an end, with life and earth,  
And this moon that leaves me dark within the door.

Edward Thomas

# Lights Out

I have come to the borders of sleep,  
The unfathomable deep  
Forest where all must lose  
Their way, however straight,  
Or winding, soon or late;  
They cannot choose.

Many a road and track  
That, since the dawn's first crack,  
Up to the forest brink,  
Deceived the travellers,  
Suddenly now blurs,  
And in they sink.

Here love ends,  
Despair, ambition ends,  
All pleasure and all trouble,  
Although most sweet or bitter,  
Here ends in sleep that is sweeter  
Than tasks most noble.

There is not any book  
Or face of dearest look  
That I would not turn from now  
To go into the unknown  
I must enter and leave alone  
I know not how.

The tall forest towers;  
Its cloudy foliage lowers  
Ahead, shelf above shelf;  
Its silence I hear and obey  
That I may lose my way  
And myself.

Edward Thomas

# Like The Touch Of Rain

Like the touch of rain she was  
On a man's flesh and hair and eyes  
When the joy of walking thus  
Has taken him by surprise:

With the love of the storm he burns,  
He sings, he laughs, well I know how,  
But forgets when he returns  
As I shall not forget her 'Go now'.

Those two words shut a door  
Between me and the blessed rain  
That was never shut before  
And will not open again.

Edward Thomas

# Lob

At hawthorn-time in Wiltshire travelling  
In search of something chance would never bring,  
An old man's face, by life and weather cut  
And coloured, - rough, brown, sweet as any nut,  
A land face, sea-blue-eyed, - hung in my mind  
When I had left him many a mile behind.  
All he said was: 'Nobody can't stop 'ee. It's  
A footpath, right enough. You see those bits  
Of mounds - that's where they opened up the barrows  
Sixty years since, while I was scaring sparrows.  
They thought as there was something to find there,  
But couldn't find it, by digging, anywhere.'

To turn back then and seek him, where was the use?  
There were three Manningfords, - Abbots, Bohun, and Bruce:  
And whether Alton, not Manningford, it was,  
My memory could not decide, because  
There was both Alton Barnes and Alton Priors.  
All had their churches, graveyards, farms, and byres,  
Lurking to one side up the paths and lanes,  
Seldom well seen except by aeroplanes;  
And when bells rang, or pigs squealed, or cocks crowed,  
Then only heard. Ages ago the road  
Approached. The people stood and looked and turned.  
Nor asked it to come nearer, nor yet learned  
To move out there and dwell in all men's dust.  
And yet withal they shot the weathercock, just  
Because 'twas he crowed out of tune, they said;  
So now the copper weathercock is dead.  
If they had reaped their dandelions and sold  
Them fairly, they could have afforded gold.

Many years passed, and I went back again  
Among those villages, and looked for men  
Who might have known my ancient. He himself  
Had long been dead or laid upon the shelf,  
I thought. One man I asked about him roared  
At my description: ' 'Tis old Bottlesford  
He means, Bill.' But another said: 'Of course,



It was Jack Button up at the White Horse.  
He's dead, sir, these three years.' This lasted till  
A girl proposed Walker of Walker's Hill,  
'Old Adam Walker. Adam's Point you'll see  
Marked on the maps.'  
'That was her roguery.'  
The next man said. He was a squire's son  
Who loved wild bird and beast, and dog and gun  
For killing them. He had loved them from his birth,  
One with another, as he loved the earth.  
'The man may be like Button, or Walker, or  
Like Bottlesford, that you want, but far more  
He sounds like one I saw when I was a child.  
I could almost swear to him. The man was wild  
And wandered. His home was where he was free.  
Everybody has met one such man as he.  
Does he keep clear old paths that no one uses  
But once a lifetime when he loves or muses?  
He is English as this gate, these flowers, this mire.  
And when at eight years old Lob-lie-by-the-fire  
Came in my books, this was the man I saw.  
He has been in England as long as dove and daw,  
Calling the wild cherry tree the merry tree,  
The rose campion Bridget-in-her-bravery;  
And in a tender mood he, as I guess,  
Christened one flower Love-in-idleness,  
And while he walked from Exeter to Leeds  
One April called all cuckoo-flowers Milkmaids.  
From him old herbal Gerard learnt, as a boy,  
To name wild clematis the Traveller's-joy.  
Our blackbirds sang no English till his ear  
Told him they called his Jan Toy 'Pretty dear'.  
(She was Jan Toy the Lucky, who, having lost  
A shilling, and found a penny loaf, rejoiced.)  
For reasons of his own to him the wren  
Is Jenny Pooter. Before all other men  
'Twas he first called the Hog's Back the Hog's Back.  
That Mother Dunch's Buttocks should not lack  
Their name was his care. He too could explain  
Totteridge and Totterdown and Juggler's Lane:  
He knows, if anyone. Why Tumbling Bay,  
Inland in Kent, is called so, he might say.

'But little he says compared with what he does.  
If ever a sage troubles him he will buzz  
Like a beehive to conclude the tedious fray:  
And the sage, who knows all languages, runs away.  
Yet Lob has thirteen hundred names for a fool,  
And though he never could spare time for school  
To unteach what the fox so well expressed,  
On biting the cock's head off, - Quietness is best, -  
He can talk quite as well as anyone  
After his thinking is forgot and done.  
He first of all told someone else's wife,  
For a farthing she'd skin a flint and spoil a knife  
Worth sixpence skinning it. She heard him speak:  
'She had a face as long as a wet week'  
Said he, telling the tale in after years.  
With blue smock and with gold rings in his ears,  
Sometimes he is a pedlar, not too poor  
To keep his wit. This is tall Tom that bore  
The logs in, and with Shakespeare in the hall  
Once talked, when icicles hung by the wall.  
As Herne the Hunter he has known hard times.  
On sleepless nights he made up weather rhymes  
Which others spoilt. And, Hob being then his name,  
He kept the hog that thought the butcher came  
To bring his breakfast. 'You thought wrong', said Hob.  
When there were kings in Kent this very Lob,  
Whose sheep grew fat and he himself grew merry,  
Wedded the king's daughter of Canterbury;  
For he alone, unlike squire, lord, and king,  
Watched a night by her without slumbering;  
He kept both waking. When he was but a lad  
He won a rich man's heiress, deaf, dumb, and sad,  
By rousing her to laugh at him. He carried  
His donkey on his back. So they were married.  
And while he was a little cobbler's boy  
He tricked the giant coming to destroy  
Shrewsbury by flood. 'And how far is it yet?'  
The giant asked in passing. 'I forget;  
But see these shoes I've worn out on the road  
and we're not there yet.' He emptied out his load  
Of shoes for mending. The giant let fall from his spade

The earth for damming Severn, and thus made  
The Wrekin hill; and little Ercall hill  
Rose where the giant scraped his boots. While still  
So young, our Jack was chief of Gotham's sages.  
But long before he could have been wise, ages  
Earlier than this, while he grew thick and strong  
And ate his bacon, or, at times, sang a song  
And merely smelt it, as Jack the giant-killer  
He made a name. He too ground up the miller,  
The Yorkshireman who ground men's bones for flour.

