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AT MICHAELMAS.

At Michaelmas

A Lyric

By Bliss Carman

1895

To T. B. M.

*For every one
Beneath the sun,
Where Autumn walks with quiet eyes.
There is a word,
Just overheard
When hill to purple hill replies*

*This afternoon
As warm as June.
With the red apples on the bough,
I set my ear
To hark, and hear
The wood-folk talking, you know how*

*There comes a "Hush!"
And then a "Tush,"
As tree to scarlet tree responds,
"Babble away!
He'll not betray
The secrets of us vagabonds*

*"Are we not all,
Both great and small,
Cousins and kindred in a joy
No school can teach,
No worldling reach,
Nor any wreck of chance destroy?"*

And so, we are,

*However far
We journey ere the journey ends,
One brotherhood
With leaf and bud
And every thing that wakes or wends.*

*The breath that blows
My Autumn rose
Through apple lands of Acadie,
Talks in the leaves
About your eaves,
Where Tortoise Shell looks out to sea.*

AT MICHAELMAS.

About the time of Michael's
feast
And all his angels,
There comes a word to man and
beast
By dark evangel's.

Then hearing what the wild
things say
To one another,
Those creatures firstborn of our
gray
Mysterious Mother,

The greatness of the world's
unrest
Steals through our pulses,
Our own life takes a meaning
guessed
From the torn dulse's.

The draft and set of deep sea
tides
Swirling and flowing,
Bears every filmy flake that
rides
Grandly unknowing.

The sunlight listens, thin and
fine
The crickets whistle,
And floating midges fill the
shine
Like a seeding thistle.

The hawkbit flies his golden
flag
From rocky pasture,
Bidding his legions never lag
Through morning's vasture.

Soon we shall see the red vines
ramp
Through forest borders,
And Indian summer breaking
camp
To silent orders.

The glossy chestnuts swell and
burst
Their prickly houses,
Agog at news which reached
them first
In sap's carouses.

The long noons turn the ribstons
red,
The pippins yellow;
The wild duck from his reedy
bed
Summons his fellow.

The robins keep the underbrush,
Songless and wary,
As though they feared some
frostier hush
Might bid them tarry;

Perhaps in the great north they
heard
Of silence falling
Upon the world without a word,
White and appalling.

The ash tree and the lady fern,
In russet frondage,
Proclaim 'tis time for our return
To vagabondage.

All summer idle have we kept;
But on a morning,
Where the blue hazy mountain
slept,
A scarlet warning

Disturbs our day-dream with a
start;
A leaf turns over;
And every earthling is at heart
Once more a rover.

All winter we shall toil and
plod,
Eating and drinking;
But now's the little time when
God
Sets folk a-thinking.

“Consider,” says the quiet sun,
“How far I wander;
Yet when had I not time on one
More flower to squander?”

“Consider,” says the restless
tide,
“My endless labor;
Yet when was I content beside
My nearest neighbor?”

So wander-lust to wander-lure,
As seed to season,
Must rise and wend, possessed
and sure
In sweet unreason.

For doorstone and repose are
good,
And kind is duty;
But joy is in the solitude
With shy-heart beauty.

And truth is one whose ways are
meek
Beyond foretelling;
Yet they must journey far who
seek
Her lowly dwelling.

Broad are the eaves, the hearth
is warm,
And wide the portal;
And there is shelter from the
storm
For every mortal.

She leads him by a thousand
heights,
Lonelily faring,
With sunrise and with eagle
flights
To mate his daring.

For her he fronts a vaster fog
Than Leif of yore did,
Voyaging for continents no log
Has yet recorded.

He travels by a polar star,
Now bright, now hidden,
For a free land, though rest be
far
And roads forbidden.

Till on a day with sweet coarse
bread
And wine she stays him,
Then in a cool and narrow bed
To slumber lays him.

So we are hers; and, fellows
mine
Of fin and feather,
By shady wood and shadowy
brine,
When comes the weather

For migrants to be moving on,
By lost indenture
You flock and gather and are
gone:
The old adventure!

I too have my unwritten date,
My gipsy presage;
And on the brink of fall I wait
The darkling message.

The sign, from prying eyes
concealed,
Is yet how flagrant!
Here's ragged-robin in the field,
A simple vagrant.



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[The end of *At Michaelmas* : A Lyric by William Bliss Carman]