Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-1892)

Crossing the Bar (1889)

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless
deep
Turns again home.
Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.

Break, Break, Break! (1835)

Break, break, break,
On thy cold grey stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead,
Will never come back to me.

The Splendour Falls on Castle Walls (1861)

The splendor falls on castle walls
And snowy summits old in story;
The long light shakes across the lakes,
And the wild cataract leaps in glory.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O, hark, O, hear! how thin and clear,
And thinner, clearer, farther going!
O, sweet and far from cliff and scar
The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying,
Blow, bugles; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O love, they die in yon rich sky,
They faint on hill or field or river;
Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
And grow forever and forever.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.

The Eagle (1851)

He clasps the crag with crooked hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ring'd with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

Tennyson's "Crossing the Bar" became the most popular lyrical meditation on death in the late Victorian period when the line "may there be no moaning of the bar"—i.e., on the part the family of those departing—was very often quoted in parting words and letters. The poem captured the idea of 'manly' courage facing the inevitable, together with an idea of God as an officer (or 'Pilot') suited to the increasing secular English middle-class who formed the bulk of colonial service. Tennyson's use of simple verse forms to express strong but always tightly-controlled emotion—and sometimes strangely evocative scenes—is apparent in the other poems given here which testify to his stature as a consummate English Romantic in the Victorian mould. The poem was written when he was indeed three years from his own death and 80 years of age.