



DOWN
THE YEAR



C. DUBAY ROBERTSON



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DOWN THE YEAR

BY
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THE PATHWAY

A YEAR is the most commonplace and the most wonderful thing there is. It is commonplace when it means just twelve months of doing—working and delving into material things—twelve months of enduring life in the ordinary ways; but it is wonderful when it means twelve months of being—growing up into big things, seeing beautiful things—twelve months of living. And the difference between the commonplace and the wonderful is measured by the angle of vision between eyes that are turned down and in and eyes turned up and out; and an angle is a point. So the passage from the commonplace to the wonderful is just the turning of the eye upon its axis. You do not need feet or wings to make the journey; it is a journey of an angle, a point.

This writer is no botanist, or entomologist, or meteorologist, or scientist of any sort whatever. He loves the good world as God made it, and the year, to him, is a pathway of delight. He cannot tell you the Latin names of flowers and birds and insects, nor the scientific words for “cloud” and “snowflake” and “raindrop”; but he loves to look at these things and finds them well worth looking at.

So come down the year with me!

PRAYER FOR THE NEW YEAR

HOLD thou my hand
In thine, O Lord, for thy great hand is strong,
And many are the stony places set
For my unwary feet, the way along,
And myriad the trials to be met.
Hold thou, O Lord, my hand!

Because thou knowest,
Lead me along the changes of the year:
The days when gray earth meets a grayer sky,
The other days when tender skies are clear;
For only thou art great among the high—
I, of the lowly, lowest.

Hold fast my hand;
Then shall I walk adown the year serene,
Grow old as swings the pendule to and fro,
But fearing not, though all may not be seen
Of where I travel when the sun drops low,
Close held by thy strong hand.

Ay, hold my hand!
Be paths where I shall go or rough or smooth,
Be men whom I shall meet or foe or friend,
Be days with tempest drear, or calm to soothe,
I care not—so through all until the end,
Thou hold, O Lord, my hand.

WHEN THE DAYS GROW SOFT

YOU can never get lost in wandering through the changes and turns of the year. That is one wonderful and tender thing about the way God orders things. The soul that goes out into the good, big, out-of-door world and becomes a citizen of that world, and lives and behaves as a citizen ought, is never at a loss for anything. And more than all is he never at a loss to know where he is. You can miss your way in a city and become utterly bewildered half a block from home. And you can lose yourself in the woods, and travel in a circle of despair for hours, and grow more bewildered each time you pass its landmarks. But that is only when you try to do what you think is consistent with your indoor ideals or habits or thought. If you will yield to the spirit of the woods you need never go astray for a moment. There is a mysterious something which folds you round, and leads you, and protects you. It is as if the very trees sheltered you with their leaves, and whispered to you the way you ought to go. You can become terribly confused in the world of business too, and tumble down and spill all your money out of your pockets,

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and get bumped until you do not know where you are. And in the world of philosophy the clouds are so beautiful and so high and so filmy that you frequently mistake the way and deduce when you ought to induce. And you can get so muddled in mathematics that the twenty-third proposition sounds like ragtime, and you go dancing along the hypotenuse under the impression that it is the shortest distance between two points. You can get lost almost anywhere, even if you try to understand the situation and to live up to it. But as you walk the paths of the year it is with absolute certainty. No one who loves this year-world in God's system enough to look at and listen to it can ever make a mistake about where he is. For each season has its characteristics that are like the voices of friends. You can never make the blunder of thinking it is summer when it is still spring. Right up to the moment of transition you know it is spring; and right after the moment you know it is summer. And you do not know it because the sun is warmer and the wind more whispery in summer than in spring, nor because the sky is a different blue, nor because family cares have stopped the singing of the birds, nor by any or all of these things. You know it just because it is different. The heart of the world out of doors beats to the pulses of one

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who loves it and the pulses bound with nature's heart. And there is no mistake because there is sympathy. Each season has its own characteristics, and when one sees and hears and smells and feels he knows by that where he is in the world of the year.

No one could mistake the spring for any other time. Just as soon as the day comes when he goes out under the trees—naked or with just a misty bloom of green showing—and takes off his hat to the breeze that may still be cold, and snuffs the air and looks up at the sky, and thinks how *soft* it all is, he knows the spring has come in that day. And when he finds the softness gone and all the world a world of ardent splendor he knows the summer has stepped in front of the spring. For softness is characteristic of the days of spring. So it is spring, and the sky is soft like a baby's eyes, and the air is soft like a kiss, and the earth under foot is soft like a carpet, and the music of the stream is soft like the voice of a girl, and the leaves that are just opening are soft like a dream, and the day is soft like a woman's heart.

Soft and tender as the dreams of a child; there is no mistake possible; it is spring. The soft sky arches above in a blue promise. The spring sky is of a color that is matched nowhere else. If you can think of all the delights you hope for, and all

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the good things you want to do, and all the beautiful things you want to see, and all the music you want to hear, and all the blessings your soul longs for—if you can think of all these at once and get them all into the right order, just as they ought to be, in your mind; and if you can keep them all before you just right, and hold them all together in mind and not let one slip nor forget a single melody of them; and if you can gather them all like this and think that One who can do it has promised to give them all to you, and if you can think of this promise as having a color, that is the color of the sky in spring. There is nothing that so well designates the blue of the sky in early spring as to say it is the blue of promise. Somehow, the springtime always seems very intimate to me, and the sky is closer to the earth than it ever is again. When the earth comes forth after her winter's retirement, if such it be, she comes into a familiar, cozy, homely universe, where for a little while she warms her hands and rubs the sleep out of her eyes and looks out of the windows and plans for the days to come. Out under the low spring sky one may stand with his old earth-mother and help her plan and know her hopes, for a promise always goes with an aspiration. We do not look for promises of things we do not hope for. This is the morning time of the year,

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and all the world is a child standing at the window looking to see what the weather is going to be. What do you hope for? Look into this near sky and see the promise of it. The blue spring sky always promises, in the name of the year, all that we ask for of good and sweet and pure. And the good old year has never failed yet to live up to the promise of the spring. It is promise-time; look up and know what the year will bring.

You have wished for much that you have not received? Well, what of that? So have I. Is that a failure of spring's pledge? No. The year has always brought for you what you read pledged on that blue scroll. You have not received it? That is a different matter. Did you look for it? Did you go after it? Did you wait and watch and stretch hands for it? Did you let the year into your heart with it? The year will always redeem the promise of the spring. Remember that spring is promising the very things you need to make you more beautiful and happy. Why should you not receive them? You must go out after them, look for them. The year has always brought them, but they will never be thrown into your lap; you must reach *up* to get them. The things that are good and true and beautiful? The good you want to do? The blessings your soul craves? Never has passed a year that has

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not brought them. If you have missed them, it is your fault, for in God's good world are all of these. And the soft blue sky of the spring promises them. I will try to find more of them this year.

The sky bends very near and the blue is neither pale nor vivid. It is as if the vividness were subdued just a little by tears. For there is such a tremendous content to the promise of spring and the potentialities of the year that one cannot contemplate them without a catch at the throat and a dimming of the eye. But that mid-blue sky is beautiful. It is always beautiful in all its blues, and no one may say that one blue is more beautiful than another. This is beautiful with the beauty of possibility. This is a blue that has in it all the vividness of summer and the richness of autumn and the ruggedness of winter. It is the blue of promise in deed and in truth.

It bends low, this sky of promise, and the world is very intimate and cozy. And you can look deep into it and see the wonders of the year, the glories of the coming days. It is like the eyes of a child: as clear and soft and as deep withal, yet with some little mystery—the concealment of all that lies behind, while revealing all the illimited possibilities that lie behind as well—that mystery that makes it impossible to gaze into them without a little feeling of awe.

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The ground is soft where the frost has gone out, and the feet make a musical little murmur as one tramps the sodden fields or muddy roadways. You can get very miry and dirty in the early spring. But no matter; you can also get very mysteriously happy. And the sunshine is like opals and amethysts shining from the bottom of a clear spring, bright but a little misty and quivery.

One reason the world seems so small and cozy to-day is because the leaves are gone and one can see a long way through the open spaces. It is an open world. That is why it seems so near; you can see all of it. Come back here to the fields and woods in a few months and all will be luxuriantly green and the heavy foliage will shut you in so that you cannot see beyond your own shadow. Then, because you must rely upon imagination to tell you what is beyond that verdant veil, all will seem great and mighty. But now you can see, and it is close, after all. A great many things are like that. We imagine there is much beyond our sight and beyond our reach and we repine because we are shut in from it. Then some day the leaves fall and we see. But O how often we see when it is too late, when the sun is setting and there is no time to go and explore the vistas opened! Thank God for the spring with its open view! I will have more courage now to go on next summer, and the

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next, and through the year and the ages, now that I have caught a glimpse of the things I have imagined. There is much for us in God's world: much of tree and sky and brook-music; much of happiness and honor and knowledge. We ought to depend more upon them. After all, God has given us a world within our reach, one we may possess and use and enjoy. And, of course, it is not too big for the soul he means to possess and enjoy it. The leaves are thick sometimes, and we imagine it is terrible and vast and lonely. Then comes a day of spring, and we know it for our own, close and homelike and accessible. I am going out more in the spring hereafter and find out more courage and confidence.

The view is open. The leaves are all gone and one can look far down the aisles of the woods and far into the thickets. And overhead one can see great stretches of sky, only marked and striped by the bare boughs. There is a peculiar impression of freedom and expansion that comes from the openness and one has a sense of escape that very speedily becomes aspiration and the very soul stretches out and up to measure up to the emancipated world.

A soft glow seems to fall from the sky and fill all the open world with a wonderful mystery. You cannot say the air is rosy; but if you could



THE VIEW IS OPEN

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translate a color into a touch, that is what you would say. The springtime is a mystic time though; and who can say that at this wonder-period the magic is not at work, and colors are really felt, and flavors are seen, and thoughts are heard, and music is caught upon upturned cheek or outstretched palm? So many strange things happen in the first wonder of life that I think it is even so. Be it as it may, there is a sweet glow over all the world. Yet there is a keenness in the wind too, a keenness that tingles through the glow like the tang through the sweetness of wine. It just makes the glow more noticeable and more effective, gives it a spiciness so that glow and softness bite into the soul and lodge there. Spring is the promise-time and this keenness is the security for the promise. It is no flabby sentimentality that will promise anything just to please everyone that comes out of the spring sky. It is not easy-going subterfuge to escape annoyance. The promise of the year is a virile one with spring behind it. And this edge to the air is the evidence of its cutting-in power—it cuts into matters of earth and of life and leaves its mark.

Somehow, it has always seemed as if there could be no place in all God's world for the merely neutral, to say nothing of the sycophantish. All the wonderful and multiplex forms of the

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outdoor world mean something. They are not the adventitious happenings in a haphazard conglomeration of things. They are real doings and achievements; and that is why you can find so much companionship among the trees and birds and flowers; and that is why there is such wonder for the soul when the clouds mass and roll and the hail drums, and the smoky fog or hoary frost makes mystery of the world. It is the recognition of kinship between a soul that means something and a world that means something. When the spring promises *you* what you want, it is a real pledge backed up by the purpose of all that is involved in the good outdoor world. Because your soul is a power, an entity, a force, you find a response. Keen from the hills, where just a little green shows, the wind comes down through the open aisles like the piccolo note through the melting melody of a symphony. And it first chills, then invigorates. The languor is chased away and, instead, the great joy of the rosy spring air sinks into the heart, and the heart swells and bounds with the very exaltation of all that the promise of the year covers. You are not softened and steeped in ennui by it, but aroused and inspired and made to bound with the joy of it. The springtime atmosphere is not one to lie down in and absorb; it must be drunk in great gulps and

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drafts. If you try to luxuriate in its softness you will be chilled to the bone; but if you take it up into your heart that softness and glow become a part of you and mark your life ever afterward.

I wonder if that is not why so many folks get lean and irritable and shiver so much—because they have tried to catch the glow and sweetness of things without letting the chill cut in. You cannot do that; you must keep the lungs full to the bursting point and the muscles moving. Then the heart glows, and the nerves tingle, and all is joyous.

The winy air sparkles and bubbles with notes of early birds. Only a few of them have come back home yet; but how glad they are to get back and how delighted they are to see one another! The song-time does not come so early as this, but these little fellows are cheery and vivacious, and their happy little chirpings and liltings are just the music to carry well through this soothing, stimulating air. They have not begun to sing in earnest; there is promise in their little trills and warbles too. The singing time will come a little later. And the notes are like flakes of crystal flashing through the mild sunshine.

All the trees but one or two are yet bare or with just a showing of green. The oak still wears his dark-red winter cloak and rustles the dry

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leaves in good-natured jeering at the more eager trees which have shed their winter habiliments before providing themselves with summer ones, like improvident folk who are too eager for a change. You never catch the oak doing that. He is too thrifty and matter-of-fact. He will never let the old leaves drop until the swelling buds in the little cups at the bases of the leaf-stems push them off. He will have his handsome new coat ready before he sheds his tattered old one. And when he dons the new one he will present an appearance of substantial competency that will be altogether to his credit among the more frivolous and fancy-clad trees.

A maple standing out against a hillside is beautiful in a filmy dress of yellow-green. Not many of the trees show any sign of leaves yet, and the maple seems to be just getting ready to dress, the color is so dainty and so filmy.

Through the soft green of the budding maple can be seen the white of a blossoming service-berry. At first one thinks it a patch of snow still clinging to the hillside. The blossoms are as white as the snowflakes, and the little spot of white behind the maple has just that pure, wistful something that always seems to hang about the last melting snowdrifts in the creases of the banks and hillsides. The service-berry is altogether a

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bold and confident sort of a tree, for it puts forth its bloom while all the other trees stand naked, and the white clumps dotting the hills among the gaunt and naked branches are like the flashes one sometimes catches of pure and sweet thoughts and doings through the gaunt unloveliness that is so in evidence everywhere.

It is rather an unpropitious time to bloom too, for there is no assurance that frost is over for good and that the pale blossoms will not be nipped and ruined. But the tree is so anxious to do something worth while, to give out a little beauty or fragrance, that it will take a chance on getting its flowers spoiled. I wish more people were like that; a great many kindnesses are wasted and more never happen at all because some one waits until it is perfectly safe.

The water in the brook gurgles and sings across the stones, a veritable wonder of grace of movement and melody of sound. There is something indefinable in the music of running water at all times, but when the first buds are bursting and the first timid flowers are blowing and the first birds are twittering, when the service-berry is white on the hill-side and the maple is just green-ing, then it is so transcendently wonderful that it catches the very heart and sweeps its strings until they tremble and sing; and the melody of them is

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too sad and glad and strange for lips to shout or throat to sound—the great, tender melody of all first things. And it thrills and trembles through and through the soul. Who can listen to the water just freed from gyves of ice as it sings through fields yet brown and under bushes yet bare and not be thrilled to ecstasy that is pain? Never tell me that he hears it who does not want to stop ears and turn away but cannot, and must listen until soul and brain are throbbing with the rhythm of it and eyes are suffused with the deep pathos of it and cheeks flush with the ineffable joy of it. Such is the music of the water in the spring.

And the beauty of it is as wonderful; for when it runs over the stones the surface is thrown up into wonderful mounds, and pitted with hollows as round and deep as the curves of a babe's body. The stones at the bottom are but stones, yet they fret the water until the surface is troubled. They are stones that trouble, yet the troubling brings beauty beyond compare, as the rough things that mar and trouble the peacefulness of us, in the very troubling make the outward seeming more beautiful. The stones lie clustered and heaped and hard. Above them the water is patterned and graceful. The constant motion does not permit shifting and changing of the pattern. The flow

WHEN THE DAYS GROW SOFT

is steady in pressure and in movement, so the little hollows and mounds stay as if molded in crystal, and a flicker now and then as a breeze sweeps the surface, or a tiny variation of pressure prevails for an instant, just gives them that crystallike look in perfection. You cannot mine such diamonds as those anywhere in the earth. But anywhere God's waters flow above God's stones, you may have them just by looking for them.

And the stones themselves! You may look down deep and see them. And no cameo was ever so delicately cut, no intaglio ever so graceful as those in the stones where the water plays between them and the sunlight. The wonderful pattern of mound and hollow above is no more wonderful than the pattern in the stones below. It is like a fantastic design born of the mystery of the spring and photographed on them with the water for a lens.

And as the water ripples the effect is that of light flowing in endless stream over the stones. The water ripples and flows above. But below it, the other stream, the stream of light, flows close above the stones. And it is as beautiful as a dream of home.

The ground is covered with thousands of little white flowers. You will not see them unless you

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look down. But when you do the eye is filled with the pure glory of it. A little white flower that may have a great botanical name or none at all, but the whiteness of it, and the multitude of it, and the modest self-obscuration of it are charming. Here and there among the white a blue violet peeps up. There are not many violets yet—just enough to accentuate the beauty of the little white flower. But there are enough to call and hold attention to the glory underfoot. You will miss a great deal unless you look down sometimes.

And now as the chill comes sharper down from the hills, and as the blue fades from the sky, and the gracious sun hides behind the maple tree, the pale moon shines out like a silver sickle among the flowering stars. And if you will turn your face toward the town again you will see across the neutral sky, just beneath the early moon, a dark, rolling cloud, narrow and well-defined, that comes from a smokestack over yonder. The day with its magic and wonder is done, and in the evening the smoke from the cooling altars of labor ascends to heaven.

SUMMER IN THE COUNTRY

WITH just a dust of gold upon the green,
The fields, half-ripened, spread beneath a sky
Like plates of turquoise burnished and domed
high,

And shreds of cloud float in the space between.

Above the heads of wheat a fiery sheen

Makes brassy glimmer, parching, hot and dry;

A little, silent, furtive breeze slips by—

The ears, responsive, whisper, nod, and lean.

As beats the heat upon the gilding grain,

So on a life when gold begins to show,

Fall fierce the rays of dole and scorching pain,

And brazen glimmer meets unrest below;

Yet ever falls the cooling welcome rain,

And ever through the field the sweet winds go.

IN THE PARSONAGE BACK YARD

THE study is close and warm, and the desk is all in a litter, and, somehow, the sermon does not grow satisfactorily. I cannot put any life into its dead form as it lies before me. The back yard is cool and shady, and I will go out there and think it over in the open air. Thought ought to be more clear in the open air anyway, and this parsonage back yard is a quiet, secluded one where a preacher can have his thoughts to himself. So I'll go out there and walk back and forth under the trees while I joint up the rest of this sermon and dress it in presentable form for next Sunday.

It is an ideal place to make sermons. White summer-day clouds roll up against the blue sky like the dreams and visions which come when you look upward at evening and think of heaven—billowy, soft, deep. And this is a summer-blue sky. There are as many blues in the sky as there are seasons in the year—and more. When I hear anyone speaking loosely about "the blue in the sky" I want to reprimand him and ask him to discriminate and tell me which blue he means. They are as different as children's eyes. The

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blue of spring is a tender, dainty, vague blue, more a promise than a reality, which sets the sense and heart alert for the intoxicating fulfillment. The blue of summer is a deep blue, glorious and bright, that fills the eye with painful ecstasy—rich, intense, brilliant. Autumn drapes the sky with the sheerest mist-veils, and the blue of the fall-time is a hazy, lazy, retrospective blue, suggesting the glories that are gone, mellowed and softened and saddened by the tragedy of the dying summer—such a blue as you see in old tapestries, filmy and inscrutable. Winter shows a hard, rigid, steely blue like the glint of a well-tempered blade.

