

THE TESTAMENT OF
CHARLES ERSKINE SCOTT WOOD

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Margery Erskine
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This little book is
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the amusement of
the grandchildren
and is not supposed
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CEP

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IN the names of all the Pagan gods,
I, CHARLES ERSKINE SCOTT WOOD,
The sole and single of that name,
Knowing seventy years of ill and good,
Unknown to that junk dealer, Fame,
Though in my youth I, stupid, fought,
Wearing the livery of the State,
Whose might is by the richest bought—
A bully which protects the great;
And served that prostitute, the Law,
Whose favors are for rich and strong;
And now, white-headed, last I draw
My pen to write a twilight song;
But not for Fame.—I write these words
In the pine woods, where mountain balm

Sweetens the air and many birds
Twitter unto the forest calm
Each his own song,—careless if he be heard—
Make now my last sure will and testament
For that dear and up-sprouting brood,
Those grandchildren, in hut and tent,
Who share with me this solitude
And whom I must too shortly leave.
Good-bys at seventy are uncertain things.
The gods delight poor mortals to deceive
And Time flies in the dusk on owlish wings.

To NANCY HONEYMAN, around whose face,
Slender and sad, cling long curls dark,
I leave the peace and quiet of this place:
The tall pines, which in solemn park
And shadowy aisles, red pillars stand;
And when with folly she is grey,

Will still be here, stretching strong hands
To welcome her who has been long away.
To her I give some certain beds of mine
Where soft on pine-leaves many an hour I lay,
My back against a kindly comrade pine,
And watched the chipmunks on the logs at play.
To her, also, I make a good bequest
Of the people of the woods, the wide-eyed deer,
Burly black bears, squirrels and the rest,
Especially this chipmunk, who with neither fear
Nor reverence now at me squeaks and jibes
From my own log, jerking his little tail.
I mean the one with black and yellow stripes
Along his sides. Nor let this giving fail.

To "BUZZY," DAVID ERSKINE HONEYMAN,
Of the quick smile, I freely give the flowers,
And that's a treasure for the great god Pan.

Blue lupines, orchids, pale, which after showers,
Each holds a moonstone at its stem,
Blue pentstemon, red cardinals and bright
Indian paintbrush, and the diadem
Of cool, damp spots, the Mt. Hood lilies, white;
Wild peonies, and by the river's brim
Yellow snap-dragons. All the flowers and weeds
Unknown, or low, or tall, I give to him;
But not the grasses, herbs or fruits or seeds.
These I except; one who owns the wild flowers
Has all the brightest of the long year's hours.
To him I give the nectar in the cups,
And draughts of that mad-making nectar, Truth.
Bitter it is, but of it all gods sup.
Also to him, that comic fellow, Youth,
With morning-glory clown-cap, harlequin
Suit of poppies, lilies, sunflowers, blue
Larkspur and wings of cobweb, thin.
Take care of them; they easy are torn through.

TO ERSKINE BIDDLE WOOD, called ERSKINSON,
I give all trout in the Metolius,
The pretty dottings their bright sides upon,
And the red streak;—the sudden splash and fuss
When quick they show a golden-gleaming side;
As swift they dart through the green waters cool,
The big ones who majestic, sullen hide
Each in his own dark ever-boiling pool.
Especially I give to him that monster one
He hooked at Horseshoe Bend and for an hour,
A long hour by the watch and by the sun,
Valiant fought, praying the gods for power
To land him, and that Daddy would but come.
But who can hold or stay the hand of Fate?
When conquered, only gasping, sudden gone
By the mere lifting of his giant weight.
So sink we in the pool Oblivion
By our own weight. —To stout-heart ERSKINSON

I do bequeath this trout and his estate.
The round-eyed beaver unto him, also
I give, shy vassals of the river,—cunning folk,
Engineers who dam the river flow,
Hew trees and dig canals. If they but spoke,
They would be wise as us;—could shoot and vote.
The grey-haired Moon who, since this round
 World's birth,
Has climbed Green Ridge, sees us and sees the
 beaver

As coldly she looks down on our dark earth.
I wonder which she loves, and which the River.
I give him mornings on the river-bank,
Song of the river when the new sun shines
On the ripples, and the grass with dew is dank
Also the solemn discourse of the pines,
At evening when the melting shadows fall
And Peace sits on the bank with folded wings;

The birds all chirruping a good-night call,
And deep in dusk a yellow warbler sings.
The river-deeps, grey as his honest eyes,
I give to him. They run for many a mile,
And none can know, or guess, what in them lies;
And silver shallows, sweet as his grave smile;
And as appurtenant to this, my gift,
I give the salmon-flies that to the breeze
Of June their gauzy sails uplift;
The caddis and the gnats, all such as these;
And the overhanging banks so lush and brave;
But not the evening primrose, or candles white
Of the big-leaf. These I have given DAVÉ.
The river is for ERSKINSON'S delight.

