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MEETING IN WINTER.

WINTER in the world it is,
Round about the unhop'd kiss
Whose dream I long have sorrow'd o'er;
Round about the longing sore,
That the touch of thee shall turn
Into joy too deep to burn.

Round thine eyes and round thy mouth
Passeth no murmur of the south,
When my lips a little while
Leave thy quivering tender smile,
As we twain, hand holding hand,
Once again together stand.

Sweet is that, as all is sweet;
For the white drift shalt thou meet
Kind and cold-cheeked and mine own,
Wrapped about with deep-furred gown
In the broad-wheeled chariot:
Then the north shall spare us not;
The wide-reaching waste of snow
Wilder, lonelier yet shall grow
As the reddened sun falls down.

But the warders of the town,
When they flash the torches out
O'er the snow amid their doubt,
And their eyes at last behold
Thy red-litten hair of gold ;
Shall they open, or in fear
Cry, " Alas ! What cometh here ?
Whence hath come this Heavenly One
To tell of all the world undone ? "

They shall open, and we shall see
The long street litten scantily
By the long stream of light before
The guest-hall's half-open door ;
And our horses' bells shall cease
As we reach the place of peace ;
Thou shalt tremble, as at last
The worn threshold is o'er-past,
And the fire-light blindeth thee :
Trembling shalt thou cling to me
As the sleepy merchants stare
At thy cold hands slim and fair,
Thy soft eyes and happy lips
Worth all lading of their ships.

O my love, how sweet and sweet
That first kissing of thy feet,
When the fire is sunk alow
And the hall made empty now
Groweth solemn, dim and vast !
O my love, the night shall last
Longer than men tell thereof
Laden with our lonely love !

WILLIAM MORRIS.