

Two Poems

By Alma Strettell

I.—The Wind

(From the French of Emile Verhaeren)

CROSSING the infinite length of the moorland,
Here comes the wind,
The wind with his trumpet that heralds November;
Endless and infinite, crossing the downs,
Here comes the wind
That teareth himself and doth fiercely dismember;
With heavy breaths turbulent smiting the towns,
The savage wind comes, the fierce wind of November!

Each bucket of iron at the wells of the farmyards,
Each bucket and pulley, it creaks and it wails;
By cisterns of farmyards, the pulleys and pails
They creak and they cry,
The whole of sad death in their melancholy.

The

The wind, it sends scudding dead leaves from the birches
 Along o'er the water, the wind of November,
 The savage, fierce wind ;
 The boughs of the trees for the birds' nests it searches,
 To bite them and grind.
 The wind, as though rasping down iron, grates past,
 And, furious and fast, from afar combs the cold
 And white avalanches of winter the old,
 The savage wind combs them so furious and fast,
 The wind of November.

From each miserable shed
 The patched garret-windows wave wild overhead
 Their foolish, poor tatters of paper and glass,
 As the savage, fierce wind of November doth pass !
 And there on its hill
 Of dingy and dun-coloured turf, the black mill,
 Swift up from below, through the empty air slashing,
 Swift down from above, like a lightning-stroke flashing,
 The black mill so sinister moweth the wind,
 The savage, fierce wind of November !

The old, ragged thatches that squat round their steeple,
 Are raised on their roof-poles, and fall with a clap,
 In the wind the old thatches and pent-houses flap,
 In the wind of November, so savage and hard.
 The crosses—and they are the arms of dead people—
 The crosses that stand in the narrow churchyard
 Fall prone on the sod
 Like some great flight of black, in the acre of God.

The wind of November!
Have you met him, the savage wind, do you remember?
Did he pass you so fleet,
Where, yon at the cross, the three hundred roads meet—
With distressfulness panting, and wailing with cold?
Yea, he who breeds fears and puts all things to flight,
Did you see him, that night
When the moon he o'erthrew—when the villages, old
In their rot and decay, past endurance and spent,
Cried, wailing like beasts, 'neath the hurricane bent?

Here comes the wind howling, that heralds dark weather,
The wind blowing infinite over the heather,
The wind with his trumpet that heralds November!

II.—A Soldier's Farewell

(From a Roumanian Folk-Song)

*T*HOU wilt recall, tomorrow,
The sunshine of to-day—
And to the sun wilt say:
“Art thou the same, the self-same sun indeed?”

Full of dead leaves the path is
That to thy cottage leads,
But there within the cottage
The spring yet blooms for thee.
Thou rockest children's cradles

To the whirring of thy spindle ;
And the flowers see thee pass.
O wife, when death shall take me,
Let it never rest, thy spindle ;
When the flowers ask : "Where is he ?"
Make answer : "In his grave,
Yet still I rock his slumber
To the whirring of my spindle."
For to the wars I'm going ;
And on thy brow I kissed thee.
Pale grew thy brow, what time it felt my kiss.
Thou wilt be left all lonely
To watch our plain's glad shimmer ;
For I no more beside thee
Shall see the maize-fields ripen ;
But the blood's flowing, I shall see without thee.
And thou shalt tell my threshold :
"Although he has gone from us,
Yet he will come again ;"
And thou shalt tell my children :
"Yea, he will come again,"
But to thy heart shalt whisper : "He is dead."
Do thou bewail and mourn me
Within thy heart's deep silence,
As in the forest's silence
The turtle-doves lament.
Yet do not ever give me,
O wife, too many tears ;
Tears are step-sisters of forgetfulness ;
But with thy spindle's whirring
Tenderly rock my slumber,

And

And tell it of the harvests,
And plains where maize-fields ripen,
For earth loves fruitfulness,
And I could speak with her
Then, of her fruitfulness,
So that she might grow glad, there where I rest.

*Thou wilt recall, to-morrow,
The sunshine of to-day,
And to the sun wilt say:
"Art thou the same, the self-same sun indeed?"*