

Parting

By Ian B. Stoughton Holborn

With silent lips, and full hearts, passion-stirred,
We watch the sands run low,
And hesitate to speak the final word,
Yet one of us must go.
And round us closes in the mist and rain,—
The long, unending chill of years of pain,—
We turn away and never meet again;
Must fate foredoom it so?

We turn away and never meet again:
Say, why must these things be?
Our sole reply, inexorably plain,
That things are as we see.
Our world is but a world of long good-byes,
O'er every meeting still the shadow lies
Of far-off watching with dull, straining eyes
Down endless hopes and vain.

And though, within the dark unrolling ways,
Some ghost may yet remain
Of what was you or I in earlier days,
WE cannot meet again:
It is not we,—we in our youth have fled,
Fled never to return; our youth is dead.
What hollow mockery is this instead
That cruel fates ordain?

Oh, LOVE,¹ thyself, dost thou no healing know?
Must thou still fight and fail?
Come pain, come death, come torture, every woe;—
Take all that may avail:
Our life, our soul, all other joys, and heap
Eternities of sorrows ages deep,
But give us each to each—thus much to keep,
And all the rest may go.

But no—farewell—one fevered kiss and strained,
Filled full with wild despair,
Until the blood starts back where white lips pained,

¹ Eros.

Close pressed as grief can bear,
One faint good-bye—then blank for evermore;
The world is cold, and nothing lies before;
And oh, the stillness, creeping o'er and o'er
The sad mist-laden air!