In a little open space between the trees I pause and look up. Just above my head the deep, silver-shot green of the trees parts and rolls back in billows of emerald glory, and beyond swells the big, majestic mass of a cloud. The forms of leaf and bud are sharply photographed against the whiteness. The clear background of sky throws the broad mass of cloud into high relief, and the green, blue, and white color-scheme is worked out with skill never equaled by brush and canvas. Artists find fault with the combination of blue and green and say they kill each other when brought together. And no doubt they are right. But the colors have been killing each other ever

IN THE PARSONAGE BACK YARD

since God stretched a blue sky above green trees and sent breezes to whisper to men to look up. And O, my soul, is anything more beautiful than these mutually destructive colors in the sunlight of summer, with cloud vignettes framing the picture in sweeping lines of ineffable grandeur?

I am a king this afternoon, walking the stately corridors of my palace. Over me springs the azure arch of the wonderful roof, above my head is a canopy of green and silver, and I tread a carpet of green and gold. The glimmer of golden sunlight on the grass—so near and so wonderful—catches my glance even as I gaze into the vault of the sky. I walk a pavement of gold. Not a street! No, no! My own palace floor, designed in most wonderful mosaic of gold on green. I can hear the tinkle and chime of the golden disks as they slip and pile and scatter again beneath my feet. "In my Father's house are many mansions" and this parsonage back yard is the one allotted to me. I am content, for the light gleams golden from the grass, falls in floods of glory through the trees, transmutes to molten opals on the white side of the house, and my mansion is glorious beyond expression. The light and shade on ground and house-walls, the flickering of shadows in wonderful play and combination, the warm glow, the color, the sweet breeze—it is all my Father's and

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mine. But O, my heart, contain thyself and break not, for thou canst not yet compass the splendor.

The flashes of light are all of the same shape, rounded like great golden coins, as if the treasurer of heaven in very exuberance of good will to men had thrown handfuls of minted glory upon the earth, and the shadows on the grass are deep and soft and velvety black, while those on the house are shallow, flat, hard, and purple. Who shall say that these things are not so because God would bring us to contemplate the mysteries and wonders of his earthly doings and ponder them, and fail to comprehend them, and so to glory in him the more?

And as if to lay it hard upon my heart that this is the place of God's presence, the sunlight dances over some playthings lying on the grass where the little boy who lives in the parsonage dropped them when he went to take his afternoon nap: a little spade near a tiny mound of earth where he has planted some flower seeds; his wheelbarrow full of leaves and grass; some pieces of rope harnessing a tree; a cornerib built of twigs and wrecked by heedless little feet; a wide-brimmed straw hat on the grass. The back yard is suddenly very lonely and silent. The winds sing and the birds chirrup, and the bees hum, and all the summer sounds are here, but it is an incom-

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plete symphony, because I have listened to it when the melody of childish laughter floated in the flood of summer's harmony. Those toys are as much a part of the furnishings of my mansion as the sunshine itself, and they remind me of the angels' visits which God permits to me in my times of bitterness and trial, when my little boy bursts into the study, or comes to me under the trees, and turns to me eyes full of the innocence of childhood so that I see in them the limpid deeps of a perfect faith and take courage. It has always seemed to me as if God must be very near a little child, and when he permits me to hold one in my arms I do it reverently. And the sunshine falls more brightly on the little straw hat, and the breeze is gentler where the flowers are planted. And O may sunshine ever be upon the golden head, and the little hands be ever employed in works of beauty which may no ungentle winds destroy!

Over yonder is the parsonage garden, where the beans have pitched their wigwams of tall poles behind the protection of the thick, white-flaked, light-green rampart of the peas, and the turnips and beets wave wide flags in the air. That garden is a color-study for a painter. You do not know how many greens there are until you have looked at a parsonage garden. There is the dark, glossy green of the beans; the light, bloomy green of the

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peas; the red-veined green of beets; the fuzzy, prickly green of turnips and radishes; the pale green of waving corn-blades; the yellow-green of feathery lettuce. These greens all blend and melt together until you cannot tell where potatoes leave off and beans begin.

I think I shall lie down under a tree. You can always think things out better lying on your back under a tree in summer. A team passes drawing a heavy load, and the horses eye with wonder the long, queer-looking object, so evidently alive, but so indifferent to the fresh green grass as to profane it by stretching out on it at full length. It will spoil several good mouthfuls of it.

This is a country parsonage, and a meadow comes right down to the fence, a meadow full of waving grass, and shadows that roll across it like the sea, and yellow pools of sunlight in green banks, and whispers, and flashes, and glints of light among the stems of timothy, and wonder, and beauty. A few plumes of the downy fox-tail grass beckon here and there above the green, and a meadow lark whistles and whistles and whistles. Two cows stand knee-deep in the grass and look across at me under the tree. There is grass enough for all three of us; and if I prefer lying on mine to eating it they regard the preference with

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complacence. You cannot account for the tastes of men and cattle.

What a great depth a tree has when you look up into it! You stand on the ground and glance to its top and estimate that it is twenty or thirty or forty feet high. But lie down under it and look up into the wonderful tracery of branches, and the splendor of glossy leaves, and the perfect symmetry of whorled twigs, and the exquisite grace of the tapering trunk, and the distance stretches out until the lines of the perspective meet in the very sky and the tip of the tree points the beauty of cloud and blue vault. Dwellers in flats and city apartments think this world is a flat and dreary and commonplace old planet. But they have never seen a tree from below. When once one has gazed up into those leagues of wonder the commonplace vanishes and he treads an enchanted world.

The branches of my ash tree underlie each other like the rungs of a great spiral ladder. The longer lower branches underlap the shorter as the eye travels upward, and thus the whole tree is in view at once, and the vision bounds, leap on leap, through the lateral spaces between the branches, up, and up, to the tip of the last leafy swinging twig and is swung out into infinity as a child swings a bubble.

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There is much to see from under a tree before you travel to the last leaf and take that leap into the infinite blue. You can get acquainted with a tree better from below than by mere casual scrutiny such as you get from ordinary intercourse. Until you see it from below a maple tree is much like an ash, and both are not so very different from the elm. But when you see the under side of the wonderful architecture they are as different as the faces of friends. The soft maple shows thick, strong-looking boughs placed wide apart and sloping upward very sharply like springing Gothic arches. The ash has more limbs than the maple, and they slant more easily upward and swing more gently toward the sky. The elm's branches are nearly horizontal, and droop at the tips. This stately tree is a real aristocrat, a nobleman of true grace and greatness, always diffusing from those down-reaching fingers something of its own grace and gentle stateliness. The fruit trees are very careless—mere networks of small, twisted twigs arranged ungracefully and unsystematically. But they may be pardoned their slovenliness, for, like overworked housewives, they are really too busy to look after their appearance. They must prepare innumerable repasts besides doing a prodigious amount of entertaining. There is a great house party on in the

IN THE PARSONAGE BACK YARD

cherry trees to-day, and the enjoyment of the feathered guests is of a noisy kind that must fill the heart of an anxious hostess with joy and her nerves with uncomfortable tingles.

Above my face the ash-keys hang in pale, yellowish green, feathery clusters, like the light, indefinite dreams of the summer day. Cherries glisten in the sun like showers of rubies, ready to drop down to me when the moment comes that I yield to the mystery of the summer and gain the secret of it all. Then they will be mine, rubies rich as blood and more precious than stones of mine or river-bed.

The trees are very tall, the sky is just beyond that last waving tip, the leaves shimmer and shimmer and shimmer, the cherries glow and glisten, the light dances on the leaves and grass, the wind is warm and light, the sky is blue as the ocean and deep as a woman's eyes, the light is rare and sweet, and, like a dandelion fluff, I float up, away, through the wonder-mazes of the boughs, up to that last swinging tip, past it, out into the blue, up, up, up, up. Eh? No, of course not. I am making a sermon. Asleep! The idea!

But the robin does not believe me, and cocks his head very knowingly and sings, impudently: "Yes, you were! Yes, you were! Yes, you were!" I remonstrate with him for his impertinence, but it

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does no good. He runs about on the ground in little, ridiculous, zig-zag patterings, and looks at me from the corner of his eye, and flirts his impudent tail in a manner that plainly says that I cannot fool him, and he would like to know what I am doing in his back yard under his tree anyway. Then he ignores me altogether and goes to catching worms almost at my very feet. This is adding insult to injury, for I cannot see any signs of bug or worm. But Mr. Robin calmly cocks his head as if listening, makes a jumping little run, dives forward, and gobbles up the morsel without so much as offering me a taste. To further show me how little he considers me, he actually smirks as it goes down, saying as plainly as a smirk can say that it is very good, and he will have another, thank you. He watches me furtively all the time he is pretending that I am not there, and when he wanders too near in his hunting springs away in little panicky starts as if scared out of his very impertinent wits, but pulls up short after half a dozen steps and snatches another grub from the grass. I cannot help watching and admiring the saucy little rascal, he is so very independent and self-reliant and resourceful. But he is startled this time and no mistake. I could not prevent that sneeze. It scares the robin into a convulsion that fairly lifts him into the air. The contrast between

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his pretended panic and this real fright is ludicrous. I am sorry for it, but then it really was not my fault, and I hope he will soon regain his composure.

The robin is scarcely out of sight among the ash boughs when a sparrow comes hopping and strutting about my feet. How like people birds are! The robin was sarcastic and impudent and suspicious. Mr. Sparrow is frankly curious and looks me over very calmly, turning his bright little beady eyes first one way, then another, in the endeavor to size me up from all points of view. He hops around me, bouncing like a diminutive rubber ball, and chirping incessantly. His inspection must be satisfactory, for he drops his wings to the ground and goes bouncing jerkily about in front of me. But his conceit is to be considerably shaken. A modest little brown lady hops into the sunlight, and my tiny companion spies her immediately. His wings drop until they scrape the very ground, his head turns upward until the beak points at the sky, and his joke of a tail flickers like the spoke of a whirligig in a high wind. But Madam Brownie will have nothing to do with him. His incessant chattering, however, has attracted the attention of a rival, who lands abruptly, squarely before him. No time is wasted in preliminaries. The battle is on at once. Up and

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down, back and forth, in the grass, through the trees, rustling, fluttering, fighting, the tiny combatants make a commotion like a Lilliputian hurricane. And such chattering! If the scientific fellows ever succeed in translating the speech of birds, as they claim to have done that of monkeys, the language of the sparrow will be unfit to print. The sparrow's morals are bad in other respects as well. He is dishonest, and steals my chickens' dinner from under their very bills and brags about it. The battle goes on with no abatement of fury, but the contestants are so very small, and the commotion they make is so out of all proportion that I cannot help laughing, more especially as the little brown lady flew off with another suitor at the very beginning of hostilities. Still fighting, they disappear around the corner of the roof, and I can hear the sounds of battle growing fainter and fainter until they are drowned in the soft, sweet call of a catbird perched in the very top of my tree. The sparrow is an altogether charming little nuisance. I would not have missed that comical fight.

The catbird calls and calls from his treetop his low, soft, sweet call. His mate is down below him somewhere among the leaves, and he is watching there near her. The catbird is a domestic fellow, and can always be found at home

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with his wife and babies except when his business calls him away. A little later, when the sun is just about to blaze out in a final farewell of glory, he will begin singing a song of love and utter peace that is worth a day's journey to hear. I have heard him at sunrise too, and then his song is one of most gladsome joy, as if something of the bliss of dawn had gotten into his bird heart and bubbled over into his throat. I am coming back to this back yard this evening to listen to him as he sings and sings and sings, full and sweet and pure, dropping, as the sun sinks, into lower and softer melodies, modulating into tender minors and contented little warbles, softer and softer, lower and lower, until you can hear only a gentle little trill of ineffable restfulness, and you know that the little slate-colored wife is asleep with the downlings snuggled safely in the bottom of the nest.

A bluejay alights on the pump-handle and yells at me. His crest stands straight up with anger and impudence, and he fairly quivers with wrath as he shrieks his threats of vengeance on the presumptuous human who has dared to invade this province of his kingdom. I can never make friends with the jay. All the other birds are amenable to friendly advances, but this flaunting braggart will have none of me. I think he must

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be a sort of Robin Hood and is afraid I will discover and betray his retreat. And, truth to tell, I have never yet seen his home.

An oriole darts like a thread of orange fire through my tree. I follow him with my eye through the open vista of boughs, and see him swing on a slender twig just above a hanging nest. Chirp! Twitter! He dips his velvet black head downward for an instant and is away again as swiftly and brilliantly as he came. He is a shy bird, but a true friend and faithful companion.

Some pigeons on the roof of the church yonder are strutting and cooing, but they are too deeply engrossed in their own love-making to give a thought to anything or anyone else.

My back yard is a place of peace.

The wind pauses. There is a moment of stillness—not silence, but stillness. The leaves hang tremulous, waiting, the maple bizarre with her clothes turned wrong side out, the hum of insects seems a trifle louder, the occasional bird-notes sound clear and sweet—it is not silence, it is stillness while the breeze rests. Then it comes, sweeping and gliding like a dancing maiden, from another quarter, bringing a new message. The leaves shiver again, then swing obediently into their new position floating out on the new current. There is a bewildering change and dazzle

IN THE PARSONAGE BACK YARD

on the grass, the cherries glisten red and glorious. The rubies are about to drop. I have waited long. I have sought so hard for the secret. Now it has come—I am in touch with the soul of the summer, and the treasure is mine at last. The magic is going to begin now. I have served my novitiate, and received the final mysteries of the initiate this afternoon, and now the rubies will fall. How they swing and glisten in great clusters! How they sparkle! How they dip and dip and dip! But I cannot quite reach them. Yes, now—the wind blows my hair into my eyes, and because I lose sight of the red for an instant it is all undone and I must serve the long novitiate all over. They are cherries again hanging high above my head, but beautiful as gems from the sea-caves.

The music goes on. It is a wonderful symphony. The birds pipe the melody in sweet flute-notes, the insects sound high clarinets and bassoons, the twigs sing like violins, the breeze sweeps in the undertones which bear along and blend the whole into the fairy harmony of the June day.

A shaft of sunlight strikes through the tree and falls on my face, blinding me with glory. I must change my position. I rise. I am transported. The glory of the sunshine of the late afternoon bathes me, penetrates my very flesh until I am transfigured with it and am all glorious within and

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without. A nimbus is round my head. My face shines—I can feel the glow. Filtering down through the trees, flecking the grass, burnishing the leaves and all that it touches into golden, mysterious glory, filling the air with dazzling beauty, melting in molten gold on the roadway, the summer sun transforms my parsonage back yard into the ante-chamber of God's throne-room.

I am blest above mortals—I see his glory.

And with God's sunshine streaming over me, and God's glory filling my eyes and my soul, I kneel beneath the wonderful tree and worship.

WHEN IT RAINS IN THE COUNTRY

I HAVE just learned where the old tapestry weavers got their delightful, soft, filmy colors. There is nothing more beautiful in all art than old tapestries, with their mysterious, veiled, reminiscent neutral tints and colors, brilliant yet subdued. I have long wondered where the old artists got their ideas for such color schemes, and have speculated much upon the question. I know now, for I have been in the country when it rains. And the summer landscape seen through a summer rain is like the rarest and most beautiful tapestry.

The bright colors, so glorious and riotous, of flower and tree and sky and billowing grass, flashing an hundred lights back to the generous sun, grow softer and less brilliant, but no less distinct when the gray clouds sweep across the sky. The impression made by the change is like that of organ music when the organist closes the swells and the diapason and trumpet stops are silent, while the tender flute and *vox humana* whisper the melody in tones like the evening breeze among the rushes. You hear each note,

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soft and pure and sweet, and the melody sings—but in a whisper. So when the veil swings across the sun's beaming face you see each color clear and distinct. The melody of tint is not lost, but the glow and gleam are quenched and all is soft and silky—brilliant without glitter, intense without gaudiness, deep but rich and delicate, tender as memories of childhood.

And when the shower breaks the shake and tremor of the falling rain softens the outlines and merges the colors and blends into one beautiful, velvety, mysterious, gray-shadowed web field and flower and curving road and sky and earth and heaven.

The only way to appreciate a rain in the country is to get right out in the midst of it. A city rain is different. You need a comfortable chair, if you are to enjoy a rain in town, placed with its back to the window and as far away as possible, and a book or something else to divert your mind from the dropping soot-splashes outside. And then it is the contrast between the cozy room and the dreary out-of-doors that you enjoy. But when it rains in the country go out in it. There is nothing quite so dismal as wet pavements and dripping eaves, with damp lumps of soot splashing grimly down on your cheek. And there is nothing quite so beautiful as wet fields, dripping

WHEN IT RAINS IN THE COUNTRY

leaves, and showers of pearls, like largess from heaven, falling upon your upturned face.

A wonderful scene is the country when it rains. Everything is green and gray. The fields are a wide, flat, smooth, soft, yellow-green sweep. The hedges make gray-green borders to the yellow-green fields, and you look through the misty vista, across the yellow-green field, up beyond the gray-green hedges, to the silvery-green trees and green-gray sky, for the sky is green-gray when it rains in the country—gray with a very perceptible yet almost intangible tinge of green, evanescent and elusive as the caress of a baby. The green of earth, of grass, and leaves, and cornblades, and half-ripened grain is caught in the strange alchemy of the mist, and each tiny droplet appropriates a tinier atom of the verdant glory and sends back to the eye its light of mingled gray and green; the gray heightened and vivified by the green, the green etherealized and sublimed by the gray. It is a soft, warm, misty light which filters down through the dainty green-gray mist and blends the lines of leaf and branch, and edge of field and hedge and roadway, into a ravishing scene of soft lines and half-defined forms and shivering, dreamlike grace.

It is a restful sky which infolds the rainy day—restful because it is so near and so soft. The

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intense radiance of the sunshine is gone. The intoxicating blue of the summer sky is covered over. The fleecy clouds and filmy mist-wreaths drop very close to the gray-green earth, and infold with indescribable tenderness the soul which trusts itself to them, infold it as they infold the flowers, the leaves, the grasses, to bear it away as they do the green and wrap it to themselves, that both cloud and soul may be more beautiful.

And through the mist the drops of rain slant parallel strokes of dull silver. While the wind rests the strokes line the vapory background with the regularity of a great etching. But when the breeze blows, as it does during a rain, with a magnificent petulance in egotistical blasts, the lines become intricate swirls and mazes of most marvelous beauty and grace. The etching moves across the vision like a great, wonderful panorama. It is too broad to see the design, the picture. All you can see are the strokes of the needle, now thick and close where the Master Etcher would have a shadow, now light and wide apart where a light comes; now slack, now dashing. One moment the strokes are thinnest threads, and so sparsely shot across the background that they seem only accidental strokes here and there; the next, dashing in flashing diagonal impetuosity till all the field is filled with the glitter and nothing

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is seen but the down-rushing shimmer. And always the unspeakable charm of the gray mystery.

