





# SNOW-BOUND.





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A WINTER IDYL.

BY

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TO  
THE MEMORY  
OF  
THE HOUSEHOLD IT DESCRIBES,  
THIS POEM IS DEDICATED  
BY THE AUTHOR.



“As the Spirits of Darkness be stronger in the dark, so Good Spirits which be Angels of Light are augmented not only by the Divine light of the Sun, but also by our common VVood Fire : and as the celestial Fire drives away dark spirits, so also this our Fire of VVood doth the same.”

COR. AGRIPPA, *Occult Philosophy*, Book I. chap. v.

“Announced by all the trumpets of the sky,  
Arrives the snow ; and, driving o’er the fields,  
Seems nowhere to alight ; the whited air  
Hides hills and woods, the river and the heaven,  
And veils the farm-house at the garden’s end.  
The sled and traveller stopped, the courier’s feet  
Delayed, all friends shut out, the housemates sit  
Around the radiant fireplace, enclosed  
In a tumultuous privacy of storm.”

EMERSON.







## S N O W - B O U N D .



THE sun that brief December day  
Rose cheerless over hills of gray,  
And, darkly circled, gave at noon  
A sadder light than waning moon.

Slow tracing down the thickening sky

Its mute and ominous prophecy,

A portent seeming less than threat,

It sank from sight before it set.

A chill no coat, however stout,

Of homespun stuff could quite shut out,

A hard, dull bitterness of cold,

## SNOW-BOUND.

That checked, mid-vein, the circling race  
Of life-blood in the sharpened face,  
The coming of the snow-storm told.  
The wind blew east : we heard the roar  
Of Ocean on his wintry shore,  
And felt the strong pulse throbbing there  
Beat with low rhythm our inland air.

Meanwhile we did our nightly chores, —  
Brought in the wood from out of doors,  
Littered the stalls, and from the mows  
Raked down the herd's-grass for the cows ;  
Heard the horse whinnying for his corn ;  
And, sharply clashing horn on horn,  
Impatient down the stanchion rows  
The cattle shake their walnut bows ;  
While, peering from his early perch  
Upon the scaffold's pole of birch,

## SNOW-BOUND.

The cock his crested helmet bent  
And down his querulous challenge sent.  
  
Unwarmed by any sunset light  
The gray day darkened into night,  
A night made hoary with the swarm  
And whirl-dance of the blinding storm,  
As zigzag wavering to and fro  
Crossed and recrossed the wingéd snow :  
And ere the early bed-time came  
The white drift piled the window-frame,  
And through the glass the clothes-line posts  
Looked in like tall and sheeted ghosts.  
  
So all night long the storm roared on :  
The morning broke without a sun ;  
In tiny spherule traced with lines  
Of Nature's geometric signs,  
In starry flake, and pellicle,

## SNOW-BOUND.

All day the hoary meteor fell ;  
And, when the second morning shone,  
We looked upon a world unknown,  
On nothing we could call our own.  
Around the glistening wonder bent  
The blue walls of the firmament,  
No cloud above, no earth below, —  
A universe of sky and snow !  
The old familiar sights of ours  
Took marvellous shapes ; strange domes and towers  
Rose up where sty or corn-crib stood,  
Or garden wall, or belt of wood ;  
A smooth white mound the brush-pile showed,  
A fenceless drift what once was road ;  
The bridle-post an old man sat  
With loose-flung coat and high cocked hat ;  
The well-curb had a Chinese roof ;  
And even the long sweep, high aloof,

## SNOW-BOUND.

In its slant splendor, seemed to tell  
Of Pisa's leaning miracle.

A prompt, decisive man, no breath  
Our father wasted : " Boys, a path ! " ·  
Well pleased, (for when did farmer boy  
Count such a summons less than joy ?)  
Our buskins on our feet we drew ;  
    With mittened hands, and caps drawn low,  
    To guard our necks and ears from snow,  
We cut the solid whiteness through.  
And, where the drift was deepest, made  
A tunnel walled and overlaid  
With dazzling crystal : we had read  
Of rare Aladdin's wondrous cave,  
And to our own his name we gave,  
With many a wish the luck were ours  
To test his lamp's supernal powers.

## SNOW-BOUND.

We reached the barn with merry din,  
And roused the prisoned brutes within.  
The old horse thrust his long head out,  
And grave with wonder gazed about ;  
The cock his lusty greeting said,  
And forth his speckled harem led ;  
The oxen lashed their tails, and hooked,  
And mild reproach of hunger looked ;  
The hornéd patriarch of the sheep,  
Like Egypt's Amun roused from sleep,  
Shook his sage head with gesture mute,  
And emphasized with stamp of foot.

All day the gusty north-wind bore  
The loosening drift its breath before ;  
Low circling round its southern zone,  
The sun through dazzling snow-mist shone.  
No church-bell lent its Christian tone

## SNOW-BOUND.

To the savage air, no social smoke  
Curled over woods of snow-hung oak.  
A solitude made more intense  
By dreary voiced elements,  
The shrieking of the mindless wind,  
The moaning tree-boughs swaying blind,  
And on the glass the unmeaning beat  
Of ghostly finger-tips of sleet.  
Beyond the circle of our hearth  
No welcome sound of toil or mirth  
Unbound the spell, and testified  
Of human life and thought outside.  
We minded that the sharpest ear  
The buried brooklet could not hear,  
The music of whose liquid lip  
Had been to us companionship,  
And, in our lonely life, had grown  
To have an almost human tone.



## S N O W - B O U N D .

As night drew on, and, from the crest  
Of wooded knolls that ridged the west,  
The sun, a snow-blown traveller, sank  
From sight beneath the smothering bank,  
We piled, with care, our nightly stack  
Of wood against the chimney-back, —  
The oaken log, green, huge, and thick,  
And on its top the stout back-stick ;  
The knotty forestick laid apart,  
And filled between with curious art  
The ragged brush ; then, hovering near,  
We watched the first red blaze appear,  
Heard the sharp crackle, caught the gleam  
On whitewashed wall and sagging beam,  
Until the old, rude-furnished room  
Burst, flower-like, into rosy bloom ;  
While radiant with a mimic flame  
Outside the sparkling drift became,