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Incantation

George Parsons Lathrop

When the leaves, by thousands thinned,
A thousand times have whirled in the wind,
And the moon, with hollow cheek,
Staring from her hollow height,
Consolation seems to seek
From the dim, reechoing night;
And the fog-streaks dead and white
Lie like ghosts of lost delight
O'er highest earth and lowest sky;
Then, Autumn, work thy witchery!



Strew the ground with poppy-seeds,
And let my bed be hung with weeds,
Growing gaunt and rank and tall,
Drooping o'er me like a pall.
Send thy stealthy, white-eyed mist
Across my brow to turn and twist
Fold on fold, and leave me blind
To all save visions in the mind.
Then, in the depth of rain-fed streams
I shall slumber, and in dreams
Slide through some long glen that burns
With a crust of blood-red ferns

And brown-withered wings of brake
Like a burning lava-lake;—
So, urged to fearful, faster flow
By the awful gasp, “Hahk! hahk!” of the crow,
Shall pass by many a haunted rood
Of the nutty, odorous wood;
Or, where the hemlocks lean and loom,
Shall fill my heart with bitter gloom;
Till, lured by light, reflected cloud,
I burst aloft my watery shroud,
And upward through the ether sail
Far above the shrill wind’s wail;—
But, falling thence, my soul involve
With the dust dead flowers dissolve;
And, gliding out at last to sea,
Lulled to a long tranquillity,
The perfect poise of seasons keep
With the tides that rest at neap.
So must be fulfilled the rite
That giveth me the dead year’s might;
And at dawn I shall arise
A spirit, though with human eyes,
A human form and human face;
And where’er I go or stay,
There the summer’s perished grace
Shall be with me, night and day.

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