

Sometimes light of beauty brings him sudden joy, as when he suddenly is lost among the cedar trees, and turns to see a hawthorn hollow smothered soft in snow. Its fairy tangle closes out the harsher forest moods, its branches bend all dainty to the ground. He stoops and, looking where the drifts are light, he finds how grasses swayed by winds have printed magic rings. Bur marigolds lift up their whorls, now reft of burs and fair with starry flakes, and further in the thicket there are four close marks which tell the limping hare. The whole vast world is fast asleep, so sound that not the midday sun can wake the slowest breath. But on the basking snow the wanderer sees the faint, queer blues and pinks working inward, and the straying of their footsteps is the prelude to the spring.

He journeys far by many untracked lakes and frozen streams. The days glide on. One sunset hour, when other storms have passed and left earth's sleep more soft, he finds his feet bent back upon the shanty's trail. He reaches it, but has no quick desire to enter, his eyes are lifted to a north-west hill. The snow has now grown deathly pale, its radiance blanched, and as he watches it the birches against the slope become less ghostly and their twigs show fleshly glow. Next floats a blue above the ground, a blue almost invisible which any wind or motion might turn pink. He looks toward the west, the sky is green with hints of yellow, then the colours go. Only the sun pours down, not gold nor silver but pure light, which slides down through the stems and runs beneath his feet. Such light, it streaming, lifting, stays the swaying hues, and as they flutter draws them in its spell. He knows they will creep forth again, renewed and strong, nor frost nor snow arrest their destiny.

He stands beneath the hill and waits. Something is wooing the earth. Some power is calling from out the heavens. Beneath the night of stars she may sleep dead, but in the morn it is whispered in his ear—the song of frogs will tell the spring's return.