

Classic Poetry Series

**George Meredith**  
**- poems -**

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# George Meredith(12 February 1828 – 18 May 1909)

George Meredith, OM was an English novelist and poet of the Victorian era.

<b>Life</b>

Meredith was born in Portsmouth, England, a son and grandson of naval outfitters. His mother died when he was five. At the age of 14 he was sent to a Moravian School in Neuwied, Germany, where he remained for two years. He read law and was articled as a solicitor, but abandoned that profession for journalism and poetry. He collaborated with Edward Gryffydd Peacock, son of Thomas Love Peacock in publishing a privately circulated literary magazine, the Monthly Observer. He married Edward Peacock's widowed sister Mary Ellen Nicolls in 1849 when he was twenty-one years old and she was twenty-eight.

He collected his early writings, first published in periodicals, into Poems, published to some acclaim in 1851. His wife ran off with the English Pre-Raphaelite painter Henry Wallis [1830–1916] in 1858; she died three years later. The collection of "sonnets" entitled Modern Love (1862) came of this experience as did The Ordeal of Richard Feverel, his first "major novel".

He married Marie Vulliamy in 1864 and settled in Surrey. He continued writing novels and poetry, often inspired by nature. His writing was characterised by a fascination with imagery and indirect references. He had a keen understanding of comedy and his Essay on Comedy (1877) is still quoted in most discussions of the history of comic theory. In The Egoist, published in 1879, he applies some of his theories of comedy in one of his most enduring novels. Some of his writings, including The Egoist, also highlight the subjugation of women during the Victorian period. During most of his career, he had difficulty achieving popular success. His first truly successful novel was Diana of the Crossways published in 1885.

Meredith supplemented his often uncertain writer's income with a job as a publisher's reader. His advice to Chapman and Hall made him influential in the world of letters. His friends in the literary world included, at different times, <a href="http://www.poemhunter.com/william-michael-rossetti/">William</a> and <a href="http://www.poemhunter.com/dante-gabriel-rossetti/">Dante</a> Gabriel Rossetti, <a href="http://www.poemhunter.com/algernon-charles-swinburne/">Algernon Charles Swinburne</a>, Leslie Stephen, Robert Louis Stevenson, George Gissing and J. M. Barrie. His contemporary Sir Arthur Conan Doyle paid him homage in the short-story The Boscombe Valley Mystery, when

Sherlock Holmes says to Dr. Watson during the discussion of the case, "And now let us talk about George Meredith, if you please, and we shall leave all minor matters until to-morrow." [Oscar Wilde](http://www.poemhunter.com/oscar-wilde/), in his dialogue *The Decay of Lying*, implies that Meredith, along with Balzac, is his favourite novelist, saying "Ah, Meredith! Who can define him? His style is chaos illumined by flashes of lightning".

In 1868 he was introduced to Thomas Hardy by Frederick Chapman of Chapman & Hall the publishers. Hardy had submitted his first novel, *The Poor Man and the Lady*. Meredith advised Hardy not to publish his book as it would be attacked by reviewers and destroy his hopes of becoming a novelist. Meredith felt the book was too bitter a satire on the rich and counselled Hardy to put it aside and write another 'with a purely artistic purpose' and more of a plot. Meredith spoke from experience; his first big novel, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, was judged so shocking that Mudie's circulating library had cancelled an order of 300 copies. Hardy continued to try and publish the novel: however it remained unpublished, though he clearly took Meredith's advice seriously. Before his death, Meredith was honoured from many quarters: he succeeded [Lord Tennyson](http://www.poemhunter.com/alfred-lord-tennyson/) as president of the Society of Authors; in 1905 he was appointed to the Order of Merit by King Edward VII.

In 1909, he died at his home in Box Hill, Surrey.

# A Ballad Of Fair Ladies In Revolt

I

See the sweet women, friend, that lean beneath  
The ever-falling fountain of green leaves  
Round the white bending stem, and like a wreath  
Of our most blushful flower shine trembling through,  
To teach philosophers the thirst of thieves:  
Is one for me? is one for you?

II

- Fair sirs, we give you welcome, yield you place,  
And you shall choose among us which you will,  
Without the idle pastime of the chase,  
If to this treaty you can well agree:  
To wed our cause, and its high task fulfil.  
He who's for us, for him are we!

III

- Most gracious ladies, nigh when light has birth,  
A troop of maids, brown as burnt heather-bells,  
And rich with life as moss-roots breathe of earth  
In the first plucking of them, past us flew  
To labour, singing rustic ritornells:  
Had they a cause? are they of you?

IV

- Sirs, they are as unthinking armies are  
To thoughtful leaders, and our cause is theirs.  
When they know men they know the state of war:  
But now they dream like sunlight on a sea,  
And deem you hold the half of happy pairs.  
He who's for us, for him are we!

V

- Ladies, I listened to a ring of dames;

Judicial in the robe and wig; secure  
As venerated portraits in their frames;  
And they denounced some insurrection new  
Against sound laws which keep you good and pure.  
Are you of them? are they of you?

## VI

- Sirs, they are of us, as their dress denotes,  
And by as much: let them together chime:  
It is an ancient bell within their throats,  
Pulled by an aged ringer; with what glee  
Befits the yellow yesterdays of time.  
He who's for us, for him are we!

## VII

- Sweet ladies, you with beauty, you with wit;  
Dowered of all favours and all blessed things  
Whereat the ruddy torch of Love is lit;  
Wherefore this vain and outworn strife renew,  
Which stays the tide no more than eddy-rings?  
Who is for love must be for you.

## VIII

- The manners of the market, honest sirs,  
'Tis hard to quit when you behold the wares.  
You flatter us, or perchance our milliners  
You flatter; so this vain and outworn She  
May still be the charmed snake to your soft airs!  
A higher lord than Love claim we.

## IX

- One day, dear lady, missing the broad track,  
I came on a wood's border, by a mead,  
Where golden May ran up to moted black:  
And there I saw Queen Beauty hold review,  
With Love before her throne in act to plead.  
Take him for me, take her for you.

X

- Ingenious gentleman, the tale is known.  
Love pleaded sweetly: Beauty would not melt:  
She would not melt: he turned in wrath: her throne  
The shadow of his back froze witheringly,  
And sobbing at his feet Queen Beauty knelt.  
O not such slaves of Love are we!

XI

- Love, lady, like the star above that lance  
Of radiance flung by sunset on ridged cloud,  
Sad as the last line of a brave romance! -  
Young Love hung dim, yet quivering round him threw  
Beams of fresh fire, while Beauty waned and bowed.  
Scorn Love, and dread the doom for you.

XII

- Called she not for her mirror, sir? Forth ran  
Her women: I am lost, she cried, when lo,  
Love in the form of an admiring man  
Once more in adoration bent the knee,  
And brought the faded Pagan to full blow:  
For which her throne she gave: not we!

XIII

- My version, madam, runs not to that end.  
A certain madness of an hour half past,  
Caught her like fever; her just lord no friend  
She fancied; aimed beyond beauty, and thence grew  
The prim acerbity, sweet Love's outcast.  
Great heaven ward off that stroke from you!

XIV

- Your prayer to heaven, good sir, is generous:  
How generous likewise that you do not name  
Offended nature! She from all of us  
Couched idle underneath our showering tree,

May quite withhold her most destructive flame;  
And then what woeful women we!

XV

- Quite, could not be, fair lady; yet your youth  
May run to drought in visionary schemes:  
And a late waking to perceive the truth,  
When day falls shrouding her supreme adieu,  
Shows darker wastes than unaccomplished dreams:  
And that may be in store for you.

XVI

- O sir, the truth, the truth! is't in the skies,  
Or in the grass, or in this heart of ours?  
But O the truth, the truth! the many eyes  
That look on it! the diverse things they see,  
According to their thirst for fruit or flowers!  
Pass on: it is the truth seek we.

XVII

- Lady, there is a truth of settled laws  
That down the past burns like a great watch-fire.  
Let youth hail changeful mornings; but your cause,  
Whetting its edge to cut the race in two,  
Is felony: you forfeit the bright lyre,  
Much honour and much glory you!

XVIII

- Sir, was it glory, was it honour, pride,  
And not as cat and serpent and poor slave,  
Wherewith we walked in union by your side?  
Spare to false womanliness her delicacy,  
Or bid true manliness give ear, we crave:  
In our defence thus chained are we.

XIX

- Yours, madam, were the privileges of life

Proper to man's ideal; you were the mark  
Of action, and the banner in the strife:  
Yea, of your very weakness once you drew  
The strength that sounds the wells, outflies the lark:  
Wrapped in a robe of flame were you!

XX

- Your friend looks thoughtful. Sir, when we were chill,  
You clothed us warmly; all in honour! when  
We starved you fed us; all in honour still:  
Oh, all in honour, ultra-honourably!  
Deep is the gratitude we owe to men,  
For privileged indeed were we!

XXI

- You cite exceptions, madam, that are sad,  
But come in the red struggle of our growth.  
Alas, that I should have to say it! bad  
Is two-sexed upon earth: this which you do,  
Shows animal impatience, mental sloth:  
Man monstrous! pining seraphs you!

XXII

- I fain would ask your friend . . . but I will ask  
You, sir, how if in place of numbers vague,  
Your sad exceptions were to break that mask  
They wear for your cool mind historically,  
And blaze like black lists of a PRESENT plague?  
But in that light behold them we.

XXIII

- Your spirit breathes a mist upon our world,  
Lady, and like a rain to pierce the roof  
And drench the bed where toil-tossed man lies curled  
In his hard-earned oblivion! You are few,  
Scattered, ill-counselled, blinded: for a proof,  
I have lived, and have known none like you.



## XXIV

- We may be blind to men, sir: we embrace  
A future now beyond the fowler's nets.  
Though few, we hold a promise for the race  
That was not at our rising: you are free  
To win brave mates; you lose but marionnettes.  
He who's for us, for him are we.

## XXV

- Ah! madam, were they puppets who withstood  
Youth's cravings for adventure to preserve  
The dedicated ways of womanhood?  
The light which leads us from the paths of rue,  
That light above us, never seen to swerve,  
Should be the home-lamp trimmed by you.

## XXVI

- Ah! sir, our worshipped posture we perchance  
Shall not abandon, though we see not how,  
Being to that lamp-post fixed, we may advance  
Beside our lords in any real degree,  
Unless we move: and to advance is now  
A sovereign need, think more than we.

## XXVII

- So push you out of harbour in small craft,  
With little seamanship; and comes a gale,  
The world will laugh, the world has often laughed,  
Lady, to see how bold when skies are blue,  
When black winds churn the deeps how panic-pale,  
How swift to the old nest fly you!

## XXVIII

- What thinks your friend, kind sir? We have escaped  
But partly that old half-tamed wild beast's paw  
Whereunder woman, the weak thing, was shaped:  
Men, too, have known the cramping enemy

In grim brute force, whom force of brain shall awe:  
Him our deliverer, await we!

XXIX

- Delusions are with eloquence endowed,  
And yours might pluck an angel from the spheres  
To play in this revolt whereto you are vowed,  
Deliverer, lady! but like summer dew  
O'er fields that crack for rain your friends drop tears,  
Who see the awakening for you.

XXX

- Is he our friend, there silent? he weeps not.  
O sir, delusion mounting like a sun  
On a mind blank as the white wife of Lot,  
Giving it warmth and movement! if this be  
Delusion, think of what thereby was won  
For men, and dream of what win we.

XXXI

- Lady, the destiny of minor powers,  
Who would recast us, is but to convulse:  
You enter on a strife that frets and sours;  
You can but win sick disappointment's hue;  
And simply an accelerated pulse,  
Some tonic you have drunk moves you.

XXXII

- Thinks your friend so? Good sir, your wit is bright;  
But wit that strives to speak the popular voice,  
Puts on its nightcap and puts out its light.  
Curfew, would seem your conqueror's decree  
To women likewise: and we have no choice  
Save darkness or rebellion, we!

XXXIII

- A plain safe intermediate way is cleft

By reason foiling passion: you that rave  
Of mad alternatives to right and left  
Echo the tempter, madam: and 'tis due  
Unto your sex to shun it as the grave,  
This later apple offered you.

XXXIV

- This apple is not ripe, it is not sweet;  
Nor rosy, sir, nor golden: eye and mouth  
Are little wooed by it; yet we would eat.  
We are somewhat tired of Eden, is our plea.  
We have thirsted long; this apple suits our drouth:  
'Tis good for men to halve, think we.

XXXV

- But say, what seek you, madam? 'Tis enough  
That you should have dominion o'er the springs  
Domestic and man's heart: those ways, how rough,  
How vile, outside the stately avenue  
Where you walk sheltered by your angel's wings,  
Are happily unknown to you.

XXXVI

- We hear women's shrieks on them. We like your phrase,  
Dominion domestic! And that roar,  
'What seek you?' is of tyrants in all days.  
Sir, get you something of our purity  
And we will of your strength: we ask no more.  
That is the sum of what seek we.

XXXVII

- O for an image, madam, in one word,  
To show you as the lightning night reveals,  
Your error and your perils: you have erred  
In mind only, and the perils that ensue  
Swift heels may soften; wherefore to swift heels  
Address your hopes of safety you!

XXXVIII

- To err in mind, sir . . . your friend smiles: he may!  
To err in mind, if err in mind we can,  
Is grievous error you do well to stay.  
But O how different from reality  
Men's fiction is! how like you in the plan,  
Is woman, knew you her as we!

XXXIX

- Look, lady, where yon river winds its line  
Toward sunset, and receives on breast and face  
The splendour of fair life: to be divine,  
'Tis nature bids you be to nature true,  
Flowing with beauty, lending earth your grace,  
Reflecting heaven in clearness you.

XL

- Sir, you speak well: your friend no word vouchsafes.  
To flow with beauty, breeding fools and worse,  
Cowards and worse: at such fair life she chafes,  
Who is not wholly of the nursery,  
Nor of your schools: we share the primal curse;  
Together shake it off, say we!

XLI

- Hear, then, my friend, madam! Tongue-restrained he stands  
Till words are thoughts, and thoughts, like swords enriched  
With tracteries of the artificer's hands,  
Are fire-proved steel to cut, fair flowers to view. -  
Do I hear him? Oh, he is bewitched, bewitched!  
Heed him not! Traitress beauties you!

XLII

- We have won a champion, sisters, and a sage!  
- Ladies, you win a guest to a good feast!  
- Sir spokesman, sneers are weakness veiling rage.  
- Of weakness, and wise men, you have the key.

- Then are there fresher mornings mounting East  
Than ever yet have dawned, sing we!

XLIII

- False ends as false began, madam, be sure!  
- What lure there is the pure cause purifies!  
- Who purifies the victim of the lure?  
- That soul which bids us our high light pursue.  
- Some heights are measured down: the wary wise  
Shun Reason in the masque with you!

XLIV

- Sir, for the friend you bring us, take our thanks.  
Yes, Beauty was of old this barren goal;  
A thing with claws; and brute-like in her pranks!  
But could she give more loyal guarantee  
Than wooing Wisdom, that in her a soul  
Has risen? Adieu: content are we!

XLV

Those ladies led their captive to the flood's  
Green edge. He floating with them seemed the most  
Fool-flushed old noddy ever crowned with buds.  
Happier than I! Then, why not wiser too?  
For he that lives with Beauty, he may boast  
His comrade over me and you.

XLVI

Have women nursed some dream since Helen sailed  
Over the sea of blood the blushing star,  
That beauty, whom frail man as Goddess hailed,  
When not possessing her (for such is he!),  
Might in a wondering season seen afar,  
Be tamed to say not 'I,' but 'we'?

XLVII

And shall they make of Beauty their estate,

The fortress and the weapon of their sex?  
Shall she in her frost-brilliance dictate,  
More queenly than of old, how we must woo,  
Ere she will melt? The halter's on our necks,  
Kick as it likes us, I and you.

XLVIII

Certain it is, if Beauty has disdained  
Her ancient conquests, with an aim thus high:  
If this, if that, if more, the fight is gained.  
But can she keep her followers without fee?  
Yet ah! to hear anew those ladies cry,  
He who's for us, for him are we!

George Meredith

# A Ballad Of Past Meridian

I

Last night returning from my twilight walk  
I met the grey mist Death, whose eyeless brow  
Was bent on me, and from his hand of chalk  
He reached me flowers as from a withered bough:  
O Death, what bitter nosegays givest thou!

II

Death said, I gather, and pursued his way.  
Another stood by me, a shape in stone,  
Sword-hacked and iron-stained, with breasts of clay,  
And metal veins that sometimes fiery shone:  
O Life, how naked and how hard when known!

III

Life said, As thou hast carved me, such am I.  
Then memory, like the nightjar on the pine,  
And sightless hope, a woodlark in night sky,  
Joined notes of Death and Life till night's decline  
Of Death, of Life, those inwound notes are mine.

George Meredith

# A Certain People

As Puritans they prominently wax,  
And none more kindly gives and takes hard knocks.  
Strong psalmic chanting, like to nasal cocks,  
They join to thunderings of their hearty thwacks.  
But naughtiness, with hoggery, not lacks  
When Peace another door in them unlocks,  
Where conscience shows the eyeing of an ox  
Grown dully apprehensive of an Axe.  
Graceless they are when gone to frivolousness,  
Fearing the God they flout, the God they glut.  
They need their pious exercises less  
Than schooling in the Pleasures: fair belief  
That these are devilish only to their thief,  
Charged with an Axe nigh on the occiput.

George Meredith



# A Faith On Trial

On the morning of May,  
Ere the children had entered my gate  
With their wreaths and mechanical lay,  
A metal ding-dong of the date!  
I mounted our hill, bearing heart  
That had little of life save its weight:  
The crowned Shadow poisoning dart  
Hung over her: she, my own,  
My good companion, mate,  
Pulse of me: she who had shown  
Fortitude quiet as Earth's  
At the shedding of leaves. And around  
The sky was in garlands of cloud,  
Winning scents from unnumbered new births,  
Pointed buds, where the woods were browned  
By a mouldered beechen shroud;  
Or over our meads of the vale,  
Such an answer to sun as he,  
Brave in his gold; to a sound,  
None sweeter, of woods flapping sail,  
With the first full flood of our year,  
For their voyage on lustreful sea:  
Unto what curtained haven in chief,  
Will be writ in the book of the sere.  
But surely the crew are we,  
Eager or stamped or bowed;  
Counted thinner at fall of the leaf.  
Grief heard them, and passed like a bier.  
Due Summerward, lo, they were set,  
In volumes of foliage proud,  
On the heave of their favouring tides,  
And their song broadened out to the cheer  
When a neck of the ramping surf  
Rattles thunder a boat overrides.  
All smiles ran the highways wet;  
The worm drew its links from the turf;  
The bird of felicity loud  
Spun high, and a South wind blew.  
Weak out of sheath downy leaves

Of the beech quivered lucid as dew,  
Their radiance asking, who grieves;  
For nought of a sorrow they knew:  
No space to the dread wrestle vowed,  
No chamber in shadow of night.  
At times as the steadier breeze  
Flutter-huddled their twigs to a crowd,  
The beam of them wafted my sight  
To league-long sun upon seas:  
The golden path we had crossed  
Many years, till her birthland swung  
Recovered to vision from lost,  
A light in her filial glance.  
And sweet was her voice with the tongue,  
The speechful tongue of her France,  
Soon at ripple about us, like rills  
Ever busy with little: away  
Through her Normandy, down where the mills  
Dot at lengths a rivercourse, grey  
As its bordering poplars bent  
To gusts off the plains above.  
Old stone chateau and farms,  
Home of her birth and her love!  
On the thread of the pasture you trace,  
By the river, their milk, for miles,  
Spotted once with the English tent,  
In days of the tocsin's alarms,  
To tower of the tallest of piles,  
The country's surveyor breast-high.  
Home of her birth and her love!  
Home of a diligent race;  
Thrifty, deft-handed to ply  
Shuttle or needle, and woo  
Sun to the roots of the pear  
Frogging each mud-walled cot.  
The elders had known her in arms.  
There plucked we the bluet, her hue  
Of the deeper forget-me-not;  
Well wedding her ripe-wheat hair.

I saw, unsighting: her heart  
I saw, and the home of her love

There printed, mournfully rent:  
Her ebbing adieu, her adieu,  
And the stride of the Shadow athwart.  
For one of our Autumns there! . . .  
Straight as the flight of a dove  
We went, swift winging we went.  
We trod solid ground, we breathed air,  
The heavens were unbroken. Break they,  
The word of the world is adieu:  
Her word: and the torrents are round,  
The jawed wolf-waters of prey.  
We stand upon isles, who stand:  
A Shadow before us, and back,  
A phantom the habited land.  
We may cry to the Sunderer, spare  
That dearest! he loosens his pack.  
Arrows we breathe, not air.  
The memories tenderly bound  
To us are a drifting crew,  
Amid grey-gapped waters for ground.  
Alone do we stand, each one,  
Till rootless as they we strew  
Those deeps of the corse-like stare  
At a foreign and stony sun.

Eyes had I but for the scene  
Of my circle, what neighbourly grew.  
If haply no finger lay out  
To the figures of days that had been,  
I gathered my herb, and endured;  
My old cloak wrapped me about.  
Unfooted was ground-ivy blue,  
Whose rustic shrewd odour allured  
In Spring's fresh of morning: unseen  
Her favourite wood-sorrel bell  
As yet, though the leaves' green floor  
Awaited their flower, that would tell  
Of a red-veined moist yestreen,  
With its droop and the hues it wore,  
When we two stood overnight  
One, in the dark van-glow  
On our hill-top, seeing beneath

Our household's twinkle of light  
Through spruce-boughs, gem of a wreath.

Budding, the service-tree, white  
Almost as whitebeam, threw,  
From the under of leaf upright,  
Flecks like a showering snow  
On the flame-shaped junipers green,  
On the sombre mounds of the yew.  
Like silvery tapers bright  
By a solemn cathedral screen,  
They glistened to closer view.  
Turf for a rooks' revel striped  
Pleased those devourers astute.  
Chorister blackbird and thrush  
Together or alternate piped;  
A free-hearted harmony large,  
With meaning for man, for brute,  
When the primitive forces are brimmed.  
Like featherings hither and yon  
Of aery tree-twigs over marge,  
To the comb of the winds, untrimmed,  
Their measure is found in the vast.  
Grief heard them, and stepped her way on.  
She has but a narrow embrace.  
Distrustful of hearing she passed.  
They piped her young Earth's Bacchic rout;  
The race, and the prize of the race;  
Earth's lustihead pressing to sprout.

But sight holds a soberer space.  
Colourless dogwood low  
Curled up a twisted root,  
Nigh yellow-green mosses, to flush  
Redder than sun upon rocks,  
When the creeper clematis-shoot  
Shall climb, cap his branches, and show,  
Beside veteran green of the box,  
At close of the year's maple blush,  
A bleeding greybeard is he,  
Now hale in the leafage lush.  
Our parasites paint us. Hard by,

A wet yew-trunk flashed the peel  
Of our naked forefathers in fight;  
With stains of the fray sweating free;  
And him came no parasite nigh:  
Firm on the hard knotted knee,  
He stood in the crown of his dun;  
Earth's toughest to stay her wheel:  
Under whom the full day is night;  
Whom the century-tempests call son,  
Having striven to rend him in vain.

I walked to observe, not to feel,  
Not to fancy, if simple of eye  
One may be among images reaped  
For a shift of the glance, as grain:  
Profitless froth you espy  
Ashore after billows have leaped.  
I fled nothing, nothing pursued:  
The changeful visible face  
Of our Mother I sought for my food;  
Crumbs by the way to sustain.  
Her sentence I knew past grace.  
Myself I had lost of us twain,  
Once bound in mirroring thought.  
She had flung me to dust in her wake;  
And I, as your convict drags  
His chain, by the scourge untaught,  
Bore life for a goad, without aim.  
I champed the sensations that make  
Of a ruffled philosophy rags.  
For them was no meaning too blunt,  
Nor aspect too cutting of steel.  
This Earth of the beautiful breasts,  
Shining up in all colours aflame,  
To them had visage of hags:  
A Mother of aches and jests:  
Soulless, heading a hunt  
Aimless except for the meal.  
Hope, with the star on her front;  
Fear, with an eye in the heel;  
Our links to a Mother of grace;  
They were dead on the nerve, and dead

For the nature divided in three;  
Gone out of heart, out of brain,  
Out of soul: I had in their place  
The calm of an empty room.  
We were joined but by that thin thread,  
My disciplined habit to see.  
And those conjure images, those,  
The puppets of loss or gain;  
Not he who is bare to his doom;  
For whom never semblance plays  
To bewitch, overcloud, illumine.  
The dusty mote-images rose;  
Sheer film of the surface awag:  
They sank as they rose; their pain  
Declaring them mine of old days.

Now gazed I where, sole upon gloom,  
As flower-bush in sun-specked crag,  
Up the spine of the double combe  
With yew-boughs heavily cloaked,  
A young apparition shone:  
Known, yet wonderful, white  
Surpassingly; doubtfully known,  
For it struck as the birth of Light:  
Even Day from the dark unyoked.  
It waved like a pilgrim flag  
O'er processional penitents flown  
When of old they broke rounding yon spine:  
O the pure wild-cherry in bloom!

For their Eastward march to the shrine  
Of the footsore far-eyed Faith,  
Was banner so brave, so fair,  
So quick with celestial sign  
Of victorious rays over death?  
For a conquest of coward despair; -  
Division of soul from wits,  
And these made rulers;--full sure,  
More starlike never did shine  
To illumine the sinister field  
Where our life's old night-bird flits.  
I knew it: with her, my own,

Had hailed it pure of the pure;  
Our beacon yearly: but strange  
When it strikes to within is the known;  
Richer than newness revealed.  
There was needed darkness like mine.  
Its beauty to vividness blown  
Drew the life in me forward, chased,  
From aloft on a pinnacle's range,  
That hindward spidery line,  
The length of the ways I had paced,  
A footfarer out of the dawn,  
To Youth's wild forest, where sprang,  
For the morning of May long gone,  
The forest's white virgin; she  
Seen yonder; and sheltered me, sang;  
She in me, I in her; what songs  
The fawn-eared wood-hollows revive  
To pour forth their tune-footed throngs;  
Inspire to the dreaming of good  
Illimitable to come:  
She, the white wild cherry, a tree,  
Earth-rooted, tangibly wood,  
Yet a presence throbbing alive;  
Nor she in our language dumb:  
A spirit born of a tree;  
Because earth-rooted alive:  
Huntress of things worth pursuit  
Of souls; in our naming, dreams.  
And each unto other was lute,  
By fits quick as breezy gleams.  
My quiver of aims and desires  
Had colour that she would have owned;  
And if by humaner fires  
Hued later, these held her enthroned:  
My crescent of Earth; my blood  
At the silvery early stir;  
Hour of the thrill of the bud  
About to burst, and by her  
Directed, attuned, englobed:  
My Goddess, the chaste, not chill;  
Choir over choir white-robed;  
White-bosomed fold within fold:

For so could I dream, breast-bare,  
In my time of blooming; dream still  
Through the maze, the mesh, and the wreck,  
Despite, since manhood was bold,  
The yoke of the flesh on my neck.  
She beckoned, I gazed, unaware  
How a shaft of the blossoming tree  
Was shot from the yew-wood's core.  
I stood to the touch of a key  
Turned in a fast-shut door.

They rounded my garden, content,  
The small fry, clutching their fee,  
Their fruit of the wreath and the pole;  
And, chatter, hop, skip, they were sent,  
In a buzz of young company glee,  
Their natural music, swift shoal  
To the next easy shedders of pence.  
Why not? for they had me in tune  
With the hungers of my kind.  
Do readings of earth draw thence,  
Then a concord deeper than cries  
Of the Whither whose echo is Whence,  
To jar unanswered, shall rise  
As a fountain-jet in the mind  
Bowed dark o'er the falling and strewn.

\* \* \*

Unwitting where it might lead,  
How it came, for the anguish to cease,  
And the Questions that sow not nor spin,  
This wisdom, rough-written, and black,  
As of veins that from venom bleed,  
I had with the peace within;  
Or patience, mortal of peace,  
Compressing the surgent strife  
In a heart laid open, not mailed,  
To the last blank hour of the rack,  
When struck the dividing knife:  
When the hand that never had failed  
In its pressure to mine hung slack.



But this in myself did I know,  
Not needing a studious brow,  
Or trust in a governing star,  
While my ears held the jangled shout  
The children were lifting afar:  
That natures at interflow  
With all of their past and the now,  
Are chords to the Nature without,  
Orbs to the greater whole:  
First then, nor utterly then  
Till our lord of sensations at war,  
The rebel, the heart, yields place  
To brain, each prompting the soul.  
Thus our dear Earth we embrace  
For the milk, her strength to men.

And crave we her medical herb,  
We have but to see and hear,  
Though pierced by the cruel acerb,  
The troops of the memories armed  
Hostile to strike at the nest  
That nourished and flew them warmed.  
Not she gives the tear for the tear.  
Weep, bleed, rave, writhe, be distraught,  
She is moveless. Not of her breast  
Are the symbols we conjure when Fear  
Takes leaven of Hope. I caught,  
With Death in me shrinking from Death,  
As cold from cold, for a sign  
Of the life beyond ashes: I cast,  
Believing the vision divine,  
Wings of that dream of my Youth  
To the spirit beloved: 'twas unglassed  
On her breast, in her depths austere:  
A flash through the mist, mere breath,  
Breath on a buckler of steel.  
For the flesh in revolt at her laws,  
Neither song nor smile in ruth,  
Nor promise of things to reveal,  
Has she, nor a word she saith:  
We are asking her wheels to pause.

Well knows she the cry of unfaith.  
If we strain to the farther shore,  
We are catching at comfort near.  
Assurances, symbols, saws,  
Revelations in legends, light  
To eyes rolling darkness, these  
Desired of the flesh in affright,  
For the which it will swear to adore,  
She yields not for prayers at her knees;  
The woolly beast bleating will shear.  
These are our sensual dreams;  
Of the yearning to touch, to feel  
The dark Impalpable sure,  
And have the Unveiled appear;  
Whereon ever black she beams,  
Doth of her terrible deal,  
She who dotes over ripeness at play,  
Rosiness fondles and feeds,  
Guides it with shepherding crook,  
To her sports and her pastures away.  
Not she gives the tear for the tear:  
Harsh wisdom gives Earth, no more;  
In one the spur and the curb:  
An answer to thoughts or deeds;  
To the Legends an alien look;  
To the Questions a figure of clay.  
Yet we have but to see and hear,  
Crave we her medical herb.  
For the road to her soul is the Real:  
The root of the growth of man:  
And the senses must traverse it fresh  
With a love that no scourge shall abate,  
To reach the lone heights where we scan  
In the mind's rarer vision this flesh;  
In the charge of the Mother our fate;  
Her law as the one common weal.

We, whom the view benumbs,  
We, quivering upward, each hour  
Know battle in air and in ground  
For the breath that goes as it comes,  
For the choice between sweet and sour,

For the smallest grain of our worth:  
And he who the reckoning sums  
Finds nought in his hand save Earth.  
Of Earth are we stripped or crowned.  
The fleeting Present we crave,  
Barter our best to wed,  
In hope of a cushioned bower,  
What is it but Future and Past  
Like wind and tide at a wave!  
Idea of the senses, bred  
For the senses to snap and devour:  
Thin as the shell of a sound  
In delivery, withered in light.  
Cry we for permanence fast,  
Permanence hangs by the grave;  
Sits on the grave green-grassed,  
On the roll of the heaved grave-mound.  
By Death, as by Life, are we fed:  
The two are one spring; our bond  
With the numbers; with whom to unite  
Here feathers wings for beyond:  
Only they can waft us in flight.  
For they are Reality's flower.  
Of them, and the contact with them,  
Issues Earth's dearest daughter, the firm  
In footing, the stately of stem;  
Unshaken though elements lour;  
A warrior heart unquelled;  
Mirror of Earth, and guide  
To the Holies from sense withheld:  
Reason, man's germinant fruit.  
She wrestles with our old worm  
Self in the narrow and wide:  
Relentless quencher of lies,  
With laughter she pierces the brute;  
And hear we her laughter peal,  
'Tis Light in us dancing to scour  
The loathed recess of his dens;  
Scatter his monstrous bed,  
And hound him to harrow and plough.  
She is the world's one prize;  
Our champion, rightfully head;

The vessel whose piloted prow,  
Though Folly froth round, hiss and hoot,  
Leaves legible print at the keel.  
Nor least is the service she does,  
That service to her may cleanse  
The well of the Sorrows in us;  
For a common delight will drain  
The rank individual fens  
Of a wound refusing to heal  
While the old worm slavers its root.

I bowed as a leaf in rain;  
As a tree when the leaf is shed  
To winds in the season at wane:  
And when from my soul I said,  
May the worm be trampled: smite,  
Sacred Reality! power  
Filled me to front it aright.  
I had come of my faith's ordeal.

It is not to stand on a tower  
And see the flat universe reel;  
Our mortal sublimities drop  
Like raiment by glisterlings worn,  
At a sweep of the scythe for the crop.  
Wisdom is won of its fight,  
The combat incessant; and dries  
To mummywrap perching a height.  
It chews the contemplative cud  
In peril of isolate scorn,  
Unfed of the onward flood.  
Nor view we a different morn  
If we gaze with the deeper sight,  
With the deeper thought forewise:  
The world is the same, seen through;  
The features of men are the same.  
But let their historian new  
In the language of nakedness write,  
Rejoice we to know not shame,  
Not a dread, not a doubt: to have done  
With the tortures of thought in the throes,  
Our animal tangle, and grasp

Very sap of the vital in this:  
That from flesh unto spirit man grows  
Even here on the sod under sun:  
That she of the wanton's kiss,  
Broken through with the bite of an asp,  
Is Mother of simple truth,  
Relentless quencher of lies;  
Eternal in thought; discerned  
In thought mid-ferry between  
The Life and the Death, which are one,  
As our breath in and out, joy or teen.  
She gives the rich vision to youth,  
If we will, of her prompting wise;  
Or men by the lash made lean,  
Who in harness the mind subserve,  
Their title to read her have earned;  
Having mastered sensation--insane  
At a stroke of the terrified nerve;  
And out of the sensual hive  
Grown to the flower of brain;  
To know her a thing alive,  
Whose aspects mutably swerve,  
Whose laws immutably reign.  
Our sentencer, clother in mist,  
Her morn bends breast to her noon,  
Noon to the hour dark-dyed,  
If we will, of her promptings wise:  
Her light is our own if we list.  
The legends that sweep her aside,  
Crying loud for an opiate boon,  
To comfort the human want,  
From the bosom of magical skies,  
She smiles on, marking their source:  
They read her with infant eyes.  
Good ships of morality they,  
For our crude developing force;  
Granite the thought to stay,  
That she is a thing alive  
To the living, the falling and strewn.  
But the Questions, the broods that haunt  
Sensation insurgent, may drive,  
The way of the channelling mole,

Head in a ground-vault gaunt  
As your telescope's skeleton moon.  
Barren comfort to these will she dole;  
Dead is her face to their cries.  
Intelligence pushing to taste  
A lesson from beasts might heed.  
They scatter a voice in the waste,  
Where any dry swish of a reed  
By grey-glassy water replies.

'They see not above or below;  
Farthest are they from my soul,'  
Earth whispers: 'they scarce have the thirst,  
Except to unriddle a rune;  
And I spin none; only show,  
Would humanity soar from its worst,  
Winged above darkness and dole,  
How flesh unto spirit must grow.  
Spirit raves not for a goal.  
Shapes in man's likeness hewn  
Desires not; neither desires  
The sleep or the glory: it trusts;  
Uses my gifts, yet aspires;  
Dreams of a higher than it.  
The dream is an atmosphere;  
A scale still ascending to knit  
The clear to the loftier Clear.  
'Tis Reason herself, tiptoe  
At the ultimate bound of her wit,  
On the verges of Night and Day.  
But is it a dream of the lusts,  
To my dustiest 'tis decreed;  
And them that so shuffle astray  
I touch with no key of gold  
For the wealth of the secret nook;  
Though I dote over ripeness at play,  
Rosiness fondle and feed,  
Guide it with shepherding crook  
To my sports and my pastures always.  
The key will shriek in the lock,  
The door will rustily hinge,  
Will open on features of mould,

To vanish corrupt at a glimpse,  
And mock as the wild echoes mock,  
Soulless in mimic, doth Greed  
Or the passion for fruitage tinge  
That dream, for your parricide imps  
To wing through the body of Time,  
Yourselves in slaying him slay.  
Much are you shots of your prime,  
You men of the act and the dream:  
And please you to fatten a weed  
That perishes, pledged to decay,  
'Tis dearth in your season of need,  
Down the slopes of the shoreward way; -  
Nigh on the misty stream,  
Where Ferryman under his hood,  
With a call to be ready to pay  
The small coin, whitens red blood.  
But the young ethereal seed  
Shall bring you the bread no buyer  
Can have for his craving supreme;  
To my quenchless quick shall speed  
The soul at her wrestle rude  
With devil, with angel more dire;  
With the flesh, with the Fates, enringed.  
The dream of the blossom of Good  
Is your banner of battle unrolled  
In its waver and current and curve  
(Choir over choir white-winged,  
White-bosomed fold within fold):  
Hopeful of victory most  
When hard is the task to sustain  
Assaults of the fearful sense  
At a mind in desolate mood  
With the Whither, whose echo is Whence;  
And humanity's clamour, lost, lost;  
And its clasp of the staves that snap;  
And evil abroad, as a main  
Uproarious, bursting its dyke.  
For back do you look, and lo,  
Forward the harvest of grain! -  
Numbers in council, awake  
To love more than things of my lap,

Love me; and to let the types break,  
Men be grass, rocks rivers, all flow;  
All save the dream sink alike  
To the source of my vital in sap:  
Their battle, their loss, their ache,  
For my pledge of vitality know.  
The dream is the thought in the ghost;  
The thought sent flying for food;  
Eyeless, but sprung of an aim  
Supernal of Reason, to find  
The great Over-Reason we name  
Beneficence: mind seeking Mind.  
Dream of the blossom of Good,  
In its waver and current and curve,  
With the hopes of my offspring enscrolled!  
Soon to be seen of a host  
The flag of the Master I serve!  
And life in them doubled on Life,  
As flame upon flame, to behold,  
High over Time-tumbled sea,  
The bliss of his headship of strife,  
Him through handmaiden me.'

George Meredith



# A Garden Idyl

With sagest craft Arachne worked  
Her web, and at a corner lurked,  
Awaiting what should plump her soon,  
To case it in the death-cocoon.  
Sagaciously her home she chose  
For visits that would never close;  
Inside my chalet-porch her feast  
Plucked all the winds but chill North-east.

The finished structure, bar on bar,  
Had snatched from light to form a star,  
And struck on sight, when quick with dews,  
Like music of the very Muse.  
Great artists pass our single sense;  
We hear in seeing, strung to tense;  
Then haply marvel, groan mayhap,  
To think such beauty means a trap.  
But Nature's genius, even man's  
At best, is practical in plans;  
Subservient to the needy thought,  
However rare the weapon wrought.  
As long as Nature holds it good  
To urge her creatures' quest for food  
Will beauty stamp the just intent  
Of weapons upon service bent.  
For beauty is a flower of roots  
Embedded lower than our boots;  
Out of the primal strata springs,  
And shows for crown of useful things

Arachne's dream of prey to size  
Aspired; so she could nigh despise  
The puny specks the breezes round  
Supplied, and let them shake unwound;  
Assured of her fat fly to come;  
Perhaps a blue, the spider's plum;  
Who takes the fatal odds in fight,  
And gives repast an appetite,  
By plunging, whizzing, till his wings

Are webbed, and in the lists he swings,  
A shrouded lump, for her to see  
Her banquet in her victory.

This matron of the unnumbered threads,  
One day of dandelions' heads  
Distributing their gray perruques  
Up every gust, I watched with looks  
Discreet beside the chalet-door;  
And gracefully a light wind bore,  
Direct upon my webster's wall,  
A monster in the form of ball;  
The mildest captive ever snared,  
That neither struggled nor despaired,  
On half the net invading hung,  
And plain as in her mother tongue,  
While low the weaver cursed her lures,  
Remarked, 'You have me; I am yours.'

Thrice magnified, in phantom shape,  
Her dream of size she saw, agape.  
Midway the vast round-raying beard  
A desiccated midge appeared;  
Whose body pricked the name of meal,  
Whose hair had growth in earth's unreal;  
Provocative of dread and wrath,  
Contempt and horror, in one froth,  
Inextricable, insensible,  
His poison presence there would dwell,  
Declaring him her dream fulfilled,  
A catch to compliment the skilled;  
And she reduced to beaky skin,  
Disgraceful among kith and kin

Against her corner, humped and aged,  
Arachne wrinkled, past enraged,  
Beyond disgust or hope in guile.  
Ridiculously volatile  
He seemed to her last spark of mind;  
And that in pallid ash declined  
Beneath the blow by knowledge dealt,  
Wherein throughout her frame she felt

That he, the light wind's libertine,  
Without a scoff, without a grin,  
And mannered like the courtly few,  
Who merely danced when light winds blew,  
Impervious to beak and claws,  
Tradition's ruinous Whitebeard was;  
Of whom, as actors in old scenes,  
Had grannam weavers warned their weans,  
With word, that less than feather-weight,  
He smote the web like bolt of Fate.

This muted drama, hour by hour,  
I watched amid a world in flower,  
Ere yet Autumnal threads had laid  
Their gray-blue o'er the grass's blade,  
And still along the garden-run  
The blindworm stretched him, drunk of sun.  
Arachne crouched unmoved; perchance  
Her visitor performed a dance;  
She puckered thinner; he the same  
As when on that light wind he came.

Next day was told what deeds of night  
Were done; the web had vanished quite;  
With it the strange opposing pair;  
And listless waved on vacant air,  
For her adieu to heart's content,  
A solitary filament.

George Meredith

## A Later Alexandrian

An inspiration caught from dubious hues  
Filled him, and mystic wrynesses he chased;  
For they lead farther than the single-faced,  
Wave subtler promise when desire pursues.  
The moon of cloud discoloured was his Muse,  
His pipe the reed of the old moaning waste.  
Love was to him with anguish fast enlaced,  
And Beauty where she walked blood-shot the dews.  
Men railed at such a singer; women thrilled  
Responsively: he sang not Nature's own  
Divinest, but his lyric had a tone,  
As 'twere a forest-echo of her voice:  
What barrenly they yearn for seemed distilled  
From what they dread, who do through tears rejoice.

George Meredith

# A Preaching From A Spanish Ballad

I

Ladies who in chains of wedlock  
Chafe at an unequal yoke,  
Not to nightingales give hearing;  
Better this, the raven's croak.

II

Down the Prado strolled my seigneur,  
Arm at lordly bow on hip,  
Fingers trimming his moustachios,  
Eyes for pirate fellowship.

III

Home sat she that owned him master;  
Like the flower bent to ground  
Rain-surcharged and sun-forsaken;  
Heedless of her hair unbound.

IV

Sudden at her feet a lover  
Palpitating knelt and wooed;  
Seemed a very gift from heaven  
To the starved of common food.

V

Love me? she his vows repeated:  
Fiery vows oft sung and thrummed:  
Wondered, as on earth a stranger;  
Thirsted, trusted, and succumbed.

VI

O beloved youth! my lover!  
Mine! my lover! take my life

Wholly: thine in soul and body,  
By this oath of more than wife!

VII

Know me for no helpless woman;  
Nay, nor coward, though I sink  
Awed beside thee, like an infant  
Learning shame ere it can think.

VIII

Swing me hence to do thee service,  
Be thy succour, prove thy shield;  
Heaven will hear!--in house thy handmaid,  
Squire upon the battlefield.

IX

At my breasts I cool thy footsoles;  
Wine I pour, I dress thy meats;  
Humbly, when my lord it pleaseth,  
Lie with him on perfumed sheets:

X

Pray for him, my blood's dear fountain,  
While he sleeps, and watch his yawn  
In that wakening babelike moment,  
Sweeter to my thought than dawn! -

XI

Thundered then her lord of thunders;  
Burst the door, and, flashing sword,  
Loud disgorged the woman's title:  
Condemnation in one word.

XII

Grand by righteous wrath transfigured,  
Towers the husband who provides

In his person judge and witness,  
Death's black doorkeeper besides!

XIII

Round his head the ancient terrors,  
Conjured of the stronger's law,  
Circle, to abash the creature  
Daring twist beneath his paw.

XIV

How though he hath squandered Honour  
High of Honour let him scold:  
Gilding of the man's possession,  
'Tis the woman's coin of gold.

XV

She inheriting from many  
Bleeding mothers bleeding sense  
Feels 'twixt her and sharp-fanged nature  
Honour first did plant the fence.

XVI

Nature, that so shrieks for justice;  
Honour's thirst, that blood will slake;  
These are women's riddles, roughly  
Mixed to write them saint or snake.

XVII

Never nature cherished woman:  
She throughout the sexes' war  
Serves as temptress and betrayer,  
Favouring man, the muscular.

XVIII

Lureful is she, bent for folly;  
Doating on the child which crows:

Yours to teach him grace in fealty,  
What the bloom is, what the rose.

XIX

Hard the task: your prison-chamber  
Widens not for lifted latch  
Till the giant thews and sinews  
Meet their Godlike overmatch.

XX

Read that riddle, scorning pity's  
Tears, of cockatrices shed:  
When the heart is vowed for freedom,  
Captaincy it yields to head.

XXI

Meanwhile you, freaked nature's martyrs,  
Honour's army, flower and weed,  
Gentle ladies, wedded ladies,  
See for you this fair one bleed.

XXII

Sole stood her offence, she faltered;  
Prayed her lord the youth to spare;  
Prayed that in the orange garden  
She might lie, and ceased her prayer.

XXIII

Then commanding to all women  
Chastity, her breasts she laid  
Bare unto the self-avenger.  
Man in metal was the blade.

George Meredith



# A Reading Of Life--The Test Of Manhood

Like a flood river whirled at rocky banks,  
An army issues out of wilderness,  
With battle plucking round its ragged flanks;  
Obstruction in the van; insane excess  
Oft at the heart; yet hard the onward stress  
Unto more spacious, where move ordered ranks,  
And rise hushed temples built of shapely stone,  
The work of hands not pledged to grind or slay.  
They gave our earth a dress of flesh on bone;  
A tongue to speak with answering heaven gave they.  
Then was the gracious birth of man's new day;  
Divided from the haunted night it shone.

That quiet dawn was Reverence; whereof sprang  
Ethereal Beauty in full morningtide.  
Another sun had risen to clasp his bride:  
It was another earth unto him sang.

Came Reverence from the Huntress on her heights?  
From the Persuader came it, in those vales  
Whereunto she melodiously invites,  
Her troops of eager servitors regales?  
Not far those two great Powers of Nature speed  
Disciple steps on earth when sole they lead;  
Nor either points for us the way of flame.  
From him predestined mightier it came;  
His task to hold them both in breast, and yield  
Their dues to each, and of their war be field.

The foes that in repulsion never ceased,  
Must he, who once has been the goodly beast  
Of one or other, at whose beck he ran,  
Constrain to make him serviceable man;  
Offending neither, nor the natural claim  
Each pressed, denying, for his true man's name.

Ah, what a sweat of anguish in that strife  
To hold them fast conjoined within him still;  
Submissive to his will

Along the road of life!  
And marvel not he wavered if at whiles  
The forward step met frowns, the backward smiles.  
For Pleasure witched him her sweet cup to drain;  
Repentance offered ecstasy in pain.  
Delicious licence called it Nature's cry;  
Ascetic rigours crushed the fleshly sigh;  
A tread on shingle timed his lame advance  
Flung as the die of Bacchanalian Chance,  
He of the troubled marching army leaned  
On godhead visible, on godhead screened;  
The radiant roseate, the curtained white;  
Yet sharp his battle strained through day, through night.

He drank of fictions, till celestial aid  
Might seem accorded when he fawned and prayed;  
Sagely the generous Giver circumspect,  
To choose for grants the egregious, his elect;  
And ever that imagined succour slew  
The soul of brotherhood whence Reverence drew.

In fellowship religion has its founts:  
The solitary his own God reveres:  
Ascend no sacred Mounts  
Our hungers or our fears.  
As only for the numbers Nature's care  
Is shown, and she the personal nothing heeds,  
So to Divinity the spring of prayer  
From brotherhood the one way upward leads.  
Like the sustaining air  
Are both for flowers and weeds.  
But he who claims in spirit to be flower,  
Will find them both an air that doth devour.

Whereby he smelt his treason, who implored  
External gifts bestowed but on the sword;  
Beheld himself, with less and less disguise,  
Through those blood-cataracts which dimmed his eyes,  
His army's foe, condemned to strive and fail;  
See a black adversary's ghost prevail;  
Never, though triumphs hailed him, hope to win  
While still the conflict tore his breast within.

Out of that agony, misread for those  
Imprisoned Powers warring unappeased,  
The ghost of his black adversary rose,  
To smother light, shut heaven, show earth diseased.  
And long with him was wrestling ere emerged  
A mind to read in him the reflex shade  
Of its fierce torment; this way, that way urged;  
By craven compromises hourly swayed.

Crouched as a nestling, still its wings untried,  
The man's mind opened under weight of cloud.  
To penetrate the dark was it endowed;  
Stood day before a vision shooting wide.  
Whereat the spectral enemy lost form;  
The traversed wilderness exposed its track.  
He felt the far advance in looking back;  
Thence trust in his foot forward through the storm.

Under the low-browed tempest's eye of ire,  
That ere it lightened smote a coward heart,  
Earth nerved her chastened son to hail athwart  
All ventures perilous his shrouded Sire;  
A stranger still, religiously divined;  
Not yet with understanding read aright.  
But when the mind, the cherishable mind,  
The multitude's grave shepherd, took full flight,  
Himself as mirror raised among his kind,  
He saw, and first of brotherhood had sight:  
Knew that his force to fly, his will to see,  
His heart enlarged beyond its ribbed domain,  
Had come of many a grip in mastery,  
Which held conjoined the hostile rival twain,  
And of his bosom made him lord, to keep  
The starry roof of his unruffled frame  
Awake to earth, to heaven, and plumb the deep  
Below, above, aye with a wistful aim.

The mastering mind in him, by tempests blown,  
By traitor inmates baited, upward burned;  
Perforce of growth, the Master mind discerned,  
The Great Unseen, nowise the Dark Unknown.

To whom unwittingly did he aspire  
In wilderness, where bitter was his need:  
To whom in blindness, as an earthy seed  
For light and air, he struck through crimson mire.  
But not ere he upheld a forehead lamp,  
And viewed an army, once the seeming doomed,  
All choral in its fruitful garden camp,  
The spiritual the palpable illumed.

This gift of penetration and embrace,  
His prize from tidal battles lost or won,  
Reveals the scheme to animate his race:  
How that it is a warfare but begun;  
Unending; with no Power to interpose;  
No prayer, save for strength to keep his ground,  
Heard of the Highest; never battle's close,  
The victory complete and victor crowned:  
Nor solace in defeat, save from that sense  
Of strength well spent, which is the strength renewed.  
In manhood must he find his competence;  
In his clear mind the spiritual food:  
God being there while he his fight maintains;  
Throughout his mind the Master Mind being there,  
While he rejects the suicide despair;  
Accepts the spur of explicable pains;  
Obedient to Nature, not her slave:  
Her lord, if to her rigid laws he bows;  
Her dust, if with his conscience he plays knave,  
And bids the Passions on the Pleasures browse:-  
Whence Evil in a world unread before;  
That mystery to simple springs resolved.  
His God the Known, diviner to adore,  
Shows Nature's savage riddles kindly solved.  
Inconscient, insensitive, she reigns  
In iron laws, though rapturous fair her face.  
Back to the primal brute shall he retrace  
His path, doth he permit to force her chains  
A soft Persuader coursing through his veins,  
An icy Huntress stringing to the chase:  
What one the flash disdains;  
What one so gives it grace.

But is he rightly manful in her eyes,  
A splendid bloodless knight to gain the skies,  
A blood-hot son of Earth by all her signs,  
Desireing and desireable he shines;  
As peaches, that have caught the sun's uprise  
And kissed warm gold till noonday, even as vines.  
Earth fills him with her juices, without fear  
That she will cast him drunken down the steeps.  
All woman is she to this man most dear;  
He sows for bread, and she in spirit reaps:  
She conscient, she sensitive, in him;  
With him enwound, his brave ambition hers:  
By him humaner made; by his keen spurs  
Pricked to race past the pride in giant limb,  
Her crazy adoration of big thews,  
Proud in her primal sons, when crags they hurled,  
Were thunder spitting lightnings on the world  
In daily deeds, and she their evening Muse.

This man, this hero, works not to destroy;  
This godlike--as the rock in ocean stands; -  
He of the myriad eyes, the myriad hands  
Creative; in his edifice has joy.  
How strength may serve for purity is shown  
When he himself can scourge to make it clean.  
Withal his pitch of pride would not disown  
A sober world that walks the balanced mean  
Between its tempters, rarely overthrown:  
And such at times his army's march has been.

Near is he to great Nature in the thought  
Each changing Season intimately saith,  
That nought save apparition knows the death;  
To the God-lighted mind of man 'tis nought.  
She counts not loss a word of any weight;  
It may befall his passions and his greeds  
To lose their treasures, like the vein that bleeds,  
But life gone breathless will she reinstate.

Close on the heart of Earth his bosom beats,  
When he the mandate lodged in it obeys,  
Alive to breast a future wrapped in haze,

Strike camp, and onward, like the wind's cloud-fleets.  
Unresting she, unresting he, from change  
To change, as rain of cloud, as fruit of rain;  
She feels her blood-tree throbbing in her grain,  
Yet skyward branched, with loftier mark and range.

No miracle the sprout of wheat from clod,  
She knows, nor growth of man in grisly brute;  
But he, the flower at head and soil at root,  
Is miracle, guides he the brute to God.  
And that way seems he bound; that way the road,  
With his dark-lantern mind, unled, alone,  
Wearifully through forest-tracts unsown,  
He travels, urged by some internal goad.

Dares he behold the thing he is, what thing  
He would become is in his mind its child;  
Astir, demanding birth to light and wing;  
For battle prompt, by pleasure unbeguiled.  
So moves he forth in faith, if he has made  
His mind God's temple, dedicate to truth.  
Earth's nourishing delights, no more gainsaid,  
He tastes, as doth the bridegroom rich in youth.  
Then knows he Love, that beckons and controls;  
The star of sky upon his footway cast;  
Then match in him who holds his tempters fast,  
The body's love and mind's, whereof the soul's.  
Then Earth her man for woman finds at last,  
To speed the pair unto her goal of goals.

Or is't the widowed's dream of her new mate?  
Seen has she virulent days of heat in flood;  
The sly Persuader snaky in his blood;  
With her the barren Huntress alternate;  
His rough refractory off on kicking heels  
To rear; the man dragged rearward, shamed, amazed;  
And as a torrent stream where cattle grazed,  
His tumbled world. What, then, the faith she feels?  
May not his aspect, like her own so fair  
Reflexively, the central force belie,  
And he, the once wild ocean storming sky,  
Be rebel at the core? What hope is there?

'Tis that in each recovery he preserves,  
Between his upper and his nether wit,  
Sense of his march ahead, more brightly lit;  
He less the shaken thing of lusts and nerves;  
With such a grasp upon his brute as tells  
Of wisdom from that vile relapsing spun.  
A Sun goes down in wasted fire, a Sun  
Resplendent springs, to faith refreshed compels.

George Meredith

# A Reading Of Life--The Vital Choice

I.

Or shall we run with Artemis  
Or yield the breast to Aphrodite?  
Both are mighty;  
Both give bliss;  
Each can torture if divided;  
Each claims worship undivided,  
In her wake would have us wallow.

II.

Youth must offer on bent knees  
Homage unto one or other;  
Earth, the mother,  
This decrees;  
And unto the pallid Scyther  
Either points us shun we either  
Shun or too devoutly follow.

George Meredith



## A Reading Of Life--With The Huntress

Through the water-eye of night,  
Midway between eve and dawn,  
See the chase, the rout, the flight  
In deep forest; oread, faun,  
Goat-foot, antlers laid on neck;  
Ravenous all the line for speed.  
See yon wavy sparkle beck  
Sign of the Virgin Lady's lead.  
Down her course a serpent star  
Coils and shatters at her heels;  
Peals the horn exulting, peals  
Plaintive, is it near or far.  
Huntress, arrowy to pursue,  
In and out of woody glen,  
Under cliffs that tear the blue,  
Over torrent, over fen,  
She and forest, where she skims  
Feathery, darken and relume:  
Those are her white-lightning limbs  
Cleaving loads of leafy gloom.  
Mountains hear her and call back,  
Shrewd with night: a frosty wail  
Distant: her the emerald vale  
Folds, and wonders in her track.  
Now her retinue is lean,  
Many rearward; streams the chase  
Eager forth of covert; seen  
One hot tide the rapturous race.  
Quiver-charged and crescent-crowned,  
Up on a flash the lighted mound  
Leaps she, bow to shoulder, shaft  
Strung to barb with archer's craft,  
Legs like plaited lyre-chords, feet  
Songs to see, past pitch of sweet.  
Fearful swiftness they outrun,  
Shaggy wildness, grey or dun,  
Challenge, charge of tusks elude:  
Theirs the dance to tame the rude;  
Beast, and beast in manhood tame,

Follow we their silver flame.  
Pride of flesh from bondage free,  
Reaping vigour of its waste,  
Marks her servitors, and she  
Sanctifies the unembraced.  
Nought of perilous she reeks;  
Valour clothes her open breast;  
Sweet beyond the thrill of sex;  
Hallowed by the sex confessed.  
Huntress arrowy to pursue,  
Colder she than sunless dew,  
She, that breath of upper air;  
Ay, but never lyrist sang,  
Draught of Bacchus never sprang  
Blood the bliss of Gods to share,  
High o'er sweep of eagle wings,  
Like the run with her, when rings  
Clear her rally, and her dart,  
In the forest's cavern heart,  
Tells of her victorious aim.  
Then is pause and chatter, cheer,  
Laughter at some satyr lame,  
Looks upon the fallen deer,  
Measuring his noble crest;  
Here a favourite in her train,  
Foremost mid her nymphs, caressed;  
All applauded. Shall she reign  
Worshipped? O to be with her there!  
She, that breath of nimble air,  
Lifts the breast to giant power.  
Maid and man, and man and maid,  
Who each other would devour  
Elsewhere, by the chase betrayed,  
There are comrades, led by her,  
Maid-preserver, man-maker.

George Meredith

## A Reading Of Life--With The Persuader

Who murmurs, hither, hither: who  
Where nought is audible so fills the ear?  
Where nought is visible can make appear  
A veil with eyes that waver through,  
Like twilight's pledge of blessed night to come,  
Or day most golden? All unseen and dumb,  
She breathes, she moves, inviting flees,  
Is lost, and leaves the thrilled desire  
To clasp and strike a slackened lyre,  
Till over smiles of hyacinth seas,  
Flame in a crystal vessel sails  
Beneath a dome of jewelled spray,  
For land that drops the rosy day  
On nights of throbbing nightingales.

Landward did the wonder flit,  
Or heart's desire of her, all earth in it.  
We saw the heavens fling down their rose;  
On rapturous waves we saw her glide;  
The pearly sea-shell half enclose;  
The shoal of sea-nymphs flush the tide;  
And we, afire to kiss her feet, no more  
Behold than tracks along a startled shore,  
With brightened edges of dark leaves that feign  
An ambush hoped, as heartless night remain.

More closely, warmly: hither, hither! she,  
The very she called forth by ripened blood  
For its next breath of being, murmurs; she,  
Allurement; she, fulfilment; she,  
The stream within us urged to flood;  
Man's cry, earth's answer, heaven's consent; O she,  
Maid, woman and divinity;  
Our over-earthly, inner-earthly mate  
Unmated; she, our hunger and our fruit  
Untasted; she our written fate  
Unread; Life's flowering, Life's root:  
Unread, divined; unseen, beheld;  
The evanescent, ever-present she,

Great Nature's stern necessity  
In radiance clothed, to softness quelled;  
With a sword's edge of sweetness keen to take  
Our breath for bliss, our hearts for fulness break.

The murmur hushes down, the veil is rent.  
Man's cry, earth's answer, heaven's consent,  
Her form is given to pardoned sight,  
And lets our mortal eyes receive  
The sovereign loveliness of celestial white;  
Adored by them who solitarily pace,  
In dusk of the underworld's perpetual eve,  
The paths among the meadow asphodel,  
Remembering. Never there her face  
Is planetary; reddens to shore sea-shell  
Around such whiteness the enamoured air  
Of noon that clothes her, never there.  
Daughter of light, the joyful light,  
She stands unveiled to nuptial sight,  
Sweet in her disregard of aid  
Divine to conquer or persuade.  
A fountain jets from moss; a flower  
Bends gently where her sunset tresses shower.  
By guerdon of her brilliance may be seen  
With eyelids unabashed the passion's Queen.

Shorn of attendant Graces she can use  
Her natural snares to make her will supreme.  
A simple nymph it is, inclined to muse  
Before the leader foot shall dip in stream:  
One arm at curve along a rounded thigh;  
Her firm new breasts each pointing its own way  
A knee half bent to shade its fellow shy,  
Where innocence, not nature, signals nay.  
The bud of fresh virginity awaits  
The wooer, and all roseate will she burst:  
She touches on the hour of happy mates;  
Still is she unaware she wakens thirst.

And while commanding blissful sight believe  
It holds her as a body strained to breast,  
Down on the underworld's perpetual eve

She plunges the possessor dispossessed;  
And bids believe that image, heaving warm,  
Is lost to float like torch-smoke after flame;  
The phantom any breeze blows out of form;  
A thirst's delusion, a defeated aim.

The rapture shed the torture weaves;  
The direst blow on human heart she deals:  
The pain to know the seen deceives;  
Nought true but what insufferably feels.  
And stabs of her delicious note,  
That is as heavenly light to hearing, heard  
Through shelter leaves, the laughter from her throat,  
We answer as the midnight's morning's bird.

She laughs, she wakens gleeful cries;  
In her delicious laughter part revealed;  
Yet mother is she more of moans and sighs,  
For longings unappeased and wounds unhealed.  
Yet would she bless, it is her task to bless:  
Yon folded couples, passing under shade,  
Are her rich harvest; bidden caress, caress,  
Consume the fruit in bloom; not disobeyed.  
We dolorous complainers had a dream,  
Wrought on the vacant air from inner fire,  
We saw stand bare of her celestial beam  
The glorious Goddess, and we dared desire.

Thereat are shown reproachful eyes, and lips  
Of upward curl to meanings half obscure;  
And glancing where a wood-nymph lightly skips  
She nods: at once that creature wears her lure.  
Blush of our being between birth and death:  
Sob of our ripened blood for its next breath:  
Her wily semblance nought of her denies;  
Seems it the Goddess runs, the Goddess hies,  
The generous Goddess yields. And she can arm  
Her dwarfed and twisted with her secret charm;  
Benevolent as Earth to feed her own.  
Fully shall they be fed, if they beseech.  
But scorn she has for them that walk alone;  
Blanched men, starved women, whom no arts can pleach.

The men as chief of criminals she disdains,  
And holds the reason in perceptive thought.  
More pitiable, like rivers lacking rains,  
Kissing cold stones, the women shrink for drought.  
Those faceless discords, out of nature strayed,  
Rank of the putrefaction ere decayed,  
In impious singles bear the thorny wreaths:  
Their lives are where harmonious Pleasure breathes  
For couples crowned with flowers that burn in dew.  
Comes there a tremor of night's forest horn  
Across her garden from the insaner crew,  
She darkens to malignity of scorn.  
A shiver courses through her garden-grounds:  
Grunt of the tusky boar, the baying hounds,  
The hunter's shouts, are heard afar, and bring  
Dead on her heart her crimsoned flower of Spring.  
These, the irreverent of Life's design,  
Division between natural and divine  
Would cast; these vaunting barrenness for best,  
In veins of gathered strength Life's tide arrest;  
And these because the roses flood their cheeks,  
Vow them in nature wise as when Love speaks.  
With them is war; and well the Goddess knows  
What undermines the race who mount the rose;  
How the ripe moment, lodged in slumberous hours,  
Enkindled by persuasion overpowers:  
Why weak as are her frailer trailing weeds,  
The strong when Beauty gleams o'er Nature's needs,  
And timely guile unguarded finds them lie.  
They who her sway withstand a sea defy,  
At every point of juncture must be proof;  
Nor look for mercy from the incessant surge  
Her forces mixed of craft and passion urge  
For the one whelming wave to spring aloof.  
She, tenderness, is pitiless to them  
Resisting in her godhead nature's truth.  
No flower their face shall be, but writhen stem;  
Their youth a frost, their age the dirge for youth.  
These miserably disinclined,  
The lamentably unembraced,  
Insult the Pleasures Earth designed  
To people and beflower the waste.

Wherefore the Pleasures pass them by:  
For death they live, in life they die.

Her head the Goddess from them turns,  
As from grey mounds of ashes in bronze urns.  
She views her quivering couples unconsolated,  
And of her beauty mirror they become,  
Like orchard blossoms, apple, pear and plum,  
Free of the cloud, beneath the flood of gold.  
Crowned with wreaths that burn in dew,  
Her couples whirl, sun-satiated,  
Athirst for shade, they sigh, they wed,  
They play the music made of two:  
Oldest of earth, earth's youngest till earth's end:  
Cunninger than the numbered strings,  
For melodies, for harmonies,  
For mastered discords, and the things  
Not vocable, whose mysteries  
Are inmost Love's, Life's reach of Life extend.

Is it an anguish overflowing shame  
And the tongue's pudency confides to her,  
With eyes of embers, breath of incense myrrh,  
The woman's marrow in some dear youth's name,  
Then is the Goddess tenderness  
Maternal, and she has a sister's tones  
Benign to soothe intemperate distress,  
Divide despair from hope, and sighs from moans.  
Her gentleness imparts exhaling ease  
To those of her milk-bearer votaries  
As warm of bosom-earth as she; of the source  
Direct; erratic but in heart's excess;  
Being mortal and ill-matched for Love's great force;  
Like green leaves caught with flames by his impress.  
And pray they under skies less overcast,  
That swiftly may her star of eve descend,  
Her lustrous morning star fly not too fast,  
To lengthen blissful night will she befriend.

Unfailing her reply to woman's voice  
In supplication instant. Is it man's,  
She hears, approves his words, her garden scans,

And him: the flowers are various, he has choice.  
Perchance his wound is deep; she listens long;  
Enjoys what music fills the plaintive song;  
And marks how he, who would be hawk at poise  
Above the bird, his plaintive song enjoys.

She reads him when his humbled manhood weeps  
To her invoked: distraction is implored.  
A smile, and he is up on godlike leaps  
Above, with his bright Goddess owned the adored.  
His tales of her declare she condescends;  
Can share his fires, not always goads and rends:  
Moreover, quits a throne, and must enclose  
A queenlier gem than woman's wayside rose.  
She bends, he quickens; she breathes low, he springs  
Enraptured; low she laughs, his woes disperse;  
Aloud she laughs and sweeps his varied strings.  
'Tis taught him how for touch of mournful verse  
Rarely the music made of two ascends,  
And Beauty's Queen some other way is won.  
Or it may solve the riddle, that she lends  
Herself to all, and yields herself to none,  
Save heavenliest: though claims by men are raised  
In hot assurance under shade of doubt:  
And numerous are the images bepraised  
As Beauty's Queen, should passion head the rout.

Be sure the ruddy hue is Love's: to woo  
Love's Fountain we must mount the ruddy hue.  
That is her garden's precept, seen where shines  
Her blood-flower, and its unsought neighbour pines.  
Daughter of light, the joyful light,  
She bids her couples face full East,  
Reflecting radiance, even when from her feast  
Their outstretched arms brown deserts disunite,  
The lion-haunted thickets hold apart.  
In love the ruddy hue declares great heart;  
High confidence in her whose aid is lent  
To lovers lifting the tuned instrument,  
Not one of rippled strings and funeral tone.  
And doth the man pursue a tightened zone,  
Then be it as the Laurel God he runs,



Confirmed to win, with countenance the Sun's.

Should pity bless the tremulous voice of woe  
He lifts for pity, limp his offspring show.  
For him requiring woman's arts to please  
Infantile tastes with babe reluctances,  
No race of giants! In the woman's veins  
Persuasion ripely runs, through hers the pains.  
Her choice of him, should kind occasion nod,  
Aspiring blends the Titan with the God;  
Yet unto dwarf and mortal, she, submiss  
In her high Lady's mandate, yields the kiss;  
And is it needed that Love's daintier brute  
Be snared as hunter, she will tempt pursuit.  
She is great Nature's ever intimate  
In breast, and doth as ready handmaid wait,  
Until perverted by her senseless male,  
She plays the winding snake, the shrinking snail,  
The flying deer, all tricks of evil fame,  
Elusive to allure, since he grew tame.

Hence has the Goddess, Nature's earliest Power,  
And greatest and most present, with her dower  
Of the transcendent beauty, gained repute  
For meditated guile. She laughs to hear  
A charge her garden's labyrinths scarce confute,  
Her garden's histories tell of to all near.  
Let it be said, But less upon her guile  
Doth she rely for her immortal smile.  
Still let the rumour spread, and terror screens  
To push her conquests by the simplest means.  
While man abjures not lustihead, nor swerves  
From earth's good labours, Beauty's Queen he serves.

Her spacious garden and her garden's grant  
She offers in reward for handsome cheer:  
Choice of the nymphs whose looks will slant  
The secret down a dewy leer  
Of corner eyelids into haze:  
Many a fair Aphrosyne  
Like flower-bell to honey-bee:  
And here they flicker round the maze

Bewildering him in heart and head:  
And here they wear the close demure,  
With subtle peeps to reassure:  
Others parade where love has bled,  
And of its crimson weave their mesh:  
Others to snap of fingers leap,  
As bearing breast with love asleep.  
These are her laughters in the flesh.  
Or would she fit a warrior mood,  
She lights her seeming unsubdued,  
And indicates the fortress-key.  
Or is it heart for heart that craves,  
She flecks along a run of waves  
The one to promise deeper sea.

Bands of her limpid primitives,  
Or patterned in the curious braid,  
Are the blest man's; and whatsoever he gives,  
For what he gives is he repaid.  
Good is it if by him 'tis held  
He wins the fairest ever welled  
From Nature's founts: she whispers it: Even I  
Not fairer! and forbids him to deny,  
Else little is he lover. Those he clasps,  
Intent as tempest, worshipful as prayer, -  
And be they doves or be they asps, -  
Must seem to him the sovereignty fair;  
Else counts he soon among life's wholly tamed.  
Him whom from utter savage she reclaimed,  
Half savage must he stay, would he be crowned  
The lover. Else, past ripeness, deathward bound,  
He reasons; and the totterer Earth detests,  
Love shuns, grim logic screws in grasp, is he.  
Doth man divide divine Necessity  
From Joy, between the Queen of Beauty's breasts  
A sword is driven; for those most glorious twain  
Present her; armed to bless and to constrain.  
Of this he perishes; not she, the throned  
On rocks that spout their springs to the sacred mounts.  
A loftier Reason out of deeper founts  
Earth's chosen Goddess bears: by none disowned  
While red blood runs to swell the pulse, she boasts,

And Beauty, like her star, descends the sky;  
Earth's answer, heaven's consent unto man's cry,  
Uplifted by the innumerable hosts.

Quickened of Nature's eye and ear,  
When the wild sap at high tide smites  
Within us; or benignly clear  
To vision; or as the iris lights  
On fluctuant waters; she is ours  
Till set of man: the dreamed, the seen;  
Flushing the world with odorous flowers:  
A soft compulsion on terrene  
By heavenly: and the world is hers  
While hunger after Beauty spurs.

So is it sung in any space  
She fills, with laugh at shallow laws  
Forbidding love's devised embrace,  
The music Beauty from it draws.

George Meredith

# A Roar Through The Tall Twin Elm-Trees

A roar thro' the tall twin elm-trees  
The mustering storm betrayed:  
The South-wind seized the willow  
That over the water swayed.

Then fell the steady deluge  
In which I strove to doze,  
Hearing all night at my window  
The knock of the winter rose.

The rainy rose of winter!  
An outcast it must pine.  
And from thy bosom outcast  
Am I, dear lady mine.

George Meredith

# A Stave Of Roving Tim

(ADDRESSED TO CERTAIN FRIENDLY TRAMPS.)

I

The wind is East, the wind is West,  
Blows in and out of haven;  
The wind that blows is the wind that's best,  
And croak, my jolly raven!  
If here awhile we jigged and laughed,  
The like we will do yonder;  
For he's the man who masters a craft,  
And light as a lord can wander.  
So, foot the measure, Roving Tim,  
And croak, my jolly raven!  
The wind according to its whim  
Is in and out of haven.

II

You live in rows of snug abodes,  
With gold, maybe, for counting;  
And mine's the beck of the rainy roads  
Against the sun a-mounting.  
I take the day as it behaves,  
Nor shiver when 'tis airy;  
But comes a breeze, all you are on waves,  
Sick chickens o' Mother Carey!  
So, now for next, cries Roving Tim,  
And croak, my jolly raven!  
The wind according to its whim  
Is in and out of haven.

III

Sweet lass, you screw a lovely leer,  
To make a man consider.  
If you were up with the auctioneer,  
I'd be a handsome bidder.

But wedlock clips the rover's wing;  
She tricks him fly to spider;  
And when we get to fights in the Ring,  
It's trumps when you play outsider.  
So, wrench and split, cries Roving Tim,  
And croak, my jolly raven!  
The wind according to its whim  
Is in and out of haven.

#### IV

Along my winding way I know  
A shady dell that's winking;  
The very corner for Self and Co  
To do a world of thinking.  
And shall I this? and shall I that?  
Till Nature answers, ne'ther!  
Strike match and light your pipe in your hat,  
Rejoicing in sound shoe-leather!  
So lead along, cries Roving Tim,  
And croak, my jolly raven!  
The wind according to its whim  
Is in and out of haven.

#### V

A cunning hand 'll hand you bread,  
With freedom for your capers.  
I'm not so sure of a cunning head;  
It steers to pits or vapours.  
But as for Life, we'll bear in sight  
The lesson Nature teaches;  
Regard it in a sailing light,  
And treat it like thirsty leeches.  
So, fly your jib, cries Roving Tim,  
And top your boom, old raven!  
The wind according to its whim  
Is in and out of haven.

#### VI

She'll take, to please her dame and dad,

The shopman nicely shaven.  
She'll learn to think o' the marching lad  
When perchers show they're craven.  
You say the shopman piles a heap,  
While I perhaps am fasting;  
And bless your wits, it haunts him in sleep,  
His tin-kettle chance of lasting!  
So hail the road, cries Roving Tim,  
And hail the rain, old raven!  
The wind according to its whim  
Is in and out of haven.

## VII

He's half a wife, yon pecker bill;  
A book and likewise preacher.  
With any soul, in a game of skill,  
He'll prove your over-reacher.  
The reason is, his brains are bent  
On doing things right single.  
You'd wish for them when pitching your tent  
At night in a whirly dingle!  
So, off we go, cries Roving Tim,  
And on we go, old raven!  
The wind according to its whim  
Is in and out of haven.

## VIII

Lord, no, man's lot is not for bliss;  
To call it woe is blindness:  
It'll here a kick, and it's there a kiss,  
And here and there a kindness.  
He starts a hare and calls her joy;  
He runs her down to sorrow:  
The dogs within him bother the boy,  
But 'tis a new day to-morrow.  
So, I at helm, cries Roving Tim,  
And you at bow, old raven!  
The wind according to its whim  
Is in and out of haven.





# Agamemnon In The Fight

[Iliad, B. XI. V. 148]

These, then, he left, and away where ranks were now clashing the thickest,  
Onward rushed, and with him rushed all of the bright-greaved Achaians.  
Foot then footmen slew, that were flying from direful compulsion,  
Horse at the horsemen (up from off under them mounted the dust-cloud,  
Up off the plain, raised up cloud-thick by the thundering horse-hooves)  
Hewed with the sword's sharp edge; and so meanwhile Lord Agamemnon  
Followed, chasing and slaughtering aye, on-urgeing the Argives.

Now, as when fire voracious catches the unclipped woodland,  
This way bears it and that the great whirl of the wind, and the scrubwood  
Stretches uptorn, flung forward alength by the fire's fury rageing,  
So beneath Atreides Agamemnon heads of the scattered  
Trojans fell; and in numbers amany the horses, neck-stiffened,  
Rattled their vacant cars down the roadway gaps of the war-field,  
Missing the blameless charioteers, but, for these, they were outstretched  
Flat upon earth, far dearer to vultures than to their home-mates.

George Meredith

# Alsace-Lorraine

## I

The sister Hours in circles linked,  
Daughters of men, of men the mates,  
Are gone on flow with the day that winked,  
With the night that spanned at golden gates.  
Mothers, they leave us, quickening seed;  
They bear us grain or flower or weed,  
As we have sown; is nought extinct  
For them we fill to be our Fates.  
Life of the breath is but the loan;  
Passing death what we have sown.

Pearly are they till the pale inherited stain  
Deepens in us, and the mirrors they form on their flow  
Darken to feature and nature: a volumed chain,  
Sequent of issue, in various eddies they show.  
Theirs is the Book of the River of Life, to read  
Leaf by leaf by reapers of long-sown seed:  
There doth our shoot up to light from a spiriting sane  
Stand as a tree whereon numberless clusters grow:  
Legible there how the heart, with its one false move  
Cast Eurydice pallor on all we love.

Our fervid heart has filled that Book in chief;  
Our fitful heart a wild reflection views;  
Our craving heart of passion suckling grief  
Disowns the author's work it must peruse;  
Inconscient in its leap to wreak the deed,  
A round of harvests red from crimson seed,  
It marks the current Hours show leaf by leaf,  
And rails at Destiny; nor traces clues;  
Though sometimes it may think what novel light  
Will strike their faces when the mind shall write.

## II

Succourful daughters of men are the rosed and starred  
Revolving Twelves in their fluent germinal rings,

Despite the burden to chasten, abase, depose.  
Fallen on France, as the sweep of scythe over sward,  
They breathed in her ear their voice of the crystal springs,  
That run from a twilight rise, from a twilight close,  
Through alternate beams and glooms, rejoicingly young.  
Only to Earth's best loved, at the breathless turns  
Where Life in fold of the Shadow reclines unstrung,  
And a ghostly lamp of their moment's union burns,  
Will such pure notes from the fountain-head be sung.

Voice of Earth's very soul to the soul she would see renewed:  
A song that sought no tears, that laid not a touch on the breast  
Sobbing aswoon and, like last foxgloves' bells upon ferns  
In sandy alleys of woodland silence, shedding to bare.  
Daughters of Earth and men, they piped of her natural brood;  
Her patient helpful four-feet; wings on the flit or in nest;  
Paws at our old-world task to scoop a defensive lair;  
Snouts at hunt through the scented grasses; enhavened scuts  
Flashing escape under show of a laugh nigh the mossed burrow-mouth.  
Sack-like droop bronze pears on the nailed branch-frontage of huts,  
To greet those wedded toilers from acres where sweat is a shower.  
Snake, cicada, lizard, on lavender slopes up South,  
Pant for joy of a sunlight driving the fielders to bower.  
Sharpened in silver by one chance breeze is the olive's grey;  
A royal-mantle floats, a red fritillary hies;  
The bee, for whom no flower of garden or wild has nay,  
Noises, heard if but named, so hot is the trade he plies.  
Processions beneath green arches of herbage, the long colonnades;  
Labour'd mounds that a foot or a wanton stick may subvert;  
Homely are they for a lowly look on bedewed grass-blades,  
On citted fir-droppings, on twisted wreaths of the worm in dirt.  
Does nought so loosen our sight from the despot heart, to receive  
Balm of a sound Earth's primary heart at its active beat:  
The motive, yet servant, of energy; simple as morn and eve;  
Treasureless, fetterless; free of the bonds of a great conceit:  
Unwounded even by cruel blows on a body that writhes;  
Nor whimpering under misfortune; elusive of obstacles; prompt  
To quit any threatened familiar domain seen doomed by the scythes;  
Its day's hard business done, the score to the good accompt.  
Creatures of forest and mead, Earth's essays in being, all kinds  
Bound by the navel-knot to the Mother, never astray,  
They in the ear upon ground will pour their intuitive minds,

Cut man's tangles for Earth's first broad rectilinear way:  
Admonishing loftier reaches, the rich adventurous shoots,  
Pushes of tentative curves, embryonic upwreathings in air;  
Not always the sprouts of Earth's root-Laws preserving her brutes;  
Oft but our primitive hungers licentious in fine and fair.

Yet the like aerial growths may chance be the delicate sprays,  
Infant of Earth's most urgent in sap, her fierier zeal  
For entry on Life's upper fields: and soul thus flourishing pays  
The martyr's penance, mark for brutish in man to heel.

Her, from a nerveless well among stagnant pools of the dry,  
Through her good aim at divine, shall commune with Earth remake;  
Fraternal unto sororial, her, where abashed she may lie,  
Divinest of man shall clasp; a world out of darkness awake,  
As it were with the Resurrection's eyelids uplifted, to see  
Honour in shame, in substance the spirit, in that dry fount  
Jets of the songful ascending silvery-bright water-tree  
Spout, with our Earth's unbaffled resurgent desire for the mount,  
Though broken at intervals, clipped, and barren in seeming it be.  
For this at our nature arises rejuvenescent from Earth,  
However respersive the blow and nigh on infernal the fall,  
The chastisement drawn down on us merited: are we of worth  
Amid our satanic excrescences, this, for the less than a call,  
Will Earth reprime, man cherish; the God who is in us and round,  
Consenting, the God there seen. Impiety speaks despair;  
Religion the virtue of serving as things of the furrowy ground,  
Debtors for breath while breath with our fellows in service we  
share.

Not such of the crowned discrowned  
Can Earth or humanity spare;  
Such not the God let die.

### III

Eastward of Paris morn is high;  
And darkness on that Eastward side  
The heart of France beholds: a thorn  
Is in her frame where shines the morn:  
A rigid wave usurps her sky,  
With eagle crest and eagle-eyed  
To scan what wormy wrinkles hint

Her forces gathering: she the thrown  
From station, lopped of an arm, astounded, lone,  
Reading late History as a foul misprint:  
Imperial, Angelical,  
At strife commingled in her frame convulsed;  
Shame of her broken sword, a ravening gall;  
Pain of the limb where once her warm blood pulsed;  
These tortures to distract her underneath  
Her whelmed Aurora's shade. But in that space  
When lay she dumb beside her trampled wreath,  
Like an unburied body mid the tombs,  
Feeling against her heart life's bitter probe  
For life, she saw how children of her race,  
The many sober sons and daughters, plied,  
By cottage lamplight through the water-globe,  
By simmering stew-pots, by the serious looms,  
Afield, in factories, with the birds astir,  
Their nimble feet and fingers; not denied  
Refreshful chatter, laughter, galliard songs.  
So like Earth's indestructible they were,  
That wrestling with its anguish rose her pride,  
To feel where in each breast the thought of her,  
On whom the circle Hours laid leaded thongs,  
Was constant; spoken sometimes in low tone  
At lip or in a fluttered look,  
A shortened breath: and they were her loved own;  
Nor ever did they waste their strength with tears,  
For pity of the weeper, nor rebuke,  
Though mainly they were charged to pay her debt,  
The Mother having conscience in arrears;  
Ready to gush the flood of vainregret,  
Else hearken to her weaponed children's moan  
Of stifled rage invoking vengeance: hell's,  
If heaven should fail the counter-wave that swells  
In blood and brain for retribution swift.  
Those helped not: wings to her soul were these who yet  
Could welcome day for labour, night for rest,  
Enrich her treasury, built of cheerful thrift,  
Of honest heart, beyond all miracles;  
And likened to Earth's humblest were Earth's best.

#### IV

Brooding on her deep fall, the many strings  
Which formed her nature set a thought on Kings,  
As aids that might the low-laid cripple lift;  
And one among them hummed devoutly leal,  
While passed the sighing breeze along her breast.  
Of Kings by the festive vanquishers rammed down  
Her gorge since fell the Chief, she knew their crown;  
Upon her through long seasons was its grasp,  
For neither soul's nor body's weal;  
As much bestows the robber wasp,  
That in the hanging apple makes a meal,  
And carves a face of abscess where was fruit  
Ripe ruddy. They would blot  
Her radiant leap above the slopes acute,  
Of summit to celestial; impute  
The wanton's aim to her divinest shot;  
Bid her walk History backward over gaps;  
Abhor the day of Phrygian caps;  
Abjure her guerdon, execrate herself;  
The Hapsburg, Hohenzollern, Guelph,  
Admire repentant; reverently prostrate  
Her person unto the belly-god; of whom  
Is inward plenty and external bloom;  
Enough of pomp and state  
And carnival to quench  
The breast's desires of an intemperate wench,  
The head's ideas beyond legitimate.

She flung them: she was France: nor with far frown  
Her lover from the embrace of her refrained:  
But in her voice an interwoven wire,  
The exultation of her gross renown,  
Struck deafness at her heavens, and they waned  
Over a look ill-gifted to aspire.  
Wherefore, as an abandonment, irate,  
The intemperate summoned up her trumpet days,  
Her treasure-galleon's wondrous freight.  
The cannon-name she sang and shrieked; transferred  
Her soul's allegiance; o'er the Tyrant slurred,  
Tranced with the zeal of her first fawning gaze,  
To clasp his trophy flags and hail him Saint.

She hailed him Saint:  
 And her Jeanne unsainted, foully sung!  
 The virgin who conceived a France when funeral glooms  
 Across a land aquake with sharp disseverance hung:  
 Conceived, and under stress of battle brought her forth;  
 Crowned her in purification of feud and foeman's taint;  
 Taught her to feel her blood her being, know her worth,  
 Have joy of unity: the Jeanne bescreeched, bescoffed,  
 Who flamed to ashes, flew up wreaths of faggot fumes;  
 Through centuries a star in vapour-folds aloft.

For her people to hail her Saint,  
 Were no lifting of her, Earth's gem,  
 Earth's chosen, Earth's throb on divine:  
 In the ranks of the starred she is one,  
 While man has thought on our line:  
 No lifting of her, but for them,  
 Breath of the mountain, beam of the sun  
 Through mist, out of swamp-fires' lures release,  
 Youth on the forehead, the rough right way  
 Seen to be footed: for them the heart's peace,  
 By the mind's war won for a permanent miracle day.

Her arms below her sword-hilt crossed,  
 The heart of that high-hallowed Jeanne  
 Into the furnace-pit she tossed  
 Before her body knew the flame,  
 And sucked its essence: warmth for righteous work,  
 An undivided power to speed her aim.  
 She had no self but France: the sainted man  
 No France but self. Him warrior and clerk,  
 Free of his iron clutch; and him her young,  
 In whirled imagination mastodonized;  
 And him her penmen, him her poets; all  
 For the visioned treasure-galleon astrain;  
 Sent zenithward on bass and treble tongue,  
 Till solely through his glory France was prized.  
 She who had her Jeanne;  
 The child of her industrious;

Earth's truest, earth's pure fount from the main;  
And she who had her one day's mate,  
In the soul's view illustrious  
Past blazonry, her Immaculate,  
Those hours of slavish Empire would recall;  
Thrill to the rattling anchor-chain  
She heard upon a day in 'I who can';  
Start to the softened, tremulous bugle-blare  
Of that Caesarean Italian  
Across the storied fields of trampled grain,  
As to a Vercingetorix of old Gaul  
Blowing the rally against a Caesar's reign.  
Her soul's protesting sobs she drowned to swear  
Fidelity unto the sainted man,  
Whose nimbus was her crown; and be again  
The foreigner in Europe, known of none,  
None knowing; sight to dazzle, voice to stun.  
Rearward she stepped, with thirst for Europe's van;  
The dream she nursed a snare,  
The flag she bore a pall.

## VI

In Nature is no rearward step allowed.  
Hard on the rock Reality do we dash  
To be shattered, if the material dream propels.  
The worship to departed splendour vowed  
Conjured a simulacrum, wove her lash,  
For the slow measure timed her peal of bells.

Thereof was the cannon-name a mockery round her hills;  
For the will of wills,  
Its flaccid ape,  
Weak as the final echo off a giant's bawl:  
Napoleon for disdain,  
His banner steeped in crape.  
Thereof the barrier of Alsace-Lorraine;  
The frozen billow crested to its fall;  
Dismemberment; disfigurement;  
Her history blotted; her proud mantle rent;  
And ever that one word to reperuse,  
With eyes behind a veil of fiery dews;



Knelling the spot where Gallic soil defiled  
Showed her sons' valour as a frenzied child  
In arms of the mailed man.  
Word that her mind must bear, her heart put under ban,  
Lest burst it: unto her eyes a ghost,  
Incredible though manifest: a scene  
Stamped with her new Saint's name: and all his host  
A wattled flock the foeman's dogs between!

## VII

Mark where a credible ghost pulls bridle to view that bare  
Corpse of a field still reddening cloud, and alive in its throes  
Beneath her Purgatorial Saint's evocative stare:  
Brand on his name, the gulf of his glory, his Legend's close.  
A lustreless Phosphor heading for daybeam Night's dead-born,  
His underworld eyeballs grip the cast of the land for a fray  
Expugnant; swift up the heights, with the Victor's instinctive scorn  
Of the trapped below, he rides; he beholds, and a two-fold grey,  
Even as the misty sun growing moon that a frost enrings,  
Is shroud on the shrouded; he knows him there in the helmeted ranks.  
The golden eagles flap lame wings,  
The black double-headed are round their flanks.  
He is there in midst of the pupils he harried to brains awake, trod  
into union; lo,  
These are his Epic's tutored Dardans, yon that Rhapsode's Achaeans  
to know.  
Nor is aught of an equipollent conflict seen, nor the weaker's  
flashed device;  
Headless is offered a breast to beaks deliberate, formal, assured,  
precise.  
Ruled by the mathematician's hand, they solve their problem, as on a  
slate.  
This is the ground foremarked, and the day; their leader modestly  
hazarded date.  
His helmeted ranks might be draggers of pools or reapers of plains  
for the warrior's guile  
Displayed; they haul, they rend, as in some orderly office  
mercantile.  
And a timed artillery speaks full-mouthed on a stuttering feeble  
reduced to nought.  
Can it be France, an army of France, tricked, netted, convulsive,

all writhen caught?

Arterial blood of an army's heart outpoured the Grey Observer sees:  
A forest of France in thunder comes, like a landslide hurled off her  
Pyrenees.

Torrent and forest ramp, roll, sling on for a charge against iron,  
reason, Fate;

It is gapped through the mass midway, bare ribs and dust ere the  
helmeted feel its weight.

So the blue billow white-plumed is plunged upon shingle to screaming  
withdrawal, but snatched,

Waved is the laurel eternal yielded by Death o'er the waste of brave  
men outmatched.

The France of the fury was there, the thing he had wielded, whose  
honour was dearer than life;

The Prussia despised, the harried, the trodden, was here; his pupil,  
the scholar in strife.

He hated to heel, in a spasm of will,  
From sleep or debate, a mannikin squire  
With head of a merlin hawk and quill  
Acrow on an ear. At him rained fire  
From a blast of eyeballs hotter than speech,  
To say what a deadly poison stuffed  
The France here laid in her bloody ditch,  
Through the Legend passing human puffed.

Credible ghost of the field which from him descends,  
Each dark anniversary day will its father return,  
Haling his shadow to spy where the Legend ends,  
That penman trumpeter's part in the wreck discern.

There, with the cup it presents at her lips, she stands,  
France, with her future staked on the word it may pledge.  
The vengeance urged of desire a reserve countermands;  
The patience clasped totters hard on the precipice edge.  
Lopped of an arm, mother love for her own springs quick,  
To curdle the milk in her breasts for the young they feed,  
At thought of her single hand, and the lost so nigh.  
Mother love for her own, who raised her when she lay sick  
Nigh death, and would in like fountains fruitlessly bleed,  
Withholds the fling of her heart on the further die.

Of love is wisdom. Is it great love, then wise  
Will our wild heart be, though whipped unto madness more  
By its mentor's counselling voice than thoughtfully reined.  
Desire of the wave for the shore,  
Passion for one last agony under skies,  
To make her heavens remorseful, she restrained

## VIII

On her lost arm love bade her look;  
On her one hand to meditate;  
The tumult of her blood abate;  
Disaster face, derision brook:  
Forbade the page of her Historic Muse,  
Until her demon his last hold forsook,  
And smoothly, with no countenance of hate,  
Her conqueror she could scan to measure. Thence  
The strange new Winter stream of ruling sense,  
Cold, comfortless, but braced to disabuse,  
Ran through the mind of this most lowly laid;  
From the top billow of victorious War,  
Down in the flagless troughs at ebb and flow;  
A wreck; her past, her future, both in shade.  
She read the things that are;  
Reality unaccepted read  
For sign of the distraught, and took her blow  
To brain; herself read through;  
Wherefore her predatory Glory paid  
Napoleon ransom knew.  
Her nature's many strings hot gusts did jar  
Against the note of reason uttered low,  
Ere passionate with duty she might wed,  
Compel the bride's embrace of her stern groom,  
Joined at an altar liker to the tomb,  
Nest of the Furies their first nuptial bed,  
They not the less were mated and proclaimed  
The rational their issue. Then she rose.

See how the rush of southern Springtide glows  
Oceanic in the chariot-wheel's ascent,  
Illuminated with one breath. The maimed,  
Tom, tortured, winter-visaged, suddenly

Had stature; to the world's wonderment,  
Fair features, grace of mien, nor least  
The comic dimples round her April mouth,  
Sprung of her intimate humanity.  
She stood before mankind the very South  
Rapt out of frost to flowery drapery;  
Unshadowed save when somewhiles she looked East.

## IX

Let but the rational prevail,  
Our footing is on ground though all else fail:  
Our kiss of Earth is then a plight  
To walk within her Laws and have her light.  
Choice of the life or death lies in ourselves;  
There is no fate but when unreason lours.  
This Land the cheerful toiler delves,  
The thinker brightens with fine wit,  
The lovelier grace as lyric flowers,  
Those rosed and starred revolving Twelves  
Shall nurse for effort infinite  
While leashed to brain the heart of France the Fair  
Beats tempered music and its lead subserves.  
Washed from her eyes the Napoleonic glare,  
Divinely raised by that in her divine,  
Not the clear sight of Earth's blunt actual swerves  
When her lost look, as on a wave of wine,  
Rolls Eastward, and the mother-flag descries  
Caress with folds and curves  
The fortress over Rhine,  
Beneath the one tall spire.  
Despite her brooding thought, her nightlong sighs,  
Her anguish in desire,  
She sees, above the brutish paw  
Alert on her still quivering limb -  
As little in past time she saw,  
Nor when dispeiced as prey,  
As victrix when abhorred -  
A Grand Germania, stout on soil;  
Audacious up the ethereal dim;  
The forest's Infant; the strong hand for toil;  
The patient brain in twilights when astray;

Shrewdest of heads to foil and counterfoil;  
The sceptic and devout; the potent sword;  
With will and armed to help in hewing way  
For Europe's march; and of the most golden chord  
Of the Heliconian lyre  
Excellent mistress. Yea, she sees, and can admire;  
Still seeing in what walks the Gallia leads;  
And with what shield upon Alsace-Lorraine  
Her wary sister's doubtful look misreads  
A mother's throbs for her lost: so loved: so near:  
Magnetic. Hard the course for her to steer,  
The leap against the sharpened spikes restrain.  
For the belted Overshadower hard the course,  
On whom devolves the spirit's touchstone, Force:  
Which is the strenuous arm, to strike inclined,  
That too much adamantine makes the mind;  
Forgets it coin of Nature's rich Exchange;  
Contracts horizons within present sight:  
Amalekite to-day, across its range  
Indisputable; to-morrow Simeonite.

X

The mother who gave birth to Jeanne;  
Who to her young Angelical sprang;  
Who lay with Earth and heard the notes she sang,  
And heard her truest sing them; she may reach  
Heights yet unknown of nations; haply teach  
A thirsting world to learn 'tis 'she who can.'

She that in History's Heliaea pleads  
The nation flowering conscience o'er the beast;  
With heart expurged of rancour, tame of greeds;  
With the winged mind from fang and claw released; -  
Will such a land be seen? It will be seen; -  
Shall stand adjudged our foremost and Earth's Queen.  
Acknowledgement that she of God proceeds  
The invisible makes visible, as his priest,  
To her is yielded by a world reclaimed.  
And stands she mutilated, fancy-shamed,  
Yet strong in arms, yet strong in self-control,  
Known valiant, her maternal throbs repressed,

Discarding vengeance, Giant with a soul; -  
My faith in her when she lay low  
Was fountain; now as wave at flow  
Beneath the lights, my faith in God is best; -  
On France has come the test  
Of what she holds within  
Responsive to Life's deeper springs.  
She above the nations blest  
In fruitful and in liveliest,  
In all that servant earth to heavenly bidding brings,  
The devotee of Glory, she may win  
Glory despoiling none, enrich her kind,  
Illume her land, and take the royal seat  
Unto the strong self-conqueror assigned.  
But ah, when speaks a loaded breath the double name,  
Humanity's old Foeman winks agrin.  
Her constant Angel eyes her heart's quick beat,  
The thrill of shadow coursing through her frame.  
Like wind among the ranks of amber wheat.  
Our Europe, vowed to unity or torn,  
Observes her face, as shepherds note the morn,  
And in a ruddy beacon mark an end  
That for the flock in their grave hearing rings.  
Specked overhead the imminent vulture wings  
At poise, one fatal movement indiscreet,  
Sprung from the Aetna passions' mad revolts,  
Draws down; the midnight hovers to descend;  
And dire as Indian noons of ulcer heat  
Anticipating tempest and the bolts,  
Hangs curtained terrors round her next day's door,  
Death's emblems for the breast of Europe flings;  
The breast that waits a spark to fire her store.  
Shall, then, the great vitality, France,  
Signal the backward step once more;  
Again a Goddess Fortune trace  
Amid the Deities, and pledge to chance  
One whom we never could replace?  
Now may she tune her nature's many strings  
To noble harmony, be seen, be known.

