

# THE HALCYON

AUDREY ALEXANDRA BROWN

There was a morning once when earth was new,  
When the clear wave but twice or thrice had rolled  
Waters as sweet as honey, fresh as dew,  
On sands of ringing gold;  
When the bright sea was young that now is old.

There was a day before the leaf was stirred  
On any branch, by any wind that blows;  
Before the simplest plain-song of a bird,  
Before the earliest rose;  
How long before the mountains, no man knows.

In such an hour the little new-made Eve  
Saw her reflection like a miracle,  
And lingered breathless, doubtful to believe,  
And kissed the limpid pool,  
Laughing to know herself so beautiful.

This was the time of man's white innocence;  
He sinned for knowledge, and the glory passed;  
He laboured much for little recompense,  
Grew old, and died at last;  
And summer failed, and winter followed fast.

The grape-bloom beauty of the world was gone;  
Something remained: blown hazels on a hill—  
Red oak-leaves, rain-wet in a ruddy dawn—  
Moon-silver; sweeter still,  
The crocus bud, the clarion daffodil.

And earth was tender of its young and weak,  
And softer to the foot of weariness;  
The sun lay warmer on a dimpled cheek;  
Pitiful of distress,  
The wind was gentler to a russet dress.

In such an age, they say, the halcyon wove  
Her reedy coracle, and shaped her nest  
As green as April and as warm as love,  
For fledgeling wing and breast;  
The sea grew still better to serve her rest.

Nine days the mottled eggs lay safe and close  
Under her brooding care; nine days the sea  
In glassy ripples neither fell nor rose—  
No tempest marred the tree  
Until the sapphire-feathered wings were free.

Such kindness had the world for infancy,  
Such love of all that shines and soars and sings—  
That there was joy in earth and sky and sea  
For each new joy of wings:  
Earth stirs no more for young delightful things.

Where build you now, bright Halcyon? Never more  
Shall wave be brooded by your glittering breast:  
The reeds grow thick by many a stream and shore,  
But none to weave your nest;  
And Greece forgets you now that loved you best.

Bird of untroubled waters, come and make  
The quiet ocean of my heart your own;  
It shall be stiller than a windless lake—  
Ah, till your brood be flown  
It shall be smooth as jade or turquoise stone.

There shall you rock your nestlings all day long  
Under a curved and dappled spread of sky;  
There shall the sapphire wings grow swift and strong,  
Thence shall they mount and fly:  
But I shall keep their beauty till I die.

There'll be another joy for all mankind—  
The gleam and glory of the fire-blue wings  
Shall flash across the darkness of the blind—  
In new undreamed-of springs  
The deaf shall wonder that the morning sings!