

TO

NATURE POEMS

## DAYBREAK FROM THE UPSTAIRS BEDROOM

Lead gray vision,  
Faded sky,  
Fronds of tree tops  
Meet the eye.

All is silent.  
Tree top shakes.  
Then the steel bowl  
Morning breaks.

Breaks in pieces,  
Falls a-clatter.  
Rooster hollers,  
"What's the matter?"

Little brown bird's *Sparrows'*  
Plaintive tweet  
Asks, "What's breaking  
In the street?"

Sun comes glowering  
Through the chinks.  
Wide-eyed screech owl  
Glares, blinks.

Rumors rustle  
Through red clover.  
Light comes pouring in  
All over.

## CUMULUS

A big, sooty-bellied, cottony cloud  
Reminds me of circus spun-candy  
And makes me want to poke my bare arm  
Right through its misty middle  
And wriggle my fingers round and round.

Or capture like lightning the whole confection  
In the hollow between my clasping hands  
And squeeze the vapor until it condenses  
To six tiny raindrops, rolling and tickling,  
Glistening, three in the palm of each hand.

## IF WINTER COME

The grass has grown brown in the meadow,  
The bloom has died on the hill,  
The songbird has flown from the cedar,  
The late autumn days have grown chill.

Fallen is the sourwood's red mantle,  
The dandelion's arrows are flown,  
The sun's fire is dimmed to a candle  
Wavering, by autumn gusts blown.

And some have a dread of the winter  
And shiver to think of the sleet.  
But winter is time for renewing;  
It is not a time of defeat.

The blanket of snow is a covering  
For seeds lying under the sod,  
Peaceful, potential, preparing  
To grow to the glory of God.

Then let us wait, thankful, repairing  
In the quiet that winters bring,  
For these gracious months God is sparing  
To help us make ready for spring.

## PERSISTENT PREACHERS OF THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

Early mornings, early April  
Dew-wet in the grass,  
Yellow suns of dandelions  
Glisten as I pass.

One inch high, nor tittle more  
On tender little stem,  
They bravely punctuate the lawn  
To stand bright-faced and trim.

And then, as Spring grows greenly on  
And grass grows rank and tall,  
They stand on tiptoe, crane their necks  
To overtop it all.

I wonder, though I never see  
Why gardeners feel it duty  
To thoroughly exterminate  
Each little alms of beauty.

? Fighting gardener, fighting drought  
Through the hot midsummer,  
Prodigal they drop their gold  
Daily for each corner.

Comes October's paint and flame  
And November's brown,  
? They trick their beams with modest grace  
In country, hamlet, town.

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## PERSISTENT PREACHERS (cont'd)

When powder-sugar snow lies deep  
At dying of December,  
As I track rabbits, shuffling boots  
Reveal the glowing ember.

*Under*

In any season, shine or storm  
They know no dereliction;  
But spark by golden spark they spread  
Perpetual benediction.

ON THE CHERRY TREE  
to S.B.R.

I sing of red cherries  
To the lover of cherry trees,  
Sun ripened cherries,  
Suns in themselves

For I was the red-breasted  
Robin that swung there  
And pecked at the luscious globes  
Painted by elves.

## TO DOGWOOD TREES

In March, when life lies chilled in winter's hand,  
All things are gray, and nothing seems to grow,  
When flowers are huddled, still afraid to blow,  
You heap white loveliness about the land.  
October comes, monotonous brown and chill,  
And eyes look longing for one colored ray.  
Then, hung with clustered berries, glossy, gay,  
You burn your scarlet torches on the hill.

Your stature is not lofty as the pine;  
The shadow that you cast is very small;  
But you provide the needed anodyne  
For tired eyes in early spring or fall.  
So might I, weary times when men repine,  
Send laughter singing to the hearts of all.



## GENESIS AND EXODUS

Like a painted warrior is the sunrise,  
Throwing wide his arms,  
Befying  
Earth and man and God and everything.

Like an old mother is the twilight,  
Nodding  
In her rocker, half asleep  
And less than half awake.

## THE PINE

The pine is a tall green prayer  
Ardently uttered by worshipping earth.  
It stands as tall as a soul stretching Godward;  
And limbs whisper higher in earnest desire,  
Yearning to reach through the gray wall of cloud  
To the azure sky.  
Why?

## THIS AUTUMN'S GOLD

How nice it was of God this early fall  
When leaves were beginning to crisp and some to fall  
Because August drought had spread a somber pall,  
When all  
When all things else were beginning to brown or gray  
And solemn scenes showed little to make one gay  
Nor color enough to fashion a modest bouquet,  
He suddenly painted the fields for a holiday.

Yes, just when we knew the fields would be sullen and sear  
We waked one morning and laughed at the thought of our fear,  
For the blanketed fields were exuding an October cheer  
With the brightest of yellows, the brightest of all the year,  
The yellowest goldenrods ever, I think, to appear.

Like a sparkling sea they danced brilliantly yellow and bright  
Waving and swaying; reflected the sun's golden light,  
Flashing it back with a mischievous schoolboy's delight  
In flashing a mirror. This was my thought at the sight:

So, God, when our green hopes are burned brown  
And dreams, like leaves, come falling helpless down,  
Shows fairer fields that bloom with faith, hope's crown.

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SOURWOOD SEASON

Only once in a long, long year  
The sourwood grows boastful and shouts: "Look here!  
Ignore all the others and look at me;  
Am I not a most ravishing tree?  
"  
"Is there one in the woods so well uniformed  
As I, in full dress of rich scarlet adorned?  
My golden tassels, my epaulets, swing  
From my handsome shoulders, like captain or king."

At first one is tempted to answer his brags  
By pointing out that his abdomen sags  
Or calling the braggart an overdressed fop,  
A flamboyant usher, or gaudy bellhop.

But who could condemn such true joy? There's no reason;  
The dog has his day, the sourwood his season.  
And the rest of the year he is mild and meek,  
Inconspicuous and discreet.

## TREE WISDOM

As you stand in gray December,  
Leafless, lifeless, sunless, stark,  
Is there in your mind a spark?  
Do you, somehow, still remember

How you came alive one day  
In early April, spread your arms  
To nesting birds that cried alarms  
Till singing safe in leafy May?

Do you remember in the summer  
Boisterous children's picnic feasts,  
Tired men and tired beasts -  
How you welcomed every comer?

And does the fire run in your veins,  
A surge of pride, as you recall  
The crimson robe you wore in fall  
As monarch over vast domains?

Standing stately still as king,  
You hush my fears with gentle laughter,  
Seeing life before and after,  
Dreaming quietly toward the spring.