` Do you believe Jack dead before his hour?  
Or that his name is Walker, or Bottlesford,  
Or Button, a mere clown, or squire, or lord?  
The man you saw, - Lob-lie-by-the-fire, Jack Cade,  
Jack Smith, Jack Moon, poor Jack of every trade,  
Young Jack, or old Jack, or Jack What-d'ye-call,  
Jack-in-the-hedge, or Robin-run-by-the-wall,  
Robin Hood, Ragged Robin, lazy Bob,  
One of the lords of No Man's Land, good Lob, -  
Although he was seen dying at Waterloo,  
Hastings, Agincourt, and Sedgemoor too, -  
Lives yet. He never will admit he is dead  
Till millers cease to grind men's bones for bread ,  
Not till our weathercock crows once again  
And I remove my house out of the lane  
the road.' With this he disappeared  
In hazel and thorn tangled with old-man's-beard.  
But one glimpse of his back, as there he stood,  
Choosing his way, proved him of old Jack's blood,  
Young Jack perhaps, and now a Wiltshireman  
As he has oft been since his days began.

Edward Thomas

# Lovers

The two men in the road were taken aback.  
The lovers came out shading their eyes from the sun,  
And never was white so white, or black so black,  
As her cheeks and hair. `There are more things than one  
A man might turn into a wood for, Jack,'  
Said George; Jack whispered: `He has not got a gun.  
It's a bit too much of a good thing, I say.  
They are going the other road, look. And see her run.'  
She ran. - 'What a thing it is, this picking may!'

Edward Thomas

# Man And Dog

"Twill take some getting.' 'Sir, I think 'twill so.'

The old man stared up at the mistletoe

That hung too high in the poplar's crest for plunder

Of any climber, though not for kissing under:

Then he went on against the north-east wind--- Straight but lame, leaning on a  
staff new-skinned, Carrying a broolly, flag-basket, and old coat,---

Towards Alto, ten miles off. And he had not

Done less from Chilgrove where he pulled up docks. 'Twere best, if he had had 'a  
money-box',

To have waited there till the sheep cleared a field

For what a half-week's flint-picking would yield.

His mind was running on the work he had done

Since he left Christchurch in the New Forest, one

Spring in the 'seventies,---navvying on dock and line From Southampton to  
Newcastle-on-Tyne,---

In 'seventy-four a year of soldiering

With the Berkshires,---hoeing and harvesting

In half the shires where corn and couch will grow.

His sons, three sons, were fighting, but the hoe

And reap-hook he liked, or anything to do with trees.

He fell once from a poplar tall as these:

The Flying Man they called him in hospital.

'If I flew now, to another world I'd fall.'

He laughed and whistled to the small brown bitch

With spots of blue that hunted in the ditch.

Her foxy Welsh grandfather must have paired

Beneath him. He kept sheep in Wales and scared Strangers, I will warrant, with  
his pearl eye

And trick of shrinking off as he were shy,

Then following close in silence for---for what?

'No rabbit, never fear, she ever got,

Yet always hunts. To-day she nearly had one:

She would and she wouldn't. 'Twas like that.

The bad one!

She's not much use, but still she's company,

Though I'm not. She goes everywhere with me. So

Alton I must reach to-night somehow:

I'll get no shakedown with that bedfellow

From farmers. Many a man sleeps worse to-night

Than I shall.' 'In the trenches.' 'Yes, that's right.  
But they'll be out of that---I hope they be---  
This weather, marching after the enemy.'  
'And so I hope. Good luck.' And there I nodded  
'Good-night. You keep straight on,' Stiffly he plodded; And at his heels the crisp  
leaves scurried fast,  
And the leaf-coloured robin watched. They passed,  
The robin till next day, the man for good,  
Together in the twilight of the wood.

Edward Thomas

# March

Now I know that Spring will come again,  
Perhaps to-morrow: however late I've patience  
After this night following on such a day.

While still my temples ached from the cold burning  
Of hail and wind, and still the primroses  
Torn by the hail were covered up in it,  
The sun filled earth and heaven with a great light  
And a tenderness, almost warmth, where the hail dripped,  
As if the mighty sun wept tears of joy.  
But 'twas too late for warmth. The sunset piled  
Mountains on mountains of snow and ice in the west:  
Somewhere among their folds the wind was lost,  
And yet 'twas cold, and though I knew that Spring  
Would come again, I knew it had not come,  
That it was lost too in those mountains chill.  
What did the thrushes know? Rain, snow, sleet, hail,  
Had kept them quiet as the primroses.  
They had but an hour to sing. On boughs they sang,  
On gates, on ground; they sang while they changed perches  
And while they fought, if they remembered to fight:  
So earnest were they to pack into that hour  
Their unwilling hoard of song before the moon  
Grew brighter than the clouds. Then 'twas no time  
For singing merely. So they could keep off silence  
And night, they cared not what they sang or screamed;  
Whether 'twas hoarse or sweet or fierce or soft;  
And to me all was sweet: they could do no wrong.

Something they knew- I also, while they sang  
And after. Not till night had half its stars  
And never a cloud, was I aware of silence  
Stained with all that hour's songs, a silence  
Saying that Spring returns, perhaps to-morrow.

Edward Thomas

# No One So Much As You

No one so much as you  
Loves this my clay,  
Or would lament as you  
Its dying day.

You know me through and through  
Though I have not told,  
And though with what you know  
You are not bold.

None ever was so fair  
As I thought you:  
Not a word can I bear  
Spoken against you.

All that I ever did  
For you seemed coarse  
Compared with what I hid  
Nor put in force.

My eyes scarce dare meet you  
Lest they should prove  
I but respond to you  
And do not love.

We look and understand,  
We cannot speak  
Except in trifles and  
Words the most weak.

For I at most accept  
Your love, regretting  
That is all: I have kept  
Only a fretting

That I could not return  
All that you gave  
And could not ever burn  
With the love you have,



Till sometimes it did seem  
Better it were  
Never to see you more  
Than linger here

With only gratitude  
Instead of love -  
A pine in solitude  
Cradling a dove.

