

**OUT OF HOURS,  
POEMS, LYRICS  
AND SONNETS**

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Out of Hours, Poems, Lyrics and Sonnets by J. M. Stuart -Young

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**J. M. STUART -YOUNG**

**OUT OF HOURS,  
POEMS, LYRICS  
AND SONNETS**



BY THE SAME AUTHOR

VERSE :

THE SEDUCTIVE COAST

MINOR MELODIES

THE AFTER LIFE

THE ANTINOMIAN

PROSE :

PASSION'S PERIL

MERELY A NEGRESS

THE SOUL SLAYER

A CUPFUL OF KERNELS

THE DOOR OF DARKNESS

# OUT OF HOURS

POEMS LYRICS AND SONNETS



BY

J. M. STUART-YOUNG

88

LONDON

ARTHUR STOCKWELL, 29, LUDGATE HILL

1909

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by the Author*

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1909

MAIN

## DEDICATORY APOLOGY

My dear John Davidson,

I know of little that need be said in the way of apology for this book, of nothing indeed that can be said without an appearance of egotism. But you, dear friend, have read about one-half of the poems in manuscript; and your criticisms call for a meed of self-defence. I do not desire that the readers of "Out of Hours" should look upon me, after the book has been laid aside, as a deliberate and calculating worker in sensual word-mosaic. For, while the abnormality of my delight in Youth and Beauty is apparent to me (and has been so for many years) I have striven throughout these expressions of feeling to write with spontaneity and freedom.

I recall the conversation, three months before I left for the Tropics in 1908, which you accorded me at St. Ives. My admiration of you, as a writer of fantastic prose and haunting poetry, informed the whole of our intercourse—and you were generous enough to convey to me some degree of intelligence regarding the impulsive way in which you perform the greater part of your work. But you added slyly: "The true artist is sure carefully to revise his lines at leisure. For both sonnets and lyrics may be inspired—but they are best when they are guarded and polished, guarded and polished!"

I take it, then, on your authority, that a Sonnet is the least likely of all forms of poetic expression to be made "stiff" by revision and improvement. Even so, in the present case, I have not sought Perfection—impossible Ideal to even the greatest creator of thought! For, while I have invested my rhymes with all the grace available, I have also sought to study my fancies in a purely impersonal way, leaving them practically untouched after each emotion has reached its reasonable and comprehensive expression.

As you know, these poems were written under somewhat peculiar conditions, and in the Bush of West Africa. Nothing, I conceive, can be less suggestive of the pure ecstasy of a Spring Day in England than the depressing heat of a dense tropical



forest. On the other hand, the "Birth-Land of Night" (as some one of our West African writers has not inaptly called the Bush) lends the abstraction from worldly news, without which—shall we not assume?—the greater portion of our lyric lore would not exist.

Here, some reader will exclaim, maybe, is clearly a case of verse being written falsely; as no emotion can be true unless it belongs to the moment and the place, and is caught up instantly. The leaping shadows on the wall are not the fire, nor is the crested wave a genuine indication of the tide.

This standpoint, however, appears to me to be a fallacious one.

My fancies have been written down in widely different moods, and under varying circumstances, during the six months that I was cut off from all "white" conversation, in the despatch of logs from the Forest to the Coast. Only the arrival of mails, sometimes twice, occasionally only once, each month, served to break the monotony of rising, eating, working, and sleeping. Each one, of course, has had its root in actual experience or imagined adventure. The mind of yester-year, as it were, has acted as receiver—the thoughts being written thereon in sympathetic ink. Loneliness, suffering, relief, hunger, hope, terror, regret—each sensation has brought to the surface (EVOKED by the perusal of a letter from one dearly loved) an emotional record already impressed upon the brain.

Oftener than not the only materials for literary work, which were at my command, consisted of a pencil and the margin of a newspaper. Composed during the leisure of an evening, after the "boys" had been given their rations of rice and dried fish—each line reproduced from the dusty archives of some previous opal-coloured year—the completed poems were immediately placed in an envelope, and despatched to you, there to be retained until I should ask you for the return of the manuscript.

