

Lord Byron, "The Isles of Greece," 1819

If you're not up on Greek history, my video of this poem has annotations: <https://youtu.be/pfNiLzgPyq0>

I.
The isles of Greece, the isles of Greece!
Where burning Sappho loved and sung,
Where grew the arts of war and peace,—
Where Delos rose and Phœbus sprung!
Eternal summer gilds them yet,
But all, except their sun, is set.

II.
The Scian and the Teian muse,
The hero's harp, the lover's lute,
Have found the fame your shores refuse;
Their place of birth alone is mute
To sounds which echo further west
Than your sires' "Islands of the Blest."

III.
The mountains look on Marathon—
And Marathon looks on the sea;
And musing there an hour alone,
I dream'd that Greece might still be free;
For standing on the Persians' grave,
I could not deem myself a slave.

IV.
A king sate on the rocky brow
Which looks o'er sea-born Salamis;
And ships, by thousands, lay below,
And men in nations;—all were his!
He counted them at break of day—
And when the sun set, where were they?

V.
And where are they? and where art thou
My country? On thy voiceless shore
The heroic lay is tuneless now—
The heroic bosom beats no more!
And must thy lyre, so long divine,
Degenerate into hands like mine?

VI.
'Tis something, in the dearth of fame,
Though link'd among a fetter'd race,
To feel at least a patriot's shame,
Even as I sing, suffuse my face;
For what is left the poet here?
For Greeks a blush—for Greece a tear.

VII.
Must we but weep o'er days more blest?
Must we but blush?—Our fathers bled.
Earth! render back from out thy breast
A remnant of our Spartan dead!
Of the three hundred grant but three,
To make a new Thermopylæ!

VIII.
What, silent still? and silent all?
Ah! no;—the voices of the dead
Sound like a distant torrent's fall,
And answer, "Let one living head,
But one arise—we come, we come!"
'Tis but the living who are dumb.

IX.
In vain—in vain; strike other chords;
Fill high the cup with Samian wine!
Leave battles to the Turkish hordes,
And shed the blood of Scio's vine!
Hark! rising to the ignoble call—
How answers each bold Bacchanal!

X.
You have the Pyrrhic dance as yet,
Where is the Pyrrhic phalanx gone?
Of two such lessons why forget
The nobler and the manlier one?
You have the letters Cadmus gave—
Think ye he meant them for a slave?

XI.
Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!
We will not think of themes like these!
It made Anacreon's song divine:
He served—but served Polycrates—
A tyrant; but our masters then
Were still, at least, our countrymen.

XII.
The tyrant of the Cheronese
Was freedom's best and bravest friend;
That tyrant was Miltiades!
Oh! that the present hour would lend
Another despot of the kind!
Such chains as his were sure to bind.

XIII.

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!
On Suli's rock, and Parga's shore
Exists the remnant of a line
Such as the Doric mothers bore;
And there, perhaps, some seed is sown,
The Heracleidan blood might own.

XIV.

Trust not for freedom to the Franks—
They have a king who buys and sells;
In native swords, and native ranks,
The only hope of courage dwells;
But Turkish force, and Latin fraud,
Would break your shield, however broad.

XV.

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!
Our virgins dance beneath the shade—
I see their glorious black eyes shine;
But gazing on each glowing maid,
Mine own the burning tear-drop laves,
To think such breasts must suckle slaves.

XVI.

Place me on Sunium's marbled steep,
Where nothing, save the waves and I,
May hear our mutual murmurs sweep;
There, swan-like, let me sing and die:
A land of slaves shall ne'er be mine—
Dash down yon cup of Samian wine!

Edward Rowland Sill (1841-1887). "The Reformer".

Before the monstrous wrong he sets him down -
One man against a stone-walled city of sin.
For centuries those walls have been abuilding;
Smooth porphyry, they slope and coldly glass
The flying storm and wheeling sun. No chink,
No crevice, lets the thinnest arrow in.
He fights alone, and from the cloudy ramparts
A thousand evil faces gibe and jeer him.
Let him lie down and die: what is the right,
And where is justice, in a world like this?
But by and by earth shakes herself, impatient;
And down, in one great roar of ruin, crash
Watch-tower and citadel and battlements.
When the red dust has cleared, the lonely soldier
Stands with strange thoughts beneath the friendly stars.

**** Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. "Prometheus"
(1772-1774)**

The translation is from [Wikipedia](#), which also has the German original.

Cover your heavens, Zeus,
with gauzy clouds,
and practice, like a boy
who beheads thistles,
on the oaks and peaks of mountains;
but you must allow
my world to stand,
and my hut, which you did not build,
and my hearth,
whose glow
you envy me.

I know nothing more shabby
under the sun, than you gods!
You wretchedly nourish,
from offerings
and the breath of prayers,
your majesty;
And you would starve, were
children and beggars not
such hopeful fools.

