

Classic Poetry Series

**Thomas Sturge Moore**  
**- poems -**

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# Thomas Sturge Moore(1870-1944)

Thomas Sturge Moore (March 4, 1870– July 18, 1944) was an English poet, author and artist. He was born on 4 March 1870 and was educated at Dulwich College, the Croydon Art School and Lambeth Art School. He was a long-term friend and correspondent of W. B. Yeats. He was also a playwright, writing a *Medea* influenced by Yeats' drama and the Japanese Noh style.

Sturge Moore was a prolific poet and his subjects included, morality, art and the spirit. His first pamphlet, *Two Poems*, was printed privately in 1893 and his first book of verse, *The Vinedresser*, was published in 1899. His love for poetry lead him to become an active member of the Poetry Recital Society. His first (of 31) plays to be produced was *Aphrodite against Artemis* (1906), staged by the Literary Theatre Club of which he became a member in 1908. He received a civil list pension in 1920 in recognition for his contribution to literature and in 1930 he was nominated as one of seven candidates for the position of Poet Laureate. He died on 18 July 1944.

He adopted the name 'Sturge' as a way of avoiding confusion with the poet Thomas Moore.

He was the brother of the famous philosopher George Edward Moore, one of the founders of the Analytic tradition in philosophy.

# A Duet

'FLOWERS nodding gaily, scent in air,  
Flowers posied, flowers for the hair,  
Sleepy flowers, flowers bold to stare-----'

'O pick me some!'

'Shells with lip, or tooth, or bleeding gum,  
Tell-tale shells, and shells that whisper Come,  
Shells that stammer, blush, and yet are dumb-----'

'O let me hear.'

'Eyes so black they draw one trembling near,  
Brown eyes, caverns flooded with a tear,  
Cloudless eyes, blue eyes so windy clear-----'

'O look at me!'

'Kisses sadly blown across the sea,  
Darkling kisses, kisses fair and free,  
Bob-a-cherry kisses 'neath a tree-----'

'O give me one!'

Thus sand a king and queen in Babylon.

Thomas Sturge Moore

# A Sicilian Idyll

(First Scene) Damon

I thank thee, no;  
Already have I drunk a bowl of wine . . .  
Nay, nay, why wouldst thou rise?  
There rolls thy ball of worsted! Sit thee down;  
Come, sit thee down, Cydilla,  
And let me fetch thy ball, rewind the wool,  
And tell thee all that happened yesterday.

Cydilla

Thanks, Damon; now, by Zeus, thou art so brisk,  
It shames me that to stoop should try my bones.

Damon

We both are old,  
And if we may have peaceful days are blessed;  
Few hours of bouyancy will come to break  
The sure withdrawal from us of life's flood.

Cydilla

True, true, youth looks a great way off! To think  
It wonce was age did lie quite out of sight!

Damon

Not many days have been so beautiful  
As yesterday, Cydilla; yet one was;  
And I with thee broke tranced on its fine spell;  
Thou dost remember? Yes? but not with tears,  
Ah, not with tears, Cydilla, pray, oh, pray!

Cydilla

Pardon me, Damon,  
'Tis many years since thou hast touched thereon;  
And something stirs about thee -  
Such air of eagerness as was thine when  
I was more foolish than in my life, I hope  
To ever have been at another time.

Damon

Pooh! foolish? - thou wast then so very wise  
That, often having seen thee foolish since,  
Wonder has made me faint that thou shouldst err.

Cydilla

Nay, then I erred, dear Damon; and remorse  
Was not so slow to find me as thou deemst.

Damon

There, mop those dear wet eyes, or thou'lt ne'er hear  
What it was filled my heart yesterday.

Cydilla

Tell, Damon; since I well know that regrets  
Hang like dull gossips round another's ear.

Damon

First, thou must know that oftentimes I rise, -  
Not heeding or not finding sleep, of watching  
Afraid no longer to be prodigal, -  
And gaze upon the beauty of the night.  
Quiet hours, while dawn absorbs the waning stars,  
Are like cold water sipped between our cups  
Washing the jaded palate till it taste  
The wine again. Ere the sun rose, I sat  
Within my garden porch; my lamp was left  
Burning beside my bed, though it would be  
Broad day before I should return upstairs.  
I let it burn, willing to waste some oil  
Rather than to disturb my tranquil mood;  
But, as the Fates determined, it was seen. -  
Suddenly, running round the dovecote, came  
A young man naked, breathless, through the dawn,  
Florid with haste and wine; it was Hipparchus.  
Yes, there he stood before me panting, rubbing  
His heated flesh which felt the cold at once.  
When he had breath enough, he begged me straight  
To put the lamp out; and himself and done it  
Ere I was on the stair.  
Flung all along my bed, his gasping shook it  
When I at length could sit down by his side:  
'What cause, young sir, brings you here in this plight

At such an hour?' He shuddered, sighed and rolled  
My blanket round him; then came a gush of words:  
'The first of causes, Damon, namely Love,  
Eldest and least resigned and most unblushing  
Of all the turbulent impulsive gods.  
A quarter of an hour scarce has flown  
Since lovely arms clung round me, and my head  
Asleep lay nested in a woman's hair;  
My cheek still bears print of its ample coils.'  
Athwart its burning flush he drew my fingers  
And their tips felt it might be as he said.  
'Oh I have had a night, a night, a night!  
Had Paris so much bliss?  
And oh! was Helen's kiss  
To be compared with those I tasted?  
Which but for me had all been wasted  
On a bald man, a fat man, a gross man, a beast  
To scare the best guest from the very best feast!'  
Cydilla need not hear half that he said,  
For he was mad awhile.  
But having given rein to hot caprice,  
And satyr jest, and the distempered male,  
At length, I heard his story.  
At sun-down certain miles without the town  
He'd chanced upon a light-wheeled litter-car,  
And in it there stood one  
Yet more a woman than her garb was rich,  
With more of youth and health than elegance.  
'The mules,' he said, 'were beauties: she was one,  
And cried directions to the neighbour field:  
'O catch that big bough! Fool, not that, the next!  
Clumsy, you've let it go! O stop it swaying,  
The eggs will jolt out!' From the road,' said he,  
'I could not see who thus was rated; so  
Sprang up beside her and beheld her husband,  
Lover or keeper, what you like to call him; -  
A middle-aged stout man upon whose shoulders  
Kneeled up a scraggy mule-boy slave, who was  
The fool that could not reach a thrush's nest  
Which they, while plucking almond, had revealed.  
Before she knew who it could be, I said,  
'Why yes, he is a fool, but we, fair friend,

