

**THE COLLECTED
WORKS OF WILLIAM
BUTLER YEATS**

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The collected works of William Butler Yeats by William Butler Yeats

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WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

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THE HOUR-GLASS:

A MORALITY

B

PERSONS IN THE PLAY

A WISE MAN

A FOOL

SOME PUPILS

AN ANGEL

THE WISE MAN'S WIFE AND TWO CHILDREN

THE HOUR-GLASS :

A MORALITY

A large room with a door at the back and another at the side, or else a curtained place where persons can enter by parting the curtains. A desk and a chair at one side. An hour-glass on a bracket or stand near the door. A creepy stool near it. Some benches. A WISE MAN sitting at his desk.

WISE MAN.

[Turning over the pages of a book.]

WHERE is that passage I am to explain to my pupils to-day? Here it is, and the book says that it was written by a beggar on the walls of Babylon: 'There are two living countries, the one visible and the one invisible; and when it is winter with us it is summer in that country, and when the November winds are up among us it is lambing-time there.' I wish that my pupils had asked me to explain any other passage. *[The FOOL comes in and stands at the door holding out his bat. He has a pair of shears in*

THE HOUR-GLASS

the other hand.] It sounds to me like foolishness; and yet that cannot be, for the writer of this book, where I have found so much knowledge, would not have set it by itself on this page, and surrounded it with so many images and so many deep colours and so much fine gilding, if it had been foolishness.

FOOL.

Give me a penny.

WISE MAN [*turns to another page*].

Here he has written: 'The learned in old times forgot the visible country.' That I understand, but I have taught my learners better.

FOOL.

Won't you give me a penny?

WISE MAN.

What do you want? The words of the wise Saracen will not teach you much.

FOOL.

Such a great wise teacher as you are will not refuse a penny to a fool.

WISE MAN.

What do you know about wisdom?

FOOL.

Oh, I know! I know what I have seen.

WISE MAN.

What is it you have seen?