

You Can't Go Back Home Again

Joseph W. Lawson (June 1963)

Memories of my youth I've cherished
Through the years I've been away;
A dream I've dreamed so many times
That I would go back home one day.
The time is now and here at last
I view old scenes in sad dismay.

The creek that tumbled tirelessly,
Its crystal ripples flashed with gold,
Taunted and teased and tempted me
With roaring rapids and sandy shoals.
Can this be it – this torpid trickle?
Struggling towards some far-off goal?

The tree down by the garden gate
With branches that fingered the sky,
The one I used to shinny up
With a proud, triumphant cry!
I'm slow to accept as only a bush
Its tired branches tangled and wry.

The great old barn where I used to go
Twice a day to milk the cow
And put out feed for the horses
Climbed a ladder to the old haymow;
Is not at all what it seemed to be.
I see a small, sagging shelter now.

Weeds and brambles clog the path
Where oft I have walked before;
A faded rambling rose now rambles
Right up to the weathered door.

The breeze that frets the tall grass whispers;
“Joe, you can’t go home anymore.”

Now that my dreams are realized and
My experience is positive truth,
There is a time of enchantment
That must be left with the game of youth; and
As I proceed with the business of living,
Accepting that which I see as Truth.