

# Guests At Yule

Edmund Clarence Stedman



## NOEL! NOEL!

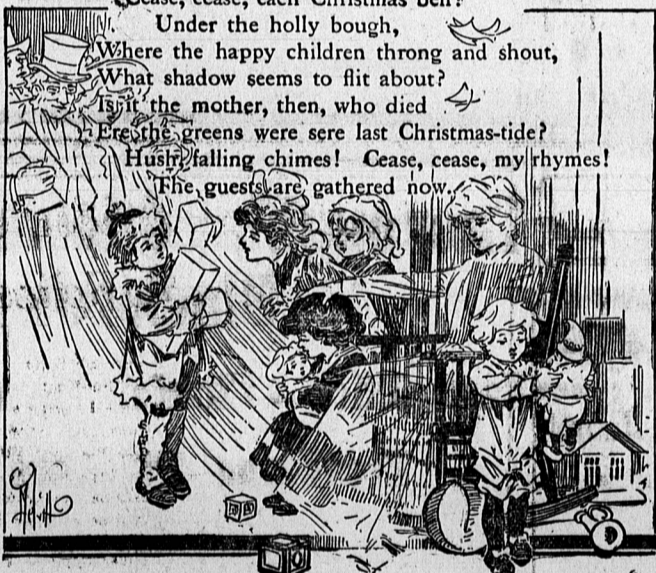
Thus sounds each Christmas bell  
Across the winter snow  
But what are the little footprints all  
That mark the path from the churchyard wall?  
They are those of the children wakened tonight  
From sleep by the Christmas bells and light  
Ring sweetly, chimes! Soft, soft, my rhymes!  
Their beds are under the snow.

## Noel! Noel!

Carols each Christmas bell  
What are the wraiths of mist  
That gather near the window-pane  
Where the winter frost all day has lain?  
They are soulless elves, who fain would peer  
Within, and laugh at our Christmas cheer  
Ring fleetly, chimes! Swift, swift, my rhymes!  
They are made of the mocking mist

## Noel! Noel!

Cease, cease, each Christmas bell!  
Under the holly bough,  
Where the happy children throng and shout,  
What shadow seems to flit about?  
Isn't the mother, then, who died  
Ere the greens were sere last Christmas-tide?  
Hush! falling chimes! Cease, cease, my rhymes!  
The guests are gathered now.



## The Spirit of Christmas.

There is hardly a festival in the calendar which has such a hold on the hearts of old and young alike as Christmas Day. The ring of the car bells and the voices upon the streets seem to take on a more cheery tone, and the spirit of the time seems to throw a glamour over places and things which ordinarily are devoid of all beauty. As it is with places, so it is with people. They, too, not only seem to change, but the transformation does take place in millions of hearts to a greater or less degree. The spirit of Christmas even affects people who for the rest of the year are devoid of sentiment and of feeling for their fellows. The most interesting stories of Christmastide are those which will never appear in print—true stories of men and women whose thoughts have been only of their own selfish aims and pleasures, but have been awakened, if only for a day or two, from their usual self-complacency, moved by some force of which they are only half-conscious to do some act of kindness to make the day happier for someone less fortunate than themselves in a worldly way.—The Christian Herald.

**The Christmas Spirit.**  
But don't you see that there is a Santa Claus! He isn't a man in a fur coat, and a reindeer sleigh and all that, but he is the Spirit of Christmas, isn't he? They've personified that and made a saint of him and invented legends about him—for the children, but when we're no longer children and don't believe in him, we still have that Christmas spirit—and it's that that gives presents and makes us feel toward one another, and makes Christmas what it is.—Harvey J. O'Higgins.

## Christmas Customs.

It is interesting to trace the origin of festival customs to those connected with Druidical superstitions of classic observances, and it will surprise many to learn that present-day sports very closely resemble the celebrations observed of old in honor of Saturn or Bacchus. The Roman Saturnalia, which occurred in the winter solstice, were a season of great festivity and rejoicing, honored by many privileges and exemptions. The spirit of gaiety had free charter, and even quarrels were suspended, to be resumed after the holidays. As a manifestation of the gratitude felt at the renewed prospects of the returning march of the sun, gifts were exchanged and special hymns were sung. These latter were really the Roman representatives of the modern carol. At the Saturnalia the Roman feasted, sang and danced, as we do at Christmas. A ruler or king was appointed, who enjoyed certain prerogatives. He presided over the sports of the season. Probably he is the ancestor of the lord of misrule, who exercised a similar power in more recent times. Merriment was a matter of general concern, and the joyous spirit of entire districts is now narrowed to family parties. It is the touch that makes the whole world kin, and it is a pleasant reminder that, after all, history repeats itself.

