

A Visit from St. Nicholas



TWAS the-night before Christmas, when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that ST. NICHOLAS soon would be there;
The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads;
And mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap,
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.

THE moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow
Gave the lustre of mid-day to objects below,
When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a miniature sleigh, and eight tiny reindeer,
With a little old driver, so lively and quick,
I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick.
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name;
"Now, Dasher! now, Dancer! now, Prancer and Vixen!
On, Comet! on Cupid! on, Donner and Blitzen!
To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!
Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!"

AS dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky,
So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,
With the sleigh full of toys, and St. Nicholas too.
And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.
As I drew in my head, and was turning around,
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.
He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot;
A bundle of toys he had flung on his back,
And he looked like a peddler just opening his pack.

HIS eyes—how they twinkled! his dimples, how merry!
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And the beard of his chin was as white as the snow;
The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath;
He had a broad face and a little round belly,
That shook, when he laughed, like a bowlful of jelly.

HE was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,
And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself;
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head,
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread;
He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
And filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk,
And laying his finger aside of his nose,
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose;
He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.
But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight,
"Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-night."

—Clement Clarke Moore (1779-1863)



The home in New York in which C. C. Moore wrote "A Visit from St. Nicholas."

Christmas Everywhere

EVERYWHERE, everywhere, Christmas tonight!
Christmas in lands of the fir-tree and pine,
Christmas in lands of the palm-tree and vine,
Christmas where snow peaks stand solemn and white,
Christmas where cornfields stand sunny and bright,
Christmas where children are hopeful and gay,
Christmas where old men are patient and gray,
Christmas where peace, like a dove in his flight,
Broods o'er brave men in the thick of the fight;
Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas tonight!
For the Christ-child who comes is the Master of all;
No palace too great, no cottage too small.

—Phillips Brooks (1835-1893)

A Christmas Toast

Now Christmas is come,
Let's beat up the drum,
And call all our neighbors together,
And when they appear,
Let us make them such cheer,
As will keep out the wind and the weather.

—Washington Irving (1783-1859)

The Most Popular Christmas Verses

Ceremonies for Christmas

COME, bring with a noise,
My merry, merry boys,
The Christmas log to the firing;
While my good dame, she
Bids ye all be free;
And drink to your hearts' desiring.

With the last year's brand
Light the new block, and
For good success in his spending,
On your psaltries play,
That sweet luck may
Come while the log is a-tending.

Drink now the strong beer,
Cut the white loaf here,
The while the meat is a-shredding;
For the rare mince-pie
And the plums stand by
To fill the paste that's a-kneading.

—Robert Herrick (1591-1634)

THE ORPHAN'S CHRISTMAS-TREE

AN orphan boy, with weary feet,
On Christmas Eve, alone, benighted,
Went through the town from street to street,
To see the clustering candles lighted
In homes where happy children meet.

Before each house he stood, to mark
The pleasant rooms that shone so fairly;
The tapers lighted, spark by spark,
Till all the trees were blazing rarely;
And sad his heart was, in the dark.

He wept; he clasped his hands and cried:
"Ah, every child to-night rejoices;
Their Christmas presents all divide,
Around their trees, with merry voices;
But Christmas is to me denied."

"Once with my sister, hand in hand
At home, how did my tree delight me!
No other tapers shone so grand;
But all forget me, none invite me,
Here, lonely, in the stranger's land.

"Will no one let me in, to share
The light,—to take some corner nigh it?
In all these houses can't they spare
A spot where I may sit in quiet—
A little seat among them there?"



"Will no one let me in to-night?
I will not beg for gift or token;
I only ask to see the sight
And hear the thanks of others spoken,
And that will be my own delight."

He knocked at every door and gate;
He rapped at window-pane and shutter;
But no one heard and bade him wait,
Or came, the "Welcome in!" to utter:
Their ears were dull, to outer fate.

Each father looked with eyes that smiled,
Upon his happy children only:
Their gifts the mother's heart beguiled
To think of them: none saw the lonely
Forgotten boy, the orphan child.

"O Christ-child, holy, kind, and dear!
I have no father and no mother,
Nor friend save thee, to give me cheer.
Be thou my help, there is none other,
Since all forget me, wandering here!"

The poor boy rubbed his hands so blue,
His little hands, the frost made chilly;
His tattered clothes he closer drew
And crouched within a corner stilly,
And prayed, and knew not what to do.

Then, suddenly, there shone a light;
Along the street, approaching nearer
Another child, in garments white,
Spoke as he came—and clearer, dearer,
His voice made music in the night:

"I am the Christ! have thou no fear!
I was a child in my probation,
And children unto me are near:
I hear and heed thy supplication,
Though all the rest forget thee here.

"My saving Word to all I bear,
And equally to each 'tis given;
I bring the promise of my care
Here, in the street, beneath the heaven,
As well as in the chambers there.

"And here, poor boy, thy Christmas-tree
Will I adorn, and so make glimmer
Through all this open space, for thee,
That those within shall twinkle dimmer,
For bright as thine they cannot be!"

The Christ-child with his shining hand
Then pointed up, and lo! the lustres
That sparkled there! He saw it stand,
A tree, o'erhung with starry clusters
On all its branches, wide and grand.

So far and yet so near! the night
Was blazing with the tapers' splendor:
What was the orphan boy's delight,
How beat his bosom warm and tender,
To see his Christmas-tree so bright!

