

o'clock at night, and spent the next day with Warren, who has gotten a very sweet woman to wife, and a most beautiful house and situation at Whitcomb on the Hill over the bridge. On Monday afternoon I arrived at Stowey. I am a good deal better; but my bowels are by no means de-revolutionized. So much for me.

I do not know what I am to say to you of your dear mother. Life passes away from us in all modes and ways, in our friends, in ourselves. We all "die daily." Heaven knows that many and many a time I have regarded my talents and acquirements as a porter's burthen, imposing on me the capital duty of going on to the end of the journey, when I would gladly lie down by the side of the road, and become the Country for a mighty nation of Maggots.

For what is life, gangrened, as it is with me, in its very vitals, domestic tranquillity? These things being so, I confess that I feel for you, but not for the event, as for the event only by an act of thought, and not by any immediate shock from the like feeling within myself.

When I return to town I can scarcely tell. I have not yet made up my mind whether or no I shall move Devonward. My relations wish to see me, and I wish to avoid the uneasy feeling I shall have if I remain so near them without gratifying the wish. No very brotherly mood of mind, I must confess, but it is, nine-tenths of it at least, a work of their own doing.

Poole desires to be remembered to you. Remember me to your wife and Mrs. Lovell. God bless you, and

S. T. COLERIDGE.

FROM WINTER SOLSTICE TO VERNAL EQUINOX.

My first glimpse of the morning was through a loophole of the frosted window pane. I saw the morning star and a light at a neighbor's, both of which struck out a thousand sparkles on the frosted glass. I was reminded of saline flakes and spars in a white cavern suddenly illuminated by a torch.

How the air burns one's eyes on such a morning! The snow was everywhere bluish in its tint, or as though colored by the intervening air. Minute snowballs hung upon the sprays of privet, and looked like some sort of cool May bloom. An evergreen hedge rounded up with snow, without hollow or wrinkle anywhere, furnished a long, narrow pallet or couch where an anchorite might sleep, if it were not something too luxurious. The space between the banks of the creek, now at its lowest winter ebb, was smoothly spread with snow, yielding a

white, clean highway, or lowway, for invisible and unimagined travelers, — spirits of the keen and tenuous air. One tree, as I passed under, whispered with its dozen dry leaves, "Pity, oh, pity me!" For "pity," indeed, I would have plucked and thrown away its leaves, had they been within reach. But all its fellows slept, or dreamed, in seasonable quiescence.

To-day, the noise of the woods was twofold: the great wave or surge sound in the treetops as the wind swept through them; then, the fitful, cautionary, light whisper, the "sh" and "hist," that ran everywhere among the dry leaves. And what is the tragedy of the cast-off honors of the tree, that, as the feet stir the leafy drift, there go forth the syllables, "hor-ror, hor-ror"?

I was, indeed, admonished to leave

the woods, through the falling of a tree but a few yards away from where I sat at the roots of another tree. What a boon is life when Fate makes a feint of snatching it away from us, and then, with a grim, aboriginal humor, satisfied with having frightened us out of our wits, smilingly hands it back for us to keep a little longer! I might, then, come another year; I might again smell the sweet odor of the moist forest mould in that place, and gather the violets of a coming spring from the knoll near by, where they first peep forth. This and more, thus epitomized or symbolized, were yet in my portion. So it was not possible death, but potential life, with a warmer impetus in the currents of being, which in that moment surged into my quickened consciousness. How should we feel what death is, who can never taste the draught without quite draining the cup? But hint at death, merely, and the experience of life runs the deeper, awaking a stronger cry of inalienable possession.

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Most haunting of all are those morning visions which the dream-artist fails to finish.

A sleeper awakes with the dream of a voice
 Enchaining the ear;
 Not a tone, not a word, yet there is no choice
 All day but to hear.
 O voice of Fate,
 Out of dreams be fulfilled or early or late!

A sleeper awakes with the dream of a face,
 Wavering, fair;
 And all day long its shadowy grace
 Follows ever where.
 O face of Fate,
 Out of dreams be fulfilled or early or late!

.

