THE STORIES OF Ernest Dowson

Edited by

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INTRODUCTION

ERNEST DOWSON was one of the few poets who prefer their prose to their verse. To Frank Harris he said while speaking of Poe: "He was a master of both prose and verse . . . his prose better than his verse, as mine is." Arthur Symons observed that Dowson was the only poet he ever knew who cared more for his prose than his verse; and Dowson's Oxford friend, W. R. Thomas, reported that his chief literary ambitions were in prose, that "poetry, when it came, was an outburst, a digression." Dowson's reading at Oxford and later was largely in the field of the novel; according to report, he spent more time reading the early novels of Henry James and Emile Zola than he did with his favorite poets, Baudelaire and Verlaine. His interest in prose was not dictated by practical necessity, for there is no evidence that he felt with George Meredith that fiction was his kitchen wench, but poetry his muse. Dowson was essentially a poet, however, and as such his chief claim to greatness lies; still much of his prose is significant not only for its illumination of his mind and art, but also for its intrinsic literary worth.

In his narratives there is much which invites the reader to autobiographical interpretation, and it has been observed that Dowson's very considerable intelligence found its best, if not its only, expression in his prose. Although he himself remarked in a letter to Arthur Moore that his poetry was composed of "verses making for mere sound, and music, with just a suggestion of sense, or hardly that," there is little in his verse that does not lend itself to ready interpretation. In fact, in an age in which the followers of the French symbolists and the poets of the esthetic school were bewildering their readers with their deliberate pursuit of *nuance*, Dowson's poetry stands out by reason of its classic simplicity and clarity. In his prose, however, there is not only a legibility which supports the conclusion that he was capable of sustained thought, but also a corroboration and amplification of much of the thought and sentiment which appears in the poetry. The narratives do much to supplement the poems, and as a result they are valuable in that they shed additional light on the mind and art of the author.

Dowson's prose, however, possesses an interest and worth which engage

the reader who is unconcerned with its value as a supplement to the poems or with the vexing problems of the biographer and the critic, who are of necessity alert to details of evidence which reveal the man. The prose, which is of considerable bulk when weighed against his total output in verse, is composed of many translations, chiefly from the French; a large number of familiar letters;* two novels, written in collaboration with Arthur Moore; nine tales of short-story length; and a few pieces of polyphonic prose.†

The translations, among which are to be named such voluminous works as Zola's *La Terre,* de Laclos' *Les Liaisons Dangereuses,* the Goncourts' *The Confidantes of a King: The Mistresses of Louis XV,* and Lacroix's *Memoirs of Cardinal Dubois,* were made in large measure to provide income, and are not always an indication of Dowson's preferences and tastes. In the translation of Zola's novel he worked with more spirit than with the others, for at the time he undertook the translation he was an enthusiastic admirer of Zola's works and was eager to bring him before a wide group of English readers.‡ Long before he was finished with the novel, however, he found his task irksome and even distasteful; and, according to Victor Plarr, he decided "to render certain Rabelaisian passages into something less offensive in English—into common cleanly blasphemies at least." It was Dowson's ability as a translator which gained him steady employment with the publisher Leonard Smithers and in time identified him unfortunately and unfairly with French erotica.§ Oscar Wilde, who spent several months with Dowson in Bernavel in the summer of 1897, said that of all of his acquaintances Dowson was best equipped to do Pierre Louÿs' *Aphrodite* into English. Although he lacked the scholar's sense of precision, his long sojourns in France during the impressionable days of his youth had trained him admirably to catch the finest shadings of the language. In spite of the fact that he came to regard his assignments for Smithers as drudgery, once started on a translation he brought to it a considerable part of his talent as a prose writer. Arthur Symons remarked that Dowson's translations "were never without

* Desmond Flower, editor of *The Poems of Ernest Christopher Dowson,* London, 1934, is engaged on a collection of the letters.

† There are a few unsigned pieces, attributed to Dowson, in a pamphlet periodical, the *Critic,* which had an ephemeral existence in 1889. H. Guy Harrison, in his bibliography appended to Victor Plarr's *Ernest Dowson: Reminiscences, Unpublished Letters and Marginalia,* London, 1914, mentions two pieces, "Between the Acts" and "The Cult of the Child."

‡ It was only after George Moore had rejected the invitation of the Lutetian Society to translate *La Terre* that Dowson was given the commission.

§ The *London Daily Telegraph* on February 28, 1900, in reporting Dowson's death made no mention of "Cynara" or "Extreme Unction," but pointed out that he was the translator of *The Memoirs of Cardinal Dubois.*

some traces of his peculiar charm of language." One cannot read his translation of Balzac's *La Fille aux Yeux d'Or* without feeling that the work as it stands in English is distinguished by delicacy of feeling and phrase.

