



Christmas

Poetry



## At Christmas

~Edgar A. Guest

*A man is at his finest  
towards the finish of the year;  
He is almost what he should be  
when the Christmas season is here;  
Then he's thinking more of others  
than he's thought the months before,  
And the laughter of his children  
is a joy worth toiling for.*

*He is less a selfish creature  
than at any other time;  
When the Christmas spirit rules him  
he comes close to the sublime.  
When it's Christmas man is bigger  
and is better in his part;  
He is keener for the service  
that is prompted by the heart.  
All the petty thoughts and narrow  
seem to vanish for awhile  
And the true reward he's seeking  
is the glory of a smile.  
Then for others he is toiling  
and somehow it seems to me  
That at Christmas he is almost  
what God wanted him to be.*

*If I had to paint a picture  
of a man I think I'd wait  
Till he'd fought his selfish battles  
and had put aside his hate.  
I'd not catch him at his labors  
when his thoughts are all of self,  
On the long days and the dreary  
when he's striving for himself.*

*I'd not take him when he's sneering,  
when he's scornful or depressed,  
But I'd look for him at Christmas  
when he's shining at his best.  
Man is ever in a struggle  
and he's oft misunderstood;  
There are days the worst that's in him  
is the master of the good,  
But at Christmas kindness rules him  
and he puts himself aside  
And his petty hates are vanquished  
and his heart is opened wide.  
Oh, I don't know how to say it,  
but somehow it seems to me  
That at Christmas man is almost  
what God sent him here to be.*

## **AN OLD FARMER'S WORDS OF WISDOM:**

("Old Farmers" have been valued for their veracity and forthrightness)

Your fences need to be horse-high, pig tight and bull-strong.

Keep skunks and bankers at a distance.

Life is simpler when you plow around the stump.

A bumble bee is considerably faster than a John Deere tractor.

Words that soak into your ears are whispered not yelled.

Meanness doesn't just happen overnight.

Forgive your enemies, it messes up their heads.

Do not corner something that you know is meaner than you.

It doesn't take a very big person to carry a grudge.

You cannot unsay a cruel word.

Every path has a few puddles.

When you wallow with pigs, expect to get dirty.

The best sermons are lived, not preached.

Most of the stuff people worry about never gonna happen anyway.

Don't judge folks by their relatives.

Remember that silence is sometimes the best answer.

Live a good and honorable life, then when you get older and think back, you'll enjoy it a second time.

Don't interfere with something that ain't bothering you none.

Timing has a lot to do with the outcome of a rain dance.

If you find yourself in a hole, the first thing to do is stop digging.

Sometimes you get and sometimes you get got.

The biggest troublemaker you'll probably ever have to deal with watches you from the mirror every morning.

Always drink upstream from the herd.

Good judgement comes from experience and a lotta that comes from bad judgement.

Letting the cat outta the bag is a whole lot easier than putting it back in.

If you get to thinking you're a person of some influence, try ordering somebody dog around.

Live simply, love generously, care deeply, speak kindly, and leave the rest to God.

Some days all you can do is smile and wait for someone to come and pull your carcass out of the bind you've gotten yourself into.

## Written In The Stars

Tonight, I look up at the stars in the sky  
And remember another star, from days long gone by  
That shone oh so brightly, to show men the way  
To a small baby laid in a manger of hay  
This baby was sweet, all shiny and new,  
But he means so much more to me and to you  
We know him as Jesus Christ or Emmanuel  
And his story is one we have long loved to tell

Because it is a story of the best of man  
Of mercy and sacrifice and God's all-knowing plan  
It is a story of love beyond measure  
Of a Father who gave us His most precious treasure

I think of all this, as I look at the stars  
I think about the love of this God of ours  
And I close my eyes and cross myself, and I pray  
That I will remember this love every day

– unknown

## *Christmastide*

by Christian Rossetti (1830-1894)

Love came down at Christmas,  
Love all lovely, Love Divine;  
Love was born at Christmas,  
Star and Angels gave the sign.

Worship we the Godhead,  
Love Incarnate, Love Divine;  
Worship we our Jesus:  
But wherewith for sacred sign?

Love shall be our token,  
Love be yours and love be mine,  
Love to God and all men,  
Love for plea and gift and sign.

Music I love - but never strain  
Could kindle raptures so divine,  
So grief assuage, so conquer pain,  
And rouse this pensive heart of mine -  
As that we hear on Christmas morn,  
Upon the wintry breezes borne.

Though Darkness still her empire keep,  
And hours must pass, ere morning break;  
From troubled dreams, or slumbers deep,  
That music kindly bids us wake:  
It calls us, with an angel's voice,  
To wake, and worship, and rejoice;

— Anne Brontë

## Christ's Nativity

Awake, glad heart! get up and sing!  
It is the birth-day of thy King.  
Awake! awake!  
The Sun doth shake  
Light from his locks, and all the way  
Breathing perfumes, doth spice the day.  
Awake, awake! hark how th' wood rings;  
Winds whisper, and the busy springs  
A concert make;  
Awake! awake!  
Man is their high-priest, and should rise  
To offer up the sacrifice.  
I would I were some bird, or star,  
Flutt'ring in woods, or lifted far  
Above this inn  
And road of sin!  
Then either star or bird should be  
Shining or singing still to thee.  
I would I had in my best part  
Fit rooms for thee! or that my heart  
Were so clean as  
Thy manger was!  
But I am all filth, and obscene;  
Yet, if thou wilt, thou canst make clean.  
Sweet Jesu! will then. Let no more  
This leper haunt and soil thy door!  
Cure him, ease him,  
O release him!  
And let once more, by mystic birth,  
The Lord of life be born in earth.

– Henry Vaughan

God's greatest gift was sent to all  
He was born in a lowly manger stall  
The gift of Jesus to those who believe  
Is a gift of love and life for all.

God's love was shown in his Son  
He came that we may live as one  
Our thanks and praise can not express  
Our love for God that brings happiness.

So at this Christmas time rejoice  
Praise the Lord with your voice  
The miracle of that special birth  
Shows how much God thinks you're worth.

