

THE LAND OF COUNTERPANE

BY ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON



When I was sick and lay a-bed, I had two pillows at my head, And all my toys beside me lay, To keep me happy all the day.

And sometimes for an hour or so

I watched my leaden soldiers go,

With different uniforms and drills,

Among the bed-clothes, through the hills;

And sometimes sent my ships in fleets All up and down among the sheets;

Or brought my trees and houses out, And planted cities all about.

I was the giant great and still

That sits upon the pillow-hill,

And sees before him, dale and plain, The pleasant land of counterpane.

CreatedforLit2Co on the web atfcit.usf.edu

Submitted by Featured Reader Mary Dettman of St. John the Evangelist Church

The Swing

BY ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

How do you like to go up in a swing,

Up in the air so blue?

Oh, I do think it the pleasantest thing

Ever a child can do!

Up in the air and over the wall,

Till I can see so wide,

Rivers and trees and cattle and all

Over the countryside—

Till I look down on the garden green,

Down on the roof so brown—

Up in the air I go flying again,

Up in the air and down!

Submitted by Featured Reader Mary Dettmann of St. John the Evangelist Church

Anthem in the Time of COVID

If your day was harsh
I will be your island. If sad,
I am your range of light.
If no words, I'll be your
words, like hands on sore
shoulders, cool water
on a blistering day. If cold,
I'll be your shawl. If buried
in work, I'll be your lunch
break, or your getaway car.
If broke, I am your bundle
of hundreds found on the
street; look at me, one
human to another, I am
free for the taking and
I am taking this moment
to tell you, I love you so.

S. Siegel, 5/27/2020

Fellow Creatures

It's true, scientists say,
there is more birdsong,
the air is 3% cleaner,
and there are far fewer
deaths on all major
interstates, including
wildlife.

However, we also know
more people are dying
of heart attacks and
heartbreak than ever,
and the virus has not
yet found its second
wind.

We are locked in a battle,
not between good and evil,
or shutdown and reopening;
not between us and them,
or now and never; not even
between breathing and
spending —

This is a battle of wills,
which at the end unlocks
more answers than questions
about our purpose here,
the atmosphere, and how
we treat all our fellow
creatures.

S. Siegel, 5/19/2020

Boundary

Afternoon leans into twilight.

Poised on a sea of lavender air,

the silver moon, at rest.

Above, the faded blue sky.

April 6, 2020

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Late September

The full moon has painted the backyard

gray and gold.

I thought I knew this place.

April 7, 2020

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Casual Conversation

Forgive me, please. I thought
we were talking only about the weather, the mystery
novel you've been reading, how your niece is worried
her teen-age son has been running with the wrong
crowd at school.

I was sure I was listening well, but later I
realized I'd missed, behind the curtains of
your speech, the rustle of a child's hand as it
slipped, palm up, between the folds.

Forgive me, please.

All these years and I am still learning
to listen for the almost imperceptible eddies
in the flow of your speech, still learning
to calm my desperate search for what to say next.

To watch for the sudden flick of your eyes
to one side, how, sometimes, your brow
will furrow for a moment, mid-sentence.

All these years
and I am still learning to register the eddies
in my own willful river of words, to note
how, sometimes, I too glance quickly to one side.
How I so often miss the whisper of my own
child's hand as it slips out of its pocket
and opens slowly, like a plea.

May 14, April 17, 2020

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Bumblebee

If you know what it is, you will find it. There is no need to define it.

Its name is of least importance. For example, I drank it. Whatever it was that I drank is not important. What is important is the fact it was drinkable. I added a sweetener to sweeten it up. It tastes better sweetened, like my honey when she teases me like a silly bumblebee.

© Emmett Wheatfall

Tender as The Moment

Kill and eat

Of course, you never see it

The kill that is

All the while you rave

About how good and tender the lamb tastes

Yes, it was tender

Tender as the moment

Your precious child was laid in your arms

Father ram did not pop a cigar

He had already been slaughtered

And ewe sheered to perfection

That fur sweater you have on

Well, she is naked and cold

Soon to be served

At a time later that evening

© emmett wheatfall

DEALING WITH THE CORONAVIRUS

“I’m being patient graciously,” she said
in response to being asked how her recovery
was progressing after being rear-ended
last December 24
, after having back

pains increasingly for three months, back
pains so acute that she needed to go
on medical leave, medical leave
just when the Coronavirus Pandemic

hit the United States, the United States
that was now mostly shut down, people
staying away from work, from congregating,
from being closer than six feet to each other.

