

Classic Poetry Series

**William Vaughn Moody**  
**- poems -**

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## William Vaughn Moody(1869 - 1910)

William Vaughn Moody was born July 8, 1869, in Spenser, Indiana. His parents died when he was young, and he worked his way through prep school and Harvard University, where he received both his B.A. (1893) and M.A. (1894), and became co-editor of Harvard Monthly. From 1894-95 he held the position of assistant in the English Department to Louis E. Gates. In 1895, Moody relocated to The University of Chicago as an instructor, a position that he held until 1903, when he was promoted to an assistant professorship. He left the University in 1907 to concentrate on his poetry.

During this time at the University, Moody published an untitled volume of poetry, as well as two poetic dramas, *The Masque of Judgment* in 1900, and *The Fire Bringer* in 1904. However, he is mostly noted for his 1906 play *The Great Divide*, hailed at the time as the "Great American Drama."

In 1908, Moody was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He married Harriet C. Brainerd on May 7, 1909. Also in that year, he saw his play *The Faith Healer* produced, an event that while it attracted some attention, was not considered a dramatic success. William Vaughn Moody was working on another poetic drama, *The Death of Eve*, when he died in Colorado Springs, CO, on October 17, 1910.

# A Grey Day

Grey drizzling mists the moorlands drape,  
Rain whitens the dead sea,  
From headland dim to sullen cape  
Grey sails creep wearily.  
I know not how that merchantman  
Has found the heart; but 'tis her plan  
Seaward her endless course to shape.

Unreal as insects that appall  
A drunkard's peevish brain,  
O'er the grey deep the dories crawl,  
Four-legged, with rowers twain:  
Midgets and minims of the earth,  
Across old ocean's vasty girth  
Toiling--heroic, comical!

I wonder how that merchant's crew  
Have ever found the will!  
I wonder what the fishers do  
To keep them toiling still!  
I wonder how the heart of man  
Has patience to live out its span,  
Or wait until its dreams come true.

William Vaughn Moody

# An Ode In Time Of Hesitation

*After seeing at Boston the statue of Robert Gould Shaw, killed while storming Fort Wagner, July 18, 1863, at the head of the first enlisted negro regiment, the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts.*

I

Before the solemn bronze Saint Gaudens made  
To thrill the heedless passer's heart with awe,  
And set here in the city's talk and trade  
To the good memory of Robert Shaw,  
This bright March morn I stand,  
And hear the distant spring come up the land;  
Knowing that what I hear is not unheard  
Of this boy soldier and his negro band,  
For all their gaze is fixed so stern ahead,  
For all the fatal rhythm of their tread.  
The land they died to save from death and shame  
Trembles and waits, hearing the spring's great name,  
And by her pangs these resolute ghosts are stirred.

II

Through street and mall the tides of people go  
Heedless; the trees upon the Common show  
No hint of green; but to my listening heart  
The still earth doth impart  
Assurance of her jubilant emprise,  
And it is clear to my long-searching eyes  
That love at last has might upon the skies.  
The ice is runneled on the little pond;  
A telltale patter drips from off the trees;  
The air is touched with southland spiceries,  
As if but yesterday it tossed the frond  
Of pendant mosses where the live-oaks grow  
Beyond Virginia and the Carolines,  
Or had its will among the fruits and vines  
Of aromatic isles asleep beyond

Florida and the Gulf of Mexico.

### III

Soon shall the Cape Ann children shout in glee,  
Spying the arbutus, spring's dear recluse;  
Hill lads at dawn shall hearken the wild goose  
Go honking northward over Tennessee;  
West from Oswego to Sault Sainte-Marie,  
And on to where the Pictured Rocks are hung,  
And yonder where, gigantic, wilful, young,  
Chicago sitteth at the northwest gates,  
With restless violent hands and casual tongue  
Moulding her mighty fates,  
The Lakes shall robe them in ethereal sheen;  
And like a larger sea, the vital green  
Of springing wheat shall vastly be outflung  
Over Dakota and the prairie states.  
By desert people immemorial  
On Arizonan mesas shall be done  
Dim rites unto the thunder and the sun;  
Nor shall the primal gods lack sacrifice  
More splendid, when the white Sierras call  
Unto the Rockies straightway to arise  
And dance before the unveiled ark of the year,  
Sounding their windy cedars as for shawms,  
Unrolling rivers clear  
For flutter of broad phylacteries;  
While Shasta signals to Alaskan seas  
That watch old sluggish glaciers downward creep  
To fling their icebergs thundering from the steep,  
And Mariposa through the purple calms  
Gazes at far Hawaii crowned with palms  
Where East and West are met, --  
A rich seal on the ocean's bosom set  
To say that East and West are twain,  
With different loss and gain:  
The Lord hath sundered them; let them be sundered yet.