In most of his letters, too, there is much that not only reveals the man, but also his talent with prose. Although Dowson was a dilatory correspondent, and rarely wrote letters for the pleasure he derived from keeping his friends informed about his movements and reflections, there are over four hundred letters extant which, aside from their value as source material for biographers and critics, possess considerable charm. The long series of letters to Victor Plarr, and the twelve to his Oxford friend Sam Smith, in which he wrote in intimate detail about his love for Adelaide Foltinowicz, are the most illuminating of the lot and the best illustrations of Dowson's manner. His correspondence with Smithers, though large, is concerned chiefly with matters of assignments for translations and the many adjustments between editor and author. Even here the manner is never commonplace. There is not only an unerring aptness of phrase but also an air of breeding and restraint which has no relation to patronage. Throughout the letters, especially in those to Sam Smith, there is a sincerity which is in itself an abiding charm. Much as he wished to be alone in his long intervals of suffering, a wistfulness comes into many of the letters he wrote from France in his last years which reveals his yearning for old friends and the nights spent at the Crown after a meeting of the Rhymers' Club. The words that Victor Plarr prefaced to the letters he included in his *Reminiscences* are applicable to Dowson's letters at large:

> In these letters, no ugly slur of passion, no ill savours are found. Instead we are refreshed by fragrance—transient and slight, perhaps, yet evident—by fragrance, be it said again, and by an unfailing touch of good breeding, a gracious and insistent air of modesty—by something diffident, boyishly shy, often beautiful and noble.

Dowson's novels, written in collaboration with Arthur Moore, are no longer read; and it is only among readers who are thoroughly familiar with the literature of the Nineties that they are known at all. The near oblivion into which they have fallen is hardly the result of the capricious judgment of time: there is little in *A Comedy of Masks* and *Adrian Rome* to commend them to the interest af present-day readers. In plot they are plainly mediocre, for evidently neither Dowson nor Moore had the kind of creative imagination which could construct a story of compelling force. Their powers were not dramatic; suspense and climax were ineffectually handled; and the

motivation was both conventional and thin. Nor were the characterizations vivid and completely convincing. Oswyn, the Bohemian painter at war with society in *A Comedy of Masks,* is a memorable figure, but he remains two-dimensional throughout. Philip Rainham, the hero of the novel, is a personable though indecisive character whose actions are not always convincingly motivated. In the later novel *Adrian Rome,* the principal figure whose name serves as the title is in some measure a side of Dowson himself, especially in the passages which deal with Adrian's Oxford days and his precepts concerning art. *Adrian Rome* is a better performance than *A Comedy of Masks* because the theme is more substantial, and the characters and plot are more skilfully integrated.

It is difficult, and in some instances impossible, to ascribe certain passages to Dowson, for Arthur Moore had a considerable share in the novels, especially in *Adrian Rome,* which he was forced to complete by himself because of Dowson's procrastination in submitting his part. An attempt at identification can be made without resorting to internal evidence by recalling that Moore stated that their plan of collaboration called for each one to write an alternate chapter, and that Dowson "batted" first in *A Comedy of Masks,* and Moore in *Adrian Rome.* "We did very little by way of revision of each others' work," wrote Moore, "alterations being rarely more than a few words in a chapter."*

In spite of the fact that the plan of writing alternate chapters was not consistently carried out, it cannot be concluded that Dowson provided the principal inspiration for the novels and that he did the greater part of the work; and it is unsound and unfair to attribute the best passages to him. In fact, in the light of what we know about his reluctance to undertake any project which required sustained application, and his long-standing habit of procrastination, we may conclude that the novels would never have been written had it not been for Moore's patience, and the constant prodding which he gave to his dilatory collaborator. The themes and characters of the novels were as much Dowson's as Moore's; but it was the latter's hand which gave direction to the stories and fitted the parts into a unified whole. Nor was Moore inadequately equipped as a stylist. His short pieces in *The Yellow Book* indicate that he was not without a sensitivity of phrase and a talent for epithet, qualities which he shared with Dowson. "The homogeneity of style is, perhaps, to some extent explained by the fact that we both sat at the feet of the same authors," wrote Moore. "It was, in fact, the discovery that we were both enthusiastic about the earlier work of Henry James which first brought us together in our Oxford days."*

* From a letter from Arthur Moore to the editor, dated October 10, 1939.

Were it not for the frequently recurring passages of excellent prose, the novels would have little to distinguish them from the mass of fiction which has a deservedly ephemeral existence. There are descriptive passages, however, notably the description of Rainham's Dock and Brodonowski's† in *A Comedy of Masks* which are both authentic and vivid; and the picture of the Thames at night is of rare beauty. In *Adrian Rome,* the scenes in the *salons* of Lady Lancaster and her kind are mildly engaging in their illumination of fashionable literary gatherings in the Nineties, and the conversations of the artists and dilettantes make pleasant reading; but the writers' pens move with more sureness when their characters are removed from the *bon mot* of the drawing-room. There is little in their manner which is sparkling and witty. Although Dowson enjoyed epigram, and it is likely that Moore was appreciative of the glitter of phrase, they had none of the talent of Meredith and Wilde. Certainly Dowson, at least, cannot be called clever. A sincerity of purpose, characteristic of virtually everything he undertook, kept him from any temptation which might have presented itself to be humorous or smart. The best passages in the novels are those in which the authors tried to make articulate through their characters their own sentiments concerning art and life. The novels then become a sort of self-deliverance in which the manner is concise, spirited, and sincere.