Everything is mystic and strange in the rain, but it is the mystery and strangeness of peculiar beauty. The familiar brilliance gone, the familiar forms of leaf and tree and grass and flower changed by the shivering air and the bending weight of accumulating drops, the dear trees and shrubs are all new and strange. When you look at a tree through the rain it seems ghostly and strangely silent. The rush of rain drowns the familiar rustle, and you can see only the mysterious beckoning of the boughs. They wave and bow and nod through the gray like the strangely familiar shapes of a dream. And they are calling and beckoning indeed—calling the tired soul out into God's refreshing rain, beckoning the weary heart to come and be renewed in courage and strength by the balm that falls from heaven. And, gradually, as the shower progresses, their beckonings become more and more labored, they bow lower and yet lower, and the leaves droop and droop, unable to sustain the gathering weight of pearls.

The rain is a paradox. The soft, close sky, the tender touch of warm drops, the dimness and mystery, are restful and quieting, while the music of wind and the marching lines of rain are inspiring and arousing. To watch those

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slanting echelons marching in time to the fifes of wind and drums of falling drops is to find your heart beating in unison with them and your soul swelling and rising and treading the same measure as God's rain—and that measure is the rhythm of the heart-beats of the Infinite.

The gray ranks march off across the field. The air is still again and clear, save for the lovely green-gray mist. The rain ceases, and the shiver and glimmer are gone from the landscape, but on every leaf and bud and flower-petal and grass-blade hang a thousand pearls, more precious and more pure than any ever brought from ocean's tinted deeps. The last of the rear guard passes and the echelons are out of sight. Then the sun comes out again, and the pearls are changed to rubies and diamonds and emeralds and topazes and turquoise, which flash with a thousand unnamed fires. The tapestry is gone and colors are again brilliant and gleaming. It is like the fairy transformations in the books we read when children. The old romance and mystery are gone and we live again in the glittering present. And the rose and daisy and grass-blade and leaf are more beautiful and brilliant for the rain, and the soul is more fresh and pure because it has bathed itself in the renewing peace and beauty of the showers of God's blessing.

SUMMER DUSK

A LITTLE breeze comes out between the hills,
And blows into the west and cools the blaze;
The hot, red sunset dims and fades away
To softer tints, mild blues and pinks and grays.

The seething thoughts in throbbing brains die
down;
Ambition, wealth, the lust of power and praise
Give place to tender moods, and, like the sky,
The soul is tranquil in the dusky rays.

NIGHT RAIN

IT is a glad time when it rains—rain is so wonderful and strange and familiarly unusual. It is always the same—the downy mist, the indistinctiveness, the coolness, and the whispering music; and it is always different—for no two raindrops are alike in all the world in shape or flash of color or line of slant in rushing descent; and no curtains of mist or fringes of spray or canopies of cloud droop and flutter and fold and billow twice in just the same forms and folds of grace.

And when it rains in the night I rise from my bed and watch the wonder. But I watch with other senses than sight—with ear that strains to catch the subtle modulations and evasive melody of a raindrop's song fluting through the air; with hands that are not nearly sensitive enough to comprehend the delicious coolness and moisture, or the quick, smashing caress of shattering gems; with nostrils that are just learning to know the fragrance of flying, splashing crystals; with another sense that has no name, by which in some way the wonder and mystery and beauty of it all come into my soul like the quick-rising,

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tear-starting emotions that come into it when I hear a child pray.

For sight is useless in the rain at night. God's candles are extinguished. The cool, velvet dark swings all around the face upturned toward the sky, and the eyes grow large with wonder—but no sight is there. The kisses of the raindrops seem like the caresses of flying angels, the sounds come from out the mystery like spirit music, the subtle beauty of it all is breathed in as the flower breathes the sunshine. Only when you stand beneath an electric globe, or in the angled glow from a window, or when the lightning flashes, do your eyes take on value.

The sky is very close when it rains at night. I cannot see it. But it is near, and I know it is near as I know when the love of wife and baby is close over and about me. I think there must be some special faculty by which one may recognize beautiful things like love and night sky, even when the dark closes his eyes. The night sky is indeed close when it rains, and it is a strange, mysterious sky. I can understand the skies of day: when twilight gray turns to dawning pink, and then to blue, when the noon blue spreads rich over the world, when it flashes into gold and crimson and purple at sunset like the last gorgeous apocalypse of beauty before the curtain falls for-

NIGHT RAIN

ever on the prophecy, when it bends gray and caressing, or is troubled with stormclouds—I can understand these skies. And I can understand a little of the night sky when I can see it all clear and blue and starry, or flooded with the honey-sweet light of a summer moon. But when it comes near in the dark and rain, so that I can almost reach up my hallowed hands and touch the very canopy of God's pavilion, yet see not, I cannot tell what it means. I only know that in the rain it is near—near.

And this close sky sends down upon my up-turned face showers of blessing and refreshing. I stand under an electric globe or in the light from a window and look up. A veil swings before the light, shimmering like pearl-embroidered gauze. Modest, subdued pearl-tints intergleam in the fabric of the veil, and the light shining through is tremulous and undulating. Many colors are there, but subdued and quiet. I stand in an enchanted circle. I cannot look into the mystery beyond it. I cannot leave the circle of the light. All that is left me is to stretch out my hands, turn my cheeks—to the flying mist. I can see only dimly the trees above my head. The familiar landscape about me is only a mosaic of shadows, some deep, some light; but I am not desolate.

Out of the circling dimness come floating pearls

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and amethysts, as beautiful thoughts float into the heart when one listens to music, sailing down upon my upturned face like crystals of starlight, and smash spattering. I cannot see whence they come. I care not. They come to me out of the void, out of nothingness, materializing at the circle of the light, dashing themselves to pieces on my face. Why should I care whence they come? Their very existence is for me. I never question the origin of the good things sent me out of the parts where my eyes penetrate not. The rain-drops splash on my face, kind words bathe my heart, glances from beloved eyes flash over my soul; I am refreshed, blessed in them, and I give thanks.

A lightning-flash while the night rain falls is a spectacle of staggering beauty. But you must stand with your back to the lightning and look out into the great deeps if you would see it in its wonder. Perhaps in all the wonderful universe there is nothing quite so wonderful as this. Yet when you see it first it is like the radiant face of a long-gone friend, so familiar is it, yet so new. For it is one of God's goodnesses that his world is to us like the homeland, and none of its wonders make us feel like strangers—all are always new, yet all are always familiar. And the lightning-limned spectacle of falling night rain is most

NIGHT RAIN

wonderful and strange of all. Yet I greet it as my own familiar possession; for has not my Father hung those crystals there in the dark and flashed his fires upon them, and has he not given me eyes that I may see? I am not afraid in the dark when it rains, for then I truly know God loves me. Else why should he make this for me to see, and make me eyes which can see it? Mayhap the beauty of the spectacle is enhanced by the dark, which causes the eyes to expand in readiness to receive the maximum of glory. Some things can be appreciated only by first passing through a preliminary training of deprivation. Because I cannot see before, when the flash does come, my eyes are opened and all the glory can stream into my soul through the dilated pupils.

The drops splash upon my face and hands in sprays of cool blessing. The sighing sound of wind in trees mingles with the faint flute whistle of the falling globules. My nostrils inhale the fragrance of the purified air. My heart swells, then trembles, and I feel the tremor, first faint and gentle, then more pronounced and more intoxicating, until nerve and heart and soul are all bounding and singing in time and tune to the music of the night. Then—the flash! And all is still! Yes, all is still. The great abyss of light is a scene of absolute silence, motionlessness. For the

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instant of the flash all my being is concentrated into my eyes—those eyes so useless until the great moment—and I hear, feel, smell nothing. I only see. And all motion ceases for that instant. The trees are bowed, but still. And the rain! Across the glow and through the fiery infinitude slant wondrous crystal cords, glittering like threads of filmiest gossamer, straight and taut as the strings of a violin; strings of jewels like none ever mined from mountain's heart or brought forth by the travail of ocean; great single gems, suspended motionless, unconnected and unsupported; and all flashing and scintillating with fires that are unnamed and are never seen on earth save when some one goes out into the night and stands where God's rain falls and looks with eyes prepared by God's darkness.

I do not know how one can see so much in such an infinitesimal space of time. The flash is so quick that there is no time to realize the motion of the raindrops, falling with the swiftness of leagues of acceleration. But this I do know: that in that space are all the wonders that a soul may see and live.

They hang there, prisms and pendants and many-faceted jewels and ropes and cords of gems—shapes that are known not to geometry nor to art—and they seem to glow with an inner luster,

NIGHT RAIN

are alive with fires of colors many and strange. And even while the flash lasts they change and coruscate anew in color more ravishing. Yet they move not, they fall not. Little flashing sparkles shoot out from each drop and scintillate along the cords of fire and send dazzling lines into the eyes until it seems that the eyeballs must be seared. And what matter? To have looked once upon this surely is enough for mortal eyes until they look upon the glory which is to come.

And all in a lightning-flash! Truly, God loveth me!

Darkness again. The crepitation, the crash of the thunder's drums, and the winds are again sounding their music. But I know now how they play. Those taut lines across the blazing welkin are the cords of the harp of the universe, and through them God's winds march in majestic, unearthly harmonies.

But though the sky seems close, though the veil hangs near, and all beyond the veil is chaos, still there is a sense of vast expanse beyond the veil. The rain on the face, the wind in the ears, the cool air in the nostrils, the beauty on the heart, all these are ringed within the charmed circle. But still I know that far beyond the veil, out yonder outside the dark, are the stars and God.



WHEN DAWN COMES ACROSS THE FIELDS

WHEN DAWN COMES ACROSS THE FIELDS

MORNING! What a mystery of magic there is in the word! It contains all there is of wonder, of amazement, of awe at the incomprehensible, of beauty and strangeness; for morning means a beginning, a coming into existence of something that was not, and so it means all the wonder and majesty of creation and birth. Morning is the coming into life of a day, and the beginning of life—the life of a flower, a bird, a bee, a boy, a picture, a poem, a paradise, a star, a world, a day—is such an event as worlds pause to witness, and circling stars change orbits for, and men's souls gasp at and well over. Morning is all of this. Just for a new day to come to the world is a great event. Sometimes I wonder when I stand bareheaded beneath the cool, deep mystery of the dawning welkin why we celebrate holidays at all. As if one day were of greater importance than another just because something is supposed to have taken place on that date in a year so far gone that no one knows whether the date is the right one or not, or because a certain square in

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the calendar is printed in red to indicate that that day is devoted to labor or trees or somebody's birthday. These things are only happenings, or, at best, an association that we have established for ourselves more or less artificially. But in each day as it comes to the world there is an essential individuality which makes it different from every other day, although, perhaps, no more important. A day is a day, and while one day differeth from another day in glory, all are glorious, and the difference is in kind of glory and not in grade. How good God is to keep on making days for us to spend! How thankless we are not to spend them in joy and praise! We spend our money and are thankful we have it to spend, even though we have to spend it all for plain food and clothing and have none for delicacies and fine raiment. Our days are ours to spend too, and we ought to be thankful we have them to spend, even when they must be spent in common work and there are none left over for so-called pleasure. Just to have a day full of hours and minutes and seconds is better than to have a dollar full of dimes and nickels and pennies. A slice cut off from eternity and given to me to make it worth while! Truly God has wonderful confidence in me to trust me with his eternities that way! So the beginning of a day is an event

WHEN DAWN COMES

in the universe, and I like to be on hand for the first quiver of life that comes with it.

Morning is a great time, but morning on the farm is an apocalypse. Day comes sometimes down between brick walls and over belching chimneys and heralded by the clangor of factory whistles and trolley cars and gongs and beating hoofs and rumbling traffic, through the smells of toil and struggle. It is wonderful then. But it is transcendent out where it comes to the world as God left it, across level mead or rolling prairie, down along the bosky bed of stream, through fringed and graceful branches, with the perfume of distillates from grass and clover-bloom and fresh-turned soil and growing corn and dew-steeped leaves and a thousand blossoms. These odors hang in the still air of night as the happy thoughts hang in the dreams of a child and cause him to laugh aloud in his slumber. And when the first warmth of morning runs through the world like wine through the veins, they quiver and fairly scintillate with delicious variations that make you think of the varying tones of a violin when swept by the bow of a master. Day comes to the world in indescribable grace and beauty when she can come in her own way across the unbounded sky to the unspoiled earth.

You can feel it coming before you are awake,

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and, no matter how sleepy you are, it has a compulsion in it that makes eyes struggle through drowsiness and torpid limbs stretch themselves and reluctant frames tumble out of bed. And it is worth while to give up sleep—any amount of it—to watch the morning come.

You feel it first before even the first bird has begun to stir and chirp. There is just a something that stirs in your heart like the sweet, vague thrill of a maiden's kiss, and it tells you morning is coming. And you cannot lie still after that. When the quiver of it has once struck into your heart you may as well give up all notion of slumber or sluggish dozing, for you can no more stay abed than a robin can keep still when he finds himself swinging on the top of a tree in the sun. It is not a call; it does not draw you; it comes into you and you go out under the stars just because you must. And it is as true a "must" as that which blends oxygen and hydrogen into water. You have to go to the morning. You feel that you are in some way abnormal if you do not. A little quiver and tremulous thrill seems to run through the universe and you open your eyes in the dark and wonder what it is. Did the wind whisper through the window? There is no sound of rustling leaves. Did a voice sing? There is no further note. Did an angel speak and set the

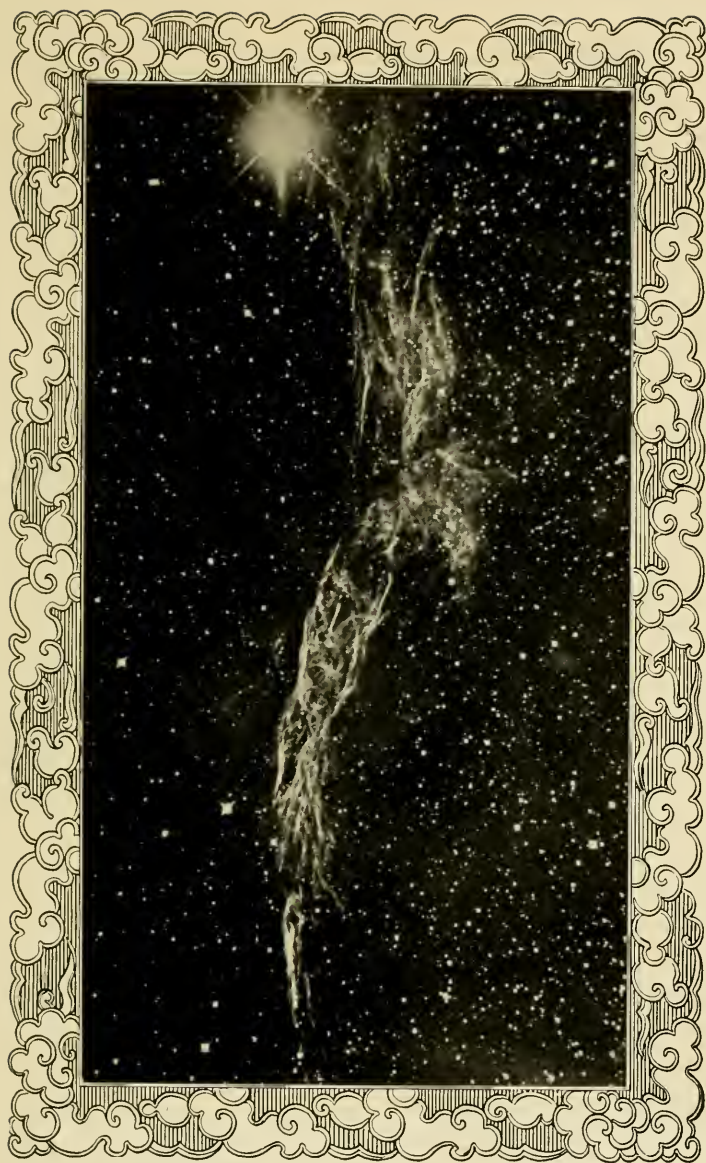
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world vibrating? It is almost the same. Did a child cry or a woman laugh? The darkness is a little puzzling, for it seems unfamiliar, a strange kind of darkness. There is that in it that makes the whole situation peculiar. Then it comes over your soul—the morning is coming. That explains everything, and at the same time makes everything possible, and is the most reasonable thing in the world. I cannot tell you how the knowledge comes. You wake wondering and in a moment it is *there*. You know it is time for dawn and you must hurry to meet it. And the hurrying to meet it is so much a part of the whole experience that one never stops to debate whether to do it. When you know morning is at the window you just go and meet it. Why? I do not know and I do not want to know. When you hold a baby in your arms you always kiss it. Why? I do not know, but it is just that way about morning. You know it is coming and you go to meet it.

It is always like that, but one summer I saw the day come in such wonderful beauty that the memory of it will stay in my heart and make life sweeter until I die. I always think of that day as to-day. It is to-day for me and I am out where God's good world is clean and sweet and the sun can find it without getting lost in the smoke.

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Darkness leaves the world early in August, and the stars are very shy visitors and spend only a little time with us. Yet early as the darkness leaves, and early as the stars glimmer away, I rise from my bed while the stars still twinkle. The moon has gone down early in the night and there is not yet a hint of sunlight across the sky. The tremor of the dawn strikes me—you know it comes long before there is any light so you can be ready for the spectacle—and I rise beneath the stars. I wonder why we always look at the sky first when the night's slumber ends. I like to keep my window open so the first spectacle that greets my opening eyes is the majestic expanse of God's heaven. I believe there must be something of the divine even in the worst of us, for I have never seen the man who did not turn his face in the first waking moments toward the sky. The incomparable sweep and arch of the majestic dome seems the only satisfaction for the gaze-search of the awakening human personality. So I look first of all at the sky. No, I will not tell what I see; I cannot. It is blue, but you have never seen a blue like it unless you have seen the sky as I see it now, so you will know nothing of it if I say it is blue. And can I say it is blue? I do not know whether that ineffable, heart-thrilling tone is blue or gray or green or all three.



THE INCOMPARABLE SWEEP AND ARCH OF THE MAJESTIC DOME

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You must look. There is no light in all the world except what comes from the stars. It is dark—night, but morning is near. The stars are very bright, but there is just a suspicion of weariness in their brilliance, as if they were anxious to end their watch. They are not faint nor dim, it is only a suggestion of flagging like you see in a bride's eyes when she has poured out her heart's love and would love more if she could. They seem sorry they can shine no brighter, yet glad they have shone so brightly through the night. Last night they were full and rich and scintillating. That is the starlight we know so well, the starlight of the evening. But the starlight of the morning is not like that; it has this strange touch of weariness, just enough to make it different and a little strange. This early morning time is a strange time and the stars partake of the beautiful strangeness.