### IV

Alas! what sounds are these that come  
Sullenly over the Pacific seas, --  
Sounds of ignoble battle, striking dumb  
The season's half-awakened ecstasies?  
Must I be humble, then,  
Now when my heart hath need of pride?  
Wild love falls on me from these sculptured men;  
By loving much the land for which they died  
I would be justified.  
My spirit was away on pinions wide  
To soothe in praise of her its passionate mood  
And ease it of its ache of gratitude.  
Too sorely heavy is the debt they lay  
On me and the companions of my day.  
I would remember now  
My country's goodliness, make sweet her name.  
Alas! what shade art thou  
Of sorrow or of blame  
Liftest the lyric leafage from her brow,  
And pointest a slow finger at her shame?

## V

Lies! lies! It cannot be! The wars we wage  
Are noble, and our battles still are won  
By justice for us, ere we lift the gage.  
We have not sold our loftiest heritage.  
The proud republic hath not stooped to cheat  
And scramble in the market-place of war;  
Her forehead weareth yet its solemn star.  
Here is her witness: this, her perfect son,  
This delicate and proud New England soul  
Who leads despised men, with just-unshackled feet,  
Up the large ways where death and glory meet,  
To show all peoples that our shame is done,  
That once more we are clean and spirit-whole.

## VI

Crouched in the sea fog on the moaning sand  
All night he lay, speaking some simple word  
From hour to hour to the slow minds that heard,  
Holding each poor life gently in his hand  
And breathing on the base rejected clay  
Till each dark face shone mystical and grand  
Against the breaking day;  
And lo, the shard the potter cast away  
Was grown a fiery chalice crystal-fine  
Fulfilled of the divine  
Great wine of battle wrath by God's ring-finger stirred.  
Then upward, where the shadowy bastion loomed  
Huge on the mountain in the wet sea light,  
Whence now, and now, infernal flowerage bloomed,  
Bloomed, burst, and scattered down its deadly seed, --  
They swept, and died like freemen on the height,  
Like freemen, and like men of noble breed;  
And when the battle fell away at night  
By hasty and contemptuous hands were thrust  
Obscurely in a common grave with him  
The fair-haired keeper of their love and trust.  
Now limb doth mingle with dissolvèd limb  
In nature's busy old democracy  
To flush the mountain laurel when she blows  
Sweet by the southern sea,  
And heart with crumbled heart climbs in the rose: --  
The untaught hearts with the high heart that knew  
This mountain fortress for no earthly hold  
Of temporal quarrel, but the bastion old  
Of spiritual wrong,  
Built by an unjust nation sheer and strong,  
Expugnable but by a nation's rue  
And bowing down before that equal shrine  
By all men held divine,  
Whereof his band and he were the most holy sign.

## VII

O bitter, bitter shade!  
Wilt thou not put the scorn  
And instant tragic question from thine eye?

Do thy dark brows yet crave  
That swift and angry stave --  
Unmeet for this desirous morn --  
That I have striven, striven to evade?  
Gazing on him, must I not deem they err  
Whose careless lips in street and shop aver  
As common tidings, deeds to make his cheek  
Flush from the bronze, and his dead throat to speak?  
Surely some elder singer would arise,  
Whose harp hath leave to threaten and to mourn  
Above this people when they go astray.  
Is Whitman, the strong spirit, overworn?  
Has Whittier put his yearning wrath away?  
I will not and I dare not yet believe!  
Though furtively the sunlight seems to grieve,  
And the spring-laden breeze  
Out of the gladdening west is sinister  
With sounds of nameless battle overseas;  
Though when we turn and question in suspense  
If these things be indeed after these ways,  
And what things are to follow after these,  
Our fluent men of place and consequence  
Fumble and fill their mouths with hollow phrase,  
Or for the end-all of deep arguments  
Intone their dull commercial liturgies --  
I dare not yet believe! My ears are shut!  
I will not hear the thin satiric praise  
And muffled laughter of our enemies,  
Bidding us never sheathe our valiant sword  
Till we have changed our birthright for a gourd  
Of wild pulse stolen from a barbarian's hut;  
Showing how wise it is to cast away  
The symbols of our spiritual sway,  
That so our hands with better ease  
May wield the driver's whip and grasp the jailer's keys.

