

# Crystal Moment



*by Robert Peter Tristram Coffin*

Once or twice this side of death  
Things can make one hold his breath.

From my boyhood I remember  
A crystal moment of September.

A wooded island rang with sounds  
Of church bells in the throats of hounds.

A buck leaped out and took the tide  
With jewels flowing past each side.

With his head high like a tree  
He swam within a yard of me.

I saw the golden drop of light  
In his eyes turned dark with fright.

I saw the forest's holiness  
On him like a fierce caress.

Fear made him lovely past belief,  
My heart was trembling like a leaf.

He leaned towards the land and life  
With need above him like a knife.

In his wake the hot hounds churned  
They stretched their muzzles out and yearned.

They bayed no more, but swam and throbbed  
Hunger drove them till they sobbed.

Pursued, pursuers reached the shore  
And vanished. I saw nothing more.

So they passed, a pageant such  
As only gods could witness much,

Life and death upon one tether  
And running beautiful together.