When I was a child
I did not know in from out;
I turned my confused eyes
to the sun, as if above it there were
an ear to hear my laments –
a heart like mine
that would pity the oppressed.

Who helped me
against the pride of the titans?
Who rescued me from death –
from slavery?
Did you not accomplish it all yourself,
my sacred, glowing heart?
Yet did you not glow with ardent and youthful goodness,
deceived, and full of gratitude
to the sleepers above?

I, honor you? Why?
Have you ever alleviated the pain
of one who is oppressed?
Have you ever quieted the tears
of one who is distressed?
Was I not forged into a man
by all-mighty Time
and eternal Fate,
my masters and yours?

You were deluded if you thought
I should hate life
and fly into the wilderness
because not all of my
budding dreams blossomed.
Here I will sit, forming men
after my own image.
It will be a race like me,
to suffer, to weep,
to enjoy and to rejoice,
and to pay no attention to you,
as I do!

**** Hugo, Victor. "Victor sed Victus" ("Victor but vanquished"), 1877)**

In our time of shocks and furies,
I am a gladiator, and I have waged war on emperors.
I've combatted the foul crowd of evil-doers.
Millions of torrents and millions of men
Have roared against me, without making me give up.
The whole chasm has come to attack me and scold me.
I've waged battle with foaming, murky things
And under the huge assault of shadows and tempests
I have bowed my head no more than a reef does.
I am not among those frightened by a sky in mourning,
Who, not daring to plumb the depths of the Styx
or Avernus,
Tremble before the dark mouth of caverns.
When tyrants were throwing from on high
Their black thunder, with crimes for lightning-bolts,
I threw my somber verse on those passing
dangerous men.
I dragged all the kings and all their ministers,
All the false gods and all their false principles,
All the thrones linked to all the scaffolds,
As well as error, infamous "justice" and the "sublime"
scepter –
All this I dragged pell-mell to the abyss.
Before emperors, princes, and giants
Who rule over clumps of non-entities,
Before those men adore, detest, and flatter,
Before all-powerful Jupiters,
I have been for forty years proud, indomitable,
triumphant.
And here I am, conquered by a small child.

Henry Lawson (1867-1922), "The Man Who Raised Charlestown"

They were hanging men in Buckland who would not
cheer King George –
The parson from his pulpit and the blacksmith from his
forge;

They were hanging men and brothers, and the stoutest
heart was down,
When a quiet man from Buckland rode at dusk to raise
Charlestown.

Not a young man in his glory filled with patriotic fire,
Not an orator or soldier, or a known man in his shire;
He was just the Unexpected – one of Danger's
Volunteers,
At a time for which he'd waited, all unheard of, many
years.

And Charlestown met in council, the quiet man to hear –
The town was large and wealthy, but the folks were
filled with fear,
The fear of death and plunder; and none to lead had
they,
And Self fought Patriotism as will always be the way.

The man turned to the people, and he spoke in anger
then.
And crooked his finger here and there to those he
marked as men.
And many gathered round him to see what they could
do –
For men know men in danger, as they know the
cowards too.

He chose his men and captains, and sent them here
and there,
The arms and ammunition were gathered in the square;
While peaceful folk were praying or croaking, every
one,
He was working with his blacksmiths at the carriage
of a gun.

While the Council sat on Sunday, and the church
bells rang their peal,
The quiet man was mending a broken waggon wheel;
While they passed their resolutions on his doings
(and the likes),
From a pile his men brought to him he was choosing
poles for pikes.

(They were hanging men in Buckland who would not
cheer King George –
They were making pikes in Charlestown at every
blacksmith's forge:
While the Council sat in session and the same old
song they sang,
They heard the horsemen gallop out, and the
blacksmiths' hammers clang.)

And a thrill went through the city ere the drums began
to roll,
And the coward found his courage, and the drunkard
found his soul.
So a thrill went through the city that would go through
all the land,
For the quiet man from Buckland held men's hearts
in his right hand.

And he caught a Charlestown poet (there are many
tell the tale),
And he took him by the collar when he'd filled him up
with ale;
"Now, then, write a song for Charlestown that shall lift
her on her way,
For she's marching out to Buckland and to Death
at break o' day."

And he set the silenced women tearing sheet and shift
and shirt
To make bandages and roll them for the men that would
get hurt.
And he called out his musicians and he told them what
to play:
"For I want my men excited when they march at break
o' day."

And he set the women cooking – with a wood-and-water
crew –
"For I want no empty stomachs for the work we have
to do."
Then he said to his new soldiers: "Eat your fill while yet
you may;
'Tis a heavy road to Buckland that we'll march at break
o' day."

And a shout went through the city when the drums
began to roll
(And the coward was a brave man and the beggar had
a soul),
And the drunken Charlestown poet cared no more if he
should hang,
For his song of "Charlestown's Coming" was the song
the soldiers sang.

