

# The Blues

*From the Cincinnati Enquirer*

By Lafcadio Hearn

Last evening closed in upon a foreboding community. The day had been lowering and cold. It was only toward midnight that the snow—the sad snow—came down in suggestive, perishable beauty. At twilight, as people hurried homeward earlier than their wont, and afoot, the sharp, marrow-piercing wind told them that the crimson and golden hues of the sensuous, treacherous Indian Summer had faded to somberness, and that Winter was here indeed. The first savage frost is never a pleasant reminder. Even to the favored of fortune and health, with ruddy face made ruddier by a laughing firelight; with the light of the sculptured drop-jet reflected back from Axminster carpet and librated walls in a glow of comfort and luxury upon faces beautiful with love and happiness and refinement, the wild wall of the blast without teaches a solemn lesson as it mourns the death of Nature. What the same mournful sound speaks of to the poor has been written a thousand times, and never yet the whole story told, though Dickens self has wrought tears from hearts of stone in his descriptions of huddling hunger and pallid sickness and woe. But if the first warning frost is at all times eloquent, it was doubly so last night. Perhaps it spoke to the laborer no more cruel words than of cold, of coalless cellars, of empty larders and lost employment, but among the dwellers in the luxurious homes of the city we heard whisperings more sobered than usual. Men spoke to their wives and daughters of the horseless streets, and of the rumors that the present plague is but a beginning of the troubles which threaten the household's best friends. That these will die by tens of thousands, carrying with them hundreds of millions of wealth, is dreaded, they said, by the coolest thinkers. Then the conversation turned naturally to great fires, which left the richest houseless and helpless upon stormy nights; sweeping away library, and pictures, and souvenirs, and home. And in this connection were mentioned the vague but widely-spread reports that the "Phoenix City," which has risen from its great disaster, has only reared its three square miles of granite as a monument to financial ruin. And speaking these things the specters "Panic" and "Hard Times" stalked in to the hearthstone council. And the small-pox epidemic slaying its hundreds in a neighboring city, and to be expected with the cold weather was spoken of only to suggest the Cholera already gathering for its leap across the Atlantic, and sure to find a ready foothold among our offal-filled alleys and in our plague-tainted air. With such thoughts came the reflection that the darling of wealth and society is as mortal as the veriest pauper, and "The Blues," settled for the hour, ominously, amid many a family circle. This was the rule, though there were exceptions among those "who wear their natures lightly," and whose love and hope and high spirits ever "break through their laugh."