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# **A Dark Month**

By

Algernon Charles Swinburne

Taken from The Collected Poetical Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne (Vol. V)

THE COLLECTED POETICAL WORKS  
OF ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

VOL. V

STUDIES IN SONG : A  
CENTURY OF ROUNDELS

: SONNETS ON ENGLISH  
DRAMATIC POETS : THE  
HEPTALOGIA : ETC.

**SWINBURNE'S POETICAL WORKS**

- I. POEMS AND BALLADS (First Series).
- II. SONGS BEFORE SUNRISE, and SONGS OF TWO NATIONS.
- III. POEMS AND BALLADS (Second and Third Series), and SONGS OF THE SPRING TIDES.
- IV. TRISTRAM OF LYONESSE, THE TALE OF BALEN, ATALANTA IN CALYDON, ERECHTHEUS.
- V. STUDIES IN SONG, A CENTURY OF ROUNDELS, SONNETS ON ENGLISH DRAMATIC POETS, THE HEPTALOGIA, ETC.
- VI. A MIDSUMMER HOLIDAY, ASTROPHEL, A CHANNEL PASSAGE AND OTHER POEMS.

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LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN

**STUDIES IN SONG : A CENTURY OF ROUNDELS :  
SONNETS ON ENGLISH DRAMATIC POETS : THE  
HEPTALOGIA : ETC.**

By

Algernon Charles Swinburne

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## A DARK MONTH

"La maison sans enfants!" — VICTOR HUGO.

### I

321

A month without sight of the sun  
Rising or reigning or setting  
Through days without use of the day,  
Who calls it the month of May?  
The sense of the name is undone  
And the sound of it fit for forgetting.

We shall not feel if the sun rise,  
We shall not care when it sets:  
If a nightingale make night's air  
As noontide, why should we care?  
Till a light of delight that is done rise,  
Extinguishing grey regrets;

Till a child's face lighten again  
On the twilight of older faces;  
Till a child's voice fall as the dew  
On furrows with heat parched through  
And all but hopeless of grain,  
Refreshing the desolate places —

Fall clear on the ears of us hearkening  
And hungering for food of the sound  
And thirsting for joy of his voice:  
Till the hearts in us hear and rejoice,  
And the thoughts of them doubting and darkening  
Rejoice with a glad thing found.

When the heart of our gladness is gone,

322

What comfort is left with us after?  
When the light of our eyes is away,  
What glory remains upon May,  
What blessing of song is thereon  
If we drink not the light of his laughter?

No small sweet face with the daytime  
To welcome, warmer than noon!  
No sweet small voice as a bird's  
To bring us the day's first words!  
Mid May for us here is not Maytime:  
No summer begins with June.

A whole dead month in the dark,  
A dawn in the mists that o'ercome her  
Stifled and smothered and sad—  
Swift speed to it, barren and bad!  
And return to us, voice of the lark,  
And remain with us, sunlight of summer.

## II

323

Alas, what right has the dawn to glimmer,  
What right has the wind to do aught but moan?  
All the day should be dimmer  
Because we are left alone.

Yestermorn like a sunbeam present  
Hither and thither a light step smiled,  
And made each place for us pleasant  
With the sense or the sight of a child.

But the leaves persist as before, and after  
Our parting the dull day still bears flowers;  
And songs less bright than his laughter  
Deride us from birds in the bowers.

Birds, and blossoms, and sunlight only,  
As though such folly sufficed for spring!  
As though the house were not lonely  
For want of the child its king!

## III

324

Asleep and afar to-night my darling  
Lies, and heeds not the night,  
If winds be stirring or storms be snarling;  
For his sleep is its own sweet light.

I sit where he sat beside me quaffing  
The wine of story and song  
Poured forth of immortal cups, and laughing  
When mirth in the draught grew strong.

I broke the gold of the words, to melt it

For hands but seven years old,  
And they caught the tale as a bird, and felt it  
More bright than visible gold.

And he drank down deep, with his eyes broad beaming,  
Here in this room where I am,  
The golden vintage of Shakespeare, gleaming  
In the silver vessels of Lamb.

