



SWAN-WHITE

WHITE of skin and brown of hair,
Her footfall wakens the sleepy air—
And suddenly sweet and strange it
grows
With scents of lilac and thyme and
rose.

Forest leaves are all astir,
Following fitfully after her.

Gold forsaketh the prickly whin,
Though not for a month comes Autumn in.

Under the touch of her wandering feet,
Grass is not soft, nor woodruff sweet!

Under the cloud of her fallen hair,
The rose in her breast is scarcely fair:

Not a flag-flower keeps its grace,
All things fade when they see her face.

Brown of hair and white of skin,
Forest-ways she goes wandering in.

And nuts grow ripe ere the gathering-time,
And the bees come back to the yellow lime.

What is her kindred, and whence comes she,
From the middle earth, or the middle sea?

For the soul's asleep in her eyes that make
The Spring come back for her beauty's sake.

And though she carries nor sword nor spear,
A curse it is that has fallen here—

Curses twain we knew nothing of—
The curse of beauty, the curse of love.

NORA HOPPER.