It is strange because it is a kind of interim in nature's processes; one thing is finished and another about to be begun. It is not yesterday and it is not to-day—yet. It is the between-time, the interval when a finished piece of work is folded up and put away and the dear world-mother pauses a moment with her hand on the knob before she opens the drawer and takes out another. And the tired stars look down, waiting

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for the new day to be born. They will not go away no matter how tired they are until that miracle comes to pass. Even the circling stars wait on that—it is so wonderful.

We are such silly mortals that we think we must be constantly rushing from one thing to another, and if by chance we lay down one task and another is not reached at the first grab, we think we are disgraced by idleness or, what is worse, are losing something by it. And it is the same way with our pleasures as with our work; we must be always at it whether working or playing, and we count the idle time as empty time. It is not so. It is the idle time that God uses to do his most wonderful things for us and to make his presence felt. He cannot get a word in edgewise when one is plunging along through the world at top speed and with eyes and thoughts racing ahead to what is to be done next. We do not live too fast; the faster we live the better, for then we shall be the better equipped for eternity when we come to enter it. But we do live too constantly. We take no breathing times, mark no division lines. God's universe is a great pattern, it is true, but each element of the mosaic is complete in itself, and even when lifted away from the other parts shows the mind of the Great Artist. God's work is so different from man's in

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this! It requires the whole picture to convey the message of an artist of earth. And our lives are like human pictures; their elements are all fused together, and each day grows out of the one before it and into the one after it so that if we are not careful we just have a mess instead of what we fondly call a system. If we would but do as God does, as God's nature does, finish each day and lay it away and begin a new one each morning, we should succeed in doing something much more like the things God does. We need the interims, the markings-off, as truly as we need the activity and the perseverance.

And this period just before the dawn is the marking-off time. It is the time when one day is done and another has not yet begun. Nature is getting ready for something *new*. She is clearing her mind from the vexations and kinks that yesterday caused her and setting her thoughts and ideas and loves all in order for a fresh piece of activity. The old things are passed away.

A new day is not a continuation of the old one. God does better for his world than to drag out the toil and weariness and exasperation and sorrow and depression that mark the fall of the days, out across the blessed night and into the light again, and call it a new day. When the black curtain falls it is to shut away forever the day that

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is done. And when it rises in the glory of the morning the day that comes forth is one that never was before on land or sea, and you have opportunities and responsibilities and kindnesses and sunshine and breezes that you never had before. You may spend it in the same field. What of that? You may do the same kind of task. No matter. It is a new task. When the sunrays of evening fall across the gorgeous west and gild the good old work-a-day world into a scene of wonder, the gilding and the glory and the wonder are absorbed by the brown old earth, and that is why she is becoming every day more beautiful. And some souls absorb, if we will, much of God and heaven and become every day more glorious. But the sunbeams of yesterday are gone; they have sunk into the fiber of the earth, and these that presently will come slanting out of the east are new ones. "New every morning is thy love, O God," and new are the pencils of light with which thou dost write its message.

Yesterday is all gone; there is not a thing in the dim world to remind one of it. Every whisper of the breeze, every rustle of the leaves, every twinkle of the stars is all about the day that is coming, not the one that is gone. And under the tired, waiting stars the fresh, waiting world lies expectant.

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The air holds a peculiar sweetness, a sweetness that is as evanescent as the smile in a child's eyes when she does not know you are looking at her. There is a cool, delicate fragrance that comes to you out of the dark and starts the nostrils to quivering and the brain and heart to reeling in a celestial intoxication. Yesterday afternoon, when the sun was hot, the flowers and grass gave off a musty, dusty smell that made you choke a little. When the dew came down upon them later—when the sun had set, but the heat was still in their sap—and began to cool them and liberate in that wonderful chemistry the more delicate odors to mingle with the heavier ones, they gave off a soft, delicious, rare, pungent, stimulating perfume. The heat of the day brings out the huskier virtues of flowers and men. When the dark and dew of the rest-times soften their tissues, that is when they yield up their sweeter and loftier and more ethereal selves in noble thoughts or loving acts. O soul, think not the dark time is a sad time; it is the sweet-time of life, and shame upon the one who would sneer at or belittle the power and value of the sweets. I wonder if this would not be a better world if we would only give more attention to getting ourselves under the influence of the softening and etherealizing dews and coolness of a little more thought for home, a little

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closer looking after the "unprofitable" things, a little longer time for prayer, and more time spent with birds and flowers and wife and children. God gives to the flowers a season of such softening and refreshing every night. He will do it for the souls of man if they will let him, and will hold up their faces to the dew of his quiet blessings like the flowers do.

But in the waiting time before the dawn the harshness and heaviness have all gone out of the perfume and only the more delicate and lighter scents are left. And through the cool hours a thousand new sweetnesses have distilled from modest flowers hidden among the long brookside grasses and in the alders, from corn-blade and new-turned earth and kine-trampled grass, and blossoms undetected except by the searching cool of the night. For, verily, the long cool brings out the perfume of flowers that would otherwise be unknown. And these mingle and blend with the odors of the afternoon and ripen and grow mellow and inexpressibly delicious as the night passes until, when the dawn-thrill shivers down to earth, it can find an atmosphere of the right composition to respond to it and catch it up and tremble with it, as the prisoned air in an organ pipe catches and trembles with the flutter of a breath, until all the world is trembling and quivering too with the

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knowledge that the morning comes. It is a sweet, cool air that intoxicates but does not bewilder, rather that wakes to perfect clarity and activity all the sleep-dulled faculties and stirs into action new ones that you never dreamed you possessed. The magic of the essences which hang in the air makes the hour before the dawn the best time of one's whole life, for they arouse strong and noble feelings and stimulate clear thought and inspire right emotions.

It is not an insipid, flaccid atmosphere; it is sweet and soft and of an alluringly elusive fragrance, but it is tense and tingling with expectancy. From the blinking stars down to the uplifted faces of the flowers that you can barely see at your feet everything is expectant. For has not the thrill from the sky shot through the world? And my nerves grow taut like harpstrings, and my eyes open wide in the gloom, and my feet seem winged, and my hands stretch out, and my soul holds herself poised, for the thrill is in me too. The universe is full of expectation. Surely, the morning must be just beyond the little hill there! It could hide nowhere else, for all about the broad bosom of the earth lies exposed like the breast of a tawny mother who would gather to it all who wander. No, that hill is in the west. Morning does not come up the west; evening went down

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that path, and in this magic world the paths are passable in only one direction. Where is the morning? Where? We look for it—the stars, the flowers, the trees, the grass, the leaves, the fields, the road, and I. Where is it?

Is there a breeze? Who can say? Somehow, I think there must be. I can barely see the least movement among the leaves at the tops of the trees. There must be a wind. How would they move else? I listen. I can hear no whisper or murmur. I reach out a wetted finger. It grows cold. I turn a cheek and for an instant send all my thought and mind to that cheek. Yes, I can feel it—just a touch, a brush of a zephyr, so light that I would never have felt it at all but for concentrated attention, just the softest touch like a fairy's caress. There is a wind, but it is an expectant wind, like everything else is expectant. It is a silent wind. It moves, but sings not; it flies, but murmurs not. It is poised waiting.

Then, without knowing how it came there or when, I see a veil over the faces of the stars, and their winking eyes grow a little dim. Yet it is like no veil I have ever seen, for though the stars through it are dim and a little ghostly, it does not seem to obscure them. Rather it is as if some great hand had swept across the gemmed sky and brushed the diamond-dust from the sur-

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faces of the stars as one might brush the bloom from a cluster of grapes. There is something floating between earth and stars that seems of a substance with the stars themselves, as if the bright bloom brushed from them filled the air. Their light is veiled in light. A kind of glimmer is under the stars, a lower stratum of light, a silvery, wispish, vapory light, through which the stars still twinkle, but more slowly and less brilliantly. Have you not lain on your back under a June-day sky and watched the clouds? You know how you will see a mass of clouds shaping and piling and moving against the blue, big and massy and emphatic, and as you watch them a thin, shreddy, smoky cloud will sail below them, moving in the opposite direction. The lower cloud does not hide the higher solid clouds, but it detracts from the majesty and beauty of their big, white, bold form. This light is like that. It is a thin, almost impalpable light, but the stars and sky recede behind it and grow vague and indefinite. And that wispy light hangs there, and will grow no stronger nor will it go away. And we wait for the morning—the flowers and trees and dimming stars, and I.

It is dark down here on the earth; that filmy light floats in the sky just beneath the stars. You can see it, but it illuminates nothing below.

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It is like the dreams and visions of a mystic, beautiful and lofty, but it does not make the foot-path any plainer nor the colors of the flowers any more distinct. It only serves to make one feel how very far beneath heaven he is. So my farmer host carries his lantern when he goes to the barnyard. The cows are waiting to be milked, and he sets the lantern on the top of a post, where its red, bleared eye glimmers through the dark like the malefic glare of some prowling gnome of the night who has got caught in a vine or on a thorn and cannot get back home to his cave in time to escape the sunshine. What an abnormality that lantern seems in the fragrant hush and dusky stillness! Yet we cannot see to get about without it. I wonder if we shall ever get to understand God's world well enough to get about easily in it at all times and in whatever one of its wonderful phases it may be, without artificial help. Here am I, and here my farmer friend under the veiled sky and the stars, our very souls tingling and quivering with the expectation of the day, but we cannot get about; we are helpless in it all. And I wonder if it will be that way when we go beyond the light-veil. Shall we always be reaching back to the world for something to help us? And I wonder if we can ever learn to get about God's world and God's heaven unhelped.

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That lantern looks out of place in this ante-dawning time. Its light is not the kind of light that harmonizes with the light in the sky, nor is it the kind of light that dispels the gloom on the grass. From where I stand I cannot see why there should be such a thing in the world as that lantern. It is just a red, flaring, ugly flame that has no business there. It makes me think of the mischief done by an impish child who tears a piece of tapestry. O that we could only make our way through life without doing violence to so many things that are tender and dainty and beautiful and evanescent like the morning minutes! Nothing could be more incongruous than the light of that lantern under the light of the stars, yet I must have it or I will come to grief as sure as I try to step. I despise and detest a lot of ugly things that have, somehow, identified themselves with this thing I call me, but I have allowed a twist to become permanent in me that makes it impossible for me to get on without them.

Yet the red flame of the lantern is a wonderful comfort, after all, because it is so intensely and emphatically of humanity; it shows the presence of human companionship. There are many wonderful places one may visit and many great experiences to pass through. And in them all is much of glory and exaltation of spirit. But I

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like to know that folks are near too. And this waiting world is a world that quivers with the extraordinary. The strange light-film across the sky, the tired stars, the silent wind, the great masses of the trees, the unfamiliar fragrance, the vague thrilling whisper that is in it all—they are all extraordinary. And a stupid man such as I, in the midst of it, does not feel at home. It is a wonderful privilege God is giving me, but my heart cannot endure it well. I would not miss it, and I thank God for it, but I thank him too for the lantern on the fence which is so intensely human in this world of the transcendent.

A flicker of phosphorescence comes into the air high above the trees. It is not light, it is not a gleam or a ray. It is just a little, half-unseen lighting up, as if the merest spray of light had sprinkled the dome. You cannot call it light; it is only a promise of light. It is pale and cold and vague; but by it, as my eyes grow accustomed to it and to the gloom, I can make out the forms of the living creatures all about me. All silent and motionless, they are like the phantasms of a dream. They seem not really to exist at all. The utter silence and motionlessness make them seem uncanny. When the sound and movement are gone, what is it to live? These animals live; I know that; but the sound and movement are

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wanting, and I cannot think they are the familiar friends of yesterday. There is a peculiar awesomeness about the complete relaxation and inertness of a sleeping dumb animal. The great bulk and ungainly postures that the most graceful of them assume in sleep seem grotesque and strange with a kind of fearsome strangeness.

A flock of ducks rests on the ground looking, in the dimness, like the last of a belated snow-drift. They sit flat and close together and their heads are muffled in their feathers so there is only a fluff of white. And coming upon it in this mysterious half-light, one is startled. And you can walk right in among them and they will not stir. One or two may utter a little, drowsy, protesting note, not a quack nor a chirrup, but a note that means "Let me alone a little while longer," and can have no other interpretation. But you can even stir them with your foot and not greatly disturb them if you are gentle about it. You cannot thrill them into life; it is the day that must do that. True, you can by rough handling and outrage rouse them to noisy, frantic, insane commotion, a panic that is no more like life than delirium is like sleep. But you cannot bring them awake in the peaceful, happy, quacking, happy-go-lucky way that makes them such whimsically delightful creatures. You cannot hurry

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nor improve upon God's way. When he means for those ducks to awake, they will awake in peace and in the ecstasy of life. If you try to wake them too soon, you make of them a clamoring, crazy, frightened, frantic something that was never meant to be seen in a good world. God means his creatures to be happy in his world, and ducks and men may be so if they will only yield to the spell of it, and not interfere with one another. This is my part of the morning; the white ducks will have their part presently.

Horses and cattle loom gigantic in the morning twilight. The cows lie peacefully, some just beginning to move their heads a little, while the horses, for the most part, sleep standing. The pigs lie motionless in the sty. And the cold, vapory light in the sky shows them to me, but dimly, O dimly.

Now changes come so fast and so many of them at once that the eye cannot follow them all nor tongue tell of them.

Gradually the sky lightens overhead. It does not grow brilliant, nor does it brighten. The sky itself becomes more light. It is a strange and wonderful spectacle to watch the sky lighten this way. It is a soft, subdued light that seems to shine from the sky itself. It is not the strong, big light the sun throws against the sky at mid-

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day, nor yet the tender glow that he sends up after his disk is hidden behind the western edge of the world. It is a white, a gray light rather, frosty and cool and diffused, as if behind the sky an angel were kindling the pure fires of heaven and they shone through a great ground-glass globe. You can see the stars disappear into the great screen of the heavens like violets closing their petals and hiding in the grass. You can see the cool, gray light growing stronger and stronger, not in pulses and waves, but in a steady, smooth, deliberate surge like the settling down of the white frost when the first chill nights come in the autumn. And it is still gray; there is no color in it. It whitens the dark sky and the stars grow very dim indeed. It sifts downward and the familiar things about me begin to take shape. The ineffable tracery of twigs and leaves begins to stand out; grass-blades can be distinguished; a flower can be descried here and there; the beasts take on a familiar look; and you can see what the ducks are on the ground.

And that lantern! Over there on the fence it still burns, but you can barely see the light of it, and it is not an anomaly any more; it is just a joke. You want to laugh at the absurdity of that foolish lantern trying to shine in this light and this world. It is the queerest thing imaginable.

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With the intensifying of the sky-light a little life comes into being. There is a restlessness that one can feel and know yet cannot tell among the creatures. Small, indescribable sounds come from the pigsty, the barnyard, the ducks, and from out of the shrouded mystery that surrounds the little circle of your vision. The night insects have hushed long since, and faintly, just audible—sometimes a whisper that is not audible, but only makes a little quiver in the ear—out of the brightening dusk come the sounds of preparation for morning. Now is when a new note is added to the chord, a new life to the cosmos: the birds begin to stir, and from tree and bush and sheltering vine, from eave and roof and hiding grass, little rustlings are heard, the tiny sound of tiny feathers being ruffled and smoothed, the small flutter of small bodies stirring. Now and then a murmur or a chirrup falls through the stir like the drip of the first raindrop through the flurry of the wind. The first murmur from the birds on a summer morning is a note of celestial music. For, verily, in the gloamy light, when the birds themselves are hid, it seems dropped straight from heaven.

First there are a thousand little movements. A cow swings her head, or perhaps comes awkwardly to her feet. A horse takes a step or two. A

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chicken stirs and flutters on the perch. The ducks put up ridiculous heads with fascinating blank faces, and one or two get up and waddle about a little to tell the others to get ready for the day. The hogs grunt softly and lazily. Then the cattle step about with more briskness, but still silently. The horses walk up to the racks of hay. The little movements grow rapidly wider and quicker. You hear the crunching of the horses' teeth as they begin to munch. Gradually the animal company comes to full life. Chickens and ducks leave the roosting places and begin to vocalize. Hogs stand up. The barnyard becomes animated. It is in all flowing blood now, the thrill of the morning, and bird and beast and fowl and porker, eager hen and funny duck, stolid plow-horse and patient cow, silly sheep and wise dog, all respond to it, and the full tide of life is flowing again. In a pause the voice of the cock rings out from his post of importance in the midst of his harem and the approach of the morning is officially announced.

What an old humbug that rooster is! He struts about among his wives, his head high and plumage ruffled, and emits his raucous hail with an air that says plainly that he considers the whole affair a great bore, but really the morning could not come to earth properly at all without

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him, so he will be on hand, no matter how distasteful it is. So he struts about among the hens, and no one else pays any attention to him, and the hens themselves take him for granted. He is very great in his own estimation, and he struts and stalks around with much pomposity—among the hens. He can be great there. The hens are too busy to pay much attention to him, for they go to work as soon as they can see, and none of the other living creatures will bother with him. He acts as if all this were the isolation of dignity and has a most delightful time enjoying it. He is like some men I know.

Over in the east a wonderful thing is taking place. I see at first a sky, faintly tinted with the cool, vague, negative tints that belong to the sea. Did you ever think how much alike all big things are? Here is an infinite morning sky, as wide and deep as the ocean, showing the very tints of the ocean. And when you look across the sea's great expanse in the early light it shows the tints of the eastern sky, and you cannot tell where sea stops and sky begins; they must be only parts of one great infinity, after all; and the ship that sails the ocean might sail right on out into the infinite sky if only we knew enough about such things. And the big, deep hearts of strong, tender men are like the heart of God, and we might know God

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better if we could only get better acquainted among ourselves.

That eastern sky shows the cool, pale blues and grays and mother-of-pearl tints. And there are some tints there that have no name. But they are as beautiful as the changes on a maiden's cheek where the blue veins show delicately under the white skin and the blush of the wild rose ebbs and flows over it as her heart beats with thoughts too pure to be spoken.

Over toward the zenith the pale, sweet coloring spreads until the tenuous gray light in the great dome is shot through with lines and sparks that scintillate and coruscate. And—where are the stars? Did you see them go? They are gone—I do not know when or where or how. And I wanted to say good-by to them. From the east the color mounts and spreads and grows brilliant. The few tints multiply until the sky is a medley of color, yet still the subdued and modest tints. But with every passing minute new beauties are added and new combinations come to pass and each minute's spectacle is more wonderful than the one before, and each new tint a little more heavenly.

