

Classic Poetry Series

Herman Melville
- poems -

Publication Date:

2012

Publisher:

Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Herman Melville(1 August 1819 – 28 September 1891)

Herman Melville was an American novelist, short story writer, essayist, and poet. He is best known for his novel *Moby-Dick*. His first three books gained much contemporary attention (the first, *Typee*, becoming a bestseller), and after a fast-blooming literary success in the late 1840s, his popularity declined precipitously in the mid-1850s and never recovered during his lifetime. When he died in 1891, he was almost completely forgotten. It was not until the "Melville Revival" in the early 20th century that his work won recognition, especially *Moby-Dick*, which was hailed as one of the literary masterpieces of both American and world literature. He was the first writer to have his works collected and published by the Library of America.

Biography

Early Life, Education, and Family

Herman Melville was born in New York City on August 1, 1819, the third of eight children of Allan and Maria Gansevoort Melvill. After her husband Allan died (& between 1832 & 1834), Maria added an "e" to the family surname — seemingly at the behest of Melville's brother Gansevoort. Part of a well-established and colorful Boston family, Melville's father spent a good deal of time abroad as a commission merchant and an importer of French dry goods. The author's paternal grandfather, Major Thomas Melvill, an honored participant of the Boston Tea Party who refused to change the style of his clothing or manners to fit the times, was depicted in Oliver Wendell Holmes's poem "The Last Leaf". Herman visited him in Boston, and his father turned to him in his frequent times of financial need.

The maternal side of Melville's family was Hudson Valley Dutch. His maternal grandfather was General Peter Gansevoort, a hero of the Battle of Saratoga; in his gold-laced uniform, the general sat for a portrait painted by Gilbert Stuart, which is described in Melville's 1852 novel, *Pierre*, for Melville wrote out of his familial as well as his nautical background. Like the titular character in *Pierre*, Melville found satisfaction in his "double revolutionary descent."

Allan Melvill sent his sons to the New York Male School (Columbia Preparatory School). Overextended financially and emotionally unstable, Allan tried to recover from his setbacks by moving his family to Albany in 1830 and going into the fur

business. The new venture, however, was unsuccessful; the War of 1812 had ruined businesses that tried to sell overseas and he was forced to declare bankruptcy. He died soon afterward, leaving his family penniless, when Herman was 12. Although Maria had well-off kin, they were concerned with protecting their own inheritances and taking advantage of investment opportunities rather than settling their mother's estate so Maria's family would be more secure with Herman's younger brother, Thomas Melville, who eventually became a governor of Sailors Snug Harbor.

Melville attended the Albany Academy from October 1830 to October 1831, and again from October 1836 to March 1837, where he studied the classics.

Early Working Life

Melville's roving disposition and a desire to support himself independently of family assistance led him to seek work as a surveyor on the Erie Canal. This effort failed, and his brother helped him get a job as a "boy" (a green hand) on a New York ship bound for Liverpool. He made the voyage, and returned on the same ship. *Redburn: His First Voyage* (1849) is partly based on his experiences of this journey.

The three years after Albany Academy (1837 to 1840) were mostly occupied with teaching school, except for the voyage to Liverpool in 1839. From 1838 to 1847, he resided at what is now known as the Herman Melville House in Lansingburgh, New York. Near the end of 1840 he once again decided to sign ship's articles. On January 3, 1841, he sailed from Fairhaven, Massachusetts on the whaler *Acushnet*, which was bound for the Pacific Ocean. He was later to comment that his life began that day. The vessel sailed around Cape Horn and traveled to the South Pacific. Melville left little direct information about the events of this 18-month cruise, although his whaling romance, *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale*, probably gives many pictures of life on board the *Acushnet*. Melville deserted the *Acushnet* in the Marquesas Islands in July 1842. For three weeks he lived among the Typee natives, who were called cannibals by the two other tribal groups on the island—though they treated Melville very well. *Typee*, Melville's first novel, describes a brief love affair with a beautiful native girl, Fayaway, who generally "wore the garb of Eden" and came to epitomize the guileless noble savage in the popular imagination.

Melville did not seem to be concerned about repercussions from his desertion from the *Acushnet*. He boarded an Australian whaleship, the *Lucy Ann*, bound for Tahiti; took part in a mutiny and was briefly jailed in the native "Calabooza Beretanee". After release he spent several months as beachcomber and island

rover (Omoo in Tahitian) eventually crossing over to Moorea. He then signed articles on yet another whaler for a six-month cruise (November 1842 - April 1843) and left that ship in Honolulu. While in Hawaii he became a controversial figure for his vehement opposition to the activities of Christian missionaries seeking to convert the native population. After working as a clerk for four months, he joined the crew of the frigate USS United States, which reached Boston in October 1844. These experiences were described in *Typee*, *Omoo*, and *White-Jacket*, which were published as novels mainly because few believed their veracity.

Melville completed *Typee* in the summer of 1845, though he had difficulty getting it published. It was eventually published in 1846 in London, where it became an overnight bestseller. The Boston publisher subsequently accepted *Omoo* sight unseen. *Typee* and *Omoo* gave Melville overnight notoriety as a writer and adventurer, and he often entertained by telling stories to his admirers. As writer and editor Nathaniel Parker Willis wrote, "With his cigar and his Spanish eyes, he talks *Typee* and *Omoo*, just as you find the flow of his delightful mind on paper". The novels, however, did not generate enough royalties for him to live on. *Omoo* was not as colorful as *Typee*, and readers began to realize Melville was not just producing adventure stories. *Redburn* and *White-Jacket* had no problem finding publishers. *Mardi* was a disappointment for readers who wanted another rollicking and exotic sea yarn.

Marriage and Later Working Life

Melville married Elizabeth Shaw, daughter of chief justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court Lemuel Shaw, on August 4, 1847; the couple honeymooned in Canada. They had four children: two sons and two daughters. In 1850 they purchased Arrowhead, a farm house in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, now a museum. Here Melville lived for 13 years, occupied with his writing and managing his farm. While living at Arrowhead, he befriended the author, [Nathaniel Hawthorne](http://www.poemhunter.com/nathaniel-hawthorne/), who lived in nearby Lenox. Melville was tremendously inspired and encouraged by his new relationship with Hawthorne during the period that he was writing *Moby-Dick* (dedicating it to Hawthorne), though their friendship was on the wane only a short time later, when he wrote *Pierre* there. However, these works did not achieve the popular and critical success of his earlier books. Indeed, *The New York Day Book* on September 8, 1852, published a venomous attack on Melville and his writings headlined HERMAN MELVILLE CRAZY. The item, offered as a news story, reported, "A critical friend, who read Melville's last book, 'Ambiguities,' between two steamboat accidents, told us that it appeared to be composed of the ravings and reveries of a madman. We were somewhat

startled at the remark, but still more at learning, a few days after, that Melville was really supposed to be deranged, and that his friends were taking measures to place him under treatment. We hope one of the earliest precautions will be to keep him stringently secluded from pen and ink." Following this and other scathing reviews of *Pierre* by critics, publishers became wary of Melville's work. His publisher, Harper & Brothers, rejected his next manuscript, *Isle of the Cross*, which has been lost. On April 1, 1857, Melville published his last full-length novel, *The Confidence-Man*. This novel, subtitled "His Masquerade", has won general acclaim in modern times as a complex and mysterious exploration of issues of fraud and honesty, identity and masquerade, but when it was published, it received reviews ranging from the bewildered to the denunciatory.

To repair his faltering finances, Melville listened to the advice of friends and decided to enter what was for others the lucrative field of lecturing. From 1857 to 1860, he spoke at lyceums, chiefly on Roman statuary and sightseeing in Rome. Turning to poetry, he gathered a collection of verse that failed to interest a publisher. In 1863, he and his wife resettled, with their four children, in New York City. After the end of the American Civil War, he published *Battle Pieces and Aspects of the War*, (1866) a collection of over 70 poems that generally was ignored by the critics, though a few gave him patronizingly favorable reviews. In 1866, Melville's wife and her relatives used their influence to obtain a position for him as customs inspector for the City of New York (a humble but adequately paying appointment), and he held the post for 19 years. In a notoriously corrupt institution, Melville soon won the reputation of being the only honest employee of the customs house. But from 1866, his professional writing career can be said to have come to an end.

Later Years

Melville spent years writing a 16,000-line epic poem, *Clarel*, inspired by his earlier trip to the Holy Land. His uncle, Peter Gansevoort, by a bequest, paid for the publication of the massive epic in 1876. But the publication failed miserably, and the unsold copies were burned when Melville was unable to afford to buy them at cost.

As his professional fortunes waned, Melville's marriage was unhappy. Elizabeth's relatives repeatedly urged her to leave him, and offered to have him committed as insane, but she refused. In 1867, his oldest son, Malcolm, shot himself, perhaps accidentally. While Melville worked, his wife managed to wean him off alcohol, and he no longer showed signs of agitation or insanity. But recurring depression was added to by the death of his second son, Stanwix, in San Francisco early in 1886. Melville retired in 1886, after several of his wife's

relatives died and left the couple legacies that Mrs. Melville administered with skill and good fortune.

As English readers, pursuing the vogue for sea stories represented by such writers as G. A. Henty, rediscovered Melville's novels, he experienced a modest revival of popularity in England, though not in the United States. Once more he took up his pen, writing a series of poems with prose head notes inspired by his early experiences at sea. He published them in two collections, each issued in a tiny edition of 25 copies for his relatives and friends: John Marr (1888) and Timoleon (1891).

One of these poems further intrigued him, and he began to rework the headnote to turn it into first a short story and then a novella. He worked on it on and off for several years, but when he died in September 1891, he left the piece unfinished, and not until the literary scholar Raymond Weaver published it in 1924 did the book – which is now known as *Billy Budd, Sailor* – come to light.

Melville died at his home in New York City early on the morning of September 28, 1891, age 72. The doctor listed "cardiac dilation" on the death certificate. He was interred in the Woodlawn Cemetery in The Bronx, New York. A common story says that his New York Times obituary called him "Henry Melville", implying that he was unknown and unappreciated at his time of death, but the story is not true. A later retrospective article did appear on October 6 in the same paper referring to him as "the late Hiram Melville", but this appears to have been a typesetting error.

From about age 35, Melville ceased to be popular with a broad audience because of his increasingly philosophical, political and experimental tendencies. His novella *Billy Budd, Sailor*, unpublished until 33 years after the author's death, was later turned into a play, an opera by Benjamin Britten and a film by Peter Ustinov.

In Herman Melville's *Religious Journey*, Walter Donald Kring detailed his discovery of letters indicating that Melville had been a member of the Unitarian Church of All Souls in New York City. Until this revelation, little had been known of his religious affiliation. Hershel Parker in the second volume of his biography makes it clear that Melville became a nominal member only to placate his wife. Melville despised Unitarianism and its associated "ism", Utilitarianism. (The great English Unitarians were Utilitarians.) See the 2006 Norton Critical Edition of *The Confidence-Man* for more detail on Melville and religion than in Parker's 2002 volume.

Publications and Contemporary Reactions

Most of Melville's novels were published first in the United Kingdom and then in the U.S. Sometimes the editions contain substantial differences with Melville acceding to his different publishers' requirements for different audiences.

Moby-Dick; or, The Whale has become Melville's most famous work and is often considered one of the greatest literary works of all time. It was dedicated to Melville's friend Nathaniel Hawthorne. It did not, however, make Melville rich. The book never sold its initial printing of 3,000 copies in his lifetime, and total earnings from the American edition amounted to just \$556.37 from his publisher, Harper & Brothers. Melville also wrote Billy Budd, White-Jacket, Israel Potter, Redburn, Typee, Omoo, Pierre, The Confidence-Man and many short stories, including "Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street" and "Benito Cereno," and works of various genres.

Melville is less well known as a poet and did not publish poetry until later in life. After the Civil War, he published Battle Pieces and Aspects of the War, which did not sell well; of the Harper & Bros. printing of 1200 copies, only 525 had been sold ten years later. Again tending to outrun the tastes of his readers, Melville's epic length verse-narrative Clarel, about a student's pilgrimage to the Holy Land, was also quite obscure, even in his own time. Among the longest single poems in American literature, Clarel, published in 1876, had an initial printing of only 350 copies. The critic Lewis Mumford found a copy of the poem in the New York Public Library in 1925 "with its pages uncut"—in other words, it had sat there unread for 50 years.

His poetry is not as highly critically esteemed as his fiction, although some critics place him as the first modernist poet in the United States; others would assert that his work more strongly suggest what today would be a postmodern view. A leading champion of Melville's claims as a great American poet was the poet and novelist Robert Penn Warren, who issued a selection of Melville's poetry prefaced by an admiring and acute critical essay. According to Melville scholar Elizabeth Renker "a sea change in the reception of the poems is incipient." In reference to the poem Clarel, poetry critic Helen Vendler remarked: "What it cost Melville to write this poem makes us pause, reading it. Alone, it is enough to win him, as a poet, what he called 'the belated funeral flower of fame'".

Critical Response

Contemporary criticism

Melville was not financially successful as a writer, having earned just over \$10,000 for his writing during his lifetime. After the success of travelogues based on voyages to the South Seas and stories based on misadventures in the merchant marine and navy, Melville's popularity declined dramatically. By 1876, all of his books were out of print. In the later years of his life and during the years after his death he was recognized, if at all, as only a minor figure in American literature.

Melville Revival

A confluence of publishing events in the 1920s brought about a reassessment now commonly called "the Melville Revival". The two books generally considered most important to the Revival were Raymond Weaver's 1921 biography *Herman Melville: Man, Mariner and Mystic* and his 1924 edition of Melville's last great but never quite finished manuscript, *Billy Budd*, which Melville's granddaughter gave to Weaver when he visited her for research on the biography. The other works that helped fan the Revival flames were Carl Van Doren's *The American Novel* (1921), D. H. Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923), Carl Van Vechten's essay in *The Double Dealer* (1922), and Lewis Mumford's biography, *Herman Melville: A Study of His Life and Vision* (1929). In 1945, the Melville Society was formed as a nonprofit organization dedicated to celebrating Melville's literary legacy. Jay Leyda, better known for his work in film, spent more than a decade gathering documents and records for the day by day *Melville Log* (1951). In the same year Newton Arvin published the critical biography *Herman Melville*, which won the nonfiction National Book Award.

In the 1960s, Northwestern University Press, in alliance with the Newberry Library and the Modern Language Association, established ongoing publication runs of Melville's various titles. This alliance sought to create a "definitive" edition of Melville's works. Titles republished under the Northwestern-Newberry Library include *Typee*, *Piazza Tales and Other Prose Pieces*, *Omoo*, *Israel Potter*, *Pierre or the Ambiguities*, *Confidence-Man*, *White Jacket or the World in a Man-of-War*, *Moby Dick*, *Mardi and a Voyage Thither*, *Redburn*, *Clarel*, as well as several volumes of Melville's poems, journals, and correspondence.

Themes of Gender and Sexuality

Although not the primary focus of Melville scholarship, there has been an emerging interest in the role of gender and sexuality in some of Melville's writings. Some critics, particularly those interested in gender studies, have explored the existence of male-dominant social structures in Melville's fiction. For

example, Alvin Sandberg claimed that the short story "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids" offers "an exploration of impotency, a portrayal of a man retreating to an all-male childhood to avoid confrontation with sexual manhood" from which the narrator engages in "congenial" digressions in heterogeneity. In line with this view Warren Rosenberg argues the homosocial "Paradise of Bachelors" is shown to be "superficial and sterile." David Harley Serlin observes in the second half of Melville's diptych, "The Tartarus of Maids," the narrator gives voice to the oppressed women he observes: "As other scholars have noted, the "slave" image here has two clear connotations. One describes the exploitation of the women's physical labor, and the other describes the exploitation of the women's reproductive organs. Of course, as models of women's oppression, the two are clearly intertwined." In the end the narrator is never fully able to come to terms with the contrasting masculine and feminine modalities. Issues of sexuality have been observed in other works as well. Rosenberg notes Taji, in "Mardi", and the protagonist in "Pierre" "think they are saving young "maidens in distress" (Yillah and Isabel) out of the purest of reasons but both are also conscious of a lurking sexual motive." When Taji kills the old priest holding Yillah captive, he states "remorse smote me hard; and like lightning I asked myself whether the death deed I had done was sprung of virtuous motive, the rescuing of a captive from thrall, or whether beneath the pretense I had engaged in this fatal affray for some other selfish purpose, the companionship of a beautiful maid." In "Pierre" the motive for his self-sacrifice for Isabel is admitted: "womanly beauty and not womanly ugliness invited him to champion the right." Rosenberg argues "This awareness of a double motive haunts both books and ultimately destroys their protagonists who would not fully acknowledge the dark underside of their idealism. The epistemological quest and the transcendental quest for love and belief are consequently sullied by the erotic."

Melville fully explores the theme of sexuality in his major poetical work "Clarel." When the narrator is separated from Ruth, with whom he has fallen in love, he is free to explore other sexual (and religious) possibilities before deciding at the end of the poem to participate in the ritualistic order marriage represents. In the course of the poem "he considers every form of sexual orientation - celibacy, homosexuality, hedonism, and heterosexuality - raising the same kinds of questions as when he considers Islam or Democracy."

Some passages and sections of Melville's works demonstrate his willingness to address all forms of sexuality, including the homoerotic, in his works. Commonly given examples from Moby Dick are the interpretation of male bonding from what is termed the "marriage bed" episode involving Ishmael and Queequeg, and the "Squeeze of the Hand" chapter describing the camaraderie of sailors extracting

spermaceti from a dead whale. Billy Budd's physical attractiveness is described in quasi-feminine terms: "As the Handsome Sailor, Billy Budd's position aboard the seventy-four was something analogous to that of a rustic beauty transplanted from the provinces and brought into competition with the highborn dames of the court." Some critics argue that "Ahab's pursuit of the whale, which they suggest can be associated with the feminine in its shape, mystery, and in its naturalness, represents the ultimate fusion of the epistemological and sexual quest."

Law and Literature

In recent years, Billy Budd has become a central text in the field of legal scholarship known as law and literature. In the novel, Billy, a handsome and popular young sailor impressed from the merchant vessel *Rights of Man* to serve aboard H.M.S. *Bellipotent* in the late 1790s, during the war between Revolutionary France and Great Britain and her monarchic allies, excites the enmity and hatred of the ship's master-at-arms, John Claggart. Claggart devises phony charges of mutiny and other crimes to level against Billy, and Captain the Honorable Edward Fairfax Vere institutes an informal inquiry, at which Billy convulsively strikes Claggart because his stammer prevents him from speaking. Vere immediately convenes a drumhead court-martial, at which, after serving as sole witness and as Billy's de facto counsel, Vere then urges the court to convict and sentence Billy to death. The trial is recounted in chapter 21, the longest chapter in the book, and that trial has become the focus of scholarly controversy: was Captain Vere a good man trapped by bad law, or did he deliberately distort and misrepresent the applicable law to condemn Billy to death?

Legacy

On May 12, 1985, the New York City Herman Melville Society gathered at 104 East 26th Street to dedicate the intersection of Park Avenue south and 26th Street as Herman Melville Square. This is the street where Melville lived from 1863 to 1891 and where, among other works, he wrote *Billy Budd*.

In 2010 it was announced that a new species of extinct giant sperm whale, *Livyatan melvillei* was named in honor of Melville. The paleontologists who discovered the fossil are all fans of *Moby-Dick* and wanted to dedicate their discovery to Melville

"The Ribs And Terrors In The Whale";

The ribs and terrors in the whale,
 Arched over me a dismal gloom,
While all God's sun-lit waves rolled by,
 And left me deepening down to doom.

I saw the opening maw of hell,
 With endless pains and sorrows there;
Which none but they that feel can tell—
 Oh, I was plunging to despair.

In black distress, I called my God,
 When I could scarce believe him mine,
He bowed his ear to my complaints—
 No more the whale did me confine.

With speed he flew to my relief,
 As on a radiant dolphin borne;
Awful, yet bright, as lightening shone
 The face of my Deliverer God.

