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California Redwoods

By MARY MATHESON WILLS

A time will come, my love, when so much earth
As your soft hand can compass I shall be;
All that is left of my poor body's worth
A formless atom in infinity;
Less than the bat can bear in wheeling flight
I shall be sometime, motionless and mute,
A breath of violets on a summer night,
The half-heard echo of a lyric flute.

Beloved, when we stood beneath those trees
That reach in timeless grandeur to the sky,
Did you think, too, in the cool evening breeze,
Of other loves that flamed and had to die?
Did you walk lightly, too, your heart aware
Of bodies warm, now dust, insentient there?

Insentient? Oh my love, can it then be
That this warm body ever shall grow cold?
Can all this dazzling joy and ecstasy
Fade in the moonlight, like a dream grown old?
Can all my being's vibrancy and fire,
This too-live-essence of my soul's desire
Decline and die, and leave of my desire
Only a heap of ashes in the night?

I do protest this fate; even though I die,
And suffer transmutation, I shall live,
As tree or stone or dust; I still shall cry
Some brave invictus, and I still shall give
My heart for keeping into your warm hand,
And live again in you who understand.