The Works of Stefan George

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Beside the long and even hedge we lean.
Led by a Sister, rows of children pace,
Their voices rise in praise of heaven's grace
In earthly accents, steadfast and serene.

We, who are bathed in evening's latest rays,
Are frightened by your words, for you recall
That we were happy only when a wall
Like this was still enough to block our gaze.

Above the spring, niched in the wall, you bent
To cup the cool and dabble in the spray,
And yet it seems your fingers draw away
From the two lion heads with some constraint.

You wear a ring whose jewelled lustre dies.
I try to slip it off, but you invade
My very spirit with your misty eyes
In answer to the plea I could not hide.

Now do not lag in reaching for the boon
Of parting pomp before the turn of tide,
The clouds are grey, they swiftly mass and glide,
Perhaps the fog will be upon us soon.

A faint and fluted note from tattered tree
Tells you that goodness, wise and ultimate,
Will dip the land — before it learns the fate
Of freezing storms — in damask lambency.

The wasps with scales of golden-green are gone
From blooms that close their chalices. We row
Our boat around an archipelago
Of matted leaves in shades of bronze and fawn.