My song for ever shall record
 That terrible, that joyful hour;
I give the glory to my God,
 His all the mercy and the power.

Herman Melville

A Dirge For Mcpherson

Arms reversed and banners creped -
Muffled drums;
Snowy horses sable-draped -
McPherson comes.

But, tell us, shall we know him more,
Lost-Mountain and lone Kenesaw?

Brave the sword upon the pall -
A gleam in gloom;
So a bright name lighteth all
McPherson's doom.

Bear him through the chapel-door -
Let priest in stole
Pace before the warrior
Who led. Bell -toll!

Lay him down within the nave,
The lesson read -
Man is noble, man is brave,
But man's - a weed.

Take him up again and wend
Graveward, nor weep:
There's a trumpet that shall rend
This Soldier's sleep.

Pass the ropes the coffin round,
And let descend;
Prayer and volley - let it sound
McPherson's end.

True fame is his, for life is o'er -
Sarpedon of the mighty war.

Herman Melville

A Meditation

How often in the years that close,
When truce had stilled the sieging gun,
The soldiers, mounting on their works,
With mutual curious glance have run
From face to face along the fronting show,
And kinsman spied, or friend--even in a foe.

What thoughts conflicting then were shared,
While sacred tenderness perforce
Welled from the heart and wet the eye;
And something of a strange remorse
Rebelled against the sanctioned sin of blood,
And Christian wars of natural brotherhood.

Then stirred the god within the breast--
The witness that is man's at birth;
A deep misgiving undermined
Each plea and subterfuge of earth;
They felt in that rapt pause, with warning rife,
Horror and anguish for the civil strife.

Of North or South they reeked not then,
Warm passion cursed the cause of war:
Can Africa pay back this blood
Spilt on Potomac's shore?
Yet doubts, as pangs, were vain the strife
to stay,
And hands that fain had clasped again
could slay.

How frequent in the camp was seen
The herald from the hostile one,
A guest and frank companion there
When the proud formal talk was done;
The pipe of peace was smoked even 'mid the
war,
And fields in Mexico again fought o'er.

In Western battle long they lay

So near opposed in trench or pit,
That foeman unto foeman called
As men who screened in tavern sit:
'You bravely fight' each to the other said--
'Toss us a biscuit!' o'er the wall it sped.

And pale on those same slopes, a boy--
A stormer, bled in noon-day glare;
No aid the Blue-coats then could bring,
He cried to them who nearest were,
And out there came 'mid howling shot and shell
A daring foe who him befriended well.

Mark the great Captains on both sides,
The soldiers with the broad renown--
They all were messmates on the Hudson's
marge,
Beneath one roof they laid them down;
And, free from hate in many an after pass,
Strove as in school-boy rivalry of the class.

A darker side there is; but doubt
In Nature's charity hovers there:
If men for new agreement yearn,
Then old upbraiding best forbear:
'The South's the sinner!' Well, so let it be;
But shall the North sin worse, and stand the
Pharisee?

O, now that brave men yield the sword,
Mine be the manful soldier-view;
By how much more they boldly warred,
By so much more is mercy due:
When Vicksburg fell, and the moody files
marched out,
Silent the victors stood, scorning to raise a
shout.

Herman Melville

A Requiem

For Soldiers lost in Ocean Transports

When, after storms that woodlands rue,
To valleys comes atoning dawn,
The robins blithe their orchard-sports renew;
And meadow-larks, no more withdrawn
Caroling fly in the languid blue;
The while, from many a hid recess,
Alert to partake the blessedness,
The pouring mites their airy dance pursue.
So, after ocean's ghastly gales,
When laughing light of hoyden morning
breaks,
Every finny hider wakes--
From vaults profound swims up with
glittering scales;
Through the delightful sea he sails,
With shoals of shining tiny things
Frolic on every wave that flings
Against the prow its showery spray;
All creatures joying in the morn,
Save them forever from joyance torn,
Whose bark was lost where now the
dolphins play;
Save them that by the fabled shore,
Down the pale stream are washed away,
Far to the reef of bones are borne;
And never revisits them the light,
Nor sight of long-sought land and pilot more;
Nor heed they now the lone bird's flight
Round the lone spar where mid-sea surges
pour.

Herman Melville

A Utilitarian View Of The Monitor's Fight

Plain be the phrase, yet apt the verse,
More ponderous than nimble;
For since grimed War here laid aside
His painted pomp, 'twould ill befit
Overmuch to ply
The rhyme's barbaric symbol.

Hail to victory without the gaud
Of glory; zeal that needs no fans
Of banners; plain mechanic power
Plied cogently in War now placed -
Where War belongs -
Among the trades and artisans.

Yet this was battle, and intense -
Beyond the strife of fleets heroic;
Deadlier, closer, calm 'mid storm;
No passion; all went on by crank.
Pivot, and screw,
And calculations of caloric.

Needless to dwell; the story's known.
The ringing of those plates on plates
Still ringeth round the world -
The clangor of the blacksmiths' fray.
The anvil-din
Resounds this message from the Fates:

War shall yet be, and to the end;
But war-paint shows the streaks of weather;
War yet shall be, but the warriors
Are now but operatives; War's made
Less grand than Peace,
And a singe runs through lace and feather.

Herman Melville

America

I

Where the wings of a sunny Dome expand
I saw a Banner in gladsome air-
Starry, like Berenice's Hair-
Afloat in broadened bravery there;
With undulating long-drawn flow,
As rolled Brazilian billows go
Voluminously o'er the Line.
The Land reposed in peace below;
The children in their glee
Were folded to the exulting heart
Of young Maternity.

II

Later, and it streamed in fight
When tempest mingled with the fray,
And over the spear-point of the shaft
I saw the ambiguous lightning play.
Valor with Valor strove, and died:
Fierce was Despair, and cruel was Pride;
And the lorn Mother speechless stood,
Pale at the fury of her brood.

III

Yet later, and the silk did wind
Her fair cold for;
Little availed the shining shroud,
Though ruddy in hue, to cheer or warm
A watcher looked upon her low, and said-
She sleeps, but sleeps, she is not dead.
But in that sleep contortion showed
The terror of the vision there-
A silent vision unavowed,
Revealing earth's foundation bare,
And Gorgon in her hidden place.

It was a thing of fear to see
So foul a dream upon so fair a face,
And the dreamer lying in that starry shroud.

IV

But from the trance she sudden broke-
The trance, or death into promoted life;
At her feet a shivered yoke,
And in her aspect turned to heaven
No trace of passion or of strife-
A clear calm look. It spake of pain,
But such as purifies from stain-
Sharp pangs that never come again-
And triumph repressed by knowledge meet,
Power delicate, and hope grown wise,
And youth matured for age's seat-
Law on her brow and empire in her eyes.
So she, with graver air and lifted flag;
While the shadow, chased by light,
Fled along the far-brawn height,
And left her on the crag.

Herman Melville

An Uninscribed Monument On One Of The Battle-Fields Of The Wilderness

Silence and solitude may hint
(Whose home is in yon piney wood)
What I, though tableted, could never tell--
The din which here befell,
And striving of the multitude.
The iron cones and spheres of death
Set round me in their rust,
These, too, if just,
Shall speak with more than animated breath.
Thou who beholdest, if thy thought,
Not narrowed down to personal cheer,
Take in the import of the quiet here--
The after-quiet--the calm full fraught;
Thou too wilt silent stand--
Silent as I, and lonesome as the land.

Herman Melville

Art

In placid hours well-pleased we dream
Of many a brave unbodied scheme.
But form to lend, pulsed life create,
What unlike things must meet and mate:
A flame to melt--a wind to freeze;
Sad patience--joyous energies;
Humility--yet pride and scorn;
Instinct and study; love and hate;
Audacity--reverence. These must mate,
And fuse with Jacob's mystic heart,
To wrestle with the angel--Art.

Herman Melville

Aurora Borealis

Commemorative of the Dissolution of armies at the Peace
May, 1865

What power disbands the Northern Lights
After their steely play?
The lonely watcher feels an awe
Of Nature's sway,
As when appearing,
He marked their flashed uprearing
In the cold gloom--
Retreatings and advancings,
(Like dallyings of doom),
Transitions and enhancings,
And bloody ray.

The phantom-host has faded quite,
Splendor and Terror gone
Portent or promise--and gives way
To pale, meek Dawn;
The coming, going,
Alike in wonder showing--
Alike the God,
Decreeing and commanding
The million blades that glowed,
The muster and disbanding--
Midnight and Morn.

Herman Melville

Ball's Bluff: A Reverie

One noontday, at my window in the town,
I saw a sight - saddest that eyes can see -
Young soldiers marching lustily
Unto the wars,
With fifes, and flags in mottoed pageantry;
While all the porches, walks, and doors
Were rich with ladies cheering royally.

They moved like Juny morning on the wave,
Their hearts were fresh as clover in its prime
(It was the breezy summer time),
Life throbbbed so strong,
How should they dream that Death in rosy clime
Would come to thin their shining throng?
Youth feels immortal, like the gods sublime.

Weeks passed; and at my window, leaving bed,
By nights I mused, of easeful sleep bereft,
On those brave boys (Ah War! thy theft);
Some marching feet
Found pause at last by cliffs Potomac cleft;
Wakeful I mused, while in the street
Far footfalls died away till none were left.

Herman Melville

Bridegroom Dick

1876

Sunning ourselves in October on a day
Balmy as spring, though the year was in decay,
I lading my pipe, she stirring her tea,
My old woman she says to me,
'Feel ye, old man, how the season mellows?'
And why should I not, blessed heart alive,
Here mellowing myself, past sixty-five,
To think o' the May-time o' pennoned young
fellows
This stripped old hulk here for years may
survive.

Ere yet, long ago, we were spliced, Bonny Blue,
(Silvery it gleams down the moon-glade o' time,
Ah, sugar in the bowl and berries in the prime!)
Coxswain I o' the Commodore's crew,--
Under me the fellows that manned his fine gig,
Spinning him ashore, a king in full fig.
Chirrupy even when crosses rubbed me,
Bridegroom Dick lieutenants dubbed me.
Pleasant at a yarn, Bob o' Linkum in a song,
Diligent in duty and nattily arrayed,
Favored I was, wife, and _fleted_ right along;
And though but a tot for such a tall grade,
A high quartermaster at last I was made.

All this, old lassie, you have heard before,
But you listen again for the sake e'en o' me;
No babble stales o' the good times o' yore
To Joan, if Darby the babbler be.

Babbler?--O' what? Addled brains, they
forget!
O--quartermaster I; yes, the signals set,
Hoisted the ensign, mended it when frayed,
Polished up the binnacle, minded the helm,
And prompt every order blithely obeyed.

To me would the officers say a word cheery--
Break through the starch o' the quarter-deck
realm;
His coxswain late, so the Commodore's pet.
Ay, and in night-watches long and weary,
Bored nigh to death with the navy etiquette,
Yearning, too, for fun, some younker, a cadet,
Dropping for time each vain bumptious trick,
Boy-like would unbend to Bridegroom Dick.
But a limit there was--a check, d' ye see:
Those fine young aristocrats knew their degree.

Well, stationed aft where their lordships
keep,--
Seldom going forward excepting to sleep,--
I, boozing now on by-gone years,
My betters recall along with my peers.
Recall them? Wife, but I see them plain:
Alive, alert, every man stirs again.
Ay, and again on the lee-side pacing,
My spy-glass carrying, a truncheon in show,
Turning at the taffrail, my footsteps retracing,
Proud in my duty, again methinks I go.
And Dave, Dainty Dave, I mark where he
stands,
Our trim sailing-master, to time the high-noon,
That thingumbob sextant perplexing eyes and
hands,
Squinting at the sun, or twiggling o' the moon;
Then, touching his cap to Old Chock-a-Block
Commanding the quarter-deck,--'Sir, twelve
o'clock.'

Where sails he now, that trim sailing-master,
Slender, yes, as the ship's sky-s'l pole?
Dimly I mind me of some sad disaster--
Dainty Dave was dropped from the navy-roll!
And ah, for old Lieutenant Chock-a-Block--
Fast, wife, chock-fast to death's black dock!
Buffeted about the obstreperous ocean,
Fleeted his life, if lagged his promotion.
Little girl, they are all, all gone, I think,

Leaving Bridegroom Dick here with lids that
wink.

Where is Ap Catesby? The fights fought of
yore
Famed him, and laced him with epaulets, and
more.
But fame is a wake that after-wakes cross,
And the waters wallow all, and laugh
Where's the loss?
But John Bull's bullet in his shoulder bearing
Ballasted Ap in his long sea-faring.
The middies they ducked to the man who had
messed
With Decatur in the gun-room, or forward
pressed
Fighting beside Perry, Hull, Porter, and the
rest.

Humped veteran o' the Heart-o'-Oak war,
Moored long in haven where the old heroes are,
Never on _you_ did the iron-clads jar!
Your open deck when the boarder assailed,
The frank old heroic hand-to-hand then availed.

But where's Guert Gan? Still heads he the van?
As before Vera-Cruz, when he dashed splashing
through
The blue rollers sunned, in his brave gold-and-
blue,
And, ere his cutter in keel took the strand,
Aloft waved his sword on the hostile land!
Went up the cheering, the quick chanticleering;
All hands vying--all colors flying:
'Cock-a-doodle-doo!' and 'Row, boys, row!'
'Hey, Starry Banner!' 'Hi, Santa Anna!'
Old Scott's young dash at Mexico.

Fine forces o' the land, fine forces o' the sea,
Fleet, army, and flotilla--tell, heart o' me,
Tell, if you can, whereaway now they be!

But ah, how to speak of the hurricane
unchained--
The Union's strands parted in the hawser
over-strained;
Our flag blown to shreds, anchors gone
altogether--
The dashed fleet o' States in Secession's foul
weather.

Lost in the smother o' that wide public stress,
In hearts, private hearts, what ties there were
snapped!
Tell, Hal--vouch, Will, o' the ward-room mess,
On you how the riving thunder-bolt clapped.
With a bead in your eye and beads in your glass,
And a grip o' the flipper, it was part and pass:
'Hal, must it be: Well, if come indeed the
shock,
To North or to South, let the victory cleave,
Vaunt it he may on his dung-hill the cock,
But _Uncle Sam's_ eagle never crow will,
believe.'

Sentiment: ay, while suspended hung all,
Ere the guns against Sumter opened there
the ball,
And partners were taken, and the red dance
began,
War's red dance o' death!--Well, we, to a man,
We sailors o' the North, wife, how could we
lag?--
Strike with your kin, and you stick to the flag!
But to sailors o' the South that easy way was
barred.
To some, dame, believe (and I speak o' what I
know),
Wormwood the trial and the Uzzite's black
shard;
And the faithfuller the heart, the crueller the
throe.
Duty? It pulled with more than one string,
This way and that, and anyhow a sting.

The flag and your kin, how be true unto both?
If either plight ye keep, then ye break the other
troth.
But elect here they must, though the casuists
were out;
Decide--hurry up--and throttle every doubt.

Of all these thrills thrilled at keelson, and
throes,
Little felt the shoddyites a-toasting o' their
toes;
In mart and bazar Lucre chuckled the huzza,
Coining the dollars in the bloody mint of war.

But in men, gray knights o' the Order o' Scars,
And brave boys bound by vows unto Mars,
Nature grappled honor, intertwisting in the
strife:--
But some cut the knot with a thoroughgoing
knife.
For how when the drums beat? How in the fray
In Hampton Roads on the fine balmy day?

There a lull, wife, befell--drop o' silent in the
din.
Let us enter that silence ere the belchings
re-begin.
Through a ragged rift aslant in the cannonade's
smoke
An iron-clad reveals her repellent broadside
Bodily intact. But a frigate, all oak,
Shows honeycombed by shot, and her deck
crimson-dyed.
And a trumpet from port of the iron-clad hails,
Summoning the other, whose flag never trails:
'Surrender that frigate, Will! Surrender,
Or I will sink her--_ram_, and end her!'

'T was Hal. And Will, from the naked heart-o'-oak,
Will, the old messmate, minus trumpet, spoke,
Informally intrepid,--'Sink her, and be
damned!'
[* Historic.]

Enough. Gathering way, the iron-clad _rammed_.
The frigate, heeling over, on the wave threw a
dusk.
Not sharing in the slant, the clapper of her bell
The fixed metal struck--uninvoked struck the
knell
Of the _Cumberland_ stillettoed by the
Merrimac's tusk;
While, broken in the wound underneath the
gun-deck,
Like a sword-fish's blade in leviathan waylaid,
The tusk was left infixed in the fast-foundering
wreck.
There, dungeoned in the cockpit, the wounded
go down,
And the chaplain with them. But the surges
uplift
The prone dead from deck, and for moment
they drift
Washed with the swimmers, and the spent
swimmers drown.
Nine fathom did she sink,--erect, though hid
from light
Save her colors unsundered and spars that
kept the height.

Nay, pardon, old aunty! Wife, never let it fall,
That big started tear that hovers on the brim;
I forgot about your nephew and the _Merrimac's_
ball;
No more then of her, since it summons up him.
But talk o' fellows' hearts in the wine's genial
cup:--
Trap them in the fate, jam them in the strait,
Guns speak their hearts then, and speak
right up.
The troublous colic o' intestine war
It sets the bowels o' affection ajar.
But, lord, old dame, so spins the whizzing world,
A humming-top, ay, for the little boy-gods
Flogging it well with their smart little rods,
Tittering at time and the coil uncurled.

Now, now, sweetheart, you sidle away,
No, never you like _that_ kind o' _gay;_
But sour if I get, giving truth her due,
Honey-sweet forever, wife, will Dick be to you!

But avast with the War! 'Why recall racking
days
Since set up anew are the slip's started stays?
Nor less, though the gale we have left behind,
Well may the heave o' the sea remind.
It irks me now, as it troubled me then,
To think o' the fate in the madness o' men.
If Dick was with Farragut on the night-river,
When the boom-chain we burst in the fire-raft's
glare,
That blood-dyed the visage as red as the liver;
In the _Battle for the Bay_ too if Dick had a
share,
And saw one aloft a-piloting the war--
Trumpet in the whirlwind, a Providence in
place--
Our Admiral old whom the captains huzza,
Dick joys in the man nor brags about the race.

But better, wife, I like to booze on the days
Ere the Old Order foundered in these very
frays,
And tradition was lost and we learned strange
ways.
Often I think on the brave cruises then;
Re-sailing them in memory, I hail the press o'
men
On the gunned promenade where rolling they
go,
Ere the dog-watch expire and break up the
show.
The Laced Caps I see between forward guns;
Away from the powder-room they puff the
cigar;
'Three days more, hey, the donnas and the
dons!'

'Your Zeres widow, will you hunt her up,
Starr?'
The Laced Caps laugh, and the bright waves
too;
Very jolly, very wicked, both sea and crew,
Nor heaven looks sour on either, I guess,
Nor Pecksniff he bosses the gods' high mess.
Wistful ye peer, wife, concerned for my head,
And how best to get me betimes to my bed.

But king o' the club, the gayest golden spark,
Sailor o' sailors, what sailor do I mark?
Tom Tight, Tom Tight, no fine fellow finer,
A cutwater nose, ay, a spirited soul;
But, bousing away at the well-brewed bowl,
He never bowled back from that last voyage to
China.

Tom was lieutenant in the brig-o'-war famed
When an officer was hung for an arch-mutineer,
But a mystery cleaved, and the captain was
blamed,
And a rumpus too raised, though his honor
it was clear.
And Tom he would say, when the mousers
would try him,
And with cup after cup o' Burgundy ply him:
'Gentlemen, in vain with your wassail you
beset,
For the more I tipple, the tighter do I get.'
No blabber, no, not even with the can--
True to himself and loyal to his clan.