It was the foreign France, the unruly, feared;  
Little for all her witcheries endeared;

Theatrical of arrogance, a sprite  
With gaseous vapours overblown,  
In her conceit of power ensphered,  
Foredoomed to violate and atone;  
Her the grim conqueror's iron might  
Avengeing clutched, distrusting rent;  
Not that sharp intellect with fire endowed  
To cleave our webs, run lightnings through our cloud;  
Not virtual France, the France benevolent,  
The chivalrous, the many-stringed, sublime  
At intervals, and oft in sweetest chime;  
Though perilously instrument,  
A breast for any having godlike gleam.  
This France could no antagonist disesteem,  
To spurn at heel and confiscate her brood.  
Albeit a waverer between heart and mind,  
And laurels won from sky or plucked from blood,  
Which wither all the wreath when intertwined,  
This cherishable France she may redeem.  
Beloved of Earth, her heart should feel at length  
How much unto Earth's offspring it doth owe.  
Obstructions are for levelling, have we strength;  
'Tis poverty of soul conceived a foe.  
Rejected be the wrath that keeps unhealed  
Her panting wound; to higher Courts appealed  
The wrongs discerned of higher: Europe waits:  
She chooses God or gambles with the Fates.  
Shines the new Helen in Alsace-Lorraine,  
A darker river severs Rhine and Rhone,  
Is heard a deadlier Epic of the twain;  
We see a Paris burn  
Or France Napoleon.

For yet he breathes whom less her heart forswears  
While trembles its desire to thwart her mind:  
The Tyrant lives in Victory's return.  
What figure with recurrent footstep fares  
Around those memoried tracks of scarlet mud,  
To sow her future from an ashen urn  
By lantern-light, as dragons' teeth are sown?  
Of bleeding pride the piercing seer is blind.  
But, cleared her eyes of that ensanguined scud

Distorting her true features, to be shown  
Benignly luminous, one who bears  
Humanity at breast, and she might learn  
How surely the excelling generous find  
Renouncement is possession. Sure  
As light enkindles light when heavenly earthly mates,  
The flame of pure immits the flame of pure,  
Magnanimous magnanimous creates.  
So to majestic beauty stricken rears  
Hard-visaged rock against the risen glow;  
And men are in the secret with the spheres,  
Whose glory is celestially to bestow.

Now nation looks to nation, that may live  
Their common nurseling, like the torrent's flower,  
Shaken by foul Destruction's fast-piled heap.  
On France is laid the proud initiative  
Of sacrifice in one self-mastering hour,  
Whereby more than her lost one will she reap;  
Perchance the very lost regain,  
To count it less than her superb reward.  
Our Europe, where is debtor each to each,  
Pass measure of excess, and war is Cain,  
Fraternal from the Seaman's beach,  
From answering Rhine in grand accord,  
From Neva beneath Northern cloud,  
And from our Transatlantic Europe loud,  
Will hail the rare example for their theme;  
Give response, as rich foliage to the breeze;  
In their entrusted nurseling know them one:  
Like a brave vessel under press of steam,  
Abreast the winds and tides, on angry seas,  
Plucked by the heavens forlorn of present sun,  
Will drive through darkness, and, with faith supreme,  
Have sight of haven and the crowded quays.

George Meredith



# Alternation

Between the fountain and the rill  
I passed, and saw the mighty will  
To leap at sky; the careless run,  
As earth would lead her little son.

Beneath them throbs an urgent well,  
That here is play, and there is war.  
I know not which had most to tell  
Of whence we spring and what we are.

George Meredith

# An Orson Of The Muse

Her son, albeit the Muse's livery  
And measured courtly paces rouse his taunts,  
Naked and hairy in his savage haunts,  
To Nature only will he bend the knee;  
Spouting the founts of her distillery  
Like rough rock-sources; and his woes and wants  
Being Nature's, civil limitation daunts  
His utterance never; the nymphs blush, not he.  
Him, when he blows of Earth, and Man, and Fate,  
The Muse will hearken to with graver ear  
Than many of her train can waken: him  
Would fain have taught what fruitful things and dear  
Must sink beneath the tidewaves, of their weight,  
If in no vessel built for sea they swim.

George Meredith

# Aneurin's Harp

## I

Prince of Bards was old Aneurin;  
He the grand Gododin sang;  
All his numbers threw such fire in,  
Struck his harp so wild a twang; -  
Still the wakeful Briton borrows  
Wisdom from its ancient heat:  
Still it haunts our source of sorrows,  
Deep excess of liquor sweet!

## II

Here the Briton, there the Saxon,  
Face to face, three fields apart,  
Thirst for light to lay their thwacks on  
Each the other with good heart.  
Dry the Saxon sits, 'mid dinful  
Noise of iron knits his steel:  
Fresh and roaring with a skinful,  
Britons round the hirlas reel.

## III

Yellow flamed the meady sunset;  
Red runs up the flag of morn.  
Signal for the British onset  
Hiccups through the British horn.  
Down these hillmen pour like cattle  
Sniffing pasture: grim below,  
Showing eager teeth of battle,  
In his spear-heads lies the foe.

## IV

- Monster of the sea! we drive him  
Back into his hungry brine.  
- You shall lodge him, feed him, wive him,  
Look on us; we stand in line.

- Pale sea-monster! foul the waters  
Cast him; foul he leaves our land.  
- You shall yield us land and daughters:  
Stay the tongue, and try the hand.

## V

Swift as torrent-streams our warriors,  
Tossing torrent lights, find way;  
Burst the ridges, crowd the barriers,  
Pierce them where the spear-heads play;  
Turn them as the clods in furrow,  
Top them like the leaping foam;  
Sorrow to the mother, sorrow,  
Sorrow to the wife at home!

## VI

Stags, they butted; bulls, they bellowed;  
Hounds, we baited them; oh, brave!  
Every second man, unfellowed,  
Took the strokes of two, and gave.  
Bare as hop-stakes in November's  
Mists they met our battle-flood:  
Hoary-red as Winter's embers  
Lay their dead lines done in blood.

## VII

Thou, my Bard, didst hang thy lyre in  
Oak-leaves, and with crimson brand  
Rhythmic fury spent, Aneurin;  
Songs the churls could understand:  
Thrumming on their Saxon sconces  
Straight, the invariable blow,  
Till they snorted true responses.  
Ever thus the Bard they know!

## VIII

But ere nightfall, harper lusty!  
When the sun was like a ball

Dropping on the battle dusty,  
What was yon discordant call?  
Cambria's old metheglin demon  
Breathed against our rushing tide;  
Clove us midst the threshing seamen:-  
Gashed, we saw our ranks divide!

## IX

Britain then with valedictory  
Shriek veiled off her face and knelt.  
Full of liquor, full of victory,  
Chief on chief old vengeance dealt.  
Backward swung their hurly-burly;  
None but dead men kept the fight.  
They that drink their cup too early,  
Darkness they shall see ere night.

## X

Loud we heard the yellow rover  
Laugh to sleep, while we raged thick,  
Thick as ants the ant-hill over,  
Asking who has thrust the stick.  
Lo, as frogs that Winter cumpers  
Meet the Spring with stiffen'd yawn,  
We from our hard night of slumbers  
Marched into the bloody dawn.

## XI

Day on day we fought, though shattered:  
Pushed and met repulses sharp,  
Till our Raven's plumes were scattered:  
All, save old Aneurin's harp.  
Hear it wailing like a mother  
O'er the strings of children slain!  
He in one tongue, in another,  
Alien, I; one blood, yet twain.

## XII

Old Aneurin! droop no longer.  
That squat ocean-scum, we own,  
Had fine stoutness, made us stronger,  
Brought us much-required backbone:  
Claimed of Power their dues, and granted  
Dues to Power in turn, when rose  
Mightier rovers; they that planted  
Sovereign here the Norman nose.

### XIII

Glorious men, with heads of eagles,  
Chopping arms, and cupboard lips;  
Warriors, hunters, keen as beagles,  
Mounted aye on horse or ships.  
Active, being hungry creatures;  
Silent, having nought to say:  
High they raised the lord of features,  
Saxon-worshipped to this day.

### XIV

Hear its deeds, the great recital!  
Stout as bergs of Arctic ice  
Once it led, and lived; a title  
Now it is, and names its price.  
This our Saxon brothers cherish:  
This, when by the worth of wits  
Lands are reared aloft, or perish,  
Sole illumines their lucre-pits.

### XV

Know we not our wrongs, unwritten  
Though they be, Aneurin? Sword,  
Song, and subtle mind, the Briton  
Brings to market, all ignored.  
'Gainst the Saxon's bone impinging,  
Still is our Gododin played;  
Shamed we see him humbly cringing  
In a shadowy nose's shade.

## XVI

Bitter is the weight that crushes  
Low, my Bard, thy race of fire.  
Here no fair young future blushes  
Bridal to a man's desire.  
Neither chief, nor aim, nor splendour  
Dressing distance, we perceive.  
Neither honour, nor the tender  
Bloom of promise, morn or eve.

## XVII

Joined we are; a tide of races  
Rolled to meet a common fate;  
England clasps in her embraces  
Many: what is England's state?  
England her distended middle  
Thumps with pride as Mammon's wife;  
Says that thus she reads thy riddle,  
Heaven! 'tis heaven to plump her life.

## XVIII

O my Bard! a yellow liquor,  
Like to that we drank of old -  
Gold is her metheglin beaker,  
She destruction drinks in gold.  
Warn her, Bard, that Power is pressing  
Hotly for his dues this hour;  
Tell her that no drunken blessing  
Stops the onward march of Power.

## XIX

Has she ears to take forewarnings  
She will cleanse her of her stains,  
Feed and speed for braver mornings  
Valourously the growth of brains.  
Power, the hard man knit for action,  
Reads each nation on the brow.  
Cripple, fool, and petrification

Fall to him--are falling now!

George Meredith



# Angela Burdett-Coutts

Long with us, now she leaves us; she has rest  
Beneath our sacred sod:  
A woman vowed to Good, whom all attest,  
The daylight gift of God.

George Meredith

# Angelic Love

Angelic love that stoops with heavenly lips  
To meet its earthly mate;  
Heroic love that to its sphere's eclipse  
Can dare to join its fate  
With one beloved devoted human heart,  
And share with it the passion and the smart,  
The undying bliss  
Of its most fleeting kiss;  
The fading grace  
Of its most sweet embrace:-  
Angelic love, heroic love!  
Whose birth can only be above,  
Whose wandering must be on earth,  
Whose haven where it first had birth!  
Love that can part with all but its own worth,  
And joy in every sacrifice  
That beautifies its Paradise!  
And gently, like a golden-fruited vine,  
With earnest tenderness itself consign,  
And creeping up deliriously entwine  
Its dear delicious arms  
Round the beloved being!  
With fair unfolded charms,  
All-trusting, and all-seeing, -  
Grape-laden with full bunches of young wine!  
While to the panting heart's dry yearning drouth  
Buds the rich dewy mouth -  
Tenderly uplifted,  
Like two rose-leaves drifted  
Down in a long warm sigh of the sweet South!  
Such love, such love is thine,  
Such heart is mine,  
O thou of mortal visions most divine!

George Meredith

# Antigone

The buried voice bespake Antigone.

'O sister! couldst thou know, as thou wilt know,  
The bliss above, the reverence below,  
Enkindled by thy sacrifice for me;  
Thou wouldst at once with holy ecstasy  
Give thy warm limbs into the yearning earth.  
Sleep, Sister! for Elysium's dawning birth, -  
And faith will fill thee with what is to be!  
Sleep, for the Gods are watching over thee!  
Thy dream will steer thee to perform their will,  
As silently their influence they instil.  
O Sister! in the sweetness of thy prime,  
Thy hand has plucked the bitter flower of death;  
But this will dower thee with Elysian breath,  
That fade into a never-fading clime.  
Dear to the Gods are those that do like thee  
A solemn duty! for the tyranny  
Of kings is feeble to the soul that dares  
Defy them to fulfil its sacred cares:  
And weak against a mighty will are men.  
O, Torch between two brothers! in whose gleam  
Our slaughtered House doth shine as one again,  
Tho' severed by the sword; now may thy dream  
Kindle desire in thee for us, and thou,  
Forgetting not thy lover and his vow,  
Leaving no human memory forgot,  
Shalt cross, not unattended, the dark stream  
Which runs by thee in sleep and ripples not.  
The large stars glitter thro' the anxious night,  
And the deep sky broods low to look at thee:  
The air is hush'd and dark o'er land and sea,  
And all is waiting for the morrow light:  
So do thy kindred spirits wait for thee.  
O Sister! soft as on the downward rill,  
Will those first daybeams from the distant hill  
Fall on the smoothness of thy placid brow,  
Like this calm sweetness breathing thro' me now:  
And when the fated sounds shall wake thine eyes,

Wilt thou, confiding in the supreme will,  
In all thy maiden steadfastness arise,  
Firm to obey and earnest to fulfil;  
Remembering the night thou didst not sleep,  
And this same brooding sky beheld thee creep,  
Defiant of unnatural decree,  
To where I lay upon the outcast land;  
Before the iron gates upon the plain;  
A wretched, graveless ghost, whose wailing chill  
Came to thy darkened door imploring thee;  
Yearning for burial like my brother slain; -  
And all was dared for love and piety!  
This thought will nerve again thy virgin hand  
To serve its purpose and its destiny.'

She woke, they led her forth, and all was still.

Swathed round in mist and crown'd with cloud,  
O Mountain! hid from peak to base -  
Caught up into the heavens and clasped  
In white ethereal arms that make  
Thy mystery of size sublime!  
What eye or thought can measure now  
Thy grand dilating loftiness!  
What giant crest dispute with thee  
Supremacy of air and sky!  
What fabled height with thee compare!  
Not those vine-terraced hills that seethe  
The lava in their fiery cusps;  
Nor that high-climbing robe of snow,  
Whose summits touch the morning star,  
And breathe the thinnest air of life;  
Nor crocus-couching Ida, warm  
With Juno's latest nuptial lure;  
Nor Tenedos whose dreamy eye  
Still looks upon beleaguered Troy;  
Nor yet Olympus crown'd with gods  
Can boast a majesty like thine,  
O Mountain! hid from peak to base,  
And image of the awful power  
With which the secret of all things,

That stoops from heaven to garment earth,  
Can speak to any human soul,  
When once the earthly limits lose  
Their pointed heights and sharpened lines,  
And measureless immensity  
Is palpable to sense and sight.

George Meredith

# Appreciation

Earth was not Earth before her sons appeared,  
Nor Beauty Beauty ere young Love was born:  
And thou when I lay hidden wast as morn  
At city-windows, touching eyelids bleared;  
To none by her fresh wingedness endeared;  
Unwelcome unto revellers outworn.  
I the last echoes of Diana's horn  
In woodland heard, and saw thee come, and cheered.  
No longer wast thou then mere light, fair soul!  
And more than simple duty moved thy feet.  
New colours rose in thee, from fear, from shame,  
From hope, effused: though not less pure a scroll  
May men read on the heart I taught to beat:  
That change in thee, if not thyself, I claim.

George Meredith

# Archduchess Anne

1--I

In middle age an evil thing  
Befell Archduchess Anne:  
She looked outside her wedding-ring  
Upon a princely man.

II

Count Louis was for horse and arms;  
And if its beacon waved,  
For love; but ladies had not charms  
To match a danger braved.

III

On battlefields he was the bow  
Bestrung to fly the shaft:  
In idle hours his heart would flow  
As winds on currents waft.

IV

His blood was of those warrior tribes  
That streamed from morning's fire,  
Whom now with traps and now with bribes  
The wily Council wire.

V

Archduchess Anne the Council ruled,  
Count Louis his great dame;  
And woe to both when one had cooled!  
Little was she to blame.

VI

Among her chiefs who spun their plots,  
Old Kraken stood the sword:

As sharp his wits for cutting knots  
Of babble he abhorred.

VII

He revered her name and line,  
Nor other merit had  
Save soldierwise to wait her sign,  
And do the deed she bade.

VIII

He saw her hand jump at her side  
Ere royally she smiled  
On Louis and his fair young bride  
Where courtly ranks defiled.

IX

That was a moment when a shock  
Through the procession ran,  
And thrilled the plumes, and stayed the clock,  
Yet smiled Archduchess Anne.

X

No touch gave she to hound in leash,  
No wink to sword in sheath:  
She seemed a woman scarce of flesh;  
Above it, or beneath.

XI

Old Kraken spied with kennelled snarl,  
His Lady deemed disgraced.  
He footed as on burning marl,  
When out of Hall he paced.

XII

'Twas seen he hammered striding legs,  
And stopped, and strode again.



Now Vengeance has a brood of eggs,  
But Patience must be hen.

XIII

Too slow are they for wrath to hatch,  
Too hot for time to rear.  
Old Kraken kept unwinding watch;  
He marked his day appear.

XIV

He neighed a laugh, though moods were rough  
With standards in revolt:  
His nostrils took the news for snuff,  
His smacking lips for salt.

XV

Count Louis' wavy cock's plumes led  
His troops of black-haired manes,  
A rebel; and old Kraken sped  
To front him on the plains.

XVI

Then camp opposed to camp did they  
Fret earth with panther claws  
For signal of a bloody day,  
Each reading from the Laws.

XVII

'Forefend it, heaven!' Count Louis cried,  
'And let the righteous plead:  
My country is a willing bride,  
Was never slave decreed.

XVIII

'Not we for thirst of blood appeal  
To sword and slaughter curst;

We have God's blessing on our steel,  
Do we our pleading first.'

XIX

Count Louis, soul of chivalry,  
Put trust in plighted word;  
By starlight on the broad brown lea,  
To bar the strife he spurred.

XX

Across his breast a crimson spot,  
That in a quiver glowed,  
The ruddy crested camp-fires shot,  
As he to darkness rode.

XXI

He rode while omens called, beware  
Old Kraken's pledge of faith!  
A smile and waving hand in air,  
And outward flew the wraith.

XXII

Before pale morn had mixed with gold,  
His army roared, and chilled,  
As men who have a woe foretold,  
And see it red fulfilled.

XXIII

Away and to his young wife speed,  
And say that Honour's dead!  
Another word she will not need  
To bow a widow's head.

XXIV

Old Kraken roped his white moustache  
Right, left, for savage glee:

- To swing him in his soldier's sash  
Were kind for such as he!

XXV

Old Kraken's look hard Winter wears  
When sweeps the wild snow-blast:  
He had the hug of Arctic bears  
For captives he held fast.

2--I

Archduchess Anne sat carved in frost,  
Shut off from priest and spouse.  
Her lips were locked, her arms were crossed,  
Her eyes were in her brows.

II

One hand enclosed a paper scroll,  
Held as a strangled asp.  
So may we see the woman's soul  
In her dire tempter's grasp.

III

Along that scroll Count Louis' doom  
Throbb'd till the letters flamed.  
She saw him in his scornful bloom,  
She saw him chained and shamed.

IV

Around that scroll Count Louis' fate  
Was acted to her stare,  
And hate in love and love in hate  
Fought fell to smite or spare.

V

Between the day that struck her old,  
And this black star of days,

Her heart swung like a storm-bell tolled  
Above a town ablaze.

VI

His beauty pressed to intercede,  
His beauty served him ill.  
- Not Vengeance, 'tis his rebel's deed,  
'Tis Justice, not our will!

VII

Yet who had sprung to life's full force  
A breast that loveless dried?  
But who had sapped it at the source,  
With scarlet to her pride!

VIII

He brought her waning heart as 'twere  
New message from the skies.  
And he betrayed, and left on her  
The burden of their sighs.

IX

In floods her tender memories poured;  
They foamed with waves of spite:  
She crushed them, high her heart outsoared,  
To keep her mind alight.

X

- The crawling creature, called in scorn  
A woman!--with this pen  
We sign a paper that may warn  
His crowing fellowmen.

XI

- We read them lesson of a power  
They slight who do us wrong.

That bitter hour this bitter hour  
Provokes; by turns the strong!

XII

- That we were woman once is known:  
That we are Justice now,  
Above our sex, above the throne,  
Men quaking shall avow.

XIII

Archduchess Anne ascending flew,  
Her heart outsoared, but felt  
The demon of her sex pursue,  
Incensing or to melt.

XIV

Those counterfloods below at leap  
Still in her breast blew storm,  
And farther up the heavenly steep  
Wrestled in angels' form.

XV

To disentangle one clear wish  
Not of her sex, she sought;  
And womanish to womanish  
Discerned in lighted thought.

XVI

With Louis' chance it went not well  
When at herself she raged;  
A woman, of whom men might tell  
She doted, crazed and aged.

XVII

Or else enamoured of a sweet  
Withdrawn, a vengeful crone!

And say, what figure at her feet  
Is this that utters moan?

XVIII

The Countess Louis from her head  
Drew veil: 'Great Lady, hear!  
My husband deems you Justice dread,  
I know you Mercy dear.

XIX

'His error upon him may fall;  
He will not breathe a nay.  
I am his helpless mate in all,  
Except for grace to pray.

XX

'Perchance on me his choice inclined,  
To give his House an heir:  
I had not marriage with his mind,  
His counsel could not share.

XXI

'I brought no portion for his weal  
But this one instinct true,  
Which bids me in my weakness kneel,  
Archduchess Anne, to you.'

XXII

The frowning Lady uttered, 'Forth!'  
Her look forbade delay:  
'It is not mine to weigh your worth;  
Your husband's others weigh.

XXIII

'Hence with the woman in your speech,'  
For nothing it avails

In woman's fashion to beseech  
Where Justice holds the scales.'

XXIV

Then bent and went the lady wan,  
Whose girlishness made grey  
The thoughts that through Archduchess Anne  
Shattered like stormy spray.

XXV

Long sat she there, as flame that strives  
To hold on beating wind:  
- His wife must be the fool of wives,  
Or cunningly designed!

XXVI

She sat until the tempest-pitch  
In her torn bosom fell;  
- His wife must be a subtle witch  
Or else God loves her well!

3--I

Old Kraken read a missive penned  
By his great Lady's hand.  
Her condescension called him friend,  
To raise the crest she fanned.

II

Swiftly to where he lay encamped  
It flew, yet breathed aloof  
From woman's feeling, and he stamped  
A heel more like a hoof.

III

She wrote of Mercy: 'She was loth  
Too hard to goad a foe.'

He stamped, as when men drive an oath  
Devils transcribe below.

#### IV

She wrote: 'We have him half by theft.'  
His wrinkles glistened keen:  
And see the Winter storm-cloud cleft  
To lurid skies between!

#### V

When read old Kraken: 'Christ our Guide,'  
His eyes were spikes of spar:  
And see the white snow-storm divide  
About an icy star!

#### VI

'She trusted him to understand,'  
She wrote, and further prayed  
That policy might rule the land.  
Old Kraken's laughter neighed.

#### VII

Her words he took; her nods and winks  
Treated as woman's fog.  
The man-dog for his mistress thinks,  
Not less her faithful dog.

#### VIII

She hugged a cloak old Kraken ripped;  
Disguise to him he loathed.  
- Your mercy, madam, shows you stripped,  
While mine will keep you clothed.

#### IX

A rough ill-soldered scar in haste  
He rubbed on his cheek-bone.



- Our policy the man shall taste;  
Our mercy shall be shown.

X

'Count Louis, honour to your race  
Decrees the Council-hall:  
You 'scape the rope by special grace,  
And like a soldier fall.'

XI

- I am a man of many sins,  
Who for one virtue die,  
Count Louis said.--They play at shins,  
Who kick, was the reply.

XII

Uprose the day of crimson sight,  
The day without a God.  
At morn the hero said Good-night:  
See there that stain on sod!

XIII

At morn the Countess Louis heard  
Young light sing in the lark.  
Ere eve it was that other bird,  
Which brings the starless dark.

XIV

To heaven she vowed herself, and yearned  
Beside her lord to lie.  
Archduchess Anne on Kraken turned,  
All white as a dead eye.

XV

If I could kill thee! shrieked her look:  
If lightning sprang from Will!

An oaken head old Kraken shook,  
And she might thank or kill.

XVI

The pride that fenced her heart in mail  
By mortal pain was torn.  
Forth from her bosom leaped a wail,  
As of a babe new-born.

XVII

She clad herself in courtly use,  
And one who heard them prate  
Had said they differed upon views  
Where statecraft raised debate.

XVIII

The wretch detested must she trust,  
The servant master own:  
Confide to godless cause so just,  
And for God's blessing moan.

XIX

Austerely she her heart kept down,  
Her woman's tongue was mute  
When voice of People, voice of Crown,  
In cannon held dispute.

XX

The Crown on seas of blood, like swine,  
Swam forefoot at the throat:  
It drank of its dear veins for wine,  
Enough if it might float!

XXI

It sank with piteous yelp, resurged  
Electrical with fear.

O had she on old Kraken urged  
Her word of mercy clear!

XXII

O had they with Count Louis been  
Accordant in his plea!  
Cursed are the women vowed to screen  
A heart that all can see!

XXIII

The godless drove unto a goal  
Was worse than vile defeat.  
Did vengeance prick Count Louis' soul  
They dressed him luscious meat.

XXIV

Worms will the faithless find their lies  
In the close treasure-chest.  
Without a God no day can rise,  
Though it should slay our best.

XXV

The Crown it furled a draggled flag,  
It sheathed a broken blade.  
Behold its triumph in the hag  
That lives with looks decayed!

XXVI

And lo, the man of oaken head,  
Of soldier's honour bare,  
He fled his land, but most he fled  
His Lady's frigid stare.

XXVII

Judged by the issue we discern  
God's blessing, and the bane.

Count Louis' dust would fill an urn,  
His deeds are waving grain.

XXVIII

And she that helped to slay, yet bade  
To spare the fated man,  
Great were her errors, but she had  
Great heart, Archduchess Anne.

George Meredith

# Ask, Is Love Divine

Ask, is Love divine,  
Voices all are, ay.  
Question for the sign,  
There's a common sigh.  
Would we, through our years,  
Love forego,  
Quit of scars and tears?  
Ah, but no, no, no!

George Meredith

## At The Close

To Thee, dear God of Mercy, both appeal,  
Who straightway sound the call to arms. Thou know'st;  
And that black spot in each embattled host,  
Spring of the blood-stream, later wilt reveal.  
Now is it red artillery and white steel;  
Till on a day will ring the victor's boast,  
That 'tis Thy chosen towers uppermost,  
Where Thy rejected grovels under heel.  
So in all times of man's descent insane  
To brute, did strength and craft combining strike,  
Even as a God of Armies, his fell blow.  
But at the close he entered Thy domain,  
Dear God of Mercy, and if lion-like  
He tore the fall'n, the Eternal was his Foe.

George Meredith

# At The Funeral

February 2, 1901

Her sacred body bear: the tenement  
Of that strong soul now ranked with God's Elect  
Her heart upon her people's heart she spent;  
Hence is she Royalty's lodestar to direct.

The peace is hers, of whom all lands have praised  
Majestic virtues ere her day unseen.  
Aloft the name of Womanhood she raised,  
And gave new readings to the Title, Queen.

George Meredith

# Atkins

Yonder's the man with his life in his hand,  
Legs on the march for whatever the land,  
Or to the slaughter, or to the maiming,  
Getting the dole of a dog for pay.  
Laurels he clasps in the words 'duty done,'  
England his heart under every sun:-  
Exquisite humour! that gives him a naming  
Base to the ear as an ass's bray.

George Meredith



# Autumn Even-Song

The long cloud edged with streaming grey  
Soars from the West;  
The red leaf mounts with it away,  
Showing the nest  
A blot among the branches bare:  
There is a cry of outcasts in the air.

Swift little breezes, darting chill,  
Pant down the lake;  
A crow flies from the yellow hill,  
And in its wake  
A baffled line of labouring rooks:  
Steel-surfaced to the light the river looks.

Pale on the panes of the old hall  
Gleams the lone space  
Between the sunset and the squall;  
And on its face  
Mournfully glimmers to the last:  
Great oaks grow mighty minstrels in the blast.

Pale the rain-rutted roadways shine  
In the green light  
Behind the cedar and the pine:  
Come, thundering night!  
Blacken broad earth with hoards of storm:  
For me yon valley-cottage beckons warm.

George Meredith

## Beauty Rothraut (From Moricke)

What is the name of King Ringang's daughter?

Rohtraut, Beauty Rohtraut!

And what does she do the livelong day,

Since she dare not knit and spin away?

O hunting and fishing is ever her play!

And, heigh! that her huntsman I might be!

I'd hunt and fish right merrily!

Be silent, heart!

And it chanced that, after this some time, -

Rohtraut, Beauty Rohtraut, -

The boy in the Castle has gained access,

And a horse he has got and a huntsman's dress,

To hunt and to fish with the merry Princess;

And, O! that a king's son I might be!

Beauty Rohtraut I love so tenderly.

Hush! hush! my heart.

Under a grey old oak they sat,

Beauty, Beauty Rohtraut!

She laughs: 'Why look you so slyly at me?

If you have heart enough, come, kiss me.'

Cried the breathless boy, 'kiss thee?'

But he thinks, kind fortune has favoured my youth;

And thrice he has kissed Beauty Rohtraut's mouth.

Down! down! mad heart.

Then slowly and silently they rode home, -

Rohtraut, Beauty Rohtraut!

The boy was lost in his delight:

'And, wert thou Empress this very night,

I would not heed or feel the blight;

Ye thousand leaves of the wild wood wist

How Beauty Rohtraut's mouth I kiss'd.

Hush! hush! wild heart.'

George Meredith

# Bellerophon

I

Maimed, beggared, grey; seeking an alms; with nod  
Of palsy doing task of thanks for bread;  
Upon the stature of a God,  
He whom the Gods have struck bends low his head.

II

Weak words he has, that slip the nerveless tongue  
Deformed, like his great frame: a broken arc:  
Once radiant as the javelin flung  
Right at the centre breastplate of his mark.

III

Oft pausing on his white-eyed inward look,  
Some undermountain narrative he tells,  
As gapped by Lykian heat the brook  
Cut from the source that in the upland swells.

IV

The cottagers who dole him fruit and crust  
With patient inattention hear him prate:  
And comes the snow, and comes the dust,  
Comes the old wanderer, more bent of late.

V

A crazy beggar grateful for a meal  
Has ever of himself a world to say.  
For them he is an ancient wheel  
Spinning a knotted thread the livelong day.

VI

He cannot, nor do they, the tale connect;  
For never singer in the land had been

Who him for theme did not reject:  
Spurned of the hoof that sprang the Hippocrene.

VII

Albeit a theme of flame to bring them straight  
The snorting white-winged brother of the wave,  
They hear him as a thing by fate  
Cursed in unholy babble to his grave.

VIII

As men that spied the wings, that heard the snort,  
Their sires have told; and of a martial prince  
Bestriding him; and old report  
Speaks of a monster slain by one long since.

IX

There is that story of the golden bit  
By Goddess given to tame the lightning steed:  
A mortal who could mount, and sit  
Flying, and up Olympus midway speed.

X

He rose like the loosed fountain's utmost leap;  
He played the star at span of heaven right o'er  
Men's heads: they saw the snowy steep,  
Saw the winged shoulders: him they saw not more.

XI

He fell: and says the shattered man, I fell:  
And sweeps an arm the height an eagle wins;  
And in his breast a mouthless well  
Heaves the worn patches of his coat of skins.

XII

Lo, this is he in whom the surgent springs  
Of recollections richer than our skies

To feed the flow of tuneful strings,  
Show but a pool of scum for shooting flies.

George Meredith

# Breath Of The Briar

I

O briar-scents, on yon wet wing  
Of warm South-west wind brushing by,  
You mind me of the sweetest thing  
That ever mingled frank and shy:  
When she and I, by love enticed,  
Beneath the orchard-apples met,  
In equal halves a ripe one sliced,  
And smelt the juices ere we ate.

II

That apple of the briar-scent,  
Among our lost in Britain now,  
Was green of rind, and redolent  
Of sweetness as a milking cow.  
The briar gives it back, well nigh  
The damsel with her teeth on it;  
Her twinkle between frank and shy,  
My thirst to bite where she had bit.

George Meredith

## By Morning Twilight

Night, like a dying mother,  
Eyes her young offspring, Day.  
The birds are dreamily piping.  
And O, my love, my darling!  
The night is life ebb'd away:  
Away beyond our reach!  
A sea that has cast us pale on the beach;  
Weeds with the weeds and the pebbles  
That hear the lone tamarisk rooted in sand  
Sway  
With the song of the sea to the land.

George Meredith

## By The Rosanna--To F.M. Stanzer Thal, Tyrol

The old grey Alp has caught the cloud,  
And the torrent river sings aloud;  
The glacier-green Rosanna sings  
An organ song of its upper springs.  
Foaming under the tiers of pine,  
I see it dash down the dark ravine,  
And it tumbles the rocks in boisterous play,  
With an earnest will to find its way.  
Sharp it throws out an emerald shoulder,  
And, thundering ever of the mountain,  
Slaps in sport some giant boulder,  
And tops it in a silver fountain.  
A chain of foam from end to end,  
And a solitude so deep, my friend,  
You may forget that man abides  
Beyond the great mute mountain-sides.  
Yet to me, in this high-walled solitude  
Of river and rock and forest rude,  
The roaring voice through the long white chain  
Is the voice of the world of bubble and brain.

George Meredith



# Camelus Saltat

What say you, critic, now you have become  
An author and maternal?--in this trap  
(To quote you) of poor hollow folk who rap  
On instruments as like as drum to drum.  
You snarled tut-tut for welcome to tum-tum,  
So like the nose fly-teased in its noon's nap.  
You scratched an insect-slaughtering thunder-clap  
With that between the fingers and the thumb.  
It seemeth mad to quit the Olympian couch,  
Which bade our public gobble or reject.  
O spectacle of Peter, shrewdly pecked,  
Piper, by his own pepper from his pouch!  
What of the sneer, the jeer, the voice austere,  
You dealt?--the voice austere, the jeer, the sneer.

George Meredith

# Cassandra

## I

Captive on a foreign shore,  
Far from Ilion's hoary wave,  
Agamemnon's bridal slave  
Speaks Futurity no more:  
Death is busy with her grave.

## II

Thick as water, bursts remote  
Round her ears the alien din,  
While her little sullen chin  
Fills the hollows of her throat:  
Silent lie her slaughter'd kin.

## III

Once to many a pealing shriek,  
Lo, from Ilion's topmost tower,  
Ilion's fierce prophetic flower  
Cried the coming of the Greek!  
Black in Hades sits the hour.

## IV

Eyeing phantoms of the Past,  
Folded like a prophet's scroll,  
In the deep's long shoreward roll  
Here she sees the anchor cast:  
Backward moves her sunless soul.

## V

Chieftains, brethren of her joy,  
Shades, the white light in their eyes  
Slanting to her lips, arise,  
Crowding quick the plains of Troy:  
Now they tell her not she lies.

## VI

O the bliss upon the plains,  
Where the joining heroes clashed  
Shield and spear, and, unabashed,  
Challenged with hot chariot-reins  
Gods!-they glimmer ocean-washed.

## VII

Alien voices round the ships,  
Thick as water, shouting Home.  
Argives, pale as midnight foam,  
Wax before her awful lips:  
White as stars that front the gloom.

## VIII

Like a torch-flame that by day  
Up the daylight twists, and, pale,  
Catches air in leaps that fail,  
Crushed by the inveterate ray,  
Through her shines the Ten-Years' Tale.

## IX

Once to many a pealing shriek,  
Lo, from Ilion's topmost tower,  
Ilion's fierce prophetic flower  
Cried the coming of the Greek!  
Black in Hades sits the hour.

## X

Still upon her sunless soul  
Gleams the narrow hidden space  
Forward, where her fiery race  
Falters on its ashen goal:  
Still the Future strikes her face.

## XI

See toward the conqueror's car  
Step the purple Queen whose hate  
Wraps red-armed her royal mate  
With his Asian tempest-star:  
Now Cassandra views her Fate.

XII

King of men! the blinded host  
Shout:- she lifts her brooding chin:  
Glad along the joyous din  
Smiles the grand majestic ghost:  
Clytemnestra leads him in.

XIII

Lo, their smoky limbs aloof,  
Shadowing heaven and the seas,  
Fates and Furies, tangling Threes,  
Tear and mix above the roof:  
Fates and fierce Eumenides.

XIV

Is the prophetess with rods  
Beaten, that she writhes in air?  
With the Gods who never spare,  
Wrestling with the unsparing Gods,  
Lone, her body struggles there.

XV

Like the snaky torch-flame white,  
Levelled as aloft it twists,  
She, her soaring arms, and wrists  
Drooping, struggles with the light,  
Helios, bright above all mists!

XVI

In his orb she sees the tower,

Dusk against its flaming rims,  
Where of old her wretched limbs  
Twisted with the stolen power:  
Ilium all the lustre dims!

XVII

O the bliss upon the plains,  
Where the joining heroes clashed  
Shield and spear, and, unabashed,  
Challenged with hot chariot-reins  
Gods!-they glimmer ocean-washed.

XVIII

Thrice the Sun-god's name she calls;  
Shrieks the deed that shames the sky;  
Like a fountain leaping high,  
Falling as a fountain falls:  
Lo, the blazing wheels go by!

XIX

Captive on a foreign shore,  
Far from Ilion's hoary wave,  
Agamemnon's bridal slave  
Speaks Futurity no more:  
Death is busy with her grave.

George Meredith

# Change In Recurrence

I

I stood at the gate of the cot  
Where my darling, with side-glance demure,  
Would spy, on her trim garden-plot,  
The busy wild things chase and lure.  
For these with their ways were her feast;  
They had surety no enemy lurked.  
Their deftest of tricks to their least  
She gathered in watch as she worked.

II

When berries were red on her ash,  
The blackbird would rifle them rough,  
Till the ground underneath looked a gash,  
And her rogue grew the round of a chough.  
The squirrel cocked ear o'er his hoop,  
Up the spruce, quick as eye, trailing brush.  
She knew any tit of the troop  
All as well as the snail-tapping thrush.

III

I gazed: 'twas the scene of the frame,  
With the face, the dear life for me, fled.  
No window a lute to my name,  
No watcher there plying the thread.  
But the blackbird hung peeking at will;  
The squirrel from cone hopped to cone;  
The thrush had a snail in his bill,  
And tap-tapped the shell hard on a stone.

George Meredith

# Chillanwallah

Chillanwallah, Chillanwallah!  
Where our brothers fought and bled,  
O thy name is natural music  
And a dirge above the dead!  
Though we have not been defeated,  
Though we can't be overcome,  
Still, whene'er thou art repeated,  
I would fain that grief were dumb.

Chillianwallah, Chillianwallah!  
'Tis a name so sad and strange,  
Like a breeze through midnight harpstrings  
Ringing many a mournful change;  
But the wildness and the sorrow  
Have a meaning of their own -  
Oh, whereof no glad to-morrow  
Can relieve the dismal tone!

Chillianwallah, Chillianwallah!  
'Tis a village dark and low,  
By the bloody Jhelum river  
Bridged by the foreboding foe;  
And across the wintry water  
He is ready to retreat,  
When the carnage and the slaughter  
Shall have paid for his defeat.

Chillianwallah, Chillianwallah!  
'Tis a wild and dreary plain,  
Strewn with plots of thickest jungle,  
Matted with the gory stain.  
There the murder-mouthed artillery,  
In the deadly ambushade,  
Wrought the thunder of its treachery  
On the skeleton brigade.

Chillianwallah, Chillianwallah!  
When the night set in with rain,  
Came the savage plundering devils

To their work among the slain;  
And the wounded and the dying  
In cold blood did share the doom  
Of their comrades round them lying,  
Stiff in the dead skyless gloom.

Chillianwallah, Chillianwallah!  
Thou wilt be a doleful chord,  
And a mystic note of mourning  
That will need no chiming word;  
And that heart will leap with anguish  
Who may understand thee best;  
But the hopes of all will languish  
Till thy memory is at rest.

George Meredith



# Clash In Arms Of The Achaians And Trojans

[Iliad, B. XIV. V. 394]

Not the sea-wave so bellows abroad when it bursts upon shingle,  
Whipped from the sea's deeps up by the terrible blast of the Northwind;  
Nay, nor is ever the roar of the fierce fire's rush so arousing,  
Down along mountain-glades, when it surges to kindle a woodland;  
Nay, nor so tonant thunders the stress of the gale in the oak-trees'  
Foliage-tresses high, when it rages to raveing its utmost;  
As rose then stupendous the Trojan's cry and Achaians',  
Dread upshouting as one when together they clashed in the conflict.

George Meredith

## Continued

How smiles he at a generation ranked  
In gloomy noddings over life! They pass.  
Not he to feed upon a breast unthanked,  
Or eye a beauteous face in a cracked glass.  
But he can spy that little twist of brain  
Which moved some weighty leader of the blind,  
Unwitting 'twas the goad of personal pain,  
To view in curst eclipse our Mother's mind,  
And show us of some rigid harridan  
The wretched bondmen till the end of time.  
O lived the Master now to paint us Man,  
That little twist of brain would ring a chime  
Of whence it came and what it caused, to start  
Thunders of laughter, clearing air and heart.

George Meredith

## Continued - II

Oracle of the market! thence you drew  
The taste which stamped you guide of the inept. -  
A North-sea pilot, Hildebrand yclept,  
A sturdy and a briny, once men knew.  
He loved small beer, and for that copious brew,  
To roll ingurgitation till he slept,  
Rations exchanged with flavour for the adept:  
And merrily plied him captain, mate and crew.  
At last this dancer to the Polar star  
Sank, washed out within, and overboard was pitched,  
To drink the sea and pilot him to land.  
O captain-critic! printed, neatly stitched,  
Know while the pillory-eggs fly fast, they are  
Not eggs, but the drowned soul of Hildebrand.

George Meredith

## Continued - Iii

'Tis true the wisdom that my mind exacts  
Through contemplation from a heart unbent  
By many tempests may be stained and rent:  
The summer flies it mightily attracts.  
Yet they seem choicer than your sons of facts,  
Which scarce give breathing of the sty's content  
For their diurnal carnal nourishment:  
Which treat with Nature in official pacts.  
The deader body Nature could proclaim.  
Much life have neither. Let the heavens of wrath  
Rattle, then both scud scattering to froth.  
But during calms the flies of idle aim  
Less put the spirit out, less baffle thirst  
For light than swinish grunTERS, blest or curst.

George Meredith

# Daphne

Musing on the fate of Daphne,  
Many feelings urged my breast,  
For the God so keen desiring,  
And the Nymph so deep distrest.

Never flashed thro' sylvan valley  
Visions so divinely fair!  
He with early ardour glowing,  
She with rosy anguish rare.

Only still more sweet and lovely  
For those terrors on her brows,  
Those swift glances wild and brilliant,  
Those delicious panting vows.

Timidly the timid shoulders  
Shrinking from the fervid hand!  
Dark the tide of hair back-flowing  
From the blue-veined temples bland!

Lovely, too, divine Apollo  
In the speed of his pursuit;  
With his eye an azure lustre,  
And his voice a summer lute!

Looking like some burnished eagle  
Hovering o'er a fluttered bird;  
Not unseen of silver Naiad,  
And of wistful Dryad heard!

Many a morn the naked beauty  
Saw her bright reflection drown  
In the flowing smooth-faced river,  
While the god came sheening down.

Down from Pindus bright Peneus  
Tells its muse-melodious source;  
Sacred is its fountained birthplace,  
And the Orient floods its course.

Many a morn the sunny darling  
Saw the rising chariot-rays,  
From the winding river-reaches,  
Mellowing in amber haze.

Thro' the flaming mountain gorges  
Lo, the River leaps the plain;  
Like a wild god-stridden courser,  
Tossing high its foamy mane.

Then he swims thro' laurelled sunlight,  
Full of all sensations sweet,  
Misty with his morning incense,  
To the mirrored maiden's feet!

Wet and bright the dinting pebbles  
Shine where oft she paused and stood;  
All her dreamy warmth revolving,  
While the chilly waters wooed.

Like to rosy-born Aurora,  
Glowing freshly into view,  
When her doubtful foot she ventures  
On the first cold morning blue.

White as that Thessalian lily,  
Fairest Tempe's fairest flower,  
Lo, the tall Peneian virgin  
Stands beneath her bathing bower.

There the laurell'd wreaths o'erarching  
Crown'd the dainty shuddering maid;  
There the dark prophetic laurel  
Kiss'd her with its sister shade.

There the young green glistening leaflets  
Hush'd with love their breezy peal;  
There the little opening flowerets  
Blush'd beneath her vermeil heel!

There among the conscious arbours

Sounds of soft tumultuous wail,  
Mysteries of love, melodious,  
Came upon the lyric gale!

Breathings of a deep enchantment,  
Effluence of immortal grace,  
Flitted round her faltering footstep,  
Spread a balm about her face!

Witless of the enamour'd presence,  
Like a dreamy lotus bud  
From its drowsy stem down-drooping,  
Gazed she in the glowing flood.

Softly sweet with fluttering presage,  
Felt she that ethereal sense,  
Drinking charms of love delirious,  
Reaping bliss of love intense!

All the air was thrill'd with sunrise,  
Birds made music of her name,  
And the god-impregnate water  
Claspt her image ere she came.

Richer for that glance unconscious!  
Dearer for that soft dismay!  
And the sudden self-possession!  
And the smile as bright as day!

Plunging 'mid her scattered tresses,  
With her blue invoking eyes;  
See her like a star descending!  
Like a rosebud see her rise!

Like a rosebud in the morning  
Dashing off its jewell'd dews,  
Ere unfolding all its fragrance  
It is gathered by the muse!

Beauteous in the foamy laughter  
Bubbling round her shrinking waist,  
Lo! from locks and lips and eyelids

Rain the glittering pearl-drops chaste!

And about the maiden rapture  
Still the ruddy ripples play'd,  
Ebbing round in startled circlets  
When her arms began to wade;

Flowing in like tides attracted  
To the glowing crescent shine!  
Clasping her ambrosial whiteness  
Like an Autumn-tinted vine!

Sinking low with love's emotion!  
Levying with look and tone  
All love's rosy arts to mimic  
Cytherea's magic zone!

Trembling up with adoration  
To the crimson daisy tip  
Budding from the snowy bosom -  
Fainter than the rose-red lip!

Rising in a storm of wavelets,  
That for shelter, feigning fright,  
Prest to those twin-heaving havens,  
Harbour'd there beneath her light;

Gleaming in a whirl of eddies  
Round her lucid throat and neck;  
Eddying in a gleam of dimples  
Up against her bloomy cheek;

Bribing all the breezy water  
With rich warmth, the nymph to keep  
In a self-imprison'd plaisance,  
Tempting her from deep to deep.

Till at last delirious passion  
Thrill'd the god to wild excess,  
And the fervour of a moment  
Made divinity confess;



And he stood in all his glory!  
But so radiant, being near,  
That her eyes were frozen on him  
In a fascinated fear!

All with orient splendour shining,  
All with roseate birth aglow,  
Gleam'd the golden god before her,  
With his golden crescent bow.

Soon the dazzled light subsided,  
And he seem'd a beauteous youth,  
Form'd to gain the maiden's murmurs,  
And to pledge the vows of truth.

Ah! that thus he had continued!  
O, that such for her had been!  
Graceful with all godlike beauty,  
But so humanly serene!

Cheeks, and mouth, and mellow ringlets,  
Bounteous as the mid-day beam;  
Pleading looks and wistful tremour,  
Tender as a maiden's dream!

Palms that like a bird's throbb'd bosom  
Palpitate with eagerness,  
Lips, the bridals of the roses,  
Dewy sweet from the caress!

Lips and limbs, and eyes and ringlets,  
Swaying, praying to one prayer,  
Like a lyre, swept by a spirit,  
In the still, enraptur'd air.

Like a lyre in some far valley,  
Uttering ravishments divine!  
All its strings to viewless fingers  
Yearning, modulations fine!

Yearning with melodious fervour!  
Like a beauteous maiden flower,

When the young beloved three paces  
Hovers from the bridal bower.

Throbbing thro' the dawning stillness!  
As a heart within a breast,  
When the young beloved is stepping  
Radiant to the nuptial nest.

O for Daphne! gentle Daphne  
Ever warmer by degrees  
Whispers full of hopes and visions  
Throng her ears like honey bees!

Never yet was lonely blossom  
Woo'd with such delicious voice!  
Never since hath mortal maiden  
Dwelt on such celestial choice!

Love-suffused she quivers, falters -  
Falters, sighs, but never speaks,  
All her rosy blood up-gushing  
Overflows her ripe young cheeks.

Blushing, sweet with virgin blushes,  
All her loveliness a-flame,  
Stands she in the orient waters,  
Stricken o'er with speechless shame!

Ah! but lovelier, ever lovelier,  
As more deep the colour glows,  
And the honey-laden lily  
Changes to the fragrant rose.

While the god with meek embraces,  
Whispering all his sacred charms,  
Softly folds her, gently holds her,  
In his white encircling arms!

But, O Dian! veil not wholly  
Thy pale crescent from the morn!  
Vanish not, O virgin goddess,  
With that look of pallid scorn!

Still thy pure protecting influence  
Shed from those fair watchful eyes! -  
Lo! her angry orb has vanished,  
And the bright sun thrones the skies!

Voicelessly the forest Virgin  
Vanished! but one look she gave -  
Keen as Niobe's arrow  
Thro' the maiden's heart it drove.

Thus toward that throning bosom  
Where all earth is warmed, - each spot  
Nourished with autumnal blessings -  
Icy chill was Daphne caught.

Icy chill! but swift revulsion  
All her gentler self renewed,  
Even as icy Winter quickens  
With bud-opening warmth imbued.

Even as a torpid brooklet,  
That to the night-gleaming moon  
Flashed in turn the frozen glances,  
Melts upon the breast of noon.

But no more - O never, never,  
Turns she to that bosom bright,  
Swiftly all her senses counsel,  
All her nerves are strung to flight.

O'er the brows of radiant Pindus  
Rolls a shadow dark and cold,  
And a sound of lamentation  
Issues from its mournful fold.

Voice of the far-sighted Muses!  
Cry of keen foreboding song!  
Every cleft of startled Tempe  
Tingles with it sharp and long.

Over bourn and bosk and dingle,

Over rivers, over rills,  
Runs the sad subservient Echo  
Toward the dim blue distant hills!

And another and another!  
'Tis a cry more wild than all;  
And the hills with muffled voices  
Answer 'Daphne!' to the call.

And another and another!  
'Tis a cry so wildly sweet,  
That her charmed heart turns rebel  
To the instinct of her feet;

And she pauses for an instant;  
But his arms have scarcely slid  
Round her waist in cestian girdles,  
And his low voluptuous lid

Lifted pleading, and the honey  
Of his mouth for hers athirst,  
Ruby glistening, raised for moisture -  
Like a bud that waits to burst

In the sweet espousing showers -  
And his tongue has scarce begun  
With its inarticulate burthen,  
And the clouds scarce show the sun

As it pierces thro' a crevice  
Of the mass that closed it o'er,  
When again the horror flashes -  
And she turns to flight once more!

And again o'er radiant Pindus  
Rolls the shadow dark and cold,  
And the sound of lamentation  
Issues from its sable fold!

And again the light winds chide her  
As she darts from his embrace -  
And again the far-voiced echoes

Speak their tidings of the chase.

Loudly now as swiftly, swiftly,  
O'er the glimmering sands she speeds;  
Wildly now as in the furzes  
From the piercing spikes she bleeds.

Deeply and with direful anguish,  
As above each crimson drop  
Passion checks the god Apollo,  
And love bids him weep and stop. -

He above each drop of crimson  
Shadowing-like the laurel leaf  
That above himself will shadow -  
Sheds a fadeless look of grief.

Then with love's remorseful discord,  
With its own desire at war,  
Sighing turns, while dimly fleeting  
Daphne flies the chase afar.

But all nature is against her!  
Pan, with all his sylvan troop,  
Thro' the vista'd woodland valleys  
Blocks her course with cry and whoop!

In the twilights of the thickets  
Trees bend down their gnarled boughs,  
Wild green leaves and low curved branches  
Hold her hair and beat her brows.

Many a brake of brushwood covert,  
Where cold darkness slumbers mute,  
Slips a shrub to thwart her passage,  
Slides a hand to clutch her foot.

Glens and glades of lushest verdure  
Toil her in their tawny mesh,  
Wilder-woofed ways and alleys  
Lock her struggling limbs in leash.

Feathery grasses, flowery mosses,  
Knot themselves to make her trip;  
Sprays and stubborn sprigs outstretching  
Put a bridle on her lip;

Many a winding lane betrays her,  
Many a sudden bosky shoot,  
And her knee makes many a stumble  
O'er some hidden damp old root,

Whose quaint face peers green and dusky  
'Mongst the matted growth of plants,  
While she rises wild and weltering,  
Speeding on with many pants.

Tangles of the wild red strawberry  
Spread their freckled trammels frail;  
In the pathway creeping brambles  
Catch her in their thorny trail.

All the widely sweeping greensward  
Shifts and swims from knoll to knoll;  
Grey rough-fingered oak and elm wood  
Push her by from bole to bole.

Groves of lemon, groves of citron,  
Tall high-foliaged plane and palm,  
Bloomy myrtle, light-blue olive,  
Wave her back with gusts of balm.

Languid jasmine, scrambling briony,  
Walls of close-festooning braid,  
Fling themselves about her, mingling  
With her wafted looks, waylaid.

Twisting bindweed, honey'd woodbine,  
Cling to her, while, red and blue,  
On her rounded form ripe berries  
Dash and die in gory dew.

Running ivies dark and lingering  
Round her light limbs drag and twine;

Round her waist with languorous tendrils  
Reels and wreathes the juicy vine;

Reining in the flying creature  
With its arms about her mouth;  
Bursting all its mellowing bunches  
To seduce her husky drouth;

Crowning her with amorous clusters;  
Pouring down her sloping back  
Fresh-born wines in glittering rillets,  
Following her in crimson track.

Buried, drenched in dewy foliage,  
Thus she glimmers from the dawn,  
Watched by every forest creature,  
Fleet-foot Oread, frolic Faun.

Silver-sandalled Arethusa  
Not more swiftly fled the sands,  
Fled the plains and fled the sunlights,  
Fled the murmuring ocean strands.

O, that now the earth would open!  
O, that now the shades would hide!  
O, that now the gods would shelter!  
Caverns lead and seas divide!

Not more faint soft-lowing Io  
Panted in those starry eyes,  
When the sleepless midnight meadows  
Piteously implored the skies!

Still her breathless flight she urges  
By the sanctuary stream,  
And the god with golden swiftness  
Follows like an eastern beam.

Her the close bewildering greenery  
Darkens with its duskiest green, -  
Him each little leaflet welcomes,  
Flushing with an orient sheen.

Thus he nears, and now all Tempe  
Rings with his melodious cry,  
Avenues and blue expanses  
Beam in his large lustrous eye!

All the branches start to music!  
As if from a secret spring  
Thousands of sweet bills are bubbling  
In the nest and on the wing.

Gleams and shines the glassy river  
And rich valleys every one;  
But of all the throbbing beauty  
Brightest! singled by the sun!

Ivy round her glimmering ankle,  
Vine about her glowing brow,  
Never sure was bride so beautiful,  
Daphne, chosen nymph, as thou!

Thus he nears! and now she feels him  
Breathing hot on every limb;  
And he hears her own quick pantings -  
Ah! that they might be for him.

O, that like the flower he tramples,  
Bending from his golden tread,  
Full of fair celestial ardours,  
She would bow her bridal head.

O, that like the flower she presses,  
Nodding from her lily touch,  
Light as in the harmless breezes,  
She would know the god for such!

See! the golden arms are round her -  
To the air she grasps and clings!  
See! his glowing arms have wound her -  
To the sky she shrieks and springs!

See! the flushing chace of Tempe



Trembles with Olympian air -  
See! green sprigs and buds are shooting  
From those white raised arms of prayer!

In the earth her feet are rooting! -  
Breasts and limbs and lifted eyes,  
Hair and lips and stretching fingers,  
Fade away-and fadeless rise.

And the god whose fervent rapture  
Clasps her finds his close embrace  
Full of palpitating branches,  
And new leaves that bud apace,

Bound his wonder-stricken forehead; -  
While in ebbing measures slow  
Sounds of softly dying pulses  
Pause and quiver, pause and go;

Go, and come again, and flutter  
On the verge of life,-then flee!  
All the white ambrosial beauty  
Is a lustrous Laurel Tree!

Still with the great panting love-chase  
All its running sap is warmed; -  
But from head to foot the virgin  
Is transfigured and transformed.

Changed!-yet the green Dryad nature  
Is instinct with human ties,  
And above its anguish'd lover  
Breathes pathetic sympathies;

Sympathies of love and sorrow;  
Joy in her divine escape;  
Breathing through her bursting foliage  
Comfort to his bending shape.

Vainly now the floating Naiads  
Seek to pierce the laurel maze,  
Nought but laurel meets their glances,

Laurel glistens as they gaze.

Nought but bright prophetic laurel!  
Laurel over eyes and brows,  
Over limbs and over bosom,  
Laurel leaves and laurel boughs!

And in vain the listening Dryad  
Shells her hand against her ear! -  
All is silence-save the echo  
Travelling in the distance drear.

George Meredith

## Dirge In Woods

A wind sways the pines,  
And below  
Not a breath of wild air;  
Still as the mosses that glow  
On the flooring and over the lines  
Of the roots here and there.  
The pine-tree drops its dead;  
They are quiet, as under the sea.  
Overhead, overhead  
Rushes life in a race,  
As the clouds the clouds chase;  
And we go,  
And we drop like the fruits of the tree,  
Even we,  
Even so.

George Meredith

# Earth And Man

I

On her great venture, Man,  
Earth gazes while her fingers dint the breast  
Which is his well of strength, his home of rest,  
And fair to scan.

II

More aid than that embrace,  
That nourishment, she cannot give: his heart  
Involves his fate; and she who urged the start  
Abides the race.

III

For he is in the lists  
Contentious with the elements, whose dower  
First sprang him; for swift vultures to devour  
If he desists.

IV

His breath of instant thirst  
Is warning of a creature matched with strife,  
To meet it as a bride, or let fall life  
On life's accursed.

V

No longer forth he bounds  
The lusty animal, afield to roam,  
But peering in Earth's entrails, where the gnome  
Strange themes propounds.

VI

By hunger sharply sped  
To grasp at weapons ere he learns their use,

In each new ring he bears a giant's thews,  
An infant's head.

VII

And ever that old task  
Of reading what he is and whence he came,  
Whither to go, finds wilder letters flame  
Across her mask.

VIII

She hears his wailful prayer,  
When now to the Invisible he raves  
To rend him from her, now of his mother craves  
Her calm, her care.

IX

The thing that shudders most  
Within him is the burden of his cry.  
Seen of his dread, she is to his blank eye  
The eyeless Ghost.

X

Or sometimes she will seem  
Heavenly, but her blush, soon wearing white,  
Veils like a gorsebush in a web of blight,  
With gold-buds dim.

XI

Once worshipped Prime of Powers,  
She still was the Implacable: as a beast,  
She struck him down and dragged him from the feast  
She crowned with flowers.

XII

Her pomp of glorious hues,  
Her revelries of ripeness, her kind smile,

Her songs, her peeping faces, lure awhile  
With symbol-clues.

XIII

The mystery she holds  
For him, inveterately he strains to see,  
And sight of his obtuseness is the key  
Among those folds.

XIV

He may entreat, aspire,  
He may despair, and she has never heed.  
She drinking his warm sweat will soothe his need,  
Not his desire.

XV

She prompts him to rejoice,  
Yet scares him on the threshold with the shroud.  
He deems her cherishing of her best-endowed  
A wanton's choice.

XVI

Albeit thereof he has found  
Firm roadway between lustfulness and pain;  
Has half transferred the battle to his brain,  
From bloody ground;

XVII

He will not read her good,  
Or wise, but with the passion Self obscures;  
Through that old devil of the thousand lures,  
Through that dense hood:

XVIII

Through terror, through distrust;  
The greed to touch, to view, to have, to live:

Through all that makes of him a sensitive  
Abhorring dust.

XIX

Behold his wormy home!  
And he the wind-whipped, anywhither wave  
Crazily tumbled on a shingle-grave  
To waste in foam.

XX

Therefore the wretch inclined  
Afresh to the Invisible, who, he saith,  
Can raise him high: with vows of living faith  
For little signs.

XXI

Some signs he must demand,  
Some proofs of slaughtered nature; some prized few,  
To satisfy the senses it is true,  
And in his hand,

XXII

This miracle which saves  
Himself, himself doth from extinction clutch,  
By virtue of his worth, contrasting much  
With brutes and knaves.

XXIII

From dust, of him abhorred,  
He would be snatched by Grace discovering worth.  
'Sever me from the hollowness of Earth!  
Me take, dear Lord!'

XXIV

She hears him. Him she owes  
For half her loveliness a love well won

By work that lights the shapeless and the dun,  
Their common foes.

XXV

He builds the soaring spires,  
That sing his soul in stone: of her he draws,  
Though blind to her, by spelling at her laws,  
Her purest fires.

XXVI

Through him hath she exchanged,  
For the gold harvest-robles, the mural crown,  
Her haggard quarry-features and thick frown  
Where monsters ranged.

XXVII

And order, high discourse,  
And decency, than which is life less dear,  
She has of him: the lyre of language clear,  
Love's tongue and source.

XXVIII

She hears him, and can hear  
With glory in his gains by work achieved:  
With grief for grief that is the unperceived  
In her so near.

XXIX

If he aloft for aid  
Imploring storms, her essence is the spur.  
His cry to heaven is a cry to her  
He would evade.

XXX

Not elsewhere can he tend.  
Those are her rules which bid him wash foul sins;



Those her revulsions from the skull that grins  
To ape his end.

XXXI

And her desires are those  
For happiness, for lastingness, for light.  
'Tis she who kindles in his haunting night  
The hoped dawn-rose.

XXXII

Fair fountains of the dark  
Daily she waves him, that his inner dream  
May clasp amid the glooms a springing beam,  
A quivering lark:

XXIII

This life and her to know  
For Spirit: with awakenedness of glee  
To feel stern joy her origin: not he  
The child of woe.

XXXIV

But that the senses still  
Usurp the station of their issue mind,  
He would have burst the chrysalis of the blind:  
As yet he will;

XXXV

As yet he will, she prays,  
Yet will when his distempered devil of Self; -  
The glutton for her fruits, the wily elf  
In shifting rays; -

XXXVI

That captain of the scorned;  
The coveter of life in soul and shell,

The fratricide, the thief, the infidel,  
The hoofed and horned; -

XXXVII

He singularly doomed  
To what he execrates and writhes to shun; -  
When fire has passed him vapour to the sun,  
And sun relumed,

XXXVIII

Then shall the horrid pall  
Be lifted, and a spirit nigh divine,  
'Live in thy offspring as I live in mine,'  
Will hear her call.

XXXIX

Whence looks he on a land  
Whereon his labour is a carven page;  
And forth from heritage to heritage  
Nought writ on sand.

XL

His fables of the Above,  
And his gapped readings of the crown and sword,  
The hell detested and the heaven adored,  
The hate, the love,

XLI

The bright wing, the black hoof,  
He shall peruse, from Reason not disjointed,  
And never unfaith clamouring to be coined  
To faith by proof.

XLII

She her just Lord may view,  
Not he, her creature, till his soul has yearned

With all her gifts to reach the light discerned  
Her spirit through.

XLIIII

Then in him time shall run  
As in the hour that to young sunlight crows;  
And--'If thou hast good faith it can repose,'  
She tells her son.

XLIV

Meanwhile on him, her chief  
Expression, her great word of life, looks she;  
Twi-minded of him, as the waxing tree,  
Or dated leaf.

George Meredith

# Earth And The Wedded Woman

## I

The shepherd, with his eye on hazy South,  
Has told of rain upon the fall of day.  
But promise is there none for Susan's drouth,  
That he will come, who keeps in dry delay.  
The freshest of the village three years gone,  
She hangs as the white field-rose hangs short-lived;  
And she and Earth are one  
In withering unrevived.  
Rain! O the glad refresher of the grain!  
And welcome waterspouts, had we sweet rain!

## II

Ah, what is Marriage, says each pouting maid,  
When she who wedded with the soldier hides  
At home as good as widowed in the shade,  
A lighthouse to the girls that would be brides:  
Nor dares to give a lad an ogle, nor  
To dream of dancing, but must hang and moan,  
Her husband in the war,  
And she to lie alone.  
Rain! O the glad refresher of the grain!  
And welcome waterspouts, had we sweet rain!

## III

They have not known; they are not in the stream;  
Light as the flying seed-ball is their play,  
The silly maids! and happy souls they seem;  
Yet Grief would not change fates with such as they.  
They have not struck the roots which meet the fires  
Beneath, and bind us fast with Earth, to know  
The strength of her desires,  
The sternness of her woe.  
Rain! O the glad refresher of the grain!  
And welcome waterspouts, had we sweet rain!

#### IV

Now, shepherd, see thy word, where without shower  
A borderless low blotting Westward spreads.  
The hall-clock holds the valley on the hour;  
Across an inner chamber thunder treads:  
The dead leaf trips, the tree-top swings, the floor  
Of dust whirls, dropping lumped: near thunder speaks,  
And drives the dames to door,  
Their kerchiefs flapped at cheeks.  
Rain! O the glad refresher of the grain!  
And welcome waterspouts of blessed rain!

#### V

Through night, with bedroom window wide for air,  
Lay Susan tranced to hear all heaven descend:  
And gurgling voices came of Earth, and rare,  
Past flowerful, breathings, deeper than life's end,  
From her heaved breast of sacred common mould;  
Whereby this lone-laid wife was moved to feel  
Unworded things and old  
To her pained heart appeal.  
Rain! O the glad refresher of the grain!  
And down in deluges of blessed rain!

#### VI

At morn she stood to live for ear and sight,  
Love sky or cloud, or rose or grasses drenched.  
A lureful devil, that in glow-worm light  
Set languor writhing all its folds, she quenched.  
But she would muse when neighbours praised her face,  
Her services, and staunchness to her mate:  
Knowing by some dim trace,  
The change might bear a date.  
Rain! O the glad refresher of the grain!  
Thrice beauteous is our sunshine after rain!

George Meredith

# Earth's Preference

Earth loves her young: a preference manifest:  
She prompts them to her fruits and flower-beds;  
Their beauty with her choicest interthreads,  
And makes her revel of their merry zest;  
As in our East much were it in our West,  
If men had risen to do the work of heads.  
Her gabbling grey she eyes askant, nor treads  
The ways they walk; by what they speak oppressed.  
How wrought they in their zenith? 'Tis not writ;  
Not all; yet she by one sure sign can read:  
Have they but held her laws and nature dear,  
They mouth no sentence of inverted wit.  
More prizes she her beasts than this high breed  
Wry in the shape she wastes her milk to rear.

George Meredith

# Earth's Secret

Not solitarily in fields we find  
Earth's secret open, though one page is there;  
Her plainest, such as children spell, and share  
With bird and beast; raised letters for the blind.  
Not where the troubled passions toss the mind,  
In turbid cities, can the key be bare.  
It hangs for those who hither thither fare,  
Close interthreading nature with our kind.  
They, hearing History speak, of what men were,  
And have become, are wise. The gain is great  
In vision and solidity; it lives.  
Yet at a thought of life apart from her,  
Solidity and vision lose their state,  
For Earth, that gives the milk, the spirit gives.

George Meredith

# Empdeocles

I

He leaped. With none to hinder,  
Of Aetna's fiery scoriae  
In the next vomit-shower, made he  
A more peculiar cinder.  
And this great Doctor, can it be,  
He left no saner recipe  
For men at issue with despair?  
Admiring, even his poet owns,  
While noting his fine lyric tones,  
The last of him was heels in air!

II

Comes Reverence, her features  
Amazed to see high Wisdom hear,  
With glimmer of a faunish leer,  
One mock her pride of creatures.  
Shall such sad incident degrade  
A stature casting sunniest shade?  
O Reverence! let Reason swim;  
Each life its critic deed reveals;  
And him reads Reason at his heels,  
If heels in air the last of him!

George Meredith



# England Before The Storm

## I

The day that is the night of days,  
With cannon-fire for sun ablaze  
We spy from any billow's lift;  
And England still this tidal drift!  
Would she to sainted forethought vow  
A space before the thunders flood,  
That martyr of its hour might now  
Spare her the tears of blood.

## II

Asleep upon her ancient deeds,  
She hugs the vision plethora breeds,  
And counts her manifold increase  
Of treasure in the fruits of peace.  
What curse on earth's improvident,  
When the dread trumpet shatters rest,  
Is wreaked, she knows, yet smiles content  
As cradle rocked from breast.

## III

She, impious to the Lord of Hosts,  
The valour of her offspring boasts,  
Mindless that now on land and main  
His heeded prayer is active brain.  
No more great heart may guard the home,  
Save eyed and armed and skilled to cleave  
Yon swallower wave with shroud of foam,  
We see not distant heave.

## IV

They stand to be her sacrifice,  
The sons this mother flings like dice,  
To face the odds and brave the Fates;  
As in those days of starry dates,

When cannon cannon's counterblast  
Awakened, muzzle muzzle bowled,  
And high in swathe of smoke the mast  
Its fighting rag outrolled.

George Meredith

# Foresight And Patience

Sprung of the father blood, the mother brain,  
Are they who point our pathway and sustain.  
They rarely meet; one soars, one walks retired.  
When they do meet, it is our earth inspired.

To see Life's formless offspring and subdued  
Desire of times unripe, we have these two,  
Whose union is right reason: join their hands,  
The world shall know itself and where it stands;  
What cowering angel and what upright beast  
Make man, behold, nor count the low the least,  
Nor less the stars have round it than its flowers.  
When these two meet, a point of time is ours.

As in a land of waterfalls, that flow  
Smooth for the leap on their great voice below,  
Some eddies near the brink borne swift along  
Will capture hearing with the liquid song,  
So, while the headlong world's imperious force  
Resounded under, heard I these discourse.

First words, where down my woodland walk she led,  
To her blind sister Patience, Foresight said:

- Your faith in me appals, to shake my own,  
When still I find you in this mire alone.

- The few steps taken at a funeral pace  
By men had slain me but for those you trace.

- Look I once back, a broken pinion I:  
Black as the rebel angels rained from sky!

- Needs must you drink of me while here you live,  
And make me rich in feeling I can give.

- A brave To-be is dawn upon my brow:  
Yet must I read my sister for the How.  
My daisy better knows her God of beams

Than doth an eagle that to mount him seems.  
She hath the secret never fieriest reach  
Of wing shall master till men hear her teach.

- Liker the clod flaked by the driving plough,  
My semblance when I have you not as now.  
The quiet creatures who escape mishap  
Bear likeness to pure growths of the green sap:  
A picture of the settled peace desired  
By cowards shunning strife or strivers tired.  
I listen at their breasts: is there no jar  
Of wrestlings and of stranglings, dead they are,  
And such a picture as the piercing mind  
Ranks beneath vegetation. Not resigned  
Are my true pupils while the world is brute.  
What edict of the stronger keeps me mute,  
Stronger impels the motion of my heart.  
I am not Resignation's counterpart.  
If that I teach, 'tis little the dry word,  
Content, but how to savour hope deferred.  
We come of earth, and rich of earth may be;  
Soon carrion if very earth are we!

The coursing veins, the constant breath, the use  
Of sleep, declare that strife allows short truce;  
Unless we clasp decay, accept defeat,  
And pass despised; 'a-cold for lack of heat,'  
Like other corpses, but without death's plea.

- My sister calls for battle; is it she?

- Rather a world of pressing men in arms,  
Than stagnant, where the sensual piper charms  
Each drowsy malady and coiling vice  
With dreams of ease whereof the soul pays price!  
No home is here for peace while evil breeds,  
While error governs, none; and must the seeds  
You sow, you that for long have reaped disdain,  
Lie barren at the doorway of the brain,  
Let stout contention drive deep furrows, blood  
Moisten, and make new channels of its flood!

- My sober little maid, when we meet first,  
Drinks of me ever with an eager thirst.  
So can I not of her till circumstance  
Drugs cravings. Here we see how men advance  
A doubtful foot, but circle if much stirred,  
Like dead weeds on whipped waters. Shout the word  
Prompting their hungers, and they grandly march,  
As to band-music under Victory's arch.  
Thus was it, and thus is it; save that then  
The beauty of frank animals had men.

- Observe them, and down rearward for a term,  
Gaze to the primal twistings of the worm.  
Thence look this way, across the fields that show  
Men's early form of speech for Yes and No.

My sister a bruised infant's utterance had;  
And issuing stronger, to mankind 'twas mad.  
I knew my home where I had choice to feel  
The toad beneath a harrow or a heel.

- Speak of this Age.

- When you it shall discern  
Bright as you are, to me the Age will turn.

- For neither of us has it any care;  
Its learning is through Science to despair.

- Despair lies down and grovels, grapples not  
With evil, casts the burden of its lot.  
This Age climbs earth.

-To challenge heaven.

- Not less  
The lower deeps. It laughs at Happiness!  
That know I, though the echoes of it wail,  
For one step upward on the crags you scale.  
Brave is the Age wherein the word will rust,  
Which means our soul asleep or body's lust,  
Until from warmth of many breasts, that beat

A temperate common music, sunlike heat  
The happiness not predatory sheds!

- But your fierce Yes and No of butting heads  
Now rages to outdo a horny Past.  
Shades of a wild Destroyer on the vast  
Are thrown by every novel light upraised.  
The world's whole round smokes ominously, amazed  
And trembling as its pregnant Aetna swells.  
Combustibles on hot combustibles  
Run piling, for one spark to roll in fire  
The mountain-torrent of infernal ire  
And leave the track of devils where men built.  
Perceptive of a doom, the sinner's guilt  
Confesses in a cry for help shrill loud,  
If drops the chillness of a passing cloud,  
To conscience, reason, human love; in vain:  
None save they but the souls which them contain.  
No extramural God, the God within  
Alone gives aid to city charged with sin.  
A world that for the spur of fool and knave  
Sweats in its laboratory what shall save?  
But men who ply their wits in such a school  
Must pray the mercy of the knave and fool.

- Much have I studied hard Necessity!  
To know her Wisdom's mother, and that we  
May deem the harshness of her later cries  
In labour a sure goad to prick the wise,  
If men among the warnings which convulse  
Can gravely dread without the craven's pulse.  
Long ere the rising of this age of ours,  
The knave and fool were stamped as monstrous Powers.  
Of human lusts and lassitudes they spring,  
And are as lasting as the parent thing.  
Yet numbering locust hosts, bent they to drill,  
They might o'ermatch and have mankind at will.  
Behold such army gathering; ours the spur,  
No scattered foe to face, but Lucifer.  
Not fool or knave is now the enemy  
O'ershadowing men, 'tis Folly, Knavery!  
A sea; nor stays that sea the bastioned beach.

Now must the brother soul alive in each  
His traitorous individual devildom  
Hold subject lest the grand destruction come.  
Dimly men see it menacing apace  
To overthrow, perchance uproot, the race.  
Within, without, they are a field of tares:  
Fruitfuller for them when the contest squares,  
And wherefore warrior service they must yield,  
Shines visible as life on either field.  
That is my comfort, following shock on shock,  
Which sets faith quaking on their firmest rock.  
Since with his weapons, all the arms of Night,  
Frail men have challenged Lucifer to fight,  
Have matched in hostile ranks, enrolled, erect,  
The human and Satanic intellect,  
Determined for their uses to control  
What forces on the earth and under roll,  
Their granite rock runs igneous; now they stand  
Pledged to the heavens for safety of their land.  
They cannot learn save grossly, gross that are:  
Through fear they learn whose aid is good in war.

- My sister, as I read them in my glass,  
Their field of tares they take for pasture grass.  
How waken them that have not any bent  
Save browsing--the concrete indifferent!  
Friend Lucifer supplies them solid stuff:  
They fear not for the race when full the trough.  
They have much fear of giving up the ghost;  
And these are of mankind the unnumbered host.

- If I could see with you, and did not faint  
In beating wing, the future I would paint.  
Those massed indifferents will learn to quake:  
Now meanwhile is another mass awake,  
Once denser than the grunTERS of the sty.  
If I could see with you! Could I but fly!

- The length of days that you with them have housed,  
An outcast else, approves their cause espoused.

- O true, they have a cause, and woe for us,

While still they have a cause too piteous!  
Yet, happy for us when, their cause defined,  
They walk no longer with a stumbler blind,  
And quicken in the virtue of their cause,  
To think me a poor mouther of old saws!  
I wait the issue of a battling Age;  
The toilers with your 'troughsters' now engage;  
Instructing them, through their acutest sense,  
How close the dangers of indifference!  
Already have my people shown their worth,  
More love they light, which folds the love of Earth.  
That love to love of labour leads: thence love  
Of humankind--earth's incense flung above.

- Admit some other features: Faithless, mean;  
Encased in matter; vowed to Gods obscene;  
Contemptuous of the impalpable, it swells  
On Doubt; for pastime swallows miracles;  
And if I bid it face what I observe,  
Declares me hoodwinked by my optic nerve!

- Oft has your prophet, for reward of toil,  
Seen nests of seeming cockatrices coil:  
Disowned them as the unholyest of Time,  
Which were his offspring, born of flame on slime.  
Nor him, their sire, have known the filial fry:  
As little as Time's earliest knew the sky.  
Perchance among them shoots a lustrous flame  
At intervals, in proof of whom they came.  
To strengthen our foundations is the task  
Of this tough Age; not in your beams to bask,  
Though, lighted by your beams, down mining caves  
The rock it blasts, the hoarded foulness braves.  
My sister sees no round beyond her mood;  
To hawk this Age has dressed her head in hood.  
Out of the course of ancient ruts and grooves,  
It moves: O much for me to say it moves!  
About his Aethiopian Highlands Nile is Nile,  
Though not the stream of the paternal smile:  
And where his tide of nourishment he drives,  
An Abyssinian wantonness revives.  
Calm as his lotus-leaf to-day he swims;



He is the yellow crops, the rounded limbs,  
The Past yet flowing, the fair time that fills;  
Breath of all mouths and grist of many mills.  
To-morrow, warning none with tempest-showers,  
He is the vast Insensate who devours  
His golden promise over leagues of seed,  
Then sits in a smooth lake upon the deed.  
The races which on barbarous force begin  
Inherit onward of their origin,  
And cancelled blessings will the current length  
Reveal till they know need of shaping strength.  
'Tis not in men to recognize the need  
Before they clash in hosts, in hosts they bleed.  
Then may sharp suffering their nature grind;  
Of rabble passions grow the chieftain Mind.  
Yet mark where still broad Nile boasts thousands fed,  
For tens up the safe mountains at his head.  
Few would be fed, not far his course prolong,  
Save for the troublous blood which makes him strong.  
- That rings of truth! More do your people thrive;  
Your Many are more merrily alive  
Than erewhile when I gloried in the page  
Of radiant singer and anointed sage.  
Greece was my lamp: burnt out for lack of oil;  
Rome, Python Rome, prey of its robber spoil!  
All structures built upon a narrow space  
Must fall, from having not your hosts for base.  
O thrice must one be you, to see them shift  
Along their desert flats, here dash, there drift;  
With faith, that of privations and spilt blood,  
Comes Reason armed to clear or bank the flood!  
And thrice must one be you, to wait release  
From duress in the swamp of their increase.  
At which oppressive scene, beyond arrest,  
A darkness not with stars of heaven dressed  
Philosophers behold; desponding view  
Your Many nourished, starved my brilliant few;  
Then flinging heels, as charioteers the reins,  
Dive down the fummy AEtina of their brains.  
Belated vessels on a rising sea,  
They seem: they pass!

- But not Philosophy!

- Ay, be we faithful to ourselves: despise  
Nought but the coward in us! That way lies  
The wisdom making passage through our slough.  
Am I not heard, my head to Earth shall bow;  
Like her, shall wait to see, and seeing wait.  
Philosophy is Life's one match for Fate.  
That photosphere of our high fountain One,  
Our spirit's Lord and Reason's fostering sun,  
Philosophy, shall light us in the shade,  
Warm in the frost, make Good our aim and aid.  
Companioned by the sweetest, ay renewed,  
Unconquerable, whose aim for aid is Good!  
Advantage to the Many: that we name  
God's voice; have there the surety in our aim.  
This thought unto my sister do I owe,  
And irony and satire off me throw.  
They crack a childish whip, drive puny herds,  
Where numbers crave their sustenance in words.  
Now let the perils thicken: clearer seen,  
Your Chieftain Mind mounts over them serene.  
Who never yet of scattered lamps was born  
To speed a world, a marching world to warn,  
But sunward from the vivid Many springs,  
Counts conquest but a step, and through disaster sings.

George Meredith

# Forest History

I.

Beneath the vans of doom did men pass in.  
Heroic who came out; for round them hung  
A wavering phantom's red volcano tongue,  
With league-long lizard tail and fishy fin:

II.

Old Earth's original Dragon; there retired  
To his last fastness; overthrown by few.  
Him a laborious thrust of roadway slew.  
Then man to play devorant straight was fired.

III.

More intimate became the forest fear  
While pillared darkness hatched malicious life  
At either elbow, wolf or gnome or knife  
And wary slid the glance from ear to ear.

IV.

In chillness, like a clouded lantern-ray,  
The forest's heart of fog on mossed morass,  
On purple pool and silky cotton-grass,  
Revealed where lured the swallower byway.

V.

Dead outlook, flattened back with hard rebound  
Off walls of distance, left each mounted height.  
It seemed a giant hag-fiend, churning spite  
Of humble human being, held the ground.

VI.

Through friendless wastes, through treacherous woodland, slow  
The feet sustained by track of feet pursued

Pained steps, and found the common brotherhood  
By sign of Heaven indifferent, Nature foe.

VII.

Anon a mason's work amazed the sight,  
And long-frosted men, called Brothers, there abode.  
They pointed up, bowed head, and dug and sowed;  
Whereof was shelter, loaf, and warm firelight.

VIII.

What words they taught were nails to scratch the head.  
Benignant works explained the chanting brood.  
Their monastery lit black solitude,  
As one might think a star that heavenward led.

IX.

Uprose a fairer nest for weary feet,  
Like some gold flower nightly inward curled,  
Where gentle maidens fled a roaring world,  
Or played with it, and had their white retreat.

X.

Into big books of metal clasps they pored.  
They governed, even as men; they welcomed lays.  
The treasures women are whose aim is praise,  
Was shown in them: the Garden half restored.

XI.

A deluge billow scoured the land off seas,  
With widened jaws, and slaughter was its foam.  
For food, for clothing, ambush, refuge, home,  
The lesser savage offered bogs and trees.

XII.

Whence reverence round grey-haired story grew:  
And inmost spots of ancient horror shone

As temples under beams of trials bygone;  
For in them sang brave times with God in view.

XIII.

Till now trim homesteads bordered spaces green,  
Like night's first little stars through clearing showers.  
Was rumoured how a castle's falcon towers  
The wilderness commanded with fierce mien.

XIV.

Therein a serious Baron stuck his lance;  
For minstrel songs a beauteous Dame would pout.  
Gay knights and sombre, felon or devout,  
Pricked onward, bound for their unsung romance.

XV.

It might be that two errant lords across  
The block of each came edged, and at sharp cry  
They charged forthwith, the better man to try.  
One rode his way, one couched on quiet moss.

XVI.

Perchance a lady sweet, whose lord lay slain,  
The robbers into gruesome durance drew.  
Swift should her hero come, like lightning's blue!  
She prayed for him, as crackling drought for rain.

XVII.

As we, that ere the worst her hero haps,  
Of Angels guided, nigh that loathly den:  
A toady cave beside an ague fen,  
Where long forlorn the lone dog whines and yaps.

XVIII.

By daylight now the forest fear could read  
Itself, and at new wonders chuckling went.

Straight for the roebuck's neck the bowman spent  
A dart that laughed at distance and at speed.

XIX.

Right loud the bugle's hallali elate  
Rang forth of merry dingles round the tors;  
And deftest hand was he from foreign wars,  
But soon he hailed the home-bred yeoman mate.

XX.

Before the blackbird pecked the turf they woke;  
At dawn the deer's wet nostrils blew their last.  
To forest, haunt of runs and prime repast,  
With paying blows, the yokel strained his yoke.

XXI.

The city urchin mooned on forest air,  
On grassy sweeps and flying arrows, thick  
As swallows o'er smooth streams, and sighed him sick  
For thinking that his dearer home was there.

XXII.

Familiar, still unseized, the forest sprang  
An old-world echo, like no mortal thing.  
The hunter's horn might wind a jocund ring,  
But held in ear it had a chilly clang.

XXIII.

Some shadow lurked aloof of ancient time;  
Some warning haunted any sound prolonged,  
As though the leagues of woodland held them wronged  
To hear an axe and see a township climb.

XXIV.

The forest's erewhile emperor at eve  
Had voice when lowered heavens drummed for gales.

At midnight a small people danced the dales,  
So thin that they might dwindle through a sieve

XXV.

Ringed mushrooms told of them, and in their throats,  
Old wives that gathered herbs and knew too much.  
The pensioned forester beside his crutch,  
Struck showers from embers at those bodeful notes.

XXVI.

Came then the one, all ear, all eye, all heart;  
Devourer, and insensibly devoured;  
In whom the city over forest flowered,  
The forest wreathed the city's drama-mart.

XXVII.

There found he in new form that Dragon old,  
From tangled solitudes expelled; and taught  
How blindly each its antidote besought;  
For either's breath the needs of either told.

XXVIII.

Now deep in woods, with song no sermon's drone,  
He showed what charm the human concourse works:  
Amid the press of men, what virtue lurks  
Where bubble sacred wells of wildness lone.

XXIX.

Our conquest these: if haply we retain  
The reverence that ne'er will overrun  
Due boundaries of realms from Nature won,  
Nor let the poet's awe in rapture wane.

George Meredith

# Fragments

Open horizons round,  
O mounting mind, to scenes unsung,  
Wherein shall walk a lusty Time:  
Our Earth is young;  
Of measure without bound;  
Infinite are the heights to climb,  
The depths to sound.

A wilding little stubble flower  
The sickle scorned which cut for wheat,  
Such was our hope in that dark hour  
When nought save uses held the street,  
And daily pleasures, daily needs,  
With barren vision, looked ahead.  
And still the same result of seeds  
Gave likeness 'twixt the live and dead.

From labours through the night, outworn,  
Above the hills the front of morn  
We see, whose eyes to heights are raised,  
And the world's wise may deem us crazed.  
While yet her lord lies under seas,  
She takes us as the wind the trees'  
Delighted leafage; all in song  
We mount to her, to her belong.

This love of nature, that allures to take  
Irregularity for harmony  
Of larger scope than our hard measures make,  
Cherish it as thy school for when on thee  
The ills of life descend.

George Meredith



# France--December 1870

## I

We look for her that sunlike stood  
Upon the forehead of our day,  
An orb of nations, radiating food  
For body and for mind always.  
Where is the Shape of glad array;  
The nervous hands, the front of steel,  
The clarion tongue? Where is the bold proud face?  
We see a vacant place;  
We hear an iron heel.

## II

O she that made the brave appeal  
For manhood when our time was dark,  
And from our fetters drove the spark  
Which was as lightning to reveal  
New seasons, with the swifter play  
Of pulses, and benigner day;  
She that divinely shook the dead  
From living man; that stretched ahead  
Her resolute forefinger straight,  
And marched toward the gloomy gate  
Of earth's Untried, gave note, and in  
The good name of Humanity  
Called forth the daring vision! she,  
She likewise half corrupt of sin,  
Angel and Wanton! can it be?  
Her star has foundered in eclipse,  
The shriek of madness on her lips;  
Shreds of her, and no more, we see.  
There is horrible convulsion, smothered din,  
As of one that in a grave-cloth struggles to be free.

## III

Look not for spreading boughs  
On the riven forest tree.

Look down where deep in blood and mire  
Black thunder plants his feet and ploughs  
The soil for ruin: that is France:  
Still thrilling like a lyre,  
Amazed to shivering discord from a fall  
Sudden as that the lurid hosts recall  
Who met in heaven the irreparable mischance.  
O that is France!  
The brilliant eyes to kindle bliss,  
The shrewd quick lips to laugh and kiss,  
Breasts that a sighing world inspire,  
And laughter-dimpled countenance  
Where soul and senses caught desire!

#### IV

Ever invoking fire from heaven, the fire  
Has grasped her, unconsumable, but framed  
For all the ecstasies of suffering dire.  
Mother of Pride, her sanctuary shamed:  
Mother of Delicacy, and made a mark  
For outrage: Mother of Luxury, stripped stark:  
Mother of Heroes, bondsmen: thro' the rains,  
Across her boundaries, lo the league-long chains!  
Fond Mother of her martial youth; they pass,  
Are spectres in her sight, are mown as grass!  
Mother of Honour, and dishonoured: Mother  
Of Glory, she condemned to crown with bays  
Her victor, and be fountain of his praise.  
Is there another curse? There is another:  
Compassionate her madness: is she not  
Mother of Reason? she that sees them mown  
Like grass, her young ones! Yea, in the low groan  
And under the fixed thunder of this hour  
Which holds the animate world in one foul blot  
Tranced circumambient while relentless Power  
Beaks at her heart and claws her limbs down-thrown,  
She, with the plunging lightnings overshoot,  
With madness for an armour against pain,  
With milkless breasts for little ones athirst,  
And round her all her noblest dying in vain,  
Mother of Reason is she, trebly cursed,

To feel, to see, to justify the blow;  
Chamber to chamber of her sequent brain  
Gives answer of the cause of her great woe,  
Inexorably echoing thro' the vaults,  
"Tis thus they reap in blood, in blood who sow:  
'This is the sum of self-absolved faults.'  
Doubt not that thro' her grief, with sight supreme,  
Thro' her delirium and despair's last dream,  
Thro' pride, thro' bright illusion and the brood  
Bewildering of her various Motherhood,  
The high strong light within her, tho' she bleeds,  
Traces the letters of returned misdeeds.  
She sees what seed long sown, ripened of late,  
Bears this fierce crop; and she discerns her fate  
From origin to agony, and on  
As far as the wave washes long and wan  
Off one disastrous impulse: for of waves  
Our life is, and our deeds are pregnant graves  
Blown rolling to the sunset from the dawn.

V

Ah, what a dawn of splendour, when her sowers  
Went forth and bent the necks of populations  
And of their terrors and humiliations  
Wove her the starry wreath that earthward lowers  
Now in the figure of a burning yoke!  
Her legions traversed North and South and East,  
Of triumph they enjoyed the glutton's feast:  
They grafted the green sprig, they lopped the oak.  
They caught by the beard the tempests, by the scalp  
The icy precipices, and clove sheer through  
The heart of horror of the pinnacled Alp,  
Emerging not as men whom mortals knew.  
They were the earthquake and the hurricane,  
The lightnings and the locusts, plagues of blight,  
Plagues of the revel: they were Deluge rain,  
And dreaded Conflagration; lawless Might.  
Death writes a reeling line along the snows,  
Where under frozen mists they may be tracked,  
Who men and elements provoked to foes,  
And Gods: they were of god and beast compact:

Abhorred of all. Yet, how they sucked the teats  
Of Carnage, thirsty issue of their dam,  
Whose eagles, angrier than their oriflamme,  
Flushed the vext earth with blood, green earth forgets.  
The gay young generations mask her grief;  
Where bled her children hangs the loaded sheaf.  
Forgetful is green earth; the Gods alone  
Remember everlastingly: they strike  
Remorselessly, and ever like for like.  
By their great memories the Gods are known.

## VI

They are with her now, and in her ears, and known.  
'Tis they that cast her to the dust for Strength,  
Their slave, to feed on her fair body's length,  
That once the sweetest and the proudest shone;  
Scoring for hideous dismemberment  
Her limbs, as were the anguish-taking breath  
Gone out of her in the insufferable descent  
From her high chieftainship; as were she death,  
Who hears a voice of justice, feels the knife  
Of torture, drinks all ignominy of life.  
They are with her, and the painful Gods might weep,  
If ever rain of tears came out of heaven  
To flatter Weakness and bid conscience sleep,  
Viewing the woe of this Immortal, driven  
For the soul's life to drain the maddening cup  
Of her own children's blood implacably:  
Unsparing even as they to furrow up  
The yellow land to likeness of a sea:  
The bountiful fair land of vine and grain,  
Of wit and grace and ardour, and strong roots,  
Fruits perishable, imperishable fruits;  
Furrowed to likeness of the dim grey main  
Behind the black obliterating cyclone.

## VII

Behold, the Gods are with her, and are known.  
Whom they abandon misery persecutes  
No more: them half-eyed apathy may loan

The happiness of pitiable brutes.  
Whom the just Gods abandon have no light,  
No ruthless light of introspective eyes  
That in the midst of misery scrutinize  
The heart and its iniquities outright.  
They rest, they smile and rest; have earned perchance  
Of ancient service quiet for a term;  
Quiet of old men dropping to the worm;  
And so goes out the soul. But not of France.  
She cries for grief, and to the Gods she cries,  
For fearfully their loosened hands chastize,  
And icily they watch the rod's caress  
Ravage her flesh from scourges merciless,  
But she, inveterate of brain, discerns  
That Pity has as little place as Joy  
Among their roll of gifts; for Strength she yearns.  
For Strength, her idol once, too long her toy.  
Lo, Strength is of the plain root-Virtues born:  
Strength shall ye gain by service, prove in scorn,  
Train by endurance, by devotion shape.  
Strength is not won by miracle or rape.  
It is the offspring of the modest years,  
The gift of sire to son, thro' those firm laws  
Which we name Gods; which are the righteous cause,  
The cause of man, and manhood's ministers.  
Could France accept the fables of her priests,  
Who blest her banners in this game of beasts,  
And now bid hope that heaven will intercede  
To violate its laws in her sore need,  
She would find comfort in their opiates:  
Mother of Reason! can she cheat the Fates?  
Would she, the champion of the open mind,  
The Omnipotent's prime gift--the gift of growth -  
Consent even for a night-time to be blind,  
And sink her soul on the delusive sloth,  
For fruits ethereal and material, both,  
In peril of her place among mankind?  
The Mother of the many Laughters might  
Call one poor shade of laughter in the light  
Of her unwavering lamp to mark what things  
The world puts faith in, careless of the truth:  
What silly puppet-bodies danced on strings,

Attached by credence, we appear in sooth,  
Demanding intercession, direct aid,  
When the whole tragic tale hangs on a broken blade!

She swung the sword for centuries; in a day  
It slipped her, like a stream cut off from source.  
She struck a feeble hand, and tried to pray,  
Clamoured of treachery, and had recourse  
To drunken outcries in her dream that Force  
Needed but hear her shouting to obey.  
Was she not formed to conquer? The bright plumes  
Of crested vanity shed graceful nods:  
Transcendent in her foundries, Arts and looms,  
Had France to fear the vengeance of the Gods?  
Her faith was on her battle-roll of names  
Sheathed in the records of old war; with dance  
And song she thrilled her warriors and her dames,  
Embracing her Dishonour: gave him France  
From head to foot, France present and to come,  
So she might hear the trumpet and the drum -  
Bellona and Bacchante! rushing forth  
On yon stout marching Schoolmen of the North.

Inveterate of brain, well knows she why  
Strength failed her, faithful to himself the first:  
Her dream is done, and she can read the sky,  
And she can take into her heart the worst  
Calamity to drug the shameful thought  
Of days that made her as the man she served  
A name of terror, but a thing unnerved:  
Buying the trickster, by the trickster bought,  
She for dominion, he to patch a throne.

## VIII

Henceforth of her the Gods are known,  
Open to them her breast is laid.  
Inveterate of brain, heart-valiant,  
Never did fairer creature pant  
Before the altar and the blade!

## IX

Swift fall the blows, and men upbraid,  
And friends give echo blunt and cold,  
The echo of the forest to the axe.  
Within her are the fires that wax  
For resurrection from the mould.

X

She snatched at heaven's flame of old,  
And kindled nations: she was weak:  
Frail sister of her heroic prototype,  
The Man; for sacrifice unripe,  
She too must fill a Vulture's beak.  
Deride the vanquished, and acclaim  
The conqueror, who stains her fame,  
Still the Gods love her, for that of high aim  
Is this good France, the bleeding thing they stripe.

XI

She shall rise worthier of her prototype  
Thro' her abasement deep; the pain that runs  
From nerve to nerve some victory achieves.  
They lie like circle-strewn soaked Autumn-leaves  
Which stain the forest scarlet, her fair sons!  
And of their death her life is: of their blood  
From many streams now urging to a flood,  
No more divided, France shall rise afresh.  
Of them she learns the lesson of the flesh:-  
The lesson writ in red since first Time ran,  
A hunter hunting down the beast in man:  
That till the chasing out of its last vice,  
The flesh was fashioned but for sacrifice.

Immortal Mother of a mortal host!  
Thou suffering of the wounds that will not slay,  
Wounds that bring death but take not life away! -  
Stand fast and hearken while thy victors boast:  
Hearken, and loathe that music evermore.  
Slip loose thy garments woven of pride and shame:  
The torture lurks in them, with them the blame

Shall pass to leave thee purer than before.  
Undo thy jewels, thinking whence they came,  
For what, and of the abominable name  
Of her who in imperial beauty wore.