Here by my hearth where he was I listen  
For the shade of the sound of a word,  
Athirst for the birdlike eyes to glisten,  
For the tongue to chirp like a bird.

At the blast of battle, how broad they brightened,  
Like fire in the spheres of stars,  
And clung to the pictured page, and lightened  
As keen as the heart of Mars!

325

At the touch of laughter, how swift it twittered  
The shrillest music on earth;  
How the lithe limbs laughed and the whole child glittered  
With radiant riot of mirth!

Our Shakespeare now, as a man dumb-stricken,  
Stands silent there on the shelf:  
And my thoughts, that had song in the heart of them, sicken,  
And relish not Shakespeare's self.

And my mood grows moodier than Hamlet's even,  
And man delights not me,  
But only the face that morn and even  
My heart leapt only to see.

That my heart made merry within me seeing,  
And sang as his laugh kept time:  
But song finds now no pleasure in being,  
And love no reason in rhyme.

#### IV

326

Mild May-blossom and proud sweet bay-flower,  
What, for shame, would you have with us here?  
It is not the month of the May-flower  
This, but the fall of the year.

Flowers open only their lips in derision,  
Leaves are as fingers that point in scorn  
The shows we see are a vision;  
Spring is not verily born.

Yet boughs turn supple and buds grow sappy,  
As though the sun were indeed the sun:  
And all our woods are happy  
With all their birds save one.

But spring is over, but summer is over,

But autumn is over, and winter stands  
With his feet sunk deep in the clover  
And cowslips cold in his hands.

His hoar grim head has a hawthorn bonnet,  
His gnarled gaunt hand has a gay green staff  
With new-blown rose-blossom on it:  
But his laugh is a dead man's laugh.

The laugh of spring that the heart seeks after,  
The hand that the whole world yearns to kiss,  
It rings not here in his laughter,  
The sign of it is not this.

There is not strength in it left to splinter  
Tall oaks, nor frost in his breath to sting:  
Yet it is but a breath as of winter,  
And it is not the hand of spring.

## V

Thirty-one pale maidens, clad  
All in mourning dresses,  
Pass, with lips and eyes more sad  
That it seems they should be glad,  
Heads discrowned of crowns they had,  
Grey for golden tresses.

Grey their girdles too for green,  
And their veils dishevelled:  
None would say, to see their mien,  
That the least of these had been  
Born no baser than a queen,  
Reared where flower-fays revelled.

Dreams that strive to seem awake,  
Ghosts that walk by daytime,  
Weary winds the way they take,  
Since, for one child's absent sake,  
May knows well, whate'er things make  
Sport, it is not Maytime.

## VI

A hand at the door taps light  
As the hand of my heart's delight:  
It is but a full-grown hand,  
Yet the stroke of it seems to start  
Hope like a bird in my heart,  
Too feeble to soar or to stand.

To start light hope from her cover  
Is to raise but a kite for a plover  
If her wings be not fledged to soar.  
Desire, but in dreams, cannot ope

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The door that was shut upon hope  
When love went out at the door.

Well were it if vision could keep  
The lids of desire as in sleep  
Fast locked, and over his eyes  
A dream with the dark soft key  
In her hand might hover, and be  
Their keeper till morning rise;

The morning that brings after many  
Days fled with no light upon any  
The small face back which is gone;  
When the loved little hands once more  
Shall struggle and strain at the door  
They beat their summons upon.

## VII

330

If a soul for but seven days were cast out of heaven and its mirth,  
They would seem to her fears like as seventy years upon earth.

Even and morrow should seem to her sorrow as long  
As the passage of numberless ages in slumberless song.

Dawn, roused by the lark, would be surely as dark in her sight  
As her measureless measure of shadowless pleasure was bright.

Noon, guilt but with glory of gold, would be hoary and grey  
In her eyes that had gazed on the depths, unamazed with the day.

Night hardly would seem to make darker her dream never done,  
When it could but withhold what a man may behold of the sun.

For dreams would perplex, were the days that should vex her but seven,  
The sight of her vision, made dark with division from heaven.

331

Till the light on my lonely way lighten that only now gleams,  
I too am divided from heaven and derided of dreams.