Tom blessed us starboard and d--d us larboard,
Right down from rail to the streak o' the
garboard.
Nor less, wife, we liked him.--Tom was a man
In contrast queer with Chaplain Le Fan,
Who blessed us at morn, and at night yet again,
D--ning us only in decorous strain;
Preaching 'tween the guns--each cutlass in its
place--

From text that averred old Adam a hard case.
I see him--Tom--on _horse-block_ standing,
Trumpet at mouth, thrown up all amain,
An elephant's bugle, vociferous demanding
Of topmen aloft in the hurricane of rain,
'Letting that sail there your faces flog?
Manhandle it, men, and you'll get the good
grog!'
O Tom, but he knew a blue-jacket's ways,
And how a lieutenant may genially haze;
Only a sailor sailors heartily praise.

Wife, where be all these chaps, I wonder?
Trumpets in the tempest, terrors in the fray,
Boomed their commands along the deck like
thunder;
But silent is the sod, and thunder dies away.
But Captain Turret, _'Old Hemlock'_ tall,
(A leaning tower when his tank brimmed all,)
Manoeuvre out alive from the war did he?
Or, too old for that, drift under the lee?
Kentuckian colossal, who, touching at Madeira,
The huge puncheon shipped o' prime
Santa-Clara;
Then rocked along the deck so solemnly!
No whit the less though judicious was enough
In dealing with the Finn who made the great
huff;
Our three-decker's giant, a grand boatswain's
mate,
Manliest of men in his own natural senses;
But driven stark mad by the devil's drugged
stuff,
Storming all aboard from his run-ashore late,
Challenging to battle, vouchsafing no pretenses,
A reeling King Ogg, delirious in power,
The quarter-deck carronades he seemed to
make cower.
'Put him in _brig_ there!' said Lieutenant
Marrot.
'Put him in _brig!_' back he mocked like a
parrot;

'Try it, then!' swaying a fist like Thor's
sledge,
And making the pigmy constables hedge--
Ship's corporals and the master-at-arms.
'In _brig_ there, I say!'--They dally no more;
Like hounds let slip on a desperate boar,
Together they pounce on the formidable Finn,
Pinion and cripple and hustle him in.
Anon, under sentry, between twin guns,
He slides off in drowse, and the long night runs.

Morning brings a summons. Whistling it calls,
Shrilled through the pipes of the boatswain's
four aids;
Trilled down the hatchways along the dusk
halls:
Muster to the Scourge!--Dawn of doom and
its blast!
As from cemeteries raised, sailors swarm before
the mast,
Tumbling up the ladders from the ship's nether
shades.

Keeping in the background and taking small
part,
Lounging at their ease, indifferent in face,
Behold the trim marines uncompromised in
heart;
Their Major, buttoned up, near the staff finds
room--
The staff o' lieutenants standing grouped in
their place.
All the Laced Caps o' the ward-room come,
The Chaplain among them, disciplined and
dumb.
The blue-nosed boatswain, complexioned like
slag,
Like a blue Monday lours--his implements in
bag.
Executioners, his aids, a couple by him stand,
At a nod there the thongs to receive from his hand.
Never venturing a caveat whatever may betide,

Though functionally here on humanity's side,
The grave Surgeon shows, like the formal
physician
Attending the rack o' the Spanish Inquisition.

The angel o' the 'brig' brings his prisoner up;
Then, steadied by his old _Santa-Clara_, a sup,
Heading all erect, the ranged assizes there,
Lo, Captain Turret, and under starred
bunting,
(A florid full face and fine silvered hair,)
Gigantic the yet greater giant confronting.

Now the culprit he liked, as a tall captain can
A Titan subordinate and true _sailor-man;_
And frequent he'd shown it--no worded
advance,
But flattering the Finn with a well-timed glance.
But what of that now? In the martinet-mien
Read the _Articles of War_, heed the naval
routine;
While, cut to the heart a dishonor there to win,
Restored to his senses, stood the Anak Finn;
In racked self-control the squeezed tears
peeping,
Scalding the eye with repressed inkeeping.
Discipline must be; the scourge is deemed due.
But ah for the sickening and strange heart-
benumbing,
Compassionate abasement in shipmates that view;
Such a grand champion shamed there succumbing!
'Brown, tie him up.'--The cord he brooked:
How else?--his arms spread apart--never
threaping;
No, never he flinched, never sideways he looked,
Peeled to the waistband, the marble flesh
creeping,
Lashed by the sleet the officious winds urge.

In function his fellows their fellowship merge--
The twain standing nigh--the two boatswain's
mates,

Sailors of his grade, ay, and brothers of his
mess.

With sharp thongs adroop the junior one
awaits

The word to uplift.

'Untie him--so!

Submission is enough, Man, you may go.'

Then, promenading aft, brushing fat Purser
Smart,

'Flog? Never meant it--hadn't any heart.

Degrade that tall fellow? '--Such, wife, was he,
Old Captain Turret, who the brave wine could
stow.

Magnanimous, you think?--But what does
Dick see?

Apron to your eye! Why, never fell a blow;
Cheer up, old wifie, 't was a long time ago.

But where's that sore one, crabbed and-severe,
Lieutenant Lon Lumbago, an arch scrutineer?

Call the roll to-day, would he answer--_Here!_

When the _Blixum's_ fellows to quarters
mustered

How he'd lurch along the lane of gun-crews
clustered,

Testy as touchwood, to pry and to peer.

Jerking his sword underneath larboard arm,
He ground his worn grinders to keep himself
calm.

Composed in his nerves, from the fidgets set
free,

Tell, Sweet Wrinkles, alive now is he,
In Paradise a parlor where the even
tempers be?

Where's Commander All-a-Tanto?

Where's Orlop Bob singing up from below?

Where's Rhyming Ned? has he spun his last
canto?

Where's Jewsharp Jim? Where's Ringadoon
Joe?

Ah, for the music over and done,

The band all dismissed save the droned
trombone!
Where's Glenn o' the gun-room, who loved
Hot-Scotch--
Glen, prompt and cool in a perilous watch?
Where's flaxen-haired Phil? a gray lieutenant?
Or rubicund, flying a dignified pennant?

But where sleeps his brother?--the cruise it was
o'er,
But ah, for death's grip that welcomed him
ashore!
Where's Sid, the cadet, so frank in his brag,
Whose toast was audacious--' _Here's Sid, and
Sid's flag!_ '
Like holiday-craft that have sunk unknown,
May a lark of a lad go lonely down?
Who takes the census under the sea?
Can others like old ensigns be,
Bunting I hoisted to flutter at the gaff--
Rags in end that once were flags
Gallant streaming from the staff?

Such scurvy doom could the chances deal
To Top-Gallant Harry and Jack Genteel?
Lo, Genteel Jack in hurricane weather,
Shagged like a bear, like a red lion roaring;
But O, so fine in his chapeau and feather,
In port to the ladies never once _jawing;_
All bland _politesse, _ how urbane was he--
_ 'Oui, mademoiselle'--'Ma chere amie!' _

'T was Jack got up the ball at Naples,
Gay in the old _Ohio_ glorious;
His hair was curled by the berth-deck barber,
Never you'd deemed him a cub of rude Boreas;
In tight little pumps, with the grand dames in
rout,
A-flinging his shapely foot all about;
His watch-chain with love's jeweled tokens
abounding,
Curls ambrosial shaking out odors,

Waltzing along the batteries, astounding
The gunner glum and the grim-visaged loaders.

Wife, where be all these blades, I wonder,
Pennoned fine fellows, so strong, so gay?
Never their colors with a dip dived under;
Have they hauled them down in a lack-lustre
day,
Or beached their boats in the Far, Far Away?
Hither and thither, blown wide asunder,
Where's this fleet, I wonder and wonder.
Slipt their cables, rattled their adieu,
(Whereaway pointing? to what rendezvous?)
Out of sight, out of mind, like the crack
Constitution,
And many a keel time never shall renew--
Bon Homme Dick o' the buff Revolution,
The _Black Cockade_ and the staunch _True-Blue._

Doff hats to Decatur! But where is his blazon?
Must merited fame endure time's wrong--
Glory's ripe grape wizen up to a raisin?
Yes! for Nature teems, and the years are
strong,
And who can keep the tally o' the names that
fleet along!

But his frigate, wife, his bride? Would
blacksmiths brown
Into smithereens smite the solid old renown?
Rivetting the bolts in the iron-clad's shell,
Hark to the hammers with _a rat-tat-tat;_
'Handier a _derby_ than a laced cocked hat!
The _Monitor_ was ugly, but she served us right
well,
Better than the _Cumberland,_ a beauty and the
belle.'

Better than the Cumberland! --Heart alive
in me!
That battlemented hull, Tantallon o' the sea,
Kicked in, as at Boston the taxed chests o' tea!

Ay, spurned by the _ram,_ once a tall, shapely
craft,
But lopped by the Rebs to an iron-beaked
raft--
A blacksmith's unicorn in armor _cap-a-pie_.

Under the water-line a _ram's_ blow is dealt:
And foul fall the knuckles that strike below the
belt.
Nor brave the inventions that serve to replace
The openness of valor while dismantling the
grace.

Aloof from all this and the never-ending game,
Tantamount to teetering, plot and counterplot;
Impenetrable armor--all-perforating shot;
Aloof, bless God, ride the war-ships of old,
A grand fleet moored in the roadstead of fame;
Not submarine sneaks with _them_ are enrolled;
Their long shadows dwarf us, their flags are as
flame.

Don't fidget so, wife; an old man's passion
Amounts to no more than this smoke that I
puff;
There, there, now, buss me in good old fashion;
A died-down candle will flicker in the snuff.

But one last thing let your old babbler say,
What Decatur's coxswain said who was long
ago hearsed,
'Take in your flying-kites, for there comes a
lubber's day
When gallant things will go, and the three-
deckers first.'

My pipe is smoked out, and the grog runs
slack;
But bowse away, wife, at your blessed Bohea;
This empty can here must needs solace me--
Nay, sweetheart, nay; I take that back;
Dick drinks from your eyes and he finds no

lack!

Herman Melville

Chattanooga

November, 1863

A kindling impulse seized the host
Inspired by heaven's elastic air;
Their hearts outran their General's plan,
Though Grant commanded there--
Grant, who without reserve can dare;
And, 'Well, go on and do your will,'
He said, and measured the mountain then:
So master-riders fling the rein--
But you must know your men.

On yester-morn in grayish mist,
Armies like ghosts on hills had fought,
And rolled from the cloud their thunders loud
The Cumberlands far had caught:
To-day the sunlit steeps are sought.
Grant stood on cliffs whence all was plain,
And smoked as one who feels no cares;
But mastered nervousness intense
Alone such calmness wears.

The summit-cannon plunge their flame
Sheer down the primal wall,
But up and up each linking troop
In stretching festoons crawl--
Nor fire a shot. Such men appall
The foe, though brave. He, from the brink,
Looks far along the breadth of slope,
And sees two miles of dark dots creep,
And knows they mean the cope.

He sees them creep. Yet here and there
Half hid 'mid leafless groves they go;
As men who ply through traceries high
Of turreted marbles show--
So dwindle these to eyes below.
But fronting shot and flanking shell
Sliver and rive the inwoven ways;

High tops of oaks and high hearts fall,
But never the climbing stays.

From right to left, from left to right
They roll the rallying cheer--
Vie with each other, brother with brother,
Who shall the first appear--
What color-bearer with colors clear
In sharp relief, like sky-drawn Grant,
Whose cigar must now be near the stump--
While in solicitude his back
Heaps slowly to a hump.

Near and more near; till now the flags
Run like a catching flame;
And one flares highest, to peril nighest--
He means to make a name:
Salvos! they give him his fame.
The staff is caught, and next the rush,
And then the leap where death has led;
Flag answered flag along the crest,
And swarms of rebels fled.

But some who gained the envied Alp,
And--eager, ardent, earnest there--
Dropped into Death's wide-open arms,
Quelled on the wing like eagles struck in
air--
Forever they slumber young and fair,
The smile upon them as they died;
Their end attained, that end a height:
Life was to these a dream fulfilled,
And death a starry night.

Herman Melville

Commemorative Of A Naval Victory

Sailors there are of the gentlest breed,
Yet strong, like every goodly thing;
The discipline of arms refines,
And the wave gives tempering.
The damasked blade its beam can fling;
It lends the last grave grace:
The hawk, the hound, and sworded nobleman
In Titian's picture for a king,
Are of hunter or warrior race.

In social halls a favored guest
In years that follow victory won,
How sweet to feel your festal fame
In woman's glance instinctive thrown:
Repose is yours--your deed is known,
It musks the amber wine;
It lives, and sheds a light from storied days
Rich as October sunsets brown,
Which make the barren place to shine.

But seldom the laurel wreath is seen
Unmixed with pensive pansies dark;
There's a light and a shadow on every man
Who at last attains his lifted mark--
Nursing through night the ethereal spark.
Elate he never can be;
He feels that spirit which glad had hailed his
worth,
Sleep in oblivion.--The shark
Glides white through the phosphorus sea.

Herman Melville

Crossing The Tropics

From 'The Saya-y-Manto.'

While now the Pole Star sinks from sight
The Southern Cross it climbs the sky;
But losing thee, my love, my light,
O bride but for one bridal night,
The loss no rising joys supply.

Love, love, the Trade Winds urge abaft,
And thee, from thee, they steadfast waft.

By day the blue and silver sea
And chime of waters blandly fanned--
Nor these, nor Gama's stars to me
May yield delight since still for thee
I long as Gama longed for land.

I yearn, I yearn, reverting turn,
My heart it streams in wake astern
When, cut by slanting sleet, we swoop
Where raves the world's inverted year,
If roses all your porch shall loop,
Not less your heart for me will droop
Doubling the world's last outpost drear.

O love, O love, these oceans vast:
Love, love, it is as death were past!

Herman Melville

Dirge

We drop our dead in the sea,
The bottomless, bottomless sea;
Each bubble a hollow sigh,
As it sinks forever and aye.

We drop our dead in the sea,--
The dead reek not of aught;
We drop our dead in the sea,--
The sea ne'er gives it a thought.

Sink, sink, oh corpse, still sink,
Far down in the bottomless sea,
Where the unknown forms do prowl,
Down, down in the bottomless sea.

'Tis night above, and night all round,
And night will it be with thee;
As thou sinkest, and sinkest for aye,
Deeper down in the bottomless sea.

Herman Melville

Dupont's Round Fight (November, 1861)

In time and measure perfect moves
All Art whose aim is sure;
Evolving rhyme and stars divine
Have rules, and they endure.

Nor less the Fleet that warred for Right,
And, warring so, prevailed,
In geometric beauty curved,
And in an orbit sailed.

The rebel at Port Royal felt
The Unity overawe,
And rued the spell. A type was here,
And victory of LAW.

Herman Melville

Epilogue

If Luther's day expand to Darwin's year,
Shall that exclude the hope--foreclose the fear?

Unmoved by all the claims our times avow,
The ancient Sphinx still keeps the porch of
shade;
And comes Despair, whom not her calm may
cow,
And coldly on that adamantine brow
Scrawls undeterred his bitter pasquinade.
But Faith (who from the scrawl indignant
turns)
With blood warm oozing from her wounded
trust,
Inscribes even on her shards of broken urns
The sign o' the cross--_the spirit above the dust!_

Yea, ape and angel, strife and old debate--
The harps of heaven and dreary gongs of hell;
Science the feud can only aggravate--
No umpire she betwixt the chimes and knell:
The running battle of the star and clod
Shall run forever--if there be no God.

Degrees we know, unknown in days before;
The light is greater, hence the shadow more;
And tantalized and apprehensive Man
Appealing--Wherefore ripen us to pain?
Seems there the spokesman of dumb Nature's
train.

But through such strange illusions have they
passed
Who in life's pilgrimage have baffled striven--
Even death may prove unreal at the last,
And stoics be astounded into heaven.

Then keep thy heart, though yet but
ill-resigned--

Clarel, thy heart, the issues there but mind;
That like the crocus budding through the
snow--
That like a swimmer rising from the deep--
That like a burning secret which doth go
Even from the bosom that would hoard and
keep;
Emerge thou mayst from the last whelming
sea,
And prove that death but routs life into victory.

Herman Melville

Falstaff's Lament Over Prince Hal Become Henry V

One that I cherished,
Yea, loved as a son -
Up early, up late with,
My promising one:
No use in good nurture,
None, lads, none!

Here on this settle
He wore the true crown,
King of good fellows,
And Fat Jack was one -
Now, Beadle of England
In formal array -
Best fellow alive
On a throne flung away!

Companions and cronies
Keep fast and lament; -
Come, drawer, more sack here
To drown discontent;
For now intuitions
Shall wither to codes,
Pragmatized morals
Shall libel the gods.

One I instructed,
Yea, talked to -alone:
Precept -example
Clean away thrown!

Sorrow makes thirsty:
Sack, drawer, more sack! -
One that I prayed for,
I, Honest Jack!

To bring down these grey hairs -
To cut his old pal!
But, I'll be magnanimous -
Here's to thee Hal!

Herman Melville

Far Off-Shore

Look, the raft, a signal flying,
Thin--a shred;
None upon the lashed spars lying,
Quick or dead.

Cries the sea-fowl, hovering over,
'Crew, the crew?'
And the billow, reckless, rover,
Sweeps anew!

Herman Melville

Formerly A Slave

The sufferance of her race is shown,
And retrospect of life,
Which now too late deliverance dawns upon;
Yet is she not at strife.

Her children's children they shall know
The good withheld from her;
And so her reverie takes prophetic cheer--
In spirit she sees the stir.

Far down the depth of thousand years,
And marks the revel shine;
Her dusky face is lit with sober light,
Sibylline, yet benign.

Herman Melville

Fragments Of A Lost Gnostic Poem Of The Twelfth Century

Found a family, build a state,
The pledged event is still the same:
Matter in end will never abate
His ancient brutal claim.

Indolence is heaven's ally here,
And energy the child of hell:
The Good Man pouring from his pitcher clear
But brims the poisoned well.

Herman Melville

From The Conflict Of Convictions

1860-1

The Ancient of Days forever is young,
Forever the scheme of Nature thrives;
I know a wind in purpose strong--
It spins _against_ the way it drives.
What if the gulfs their slimed foundations
bare?
So deep must the stones be hurled
Whereon the throes of ages rear
The final empire and the happier world.

Power unanointed may come--
Dominion (unsought by the free)
And the Iron Dome,
Stronger for stress and strain,
Fling her huge shadow athwart the main;
But the Founders' dream shall flee.
Age after age has been,
(From man's changeless heart their way they
win);
And death be busy with all who strive--
Death, with silent negative.

Yea and Nay--
Each hath his say;
But God He keeps the middle way.
None was by
When He spread the sky;
Wisdom is vain, and prophecy.

Herman Melville

Gettysburg

O Pride of the days in prime of the months
Now trebled in great renown,
When before the ark of our holy cause
Fell Dagon down-
Dagon foredoomed, who, armed and targed,
Never his impious heart enlarged
Beyond that hour; God walled his power,
And there the last invader charged.

He charged, and in that charge condensed
His all of hate and all of fire;
He sought to blast us in his scorn,
And wither us in his ire.
Before him went the shriek of shells-
Aerial screamings, taunts and yells;
Then the three waves in flashed advance
Surged, but were met, and back they set:
Pride was repelled by sterner pride,
And Right is a strong-hold yet.

Before our lines it seemed a beach
Which wild September gales have strown
With havoc on wreck, and dashed therewith
Pale crews unknown-
Men, arms, and steeds. The evening sun
Died on the face of each lifeless one,
And died along the winding marge of fight
And searching-parties lone.

Sloped on the hill the mounds were green,
Our centre held that place of graves,
And some still hold it in their swoon,
And over these a glory waves.
The warrior-monument, crashed in fight,
Shall soar transfigured in loftier light,
A meaning ampler bear;
Soldier and priest with hymn and prayer
Have laid the stone, and every bone
Shall rest in honor there.

