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## The Children Are Coming Slowly up the Stairs

THOMAS HORNSBY FERRIL

POETRY

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### THE CHILDREN ARE COMING SLOWLY UP THE STAIRS

*Motions of atoms which tend, then,  
toward death and destruction can never  
have victory always, nor bury existence forever.*

—Titus Lucretius Caro

The solstice gable of my roof is dialing  
Noonaway gardens and the flutes are gone,  
The first leaf slowly flutters summer down,  
Yet here, anew, causing the light to be,  
The children are coming slowly up the stairs,  
The leaded stained-glass window on the landing  
Shattering rainbows over the bannister.

Below, the screen door drowzes on its hook,  
The shady porch is sifting woodbine rustle  
From scrolls of jig-saw fir some carpenter  
Had laced together, hours by very fashion,  
One summer day when horses nodded at  
Their hitching posts under the cottonwoods.  
Still, up the stairs the woodbine breath is drifting,  
A scent of light ago to be remembered.

How curious of coming up the stairs  
Of this old house, these tip-toe boys and girls  
Poking their fingers into peacock whorls  
Of stained glass carpeting the treads and risers.

The children loll for centuries on the landing,  
They laugh, they chant, they whisper mysteries,



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Barcfoot they clamber trellises of ghosts,  
They quarrel, they fall,  
They grip again and climb,  
They scuff the soda rungs of skeleton lakes,  
They twinkle-skip and prance the bird-song ways  
The ice-cap suffers woods to keep a while,  
They stalk the tug of the moon  
On the hills, on the beaches,  
They slosh the tides that bathe and dry the slain  
In estuaries festering cenotaphs.

The children are coming slowly up the stairs,  
Wrathful as judges and lovers,  
They are the elves, the clowns, the lions,  
The wry prosperities of weeds and treasure,  
They are the morning over the dust of spearmen,  
Over the mountains grinding the mountains to pieces,  
Deep are their eyes as pools in the darkest forest  
Knowing by evening noon some constellations  
And by night some stars.