

THE WILLOWS OF STUDLEY

(DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY)

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Willows, you have beheld far happier days.
A little river wandered through this ground,
And the young Red Man on his hunting ways
Paused underneath your boughs to catch the sound
Of your soft lullabies, so sweet and low,
While in your arms you cradled infant birds,
For only forest people ever know
Tree music from the trees' great gift of words.

The woodsman with his axe in search of fuel
Here raised the burden to his shoulders broad,
This pioneer from distant lands, and cruel
To what he needed, watched the dawn of God
Walk like an armoured Michael through your boles,
And late at night beneath your branches stood
To hear the silvery ripples made by moles,
The rush of furry folk within a wood.

Perhaps he crossed the river times again
Until it narrowed slowly to a close,
As from your hair the breeze shook emerald rain,
And from the bank the thrush stirred with the rose.
Perhaps his children going slowly past
Carried their golden apples to the sale,
While sweet fern to the purple daisies cast
Its fragrance after the September gale.

You have looked down on bright and eager eyes,
Watched a grey college open wide its doors,
With books of knowledge holding rich surprise,
Heard faintly rapid footsteps on its floors.
You too have seen a strange bird cleave the sky,
A bird unknown to man and maid before,
A bird whose pathway higher led, and high
Adventure's voice that summoned youth to war.

Unharmd by storms, like gods you stand and wait,
Muted the music now within each heart,
God grant upon the last day of your fate
His hand, not man's, may send the levelling dart,
Sparing your leaves where robins make their swings,
And play as in past ages their brief games,
Dear vital leaves in which life burns, and flings
Green fire to crown your years with singing flames.