**Not Blessed.**  
The presents you forget to give to others who don't forget to give to you are not so blessed.

# Christmas Legends

**A**LL around the season of the Coming of Love as a little child there have sprung legends and beliefs, like blossoms in a gracious clime, which testify with subtlety to the depth of the appeal of the birth of Christ. Here divinely spiritual symbolism and there sweet human tenderness and pathos appear, and, blended, they evidence the world's belief that this was both Son of Man and Son of God.

An Irish legend tells that, on Christmas eve, the Christ-child wanders out in the darkness and cold, and the peasants still put lighted candles in their windows to guide the sacred little feet, that they may not stumble on their way to their homes. And in Hungary the people go yet further in their tenderness for the Child, they spread feasts and leave their doors open that He may enter at His will, while throughout Christendom there is a belief that no evil can touch any child who is born on Christmas eve.

The legend which tells how the very hay which lined the manger in which the Holy Babe was laid put forth living red blossoms at midwinter at the touch of the Babe's body could only have arisen from belief in the renewal of life through the Lord of Life.

## The Holy Thorn.

It is not so many centuries ago since there was that holy thorn at Glastonbury which blossomed every Christmas, and, so ran the legend, had done ever since St. Joseph of Arimathea, having come as apostle to Britain, and landing at Glastonbury, had stuck his staff of dry hawthorn into the soil, commanding it to put forth leaves and blossoms. This was the staff which converted to the Christian faith, the faith which preached life from death.

The holy thorn of Glastonbury flourished during the centuries until the civil wars. During those times it was uprooted; but several persons had had trees growing from cuttings from the original tree, and those continued to bloom at the Christ-season, just as their parent, which had grown from St. Joseph's staff, had bloomed. And about the middle of the 18th century it was recorded in the Gentleman's Magazine how the famous holy thorn would not deign to recognize the new style calendar, which had then come into force but would persist in blossoming as of old on old Christmas day!

In those days the anniversary of the advent of the Babe had certainly meant more to the common people than merely a time for feasting and revelry, for giving and receiving; it had been also a season for holy observances, for they refused to go to church on New Christmas day, the holy thorn not being then in blossom. So serious became the trouble that the clergy found it prudent to announce that Old Christmas day should also be kept sacred as before. Only another story of men's weak, superstitious minds? True, perhaps; but they are better who evidence some spiritual weakness than those who wallow in the wholly material, and when we cease to be careful of the cup and the platter, we become not over careful of their contents.

## The Birth Christmas Rose.

NOTHER of those spiritual parables is the legend of the Christmas rose, and it tells how good things, fit for giving, spring up ready to the hand which earnestly desires to give to the child. It is said that a certain maiden of Bethlehem was so poor that she had nothing to give to the Babe to whom kings brought wealth from afar, and, as she stood, longing and mourning, and angel appeared to her, saying: "Look at thy feet, beneath the snow," and lo! on obeying the maiden found that a new flower had miraculously sprung up and blossomed at her needs. Every since then, runs this story, this exquisite flower, with its snowy petals just touched by suggestions of pinkish bloom, is to be found at this season; and, indeed, its half-opened cups are like chalices of love, and its fully-spread petals are like a happy innocence, fit symbols for the gifts for the Babe of spotless innocence; whose heart was the vessel of love.

## Christmas Eve Legends.

HERE are several exceedingly touching legends concerning bells, which are heard ringing from buried cities and villages at this season. One belongs to a village near Raleigh, in Nottinghamshire, and the story runs that once, where there is now but a valley, there was a village which, with every trace of life and habitation, had been swallowed by an earthquake; but ever since, at Christmas, the bells of the buried church are heard to ring as of old.

A similar legend is told of Preston, in Lancashire, and yet another and more moving one comes from the Netherlands. It is said that the city of Beem was notorious for its black and shameless sins, as well as renowned for its beauty and magnificence. To the Sodom of the middle ages came our Savior on one anniversary of His birth, and went as a beggar from door to door, but not one in all that Christmas keeping city gave the Master of the abundance. Sin he saw rampant on every side, but not

a trace of Christmas bounty and good will, and he, called to the sea, which, as of old, obeyed his voice, and Beem, the city of sin, was buried deep, clean out of sight, beneath the waves. But ever at Christmas up from beneath the covering waters comes the sweet calling of church bells buried in Beem. It is a legend which appears to tell in parable that nothing which ever belonged to the Christ, and was dedicated to His service, is ever wholly lost from him and alienated from service; that ever and again something of their inherent beauty and compelling sweetness rises from the depths through all seeming ruin.