## VIII

332

A twilight fire-fly may suggest  
How flames the fire that feeds the sun:  
"A crooked figure may attest  
In little space a million."

But this faint-figured verse, that dresses  
With flowers the bones of one bare month,  
Of all it would say scarce expresses  
In crooked ways a millionth.

A fire-fly tenders to the father  
Of fires a tribute something worth:  
My verse, a shard-borne beetle rather,

Drones over scarce-illuminated earth.

Some inches round me though it brighten  
With light of music-making thought,  
The dark indeed it may not lighten,  
The silence moves not, hearing nought.

Only my heart is eased with hearing,  
Only mine eyes are soothed with seeing,  
A face brought nigh, a footfall nearing,  
Till hopes take form and dreams have being.

## IX

333

As a poor man hungering stands with insatiate eyes and hands  
Void of bread  
Right in sight of men that feast while his famine with no least  
Crumb is fed,

Here across the garden-wall can I hear strange children call,  
Watch them play,  
From the windowed seat above, whence the goodlier child I love  
Is away.

Here the sights we saw together moved his fancy like a feather  
To and fro,  
Now to wonder, and thereafter to the sunny storm of laughter  
Loud and low—

Sights engraven on storied pages where man's tale of seven swift ages  
All was told—  
Seen of eyes yet bright from heaven—for the lips that laughed were  
seven  
Sweet years old.

## X

334

Why should May remember  
March, if March forget  
The days that began with December  
The nights that a frost could fret?

All their griefs are done with  
Now the bright months bless  
Fit souls to rejoice in the sun with,  
Fit heads for the wind's caress;

Souls of children quickening  
With the whole world's mirth,  
Heads closelier than field-flowers thickening  
That crowd and illuminate earth,

Now that May's call musters  
Files of baby bands  
To marshal in joyfuller clusters



Than the flowers that encumber their hands.

Yet morose November  
Found them no less gay,  
With nought to forget or remember  
Less bright than a branch of may.

All the seasons moving  
Move their minds alike  
Applauding, acclaiming, approving  
All hours of the year that strike.

So my heart may fret not,  
Wondering if my friend  
Remember me not or forget not  
Or ever the month find end.

Not that love sows lighter  
Seed in children sown,  
But that life being lit in them brighter  
Moves fleeter than even our own.

May nor yet September  
Binds their hearts, that yet  
Remember, forget, and remember,  
Forget, and recall, and forget.

## XI

As light on a lake's face moving  
Between a cloud and a cloud  
Till night reclaim it, reproving  
The heart that exults too loud,

The heart that watching rejoices  
When soft it swims into sight  
Applauded of all the voices  
And stars of the windy night,

So brief and unsure, but sweeter  
Than ever a moondawn smiled,  
Moves, measured of no tune's metre,  
The song in the soul of a child;

The song that the sweet soul singing  
Half listens, and hardly hears,  
Though sweeter than joy-bells ringing  
And brighter than joy's own tears;

The song that remembrance of pleasure  
Begins, and forgetfulness ends  
With a soft swift change in the measure  
That rings in remembrance of friends

As the moon on the lake's face flashes,  
So haply may gleam at whites  
A dream through the dear deep lashes

335

336

337

Whereunder a child's eye smiles,  
And the least of us all that love him  
May take for a moment part  
With angels around and above him,  
And I find place in his heart.

## XII

338

Child, were you kinless and lonely—  
Dear, were you kin to me—  
My love were compassionate only  
Or such as it needs would be.

But eyes of father and mother  
Like sunlight shed on you shine:  
What need you have heed of another  
Such new strange love as is mine?

It is not meet if unruly  
Hands take of the children's bread  
And cast it to dogs; but truly  
The dogs after all would be fed.

On crumbs from the children's table  
That crumble, dropped from above,  
My heart feeds, fed with unstable  
Loose waifs of a child's light love.

Though love in your heart were brittle  
As glass that breaks with a touch,  
You haply would lend him a little  
Who surely would give you much.

## XIII

339

Here is a rough  
Rude sketch of my friend,  
Faint-coloured enough  
And unworthily penned.