The copying out of the lines this month has been the mechanical occupation of an amanuensis, and (as previously stated) I have refrained from making alterations save where your own occasional emendations have impressed me as just.

Somewhere, in a more ambitious volume of mine, written in days when I was seriously courting the muse, I have written, "Beauty is the expression of individuality. Poetry is the flowering of the mind into rhythmic utterance, Prose the budding of the leaves. And, seeing how deeply an erotic spirit flavours natural

life, it is no wonder that the sweetest singers in any tongue are immeasurably sensuous."

The craftsman is always the craftsman, I suppose, possessing a faculty of self-criticism which is co-equal with that of the professional reviewer. Faults here are numerous, blemishes must be evident, ineptitudes frequent—to be quite frank, I am ashamed of my work . . . or, should I not condone that, and say of SOME of my work? The unhealthy ring of certain lines is obvious to me; the frenzy of others; the fatuity of others; but (*Dieu merci!*) the merit of others! I conclude that I always meant to publish the volume, though when I was working upon its contents, the occupation served merely as a palliative of my weariness, and an anodyne of my absolute loneliness of spirit.

Hence, I make no special appeal to the reader who has sympathy with my outlook. Having seen—*comme vous, mon cher ami*—my Ideal in flashes, at first with a mazed and faltering vision, but ever more clearly as my eyes have been purged by manhood and the variable experience, bitter and sweet, of the passing years, I do not hesitate to expect understanding and sympathy, even from the most pronounced of Philistines!

All expressions and experiences have their value, sensations their psychological significance. The only road along which we can travel to a true philosophy of life seems to me to lie in this humble study of one's own nature—capturing the diverse readings of the soul's phenomena, as they are forced upon the mind by that essence of the soul—memory!

Your own words are apropos:—

" My feet are heavy now, but on I go,  
My head erect beneath the tragic years;  
The way is steep, but I would have it so,  
And dusty, but I lay the dust with tears,  
Though none may see me weep: alone I climb  
The rocky path that leads me out of time—  
Out of time and out of all,  
Singing yet in sun and rain  
' Heel and toe from dawn to dusk,  
Round the world and home again.'

Farewell the hope that mocked, farewell despair  
That went before me still and made the pace,

The earth is full of graves, and mine was there  
 Before my life began, my resting-place;  
 And I shall find it out, and with the dead  
 Lie down for ever, all my sayings said,  
 Deeds all done, songs all sung,  
 While others chant in sun and rain,  
 ' Heel and toe from dawn to dusk,  
 Round the world and home again.' "

This is truth—or the truth so far as any man can write it about himself, or about the race to which he belongs!

Many of your keenest admirers were displeased by the result of such extreme candour. Personally, I revere your books the more—and it is in the same spirit that I would have my own poor verses received.

I shall protest no further. To you it is unnecessary—and as for the General Public . . . Well, no one is asked to buy my book, so that I must beg leave to be excused!

Better fortune, dear J. D., and that "peace of mind which passeth all understanding."

Your devoted

West Africa,  
 Spring, 1909.

J. M. STUART-YOUNG.

NOTE.—Since I wrote the Dedicatory letter quoted above, the mysterious disappearance and death of John Davidson has added yet another tragedy to the long list of Disappointed Genius. I am reluctant to withdraw any part of my apology; nor do I care to add anything to what I have already written. Perhaps a significant sentence from my letter to "The Saturday Review," May 29th, 1909, would not be superfluous.

I quote verbatim: ". . . the painfully obvious and oft-stated fact that at no time during the last half-century (to go no further back) has any man had a right to expect a living out of poetry."

It behoves all lovers of true verse to awaken to a sense of their responsibilities! In the hands of book-buyers—and book-buyers only—lies the remedy of John Davidson's despairing suicide.

Autumn, 1909.