

Élégie en prose

No. 9 of *Neuf Mélodies* (later renamed *Irlande*)

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French prose translation by Louise Belloc of English poem by Irishman Thomas Moore (1779-1852). The original poem, provided here, was inspired by Irish revolutionary Robert Emmet's "Speech on the Docks," a love-song to liberty as well as a beloved woman.

Élégie en prose

Paraphrase by Louise Belloc

1. Quand celui qui t'adore n'aura laissé
derrière lui
que le nom de sa faute et de ses douleurs,
oh! dis, pleureras-tu s'ils noircissent la
mémoire
d'une vie qui fut livrée pour toi?
Oui, pleure! Et quel que soit l'arrêt
de mes ennemis,
tes larmes l'effaceront.
Car le Ciel est témoin que, coupable envers
eux,
Je ne fus que trop fidèle pour toi.

2. Tu fus l'idole de mes rêves d'amour;
chaque pensée de ma raison t'appartenait.
Dans mon humble et dernière prière
ton nom sera mêlé avec le mien.
Oh! bénis soient les amis, oui, bénis soient
les amants
Qui vivront pour voir les jours de ta gloire!
Mais, après cette joie, la plus chère faveur
que puisse
accorder le Ciel,
c'est l'orgueil de mourir pour toi.

Elegy

Original poem by Thomas Moore

1. When he, who adores thee, has left but the
name
Of his fault and his sorrows behind,
Oh! Say wilt thou weep, when they darken
the fame
Of a life that for thee was resign'd!
Yes, weep, and however my foes may
condemn,
Thy tears shall efface their decree;
For, heaven can witness, though guilty to
them,
I have been but too faithful to thee!

2. With thee were the dreams of my earliest
love;
Every thought of my reason was thine:
In my last humble prayer to the Spirit above,
Thy name shall be mingled with mine!
Oh! blest are the lovers and friends who
shall live
The days of thy glory to see;
But the next dearest blessing
that heaven can give
Is the pride of thus dying for thee!

Note: Belloc's near-literal rendition of Moore's poem was sufficiently rhythmical and poetic to bear setting as is (Berlioz called the text "cadenced prose"). To set prose of any kind to music, however, was a highly rebellious gesture, fitting for the strikingly original music.

– Katherine Kolb