Were we not foolish waiting for such fools?  
Let us be off!' I stooped, took, shook the reins  
With one hand, while the other clasped her waist.  
'Ah, who?' she turned; I smiled like amorous Zeus;  
A certain vagueness clouded her wild eyes  
As though she saw a swan, a bull, a shower  
Of hurried flames, and felt divinely pleased.  
I cracked the whip and we were jolted down;  
A kiss was snatched getting the ribbons straight;  
We hardly heard them first begin to bawl,  
So great our expedition towards the town:  
We flew. I pulled up at an inn, then bid them  
Stable my mules and chariot and prepare  
A meal for Dives; meanwhile we would stroll  
Down to the market. Took her arm in mine,  
And, out of sight, hurried her through cross-lanes,  
Bade her choose, now at a fruit, now pastry booth.  
Until we gained my lodging she spoke little  
But often laughed, tittering from time to time,  
'O Bacchus, what a prank! - Just think of Cymon,  
So stout as he is, at least five miles to walk  
Without a carriage! - well you take things coolly' -  
Or such appreciation nice of gifts  
I need not boast of, since I had them gratis,  
When my stiff door creaked open grudgingly  
Her face first fell; the room looked bare enough.  
Still we brought with us food and cakes; I owned  
A little cellar of delicious wine;  
An unasked neighbour's garden furnished flowers;  
Jests helped me nimbly, I surpassed myself;  
So we were friends and, having laughed, we drank,  
Ate, sang, danced, grew wild. Soon both had one  
Desire, effort, goal,  
One bed, one sleep, one dream . . .  
O Damon, Damon, both had one alarm,  
When woken by the door forced rudely open,  
Lit from the stair, bedazzled, glowered at, hated!  
She clung to me; her master, husband, uncle  
(I know not which or what he was) stood there;  
It crossed my mind he might have been her father.  
Naked, unarmed, I rose, and did assume  
What dignity is not derived from clothes,

Bid them to quit my room, my private dwelling.  
It was no use, for that gross beast was rich;  
Had his been neither legal right nor moral,  
My natural right was nought, for his she was  
In eyes of those bribed catchpolls. Brute revenge  
Seethed in his pimpled face: 'To gaol with him!'  
He shouted huskily. I wrapped some clothes  
About my shuddering bed-fellow, a sheet  
Flung round myself; ere she was led away,  
Had whispered to her 'Shriek, faint on the stair!'  
Then I was seized by two dog officers.  
That girl was worth her keep, for, going down,  
She suddenly writhed, gasped, and had a fit.  
My chance occurred, and I whipped through the casement;  
All they could do was catch away the sheet;  
I dropped a dozen feet into a bush,  
Soon found my heels and plied them; here I am.'

Cydilla

A strange tale, Damon, this to tell to me  
And introduce as thou at first began.

Damon

Thy life, Cydilla, has at all times been  
A ceremony: this young man's  
Discovered by free impulse, not couched in forms  
Worn and made smooth by prudent folk long dead.  
I love Hipparchus for his wave-like brightness;  
He wastes himself, but till his flash is gone  
I shall be ever glad to hear him laugh:  
Nor could one make a Spartan of him even  
Were one the Spartan with a will to do it.  
Yet had there been no more than what is told,  
Thou wouldst not now be lending ear to me.

Cydilla

Hearing such things, I think of my poor son,  
Which makes me far too sad to smile at folly.

Damon

There, let me tell thee all just as it happened,  
And of thy son I shall be speaking soon.



Cydilla

Delphis! Alas, are his companions still  
No better than such ne'er-do-wells? I thought  
His life was sager now, though he has killed  
My hopes of seeing him a councillor.

Damon

How thou art quick to lay claim to a sorrow!  
Should I have come so eagerly to thee  
If all there was to tell thee were such poor news?

Cydilla

Forgive me; well know I there is no end  
To Damon's kindness; my poor boy has proved it;  
Could but his father so have understood him!

Damon

Let lie the sad contents of vanished years;  
Why with complaints reproach the helpless dead?  
Thy husband ne'er will cross thy hopes again.  
Come, think of what a sky made yesterday  
The worthy dream of thrice divine Apollo!  
Hipparchus' plan was, we should take the road  
(As, when such mornings tempt me, is my wont)  
And cross the hills, along the coast, toward Mylae.  
He in disguise, a younger handier Chloe,  
Would lead my mule; must brown his face and arms:  
And thereon straight to wake her he was gone.  
Their voices from her cabin crossed the yard;  
He swears those parts of her are still well made  
Which she keeps too well hidden when about; -  
And she, no little pleased, that interlards,  
Between her exclamations at his figure,  
Reproof of gallantries half-laughed at hers.  
Anon she titters as he dons her dress  
Doubtless with pantomime -  
Head-carriage and hip-swagger.  
A wench, more conscious of her sex than grace,  
He then rejoined me, changed beyond belief,  
Roguish as vintage makes them; bustling helps  
Or hinders Chloe harness to the mule; -

In fine bewitching both her age and mine.  
The life that in such fellows runs to waste  
Is like a gust that pulls about spring trees  
And spoils your hope of fruit, while it delights  
The sense with bloom and odour scattered, mingled  
With salt spume savours from a crested offing.  
The sun was not long up when we set forth  
And, coming to the deeply shadowed gate,  
Found catchpolls lurked there, true to his surmise.  
Them he, his beard disguised like face-ache, sauced;  
(Too gaily for that bandaged cheek, thought I);  
But they, whose business was to think,  
Were quite contented, let the hussy pass,  
Returned her kisses blown back down the road,  
And crowned the mirth of their outwitter's heart.  
As the steep road wound clear above the town,  
Fewer became those little comedies  
To which encounteres roused him: till, at last,  
He scarcely knew we passed some vine-dressers:  
And I could see the sun's heat, lack of sleep,  
And his late orgy would defeat his powers.  
So, where the road grows level and must soon  
Descend, I bade him climb into the car;  
On which the mule went slower still and slower.  
This creature, who, upon occasions, shows  
Taste very like her master's left the highway  
And took a grass-grown wheel-track that led down  
Zigzag athwart the broad curved banks of lawn  
Coating a valley between rounded hills  
Which faced the sea abruptly in huge crags.  
Each slope grew steeper till I left my seat  
And led the mule; for now Hipparchus' snore  
Tuned with the crooning waves heard from below.  
We passed two narrow belts of wood and then  
The sea, that first showed blue above their tops,  
Was spread before us chequered with white waves  
Breaking beneath on boulders which choked up  
The narrowed issue seawards of the glen.  
The steep path would no more admit of wheels:  
I took the beast and tethered her to graze  
Within the shade of a stunt ilex clump, -  
Returned to find a vacant car; Hipparchus,

Uneasy on my tilting down the shafts,  
And heated with strange clothes, had roused himself  
And lay asleep upon his late disguise,  
Naked 'neath the cool eaves of one huge rock  
That stood alone, much higher up than those  
Over, and through, and under which, the waves  
Made music or forced milk-white floods of foam.  
There I reclined, while vision, sound and scent  
Won on my willing soul like sleep on joy,  
Till all accustomed thoughts were far away  
As from a happy child the cares of men.  
The hour was sacred to those earlier gods  
Who are not active, but divinely wait  
The consummation of their first great deeds,  
Unfolding still and blessing hours serene.  
Presently I was gazing on a boy,  
(Though whence he came my mind had not perceived).  
Twelve or thirteen he seemed, with clinging feet  
Poised on a boulder, and against the sea  
Set off. His wide-brimmed hat of straw was arched  
Over his massed black and abundant curls  
By orange ribbon tied beneath his chin;  
Around his arms and shoulders his sole dress,  
A cloak, was all bunched up. He leapt, and lighted  
Upon the boulder just beneath; there swayed,  
Re-poised,  
And perked his head like an inquisitive bird,  
As gravely happy; of all unconscious save  
His body's aptness for its then employment;  
His eyes intent on shells in some clear pool  
Or choosing where he next will plant his feet.  
Again he leaps, his curls against his hat  
Bounce up behind. The daintiest thing alive,  
He rocks awhile, turned from me towards the sea;  
Unseen I might devour him with my eyes.  
At last he stood upon a ledge each wave  
Spread with a sheet of foam four inches deep;  
From minute to minute, while it bathed his feet,  
He gazing at them saw them disappear  
And reappear all shining and refreshed;  
Then raised his head, beheld the ocean stretched  
Alive before him its magnitude.