Fearlessly fair  
And triumphant he stands,  
And holds unaware  
Friends' hearts in his hands;

Stalwart and straight  
As an oak that should bring  
Forth gallant and great  
Fresh roses in spring.

On the paths of his pleasure  
All graces that wait  
What metre shall measure  
What rhyme shall relate

Each action, each motion,  
Each feature, each limb,  
Demands a devotion  
In honour of him:

Head that the hand  
Of a god might have blest,  
Laid lustrous and bland  
On the curve of its crest:

340

Mouth sweeter than cherries,  
Keen eyes as of Mars,  
Browner than berries  
And brighter than stars.

Nor colour nor wordy  
Weak song can declare  
The stature how sturdy,  
How stalwart his air.

As a king in his bright  
Presence-chamber may be,  
So seems he in height—  
Twice higher than your knee.

As a warrior sedate  
With reserve of his power,  
So seems he in state—  
As tall as a flower:

As a rose overtowering  
The ranks of the rest  
That beneath it lie cowering,  
Less bright than their best.

And his hands are as sunny  
As ruddy ripe corn  
Or the browner-hued honey  
From heather-bells borne.

When summer sits proudest,  
Fulfilled with its mirth,  
And rapture is loudest  
In air and on earth,

341

The suns of all hours  
That have ripened the roots  
Bring forth not such flowers  
And beget not such fruits.

And well though I know it,  
As fain would I write,  
Child, never a poet  
Could praise you aright.

I bless you? the blessing  
Were less than a jest  
Too poor for expressing;  
I come to be blest,

With humble and dutiful  
Heart, from above:  
Bless me, O my beautiful  
Innocent love!

This rhyme in your praise  
With a smile was begun;  
But the goal of his ways  
Is uncovered to none,

Nor pervious till after  
The limit impend;  
It is not in laughter  
These rhymes of you end.

#### XIV

342

Spring, and fall, and summer, and winter,  
Which may Earth love least of them all,  
Whose arms embrace as their signs imprint her,  
Summer, or winter, or spring, or fall?

The clear-eyed spring with the wood-birds mating,  
The rose-red summer with eyes aglow,  
The yellow fall with serene eyes waiting,  
The wild-eyed winter with hair all snow?

Spring's eyes are soft, but if frosts benumb her  
As winter's own will her shrewd breath sting:  
Storms may rend the raiment of summer,  
And fall grow bitter as harsh-lipped spring.

One sign for summer and winter guides me,  
One for spring, and the like for fall:  
Whichever from sight of my friend divides me,  
That is the worst ill season of all.

#### XV

343

Worse than winter is spring  
If I come not to sight of my king:  
But then what a spring will it be  
When my king takes homage of me!

I send his grace from afar  
Homage, as though to a star;  
As a shepherd whose flock takes flight  
May worship a star by night.

As a flock that a wolf is upon  
My songs take flight and are gone:  
No heart is in any to sing  
Aught but the praise of my king.

Fain would I once and again

Sing deeds and passions of men:  
But ever a child's head gleams  
Between my work and my dreams.

Between my hand and my eyes  
The lines of a small face rise,  
And the lines I trace and retrace  
Are none but those of the face.

## XVI

344

Till the tale of all this flock of days alike  
All be done,  
Weary days of waiting till the month's hand strike  
Thirty-one,  
Till the clock's hand of the month break off, and end  
With the clock,  
Till the last and whitest sheep at last be penned  
Of the flock,  
I their shepherd keep the count of night and day  
With my song,  
Though my song be, like this month which once was May,  
All too long.

## XVII

345

The incarnate sun, a tall strong youth,  
On old Greek eyes in sculpture smiled:  
But trulier had it given the truth  
To shape him like a child.

No face full-grown of all our dearest  
So lightens all our darkness, none  
Most loved of all our hearts hold nearest  
To far outshines the sun,

As when with sly shy smiles that feign  
Doubt if the hour be clear, the time  
Fit to break off my work again  
Or sport of prose or rhyme,

My friend peers in on me with merry  
Wise face, and though the sky stay dim  
The very light of day, the very  
Sun's self comes in with him.

