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## THE HERMIT THRUSH

BY GRACE DENIO LITCHFIELD

Lo, ended now sweet day's brief lease,  
Dusk comes, soft shod with silence and with peace.  
In the spent west where fades the rose to white,  
Foreteller of the nightly miracle of light,  
Shine's Dian's star,  
Lonely as prophets are,  
And exquisite as hope is, seen afar.

The spreading shadows meet and blend,  
Are merged in one—  
As mingling waters mix and run—  
Blot out the lanes they follow,  
O'erflow the hillside, fill the hollow  
From end to end,  
On shimmering lake and blossomed field  
Lay their pale grayness like a shield.

Mysteriously still all earth has grown.  
A spell is on the hour,  
As had it power  
To call back memories forgot  
Of griefs that have been and are not,  
Of fears long flown,  
And formless dread of the for aye unknown.  
Nor seems it man alone,  
Who 'neath the mystic calm doth feel  
The rush of fate's inexorable wheel.

In the dim wood such quiet reigns  
As elsewhere naught save death attains.  
The breeze hath furled his fragrant wings,  
And cradled where the aspen swings,  
Sleeping, he dreams of many things—  
Of sweet-pea blooms in misty June—  
Of sun-ripe roses at full noon—  
Of lilies, kissed beneath the moon—  
And dreaming, shivers,  
And the aspen quivers.  
The pines, where dappled sunbeams drifted  
All day from bough to bough,  
Stand drenched in darkness, sombre arms uplifted,  
Cold dews upon them now.

Hushed are the songs that made their day's delight.  
Long since the White-Throat whistled his good-night.

No nested note is heard  
From any leaf-hid bird,  
Nor rustle of a night moth's wing,  
Nor stir of smallest living thing.  
The stillness deepeneth,  
With everywhere a sense  
Of something in suspense,  
As though the listening forest held its breath  
For a yet unspoken word.

Then on the silence falls a fluted sound,  
Melodious, full and round,  
Flooding the mossy solitudes,  
As from the topmost height of clustering firs  
The high-priest of the woodland choristers  
Outpours his threefold chant of threefold interludes.

Oh, hark! oh, hark!  
Across the creeping dark,  
Again, again, and yet again  
The soaring rapture of his vesper psalm—  
His evensong of prayer and praise—  
O'erflowing all the dusky ways,  
Steeping the night in balm!  
Again, again, and yet again!  
More liquid than a silver bell—  
Sweeter than lay of Philomel—  
Life's utmost glory in its lift and swell!  
Free from beclouding cares and frets;  
Free from vain doubtings, vain regrets;  
A burst of joyance with no human taint  
Of trustless dread or hopeless plaint—  
A heavenly-cadenced melody—  
A lyric cry of ecstasy!

Oh, hark! oh, hark!  
Through the creeping dark,  
Secure in faith, triumphant in desire,  
The rich song rises, higher yet and higher  
Above the sod,  
As though it would a sleeping world commend  
To a sleepless God.  
Again. Again. And once again.  
And so hath end.

GRACE DENIO LITCHFIELD.