Edward Thomas

# October

The green elm with the one great bough of gold  
Lets leaves into the grass slip, one by one, --  
The short hill grass, the mushrooms small milk-white,  
Harebell and scabious and tormentil,  
That blackberry and gorse, in dew and sun,  
Bow down to; and the wind travels too light  
To shake the fallen birch leaves from the fern;  
The gossamers wander at their own will.  
At heavier steps than birds' the squirrels scold.  
The rich scene has grown fresh again and new  
As Spring and to the touch is not more cool  
Than it is warm to the gaze; and now I might  
As happy be as earth is beautiful,  
Were I some other or with earth could turn  
In alternation of violet and rose,  
Harebell and snowdrop, at their season due,  
And gorse that has no time not to be gay.  
But if this be not happiness, -- who knows?  
Some day I shall think this a happy day,  
And this mood by the name of melancholy  
Shall no more blackened and obscured be.

Edward Thomas

# Old Man

Old Man, or Lads-Love, - in the name there's nothing  
To one that knows not Lads-Love, or Old Man,  
The hoar green feathery herb, almost a tree,  
Growing with rosemary and lavender.  
Even to one that knows it well, the names  
Half decorate, half perplex, the thing it is:  
At least, what that is clings not to the names  
In spite of time. And yet I like the names.

The herb itself I like not, but for certain  
I love it, as someday the child will love it  
Who plucks a feather from the door-side bush  
Whenever she goes in or out of the house.  
Often she waits there, snipping the tips and shrivelling  
The shreds at last on to the path,  
Thinking perhaps of nothing, till she sniffs  
Her fingers and runs off. The bush is still  
But half as tall as she, 'though it is as old;  
So well she clips it. Not a word she says;  
And I can only wonder how much hereafter  
She will remember, with that bitter scent,  
Of garden rows, and ancient damson trees  
Topping a hedge, a bent path to a door  
A low thick bush beside the door, and me  
Forbidding her to pick.  
As for myself,  
Where first I met the bitter scent is lost.  
I, too, often shrivel the grey shreds,  
Sniff them and think and sniff again and try  
Once more to think what it is I am remembering,  
Always in vain. I cannot like the scent,  
Yet I would rather give up others more sweet,  
With no meaning, than this bitter one.  
I have mislaid the key. I sniff the spray  
And think of nothing; I see and I hear nothing;  
Yet seem, too, to be listening, lying in wait  
For what I should, yet never can, remember;  
No garden appears, no path, no hoar-green bush  
Of Lad's-love, or Old Man, no child beside,

Neither father nor mother, nor any playmate;  
Only an avenue, dark, nameless, without end

Edward Thomas

## Over The Hills

Often and often it came back again  
To mind, the day I passed the horizon ridge  
To a new country, the path I had to find  
By half-gaps that were stiles once in the hedge,  
The pack of scarlet clouds running across  
The harvest evening that seemed endless then  
And after, and the inn where all were kind,  
All were strangers. I did not know my loss  
Till one day twelve months later suddenly  
I leaned upon my spade and saw it all,  
Though far beyond the sky-line. It became  
Almost a habit through the year for me  
To lean and see it and think to do the same  
Again for two days and a night. Recall  
Was vain: no more could the restless brook  
Ever turn back and climb the waterfall  
To the lake that rests and stirs not in its nook,  
As in the hollow of the collar-bone  
Under the mountain's head of rush and stone.

Edward Thomas

# Rain

Rain, midnight rain, nothing but the wild rain  
On this bleak hut, and solitude, and me  
Remembering again that I shall die  
And neither hear the rain nor give it thanks  
For washing me cleaner than I have been  
Since I was born into this solitude.  
Blessed are the dead that the rain rains upon:  
But here I pray that none whom once I loved  
Is dying to-night or lying still awake  
Solitary, listening to the rain,  
Either in pain or thus in sympathy  
Helpless among the living and the dead,  
Like a cold water among broken reeds,  
Myriads of broken reeds all still and stiff,  
Like me who have no love which this wild rain  
Has not dissolved except the love of death,  
If love it be towards what is perfect and  
Cannot, the tempest tells me, disappoint.

Edward Thomas

# Roads

I LOVE roads:

The goddesses that dwell  
Far along invisible  
Are my favourite gods.

Roads go on  
While we forget, and are  
Forgotten like a star  
That shoots and is gone.

On this earth 'tis sure  
We men have not made  
Anything that doth fade  
So soon, so long endure:

The hill road wet with rain  
In the sun would not gleam  
Like a winding stream  
If we trod it not again.

They are lonely  
While we sleep, lonelier  
For lack of the traveller  
Who is now a dream only.

From dawn's twilight  
And all the clouds like sheep  
On the mountains of sleep  
They wind into the night.

The next turn may reveal  
Heaven: upon the crest  
The close pine clump, at rest  
And black, may Hell conceal.

Often footsore, never  
Yet of the road I weary,  
Though long and steep and dreary  
As it winds on for ever.

Helen of the roads,  
The mountain ways of Wales  
And the Mabinogion tales,  
Is one of the true gods,

Abiding in the trees,  
The threes and fours so wise,  
The larger companies,  
That by the roadside be,

And beneath the rafter  
Else uninhabited  
Excepting by the dead;  
And it is her laughter

At morn and night I hear  
When the thrush cock sings  
Bright irrelevant things,  
And when the chanticler

Calls back to their own night  
Troops that make loneliness  
With their light footsteps' press,  
As Helen's own are light.

Now all roads lead to France  
And heavy is the tread  
Of the living; but the dead  
Returning lightly dance:

Whatever the road bring  
To me or take from me,  
They keep me company  
With their pattering,

Crowding the solitude  
Of the loops over the downs,  
Hushing the roar of towns  
And their brief multitude.





# Snow

In the gloom of whiteness,  
In the great silence of snow,  
A child was sighing  
And bitterly saying: "Oh,  
They have killed a white bird up there on her nest,  
The down is fluttering from her breast!"  
And still it fell through that dusky brightness  
On the child crying for the bird of the snow.

Edward Thomas

# Sowing

IT was a perfect day  
For sowing; just  
As sweet and dry was the ground  
As tobacco-dust.

I tasted deep the hour  
Between the far  
Owl's chuckling first soft cry  
And the first star.

A long stretched hour it was;  
Nothing undone  
Remained; the early seeds  
All safely sown.

And now, hark at the rain,  
Windless and light,  
Half a kiss, half a tear,  
Saying good-night.

Edward Thomas

# Tall Nettles

TALL nettles cover up, as they have done  
These many springs, the rusty harrow, the plough  
Long worn out, and the roller made of stone:  
Only the elm butt tops the nettles now.

This corner of the farmyard I like most:  
As well as any bloom upon a flower  
I like the dust on the nettles, never lost  
Except to prove the sweetness of a shower.