– Catherine Pulsifier

Christmas is for giving  
And for showing that we care,  
For honoring the Christ Child  
With the loving gifts we share.  
The wise men gave of riches;  
The shepherds, faith and love.  
Each gift, in its own measure,  
Was smiled on from above.  
Let every gift be treasured;  
Not always size or price  
Determines the extent of love  
And willing sacrifice  
Handsome gifts with festive trim  
Bring smiles of sweet content,  
But modest gifts of humble means  
are oftentimes heaven sent.  
Whether it be large or small,  
Each gift will share in part  
The message of true Christmas joy  
If given from the heart!

– Iris W. Bray



# *A Nativity*

By Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936)

*The Babe was laid in the Manger*

*Between the gentle kine—*

*All safe from cold and danger—*

“But it was not so with mine,  
(With mine! With mine!)

“Is it well with the child, is it well?”

The waiting mother prayed.

“For I know not how he fell,  
And I know not where he is laid.”

*A Star stood forth in Heaven;*

*The Watchers ran to see*

*The Sign of the Promise given—*

“But there comes no sign to me.  
(To me! To me!)

“My child died in the dark.  
Is it well with the child, is it well?

There was none to tend him or mark,  
And I know not how he fell.”

*The Cross was raised on high;*

*The Mother grieved beside—*

“But the Mother saw Him die  
And took Him when He died.  
(He died! He died!)

“Seemly and undefiled  
His burial-place was made—  
Is it well, is it well with the child?  
For I know not where he is laid.”

*On the dawning of Easter Day*

*Comes Mary Magdalene;*

*But the Stone was rolled away,*

*And the Body was not within—  
(Within! Within!)*

“Ah, who will answer my word?”

The broken mother prayed.

“They have taken away my Lord,  
And I know not where He is Laid.”  
“The Star stands forth in Heaven.

*The watchers watch in vain*

*For Sign of the Promise given*

*Of peace on Earth again—  
(Again! Again!)*

“But I know for Whom he fell”—

The steadfast mother smiled,

“Is it well with the child—is it well?  
It is well—it is well with the child!”

# *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*

By John Milton (1608-1674)

I

This is the month, and this the happy morn,  
Wherein the Son of Heaven's eternal King,  
Of wedded maid and Virgin Mother born,  
Our great redemption from above did bring;  
For so the holy sages once did sing,  
That he our deadly forfeit should release,  
And with his Father work us a perpetual peace.

II

That glorious Form, that Light unsufferable,  
And that far-beaming blaze of majesty,  
Wherewith he went at Heaven's high council-table  
To sit the midst of Trinal Unity,  
He laid aside, and, here with us to be,  
Forsook the Courts of everlasting Day,  
And chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay.

III

Say, Heavenly Muse, shall not thy sacred vein  
Afford a present to the Infant God?  
Hast thou no verse, no hymn, or solemn strain,  
To welcome him to this his new abode,  
Now while the heaven, by the Sun's team untrod,  
Hath took no print of the approaching light,  
And all the spangled host keep watch in squadrons bright?

IV

See how from far upon the Eastern road  
The star-led Wisards haste with odours sweet!  
Oh! run; prevent them with thy humble ode,  
And lay it lowly at his blessèd feet;  
Have thou the honour first thy Lord to greet,  
And join thy voice unto the Angel Quire,  
From out his secret altar touched with hallowed fire.  
The Hymn

I

It was the winter wild,  
While the heaven-born child  
All meanly wrapt in the rude manger lies;  
Nature, in awe to him,  
Had doffed her gaudy trim,

With her great Master so to sympathize:  
It was no season then for her  
To wanton with the Sun, her lusty Paramour.

II

Only with speeches fair  
She woos the gentle air  
To hide her guilty front with innocent snow,  
And on her naked shame,  
Pollute with sinful blame,  
The saintly veil of maiden white to throw;  
Confounded, that her Maker's eyes  
Should look so near upon her foul deformities.

III

But he, her fears to cease,  
Sent down the meek-eyed Peace:  
She, crowned with olive green, came softly sliding  
Down through the turning sphere,  
His ready Harbinger,  
With turtle wing the amorous clouds dividing;  
And, waving wide her myrtle wand,  
She strikes a universal peace through sea and land.

IV

No war, or battail's sound,  
Was heard the world around;  
The idle spear and shield were high uphung;  
The hookèd chariot stood,  
Unstained with hostile blood;  
The trumpet spake not to the armèd throng;  
And Kings sat still with awful eye,  
As if they surely knew their sovran Lord was by.

V

But peaceful was the night  
Wherein the Prince of Light  
His reign of peace upon the earth began.  
The winds, with wonder whist,  
Smoothly the waters kissed,  
Whispering new joys to the mild Ocean,  
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,  
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmed wave.

## VI

The stars, with deep amaze,  
Stand fixed in steadfast gaze,  
Bending one way their precious influence,  
And will not take their flight,  
For all the morning light,  
Or Lucifer that often warned them thence;  
But in their glimmering orbs did glow,  
Until their Lord himself bespake, and bid them go.

## VII

And, though the shady gloom  
Had given day her room,  
The Sun himself withheld his wonted speed,  
And hid his head of shame,  
As his inferior flame  
The new-enlightened world no more should need:  
He saw a greater Sun appear  
Than his bright Throne or burning axletree could bear.

## VIII

The Shepherds on the lawn,  
Or ere the point of dawn,  
Sat simply chatting in a rustic row;  
Full little thought they than  
That the mighty Pan  
Was kindly come to live with them below:  
Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep,  
Was all that did their silly thoughts so busy keep.

## IX

When such music sweet  
Their hearts and ears did greet  
As never was by mortal finger strook,  
Divinely-warbled voice  
Answering the stringèd noise,  
As all their souls in blissful rapture took:  
The air, such pleasure loth to lose,  
With thousand echoes still prolongs each heavenly close.

## X

Nature, that heard such sound  
Beneath the hollow round  
Of Cynthia's seat the airy Region thrilling,  
Now was almost won  
To think her part was done,

And that her reign had here its last fulfilling:  
She knew such harmony alone  
Could hold all Heaven and Earth in happier union.

XI

At last surrounds their sight  
A globe of circular light,  
That with long beams the shamefaced Night arrayed;  
The helmèd Cherubim  
And sworded Seraphim  
Are seen in glittering ranks with wings displayed,  
Harping in loud and solemn quire,  
With unexpressive notes, to Heaven's newborn Heir.

