Images
of
Thought
Also by
W. Reeves Smith

SOMETHING ABOUT LOVE
THE SOUND OF THOUGHT
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Some of these poems were published in 1970 by Croxdale Press, Knoxville, Tennessee, under the title THE SOUND OF THOUGHT.
Life comes our way
One part each day,
Its total span so brief,
That by abuse
Who scorns its use,
Upon himself plays thief.

So when my page
Is yellow age,
The letters dull and wry,
Let there be writ
That bit by bit,
I've wrung each moment dry.
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ENCHANTER

If there be eyes that look upon her grace
And suffer not the slightest pangs of greed,
They are but sightless windows of a face
That mark for him a greater part of need,
For if he be the sum of manly parts
That lie within her field of converse pole,
Constricting lines that thread unguarded hearts
Must weave into the fabric of his soul,
And holding court with one so richly blessed,
Expecting less than she his thought to haunt,
Begs time to yield the profits of unrest
As what he thus admires he comes to want.
   No one is to himself an isle so strong,
   Emotion's pounding sea ignores for long.
AUTUMN YEARS

When in life's glass the grains are want and slow,
And time's relentless hands have carved their mark,
When joy is not the joy I used to know,
Then have I come at last to soon depart,
For thought I drown my eyes with things undone,
No tear can bring to pass what I have failed,
Nor bargaining with King Tenebrarum,
The staid inertial ways of fate assail.
In autumn years when mundane debts accrue,
No longer will life's staff its charge sustain,
Then I, like leaves arrayed in golden hue,
Must fall to join the dust from which I came.
Though food for worms I be as other clay,
I will have known the life of every day.
If I were granted now the fairest Muse
With endless words of every hue conceived,
And I make bold to make of them good use,
My pen would fail the wonders I perceive,
For who with words could match the heaven's blue,
Recall the haunting whispers of a smile,
Be blind enough to see as lovers do,
Or frame the guileless beauty of a child?
And who could hear the great unspoken truths,
Or know which evil mote profanes the eye,
Be wise enough to word the songs of youth,
Or mother's pride that hears her newborn cry?
What pleading insight begs the eye to see
Remains a shapeless form to those like me.
A CROOKED HEAD

When life seems turned upon its darkest side
And joy bemoans its solitary fate,
I could entreat whatever gods abide
To lift the bondage of my hapless state,
But like a char discounting flames it nursed,
Such introspect must wear a crooked head
That faults the truth by finding life accursed
Where facts would speak of happiness instead.
So from despair I look the other way
And see at once the bounties of my store
And vow that when each dawn has raised my day
Such dark will pale its light of truth no more.
    That I, with thanks, must go with what is mine
    Brings from a muted pen this awkward rhyme.
THE LEAST

If for a dimming sense some witch could brew
A portent from the herbs of wisdom's store,
I, mantled as a sage, could then pursue
The truth beyond the guile I much abhor;
For in my silent moods, fond musings turn
To sort life's chaff for seldom truths therein,
And ponder most to learn what I must learn,
To better weigh the worth of foe and friend;
For least has honored more when come as friend,
Than all the praises a guileful great can show,
And seldom are the least made least within,
Or clothed with pride, in which they naked go.
   They give the most who have not much to give;
   For them each day begins what's left to live.
EQUIVOCATION

As strange as be the thorn that bears a rose,
So is my friend with words and acts diverged
That by the first some beauty's scene disclosed
Has by the last its better ports expunged.
But since at times the face of truth seems false
Should not we doubt by ample faith subtend
Lest by a human trait that logic faults.
Learn we have wrongly judged what they intend?
Leave time to tell the beauty of the bell
Despite the richest tones it thinks to sing,
For if its truth be rent by flaws indwelled,
Discerning ears will note its hollow ring:
  Then all the gain deception's way has sought,
  By its own hand expires in sad default.
HAPPINESS

