

Leaf By Leaf

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A Tree in Autumn is a lovely sight. One tree alone can concentrate the beauty of a whole woodland, leaf by leaf and branch by branch, as one flower can give the essence of a whole garden. For the beauty of the turning woods is not alone in the scarlet of a maple grove or the sungold glow of a hillside stand of beeches. It is in the subtle change that creeps along the leaves themselves, running from point to point and vein to vein. A woodland in full color is as awesome to me as a forest fire, but a single tree is like a dancing tongue of flame to warm the heart.

Watch even a single branch outside a certain window and you are watching the color of change. One morning there is a spot of yellow on a certain leaf, yellow which has not yet quite achieved the glow of gold. Another day and that glow may

be here. It spreads. The spot becomes a splash of gold, edged perhaps with a thin line of scarlet. It creeps down the leaf between the veins, and then across the veins; and the scarlet edging widens into a band and then a border. Meantime, other leaves have begun to turn, some to gold, some to dull bronze, some to blood-red, all extremely beautiful, all on the same branch, yet no two are alike in either pattern or coloration. Finally, it is a branch as full of color as the whole woodland.

Thus comes Autumn, leaf by leaf and tree by tree; thus the woods become a hooked rug flung across the hills with all its folds and all its colors as they come to hand. I paused beneath one tree the other day, looked up and could see Autumn all over the hills of America. I can pick up one leaf of those already cast adrift and hold Autumn in my hand.