O Mother of a fated fleeting host  
Conceived in the past days of sin, and born  
Heirs of disease and arrogance and scorn,  
Surrender, yield the weight of thy great ghost,  
Like wings on air, to what the heavens proclaim  
With trumpets from the multitudinous mounds  
Where peace has filled the hearing of thy sons:  
Albeit a pang of dissolution rounds  
Each new discernment of the undying ones,  
Do thou stoop to these graves here scattered wide  
Along thy fields, as sunless billows roll;  
These ashes have the lesson for the soul.  
'Die to thy Vanity, and strain thy Pride,  
Strip off thy Luxury: that thou may'st live,  
Die to thyself,' they say, 'as we have died  
From dear existence and the foe forgive,  
Nor pray for aught save in our little space  
To warn good seed to greet the fair earth's face.'  
O Mother! take their counsel, and so shall  
The broader world breathe in on this thy home,  
Light clear for thee the counter-changing dome,  
Strength give thee, like an ocean's vast expanse  
Off mountain cliffs, the generations all,  
Not whirling in their narrow rings of foam,  
But as a river forward. Soaring France!  
Now is Humanity on trial in thee:  
Now may'st thou gather humankind in fee:  
Now prove that Reason is a quenchless scroll;  
Make of calamity thine aureole,  
And bleeding head us thro' the troubles of the sea.

George Meredith



# Gordon Of Khartoum

Of men he would have raised to light he fell:  
In soul he conquered with those nerveless hands.  
His country's pride and her abasement knell  
The Man of England circled by the sands.

George Meredith

## Grace And Love

Two flower-enfolding crystal vases she  
I love fills daily, mindful but of one:  
And close behind pale morn she, like the sun  
Priming our world with light, pours, sweet to see,  
Clear water in the cup, and into me  
The image of herself: and that being done,  
Choice of what blooms round her fair garden run  
In climbers or in creepers or the tree  
She ranges with unerring fingers fine,  
To harmony so vivid that through sight  
I hear, I have her heavenliness to fold  
Beyond the senses, where such love as mine,  
Such grace as hers, should the strange Fates withhold  
Their starry more from her and me, unite.

George Meredith

# Grandfather Bridgeman

## I

'Heigh, boys!' cried Grandfather Bridgeman, 'it's time before dinner to-day.'  
He lifted the crumpled letter, and thumped a surprising 'Hurrah!'  
Up jumped all the echoing young ones, but John, with the starch in his throat,  
Said, 'Father, before we make noises, let's see the contents of the note.'  
The old man glared at him harshly, and twinkling made answer: 'Too bad!  
John Bridgeman, I'm always the whisky, and you are the water, my lad!'

## II

But soon it was known thro' the house, and the house ran over for joy,  
That news, good news, great marvels, had come from the soldier boy;  
Young Tom, the luckless scapegrace, offshoot of Methodist John;  
His grandfather's evening tale, whom the old man hailed as his son.  
And the old man's shout of pride was a shout of his victory, too;  
For he called his affection a method: the neighbours' opinions he knew.

## III

Meantime, from the morning table removing the stout breakfast cheer,  
The drink of the three generations, the milk, the tea, and the beer  
(Alone in its generous reading of pints stood the Grandfather's jug),  
The women for sight of the missive came pressing to coax and to hug.  
He scattered them quick, with a buss and a smack; thereupon he began  
Diversions with John's little Sarah: on Sunday, the naughty old man!

## IV

Then messengers sped to the maltster, the auctioneer, miller, and all  
The seven sons of the farmer who housed in the range of his call.  
Likewise the married daughters, three plentiful ladies, prime cooks,  
Who bowed to him while they condemned, in meek hope to stand high in his  
books.

'John's wife is a fool at a pudding,' they said, and the light carts up hill  
Went merrily, flouting the Sabbath: for puddings well made mend a will.

## V

The day was a van-bird of summer: the robin still piped, but the blue,  
As a warm and dreamy palace with voices of larks ringing thro',  
Looked down as if wistfully eyeing the blossoms that fell from its lap:  
A day to sweeten the juices: a day to quicken the sap.  
All round the shadowy orchard sloped meadows in gold, and the dear  
Shy violets breathed their hearts out: the maiden breath of the year!

## VI

Full time there was before dinner to bring fifteen of his blood,  
To sit at the old man's table: they found that the dinner was good.  
But who was she by the lilacs and pouring laburnums concealed,  
When under the blossoming apple the chair of the Grandfather wheeled?  
She heard one little child crying, 'Dear brave Cousin Tom!' as it leapt;  
Then murmured she: 'Let me spare them!' and passed round the walnuts, and  
wept.

## VII

Yet not from sight had she slipped ere feminine eyes could detect  
The figure of Mary Charlworth. 'It's just what we all might expect,'  
Was uttered: and: 'Didn't I tell you?' Of Mary the rumour resounds,  
That she is now her own mistress, and mistress of five thousand pounds.  
'Twas she, they say, who cruelly sent young Tom to the war.  
Miss Mary, we thank you now! If you knew what we're thanking you for!

## VIII

But, 'Have her in: let her hear it,' called Grandfather Bridgeman, elate,  
While Mary's black-gloved fingers hung trembling with flight on the gate.  
Despite the women's remonstrance, two little ones, lighter than deer,  
Were loosed, and Mary, imprisoned, her whole face white as a tear,  
Came forward with culprit footsteps. Her punishment was to commence:  
The pity in her pale visage they read in a different sense.

## IX

'You perhaps may remember a fellow, Miss Charlworth, a sort of black sheep,'  
The old man turned his tongue to ironical utterance deep:  
'He came of a Methodist dad, so it wasn't his fault if he kicked.  
He earned a sad reputation, but Methodists are mortal strict.  
His name was Tom, and, dash me! but Bridgeman! I think you might add:

Whatever he was, bear in mind that he came of a Methodist dad.'

X

This prelude dismally lengthened, till Mary, starting, exclaimed,  
'A letter, Sir, from your grandson?' 'Tom Bridgeman that rascal is named,'  
The old man answered, and further, the words that sent Tom to the ranks  
Repeated as words of a person to whom they all owed mighty thanks.  
But Mary never blushed: with her eyes on the letter, she sate,  
And twice interrupting him faltered, 'The date, may I ask, Sir, the date?'

XI

'Why, that's what I never look at in a letter,' the farmer replied:  
'Facts first! and now I'll be parson.' The Bridgeman women descried  
A quiver on Mary's eyebrows. One turned, and while shifting her comb,  
Said low to a sister: 'I'm certain she knows more than we about Tom.  
She wants him now he's a hero!' The same, resuming her place,  
Begged Mary to check them the moment she found it a tedious case.

XII

Then as a mastiff swallows the snarling noises of cats,  
The voice of the farmer opened. "Three cheers, and off with your hats!"  
- That's Tom. 'We've beaten them, Daddy, and tough work it was, to be sure!  
A regular stand-up combat: eight hours smelling powder and gore.  
I entered it Serjeant-Major,'-and now he commands a salute,  
And carries the flag of old England! Heigh! see him lift foes on his foot!

XIII

'-An officer! ay, Miss Charlworth, he is, or he is so to be;  
You'll own war isn't such humbug: and Glory means something, you see.  
'But don't say a word,' he continues, 'against the brave French any more.'  
- That stopt me: we'll now march together. I couldn't read further before.  
That 'brave French' I couldn't stomach. He can't see their cunning to get  
Us Britons to fight their battles, while best half the winnings they net!'

XIV

The old man sneered, and read forward. It was of that desperate fight; -  
The Muscovite stole thro' the mist-wreaths that wrapped the chill Inkermann

height,  
Where stood our silent outposts: old England was in them that day!  
O sharp worked his ruddy wrinkles, as if to the breath of the fray  
They moved! He sat bareheaded: his long hair over him slow  
Swung white as the silky bog-flowers in purple heath-hollows that grow.

XV

And louder at Tom's first person: acute and in thunder the 'I'  
Invaded the ear with a whinny of triumph, that seem'd to defy  
The hosts of the world. All heated, what wonder he little could brook  
To catch the sight of Mary's demure puritanical look?  
And still as he led the onslaught, his treacherous side-shots he sent  
At her who was fighting a battle as fierce, and who sat there unbent.

XVI

"We stood in line, and like hedgehogs the Russians rolled under us thick.  
They frightened me there.'-He's no coward; for when, Miss, they came at the  
quick,  
The sight, he swears, was a breakfast.-'My stomach felt tight: in a glimpse  
I saw you snoring at home with the dear cuddled-up little imps.  
And then like the winter brickfields at midnight, hot fire lengthened out.  
Our fellows were just leashed bloodhounds: no heart of the lot faced about.

XVII

"And only that grumbler, Bob Harris, remarked that we stood one to ten:  
'Ye fool,' says Mick Grady, 'just tell 'em they know to compliment men!'  
And I sang out your old words: 'If the opposite side isn't God's,  
Heigh! after you've counted a dozen, the pluckiest lads have the odds.'  
Ping-ping flew the enemies' pepper: the Colonel roared, Forward, and we  
Went at them. 'Twas first like a blanket: and then a long plunge in the sea.

XVIII

"Well, now about me and the Frenchman: it happened I can't tell you how:  
And, Grandfather, hear, if you love me, and put aside prejudice now':  
He never says 'Grandfather'-Tom don't-save it's a serious thing.  
'Well, there were some pits for the rifles, just dug on our French-leaning wing:  
And backwards, and forwards, and backwards we went, and at last I was vexed,

And swore I would never surrender a foot when the Russians charged next.

XIX

"I know that life's worth keeping."-Ay, so it is, lad; so it is! -  
'But my life belongs to a woman.'-Does that mean Her Majesty, Miss? -  
'These Russians came lumping and grinning: they're fierce at it, though they are blocks.  
Our fellows were pretty well pumped, and looked sharp for the little French cocks.  
Lord, didn't we pray for their crowing! when over us, on the hill-top,  
Behold the first line of them skipping, like kangaroos seen on the hop.

XX

"That sent me into a passion, to think of them spying our flight!"  
Heigh, Tom! you've Bridgeman blood, boy! And, "Face them!" I shouted: 'All right;  
Sure, Serjeant, we'll take their shot dacent, like gentlemen,' Grady replied.  
A ball in his mouth, and the noble old Irishman dropped by my side.  
Then there was just an instant to save myself, when a short wheeze  
Of bloody lungs under the smoke, and a red-coat crawled up on his knees.

XXI

"'Twas Ensign Baynes of our parish.'-Ah, ah, Miss Charlworth, the one  
Our Tom fought for a young lady? Come, now we've got into the fun!-  
'I shouldered him: he primed his pistol, and I trailed my musket, prepared.'  
Why, that's a fine pick-a-back for ye, to make twenty Russians look scared!  
'They came-never mind how many: we couldn't have run very well,  
We fought back to back: 'face to face, our last time!' he said, smiling, and fell.

XXII

"Then I strove wild for his body: the beggars saw glittering rings,  
Which I vowed to send to his mother. I got some hard knocks and sharp stings,  
But felt them no more than angel, or devil, except in the wind.  
I know that I swore at a Russian for showing his teeth, and he grinned  
The harder: quick, as from heaven, a man on a horse rode between,  
And fired, and swung his bright sabre: I can't write you more of the scene.

XXIII

"But half in his arms, and half at his stirrup, he bore me right forth,  
And pitched me among my old comrades: before I could tell south from north,  
He caught my hand up, and kissed it! Don't ever let any man speak  
A word against Frenchmen, I near him! I can't find his name, tho' I seek.  
But French, and a General, surely he was, and, God bless him! thro' him  
I've learnt to love a whole nation." The ancient man paused, winking dim.

#### XXIV

A curious look, half woeful, was seen on his face as he turned  
His eyes upon each of his children, like one who but faintly discerned  
His old self in an old mirror. Then gathering sense in his fist,  
He sounded it hard on his knee-cap. 'Your hand, Tom, the French fellow kissed!  
He kissed my boy's old pounder! I say he's a gentleman!' Straight  
The letter he tossed to one daughter; bade her the remainder relate.

#### XXV

Tom properly stated his praises in facts, but the lady preferred  
To deck the narration with brackets, and drop her additional word.  
What nobler Christian natures these women could boast, who, 'twas known,  
Once spat at the name of their nephew, and now made his praises their own!  
The letter at last was finished, the hearers breathed freely, and sign  
Was given, 'Tom's health!'-Quoth the farmer: 'Eh, Miss? are you weak in the  
spine?'

#### XXVI

For Mary had sunk, and her body was shaking, as if in a fit.  
Tom's letter she held, and her thumb-nail the month when the letter was writ  
Fast-dinted, while she hung sobbing: 'O, see, Sir, the letter is old!  
O, do not be too happy!'-'If I understand you, I'm bowled!  
Said Grandfather Bridgeman, 'and down go my wickets!-not happy! when here,  
Here's Tom like to marry his General's daughter-or widow-I'll swear!

#### XXVII

'I wager he knows how to strut, too! It's all on the cards that the Queen  
Will ask him to Buckingham Palace, to say what he's done and he's seen.  
Victoria's fond of her soldiers: and she's got a nose for a fight.  
If Tom tells a cleverish story-there is such a thing as a knight!



And don't he look roguish and handsome!-To see a girl snivelling there -  
By George, Miss, it's clear that you're jealous'-'I love him!' she answered his  
stare.

#### XXVIII

'Yes! now!' breathed the voice of a woman.-'Ah! now!' quiver'd low the reply.  
'And 'now''s just a bit too late, so it's no use your piping your eye,'  
The farmer added bluffly: 'Old Lawyer Charlworth was rich;  
You followed his instructions in kicking Tom into the ditch.  
If you're such a dutiful daughter, that doesn't prove Tom is a fool.  
Forgive and forget's my motto! and here's my grog growing cool!'

#### XXIX

'But, Sir,' Mary faintly repeated: 'for four long weeks I have failed  
To come and cast on you my burden; such grief for you always prevailed!  
My heart has so bled for you!' The old man burst on her speech:  
'You've chosen a likely time, Miss! a pretty occasion to preach!'  
And was it not outrageous, that now, of all times, one should come  
With incomprehensible pity! Far better had Mary been dumb.

#### XXX

But when again she stammered in this bewildering way,  
The farmer no longer could bear it, and begged her to go, or to stay,  
But not to be whimpering nonsense at such a time. Pricked by a goad,  
'Twas you who sent him to glory:- you've come here to reap what you sowed.  
Is that it?' he asked; and the silence the elders preserved plainly said,  
On Mary's heaving bosom this begging-petition was read.

#### XXXI

And that it was scarcely a bargain that she who had driven him wild  
Should share now the fruits of his valour, the women expressed, as they smiled.  
The family pride of the Bridgemans was comforted; still, with contempt,  
They looked on a monied damsel of modesty quite so exempt.  
'O give me force to tell them!' cried Mary, and even as she spoke,  
A shout and a hush of the children: a vision on all of them broke.

#### XXXII

Wheeled, pale, in a chair, and shattered, the wreck of their hero was seen;  
The ghost of Tom drawn slow o'er the orchard's shadowy green.  
Could this be the martial darling they joyed in a moment ago?  
'He knows it?' to Mary Tom murmured, and closed his weak lids at her 'No.'  
'Beloved!' she said, falling by him, 'I have been a coward: I thought  
You lay in the foreign country, and some strange good might be wrought.

### XXXIII

'Each day I have come to tell him, and failed, with my hand on the gate.  
I bore the dreadful knowledge, and crushed my heart with its weight.  
The letter brought by your comrade-he has but just read it aloud!  
It only reached him this morning!' Her head on his shoulder she bowed.  
Then Tom with pity's tenderest lordliness patted her arm,  
And eyed the old white-head fondly, with something of doubt and alarm.

### XXXIV

O, take to your fancy a sculptor whose fresh marble offspring appears  
Before him, shiningly perfect, the laurel-crown'd issue of years:  
Is heaven offended? for lightning behold from its bosom escape,  
And those are mocking fragments that made the harmonious shape!  
He cannot love the ruins, till, feeling that ruins alone  
Are left, he loves them threefold. So passed the old grandfather's moan.

### XXXV

John's text for a sermon on Slaughter he heard, and he did not protest.  
All rigid as April snowdrifts, he stood, hard and feeble; his chest  
Just showing the swell of the fire as it melted him. Smiting a rib,  
'Heigh! what have we been about, Tom! Was this all a terrible fib?'  
He cried, and the letter forth-trembled. Tom told what the cannon had done.  
Few present but ached to see falling those aged tears on his heart's son!

### XXXVI

Up lanes of the quiet village, and where the mill-waters rush red  
Thro' browning summer meadows to catch the sun's crimsoning head,  
You meet an old man and a maiden who has the soft ways of a wife  
With one whom they wheel, alternate; whose delicate flush of new life  
Is prized like the early primrose. Then shake his right hand, in the chair -  
The old man fails never to tell you: 'You've got the French General's there!'

George Meredith

# Hard Weather

Bursts from a rending East in flaws  
The young green leaflet's harrier, sworn  
To strew the garden, strip the shaws,  
And show our Spring with banner torn.  
Was ever such virago morn?  
The wind has teeth, the wind has claws.  
All the wind's wolves through woods are loose,  
The wild wind's falconry aloft.  
Shrill underfoot the grassblade shrews,  
At gallop, clumped, and down the croft  
Bestrid by shadows, beaten, tossed;  
It seems a scythe, it seems a rod.  
The howl is up at the howl's accost;  
The shivers greet and the shivers nod.

Is the land ship? we are rolled, we drive  
Tritonly, cleaving hiss and hum;  
Whirl with the dead, or mount or dive,  
Or down in dregs, or on in scum.  
And drums the distant, pipes the near,  
And vale and hill are grey in grey,  
As when the surge is crumbling sheer,  
And sea-mews wing the haze of spray.  
Clouds--are they bony witches?--swarms,  
Darting swift on the robber's flight,  
Hurry an infant sky in arms:  
It peeps, it becks; 'tis day, 'tis night.  
Black while over the loop of blue  
The swathe is closed, like shroud on corse.  
Lo, as if swift the Furies flew,  
The Fates at heel at a cry to horse!

Interpret me the savage whirr:  
And is it Nature scourged, or she,  
Her offspring's executioner,  
Reducing land to barren sea?  
But is there meaning in a day  
When this fierce angel of the air,  
Intent to throw, and haply slay,

Can for what breath of life we bear,  
Exact the wrestle?--Call to mind  
The many meanings glistening up  
When Nature to her nurslings kind,  
Hands them the fruitage and the cup!  
And seek we rich significance  
Not elsewhere than with those tides  
Of pleasure on the sunned expanse,  
Whose flow deludes, whose ebb derides?

Look in the face of men who fare  
Lock-mouthed, a match in lungs and thews  
For this fierce angel of the air,  
To twist with him and take his bruise.  
That is the face beloved of old  
Of Earth, young mother of her brood:  
Nor broken for us shows the mould  
When muscle is in mind renewed:  
Though farther from her nature rude,  
Yet nearer to her spirit's hold:  
And though of gentler mood serene,  
Still forceful of her fountain-jet.  
So shall her blows be shrewdly met,  
Be luminously read the scene  
Where Life is at her grindstone set,  
That she may give us edgeing keen,  
String us for battle, till as play  
The common strokes of fortune shower.  
Such meaning in a dagger-day  
Our wits may clasp to wax in power.  
Yea, feel us warmer at her breast,  
By spin of blood in lusty drill,  
Than when her honeyed hands caressed,  
And Pleasure, sapping, seemed to fill.

Behold the life at ease; it drifts.  
The sharpened life commands its course.  
She winnows, winnows roughly; sifts,  
To dip her chosen in her source:  
Contention is the vital force,  
Whence pluck they brain, her prize of gifts,  
Sky of the senses! on which height,

Not disconnected, yet released,  
They see how spirit comes to light,  
Through conquest of the inner beast,  
Which Measure tames to movement sane,  
In harmony with what is fair.  
Never is Earth misread by brain:  
That is the welling of her, there  
The mirror: with one step beyond,  
For likewise is it voice; and more,  
Benignest kinship bids respond,  
When wail the weak, and them restore  
Whom days as fell as this may rive,  
While Earth sits ebon in her gloom,  
Us atomies of life alive  
Unheeding, bent on life to come.  
Her children of the labouring brain,  
These are the champions of the race,  
True parents, and the sole humane,  
With understanding for their base.  
Earth yields the milk, but all her mind  
Is vowed to thresh for stouter stock.  
Her passion for old giantkind,  
That scaled the mount, uphurled the rock,  
Devolves on them who read aright  
Her meaning and devoutly serve;  
Nor in her starlessness of night  
Peruse her with the craven nerve:  
But even as she from grass to corn,  
To eagle high from grubbing mole,  
Prove in strong brain her noblest born,  
The station for the flight of soul.

George Meredith

# Hawarden

When comes the lighted day for men to read  
Life's meaning, with the work before their hands  
Till this good gift of breath from debt is freed,  
Earth will not hear her children's wailful bands  
Deplore the chieftain fall'n in sob and dirge;  
Nor they look where is darkness, but on high.  
The sun that dropped down our horizon's verge,  
Illumes his labours through the travelled sky,  
Now seen in sum, most glorious; and 'tis known  
By what our warrior wrought we hold him fast.  
A splendid image built of man has flown;  
His deeds inspired of God outstep a Past.  
Ours the great privilege to have had one  
Among us who celestial tasks has done.

George Meredith

# Hernani

Cistercians might crack their sides  
With laughter, and exemption get,  
At sight of heroes clasping brides,  
And hearing--O the horn! the horn!  
The horn of their obstructive debt!

But quit the stage, that note applies  
For sermons cosmopolitan,  
Hernani. Have we filched our prize,  
Forgetting . . .? O the horn! the horn!  
The horn of the Old Gentleman!

George Meredith



# Hymn To Colour

## I

With Life and Death I walked when Love appeared,  
And made them on each side a shadow seem.  
Through wooded vales the land of dawn we neared,  
Where down smooth rapids whirls the helmless dream  
To fall on daylight; and night puts away  
Her darker veil for grey.

## II

In that grey veil green grassblades brushed we by;  
We came where woods breathed sharp, and overhead  
Rocks raised clear horns on a transforming sky:  
Around, save for those shapes, with him who led  
And linked them, desert varied by no sign  
Of other life than mine.

## III

By this the dark-winged planet, raying wide,  
From the mild pearl-glow to the rose upborne,  
Drew in his fires, less faint than far descried,  
Pure-fronted on a stronger wave of morn:  
And those two shapes the splendour interweaved,  
Hung web-like, sank and heaved.

## IV

Love took my hand when hidden stood the sun  
To fling his robe on shoulder-heights of snow.  
Then said: There lie they, Life and Death in one.  
Whichever is, the other is: but know,  
It is thy craving self that thou dost see,  
Not in them seeing me.

## V

Shall man into the mystery of breath,

From his quick beating pulse a pathway spy?  
Or learn the secret of the shrouded death,  
By lifting up the lid of a white eye?  
Cleave thou thy way with fathering desire  
Of fire to reach to fire.

## VI

Look now where Colour, the soul's bridegroom, makes  
The house of heaven splendid for the bride.  
To him as leaps a fountain she awakes,  
In knotting arms, yet boundless: him beside,  
She holds the flower to heaven, and by his power  
Brings heaven to the flower.

## VII

He gives her homeliness in desert air,  
And sovereignty in spaciousness; he leads  
Through widening chambers of surprise to where  
Throbs rapture near an end that aye recedes,  
Because his touch is infinite and lends  
A yonder to all ends.

## VIII

Death begs of Life his blush; Life Death persuades  
To keep long day with his caresses graced.  
He is the heart of light, the wing of shades,  
The crown of beauty: never soul embraced  
Of him can harbour unfaith; soul of him  
Possessed walks never dim.

## IX

Love eyed his rosy memories: he sang:  
O bloom of dawn, breathed up from the gold sheaf  
Held springing beneath Orient! that dost hang  
The space of dewdrops running over leaf;  
Thy fleetingness is bigger in the ghost  
Than Time with all his host!

X

Of thee to say behold, has said adieu:  
But love remembers how the sky was green,  
And how the grasses glimmered lightest blue;  
How saint-like grey took fervour: how the screen  
Of cloud grew violet; how thy moment came  
Between a blush and flame.

XI

Love saw the emissary eglantine  
Break wave round thy white feet above the gloom;  
Lay finger on thy star; thy raiment line  
With cherub wing and limb; wed thy soft bloom,  
Gold-quivering like sunrays in thistle-down,  
Earth under rolling brown.

XII

They do not look through love to look on thee,  
Grave heavenliness! nor know they joy of sight,  
Who deem the wave of rapt desire must be  
Its wrecking and last issue of delight.  
Dead seasons quicken in one petal-spot  
Of colour unforgot.

XIII

This way have men come out of brutishness  
To spell the letters of the sky and read  
A reflex upon earth else meaningless.  
With thee, O fount of the Untimed! to lead,  
Drink they of thee, thee eyeing, they unaged  
Shall on through brave wars waged.

XIV

More gardens will they win than any lost;  
The vile plucked out of them, the unlovely slain.  
Not forfeiting the beast with which they are crossed,  
To stature of the Gods will they attain.

They shall uplift their Earth to meet her Lord,  
Themselves the attuning chord!

XV

The song had ceased; my vision with the song.  
Then of those Shadows, which one made descent  
Beside me I knew not: but Life ere long  
Came on me in the public ways and bent  
Eyes deeper than of old: Death met I too,  
And saw the dawn glow through.

George Meredith

# Hypnos On Ida

[Iliad, B. XIV. V. 283]

They then to fountain-abundant Ida, mother of wild beasts,  
Came, and they first left ocean to fare over mainland at Lektos,  
Where underneath of their feet waved loftiest growths of the woodland.  
There hung Hypnos fast, ere the vision of Zeus was observant,  
Mounted upon a tall pine-tree, tallest of pines that on Ida  
Lustily spring off soil for the shoot up aloft into aether.  
There did he sit well-cloaked by the wide-branched pine for concealment,  
That loud bird, in his form like, that perched high up in the mountains,  
Chalkis is named by the Gods, but of mortals known as Kymindis.

George Meredith

## Il Y A Cent Ans

That march of the funereal Past behold;  
How Glory sat on Bondage for its throne;  
How men, like dazzled insects, through the mould  
Still worked their way, and bled to keep their own.

We know them, as they strove and wrought and yearned;  
Their hopes, their fears; what page of Life they wist:  
At whiles their vision upon us was turned,  
Baffled by shapes limmed loosely on thick mist.

Beneath the fortress bulk of Power they bent  
Blunt heads, adoring or in shackled hate,  
All save the rebel hymned him; and it meant  
A world submitting to incarnate Fate.

From this he drew fresh appetite for sway,  
And of it fell: whereat was chorus raised,  
How surely shall a mad ambition pay  
Dues to Humanity, erewhile amazed.

'Twas dreamed by some the deluge would ensue,  
So trembling was the tension long constrained;  
A spirit of faith was in the chosen few,  
That steps to the millennium had been gained.

But mainly the rich business of the hour,  
Their sight, made blind by urgency of blood,  
Embraced; and facts, the passing sweet or sour,  
To them were solid things that nought withstood.

Their facts are going headlong on the tides,  
Like commas on a line of History's page;  
Nor that which once they took for Truth abides,  
Save in the form of youth enlarged from age.

Meantime give ear to woodland notes around,  
Look on our Earth full-breasted to our sun:  
So was it when their poets heard the sound,  
Beheld the scene: in them our days are one.

What figures will be shown the century hence?  
What lands intact? We do but know that Power  
From piety divorced, though seen immense,  
Shall sink on envy of the humblest flower.

Our cry for cradled Peace, while men are still  
The three-parts brute which smothers the divine,  
Heaven answers: Guard it with forethoughtful will,  
Or buy it; all your gains from War resign.

A land, not indefensibly alarmed,  
May see, unwarned by hint of friendly gods,  
Between a hermit crab at all points armed,  
And one without a shell, decisive odds.

George Meredith

# Internal Harmony

Assured of worthiness we do not dread  
Competitors; we rather give them hail  
And greeting in the lists where we may fail:  
Must, if we bear an aim beyond the head!  
My betters are my masters: purely fed  
By their sustainment I likewise shall scale  
Some rocky steps between the mount and vale;  
Meanwhile the mark I have and I will wed.  
So that I draw the breath of finer air,  
Station is nought, nor footways laurel-strewn,  
Nor rivals tightly belted for the race.  
Good speed to them! My place is here or there;  
My pride is that among them I have place:  
And thus I keep this instrument in tune.

George Meredith



# Invitation To The Country

Now 'tis Spring on wood and wold,  
Early Spring that shivers with cold,  
But gladdens, and gathers, day by day,  
A lovelier hue, a warmer ray,  
A sweeter song, a dearer ditty;  
Ouzel and throstle, new-mated and gay,  
Singing their bridals on every spray -  
Oh, hear them, deep in the songless City!  
Cast off the yoke of toil and smoke,  
As Spring is casting winter's grey,  
As serpents cast their skins away:  
And come, for the Country awaits thee with pity  
And longs to bathe thee in her delight,  
And take a new joy in thy kindling sight;  
And I no less, by day and night,  
Long for thy coming, and watch for, and wait thee,  
And wonder what duties can thus berate thee.

Dry-fruited firs are dropping their cones,  
And vista'd avenues of pines  
Take richer green, give fresher tones,  
As morn after morn the glad sun shines.

Primrose tufts peep over the brooks,  
Fair faces amid moist decay!  
The rivulets run with the dead leaves at play,  
The leafless elms are alive with the rooks.

Over the meadows the cowslips are springing,  
The marshes are thick with king-cup gold,  
Clear is the cry of the lambs in the fold,  
The skylark is singing, and singing, and singing.

Soon comes the cuckoo when April is fair,  
And her blue eye the brighter the more it may weep:  
The frog and the butterfly wake from their sleep,  
Each to its element, water and air.

Mist hangs still on every hill,

And curls up the valleys at eve; but noon  
Is fullest of Spring; and at midnight the moon  
Gives her westering throne to Orion's bright zone,  
As he slopes o'er the darkened world's repose;  
And a lustre in eastern Sirius glows.

Come, in the season of opening buds;  
Come, and molest not the otter that whistles  
Unlit by the moon, 'mid the wet winter bristles  
Of willow, half-drowned in the fattening floods.  
Let him catch his cold fish without fear of a gun,  
And the stars shall shield him, and thou wilt shun!  
And every little bird under the sun  
Shall know that the bounty of Spring doth dwell  
In the winds that blow, in the waters that run,  
And in the breast of man as well.

George Meredith

# Ireland

Fire in her ashes Ireland feels  
And in her veins a glow of heat.  
To her the lost old time, appeals  
For resurrection, good to greet:  
Not as a shape with spectral eyes,  
But humanly maternal, young  
In all that quickens pride, and wise  
To speak the best her bards have sung.

You read her as a land distraught,  
Where bitterest rebel passions seethe.  
Look with a core of heart in thought,  
For so is known the truth beneath.  
She came to you a loathing bride,  
And it has been no happy bed.  
Believe in her as friend, allied  
By bonds as close as those who wed.

Her speech is held for hatred's cry;  
Her silence tells of treason hid:  
Were it her aim to burst the tie,  
She sees what iron laws forbid.  
Excess of heart obscures from view  
A head as keen as yours to count.  
Trust her, that she may prove her true  
In links whereof is love the fount.

May she not call herself her own?  
That is her cry, and thence her spits  
Of fury, thence her graceless tone  
At justice given in bits and bits.  
The limbs once raw with gnawing chains  
Will fret at silken when God's beams  
Of Freedom beckon o'er the plains  
From mounts that show it more than dreams.

She, generous, craves your generous dole;  
That will not rouse the crack of doom.  
It ends the blundering past control

Simply to give her elbow-room.  
Her offspring feels they are a race,  
To be a nation is their claim;  
Yet stronger bound in your embrace  
Than when the tie was but a name.

A nation she, and formed to charm,  
With heart for heart and hands all round.  
No longer England's broken arm,  
Would England know where strength is found.  
And strength to-day is England's need;  
To-morrow it may be for both  
Salvation: heed the portents, heed  
The warnings; free the mind from sloth.

Too long the pair have danced in mud,  
With no advance from sun to sun.  
Ah, what a bounding course of blood  
Has England with an Ireland one!  
Behold yon shadow cross the downs,  
And off away to yeasty seas.  
Lightly will fly old rancour's frowns  
When solid with high heart stand these.

George Meredith

## Islet The Dachs

Our Islet out of Helgoland, dismissed  
From his quaint tenement, quits hates and loves.  
There lived with us a wagging humourist  
In that hound's arch dwarf-legged on boxing-gloves.

George Meredith

## J. C. M.

A fountain of our sweetest, quick to spring  
In fellowship abounding, here subsides:  
And never passage of a cloud on wing  
To gladden blue forgets him; near he hides.

George Meredith

# John Lackland

A wicked man is bad enough on earth;  
But O the baleful lustre of a chief  
Once pledged in tyranny! O star of dearth  
Darkly illumining a nation's grief!  
How many men have worn thee on their brows!  
Alas for them and us! God's precious gift  
Of gracious dispensation got by theft -  
The damning form of false unholy vows!  
The thief of God and man must have his fee:  
And thou, John Lackland, despicable prince -  
Basest of England's banes before or since!  
Thrice traitor, coward, thief! O thou shalt be  
The historic warning, trampled and abhorr'd  
Who dared to steal and stain the symbols of the Lord!

George Meredith

# Joy Is Fleet

Joy is fleet,  
Sorrow slow.  
Love, so sweet,  
Sorrow will sow.  
Love, that has flown  
Ere day's decline,  
Love to have known,  
Sorrow, be mine!

George Meredith



# Juggling Jerry

Pitch here the tent, while the old horse grazes:  
By the old hedge-side we'll halt a stage.  
It's nigh my last above the daisies:  
My next leaf'll be man's blank page.  
Yes, my old girl! and it's no use crying:  
Juggler, constable, king, must bow.  
One that outjuggles all's been spying  
Long to have me, and he has me now.

We've travelled times to this old common:  
Often we've hung our pots in the gorse.  
We've had a stirring life, old woman!  
You, and I, and the old grey horse.  
Races, and fairs, and royal occasions,  
Found us coming to their call:  
Now they'll miss us at our stations:  
There's a Juggler outjuggles all!

Up goes the lark, as if all were jolly!  
Over the duck-pond the willow shakes.  
Easy to think that grieving's folly,  
When the hand's firm as driven stakes!  
Ay, when we're strong, and braced, and manful,  
Life's a sweet fiddle: but we're a batch  
Born to become the Great Juggler's han'ful:  
Balls he shies up, and is safe to catch.

Here's where the lads of the village cricket:  
I was a lad not wide from here:  
Couldn't I whip off the bale from the wicket?  
Like an old world those days appear!  
Donkey, sheep, geese, and thatch'd ale-house--I know them!  
They are old friends of my halts, and seem,  
Somehow, as if kind thanks I owe them:  
Juggling don't hinder the heart's esteem.

Juggling's no sin, for we must have victual:  
Nature allows us to bait for the fool.  
Holding one's own makes us juggle no little;

But, to increase it, hard juggling's the rule.  
You that are sneering at my profession,  
Haven't you juggled a vast amount?  
There's the Prime Minister, in one Session,  
Juggles more games than my sins'll count.

I've murdered insects with mock thunder:  
Conscience, for that, in men don't quail.  
I've made bread from the bump of wonder:  
That's my business, and there's my tale.  
Fashion and rank all praised the professor:  
Ay! and I've had my smile from the Queen:  
Bravo, Jerry! she meant: God bless her!  
Ain't this a sermon on that scene?

I've studied men from my topsy-turvy  
Close, and, I reckon, rather true.  
Some are fine fellows: some, right scurvy:  
Most, a dash between the two.  
But it's a woman, old girl, that makes me  
Think more kindly of the race:  
And it's a woman, old girl, that shakes me  
When the Great Juggler I must face.

We two were married, due and legal:  
Honest we've lived since we've been one.  
Lord! I could then jump like an eagle:  
You danced bright as a bit o' the sun.  
Birds in a May-bush we were! right merry!  
All night we kiss'd, we juggled all day.  
Joy was the heart of Juggling Jerry!  
Now from his old girl he's juggled away.

It's past parsons to console us:  
No, nor no doctor fetch for me:  
I can die without my bolus;  
Two of a trade, lass, never agree!  
Parson and Doctor!--don't they love rarely  
Fighting the devil in other men's fields!  
Stand up yourself and match him fairly:  
Then see how the rascal yields!

I, lass, have lived no gipsy, flaunting  
Finery while his poor helpmate grubs:  
Coin I've stored, and you won't be wanting:  
You shan't beg from the troughs and tubs.  
Nobly you've stuck to me, though in his kitchen  
Many a Marquis would hail you Cook!  
Palaces you could have ruled and grown rich in,  
But your old Jerry you never forsook.

Hand up the chirper! ripe ale winks in it;  
Let's have comfort and be at peace.  
Once a stout draught made me light as a linnet.  
Cheer up! the Lord must have his lease.  
May be--for none see in that black hollow--  
It's just a place where we're held in pawn,  
And, when the Great Juggler makes as to swallow,  
It's just the sword-trick--I ain't quite gone!

Yonder came smells of the gorse, so nutty,  
Gold-like and warm: it's the prime of May.  
Better than mortar, brick and putty  
Is God's house on a blowing day.  
Lean me more up the mound; now I feel it:  
All the old heath-smells! Ain't it strange?  
There's the world laughing, as if to conceal it,  
But He's by us, juggling the change.

I mind it well, by the sea-beach lying,  
Once--it's long gone--when two gulls we beheld,  
Which, as the moon got up, were flying  
Down a big wave that sparked and swell'd.  
Crack, went a gun: one fell: the second  
Wheeled round him twice, and was off for new luck:  
There in the dark her white wing beckon'd:--  
Drop me a kiss--I'm the bird dead-struck!

George Meredith

# July

I

Blue July, bright July,  
Month of storms and gorgeous blue;  
Violet lightnings o'er thy sky,  
Heavy falls of drenching dew;  
Summer crown! o'er glen and glade  
Shrinking hyacinths in their shade;  
I welcome thee with all thy pride,  
I love thee like an Eastern bride.  
Though all the singing days are done  
As in those climes that clasp the sun;  
Though the cuckoo in his throat  
Leaves to the dove his last twin note;  
Come to me with thy lustrous eye,  
Golden-dawning oriently,  
Come with all thy shining blooms,  
Thy rich red rose and rolling glooms.  
Though the cuckoo doth but sing 'cuk, cuk,'  
And the dove alone doth coo;  
Though the cushat spins her coo-r-roo, r-r-roo -  
To the cuckoo's halting 'cuk.'

II

Sweet July, warm July!  
Month when mosses near the stream,  
Soft green mosses thick and shy,  
Are a rapture and a dream.  
Summer Queen! whose foot the fern  
Fades beneath while chestnuts burn;  
I welcome thee with thy fierce love,  
Gloom below and gleam above.  
Though all the forest trees hang dumb,  
With dense leafiness o'ercome;  
Though the nightingale and thrush,  
Pipe not from the bough or bush;  
Come to me with thy lustrous eye,  
Azure-melting westerly,  
The raptures of thy face unfold,

And welcome in thy robes of gold!  
Tho' the nightingale broods-'sweet-chuck-sweet' -  
And the ouzel flutes so chill,  
Tho' the throstle gives but one shrilly trill  
To the nightingale's 'sweet-sweet.'

George Meredith

# Jump-To-Glory Jane

## I

A revelation came on Jane,  
The widow of a labouring swain:  
And first her body trembled sharp,  
Then all the woman was a harp  
With winds along the strings; she heard,  
Though there was neither tone nor word.

## II

For past our hearing was the air,  
Beyond our speaking what it bare,  
And she within herself had sight  
Of heaven at work to cleanse outright,  
To make of her a mansion fit  
For angel hosts inside to sit.

## III

They entered, and forthwith entranced,  
Her body braced, her members danced;  
Surprisingly the woman leapt;  
And countenance composed she kept:  
As gossip neighbours in the lane  
Declared, who saw and pitied Jane.

## IV

These knew she had been reading books,  
The which was witnessed by her looks  
Of late: she had a mania  
For mad folk in America,  
And said for sure they led the way,  
But meat and beer were meant to stay.

## V

That she had visited a fair,

Had seen a gauzy lady there,  
Alive with tricks on legs alone,  
As good as wings, was also known:  
And longwhiles in a sullen mood,  
Before her jumping, Jane would brood.

## VI

A good knee's height, they say, she sprang;  
Her arms and feet like those who hang:  
As if afire the body sped,  
And neither pair contributed.  
She jumped in silence: she was thought  
A corpse to resurrection caught.

## VII

The villagers were mostly dazed;  
They jeered, they wondered, and they praised.  
'Twas guessed by some she was inspired,  
And some would have it she had hired  
An engine in her petticoats,  
To turn their wits and win their votes.

## VIII

Her first was Winny Earnes, a kind  
Of woman not to dance inclined;  
But she went up, entirely won,  
Ere Jump-to-glory Jane had done;  
And once a vixen wild for speech,  
She found the better way to preach.

## IX

No long time after, Jane was seen  
Directing jumps at Daddy Green;  
And that old man, to watch her fly,  
Had eyebrows made of arches high;  
Till homeward he likewise did hop,  
Oft calling on himself to stop!

X

It was a scene when man and maid,  
Abandoning all other trade,  
And careless of the call to meals,  
Went jumping at the woman's heels.  
By dozens they were counted soon,  
Without a sound to tell their tune.

XI

Along the roads they came, and crossed  
The fields, and o'er the hills were lost,  
And in the evening reappeared;  
Then short like hobbled horses reared,  
And down upon the grass they plumped:  
Alone their Jane to glory jumped.

XII

At morn they rose, to see her spring  
All going as an engine thing;  
And lighter than the gossamer  
She led the bobbars following her,  
Past old acquaintances, and where  
They made the stranger stupid stare.

XIII

When turnips were a filling crop,  
In scorn they jumped a butcher's shop:  
Or, spite of threats to flog and souse,  
They jumped for shame a public-house:  
And much their legs were seized with rage  
If passing by the vicarage.

XIV

The tightness of a hempen rope  
Their bodies got; but laundry soap  
Not handsomer can rub the skin  
For token of the washed within.



Occasionally coughers cast  
A leg aloft and coughed their last.

XV

The weaker maids and some old men,  
Requiring rafters for the pen  
On rainy nights, were those who fell.  
The rest were quite a miracle,  
Refreshed as you may search all round  
On Club-feast days and cry, Not found!

XVI

For these poor innocents, that slept  
Against the sky, soft women wept:  
For never did they any theft;  
'Twas known when they their camping left,  
And jumped the cold out of their rags;  
In spirit rich as money-bags.

XVII

They jumped the question, jumped reply;  
And whether to insist, deny,  
Reprove, persuade, they jumped in ranks  
Or singly, straight the arms to flanks,  
And straight the legs, with just a knee  
For bending in a mild degree.

XVIII

The villagers might call them mad;  
An endless holiday they had,  
Of pleasure in a serious work:  
They taugt by leaps where perils lurk,  
And with the lambkins practised sports  
For 'scaping Satan's pounds and quarts.

XIX

It really seemed on certain days,

When they bobbed up their Lord to praise,  
And bobbing up they caught the glance  
Of light, our secret is to dance,  
And hold the tongue from hindering peace;  
To dance out preacher and police.

XX

Those flies of boys disturbed them sore  
On Sundays and when daylight wore:  
With withies cut from hedge or copse,  
They treated them as whipping-tops,  
And flung big stones with cruel aim;  
Yet all the flock jumped on the same.

XXI

For what could persecution do  
To worry such a blessed crew,  
On whom it was as wind to fire,  
Which set them always jumping higher?  
The parson and the lawyer tried,  
By meek persistency defied.

XXII

But if they bore, they could pursue  
As well, and this the Bishop too;  
When inner warnings proved him plain  
The chase for Jump-to-glory Jane.  
She knew it by his being sent  
To bless the feasting in the tent.

XXIII

Not less than fifty years on end,  
The Squire had been the Bishop's friend:  
And his poor tenants, harmless ones,  
With souls to save! fed not on buns,  
But angry meats: she took her place  
Outside to show the way to grace.

#### XXIV

In apron suit the Bishop stood;  
The crowding people kindly viewed.  
A gaunt grey woman he saw rise  
On air, with most beseeching eyes:  
And evident as light in dark  
It was, she set to him for mark.

#### XXV

Her highest leap had come: with ease  
She jumped to reach the Bishop's knees:  
Compressing tight her arms and lips,  
She sought to jump the Bishop's hips:  
Her aim flew at his apron-band,  
That he might see and understand.

#### XXVI

The mild inquiry of his gaze  
Was altered to a peaked amaze,  
At sight of thirty in ascent,  
To gain his notice clearly bent:  
And greatly Jane at heart was vexed  
By his ploughed look of mind perplexed.

#### XXVII

In jumps that said, Beware the pit!  
More eloquent than speaking it -  
That said, Avoid the boiled, the roast;  
The heated nose on face of ghost,  
Which comes of drinking: up and o'er  
The flesh with me! did Jane implore.

#### XXVIII

She jumped him high as huntsmen go  
Across the gate; she jumped him low,  
To coax him to begin and feel  
His infant steps returning, peel

His mortal pride, exposing fruit,  
And off with hat and apron suit.

XXIX

We need much patience, well she knew,  
And out and out, and through and through,  
When we would gentlefolk address,  
However we may seek to bless:  
At times they hide them like the beasts  
From sacred beams; and mostly priests.

XXX

He gave no sign of making bare,  
Nor she of faintness or despair.  
Inflamed with hope that she might win,  
If she but coaxed him to begin,  
She used all arts for making fain;  
The mother with her babe was Jane.

XXXI

Now stamped the Squire, and knowing not  
Her business, waved her from the spot.  
Encircled by the men of might,  
The head of Jane, like flickering light,  
As in a charger, they beheld  
Ere she was from the park expelled.

XXXII

Her grief, in jumps of earthly weight,  
Did Jane around communicate:  
For that the moment when began  
The holy but mistaken man,  
In view of light, to take his lift,  
They cut him from her charm adrift!

XXXIII

And he was lost: a banished face

For ever from the ways of grace,  
Unless pinched hard by dreams in fright.  
They saw the Bishop's wavering sprite  
Within her look, at come and go,  
Long after he had caused her woe.

XXXIV

Her greying eyes (until she sank  
At Fredsham on the wayside bank,  
Like cinder heaps that whitened lie  
From coals that shot the flame to sky)  
Had glassy vacancies, which yearned  
For one in memory discerned.

XXXV

May those who ply the tongue that cheats,  
And those who rush to beer and meats,  
And those whose mean ambition aims  
At palaces and titled names,  
Depart in such a cheerful strain  
As did our Jump-to-glory Jane!

XXXVI

Her end was beautiful: one sigh.  
She jumped a foot when it was nigh.  
A lily in a linen clout  
She looked when they had laid her out.  
It is a lily-light she bears  
For England up the ladder-stairs.

George Meredith

# King Harald's Trance

I

Sword in length a reaping-hook amain  
Harald sheared his field, blood up to shank:  
'Mid the swathes of slain,  
First at moonrise drank.

II

Thereof hunger, as for meats the knife,  
Pricked his ribs, in one sharp spur to reach  
Home and his young wife,  
Nigh the sea-ford beach.

III

After battle keen to feed was he:  
Smoking flesh the thresher washed down fast,  
Like an angry sea  
Ships from keel to mast.

IV

Name us glory, singer, name us pride  
Matching Harald's in his deeds of strength;  
Chiefs, wife, sword by side,  
Foemen stretched their length!

V

Half a winter night the toasts hurrahed,  
Crowned him, clothed him, trumpeted him high,  
Till awink he bade  
Wife to chamber fly.

VI

Twice the sun had mounted, twice had sunk,  
Ere his ears took sound; he lay for dead;

Mountain on his trunk,  
Ocean on his head.

## VII

Clamped to couch, his fiery hearing sucked  
Whispers that at heart made iron-clang:  
Here fool-women clucked,  
There men held harangue.

## VIII

Burial to fit their lord of war  
They decreed him: hailed the kingling: ha!  
Hateful! but this Thor  
Failed a weak lamb's baa.

## IX

King they hailed a branchlet, shaped to fare,  
Weighted so, like quaking shingle spume,  
When his blood's own heir  
Ripened in the womb!

## X

Still he heard, and doglike, hoglike, ran  
Nose of hearing till his blind sight saw:  
Woman stood with man  
Mouthing low, at paw.

## XI

Woman, man, they mouthed; they spake a thing  
Armed to split a mountain, sunder seas:  
Still the frozen king  
Lay and felt him freeze.

## XII

Doglike, hoglike, horselike now he raced,  
Riderless, in ghost across a ground

Flint of breast, blank-faced,  
Past the fleshly bound.

XIII

Smell of brine his nostrils filled with might:  
Nostrils quickened eyelids, eyelids hand:  
Hand for sword at right  
Groped, the great haft spanned.

XIV

Wonder struck to ice his people's eyes:  
Him they saw, the prone upon the bier,  
Sheer from backbone rise,  
Sword uplifting peer.

XV

Sitting did he breathe against the blade,  
Standing kiss it for that proof of life:  
Strode, as netters wade,  
Straightway to his wife.

XVI

Her he eyed: his judgement was one word,  
Foulbed! and she fell: the blow clove two.  
Fearful for the third,  
All their breath indrew.

XVII

Morning danced along the waves to beach;  
Dumb his chiefs fetched breath for what might hap:  
Glassily on each  
Stared the iron cap.

XVIII

Sudden, as it were a monster oak  
Split to yield a limb by stress of heat,



Strained he, staggered, broke  
Doubled at their feet.

George Meredith

# Lines To A Friend Visiting America

I

Now farewell to you! you are  
One of my dearest, whom I trust:  
Now follow you the Western star,  
And cast the old world off as dust.

II

From many friends adieu! adieu!  
The quick heart of the word therein.  
Much that we hope for hangs with you:  
We lose you, but we lose to win.

III

The beggar-king, November, frets:  
His tatters rich with Indian dyes  
Goes hugging: we our season's debts  
Pay calmly, of the Spring forewise.

IV

We send our worthiest; can no less,  
If we would now be read aright, -  
To that great people who may bless  
Or curse mankind: they have the might.

V

The proudest seasons find their graves,  
And we, who would not be wooed, must court.  
We have let the blunderers and the waves  
Divide us, and the devil had sport.

VI

The blunderers and the waves no more  
Shall sever kindred sending forth

Their worthiest from shore to shore  
For welcome, bent to prove their worth.

VII

Go you and such as you afloat,  
Our lost kinsfellowship to revive.  
The battle of the antidote  
Is tough, though silent: may you thrive!

VIII

I, when in this North wind I see  
The straining red woods blown awry,  
Feel shuddering like the winter tree,  
All vein and artery on cold sky.

IX

The leaf that clothed me is torn away;  
My friend is as a flying seed.  
Ay, true; to bring replenished day  
Light ebbs, but I am bare, and bleed.

X

What husky habitations seem  
These comfortable sayings! they fell,  
In some rich year become a dream:-  
So cries my heart, the infidel! . . .

XI

Oh! for the strenuous mind in quest,  
Arabian visions could not vie  
With those broad wonders of the West,  
And would I bid you stay? Not I!

XII

The strange experimental land  
Where men continually dare take

Niagara leaps;--unshattered stand  
'Twixt fall and fall;--for conscience' sake,

XIII

Drive onward like a flood's increase; -  
Fresh rapids and abysses engage; -  
(We live--we die) scorn fireside peace,  
And, as a garment, put on rage,

XIV

Rather than bear God's reprimand,  
By rearing on a full fat soil  
Concrete of sin and sloth;--this land,  
You will observe it coil in coil.

XV

The land has been discover'd long,  
The people we have yet to know;  
Themselves they know not, save that strong  
For good and evil still they grow.

XVI

Nor know they us. Yea, well enough  
In that inveterate machine  
Through which we speak the printed stuff  
Daily, with voice most hugeous, mien

XVII

Tremendous:- as a lion's show  
The grand menagerie paintings hide:  
Hear the drum beat, the trombones blow!  
The poor old Lion lies inside! . . .

XVIII

It is not England that they hear,  
But mighty Mammon's pipers, trained

To trumpet out his moods, and stir  
His sluggish soul: HER voice is chained:

XIX

Almost her spirit seems moribund!  
O teach them, 'tis not she displays  
The panic of a purse rotund,  
Eternal dread of evil days, -

XX

That haunting spectre of success  
Which shows a heart sunk low in the girths:  
Not England answers nobleness, -  
'Live for thyself: thou art not earth's.'

XXI

Not she, when struggling manhood tries  
For freedom, air, a hopefuller fate,  
Points out the planet, Compromise,  
And shakes a mild reproving pate:

XXII

Says never: 'I am well at ease,  
My sneers upon the weak I shed:  
The strong have my cajoleries:  
And those beneath my feet I tread.'

XXIII

Nay, but 'tis said for her, great Lord!  
The misery's there! The shameless one  
Adjures mankind to sheathe the sword,  
Herself not yielding what it won:-

XXIV

Her sermon at cock-crow doth preach,  
On sweet Prosperity--or greed.

'Lo! as the beasts feed, each for each,  
God's blessings let us take, and feed!'

XXV

Ungrateful creatures crave a part -  
She tells them firmly she is full;  
Lost sheared sheep hurt her tender heart  
With bleating, stops her ears with wool:-

XXVI

Seized sometimes by prodigious qualms  
(Nightmares of bankruptcy and death), -  
Showers down in lumps a load of alms,  
Then pants as one who has lost a breath;

XXVII

Believes high heaven, whence favours flow,  
Too kind to ask a sacrifice  
For what it specially doth bestow; -  
Gives SHE, 'tis generous, cheese to mice.

XXVIII

She saw the young Dominion strip  
For battle with a grievous wrong,  
And curled a noble Norman lip,  
And looked with half an eye sidelong;

XXIX

And in stout Saxon wrote her sneers,  
Denounced the waste of blood and coin,  
Implored the combatants, with tears,  
Never to think they could rejoin.

XXX

Oh! was it England that, alas!  
Turned sharp the victor to cajole?

Behold her features in the glass:  
A monstrous semblance mocks her soul!

XXXI

A false majority, by stealth,  
Have got her fast, and sway the rod:  
A headless tyrant built of wealth,  
The hypocrite, the belly-God.

XXXII

To him the daily hymns they raise:  
His tastes are sought: his will is done:  
He sniffs the putrid steam of praise,  
Place for true England here is none!

XXXIII

But can a distant race discern  
The difference 'twixt her and him?  
My friend, that will you bid them learn.  
He shames and binds her, head and limb.

XXXIV

Old wood has blossoms of this sort.  
Though sound at core, she is old wood.  
If freemen hate her, one retort  
She has; but one!--'You are my blood.'

XXXV

A poet, half a prophet, rose  
In recent days, and called for power.  
I love him; but his mountain prose -  
His Alp and valley and wild flower -

XXXVI

Proclaimed our weakness, not its source.  
What medicine for disease had he?

Whom summoned for a show of force?  
Our titular aristocracy!

XXXVII

Why, these are great at City feasts;  
From City riches mainly rise:  
'Tis well to hear them, when the beasts  
That die for us they eulogize!

XXXVIII

But these, of all the liveried crew  
Obeisant in Mammon's walk,  
Most deferent ply the facial screw,  
The spinal bend, submissive talk.

XXXIX

Small fear that they will run to books  
(At least the better form of seed)!  
I, too, have hoped from their good looks,  
And fables of their Northman breed; -

XL

Have hoped that they the land would head  
In acts magnanimous; but, lo,  
When fainting heroes beg for bread  
They frown: where they are driven they go.

XLI

Good health, my friend! and may your lot  
Be cheerful o'er the Western rounds.  
This butter-woman's market-trot  
Of verse is passing market-bounds.

XLII

Adieu! the sun sets; he is gone.  
On banks of fog faint lines extend:



Adieu! bring back a braver dawn  
To England, and to me my friend.

George Meredith

# London By Lamplight

There stands a singer in the street,  
He has an audience motley and meet;  
Above him lowers the London night,  
And around the lamps are flaring bright.

His minstrelsy may be unchaste -  
'Tis much unto that motley taste,  
And loud the laughter he provokes  
From those sad slaves of obscene jokes.

But woe is many a passer by  
Who as he goes turns half an eye,  
To see the human form divine  
Thus Circe-wise changed into swine!

Make up the sum of either sex  
That all our human hopes perplex,  
With those unhappy shapes that know  
The silent streets and pale cock-crow.

And can I trace in such dull eyes  
Of fireside peace or country skies?  
And could those haggard cheeks presume  
To memories of a May-tide bloom?

Those violated forms have been  
The pride of many a flowering green;  
And still the virgin bosom heaves  
With daisy meads and dewy leaves.

But stygian darkness reigns within  
The river of death from the founts of sin;  
And one prophetic water rolls  
Its gas-lit surface for their souls.

I will not hide the tragic sight -  
Those drown'd black locks, those dead lips white,  
Will rise from out the slimy flood,  
And cry before God's throne for blood!

Those stiffened limbs, that swollen face, -  
Pollution's last and best embrace,  
Will call, as such a picture can,  
For retribution upon man.

Hark! how their feeble laughter rings,  
While still the ballad-monger sings,  
And flatters their unhappy breasts  
With poisonous words and pungent jests.

O how would every daisy blush  
To see them 'mid that earthy crush!  
O dumb would be the evening thrush,  
And hoary look the hawthorn bush!

The meadows of their infancy  
Would shrink from them, and every tree,  
And every little laughing spot,  
Would hush itself and know them not.

Precursor to what black despairs  
Was that child's face which once was theirs!  
And O to what a world of guile  
Was herald that young angel smile!

That face which to a father's eye  
Was balm for all anxiety;  
That smile which to a mother's heart  
Went swifter than the swallow's dart!

O happy homes! that still they know  
At intervals, with what a woe  
Would ye look on them, dim and strange,  
Suffering worse than winter change!

And yet could I transplant them there,  
To breathe again the innocent air  
Of youth, and once more reconcile  
Their outcast looks with nature's smile;

Could I but give them one clear day

Of this delicious loving May,  
Release their souls from anguish dark,  
And stand them underneath the lark; -

I think that Nature would have power  
To graft again her blighted flower  
Upon the broken stem, renew  
Some portion of its early hue; -

The heavy flood of tears unlock,  
More precious than the Scriptured rock;  
At least instil a happier mood,  
And bring them back to womanhood.

Alas! how many lost ones claim  
This refuge from despair and shame!  
How many, longing for the light,  
Sink deeper in the abyss this night!

O, crying sin! O, blushing thought!  
Not only unto those that wrought  
The misery and deadly blight;  
But those that outcast them this night!

O, agony of grief! for who  
Less dainty than his race, will do  
Such battle for their human right,  
As shall awake this startled night?

Proclaim this evil human page  
Will ever blot the Golden Age  
That poets dream and saints invite,  
If it be unredeemed this night?

This night of deep solemnity,  
And verdurous serenity,  
While over every fleecy field  
The dews descend and odours yield.

This night of gleaming floods and falls,  
Of forest glooms and sylvan calls,  
Of starlight on the pebbly rills,

And twilight on the circling hills.

This night! when from the paths of men  
Grey error steams as from a fen;  
As o'er this flaring City wreathes  
The black cloud-vapour that it breathes!

This night from which a morn will spring  
Blooming on its orient wing;  
A morn to roll with many more  
Its ghostly foam on the twilight shore.

Morn! when the fate of all mankind  
Hangs poised in doubt, and man is blind.  
His duties of the day will seem  
The fact of life, and mine the dream:

The destinies that bards have sung,  
Regeneration to the young,  
Reverberation of the truth,  
And virtuous culture unto youth!

Youth! in whose season let abound  
All flowers and fruits that strew the ground,  
Voluptuous joy where love consents,  
And health and pleasure pitch their tents:

All rapture and all pure delight;  
A garden all unknown to blight;  
But never the unnatural sight  
That throngs the shameless song this night!

George Meredith

# Love In The Valley

Under yonder beech-tree single on the green-sward,  
Couched with her arms behind her golden head,  
Knees and tresses folded to slip and ripple idly,  
Lies my young love sleeping in the shade.  
Had I the heart to slide an arm beneath her,  
Press her parting lips as her waist I gather slow,  
Waking in amazement she could not but embrace me:  
Then would she hold me and never let me go?

Shy as the squirrel and wayward as the swallow,  
Swift as the swallow along the river's light  
Circling the surface to meet his mirrored winglets,  
Fleeter she seems in her stay than in her flight.  
Shy as the squirrel that leaps among the pine-tops,  
Wayward as the swallow overhead at set of sun,  
She whom I love is hard to catch and conquer,  
Hard, but O the glory of the winning were she won!

When her mother tends her before the laughing mirror,  
Tying up her laces, looping up her hair,  
Often she thinks, were this wild thing wedded,  
More love should I have, and much less care.  
When her mother tends her before the lighted mirror,  
Loosening her laces, combing down her curls,  
Often she thinks, were this wild thing wedded,  
I should miss but one for many boys and girls.

Heartless she is as the shadow in the meadows  
Flying to the hills on a blue and breezy noon.  
No, she is athirst and drinking up her wonder:  
Earth to her is young as the slip of the new moon.  
Deals she an unkindness, 'tis but her rapid measure,  
Even as in a dance; and her smile can heal no less:  
Like the swinging May-cloud that pelts the flowers with hailstones  
Off a sunny border, she was made to bruise and bless.

Lovely are the curves of the white owl sweeping  
Wavy in the dusk lit by one large star.  
Lone on the fir-branch, his rattle-note unvaried,

Brooding o'er the gloom, spins the brown eve-jar.  
Darker grows the valley, more and more forgetting:  
So were it with me if forgetting could be willed.  
Tell the grassy hollow that holds the bubbling well-spring,  
Tell it to forget the source that keeps it filled.

Stepping down the hill with her fair companions,  
Arm in arm, all against the raying West  
Boldly she sings, to the merry tune she marches,  
Brave in her shape, and sweeter unpossessed.  
Sweeter, for she is what my heart first awaking  
Whispered the world was; morning light is she.  
Love that so desires would fain keep her changeless;  
Fain would fling the net, and fain have her free.

Happy happy time, when the white star hovers  
Low over dim fields fresh with bloomy dew,  
Near the face of dawn, that draws athwart the darkness,  
Threading it with colour, as yewberries the yew.  
Thicker crowd the shades while the grave East deepens  
Glowing, and with crimson a long cloud swells.  
Maiden still the morn is; and strange she is, and secret;  
Strange her eyes; her cheeks are cold as cold sea-shells.

Sunrays, leaning on our southern hills and lighting  
Wild cloud-mountains that drag the hills along,  
Oft ends the day of your shifting brilliant laughter  
Chill as a dull face frowning on a song.  
Ay, but shows the South-West a ripple-feathered bosom  
Blown to silver while the clouds are shaken and ascend  
Scaling the mid-heavens as they stream, there comes a sunset  
Rich, deep like love in beauty without end.

When at dawn she sighs, and like an infant to the window  
Turns grave eyes craving light, released from dreams,  
Beautiful she looks, like a white water-lily  
Bursting out of bud in havens of the streams.  
When from bed she rises clothed from neck to ankle  
In her long nightgown sweet as boughs of May,  
Beautiful she looks, like a tall garden lily  
Pure from the night, and splendid for the day.

Mother of the dews, dark eye-lashed twilight,  
Low-lidded twilight, o'er the valley's brim,  
Rounding on thy breast sings the dew-delighted skylark,  
Clear as though the dewdrops had their voice in him.  
Hidden where the rose-flush drinks the rayless planet,  
Fountain-full he pours the spraying fountain-showers.  
Let me hear her laughter, I would have her ever  
Cool as dew in twilight, the lark above the flowers.

All the girls are out with their baskets for the primrose;  
Up lanes, woods through, they troop in joyful bands.  
My sweet leads: she knows not why, but now she totters,  
Eyes the bent anemones, and hangs her hands.  
Such a look will tell that the violets are peeping,  
Coming the rose: and unaware a cry  
Springs in her bosom for odours and for colour,  
Covert and the nightingale; she knows not why.

Kerchiefed head and chin she darts between her tulips,  
Streaming like a willow grey in arrowy rain:  
Some bend beaten cheek to gravel, and their angel  
She will be; she lifts them, and on she speeds again.  
Black the driving raincloud breasts the iron gateway:  
She is forth to cheer a neighbour lacking mirth.  
So when sky and grass met rolling dumb for thunder  
Saw I once a white dove, sole light of earth.

Prim little scholars are the flowers of her garden,  
Trained to stand in rows, and asking if they please.  
I might love them well but for loving more the wild ones:  
O my wild ones! they tell me more than these.  
You, my wild one, you tell of honied field-rose,  
Violet, blushing eglantine in life; and even as they,  
They by the wayside are earnest of your goodness,  
You are of life's, on the banks that line the way.

Peering at her chamber the white crowns the red rose,  
Jasmine winds the porch with stars two and three.  
Parted is the window; she sleeps; the starry jasmine  
Breathes a falling breath that carries thoughts of me.  
Sweeter unpossessed, have I said of her my sweetest?  
Not while she sleeps: while she sleeps the jasmine breathes,



Luring her to love; she sleeps; the starry jasmine  
Bears me to her pillow under white rose-wreaths.

Yellow with birdfoot-trefoil are the grass-glades;  
Yellow with cinquefoil of the dew-grey leaf;  
Yellow with stonecrop; the moss-mounds are yellow;  
Blue-necked the wheat sways, yellowing to the sheaf:  
Green-yellow bursts from the copse the laughing yaffle;  
Sharp as a sickle is the edge of shade and shine:  
Earth in her heart laughs looking at the heavens,  
Thinking of the harvest: I look and think of mine.

This I may know: her dressing and undressing  
Such a change of light shows as when the skies in sport  
Shift from cloud to moonlight; or edging over thunder  
Slips a ray of sun; or sweeping into port  
White sails furl; or on the ocean borders  
White sails lean along the waves leaping green.  
Visions of her shower before me, but from eyesight  
Guarded she would be like the sun were she seen.

Front door and back of the mossed old farmhouse  
Open with the morn, and in a breezy link  
Freshly sparkles garden to stripe-shadowed orchard,  
Green across a rill where on sand the minnows wink.  
Busy in the grass the early sun of summer  
Swarms, and the blackbird's mellow fluting notes  
Call my darling up with round and roguish challenge:  
Quaintest, richest carol of all the singing throats!

Cool was the woodside; cool as her white dairy  
Keeping sweet the cream-pan; and there the boys from school,  
Cricketing below, rushed brown and red with sunshine;  
O the dark translucence of the deep-eyed cool!  
Spying from the farm, herself she fetched a pitcher  
Full of milk, and tilted for each in turn the beak.  
Then a little fellow, mouth up and on tiptoe,  
Said, "I will kiss you": she laughed and leaned her cheek.

Doves of the fir-wood walling high our red roof  
Through the long noon coo, crooning through the coo.  
Loose droop the leaves, and down the sleepy roadway

Sometimes pipes a chaffinch; loose droops the blue.  
Cows flap a slow tail knee-deep in the river,  
Breathless, given up to sun and gnat and fly.  
Nowhere is she seen; and if I see her nowhere,  
Lightning may come, straight rains and tiger sky.

O the golden sheaf, the rustling treasure-armful!  
O the nutbrown tresses nodding interlaced!  
O the treasure-tresses one another over  
Nodding! O the girdle slack about the waist!  
Slain are the poppies that shot their random scarlet  
Quick amid the wheatears: wound about the waist,  
Gathered, see these brides of Earth one blush of ripeness!  
O the nutbrown tresses nodding interlaced!

Large and smoky red the sun's cold disk drops,  
Clipped by naked hills, on violet shaded snow:  
Eastward large and still lights up a bower of moonrise,  
Whence at her leisure steps the moon aglow.  
Nightlong on black print-branches our beech-tree  
Gazes in this whiteness: nightlong could I.  
Here may life on death or death on life be painted.  
Let me clasp her soul to know she cannot die!

Gossips count her faults; they scour a narrow chamber  
Where there is no window, read not heaven or her.  
"When she was a tiny," one aged woman quavers,  
Plucks at my heart and leads me by the ear.  
Faults she had once as she learnt to run and tumbled:  
Faults of feature some see, beauty not complete.  
Yet, good gossips, beauty that makes holy  
Earth and air, may have faults from head to feet.

Hither she comes; she comes to me; she lingers,  
Deepens her brown eyebrows, while in new surprise  
High rise the lashes in wonder of a stranger;  
Yet am I the light and living of her eyes.  
Something friends have told her fills her heart to brimming,  
Nets her in her blushes, and wounds her, and tames.--  
Sure of her haven, O like a dove alighting,  
Arms up, she dropped: our souls were in our names.

Soon will she lie like a white-frost sunrise.  
Yellow oats and brown wheat, barley pale as rye,  
Long since your sheaves have yielded to the thresher,  
Felt the girdle loosened, seen the tresses fly.  
Soon will she lie like a blood-red sunset.  
Swift with the to-morrow, green-winged Spring!  
Sing from the South-West, bring her back the truants,  
Nightingale and swallow, song and dipping wing.

Soft new beech-leaves, up to beamy April  
Spreading bough on bough a primrose mountain, you,  
Lucid in the moon, raise lilies to the skyfields,  
Youngest green transfused in silver shining through:  
Fairer than the lily, than the wild white cherry:  
Fair as in image my seraph love appears  
Borne to me by dreams when dawn is at my eyelids:  
Fair as in the flesh she swims to me on tears.

Could I find a place to be alone with heaven,  
I would speak my heart out: heaven is my need.  
Every woodland tree is flushing like the dog-wood,  
Flashing like the whitebeam, swaying like the reed.  
Flushing like the dog-wood crimson in October;  
Streaming like the flag-reed South-West blown;  
Flashing as in gusts the sudden-lighted white beam:  
All seem to know what is for heaven alone.

George Meredith

# Love Is Winged For Two

Love is winged for two,  
In the worst he weathers,  
When their hearts are tied;  
But if they divide,  
O too true!  
Cracks a globe, and feathers, feathers,  
Feathers all the ground bestrew.

I was breast of morning sea,  
Rosy plume on forest dun,  
I the laugh in rainy fleeces,  
While with me  
She made one.  
Now must we pick up our pieces,  
For that then so winged were we.

George Meredith

## Love's Grave

MARK where the pressing wind shoots javelin-like,  
Its skeleton shadow on the broad-back'd wave!  
Here is a fitting spot to dig Love's grave;  
Here where the ponderous breakers plunge and strike,  
And dart their hissing tongues high up the sand:  
In hearing of the ocean, and in sight  
Of those ribb'd wind-streaks running into white.  
If I the death of Love had deeply plann'd,  
I never could have made it half so sure,  
As by the unblest kisses which upbraid  
The full-waked sense; or failing that, degrade!  
'Tis morning: but no morning can restore  
What we have forfeited. I see no sin:  
The wrong is mix'd. In tragic life, God wot,  
No villain need be! Passions spin the plot:  
We are betray'd by what is false within.

George Meredith

# Lucifer In Starlight

On a starred night Prince Lucifer uprose.  
Tired of his dark dominion swung the fiend  
Above the rolling ball in cloud part screened,  
Where sinners hugged their spectre of repose.  
Poor prey to his hot fit of pride were those.  
And now upon his western wing he leaned,  
Now his huge bulk o'er Afric's sands careened,  
Now the black planet shadowed Arctic snows.  
Soaring through wider zones that pricked his scars  
With memory of the old revolt from Awe,  
He reached a middle height, and at the stars,  
Which are the brain of heaven, he looked, and sank.  
Around the ancient track marched, rank on rank,  
The army of unalterable law.

George Meredith

## M. M.

Who call her Mother and who calls her Wife  
Look on her grave and see not Death but Life.

George Meredith

# Manfred

## I

Projected from the bilious Childe,  
This clatterjaw his foot could set  
On Alps, without a breast beguiled  
To glow in shedding rascal sweat.  
Somewhere about his grinder teeth,  
He mouthed of thoughts that grilled beneath,  
And summoned Nature to her feud  
With bile and buskin Attitude.

## II

Considerably was the world  
Of spinsterdom and clergy racked  
While he his hinted horrors hurled,  
And she pictorially attacked.  
A duel hugeous. Tragic? Ho!  
The cities, not the mountains, blow  
Such bladders; in their shapes confessed  
An after-dinner's indigest.

George Meredith



# Margaret's Bridal Eve

I

The old grey mother she thrummed on her knee:  
There is a rose that's ready;  
And which of the handsome young men shall it be?  
There's a rose that's ready for clipping.

My daughter, come hither, come hither to me:  
There is a rose that's ready;  
Come, point me your finger on him that you see:  
There's a rose that's ready for clipping.

O mother, my mother, it never can be:  
There is a rose that's ready;  
For I shall bring shame on the man marries me:  
There's a rose that's ready for clipping.

Now let your tongue be deep as the sea:  
There is a rose that's ready;  
And the man'll jump for you, right briskly will he:  
There's a rose that's ready for clipping.

Tall Margaret wept bitterly:  
There is a rose that's ready;  
And as her parent bade did she:  
There's a rose that's ready for clipping.

O the handsome young man dropped down on his knee:  
There is a rose that's ready;  
Pale Margaret gave him her hand, woe's me!  
There's a rose that's ready for clipping.

II

O mother, my mother, this thing I must say:  
There is a rose in the garden;  
Ere he lies on the breast where that other lay:  
And the bird sings over the roses.

Now, folly, my daughter, for men are men:  
There is a rose in the garden;  
You marry them blindfold, I tell you again:  
And the bird sings over the roses.

O mother, but when he kisses me!  
There is a rose in the garden;  
My child, 'tis which shall sweetest be!  
And the bird sings over the roses.

O mother, but when I awake in the morn!  
There is a rose in the garden;  
My child, you are his, and the ring is worn:  
And the bird sings over the roses.

Tall Margaret sighed and loosened a tress:  
There is a rose in the garden;  
Poor comfort she had of her comeliness  
And the bird sings over the roses.

My mother will sink if this thing be said:  
There is a rose in the garden;  
That my first betrothed came thrice to my bed;  
And the bird sings over the roses.

He died on my shoulder the third cold night:  
There is a rose in the garden;  
I dragged his body all through the moonlight:  
And the bird sings over the roses.

But when I came by my father's door:  
There is a rose in the garden;  
I fell in a lump on the stiff dead floor:  
And the bird sings over the roses.

O neither to heaven, nor yet to hell:  
There is a rose in the garden;  
Could I follow the lover I loved so well!  
And the bird sings over the roses.

III

The bridesmaids slept in their chambers apart:  
There is a rose that's ready;  
Tall Margaret walked with her thumping heart:  
There's a rose that's ready for clipping.

The frill of her nightgown below the left breast:  
There is a rose that's ready;  
Had fall'n like a cloud of the moonlighted West:  
There's a rose that's ready for clipping.

But where the West-cloud breaks to a star:  
There is a rose that's ready;  
Pale Margaret's breast showed a winding scar:  
There's a rose that's ready for clipping.

O few are the brides with such a sign!  
There is a rose that's ready;  
Though I went mad the fault was mine:  
There's a rose that's ready for clipping.

I must speak to him under this roof to-night:  
There is a rose that's ready;  
I shall burn to death if I speak in the light:  
There's a rose that's ready for clipping.

O my breast! I must strike you a bloodier wound:  
There is a rose that's ready;  
Than when I scored you red and swooned:  
There's a rose that's ready for clipping.

I will stab my honour under his eye:  
There is a rose that's ready;  
Though I bleed to the death, I shall let out the lie:  
There's a rose that's ready for clipping.

O happy my bridesmaids! white sleep is with you!  
There is a rose that's ready;  
Had he chosen among you he might sleep too!  
There's a rose that's ready for clipping.

O happy my bridesmaids! your breasts are clean:  
There is a rose that's ready;

You carry no mark of what has been!  
There's a rose that's ready for clipping.

#### IV

An hour before the chilly beam:  
Red rose and white in the garden;  
The bridegroom started out of a dream:  
And the bird sings over the roses.

He went to the door, and there espied:  
Red rose and white in the garden;  
The figure of his silent bride:  
And the bird sings over the roses.

He went to the door, and let her in:  
Red rose and white in the garden;  
Whiter looked she than a child of sin:  
And the bird sings over the roses.

She looked so white, she looked so sweet:  
Red rose and white in the garden;  
She looked so pure he fell at her feet:  
And the bird sings over the roses.

He fell at her feet with love and awe:  
Red rose and white in the garden;  
A stainless body of light he saw:  
And the bird sings over the roses.

O Margaret, say you are not of the dead!  
Red rose and white in the garden;  
My bride! by the angels at night are you led?  
And the bird sings over the roses.

I am not led by the angels about:  
Red rose and white in the garden;  
But I have a devil within to let out:  
And the bird sings over the roses.

O Margaret! my bride and saint!  
Red rose and white in the garden;

There is on you no earthly taint:  
And the bird sings over the roses.

I am no saint, and no bride can I be:  
Red rose and white in the garden;  
Until I have opened my bosom to thee:  
And the bird sings over the roses.

To catch at her heart she laid one hand:  
Red rose and white in the garden;  
She told the tale where she did stand:  
And the bird sings over the roses.

She stood before him pale and tall:  
Red rose and white in the garden;  
Her eyes between his, she told him all:  
And the bird sings over the roses.

She saw how her body grow freckled and foul:  
Red rose and white in the garden;  
She heard from the woods the hooting owl:  
And the bird sings over the roses.

With never a quiver her mouth did speak:  
Red rose and white in the garden;  
O when she had done she stood so meek!  
And the bird sings over the roses.

The bridegroom stamped and called her vile:  
Red rose and white in the garden;  
He did but waken a little smile:  
And the bird sings over the roses.

The bridegroom raged and called her foul:  
Red rose and white in the garden;  
She heard from the woods the hooting owl:  
And the bird sings over the roses.

He muttered a name full bitter and sore:  
Red rose and white in the garden;  
She fell in a lump on the still dead floor:  
And the bird sings over the roses.

O great was the wonder, and loud the wail:  
Red rose and white in the garden;  
When through the household flew the tale:  
And the bird sings over the roses.

The old grey mother she dressed the bier:  
Red rose and white in the garden;  
With a shivering chin and never a tear:  
And the bird sings over the roses.

O had you but done as I bade you, my child!  
Red rose and white in the garden;  
You would not have died and been reviled:  
And the bird sings over the roses.

The bridegroom he hung at midnight by the bier:  
Red rose and white in the garden;  
He eyed the white girl thro' a dazzling tear:  
And the bird sings over the roses.

O had you been false as the women who stray:  
Red rose and white in the garden;  
You would not be now with the Angels of Day!  
And the bird sings over the roses.

George Meredith

# Marian

## I

She can be as wise as we,  
And wiser when she wishes;  
She can knit with cunning wit,  
And dress the homely dishes.  
She can flourish staff or pen,  
And deal a wound that lingers;  
She can talk the talk of men,  
And touch with thrilling fingers.

## II

Match her ye across the sea,  
Natures fond and fiery;  
Ye who zest the turtle's nest  
With the eagle's eyrie.  
Soft and loving is her soul,  
Swift and lofty soaring;  
Mixing with its dove-like dole  
Passionate adoring.

## III

Such a she who'll match with me?  
In flying or pursuing,  
Subtle wiles are in her smiles  
To set the world a-wooing.  
She is steadfast as a star,  
And yet the maddest maiden:  
She can wage a gallant war,  
And give the peace of Eden.

George Meredith

# Marshalling Of The Achaians

[Iliad, B. II V. 455]

Like as a terrible fire feeds fast on a forest enormous,  
Up on a mountain height, and the blaze of it radiates round far,  
So on the bright blest arms of the host in their march did the splendour  
Gleam wide round through the circle of air right up to the sky-vault.  
They, now, as when swarm thick in the air multitudinous winged flocks,  
Be it of geese or of cranes or the long-necked troops of the wild-swans,  
Off that Asian mead, by the flow of the waters of Kaistros;  
Hither and yon fly they, and rejoicing in pride of their pinions,  
Clamour, shaped to their ranks, and the mead all about them resoundeth;  
So those numerous tribes from their ships and their shelterings poured forth  
On that plain of Scamander, and horrible rumbled beneath them  
Earth to the quick-paced feet of the men and the tramp of the horse-hooves.  
Stopped they then on the fair-flower'd field of Scamander, their thousands  
Many as leaves and the blossoms born of the flowerful season.  
Even as countless hot-pressed flies in their multitudes traverse,  
Clouds of them, under some herdsman's winning, where then are the milk-pails  
Also, full of their milk, in the bountiful season of spring-time;  
Even so thickly the long-haired sons of Achaia the plain held,  
Prompt for the dash at the Trojan host, with the passion to crush them.  
Those, likewise, as the goatherds, eyeing their vast flocks of goats, know  
Easily one from the other when all get mixed o'er the pasture,  
So did the chieftains rank them here there in their places for onslaught,  
Hard on the push of the fray; and among them King Agamemnon,  
He, for his eyes and his head, as when Zeus glows glad in his thunder,  
He with the girdle of Ares, he with the breast of Poseidon.

George Meredith



# Martin's Puzzle

## I

There she goes up the street with her book in her hand,  
And her Good morning, Martin! Ay, lass, how d'ye do?  
Very well, thank you, Martin!-I can't understand!  
I might just as well never have cobbled a shoe!  
I can't understand it. She talks like a song;  
Her voice takes your ear like the ring of a glass;  
She seems to give gladness while limping along,  
Yet sinner ne'er suffer'd like that little lass.

## II

First, a fool of a boy ran her down with a cart.  
Then, her fool of a father-a blacksmith by trade -  
Why the deuce does he tell us it half broke his heart?  
His heart!-where's the leg of the poor little maid!  
Well, that's not enough; they must push her downstairs,  
To make her go crooked: but why count the list?  
If it's right to suppose that our human affairs  
Are all order'd by heaven-there, bang goes my fist!

## III

For if angels can look on such sights-never mind!  
When you're next to blaspheming, it's best to be mum.  
The parson declares that her woes weren't designed;  
But, then, with the parson it's all kingdom-come.  
Lose a leg, save a soul-a convenient text;  
I call it Tea doctrine, not savouring of God.  
When poor little Molly wants 'chastening,' why, next  
The Archangel Michael might taste of the rod.

## IV

But, to see the poor darling go limping for miles  
To read books to sick people!-and just of an age  
When girls learn the meaning of ribands and smiles!  
Makes me feel like a squirrel that turns in a cage.

The more I push thinking the more I revolve:  
I never get farther:- and as to her face,  
It starts up when near on my puzzle I solve,  
And says, 'This crush'd body seems such a sad case.'

#### V

Not that she's for complaining: she reads to earn pence;  
And from those who can't pay, simple thanks are enough.  
Does she leave lamentation for chaps without sense?  
Howsoever, she's made up of wonderful stuff.  
Ay, the soul in her body must be a stout cord;  
She sings little hymns at the close of the day,  
Though she has but three fingers to lift to the Lord,  
And only one leg to kneel down with to pray.

#### VI

What I ask is, Why persecute such a poor dear,  
If there's Law above all? Answer that if you can!  
Irreligious I'm not; but I look on this sphere  
As a place where a man should just think like a man.  
It isn't fair dealing! But, contrariwise,  
Do bullets in battle the wicked select?  
Why, then it's all chance-work! And yet, in her eyes,  
She holds a fixed something by which I am checked.

#### VII

Yonder riband of sunshine aslope on the wall,  
If you eye it a minute 'll have the same look:  
So kind! and so merciful! God of us all!  
It's the very same lesson we get from the Book.  
Then, is Life but a trial? Is that what is meant?  
Some must toil, and some perish, for others below:  
The injustice to each spreads a common content;  
Ay! I've lost it again, for it can't be quite so.

#### VIII

She's the victim of fools: that seems nearer the mark.  
On earth there are engines and numerous fools.

Why the Lord can permit them, we're still in the dark;  
He does, and in some sort of way they're His tools.  
It's a roundabout way, with respect let me add,  
If Molly goes crippled that we may be taught:  
But, perhaps, it's the only way, though it's so bad;  
In that case we'll bow down our heads,-as we ought.

## IX

But the worst of ME is, that when I bow my head,  
I perceive a thought wriggling away in the dust,  
And I follow its tracks, quite forgetful, instead  
Of humble acceptance: for, question I must!  
Here's a creature made carefully-carefully made!  
Put together with craft, and then stamped on, and why?  
The answer seems nowhere: it's discord that's played.  
The sky's a blue dish!-an implacable sky!

## X

Stop a moment. I seize an idea from the pit.  
They tell us that discord, though discord, alone,  
Can be harmony when the notes properly fit:  
Am I judging all things from a single false tone?  
Is the Universe one immense Organ, that rolls  
From devils to angels? I'm blind with the sight.  
It pours such a splendour on heaps of poor souls!  
I might try at kneeling with Molly to-night.

George Meredith

# Meditation Under Stars

What links are ours with orbs that are  
So resolutely far:  
The solitary asks, and they  
Give radiance as from a shield:  
Still at the death of day,  
The seen, the unrevealed.  
Implacable they shine  
To us who would of Life obtain  
An answer for the life we strain  
To nourish with one sign.  
Nor can imagination throw  
The penetrative shaft: we pass  
The breath of thought, who would divine  
If haply they may grow  
As Earth; have our desire to know;  
If life comes there to grain from grass,  
And flowers like ours of toil and pain;  
Has passion to beat bar,  
Win space from cleaving brain;  
The mystic link attain,  
Whereby star holds on star.

Those visible immortals beam  
Allurement to the dream:  
Ireful at human hungers brook  
No question in the look.  
For ever virgin to our sense,  
Remote they wane to gaze intense:  
Prolong it, and in ruthlessness they smite  
The beating heart behind the ball of sight:  
Till we conceive their heavens hoar,  
Those lights they raise but sparkles frore,  
And Earth, our blood-warm Earth, a shuddering prey  
To that frigidity of brainless ray.  
Yet space is given for breath of thought  
Beyond our bounds when musing: more  
When to that musing love is brought,  
And love is asked of love's wherefore.  
'Tis Earth's, her gift; else have we nought:

Her gift, her secret, here our tie.  
And not with her and yonder sky?  
Bethink you: were it Earth alone  
Breeds love, would not her region be  
The sole delight and throne  
Of generous Deity?

To deeper than this ball of sight  
Appeal the lustrous people of the night.  
Fronting yon shoreless, sown with fiery sails,  
It is our ravenous that quails,  
Flesh by its craven thirsts and fears distraught.  
The spirit leaps alight,  
Doubts not in them is he,  
The binder of his sheaves, the sane, the right:  
Of magnitude to magnitude is wrought,  
To feel it large of the great life they hold:  
In them to come, or vaster intervolved,  
The issues known in us, our unsolved solved:  
That there with toil Life climbs the self-same Tree,  
Whose roots enrichment have from ripeness dropped.  
So may we read and little find them cold:  
Let it but be the lord of Mind to guide  
Our eyes; no branch of Reason's growing lopped;  
Nor dreaming on a dream; but fortified  
By day to penetrate black midnight; see,  
Hear, feel, outside the senses; even that we,  
The specks of dust upon a mound of mould,  
We who reflect those rays, though low our place,  
To them are lastingly allied.

So may we read, and little find them cold:  
Not frosty lamps illumining dead space,  
Not distant aliens, not senseless Powers.  
The fire is in them whereof we are born;  
The music of their motion may be ours.  
Spirit shall deem them beckoning Earth and voiced  
Sisterly to her, in her beams rejoiced.  
Of love, the grand impulsion, we behold  
The love that lends her grace  
Among the starry fold.  
Then at new flood of customary morn,

Look at her through her showers,  
Her mists, her streaming gold,  
A wonder edges the familiar face:  
She wears no more that robe of printed hours;  
Half strange seems Earth, and sweeter than her flowers.

George Meredith

# Melampus

## I

With love exceeding a simple love of the things  
That glide in grasses and rubble of woody wreck;  
Or change their perch on a beat of quivering wings  
From branch to branch, only restful to pipe and peck;  
Or, bristled, curl at a touch their snouts in a ball;  
Or cast their web between bramble and thorny hook;  
The good physician Melampus, loving them all,  
Among them walked, as a scholar who reads a book.

## II

For him the woods were a home and gave him the key  
Of knowledge, thirst for their treasures in herbs and flowers.  
The secrets held by the creatures nearer than we  
To earth he sought, and the link of their life with ours:  
And where alike we are, unlike where, and the veined  
Division, veined parallel, of a blood that flows  
In them, in us, from the source by man unattained  
Save marks he well what the mystical woods disclose.

## III

And this he deemed might be boon of love to a breast  
Embracing tenderly each little motive shape,  
The prone, the flitting, who seek their food whither best  
Their wits direct, whither best from their foes escape.  
For closer drawn to our mother's natural milk,  
As babes they learn where her motherly help is great:  
They know the juice for the honey, juice for the silk,  
And need they medical antidotes, find them straight.

## IV

Of earth and sun they are wise, they nourish their broods,  
Weave, build, hive, burrow and battle, take joy and pain  
Like swimmers varying billows: never in woods  
Runs white insanity fleeing itself: all sane

The woods revolve: as the tree its shadowing limbs  
To some resemblance in motion, the rooted life  
Restrains disorder: you hear the primitive hymns  
Of earth in woods issue wild of the web of strife.

## V

Now sleeping once on a day of marvellous fire,  
A brood of snakes he had cherished in grave regret  
That death his people had dealt their dam and their sire,  
Through savage dread of them, crept to his neck, and set  
Their tongues to lick him: the swift affectionate tongue  
Of each ran licking the slumberer: then his ears  
A forked red tongue tickled shrewdly: sudden upsprung,  
He heard a voice piping: Ay, for he has no fears!

## VI

A bird said that, in the notes of birds, and the speech  
Of men, it seemed: and another renewed: He moves  
To learn and not to pursue, he gathers to teach;  
He feeds his young as do we, and as we love loves.  
No fears have I of a man who goes with his head  
To earth, chance looking aloft at us, kind of hand:  
I feel to him as to earth of whom we are fed;  
I pipe him much for his good could he understand.

## VII

Melampus touched at his ears, laid finger on wrist  
He was not dreaming, he sensibly felt and heard.  
Above, through leaves, where the tree-twigs inter-twist,  
He spied the birds and the bill of the speaking bird.  
His cushion mosses in shades of various green,  
The lumped, the antlered, he pressed, while the sunny snake  
Slipped under: draughts he had drunk of clear Hippocrene,  
It seemed, and sat with a gift of the Gods awake.

## VIII

Divinely thrilled was the man, exultingly full,  
As quick well-waters that come of the heart of earth,



Ere yet they dart in a brook are one bubble-pool  
To light and sound, wedding both at the leap of birth.  
The soul of light vivid shone, a stream within stream;  
The soul of sound from a musical shell outflew;  
Where others hear but a hum and see but a beam,  
The tongue and eye of the fountain of life he knew.

## IX

He knew the Hours: they were round him, laden with seed  
Of hours bestrewn upon vapour, and one by one  
They winged as ripened in fruit the burden decreed  
For each to scatter; they flushed like the buds in sun,  
Bequeathing seed to successive similar rings,  
Their sisters, bearers to men of what men have earned:  
He knew them, talked with the yet unreddened; the stings,  
The sweets, they warmed at their bosoms divined, discerned.

## X

Not unsolicited, sought by diligent feet,  
By riddling fingers expanded, oft watched in growth  
With brooding deep as the noon-ray's quickening wheat,  
Ere touch'd, the pendulous flower of the plants of sloth,  
The plants of rigidity, answered question and squeeze,  
Revealing wherefore it bloomed, uninviting, bent,  
Yet making harmony breathe of life and disease,  
The deeper chord of a wonderful instrument.

## XI

So passed he luminous-eyed for earth and the fates  
We arm to bruise or caress us: his ears were charged  
With tones of love in a whirl of voluble hates,  
With music wrought of distraction his heart enlarged.  
Celestial-shining, though mortal, singer, though mute,  
He drew the Master of harmonies, voiced or stilled,  
To seek him; heard at the silent medicine-root  
A song, beheld in fulfilment the unfulfilled.

## XII

Him Phoebus, lending to darkness colour and form  
Of light's excess, many lessons and counsels gave,  
Showed Wisdom lord of the human intricate swarm,  
And whence prophetic it looks on the hives that rave,  
And how acquired, of the zeal of love to acquire,  
And where it stands, in the centre of life a sphere;  
And Measure, mood of the lyre, the rapturous lyre,  
He said was Wisdom, and struck him the notes to hear.

### XIII

Sweet, sweet: 'twas glory of vision, honey, the breeze  
In heat, the run of the river on root and stone,  
All senses joined, as the sister Pierides  
Are one, uplifting their chorus, the Nine, his own.  
In stately order, evolved of sound into sight,  
From sight to sound intershifting, the man descried  
The growths of earth, his adored, like day out of night,  
Ascend in song, seeing nature and song allied.

### XIV

And there vitality, there, there solely in song,  
Resides, where earth and her uses to men, their needs,  
Their forceful cravings, the theme are: there is it strong,  
The Master said: and the studious eye that reads,  
(Yea, even as earth to the crown of Gods on the mount),  
In links divine with the lyrical tongue is bound.  
Pursue thy craft: it is music drawn of a fount  
To spring perennial; well-spring is common ground.

### XV

Melampus dwelt among men: physician and sage,  
He served them, loving them, healing them; sick or maimed,  
Or them that frenzied in some delirious rage  
Outran the measure, his juice of the woods reclaimed.  
He played on men, as his master, Phoebus, on strings  
Melodious: as the God did he drive and check,  
Through love exceeding a simple love of the things  
That glide in grasses and rubble of woody wreck.



# Men And Man

I

Men the Angels eyed;  
And here they were wild waves,  
And there as marsh descried;  
Men the Angels eyed,  
And liked the picture best  
Where they were greenly dressed  
In brotherhood of graves.

II

Man the Angels marked:  
He led a host through murk,  
On fearful seas embarked;  
Man the Angels marked;  
To think without a nay,  
That he was good as they,  
And help him at his work.

III

Man and Angels, ye  
A sluggish fen shall drain,  
Shall quell a warring sea.  
Man and Angels, ye,  
Whom stain of strife befouls,  
A light to kindle souls  
Bear radiant in the stain.

George Meredith

## Milton--December 9, 1608: December 9, 1908

What splendour of imperial station man,  
The Tree of Life, may reach when, rooted fast,  
His branching stem points way to upper air  
And skyward still aspires, we see in him  
Who sang for us the Archangelical host,  
Made Morning, by old Darkness urged to the abyss;  
A voice that down three centuries onward rolls;  
Onward will roll while lives our English tongue,  
In the devout of music unsurpassed  
Since Piety won Heaven's ear on Israel's harp.

The face of Earth, the soul of Earth, her charm,  
Her dread austerity; the quavering fate  
Of mortals with blind hope by passion swayed,  
His mind embraced, the while on trodden soil,  
Defender of the Commonwealth, he joined  
Our temporal fray, whereof is vital fruit,  
And, choosing armoury of the Scholar, stood  
Beside his peers to raise the voice for Freedom:  
Nor has fair Liberty a champion armed  
To meet on heights or plains the Sophister  
Throughout the ages, equal to this man,  
Whose spirit breathed high Heaven, and drew thence  
The ethereal sword to smite.

Were England sunk  
Beneath the shifting tides, her heart, her brain,  
The smile she wears, the faith she holds, her best,  
Would live full-toned in the grand delivery  
Of his cathedral speech: an utterance  
Almost divine, and such as Hellespont,  
Crashing its breakers under Ida's frown,  
Inspired: yet worthier he, whose instrument  
Was by comparison the coarse reed-pipe;  
Whereof have come the marvellous harmonies,  
Which, with his lofty theme, of infinite range,  
Abash, entrance, exalt.

We need him now,

This latest Age in repetition cries:  
For Belial, the adroit, is in our midst;  
Mammon, more swoln to squeeze the slavish sweat  
From hopeless toil: and overshadowingly  
(Aggrandized, monstrous in his grinning mask  
Of hypocritical Peace,) inveterate Moloch  
Remains the great example.

Homage to him  
His debtor band, innumerable as waves  
Running all golden from an eastern sun,  
Joyfully render, in deep reverence  
Subscribe, and as they speak their Milton's name,  
Rays of his glory on their foreheads bear.

George Meredith

# Modern Love

## I

By this he knew she wept with waking eyes:  
That, at his hand's light quiver by her head,  
The strange low sobs that shook their common bed  
Were called into her with a sharp surprise,  
And strangled mute, like little gaping snakes,  
Dreadfully venomous to him. She lay  
Stone-still, and the long darkness flowed away  
With muffled pulses. Then, as midnight makes  
Her giant heart of Memory and Tears  
Drink the pale drug of silence, and so beat  
Sleep's heavy measure, they from head to feet  
Were moveless, looking through their dead black years,  
By vain regret scrawled over the blank wall.  
Like sculptured effigies they might be seen  
Upon their marriage-tomb, the sword between;  
Each wishing for the sword that severs all.

## II

It ended, and the morrow brought the task.  
Her eyes were guilty gates, that let him in  
By shutting all too zealous for their sin:  
Each sucked a secret, and each wore a mask.  
But, oh, the bitter taste her beauty had!  
He sickened as at breath of poison-flowers:  
A languid humour stole among the hours,  
And if their smiles encountered, he went mad,  
And raged deep inward, till the light was brown  
Before his vision, and the world, forgot,  
Looked wicked as some old dull murder-spot.  
A star with lurid beams, she seemed to crown  
The pit of infamy: and then again  
He fainted on his vengefulness, and strove  
To ape the magnanimity of love,  
And smote himself, a shuddering heap of pain.