With hope impoverished by circumstance,
And life imploring cheer where cheer is none,
I look upon the havoc wrought by chance,
And wonder if more wrong it could have done.
But is a sadness all of sorrow made,
When I cry most for what was once my joy?
And with true faith can hope be thus allayed,
By minions of deceit in fate's employ?
Does kindness not perpetuate its bread,
And are not smiles the image of their plyer,
And can despair but mirror faith in need,
Or anger's flames consume else but their sire?
    Can truth bring greater joy to man than when
It shows him happiness is born within?
MOMENTS THAT REMAIN

When by its orb the earth in turning day
Subtracts from precious moments that remain,
They end on end must sm the whole away,
Till circumstance decrees our lives be twain.
Foreknowing well the speed with which they race,
Extract from tech the essence there contained,
That it departed leaves you in its place
A beauty that in mem'ry will remain.
Then when in time the fires of love grow cold,
And life seems want to turn its darkest side,
Relive those precious moments mem'ries hold,
When you, by need of you, were satisfied.
   Few else are they that Fate will quick forgive,
   Thank those who lived all yet there was to live.
PERFECTION'S THRIFT

Go seek you now my Heart, Oh, lovely rose,
That she may see in you her like in prime
And learn the thrift each such perfection knows
Ere it be cast upon the wastes of time.
And let her sense that had your blossoms come
To lands where none among the quick abide,
As worthless would your life and beauty sum
As do the graces she would from me hide.
For now the skin that holds her precious wine
Plays thief upon the cup that I would fill,
And would the essence of its bloom confine
To rob me of my due, and Nature's will.

Can wine be more without the lips that taste
Than lips without their wine are more than waste!
MISSHAPEN RULE

In grief I view sad yesterday so soon,
And good myself's self-pity that I failed
To savor well the honey of its bloom,
Bemoaning most its gall and dark travail;
Though issued in arrayments pure as gold,
And reckoned well for priding abject broods,
With prejudicial eyes I scorned its role,
To find there mirrored only my sad moods
Can those who look my way see else but fool,
Who thrusts life's precious gift of life aside,
To shape each day by some misshapen rule,
Engendered the bad for good to hide?
Sa suckle all the good of morrow's store,
For once departed days can live no more.
THE PROFLIGATE

Of what unearthly substance do they mold
These creatures we have want to call a friend,
That having access to our unkempt soul
Turn then within their cloak and back again,
Destructing thus the laws of constancy
That trust beget another like in kind
Till as a bold and coffered legacy
Unbroken be the bonds of kindred mind.
Poor fools are they whose backs must face a friend,
Foregoing buds small tillage soon could swell
To blossom forth a beauty that till then
The natural laws of strangeness had withheld,
   For they know not what friendship's simple way,
   Unlike a flower, dies upon decay.
Among the legends of my solitude
And phantom fancies graved with pure delight,
Cavorts a nymph so much with charm imbued,
As shames the best of visions sired by night.
As shames the best of visions sired by night,
Conceived and nurtured thus in phantasy,
I awe beyond the power words can hold
To find reality where none should be,
As this, once wrought of base, is turned to gold.
So rapt am I by tones that warm these ears
And pleasures that for once outlast the dawn,
This poor mind's eye, unwet by idle tears,
Would wash with grief the image of it gone.
To have so much and yet beyond recall
Would be like having part but never all.
THE WELL-FANGED VIPER

When Death, that well-fanged viper, coils to strike,
He views with greed through slanting, angry eyes
A helpless pawn that stands till puppet like
With many severed strings he falls and dies.
Pestiferous and all-defiling beast,
Envenomer of every life life brings,
You would but suck my breath till it has ceased,
So I be cast among unquickened things.
Though struck and left unscratched, your venom streaks
Tell me I live each day on borrowed breath,
Till fate has yielded what the fanged one seeks,
And I, and all things gone, join hands in death,
   Where to the strident beat from drums of yore,
I'll march in endless time forevermore.
TWO MASTERS