XII

Such music (as 'tis said)  
Before was never made,  
But when of old the Sons of Morning sung,  
While the Creator great  
His constellations set,  
And the well-balanced World on hinges hung,  
And cast the dark foundations deep,  
And bid the weltering waves their oozy channel keep.

XIII

Ring out, ye crystal spheres!  
Once bless our human ears,  
If ye have power to touch our senses so;  
And let your silver chime  
Move in melodious time;  
And let the bass of heaven's deep organ blow;  
And with your ninefold harmony  
Make up full consort of the angelic symphony.

XIV

For, if such holy song  
Enwrap our fancy long,  
Time will run back and fetch the Age of Gold;  
And speckled Vanity  
Will sicken soon and die,  
And leprous Sin will melt from earthly mould;  
And Hell itself will pass away,  
And leave her dolorous mansions of the peering day.

XV

Yes, Truth and Justice then  
Will down return to men,  
The enamelled arras of the rainbow wearing;  
And Mercy set between,  
Throned in celestial sheen,  
With radiant feet the tissued clouds down steering;  
And Heaven, as at some festival,  
Will open wide the gates of her high palace-hall.

#### XVI

But wisest Fate says No,  
This must not yet be so;  
The Babe lies yet in smiling infancy  
That on the bitter cross  
Must redeem our loss,  
So both himself and us to glorify:  
Yet first, to those chained in sleep,  
The wakeful trump of doom must thunder through the deep,

#### XVII

With such a horrid clang  
As on Mount Sinai rang,  
While the red fire and smouldering clouds outbrake:  
The aged Earth, aghast  
With terror of that blast,  
Shall from the surface to the centre shake,  
When, at the world's last session,  
The dreadful Judge in middle air shall spread his throne.

#### XVIII

And then at last our bliss  
Full and perfect is,  
But now begins; for from this happy day  
The Old Dragon under ground,  
In straiter limits bound,  
Not half so far casts his usurpèd sway,  
And, wroth to see his Kingdom fail,  
Swindges the scaly horror of his folded tail.

#### XIX

The Oracles are dumb;  
No voice or hideous hum  
Runs through the archèd roof in words deceiving.  
Apollo from his shrine  
Can no more divine,  
Will hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving.

No nightly trance, or breathèd spell,  
Inspires the pale-eyed Priest from the prophetic cell.

XX

The lonely mountains o'er,  
And the resounding shore,  
A voice of weeping heard and loud lament;  
Edgèd with poplar pale,  
From haunted spring, and dale  
The parting Genius is with sighing sent;  
With flower-inwoven tresses torn  
The Nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets mourn.

XXI

In consecrated earth,  
And on the holy hearth,  
The Lars and Lemures moan with midnight plaint;  
In urns, and altars round,  
A drear and dying sound  
Affrights the Flamens at their service quaint;  
And the chill marble seems to sweat,  
While each peculiar power forgoes his wonted seat.

XXII

Peor and Baälim  
Forsake their temples dim,  
With that twice-battered god of Palestine;  
And moonèd Ashtaroth,  
Heaven's Queen and Mother both,  
Now sits not girt with tapers' holy shine:  
The Libyc Hammon shrinks his horn;  
In vain the Tyrian maids their wounded Thammuz mourn.

XXIII

And sullen Moloch, fled,  
Hath left in shadows dread  
His burning idol all of blackest hue;  
In vain with cymbals' ring  
They call the grisly king,  
In dismal dance about the furnace blue;  
The brutish gods of Nile as fast,  
Isis, and Orus, and the dog Anubis, haste.

XXIV

Nor is Osiris seen  
In Memphian grove or green,

Trampling the unshowered grass with lowings loud;  
Nor can he be at rest  
Within his sacred chest;  
Nought but profoundest Hell can be his shroud;  
In vain, with timbreled anthems dark,  
The sable-stolèd Sorcerers bear his worshiped ark.

XXV

He feels from Juda's land  
The dreaded Infant's hand;  
The rays of Bethlehem blind his dusky eyn;  
Nor all the gods beside  
Longer dare abide,  
Not Typhon huge ending in snaky twine:  
Our Babe, to show his Godhead true,  
Can in his swaddling bands control the damnèd crew.

XXVI

So, when the Sun in bed,  
Curtained with cloudy red,  
Pillows his chin upon an orient wave,  
The flocking shadows pale  
Troop to the infernal jail,  
Each fettered ghost slips to his several grave,  
And the yellow-skirted Fays  
Fly after the night-steeds, leaving their moon-loved maze.

XXVII

But see! the Virgin blest  
Hath laid her Babe to rest,  
Time is our tedious song should here have ending:  
Heaven's youngest-teemèd star  
Hath fixed her polished car,  
Her sleeping Lord with handmaid lamp attending;  
And all about the courtly stable  
Bright-harnessed Angels sit in order serviceable.



# *Christmas at Sea*

By Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894)

The sheets were frozen hard, and they cut the naked hand;  
The decks were like a slide, where a seaman scarce could stand;  
The wind was a nor'wester, blowing squally off the sea;  
And cliffs and spouting breakers were the only things a-lee.  
They heard the surf a-roaring before the break of day;  
But 'twas only with the peep of light we saw how ill we lay.  
We tumbled every hand on deck instanter, with a shout,  
And we gave her the maintops'l, and stood by to go about.  
All day we tacked and tacked between the South Head and the North;  
All day we hauled the frozen sheets, and got no further forth;  
All day as cold as charity, in bitter pain and dread,  
For very life and nature we tacked from head to head.  
We gave the South a wider berth, for there the tide-race roared;  
But every tack we made we brought the North Head close aboard:  
So's we saw the cliffs and houses, and the breakers running high,  
And the coastguard in his garden, with his glass against his eye.  
The frost was on the village roofs as white as ocean foam;  
The good red fires were burning bright in every 'long-shore home;  
The windows sparkled clear, and the chimneys volleyed out;  
And I vow we sniffed the victuals as the vessel went about.  
The bells upon the church were rung with a mighty jovial cheer;  
For it's just that I should tell you how (of all days in the year)  
This day of our adversity was blessed Christmas morn,  
And the house above the coastguard's was the house where I was born.  
O well I saw the pleasant room, the pleasant faces there,  
My mother's silver spectacles, my father's silver hair;  
And well I saw the firelight, like a flight of homely elves,  
Go dancing round the china-plates that stand upon the shelves.  
And well I knew the talk they had, the talk that was of me,  
Of the shadow on the household and the son that went to sea;  
And O the wicked fool I seemed, in every kind of way,  
To be here and hauling frozen ropes on blessed Christmas Day.

