

## Geist's Grave Full Poem

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### Geist's Grave Matthew Arnold (1822-88)

Four years!--and didst thou stay above The ground, which hides thee now, but four? And all that life, and all that love, Were crowded, Geist! into no more?

Only four years those winning ways, Which make me for thy presence yearn, Call'd us to pet thee or to praise, Dear little friend! at every turn?

That loving heart, that patient soul, Had they indeed no longer span, To run their course, and reach their goal, And read their homily to man?

That liquid, melancholy eye, From whose pathetic, soul-fed springs Seem'd surging the Virgilian cry, The sense of tears in mortal things--

That steadfast, mournful strain, consoled By spirits gloriously gay, And temper of heroic mould-- What, was four years their whole short day?

Yes, only four!--and not the course Of all the centuries yet to come, And not the infinite resource Of Nature, with her countless sum

Of figures, with her fulness vast Of new creation evermore, Can ever quite repeat the past, Or just thy little self restore.

Stern law of every mortal lot! Which man, proud man, finds hard to bear, And builds himself I know not what Of second life I know not where.

But thou, when struck thine hour to go, On us, who stood despondent by, A meek last glance of love didst throw, And humbly lay thee down to die.

Yet would we keep thee in our heart-- Would fix our favourite on the scene, Nor let thee utterly depart And be as if thou ne'er hadst been.

And so there rise these lines of verse On lips that rarely form them now ; While to each other we rehearse: Such ways, such arts, such looks hadst thou!

We stroke thy broad brown paws again, We bid thee to thy vacant chair, We greet thee by the window-pane, We hear thy scuffle on the stair.

We see the flaps of thy large ears Quick raised to ask which way we go; Crossing the frozen lake, appears Thy small black figure on the snow!

Nor to us only art thou dear Who mourn thee in thine English home; Thou hast thine absent master's tear, Dropt by the far Australian foam.

Thy memory lasts both here and there, And thou shalt live as long as we. And after that--thou dost not care! In us was all the world to thee.

Yet, fondly zealous for thy fame, Even to a date beyond our own We strive to carry down thy name, By mounded turf, and graven stone.

We lay thee, close within our reach, Here, where the grass is smooth and warm, Between the holly and the beech, Where oft we watch'd thy couchant form,

Asleep, yet lending half an ear To travellers on the Portsmouth road;-- There build we thee, O guardian dear, Mark'd with a stone, thy last abode!

Then some, who through this garden pass, When we too, like thyself, are clay, Shall see thy grave upon the grass, And stop before the stone, and say:

People who lived here long ago Did by this stone, it seems, intend To name for future times to know The dachs-hound, Geist, their little friend.