

Moss

William Barnes

Preamble

The late Bob Finch sent Mark Hill a photocopy of a significant poem that was overlooked in the compilation of Edwards (1992). This is by the Dorset poet William Barnes (1801-1886), best known for his dialect verse and philological interests. Barnes wished to rid the English language of Latin and Greek influences, calling botany 'wortlore'. No doubt he would have called bryology 'mosslore'. Here is the poem, which Bob copied from Jones (1962). 'Moss' has several of the associations noted by Edwards (1992) – especially loneliness and solitude, shadows, dreams and haunting. The mood is sombre and elegiac.

References

- Edwards SR. 1992. *Mosses in English literature*. British Bryological Society Special Volume No. 4. Cardiff: British Bryological Society.
- Jones B, ed. 1962. *The poems of William Barnes*. London: Centaur Press.

MOSS

O rain-bred moss that now dost hide
The timber's bark and wet rock's side,
Upshining to the sun, between
The darksome storms, in lively green,
And wash'd by pearly rain drops clean,
Steal o'er my lonely path, and climb
My wall, dear child of silent time.
Come winter moss, creep on, creep on,
And warn me of the time that's gone.

Green child of winter, born to take
Whate'er the hands of man forsake,
That makest dull, in rainy air,
His labour-brighten'd works; so fair
While newly left in summer's glare;
And stealest o'er the stone that keeps
His name in mem'ry where he sleeps.
Come winter moss, creep on, creep on,
And warn me of the time that's gone.

Come lowly plant that lov'st, like me,
The shadow of the woodland tree,
And waterfall where echo mocks
The milkmaid's song by dripping rocks,
And sunny turf for roving flocks,
And ribby elms extending wide
Their roots within the hillock's side.
Come winter moss, creep on, creep on,
And warn me of the time that's gone.

Come, meet me wandering, and call
My mind to some green mould'ring hall
That once stood high, the fair-wall'd pride
Of hearts that lov'd, and hoped, and died,
Ere thou hadst climb'd around its side:
Where blooming faces once were gay
For eyes no more to know the day.
Come winter moss, creep on, creep on,
And warn me of the time that's gone.

While there in youth,— the sweetest part
Of life,— with joy-believing heart,
They liv'd their own dear days, all fraught
With incidents for after-thought
In later life, when fancy brought
The outline of some faded face
Again to its forsaken place.
Come winter moss, creep on, creep on,
And warn me of the time that's gone.

Come where thou climbedst, fresh and free,
The grass-begloomed apple-tree
That, hardly shaken with my small
Boy's strength, with quiv'ing head, let fall
The apples we lik'd most of all,
Or elm I climb'd, with clasping legs,
To reach the crow's high-nested eggs.
Come winter moss, creep on, creep on,
And warn me of the time that's gone.

Or where I found thy yellow bed
Below the hill-borne fir-tree's head,
And heard the whistling east wind blow
Above, while wood-screen'd down below
I rambled in the spring-day's glow,
And watch'd the low-ear'd hares upspring
From cover, and the birds take wing.
Come winter moss, creep on, creep on,
And warn me of the time that's gone.

Or where the bluebells bent their tops
In windless shadows of the copse;
Or where the misty west wind blew
O'er primroses that peer'd out through
Thy bankside bed, and scatter'd dew
O'er grey spring grass I watch'd alone
Where thou had grown o'er some old stone.
Come winter moss, creep on, creep on,
And warn me of the time that's gone.

Rare and interesting bryophytes in Britain and Ireland

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Categories of interesting record

A *Altitude*, **D** *Dispersing*, **F** *Fruiting*, **G** *Gametangia*, **H** *Habitat*, **N** *Nationally rare*, **P** *Previously under-recorded*, **R** *Regionally rare*, **S** *Status report*, **V** *Vegetatively reproducing*. For a fuller explanation of categories refer to Hill (2006).

Liverworts

23.10. *Lophozia capitata*. **17:** on sandy wet heathland under

heather with *Cephaloziella rubella*, 20 m alt., Wisley Heath, TQ068587, 2006, Wallis, conf. Matcham. First record for the county since 1970 of this sporadic and rare plant. **N.**

Mosses

13.1. *Pseudephemerum nitidum*. **59:** on open silty sand, pH 5.6, margin of reservoir, with *Archidium alternifolium*, *Bryum klinckgraeffii*, *B. tenuisetum*, *Hypnum cypressiforme*, *Pohlia bulbifera*, *Pohlia wahlenbergii* and *Riccia huebeneriana*, 140 m alt., Anglezarke Reservoir,