Edward Thomas

# Thaw

Over the land freckled with snow half-thawed  
The speculating rooks at their nests cawed  
And saw from elm-tops, delicate as flowers of grass,  
What we below could not see, Winter pass.

Edward Thomas

# The Ash Grove

Half of the grove stood dead, and those that yet lived made  
Little more than the dead ones made of shade.  
If they led to a house, long before they had seen its fall:  
But they welcomed me; I was glad without cause and delayed.

Scarce a hundred paces under the trees was the interval -  
Paces each sweeter than the sweetest miles - but nothing at all,  
Not even the spirits of memory and fear with restless wing,  
Could climb down in to molest me over the wall

That I passed through at either end without noticing.  
And now an ash grove far from those hills can bring  
The same tranquillity in which I wander a ghost  
With a ghostly gladness, as if I heard a girl sing

The song of the Ash Grove soft as love uncrossed,  
And then in a crowd or in distance it were lost,  
But the moment unveiled something unwilling to die  
And I had what I most desired, without search or desert or cost.

Edward Thomas

# The Barn

They should never have built a barn there, at all -  
Drip, drip, drip! - under that elm tree,  
Though when it was young. Now it is old  
But good, not like the barn and me.

To-morrow they cut it down. They will leave  
The barn, as I shall be left, maybe.  
What holds it up? 'Twould not pay to pull down.  
Well, this place has no other antiquity.

No abbey or castle looks so old  
As this that Job Knight built in '54,  
Built to keep corn for rats and men.  
Now there's fowls in the roof, pigs on the floor.

What thatch survives is dung for the grass,  
The best grass on the farm. A pity the roof  
Will not bear a mower to mow it. But  
Only fowls have foothold enough.

Starlings used to sit there with bubbling throats  
Making a spiky beard as they chattered  
And whistled and kissed, with heads in air,  
Till they thought of something else that mattered.

But now they cannot find a place,  
Among all those holes, for a nest any more.  
It's the turn of lesser things, I suppose.  
Once I fancied 'twas starlings they built it for.

Edward Thomas

# The Barn And The Down

It stood in the sunset sky  
Like the straight-backed down,  
Many a time - the barn  
At the edge of town,

So huge and dark that it seemed  
It was the hill  
Till the gable's precipice proved  
It impossible.

Then the great down in the west  
Grew into sight,  
A barn stored full to the ridge  
With black of night;

And the barn fell to a barn  
Or even less  
Before critical eyes and its own  
Late mightiness.

But far down and near barn and I  
Since then have smiled,  
Having seen my new cautiousness  
By itself beguiled

To disdain what seemed the barn  
Till a few steps changed  
It past all doubt to the down;  
So the barn was avenged.

Edward Thomas



# The Bridge

I have come a long way to-day:  
On a strange bridge alone,  
Remembering friends, old friends,  
I rest, without smile or moan,  
As they remember me without smile or moan.

All are behind, the kind  
And the unkind too, no more  
To-night than a dream. The stream  
Runs softly yet drowns the Past,  
The dark-lit stream has drowned the Future and the Past.

No traveller has rest more blest  
Than this moment brief between  
Two lives, when the Night's first lights  
And shades hide what has never been,  
Things goodlier, lovelier, dearer, than will be or have been.

Edward Thomas

# The Brook

Seated once by a brook, watching a child  
Chiefly that paddled, I was thus beguiled.  
Mellow the blackbird sang and sharp the thrush  
Not far off in oak and hazel brush,  
Unseen. There was a scent like honeycomb  
From mugwort dull. And down upon the dome  
Of the stone the cart-horse kicks against so oft  
A butterfly alighted. From aloft  
He took the heat of the sun, and from below.  
On the hot stone he perched contented so,  
As if never a cart would pass again  
That way; as if I were the last of men  
And he the first of insects to have earth  
And sun together and to know their worth.  
I was divided between him and the gleam,  
The motion, and the voices, of the stream,  
The waters running frizzled over gravel,  
That never vanish and for ever travel.  
A grey flycatcher silent on a fence  
And I sat as if we had been there since  
The horseman and the horse lying beneath  
The fir-tree-covered barrow on the heath,  
The horseman and the horse with silver shoes,  
Galloped the downs last. All that I could lose  
I lost. And then the child's voice raised the dead.  
'No one's been here before' was what she said  
And what I felt, yet never should have found  
A word for, while I gathered sight and sound.

Edward Thomas

# The Chalk-Pit

Is this the road that climbs above and bends  
Round what was once a chalk-pit: now it is  
By accident an amphitheatre.  
Some ash trees standing ankle-deep in briar  
And bramble act the parts, and neither speak  
Nor stir,' 'But see: they have fallen, every one,  
And briar and bramble have grown over them.'  
'That is the place. As usual no one is here.  
Hardly can I imagine the drop of the axe,  
And the smack that is like an echo, sounding here.'  
'I do not understand.' 'Why, what I mean is  
That I have seen the place two or three times  
At most, and that its emptiness and silence  
And stillness haunt me, as if just before  
It was not empty, silent, still, but full  
Of life of some kind, perhaps tragical.  
Has anything unusual happened here?'  
'Not that I know of. It is called the Dell.  
They have not dug chalk here for a century.  
That was the ash trees' age. But I will ask.'  
'No. Do not. I prefer to make a tale,  
Or better leave it like the end of a play,  
Actors and audience and lights all gone;  
For so it looks now. In my memory  
Again and again I see it, strangely dark,  
And vacant of a life but just withdrawn.  
We have not seen the woodman with the axe.  
Some ghost has left it now as we two came,'  
'And yet you doubted if this were the road?'  
'Well, sometimes I have thought of it and failed  
To place it. No. And I am not quite sure,  
Even now, this is it. For another place,  
Real or painted, may have combined with it.  
Or I myself a long way back in time...'  
'Why, as to that, I used to meet a man -  
I had forgotten, - searching for birds' nests  
Along the road and in the chalk-pit too.  
The wren's hole was an eye that looked at him  
For recognition. Every nest he knew.

He got a stiff neck, by looking this side or that,  
Spring after spring, he told me, with his laugh -  
A sort of laugh. He was a visitor,  
A man of forty, - smoked and strolled about.  
At orts and crosses Pleasure and Pain had played  
On his brown features; - I think both had lost; -  
Mild and yet wild too. You may know the kind.  
And once or twice a woman shared his walks,  
A girl of twenty with a brown boy's face,  
And hair brown as a thrush or as a nut,  
Thick eyebrows, glinting eyes - 'You have said enough.  
A pair, - free thought, free love, - I know the breed:  
I shall not mix my fancies up with them.'  
'You please yourself. I should prefer the truth  
Or nothing. Here, in fact, is nothing at all  
Except a silent place that once rang loud,  
And trees and us - imperfect friends, we men  
And trees since time began; and nevertheless  
Between us we still breed a mystery.'

