

# Twelve River RIPPLES

## Favourite Poem



It's time for us to look at an old favourite for this time of year.

### **To Autumn** by John Keats

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,  
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;  
Conspiring with him how to load and bless  
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;  
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,  
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;  
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells  
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,  
And still more, later flowers for the bees,  
Until they think warm days will never cease,  
For summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?  
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find  
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,  
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;  
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,  
Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook  
Spare the next swath and all its twined flowers:  
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep  
Steady thy laden head across a brook;  
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,  
Thou watchest the last oozings, hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?  
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too, –  
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,  
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;  
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn  
Among the river shallows, borne aloft  
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;  
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;  
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft  
The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft,  
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

## Favourite Poem cont.

As I do my daily walk around Braziers Wood in Ravenswood, I have been seeing the blackberries on the bramble, and where there are apple trees, fruit appearing on the branches. I often think of the sumptuous description that Keats gives of fruit ripening and Autumn loading and blessing the brambles and hedges. Braziers Wood is always glorious in Autumn, and whenever I find myself regressing to my childhood and kicking up the leaves that are strewn about (you should try it if you haven't already), I am often reminded of the first line of this poem, its alliteration and rhythm complimenting the rustle and flurry of the leaves.

Keats captures the beauty and abundance of Autumn. This is the season of harvest, and we see grain lying lazily *on the granary floor*, sleepy, and maybe some field stubble in a furrow in an opiate drowsiness, and a tree

trying to steady its *laden* or heavy branches across the brook. Next there is the invisible essence of Autumn watching the press patiently, in anticipation perhaps of some spicy Christmas cider. From the heat and excitement of the summer sun, we are reflective, restful.

In the last verse, something takes flight. Maybe it's our soul, revelling in the beauty of the moment, the choir of gnats, the *lambs loud* bleating, the song of *the redbreast* and the *swallows* that *twitter in the skies*. Keats flies with the swallows and takes us with him. Autumn has come, the comfort of a good harvest and the coolness of the mists gives us a feeling of well-being and prepares us gently for the winter. We are safe here as nature gets ready to sleep.

*Simon Black*