**Robert Blake**

**Mrs. Steelman**

**AP Literature**

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**In “Summer in England, 1914,” Alice Meynell paints an idyllic picture of London and the surrounding rural areas, which juxtaposes the graphic horror of World War I. Through the opposing visual images of the landscape and metrical music of the words, the poet reveals not only her abhorrence of war, but also her distrust of mankind.**

**The use of light in the poem depicts a London that seems to be blessed by the hand of God. The sun’s light is “caressing,” its transfiguration a gift that is extended from the city to the country. Even in the dark of night the farms are swathed in light coming from the moon: “Stroking the bread within the sheaves, / Looking ‘twixt apples and their leaves” (lines 11-12). The beautiful images of the landscape, however, are juxtaposed quite suddenly with the death of not one, but multiple armies. The poem necessitates that the reader move slowly through the landscape of war, which is mysteriously intertwined with “flower following tender flower” (19). Love is cautioned to turn away from the repugnant sight of corpses, bloodied by the very men who are invited to participate in Britain’s Garden of Eden but, instead, choose to mar God’s gift.**

**Meynell also uses the metrical sound of language to emphasize the difference between what could be and what is apparently man’s doom. The poem is divided into five stanzas of six lines each with a nearly consistent iambic tetrameter. The lulling beat of the lines is mesmerizing in that the reader is almost duped into believing the light that “define[s] the distances” (3) of both city and country are permanent. Lines are infused with “s” sounds that slip off the tongue, convenient and hopeful. What is unexpected is the combination of heaven and horror within the same two lines of softness and melancholy: “This chaste young silver sun went up / Softly, a thousand shattered men” (15-16) - a beguiling yet candid thought – the light highlights not only the sinless, but also the sinful. Readers may see love hiding her face, but the truth is that the human race is finally revealed for what it is: unsacrificed. The sound and rhythm is finally broken at the end of the poem when the final line changes to trimeter, a short but powerful line announcing total forgiveness.**

**England is described as a country that must choose. Alice Meynell delivers a message to both instruct and warn. Through the juxtaposition of images and sound, the poet illustrates how evil can be couched in goodness. Both can be witnessed, but only one can be maintained.**