“I haven’t gotten paid in two months, either,”
she said, pay that she needed for food,
for her chiropractor, “and it’s stressful.”
I could imagine that, could understand

how she was stressed, how the world
was a more difficult and scary place, how
no one knew who had the Coronavirus
and who didn’t, how it was all going

to turn out, whether there would be
a department store there when she
was ready to go back to work, whether
there would be customers who wanted

what they had to sell. That's where
she was today. Did I have anything
meaningful to say to her that was relevant
to her situation, anything to help

deal with her stress? I tried "Have you
done everything you can do?" That
seemed to work And above all, I said,
"Keep being patient graciously."

Tom Hogan

Milwaukie

4-23-20

Rev. 5-29-2020

NORTHWEST FLIGHT: A CINQUAIN

White clouds
Out the window,
Brown fields passing below
Crossing America's heartland.
We fly.

Red tray
Standing silent
Sentinel observing
Her creating golden pancakes.
We eat.

Green grass
Over water
Oozing up from the deep
Feeding hope to lives needing faith.
We grow.

Tom Hogan

3-22-07

On growing old

There is a glory in getting old—
sharp edges worn smooth,
jagged peaks ground down
to mix with years of rotting things
like giant fallen chestnuts everywhere,
to make a sandy loam of grief
where columbines and trilliums might grow
among the beech and oak,
the green brier and blackberry,
the maple, poplar and sassafras
in the quiet mountain meadow shade
and dappled sun,
knowing all the while
the fire and ice will come again
and slowly, slowly change the face of things
which face will startle still—
take the breath away
with beauty.

Bill Denham

The truth of that

There is a kind of cultural schizophrenia I feel—

how we loose our words
from their moorings,
make for ourselves, then,
an endless flow of floating
states of being—unconnected
to what is true for us or for others,
as if words
had no moorings,
as if the ground were not beneath our feet,
the sky above our head, the sea at the edge of land,
as if the sequoia, the saguaro,
could not take our breath away,
or the dahlia, or the earthworm,
or anything we might rest our eyes upon,
or wrap our ears around,
or pass our hands across,
as if the heart that beats
inside of you is not the same as mine,
as if these two eyes could not meet yours
and know the truth of that!

Bill Denham

The turning of the year

The way our world turns,
darkness comes slowly,
almost imperceptibly
and can hold, in its slowness,
the certain beauty of passing,
side by side, or inextricably entwined,
if you prefer, the likewise, near imperceptible
pin-pricks of fear just beneath the surface
of our soul, for the way things are,
we must get through the dark
to be able to see it diminish,
bit by bit, slowly relinquishing itself
to another dawn, another day,
another turn, then, toward the end,
the loss of that particular vision
light or breath allows—the slowness,
that may not seem slow,
giving us time, again and again
to adjust to the loss,
to know its heartbeat,
to know its deep rhythm
of beauty and fear
and hold them
close, as time does,
together.

Bill Denham

From the Window Where I Sit

Mosquito

First spring mosquito

Ugh. Already the bloodsuckers

Ready to dine

maw.4.14.2020

Lady Bug

Landed on windshield

Hitched for many a mile

Flew off at overlook

maw.4.14.2020

Dust Bath

Squirrels in wallow

Spinning, twisting, rolling

Ah, clean and pretty

maw.4.14.2020

Pine Pollen

A fog of yellow

Drifting on the slightest breeze

It rains on everything

maw.4.15.2020

Oregon Grape

Prickly bushes bloom
Visited by early buzzing bees
Then tiny-feathered fluff

maw.4.15.2020

From the Window Where I Sit

Rhododendrons

Death stalked the bushes
The leaves turning yellow-brown
Soon gone forever

maw.4.15.2020

Greenery

Fifty shades of green
Of pink, yellow, red and white
Spring foliage explodes

maw.4.15.2020

Robins

Wherefore art thou now?
So many in the past years
So few seen this spring

maw.4.15.2020

Flies

Remember: screen door
The humongous flies enter

An Annoying Pest

maw.4.15.2020

Sunshine Soon

North facing retreat
Sun soon to round the corner

Warm old bones surely

maw.4.15.2020

Mary Wiedl

SURRENDER

If I surrender, must I fight and rend it from my breast, this viced behavior that no longer serves me?