None but a child could have been so absorbed  
As to escape its spell till then, none else  
Could so have voiced glad wonder in a song: -  
'All the waves of the sea are there!  
In at my eyes they crush.  
Till my head holds as fair a sea:  
Though I shut my eyes, they are there!  
Nay towards my lids they rush,  
Mad to burst forth from me  
Back to the open air! -  
To follow them my heart needs,  
O white-maned steeds, to ride you;  
Lathe-shouldered steeds,  
To the western isles astride you  
Amyntas speeds!'  
'Damon!' said a voice quite close to me  
And looking up . . . as might have stood Apollo  
In one vase garment such as shepherds wear  
And leaning on such tall staff stood . . . Thou guessest,  
Whose majesty as vainly was disguised  
As must have been Apollo's minding sheep.

Cydilla

Delphis! I know, dear Damon, it was Delphis!  
Healthy life in the country having chased  
His haggard looks; his speech is not wild now,  
Nor wicked with exceptions to things honest:  
Thy face a kindlier way than speech tells this.

Damon

Yes, dear Cydilla, he was altogether  
What mountaineers might dream of for a king.

Cydilla

But tell me, is he tutor to that boy?

Damon

He is an elder brother to the lad.

Cydilla

Nay, nay, hide nothing, speak the worst at once.

Damon

I meant no hint of ill;  
A god in love with young Amyntas might  
Look as he did; fathers alone feel like him:  
Could I convey his calm and happy speech  
Thy last suspicion would be laid to rest.

Cydilla

Damon, see, my glad tears have drowned all fear;  
Think'st thou he may come back and win renown,  
And fill his father's place?  
Not as his father filled it,  
But with an inward spirit correspondent  
To that contained and high imposing mien  
Which made his father honoured before men  
Of greater wisdom, more integrity.

Damon

And loved before men of more kindness!

Cydilla

O Damon, far too happy am I now  
To grace thy naughtiness by showing pain.  
My Delphis 'owns the brains and presence too  
That makes a Pericles!' . . . (the words are thine)  
Had he but the will; and has he now?  
Good Damon, tell me quick?

Damon

He dreams not of the court, and city life  
Is what he rails at.

Cydilla

Well, if he now be wise and sober-souled  
And loved for goodness, I can rest content.

Damon

My brain lights up to see thee happy! wait,  
It may be I can give some notion how  
Our poet spoke:  
'Damon, the best of life is in thine eyes -  
Worship of promise-laden beauty. Seems he not

The god of this fair scene?  
 Those waves claim such a master as that boy;  
 And these green slopes have waited till his feet  
 Should wander them, to prove they were not spread  
 In wantonness. What were this flower's prayer  
 Had it a voice? The place behind his ear  
 Would brim its cup with bliss and overbrim;  
 O, to be worn and fade beside his cheek!' -  
 'In love and happy, Delphis; and the boy?' -  
 'Loves and is happy' -  
 'You hale from?' -  
 'Ætna;  
 We have been out two days and crossed this ridge,  
 West of Mount Mycon's head. I serve his father,  
 A farmer well-to-do and full of sense,  
 Who owns a grass-farm cleared among the pines  
 North-west the cone, where even at noon in summer,  
 The slope it falls on lengthens a tree's shade.  
 To play the lyre and write and dance  
 I teach this lad; in all their country toil  
 Join, nor ask better fare than cheese, black bread,  
 Butter or curds, and milk, nor better bed  
 Than litter of dried fern or lentisk yields,  
 Such as they all sleep soundly on and dream,  
 (If e'er they dream) of places where it grew, -  
 Where they have gathered mushrooms, eaten berries,  
 Or found the sheep they lost, or killed a fox,  
 Or snared the kestrel, or so played their pipes  
 Some maid showed pleasure, sighed, nay even wept.  
 There to be poet need involve no strain,  
 For though enough of coarseness, dung, - nay, nay,  
 And suffering, too, be mingled with the life,  
 'Tis wedded to such an air,  
 Such water and sound health!  
 What else might jar or fret chimes in attuned  
 Like satyr's cloven hoof or lorn nymph's grief  
 In a choice ode. Though lust, disease and death,  
 As everywhere, are cruel tyrants, yet  
 They all wear flowers, and each sings a song  
 Such as the hilly echo loves to learn.'  
 'At last then even Delphis knows content?'  
 'Damon, not so:

This life has brought me health but not content.  
That boy, whose shouts ring round us while he flings  
Intent each one toward yon shining object  
Afloat inshore . . . I eat my heart to think  
How all which makes him worthy of more love  
Must train his ear to catch the siren croon  
That never else had reached his upland home!  
And he who failed in proof, how should he arm  
Another against perils? Ah, false hope,  
And credulous enjoyment! How should I,  
Life's fool, while wakening ready wit in him,  
Teach how to shun applause, and those bright eyes  
Of women who pour in the lap of spring  
Their whole year's substance? They can offer  
To fill the day much fuller than I could,  
And yet teach night surpass it. Can my means  
Prevent the ruin of the thing I cherish?  
What cares Zeus for him? Fate despises love.  
Why, lads more exquisite, brimming with promise,  
A thousand times have been lost for the lack  
Of just the help a watchful god might give;  
But which the best of fathers, best of mothers,  
Of friends, of lovers cannot quite supply.  
Powers, who swathe man's virtue up in weakness,  
Then plunge his delicate mind in hot desire,  
Preparing pleasure first and after shame  
To bandage round his eyes, - these gods are not  
The friends of men.'

