Herman Melville (1819-1891)
Excerpts from Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War

“The Portent”
(1859)

Hanging from the beam,
    Slowly swaying (such the law),
Gaunt the shadow on your green,
    Shenandoah!
The cut is on the crown
(Lo, John Brown),
And the stabs shall heal no more.

Hidden in the cap
    Is the anguish none can draw;
So your future veils its face,
    Shenandoah!
But the streaming beard is shown
(Weird John Brown)
The meteor of the war.
“Stonewall Jackson”
Mortally wounded at Chancellorsville
(May, 1863)

The Man who fiercest charged in fight,
Whose sword and prayer were long—
Stonewall!
Even him who stoutly stood for Wrong,
How can we praise? Yet coming days
Shall not forget him with this song.

Dead is the Man whose Cause is dead,
Vainly he died and set his seal—
Stonewall!
Earnest in error, as we feel;
True to the thing he deemed was due,
True as John Brown or steel.

Relentlessly he routed us;
But we relent, for he is low—
Stonewall!
Justly his fame we outlaw; so
We drop a tea on the bold Virginian’s bier,
Because no wreath we owe.