## VIII

Was it for this our fathers kept the law?  
This crown shall crown their struggle and their ruth?  
Are we the eagle nation Milton saw



Mewing its mighty youth,  
Soon to possess the mountain winds of truth,  
And be a swift familiar of the sun  
Where eye before God's face his trumpets run?  
Or have we but the talons and the maw,  
And for the abject likeness of our heart  
Shall some less lordly bird be set apart? --  
Some gross-billed wader where the swamps are fat?  
Some gorgier in the sun? Some prowler with the bat?

## IX

Ah no!  
We have not fallen so.  
We are our fathers' sons: let those who lead us know!  
'T was only yesterday sick Cuba's cry  
Came up the tropic wind, "Now help us, for we die!"  
Then Alabama heard,  
And rising, pale, to Maine and Idaho  
Shouted a burning word.  
Proud state with proud impassioned state conferred,  
And at the lifting of a hand sprang forth,  
East, west, and south, and north,  
Beautiful armies. Oh, by the sweet blood and young  
Shed on the awful hill slope at San Juan,  
By the unforgotten names of eager boys  
Who might have tasted girls' love and been stung  
With the old mystic joys  
And starry griefs, now the spring nights come on,  
But that the heart of youth is generous, --  
We charge you, ye who lead us,  
Breathe on their chivalry no hint of stain!  
Turn not their new-world victories to gain!  
One least leaf plucked for chaffer from the bays  
Of their dear praise,  
One jot of their pure conquest put to hire,  
The implacable republic will require;  
With clamor, in the glare and gaze of noon,  
Or subtly, coming as a thief at night,  
But surely, very surely, slow or soon  
That insult deep we deeply will requite.

Tempt not our weakness, our cupidity!  
For save we let the island men go free,  
Those baffled and dislaureled ghosts  
Will curse us from the lamentable coasts  
Where walk the frustrate dead.  
The cup of trembling shall be drainèd quite,  
Eaten the sour bread of astonishment,  
With ashes of the hearth shall be made white  
Our hair, and wailing shall be in the tent;  
Then on your guiltier head  
Shall our intolerable self-disdain  
Wreak suddenly its anger and its pain;  
For manifest in that disastrous light  
We shall discern the right  
And do it, tardily. -- O ye who lead,  
Take heed!  
Blindness we may forgive, but baseness we will smite.

William Vaughn Moody

# Faded Pictures

NLY two patient eyes to stare  
Out of the canvas. All the rest-  
The warm green gown, the small hands pressed  
Light in the lap, the braided hair

That must have made the sweet low brow  
So earnest, centuries ago,  
When some one saw it change and glow-  
All faded! Just the eyes burn now.

I dare say people pass and pass  
Before the blistered little frame,  
And dingy work without a name  
Stuck in behind its square of glass.

But I, well, I left Raphael  
Just to come drink these eyes of hers,  
To think away the stains and blurs  
And make all new again and well.

Only, for tears my head will bow,  
Because there on my heart's last wall,  
Scarce one tint left to tell it all,  
A picture keeps its eyes, somehow.

William Vaughn Moody

# Gloucester Moods

A mile behind is Gloucester town  
Where the fishing fleets put in,  
A mile ahead the land dips down  
And the woods and farms begin.  
Here, where the moors stretch free  
In the high blue afternoon,  
Are the marching sun and talking sea,  
And the racing winds that wheel and flee  
On the flying heels of June.

Jill-o'er-the-ground is purple blue,  
Blue is the quaker-maid,  
The wild geranium holds its dew  
Long in the boulder's shade.  
Wax-red hangs the cup  
From the huckleberry boughs,  
In barberry bells the grey moths sup,  
Or where the choke-cherry lifts high up  
Sweet bowls for their carouse.