## XVIII

346

Out of sight,  
Out of mind!  
Could the light  
Prove unkind?

Can the sun  
Quite forget  
What was done  
Ere he set?

Does the moon  
When she wanes  
Leave no tune  
That remains

In the void  
Shell of night  
Overcloyed  
With her light?

Must the shore  
At low tide  
Feel no more  
Hope or pride,

No intense  
Joy to be,  
In the sense  
Of the sea—

In the pulses  
Of her shocks  
It repulses,  
When its rocks

Thrill and ring  
As with glee?  
Has my king  
Cast off me,

Whom no bird  
Flying south  
Brings one word  
From his mouth?

Not the ghost  
Of a word.  
Riding post  
Have I heard,

Since the day  
When my king  
Took away  
With him spring,

And the cup  
Of each flower  
Shrivelled up  
That same hour,

With no light  
Left behind.  
Out of sight,  
Out of mind!

## XIX

Because I adore you  
And fall  
On the knees of my spirit before you—  
After all,

You need not insult,  
My king,  
With neglect, though your spirit exult  
In the spring,

Even me, though not worth,  
God knows,  
One word of you sent me in mirth,  
Or one rose

Out of all in your garden  
That grow  
Where the frost and the wind never harden  
Flakes of snow,

Nor ever is rain  
At all,  
But the roses rejoice to remain  
Fair and tall—

The roses of love,  
More sweet  
Than blossoms that rain from above  
Round our feet,

349

When under high bowers  
We pass,  
Where the west wind freckles with flowers  
All the grass.

But a child's thoughts bear  
More bright  
Sweet visions by day, and more fair  
Dreams by night,

Than summer's whole treasure  
Can be:  
What am I that his thought should take pleasure,  
Then, in me?

I am only my love's  
True lover,  
With a nestful of songs, like doves  
Under cover,

That I bring in my cap  
Fresh caught,  
To be laid on my small king's lap—  
Worth just nought.

Yet it haply may hap  
That he,

When the mirth in his veins is as sap  
In a tree,

Will remember me too  
Some day  
Ere the transit be thoroughly through  
Of this May—

Or perchance, if such grace  
May be,  
Some night when I dream of his face.  
Dream of me.

Or if this be too high  
A hope  
For me to prefigure in my  
Horoscope,

He may dream of the place  
Where we  
Basked once in the light of his face,  
Who now see

Nought brighter, not one  
Thing bright,  
Than the stars and the moon and the sun,  
Day nor night.

## XX

Day by darkling day,  
Overpassing, bears away  
Somewhat of the burden of this weary May.

Night by numbered night,  
Waning, brings more near in sight  
Hope that grows to vision of my heart's delight.

Nearer seems to burn  
In the dawn's rekindling urn  
Flame of fragrant incense, hailing his return.

Louder seems each bird  
In the brightening branches heard  
Still to speak some ever more delightful word.

All the mists that swim  
Round the dawns that grow less dim  
Still wax brighter and more bright with hope of him.

All the suns that rise  
Bring that day more near our eyes  
When the sight of him shall clear our clouded skies.

All the winds that roam  
Fruitful fields or fruitless foam  
Blow the bright hour near that brings his bright face home.



## XXI

I hear of two far hence  
In a garden met,  
And the fragrance blown from thence  
Fades not yet.

The one is seven years old,  
And my friend is he:  
But the years of the other have told  
Eighty-three.

To hear these twain converse  
Or to see them greet  
Were sweeter than softest verse  
May be sweet.

The hoar old gardener there  
With an eye more mild  
Perchance than his mild white hair  
Meets the child.

I had rather hear the words  
That the twain exchange  
Than the songs of all the birds  
There that range,

Call, chirp, and twitter there  
Through the garden-beds  
Where the sun alike sees fair  
Those two heads,

And which may holier be  
Held in heaven of those  
Or more worth heart's thanks to see  
No man knows.

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## XXII

Of such is the kingdom of heaven,  
No glory that ever was shed  
From the crowning star of the seven  
That crown the north world's head,

No word that ever was spoken  
Of human or godlike tongue,  
Gave ever such godlike token  
Since human harps were strung.

