

Easter 1916

W.B. Yeats

Explanation:

Hearts with one purpose alone,
Through summer and winter seem
Enchanted to a stone
To trouble the living stream

Or,
Being certain that they and I
But lived where motley is worn
All changed, changed utterly;
A terrible beauty is born.

The lines meant for explanation are from W.B. Yeats' poem 'Easter 1916'. The poem 'Easter 1916' celebrates the patriotic fervour of the Irish leaders of the Easter uprising of 1916 in Dublin against the British rule. The quoted lines speak volumes for the laudable sacrifice of the hot-blooded but steady revolutionaries of Ireland.

A number of the revolutionaries were personally known to the poet. In the pre-uprising days, he would often meet them in the evening. Some of them were the members of the club which the poet himself belonged to. He recalls having had jolly times with them at the club. During those days, the poet nursed a strong notion that he and the revolutionaries were leading only a clownish life devoid of any seriousness as such. But, in the wake of the Easter uprising, he discovers a wonderful change in them. He now finds that the hearts of these people are glowing with the lone purpose of winning self-rule for their motherland. Time flies, but their sacred purpose remains firmly the same through all seasons, be it summer or winter. And this purpose seems to have changed them, by its enchantment, into stone-hearted rebels vowed to disrupt the stream of British imperialism in Ireland.

It is this change in the minds of the Irish freedom-fighters that has held the poet spell-bound. He cannot but admire them now. The revolutionaries have now changed utterly and are ready to achieve their goal even at the expense of their lives. A change of this kind is both fascinating and fearful, so much so that a 'terrible beauty' is born of it. The dawn of this change is terrible because it will inevitably cause violence and bloodshed. It is beautiful, at the same time, because the people are finally uniting and standing up firmly for the cause of their beloved country.