Over the shelf of the sandy cove  
Beach-peas blossom late.  
By copse and cliff the swallows rove  
Each calling to his mate.  
Seaward the sea-gulls go,  
And the land-birds all are here;  
That green-gold flash was a vireo,  
And yonder flame where the marsh-flags grow  
Was a scarlet tanager.

This earth is not the steadfast place  
We landsmen build upon;  
From deep to deep she varies pace,  
And while she comes is gone.  
Beneath my feet I feel  
Her smooth bulk heave and dip;  
With velvet plunge and soft upreel  
She swings and steadies to her keel  
Like a gallant, gallant ship.

These summer clouds she sets for sail,  
The sun is her masthead light,  
She tows the moon like a pinnacle frail  
Where her phosphor wake churns bright.  
Now hid, now looming clear,  
On the face of the dangerous blue  
The star fleets tack and wheel and veer,  
But on, but on does the old earth steer  
As if her port she knew.

God, dear God! Does she know her port,  
Though she goes so far about?  
Or blind astray, does she make her sport  
To brazen and chance it out?  
I watched when her captains passed:  
She were better captainless.  
Men in the cabin, before the mast,  
But some were reckless and some aghast,  
And some sat gorged at mess.

By her battened hatch I leaned and caught  
Sounds from the noisome hold,--  
Cursing and sighing of souls distraught  
And cries too sad to be told.  
Then I strove to go down and see;  
But they said, "Thou art not of us!"  
I turned to those on the deck with me  
And cried, "Give help!" But they said, "Let be:  
Our ship sails faster thus."

Jill-o'er-the-ground is purple blue,  
Blue is the quaker-maid,  
The alder-clump where the brook comes through  
Breeds cresses in its shade.  
To be out of the moiling street  
With its swelter and its sin!  
Who has given to me this sweet,  
And given my brother dust to eat?  
And when will his wage come in?

Scattering wide or blown in ranks,

Yellow and white and brown,  
Boats and boats from the fishing banks  
Come home to Gloucester town.  
There is cash to purse and spend,  
There are wives to be embraced,  
Hearts to borrow and hearts to lend,  
And hearts to take and keep to the end;--  
O little sails, make haste!

But thou, vast outbound ship of souls,  
What harbor town for thee?  
What shapes, when thy arriving tolls,  
Shall crowd the banks to see?  
Shall all the happy shipmates then  
Stand singing brotherly?  
Or shall a haggard ruthless few  
Warp her over and bring her to,  
While the many broken souls of men  
Fester down in the slaver's pen  
And nothing to say or do?

William Vaughn Moody

# I Am the Woman

I am the Woman, ark of the law and its breaker,  
Who chastened her steps and taught her knees to be meek,  
Bridled and bitted her heart and humbled her cheek,  
Parcelled her will, and cried 'Take more!' to the taker,  
Shunned what they told her to shun, sought what they bade her seek,  
Locked up her mouth from scornful speaking: now it is open to speak.

I am she that is terribly fashioned, the creature  
Wrought in God's perilous mood, in His unsafe hour.  
The morning star was mute, beholding my feature,  
Seeing the rapture I was, the shame, and the power,  
Scared at my manifold meaning; he heard me call  
'O fairest among ten thousand, acceptable brother!'  
And he answered not, for doubt; till he saw me crawl  
And whisper down to the secret worm, 'O mother,  
Be not wroth in the ancient house; thy daughter forgets not at all!'  
I am the Woman, flëer away,  
Soft withdrawer back from the maddened mate,  
Lurer inward and down to the gates of day  
And crier there in the gate,  
'What shall I give for thee, wild one, say!  
The long, slow rapture and patient anguish of life,  
Or art thou minded a swifter way?  
Ask if thou canst, the gold, but oh if thou must,

Good is the shining dross, lovely the dust!  
Look at me, I am the Woman, harlot and heavenly wife;  
Tell me thy price, be unashamed; I will assuredly pay!