They lit the high sea-light, and the dark began to fall.  
"All hands to loose topgallant sails," I heard the captain call.  
"By the Lord, she'll never stand it," our first mate Jackson, cried.  
..."It's the one way or the other, Mr. Jackson," he replied.  
She staggered to her bearings, but the sails were new and good,  
And the ship smelt up to windward just as though she understood.  
As the winter's day was ending, in the entry of the night,  
We cleared the weary headland, and passed below the light.  
And they heaved a mighty breath, every soul on board but me,  
As they saw her nose again pointing handsome out to sea;  
But all that I could think of, in the darkness and the cold,  
Was just that I was leaving home and my folks were growing old.

## *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear*

It came upon the midnight clear,  
That glorious song of old,  
From angels bending near the earth  
To touch their harps of gold:  
“Peace on the earth, good will to men  
From heav’n’s all-gracious King.”  
The world in solemn stillness lay  
To hear the angels sing.

Still thru the cloven skies they come  
With peaceful wings unfurled,  
And still their heav’nly music floats  
O’er all the weary world.  
Above its sad and lowly plains  
They bend on hov’ring wing,  
And ever o’er its babel sounds  
The blessed angels sing.

For lo! the days are hast’ning on,  
By prophets seen of old,  
When with the ever-circling years  
Shall come the time foretold,  
When the new heav’n and earth shall own  
The Prince of Peace their King,  
And the whole world send back the song  
Which now the angels sing.

## ***Hark! The Herald Angels Sing***

by Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Music by Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)



Hark! the herald angels sing  
Glory to the newborn King!  
Peace on earth and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled!  
Joyful, all ye nations, rise;  
Join the triumph of the skies;  
With th'angelic host proclaim  
Christ is born in Bethlehem!

Hark! the herald angels sing  
Glory to the newborn King!

Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!  
Hail the Son of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all he brings,  
Ris'n with healing in his wings.  
Mild he lays his glory by,  
Born that man no more may die;  
Born to raise the sons of earth,  
Born to give them second birth.

Hark! the herald angels sing  
Glory to the newborn King!

## ***Far, Far Away***

**Far, far away on Judea's plains,  
Shepherds of old heard the joyous strains:  
Glory to God, Glory to God,  
Glory to God in the highest;  
Peace on earth, goodwill to men;  
Peace on earth, goodwill to men!**

**Sweet are these strains of redeeming love,  
Message of mercy from heav'n above:  
Glory to God, Glory to God,  
Glory to God in the highest;  
Peace on earth, goodwill to men;  
Peace on earth, goodwill to men!**

**Lord, with the angels we too would rejoice;  
Help us to sing with the heart and voice:  
Glory to God, Glory to God,  
Glory to God in the highest;  
Peace on earth, goodwill to men;  
Peace on earth, goodwill to men!**

**Hasten the time when, from ev'ry clime,  
Men shall unite in the strains sublime:  
Glory to God, Glory to God,  
Glory to God in the highest;  
Peace on earth, goodwill to men;  
Peace on earth, goodwill to men!**

*Text and music:*  
John Menzies Macfarlane, 1833–1892

# *Christmas Bells*

*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

I heard the bells on Christmas Day  
Their old, familiar carols play,  
And wild and sweet  
The words repeat  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come,  
The belfries of all Christendom  
Had rolled along  
The unbroken song  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

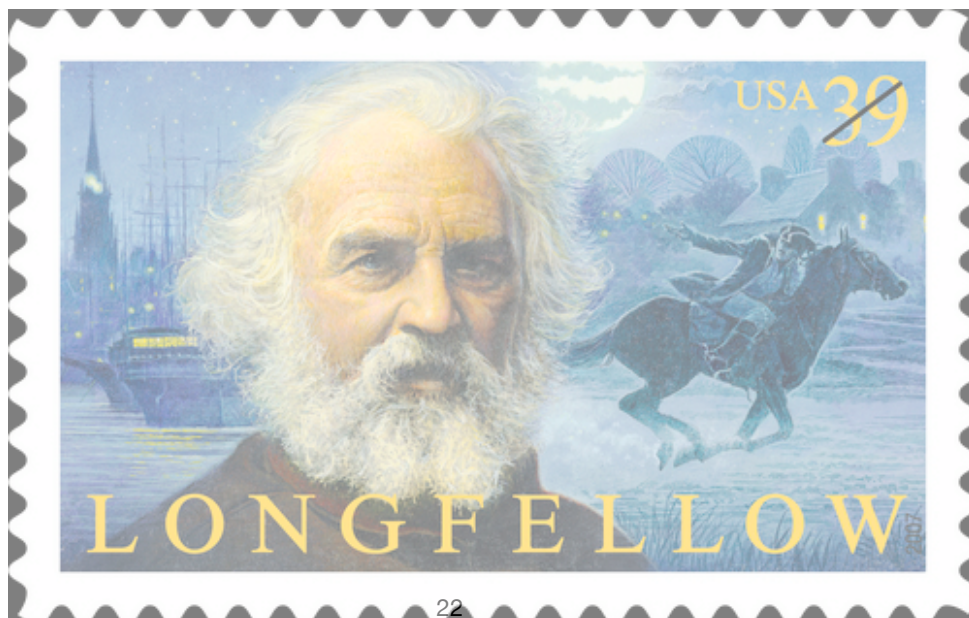
Till, ringing, singing on its way,  
The world revolved from night to day,  
A voice, a chime,  
A chant sublime  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth  
The cannon thundered in the South,  
And with the sound  
The carols drowned  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

It was as if an earthquake rent  
The hearth stones of a continent,  
And made forlorn  
The households born  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;  
"There is no peace on earth," I said;  
"For hate is strong,  
And mocks the song  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:  
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep!  
The Wrong shall fail,  
The Right prevail,  
With peace on earth, good-will to men!"