## III

This was the woman; what now of the man?  
But pass him. If he comes beneath a heel,  
He shall be crushed until he cannot feel,  
Or, being callous, haply till he can.  
But he is nothing:- nothing? Only mark  
The rich light striking out from her on him!  
Ha! what a sense it is when her eyes swim  
Across the man she singles, leaving dark  
All else! Lord God, who mad'st the thing so fair,  
See that I am drawn to her even now!  
It cannot be such harm on her cool brow  
To put a kiss? Yet if I meet him there!  
But she is mine! Ah, no! I know too well  
I claim a star whose light is overcast:  
I claim a phantom-woman in the Past.  
The hour has struck, though I heard not the bell!

#### IV

All other joys of life he strove to warm,  
And magnify, and catch them to his lip:  
But they had suffered shipwreck with the ship,  
And gazed upon him sallow from the storm.  
Or if Delusion came, 'twas but to show  
The coming minute mock the one that went.  
Cold as a mountain in its star-pitched tent,  
Stood high Philosophy, less friend than foe:  
Whom self-caged Passion, from its prison-bars,  
Is always watching with a wondering hate.  
Not till the fire is dying in the grate,  
Look we for any kinship with the stars.  
Oh, wisdom never comes when it is gold,  
And the great price we pay for it full worth:  
We have it only when we are half earth.  
Little avails that coinage to the old!

#### V

A message from her set his brain aflame.  
A world of household matters filled her mind,  
Wherein he saw hypocrisy designed:



She treated him as something that is tame,  
And but at other provocation bites.  
Familiar was her shoulder in the glass,  
Through that dark rain: yet it may come to pass  
That a changed eye finds such familiar sights  
More keenly tempting than new loveliness.  
The 'What has been' a moment seemed his own:  
The splendours, mysteries, dearer because known,  
Nor less divine: Love's inmost sacredness  
Called to him, 'Come!'-In his restraining start,  
Eyes nurtured to be looked at scarce could see  
A wave of the great waves of Destiny  
Convulsed at a checked impulse of the heart.

## VI

It chanced his lips did meet her forehead cool.  
She had no blush, but slanted down her eye.  
Shamed nature, then, confesses love can die:  
And most she punishes the tender fool  
Who will believe what honours her the most!  
Dead! is it dead? She has a pulse, and flow  
Of tears, the price of blood-drops, as I know,  
For whom the midnight sobs around Love's ghost,  
Since then I heard her, and so will sob on.  
The love is here; it has but changed its aim.  
O bitter barren woman! what's the name?  
The name, the name, the new name thou hast won?  
Behold me striking the world's coward stroke!  
That will I not do, though the sting is dire.  
- Beneath the surface this, while by the fire  
They sat, she laughing at a quiet joke.

## VII

She issues radiant from her dressing-room,  
Like one prepared to scale an upper sphere:  
- By stirring up a lower, much I fear!  
How deftly that oiled barber lays his bloom!  
That long-shanked dapper Cupid with frisked curls  
Can make known women torturingly fair;  
The gold-eyed serpent dwelling in rich hair

Awakes beneath his magic whisks and twirls.  
His art can take the eyes from out my head,  
Until I see with eyes of other men;  
While deeper knowledge crouches in its den,  
And sends a spark up:- is it true we are wed?  
Yea! filthiness of body is most vile,  
But faithlessness of heart I do hold worse.  
The former, it were not so great a curse  
To read on the steel-mirror of her smile.

## VIII

Yet it was plain she struggled, and that salt  
Of righteous feeling made her pitiful.  
Poor twisting worm, so queenly beautiful!  
Where came the cleft between us? whose the fault?  
My tears are on thee, that have rarely dropped  
As balm for any bitter wound of mine:  
My breast will open for thee at a sign!  
But, no: we are two reed-pipes, coarsely stopped:  
The God once filled them with his mellow breath;  
And they were music till he flung them down,  
Used! used! Hear now the discord-loving clown  
Puff his gross spirit in them, worse than death!  
I do not know myself without thee more:  
In this unholy battle I grow base:  
If the same soul be under the same face,  
Speak, and a taste of that old time restore!

## IX

He felt the wild beast in him betweenwhiles  
So masterfully rude, that he would grieve  
To see the helpless delicate thing receive  
His guardianship through certain dark defiles.  
Had he not teeth to rend, and hunger too?  
But still he spared her. Once: 'Have you no fear?'  
He said: 'twas dusk; she in his grasp; none near.  
She laughed: 'No, surely; am I not with you?'  
And uttering that soft starry 'you,' she leaned  
Her gentle body near him, looking up;  
And from her eyes, as from a poison-cup,

He drank until the fluttering eyelids screened.  
Devilish malignant witch! and oh, young beam  
Of heaven's circle-glory! Here thy shape  
To squeeze like an intoxicating grape -  
I might, and yet thou goest safe, supreme.

X

But where began the change; and what's my crime?  
The wretch condemned, who has not been arraigned,  
Chafes at his sentence. Shall I, unsustained,  
Drag on Love's nerveless body thro' all time?  
I must have slept, since now I wake. Prepare,  
You lovers, to know Love a thing of moods:  
Not, like hard life, of laws. In Love's deep woods,  
I dreamt of loyal Life:- the offence is there!  
Love's jealous woods about the sun are curled;  
At least, the sun far brighter there did beam. -  
My crime is, that the puppet of a dream,  
I plotted to be worthy of the world.  
Oh, had I with my darling helped to mince  
The facts of life, you still had seen me go  
With hindward feather and with forward toe,  
Her much-adored delightful Fairy Prince!

XI

Out in the yellow meadows, where the bee  
Hums by us with the honey of the Spring,  
And showers of sweet notes from the larks on wing  
Are dropping like a noon-dew, wander we.  
Or is it now? or was it then? for now,  
As then, the larks from running rings pour showers:  
The golden foot of May is on the flowers,  
And friendly shadows dance upon her brow.  
What's this, when Nature swears there is no change  
To challenge eyesight? Now, as then, the grace  
Of heaven seems holding earth in its embrace.  
Nor eyes, nor heart, has she to feel it strange?  
Look, woman, in the West. There wilt thou see  
An amber cradle near the sun's decline:  
Within it, featured even in death divine,

Is lying a dead infant, slain by thee.

## XII

Not solely that the Future she destroys,  
And the fair life which in the distance lies  
For all men, beckoning out from dim rich skies:  
Nor that the passing hour's supporting joys  
Have lost the keen-edged flavour, which begat  
Distinction in old times, and still should breed  
Sweet Memory, and Hope,-earth's modest seed,  
And heaven's high-prompting: not that the world is flat  
Since that soft-luring creature I embraced  
Among the children of Illusion went:  
Methinks with all this loss I were content,  
If the mad Past, on which my foot is based,  
Were firm, or might be blotted: but the whole  
Of life is mixed: the mocking Past will stay:  
And if I drink oblivion of a day,  
So shorten I the stature of my soul.

## XIII

'I play for Seasons; not Eternities!'  
Says Nature, laughing on her way. 'So must  
All those whose stake is nothing more than dust!'  
And lo, she wins, and of her harmonies  
She is full sure! Upon her dying rose  
She drops a look of fondness, and goes by,  
Scarce any retrospection in her eye;  
For she the laws of growth most deeply knows,  
Whose hands bear, here, a seed-bag-there, an urn.  
Pledged she herself to aught, 'twould mark her end!  
This lesson of our only visible friend  
Can we not teach our foolish hearts to learn?  
Yes! yes!-but, oh, our human rose is fair  
Surpassingly! Lose calmly Love's great bliss,  
When the renewed for ever of a kiss  
Whirls life within the shower of loosened hair!

## XIV

What soul would bargain for a cure that brings  
Contempt the nobler agony to kill?  
Rather let me bear on the bitter ill,  
And strike this rusty bosom with new stings!  
It seems there is another veering fit,  
Since on a gold-haired lady's eyeballs pure  
I looked with little prospect of a cure,  
The while her mouth's red bow loosed shafts of wit.  
Just heaven! can it be true that jealousy  
Has decked the woman thus? and does her head  
Swim somewhat for possessions forfeited?  
Madam, you teach me many things that be.  
I open an old book, and there I find  
That 'Women still may love whom they deceive.'  
Such love I prize not, madam: by your leave,  
The game you play at is not to my mind.

XV

I think she sleeps: it must be sleep, when low  
Hangs that abandoned arm toward the floor;  
The face turned with it. Now make fast the door.  
Sleep on: it is your husband, not your foe.  
The Poet's black stage-lion of wronged love  
Frights not our modern dames:- well if he did!  
Now will I pour new light upon that lid,  
Full-sloping like the breasts beneath. 'Sweet dove,  
Your sleep is pure. Nay, pardon: I disturb.  
I do not? good!' Her waking infant-stare  
Grows woman to the burden my hands bear:  
Her own handwriting to me when no curb  
Was left on Passion's tongue. She trembles through;  
A woman's tremble-the whole instrument:-  
I show another letter lately sent.  
The words are very like: the name is new.

XVI

In our old shipwrecked days there was an hour,  
When in the firelight steadily aglow,  
Joined slackly, we beheld the red chasm grow  
Among the clicking coals. Our library-bower

That eve was left to us: and hushed we sat  
As lovers to whom Time is whispering.  
From sudden-opened doors we heard them sing:  
The nodding elders mixed good wine with chat.  
Well knew we that Life's greatest treasure lay  
With us, and of it was our talk. 'Ah, yes!  
Love dies!' I said: I never thought it less.  
She yearned to me that sentence to unsay.  
Then when the fire domed blackening, I found  
Her cheek was salt against my kiss, and swift  
Up the sharp scale of sobs her breast did lift:-  
Now am I haunted by that taste! that sound!

## XVII

At dinner, she is hostess, I am host.  
Went the feast ever cheerfuller? She keeps  
The Topic over intellectual deeps  
In buoyancy afloat. They see no ghost.  
With sparkling surface-eyes we ply the ball:  
It is in truth a most contagious game:  
HIDING THE SKELETON, shall be its name.  
Such play as this the devils might appal!  
But here's the greater wonder; in that we,  
Enamoured of an acting nought can tire,  
Each other, like true hypocrites, admire;  
Warm-lighted looks, Love's ephemerioe,  
Shoot gaily o'er the dishes and the wine.  
We waken envy of our happy lot.  
Fast, sweet, and golden, shows the marriage-knot.  
Dear guests, you now have seen Love's corpse-light shine.

## XVIII

Here Jack and Tom are paired with Moll and Meg.  
Curved open to the river-reach is seen  
A country merry-making on the green.  
Fair space for signal shakings of the leg.  
That little screwy fiddler from his booth,  
Whence flows one nut-brown stream, commands the joints  
Of all who caper here at various points.  
I have known rustic revels in my youth:

The May-fly pleasures of a mind at ease.  
An early goddess was a country lass:  
A charmed Amphion-oak she tripped the grass.  
What life was that I lived? The life of these?  
Heaven keep them happy! Nature they seem near.  
They must, I think, be wiser than I am;  
They have the secret of the bull and lamb.  
'Tis true that when we trace its source, 'tis beer.

XIX

No state is enviable. To the luck alone  
Of some few favoured men I would put claim.  
I bleed, but her who wounds I will not blame.  
Have I not felt her heart as 'twere my own  
Beat thro' me? could I hurt her? heaven and hell!  
But I could hurt her cruelly! Can I let  
My Love's old time-piece to another set,  
Swear it can't stop, and must for ever swell?  
Sure, that's one way Love drifts into the mart  
Where goat-legged buyers throng. I see not plain:-  
My meaning is, it must not be again.  
Great God! the maddest gambler throws his heart.  
If any state be enviable on earth,  
'Tis yon born idiot's, who, as days go by,  
Still rubs his hands before him, like a fly,  
In a queer sort of meditative mirth.

XX

I am not of those miserable males  
Who sniff at vice and, daring not to snap,  
Do therefore hope for heaven. I take the hap  
Of all my deeds. The wind that fills my sails  
Propels; but I am helmsman. Am I wrecked,  
I know the devil has sufficient weight  
To bear: I lay it not on him, or fate.  
Besides, he's damned. That man I do suspect  
A coward, who would burden the poor deuce  
With what ensues from his own slipperiness.  
I have just found a wanton-scented tress  
In an old desk, dusty for lack of use.

Of days and nights it is demonstrative,  
That, like some aged star, gleam luridly.  
If for those times I must ask charity,  
Have I not any charity to give?

XXI

We three are on the cedar-shadowed lawn;  
My friend being third. He who at love once laughed  
Is in the weak rib by a fatal shaft  
Struck through, and tells his passion's bashful dawn  
And radiant culmination, glorious crown,  
When 'this' she said: went 'thus': most wondrous she.  
Our eyes grow white, encountering: that we are three,  
Forgetful; then together we look down.  
But he demands our blessing; is convinced  
That words of wedded lovers must bring good.  
We question; if we dare! or if we should!  
And pat him, with light laugh. We have not winced.  
Next, she has fallen. Fainting points the sign  
To happy things in wedlock. When she wakes,  
She looks the star that thro' the cedar shakes:  
Her lost moist hand clings mortally to mine.

XXII

What may the woman labour to confess?  
There is about her mouth a nervous twitch.  
'Tis something to be told, or hidden:- which?  
I get a glimpse of hell in this mild guess.  
She has desires of touch, as if to feel  
That all the household things are things she knew.  
She stops before the glass. What sight in view?  
A face that seems the latest to reveal!  
For she turns from it hastily, and tossed  
Irresolute steals shadow-like to where  
I stand; and wavering pale before me there,  
Her tears fall still as oak-leaves after frost.  
She will not speak. I will not ask. We are  
League-sundered by the silent gulf between.  
You burly lovers on the village green,  
Yours is a lower, and a happier star!



### XXIII

'Tis Christmas weather, and a country house  
Receives us: rooms are full: we can but get  
An attic-crib. Such lovers will not fret  
At that, it is half-said. The great carouse  
Knocks hard upon the midnight's hollow door,  
But when I knock at hers, I see the pit.  
Why did I come here in that dullard fit?  
I enter, and lie couched upon the floor.  
Passing, I caught the coverlet's quick beat:-  
Come, Shame, burn to my soul! and Pride, and Pain -  
Foul demons that have tortured me, enchain!  
Out in the freezing darkness the lambs bleat.  
The small bird stiffens in the low starlight.  
I know not how, but shuddering as I slept,  
I dreamed a banished angel to me crept:  
My feet were nourished on her breasts all night.

### XXIV

The misery is greater, as I live!  
To know her flesh so pure, so keen her sense,  
That she does penance now for no offence,  
Save against Love. The less can I forgive!  
The less can I forgive, though I adore  
That cruel lovely pallor which surrounds  
Her footsteps; and the low vibrating sounds  
That come on me, as from a magic shore.  
Low are they, but most subtle to find out  
The shrinking soul. Madam, 'tis understood  
When women play upon their womanhood,  
It means, a Season gone. And yet I doubt  
But I am duped. That nun-like look waylays  
My fancy. Oh! I do but wait a sign!  
Pluck out the eyes of pride! thy mouth to mine!  
Never! though I die thirsting. Go thy ways!

### XXV

You like not that French novel? Tell me why.

You think it quite unnatural. Let us see.  
The actors are, it seems, the usual three:  
Husband, and wife, and lover. She-but fie!  
In England we'll not hear of it. Edmond,  
The lover, her devout chagrin doth share;  
Blanc-mange and absinthe are his penitent fare,  
Till his pale aspect makes her over-fond:  
So, to preclude fresh sin, he tries rosbif.  
Meantime the husband is no more abused:  
Auguste forgives her ere the tear is used.  
Then hangeth all on one tremendous IF:-  
IF she will choose between them. She does choose;  
And takes her husband, like a proper wife.  
Unnatural? My dear, these things are life:  
And life, some think, is worthy of the Muse.

## XXVI

Love ere he bleeds, an eagle in high skies,  
Has earth beneath his wings: from reddened eve  
He views the rosy dawn. In vain they weave  
The fatal web below while far he flies.  
But when the arrow strikes him, there's a change.  
He moves but in the track of his spent pain,  
Whose red drops are the links of a harsh chain,  
Binding him to the ground, with narrow range.  
A subtle serpent then has Love become.  
I had the eagle in my bosom erst:  
Henceforward with the serpent I am cursed.  
I can interpret where the mouth is dumb.  
Speak, and I see the side-lie of a truth.  
Perchance my heart may pardon you this deed:  
But be no coward:- you that made Love bleed,  
You must bear all the venom of his tooth!

## XXVII

Distraction is the panacea, Sir!  
I hear my oracle of Medicine say.  
Doctor! that same specific yesterday  
I tried, and the result will not deter  
A second trial. Is the devil's line

Of golden hair, or raven black, composed?  
And does a cheek, like any sea-shell rosed,  
Or clear as widowed sky, seem most divine?  
No matter, so I taste forgetfulness.  
And if the devil snare me, body and mind,  
Here gratefully I score:- he seemed kind,  
When not a soul would comfort my distress!  
O sweet new world, in which I rise new made!  
O Lady, once I gave love: now I take!  
Lady, I must be flattered. Shouldst thou wake  
The passion of a demon, be not afraid.

#### XXVIII

I must be flattered. The imperious  
Desire speaks out. Lady, I am content  
To play with you the game of Sentiment,  
And with you enter on paths perilous;  
But if across your beauty I throw light,  
To make it threefold, it must be all mine.  
First secret; then avowed. For I must shine  
Envied,-I, lessened in my proper sight!  
Be watchful of your beauty, Lady dear!  
How much hangs on that lamp you cannot tell.  
Most earnestly I pray you, tend it well:  
And men shall see me as a burning sphere;  
And men shall mark you eyeing me, and groan  
To be the God of such a grand sunflower!  
I feel the promptings of Satanic power,  
While you do homage unto me alone.

#### XXIX

Am I failing? For no longer can I cast  
A glory round about this head of gold.  
Glory she wears, but springing from the mould;  
Not like the consecration of the Past!  
Is my soul beggared? Something more than earth  
I cry for still: I cannot be at peace  
In having Love upon a mortal lease.  
I cannot take the woman at her worth!  
Where is the ancient wealth wherewith I clothed

Our human nakedness, and could endow  
With spiritual splendour a white brow  
That else had grinned at me the fact I loathed?  
A kiss is but a kiss now! and no wave  
Of a great flood that whirls me to the sea.  
But, as you will! we'll sit contentedly,  
And eat our pot of honey on the grave.

XXX

What are we first? First, animals; and next  
Intelligences at a leap; on whom  
Pale lies the distant shadow of the tomb,  
And all that draweth on the tomb for text.  
Into which state comes Love, the crowning sun:  
Beneath whose light the shadow loses form.  
We are the lords of life, and life is warm.  
Intelligence and instinct now are one.  
But nature says: 'My children most they seem  
When they least know me: therefore I decree  
That they shall suffer.' Swift doth young Love flee,  
And we stand wakened, shivering from our dream.  
Then if we study Nature we are wise.  
Thus do the few who live but with the day:  
The scientific animals are they. -  
Lady, this is my sonnet to your eyes.

XXXI

This golden head has wit in it. I live  
Again, and a far higher life, near her.  
Some women like a young philosopher;  
Perchance because he is diminutive.  
For woman's manly god must not exceed  
Proportions of the natural nursing size.  
Great poets and great sages draw no prize  
With women: but the little lap-dog breed,  
Who can be hugged, or on a mantel-piece  
Perched up for adoration, these obtain  
Her homage. And of this we men are vain?  
Of this! 'Tis ordered for the world's increase!  
Small flattery! Yet she has that rare gift

To beauty, Common Sense. I am approved.  
It is not half so nice as being loved,  
And yet I do prefer it. What's my drift?

XXXII

Full faith I have she holds that rarest gift  
To beauty, Common Sense. To see her lie  
With her fair visage an inverted sky  
Bloom-covered, while the underlids uplift,  
Would almost wreck the faith; but when her mouth  
(Can it kiss sweetly? sweetly!) would address  
The inner me that thirsts for her no less,  
And has so long been languishing in drouth,  
I feel that I am matched; that I am man!  
One restless corner of my heart or head,  
That holds a dying something never dead,  
Still frets, though Nature giveth all she can.  
It means, that woman is not, I opine,  
Her sex's antidote. Who seeks the asp  
For serpent's bites? 'Twould calm me could I clasp  
Shrieking Bacchantes with their souls of wine!

XXXIII

'In Paris, at the Louvre, there have I seen  
The sumptuously-feathered angel pierce  
Prone Lucifer, descending. Looked he fierce,  
Showing the fight a fair one? Too serene!  
The young Pharsalians did not disarray  
Less willingly their locks of floating silk:  
That suckling mouth of his upon the milk  
Of heaven might still be feasting through the fray.  
Oh, Raphael! when men the Fiend do fight,  
They conquer not upon such easy terms.  
Half serpent in the struggle grow these worms.  
And does he grow half human, all is right.'  
This to my Lady in a distant spot,  
Upon the theme: WHILE MIND IS MASTERING CLAY,  
GROSS CLAY INVADES IT. If the spy you play,  
My wife, read this! Strange love talk, is it not?

## XXXIV

Madam would speak with me. So, now it comes:  
 The Deluge or else Fire! She's well; she thanks  
 My husbandship. Our chain on silence clanks.  
 Time leers between, above his twiddling thumbs.  
 Am I quite well? Most excellent in health!  
 The journals, too, I diligently peruse.  
 Vesuvius is expected to give news:  
 Niagara is no noisier. By stealth  
 Our eyes dart scrutinizing snakes. She's glad  
 I'm happy, says her quivering under-lip.  
 'And are not you?' 'How can I be?' 'Take ship!  
 For happiness is somewhere to be had.'  
 'Nowhere for me!' Her voice is barely heard.  
 I am not melted, and make no pretence.  
 With commonplace I freeze her, tongue and sense.  
 Niagara or Vesuvius is deferred.

## XXXV

It is no vulgar nature I have wived.  
 Secretive, sensitive, she takes a wound  
 Deep to her soul, as if the sense had swooned,  
 And not a thought of vengeance had survived.  
 No confidences has she: but relief  
 Must come to one whose suffering is acute.  
 O have a care of natures that are mute!  
 They punish you in acts: their steps are brief.  
 What is she doing? What does she demand  
 From Providence or me? She is not one  
 Long to endure this torpidly, and shun  
 The drugs that crowd about a woman's hand.  
 At Forfeits during snow we played, and I  
 Must kiss her. 'Well performed!' I said: then she:  
 'Tis hardly worth the money, you agree?'  
 Save her? What for? To act this wedded lie!

## XXXVI

My Lady unto Madam makes her bow.  
 The charm of women is, that even while

You're probed by them for tears, you yet may smile,  
Nay, laugh outright, as I have done just now.  
The interview was gracious: they anoint  
(To me aside) each other with fine praise:  
Discriminating compliments they raise,  
That hit with wondrous aim on the weak point:  
My Lady's nose of Nature might complain.  
It is not fashioned aptly to express  
Her character of large-browed steadfastness.  
But Madam says: Thereof she may be vain!  
Now, Madam's faulty feature is a glazed  
And inaccessible eye, that has soft fires,  
Wide gates, at love-time, only. This admires  
My Lady. At the two I stand amazed.

### XXXVII

Along the garden terrace, under which  
A purple valley (lighted at its edge  
By smoky torch-flame on the long cloud-ledge  
Whereunder dropped the chariot) glimmers rich,  
A quiet company we pace, and wait  
The dinner-bell in prae-digestive calm.  
So sweet up violet banks the Southern balm  
Breathes round, we care not if the bell be late:  
Though here and there grey seniors question Time  
In irritable coughings. With slow foot  
The low rosed moon, the face of Music mute,  
Begins among her silent bars to climb.  
As in and out, in silvery dusk, we thread,  
I hear the laugh of Madam, and discern  
My Lady's heel before me at each turn.  
Our tragedy, is it alive or dead?

### XXXVIII

Give to imagination some pure light  
In human form to fix it, or you shame  
The devils with that hideous human game:-  
Imagination urging appetite!  
Thus fallen have earth's greatest Gogmagogs,  
Who dazzle us, whom we can not revere:

Imagination is the charioteer  
That, in default of better, drives the hogs.  
So, therefore, my dear Lady, let me love!  
My soul is arrowy to the light in you.  
You know me that I never can renew  
The bond that woman broke: what would you have?  
'Tis Love, or Vileness! not a choice between,  
Save petrification! What does Pity here?  
She killed a thing, and now it's dead, 'tis dear.  
Oh, when you counsel me, think what you mean!

XXXIX

She yields: my Lady in her noblest mood  
Has yielded: she, my golden-crowned rose!  
The bride of every sense! more sweet than those  
Who breathe the violet breath of maidenhood.  
O visage of still music in the sky!  
Soft moon! I feel thy song, my fairest friend!  
True harmony within can apprehend  
Dumb harmony without. And hark! 'tis nigh!  
Belief has struck the note of sound: a gleam  
Of living silver shows me where she shook  
Her long white fingers down the shadowy brook,  
That sings her song, half waking, half in dream.  
What two come here to mar this heavenly tune?  
A man is one: the woman bears my name,  
And honour. Their hands touch! Am I still tame?  
God, what a dancing spectre seems the moon!

XL

I bade my Lady think what she might mean.  
Know I my meaning, I? Can I love one,  
And yet be jealous of another? None  
Commits such folly. Terrible Love, I ween,  
Has might, even dead, half sighing to upheave  
The lightless seas of selfishness amain:  
Seas that in a man's heart have no rain  
To fall and still them. Peace can I achieve,  
By turning to this fountain-source of woe,  
This woman, who's to Love as fire to wood?



She breathed the violet breath of maidenhood  
Against my kisses once! but I say, No!  
The thing is mocked at! Helplessly afloat,  
I know not what I do, whereto I strive.  
The dread that my old love may be alive  
Has seized my nursling new love by the throat.

XLI

How many a thing which we cast to the ground,  
When others pick it up becomes a gem!  
We grasp at all the wealth it is to them;  
And by reflected light its worth is found.  
Yet for us still 'tis nothing! and that zeal  
Of false appreciation quickly fades.  
This truth is little known to human shades,  
How rare from their own instinct 'tis to feel!  
They waste the soul with spurious desire,  
That is not the ripe flame upon the bough.  
We two have taken up a lifeless vow  
To rob a living passion: dust for fire!  
Madam is grave, and eyes the clock that tells  
Approaching midnight. We have struck despair  
Into two hearts. O, look we like a pair  
Who for fresh nuptials joyfully yield all else?

XLII

I am to follow her. There is much grace  
In woman when thus bent on martyrdom.  
They think that dignity of soul may come,  
Perchance, with dignity of body. Base!  
But I was taken by that air of cold  
And statuesque sedateness, when she said  
'I'm going'; lit a taper, bowed her head,  
And went, as with the stride of Pallas bold.  
Fleshly indifference horrible! The hands  
Of Time now signal: O, she's safe from me!  
Within those secret walls what do I see?  
Where first she set the taper down she stands:  
Not Pallas: Hebe shamed! Thoughts black as death  
Like a stirred pool in sunshine break. Her wrists

I catch: she faltering, as she half resists,  
'You love . . .? love . . .? love . . .?' all on an indrawn breath.

#### XLIII

Mark where the pressing wind shoots javelin-like  
Its skeleton shadow on the broad-backed wave!  
Here is a fitting spot to dig Love's grave;  
Here where the ponderous breakers plunge and strike,  
And dart their hissing tongues high up the sand:  
In hearing of the ocean, and in sight  
Of those ribbed wind-streaks running into white.  
If I the death of Love had deeply planned,  
I never could have made it half so sure,  
As by the unblest kisses which upbraid  
The full-waked sense; or failing that, degrade!  
'Tis morning: but no morning can restore  
What we have forfeited. I see no sin:  
The wrong is mixed. In tragic life, God wot,  
No villain need be! Passions spin the plot:  
We are betrayed by what is false within.

#### XLIV

They say, that Pity in Love's service dwells,  
A porter at the rosy temple's gate.  
I missed him going: but it is my fate  
To come upon him now beside his wells;  
Whereby I know that I Love's temple leave,  
And that the purple doors have closed behind.  
Poor soul! if, in those early days unkind,  
Thy power to sting had been but power to grieve,  
We now might with an equal spirit meet,  
And not be matched like innocence and vice.  
She for the Temple's worship has paid price,  
And takes the coin of Pity as a cheat.  
She sees through simulation to the bone:  
What's best in her impels her to the worst:  
Never, she cries, shall Pity soothe Love's thirst,  
Or foul hypocrisy for truth atone!

#### XLV

It is the season of the sweet wild rose,  
My Lady's emblem in the heart of me!  
So golden-crowned shines she gloriously,  
And with that softest dream of blood she glows;  
Mild as an evening heaven round Hesper bright!  
I pluck the flower, and smell it, and revive  
The time when in her eyes I stood alive.  
I seem to look upon it out of Night.  
Here's Madam, stepping hastily. Her whims  
Bid her demand the flower, which I let drop.  
As I proceed, I feel her sharply stop,  
And crush it under heel with trembling limbs.  
She joins me in a cat-like way, and talks  
Of company, and even condescends  
To utter laughing scandal of old friends.  
These are the summer days, and these our walks.

#### XLVI

At last we parley: we so strangely dumb  
In such a close communion! It befell  
About the sounding of the Matin-bell,  
And lo! her place was vacant, and the hum  
Of loneliness was round me. Then I rose,  
And my disordered brain did guide my foot  
To that old wood where our first love-salute  
Was interchanged: the source of many throes!  
There did I see her, not alone. I moved  
Toward her, and made proffer of my arm.  
She took it simply, with no rude alarm;  
And that disturbing shadow passed reprov'd.  
I felt the pained speech coming, and declared  
My firm belief in her, ere she could speak.  
A ghastly morning came into her cheek,  
While with a widening soul on me she stared.

#### XLVII

We saw the swallows gathering in the sky,  
And in the osier-isle we heard them noise.  
We had not to look back on summer joys,

Or forward to a summer of bright dye:  
But in the largeness of the evening earth  
Our spirits grew as we went side by side.  
The hour became her husband and my bride.  
Love, that had robbed us so, thus blessed our dearth!  
The pilgrims of the year waxed very loud  
In multitudinous chatterings, as the flood  
Full brown came from the West, and like pale blood  
Expanded to the upper crimson cloud.  
Love, that had robbed us of immortal things,  
This little moment mercifully gave,  
Where I have seen across the twilight wave  
The swan sail with her young beneath her wings.

#### XLVIII

Their sense is with their senses all mixed in,  
Destroyed by subtleties these women are!  
More brain, O Lord, more brain! or we shall mar  
Utterly this fair garden we might win.  
Behold! I looked for peace, and thought it near.  
Our inmost hearts had opened, each to each.  
We drank the pure daylight of honest speech.  
Alas! that was the fatal draught, I fear.  
For when of my lost Lady came the word,  
This woman, O this agony of flesh!  
Jealous devotion bade her break the mesh,  
That I might seek that other like a bird.  
I do adore the nobleness! despise  
The act! She has gone forth, I know not where.  
Will the hard world my sentience of her share  
I feel the truth; so let the world surmise.

#### XLIX

He found her by the ocean's moaning verge,  
Nor any wicked change in her discerned;  
And she believed his old love had returned,  
Which was her exultation, and her scourge.  
She took his hand, and walked with him, and seemed  
The wife he sought, though shadow-like and dry.  
She had one terror, lest her heart should sigh,

And tell her loudly she no longer dreamed.  
She dared not say, 'This is my breast: look in.'  
But there's a strength to help the desperate weak.  
That night he learned how silence best can speak  
The awful things when Pity pleads for Sin.  
About the middle of the night her call  
Was heard, and he came wondering to the bed.  
'Now kiss me, dear! it may be, now!' she said.  
Lethe had passed those lips, and he knew all.

L

Thus piteously Love closed what he begat:  
The union of this ever-diverse pair!  
These two were rapid falcons in a snare,  
Condemned to do the flitting of the bat.  
Lovers beneath the singing sky of May,  
They wandered once; clear as the dew on flowers:  
But they fed not on the advancing hours:  
Their hearts held cravings for the buried day.  
Then each applied to each that fatal knife,  
Deep questioning, which probes to endless dole.  
Ah, what a dusty answer gets the soul  
When hot for certainties in this our life! -  
In tragic hints here see what evermore  
Moves dark as yonder midnight ocean's force,  
Thundering like ramping hosts of warrior horse,  
To throw that faint thin fine upon the shore!

George Meredith

# Modern Love I: By This He Knew She Wept

By this he knew she wept with waking eyes:  
That, at his hand's light quiver by her head,  
The strange low sobs that shook their common bed  
Were called into her with a sharp surprise,  
And strangled mute, like little gaping snakes,  
Dreadfully venomous to him. She lay  
Stone-still, and the long darkness flowed away  
With muffled pulses. Then, as midnight makes  
Her giant heart of Memory and Tears  
Drink the pale drug of silence, and so beat  
Sleep's heavy measure, they from head to feet  
Were moveless, looking through their dead black years,  
By vain regret scrawled over the blank wall.  
Like sculptured effigies they might be seen  
Upon their marriage-tomb, the sword between;  
Each wishing for the sword that severs all.

George Meredith

## Modern Love II: It Ended, And The Morrow

It ended, and the morrow brought the task.  
Her eyes were guilty gates, that let him in  
By shutting all too zealous for their sin:  
Each sucked a secret, and each wore a mask.  
But, oh, the bitter taste her beauty had!  
He sickened as at breath of poison-flowers:  
A languid humour stole among the hours,  
And if their smiles encountered, he went mad,  
And raged deep inward, till the light was brown  
Before his vision, and the world, forgot,  
Looked wicked as some old dull murder-spot.  
A star with lurid beams, she seemed to crown  
The pit of infamy: and then again  
He fainted on his vengefulness, and strove  
To ape the magnanimity of love,  
And smote himself, a shuddering heap of pain.

George Meredith

## Modern Love Iii: This Was The Woman

This was the woman; what now of the man?  
But pass him. If he comes beneath a heel,  
He shall be crushed until he cannot feel,  
Or, being callous, haply till he can.  
But he is nothing:--nothing? Only mark  
The rich light striking out from her on him!  
Ha! what a sense it is when her eyes swim  
Across the man she singles, leaving dark  
All else! Lord God, who mad'st the thing so fair,  
See that I am drawn to her even now!  
It cannot be such harm on her cool brow  
To put a kiss? Yet if I meet him there!  
But she is mine! Ah, no! I know too well  
I claim a star whose light is overcast:  
I claim a phantom-woman in the Past.  
The hour has struck, though I heard not the bell!

George Meredith



## Modern Love Iv: All Other Joys Of Life

All other joys of life he strove to warm,  
And magnify, and catch them to his lip:  
But they had suffered shipwreck with the ship,  
And gazed upon him sallow from the storm.  
Or if Delusion came, 'twas but to show  
The coming minute mock the one that went.  
Cold as a mountain in its star-pitched tent,  
Stood high Philosophy, less friend than foe:  
Whom self-caged Passion, from its prison-bars,  
Is always watching with a wondering hate.  
Not till the fire is dying in the grate,  
Look we for any kinship with the stars.  
Oh, wisdom never comes when it is gold,  
And the great price we pay for it full worth:  
We have it only when we are half earth.  
Little avails that coinage to the old!

George Meredith

## Modern Love IX: He Felt The Wild Beast

He felt the wild beast in him betweenwhiles  
So masterfully rude, that he would grieve  
To see the helpless delicate thing receive  
His guardianship through certain dark defiles.  
Had he not teeth to rend, and hunger too?  
But still he spared her. Once: 'Have you no fear ?'  
He said: 'twas dusk; she in his grasp; none near.  
She laughed: 'No, surely; am I not with you?'  
And uttering that soft starry 'you,' she leaned  
Her gentle body near him, looking up;  
And from her eyes, as from a poison-cup,  
He drank until the fluttering eyelids screened.  
Devilish malignant witch and oh, young beam  
Of heaven's circle-glory! Here thy shape  
To squeeze like an intoxicating grape  
I might, and yet thou goest safe, supreme.

George Meredith

## Modern Love L: Thus Piteously Love

Thus piteously Love closed what he begat:  
The union of this ever-diverse pair!  
These two were rapid falcons in a snare,  
Condemned to do the flitting of the bat.  
Lovers beneath the singing sky of May,  
They wandered once; clear as the dew on flowers:  
But they fed not on the advancing hours:  
Their hearts held cravings for the buried day.  
Then each applied to each that fatal knife,  
Deep questioning, which probes to endless dole.  
Ah, what a dusty answer gets the soul  
When hot for certainties in this our life!--  
In tragic hints here see what evermore  
Moves dark as yonder midnight ocean's force,  
Thundering like ramping hosts of warrior horse,  
To throw that faint thin line upon the shore!

George Meredith

## Modern Love V: A Message From Her

A message from her set his brain aflame.  
A world of household matters filled her mind,  
Wherein he saw hypocrisy designed:  
She treated him as something that is tame,  
And but at other provocation bites.  
Familiar was her shoulder in the glass,  
Through that dark rain: yet it may come to pass  
That a changed eye finds such familiar sights  
More keenly tempting than new loveliness.  
The 'What has been' a moment seemed his own:  
The splendours, mysteries, dearer because known,  
Nor less divine: Love's inmost sacredness  
Called to him, 'Come!'--In his restraining start,  
Eyes nurtured to be looked at, scarce could see  
A wave of the great waves of Destiny  
Convulsed at a checked impulse of the heart.

George Meredith

## Modern Love Vi: It Chanced His Lips Did Meet

It chanced his lips did meet her forehead cool.  
She had no blush, but slanted down her eye.  
Shamed nature, then, confesses love can die:  
And most she punishes the tender fool  
Who will believe what honours her the most!  
Dead! is it dead? She has a pulse, and flow  
Of tears, the price of blood-drops, as I know,  
For whom the midnight sobs around Love's ghost,  
Since then I heard her, and so will sob on.  
The love is here; it has but changed its aim.  
O bitter barren woman! what's the name?  
The name, the name, the new name thou hast won?  
Behold me striking the world's coward stroke!  
That will I not do, though the sting is dire.  
Beneath the surface this, while by the fire  
They sat, she laughing at a quiet joke.

George Meredith

## Modern Love Vii: She Issues Radiant

She issues radiant from her dressing-room,  
Like one prepared to scale an upper sphere:  
--By stirring up a lower, much I fear  
How deftly that oiled barber lays his bloom  
That long-shanked dapper Cupid with frisked curls  
Can make known women torturingly fair;  
The gold-eyed serpent dwelling in rich hair,  
Awakes beneath his magic whisks and twirls.  
His art can take the eyes from out my head,  
Until I see with eyes of other men;  
While deeper knowledge crouches in its den,  
And sends a spark up:--is it true we are wed?  
Yea! filthiness of body is most vile,  
But faithlessness of heart I do hold worse.  
The former, it were not so great a curse  
To read on the steel-mirror of her smile.

George Meredith

## Modern Love Viii: Yet It Was Plain She Struggled

Yet it was plain she struggled, and that salt  
Of righteous feeling made her pitiful.  
Poor twisting worm, so queenly beautiful!  
Where came the cleft between us? whose the fault?  
My tears are on thee, that have rarely dropped  
As balm for any bitter wound of mine:  
My breast will open for thee at a sign!  
But, no: we are two reed-pipes, coarsely stopped:  
The God once filled them with his mellow breath;  
And they were music till he flung them down,  
Used! used! Hear now the discord-loving clown  
Puff his gross spirit in them, worse than death  
I do not know myself without thee more:  
In this unholy battle I grow base:  
If the same soul be under the same face,  
Speak, and a taste of that old time restore!

George Meredith

## Modern Love X: But Where Began The Change

But where began the change; and what's my crime?  
The wretch condemned, who has not been arraigned,  
Chafes at his sentence. Shall I, unsustained,  
Drag on Love's nerveless body thro' all time?  
I must have slept, since now I wake. Prepare,  
You lovers, to know Love a thing of moods:  
Not like hard life, of laws. In Love's deep woods,  
I dreamt of loyal Life:--the offence is there!  
Love's jealous woods about the sun are curled;  
At least, the sun far brighter there did beam.  
My crime is, that the puppet of a dream,  
I plotted to be worthy of the world.  
Oh, had I with my darling helped to mince  
The facts of life, you still had seen me go  
With hindward feather and with forward toe,  
Her much-adored delightful Fairy Prince!

George Meredith



## Modern Love Xi: Out In The Yellow Meadows

Out in the yellow meadows, where the bee  
Hums by us with the honey of the Spring,  
And showers of sweet notes from the larks on wing,  
Are dropping like a noon-dew, wander we.  
Or is it now? or was it then? for now,  
As then, the larks from running rings pour showers:  
The golden foot of May is on the flowers,  
And friendly shadows dance upon her brow.  
What's this, when Nature swears there is no change  
To challenge eyesight? Now, as then, the grace  
Of heaven seems holding earth in its embrace.  
Nor eyes, nor heart, has she to feel it strange?  
Look, woman, in the West. There wilt thou see  
An amber cradle near the sun's decline:  
Within it, featured even in death divine,  
Is lying a dead infant, slain by thee.

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xii: Not Solely That The Future

Not solely that the Future she destroys,  
And the fair life which in the distance lies  
For all men, beckoning out from dim rich skies:  
Nor that the passing hour's supporting joys  
Have lost the keen-edged flavour, which begat  
Distinction in old times, and still should breed  
Sweet Memory, and Hope,--earth's modest seed,  
And heaven's high-prompting: not that the world is flat  
Since that soft-luring creature I embraced,  
Among the children of Illusion went:  
Methinks with all this loss I were content,  
If the mad Past, on which my foot is based,  
Were firm, or might be blotted: but the whole  
Of life is mixed: the mocking Past will stay:  
And if I drink oblivion of a day,  
So shorten I the stature of my soul.

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xiii: I Play For Seasons, Not Eternities

'I play for Seasons; not Eternities!'  
Says Nature, laughing on her way. 'So must  
All those whose stake is nothing more than dust!'  
And lo, she wins, and of her harmonies  
She is full sure! Upon her dying rose,  
She drops a look of fondness, and goes by,  
Scarce any retrospection in her eye;  
For she the laws of growth most deeply knows,  
Whose hands bear, here, a seed-bag--there, an urn.  
Pledges she herself to aught, 'twould mark her end!  
This lesson of our only visible friend,  
Can we not teach our foolish hearts to learn ?  
Yes! yes!--but, oh, our human rose is fair  
Surpassingly! Lose calmly Love's great bliss,  
When the renewed for ever of a kiss  
Whirls life within the shower of loosened hair!

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xiv: What Soul Would Bargain

What soul would bargain for a cure that brings  
Contempt the nobler agony to kill?  
Rather let me bear on the bitter ill,  
And strike this rusty bosom with new stings!  
It seems there is another veering fit  
Since on a gold-haired lady's eyeballs pure,  
I looked with little prospect of a cure,  
The while her mouth's red bow loosed shafts of wit.  
Just heaven! can it be true that jealousy  
Has decked the woman thus? and does her head  
Swim somewhat for possessions forfeited?  
Madam, you teach me many things that be.  
I open an old book, and there I find  
That "Women still may love whom they deceive."  
Such love I prize not, madam: by your leave,  
The game you play at is not to my mind.

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xix: No State Is Envable

No state is enviable. To the luck alone  
Of some few favoured men I would put claim.  
I bleed, but her who wounds I will not blame.  
Have I not felt her heart as 'twere my own  
Beat thro' me? could I hurt her? heaven and hell!  
But I could hurt her cruelly! Can I let  
My Love's old time-piece to another set,  
Swear it can't stop, and must for ever swell?  
Sure, that's one way Love drifts into the mart  
Where goat-legged buyers throng. I see not plain:--  
My meaning is, it must not be again.  
Great God! the maddest gambler throws his heart.  
If any state be enviable on earth,  
'Tis yon born idiot's, who, as days go by,  
Still rubs his hands before him, like a fly,  
In a queer sort of meditative mirth.

George Meredith

## Modern Love XI: I Bade My Lady Think

I bade my Lady think what she might mean.  
Know I my meaning, I? Can I love one,  
And yet be jealous of another? None  
Commits such folly. Terrible Love, I ween,  
Has might, even dead, half sighing to upheave  
The lightless seas of selfishness amain:  
Seas that in a man's heart have no rain  
To fall and still them. Peace can I achieve,  
By turning to this fountain-source of woe,  
This woman, who's to Love as fire to wood?  
She breathed the violet breath of maidenhood  
Against my kisses once! but I say, No!  
The thing is mocked at! Helplessly afloat,  
I know not what I do, whereto I strive,  
The dread that my old love may be alive,  
Has seized my nursling new love by the throat.

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xli: How Many A Thing

How many a thing which we cast to the ground,  
When others pick it up becomes a gem!  
We grasp at all the wealth it is to them;  
And by reflected light its worth is found.  
Yet for us still 'tis nothing! and that zeal  
Of false appreciation quickly fades.  
This truth is little known to human shades,  
How rare from their own instinct 'tis to feel!  
They waste the soul with spurious desire,  
That is not the ripe flame upon the bough.  
We two have taken up a lifeless vow  
To rob a living passion: dust for fire!  
Madam is grave, and eyes the clock that tells  
Approaching midnight. We have struck despair  
Into two hearts. O, look we like a pair  
Who for fresh nuptials joyfully yield all else?

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xlii: I Am To Follow Her

I am to follow her. There is much grace  
In woman when thus bent on martyrdom.  
They think that dignity of soul may come,  
Perchance, with dignity of body. Base!  
But I was taken by that air of cold  
And statuesque sedateness, when she said  
'I'm going'; lit a taper, bowed her head,  
And went, as with the stride of Pallas bold.  
Fleshly indifference horrible! The hands  
Of Time now signal: O, she's safe from me!  
Within those secret walls what do I see  
Where first she set the taper down she stands:  
Not Pallas: Hebe shamed! Thoughts black as death,  
Like a stirred pool in sunshine break. Her wrists  
I catch: she faltering, as she half resists,  
'You love. . . ? love. . . ? love. . . ?' all on an in-drawn breath.

George Meredith



## Modern Love Xliii: Mark Where The Pressing Wind

Mark where the pressing wind shoots javelin-like,  
Its skeleton shadow on the broad-backed wave!  
Here is a fitting spot to dig Love's grave;  
Here where the ponderous breakers plunge and strike,  
And dart their hissing tongues high up the sand:  
In hearing of the ocean, and in sight  
Of those ribbed wind-streaks running into white.  
If I the death of Love had deeply planned,  
I never could have made it half so sure,  
As by the unblest kisses which upbraid  
The full-waked sense; or failing that, degrade!  
'Tis morning: but no morning can restore  
What we have forfeited. I see no sin:  
The wrong is mixed. In tragic life, God wot,  
No villain need be! Passions spin the plot:  
We are betrayed by what is false within.

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xliv: They Say That Pity

They say, that Pity in Love's service dwells,  
A porter at the rosy temple's gate.  
I missed him going: but it is my fate  
To come upon him now beside his wells;  
Whereby I know that I Love's temple leave,  
And that the purple doors have closed behind.  
Poor soul! if in those early days unkind,  
Thy power to sting had been but power to grieve,  
We now might with an equal spirit meet,  
And not be matched like innocence and vice.  
She for the Temple's worship has paid price,  
And takes the coin of Pity as a cheat.  
She sees through simulation to the bone:  
What's best in her impels her to the worst:  
Never, she cries, shall Pity soothe Love's thirst,  
Or foul hypocrisy for truth atone.

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xlix: He Found Her

He found her by the ocean's moaning verge,  
Nor any wicked change in her discerned;  
And she believed his old love had returned,  
Which was her exultation, and her scourge.  
She took his hand, and walked with him, and seemed  
The wife he sought, though shadow-like and dry.  
She had one terror, lest her heart should sigh,  
And tell her loudly she no longer dreamed.  
She dared not say, 'This is my breast: look in.'  
But there's a strength to help the desperate weak.  
That night he learned how silence best can speak  
The awful things when Pity pleads for Sin.  
About the middle of the night her call  
Was heard, and he came wondering to the bed.  
'Now kiss me, dear! it may be, now!' she said.  
Lethe had passed those lips, and he knew all.

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xlv: It Is The Season

It is the season of the sweet wild rose,  
My Lady's emblem in the heart of me!  
So golden-crownèd shines she gloriously,  
And with that softest dream of blood she glows:  
Mild as an evening heaven round Hesper bright!  
I pluck the flower, and smell it, and revive  
The time when in her eyes I stood alive.  
I seem to look upon it out of Night.  
Here's Madam, stepping hastily. Her whims  
Bid her demand the flower, which I let drop.  
As I proceed, I feel her sharply stop,  
And crush it under heel with trembling limbs.  
She joins me in a cat-like way, and talks  
Of company, and even condescends  
To utter laughing scandal of old friends.  
These are the summer days, and these our walks.

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xlvi: At Last We Parley

At last we parley: we so strangely dumb  
In such a close communion! It befell  
About the sounding of the Matin-bell,  
And lo! her place was vacant, and the hum  
Of loneliness was round me. Then I rose,  
And my disordered brain did guide my foot  
To that old wood where our first love-salute  
Was interchanged: the source of many throes!  
There did I see her, not alone. I moved  
Toward her, and made proffer of my arm.  
She took it simply, with no rude alarm;  
And that disturbing shadow passed reproved.  
I felt the pained speech coming, and declared  
My firm belief in her, ere she could speak.  
A ghastly morning came into her cheek,  
While with a widening soul on me she stared.

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xlvii: We Saw The Swallows

We saw the swallows gathering in the sky,  
And in the osier-isle we heard them noise.  
We had not to look back on summer joys,  
Or forward to a summer of bright dye:  
But in the largeness of the evening earth  
Our spirits grew as we went side by side.  
The hour became her husband and my bride.  
Love that had robbed us so, thus blessed our dearth!  
The pilgrims of the year waxed very loud  
In multitudinous chatterings, as the flood  
Full brown came from the West, and like pale blood  
Expanded to the upper crimson cloud.  
Love that had robbed us of immortal things,  
This little moment mercifully gave,  
Where I have seen across the twilight wave  
The swan sail with her young beneath her wings.

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xlviii: Their Sense

Their sense is with their senses all mixed in,  
Destroyed by subtleties these women are!  
More brain, O Lord, more brain! or we shall mar  
Utterly this fair garden we might win.  
Behold! I looked for peace, and thought it near.  
Our inmost hearts had opened, each to each.  
We drank the pure daylight of honest speech.  
Alas I that was the fatal draught, I fear.  
For when of my lost Lady came the word,  
This woman, O this agony of flesh!  
Jealous devotion bade her break the mesh,  
That I might seek that other like a bird.  
I do adore the nobleness! despise  
The act! She has gone forth, I know not where.  
Will the hard world my sentience of her share?  
I feel the truth; so let the world surmise.

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xv: I Think She Sleeps

I think she sleeps: it must be sleep, when low  
Hangs that abandoned arm toward the floor;  
The face turned with it. Now make fast the door.  
Sleep on: it is your husband, not your foe.  
The Poet's black stage-lion of wronged love,  
Frights not our modern dames:--well if he did!  
Now will I pour new light upon that lid,  
Full-sloping like the breasts beneath. 'Sweet dove,  
Your sleep is pure. Nay, pardon: I disturb.  
I do not? good!' Her waking infant-stare  
Grows woman to the burden my hands bear:  
Her own handwriting to me when no curb  
Was left on Passion's tongue. She trembles through;  
A woman's tremble--the whole instrument:--  
I show another letter lately sent.  
The words are very like: the name is new.

George Meredith



## Modern Love Xvi: In Our Old Shipwrecked Days

In our old shipwrecked days there was an hour,  
When in the firelight steadily aglow,  
Joined slackly, we beheld the red chasm grow  
Among the clicking coals. Our library-bower  
That eve was left to us: and hushed we sat  
As lovers to whom Time is whispering.  
From sudden-opened doors we heard them sing:  
The nodding elders mixed good wine with chat.  
Well knew we that Life's greatest treasure lay  
With us, and of it was our talk. "Ah, yes!  
Love dies!" I said: I never thought it less.  
She yearned to me that sentence to unsay.  
Then when the fire domed blackening, I found  
Her cheek was salt against my kiss, and swift  
Up the sharp scale of sobs her breast did lift:--  
Now am I haunted by that taste! that sound!

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xvii: At Dinner She Is Hostess

At dinner, she is hostess, I am host.  
Went the feast ever cheerfuller? She keeps  
The Topic over intellectual deeps  
In buoyancy afloat. They see no ghost.  
With sparkling surface-eyes we ply the ball:  
It is in truth a most contagious game:  
HIDING THE SKELETON, shall be its name.  
Such play as this the devils might appal!  
But here's the greater wonder; in that we,  
Enamoured of an acting nought can tire,  
Each other, like true hypocrites, admire;  
Warm-lighted looks, Love's ephemerioe,  
Shoot gaily o'er the dishes and the wine.  
We waken envy of our happy lot.  
Fast, sweet, and golden, shows the marriage-knot.  
Dear guests, you now have seen Love's corpse-light shine.

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xviii: Here Jack And Tom

Here Jack and Tom are paired with Moll and Meg.  
Curved open to the river-reach is seen  
A country merry-making on the green.  
Fair space for signal shakings of the leg.  
That little screwy fiddler from his booth,  
Whence flows one nut-brown stream, commands the joints  
Of all who caper here at various points.  
I have known rustic revels in my youth:  
The May-fly pleasures of a mind at ease.  
An early goddess was a county lass:  
A charmed Amphion-oak she tripped the grass.  
What life was that I lived? The life of these?  
Heaven keep them happy! Nature they seem near.  
They must, I think, be wiser than I am;  
They have the secret of the bull and lamb.  
'Tis true that when we trace its source, 'tis beer.

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xx: I Am Not Of Those

I am not of those miserable males  
Who sniff at vice and, daring not to snap,  
Do therefore hope for heaven. I take the hap  
Of all my deeds. The wind that fills my sails  
Propels; but I am helmsman. Am I wrecked,  
I know the devil has sufficient weight  
To bear: I lay it not on him, or fate.  
Besides, he's damned. That man I do suspect  
A coward, who would burden the poor deuce  
With what ensues from his own slipperiness.  
I have just found a wanton-scented tress  
In an old desk, dusty for lack of use.  
Of days and nights it is demonstrative,  
That, like some aged star, gleam luridly.  
If for those times I must ask charity,  
Have I not any charity to give?

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xxi: We Three Are

We three are on the cedar-shadowed lawn;  
My friend being third. He who at love once laughed,  
Is in the weak rib by a fatal shaft  
Struck through, and tells his passion's bashful dawn  
And radiant culmination, glorious crown,  
When 'this' she said: went 'thus': most wondrous she.  
Our eyes grow white, encountering that we are three,  
Forgetful; then together we look down.  
But he demands our blessing; is convinced  
That words of wedded lovers must bring good.  
We question; if we dare! or if we should!  
And pat him, with light laugh. We have not winced.  
Next, she has fallen. Fainting points the sign  
To happy things in wedlock. When she wakes,  
She looks the star that thro' the cedar shakes:  
Her lost moist hand clings mortally to mine.

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xxii: What May The Woman

What may the woman labour to confess?  
There is about her mouth a nervous twitch.  
'Tis something to be told, or hidden:--which?  
I get a glimpse of hell in this mild guess.  
She has desires of touch, as if to feel  
That all the household things are things she knew.  
She stops before the glass. What sight in view?  
A face that seems the latest to reveal!  
For she turns from it hastily, and tossed  
Irresolute, steals shadow-like to where  
I stand; and wavering pale before me there,  
Her tears fall still as oak-leaves after frost.  
She will not speak. I will not ask. We are  
League-sundered by the silent gulf between.  
Yon burly lovers on the village green,  
Yours is a lower, and a happier star!

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xxiii: 'Tis Christmas Weather

'Tis Christmas weather, and a country house  
Receives us: rooms are full: we can but get  
An attic-crib. Such lovers will not fret  
At that, it is half-said. The great carouse  
Knocks hard upon the midnight's hollow door,  
But when I knock at hers, I see the pit.  
Why did I come here in that dullard fit?  
I enter, and lie couched upon the floor.  
Passing, I caught the coverlet's quick beat:--  
Come, Shame, burn to my soul! and Pride, and Pain--  
Foul demons that have tortured me, enchain!  
Out in the freezing darkness the lambs bleat.  
The small bird stiffens in the low starlight.  
I know not how, but shuddering as I slept,  
I dreamed a banished angel to me crept:  
My feet were nourished on her breasts all night.

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xxiv: The Misery Is Greater

The misery is greater, as I live!  
To know her flesh so pure, so keen her sense,  
That she does penance now for no offence,  
Save against Love. The less can I forgive!  
The less can I forgive, though I adore  
That cruel lovely pallor which surrounds  
Her footsteps; and the low vibrating sounds  
That come on me, as from a magic shore.  
Low are they, but most subtle to find out  
The shrinking soul. Madam, 'tis understood  
When women play upon their womanhood;  
It means, a Season gone. And yet I doubt  
But I am duped. That nun-like look waylays  
My fancy. Oh! I do but wait a sign!  
Pluck out the eyes of pride! thy mouth to mine!  
Never! though I die thirsting. Go thy ways!

George Meredith



## Modern Love Xxix: Am I Failing

Am I failing ? For no longer can I cast  
A glory round about this head of gold.  
Glory she wears, but springing from the mould;  
Not like the consecration of the Past!  
Is my soul beggared? Something more than earth  
I cry for still: I cannot be at peace  
In having Love upon a' mortal lease.  
I cannot take the woman at her worth!  
Where is the ancient wealth wherewith I clothed  
Our human nakedness, and could endow  
With spiritual splendour a white brow  
That else had grinned at me the fact I loathed ?  
A kiss is but a kiss now! and no wave  
Of a great flood that whirls me to the sea.  
But, as you will! we'll sit contentedly,  
And eat our pot of honey on the grave.

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xxv: You Like Not That French Novel

You like not that French novel? Tell me why.  
You think it quite unnatural. Let us see.  
The actors are, it seems, the usual three:  
Husband, and wife, and lover. She--but fie!  
In England we'll not hear of it. Edmond,  
The lover, her devout chagrin doth share;  
Blanc-mange and absinthe are his penitent fare,  
Till his pale aspect makes her over-fond:  
So, to preclude fresh sin, he tries rosbif.  
Meantime the husband is no more abused:  
Auguste forgives her ere the tear is used.  
Then hangeth all on one tremendous IF:--  
If she will choose between them. She does choose;  
And takes her husband, like a proper wife.  
Unnatural? My dear, these things are life:  
And life, some think, is worthy of the Muse.

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xxvi: Love Ere He Bleeds

Love ere he bleeds, an eagle in high skies,  
Has earth beneath his wings: from reddened eve  
He views the rosy dawn. In vain they weave  
The fatal web below while far he flies.  
But when the arrow strikes him, there's a change.  
He moves but in the track of his spent pain,  
Whose red drops are the links of a harsh chain,  
Binding him to the ground, with narrow range.  
A subtle serpent then has Love become.  
I had the eagle in my bosom erst:  
Henceforward with the serpent I am cursed.  
I can interpret where the mouth is dumb.  
Speak, and I see the side-lie of a truth.  
Perchance my heart may pardon you this deed:  
But be no coward:--you that made Love bleed,  
You must bear all the venom of his tooth!

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xxvii: Distraction Is The Panacea

Distraction is the panacea, Sir!  
I hear my oracle of Medicine say.  
Doctor! that same specific yesterday  
I tried, and the result will not deter  
A second trial. Is the devil's line  
Of golden hair, or raven black, composed?  
And does a cheek, like any sea-shell rosed,  
Or clear as widowed sky, seem most divine?  
No matter, so I taste forgetfulness.  
And if the devil snare me, body and mind,  
Here gratefully I score:--he seemèd kind,  
When not a soul would comfort my distress!  
O sweet new world, in which I rise new made!  
O Lady, once I gave love: now I take!  
Lady, I must be flattered. Shouldst thou wake  
The passion of a demon, be not afraid.

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xxviii: I Must Be Flattered

I must be flattered. The imperious  
Desire speaks out. Lady, I am content  
To play with you the game of Sentiment,  
And with you enter on paths perilous;  
But if across your beauty I throw light,  
To make it threefold, it must be all mine.  
First secret; then avowed. For I must shine  
Envied,--I, lessened in my proper sight!  
Be watchful of your beauty, Lady dear!  
How much hangs on that lamp you cannot tell.  
Most earnestly I pray you, tend it well:  
And men shall see me as a burning sphere;  
And men shall mark you eyeing me, and groan  
To be the God of such a grand sunflower!  
I feel the promptings of Satanic power,  
While you do homage unto me alone.

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xxx: What Are We First

What are we first? First, animals; and next  
Intelligences at a leap; on whom  
Pale lies the distant shadow of the tomb,  
And all that draweth on the tomb for text.  
Into which state comes Love, the crowning sun:  
Beneath whose light the shadow loses form.  
We are the lords of life, and life is warm.  
Intelligence and instinct now are one.  
But nature says: 'My children most they seem  
When they least know me: therefore I decree  
That they shall suffer.' Swift doth young Love flee,  
And we stand wakened, shivering from our dream.  
Then if we study Nature we are wise.  
Thus do the few who live but with the day:  
The scientific animals are they.  
Lady, this is my sonnet to your eyes.

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xxxi: This Golden Head

This golden head has wit in it. I live  
Again, and a far higher life, near her.  
Some women like a young philosopher;  
Perchance because he is diminutive.  
For woman's manly god must not exceed  
Proportions of the natural nursing size.  
Great poets and great sages draw no prize  
With women: but the little lap-dog breed,  
Who can be hugged, or on a mantel-piece  
Perched up for adoration, these obtain  
Her homage. And of this we men are vain?  
Of this! 'Tis ordered for the world's increase  
Small flattery! Yet she has that rare gift  
To beauty, Common Sense. I am approved.  
It is not half so nice as being loved,  
And yet I do prefer it. What's my drift?

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xxxii: Full Faith I Have

Full faith I have she holds that rarest gift  
To beauty, Common Sense. To see her lie  
With her fair visage an inverted sky  
Bloom-covered, while the underlids uplift,  
Would almost wreck the faith; but when her mouth  
(Can it kiss sweetly? sweetly!) would address  
The inner me that thirsts for her no less,  
And has so long been languishing in drouth,  
I feel that I am matched; that I am man!  
One restless corner of my heart or head,  
That holds a dying something never dead,  
Still frets, though Nature giveth all she can.  
It means, that woman is not, I opine,  
Her sex's antidote. Who seeks the asp  
For serpent's bites? 'Twould calm me could I clasp  
Shrieking Bacchantes with their souls of wine!

George Meredith



## Modern Love Xxxiii: In Paris, At The Louvre

'In Paris, at the Louvre, there have I seen  
The sumptuously-feathered angel pierce  
Prone Lucifer, descending. Looked he fierce,  
Showing the fight a fair one? Too serene!  
The young Pharsalians did not disarray  
Less willingly their locks of floating silk:  
That suckling mouth of his, upon the milk  
Of heaven might still be feasting through the fray.  
Oh, Raphael! when men the Fiend do fight,  
They conquer not upon such easy terms.  
Half serpent in the struggle grow these worms  
And does he grow half human, all is right.'  
This to my Lady in a distant spot,  
Upon the theme: While mind is mastering clay,  
Gross clay invades it. If the spy you play,  
My wife, read this! Strange love talk, is it not?

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xxxiv: Madam Would Speak With Me

Madam would speak with me. So, now it comes:  
The Deluge or else Fire! She's well, she thanks  
My husbandship. Our chain on silence clanks.  
Time leers between, above his twiddling thumbs.  
Am I quite well? Most excellent in health!  
The journals, too, I diligently peruse.  
Vesuvius is expected to give news:  
Niagara is no noisier. By stealth  
Our eyes dart scrutinizing snakes. She's glad  
I'm happy, says her quivering under-lip.  
"And are not you?" "How can I be?" "Take ship!  
For happiness is somewhere to be had."  
"Nowhere for me!" Her voice is barely heard.  
I am not melted, and make no pretence.  
With commonplace I freeze her, tongue and sense.  
Niagara or Vesuvius is deferred.

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xxxix: She Yields

She yields: my Lady in her noblest mood  
Has yielded: she, my golden-crownèd rose!  
The bride of every sense! more sweet than those  
Who breathe the violet breath of maidenhood.  
O visage of still music in the sky  
Soft moon! I feel thy song, my fairest friend!  
True harmony within can apprehend  
Dumb harmony without. And hark! 'tis nigh!  
Belief has struck the note of sound: a gleam  
Of living silver shows me where she shook  
Her long white fingers down the shadowy brook,  
That sings her song, half waking, half in dream.  
What two come here to mar this heavenly tune ?  
A man is one: the woman bears my name,  
And honour. Their hands touch! Am I still tame?  
God, what a dancing spectre seems the moon!

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xxxv: It Is No Vulgar Nature

It is no vulgar nature I have wived.  
Secretive, sensitive, she takes a wound  
Deep to her soul, as if the sense had swooned,  
And not a thought of vengeance had survived.  
No confidences has she: but relief  
Must come to one whose suffering is acute.  
O have a care of natures that are mute!  
They punish you in acts: their steps are brief.  
What is she doing? What does she demand  
From Providence or me? She is not one  
Long to endure this torpidly, and shun  
The drugs that crowd about a woman's hand.  
At Forfeits during snow we played, and I  
Must kiss her. 'Well performed!' I said: then she:  
'Tis hardly worth the money, you agree?'  
Save her? What for? To act this wedded lie!

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xxxvi: My Lady Unto Madam

My Lady unto Madam makes her bow.  
The charm of women is, that even while  
You're probed by them for tears, you yet may smile,  
Nay, laugh outright, as I have done just now.  
The interview was gracious: they anoint  
(To me aside) each other with fine praise:  
Discriminating compliments they raise,  
That hit with wondrous aim on the weak point:  
My Lady's nose of Nature might complain.  
It is not fashioned aptly to express  
Her character of large-browed steadfastness.  
But Madam says: Thereof she may be vain!  
Now, Madam's faulty feature is a glazed  
And inaccessible eye, that has soft fires,  
Wide gates, at love-time only. This admires  
My Lady. At the two I stand amazed.

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xxxvii: Along The Garden Terrace

Along the garden terrace, under which  
A purple valley (lighted at its edge  
By smoky torch-flame on the long cloud-ledge  
Whereunder dropped the chariot), glimmers rich,  
A quiet company we pace, and wait  
The dinner-bell in prae-digestive calm.  
So sweet up violet banks the Southern balm  
Breathes round, we care not if the bell be late:  
Though here and there grey seniors question Time  
In irritable coughings. With slow foot  
The low rosed moon, the face of Music mute,  
Begins among her silent bars to climb.  
As in and out, in silvery dusk, we thread,  
I hear the laugh of Madam, and discern  
My Lady's heel before me at each turn.  
Our tragedy, is it alive or dead?

George Meredith

## Modern Love Xxxviii: Give To Imagination

Give to imagination some pure light  
In human form to fix it, or you shame  
The devils with that hideous human game:  
Imagination urging appetite!  
Thus fallen have earth's greatest Gogmagogs,  
Who dazzle us, whom we can not revere:  
Imagination is the charioteer  
That, in default of better, drives the hogs.  
So, therefore, my dear Lady, let me love!  
My soul is arrowy to the light in you.  
You know me that I never can renew  
The bond that woman broke: what would you have?  
'Tis Love, or Vileness! not a choice between,  
Save petrification! What does Pity here?  
She killed a thing, and now it's dead, 'tis dear.  
Oh, when you counsel me, think what you mean!

George Meredith

# Mother To Babe

I

Fleck of sky you are,  
Dropped through branches dark,  
O my little one, mine!  
Promise of the star,  
Outpour of the lark;  
Beam and song divine.

II

See this precious gift,  
Steeping in new birth  
All my being, for sign  
Earth to heaven can lift,  
Heaven descend on earth,  
Both in one be mine!

III

Life in light you glass  
When you peep and coo,  
You, my little one, mine!  
Brooklet chirps to grass,  
Daisy looks in dew  
Up to dear sunshine.

George Meredith



# My Theme

Of me and of my theme think what thou wilt:  
The song of gladness one straight bolt can check.  
But I have never stood at Fortune's beck:  
Were she and her light crew to run atilt  
At my poor holding little would be spilt;  
Small were the praise for singing o'er that wreck.  
Who courts her dooms to strife his bended neck;  
He grasps a blade, not always by the hilt.  
Nathless she strikes at random, can be fell  
With other than those votaries she deals  
The black or brilliant from her thunder-rift.  
I say but that this love of Earth reveals  
A soul beside our own to quicken, quell,  
Irradiate, and through ruinous floods uplift.

George Meredith

# Napoleon

## I

Cannon his name,  
Cannon his voice, he came.  
Who heard of him heard shaken hills,  
An earth at quake, to quiet stamped;  
Who looked on him beheld the will of wills,  
The driver of wild flocks where lions ramped:  
Beheld War's liveries flee him, like lumped grass  
Nid-nod to ground beneath the cuffing storm;  
While laurelled over his Imperial form,  
Forth from her bearded tube of lacquey brass,  
Reverberant notes and long blew volant Fame.  
Incarnate Victory, Power manifest,  
Infernal or God-given to mankind,  
On the quenched volcano's cusp did he take stand,  
A conquering army's height above the land,  
Which calls that army offspring of its breast,  
And sees it mid the starry camps enshrined;  
His eye the cannon's flame,  
The cannon's cave his mind.

## II

To weld the nation in a name of dread,  
And scatter carrion flies off wounds unhealed,  
The Necessitated came, as comes from out  
Electric ebon lightning's javelin-head,  
Threatening agitation in the revealed  
Founts of our being; terrible with doubt,  
With radiance restorative. At one stride  
Athwart the Law he stood for sovereign sway.  
That Soliform made featureless beside  
His brilliancy who neighboured: vapour they;  
Vapour what postured statues barred his tread.  
On high in amphitheatre field on field,  
Italian, Egyptian, Austrian,  
Far heard and of the carnage discord clear,  
Bells of his escalating triumphs pealed

In crashes on a choral chant severe,  
Heraldic of the authentic Charlemagne,  
Globe, sceptre, sword, to enfold, to rule, to smite,  
Make unity of the mass,  
Coherent or refractory, by his might.

Forth from her bearded tube of lacquey brass,  
Fame blew, and tuned the jangles, bent the knees  
Rebellious or submissive; his decrees  
Were thunder in those heavens and compelled:  
Such as disordered earth, eclipsed of stars,  
Endures for sign of Order's calm return,  
Whereunto she is vowed; and his wreckage-spars,  
His harried ships, old riotous Ocean lifts alight,  
Subdued to splendour in his delirant churn.  
Glory suffused the accordant, quelled,  
By magic of high sovereignty, revolt:  
And he, the reader of men, himself unread;  
The name of hope, the name of dread;  
Bloom of the coming years or blight;  
An arm to hurl the bolt  
With aim Olympian; bore  
Likeness to Godhead. Whither his flashes hied  
Hosts fell; what he constructed held rock-fast.  
So did earth's abjects deem of him that built and clove.  
Torch on imagination, beams he cast,  
Whereat they hailed him deified:  
If less than an eagle-speeding Jove, than Vulcan more.  
Or it might be a Vulcan-Jove,  
Europe for smithy, Europe's floor  
Lurid with sparks in evanescent showers,  
Loud echo-clap of hammers at all hours,  
Our skies the reflex of its furnace blast.

### III

On him the long enchained, released  
For bride of the miracle day up the midway blue;  
She from her heavenly lover fallen to serve for feast  
Of rancours and raw hungers; she, the untrue,  
Yet pitiable, not despicable, gazed.  
Fawning, her body bent, she gazed

With eyes the moonstone portals to her heart:  
Eyes magnifying through hysteric tears  
This apparition, ghostly for belief;  
Demoniac or divine, but sole  
Over earth's mightiest written Chief;  
Earth's chosen, crowned, unchallengeable upstart:  
The trumpet word to awake, transform, renew;  
The arbiter of circumstance;  
High above limitations, as the spheres.  
Nor ever had heroical Romance,  
Never ensanguined History's lengthened scroll,  
Shown fulminant to shoot the levin dart  
Terrific as this man, by whom upraised,  
Aggrandized and begemmed, she outstripped her peers;  
Like midnight's levying brazier-beacon blazed  
Defiant to the world, a rally for her sons,  
Day of the darkness; this man's mate; by him,  
Cannon his name,  
Rescued from vivisectionist and knave,  
Her body's dominators and her shame;  
By him with the rivers of ranked battalions, brave  
Past mortal, girt: a march of swords and guns  
Incessant; his proved warriors; loaded dice  
He flung on the crested board, where chilly Fears  
Behold the Reaper's ground, Death sitting grim,  
Awatch for his predestined ones,  
Mid shrieks and torrent-hooves; but these,  
Inebriate of his inevitable device,  
Hail it their hero's wood of lustrous laurel-trees,  
Blossom and fruit of fresh Hesperides,  
The boiling life-blood in their cheers.  
Unequaled since the world was man they pour  
A spiky girdle round her; these, her sons,  
His cataracts at smooth holiday, soon to roar  
Obstruction shattered at his will or whim:  
Kind to her ear as quiring Cherubim,  
And trampling earth like scornful mastodons.

#### IV

The flood that swept her to be slave  
Adoring, under thought of being his mate,

These were, and unto the visibly unexcelled,  
As much of heart as objects can she gave,  
Or what of heart the body bears for freight  
When Majesty apparent overawes;  
By the flash of his ascending deeds upheld,  
Which let not feminine pride in him have pause  
To question where the nobler pride rebelled.  
She read the hieroglyphic on his brow,  
Felt his firm hand to wield the giant's mace;  
Herself whirled upward in an eagle's claws,  
Past recollection of her earthly place;  
And if cold Reason pressed her, called him Fate;  
Offering abashed the servile woman's vow.  
Delirium was her virtue when the look  
At fettered wrists and violated laws  
Faith in a rectitude Supernal shook,  
Till worship of him shone as her last rational state,  
The slave's apology for gemmed disgrace.  
Far in her mind that leap from earth to the ghost  
Midway on high; or felt as a troubled pool;  
Or as a broken sleep that hunts a dream half lost,  
Arrested and rebuked by the common school  
Of daily things for truancy. She could rejoice  
To know with wakeful eyeballs Violence  
Her crowned possessor, and, on every sense  
Incumbent, Fact, Imperial Fact, her choice,  
In scorn of barren visions, aims at a glassy void.  
Who sprang for Liberty once, found slavery sweet;  
And Tyranny, on alert subservience buoyed,  
Spurred a blood-mare immeasurably fleet  
To shoot the transient leagues in a passing wink,  
Prompt for the glorious bound at the fanged abyss's brink.  
Scarce felt she that she bled when battle scored  
On riddled flags the further conjured line;  
From off the meteor gleam of his waved sword  
Reflected bright in permanence: she bled  
As the Bacchante spills her challengeing wine  
With whirl o' the cup before the kiss to lip;  
And bade drudge History in his footprints tread,  
For pride of sword-strokes o'er slow penmanship:  
Each step of his a volume: his sharp word  
The shower of steel and lead

Or pastoral sunshine.

V

Persistent through the brazen chorus round  
His thunderous footsteps on the foeman's ground,  
A broken carol of wild notes was heard,  
As when an ailing infant wails a dream.  
Strange in familiarity it rang:  
And now along the dark blue vault might seem  
Winged migratories having but heaven for home,  
Now the lone sea-bird's cry down shocks of foam,  
Beneath a ruthless paw the captive's pang.

It sang the gift that comes from God  
To mind of man as air to lung.  
So through her days of under sod  
Her faith unto her heart had sung,  
Like bedded seed by frozen clod,  
With view of wide-armed heaven and buds at burst,  
And midway up, Earth's fluttering little lyre.  
Even for a glimpse, for even a hope in chained desire  
The vision of it watered thirst.

VI

But whom those errant moans accused  
As Liberty's murderous mother, cried accursed,  
France blew to deafness: for a space she mused;  
She smoothed a startled look, and sought,  
From treasuries of the adoring slave,  
Her surest way to strangle thought;  
Picturing her dread lord decree advance  
Into the enemy's land; artillery, bayonet, lance;  
His ordering fingers point the dial's to time their ranks:  
Himself the black storm-cloud, the tempest's bayonet-glaive.  
Like foam-heads of a loosened freshet bursting banks,  
By mount and fort they thread to swamp the sluggard plains.  
Shines his gold-laurel sun, or cloak connivent rains.  
They press to where the hosts in line and square throng mute;  
He watchful of their form, the Audacious, the Astute;  
Eagle to grip the field; to work his craftiest, fox.

From his brief signal, straight the stroke of the leveller falls;  
From him those opal puffs, those arcs with the clouded balls:  
He waves and the voluble scene is a quagmire shifting blocks;  
They clash, they are knotted, and now 'tis the deed of the axe on  
the log;  
Here away moves a spiky woodland, and yon away sweep  
Rivers of horse torrent-mad to the shock, and the heap over heap  
Right through the troughed black lines turned to bunches or shreds,  
or a fog  
Rolling off sunlight's arrows. Not mightier Phoebus in ire,  
Nor deadlier Jove's avenging right hand, than he of the brain  
Keen at an enemy's mind to encircle and pierce and constrain,  
Muffling his own for a fate-charged blow very Gods may admire.  
Sure to behold are his eagles on high where the conflict raged.  
Rightly, then, should France worship, and deafen the disaccord  
Of those who dare withstand an irresistible sword  
To thwart his predestined subjection of Europe. Let them submit!  
She said it aloud, and heard in her breast, as a singer caged,  
With the beat of wings at bars, Earth's fluttering little lyre.  
No more at midway heaven, but liker midway to the pit:  
Not singing the spirally upward of rapture, the downward of pain  
Rather, the drop sheer downward from pressure of merciless weight.

Her strangled thought got breath, with her worship held debate;  
To yield and sink, yet eye askant the mark she had missed.  
Over the black-blue rollers of that broad Westerly main,  
Steady to sky, the light of Liberty glowed  
In a flaming pillar, that cast on the troubled waters a road  
For Europe to cross, and see the thing lost subsist.  
For there 'twas a shepherd led his people, no butcher of sheep;  
Firmly there the banner he first upreared  
Stands to rally; and nourishing grain do his children reap  
From a father beloved in life, in his death revered.  
Contemplating him and his work, shall a skyward glance  
Clearer sight of our dreamed and abandoned obtain;  
Nay, but as if seen in station above the Republic, France  
Had view of her one-day's heavenly lover again;  
Saw him amid the bright host looking down on her; knew she had  
erred,  
Knew him her judge, knew yonder the spirit preferred;  
Yonder the base of the summit she strove that day to ascend,  
Ere cannon mastered her soul, and all dreams had end.

## VII

Soon felt she in her shivered frame  
A bodeful drain of blood illumine  
Her wits with frosty fire to read  
The dazzling wizard who would have her bleed  
On fruitless marsh and snows of spectral gloom  
For victory that was victory scarce in name.  
Husky his clarions laboured, and her sighs  
O'er slaughtered sons were heavier than the prize;  
Recalling how he stood by Frederic's tomb,  
With Frederic's country underfoot and spurned:  
There meditated; till her hope might guess,  
Albeit his constant star prescribe success,  
The savage strife would sink, the civil aim  
To head a mannered world breathe zephyrous  
Of morning after storm; whereunto she yearned;  
And Labour's lovely peace, and Beauty's courtly bloom,  
The mind in strenuous tasks hilarious.  
At such great height, where hero hero topped,  
Right sanely should the Grand Ascendant think  
No further leaps at the fanged abyss's brink  
True Genius takes: be battle's dice-box dropped!

She watched his desert features, hung to hear  
The honey words desired, and veiled her face;  
Hearing the Seaman's name recur  
Wrathfully, thick with a meaning worse  
Than call to the march: for that inveterate Purse  
Could kindle the extinct, inform a vacant place,  
Conjure a heart into the trebly felled.  
It squeezed the globe, insufferably swelled  
To feed insurgent Europe: rear and van  
Were haunted by the amphibious curse;  
Here flesh, there phantom, livelier after rout:  
The Seaman piping aye to the rightabout,  
Distracted Europe's Master, puffed remote  
Those Indies of the swift Macedonian,  
Whereon would Europe's Master somewhiles doat,  
In dreamings on a docile universe  
Beneath an immarcessible Charlemagne.



Nor marvel France should veil a seer's face,  
And call on darkness as a blest retreat.  
Magnanimously could her iron Emperor  
Confront submission: hostile stirred to heat  
All his vast enginery, allowed no halt  
Up withered avenues of waste-blood war,  
To the pitiless red mounts of fire afume,  
As 'twere the world's arteries opened! Woe the race!  
Ask wherefore Fortune's vile caprice should balk  
His panther spring across the foaming salt,  
From martial sands to the cliffs of pallid chalk!  
There is no answer: seed of black defeat  
She then did sow, and France nigh unto death foredoom.  
See since that Seaman's epicycle sprite  
Engirdle, lure and goad him to the chase  
Along drear leagues of crimson spotting white  
With mother's tears of France, that he may meet  
Behind suborned battalions, ranked as wheat  
Where peeps the weedy poppy, him of the sea;  
Earth's power to baffle Ocean's power resume;  
Victorious army crown o'er Victory's fleet;  
And bearing low that Seaman upon knee,  
Stay the vexed question of supremacy,  
Obnoxious in the vault by Frederic's tomb.

## VIII

Poured streams of Europe's veins the flood  
Full Rhine or Danube rolls off morning-tide  
Through shadowed reaches into crimson-dyed:  
And Rhine and Danube knew her gush of blood  
Down the plucked roots the deepest in her breast.  
He tossed her cordials, from his laurels pressed.  
She drank for dryness thirstily, praised his gifts.  
The blooded frame a powerful draught uplifts  
Writhed the devotedness her voice rang wide  
In cries ecstatic, as of the martyr-Blest,  
Their spirits issuing forth of bodies racked,  
And crazy chuckles, with life's tears at feud;  
While near her heart the sunken sentinel  
Called Critic marked, and dumb in awe reviewed

This torture, this anointed, this untracked  
To mortal source, this alien of his kind;  
Creator, slayer, conjuror, Solon-Mars,  
The cataract of the abyss, the star of stars;  
Whose arts to lay the senses under spell  
Aroused an insurrectionary mind.

## IX

He, did he love her? France was his weapon, shrewd  
At edge, a wind in onset: he loved well  
His tempered weapon, with the which he hewed  
Clean to the ground impediments, or hacked,  
Sure of the blade that served the great man-miracle.  
He raised her, robed her, gemmed her for his bride,  
Did but her blood in blindness given exact.  
Her blood she gave, was blind to him as guide:  
She quivered at his word, and at his touch  
Was hound or steed for any mark he espied.  
He loved her more than little, less than much.  
The fair subservient of Imperial Fact  
Next to his consanguineous was placed  
In ranked esteem; above the diurnal meal,  
Vexatious carnal appetites above,  
Above his hoards, while she Imperial Fact embraced,  
And rose but at command from under heel.  
The love devolvent, the ascension love,  
Receptive or profuse, were fires he lacked,  
Whose marrow had expelled their wasteful sparks;  
Whose mind, the vast machine of endless haste,  
Took up but solids for its glowing seal.  
The hungry love, that fish-like creatures feel,  
Impelled for prize of hooks, for prey of sharks,  
His night's first quarter sicklied to distaste,  
In warm enjoyment barely might distract.  
A head that held an Europe half devoured  
Taste in the blood's conceit of pleasure soured.  
Nought save his rounding aim, the means he plied,  
Death for his cause, to him could point appeal.  
His mistress was the thing of uses tried.  
Frigid the netting smile on whom he wooed,  
But on his Policy his eye was lewd.

That sharp long zig-zag into distance brooked  
No foot across; a shade his ire provoked.  
The blunder or the cruelty of a deed  
His Policy imperative could plead.  
He deemed nought other precious, nor knew he  
Legitimate outside his Policy.  
Men's lives and works were due, from their birth's date,  
To the State's shield and sword, himself the State.  
He thought for them in mass, as Titan may;  
For their pronounced well-being bade obey;  
O'er each obstructive thicket thunderclapped,  
And straight their easy road to market mapped.  
Watched Argus to survey the huge preserves  
He held or coveted; Mars was armed alert  
At sign of motion; yet his brows were murk,  
His gorge would surge, to see the butcher's work,  
The Reaper's field; a sensitive in nerves.  
He rode not over men to do them hurt.  
As one who claimed to have for paramour  
Earth's fairest form, he dealt the cancelling blow;  
Impassioned, still impersonal; to ensure  
Possession; free of rivals, not their foe.

The common Tyrant's frenzies, rancour, spites,  
He knew as little as men's claim on rights.  
A kindness for old servants, early friends,  
Was constant in him while they served his ends;  
And if irascible, 'twas the moment's reek  
From fires diverted by some gusty freak.  
His Policy the act which breeds the act  
Prevised, in issues accurately summed  
From reckonings of men's tempers, terrors, needs:-  
That universal army, which he leads  
Who builds Imperial on Imperious Fact.  
Within his hot brain's hammering workshop hummed  
A thousand furious wheels at whirr, untired  
As Nature in her reproductive throes;  
And did they grate, he spake, and cannon fired:  
The cause being aye the incendiary foes  
Proved by prostration culpable. His dispense  
Of Justice made his active conscience;  
His passive was of ceaseless labour formed.

So found this Tyrant sanction and repose;  
Humanly just, inhumanly unwarmed.  
Preventive fencings with the foul intent  
Occult, by him observed and foiled betimes,  
Let fool historians chronicle as crimes.  
His blows were dealt to clear the way he went:  
Too busy sword and mind for needless blows.  
The mighty bird of sky minutest grains  
On ground perceived; in heaven but rays or rains;  
In humankind diversities of masks,  
For rule of men the choice of bait or goads.  
The statesman steered the despot to large tasks;  
The despot drove the statesman on short roads.  
For Order's cause he laboured, as inclined  
A soldier's training and his Euclid mind.  
His army unto men he could present  
As model of the perfect instrument.  
That creature, woman, was the sofa soft,  
When warriors their dusty armour doffed,  
And read their manuals for the making truce  
With rosy frailties framed to reproduce.  
He farmed his land, distillingly alive  
For the utmost extract he might have and hive,  
Wherewith to marshal force; and in like scheme,  
Benign shone Hymen's torch on young love's dream.  
Thus to be strong was he beneficent;  
A fount of earth, likewise a firmament.

The disputant in words his eye dismayed:  
Opinions blocked his passage. Rent  
Were Councils with a gesture; brayed  
By hoarse camp-phrase what argument  
Dared interpose to waken spleen  
In him whose vision grasped the unseen,  
Whose counsellor was the ready blade,  
Whose argument the cannonade.  
He loathed his land's divergent parties, loth  
To grant them speech, they were such idle troops;  
The friable and the grumous, dizzards both.  
Men were good sticks his mastery wrought from hoops;  
Some serviceable, none credible on oath.  
The silly preference they nursed to die

In beds he scorned, and led where they should lie.  
If magic made them pliable for his use,  
Magician he could be by planned surprise.  
For do they see the deuce in human guise,  
As men's acknowledged head appears the deuce,  
And they will toil with devilish craft and zeal.  
Among them certain vagrant wits that had  
Ideas buzzed; they were the feebly mad;  
Pursuers of a film they hailed ideal;  
But could be dangerous fire-flies for a brain  
Subdued by fact, still amorous of the inane.  
With a breath he blew them out, to beat their wings  
The way of such transfeminated things,  
And France had sense of vacancy in Light.

That is the soul's dead darkness, making clutch  
Wild hands for aid at muscles within touch;  
Adding to slavery's chain the stringent twist;  
Even when it brings close surety that aright  
She reads her Tyrant through his golden mist;  
Perceives him fast to a harsher Tyrant bound;  
Self-ridden, self-hunted, captive of his aim;  
Material grandeur's ape, the Infernal's hound;  
Enormous, with no infinite around;  
No starred deep sky, no Muse, or lame  
The dusty pattering pinions,  
The voice as through the brazen tube of Fame.

X

Hugest of engines, a much limited man,  
She saw the Lustrous, her great lord, appear  
Through that smoked glass her last privation brought  
To point her critic eye and spur her thought:  
A heart but to propel Leviathan;  
A spirit that breathed but in earth's atmosphere.  
Amid the plumed and sceptred ones  
Irradiatingly Jovian,  
The mountain tower capped by the floating cloud;  
A nursery screamer where dialectics ruled:  
Mannerless, graceless, laughterless, unlike  
Herself in all, yet with such power to strike,

That she the various features she could scan  
Dared not to sum, though seeing: and befooled  
By power which beamed omnipotent, she bowed,  
Subservient as roused echo round his guns.  
Invulnerable Prince of Myrmidons,  
He sparkled, by no sage Athene schooled.  
Partly she read her riddle, stricken and pained;  
But irony, her spirit's tongue, restrained.  
The Critic, last of vital in the proud  
Enslaved, when most detectively endowed,  
Admired how irony's venom off him ran,  
Like rain-drops down a statue cast in bronze:  
Whereby of her keen rapier disarmed,  
Again her chant of eulogy began,  
Protesting, but with slavish senses charmed.

Her warrior, chief among the valorous great  
In arms he was, dispelling shades of blame,  
With radiance palpable in fruit and weight.  
Heard she reproach, his victories blared response;  
His victories bent the Critic to acclaim,  
As with fresh blows upon a ringing scone.  
Or heard she from scarred ranks of jolly growls  
His veterans dwarf their reverence and, like owls,  
Laugh in the pitch of discord, to exalt  
Their idol for some genial trick or fault,  
She, too, became his marching veteran.  
Again she took her breath from them who bore  
His eagles through the tawny roar,  
And murmured at a peaceful state,  
That bred the title charlatan,  
As missile from the mouth of hate,  
For one the daemon fierily filled and hurled,  
Cannon his name,  
Shattering against a barrier world;  
Her supreme player of man's primaeval game.

The daemon filled him, and he filled her sons;  
Strung them to stature over human height,  
As march the standards down the smoky fight;  
Her cherubim, her towering mastodons!  
Directed vault or breach, break through

Earth's toughest, seasons, elements, tame;  
Dash at the bulk the sharpened few;  
Count death the smallest of their debts:  
Show that the will to do  
Is masculine and begets!

These princes unto him the mother owed;  
These jewels of manhood that rich hand bestowed.  
What wonder, though with wits awake  
To read her riddle, for these her offspring's sake; -  
And she, before high heaven adulteress,  
The lost to honour, in his glory clothed,  
Else naked, shamed in sight of men, self-loathed; -  
That she should quench her thought, nor worship less  
Than ere she bled on sands or snows and knew  
The slave's alternative, to worship or to rue!

XI

Bright from the shell of that much limited man,  
Her hero, like the falchion out of sheath,  
Like soul that quits the tumbled body, soared:  
And France, impulsive, nuptial with his plan,  
Albeit the Critic fretting her, adored  
Once more. Exultingly her heart went forth,  
Submissive to his mind and mood,  
The way of those pent-eyebrows North;  
For now was he to win the wreath  
Surpassing sunniest in camp or Court;  
Next, as the blessed harvest after years of blight,  
Sit, the Great Emperor, to be known the Good!

Now had the Seaman's volvent sprite,  
Lean from the chase that barked his contraband,  
A beggared applicant at every port,  
To strew the profitless deeps and rot beneath,  
Slung northward, for a hunted beast's retort  
On sovereign power; there his final stand,  
Among the perjured Scythian's shaggy horde,  
The hydrocephalic aerolite  
Had taken; flashing thence repellent teeth,  
Though Europe's Master Europe's Rebel banned

To be earth's outcast, ocean's lord and sport.

Unmoved might seem the Master's taunted sword.  
Northward his dusky legions nightly slipped,  
As on the map of that all-provident head;  
He luting Peace the while, like morning's cock  
The quiet day to round the hours for bed;  
No pastoral shepherd sweeter to his flock.  
Then Europe first beheld her Titan stripped.  
To what vast length of limb and mounds of thews,  
How trained to scale the eminences, pluck  
The hazards for new footing, how compel  
Those timely incidents by men named luck,  
Through forethought that defied the Fates to choose,  
Her grovelling admiration had not yet  
Imagined of the great man-miracle;  
And France recounted with her comic smile  
Duplicities of Court and Cabinet,  
The silky female of his male in guile,  
Wherewith her two-faced Master could amuse  
A dupe he charmed in sunny beams to bask,  
Before his feint for camisado struck  
The lightning moment of the cast-off mask.

Splendours of earth repeating heaven's at set  
Of sun down mountain cloud in masses arched;  
Since Asia upon Europe marched,  
Unmatched the copious multitudes; unknown  
To Gallia's over-runner, Rome's inveterate foe,  
Such hosts; all one machine for overthrow,  
Coruscant from the Master's hand, compact  
As reasoned thoughts in the Master's head; were shown  
Yon lightning moment when his acme might  
Blazed o'er the stream that cuts the sandy tract  
Borussian from Sarmatia's famished flat;  
The century's flower; and off its pinnacled throne,  
Rayed servitude on Europe's ball of sight.

XII

Behind the Northern curtain-folds he passed.  
There heard hushed France her muffled heart beat fast



Against the hollow ear-drum, where she sat  
In expectation's darkness, until cracked  
The straining curtain-seams: a scaly light  
Was ghost above an army under shroud.  
Imperious on Imperial Fact  
Incestuously the incredible begat.  
His veterans and auxiliaries,  
The trained, the trustful, sanguine, proud,  
Princely, scarce numerable to recite, -  
Titanic of all Titan tragedies! -  
That Northern curtain took them, as the seas  
Gulp the great ships to give back shipmen white.

Alive in marble, she conceived in soul,  
With barren eyes and mouth, the mother's loss;  
The bolt from her abandoned heaven sped;  
The snowy army rolling knoll on knoll  
Beyond horizon, under no blest Cross:  
By the vulture dotted and engarlanded.

Was it a necromancer lured  
To weave his tense betraying spell?  
A Titan whom our God endured  
Till he of his foul hungers fell,  
By all his craft and labour scourged?  
A deluge Europe's liberated wave,  
Paeon to sky, leapt over that vast grave.  
Its shadow-points against her sacred land converged.  
And him, her yoke-fellow, her black lord, her fate,  
In doubt, in fevered hope, in chills of hate,  
That tore her old credulity to strips,  
Then pressed the auspicious relics on her lips,  
His withered slave for foregone miracles urged.  
And he, whom now his ominous halo's round,  
A three parts blank decrescent sickle, crowned,  
Prodigious in catastrophe, could wear  
The realm of Darkness with its Prince's air;  
Assume in mien the resolute pretence  
To satiate an hungered confidence,  
Proved criminal by the sceptic seen to cower  
Beside the generous face of that frail flower.

Desire and terror then had each of each:  
His crown and sword were staked on the magic stroke;  
Her blood she gave as one who loved her leech;  
And both did barter under union's cloak.  
An union in hot fever and fierce need  
Of either's aid, distrust in trust did breed.  
Their traffic instincts hooded their live wits  
To issues. Never human fortune throve  
On such alliance. Viewed by fits,  
From Vulcan's forge a hovering Jove  
Evolved. The slave he dragged the Tyrant drove.  
Her awe of him his dread of her invoked:  
His nature with her shivering faith ran yoked.  
What wisdom counselled, Policy declined;  
All perils dared he save the step behind.  
Ahead his grand initiative becked:  
One spark of radiance blurred, his orb was wrecked.  
Stripped to the despot upstart, for success  
He raged to clothe a perilous nakedness.  
He would not fall, while falling; would not be taught,  
While learning; would not relax his grasp on aught  
He held in hand, while losing it; pressed advance,  
Pricked for her lees the veins of wasted France;  
Who, had he stayed to husband her, had spun  
The strength he taxed unripened for his throw,  
In vengeful casts calamitous,  
On fields where palsyng Pyrrhic laurels grow,  
The luminous the ruinous.  
An incalcent scorpion,  
And fierier for the mounded cirque  
That narrowed at him thick and murk,  
This gambler with his genius  
Flung lives in angry volleys, bloody lightnings, flung  
His fortunes to the hosts he stung,  
With victories clipped his eagle's wings.  
By the hands that built him up was he undone:  
By the star aloft, which was his ram's-head will  
Within; by the toppling throne the soldier won;  
By the yeasty ferment of what once had been,  
To cloud a rational mind for present things;

By his own force, the suicide in his mill.  
Needs never God of Vengeance intervene  
When giants their last lesson have to learn.  
Fighting against an end he could discern,  
The chivalry whereof he had none  
He called from his worn slave's abundant springs:  
Not deigning spousally entreat  
That ever blinded by his martial skill,  
But harsh to have her worship counted out  
In human coin, her vital rivers drained,  
Her infant forests felled, commanded die  
The decade thousand deaths for his Imperial seat,  
Where throning he her faith in him maintained;  
Bound Reason to believe delayed defeat  
Was triumph; and what strength in her remained  
To head against the ultimate foreseen rout,  
Insensate taxed; of his impenitent will,  
Servant and sycophant: without ally,  
In Python's coils, the Master Craftsman still;  
The smiter, panther springer, trapper sly,  
The deadly wrestler at the crucial bout,  
The penetrant, the tonant, tower of towers,  
Striking from black disaster starry showers.  
Her supreme player of man's primaeval game,  
He won his harnessed victim's rapturous shout,  
When every move was mortal to her frame,  
Her prayer to life that stricken he might lie,  
She to exchange his laurels for earth's flowers.