And as the minutes pass the cool tints change to glows. The sweet, opalescent pink deepens and turns to a red as deep as the red in the heart of a

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ruby. The cool, greenish, grayish blue leaps almost suddenly into life and sparkles and glistens like crushed sapphires. The red merges into a glowing yellow, the blue into a gorgeous purple, and flaming orange, like the wings of a million orioles, flashes across the superb spectacle. Before my eyes the east changes from subdued color to flaming gorgeousness; from sweet, cool quiet to glowing, pulsing, blazing life. And out of the glow, up across the arching dome, and level across the waking earth, through the misty air, speed beams and rays of a grateful warmth. It falls upon the stirring creatures and the stir becomes ecstasy and the lambs and young colts kick up their heels for very joy of life and the morning, while birds burst into melody. The glow and glory sink down through eye and touch into the soul so that it glows with the morning; they strike upon the night-cooled earth, and she responds in rapture; they penetrate the leaves to where the birds wait, and they sing; they search out the winged creatures among the grass and flowers, and their hum and buzz is added to the symphony.

The morning cometh apace.

Shafts of light radiate fan-wise across the sky from a spot on the eastern horizon. There is no sight of sun yet. All the light that is on the earth

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—gorgeous and magnificent though it is—is first thrown into the sky and falls back to where I stand. Up they spring in tremendous lines of awful stretch and sweep and of color unseen save when the heralds of the sky thus unfurl their banners before the coming of the king of day. White mists become visible in the low places, and melt away even as I catch sight of them.

Then a pause. The deep colors grow slowly, slowly deeper; the sky seems to recede in the east so that I look into an infinity of color. Then a new transformation. With marvelous rapidity that deep, deep, unfathomably deep and wide pit of color changes from color to fire. The colors leap and dance and wind themselves like gay banners. They are melted and blend together and seethe and bubble and give off vapors as indescribably magnificent as themselves. The sky in the east in an instant becomes blazing, flaming, hot, bright, intolerable. And at the change all the bird-notes are loosed, and melody mingles with magnificence, and movement is full and free and joyous. The full tide of life is at the flood. Long, level lances of light pierce my eyeballs as I gaze fascinated into the unearthly beauty of the east.

Then the sun lifts above the rim of the world, and in the glory a new day is born.

JUST BEFORE THE LEAVES TURN

JUST before the leaves turn there are some very fine things to see if you will go rambling through the browning grass and under the trees that are getting ready for the fall carnival. But you must get away from the beaten roads if you want to see them all. You can find some of them along the ways; and that is one beautiful thing about the big out-of-doors—it cannot contain itself. It is so full of beauty and the kind of wonder that lifts up souls that it must come crowding right through the woods, across the fields, up to the very roadways where we walk, and even to our doorsteps. Part of it you cannot miss. Neither can you find all of it by keeping to the beaten ways. The out-of-doors has to crowd into stupid humanity some way—or it seems as if it must—in order that it be not a failure. I often stop to wonder why God does fling his beautiful things right before us so lavishly when we so often just stare stupidly and wonder what it is all about. But the best of the outdoors must be sought for like any other best. The best is the best because it is not forced upon us and so made cheap. I do not mean that anything you will find in the outdoor

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world is poor or cheap; it is all too good for such as we. But the part that is crowded upon us is only a hint of what is waiting if we will go to look for it.

And a good time to go is just before the leaves turn. And the leaves are about to turn—now. So come and bring your eyes, and we will climb over the fence, and get out of the powdery dust into the grass that is getting just a little rusty, and walk down the aisles under the Gothic arches of God's most beloved of temples.

I do not wonder that the barbarous old Goths modeled the arches of their buildings by the springing and meeting boughs of trees. Some say they did it because they did not know how to do it any other way, that they were too stupid to originate a form, and so just imitated the lines they saw when they looked down the vistas of their beloved forests. I do not believe it. I do not care if they were wantonly destructive and cruel—I rather believe that is a libel, anyway—they knew that nowhere in all the world could be found a form of greater grace for their houses, and they were too wise to try to improve upon what was already perfect. I am glad too that convention still retains that form for churches; it is God's own form and ought to be used in his house.

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Stand here just a minute before we enter the cathedral. Let us look at it outside before we explore the beauties of the interior. Did you expect to find a gorgeous, flaming, glowing world because I said it is autumn? You will find that if you will come back here in a few weeks, but now the world is rather neutral and quiet of beauty. The leaves are still green, although the richness and gleam of the summer are somewhat mellowed and the grass has only a tiny flicker of a rustle in it, and only the faintest hint that after a while it will be brown. It is long and soft and rich under the feet and just a little crisp, and it waves when the wind blows. And the wind in it talks—it does not sing in the early autumn grass—it talks in a sibilant tone that makes you think that autumn elves must be getting together somewhere down in the green depths of it to make plans for the mad frolic that is coming when the Frost Sprite comes to hold carnival for a little while. Are you disappointed? No, not disappointed; no one can be disappointed in the good outdoors. But mayhap a little surprised. Autumn is the gorgeous time, and this is a world neutral and negative rather than colorful and pronounced. In the large it is quiet and modest, but in the small things, the details of the architecture, the beauty of the cathedral where we wor-

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ship to-day is marvelously clear and positive. When we were here in the full throb and pulsing glow of summer the radiance was dazzling, bewildering, distracting. The color and warmth and brilliance all combined in a glory that smote the eyeballs with blindness and fell upon the heart in waves of burning, confusing ecstasy. That is all gone now, and in the softer radiance the eye may pick out the elements of the picture and revel in the beauty of leaf or twig or hazy sky or purpling grape or downy thistle. It all stands free now, what before was merged into the intense life of the glow-time of the year.

Then we looked at a broad, bright, full-colored painting. And we will come back here again and look upon another equally brilliant. But now the Great Artist has put out a sepia etching for us to glory in.

So now we cross the open field where the late vegetables, disheveled and burdened, still stand in long rows, like children waiting to be dismissed from school, lessons all learned and dog-eared books packed up. The dying vines reveal the rotund forms of the pumpkins and squashes lying on the ground. Sprawled over the puffy earth, the gray-brown vines trace a lace pattern that is intricate and beautiful. How our feet sink into the soft, moist soil! Last spring—Why is it that the

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autumn-time always puts one to thinking of the times that have gone? There is a delightful softness in this soil so that it seems one could walk through it all day and not tire; there is a witching beauty in the soft gray tracery of the dead vines over the sweet brown earth; there is richness and lusciousness of color in the pumpkins; there is spice in the sweet, clear air; and in the whole world is the wonder of the approaching glory. Surely, this time is full enough. But—last spring some one dug mightily and toiled patiently to bring this field to the mellowness that is so delightful to our feet to-day, and the memory of his toil is in the very soil we tread. Let us stop a moment to pay our tribute of appreciation to whomsoever it was. No matter if he did not know us and was digging only in order to raise squashes and pumpkins. Perhaps he had visions of golden yellow pies or creamy and sweet baked squashes steaming on his table. No matter if that is all he thought of. He worked, and we tread the soft soil he made and are glad. A good deal that comes to us comes that way, it seems to me. He never thought of us; we thought no more of him; he just worked. Other men have labored and we have entered into their labors. I think he would be as glad—if he knew about it—for our satisfaction in his springy field as for his golden

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pumpkins. Whoever he was, he did his work well and so did more than he supposed. It is always so; doing your work well brings bigger results than you think. And I am glad for the soft footing that I had nothing to do with preparing. I am glad for a lot of other things that make this world so much like heaven and that I do nothing of myself to merit or obtain: for the blue sky overhead, the sweet summer wind, the moonlight on water, a baby's smile, prayer, the love of wife and children, the deep peace of the twilight, white clouds in a summer sky, friends, the respect and love of some men, the deep joy of life, God's care and the love of the Christ. I should be a spiritual bankrupt if I had to make my own fortune and inherit nothing. But so much is given me which I could never earn that I feel that I ought to step very softly in this mellow soil and be very thankful; and that I ought to be very earnest about doing the small work I can do—doing it well enough to spread out just a little beyond what I can see and make an easier footing for some one after I have gathered my squashes.

Our thanks to the man who dug last spring.

Across there the wire fence sags under the weight of a mighty squash which hangs suspended grotesquely by its crooked neck from the very

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top. It looks like some fantastic bird without feet or wings, hanging by its bill from the wire. Last summer—again the past time! But how much there is to make us think of it! Somehow, everything that is complete and ripe in itself speaks of days, many or few, and seasons, rigorous or mild, which have gone into its making, whether it be a squash or a tree or a berry, a poem, a picture, or a man. Last summer, then, while there was nothing for the vine to lift but a gorgeous yellow blossom, it climbed that woven trellis of wire and flaunted the big yellow bloom in the very face of the sun. It was young then and strong, and the yellow bloom was very beautiful. And that is like a young man in the glory of his youth, with the bloom of his ideals and ambitions upon him. He is strong and the climbing is easy, for the flowers are very beautiful. Now the vine is dry and ragged and growing friable and brittle. And that is like the young man become old when his ideals have fruited and come to maturity and are more majestic than the flowers. He can maintain the heavy responsibilities, as the vine holds the fruit, because he climbed as high as he could while nothing but the ideals and ambitions of youth were to be lifted and the full tide of life was in his veins. There are some vines lying with their fruit on the ground; they failed to

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climb while they could. And there are men who must ripen the fruit of their lives in humiliation and obscurity because they failed to lift themselves when they might. I wish I had climbed higher when my soul was in the flower.

These vines that are under our feet in the soft earth are gray, with brown tones shot through it that makes them look like a great filigree of dull silver a little tarnished and the more beautiful and valuable because of the tarnish. I do not like things too new and bright, they seem not to have anything to do with people; they are so perfect in newness and polish that they stand apart from you. But when the spots from finger marks have begun to show, and the little nicks and scratches that tell of use cobweb the fair surface, then they seem real and worth something. Sometimes I wonder if the tarnished spots and broken places we find in ourselves as the years march to the autumn time are not the marks that come from our being associated with the use and enjoyment of the Great Personality in whose crown the souls of his people shall shine as gems. For "they shall be his when he cometh to make up his jewels."

These gray-silver vines are like that too. The year has worn them from the spring to the fall, and their sheen is grayed over and they are

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broken a little. But they are the dearer because of it. Step carefully; we will not mar them, because from us such would be spoliation. Let the good year wear them out; we will luxuriate in the subdued gray, the sprawled, involved pattern, the awkward grace of them.

The beauty is not all under foot when the autumn is on the way. We cross the open and climb the fence where the squash hangs, and walk softly down the long aisle and into the nave of the temple, a glade among the boles where the open sky domes the space and the trees stand like columns marking the edge of the central rotunda. A little swing and dip opposite the point where we enter it forms the apse; and there is an altar, draped in the most graceful of tapestry and bearing a votive light of mystery and wonder: a big, round, half-rotted stump, covered with ivy, which clings to its rough bark and covers it with a valance of living green, and crowned with a clump of fungus that grows, yellow and bright, from the hollow top—truly an altar worthy the temple; and that orange-colored fungus is more beautiful than flame of wax.

The fungus is so yellow and so bright and so colorful that it seems fairly to shed light like a blazing lamp, and the little glade is illuminated and glorified by it. The brilliant yellow topping

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the rich green of the ivy, with the dark bark showing through in places, is a combination of color never to be forgotten while eyes retain their sensitiveness or mind its memory.

Down here, protected by the canopy of the trees, the grass is still rich green and rank—a tufted carpet where we may kneel before the shrine. And the ivy leaves still show the gloss and sheen of their summer prime. The frost has been kept away by the thick cover of the leaves and we are in the midst of a bit of midsummer even while the vague, heart-breaking sadness of autumn is in the air and on the hills. The filmy, tenuous haze hangs above our heads as the memories of a happy youth-time glorify and mellow the austerities of age. The sky is a melting blue, like the blue of a maiden's eyes. What a blue it is as it arches above the trees in a sweep of utter majesty! Did you ever note before how infinite the sky is when you look up at a little space of it through trees? You think you appreciate its vastness when you can let the vision sweep from zenith to horizon and from horizon to zenith and down to horizon again. But stand here in the glade in the woods and look up. The deep is deeper and the sweep more majestic than ever before, and all the deep and all the sweep filled with that soft, soft haze, and the eyes mist over

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too, and the heart leaps and struggles, and the soul soars in the deep blue space. The peace of the infinite is in it and the memories of the eternal.

Light, filmy gray clouds float across the blue dome, so thin and sheer as to be scarcely visible. They are like the all but invisible veil that covers a bride's face; you cannot see the veil, but you cannot but see the tender mistiness it gives to her bright eyes and blooming cheeks and her whole radiant face. You see the cloud-veil only as it makes that blue arch more tender and misty. The light comes down upon us through the veil, cool and chaste, just ardent enough to show up with the sharp distinctness of a cameo all the lovely little details of the lovely glade and modest enough to make them all show forth their own peculiar beauty without being crushed and hidden in the glory. How restful and complacent is this light just before the leaves turn! The world seems so well satisfied with itself just now, like a man who has fought and beaten the follies of his youth, and won his battle with life, and begins to realize that he amounts to something in himself and need not be disturbed or anxious over his problems or perturbed as he faces old age. Has not he vindicated himself so far? Shall he be less able in the years to come than he has been in those just past? Verily, the problems of age and

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winter are as nothing to the soul or the world in the full satisfaction of the fulling-time of life or year when compared with those of youth and the spring. Good Old Year! He has come to middle age and is at his happiest, richest, fullest life.

While our eyes are turned to the sky the round globe of a maple gradually defines itself. You have been looking at it for minutes, but have not seen it, but there is something about the hard maple that will not be long neglected. It is like a strong, true, graceful, sweet personality; it has much of beauty and a great deal of strength and majesty and will make itself felt. If the hard maple were a man you would turn and look whenever he entered the room. And when he stood up on the platform to speak—for he would be an orator, would the maple; not a rhetorician or an elocutionist, but a man with opinions worth expressing and able to express them—everyone would settle into close attention. The symmetrical, perfectly proportioned mass of the tree stands out against the filmy sky in striking perfection of form and grace of pose. How self-sufficient it is without being self-conscious! Neither abashed nor intrusive, it stands erect in its strong beauty and cares not whether you and I approve it or not. But who can help approving what cannot be improved, whether a tree or a man? The leaves of

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the maple are still green, rich, and glossy. But up near the top a single bough has caught the frost that has not yet penetrated to the glade under the leaves, and flames red and yellow among the green, like a magnificent plume set in the helmet of a strong, gentle knight. And the good tree seems proud of the beauty it gives him. Why not? Has he not a right to this adornment who himself makes beautiful the place where he stands? Trees are very like folk, and I cannot but think there is just the normal amount of personal vanity in the maple, the vanity that makes good, strong, gentle men so lovable. The maple is lovable in the same way. Because he stands erect and stands high, he has caught the chill of the frost, and it has left its mark on him. And he has by his own nobility and gentleness made it a mark of beauty. It takes a real man or a real tree to turn the weed of chill or scorn or sorrow or storm into a crest of majesty and be proud of it. Thank God for the maple tree—and for the maple-men!

A whisper in the trees answers the whisper in the grass; but for this the whole world is full of the silence of worship here in this temple of sylvan primality. Those whispers are the antiphon from choir to choir, but it is all the same theme and the same heart-piercing melody. I call it melody, for I do not know what else to call it.

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But it is not music, not a song. It is an antiphony of tender declamation, spoken—not sung—from grass to leaves and from leaves back to grass again, until the glade is full of it and it spreads up toward the sky; until the wood is full of it and it melts into the heart, the whisper of the goodness and sweetness and beauty that fills God's good, sweet world.

Beyond the maple's rotund globe we may see an oak, a little ragged, but as true and good as the oaken heart covered by his rough bark. Not so tall nor so symmetrical as the maple, nor so perfect in infoliation, the oak gives the impression of sturdy, companionable, dependable strength and reliability under strain. This particular tree to-day is wonderful because it seems that we can see the very blood of it coursing through its veins. An ivy has climbed up the trunk and followed every limb to its uttermost tip. The ivy is more tender than the oak, and the early frost has incarnadined every ivy leaf, but left the dark-green oak leaves untouched, so that veins of scarlet run through the green mass and outline the trunk and branches.

The cathedral now is full of the smell of incense. It rises in aromatic pungency and fills all the air about. Gazing upward and wrapped in the glory of the vision, we might think ourselves

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indeed and in truth standing where altars smoke and priests chant. It rises and touches the nostrils pungently. Our heedless feet have trampled and bruised a clump of pennyroyal and the fragrance of it fills the air, rich, sweet, aromatic, mystic. It refreshes the nerves and intoxicates the senses until our veins seem to throb with the very life of the wood and the autumn. The pennyroyal is an altogether delightful little herb. It grows low and modest and it loves the companionship of its own kind and grows in clumps like loyal clans that find each other sufficient. It is not an eremite though, for it likes to be close to the trees, and while the little bunches and tufts of it sway stiffly in the sunshine for a large part of the day, it will always be found where the shade of the trees reaches it too. It is a very beautiful little plant to look at also, with its gracefully erect little stems and modestly independent bearing, its small, heart-shaped leaves worn so primly in exact intervals along the stem, and its tiny bluish flowers which you can scarcely see and which bloom for only a few days, then die and add fragrance to the fragrant plant. And it is such a persistently good-natured creature too that I am sorry we stepped on it. But we should never have caught its fragrance unless we had crushed it. And its good-nature is so great and so persistent

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that the more it is bruised and crushed the sweeter it is. You cannot spoil it, for if you break and mar the leaf and stem you only release the perfume, and this perfume will hang here in the glade all day long. Many modest souls are that way too; they give out their sweetest when bruised.

The soft sun beams, the little wind whispers, the sweet air sparkles, the filmy light veils and sweeps and floats, the ineffable wonder of the late summer mingles with the mystic strangeness of early fall, and the incense of the pennyroyal fills all the sun-shot, wind-kissed, blue-domed cup. We will make an offering. We gather a handful of the bruised pennyroyal and lay it beside the flamboyant toadstools on the top of the stump. So we offer sweet-smelling incense from the earth to the God of the earth who has offered himself the light. It is before such altars as this that men worship.

Now leave we the chapel where our offering will perfume the air until night and take our way through the columns. There are some very beautiful colors and patterns to be seen on these trees, and we walk through a maze of wonder upon a carpet of magic. A few bright leaves lie upon the grass, like the unnoticed scraps pulled by the briars from a prince's robe. The sun comes flecking through the trees in a changing, moving

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design that is bewildering and touches into momentary relief the brilliant fragments, then leaves them in shadow while the green of the grass is gilded to the color of old gold. Look down that vista and watch the wonder. There is constant movement on the ground, as if a thousand beakers of the wines of the gods had been emptied there and were flowing in mingling color and sparkling current. The few leaves already down seem to dance and move, but they do not; that is the effect of the flickering sunshine as it is stirred up by the moving of the trees. Now it is all bright and strange; the light pauses for an instant. Now it is all dim and strange; a cloud sweeps across the sky and its shadow speeds across the earth. But it is gone even as we catch sight of its moving edges, and the brilliance moves again.

