

BEAUTIFUL SNOW.

How many thousands have let their tears fall over these beautiful lines, as their touching pathos called into recollection the sad story of other and similar victims to man's wanton cruelty! In point of smooth versification and easy flowing rhythm, through which is almost heard the plaintive wail of woman's ruined honor, our knowledge of English literature brings to mind no single poem of such thrilling interest.

In the early part of the war, one dark Saturday morning in the dead of winter, there died at the Commercial Hospital, Cincinnati, a young woman over whose head only two and twenty summers had passed. She had once been possessed of an enviable share of beauty; had been, as she herself said, "flattered and sought for the charms of her face;" but, alas! upon her fair brow had long been written that terrible word prostitute! Once the pride of respectable parents, her first wrong step was the small beginning of the "same old story over again," which has been the only life history of thousands. Highly educated and accomplished in manners, she might have shone in the best of society. But the evil hour that proved her ruin was but the door from childhood; and having spent a young life in disgrace and shame, the poor friendless one died the melancholy death of a broken-hearted outcast.

Among her personal effects was found in manuscript, the "Beautiful Snow," which was immediately carried to Enos B. Reed, a gentle man of culture and literary tastes, who was at that time editor of the *National Union*. In the columns of that paper on the morning of the day following the girl's death, the poem appeared in print for the first time. When the paper containing the poem came out on Sunday morning, the body of the victim had no yet received burial. The attention of Thomas Buchanan Reed, one of the first American poets, was soon directed to the newly-published lines, who was so taken with their stirring pathos that he immediately followed the corps to its final resting place.

Such are the plain facts concerning her whose "Beautiful Snow" will long be regarded as one of the brightest gems in American literature.

Oh! the snow, the beautiful snow,
Filling the sky and earth below,
Over the housetops, over the street,
Over the heads of the people you meet,
Dancing,
Flirting,
Skimming along;

Beautiful snow! it can do no wrong,
Flying to kiss a fair lady's cheek,
Clinging to lips in frolicsome freak,
Beautiful snow from heaven above,
Pure as an angel, gentle as love!

Oh! the snow, the beautiful snow,
How the flakes gather and laugh as they go,
Whirling about in maddening fun,
Chasing,
Loughing,
Hurrying by,

It lights on the face and it sparkles the eye!
And the dogs, with a bark and a bound,
Snap at the crystals as they eddy around;
The town is alive, and its heart in a glow,
To welcome the coming of beautiful snow!

How wild the crowd goes swaying along,
Hailing each other with humor and song!
How the gay sleighs, like meteors, flash by,
Bright for a moment, then lost to the eye:
Ringing,
Swinging,
Dashing they go,

Over the crust of the beautiful snow:
Snow so pure when it falls from the sky,
To be trampled and tracked by thousands of feet,
Till it blends with the filth in the horrible street.

Once I was pure as the snow—but I fell,
Fell like the snow-flakes from heaven to hell,
Fell to be trampled as filth on the street,
Fell to be scoffed, to be spit on, and beat;
Pleading,
Cursing,
Dreading to die,

Selling my soul to whoever would buy,
Dealing in shame for a morsel of bread;
Hating the living, and fearing the dead,
Merciful God! have I fallen so low?
And yet I was once like the beautiful snow.

Once I was fair like the beautiful snow,
With an eye like a crystal, a heart like its glow;
Once I was loved for my innocent grace—
Flattered and sought for the charms of my face;
Fathers,
Mothers,
Sisters all,

God and myself, I have lost by my fall;
The veriest wretch that goes shivering by
Will make a wide sweep lest I wander too nigh.
For all that is on or above me I know,
There is nothing that's pure as the beautiful snow.

How strange it would be that this beautiful snow
Should fall on a sinner with nowhere to go!
How strange it would be, when night comes again,

If the snow and the ice struck my desperate brain;

Fainting,
Freezing,
Dying alone,
Too wicked for prayer, too weak for a moan,
To be heard in the streets of the crazy town,
Gone mad in the joy of snow coming down;
To lie and to die in my terrible woe,
With a bed and a shroud of the beautiful snow.

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