

## TWO DAYS IN LIFE'S WOODS.

## I.

DEEP forest gloom and sleep. The mountain streams  
 Gurgle and hiss, or loudly thundering pour  
 O'er hidden precipices. Anxious dreams  
 And weariness dwell here, and nothing more.

Weariness, too, dwells on the heights, but there  
 Life dwells with him—not dream-life. I will go;  
 What the blue world above holds that is fair,  
 What the winds nightly tell of, I will know.

The sunset seas; the beach where gleams the foam;  
 The far-off peaks, reverend above their peers;  
 The forests, tossing in the winds that roam  
 The wide earth o'er; God's sacred heaven that nears;—

These I will see; among the dry leaves dead  
 I will forgotten leave my dismal dreams;  
 The power of sleep forevermore has fled,  
 E'en midst these shadows fall the white sunbeams.

## II.

“*One day is as another?*—Can'st thou not,  
 O sluggard, climb and make thy dwelling there?  
 Can'st thou not wake again? Hast thou forgot  
 What was, *that* day, thy whole heart's full-voiced prayer?”

Nay; but to climb I have not alway strength,  
 I know not how it was. Some beam of clear,  
 True sunlight, flashing through the leaves at length,  
 Tempted me, waked me; I forgot my fear.

But now I fear the thirst, the paths half hid,  
 The thorns, the treacherous rock, the weariness;  
 I know no more why I should seek to rid  
 My soul of sleep. My anguish now is less.

That day I suffered much. To wake is pain.  
 Dreams, like the mountain torrents full of sound,  
 Mean little to us. Empty all and vain  
 The world of sleep is through a whole life's round.

But that one hour's clear light, that piercing air—  
 I was awake then, felt new joy and grief,  
 Trembled as, when the winter storm-winds tear  
 Great trees from hillsides, trembles every leaf.

Then knew I the all-moving God above,  
Around, beneath me; knew in every life  
The Infinite that dwells in it; knew love  
Eternal brooding o'er all transient strife;—

All this I knew, pierced with sharp pain to know—  
This know no more; vague, empty words I speak,  
Words worn and hardened like down-trodden snow,  
Thrice frozen by new blasts of north winds bleak.

Why should I wake? Millions have slept before,  
Their whole lives through. Who ever waking made  
The mountains higher, that the storms wear lower,  
Or ever the old world's slow decay delayed?

Or helped its growth? Does God's own strength decline?  
Or shall I help him? Through the ages past,  
Worlds, starry clusters on heaven's laden vine,  
Grew, ripened, rotted to their end at last.

And in them flitted lives; so flocks of jays  
Fly chattering through these echoing solitudes.  
Nothing they meant. And God's eternal ways,  
How should we find them in our changing moods?

My mood be fixed. Upon the stream to gaze;  
To count the bubbles breaking on the stones  
Below the rapids; to list in dull amaze,  
While in the trees the querulous sea-wind moans;

To find my food and eat it, by my fire  
At night to rest, beneath my own dark roof;  
To quench each heavenward-flickering, mad desire;  
To be forever 'gainst idle fancy proof;—

This be my life. Let the sun shine above,  
'Tis not my work; he finds it good to shine;  
E'en so, whate'er it be, Eternal Love,  
A sleeping man may leave to the Divine.

The night comes and the mist; the dripping boughs  
Have their speech, too, that nothing means; and I,  
Whom never more may tedious visions rouse,  
Can see between them but a leaden sky.

“And yet, above that misty, fearful gloom,  
One Star beams—nay! fear not, thy fright were vain—  
Thou never shalt see it; yet, so were thy doom,  
Once seeing it, thou never couldst sleep again.”

*Josiah Royce.*