

## WINTER IN THE VILLAGE

October's dreary days along do draw,  
The drenching rains of Autumn now appear,  
Early in afternoon the rooks do caw,  
As to the tall elm trees they gather near.

The fields are bare, the corn is gathered in,  
And safe and sound the precious grain is stored;  
The threshers now their busy task begin  
With flail all day, upon the oaken board.

The howling blast sweeps through the withered trees,  
And brings a winterish chill about the field,  
And everywhere first touched of winter's breeze,  
Makes leaves and flowers to the foeman yield.

The birds their songs have ended, now they hop  
From hedge to hedge in search of daily food,  
Save but the sparrow, on the chimney top,  
Who chirps away all day in merry mood.

Or save the little redbreast at your doors  
Who cheerfully doth beg for wasted crumbs;  
How watchful is his eye, how he implores,  
Until a cold heart oft he overcomes.

The trees are bare, now scarce a leaf is seen  
Upon the boughs, the frost hath nipped them all,  
And now the frosty air bites sharp and keen,  
And now the fleecy snow begins to fall.

Rivers, and ponds, now everywhere doth freeze,  
And youth and health run cheerfully and shout,  
But old men do cough and old women sneeze,  
And idleness doth limp and shrimp about.

And merry schoolboys, in the school yard wide,  
Hail with delight the fleecy falling snow,  
And in good humour, equal sides divide,  
Then with the round plump balls assail the foe.

Or on the village pond, when school is o'er,  
Across its glassy face they make their slide,  
And in a line, while they doth shout and roar,  
Swiftly and merrily along they glide.

Now in the keen and frosty nights so dark,  
When the cosy owl sits snug in the barn,  
From yonder copse the fox doth sharply bark,  
As he looks out for prey till early morn.

Quiet as the dead at night is our dell,  
Save but the rippling waters in the mead,  
Or from yon city, when the big church bell,  
Tells how the bishop his evening prayers do read.

At early morn the merry sound is heard  
Of hunter's horn, as he calls to his hounds,  
And wily Reynard, about his strength do gird,  
As o'er the hills and dales and fields he bounds.

Oft through the stream he is obliged to go  
And up and down its banks he runs with speed,  
To shift his scent, to puzzle his dread foe,  
For if they smell his trail he sure will bleed.

Poor fox, what haphazard life is thine,  
No rest, or peace, thy days are misery;  
Worried to death, thou may'st well repine,  
What pleasure is to man is cruel death to thee.

Now as draws on the merry time of Yule  
From yonder woods the slaughtering guns are heard,  
And down the steep ascent the sturdy mule  
Brings heavy loads of bleeding hares and bird.

'Tis a great day when Squire doth invite,  
His friends from town to shoot his covers o'er,  
From early morn all day till comes the night  
Each one doth strive to make the biggest score.

Then in his ancient hall they drown the night  
In scenes of revelry the wine goes round,  
And deeds of wondrous shooting each recite,  
And songs, and jokes, and tales do there abound.

Our parson now his night school de begin,  
To teach the sturdy ploughboys how to read,  
And write, and sum, and tries their hearts to win  
To the sweet Saviour, who for all did bleed.

Though oft hard his task, with his rustic boys,  
He never tires, on teaching them he goes,  
His welcome face is full of beaming joys,  
He never is depressed with cares or woes.

Oft some intelligent young youth is seen  
Through his aid obtain a situation good  
In yonder city, and many a one has been  
A prosperous merchant from a plough boy rude.

With what device he will attention draw,

With what sweet homely words he doth inspire  
Their rough uncultivated minds with awe,  
And fill them with a list'ning fond desire.

Then once a month he doth regale them all,  
With tea and cake all to their hearts content,  
And the Squire's wife and daughters from the Hall  
Doth play and sing, all for their merriment.

With what delight he his little choir trains  
In stirring music pure if not sublime,  
With what delight he hears his daughter's strains  
Leading above the rest in measured time.

And then the annual banquet at his house,  
See how he entertains his rustic guests,  
They all in mirth and jollity carouse,  
Nor does he think himself above the rest.

Pleasures like these endears me to my vale,  
And scenes like these doth bind me to this spot,  
Though hard and drear may be the winter's gale  
Life's dearest bliss, I find in my sweet cot.