Or may it be the softest of choices,

an ease of release like the leaves from their tree,

a gentle letting go that harms neither part?

Indeed, in the instant of separation, space enters and time slows.

Lighter and more fluid within,

I have made room to breathe and dance to a thanksgiving song whose melody breaks open my heart.

What was I fighting all this time,

layering a useless wall that kept me out of my true home?

That regret earns but an instant of my attention.

Spinning into Beloved's possibilities,

I now surrender into the vastness of Love's unknown

and whisper, "Welcome home!"

11/14/11

Heather Hannam

BROKENNESS

What is this chosen brokenness?

The scars and cracks, the sharp edges and jagged remnants of a life,
personality, an ego.

Hard played, I imagine, against both clock and opponent,
a win but with a loss of passion that leaves dust in the wounds and bones
crushed from the efforts.

That is one view, ripe for immediate discard, when I feel Beloved's offer to
choose me again.

Brokering a second view, Spirit bathes the bleeding gash and fills the gaping
line with not only Grace,
but Gold,
the alchemical healing bonded in a wisdomed beauty.

I turn my gaze inward, amazed to reveal the myriad of golden veins within,
my rivulets of brokenness blessed once again.

3/10/14

Heather Hannam

The Holy Trinity of Light Revival Church Bus

This big old ark, the color of heaven,
going around a corner
heaves from one side to another.

As though a wave catches us from the side,
our singing slides up an octave,
"Amazing grace how sweet the sound . . ."

We rumble down a hill and struggle up the next,
engine coughing like an asthmatic. Topping the rise,
the motor dies and we coast, everybody silent
as in an elevator.

Eveline, the driver, turns around and mutters,
"End of the line." We look at each other,
then out the windows: wilderness,
not a gas station or phone booth in sight.

Up ahead, a neon sign (the kind they never turn off)
flashes: Tavern, Tavern, Tavern . . .

The reverend stands up in the posture he uses
to give sermons and tells us to remain calm.
No one is listening. They are all scared as house pets.

If he does not ask for volunteers,
we could be here until Easter.
Judging by the strain on their faces,
I answer the unspoken question, "I will,"
the voice in my mouth
not sounding like it was me
but somebody else.

Stepping off the bus into the blast of afternoon heat,
the cicadas clack in the high grass, cards
we clothes pinned to slap against the spokes of our bicycles
when I was a girl.

Their eyes follow me. I am an actress,
but I don't know if this is "Daniel in the Lion's Den"
or "Jonah Swallowed by the Whale". Some picnic:
the potato salad already spoiling, the vanilla ice cream
half melted.

When I reach the gravel parking lot,
music drifts between the cars.
For a moment, I believe my hips swayed
to that old rhythm, the tribal beat
trapped in the jungle of my bones.
Dancing with that soldier from Granville,
these hands, not wrinkled then,
fingered the ribs of his back
all summer long.

In the air-conditioned darkness, my eyes blink
to clear yellow circles which float like balloons.
I press a quarter into the slot
for that electrical hum to ignite in my ear . . .

The man said it would be an hour.
I lay a dollar on the counter.
When my beer comes, I close my eyes
and sip it slow . . . we should have gotten married
before the war turned him to dust.
I missed that bingo,
because my number was called
and I was fool enough not to be listening
to the melody inside.

I pop a breath mint, slide off the stool,
and out the door. The bus sits on the side of the road
like a dead slug. Those old women are singing,
but the only words I can make out
are "O' Lord," so that is how I start my prayer
to get us home again.

Mark Thalman

This is the opening poem of my new book *The Peasant Dance*
due out from Cherry Grove Collections sometime in the next month.
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