Long before Dowson began to write *A Comedy of Masks* with Moore, he had written prose tales of short-story length for the magazines. In January 1888, while he was still at Oxford, "Souvenirs of an Egoist" appeared in *Temple Bar.* During the long vacation before the winter of 1888, he wrote to his friend Thomas that he had several pieces under way. What these efforts were we cannot determine, for Dowson evidently kept no notebook for his prose similar to the "Poesie Schublade" in which he preserved much of his verse. It is possible that they were the beginnings of the stories which later *Macmillan's Magazine* and the *Century Guild Hobby Horse* were to print; but it is more likely that the pieces did not measure up to the high critical standards he had already established, and he put them aside, as he did with much of his early verse. Five tales appeared in print by

* From a letter from Arthur Moore to the editor, dated September 16, 1939.

† Rainham's Dock was undoubtedly drawn from Bridge Dock, Limehouse, the drydock which had been in the Dowson family for several generations, and at which Dowson worked as a bookkeeper. Brodonowski's was similar to "Poland," the restaurant in Soho where Dowson saw Adelaide Foltinowicz.

January 1893, and four of these he sent to John Lane and Elkin Mathews in the hope that they would issue them in a handsomely bound volume with illustrations by Aubrey Beardsley. Months passed before Lane got around to them, finally to inform Dowson that the tales were not of sufficient length to make a volume. In an undated letter, Dowson replied to the publishers:

Bridge Dock
Limehouse E.

Dear Sirs

I am obliged for your letter with reference to my stories. Would you kindly let me know how much more material you would require to make up a volume uniform with "Keynotes"?* There is a story of mine, recently published in the "Hobby Horse"† which I could include, if it should meet your approval—and I have one story nearly completed, and another, unpublished, which I could send you shortly.

If this would not be sufficient, I am afraid I should not be able to add anything more until the Summer, for I am at present engaged upon a translation, which occupies, and will occupy, all my time until the beginning of May.‡ If you would prefer the matter to stand over till then I could no doubt manage to add a few more. The two new stories I propose sending you are both rather longer than the longest of those now in your hands. The story in the "Hobby Horse," however, is not more than 2,500 words.

Yours faithfully,
Ernest Dowson.

Lane's decision to return the tales to Dowson until additional stories were submitted was dependent largely on Richard Le Gallienne's reader's report. G. B. Burgin and Clemence Housman also read the stories for Lane, and apparently their judgments were similar in substance to Le Gallienne's, who on February 15, 1894, returned the manuscripts to Lane with the following report:

Souvenirs of an Egoist, etc., by Ernest Dowson.

Mr. Dowson applies very delicate literary treatment to somewhat hackneyed themes—at least in the case of two of his stories "The Souvenirs of an Egoist" and "The Story of a Violin." The great musical composer who started life as an organ-grinder, the second violin in an orchestra, next to unknown, who was

* *Keynotes* was the title of a collection of stories by George Egerton. The book attained such wide circulation that Lane decided to issue a "Keynotes" series among which such works as Arthur Machen's *The Great God Pan*, Ella D'Arcy's *Monochromes*, and Fiona Macleod's *The Mountain Lovers* were published.

† This was "The Statute of Limitations," printed in January 1893.

‡ It was during this time that Dowson was translating Zola's *La Terre*.

once the guardian and tutor of the fashionable prima-donna (like little Bows in Pendennis) are very old acquaintances in fiction. In much of Dowson and Moore's "Comedy of Masks" one was struck by the same conventionalism of theme and freshness of treatment. However, if these well-known types have been done before, they have seldom been done better. Of the other two, "A Case of Conscience" is very much in the manner of Mr. Wedmore's "Pastorals"—"A Last Love at Portici," for example—delicate, vague, is generally "nice," but amounting to little. "The Diary of a Successful Man" is probably the most original—but the title certainly should be changed. It is a rough and ready label, with no true relation to the story. "The Story of a Violin" is also an unfortunate title, as nothing is more hackneyed than the conventional Stradivarius story, the title will inevitably suggest. "Souvenirs of an Egoist" is a *taking* title, & so, I suppose, had better be left, but it suggests far more than the story fulfills.

