

"Easter, 1916"

By William Butler Yeats

*Transcription, correction, editorial commentary, and
markup by Students and Staff of the University of Virginia*

MICHAEL ROBARTES AND THE
DANCER, BY WILLIAM BUTLER
YEATS.

THE CUALA PRESS
CHURCHTOWN
DUDNRUM JUNE 1924

EASTER, 1916.

1 I have met them at close of day
1 Coming with vivid faces
2 From counter or desk among grey
3 Eighteenth-century houses.
4 I have passed with a nod of the head
5 Or polite meaningless words,
6 Or have lingered awhile and said
7 Polite meaningless words,
8 And thought before I had done
9 Of a mocking tale or a gibe
10 To please a companion
11 Around the fire at the club,
12 Being certain that they and I
13 But lived where motley is worn:
14 All changed, changed utterly:
15 A terrible beauty is born.

16 That woman's days were spent
17 In ignorant good-will,
18 Her nights in argument
19 Until her voice grew shrill.
20 What voice more sweet than hers
21 When, young and beautiful,
22 She rode to harriers?
23 This man had kept a school
24 And rode our winged horse;
25 This other his helper and friend

- 10 -

26 Was coming into his force;
27 He might have won fame in the end,
28 So sensitive his nature seemed,
29 So daring and sweet his thought.
30 This other man I had dreamed
31 A drunken, vain-glorious lout.
32 He had done most bitter wrong
33 To some who are near my heart,
34 Yet I number him in the song;
35 He, too, has resigned his part
36 In the casual comedy;

37 He, too, has been changed in his turn,
38 Transformed utterly:
39 A terrible beauty is born.

40 Hearts with one purpose alone
41 Through summer and winter seem
42 Enchanted to a stone
43 To trouble the living stream.
44 The horse that comes from the road,
45 The rider, the birds that range
46 From cloud to tumbling cloud,
47 Minute by minute they change;
48 A shadow of cloud on the stream
49 Changes minute by minute;
50 A horse-hoof slides on the brim,
51 And a horse plashes within it;
52 The long-legged moor-hens dive,
53 And hens to moor-cocks call.

- 11 -

54 Minute by minute they live:
55 The stone's in the midst of all.

56 Too long a sacrifice
57 Can make a stone of the heart.
58 O when may it suffice?
59 That is heaven's part, our part
60 To murmur name upon name,
61 As a mother names her child
62 When sleep at last has come
63 On limbs that had run wild.
64 What is it but nightfall?
65 No, no, not night but death;
66 Was it needless death after all?
67 For England may keep faith
68 For all that is done and said.
69 We know their dream; enough
70 To know they dreamed and are dead;
71 And what if excess of love
72 Bewildered them till they died?
73 I write it out in a verse—
74 MacDonagh and MacBride
75 And Connolly and Pearse
76 Now and in time to be,
77 Wherever green is worn,
78 Are changed, changed utterly:
79 A terrible beauty is born.

September 25th, 1916