T

his Christmas, mend a quarrel. Seek out a forgotten friend. Dismiss suspicion, and replace it with trust. Write a love letter. Share some treasure. Give a soft answer. Encourage youth. Manifest your loyalty in word and deed. Keep a promise. Find the time. Forgo a grudge. Forgive an enemy. Listen. Apologize if you were wrong. Try to understand. Flout envy. Examine your demands on others. Think first of someone else. Appreciate. Be kind; be gentle. Laugh a little. Laugh a little more. Deserve confidence. Take up arms against malice. Decry complacency. Express your gratitude. Go to church. Welcome a stranger. Gladden the heart of a child. Take pleasure in beauty and wonder of the earth. Speak your love. Speak it again. Speak it still once again.

## ***Good King Wenceslas***

Good King Wenceslas looked out  
On the feast of Stephen  
When the snow lay round about  
Deep and crisp and even  
Brightly shone the moon that night  
Though the frost was cruel  
When a poor man came in sight  
Gath'ring winter fuel

"Hither, page, and stand by me  
If thou know'st it, telling  
Yonder peasant, who is he?  
Where and what his dwelling?"

"Sire, he lives a good league hence  
Underneath the mountain  
Right against the forest fence  
By Saint Agnes' fountain."

"Bring me flesh and bring me wine  
Bring me pine logs hither  
Thou and I will see him dine  
When we bear him thither."

Page and monarch forth they went  
Forth they went together  
Through the rude wind's wild lament  
And the bitter weather

"Sire, the night is darker now  
And the wind blows stronger  
Fails my heart, I know not how,  
I can go no longer."  
"Mark my footsteps, my good page  
Tread thou in them boldly  
Thou shalt find the winter's rage  
Freeze thy blood less coldly."

In his master's steps he trod  
Where the snow lay dinted  
Heat was in the very sod  
Which the Saint had printed  
Therefore, Christian men, be sure  
Wealth or rank possessing  
Ye who now will bless the poor  
Shall yourselves find blessing





# Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee

by Unknown Author, 12th century

Translated by Edward Caswall, 1814-1878

Jesus, the very thought of thee  
With sweetness fills the breast;  
But sweeter far Thy face to see  
And in Thy presence rest.

Nor voice can sing, nor heart can frame,  
Nor can the memory find  
A sweeter sound than Thy blest name,  
O Savior of mankind!

O Hope of every contrite heart,  
O Joy of all the meek!  
To those who fall, how kind Thou art,  
How good to those who seek!

But what to those who find? Ah! this  
Nor tongue nor pen can show;  
The love of Jesus, what it is,  
None but His loved ones know.

Jesus, our only Joy be Thou  
As Thou our Prize wilt be!  
Jesus, be Thou our Glory now  
And through eternity.



## Little Tree

by E. E. Cummings

little tree

little silent Christmas tree

you are so little

you are more like a flower

who found you in the green forest

and were you very sorry to come away?

see i will comfort you

because you smell so sweetly

i will kiss your cool bark

and hug you safe and tight

just as your mother would,

only don't be afraid

look the spangles

that sleep all the year in a dark box

dreaming of being taken out and allowed to  
shine,

the balls the chains red and gold the fluffy  
threads,

put up your little arms

and i'll give them all to you to hold

every finger shall have its ring

and there won't a single place dark or  
unhappy

then when you're quite dressed

you'll stand in the window for everyone to  
see

and how they'll stare!

oh but you'll be very proud

and my little sister and i will take hands

and looking up at our beautiful tree

we'll dance and sing

"Noel Noel"



## One Solitary Life

~Dr James Allen Francis, © 1926~

He was born in an obscure village,  
The child of a peasant woman.  
He grew up in still another village,  
Where he worked in a carpenter shop  
Until he was thirty.

Then for three years  
He was an itinerant preacher.  
He never wrote a book.  
He never held an office.  
He never had a family or owned a house.  
He didn't go to college.  
He never visited a big city.  
He never traveled two hundred miles  
From the place where he was born.  
He did none of the things  
One usually associates with greatness.  
He had no credentials but himself.

He was only thirty-three  
When the tide of public opinion turned against him.  
His friends ran away.  
He was turned over to his enemies.  
And went through the mockery of a trial.

He was nailed to a cross  
Between two thieves.  
While he was dying,  
His executioners gambled for his clothing,  
The only property he had on Earth.  
When he was dead,  
He was laid in a borrowed grave  
Through the pity of a friend.

Twenty centuries have come and gone,  
And today he is the central figure  
Of the human race,  
And the leader of mankind's progress.

All the armies that ever marched,  
All the navies that ever sailed,  
All the parliament that ever sat,  
All the kings that ever reigned,  
Put together have not affected  
The life of man on Earth  
As much as that

## What Is Christmas?

by President Thomas S. Monson (Ensign, December 1998)

*There's Christmas in the home and church,  
There's Christmas in the mart;  
But you'll not know what Christmas is  
Unless it's in your heart.*

*The bells may call across the snow,  
And carols search the air;  
But, oh, the heart will miss the thrill  
Unless it's Christmas there.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson, the poet, wrote:  
"Rings and jewels are not gifts, but apologies for gifts.  
The only [true] gift is a portion of thyself."

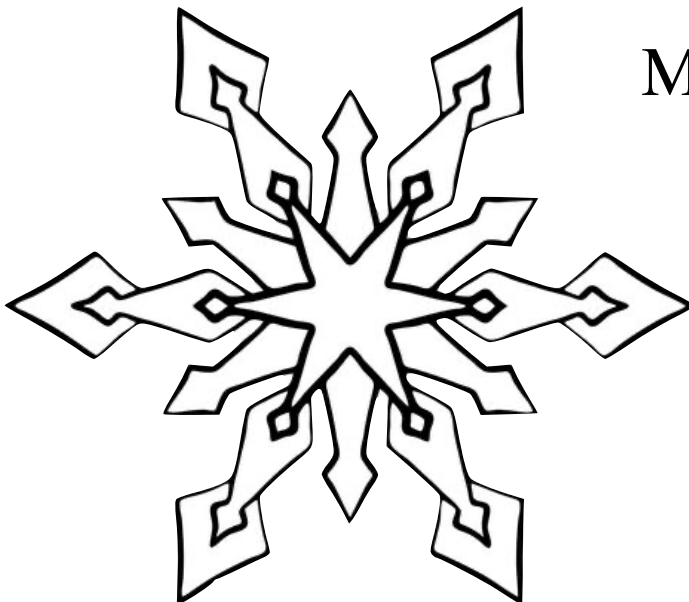
No time for God, what fools we are,  
To clutter up our lives with common things  
And leave without the Lord of life and life itself.