## The Manger.

RADITION declares that within the stone manger there was another one of wood, and that the stone cradle in the Chapel of the Nativity is, indeed, the outer manger. Splendid is that humble stone trough now with white marble, softly rich with costly draperies, and radiant with a silver star, which is surrounded by 16 lamps, ever a-lit. But yet more glorious is the wooden manger at Rome, held to be the veritable manger in which the Christ-child lay. It was removed to Rome in the seventh century, during the Mohammedan invasion of the Holy Land, and there it is preserved in a strong brazen chest, from which it is brought forth on Christmas days, when it is placed on the Grand Altar. It is mounted upon a stand of silver, which is inlaid with gold and gems, and the shrine in which it rests is of purest rock crystal. In the days in which this was accomplished men, whatsoever may have been their shortcomings in other directions, gave magnificently to the Church Visible.

## Christmas Bells.

RADITION says that the hour of the Babe's birth was the hour of midnight, and legend adds that from then until dawn cocks crow. In Ireland it is held that whoso looks into a mirror on this eve will see the devil or Judas Iscariot looking over his shoulder, surely thought sufficient to drive the hardest soul to a thought of the innocent Babe.

Another legend tells that, on Christmas eve, Judas Iscariot is released from that hell—"his own place"—and is allowed to return to earth that he may cool himself in icy waters.

Wild and improbable although such and such legends appear on their faces, they bear study and repay it, for we then see that they are full of subtle spiritual expression, as it were; that they are parables of certain spiritual facts, and it will be ill for us should the Christmas day ever dawn on which such flowers of tender faith and wonder shall appear to us no more than dry curious specimens from the dead roots of superstition.

## What Christmas Means.

Christmas means hope and its realization. The child grows eagerly expectant as the time approaches for the visit of Santa Claus. While this fiction remains unquestioned, the imagination opens new and wider worlds, and ideals become so much a part of the mind that the prosaic and commonplace can never crush them. Until the youth reaches manhood and independence, Christmas is the happiest day of the year. Its gifts and hearty good cheer impress family affection, parental thoughtfulness and brotherly love. The duldest and most irresponsible of fathers and mothers are uplifted to a vision of higher life by the interchanges of souvenirs and the merry meeting with children and grandchildren at the table and fireside. Few can escape and all enjoy the meaning of the festival, the lessons it conveys and the inspiration it gives, and we enter upon a brighter future and a fuller appreciation of the beneficence of the practice of faith, hope and charity. The loved ones who have crossed to the other side, the loved near and far who are still with us, the old homestead with its precious memories, the old church whose sacred associations tie together childhood, maturity and age, love, marriage and death; the schoolhouse where the beginnings of education were so painful, and the ever-increasing pleasures of the pursuit of learning through the high school, academy and college are recalled and recited, and there is exquisite delight in these oft-told tales, and new experiences enliven this blessed anniversary.—Leslie's Weekly.

## First Christmas Observance.

Christmas gets its name from the mass celebrated in the early days of the Christian church in honor of the birth of Christ, its first solemnization having been ordered by Pope Telesphorus. This was in or before the year 138, for in that year Pope Telesphorus died.

At first Christmas was what is known as a movable feast, just as Easter is now, and owing to misunderstandings was celebrated as late as April or May. In the fourth century an ecclesiastical investigation was ordered, and upon the authority of the tables of the censors in the Roman archives December 25 was agreed upon as the date of the Savior's nativity. Tradition fixed the hour of birth at about midnight, and this led to the celebration of a midnight mass in all the churches, a second at dawn and a third in the later morning.

# The Joys of Christmas Time

By Kennett Harris



Hark! the merry chimes are warning us that this is Christmas morning, And it's time that we were rising, though the hour isn't late. Still, the kids will be flocking, each to overhaul his stockings, And there's scads of things we've got to do that really cannot wait. Yet, before we kick the clothes off (quite determined not to doze off), Let's indulge in dreamy musing on this joyous Christmastide; Let us, while the bells are pealing, get up some real Christmas feeling. Fill ourselves with sweet emotions that are not quite cut and dried. True, the minutes fast are gliding, but, consarn 'em, let 'em glide.

Think of these long weeks of waiting, all the glad anticipating Of the gay and festive season that at last, at last is here; Never resting, never stopping in our mad career of shopping, Searching over the ideal, not too cheap and not too dear; Crushed and elbowed in the reeking crowds, that like ourselves are seeking Just the very thing of all things that their loved ones most desired. Limp and dragged then emerging from the pushing, struggling, surging Mob, with parcels overlaid, reaching home at last, dog tired. Those experiences may be best described as "most all-fired."

