

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON (1850-1894)

The Vagabond (To an air of Schubert)

Interpretation 1

Give me the life I enjoy,
Other ways of living don't interest me,
Give me the open road, the sky above
And different paths to choose from.
I'll sleep outside under stars,
I'll soften my hard, stale bread in water-
That's the life for someone like me
That's the life I want to lead.

Let death come, whenever,
Let life bring, whatever,
Give me nature
And a road to follow.
I don't need wealth, hope or love,
I don't need friends;
All I want is the natural world
And a road to follow.

Autumn's cold weather can come
When I am traveling,
In autumn, birds don't sing
Fingers go blue* from the cold
Frost makes fields look white
It's warm at some kind person's fire.
Autumn's cold won't change my mind,
Nor will winter stop my travels.

Let death come, whenever,
Let life bring on whatever,
Give me nature
And a road to follow
I don't need wealth, hope or love
I don't need friends
All I want is the natural world
And a road to follow.

* When the body is cold it reduces the amount of blood flowing to fingers, toes and ears (where it is closest to the skin and can lose warmth.) It is red blood flowing through and under the skin

Give to me the life I love,
Let the lave go by me,
Give the jolly heaven above
And the by-way nigh me.
Bed in the bush with stars to see,
Bread I dip in the river-
There's the life for a man like me,
There's the life for ever.

Let the blow fall soon or late,
Let what will be o'er me:
Give the face of earth around
And the road before me.
Wealth I seek not, hope nor love,
Nor a friend to know me;
All I seek, the heaven above
And the road before me.

Or let autumn fall on me
When a-field I linger,
Silencing the bird on tree
Biting the blue finger,
White as meal the frosty field-
Warm the fireside haven-
Not to autumn will I yield,
Not to winter even!

Let the blow fall soon or late,
Let what will be o'er me"
Give the face of earth around
And the road before me.
Wealth I seek not, hope nor love,
Nor a friend to know more;
All I seek, the heaven above
And the road before me.

lave = rest, remainder
meal = ground grain, flour

Interpretation 2

Give me have the life I choose
I don't care for other ways of living
Give me freedom
Let me choose which road I'll take.
I'll sleep anywhere
Don't care if I have little to eat, I'll make do
That's the sort of life that suits me
That's the way I prefer it to be.

My death may come at any time,
I'll face the consequences of my choices:
The world is full of wondrous possibilities
And I want the chance to live life to the full.
I don't want to be trapped like other people
By wealth, hope, love or friends
I ask only for freedom
And I want the chance to live life to the full.

There are times when life is tough
As I follow my chosen paths,
Times when I have to battle alone
Times when there are many hardships
Life can seem pretty bleak at those times
But even in the worst times, there can be joy.
Tough times won't change my mind
Not even severe hardships will stop me.

My death may come at any time,
I'll face the consequences of my choices:
The world is full of wondrous possibilities
And I want the chance to live life to the full.
I don't want to be trapped like other people
By wealth, hope, love or friends
I ask only for freedom
And I want the chance to live life to the full.

Interpretations 1 and 2 by Dennis Foster