Edward Thomas

# The Cherry Trees

The cherry trees bend over and are shedding,  
On the old road where all that passed are dead,  
Their petals, strewing the grass as for a wedding  
This early May morn when there is none to wed.

Edward Thomas

# The Child In The Orchard

'He rolls in the orchard: he is stained with moss  
And with earth, the solitary old white horse.  
Where is his father and where is his mother  
Among all the brown horses? Has he a brother?  
I know the swallow, the hawk, and the hern;  
But there are two million things for me to learn.

'Who was the lady that rode the white horse  
With rings and bells to Banbury Cross?  
Was there no other lady in England beside  
That a nursery rhyme could take for a ride?  
The swift, the swallow, the hawk, and the hern.  
There are two million things for me to learn.

'Was there a man once who straddled across  
The back of the Westbury White Horse  
Over there on Salisbury Plain's green wall?  
Was he bound for Westbury, or had he a fall?  
The swift, the swallow, the hawk, and the hern.  
There are two million things for me to learn.

'Out of all the white horses I know three,  
At the age of six; and it seems to me  
There is so much to learn, for men,  
That I dare not go to bed again.  
The swift, the swallow, the hawk, and the hern.  
There are millions things for me to learn.'

Edward Thomas

# The Child On The Cliffs

Mother, the root of this little yellow flower  
Among the stones has the taste of quinine.  
Things are strange to-day on the cliff. The sun shines so bright,  
And the grasshopper works at his sewing machine  
So hard. Here's one on my hand, mother, look;  
I lie so still. There's one on your book.

But I have something to tell more strange. So leave  
Your book to the grasshopper, mother dear, -  
Like a green knight in a dazzling market-place -  
And listen now. Can you hear what I hear  
Far out? Now and then the foam there curls  
And stretches a white arm out like a girl's.

Fishes and gulls ring no bells. There cannot be  
A chapel or church between here and Devon,  
With fishes or gulls ringing its bell, - hark! -  
Somewhere under the sea or up in heaven.  
'It's the bell, my son, out in the bay  
On the buoy. It does sound sweet to-day.'

Sweeter I never heard, mother, no, not in all Wales.  
I should like to be lying under that foam,  
Dead, but able to hear the sound of the bell,  
And certain that you would often come  
And rest, listening happily.  
I should be happy if that could be.

Edward Thomas

# The Combe

The Combe was ever dark, ancient and dark.  
Its mouth is stopped with brambles, thorn, and briar;  
And no one scrambles over the sliding chalk  
By beech and yew and perishing juniper  
Down the half precipices of its sides, with roots  
And rabbit holes for steps. The sun of Winter,  
The moon of Summer, and all the singing birds  
Except the missel-thrush that loves juniper,  
Are quite shut out. But far more ancient and dark  
The Combe looks since they killed the badger there,  
Dug him out and gave him to the hounds,  
That most ancient Briton of English beasts.

Edward Thomas



# The Cuckoo

That's the cuckoo, you say. I cannot hear it.  
When last I heard it I cannot recall; but I know  
Too well the year when first I failed to hear it -  
It was drowned by my man groaning out to his sheep 'Ho! Ho!'

Ten times with an angry voice he shouted  
'Ho! Ho!' but not in anger, for that was his way.  
He died that Summer, and that is how I remember  
The cuckoo calling, the children listening, and me saying 'Nay'.

And now, as you said, 'There it is', I was hearing  
Not the cuckoo at all, but my man's 'Ho! Ho!' instead.  
And I think that even if I could lose my deafness  
The cuckoo's note would be drowned by the voice of my dead.

Edward Thomas

# The Dark Forest

Dark is the forest and deep, and overhead  
Hang stars like seeds of light  
In vain, though not since they were sown was bred  
Anything more bright.

And evermore mighty multitudes ride  
About, nor enter in;  
Of the other multitudes that dwell inside  
Never yet was one seen.

The forest foxglove is purple, the marguerite  
Outside is gold and white,  
Nor can those that pluck either blossom greet  
The others, day or night.

Edward Thomas

# The Gallows

There was a weasel lived in the sun  
With all his family,  
Till a keeper shot him with his gun  
And hung him up on a tree,  
Where he swings in the wind and rain,  
In the sun and in the snow,  
Without pleasure, without pain,  
On the dead oak tree bough.

There was a crow who was no sleeper,  
But a thief and a murderer  
Till a very late hour; and this keeper  
Made him one of the things that were,  
To hang and flap in rain and wind,  
In the sun and in the snow.  
There are no more sins to be sinned  
On the dead oak tree bough.

There was a magpie, too,  
Had a long tongue and a long tail;  
He could talk and do -  
But what did that avail?  
He, too, flaps in the wind and rain  
Alongside weasel and crow,  
Without pleasue, without pain,  
On the dead oak tree bough.

And many other beasts  
And birds, skin, bone, and feather,  
Have been taken from their feasts  
And hung up there together,  
To swing and have endless leisure  
In the sun and in the snow,  
Without pain, without pleasure,  
On the dead oak tree bough.

Edward Thomas

# The Glory

The glory of the beauty of the morning, -  
The cuckoo crying over the untouched dew;  
The blackbird that has found it, and the dove  
That tempts me on to something sweeter than love;  
White clouds ranged even and fair as new-mown hay;  
The heat, the stir, the sublime vacancy  
Of sky and meadow and forest and my own heart: -  
The glory invites me, yet it leaves me scorning  
All I can ever do, all I can be,  
Beside the lovely of motion, shape, and hue,  
The happiness I fancy fit to dwell  
In beauty's presence. Shall I now this day  
Begin to seek as far as heaven, as hell,  
Wisdom or strength to match this beauty, start  
And tread the pale dust pitted with small dark drops,  
In hope to find whatever it is I seek,  
Harkening to short-lived happy-seeming things  
That we know naught of, in the hazel copse?  
Or must I be content with discontent  
As larks and swallows are perhaps with wings?  
And shall I ask at the day's end once more  
What beauty is, and what I can have meant  
By happiness? And shall I let all go,  
Glad, weary, or both? Or shall I perhaps know  
That I was happy oft and oft before,  
Awhile forgetting how I am fast pent,  
How dreary-swift, with naught to travel to,  
Is Time? I cannot bite the day to the core.

Edward Thomas

# The Green Roads

The green roads that end in the forest  
Are strewn with white goose feathers this June,

Life marks left behind by someone gone to the forest  
To show his track. But he has never come back.

Down each green road a cottage looks at the forest.  
Round one the nettle towers; two are bathed in flowers.

An old man along the green road to the forest  
Strays from one, from another a child alone.

