

**Classic Poetry Series**

**Eliza Cook**

**- poems -**

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## **Don't Tell the World that You're Waiting for Me**

THREE summers have gone since the first time we met, love,  
And still 'tis in vain that I ask thee to wed ;  
I hear no reply but a gentle " Not yet, love,"  
With a smile of your lip, and a shake of your head.  
Ah ! how oft have I whispered, how oft have I sued thee,  
And breathed my soul's question of " When shall it be ?"  
You know, dear, how long and how truly I've wooed thee,  
So don't tell the world that you're waiting for me.

I have fashioned a home, where the fairies might dwell, love,  
I've planted the myrtle, the rose, and the vine ;  
But the cottage to me is a mere hermit's cell, love,  
And the bloom will be dull till the flowers are thine.  
I've a ring of bright gold, which I gaze on when lonely,  
And sigh with Hope's eloquence, " When will it be ?"  
There needs but thy " Yes," love--one little word only,  
So don't tell the world that you're waiting for me.

Eliza Cook

## Song of the Worm

THE worm, the rich worm, has a noble domain  
In the field that is stored with its millions of slain ;  
The charnel-grounds widen, to me they belong,  
With the vaults of the sepulchre, sculptured and strong.  
The tower of ages in fragments is laid,  
Moss grows on the stones, and I lurk in its shade ;  
And the hand of the giant and heart of the brave  
Must turn weak and submit to the worm and the grave.

Daughters of earth, if I happen to meet  
Your bloom-plucking fingers and sod-treading feet--  
Oh ! turn not away with the shriek of disgust  
From the thing you must mate with in darkness and dust.  
Your eyes may be flashing in pleasure and pride,  
'Neath the crown of a Queen or the wreath of a bride ;  
Your lips may be fresh and your cheeks may be fair--  
Let a few years pass over, and I shall be there.

Cities of splendour, where palace and gate,  
Where the marble of strength and the purple of state ;  
Where the mart and arena, the olive and vine,  
Once flourished in glory ; oh ! are ye not mine ?  
Go look for famed Carthage, and I shall be found  
In the desolate ruin and weed-covered mound ;  
And the slime of my trailing discovers my home,  
'Mid the pillars of Tyre and the temples of Rome.

I am sacredly sheltered and daintily fed  
Where the velvet bedecks, and the white lawn is spread ;  
I may feast undisturbed, I may dwell and carouse  
On the sweetest of lips and the smoothest of brows.  
The voice of the sexton, the chink of the spade,  
Sound merrily under the willow's dank shade.  
They are carnival notes, and I travel with glee  
To learn what the churchyard has given to me.

Oh ! the worm, the rich worm, has a noble domain,  
For where monarchs are voiceless I revel and reign ;  
I delve at my ease and regale where I may ;  
None dispute with the worm in his will or his way.  
The high and the bright for my feasting must fall--  
Youth, Beauty, and Manhood, I prey on ye all :  
The Prince and the peasant, the despot and slave ;  
All, all must bow down to the worm and the grave.

Eliza Cook

## The Old Arm-chair

I LOVE it, I love it ; and who shall dare  
To chide me for loving that old Arm-chair ?  
I've treasured it long as a sainted prize ;  
I've bedewed it with tears, and embalmed it with sighs.  
'Tis bound by a thousand bands to my heart ;  
Not a tie will break, not a link will start.  
Would ye learn the spell ? -- a mother sat there ;  
And a sacred thing is that old Arm-chair.

In Childhood's hour I lingered near  
The hallowed seat with listening ear ;  
And gentle words that mother would give ;  
To fit me to die, and teach me to live.  
She told me shame would never betide,  
With truth for my creed and God for my guide ;  
She taught me to lisp my earliest prayer ;  
As I knelt beside that old Arm-chair.

I sat and watched her many a day,  
When her eye grew dim, and her locks were grey :  
And I almost worshipped her when she smiled,  
And turned from her Bible, to bless her child.  
Years rolled on; but the last one sped--  
My idol was shattered; my earth-star fled :  
I learnt how much the heart can bear,  
When I saw her die in that old Arm-chair.

'Tis past, 'tis past, but I gaze on it now  
With quivering breath and throbbing brow :  
'Twas there she nursed me ; 'twas there she died :  
And Memory flows with lava tide.  
Say it is folly, and deem me weak,  
While the scalding drops start down my cheek ;  
But I love it, I love it ; and cannot tear  
My soul from a mother's old Arm-chair.

Eliza Cook

## The Quiet Eye

THE ORB I like is not the one  
That dazzles with its lightning gleam;  
That dares to look upon the sun,  
As though it challenged brighter beam.  
That orb may sparkle, flash, and roll;  
Its fire may blaze, its shaft may fly;  
But not for me: I prize the soul  
That slumbers in a quiet eye.

There 's something in its placid shade  
That tells of calm, unworldly thought;  
Hope may be crown'd, or joy delay'd—  
No dimness steals, no ray is caught.  
Its pensive language seems to say,  
"I know that I must close and die;"  
And death itself, come when it may,  
Can hardly change the quiet eye.

There 's meaning in its steady glance,  
Of gentle blame or praising love,  
That makes me tremble to advance  
A word, that meaning might reprove.  
The haughty threat, the fiery look,  
My spirit proudly can defy,  
But never yet could meet and brook  
The upbraiding of a quiet eye.

There 's firmness in its even light,  
That augurs of a breast sincere:  
And, oh! take watch how ye excite  
That firmness till it yield a tear.  
Some bosoms give an easy sigh,  
Some drops of grief will freely start,  
But that which sears the quiet eye  
Hath its deep fountain in the heart.

Eliza Cook

## The Sea-Child

HE crawls to the cliff and plays on a brink  
Where every eye but his own would shrink;  
No music he hears but the billow's noise,  
And shells and weeds are his only toys.  
No lullaby can the mother find  
To sing him to rest like the moaning wind;  
And the louder it wails and the fiercer it sweeps,  
The deeper he breathes and the sounder he sleeps.

And now his wandering feet can reach  
The rugged tracks of the desolate beach;  
Creeping about like a Triton imp,  
To find the haunts of the crab and shrimp.  
He clings, with none to guide or help,  
To the furthest ridge of slippery kelp;  
And his bold heart glows while he stands and mocks  
The seamew's cry on the jutting rocks.

Few years have wan'd—and now he stands  
Bareheaded on the shelving sands.  
A boat is moor'd, but his young hands cope  
Right well with the twisted cable rope;  
He frees the craft, she kisses the tide;  
The boy has climb'd her beaten side:  
She drifts—she floats—he shouts with glee;  
His soul hath claim'd its right on the sea.

'T is vain to tell him the howling breath  
Rides over the waters with wreck and death:  
He 'll say there 's more of fear and pain  
On the plague-ridden earth than the storm-lash'd main.  
'T would be as wise to spend thy power  
In trying to lure the bee from the flower,  
The lark from the sky, or the worm from the grave,  
As in weaning the Sea-Child from the wave.

Eliza Cook