Fog and frost. — a weather antagonism, a meeting of elements phlegmatic and fiery, since frost is the fire that burns by freezing.

Though it was still twilight, I could see that all exposed surfaces, as the trunks of trees and fences, were coated

with frost, which seemed to shine by its own light. Each blade of grass would have been found to be striped with white, and resembling the variegated or ribbon grass of the old-fashioned garden. All was soil for this hibernal vegetation, which, like true mosses and fungi, seemed preying upon the irresolute and passive life of nature. And as I stepped upon the planks of the bridge, it was as though sugar was crushed underfoot, so thick and crisp was the frost. One set of tracks only preceded mine. He who left them upon the frosty planks appeared to be a genuine *matutinus homo*, all in gray, as an early-morning man should be; yet his garments had not been selected with reference to the morning gray, but to his business of dealer in flour! A span of bay horses passed. These had their plushy winter coats well mixed with the tingling gray of the frost; or rather, it was suggested that they were slowly undergoing transformation into horses of snow.

About turning home, I heard a high, quavering note, apparently uttered by some bird on the wing, possibly a belighted owl. The note died so gradually away, the attentive silence of the hour retained it so long, that I could not be sure when I actually ceased to hear it.

It continued growing cold. The sun, though shining without let or hindrance of any cloud, was feeble and ineffectual, only serving to make cold visible as well as sensible to the touch. A glittering ricochet of beams was flashed back from every pool of ice; lending the impression that there may be reflected cold as well as reflected heat. A glassy trail of light extended from the gate to the door, like the trail of light upon wrinkled waters.

Looking off to the distant woods, my attention was attracted by the mysterious play of two wind-blown smoke-plumes proceeding from farmhouse chimneys. Against the sombre background of the woods, these two jets of smoke seemed

like white waving flames impaled at some point and struggling to wrest themselves free. In a mythological view, these might have been regarded as signals raised by the *genii loci* inhabiting the woody bound of earth, — Homeric tokens and messages, as when Simois lifted a crystal billow to call a brother river to his aid. Or say so much fog was compressed into two spiral moulds, and that the houses whence these proceeded were reservoirs of solid brume and cold weather.

A field of old snow harrowed by the winds, it appeared. All recent loose snow had been blown away, and the surface thus left had the look of having been trodden by innumerable feet of herds; no single track showing plainly, but track upon track, in rugged confusion. Fine, light snow driving over the field might have been clouds of miraculously bleached and sifted summer dust; or smoke or steam exhaling from the ground was suggested. Sweeping along the surface of roadside pools, the whited gust lent the apparent motion of swiftly running water seen through transparent ice.

To the lake this afternoon, by the Jericho road. As we approached, it was impossible, at a half mile's distance, to determine where the shore left off and the water began, so monotonous was the prevailing dead whiteness of the prospect. A few rods out from the beach was a line of ice upheaval. The great boulder-like masses thus formed sloped towards the shore, but were jagged and abrupt on the north or lake side, rising to perhaps eight feet in height, and appearing to have been rent up from the level by the wind from that quarter. There was some resemblance in their shape to the rooty masses of upturned forest trees, — the ascribed origin of the "cradle-knolls" of the farmer's parlance. Between these solidly strenuous waves there was, in one place, a small cave or

passageway, roofed with a pendent arabesque, which, when broken off, simulated crystal pipes and trumpets, — the pieces of a hyperborean orchestra to discourse a "frozen music"! Beyond this line of rough ice the lake looked like a level field with slightly harrowed clods and small stones. Far on the horizon was a formation of ice that vaguely suggested the piers of a bridge or a viaduct.

I was told that these glacial masses are sometimes thrown up to the height of twelve feet; and illustrating how treacherous is this architecture of the ice-king, I heard the account of a man who had scaled the side of one of these masses, and at the top had broken through and fallen into the water. The roofing ice was but a thin film caused by the washing of the water up the side of the frozen wave. Thus there was produced an air-hole on a large scale, a pit-fall in the shape of an ice-pen.