On the whole, having regard for the general delicacy of the treatment, and *the success of "Comedy of Masks"* (which was not a consideration when I first read these stories) I would advise you to accept these as installment of a volume (they are not big enough to make one themselves) with the proviso that the stories to come should be more striking, more original in theme—not less so, not mere makeweight—than these under consideration.

It was not until 1895 that Lane and Mathews issued a collection of Dowson's tales under the title *Dilemmas: Stories and Studies in Sentiment.** The story which Dowson had mentioned in his letter to Lane, "The Statute of Limitations," which had appeared in the *Century Guild Hobby Horse* in January 1893, was the only addition to the four manuscripts originally submitted. His story "Apple Blossom in Brittany," which appeared in the *Yellow Book* in October 1894, was not included, possibly owing to the fact that it had appeared so recently in a magazine.

Although the format of the book was disappointing to Dowson—there were no illustrations by Beardsley, and the paper and binding were the cheapest that ever came out of the house of Elkin Mathews—the reception which greeted *Dilemmas* was for the most part encouraging.† Numerous reviews appeared soon after the volume was issued, in some of which—notably the article in the *Pall Mall*—the reviewers were commendatory

* On November 18, 1894, Dowson wrote to Arthur Symons:
"My dear Symons,
Did I meet you the other night at the Temple or did I dream it? I am just going off to visit Elkin Mathews. I am wavering between 'Blind Alleys' and 'Sentimental Dilemmas' as a title for my stories. . . ."

† The sale of the volume was slight. In Mathews' handwriting on an undated letter of Dowson's in which the author inquired about his royalties, there is the notation: "July 10/95 sent 3/10 making 7/10/0 altogether." The book had been available for six months.

without being discerning. The critic in the *Daily Chronicle* wrote to the point when he observed:

> Mr. Dowson embodies with great skill and charm the conception of life as "a series of moments and emotions" and of certain crises arising therefrom which have an artistic interest of their own largely independent of the longer "story" of which they form a part.

It is no doubt true that the chief appeal of the tales is largely independent of the longer story.

The pieces which appeared in the *Yellow Book* and the *Savoy* Dowson never collected, although he thought highly of them. They survive in the magazines in which they first appeared; and in reprintings in such collections as the *Bibelot,* Edward J. O'Brien's *Great Modern English Stories,* and T. B. Mosher's *Studies in Sentiment*—a title borrowed from Dowson—they have an isolated and somewhat obscure existence. They represent his finest work in prose. Like the stories in *Dilemmas,* they are not short stories in the usual sense of the term. Stories they can hardly be called: they illustrate a form which is virtually a *genre* unto itself. "Studies in Sentiment," the subtitle which Dowson gave to the collection *Dilemmas,* is perhaps as expressive a label for his short prose pieces as any that can be produced. They show little integration of character, setting, and plot in order to attain a unity of effect. In fact, they are devoid of real plot, of dramatic development, and stirring action. Furthermore, the characters are generally vague. His men and women are figures rather than characters, and as such they bear a faint resemblance to Hawthorne's. They are rarely exhibited in the full career of action. The action is either in the past or implied for the future; the present rarely comes into bold relief. Most of the space is taken up by a flash-back into the past, leaving the present without action save the results of events in the past. All the tales are subdued in color, like paintings in *grisaille,* even when springtime in Brittany provides the setting. They are chaste, restrained records of suffering, of devotion to an ideal, and unselfishness, with nothing of the yarn-spinner's gusto, and with little on which the reader can take a firm grasp. They linger in the memory only vaguely, for there is nothing in their development which stands out concretely and boldly. To retell them in summary is somehow to lose not only their manner but their substance. A frequent flash-like intensity of feeling and a fragile beauty of manner characterize these pieces and account in part for their appeal.

In spite of the fact that the smooth-flowing quality of the style is often

arrested by gratuitous punctuation, the manner attains distinction consistently. Plarr observed that "in his prose, on which he set extreme value, there is sometimes an apparent touch of labour and preciosity. There are petulant Gallicisms, for instance, set down with deliberation. He was fond of quoting Flaubert—was it Flaubert?—who sat long in meditation in front of a blackboard with alternative words chalked thereon. Dowson would have had me believe that he, too, pondered the *mot juste* for hours." That he pondered the *mot juste* is adequately proved by examining the revisions he made in his stories between the time they appeared in the magazines and later in *Dilemmas;* but the total effect is never one of labor, much less of ornateness. He had his character Adrian Rome remark: ". . . he had reproached himself with offences against his passion for style, believing that he had, in a measure, succeeded in the constant endeavor to be classically fine, without 'preciousness,' or merely ornate writing, to be simple, inevitable, precise." The style becomes rich without approaching heaviness; the adjectives never outweigh the images they are designed to create, nor are the effects in any way overwrought. The "petulant Gallicisms" of which Plarr spoke are there, but these mild blemishes—if they are blemishes—are outweighed by the rich cadences in many of the passages and by the author's unfailing restraint.