No sign that ever was given  
To faithful or faithless eyes  
Showed ever beyond clouds riven  
So clear a Paradise.

Earth's creeds may be seventy times seven  
And blood have defiled each creed:  
If of such be the kingdom of heaven,

354

It must be heaven indeed.

### XXIII

355

The wind on the downs is bright  
As though from the sea:  
And morning and night  
Take comfort again with me.

He is nearer to-day,  
Each night to each morning saith,  
Whose return shall revive dead May  
With the balm of his breath.

The sunset says to the moon,  
He is nearer to-night  
Whose coming in June  
Is looked for more than the light.

Bird answers to bird,  
Hour passes the sign on to hour,  
And for joy of the bright news heard  
Flower murmurs to flower.

The ways that were glad of his feet  
In the woods that he knew  
Grow softer to meet  
The sense of his footfall anew.

He is near now as day,  
Says hope to the new-born light:  
He is near now as June is to May,  
Says love to the night.

### XXIV

356

Good things I keep to console me  
For lack of the best of all,  
A child to command and control me,  
Bid come and remain at his call.

Sun, wind, and woodland and highland,  
Give all that ever they gave:  
But my world is a cultureless island,  
My spirit a masterless slave.

And friends are about me, and better  
At summons of no man stand:  
But I pine for the touch of a fetter,  
The curb of a strong king's hand.

Each hour of the day in her season  
Is mine to be served as I will:  
And for no more exquisite reason  
Are all served idly and ill.

By slavery my sense is corrupted,  
My soul not fit to be free:  
I would fain be controlled, interrupted,  
Compelled as a thrall may be.

For fault of spur and of bridle  
I tire of my stall to death:  
My sail flaps joyless and idle  
For want of a small child's breath.

## XXV

357

Whiter and whiter  
The dark lines grow,  
And broader opens and brighter  
The sense of the text below.

Nightfall and morrow  
Bring nigher the boy  
Whom wanting we want not sorrow,  
Whom having we want no joy.

Clearer and clearer  
The sweet sense grows  
Of the word which hath summer for hearer,  
The word on the lips of the rose.

Duskily dwindles  
Each deathlike day,  
Till June rearing rekindles  
The depth of the darkness of May.

## XXVI

358

"In his bright radiance and collateral light  
Must I be comforted, not in his sphere."

Stars in heaven are many,  
Suns in heaven but one:  
Nor for man may any  
Star supplant the sun.

Many a child as joyous  
As our far-off king  
Meets as though to annoy us  
In the paths of spring.

Sure as spring gives warning,  
All things dance in tune:  
Sun on Easter morning,  
Cloud and windy moon,

Stars between the tossing  
Boughs of tuneful trees,  
Sails of ships recrossing

Leagues of dancing seas;

Best, in all this playtime,  
Best of all in tune,  
Girls more glad than Maytime,  
Boys more bright than June;

Mixed with all those dances,  
Far through field and street  
Sing their silent glances,  
Ring their radiant feet.

359

Flowers wherewith May crowned us  
Fall ere June be crowned:  
Children blossom round us  
All the whole year round.

Is the garland worthless  
For one rose the less,  
And the feast made mirthless?  
Love, at least, says yes.

Strange it were, with many  
Stars enkindling air,  
Should but one find any  
Welcome: strange it were,

Had one star alone won  
Praise for light from far:  
Nay, love needs his own one  
Bright particular star.

Hope and recollection  
Only lead him right  
In its bright reflection  
And collateral light.

Find as yet we may not  
Comfort in its sphere:  
Yet these days will weigh not  
When it warms us here;

When full-orbed it rises,  
Now divined afar:  
None in all the skies is  
Half so good a star;

360

None that seers importune  
Till a sign be won:  
Star of our good fortune,  
Rise and reign, our sun!

## XXVII

361

I pass by the small room now forlorn  
Where once each night as I passed I knew  
A child's bright sleep from even to morn

Made sweet the whole night through.

As a soundless shell, as a songless nest,  
Seems now the room that was radiant then  
And fragrant with his happier rest  
Than that of slumbering men.