Herman Melville

Gold

We rovers bold,
To the land of Gold,
Over the bowling billows are gliding:
Eager to toil,
For the golden spoil,
And every hardship bidding.
See! See!
Before our prows' resistless dashes
The gold-fish fly in golden flashes!
'Neath a sun of gold,
We rovers bold,
On the golden land are gaining;
And every night,
We steer aright,
By golden stars unwaning!
All fires burn a golden glare:
No locks so bright as golden hair!
All orange groves have golden gushings;
All mornings dawn with golden flushings!
In a shower of gold, say fables old,
A maiden was won by the god of gold!
In golden goblets wine is beaming:
On golden couches kings are dreaming!
The Golden Rule dries many tears!
The Golden Number rules the spheres!
Gold, gold it is, that sways the nations:
Gold! gold! the center of all rotations!
On golden axles worlds are turning:
With phosphorescence seas are burning!
All fire-flies flame with golden gleamings!
Gold-hunters' hearts with golden dreamings!
With golden arrows kings are slain:
With gold we'll buy a freeman's name!
In toilsome trades, for scanty earnings,
At home we've slaved, with stifled yearnings:
No light! no hope! Oh, heavy woe!
When nights fled fast, and days dragged slow.
But joyful now, with eager eye,
Fast to the Promised Land we fly:

Where in deep mines,
The treasure shines;
Or down in beds of golden streams,
The gold-flakes glance in golden gleams!
How we long to sift,
That yellow drift!
Rivers! Rivers! cease your goings!
Sand-bars! rise, and stay the tide!
'Till we've gained the golden flowing;
And in the golden haven ride!

Herman Melville

Gold In The Mountain

Gold in the mountain,
And gold in the glen,
And greed in the heart,
Heaven having no part,
And unsatisfied men.

Herman Melville

Greek Architecture

Not magnitude, not lavishness,
But Form—the Site;
Not innovating wilfulness,
But reverence for the Archetype.

Herman Melville

Healed Of My Hurt

Healed of my hurt, I laud the inhuman Sea-
Yea, bless the Angels Four that there convene;
For healed I am even by the pitiless breath
Distilled in wholesome dew named rosmarine.

Herman Melville

Herba Santa

I

After long wars when comes release
Not olive wands proclaiming peace
Can import dearer share
Than stems of Herba Santa hazed
In autumn's Indian air.
Of moods they breathe that care disarm,
They pledge us lenitive and calm.

II

Shall code or creed a lure afford
To win all selves to Love's accord?
When Love ordained a supper divine
For the wide world of man,
What bickerings o'er his gracious wine!
Then strange new feuds began.

Effectual more in lowlier way,
Pacific Herb, thy sensuous plea
The bristling clans of Adam sway
At least to fellowship in thee!
Before thine altar tribal flags are furled,
Fain wouldst thou make one hearthstone of
the world.

III

To scythe, to sceptre, pen and hod--
Yea, sodden laborers dumb;
To brains overplied, to feet that plod,
In solace of the _Truce of God_
The Calumet has come!

IV

Ah for the world ere Raleigh's find
Never that knew this suasive balm
That helps when Gilead's fails to heal,
Helps by an interserted charm.

Insinuous thou that through the nerve

Windest the soul, and so canst win
Some from repinings, some from sin,
The Church's aim thou dost subserve.

The ruffled fag fordone with care
And brooding, God would ease this pain:
Him soothest thou and smoothest down
Till some content return again.

Even ruffians feel thy influence breed
Saint Martin's summer in the mind,
They feel this last evangel plead,
As did the first, apart from creed,
Be peaceful, man--be kind!

V
Rejected once on higher plain,
O Love supreme, to come again
Can this be thine?
Again to come, and win us too
In likeness of a weed
That as a god didst vainly woo,
As man more vainly bleed?

VI
Forbear, my soul! and in thine Eastern
chamber
Rehearse the dream that brings the long
release:
Through jasmine sweet and talismanic amber
Inhaling Herba Santa in the passive Pipe
of Peace.

Herman Melville

Immolated

Children of my happier prime,
When One yet lived with me, and threw
Her rainbow over life and time,
Even Hope, my bride, and mother to you!
O, nurtured in sweet pastoral air,
And fed on flowers and light and dew
Of morning meadows -spare, ah, spare
Reproach; spare, and upbraid me not
That, yielding scarce to reckless mood,
But jealous of your future lot,
I sealed you in a fate subdued.
Have I not saved you from the dread
Theft, and ignoring which need be
The triumph of the insincere
Unanimous Mediocrity?
Rest, therefore, free from all despite,
Snugged in the arms of comfortable night.

Herman Melville

In The Prison Pen

1864

Listless he eyes the palisades
And sentries in the glare;
'Tis barren as a pelican-beach
But his world is ended there.

Nothing to do; and vacant hands
Bring on the idiot-pain;
He tries to think--to recollect,
But the blur is on his brain.

Around him swarm the plaining ghosts
Like those on Virgil's shore--
A wilderness of faces dim,
And pale ones gashed and hoar.

A smiting sun. No shed, no tree;
He totters to his lair--
A den that sick hands dug in earth
Ere famine wasted there,

Or, dropping in his place, he swoons,
Walled in by throngs that press,
Till forth from the throngs they bear
him dead--
Dead in his meagreness.

Herman Melville

Inscription

For Graves at Pea Ridge, Arkansas

Let none misgive we died amiss
When here we strove in furious fight:
Furious it was; nathless was this
Better than tranquil plight,
And tame surrender of the Cause
Hallowed by hearts and by the laws.
We here who warred for Man and Right,
The choice of warring never laid with us.
There we were ruled by the traitor's choice.
Nor long we stood to trim and poise,
But marched and fell--victorious!

Herman Melville

Invocation

Ha, ha, gods and kings; fill high, one and all;
Drink, drink! shout and drink! mad respond to
the call!

Fill fast, and fill full; 'gainst the goblet ne'er
sin;

Quaff there, at high tide, to the uttermost
rim:--

Flood-tide, and soul-tide to the brim!

Who with wine in him fears? who thinks of his
cares?

Who sighs to be wise, when wine in him flares?

Water sinks down below, in currents full slow;

But wine mounts on high with its genial glow:--

Welling up, till the brain overflow!

As the spheres, with a roll, some fiery of soul,

Others golden, with music, revolve round the
pole;

So let our cups, radiant with many hued wines,

Round and round in groups circle, our Zodiac's

Signs:--

Round reeling, and ringing their chimes!

Then drink, gods and kings; wine merriment
brings;

It bounds through the veins; there, jubilant
sings.

Let it ebb, then, and flow; wine never grows
dim;

Drain down that bright tide at the foam beaded
rim:--

Fill up, every cup, to the brim!

Herman Melville

Jack Roy

Kept up by relays of generations young
Never dies at halyards the blithe chorus sung;
While in sands, sounds, and seas where the
storm-petrels cry,
Dropped mute around the globe, these halyard
singers lie.
Short-lived the clippers for racing-cups that
run,
And speeds in life's career many a lavish
mother's-son.

But thou, manly king o' the old _Splendid's_
crew,
The ribbons o' thy hat still a-fluttering, should
fly--
A challenge, and forever, nor the bravery
should rue.
Only in a tussle for the starry flag high,
When 'tis piety to do, and privilege to die.
Then, only then, would heaven think to lop
Such a cedar as the captain o' the _Splendid's_
main-top:
A belted sea-gentleman; a gallant, off-hand
Mercutio indifferent in life's gay command.
Magnanimous in humor; when the splintering
shot fell,
'Tooth-picks a-plenty, lads; thank 'em with a
shell!'

Sang Larry o' the _Cannakin,_ smuggler o' the
wine,
At mess between guns, lad in jovial recline:
'In Limbo our Jack he would chirrup up a
cheer,
The martinet there find a chaffing mutineer;
From a thousand fathoms down under hatches
o' your Hades,
He'd ascend in love-ditty, kissing fingers to
your ladies!'

Never relishing the knave, though allowing
for the menial,
Nor overmuch the king, Jack, nor prodigally
genial.

Ashore on liberty he flashed in escapade,
Vaulting over life in its levelness of grade,
Like the dolphin off Africa in rainbow
a-sweeping--
Arch iridescent shot from seas languid
sleeping.

Larking with thy life, if a joy but a toy,
Heroic in thy levity wert thou, Jack Roy.

Herman Melville

John Marr And Other Sailors

Since as in night's deck-watch ye show,
Why, lads, so silent here to me,
Your watchmate of times long ago?
Once, for all the darkling sea,
You your voices raised how clearly,
Striking in when tempest sung;
Hoisting up the storm-sail cheerly,
Life is storm--let storm! you rung.
Taking things as fated merely,
Childlike though the world ye spanned;
Nor holding unto life too dearly,
Ye who held your lives in hand--
Skimmers, who on oceans four
Petrels were, and larks ashore.

O, not from memory lightly flung,
Forgot, like strains no more availing,
The heart to music haughtier strung;
Nay, frequent near me, never staleing,
Whose good feeling kept ye young.
Like tides that enter creek or stream,
Ye come, ye visit me, or seem
Swimming out from seas of faces,
Alien myriads memory traces,
To enfold me in a dream!

I yearn as ye. But rafts that strain,
Parted, shall they lock again?
Twined we were, entwined, then riven,
Ever to new embracements driven,
Shifting gulf-weed of the main!
And how if one here shift no more,
Lodged by the flinging surge ashore?
Nor less, as now, in eve's decline,
Your shadowy fellowship is mine.
Ye float around me, form and feature:--
Tattooings, ear-rings, love-locks curled;
Barbarians of man's simpler nature,
Unworldly servers of the world.

Yea, present all, and dear to me,
Though shades, or scouring China's sea.

Whither, whither, merchant-sailors,
Whitherward now in roaring gales?
Competing still, ye huntsman-whalers,
In leviathan's wake what boat prevails?
And man-of-war's men, whereaway?
If now no dinned drum beat to quarters
On the wilds of midnight waters--
Foemen looming through the spray;
Do yet your gangway lanterns, streaming,
Vainly strive to pierce below,
When, tilted from the slant plank gleaming,
A brother you see to darkness go?

But, gunmates lashed in shotted canvas,
If where long watch-below ye keep,
Never the shrill _'All hands up hammocks!_' _
Breaks the spell that charms your sleep,
And summoning trumps might vainly call,
And booming guns implore--
A beat, a heart-beat musters all,
One heart-beat at heart-core.
It musters. But to clasp, retain;
To see you at the halyards main--
To hear your chorus once again!

Herman Melville

L'Envoi

The Return of the Sire de Nesle.

A.D. 16

My towers at last! These roving end,
Their thirst is slaked in larger dearth:
The yearning infinite recoils,
For terrible is earth.

Kaf thrusts his snouted crags through fog:
Araxes swells beyond his span,
And knowledge poured by pilgrimage
Overflows the banks of man.

But thou, my stay, thy lasting love
One lonely good, let this but be!
Weary to view the wide world's swarm,
But blest to fold but thee.

Herman Melville

Lines Traced Under An Image Of Amor Threatening

Fear me, virgin whosoever
Taking pride from love exempt,
Fear me, slighted. Never, never
Brave me, nor my fury tempt:
Downy wings, but wroth they beat
Tempest even in reason's seat.

Herman Melville

Lone Founts

Though fast youth's glorious fable flies,
View not the world with worldling's eyes;
Nor turn with weather of the time.
Foreclose the coming of surprise:
Stand where Posterity shall stand;
Stand where the Ancients stood before,
And, dipping in lone founts thy hand,
Drink of the never-varying lore:
Wise once, and wise thence evermore.

Herman Melville

Look-Out Mountain

WHO inhabiteth the Mountain
That it shines in lurid light,
And is rolled about with thunders,
And terrors, and a blight,
Like Kaf the peak of Eblis-
Kaf, the evil height?
Who has gone up with a shouting
And a trumpet in the night?

There is battle in the Mountain-
Might assaulteth Might;
'Tis the fastness of the Anarch,
Torrent-torn, an ancient height;
The crags resound the clangor
Of the war of Wrong and Right;
And the armies in the valley
Watch and pray for dawning light.

Joy, joy, the day is breaking,
And the cloud is rolled from sight;
There is triumph in the Morning
For the Anarch's plunging flight;
God has glorified the Mountain
Where a banner burneth bright,
And the armies of the valley
They are fortified in right.

Herman Melville

Malvern Hill

Ye elms that wave on Malvern Hill
In prime of morn and May,
Recall ye how McClellan's men
Here stood at bay?
While deep within yon forest dim
Our rigid comrades lay -
Some with the cartridge in their mouth,
Others with fixed arms lifted South -
Invoking so
The cypress glades? Ah wilds of woe!

The spires of Richmond, late beheld
Through rifts in musket-haze,
Were closed from view in clouds of dust
On leaf-walled ways,
Where streamed our wagons in caravan;
And the Seven Nights and Days
Of march and fast, retreat and fight,
Pinched our grimed faces to ghastly plight -
Does the elm wood
Recall the haggard beards of blood?

The battle-smoked flag, with stars eclipsed,
We followed (it never fell!) -
In silence husbanded our strength -
Received their yell;
Till on this slope we patient turned
With cannon ordered well;
Reverse we proved was not defeat;
But ah, the sod what thousands meet! -
Does Malvern Wood
Bethink itself, and muse and brood?

We elms of Malvern Hill
Remember every thing;
But sap the twig will fill:
Wag the world how it will,
Leaves must be green in Spring.

Marlena

Far off in the sea is Marlena,
A land of shades and streams,
A land of many delights,
Dark and bold, thy shores, Marlena;
But green, and timorous, thy soft knolls,
Crouching behind the woodlands.
All shady thy hills; all gleaming thy springs,
Like eyes in the earth looking at you.
How charming thy haunts, Marlena!--
Oh, the waters that flow through Onimoo;
Oh, the leaves that rustle through Ponoo:
Oh, the roses that blossom in Tarma.
Come, and see the valley of Vina:
How sweet, how sweet, the Isles from Hina:
'Tis aye afternoon of the full, full moon,
And ever the season of fruit,
And ever the hour of flowers,
And never the time of rains and gales,
All in and about Marlena.
Soft sigh the boughs in the stilly air,
Soft lap the beach the billows there;
And in the woods or by the streams,
You needs must nod in the Land of Dreams.

Herman Melville

Memorials On The Slain At Chickamauga

Happy are they and charmed in life
Who through long wars arrive unscarred
At peace. To such the wreath be given,
If they unfalteringly have striven -
In honor, as in limb, unmarred.
Let cheerful praise be rife,
And let them live their years at ease,
Musing on brothers who victorious died -
Loved mates whose memory shall ever please.

And yet mischance is honorable too -
Seeming defeat in conflict justified
Whose end to closing eyes is hid from view.
The will, that never can relent -
The aim, survivor of the bafflement,
Make this memorial due.

Herman Melville

Misgivings

When ocean-clouds over inland hills
Sweep storming in late autumn brown,
And horror the sodden valley fills,
And the spire falls crashing in the town,
I muse upon my country's ills--
The tempest burning from the waste of Time
On the world's fairest hope linked with man's foulest crime.

Nature's dark side is heeded now--
(Ah! optimist-cheer dishartened flown)--
A child may read the moody brow
Of yon black mountain lone.
With shouts the torrents down the gorges go,
And storms are formed behind the storms we feel:
The hemlock shakes in the rafter, the oak in the driving keel.

Herman Melville

Monody

To have known him, to have loved him
After loneness long;
And then to be estranged in life,
And neither in the wrong;
And now for death to set his seal--
Ease me, a little ease, my song!

By wintry hills his hermit-mound
The sheeted snow-drifts drape,
And houseless there the snow-bird flits
Beneath the fir-trees' crape:
Glazed now with ice the cloistral vine
That hid the shyest grape.

Herman Melville

Off Cape Colonna

Aloof they crown the foreland lone,
From aloft they loftier rise--
Fair columns, in the aureole rolled
From sunned Greek seas and skies.
They wax, sublimed to fancy's view,
A god-like group against the blue.

Over much like gods! Serene they saw
The wolf-waves board the deck,
And headlong hull of Falconer,
And many a deadlier wreck.

Herman Melville

Old Counsel

Of The Young Master of a Wrecked California Clipper

Come out of the Golden Gate,
Go round the Horn with streamers,
Carry royals early and late;
But, brother, be not over-elate--
All hands save ship! has startled dreamers.

Herman Melville

On The Grave Of A Young Cavalry Officer Killed In The Valley Of Virginia

Beauty and youth, with manners sweet, and
friends--

Gold, yet a mind not unenriched had he

Whom here low violets veil from eyes.

But all these gifts transcended be:

His happier fortune in this mound you see.

Herman Melville

On The Photograph Of A Corps Commander

Ay, man is manly. Here you see
The warrior-carriage of the head,
And brave dilation of the frame;
And lighting all, the soul that led
In Spottsylvania's charge to victory,
Which justifies his fame.

A cheering picture. It is good
To look upon a Chief like this,
In whom the spirit moulds the form.
Here favoring Nature, oft remiss,
With eagle mien expressive has endued
A man to kindle strains that warm.

Trace back his lineage, and his sires,
Yeoman or noble, you shall find
Enrolled with men of Agincourt,
Heroes who shared great Harry's mind.
Down to us come the knightly Norman fires,
And front the Templars bore.

Nothing can lift the heart of man
Like manhood in a fellow-man.
The thought of heaven's great King afar
But humbles us--too weak to scan;
But manly greatness men can span,
And feel the bonds that draw.

Herman Melville

On The Slain Collegians

Youth is the time when hearts are large,
And stirring wars
Appeal to the spirit which appeals in turn
To the blade it draws.
If woman incite, and duty show
(Though made the mask of Cain),
Or whether it be Truth's sacred cause,
Who can aloof remain
That shares youth's ardor, uncooled by the
snow
Of wisdom or sordid gain?

The liberal arts and nurture sweet
Which give his gentleness to man--
Train him to honor, lend him grace
Through bright examples meet--
That culture which makes never wan
With underminings deep, but holds
The surface still, its fitting place,
And so gives sunniness to the face
And bravery to the heart; what troops
Of generous boys in happiness thus bred--
Saturnians through life's Tempe led,
Went from the North and came from the
South,
With golden mottoes in the mouth,
To lie down midway on a bloody bed.

Woe for the homes of the North,
And woe for the seats of the South:
All who felt life's spring in prime,
And were swept by the wind of their place and
time--
All lavish hearts, on whichever side,
Of birth urbane or courage high,
Armed them for the stirring wars--
Armed them--some to die.
Apollo-like in pride.
Each would slay his Python--caught

The maxims in his temple taught--
Aflame with sympathies whose blaze
Perforce enwrapped him--social laws,
Friendship and kin, and by-gone days--
Vows, kisses--every heart unmoors,
And launches into the seas of wars.
What could they else--North or South?
Each went forth with blessings given
By priests and mothers in the name of Heaven;
And honor in both was chief.
Warred one for Right, and one for Wrong?
So be it; but they both were young--
Each grape to his cluster clung,
All their elegies are sung.
The anguish of maternal hearts
Must search for balm divine;
But well the striplings bore their fated parts
(The heavens all parts assign)--
Never felt life's care or cloy.
Each bloomed and died an unabated Boy;
Nor dreamed what death was--thought it mere
Sliding into some vernal sphere.
They knew the joy, but leaped the grief,
Like plants that flower ere comes the leaf--
Which storms lay low in kindly doom,
And kill them in their flush of bloom.

Herman Melville

Pebbles

I

Though the Clerk of the Weather insist,
And lay down the weather-law,
Pintado and gannet they wist
That the winds blow whither they list
In tempest or flaw.

II

Old are the creeds, but stale the schools,
Revamped as the mode may veer,
But Orm from the schools to the beaches
strays
And, finding a Conch hoar with time, he
delays
And reverent lifts it to ear.
That Voice, pitched in far monotone,
Shall it swerve? shall it deviate ever?
The Seas have inspired it, and Truth--
Truth, varying from sameness never.

III

In hollows of the liquid hills
Where the long Blue Ridges run,
The flattery of no echo thrills,
For echo the seas have none;
Nor aught that gives man back man's strain--
The hope of his heart, the dream in his brain.

IV

On ocean where the embattled fleets repair,
Man, suffering inflictor, sails on sufferance
there.

V

Implacable I, the old Implacable Sea:
Implacable most when most I smile serene--
Pleased, not appeased, by myriad wrecks in
me.