There is a peculiar silence in the early fall-time, a silence that is like the light. The myriad of bird-notes and insects' dronings that make the summer a time of confusing melody is hushed, just as the distracting glow is subdued. Most of the birds have gone, and the bees are preparing their quarters for the long night, and many of the flitting winged creatures of reed-top and grass-plume and flower-cup and sun-filled space have spun their silken coverlids and entered upon their metamorphosis. So their songs and pipings and

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humblings, their voices and flutes and string-tones, are lacking. And the single sounds that remain stand out clear and distinct in the silence like the details of leaf and twig, and plummy golden-rod and late flower and dust-covered weed stand out in the misty light. Such sound as there is carries far and comes to us distinctly: a single frog croaking from the pond over yonder, the call of a solitary jay hidden somewhere across the ravine in the trees, the crow of a cock, some children's voices from down along the brook. The notes come clear and distinct and with a peculiar pathetic quality. It is as if the frog and the jay and the cock and the children were all calling attention to the absence of the choir of the woods without meaning to do so, just as we so frequently rub rough hands over tender hearts when we are thinking only of our own bereavements and sorrows.

But though the singers are gone, and the flowers are beginning to show signs of wear, there is still much of life in the woods. A squirrel springs chippering from almost at our feet and runs in irregular bounding leaps among the trees and scurries up a tall elm. He is about half-way to the branches when he flattens his furry body against the trunk. A shadow swoops across the grass and we start. It comes too swift and too

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straight for a cloud. The clouds are moving lazily and erratically to-day and the cloud-shadows do not seem to come across the ground—they just are. The clouds move silently too, but this sweeping shadow comes with a rush and whizz. We look up just in time to see a great red-tailed hawk, wings rigid and curved talons extended, swoop straight at the squirrel. It dashes against the tree and almost falls to the ground before it can recover flight, and just as we look to see the squirrel hanging from its claws the squirrel looks around the tree and laughs. He has escaped by darting around the tree at the moment the frightful talons clutched. That derisive chatter is too much for his hawkship, and he wheels and comes back. Not quite so recklessly this time, for that crash against the tree has taught the red-tailed buccaneer caution. But he comes straight and true, claws ready, wings set, and the tawny rudder ready to check the force of the collision. But when the claws close again there is no squirrel. He is around on our side of the tree again lying flat against the bark. His movement has been too quick to see, but he is motionless while his enemy gathers himself up and flies away with a scream. Then Mr. Squirrel comes to life and sends out his mocking chatter again. The hawk tries it a third time, but only

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half-heartedly, and gives it up and goes elsewhere for his dinner. And now the true squirrel-ness of the little brown rascal shows itself, for he runs up to the fork of the tree, produces an acorn from somewhere—I cannot see whether he takes it from the pouch of his cheek or from a crevice in the bark—and makes the chips fly, chattering and screaming all the time, for all the world like a little truculent whiffet who has kept cool long enough to escape a big bully and when danger is past, gives way to exiguous anger and boasts loudly of what he will do to him when he comes back. The red squirrel is altogether an amusing little scamp. He is a good fellow too, who makes friends easily, as well as a thoroughgoing egoist. He was never afraid of that hawk for a minute, for he knew he could baffle it, and he depended upon himself to see him safe. And the exploit of eating the acorn as soon as he has leisure—to show how little he really is concerned—well, he is delightful, truly. But how nearly a tragedy it was! Or it seems so to us because we do not understand so well as the squirrel.

A little pond lies over here to the left where we can just see a glimmer of greenish silver. The water lies low among rushes and coarse grass, and the green falling upon the smooth surface makes it look like some kind of fairy alloy that



THE WATER LIES LOW AMONG RUSHES

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has the sheen of silver and the green of the rush. I have seen green gold, but never before have I seen green silver. So we have found something more rare than anything heretofore known in the world. You cannot see the sky in this little pond; the grass and rushes have crowded up and into the very water so that you can see only their green reflection. If we could, somehow, put our heads out on the end of a pole and turn them so as to look straight down, we would see the sky then, and an amazing deep sky it would be. But, unfortunately, the heads are fastened, and it is not safe to get one's feet wet at this time of the year, and we have no wading boots. But no matter. A green-deep pond is more striking than a blue-deep one because it is not so common. The frog hushes as we approach, and unless you are prepared for it—There! That is what I was going to tell you. He was in the grass right at the edge of the water and stayed there until our big, clumsy feet, clumping down, threatened to crush him. Then he leaped, sprawling through the air, but diving cleanly head first into the water. He seems to jump from under our very feet, and unless you are prepared for it he will startle you—just as he did us.

The ripples from his plunge widen and widen and make a small commotion against the mud at

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our feet, and over across where they have circled out until they reach the far side of the pond we can see the grasses moving from their impulse, although the water is smooth again; and as soon as it is smooth the water-spiders come out from their hiding places among the grass and begin again their giddy dance on the slippery floor. I wonder whether they are crazy, or have Saint Vitus's dance, or are really doing something, or only think they are, or are weaving a mystic spell of interlacing tracks across the water to entangle the frog, or are wound up and cannot help it. They act just like the folks on a crowded street; they rush about, in and out, and dodge around each other, and when one has come to the edge of the group he flicks back to the center again, and they flicker and swarm and scatter and swarm again, just a black splotch of movement on the water. You cannot follow one of them very long with your eyes, or your eyes will be hopelessly tangled. They act for all the world as if they were folks. I wonder why folks do it. I can understand why the spiders do; they do not know any better than just to hurry about among themselves, getting nothing done, but making a prodigious flurry. But folks do know better—or ought to. They ought to know that however much there is to do, or to pretend to

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do—somehow, we act as if we were disgraced unless we keep up the appearance of doing all the time—there is much more to be accomplished by getting away sometimes to where there are no hurriers and being alone in his temples with the Unhurried God and the unhurrying world he made and dwells in; much more of hope and peace and power, of strong heart-acts and light and truth.

We gaze and gaze into the cool, deep, infinitely deep green wonder of the pond until we are fascinated. When I look into still water I can understand why some people believe in crystal-gazing as a means of discovering mysteries, but not how anyone can believe in the crystal. We see mysteries in the deeps of this silver-green pond this afternoon. They are the veritable mysteries of God, and I believe he means for us to seek them out and gaze into them and know him better by it. But how one can believe in the mystery of a glass ball is a greater mystery than anything else. And, verily, when one has gazed into the deeps of God's clear crystal of limpid revelation everything else becomes cheap and trivial. How the sordidness and grime and pettiness fade to nothingness when the infinite is spread before one as in a sheet of quiet water on a tranquil day! Is there a soul that doubts the greatness and goodness and

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eternity of the things that are real, and is clogged and suffocated with the selfishness and meanness and temporality of the things that only seem? Let him seek the companionship of trees for a while, and fellowship with the flowers and birds and squirrels, and look for an hour into a pool of water lying in the shade. He will receive a new valuation of the universe.

Water is wonderful; it is like life in showing so many phases of beauty. Not far from the pond a little brook sings and sparkles and hurries and loiters its way over pebbles and bowlders and mud and sand, between banks high and steep or low and flat, through meadow and field and wood and under little bridges. A footbridge, made of a single plank fastened with wire to trees on either side to prevent its being carried away when the spring rains fill the brook to overflowing, crosses from one high bank to the other. Just before the stream reaches the bridge it broadens in an open, sunny spot into a pool, big as a dinner table, quiet, and shallower than the narrow neck just above it. Half the pool is in shadow, half in sunshine. The shaded half is mysterious-looking and black; the sunny part sweet and sparkling. It is the branch of a tree which shades it, and the shadow keeps moving and shifting, and the line between sun and shade is not sharp nor constant, so there is con-

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tinual change and play over the surface. But one half is in shade and one in sun.

A peculiar dimpling of the water of this little pool attracts our attention. It is not a splash, although it makes you think of a splash, and surely think the drops will show next time. It is not a ripple either. There is just a dimple exactly like you see in a baby's cheek when she smiles, as deep and tender as that and as quickly done. While we watch, a minnow leaps clear of the water, flashes a white and silver signal in the sun, and drops again into the cool depths. Then another and another and another—here, yonder, through sun or shade, this side, yon side, they spring up. And we look and see that the dimples are where the tiny fishes do not spring quite clear, but catch the surface a little smack with tails that do not cut into the air above. And they leap and gleam and flicker like water-fairies dancing. They are not over two inches long and all white and silver, graceful and slender and full of the springy vitality that possesses all young things regardless of the season. They are romping and having a good time. That is what this autumn world is for.

Below the little bridge the water goes tumbling over stones and the root of a tree in a miniature waterfall that makes music sweeter than tone of violin or flute. Our cathedral has its columned

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nave and lighted altar and incense; here is its organ, and the music of it fills the air together with the incense, and ear and nostril become gates into the soul for the simultaneous entrance of the intoxication of the sound and of the fragrance. The water is dark below the bridge, and it seems a little strange, for we have loitered here so often during the summer to enjoy the jewels scintillating and flashing in the waterfall and tiny rapids. But now the jewels are all gone and the water pours over the tree-root in a slate-colored veil and troubles itself above the stones in shadowy perturbation.

We cross the bridge and come to a fence. Beyond the fence the road lies dusty and white. Here we must leave the cathedral and take our way down the path of the world again. But we shall not leave the spirit of the worshiping place behind. The smell of the incense is in our nostrils; the glow of the yellow altar-fire is in our eyes; the music of falling water is in our ears, the deep, deep wonder of it is on our hearts.

The roadside weeds are powdered gray, except the smartweed, which is brown. The roadway is thick and soft with the dust of countless footsteps of men and horses and other fellows of the road. And it rises in little puffs beneath our feet as we plod down the way that is as old as man,

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the way of labor, workaday toil, and commonplaceness. But the gray dust turns crimson as it puffs up in the late red sun of the autumn afternoon, and the housetops, as we come in sight of them, are glory-tipped, and the trees are gilded, and the fences and posts and such common things are changed in the light from the scarlet sunset, and our faces shine with it.

The way of the commonplace? Verily. But that is the way of God's glory!



THE BIRCH IS BIZARRE IN HIS SILVER RAGS

THE GRAPEVINE

A GRAPEVINE in autumn is one of the most wonderful things God ever made and let a man look at. In the spring it is wonderful too, but that is a dainty, evanescent wonder of elusive fragrance and tender color. The autumn wonder of it is a wonder of richness and soft, strong color, and prodigality, and deep, quiet truth-telling.

Somehow, a grapevine always seems the symbol of generous honesty and modest, solid worth among all the gorgeousness and glow of the autumn-time. The oaks are reservedly opulent in their dark, rich crimson. The maples are brilliant in yellow and orange and red. The birch is bizarre in his silver rags, looking like a masquerader costumed as a fairy prince who has been caught by hoodlums on his way home and has barely escaped with his tinsel tatters to cover him. The sycamores are not much better. But they wear their rags with more dignity and there is less glint of silver. They do not pretend so much. The elm is always graceful, and no less when the first frosts and breezes from the north have scattered its leaves. The elm always makes me think of a stately old gentleman whose gentle birth and

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habitual politeness can never be forgotten, no matter how bare circumstances may strip him, and whose hope of better days to come is perennial. Of course, he is a gentleman, the elm. Has he not the very air of it in his graceful, sweeping limbs? Will his fortunes not be recovered next spring? He knows they will. And he is never disappointed. Neither is the human gentle soul whose hope is in the same God, albeit sometimes that God lets him have a richer and nobler fortune in his soul than the one he has lost in bank or farm. But the grapevine is subdued in color, modest in mien, generous in richness and altogether comfortable.

The brown weeds and sere rushes nod in grace like good-natured gnomes, the creeper drapes the gaunt skeleton of a dead tree with festoons of blood, the brown grass is soft and silent as velvet under the foot, and Autumn calls and offers wine in beakers of crystal sunshine.

We'll go and taste the hospitality of the jolly, rascally old scamp. He could not keep sober to save his life—if he did he would not save it, for if he is sober he dies—but he is a great host for all that; and if you can stand and watch where his devotees foregather without shouting and joining in the mirth, then you truly need a draught of his wine to warm your blood.

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He is a deceitful old rogue too, as well as a roysterer. You would never know him by his dress and manner. His guests, the gay trees and vines and feathery weeds and chirping sparrows and flame-colored tanagers, seem a strange crew to be holding carnival on his preserves. To see him you would take him for anything but the jovial reprobate he is. All robed in brown like a Capuchin monk, with mystery in the folds of his dun cowl, he sits on the hills or walks through the lanes or taps at your window with downcast face and saddened mien, and his invitation is given in the most sorrowful voice you can imagine. He wants you to think he is solemn.

He bulldozes some folks too, so that you hear them speak of the melancholy time when he is master of the year. But do not be afraid of him or shrink from a little familiarity. He is not so sad, and far from as dignified as he pretends. Tweak up his cowl and look at the merry eyes and smiling lips and red nose. He will not rebuke you. In fact, if you do not do something like that he is apt to wander on and leave you gazing after him and pitying his sadness. And as sure as you do that, the sadness becomes yours and the old fraud laughs in his hood.

I went out with him one day into his estates, the woods and brakes and brambles, and got ac-

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quainted with him. You cannot know the true spirit of the Autumn until you meet him on his own ground and let your soul go in sympathy with him. The brown, subdued, monkish, sorrowful air is only a disguise. It is thrown off when one comes close. Under the flaming trees, among the gorgeous vines and bushes, where the sparkling sunshine falls free and unshadowed, and nimble winter birds chirrup and flit, Autumn is as hilarious as a schoolboy.

Why not? The year is coming to the close of his day's work. The twilight is closing in. The work is all done. So the year lays aside the sober, labor-stained garments and dons the brighter ones of leisure. The family has gathered together and all are happy. I like to think of Autumn in his true character of a hearty, husky toiler who has come home after a hard day's work and puts on his holiday garments for a joyous evening before the fires go out and the night falls. Look at the color; listen to the whisper in the air; stretch your hands to the season; and heart beats quick, and blood bounds free, and breath comes full, and soul swells for very joy.

Yes, I like Autumn without his disguise; I can trust him. But one must be careful of his wine. It goes to the head with amazing quickness and causes grave indiscretions. I have seen

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one of the most staid, grave, dignified, straight-backed preachers of my acquaintance quaff a goblet from Autumn's hand, and straightway high hat flew one way, eyeglasses brought up short on their cord on the other side, and clerical coattails spread in a most unholy gyration, while the echoes that live back in the hills forgot their timidity and showed themselves as they looked over the tops in amazement at the consignment of sound sent them from the clerical throat.

I followed Autumn down through the aisles of his trees. He stopped and bade me sit down with him on the ground where the sun fell warm on the brown grass and the long blades leaned parted in drooping curves of grace. He told me to part them further with my hands, and I did. I looked into their network of traced stems and further down between them to the basking earth. Clear and sharp as a cameo each blade and leaf and crinkled fiber stood out. And down among it all scurried the little creatures of the mold, active and eager, running about on a thousand errands of grave import wholly unknown to the great creature bending over their world. Then he told me to look up, and a late butterfly went flitting and careening through the grass tops and fell helpless, a poor sprite of the summer who could not bear the deep, rich autumn life.

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And I went with him, on down through the painted corridors of the wood and he showed me the grapevine. And when he threw back his monkish cowl to look at his proudest possession, I saw back of the joviality and camaraderie of him the seriousness shining through. For, after all, he is a solid old chap, though not solemn and sad as he pretends. He is only serious. His grapevine was a wonder-thing. It had climbed up a dead tree and covered the very tips of the scraggy limbs. I am glad it did that. The poor tree must stand there in its gaunt grotesqueness else. But the white limbs were draped and covered with the vine. The vine leaves still hung, but the rich green of the summer was replaced with a soft, fleecy, downy brown as tender and clinging as the fluffy stuff a mother wraps a baby in. And the richest brown! Not brilliant, like the brown of the oak leaf, nor weak like that of sere grass, but rich and strong in tone like the note of a violoncello, sweet and satisfying. I wanted to climb up and lie down and dream away the day in the restful coverlid.

The full clusters cascaded through the brown leaves as if one of Autumn's gnomes, frolic-mad, had rushed into the workshops beneath the hills and caught up the crucible full of melted amethysts and flung it over the vine to run down in

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rich torrents and congeal. What an opulence of color are purple grapes among brown leaves! As deep and true in color as the deep, true eyes of a wife! As round and perfect in form as a baby's finger-tips!

And old Autumn and I stood there and looked. And he was proud of his vine, and I was proud that he let me see it. Rich, honest, generous vine! Rich, honest, generous Autumn!

I plucked a cluster and the rich blood of it stained my hand, red and gorgeous. I put a grape into my mouth. I squeezed out the juice, rich with the rare flavor that only a frost-ripened wild grape possesses. I cannot tell how it tastes. But if you will recall the most glorious June day of your whole life, close your eyes and imagine again the wonder of the sunshine, feel on your face the caress of June winds, make yourself smell again the fragrance of June flowers, glory and softness and sweetness, and make them all into a flavor—if you can taste a June day, you know what it is. For the grape is a June day, ripened and transmuted so as to appeal to yet another sense. How wonderfully good God is! I can see the sun; I can feel the breeze; I can smell the fragrance; I can hear a bird's song; but I cannot taste them. So God's vine gathers it all up and makes a grape of it, and God's sunshine

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strikes into it, and God's breeze blows upon it, and God's fragrance melts into it; then, God's autumn shows it to me; and I, God's man, pluck and press and taste the sunshine that has shone into that grape through the summer.

And while the taste hangs on my tongue, and my eyes drink the glory of the color all about and the color on the vine—surely, all this is God's glory shining into my soul. I can feel it, know it coming in. God is shining himself into me. And some day, in his good, glorious autumn time, one will come on whose frontlet is writ "Destiny," who will pluck and press. And because it is God who has shined into it, this soul will give out God again under the pressure even as the grape gives out the sunshine.

Even so.

Shine, sun of God!