The innumerable whelmed him, and he fell:  
A vessel in mid-ocean under storm.  
Ere ceased the lullaby of his passing bell,  
He sprang to sight, in human form  
Revealed, from no celestial aids:  
The shades enclosed him, and he fired the shades.

Cannon his name,  
Cannon his voice, he came.  
The fount of miracles from drought-dust arose,  
Amazing even on his Imperial stage,  
Where marvels lightened through the alternate hours  
And winged o'er human earth's heroic shone.

Into the press of cumulative foes,  
Across the friendly fields of smoke and rage,  
A broken structure bore his furious powers;  
The man no more, the Warrior Chief the same;  
Match for all rivals; in himself but flame  
Of an outworn lamp, to illumine nought anon.  
Yet loud as when he first showed War's effete  
Their Schoolman off his eagle mounted high,  
And summoned to subject who dared compete,  
The cannon in the name Napoleon  
Discoursed of sulphur earth to curtained sky.  
So through a tropic day a regnant sun,  
Where armies of assailant vapours thronged,  
His glory's trappings laid on them: comes night,  
Enwraps him in a bosom quick of heat  
From his anterior splendours, and shall seem  
Day instant, Day's own lord in the furnace gleam,  
The virulent quiver on ravished eyes prolonged,  
When severed darkness, all flaminical bright,  
Slips vivid eagles linked in rapid flight;  
Which bring at whiles the lionly far roar,  
As wrestled he with manacles and gags,  
To speed across a cowering world once more,  
Superb in ordered floods, his lordly flags.  
His name on silence thundered, on the obscure  
Lightened; it haunted morn and even-song:  
Earth of her prodigy's extinction long,  
With shudderings and with thrillings, hung unsure.

Snapped was the chord that made the resonant bow,  
In France, abased and like a shrunken corse;  
Amid the weakest weak, the lowest low,  
From the highest fallen, stagnant off her source;  
Condemned to hear the nations' hostile mirth;  
See curtained heavens, and smell a sulphurous earth;  
Which told how evermore shall tyrant Force  
Beget the greater for its overthrow.  
The song of Liberty in her hearing spoke  
A foreign tongue; Earth's fluttering little lyre  
Unlike, but like the raven's ravening croak.  
Not till her breath of being could aspire  
Anew, this loved and scourged of Angels found

Our common brotherhood in sight and sound:  
When mellow rang the name Napoleon,  
And dim aloft her young Angelical waved.  
Between ethereal and gross to choose,  
She swung; her soul desired, her senses craved.  
They pricked her dreams, while oft her skies were dun  
Behind o'ershadowing foemen: on a tide  
They drew the nature having need of pride  
Among her fellows for its vital dues:  
He seen like some rare treasure-galleon,  
Hull down, with masts against the Western hues.

George Meredith

# Nature And Life

## I

Leave the uproar: at a leap  
Thou shalt strike a woodland path,  
Enter silence, not of sleep,  
Under shadows, not of wrath;  
Breath which is the spirit's bath  
In the old Beginnings find,  
And endow them with a mind,  
Seed for seedling, swathe for swathe.  
That gives Nature to us, this  
Give we her, and so we kiss.

## II

Fruitful is it so: but hear  
How within the shell thou art,  
Music sounds; nor other near  
Can to such a tremor start.  
Of the waves our life is part;  
They our running harvests bear:  
Back to them for manful air,  
Laden with the woodland's heart!  
That gives Battle to us, this  
Give we it, and good the kiss.

George Meredith

# Night Of Frost In May

With splendour of a silver day,  
A frosted night had opened May:  
And on that plumed and armoured night,  
As one close temple hove our wood,  
Its border leafage virgin white.  
Remote down air an owl hallooed.  
The black twig dropped without a twirl;  
The bud in jewelled grasp was nipped;  
The brown leaf cracked a scorching curl;  
A crystal off the green leaf slipped.  
Across the tracks of rimy tan,  
Some busy thread at whiles would shoot;  
A limping minnow-rillet ran,  
To hang upon an icy foot.

In this shrill hush of quietude,  
The ear conceived a severing cry.  
Almost it let the sound elude,  
When chuckles three, a warble shy,  
From hazels of the garden came,  
Near by the crimson-windowed farm.  
They laid the trance on breath and frame,  
A prelude of the passion-charm.

Then soon was heard, not sooner heard  
Than answered, doubled, trebled, more,  
Voice of an Eden in the bird  
Renewing with his pipe of four  
The sob: a troubled Eden, rich  
In throb of heart: unnumbered throats  
Flung upward at a fountain's pitch,  
The fervour of the four long notes,  
That on the fountain's pool subside,  
Exult and ruffle and upspring:  
Endless the crossing multiplied  
Of silver and of golden string.  
There chimed a bubbled underbrew  
With witch-wild spray of vocal dew.

It seemed a single harper swept  
Our wild wood's inner chords and waked  
A spirit that for yearning ached  
Ere men desired and joyed or wept.  
Or now a legion ravishing  
Musician rivals did unite  
In love of sweetness high to sing  
The subtle song that rivals light;  
From breast of earth to breast of sky:  
And they were secret, they were nigh:  
A hand the magic might disperse;  
The magic swung my universe.

Yet sharpened breath forbade to dream,  
Where all was visionary gleam;  
Where Seasons, as with cymbals, clashed;  
And feelings, passing joy and woe,  
Churned, gurgled, spouted, interflashed,  
Nor either was the one we know:  
Nor pregnant of the heart contained  
In us were they, that griefless plained,  
That plaining soared; and through the heart  
Struck to one note the wide apart:-  
A passion surgent from despair;  
A paining bliss in fervid cold;  
Off the last vital edge of air,  
Leap heavenward of the lofty-souled,  
For rapture of a wine of tears;  
As had a star among the spheres  
Caught up our earth to some mid-height  
Of double life to ear and sight,  
She giving voice to thought that shines  
Keen-brilliant of her deepest mines;  
While steely drips the rillet clinked,  
And hoar with crust the cowslip swelled.

Then was the lyre of earth beheld,  
Then heard by me: it holds me linked;  
Across the years to dead-ebb shores  
I stand on, my blood-thrill restores.  
But would I conjure into me  
Those issue notes, I must review



What serious breath the woodland drew;  
The low throb of expectancy;  
How the white mother-muteness pressed  
On leaf and meadow-herb; how shook,  
Nigh speech of mouth, the sparkle-crest  
Seen spinning on the bracken-crook.

George Meredith

## October 21, 1905

The hundred years have passed, and he  
Whose name appeased a nation's fears,  
As with a hand laid over sea;  
To thunder through the foeman's ears  
Defeat before his blast of fire;  
Lives in the immortality  
That poets dream and noblest souls desire.

Never did nation's need evoke  
Hero like him for aid, the while  
A Continent was cannon-smoke  
Or peace in slavery: this one Isle  
Reflecting Nature: this one man  
Her sea-hound and her mortal stroke,  
With war-worn body aye in battle's van.

And do we love him well, as well  
As he his country, we may greet,  
With hand on steel, our passing bell  
Nigh on the swing, for prelude sweet  
To the music heard when his last breath  
Hung on its ebb beside the knell,  
And VICTORY in his ear sang gracious Death.

Ah, day of glory! day of tears!  
Day of a people bowed as one!  
Behold across those hundred years  
The lion flash of gun at gun:  
Our bitter pride; our love bereaved;  
What pall of cloud o'ercame our sun  
That day, to bear his wreath, the end achieved.

Joy that no more with murder's frown  
The ancient rivals bark apart.  
Now Nelson to brave France is shown  
A hero after her own heart:  
And he now scanning that quick race,  
To whom through life his glove was thrown,  
Would know a sister spirit to embrace.

George Meredith

# Ode To The Spirit Of The Earth In Autumn

Fair Mother Earth lay on her back last night,  
To gaze her fill on Autumn's sunset skies,  
When at a waving of the fallen light  
Sprang realms of rosy fruitage o'er her eyes.  
A lustrous heavenly orchard hung the West,  
Wherein the blood of Eden bloomed again:  
Red were the myriad cherub-mouths that pressed,  
Among the clusters, rich with song, full fain,  
But dumb, because that overmastering spell  
Of rapture held them dumb: then, here and there,  
A golden harp lost strings; a crimson shell  
Burnt grey; and sheaves of lustre fell to air.  
The illimitable eagerness of hue  
Bronzed, and the beamy winged bloom that flew  
'Mid those bunched fruits and thronging figures failed.  
A green-edged lake of saffron touched the blue,  
With isles of fireless purple lying through:  
And Fancy on that lake to seek lost treasures sailed.

Not long the silence followed:  
The voice that issues from thy breast,  
O glorious South-west,  
Along the gloom-horizon holloa'd;  
Warning the valleys with a mellow roar  
Through flapping wings; then sharp the woodland bore  
A shudder and a noise of hands:  
A thousand horns from some far vale  
In ambush sounding on the gale.  
Forth from the cloven sky came bands  
Of revel-gathering spirits; trooping down,  
Some rode the tree-tops; some on torn cloud-strips  
Burst screaming thro' the lighted town:  
And scudding seaward, some fell on big ships:  
Or mounting the sea-horses blew  
Bright foam-flakes on the black review  
Of heaving hulls and burying beaks.

Still on the farthest line, with outpuffed cheeks,  
'Twixt dark and utter dark, the great wind drew

From heaven that disenchanted harmony  
To join earth's laughter in the midnight blind:  
Booming a distant chorus to the shrieks  
Preluding him: then he,  
His mantle streaming thunderingly behind,  
Across the yellow realm of stiffened Day,  
Shot thro' the woodland alleys signals three;  
And with the pressure of a sea  
Plunged broad upon the vale that under lay.

Night on the rolling foliage fell:  
But I, who love old hymning night,  
And know the Dryad voices well,  
Discerned them as their leaves took flight,  
Like souls to wander after death:  
Great armies in imperial dyes,  
And mad to tread the air and rise,  
The savage freedom of the skies  
To taste before they rot. And here,  
Like frail white-bodied girls in fear,  
The birches swung from shrieks to sighs;  
The aspens, laughers at a breath,  
In showering spray-falls mixed their cries,  
Or raked a savage ocean-strand  
With one incessant drowning screech.  
Here stood a solitary beech,  
That gave its gold with open hand,  
And all its branches, toning chill,  
Did seem to shut their teeth right fast,  
To shriek more mercilessly shrill,  
And match the fierceness of the blast.

But heard I a low swell that noised  
Of far-off ocean, I was 'ware  
Of pines upon their wide roots poised,  
Whom never madness in the air  
Can draw to more than loftier stress  
Of mournfulness, not mournfulness  
For melancholy, but Joy's excess,  
That singing on the lap of sorrow faints:  
And Peace, as in the hearts of saints  
Who chant unto the Lord their God;

Deep Peace below upon the muffled sod,  
The stillness of the sea's unswaying floor,  
Could I be sole there not to see  
The life within the life awake;  
The spirit bursting from the tree,  
And rising from the troubled lake?  
Pour, let the wines of Heaven pour!  
The Golden Harp is struck once more,  
And all its music is for me!  
Pour, let the wines of Heaven pour!  
And, ho, for a night of Pagan glee!

There is a curtain o'er us.  
For once, good souls, we'll not pretend  
To be aught better than her who bore us,  
And is our only visible friend.  
Hark to her laughter! who laughs like this,  
Can she be dead, or rooted in pain?  
She has been slain by the narrow brain,  
But for us who love her she lives again.  
Can she die? O, take her kiss!

The crimson-footed nymph is panting up the glade,  
With the wine-jar at her arm-pit, and the drunken ivy-braid  
Round her forehead, breasts, and thighs: starts a Satyr, and they  
speed:  
Hear the crushing of the leaves: hear the cracking of the bough!  
And the whistling of the bramble, the piping of the weed!

But the bull-voiced oak is battling now:  
The storm has seized him half-asleep,  
And round him the wild woodland throngs  
To hear the fury of his songs,  
The uproar of an outraged deep.  
He wakes to find a wrestling giant  
Trunk to trunk and limb to limb,  
And on his rooted force reliant  
He laughs and grasps the broadened giant,  
And twist and roll the Anakim;  
And multitudes, acclaiming to the cloud,  
Cry which is breaking, which is bowed.

Away, for the cymbals clash aloft  
In the circles of pine, on the moss-floor soft.  
The nymphs of the woodland are gathering there.  
They huddle the leaves, and trample, and toss;  
They swing in the branches, they roll in the moss,  
They blow the seed on the air.  
Back to back they stand and blow  
The winged seed on the cradling air,  
A fountain of leaves over bosom and back.

The pipe of the Faun comes on their track  
And the weltering alleys overflow  
With musical shrieks and wind-wedded hair.  
The riotous companies melt to a pair.  
Bless them, mother of kindness!

A star has nodded through  
The depths of the flying blue.  
Time only to plant the light  
Of a memory in the blindness.  
But time to show me the sight  
Of my life thro' the curtain of night;  
Shining a moment, and mixed  
With the onward-hurrying stream,  
Whose pressure is darkness to me;  
Behind the curtain, fixed,  
Beams with endless beam  
That star on the changing sea.

Great Mother Nature! teach me, like thee,  
To kiss the season and shun regrets.  
And am I more than the mother who bore,  
Mock me not with thy harmony!  
Teach me to blot regrets,  
Great Mother! me inspire  
With faith that forward sets  
But feeds the living fire,  
Faith that never frets  
For vagueness in the form.  
In life, O keep me warm!  
For, what is human grief?  
And what do men desire?

Teach me to feel myself the tree,  
And not the withered leaf.  
Fixed am I and await the dark to-be  
And O, green bounteous Earth!  
Bacchante Mother! stern to those  
Who live not in thy heart of mirth;  
Death shall I shrink from, loving thee?  
Into the breast that gives the rose,  
Shall I with shuddering fall?

Earth, the mother of all,  
Moves on her stedfast way,  
Gathering, flinging, sowing.  
Mortals, we live in her day,  
She in her children is growing.

She can lead us, only she,  
Unto God's footstool, whither she reaches:  
Loved, enjoyed, her gifts must be,  
Reverenced the truths she teaches,  
Ere a man may hope that he  
Ever can attain the glee  
Of things without a destiny!

She knows not loss:  
She feels but her need,  
Who the winged seed  
With the leaf doth toss.

And may not men to this attain?  
That the joy of motion, the rapture of being,  
Shall throw strong light when our season is fleeing,  
Nor quicken aged blood in vain,  
At the gates of the vault, on the verge of the plain?  
Life thoroughly lived is a fact in the brain,  
While eyes are left for seeing.  
Behold, in yon stripped Autumn, shivering grey,  
Earth knows no desolation.  
She smells regeneration  
In the moist breath of decay.

Prophetic of the coming joy and strife,



Like the wild western war-chief sinking  
Calm to the end he eyes unblinking,  
Her voice is jubilant in ebbing life.

He for his happy hunting-fields  
Forgets the droning chant, and yields  
His numbered breaths to exultation  
In the proud anticipation:  
Shouting the glories of his nation,  
Shouting the grandeur of his race,  
Shouting his own great deeds of daring:  
And when at last death grasps his face,  
And stiffened on the ground in peace  
He lies with all his painted terrors glaring;  
Hushed are the tribe to hear a threading cry:  
Not from the dead man;  
Not from the standers-by:  
The spirit of the red man  
Is welcomed by his fathers up on high.

George Meredith

## On Como

A rainless darkness drew o'er the lake  
As we lay in our boat with oars unshipped.  
It seemed neither cloud nor water awake,  
And forth of the low black curtain slipped  
Thunderless lightning. Scoff no more  
At angels imagined in downward flight  
For the daughters of earth as fabled of yore:  
Here was beauty might well invite  
Dark heavens to gleam with the fire of a sun  
Resurgent; here the exchanged embrace  
Worthy of heaven and earth made one.

And witness it, ye of the privileged space,  
Said the flash; and the mountains, as from an abyss  
For quivering seconds leaped up to attest  
That given, received, renewed was the kiss;  
The lips to lips and the breast to breast;  
All in a glory of ecstasy, swift  
As an eagle at prey, and pure as the prayer  
Of an infant bidden joined hands uplift  
To be guarded through darkness by spirits of air,  
Ere setting the sails of sleep till day.  
Slowly the low cloud swung, and far  
It panted along its mirrored way;  
Above loose threads one sanctioning star,  
The wonder of what had been witnessed, sealed,  
And with me still as in crystal glassed  
Are the depths alight, the heavens revealed,  
Where on to the Alps the muteness passed.

George Meredith

# On Hearing The News From Venice

(The Death Of Robert Browning)

Now dumb is he who waked the world to speak,  
And voiceless hangs the world beside his bier.  
Our words are sobs, our cry of praise a tear:  
We are the smitten mortal, we the weak.  
We see a spirit on Earth's loftiest peak  
Shine, and wing hence the way he makes more clear:  
See a great Tree of Life that never sere  
Dropped leaf for aught that age or storms might wreak.  
Such ending is not Death: such living shows  
What wide illumination brightness sheds  
From one big heart, to conquer man's old foes:  
The coward, and the tyrant, and the force  
Of all those weedy monsters raising heads  
When Song is murk from springs of turbid source.

December 13, 1889.

George Meredith

# On The Danger Of War

Avert, High Wisdom, never vainly wooed,  
This threat of War, that shows a land brain-sick.  
When nations gain the pitch where rhetoric  
Seems reason they are ripe for cannon's food.  
Dark looms the issue though the cause be good,  
But with the doubt 'tis our old devil's trick.  
O now the down-slope of the lunatic  
Illumine lest we redden of that brood.  
For not since man in his first view of thee  
Ascended to the heavens giving sign  
Within him of deep sky and sounded sea,  
Did he unforfeiting thy laws transgress;  
In peril of his blood his ears incline  
To drums whose loudness is their emptiness.

George Meredith

# On The Tombstone Of James Christopher Wilson (D. April 11, 1884) In Headley Churchyard, Surrey

Thou our beloved and light of Earth hast crossed  
The sea of darkness to the yonder shore.  
There dost thou shine a light transferred, not lost,  
Through love to kindle in our souls the more.

George Meredith

# Outer And Inner

## I

From twig to twig the spider weaves  
At noon his webbing fine.  
So near to mute the zephyrs flute  
That only leaflets dance.  
The sun draws out of hazel leaves  
A smell of woodland wine.  
I wake a swarm to sudden storm  
At any step's advance.

## II

Along my path is bugloss blue,  
The star with fruit in moss;  
The foxgloves drop from throat to top  
A daily lesser bell.  
The blackest shadow, nurse of dew,  
Has orange skeins across;  
And keenly red is one thin thread  
That flashing seems to swell.

## III

My world I note ere fancy comes,  
Minutest hushed observe:  
What busy bits of motioned wits  
Through antlered mosswork strive.  
But now so low the stillness hums,  
My springs of seeing swerve,  
For half a wink to thrill and think  
The woods with nymphs alive.

## IV

I neighbour the invisible  
So close that my consent  
Is only asked for spirits masked  
To leap from trees and flowers.

And this because with them I dwell  
In thought, while calmly bent  
To read the lines dear Earth designs  
Shall speak her life on ours.

V

Accept, she says; it is not hard  
In woods; but she in towns  
Repeats, accept; and have we wept,  
And have we quailed with fears,  
Or shrunk with horrors, sure reward  
We have whom knowledge crowns;  
Who see in mould the rose unfold,  
The soul through blood and tears.

George Meredith

## Outside The Crowd

To sit on History in an easy chair,  
Still rivalling the wild hordes by whom 'twas writ!  
Sure, this beseems a race of laggard wit,  
Unwarned by those plain letters scrawled on air.  
If more than hands' and armsful be our share,  
Snatch we for substance we see vapours flit.  
Have we not heard derision infinite  
When old men play the youth to chase the snare?  
Let us be belted athletes, matched for foes,  
Or stand aloof, the great Benevolent,  
The Lord of Lands no Robber-birds annex,  
Where Justice holds the scales with pure intent;  
Armed to support her sword;--lest we compose  
That Chapter for the historic word on Wrecks.

George Meredith



# Over The Hills

The old hound wags his shaggy tail,  
And I know what he would say:  
It's over the hills we'll bound, old hound,  
Over the hills, and away.

There's nought for us here save to count the clock,  
And hang the head all day:  
But over the hills we'll bound, old hound,  
Over the hills and away.

Here among men we're like the deer  
That yonder is our prey:  
So, over the hills we'll bound, old hound,  
Over the hills and away.

The hypocrite is master here,  
But he's the cock of clay:  
So, over the hills we'll bound, old hound,  
Over the hills and away.

The women, they shall sigh and smile,  
And madden whom they may:  
It's over the hills we'll bound, old hound,  
Over the hills and away.

Let silly lads in couples run  
To pleasure, a wicked fay:  
'Tis ours on the heather to bound, old hound,  
Over the hills and away.

The torrent glints under the rowan red,  
And shakes the bracken spray:  
What joy on the heather to bound, old hound,  
Over the hills and away.

The sun bursts broad, and the heathery bed  
Is purple, and orange, and gray:  
Away, and away, we'll bound, old hound,  
Over the hills and away.

George Meredith

# Paris And Diomedes

[Iliad; B. XI V. 378]

So he, with a clear shout of laughter,  
Forth of his ambush leapt, and he vaunted him, uttering thiswise:  
'Hit thou art! not in vain flew the shaft; how by rights it had pierced thee  
Into the undermost gut, therewith to have rived thee of life-breath!  
Following that had the Trojans plucked a new breath from their direst,  
They all frightened of thee, as the goats bleat in flight from a lion.'  
Then unto him untroubled made answer stout Diomedes:  
'Bow-puller, jiber, thy bow for thy glorying, spyer at virgins!  
If that thou dared'st face me here out in the open with weapons,  
Nothing then would avail thee thy bow and thy thick shot of arrows.  
Now thou plumest thee vainly because of a graze of my footsole;  
Reck I as were that stroke from a woman or some pettish infant.  
Aye flies blunted the dart of the man that's emasculate, noughtworth!  
Otherwise hits, forth flying from me, and but strikes it the slightest,  
My keen shaft, and it numbers a man of the dead fallen straightway.  
Torn, troth, then are the cheeks of the wife of that man fallen slaughtered,  
Orphans his babes, full surely he reddens the earth with his blood-drops,  
Rotting, round him the birds, more numerous they than the women.'

George Meredith

# Pastorals

I

How sweet on sunny afternoons,  
For those who journey light and well,  
To loiter up a hilly rise  
Which hides the prospect far beyond,  
And fancy all the landscape lying  
Beautiful and still;

Beneath a sky of summer blue,  
Whose rounded cloudlets, folded soft,  
Gaze on the scene which we await  
And picture from their peacefulness;  
So calmly to the earth inclining  
Float those loving shapes!

Like airy brides, each singling out  
A spot to love and bless with love,  
Their creamy bosoms glowing warm,  
Till distance weds them to the hills,  
And with its latest gleam the river  
Sinks in their embrace.

And silverly the river runs,  
And many a graceful wind he makes,  
By fields where feed the happy flocks,  
And hedge-rows hushing pleasant lanes,  
The charms of English home reflected  
In his shining eye:

Ancestral oak, broad-foliaged elm,  
Rich meadows sunned and starred with flowers,  
The cottage breathing tender smoke  
Against the brooding golden air,  
With glimpses of a stately mansion  
On a woodland sward;

And circling round, as with a ring,  
The distance spreading amber haze,

Enclosing hills and pastures sweet;  
A depth of soft and mellow light  
Which fills the heart with sudden yearning  
Aimless and serene!

No disenchantment follows here,  
For nature's inspiration moves  
The dream which she herself fulfils;  
And he whose heart, like valley warmth,  
Steams up with joy at scenes like this  
Shall never be forlorn.

And O for any human soul  
The rapture of a wide survey -  
A valley sweeping to the West,  
With all its wealth of loveliness,  
Is more than recompense for days  
That taught us to endure.

## II

Yon upland slope which hides the sun  
Ascending from his eastern deeps,  
And now against the hues of dawn  
One level line of tillage rears;  
The furrowed brow of toil and time;  
To many it is but a sweep of land!

To others 'tis an Autumn trust,  
But unto me a mystery; -  
An influence strange and swift as dreams;  
A whispering of old romance;  
A temple naked to the clouds;  
Or one of nature's bosoms fresh revealed,

Heaving with adoration! there  
The work of husbandry is done,  
And daily bread is daily earned;  
Nor seems there ought to indicate  
The springs which move in me such thoughts,  
But from my soul a spirit calls them up.

All day into the open sky,  
All night to the eternal stars,  
For ever both at morn and eve  
Men mellow distances draw near,  
And shadows lengthen in the dusk,  
Athwart the heavens it rolls its glimmering line!

When twilight from the dream-hued West  
Sighs hush! and all the land is still;  
When, from the lush empurpling East,  
The twilight of the crowing cock  
Peers on the drowsy village roofs,  
Athwart the heavens that glimmering line is seen.

And now beneath the rising sun,  
Whose shining chariot overpeers  
The irradiate ridge, while fetlock deep  
In the rich soil his coursers plunge -  
How grand in robes of light it looks!  
How glorious with rare suggestive grace!

The ploughman mounting up the height  
Becomes a glowing shape, as though  
'Twere young Triptolemus, plough in hand,  
While Ceres in her amber scarf  
With gentle love directs him how  
To wed the willing earth and hope for fruits!

The furrows running up are fraught  
With meanings; there the goddess walks,  
While Proserpine is young, and there -  
'Mid the late autumn sheaves, her voice  
Sobbing and choked with dumb despair -  
The nights will hear her wailing for her child!

Whatever dim tradition tells,  
Whatever history may reveal,  
Or fancy, from her starry brows,  
Of light or dreamful lustre shed,  
Could not at this sweet time increase  
The quiet consecration of the spot.

Blest with the sweat of labour, blest  
With the young sun's first vigorous beams,  
Village hope and harvest prayer, -  
The heart that throbs beneath it holds  
A bliss so perfect in itself  
Men's thoughts must borrow rather than bestow.

### III

Now standing on this hedgeside path,  
Up which the evening winds are blowing  
Wildly from the lingering lines  
Of sunset o'er the hills;  
Unaided by one motive thought,  
My spirit with a strange impulsion  
Rises, like a fledgling,  
Whose wings are not mature, but still  
Supported by its strong desire  
Beats up its native air and leaves  
The tender mother's nest.

Great music under heaven is made,  
And in the track of rushing darkness  
Comes the solemn shape of night,  
And broods above the earth.  
A thing of Nature am I now,  
Abroad, without a sense or feeling  
Born not of her bosom;  
Content with all her truths and fates;  
Ev'n as yon strip of grass that bows  
Above the new-born violet bloom,  
And sings with wood and field.

### IV

Lo, as a tree, whose wintry twigs  
Drink in the sun with fibrous joy,  
And down into its dampest roots  
Thrills quickened with the draught of life,

I wake unto the dawn, and leave my griefs to drowse.

I rise and drink the fresh sweet air:  
Each draught a future bud of Spring;  
Each glance of blue a birth of green;  
I will not mimic yonder oak  
That dallies with dead leaves ev'n while the primrose peeps.

But full of these warm-whispering beams,  
Like Memnon in his mother's eye, -  
Aurora! when the statue stone  
Moaned soft to her pathetic touch, -  
My soul shall own its parent in the founts of day!

And ever in the recurring light,  
True to the primal joy of dawn,  
Forget its barren griefs; and aye  
Like aspens in the faintest breeze  
Turn all its silver sides and tremble into song.

V

Now from the meadow floods the wild duck clamours,  
Now the wood pigeon wings a rapid flight,  
Now the homeward rookery follows up its vanguard,  
And the valley mists are curling up the hills.

Three short songs gives the clear-voiced throstle,  
Sweetening the twilight ere he fills the nest;  
While the little bird upon the leafless branches  
Tweets to its mate a tiny loving note.

Deeper the stillness hangs on every motion;  
Calmer the silence follows every call;  
Now all is quiet save the roosting pheasant,  
The bell-wether's tinkle and the watch-dog's bark.

Softly shine the lights from the silent kindling homestead,  
Stars of the hearth to the shepherd in the fold;  
Springs of desire to the traveller on the roadway;  
Ever breathing incense to the ever-blessing sky!



## VI

How barren would this valley be,  
Without the golden orb that gazes  
On it, broadening to hues  
Of rose, and spreading wings of amber;  
Blessing it before it falls asleep.

How barren would this valley be,  
Without the human lives now beating  
In it, or the throbbing hearts  
Far distant, who their flower of childhood  
Cherish here, and water it with tears!

How barren should I be, were I  
Without above that loving splendour,  
Shedding light and warmth! without  
Some kindred natures of my kind  
To joy in me, or yearn towards me now!

## VII

Summer glows warm on the meadows, and speedwell, and gold-cups, and daisies

Darken 'mid deepening masses of sorrel, and shadowy grasses  
Show the ripe hue to the farmer, and summon the scythe and the hay-makers  
Down from the village; and now, even now, the air smells of the mowing,  
And the sharp song of the scythe whistles daily; from dawn, till the gloaming  
Wears its cool star, sweet and welcome to all flaming faces afield now;  
Heavily weighs the hot season, and drowns the darkening foliage,  
Drooping with languor; the white cloud floats, but sails not, for windless  
Heaven's blue tents it; no lark singing up in its fleecy white valleys;  
Up in its fairy white valleys, once feathered with minstrels, melodious  
With the invisible joy that wakes dawn o'er the green fields of England.  
Summer glows warm on the meadows; then come, let us roam thro' them gaily,  
Heedless of heat, and the hot-kissing sun, and the fear of dark freckles.  
Never one kiss will he give on a neck, or a lily-white forehead,  
Chin, hand, or bosom uncovered, all panting, to take the chance coolness,  
But full sure the fiery pressure leaves seal of espousal.

Heed him not; come, tho' he kiss till the soft little upper-lip loses  
Half its pure whiteness; just speck'd where the curve of the rosy mouth reddens.

Come, let him kiss, let him kiss, and his kisses shall make thee the sweeter.  
Thou art no nun, veiled and vowed; doomed to nourish a withering pallor!  
City exotics beside thee would show like bleached linen at mid-day,  
Hung upon hedges of eglantine! Thou in the freedom of nature,  
Full of her beauty and wisdom, gentleness, joyance, and kindness!  
Come, and like bees will we gather the rich golden honey of noontide;  
Deep in the sweet summer meadows, border'd by hillside and river,  
Lined with long trenches half-hidden, where smell of white meadow-sweet,  
sweetest,  
Blissfully hovers-O sweetest! but pluck it not! even in the tenderest  
Grasp it will lose breath and wither; like many, not made for a posy.

See, the sun slopes down the meadows, where all the flowers are falling!  
Falling unhymned; for the nightingale scarce ever charms the long twilight:  
Mute with the cares of the nest; only known by a 'chuck, chuck,' and dovelike  
Call of content, but the finch and the linnet and blackcap pipe loudly.  
Round on the western hill-side warbles the rich-billed ouzel;  
And the shrill throstle is filling the tangled thickening copses;  
Singing o'er hyacinths hid, and most honey'd of flowers, white field-rose.  
Joy thus to revel all day in the grass of our own beloved country;  
Revel all day, till the lark mounts at eve with his sweet 'tirra-lirra':  
Trilling delightfully. See, on the river the slow-rippled surface  
Shining; the slow ripple broadens in circles; the bright surface smoothens;  
Now it is flat as the leaves of the yet unseen water-lily.  
There dart the lives of a day, ever-varying tactics fantastic.  
There, by the wet-mirrored osiers, the emerald wing of the kingfisher  
Flashes, the fish in his beak! there the dab-chick dived, and the motion  
Lazily undulates all thro' the tall standing army of rushes.

Joy thus to revel all day, till the twilight turns us homeward!  
Till all the lingering deep-blooming splendour of sunset is over,  
And the one star shines mildly in mellowing hues, like a spirit  
Sent to assure us that light never dieth, tho' day is now buried.  
Saying: to-morrow, to-morrow, few hours intervening, that interval  
Tuned by the woodlark in heaven, to-morrow my semblance, far eastward,  
Heralds the day 'tis my mission eternal to seal and to prophecy.  
Come then, and homeward; passing down the close path of the meadows.  
Home like the bees stored with sweetness; each with a lark in the bosom,  
Trilling for ever, and oh! will yon lark ever cease to sing up there?

George Meredith

# Penetration And Trust

I

Sleek as a lizard at round of a stone,  
The look of her heart slipped out and in.  
Sweet on her lord her soft eyes shone,  
As innocents clear of a shade of sin.

II

He laid a finger under her chin,  
His arm for her girdle at waist was thrown:  
Now, what will happen and who will win,  
With me in the fight and my lady lone?

III

He clasped her, clasping a shape of stone;  
Was fire on her eyes till they let him in.  
Her breast to a God of the daybeams shone,  
And never a corner for serpent sin.

IV

Tranced she stood, with a chattering chin;  
Her shrunken form at his feet was thrown:  
At home to the death my lord shall win,  
When it is no tyrant who leaves me lone!

George Meredith

# Periander

## I

How died Melissa none dares shape in words.  
A woman who is wife despotic lords  
Count faggot at the question, Shall she live!  
Her son, because his brows were black of her,  
Runs barking for his bread, a fugitive,  
And Corinth frowns on them that feed the cur.

## II

There is no Corinth save the whip and curb  
Of Corinth, high Periander; the superb  
In magnanimity, in rule severe.  
Up on his marble fortress-tower he sits,  
The city under him: a white yoked steer,  
That bears his heart for pulse, his head for wits.

## III

Bloom of the generous fires of his fair Spring  
Still coloured him when men forbore to sting;  
Admiring meekly where the ordered seeds  
Of his good sovereignty showed gardens trim;  
And owning that the hoe he struck at weeds  
Was author of the flowers raised face to him.

## IV

His Corinth, to each mood subservient  
In homage, made he as an instrument  
To yield him music with scarce touch of stops.  
He breathed, it piped; he moved, it rose to fly:  
At whiles a bloodhorse racing till it drops;  
At whiles a crouching dog, on him all eye.

## V

His wisdom men acknowledged; only one,

The creature, issue of him, Lycophron,  
That rebel with his mother in his brows,  
Contested: such an infamous would foul  
Pirene! Little heed where he might house  
The prince gave, hearing: so the fox, the owl!

## VI

To prove the Gods benignant to his rule,  
The years, which fasten rigid whom they cool,  
Reviewing, saw him hold the seat of power.  
A grey one asked: Who next? nor answer had:  
One greyer pointed on the pallid hour  
To come: a river dried of waters glad.

## VII

For which of his male issue promised grip  
To stride yon people, with the curb and whip?  
This Lycophron! he sole, the father like,  
Fired prospect of a line in one strong tide,  
By right of mastery; stern will to strike;  
Pride to support the stroke: yea, Godlike pride!

## VIII

Himself the prince beheld a failing fount.  
His line stretched back unto its holy mount:  
The thirsty onward waved for him no sign.  
Then stood before his vision that hard son.  
The seizure of a passion for his line  
Impelled him to the path of Lycophron.

## IX

The youth was tossing pebbles in the sea;  
A figure shunned along the busy quay,  
Perforce of the harsh edict for who dared  
Address him outcast. Naming it, he crossed  
His father's look with look that proved them paired  
For stiffness, and another pebble tossed.

X

An exile to the Island ere nightfall  
He passed from sight, from the hushed mouths of all.  
It had resemblance to a death: and on,  
Against a coast where sapphire shattered white,  
The seasons rolled like troops of billows blown  
To spraymist. The prince gazed on capping night.

XI

Deaf Age spake in his ear with shouts: Thy son!  
Deep from his heart Life raved of work not done.  
He heard historic echoes moan his name,  
As of the prince in whom the race had pause;  
Till Tyranny paternity became,  
And him he hated loved he for the cause.

XII

Not Lycophron the exile now appeared,  
But young Periander, from the shadow cleared,  
That haunted his rebellious brows. The prince  
Grew bright for him; saw youth, if seeming loth,  
Return: and of pure pardon to convince,  
Despatched the messenger most dear with both.

XIII

His daughter, from the exile's Island home,  
Wrote, as a flight of halcyons o'er the foam,  
Sweet words: her brother to his father bowed;  
Accepted his peace-offering, and rejoiced.  
To bring him back a prince the father vowed,  
Commanded man the oars, the white sails hoist.

XIV

He waved the fleet to strain its westward way  
On to the sea-hued hills that crown the bay:  
Soil of those hospitable islanders  
Whom now his heart, for honour to his blood,

Thanked. They should learn what boons a prince confers  
When happiness enjoins him gratitude!

XV

In watch upon the offing, worn with haste  
To see his youth revived, and, close embraced,  
Pardon who had subdued him, who had gained  
Surely the stoutest battle between two  
Since Titan pierced by young Apollo stained  
Earth's breast, the prince looked forth, himself looked through.

XVI

Errors aforesaid unperceived were bared,  
To be by his young masterful repaired:  
Renewed his great ideas gone to smoke;  
His policy confirmed amid the surge  
Of States and people fretting at his yoke.  
And lo, the fleet brown-flocked on the sea-verge!

XVII

Oars pulled: they streamed in harbour; without cheer  
For welcome shadowed round the heaving bier.  
They, whose approach in such rare pomp and stress  
Of numbers the free islanders dismayed  
At Tyranny come masking to oppress,  
Found Lycophron this breathless, this lone-laid.

XVIII

Who smote the man thrown open to young joy?  
The image of the mother of his boy  
Came forth from his unwary breast in wreaths,  
With eyes. And shall a woman, that extinct,  
Smite out of dust the Powerful who breathes?  
Her loved the son; her served; they lay close-linked!

XIX

Dead was he, and demanding earth. Demand



Sharper for vengeance of an instant hand,  
The Tyrant in the father heard him cry,  
And raged a plague; to prove on free Hellenes  
How prompt the Tyrant for the Persian dye;  
How black his Gods behind their marble screens.

George Meredith

## Phaethon--Attempted In Galliambic Measure

At the coming up of Phoebus the all-luminous charioteer,  
Double-visaged stand the mountains in imperial multitudes,  
And with shadows dappled men sing to him, Hail, O Beneficent!  
For they shudder chill, the earth-vales, at his clouding, shudder to  
black;  
In the light of him there is music thro' the poplar and river-sedge,  
Renovation, chirp of brooks, hum of the forest--an ocean-song.  
Never pearl from ocean-hollows by the diver exultingly,  
In his breathlessness, above thrust, is as earth to Helios.  
Who usurps his place there, rashest? Aphrodite's loved one it is!  
To his son the flaming Sun-God, to the tender youth, Phaethon,  
Rule of day this day surrenders as a thing hereditary,  
Having sworn by Styx tremendous, for the proof of his parentage,  
He would grant his son's petition, whatsoever the sign thereof.  
Then, rejoiced, the stripling answered: 'Rule of day give me; give  
it me,  
Give me place that men may see me how I blaze, and transcendingly  
I, divine, proclaim my birthright.' Darkened Helios, and his  
utterance  
Choked prophetic: 'O half mortal!' he exclaimed in an agony,  
'O lost son of mine! lost son! No! put a prayer for another thing:  
Not for this: insane to wish it, and to crave the gift impious!  
Cannot other gifts my godhead shed upon thee? miraculous  
Mighty gifts to prove a blessing, that to earth thou shalt be a joy?  
Gifts of healing, wherewith men walk as the Gods beneficently;  
As a God to sway to concord hearts of men, reconciling them;  
Gifts of verse, the lyre, the laurel, therewithal that thine origin  
Shall be known even as when I strike on the string'd shell with  
melody,  
And the golden notes, like medicine, darting straight to the  
cavities,  
Fill them up, till hearts of men bound as the billows, the ships  
thereon.'  
Thus intently urged the Sun-God; but the force of his eloquence  
Was the pressing on of sea-waves scattered broad from the rocks  
away.  
What shall move a soul from madness? Lost, lost in delirium,  
Rock-fast, the adolescent to his father, irreverent,  
'By the oath! the oath! thine oath!' cried. The effulgent foreseer

then,  
Quivering in his loins parental, on the boy's beaming countenance  
Looked and moaned, and urged him for love's sake, for sweet life's  
sake, to yield the claim,  
To abandon his mad hunger, and avert the calamity.  
But he, vehement, passionate, called out: 'Let me show I am what I  
say,  
That the taunts I hear be silenced: I am stung with their  
whispering.  
Only, Thou, my Father, Thou tell how aloft the revolving wheels,  
How aloft the cleaving horse-crests I may guide peremptorily,  
Till I drink the shadows, fire-hot, like a flower celestial,  
And my fellows see me curbing the fierce steeds, the dear dew-  
drinkers:  
Yea, for this I gaze on life's light; throw for this any sacrifice.'

All the end foreseeing, Phoebus to his oath irrevocable  
Bowed obedient, deploring the insanity pitiless.  
Then the flame-outsnoiting horses were led forth: it was so  
decreed.  
They were yoked before the glad youth by his sister-ancillaries.  
Swift the ripple ripples follow'd, as of aureate Helicon,  
Down their flanks, while they impatient pawed desire of the  
distances,  
And the bit with fury champed. Oh! unimaginable delight!  
Unimagined speed and splendour in the circle of upper air!  
Glory grander than the armed host upon earth singing victory!  
Chafed the youth with their spirit surcharged, as when blossom is  
shaken by winds,  
Marked that labour by his sister Phaethontides finished, quick  
On the slope of the car his forefoot set assured: and the morning  
rose:  
Seeing whom, and what a day dawned, stood the God, as in harvest  
fields,  
When the reaper grasps the full sheaf and the sickle that severs it:  
Hugged the withered head with one hand, with the other, to indicate  
(If this woe might be averted, this immeasurable evil),  
Laid the kindling course in view, told how the reins to manipulate:  
Named the horses fondly, fearful, caution'd urgently betweenwhiles:  
Their diverging tempers dwelt on, and their wantonness, wickedness,  
That the voice of Gods alone held in restraint; but the voice of  
Gods;

None but Gods can curb. He spake: vain were the words: scarcely  
listening,  
Mounted Phaethon, swinging reins loose, and, 'Behold me, companions,  
It is I here, I!' he shouted, glancing down with supremacy;  
'Not to any of you was this gift granted ever in annals of men;  
I alone what only Gods can, I alone am governing day!'  
Short the triumph, brief his rapture: see a hurricane suddenly  
Beat the lifting billow crestless, roll it broken this way and that;

-

At the leap on yielding ether, in despite of his reprimand,  
Swayed tumultuous the fire-steeds, plunging reckless hither and yon;  
Unto men a great amazement, all agaze at the Troubled East:-  
Pitifully for mastery striving in ascension, the charioteer,  
Reminiscent, drifts of counsel caught confused in his arid wits;  
The reins stiff ahind his shoulder madly pulled for the mastery,  
Till a thunder off the tense chords thro' his ears dinned horrible.  
Panic seized him: fled his vision of inviolability;  
Fled the dream that he of mortals rode mischances predominant;  
And he cried, 'Had I petitioned for a cup of chill aconite,  
My descent to awful Hades had been soft, for now must I go  
With the curse by father Zeus cast on ambition immoderate.  
Oh, my sisters! Thou, my Goddess, in whose love I was enviable,  
From whose arms I rushed befrenzied, what a wreck will this body be,  
That admired of thee stood rose-warm in the courts where thy  
mysteries  
Celebration had from me, me the most splendidly privileged!  
Never more shall I thy temple fill with incenses bewildering;  
Not again hear thy half-murmurs--I am lost!--never, never more.  
I am wrecked on seas of air, hurled to my death in a vessel of  
flame!  
Hither, sisters! Father, save me! Hither, succour me, Cypria!'

Now a wail of men to Zeus rang: from Olympus the Thunderer  
Saw the rage of the havoc wide-mouthed, the bright car  
superimpending  
Over Asia, Africa, low down; ruin flaming over the vales;  
Light disastrous rising savage out of smoke inveterately;  
Beast-black, conflagration like a menacing shadow move  
With voracious roaring southward, where aslant, insufferable,  
The bright steeds careered their parched way down an arc of the  
firmament.  
For the day grew like to thick night, and the orb was its beacon-

fire,  
 And from hill to hill of darkness burst the day's apparition forth.  
 Lo, a wrestler, not a God, stood in the chariot ever lowering:  
 Lo, the shape of one who raced there to outstrip the legitimate  
 hours:  
 Lo, the ravish'd beams of Phoebus dragged in shame at the chariot-  
 wheels:  
 Light of days of happy pipings by the mead-singing rivulets!  
 Lo, lo, increasing lustre, torrid breath to the nostrils; lo,  
 Torrid brilliancies thro' the vapours lighten swifter, penetrate  
 them,  
 Fasten merciless, ruminant, hueless, on earth's frame crackling  
 busily.  
 He aloft, the frenzied driver, in the glow of the universe,  
 Like the paling of the dawn-star withers visibly, he aloft:  
 Bitter fury in his aspect, bitter death in the heart of him.  
 Crouch the herds, contract the reptiles, crouch the lions under  
 their paws.  
 White as metal in the furnace are the faces of human-kind:  
 Inarticulate creatures of earth dumb all await the ultimate shock.  
 To the bolt he launched, 'Strike dead, thou,' uttered Zeus, very  
 terrible;  
 'Perish folly, else 'tis man's fate'; and the bolt flew unerringly.  
 Then the kindler stooped; from the torch-car down the measureless  
 altitudes  
 Leaned his rayless head, relinquished rein and footing, raised not a  
 cry.  
 Like the flower on the river's surface when expanding it vanishes,  
 Gave his limbs to right and left, quenched: and so fell he  
 precipitate,  
 Seen of men as a glad rain-fall, sending coolness yet ere it comes:  
 So he showered above them, shadowed o'er the blue archipelagoes,  
 O'er the silken-shining pastures of the continents and the isles;  
 So descending brought revival to the greenery of our earth.

Lither, noisy in the breezes now his sisters shivering weep,  
 By the river flowing smooth out to the vexed sea of Adria,  
 Where he fell, and where they suffered sudden change to the  
 tremulous  
 Ever-wailful trees bemoaning him, a bruised purple cyclamen.



# Phantasy

I

Within a Temple of the Toes,  
Where twirled the passionate Wili,  
I saw full many a market rose,  
And sighed for my village lily.

II

With cynical Adrian then I took flight  
To that old dead city whose carol  
Bursts out like a reveller's loud in the night,  
As he sits astride his barrel.

III

We two were bound the Alps to scale,  
Up the rock-reflecting river;  
Old times blew thro' me like a gale,  
And kept my thoughts in a quiver.

IV

Hawking ruin, wood-slope, and vine  
Reeled silver-laced under my vision,  
And into me passed, with the green-eyed wine  
Knocking hard at my head for admission.

V

I held the village lily cheap,  
And the dream around her idle:  
Lo, quietly as I lay to sleep,  
The bells led me off to a bridal.

VI

My bride wore the hood of a Beguine,  
And mine was the foot to falter;

Three cowed monks, rat-eyed, were seen;  
The Cross was of bones o'er the altar.

## VII

The Cross was of bones; the priest that read,  
A spectacled necromancer:  
But at the fourth word, the bride I led  
Changed to an Opera dancer.

## VIII

A young ballet-beauty, who perked in her place,  
A darling of pink and spangles;  
One fair foot level with her face,  
And the hearts of men at her ankles.

## IX

She whirled, she twirled, the mock-priest grinned,  
And quickly his mask unriddled;  
'Twas Adrian! loud his old laughter dinned;  
Then he seized a fiddle, and fiddled.

## X

He fiddled, he glowed with the bottomless fire,  
Like Sathanas in feature:  
All through me he fiddled a wolfish desire  
To dance with that bright creature.

## XI

And gathering courage I said to my soul,  
Throttle the thing that hinders!  
When the three cowed monks, from black as coal,  
Waxed hot as furnace-cinders.

## XII

They caught her up, twirling: they leapt between-whiles:  
The fiddler flickered with laughter:



Profanely they flew down the awful aisles,  
Where I went sliding after.

XIII

Down the awful aisles, by the fretted walls,  
Beneath the Gothic arches:-  
King Skull in the black confessionals  
Sat rub-a-dub-dubbing his marches.

XIV

Then the silent cold stone warriors frowned,  
The pictured saints strode forward:  
A whirlwind swept them from holy ground;  
A tempest puffed them nor'ward.

XV

They shot through the great cathedral door;  
Like mallards they traversed ocean:  
And gazing below, on its boiling floor,  
I marked a horrid commotion.

XVI

Down a forest's long alleys they spun like tops:  
It seemed that for ages and ages,  
Thro' the Book of Life bereft of stops,  
They waltzed continuous pages.

XVII

And ages after, scarce awake,  
And my blood with the fever fretting,  
I stood alone by a forest-lake,  
Whose shadows the moon were netting.

XVIII

Lilies, golden and white, by the curls  
Of their broad flat leaves hung swaying.

A wreath of languid twining girls  
Streamed upward, long locks disarraying.

XIX

Their cheeks had the satin frost-glow of the moon;  
Their eyes the fire of Sirius.  
They circled, and droned a monotonous tune,  
Abandoned to love delirious.

XX

Like lengths of convolvulus torn from the hedge,  
And trailing the highway over,  
The dreamy-eyed mistresses circled the sedge,  
And called for a lover, a lover!

XXI

I sank, I rose through seas of eyes,  
In odorous swathes delicious:  
They fanned me with impetuous sighs,  
They hit me with kisses vicious.

XXII

My ears were spelled, my neck was coiled,  
And I with their fury was glowing,  
When the marbly waters bubbled and boiled  
At a watery noise of crowing.

XXIII

They dragged me low and low to the lake:  
Their kisses more stormily showered;  
On the emerald brink, in the white moon's wake,  
An earthly damsel cowered.

XXIV

Fresh heart-sobs shook her knitted hands  
Beneath a tiny suckling,

As one by one of the doleful bands  
Dived like a fairy duckling.

XXV

And now my turn had come-O me!  
What wisdom was mine that second!  
I dropped on the adorer's knee;  
To that sweet figure I beckoned.

XXVI

Save me! save me! for now I know  
The powers that Nature gave me,  
And the value of honest love I know:-  
My village lily! save me!

XXVII

Come 'twixt me and the sisterhood,  
While the passion-born phantoms are fleeing!  
Oh, he that is true to flesh and blood  
Is true to his own being!

XXVIII

And he that is false to flesh and blood  
Is false to the star within him:  
And the mad and hungry sisterhood  
All under the tides shall win him!

XXIX

My village lily! save me! save!  
For strength is with the holy:-  
Already I shuddered to feel the wave,  
As I kept sinking slowly:-

XXX

I felt the cold wave and the under-tug  
Of the Brides, when-starting and shrinking -

Lo, Adrian tilts the water-jug!  
And Bruges with morn is blinking.

XXXI

Merrily sparkles sunny prime  
On gabled peak and arbour:  
Merrily rattles belfry-chime  
The song of Sevilla's Barber.

George Meredith

# Phoebus With Admetus

WHEN by Zeus relenting the mandate was revoked,  
 &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Sentencing to exile the bright Sun-God,  
 Mindful were the ploughmen of who the steer had yoked,  
 &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Who: and what a track show'd the upturn'd sod!  
 Mindful were the shepherds, as now the noon severe  
 &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Bent a burning eyebrow to brown evetide,  
 How the rustic flute drew the silver to the sphere,  
 &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Sister of his own, till her rays fell wide.  
 &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;God! of whom music  
 &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;And song and blood are pure,  
 &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;The day is never darken'd  
 &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;That had thee here obscure.  
 Chirping none, the scarlet cicadas crouch'd in ranks:  
 &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Slack the thistle-head piled its down-silk gray:  
 Scarce the stony lizard suck'd hollows in his flanks:  
 &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Thick on spots of umbrage our drowsed flocks lay.  
 Sudden bow'd the chestnuts beneath a wind unheard,  
 &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Lengthen'd ran the grasses, the sky grew slate:  
 Then amid a swift flight of wing'd seed white as curd,  
 &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Clear of limb a Youth smote the master's gate.  
 &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;God! of whom music  
 &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;And song and blood are pure,  
 &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;The day is never darken'd  
 &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;That had thee here obscure.

Water, first of singers, o'er rocky mount and mead,  
 &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;First of earthly singers, the sun-loved rill,  
 Sang of him, and flooded the ripples on the reed,  
 &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Seeking whom to waken and what ear fill.  
 Water, sweetest soother to kiss a wound and cool,  
 &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Sweetest and divinest, the sky-born brook,  
 Chuckled, with a whimper, and made a mirror-pool  
 &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Round the guest we welcomed, the strange hand shook.  
 &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;God! of whom music  
 &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;And song and blood are pure,  
 &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;The day is never darken'd  
 &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;That had thee here obscure.

Many swarms of wild bees descended on our fields:

&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Stately stood the wheatstalk with head bent high:  
Big of heart we labour'd at storing mighty yields,  
&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Wool and corn, and clusters to make men cry!  
Hand-like rush'd the vintage; we strung the bellied skins  
&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Plump, and at the sealing the Youth's voice rose:  
Maidens clung in circle, on little fists their chins;  
&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Gentle beasties through push'd a cold long nose.  
&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;God! of whom music  
&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;And song and blood are pure,  
&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;The day is never darken'd  
&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;That had thee here obscure.

Foot to fire in snowtime we trimm'd the slender shaft:  
&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Often down the pit spied the lean wolf's teeth  
Grin against his will, trapp'd by masterstrokes of craft;  
&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Helpless in his froth-wrath as green logs seethe!  
Safe the tender lambs tugg'd the teats, and winter sped  
&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Whirl'd before the crocus, the year's new gold.  
Hung the hooky beak up aloft, the arrowhead  
&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Redden'd through his feathers for our dear fold.  
&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;God! of whom music  
&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;And song and blood are pure,  
&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;The day is never darken'd  
&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;That had thee here obscure.

Tales we drank of giants at war with gods above:  
&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Rocks were they to look on, and earth climb'd air!  
Tales of search for simples, and those who sought of love  
&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Ease because the creature was all too fair.  
Pleasant ran our thinking that while our work was good.  
&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Sure as fruits for sweat would the praise come fast.  
He that wrestled stoutest and tamed the billow-brood  
&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Danced in rings with girls, like a sail-flapp'd mast.  
&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;God! of whom music  
&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;And song and blood are pure,  
&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;The day is never darken'd  
&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;That had thee here obscure.

Lo, the herb of healing, when once the herb is known,  
&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Shines in shady woods bright as new-sprung flame.  
Ere the string was tighten'd we heard the mellow tone,  
&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;After he had taught how the sweet sounds came.







# Pictures Of The Rhine

## I

The spirit of Romance dies not to those  
Who hold a kindred spirit in their souls:  
Even as the odorous life within the rose  
Lives in the scattered leaflets and controls  
Mysterious adoration, so there glows  
Above dead things a thing that cannot die;  
Faint as the glimmer of a tearful eye,  
Ere the orb fills and all the sorrow flows.  
Beauty renews itself in many ways;  
The flower is fading while the new bud blows;  
And this dear land as true a symbol shows,  
While o'er it like a mellow sunset strays  
The legendary splendour of old days,  
In visible, inviolate repose.

## II

About a mile behind the viny banks,  
How sweet it was, upon a sloping green,  
Sunspread, and shaded with a branching screen,  
To lie in peace half-murmuring words of thanks!  
To see the mountains on each other climb,  
With spaces for rich meadows flowery bright;  
The winding river freshening the sight  
At intervals, the trees in leafy prime;  
The distant village-roofs of blue and white,  
With intersections of quaint-fashioned beams  
All slanting crosswise, and the feudal gleams  
Of ruined turrets, barren in the light; -  
To watch the changing clouds, like clime in clime;  
Oh sweet to lie and bless the luxury of time.

## III

Fresh blows the early breeze, our sail is full;  
A merry morning and a mighty tide.  
Cheerily O! and past St. Goar we glide,

Half hid in misty dawn and mountain cool.  
The river is our own! and now the sun  
In saffron clothes the warming atmosphere;  
The sky lifts up her white veil like a nun,  
And looks upon the landscape blue and clear; -  
The lark is up; the hills, the vines in sight;  
The river broadens with his waking bliss  
And throws up islands to behold the light;  
Voices begin to rise, all hues to kiss; -  
Was ever such a happy morn as this!  
Birds sing, we shout, flowers breathe, trees shine with one delight!

#### IV

Between the two white breasts of her we love,  
A dewy blushing rose will sometimes spring;  
Thus Nonnenwerth like an enchanted thing  
Rises mid-stream the crystal depths above.  
On either side the waters heave and swell,  
But all is calm within the little Isle;  
Content it is to give its holy smile,  
And bless with peace the lives that in it dwell.  
Most dear on the dark grass beneath its bower  
Of kindred trees embracing branch and bough,  
To dream of fairy foot and sudden flower;  
Or haply with a twilight on the brow,  
To muse upon the legendary hour,  
And Roland's lonely love and Hildegard's sad vow.

#### V

Hark! how the bitter winter breezes blow  
Round the sharp rocks and o'er the half-lifted wave,  
While all the rocky woodland branches rave  
Shrill with the piercing cold, and every cave,  
Along the icy water-margin low,  
Rings bubbling with the whirling overflow;  
And sharp the echoes answer distant cries  
Of dawning daylight and the dim sunrise,  
And the gloom-coloured clouds that stain the skies  
With pictures of a warmth, and frozen glow  
Spread over endless fields of sheeted snow;

And white untrodden mountains shining cold,  
And muffled footpaths winding thro' the wold,  
O'er which those wintry gusts cease not to howl and blow.

## VI

Rare is the loveliness of slow decay!  
With youth and beauty all must be desired,  
But 'tis the charm of things long past away,  
They leave, alone, the light they have inspired:  
The calmness of a picture; Memory now  
Is the sole life among the ruins grey,  
And like a phantom in fantastic play  
She wanders with rank weeds stuck on her brow,  
Over grass-hidden caves and turret-tops,  
Herself almost as tottering as they;  
While, to the steps of Time, her latest props  
Fall stone by stone, and in the Sun's hot ray  
All that remains stands up in rugged pride,  
And bridal vines drink in his juices on each side.

George Meredith

# Poetry

## THE POETRY OF CHAUCER

Grey with all honours of age! but fresh-featured and ruddy  
As dawn when the drowsy farm-yard has thrice heard Chaunticlere.  
Tender to tearfulness-childlike, and manly, and motherly;  
Here beats true English blood richest joyance on sweet English ground.

## THE POETRY OF SPENSER

Lakes where the sunsheen is mystic with splendour and softness;  
Vales where sweet life is all Summer with golden romance:  
Forests that glimmer with twilight round revel-bright palaces;  
Here in our May-blood we wander, careering 'mongst ladies and knights.

## THE POETRY OF SHAKESPEARE

Picture some Isle smiling green 'mid the white-foaming ocean; -  
Full of old woods, leafy wisdoms, and frolicsome fays;  
Passions and pageants; sweet love singing bird-like above it;  
Life in all shapes, aims, and fates, is there warm'd by one great human heart.

## THE POETRY OF MILTON

Like to some deep-chested organ whose grand inspiration,  
Serenely majestic in utterance, lofty and calm,  
Interprets to mortals with melody great as its burthen  
The mystical harmonies chiming for ever throughout the bright spheres.

## THE POETRY OF SOUTHEY

Keen as an eagle whose flight towards the dim empyrean  
Fearless of toil or fatigue ever royally wends!  
Vast in the cloud-coloured robes of the balm-breathing Orient  
Lo! the grand Epic advances, unfolding the humanest truth.

## THE POETRY OF COLERIDGE

A brook glancing under green leaves, self-delighting, exulting,  
And full of a gurgling melody ever renewed -  
Renewed thro' all changes of Heaven, unceasing in sunlight,  
Unceasing in moonlight, but hushed in the beams of the holier orb.

## THE POETRY OF SHELLEY

See'st thou a Skylark whose glistening winglets ascending  
Quiver like pulses beneath the melodious dawn?  
Deep in the heart-yearning distance of heaven it flutters -  
Wisdom and beauty and love are the treasures it brings down at eve.

## THE POETRY OF WORDSWORTH

A breath of the mountains, fresh born in the regions majestic,  
That look with their eye-daring summits deep into the sky.  
The voice of great Nature; sublime with her lofty conceptions,  
Yet earnest and simple as any sweet child of the green lowly vale.

## THE POETRY OF KEATS

The song of a nightingale sent thro' a slumbrous valley,  
Low-lidded with twilight, and tranced with the dolorous sound,  
Tranced with a tender enchantment; the yearning of passion  
That wins immortality even while panting delirious with death.

George Meredith

# Progress

In Progress you have little faith, say you:  
Men will maintain dear interests, wreak base hates,  
By force, and gentle women choose their mates  
Most amorously from the gilded fighting crew:  
The human heart Bellona's mad halloo  
Will ever fire to dicing with the Fates.  
'Now at this time,' says History, 'those two States  
Stood ready their past wrestling to renew.  
They sharpened arms and showed them, like the brutes  
Whose haunches quiver. But a yellow blight  
Fell on their waxing harvests. They deferred  
The bloody settlement of their disputes  
Till God should bless them better.' They did right.  
And naming Progress, both shall have the word.

George Meredith

# Requiem

Where faces are hueless, where eyelids are dewless,  
Where passion is silent and hearts never crave;  
Where thought hath no theme, and where sleep hath no dream,  
In patience and peace thou art gone-to thy grave!  
Gone where no warning can wake thee to morning,  
Dead tho' a thousand hands stretch'd out to save.

Thou cam'st to us sighing, and singing and dying,  
How could it be otherwise, fair as thou wert?  
Placidly fading, and sinking and shading  
At last to that shadow, the latest desert;  
Wasting and waning, but still, still remaining.  
Alas for the hand that could deal the death-hurt!

The Summer that brightens, the Winter that whitens,  
The world and its voices, the sea and the sky,  
The bloom of creation, the tie of relation,  
All-all is a blank to thine ear and thine eye;  
The ear may not listen, the eye may not glisten,  
Nevermore waked by a smile or a sigh.

The tree that is rootless must ever be fruitless;  
And thou art alone in thy death and thy birth;  
No last loving token of wedded love broken,  
No sign of thy singleness, sweetness and worth;  
Lost as the flower that is drowned in the shower,  
Fall'n like a snowflake to melt in the earth.

George Meredith

# Seed-Time

## I

Flowers of the willow-herb are wool;  
Flowers of the briar berries red;  
Speeding their seed as the breeze may rule,  
Flowers of the thistle loosen the thread.  
Flowers of the clematis drip in beard,  
Slack from the fir-tree youngly climbed;  
Chaplets in air, flies foliage seared;  
Heeled upon earth, lie clusters rimed.

## II

Where were skies of the mantle stained  
Orange and scarlet, a coat of frieze  
Travels from North till day has waned,  
Tattered, soaked in the ditch's dyes;  
Tumbles the rook under grey or slate;  
Else enfolding us, damps to the bone;  
Narrows the world to my neighbour's gate;  
Paints me Life as a wheezy crone.

## III

Now seems none but the spider lord;  
Star in circle his web waits prey,  
Silvering bush-mounds, blue brushing sward;  
Slow runs the hour, swift flits the ray.  
Now to his thread-shroud is he nigh,  
Nigh to the tangle where wings are sealed,  
He who frolicked the jewelled fly;  
All is adroop on the down and the weald.

## IV

Mists more lone for the sheep-bell enwrap  
Nights that tardily let slip a morn  
Paler than moons, and on noontide's lap  
Flame dies cold, like the rose late born.



Rose born late, born withered in bud! -  
I, even I, for a zenith of sun  
Cry, to fulfil me, nourish my blood:  
O for a day of the long light, one!

V

Master the blood, nor read by chills,  
Earth admonishes: Hast thou ploughed,  
Sown, reaped, harvested grain for the mills,  
Thou hast the light over shadow of cloud.  
Steadily eyeing, before that wail  
Animal-infant, thy mind began,  
Momently nearer me: should sight fail,  
Plod in the track of the husbandman.

VI

Verily now is our season of seed,  
Now in our Autumn; and Earth discerns  
Them that have served her in them that can read,  
Glassing, where under the surface she burns,  
Quick at her wheel, while the fuel, decay,  
Brightens the fire of renewal: and we?  
Death is the word of a bovine day,  
Know you the breast of the springing To-be.

George Meredith

## Sense And Spirit

The senses loving Earth or well or ill  
Ravel yet more the riddle of our lot.  
The mind is in their trammels, and lights not  
By trimming fear-bred tales; nor does the will  
To find in nature things which less may chill  
An ardour that desires, unknowing what.  
Till we conceive her living we go distraught,  
At best but circle-windsails of a mill.  
Seeing she lives, and of her joy of life  
Creatively has given us blood and breath  
For endless war and never wound unhealed,  
The gloomy Wherefore of our battle-field  
Solves in the Spirit, wrought of her through strife  
To read her own and trust her down to death.

George Meredith

# Shemselnihar

O my lover! the night like a broad smooth wave  
Bears us onward, and morn, a black rock, shines wet.  
How I shuddered-I knew not that I was a slave,  
Till I looked on thy face:- then I writhed in the net.  
Then I felt like a thing caught by fire, that her star  
Glowed dark on the bosom of Shemselnihar.

And he came, whose I am: O my lover! he came:  
And his slave, still so envied of women, was I:  
And I turned as a hissing leaf spits from the flame,  
Yes, I shrivelled to dust from him, haggard and dry.  
O forgive her:- she was but as dead lilies are:  
The life of her heart fled from Shemselnihar.

Yet with thee like a full throbbing rose how I bloom!  
Like a rose by the fountain whose showering we hear,  
As we lie, O my lover! in this rich gloom,  
Smelling faint the cool breath of the lemon-groves near.  
As we lie gazing out on that glowing great star -  
Ah! dark on the bosom of Shemselnihar.

Yet with thee am I not as an arm of the vine,  
Firm to bind thee, to cherish thee, feed thee sweet?  
Swear an oath on my lip to let none disentwine  
The life that here fawns to give warmth to thy feet.  
I on thine, thus! no more shall that jewelled Head jar  
The music thou breathest on Shemselnihar.

Far away, far away, where the wandering scents  
Of all flowers are sweetest, white mountains among,  
There my kindred abide in their green and blue tents:  
Bear me to them, my lover! they lost me so young.  
Let us slip down the stream and leap steed till afar  
None question thy claim upon Shemselnihar.

O that long note the bulbul gave out-meaning love!  
O my lover, hark to him and think it my voice!  
The blue night like a great bell-flower from above  
Drooping low and gold-eyed: O, but hear him rejoice!

Can it be? 'twas a flash! that accurst scimiter  
In thought even cuts thee from Shemselnihar.

Yes, I would that, less generous, he would oppress,  
He would chain me, upbraid me, burn deep brands for hate,  
Than with this mask of freedom and gorgeousness  
Bespangle my slavery, mock my strange fate.  
Would, would, would, O my lover, he knew-dared debar  
Thy coming, and earn curse of Shemselnihar!

George Meredith

# Society

Historic be the survey of our kind,  
And how their brave Society took shape.  
Lion, wolf, vulture, fox, jackal and ape,  
The strong of limb, the keen of nose, we find,  
Who, with some jars in harmony, combined,  
Their primal instincts taming, to escape  
The brawl indecent, and hot passions drape.  
Convenience pricked conscience, that the mind.  
Thus entered they the field of milder beasts,  
Which in some sort of civil order graze,  
And do half-homage to the God of Laws.  
But are they still for their old ravenous feasts,  
Earth gives the edifice they build no base:  
They spring another flood of fangs and claws.

George Meredith

# Solon

## I

The Tyrant passed, and friendlier was his eye  
On the great man of Athens, whom for foe  
He knew, than on the sycophantic fry  
That broke as waters round a galley's flow,  
Bubbles at prow and foam along the wake.  
Solidity the Thunderer could not shake,  
Beneath an adverse wind still stripping bare,  
His kinsman, of the light-in-cavern look,  
From thought drew, and a countenance could wear  
Not less at peace than fields in Attic air  
Shorn, and shown fruitful by the reaper's hook.

## II

Most enviable so; yet much insane  
To deem of minds of men they grow! these sheep,  
By fits wild horses, need the crook and rein;  
Hot bulls by fits, pure wisdom hold they cheap,  
My Lawgiver, when fiery is the mood.  
For ones and twos and threes thy words are good;  
For thine own government are pillars: mine  
Stand acts to fit the herd; which has quick thirst,  
Rejecting elegiacs, though they shine  
On polished brass, and, worthy of the Nine,  
In showering columns from their fountain burst.

## III

Thus museful rode the Tyrant, princely plumed,  
To his high seat upon the sacred rock:  
And Solon, blank beside his rule, resumed  
The meditation which that passing mock  
Had buffeted awhile to sallowness.  
He little loved the man, his office less,  
Yet owned him for a flower of his kind.  
Therefore the heavier curse on Athens he!  
The people grew not in themselves, but, blind,

Accepted sight from him, to him resigned  
Their hopes of stature, rootless as at sea.

#### IV

As under sea lay Solon's work, or seemed  
By turbid shore-waves beaten day by day;  
Defaced, half formless, like an image dreamed,  
Or child that fashioned in another clay  
Appears, by strangers' hands to home returned.  
But shall the Present tyrannize us? earned  
It was in some way, justly says the sage.  
One sees not how, while husbanding regrets;  
While tossing scorn abroad from righteous rage,  
High vision is obscured; for this is age  
When robbed--more infant than the babe it frets!

#### V

Yet see Athenians treading the black path  
Laid by a prince's shadow! well content  
To wait his pleasure, shivering at his wrath:  
They bow to their accepted Orient  
With offer of the all that renders bright:  
Forgetful of the growth of men to light,  
As creatures reared on Persian milk they bow.  
Unripe! unripe! The times are overcast.  
But still may they who sowed behind the plough  
True seed fix in the mind an unborn NOW  
To make the plagues afflicting us things past.

George Meredith

## Song (Untitled #10)

Come to me in any shape!  
As a victor crown'd with vine,  
In thy curls the clustering grape, -  
Or a vanquished slave:  
'Tis thy coming that I crave,  
And thy folding serpent twine,  
Close and dumb;  
Ne'er from that would I escape;  
Come to me in any shape!  
Only come!

Only come, and in my breast  
Hide thy shame or show thy pride;  
In my bosom be caressed,  
Never more to part;  
Come into my yearning heart;  
I, the serpent, golden-eyed,  
Twine round thee;  
Twine thee with no venom'd test;  
Absence makes the venom'd nest;  
Come to me!

Come to me, my lover, come!  
Violets on the tender stem  
Die and wither in their bloom,  
Under dewy grass;  
Come, my lover, or, alas!  
I shall die, shall die like them,  
Frail and lone;  
Come to me, my lover, come!  
Let thy bosom be my tomb:  
Come, my own!

George Meredith



## Song (Untitled #11)

The daisy now is out upon the green;  
And in the grassy lanes  
The child of April rains,  
The sweet fresh-hearted violet, is smelt and loved unseen.

Along the brooks and meads, the daffodil  
Its yellow richness spreads,  
And by the fountain-heads  
Of rivers, cowslips cluster round, and over every hill.

The crocus and the primrose may have gone,  
The snowdrop may be low,  
But soon the purple glow  
Of hyacinths will fill the copse, and lilies watch the dawn.

And in the sweetness of the budding year,  
The cuckoo's woodland call,  
The skylark over all,  
And then at eve, the nightingale, is doubly sweet and dear.

My soul is singing with the happy birds,  
And all my human powers  
Are blooming with the flowers,  
My foot is on the fields and downs, among the flocks and herds.

Deep in the forest where the foliage droops,  
I wander, fill'd with joy.  
Again as when a boy,  
The sunny vistas tempt me on with dim delicious hopes.

The sunny vistas, dim with hurrying shade,  
And old romantic haze:-  
Again as in past days,  
The spirit of immortal Spring doth every sense pervade.

Oh! do not say that this will ever cease; -  
This joy of woods and fields,  
This youth that nature yields,  
Will never speak to me in vain, tho' soundly rapt in peace.

George Meredith

## Song (Untitled #12)

Should thy love die;  
O bury it not under ice-blue eyes!  
And lips that deny,  
With a scornful surprise,  
The life it once lived in thy breast when it wore no disguise.

Should thy love die;  
O bury it where the sweet wild-flowers blow!  
And breezes go by,  
With no whisper of woe;  
And strange feet cannot guess of the anguish that slumbers below.

Should thy love die;  
O wander once more to the haunt of the bee!  
Where the foliaged sky  
Is most sacred to see,  
And thy being first felt its wild birth like a wind-wakened tree.

Should thy love die;  
O dissemble it! smile! let the rose hide the thorn!  
While the lark sings on high,  
And no thing looks forlorn,  
Bury it, bury it, bury it where it was born.

George Meredith

## Song (Untitled #13)

Under boughs of breathing May,  
In the mild spring-time I lay,  
Lonely, for I had no love;  
And the sweet birds all sang for pity,  
Cuckoo, lark, and dove.

Tell me, cuckoo, then I cried,  
Dare I woo and wed a bride?  
I, like thee, have no home-nest;  
And the twin notes thus tuned their ditty, -  
'Love can answer best.'

Nor, warm dove with tender coo,  
Have I thy soft voice to woo,  
Even were a damsel by;  
And the deep woodland crooned its ditty, -  
'Love her first and try.'

Nor have I, wild lark, thy wing,  
That from bluest heaven can bring  
Bliss, whatever fate befall;  
And the sky-lyrist trilled this ditty, -  
'Love will give thee all.'

So it chanced while June was young,  
Wooing well with fervent song,  
I had won a damsel coy;  
And the sweet birds that sang for pity,  
Jubileed for joy.

George Meredith

## Song (Untitled #2)

The moon is alone in the sky  
As thou in my soul;  
The sea takes her image to lie  
Where the white ripples roll  
All night in a dream,  
With the light of her beam,  
Hushedly, mournfully, mistily up to the shore.  
The pebbles speak low  
In the ebb and the flow,  
As I when thy voice came at intervals, tuned to adore:  
Nought other stirred  
Save my heart all unheard  
Beating to bliss that is past evermore.

George Meredith

## Song (Untitled #3)

Fair and false! No dawn will greet  
Thy waking beauty as of old;  
The little flower beneath thy feet  
Is alien to thy smile so cold;  
The merry bird flown up to meet  
Young morning from his nest i' the wheat  
Scatters his joy to wood and wold,  
But scorns the arrogance of gold.

False and fair! I scarce know why,  
But standing in the lonely air,  
And underneath the blessed sky,  
I plead for thee in my despair; -  
For thee cut off, both heart and eye  
From living truth; thy spring quite dry;  
For thee, that heaven my thought may share,  
Forget-how false! and think-how fair!

George Meredith

## Song (Untitled #4)

Two wedded lovers watched the rising moon,  
That with her strange mysterious beauty glowing,  
Over misty hills and waters flowing,  
Crowned the long twilight loveliness of June:  
And thus in me, and thus in me, they spake,  
The solemn secret of first love did wake.

Above the hills the blushing orb arose;  
Her shape encircled by a radiant bower,  
In which the nightingale with charmed power  
Poured forth enchantment o'er the dark repose:  
And thus in me, and thus in me, they said,  
Earth's mists did with the sweet new spirit wed.

Far up the sky with ever purer beam,  
Upon the throne of night the moon was seated,  
And down the valley glens the shades retreated,  
And silver light was on the open stream.  
And thus in me, and thus in me, they sighed,  
Aspiring Love has hallowed Passion's tide.

George Meredith

## Song (Untitled #5)

I cannot lose thee for a day,  
But like a bird with restless wing  
My heart will find thee far away,  
And on thy bosom fall and sing,  
My nest is here, my rest is here; -  
And in the lull of wind and rain,  
Fresh voices make a sweet refrain,  
'His rest is there, his nest is there.'

With thee the wind and sky are fair,  
But parted, both are strange and dark;  
And treacherous the quiet air  
That holds me singing like a lark,  
O shield my love, strong arm above!  
Till in the hush of wind and rain,  
Fresh voices make a rich refrain,  
'The arm above will shield thy love.'

George Meredith



## Song (Untitled #6)

The flower unfolds its dawning cup,  
And the young sun drinks the star-dews up,  
At eve it droops with the bliss of day,  
And dreams in the midnight far away.

So am I in thy sole, sweet glance  
Pressed with a weight of utterance;  
Lovingly all my leaves unfold,  
And gleam to the beams of thirsty gold.

At eve I droop, for then the swell  
Of feeling falters forth farewell; -  
At midnight I am dreaming deep,  
Of what has been, in blissful sleep.

When-ah! when will love's own fight  
Wed me alike thro' day and night,  
When will the stars with their linking charms  
Wake us in each other's arms?

George Meredith

## Song (Untitled #7)

Thou to me art such a spring  
As the Arab seeks at eve,  
Thirsty from the shining sands;  
There to bathe his face and hands,  
While the sun is taking leave,  
And dewy sleep is a delicious thing.

Thou to me art such a dream  
As he dreams upon the grass,  
While the bubbling coolness near  
Makes sweet music in his ear;  
And the stars that slowly pass  
In solitary grandeur o'er him gleam.

Thou to me art such a dawn  
As the dawn whose ruddy kiss  
Wakes him to his darling steed;  
And again the desert speed,  
And again the desert bliss,  
Lightens thro' his veins, and he is gone!

George Meredith

## Song (Untitled #8)

No, no, the falling blossom is no sign  
Of loveliness destroy'd and sorrow mute;  
The blossom sheds its loveliness divine; -  
Its mission is to prophecy the fruit.

Nor is the day of love for ever dead,  
When young enchantment and romance are gone;  
The veil is drawn, but all the future dread  
Is lightened by the finger of the dawn.

Love moves with life along a darker way,  
They cast a shadow and they call it death:  
But rich is the fulfilment of their day;  
The purer passion and the firmer faith.

George Meredith

## Song (Untitled #9)

I would I were the drop of rain  
That falls into the dancing rill,  
For I should seek the river then,  
And roll below the wooded hill,  
Until I reached the sea.

And O, to be the river swift  
That wrestles with the wilful tide,  
And fling the briny weeds aside  
That o'er the foamy billows drift,  
Until I came to thee!

I would that after weary strife,  
And storm beneath the piping wind,  
The current of my true fresh life  
Might come unmingled, unimbrined,  
To where thou floatest free.

Might find thee in some amber clime,  
Where sunlight dazzles on the sail,  
And dreaming of our plighted vale  
Might seal the dream, and bless the time,  
With maiden kisses three.

George Meredith

## Song (Untitled#1)

Love within the lover's breast  
Burns like Hesper in the west,  
O'er the ashes of the sun,  
Till the day and night are done;  
Then when dawn drives up her car -  
Lo! it is the morning star.

Love! thy love pours down on mine  
As the sunlight on the vine,  
As the snow-rill on the vale,  
As the salt breeze in the sail;  
As the song unto the bird,  
On my lips thy name is heard.

As a dewdrop on the rose  
In thy heart my passion glows,  
As a skylark to the sky  
Up into thy breast I fly;  
As a sea-shell of the sea  
Ever shall I sing of thee.

George Meredith

## Song In The Songless

They have no song, the sedges dry,  
And still they sing.  
It is within my breast they sing,  
As I pass by.  
Within my breast they touch a string,  
They wake a sigh.  
There is but sound of sedges dry;  
In me they sing.

George Meredith

## Song--Autumn

When nuts behind the hazel-leaf  
Are brown as the squirrel that hunts them free,  
And the fields are rich with the sun-burnt sheaf,  
'Mid the blue cornflower and the yellowing tree;  
And the farmer glows and beams in his glee;

O then is the season to wed thee a bride!  
Ere the garners are filled and the ale-cups foam;  
For a smiling hostess is the pride  
And flower of every Harvest Home.

George Meredith

## Song--Spring

When buds of palm do burst and spread  
Their downy feathers in the lane,  
And orchard blossoms, white and red,  
Breathe Spring delight for Autumn gain;  
And the skylark shakes his wings in the rain;

O then is the season to look for a bride!  
Choose her warily, woo her unseen;  
For the choicest maids are those that hide  
Like dewy violets under the green.

George Meredith



# Sorrow And Joys

Bury thy sorrows, and they shall rise  
As souls to the immortal skies,  
And there look down like mothers' eyes.

But let thy joys be fresh as flowers,  
That suck the honey of the showers,  
And bloom alike on huts and towers.

So shall thy days be sweet and bright;  
Solemn and sweet thy starry night,  
Conscious of love each change of light.

The stars will watch the flowers asleep,  
The flowers will feel the soft stars weep,  
And both will mix sensations deep.

With these below, with those above,  
Sits evermore the brooding dove,  
Uniting both in bonds of love.

For both by nature are akin;  
Sorrow, the ashen fruit of sin,  
And joy, the juice of life within.

Children of earth are these; and those  
The spirits of divine repose -  
Death radiant o'er all human woes.

O, think what then had been thy doom,  
If homeless and without a tomb  
They had been left to haunt the gloom!

O, think again what now they are -  
Motherly love, tho' dim and far,  
Imaged in every lustrous star.

For they, in their salvation, know  
No vestige of their former woe,  
While thro' them all the heavens do flow.

Thus art thou wedded to the skies,  
And watched by ever-loving eyes,  
And warned by yearning sympathies.

George Meredith

# South-West Wind In The Woodland

The silence of preluded song -  
Aeolian silence charms the woods;  
Each tree a harp, whose foliaged strings  
Are waiting for the master's touch  
To sweep them into storms of joy,  
Stands mute and whispers not; the birds  
Brood dumb in their foreboding nests,  
Save here and there a chirp or tweet,  
That utters fear or anxious love,  
Or when the ouzel sends a swift  
Half warble, shrinking back again  
His golden bill, or when aloud  
The storm-cock warns the dusking hills  
And villages and valleys round:  
For lo, beneath those ragged clouds  
That skirt the opening west, a stream  
Of yellow light and windy flame  
Spreads lengthening southward, and the sky  
Begins to gloom, and o'er the ground  
A moan of coming blasts creeps low  
And rustles in the crisping grass;  
Till suddenly with mighty arms  
Outspread, that reach the horizon round,  
The great South-West drives o'er the earth,  
And loosens all his roaring robes  
Behind him, over heath and moor.  
He comes upon the neck of night,  
Like one that leaps a fiery steed  
Whose keen black haunches quivering shine  
With eagerness and haste, that needs  
No spur to make the dark leagues fly!  
Whose eyes are meteors of speed;  
Whose mane is as a flashing foam;  
Whose hoofs are travelling thunder-shocks; -  
He comes, and while his growing gusts,  
Wild couriers of his reckless course,  
Are whistling from the daggered gorse,  
And hurrying over fern and broom,  
Midway, far off, he feigns to halt

And gather in his streaming train.

Now, whirring like an eagle's wing  
Preparing for a wide blue flight;  
Now, flapping like a sail that tacks  
And chides the wet bewildered mast;  
Now, screaming like an anguish'd thing  
Chased close by some down-breathing beak;  
Now, wailing like a breaking heart,  
That will not wholly break, but hopes  
With hope that knows itself in vain;  
Now, threatening like a storm-charged cloud;  
Now, cooing like a woodland dove;  
Now, up again in roar and wrath  
High soaring and wide sweeping; now,  
With sudden fury dashing down  
Full-force on the awaiting woods.

Long waited there, for aspens frail  
That tinkle with a silver bell,  
To warn the Zephyr of their love,  
When danger is at hand, and wake  
The neighbouring boughs, surrendering all  
Their prophet harmony of leaves,  
Had caught his earliest windward thought,  
And told it trembling; naked birk  
Down showering her dishevelled hair,  
And like a beauty yielding up  
Her fate to all the elements,  
Had swayed in answer; hazels close,  
Thick brambles and dark brushwood tufts,  
And briared brakes that line the dells  
With shaggy beetling brows, had sung  
Shrill music, while the tattered flaws  
Tore over them, and now the whole  
Tumultuous concords, seized at once  
With savage inspiration, -pine,  
And larch, and beech, and fir, and thorn,  
And ash, and oak, and oakling, rave  
And shriek, and shout, and whirl, and toss,  
And stretch their arms, and split, and crack,  
And bend their stems, and bow their heads,

And grind, and groan, and lion-like  
Roar to the echo-peopled hills  
And ravenous wilds, and crake-like cry  
With harsh delight, and cave-like call  
With hollow mouth, and harp-like thrill  
With mighty melodies, sublime,  
From clumps of column'd pines that wave  
A lofty anthem to the sky,  
Fit music for a prophet's soul -  
And like an ocean gathering power,  
And murmuring deep, while down below  
Reigns calm profound;-not trembling now  
The aspens, but like freshening waves  
That fall upon a shingly beach; -  
And round the oak a solemn roll  
Of organ harmony ascends,  
And in the upper foliage sounds

A symphony of distant seas.  
The voice of nature is abroad  
This night; she fills the air with balm;  
Her mystery is o'er the land;  
And who that hears her now and yields  
His being to her yearning tones,  
And seats his soul upon her wings,  
And broadens o'er the wind-swept world  
With her, will gather in the flight  
More knowledge of her secret, more  
Delight in her beneficence,  
Than hours of musing, or the lore  
That lives with men could ever give!  
Nor will it pass away when morn  
Shall look upon the lulling leaves,  
And woodland sunshine, Eden-sweet,  
Dreams o'er the paths of peaceful shade; -  
For every elemental power  
Is kindred to our hearts, and once  
Acknowledged, wedded, once embraced,  
Once taken to the unfettered sense,  
Once claspt into the naked life,  
The union is eternal.



# Sunrise

The clouds are withdrawn  
And their thin-rippled mist,  
That stream'd o'er the lawn  
To the drowsy-eyed west.  
Cold and grey  
They slept in the way,  
And shrank from the ray  
Of the chariot East:  
But now they are gone,  
And the bounding light  
Leaps thro' the bars  
Of doubtful dawn;  
Blinding the stars,  
And blessing the sight;  
Shedding delight  
On all below;  
Glimmering fields,  
And wakening wealds,  
And rising lark,  
And meadows dark,  
And idle rills,  
And labouring mills,  
And far-distant hills  
Of the fawn and the doe.  
The sun is cheered  
And his path is cleared,  
As he steps to the air  
From his emerald cave,  
His heel in the wave,  
Most bright and bare;  
In the tide of the sky  
His radiant hair  
From his temples fair  
Blown back on high;  
As forward he bends,  
And upward ascends,  
Timely and true,  
To the breast of the blue;  
His warm red lips

Kissing the dew,  
Which sweetened drips  
On his flower cupholders;  
Every hue  
From his gleaming shoulders  
Shining anew  
With colour sky-born,  
As it washes and dips  
In the pride of the morn.  
Robes of azure,  
Fringed with amber,  
Fold upon fold  
Of purple and gold,  
Vine-leaf bloom,  
And the grape's ripe gloom,  
When season deep  
In noontide leisure,  
With clustering heap  
The tendrils clamber  
Full in the face  
Of his hot embrace,  
Fill'd with the gleams  
Of his firmest beams.  
Autumn flushes,  
Roseate blushes,  
Vermeil tinges,  
Violet fringes,  
Every hue  
Of his flower cupholders,  
O'er the clear ether  
Mingled together,  
Shining anew  
From his gleaming shoulders!  
Circling about  
In a coronal rout,  
And floating behind,  
The way of the wind,  
As forward he bends,  
And upward ascends,  
Timely and true,  
To the breast of the blue.  
His bright neck curved,



His clear limbs nerved,  
Diamond keen  
On his front serene,  
While each white arm strains  
To the racing reins,  
As plunging, eyes flashing,  
Dripping, and dashing,  
His steeds triple grown  
Rear up to his throne,  
Ruffling the rest  
Of the sea's blue breast,  
From his flooding, flaming crimson crest!

George Meredith

# Tardy Spring

Now the North wind ceases,  
The warm South-west awakes;  
Swift fly the fleeces,  
Thick the blossom-flakes.

Now hill to hill has made the stride,  
And distance waves the without end:  
Now in the breast a door flings wide;  
Our farthest smiles, our next is friend.  
And song of England's rush of flowers  
Is this full breeze with mellow stops,  
That spins the lark for shine, for showers;  
He drinks his hurried flight, and drops.  
The stir in memory seem these things,  
Which out of moistened turf and clay  
Astrain for light push patient rings,  
Or leap to find the waterway.  
'Tis equal to a wonder done,  
Whatever simple lives renew  
Their tricks beneath the father sun,  
As though they caught a broken clue;  
So hard was earth an eyewink back:  
But now the common life has come,  
The blotting cloud a dappled pack,  
The grasses one vast underhum.  
A City clothed in snow and soot,  
With lamps for day in ghostly rows,  
Breaks to the scene of hosts afoot,  
The river that reflective flows:  
And there did fog down crypts of street  
Play spectre upon eye and mouth:-  
Their faces are a glass to greet  
This magic of the whirl for South.  
A burly joy each creature swells  
With sound of its own hungry quest;  
Earth has to fill her empty wells,  
And speed the service of the nest;  
The phantom of the snow-wreath melt,  
That haunts the farmer's look abroad,

Who sees what tomb a white night built,  
Where flocks now bleat and sprouts the clod.  
For iron Winter held her firm;  
Across her sky he laid his hand;  
And bird he starved, he stiffened worm;  
A sightless heaven, a shaven land.  
Her shivering Spring feigned fast asleep,  
The bitten buds dared not unfold:  
We raced on roads and ice to keep  
Thought of the girl we love from cold.

But now the North wind ceases,  
The warm South-west awakes,  
The heavens are out in fleeces,  
And earth's green banner shakes.

George Meredith

# The Appeasement Of Demeter

## I

Demeter devastated our good land,  
In blackness for her daughter snatched below.  
Smoke-pillar or loose hillock was the sand,  
Where soil had been to clasp warm seed and throw  
The wheat, vine, olive, ripe to Summer's ray.  
Now whether night advancing, whether day,  
Scarce did the baldness show:  
The hand of man was a defeated hand.

## II

Necessity, the primal goad to growth,  
Stood shrunken; Youth and Age appeared as one;  
Like Winter Summer; good as labour sloth;  
Nor was there answer wherefore beamed the sun,  
Or why men drew the breath to carry pain.  
High reared the ploughshare, broken lay the wain,  
Idly the flax-wheel spun  
Unridered: starving lords were wasp and moth.

## III

Lean grassblades losing green on their bent flags,  
Sang chilly to themselves; lone honey-bees  
Pursued the flowers that were not with dry bags;  
Sole sound aloud the snap of sapless trees,  
More sharp than slingstones on hard breastplates hurled.  
Back to first chaos tumbled the stopped world,  
Careless to lure or please.  
A nature of gaunt ribs, an earth of crags.

## IV

No smile Demeter cast: the gloom she saw,  
Well draped her direful musing; for in gloom,  
In thicker gloom, deep down the cavern-maw,  
Her sweet had vanished; liker unto whom,

And whose pale place of habitation mute,  
She and all seemed where Seasons, pledged for fruit  
Anciently, gaped for bloom:  
Where hand of man was as a plucked fowl's claw.

## V

The wrathful Queen descended on a vale,  
That ere the ravished hour for richness heaved.  
Iambe, maiden of the merry tale,  
Beside her eyed the once red-cheeked, green-leaved.  
It looked as if the Deluge had withdrawn.  
Pity caught at her throat; her jests were gone.  
More than for her who grieved,  
She could for this waste home have piped the wail.

## VI

Iambe, her dear mountain-rivulet  
To waken laughter from cold stones, beheld  
A riven wheatfield cracking for the wet,  
And seed like infant's teeth, that never swelled,  
Apeep up flinty ridges, milkless round.  
Teeth of the giants marked she where thin ground  
Rocky in spikes rebelled  
Against the hand here slack as rotted net.

## VII

The valley people up the ashen scoop  
She beckoned, aiming hopelessly to win  
Her Mistress in compassion of yon group  
So pinched and wizened; with their aged grin,  
For lack of warmth to smile on mouths of woe,  
White as in chalk outlining little O,  
Dumb, from a falling chin;  
Young, old, alike half-bent to make the hoop.

## VIII

Their tongues of birds they wagged, weak-voiced as when  
Dark underwaters the recesses choke;

With cluck and upper quiver of a hen  
In grasp, past pecking: cry before the croak.  
Relentlessly their gold-haired Heaven, their fount  
Bountiful of old days, heard them recount  
This and that cruel stroke:  
Nor eye nor ear had she for piteous men.

## IX

A figure of black rock by sunbeams crowned  
Through stormclouds, where the volumed shades enfold  
An earth in awe before the claps resound  
And woods and dwellings are as billows rolled,  
The barren Nourisher unmelted shed  
Death from the looks that wandered with the dead  
Out of the realms of gold,  
In famine for her lost, her lost unfound.

## X

Iambe from her Mistress tripped; she raised  
The cattle-call above the moan of prayer;  
And slowly out of fields their fancy grazed,  
Among the droves, defiled a horse and mare:  
The wrecks of horse and mare: such ribs as view  
Seas that have struck brave ships ashore, while through  
Shoots the swift foamspit: bare  
They nodded, and Demeter on them gazed.

## XI

Howbeit the season of the dancing blood,  
Forgot was horse of mare, yea, mare of horse:  
Reversed, each head at either's flank, they stood.  
Whereat the Goddess, in a dim remorse,  
Laid hand on them, and smacked; and her touch pricked.  
Neighing within, at either's flank they licked;  
Played on a moment's force  
At courtship, withering to the crazy nod.

## XII

The nod was that we gather for consent;  
And mournfully amid the group a dame,  
Interpreting the thing in nature meant,  
Her hands held out like bearers of the flame,  
And nodded for the negative sideways.  
Keen at her Mistress glanced Iambe: rays  
From the Great Mother came:  
Her lips were opened wide; the curse was rent.

### XIII

She laughed: since our first harvesting heard none  
Like thunder of the song of heart: her face,  
The dreadful darkness, shook to mounted sun,  
And peal on peal across the hills held chase.  
She laughed herself to water; laughed to fire;  
Laughed the torrential laugh of dam and sire  
Full of the marrowy race.  
Her laughter, Gods! was flesh on skeleton.

### XIV

The valley people huddled, broke, afraid,  
Assured, and taking lightning in the veins,  
They puffed, they leaped, linked hands, together swayed,  
Unwitting happiness till golden rains  
Of tears in laughter, laughter weeping, smote  
Knowledge of milky mercy from that throat  
Pouring to heal their pains:  
And one bold youth set mouth at a shy maid.

### XV

Iambe clapped to see the kindly lusts  
Inspire the valley people, still on seas,  
Like poplar-tops relieved from stress of gusts,  
With rapture in their wonderment; but these,  
Low homage being rendered, ran to plough,  
Fed by the laugh, as by the mother cow  
Calves at the teats they tease:  
Soon drove they through the yielding furrow-crusts.

XVI

Uprose the blade in green, the leaf in red,  
The tree of water and the tree of wood:  
And soon among the branches overhead  
Gave beauty juicy issue sweet for food.  
O Laughter! beauty plumped and love had birth.  
Laughter! O thou reviver of sick Earth!  
Good for the spirit, good  
For body, thou! to both art wine and bread!

George Meredith



# The Beggar's Soliloquy

## I

Now, this, to my notion, is pleasant cheer,  
To lie all alone on a ragged heath,  
Where your nose isn't sniffing for bones or beer,  
But a peat-fire smells like a garden beneath.  
The cottagers bustle about the door,  
And the girl at the window ties her strings.  
She's a dish for a man who's a mind to be poor;  
Lord! women are such expensive things.

## II

We don't marry beggars, says she: why, no:  
It seems that to make 'em is what you do;  
And as I can cook, and scour, and sew,  
I needn't pay half my victuals for you.  
A man for himself should be able to scratch,  
But tickling's a luxury:- love, indeed!  
Love burns as long as the lucifer match,  
Wedlock's the candle! Now, that's my creed.

## III

The church-bells sound water-like over the wheat;  
And up the long path troop pair after pair.  
The man's well-brushed, and the woman looks neat:  
It's man and woman everywhere!  
Unless, like me, you lie here flat,  
With a donkey for friend, you must have a wife:  
She pulls out your hair, but she brushes your hat.  
Appearances make the best half of life.

## IV

You nice little madam! you know you're nice.  
I remember hearing a parson say  
You're a plateful of vanity pepper'd with vice;  
You chap at the gate thinks t' other way.

On his waistcoat you read both his head and his heart:  
There's a whole week's wages there figured in gold!  
Yes! when you turn round you may well give a start:  
It's fun to a fellow who's getting old.

## V

Now, that's a good craft, weaving waistcoats and flowers,  
And selling of ribbons, and scenting of lard:  
It gives you a house to get in from the showers,  
And food when your appetite jockeys you hard.  
You live a respectable man; but I ask  
If it's worth the trouble? You use your tools,  
And spend your time, and what's your task?  
Why, to make a slide for a couple of fools.

## VI

You can't match the colour o' these heath mounds,  
Nor better that peat-fire's agreeable smell.  
I'm clothed-like with natural sights and sounds;  
To myself I'm in tune: I hope you're as well.  
You jolly old cot! though you don't own coal:  
It's a generous pot that's boiled with peat.  
Let the Lord Mayor o' London roast oxen whole:  
His smoke, at least, don't smell so sweet.

## VII

I'm not a low Radical, hating the laws,  
Who'd the aristocracy rebuke.  
I talk o' the Lord Mayor o' London because  
I once was on intimate terms with his cook.  
I served him a turn, and got pensioned on scraps,  
And, Lord, Sir! didn't I envy his place,  
Till Death knock'd him down with the softest of taps,  
And I knew what was meant by a tallowy face!

