

which all that has gone

Sigurd Olson
from Wilderness Days



winter

Photos by Sandy Richardson



The thin snow now driving from the north and lodging on my coat consists of those beautiful star crystals... How full of the creative genius is the air in which these are generated! I should hardly have admired it more if real stars fell and lodged on my coat. Nature is full of genius, full of the divinity, so that not a snow-flake escapes its fashioning hand... The same law that shapes the earth-star shapes the snow-star.

What a world we live in! where myriads of these little disks, so beautiful to the most prying eye, are whirled down on every traveller's coat, the observant and the unobservant, and on the restless squirrel's fur, and on the far-stretching fields and forests, the wooded dells, and the mountain tops. Far, far away from the haunts of man, they roll down some little slope, fall over and come to their bearings, and melt or lose their beauty in the mass, ready anon to swell some little rill with their contribution, and so, at last, the universal ocean from which they came. There they lie, like the wreck of chariot wheels after a battle in the skies. Meanwhile the meadow mouse shoves them aside in his gallery, the schoolboy casts them in his snowball, or the woodman's sled glides smoothly over them, these glorious spangles, the sweepings of heaven's floor. And they all sing, melting as they sing of the mysteries of the number six-six, six, six. He takes up the waters of the sea in his hand, leaving the salt; He disperses it in mist through the skies; He recollects and sprinkles it like grain in six-rayed snowy stars over the earth, there to lie till He dissolves its bond again.

Henry David Thoreau
from his Journal

