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THE TWO SIDES OF THE RIVER.

THE YOUTHS.
O winter, O white winter, wert thou gone
No more within the wilds were I alone,
Leaping with bent bow over stock and stone;
No more alone my love the lamp should burn,
Watching the weary spindle twist and turn,
Or o'er the web hold back her tears and yearn.
O winter, O white winter, wert thou gone!

THE MAIDENS.
Sweet thoughts fly swifter than the drifting snow,
And with the twisting thread sweet longings grow,
And o'er the web sweet pictures come and go;
For no white winter are we long alone.

THE YOUTHS.
O stream, so changed, what hast thou done to me,
That I thy glittering ford no more can see
Wreathing witht white her fair feet lovingly?
See in the rain she stands; and, looking down
With frightened eyes upon thy whirlpools brown,
Drops to her feet again her girded gown.
O hurrying, turbid stream, what hast thou done?

THE MAIDENS.
The clouds lift, telling of a fairer day,
When through the thin stream I shall take my way,
Girt round with gold, and garlanded with may.
What rushing stream can keep us long alone?

THE YOUTHS.
O burning Sun! O master of unrest!
Why must we, toiling, cast away the best,
Now when the bird sleeps by his empty nest?
THE TWO SIDES OF THE RIVER.

See, with my garland lying at her feet,
In lonely labour stands mine own, my sweet,
Above the quern, half-filled with half-ground wheat.

O red task-master, that thy flames were done!

THE MAIDENS.

O love, to-night across the half-shorn plain,
Shall I not go to meet the yellow wain,
A look of love at end of toil to gain?

What flaming sun can keep us long alone?

THE YOUTHS.

To-morrow, said I, is grape-gathering o'er;
To-morrow and our loves are twinned no more.
To-morrow came, to bring us woe and war.

What have I done, that I should stand with these,
Harkening the dread shouts borne upon the breeze,
While she, far off, sits weeping 'neath her trees?

Alas! O kings, what is it ye have done?

THE MAIDENS.

Come love, delay not, come and slay my dread;
Already is the banquet-table spread,
In the cool chamber flower-strewn is my bed.

Come, love; what king can keep us long alone?

THE YOUTHS.

O city, city, open thou thy gate;
See with life snatched from out the hand of fate,
Still on this glittering triumph must I wait.

Are not her hands stretched out to me? her eyes,
Are they not weary as each new hope dies,
And lone before her still the long road lies?

O golden city, fain would I be gone!
THE TWO SIDES OF THE RIVER.

THE MAIDENS.

Ah! thou art happy amid shouts and songs,
And all that unto conquering men belongs;
Night hath for me no fear, and day no wrongs.

What brazen city-gates can keep us lone?

THE YOUTHS.

O long, long road, how bare thou art, and grey;
Hill after hill thou climbest, and the day
Is ended now, O moonlit endless way!

And she is standing where the rushes grow,
And still with white hand shades her anxious brow,
Though 'neath the world the sun has fallen now.

O dreary road, when will thy leagues be done?

THE MAIDENS.

O tremblest thou, grey road, or do my feet
Tremble with joy thy flinty face to meet
Because my love's eyes soon mine eyes shall greet?

No heart thou hast to keep us long alone.

THE YOUTHS.

O wilt thou ne'er depart, thou heavy night?
When will thy slaying bring on the morning bright,
That leads my weary feet to my delight?

Why lingerest thou, filling with wandering fears
My lone love's tired heart; her eyes with tears,
For thoughts like sorrow for the vanished years?

Weaver of ill thoughts, when wilt thou begone?

THE MAIDENS.

Love, to the East are thine eyes turned, as mine,
In patient watching for the night's decline?
And hast thou noted this grey widening line?

Can any darkness keep us long alone?
THE TWO SIDES OF THE RIVER.

The Youths.

O day! O day! is this a little thing
That thou so long unto thy life must cling
Because I gave thee such a welcoming?

I called thee king of all felicity,
I praised thee that thou broughtest joy so nigh—
Thine hours are turned to years; thou wilt not die.

O day so longed for, would that thou wert gone!

The Maidens.

The light fails, love; the long day soon shall be
Nought but a pensive, happy memory,
Blessed for the tales it told to thee and me.

How hard it was, O love, to be alone.

William Morris.