Untutored is the mind that tries with dreams
To quench the searing flames of passion's fire,
Believing phantom visages and schemes
Had best supplant the one of its desire.
When as a prisoned inmate forced to stay.
And unfulfilled, deny the body's due,
The sweetest needs, like flowers, soon decay
And, festering, torment the soul anew.
The press of passion must in time release
The nurturing of mores' boundless themes.
If mind and body go in hand with peace,
Reality must interchange with dreams.
Then needs and deeds have each their just deserve —
Two masters are, by one, more than to serve!
THE SWORD

Though Time may slow the heart that counts my pulse,
And look his sluttish scythe into my field,
Or carve upon my brow with rude insults,
He grieves upon the dauntless sword I wield.
For therein lie the elements of love,
Alloyed with those of purest trust and deed,
Well tempered in the furnaces above
By unseen hands that bend to fill man's need.
And all of this, my Faith, you've brought to me
When come my way with simple unheard song
That setup on my strings of sympathy
The harmonies where kindred tones belong.
   And though Time force my steps within death's shade,
   He looks with awe's respect upon my blade.
THIRST

With the burning thirst of a long lost man,
Under torrid suns of an angry hue,
I've searched endless oceans of desert sand
To find the oasis that lies in you.
Oh! sweetest essence nature ere distilled,
Should I by this my fate's travail surcease,
And will unto my humor's will,
Discounting all beyond their health's increase?
Make of these needs, thoughts born to more than hope,
That merit from divisiveness evolve,
To cause the biased urge with which men cope,
Rest light upon your balance of resolve.
'Tis best man have a thirst he must deny,
Than let false glitter blind an eager eye.
WITHOUT-WITHIN

Yon crimson buds that hug the limbs of spring
When nature's beauty charms compete with thee,
Compounded with the notes her songbirds sing'
Expatiate the joys you hold for me.
The boundless beauty of thy sculptured lines
Portends the skill within thy Maker's hands,
That when compared to thee all beauty finds
No such perfection known to any man.
Although thy outward beauty doth confound,
'Tis lesser of the two: without, within,
For in thy heart a nobleness abounds,
With which all other beauties must contend.
    By these my joy and riches are increased;
    By these my wanton needs of want surceased.
FROM LESSER CLAY

As surely as a great tide's bosoms heave
In cadence to the moons coercive hand,
You, with a deftness, from my gnarls cleave
The essence of a new and better man;
For in the dungeons of my sorried soul,
Among the elements of bleak despair,
You've come to break the endless bonds that hold
The better parts of me imprisoned there.
As time's discarded bits subtract the day,
So grows my debt to you for having shown
That loving hands can coax from lesser clay
A virtue where a virtue stands alone,
And Fate, that faults uncertain steps of man,
Bemoans the might of your determined hand.
EQUALITY

Although men blind themselves with pride or hate,
Or feign their wealth with well-dimensioned lies,
They play before the sightless eyes of Fate
Too much of life before they realize;
Intrusive visions vie with joy's redress
As once unhurried Time compounds his range,
That while each day life's lease is ever pressed,
Abundance with privation interchange.
Proud prince and pauper each their steadfast way
Converge upon the dark and dateless shore,
Where title, wealth, and rank are stripped away,
That all men go as equals evermore.

What should have been their aim by reason urged
Becomes a mark of fault by death expurged.
LIFE'S MELODIES

When awesome clouds of dark investiture
Have welled within the confines of my stall,
That cherished most consorts with forfeiture
As though some evil thing would have my all.
But gifts as man is with faith and hope.
'Tis with impassioned ears I turn their way,
As faith expatiates within her scope,
Sequestered truths my gloom had cast away,
Then with finesse hope sets upon the task
Of bringing hapless tones into accord,
Where from their destined places on the staff,
Come melodies that once were but discords.
Thus matters not how dark the clouds may boil,
The sun in time will soon abort their toil.
THE TALE OF A KNIGHT

