

# **POEMS & PARODIES**

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Poems & parodies by T. M. Kettle

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**T. M. KETTLE**

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BY

T. M. KETTLE

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Henrietta Street, Covent Garden

1916

## TOM KETTLE

1880-1916

Two simple words, charged now for some of us with sad and infinite memories. It is not the death of the Professor, nor of the soldier, nor of the politician—nor even of the poet or the essayist—that causes the heart-ache that we feel. It is the loss of that rare, charming, wondrous personality summed up in those two simple words, **TOM KETTLE**.

A genial cynic, a pleasant pessimist, an earnest trifter, he was made up of contradictions. A fellow of infinite jest—and infinite sadness. His prototypes were Hamlet or the Melancholy Jacques. Among the delightful essays he has left us in that charming little book, *The Day's*

<sup>17</sup>  
*Burden*, is one entitled "A new way of misunderstanding *Hamlet*." He was himself a veritable Hamlet in this twentieth century Ireland. One may ask, did he quite understand himself? Master of paradox, enunciator of enigma, he was a paradox and an enigma in, and to, himself. Shall we seek now to pluck out the heart of his mystery? The lines are hackneyed beyond hope, but in this instance they apply in truth.

The personality of Kettle had in it something subtle; something essential yet elusive; something not to be defined. He was a great talker in the Johnsonian sense. As a story-teller, it was not so much the point of his tale that counted as his telling of it. The divagations from the text in which he loved to indulge were the delight of his auditors. With truth it may be said that his rich humour, his brilliant, mordant wit, caused his listeners to hang upon his words. And his

outlook was so wide, his soul so big, his mind so broad, and a deep love of humanity so permeated him that his talk, or one might more fittingly say, his discourse, was educating and uplifting. But he was a man of moods, descending from heights of Homeric humour to the depths of a divine despair. Those privileged to hear him thus expounding will cherish the memory while they live. We, too, as it were, have "seen Shelley plain." He charmed, he fascinated. This, in truth, describes him for his spell wrought even on those who actually disliked him.

In the numerous notices printed of him since he died much has been written of the promise of his career. More appropriate it would be to write of his performance. He crowded into thirty-six years of life far more than most men achieve in twice that span. Now the orator is silent, the brilliant wit has ceased to sparkle,



the skilful pen will ply no more. Tom Kettle knows at last the answer to the riddle that baffled him, the Riddle of the Universe.

Well may we mourn—

*For Lycidas is dead ;  
Young Lycidas : dead ere his prime,  
And hath not left his peer.*

WILLIAM DAWSON.

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
<b>PERSONAL</b>	
Dedication Sonnet: To my Wife ...	13
To my daughter Betty, the gift of God ...	15
On Leaving Ireland ...	17
Epigram ...	18
<b>EARLY POEMS</b>	
To Young Ireland ...	21
Sowing ...	24
Dreams and Duty ...	26
A Song of Vengeance ...	29
<b>TRANSLATIONS</b>	
At Achensee, Tirol ...	33
The Monks ...	36
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>	
The Lady of Life ...	43
When others see us as we see ourselves ...	45
Ennui ...	47
Ballad Autumnal ...	48
The Lost Ball ...	51

			PAGE
	POLITICAL		
Parnell	... ..	...	55
The House of Lords : An Epitaph	...	...	58
Reason in Rhyme	... ..	...	61
Asquith in Dublin	... ..	...	67
Ulster	... ..	...	69
To Ireland	... ..	...	72
	WAR POEMS		
Paddy	... ..	...	75
Sergeant Mike O'Leary	... ..	...	79
A Nation's Freedom	... ..	...	80
A Song of the Irish Armies	... ..	...	84

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