I am also the Mother: of two that I bore  
I comfort and feed the slayer, feed and comfort the slain.  
Did they number my daughters and sons? I am mother of more!  
Many a head they marked not, here in my bosom has lain,  
Babbling with unborn lips in a tongue to be,  
Far, incredible matters, all familiar to me.  
Still would the man come whispering, 'Wife!' but many a time my breast  
Took him not as a husband: I soothed him and laid him to rest  
Even as the babe of my body, and knew him for such.  
My mouth is open to speak, that was dumb too much!

I say to you I am the Mother; and under the sword  
Which flamed each way to harry us forth from the Lord,  
I saw Him young at the portal, weeping and staying the rod,  
And I, even I was His mother, and I yearned as the mother of God.

I am also the Spirit. The Sisters laughed  
When I sat with them dumb in the portals, over my lamp,  
Half asleep in the doors: for my gown was raught  
Off at the shoulder to shield from the wind and the rain  
The wick I tended against the mysterious hour  
When the Silent City of Being should ring with song,  
As the Lord came in with Life to the marriage bower.  
'Look!' laughed the elder Sisters; and crimson with shame  
I hid my breast away from the rosy flame.  
'Ah!' cried the leaning Sisters, pointing, doing me wrong,  
'Do you see?' laughed the wanton Sisters, 'She will get her lover ere long!'  
And it was but a little while till unto my need  
He was given indeed,  
And we walked where waxing world after world went by;  
And I said to my lover, 'Let us begone,  
'Oh, let us begone, and try  
'Which of them all the fairest to dwell in is,  
'Which is the place for us, our desirable clime!'  
But he said, 'They are only the huts and the little villages,  
Pleasant to go and lodge in rudely over the vintage—time!'  
Scornfully spake he, being unwise,  
Being flushed at heart because of our walking together.  
But I was mute with passionate prophecies;  
My heart went veiled and faint in the golden weather,  
While universe drifted by after still universe.  
Then I cried, 'Alas, we must hasten and lodge therein,  
One after one, and in every star that they shed!

A dark and a weary thing is come on our head—  
To search obedience out in the bosom of sin,  
To listen deep for love when thunders the curse;  
For O my love, behold where the Lord hath planted  
In every star in the midst His dangerous Tree!  
Still I must pluck thereof and bring unto thee,  
Saying, 'The coolness for which all night we have panted;  
Taste of the goodly thing, I have tasted first!'  
Bringing us noway coolness, but burning thirst,



Giving us noway peace, but implacable strife,  
Loosing upon us the wounding joy and the wasting sorrow of life!

I am the Woman, ark of the Law and sacred arm to upbear it,  
Heathen trumpet to overthrow and idolatrous sword to shear it:  
Yea, she whose arm was round the neck of the morning star at song,  
Is she who kneeleth now in the dust and cries at the secret door,  
'Open to me, O sleeping mother! The gate is heavy and strong.  
'Open to me, I am come at last; be wroth with thy child no more.  
'Let me lie down with thee there in the dark, and be slothful with thee as before!'

William Vaughn Moody

# On A Soldier Fallen In The Philippines

Streets of the roaring town,  
Hush for him, hush, be still!  
He comes, who was stricken down  
Doing the word of our will.  
Hush! Let him have his state,  
Give him his soldier's crown.  
The grists of trade can wait  
Their grinding at the mill,  
But he cannot wait for his honor, now the trumpet has been blown.  
Wreath of pride now for his granite brow, lay love on his breast of stone.

Toll! Let the great bells toll  
Till the clashing air is dim.  
Did we wrong this parted soul?  
We will make it up to him.  
Toll! Let him never guess  
What work we set him to.  
Laurel, laurel, yes;  
He did what we bade him do.  
Praise, and never a whispered hint but the fight he fought was good;  
Never a word that the blood on his sword was his country's own heart's-blood.

A flag for the soldier's bier  
Who dies that his land may live;  
O, banners, banners here,  
That he doubt not nor misgive!  
That he heed not from the tomb  
The evil days draw near  
When the nation, robed in gloom,  
With its faithless past shall strive.  
Let him never dream that his bullet's scream went wide of its island mark,  
Home to the heart of his darling land where she stumbled and sinned in the dark.