The Delphic of old days before me stood,  
Passionate, stormy, teeming with black thought,  
His back turned on that sparkling summer sea,  
His back turned on his love; and wilder words  
And less coherent thought poured from him now.  
Hipparchus waking took stock of the scene.  
I watched him wend down, rubbing sleepy lids,  
To where the boy was busy throwing stones.  
He joined the work, but even his stronger arm  
And heavier flints he hurled would not suffice  
To drive that floating object nearer shore:  
And, ere the rebel Delphic had expressed  
Enough of anger and contempt for gods,  
(Who, he asserted, were the dreams of men),

I saw the stone-throwers both take the water  
And swimming easily attain their end.  
The way they held their noses proved the thing  
A tunny, belly floating upward, dead;  
Both towed it till the current caught and swept it  
Out far from that sweet cove; they laughing watched:  
Then, suddenly, Amyntas screamed and Delphis  
Turned to see him sink  
Locked in Hipparchus' arms.  
The god Apollo never  
Burst through a cloud with more ease than thy son  
Poured from his homespun garb  
The rapid glory of his naked limbs,  
And like a streak of lightning reached the waves: -  
Wherein his thwarted speed appeared more awful  
As, brought within the scope of comprehension,  
Its progress and its purpose could be gauged.  
Spluttering Amyntas rose, Hipparchus near him  
Who cried 'Why coy of kisses, lovely lad?  
I ne'er would harm thee; art thou not ashamed  
To treat thy conquest thus?'  
He shouted partly to drown the sea's noise, chiefly  
The nearing Delphis to disarm.  
His voice lost its assurance while he spoke,  
And, as he finished, quick to escape he turned;  
Thy son's eyes and that steady coming on,  
As he might see them over ruffled crests,  
Far better helped him swim  
Than ever in his life he swam before.  
Delphis passed by Amyntas;  
Hipparchus was o'er taken,  
Cuffed, ducked and shaken;  
In vain he clung about his angry foe;  
Held under he perforce let go:  
I, fearing for his life, set up a whoop  
To bring cause and effect to thy son's mind,  
And in dire rage's room his sense returned.  
He towed Hipparchus back like one he'd saved  
From drowning, laid him out upon that ledge  
Where late Amyntas stood, where now he kneeled  
Shivering, alarmed and mute.  
Delphis next set the drowned man's mouth to drain;



We worked his arms, for I had joined them; soon  
His breathing recommenced; we laid him higher  
On sun-warmed turf to come back to himself;  
Then we climbed to the cart without a word.  
The sun had dried their limbs; they, putting on  
Their clothes, sat down; at length, I asked the lad  
What made him keen to pelt a stinking fish.  
Blushing, he said, 'I wondered what it was.  
But that man, when he came to help, declared  
'Twould prove a dead sea-nymph, and we might see,  
By swimming out, how finely she was made.  
I did not half believe, yet when we found  
That foul stale fish, it made us laugh.' He smiled  
And watched Hipparchus spit and cough and groan.  
I moved to the car and unpacked bread and meat,  
A cheese, some fruit, a skin of wine, two bowls.  
Amyntas was all joy to see such things;  
Ran off and pulled acanthus for our plates;  
Chattering, he helped me set all forth, - was keen  
To choose rock basin where the wine might cool;  
Approved, was full as happy as I to praise:  
And most he pleased me, when he set a place  
For poor Hipparchus. Thus our eager work,  
While Delphis, in his thoughts retired, sat frowning,  
Grew like a home-conspiracy to trap  
The one who bears the brunt of outside cares  
Into the glow of cheerfulness that bathes  
The children and the mother, - happy not  
To foresee winter, short-commons or long debts,  
Since they are busied for the present meal, -  
Too young, too weak, too kind, to peer ahead,  
Or probe the dark horizon bleak with storms.  
Oh! I have sometimes thought there is a god  
Who helps with lucky accidents when folk  
Join with the little ones to chase such gloom.  
That chance which left Hipparchus with no clothers,  
Surely divinity was ambushed in it?  
When he must put on Chloe's, Amyntas rocked  
With laughter, and Hipparchus, quick to use  
A favourable gust, pretends confusion  
Such as a farmer's daughter red-faced shows  
If in the dance her dress has come unpinned.

She suddenly grow grave; yet, seeing there  
Friends only, stoops behind a sister-skirt.  
Then, having set to rights the small mishap,  
Holding her screener's elbows, round her shoulder  
Peeps, to bob back meeting a young man's eye.  
All, grateful for such laughs, give Hermes thanks.  
And even Delphis at Hipparchus smiled  
When, from behind me, he peeped bashful forth;  
Laughing because he was or was not like  
Some wench . . .  
Why, Delphis, in the name of Zeus  
How come you here?

Cydilla What can have happened, Delphis?  
Be brief for pity!

Delphis Nothing, mother, nothing  
That has not happened time on time before  
To thee, to Damon, when the life ye thought  
With pride and pleasure yours, has proved a dream.  
They strike down on us from the top of heaven,  
Bear us up in their talons, up and up,  
Drop us: we fall, are crippled, maimed for life.  
'Our dreams'? nay, we are theirs for sport, for prey,  
And life is the King Eagle,  
The strongest, highest, flyer, from whose clutch  
The fall is fatal always.

Cydilla Delphis, Delphis,  
Good Damon had been making me so happy  
By telling . . .

Delphis  
How he watched me near the zenith?  
Three years back  
That dream pounced on me and began to soar;  
Having been sick, my heart had found new lies;  
The only thoughts I then had ears for were  
Healthy, virtuous, sweet;  
Jaded town-wastrel,  
A counry setting was the sole could take me  
Three hears back.

Damon might have guessed  
From such a dizzy height  
What fall was coming.

Cydilla  
Ah my boy, my boy!

Damon  
Sit down, be patient, let us hear and aid, -  
Has aught befallen Amyntas?

Delphis  
Would he were dead!  
Would that I had been brute enough to slay him. -  
Great Zeus, Hipparchus had so turned his head.  
His every smile and word  
As we sat by our fire, stung my fool's heart. -  
'How we laughed to see him curtsey,  
Fidget strings about his waist, -  
Giggle, his beard caught in the chlamys' hem  
Drawing it tight about his neck, just like  
Our Baucis.' Could not sleep  
For thinking of the life they lead in towns;  
He said so: when, at last,  
He sighed from dreamland, thoughts  
I had been day-long brooding  
Broke into vision.

A child, a girl,  
Beautiful, nay more than others beautiful,  
Not meant for marriage, not for one man meant,  
You know what she will be;  
At six years old or seven her life is round her;  
A company, all ages, old men, young men,  
Whose vices she must prey on.  
And the bent crone she will be is there too,  
Patting her head and chuckling prophecies. -  
O cherry lips, O wild bird eyes,  
O gay invulnerable setter-at-nought  
Of will, of virtue -  
Thou art as constant a cause as is the sea,  
As is the sun, as are the winds, as night,

Of opportunities not only but events; -  
The unalterable past  
Is full of thy contrivance,  
Aphrodite,  
Goddess of ruin!

No girl; nay, nay,  
Amyntas is young,  
Is gay,  
Has beauty and health - and yet  
In his sleep I have seen him smile  
And known that his dream was vile;  
Those eyes which brimmed over with glee  
Till my life flowed as fresh as the sea -  
Those eyes, gloved each in a warm live lid,  
May be glad that their visions are hid.

I taught myself to rhyme; the trick will cling.  
Ah, Damon, day-lit vision is more dread  
Than those which suddenly replace the dark!  
When the dawn filtered through our tent of boughs  
I saw him closely wrapped in his grey cloak,  
His head upon a pile of caked thin leaves  
Whose life had dried up full two years ago.  
Their flakes shook in the breath from those moist lips;  
The vow his kiss would seal must prove, I knew  
As friable as that pale ashen fritter;  
It had more body than reason dare expect  
From that so beautiful creature's best intent.  
He waking found me no more there; and wanders  
Through Ætna's woods to-day  
Calling at times, or questioning charcoal burners,  
Till he shall strike a road shall lead him home;  
Yet all his life must be spent as he spends  
This day in whistling, wondering, singing, chatting,  
In the great wood, vacant and amiable.

