

WINTER AND THE POETS

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There have been poets who loved winter without reservation, others who loved certain manifestations of the season, still others who found the winter of outdoors attractive chiefly as a foil for enhancing appreciation of indoors winter comforts, and, lastly, some in whom the season inspired profound melancholy. It is interesting to compare these varied reactions.

Coleridge writes:

"Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee,
Whether the summer clothe the general earth
With greenness, or the robin sit and sing
Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch."

Cowper, not a cheerful soul, says:

"O winter, ruler of the inverted year,
Thy scattered hair with sleet like ashes filled,
Thy breath congealed upon thy lips, thy cheeks
Fringed with a beard made white with other snows
Than those of age, thy forehead wrapped in clouds --
* * * *

I love thee, all unlovely as thou seem'st
And dreaded as thou art."

Whittier pictures the comfortably snow-bound New England household:

"Shut in from all the world without,
We sat the clean-winged hearth about,
Content to let the north wind roar
In baffled rage at pane and door."

Compare the pessimism of Tom Hood:

"The year's in the wane,
There is nothing adorning;
The night has no eve
And the day has no morning;
Cold winter gives warning.
The rivers run chill,
The red sun is sinking:
And I am grown old,
And life is fast shrinking --
Here's enow for sad thinking."

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