

The Snow-Fiend

By Ann Radcliffe

Hark! to the Snow-Fiend's voice afar
That shrieks upon the troubled air!
Him by that shrilly call I know—
Though yet unseen, unfelt below—
And by the mist of livid grey,
That steals upon his onward way.
He from the ice-peaks of the North
In sounding majesty comes forth;
Dark amidst the wondrous light,
That streams o'er all the northern night.
A wan rime through the airy waste
Marks where unseen his car has past;
And veils the spectre-shapes, his train,
That wait upon his vengeful reign.
Disease and Want and shuddering Fear
Danger and Woe and Death are there.
Around his head for ever raves
A whirlwind cold of misty waves.
But oft, the parting surge between,
His visage, keen and white, is seen;
His savage eye and paly glare
Beneath a helm of ice appear;
A snowy plume waves o'er the crest,
And wings of snow his form invest.
Aloft he bears a frozen wand;
The ice-bolt trembles in his hand;
And ever, when on sea he rides,
An iceberg for his throne provides.
As fierce, he drives his distant way,
Agents remote his call obey,
From half-known Greenland's snow-piled shore
To Newfoundland and Labrador;
O'er solid seas, where nought is scanned
To mark a difference from land,
And sound itself does but explain
The desolation of his reign;
The moaning querulous and deep,
And the wild howl's infuriate sweep
Where'er he moves, some note of woe
Proclaims the presence of the foe;
While he, relentless, round him flings

The white shower from his flaky wings.
Hark! 'tis his voice:—I shun his call,
And shuddering seek the blazing hall.
O! speak of mirth; O! raise the song!
Hear not the fiends, that round him throng!
Of curtained rooms and firesides tell,
Bid Fancy work her genial spell,
That wraps in marvel and delight
December's long tempestuous night;
Makes courtly groups in summer bowers
Dance through pale Winter's midnight hours;
And July's eve its rich glow shed
On the hoar wreath, that binds his head;
Or knights on strange adventure bent,
Or ladies into thraldom sent;
Whatever gaiety ideal
Can substitute for troubles real.
Then let the storms of Winter sing,
And his sad veil the Snow-Fiend fling,
Though wailing lays are in the wind,
They reach not then the 'tranced mind;
Nor murky form, nor dismal sound
May pass the high, enchanted bound!