



The Home Department

Conducted by
Helen Watts McKee

"Once I Was Pure."

O, the snow—the beautiful snow!
Filling the sky and the earth below:
Over the house-tops, over the street,
Over the heads of the people you meet,
Dancing,

Flirting,
Skimming along,
Beautiful snow! It can do nothing
wrong.
Flying to kiss a fair lady's cheek,
Clinging to lips in a frolicsome freak;
Beautiful snow, from the heavens
above,
Pure as an angel and fickle as love!

O, the snow, the beautiful snow!
How the flakes gather and laugh as
they go!
Whirling about in its maddening fun,
It plays in its glee with every one;
Chasing,

Laughing,
Hurrying by,
It lights up the face, and it sparkles
the eye,
And even the dogs, with a bark and
a bound,
Snap at the crystals that eddy around.
The town is alive, and its heart is
aglow,
To welcome the fall of the beautiful
snow.

How the wild crowd goes swaying
along,
Hailing each other with mirth and
with song;
How the gay sledges, like meteors,
flash by—
Bright for a moment, then lost to the
eye;
Ringing,

Swinging,
Dashing they go,
Over the crest of the beautiful snow:
Snow, so pure when it falls from the
sky,
To be trampled in mud by the crowd
rushing by:
To be trampled and tracked by the
thousands of feet,
Till it blends with the filth of the
horrible street.

Once I was pure as the snow—but I
fell:
Fell, like the snow-flake, from heaven
to hell;
Fell, to be trampled as filth of the
street;
Fell, to be scoffed, to be spit on and
beat!

Pleading,
Cursing,
Dreading to die;
Selling my soul to whoever would buy,
Dealing in shame for a morsel of
bread,
Hating the living and fearing the
dead!
Merciful God! Have I fallen so low?
Yet, once I was pure as this beautiful
snow!

Once I was fair as the beautiful snow,
With an eye like its crystal, a heart
like its glow,
Once I was loved for my innocent
grace—

Flattered and sought for the charm of
my face;
Father,
Mother,
Sisters all,
God and myself I have lost by my
fall.
The veriest wretch that goes shiver-
ing by
Will take a wide sweep lest I wander
too nigh;

For, of all that is on or about me, I
know
There is nothing that's pure but the
beautiful snow.

How strange it should be that this
beautiful snow
Should fall on a sinner with nowhere
to go!

How strange it would be, when the
night comes again,
If the snow and the ice struck my
desperate brain!

Fainting,
Freezing,
Dying alone,

Too wicked for prayer, too weak for
my moan
To be heard in the crash of the crazy
old town,

Gone mad in its joy at the snow's
coming down—
To lie and to die in my terrible woe,
With a bed and a shroud of the beau-
tiful snow!

—Anonymous.

*By request.

Among My Letters.

There is scarcely a woman, whose
name appears at all frequently in the
columns of the newspapers and per-
iodicals of the day, but that receives
many letters from other women—and
not infrequently from men—asking her
to tell them the secret of success; to
help them to a better and easier way
of making a living than the one they
at the time pursue. Strange to say,
the one idea which dominates them is
that in newspaper work—journalism,
they call it—is to be found this ideal
field of ease and financial remunera-
tion. "Just to sit at one's desk all
day and write"—this seems the easy
life, greatly to be desired. No thought
of any further need than a pencil and
a piece of paper.

Among these applicants for jour-
nalistic honors and emoluments, the
majority have not considered the mas-
tery of the spelling-book at all neces-
sary; a less number have considered
the need of an understanding of the
rules of grammar and rhetoric, and
the least number of all have given a
thought to the absolute necessity of a
wide and varied knowledge of things
outside of the school-books, which go
to equip the "newspaper woman" for
successful competition along her
chosen line.

For most of these false ideas which
the aspirants have imbibed concern-
ing the ease and lack of competition in
this field, we may hold as largely re-
sponsible the glowing assertions of the
circulars sent out by the many "cor-
respondence schools," which promise
to take the "rawest recruit," whether
fitted or not by nature for the work,
and, by a course of study, to be car-
ried on through the mails, give him
or her the unchallenged entre into
the holy of holies of journalism, turn-
ing the applicant out after a few
weeks, or at most, months, capable
of competing successfully with the
man or woman who has spent years
in hard study and close, practical ap-
plication of the rules governing the
profession.

According to these circulars, the
work is easy, the competition small,
the wages excellent, situations always
awaiting one, and your manuscript
sells "on sight." And when they have
got your money and you are given your
diploma, you do indeed find that "all
avenues are open to you," but you also
find that a great many people are go-
ing in ahead of you, and that you have

not even understood the pass-word.
Dear sisters, you complain of the
drudgery of the home work: have you
never thought that there may be the
same conditions in the work of other
departments of industry? Let me tell
you, there is drudgery everywhere—
in all things; and the hardest of all
is the drudgery of preparation. No
matter how high you go in the scale,
the same "grind" confronts you,
changed only in form and, perhaps,
in degree; routine, humdrum, over
and over—always the same. To suc-
ceed in any occupation, you must
work; you cannot stand still. It is
either forward or backward; if you
pause a moment, somebody will crowd
into your place; you will lose ground,
and, once you get behind in the race,
the struggle to regain may end only
in defeat.