William Vaughn Moody

# The Bracelet Of Grass

The opal heart of afternoon  
Was clouding on to throbs of storm,  
Ashen within the ardent west  
The lips of thunder muttered harm,  
And as a bubble like to break  
Hung heaven's trembling amethyst,  
When with the sedge-grass by the lake  
I braceleted her wrist.

And when the ribbon grass was tied,  
Sad with the happiness we planned,  
Palm linked in palm we stood awhile  
And watched the raindrops dot the sand;  
Until the anger of the breeze  
Chid all the lake's bright breathing down,  
And ravished all the radiancies  
From her deep eyes of brown.

We gazed from shelter on the storm,  
And through our hearts swept ghostly pain  
To see the shards of day sweep past,  
Broken, and none might mend again.

Broken, that none shall ever mend;  
Loosened, that none shall ever tie.  
O the wind and the wind, will it never end?  
O the sweeping past of the ruined sky!

William Vaughn Moody

# The Daguerreotype

This, then, is she,  
My mother as she looked at seventeen,  
When she first met my father. Young incredibly,  
Younger than spring, without the faintest trace  
Of disappointment, weariness, or tean  
Upon the childlike earnestness and grace  
Of the waiting face.

Those close-wound ropes of pearl  
(Or common beads made precious by their use)  
Seem heavy for so slight a throat to wear;  
But the low bodice leaves the shoulders bare  
And half the glad swell of the breast, for news  
That now the woman stirs within the girl.

And yet,  
Even so, the loops and globes  
Of beaten gold  
And jet  
Hung, in the stately way of old,  
From the ears' drooping lobes  
On festivals and Lord's-day of the week,  
Show all too matron-sober for the cheek, --  
Which, now I look again, is perfect child,  
Or no -- or no -- 't is girlhood's very self,  
Moulded by some deep, mischief-ridden elf  
So meek, so maiden mild,  
But startling the close gazer with the sense  
Of passions forest-shy and forest-wild,  
And delicate delirious merriments.

As a moth beats sidewise  
And up and over, and tries  
To skirt the irresistible lure  
Of the flame that has him sure,  
My spirit, that is none too strong to-day,  
Flutters and makes delay, --  
Pausing to wonder on the perfect lips,  
Lifting to muse upon the low-drawn hair  
And each hid radiance there,  
But powerless to stem the tide-race bright,

The vehement peace which drifts it toward the light  
Where soon -- ah, now, with cries  
Of grief and giving-up unto its gain  
It shrinks no longer nor denies,  
But dips  
Hurriedly home to the exquisite heart of pain, --  
And all is well, for I have seen them plain,  
The unforgettable, the unforgotten eyes!  
Across the blinding gush of these good tears  
They shine as in the sweet and heavy years  
When by her bed and chair  
We children gathered jealously to share  
The sunlit aura breathing myrrh and thyme,  
Where the sore-stricken body made a clime  
Gentler than May and pleasanter than rhyme,  
Holier and more mystical than prayer.

God, how thy ways are strange!  
That this should be, even this,  
The patient head  
Which suffered years ago the dreary change!  
That these so dewy lips should be the same  
As those I stooped to kiss  
And heard my harrowing half-spoken name,  
A little ere the one who bowed above her,  
Our father and her very constant lover,  
Rose stoical, and we knew that she was dead.  
Then I, who could not understand or share  
His antique nobleness,  
Being unapt to bear  
The insults which time flings us for our proof,  
Fled from the horrible roof  
Into the alien sunshine merciless,  
The shrill satiric fields ghastly with day,  
Raging to front God in his pride of sway  
And hurl across the lifted swords of fate  
That ringed Him where He sat  
My puny gage of scorn and desolate hate  
Which somehow should undo Him, after all!  
That this girl face, expectant, virginal,  
Which gazes out at me  
Boon as a sweetheart, as if nothing loth

