

## The Fall Of The Oak

by George Hill

A glorious tree is the old gray oak:  
He has stood for a thousand years,  
Has stood and frowned  
On the trees around,  
Like a king among his peers;  
As round their king they stand, so now,  
When the flowers their pale leaves fold,  
The tall trees round him stand, arrayed  
In their robes of purple and gold.

He has stood like a tower  
Through sun and shower,  
And dared the winds to battle;  
He has heard the hail,  
As from plates of mail,  
From his own limbs shaken, rattle;  
He has tossed them about, and shorn the tops  
(When the storm had roused his might)  
Of the forest-trees, as a strong man doth  
The heads of his foes in fight.

The autumn sun looks kindly down,  
But the frost is on the lea,  
And sprinkles the horn  
Of the owl at morn,  
As she hies to the old oak-tree.  
Not a leaf is stirred;  
Not a sound is heard  
But the thump of the thresher's flail,  
The low wind's sigh,  
Or the distant cry  
Of the hound on the fox's trail.

The forester he has whistling plunged  
With his axe, in the deep wood's gloom,  
That shrouds the hill,  
Where few and chill  
The sunbeams struggling come;  
His brawny arm he has bared, and laid  
His axe at the root of the tree,  
The gray old oak,  
And, with lusty stroke,  
He wields it merrily -

With lusty stroke, -  
And the old gray oak,  
Through the folds of his gorgeous vest  
You may see him shake,  
And the night-owl break  
From her perch in his leafy crest.  
She will come but to find him gone from where  
He stood at the break of day;  
Like a cloud that peals as it melts to air,  
He has passed, with a crash, away.

Though the spring in the bloom and the frost in gold  
No more his limbs attire,  
On the stormy wave  
He shall float, and brave  
The blast and the battle-fire!  
Shall spread his white wings to the wind,  
And thunder on the deep,  
As he thundered when  
His bough was green,  
On the high and stormy steep.