

# TAKE HEART

## A Conversation in Poetry

*Edited & Introduced by Wesley McNair,  
Maine Poet Laureate*

The traditional sonnet is normally reserved for ideas, thoughts and sentiments. What makes the sonnets of Maine's Edwin Arlington Robinson so original is that he uses them to tell stories. Today's poem, one of his best, offers an example.

### The Clerks

*by Edwin Arlington Robinson*

I did not think that I should find them there  
When I came back again; but there they stood,  
As in the days they dreamed of when young blood  
Was in their cheeks and women called them fair.  
Be sure, they met me with an ancient air, --  
And yes, there was a shop-worn brotherhood  
About them; but the men were just as good,  
And just as human as they ever were.

And you that ache so much to be sublime,  
And you that feed yourself with your descent,  
What comes of all your visions and your fears?  
Poets and kings are but the clerks of Time,  
Tying the same dull webs of discontent,  
Clipping the same sad alnage of the years.

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