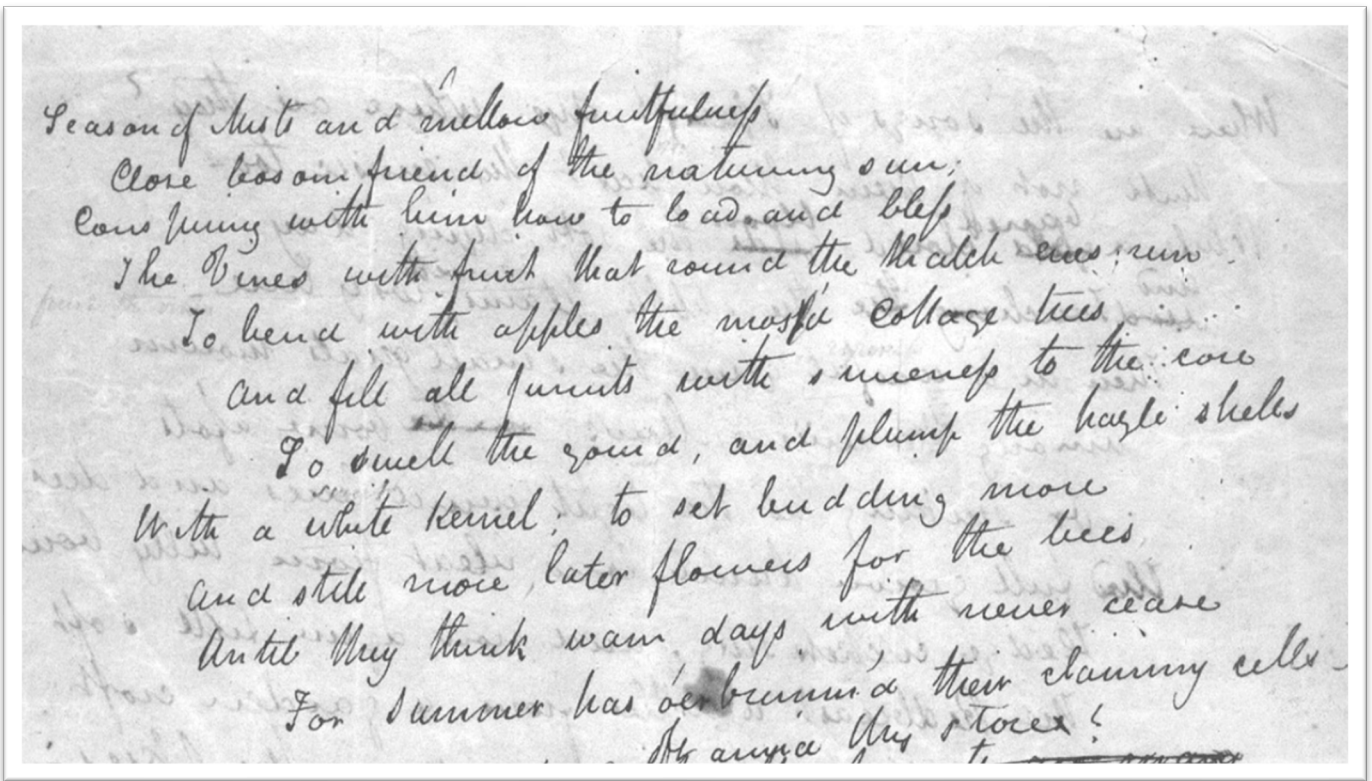


## Two Poems by John Keats



## *La belle dame sans merci*<sup>1</sup>

O WHAT can ail thee knight at arms,  
Alone and palely loitering?  
The sedge<sup>2</sup> has withered from the lake  
And no birds sing!

O what can ail thee knight at arms,  
So haggard and so woe begone?  
The squirrel's granary is full  
And the harvest's done.

