

## The Snowdrop King

James Allen was a luminary, he hailed from Shepton Mallet.  
Horticulture was his love and Snowdrops were his palette.  
He grew the dainty 'milk-drops' and taught himself the art,  
Of breeding unique hybrids – a passion from his heart.

He weaved his magic, worked his skill, with patience, time and love,  
A hundred new Galanthi... His angels from above.  
He earned a reputation, respect and credit too,  
And he became - 'The Snowdrop King' - A title he held true.

But as time passed, a twist of fate, attacked James Allen's plants,  
Botrytis sailed in on the wind. They never stood a chance.  
A fungus, it was airborne, spores floated on the breeze,  
Smothering and rotting plants – an inexorable disease.

Still more bad luck, so undeserved... Blight descended on the land;  
The Narcissus Bulb-Fly came, laying larvae in the ground.  
They hatched, they ate, they killed the bulbs... Wiping scores of Snowdrops out.  
Mr Allen tried to save them, – of that there is no doubt.

But one by one, his Snowdrops died... Extinct and gone forever.  
We mourn their loss collectively, we think of them together.  
Yet, time moves on, a century gone but everything's not lost;  
For, two 'extra special' Snowdrops peep their heads up through the frost.

It's Merlin and it's Magnet - James Allen's Legacy.  
Small and strong, brave and bold – a gift for all to see.  
Two sacred, soul survivors, who push up year on year,  
They've faced it all, survived the worst, have nothing left to fear.

They embrace our frozen landscape, through wind and sleet and rain.  
Every year, tenaciously, they bless us once again.  
So when you see Galanthi, admire them and think:  
A sign of hope - a lucky one - which too could be extinct.

They are Shepton Mallet's emblem. They bring hope and thoughts of Spring,  
Let's remember, Mr. Allen - 'Shepton's Humble Snowdrop King'.

[Joanne Knight, Shepton Mallet](#)