VI

Curled in the comb of yon billow Andean,
Is it the Dragon's heaven-challenging crest?
Elemental mad ramping of ravening waters--
Yet Christ on the Mount, and the dove in
her nest!

VII

Healed of my hurt, I laud the inhuman Sea--
Yea, bless the Angels Four that there convene;
For healed I am ever by their pitiless breath
Distilled in wholesome dew named rosmarine.

Herman Melville

Pipe Song

Care is all stuff:--

Puff! Puff!

To puff is enough:--

Puff! Puff

More musky than snuff,

And warm is a puff:--

Puff! Puff

Here we sit mid our puffs,

Like old lords in their ruffs,

Snug as bears in their muffs:--

Puff! Puff

Then puff, puff, puff,

For care is all stuff,

Puffed off in a puff--

Puff! Puff!

Herman Melville

Rebel Color-Bearers At Shiloh

_A plea against the vindictive cry raised by civilians
shortly after the surrender at Appomattox_

The color-bearers facing death
White in the whirling sulphurous wreath,
Stand boldly out before the line;
Right and left their glances go,
Proud of each other, glorying in their show;
Their battle-flags about them blow,
And fold them as in flame divine:
Such living robes are only seen
Round martyrs burning on the green--
And martyrs for the Wrong have been.

Perish their Cause! but mark the men--
Mark the planted statues, then
Draw trigger on them if you can.

The leader of a patriot-band
Even so could view rebels who so could stand;
And this when peril pressed him sore,
Left aidless in the shivered front of war--
Skulkers behind, defiant foes before,
And fighting with a broken brand.
The challenge in that courage rare--
Courage defenseless, proudly bare--
Never could tempt him; he could dare
Strike up the leveled rifle there.

Sunday at Shiloh, and the day
When Stonewall charged--McClellan's
crimson May,
And Chickamauga's wave of death,
And of the Wilderness the cypress wreath--
All these have passed away.
The life in the veins of Treason lags,
Her daring color-bearers drop their flags,
And yield. _Now_ shall we fire?
Can poor spite be?

Shall nobleness in victory less aspire
Than in reverse? Spare Spleen her ire,
And think how Grant met Lee.

Herman Melville

Shelley's Vision

Wandering late by morning seas
When my heart with pain was low--
Hate the censor pelted me--
Deject I saw my shadow go.

In elf-caprice of bitter tone
I too would pelt the pelted one:
At my shadow I cast a stone.

When lo, upon that sun-lit ground
I saw the quivering phantom take
The likeness of St. Stephen crowned:
Then did self-reverence awake.

Herman Melville

Sheridan At Cedar Creek

(October, 1864)

Shoe the steed with silver
That bore him to the fray,
When he heard the guns at dawning-
Miles away;
When he heard them calling, calling-
Mount! nor stay:
Quick, or all is lost;
They've surprised and stormed the post.
They push your routed host-
Gallop! retrieve the day.

House the horse in ermine-
For the foam-flake blew
White through red October;
He thundered into view;
They cheered him in the looming,
Horseman and horse they knew.
The turn of the tide began,
The rally of bugles ran,
He swung his hat in the van;
The electric hoof-spark flew.

Wreath the steed and lead him-
For the charge he led
Touched and turned the cypress
Into amaranths for the head
Of Philip, king of riders,
Who raised them from the dead
The camp (at dawning lost),
By eve, recovered-forced,
Rang with the laughter of the host
At belated Early fled.

Shroud the horse in sable-
For the mounds they heap!
There is firing in the Valley,
And yet no strife they keep;

It is the parting volley,
It is the pathos deep.
There is glory for the brave
Who lead, and nobly save,
But no knowledge in the grave
Where the nameless followers sleep.

Herman Melville

Shiloh - A Requiem

Skimming lightly, wheeling still,
The swallows fly low
Over the field in clouded days,
The forest-field of Shiloh --
Over the field where April rain
Solaced the parched one stretched in pain
Through the pause of night
That followed the Sunday fight
Around the church of Shiloh--
The church so lone, the log-built one,
That echoed to many a parting groan
And natural prayer
Of dying foemen mingled there --
Foemen at morn, but friends at eve --
Fame or country least their care:
(What like a bullet can undeceive!)
But now they lie low,
While over them the swallows skim,
And all is hushed at Shiloh.

Herman Melville

Song of the Paddlers [excerpt]

Dip, dip, in the brine our paddles dip,
Dip, dip, the fins of our swimming ship!
How the waters part,
As on we dart;
 Our sharp prows fly,
 And curl on high,
As the upright fin of the rushing shark,
Rushing fast and far on his flying mark!
Like him we prey;
Like him we slay;
 Swim on the foe,
 Our prow a blow!

Herman Melville

Song Of Yoomy

Departed the pride, and the glory of Mardi:
The vaunt of her isles sleeps deep in the sea,
That rolls o'er his corse with a hush,
His warriors bend over their spears,
His sisters gaze upward and mourn.
Weep, weep, for Adondo is dead!
The sun has gone down in a shower;
Buried in clouds the face of the moon;
Tears stand in the eyes of the starry skies,
And stand in the eyes of the flowers;
And streams of tears are the trickling brooks,
Coursing adown the mountains.--
Departed the pride, and the glory of Mardi:
The vaunt of her isles sleeps deep in the sea.
Fast falls the small rain on its bosom that
sobs,--
Not showers of rain, but the tears of Oro.

Herman Melville

Stonewall Jackson

Mortally Wounded at Chancellorsville

The Man who fiercest charged in fight,
Whose sword and prayer were long -
Stonewall!

Even him who stoutly stood for Wrong,
How can we praise? Yet coming days
Shall not forget him with this song.

Dead is the Man whose Cause is dead,
Vainly he died and set his seal -
Stonewall!

Earnest in error, as we feel;
True to the thing he deemed was due,
True as John Brown or steel.

Relentlessly he routed us;
But we relent, for he is low -
Stonewall!
Justly his fame we outlaw; so
We drop a tear on the bold Virginian's bier,
Because no wreath we owe.

Herman Melville

Stonewall Jackson (Ascribed To A Virginian)

One man we claim of wrought reknown
Which not the North shall care to slur;
A Modern lived who sleeps in death,
Calm as the marble Ancients are:
'Tis he whose life, though a vapor's wreath,
Was charged with the lightning's burning breath -
Stonewall, stormer of the war.

But who shall hymn the Roman heart?
A stoic he, but even more:
The iron will and lion thew
Were strong to inflict as to endure:
Who like him could stand, or pursue?
His fate the fatalist followed through;
In all his great soul found to do
Stonewall followed his star.

He followed his star on the Romney march
Through the sleet to the wintry war;
And he followed it on when he bowed the grain -
The Wind of the Shenandoah;
At Gaines's Mill in the giants' strain -
On the fierce forced stride to Manassas-plain,
Where his sword with thunder was clothed again,
Stonewall followed his star.

His star he followed athwart the flood
To Potomac's Northern shore,
When midway wading, his host of braves
'My Maryland!' loud did roar -
To red Antietam's field of graves,
Through mountain-passes, woods, and waves,
They followed their pagod with hymns and glaives,
For Stonewall followed a star.

Back it led him to Marye's slope,
Where the shock and the fame he bore;
And to green Moss-Neck it guided him -
Brief respite from throes of war:

To the laurel glade by the Wilderness grim,
Through climxed victory naught shall dim,
Even unto death it piloted him -
Stonewall followed his star.

Its lead he followed in gentle ways
Which never the valiant mar;
A cap we sent him. bestarred, to replace
The sun-scorched helm of war:
A fillet he made of the shining lace
Childhood's laughing brow to grace -
Not his was a goldsmith's star.

O, much of doubt in after days
Shall cling, as now, to the war;
Of the right and the wrong they'll still debate,
Puzzled by Stonewall's star:
'Fortune went with the North elate,'
'Ay, but the South had Stonewall's weight,
And he fell in the South's great war.'

Herman Melville

The Aeolian Harp

At The Surf Inn

List the harp in window wailing
Stirred by fitful gales from sea:
Shrieking up in mad crescendo--
Dying down in plaintive key!

Listen: less a strain ideal
Than Ariel's rendering of the Real.
What that Real is, let hint
A picture stamped in memory's mint.

Braced well up, with beams aslant,
Betwixt the continents sails the _Phocion,_
For Baltimore bound from Alicant.
Blue breezy skies white fleeces fleck
Over the chill blue white-capped ocean:
From yard-arm comes--'Wreck ho, a
wreck!'

Dismasted and adrift,
Longtime a thing forsaken;
Overwashed by every wave
Like the slumbering kraken;
Heedless if the billow roar,
Oblivious of the lull,
Leagues and leagues from shoal or shore,
It swims--a levelled hull:
Bulwarks gone--a shaven wreck,
Nameless and a grass-green deck.
A lumberman: perchance, in hold
Prostrate pines with hemlocks rolled.

It has drifted, waterlogged,
Till by trailing weeds beclotted:
Drifted, drifted, day by day,
Pilotless on pathless way.
It has drifted till each plank
Is oozy as the oyster-bank:

Drifted, drifted, night by night,
Craft that never shows a light;
Nor ever, to prevent worse knell,
Tolls in fog the warning bell.

From collision never shrinking,
Drive what may through darksome smother;
Saturate, but never sinking,
Fatal only to the _other!_
Deadlier than the sunken reef
Since still the snare it shifteth,
Torpido in dumb ambushade
Waylayingly it drifteth.

O, the sailors--O, the sails!
O, the lost crews never heard of!
Well the harp of Ariel wails
Thought that tongue can tell no word of!

Herman Melville

The Age Of The Antonines

While faith forecasts millennial years
Spite Europe's embattled lines,
Back to the Past one glance be cast--
The Age of the Antonines!
O summit of fate, O zenith of time
When a pagan gentleman reigned,
And the olive was nailed to the inn of the
world
Nor the peace of the just was feigned.
A halcyon Age, afar it shines,
Solstice of Man and the Antonines.

Hymns to the nations' friendly gods
Went up from the fellowly shrines,
No demagogue beat the pulpit-drum
In the Age of the Antonines!
The sting was not dreamed to be taken from
death,
No Paradise pledged or sought,
But they reasoned of fate at the flowing feast,
Nor stifled the fluent thought,
We sham, we shuffle while faith declines--
They were frank in the Age of the Antonines.

Orders and ranks they kept degree,
Few felt how the parvenu pines,
No law-maker took the lawless one's fee
In the Age of the Antonines!
Under law made will the world reposed
And the ruler's right confessed,
For the heavens elected the Emperor then,
The foremost of men the best.
Ah, might we read in America's signs
The Age restored of the Antonines.

Herman Melville

The Apparition: A Retrospect

Convulsions came; and, where the field
Long slept in pastoral green,
A goblin-mountain was upheaved
(Sure the scared sense was all deceived),
Marl-glen and slag-ravine.

The unreserve of Ill was there,
The clinkers in her last retreat;
But, ere the eye could take it in,
Or mind could comprehension win,
It sunk! - and at our feet.

So, then, Solidity's a crust -
The core of fire below;
All may go well for many a year,
But who can think without a fear
Of horrors that happen so?

Herman Melville

The Bench Of Boors

In bed I muse on Tenier's boors,
Embrowned and beery losels all;
A wakeful brain
Elaborates pain:
Within low doors the slugs of boors
Laze and yawn and doze again.

In dreams they doze, the drowsy boors,
Their hazy hovel warm and small:
Thought's ampler bound
But chill is found:
Within low doors the basking boors
Snugly hug the ember-mound.

Sleepless, I see the slumberous boors
Their blurred eyes blink, their eyelids fall:
Thought's eager sight
Aches--overbright!
Within low doors the boozy boors
Cat-naps take in pipe-bowl light.

Herman Melville

The Berg (A Dream)

I saw a ship of material build
(Her standards set, her brave apparel on)
Directed as by madness mere
Against a solid iceberg steer,
Nor budge it, though the infactuate ship went down.
The impact made huge ice-cubes fall
Sullen in tons that crashed the deck;
But that one avalanche was all--
No other movement save the foundering wreck.

Along the spurs of ridges pale,
Not any slenderest shaft and frail,
A prism over glass-green gorges lone,
Toppled; or lace or traceries fine,
Nor pendant drops in grot or mine
Were jarred, when the stunned ship went down.
Nor sole the gulls in cloud that wheeled
Circling one snow-flanked peak afar,
But nearer fowl the floes that skimmed
And crystal beaches, felt no jar.
No thrill transmitted stirred the lock
Of jack-straw neddle-ice at base;
Towers indermined by waves--the block
Atilt impending-- kept their place.
Seals, dozing sleek on sliddery ledges
Slipt never, when by loftier edges
Through the inertia ovrthrown,
The impetuous ship in bafflement went down.

Hard Berg (methought), so cold, so vast,
With mortal damps self-overcast;
Exhaling still thy dankish breath--
Adrift dissolving, bound for death;
Though lumpish thou, a lumbering one--
A lumbering lubbard loitering slow,
Impingers rue thee ad go slow
Sounding thy precipice below,
Nor stir the slimy slug that sprawls
Along thy dead indifference of walls.

Herman Melville

The College Colonel

He rides at their head;
A crutch by his saddle just slants in view,
One slung arm in splints, you see,
Yet he guides his strong steed - how coldly too.

He brings his regiment home -
Not as they filed two years before,
But a remnant half-tattered, and battered, and worn,
Like castaway sailors, who - stunned
By the surf's loud roar,
Their mates dragged back and seen no more -
Again and again breast the surge,
And at last crawl, spent, to shore.

A still rigidity and pale -
An Indian aloofness lines his brow;
He has lived a thousand years
Compressed in battle's pains and prayers,
Marches and watches slow.

There are welcoming shots, and flags;
Old men off hat to the Boy,
Wreaths from gay balconies fall at his feet,
But to him - there comes alloy.

It is not that a leg is lost,
It is not that an arm is maimed,
It is not that the fever has racked -
Self he has long since disclaimed.

But all through the Seven Days' Fight,
And deep in the Wilderness grim,
And in the field-hospital tent,
And Petersburg crater, and dim
Lean brooding in Libby, there came -
Ah heaven! - what truth to him.

Herman Melville

The Eagle Of The Blue

ALOFT he guards the starry folds
Who is the brother of the star;
The bird whose joy is in the wind
Exulteth in the war.

No painted plume—a sober hue,
His beauty is his power;
That eager calm of gaze intent
Foresees the Sibyl's hour.

Austere, he crowns the swaying perch,
Flapped by the angry flag;
The hurricane from the battery sings,
But his claw has known the crag.

Amid the scream of shells, his scream
Runs shrilling; and the glare
Of eyes that brave the blinding sun
The volleyed flame can bear.

The pride of quenchless strength is his—
Strength which, though chained, avails;
The very rebel looks and thrills—
The anchored Emblem hails.

Though scarred in many a furious fray,
No deadly hurt he knew;
Well may we think his years are charmed—
The Eagle of the Blue.

Herman Melville

The Enthusiast

"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him"

Shall hearts that beat no base retreat
In youth's magnanimous years -
Ignoble hold it, if discreet
When interest tames to fears;
Shall spirits that worship light
Perfidious deem its sacred glow,
Recant, and trudge where worldlings go,
Conform and own them right?

Shall Time with creeping influence cold
Unnerve and cow? The heart
Pine for the heartless ones enrolled
With palterers of the mart?
Shall faith abjure her skies,
Or pale probation blench her down
To shrink from Truth so still, so lone
Mid loud gregarious lies?

Each burning boat in Caesar's rear,
Flames -No return through me!
So put the torch to ties though dear,
If ties but tempters be.
Nor cringe if come the night:
Walk through the cloud to meet the pall,
Though light forsake thee, never fall
From fealty to light.

Herman Melville

The Enviably Isles

From 'Rammon.'

Through storms you reach them and from
storms are free.

Afar descried, the foremost drear in hue,
But, nearer, green; and, on the marge, the sea
Makes thunder low and mist of rainbowed
dew.

But, inland, where the sleep that folds the hills
A dreamier sleep, the trance of God, instills--
On uplands hazed, in wandering airs
aswoon,
Slow-swaying palms salute love's cypress tree
Adown in vale where pebbly runlets croon
A song to lull all sorrow and all glee.

Sweet-fern and moss in many a glade are here.
Where, strewn in flocks, what cheek-flushed
myriads lie
Dimpling in dream--unconscious slumberers
mere,
While billows endless round the beaches die.

Herman Melville

The Figure-Head

The _Charles-and-Emma_ seaward sped,
(Named from the carven pair at prow,)
He so smart, and a curly head,
She tricked forth as a bride knows how:
Pretty stem for the port, I trow!

But iron-rust and alum-spray
And chafing gear, and sun and dew
Vexed this lad and lassie gay,
Tears in their eyes, salt tears nor few;
And the hug relaxed with the failing glue.

But came in end a dismal night,
With creaking beams and ribs that groan,
A black lee-shore and waters white:
Dropped on the reef, the pair lie prone:
O, the breakers dance, but the winds they
moan!

Herman Melville

The Fortitude Of The North

Under the Disaster of the Second Manassas

They take no shame for dark defeat
While prizing yet each victory won,
Who fight for the Right through all retreat,
Nor pause until their work is done.
The Cape-of-Storms is proof to every throe;
Vainly against that foreland beat
Wild winds aloft and wilder waves below:
The black cliffs gleam through rents in sleet
When the livid Antarctic storm-clouds glow.

Herman Melville

The Good Craft _Snow Bird_

Strenuous need that head-wind be
From purposed voyage that drives at last
The ship, sharp-braced and dogged still,
Beating up against the blast.

Brigs that figs for market gather,
Homeward-bound upon the stretch,
Encounter oft this uglier weather
Yet in end their port they fetch.

Mark yon craft from sunny Smyrna
Glazed with ice in Boston Bay;
Out they toss the fig-drums cheerly,
Livelier for the frosty ray.

What if sleet off-shore assailed her,
What though ice yet plate her yards;
In wintry port not less she renders
Summer's gift with warm regards!

And, look, the underwriters' man,
Timely, when the stevedore's done,
Puts on his _specs_ to pry and scan,
And sets her down--_A, No. 1._

Bravo, master! Bravo, brig!
For slanting snows out of the West
Never the _Snow-Bird_ cares one fig;
And foul winds steady her, though a pest.

Herman Melville

The Haglets

By chapel bare, with walls sea-beat
The lichened urns in wilds are lost
About a carved memorial stone
That shows, decayed and coral-mossed,
A form recumbent, swords at feet,
Trophies at head, and kelp for a
winding-sheet.

I invoke thy ghost, neglected fane,
Washed by the waters' long lament;
I adjure the recumbent effigy
To tell the cenotaph's intent--
Reveal why fagotted swords are at feet,
Why trophies appear and weeds are the
winding-sheet.

By open ports the Admiral sits,
And shares repose with guns that tell
Of power that smote the arm'd Plate Fleet
Whose sinking flag-ship's colors fell;
But over the Admiral floats in light
His squadron's flag, the red-cross Flag
of the White.

The eddy waters whirl astern,
The prow, a seedsman, sows the spray;
With bellying sails and buckling spars
The black hull leaves a Milky Way;
Her timbers thrill, her batteries roll,
She revelling speeds exulting with pennon
at pole,

But ah, for standards captive trailed
For all their scutcheoned castles' pride--
Castilian towers that dominate Spain,
Naples, and either Ind beside;
Those haughty towers, armorial ones,
Rue the salute from the Admiral's dens
of guns.

Ensigns and arms in trophy brave,
Braver for many a rent and scar,
The captor's naval hall bedeck,
Spoil that insures an earldom's star--
Toledo's great, grand draperies, too,
Spain's steel and silk, and splendors from
Peru.

But crippled part in splintering fight,
The vanquished flying the victor's flags,
With prize-crews, under convoy-guns,
Heavy the fleet from Opher drags--
The Admiral crowding sail ahead,
Foremost with news who foremost in conflict
sped.

