

SAMPLER

Bare George

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Claire Crowther

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All inaccuracies are entirely my fault.*

Quotes from The Golden Legend, compiled by Jacobus de Voragine, 1275, and translated into English by William Caxton, 1483, are taken from the Temple Classic edition edited by F. S. Ellis, 1900.

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for Carrie Etter

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wherever there is room on the ground put either a circular group of busts on pedestals, in consultation, all looking inwards – or else the colossal figure of a man killing, about to kill, or having killed (the present tense is preferred) a beast; the more pricks the beast has, the better – in fact a dragon is the correct thing, but if that is beyond the artist, he may content himself with a lion or a pig. The beast-killing principle has been carried out everywhere with a relentless monotony, which makes some parts of Berlin look like a fossil slaughter-house.

Lewis Carroll, diary 1867

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The george

When I look at a random sample of men called George –
 say King, Meredith, Eliot, Curious, Szirtes –
 only one is called a Saint. If a man is a george
 for my purposes, he is shaped, designed, cut, valued,
 minted in gold and put into circulation, free –
 the george* – its picture by Pistrucci shows a George (Saint,
 of course) killing a dragon, rescuing a woman.

That's not
 my story of men:

*The skin moves on his muscle, sun
 over down land.*

*a coin now abandoned. Re Pistrucci: classic
 copyist stripping men of clothes as well as women.
 I warm to him. He dropped the model's toga – bare George!
 Xphrastic art, is that what you're calling this poem?
 Pissed Strucci, I say. He knew King George was no soldier.
 They were pissheads both. He dared George to find where coins
 end – die, the bullet-headed punch, is not to die for
 coins, it's to remelt – and to visit the furnace
 that I say is famous for women's work.

The Coin According to George Herbert

Death hugged me warmly.
Naturally I balked,
Wondering what he'd done
And sharp-eyed death noticing my recoil
And fulsome as a son
Patted my hand: Look
All the figures show
This is the way to go.
Oh but the cost a loss of made things makes.
I can't begin to think
How taking us out will spoil...
My dear, it's just the brink
Of brilliant things. You must consider me
And what I do.
Then I knew I'd lost you.

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Coin City

Let us suppose that only women mint
make coins give the physical to money
forge the material of spend.

and they brought him a penny. And
he saith to them. Whose is this image
and super-scription? They say unto
him, Caesar's.

Matthew 22: 19-21

Perhaps every coin made by a woman
(be she ever so unlike Mary Queen of Scots)
would be a nonsunt, would carry the inscription:

IAM NON SUNT DUO SED UNA CARO

Now they are not two but one flesh.