(Save for the eyes, with other presage stored)  
To pledge me troth,  
And in the kingdom where the heart is lord  
Take sail on the terrible gladness of the deep  
Whose winds the gray Norns keep, --  
That this should be indeed  
The flesh which caught my soul, a flying seed,  
Out of the to and fro  
Of scattering hands where the seedsman Mage,  
Stooping from star to star and age to age  
Sings as he sows!  
That underneath this breast  
Nine moons I fed  
Deep of divine unrest,  
While over and over in the dark she said,  
"Blessed! but not as happier children blessed" --  
That this should be  
Even she . . .  
God, how with time and change  
Thou makest thy footsteps strange!  
Ah, now I know  
They play upon me, and it is not so.  
Why, 't is a girl I never saw before,  
A little thing to flatter and make weep,  
To tease until her heart is sore,  
Then kiss and clear the score;  
A gypsy run-the-fields,  
A little liberal daughter of the earth,  
Good for what hour of truancy and mirth  
The careless season yields  
Hither-side the flood of the year and yonder of the neap;  
Then thank you, thanks again, and twenty light good-byes. --  
O shrined above the skies,  
Frown not, clear brow,  
Darken not, holy eyes!  
Thou knowest well I know that it is thou  
Only to save me from such memories  
As would unman me quite,  
Here in this web of strangeness caught  
And prey to troubled thought  
Do I devise  
These foolish shifts and slight;

Only to shield me from the afflicting sense  
Of some waste influence  
Which from this morning face and lustrous hair  
Breathes on me sudden ruin and despair.  
In any other guise,  
With any but this girlish depth of gaze,  
Your coming had not so unsealed and poured  
The dusty amphoras where I had stored  
The drippings of the winepress of my days.  
I think these eyes foresee,  
Now in their unawakened virgin time,  
Their mother's pride in me,  
And dream even now, unconsciously,  
Upon each soaring peak and sky-hung lea  
You pictured I should climb.  
Broken premonitions come,  
Shapes, gestures visionary,  
Not as once to maiden Mary  
The manifest angel with fresh lilies came  
Intelligibly calling her by name;  
But vanishingly, dumb,  
Thwarted and bright and wild,  
As heralding a sin-defiled,  
Earth-encumbered, blood-begotten, passionate man-child,  
Who yet should be a trump of mighty call  
Blown in the gates of evil kings  
To make them fall;  
Who yet should be a sword of flame before  
The soul's inviolate door  
To beat away the clang of hellish wings;  
Who yet should be a lyre  
Of high unquenchable desire  
In the day of little things. --  
Look, where the amphoras,  
The yield of many days,  
Trod by my hot soul from the pulp of self,  
And set upon the shelf  
In sullen pride  
The Vineyard-master's tasting to abide --  
O mother mine!  
Are these the bringings-in, the doings fine,  
Of him you used to praise?

Emptied and overthrown  
The jars lie strown.  
These, for their flavor duly nursed,  
Drip from the stopples vinegar accursed;  
These, I thought honied to the very seal,  
Dry, dry, -- a little acid meal,  
A pinch of mouldy dust,  
Sole leavings of the amber-mantling must;  
These, rude to look upon,  
But flasking up the liquor dearest won,  
Through sacred hours and hard,  
With watching and with wrestlings and with grief,  
Even of these, of these in chief,  
The stale breath sickens reeking from the shard.  
Nothing is left. Aye, how much less than naught!  
What shall be said or thought  
Of the slack hours and waste imaginings,  
The cynic rending of the wings,  
Known to that froward, that unreckoning heart  
Whereof this brewage was the precious part,  
Treasured and set away with furtive boast?  
O dear and cruel ghost,  
Be merciful, be just!  
See, I was yours and I am in the dust.  
Then look not so, as if all things were well!  
Take your eyes from me, leave me to my shame,  
Or else, if gaze they must,  
Steel them with judgment, darken them with blame;  
But by the ways of light ineffable  
You bade me go and I have faltered from,  
By the low waters moaning out of hell  
Whereto my feet have come,  
Lay not on me these intolerable  
Looks of rejoicing love, of pride, of happy trust!

Nothing dismayed?  
By all I say and all I hint not made  
Afraid?  
O then, stay by me! Let  
These eyes afflict me, cleanse me, keep me yet,  
Brave eyes and true!  
See how the shrivelled heart, that long has lain



Dead to delight and pain,  
Stirs, and begins again  
To utter pleasant life, as if it knew  
The wintry days were through;  
As if in its awakening boughs it heard  
The quick, sweet-spoken bird.  
Strong eyes and brave,  
Inexorable to save!

