

OREGON OCTOBER

I KNOW October by brave bloom that lingers,
Crowding long beauty into respite brief,
By wisps of fog between the dark fir-fingers,
By sodden grasses, and by fall of leaf.

Yes, and by hills, that, like some circus mummer,
Prank themselves out to hide their slow decay,
Painting their wrinkles with a hue of summer
That mimics sunshine on the rainiest day.

Thus do I know October; by the daring
Of cob-web wheels that flaunt their gems at noon,
And the thick cloud-wrap all the world is wearing,
Like a dark worm that spins a white cocoon.

This spells October: this, the calm abating
Of sap and pulse in an enchantment deep;
This, the calm hush, and this, the peaceful waiting;
The earth lies down, but falls not yet asleep.

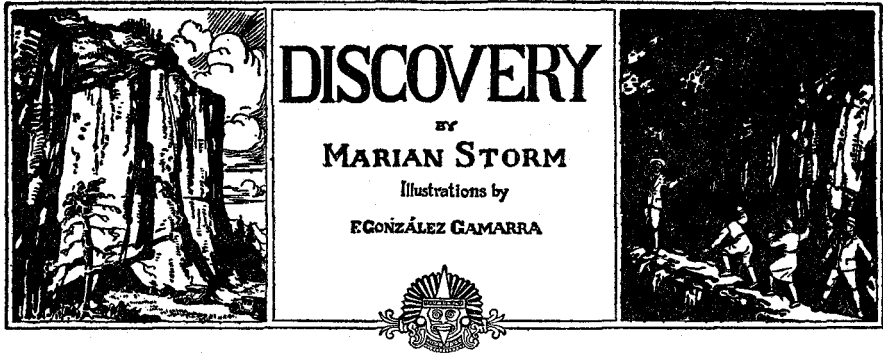
— *Frances Holmstrom*

ODD!

GOD made, they say, ten thousand races,
With fins or wings or beaks or faces.
And from them all He chose and blest
A certain species He liked best.

To me it seems a little odd
And just a trifle hard on God,
That those alone He chose as best
Should eagerly destroy the rest!

— *John Russell McCarthy*



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the shadows, — the peace and silence and the good dark?"

"If I knew how long they were going to last!"

"I love the good dark. Dear God, how I wished for it, toward the end, back home! When the physical passions have died and the mind itself grows sleepy, then the shadows are best. I always was sort of an old bat, you know, a prober of the darkness."

"But I don't know! I can't make myself remember. You were somebody famous, I think, and when I watch you and hear you talk that way I see a worn place in the carpet in the living-room, and old Colonel Bownes talking about Shiloh and Kenesaw Mountain, but I can't, I can't . . ."

He burst out laughing, — it was almost a cackle, — and suddenly was grave again. "For all those hard years I longed and suffered and fought for a little fame. It seemed to me that I must wrest it from them! I feared that the bitterness in my heart would poison me, — I think it did. Then when recognition began to come, perhaps it was too late. Anyway, I didn't want it any more. I knew what I needed, — range after range of lonely mountains, and purple valleys full of sleep. Then, I said to myself, the good dark. I have earned my euthanasia, — I will go to meet it. And now I am happy, for beyond all hope I have found euthanasia, the easy death, the death that is like a dream."

I could not speak. I sat staring at him.

"But I am glad to have a companion in the shadows. I find that every thread has not been cut. There are moments when I know the absurdity of loneliness."

"If this solitude, this profound con-

templation are everything, then are human contacts vain to you, — are people nothing, and all the warmth . . ."

"Remember that I am speaking here in extreme old age. There are times when the good dark is best, there are men who must seek it." He sat up straight, and the blue veins stood out upon his pallid hands, tense upon the arms of the chair. "All that is worth while in life is the love you have had for a few people near you. But that survives the shadows, — that is the one radiant thing."

He sank back. "If I talk on, — these old words of mine, — you will soon know who I am. No one outside the caves must get news of that, but why should I not tell you, who are deep within?"

"For pity, now, speak to me plainly! Tell me what has happened to me, — where I am, — why the Indians have not helped me leave. I don't care about the gold dishes, — it would take more than treasure to bring me back in here. I'll go mad among these awful shadows. I hate your good dark, — truly, I cannot stand it. It is a frightful situation . . ."

"Smoke. Sit down again." The old man motioned serenely. "You can't expect to tumble into Pluto's palace and get right out. Remember Persephone! I will tell you what you're up against, — frankness was my failing. You are destined for sacrifice, but not till Spring comes again. That's the only time we hold these ceremonies."

"Sacrifice in that pool?"

"The *cenote*, the sacred well. But we'll find some escape, perhaps. Gradually we'll contrive some plan. The Indians consider it a great honor to be chosen as a