I have often wondered how much the clouds passing over the lake have to do with the mobile streakings of its summer waters, — how much of this variability in color is due to the clouds, how much to the motion and to the differing depth of the water. To-day, standing on a high bluff overlooking the hollow of the frozen lake, I was greatly impressed, seeing the shadow of a cloud (and that but a small one) move slowly over the desolate white plain. The progress of the cloud was marked by a dark streak extending from east to west, just as in the summer, only now there was neither color nor motion of waves. How that slim, traveling shadow accentuated the dreary void and savageness of the scene, as though it had been the phantom epitome of some caravan that once had attempted to cross that bleak Sahara!

Returning, I read the fable of a shower of gold, — read it rather by means of fancy than by the natural eye. Particles of snow, light and fine, like dust motes, kept falling through the sunny air; or rather, every atom wavered and

floated and scintillated, as though buoyed up by an electric current. Only in the sunlight could this fine, glancing snow-dust be seen. The shadows showed no least trace of it.

What liberality of affection in the universal have we if we do not love the life of all nature, including dumb animals, which, for all we may know, are endowed with a portion of the same spirit as ourselves? To love humanity alone, to have no compassionate interest in these unlanguageed ones, is like loving the members of our own house and family, merely, with no feeling to spend on any unrelated individual. Humanity is our own immediate family; but, not to be clan-ish, let us make friends with the blameless good citizens outside this kinship bond. I would enter by sympathetic imagining into the life of bird and beast; would try to resolve their possible questionings, reminiscences, hopes, and fears.

What are the winter cogitations of the little brown bat that lives in the closet, and is called their "familiar" by the N— family? They brought the creature out for my inspection. Its hair, or fur, of a medium shade of brown, is soft and fine. Its upright, rather large ears, yet of a membranous delicacy and thinness, give their owner an expression of alertness and sagacity. Its face is long, and narrows towards the nose, suggesting the pig's physiognomy. The eyes, round, scarce a pin-head in size, are like black diamond points. Its mouth, when open, shows a pink interior; teeth white and tiny; and the tongue, a bit of pink tape or ribbon, is wonderfully dexterous in its motions. The "familiar," when a toy saucer of water was placed before it, drank, or lapped, with a kind of dog-day thirst. The toed and fingered wings (why not *pterodactyl*?), when spread out, were half transparent in their thinness, the underside color being reddish in spots. A little water was poured into the box inhabited by the bat, who there-

upon sat up nearly erect, deliberately bent its head around between body and outspread wing, and proceeded to lick off the water, very much after the fashion of puss when surprised by a sudden shower bath.

It is a distress siege for the sparrows and other small birds. Opening the door this morning, I picked up, on the step, a dead sparrow, frozen, like a pebble with feathers fastened to it. If these small mites were human, I can guess what their reflections would be in this trying time; they would question, what offense had they ever committed, that Heaven should inflict such punishment? But the sparrows, as if they accepted once and for all the parable which mercifully mentions them, enter into no discriminations arraigining Providence. If they survive the freezing night, their spirits and hopes suffer no visible diminution.

This morning, a downy woodpecker, after tapping about the posts that support the clothesline, and finding small entertainment there, flew to the ground, where crumbs from the table had been thrown and frozen under, unluckily, by the dripping of the eaves. With hammer-like blows, how vigorously he pecked at the stubborn ice! I did not remember that I had ever before seen a woodpecker alight upon the ground. And now the dear little chickadee sits on his bone (tacked by careful hands to the plum-tree for his sole benefit), sits, and sings, and says most enchanting things, in the intervals between nipping and picking. He has one note which sounds like the human voice practicing *mi, re, mi, re*, — a clear musical note, filled with sentiment, and somewhat unlike the piquant conversation usually exchanged by a flock of his merry fellows.

What a very gymnast is the typical chickadee! As he twists himself on his perch, bringing his head under his feet, I

am reminded of similar grotesque actions in the parrot. How tame and curious, hopping down through the branches, until just above one's head! There is a winnowing sound in the flight of the chickadee which recalls the rustling noise of the humming-bird's wings, or the night-moth hovering over flowers, in the far-away antipode of the season. Responsive to this sweetest note heard in all winterdom comes the terse staccato "yah, yah," of the fellowshipping nuthatches. This sharp note, sounded from so many different places, might be paralleled by the going off of firecrackers, one after another, here and there, at random.

