

DIFFUGERE NIVES.*
HORACE—ODES, IV. 7.

THE snows are fled away, leaves on the shaws¹
And grasses in the mead renew their birth,
The river to the river-bed withdraws,
And altered is the fashion of the earth.

5 The Nymphs and Graces three put off their fear
And unapparelled in the woodland play.
The swift hour and the brief prime of the year
Say to the soul, *Thou wast not born for aye.*²

Thaw follows frost; hard on the heel of spring
10 Treads summer sure to die, for hard on hers
Comes autumn, with his apples scattering;
Then back to wintertide, when nothing stirs.

But oh, whate'er the sky-led seasons mar,
Moon upon moon rebuilds it with her beams:
15 Come *we* where Tullus and where Ancus³ are,
And good Aeneas,⁴ we are dust and dreams.

Torquatus,⁵ if the gods in heaven shall add
The morrow to the day, what tongue has told?
Feast then thy heart, for what thy heart has had
20 The fingers of no heir will ever hold.

When thou descendest once the shades among,
The stern assize and equal judgment o'er,
Not thy long lineage nor thy golden tongue,
No, nor thy righteousness, shall friend thee more.

25 Night holds Hippolytus⁶ the pure of stain,
Diana steads him nothing, he must stay;
And Theseus leaves Pirithöus⁷ in the chain
The love of comrades cannot take away.

A. E. HOUSMAN.

Source: A. E. Housman. "Diffugere Nives." *The Quarto*. Volume 3. J.S. Virtue, 1897. 97. *Google Books*. Google, 10 June 2013. Accessed 16 September 2015. <<https://books.google.com/books?id=f-05AQAAMAAJ>>.

* *Diffugere nives*: "The snows are fled away" (Latin), opening words of *Odes* book IV, ode 7, by the Roman poet Horace. Housman is loosely translating Horace's poem.

¹ *shaw*: "A thicket, a small wood, copse or grove" (*OED*).

² *for aye*: forever

³ *Tullus... Ancus*: kings of Rome, according to legend

⁴ *Aeneas*: legendary ancestor of the founders of Rome

⁵ *Torquatus*: Horace's friend

⁶ *Hippolytus*: Hippolytus remained chaste in devotion to the virgin goddess Diana.

⁷ *Theseus... Pirithöus*: two friends who tried to kidnap the goddess of the underworld, but were instead imprisoned there. Hercules freed Theseus but could not free Pirithöus.