The knight was quick to stand at full salute,
As fire in his love's eye impassioned deed,
He, thought by most a spineless docile mute,
Now firm in stance, articulates her need.
With sword in hand, Defiant head held high,
This now intrepid one defends her cause,
Increasing worth and image in her eye
With valor bounded but by nature's laws.
When in the raging battle honor calls,
Though robbed by ebbing strength of all but pride,
He, answering with noble effort, falls,
A venerated hero at her side.
   Her noble eye, once flamed by fire and fight,
   Now weeps because she loved her fallen knight.
IMAGE OF A FOOL

What mind of man could sire a greater fool
Than he who thieves upon his own content
By gauging life with some distorted rule
That wrongs the right of every good intent?
For who expects to find one wedless sired
With ease will fit the next into that mold,
Reshaping truth to forms of his desire,
Then image wrong the wrong that he beholds.
With reason's tangled web a lone defense,
Life wears for him a dark sinistrous pall
As those who bring for him their best intents
Seem com to bear the fruit of evil's all.
Should not he better yield an edge of doubt
To form the peace of mind he lives without?
LOVE'S TOUCH

Enamored by the thought of sweet Love's touch—
Than which none shames the joy of joy so well—
Sweet timbre of life's lute, and honored much,
I kneel in tranquil homage 'neath your spell,
Beside you, vestal nymph, lies my desires,
That knot the groin and heart with nerve's raw bark
And touch the nakedness of dreams with fire
To guide love's arrow to its destined mark.
You, keeper of emotion's sacred key,
Come, quietly turn the bolt of this heart's door,
That from this pallid dungeon I be free
To go with love of love forevermore.
    Compatriot of rich and lean of mind,
    Still does your secret foil this pen of mine.
MY CROSS

When time has come upon that part of day
That absent friends make solitude my cross,
Through candid eyes I view my feet of clay
Behind facades which worldly eyes accost;
For here upon the ashes of intent,
From tinder spent on dissipated dreams,
Uncertain flames cast shadows of lament,
Bemoaning most their birth in arrant schemes;
For naught has come to mountains I would climb,
And moments I once had thought to build,
And even less to beauties I would rhyme
Ere they as echoes go among the stilled.
And as perforce I needs and deeds equate,
'Tis clear I brought too little much too late.
A STATELY QUEEN

If you, by means as yet unknown to man,
Could search the inner working of my soul,
The truths uncovered there would bring to hand
A joy far more than one young heart could hold.
For in those thoughts you reign a stately queen,
As pure as be the white of driven snow,
That from a vantaged throne of golden dreams
Do hold in hand the subject heart below.
And it by need of you is born afresh,
Be cleansed of vaunt and pious schemes of greed,
And held above the ways of troubled flesh
That thrive upon the press of errant need;
   And I by you am brought such joy within
I ne'er would change my place with other men.
TRUTH

When knowledge lends me facts for half men ask,
But ego's need would have me fabricate,
The truth I rob from half to gild my mask,
Returning, steals the half that's my estate,
For when man's wisdom cries a hungry need,
And acting on my falseness often fails,
He, noting lack of honor in my creed,
Will doubt my work though in it truth prevails.
Then will I image fool in other's eyes,
As all respect me less instead of more,
And worthless be the facts of which I'm wise,
For they will wear the falseness others wore.
   To feign ourselves as one we would adore
Is but to gain an image we abhor!
CONSTANT STAR

In haste I stroke these lines against that time
When faded curls would mock a youthful way,
And sadness, counting seasons that are mine,
Contrives to mute all else this pen would say.
For in that time when darkness comes to dwell,
That I be but a wrinkle in your mind,
I would it be that, "I have love thee well,"
Transcend all other riches left behind.
’Tis thy high trek Oh! ever constant star,
That mends the lines upon my errored chart
And beckons me from hapless lands afar
To keep you ever gentle on my heart.
   Though small import or largess be this work,
   Of it, I best go damned than go unheard.
THE FUTURE

