

A. C. Swinburne (1837-1909)

7 *The Brothers*

There were twa brethren fell on strife;  
Sweet fruits are sair to gather;  
The tane has reft his brother of life;  
And the wind wears owre the heather.

There were twa brethren fell to fray; 5  
Sweet fruits are sair to gather;  
The tane is clad in a cloak of clay;  
And the wind wears owre the heather.

O loud and loud was the live man's cry,  
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather) 10  
"Would God the dead and the slain were I!"  
And the wind wears owre the heather.

"O sair was the wrang and sair the fray,"  
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)  
"But liefer had love be slain than slay," 15  
And the wind wears owre the heather.

"O sweet is the life that sleeps at hame,"  
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)  
"But I maun wake on a far sea's faem," 20  
And the wind wears owre the heather.

"And women are fairest of a' things fair,"  
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)  
"But never shall I kiss woman mair,"  
And the wind wears owre the heather.

Between the birk and the aik and the thorn, 25

(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)  
He's laid his brother to lie forlorn:  
And the wind wears owre the heather.

Between the bent and the burn and the broom,  
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather) 30  
He's laid him to sleep till dawn of doom:  
And the wind wears owre the heather.

He's tane him owre the waters wide,  
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)  
Afar to fleet and afar to bide: 35  
And the wind wears owre the heather.

His hair was yellow, his cheek was red,  
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)  
When he set his face to the wind and fled:  
And the wind wears owre the heather. 40

His banes were stark and his een were bright,  
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)  
When he set his face to the sea by night:  
And the wind wears owre the heather.

His cheek was wan and his hair was grey, 45  
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)  
When he came back hame frae the wide world's way:  
And the wind wears owre the heather.

His banes were weary, his een were dim,  
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather) 50  
And nae man lived and had mind of him:  
And the wind wears owre the heather.

"O whatten a wreck wad they seek on land,"  
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)  
"That they houk the turf to the seaward hand?" 55

And the wind wears owre the heather.

“O whatten a prey wad they think to take”

(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)

“That they delve the dykes for a dead man’s sake?”

And the wind wears owre the heather.

60

A bane of the dead in his hand he’s tane;

Sweet fruits are sair to gather:

And the red blood brak frae the dead white bane.

And the wind wears owre the heather.

He’s cast it forth of his auld faint hand;

65

Sweet fruits are sair to gather:

And the red blood ran on the wan wet sand.

And the wind wears owre the heather.

“O whatten a slayer is this,” they said,

(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)

70

“That the straik of his hand should raise his dead?”

And the wind wears owre the heather.

“O weel is me for the sign I take,”

(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)

“That now I may die for my auld sin’s sake,”

75

And the wind wears owre the heather.

“For the dead was in wait now fifty year,”

(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)

“And now shall I die for his blood’s sake here,”

And the wind wears owre the heather.

80

1889

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