A WINTER DAY ON A COUNTRY CIRCUIT

I AM a circuit preacher. This statement does not entitle me to any special consideration. I make it merely to make clear that I have the opportunity of seeing wonderful things. I thank God for the eyes and the opportunity to see the wonders of his out-of-doors. One Sunday afternoon in December I start on a four-mile drive to a lonely country church. I really drive four miles through the aisles and corridors of God's most wonderful temples. The afternoon air is full of a peculiar, dusky semiradiance. The sky, neither blue nor gray, yet both blue and gray, is a color-tone that I can liken to nothing that I have ever seen—soft, fluffy, modestly brilliant, as if summer blue and winter gray were mingled yet not merged. And the whole is permeated by a myriad of floating, dustlike particles of a dunlike tarnished gold. Through this beautifully weird atmosphere of dusty brilliance, fire-lines and gemmy sparkles shoot and glimmer and shift, as if the earth were at the center of a great opal and I could see from inside the jewel the magnificent play and change of fire and color. The sun is veiled—not hidden, not obscured, but veiled, as the face of an Eastern

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woman is veiled when she goes abroad—with a misty, transparent, filmy veil which heightens and enhances the rose and carnation tints of cheeks and lips, the pearly gleam of brow, the brilliance of the eye, yet conceals the grosser appearance of the countenance. There is none of the hard, diamondlike brilliance of the winter sun. That is hidden by the veil. There is none of the intolerable fervor of summer. That is subdued by the gold dust in the air. There is none of the languorous glow of spring. That is invigorated into keenness by the cold. There is none of the burning, scorching ardor of autumn. That is cooled and filtered by the film of mist. It is just the sun of that day, neither summer sun, winter sun, spring sun, nor autumn sun. You have heard singers speak of a veiled voice; this is a veiled sun. His beauty, his light, his glory shed themselves through the veil about me and over the earth, like the melody from the throat of the singer, and my soul melts into the glory of that great mystery which comes filtering and sprinkling from the face of the heavenly sun through the color and change and misty glow of the winter afternoon. It falls upon me, about me, into my heart. I am one of the infinitesimal bits of gold dust that float in the air. I am part of it all. This is the intoxication of the melody of light

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that flows downward through the veil and lifts my soul as melody of sound has never lifted me. All the landscape luxuriates in the unusual glow. It seems not unreal nor unusual, however. None of the moods of nature are unusual. All are a matter of course. And I am glad that God has made the earth so that it is never incongruous nor abnormal. And I am glad that he has made it so it is all and always so unusual that we ever see something new about himself in the change. Field and meadow, brook and bank, snow and cloud, tree and shrub and grass tell me a different story this afternoon than any I have heard, because God deluges them and me with the light of a veiled sun, and reflects the light back into my eyes from every ice-pool and snowdrift and brown hollow. I see a new earth and my eyes almost penetrate into a new heaven.

The road lies along a field newly plowed. The rough, uneven surface lies like a suddenly congealed sea of lava. The smooth surfaces left polished by the plowshare gleam in the peculiar light and send back bright beams and points. The thin snow does not cover the ground, but overlies the inequalities as the lichen overlies the unevenness of the boulder. Looking across the stretch before me, the field presents a symmetrical, regular succession of wave-forms in alternate black

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and white, as if two lakes of pitch and milk were tossing in the same basin, under the same wind, yet without mingling. How strange is this day, with its minglings and mixings and dual appearances! But it is not black and white at all when a closer look shows up the real colors of that field. It is not black, but a deep brown, rich as the cloying lusciousness of the cocoa berry, and showing a silvery sheen in the sunlight: a brown that supplies, in the symphony of this afternoon, the deep, rich, heart-shaking 'cello tones which give substance and volume and weight to the entire orchestra; smoothing the shrill piccolo of the snow crystals; bearing up and carrying in irresistible sweep the soft, whispering violin tones of the golden, trembling air; steadying and softening the brassy blare of the ice-blue shadows on the brook.

And the snow is not white, but shaded and modified by tints that have no name, and that are never seen save through the tears which well up from a heart bursting in its effort to contain and retain the strains of the color-melody. What a symphony it is—a symphony of color, of mystery, of gray mist, of subdued tones, of soft minors, and mystic, hidden themes! How the heart aches! How it longs to burst out and swell and swell and swell until it can contain

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all the intensity, the meaning that is so mightily apparent, that throbs in the color, in the symmetry, in the sighing winter wind, and yet is hidden. It is exquisite music. It is exquisite pain. The heartstrings are like to snap as they attune themselves to the symphony of a winter day.

Beyond the plowed field is a cornfield. The stalks, stripped of their burden of ears, stand bravely in their rank and file like tattered soldiers guarding their line of battle even when the bullets of the enemy and the roughness of their own march have well-nigh stripped their uniforms from their backs. They stand bravely, these warriors of the field. They have a right still to wave their ragged plumes in the chilly air and rustle their tattered, gold-bright uniforms in this gold-bright afternoon. Have they not stood there all through the spring and summer and fall and done battle with the wind and rain and hail and scorching sun, guarding the precious trust given them? Have they not conquered? Have they not captured, by very force of dauntless energy and wonderful skill at arms, the ozone from wind, and oxygen from rain, and mysterious life and force from sunbeam, and brought all into the treasure their husky knapsacks held? Have they not turned the very guns of the enemy against him? Have they not a right

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to stand still in their yet unbroken line? And they do stand and wave their plumes in this dun-gray day, and send out little modest flashes of light from the untarnished portions of their once polished bayonets. The cornfield is a yellow-brown stretch, with the snow giving an additional mellowness to its brown. Unlike the plowed field, the brown of cornstalks and the white of snow do not contrast. Rather do they mutually mellow each other. The snow has a softer, milder white from its juxtaposition with the brown stalks. The corn has a mellower, more evasive tone because of the snow. And both are beautiful beyond expression. This mingling of a light snow with the autumn tints is one of God's everyday miracles. And when it occurs on a gold-powdered day it is more wonderful still.

This is a brown day. In the meadows is a deeper, richer brown than that of the cornfields, a brown that shades imperceptibly into gray as it recedes into the shadows of the distance. The dry, waving grass does not reveal the snow, but I know it is there because of the hint I have in the whisper and glimmer that come when the brown grass moves. I know it is there as I know that love is in the heart of my wife when I look into the shadows and the deep-gleaming mysteries of her eyes. Varying, shifting shades play over the



THE BED OF THE STREAM FORMS A PASSAGE-WAY AMONG THE TREES

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brown shadow as the clouds float in front of the sun and then move aside like playful children passing between the lamp and the wall and laughing at the shadows. And ever that luster from the wonderful sky! A rattling bridge of planks crosses a stream. The boards are shrunk so that great gaps appear between them through which come the gleam and ripple of water, and I have the peculiar sensation of traveling in mid-air and looking downward toward the earth. The horse is startled at the sudden transition from terra firma to the air route, and bows his neck and glances apprehensively downward, as if to assure himself that he still stands on something tangible and secure. The view from this midair observatory is like a scene from an old fairy play. Upstream is a snowy white wood vista. The bed of the stream forms a passageway among the trees, and the rounded banks, rising on either hand, look like heaps of pillows piled by the creatures of the wood to retain the little brook within its bounds and mark off the limits of its license. The stream itself is a long ribbon of white and blue-black ice, broken into fragments near the bridge by the outcropping of rocks from the bottom. The stones are ice-covered and glistening, rounded and smooth, but forming a piece of most wonderful mosaic of blue-white shades laid

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upon the dead white of the ice below. A fringe hangs over each margin of the stream so that no hard, distinct line appears where earth and ice meet; a fringe of softest, purest white where the grasses and twigs have caught and held the snow in fluffs of down. Here and there a dark opening appears in the etched white wall where a rabbit has made his way down to the edge and turned back to his cozy winter home when he found there only ice. There is not a sound that one can name, not a movement that one can see, yet down that rounded channel, through the interlacing nakedness of boughs and shrubs, comes the pulse of all the wonderful life of the winter woods. I feel it on my cheeks, the scent of it is in my nostrils, the throb of it is in my heart. I cannot go up that pathway to meet it, however, because I belong for this afternoon to the creatures of the shingled roof and ruddy hearth.

But I want to go!

Below the bridge the water tumbles from beneath the ice into a little open basin, and dimples and blackens, and gives out little silver flashes and invites me to a plunge. But I know it has a chill which strikes through the very marrow, even though it does try to hide it in silver and blue dimples. I will come back here in August and accept the invitation then, for I know the stream is

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laughing in anticipation of the prank it would play on me. I am acquainted with the ways of brooks. And there it goes, rippling out along between its banks across the wide, wonderful meadow. A little further along lies a wheatfield. Here is another of the singular beauties of this singular day. The wheat is green, brilliantly, deeply, richly green, such a green as flashes from the bleeding heart of an emerald just cut on the lapidary's stone. How green it is! And how cold! The snow is half hidden among the wheat, but the wheat is green of a hue that cannot be heightened, but is peculiarly affected by the half-hidden white. The field is not mottled with white like the plowed ground. It is not overlaid with white as the smooth surface of the road. It is not underlaid with white like the brown meadow. But among the green wheat the white of the snow lies mingled as the colors are mingled which a painter spreads upon his canvas. A practiced eye can discern the different colors, but each one gives to all the rest its own peculiar tone, while at the same time sinking its own hue into the color-tone of the whole. Peculiarly enhanced is the green, peculiarly modified is the white in this frigid combination. It is a combination of color to make the heart shiver with cold. No wonder the little oak shrub, standing in the edge of the field, rattles its stiff leaves as if in distress.

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The frost has been sudden and severe. The leaves on that little shrub have not had time to change gradually to the dark red which is the oak's winter cognizance. They have been frozen while the sap yet flowed, and have retained their glossy green with just an edging of brown. And that green and white field seems to keep them stiff and hard by the very force of its cold color. It looks familiar and yet strange; those leaves should be dry and red. They are green and brown, with a sheen upon them like that of opal glass in old cathedral windows. They are stiff and rigid and rattle in the breeze. They should be soft and rustling. I gather some of them, but soon they melt from exquisite porcelain to a mass of wet unpleasantness in my hand.

A sudden whirr of little wings attracts my attention to the other side of the road. When I turn I am in fairyland. The snowbirds have risen from the brow of a long stretch of snow dunes that are more beautiful than anything ever imagined by the most ethereal of mystics. The horse must go slowly here. Not a single curve or glint of this beauty can be missed. The drift lies along the hedge, and the coping of its summit reaches to the height of the wheel and, in some places, to the horse's back. As far as I can see, the marvelous succession of surprise goes on. The

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wind has erected the snow into ramparts of marble. Beneath the protection of their overhanging ridges the Master Sculptor has done his choicest work. Here are forms as graceful as grace of angels; shapes and patterns that no geometrician can ever measure and no artist ever pencil, as beautiful as the dreams of a child; shapes fantastic as the wildest hallucinations of hashish; mounds and swelling undulations and upheavings, as daintily rounded and velvety soft, as sweetly, dazzling white, as a maiden's bosom. Here spring up pillars and columns and pilasters such as never were seen in classic sculpture. Forms of grandeur, nobility, majesty are here. Grand, sweeping, perfect curves alternate with long stretches of the most delicate and dainty lacework. Great fluffs of down lie piled up about the borders of gleaming flats like the clouds that tumble away in mighty, rolling masses from the face of the summer moon. Deep grottoes and mountain peaks, fairy caves and enchanted hills, castles, palaces—I wander through them all, and in the snow I find the treasures of the Infinite. Along the base of the range of snow-mountains the roadside weeds have been transformed into things of wonder. Tall plumes, whiter than the brow of purity, lift themselves, feathery, soft; but they fall in a shower of diamonds at my

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touch. Mantles of whitest ermine drape the columns, and couches of fur invite repose. Here I seem to see, condensed into one stretch of country road, all the beauty of form that the universe contains. It is as if I had within my grasp the abstraction of beauty and could express it as I would. But I am afraid to try to express it, for only in the outdoor world of God can such beauty as this be born.

It is growing too dark to see more. My heart is full too, and I am bending, tired from the beauty of the day. The air has lost the golden mistiness, and the blue is dying from the sky. A great gray cloud comes out of the west. The shadows grow gray. The earth and sky and all lose their tints and merge into the gray. I cannot see where earth and sky meet. A snowflake falls upon my face, soft as a baby's kiss. The night is falling too. It was a kiss—the good-by kiss of the day. The cloud from the west comes on and more flakes fall.

It is growing dark. I answer the farewell of the day.

I will go home.

WHEN THE WIND BLEW

THE Wind came shouting and tearing out of the west the other day like a great rowdy schoolboy just let loose from a long, dull afternoon of fractions and capital cities and polysyllables and such abominations. I heard him coming and went out and looked and watched his approach. The west flamed, for it was just at school-closing time of a snowless winter day. There were scarlet and blue and purple and cold silver and gray-steel and yellow-gold and blue-transparent cloud-veils and broad-dashed color and close-gathered mist-wreaths, all in the glory of it; and out of this royal gateway came the Wind.

I heard his whistle first, clear and far away; then the sweep of his robe and the tramp of his feet as he trod the brown earth with speedy majesty. And I stood and looked into the gray countenance of him. Truly the Winter Wind from the west is like a schoolboy, not only in the rush and tramp and shout and boisterous coming of him, but in the amazing transformations of which he is capable.

There be those mortals of poor blood and tender frame who shiver and growl at the coming of the

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Wind in winter. I am sorry for them. They are afraid to go out and look into the face of the tempest and feel the great lifting rush of it and listen to the diapason organ music that accompanies the Wind. I am sorry for them—they miss so much. What can one know of wind who has never heard it except through a chimney or in the peevish whine of a door-crevice (echoed still more peevishly by the fire-hugger), or felt it except as a draft to be dreaded and guarded against, or seen it at all? What can one know of wind who has never snuffed it until nostrils tingle and eyes mist over? What can one know of wind who has never opened his arms wide and let it pound on his breast and clasped it there? Never tell me that Winter Wind is dreadful; I know better. For I have gone out into the open with him and been knocked and thumped by him, and fought back, and yelled when he shouted, and whooped when he screeched, so that man-whoop and wind-screech have gone whirling together in one eerie note along and out to where these disturbances we know as sounds die and are gathered into the music of God's universe as into heaven.

You can take such liberties as this with the west wind in winter.

And you can take just such liberties with a

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romping boy. Truly they are much alike. I watched the Wind coming. I caught him square on my breast. I turned with him and watched him go soaring into the leaden east. And my soul went soaring with him. A boy has that way with him too. He comes bounding and boisterous and flings himself straight into your outstretched arms—whose arms are not outstretched to him?—verily, straight through your arms clear down into your heart, and there is no room for anything else. Then he will take you and make you look into his face and through his eyes into the limpid deep soul of him until you are caught and borne away into infinities of goodness and greatness and majesty—with a sweep and a swing as of the wind—as you contemplate the unlimited possibilities of that man-soul. “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth.” So is the soul of a man-child. The romp and shout and glad boisterousness are there. And so are the high, strong thoughts and infinite sweeps and reaches of a soul. What a boy may become as he outgrows the hilarious crudeness of youth (but O, let him never outgrow the hilarity!) is as mysterious, as wonderful, as majestic, and altogether grand as the infinitude of the wind. The wind

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strikes upon one's soul with rush and buffet and shout. So does the boy. The wind whistles and sings and runs. So does he. And in the wind are all the energy and powers of wonderful cosmic forces. So in him, only they here are the forces of a cosmos that transcends even the cosmos of the winds.

Thank God for boys and winds!

And out of the gorgeous west came the Wind in glorious roughness and mighty voice. And I stood and watched him come, glad as when my boy comes romping home from school. Sweeping the earth's upturned face, gathering momentum, it seemed, with every one of the thousand leagues traversed from the splendid sky, swelling out the soul-shaking melody until it seemed that heart must burst and soul faint with the grandeur of it, the West Wind came across the snowless winter day.

There was a cold sunshine sprinkling down—thin, clear, crystallized sunshine like diamonds melted and diluted so that the sparkle stayed, but the fire and color were quenched—a sunshine brilliant but cold, bright but hard, brilliant and cold and bright and hard as the music that rings from a blue steel blade when it is struck, thrilling and shivering. And it was beautiful, this steely sunshine, for frost-particles sailed in the wind and

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gave out a thousand glimmers and white sparks. But nowhere the color and flash of fire such as snow-diamonds show or dewdrops distill under the turning and caressing of the sun. The air and sun and frost-mist all were neutral.

And this was right, for this was the day of the Wind. God's doings with his wind and sky and sun and rain are never inartistic. The great picture is limned, the great song sung, the great drama played with perfect unity and symmetry. No part is allowed to overlap the other and no part is crowded out. Each glory has its place and each its time for emphasis. Have you never noticed how days are endowed with character? How they stand out from other days? One day is always the bright day; one the rainy day; one the gray day; one the spring day; one the cloudy day; one the cold, one the warm. And when you say thus you say truly, for God's days are the days of God's specific doings. So this was the day of the Wind. Of course the sun retired his brilliance and dazzling lights and showed only the cold blue sheen that would never obtrude before the wind. Of course the sky—in all but the flaming west whence came the wind—put over the blue the veil of misty gray, not to hide, but to subdue. Of course the earth was brown and soft, with nothing to catch and hold the attention. All

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was ready for the Wind when he came, and ready to acclaim and not merely to give him precedence. This was the day of the Wind, and all the day was ordered into a setting for the glorious coming of the Wind from the west. One day at a time, one work at a time, one responsibility at a time, one glory at a time—this is the plan in God's great world out-of-doors. Verily, and the plan is for one worker at a time and one honor-bearer at a time. When will foolish men learn that and be governed by it? Each has his work. Let the others permit him to do it. And each has his day of glory. Let the others of us retire and help make it a day of greater glory for our fellow, knowing each that his day is also a part of God's plan. Sun-glory or sky-glory or rain-glory or snow-glory all come, but come singly. But, thank God, all come!

All the earth paid homage to the Wind. Not all willingly—there were some rebels against the lord of the day just as there always are among foolish human folks too. Some there were who acknowledged the Wind only because they must, and bowed before him only when pushed down. The tall, noble trees paid him willing worship, and in worshiping enhanced their own nobility. The fussy shrubs and bushes gave him scant courtesy and so made themselves ridiculous. After

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all, there is much of humanity in the so-called lower world of vegetable life.

The maples stood tall and slenderly graceful, their long, strong boughs slanting up across the sky in bold lines of rugged beauty—the beauty that is in what is strong and good like a muscular arm or a patient toil-lined and weather-beaten countenance. These tall columns bifurcated into smaller limbs of the same striking gracefulness and strength, and these again into twigs. And when the Wind came the maples got a little excited—as the strong and good sometimes will—and forgot the reserve that becomes strength. But they were glad to see the West Wind, nevertheless, and swung and waved their great boughs, a little wildly and awkwardly, but altogether enthusiastically, like the capering of some big, good-natured fellow on a holiday with his children. But the very awkwardness is fascinating because it is so whole-souled. The little branches and twigs whipped the sky like limber withes waved—a shade too emphatically—to the discomfort of the near bystanders.

The locusts are prickly fellows at best, but they are very lovable trees, after all. Their greeting to the Wind seemed stiff and surly. But when you know the locust you know that he is anything but surly, although his appearance belies that es-

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timate of him. When the Wind went past, the locusts tried their best to bow gracefully, but they could not. There are some men too who make spectacles of themselves trying to be genteel when nature intended them to be hearty. The locust is a hearty tree. In spite of his thorns he means well. The boughs are too thick and stiff to wave and bend gracefully, so they contented themselves with little, stiff, struggling, ungainly movements. The little twigs all *wiggled*. The whole tree was in a tremendous state. Here and there in the grove one burst through his temperamental reserve and threw his hat up in the air. Yes, your locust would be a very fine gentleman if nature had given him a little more suavity of manner and more elasticity in his make-up.

Next to the locusts stood two or three elms. Here are the true cavaliers of the tree world. They stood in towering, graceful, upright nobility when the Wind went by, like nobles watching the passing of their prince. They held their trunks nearly rigid—with only a slight dignified bend—the branches and twigs just waved aside for the Wind to pass, and all with the most distinguished grace. There they stood, the nobles. The prince passed, and they bowed from the waist like gentlemen fully aware of their own

WHEN THE WIND BLEW

position, unabashed in the royal presence, and each, with graceful flourish and sweep of arm and hand, took off his hat.