I see a lilly on thy brow  
With anguish moist and fever dew,  
And on thy cheeks a fading rose  
Fast Withereth too—

I met a Lady in the Meads<sup>3</sup>  
Full beautiful, a faery's child;<sup>4</sup>  
Her hair was long, her foot was light  
And her eyes were wild—

I made a Garland for her head,  
And bracelets too, and fragrant Zone  
She look'd at me as she did love  
And made sweet moan—

I set her on my pacing steed  
And nothing else saw all day long,  
For sidelong would she bend, and sing  
A faery's song—

She found me roots of relish sweet  
And honey wild and manna<sup>5</sup> dew,  
And sure in language strange she said  
I love thee true—

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<sup>1</sup> The beautiful woman without pity

<sup>2</sup> *Sedge* - a grass-like tufted plant

<sup>3</sup> *Meads* - meadows

<sup>4</sup> *Faery* - fairy, one of the *fae*, a race of supernatural beings that precede humanity

<sup>5</sup> *Manna* - a sugary extract from the sap of an Ash tree, but also associated with the biblical manna.

She took me to her elfin grot<sup>6</sup>  
And there she wept and sigh'd full sore,  
And there I shut her wild wild eyes  
With kisses four.

And there she lulled me asleep  
And there I dream'd—Ah! Woe betide!<sup>7</sup>  
The latest dream I ever dreamt  
On the cold hill side.

I saw pale kings and Princes too,  
Pale warriors, death pale were they all;  
They cried 'La belle dame sans merci  
Thee hath in thrall.'<sup>8</sup>

I saw their starv'd lips in the gloam<sup>9</sup>  
With horrid warning gaped wide,  
And I awoke and found me here  
On the cold hill's side.

And this is why I sojourn here  
Alone and palely loitering;  
Though the sedge is wither'd from the Lake  
And no birds sing.

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<sup>6</sup> *Grot* - short for grotto, or cave

<sup>7</sup> *Betide* - happen, or happen to

<sup>8</sup> *in thrall* - under the power of someone or something

<sup>9</sup> *Gloam* - twilight, or gloaming

## To Autumn

SEASON of mists and mellow fruitfulness!  
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;  
Conspiring with him how to load and bless  
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves<sup>1</sup> run;  
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,  
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;  
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells  
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,  
And still more, later flowers for the bees,  
Until they think warm days will never cease,  
For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?  
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find  
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,  
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing<sup>2</sup> wind;  
Or on a half-reap'd furrow<sup>3</sup> sound asleep,  
Drowsed with the fumes of poppies, while thy hook<sup>4</sup>  
Spares the next swath and all its twinèd flowers;  
And sometimes like a gleaner<sup>5</sup> thou dost keep  
Steady thy laden head across a brook;  
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,  
Thou watchest the last ooziings, hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?  
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,  
While barrèd clouds bloom the soft-dying day,  
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;  
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn  
Among the river shallows,<sup>6</sup> borne aloft  
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;  
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;  
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft  
The redbreast<sup>7</sup> whistles from a garden-croft,<sup>8</sup>  
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

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<sup>1</sup> *thatch-eave* - the bottom of a thatched cottage roof

<sup>2</sup> *winnowing* - to separate grain from chaff. This involves using large hand-held fans to blow the mixture into the air so that the wind blows away the lighter chaff.

<sup>3</sup> *furrow* - a long narrow trench made in the ground by a plow, and the row of crops that eventually grows there

<sup>4</sup> *hook* - a scythe, an agricultural hand tool for mowing grass or reaping crops

<sup>5</sup> *gleaner* - one who collects leftover crops from farmers' fields after they have been harvested

<sup>6</sup> *shallows* - willow trees or shrubs, especially the pussy willow

<sup>7</sup> *redbreast* - unlike in the US, where the robin is a herald of Spring, the English red-breasted robin is a winter bird

<sup>8</sup> *garden-croft* - an enclosed garden or a small piece of land.