

## The Lonely Idol

I had from a friend an old outlandish stone, a little swine-faced idol to whom no one prayed.

And when I saw his melancholy case as he sat cross-legged at receipt of prayer, holding a little scourge that the years had broken (and no one heeded the scourge and no one prayed and no one came with squealing sacrifice; and he had been a god), then I took pity on the little forgotten thing and prayed to it as perhaps they prayed long since, before the coming of the strange dark ships, and humbled myself and said:

“O idol, idol of the hard pale stone, invincible to the years, O scourge-holder, give ear for behold I pray.

“O little pale-green image whose wanderings are from far, know thou that here in Europe and in other lands near by, too soon there pass from us the sweets and song and the lion strength of youth: too soon do their cheeks fade, their hair grow grey and our beloved die; too brittle is beauty, too far off is fame and the years are gathered too soon; there are leaves, leaves falling, everywhere falling; there is autumn among men, autumn and reaping; failure there is, struggle, dying and weeping, and all that is beautiful hath not remained but is even as the glory of morning upon the water.

“Even our memories are gathered too with the sound of the ancient voices, the pleasant ancient voices that come to our ears no more; the very gardens of our childhood fade, and there dims with the speed of the years even the mind’s own eye.

“O be not any more the friend of Time, for the silent hurry of his malevolent feet have trodden down what’s

fairest; I almost hear the whimper of the years running behind him hound-like, and it takes few to tear us.

“All that is beautiful he crushes down as a big man tramples daisies, all that is fairest. How very fair are the little children of men. It is autumn with all the world, and the stars weep to see it.

“Therefore no longer be the friend of Time, who will not let us be, and be not good to him but pity us, and let lovely things live on for the sake of our tears.”

Thus prayed I out of compassion one windy day to the snout-faced idol to whom no one kneeled.