## VIII

On the contrary, I'm Conservative quite;  
There's beggars in Scripture 'mongst Gentiles and Jews:

It's nonsense, trying to set things right,  
For if people will give, why, who'll refuse?  
That stopping old custom wakes my spleen:  
The poor and the rich both in giving agree:  
Your tight-fisted shopman's the Radical mean:  
There's nothing in common 'twixt him and me.

## IX

He says I'm no use! but I won't reply.  
You're lucky not being of use to him!  
On week-days he's playing at Spider and Fly,  
And on Sundays he sings about Cherubim!  
Nailing shillings to counters is his chief work:  
He nods now and then at the name on his door:  
But judge of us two, at a bow and a smirk,  
I think I'm his match: and I'm honest-that's more.

## X

No use! well, I mayn't be. You ring a pig's snout,  
And then call the animal glutton! Now, he,  
Mr. Shopman, he's nought but a pipe and a spout  
Who won't let the goods o' this world pass free.  
This blazing blue weather all round the brown crop,  
He can't enjoy! all but cash he hates.  
He's only a snail that crawls under his shop;  
Though he has got the ear o' the magistrates.

## XI

Now, giving and taking's a proper exchange,  
Like question and answer: you're both content.  
But buying and selling seems always strange;  
You're hostile, and that's the thing that's meant.  
It's man against man-you're almost brutes;  
There's here no thanks, and there's there no pride.  
If Charity's Christian, don't blame my pursuits,  
I carry a touchstone by which you're tried.

## XII

- 'Take it,' says she, 'it's all I've got':  
I remember a girl in London streets:  
She stood by a coffee-stall, nice and hot,  
My belly was like a lamb that bleats.  
Says I to myself, as her shilling I seized,  
You haven't a character here, my dear!  
But for making a rascal like me so pleased,  
I'll give you one, in a better sphere!

### XIII

And that's where it is-she made me feel  
I was a rascal: but people who scorn,  
And tell a poor patch-breech he isn't genteel,  
Why, they make him kick up-and he treads on a corn.  
It isn't liking, it's curst ill-luck,  
Drives half of us into the begging-trade:  
If for taking to water you praise a duck,  
For taking to beer why a man upbraid?

### XIV

The sermon's over: they're out of the porch,  
And it's time for me to move a leg;  
But in general people who come from church,  
And have called themselves sinners, hate chaps to beg.  
I'll wager they'll all of 'em dine to-day!  
I was easy half a minute ago.  
If that isn't pig that's baking away,  
May I perish!-we're never contented-heigho!

George Meredith

# The Burden Of Strength

If that thou hast the gift of strength, then know  
Thy part is to uplift the trodden low;  
Else in a giant's grasp until the end  
A hopeless wrestler shall thy soul contend.

George Meredith

# The Cageing Of Ares

[Iliad, v. V. 385--Dedicated to the Council at The Hague.]

How big of breast our Mother Gaea laughed  
At sight of her boy Giants on the leap  
Each over other as they neighbored home,  
Fronting the day's descent across green slopes,  
And up fired mountain crags their shadows danced.  
Close with them in their fun, she scarce could guess,  
Though these two billowy urchins reeked of craft,  
It signalled some adventurous master-trick  
To set Olympians buzzing in debate,  
Lest it might be their godhead undermined,  
The Tyranny menaced. Ephialtes high  
On shoulders of his brother Otos waved  
For the bull-bellowings given to grand good news,  
Compact, complexioned in his gleeful roar  
While Otos aped the prisoner's wrists and knees,  
With doleful sniffs between recurrent howls;  
Till Gaea's lap receiving them, they stretched,  
And both upon her bosom shaken to speech,  
Burst the hot story out of throats of both,  
Like rocky head-founts, baffling in their glut  
The hurried spout. And as when drifting storm  
Disburdened loses clasp of here and yon  
A peak, a forest mound, a valley's gleam  
Of grass and the river's crooks and snaky coils,  
Signification marvellous she caught,  
Through gurglings of triumphant jollity,  
Which now engulfed and now gave eye; at last  
Subsided, and the serious naked deed,  
With mountain-cloud of laughter banked around,  
Stood in her sight confirmed: she could believe  
That these, her sprouts of promise, her most prized,  
These two made up of lion, bear and fox,  
Her sportive, suckling mammoths, her young joy,  
Still by the reckoning infants among men,  
Had done the deed to strike the Titan host  
In envy dumb, in envious heart elate:  
These two combining strength and craft had snared,

Enmeshed, bound fast with thongs, discreetly caged  
The blood-shedder, the terrible Lord of War;  
Destroyer, ravager, superb in plumes;  
The barren furrower of anointed fields;  
The scarlet heel in towns, foul smoke to sky,  
Her hated enemy, too long her scourge:  
Great Ares. And they gagged his trumpet mouth  
When they had seized on his implacable spear,  
Hugged him to reedy helplessness despite  
His godlike fury startled from amaze.  
For he had eyed them nearing him in play,  
The giant cubs, who gambolled and who snarled,  
Unheeding his fell presence, by the mount  
Ossa, beside a brushwood cavern; there  
On Earth's original fisticuffs they called  
For ease of sharp dispute: whereat the God,  
Approving, deemed that sometime trained to arms,  
Good servitors of Ares they would be,  
And ply the pointed spear to dominate  
Their rebel restless fellows, villain brood  
Vowed to defy Immortals. So it chanced  
Amusedly he watched them, and as one  
The lusty twain were on him and they had him.  
Breath to us, Powers of air, for laughter loud!  
Cock of Olympus he, superb in plumes!  
Bound like a wheaten sheaf by those two babes!  
Because they knew our Mother Gaea loathed him,  
Knew him the famine, pestilence and waste;  
A desolating fire to blind the sight  
With splendour built of fruitful things in ashes;  
The gory chariot-wheel on cries for justice;  
Her deepest planted and her liveliest voice,  
Heard from the babe as from the broken crone.  
Behold him in his vessel of bronze encased,  
And tumbled down the cave. But rather look -  
Ah, that the woman tattler had not sought,  
Of all the Gods to let her secret fly,  
Hermes, after the thirteen songful months!  
Prompting the Dexterous to work his arts,  
And shatter earth's delirious holiday,  
Then first, as where the fountain runs a stream,  
Resolving to composure on its throbs.

But see her in the Seasons through that year;  
That one glad year and the fair opening month.  
Had never our Great Mother such sweet face!  
War with her, gentle war with her, each day  
Her sons and daughters urged; at eve were flung,  
On the morrow stood to challenge; in their strength  
Renewed, indomitable; whereof they won,  
From hourly wrestlings up to shut of lids,  
Her ready secret: the abounding life  
Returned for valiant labour: she and they  
Defeated and victorious turn by turn;  
By loss enriched, by overthrow restored.  
Exchange of powers of this conflict came;  
Defacement none, nor ever squandered force.  
Is battle nature's mandate, here it reigned,  
As music unto the hand that smote the strings;  
And she the rosier from their showery brows,  
They fruitful from her ploughed and harrowed breast.  
Back to the primal rational of those  
Who suck the teats of milky earth, and clasp  
Stability in hatred of the insane,  
Man stepped; with wits less fearful to pronounce  
The mortal mind's concept of earth's divorced  
Above; those beautiful, those masterful,  
Those lawless. High they sit, and if descend,  
Descend to reap, not sowing. Is it just?  
Earth in her happy children asked that word,  
Whereto within their breast was her reply.  
Those beautiful, those masterful, those lawless,  
Enjoy the life prolonged, outleap the years;  
Yet they ('twas the Great Mother's voice inspired  
The audacious thought), they, glorious over dust,  
Outleap not her; disrooted from her soar,  
To meet the certain fate of earth's divorced,  
And clap lame wings across a wintry haze,  
Up to the farthest bourne: immortal still,  
Thenceforth innocuous; lovelier than when ruled  
The Tyranny. This her voice within them told,  
When softly the Great Mother chid her sons  
Not of the giant brood, who did create  
Those lawless Gods, first offspring of our brain  
Set moving by an abject blood, that waked



To wanton under elements more benign,  
And planted aliens on Olympian heights; -  
Imagination's cradle poesy  
Become a monstrous pressure upon men; -  
Foes of good Gaea; until dispossessed  
By light from her, born of the love of her,  
Their lordship the illumined brain rejects  
For earth's beneficent, the sons of Law,  
Her other name. So spake she in their heart,  
Among the wheat-blades proud of stalk; beneath  
Young vine-leaves pushing timid fingers forth,  
Confidently to cling. And when brown corn  
Swayed armed ranks with softened cricket song,  
With gold necks bent for any zephyr's kiss;  
When vine-roots daily down a rubble soil  
Drank fire of heaven athirst to swell the grape;  
When swelled the grape, and in it held a ray,  
Rich issue of the embrace of heaven and earth;  
The very eye of passion drowsed by excess,  
And yet a burning lion for the spring;  
Then in that time of general cherishment,  
Sweet breathing balm and flutes by cool wood-side,  
He the harsh rouser of ire being absent, caged,  
Then did good Gaea's children gratefully  
Lift hymns to Gods they judged, but praised for peace,  
Delightful Peace, that answers Reason's call  
Harmoniously and images her Law;  
Reflects, and though short-lived as then, revives,  
In memories made present on the brain  
By natural yearnings, all the happy scenes;  
The picture of an earth allied to heaven;  
Between them the known smile behind black masks;  
Rightly their various moods interpreted;  
And frolic because toilful children borne  
With larger comprehension of Earth's aim  
At loftier, clearer, sweeter, by their aid.

George Meredith

# The Call

Under what spell are we debased  
By fears for our inviolate Isle,  
Whose record is of dangers faced  
And flung to heel with even smile?  
Is it a vaster force, a subtler guile?

They say Exercitus designs  
To match the famed Salsipotent  
Where on her sceptre she reclines;  
Awake: but were a slumber sent  
By guilty gods, more fell his foul intent.

The subtler web, the vaster foe,  
Well may we meet when drilled for deeds:  
But in these days of wealth at flow,  
A word of breezy warning breeds  
The pained responses seen in lakeside reeds.

We fain would stand contemplative,  
All innocent as meadow grass;  
In human goodness fain believe,  
Believe a cloud is formed to pass;  
Its shadows chase with draughts of hippocras.

Others have gone; the way they went  
Sweet sunny now, and safe our nest.  
Humanity, enlightenment,  
Against the warning hum protest:  
Let the world hear that we know what is best.

So do the beatific speak;  
Yet have they ears, and eyes as well;  
And if not with a paler cheek,  
They feel the shivers in them dwell,  
That something of a dubious future tell.

For huge possessions render slack  
The power we need to hold them fast;  
Save when a quickened heart shall make

Our people one, to meet what blast  
May blow from temporal heavens overcast.

Our people one! Nor they with strength  
Dependent on a single arm:  
Alert, and braced the whole land's length,  
Rejoicing in their manhood's charm  
For friend or foe; to succour, not to harm.

Has ever weakness won esteem?  
Or counts it as a prized ally?  
They who have read in History deem  
It ranks among the slavish fry,  
Whose claim to live justiciary Fates deny.

It can not be declared we are  
A nation till from end to end  
The land can show such front to war  
As bids a crouching foe expend  
His ire in air, and preferably be friend.

We dreading him, we do him wrong;  
For fears discolour, fears invite.  
Like him, our task is to be strong;  
Unlike him, claiming not by might  
To snatch an envied treasure as a right.

So may a stouter brotherhood  
At home be signalled over sea  
For righteous, and be understood,  
Nay, welcomed, when 'tis shown that we  
All duties have embraced in being free.

This Britain slumbering, she is rich;  
Lies placid as a cradled child;  
At times with an uneasy twitch,  
That tells of dreams unduly wild.  
Shall she be with a foreign drug defiled?

The grandeur of her deeds recall;  
Look on her face so kindly fair:  
This Britain! and were she to fall,

Mankind would breathe a harsher air,  
The nations miss a light of leading rare.

George Meredith

# The Century Of Garibaldi

We who have seen Italia in the throes,  
Half risen but to be hurled to ground, and now  
Like a ripe field of wheat where once drove plough  
All bounteous as she is fair, we think of those  
Who blew the breath of life into her frame:  
Cavour, Mazzini, Garibaldi: Three:  
Her Brain, her Soul, her Sword; and set her free  
From ruinous discords, with one lustrous aim.

That aim, albeit they were of minds diverse,  
Conjoined them, not to strive without surcease;  
For them could be no babblement of peace  
While lay their country under Slavery's curse.

The set of torn Italia's glorious day  
Was ever sunrise in each filial breast.  
Of eagle beaks by righteousness unblest  
They felt her pulsing body made the prey.

Wherefore they struck, and had to count their dead.  
With bitter smile of resolution nerved  
To try new issues, holding faith unswerved,  
Promise they gathered from the rich blood shed.

In them Italia, visible to us then  
As living, rose; for proof that huge brute Force  
Has never being from celestial source,  
And is the lord of cravens, not of men.

Now breaking up the crust of temporal strife,  
Who reads their acts enshrined in History, sees  
That Tyrants were the Revolutionaries,  
The Rebels men heart-vowed to hallowed life.

Pure as the Archangel's cleaving Darkness thro',  
The Sword he sees, the keen unwearied Sword,  
A single blade against a circling horde,  
And aye for Freedom and the trampled few.

The cry of Liberty from dungeon cell,  
From exile, was his God's command to smite,  
As for a swim in sea he joined the fight,  
With radiant face, full sure that he did well.

Behold a warrior dealing mortal strokes,  
Whose nature was a child's: amid his foes  
A wary trickster: at the battle's close,  
No gentler friend this leopard dashed with fox.

Down the long roll of History will run  
The story of these deeds, and speed his race  
Beneath defeat more hotly to embrace  
The noble cause and trust to another sun.

And lo, that sun is in Italia's skies  
This day, by grace of his good sword in part.  
It beckons her to keep a warrior heart  
For guard of beauty, all too sweet a prize.

Earth gave him: blessed be the Earth that gave.  
Earth's Master crowned his honest work on earth:  
Proudly Italia names his place of birth:  
The bosom of Humanity his grave.

George Meredith

# The Crisis

Spirit of Russia, now has come  
The day when thou canst not be dumb.  
Around thee foams the torrent tide,  
Above thee its fell fountain, Pride.  
The senseless rock awaits thy word  
To crumble; shall it be unheard?  
Already, like a tempest-sun,  
That shoots the flare and shuts to dun,  
Thy land 'twixt flame and darkness heaves,  
Showing the blade wherewith Fate cleaves,  
If mortals in high courage fail  
At the one breath before the gale.  
Those rulers in all forms of lust,  
Who trod thy children down to dust  
On the red Sunday, know right well  
What word for them thy voice would spell,  
What quick perdition for them weave,  
Did they in such a voice believe.  
Not thine to raise the avenger's shriek,  
Nor turn to them a Tolstoi cheek;  
Nor menace him, the waverer still,  
Man of much heart and little will,  
The criminal of his high seat,  
Whose plea of Guiltless judges it.  
For him thy voice shall bring to hand  
Salvation, and to thy torn land,  
Seen on the breakers. Now has come  
The day when thou canst not be dumb,  
Spirit of Russia:- those who bind  
Thy limbs and iron-cap thy mind,  
Take thee for quaking flesh, misdoubt  
That thou art of the rabble rout  
Which cries and flees, with whimpering lip,  
From reckless gun and brutal whip;  
But he who has at heart the deeds  
Of thy heroic offspring reads  
In them a soul; not given to shrink  
From peril on the abyss's brink;  
With never dread of murderous power;

With view beyond the crimson hour;  
Neither an instinct-driven might,  
Nor visionary erudite;  
A soul; that art thou. It remains  
For thee to stay thy children's veins,  
The countertides of hate arrest,  
Give to thy sons a breathing breast,  
And Him resembling, in His sight,  
Say to thy land, Let there be Light.

George Meredith



# The Crown Of Love

O might I load my arms with thee,  
Like that young lover of Romance  
Who loved and gained so gloriously  
The fair Princess of France!

Because he dared to love so high,  
He, bearing her dear weight, shall speed  
To where the mountain touched on sky:  
So the proud king decreed.

Unhalting he must bear her on,  
Nor pause a space to gather breath,  
And on the height she will be won;  
And she was won in death!

Red the far summit flames with morn,  
While in the plain a glistening Court  
Surrounds the king who practised scorn  
Through such a mask of sport.

She leans into his arms; she lets  
Her lovely shape be clasped: he fares.  
God speed him whole! The knights make bets:  
The ladies lift soft prayers.

O have you seen the deer at chase?  
O have you seen the wounded kite?  
So boundingly he runs the race,  
So wavering grows his flight.

- My lover! linger here, and slake  
Thy thirst, or me thou wilt not win.  
- See'st thou the tumbled heavens? they break!  
They beckon us up and in.

- Ah, hero-love! unloose thy hold:  
O drop me like a cursed thing.  
- See'st thou the crowded swards of gold?  
They wave to us Rose and Ring.

- O death-white mouth! O cast me down!  
Thou diest? Then with thee I die.  
- See'st thou the angels with their Crown?  
We twain have reached the sky.

George Meredith

# The Day Of The Daughter Of Hades

## I

He who has looked upon Earth  
Deeper than flower and fruit,  
Losing some hue of his mirth,  
As the tree striking rock at the root,  
Unto him shall the marvellous tale  
Of Callistes more humanly come  
With the touch on his breast than a hail  
From the markets that hum.

## II

Now the youth footed swift to the dawn.  
'Twas the season when wintertide,  
In the higher rock-hollows updrawn,  
Leaves meadows to bud, and he spied,  
By light throwing shallow shade,  
Between the beam and the gloom,  
Sicilian Enna, whose Maid  
Such aspect wears in her bloom  
Underneath since the Charioteer  
Of Darkness whirled her away,  
On a reaped afternoon of the year,  
Nigh the poppy-droop of Day.  
O and naked of her, all dust,  
The majestic Mother and Nurse,  
Ringing cries to the God, the Just,  
Curled the land with the blight of her curse:  
Recollected of this glad isle  
Still quaking. But now more fair,  
And momentarily fraying the while  
The veil of the shadows there,  
Soft Enna that prostrate grief  
Sang through, and revealed round the vines,  
Bronze-orange, the crisp young leaf,  
The wheat-blades tripping in lines,  
A hue unilluminated by sun  
Of the flowers flooding grass as from founts:

All the penetrable dun  
Of the morn ere she mounts.

### III

Nor had saffron and sapphire and red  
Waved aloft to their sisters below,  
When gaped by the rock-channel head  
Of the lake, black, a cave at one blow,  
Reverberant over the plain:  
A sound oft fearfully swung  
For the coming of wrathful rain:  
And forth, like the dragon-tongue  
Of a fire beaten flat by the gale,  
But more as the smoke to behold,  
A chariot burst. Then a wail  
Quivered high of the love that would fold  
Bliss immeasurable, bigger than heart,  
Though a God's: and the wheels were stayed,  
And the team of the chariot swart  
Reared in marble, the six, dismayed,  
Like hoofs that by night plashing sea  
Curve and ramp from the vast swan-wave:  
For, lo, the Great Mother, She!  
And Callistes gazed, he gave  
His eyeballs up to the sight:  
The embrace of the Twain, of whom  
To men are their day, their night,  
Mellow fruits and the shearing tomb:  
Our Lady of the Sheaves  
And the Lily of Hades, the Sweet  
Of Enna: he saw through leaves  
The Mother and Daughter meet.  
They stood by the chariot-wheel,  
Embraced, very tall, most like  
Fellow poplars, wind-taken, that reel  
Down their shivering columns and strike  
Head to head, crossing throats: and apart,  
For the feast of the look, they drew,  
Which Darkness no longer could thwart;  
And they broke together anew,  
Exulting to tears, flower and bud.

But the mate of the Rayless was grave:  
She smiled like Sleep on its flood,  
That washes of all we crave:  
Like the trance of eyes awake  
And the spirit enshrouded, she cast  
The wan underworld on the lake.  
They were so, and they passed.

#### IV

He tells it, who knew the law  
Upon mortals: he stood alive  
Declaring that this he saw:  
He could see, and survive.

#### V

Now the youth was not ware of the beams  
With the grasses intertwined,  
For each thing seen, as in dreams,  
Came stepping to rear through his mind,  
Till it struck his remembered prayer  
To be witness of this which had flown  
Like a smoke melted thinner than air,  
That the vacancy doth disown.  
And viewing a maiden, he thought  
It might now be morn, and afar  
Within him the memory wrought  
Of a something that slipped from the car  
When those, the august, moved by:  
Perchance a scarf, and perchance  
This maiden. She did not fly,  
Nor started at his advance:  
She looked, as when infinite thirst  
Pants pausing to bless the springs,  
Refreshed, unsated. Then first  
He trembled with awe of the things  
He had seen; and he did transfer,  
Divining and doubting in turn,  
His reverence unto her;  
Nor asked what he crouched to learn:  
The whence of her, whither, and why

Her presence there, and her name,  
Her parentage: under which sky  
Her birth, and how hither she came,  
So young, a virgin, alone,  
Unfriended, having no fear,  
As Oreads have; no moan,  
Like the lost upon earth; no tear;  
Not a sign of the torch in the blood,  
Though her stature had reached the height  
When mantles a tender rud  
In maids that of youths have sight,  
If maids of our seed they be:  
For he said: A glad vision art thou!  
And she answered him: Thou to me!  
As men utter a vow.

## VI

Then said she, quick as the cries  
Of the rainy cranes: Light! light!  
And Helios rose in her eyes,  
That were full as the dew-balls bright,  
Relucent to him as dews  
Unshaded. Breathing, she sent  
Her voice to the God of the Muse,  
And along the vale it went,  
Strange to hear: not thin, not shrill:  
Sweet, but no young maid's throat:  
The echo beyond the hill  
Ran falling on half the note:  
And under the shaken ground  
Where the Hundred-headed groans  
By the roots of great AEtna bound,  
As of him were hollow tones  
Of wondering roared: a tale  
Repeated to sunless halls.  
But now off the face of the vale  
Shadows fled in a breath, and the walls  
Of the lake's rock-head were gold,  
And the breast of the lake, that swell  
Of the crestless long wave rolled  
To shore-bubble, pebble and shell.

A morning of radiant lids  
O'er the dance of the earth opened wide:  
The bees chose their flowers, the snub kids  
Upon hindlegs went sportive, or plied,  
Nosing, hard at the dugs to be filled:  
There was milk, honey, music to make:  
Up their branches the little birds billed:  
Chirrup, drone, bleat and buzz ringed the lake.  
O shining in sunlight, chief  
After water and water's caress,  
Was the young bronze-orange leaf,  
That clung to the tree as a tress,  
Shooting lucid tendrils to wed  
With the vine-hook tree or pole,  
Like Arachne launched out on her thread.  
Then the maiden her dusky stole  
In the span of the black-starred zone,  
Gathered up for her footing fleet.  
As one that had toil of her own  
She followed the lines of wheat  
Tripping straight through the fields, green blades,  
To the groves of olive grey,  
Downy-grey, golden-tinged: and to glades  
Where the pear-blossom thickens the spray  
In a night, like the snow-packed storm:  
Pear, apple, almond, plum:  
Not wintry now: pushing, warm!  
And she touched them with finger and thumb,  
As the vine-hook closes: she smiled,  
Recounting again and again,  
Corn, wine, fruit, oil! like a child,  
With the meaning known to men.  
For hours in the track of the plough  
And the pruning-knife she stepped,  
And of how the seed works, and of how  
Yields the soil, she seemed adept.  
Then she murmured that name of the dearth,  
The Beneficent, Hers, who bade  
Our husbandmen sow for the birth  
Of the grain making earth full glad.  
She murmured that Other's: the dirge  
Of life-light: for whose dark lap

Our locks are clipped on the verge  
Of the realm where runs no sap.  
She said: We have looked on both!  
And her eyes had a wavering beam  
Of various lights, like the froth  
Of the storm-swollen ravine stream  
In flame of the bolt. What links  
Were these which had made him her friend?  
He eyed her, as one who drinks,  
And would drink to the end.

## VII

Now the meadows with crocus besprent,  
And the asphodel woodsides she left,  
And the lake-slopes, the ravishing scent  
Of narcissus, dark-sweet, for the cleft  
That tutors the torrent-brook,  
Delaying its forceful spleen  
With many a wind and crook  
Through rock to the broad ravine.  
By the hyacinth-bells in the brakes,  
And the shade-loved white windflower, half hid,  
And the sun-loving lizards and snakes  
On the cleft's barren ledges, that slid  
Out of sight, smooth as waterdrops, all,  
At a snap of twig or bark  
In the track of the foreign foot-fall,  
She climbed to the pineforest dark,  
Overbrowsing an emerald chine  
Of the grass-billows. Thence, as a wreath,  
Running poplar and cypress to pine,  
The lake-banks are seen, and beneath,  
Vineyard, village, groves, rivers, towers, farms,  
The citadel watching the bay,  
The bay with the town in its arms,  
The town shining white as the spray  
Of the sapphire sea-wave on the rock,  
Where the rock stars the girdle of sea,  
White-ringed, as the midday flock,  
Clipped by heat, rings the round of the tree.  
That hour of the piercing shaft



Transfixes bough-shadows, confused  
In veins of fire, and she laughed,  
With her quiet mouth amused  
To see the whole flock, adroop,  
Asleep, hug the tree-stem as one,  
Imperceptibly filling the loop  
Of its shade at a slant of sun.  
The pipes under pent of the crag,  
Where the goatherds in piping recline,  
Have whimsical stops, burst and flag  
Uncorrected as outstretched swine:  
For the fingers are slack and unsure,  
And the wind issues querulous:- thorns  
And snakes!--but she listened demure,  
Comparing day's music with morn's.  
Of the gentle spirit that slips  
From the bark of the tree she discoursed,  
And of her of the wells, whose lips  
Are coolness enchanting, rock-sourced.  
And much of the sacred loon,  
The frolic, the Goatfoot God,  
For stories of indolent noon  
In the pineforest's odorous nod,  
She questioned, not knowing: he can  
Be waspish, irascible, rude,  
He is oftener friendly to man,  
And ever to beasts and their brood.  
For the which did she love him well,  
She said, and his pipes of the reed,  
His twitched lips puffing to tell  
In music his tears and his need,  
Against the sharp catch of his hurt.  
Not as shepherds of Pan did she speak,  
Nor spake as the schools, to divert,  
But fondly, perceiving him weak  
Before Gods, and to shepherds a fear,  
A holiness, horn and heel.  
All this she had learnt in her ear  
From Callistes, and taught him to feel.  
Yea, the solemn divinity flushed  
Through the shaggy brown skin of the beast,  
And the steeps where the cataract rushed,

And the wilds where the forest is priest,  
Were his temple to clothe him in awe,  
While she spake: 'twas a wonder: she read  
The haunts of the beak and the claw  
As plain as the land of bread,  
But Cities and martial States,  
Whither soon the youth veered his theme,  
Were impervious barrier-gates  
To her: and that ship, a trireme,  
Nearing harbour, scarce wakened her glance,  
Though he dwelt on the message it bore  
Of sceptre and sword and lance  
To the bee-swarms black on the shore,  
Which were audible almost,  
So black they were. It befel  
That he called up the warrior host  
Of the Song pouring hydromel  
In thunder, the wide-winged Song.  
And he named with his boyish pride  
The heroes, the noble throng  
Past Acheron now, foul tide!  
With his joy of the godlike band  
And the verse divine, he named  
The chiefs pressing hot on the strand,  
Seen of Gods, of Gods aided, and maimed.  
The fleetfoot and ireful; the King;  
Him, the prompter in stratagem,  
Many-shifted and masterful: Sing,  
O Muse! But she cried: Not of them  
She breathed as if breath had failed,  
And her eyes, while she bade him desist,  
Held the lost-to-light ghosts grey-mailed,  
As you see the grey river-mist  
Hold shapes on the yonder bank.  
A moment her body waned,  
The light of her sprang and sank:  
Then she looked at the sun, she regained  
Clear feature, and she breathed deep.  
She wore the wan smile he had seen,  
As the flow of the river of Sleep,  
On the mouth of the Shadow-Queen.  
In sunlight she craved to bask,

Saying: Life! And who was she? who?  
Of what issue? He dared not ask,  
For that partly he knew.

## VIII

A noise of the hollow ground  
Turned the eye to the ear in debate:  
Not the soft overflowing of sound  
Of the pines, ranked, lofty, straight,  
Barely swayed to some whispers remote,  
Some swarming whispers above:  
Not the pines with the faint airs afloat,  
Hush-hushing the nested dove:  
It was not the pines, or the rout  
Oft heard from mid-forest in chase,  
But the long muffled roar of a shout  
Subterranean. Sharp grew her face.  
She rose, yet not moved by affright;  
'Twas rather good haste to use  
Her holiday of delight  
In the beams of the God of the Muse.  
And the steeps of the forest she crossed,  
On its dry red sheddings and cones  
Up the paths by roots green-mossed,  
Spotted amber, and old mossed stones.  
Then out where the brook-torrent starts  
To her leap, and from bend to curve  
A hurrying elbow darts  
For the instant-glancing swerve,  
Decisive, with violent will  
In the action formed, like hers,  
The maiden's, ascending; and still  
Ascending, the bud of the furze,  
The broom, and all blue-berried shoots  
Of stubborn and prickly kind,  
The juniper flat on its roots,  
The dwarf rhododaphne, behind  
She left, and the mountain sheep  
Far behind, goat, herbage and flower.  
The island was hers, and the deep,  
All heaven, a golden hour.

Then with wonderful voice, that rang  
Through air as the swan's nigh death,  
Of the glory of Light she sang,  
She sang of the rapture of Breath.  
Nor ever, says he who heard,  
Heard Earth in her boundaries broad,  
From bosom of singer or bird  
A sweetness thus rich of the God  
Whose harmonies always are sane.  
She sang of furrow and seed,  
The burial, birth of the grain,  
The growth, and the showers that feed,  
And the green blades waxing mature  
For the husbandman's armful brown.  
O, the song in its burden ran pure,  
And burden to song was a crown.  
Callistes, a singer, skilled  
In the gift he could measure and praise,  
By a rival's art was thrilled,  
Though she sang but a Song of Days,  
Where the husbandman's toil and strife  
Little varies to strife and toil:  
But the milky kernel of life,  
With her numbered: corn, wine, fruit, oil  
The song did give him to eat:  
Gave the first rapt vision of Good,  
And the fresh young sense of Sweet  
The grace of the battle for food,  
With the issue Earth cannot refuse  
When men to their labour are sworn.  
'Twas a song of the God of the Muse  
To the forehead of Morn.

## IX

Him loved she. Lo, now was he veiled:  
Over sea stood a swelled cloud-rack:  
The fishing-boat heavenward sailed,  
Bent abeam, with a whitened track,  
Surprised, fast hauling the net,  
As it flew: sea dashed, earth shook.  
She said: Is it night? O not yet!

With a travail of thoughts in her look.  
The mountain heaved up to its peak:  
Sea darkened: earth gathered her fowl;  
Of bird or of branch rose the shriek.  
Night? but never so fell a scowl  
Wore night, nor the sky since then  
When ocean ran swallowing shore,  
And the Gods looked down for men.  
Broke tempest with that stern roar  
Never yet, save when black on the whirl  
Rode wrath of a sovereign Power.  
Then the youth and the shuddering girl,  
Dim as shades in the angry shower,  
Joined hands and descended a maze  
Of the paths that were racing alive  
Round boulder and bush, cleaving ways,  
Incessant, with sound of a hive.  
The height was a fountain-urn  
Pouring streams, and the whole solid height  
Leaped, chasing at every turn  
The pair in one spirit of flight  
To the folding pineforest. Yet here,  
Like the pause to things hunted, in doubt,  
The stillness bred spectral fear  
Of the awfulness ranging without,  
And imminent. Downward they fled,  
From under the haunted roof,  
To the valley aquake with the tread  
Of an iron-resounding hoof,  
As of legions of thunderful horse  
Broken loose and in line tramping hard.  
For the rage of a hungry force  
Roamed blind of its mark over sward:  
They saw it rush dense in the cloak  
Of its travelling swathe of steam;  
All the vale through a thin thread-smoke  
Was thrown back to distance extreme:  
And dull the full breast of it blinked,  
Like a buckler of steel breathed o'er,  
Diminished, in strangeness distinct,  
Glowing cold, unearthly, hoar:  
An Enna of fields beyond sun,

Out of light, in a lurid web;  
And the traversing fury spun  
Up and down with a wave's flow and ebb;  
As the wave breaks to grasp and to spurn,  
Retire, and in ravenous greed,  
Inveterate, swell its return.  
Up and down, as if wringing from speed  
Sights that made the unsighted appear,  
Delude and dissolve, on it scoured.  
Lo, a sea upon land held career  
Through the plain of the vale half-devoured.  
Callistes of home and escape  
Muttered swiftly, unwitting of speech.  
She gazed at the Void of shape,  
She put her white hand to his reach,  
Saying: Now have we looked on the Three.  
And divided from day, from night,  
From air that is breath, stood she,  
Like the vale, out of light.

X

Then again in disorderly words  
He muttered of home, and was mute,  
With the heart of the cowering birds  
Ere they burst off the fowler's foot.  
He gave her some redness that streamed  
Through her limbs in a flitting glow.  
The sigh of our life she seemed,  
The bliss of it clothing in woe.  
Frailer than flower when the round  
Of the sickle encircles it: strong  
To tell of the things profound,  
Our inmost uttering song,  
Unspoken. So stood she awhile  
In the gloom of the terror afield,  
And the silence about her smile  
Said more than of tongue is revealed.  
I have breathed: I have gazed: I have been:  
It said: and not joylessly shone  
The remembrance of light through the screen  
Of a face that seemed shadow and stone.

She led the youth trembling, appalled,  
To the lake-banks he saw sink and rise  
Like a panic-struck breast. Then she called,  
And the hurricane blackness had eyes.  
It launched like the Thunderer's bolt.  
Pale she drooped, and the youth by her side  
Would have clasped her and dared a revolt  
Sacriligious as ever defied  
High Olympus, but vainly for strength  
His compassionate heart shook a frame  
Stricken rigid to ice all its length.  
On a main the black traveller came.  
Lo, a chariot, cleaving the storm,  
Clove the fountaining lake with a plough,  
And the lord of the steeds was in form  
He, the God of implacable brow,  
Darkness: he: he in person: he raged  
Through the wave like a boar of the wilds  
From the hunters and hounds disengaged,  
And a name shouted hoarsely: his child's.  
Horror melted in anguish to hear.  
Lo, the wave hissed apart for the path  
Of the terrible Charioteer,  
With the foam and torn features of wrath,  
Hurled aloft on each arm in a sheet;  
And the steeds clove it, rushing at land  
Like the teeth of the famished at meat.  
Then he swept out his hand.

## XI

This, no more, doth Callistes recall:  
He saw, ere he dropped in swoon,  
On the maiden the chariot fall,  
As a thundercloud swings on the moon.  
Forth, free of the deluge, one cry  
From the vanishing gallop rose clear:  
And: Skiegeneia! the sky  
Rang; Skiegeneia! the sphere.  
And she left him therewith, to rejoice,  
Repine, yearn, and know not his aim,  
The life of their day in her voice,

Left her life in her name.

## XII

Now the valley in ruin of fields  
And fair meadowland, showing at eve  
Like the spear-pitted warrior's shields  
After battle, bade men believe  
That no other than wrathfullest God  
Had been loose on her beautiful breast,  
Where the flowery grass was clod,  
Wheat and vine as a trailing nest.  
The valley, discreet in grief,  
Disclosed but the open truth,  
And Enna had hope of the sheaf:  
There was none for the desolate youth  
Devoted to mourn and to crave.  
Of the secret he had divined  
Of his friend of a day would he rave:  
How for light of our earth she pined:  
For the olive, the vine and the wheat,  
Burning through with inherited fire:  
And when Mother went Mother to meet,  
She was prompted by simple desire  
In the day-destined car to have place  
At the skirts of the Goddess, unseen,  
And be drawn to the dear earth's face.  
She was fire for the blue and the green  
Of our earth, dark fire; athirst  
As a seed of her bosom for dawn,  
White air that had robed and nursed  
Her mother. Now was she gone  
With the Silent, the God without tear,  
Like a bud peeping out of its sheath  
To be sundered and stamped with the sere.  
And Callistes to her beneath,  
As she to our beams, extinct,  
Strained arms: he was shade of her shade.  
In division so were they linked.  
But the song which had betrayed  
Her flight to the cavernous ear  
For its own keenly wakeful: that song



Of the sowing and reaping, and cheer  
Of the husbandman's heart made strong  
Through droughts and deluging rains  
With his faith in the Great Mother's love:  
O the joy of the breath she sustains,  
And the lyre of the light above,  
And the first rapt vision of Good,  
And the fresh young sense of Sweet:  
That song the youth ever pursued  
In the track of her footing fleet.  
For men to be profited much  
By her day upon earth did he sing:  
Of her voice, and her steps, and her touch  
On the blossoms of tender Spring,  
Immortal: and how in her soul  
She is with them, and tearless abides,  
Folding grain of a love for one goal  
In patience, past flowing of tides.  
And if unto him she was tears,  
He wept not: he wasted within:  
Seeming sane in the song, to his peers,  
Only crazed where the cravings begin.  
Our Lady of Gifts prized he less  
Than her issue in darkness: the dim  
Lost Skiegencia's caress  
Of our earth made it richest for him.  
And for that was a curse on him raised,  
And he withered rathe, dry to his prime,  
Though the bounteous Giver be praised  
Through the island with rites of old time  
Exceedingly fervent, and reaped  
Veneration for teachings devout,  
Pious hymns when the corn-sheaves are heaped  
And the wine-presses ruddily spout,  
And the olive and apple are juice  
At a touch light as hers lost below.  
Whatsoever to men is of use  
Sprang his worship of them who bestow,  
In a measure of songs unexcelled:  
But that soul loving earth and the sun  
From her home of the shadows he held  
For his beacon where beam there is none:

And to join her, or have her brought back,  
In his frenzy the singer would call,  
Till he followed where never was track,  
On the path trod of all.

George Meredith

# The Death Of Winter

When April with her wild blue eye  
Comes dancing over the grass,  
And all the crimson buds so shy  
Peep out to see her pass;  
As lightly she loosens her showery locks  
And flutters her rainy wings;  
Laughingly stoops  
To the glass of the stream,  
And loosens and loops  
Her hair by the gleam,  
While all the young villagers blithe as the flocks  
Go frolicking round in rings; -  
Then Winter, he who tamed the fly,  
Turns on his back and prepares to die,  
For he cannot live longer under the sky.

Down the valleys glittering green,  
Down from the hills in snowy rills,  
He melts between the border sheen  
And leaps the flowery verges!  
He cannot choose but brighten their hues,  
And tho' he would creep, he fain must leap,  
For the quick Spring spirit urges.  
Down the vale and down the dale  
He leaps and lights, till his moments fail,  
Buried in blossoms red and pale,  
While the sweet birds sing his dirges!

O Winter! I'd live that life of thine,  
With a frosty brow and an icicle tongue,  
And never a song my whole life long, -  
Were such delicious burial mine!  
To die and be buried, and so remain  
A wandering brook in April's train,  
Fixing my dying eyes for aye  
On the dawning brows of maiden May.

George Meredith

# The Discipline Of Wisdom

Rich labour is the struggle to be wise,  
While we make sure the struggle cannot cease.  
Else better were it in some bower of peace  
Slothful to swing, contending with the flies.  
You point at Wisdom fixed on lofty skies,  
As mid barbarian hordes a sculptured Greece:  
She falls. To live and shine, she grows her fleece,  
Is shorn, and rubs with follies and with lies.  
So following her, your hewing may attain  
The right to speak unto the mute, and shun  
That sly temptation of the illumined brain,  
Deliveries oracular, self-spun.  
Who sweats not with the flock will seek in vain  
To shed the words which are ripe fruit of sun.

George Meredith

## The Doe: A Fragment (From Wandering Willie)

And-'Yonder look! yoho! yoho!  
Nancy is off!' the farmer cried,  
Advancing by the river side,  
Red-kerchieft and brown-coated;-'So,  
My girl, who else could leap like that?  
So neatly! like a lady! 'Zounds!  
Look at her how she leads the hounds!  
And waving his dusty beaver hat,  
He cheered across the chase-filled water,  
And clapt his arm about his daughter,  
And gave to Joan a courteous hug,  
And kiss that, like a stubborn plug  
From generous vats in vastness rounded,  
The inner wealth and spirit sounded:  
Eagerly pointing South, where, lo,  
The daintiest, fleetest-footed doe  
Led o'er the fields and thro' the furze  
Beyond: her lively delicate ears  
Prickt up erect, and in her track  
A dappled lengthy-striding pack.

Scarce had they cast eyes upon her,  
When every heart was wagered on her,  
And half in dread, and half delight,  
They watched her lovely bounding flight;  
As now across the flashing green,  
And now beneath the stately trees,  
And now far distant in the dene,  
She headed on with graceful ease:  
Hanging aloft with doubled knees,  
At times athwart some hedge or gate;  
And slackening pace by slow degrees,  
As for the foremost foe to wait.  
Renewing her outstripping rate  
Whene'er the hot pursuers neared,  
By garden wall and paled estate,  
Where clambering gazers whooped and cheered.  
Here winding under elm and oak,  
And slanting up the sunny hill:

Splashing the water here like smoke  
Among the mill-holms round the mill.

And-'Let her go; she shows her game,  
My Nancy girl, my pet and treasure!'  
The farmer sighed: his eyes with pleasure  
Brimming: "'Tis my daughter's name,  
My second daughter lying yonder.'  
And Willie's eye in search did wander,  
And caught at once, with moist regard,  
The white gleams of a grey churchyard.  
'Three weeks before my girl had gone,  
And while upon her pillows propped,  
She lay at eve; the weakling fawn -  
For still it seems a fawn just dropt  
A se'nnight-to my Nancy's bed  
I brought to make my girl a gift:  
The mothers of them both were dead:  
And both to bless it was my drift,  
By giving each a friend; not thinking  
How rapidly my girl was sinking.  
And I remember how, to pat  
Its neck, she stretched her hand so weak,  
And its cold nose against her cheek  
Pressed fondly: and I fetched the mat  
To make it up a couch just by her,  
Where in the lone dark hours to lie:  
For neither dear old nurse nor I  
Would any single wish deny her.  
And there unto the last it lay;  
And in the pastures cared to play  
Little or nothing: there its meals  
And milk I brought: and even now  
The creature such affection feels  
For that old room that, when and how,  
'Tis strange to mark, it slinks and steals  
To get there, and all day conceals.  
And once when nurse who, since that time,  
Keeps house for me, was very sick,  
Waking upon the midnight chime,  
And listening to the stair-clock's click,  
I heard a rustling, half uncertain,

Close against the dark bed-curtain:  
And while I thrust my leg to kick,  
And feel the phantom with my feet,  
A loving tongue began to lick  
My left hand lying on the sheet;  
And warm sweet breath upon me blew,  
And that 'twas Nancy then I knew.  
So, for her love, I had good cause  
To have the creature 'Nancy' christened.'

He paused, and in the moment's pause,  
His eyes and Willie's strangely glistened.  
Nearer came Joan, and Bessy hung  
With face averted, near enough  
To hear, and sob unheard; the young  
And careless ones had scampered off  
Meantime, and sought the loftiest place  
To beacon the approaching chase.

'Daily upon the meads to browse,  
Goes Nancy with those dairy cows  
You see behind the clematis:  
And such a favourite she is,  
That when fatigued, and helter skelter,  
Among them from her foes to shelter,  
She dashes when the chase is over,  
They'll close her in and give her cover,  
And bend their horns against the hounds,  
And low, and keep them out of bounds!  
From the house dogs she dreads no harm,  
And is good friends with all the farm,  
Man, and bird, and beast, howbeit  
Their natures seem so opposite.  
And she is known for many a mile,  
And noted for her splendid style,  
For her clear leap and quick slight hoof;  
Welcome she is in many a roof.  
And if I say, I love her, man!  
I say but little: her fine eyes full  
Of memories of my girl, at Yule  
And May-time, make her dearer than  
Dumb brute to men has been, I think.

So dear I do not find her dumb.  
I know her ways, her slightest wink,  
So well; and to my hand she'll come,  
Sidelong, for food or a caress,  
Just like a loving human thing.  
Nor can I help, I do confess,  
Some touch of human sorrowing  
To think there may be such a doubt  
That from the next world she'll be shut out,  
And parted from me! And well I mind  
How, when my girl's last moments came,  
Her soft eyes very soft and kind,  
She joined her hands and prayed the same,  
That she 'might meet her father, mother,  
Sister Bess, and each dear brother,  
And with them, if it might be, one  
Who was her last companion.'  
Meaning the fawn-the doe you mark -  
For my bay mare was then a foal,  
And time has passed since then:- but hark!

For like the shrieking of a soul  
Shut in a tomb, a darkened cry  
Of inward-wailing agony  
Surprised them, and all eyes on each  
Fixed in the mute-appealing speech  
Of self-reproachful apprehension:  
Knowing not what to think or do:  
But Joan, recovering first, broke through  
The instantaneous suspension,  
And knelt upon the ground, and guessed  
The bitterness at a glance, and pressed  
Into the comfort of her breast  
The deep-throed quaking shape that drooped  
In misery's wilful aggravation,  
Before the farmer as he stooped,  
Touched with accusing consternation:  
Soothing her as she sobbed aloud:-  
'Not me! not me! Oh, no, no, no!  
Not me! God will not take me in!  
Nothing can wipe away my sin!  
I shall not see her: you will go;



You and all that she loves so:  
Not me! not me! Oh, no, no, no!  
Colourless, her long black hair,  
Like seaweed in a tempest tossed  
Tangling astray, to Joan's care  
She yielded like a creature lost:  
Yielded, drooping toward the ground,  
As doth a shape one half-hour drowned,  
And heaved from sea with mast and spar,  
All dark of its immortal star.  
And on that tender heart, inured  
To flatter basest grief, and fight  
Despair upon the brink of night,  
She suffered herself to sink, assured  
Of refuge; and her ear inclined  
To comfort; and her thoughts resigned  
To counsel; her wild hair let brush  
From off her weeping brows; and shook  
With many little sobs that took  
Deeper-drawn breaths, till into sighs,  
Long sighs, they sank; and to the 'hush!'  
Of Joan's gentle chide, she sought  
Childlike to check them as she ought,  
Looking up at her infantwise.  
And Willie, gazing on them both,  
Shivered with bliss through blood and brain,  
To see the darling of his troth  
Like a maternal angel strain  
The sinful and the sinless child  
At once on either breast, and there  
In peace and promise reconciled  
Unite them: nor could Nature's care  
With subtler sweet beneficence  
Have fed the springs of penitence,  
Still keeping true, though harshly tried,  
The vital prop of human pride.

George Meredith

# The Emperor Frederick Of Our Time

With Alfred and St. Louis he doth win  
Grander than crowned head's mortuary dome:  
His gentle heroic manhood enters in  
The ever-flowering common heart for home.

George Meredith

# The Empty Purse--A Sermon To Our Later Prodigal Son

Thou, run to the dry on this wayside bank,  
Too plainly of all the propellers bereft!  
Quenched youth, and is that thy purse?  
Even such limp slough as the snake has left  
Slack to the gale upon spikes of whin,  
For cast-off coat of a life gone blank,  
In its frame of a grin at the seeker, is thine;  
And thine to crave and to curse  
The sweet thing once within.  
Accuse him: some devil committed the theft,  
Which leaves of the portly a skin,  
No more; of the weighty a whine.

Pursue him: and first, to be sure of his track,  
Over devious ways that have led to this,  
In the stream's consecutive line,  
Let memory lead thee back  
To where waves Morning her fleur-de-lys,  
Unflushed at the front of the roseate door  
Unopened yet: never shadow there  
Of a Tartarus lighted by Dis  
For souls whose cry is, alack!  
An ivory cradle rocks, a peep  
Through his eyelashes' laugh, a breathing pearl.  
There the young chief of the animals wore  
A likeness to heavenly hosts, unaware  
Of his love of himself; with the hours at leap.  
In a dingle away from a rutted highroad,  
Around him the earliest throstle and merle,  
Our human smile between milk and sleep,  
Effervescent of Nature he crowed.  
Fair was that season; furl over furl  
The banners of blossom; a dancing floor  
This earth; very angels the clouds; and fair  
Thou on the tablets of forehead and breast:  
Careless, a centre of vigilant care.  
Thy mother kisses an infant curl.

The room of the toys was a boundless nest,  
A kingdom the field of the games,  
Till entered the craving for more,  
And the worshipped small body had aims.  
A good little idol, as records attest,  
When they tell of him lightly appeased in a scream  
By sweets and caresses: he gave but sign  
That the heir of a purse-plumped dominant race,  
Accustomed to plenty, not dumb would pine.  
Almost magician, his earliest dream  
Was lord of the unpossessed  
For a look; himself and his chase,  
As on puffs of a wind at whirl,  
Made one in the wink of a gleam.  
She kisses a locket curl,  
She conjures to vision a cherub face,  
When her butterfly counted his day  
All meadow and flowers, mishap  
Derided, and taken for play  
The fling of an urchin's cap.  
When her butterfly showed him an eaglet born,  
For preying too heedlessly bred,  
What a heart clapped in thee then!  
With what fuller colours of morn!  
And high to the uttermost heavens it flew,  
Swift as on poet's pen.  
It flew to be wedded, to wed  
The mystery scented around:  
Issue of flower and dew,  
Issue of light and sound:  
Thinner than either; a thread  
Spun of the dream they threw  
To kindle, allure, evade.  
It ran the sea-wave, the garden's dance,  
To the forest's dark heart down a dappled glade;  
Led on by a perishing glance,  
By a twinkle's eternal waylaid.  
Woman, the name was, when she took form;  
Sheaf of the wonders of life. She fled,  
Close imaged; she neared, far seen. How she made  
Palpitate earth of the living and dead!  
Did she not show thee the world designed

Solely for loveliness? Nested warm,  
The day was the morrow in flight. And for thee,  
She muted the discords, tuned, refined;  
Drowned sharp edges beneath her cloak.  
Eye of the waters, and throb of the tree,  
Sliding on radiance, winging from shade,  
With her witch-whisper o'er ruins, in reeds,  
She sang low the song of her promise delayed;  
Beckoned and died, as a finger of smoke  
Astream over woodland. And was not she  
History's heroines white on storm?  
Remember her summons to valorous deeds.  
Shone she a lure of the honey-bag swarm,  
Most was her beam on the knightly: she led  
For the honours of manhood more than the prize;  
Waved her magnetical yoke  
Whither the warrior bled,  
Ere to the bower of sighs.  
And shy of her secrets she was; under deeps  
Plunged at the breath of a thirst that woke  
The dream in the cave where the Dreaded sleeps.

Away over heaven the young heart flew,  
And caught many lustres, till some one said  
(Or was it the thought into hearing grew?),  
NOT THOU AS COMMONER MEN!  
Thy stature puffed and it swayed,  
It stiffened to royal-erect;  
A brassy trumpet brayed;  
A whirling seized thy head;  
The vision of beauty was flecked.  
Note well the how and the when,  
The thing that prompted and sped.  
Thereanon the keen passions clapped wing,  
Fixed eye, and the world was prey.  
No simple world of thy greenblade Spring,  
Nor world of thy flowerful prime  
On the topmost Orient peak  
Above a yet vaporous day.  
Flesh was it, breast to beak:  
A four-walled windowless world without ray,  
Only darkening jets on a river of slime,

Where harsh over music as woodland jay,  
A voice chants, Woe to the weak!  
And along an insatiate feast,  
Women and men are one  
In the cup transforming to beast.  
Magian worship they paid to their sun,  
Lord of the Purse! Behold him climb.  
Stalked ever such figure of fun  
For monarch in great-grin pantomime?  
See now the heart dwindle, the frame distend;  
The soul to its anchorite cavern retreat,  
From a life that reeks of the rotted end;  
While he--is he pictureable? replete,  
Gourd-like swells of the rank of the soil,  
Hollow, more hollow at core.  
And for him did the hundreds toil  
Despised; in the cold and heat,  
This image ridiculous bore  
On their shoulders for morsels of meat!

Gross, with the fumes of incense full,  
With parasites tickled, with slaves begirt,  
He strutted, a cock, he bellowed, a bull,  
He rolled him, a dog, in dirt.  
And dog, bull, cook, was he, fanged, horned, plumed;  
Original man, as philosophers vouch;  
Carnivorous, cannibal; length-long exhumed,  
Frightfully living and armed to devour;  
The primitive weapons of prey in his pouch;  
The bait, the line and the hook:  
To feed on his fellows intent.  
God of the Danae shower,  
He had but to follow his bent.  
He battened on fowl not safely hatched,  
On sheep astray from the crook;  
A lure for the foolish in fold:  
To carrion turning what flesh he touched.  
And O the grace of his air,  
As he at the goblet sips,  
A centre of girdles loosed,  
With their grisly label, Sold!  
Credulous hears the fidelity swear,

Which has roving eyes over yielded lips:  
To-morrow will fancy himself the seduced,  
The stuck in a treacherous slough,  
Because of his faith in a purchased pair,  
False to a vinous vow.

In his glory of banquet strip him bare,  
And what is the creature we view?  
Our pousy Apollo Apollyon's tool;  
A small one, still of the crew  
By serpent Apollyon blest:  
His plea in apology, blindfold Fool.  
A fool surcharged, propelled, unwarned;  
Not viler, you hear him protest:  
Of a popular countenance not incorrect.  
But deeds are the picture in essence, deeds  
Paint him the hooved and homed,  
Despite the poor pother he pleads,  
And his look of a nation's elect.  
We have him, our quarry confessed!  
And scan him: the features inspect  
Of that bestial multiform: cry,  
Corroborate I, O Samian Sage!  
The book of thy wisdom, proved  
On me, its last hieroglyph page,  
Alive in the horned and hooved?  
Thou! will he make reply.

Thus has the plenary purse  
Done often: to do will engage  
Anew upon all of thy like, or worse.  
And now is thy deepest regret  
To be man, clean rescued from beast:  
From the grip of the Sorcerer, Gold,  
Celestially released.

But now from his cavernous hold,  
Free may thy soul be set,  
As a child of the Death and the Life, to learn,  
Refreshed by some bodily sweat,  
The meaning of either in turn,  
What issue may come of the two:-

A morn beyond mornings, beyond all reach  
Of emotional arms at the stretch to enfold:  
A firmament passing our visible blue.  
To those having nought to reflect it, 'tis nought;  
To those who are misty, 'tis mist on the beach  
From the billow withdrawing; to those who see  
Earth, our mother, in thought,  
Her spirit it is, our key.

Ay, the Life and the Death are her words to us here,  
Of one significance, pricking the blind.  
This is thy gain now the surface is clear:  
To read with a soul in the mirror of mind  
Is man's chief lesson.--Thou smilest! I preach!  
Acid smiling, my friend, reveals  
Abysses within; frigid preaching a street  
Paved unconcernedly smooth  
For the lecturer straight on his heels,  
Up and down a policeman's beat;  
Bearing tonics not labelled to soothe.  
Thou hast a disgust of the sermon in rhyme.  
It is not attractive in being too chaste.  
The popular tale of adventure and crime  
Would equally sicken an overdone taste.  
So, then, onward. Philosophy, thoughtless to soothe,  
Lifts, if thou wilt, or there leaves thee supine.

Thy condition, good sooth, has no seeming of sweet;  
It walks our first crags, it is flint for the tooth,  
For the thirsts of our nature brine.  
But manful has met it, manful will meet.  
And think of thy privilege: supple with youth,  
To have sight of the headlong swine,  
Once fouling thee, jumping the dips!  
As the coin of thy purse poured out:  
An animal's holiday past:  
And free of them thou, to begin a new bout;  
To start a fresh hunt on a resolute blast:  
No more an imp-ridden to bournes of eclipse:  
Having knowledge to spur thee, a gift to compare;  
Rubbing shoulder to shoulder, as only the book  
Of the world can be read, by necessity urged.



For witness, what blinkers are they who look  
From the state of the prince or the millionaire!  
They see but the fish they attract,  
The hungers on them converged;  
And never the thought in the shell of the act,  
Nor ever life's fangless mirth.  
But first, that the poisonous of thee be purged,  
Go into thyself, strike Earth.  
She is there, she is felt in a blow struck hard.  
Thou findest a pugilist countering quick,  
Cunning at drives where thy shutters are barred;  
Not, after the studied professional trick,  
Blue-sealing; she brightens the sight. Strike Earth,  
Antaeus, young giant, whom fortune trips!  
And thou com'st on a saving fact,  
To nourish thy planted worth.

Be it clay, flint, mud, or the rubble of chips,  
Thy roots have grasp in the stern-exact:  
The redemption of sinners deluded! the last  
Dry handful, that bruises and saves.  
To the common big heart are we bound right fast,  
When our Mother admonishing nips  
At the nakedness bare of a clout,  
And we crave what the commonest craves.

This wealth was a fortress-wall,  
Under which grew our grim little beast-god stout;  
Self-worshipped, the foe, in division from all;  
With crowds of illogical Christians, no doubt;  
Till the rescuing earthquake cracked.  
Thus are we man made firm;  
Made warm by the numbers compact.  
We follow no longer a trumpet-snout,  
At a trot where the hog is tracked,  
Nor wriggle the way of the worm.

Thou wilt spare us the cynical pout  
At humanity: sign of a nature bechurled.  
No stenchy anathemas cast  
Upon Providence, women, the world.  
Distinguish thy tempers and trim thy wits.

The purchased are things of the mart, not classed  
Among resonant types that have freely grown.

Thy knowledge of women might be surpassed:  
As any sad dog's of sweet flesh when he quits  
The wayside wandering bone!  
No revilings of comrades as ingrates: thee  
The tempter, misleader, and criminal (screened  
By laws yet barbarous) own.

If some one performed Fiend's deputy,  
He was for awhile the Fiend.  
Still, nursing a passion to speak,  
As the punch-bowl does, in the moral vein,  
When the ladle has finished its leak,  
And the vessel is loquent of nature's inane,  
Hie where the demagogues roar  
Like a Phalaris bull, with the victim's force:  
Hurrah to their jolly attack  
On a City that smokes of the Plain;  
A city of sin's death-dyes,  
Holding revel of worms in a corse;  
A city of malady sore,  
Over-ripe for the big doom's crack:  
A city of hymnical snore;  
Connubial truths and lies  
Demanding an instant divorce,  
Clean as the bright from the black.  
It were well for thy system to sermonize.  
There are giants to slay, and they call for their Jack.

Then up stand thou in the midst:  
Thy good grain out of thee thresh,  
Hand upon heart: relate  
What things thou legally didst  
For the Archseducer of flesh.  
Omitting the murmurs of women and fate,  
Confess thee an instrument armed  
To be snare of our wanton, our weak,  
Of all by the sensual charmed.  
For once shall repentance be done by the tongue:  
Speak, though execrate, speak

A word on grandmotherly Laws  
Giving rivers of gold to our young,  
In the days of their hungers impure;  
To furnish them beak and claws,  
And make them a banquet's lure.

Thou the example, saved  
Miraculously by this poor skin!  
Thereat let the Purse be waved:  
The snake-slough sick of the snaky sin:  
A devil, if devil as devil behaved  
Ever, thou knowest, look thou but in,  
Where he shivers, a culprit fettered and shaved;  
O a bird stripped of feather, a fish clipped of fin!

And commend for a washing the torrents of wrath,  
Which hurl at the foe of the dearest men prize  
Rough-rolling boulders and froth.  
Gigantical enginery they can command,  
For the crushing of enemies not of great size:  
But hold to thy desperate stand.  
Men's right of bequeathing their all to their own  
(With little regard for the creatures they squeezed);  
Their mill and mill-water and nether mill-stone  
Tied fast to their infant; lo, this is the last  
Of their hungers, by prudent devices appeased.  
The law they decree is their ultimate slave;  
Wherein we perceive old Voracity glassed.  
It works from their dust, and it reeks of their grave.  
Point them to greener, though Journals be guns;  
To brotherly fields under fatherly skies;  
Where the savage still primitive learns of a debt  
He has owed since he drummed on his belly for war;  
And how for his giving, the more will he get;  
For trusting his fellows, leave friends round his sons:  
Till they see, with the gape of a startled surprise,  
Their adored tyrant-monster a brute to abhor,  
The sun of their system a father of flies!

So, for such good hope, take their scourge unashamed;  
'Tis the portion of them who civilize,  
Who speak the word novel and true:

How the brutish antique of our springs may be tamed,  
Without loss of the strength that should push us to flower;  
How the God of old time will act Satan of new,  
If we keep him not straight at the higher God aimed;  
For whose habitation within us we scour  
This house of our life; where our bitterest pains  
Are those to eject the Infernal, who heaps  
Mire on the soul. Take stripes or chains;  
Grip at thy standard reviled.  
And what if our body be dashed from the steeps?  
Our spoken in protest remains.  
A young generation reaps.

The young generation! ah, there is the child  
Of our souls down the Ages! to bleed for it, proof  
That souls we have, with our senses filed,  
Our shuttles at thread of the woof.  
May it be braver than ours,  
To encounter the rattle of hostile bolts,  
To look on the rising of Stranger Powers.  
May it know how the mind in expansion revolts  
From a nursery Past with dead letters aloof,  
And the piping to stupor of Precedents shun,  
In a field where the forefather print of the hoof  
Is not yet overgrassed by the watering hours,  
And should prompt us to Change, as to promise of sun,  
Till brain-rule splendidly towers.  
For that large light we have laboured and tramped  
Thorough forests and bogland, still to perceive  
Our animate morning stamped  
With the lines of a sombre eve.

A timorous thing ran the innocent hind,  
When the wolf was the hypocrite fang under hood,  
The snake a lithe lurker up sleeve,  
And the lion effulgently ramped.  
Then our forefather hoof did its work in the wood,  
By right of the better in kind.  
But now will it breed yon bestial brood  
Three-fold thrice over, if bent to bind,  
As the healthy in chains with the sick,  
Unto despot usage our issuing mind.

It signifies battle or death's dull knell.  
Precedents icily written on high  
Challenge the Tentatives hot to rebel.  
Our Mother, who speeds her bloomful quick  
For the march, reads which the impediment well.  
She smiles when of sapience is their boast.  
O loose of the tug between blood run dry  
And blood running flame may our offspring run!  
May brain democratic be king of the host!  
Less then shall the volumes of History tell  
Of the stop in progression, the slip in relapse,  
That counts us a sand-slack inch hard won  
Beneath an oppressive incumbent perhaps.

Let the senile lords in a parchment sky,  
And the generous turbulents drunken of morn,  
Their battle of instincts put by,  
A moment examine this field:  
On a Roman street cast thoughtful eye,  
Along to the mounts from the bog-forest weald.  
It merits a glance at our history's maps,  
To see across Britain's old shaggy unshorn,  
Through the Parties in strife internecine, foot  
The ruler's close-reckoned direct to the mark.  
From the head ran the vanquisher's orderly route,  
In the stride of his forts through the tangle and dark.  
From the head runs the paved firm way for advance,  
And we shoulder, we wrangle! The light on us shed  
Shows dense beetle blackness in swarm, lurid Chance,  
The Goddess of gamblers, above. From the head,  
Then when it worked for the birth of a star  
Fraternal with heaven's in beauty and ray,  
Sprang the Acropolis. Ask what crown  
Comes of our tides of the blood at war,  
For men to bequeath generations down!  
And ask what thou wast when the Purse was brimmed:  
What high-bounding ball for the Gods at play:  
A Conservative youth! who the cream-bowl skimmed,  
Desiring affairs to be left as they are.

So, thou takest Youth's natural place in the fray,  
As a Tentative, combating Peace,

Our lullaby word for decay. -  
There will come an immediate decree  
In thy mind for the opposite party's decease,  
If he bends not an instant knee.  
Expunge it: extinguishing counts poor gain.  
And accept a mild word of police:-  
Be mannerly, measured; refrain  
From the puffings of him of the bagpipe cheeks.  
Our political, even as the merchant main,  
A temperate gale requires  
For the ship that haven seeks;  
Neither God of the winds nor his bellowsy squires.

Then observe the antagonist, con  
His reasons for rocking the lullaby word.  
You stand on a different stage of the stairs.  
He fought certain battles, yon senile lord.  
In the strength of thee, feel his bequest to his heirs.  
We are now on his inches of ground hard won,  
For a perch to a flight o'er his resting fence.

Does it knock too hard at thy head if I say,  
That Time is both father and son?  
Tough lesson, when senses are floods over sense! -  
Discern the paternal of Now  
As the Then of thy present tense.  
You may pull as you will either way,  
You can never be other than one.  
So, be filial. Giants to slay  
Demand knowing eyes in their Jack.

There are those whom we push from the path with respect.  
Bow to that elder, though seeing him bow  
To the backward as well, for a thunderous back  
Upon thee. In his day he was not all wrong.  
Unto some foundered zenith he strove, and was wrecked.  
He scrambled to shore with a worship of shore.  
The Future he sees as the slippery murk;  
The Past as his doctrinal library lore.  
He stands now the rock to the wave's wild wash.  
Yet thy lumpish antagonist once did work  
Heroical, one of our strong.

His gold to retain and his dross reject,  
Engage him, but humour, not aiming to quash.  
Detest the dead squat of the Turk,  
And suffice it to move him along.  
Drink of faith in the brains a full draught  
Before the oration: beware  
Lest rhetoric moonily waft  
Whither horrid activities snare.  
Rhetoric, juice for the mob  
Despising more luminous grape,  
Oft at its fount has it laughed  
In the cataracts rolling for rape  
Of a Reason left single to sob!

'Tis known how the permanent never is writ  
In blood of the passions: mercurial they,  
Shifty their issue: stir not that pit  
To the game our brutes best play.

But with rhetoric loose, can we check man's brute?  
Assemblies of men on their legs invoke  
Excitement for wholesome diversion: there shoot  
Electrical sparks between their dry thatch  
And thy waved torch, more to kindle than light.  
'Tis instant between you: the trick of a catch  
(To match a Batrachian croak)  
Will thump them a frenzy or fun in their veins.  
Then may it be rather the well-worn joke  
Thou repeatest, to stop conflagration, and write  
Penance for rhetoric. Strange will it seem,  
When thou readest that form of thy homage to brains!

For the secret why demagogues fail,  
Though they carry hot mobs to the red extreme,  
And knock out or knock in the nail  
(We will rank them as flatly sincere,  
Devoutly detesting a wrong,  
Engines o'ercharged with our human steam),  
Question thee, seething amid the throng.  
And ask, whether Wisdom is born of blood-heat;  
Or of other than Wisdom comes victory here; -  
Aught more than the banquet and roundelay,

That is closed with a terrible terminal wail,  
A retributive black ding-dong?  
And ask of thyself: This furious Yea  
Of a speech I thump to repeat,  
In the cause I would have prevail,  
For seed of a nourishing wheat,  
IS IT ACCEPTED OF SONG?  
Does it sound to the mind through the ear,  
Right sober, pure sane? has it disciplined feet?  
Thou wilt find it a test severe;  
Unerring whatever the theme.  
Rings it for Reason a melody clear,  
We have bidden old Chaos retreat;  
We have called on Creation to hear;  
All forces that make us are one full stream.  
Simple islander! thus may the spirit in verse,  
Showing its practical value and weight,  
Pipe to thee clear from the Empty Purse,  
Lead thee aloft to that high estate. -  
The test is conclusive, I deem:  
It embraces or mortally bites.  
We have then the key-note for debate:  
A Senate that sits on the heights  
Over discords, to shape and amend.

And no singer is needed to serve  
The musical God, my friend.  
Needs only his law on a sensible nerve:  
A law that to Measure invites,  
Forbidding the passions contend.  
Is it accepted of Song?  
And if then the blunt answer be Nay,  
Dislink thee sharp from the ramping horde,  
Slaves of the Goddess of hoar-old sway,  
The Queen of delirious rites,  
Queen of those issueless mobs, that rend  
For frenzy the strings of a fruitful accord,  
Pursuing insensate, seething in throng,  
Their wild idea to its ashen end.  
Off to their Phrygia, shriek and gong,  
Shorn from their fellows, behold them wend!



But thou, should the answer ring Ay,  
Hast warrant of seed for thy word:  
The musical God is nigh  
To inspirit and temper, tune it, and steer  
Through the shoals: is it worthy of Song,  
There are souls all woman to hear,  
Woman to bear and renew.  
For he is the Master of Measure, and weighs,  
Broad as the arms of his blue,  
Fine as the web of his rays,  
Justice, whose voice is a melody clear,  
The one sure life for the numbered long,  
From him are the brutal and vain,  
The vile, the excessive, out-thrust:  
He points to the God on the upmost throne:  
He is the saver of grain,  
The sifter of spirit from dust.  
He, Harmony, tells how to Measure pertain  
The virilities: Measure alone  
Has votaries rich in the male:  
Fathers embracing no cloud,  
Sowing no harvestless main:  
Alike by the flesh and the spirit endowed  
To create, to perpetuate; woo, win, wed;  
Send progeny streaming, have earth for their own,  
Over-run the insensates, disperse with a puff  
Simulacra, though solid they sail,  
And seem such imperial stuff:  
Yes, the living divide off the dead.

Then thou with thy furies outgrown,  
Not as Cybele's beast will thy head lash tail  
So praeter-determinedly thermonous,  
Nor thy cause be an Attis far fled.  
Thou under stress of the strife  
Shalt hear for sustainment supreme  
The cry of the conscience of Life:  
KEEP THE YOUNG GENERATIONS IN HAIL,  
AND BEQUEATH THEM NO TUMBLED HOUSE!

There hast thou the sacred theme,  
Therein the inveterate spur,

Of the Innermost. See her one blink  
In vision past eyeballs. Not thee  
She cares for, but us. Follow her.  
Follow her, and thou wilt not sink.  
With thy soul the Life espouse:  
This Life of the visible, audible, ring  
With thy love tight about; and no death will be;  
The name be an empty thing,  
And woe a forgotten old trick:  
And battle will come as a challenge to drink;  
As a warrior's wound each transient sting.  
She leads to the Uppermost link by link;  
Exacts but vision, desires not vows.  
Above us the singular number to see;  
The plural warm round us; ourself in the thick,  
A dot or a stop: that is our task;  
Her lesson in figured arithmetic,  
For the letters of Life behind its mask;  
Her flower-like look under fearful brows.

As for thy special case, O my friend, one must think  
Massilia's victim, who held the carouse  
For the length of a carnival year,  
Knew worse: but the wretch had his opening choice.  
For thee, by our law, no alternatives were:  
Thy fall was assured ere thou camest to a voice.  
He cancelled the ravaging Plague,  
With the roll of his fat off the cliff.  
Do thou with thy lean as the weapon of ink,  
Though they call thee an angler who fishes the vague  
And catches the not too pink,  
Attack one as murderous, knowing thy cause  
Is the cause of community. Iterate,  
Iterate, iterate, harp on the trite:  
Our preacher to win is the supple in stiff:  
Yet always in measure, with bearing polite:  
The manner of one that would expiate  
His share in grandmotherly Laws,  
Which do the dark thing to destroy,  
Under aspect of water so guilelessly white  
For the general use, by the devils befouled.

Enough, poor prodigal boy!  
Thou hast listened with patience; another had howled.  
Repentance is proved, forgiveness is earned.  
And 'tis bony: denied thee thy succulent half  
Of the parable's blessing, to swineherd returned:  
A Sermon thy slice of the Scriptural calf!  
By my faith, there is feasting to come,  
Not the less, when our Earth we have seen  
Beneath and on surface, her deeds and designs:  
Who gives us the man-loving Nazarene,  
The martyrs, the poets, the corn and the vines.  
By my faith in the head, she has wonders in loom;  
Revelations, delights. I can hear a faint crow  
Of the cock of fresh mornings, far, far, yet distinct;  
As down the new shafting of mines,  
A cry of the metally gnome.  
When our Earth we have seen, and have linked  
With the home of the Spirit to whom we unfold,  
Imprisoned humanity open will throw  
Its fortress gates, and the rivers of gold  
For the congregate friendliness flow.  
Then the meaning of Earth in her children behold:  
Glad eyes, frank hands, and a fellowship real:  
And laughter on lips, as the birds' outburst  
At the flooding of light. No robbery then  
The feast, nor a robber's abode the home,  
For a furnished model of our first den!  
Nor Life as a stationed wheel;  
Nor History written in blood or in foam,  
For vendetta of Parties in cursing accursed.  
The God in the conscience of multitudes feel,  
And we feel deep to Earth at her heart,  
We have her communion with men,  
New ground, new skies for appeal.  
Yield into harness thy best and thy worst;  
Away on the trot of thy servitude start,  
Through the rigours and joys and sustainments of air.  
If courage should falter, 'tis wholesome to kneel.  
Remember that well, for the secret with some,  
Who pray for no gift, but have cleansing in prayer,  
And free from impurities tower-like stand.  
I promise not more, save that feasting will come

To a mind and a body no longer inversed:  
The sense of large charity over the land,  
Earth's wheaten of wisdom dispensed in the rough,  
And a bell ringing thanks for a sustenance meal  
Through the active machine: lean fare,  
But it carries a sparkle! And now enough,  
And part we as comrades part,  
To meet again never or some day or soon.

Our season of drought is reminder rude:-  
No later than yesternoon,  
I looked on the horse of a cart,  
By the wayside water-trough.  
How at every draught of his bride of thirst  
His nostrils widened! The sight was good:  
Food for us, food, such as first  
Drew our thoughts to earth's lowly for food.

George Meredith

# The Flower Of The Ruins

Take thy lute and sing  
By the ruined castle walls,  
Where the torrent-foam falls,  
And long weeds wave:  
Take thy lute and sing,  
O'er the grey ancestral grave!  
Daughter of a King,  
Tune thy string.

Sing of happy hours,  
In the roar of rushing time;  
Till all the echoes chime  
To the days gone by;  
Sing of passing hours  
To the ever-present sky; -  
Weep-and let the showers  
Wake thy flowers.

Sing of glories gone: -  
No more the blazoned fold  
From the banner is unrolled;  
The gold sun is set.  
Sing his glory gone,  
For thy voice may charm him yet;  
Daughter of the dawn,  
He is gone!

Pour forth all thy grief!  
Passionately sweep the chords,  
Wed them quivering to thy words;  
Wild words of wail!  
Shed thy withered grief -  
But hold not Autumn to thy bale;  
The eddy of the leaf  
Must be brief!

Sing up to the night:  
Hard it is for streaming tears  
To read the calmness of the spheres;

Coldly they shine;  
Sing up to their light;  
They have views thou may'st divine -  
Gain prophetic sight  
From their light!

On the windy hills  
Lo, the little harebell leans  
On the spire-grass that it queens,  
With bonnet blue;  
Trusting love instils  
Love and subject reverence true;  
Learn what love instils  
On the hills!

By the bare wayside  
Placid snowdrops hang their cheeks,  
Softly touch'd with pale green streaks,  
Soon, soon, to die;  
On the clothed hedgeside  
Bands of rosy beauties vie,  
In their prophesied  
Summer pride.

From the snowdrop learn;  
Not in her pale life lives she,  
But in her blushing prophecy.  
Thus be thy hopes,  
Living but to yearn  
Upwards to the hidden scopes; -  
Even within the urn  
Let them burn!

Heroes of thy race -  
Warriors with golden crowns,  
Ghostly shapes with marbled frowns  
Stare thee to stone;  
Matrons of thy race  
Pass before thee making moan;  
Full of solemn grace  
Is their pace.

Piteous their despair!  
Piteous their looks forlorn!  
Terrible their ghostly scorn!  
Still hold thou fast; -  
Heed not their despair! -  
Thou art thy future, not thy past;  
Let them glance and glare  
Thro' the air.

Thou the ruin's bud,  
Be not that moist rich-smelling weed  
With its arras-sembled brede,  
And ruin-haunting stalk;  
Thou the ruin's bud,  
Be still the rose that lights the walk,  
Mix thy fragrant blood  
With the flood!

George Meredith

# The Garden Of Epicurus

That Garden of sedate Philosophy  
Once flourished, fenced from passion and mishap,  
A shining spot upon a shaggy map;  
Where mind and body, in fair junction free,  
Luted their joyful concord; like the tree  
From root to flowering twigs a flowing sap.  
Clear Wisdom found in tended Nature's lap  
Of gentlemen the happy nursery.  
That Garden would on light supremest verge,  
Were the long drawing of an equal breath  
Healthful for Wisdom's head, her heart, her aims.  
Our world which for its Babels wants a scourge,  
And for its wilds a husbandman, acclaims  
The crucifix that came of Nazareth.

George Meredith



# The Head Of Bran The Blest

I

When the Head of Bran  
Was firm on British shoulders,  
God made a man!  
Cried all beholders.

Steel could not resist  
The weight his arm would rattle;  
He, with naked fist,  
Has brain'd a knight in battle.

He marched on the foe,  
And never counted numbers;  
Foreign widows know  
The hosts he sent to slumbers.

As a street you scan,  
That's towered by the steeple,  
So the Head of Bran  
Rose o'er his people.

II

'Death's my neighbour,'  
Quoth Bran the Blest;  
'Christian labour  
Brings Christian rest.  
From the trunk sever  
The Head of Bran,  
That which never  
Has bent to man!  
'That which never  
To men has bowed  
Shall live ever  
To shame the shroud:  
Shall live ever  
To face the foe;  
Sever it, sever,

And with one blow.

'Be it written,  
That all I wrought  
Was for Britain,  
In deed and thought:  
Be it written,  
That while I die,  
Glory to Britain!  
Is my last cry.

'Glory to Britain!  
Death echoes me round.  
Glory to Britain!  
The world shall resound.  
Glory to Britain!  
In ruin and fall,  
Glory to Britain!  
Is heard over all.'

### III

Burn, Sun, down the sea!  
Bran lies low with thee.

Burst, Morn, from the main!  
Bran so shall rise again.

Blow, Wind, from the field!  
Bran's Head is the Briton's shield.

Beam, Star, in the West!  
Bright burns the Head of Bran the Blest.

### IV

Crimson-footed, like the stork,  
From great ruts of slaughter,  
Warriors of the Golden Torque  
Cross the lifting water.  
Princes seven, enchaining hands,  
Bear the live head homeward.

Lo! it speaks, and still commands:  
Gazing out far foamward.

Fiery words of lightning sense  
Down the hollows thunder;  
Forest hostels know not whence  
Comes the speech, and wonder.  
City-Castles, on the steep,  
Where the faithful Seven  
House at midnight, hear, in sleep,  
Laughter under heaven.

Lilies, swimming on the mere,  
In the castle shadow,  
Under draw their heads, and Fear  
Walks the misty meadow.  
Tremble not! it is not Death  
Pledging dark espousal:  
'Tis the Head of endless breath,  
Challenging carousal!

Brim the horn! a health is drunk,  
Now, that shall keep going:  
Life is but the pebble sunk;  
Deeds, the circle growing!  
Fill, and pledge the Head of Bran!  
While his lead they follow,  
Long shall heads in Britain plan  
Speech Death cannot swallow!

George Meredith

# The Horses Of Achilles

[Iliad, B. XVII. V. 426]

So now the horses of Aiakides, off wide of the war-ground,  
Wept, since first they were ware of their charioteer overthrown there,  
Cast down low in the whirl of the dust under man-slaying Hector.  
Sooth, meanwhile, then did Automedon, brave son of Dioces,  
Oft, on the one hand, urge them with flicks of the swift whip, and oft, too,  
Coax entreatingly, hurriedly; whiles did he angrily threaten.  
Vainly, for these would not to the ships, to the Hellespont spacious,  
Backward turn, nor be whipped to the battle among the Achaians.  
Nay, as a pillar remains immovable, fixed on the tombstone,  
Haply, of some dead man or it may be a woman there-under;  
Even like hard stood they there attached to the glorious war-car,  
Earthward bowed with their heads; and of them so lamenting incessant  
Ran the hot teardrops downward on to the earth from their eyelids,  
Mourning their charioteer; all their lustrous manes dusty-clotted,  
Right side and left of the yoke-ring tossed, to the breadth of the yoke-bow.  
Now when the issue of Kronos beheld that sorrow, his head shook  
Pitying them for their grief, these words then he spake in his bosom;  
'Why, ye hapless, gave we to Peleus you, to a mortal  
Master; ye that are ageless both, ye both of you deathless!  
Was it that ye among men most wretched should come to have heart-grief?  
'Tis most true, than the race of these men is there wretcheder nowhere  
Aught over earth's range found that is gifted with breath and has movement.'

George Meredith

# The Hueless Love

Unto that love must we through fire attain,  
Which those two held as breath of common air;  
The hands of whom were given in bond elsewhere;  
Whom Honour was untroubled to restrain.

Midway the road of our life's term they met,  
And one another knew without surprise;  
Nor cared that beauty stood in mutual eyes;  
Nor at their tardy meeting nursed regret.

To them it was revealed how they had found  
The kindred nature and the needed mind;  
The mate by long conspiracy designed;  
The flower to plant in sanctuary ground.

Avowed in vigilant solicitude  
For either, what most lived within each breast  
They let be seen: yet every human test  
Demanding righteousness approved them good.

She leaned on a strong arm, and little feared  
Abandonment to help if heaved or sank  
Her heart at intervals while Love looked blank,  
Life rosier were she but less revered.

An arm that never shook did not obscure  
Her woman's intuition of the bliss -  
Their tempter's moment o'er the black abyss,  
Across the narrow plank--he could abjure.

Then came a day that clipped for him the thread,  
And their first touch of lips, as he lay cold,  
Was all of earthly in their love untold,  
Beyond all earthly known to them who wed.

So has there come the gust at South-west flung  
By sudden volt on eves of freezing mist,  
When sister snowflake sister snowdrop kissed,  
And one passed out, and one the bell-head hung.

George Meredith

# The Invective Of Achilles

[Iliad, B. I. V. 149]

'Heigh me! brazen of front, thou glutton for plunder, how can one,  
Servant here to thy mandates, heed thee among our Achaians,  
Either the mission hie on or stoutly do fight with the foemen?  
I, not hither I fared on account of the spear-armed Trojans,  
Pledged to the combat; they unto me have in nowise a harm done;  
Never have they, of a truth, come lifting my horses or oxen;  
Never in deep-soiled Phthia, the nurser of heroes, my harvests  
Ravaged, they; for between us is numbered full many a darksome  
Mountain, ay, therewith too the stretch of the windy sea-waters.  
O hugely shameless! thee did we follow to hearten thee, justice  
Pluck from the Dardans for him, Menelaos, thee too, thou dog-eyed!  
Whereof little thy thought is, nought whatever thou reckest.  
Worse, it is thou whose threat 'tis to ravish my prize from me, portion  
Won with much labour, the which my gift from the sons of Achaia.  
Never, in sooth, have I known my prize equal thine when Achaians  
Gave some flourishing populous Trojan town up to pillage.  
Nay, sure, mine were the hands did most in the storm of the combat,  
Yet when came peradventure share of the booty amongst us,  
Bigger to thee went the prize, while I some small blessed thing bore  
Off to the ships, my share of reward for my toil in the bloodshed!  
So now go I to Phthia, for better by much it beseems me  
Homeward go with my beaked ships now, and I hold not in prospect,  
I being outraged, thou mayst gather here plunder and wealth-store.'

George Meredith

## The Invective Of Achilles--V. 225

'Bibber besotted, with scowl of a cur, having heart of a deer, thou!  
Never to join to thy warriors armed for the press of the conflict,  
Never for ambush forth with the princeliest sons of Achaia  
Dared thy soul, for to thee that thing would have looked as a death-stroke.  
Sooth, more easy it seems, down the lengthened array of Achaians,  
Snatch at the prize of the one whose voice has been lifted against thee.  
Ravening king of the folk, for that thou hast thy rule over abjects;  
Else, son of Atreus, now were this outrage on me thy last one.  
Nay, but I tell thee, and I do swear a big oath on it likewise:  
Yea, by the sceptre here, and it surely bears branches and leaf-buds  
Never again, since first it was lopped from its trunk on the mountains,  
No more sprouting; for round it all clean has the sharp metal clipped off  
Leaves and the bark; ay, verify now do the sons of Achaia,  
Guardian hands of the counsels of Zeus, pronouncing the judgement,  
Hold it aloft; so now unto thee shall the oath have its portent;  
Loud will the cry for Achilles burst from the sons of Achaia  
Throughout the army, and thou chafe powerless, though in an anguish,  
How to give succour when vast crops down under man-slaying Hector  
Tumble expiring; and thou deep in thee shalt tear at thy heart-strings,  
Rage-wrung, thou, that in nought thou didst honour the flower of Achaians.'

George Meredith



# The Labourer

For a Heracles in his fighting ire there is never the glory that follows

When ashen he lies and the poets arise to sing of the work he has done.

But to vision alive under shallows of sight, lo, the Labourer's crown is Apollo's,

While stands he yet in his grime and sweat--to wrestle for fruits of the Sun.

Can an enemy wither his cheer? Not you, ye fair yellow-flowering ladies,

Who join with your lords to jar the chords of a bosom heroic, and clog.

'Tis the faltering friend, an inanimate land, may drag a great soul to their Hades,

And plunge him far from a beam of star till he hears the deep bay of the Dog.

Apparition is then of a monster-task, in a policy carving new fashions:

The winninger course than the rule of force, and the springs lured to run in a stream:

He would bend tough oak, he would stiffen the reed, point Reason to swallow the passions,

Bid Britons awake two steps to take where one is a trouble extreme!

Not the less is he nerved with the Labourer's resolute hope: that by him shall be written,

To honour his race, this deed of grace, for the weak from the strong made just:

That her sons over seas in a rally of praise may behold a thrice vitalised Britain,

Ashine with the light of the doing of right: at the gates of the Future in trust.

George Meredith

# The Lady C. M.

To them that knew her, there is vital flame  
In these the simple letters of her name.  
To them that knew her not, be it but said,  
So strong a spirit is not of the dead.

George Meredith

# The Lark Ascending

He rises and begins to round,  
He drops the silver chain of sound  
Of many links without a break,  
In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake,  
All intervolv'd and spreading wide,  
Like water-dimples down a tide  
Where ripple ripple overcurls  
And eddy into eddy whirls;  
A press of hurried notes that run  
So fleet they scarce are more than one,  
Yet changingly the trills repeat  
And linger ringing while they fleet,  
Sweet to the quick o' the ear, and dear  
To her beyond the handmaid ear,  
Who sits beside our inner springs,  
Too often dry for this he brings,  
Which seems the very jet of earth  
At sight of sun, her musci's mirth,  
As up he wings the spiral stair,  
A song of light, and pierces air  
With fountain ardor, fountain play,  
To reach the shining tops of day,  
And drink in everything discern'd  
An ecstasy to music turn'd,  
Impell'd by what his happy bill  
Disperses; drinking, showering still,  
Unthinking save that he may give  
His voice the outlet, there to live  
Renew'd in endless notes of glee,  
So thirsty of his voice is he,  
For all to hear and all to know  
That he is joy, awake, aglow,  
The tumult of the heart to hear  
Through pureness filter'd crystal-clear,  
And know the pleasure sprinkled bright  
By simple singing of delight,  
Shrill, irreflective, unrestrain'd,  
Rapt, ringing, on the jet sustain'd  
Without a break, without a fall,

Sweet-silvery, sheer lyrical,  
Perennial, quavering up the chord  
Like myriad dews of sunny sward  
That trembling into fulness shine,  
And sparkle dropping argentine;  
Such wooing as the ear receives  
From zephyr caught in choric leaves  
Of aspens when their chattering net  
Is flush'd to white with shivers wet;  
And such the water-spirit's chime  
On mountain heights in morning's prime,  
Too freshly sweet to seem excess,  
Too animate to need a stress;  
But wider over many heads  
The starry voice ascending spreads,  
Awakening, as it waxes thin,  
The best in us to him akin;  
And every face to watch him rais'd,  
Puts on the light of children prais'd,  
So rich our human pleasure ripens  
When sweetness on sincereness pipes,  
Though nought be promis'd from the seas,  
But only a soft-ruffling breeze  
Sweep glittering on a still content,  
Serenity in ravishment.

For singing till his heaven fills,  
'T is love of earth that he instils,  
And ever winging up and up,  
Our valley is his golden cup,  
And he the wine which overflows  
To lift us with him as he goes:  
The woods and brooks, the sheep and kine  
He is, the hills, the human line,  
The meadows green, the fallows brown,  
The dreams of labor in the town;  
He sings the sap, the quicken'd veins;  
The wedding song of sun and rains  
He is, the dance of children, thanks  
Of sowers, shout of primrose-banks,  
And eye of violets while they breathe;  
All these the circling song will wreathe,

And you shall hear the herb and tree,  
The better heart of men shall see,  
Shall feel celestially, as long  
As you crave nothing save the song.  
Was never voice of ours could say  
Our inmost in the sweetest way,  
Like yonder voice aloft, and link  
All hearers in the song they drink:  
Our wisdom speaks from failing blood,  
Our passion is too full in flood,  
We want the key of his wild note  
Of truthful in a tuneful throat,  
The song seraphically free  
Of taint of personality,  
So pure that it salutes the suns  
The voice of one for millions,  
In whom the millions rejoice  
For giving their one spirit voice.

Yet men have we, whom we revere,  
Now names, and men still housing here,  
Whose lives, by many a battle-dint  
Defaced, and grinding wheels on flint,  
Yield substance, though they sing not, sweet  
For song our highest heaven to greet:  
Whom heavenly singing gives us new,  
Enspheres them brilliant in our blue,  
From firmest base to farthest leap,  
Because their love of Earth is deep,  
And they are warriors in accord  
With life to serve and pass reward,  
So touching purest and so heard  
In the brain's reflex of yon bird;  
Wherefore their soul in me, or mine,  
Through self-forgetfulness divine,  
In them, that song aloft maintains,  
To fill the sky and thrill the plains  
With showerings drawn from human stores,  
As he to silence nearer soars,  
Extends the world at wings and dome,  
More spacious making more our home,  
Till lost on his aërial rings

In light, and then the fancy sings.

George Meredith

# The Last Contention

I

Young captain of a crazy bark!  
O tameless heart in battered frame!  
Thy sailing orders have a mark,  
And hers is not the name.

II

For action all thine iron clanks  
In cravings for a splendid prize;  
Again to race or bump thy planks  
With any flag that flies.

III

Consult them; they are eloquent  
For senses not inebriate.  
They trust thee on the star intent,  
That leads to land their freight.

IV

And they have known thee high peruse  
The heavens, and deep the earth, till thou  
Didst into the flushed circle cruise  
Where reason quits the brow.

V

Thou animatest ancient tales,  
To prove our world of linear seed:  
Thy very virtue now assails,  
A tempter to mislead.

VI

But thou hast answer I am I;  
My passion hallows, bids command:

And she is gracious, she is nigh:  
One motion of the hand!

VII

It will suffice; a whirly tune  
These winds will pipe, and thou perform  
The nodded part of pantaloon  
In thy created storm.

VIII

Admires thee Nature with much pride;  
She clasps thee for a gift of morn,  
Till thou art set against the tide,  
And then beware her scorn.

IX

Sad issue, should that strife befall  
Between thy mortal ship and thee!  
It writes the melancholy scrawl  
Of wreckage over sea.

X

This lady of the luting tongue,  
The flash in darkness, billow's grace,  
For thee the worship; for the young  
In muscle the embrace.

XI

Soar on thy manhood clear from those  
Whose toothless Winter claws at May,  
And take her as the vein of rose  
Athwart an evening grey.

George Meredith



# The Lesson Of Grief

Not ere the bitter herb we taste,  
Which ages thought of happy times,  
To plant us in a weeping waste,  
Rings with our fellows this one heart  
Accordant chimes.

When I had shed my glad year's leaf,  
I did believe I stood alone,  
Till that great company of Grief  
Taught me to know this craving heart  
For not my own.

George Meredith

# The Longest Day

On yonder hills soft twilight dwells  
And Hesper burns where sunset dies,  
Moist and chill the woodland smells  
From the fern-covered hollows arise;  
Darkness drops not from the skies,  
But shadows of darkness are flung o'er the vale  
From the boughs of the chestnut, the oak, and the elm,  
While night in yon lines of eastern pines  
Preserves alone her inviolate realm  
Against the twilight pale.

Say, then say, what is this day,  
That it lingers thus with half-closed eyes,  
When the sunset is quenched and the orient ray  
Of the roseate moon doth rise,  
Like a midnight sun o'er the skies!  
'Tis the longest, the longest of all the glad year,  
The longest in life and the fairest in hue,  
When day and night, in bridal light,  
Mingle their beings beneath the sweet blue,  
And bless the balmy air!

Upward to this starry height  
The culminating seasons rolled;  
On one slope green with spring delight,  
The other with harvest gold,  
And treasures of Autumn untold:  
And on this highest throne of the midsummer now  
The waning but deathless day doth dream,  
With a rapturous grace, as tho' from the face  
Of the unveiled infinity, lo, a far beam  
Had fall'n on her dim-flushed brow!

Prolong, prolong that tide of song,  
O leafy nightingale and thrush!  
Still, earnest-throated blackcap, throng  
The woods with that emulous gush  
Of notes in tumultuous rush.  
Ye summer souls, raise up one voice!

A charm is afloat all over the land;  
The ripe year doth fall to the Spirit of all,  
Who blesses it with outstretched hand;  
Ye summer souls, rejoice!

George Meredith

# The Main Regret

[Written for the Charing Cross Album]

I.

Seen, too clear and historic within us, our sins of omission  
Frown when the Autumn days strike us all ruthlessly bare.  
They of our mortal diseases find never healing physician;  
Errors they of the soul, past the one hope to repair.

II.

Sunshine might we have been unto seed under soil, or have scattered  
Seed to ascendant suns brighter than any that shone.  
Even the limp-legged beggar a sick desperado has flattered  
Back to a half-sloughed life cheered by the mere human tone.

George Meredith

# The Mares Of The Camargue

[From the Mireio of Mistral]

A hundred mares, all white! their manes  
Like mace-reed of the marshy plains  
Thick-tufted, wavy, free o' the shears:  
And when the fiery squadron rears  
Bursting at speed, each mane appears  
Even as the white scarf of a fay  
Floating upon their necks along the heavens away.

O race of humankind, take shame!  
For never yet a hand could tame,  
Nor bitter spur that rips the flanks subdue  
The mares of the Camargue. I have known,  
By treason snared, some captives shown;  
Expatriate from their native Rhone,  
Led off, their saline pastures far from view:

And on a day, with prompt rebound,  
They have flung their riders to the ground,  
And at a single gallop, scouring free,  
Wide-nostril'd to the wind, twice ten  
Of long marsh-leagues devour'd, and then,  
Back to the Vacares again,  
After ten years of slavery just to breathe salt sea

For of this savage race unbent,  
The ocean is the element.  
Of old escaped from Neptune's car, full sure,  
Still with the white foam fleck'd are they,  
And when the sea puffs black from grey,  
And ships part cables, loudly neigh  
The stallions of Camargue, all joyful in the roar;

And keen as a whip they lash and crack  
Their tails that drag the dust, and back  
Scratch up the earth, and feel, entering their flesh, where he,  
The God, drives deep his trident teeth,  
Who in one horror, above, beneath,

Bids storm and watery deluge seethe,  
And shatters to their depths the abysses of the sea.

George Meredith

# The Meeting

The old coach-road through a common of furze,  
With knolls of pine, ran white;  
Berries of autumn, with thistles, and burrs,  
And spider-threads, droop'd in the light.

The light in a thin blue veil peered sick;  
The sheep grazed close and still;  
The smoke of a farm by a yellow rick  
Curled lazily under a hill.

No fly shook the round of the silver net;  
No insect the swift bird chased;  
Only two travellers moved and met  
Across that hazy waste.

One was a girl with a babe that throve,  
Her ruin and her bliss;  
One was a youth with a lawless love,  
Who clasped it the more for this.

The girl for her babe hummed prayerful speech;  
The youth for his love did pray;  
Each cast a wistful look on each,  
And either went their way.

George Meredith

# The Night-Walk

Awakes for me and leaps from shroud  
All radiantly the moon's own night  
Of folded showers in streamer cloud;  
Our shadows down the highway white  
Or deep in woodland woven-boughed,  
With yon and yon a stem alight.

I see marauder runagates  
Across us shoot their dusky wink;  
I hear the parliament of chats  
In haws beside the river's brink;  
And drops the vole off alder-banks,  
To push his arrow through the stream.  
These busy people had our thanks  
For tickling sight and sound, but theme  
They were not more than breath we drew  
Delighted with our world's embrace:  
The moss-root smell where beeches grew,  
And watered grass in breezy space;  
The silken heights, of ghostly bloom  
Among their folds, by distance draped.  
'Twas Youth, rapacious to consume,  
That cried to have its chaos shaped:  
Absorbing, little noting, still  
Enriched, and thinking it bestowed;  
With wistful looks on each far hill  
For something hidden, something owed.  
Unto his mantled sister, Day  
Had given the secret things we sought  
And she was grave and saintly gay;  
At times she fluttered, spoke her thought;  
She flew on it, then folded wings,  
In meditation passing lone,  
To breathe around the secret things,  
Which have no word, and yet are known;  
Of thirst for them are known, as air  
Is health in blood: we gained enough  
By this to feel it honest fare;  
Impalpable, not barren, stuff.



