

ERNEST DOWSON

“Vain Resolves” (1891)

I said: “There is an end of my desire:
 Now have I soon, and I have harvested,
And these are ashes of an ancient fire,
 Which, verily, shall not be quickened.
Now will I take me to a place of peace,
 Forget mine heart’s desire;
In solitude and prayer, work out my soul’s release.

“I shall forget her eyes, how cold they were;
 Forget her voice, how soft it was and low,
With all my singing that she did not hear,
 And all my service that she did not know.
I shall not hold the merest memory
 Of any days that were,
Within those solitudes where I will fasten me.”

And once she passed, and once she raised her eyes,
 And smiled for courtesy, and nothing said:
And suddenly the old flame did uprise,
 And all my dead desire was quickened.
Yea! as it hath been, it shall ever be,
 Most passionless, purer eyes!
Which never shall grow soft, nor change, nor pity me.