But out from cloistral gallery dim,
In early night his glance is thrown;
He marks the vague reserve of heaven,
He feels the touch of ocean lone;
Then turns, in frame part undermined,
Nor notes the shadowing wings that fan
behind.

There, peaked and gray, three haglets fly,
And follow, follow fast in wake
Where slides the cabin-lustre shy,
And sharks from man a glamour take,
Seething along the line of light
In lane that endless rules the war-ship's flight.

The sea-fowl here, whose hearts none know,
They followed late the flag-ship quelled,
(As now the victor one) and long
Above her gurgling grave, shrill held
With screams their wheeling rites--then sped
Direct in silence where the victor led.

Now winds less fleet, but fairer, blow,
A ripple laps the coppered side,
While phosphor sparks make ocean gleam,

Like camps lit up in triumph wide;
With lights and tinkling cymbals meet
Acclaiming seas the advancing conqueror
greet.

But who a flattering tide may trust,
Or favoring breeze, or aught in end?--
Careening under startling blasts
The sheeted towers of sails impend;
While, gathering bale, behind is bred
A livid storm-bow, like a rainbow dead.

At trumpet-call the topmen spring;
And, urged by after-call in stress,
Yet other tribes of tars ascend
The rigging's howling wilderness;
But ere yard-ends alert they win,
Hell rules in heaven with hurricane-fire
and din.

The spars, athwart at spiry height,
Like quaking Lima's crosses rock;
Like bees the clustering sailors cling
Against the shrouds, or take the shock
Flat on the swept yard-arms aslant,
Dipped like the wheeling condor's pinions
gaunt.

A LULL! and tongues of languid flame
Lick every boom, and lambent show
Electric 'gainst each face aloft;
The herds of clouds with bellowings go:
The black ship rears--beset--harassed,
Then plunges far with luminous antlers vast.

In trim betimes they turn from land,
Some shivered sails and spars they stow;
One watch, dismissed, they troll the can,
While loud the billow thumps the bow--
Vies with the fist that smites the board,
Obstreperous at each reveller's jovial word.

Of royal oak by storms confirmed,
The tested hull her lineage shows:
Vainly the plungings whelm her prow--
She rallies, rears, she sturdier grows:
Each shot-hole plugged, each storm-sail home,
With batteries housed she rams the watery
dome.

DIM seen adrift through driving scud,
The wan moon shows in plight forlorn;
Then, pinched in visage, fades and fades
Like to the faces drowned at morn,
When deeps engulfed the flag-ship's crew,
And, shrilling round, the inscrutable haglets
flew.

And still they fly, nor now they cry,
But constant fan a second wake,
Unflagging pinions ply and ply,
Abreast their course intent they take;
Their silence marks a stable mood,
They patient keep their eager neighborhood.

Plumed with a smoke, a confluent sea,
Heaved in a combing pyramid full,
Spent at its climax, in collapse
Down headlong thundering stuns the hull:
The trophy drops; but, reared again,
Shows Mars' high-altar and contemns the
main.

REBUILT it stands, the brag of arms,
Transferred in site--no thought of where
The sensitive needle keeps its place,
And starts, disturbed, a quiverer there;
The helmsman rubs the clouded glass--
Peers in, but lets the trembling portent pass.

Let pass as well his shipmates do
(Whose dream of power no tremors jar)
Fears for the fleet convoyed astern:
'Our flag they fly, they share our star;

Spain's galleons great in hull are stout:
Manned by our men--like us they'll ride it
out.'

Tonight's the night that ends the week--
Ends day and week and month and year:
A fourfold imminent flickering time,
For now the midnight draws anear:
Eight bells! and passing-bells they be--
The Old year fades, the Old Year dies at sea.

He launched them well. But shall the New
Redeem the pledge the Old Year made,
Or prove a self-asserting heir?
But healthy hearts few qualms invade:
By shot-chests grouped in bays 'tween guns
The gossips chat, the grizzled, sea-beat ones.

And boyish dreams some graybeards blab:
'To sea, my lads, we go no more
Who share the Acapulco prize;
We'll all night in, and bang the door;
Our ingots red shall yield us bliss:
Lads, golden years begin to-night with this!'

Released from deck, yet waiting call,
Glazed caps and coats baptized in storm,
A watch of Laced Sleeves round the board
Draw near in heart to keep them warm:
'Sweethearts and wives!' clink, clink, they
meet,
And, quaffing, dip in wine their beards of
sleet.
'Ay, let the star-light stay withdrawn,
So here her hearth-light memory fling,
So in this wine-light cheer be born,
And honor's fellowship weld our ring--
Honor! our Admiral's aim foretold:

A tomb or a trophy, and lo, 't is a trophy and
gold!
But he, a unit, sole in rank,

Apart needs keep his lonely state,
The sentry at his guarded door
Mute as by vault the sculptured Fate;
Belted he sits in drowsy light,
And, hatted, nods--the Admiral of the White.

He dozes, aged with watches passed--
Years, years of pacing to and fro;
He dozes, nor attends the stir
In bullioned standards rustling low,
Nor minds the blades whose secret thrill
Perverts overhead the magnet's Polar will:--

LESS heeds the shadowing three that play
And follow, follow fast in wake,
Untiring wing and lidless eye--
Abreast their course intent they take;
Or sigh or sing, they hold for good
The unvarying flight and fixed inveterate
mood.

In dream at last his dozings merge,
In dream he reaps his victor's fruit;
The Flags-o'-the-Blue, the Flags-o'-the-Red,
Dipped flags of his country's fleets salute
His Flag-o'-the-White in harbor proud--
But why should it blench? Why turn to a
painted shroud?

The hungry seas they hound the hull,
The sharks they dog the haglets' flight;
With one consent the winds, the waves
In hunt with fins and wings unite,
While drear the harps in cordage sound
Remindful wails for old Armadas drowned.

Ha--yonder! are they Northern Lights?
Or signals flashed to warn or ward?
Yea, signals lanced in breakers high;
But doom on warning follows hard:
While yet they veer in hope to shun,
They strike! and thumps of hull and heart are

one.

But beating hearts a drum-beat calls
And prompt the men to quarters go;
Discipline, curbing nature, rules--
Heroic makes who duty know:
They execute the trump's command,
Or in peremptory places wait and stand.

Yet cast about in blind amaze--
As through their watery shroud they peer:
'We tacked from land: then how betrayed?
Have currents swerved us--snared us here?'
None heed the blades that clash in place
Under lamps dashed down that lit the
magnet's case.

Ah, what may live, who mighty swim,
Or boat-crew reach that shore forbid,
Or cable span? Must victors drown--
Perish, even as the vanquished did?
Man keeps from man the stifled moan;
They shouldering stand, yet each in heart
how lone.

Some heaven invoke; but rings of reefs
Prayer and despair alike deride
In dance of breakers forked or peaked,
Pale maniacs of the maddened tide;
While, strenuous yet some end to earn,
The haglets spin, though now no more astern.

Like shuttles hurrying in the looms
Aloft through rigging frayed they ply--
Cross and recross--weave and inweave,
Then lock the web with clinching cry
Over the seas on seas that clasp
The weltering wreck where gurgling ends the
gasp.

Ah, for the Plate-Fleet trophy now,
The victor's voucher, flags and arms;

Never they'll hang in Abbey old
And take Time's dust with holier palms;
Nor less content, in liquid night,
Their captor sleeps--the Admiral of the
White.

Imbedded deep with shells
And drifted treasure deep,
Forever he sinks deeper in
Unfathomable sleep--
His cannon round him thrown,
His sailors at his feet,
The wizard sea enchanting them
Where never haglets beat.

On nights when meteors play
And light the breakers dance,
The Oreads from the caves
With silvery elves advance;
And up from ocean stream,
And down from heaven far,
The rays that blend in dream
The abysm and the star.

Herman Melville

The House-Top

No sleep. The sultriness pervades the air
And blinds the brain-a dense oppression, such
As tawny tigers feel in matted shades,
Vexing their blood and making apt for ravage.
Beneath the stars the roofof desert spreads
Vacant as Libya. All is hushed near by.
Yet fitfully from far breaks a mixed surf
Of muffled sound, the Atheist roar of riot.
Yonder, where parching Sirius set in drought,
Balefully glares red Arson-there-and there.
The town is taken by its rats-ship-rats
And rats of the wharves. All civil charms
And priestly spells which late held hearts in awe-
Fear-bound, subjected to a better sway
Than sway of self; these like a dream dissolve
And man rebounds whole aeons back in nature.
Hail to the low dull rumble, dull and dead,
And ponderous drag that jars the wall.
Wise Draco comes, deep in the midnight roll
Of black artillery; he comes, though late;
In code corroborating Calvin's creed
And cynic tyrannies of honest kings;
He comes, nor parlies; and the Town, redeemed,
Gives thanks devout; nor, being thankful, heeds
The grimy slur on the Republic's faith implied,
Which holds that man is naturally good,
And-more-is Nature's Roman, never to be scourged.

Herman Melville

The Land Of Love

Hail! voyagers, hail!
Whence e'er ye come, where'er ye rove,
No calmer strand,
No sweeter land,
Will e'er ye view, than the Land of Love!

Hail! voyagers, hail!
To these, our shores, soft gales invite:
The palm plumes wave,
The billows lave,
And hither point fix'd stars of light!

Hail! voyagers, hail!
Think not our groves wide brood with gloom;
In this, our isle,
Bright flowers smile:
Full urns, rose-heaped, these valleys bloom.

Hail! voyagers, hail!
Be not deceived; renounce vain things;
Ye may not find
A tranquil mind,
Though hence ye sail with swiftest wings.

Hail! voyagers, hail!
Time flies full fast; life soon is o'er;
And ye may mourn,
That hither borne,
Ye left behind our pleasant shore.

Herman Melville

The Maldive Shark

About the Shark, phlegmatical one,
Pale sot of the Maldive sea,
The sleek little pilot-fish, azure and slim,
How alert in attendance be.
From his saw-pit of mouth, from his charnel of maw,
They have nothing of harm to dread,
But liquidly glide on his ghastly flank
Or before his Gorgonian head;
Or lurk in the port of serrated teeth
In white triple tiers of glittering gates,
And there find a haven when peril's abroad,
An asylum in jaws of the Fates!
They are friends; and friendly they guide him to prey,
Yet never partake of the treat --
Eyes and brains to the dotard lethargic and dull,
Pale ravener of horrible meat.

Herman Melville

The Man-O-War Hawk

Yon black man-of-war-hawk that wheels in
the light
O'er the black ship's white sky-s'l, sunned
cloud to the sight,
Have we low-flyers wings to ascend to his
height?
No arrow can reach him; nor thought can
attain
To the placid supreme in the sweep of his
reign.

Herman Melville

The March Into Virginia

Did all the lets and bars appear
To every just or larger end,
Whence should come the trust and cheer?
Youth must its ignorant impulse lend -
Age finds place in the rear.
All wars are boyish, and are fought by boys,
The champions and enthusiasts of the state:
Turbid adors and vain joys
Not barrenly abate -
Stimulants to the power mature,
Preparatives of fate.

Who here forecasteth the event?
What heart but spurns at precedent
And warnings of the wise,
Contemned foreclosures of surprise?
The banners play, the bugles call,
The air is blue and prodigal.
No berrying party, pleasure-wooded,
No picnic party in the May,
Ever went less loth than they
Into that leafy neighborhood.
In Bacchic glee they file toward Fate,
Moloch's uninitiate;
Expectancy, and glad surmise
Of battle's unknown mysteries,
All they feel is this: 'tis glory,
A rapture sharp, though transitory,
Yet lasting in belauled story.
So they gayly go to fight,
Chanting left and laughing right.

But some who this blithe mood present,
As on in lightsome files they fare,
Shall die experienced ere three days are spent -
Perish, enlightened by the vollied glare;
Or shame survive, and, like to adamant,
The throe of Second Manassas share.

The March To The Sea

Not Kenesaw high-arching,
Nor Allatoona's glen--
Though there the graves lie parching--
Stayed Sherman's miles of men;
From charred Atlanta marching
They launched the sword again.
The columns streamed like rivers
Which in their course agree,
And they streamed until their flashing
Met the flashing of the sea:
It was glorious glad marching,
That marching to the sea.

The brushed the foe before them
(Shall gnats impede the bull?);
Their own good bridges bore them
Over swamps or torrents full,
And the grand pines waving o'er them
Bowed to axes keen and cool.
The columns grooved their channels.
Enforced their own decree,
And their power met nothing larger
Until it met the sea:
It was glorious glad marching,
A marching glad and free.

Kilpatrick's snare of riders
In zigzags mazed the land,
Perplexed the pale Southsiders
With feints on every hand;
Vague menace awed the hidiers
In forts beyond command.
To Sherman's shifting problem
No foeman knew the key;
But onward went the marching
Unpausing to the sea:
It was glorious glad marching,
The swinging step was free.

The flankers ranged like pigeons

In clouds through field or wood;
The flocks of all those regions,
The herds and horses good,
Poured in and swelled the legions,
For they caught the marching mood.

A volley ahead! They hear it;
And they hear the repartee:
Fighting was but frolic
In that marching to the sea:
It was glorious glad marching,
A marching bold and free.

All nature felt their coming,
The birds like couriers flew,
And the banners brightly blooming
The slaves by thousands drew,
And they marched beside the drumming,
And they joined the armies blue.

The cocks crowed from the cannon
(Pets named from Grant and Lee),
Plumed fighters and campaigners
In the marching to the sea:
It was glorious glad marching,
For every man was free.

The foragers through calm lands
Swept in tempest gay,
And they breathed the air of balm-lands
Where rolled savannas lay,
And they helped themselves from farm-lands--
As who should say them nay?

The regiments uproarious
Laughed in Plenty's glee;
And they marched till their broad laughter
Met the laughter of the sea:
It was glorious glad marching,
That marching to the sea.

The grain of endless acres
Was threshed (as in the East)
By the trampling of the Takers,
Strong march of man and beast;

The flails of those earth-shakers
Left a famine where they ceased.
The arsenals were yielded;
The sword (that was to be),
Arrested in the forging,
Rued that marching to the sea:
It was glorious glad marching,
But ah, the stern decree!

For behind they left a wailing,
A terror and a ban,
And blazing cinders sailing,
And houseless households wan,
Wide zones of counties paling,
And towns where maniacs ran.
Was it Treason's retribution--
Necessity the plea?
They will long remember Sherman
And his streaming columns free--
They will long remember Sherman
Marching to the sea.

(December, 1864.)

Herman Melville

The Marchioness Of Brinvilliers

He toned the sprightly beam of morning
With twilight meek of tender eve,
Brightness interfused with softness,
Light and shade did weave:
And gave to candor equal place
With mystery starred in open skies;
And, floating all in sweetness, made
Her fathomless mild eyes.

Herman Melville

The Martyr

(Indicative of the Passion of the People
on the 15th Day of April, 1865)

* * *

Good Friday was the day
Of the prodigy and crime,
When they killed him in his pity,
When they killed him in his prime
Of clemency and calm-
When with yearning he was filled
To redeem the evil-willed,
And, though conqueror, be kind;
But they killed him in his kindness,
In their madness and their blindness,
And they killed him from behind.

There is sobbing of the strong,
And a pall upon the land;
But the People in their weeping
Bare the iron hand;
Beware the People weeping
When they bare the iron hand.

He lieth in his blood-
The father in his face;
They have killed him, the Forgiver-
The Avenger takes his place,
The Avenger wisely stern,
Who in righteousness shall do
What the heavens call him to,
And the parricides remand;
For they killed him in his kindness,
In their madness and their blindness,
And his blood is on their hand.

There is sobbing of the strong,
And a pall upon the land;
But the People in their weeping
Bare the iron hand;

Beware the People weeping
When they bare the iron hand.

Herman Melville

The Mound By The Lake

The grass shall never forget this grave.
When homeward footing it in the sun
After the weary ride by rail,
The stripling soldiers passed her door,
Wounded perchance, or wan and pale,
She left her household work undone -
Duly the wayside table spread,
With evergreens shaded, to regale
Each travel-spent and grateful one.
So warm her heart, childless, unwed,
Who like a mother comforted.

Herman Melville

The New Zealot To The Sun

Persian, you rise
Aflame from climes of sacrifice
Where adulators sue,
And prostrate man, with brow abased,
Adheres to rites whose tenor traced
All worship hitherto.

Arch type of sway,
Meetly your over-ruling ray
You fling from Asia's plain,
Whence flashed the javelins abroad
Of many a wild incursive horde
Led by some shepherd Cain.

Mid terrors dinned
Gods too came conquerors from your Ind,
The book of Brahma throve;
They came like to the scythed car,
Westward they rolled their empire far,
Of night their purple wove.

Chemist, you breed
In orient climes each sorcerous weed
That energizes dream--
Transmitted, spread in myths and creeds,
Houris and hells, delirious screeds
And Calvin's last extreme.

What though your light
In time's first dawn compelled the flight
Of Chaos' startled clan,
Shall never all your darted spears
Disperse worse Anarchs, frauds and fears,
Sprung from these weeds to man?

But Science yet
An effluence ampler shall beget,
And power beyond your play--
Shall quell the shades you fail to rout,

Yea, searching every secret out
Elucidate your ray.

Herman Melville

The Night March

With banners furled and clarions mute,
An army passes in the night;
And beaming spears and helms salute
The dark with bright.

In silence deep the legions stream,
With open ranks, in order true;
Over boundless plains they stream and
gleam--
No chief in view!

Afar, in twinkling distance lost,
(So legends tell) he lonely wends
And back through all that shining host
His mandate sends.

Herman Melville

The Portent

Hanging from the beam,
Slowly swaying (such the law),
Gaunt the shadow on the green,
Shenandoah!
The cut is on the crown
(Lo, John Brown),
And the stabs shall heal no more.

Hidden in the cap
Is the anguish none can draw;
So your future veils its face,
Shenandoah!
But the streaming beard is shown
(Weird John Brown),
The meteor of the war.

Herman Melville

The Ravaged Villa

In shards the sylvan vases lie,
Their links of dance undone,
And brambles wither by thy brim,
Choked fountain of the sun!
The spider in the laurel spins,
The weed exiles the flower:
And, flung to kiln, Apollo's bust
Makes lime for Mammon's tower.

Herman Melville

The Released Rebel Prisoner

June, 1865

Armies he's seen--the herds of war,
But never such swarms of men
As now in the Nineveh of the North--
How mad the Rebellion then!

And yet but dimly he divines
The depth of that deceit,
And superstition of vast pride
Humbled to such defeat.

Seductive shone the Chiefs in arms--
His steel the nearest magnet drew;
Wreathed with its kind, the Gulf-weed drives--
'Tis Nature's wrong they rue.

His face is hidden in his beard,
But his heart peers out at eye--
And such a heart! like a mountain-pool
Where no man passes by.

He thinks of Hill--a brave soul gone;
And Ashby dead in pale disdain;
And Stuart with the Rupert-plume,
Whose blue eye never shall laugh again.

He hears the drum; he sees our boys
From his wasted fields return;
Ladies feast them on strawberries,
And even to kiss them yearn.

He marks them bronzed, in soldier-trim,
The rifle proudly borne;
They bear it for an heirloom home,
And he--disarmed--jail-worn.

Home, home--his heart is full of it;
But home he never shall see,

Even should he stand upon the spot:
'Tis gone!--where his brothers be.

The cypress-moss from tree to tree
Hangs in his Southern land;
As weird, from thought to thought of his
Run memories hand in hand.

And so he lingers--lingers on
In the City of the Foe--
His cousins and his countrymen
Who see him listless go.

Herman Melville

The Scout Toward Aldie

The cavalry-camp lies on the slope
Of what was late a vernal hill,
But now like a pavement bare-
An outpost in the perilous wilds
Which ever are lone and still;
But Mosby's men are there -
Of Mosby best beware.

Great trees the troopers felled, and leaned
In antlered walls about their tents;
Strict watch they kept; 'twas Hark! and Mark!
Unarmed none cared to stir abroad
For berries beyond their forest-fence:
As glides in seas the shark,
Rides Mosby through green dark.