Damon  
Can it be possible that thou desertest  
Thy love, thy ward, the work of three long years,  
Because chance, on an April holiday  
Has filled this boy's talk with another man,

And wonder at another way of life?  
Worse than a woman's is such jealousy;  
The lad must live!

Delphis

Live, live, to be sure, he must live!  
I have lived, am a fool for my pains!  
And yet, and yet,  
This heart has ached to play the god for him: -  
Mine eyes for his had sifted visible things;  
Speech had been filtered ere it reached his ear;  
Not in the world should he have lived, but breathed  
Humanity's distilled quintessences;  
The indiscriminate multitude sorted should yield him  
Acquaintance and friend discerned, chosen by me: -  
By me, who failed, wrecked, my youth's prime, and dragged  
More wonderful than his gifts in the mire!

Damon

Yet if experience could not teach and save  
Others from ignorance, why, towns would be  
Ruins, and civil men like outlaws thieves,  
Stab, riot, ere two generations passed.

Delphis

Where is the Athens that Pericles loved?  
Where are the youths that were Socrates' friends?  
There was a town where all learnt  
What the wisest taught!  
Why had crude Sparta such treasonous force?  
Could Philip of Macedon  
Breed a true Greek of his son?  
What honour to conquer a world  
Where Alcibiades had failed,  
Lead half-drilled highland hordes  
Whose lust would inherit the wise?  
There is nothing art's industry shaped  
But their idleness praising it mocked.  
Thus Fate re-assumed her command  
And laughed at experienced law.  
What ails man to love with such pains?  
Why toil to create in the mind

Of those who shall close in his grave  
The best that he is and has hoped?  
The longer permission he has,  
The nobler the structure so raised,  
The greater its downfall. Fools, fools,  
Where is a town such as Pericles ruled?  
Where youths to replace those whom Socrates loved?

Wise Damon, thou art silent; - Mother, thou  
Hast only arms to cling about thy son. -  
Who can descry the purpose of a god  
With eyes wide-open? shut them, every fool  
Can conjure up a world arriving somewhere,  
Resulting in what he may call perfection.  
Evil must soon or late succeed to good.  
There well may once have been a golden age:  
Why should we treat it as a poet's tale?  
Yet, in those hills that hung o'er Arcady,  
Some roving inebriate Daimon  
Begot him fair children  
On nymphs of the vineyard,  
On nymphs of the rock: -  
And in the heart of the forest  
Lay bound in white arms,  
In action creative a father  
Without a thought for his child: -  
A purposeless god,  
The forbear of men  
To corrupt, ape, inherit and spoil  
That fine race before hand with doom!

No, Damon, what's an answer worth to one  
Whose mind has been flung open?  
Only last night,  
The gates of my spirit gave entrance  
Unto the great light;  
And I saw how virtue seduceth,  
Not ended today or tomorrow  
Like the passion for love,  
Like the passion for life -  
But perennial pain  
And age-long effort.

Dead deeds are the teeth that shine  
In the mouth that repeateth praise,  
That spurs men to do high things  
Since their fathers did higher before -  
To give more than they hope to receive,  
To slave and to die in a secular cause!  
The mouth that smiles over-praise  
Eats out the heart of each fool  
To feed the great dream of a race.

Yet wearied peoples each in turn awake  
From virtue, as a man from his brief love,  
And, roughly shaken, face the useless truth;  
No answer to brute fact has e'er been found.  
Slaves of your slaves, caged in your furnished rooms,  
Ushered to meals when reft of appetite -  
Though hungry, bound to wait a stated hour -  
Your dearest contemplation broken off  
By the appointed summons to your bath;  
Racked with more thought for those whom you may flog  
Than for those dear; obsessed by your possessions  
With a dull round of stale anxieties; -  
Soon maintenance grows the extreme reach of hope  
For those held in respect, as in a vice,  
By citizens of whom they are the pick.  
Of men the least bond is the roving seaman  
Who hires himself to merchantman or pirate  
For single voyages, stays where he may please,  
Lives his purse empty in a dozen ports,  
And ne'er obeys the ghost of what once was!  
His laugh chimes readily; his kiss, no symbol  
Of aught to come, but cordial, eager, hot,  
Leaves his tomorrow free. With him for comrade  
Each day shall be enough, and what is good  
Enjoyed, and what is evil borne or cursed.  
I go, because I will not have a friend  
Lay claim upon my leisure this day week.  
I will be melted by each smile that takes me;  
What though a hundred lips should meet with mine!  
A vagabond I shall be as the moon is.  
The sun, the waves, the winds, all birds, all beasts,  
Are ever on the move, and take what comes;

They are not parasites like plants and men  
Rooted in that which fed them yesterday.  
Not even Memory shall follow Delphis,  
For I will yield to all impulse save hers,  
Therein alone subject to prescient rigour;  
Lest she should lure me back among the dying -  
Pilfer the present for the beggar past.  
Free minds must bargain with each greedy moment  
And seize the most that lies to hand at once.  
Ye are too old to understand my words;  
I yet have youth enough, and can escape  
From that which sucks each individual man  
Into the common dream.

Cydilla

Stay, Delphis, hear what Damon has to say!  
He is mad!

Damon

Mad - yes - mad as cruelty!

. . . . .

Poor, poor Cydilla! was it then to this  
That all my tale was prologue?  
Think of Amyntas, think of that poor boy,  
Bereaved as we are both bereaved! Come, come,  
Find him, and say that Love himself has sent us  
To offer our poor service in his stead.

Cydilla

Good Damon, help me find my wool; my eyes  
Are blind with tears; then I will come at once!  
We must be doing something, for I feel  
We both shall drown our hearts with time to spare.

Thomas Sturge Moore



# Aforetime

Dear exile from the hurrying crowd,  
At work I muse to you aloud;  
Thought on my anvil softens, glows,  
And I forget our art has foes;  
For life, the mother of beauty, seems  
A joyous sleep with waking dreams.  
Then the toy armoury of the brain  
Opining, judging, looks as vain  
As trowels silver gilt for use  
Of mayors and kings, who have to lay  
Foundation stones in hope they may  
Be honoured for walls others build.  
I, in amicable muse,  
With fathomless wonder only filled,  
Whisper over to your ear  
Listening two hundred odd miles north,  
And give thought chase that, were you here,  
Our talk would never run to earth.