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A young farmer tells me a good story about a woodpecker. While chopping in the woods, he observed one of these birds perseveringly boring in one particular spot high on the trunk of a tree. As the bird kept up this industry all the forenoon, in the afternoon the farmer, out of curiosity, and with the prodigality of our Western woodsmen, cut the tree down, and proceeded to investigate by deepening the hole already made by the persistent woodpecker. Finally, there was laid bare a large white grub, which rolled out and fell to the ground. The best part of the story is this: the woodpecker, which had all the time remained on the field of action, now came and devoured the grub. I dare say the woodpecker innocently thought that the man had seen its honest effort to secure food, and had generously come to its assistance.

.
Watched the morning star out of the sky. It stood forth, sparkling and clear, in color between gold and silver, foiled by the pale sapphire of the sky. I thought it would be a short and easy thing to see the end of the chase, with the sun so close upon the star's track, so I proposed a walk towards the east, keeping the bright fugitive in view until

it should disappear. It was almost a thrilling chase; for, as I walked, the star, to all intents and purposes of the eye, also hurried along, seeming to thread in and out among the treetops, like a very firefly of the morning! Finally, I took up a stationary watch. The star, too, kept watch of the sun, showing some tremulous apprehension; yet it stayed, growing all the time finer and mistier, till one who had not watched it from the start could scarcely have detected its form or place. Looking away, I was able to find it again only by tracing its position with reference to a certain roof and treetop. To the tense nerve of vision, the sky became alive with phantasmal stars; these, however, quite separable from the real star. Once, as a light cloud of chimney smoke went up, the star was more definitely seen, as when the sun is looked at through smoked glass. The red orb of the sun soon pushed up between two bands of dark cloud; and yet the star would not out! It was not until fifteen minutes later that its bright ore sank to rise not again, in the broad flow of daylight. Quite as I expected: I did not see the star *disappear*; while I was looking, behold, there was no star there, but the instant of its withdrawal was not marked. We never see the stars come into the sky, or vanish out of it. Presto, they are there, or they are absent, without warning!

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What pleasure the eye finds in discovering sharp antitheses, even of the most trivial nature! Looking across the snowy roof just now, I observed a pleasing effect produced by a sooty chimney against the pale blue sky as background. Encouraged by that delicate, faint-tinted foil, the chimney soot insists upon looking like some sort of rich brown-black efflorescence or rust, a velvety growth of mould, or a minute black fungus. The chimney becomes, at this moment, as piquing to my fancy as if it were some storied tower or column. I am

aware that this is "all in my eye," as the common saying is. But, more than this, the eye is a great autocrat, and will not be denied; if it seeks luxury, grandeur, adventure, out of the simplest elements, it will itself construct all these.

It is surely not well to look back re- pinningly, to trouble ourselves with the sorrowful enumeration of what the individual lot has foregone or has failed to achieve; yet a sort of generous disquiet may haunt us on this subject of losses. And not from altruism, merely, but from a kind of sublimated economics, which desires the conservation of blessings, we may fairly enough, if vainly also, wish that others might grasp the opportunity we failed to grasp, that some one shall win where our speed and strength fell short.

"Thus Nisus stumbled on the slippery place

While his young friend performed and won the race."

Would we might each know our Euryalus!

Hast thou found what I have lost,
All among the wild days tossed?
Alien, outlaw, slave, or thief,
Or of rogues the very chief,—
Care I not, if any one
Of my kind beneath the sun
Might but follow, might but find
What the wave and what the wind,
Ever beating on my track,
Made me leave, and ne'er look back!
Hast thou found what I have lost,
Any of Earth's motley host?

A star, or the light of a lamp with a dark space about it, to the eye takes the shape of a three-pointed star; one pencil of rays vertical, the other two drawn obliquely from the common centre downwards. Some slight variation from this figure occurs by bending the head to left or right; but the three divisions are still sufficiently indicated.