The fourteen pieces included in this volume indicate a wider range of interest, theme, and style than is generally attributed to Dowson. Although there is no marked change or development in his manner in the narratives which were written after *Dilemmas* appeared, in the short pieces in *Decorations: In Verse and Prose* (1899), all apparently written after the demise of the *Savoy,* he is no longer concerned with story-telling. It is possible that he had come to recognize his inability to write narratives with vivid characterization and compelling plot, but it is more likely that the lyric poet ultimately overcame the writer of tales. Robert Sherard recalled how Dowson in his last years was more and more inclined toward the belief that poetry may and often does exist in prose. In fact, the original title of *Decorations* was *Love's Aftermath: Poems in Verse and Prose.* It was in the pieces in which he was not burdened by the necessity of telling a sustained story that Dowson did his finest work in prose. "The Dying of Francis Donne," "Absinthia Taetra," and "The Visit" are unmistakably poetic. To bring such pieces to the reader, and to assemble the heretofore scattered narratives into one volume justify, I hope, this collection of Dowson's prose.

The order in which I have placed the works is chronological in so far as

the time of writing can be determined. Thus, "Souvenirs of an Egoist," which appeared in *Temple Bar* in January 1888, is placed first, in spite of the fact that "The Diary of a Successful Man," which did not appear in *Macmillan's Magazine* until February 1890, is placed first in *Dilemmas*. Although Dowson gave much attention to the order in which he placed his poems in *Verses*, in the arrangement of his prose as it appears in *Dilemmas* and *Decorations* it is difficult to see any plan. Since there is no means of determining the time of writing of the prose pieces in *Decorations*, I have preserved the order in the book. I should like to place "The Visit" last instead of "The Princess of Dreams"; but since Dowson for no apparent reason preferred this arrangement, I have decided against making any change.

The texts which I have followed preserve Dowson's preferences in instances in which there is an indication of choice. Thus the five tales originally appearing in magazines, which Dowson revised for *Dilemmas*, follow the texts of the collection. The pieces from *Decorations* follow the first edition issued by Smithers in 1899. The proofs for *Decorations*, in the collection of Mr. J. Harlin O'Connell, indicate that Dowson made only one trifling change in the prose section. The remaining tales follow the only existing texts, the magazines in which they originally appeared.

M. L.

Cynwyd, Pennsylvania
December 1946

NOTES

So many trifling variations appear in the narratives in *Dilemmas* and their original printings in *Temple Bar, Macmillan's Magazine,* and the *Century Guild Hobby Horse* that an exhaustive collation of the texts is neither practicable nor necessary. A half-hundred changes appear, for example, in the text of "Souvenirs of an Egoist" in *Dilemmas* and its printing in *Temple Bar.* The differences are largely in punctuation, to which Dowson evidently attached a great deal of importance. A comparison of the versions and texts of both his poems and prose indicates a scrupulous weighing of the effects which could be attained by the use or deletion of a comma, or the substitution of a semicolon for a colon. At times it would seem that in his prose his inclination was to eliminate as much punctuation as possible without impairing the meaning; but this tendency was not consistently applied. The same lack of consistency is evident in the occasional substitution of English words for French words in italic type. General adjectives and names of places at times give way to more specific terms, but just as often the specific yields to the general. As a result, no conclusions can be drawn concerning the development of his style.

When comparing Dowson texts, one should bear in mind that he was very dilatory in reading and returning proof, especially after 1895; and that some of the manuscripts submitted to Smithers for the *Savoy* were never offered to Dowson in proof when the magazine was about to go to press. Smithers and his staff, including Symons, made the changes they considered necessary without consulting Dowson who, during the heyday of the *Savoy,* spent most of his time in France. A careful comparison of the two manuscripts of *The Pierrot of the Minute* with the version Smithers issued in 1897 shows many signs of Smithers' questionable handiwork. In no instance in the prose in which there are variant texts available are the changes of sufficient importance to affect either the theme or the manner of the pieces; and, as a result, they have not been tabulated.

From the time that he left Bridge Dock, Limehouse, in 1895, Dowson was constantly moving about with nothing more than a shabby suitcase to keep his belongings in; and the quarters he occupied were rarely sufficiently commodious to store away manuscripts and rough drafts, even had he been inclined to preserve them. In the early Nineties he kept much of his verse in a notebook which he called his "Poesie Schublade"; but with illness and despair attending him at every turn, he made little effort to keep anything which was not of immediate necessity. Transcription had always been irksome to him; and with disease and ill fortune undermining his energy and ambition, he became negligent in making duplicate copies of his work and in preserving original manuscripts. Much as he valued his prose, he had reached a stage in the late Nineties in which he was little concerned with providing posterity with collectors' items.