A pride of legs in motion kept  
Our spirits to their task meanwhile,  
And what was deepest dreaming slept:  
The posts that named the swallowed mile;  
Beside the straight canal the hut  
Abandoned; near the river's source  
Its infant chirp; the shortest cut;  
The roadway missed; were our discourse;  
At times dear poets, whom some view  
Transcendent or subdued evoked  
To speak the memorable, the true,  
The luminous as a moon uncloaked;  
For proof that there, among earth's dumb,  
A soul had passed and said our best.  
Or it might be we chimed on some  
Historic favourite's astral crest,  
With part to reverence in its gleam,  
And part to rivalry the shout:  
So royal, unuttered, is youth's dream  
Of power within to strike without.  
But most the silences were sweet,  
Like mothers' breasts, to bid it feel  
It lived in such divine conceit  
As envies aught we stamp for real.

To either then an untold tale  
Was Life, and author, hero, we.  
The chapters holding peaks to scale,  
Or depths to fathom, made our glee;  
For we were armed of inner fires,  
Unbled in us the ripe desires;  
And passion rolled a quiet sea,  
Whereon was Love the phantom sail.

George Meredith

# The Nuptials Of Attila

## I

Flat as to an eagle's eye,  
Earth hung under Attila.  
Sign for carnage gave he none.  
In the peace of his disdain,  
Sun and rain, and rain and sun,  
Cherished men to wax again,  
Crawl, and in their manner die.  
On his people stood a frost.  
Like the charger cut in stone,  
Rearing stiff, the warrior host,  
Which had life from him alone,  
Craved the trumpet's eager note,  
As the bridled earth the Spring.  
Rusty was the trumpet's throat.  
He let chief and prophet rave;  
Venturous earth around him string  
Threads of grass and slender rye,  
Wave them, and untrampled wave.  
O for the time when God did cry,  
Eye and have, my Attila!

## II

Scorn of conquest filled like sleep  
Him that drank of havoc deep  
When the Green Cat pawed the globe:  
When the horsemen from his bow  
Shot in sheaves and made the foe  
Crimson fringes of a robe,  
Trailed o'er towns and fields in woe;  
When they streaked the rivers red,  
When the saddle was the bed.  
Attila, my Attila!

## III

He breathed peace and pulled a flower.

Eye and have, my Attila!  
This was the damsel Ildico,  
Rich in bloom until that hour:  
Shyer than the forest doe  
Twinkling slim through branches green.  
Yet the shyest shall be seen.  
Make the bed for Attila!

#### IV

Seen of Attila, desired,  
She was led to him straightway:  
Radiantly was she attired;  
Rifled lands were her array,  
Jewels bled from weeping crowns,  
Gold of woeful fields and towns.  
She stood pallid in the light.  
How she walked, how withered white,  
From the blessing to the board,  
She who would have proudly blushed,  
Women whispered, asking why,  
Hinting of a youth, and hushed.  
Was it terror of her lord?  
Was she childish? was she sly?  
Was it the bright mantle's dye  
Drained her blood to hues of grief  
Like the ash that shoots the spark?  
See the green tree all in leaf:  
See the green tree stripped of bark! -  
Make the bed for Attila!

#### V

Round the banquet-table's load  
Scores of iron horsemen rode;  
Chosen warriors, keen and hard;  
Grain of threshing battle-dints;  
Attila's fierce body-guard,  
Smelling war like fire in flints.  
Grant them peace be fugitive!  
Iron-capped and iron-heeled,  
Each against his fellow's shield

Smote the spear-head, shouting, Live,  
Attila! my Attila!  
Eagle, eagle of our breed,  
Eagle, beak the lamb, and feed!  
Have her, and unleash us! live,  
Attila! my Attila!

## VI

He was of the blood to shine  
Bronze in joy, like skies that scorch.  
Beaming with the goblet wine  
In the wavering of the torch,  
Looked he backward on his bride.  
Eye and have, my Attila!  
Fair in her wide robe was she:  
Where the robe and vest divide,  
Fair she seemed surpassingly:  
Soft, yet vivid as the stream  
Danube rolls in the moonbeam  
Through rock-barriers: but she smiled  
Never, she sat cold as salt:  
Open-mouthed as a young child  
Wondering with a mind at fault.  
Make the bed for Attila!

## VII

Under the thin hoop of gold  
Whence in waves her hair outrolled,  
'Twixt her brows the women saw  
Shadows of a vulture's claw  
Gript in flight: strange knots that sped  
Closing and dissolving aye:  
Such as wicked dreams betray  
When pale dawn creeps o'er the bed.  
They might show the common pang  
Known to virgins, in whom dread  
Hunts their bliss like famished hounds;  
While the chiefs with roaring rounds  
Tossed her to her lord, and sang  
Praise of him whose hand was large,

Cheers for beauty brought to yield,  
Chirrup of the trot afield,  
Hurrahs of the battle-charge.

## VIII

Those rock-faces hung with weed  
Reddened: their great days of speed,  
Slaughter, triumph, flood and flame,  
Like a jealous frenzy wrought,  
Scoffed at them and did them shame,  
Quaffing idle, conquering nought.  
O for the time when God decreed  
Earth the prey of Attila!  
God called on thee in his wrath,  
Trample it to mire! 'Twas done.  
Swift as Danube clove our path  
Down from East to Western sun.  
Huns! behold your pasture, gaze,  
Take, our king said: heel to flank  
(Whisper it, the war-horse neighs!)  
Forth we drove, and blood we drank  
Fresh as dawn-dew: earth was ours:  
Men were flocks we lashed and spurned:  
Fast as windy flame devours,  
Flame along the wind, we burned.  
Arrow javelin, spear, and sword!  
Here the snows and there the plains;  
On! our signal: onward poured  
Torrents of the tightened reins,  
Foaming over vine and corn  
Hot against the city-wall.  
Whisper it, you sound a horn  
To the grey beast in the stall!  
Yea, he whinnies at a nod.  
O for sound of the trumpet-notes!  
O for the time when thunder-shod,  
He that scarce can munch his oats,  
Hung on the peaks, brooded aloof,  
Champed the grain of the wrath of God,  
Pressed a cloud on the cowering roof,  
Snorted out of the blackness fire!

Scarlet broke the sky, and down,  
Hammering West with print of his hoof,  
He burst out of the bosom of ire  
Sharp as eyelight under thy frown,  
Attila, my Attila!

## IX

Ravaged cities rolling smoke  
Thick on cornfields dry and black,  
Wave his banners, bear his yoke.  
Track the lightning, and you track  
Attila. They moan: 'tis he!  
Bleed: 'tis he! Beneath his foot  
Leagues are deserts charred and mute;  
Where he passed, there passed a sea.  
Attila, my Attila!

## X

- Who breathed on the king cold breath?  
Said a voice amid the host,  
He is Death that weds a ghost,  
Else a ghost that weds with Death?  
Ildico's chill little hand  
Shuddering he beheld: austere  
Stared, as one who would command  
Sight of what has filled his ear:  
Plucked his thin beard, laughed disdain.  
Feast, ye Huns! His arm be raised,  
Like the warrior, battle-dazed,  
Joining to the fight amain.  
Make the bed for Attila!

## XI

Silent Ildico stood up.  
King and chief to pledge her well,  
Shocked sword sword and cup on cup,  
Clamouring like a brazen bell.  
Silent stepped the queenly slave.  
Fair, by heaven! she was to meet

On a midnight, near a grave,  
Flapping wide the winding-sheet.

XII

Death and she walked through the crowd,  
Out beyond the flush of light.  
Ceremonious women bowed  
Following her: 'twas middle night.  
Then the warriors each on each  
Spied, nor overloudly laughed;  
Like the victims of the leech,  
Who have drunk of a strange draught.

XIII

Attila remained. Even so  
Frowned he when he struck the blow,  
Brained his horse, that stumbled twice,  
On a bloody day in Gaul,  
Bellowing, Perish omens! All  
Marvelled at the sacrifice,  
But the battle, swinging dim,  
Rang off that axe-blow for him.  
Attila, my Attila!

XIV

Brightening over Danube wheeled  
Star by star; and she, most fair,  
Sweet as victory half-revealed,  
Seized to make him glad and young;  
She, O sweet as the dark sign  
Given him oft in battles gone,  
When the voice within said, Dare!  
And the trumpet-notes were sprung  
Rapturous for the charge in line:  
She lay waiting: fair as dawn  
Wrapped in folds of night she lay;  
Secret, lustrous; flaglike there,  
Waiting him to stream and ray,  
With one loosening blush outflung,

Colours of his hordes of horse  
Ranked for combat; still he hung  
Like the fever dreading air,  
Cursed of heat; and as a corse  
Gathers vultures, in his brain  
Images of her eyes and kiss  
Plucked at the limbs that could remain  
Loitering nigh the doors of bliss.  
Make the bed for Attila!

XV

Passion on one hand, on one,  
Destiny led forth the Hun.  
Heard ye outcries of affright,  
Voices that through many a fray,  
In the press of flag and spear,  
Warned the king of peril near?  
Men were dumb, they gave him way,  
Eager heads to left and right,  
Like the bearded standard, thrust,  
As in battle, for a nod  
From their lord of battle-dust.  
Attila, my Attila!  
Slow between the lines he trod.  
Saw ye not the sun drop slow  
On this nuptial day, ere eve  
Pierced him on the couch aglow?  
Attila, my Attila!  
Here and there his heart would cleave  
Clotted memory for a space:  
Some stout chief's familiar face,  
Choicest of his fighting brood,  
Touched him, as 'twere one to know  
Ere he met his bride's embrace.  
Attila, my Attila!  
Twisting fingers in a beard  
Scant as winter underwood,  
With a narrowed eye he peered;  
Like the sunset's graver red  
Up old pine-stems. Grave he stood  
Eyeing them on whom was shed



Burning light from him alone.  
Attila, my Attila!  
Red were they whose mouths recalled  
Where the slaughter mounted high,  
High on it, o'er earth appalled,  
He; heaven's finger in their sight  
Raising him on waves of dead,  
Up to heaven his trumpets blown.  
O for the time when God's delight  
Crowned the head of Attila!  
Hungry river of the crag  
Stretching hands for earth he came:  
Force and Speed astride his name  
Pointed back to spear and flag.  
He came out of miracle cloud,  
Lightning-swift and spectre-lean.  
Now those days are in a shroud:  
Have him to his ghostly queen.  
Make the bed for Attila!

#### XVI

One, with winecups overstrung,  
Cried him farewell in Rome's tongue.  
Who? for the great king turned as though  
Wrath to the shaft's head strained the bow.  
Nay, not wrath the king possessed,  
But a radiance of the breast.  
In that sound he had the key  
Of his cunning malady.  
Lo, where gleamed the sapphire lake,  
Leo, with his Rome at stake,  
Drew blank air to hues and forms;  
Whereof Two that shone distinct,  
Linked as orb'd stars are linked,  
Clear among the myriad swarms,  
In a constellation, dashed  
Full on horse and rider's eyes  
Sunless light, but light it was -  
Light that blinded and abashed,  
Froze his members, bade him pause,  
Caught him mid-gallop, blazed him home.

Attila, my Attila!  
What are streams that cease to flow?  
What was Attila, rolled thence,  
Cheated by a juggler's show?  
Like that lake of blue intense,  
Under tempest lashed to foam,  
Lurid radiance, as he passed,  
Filled him, and around was glassed,  
When deep-voiced he uttered, Rome!

## XVII

Rome! the word was: and like meat  
Flung to dogs the word was torn.  
Soon Rome's magic priests shall bleat  
Round their magic Pope forlorn!  
Loud they swore the king had sworn  
Vengeance on the Roman cheat,  
Ere he passed, as, grave and still,  
Danube through the shouting hill:  
Sworn it by his naked life!  
Eagle, snakes these women are:  
Take them on the wing! but war,  
Smoking war's the warrior's wife!  
Then for plunder! then for brides  
Won without a winking priest! -  
Danube whirled his train of tides  
Black toward the yellow East.  
Make the bed for Attila!

## XVIII

Chirrup of the trot afield,  
Hurrahs of the battle-charge,  
How they answered, how they pealed,  
When the morning rose and drew  
Bow and javelin, lance and targe,  
In the nuptial casement's view!  
Attila, my Attila!  
Down the hillspurs, out of tents  
Glimmering in mid-forest, through  
Mists of the cool morning scents,

Forth from city-alley, court,  
Arch, the bounding horsemen flew,  
Joined along the plains of dew,  
Raced and gave the rein to sport,  
Closed and streamed like curtain-rents  
Fluttered by a wind, and flowed  
Into squadrons: trumpets blew,  
Chargers neighed, and trappings glowed  
Brave as the bright Orient's.  
Look on the seas that run to greet  
Sunrise: look on the leagues of wheat:  
Look on the lines and squares that fret  
Leaping to level the lance blood-wet.  
Tens of thousands, man and steed,  
Tossing like field-flowers in Spring;  
Ready to be hurled at need  
Whither their great lord may sling.  
Finger Romeward, Romeward, King!  
Attila, my Attila!  
Still the woman holds him fast  
As a night-flag round the mast.

#### XIX

Nigh upon the fiery noon,  
Out of ranks a roaring burst.  
'Ware white women like the moon!  
They are poison: they have thirst  
First for love, and next for rule.  
Jealous of the army, she?  
Ho, the little wanton fool!  
We were his before she squealed  
Blind for mother's milk, and heeled  
Kicking on her mother's knee.  
His in life and death are we:  
She but one flower of a field.  
We have given him bliss tenfold  
In an hour to match her night:  
Attila, my Attila!  
Still her arms the master hold,  
As on wounds the scarf winds tight.

XX

Over Danube day no more,  
Like the warrior's planted spear,  
Stood to hail the King: in fear  
Western day knocked at his door.  
Attila, my Attila!  
Sudden in the army's eyes  
Rolled a blast of lights and cries:  
Flashing through them: Dead are ye!  
Dead, ye Huns, and torn piecemeal!  
See the ordered army reel  
Stricken through the ribs: and see,  
Wild for speed to cheat despair,  
Horsemen, clutching knee to chin,  
Crouch and dart they know not where.  
Attila, my Attila!  
Faces covered, faces bare,  
Light the palace-front like jets  
Of a dreadful fire within.  
Beating hands and driving hair  
Start on roof and parapets.  
Dust rolls up; the slaughter din.  
- Death to them who call him dead!  
Death to them who doubt the tale!  
Choking in his dusty veil,  
Sank the sun on his death-bed.  
Make the bed for Attila!

XXI

'Tis the room where thunder sleeps.  
Frenzy, as a wave to shore  
Surging, burst the silent door,  
And drew back to awful deeps  
Breath beaten out, foam-white. Anew  
Howled and pressed the ghastly crew,  
Like storm-waters over rocks.  
Attila, my Attila!  
One long shaft of sunset red  
Laid a finger on the bed.  
Horror, with the snaky locks,

Shocked the surge to stiffened heaps,  
Hoary as the glacier's head  
Faced to the moon. Insane they look.  
God it is in heaven who weeps  
Fallen from his hand the Scourge he shook.  
Make the bed for Attila!

## XXII

Square along the couch, and stark,  
Like the sea-rejected thing  
Sea-sucked white, behold their King.  
Attila, my Attila!  
Beams that panted black and bright,  
Scornful lightnings danced their sight:  
Him they see an oak in bud,  
Him an oaklog stripped of bark:  
Him, their lord of day and night,  
White, and lifting up his blood  
Dumb for vengeance. Name us that,  
Huddled in the corner dark  
Humped and grinning like a cat,  
Teeth for lips!--'tis she! she stares,  
Glittering through her bristled hairs.  
Rend her! Pierce her to the hilt!  
She is Murder: have her out!  
What! this little fist, as big  
As the southern summer fig!  
She is Madness, none may doubt.  
Death, who dares deny her guilt!  
Death, who says his blood she spilt!  
Make the bed for Attila!

## XXIII

Torch and lamp and sunset-red  
Fell three-fingered on the bed.  
In the torch the beard-hair scant  
With the great breast seemed to pant:  
In the yellow lamp the limbs  
Wavered, as the lake-flower swims:  
In the sunset red the dead

Dead avowed him, dry blood-red.

XXIV

Hatred of that abject slave,  
Earth, was in each chieftain's heart.  
Earth has got him, whom God gave,  
Earth may sing, and earth shall smart!  
Attila, my Attila!

XXV

Thus their prayer was raved and ceased.  
Then had Vengeance of her feast  
Scent in their quick pang to smite  
Which they knew not, but huge pain  
Urged them for some victim slain  
Swift, and blotted from the sight.  
Each at each, a crouching beast,  
Glared, and quivered for the word.  
Each at each, and all on that,  
Humped and grinning like a cat,  
Head-bound with its bridal-wreath.  
Then the bitter chamber heard  
Vengeance in a cauldron seethe.  
Hurried counsel rage and craft  
Yelped to hungry men, whose teeth  
Hard the grey lip-ringlet gnawed,  
Gleaming till their fury laughed.  
With the steel-hilt in the clutch,  
Eyes were shot on her that froze  
In their blood-thirst overawed;  
Burned to rend, yet feared to touch.  
She that was his nuptial rose,  
She was of his heart's blood clad:  
Oh! the last of him she had! -  
Could a little fist as big  
As the southern summer fig,  
Push a dagger's point to pierce  
Ribs like those? Who else! They glared  
Each at each. Suspicion fierce  
Many a black remembrance bared.

Attila, my Attila!  
Death, who dares deny her guilt!  
Death, who says his blood she spilt!  
Traitor he, who stands between!  
Swift to hell, who harms the Queen!  
She, the wild contention's cause,  
Combed her hair with quiet paws.  
Make the bed for Attila!

XXVI

Night was on the host in arms.  
Night, as never night before,  
Harkened to an army's roar  
Breaking up in snaky swarms:  
Torch and steel and snorting steed,  
Hunted by the cry of blood,  
Cursed with blindness, mad for day.  
Where the torches ran a flood,  
Tales of him and of the deed  
Showered like a torrent spray.  
Fear of silence made them strive  
Loud in warrior-hymns that grew  
Hoarse for slaughter yet unwreaked.  
Ghostly Night across the hive,  
With a crimson finger drew  
Letters on her breast and shrieked.  
Night was on them like the mould  
On the buried half alive.  
Night, their bloody Queen, her fold  
Wound on them and struck them through.  
Make the bed for Attila!

XXVII

Earth has got him whom God gave,  
Earth may sing, and earth shall smart!  
None of earth shall know his grave.  
They that dig with Death depart.  
Attila, my Attila!

XXVIII

Thus their prayer was raved and passed:  
Passed in peace their red sunset:  
Hewn and earthed those men of sweat  
Who had housed him in the vast,  
Where no mortal might declare,  
There lies he--his end was there!  
Attila, my Attila!

XXIX

Kingless was the army left:  
Of its head the race bereft.  
Every fury of the pit  
Tortured and dismembered it.  
Lo, upon a silent hour,  
When the pitch of frost subsides,  
Danube with a shout of power  
Loosens his imprisoned tides:  
Wide around the frightened plains  
Shake to hear his riven chains,  
Dreadfuller than heaven in wrath,  
As he makes himself a path:  
High leap the ice-cracks, towering pile  
Floes to bergs, and giant peers  
Wrestle on a drifted isle;  
Island on ice-island rears;  
Dissolution battles fast:  
Big the senseless Titans loom,  
Through a mist of common doom  
Striving which shall die the last:  
Till a gentle-breathing morn  
Frees the stream from bank to bank.  
So the Empire built of scorn  
Agonized, dissolved and sank.  
Of the Queen no more was told  
Than of leaf on Danube rolled.  
Make the bed for Attila!

George Meredith



# The Old Chartist

I

Whate'er I be, old England is my dam!  
So there's my answer to the judges, clear.  
I'm nothing of a fox, nor of a lamb;  
I don't know how to bleat nor how to leer:  
I'm for the nation!  
That's why you see me by the wayside here,  
Returning home from transportation.

II

It's Summer in her bath this morn, I think.  
I'm fresh as dew, and chirpy as the birds:  
And just for joy to see old England wink  
Thro' leaves again, I could harangue the herds:  
Isn't it something  
To speak out like a man when you've got words,  
And prove you're not a stupid dumb thing?

III

They shipp'd me of for it; I'm here again.  
Old England is my dam, whate'er I be!  
Says I, I'll tramp it home, and see the grain:  
If you see well, you're king of what you see:  
Eyesight is having,  
If you're not given, I said, to gluttony.  
Such talk to ignorance sounds as raving.

IV

You dear old brook, that from his Grace's park  
Come bounding! on you run near my old town:  
My lord can't lock the water; nor the lark,  
Unless he kills him, can my lord keep down.  
Up, is the song-note!  
I've tried it, too:- for comfort and renown,  
I rather pitch'd upon the wrong note.

## V

I'm not ashamed: Not beaten's still my boast:  
Again I'll rouse the people up to strike.  
But home's where different politics jar most.  
Respectability the women like.  
This form, or that form, -  
The Government may be hungry pike,  
But don't you mount a Chartist platform!

## VI

Well, well! Not beaten-spite of them, I shout;  
And my estate is suffering for the Cause. -  
No,-what is yon brown water-rat about,  
Who washes his old poll with busy paws?  
What does he mean by't?  
It's like defying all our natural laws,  
For him to hope that he'll get clean by't.

## VII

His seat is on a mud-bank, and his trade  
Is dirt:- he's quite contemptible; and yet  
The fellow's all as anxious as a maid  
To show a decent dress, and dry the wet.  
Now it's his whisker,  
And now his nose, and ear: he seems to get  
Each moment at the motion brisker!

## VIII

To see him squat like little chaps at school,  
I could let fly a laugh with all my might.  
He peers, hangs both his fore-paws:- bless that fool,  
He's bobbing at his frill now!-what a sight!  
Licking the dish up,  
As if he thought to pass from black to white,  
Like parson into lawny bishop.

## IX

The elms and yellow reed-flags in the sun,  
Look on quite grave:- the sunlight flecks his side;  
And links of bindweed-flowers round him run,  
And shine up doubled with him in the tide.  
I'M nearly splitting,  
But nature seems like seconding his pride,  
And thinks that his behaviour's fitting.

X

That isle o' mud looks baking dry with gold.  
His needle-muzzle still works out and in.  
It really is a wonder to behold,  
And makes me feel the bristles of my chin.  
Judged by appearance,  
I fancy of the two I'm nearer Sin,  
And might as well commence a clearance.

XI

And that's what my fine daughter said:- she meant:  
Pray, hold your tongue, and wear a Sunday face.  
Her husband, the young linendraper, spent  
Much argument thereon:- I'm their disgrace.  
Bother the couple!  
I feel superior to a chap whose place  
Commands him to be neat and supple.

XII

But if I go and say to my old hen:  
I'll mend the gentry's boots, and keep discreet,  
Until they grow TOO violent,-why, then,  
A warmer welcome I might chance to meet:  
Warmer and better.  
And if she fancies her old cock is beat,  
And drops upon her knees-so let her!

XIII

She suffered for me:- women, you'll observe,

Don't suffer for a Cause, but for a man.  
When I was in the dock she show'd her nerve:  
I saw beneath her shawl my old tea-can  
Trembling . . . she brought it  
To screw me for my work: she loath'd my plan,  
And therefore doubly kind I thought it.

XIV

I've never lost the taste of that same tea:  
That liquor on my logic floats like oil,  
When I state facts, and fellows disagree.  
For human creatures all are in a coil;  
All may want pardon.  
I see a day when every pot will boil  
Harmonious in one great Tea-garden!

XV

We wait the setting of the Dandy's day,  
Before that time!-He's furbishing his dress, -  
He WILL be ready for it!-and I say,  
That yon old dandy rat amid the cress, -  
Thanks to hard labour! -  
If cleanliness is next to godliness,  
The old fat fellow's heaven's neighbour!

XVI

You teach me a fine lesson, my old boy!  
I've looked on my superiors far too long,  
And small has been my profit as my joy.  
You've done the right while I've denounced the wrong.  
Prosper me later!  
Like you I will despise the sniggering throng,  
And please myself and my Creator.

XVII

I'll bring the linendraper and his wife  
Some day to see you; taking off my hat.  
Should they ask why, I'll answer: in my life

I never found so true a democrat.  
Base occupation  
Can't rob you of your own esteem, old rat!  
I'll preach you to the British nation.

George Meredith

# The Olive Branch

A dove flew with an Olive Branch;  
It crossed the sea and reached the shore,  
And on a ship about to launch  
Dropped down the happy sign it bore.

'An omen' rang the glad acclaim!  
The Captain stooped and picked it up,  
'Be then the Olive Branch her name,'  
Cried she who flung the christening cup.

The vessel took the laughing tides;  
It was a joyous revelry  
To see her dashing from her sides  
The rough, salt kisses of the sea.

And forth into the bursting foam  
She spread her sail and sped away,  
The rolling surge her restless home,  
Her incense wreaths the showering spray.

Far out, and where the riot waves  
Run mingling in tumultuous throngs,  
She danced above a thousand graves,  
And heard a thousand briny songs.

Her mission with her manly crew,  
Her flag unfurl'd, her title told,  
She took the Old World to the New,  
And brought the New World to the Old.

Secure of friendliest welcomings,  
She swam the havens sheening fair;  
Secure upon her glad white wings,  
She fluttered on the ocean air.

To her no more the bastioned fort  
Shot out its swarthy tongue of fire;  
From bay to bay, from port to port,  
Her coming was the world's desire.

And tho' the tempest lashed her oft,  
And tho' the rocks had hungry teeth,  
And lightnings split the masts aloft,  
And thunders shook the planks beneath,

And tho' the storm, self-willed and blind,  
Made tatters of her dauntless sail,  
And all the wildness of the wind  
Was loosed on her, she did not fail;

But gallantly she ploughed the main,  
And gloriously her welcome pealed,  
And grandly shone to sky and plain  
The goodly bales her decks revealed;

Brought from the fruitful eastern glebes  
Where blow the gusts of balm and spice,  
Or where the black blockaded ribs  
Are jammed 'mongst ghostly fleets of ice,

Or where upon the curling hills  
Glow clusters of the bright-eyed grape,  
Or where the hand of labour drills  
The stubbornness of earth to shape;

Rich harvestings and wealthy germs,  
And handicrafts and shapely wares,  
And spinnings of the hermit worms,  
And fruits that bloom by lions' lairs.

Come, read the meaning of the deep!  
The use of winds and waters learn!  
'Tis not to make the mother weep  
For sons that never will return;

'Tis not to make the nations show  
Contempt for all whom seas divide;  
'Tis not to pamper war and woe,  
Nor feed traditionary pride;

'Tis not to make the floating bulk

Mask death upon its slippery deck,  
Itself in turn a shattered hulk,  
A ghastly raft, a bleeding wreck.

It is to knit with loving lip  
The interests of land to land;  
To join in far-seen fellowship  
The tropic and the polar strand.

It is to make that foaming Strength  
Whose rebel forces wrestle still  
Thro' all his boundaried breadth and length  
Become a vassal to our will.

It is to make the various skies,  
And all the various fruits they vaunt,  
And all the dowers of earth we prize,  
Subservient to our household want.

And more, for knowledge crowns the gain  
Of intercourse with other souls,  
And Wisdom travels not in vain  
The plunging spaces of the poles.

The wild Atlantic's weltering gloom,  
Earth-clasping seas of North and South,  
The Baltic with its amber spume,  
The Caspian with its frozen mouth;

The broad Pacific, basking bright,  
And girdling lands of lustrous growth,  
Vast continents and isles of light,  
Dumb tracts of undiscovered sloth;

She visits these, traversing each;  
They ripen to the common sun;  
Thro' diverse forms and different speech,  
The world's humanity is one.

O may her voice have power to say  
How soon the wrecking discords cease,  
When every wandering wave is gay



With golden argosies of peace!

Now when the ark of human fate,  
Long baffled by the wayward wind,  
Is drifting with its peopled freight,  
Safe haven on the heights to find;

Safe haven from the drowning slime  
Of evil deeds and Deluge wrath; -  
To plant again the foot of Time  
Upon a purer, firmer path;

'Tis now the hour to probe the ground,  
To watch the Heavens, to speak the word,  
The fathoms of the deep to sound,  
And send abroad the missioned bird,

On strengthened wing for evermore,  
Let Science, swiftly as she can,  
Fly seaward on from shore to shore,  
And bind the links of man to man;

And like that fair propitious Dove  
Bless future fleets about to launch;  
Make every freight a freight of love,  
And every ship an Olive Branch.

George Meredith

# The Orchard And The Heath

I chanced upon an early walk to spy  
A troop of children through an orchard gate:  
The boughs hung low, the grass was high;  
They had but to lift hands or wait  
For fruits to fill them; fruits were all their sky.

They shouted, running on from tree to tree,  
And played the game the wind plays, on and round.  
'Twas visible invisible glee  
Pursuing; and a fountain's sound  
Of laughter spouted, pattering fresh on me.

I could have watched them till the daylight fled,  
Their pretty bower made such a light of day.  
A small one tumbling sang, 'Oh! head!'  
The rest to comfort her straightway  
Seized on a branch and thumped down apples red.

The tiny creature flashing through green grass,  
And laughing with her feet and eyes among  
Fresh apples, while a little lass  
Over as o'er breeze-ripples hung:  
That sight I saw, and passed as aliens pass.

My footpath left the pleasant farms and lanes,  
Soft cottage-smoke, straight cocks a-crow, gay flowers;  
Beyond the wheel-ruts of the wains,  
Across a heath I walked for hours,  
And met its rival tenants, rays and rains.

Still in my view mile-distant firs appeared,  
When, under a patched channel-bank enriched  
With foxglove whose late bells drooped seared,  
Behold, a family had pitched  
Their camp, and labouring the low tent upreared.

Here, too, were many children, quick to scan  
A new thing coming; swarthy cheeks, white teeth:  
In many-coloured rags they ran,

Like iron runlets of the heath.  
Dispersed lay broth-pot, sticks, and drinking-can.

Three girls, with shoulders like a boat at sea  
Tipped sideways by the wave (their clothing slid  
From either ridge unequally),  
Lean, swift and voluble, bestrid  
A starting-point, unfrocked to the bent knee.

They raced; their brothers yelled them on, and broke  
In act to follow, but as one they snuffed  
Wood-fumes, and by the fire that spoke  
Of provender, its pale flame puffed,  
And rolled athwart dwarf furzes grey-blue smoke.

Soon on the dark edge of a ruddier gleam,  
The mother-pot perusing, all, stretched flat,  
Paused for its bubbling-up supreme:  
A dog upright in circle sat,  
And oft his nose went with the flying steam.

I turned and looked on heaven awhile, where now  
The moor-faced sunset broadened with red light;  
Threw high aloft a golden bough,  
And seemed the desert of the night  
Far down with mellow orchards to endow.

George Meredith

# The Patriot Engineer

'Sirs! may I shake your hands?  
My countrymen, I see!  
I've lived in foreign lands  
Till England's Heaven to me.  
A hearty shake will do me good,  
And freshen up my sluggish blood.'

Into his hard right hand we struck,  
Gave the shake, and wish'd him luck.

'-From Austria I come,  
An English wife to win,  
And find an English home,  
And live and die therein.  
Great Lord! how many a year I've pined  
To drink old ale and speak my mind!'

Loud rang our laughter, and the shout  
Hills round the Meuse-boat echoed about.

'-Ay, no offence: laugh on,  
Young gentlemen: I'll join.  
Had you to exile gone,  
Where free speech is base coin,  
You'd sigh to see the jolly nose  
Where Freedom's native liquor flows!'

He this time the laughter led,  
Dabbling his oily bullet head.

'-Give me, to suit my moods,  
An ale-house on a heath,  
I'll hand the crags and woods  
To B'elzebub beneath.  
A fig for scenery! what scene  
Can beat a Jackass on a green?'

Gravely he seem'd, with gaze intense,  
Putting the question to common sense.

'-Why, there's the ale-house bench:  
The furze-flower shining round:  
And there's my waiting-wench,  
As lissome as a hound.  
With 'hail Britannia!' ere I drink,  
I'll kiss her with an artful wink.'

Fair flash'd the foreign landscape while  
We breath'd again our native Isle.

'-The geese may swim hard-by;  
They gabble, and you talk:  
You're sure there's not a spy  
To mark your name with chalk.  
My heart's an oak, and it won't grow  
In flower-pots, foreigners must know.'

Pensive he stood: then shook his head  
Sadly; held out his fist, and said:

'-You've heard that Hungary's floor'd?  
They've got her on the ground.  
A traitor broke her sword:  
Two despots held her bound.  
I've seen her gasping her last hope:  
I've seen her sons strung up b' the rope.

'Nine gallant gentlemen  
In Arad they strung up!  
I work'd in peace till then:-  
That poison'd all my cup.  
A smell of corpses haunted me:  
My nostril sniff'd like life for sea.

'Take money for my hire  
From butchers?-not the man!  
I've got some natural fire,  
And don't flash in the pan; -  
A few ideas I reveal'd:-  
'Twas well old England stood my shield!

'Said I, 'The Lord of Hosts  
Have mercy on your land!  
I see those dangling ghosts, -  
And you may keep command,  
And hang, and shoot, and have your day:  
They hold your bill, and you must pay.

"You've sent them where they're strong,  
You carrion Double-Head!  
I hear them sound a gong  
In Heaven above!'-I said.  
'My God, what feathers won't you moult  
For this!' says I: and then I bolt.

'The Bird's a beastly Bird,  
And what is more, a fool.  
I shake hands with the herd  
That flock beneath his rule.  
They're kindly; and their land is fine.  
I thought it rarer once than mine.

'And rare would be its lot,  
But that he baulks its powers:  
It's just an earthen pot  
For hearts of oak like ours.  
Think! Think!-four days from those frontiers,  
And I'm a-head full fifty years.

'It tingles to your scalps,  
To think of it, my boys!  
Confusion on their Alps,  
And all their baby toys!  
The mountains Britain boasts are men:  
And scale you them, my brethren!'

Cluck, went his tongue; his fingers, snap.  
Britons were proved all heights to cap.

And we who worshipp'd crags,  
Where purple splendours burn'd,  
Our idol saw in rags,  
And right about were turn'd.

Horizons rich with trembling spires  
On violet twilights lost their fires.

And heights where morning wakes  
With one cheek over snow; -  
And iron-walled lakes  
Where sits the white moon low; -  
For us on youthful travel bent,  
The robing picturesque was rent.

Wherever Beauty show'd  
The wonders of her face,  
This man his Jackass rode,  
High despot of the place.

Fair dreams of our enchanted life  
Fled fast from his shrill island fife.

And yet we liked him well;  
We laugh'd with honest hearts:-  
He shock'd some inner spell,  
And rous'd discordant parts.  
We echoed what we half abjured:  
And hating, smilingly endured.

Moreover, could we be  
To our dear land disloyal?  
And were not also we  
Of History's blood-Royal?  
We glow'd to think how donkeys graze  
In England, thrilling at their brays.

For there a man may view  
An aspect more sublime  
Than Alps against the blue:-  
The morning eyes of Time!  
The very Ass participates  
The glory Freedom radiates!

George Meredith

# The Poetry Of Chaucer

Grey with all honours of age! but fresh-featured and ruddy  
As dawn when the drowsy farm-yard has thrice heard Chaunticlere.  
Tender to tearfulness--childlike, and manly, and motherly;  
Here beats true English blood richest joyance on sweet English  
ground.

George Meredith



# The Poetry Of Coleridge

A brook glancing under green leaves, self-delighting, exulting,  
And full of a gurgling melody ever renewed -  
Renewed thro' all changes of Heaven, unceasing in sunlight,  
Unceasing in moonlight, but hushed in the beams of the holier orb.

George Meredith

# The Poetry Of Keats

The song of a nightingale sent thro' a slumbrous valley,  
Low-lidded with twilight, and tranced with the dolorous sound,  
Tranced with a tender enchantment; the yearning of passion  
That wins immortality even while panting delirious with death.

George Meredith

# The Poetry Of Milton

Like to some deep-chested organ whose grand inspiration,  
Serenely majestic in utterance, lofty and calm,  
Interprets to mortals with melody great as its burthen  
The mystical harmonies chiming for ever throughout the bright  
spheres.

George Meredith

# The Poetry Of Shakespeare

Picture some Isle smiling green 'mid the white-foaming ocean; -  
Full of old woods, leafy wisdoms, and frolicsome fays;  
Passions and pageants; sweet love singing bird-like above it;  
Life in all shapes, aims, and fates, is there warm'd by one great  
human heart.

George Meredith

# The Poetry Of Shelley

See'st thou a Skylark whose glistening winglets ascending  
Quiver like pulses beneath the melodious dawn?  
Deep in the heart-yearning distance of heaven it flutters -  
Wisdom and beauty and love are the treasures it brings down at eve.

George Meredith

# The Poetry Of Southey

Keen as an eagle whose flight towards the dim empyrean  
Fearless of toil or fatigue ever royally wends!  
Vast in the cloud-coloured robes of the balm-breathing Orient  
Lo! the grand Epic advances, unfolding the humanest truth.

George Meredith

# The Poetry Of Spenser

Lakes where the sunsheen is mystic with splendour and softness;  
Vales where sweet life is all Summer with golden romance:  
Forests that glimmer with twilight round revel-bright palaces;  
Here in our May-blood we wander, careering 'mongst ladies and  
knights.

George Meredith

# The Poetry Of Wordsworth

A breath of the mountains, fresh born in the regions majestic,  
That look with their eye-daring summits deep into the sky.  
The voice of great Nature; sublime with her lofty conceptions,  
Yet earnest and simple as any sweet child of the green lowly vale.

George Meredith



# The Point Of Taste

Unhappy poets of a sunken prime!  
You to reviewers are as ball to bat.  
They shadow you with Homer, knock you flat  
With Shakespeare: bludgeons brainingly sublime  
On you the excommunicates of Rhyme,  
Because you sing not in the living Fat.  
The wiry whizz of an intrusive gnat  
Is verse that shuns their self-producing time.  
Sound them their clocks, with loud alarum trump,  
Or watches ticking temporal at their fobs,  
You win their pleased attention. But, bright God  
O' the lyre, what bully-drawlers they applaud!  
Rather for us a tavern-catch, and bump  
Chorus where Lumpkin with his Giles hobnobs.

George Meredith

# The Promise In Disturbance

How low when angels fall their black descent,  
Our primal thunder tells: known is the pain  
Of music, that nigh throning wisdom went,  
And one false note cast wailful to the insane.  
Now seems the language heard of Love as rain  
To make a mire where fruitfulness was meant.  
The golden harp gives out a jangled strain,  
Too like revolt from heaven's Omnipotent.  
But listen in the thought; so may there come  
Conception of a newly-added chord,  
Commanding space beyond where ear has home.  
In labour of the trouble at its fount,  
Leads Life to an intelligible Lord  
The rebel discords up the sacred mount.

George Meredith

# The Question Whither

## I

When we have thrown off this old suit,  
So much in need of mending,  
To sink among the naked mute,  
Is that, think you, our ending?  
We follow many, more we lead,  
And you who sadly turf us,  
Believe not that all living seed  
Must flower above the surface.

## II

Sensation is a gracious gift,  
But were it cramped to station,  
The prayer to have it cast adrift  
Would spout from all sensation.  
Enough if we have winked to sun,  
Have sped the plough a season;  
There is a soul for labour done,  
Endureth fixed as reason.

## III

Then let our trust be firm in Good,  
Though we be of the fasting;  
Our questions are a mortal brood,  
Our work is everlasting.  
We children of Beneficence  
Are in its being sharers;  
And Whither vainer sounds than Whence,  
For word with such wayfarers.

George Meredith

# The Rape Of Aurora

Never, O never,  
Since dewy sweet Flora  
Was ravished by Zephyr,  
Was such a thing heard  
In the valleys so hollow!  
Till rosy Aurora,  
Uprising as ever,  
Bright Phosphor to follow,  
Pale Phoebe to sever,  
Was caught like a bird  
To the breast of Apollo!

Wildly she flutters,  
And flushes all over  
With passionate mutters  
Of shame to the hush  
Of his amorous whispers:  
But O such a lover  
Must win when he utters,  
Thro' rosy red lispers,  
The pains that discover  
The wishes that gush  
From the torches of Hesperus.

One finger just touching  
The Orient chamber,  
Unflooded the gushing  
Of light that illumed  
All her lustrous unveiling.  
On clouds of glow amber,  
Her limbs richly blushing,  
She lay sweetly wailing,  
In odours that gloomed  
On the God as he bloomed  
O'er her loveliness paling.

Great Pan in his covert  
Beheld the rare glistening,  
The cry of the love-hurt,

The sigh and the kiss  
Of the latest close mingling;  
But love, thought he, listening,  
Will not do a dove hurt,  
I know,-and a tingling,  
Latent with bliss,  
Prickt thro' him, I wis,  
For the Nymph he was singling.

George Meredith

# The Revolution

## I

Not yet had History's Aetna smoked the skies,  
And low the Gallic Giantess lay enchained,  
While overhead in ordered set and rise  
Her kingly crowns immutably defiled;  
Effulgent on funereal piled  
Across the vacant heavens, and distrained  
Her body, mutely, even as earth, to bear;  
Despoiled the tomb of hope, her mouth of air.

## II

Through marching scores of winters racked she lay,  
Beneath a hoar-frost's brilliant crust,  
Whereon the jewelled flies that drained  
Her breasts disported in a glistening spray;  
She, the land's fount of fruits, enclosed with dust;  
By good and evil angels fed, sustained  
In part to curse, in part to pray,  
Sucking the dubious rumours, till men saw  
The throbs of her charged heart before the Just,  
So worn the harrowed surface had become:  
And still they deemed the dance above was Law,  
Amort all passion in a rebel dumb.

## III

Then, on the unanticipated day,  
Earth heaved, and rose a veinous mound  
To roar of the underfloods; and off it sprang,  
Ravishing as red wine in woman's form,  
A splendid Maenad, she of the delirious laugh,  
Her body twisted flames with the smoke-cap crowned;  
She of the Bacchic foot; the challenger to the fray,  
Bewitchment for the embrace; who sang, who sang  
Intoxication to her swarm,  
Revolved them, hair, voice, feet, in her carmagnole,  
As with a stroke she snapped the Royal staff,

Dealt the awaited blow on guilt decay  
(O ripeness of the time! O Retribution sure,  
If but our vital lamp illumine us to endure!)  
And, like a glad releasing of her soul,  
Sent the word Liberty up to meet the midway blue,  
Her bridegroom in descent to her; and they joined,  
In the face of men they joined: attest it true,  
The million witnesses, that she,  
For ages lying beside the mole,  
Was on the unanticipated miracle day  
Upraised to midway heaven and, as to her goal,  
Enfolded, ere the Immaculate knew  
What Lucifer of the Mint had coined  
His bride's adulterate currency  
Of burning love corrupt of an infuriate hate;  
She worthy, she unworthy; that one day his mate:  
His mate for that one day of the unwritten deed.  
Read backward on the hoar-frost's brilliant crust;  
Beneath it read.  
Athirst to kiss, athirst to slay, she stood,  
A radiance fringed with grim affright;  
For them that hungered, she was nourishing food,  
For those who sparkled, Night.  
Read in her heart, and how before the Just  
Her doings, her misdoings, plead.

#### IV

Down on her leap for him the young Angelical broke  
To husband a resurgent France:  
From whom, with her dethroning stroke,  
Dishonour passed; the dalliance,  
That is occasion's yea or nay,  
In issues for the soul to pay,  
Discarded; and the cleft 'twixt deed and word,  
The sinuous lie which warbles the sweet bird,  
Wherein we see old Darkness peer,  
Cold Dissolution beck, she had flung hence;  
And hence the talons and the beak of prey;  
Hence all the lures to silken swine  
Thronging the troughs of indolence;  
With every sleek convolvement serpentine;

The pride in elfin arts to veil an evil leer,  
And bid a goatfoot trip it like a fay.  
He clasped in this revived, uprisen France,  
A valorous dame, of countenance  
The lightning's upon cloud: unlit as yet  
On brows and lips the lurid shine  
Of seas in the night-wind's whirl; unstirred  
Her pouch of the centuries' injuries compressed;  
The shriek that tore the world as yet unheard:  
Earth's animate full flower she looked, intense  
For worship, wholly given him, fair  
Adoring or desiring; in her bright jet,  
Earth's crystal spring to sky: Earth's warrior Best  
To win Heaven's Pure up that midway  
We vision for new ground, where sense  
And spirit are one for the further flight; breast-bare,  
Bare-limbed; nor graceless gleamed her disarray  
In scorn of the seductive insincere,  
But martially nude for hot Bellona's play,  
And amorous of the loftiest in her view.

V

She sprang from dust to drink of earth's cool dew,  
The breath of swaying grasses share,  
Mankind embrace, their weaklings rear,  
At wrestle with the tyrannic strong;  
Her forehead clear to her mate, virgin anew,  
As immortals may be in the mortal sphere.  
Read through her launching heart, who had lain long  
With Earth and heard till it became her own  
Our good Great Mother's eve and matin song:  
The humming burden of Earth's toil to feed  
Her creatures all, her task to speed their growth,  
Her aim to lead them up her pathways, shown  
Between the Pains and Pleasures; warned of both,  
Of either aided on their hard ascent.  
Now when she looked, with love's benign delight  
After great ecstasy, along the plains,  
What foulest impregnation of her sight  
Transformed the scene to multitudinous troops  
Of human sketches, quaver-figures, bent,



As were they winter sedges, broken hoops,  
Dry udder, vineless poles, worm-eaten posts,  
With features like the flowers defaced by deluge rains?  
Recked she that some perverting devil had limned  
Earth's proudest to spout scorn of the Maker's hand,  
Who could a day behold these deathly hosts,  
And see, decked, graced, and delicately trimmed,  
A ribanded and gemmed elected few,  
Sanctioned, of milk and honey starve the land:-  
Like melody in flesh, its pleasant game  
Olympianwise perform, cloak but the shame:  
Beautiful statures; hideous,  
By Christian contrast; pranked with golden chains,  
And flexile where is manhood straight;  
Mortuaries where warm should beat  
The brotherhood that keeps blood sweet:  
Who dared in cantique impious  
Proclaim the Just, to whom was due  
Cathedral gratitude in the pomp of state,  
For that on those lean outcasts hung the sucker Pains,  
On these elect the swelling Pleasures grew.  
Surely a devil's land when that meant death for each!  
Fresh from the breast of Earth, not thus,  
With all the body's life to plump the leech,  
Is Nature's way, she knew. The abominable scene  
Spat at the skies; and through her veins,  
To cloud celestially sown,  
Ran venom of what nourishment  
Her dark sustainer subterrene  
Supplied her, stretched supine on the rack,  
Alive in the shrewd nerves, the seething brains,  
Under derisive revels, prone  
As one clamped fast, with the interminable senseless blent.

## VI

Now was her face white waves in the tempest's sharp flame-blink;  
Her skies shot black.  
Now was it visioned infamy to drink  
Of earth's cool dew, and through the vines  
Frolic in pearly laughter with her young,  
Watching the healthful, natural, happy signs

Where hands of lads and maids like tendrils clung,  
After their sly shy ventures from the leaf,  
And promised bunches. Now it seemed  
The world was one malarious mire,  
Crying for purification: chief  
This land of France. It seemed  
A duteous desire  
To drink of life's hot flood, and the crimson streamed.

## VII

She drank what makes man demon at the draught.  
Her skies lowered black,  
Her lover flew,  
There swept a shudder over men.  
Her heavenly lover fled her, and she laughed,  
For laughter was her spirit's weapon then.  
The Infernal rose uncalled, he with his crew.

## VIII

As mighty thews burst manacles, she went mad:  
Her heart a flaring torch usurped her wits.  
Such enemies of her next-drawn breath she had!  
To tread her down in her live grave beneath  
Their dancing floor sunned blind by the Royal wreath,  
They ringed her steps with crafty prison pits.  
Without they girdled her, made nest within.  
There ramped the lion, here entrailed the snake.  
They forced the cup to her lips when she drank blood;  
Believing it, in the mother's mind at strain,  
In the mother's fears, and in young Liberty's wail  
Alarmed, for her encompassed children's sake,  
The sole sure way to save her priceless bud.  
Wherewith, when power had gifted her to prevail,  
Vengeance appeared as logically akin.  
Insanely rational they; she rationally insane;  
And in compute of sin, was hers the appealing sin.

## IX

Amid the splash of scarlet mud

Stained at the mouth, drunk with our common air,  
Not lack of love was her defect;  
The Fury mourned and raged and bled for France  
Breathing from exultation to despair  
At every wild-winged hope struck by mischance  
Soaring at each faint gleam o'er her abyss.  
Heard still, to be heard while France shall stand erect,  
The frontier march she piped her sons, for where  
Her crouching outer enemy camped,  
Attendant on the deadlier inner's hiss.  
She piped her sons the frontier march, the wine  
Of martial music, History's cherished tune;  
And they, the saintliest labourers that aye  
Dropped sweat on soil for bread, took arms and tramped;  
High-breasted to match men or elements,  
Or Fortune, harsh schoolmistress with the undrilled:  
War's ragged pupils; many a wavering line,  
Torn from the dear fat soil of champaigns hopefully tilled,  
Torn from the motherly bowl, the homely spoon,  
To jest at famine, ply  
The novel scythe, and stand to it on the field;  
Lie in the furrows, rain-clouds for their tents;  
Fronting the red artillery straighten spine;  
Buckle the shiver at sight of comrades strewn;  
Over an empty platter affect the merrily filled;  
Die, if the multiple hazards around said die;  
Downward measure a foeman mightily sized;  
Laugh at the legs that would run for a life despised;  
Lyrical on into death's red roaring jaw-gape, steeled  
Gaily to take of the foe his lesson, and give reply.  
Cheerful apprentices, they shall be masters soon!

X

Lo, where hurricane flocks of the North-wind rattle their thunder  
Loud through a night, and at dawn comes change to the great South-  
west,  
Hounds are the hounded in clouds, waves, forests, inverted the race:  
Lo, in the day's young beams the colossal invading pursuers  
Burst upon rocks and were foam;  
Ridged up a torrent crest;  
Crumbled to ruin, still gazing a glacial wonder;

Turned shamed feet toe to heel on their track at a panic pace.  
Yesterday's clarion cock scudded hen of the invalid comb;  
They, the triumphant tonant towering upper, were under;  
They, violators of home, dared hope an inviolate home;  
They that had stood for the stroke were the vigorous hewers;  
Quick as the trick of the wrist with the rapier, they the pursuers.  
Heavens and men amazed heard the arrogant crying for grace;  
Saw the once hearth-reek rabble the scourge of an army dispieced;  
Saw such a shift of the hunt as when Titan Olympus clomb.  
Fly! was the sportsman's word; and the note of the quarry rang,  
Chase!

## XI

Banners from South, from East,  
Sheaves of pale banners drooping hole and shred;  
The captive brides of valour, Sabine Wives  
Plucked from the foeman's blushful bed,  
For glorious muted battle-tongues  
Of deeds along the horizon's red,  
At cost of unreluctant lives;  
Her toilful heroes homeward poured,  
To give their fevered mother air of the lungs.  
She breathed, and in the breathing craved.  
Environed as she was, at bay,  
Safety she kissed on her drawn sword,  
And waved for victory, for fresh victory waved:  
She craved for victory as her daily bread;  
For victory as her daily banquet raved.

## XII

Now had her glut of vengeance left her grey  
Of blood, who in her entrails fiercely tore  
To clutch and squeeze her snakes; herself the more  
Devitalizing: red washer Auroral ray;  
Desired if but to paint her pallid hue.  
The passion for that young horizon red,  
Which dowered her with the flags, the blazing fame,  
Like dotage of the past-meridian dame  
For some bright Sungod adolescent, swelled  
Insatiate, to the voracious grew,

The glutton's inward ravener bred;  
Till she, mankind's most dreaded, most abhorred,  
Witless in her demands on Fortune, asked,  
As by the weaving Fates impelled,  
To have the thing most loathed, the iron lord,  
Controller and chastiser, under Victory masked.

### XIII

Banners from East, from South,  
She hugged him in them, feared the scourge they meant,  
Yet blindly hugged, and hungering built his throne.  
So may you see the village innocent,  
With curtesy of shut lids and open mouth,  
In act to beg for sweets expect a loathly stone:  
See furthermore the Just in his measures weigh  
Her sufferings and her sins, dispense her meed.  
False to her bridegroom lord of the miracle day,  
She fell: from his ethereal home observed  
Through love, grown alien love, not moved to plead  
Against the season's fruit for deadly Seed,  
But marking how she had aimed, and where she swerved,  
Why suffered, with a sad consenting thought.  
Nor would he shun her sullen look, nor monstrous hold  
The doer of the monstrous; she aroused,  
She, the long tortured, suddenly freed, distraught,  
More strongly the divine in him than when  
Joy of her as she sprang from mould  
Drew him the midway heavens adown  
To clasp her in his arms espoused  
Before the sight of wondering men,  
And put upon the day a deathless crown.  
The veins and arteries of her, fold in fold,  
His alien love laid open, to divide  
The martyred creature from her crimes; he knew  
What cowardice in her valour could reside;  
What strength her weakness covered; what abased  
Sublimity so illumining, and what raised  
This wallower in old slime to noblest heights,  
Up to the union on the midway blue:-  
Day that the celestial grave Recorder hangs  
Among dark History's nocturnal lights,

With vivid beams indicative to the quick  
Of all who have felt the vaulted body's pangs  
Beneath a mind in hopeless soaring sick.  
She had forgot how, long enslaved, she yearned  
To the one helping hand above;  
Forgot her faith in the Great Undiscerned,  
Whereof she sprang aloft to her Angelical love  
That day: and he, the bright day's husband, still with love,  
Though alien, though to an upper seat retired,  
Behold a wrangling heart, as 'twere her soul  
On eddies of wild waters cast;  
In wilderness division; fired  
For domination, freedom, lust,  
The Pleasures; lo, a witch's snaky bowl  
Set at her lips; the blood-drinker's madness fast  
Upon her; and therewith mistrust,  
Most of herself: a mouth of guile.  
Compassionately could he smile,  
To hear the mouth disclaiming God,  
And clamouring for the Just!  
Her thousand impulses, like torches, coursed  
City and field; and pushed abroad  
O'er hungry waves to thirsty sands,  
Flaring at further; she had grown to be  
The headless with the fearful hands;  
To slaughter, else to suicide, enforced.  
But he, remembering how his love began,  
And of what creature, pitied when was plain  
Another measure of captivity:  
The need for strap and rod;  
The penitential prayers again;  
Again the bitter bowing down to dust;  
The burden on the flesh for who disclaims the God,  
The answer when is call upon the Just.  
Whence her lost virtue had found refuge strode  
Her master, saying, 'I only; I who can!'  
And echoed round her army, now her chain.  
So learns the nation, closing Anarch's reign,  
That she had been in travail of a Man.

George Meredith

# The Riddle For Men

I

This Riddle rede or die,  
Says History since our Flood,  
To warn her sons of power:-  
It can be truth, it can be lie;  
Be parasite to twist awry;  
The drouthy vampire for your blood;  
The fountain of the silver flower;  
A brand, a lure, a web, a crest;  
Supple of wax or tempered steel;  
The spur to honour, snake in nest:  
'Tis as you will with it to deal;  
To wear upon the breast,  
Or trample under heel.

II

And rede you not aright,  
Says Nature, still in red  
Shall History's tale be writ!  
For solely thus you lead to light  
The trailing chapters she must write,  
And pass my fiery test of dead  
Or living through the furnace-pit:  
Dislinked from who the softer hold  
In grip of brute, and brute remain:  
Of whom the woeful tale is told,  
How for one short Sultanic reign,  
Their bodies lapse to mould,  
Their souls behowl the plain.

George Meredith

# The Sage Enamoured And The Honest Lady

I

One fairest of the ripe unwedded left  
Her shadow on the Sage's path; he found,  
By common signs, that she had done a theft.  
He could have made the sovereign heights resound  
With questions of the wherefore of her state:  
He on far other but an hour before  
Intent. And was it man, or was it mate,  
That she disdained? or was there haply more?

About her mouth a placid humour slipped  
The dimple, as you see smooth lakes at eve  
Spread melting rings where late a swallow dipped.  
The surface was attentive to receive,  
The secret underneath enfolded fast.  
She had the step of the unconquered, brave,  
Not arrogant; and if the vessel's mast  
Waved liberty, no challenge did it wave.  
Her eyes were the sweet world desired of souls,  
With something of a wavering line unspelt.  
They hold the look whose tenderness condoles  
For what the sister in the look has dealt  
Of fatal beyond healing; and her tones  
A woman's honeyed amorous outvied,  
As when in a dropped viol the wood-throb moans  
Among the sobbing strings, that plain and chide  
Like infants for themselves, less deep to thrill  
Than those rich mother-notes for them breathed round.  
Those voices are not magic of the will  
To strike love's wound, but of love's wound give sound,  
Conveying it; the yearnings, pains and dreams.  
They waft to the moist tropics after storm,  
When out of passion spent thick incense steams,  
And jewel-belted clouds the wreck transform.

Was never hand on brush or lyre to paint  
Her gracious manners, where the nuptial ring  
Of melody clasped motion in restraint:



The reed-blade with the breeze thereof may sing.  
With such endowments armed was she and decked  
To make her spoken thoughts eclipse her kind;  
Surpassing many a giant intellect,  
The marvel of that cradled infant mind.  
It clenched the tiny fist, it curled the toe;  
Cherubic laughed, enticed, dispensed, absorbed;  
And promised in fair feminine to grow  
A Sage's match and mate, more heavenly orb'd.

## II

Across his path the spouseless Lady cast  
Her shadow, and the man that thing became.  
His youth uprising called his age the Past.  
This was the strong grey head of laurell'd name,  
And in his bosom an inverted Sage  
Mistook for light of morn the light which sank.  
But who while veins run blood shall know the page  
Succeeding ere we turn upon our blank?  
Comes Beauty with her tale of moon and cloud,  
Her silvered rims of mystery pointing in  
To hollows of the half-veiled unavow'd,  
Where beats her secret life, grey heads will spin  
Quick as the young, and spell those hieroglyphs  
Of phosphorescent dusk, devoutly bent;  
They drink a cup to whirl on dizzier cliffs  
For their shamed fall, which asks, why was she sent!  
Why, and of whom, and whence; and tell they truth,  
The legends of her mission to beguile?

Hard likeness to the toilful apes of youth  
He bore at times, and tempted the sly smile;  
And not on her soft lips was it descried.  
She stepped her way benevolently grave:  
Nor sign that Beauty fed her worm of pride,  
By tossing victim to the courtier knave,  
Let peep, nor of the naughty pride gave sign.  
Rather 'twas humbleness in being pursued,  
As pilgrim to the temple of a shrine.  
Had he not wits to pierce the mask he wooed?  
All wisdom's armoury this man could wield;

And if the cynic in the Sage it pleased  
Traverse her woman's curtain and poor shield,  
For new example of a world diseased;  
Showing her shrineless, not a temple, bare;  
A curtain ripped to tatters by the blast;  
Yet she most surely to this man stood fair:  
He worshipped like the young enthusiast,  
Named simpleton or poet. Did he read  
Right through, and with the voice she held reserved  
Amid her vacant ruins jointly plead?

Compassion for the man thus noble nerved  
The pity for herself she felt in him,  
To wreak a deed of sacrifice, and save;  
At least, be worthy. That our soul may swim,  
We sink our heart down bubbling under wave.  
It bubbles till it drops among the wrecks.  
But, ah! confession of a woman's breast:  
She eminent, she honoured of her sex!  
Truth speaks, and takes the spots of the confessed,  
To veil them. None of women, save their vile,  
Plays traitor to an army in the field.  
The cries most vindicating most defile.  
How shall a cause to Nature be appealed,  
When, under pressure of their common foe,  
Her sisters shun the Mother and disown,  
On pain of his intolerable crow  
Above the fiction, built for him, o'erthrown?  
Irrational he is, irrational  
Must they be, though not Reason's light shall wane  
In them with ever Nature at close call,  
Behind the fiction torturing to sustain;  
Who hear her in the milk, and sometimes make  
A tongueless answer, shivered on a sigh:  
Whereat men dread their lofty structure's quake  
Once more, and in their hosts for tocsin ply  
The crazy roar of peril, leonine  
For injured majesty. That sigh of dames  
Is rare and soon suppressed. Not they combine  
To shake the structure sheltering them, which tames  
Their lustier if not wilder: fixed are they,  
In elegancy scarce denoting ease;

And do they breathe, it is not to betray  
The martyr in the caryatides.  
Yet here and there along the graceful row  
Is one who fetches breath from deeps, who deems,  
Moved by a desperate craving, their old foe  
May yield a trustier friend than woman seems,  
And aid to bear the sculptured floral weight  
Massed upon heads not utterly of stone:  
May stamp endurance by expounding fate.  
She turned to him, and, This you seek is gone;  
Look in, she said, as pants the furnace, brief,  
Frost-white. She gave his hearing sight to view  
The silent chamber of a brown curled leaf:  
Thing that had throbbled ere shot black lightning through.  
No further sign of heart could he discern:  
The picture of her speech was winter sky;  
A headless figure folding a cleft urn,  
Where tears once at the overflow were dry.

### III

So spake she her first utterance on the rack.  
It softened torment, in the funeral hues  
Round wan Romance at ebb, but drove her back  
To listen to herself, herself accuse  
Harshly as Love's imperial cause allowed.  
She meant to grovel, and her lover praised  
So high o'er the condemnatory crowd,  
That she performe a fellow phoenix blazed.

The picture was of hand fast joined to hand,  
Both pushed from angry skies, their grasp more pledged  
Under the threatened flash of a bright brand  
At arm's length up, for severing action edged.  
Why, then Love's Court of Honour contemplate;  
And two drowned shorecasts, who, for the life esteemed  
Above their lost, invoke an advocate  
In Passion's purity, thereby redeemed.

Redeemed, uplifted, glimmering on a throne,  
The woman stricken by an arrow falls.  
His advocate she can be, not her own,

If, Traitress to thy sex! one sister calls.  
Have we such scenes of drapery's mournfulness  
On Beauty's revelations, witch'd we plant,  
Over the fair shape humbled to confess,  
An angel's buckler, with loud choric chant.

#### IV

No knightly sword to serve, nor harp of bard,  
The lady's hand in her physician's knew.  
She had not hoped for them as her award,  
When zig-zag on the tongue electric flew  
Her charge of counter-motives, none impure:  
But muteness whipped her skin. She could have said,  
Her free confession was to work his cure,  
Show proofs for why she could not love or wed.  
Were they not shown? His muteness shook in thrall  
Her body on the verge of that black pit  
Sheer from the treacherous confessional,  
Demanding further, while perusing it.

Slave is the open mouth beneath the closed.  
She sank; she snatched at colours; they were peel  
Of fruit past savour, in derision rosed.  
For the dark downward then her soul did reel.  
A press of hideous impulse urged to speak:  
A novel dread of man enchained her dumb.  
She felt the silence thicken, heard it shriek,  
Heard Life subsiding on the eternal hum:  
Welcome to women, when, between man's laws  
And Nature's thirsts, they, soul from body torn,  
Give suck at breast to a celestial cause,  
Named by the mouth infernal, and forsworn.  
Nathless her forehead twitched a sad content,  
To think the cure so manifest, so frail  
Her charm remaining. Was the curtain's rent  
Too wide? he but a man of that herd male?  
She saw him as that herd of the forked head  
Butting the woman harrowed on her knees,  
Clothed only in life's last devouring red.  
Confession at her fearful instant sees  
Judicial Silence write the devil fact

In letters of the skeleton: at once,  
Swayed on the supplication of her act,  
The rabble reading, roaring to denounce,  
She joins. No longer colouring, with skips  
At tangles, picture that for eyes in tears  
Might swim the sequence, she addressed her lips  
To do the scaffold's office at his ears.

Into the bitter judgement of that herd  
On women, she, deeming it present, fell.  
Her frenzy of abasement hugged the word  
They stone with, and so pile their citadel  
To launch at outcasts the foul levin bolt.  
As had he flung it, in her breast it burned.  
Face and reflect it did her hot revolt  
From hardness, to the writhing rebel turned;  
Because the golden buckler was withheld,  
She to herself applies the powder-spark,  
For joy of one wild demon burst ere quelled,  
Perishing to astound the tyrant Dark.

She had the Scriptural word so scored on brain,  
It rang through air to sky, and rocked a world  
That danced down shades the scarlet dance profane;  
Most women! see! by the man's view dustward hurled,  
Impenitent, submissive, torn in two.  
They sink upon their nature, the unnamed,  
And sops of nourishment may get some few,  
In place of understanding, scourged and shamed.

Barely have seasoned women understood  
The great Irrational, who thunders power,  
Drives Nature to her primitive wild wood,  
And courts her in the covert's dewy hour;  
Returning to his fortress nigh night's end,  
With execration of her daughters' lures.  
They help him the proud fortress to defend,  
Nor see what front it wears, what life immures,  
The murder it commits; nor that its base  
Is shifty as a huckster's opening deal  
For bargain under smoothest market face,  
While Gentleness bids frigid Justice feel,

Justice protests that Reason is her seat;  
Elect Convenience, as Reason masked,  
Hears calmly cramped Humanity entreat;  
Until a sentient world is overtaken,  
And rouses Reason's fountain-self: she calls  
On Nature; Nature answers: Share your guilt  
In common when contention cracks the walls  
Of the big house which not on me is built.

The Lady said as much as breath will bear;  
To happier sisters inconceivable:  
Contemptible to veterans of the fair,  
Who show for a convolving pearly shell,  
A treasure of the shore, their written book.  
As much as woman's breath will bear and live  
Shaped she to words beneath a knotted look,  
That held as if for grain the summing sieve.  
Her judge now brightened without pause, as wakes  
Our homely daylight after dread of spells.  
Lips sugared to let loose the little snakes  
Of slimy lustres ringing elfin bells  
About a story of the naked flesh,  
Intending but to put some garment on,  
Should learn, that in the subject they enmesh,  
A traitor lurks and will be known anon.  
Delusion heating pricks the torpid doubt,  
Stationed for index down an ancient track:  
And ware of it was he while she poured out  
A broken moon on forest-waters black.

Though past the stage where midway men are skilled  
To scan their senses wriggling under plough,  
When yet to the charmed seed of speech distilled,  
Their hearts are fallow, he, and witless how,  
Loathing, had yielded, like bruised limb to leech,  
Not handsomely; but now beholding bleed  
Soul of the woman in her prostrate speech,  
The valour of that rawness he could read.  
Thence flashed it, as the crimson currents ran  
From senses up to thoughts, how she had read  
Maternally the warm remainder man  
Beneath his crust, and Nature's pity shed,

In shedding dearer than heart's blood to light  
His vision of the path mild Wisdom walks.  
Therewith he could espy Confession's fright;  
Her need of him: these flowers grow on stalks;  
They suck from soil, and have their urgencies  
Beside and with the lovely face mid leaves.  
Veins of divergencies, convergencies,  
Our botanist in womankind perceives;  
And if he hugs no wound, the man can prize  
That splendid consummation and sure proof  
Of more than heart in her, who might despise,  
Who drowns herself, for pity up aloof  
To soar and be like Nature's pity: she  
Instinctive of what virtue in young days  
Had served him for his pilot-star on sea,  
To trouble him in haven. Thus his gaze  
Came out of rust, and more than the schooled tongue  
Was gifted to encourage and assure.  
He gave her of the deep well she had sprung;  
And name it gratitude, the word is poor.  
But name it gratitude, is aught as rare  
From sex to sex? And let it have survived  
Their conflict, comes the peace between the pair,  
Unknown to thousands husbanded and wived:  
Unknown to Passion, generous for prey:  
Unknown to Love, too blissful in a truce.  
Their tenderest of self did each one slay;  
His cloak of dignity, her fleur de luce;  
Her lily flower, and his abolla cloak,  
Things living, slew they, and no artery bled.  
A moment of some sacrificial smoke  
They passed, and were the dearer for their dead.

He learnt how much we gain who make no claims.  
A nightcap on his flicker of grey fire  
Was thought of her sharp shudder in the flames,  
Confessing; and its conjured image dire,  
Of love, the torrent on the valley dashed;  
The whirlwind swathing tremulous peaks; young force,  
Visioned to hold corrected and abashed  
Our senile emulous; which rolls its course  
Proud to the shattering end; with these few last

Hot quintessential drops of bryony juice,  
Squeezed out in anguish: all of that once vast!  
And still, though having skin for man's abuse,  
Though no more glorying in the beauteous wreath  
Shot skyward from a blood at passionate jet,  
Repenting but in words, that stand as teeth  
Between the vivid lips; a vassal set;  
And numb, of formal value. Are we true  
In nature, never natural thing repents;  
Albeit receiving punishment for due,  
Among the group of this world's penitents;  
Albeit remorsefully regretting, oft  
Cravenly, while the scourge no shudder spares.

Our world believes it stabler if the soft  
Are whipped to show the face repentance wears.  
Then hear it, in a moan of atheist gloom,  
Deplore the weedy growth of hypocrites;  
Count Nature devilish, and accept for doom  
The chasm between our passions and our wits!

Affecting lunar whiteness, patent snows,  
It trembles at betrayal of a sore.  
Hers is the glacier-conscience, to expose  
Impurities for clearness at the core.

She to her hungered thundering in breast,  
YE SHALL NOT STARVE, not feebly designates  
The world repressing as a life repressed,  
Judged by the wasted martyrs it creates.  
How Sin, amid the shades Cimmerian,  
Repents, she points for sight: and she avers,  
The hoofed half-angel in the Puritan  
Nigh reads her when no brutish wrath deters.

Sin against immaturity, the sin  
Of ravenous excess, what deed divides  
Man from vitality; these bleed within;  
Bleed in the crippled relic that abides.  
Perpetually they bleed; a limb is lost,  
A piece of life, the very spirit maimed.  
But culprit who the law of man has crossed



With Nature's dubiously within is blamed;  
Despite our cry at cutting of the whip,  
Our shiver in the night when numbers frown,  
We but bewail a broken fellowship,  
A sting, an isolation, a fall'n crown.

Abject of sinners is that sensitive,  
The flesh, amenable to stripes, miscalled  
Incorrigible: such title do we give  
To the poor shrinking stuff wherewith we are walled;  
And, taking it for Nature, place in ban  
Our Mother, as a Power wanton-willed,  
The shame and baffler of the soul of man,  
The recreant, reptilious. Do thou build  
Thy mind on her foundations in earth's bed;  
Behold man's mind the child of her keen rod,  
For teaching how the wits and passions wed  
To rear that temple of the credible God;  
Sacred the letters of her laws, and plain,  
Will shine, to guide thy feet and hold thee firm:  
Then, as a pathway through a field of grain,  
Man's laws appear the blind progressive worm,  
That moves by touch, and thrust of linking rings  
The which to endow with vision, lift from mud  
To level of their nature's aims and springs,  
Must those, the twain beside our vital flood,  
Now on opposing banks, the twain at strife  
(Whom the so rosy ferryman invites  
To junction, and mid-channel over Life,  
Unmasked to the ghostly, much asunder smites)  
Instruct in deeper than Convenience,  
In higher than the harvest of a year.  
Only the rooted knowledge to high sense  
Of heavenly can mount, and feel the spur  
For fruitfulest advancement, eye a mark  
Beyond the path with grain on either hand,  
Help to the steering of our social Ark  
Over the barbarous waters unto land.

For us the double conscience and its war,  
The serving of two masters, false to both,  
Until those twain, who spring the root and are

The knowledge in division, plight a troth  
Of equal hands: nor longer circulate  
A pious token for their current coin,  
To growl at the exchange; they, mate and mate,  
Fair feminine and masculine shall join  
Upon an upper plane, still common mould,  
Where stamped religion and reflective pace  
A statelier measure, and the hoop of gold  
Rounds to horizon for their soul's embrace.  
Then shall those noblest of the earth and sun  
Inmix unlike to waves on savage sea.  
But not till Nature's laws and man's are one,  
Can marriage of the man and woman be.

V

He passed her through the sermon's dull defile.  
Down under billowy vapour-gorges heaved  
The city and the vale and mountain-pile.  
She felt strange push of shuttle-threads that weaved.

A new land in an old beneath her lay;  
And forth to meet it did her spirit rush,  
As bride who without shame has come to say,  
Husband, in his dear face that caused her blush.

A natural woman's heart, not more than clad  
By station and bright raiment, gathers heat  
From nakedness in trusted hands: she had  
The joy of those who feel the world's heart beat,  
After long doubt of it as fire or ice;  
Because one man had helped her to breathe free;  
Surprised to faith in something of a price  
Past the old charity in chivalry:-  
Our first wild step to right the loaded scales  
Displaying women shamefully outweighed.  
The wisdom of humaneness best avails  
For serving justice till that fraud is brayed.  
Her buried body fed the life she drank.  
And not another stripping of her wound!  
The startled thought on black delirium sank,  
While with her gentle surgeon she communed,

And woman's prospect of the yoke repelled.  
Her buried body gave her flowers and food;  
The peace, the homely skies, the springs that welled;  
Love, the large love that folds the multitude.  
Soul's chastity in honesty, and this  
With beauty, made the dower to men refused.  
And little do they know the prize they miss;  
Which is their happy fortune! Thus he mused

For him, the cynic in the Sage had play  
A hazy moment, by a breath dispersed;  
To think, of all alive most wedded they,  
Whom time disjoined! He needed her quick thirst  
For renovated earth: on earth she gazed,  
With humble aim to foot beside the wise.  
Lo, where the eyelashes of night are raised  
Yet lowly over morning's pure grey eyes.

George Meredith

# The Shipwreck Of Idomeneus

Swept from his fleet upon that fatal night  
When great Poseidon's sudden-veering wrath  
Scattered the happy homeward-floating Greeks  
Like foam-flakes off the waves, the King of Crete  
Held lofty commune with the dark Sea-god.  
His brows were crowned with victory, his cheeks  
Were flushed with triumph, but the mighty joy  
Of Troy's destruction and his own great deeds  
Passed, for the thoughts of home were dearer now,  
And sweet the memory of wife and child,  
And weary now the ten long, foreign years,  
And terrible the doubt of short delay -  
More terrible, O Gods! he cried, but stopped;  
Then raised his voice upon the storm and prayed.  
O thou, if injured, injured not by me,  
Poseidon! whom sea-deities obey  
And mortals worship, hear me! for indeed  
It was our oath to aid the cause of Greece,  
Not unespoused by Gods, and most of all  
By thee, if gentle currents, havens calm,  
Fair winds and prosperous voyage, and the Shape  
Impersonate in many a perilous hour,  
Both in the stately councils of the Kings,  
And when the husky battle murmured thick,  
May testify of services performed!  
But now the seas are haggard with thy wrath,  
Thy breath is tempest! never at the shores  
Of hostile Ilium did thy stormful brows  
Betray such fierce magnificence! not even  
On that wild day when, mad with torch and glare,  
The frantic crowds with eyes like starving wolves  
Burst from their ports impregnable, a stream  
Of headlong fury toward the hissing deep;  
Where then full-armed I stood in guard, compact  
Beside thee, and alone, with brand and spear,  
We held at bay the swarming brood, and poured  
Blood of choice warriors on the foot-ploughed sands!  
Thou, meantime, dark with conflict, as a cloud  
That thickens in the bosom of the West

Over quenched sunset, circled round with flame,  
Huge as a billow running from the winds  
Long distances, till with black shipwreck swoln,  
It flings its angry mane about the sky.  
And like that billow heaving ere it burst;  
And like that cloud urged by impulsive storm  
With charge of thunder, lightning, and the drench  
Of torrents, thou in all thy majesty  
Of mightiness didst fall upon the war!  
Remember that great moment! Nor forget  
The aid I gave thee; how my ready spear  
Flew swiftly seconding thy mortal stroke,  
Where'er the press was hottest; never slacked  
My arm its duty, nor mine eye its aim,  
Though terribly they compassed us, and stood  
Thick as an Autumn forest, whose brown hair,  
Lustrous with sunlight, by the still increase  
Of heat to glowing heat conceives like zeal  
Of radiance, till at the pitch of noon  
'Tis seized with conflagration and distends  
Horridly over leagues of doom'd domain;  
Mingling the screams of birds, the cries of brutes,  
The wail of creatures in the covert pent,  
Howls, yells, and shrieks of agony, the hiss  
Of seething sap, and crash of falling boughs  
Together in its dull voracious roar.  
So closely and so fearfully they throng'd,  
Savage with phantasies of victory,  
A sea of dusky shapes; for day had passed  
And night fell on their darkened faces, red  
With fight and torchflare; shrill the resonant air  
With eager shouts, and hoarse with angry groans;  
While over all the dense and sullen boom,  
The din and murmur of the myriads,  
Rolled with its awful intervals, as though  
The battle breathed, or as against the shore  
Waves gather back to heave themselves anew.  
That night sleep dropped not from the dreary skies,  
Nor could the prowess of our chiefs oppose  
That sea of raging men. But what were they?  
Or what is man opposed to thee? Its hopes  
Are wrecks, himself the drowning, drifting weed

That wanders on thy waters; such as I  
Who see the scattered remnants of my fleet,  
Remembering the day when first we sailed,  
Each glad ship shining like the morning star  
With promise for the world. Oh! such as I  
Thus darkly drifting on the drowning waves.  
O God of waters! 'tis a dreadful thing  
To suffer for an evil unrevealed;  
Dreadful it is to hear the perishing cry  
Of those we love; the silence that succeeds  
How dreadful! Still my trust is fixed on thee  
For those that still remain and for myself.  
And if I hear thy swift foam-snorting steeds  
Drawing thy dusky chariot, as in  
The pauses of the wind I seem to hear,  
Deaf thou art not to my entreating prayer!  
Haste then to give us help, for closely now  
Crete whispers in my ears, and all my blood  
Runs keen and warm for home, and I have yearning,  
Such yearning as I never felt before,  
To see again my wife, my little son,  
My Queen, my pretty nursling of five years,  
The darling of my hopes, our dearest pledge  
Of marriage, and our brightest prize of love,  
Whose parting cry rings clearest in my heart.  
O lay this horror, much-offended God!  
And making all as fair and firm as when  
We trusted to thy mighty depths of old, -  
I vow to sacrifice the first whom Zeus  
Shall prompt to hail us from the white seashore  
And welcome our return to royal Crete,  
An offering, Poseidon, unto thee!

Amid the din of elemental strife,  
No voice may pierce but Deity supreme:  
And Deity supreme alone can hear,  
Above the hurricane's discordant shrieks,  
The cry of agonized humanity.

Not unappeased was He who smites the waves,  
When to his stormy ears the warrior's vow  
Entered, and from his foamy pinnacle

Tumultuous he beheld the prostrate form,  
And knew the mighty heart. Awhile he gazed,  
As doubtful of his purpose, and the storm,  
Conscious of that divine debate, withheld  
Its fierce emotion, in the luminous gloom  
Of those so dark irradiating eyes!  
Beneath whose wavering lustre shone revealed  
The tumult of the purpling deeps, and all  
The throbbing of the tempest, as it paused,  
Slowly subsiding, seeming to await  
The sudden signal, as a faithful hound  
Pants with the forepaws stretched before its nose,  
Athwart the greensward, after an eager chase;  
Its hot tongue thrust to cool, its foamy jaws  
Open to let the swift breath come and go,  
Its quick interrogating eyes fixed keen  
Upon the huntsman's countenance, and ever  
Lashing its sharp impatient tail with haste:  
Prompt at the slightest sign to scour away,  
And hang itself afresh by the bleeding fangs,  
Upon the neck of some death-singled stag,  
Whose royal antlers, eyes, and stumbling knees  
Will supplicate the Gods in mute despair.  
This time not mute, nor yet in vain this time!  
For still the burden of the earnest voice  
And all the vivid glories it revoked  
Sank in the God, with that absorbed suspense  
Felt only by the Olympians, whose minds  
Unbounded like our mortal brain, perceive  
All things complete, the end, the aim of all;  
To whom the crown and consequence of deeds  
Are ever present with the deed itself.

And now the pouring surges, vast and smooth,  
Grew weary of restraint, and heaved themselves  
Headlong beneath him, breaking at his feet  
With wild importunate cries and angry wail;  
Like crowds that shout for bread and hunger more.  
And now the surface of their rolling backs  
Was ridged with foam-topt furrows, rising high  
And dashing wildly, like to fiery steeds,  
Fresh from the Thracian or Thessalian plains,

High-blooded mares just tempering to the bit,  
Whose manes at full-speed stream upon the winds,  
And in whose delicate nostrils when the gust  
Breathes of their native plains, they ramp and rear,  
Frothing the curb, and bounding from the earth,  
As though the Sun-god's chariot alone  
Were fit to follow in their flashing track.  
Anon with gathering stature to the height  
Of those colossal giants, doomed long since  
To torturous grief and penance, that assailed  
The sky-throned courts of Zeus, and climbing, dared  
For once in a world the Olympic wrath, and braved  
The electric spirit which from his clenching hand  
Pierces the dark-veined earth, and with a touch  
Is death to mortals, fearfully they grew!  
And with like purpose of audacity  
Threatened Titanic fury to the God.  
Such was the agitation of the sea  
Beneath Poseidon's thought-revolving brows,  
Storming for signal. But no signal came.  
And as when men, who congregate to hear  
Some proclamation from the regal fount,  
With eager questioning and anxious phrase  
Betray the expectation of their hearts,  
Till after many hours of fretful sloth,  
Weary with much delay, they hold discourse  
In sullen groups and cloudy masses, stirred  
With rage irresolute and whispering plot,  
Known more by indication than by word,  
And understood alone by those whose minds  
Participate;-even so the restless waves  
Began to lose all sense of servitude,  
And worked with rebel passions, bursting, now  
To right, and now to left, but evermore  
Subdued with influence, and controlled with dread  
Of that inviolate Authority.  
Then, swiftly as he mused, the impetuous God  
Seized on the pausing reins, his coursers plunged,  
His brows resumed the grandeur of their ire;  
Throughout his vast divinity the deeps  
Concurrent thrilled with action, and away,  
As sweeps a thunder-cloud across the sky



In harvest-time, preluded by dull blasts;  
Or some black-visaged whirlwind, whose wide folds  
Rush, wrestling on with all 'twixt heaven and earth,  
Darkling he hurried, and his distant voice,  
Not softened by delay, was heard in tones  
Distinctly terrible, still following up  
Its rapid utterance of tremendous wrath  
With hoarse reverberations; like the roar  
Of lions when they hunger, and awake  
The sullen echoes from their forest sleep,  
To speed the ravenous noise from hill to hill  
And startle victims; but more awful, He,  
Scudding across the hills that rise and sink,  
With foam, and splash, and cataracts of spray,  
Clothed in majestic splendour; girt about  
With Sea-gods and swift creatures of the sea;  
Their briny eyes blind with the showering drops;  
Their stormy locks, salt tongues, and scaly backs,  
Quivering in harmony with the tempest, fierce  
And eager with tempestuous delight; -  
He like a moving rock above them all  
Solemnly towering while fitful gleams  
Brake from his dense black forehead, which display'd  
The enduring chiefs as their distracted fleets  
Tossed, toiling with the waters, climbing high,  
And plunging downward with determined beaks,  
In lurid anguish; but the Cretan king  
And all his crew were 'ware of under-tides,  
That for the groaning vessel made a path,  
On which the impending and precipitous waves  
Fell not, nor suck'd to their abysmal gorge.

O, happy they to feel the mighty God,  
Without his whelming presence near: to feel  
Safety and sweet relief from such despair,  
And gushing of their weary hopes once more  
Within their fond warm hearts, tired limbs, and eyes  
Heavy with much fatigue and want of sleep!  
Prayers did not lack; like mountain springs they came,  
After the earth has drunk the drenching rains,  
And throws her fresh-born jets into the sun  
With joyous sparkles; -for there needed not

Evidence more serene of instant grace,  
Immortal mercy! and the sense which follows  
Divine interposition, when the shock  
Of danger hath been thwarted by the Gods,  
Visibly, and through supplication deep, -  
Rose in them, chiefly in the royal mind  
Of him whose interceding vow had saved.  
Tears from that great heroic soul sprang up;  
Not painful as in grief, nor smarting keen  
With shame of weeping; but calm, fresh, and sweet;  
Such as in lofty spirits rise, and wed  
The nature of the woman to the man;  
A sight most lovely to the Gods! They fell  
Like showers of starlight from his steadfast eyes,  
As ever towards the prow he gazed, nor moved  
One muscle, with firm lips and level lids,  
Motionless; while the winds sang in his ears,  
And took the length of his brown hair in streams  
Behind him. Thus the hours passed, and the oars  
Plied without pause, and nothing but the sound  
Of the dull rowlocks and still watery sough,  
Far off, the carnage of the storm, was heard.  
For nothing spake the mariners in their toil,  
And all the captains of the war were dumb:  
Too much oppressed with wonder, too much thrilled  
By their great chieftain's silence, to disturb  
Such meditation with poor human speech.  
Meantime the moon through slips of driving cloud  
Came forth, and glanced athwart the seas a path  
Of dusky splendour, like the Hadean brows,  
When with Elysian passion they behold  
Persephone's complacent hueless cheeks.  
Soon gathering strength and lustre, as a ship  
That swims into some blue and open bay  
With bright full-bosomed sails, the radiant car  
Of Artemis advanced, and on the waves  
Sparkled like arrows from her silver bow  
The keenness of her pure and tender gaze.

Then, slowly, one by one the chiefs sought rest;  
The watches being set, and men to relieve  
The rowers at midseason. Fair it was

To see them as they lay! Some up the prow,  
Some round the helm, in open-handed sleep;  
With casques unloosed, and bucklers put aside;  
The ten years' tale of war upon their cheeks,  
Where clung the salt wet locks, and on their breasts  
Beards, the thick growth of many a proud campaign;  
And on their brows the bright invisible crown  
Victory sheds from her own radiant form,  
As o'er her favourites' heads she sings and soars.  
But dreams came not so calmly; as around  
Turbulent shores wild waves and swamping surf  
Prevail, while seaward, on the tranquil deeps,  
Reign placid surfaces and solemn peace,  
So, from the troubled strands of memory, they  
Launched and were tossed, long ere they found the tides  
That lead to the gentle bosoms of pure rest.  
And like to one who from a ghostly watch  
In a lone house where murder hath been done,  
And secret violations, pale with stealth  
Emerges, staggering on the first chill gust  
Wherewith the morning greets him, feeling not  
Its balmy freshness on his bloodless cheek, -  
But swift to hide his midnight face afar,  
'Mongst the old woods and timid-glancing flowers  
Hastens, till on the fresh reviving breasts  
Of tender Dryads folded he forgets  
The pallid witness of those nameless things,  
In renovated senses lapt, and joins  
The full, keen joyance of the day, so they  
From sights and sounds of battle smeared with blood,  
And shrieking souls on Acheron's bleak tides,  
And wail of execrating kindred, slid  
Into oblivious slumber and a sense  
Of satiate deliciousness complete.

Leave them, O Muse, in that so happy sleep!  
Leave them to reap the harvest of their toil,  
While fast in moonlight the glad vessel glides,  
As if instinctive to its forest home.  
O Muse, that in all sorrows and all joys,  
Rapturous bliss and suffering divine,  
Dwellest with equal fervour, in the calm

Of thy serene philosophy, albeit  
Thy gentle nature is of joy alone,  
And loves the pipings of the happy fields,  
Better than all the great parade and pomp  
Which forms the train of heroes and of kings,  
And sows, too frequently, the tragic seeds  
That choke with sobs thy singing,-turn away  
Thy lustrous eyes back to the oath-bound man!  
For as a shepherd stands above his flock,  
The lofty figure of the king is seen,  
Standing above his warriors as they sleep:  
And still as from a rock grey waters gush,  
While still the rock is passionless and dark,  
Nor moves one feature of its giant face,  
The tears fall from his eyes, and he stirs not.

And O, bright Muse! forget not thou to fold  
In thy prophetic sympathy the thought  
Of him whose destiny has heard its doom:  
The Sacrifice thro' whom the ship is saved.  
Haply that Sacrifice is sleeping now,  
And dreams of glad tomorrows. Haply now,  
His hopes are keenest, and his fervent blood  
Richest with youth, and love, and fond regard!  
Round him the circle of affections blooms,  
And in some happy nest of home he lives,  
One name oft uttering in delighted ears,  
Mother! at which the heart of men are kin  
With reverence and yearning. Haply, too,  
That other name, twin holy, twin revered,  
He whispers often to the passing winds  
That blow toward the Asiatic coasts;  
For Crete has sent her bravest to the war,  
And multitudes pressed forward to that rank,  
Men with sad weeping wives and little ones.  
That other name-O Father! who art thou,  
Thus doomed to lose the star of thy last days?  
It may be the sole flower of thy life,  
And that of all who now look up to thee!  
O Father, Father! unto thee even now  
Fate cries; the future with imploring voice  
Cries 'Save me,' 'Save me,' though thou hearest not.

And O thou Sacrifice, foredoomed by Zeus;  
Even now the dark inexorable deed  
Is dealing its relentless stroke, and vain  
Are prayers, and tears, and struggles, and despair!  
The mother's tears, the nation's stormful grief,  
The people's indignation and revenge!  
Vain the last childlike pleading voice for life,  
The quick resolve, the young heroic brow,  
So like, so like, and vainly beautiful!  
Oh! whosoe'er ye are the Muse says not,  
And sees not, but the Gods look down on both.

George Meredith

# The Sleeping City

A Princess in the eastern tale  
Paced thro' a marble city pale,  
And saw in ghastly shapes of stone  
The sculptured life she breathed alone;

Saw, where'er her eye might range,  
Herself the only child of change;  
And heard her echoed footfall chime  
Between Oblivion and Time;

And in the squares where fountains played,  
And up the spiral balustrade,  
Along the drowsy corridors,  
Even to the inmost sleeping floors,

Surveyed in wonder chilled with dread  
The seemingness of Death, not dead;  
Life's semblance but without its storm,  
And silence frosting every form;

Crowned figures, cold and grouping slaves,  
Like suddenly arrested waves  
About to sink, about to rise, -  
Strange meaning in their stricken eyes;

And cloths and couches live with flame  
Of leopards fierce and lions tame,  
And hunters in the jungle reed,  
Thrown out by sombre glowing brede;

Dumb chambers hushed with fold on fold,  
And cumbrous gorgeousness of gold;  
White casements o'er embroidered seats,  
Looking on solitudes of streets, -

On palaces and column'd towers,  
Unconscious of the stony hours;  
Harsh gateways startled at a sound,  
With burning lamps all burnish'd round; -

Surveyed in awe this wealth and state,  
Touched by the finger of a Fate,  
And drew with slow-awakening fear  
The sternness of the atmosphere; -

And gradually, with stealthier foot,  
Became herself a thing as mute,  
And listened,-while with swift alarm  
Her alien heart shrank from the charm;

Yet as her thoughts dilating rose,  
Took glory in the great repose,  
And over every postured form  
Spread lava-like and brooded warm, -

And fixed on every frozen face  
Beheld the record of its race,  
And in each chiselled feature knew  
The stormy life that once blushed thro'; -

The ever-present of the past  
There written; all that lightened last,  
Love, anguish, hope, disease, despair,  
Beauty and rage, all written there; -

Enchanted Passions! whose pale doom  
Is never flushed by blight or bloom,  
But sentinelled by silent orbs,  
Whose light the pallid scene absorbs. -

Like such a one I pace along  
This City with its sleeping throng;  
Like her with dread and awe, that turns  
To rapture, and sublimely yearns; -

For now the quiet stars look down  
On lights as quiet as their own;  
The streets that groaned with traffic show  
As if with silence paved below;

The latest revellers are at peace,

The signs of in-door tumult cease,  
From gay saloon and low resort,  
Comes not one murmur or report:

The clattering chariot rolls not by,  
The windows show no waking eye,  
The houses smoke not, and the air  
Is clear, and all the midnight fair.

The centre of the striving world,  
Round which the human fate is curled,  
To which the future crieth wild, -  
Is pillowed like a cradled child.

The palace roof that guards a crown,  
The mansion swathed in dreamy down,  
Hovel, court, and alley-shed,  
Sleep in the calmness of the dead.

Now while the many-motived heart  
Lies hushed-fireside and busy mart,  
And mortal pulses beat the tune  
That charms the calm cold ear o' the moon

Whose yellowing crescent down the West  
Leans listening, now when every breast  
Its basest or its purest heaves,  
The soul that joys, the soul that grieves; -

While Fame is crowning happy brows  
That day will blindly scorn, while vows  
Of anguished love, long hidden, speak  
From faltering tongue and flushing cheek

The language only known to dreams,  
Rich eloquence of rosy themes!  
While on the Beauty's folded mouth  
Disdain just wrinkles baby youth;

While Poverty dispenses alms  
To outcasts, bread, and healing balms;  
While old Mammon knows himself



The greatest beggar for his pelf;

While noble things in darkness grope,  
The Statesman's aim, the Poet's hope;  
The Patriot's impulse gathers fire,  
And germs of future fruits aspire; -

Now while dumb nature owns its links,  
And from one common fountain drinks,  
Methinks in all around I see  
This Picture in Eternity; -

A marbled City planted there  
With all its pageants and despair;  
A peopled hush, a Death not dead,  
But stricken with Medusa's head; -

And in the Gorgon's glance for aye  
The lifeless immortality  
Reveals in sculptured calmness all  
Its latest life beyond recall.

George Meredith

# The Song Of Courtesy

## I

When Sir Gawain was led to his bridal-bed,  
By Arthur's knights in scorn God-spel:-  
How think you he felt?  
O the bride within  
Was yellow and dry as a snake's old skin;  
Loathly as sin!  
Scarcely faceable,  
Quite unembraceable;  
With a hog's bristle on a hag's chin! -  
Gentle Gawain felt as should we,  
Little of Love's soft fire knew he:  
But he was the Knight of Courtesy.

## II

When that evil lady he lay beside  
Bade him turn to greet his bride,  
What think you he did?  
O, to spare her pain,  
And let not his loathing her loathliness vain  
Mirror too plain,  
Sadly, sighingly,  
Almost dyingly,  
Turned he and kissed her once and again.  
Like Sir Gawain, gentles, should we?  
SILENT, ALL! But for pattern agree  
There's none like the Knight of Courtesy.

## III

Sir Gawain sprang up amid laces and curls:  
Kisses are not wasted pearls:-  
What clung in his arms?  
O, a maiden flower,  
Burning with blushes the sweet bride-bower,  
Beauty her dower!  
Breathing perfumingly;

Shall I live bloomingly,  
Said she, by day, or the bridal hour?  
Thereat he clasped her, and whispered he,  
Thine, rare bride, the choice shall be.  
Said she, Twice blest is Courtesy!

#### IV

Of gentle Sir Gawain they had no sport,  
When it was morning in Arthur's court;  
What think you they cried?  
Now, life and eyes!  
This bride is the very Saint's dream of a prize,  
Fresh from the skies!  
See ye not, Courtesy  
Is the true Alchemy,  
Turning to gold all it touches and tries?  
Like the true knight, so may we  
Make the basest that there be  
Beautiful by Courtesy!

George Meredith

# The Song Of Theodolinda

## I

Queen Theodolind has built  
In the earth a furnace-bed:  
There the Traitor Nail that spilt  
Blood of the anointed Head,  
Red of heat, resolves in shame:  
White of heat, awakes to flame.  
Beat, beat! white of heat,  
Red of heat, beat, beat!

## II

Mark the skeleton of fire  
Lightening from its thunder-roof:  
So comes this that saw expire  
Him we love, for our behoof!  
Red of heat, O white of heat,  
This from off the Cross we greet.

## III

Brown-cowled hammermen around  
Nerve their naked arms to strike  
Death with Resurrection crowned,  
Each upon that cruel spike.  
Red of heat the furnace leaps,  
White of heat transfigured sleeps.

## IV

Hard against the furnace core  
Holds the Queen her streaming eyes:  
Lo! that thing of piteous gore  
In the lap of radiance lies,  
Red of heat, as when He takes,  
White of heat, whom earth forsakes.

## V

Forth with it, and crushing ring  
Iron hymns, for men to hear  
Echoes of the deeds that sting  
Earth into its graves, and fear!  
Red of heat, He maketh thus,  
White of heat, a crown of us.

## VI

This that killed Thee, kissed Thee, Lord!  
Touched Thee, and we touch it: dear,  
Dark it is; adored, abhorred:  
Vilest, yet most sainted here.  
Red of heat, O white of heat,  
In it hell and heaven meet.

## VII

I behold our morning day  
When they chased Him out with rods  
Up to where this traitor lay  
Thirsting; and the blood was God's!  
Red of heat, it shall be pressed,  
White of heat, once on my breast!

## VIII

Quick! the reptile in me shrieks,  
Not the soul. Again; the Cross  
Burn there. Oh! this pain it wreaks  
Rapture is: pain is not loss.  
Red of heat, the tooth of Death,  
White of heat, has caught my breath.

## IX

Brand me, bite me, bitter thing!  
Thus He felt, and thus I am  
One with Him in suffering,  
One with Him in bliss, the Lamb.  
Red of heat, O white of heat,

Thus is bitterness made sweet.

X

Now am I, who bear that stamp  
Scorched in me, the living sign  
Sole on earth--the lighted lamp  
Of the dreadful Day divine.  
White of heat, beat on it fast!  
Red of heat, its shape has passed.

XI

Out in angry sparks they fly,  
They that sentenced Him to bleed:  
Pontius and his troop: they die,  
Damned for ever for the deed!  
White of heat in vain they soar:  
Red of heat they strew the floor.

XII

Fury on it! have its debt!  
Thunder on the Hill accurst,  
Golgotha, be ye! and sweat  
Blood, and thirst the Passion's thirst.  
Red of heat and white of heat,  
Champ it like fierce teeth that eat.

XIII

Strike it as the ages crush  
Towers! for while a shape is seen  
I am rivalled. Quench its blush,  
Devil! But it crowns me Queen,  
Red of heat, as none before,  
White of heat, the circlet wore.

