



Passersby

For  
the Thinkings

A poetry professor once advised that I read what I like. And I like that. That's what it's about anyway, and I'm not pursuing a masters in this stuff. Why trouble with works I'm supposed to appreciate, unless and until I do? So what follows are a few favs from among this year's passersby. And I share them with the same sentiment. Don't read them... unless ya wanna.

*And Merry Christmas!*

-P

December 17th 2024

*The Alarmed Skipper*  
*by James Thomas Fields*

Many a long, long year ago,  
Nantucket skippers had a plan  
Of finding out, though “lying low,”  
How near New York their schooners ran.

They greased the lead before it fell,  
And then, by sounding through the night,  
Knowing the soil that stuck, so well,  
They always guessed their reckoning right

A skipper gray, whose eyes were dim,  
Could tell, by tasting, just the spot,  
And so below he’d “dowse the glim” —  
After, of course, his “something hot.”

Snug in his berth, at eight o’clock,  
This ancient skipper might be found;  
No matter how his craft would rock,  
He slept — for skippers’ naps are sound!

The watch on deck would now and then

Run down and wake him, with the lead;  
He'd up, and taste, and tell the men  
How many miles they went ahead.

One night, 'twas Jotham Marden's watch,  
A curious wag — the peddler's son —  
And so he mused (the wanton wretch),  
“To-night I'll have a grain of fun.

“We're all a set of stupid fools  
To think the skipper knows by tasting  
What ground he's on — Nantucket schools  
Don't teach such stuff, with all their basting!”

And so he took the well-greased lead  
And rubbed it o'er a box of earth  
That stood on deck — a parsnip-bed —  
And then he sought the skipper's berth.

“Where are we now, sir? Please to taste.”  
The skipper yawned, put out his tongue,  
Then ope'd his eyes in wondrous haste,  
And then upon the floor he sprung!

The skipper stormed and tore his hair,  
Thrust on his boots, and roared to Marden,  
“Nantucket’s sunk, and here we are  
Right over old Marm Hackett’s garden!”

*Sonnet 30*

*by Shakespeare*

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought  
I summon up remembrance of things past,  
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,  
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste:  
Then can I drown an eye, unus'd to flow,  
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,  
And weep afresh love's long since cancell'd woe,  
And moan th' expense of many a vanish'd sight;  
Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,  
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er  
The sad account of fore-bemoaned moan,  
Which I new pay as if not paid before.  
But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,  
All losses are restor'd, and sorrows end.

## *Tragedy*

*by Jill Spargur*

I always wanted a red balloon,

It only cost a dime,

But Ma said it was risky,

They broke so quickly,

And beside, she didn't have time;

And even if she did, she didn't

Think they were worth a dime.

We lived on a farm, and I only went

To one circus and fair,

And all the balloons I ever saw

Were there.

There were yellow ones and blue ones,

But the kind I liked the best

Were red, and I don't see why

She couldn't have stopped and said

That maybe I could have one —

But she didn't — I suppose that now

You can buy them anywheres,

And that they still sell red ones

At circuses and fairs.

I got a little money saved;

I got a lot of time,  
I got no one to tell me how to spend my dime;  
Plenty of balloons — but somehow  
There's something died inside of me,  
And I don't want one — now.

*Father*

*by Edgar Albert Guest*

My father knows the proper way  
The nation should be run;  
He tells us children every day  
Just what should now be done.  
He knows the way to fix the trusts,  
He has a simple plan;  
But if the furnace needs repairs,  
We have to hire a man.

My father, in a day or two  
Could land big thieves in jail;  
There's nothing that he cannot do,  
He knows no word like "fail."  
"Our confidence" he would restore,  
Of that there is no doubt;  
But if there is a chair to mend,  
We have to send it out.

All public questions that arise,  
He settles on the spot;  
He waits not till the tumult dies,

But grabs it while it's hot.  
In matters of finance he can  
Tell Congress what to do;  
But, O, he finds it hard to meet  
His bills as they fall due.

It almost makes him sick to read  
The things law-makers say;  
Why, father's just the man they need,  
He never goes astray.  
All wars he'd very quickly end,  
As fast as I can write it;  
But when a neighbor starts a fuss,  
'Tis mother has to fight it.

In conversation father can  
Do many wondrous things;  
He's built upon a wiser plan  
Than presidents or kings.  
He knows the ins and outs of each  
And every deep transaction;  
We look to him for theories,  
But look to ma for action.

***The Night Has A Thousand Eyes***  
***by Francis William Bourdillon***

The night has a thousand eyes,  
And the day but one;  
Yet the light of the bright world dies  
With the dying sun.

The mind has a thousand eyes,  
And the heart but one:  
Yet the light of a whole life dies  
When love is done.

*A Red, Red Rose*

*by Robert Burns*

O my Luve is like a red, red rose  
That's newly sprung in June;  
O my Luve is like the melody  
That's sweetly played in tune.

So fair art thou, my bonnie lass,  
So deep in luv am I;  
And I will luv thee still, my dear,  
Till a' the seas gang dry.

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,  
And the rocks melt wi' the sun;  
I will love thee still, my dear,  
While the sands o' life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only luv!  
And fare thee weel awhile!  
And I will come again, my luv,  
Though it were ten thousand mile.

*Silence*

*by Babette Deutsch*

Silence with you is like the faint delicious  
Smile of a child asleep, in dreams unguessed:  
Only the hinted wonder of its dreaming,  
The soft, slow-breathing miracle of rest.  
Silence with you is like a kind departure  
From iron clangor and the engulfing crowd  
Into a wide and greenly barren meadow,  
Under the bloom of some blue-bosomed cloud;  
Or like one held upon the sands at evening,  
When the drawn tide rolls out, and the mixed light  
Of sea and sky enshrouds the far, wind-bellowed  
Sails that move darkly on the edge of night.

*Recuerdo*

*by Edna St. Vincent Millay*

We were very tired, we were very merry—  
We had gone back and forth all night on the ferry.  
It was bare and bright, and smelled like a stable—  
But we looked into a fire, we leaned across a table,  
We lay on a hill-top underneath the moon;  
And the whistles kept blowing, and the dawn came soon.

We were very tired, we were very merry—  
We had gone back and forth all night on the ferry;  
And you ate an apple, and I ate a pear,  
From a dozen of each we had bought somewhere;  
And the sky went wan, and the wind came cold,  
And the sun rose dripping, a bucketful of gold.

We were very tired, we were very merry,  
We had gone back and forth all night on the ferry.  
We hailed, “Good morrow, mother!” to a shawl-covered  
head,  
And bought a morning paper, which neither of us read;  
And she wept, “God bless you!” for the apples and pears,  
And we gave her all our money but our subway fares.

*Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*  
*by Robert Frost*

Whose woods these are I think I know.  
His house is in the village though;  
He will not see me stopping here  
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer  
To stop without a farmhouse near  
Between the woods and frozen lake  
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake  
To ask if there is some mistake.  
The only other sound's the sweep  
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
And miles to go before I sleep.

***Sonnet 130: My mistress' eyes are nothing like  
the sun***

***by William Shakespeare***

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;  
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;  
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;  
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.  
I have seen roses damasked, red and white,  
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;  
And in some perfumes is there more delight  
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.  
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know  
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;  
I grant I never saw a goddess go;  
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground.  
    And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare  
    As any she belied with false compare.