No time for God, as well to say,  
No time to eat, to sleep, to live to die;  
Take time for God or a poor misshapen thing you'll be  
To step into eternity and say to him,  
I had no time for thee.

## Snowflakes

I once thought that snowflakes were feathers  
And that they came falling down  
When the Moon Lady feathered her chickens  
And shook out her silver gown.

And then I began to look closer,  
And now I know just what they are –  
I caught one today in my mitten,  
And there was a baby star.



Marchette Chute



# *The Bells*

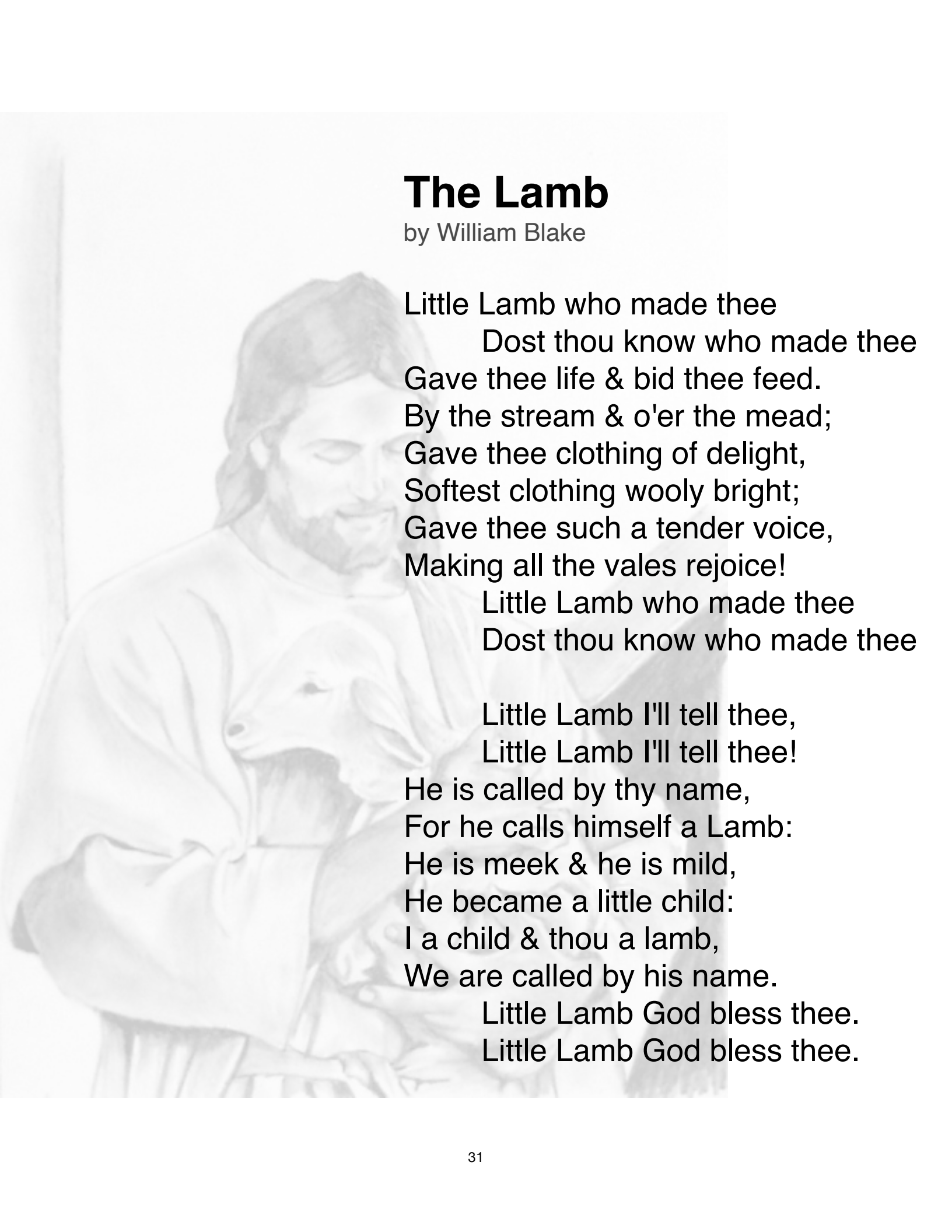
*by Edgar Allan Poe*

Hear the sledges with the bells --  
    Silver bells!  
What a world of merriment their melody foretells!  
    How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle,  
        In the icy air of night!  
While the stars that overspinkle  
All the heavens seem to twinkle  
    With a crystalline delight;  
    Keeping time, time, time,  
    In a sort of Runic rhyme,  
To the tintinnabulation that so musically wells  
    From the bells, bells, bells, bells,  
        Bells, bells, bells --  
From the jingling and the tinkling of the bells.



# The Lamb

by William Blake



Little Lamb who made thee  
Dost thou know who made thee  
Gave thee life & bid thee feed.  
By the stream & o'er the mead;  
Gave thee clothing of delight,  
Softest clothing wooly bright;  
Gave thee such a tender voice,  
Making all the vales rejoice!

Little Lamb who made thee  
Dost thou know who made thee

Little Lamb I'll tell thee,  
Little Lamb I'll tell thee!  
He is called by thy name,  
For he calls himself a Lamb:  
He is meek & he is mild,  
He became a little child:  
I a child & thou a lamb,  
We are called by his name.

Little Lamb God bless thee.  
Little Lamb God bless thee.



# The Sugar-Plum Tree

HAVE you ever heard of the Sugar-Plum Tree?

'T is a marvel of great renown!  
It blooms on the shore of the Lollipop sea  
In the garden of Shut-Eye Town;  
The fruit that it bears is so wondrously sweet  
(As those who have tasted it say)  
That good little children have only to eat  
Of that fruit to be happy next day.

When you've got to the tree, you would have a hard time

To capture the fruit which I sing;

The tree is so tall that no person could climb

To the boughs where the sugar-plums swing!

