

A SONG OF WELCOME

If the wind and the sunlight of April and August
 had mingled the past and hereafter
In a single adorable season whose life were a rapture
 of love and of laughter,
And the blithest of singers were back with a song ;
 if again from his tomb as from prison,
If again from the night or the twilight of ages Aristophanes
 had arisen,
With the gold-feathered wings of a bird that were
 also a god upon earth at his shoulders,
And the gold-flowing laugh of the manhood of old at
 his lips, for a joy to beholders,
He alone unrebuked of presumption were able to set
 to some adequate measure
The delight of our eyes in the dawn that restores
 them the sun of their sense and the pleasure.
For the days of the darkness of spirit are over for all
 of us here, and the season
When desire was a longing, and absence a thorn, and
 rejoicing a word without reason.

For the roof overhead of the pines is astir with delight
as of jubilant voices,
And the floor underfoot of the bracken and heather
alive as a heart that rejoices.
For the house that was childless awhile, and the light
of it darkened, the pulse of it dwindled,
Rings radiant again with a child's bright feet, with
the light of his face is rekindled.
And the ways of the meadows that knew him, the
sweep of the down that the sky's belt closes,
Grow gladder at heart than the soft wind made them
whose feet were but fragrant with roses,
Though the fall of the year be upon us, who trusted
in June and by June were defrauded,
And the summer that brought us not back the desire
of our eyes be gone hence unapplauded.
For July came joyless among us, and August went
out from us arid and sterile,
And the hope of our hearts, as it seemed, was no
more than a flower that the seasons imperil,
And the joy of our hearts, as it seemed, than a thought
which regret had not heart to remember,
Till four dark months overpast were atoned for, and
summer began in September.
Hark, April again as a bird in the house with a child's
voice hither and thither :
See, May in the garden again with a child's face
cheering the woods ere they wither.

June laughs in the light of his eyes, and July on
the sunbright cheeks of him slumbers,
And August glows in a smile more sweet than the
cadence of gold-mouthed numbers.
In the morning the sight of him brightens the sun,
and the noon with delight in him flushes,
And the silence of nightfall is music about him as
soft as the sleep that it hushes.
We awake with a sense of a sunrise that is not a
gift of the sundawn's giving,
And a voice that salutes us is sweeter than all
sounds else in the world of the living,
And a presence that warms us is brighter than all
in the world of our visions beholden,
Though the dreams of our sleep were as those that the
light of a world without grief makes golden.
For the best that the best of us ever devised as a
likeness of heaven and its glory,
What was it of old, or what is it and will be for ever,
in song or in story,
Or in shape or in colour of carven or painted
resemblance, adored of all ages,
But a vision recorded of children alive in the pictures
of old or the pages ?
Where children are not, heaven is not, and heaven
if they come not again shall be never :
But the face and the voice of a child are assurance
of heaven and its promise for ever.