The evening is one of unusual beauty in respect to frost scintillations. Patches of snow here and there sparkle as though nothing less precious than diamond dust had been sprinkled abroad, or, to seek a homelier comparison, as

though the whole body of snow, like the fur of some animals, were charged with electricity. Dark places, bare of snow, dry blades of grass, also, twinkle with pin-points of keen, clear light, as they might if sprinkled with a more vivid dew. This is, indeed, winter dew; and the effect of the frost is all the more enchanting and unaccountable because of the complete silence. The faint, occasional glitter of the dew in summer nights appears half to proceed from the motion of insect life hidden under the grass blades. Besides, the wind and all leafy stirrs seem to help account for the flickering changes of the dew. But this frozen dew, the frost, glints elfishly along the still surface of the winter-bound earth, and, by a twinkling pantomime, appears to keep up communication with those greater frost crystals overhead, the stars and planets of the December night.

The moon this evening is not queen in an absolute monarchy; all the eminent stars keeping their places and shining splendidly with live fire of silver beams. How different always is the light of the stars from that of the moon, which is surely the lamp of the dead, throwing a dead planet's lack-lustre eye-beams! And to-night the stars appear not very far away.

"The black elm-tops among the freezing stars,"

says one. Yonder bevy of beauties gazes out through a lattice work of lithe maple.

The circumpolar movement of the stars, in these jocund clear nights of the winter, suggests a familiar and perhaps too trivial comparison. I think of the whole sparkling company as of a ring of children moving with hands joined about one of their own number placed in the centre of the circle. They dance on and on, around and around, disappear, return, disappear. I could fancy the sky swims giddily with their changeful splendors.

Last night when I stretched the thread

of enchantment between the sashes of the window, Day-before-Yesterday and Day-after-To-Morrow immediately met in the caressing sound that arose from the windswept chord. Again, as always before, the sound seemed such as I might at any time have heard, had I but listened for it. And to-night there comes a sound faintly tentative, more like a low, deep note from a horn than the vibration of a chord. The very window, where the slight thread is stretched between wooden keys, seems to me haunted; to the ear a strange, solemn, mournful apparition coming and going, now advancing, now retiring. What does it seek? A brave trumpeter! Where fell the legion which its fanfare incited? And do they not fight the fatal fight over again to-night in the windy fields of heaven?

Examining the wind-harp later in the evening, I find that it has, instead of keys of wood at each end of the crevice, two drops of ice, holding the thread between them, some ten inches apart. Thus Nature has far more to do with this simple instrument than have mortal hands. I provide the silken string only; Ice keys it and gives the pitch, and Wind plays upon it at will.

The wind-harp is not so unlike other searchers and singers of the unknown. Always uprises the strain bravely through the first, third, and fifth of the scale, but the ear waits in vain to hear the key-note reached; only the wailing seventh is achieved. But one poor half-tone is wanting; yet great Æolus himself cannot overcome the law which governs the chord. So likewise fail of completion the ascending thought and utterance of the artist whom the winds of imagination and emotion sway as they list. How seldom is the cadence satisfied!

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This slender homesick tree that died
Set in an alien soil unkind,
Uptorn in autumn, cast aside,
Lay bare to winter's frost and wind.

I brought it to my hearth last night;
I said, "Thy gardener will I be!"
And in a bed of coals so bright
I planted there the young dead tree.

"Now live, and bloom a little span."
The kindly flames compliant laughed:
They bathed its roots, and blithely ran
Along the bare and piteous shaft.

Then fiery buds did deck the tree
That never one green leaf had graced.
O Gardener, do the same by me,
Not leave me blanching on the waste!

.

Remembering Milton's requirement that he who would write an heroic poem should lead an heroic life, I am persuaded that he who would write lyrics must lead a lyrical life. He must in his thoughts be buoyant, impressible, keenly alive in all the senses; answering, as an echo, the music of many-voiced nature and human life. He must not suffer himself to be dulled, though in contact with dullness; must not be made poor, though keeping Poverty's company in an attic; must not be piqued into sordid curiosity; must not fret at time's deceitful slipping away, or at opportunity's non-arriving. Light, light, light must be his step, and list, list for all sweet and stirring sounds of the way. Whatever is met therein, he must, as a stranger, give it welcome.

