

Texts and Translations

The Vagabond

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894)

Give to me the life I love,
Let the lave go by me,
Give the jolly heaven above,
And the byway nigh me.
Bed in the bush with stars to see,
Bread I dip in the river –
There's the life for a man like me,
There's the life for ever.

Let the blow fall soon or late,
Let what will be o'er me;
Give the face of earth around,
And the road before me.
Wealth I seek not, hope nor love,
Nor a friend to know me;
All I seek, the heaven above,
And the road below me.

Or let autumn fall on me
Where afield I linger,
Silencing the bird on tree,
Biting the blue finger.
White as meal the frosty field –
Warm the fireside haven –
Not to autumn will I yield,
Not to winter even!

Let the blow fall soon or late,
Let what will be o'er me;
Give the face of earth around,
And the road before me.
Wealth I ask not, hope nor love,
Nor a friend to know me;
All I ask, the heaven above,
And the road below me.

Winter Proverbs

Chinese proverb:

The pine stays green in winter; wisdom in hardship.

English proverb:

They that sing in summer, must dance in winter.

German proverb:

Those who don't pick roses in the summer, won't pick them in winter, either.

Der Nussbaum

Julius Mosen (1803–1867)

Es grünet ein Nussbaum, vor dem Haus,
Duftig,
Luftig
Breitet er blättrig die Aeste aus.

Viel liebliche Blüten stehen d'ran,
Linde
Winde
Kommen, sie herzlich zu umfahn.

Es flüstern je zwei zu zwei gepaart,
Neigend,
Beugend
Zierlich zum Kusse die Häuptchen zart.

Sie flüstern von einem Mägdlein, das
Dächte
Die Nächte
Und Tagelang, wüsste ach! selber nicht was.

Sie flüstern—wer mag verstehen so gar
Leise
Weis'?
Flüstern von Bräut'gam und nächstem Jahr.

Das Mägdlein horchet, es rauscht im Baum;
Sehnend,
Wähnend
Sinkt es lächelnd in Schlaf und Traum.

The Walnut Tree

English translation by Richard Stokes

*A nut tree blossoms outside the house,
Fragrantly,
Airily,
It spreads its leafy boughs.*

*Many lovely blossoms it bears,
Gentle
Winds
Come to caress them tenderly.*

*Paired together, they whisper,
Inclining,
Bending
Gracefully their delicate heads to kiss.*

*They whisper of a maiden who
Dreamed
For nights
And days of, alas, she knew not what.*

*They whisper—who can understand
So soft
A song?
Whisper of a bridegroom and next year.*

*The maiden listens, the tree rustles;
Yearning,
Musing
She drifts smiling into sleep and dreams.*

Sleep Now, O Sleep Now

James Joyce (1882–1941)

Sleep now, O sleep now,
O you unquiet heart!
A voice crying "Sleep now"
Is heard in my heart.

The voice of the winter
Is heard at the door.
O sleep, for the winter
Is crying "Sleep no more."

My kiss will give peace now
And quiet to your heart —
Sleep on in peace now,
O you unquiet heart!

Autumn Leaves

French text by Jacques Prévert (1900–1977)

English translation by Johnny Mercer (1909–1976)

The falling leaves drift by my window
The autumn leaves of red and gold.
I see your lips, the summer kisses,
The sun-burned hands I used to hold.

Since you went away the days grow long
And soon I'll hear old winter's song.
But I miss you most of all my darling
When autumn leaves start to fall.

When October Goes

Johnny Mercer (1909–1976)

And when October goes
The snow begins to fly.
Above the smoky roofs
I watch the planes go by;
The children running home beneath
A twilight sky.
Oh, for the fun of them
When I was one of them.

And when October goes
The same old dream appears.
And you are in my arms
To share the happy years.
I turn my head away to hide
The helpless tears.
Oh, how I hate to see October go.

I should be over it now, I know.
It doesn't matter much how old I grow.
I hate to see October go.

The Lake Isle of Innisfree

William Butler Yeats (1865–1939)

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

There is a solitude of space

Emily Dickinson (1830–1886)

There is a solitude of space
A solitude of sea
A solitude of death, but these
Society shall be
Compared with that profounder site
That polar privacy
A soul admitted to itself—
Finite infinity.

As if the Sea should part

Emily Dickinson (1830–1886)

As if the Sea should part
And show a further Sea —
And that — a further — and the Three
But a presumption be —
Of Periods of Seas —
Unvisited of Shores —
Themselves the Verge of Seas to be —
Eternity — is Those —

A soft Sea washed around the House

Emily Dickinson (1830–1886)

A soft Sea washed around the House
A Sea of Summer Air
And rose and fell the magic Planks
That sailed without a care—
For Captain was the Butterfly
For Helmsman was the Bee
And an entire universe
For the delighted crew.

Snowforms

Apingaut = first snow fall
Mauyak = soft snow
Qanit = falling snow
Sitidlorak = hard snow
Akelrorak = newly drifted snow
Pokaktok = snow like salt
Tiltuktortok = snow beaten down
Aput = snow spread out

Traverse Bay

E. Pauline Johnson (1861–1913)

Outside, a sweep of waves and winds
That roar Beneath the storm-threatened skies,
But here, a harbour sheltered by shore
That circles, crescent wise.
Like some young moon that left its aerial lands
To shape and spill its silver on these sands.

I stand and watch the line of liquid blue
Where skies and waters meet,
The Long green waves that crowd the view
And break about my feet.
The waters lift and heave,
Then drop away Beaten and breathless,
Sweeping up the bay.

All the wonder of windswept sea
And its tempestuous sky
Its hidden past, unknown history
Its centuries gone by.
Rise, arise and proclaim,
Proclaim the Infinite,
Until the doubt within my heart
grows hushed, then still.

Spring

Janet Mason

The radiance of Spring awakens
The warmth and tenderness of life.
Buds and greening fill the eye.
With joy we feast upon thy splendour.
Our lives they are renewed, restored
And our souls they are refreshed,
But that we could forever dwell
In the springtime of thy world.

Voice on the Wind

Sarah Quartel (b. 1982)

I heard a voice on the summer wind
Who she is I can't explain.
I heard a voice on the summer wind
Blowing free and blowing strong
Strength and spirit in her song.
I heard a voice on the summer wind
Sounds familiar like my own.
I am the voice on the summer wind
Strong and sure where e'er I stand.