

THE CHERRY TREE

BESIDE my house a cherry tree
Spread branches fair and green.
A goodly sight it was to see
The sly winds creep between
Its thick-hung boughs, the sunlit stripe
Its glossy leaves and cherries ripe.

Some little lads came whistling by;
'Come pluck for me, but take
Good heed,' I warned, 'ye climb not high,
For ye have heads that break.'
They smiled—but climbed too far alas!
A great bough tumbled on the grass.

The curly heads were quickly soothed,
For childhood woes are brief—
A kiss, a coin, the hurt was smoothed
With haste beyond belief—
But torn and low the limb was lain,
The limb that none might graft again.

I tried to smile. I said, 'At least
This fruit upon the plate
Is mine; and sure this ruddy feast
My loss will compensate.'
The cherries (O twice-bitter waste!)
Were sharp and acrid to the taste.

I thought upon another tree,
Whereof Christ laid the seed:
Its waving limbs shook green and free,
And through its massy brede
Tarried and sang the birds of air
And came to make their nestings there.