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THE LONG SWEETENING

Caroline Peay Harrison

The flames burn like low star-fire
in the creeping chill of late
night
or early morning, depends on who
you ask.
Stirring the cane becomes a dance
to the fiddle being played
nonstop for hours.
The least ones lie dreaming here
and there on quilts damp with
dew,
but if we dance all night we have
sweetening for the year.
Who cares
that we can go to town and trade for
all the sugar we will ever need,
but none so rich and deep as
the stir-off,
the making of the pleasure crop
into molasses
by the light of another year's
harvest moon.