The Locust Hunt

Philip Murray

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THE LOCUST HUNT

When Fabre took his children locust hunting
Across the stubby meadows of Provence
Young Paul was content to capture the large Grey Locust
Perched like a small bird on the everlastings,
But little Marie-Pauline preferred honey color
And searched hopefully for the rich Italian
With gauzy pink wings and striking carmine legs
Which liked the mulberry bushes best of all;
And on these bushes it was she who caught
In her excited hands the morning's prize,
A great beauty bearing St. Andrew's cross,
That martyr's X, marked on its slender back
By four white slanted stripes, and further patched
With rare Greek green like verdigris on bronze.

How gleefully when they spied one did they scoop
The delicate captive into a paper funnel,
And with what care, approaching tenderness,
Did father place it in a tiny cage,
Promising if the children were sharp hunters
And caught more specimens than he required
They should have locusts for supper,
Prepared the Arab way and served with honey;
It was perhaps a dubious reward
For Fabre said later, cautiously — they were good,
But none of us desired to have them again.

PHILIP MURRAY