

# Poppies on Ludlow Castle

By Willa Cather

Through halls of vanished pleasure,  
And hold of vanished power,  
And crypt of faith forgotten,  
I came to Ludlow tower.

A-top of arch and stairway,  
Of crypt, and donjon cell,  
Of council hall, and chamber,  
Of wall, and ditch, and well.

High over grated turrets  
Where clinging ivies run,  
A thousand scarlet poppies  
Enticed the rising sun.

Upon the topmost tower,  
With death and damp below,—  
Three hundred years of spoilage,—  
The crimson poppies grow.

—This hall it was that bred him,  
These hills that knew him brave,  
The gentlest English singer  
That fills an English grave.—

How have they heart to blossom  
So cruel gay and red,  
When beauty so hath perished  
And valor so hath sped?

When knights so fair are rotten,  
And captains true asleep,  
And singing lips are dust-stopped  
Six English earth-feet deep?

When ages old remind me  
How much hath gone for naught,  
What wretched ghost remaineth  
Of all that flesh hath wrought;

Of love and song and warring,  
Of adventure and play,  
Of art and comely building,  
Of faith and form and fray,

I'll mind the flowers of pleasure,  
Of short-lived youth and sleep,  
That drank the sunny weather  
A-top of Ludlow keep.