In the thicket bordering the forest,  
All day long a thrush twiddles his song.

It is old, but the trees are young in the forest,  
All but one like a castle keep, in the middle deep.

That oak saw the ages pass in the forest:  
They were a host, but their memories are lost,

For the tree is dead: all things forget the forest  
Excepting perhaps me, when now I see

The old man, the child, the goose feathers at the edge of the forest,  
And hear all day long the thrush repeat his song.

Edward Thomas

# The Gypsy

A fortnight before Christmas Gypsies were everywhere:  
Vans were drawn up on wastes, women trailed to the fair.  
'My gentleman,' said one, 'you've got a lucky face.'  
'And you've a luckier,' I thought, 'if such grace  
And impudence in rags are lucky.' 'Give a penny  
For the poor baby's sake.' 'Indeed I have not any  
Unless you can give change for a sovereign, my dear.'  
'Then just half a pipeful of tobacco can you spare?'  
I gave it. With that much victory she laughed content.  
I should have given more, but off and away she went  
With her baby and her pink sham flowers to rejoin  
The rest before I could translate to its proper coin  
Gratitude for her grace. And I paid nothing then,  
As I pay nothing now with the dipping of my pen  
For her brother's music when he drummed the tambourine  
And stamped his feet, which made the workmen passing grin,  
While his mouth-organ changed to a rascally Bacchanal dance  
'Over the hills and far away.' This and his glance  
Outlasted all the fair, farmer, and auctioneer,  
Cheap-jack, balloon-man, drover with crooked stick, and steer,  
Pig, turkey, goose, and duck, Christmas corpses to be.  
Not even the kneeling ox had eyes like the Romany.  
That night he peopled for me the hollow wooded land,  
More dark and wild than the stormiest heavens, that I searched and scanned  
Like a ghost new-arrived. The gradations of the dark  
Were like an underworld of death, but for the spark  
In the Gypsy boy's black eyes as he played and stamped his tune,  
'Over the hills and far away,' and a crescent moon.

Edward Thomas

# The Hollow Wood

Out in the sun the goldfinch flits  
Along the thistle-tops, flits and twits  
Above the hollow wood  
Where birds swim like fish -  
Fish that laugh and shriek -  
To and fro, far below  
In the pale hollow wood.

Lichen, ivy, and moss  
Keep evergreen the trees  
That stand half-flayed and dying,  
And the dead trees on their knees  
In dog's-mercury and moss:  
And the bright twit of the goldfinch drops  
Down there as he flits on thistle-tops.

Edward Thomas

# The Huxter

He has a hump like an ape on his back;  
He has of money a plentiful lack;  
And but for a gay coat of double his girth  
There is not a plainer thing on the earth  
This fine May morning.

But the huxter has a bottle of beer;  
He drives a cart and his wife sits near  
Who does not heed his lack or his hump;  
And they laugh as down the lane they bump  
This fine May morning.

Edward Thomas



# The Lane

Some day, I think, there will be people enough  
In Froxfield to pick all the blackberries  
Out of the hedges of Green Lane, the straight  
Broad lane where now September hides herself  
In bracken and blackberry, harebell and dwarf gorse.  
To-day, where yesterday a hundred sheep  
Were nibbling, halcyon bells shake to the sway  
Of waters that no vessel ever sailed ...  
It is a kind of spring: the chaffinch tries  
His song. For heat it is like summer too.  
This might be winter's quiet. While the glint  
Of hollies dark in the swollen hedges lasts -  
One mile - and those bells ring, little I know  
Or heed if time be still the same, until  
The lane ends and once more all is the same.

Edward Thomas

# The Lofty Sky

To-day I want the sky,  
The tops of the high hills,  
Above the last man's house,  
His hedges, and his cows,  
Where, if I will, I look  
Down even on sheep and rook,  
And of all things that move  
See buzzards only above:-  
Past all trees, past furze  
And thorn, where nought deters  
The desire of the eye  
For sky, nothing but sky.  
I sicken of the woods  
And all the multitudes  
Of hedge-trees. They are no more  
Than weeds upon this floor  
Of the river of air  
Leagues deep, leagues wide, where  
I am like a fish that lives  
In weeds and mud and gives  
What's above him no thought.  
I might be a tench for aught  
That I can do to-day  
Down on the wealden clay.  
Even the tench has days  
When he floats up and plays  
Among the lily leaves  
And sees the sky, or grieves  
Not if he nothing sees:  
While I, I know that trees  
Under that lofty sky  
Are weeds, fields mud, and I  
Would arise and go far  
To where the lilies are.

Edward Thomas

# The Long Small Room

THE long small room that showed willows in the west  
Narrowed up to the end the fireplace filled,  
Although not wide. I liked it. No one guessed  
What need or accident made them so build.

Only the moon, the mouse, and the sparrow peeped  
In from the ivy round the casement thick.  
Of all they saw and heard there they shall keep  
The tale for the old ivy and older brick.

When I look back I am like moon, sparrow, and mouse  
That witnessed what they could never understand  
Or alter or prevent in the dark house.  
One thing remains the same--this is my right hand

Crawling crab-like over the clean white page,  
Resting awhile each morning on the pillow,  
Then once more starting to crawl on towards age.  
The hundred last leaves stream upon the willow.

Edward Thomas

# The Manor Farm

THE rock-like mud unfroze a little, and rills  
Ran and sparkled down each side of the road  
Under the catkins wagging in the hedge.  
But earth would have her sleep out, spite of the sun;  
Nor did I value that thin gilding beam  
More than a pretty February thing  
Till I came down to the old Manor Farm,  
And church and yew-tree opposite, in age  
Its equals and in size. The church and yew  
And farmhouse slept in a Sunday silentness.  
The air raised not a straw. The steep farm roof,  
With tiles duskily glowing, entertained  
The mid-day sun; and up and down the roof  
White pigeons nestled. There was no sound but one.  
Three cart-horses were looking over a gate  
Drowsily through their forelocks, swishing their tails  
Against a fly, a solitary fly.

The Winter's cheek flushed as if he had drained  
Spring, Summer, and Autumn at a draught  
And smiled quietly. But 'twas not winter-  
Rather a season of bliss unchangeable,  
Awakened from farm and church where it had lain  
Safe under tile and thatch for ages since  
This England, Old already, was called Merry.

Edward Thomas

# The New House

NOW first, as I shut the door,  
I was alone  
In the new house; and the wind  
Began to moan.

Old at once was the house,  
And I was old;  
My ears were teased with the dread  
Of what was foretold,

Nights of storm, days of mist, without end;  
Sad days when the sun  
Shone in vain: old griefs and griefs  
Not yest begun.