If in her wisdom fate should bring to haunt,
All-seeing eyes, the future to perceive,
Few men would find in courage more than want,
And few would want more courage to conceive.
Mystery's shroud of kindness hides to be,
Securer than a mem'ry grips the past,
And guards a man who would the future see,
To have his bones and flesh the mind outlast.
Sad rains my flood the rivers of each life
And drown fond hopes within its swirling flow,
But of his fate man best go unaware,
For it is that which no man ought to know.
   In peace let Than'tos' crowning work be done,
   In peace let mind and body leave as one.
Thus shall I live, pretending you are mine
For endless days, or few, as your desire
To have life's growing needs and pleasures rhyme,
Brings you to me, with need of him afire.
By this you give of most long held for him,
And so increase my wealth ten thousand fold,
That I, in holding such a precious gem,
By it, excel the wealth all coffers hold.
Thus we who once were twain now go as one,
The fusion serving fuel for passion's fire,
To leave upon its hearth from all things done
Such ash as fond remains of our desire;
    That I by you am brought to Heaven's gate
While you who've waited long, no longer wait.
MY DEBT

These golden spires that raise the dawning sun
Are come like heralds from a king of old
To bear us word that Noctis' work is done,
And day now wears its crown of gleaming gold.
Can I upon whom Time thus richly smiles,
Spend well the restless bounty of his store
And know its seeming plenty but beguiles—
That when once come can come again no more?
If I be wise and to my heart lend ears
That hear in truth what toils I should increase,
Then as these bits of life form into years,
So will I effort them to pay Time's lease,
   For knowing well what form my mold should take
   Implores a haste ere Time my loan forsake.
FIRST SNOW

As blushing summer pales in winter's cold,
And nature rigs her stage for coming sights,
The angels dust from stars the heavens hold,
A show that mantles earth a virgin white.
Such beauty greeds the eye to take its fill,
As shadows, drifts, and things in robes of white
Are blended to a peace and tranquil still
And lit by mother moon, fond torch of night.
As nature paints the image of its soul,
Through orbs of awe I view this wonderland,
And think upon the way a thing so cold
Can warm so well the heart of every man,

Then grieve that man with coming day will spoil
This lovely gift from nature's endless toil.
FILIA

Oh, lovely bloom of my departing seed,
Whose youthful hands must hold as mine are failed,
Bring to these words a pliant hour's heed
For truths my erred trials have since unveiled.
Time's great fell hand with imperceptions thieve
Life's precious bite to vast denuded graves,
Subtracting each the quotient by its leave
Till all in death's dank darkness go enslaved.
Foreknowing this then vest your bits with care,
Lest as a candle's flicker in the night,
The substances of life so vested there
Are all consumed by that which makes it bright;
For time in time accelerates his pace
That laggard years of youth with age shall race.
FILIA II

Beware of him who lies as you require,
Despite that it absolve your acts of blame.
By every test he still remains a liar
And may in time heap insult on your name.
When judging gifts that seem to obviate,
Consider if you're known as friend or foe,
And are the strings you fear will obligate
But more that pleas for what you would bestow?
Despair of him agreed to every word
Who finds a truth where truth does not belong.
He lies or fails discern of what he's heard,
For there are times when every man is wrong.
   Vicissitude commends no mindless act
   So long as thoughts resolve conflicting fact.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

W. Reeves Smith was born in Atoka, Tennessee, and served in the U.S. Air Force during World War II. While a Technical Sergeant in the South Pacific, he was awarded the Legion of Merit by General Douglas MacArthur.

The author moved to Knoxville, Tennessee, in 1946. After graduating from The University of Tennessee in 1950, he began work as a mechanical engineer at Union Carbide Nuclear Corporation, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, where he is still employed.

The author's hobbies include ham radio, flying, photography, motorcycling, hypnosis, magic, watchmaking, high fidelity, song writing, and freelance writing.

His first book of poetry, THE SOUND OF THOUGHT, was published in 1970. SOMETHING ABOUT LOVE, his second book, was begun in 1975. Eighty percent of the book was written during June and July, the remainder by Christmas.