

**ROSE ACRE PAPERS:
INCLUDING
ESSAYS FROM
"HORAE SOLITARIAE"**

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Rose Acre papers: including essays from "Horae solitariae" by Edward Thomas

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EDWARD THOMAS

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ESSAYS FROM
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Rose Acre Papers

Including Essays from
"Horae Solitariae"

By

Edward Thomas

Author of
"Rest and Unrest"



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Most of the chapters in this book are reprinted from my "Horæ Solitariae," first published in 1902. "An Autumn House" and "Rain" formed part of a little book entitled "Rose Acre Papers." All were written between 1898 and 1901.

E. T.

Caryatids

THE oriel surveys an angular plain of roofs—
blue slate, auburn tile-work, grizzled stone—
and soaring thence a steeple, the clustered
masonry at its base inhabited and ever
guarded by sad crowned women, with faces
lifted skyward. Very likely these are saints,
perhaps martyrs; but I never heard their
legend from the pigeon that sways about
them, or the wind that sharpens the angles
of their faces. Night after night I see them,
and after many vigils, whilst bells are calling
to each other above us, and night closes over
the placid city, faces seen in the enchanted
past reappear, faces of men and women like
Caryatids, and close kin to these guardians
of the spire, among cloud and star. Nor

Caryatids

merely faces I have seen, but the long-enduring I have read of also. One by one—as I watch the queenly stone figures, wrought upon by the magic of distance and lofty place (nearer the stars than we!)—such faces emerge from the past, with more of the uncomplaining benedictionless. These are the Caryatids of life. Fearful burdens rest on their tender necks. Yet one sees not wherefore they should undergo so much, any more than should the Caryatids that bear mountains of carven stone. Silent, immobile, like Caryatids, their palms are crossed with tearless supplication on their bosoms. Children, too, are of their number. . . .

Go one humming May afternoon to the fields, along a sweet and wildsome pathway startled by your footfalls—from which you may fancy you hear the wounded note of a spirit of the spot escaping. Out of sight, bees are noisy in the willow top. On almost leafless blackthorns the blossom is delicate

Caryatids

like summer snow. And the foliage of lime and poplar is heavy scented, after rain; the blackbird's note is mellow for it. . . . Those children crowning themselves with coils of docile bryony, with flowers between, and now running toward a tuneless voice of command in the distance—they are Caryatids. Farther on, I used to meet an idiot, day after day, holding in leash a pair of divine, chestnut horses. He is kind, fraternally kind, to the field creatures; and they to him, in return. They are indeed his only pleasure, his sole interest. Also he is more truly related to them than you might think. Not one of their voices there is he will not copy—the whew of plovers, the bullfinch's delicate, internal soprano, the sob of unchilded otters—and especially the hiss of snakes. His sense of smell is fine and undecceivable. I never heard a sigh from him; for he seems to have no longings, no regrets; the source of tears has run dry, since the time when children baited and derided him pitilessly.