Many of the manuscripts he submitted to Smithers were never returned to him; and on his brief visits to London he was more interested in his promised remuneration than in getting them back. The demise of the *Savoy* and later of Smithers, with no responsible successor to preserve the accumulated store, accounts for the disappearance and probable destruction of much that Dowson and others submitted. When Robert Sherard found Dowson dying in the garret on Euston Road, he had only a partially finished translation of a French story among his literary effects; and Smithers, upon being questioned about Dowson's belongings after the poet's death, answered that he had paid Dowson in full and that he had nothing to pass over to his relatives. The few extant manuscripts of Dowson's prose probably were picked up by the poet's friends before the dissolution of the House of Smithers. One of them has turned up in a New York bookshop, and some may be in the collection of the late Sir Hugh Walpole; but most of the reports concerning the whereabouts of this or that manuscript have turned out to be unattested rumors.

Although the narratives are tenuous in theme, their interpretation is apparent to one who is familiar with the facts in Dowson's life during the stages in which the stories were written. It was no mere formality on Dowson's part when he dedicated the tales in *Dilemmas* and his story "The Eyes of Pride" to Adelaide Foltinowicz. She was the "Missie" of his letters, the little Polish girl whose innocence made conquest of his heart. He was in love with Adelaide, despite the disparity in their ages and stations, and seriously planned to marry her. His dallying, caused in large measure by ill health, the tragic and untimely death of his parents, and the lack of complete faith in his ideal, led her in time to marry the waiter in her father's Soho restaurant. During the years of his irregular courtship, he returned again and again to the beauty of innocence as the theme for his poems and stories. In fact, even before he met Adelaide, in such a sequence as the "Sonnets of a Little Girl" and his prose tales "Souvenirs of an Egoist" and "A Case of Conscience," the ennobling power of innocence, especially as it is found in little girls, was the controlling sentiment. There can be little doubt that "Apple Blossom in Brittany," "The Eyes of Pride," and the short lyric tale "The Princess of Dreams" were related to Dowson's love for Adelaide. Nor can such pieces as "Absinthia Taetra," "The Dying of Francis Donne," and "The Visit" fail to invite autobiographical interpretation, for their themes have a clear parallel in Dowson's life. In these instances, I have pointed out the relationship which possibly existed between passages in Dowson's life and his stories.

SOUVENIRS OF AN EGOIST. Appeared first in *Temple Bar,* January 1888. Reprinted in *Dilemmas* (1895) as the fourth narrative. No MS version is known to me. Numerous changes appear in the later text, none of which has particular significance in its bearing on the theme and manner of the story. Although Dowson's tendency in the later pieces was to delete as much punctuation as was compatible with clarity, the text in *Temple Bar* is more sparsely punctuated

than that in *Dilemmas*. Written while Dowson was at Queen's College, Oxford, this is his first prose study in the beauty of innocence. It is Ninette, the gamine, who gives the egoist Anton his most cherished souvenir. "'Souvenirs of an Egoist' is a *taking* title," said Richard Le Gallienne, ". . . but it suggests far more than the story fulfills." Although the theme is somewhat disappointing, the style is comparable to that in his most mature prose.

THE DIARY OF A SUCCESSFUL MAN. Appeared first in *Macmillan's Magazine*, February 1890. Reprinted in *Dilemmas* (1895) as the first narrative. No MS version is known to me. As Le Gallienne pointed out, it is perhaps the most original of the tales in *Dilemmas*. It is difficult to see an appropriateness in the title. The setting is Bruges, where Dowson spent several weeks in the autumn of 1889. There is little in the story, however, which shows a penetrating observation of Flemish local color. Bruges is only a vague background. It was soon after he had finished this story that Dowson became a Roman Catholic. There are many references to the Church in the story, and an obvious regard for the beauty of the ritual. As with the character Lorimer, the Church "seems in some of its more somber aspects to exercise an extraordinary fascination over him."

AN ORCHESTRAL VIOLIN. Appeared first in *Macmillan's Magazine* in August 1891 under the title "The Story of a Violin." Reprinted in *Dilemmas* (1895) with many minor changes as the third narrative. No MS version is known to me. The background of music in the story, more pronounced than that in "Souvenirs of an Egoist," indicates familiarity with the idiom and art of the profession. Dowson's interest in music was never profound; he attended concerts and operas as a young man just down from Oxford; but by the time Noël Johnson produced a musical setting for "The Moon Maiden's Song" from *The Pierrot of the Minute*, Dowson showed a preference for such music halls as Bullier's. He never requested a copy of Johnson's composition. Granville Bantock's musical setting for *The Pierrot of the Minute* was not composed until after Dowson's death.

A CASE OF CONSCIENCE. Appeared first in the *Century Guild Hobby Horse*, April 1891. Reprinted in *Dilemmas* (1895) as the second narrative. No MS version is known to me. Le Gallienne compared this tale to Sir Frederic Wedmore's "A Last Love at Portici" in *Pastorals in France* (1877). Dowson read and admired Wedmore's *Pastorals*, but there is no pronounced similarity to Wedmore's story in either theme or style. In comparing the two authors, Edward J. O'Brien stated that Wedmore's "fabric is most often less pliable than that of Dowson."