Yet no antiquated stole showed endurance more heroic Than we've manifested through the weary ordeal of that time; We have stood the stress of barter with the courage of a martyr; Now we find sweet compensation listening to the Christmas chime, Whose clear cadence, soft and mellow, seems to whisper to a fellow That the worst is nearly over, that we soon may breathe again, Soon may find surcease of sorrow, and that, maybe by tomorrow Or the next day, may be lifted something of this mental strain, That a blessed sense of rest may soothe the tissues of our brain.



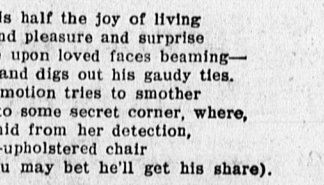
We have done with haste and flurry, no occasion now to worry, Lest some sensitive relation may have been quite overlooked. All the lists of names are checked and all the walls with green are decked, and Now within a few short hours the Christmas dinner will be cooked. Hail to Christmas! happy season! There is some substantial reason To be gleeful at the advent—the beginning of the end. As thou comest wreathed with holly, we can certainly be jolly, Welcome thee with feast and wassail, and in general unbend, For we know that we have spent for these the last cent we can spend!

Now the door bell will cease ringing to the people who were bringing An endless string of packages from morn to dewy eve; We no longer will be running to conceal those things with cunning, And we'll lose our wonted air of having something up our sleeve. There will be a deuced litter, when the gewgaws gleam and glitter, Of waste paper, string and cotton, from the kitchen to the hall; But, with conscience elastic, we will grow enthusiastic And "wonder how they guessed," as on the donors' necks we fall, Looking blissful over dewdads that we didn't want at all.



Ah, this blessed thing of giving! It is half the joy of living To watch the looks of gratitude and pleasure and surprise. That, at least to outward seeming, are upon loved faces beaming— As the loved one opens his parcel and digs out his gaudy tie. And the gentle wife and mother her emotion tries to smother When conducted by her husband, to some secret corner, where, As a proof of fond affection, he has hid from her detection, His gift to her, a cozy, costly, well-upholstered chair (Of whose comforts, in the future, you may bet he'll get his share).

Now this Christmas spirit moves us to sense that it behoves us To keep Poverty's bare platter and fill Destitution's cup. Bring turk and pie and gladness to the homes of empty sadness! To help out sweet Christmas charity who would not loosen up? But it's highly aggravating not to say exasperating, When we've given most nobly and without thought of stint, To find out, as we expected, that the modest are neglected And our princely beneficence hasn't found its way to print. (Certainly we didn't ask it, but a man might take a hint).



But away with sad reflection! This is no time for dejection. Merry Christmas, happy Christmas, as we said, has come at last! All the many tribulations, all the trials and vexations That have crowded thick upon us for the last six weeks, are past. Not a protest shall be uttered, though the house with toys is cluttered And the kids are all parading to the sound of horn and drum, Lusty lung and larynx vying the extent of their rejoicing. We will have to stand the racket now that Christmas day is come. (Later tone our nervous system at some sanitarium).

Thank the Giver if we're able to sit 'round a well-spread table, Where the plump white-bosomed turkey sheds its savor through the room, And pudding comes on smoking, and there's no end to the joking, And no heart that harbors malice and no mind o'ercast with gloom, Let us be profoundly grateful that we have at least a plentiful, Grateful for the pepin tablets that correct our Christmas cheer; Hold it as among our mercies if there's coin left in our purses, Be thankful for those dear to us and those who hold us dear. (And most supremely thankful Christmas comes but once a year).



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## CHRISTMAS IS A PROPHECY

It Forecasts the Perfect Social Conditions Which Will Fulfill the Promises of Christ. Christmas is not only a fact commemorating the one sacred festival in the world's calendar, but the glorious prophecy of a coming day, surpassing all the brightest social dreams that have ever visited the most advanced human mind. He sprang, His human nature side, from kings and peasants, from saints and sinners. He is yet to lift every peasant to the kingliest throne of character and transform the chief of sinners into the holiest of saints. He allied Himself with poverty and the common people. He is yet to banish poverty with all its ills, from the world, and to give to common humanity their rightful sovereignty. He worked with His hands for His daily bread. He is yet to dignify and glorify in the thought of mankind all honest toil. He honored woman with His sympathetic and appreciative regard. He is yet to relieve her from every form of serfdom created by the past ages. He took little children in His arms and blessed them. He is yet to make blessed the child life in every welcoming home. He gave His peace to His distracted disciples. He is yet to make wars cease unto the end of the earth. He united His brethren with Himself and His Father in one unbroken oneness. He is yet to make every man a brother to his fellow-man and at one with his Father in Heaven.