W. B. Yeats's "Adam's Curse" (Nov. 1902; 1902, 1903)

We sat together at one summer's end, That beautiful mild woman, your close friend, And you and I, and talked of poetry. I said: "A line will take us hours maybe; Yet if it does not seem a moment's thought, 5 Our stitching and unstitching has been naught. Better go down upon your marrow-bones And scrub a kitchen pavement, or break stones Like an old pauper, in all kinds of weather; 10 For to articulate sweet sounds together Is to work harder than all these, and yet Be thought an idler by the noisy set Of bankers, schoolmasters, and clergymen The martyrs call the world." 15 And thereupon That beautiful mild woman for whose sake There's many a one shall find out all heartache On finding that her voice is sweet and low Replied: "To be born woman is to know— Although they do not talk of it at school— 20 That we must labour to be beautiful." I said: "It's certain there is no fine thing Since Adam's fall but needs much labouring. There have been lovers who thought love should be So much compounded of high courtesy 25 That they would sight and quote with learned looks Precedents out of beautiful old books; Yet now it seems an idle trade enough." We sat grown quiet at the name of love; We saw the last embers of daylight, die 30 And in the trembling blue-green of the sky A moon, worn as if it had been a shell Washed by time's waters as they rose and fell About the stars and broke in days and years. I had a thought for no one's but your ears: 35 That you were beautiful, and that I strove To love you in the old high way of love; That it had all seemed happy, and yet we'd grown As weary-hearted as that hollow moon.