But up in that tree sits a chocolate cat,

And a gingerbread dog prowls below--

And this is the way you contrive to get at

Those sugar-plums tempting you so:



You say but the word to that gingerbread dog  
And he barks with such terrible zest  
That the chocolate cat is at once all agog,  
As her swelling proportions attest.  
And the chocolate cat goes cavorting around  
From this leafy limb unto that,  
And the sugar-plums tumble, of course, to the ground--  
Hurrah for that chocolate cat!

There are marshmallows, gumdrops, and peppermint canes,  
With stripings of scarlet or gold,  
And you carry away of the treasure that rains  
As much as your apron can hold!  
So come, little child, cuddle closer to me  
In your dainty white nightcap and gown,  
And I'll rock you away to that Sugar-Plum Tree  
In the garden of Shut-Eye Town.

-- Eugene Field (1850-1895) --



A sugar plum is a piece of candy that is made of sugar and shaped in a small round or oval shape. Sugar plums are widely associated with Christmas, through cultural phenomena such as the Sugar Plum Fairy in *The Nutcracker* (Composed by Tchaikovsky), as well as the line "Visions of sugar plums danced in their heads," from "A Visit from St. Nicholas," better known as "Twas the Night Before Christmas."



## The Three Levels of Christmas

This is a beautiful time of the year. We love the excitement, the giving spirit, the special awareness of - and appreciation for - family and friends, and the special feelings of love and brotherhood that bless our gatherings at Christmas time.

In all of this joyousness, it is well to reflect that Christmas really comes at three levels.

Let's call the first, the *Santa Claus level*. This is the condition of Christmas trees and holly, of whispered secrets and colorful packages - of candlelight, rich food, and warm, open houses. It's carolers in the shopping malls, excited children and weary, but loving parents. It's a lovely time of special warmth, caring and giving. As well, it's the level at which we eat too much, spend too much, and do too much - and enjoy every minute, despite our complaints. We love the Santa Level of Christmas!

But, there's a higher, more beautiful and refined level. Let's call it the *Silent Night degree*. This is the level of all our glorious Christmas carols, of that beloved, familiar story: "Now in those days there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus...". It's the level of the crowded inn and the silent holy moment in a dark stable where the Son of Man came to earth. It's shepherds on steep, bare hills near Bethlehem, angels with their glad tidings, a new star in the east and wise men traveling far... in search of the Holy One. How beautiful and meaningful it is; how infinitely poorer we would be without this sacred level of Christmas.

The trouble is, these two levels of Christmas don't last. They can't!

Twelve days of Christmas, at the first level, is about all most of us can stand. It is too intense and far too extravagant. The tree dries out and the needles fall. The candles burn down and the beautiful wrappings go out with the trash. The carolers take off to the ski slopes, the toys wear out and often break; and the biggest day in the stores for the entire year is exchange day, December 26. The feast is over, and the dieting begins.

But the lonely and the hungry are with us still, perhaps lonelier and hungrier than before. And as lovely and joyous as the first level of Christmas is, there will come a day, very soon after, when mother will put away the decorations, vacuum the living room and think "Thank goodness that's over for another year!"

Even the second level, that of the Baby Jesus, cannot last. How many times this season can you sing "Silent Night"? The angels and the star and the shepherd, even the silent, sacred mystery of that holy night itself, can't long satisfy humanity's basic need. The person who keeps Christ in the manger will, in the end, be left disappointed and empty.

No, for Christmas to last all year long, for it to grow in beauty and meaning and purpose, for it to have the power to change lives, we must celebrate it at the third level - that of the *adult Christ*. It is with this maturity... not as an infant... that the Savior brings his gifts of lasting hope, lasting peace, and lasting joy.

It was the adult Christ who reached out and touched the untouchable, who loved the unlovable, and who so loved us all, that even in His agony upon the cross prayed forgiveness for His enemies. This is the Christ, creator of worlds without number, who wept because so many of us lack affection; and hate each other - and who, willingly, gave His life for all! This is the Christ, the adult Christ who gave us the perfect example, and who asked us to follow Him.

**Accepting that invitation is the way - the only way -  
to celebrate Christmas all year and all life long!**

# The Three Kings

by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Three Kings came riding from far away,  
Melchior and Gaspar and Baltasar;  
Three Wise Men out of the East were they,  
And they travelled by night and they slept by day,  
For their guide was a beautiful, wonderful star.

The star was so beautiful, large and clear,  
That all the other stars of the sky  
Became a white mist in the atmosphere,  
And by this they knew that the coming was near  
Of the Prince foretold in the prophecy.

Three caskets they bore on their saddle-bows,  
Three caskets of gold with golden keys;  
Their robes were of crimson silk with rows  
Of bells and pomegranates and furbelows,  
Their turbans like blossoming almond-trees.

And so the Three Kings rode into the West,  
Through the dusk of the night, over hill  
and dell,  
And sometimes they nodded with beard  
on breast,  
And sometimes talked, as they paused  
to rest,  
With the people they met at some  
wayside well.

"Of the child that is born," said  
Baltasar,  
"Good people, I pray you, tell us the  
news;  
For we in the East have seen his star,  
And have ridden fast, and have ridden  
far,  
To find and worship the King of the  
Jews."

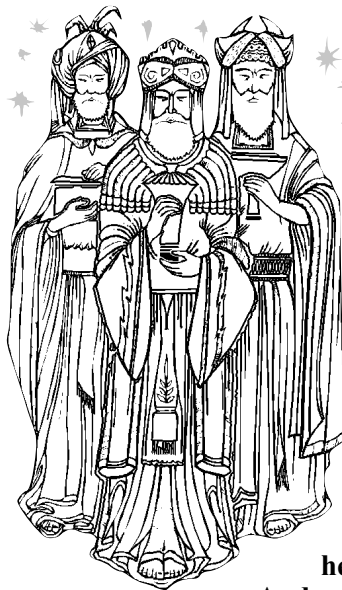
And the people answered, "You ask in vain;  
We know of no King but Herod the Great!"  
They thought the Wise Men were men insane,  
As they spurred their horses across the plain,  
Like riders in haste, who cannot wait.