William Vaughn Moody

# The Golden Journey

All day he drowns by the sail  
With dreams of her, and all night long  
The broken waters are at song  
Of how she lingers, wild and pale,  
When all the temple lights are dumb,  
And weaves her spells to make him come.

The wide sea traversed, he will stand  
With straining eyes, until the shoal  
Green water from the prow shall roll  
Upon the yellow strip of sand -  
Searching some fern-hid tangled way  
Into the forest old and grey.

Then he will leap upon the shore,  
And cast one look up at the sun,  
Over his loosened locks will run  
The dawn breeze, and a bird will pour  
Its rapture out to make life seem  
Too sweet to leave for such a dream.

But all the swifter will he go  
Through the pale, scattered asphodels,  
Down mote-hung dusk of olive dells,  
To where the ancient basins throw  
Fleet threads of blue and trembling zones  
Of gold upon the temple stones.

There noon keeps just a twilight trace;  
Twixt love and hate, and death and birth,  
No man may choose; nor sobs nor mirth  
May enter in that haunted place.  
All day the fountain sphynx lets drip  
Slow drops of silence from her lip.

To hold the porch-roof slender girls  
Of milk-white marble stand arow;  
Doubt never blurs a single brow,  
And never the noon's faintness curls

From their expectant hush of pride  
The lips the god has glorified.

But these things he will barely view,  
Or if he stay to heed them, still  
But as the lark the lights that spill  
From out the sun it soars unto,  
Where, past the splendors and the heats,  
The sun's heart's self forever beats.

For wide the brazen doors will swing  
Soon as his sandals touch the pave;  
The anxious light inside will wave  
And tremble to a lunar ring  
About the form that lieth prone  
Before the dreadful altar-stone.

She will not look or speak or stir,  
But with drowned lips and cheeks death-white  
Will lie amid the pool of light,  
Until, grown faint with thirst of her,  
He shall bow down his face and sink  
Breathless beneath the eddying brink.

Then a swift music will begin,  
And as the brazen doors shut slow,  
There will be hurrying to and fro,  
And lights and calls and silver din,  
While through the star-freaked swirl of air  
The god's sweet cruel eyes will stare.

William Vaughn Moody

# The Quarry

Between the rice swamps and the fields of tea  
I met a sacred elephant, snow-white.  
Upon his back a huge pagoda towered  
Full of brass gods and food of sacrifice.  
Upon his forehead sat a golden throne,  
The massy metal twisted into shapes  
Grotesque, antediluvian, such as move  
In myth or have their broken images  
Sealed in the stony middle of the hills.  
A peacock spread his thousand dyes to screen  
The yellow sunlight from the head of one  
Who sat upon the throne, clad stiff with gems,  
Heirlooms of dynasties of buried kings,--  
Himself the likeness of a buried king,  
With frozen gesture and unfocused eyes.  
The trappings of the beast were over-scrawled  
With broideries--sea-shapes and flying things,  
Fan-trees and dwarfed nodosities of pine,  
Mixed with old alphabets, and faded lore  
Fallen from ecstatic mouths before the Flood,  
Or gathered by the daughters when they walked  
Eastward in Eden with the Sons of God  
Whom love and the deep moon made garrulous  
Between the carven tusks his trunk hung dead;  
Blind as the eyes of pearl in Buddha's brow  
His beaded eyes stared thwart upon the road;  
And feebler than the doting knees of eid,  
His joints, of size to swing the builder's crane  
Across the war-walls of the Anakim,  
Made vain and shaken haste. Good need was his  
To hasten: panting, foaming, on the slot  
Came many brutes of prey, their several hates  
Laid by until the sharing of the spoil.  
Just as they gathered stomach for the leap,  
The sun was darkened, and wide-balanced wings  
Beat downward on the trade-wind from the sea.  
A wheel of shadow sped along the fields  
And o'er the dreaming cities. Suddenly  
My heart misgave me, and I cried aloud,

"Alas! What dost thou here? What dost thou here? "  
The great beasts and the little halted sharp,  
Eyed the grand circler, doubting his intent.  
Straightway the wind flawed and he came about,  
Stooping to take the vanward of the pack;  
Then turned, between the chasers and the chased,  
Crying a word I could not understand,--  
But stiller-tongued, with eyes somewhat askance,  
They settled to the slot and disappeared.

William Vaughn Moody