



Midwinter's snow lies deep and chill
On field and forest, vale and hill,
And wintry winds are blowing:
The short-hour'd day is almost past.
The sun has reached the west at last.
Just o'er the hilltops showing.

The sleigh-bells jingle at the door.
And happy young folks full a score,
In friendship warm are meeting:
The Old Year dies this winter night,
And these whose hearts are free and light
Await the New Year's greeting

Without, King Winter holds his reign,
And gathers 'round a snowy train
Of Jack Frost and his fellows:
They search for cracks wherein to creep
While 'round the house with whisk
and leap
The noisy west wind bellows.

But in the house, defying cold,
The fires blaze up with red and gold.
From solid pitch-knots burning,
While logs of oak and solid beech,
That come within the wild flame's
reach,
To glowing coals are turning.

With sumptuous feast the board is
crowned,
Where father smiles on all around.
And joins in laughter hearty;
While mother, seated at his side,
Regards her flock with looks of pride,
The happiest of the party.

When supper's done, the merry throng
Meet round the fire with laugh and
song.

And each some tale is telling
Of Indians, ghosts, or goblin things,
Which fly at night with black bat's
wings,
Or haunt some lonely dwelling.

The hands across the clock dial creep;
The little folks are going to sleep,
As midnight hour draws nearer,
But when the clock at twelve rings out,
Then "Happy New Year" is the shout
Of every watchful hearer.

The crescent moon rides in the west
Before the household seeks their rest.
And in their dream-thoughts mingle
The many memories of the night,
The happy faces, young and bright,
And distant sleigh-bells jingle.

—Good Housekeeping.

