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Lantern in the Snow

By Robert P. Tristram Coffin

This thing is beautiful, I know,
A lantern burning in the snow,
Which diggers left so men might see
Their hole beneath my lilac tree.

The lantern makes a spot of gold,
Alien to the dark and cold,
Burning steady as it can,
As if a warm, good part of man
Were left outside there in the night
To go on working, giving light.
The glow strikes down and shows the
ground
A single solitary mound
Of whiteness set in vacant space,
The light strikes up and shows the grace
Of the lilac's limbs and bark,
A'n open fan against the dark.
The snow falls round the common
thing
And makes a dim, mysterious ring
Of flaky flame that wheels and turns
As the lonely lantern burns.

There are only four or five
Such sights for any man alive
In all the years he has to go
Like this lantern in the snow.

