

Life still hath one romance that  
naught can bury, for still will Christ-  
mas gild the year's mischances, if  
childhood comes to make him merry.

So now is come our joyfulest feast:  
let every one be jolly; each room with  
ivy leaf is drest, and every post with  
holly.

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## Wise Men from the West

By Gerald Balbour.

One of the most beautiful things of the first Christmas, belongs to the realm of thought. Before the world had time to know or to believe or to be sceptical about the incarnation at Bethlehem certain Wise Men from the East had an inspiration.

Nothing doubting they set forth to pay homage to the Babe in the Manger.

Probably a crowded romance would be written if we did but know what other wise men have thought at Christmas time.

May not momentous or beautiful things have entered the minds of our Wise Men of the Western World at the time when lesser humanity rejoiced?

It was assuredly so with Robert Louis Stevenson. We cannot fully appreciate the debt we owe to the lonely first Christmas he spent in California. He had only his landlady, or landlady, and the restaurant waiters with whom to talk. But then along came Charles Stoddard who loaned him the "Typee" and "Omoo" of Herman Melville. From his biographer we know the result—it was here in his darkest hour that he received the impulse which in the end "was to cast him out as by a freshet upon those ultimate isles."

How different was a memorable Christmas passed by the famous Dr. Arnold of Rugby. He spent it at Fox How in writing long letters on abstruse theological problems, and planning a course of lectures on history. A week later he was able to say he had nearly finished six, and they became among the best known of his writings.

More reasonable thoughts came to Lewis Carroll at Christmas for he would tell stories to the children who loved to gather around him. Prince Uggug who appears in "Sylvie and Bruno," first took shape in just that way, for he talked about Uggug to the children by the yule-tide fire at Hatfield.

It is probable that we owe the inspiration we may draw from John Ruskin, to the encouragement which came to him at Christmas to turn author and artist. He was only sixteen and undecided as to the future, when a friend asked him to write some verses to fit an illustration. The young man was profoundly thrilled when on Christmas Day a parcel reached him at Herne Hill containing a gorgeous gilt morocco volume inscribed, "To John Ruskin, from the publishers." It would have been enough to turn the head of many an ambitious youth, but happily it only turned the thoughts of Ruskin to better things.

### A Message to Little Girls.

This Wise Man of the West was destined to make yet another Christmas memorable, for his preface to "Ethics of the Dust," dedicated to the Real Little Housewives, bears the date of Christmas, 1865. It was his message and holiday lesson for all English-speaking little girls who chose to read him.

One of the greatest short story writers of our western world figured in a Christmas episode which is a poignant and dramatic contrast to all that we associate with the merry, merry time of Yule. Picture O. Henry in a prison of the golden west reading the manuscript of "The Christmas Charrapa!" to two fellow convicts. One of these men has said that from the time his rich, low hesitant voice began there was breathless suspense, until suddenly Bill Raider gulped, and Henry, known as Porter, looked up as one aroused from a dream. Raider grinned and jammed his maimed hand into his eye.

"Curse you, Porter, I never did it in my life before," the convict cried. "By God, I didn't know what a tear looked like."

This spectacle of two train robbers weeping while O. Henry told them his Christmas story, is surely one of the most moving illustrations of what wise men of the west have been doing while the merry bells were ringing.

### Undone!

And the thought of bells reminds one of John Donne whose thoughts continue to provide rich ore for many of our preachers, and thinkers. He risked all for love, by secretly marrying his sixteen-year-old bride one Christmas-tide, and it cost him his post as secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton, the Lord Keeper of the Great Seal.

The father of the bride was furious, and told the lovers that they were not to expect any money from him, but Donne had a whimsical thought. When the match was made he sent a note which ran: "John Donne, Anne Donne, Undone," and the father-in-law was so amused that he renounced.

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## Good Tidings of Great Joy

Peace on Earth

**LUKE 2:7-14**—And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for him in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night, 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, and the angel said unto them, Fear not! for behold, I bring

you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the Heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will to-ward men.

## Mr. Pepsy's Enjoys Christmas

By Adrian Starr.

December 24th.

Up, very much betimes, for we are resolved to be very merry this Christmas, my poor wife having invited Aunt Jane Pepsy, W. Pinton and his wife, Cousin Peter Pepsy, several of her relations, and I know not who else to spend Christmas with us. But Lord! how we are going to sleep them and cook for them I know not, our cook-maid Jane having gone, touching the matter of the box getting into the pudding, and my wife, poor wretch, all alone without serving maid of any kind. So about three of the clock, along comes Aunt Jane Pepsy, to be followed presently by W. Pinton and the rest of them. All fell to being very merry, and when after dark the waltz did come a-playing outside the house, I thinking to hand them two pence, but being all a-fuddled, did unfortunately give them two two-shilling pieces, which vexed me. So passing angry for the rest of the evening, but Lord forgive

me! I can hardly remember what happened after eight of the clock, for I dimly remember, though, going to get a clean silk handkerchief (as I thought), and taking by mistake my poor wife's new frock, which is not to be wondered at, as the frocks are so skimpy these days.

December 25th, Christmas Day.

Up betimes again to find all the guests a-grumbling at the accommodation (or lack of accommodation) we had provided for them. Lord! but I hope we may get through this time without mishap, which I doubt, we having four more guests than we can provide for. However, after breakfast we fell to being very merry, and my wife disappeared to get the dinner a-going. So anon, it being past one of the clock, W. Pinton, who hath, methinks, the manners of a country bumpkin, did ask in his sarcastic way if we dined late, so I to the kitchen.

