"Give me to struggle with weather and wind;
Give me to stride through the snow;
Give me the feel of the chill on my cheeks,
And the glow and the glory within!"

March 17th.

The joy of winter: the downright joy of winter! I tramped to-day through miles of open, snow-clad country. I slipped in the ruts of the roads or ploughed through the drifts in the fields with such a sense of adventure as I cannot describe.

Day before yesterday we had a heavy north wind with stinging gusts of snow. Yesterday fell bright and cold with snow lying fine and crumbly like sugar. To the east of the house where I shovelled a path the heaps are nearly as high as my shoulder....

This perfect morning a faint purplish haze is upon all the hills, with bright sunshine and still, cold air through which the chimney smoke rises straight upward. Hungry crows flap across the fields, or with unaccustomed daring settle close in upon the manure heaps around the barns. All the hillsides glisten and sparkle like cloth of gold, each glass knob on the telephone poles is like a resplendent jewel, and the long morning shadows of the trees lie blue upon the snow. Horses' feet crunch upon the road as the early farmers go by with milk for the creamery--the frosty breath of each driver fluttering aside like a white scarf. Through the still air ordinary voices cut sharply and clearly, and a laugh bounds out across the open country with a kind of superabundance of joy. I see two men beating their arms as they follow their wood sled. They are bantering one another noisily. I see a man shovelling snow from his barn doors; as each shovelful rises and scatters, the sun catches it for an instant and it falls, a silvery shower. ... I tramped to-day through miles of it: and whether in broken roads or spotless fields, had great joy of it. The spring is beautiful indeed, and one is happy at autumn, but of all the year no other mornings set the blood to racing like these; none gives a greater sense of youth, strength, or of the general goodness of the earth.

Give me the winter: give me the winter! Not all winter, but just winter enough, just what nature sends.

...Dry air in the throat so cold at first as to make one cough; and dry, sharp, tingling air in the nostrils; frost on beard and eyebrows; cheeks red and crusty, so that to wrinkle them hurts: but all the body within aglow with warmth and health. Twice the ordinary ozone in the air, so that one wishes to whistle or sing, and if the fingers grow chill, what are shoulders for but to beat them around!

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It is a strange and yet familiar experience how all things present their opposites. Do you enjoy the winter? Your
neighbour loathes or fears it. Do you enjoy life? To your friend it is a sorrow and a heaviness. Even to you it is not always alike. Though the world itself is the same to-day as it was yesterday and will be to-morrow--the same snowy fields and polar hills, the same wintry stars, the same infinitely alluring variety of people--yet to-day you, that were a god, have become a grieving child.

Even at moments when we are well pleased with the earth we often have a wistful feeling that we should conceal it lest it hurt those borne down by circumstances too great or too sad for them. What is there to offer one who cannot respond gladly to the beauty of the fields, or opens his heart widely to the beckoning of friends? And we ask ourselves: Have I been tried as this man has? Would I be happy then? Have I been wrung with sorrow, worn down by ill-health, buffeted with injustice as this man has? Would I be happy then?

I saw on my walk to-day an old woman with a crossed shawl upon her breast creeping out painfully to feed her hens. She lives on a small, ill-kept farm I have known for years. She is old and poor and asthmatic, and the cold bites through her with the sharpness of knives. The path to the hen-house is a kind of via dolorosa, a terror of slipperiness and cold. She might avoid it: her son, worthless as he is, might do it for her, but she clings to it as she clings to her life. It is the last reason for staying here! But the white fields and drifted roads are never joyfully met, never desired. She spends half the summer dreading the return of winter from the severities of which she cannot escape.

Nor is it all mere poverty, though she is poor, for there are those who would help to send her away, but she will not go. She is wrapped about with Old Terrors, Ancient Tyrannies--that Terror of the Unknown which is more painful even than the Terror of the Known: those Tyrannies of Habit and of Place which so often and so ruthlessly rule the lives of the old. She clings desperately to the few people she knows ("'tis hard to die among strangers!") and the customs she has followed all her life. Against the stark power of her tragic helplessness neither the good nor the great of the earth may prevail. This reality too....

I had a curious experience not long ago: One of those experiences which light up as in a flash some of the fundamental things of life. I met a man in the town road whom I have come to know rather more than slightly. He is a man of education and has been "well-off" in the country sense, is still, so far as I know, but he has a sardonic outlook upon life. He is discouraged about human nature. Thinks that politics are rotten, and that the prices of potatoes and bread are disgraceful. The state of the nation, and of the world, is quite beyond temperate expression. Few rays of joy seem to illuminate his pathway.

As we approached in the town road I called out to him:

"Good morning."

He paused and, to my surprise, responded:

"Are you happy?"

It had not occurred to me for some time whether I was happy or not, so I replied:

"I don't know; why do you ask?"

He looked at me in a questioning, and I thought rather indignant, way.

"Why shouldn't a man be happy?" I pressed him.

"Why _should_ he be? Answer me that!" he responded, "Why should he be? Look at the world!"

With that he passed onward with a kind of crushing dignity.

I have laughed since when I have recalled the tone of his voice as he said, "Look at the world!" Gloomy and black it was. It evidently made him indignant to be here.
But at the moment his bitter query, the essential attitude of spirit which lay behind it, struck into me with a poignancy that stopped me where I stood. Was I, then, all wrong about the world? I actually had a kind of fear lest when I should look up again I should find the earth grown wan and bleak and unfriendly, so that I should no longer desire it.

"Look at the world!" I said aloud.

And with that I suddenly looked all around me and it is a strange, deep thing, as I have thought of it since, how the world came back upon me with a kind of infinite, calm assurance, as beautiful as ever it was. There were the hills and the fields and the great still trees--and the open sky above. And even as I looked down the road and saw my sardonic old friend plodding through the snow--his very back frowning--I had a sense that he belonged in the picture, too--and couldn't help himself. That he even had a kind of grace, and gave a human touch to that wintry scene! He had probably said a great deal more than he meant!

Look at the world!

Well, look at it.

(The end)

David Grayson's essay: Look At The World!

By David Grayson