

William Morris (1834-96)

1 *Riding Together*

For many, many days together
The wind blew steady from the East;
For many days hot grew the weather,
About the time of our Lady's Feast.

For many days we rode together, 5
Yet met we neither friend nor foe;
Hotter and clearer grew the weather,
Steadily did the East wind blow.

We saw the trees in the hot, bright weather,
Clear-cut, with shadows very black, 10
As freely we rode on together
With helms unlaced and bridles slack.

And often as we rode together,
We, looking down the green-bank'd stream,
Saw flowers in the sunny weather, 15
And saw the bubble-making bream.

And in the night lay down together,
And hung above our heads the rood,
Or watch'd night-long in the dewy weather,
The while the moon did watch the wood. 20

Our spears stood bright and thick together,
Straight out the banners stream'd behind,
As we gallop'd on in the sunny weather,
With faces turn'd towards the wind.

Down sank our threescore spears together, 25
As thick we saw the pagans ride;
His eager face in the clear fresh weather,
Shone out that last time by my side.

Up the sweep of the bridge we dash'd together,
It rock'd to the crash of the meeting spears, 30
Down rain'd the buds of the dear spring weather,
The elm-tree flowers fell like tears.

There, as we roll'd and writhed together,
I threw my arms above my head,
For close by my side, in the lovely weather, 35
I saw him reel and fall back dead.

I and the slayer met together,
He waited the death-stroke there in his place,
With thoughts of death, in the lovely weather,
Gapingly mazed at my madden'd face. 40

Madly I fought as we fought together;
In vain: the little Christian band
The pagans drown'd, as in stormy weather,
The river drowns low-lying land.

They bound my blood-stain'd hands together, 45
They bound his corpse to nod by my side:
Then on we rode, in the bright March weather,
With clash of cymbals did we ride.

We ride no more, no more together;
My prison-bars are thick and strong, 50
I take no heed of any weather,
The sweet Saints grant I live not long.

1858

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