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## Christmas With Dickens

By Howard Haldane

Eighty-six years have passed since Charles Dickens gave to a delighted world the first of his far too few Christmas stories, whose tenderness, humour and great-hearted humanity made him the most beloved of British authors.

It was in the autumn of 1843, when he was living with his young family in Devonshire Terrace, Regent's Park, that "A Christmas Carol, in Prose—being a Ghost Story for Christmas," was written (like most of Dickens' work) at high pressure. At the time he was working on "Chuzzlewit"—"a race against time"; but it was no less important that the "Carol" should make its appearance for Christmas.

Thus week after week he was at his desk a dozen hours or more a day, exhausting himself and his nerves to a dangerous extent. And when he could write no more he would saunter forth on long aimless walks through the London streets, covering a dozen or fifteen miles before, in the early

hours of the morning, he sought his bed. "He never left home," we read, "before the owl went out, and led the most solitary of lives." And, as with "The Chimes," a year later, as he wrote "The Carol," he "laughed and wept again, and exited himself in the most extraordinary manner."

"The Carol" was quick to find its way into the hearts of the reading public. It was a direct appeal of heart to heart such as few, if any, could resist. Copies were sold in thousands, as fast as they could be produced; Dickens was deluged with letters from all parts of the world, full of gratitude and admiration.

The manuscript of "The Carol" has had many vicissitudes since Dickens presented it to his old school-fellow, Thomas Milton. Fifty years ago it was sold for £50 to a bookseller, Mr. Harvey, who re-sold it to Mr. George Churchill, a collector.

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## Christmas Uncle's Good Deed

By E. B. Healy.

"What shall little children sing?  
On Christmas Day in the morning,  
Love and joy to Christ their King  
On Christmas Day in the morning,  
Carol, oh, carol. Christmas is here,  
Gladdest of all the days in the year,  
Carol! Carol! Carol!!! Carol!!!! Car—"  
"Go and carol further down the street,  
please, here is a shilling for my share. Thank you very much."

"Thank you, Sir. Happy Christmas, Sir. A very, very, happy Christmas, and very many of 'em, Sir. and—"

Further felicitations were cut short by the closing of the door, and the band of ragged, but smiling children, departed to continue their vocal efforts further down.

They were requested, in tones more forcible than polite, to remove themselves, and their carols, from the vicinity.

"Sakes alive—but aren't some folks acid, at what Miss Stokes calls this 'ere season of pieces and good-wills—whatever that means!"

"Peace, and good-will, 'Arold. You never do say your words proper. You'll never be a gentleman—you won't."

"Never mind about my grammars. But let's 'ave a squint at the bob! Is it good?"

"Of course, it is. Here, I'll bite it, like my Dad does, when he gets a shilling tip."

Larry Murphy never had any trouble with his aspirates. Larry had only recently crossed the channel to live with his taxi-driving father.

"First time I ever remembers getting a real bob. That there bloke must be a proper gentleman, so 'e must. I vote we share and spend, this minute."

And while the ragged but jubilant group were squabbling as to the sharing of the well tested precious coin, "that there bloke, the bestower of the treasure, was sitting with bowed head, meditating moodily as to where he should spend his Christmas."

Kevin Connolly was thirty-nine. He had no relations that he knew of. The only one he had ever known was his old grandmother. She had brought him up from babyhood. She died when the lad was twelve. Father Murphy, who had always taken an interest in the bright-faced boy, took him into his home. He taught him Latin and Greek, and when a vacancy turned up in the village school for a monitor, Kevin was chosen. At eighteen he finished his monitorship and entered a Training College. Then Father Murphy died suddenly, and Kevin found himself without a helper. He passed his examinations brilliantly, and at the end of his two years, obtained a position in a Liverpool school. He taught all day—and studied all night, took a degree, and drifted to London. Now, at thirty-nine, he had attained the topmost step of the teaching profession. He was head master of a famous school. His salary Father Murphy would have termed princely. But he was a lonely man.

"What shall little children sing on Christmas Day in the morning?"

There were those urchins back again, carolling joyously in their shrill voices. Little children—how they tugged at his heart strings! If only he had a home, and a wife and little children! The best gifts of life had passed him by. Christmas—he conjured up visions of Yule logs, mistletoe, plum-puddings, Christmas stockings, happy faces, voices and laughter.

As he looked down the years, all he could see in life was a series of lonely Christmases spent in lodging houses, and in later times hotels, where he shyly avoided the noisy family parties, and unattached ladies who looked longingly at him.

But why shouldn't he have a good time? He had health, money—and yes—he didn't look his age! He had a slim, lean figure, and pleasant rather shy blue eyes. Why shouldn't he have a real Christmas—just for once? A Christmas in old Ireland—Yes! He took down a directory, Ireland. What homely names! Anascragh, Anabullog, Abashta, Analeentha, Ballybigan, Ballythis and Ballythat. He couldn't decide. He went right through the pages. Then he stopped. Shanvallymore. What a soothing old name! Near Mallow, too! That was where his only Irish assistant came from. Well, he had decided. He would spend his Christmas there.

Now for his family. Ahern, Burke, Breen, Connolly—his own name. He must run round at once and find out something about the Connollys of Shanvallymore. Perhaps, they had some long lost relatives! He had just one week before school closed—a week to make his plans! Life is worth living when one has decided on an adventure.

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