It seemed to him a happy dream;
Then, from the starry branches bending,
The angels stooped, and through the gleam
They lifted him to peace unending,
They folded him in love supreme.



The orphan child is now at rest:
No father's care he needs, nor mother's,
Upon the Christ-child's holy breast.
All that is here bestowed on others
He there forgets, where all is best.

—Bayard Taylor (1825-1878), After Rueckerl.

RICH GROWS THE CHRISTMAS TREE

WHERE grows the Christmas tree—
The green, deep-rooted Christmas tree?
By what brave toil, in what rich soil,
Can spring the blooming Christmas tree?
Is it from prairies broad and deep,
Where future harvests softly sleep,
And flocks of acres, far and free,
Lie level as a waveless sea?
Or is it where a breeze-skein twines
Between the lofty-plumaged pines?
Or where sweet stealthy languor roves
Among the Southland orange groves?
Or blooms it best 'mid city homes,
With wealth's unnumbered spires and domes?
Or is it where, through changeful day,
The mountain shadows creep and play,
And swift a gleaming sun-flood rides
Along the tall cliff's dappled sides?

High grows the Christmas tree,
The sweet, love-planted Christmas tree,—
Where'er extends the hand of friends;
Wherever heart-caressings be.

What bears the Christmas tree—
The bright, rich-fruited Christmas tree?
What gather they, expectant-gay,
Who throng around the Christmas tree?
Leaves picked by love-instructed art
From off the branches of the heart;
Fruits culled from every tree and vine
Where zephyrs fly, and sunbeams abine.
What'er can brighten to our gaze
The trembling dawn of childhood days;
What'er can feed more clear and high
The flame of youth's expectant eye;
What'er can make more richly good
The blood of man and womanhood,
Or bid old age look smiling round
At gems of earth-joy newly found;
What'er can say, "While strength endures,
My life has love and help for yours."

Rich glows the Christmas tree,
The heart-protected Christmas tree—
With tokens dear that bring more near
God's earth-lent love to you and me.

—Will Carleton (1843-1912)

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God Rest You Merry Gentlemen

GOD rest you merry, gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour,
Was born upon this day,
To save us all from Satan's power
When we were gone astray,
O tidings of comfort and joy!
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour,
Was born on Christmas Day.

In Bethlehem, in Jewry,
This blessed babe was born,
And laid within a manger,
Upon this blessed morn;
The which His mother, Mary,
Nothing did take in scorn.

From God our Heavenly Father,
A blessed angel came;
And unto certain shepherds
Brought tidings of the same:
How that in Bethlehem was born
The Son of God by name.

"Fear not," then said the angel,
"Let nothing you affright,
This day is born a Saviour
Of virtue, power, and might,
So frequently to vanquish all
The friends of Satan quite."

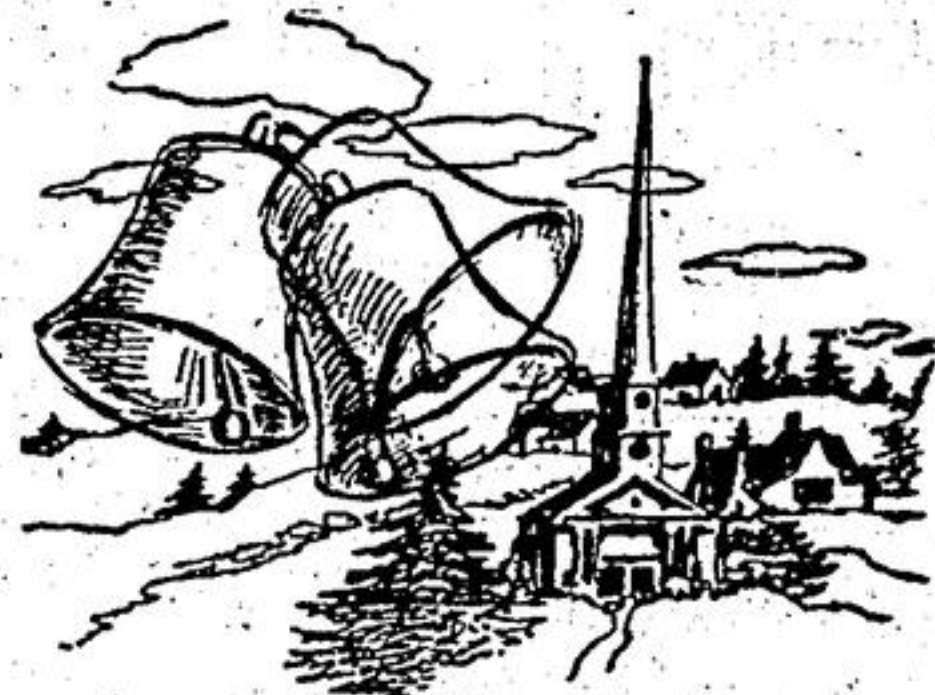
The shepherds at these tidings
Rejoiced much in mind,
And left their flocks a-feeding
In tempest, storm, and wind,
And went to Bethlehem straightway,
This blessed babe to find.

But when to Bethlehem they came,
Whereat this infant lay,
They found Him in a manger,
Where oxen feed on hay,
His mother Mary kneeling,
Unto the Lord did pray.

Now to the Lord sing praises,
All you within this place,
And with true love and brotherhood
Each other now embrace;
This holy tide of Christmas
All others doth deface.
O tidings of comfort and joy!
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour,
Was born on Christmas Day.

—Unknown

Christmas Bells



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 fall,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men!"

—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)