And they cursed the King of England, and they shouted
in their glee,
And they swore to drive the British and their friends into
the sea;
But when they'd quite finished swearing, said their
leader "Let us pray,
For we march to Death and Freedom, and it's nearly
dawn of day."

There were marching feet at daybreak, and close upon
their heels
Came the scuffling tread of horses and the heavy crunch
of wheels;
So they took the road to Buckland, with their scout out
to take heed,
And a quiet man of fifty on a grey horse in the lead.

There was silence in the city, there was silence as
of night –
Women in the ghostly daylight, kneeling, praying,
deathly white,
As their mothers knelt before them, as their daughters
knelt since then,
And as ours shall, in the future, kneel and pray for
fighting men.

For their men had gone to battle, as our sons and
grandsons too
Must go out, for Life and Freedom, as all nations have
to do.
And the Charlestown women waited for the sounds that
came too soon –
Though they listened, almost breathless, till the early
afternoon.

Then they heard the tones of danger for their husbands,
sweethearts, sons,
And they stopped their ears in terror, crying, "Oh, my
God! The guns!"
Then they strained their ears to listen through the
church-bells' startled chime –
Far along the road to Buckland, Charlestown's guns
were marking time.

"They advance!" "They halt!" "Retreating!" "They come
back!" The guns are done!"
But the calmer spirits, listening, said: "Our guns are
going on."
And the friend and foe in Buckland felt two different
kinds of thrills
When they heard the Charlestown cannon talking on
the Buckland hills.

And the quiet man of Buckland sent a message in
that day,
And he gave the British soldiers just two hours to
march away.
And they hang men there no longer, there is peace
on land and wave;
On the sunny hills of Buckland there is many
a quiet grave.

There is peace upon the land, and there is friendship
on the waves –
On the sunny hills of Buckland there are rows of quiet
graves.
And an ancient man in Buckland may be seen in
sunny hours,
Pottering round about his garden, and his kitchen
stuff and flowers.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "The Arrow and the Song," 1845

I shot an arrow into the air,
It fell to earth, I knew not where;
For, so swiftly it flew, the sight
Could not follow it in its flight.

I breathed a song into the air,
It fell to earth, I knew not where;
For who has sight so keen and strong,
That it can follow the flight of song?

Long, long afterward, in an oak
I found the arrow, still unbroke;
And the song, from beginning to end,
I found again in the heart of a friend.

Edward Rowland Sill (1841-1887), "The Open Window".

My tower was grimly builded,
With many a bolt and bar,
"And here," I thought, "I will keep my life
From the bitter world afar."

Dark and chill was the stony floor,
Where never a sunbeam lay,
And the mould crept up on the dreary wall,
With its ghost touch, day by day.

One morn, in my sullen musings,
A flutter and cry I heard;
And close at the rusty casement
There clung a frightened bird.

Then back I flung the shutter
That was never before undone,
And I kept till its wings were rested
The little weary one.

But in through the open window,
Which I had forgot to close,
There had burst a gush of sunshine
And a summer scent of rose.

For all the while I had burrowed
There in my dingy tower,
Lo! the birds had sung and the leaves had danced
From hour to sunny hour.

And such balm and warmth and beauty
Came drifting in since then,
That the window still stands open
And shall never be shut again.

Berton Braley (1882-1966), "Merchant Adventurers".

Merchant Adventurers sending their galleys
Seaward from Sidon and Tyre,
Freighting their wares over mountains and valleys,
Desert and jungle and mire.
Merchant Adventurers - traders of Venice
Peddling their goods overseas,
Dauntless in face of the terrors that menace;
Merchant Adventurers, these!

Merchant Adventurers - "English Exploiters"
Sailing the perilous Main,
Threading the haunts where the Buccaneer loiters,
Dodging the galleons of Spain.
Merchant Adventurers -- dealers and jobbers,
German, Italian and Gaul,
Fighting the greedy baronial robbers -
Merchant Adventurers, all!

Merchant Adventurers! All through the ages
Somehow their business was done,
(Seeking their profit and paying their wages)
Everywhere under the sun.
Jasons of trade who were ceaselessly faring
Over new countries and seas,
Shopkeepers canny, courageous and daring,
Merchant Adventurers, these!

Now? Writers damn them as "commonplace Babbits,
Clogging the path of advance,
Middle-class dullards of standardized habits,
Utterly lacking romance!"
If we believe all these critics and censors
Business is humdrum to-day,
Gone is the spirit of Merchant Adventurers
Crumbled to dust and decay!

Don't you believe it - that spirit is glowing
Under the Business Man's vest;
Jasons of Trade are still joyously going

Forth on a magical quest.
Gambling with Fate, burning bridges behind them,
Wagering all in the till,
Bucking the world for a profit, you'll find them
Merchant Adventurers still!