

To stimulate laudable pride  
 In his heart, since time began,  
 For mortals a law have cast,  
 As the pitcher is cast for the ewer,  
 That the slow alone shall last,  
 The gradual only endure;  
 And that wealth which grows in a night,  
 In a night shall fade away,  
 As the morning mists take flight  
 At a glance of the eye of day.

## II.

Success is labor's prize,  
 Work is the mother of Fame,  
 And who on a "boom" shall rise  
 To the height of an honest name?  
 The bee by industry reapeth  
 The stores which enrich the hives;  
 All that is thrifty creepeth,  
 For toil is the law of lives.  
 And he who reaps without sowing  
 A bitter harvest reaps.  
 The law of gradual growing  
 Is a law that never sleeps.

[CURTAIN.]

*Robert Grant.*

## A SNOW-STORM.

THAT is a striking line with which Emerson opens his beautiful poem of the Snow-storm:

"Announced by all the trumpets of the sky,  
 Arrives the snow, and, driving o'er the fields,  
 Seems nowhere to alight."

One seems to see the clouds puffing their cheeks as they sound the charge of their white legions. But the line is more accurately descriptive of a rain-storm, as, in both summer and winter, rain is usually preceded by wind. Homer, describing a snow-storm in his time, says:

"The winds are lulled."

The preparations of a snow-storm are, as a rule, gentle and quiet; a marked hush pervades both the earth and the sky. The movements of the celestial forces are muffled as if the snow already paved the way of their coming. There is no uproar, no clashing of arms, no blowing of wind trumpets. These soft, feathery, exquisite crystals are formed as if in the silence and privacy of the inner cloud-chambers. Rude winds would break the spell and mar the process. The clouds are smoother, with less definite outlines and slower move-

ments than those which bring rain. In fact, everything is prophetic of the gentle and noiseless meteor that is approaching, and of the stillness that is to succeed it, when "all the batteries of sound are spiked," as Lowell says, and "we see the movements of life as a deaf man sees it—a mere wraith of the clamorous existence that inflicts itself on our ears when the ground is bare." After the storm is fairly launched, the winds not infrequently awake, and, seeing their opportunity, pipe the flakes a lively dance. I am speaking now of the typical, full-born mid-winter storm that comes to us from the North or N. N. E., and that piles the landscape knee-deep with snow. Such a storm came to us the last day of January—the master-storm of the winter. Previous to that date we had had but light snow. The spruces had been able to catch it all upon their arms and keep a circle of bare ground beneath them where the birds scratched. But the day following this fall they stood with their lower branches completely buried. If the Old Man of the North had but sent us his couriers and errand-boys before! The old gray-beard appeared himself at our doors on this occasion, and we were all his subjects. His flag was upon every tree and roof, his seal

upon every door and window, and his embargo upon every path and highway. He slipped down upon us, too, under the cover of such a bright seraphic day,—a day that disarmed suspicion with all but the wise ones, a day without a cloud or a film, a gentle breeze from the west, a dry, bracing air, a blazing sun that brought out the bare ground under the lee of the fences and farm buildings, and at night a spotless moon near her full. The next morning the sky reddened in the east, then became gray, heavy, and silent. A seamless cloud covered it. The smoke from the chimneys went up with a barely perceptible slant toward the north. In the forenoon the cedar birds, purple-finches, yellow-birds, nut-hatches, blue-birds, were in flocks, or in couples or trios about the trees, more or less noisy and loquacious. About noon a thin, white veil began to blur the distant Southern mountains. It was like a white dream slowly descending upon them. The first flake or flakelet that reached me was a mere white speck that came idly circling and eddying to the ground. I could not see it after it alighted. It might have been a scale from the feather of some passing bird, or a larger mote in the air that the stillness was allowing to settle. Yet it was the altogether inaudible and infinitesimal trumpeter that announced the coming storm, the grain of sand that heralded the ocean. Presently another fell, then another; the white mist was creeping up the river valley. How slowly and loiteringly it came, and how microscopic its first siftings! This mill is bolting its flour very fine, you think. But wait a little; it gets coarser by and by; you begin to see the flakes; they increase in numbers and in size, and before one o'clock it is snowing steadily. The flakes come straight down, but in a half-hour they have a marked slant toward the north; the wind is taking a hand in the game. By mid-afternoon the storm is coming in regular pulse-beats or in vertical waves. The wind is not strong, but seems steady; the pines hum, yet there is a sort of rhythmic throb in the meteor; the air toward the winds looks ribbed with steady-moving vertical waves of snow. The impulses travel along like undulations in a vast suspended white curtain, imparted by some invisible hand then in the northeast. As the day declines the storm waxes, the wind increases, and the snow-fall thickens. Then comes that

—“tumultuous privacy of storm,”

of Emerson's famous line, which you feel outside as well as in. Out of doors you seem in a vast tent of snow; the distance is shut out, near by objects are hidden; there is a white

curtain above you and white screens about you, and you feel housed and secluded in storm. Your friend leaves your door and he is wrapped away in white obscurity, caught up in a cloud, and his footsteps are obliterated. Travelers meet on the road and do not see or hear each other till they are face to face. The passing train, half a mile away, gives forth a near wraith of sound. Its whistle is deadened as in a dense wood. Still the storm rose. At five o'clock I went forth to face it in a two-mile walk. It was exhilarating in the extreme. The snow was lighter than chaff. It had been dried in the Arctic ovens to the last degree. The foot sped through it without hindrance. I fancied the grouse and quails quietly sitting down in the open places, and letting it drift over them. With head under wing and wing snugly folded they would be softly and tenderly buried in a few moments. The mice and the squirrels were in their dens, but I fancied the fox asleep upon some rock or log, and letting the flakes cover him. The hare in her form, too, was being warmly sepulchered with the rest. I thought of the young cattle and the sheep huddled together on the lee side of a haystack in some remote field, all enveloped in mantles of white.