Man can answer no momentous question:  
Whence comes his spirit? Has it lived before?  
Reason fails; hot springs of feeling spout  
Their snowy columns high in the dim land  
Of his surmise — violent divine decisions  
That often rule him: and at times he views  
Portraits of places he has never been to,  
Yet more minute and vivid than remembrance,  
Of boyhood homes, sail between sleep and waking  
Like some mirage, refuting all experience  
With topsy-turvy ships,  
That steals by in dead calms through tropic haze:  
And many a man in his climacteric years,  
Thoughts and remembered words have roused from sleep  
With knowledge that he lacked on lying down:  
And I, lapped in a trance of reverie, doubt  
Some spore of episodes  
Anterior far beyond this body's birth,  
Dispersed like puffs of dust impalpable,  
Wind-carried round this globe for centuries,

May, breathed with common air, yet swim the blood,  
And striking root in this or that brain, raise  
Imaginations unaccountable;  
One such seems half-implied in all I am,  
And many times re-pondered shapes like this:

A child myself I watched a woman loll  
Like to a clot of seaweed thrown ashore;  
Heavy and limp as cloth soaked in black dye,  
She glooms the noontide dazzle where a bay  
Bites into vineyarded flats close-fenced by hills,  
Over whose tops lap forests of cork and fir  
And reach in places half down their rough slopes.  
Lower, some few cleared fields square on the thickets  
Of junipers and longer thorns than furze  
So clumped that they are trackless even for goats  
I know two things about that woman: first  
She is a slave and I am free, and next  
As mothers need their sons' love she needs mine.  
Longings to utter fond compassionate sounds  
Stir through me, checked by knowing wiser folk  
Reprobate such indulgence. Ill at ease,  
Mute, yet her captive, I thrust brown toes through  
Loose sand no daily large tides overwhelm  
To cake and roll it firm and smooth and clean  
As the Atlantic remakes shores, you know.  
But there, like trailing skirts, long flaws of wind  
Obliterate the prints feet during calms  
Track over and over its always lonely stretch,  
Till some will have, it ghosts must rove at night;  
For folk by day are rare, yet a still week  
Leaves hardly ten yards anywhere uncrossed;  
Tempest spreads all revirginate like snow,  
Half burying dead wood snapped off from tossed trees,  
Since right along the foreshore, out of reach  
Of furious driven waves, three hundred pines  
Straggle the marches between sand and soil.  
Like maps of stone-walled fields their branching roots  
Hold the silt still so that thin grass grows there,  
Its blades whitened with travelling powdery drift  
The besom of the lightest breeze sets stirring.  
That woman's gaze toils worn from remote years,

Yet forward yearns through the bright spacious noon,  
Beyond the farthest isle, whose filmy shape  
Floats faint on the sea-line.  
I, scooping grains up with the frail half-shell  
Pale green and white-lined of sea-urchin, knew  
What her eyes sought as often children know  
Of grief or sin they could not name or think of  
Yet sooth or shrink from, so I saw and longed  
To heal her tender wound and yet said naught.  
The energy of bygone joy and pain  
Had left her listless figure charged with magic  
That caught and held my idleness near hers.  
Resentful of her power, my spirit chafed  
Against its own deep pity, as though it were  
Raised ghost and she the witch had bid it haunt me.  
What's more I knew this slave by rights should glean  
And faggot drift-wood, not lounge there and waste  
My father's food dreaming his time away.  
For then as now the common-minded rich  
Grudged ease to those whose toil brought them in means  
For every waste of life. At length I spoke,  
Insulting both my inarticulate soul  
And her with acted anger: 'Lazy wretch,  
Is it for eyes like yours to watch the sea  
As though you waited for a homing ship?  
My father might with reason spend his hours  
Scanning the far horizon; for his Swan  
Whose outward lading was full half a vintage  
Is now months overdue.' She turned on me  
Her languor knit and, through its homespun wrap,  
Her muscular frame gave hints of rebel will,  
While those great caves of night, her eyes, faced mine,  
Dread with the silence of unuttered wrongs:  
At last she spoke as one who must be heeded.  
Truly I am not clear  
Whether her meaning was conveyed in words  
(She mingled accents of an eastern tongue  
With deformed phrases of our native Latin)  
Or whether thought from her gaze poured through mine.  
The gravity of recollected life  
Was hers, condensed and, like a vision, flashed  
Suddenly on the guilty mind, a whole

Compact, no longer a mere tedious string  
Of moments negligible, each so small  
As they were lived, but stark like a slain man  
Who would alive have been ourself with twice  
The skill, the knowledge, the vitality  
Actually ours. Yea, as a tree may view  
With fingerless boughs and lorn pole impotent,  
An elephant gorged upon its leaves depart,  
Men often have reviewed an unwieldy past,  
That like a feasted Mammoth, leisured and slow,  
Turned its back on their warped bones. Even thus,  
Momentous with reproach, her grave regard  
Made me feel mean, cashiered of rank and right,  
My limbs that twelve good years had nursed were numbed  
And all their fidgety quicksilver grew stiff,  
Novel and fevering hallucinations  
Invaded my attention. So daylight  
When shutters are thrown back spreads through a house;  
As then the dreams and terrors of the night  
Decamp, so from my mind were driven  
All its own thoughts and feelings. Close she leant  
Propped on a swarthy arm, while the other helped  
With eloquent gesture potent as wizard wand,  
Veil the world off as with an airy web,  
Or flowing tent a-gleam with pictured folds.  
These tauten and distend — one sea of wheat,  
Islanded with black cities, borders now  
The voluminous blue pavilion of day.  
There-under to the nearest of those towns  
This woman younger by ten years made haste  
While at her side ran a small boy of six.  
They neared the walls, half a huge double gate  
Lay prostrate, though the other by stone hinges  
Hung to its flanking tower. The path they followed  
Threaded an old paved road whose flags were edged  
With dry grass and dry weeds, even cactuses  
Had pushed the stones up or found root in muck heaps:  
The path struck up the slope of the fallen door,  
Basalt like midnight, o'er which dusty feet  
Had greyed a passage, for it rested on  
Some débris fallen from the left-hand tower,  
And from its upper edge rude blocks like steps

Led down into the straight main street, that ran  
Past eyeless buildings mined as it were from coal,  
And earthquake-raised to light. Palaces and  
Roofless wide-flighted colonnaded temples,  
The uncemented walls piled-plumb with blocks  
Squared, polished, fitted with daemonic patience.  
Each gaping threshold high again as need be  
Waited a nine-foot lord to enter hall,  
Where the least draughty corner sheltered now  
Half-tented hut or improvised small home  
For Arab, brown, light-footed and proud-necked  
As was this woman with the compelling voice.  
Their present hatched and hived within that past  
As bees in the parchment chest of Samson's lion;  
And all seem conscious that their life was sweet,  
Like mice who clean their faces after meals  
And have such grace of movement, when unscared,  
As wins the admiration even of those  
Whose stores they rob and soil. I saw her eyes  
Young with contentment in her son  
And smaller babe and in their handsome sire,  
And knew that many a supper had been relished  
With hearts as joyous as waited while she cooked  
And served upon returning to their cot  
In hall where once far other hearts caroused.  
They and their tribe could never reap a tithe  
Of the vast harvest rustling round those ruins,  
And over which a half-moon soon set forth  
From black hills mounded up both east and south,  
While north-west her light played on distant summits;  
All the huge interspace floored with standing corn  
Which kings afar send soldiery to reap,  
Who now, beside a long canal cut straight  
In ancient days, have pitched their noisy camp  
Which on that vast staid silence makes a bruise  
Of blare and riot that its robust health  
Will certainly heal in a brief lapse of time.