NO NEW WAYS OF GRIEF.

Think not that thou wast set apart
Past touch of all relief.
Remember, O sad heart,
Thou shalt not taste untasted smart,
Nor strike an unknown reef;
Remember, thou sad heart,
That there are no new ways of Grief.

Grief long ago tried all her art;
No strange shaft leaves her sheaf.
Remember, O sad heart,
Of those she sets to ply the dart
Still Love and Death be chief;
Remember, thou sad heart,
That there are no new ways of Grief.

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When "commonplace" becomes an admitted grievance, it may be suspected

that the perfectly insulating quality of one's enthusiasm is deteriorating; that one is one's self becoming dull to those finer sights and sounds, those luminous impressions, which are not the prize of all, nor perhaps of any at all times. In genuine and unalloyed rapture one does not question whether he sees and hears more than others may see and hear. The vision being reality to him who has it, it does not profit to quarrel with those who may not entertain the same. It is only when the visionary faculty departs or weakens that we perceive the wretchedness and vacuity of life without it, and that we question curiously how they manage to live who have no use of this faculty.

A savage Western blizzard fanning boreal frosty fire from its wings. The rudest, if not the coldest day of the season thus far. Looking out on the white gale, it seemed to us that we were in the very mill of the storm, — the place where the chaff was winnowed and where the grist was ground, to be distributed by revolutions of the wind every whither over the face of the earth! A few steps taken out of doors in such a storm lend the excitement and sense of adventure of an arctic expedition compressed into minutes instead of months; while the knowledge that home is close by, though sheeted by the wrath of the storm to invisibility, piques and comforts with the contrast presented. Out of the west comes a wild raid of wind lifting the snow around us. These are the driving sands of the White Desert. These deserted ways are streets of that City of Desolation wherein dwell, according to the Swedish seer, the thrice inane shades of those who were esteemed wise on the earth, but who loved and benefited none of their fellow-beings.

The trees are not proof to such rigor, if one may judge by the voice of protest which arises from them in the dead

stillness of the keen night. One maple creaks like an old wellsweep in a summer drought. A deep fissure in its bark extends several feet downwards from the forking of the trunk, showing how frost has already driven an entering wedge.

The cracking of timbers in the house is a sound rather of the night than of the day. Although the added stillness of the night might seem to explain the phenomenon, it can more easily be accounted for on a mythological basis; say there is a lurking, mischievous Norse spirit who, when sober householders are sound asleep, delights, with great double fist, to smite the timbers, and terrify slumbering mortals in their puny dwellings.

The chosen articulation of cold weather is a fine falsetto, or the utterance of a tense, well-rosined string. How shrill, though small, the sound of bits of icicles clashing and falling together! The snow squeaks underfoot with the peevish cry of a bat; or the noise might be likened (since we are fond of making extremes meet in our weather characterizations) to the hissing of a hot iron when water is poured upon it.

In walking over slippery ground, the muscles in the soles of the feet involuntarily contract, as though, for security's sake, a sort of suction process were employed; perhaps similar to that which enables a fly to make the tour of the ceiling overhead. There is a prehensile effort on the part of the foot, the toes endeavoring, as it were, to make of themselves fingers, the better to take hold of the ground.

A Silver Day. Since morning the trees and the grass have been thickly hung with ice. Nothing could be more pleasing in its way than this flashing garniture draped over the dissoluteness and general squalor of the half-melted old snow. The trees, covered, limb, branch, and twig, with ice, were, to the eye, of the density which the first leafage imparts in May. They looked as though

they were indeed budding a crystal foliage, — a springtime thought in the deep heart of winter. The sun, coming out upon these laden trees, showed them to be clothed as with the lightning. On the east side of each twig the ice had gathered in the form of a cord as thick as the twig itself; and the tops of all the trees were bent somewhat towards the east. The crust of the snow was here and there glazed with ice, lending the suggestion that oil had been poured abroad at random, to assuage the storm, and had afterwards settled in puddles.