The day therein is less than the day,  
The night is indeed night now therein:  
Heavier the dark seems there to weigh,  
And slower the dawns begin.

As a nest fulfilled with birds, as a shell  
Fulfilled with breath of a god's own hymn,  
Again shall be this bare blank cell,  
Made sweet again with him.

## XXVIII

362

Spring darkens before us,  
A flame going down,  
With chant from the chorus  
Of days without crown—  
Cloud, rain, and sonorous  
Soft wind on the down.

She is wearier not of us  
Than we of the dream  
That spring was to love us  
And joy was to gleam  
Through the shadows above us  
That shift as they stream.

Half dark and half hoary,  
Float far on the loud  
Mild wind, as a glory  
Half pale and half proud  
From the twilight of story,  
Her tresses of cloud;

Like phantoms that glimmer  
Of glories of old  
With ever yet dimmer  
Pale circlets of gold  
As darkness grows grimmer  
And memory more cold.

Like hope growing clearer  
With wane of the moon,  
Shines toward us the nearer  
Gold frontlet of June,  
And a face with it dearer  
Than midsummer noon.

363

## XXIX

364

You send me your love in a letter,  
I send you my love in a song:  
Ah child, your gift is the better,  
Mine does you but wrong.

No fame, were the best less brittle,  
No praise, were it wide as earth,  
Is worth so much as a little  
Child's love may be worth.

We see the children above us  
As they might angels above:  
Come back to us, child, if you love us,  
And bring us your love.

### XXX

365

No time for books or for letters:  
What time should there be?  
No room for tasks and their fetters:  
Full room to be free.

The wind and the sun and the Maytime  
Had never a guest  
More worthy the most that his playtime  
Could give of its best.

If rain should come on, peradventure,  
(But sunshine forbid!)  
Vain hope in us haply might venture  
To dream as it did.

But never may come, of all comers  
Least welcome, the rain,  
To mix with his servant the summer's  
Rose-garlanded train!

He would write, but his hours are as busy  
As bees in the sun,  
And the jubilant whirl of their dizzy  
Dance never is done.

The message is more than a letter,  
Let love understand,  
And the thought of his joys even better  
Than sight of his hand.

### XXXI

366

Wind, high-souled, full-hearted  
South-west wind of the spring!  
Ere April and earth had parted,  
Skies, bright with thy forward wing,  
Grew dark in an hour with the shadow behind it, that bade not a bird  
dare sing.

Wind whose feet are sunny,  
Wind whose wings are cloud,  
With lips more sweet than honey  
Still, speak they low or loud,  
Rejoice now again in the strength of thine heart: let the depth of thy  
soul wax proud.

We hear thee singing or sighing,  
Just not given to sight,  
All but visibly flying  
Between the clouds and the light,  
And the light in our hearts is enkindled, the shadow therein of the  
clouds put to flight.

From the gift of thine hands we gather  
The core of the flowers therein,  
Keen glad heart of heather,  
Hot sweet heart of whin,  
Twin breaths in thy godlike breath close blended of wild spring's  
wildest of kin.

367

All but visibly beating  
We feel thy wings in the far  
Clear waste, and the plumes of them fleeting,  
Soft as swan's plumes are,  
And strong as a wild swan's pinions, and swift as the flash of the flight  
of a star.

As the flight of a planet enkindled  
Seems thy far soft flight  
Now May's reign has dwindled  
And the crescent of June takes light  
And the presence of summer is here, and the hope of a welcomer  
presence in sight.

Wind, sweet-souled, great-hearted  
Southwest wind on the wold!  
From us is a glory departed  
That now shall return as of old,  
Borne back on thy wings as an eagle's expanding, and crowned with the  
sundawn's gold.

There is not a flower but rejoices,  
There is not a leaf but has heard:  
All the fields find voices,  
All the woods are stirred:  
There is not a nest but is brighter because of the coming of one bright  
bird.

Out of dawn and morning,  
Noon and afternoon,  
The sun to the world gives warning  
Of news that brightens the moon;  
And the stars all night exult with us, hearing of joy that shall come with  
June.

The line in number VII

To far outshines the sun,

appears thus in the original. It may be a misprint.

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