

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

11 *Her Immortality*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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1898

(From *The Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy*.
London: Macmillan, 1930)