All was foretold me; naught  
Could I foresee;  
But I learnt how the wind would sound  
After these things should be

Edward Thomas

# The Other

The forest ended. Glad I was  
To feel the light, and hear the hum  
Of bees, and smell the drying grass  
And the sweet mint, because I had come  
To an end of forest, and because  
Here was both road and inn, the sum  
Of what's not forest. But 'twas here  
They asked me if I did not pass  
Yesterday this way. 'Not you? Queer.'  
'Who then? and slept here?' I felt fear.

I learnt his road and, ere they were  
Sure I was I, left the dark wood  
Behind, kestrel and woodpecker,  
The inn in the sun, the happy mood  
When first I tasted sunlight there.  
I travelled fast, in hopes I should  
Outrun that other. What to do  
When caught, I planned not. I pursued  
To prove the likeness, and, if true,  
To watch until myself I knew.

I tried the inns that evening  
Of a long gabled high-street grey,  
Of courts and outskirts, travelling  
And eager but a weary way,  
In vain. He was not there. Nothing  
Told me that ever till that day  
Had one like me entered those doors,  
Save once. That time I dared: 'You may  
Recall' -- but never-foamless shores  
Make better friends than those dull boors.

Many and many a day like this  
Aimed at the unseen moving goal  
And nothing found but remedies  
For all desire. These made not whole;  
They sowed a new desire, a kiss  
Desire's self beyond control,

Desire of desire. And yet  
Life stayed on within my soul.  
One night in sheltering from the wet  
I quite forgot I could forget.

A customer, then the landlady  
Stared at me. With a kind of smile  
They hesitated awkwardly:  
Their silence gave me time for guile.  
Had anyone called there like me,  
I asked. It was quite plain the wile  
Succeeded. For they poured out all.  
And that was naught. Less than a mile  
Beyond the inn, I could recall  
He was like me in general.

He had pleased them, but I less.  
I was more eager than before  
To find him out and to confess,  
To bore him and to let him bore.  
I could not wait: children might guess  
I had a purpose, something more  
That made an answer indiscreet.  
One girl's caution made me sore,  
Too indignant even to greet  
That other had we chanced to meet.

I sought then in solitude.  
The wind had fallen with the night; as still  
The roads lay as the ploughland rude,  
Dark and naked, on the hill.  
Had there been ever any feud  
'Twixt earth and sky, a mighty will  
Closed it: the crocketed dark trees,  
A dark house, dark impossible  
Cloud-towers, one star, one lamp, one peace  
Held on an everlasting lease:

And all was earth's, or all was sky's;  
No difference endured between  
The two. A dog barked on a hidden rise;  
A marshbird whistled high unseen;

The latest waking blackbird's cries  
Perished upon the silence keen.  
The last light filled a narrow firth  
Among the clouds. I stood serene,  
And with a solemn quiet mirth,  
An old inhabitant of earth.

Once the name I gave to hours  
Like this was melancholy, when  
It was not happiness and powers  
Coming like exiles home again,  
And weaknesses quitting their bowers,  
Smiled and enjoyed, far off from men,  
Moments of everlastingness.  
And fortunate my search was then  
While what I sought, nevertheless,  
That I was seeking, I did not guess.

That time was brief: once more at inn  
And upon road I sought my man  
Till once amid a tap-room's din  
Loudly he asked for me, began  
To speak, as if it had been a sin,  
Of how I thought and dreamed and ran  
After him thus, day after day:  
He lived as one under a ban  
For this: what had I got to say?  
I said nothing. I slipped away.

And now I dare not follow after  
Too close. I try to keep in sight,  
Dreading his frown and worse his laughter.  
I steal out of the wood to light;  
I see the swift shoot from the rafter  
By the inn door: ere I alight  
I wait and hear the starlings wheeze  
And nibble like ducks: I wait his flight.  
He goes: I follow: no release  
Until he ceases. Then I also shall cease.

Edward Thomas



# The Owl

DOWNHILL I came, hungry, and yet not starved,  
Cold, yet had heat within me that was proof  
Against the north wind; tired, yet so that rest  
Had seemed the sweetest thing under a roof.

Then at the inn I had food, fire, and rest,  
Knowing how hungry, cold, and tired was I.  
All of the night was quite barred out except  
An owl's cry, a most melancholy cry.

Shaken out long and clear upon the hill  
No merry note, nor cause of merriment,  
But one telling me plain what I escaped  
And others could not, that night, as in I went.

And salted was my food, and my repose,  
Salted and sobered too, by the bird's voice  
Speaking for all who lay under the stars,  
Soldiers and poor, unable to rejoice.

Edward Thomas

# The Path

RUNNING along a bank, a parapet  
That saves from the precipitous wood below  
The level road, there is a path. It serves  
Children for looking down the long smooth steep,  
Between the legs of beech and yew, to where  
A fallen tree checks the sight: while men and women  
Content themselves with the road and what they see  
Over the bank, and what the children tell.  
The path, winding like silver, trickles on,  
Bordered and even invaded by thinnest moss  
That tries to cover roots and crumbling chalk  
With gold, olive, and emerald, but in vain.  
The children wear it. They have flattened the bank  
On top, and silvered it between the moss  
With the current of their feet, year after year.  
But the road is houseless, and leads not to school.  
To see a child is rare there, and the eye  
Has but the road, the wood that overhangs  
And underyawns it, and the path that looks  
As if it led on to some legendary  
Or fancied place where men have wished to go  
And stay; till, sudden, it ends where the wood ends.

Edward Thomas

# The Sign-Post

The dim sea glints chill. The white sun is shy,  
And the skeleton weeds and the never-dry,  
Rough, long grasses keep white with frost  
At the hill-top by the finger-post;  
The smoke of the traveller's-joy is puffed  
Over hawthorn berry and hazel tuft.  
I read the sign. Which way shall I go?  
A voice says: "You would not have doubted so  
At twenty." Another voice gentle with scorn  
Says: "At twenty you wished you had never been born."  
One hazel lost a leaf of gold  
From a tuft at the tip, when the first voice told  
The other he wished to know what 'twould be  
To be sixty by this same post. "You shall see,"  
He laughed -and I had to join his laughter -  
"You shall see; but either before or after,  
Whatever happens, it must befall.  
A mouthful of earth to remedy all  
Regrets and wishes shall be freely given;  
And if there be a flaw in that heaven  
'Twill be freedom to wish, and your wish may be  
To be here or anywhere talking to me,  
No matter what the weather, on earth,  
At any age between death and birth, -  
To see what day or night can be,  
The sun and the frost, the land and the sea,  
Summer, Winter, Autumn, Spring, -  
With a poor man of any sort, down to a king,  
Standing upright out in the air  
Wondering where he shall journey, O where?"