Try to learn this lesson: Whenever
you are ready for something better,
the "something better" will be given
you; when once you come to possess
it you may find it not at all what you
thought it was; it may be a heavier
burden than the one you are now
bearing. Yet, if it be given to you,
believe it is for your best good, a
means of growth, or development.
Learn to dispel discontent by cheer-
fulness; to make the most of the little
things; to do even the meanest tasks
with a courage and pride that shall
glorify your labor, and that shall in-
vest even drudgery with a something
divine. It was the "good and faithful
servant" that was bidden to enter in-
to the joy of his Lord.

To You.

Dear readers of the Home Depart-
ment, this letter is to you—each of
you, personally. I want every one of
you to give my appeal careful, per-
sonal thought. I want to make the
Home Department of The Commoner
so useful, practical, reliable, encour-
aging, comforting, cheering and sym-
pathetic that it will become a house-

Question Box.

The conductor of the Home De-
partment will be glad to answer
questions concerning matters of
interest to Housekeepers. Make
your questions as brief as possible
and address all communications to
"Home Department, The Com-
moner, Lincoln, Nebr."

hold necessity—something that will
be looked for, expected, and read in-
terestedly; something you will show to
your friends as containing just what
you want or need.

To do this, I must know what I am
talking about; I must be cognizant of
the tastes and needs of those to whom
I am talking; I must know something
of you, personally. So I propose ex-
changing information with you; I
want you to tell me, in a few clear,
concise sentences, what you think
would please others, and what you,
yourself, would like me to talk about;
wherein my words may bridge your
difficulties; how I may supply your
wants, or show you a better path
than that which you now tread.
You shall write me, offering sug-

gestions, criticisms, which I shall ac-
cept in the spirit in which they are
offered. Tell me what you know, and
what you would like to know; if I
do not quite understand the subject
upon which I am asked to talk, I shall
know pretty well where to find those
who do, and who are anxious to aid
me in my efforts to help you. I real-
ize that much helpful encouragement
and many useful hints will thus reach
me, and I shall use them as ably as
I can in enlarging the influence of
these pages.

You will understand, wont you, that
it will be impossible for your editor
to personally answer your letters, or
that the letters can be published? But
I shall carefully glean all the good,
and give it back to you as acceptably
as I can.

By just a few words to me, suggest-
ing helpful ideas, you may enable me
to do untold good to some poor, dis-
couraged soul that is groping vainly
for just that one ray of light which
you, alone, are capable of sending out.
Will you do me this kindness?

"Bobbie Burns."

I saw the other day a recently pub-
lished edition of Burns' works, quite
the finest I have ever seen. As I
looked at the six large volumes with
their heavy paper, wide margins, clear
type and handsome illustrations, I
thought how much sorrow and suf-
fering and shame the money which
they cost might have saved the man
whose immortal poetry is thus en-
shrined. Poor Burns never had, in all
his life, so much money as this single
edition of his works represents. He
and his family were indebted to char-
ity for the common necessities of life
during his last illness, and he was
actually dunned, up his death-bed, for
a paltry debt of \$35.

Now they build monuments of
bronze and marble to his memory, and
offer us the product of his genius in
books so rich and rare that he would
hardly have dared to touch them with
his ploughman's hands. I wonder if
he knows how much has been done
for him—when he does not need it?
He knew, only too well, how little
was done for him when it would have
availed.

The last time Burns was able to
walk out, he called upon a lady who
had been very kind to him in the days
of his sore distress; she had a de-
cided taste for music, and he proposed
that if she would play for him any
favorite tune for which she desired
new words, he would write them. She
sat down and played over several times
the air to an old Scotch ballad, be-
ginning thus:

"The robbin cam' to the wren's nest,
An' keeket in, an' keeket in."

The poet listened attentively, then
took out his pencil and in a few mo-
ments produced what has always
seemed to be the sweetest love-song
in the language:

"Oh, wert thou in the cauld blast
On yonder lea, on yonder lea,
My plaidie to the angry air,
I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee.
Or did Misfortune's bitter storm
Around thee blaw, around thee blaw,
Thy beild should be my bosom,
To share it a', to share it a'."

Or were I in the wildest waste,
Sae bleak and bare, sae bleak and
bare,

The desert were a paradise,
If thou wert there, if thou wert
there.

Or were I monarch of the globe,
Wi' thee to reign, wi' thee to reign,
The brightest jewel in my crown
Wad be my queen, wad be my queen.

Long years afterward, Felix Men-
delssohn-Bartholdy saw these lines
and was so struck with their ex-
quisite grace and beauty that he wrote
new music for them. So now, the song
of Burns, wedded to the music of