One night, re-thought on after ten whole years,  
Is like the condor high above the Andes,  
A speck with difficulty found again  
Once the attention quits it. And I next

Descried our woman under breathless noon,  
Bathing in a clear lane of gliding water  
Whose banks seem lonely as the path of light  
Crossing mid ocean south of Capricorn.  
Her son steals warily after a butterfly  
And is as hushed with hope to capture it  
As are the birds with heat. An insect hum  
Circles the spot as round a cymbal's rim,  
Long after it has clanged, tingles a throb  
Which in a dream forgets the parent sound,  
Oppressed by this protracted and awe-filled pause,  
She hardly dares to wade the stream and moves  
As though in dread to wake some sleeping god,  
Yet still she nears and nears the further bank  
Where there is shade under a shumac's eaves.  
The brilliant surface cut her right in two,  
And the reflection of her bronzed torso  
Hid all beneath the polished gliding mirror;  
How her face listened to that sleep divine  
Whose audible breath was tuned to dreams of bliss!

Sudden, as though the woof of heaven were torn,  
A strident shout rang from some neighbour shrubs  
Three Nubian soldiers ran upon her with  
Delighted oily faces. Screaming first  
Commands to her small son to make for home,  
She laboured to recross the current as when  
In nightmares the scared soul expects to die  
Tortured by mutiny in limbs like lead,  
But as the playful lion of the sea  
Climbs the rock ledges hard by Fingal's cave  
To throw himself down into deep green baths,  
While others barking follow his vigorous lead,  
The foremost Abyssinian threw his weight  
Before her with a splash that hid them both,  
As the explosion of light-filled liquid parcels  
Shot forth in all directions. In his arms  
She re-appeared, a tragic terrified face  
Beside his coarse one laughing with success.  
Squeezing her with a pantomime of love,  
He turns to follow an arrow with his eyes  
That his companion, still upon the bank,

Has aimed towards her son's small head that bobbed  
Like a black cork across the basking corn.  
But from the level of the sunk stream bed  
Neither he nor she could see the target aimed at,  
Yet in the pause they heard the poor child scream;  
A second arrow, second scream; she fought,  
But soon like bundle bound, hung o'er his shoulder,  
Helpless as a mouse in cat's mouth carried off  
In search of quiet, there to play with it.  
Those arrows missed? — or did they not? The child  
Shrieked twice, yet scarcely like a wounded thing  
She thought and hoped and still but thinks and hopes.  
Where is that boy? Where is her husband now?  
While she submitted body to force and soul  
To the great shuddering violence of despair  
How had their life progressed in that far place?  
Compassion fused my consciousness with hers  
And second-sighted eloquence arose  
To claim my mind for rostrum,  
But obstinately tranced  
My eyes clung to their vision;  
For regions to explore allure the boy  
No stretch of thought or sea of feeling tempts.  
Entranced, the mind I then had, haunted  
Those basalt ruins. High on sable towers  
Some silky patriarchal goat appears  
And ponders silent streets, or suddenly  
Some nanny, her huge bag swollen with milk,  
Trots out on galleries that unfenced run  
Round vacant courts, there, stopped by plaintive kids,  
Lets them complete their meal. While always, always,  
Throughout, those mazed, sullen and sun-soaked walls,  
The steady, healthy wind,  
Which often blows for weeks without a lull  
Across that upland plain,  
Flutes staidly. Moaning  
Continuously as seas  
Or forests before storm,  
And, gathering moment,  
Articulated by her woe, begins  
With second-sighted eloquence  
To wail through me,

Nigh as unheeded,  
As though it still had been  
Meaningless wind.

For ah! the heart is cowed  
And dares not use her strength,  
Hears the kind impulse plead  
Against the common avaricious fear,  
Grants it but life, though sovereignty was due  
Or doles it sway but one day out of seven  
Or one a year.

So, so, and ever, so  
In the close-curtained court  
Those causes are deferred  
Which most import;  
These wait man's leisure.  
These daily matters elbow;  
Merely because  
His panic meanness  
Jibs blindly ere it hear  
What wisdom has prepared,  
Bolts headlong ere it see  
Her face unfold its smile.  
Man after man, race after race  
Drops jaded by the iterancy  
Of petty fear.  
Even as horses on the green steppes grazing,  
Hundreds scattered through lonely peacefulness,  
If shadow of cloud or red fox breaking earth  
Delude but one with dream of a stealthy foe,  
All are stampeded.  
Their frantic torrent draws in,  
With dire attraction, cumulative force,  
Stragglers grazing miles from where it started;  
On it thunders quite devoid of meaning.  
The tender private soul  
Thus takes contagion from the sordid crowd,  
And shying at mere dread of loss,  
Loses the whole of life.  
Thus, in the vortex of a base turmoil,  
Those myriad million energies wear down



That might have raised mankind  
To live the life of gods.  
Had but my soul been his,  
As his was mine,  
Those wind-resembling accents  
Had found fit auditor.  
Their second-sighted eloquence,  
Welcomed with acclamation,  
Had fired action.  
But that was ages since: he was not then  
What now I am,  
Who have no longer  
The opportunity then mine, then missed, —  
Who still am dazed and troubled  
Surmising others mine, others missed.

Passionate, never-wearied voice,  
Tombed in thy brittle shell,  
This human heart  
Thou croonest age on age,  
'Give and ask not,  
Help and blame not,'  
Heeded less than large and mottled cowry  
The which at least some child may hold to ear  
All smiles to listen.

Thou findest parables;  
With fond imagination  
Adorning truth  
For the successive  
Unpersuaded  
Generations.

This boy, myself that was,  
Musing visions by that woman raised,  
Watched that land she came from, towned with ruins  
Send mile-long files of laden camels out  
With grain to hostile cities, —  
Knew too the blue entrancing plain of waters  
Teemed with fresh shoals, buoyed up indifferently,  
Fisher — trader — pirate bark, —  
Even the straight thought whispered at his ear,

'Thy lips might join with hers as with some cousin's,  
Here, now, at noon,  
Hugging her bereavéd sadness close,  
And still, to-night, with equal satisfaction,  
Thy mother's blind contentment with her son.'  
While half-seduced, half-chafed, his mind was shaken  
As with conflicting gusts a choppy sea,  
His eyes, still greedy of their visions,  
Fastened a swarthy town enisled in wheat,  
And to the ebon threshold of each house,  
Conjured forth the man that each was planned for:  
Great creatures smiling with his father's smile,  
Muscular, wealthy and self-satisfied,  
Wearing loud-coloured raiment, earrings, chains,  
Armlet and buckle, all of clanking gold.  
His spirit drank from theirs great draughts of pride  
And read their minds more clearly than his own;  
All, with one counsel like a chorus, dinned  
His soul that then was mine,  
With truths well-proved in action.  
'Love is chaos,  
For order's sake  
Whatever must be, should be,'  
Roared those bulls of Bashan.  
Then their proud chant argued,  
'How should this woman know  
Her little lad again,  
Who either now is bones  
Under the fertile field,  
Or well nigh a grown man?  
Say they should cross at market  
Both slaves would pass on, not a start the wiser.  
What is she then to him  
Or he to her  
After these years?  
To drag a life that might have been but is not  
With toil of mind and heart,  
Through dreary year on year,  
Neglecting for its sake the life that is,  
Spells folly and ingratitude to those  
Who treat their slaves well.  
Thy father's household and thyself should be

More to her now than those who may be dead,  
The place she lives in dearer  
Than any unattainable far land  
Where she is more forgotten than old dreams.  
Why make the day of evil worse  
By dwelling on it after it has past?  
Near things alone are real,  
Now is the whole of time:  
Places beyond the horizon are but pictures;  
Memory cheats the eye with an illusion!