When at last it begins to rain, there is a curious crackling sound in the stiffened treetops, reminding one of the crepitation of breaking wave-crests; or one might fancy that in some aerial street the constant passing of feet is to be heard.

Later, when the rain from heaven has ceased, the thawing trees rain lesser showers of their own, from time to time casting off resounding links and plates of their glacial armor; and even the window panes are pelted with this "elfin storm from fairyland." The evening is musical with the clatter of the running eaves; just as though the house were islanded in the silver arms of some pleasant mid-air brook.

My daily walk has come to be bounded by that limit where, with delicate laughter and prattle, little Lalage slips under the sidewalk and the road, and takes her way to the great sea. When I listen to her thus sweetly speaking, sweetly laughing, I seem more *en rapport* with the old inland surrounding than anywhere else in this seaboard world. She runs to the great sea. But all small streams the world over talk as if they expected to run together into one eventual river. They speak the language of childhood, which can never be alien to the heart, whatever its adult tongue shall prove to be. And hearken how the voice of the water continues the same, summer

or winter. Once set free, it awakes with the same word and tone with which it fell asleep in December. To-day, closing my eyes, and listening to the soft *palabra* of the little brook, I could have believed the season to be June.

"Men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever."

Goes on forever with its infinitesimal pretty babbling and gossip.

At times we seem to be merely hoarding life; not living very much on some days, in order that we may live redundantly on others. It is winter sleep at the bottom of a dark, safe hibernaculum. Like the jelly-fish in the descriptions, we too have our periods of "rhythmical propulsion" followed by "intervals of exhaustion." Or say that these dull and ineffectual seasons are as a sort of moist rich mould, in which germs of luxuriant plants are sinking ever deeper, their dry husks finally to burst asunder and let a new life of thought up and out to the daylight. The unfruitful season, — when is it? Harvesting is a kind of preparation towards squandering or consuming. All the growing and quietly ripening time preceding the ingathering is perhaps the fruitful season pre-eminently. Yet deep snows, also, are not unfruitful; for by them the ground and its seed-vested hopes are protected and treated with a kind of brooding tenderness. Why should we be any more troubled by the lets and interruptions the spirit meets in its perverse moods than is the grass that a little while ago caught rumor of the spring and grew apace, but is now under the snow again with all its forward blades? If not those very blades, others will hasten up to the sun, when the snow is gone; and this will be repeated with every relaxing of wintry influence, until the winter has power no longer. Besides, I suspect, when we most bitterly complain of torpor, it is no sign that we

are mentally enchained. How should we know it, if we were indeed sunk in apathy? What sleeper ever dreamed that he was asleep? The man who froze both hands, lately, on the coldest day of the year, had not *felt* any great degree of cold, and was surprised at finding out his calamity. Conversely, it may be no sure token of most vigorous life and activity when to ourselves we seem most energized and effective.

Ay, brave he is! Such fire is in his eyes
Its darted fervor chases frosty fear;
And trembling ones that listen to his cheer
Take heart, and to strange deeds of prowess
rise.

Yet doubt not that he heeds where safety lies,
For none holds this delightful life more
dear,

And none has read life's worth in lines so
clear;

Doubt not that spirit brave is also wise!

Why moves he, then, where densest fly the
darts?

Why sets his sails, to cleave the wintry sea?
Because where ease and quiet lap our hearts,
Where Fortune of her softening gifts is free,
There ever must his thick of peril be:
He's only safe where strife a deathless zeal
imparts!

What endless exhortations to be spun
from the old, strong, if time-worn lines
of Chapman for text!—

“There is no danger to a man
Who knows what life and death is.”

The most delicate kind of flattery is that which refrains from all flattery when it is perceived that no obvious and expressed measures are acceptable. In the midst of much uttered and perhaps sincere approbation, the silence of one person may be the sweetest pæan of all.

How dost thou make me rich, thou bounteous
one,

Who, when the world its various gifts would
reach

To these desirous hands, dost smile on each,
And give best gifts although thou givest none!
How dost thou praise what hand or heart hath
done,

Who dost each careless praiser's tongue im-
peach!