All spake of him, but few had seen
Except the maimed ones or the low;
Yet rumor made him every thing-
A farmer-woodman-refugee-
The man who crossed the field but now;
A spell about his life did cling -
Who to the ground shall Mosby bring?

The morning-bugles lonely play,
Lonely the evening-bugle calls -
Unanswered voices in the wild;
The settled hush of birds in nest
Becharms, and all the wood enthalls:
Memory's self is so beguiled
That Mosby seems a satyr's child.

They lived as in the Eerie Land-
The fire-flies showed with fairy gleam;
And yet from pine-tops one might ken
The Capitol dome-hazy-sublime-
A vision breaking on a dream:
So strange it was that Mosby's men
Should dare to prowl where the Dome was seen.

A scout toward Aldie broke the spell. -
The Leader lies before his tent
Gazing at heaven's all-cheering lamp
Through blandness of a morning rare;
His thoughts on bitter-sweets are bent:
His sunny bride is in the camp -
But Mosby - graves are beds of damp!

The trumpet calls; he goes within;
But none the prayer and sob may know:
Her hero he, but bridegroom too.
Ah, love in a tent is a queenly thing,
And fame, be sure, refines the vow;
But fame fond wives have lived to rue,
And Mosby's men fell deeds can do.

Tan-tara! tan-tara! tan-tara!
Mounted and armed he sits a king;
For pride she smiles if now she peep -
Elate he rides at the head of his men;
He is young, and command is a boyish thing:
They file out into the forest deep -
Do Mosby and his rangers sleep?

The sun is gold, and the world is green,
Opal the vapors of morning roll;
The champing horses lightly prance -
Full of caprice, and the riders too
Curving in many a caricole.
But marshaled soon, by fours advance -
Mosby had checked that airy dance.

By the hospital-tent the cripples stand -
Bandage, and crutch, and cane, and sling,
And palely eye the brave array;
The froth of the cup is gone for them
(Caw! caw! the crows through the blueness wing);
Yet these were late as bold, as gay;
But Mosby - a clip, and grass is hay.

How strong they feel on their horses free,

Tingles the tendoned thigh with life;
Their cavalry-jackets make boys of all -
With golden breasts like the oriole;
The chat, the jest, and laugh are rife.
But word is passed from the front - a call
For order; the wood is Mosby's hall.

To which behest one rider sly
(Spurred, but unarmed) gave little heed -
Of dexterous fun not slow or spare,
He teased his neighbors of touchy mood,
Into plungings he pricked his steed:
A black-eyed man on a coal-black mare,
Alive as Mosby in mountain air.

His limbs were long, and large and round;
He whispered, winked-did all but shout:
A healthy man for the sick to view;
The taste in his mouth was sweet at morn;
Little of care he cared about.
And yet of pains and pangs he knew -
In others, maimed by Mosby's crew.

The Hospital Steward - even he
(Sacred in person as a priest),
And on his coat-sleeve broidered nice
Wore the caduceus, black and green.
No wonder he sat so light on his beast;
This cheery man in suit of price
Not even Mosby dared to slice.

They pass the picket by the pine
And hollow log - a lonesome place;
His horse adroop, and pistol clean;
'Tis cocked - kept leveled toward the wood;
Strained vigilance ages his childish face.
Since midnight has that stripling been
Peering for Mosby through the green.

Splashing they cross the freshet-flood,
And up the muddy bank they strain;
A horse at the spectral white-ash shies -

One of the span of the ambulance,
Black as a hearse. They give the rein:
Silent speed on a scout were wise,
Could cunning baffle Mosby's spies.

Rumor had come that a band was lodged
In green retreats of hills that peer
By Aldie (famed for the swordless charge).
Much store they'd heaped of captured arms
And, per adventure, pilfered cheer;
For Mosby's lads oft hearts enlarge
In revelry by some gorge's marge.

'Don't let your sabres rattle and ring;
To his oat-bag let each man give heed -
There now, that fellow's bag's untied,
Sowing the road with the precious grain.
Your carbines swing at hand - you need!
Look to yourselves, and your nags beside,
Men who after Mosby ride.'

Picked lads and keen went sharp before -
A guard, though scarce against surprise;
And rearmost rode an answering troop,
But flankers none to right or left.
No bugle peals, no pennon flies:
Silent they sweep, and fain would swoop
On Mosby with an Indian whoop.

On, right on through the forest land,
Nor man, nor maid, nor child was seen -
Not even a dog. The air was still;
The blackened hut they turned to see,
And spied charred benches on the green;
A squirrel sprang from the rotting mill
Whence Mosby sallied late, brave blood to spill.

By worn-out fields they cantered on -
Drear fields amid the woodlands wide;
By cross-roads of some olden time,
In which grew groves; by gate-stones down -
Grassed ruins of secluded pride:

A strange lone land, long past the prime,
Fit land for Mosby or for crime.

The brook in the dell they pass. One peers
Between the leaves: 'Ay, there's the place -
There, on the oozy ledge - 'twas there
We found the body (Blake's you know);
Such whirlings, gurglings round the face -
Shot drinking! Well, in war all's fair -
So Mosby says. The bough - take care!'

Hard by, a chapel. Flower-pot mould
Dank and decayed the shaded roof;
The porch was punk; the clapboards spanned
With ruffled lichens gray or green;
Red coral-moss was not aloof;
And mid dry leaves green dead-man's-hand
Groped toward that chapel in Mosby-land.

They leave the road and take the wood,
And mark the trace of ridges there -
A wood where once had slept the farm -
A wood where once tobacco grew
Drowsily in the hazy air,
And wrought in all kind things a calm -
Such influence, Mosby! bids disarm.

To ease even yet the place did woo -
To ease which pines unstirring share,
For ease the weary horses sighed:
Halting, and slackening girths, they feed,
Their pipes they light, they loiter there;
Then up, and urging still the Guide,
On, and after Mosby ride.

This Guide in frowzy coat of brown,
And beard of ancient growth and mould,
Bestrode a bony steed and strong,
As suited well with bulk he bore -
A wheezy man with depth of hold
Who jouncing went. A staff he swung -
A wight whom Mosby's wasp had stung.

Burnt out and homeless - hunted long!
That wheeze he caught in autumn-wood
Crouching (a fat man) for his life,
And spied his lean son 'mong the crew
That probed the covert. Ah! black blood
Was his 'gainst even child and wife -
Fast friends to Mosby. Such the strife.

A lad, unhorsed by sliding girths,
Strains hard to readjust his seat
Ere the main body show the gap
'Twixt them and the rear-guard; scrub-oaks near
He sidelong eyes, while hands move fleet;
Then mounts and spurs. One drops his cap -
'Let Mosby find!' nor heeds mishap.

A gable time-stained peeps through trees:
'You mind the fight in the haunted house?
That's it; we clenched them in the room -
An ambushade of ghosts, we thought,
But proved sly rebels on a bouse!
Luke lies in the yard.' The chimneys loom:
Some muse on Mosby - some on doom.

Less nimbly now through brakes they wind,
And ford wild creeks where men have drowned;
They skirt the pool, avoid the fen,
And so till night, when down they lie,
Their steeds still saddled, in wooded ground:
Rein in hand they slumber then,
Dreaming of Mosby's cedarn den.

But Colonel and Major friendly sat
Where boughs deformed low made a seat.
The Young Man talked (all sworded and spurred)
Of the partisan's blade he longed to win,
And frays in which he meant to beat.
The grizzled Major smoked, and heard:
'But what's that - Mosby?' 'No, a bird.'

A contrast here like sire and son,

Hope and Experience sage did meet;
The Youth was brave, the Senior too;
But through the Seven Days one had served,
And gasped with the rear-guard in retreat:
So he smoked and smoked, and the wreath he blew -
'Any sure news of Mosby's crew?'

He smoked and smoked, eyeing the while
A huge tree hydra-like in growth -
Moon-tinged-with crook'd boughs rent or lopped -
Itself a haggard forest. 'Come!'
The Colonel cried, 'to talk you're loath;
D'ye hear? I say he must be stopped,
This Mosby - caged, and hair close cropped.'

'Of course; but what's that dangling there?'
'Where?' 'From the tree - that gallows-bough;
'A bit of frayed bark, is it not?'
'Ay-or a rope; did we hang last? -
Don't like my neckerchief any how;'
He loosened it: 'O ay, we'll stop
This Mosby - but that vile jerk and drop!'

By peep of light they feed and ride,
Gaining a grove's green edge at morn,
And mark the Aldie hills upread
And five gigantic horsemen carved
Clear-cut against the sky withdrawn;
Are more behind? an open snare?
Or Mosby's men but watchmen there?

The ravaged land was miles behind,
And Loudon spread her landscape rare;
Orchards in pleasant lowlands stood,
Cows were feeding, a cock loud crew,
But not a friend at need was there;
The valley-folk were only good
To Mosby and his wandering brood.

What best to do? what mean yon men?
Colonel and Guide their minds compare;
Be sure some looked their Leader through;

Dismounted, on his sword he leaned
As one who feigns an easy air;
And yet perplexed he was they knew -
Perplexed by Mosby's mountain-crew.

The Major hemmed as he would speak,
But checked himself, and left the ring
Of cavalrymen about their Chief -
Young courtiers mute who paid their court
By looking with confidence on their king;
They knew him brave, foresaw no grief -
But Mosby - the time to think is brief.

The Surgeon (sashed in sacred green)
Was glad 'twas not for him to say
What next should be; if a trooper bleeds,
Why he will do his best, as wont,
And his partner in black will aid and pray;
But judgment bides with him who leads,
And Mosby many a problem breeds.

The Surgeon was the kindest man
That ever a callous trace professed;
He felt for him, that Leader young,
And offered medicine from his flask:
The Colonel took it with marvelous zest.
For such fine medicine good and strong,
Oft Mosby and his foresters long.

A charm of proof. 'Ho, Major, come-
Pounce on yon men! Take half your troop,
Through the thickets wind-pray speedy be-
And gain their rear. And, Captain Morn,
Picket these roads-all travelers stop;
The rest to the edge of this crest with me,
That Mosby and his scouts may see.'

Commanded and done. Ere the sun stood steep,
Back came the Blues, with a troop of Grays,
Ten riding double-luckless ten!-
Five horses gone, and looped hats lost,
And love-locks dancing in a maze-

Certes, but sophomores from the glen
Of Mosby-not his veteran men.

'Colonel,' said the Major, touching his cap,
'We've had our ride, and here they are.'
'Well done! How many found you there?'
'As many as I bring you here.'
'And no one hurt?' 'There'll be no scar -
One fool was battered.' 'Find their lair?'
'Why, Mosby's brood camp everywhere.'

He sighed, and slid down from his horse,
And limping went to a spring-head nigh.
'Why, bless me, Major, not hurt, I hope?'
'Battered my knee against a bar
When the rush was made; all right by-and-by. -
Halloa! They gave you too much rope -
Go back to Mosby, eh? elope?'

Just by the low-hanging skirt of wood
The guard, remiss, had given a chance
For a sudden sally into the cover -
But foiled the intent, nor fired a shot,
Though the issue was a deadly trance;
For, hurled 'gainst an oak that humped low over,
Mosby's man fell, pale as a lover.

They pulled some grass his head to ease
(Lined with blue shreds a ground-nest stirred).
The Surgeon came - 'Here's a to-do!'
'Ah!' cried the Major, darting a glance,
'This fellow's the one that fired and spurred
Downhill, but met reserves below -
My boys, not Mosby's - so we go!'

The Surgeon - bluff, red, goodly man -
Kneeled by the hurt one; like a bee
He toiled the pale young Chaplain too -
(Who went to the wars for cure of souls,
And his own student-ailments) - he
Bent over likewise; spite the two,
Mosby's poor man more pallid grew.

Meanwhile the mounted captives near
Jested; and yet they anxious showed;
Virginians; some of family-pride,
And young, and full of fire, and fine
In open feature and cheek that glowed;
And here thrall'd vagabonds now they ride -
But list! one speaks for Mosby's side.

'Why, three to one - your horses strong -
Revolvers, rifles, and a surprise -
Surrender we account no shame!
We live, are gay, and life is hope;
We'll fight again when fight is wise.
There are plenty more from where we came;
But go find Mosby - start the game!'

Yet one there was who looked but glum;
In middle-age, a father he,
And this his first experience too:
'They shot at my heart when my hands were up -
This fighting's crazy work, I see!'
But no one is nigh; what next do?
The woods are mute, and Mosby is the foe.

'Save what we've got,' the Major said;
'Bad plan to make a scout too long;
The tide may turn, and drag them back,
And more beside. These rides I've been,
And every time a mine was sprung.
To rescue, mind, they won't be slack -
Look out for Mosby's rifle-crack.'

'We'll welcome it! Give crack for crack!
Peril, old lad, is what I seek.'
'O then, there's plenty to be had -
By all means on, and have our fill!'
With that, grotesque, he writhed his neck,
Showing a scar by buck-shot made -
Kind Mosby's Christmas gift, he said.

'But, Colonel, my prisoners - let a guard

Make sure of them, and lead to camp.
That done, we're free for a dark-room fight
If so you say. 'The other laughed;
'Trust me, Major, nor throw a damp.
But first to try a little sleight -
Sure news of Mosby would suit me quite.'

Herewith he turned - 'Reb, have a dram?'
Holding the Surgeon's flask with a smile
To a young scapegrace from the glen.
'O yes!' he eagerly replied,
'And thank you, Colonel, but - any guile?
For if you think we'll blab - why, then
You don't know Mosby or his men.'

The Leader's genial air relaxed.
'Best give it up,' a whisperer said.
'By heaven, I'll range their rebel den!'
'They'll treat you well,' the captive cried;
'They're all like us - handsome - well bred:
In wood or town, with sword or pen,
Polite is Mosby, and his men.'

'Where were you, lads, last night? - come, tell!'
'We? - at a wedding in the Vale -
The bridegroom our comrade; by his side
Belisent, my cousin - O, so proud
Of her young love with old wounds pale -
A Virginian girl! God bless her pride -
Of a crippled Mosby-man the bride!'

'Four wall shall mend that saucy mood,
And moping prisons tame him down,'
Said Captain Cloud.' God help that day,'
Cried Captain Morn, 'and he so young.
But hark, he sings - a madcap one!'
'O we multiply merrily in the May,
The birds and Mosby's men, they say!'

While echoes ran, a wagon old,
Under stout guard of Corporal Chew
Came up; a lame horse, dingy white,

With clouted harness; ropes in hand,
Cringed the humped driver, black in hue;
By him (for Mosby's band a sight)
A sister-rebel sat, her veil held tight.

'I picked them up,' the Corporal said,
'Crunching their way over stick and root,
Through yonder wood. The man here - Cuff -
Says they are going to Leesburgtown.'
The Colonel's eye took in the group;
The veiled one's hand he spied - enough!
Not Mosby's. Spite the gown's poor stuff,

Off went his hat: 'Lady, fear not;
We soldiers do what we deplore -
I must detain you till we march,'
The stranger nodded. Nettled now,
He grew politer than before: -
'Tis Mosby's fault, this halt and search:'
The lady stiffened in her starch.

'My duty, madam, bids me now
Ask what may seem a little rude.
Pardon - that veil - withdraw it, please
(Corporal! Make every man fall back);
Pray, now I do but what I should;
Bethink you, 'tis in masks like these
That Mosby haunts the villages.'

Slowly the stranger drew her veil,
And looked the Soldier in the eye -
A glance of mingled foul and fair;
Sad patience in a proud disdain,
And more than quietude. A sigh
She heaved, and if all unaware,
And far seemed Mosby from her care.

She came from Yewton Place, her home,
So ravaged by the war's wild play -
Campings, and foragings, and fires -
That now she sought an aunt's abode.
Her kinsmen? In Lee's army, they.

The black? A servant, late her sire's.
And Mosby? Vainly he inquires.

He gazed, and sad she met his eye;
'In the wood yonder were you lost?'
No; at the forks they left the road
Because of hoof-prints (thick they were -
Thick as the words in notes thrice crossed),
And fearful, made that episode.
In fear of Mosby? None she showed.

Her poor attire again he scanned:
'Lady, once more; I grieve to jar
On all sweet usage, but must plead
To have what peeps there from your dress;
That letter - 'tis justly prize of war.'
She started - gave it - she must need.
'Tis not from Mosby? May I read?'

And straight such matter he perused
That with the Guide he went apart.
The Hospital Steward's turn began:
'Must squeeze this darkey; every tap
Of knowledge we are bound to start.'
'Garry,' she said, 'tell all you can
Of Colonel Mosby - that brave man.'

'Dun know much, sare; and missis here
Know less dan me. But dis I know -'
'Well, what?' 'I dun know what I know.'
'A knowing answer!' The hump-back coughed,
Rubbing his yellowish wool-like tow.
'Come - Mosby - tell!' 'O dun look so!
My gal nursed missis - let we go.'

'Go where?' demanded Captain Cloud;
'Back into bondage? Man, you're free!'
'Well, let we free!' The Captain's brow
Lowered; the Colonel came - had heard:
'Pooh! pooh! His simple heart I see -
A faithful servant. -Lady' (a bow),
'Mosby's abroad - with us you'll go.

'Guard! Look to your prisoners; back to camp!
The man in the grass - can he mount and away?
Why, how he groans!' 'Bad inward bruise-
Might lug him along in the ambulance.'
'Coals to Newcastle! Let him stay.
Boots and saddles! - our pains we lose,
Nor care I if Mosby hear the news!'

But word was sent to a house at hand,
And a flask was left by the hurt one's side.
They seized in that same house a man,
Neutral by day, by night a foe -
So charged his neighbor late, the Guide.
A grudge? Hate will do what it can;
Along he went for a Mosby-man.

No secrets now; the bugle calls;
The open road they take, nor shun
The hill; retrace the weary way.
But one there was who whispered low,
'This is a feint - we'll back anon;
Young Hair-Brains don't retreat, they say;
A brush with Mosby is the play!'

They rode till eve. Then on a farm
That lay along a hill-side green,
Bivouacked. Fires were made, and then
Coffee was boiled; a cow was coaxed
And killed, and savory roasts were seen;
And under the lee of a cattle-pen
The guard supped freely with Mosby's men.

The ball was bandied to and fro;
Hits were given and hits were met;
'Chickamauga, Feds - take off your hat!'
'But the Fight in the Clouds repaid you, Rebs!'
'Forgotten about Manassas yet?'
Chatting and chaffing, and tit for tat,
Mosby's clan with the troopers sat.

'Here comes the moon!' a captive cried;

'A song! What say? Archy, my lad!'
Hailing are still one of the clan
(A boyish face with girlish hair),
'Give us that thing poor Pansy made
Last year.' He brightened, and began;
And this was the song of Mosby's man:

Spring is come; she shows her pass -
Wild violets cool!
South of woods a small close grass -
A vernal wool!
Leaves are a'bud on the sassafras-
They'll soon be full;
Blessings on the friendly screen -
I'm for the South! Says the leafage green.

Robins! fly, and take your fill
Of out-of-doors -
Garden, orchard, meadow, hill,
Barns and bowers;
Take your fill, and have your will -
Virginia's yours!
But, bluebirds! Keep away, and fear
The ambuscade in bushes here.

'A green song that,' a sergeant said;
'But where's poor Pansy? Gone, I fear.'
'Ay, mustered out at Ashby's Gap.'
'I see; now for a live man's song;
Ditty for ditty - prepare to cheer.
My bluebirds, you can fling a cap!
You barehead Mosby-boys - why - clap!'

Nine Blue-coats went a-nutting
Slyly in Tennessee-
Not for chestnuts - better than that-
Hugh, you bumble-bee!
Nutting, nutting -
All through the year there's nutting!

A tree they spied so yellow,
Rustling in motion queer;

In they fired, and down they dropped -
Butternuts, my dear!
Nutting, nutting-
Who'll 'list to go a-nutting?

Ah! Why should good fellows foe men be?
And who would dream that foes they were -
Larking and singing so friendly then -
A family likeness in every face.
But Captain Cloud made sour demur:
'Guard! Keep your prisoners in the pen,
And let none talk with Mosby's men.'