THE STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS. Appeared first in the *Century Guild Hobby Horse*, January 1893. Reprinted in *Dilemmas* (1895) as the fifth story.

This was the only addition to the four tales originally submitted to Lane and Mathews. Few changes appear in the two texts, probably owing to the fact that the story was the last which appeared in a magazine before *Dilemmas* was printed. No MS version is known to me. Michael Garth's problem in the story has a parallel in Dowson's attachment for Adelaide Foltinowicz. The story illuminates and supplements the "Sonnets of a Little Girl" and the other poems in which the beauty of innocence is the theme.

APPLE BLOSSOM IN BRITTANY. Appeared in the *Yellow Book*, October 1894. No MS version is known to me. It was reprinted in T. B. Mosher's collection *Studies in Sentiment*, Portland, Maine, 1915. It was Dowson's only piece—in either verse or prose—in the *Yellow Book*. According to Robert Sherard, Dowson preferred to submit his work to Herbert Horne, editor of the *Century Guild Hobby Horse*, rather than to Henry Harland of the *Yellow Book*. Horne often attended the meetings of the Rhymers' Club and the gatherings at the Fitzroy settlement when Dowson was active in these circles. He printed two of Dowson's tales and much of his verse, including "Non sum qualis eram bonae sub regno Cynarae." With the controversies which raged over the morals of the *Yellow Book* Dowson was neither connected nor concerned.

That Campion's love for Marie-Ursule in the story was essentially Dowson's for innocent girlhood may readily be observed, especially in the light of what he had written in his earlier pieces, and of what we know about his love for Adelaide. It is idle to try to identify Dowson too strictly with Campion in the story, but many of the thoughts that Campion expressed concerning the simplicity and guilelessness he found in Marie-Ursule were undoubtedly Dowson's own. Furthermore, Campion's decision to encourage Marie-Ursule to become a nun so that her innocence would never be sullied and so that he might always retain the image of the young girl illuminates much of Dowson's attitude toward Adelaide. Not long before the story was issued, he had written to Plarr about Adelaide:

> *Die Kleine* instead of changing, altering, repelling, as I feared/hoped might happen, in the nature of things, seems to grow in grace and favour daily. What a terrible, lamentable thing growth is! It "makes me mad" to think that in a year or two at most the most perfect exquisite relation I ever succeeded in making must naturally end. Yes, it makes me mad. One ought to be able to cease caring for anyone exactly when one wishes; it's too difficult: or one ought to be able to live directly in the present. . . .

THE EYES OF PRIDE. Appeared in the first issue of the *Savoy*, January 1896. There is a MS version of fifteen large foolscap pages at present in the Argus Book Shop, 3 West 46th Street, New York, in which many corrections in Dowson's hand appear. This story was reprinted in the *Bibelot*, 1912, Volume 18; and in T. B. Mosher's collection, *Studies in Sentiment*, 1915. Dowson contributed to all of the issues of the *Savoy* except the last number, to which Arthur

Symons alone contributed the literary contents. Symons was the literary editor, Beardsley the art editor, and Smithers the managing editor. Dowson was one of the mainstays of the magazine during its brief but brilliant existence.

The lines of George Meredith are from *Modern Love,* XXIV. The story was dedicated to A.F.—Adelaide Foltinowicz. Its autobiographical significance should not be carried too far, but it must at least be recognized. When the story appeared, few of its readers knew anything about the "A.F." to whom it was dedicated. Dowson and Adelaide had quarreled before his leaving for Paris, and to him it was only their pride which was keeping them apart. There is much of Dowson in the character Seefang. The story was not whipped off in order to give Symons and Smithers the promised contribution to their new magazine, but was written out of his own distress, with the thought that there would be a time when Adelaide would read it and understand. He thought highly of the story, for in a letter to Edgar Jepson he wrote: "I have sent off my story . . . and am tolerably satisfied with it—in fact it is the best I have done—except perhaps that in the 'Yellow Book.' "

COUNTESS MARIE OF THE ANGELS. Appeared in the *Savoy,* April 1896. No MS version is known to me. It was reprinted in the *Bibelot,* 1912, Volume 18; and in T. B. Mosher's collection *Studies in Sentiment,* 1915. The story was dedicated to Jean de Tinan, a French poet who died quite young, with whom Dowson moved about during his first winter in Paris. It is the weakest of Dowson's contributions to the *Savoy.* The "petulant Gallicisms" of which Plarr spoke are here in abundance. The use of French terms is understandable, if not altogether justifiable, when it is borne in mind that Dowson had been living in France for months before the story was written.