TO REBECCA BIDDLE WOOD, OR HAPPY BECKS,
I give the birds that mostly here frequent;
The gentle doves, small heads and irised necks,

That coo so soft when the long day is spent.
Pine siskins, tiny mites, that upside-down
Walk on the limbs; woodpeckers of all kinds;
Sparrows, song and vesper and white-crowned,
The happy singers of so many minds;
Lazuli buntings, bluest of all gems;
Robins that cluck the dawn and, flying high,
The night-hawks. Soothing it is to follow them
In their erratic flicker on the sky.
I give to her those restless water-sprites,
Those little river-nymphs in quaker grey,
The water-ouzels which with mad delight
Dash in the stream and cascade's tossing spray.
As I was bathing in a pool one morn,
I saw an old one coax its young to dare
The dangers of the rapids, or be borne
Light as a lark upon the morning air.
Not either would it do, but up and down

Teetered and protested with shrill peep.
It could not fly and surely it would drown
If it should venture on that foamy deep.
Ah ha, I thought, you are a coward too.
You only show your wings, but will not fly,
Yet you are born a fledgling of the blue,
Master alike of water, earth and sky.
I know, my little brother; I understand:
Brave hearts, not wings, launch to the great
unknown,
And presently you'll conquer sky and land
And make the hissing torrent all your own.
I give to BECKS this water-ouzel child
And I enjoin it tribute bring to her,
From water, earth and sky; in April mild
Some evening by the stream it sing to her.
I give to her, because her heart is good,
The hawks and owls and such outlaws, outcasts,

Whose ministering to men, misunderstood,
Brings them, our friends, to felon's death at last.
So Saviours always shine from out the past.
I give her birds because of our cell-mates.
The birds seem happiest and full of cheer,
With no rebellion at relentless fate.
Their words one song of hope, without a fear.
Out lying in the sunny woods sometimes
I've heard a steady, happy little hum
And thought it was the music of the pines,
But presently small BECKS would singing come,
Gathering strawberries in the open glade,
Her chubby hands stained red,—but not with
 blood;
A singing, humming, happy little maid
To whom the world was love and all was good.
To all the gods I pray it may be so,
For love breeds love as sure as hate breeds woe.

To JUDY—JUDITH HONEYMAN, I mean,
Though I have had much scorn and ill from her,
I give the red-top in the meadow green
Through which she rambles like a bee astir,
Her small head glowing in the loving sun,
A burnished copper ball that roves and roves
Until she comes a clover-patch upon
And sucks the big red blooms she dearly loves.
I give her all the yarrow which stars white
The red-top pink of her delightful meadow.
The spots the bold, cloud-piercing sun makes
bright
And all the spots where big clouds cast a shadow.
To her I give pine-cones she loves to hoard,
Cast slyly to her by the pine-tree giant,
The dandelion and lily-pollen stored
Yellow upon red lips that pout defiant;
But little good have I had of her will,

Yet I am old and know how wise that Saviour
Who said hate not, but render good for ill;
And so, in spite of her unjust behavior,
I give her all those herbs and fruits and seeds
Which I reserved from DAVE, her elder brother;
Strawberries, lying thick as coral beads;
Blackberries, scrambling over one another;
Mint, pungent at the river's edge, wild thyme,
Waldmeister and such fragrant precious
growings,
And, as I'm growing rather tired of rhyme,
This is, for her, the last of my bestowings.
Namely, eight black, eight yellow and ten red
And ten blue butterflies, to be selected
At her own will and pleasure. Be it said,
However, this bequest is not perfected
Save on condition that said butterflies,
And each of them, be given right of rover

In tyrant JUDY's meadow, as it lies,
With freedom of the red and the white clover.
Lastly, to each and unto every one
Of my grandchildren, whereso'er they be,
To little "BABS" and BRYSE and MARIAN
In the sagebrush, and to those stalwart three:
MAXIE and BERWICK, little JOHN or JACK,
Robbing the ocean of its sandy toy,
And wanderers who will be coming back,
Shy NAN, tempestuous TASH and ALAN boy,
Now in the dead dust of Penn's Quaker City,
To DEBORAH of the violet eyes and LYDIA
CHRISTINE. — These last are one; it is a pity.
To each of these. — Now carefully consider, you,
And to each one hereafter to be born;
I give green earth, blue sky, beauty of night,
The scarlet sunsets and the golden morn;
The black, strange universe with stars alight

And we left questioning every distant spark;
I would give something to take out the fright
From hearts lost in the vast celestial dark,
The never-answered questions of the soul;
But that I cannot. I can only give
The truth by which the Universe must live.
Beauty is Love, and Love the unknown Whole.

CHARLES ERSKINE SCOTT WOOD.

THE METOLIUS RIVER,
JEFFERSON COUNTY, OREGON,
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