That captain was a valorous one
(No irony, but honest truth),
Yet down from his brain cold drops distilled,
Making stalactites in his heart -
A conscientious soul, forsooth;
And with a formal hate was filled
Of Mosby's band; and some he'd killed.

Meantime the lady rueful sat,
Watching the flicker of a fire
Where the Colonel played the outdoor host
In brave old hall of ancient Night.
But ever the dame grew shyer and shyer,
Seeming with private grief engrossed -
Grief far from Mosby, housed or lost.

The ruddy embers showed her pale.
The Soldier did his best devoir:
'Some coffee? -no? - cracker? -one?'
Cared for her servant - sought to cheer:
'I know, I know - a cruel war!
But wait - even Mosby'll eat his bun;
The Old Hearth - back to it anon!'

But cordial words no balm could bring;
She sighed, and kept her inward chafe,
And seemed to hate the voice of glee -
Joyless and tearless. Soon he called

An escort: 'See this lady safe
In yonder house. - Madam, you're free.
And now for Mosby. - Guide! With me.'

('A night-ride, eh?') 'Tighten your girths!
But, buglers! Not a note from you.
Fling more rails on the fires - ablaze!
(Sergeant, a feint - I told you so -
Toward Aldie again. Bivouac, adieu!')
After the cheery flames they gaze,
Then back for Mosby through the maze.

The moon looked through the trees, and tipped
The scabbards with her elfin beam;
The Leader backward cast his glance,
Proud of the cavalcade that came-
A hundred horses, bay and cream:
'Major! Look how the lads advance -
Mosby we'll have in the ambulance!'

'No doubt, no doubt: - was that a hare? -
First catch, then cook; and cook him brown.'
'Trust me to catch,' the other cried-
'The lady's letter! - A dance, man, dance
This night is given in Leesburgtown!'
'He'll be there too!' wheezed out the Guide;
'That Mosby loves a dance and ride!'

'The lady, ah! - the lady's letter -
A lady, then, is in the case,'
Muttered the Major. 'Ay, her aunt
Writes her to come by Friday eve
(To-night), for people of the place,
At Mosby's last fight jubilant,
A party give, thought able-cheer be scant.'

The Major hemmed. 'Then this night-ride
We owe to her? - One lighted house
In a town else dark .- The moths, begar!
Are not quite yet all dead!' 'How? how?'
'A mute, meek mournful little mouse! -
Mosby has wiles which subtle are -

But woman's wiles in wiles of war!

'Tut, Major! By what craft or guile -'
'Can't tell! but he'll be found in wait.
Softly we enter, say, the town -
Good! Pickets post, and all so sure -
When - crack! The rifles from every gate,
The Gray-backs fire - dashes up and down -
Each alley unto Mosby known!

'Now, Major, now - you take dark views
Of a moonlight night.' 'Well, well, we'll see,'
And smoked as if each whiff were gain.
The other mused; then sudden asked,
'What would you doing rand decree?'
I'd beat, if I could, Lee's armies - then
Send constables after Mosby's men.'

'Ay! ay! - you're odd.' The moon sailed up;
On through the shadowy land they went.
'Names must be made and printed be!'
Hummed the blithe Colonel. 'Doc, your flask!
Major, I drink to your good content.
My pipe is out - enough for me!
One's buttons shine - does Mosby see?

'But what comes here?' A man from the front
Reported a tree athwart the road.
'Go round it, then; no time to bide;
All right - go on! Were one to stay
For each distrust of a nervous mood,
Long miles we'd make in this our ride
Through Mosby-land. - Oh! with the Guide!'

Then sportful to the Surgeon turned:
'Green sashes hardly serve by night!'
'Nor bullets nor bottles,' the Major sighed,
'Against these moccasin-snakes-such foes
As seldom come to solid fight:
They kill and vanish; through grass they glide;
Devil take Mosby!'-his horse here shied.

'Hold! look-the tree, like a dragged balloon;
A globe of leaves-some trickery here;
My nag is right-best now be shy.'
A movement was made, a hubbub and snarl;
Little was plain-they blindly steer.
The Pleiades, as from ambush sly,
Peep out-Mosby's men in the sky!

As restive they turn, how sore they feel,
And cross, and sleepy, and full of spleen,
And curse the war. 'Fools, North and South!'
Said one right out. 'O for a bed!
O now to drop in this woodland green!'
He drops as the syllables leave his mouth-
Mosby speaks from the undergrowth-

Speaks in a volley! Out jets the flame!
Men fall from their saddles like plums from trees;
Horses take fright, reins tangle and bind;
'Steady - Dismount - form - and into the wood!'
They go, but find what scarce can please:
Their steeds have been tied in the field behind,
And Mosby's men are off like the wind.

Sound the recall! Vain to pursue -
The enemy scatters in wilds he knows,
To reunite in his own good time;
And, to follow, they need divide-
To come lone and lost on crouching foes:
Maple and hemlock, beech and lime,
Are Mosby's confederates, share the crime.

'Major,' burst in a bugler small,
'The fellow we left in Loudon grass -
Sir slyboots with the inward bruise,
His voice I heard - the very same -
Some watch word in the ambush pass;
Ay, sir, we had him in his shoes -
We caught him - Mosby - but to lose!'

'Go, go! - these saddle-dreamers! Well,
And here's another. - Cool, sir, cool!'

'Major, I saw them mount and sweep,
And one was humped, or I mistake,
And in the skurry dropped his wool.'
'A wig! go fetch it: - the lads need sleep;
They'll next see Mosby in a sheep!

'Come, come, fall back! Reform your ranks -
All's jackstraws here! Where's Captain Morn?-
We've parted like boats in a raging tide!
But stay - the Colonel - did he charge?
And comes he there? 'Tis streak of dawn;
Mosby is off, the woods are wide-
Hist! there's a groan - this crazy ride!

As they searched for the fallen, the dawn grew chill;
They lay in the dew: 'Ah! Hurt much, Mink?
And - yes - the Colonel! 'Dead! but so calm
That death seemed nothing - even death,
The thing we deem everything heart can think;
Amid wilding roses that shed their balm,
Careless of Mosby he lay - in a charm!

The Major took him by the Hand -
Into the friendly clasp it bled
(A ball through heart and hand he rued):
'Good-bye' and gazed with humid glance;
Then in a hollow reverie said
'The weakness thing is lustihood;
But Mosby' - and he checked his mood.

'Where's the advance? - cut off, by heaven!
Come, Surgeon, how with your wounded there?'
'The ambulance will carry all.'
'Well, get them in; we go to camp.
Seven prisoners gone? For the rest have care.'
Then to himself, 'This grief is gall;
That Mosby! - I'll cast a silver ball!'

'Ho!' turning - 'Captain Cloud, you mind
The place where the escort went - so shady?
Go search every closet low and high,
And barn, and bin, and hidden bower -

Every covert - find that lady!
And yet I may misjudge her - ay,
Women (like Mosby) mystify.

'We'll see. Ay, Captain, go - with speed!
Surround and search; each living thing
Secure; that done, await us where
We last turned off. Stay! fire the cage
If the birds be flown. 'By the cross-road spring
The bands rejoined; no words; the glare
Told all. Had Mosby plotted there?

The weary troop that wended now -
Hardly it seemed the same that pricked
Forth to the forest from the camp:
Foot-sore horses, jaded men;
Every backbone felt as nicked,
Each eye dim as a sick-room lamp,
All faces stamped with Mosby's stamp.

In order due the Major rode -
Chaplain and Surgeon on either hand;
A riderless horse a negro led;
In a wagon the blanketed sleeper went;
Then the ambulance with the bleeding band;
And, an emptied oat-bag on each head,
Went Mosby's men, and marked the dead.

What gloomed them? What so cast them down,
And changed the cheer that late they took,
As double-guarded now they rode
Between the files of moody men?
Some sudden consciousness they brook,
Or dread the sequel. That night's blood
Disturbed even Mosby's brotherhood.

The flagging horses stumbled at roots,
Floundered in mires, or clinked the stones;
No rider spake except aside;
But the wounded cramped in the ambulance,
It was horror to hear their groans -
Jerked along in the woodland ride,

While Mosby's clan their reverie hide.

The Hospital Steward - even he -
Who on the sleeper kept this glance,
Was changed; late bright-black beard and eye
Looked now hearse-black; his heavy heart,
Like his fagged mare, no more could dance;
His grape was now a raisin dry:
'Tis Mosby's homily - Man must die.

The amber sunset flushed the camp
As on the hill their eyes they fed;
The picket dumb looks at the wagon dart;
A handkerchief waves from the bannered tent -
As white, alas! The face of the dead:
Who shall the withering news impart?
The bullet of Mosby goes through heart to heart!

They buried him where the lone ones lie
(Lone sentries shot on midnight post) -
A green-wood grave-yard hid from ken,
Where sweet-fern flings an odor nigh -
Yet held in fear for the gleaming ghost!
Though the bride should see threescore and ten,
She will dream of Mosby and his men.

Now halt the verse, and turn aside -
The cypress falls athwart the way;
No joy remains for bard to sing;
And heaviest dole of all is this,
That other hearts shall be as gay
As hers that now no more shall spring:
To Mosby-land the dirges cling.

Herman Melville

The Stone Fleet

I have a feeling for those ships,
Each worn and ancient one,
With great bluff bows, and broad in the beam:
Ay, it was unkindly done.
But so they serve the Obsolete-
Even so, Stone Fleet!

You'll say I'm doting; do but think
I scudded round the Horn in one-
The Tenedos, a glorious
Good old craft as ever run-
Sunk (how all unmeet!)
With the Old Stone Fleet.

An India ship of fame was she,
Spices and shawls and fans she bore;
A whaler when her wrinkles came-
Turned off! till, spent and poor,
Her bones were sold (escheat)!
Ah! Stone Fleet.

Four were erst patrician keels
(Names attest what families be),
The Kensington, and Richmond too,
Leonidas and Lee:
But now they have their seat
With the Old Stone Fleet.

To scuttle them-a pirate deed-
Sack them, and dismast;
They sunk so slow, they died so hard,
But gurgling dropped at last.
Their ghosts in gales repeat
Woe's us, Stone Fleet!

And all for naught. The waters pass-
Currents will have their way;
Nature is nobody's ally; 'tis well;
The harbor is bettered-will stay.

A failure, and complete,
Was your Old Stone Fleet.

Herman Melville

The Swamp Angel

There is a coal-black Angel
With a thick Afric lip,
And he dwells (like the hunted and harried)
In a swamp where the green frogs dip.
But his face is against a City
Which is over a bay of the sea,
And he breathes with a breath that is
blastment,
And dooms by a far decree.

By night there is fear in the City,
Through the darkness a star soareth on;
There's a scream that screams up to the zenith,
Then the poise of a meteor lone--
Lighting far the pale fright of the faces,
And downward the coming is seen;
Then the rush, and the burst, and the havoc,
And wails and shrieks between.

It comes like the thief in the gloaming;
It comes, and none may foretell
The place of the coming--the glaring;
They live in a sleepless spell
That wizens, and withers, and whitens;
It ages the young, and the bloom
Of the maiden is ashes of roses--
The Swamp Angel broods in his gloom.

Swift is his messengers' going,
But slowly he saps their halls,
As if by delay deluding.
They move from their crumbling walls
Farther and farther away;
But the Angel sends after and after,
By night with the flame of his ray--
By night with the voice of his screaming--
Sends after them, stone by stone,
And farther walls fall, farther portals,
And weed follows weed through the Town.

Is this the proud City? the scorner
Which never would yield the ground?
Which mocked at the coal-black Angel?
The cup of despair goes round.
Vainly he calls upon Michael
(The white man's seraph was he,)
For Michael has fled from his tower
To the Angel over the sea.
Who weeps for the woeful City
Let him weep for our guilty kind;
Who joys at her wild despairing--
Christ, the Forgiver, convert his mind.

Herman Melville

The Temeraire

The gloomy hulls in armor grim,
Like clouds o'er moors have met,
And prove that oak, and iron, and man
Are tough in fibre yet.

But Splendors wane. The sea-fight yields
No front of old display;
The garniture, emblazonment,
And heraldry all decay.

Towering afar in parting light,
The fleets like Albion's forelands shine--
The full-sailed fleets, the shrouded show
Of Ships-of-the-Line.

The fighting _Temeraire,_
Built of a thousand trees,
Lunging out her lightnings,
And beetling o'er the seas--
O Ship, how brave and fair,
That fought so oft and well,

On open decks you manned the gun
Armorial.
What cheerings did you share,
Impulsive in the van,
When down upon leagued France and
Spain
We English ran--
The freshet at your bowsprit
Like the foam upon the can.
Bickering, your colors
Licked up the Spanish air,
You flapped with flames of battle-flags--
Your challenge, _Temeraire!_
The rear ones of our fleet
They yearned to share your place,
Still vying with the Victory
Throughout that earnest race--

The Victory, whose Admiral,
With orders nobly won,
Shone in the globe of the battle glow--
The angel in that sun.
Parallel in story,
Lo, the stately pair,
As late in grapple ranging,
The foe between them there--
When four great hulls lay tiered,
And the fiery tempest cleared,
And your prizes twain appeared,
Temeraire!

But Trafalgar is over now,
The quarter-deck undone;
The carved and castled navies fire
Their evening-gun.
O, Titan _Temeraire,_
Your stern-lights fade away;
Your bulwarks to the years must yield,
And heart-of-oak decay.
A pigmy steam-tug tows you,
Gigantic, to the shore--
Dismantled of your guns and spars,
And sweeping wings of war.
The rivets clinch the iron clads,
Men learn a deadlier lore;
But Fame has nailed your battle-flags--
Your ghost it sails before:
O, the navies old and oaken,
O, the _Temeraire_ no more!

Herman Melville

The Tuft Of Kelp

All dripping in tangles green,
Cast up by a lonely sea
If purer for that, O Weed,
Bitterer, too, are ye?

Herman Melville

The Victor Of Antietam

When tempest winnowed grain from bran;
And men were looking for a man,
Authority called you to the van,
McClellan:
Along the line the plaudit ran,
As later when Antietam's cheers began.

Through storm-cloud and eclipse must move
Each Cause and Man, dear to the stars and Jove;
Nor always can the wisest tell
Deferred fulfillment from the hopeless knell-
The struggler from the floundering ne'er-do-well.
A pall-cloth on the Seven Days fell,
McClellan:
Unprosperously heroical!
Who could Antietam's wreath foretell?

Authority called you; then, in mist
And loom of jeopardy-dismissed.
But staring peril soon appalled;
You, the Discarded, she recalled-
Recalled you, nor endured delay;
And forth you rode upon a blasted way,
Arrayed Pope's rout, and routed Lee's array,
McClellan:
Your tent was choked with captured flags that day,
McClellan:
Antietam was a telling fray.

Recalled you; and she heard your drum
Advancing through the ghastly gloom.
You manned the wall, you propped the Dome,
You stormed the powerful stormer home.
McClellan:
Antietam's cannon long shall boom.

At Alexandria, left alone,
McClellan:
Your veterans sent from you, and thrown

To fields and fortunes all unknown-
What thoughts were yours, revealed to none,
While faithful still you labored on-
Hearing the far Manassas gun!
McClellan:
Only Antietam could atone.

You fought in the front (an evil day,
McClellan)-
The fore-front of the first assay;
The Cause went sounding, groped its way;
The leadsmen quarrelled in the bay;
Quills thwarted swords; divided sway;
The rebel flushed in his lusty May:
You did your best, as in you lay,
McClellan.
Antietam's sun-burst sheds a ray.

Your medalled soldiers love you well,
McClellan:
Name your name, their true hearts swell;
With you they shook dread Stonewall's spell,
With you they braved the blended yell
Of rebel and maligner fell;
With you in shame or fame they dwell,
McClellan:
Antietam-braves a brave can tell.

And when your comrades (now so few,
McClellan-
Such ravage in deep files they rue)
Meet round the board, and sadly view
The empty places; tribute due
They render to the dead-and you!
Absent and silent o'er the blue;
The one-armed lift the wine to you,
McClellan,
And great Antietam's cheers renew.

Herman Melville

To Ned

Where is the world we roved, Ned Bunn?
Hollows thereof lay rich in shade
By voyagers old inviolate thrown
Ere Paul Pry cruised with Pelf and Trade.
To us old lads some thoughts come home
Who roamed a world young lads no more shall
roam.

Nor less the satiate year impends
When, wearying of routine-resorts,
The pleasure-hunter shall break loose,
Ned, for our Pantheistic ports:--
Marquesas and glenned isles that be
Authentic Edens in a Pagan sea.

The charm of scenes untried shall lure,
And, Ned, a legend urge the flight--
The Typee-truants under stars
Unknown to Shakespere's _Midsummer-
Night;_
And man, if lost to Saturn's Age,
Yet feeling life no Syrian pilgrimage.

But, tell, shall he, the tourist, find
Our isles the same in violet-glow
Enamoring us what years and years--
Ah, Ned, what years and years ago!
Well, Adam advances, smart in pace,
But scarce by violets that advance you trace.

But we, in anchor-watches calm,
The Indian Psyche's languor won,
And, musing, breathed primeval balm
From Edens ere yet overrun;
Marvelling mild if mortal twice,
Here and hereafter, touch a Paradise.

Herman Melville

To The Master Of The _Meteor_

Lonesome on earth's loneliest deep,
Sailor! who dost thy vigil keep--
Off the Cape of Storms dost musing sweep
Over monstrous waves that curl and comb;
Of thee we think when here from brink
We blow the mead in bubbling foam.

Of thee we think, in a ring we link;
To the shearer of ocean's fleece we drink,
And the _Meteor_ rolling home.

Herman Melville

Tom Deadlight

Farewell and adieu to you noble hearties,--
Farewell and adieu to you ladies of Spain,
For I've received orders for to sail for the
Deadman,
But hope with the grand fleet to see you
again.

I have hove my ship to, with main-top-sail
aback, boys;
I have hove my ship to, for the strike
soundings clear--
The black scud a'flying; but, by God's blessing,
dam' me,
Right up the Channel for the Deadman I'll
steer.

I have worried through the waters that are
called the Doldrums,
And growled at Sargasso that clogs while ye
grobe--
Blast my eyes, but the light-ship is hid by the
mist, lads:--
Flying Dutchman--odds bobbs--off the
Cape of Good Hope!

But what's this I feel that is fanning my cheek,
Matt?
The white goney's wing?--how she rolls!--
't is the Cape!--
Give my kit to the mess, Jock, for kin none is
mine, none;
And tell _Holy Joe_ to avast with the crape.

Dead reckoning, says _Joe_, it won't do to go by;
But they doused all the glims, Matt, in sky
t' other night.
Dead reckoning is good for to sail for the
Deadman;
And Tom Deadlight he thinks it may reckon

near right.

The signal!--it streams for the grand fleet to anchor.

The captains--the trumpets--the hullabaloo!
Stand by for blue-blazes, and mind your shank-painters,
For the Lord High Admiral, he's squinting at you!

But give me my _tot_, Matt, before I roll over;
Jock, let's have your flipper, it's good for to feel;
And don't sew me up without _baccy_ in mouth, boys,
And don't blubber like lubbers when I turn up my keel.

Herman Melville

We Fish

We fish, we fish, we merrily swim,
We care not for friend nor for foe.
Our fins are stout,
Our tails are out,
As through the seas we go.

Fish, Fish, we are fish with red gills;
Naught disturbs us, our blood is at zero:
We are buoyant because of our bags,
Being many, each fish is a hero.
We care not what is it, this life
That we follow, this phantom unknown;
To swim, it's exceedingly pleasant,--
So swim away, making a foam.
This strange looking thing by our side,
Not for safety, around it we flee:--
Its shadow's so shady, that's all,--
We only swim under its lee.
And as for the eels there above,
And as for the fowls of the air,
We care not for them nor their ways,
As we cheerily glide afar!

We fish, we fish, we merrily swim,
We care not for friend nor for foe:
Our fins are stout,
Our tails are out,
As through the seas we go.

Herman Melville