

The Autumn Sun Slants Gently Down

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Have I ever seen so beautiful a sight
As Butler in the autumn of the year! Today
The browns and reds and golds are shimmering in the warming sun,
And the greens, resistant yet, wave their bright memories of spring . . .

It was on a day like this, only one short year ago
That moved by a deeper urgency that I can now express
And outwardly explained with "Oh, how stifling is this air indoors!
I'm going out to limber up a bit,"
Down a welcome path I turned my way.
Overhead the branches intertwined and formed a canopy of color
Through which I gazed to see the hazy mist of blue, blue sky.
And blanketing the ground, dry, crunchy leaves
Drifted here and there, in careless glee
Responding to my kicking, shuffling feet.
And on my quickened senses played a host of lovely things:
The beloved, familiar tree of weeping grace
Gently nodding to the towers of sparkling gray;
Other trees so metamorphosed that they seemed not trees at all,
But a glorious, dancing mass of flaming gold
Or an undulating sea of winey red;
The softly-murmured flow of a leafy-surfaced stream
Intensifying beauty in its own reflective depths;
The subtle, hybrid fragrance of fall flowers and blue bonfire smoke
Filling the air with crisp exhilaration . . .

But as I walked along absorbing to myself the very atmosphere around me
Like a substance some great Chemist is exposing to the light;
An alien note crept in the natural air,
And a sound of ringing voices lifted high in boisterous song
Echoed and reechoed through the trees.
Lustily the words rang, "Off we go into the wild blue yonder,
Climbing high into the sky . . ."
I listened, tense, until the sounds had died away.

Today the campus shines with that same glow it had a year ago
As if the intervening time had never been,
For as I walk the leaves are crunching still
And the trees, still metamorphosed, stand glistening there.
But vainly do I listen for those virile strains
Of strong young voices lifted high in song,
For they have gone to fly in the wild blue
They sang so lustily about.
They have gone to rise, to rise again, and more
Perhaps to rise again and rise no more.

Still the autumn sun slants gently down
Upon a perfect leaf, a tranquil stream,
A rainbow promise to the ones who seek
For life again, and hope, and power to dream.