XIV

Lowly I will be, and quail,  
Crawling, with a beggar's hand:

On my breast the branded Nail,  
On my head the iron band.  
Red of heat, are none so base!  
White of heat, none know such grace!

XV

In their heaven the sainted hosts,  
Robed in violet unflecked,  
Gaze on humankind as ghosts:  
I draw down a ray direct.  
Red of heat, across my brow,  
White of heat, I touch Him now.

XVI

Robed in violet, robed in gold,  
Robed in pearl, they make our dawn.  
What am I to them? Behold  
What ye are to me, and fawn.  
Red of heat, be humble, ye!  
White of heat, O teach it me!

XVII

Martyrs! hungry peaks in air,  
Rent with lightnings, clad with snow,  
Crowned with stars! you strip me bare,  
Pierce me, shame me, stretch me low,  
Red of heat, but it may be,  
White of heat, some envy me!

XVIII

O poor enviers! God's own gifts  
Have a devil for the weak.  
Yea, the very force that lifts  
Finds the vessel's secret leak.  
Red of heat, I rise o'er all:  
White of heat, I faint, I fall.

XIX

Those old Martyrs sloughed their pride,  
Taking humbleness like mirth.  
I am to His Glory tied,  
I that witness Him on earth!  
Red of heat, my pride of dust,  
White of heat, feeds fire in trust.

XX

Kindle me to constant fire,  
Lest the nail be but a nail!  
Give me wings of great desire,  
Lest I look within, and fail!  
Red of heat, the furnace light,  
White of heat, fix on my sight.

XXI

Never for the Chosen peace!  
Know, by me tormented know,  
Never shall the wrestling cease  
Till with our outlasting Foe,  
Red of heat to white of heat,  
Roll we to the Godhead's feet!  
Beat, beat! white of heat,  
Red of heat, beat, beat!

George Meredith



# The South-Wester

Day of the cloud in fleets! O day  
Of wedded white and blue, that sail  
Immingled, with a footing ray  
In shadow-sandals down our vale! -  
And swift to ravish golden meads,  
Swift up the run of turf it speeds,  
Thy bright of head and dark of heel,  
To where the hilltop flings on sky,  
As hawk from wrist or dust from wheel,  
The tiptoe sealers tossed to fly:-  
Thee the last thunder's caverned peal  
Delivered from a wailful night:  
All dusky round thy cradled light,  
Those brine-born issues, now in bloom  
Transfigured, wreathed as raven's plume  
And briony-leaf to watch thee lie:  
Dark eyebrows o'er a dreamful eye  
Nigh opening: till in the braid  
Of purpled vapours thou wert rosed:  
Till that new babe a Goddess maid  
Appeared and vividly disclosed  
Her beat of life: then crimson played  
On edges of the plume and leaf:  
Shape had they and fair feature brief,  
The wings, the smiles: they flew the breast,  
Earth's milk. But what imperial march  
Their standards led for earth, none guessed  
Ere upward of a coloured arch,  
An arrow straining eager head  
Lightened, and high for zenith sped.  
Fierier followed; followed Fire.  
Name the young lord of Earth's desire,  
Whose look her wine is, and whose mouth  
Her music! Beauteous was she seen  
Beneath her midway West of South;  
And sister was her quivered green  
To sapphire of the Nereid eyes  
On sea when sun is breeze; she winked  
As they, and waved, heaved waterwise

Her flood of leaves and grasses linked:  
A myriad lustrous butterflies  
A moment in the fluttering sheen;  
Becapped with the slate air that throws  
The reindeer's antlers black between  
Low-frowning and wide-fallen snows,  
A minute after; hooded, stoled  
To suit a graveside Season's dirge.  
Lo, but the breaking of a surge,  
And she is in her lover's fold,  
Illumined o'er a boundless range  
Anew: and through quick morning hours  
The Tropic-Arctic countercharge  
Did seem to pant in beams and showers.

But noon beheld a larger heaven;  
Beheld on our reflecting field  
The Sower to the Bearer given,  
And both their inner sweetest yield,  
Fresh as when dews were grey or first  
Received the flush of hues athirst.  
Heard we the woodland, eyeing sun,  
As harp and harper were they one.  
A murky cloud a fair pursued,  
Assailed, and felt the limbs elude:  
He sat him down to pipe his woe,  
And some strange beast of sky became:  
A giant's club withheld the blow;  
A milky cloud went all to flame.  
And there were groups where silvery springs  
The ethereal forest showed begirt  
By companies in choric rings,  
Whom but to see made ear alert.  
For music did each movement rouse,  
And motion was a minstrel's rage  
To have our spirits out of house,  
And bathe them on the open page.  
This was a day that knew not age.  
Since flew the vapoury twos and threes  
From western pile to eastern rack;  
As on from peaks of Pyrenees  
To Graians; youngness ruled the track.

When songful beams were shut in caves,  
And rainy drapery swept across;  
When the ranked clouds were downy waves,  
Breast of swan, eagle, albatross,  
In ordered lines to screen the blue,  
Youngest of light was nigh, we knew.  
The silver finger of it laughed  
Along the narrow rift: it shot,  
Slew the huge gloom with golden shaft,  
Then haled on high the volumed blot,  
To build the hurling palace, cleave  
The dazzling chasm; the flying nests,  
The many glory-garlands weave,  
Whose presence not our sight attests  
Till wonder with the splendour blent,  
And passion for the beauty flown,  
Make evanescence permanent,  
The thing at heart our endless own.

Only at gathered eve knew we  
The marvels of the day: for then  
Mount upon mountain out of sea  
Arose, and to our spacious ken  
Trebled sublime Olympus round  
In towering amphitheatre.  
Colossal on enormous mound,  
Majestic gods we saw confer.  
They wafted the Dream-messenger  
From off the loftiest, the crowned:  
That Lady of the hues of foam  
In sun-rays: who, close under dome,  
A figure on the foot's descent,  
Irradiate to vapour went,  
As one whose mission was resigned,  
Dispieced, undraped, dissolved to threads;  
Melting she passed into the mind,  
Where immortal with mortal weds.

Whereby was known that we had viewed  
The union of our earth and skies  
Renewed: nor less alive renewed  
Than when old bards, in nature wise,

Conceived pure beauty given to eyes,  
And with undyingness imbued.  
Pageant of man's poetic brain,  
His grand procession of the song,  
It was; the Muses and their train;  
Their God to lead the glittering throng:  
At whiles a beat of forest gong;  
At whiles a glimpse of Python slain.  
Mostly divinest harmony,  
The lyre, the dance. We could believe  
A life in orb and brook and tree,  
And cloud; and still holds Memory  
A morning in the eyes of eve.

George Meredith

# The Spirit Of Shakespeare

Thy greatest knew thee, Mother Earth; unsoured  
He knew thy sons. He probed from hell to hell  
Of human passions, but of love deflowered  
His wisdom was not, for he knew thee well.  
Thence came the honeyed corner at his lips,  
The conquering smile wherein his spirit sails  
Calm as the God who the white sea-wave whips,  
Yet full of speech and intershifting tales,  
Close mirrors of us: thence had he the laugh  
We feel is thine: broad as ten thousand beeves  
At pasture! thence thy songs, that winnow chaff  
From grain, bid sick Philosophy's last leaves  
Whirl, if they have no response-they enforced  
To fatten Earth when from her soul divorced.

George Meredith

# The Star Sirius

Bright Sirius! that when Orion pales  
To dotlings under moonlight still art keen  
With cheerful fervour of a warrior's mien  
Who holds in his great heart the battle-scales:  
Unquenched of flame though swift the flood assails,  
Reducing many lustrous to the lean:  
Be thou my star, and thou in me be seen  
To show what source divine is, and prevails.  
Long watches through, at one with godly night,  
I mark thee planting joy in constant fire;  
And thy quick beams, whose jets of life inspire  
Life to the spirit, passion for the light,  
Dark Earth since first she lost her lord from sight  
Has viewed and felt them sweep her as a lyre.

George Meredith

# The State Of Age

Rub thou thy battered lamp: nor claim nor beg  
Honours from aught about thee. Light the young.  
Thy frame is as a dusty mantle hung,  
O grey one! pendant on a loosened peg.  
Thou art for this our life an ancient egg,  
Or a tough bird: thou hast a rudderless tongue,  
Turning dead trifles, like the cock of dung,  
Which runs, Time's contrast to thy halting leg.  
Nature, it is most sure, not thee admires.  
But hast thou in thy season set her fires  
To burn from Self to Spirit through the lash,  
Honoured the sons of Earth shall hold thee high:  
Yea, to spread light when thy proud letter I  
Drops prone and void as any thoughtless dash.

George Meredith

# The Sweet O' The Year

Now the frog, all lean and weak,  
Yawning from his famished sleep,  
Water in the ditch doth seek,  
Fast as he can stretch and leap:  
Marshy king-cups burning near  
Tell him 'tis the sweet o' the year.

Now the ant works up his mound  
In the mouldered piny soil,  
And above the busy ground  
Takes the joy of earnest toil:  
Dropping pine-cones, dry and sere,  
Warn him 'tis the sweet o' the year.

Now the chrysalis on the wall  
Cracks, and out the creature springs,  
Raptures in his body small,  
Wonders on his dusty wings:  
Bells and cups, all shining clear,  
Show him 'tis the sweet o' the year.

Now the brown bee, wild and wise,  
Hums abroad, and roves and roams,  
Storing in his wealthy thighs  
Treasure for the golden combs:  
Dewy buds and blossoms dear  
Whisper 'tis the sweet o' the year.

Now the merry maids so fair  
Weave the wreaths and choose the queen,  
Blooming in the open air,  
Like fresh flowers upon the green;  
Spring, in every thought sincere,  
Thrills them with the sweet o' the year.

Now the lads, all quick and gay,  
Whistle to the browsing herds,  
Or in the twilight pastures grey  
Learn the use of whispered words:



First a blush, and then a tear,  
And then a smile, i' the sweet o' the year.

Now the May-fly and the fish  
Play again from noon to night;  
Every breeze begets a wish,  
Every motion means delight:  
Heaven high over heath and mere  
Crowns with blue the sweet o' the year.

Now all Nature is alive,  
Bird and beetle, man and mole;  
Bee-like goes the human hive,  
Lark-like sings the soaring soul:  
Hearty faith and honest cheer  
Welcome in the sweet o' the year.

George Meredith

# The Teaching Of The Nude

## I

A satyr spied a Goddess in her bath,  
Unseen of her attendant nymphs; none knew.  
Forthwith the creature to his fellows drew,  
And looking backward on the curtained path,  
He strove to tell; he could but heave a breast  
Too full, and point to mouth, with failing leers:  
Vainly he danced for speech, he giggled tears,  
Made as if torn in two, as if tight pressed,  
As if cast prone; then fetching whimpered tunes  
For words, flung heel and set his hairy flight  
Through forest-hollows, over rocky height.  
The green leaves buried him three rounds of moons.  
A senatorial Satyr named what herb  
Had hurried him outrunning reason's curb.

## II

'Tis told how when that hieaway unchecked  
To dell returned, he seemed of tempered mood:  
Even as the valley of the torrent rude,  
The torrent now a brook, the valley wrecked.  
In him, to hale him high or hurl ahead,  
Goddess and Goatfoot hourly wrestled sore;  
Hourly the immortal prevailing more:  
Till one hot noon saw Meliboeus peep  
From thicket-sprays to where his full-blown dame,  
In circle by the lusty friskers gripped,  
Laughed the showered rose-leaves while her limbs were stripped.  
She beckoned to our Satyr, and he came.  
Then twirled she mounds of ripeness, wreath of arms.  
His hoof kicked up the clothing for such charms.

George Meredith

# The Three Maidens

There were three maidens met on the highway;  
The sun was down, the night was late:  
And two sang loud with the birds of May,  
O the nightingale is merry with its mate.

Said they to the youngest, Why walk you there so still?  
The land is dark, the night is late:  
O, but the heart in my side is ill,  
And the nightingale will languish for its mate.

Said they to the youngest, Of lovers there is store;  
The moon mounts up, the night is late:  
O, I shall look on man no more,  
And the nightingale is dumb without its mate.

Said they to the youngest, Uncross your arms and sing;  
The moon mounts high, the night is late:  
O my dear lover can hear no thing,  
And the nightingale sings only to its mate.

They slew him in revenge, and his true-love was his lure;  
The moon is pale, the night is late:  
His grave is shallow on the moor;  
O the nightingale is dying for its mate.

His blood is on his breast, and the moss-roots at his hair;  
The moon is chill, the night is late:  
But I will lie beside him there:  
O the nightingale is dying for its mate.

George Meredith

# The Three Singers To Young Blood

Carols nature, counsel men.  
Different notes as rook from wren  
Hear we when our steps begin,  
And the choice is cast within,  
Where a robber raven's tale  
Urges passion's nightingale.

Hark to the three. Chimed they in one,  
Life were music of the sun.  
Liquid first, and then the caw,  
Then the cry that knows not law.

I

As the birds do, so do we,  
Bill our mate, and choose our tree.  
Swift to building work addressed,  
Any straw will help a nest.  
Mates are warm, and this is truth,  
Glad the young that come of youth.  
They have bloom i' the blood and sap  
Chilling at no thunder-clap.  
Man and woman on the thorn  
Trust not Earth, and have her scorn.  
They who in her lead confide,  
Wither me if they spread not wide!  
Look for aid to little things,  
You will get them quick as wings,  
Thick as feathers; would you feed,  
Take the leap that springs the need.

II

Contemplate the rutted road:  
Life is both a lure and goad.  
Each to hold in measure just,  
Trample appetite to dust.  
Mark the fool and wanton spin:  
Keep to harness as a skin.

Ere you follow nature's lead,  
Of her powers in you have heed;  
Else a shiverer you will find  
You have challenged humankind.  
Mates are chosen marketwise:  
Coolest bargainer best buys.  
Leap not, nor let leap the heart:  
Trot your track, and drag your cart.  
So your end may be in wool,  
Honoured, and with manger full.

### III

O the rosy light! it fleets,  
Dearer dying than all sweets.  
That is life: it waves and goes;  
Solely in that cherished Rose  
Palpitates, or else 'tis death.  
Call it love with all thy breath.  
Love! it lingers: Love! it nears:  
Love! O Love! the Rose appears,  
Blushful, magic, reddening air.  
Now the choice is on thee: dare!  
Mortal seems the touch, but makes  
Immortal the hand that takes.  
Feel what sea within thee shames  
Of its force all other claims,  
Drowns them. Clasp! the world will be  
Heavenly Rose to swelling sea.

George Meredith

# The Thrush In February

I know him, February's thrush,  
And loud at eve he valentines  
On sprays that paw the naked bush  
Where soon will sprout the thorns and bines.

Now ere the foreign singer thrills  
Our vale his plain-song pipe he pours,  
A herald of the million bills;  
And heed him not, the loss is yours.

My study, flanked with ivied fir  
And budded beech with dry leaves curled,  
Perched over yew and juniper,  
He neighbours, piping to his world:-

The wooded pathways dank on brown,  
The branches on grey cloud a web,  
The long green roller of the down,  
An image of the deluge-ebb:-

And farther, they may hear along  
The stream beneath the poplar row.  
By fits, like welling rocks, the song  
Spouts of a blushful Spring in flow.

But most he loves to front the vale  
When waves of warm South-western rains  
Have left our heavens clear in pale,  
With faintest beck of moist red veins:

Vermilion wings, by distance held  
To pause aflight while fleeting swift:  
And high aloft the pearl inshelled  
Her lucid glow in glow will lift;

A little south of coloured sky;  
Directing, gravely amorous,  
The human of a tender eye  
Through pure celestial on us:

Remote, not alien; still, not cold;  
Unraying yet, more pearl than star;  
She seems a while the vale to hold  
In trance, and homelier makes the far.

Then Earth her sweet unscented breathes,  
An orb of lustre quits the height;  
And like blue iris-flags, in wreaths  
The sky takes darkness, long ere quite.

His Island voice then shall you hear,  
Nor ever after separate  
From such a twilight of the year  
Advancing to the vernal gate.

He sings me, out of Winter's throat,  
The young time with the life ahead;  
And my young time his leaping note  
Recalls to spirit-mirth from dead.

Imbedded in a land of greed,  
Of mammon-quakings dire as Earth's,  
My care was but to soothe my need;  
At peace among the littleworths.

To light and song my yearning aimed;  
To that deep breast of song and light  
Which men have barrenest proclaimed;  
As 'tis to senses pricked with fright.

So mine are these new fruitings rich  
The simple to the common brings;  
I keep the youth of souls who pitch  
Their joy in this old heart of things:

Who feel the Coming young as aye,  
Thrice hopeful on the ground we plough;  
Alive for life, awake to die;  
One voice to cheer the seedling Now.

Full lasting is the song, though he,

The singer, passes: lasting too,  
For souls not lent in usury,  
The rapture of the forward view.

With that I bear my senses fraught  
Till what I am fast shoreward drives.  
They are the vessel of the Thought.  
The vessel splits, the Thought survives.

Nought else are we when sailing brave,  
Save husks to raise and bid it burn.  
Glimpse of its livingness will wave  
A light the senses can discern

Across the river of the death,  
Their close. Meanwhile, O twilight bird  
Of promise! bird of happy breath!  
I hear, I would the City heard.

The City of the smoky fray;  
A prodded ox, it drags and moans:  
Its Morrow no man's child; its Day  
A vulture's morsel beaked to bones.

It strives without a mark for strife;  
It feasts beside a famished host:  
The loose restraint of wanton life,  
That threatened penance in the ghost!

Yet there our battle urges; there  
Spring heroes many: issuing thence,  
Names that should leave no vacant air  
For fresh delight in confidence.

Life was to them the bag of grain,  
And Death the weedy harrow's tooth.  
Those warriors of the sighting brain  
Give worn Humanity new youth.

Our song and star are they to lead  
The tidal multitude and blind  
From bestial to the higher breed



By fighting souls of love divined,

They scorned the ventral dream of peace,  
Unknown in nature. This they knew:  
That life begets with fair increase  
Beyond the flesh, if life be true.

Just reason based on valiant blood,  
The instinct bred afield would match  
To pipe thereof a swelling flood,  
Were men of Earth made wise in watch.

Though now the numbers count as drops  
An urn might bear, they father Time.  
She shapes anew her dusty crops;  
Her quick in their own likeness climb.

Of their own force do they create;  
They climb to light, in her their root.  
Your brutish cry at muffled fate  
She smites with pangs of worse than brute.

She, judged of shrinking nerves, appears  
A Mother whom no cry can melt;  
But read her past desires and fears,  
The letters on her breast are spelt.

A slayer, yea, as when she pressed  
Her savage to the slaughter-heaps,  
To sacrifice she prompts her best:  
She reaps them as the sower reaps.

But read her thought to speed the race,  
And stars rush forth of blackest night:  
You chill not at a cold embrace  
To come, nor dread a dubious might.

Her double visage, double voice,  
In oneness rise to quench the doubt.  
This breath, her gift, has only choice  
Of service, breathe we in or out.

Since Pain and Pleasure on each hand  
Led our wild steps from slimy rock  
To yonder sweeps of gardenland,  
We breathe but to be sword or block.

The sighting brain her good decree  
Accepts; obeys those guides, in faith,  
By reason hourly fed, that she,  
To some the clod, to some the wraith,

Is more, no mask; a flame, a stream.  
Flame, stream, are we, in mid career  
From torrent source, delirious dream,  
To heaven-reflecting currents clear.

And why the sons of Strength have been  
Her cherished offspring ever; how  
The Spirit served by her is seen  
Through Law; perusing love will show.

Love born of knowledge, love that gains  
Vitality as Earth it mates,  
The meaning of the Pleasures, Pains,  
The Life, the Death, illuminates.

For love we Earth, then serve we all;  
Her mystic secret then is ours:  
We fall, or view our treasures fall,  
Unclouded, as beholds her flowers

Earth, from a night of frosty wreck,  
Enrobed in morning's mounted fire,  
When lowly, with a broken neck,  
The crocus lays her cheek to mire.

George Meredith

# The Two Blackbirds

A blackbird in a wicker cage,  
That hung and swung 'mid fruits and flowers,  
Had learnt the song-charm, to assuage  
The dreariness of its wingless hours.

And ever when the song was heard,  
From trees that shade the grassy plot  
Warbled another glossy bird,  
Whose mate not long ago was shot.

Strange anguish in that creature's breast,  
Unwept like human grief, unsaid,  
Has quickened in its lonely nest  
A living impulse from the dead.

Not to console its own wild smart, -  
But with a kindling instinct strong,  
The novel feeling of its heart  
Beats for the captive bird of song.

And when those mellow notes are still,  
It hops from off its choral perch,  
O'er path and sward, with busy bill,  
All grateful gifts to peck and search.

Store of ouzel dainties choice  
To those white swinging bars it brings;  
And with a low consoling voice  
It talks between its fluttering wings.

Deeply in their bitter grief  
Those sufferers reciprocate,  
The one sings for its woodland life,  
The other for its murdered mate.

But deeper doth the secret prove,  
Uniting those sad creatures so;  
Humanity's great link of love,  
The common sympathy of woe.

Well divined from day to day  
Is the swift speech between them twain;  
For when the bird is scared away,  
The captive bursts to song again.

Yet daily with its flattering voice,  
Talking amid its fluttering wings,  
Store of ouzel dainties choice  
With busy bill the poor bird brings.

And shall I say, till weak with age  
Down from its drowsy branch it drops,  
It will not leave that captive cage,  
Nor cease those busy searching hops?

Ah, no! the moral will not strain;  
Another sense will make it range,  
Another mate will soothe its pain,  
Another season work a change.

But thro' the live-long summer, tried,  
A pure devotion we may see;  
The ebb and flow of Nature's tide;  
A self-forgetful sympathy.

George Meredith

# The Two Masks

Melpomene among her livid people,  
Ere stroke of lyre, upon Thaleia looks,  
Warned by old contests that one museful ripple  
Along those lips of rose with tendril hooks  
Forebodes disturbance in the springs of pathos,  
Perchance may change of masks midway demand,  
Albeit the man rise mountainous as Athos,  
The woman wild as Cape Leucadia stand.

## II

For this the Comic Muse exacts of creatures  
Appealing to the fount of tears: that they  
Strive never to outleap our human features,  
And do Right Reason's ordinance obey,  
In peril of the hum to laughter nighest.  
But prove they under stress of action's fire  
Nobleness, to that test of Reason highest,  
She bows: she waves them for the loftier lyre.

George Meredith

# The Voyage Of The 'Ophir'

Men of our race, we send you one  
Round whom Victoria's holy name  
Is halo from the sunken sun  
Of her grand Summer's day aflame.  
The heart of your loved Motherland,  
To them she loves as her own blood,  
This Flower of Ocean bears in hand,  
Assured of gift as good.

Forth for our Southern shores the fleet  
Which crowns a nation's wisdom steams,  
That there may Briton Briton greet,  
And stamp as fact Imperial dreams.  
Across the globe, from sea to sea,  
The long smoke-pennon trails above,  
Writes over sky how wise will be  
The Power that trusts to love.

A love that springs from heart and brain  
In union gives for ripest fruit  
The concord Kings and States in vain  
Have sought, who played the lofty brute,  
And fondly deeming they possessed,  
On force relied, and found it break:  
That truth once scored on Britain's breast  
Now keeps her mind awake.

Australian, Canadian,  
To tone old veins with streams of youth,  
Our trust be on the best in man  
Henceforth, and we shall prove that truth.  
Prove to a world of brows down-bent  
That in the Britain thus endowed,  
Imperial means beneficent,  
And strength to service vowed.

George Meredith

# The Warning

We have seen mighty men ballooning high,  
And in another moment bump the ground.  
He falls; and in his measurement is found  
To count some inches o'er the common fry.  
'Twas not enough to send him climbing sky,  
Yet 'twas enough above his fellows crowned,  
Had he less panted. Let his faithful hound  
Bark at detractors. He may walk or lie.  
Concerns it most ourselves, who with our gas -  
This little Isle's insatiable greed  
For Continents--filled to inflation burst.  
So do ripe nations into squalor pass,  
When, driven as herds by their old private thirst,  
They scorn the brain's wild search for virtuous light.

George Meredith

# The Wild Rose

High climbs June's wild rose,  
Her bush all blooms in a swarm;  
And swift from the bud she blows,  
In a day when the wooer is warm;  
Frank to receive and give,  
Her bosom is open to bee and sun:  
Pride she has none,  
Nor shame she knows;  
Happy to live.

Unlike those of the garden nigh,  
Her queenly sisters enthroned by art;  
Loosening petals one by one  
To the fiery Passion's dart  
Superbly shy.  
For them in some glory of hair,  
Or nest of the heaving mounds to lie,  
Or path of the bride bestrew.  
Ever are they the theme for song.  
But nought of that is her share.  
Hardly from wayfarers tramping along,  
A glance they care not to renew.

And she at a word of the claims of kin  
Shrinks to the level of roads and meads:  
She is only a plain princess of the weeds,  
As an outcast witless of sin:  
Much disregarded, save by the few  
Who love her, that has not a spot of deceit,  
No promise of sweet beyond sweet,  
Often descending to sour.  
On any fair breast she would die in an hour.  
Praises she scarce could bear,  
Were any wild poet to praise.  
Her aim is to rise into light and air.  
One of the darlings of Earth, no more,  
And little it seems in the dusty ways,  
Unless to the grasses nodding beneath;  
The bird clapping wings to soar,



The clouds of an evetide's wreath.

George Meredith

# The Wild Rose And The Snowdrop

The Snowdrop is the prophet of the flowers;  
It lives and dies upon its bed of snows;  
And like a thought of spring it comes and goes,  
Hanging its head beside our leafless bowers.  
The sun's betrothing kiss it never knows,  
Nor all the glowing joy of golden showers;  
But ever in a placid, pure repose,  
More like a spirit with its look serene,  
Droops its pale cheek veined thro' with infant green.

Queen of her sisters is the sweet Wild Rose,  
Sprung from the earnest sun and ripe young June;  
The year's own darling and the Summer's Queen!  
Lustrous as the new-throned crescent moon.  
Much of that early prophet look she shows,  
Mixed with her fair espoused blush which glows,  
As if the ethereal fairy blood were seen;  
Like a soft evening over sunset snows,  
Half twilight violet shade, half crimson sheen.

Twin-born are both in beauteousness, most fair  
In all that glads the eye and charms the air;  
In all that wakes emotions in the mind  
And sows sweet sympathies for human kind.  
Twin-born, albeit their seasons are apart,  
They bloom together in the thoughtful heart;  
Fair symbols of the marvels of our state,  
Mute speakers of the oracles of fate!

For each, fulfilling nature's law, fulfils  
Itself and its own aspirations pure;  
Living and dying; letting faith ensure  
New life when deathless Spring shall touch the hills.  
Each perfect in its place; and each content  
With that perfection which its being meant:  
Divided not by months that intervene,  
But linked by all the flowers that bud between.  
Forever smiling thro' its season brief,  
The one in glory and the one in grief:

Forever painting to our museful sight,  
How lowlihead and loveliness unite.

Born from the first blind yearning of the earth  
To be a mother and give happy birth,  
Ere yet the northern sun such rapture brings,  
Lo, from her virgin breast the Snowdrop springs;  
And ere the snows have melted from the grass,  
And not a strip of greensward doth appear,  
Save the faint prophecy its cheeks declare,  
Alone, unkissed, unloved, behold it pass!  
While in the ripe enthronement of the year,  
Whispering the breeze, and wedding the rich air  
With her so sweet, delicious bridal breath, -  
Odorous and exquisite beyond compare,  
And starr'd with dews upon her forehead clear,  
Fresh-hearted as a Maiden Queen should be  
Who takes the land's devotion as her fee, -  
The Wild Rose blooms, all summer for her dower,  
Nature's most beautiful and perfect flower.

George Meredith

# The Wisdom Of Eld

We spend our lives in learning pilotage,  
And grow good steersmen when the vessel's crank!  
Gap-toothed he spake, and with a tottering shank  
Sidled to gain the sunny bench of Age.  
It is the sentence which completes that stage;  
A testament of wisdom reading blank.  
The seniors of the race, on their last plank,  
Pass mumbling it as nature's final page.  
These, bent by such experience, are the band  
Who captain young enthusiasts to maintain  
What things we view, and Earth's decree withstand,  
Lest dreaded Change, long dammed by dull decay,  
Should bring the world a vessel steered by brain,  
And ancients musical at close of day.

George Meredith

# The Woods Of Westermain

## I

Enter these enchanted woods,  
You who dare.  
Nothing harms beneath the leaves  
More than waves a swimmer cleaves.  
Toss your heart up with the lark,  
Foot at peace with mouse and worm,  
Fair you fare.  
Only at a dread of dark  
Quaver, and they quit their form:  
Thousand eyeballs under hoods  
Have you by the hair.  
Enter these enchanted woods,  
You who dare.

## II

Here the snake across your path  
Stretches in his golden bath:  
Mossy-footed squirrels leap  
Soft as winnowing plumes of Sleep:  
Yaffles on a chuckle skim  
Low to laugh from branches dim:  
Up the pine, where sits the star,  
Rattles deep the moth-winged jar.  
Each has business of his own;  
But should you distrust a tone,  
Then beware.  
Shudder all the haunted roods,  
All the eyeballs under hoods  
Shroud you in their glare.  
Enter these enchanted woods,  
You who dare.

## III

Open hither, open hence,  
Scarce a bramble weaves a fence,

Where the strawberry runs red,  
With white star-flower overhead;  
Cumbered by dry twig and cone,  
Shredded husks of seedlings flown,  
Mine of mole and spotted flint:  
Of dire wizardry no hint,  
Save mayhap the print that shows  
Hasty outward-tripping toes,  
Heels to terror on the mould.  
These, the woods of Westermain,  
Are as others to behold,  
Rich of wreathing sun and rain;  
Foliage lustreful around  
Shadowed leagues of slumbering sound.  
Wavy tree-tops, yellow whins,  
Shelter eager minikins,  
Myriads, free to peck and pipe:  
Would you better? would you worse?  
You with them may gather ripe  
Pleasures flowing not from purse.  
Quick and far as Colour flies  
Taking the delighted eyes,  
You of any well that springs  
May unfold the heaven of things;  
Have it homely and within,  
And thereof its likeness win,  
Will you so in soul's desire:  
This do sages grant t' the lyre.  
This is being bird and more,  
More than glad musician this;  
Granaries you will have a store  
Past the world of woe and bliss;  
Sharing still its bliss and woe;  
Harnessed to its hungers, no.  
On the throne Success usurps,  
You shall seat the joy you feel  
Where a race of water chirps,  
Twisting hues of flourished steel:  
Or where light is caught in hoop  
Up a clearing's leafy rise,  
Where the crossing deerherds troop  
Classic splendours, knightly dyes.

Or, where old-eyed oxen chew  
Speculation with the cud,  
Read their pool of vision through,  
Back to hours when mind was mud;  
Nigh the knot, which did untwine  
Timelessly to drowsy suns;  
Seeing Earth a slimy spine,  
Heaven a space for winging tons.  
Farther, deeper, may you read,  
Have you sight for things afield,  
Where peeps she, the Nurse of seed,  
Cloaked, but in the peep revealed;  
Showing a kind face and sweet:  
Look you with the soul you see't.  
Glory narrowing to grace,  
Grace to glory magnified,  
Following that will you embrace  
Close in arms or aery wide.  
Banished is the white Foam-born  
Not from here, nor under ban  
Phoebus lyrist, Phoebe's horn,  
Pipings of the reedy Pan.  
Loved of Earth of old they were,  
Loving did interpret her;  
And the sterner worship bars  
None whom Song has made her stars.  
You have seen the huntress moon  
Radiantly facing dawn,  
Dusky meads between them strewn  
Glimmering like downy awn:  
Argent Westward glows the hunt,  
East the blush about to climb;  
One another fair they front,  
Transient, yet outshine the time;  
Even as dewlight off the rose  
In the mind a jewel sows.  
Thus opposing grandeurs live  
Here if Beauty be their dower:  
Doth she of her spirit give,  
Fleetingness will spare her flower.  
This is in the tune we play,  
Which no spring of strength would quell;

In subduing does not slay;  
Guides the channel, guards the well:  
Tempered holds the young blood-heat,  
Yet through measured grave accord,  
Hears the heart of wildness beat  
Like a centaur's hoof on sward.  
Drink the sense the notes infuse,  
You a larger self will find:  
Sweetest fellowship ensues  
With the creatures of your kind.  
Ay, and Love, if Love it be  
Flaming over I and ME,  
Love meet they who do not shove  
Cravings in the van of Love.  
Courtly dames are here to woo,  
Knowing love if it be true.  
Reverence the blossom-shoot  
Fervently, they are the fruit.  
Mark them stepping, hear them talk,  
Goddess, is no myth inane,  
You will say of those who walk  
In the woods of Westermain.  
Waters that from throat and thigh  
Dart the sun his arrows back;  
Leaves that on a woodland sigh  
Chat of secret things no lack;  
Shadowy branch-leaves, waters clear,  
Bare or veiled they move sincere;  
Not by slavish terrors tripped  
Being anew in nature dipped,  
Growths of what they step on, these;  
With the roots the grace of trees.  
Casket-breasts they give, nor hide,  
For a tyrant's flattered pride,  
Mind, which nourished not by light,  
Lurks the shuffling trickster sprite:  
Whereof are strange tales to tell;  
Some in blood writ, tombed in bell.  
Here the ancient battle ends,  
Joining two astonished friends,  
Who the kiss can give and take  
With more warmth than in that world



Where the tiger claws the snake,  
Snake her tiger clasps infurled,  
And the issue of their fight  
People lands in snarling plight.  
Here her splendid beast she leads  
Silken-leashed and decked with weeds  
Wild as he, but breathing faint  
Sweetness of unfelt constraint.  
Love, the great volcano, flings  
Fires of lower Earth to sky;  
Love, the sole permitted, sings  
Sovereignly of ME and I.  
Bowers he has of sacred shade,  
Spaces of superb parade,  
Voiceful . . . But bring you a note  
Wrangling, howsoe'er remote,  
Discords out of discord spin  
Round and round derisive din:  
Sudden will a pallor pant  
Chill at screeches miscreant;  
Owls or spectres, thick they flee;  
Nightmare upon horror broods;  
Hooded laughter, monkish glee,  
Gaps the vital air.  
Enter these enchanted woods  
You who dare.

#### IV

You must love the light so well  
That no darkness will seem fell.  
Love it so you could accost  
Fellowly a livid ghost.  
Whish! the phantom wisps away,  
Owns him smoke to cocks of day.  
In your breast the light must burn  
Fed of you, like corn in quern  
Ever plumping while the wheel  
Speeds the mill and drains the meal.  
Light to light sees little strange,  
Only features heavenly new;  
Then you touch the nerve of Change,

Then of Earth you have the clue;  
Then her two-sexed meanings melt  
Through you, wed the thought and felt.  
Sameness locks no scurfy pond  
Here for Custom, crazy-fond:  
Change is on the wing to bud  
Rose in brain from rose in blood.  
Wisdom throbbing shall you see  
Central in complexity;  
From her pasture 'mid the beasts  
Rise to her ethereal feasts,  
Not, though lightnings track your wit  
Starward, scorning them you quit:  
For be sure the bravest wing  
Preens it in our common spring,  
Thence along the vault to soar,  
You with others, gathering more,  
Glad of more, till you reject  
Your proud title of elect,  
Perilous even here while few  
Roam the arched greenwood with you.  
Heed that snare.  
Muffled by his cavern-cowl  
Squats the scaly Dragon-fowl,  
Who was lord ere light you drank,  
And lest blood of knightly rank  
Stream, let not your fair princess  
Stray: he holds the leagues in stress,  
Watches keenly there.  
Oft has he been riven; slain  
Is no force in Westermain.  
Wait, and we shall forge him curbs,  
Put his fangs to uses, tame,  
Teach him, quick as cunning herbs,  
How to cure him sick and lame.  
Much restricted, much enringed,  
Much he frets, the hooked and winged,  
Never known to spare.  
'Tis enough: the name of Sage  
Hits no thing in nature, nought;  
Man the least, save when grave Age  
From yon Dragon guards his thought.

Eye him when you hearken dumb  
To what words from Wisdom come.  
When she says how few are by  
Listening to her, eye his eye.  
Self, his name declare.  
Him shall Change, transforming late,  
Wonderously renovate.  
Hug himself the creature may:  
What he hugs is loathed decay.  
Crying, slip thy scales, and slough!  
Change will strip his armour off;  
Make of him who was all maw,  
Inly only thrilling-shrewd,  
Such a servant as none saw  
Through his days of dragonhood.  
Days when growling o'er his bone,  
Sharpened he for mine and thine;  
Sensitive within alone;  
Scaly as the bark of pine.  
Change, the strongest son of Life,  
Has the Spirit here to wife.  
Lo, their young of vivid breed,  
Bear the lights that onward speed,  
Threading thickets, mounting glades,  
Up the verdurous colonnades,  
Round the fluttered curves, and down,  
Out of sight of Earth's blue crown,  
Whither, in her central space,  
Spouts the Fount and Lure o' the chase.  
Fount unresting, Lure divine!  
There meet all: too late look most.  
Fire in water hued as wine,  
Springs amid a shadowy host,  
Circled: one close-headed mob,  
Breathless, scanning divers heaps,  
Where a Heart begins to throb,  
Where it ceases, slow, with leaps.  
And 'tis very strange, 'tis said,  
How you spy in each of them  
Semblance of that Dragon red,  
As the oak in bracken-stem.  
And, 'tis said, how each and each:

Which commences, which subsides:  
First my Dragon! doth beseech  
Her who food for all provides.  
And she answers with no sign;  
Utters neither yea nor nay;  
Fires the water hued as wine;  
Kneads another spark in clay.  
Terror is about her hid;  
Silence of the thunders locked;  
Lightnings lining the shut lid;  
Fixity on quaking rocked.  
Lo, you look at Flow and Drought  
Interflashed and interwrought:  
Ended is begun, begun  
Ended, quick as torrents run.  
Young Impulsion spouts to sink;  
Luridness and lustre link;  
'Tis your come and go of breath;  
Mirrored pants the Life, the Death;  
Each of either reaped and sown:  
Rosiest rosy wanes to crone.  
See you so? your senses drift;  
'Tis a shuttle weaving swift.  
Look with spirit past the sense,  
Spirit shines in permanence.  
That is She, the view of whom  
Is the dust within the tomb,  
Is the inner blush above,  
Look to loathe, or look to love;  
Think her Lump, or know her Flame;  
Dread her scourge, or read her aim;  
Shoot your hungers from their nerve;  
Or, in her example, serve.  
Some have found her sitting grave;  
Laughing, some; or, browed with sweat,  
Hurling dust of fool and knave  
In a hissing smithy's jet.  
More it were not well to speak;  
Burn to see, you need but seek.  
Once beheld she gives the key  
Airing every doorway, she.  
Little can you stop or steer

Ere of her you are the seer.  
On the surface she will witch,  
Rendering Beauty yours, but gaze  
Under, and the soul is rich  
Past computing, past amaze.  
Then is courage that endures  
Even her awful tremble yours.  
Then, the reflex of that Fount  
Spied below, will Reason mount  
Lordly and a quenchless force,  
Lighting Pain to its mad source,  
Scaring Fear till Fear escapes,  
Shot through all its phantom shapes.  
Then your spirit will perceive  
Fleshly seed of fleshly sins;  
Where the passions interweave,  
How the serpent tangle spins  
Of the sense of Earth misprised,  
Brainlessly unrecognized;  
She being Spirit in her clods,  
Footway to the God of Gods.  
Then for you are pleasures pure,  
Sureties as the stars are sure:  
Not the wanton beckoning flags  
Which, of flattery and delight,  
Wax to the grim Habit-Hags  
Riding souls of men to night:  
Pleasures that through blood run sane,  
Quickening spirit from the brain.  
Each of each in sequent birth,  
Blood and brain and spirit, three,  
(Say the deepest gnomes of Earth),  
Join for true felicity.  
Are they parted, then expect  
Some one sailing will be wrecked:  
Separate hunting are they sped,  
Scan the morsel coveted.  
Earth that Triad is: she hides  
Joy from him who that divides;  
Showers it when the three are one  
Glassing her in union.  
Earth your haven, Earth your helm,

You command a double realm;  
Labouring here to pay your debt,  
Till your little sun shall set;  
Leaving her the future task:  
Loving her too well to ask.  
Eglantine that climbs the yew,  
She her darkest wreathes for those  
Knowing her the Ever-new,  
And themselves the kin o' the rose.  
Life, the chisel, axe and sword,  
Wield who have her depths explored:  
Life, the dream, shall be their robe  
Large as air about the globe;  
Life, the question, hear its cry  
Echoed with concordant Why;  
Life, the small self-dragon ramped,  
Thrill for service to be stamped.  
Ay, and over every height  
Life for them shall wave a wand:  
That, the last, where sits affright,  
Homely shows the stream beyond.  
Love the light and be its lynx,  
You will track her and attain;  
Read her as no cruel Sphinx  
In the woods of Westermain,  
Daily fresh the woods are ranged;  
Glooms which elsewhere appal,  
Sounded: here, their worths exchanged  
Urban joins with pastoral:  
Little lost, save what may drop  
Husk-like, and the mind preserves.  
Natural overgrowths they lop,  
Yet from nature neither swerves,  
Trained or savage: for this cause:  
Of our Earth they ply the laws,  
Have in Earth their feeding root,  
Mind of man and bent of brute.  
Hear that song; both wild and ruled.  
Hear it: is it wail or mirth?  
Ordered, bubbled, quite unschooled?  
None, and all: it springs of Earth.  
O but hear it! 'tis the mind;

Mind that with deep Earth unites,  
Round the solid trunk to wind  
Rings of clasping parasites.  
Music have you there to feed  
Simplest and most soaring need.  
Free to wind, and in desire  
Winding, they to her attached  
Feel the trunk a spring of fire,  
And ascend to heights unmatched,  
Whence the tidal world is viewed  
As a sea of windy wheat,  
Momently black, barren, rude;  
Golden-brown, for harvest meet,  
Dragon-reaped from folly-sown;  
Bride-like to the sickle-blade:  
Quick it varies, while the moan,  
Moan of a sad creature strayed,  
Chiefly is its voice. So flesh  
Conjures tempest-flails to thresh  
Good from worthless. Some clear lamps  
Light it; more of dead marsh-damps.  
Monster is it still, and blind,  
Fit but to be led by Pain.  
Glance we at the paths behind,  
Fruitful sight has Westermain.  
There we laboured, and in turn  
Forward our blown lamps discern,  
As you see on the dark deep  
Far the loftier billows leap,  
Foam for beacon bear.  
Hither, hither, if you will,  
Drink instruction, or instil,  
Run the woods like vernal sap,  
Crying, hail to luminousness!  
But have care.  
In yourself may lurk the trap:  
On conditions they caress.  
Here you meet the light invoked  
Here is never secret cloaked.  
Doubt you with the monster's fry  
All his orbit may exclude;  
Are you of the stiff, the dry,

Cursing the not understood;  
Grasp you with the monster's claws;  
Govern with his truncheon-saws;  
Hate, the shadow of a grain;  
You are lost in Westermain:  
Earthward swoops a vulture sun,  
Nighted upon carrion:  
Straightway venom wine-cups shout  
Toasts to One whose eyes are out:  
Flowers along the reeling floor  
Drip henbane and hellebore:  
Beauty, of her tresses shorn,  
Shrieks as nature's maniac:  
Hideousness on hoof and horn  
Tumbles, yapping in her track:  
Haggard Wisdom, stately once,  
Leers fantastical and trips:  
Allegory drums the sconce,  
Impiousness nibblenips.  
Imp that dances, imp that flits,  
Imp o' the demon-growing girl,  
Maddest! whirl with imp o' the pits  
Round you, and with them you whirl  
Fast where pours the fountain-rout  
Out of Him whose eyes are out:  
Multitudes on multitudes,  
Drenched in wallowing devilry:  
And you ask where you may be,  
In what reek of a lair  
Given to bones and ogre-broods:  
And they yell you Where.  
Enter these enchanted woods,  
You who dare.

George Meredith



# The World's Advance

Judge mildly the tasked world; and disincline  
To brand it, for it bears a heavy pack.  
You have perchance observed the inebriate's track  
At night when he has quitted the inn-sign:  
He plays diversions on the homeward line,  
Still that way bent albeit his legs are slack:  
A hedge may take him, but he turns not back,  
Nor turns this burdened world, of curving spine.  
'Spiral,' the memorable Lady terms  
Our mind's ascent: our world's advance presents  
That figure on a flat; the way of worms.  
Cherish the promise of its good intents,  
And warn it, not one instinct to efface  
Ere Reason ripens for the vacant place.

George Meredith

# The Years Had Worn Their Season's Belt

The years had worn their seasons' belt,  
From bud to rosy prime,  
Since Nellie by the larch-pole knelt  
And helped the hop to climb.

Most diligent of teachers then,  
But now with all to learn,  
She breathed beyond a thought of men,  
Though formed to make men burn.

She dwelt where 'twixt low-beaten thorns  
Two mill-blades, like a snail,  
Enormous, with inquiring horns,  
Looked down on half the vale.

You know the grey of dew on grass  
Ere with the young sun fired,  
And you know well the thirst one has  
For the coming and desired.

Quick in our ring she leapt, and gave  
Her hand to left, to right.  
No claim on her had any, save  
To feed the joy of sight.

For man and maid a laughing word  
She tossed, in notes as clear  
As when the February bird  
Sings out that Spring is near.

Of what befell behind that scone,  
Let none who knows reveal.  
In ballad days she might have been  
A heroine rousing steel.

On us did she bestow the hour,  
And fixed it firm in thought;  
Her spirit like a meadow flower  
That gives, and asks for nought.

She seemed to make the sunlight stay  
And show her in its pride.  
O she was fair as a beech in May  
With the sun on the yonder side.

There was more life than breath can give,  
In the looks in her fair form;  
For little can we say we live  
Until the heart is warm.

George Meredith

# The Year's Shredings

The varied colours are a fitful heap:  
They pass in constant service though they sleep;  
The self gone out of them, therewith the pain:  
Read that, who still to spell our earth remain.

George Meredith

# The Young Princess -- A Ballad Of Old Laws Of Love

1--I

When the South sang like a nightingale  
Above a bower in May,  
The training of Love's vine of flame  
Was writ in laws, for lord and dame  
To say their yea and nay.

II

When the South sang like a nightingale  
Across the flowering night,  
And lord and dame held gentle sport,  
There came a young princess to Court,  
A frost of beauty white.

III

The South sang like a nightingale  
To thaw her glittering dream:  
No vine of Love her bosom gave,  
She drank no wine of Love, but grave  
She held them to Love's theme.

IV

The South grew all a nightingale  
Beneath a moon unmoved:  
Like the banner of war she led them on;  
She left them to lie, like the light that has gone  
From wine-cups overproved.

V

When the South was a fervid nightingale,  
And she a chilling moon,  
'Twas pity to see on the garden swards,  
Against Love's laws, those rival lords  
As willow-wands lie strewn.

## VI

The South had throat of a nightingale  
For her, the young princess:  
She gave no vine of Love to rear,  
Love's wine drank not, yet bent her ear  
To themes of Love no less.

## 2--I

The lords of the Court they sighed heart-sick,  
Heart-free Lord Dusiote laughed:  
I prize her no more than a fling o' the dice,  
But, or shame to my manhood, a lady of ice,  
We master her by craft!

## II

Heart-sick the lords of joyance yawned,  
Lord Dusiote laughed heart-free:  
I count her as much as a crack o' my thumb,  
But, or shame of my manhood, to me she shall come  
Like the bird to roost in the tree!

## III

At dead of night when the palace-guard  
Had passed the measured rounds,  
The young princess awoke to feel  
A shudder of blood at the crackle of steel  
Within the garden-bounds.

## IV

It ceased, and she thought of whom was need,  
The friar or the leech;  
When lo, stood her tirewoman breathless by:  
Lord Dusiote, madam, to death is nigh,  
Of you he would have speech.

## V

He prays you of your gentleness,  
To light him to his dark end.  
The princess rose, and forth she went,  
For charity was her intent,  
Devoutly to befriend.

VI

Lord Dusiote hung on his good squire's arm,  
The priest beside him knelt:  
A weeping handkerchief was pressed  
To stay the red flood at his breast,  
And bid cold ladies melt.

VII

O lady, though you are ice to men,  
All pure to heaven as light  
Within the dew within the flower,  
Of you 'tis whispered that love has power  
When secret is the night.

VIII

I have silenced the slanderers, peace to their souls!  
Save one was too cunning for me.  
I die, whose love is late avowed,  
He lives, who boasts the lily has bowed  
To the oath of a bended knee.

IX

Lord Dusiote drew breath with pain,  
And she with pain drew breath:  
On him she looked, on his like above;  
She flew in the folds of a marvel of love  
Revealed to pass to death.

X

You are dying, O great-hearted lord,

You are dying for me, she cried;  
O take my hand, O take my kiss,  
And take of your right for love like this,  
The vow that plights me bride.

## XI

She bade the priest recite his words  
While hand in hand were they,  
Lord Dusote's soul to waft to bliss;  
He had her hand, her vow, her kiss,  
And his body was borne away.

## 3--I

Lord Dusote sprang from priest and squire;  
He gazed at her lighted room:  
The laughter in his heart grew slack;  
He knew not the force that pushed him back  
From her and the morn in bloom.

## II

Like a drowned man's length on the strong flood-tide,  
Like the shade of a bird in the sun,  
He fled from his lady whom he might claim  
As ghost, and who made the daybeams flame  
To scare what he had done.

## III

There was grief at Court for one so gay,  
Though he was a lord less keen  
For training the vine than at vintage-press;  
But in her soul the young princess  
Believed that love had been.

## IV

Lord Dusote fled the Court and land,  
He crossed the woeful seas,  
Till his traitorous doing seemed clearer to burn,



And the lady beloved drew his heart for return,  
Like the banner of war in the breeze.

V

He neared the palace, he spied the Court,  
And music he heard, and they told  
Of foreign lords arrived to bring  
The nuptial gifts of a bridegroom king  
To the princess grave and cold.

VI

The masque and the dance were cloud on wave,  
And down the masque and the dance  
Lord Dusote stepped from dame to dame,  
And to the young princess he came,  
With a bow and a burning glance.

VII

Do you take a new husband to-morrow, lady?  
She shrank as at prick of steel.  
Must the first yield place to the second, he sighed.  
Her eyes were like the grave that is wide  
For the corpse from head to heel.

VIII

My lady, my love, that little hand  
Has mine ringed fast in plight:  
I bear for your lips a lawful thirst,  
And as justly the second should follow the first,  
I come to your door this night.

IX

If a ghost should come a ghost will go:  
No more the lady said,  
Save that ever when he in wrath began  
To swear by the faith of a living man,  
She answered him, You are dead.

4--I

The soft night-wind went laden to death  
With smell of the orange in flower;  
The light leaves prattled to neighbour ears;  
The bird of the passion sang over his tears;  
The night named hour by hour.

II

Sang loud, sang low the rapturous bird  
Till the yellow hour was nigh,  
Behind the folds of a darker cloud:  
He chuckled, he sobbed, aloud, aloud;  
The voice between earth and sky.

III

O will you, will you, women are weak;  
The proudest are yielding mates  
For a forward foot and a tongue of fire:  
So thought Lord Dusote's trusty squire,  
At watch by the palace-gates.

IV

The song of the bird was wine in his blood,  
And woman the odorous bloom:  
His master's great adventure stirred  
Within him to mingle the bloom and bird,  
And morn ere its coming illumed.

V

Beside him strangely a piece of the dark  
Had moved, and the undertones  
Of a priest in prayer, like a cavernous wave,  
He heard, as were there a soul to save  
For urgency now in the groans.

VI

No priest was hired for the play this night:  
And the squire tossed head like a deer  
At sniff of the tainted wind; he gazed  
Where cresset-lamps in a door were raised,  
Belike on a passing bier.

## VII

All cloaked and masked, with naked blades,  
That flashed of a judgement done,  
The lords of the Court, from the palace-door,  
Came issuing silently, bearers four,  
And flat on their shoulders one.

## VIII

They marched the body to squire and priest,  
They lowered it sad to earth:  
The priest they gave the burial dole,  
Bade wrestle hourly for his soul,  
Who was a lord of worth.

## IX

One said, farewell to a gallant knight!  
And one, but a restless ghost!  
'Tis a year and a day since in this place  
He died, sped high by a lady of grace  
To join the blissful host.

## X

Not vainly on us she charged her cause,  
The lady whom we revere  
For faith in the mask of a love untrue  
To the Love we honour, the Love her due,  
The Love we have vowed to rear.

## XI

A trap for the sweet tooth, lures for the light,

For the fortress defiant a mine:  
Right well! But not in the South, princess,  
Shall the lady snared of her nobleness  
Ever shamed or a captive pine.

XII

When the South had voice of a nightingale  
Above a Maying bower,  
On the heights of Love walked radiant peers;  
The bird of the passion sang over his tears  
To the breeze and the orange-flower.

George Meredith

# The Young Usurper

On my darling's bosom  
Has dropped a living rosy bud,  
Fair as brilliant Hesper  
Against the brimming flood.  
She handles him,  
She dandles him,  
She fondles him and eyes him:  
And if upon a tear he wakes,  
With many a kiss she dries him:  
She covets every move he makes,  
And never enough can prize him.  
Ah, the young Usurper!  
I yield my golden throne:  
Such angel bands attend his hands  
To claim it for his own.

George Meredith

# The Youthful Quest

His Lady queen of woods to meet,  
He wanders day and night:  
The leaves have whisperings discreet,  
The mossy ways invite.

Across a lustrous ring of space,  
By covert hoods and caves,  
Is promise of her secret face  
In film that onward waves.

For darkness is the light astrain,  
Astrain for light the dark.  
A grey moth down a larches' lane  
Unwinds a ghostly spark.

Her lamp he sees, and young desire  
Is fed while cloaked she flies.  
She quivers shot of violet fire  
To ash at look of eyes.

George Meredith

# Time And Sentiment

I see a fair young couple in a wood,  
And as they go, one bends to take a flower,  
That so may be embalmed their happy hour,  
And in another day, a kindred mood,  
Haply together, or in solitude,  
Recovered what the teeth of Time devour,  
The joy, the bloom, and the illusive power,  
Wherewith by their young blood they are endued  
To move all enviable, framed in May,  
And of an aspect sisterly with Truth:  
Yet seek they with Time's laughing things to wed:  
Who will be prompted on some pallid day  
To lift the hueless flower and show that dead,  
Even such, and by this token, is their youth.

George Meredith

## To A Friend Lost (Tom Taylor)

When I remember, friend, whom lost I call,  
Because a man beloved is taken hence,  
The tender humour and the fire of sense  
In your good eyes; how full of heart for all,  
And chiefly for the weaker by the wall,  
You bore that lamp of sane benevolence;  
Then see I round you Death his shadows dense  
Divide, and at your feet his emblems fall.  
For surely are you one with the white host,  
Spirits, whose memory is our vital air,  
Through the great love of Earth they had: lo, these,  
Like beams that throw the path on tossing seas,  
Can bid us feel we keep them in the ghost,  
Partakers of a strife they joyed to share.

George Meredith



# To A Nightingale

O nightingale! how hast thou learnt  
The note of the nested dove?  
While under thy bower the fern hangs burnt  
And no cloud hovers above!  
Rich July has many a sky  
With splendour dim, that thou mightst hymn,  
And make rejoice with thy wondrous voice,  
And the thrill of thy wild pervading tone!  
But instead of to woo, thou hast learnt to coo:  
Thy song is mute at the mellowing fruit,  
And the dirge of the flowers is sung by the hours  
In silence and twilight alone.

O nightingale! 'tis this, 'tis this  
That makes thee mock the dove!  
That thou hast past thy marriage bliss,  
To know a parent's love.  
The waves of fern may fade and burn,  
The grasses may fall, the flowers and all,  
And the pine-smells o'er the oak dells  
Float on their drowsy and odorous wings,  
But thou wilt do nothing but coo,  
Brimming the nest with thy brooding breast,  
'Midst that young throng of future song,  
Round whom the Future sings!

George Meredith

# To A Skylark

O skylark! I see thee and call thee joy!  
Thy wings bear thee up to the breast of the dawn;  
I see thee no more, but thy song is still  
The tongue of the heavens to me!

Thus are the days when I was a boy;  
Sweet while I lived in them, dear now they're gone:  
I feel them no longer, but still, O still  
They tell of the heavens to me.

George Meredith

## To Alex. Smith, The 'Glasgow Poet,' On His Sonnet To 'Fame'

Not vainly doth the earnest voice of man  
Call for the thing that is his pure desire!  
Fame is the birthright of the living lyre!  
To noble impulse Nature puts no ban.  
Nor vainly to the Sphinx thy voice was raised!  
Tho' all thy great emotions like a sea,  
Against her stony immortality,  
Shatter themselves unheeded and amazed.  
Time moves behind her in a blind eclipse:  
Yet if in her cold eyes the end of all  
Be visible, as on her large closed lips  
Hangs dumb the awful riddle of the earth; -  
She sees, and she might speak, since that wild call,  
The mighty warning of a Poet's birth.

George Meredith

# To Cardinal Manning

I, wakeful for the skylark voice in men,  
Or straining for the angel of the light,  
Rebuked am I by hungry ear and sight,  
When I behold one lamp that through our fen  
Goes hourly where most noisome; hear again  
A tongue that loathsomeness will not affright  
From speaking to the soul of us forthright  
What things our craven senses keep from ken.  
This is the doing of the Christ; the way  
He went on earth; the service above guile  
To prop a tyrant creed: it sings, it shines;  
Cries to the Mammonites: Allay, allay  
Such misery as by these present signs  
Brings vengeance down; nor them who rouse revile.

George Meredith

# To Children: For Tyrants

I

Strike not thy dog with a stick!  
I did it yesterday:  
Not to undo though I gained  
The Paradise: heavy it rained  
On Kobold's flanks, and he lay.

II

Little Bruno, our long-ear pup,  
From his hunt had come back to my heel.  
I heard a sharp worrying sound,  
And Bruno foamed on the ground,  
With Koby as making a meal.

III

I did what I could not undo  
Were the gates of the Paradise shut  
Behind me: I deemed it was just.  
I left Koby crouched in the dust,  
Some yards from the woodman's hut.

IV

He bewhimpered his welting, and I  
Scarce thought it enough for him: so,  
By degrees, through the upper box-grove,  
Within me an old story hove,  
Of a man and a dog: you shall know.

V

The dog was of novel breed,  
The Shannon retriever, untried:  
His master, an old Irish lord,  
In an oaken armchair snored  
At midnight, whisky beside.

## VI

Perched up a desolate tower,  
Where the black storm-wind was a whip  
To set it nigh spinning, these two  
Were alone, like the last of a crew,  
Outworn in a wave-beaten ship.

## VII

The dog lifted muzzle, and sniffed;  
He quitted his couch on the rug,  
Nose to floor, nose aloft; whined, barked;  
And, finding the signals unmarked,  
Caught a hand in a death-grapple tug.

## VIII

He pulled till his master jumped  
For fury of wrath, and laid on  
With the length of a tough knotted staff,  
Fit to drive the life flying like chaff,  
And leave a sheer carcass anon.

## IX

That done, he sat, panted, and cursed  
The vile cross of this brute: nevermore  
Would he house it to rear such a cur!  
The dog dragged his legs, pained to stir,  
Eyed his master, dropped, barked at the door.

## X

Then his master raised head too, and sniffed:  
It struck him the dog had a sense  
That honoured both dam and sire.  
You have guessed how the tower was afire.  
The Shannon retriever dates thence.

## XI

I mused: saw the pup ease his heart  
Of his instinct for chasing, and sink  
Overwrought by excitement so new:  
A scene that for Koby to view  
Was the seizure of nerves in a link.

XII

And part sympathetic, and part  
Imitatively, raged my poor brute;  
And I, not thinking of ill,  
Doing eviller: nerves are still  
Our savage too quick at the root.

XIII

They spring us: I proved it, albeit  
I played executioner then  
For discipline, justice, the like.  
Yon stick I had handy to strike  
Should have warned of the tyrant in men.

XIV

You read in your History books,  
How the Prince in his youth had a mind  
For governing gently his land.  
Ah, the use of that weapon at hand,  
When the temper is other than kind!

XV

At home all was well; Koby's ribs  
Not so sore as my thoughts: if, beguiled,  
He forgives me, his criminal air  
Throws a shade of Llewellyn's despair  
For the hound slain for saving his child.

George Meredith

## To J. M.

Let Fate or Insufficiency provide  
Mean ends for men who what they are would be:  
Pinned in their narrow day no change they see  
Save one which strikes the blow to brutes and pride.  
Our faith is ours and comes not on a tide:  
And whether Earth's great offspring, by decree,  
Must rot if they abjure rapacity,  
Not argument but effort shall decide.  
They number many heads in that hard flock:  
Trim swordsmen they push forth: yet try thy steel.  
Thou, fighting for poor humankind, wilt feel  
The strength of Roland in thy wrist to hew  
A chasm sheer into the barrier rock,  
And bring the army of the faithful through.

George Meredith



# To Robin Redbreast

Merrily 'mid the faded leaves,  
O Robin of the bright red breast!  
Cheerily over the Autumn eaves,  
Thy note is heard, bonny bird;  
Sent to cheer us, and kindly endear us  
To what would be a sorrowful time  
Without thee in the weltering clime:  
Merry art thou in the boughs of the lime,  
While thy fadeless waistcoat glows on thy breast,  
In Autumn's reddest livery drest.

A merry song, a cheery song!  
In the boughs above, on the sward below,  
Chirping and singing the live day long,  
While the maple in grief sheds its fiery leaf,  
And all the trees waning, with bitter complaining,  
Chestnut, and elm, and sycamore,  
Catch the wild gust in their arms, and roar  
Like the sea on a stormy shore,  
Till wailfully they let it go,  
And weep themselves naked and weary with woe.

Merrily, cheerily, joyously still  
Pours out the crimson-crested tide.  
The set of the season burns bright on the hill,  
Where the foliage dead falls yellow and red,  
Picturing vainly, but foretelling plainly  
The wealth of cottage warmth that comes  
When the frost gleams and the blood numbs,  
And then, bonny Robin, I'll spread thee out crumbs  
In my garden porch for thy redbreast pride,  
The song and the ensign of dear fireside.

George Meredith

# To The Comic Spirit

Sword of Common Sense! -  
Our surest gift: the sacred chain  
Of man to man: firm earth for trust  
In structures vowed to permanence:-  
Thou guardian issue of the harvest brain!  
Implacable perforce of just;  
With that good treasure in defence,  
Which is our gold crushed out of joy and pain  
Since first men planted foot and hand was king:  
Bright, nimble of the marrow-nerve  
To wield thy double edge, retort  
Or hold the deadlier reserve,  
And through thy victim's weapon sting:  
Thine is the service, thine the sport  
This shifty heart of ours to hunt  
Across its webs and round the many a ring  
Where fox it is, or snake, or mingled seeds  
Occasion heats to shape, or the poor smoke  
Struck from a puff-ball, or the troughster's grunt; -  
Once lion of our desert's trodden weeds;  
And but for thy straight finger at the yoke,  
Again to be the lordly paw,  
Naming his appetites his needs,  
Behind a decorative cloak:  
Thou, of the highest, the unwritten Law  
We read upon that building's architrave  
In the mind's firmament, by men upraised  
With sweat of blood when they had quitted cave  
For fellowship, and rearward looked amazed,  
Where the prime motive gapes a lurid jaw,  
Thou, soul of wakened heads, art armed to warn,  
Restrain, lest we backslide on whence we sprang,  
Scarce better than our dwarf beginning shoot,  
Of every gathered pearl and blossom shorn;  
Through thee, in novel wiles to win disguise,  
Seen are the pits of the disruptor, seen  
His rebel agitation at our root:  
Thou hast him out of hawking eyes;  
Nor ever morning of the clang

Young Echo sped on hill from horn  
In forest blown when scent was keen  
Off earthy dews besprinkling blades  
Of covert grass more merrily rang  
The yelp of chase down alleys green,  
Forth of the headlong-pouring glades,  
Over the dappled fallows wild away,  
Than thy fine unaccented scorn  
At sight of man's old secret brute,  
Devout for pasture on his prey,  
Advancing, yawning to devour;  
With step of deer, with voice of flute,  
Haply with visage of the lily flower.

Let the cock crow and ruddy morn  
His handmaiden appear! Youth claims his hour.  
The generously ludicrous  
Espouses it. But see we sons of day,  
Off whom Life leans for guidance in our fight,  
Accept the throb for lord of us;  
For lord, for the main central light  
That gives direction, not the eclipse;  
Or dost thou look where niggard Age,  
Demanding reverence for wrinkles, whips  
A tumbled top to grind a wolf's worn tooth; -  
Hoar despot on our final stage,  
In dotage of a stunted Youth; -  
Or it may be some venerable sage,  
Not having thee awake in him, compact  
Of wisdom else, the breast's old tempter trips;  
Or see we ceremonial state,  
Robing the gilded beast, exact  
Abjection, while the crackskull name of Fate  
Is used to stamp and hallow printed fact;  
A cruel corner lengthens up thy lips;  
These are thy game wherever men engage:  
These and, majestic in a borrowed shape,  
The major and the minor potentate,  
Creative of their various ape; -  
The tiptoe mortals triumphing to write  
Upon a perishable page  
An inch above their fellows' height; -

The criers of foregone wisdom, who impose  
Its slough on live conditions, much for the greed  
Of our first hungry figure wide agape; -  
Call up thy hounds of laughter to their run.  
These, that would have men still of men be foes,  
Eternal fox to prowl and pike to feed;  
Would keep our life the whirly pool  
Of turbid stuff dishonouring History;  
The herd the drover's herd, the fool the fool,  
Ourselves our slavish self's infernal sun:  
These are the children of the heart untaught  
By thy quick founts to beat abroad, by thee  
Untamed to tone its passions under thought,  
The rich humaneness reading in thy fun.  
Of them a world of coltish heels for school  
We have; a world with driving wrecks bestrewn.

'Tis written of the Gods of human mould,  
Those Nectar Gods, of glorious stature hewn  
To quicken hymns, that they did hear, incensed,  
Satiric comments overbold,  
From one whose part was by decree  
The jester's; but they boiled to feel him bite.  
Better for them had they with Reason fenced  
Or smiled corrected! They in the great Gods' might  
Their prober crushed, as fingers flea.  
Crumbled Olympus when the sovereign sire  
His fatal kick to Momus gave, albeit  
Men could behold the sacred Mount aspire,  
The Satirist pass by on limping feet.  
Those Gods who saw the ejected laugh alight  
Below had then their last of airy glee;  
They in the cup sought Laughter's drowned sprite,  
Fed to dire fatness off uncurbed conceit.  
Eyes under saw them waddle on their Mount,  
And drew them down; to flattest earth they rolled.  
This know we veritable. O Sage of Mirth!  
Can it be true, the story men recount  
Of the fall'n plight of the great Gods on earth?  
How they being deathless, though of human mould,  
With human cravings, undecaying frames,  
Must labour for subsistence; are a band

Whom a loose-cheeked, wide-lipped gay cripple leads  
At haunts of holiday on summer sand:  
And lightly he will hint to one that heeds  
Names in pained designation of them, names  
Ensphered on blue skies and on black, which twirl  
Our hearing madly from our seeing dazed,  
Add Bacchus unto both; and he entreats  
(His baby dimples in maternal chaps  
Running wild labyrinths of line and curl)  
Compassion for his masterful Trombone,  
Whose thunder is the brass of how he blazed  
Of old: for him of the mountain-muscle feats,  
Who guts a drum to fetch a snappish groan:  
For his fierce bugler horning onset, whom  
A truncheon-battered helmet caps . . .  
The creature is of earnest mien  
To plead a sorrow darker than the tomb.  
His Harp and Triangle, in tone subdued,  
He names; they are a rayless red and white;  
The dawn-hued libertine, the gibbous prude.  
And, if we recognize his Tambourine,  
He asks; exhausted names her: she has become  
A globe in cupolas; the blowziest queen  
Of overflowing dome on dome;  
Redundancy contending with the tight,  
Leaping the dam! He fondly calls, his girl,  
The buxom tripper with the goblet-smile,  
Refreshful. O but now his brows are dun,  
Bunched are his lips, as when distilling guile,  
To drop his venomous: the Dame of dames,  
Flower of the world, that honey one,  
She of the earthly rose in the sea-pearl,  
To whom the world ran ocean for her kiss;  
He names her, as a worshipper he names,  
And indicates with a contemptuous thumb.  
The lady meanwhile lures the mob, alike  
Ogles the bursters of the horn and drum.  
Curtain her close! her open arms  
Have suckers for beholders: she to this?  
For that she could not, save in fury, hear  
A sharp corrective utterance flick  
Her idle manners, for the laugh to strike

Beauty so breeding beauty, without peer  
Above the snows, among the flowers? She reaps  
This mouldy garner of the fatal kick?  
Gross with the sacrifice of Circe-swarms,  
Astarte of vile sweets that slay, malign,  
From Greek resplendent to Phoenician foul,  
The trader in attractions sinks, all brine  
To thoughts of taste; is 't love?--bark, dog! hoot, owl!  
And she is blushless: ancient worship weeps.  
Suicide Graces dangle down the charms  
Sprawling like gourds on outer garden-heaps.  
She stands in her unholy oily leer  
A statue losing feature, weather-sick  
Mid draggled creepers of twined ivy sere.  
The curtain cried for magnifies to see! -  
We cannot quench our one corrupting glance:  
The vision of the rumour will not flee.  
Doth the Boy own such Mother?--shoot his dart  
To bring her, countless as the crested deeps,  
Her subjects of the uncorrected heart?  
False is that vision, shrieks the devotee;  
Incredible, we echo; and anew  
Like a far growling lightning-cloud it leaps.  
Low humourist this leader seems; perchance  
Pitched from his University career,  
Adept at classic fooling. Yet of mould  
Human those Gods were: deathless too:  
On high they not as meditatives paced:  
Prodigiously they did the deeds of flesh:  
Descending, they would touch the lowest here:  
And she, that lighted form of blue and gold,  
Whom the seas gave, all earth, all earth embraced;  
Exulting in the great hauls of her mesh;  
Desired and hated, desperately dear;  
Most human of them was. No more pursue!  
Enough that the black story can be told.  
It preaches to the eminently placed:  
For whom disastrous wreckage is nigh due,  
Paints omen. Truly they our throbber had;  
The passions plumping, passions playing leech,  
Cunning to trick us for the day's good cheer.  
Our uncorrected human heart will swell

To notions monstrous, doings mad  
As billows on a foam-lashed beach;  
Borne on the tides of alternating heats,  
Will drug the brain, will doom the soul as well;  
Call the closed mouth of that harsh final Power  
To speak in judgement: Nemesis, the fell:  
Of those bright Gods assembled, offspring sour;  
The last surviving on the upper seats;  
As with men Reason when their hearts rebel.

Ah, what a fruitless breeder is this heart,  
Full of the mingled seeds, each eating each.  
Not wiser of our mark than at the start,  
It surges like the wrath-faced father Sea  
To countering winds; a force blind-eyed,  
On endless rounds of aimless reach;  
Emotion for the source of pride,  
The grounds of faith in fixity  
Above our flesh; its cravings urging speech,  
Inspiring prayer; by turns a lump  
Swung on a time-piece, and by turns  
A quivering energy to jump  
For seats angelical: it shrinks, it yearns,  
Loves, loathes; is flame or cinders; lastly cloud  
Capping a sullen crater: and mankind  
We see cloud-capped, an army of the dark,  
Because of thy straight leadership declined;  
At heels of this or that delusive spark:  
Now when the multitudinous races press  
Elbow to elbow hourly more,  
A thickened host; when now we hear aloud  
Life for the very life implore  
A signal of a visioned mark;  
Light of the mind, the mind's discourse,  
The rational in graciousness,  
Thee by acknowledgement enthroned,  
To tame and lead that blind-eyed force  
In harmony of harness with the crowd,  
For payment of their dues; as yet disowned,  
Save where some dutiful lone creature, vowed  
To holy work, deems it the heart's intent;  
Or where a silken circle views it cowed,

The seeming figure of concordance, bent  
On satiating tyrant lust  
Or barren fits of sentiment.

Thou wilt not have our paths befouled  
By simulation; are we vile to view,  
The heavens shall see us clean of our own dust,  
Beneath thy breezy flitting wing:  
They make their mirror upon faces true;  
And where they win reflection, lucid heave  
The under tides of this hot heart seen through.  
Beneficently wilt thou clip  
All oversteppings of the plumed,  
The puffed, and bid the masker strip,  
And into the crowned windbag thrust,  
Tearing the mortal from the vital thing,  
A lightning o'er the half-illumed,  
Who to base brute-dominion cleave,  
Yet mark effects, and shun the flash,  
Till their drowsed wits a beam conceive,  
To spy a wound without a gash,  
The magic in a turn of wrist,  
And how are wedded heart and head regaled  
When Wit o'er Folly blows the mort,  
And their high note of union spreads  
Wide from the timely word with conquest charged;  
Victorious laughter, of no loud report,  
If heard; derision as divinely veiled  
As terrible Immortals in rose-mist,  
Given to the vision of arrested men:  
Whereat they feel within them weave  
Community its closer threads,  
And are to our fraternal state enlarged;  
Like warm fresh blood is their enlivened ken:  
They learn that thou art not of alien sort,  
Speaking the tongue by vipers hissed,  
Or of the frosty heights unsealed,  
Or of the vain who simple speech distort,  
Or of the vapours pointing on to nought  
Along cold skies; though sharp and high thy pitch;  
As when sole homeward the belated treads,  
And hears aloft a clamour wailed,



That once had seemed the broomstick witch  
Horridly violating cloud for drought:  
He, from the rub of minds dispersing fears,  
Hears migrants marshalling their midnight train;  
Homeliest order in black sky appears,  
Not less than in the lighted village steads.  
So do those half-illumed wax clear to share  
A cry that is our common voice; the note  
Of fellowship upon a loftier plane,  
Above embattled castle-wall and moat;  
And toning drops as from pure heaven it sheds.  
So thou for washing a phantasmal air,  
For thy sweet singing keynote of the wise,  
Laughter--the joy of Reason seeing fade  
Obstruction into Earth's renewing beds,  
Beneath the stroke of her good servant's blade -  
Thenceforth art as their earth-star hailed;  
Gain of the years, conjunction's prize.  
The greater heart in thy appeal to heads  
They see, thou Captain of our civil Fort!  
By more elusive savages assailed  
On each ascending stage; untired  
Both inner foe and outer to cut short,  
And blow to chaff pretenders void of grist:  
Showing old tiger's claws, old crocodile's  
Yard-grin of eager grinders, slim to sight,  
Like forms in running water, oft when smiles,  
When pearly tears, when fluent lips delight:  
But never with the slayer's malice fired:  
As little as informs an infant's fist  
Clenched at the sneeze! Thou wouldst but have us be  
Good sons of mother soil, whereby to grow  
Branching on fairer skies, one stately tree;  
Broad of the tilth for flowering at the Court:  
Which is the tree bound fast to wave its tress;  
Of strength controlled sheer beauty to bestow.  
Ambrosial heights of possible acquist,  
Where souls of men with soul of man consort,  
And all look higher to new loveliness  
Begotten of the look: thy mark is there;  
While on our temporal ground alive,  
Rightly though fearfully thou wieldest sword

Of finer temper now a numbered learn  
That they resisting thee themselves resist;  
And not thy bigger joy to smite and drive,  
Prompt the dense herd to butt, and set the snare  
Witching them into pitfalls for hoarse shouts.  
More now, and hourly more, and of the Lord  
Thou lead'st to, doth this rebel heart discern,  
When pinched ascetic and red sensualist  
Alternately recurrent freeze or burn,  
And of its old religions it has doubts.  
It fears thee less when thou hast shown it bare;  
Less hates, part understands, nor much resents,  
When the prized objects it has raised for prayer,  
For fitful prayer;--repentance dreading fire,  
Impelled by aches; the blindness which repents  
Like the poor trampled worm that writhes in mire; -  
Are sounded by thee, and thou darest probe  
Old institutions and establishments,  
Once fortresses against the floods of sin,  
For what their worth; and questioningly prod  
For why they stand upon a racing globe,  
Impeding blocks, less useful than the clod;  
Their angel out of them, a demon in.

This half-enlightened heart, still doomed to fret,  
To hurl at vanities, to drift in shame  
Of gain or loss, bewailing the sure rod,  
Shall of predestination wed thee yet.  
Something it gathers of what things should drop  
At entrance on new times; of how thrice broad  
The world of minds communicative; how  
A stragglng Nature classed in school, and scored  
With stripes admonishing, may yield to plough  
Fruitfullest furrows, nor for waxing tame  
Be feeble on an Earth whose gentler crop  
Is its most living, in the mind that steers,  
By Reason led, her way of tree and flame,  
Beyond the genuflexions and the tears;  
Upon an Earth that cannot stop,  
Where upward is the visible aim,  
And ever we espy the greater God,  
For simple pointing at a good adored:

Proof of the closer neighbourhood. Head on,  
Sword of the many, light of the few! untwist  
Or cut our tangles till fair space is won  
Beyond a briared wood of austere brow,  
Believed of discord by thy timely word  
At intervals refreshing life: for thou  
Art verify Keeper of the Muse's Key;  
Thyself no vacant melodist;  
On lower land elective even as she;  
Holding, as she, all dissonance abhorred;  
Advising to her measured steps in flow;  
And teaching how for being subjected free  
Past thought of freedom we may come to know  
The music of the meaning of Accord.

George Meredith

# Trafalgar Day

He leads: we hear our Seaman's call  
In the roll of battles won;  
For he is Britain's Admiral  
Till setting of her sun.

When Britain's life was in her ships,  
He kept the sea as his own right;  
And saved us from more fell eclipse  
Than drops on day from blackest night.  
Again his battle spat the flame!  
Again his victory flag men saw!  
At sound of Nelson's chieftain name,  
A deeper breath did Freedom draw.

Each trusty captain knew his part:  
They served as men, not marshalled kine:  
The pulses they of his great heart,  
With heads to work his main design.  
Their Nelson's word, to beat the foe,  
And spare the fall'n, before them shone.  
Good was the hour of blow for blow,  
And clear their course while they fought on.

Behold the Envied vanward sweep! -  
A day in mourning weeds adored!  
Then Victory was wrought to weep;  
Then sorrow crowned with laurel soared.

A breezeless flag above a shroud  
All Britain was when wind and wave,  
To make her, passing human, proud,  
Brought his last gift from o'er the grave!

Uprose the soul of him a star  
On that brave day of Ocean days:  
It rolled the smoke from Trafalger  
To darken Austerlitz ablaze.  
Are we the men of old, its light  
Will point us under every sky

The path he took; and must we fight,  
Our Nelson be our battle-cry!

He leads: we hear our Seaman's call  
In the roll of battles won;  
For he is Britain's Admiral  
Till setting of her sun.

George Meredith

# Twilight Music

Know you the low pervading breeze  
That softly sings  
In the trembling leaves of twilight trees,  
As if the wind were dreaming on its wings?  
And have you marked their still degrees  
Of ebbing melody, like the strings  
Of a silver harp swept by a spirit's hand  
In some strange glimmering land,  
'Mid gushing springs,  
And glistenings  
Of waters and of planets, wild and grand!  
And have you marked in that still time  
The chariots of those shining cars  
Brighten upon the hushing dark,  
And bent to hark  
That Voice, amid the poplar and the lime,  
Pause in the dilating lustre  
Of the spheral cluster;  
Pause but to renew its sweetness, deep  
As dreams of heaven to souls that sleep!  
And felt, despite earth's jarring wars,  
When day is done  
And dead the sun,  
Still a voice divine can sing,  
Still is there sympathy can bring  
A whisper from the stars!  
Ah, with this sentience quickly will you know  
How like a tree I tremble to the tones  
Of your sweet voice!  
How keenly I rejoice  
When in me with sweet motions slow  
The spiritual music ebbs and moans -  
Lives in the lustre of those heavenly eyes,  
Dies in the light of its own paradise, -  
Dies, and relives eternal from its death,  
Immortal melodies in each deep breath;  
Sweeps thro' my being, bearing up to thee  
Myself, the weight of its eternity;  
Till, nerved to life from its ordeal fire,

It marries music with the human lyre,  
Blending divine delight with loveliest desire.

George Meredith

# Union In Disseverance

unset worn to its last vermilion he;  
She that star overhead in slow descent:  
That white star with the front of angel she;  
He undone in his rays of glory spent

Halo, fair as the bow-shot at his rise,  
He casts round her, and knows his hour of rest  
Incomplete, were the light for which he dies,  
Less like joy of the dove that wings to nest.

Lustrous momentarily, near on earth she sinks;  
Life's full throb over breathless and abased:  
Yet stand they, though impalpable the links,  
One, more one than the bridally embraced.

George Meredith



## Unknown Fair Faces

Though I am faithful to my loves lived through,  
And place them among Memory's great stars,  
Where burns a face like Hesper: one like Mars:  
Of visages I get a moment's view,  
Sweet eyes that in the heaven of me, too,  
Ascend, tho' virgin to my life they passed.  
Lo, these within my destiny seem glassed  
At times so bright, I wish that Hope were new.  
A gracious freckled lady, tall and grave,  
Went, in a shawl voluminous and white,  
Last sunset by; and going sow'd a glance.  
Earth is too poor to hold a second chance;  
I will not ask for more than Fortune gave:  
My heart she goes from-never from my sight!

George Meredith

# Violets

Violets, shy violets!  
How many hearts with you compare!  
Who hide themselves in thickest green,  
And thence, unseen,  
Ravish the enraptured air  
With sweetness, dewy fresh and rare!

Violets, shy violets!  
Human hearts to me shall be  
Viewless violets in the grass,  
And as I pass,  
Odours and sweet imagery  
Will wait on mine and gladden me!

George Meredith

# When I Would Imagine

When I would image her features,  
Comes up a shrouded head:  
I touch the outlines, shrinking;  
She seems of the wandering dead.

But when love asks for nothing,  
And lies on his bed of snow,  
The face slips under my eyelids,  
All in its living glow.

Like a dark cathedral city,  
Whose spires, and domes, and towers  
Quiver in violet lightnings,  
My soul basks on for hours.

George Meredith

# Whimper Of Sympathy

Hawk or shrike has done this deed  
Of downy feathers: rueful sight!  
Sweet sentimentalist, invite  
Your bosom's Power to intercede.

So hard it seems that one must bleed  
Because another needs will bite!  
All round we find cold Nature slight  
The feelings of the totter-knee'd.

O it were pleasant with you  
To fly from this tussle of foes,  
The shambles, the charnel, the wrinkle!  
To dwell in yon dribble of dew  
On the cheek of your sovereign rose,  
And live the young life of a twinkle.

George Meredith

# Will O' The Wisp

Follow me, follow me,  
Over brake and under tree,  
Thro' the bosky tanglery,  
Brushwood and bramble!  
Follow me, follow me,  
Laugh and leap and scramble!  
Follow, follow,  
Hill and hollow,  
Fosse and burrow,  
Fen and furrow,  
Down into the bulrush beds,  
'Midst the reeds and osier heads,  
In the rushy soaking damps,  
Where the vapours pitch their camps,  
Follow me, follow me,  
For a midnight ramble!  
O! what a mighty fog,  
What a merry night O ho!  
Follow, follow, nigher, nigher -  
Over bank, and pond, and briar,  
Down into the croaking ditches,  
Rotten log,  
Spotted frog,  
Beetle bright  
With crawling light,  
What a joy O ho!  
Deep into the purple bog -  
What a joy O ho!  
Where like hosts of puckered witches  
All the shivering agues sit  
Warming hands and chafing feet,  
By the blue marsh-hovering oils:  
O the fools for all their moans!  
Not a forest mad with fire  
Could still their teeth, or warm their bones,  
Or loose them from their chilly coils.  
What a clatter,  
How they chatter!  
Shrink and huddle,

All a muddle!  
What a joy O ho!  
Down we go, down we go,  
What a joy O ho!  
Soon shall I be down below,  
Plunging with a grey fat friar,  
Hither, thither, to and fro,  
Breathing mists and whisking lamps,  
Plashing in the shiny swamps;  
While my cousin Lantern Jack,  
With cook ears and cunning eyes,  
Turns him round upon his back,  
Daubs him oozy green and black,  
Sits upon his rolling size,  
Where he lies, where he lies,  
Groaning full of sack -  
Staring with his great round eyes!  
What a joy O ho!  
Sits upon him in the swamps  
Breathing mists and whisking lamps!  
What a joy O ho!  
Such a lad is Lantern Jack,  
When he rides the black nightmare  
Through the fens, and puts a glare  
In the friar's track.  
Such a frolic lad, good lack!  
To turn a friar on his back,  
Trip him, clip him, whip him, nip him.  
Lay him sprawling, smack!  
Such a lad is Lantern Jack!  
Such a tricky lad, good lack!  
What a joy O ho!  
Follow me, follow me,  
Where he sits, and you shall see!

George Meredith

# Wind On The Lyre

That was the chirp of Ariel  
You heard, as overhead it flew,  
The farther going more to dwell,  
And wing our green to wed our blue;  
But whether note of joy or knell,  
Not his own Father-singer knew;  
Nor yet can any mortal tell,  
Save only how it shivers through;  
The breast of us a sounded shell,  
The blood of us a lighted dew.

George Meredith

# Winter Heavens

Sharp is the night, but stars with frost alive  
Leap off the rim of earth across the dome.  
It is a night to make the heavens our home  
More than the nest whereto apace we strive.  
Lengths down our road each fir-tree seems a hive,  
In swarms outrushing from the golden comb.  
They waken waves of thoughts that burst to foam:  
The living throb in me, the dead revive.  
Yon mantle clothes us: there, past mortal breath,  
Life glistens on the river of the death.  
It folds us, flesh and dust; and have we knelt,  
Or never knelt, or eyed as kine the springs  
Of radiance, the radiance enrings:  
And this is the soul's haven to have felt.

George Meredith



# Woodland Peace

Sweet as Eden is the air,  
And Eden-sweet the ray.  
No Paradise is lost for them  
Who foot by branching root and stem,  
And lightly with the woodland share  
The change of night and day.

Here all say,  
We serve her, even as I:  
We brood, we strive to sky,  
We gaze upon decay,  
We wot of life through death,  
How each feeds each we spy;  
And is a tangle round,  
Are patient; what is dumb  
We question not, nor ask  
The silent to give sound,  
The hidden to unmask,  
The distant to draw near.

And this the woodland saith:  
I know not hope or fear;  
I take whate'er may come;  
I raise my head to aspects fair,  
From foul I turn away.

Sweet as Eden is the air,  
And Eden-sweet the ray.

George Meredith

# Woodman And Echo

Close Echo hears the woodman's axe,  
To double on it, as in glee,  
With clap of hands, and little lacks  
Of meaning in her repartee.  
For all shall fall,  
As one has done,  
The tree of me,  
Of thee the tree;  
And unto all  
The fate we wait  
Reveals the wheels  
Whereon we run:  
We tower to flower,  
We spread the shade,  
We drop for crop,  
At length are laid;  
Are rolled in mould,  
From chop and lop:  
And are we thick in woodland tracks,  
Or tempting of our stature we,  
The end is one, we do but wax  
For service over land and sea.  
So, strike! the like  
Shall thus of us,  
My brawny woodman, claim the tax.  
Nor foe thy blow,  
Though wood be good,  
And shriekingly the timber cracks:  
The ground we crowned  
Shall speed the seed  
Of younger into swelling sacks.

For use he hews,  
To make awake  
The spirit of what stuff we be:  
Our earth of mirth  
And tears he clears  
For braver, let our minds agree;  
And then will men

Within them win  
An Echo clapping harmony.

George Meredith

# Young Reynard

## I

Gracefullest leaper, the dappled fox-cub  
Curves over brambles with berries and buds,  
Light as a bubble that flies from the tub,  
Whisked by the laundry-wife out of her suds.  
Wavy he comes, woolly, all at his ease,  
Elegant, fashioned to foot with the deuce;  
Nature's own prince of the dance: then he sees  
Me, and retires as if making excuse.

## II

Never closed minuet courtlier! Soon  
Cub-hunting troops were abroad, and a yelp  
Told of sure scent: ere the stroke upon noon  
Reynard the younger lay far beyond help.  
Wild, my poor friend, has the fate to be chased;  
Civil will conquer: were 't other 'twere worse;  
Fair, by the flushed early morning embraced,  
Haply you live a day longer in verse.

George Meredith

## Youth In Age

Once I was part of the music I heard  
On the boughs or sweet between earth and sky,  
For joy of the beating of wings on high  
My heart shot into the breast of the bird.

I hear it now and I see it fly,  
And a life in wrinkles again is stirred,  
My heart shoots into the breast of the bird,  
As it will for sheer love till the last long sigh.

George Meredith

# Youth In Memory

Days, when the ball of our vision  
Had eagles that flew unabashed to sun;  
When the grasp on the bow was decision,  
And arrow and hand and eye were one;  
When the Pleasures, like waves to a swimmer,  
Came heaving for rapture ahead! -  
Invoke them, they dwindle, they glimmer  
As lights over mounds of the dead.

Behold the winged Olympus, off the mead,  
With thunder of wide pinions, lightning speed,  
Wafting the shepherd-boy through ether clear,  
To bear the golden nectar-cup.  
So flies desire at view of its delight,  
When the young heart is tiptoe perched on sight.  
We meanwhile who in hues of the sick year  
The Spring-time paint to prick us for our lost,  
Mount but the fatal half way up -  
Whereon shut eyes! This is decreed,  
For Age that would to youthful heavens ascend,  
By passion for the arms' possession tossed,  
It falls the way of sighs and hath their end;  
A spark gone out to more sepulchral night.  
Good if the arrowy eagle of the height  
Be then the little bird that hops to feed.

Lame falls the cry to kindle days  
Of radiant orb and daring gaze.  
It does but clank our mortal chain.  
For Earth reads through her felon old  
The many-numbered of her fold,  
Who forward tottering backward strain,  
And would be thieves of treasure spent,  
With their grey season soured.  
She could write out their history in their thirst  
To have again the much devoured,  
And be the bud at burst;  
In honey fancy join the flow,  
Where Youth swims on as once they went,

All choiric for spontaneous glee  
Of active eager lungs and thews;  
They now bared roots beside the river bent;  
Whose privilege themselves to see;  
Their place in yonder tideway know;  
The current glass peruse;  
The depths intently sound;  
And sapped by each returning flood  
Accept for monitory nourishment  
Those worn roped features under crust of mud,  
Reflected in the silvery smooth around:  
Not less the branching and high singing tree,  
A home of nests, a landmark and a tent,  
Until their hour for losing hold on ground.  
Even such good harvest of the things that flee  
Earth offers her subjected, and they choose  
Rather of Bacchic Youth one beam to drink,  
And warm slow marrow with the sensual wink.  
So block they at her source the Mother of the Muse.

Who cheerfully the little bird becomes,  
Without a fall, and pipes for peck at crumbs,  
May have her dolings to the lightest touch;  
As where some cripple muses by his crutch,  
Unwitting that the spirit in him sings:  
'When I had legs, then had I wings,  
As good as any born of eggs,  
To feed on all aerial things,  
When I had legs!'  
And if not to embrace he sighs,  
She gives him breath of Youth awhile,  
Perspective of a breezy mile,  
Companionable hedgeways, lifting skies;  
Scenes where his nested dreams upon their hoard  
Brooded, or up to empyrean soared:  
Enough to link him with a dotted line.  
But cravings for an eagle's flight,  
To top white peaks and serve wild wine  
Among the rosy undecayed,  
Bring only flash of shade  
From her full throbbing breast of day in night.  
By what they crave are they betrayed:

And cavernous is that young dragon's jaw,  
Crimson for all the fiery reptile saw  
In time now coveted, for teeth to flay,  
Once more consume, were Life recurrent May.  
They to their moment of drawn breath,  
Which is the life that makes the death,  
The death that makes ethereal life would bind:  
The death that breeds the spectre do they find.  
Darkness is wedded and the waste regrets  
Beating as dead leaves on a fitful gust,  
By souls no longer dowered to climb  
Beneath their pack of dust,  
Whom envy of a lustrous prime,  
Eclipsed while yet invoked, besets,  
And dooms to sink and water sable flowers,  
That never gladdened eye or loaded bee.  
Strain we the arms for Memory's hours,  
We are the seized Persephone.  
Responsive never to the soft desire  
For one prized tune is this our chord of life.  
'Tis clipped to deadness with a wanton knife,  
In wishes that for ecstasies aspire.  
Yet have we glad companionship of Youth,  
Elysian meadows for the mind,  
Dare we to face deeds done, and in our tomb  
Filled with the parti-coloured bloom  
Of loved and hated, grasp all human truth  
Sowed by us down the mazy paths behind.  
To feel that heaven must we that hell sound through:  
Whence comes a line of continuity,  
That brings our middle station into view,  
Between those poles; a novel Earth we see,  
In likeness of us, made of banned and blest;  
The sower's bed, but not the reaper's rest:  
An Earth alive with meanings, wherein meet  
Buried, and breathing, and to be.  
Then of the junction of the three,  
Even as a heart in brain, full sweet  
May sense of soul, the sum of music, beat.

Only the soul can walk the dusty track  
Where hangs our flowering under vapours black,



And bear to see how these pervade, obscure,  
Quench recollection of a spacious pure.  
They take phantasmal forms, divide, convolve,  
Hard at each other point and gape,  
Horrible ghosts! in agony dissolve,  
To reappear with one they drape  
For criminal, and, Father! shrieking name,  
Who such distorted issue did beget.  
Accept them, them and him, though hiss thy sweat  
Off brow on breast, whose furnace flame  
Has eaten, and old Self consumes.  
Out of the purification will they leap,  
Thee renovating while new light illumines  
The dusky web of evil, known as pain,  
That heavily up healthward mounts the steep;  
Our fleshly road to beacon-fire of brain:  
Midway the tameless oceanic brute  
Below, whose heave is topped with foam for fruit,  
And the fair heaven reflecting inner peace  
On righteous warfare, that asks not to cease.

Forth of such passage through black fire we win  
Clear hearing of the simple lute,  
Whereon, and not on other, Memory plays  
For them who can in quietness receive  
Her restorative airs: a ditty thin  
As note of hedgerow bird in ear of eve,  
Or wave at ebb, the shallow catching rays  
On a transparent sheet, where curves a glass  
To truer heavens than when the breaker neighs  
Loud at the plunge for bubbly wreck in roar.  
Solidity and bulk and martial brass,  
Once tyrants of the senses, faintly score  
A mark on pebbled sand or fluid slime,  
While present in the spirit, vital there,  
Are things that seemed the phantoms of their time;  
Eternal as the recurrent cloud, as air  
Imperative, refreshful as dawn-dew.  
Some evanescent hand on vapour scrawled  
Historic of the soul, and heats anew  
Its coloured lines where deeds of flesh stand bald.  
True of the man, and of mankind 'tis true,

Did we stout battle with the Shade, Despair,  
Our cowardice, it blooms; or haply warred  
Against the primal beast in us, and flung;  
Or cleaving mists of Sorrow, left it starred  
Above self-pity slain: or it was Prayer  
First taken for Life's cleanser; or the tongue  
Spake for the world against this heart; or rings  
Old laughter, from the founts of wisdom sprung;  
Or clap of wing of joy, that was a throb  
From breast of Earth, and did no creature rob:  
These quickening live. But deepest at her springs,  
Most filial, is an eye to love her young.  
And had we it, to see with it, alive  
Is our lost garden, flower, bird and hive.  
Blood of her blood, aim of her aim, are then  
The green-robed and grey-crested sons of men:  
She tributary to her aged restores  
The living in the dead; she will inspire  
Faith homelier than on the Yonder shores,  
Abhorring these as mire,  
Uncertain steps, in dimness gropes,  
With mortal tremours pricking hopes,  
And, by the final Bacchic of the lusts  
Propelled, the Bacchic of the spirit trusts:  
A fervour drunk from mystic hierophants;  
Not utterly misled, though blindly led,  
Led round fermenting eddies. Faith she plants  
In her own firmness as our midway road:  
Which rightly Youth has read, though blindly read;  
Her essence reading in her toothsome goad;  
Spur of bright dreams experience disenchants.  
But love we well the young, her road midway  
The darkneses runs consecrated clay.  
Despite our feeble hold on this green home,  
And the vast outer strangeness void of dome,  
Shall we be with them, of them, taught to feel,  
Up to the moment of our prostrate fall,  
The life they deem voluptuously real  
Is more than empty echo of a call,  
Or shadow of a shade, or swing of tides;  
As brooding upon age, when veins congeal,  
Grey palsy nods to think. With us for guides,

Another step above the animal,  
To views in Alpine thought are they helped on.  
Good if so far we live in them when gone!

And there the arrowy eagle of the height  
Becomes the little bird that hops to feed,  
Glad of a crumb, for tempered appetite  
To make it wholesome blood and fruitful seed.  
Then Memory strikes on no slack string,  
Nor sectional will varied Life appear:  
Perforce of soul discerned in mind, we hear  
Earth with her Onward chime, with Winter Spring.  
And ours the mellow note, while sharing joys  
No more subjecting mortals who have learnt  
To build for happiness on equipoise,  
The Pleasures read in sparks of substance burnt;  
Know in our seasons an integral wheel,  
That rolls us to a mark may yet be willed.  
This, the truistic rubbish under heel  
Of all the world, we peck at and are filled.

George Meredith