THE DYING OF FRANCIS DONNE. Appeared in the *Savoy,* August 1896. No MS version is known to me. Reprinted in the *Bibelot,* 1912, Volume 18; in Mosher's collection, *Studies in Sentiment,* 1915; and in Edward J. O'Brien's *Great Modern English Stories,* 1919. Only the most flexible definition of the short story allows for its inclusion in such a collection, but its power can scarcely be overestimated. O'Brien said: ". . . it is essentially the work of a bookish man who loved old English prose, but whose craving for sensations engendered a unique hyperaesthesia. The story is a remarkable contribution to the literature of sensibility, and pulses with a rhythm which follows with great precision the slightest nervous channel of his thought." Mr. Norris Getty wrote to me on June 24, 1945: "It has been ten years since I read 'The Dying of Francis Donne,' but the feeling of death that Dowson created is still far too vividly memorable for comfort. By comparison, 'The Turn of the Screw' is material for the *Woman's Home Companion.*" In the light of what Dowson was experiencing at the time immediately before the study appeared, and what was to follow, "The Dying of Francis Donne" becomes not only a penetrating study in the psychology of

the contemplation of death, but a searching revelation of Dowson's attitude as well. The study was not written out of a "craving for sensations" which would engender "a unique hyperaesthesia." No doubt Dowson experienced all of the sensations he recorded—and more. Anyone who wishes to know the essential voice of Dowson at the time when his dread malady was tightening its grip should reflect on the significance of this record.

". . . quia pulvis es et in pulverem reverteris" is taken from the Vulgate translation of Genesis 3:19. When the composers of the Catholic Missal compiled the Missal, they used this passage with a preceding "Memento homo" for the Imposition of Ashes in the Ash Wednesday service.

THE FORTUNATE ISLANDS. Appeared for the first time in the prose section of *Decorations: in Verse and Prose* (1899). No MS versions of any of the prose pieces in *Decorations* are known to me. The proofs of both the verse and prose are in the collection of Mr. J. Harlin O'Connell. One change is penciled in the proofs: in Paragraph 2, "any dreaming" is corrected to "my dreaming." Dowson constantly sought escape from the world and himself by changing his environment. Apparently in time he realized that a change of scene produced only temporary benefits, and that "the fortunate islands" were not man's lot. The sentiment of the piece is an amplification of two lines of verse which Desmond Flower included in his section of Dowson's hitherto unpublished poems:

> In vein (sic) we cross the seas change lands,
> In search of that we know not.

MARKETS. Appeared first in *Decorations.* It has no counterpart in Dowson's works. The apparent naïveté of the maid is entirely foreign to the sweet innocence of the girls in most of the stories. At best, the piece is a trifle which leads the reader to question its right to be included in a collection which holds such poetic prose as "The Visit."

ABSINTHIA TAETRA. Appeared first in *Decorations.* It is a sort of "Confessions of an English Absinthe Drinker." In the light of Dowson's familiarity with absinthe the piece cannot be dismissed as a rhetorical exercise. Frequently during the winter of 1897 Dowson must have experienced all of that which the prose poem records. He drank to excess not because he liked the squalid and the evil but, like many another, because he was ill in body and soul.

THE VISIT. Appeared for the first time in *Decorations.* In spite of the fact that Dowson tried to leave the impression with many of his acquaintances that his illnesses were only trifling, he himself knew how grave the malady was from which he suffered. Both of his parents were tuberculous, and his only brother, Rowland, died of consumption. Like his character Francis Donne, his awareness of approaching death became increasingly poignant: he knew he was going to die "in a few months, in six perhaps, and certainly in a year." This

knowledge stimulated and depressed him in turn. During the winter of 1898, when he, like Keats, had fears that he might cease to be, he drove himself to work until his feeble body could stand no more; and there were times, when the charcoal smoldered low and a great weariness came over him, that he looked into the countenance of the visitor who had come to him on lonely, anguished nights, and said, "I have wanted you all my life."

THE PRINCESS OF DREAMS. Appeared first in *Decorations*. This allegory was doubtless written after Adelaide had spurned Dowson's love and married Auguste, the waiter at "Poland," the Soho restaurant. According to rumor, her marriage brought her small happiness. Some of Dowson's acquaintances, out of humor with his attachment, reported that her innocence was sullied long before he lost her; but whenever he spoke of her, he defended her. In *Contemporary Portraits* (Second Series), Frank Harris reported a conversation which he had had with Dowson soon after Adelaide's marriage.

"You can find a dozen finer gems, incomparably more lustrous, more . . ." Harris insisted.

"More to your taste, I dare say," said Dowson, "not to mine. Can't you see that I loved her just because you and the others could find nothing in her. . . ."

This tale, however, may be interpreted by some as evidence that Dowson was finally willing to believe that the tower was not of ivory and that Adelaide was neither virtuous nor a princess.