

Homing Swallows¹

Claude McKay

Swift swallows sailing from the Spanish main²,
O rain-birds³ racing merrily away
From hill-tops parched with heat and sultry plain
Of wilting plants and fainting flowers, say—

5 When at the noon-hour from the chapel school⁴
The children dash and scamper down the dale,
Scornful of teacher's rod and binding rule
Forever broken and without avail,

Do they still stop beneath the giant tree
10 To gather locusts⁵ in their childish greed,
And chuckle when they break the pods to see
The golden powder clustered round the seed?

Editorial Notes

1. **Homing Swallow:** a swallow capable of traveling distances but returning to its point of origin, like a homing pigeon.
2. **Spanish Main:** The mainland of the Americas that were part of the Spanish empire.
3. **Rain-Birds:** Birds whose singing signals the coming of rain.
4. **Chapel School:** A school run by a religious organization.
5. **Locusts:** Here not the insect, but instead locust flowers, the flowers of the *robinia pseudoacaci*.