“I thought me on the ourie cattle,  
Or silly sheep, wha bide this brattle  
O' wintry war,  
Or thro' the drift, deep-lairing sprattle,  
Beneath a scaur.

Ilk happing bird, wee helpless thing,  
That in the merry months o' spring  
Delighted me to hear thee sing,  
What comes o' thee?  
Where will thou cow'r thy chittering wing,  
And close thy ee?”

As I passed the creek I noticed the white woolly masses that filled the water. It was as if somebody up above had been washing his sheep and the water had carried away all the wool, and I thought of the Psalmist's phrase, “He giveth snow like wool.” On the river a heavy fall of snow simulates a thin layer of cotton batting. The tide drifts it along, and where it meets with an obstruction along shore, it folds up and becomes wrinkled or convoluted like a fabric, or like cotton sheeting. Attempt to row a boat through it, and it seems indeed like cotton or wool, every fiber of which resists your progress.

As the sun went down and darkness fell, the storm impulse reached its full. It became a wild conflagration of wind and snow; the world was wrapt in frost flame; it enveloped one, and penetrated his lungs and caught away his breath like a blast from a burning city. How it whipped around and under

every cover and searched out every crack and crevice, sifting under the shingles in the attic, darting its white tongue under the kitchen door, puffing its breath down the chimney, roaring through the woods, stalking like a sheeted ghost across the hills, bending in white and even changing forms above the fences, sweeping across the plains, whirling in eddies behind the buildings, or leaping spitefully up their walls—in short, taking the world entirely to itself and giving a loose rein to its desire.

But in the morning, behold! the world was not consumed; it was not the besom of destruction, after all, but the gentle hand of mercy. How deeply and warmly and spotlessly Earth's nakedness is clothed!—the "wool" of the Psalmist nearly two feet deep. And, as far as warmth and protection are concerned, there is a good deal of the virtue of wool in such a snow-fall. How it protects the grass, the plants, the roots of the trees, and the worms, insects, and smaller animals in the ground! It is a veritable fleece, beneath which the shivering earth ("the frozen hills ached with pain," says one of our young poets) is restored to warmth. When the temperature of the air is at zero, the thermometer, placed at the surface of the ground beneath a foot and a half of snow, would probably indicate but a few degrees below freezing; the snow is rendered such a perfect non-conductor of heat mainly by reason of the quantity of air that is caught and retained between the crystals. Then how, like a fleece of wool, it rounds and fills out the landscape, and makes the leanest and most angular field look smooth.

The day dawned and continued as innocent and fair as the day which had preceded—two mountain-peaks of sky and sun, with their valley of cloud and snow between. Walk to the nearest spring run on such a morning, and you can see the Colorado valley and the great cañons of the West in miniature, carved in alabaster. In the midst of the plain of snow lie these chasms; the vertical walls, the bold headlands, the turrets and spires and obelisks, the rounded and tower-

ing capes, the carved and buttressed precipices, the branch valleys and cañons, and the winding and tortuous course of the main channel are all here—all that the Yosemite or Yellowstone have to show, but the terraces and the cascades. Sometimes my cañon is bridged, and one's fancy runs nimbly across a vast arch of Parian marble, and that makes up for the falls and the terraces. Where the ground is marshy I come upon a pretty and vivid illustration of what I have read and been told of the Florida formation. This white and brittle limestone is undermined by water. Here are the dimples and depressions, the sinks and the wells, the springs and the lakes. Some places a mouse might break through the surface and reveal the water far beneath, or the snow gives way of its own weight and you have a minute Florida well, with the truncated cone-shape and all. The arched and subterranean pools and passages are there likewise.

But there is a more beautiful and fundamental geology than this in the snow-storm: we are admitted into nature's oldest laboratory and see the working of the law by which the foundations of the material universe were laid,—the law or mystery of crystallization. The earth is built upon crystals; the granite rock is only a denser and more compact snow, or a kind of ice that was vapor once and may be vapor again. A little more time, a little more heat, and the hills are but April snow-banks. Nature has but two forms: the cell and the crystal—the crystal first, the cell last. All organic nature is built up of the cell; all inorganic of the crystal. Cell upon cell rises the vegetable, rises the animal; crystal wedded to and compacted with crystal stretches the earth beneath them. See in the falling snow the old cooling and precipitation, and the shooting, radiating forms, that are the architects of planet and globe.

We love the sight of the brown and ruddy earth; it is the color of life, while a snow-covered plain is the face of death; yet snow is but the mark of the life-giving rain; it, too, is the friend of man—the tender, sculpturesque immaculate, warning, fertilizing snow.

*John Burroughs.*

