

THERE WAS ONCE A STARVELING CHILD

A Serious Poem

by
Edwin Arlington Robinson



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Edwin Arlington Robinson
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Extracts from "Captain Craig."

I doubt if ten men in all Tilbury Town
Had ever shaken hands with Captain Craig.

The Captain had one chair;
And on the bottom of it, like a king,
For longer time than I dare chronicle,
Sat with an ancient ease and eulogized
His opportunity. My friends got out,
Like brokers out of Arcady; but I--
May be for fascination of the thing,
Stayed listening, unwearied and unstung.
When they were gone the captain's tuneful ooze
Of rhetoric took on a change; he smiled
At me and then continued, earnestly:
"Your friends have had enough of it; but you,
By prudence or by conscience, have remained;
And that is very good, for I have things
To tell you: things that are not words alone--
Which are the ghosts of things--but something firmer.
First, would I have you know, for every gift
Or sacrifice, there are--or they may be--
Two kinds of gratitude: the sudden kind
We feel for what we take, the larger kind
We feel for what we give.

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