The fruit trees acted like good, hard-working people, unaccustomed to much outside their routine, who had gone nervous and lost all control of themselves at the great moment. They were full of little, pettish, fidgety, snappy, irritable movements in all their whole mass of sturdy limbs and stubby twigs. The strain of the occasion was too great. Every little twig seemed in a tremor, so that the whole tree gave the impression of being perturbed by something within rather than played upon by the great thing that was happening around them.

The bushes just gave little stiff bows and squirms and twists. I think they were determined to show those lordly elms and sturdy locusts and powerful maples that they were just as good as anyone, and I believe they bowed to the Wind only when compelled by surprise at his wonderful sweep and song.

The vines on wall and trellis thrilled through all their length. There was not much movement, but a thrill that ran and quivered and trembled and murmured all through them. The Wind is prince of the vines too, and they love him in a quiet, faithful way.

DOWN THE YEAR

So the Wind came out of the west, across the
sere, snowless earth, was greeted by tree and
bush and vine and me, and passed on into the
great, wide east.

WHEN THE SNOW FALLS

SNOW does not always fall. Sometimes it flies. Then it is like a flock of white birds, sailing before the north wind with the vision in their eyes of the sweet air and balmy breeze and languorous sunshine of the south, with backs turned to the chill and bluster. It comes soaring out of the sky in straight, unswerving lines, as if each flake looked at that which men cannot see, even as the bird looks at some distant, well-defined and well-known goal, and pressed toward it—even as the birds—with instinct sure and pinions unwearied. In slanting, even-sloping lines, the white atoms course leisurely yet unflagging; unhurried yet unhesitant; slipping down the long filamentary lanes from sky to earth. When such flakes strike your face they come with a little thud and flatten out in a tiny splash that feels like a fairy's handful of dew-diamonds flung out of the air, and they melt at once into a tear, dissolved in disappointment at not reaching the end of that long fine, sloping roadway to find rest among the welcoming brown grass-blades, or eager crumbling dust-atoms, or friendly frost-crystals, or fraternal snowflakes of a former exodus.

DOWN THE YEAR

The flying snow is gentle, but determined.

Sometimes it flutters. Then it is like a flock of white butterflies come by mistake to hover over dun fields. Fluttering snow is always big and soft and fluffy; it could not flutter otherwise, and it flutters in a gentle wind that is a surprise. From the coziness of a fireside one looks through the square vista of a window filled with the white snow-butterflies dancing and flitting. Butterflies must needs dance; that is their nature. And they must needs dance in a warm, sweet, gentle wind. These white butterflies dance across the pane and in the distance so merrily that one throws up the sash and leans out. And the cold wind strikes across the cheek and brings a flush, and into the nostrils with a tingle, and into the eyes and they weep. It is as if a girl had suddenly struck one's face with a branch of briars. The white butterflies must have the music of a soft breeze; how else can they dance so well? But it is a cold winter zephyr, and they dance again in glee at the discomfiture of the foolish creature of the fire who thought there could be no other cause for hilarity than warmth and balm, and forgot all about the intoxication of an eccentric, fitful, gusty, whirling winter wind.

Go out there among them, and how speedily the flush on the cheek becomes a glow, and the tears

WHEN THE SNOW FALLS

in the eyes are dissipated in a sparkle, and the whole frame tingles, and the whole soul would fain flutter and dance too!

The fluttering snow is hilarious and companionable.

Sometimes it floats. Then it is like scraps from the white summer-day clouds that are piled up somewhere above the gray canopy to be ready when the time comes to set them floating—great mist-bergs in the sea of God's blue sky. The floating snow comes down softly, slowly, the flakes drifting together, then parting and floating side by side a little way, and settles over earth and twig and housetop and upturned face like a mantle of tenderness.

Down through the gray day, white and wonderful against the gray sky, more white and more wonderful as they mass and pile against the gloomy earth, the flakes of the floating snow come from the regions where only our faith can penetrate; plucked by the angels from God's big clouds and made to enwrap a blessing as a child puts a kiss among the petals of a flower and throws it to a favorite.

The floating snow is tender and caressing.

Sometimes it drives. Then it is like crystal arrows sent from the bows of peevish elves of the air who have been angered at some indiscreet

DOWN THE YEAR

familiarity on the part of men and revenge themselves by filling the air so full of sting that the presumptuous one cannot venture into it without serious discomfort.

Driving snow is not white; it is a keen, blue-gray, steely hue, like the clear smoke that rises from a forge when the fire is clean and the iron in it is almost tempered and free from impurities. The affronted elves do indeed temper their darts, and the smoky, driving mist is like the reek from the process. Driving snow goes horizontally. Perhaps that is why it seems strange and unnatural; that and because snow ought to be soft and gentle. Soft and gentle and coming down from the sky—so we think of snow. But when it drives upon the blast it is hard and sharp and hurts the face like knives, and sweeps across the earth instead of spreading over it; and it is eerie and uncanny. You cannot see the flakes when it comes that way. It is just a great, strange cloak flung out, full of mystery, that looks like pearly gossamer, but is a hauberk woven of tempered steel strands and shot through with pointed rivets.

Yet the driving snow, for all its uncanniness and crabbedness, possesses a wonderful charm, for the driving snow rides upon the north wind, and the north wind orders his flight to the music of a diapason unheard in organ-pipe or bombardon, a

WHEN THE SNOW FALLS

note too deep to assign to a place on any staff, too strange to qualify by any term of tone quality, too thrilling to be prisoned by any apparatus of voice or string or reed or brass. It is only the heart that can know the music of the north wind, and only as the heart knows it can one realize its power and quality. But out in the midst of the steely cloak, eyes sheltered against the flying particles, all the world and all the sky shut out by the gray mystery, the mighty roll of it booms into the soul.

You cannot see whereon you stand, for the ground is hidden. You cannot tell by what you are surrounded, for the familiar landscape has disappeared. You cannot know what is over you, for the sky is covered. When you are in the driving snow there is nothing in all the universe but a man-creature and the rolling reverberation of the north wind. The swelling and ever-swelling song swallows up all the smaller sounds: the whistle in the trees, the rustle of the bushes, the swish of rushing snow; it fills all the corners of the air, all the corners of the world, and submerges anything less than itself. A ripple on the smooth surface of water is beautiful, but a mounting wave is grand, so the little ripple is erased. The song of the breeze is refreshing, but the boreal melody is majestic; so the little breeze-song is swallowed up.

DOWN THE YEAR

Out in the driving snow, that great music does not fill the universe; is a visible, tangible thing, and it swells and grows and becomes bigger and bigger until it is the universe.

The driving snow is pitiless and mysterious, but to him who disdains pity it is grand.

Sometimes it drifts. Then it is like the rolling of billows—sweeping, impetuous, graceful, beautiful. The drifting snow seems never at rest, never in motion, but always changing. It seems not to come down, but only to change its form and place. It piles and builds itself into forms of majesty and grandeur, curves and ledges of ineffable grace, swelling mounds and rolling tumuli, wide, flat sweeps and glistening plateaux, towering cathedrals and lofty spires, shapes of softness and curving grace, of rugged and bold beauty; and, even as one watches, they merge into one another, so that tumulus turns to spire and spire to waving crest, plateau to rounded bowl, and rugged ledge to fluffy line of delicate beauty. The changes do not come; they do not take place; they *are*. Enough! It is done, and the constant shift and transformation, the everlasting change, has never yet exhausted the resources of the Great Sculptor who molds and fashions this gleaming marble to his will. There are more forms of beauty and wonder to be seen in a snowdrift than in anything

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else in God's world except the sweet form of a child full of curves and dimples and graces.

The drifting snow is whelmingly beautiful.

And sometimes it falls. When the snow falls you can see a wonderful thing from your window. When the snow falls it is like sweet words born of tender thoughts and set free to pursue their own unhampered way through the world. And so it comes down softly and beautifully and covers all the earth softly and beautifully. The falling snow brings, without loss, the thoughts of God. The window frames a dazzling view and the world out there is a dazzling world. But not through frame nor window pane, nor even opened casement, is the way to see the snow falling; one must go out in it, and wander in the maze of it, and feel the caress of it on hands and cheeks like a baby's kisses, cool and chaste, and breathe the delicious chill of it down, deep down, into the heart, where it is fused into thoughts of wonder and words of praise and a song of sheer exhilaration. No one knows anything about snow who is afraid of getting it on him. And the only way a snow-storm means anything at all is to plunge into the dancing heart of it and tramp and flounder and sing and scream and turn your face upward and merge into the great, vast, misty universe of gray sky and dim trees and muffled earth and silence.

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The snow is a magic wonder; it transports gross bodies like this of mine out into a world of ethereal wonder and deep mystery. And it is a deep joy just to get it on you.

But what a transformed world it is! The lines and angles and sharp contours and bounding lines are all gone. There is no division line even between earth and sky. As you peer out into the whirling air there is a deep, dark gray that begins at your feet and sweeps out around and up to merge into a lighter gray that circles and embraces and in turn thins into a pearly gray that is lightest of all and which springs and arches into a great dome overhead. The dark gray is the earth veiled in the snow; the lighter gray—the band that lies just above it—is the bulk of the trees and bushes where a little light of the sky comes through, and the pearl gray is the sky doming up over it all. But where earth leaves off and shrubbery begins, or where the sky meets the middle zone, no eye can see. And the vision rides in swooping, soaring fashion up and out in one grand flight from nadir to zenith on the most perfect of gradations of gray-tones—without a line, without a division, without any little break or jar, one unbroken ascent. There is no horizon when it snows and no one can say where earth ends and heaven begins, or whether all is not heaven.

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And it is. It is one of God's great mercies that sometimes he lets us see just how his universe is built and to view his plan of it. And then we know that there is no real division line between his territory and ours, between his sky, his heaven, and our earth; it is only that we have imagined there is one there. Why be afraid of the snow? That is when earth and sky come thus together. Why dread the cold and bluster of the times of adversity and the winter of sacrifice? It is then that we really come to see the truth that all is of God. And there is no horizon between the things that are high and the things that are low except as we make it ourselves.

The familiar things are all veiled in a veil of the sheerest texture imaginable. The snow-filled air is like filmy gossamer spangled with silver stars and folded and doubled until it bars the sight where the folds are thick and dims it everywhere. And through the mist of it, among the silver star-flakes, the old familiar trees and houses and barns and fences look softened and beautified. God's world is always beautiful and no less when trees are bare and earth is dun. It is always beautiful. So is a woman's face, and no less when the first blush and flowerlike brilliance of youth have given place to the more staid beauty of womanhood. But wrap the earth of springtime in a veil

DOWN THE YEAR

of apple blossoms, and how transcendent and heart-melting becomes her beauty! Veil a sweet maiden in a bridal veil, and you do not know her because of the new beauty it puts into her face. Veil the leafless earth in a bridal veil of falling snow, and you know not the place of soul-shaking beauty it becomes. Veil a woman in the habit of the bride, and the new softness and deepened strength of her face will make a new countenance. The earth under the falling snow is like a woman under a bridal veil who has waited to put it on until there is nothing of her beauty left except what will remain through the years and not fade and fall like the dainty beauty of a girl or the delicate blossoms and leaves of spring. The trees are a little rugged perhaps, but the good old limbs and twigs are always there, while leaf and blossom are inconstant. How good God is! Trees and bushes and vines and men and women may contemplate with dismay the transitory character of the springtime beauties, but the sturdy, characterful graces of the colder seasons are permanent. And the veil of the snow is as sheer and beautiful and as pleasant to wear as the veil of apple blossoms.

And the snow softens and makes ineffably graceful the familiar things of one's little world. Angles are rounded, lines are blurred, surfaces re-

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lieved, roughness covered, dun-colored bark and weather-browned boards silvered, and all beautiful with the strange beauty of a familiar thing when seen in its true character, though long considered uncouth and commonplace. For it requires much of God's forbearance and a great many folds of the veil to reveal to us the truth, and I think he must be often near the limit of divine patience because we will not look at the roughness and uncouthness through the right atmosphere. There is nothing ugly in what God does. But we need to have our eyes shut to very much before we can see the beauty in many of his treasures, and that is why snow falls through the air and why some dim days come to a man's life.

When the wind blows the veil is rent and you can look through the tears and catch clear glimpses of tree and house and familiar hill. But it is only a glimpse; the wonder is too great, and the veil swirls together again and all is soft and misty and beautiful with the beauty of the snow. At some seasons you must look at even the familiar things through the mist and mystery. You would not know their beauty else.

When you see the wreaths of smoke from a chimney floating among the flakes you see a strange thing. Yet it is the combination of gray reek and white flake that is strange, not the smoke

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nor the snow. But, somehow, smoke among the snow looks queer. It is queer, but it is amazingly beautiful too. The soft, misty, curling plume twists itself in and out among the flying flakes almost like a thing of life. The smoke is all one mass, a blue-gray, vapory mass, while the snow is a myriad of fragments. To see the misty mass rising among the gleaming fragments, to see the fragments shooting through the mass, and all the time the weird flicker of gray among the white, is an experience of wonder no less than the gray wonder of the arching welkin. In fact, it seems almost as if a shred had been torn from that gray sky and thrown down to enveil and mystify the eyes which would look upon the mystery of the winter.

But it is not eerie, this striking combination of gray and white, of mass and fragment. It is unusual, but not uncanny. One does not know the possibilities either of smoke or of snow until he sees them in combination. Either one is very commonplace, but together they are very remarkable. I wonder if a good deal of the uninterestingness of our everyday experiences is not due to our failure to try out new combinations of familiar things. There are only a comparatively few elements known to chemists, but from these are formed, by various combinations, compounds

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greater in number than may be counted. Life is made up of about the same ingredients wherever we see it, and the sameness palls on many until the soul is sick. But the same elements combined in different proportions and different manner might make of it a most wonderful thing. So commonplace a thing as our love for company and its gratification by gathering one's friends around him at dinner may, by a new combination, be made to yield an amazing zest. And it is not a new thing either. A Galilæan Peasant hit on this particular combination a long time ago. He said, "When thou makest a feast, go out and call the poor, the maimed, and the blind." Now here is a new thing under the sun. A man's social life and his friendships, like a silver mist that glorifies his personality, are to be brought into combination with his charity (Charity, forsooth! Charity properly means love, and we make it mean grudging alms!), the cold, white flakes of which may be showered ever so thickly about him, but are as cold as the snow. Yes, his social life and his charity brought together like the smoke and the snow! I do not know whether any in Galilee tried the plan or not, but many since then have, and the new combination of familiar things has brought a beauty and interest undreamed into their lives. The commonplace elements may always be com-

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bined differently. How foolish we are to persist in keeping to the same old compounds—that have palled upon us and dulled the keen edge of life—when the mixture of love with duty, heart with work, soul with charity, or some other unusual combination will bring all the wonders of a fresh life to our jaded souls!

I am glad God let me see the smoke among the snowflakes one day.

When you look at the falling snow it seems tumultuous and impetuous, a turbulent rush and tossing and crossing and confusion of atoms. The downward rush of flakes seems swift and impetuous; there is no rest in the wild career between heaven and earth, and the eye is confused and bewildered until it seems that there is nothing in all the world but flying snow that must fly forever and never come to rest.

But this is because you try to see too much at once. God has not made us big enough of vision to comprehend all that goes on about us, even all of a snowstorm. So we too frequently try to glimpse all the universe, and fail, and decide that it is all a muddle, and there is no beauty in it, and no purpose behind it, and perhaps no God over it. And sometimes we try to gather into one glance all that our own lives contain. You cannot do that either. Each day is a cross-section, and you

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can glimpse only that. It takes years to make a life and it takes decades to fit a life rightly into God's scheme of things; neither one can be done at a glance, nor can one see at a glance how it is going to be done. So there is only a confused impression of hurrying, criss-crossing, opposing events when one takes a look at things in general, and there is just the same impression when you try to comprehend the fall of the snow in the large. Some things must be viewed in the large. In fact, if you want to succeed in anything within your own power, you must view it in the large. But some things you must view in part, and leave the large view to God until such time as he sees fit to make your eyes and your soul big enough to compass it all, because these things are in his power and not yours. The same God is God of the snowstorm and God of the life of a man. And while you may see only a rush of unrelated and haphazard happenings, or a mixing and moiling flurry of flying snow, God knows what is happening—for he is doing it.

Single out one flake as soon as it comes into view at the square top of the field of vision and follow it to earth, and you will see a different movement altogether from that of hurry and tumult. It sails lightly, flutteringly, gracefully, waveringly downward like a bit of thistledown or

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a feather from the wing of a white bird which soars so high as to be invisible. Its movement is slow and flitting. It sinks a little way, then joins a comrade and they float side by side for a time, then part and each settles gracefully and softly down upon the bosom of the old brown mother. The white flakes seem so proud of their brown earth-mother, and so glad to find her bosom again after their visit to the sky by way of the sunbeam roadways.

And single out the things that seem confused and jumbled through the world and see how gently, beautifully, gracefully, and, finally, how softly and restfully the God of snow and souls drops each into its place among the others and makes of them all together a white mantle for his goodness.

You cannot see the snow against the sky; it needs the dark background of dun earth and brown forest before you can see it at all. The top of the field of view in a snowstorm is cut square across as with a plane, and the flakes come floating down from out the invisible like the thoughts that come from somewhere when the twilight glimmers and the hands are folded and the eyes cannot see far. But they come, the thoughts and the snowflakes, down out of the great mystery. And the flakes fall on one's face

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with a caress, and the thoughts bathe one's heart like an angel's whisper, and the unseen comes very near. Somewhere out yonder the white flakes are made. Somewhere out yonder the good things of heaven and human life—dear voices and deep eyes and loving hearts—are fashioned. And flakes and blessings come floating in to us out of the unseen and we cannot see them until they come against the dark background of the world we live in. How could we appreciate the snow without the old brown, sober earth to see it against? How could we know just how good God is without the tone of serenity that creeps into our lives as we pass along through and from the springtime and summer to see it against? This serene time is rich because it sets out the dear white things that come out of God's infinite goodness like the snowflakes out of his fathomless gray sky.

So the snow falls, and the blessings come, and I cannot see them until they stand out against the dark things my eyes will turn to in spite of me. But because the snow and the blessings come, and because they make the brown all the more beautiful and are made the more beautiful by it, and because they can come from nowhere else, I know that up yonder above the planed top of the field of my vision, up there somewhere be-

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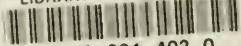
yond the browns and gray and sereness, inclosing them all, glorifying them all, loving them all, and using them all—brown trees and gray cloud and white flake and sere field and sober heart and patient soul—is God.

It is a strange and wonderful time when the snow falls.

WINTER DUSK .

Beyond the casement's angled glow
 The meadow stretches, cold and dim;
Beyond the mead a bare hedgerow,
 Above the hedge, like rapiers slim,
The eerie birch boughs slash and scar
 The rigid, freezing, steely sky;
Above the ghostly tree a star—
 Beyond the star—wide mystery.

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