

Anna Nickerson

[They saw him walking in the meadow]

They saw him walking in the meadow
In May he stood beneath the willow
In June he lay among the yarrow
Pollen gilding him with yellow
 Yellow crowning him with grace.
He lay there till the grass grew high
He lay there till the stars turned blue
He lay there till his breath ran cold
 The boy without a face.

Between the shining silver trees
He waited for the world to freeze
And ice to form upon the breeze
And snow to lie upon the lease
 Leaving its white grace.
And then he breathed his last blue breath
And left it in the shining air
And left his stiffened body there
 The boy without a face.

His only keepers were the fox,
Crouching in the purple phlox,
The hare whose eyes at equinox
Eyed the slowly roving ox
 Bellowing his song of grace.
Briers grew about his head
Campions covered his outspread hair
And mildew took the place of tears
 The boy without a face.

July came, and the woods grew pretty
Local people left the city
Moved by long forgotten pity
For their lovely Prince Dmitry
 Who had crowned their lives with grace.
They came with cakes, they came with flowers
They came to strew his grave with boughs
But in the darkening hour they saw
 The boy without a face.