'Your thoughts are sound, bold builders,  
I am my father's son.  
Behold this home-shore, these our hills, this bay,  
And this our slave! —  
Up, work, look sharp about it!  
Bounding a foot and fast retiring from her,  
I stoop for stones strewn thick about the sand,  
Aim them, fling them,  
And, as my idle arm resumes the knack,  
Score a hit and laugh  
To see her stumble hurt, behind the pine trunks.  
'Unless you work, I throw again,  
To it and steady at it.  
Mark me, drab, we Camilli  
Mean what we say.'  
Stone after stone still flies,  
But aimed to knock chips from the pine-boles now;  
For she is busy gathering sticks, increasing  
Her distance as she may. The noon is sultry,  
Heated and clammy, I,  
Towards the live waves turning, slip my tunic,  
Then run in naked.  
Cooled and soothed by swimming,  
Both mind and heart from their late tumult tuned  
To placid acquiescent health,  
I float, suspended in the limpid water,  
Passive, rhythmically governed;  
So tranced worlds travel the dark shoreless ether.

'Where should this stream of pictures tend?'  
No, Bottomley, you will not ask;

To you I am quite free to send  
The unexpected, unexplained,  
You will not take me thus to task.

So they be painted well, they live;  
If ill, they yet may cling to fame  
Associated with your name.  
In which case you, and not I, give  
That we are both contented with.

Thomas Sturge Moore

# Idleness

O idleness, too fond of me,  
Begone, I know and hate thee!  
Nothing canst thou of pleasure see  
In one that so doth rate thee;

For empty are both mind and heart  
While thou with me dost linger;  
More profit would to thee impart  
A babe that sucks its finger.

I know thou hast a better way  
To spend these hours thou squand'rest;  
Some lad toils in the trough to-day  
Who groans because thou wand'rest;

A bleating sheep he dowses now  
Or wrestles with ram's terror;  
Ah, 'mid the washing's hubbub, how  
His sighs reproach thine error!

He knows and loves thee, Idleness;  
For when his sheep are browsing,  
His open eyes enchant and bless  
A mind divinely drowsing;

No slave to sleep, he wills and sees  
From hill-lawns the brown tillage;  
Green winding lanes and clumps of trees,  
Far town or nearer village,

The sea itself; the fishing feet  
Where more, thine idle lovers,  
Heark'ning to sea-mews find thee sweet  
Like him who hears the plovers.

Begone; those haul their ropes at sea,  
These plunge sheep in yon river:  
Free, free from toil thy friends, and me  
From Idleness deliver!

Thomas Sturge Moore

# Renaissance

O happy soul, forget thy self!  
This that has haunted all the past,  
That conjured disappointments fast,  
That never could let well alone;  
That, climbing to achievement's throne,  
Slipped on the last step; this that wove  
Dissatisfaction's clinging net,  
And ran through life like squandered pelf:--  
This that till now has been thy self  
Forget, O happy soul, forget.

If ever thou didst aught commence,--  
Set'st forth in springtide woods to rove,--  
Or, when the sun in July throve,  
Didst plunge into calm bay of ocean  
With fine felicity in motion,--  
Or, having climbed some high hill's brow,  
Thy toil behind thee like the night,  
Stoodst in the chill dawn's air intense;--  
Commence thus now, thus recommence:

Take to the future as to light.  
Not as a bather on the shore  
Strips of his clothes, glad soul, strip thou:  
He throws them off, but folds them now;  
Although he for the billows yearns,  
To weight them down with stones he turns;  
To mark the spot he scans the shore;  
Of his return he thinks before.  
Do thou forget

All that, until this joy franchised thee,  
Tainted thee, stained thee, or disguised thee;  
For gladness, henceforth without let,  
Be thou a body, naked, fair;  
And be thy kingdom all the air  
Which the noon fills with light;  
And be thine actions every one,

Like to a dawn or set of sun,  
Robed in an ample glory's peace;  
Since thou hast tasted this great glee  
Whose virtue prophesies in thee  
That wrong is wholly doomed, is doomed and bound to cease.

Thomas Sturge Moore



# Rowers Chant

Row till the land dip 'neath  
The sea from view.  
Row till a land peep up,  
A home for you.

Row till the mast sing songs  
Welcome and sweet.  
Row till the waves, out-stripped,  
Give up dead beat.

Row till the sea-nymphs rise  
To ask you why  
Rowing you tarry not  
To hear them sigh.

Row till the stars grow bright  
Like certain eyes.  
Row till the noon be high  
As hopes you prize.

Row till you harbour in  
All longing's port.  
Row till you find all things  
For which you sought.

Thomas Sturge Moore

# Silence Sings

SO faint, no ear is sure it hears,  
So faint and far;  
So vast that very near appears  
My voice, both here and in each star  
Unmeasured leagues do bridge between;  
Like that which on a face is seen  
Where secrets are;  
Sweeping, like veils of lofty balm,  
Tresses unbound  
O'er desert sand, o'er ocean calm,  
I am wherever is not sound;  
And, goddess of the truthful face,  
My beauty doth instill its grace  
That joy abound.

Thomas Sturge Moore

# The Dying Swan

O SILVER-THROATED Swan  
Struck, struck! A golden dart  
Clean through thy breast has gone  
Home to thy heart.  
Thrill, thrill, O silver throat!  
O silver trumpet, pour  
Love for defiance back  
On him who smote!  
And brim, brim o'er  
With love; and ruby-dye thy track  
Down thy last living reach  
Of river, sail the golden light—  
Enter the sun's heart—even teach  
O wondrous-gifted Pain, teach Thou  
The God of love, let him learn how

Thomas Sturge Moore

# The Rower's Chant

ROW till the land dip 'neath  
The sea from view.  
Row till a land peep up,  
A home for you.

Row till the mast sing songs  
Welcome and sweet,  
Row till the waves, outstripped,  
Give up, dead beat.

Row till the sea-nymphs rise  
To ask you why  
Rowing you tarry not  
To hear them sigh.

Row till the stars grow bright  
Like certain eyes.  
Row till the noon be high  
As hopes you prize.

Row till you harbour in  
All longing's port.  
Row till you find all things  
For which you sought.

Thomas Sturge Moore

# To Memory

O deeper than the noontide seems when blue,  
Conceived as of yet finer woof than air,  
Where, as clouds form, folk cherished, moments rare,  
Fitfully gleam and pass . . . romance all true,  
Yet never real enough, thou wild deceit,  
Drug us till we, no longer what we are,  
Love as we loved ! . . . Reluming star by star  
Night falls and tears with thy far glances meet.

Thou dream of dreams, which most we can retrieve  
And least forget, for thee dramatic truth  
Drapes in fresh silks the tragedy of youth.  
Yet as they act, our eyes, once blind, perceive  
Much those performers are too fond to note  
Till phantom sobs catch in a shrivelled throat.

Thomas Sturge Moore