Edward Thomas

# The Sorrow of True Love

The sorrow of true love is a great sorrow  
And true love parting blackens a bright morrow:  
Yet almost they equal joys, since their despair  
Is but hope blinded by its tears, and clear  
Above the storm the heavens wait to be seen.  
But greater sorrow from less love has been  
That can mistake lack of despair for hope  
And knows not tempest and the perfect scope  
Of summer, but a frozen drizzle perpetual  
Of drops that from remorse and pity fall  
And cannot ever shine in the sun or thaw,  
Removed eternally from the sun's law.

Edward Thomas

# The Trumpet

Rise up, rise up,  
And, as the trumpet blowing  
Chases the dreams of men,  
As the dawn glowing  
The stars that left unlit  
The land and water,  
Rise up and scatter  
The dew that covers  
The print of last night's lovers -  
Scatter it, scatter it!

While you are listening  
To the clear horn,  
Forget, men, everything  
On this earth newborn,  
Except that it is lovelier  
Than any mysteries.  
Open your eyes to the air  
That has washed the eyes of the stars  
Through all the dewy night:  
Up with the light,  
To the old wars;  
Arise, arise!

Edward Thomas

# The Word

There are so many things I have forgot,  
That once were much to me, or that were not,  
All lost, as is a childless woman's child  
And its child's children, in the undefiled  
Abyss of what can never be again.  
I have forgot, too, names of the mighty men  
That fought and lost or won in the old wars,  
Of kings and fiends and gods, and most of the stars.  
Some things I have forgot that I forget.  
But lesser things there are, remembered yet,  
Than all the others. One name that I have not --  
Though 'tis an empty thingless name -- forgot  
Never can die because Spring after Spring  
Some thrushes learn to say it as they sing.  
There is always one at midday saying it clear  
And tart -- the name, only the name I hear.  
While perhaps I am thinking of the elder scent  
That is like food, or while I am content  
With the wild rose scent that is like memory,  
This name suddenly is cried out to me  
From somewhere in the bushes by a bird  
Over and over again, a pure thrush word.

Edward Thomas

# This Is No Case Of Petty Right Or Wrong

This is no case of petty right or wrong  
That politicians or philosophers  
Can judge. I hate not Germans, nor grow hot  
With love of Englishmen, to please newspapers.  
Beside my hate for one fat patriot  
My hatred of the Kaiser is love true:-  
A kind of god he is, banging a gong.  
But I have not to choose between the two,  
Or between justice and injustice. Dinned  
With war and argument I read no more  
Than in the storm smoking along the wind  
Athwart the wood. Two witches' cauldrons roar.  
From one the weather shall rise clear and gay;  
Out of the other an England beautiful  
And like her mother that died yesterday.  
Little I know or care if, being dull,  
I shall miss something that historians  
Can rake out of the ashes when perchance  
The phoenix broods serene above their ken.  
But with the best and meanest Englishmen  
I am one in crying, God save England, lest  
We lose what never slaves and cattle blessed.  
The ages made her that made us from dust:  
She is all we know and live by, and we trust  
She is good and must endure, loving her so:  
And as we love ourselves we hate her foe.

Edward Thomas

# To-Night

Harry, you know at night  
The larks in Castle Alley  
Sing from the attic's height  
As if the electric light  
Were the true sun above a summer valley:  
Whistle, don't knock, to-night.

I shall come early, Kate:  
And we in Castle Alley  
Will sit close out of sight  
Alone, and ask no light  
Of lamp or sun above a summer valley:  
To-night I can stay late.

Edward Thomas



## Two Pewits

Under the after-sunset sky  
Two pewits sport and cry,  
More white than is the moon on high  
Riding the dark surge silently;  
More black than earth. Their cry  
Is the one sound under the sky.  
They alone move, now low, now high,  
And merrily they cry  
To the mischievous Spring sky,  
Plunging earthward, tossing high,  
Over the ghost who wonders why  
So merrily they cry and fly,  
Nor choose 'twixt earth and sky,  
While the moon's quarter silently  
Rides, and earth rests as silently.

Edward Thomas

# Unknown

She is most fair,  
And when they see her pass  
The poets' ladies  
Look no more in the glass  
But after her.

On a bleak moor  
Running under the moon  
She lures a poet,  
Once proud or happy, soon  
Far from his door.

Beside a train,  
Because they saw her go,  
Or failed to see her,  
Travellers and watchers know  
Another pain.

The simple lack  
Of her is more to me  
Than others' presence,  
Whether life splendid be  
Or utter black.

I have not seen,  
I have no news of her;  
I can tell only  
She is not here, but there  
She might have been.

She is to be kissed  
Only perhaps by me;  
She may be seeking  
Me and no other; she  
May not exist.

Edward Thomas

# When First I Came Here

WHEN first I came here I had hope,  
Hope for I knew not what. Fast beat  
My heart at the sight of the tall slope  
Or grass and yews, as if my feet

Only by scaling its steps of chalk  
Would see something no other hill  
Ever disclosed. And now I walk  
Down it the last time. Never will

My heart beat so again at sight  
Of any hill although as fair  
And loftier. For infinite  
The change, late unperceived, this year,

The twelfth, suddenly, shows me plain.  
Hope now,--not health nor cheerfulness,  
Since they can come and go again,  
As often one brief hour witnesses,--

Just hope has gone forever. Perhaps  
I may love other hills yet more  
Than this: the future and the maps  
Hide something I was waiting for.

One thing I know, that love with chance  
And use and time and necessity  
Will grow, and louder the heart's dance  
At parting than at meeting be.

Edward Thomas

# Words

Out of us all  
That make rhymes  
Will you choose  
Sometimes -  
As the winds use  
A crack in a wall  
Or a drain,  
Their joy or their pain  
To whistle through -  
Choose me,  
You English words?

I know you:  
You are light as dreams,  
Tough as oak,  
Precious as gold,  
As poppies and corn,  
Or an old cloak:  
Sweet as our birds  
To the ear,  
As the burnet rose  
In the heat  
Of Midsummer:  
Strange as the races  
Of dead and unborn:  
Strange and sweet  
Equally,  
And familiar,  
To the eye,  
As the dearest faces  
That a man knows,  
And as lost homes are:  
But though older far  
Than oldest yew, -  
As our hills are, old, -  
Worn new  
Again and again:  
Young as our streams  
After rain:

And as dear  
As the earth which you prove  
That we love.

Make me content  
With some sweetness  
From Wales  
Whose nightingales  
Have no wings, -  
From Wiltshire and Kent  
And Herefordshire, -  
And the villages there, -  
From the names, and the things  
No less.

Let me sometimes dance  
With you,  
Or climb  
Or stand perchance  
In ecstasy,  
Fixed and free  
In a rhyme,  
As poets do.

Edward Thomas