And when they came to Jerusalem,  
Herod the Great, who had heard this thing,  
Sent for the Wise Men and questioned them;  
And said, "Go down unto Bethlehem,  
And bring me tidings of this new king."

So they rode away; and the star stood still,  
The only one in the grey of morn;  
Yes, it stopped --it stood still of its own free will,  
Right over Bethlehem on the hill,  
The city of David, where Christ was born.

And the Three Kings rode through the gate and the  
guard,  
Through the silent street, till their horses turned  
And neighed as they entered the great inn-yard;  
But the windows were closed, and the doors were  
barred,  
And only a light in the stable burned.

And cradled there in the scented hay,  
In the air made sweet by the breath of kine,  
The little child in the manger lay,  
The child, that would be king one day  
Of a kingdom not human, but divine.



His mother Mary of Nazareth  
Sat watching beside his place of  
rest,  
Watching the even flow of his  
breath,  
For the joy of life and the terror of  
death  
Were mingled together in her breast.

They laid their offerings at his feet:  
The gold was their tribute to a King,  
The frankincense, with its odor  
sweet,  
Was for the Priest, the Paraclete,  
The myrrh for the body's burying.

And the mother wondered and bowed  
her head,  
And sat as still as a statue of stone,  
Her heart was troubled yet comforted,  
Remembering what the Angel had said  
Of an endless reign and of David's throne.

Then the Kings rode out of the city gate,  
With a clatter of hoofs in proud array;  
But they went not back to Herod the Great,  
For they knew his malice and feared his hate,  
And returned to their homes by another way.

# For Christmas

This poem was awarded the first-place prize by James E. Talmage in 1904. This poem describes Mary's feelings at the birth and death of her son.

O beautiful mother Mary, O mother of croonings low,  
Did you know more bliss in each fond kiss  
Than we common mothers know?  
His baby step she taught him, she put him gaily down  
And laughed with pleased, low laughter when his fingers clutched her  
own.  
She taught him his first 'Our Father,' and as he lisped the prayer,  
She bended her face till her lips found place In the soft sheen of his hair.  
O beautiful mother Mary, O Woman of women wise,  
Did you see the End? Or did Father send  
A kindly veil for your eyes?  
She watched him grow into boyhood, with innocent eyes like his own  
That wept when He came into manhood and the Load He must carry  
alone.  
For the way of the Hill was heavy, and the Cross on the Hill was high  
And 'twas hard to look where whose sins He took were lusting to see  
Him die!  
We see our children bleeding; we see our sons go wrong  
We sense our own soul's weakness and pray to be made strong.  
And so when the holly reddens, and the white on the brown earth lies  
And Christmas cheer is in the air, The mother in us cries:  
O Son of beautiful Mary, O JESUS of Galilee,  
Let her spirit pure in our hearts outpour That our babes may grow like  
Thee!

# Sweet Little Baby

by Linda Hoffman Kimball

Sweet little Baby  
Resting in the hay,  
Do You know why shepherds come  
To worship You today?  
Sweet little Baby,  
While Mary hummed to Thee,  
Angels sang out “Gloria!”  
O’er flock and field and tree.  
Sweet little Baby  
Peaceful in the night,

Shepherds ran here breathlessly  
To see this wondrous sight.  
Sweet little Baby  
Wrapped up snug and tight,  
You set them free from fear and death  
By being born tonight.  
Sweet little Baby  
Smiling at these men,  
In time, You’ll be their Shepherd  
To guide them home again.

# The Donkey

by Milo Mills: from *the Friend*, 1971

The donkey stood in his stall that night  
And blinked at the glory of heavenly light  
That filled the stable where Jesus lay.  
And he heard the voices of angels say,  
“Glory to God in the highest! Peace to men!”  
And then all about, again, and again,  
The heavenly hosts sang; and the donkey’s ear  
Twitched in wonder of those so near:  
The Mother Mary, Joseph, the Child—  
The Precious Savior, tiny and mild.  
The donkey stood in his stall, and he  
Was privileged to see the majesty  
Of a Savior King, God’s own Son.  
Oh, wasn’t he lucky to be one  
Of the creatures bathed in golden light  
When Christ was born on Christmas night!

## ***The Miracle Dreams***

Susie M. Best, Century Magazine, Dec. 1907, 180–82

That night when in [the] Judean skies  
The mystic Star dispensed its light,  
A blind man [groped] in his sleep,  
And dreamed [that] he had sight.

That night when shepherds heard the song  
Of hosts angelic choring near,  
A deaf man stirred in slumber's spell,  
And dreamed [that] he could hear.

That night when in the cattle-stall  
Slept Child and Mother [without talk],  
A cripple[d] [man] turned his twisted limbs,  
And dreamed [that] he [could walk].

That night when o'er the new-born Babe  
The tender Mary rose to lean,  
A loathsome leper smiled in sleep,  
And dreamed [that] he was clean.

That night when to his Mother's breast  
The little King was held secure,  
A harlot slept a happy sleep,  
And dreamed [that] she was pure.

That night when in the manger lay  
The Sanctified, who came to save,  
A man moved in the sleep of death,  
And dreamed there was no grave.

Quoted by Jeffery R. Holland, The Dream of Bethlehem,  
2020 Christmas Devotional

## Luke 2, JST

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that ~~all the world~~ [his empire] should be ~~taxed~~ [registered where one is born].

2 (And this ~~taxing~~ [registration] was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

3 And all went to be ~~taxed~~ [counted], every one into his own city.

4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David) [at the time of Passover]

5 To be ~~taxed~~ [counted] with Mary his ~~espoused~~ wife, being great with child.

6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn[s].

8 And there were in the same country shepherds [first witnesses] abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger [not many babies are in mangers, it was this sign not the star that was their sign].

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and ~~saying~~ [singing],

14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace [among men of] good will ~~toward men~~.

15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

16 And they came with haste, and found [because they went in haste] Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

17 And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

18 And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

19 But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was ~~told~~ [manifested, JST] unto them.

# **The Christmas Symbol**

**(Music for Choirs)**

Only a manger, cold and bare,  
Only a maiden mild,  
Only some shepherds kneeling there,  
Watching a little child,  
And yet that maiden's arms enfold the King of Heav'n above;  
And in the Christ Child we behold the Lord of Life and Love.  
And in the Christ Child we behold the Lord of Life and Love.