

THE SUMMER WOODS

(William Forsyth, Good Words, 1862)

Go gather sunbeams where they lie
On every hill-side sleeping,
And put them where they will not die,
Within your young heart's keeping.
They paint with light, with loving hand, the blossom
when it's blowing,
They tune the lays of every land, and bless where'er
they fall;
Keep every day, like Summer gay, for yellow
Autumn's glowing,
For happy hearts have summer aye, and sunshine
over all.

Then merry all – go merrily,
And happy foot go free,
With laughter ringing cheerily;
I would not stint your glee.
Wake up, you gladsome voices, till the grand old wood
rejoices,
Let beauty claim her kindred where the Summer's
hand
His path of light is spreading for the bride that he is
wedding;
Go all, and greet the rosy Queen that's coming
through the land.

The primrose blooms for Easter-tide,
The daffodil for May;
But June's the lordly Summer's bride,
And this her bridal day.
And who but you, as pure as dew, as true as ye are
tender,
So light of heart, should bear your part, amid her
bridal cheer?
And who but you, to life so new, should dance amid
her splendour, –
Should rise with living rapture through the radiance
of the year?

Then dance away the merry day,
Your meed of music bringing,
Where household cares hush half the lay
The birds were lately singing;
The Robin in his summer haunt, his woodland place of
wooing,
Has all forgot the welcome note that sang away the
snow;
The Cuckoo calls among the firs, the green Cuckoo
cuckooing,
Your little mimic voices stir to music as ye go.

See there, the glimpse of grassy dales
Is gleaming through the larches,
And here, like dim cathedral aisles,

The gloom of beechen arches;
The heather glows on every bank, the wild-rose on its
thorn;
The woodbines o'er the dusky glean their golden
garlands fling;
And there the flush of noontide rays, and here the
blush of morn,
Where fainting fair anemones lie left behind the
Spring.
And all flowers are blowing,
To the fullness of their noon,
Where the Summer king is going
With his queenly lady June.
Her cheek is like the apple-bloom before it opens
fairly;
She strews the ground with flowers around, with ever-
radiant hand;
Her mantle-fold of green and gold is floating round
her rarely;
We'll greet with love the rosy Queen that's coming
through the land.

Then wake the gladsome greenwood way,
With all your young delight;
I've seen your fathers' hearts as gay,
Your mothers' eyes as bright.
And they are all the gayer, all the brighter are their
eyes,
For days they spent in merriment among the woods
of old;
And they are all the gayer all, for happy thoughts that
rise,
And far-off hours like these recall all clad robes of
gold.

Some brown as nuts in nutting days,
Some blushing red as maples;
They rolled about the heather braes
Like rosy-cheeked apples;
And up and down the woodland brown the merry
band wend dancing,
Their hearts as light as any bird's to memory and
me;
As sunset beams on sparkling streams their bright
young eyes were glancing;
Their voices sweet and happy feet kept time with
tuneful glee.

And hope may pour its richest store
With every promise true;
Yet golden halcyons shine no more
Like those that shine on you.
And ye will seek, as I have sought, for beauty's fading
traces,
The footprints of the Summers where you danced in
other years;

And find that sunshine never dies when shed on
happy faces,
But lives through life-long memories, though maybe
fringed with tears.

Then dance away with merry din,
I love your laughter dearly;
The linnet on his muirland whin
Could never sing so clearly.
The golden thrush, within his bush, the blackbird on
his tree,
Have kept their sweet-love songs to greet the bridal
joys of June;
And far away the skylark's lay rings o'er the lowan lea;
Oh, happy song of happy hearts with song and heart
in tune!

The rosebuds, with their ruby lips,
To Summer's kisses cling;
The larches' crimson finger-tips
Wave farewell to the Spring;
The chestnut's hyacinthine flower, the ever-fragrant
haw,
Are shedding balms through sun and shower, and
beauty where they stand;
The ancient oaks, like brave old kings, who kept the
world in awe,
All greet with love the rosy Queen that's coming
through the land.

Then dance through all their rosy reign,
Be merry while you may;
You'll never dance so young again,
Though dancing every day.
The old divine emotion that is throbbing everywhere,
Is waking into beauty, and is breaking into song:
The every-young whose raptures sprung when Eden
first was fair,
Makes hearts as light, and eyes as bright, and
blithe's the day is long.

Then make the merry greenwood ring
With voices sweet to hear;
As songs that fairy maidens sing
At milking of the deer.
It is the time when Summer, all his golden glory
shedding,
His joys on every comer, all his love on sea and
shore,
His path of light is spreading, for the bride that he is
wedding,
His radiant Queen in bridal sheen, his loved one
evermore.

There's joy in every blossom-fold,
There's peace among the leaves;
And all the sunshine turns to gold

Among the harvest sheaves.
But all the harvests are not when the grain is waving
yellow,
And brown October apples in their ruddy ripeness
fall!
Then gather sunshine while you may, to make your
Autumn mellow,
And let you keep, in after day, an open heart for
all.