

AN ARCTIC DAWN



How more than beautiful the shroud
 Of dead light in the moon-mad north!
 Great, tall torch-flipping stars stand forth,
 The cobalt blue knows not a cloud -
 The mountains all about in white.

The tandem sudden broke all rule,
 The dogs, so glad they scarce could stand
 Swung back, each leaping like a boy,
 Let loose from some dark, ugly school
 Leapt up and tried to lick a hand

The groaning, grinding stream below,
 Just one wide stream and seam of snow!
 The trees hang white as hooded nun
 No thing not white, not one, not one
 All day, all day, all night, all night--
 Nay, nay, there is not day nor night,
 Just whiteness, whiteness, ghastly white
 Made doubly white by that mad moon,
 And sweet chords jangled out of tune!

How suddenly God's finger set
 A crimson flower on that height
 Above the battered walls of night!
 A little space it flourished yet
 And then His angel, His first-born,
 Burst through the primal bars of morn!

At last we saw, or seemed to see
 Above beyond, another world
 Far up the icy path there curled
 A red-veined cloud, a canopy
 That topped the fearful, ice-built peak
 That seemed to prop the very porch
 Of God, and then, as if a torch
 Burned dim, there flashed a fiery ^{break!}

His right hand held a sword of flame
 His left hand javelins of light.
 And then swift down, down, down he came
 His red wings wide as the wide sky
 And right and left, and hip and thigh,
 He smote the marshalled hosts of night!

One dogs sat down, we sat the sled
 And watched the torch, the rim of red.
 The little wooly dogs, they knew!
 They thrust their noses out and up,
 They drank the light as from a cup,
 Their little feet, so worn, so true,
 Could scarce keep quiet for delight.
 They knew, they knew, how much they ^{knew,}
 The mighty breaking up of night!
 Their bright eyes sparkled with such joy
 That we at last should see the light!

The ice-heaped palisades, the high
 Heaved peaks that prop God's house, the
 That flamed above the prison bars ^{stars}
 Were burned to ruin and were not.
 The scared moon paled and she forgot
 Her force and place and turned to fly.
 Then glad down shook her raiment wide,
 As some proud woman satisfied,
 Tiptoed, exultant, fill her form,
 A queen above some battle storm
 Blazed with the glory, the delight
 Of battle with the hosts of night.
 And night was broken, light at last
 Possessed the Yukon, Death was past.

Looy Miller