Thou Golden Silence to his Silver Speech,
Still warn me what to seek and what to shun!
Bitter the praise bestowed like scattered alms,
But sweet the praise that meets the heart's de-
sire

When joined with heart's desert in one strong
plea;

And sweet the censure that with caustic fire
First sears, then laves with comfort-dropping
balms.

Such censure and such praise be mine from
thee.

The scent of the thaw precedes the actual process. I should think that the snow must soon be swept away, by the flavor of the air, which tastes of the leaven of spring distributed through the wintry mass. And yet the spring is still far distant.

Sap flowing, resinous bark, breathing buds, all are suggested in the fragrant draught of the moist air. In years gone I have been much puzzled to trace to its origin this compound perfume sprinkled upon the keen breath of winter. I have at last tracked it to its source in the evergreens. Though the fragrance is to be noticed at other seasons, it is never so marked as in the winter time. Is it possible that the odor is enhanced by the shedding of the leaves, now going on? There was a touch of extra refinement to-day when, as I passed under their swinging boughs, the old fir-trees shed the breath of the hyacinth upon my path.

The lingering snow, to which partial thawings have given an icy grain, though stained with wear and weather, does not offend the eye's sense for purity as when a new-fallen snow is subject to rough usage. Mixed with mud, the snow has now a flinty, durable look, as of crystal flakes and spars mingled with earth,—a firm conglomerate. Each drift suggests a change to some mineral substance, granite boulder, or loose shale.

As the thaw proceeds, the snow takes on a darkish tint, just as when a snow-

ball is dipped in and out of the water. In the partial thawing that goes on from day to day, I notice that the icy roads are marked by serpentine channelings or grooves, forming a pleasing arabesque. If some warmth-absorbing substance lay in sinuous lines directly beneath the surface, the snow would melt in just such patterns. The gradual wasting of the drifts produces certain curious effects. Sometimes, for instance, where but a little frozen snow remains, it lies in notched oblique planes, in the figure of a skeleton leaf, with serrate edges. Such drifts might be fancied to be the anatomy or framework upon which the whole architecture of the great snow had rested; now its ruined and crumbling beams and rafters.

The season had not seemed intolerably long until, the other day, my eye fell upon a spot of uncovered turf where already the grass looked as if it had some faint thoughts springward. That tuft of faded grass, with its gray-brown blades, ever so scantily threaded with anxious green, seemed to set a period, and to lengthen wonderfully the retrospective time. Long winter lay behind us.

THE GIFT OF THE MAPLE.

Lo! I, the dryad
Guarding this tree,
From its warm heart-blood
Drained this for thee;
Clear-dropping ichor
Drawn from deep wells,
Trickling in sunshine
Through the white cells!

Southern winds fanned it,
Sipped its mild wine;
Sacred fire brewed it,
Nectar divine;
Last, the rich fluid,
Poured in a mould,

Bodies in amber
Virtues untold.

Happy, O taster,
Happy art thou,
In the sweet tribute
Root, branch, and bough
Spare from their pleasures
In summer to-be!
Lo! I, the dryad
Guarding this tree,
Bid thee in tasting
Be mindful of me!

The curling smoke from the sugar-bush proclaims the initial industry of a new season. Heard or unheard, there is now a drop in the woods which wears away the stone heart of winter. Where the drop falls, from woody fibre to wooden receptacle, resorts a more conscious awakening life: there drink the first returning birds, the wintering chipmunk, and perchance the field-mouse, too,

“Meagre from its cellèd sleep.”

Nature occasionally puts on an unwanted *supernatural* look. The air, the common daylight, fills with fables. So looked the earth, the sky, or the waters to some dreamer in pagan times. I should not find it easy to define the impression that came upon me to-day when walking, as I looked up at the sky, which was clouded halfway to the zenith with gray vapor softening to white at the edges, and thinly veiling the sun. It was the appearance of the orb itself that made the moment an enchanted one, shaping forth pictures of the *Iliad* and the masking deities of the heathen heavens. The day-god showed no radiating light; only a flat white disk, rather larger to the eye than usual, gliding through diaphanous gray cloud. It was the silver sun of March, and the winged herald of the lengthening day.

Edith M. Thomas.