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CENTURIES OLD WAITS SING ANCIENT CAROLS

The Christmas Carol Dates Back to Early Date in Christian Era When Choir Boys Serenaded in Anticipation of Santa Claus.

The exact origin of the word "carol" is somewhat obscure and has been the subject of much discussion and investigation, with no positive results. The majority of us are perfectly willing to let the seers do the quibbling over the matter, split hairs, as 'twere, and accept the word and its implication for what they mean to us. Concerning arguments on the subject, the word is claimed by some, who claim they know, to be of Latin derivation, by others equally sure to be Welsh, and again by some students the idea is brought forward that it came from the French language from the speech of the Gauls, and thus was carried to England.

Among the earliest relics are some carols which must have been written before the reign of Elizabeth. The very first one we know about is "A Carrolle of Huntynge," composed by a prioress of St. Albans. Charles d'Orleans, the gay French captive, composed a number of delightful Anglo-Norman chansons while languishing in prison in 1415, but he is not regarded as sponsor of the word carol as we know it. The term is ordinarily significant of joy or exultation; and of devotion according to Shakespeare and Milton.

There are three types of carol—ecclesiastical, popular and festive. One of the first ecclesiastical ones,

and one with which we are all familiar, is the beautiful old Portuguese hymn, "Come, All Ye Faithful," and no more inspiring example of the devotional carol is to be found. The Ambrosian Te Deum, Charlemagne's hymn and Veni Creator Spiritus are also good types of the sublime, glorious chants. Among the festive carols are "The Boar's Head," with which all England sings its way through the night before Christmas, and another equally popular one, "God Rest You Merry Gentlemen." "Good King Wenceslaus" and "Royal Day That Chastest Gloom" are two examples of the popular carols, many of which have crept into usage for church celebrations.

The custom of caroling on Christmas eve is primarily a practice, belonging to England, particularly in the western and northern sections. Indeed there is very little of it in Scotland and in the western parts of England. We have in the States adopted the idea of singing carols in churches, but the most attractive custom of going from house to house is not in general use. Too bad it isn't done more universally, for there is not a much prettier sound than one of the quaint songs ringing out on the still, frosty air, to the accompaniment of tinkling instruments.

WHAT THE CHRISTMAS "WAITS" SING

Santa Claus being about to desert the city streets for his annual reindeer ride over the roofs the "waits" prepare to sing their centuries old carols.

In several American cities has been revived the beautiful old custom of the "waits" going about from house to house singing the familiar old songs. Light the Christmas candles in your window if you want them to stop before your home!

God rest you merry, gentlemen: let nothing you dismay—

They will surely sing that, perhaps the best known of all old English carols. And this too.

Hark! The herald angels sing, Glory to the newborn king.

And, of course, "O Little Town of Bethlehem."

Perhaps, too, they will sing what is said to be the earliest known Christmas carol, dating from Anglo-Norman days of the thirteenth century, which begins

Lordings, listen to our lay— We have come from far away To seek Christmas.

In this mansion we are told He his yearly feasts doth hold: 'Tis to-day!

May Joy come from God above To all those who Christmas love.

This carol ends with the toast of those days:

"Here, then, I bid you all Wassail: cursed be he who will not say drink-hail." "Wassail" meaning your health and "drink-hail" being the usual and courteous acknowledgement.

One of the best known of all the old carols, although not one of the oldest, was written by Nahum Tate in 1703 and is called the "Song of the Angels." It begins:

While shepherds watch'd their flocks by night, The angel of the Lord came down One of the best known of all the

TO THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS

Once more the Blessed Day has come To soothe the hearts of Christendom;

Like some cool hand that's pressed Upon the fevered pulse of pain, The Christmas Spirit comes again To quife our unrest.

Forgot awhile are grief and loss, The brooding cares that irk and cross; From farthest sea to sea, From northern lands of ice and snow,

To where the rose and jasmine blow, The Holy Mystery.

Its influence benign outspreads: On bended knees, with low-bowed heads, With myrrh and frankincense sweet Fit recognition we should make, Our alabaster boxes break In tribute at His feet.

old carols, although not one of the oldest, was written by Nahum Tate in 1703 and is called the "Song of the Angels." It begins: While shepherds watched their flocks night.

All seated on the ground, The angel of the Lord came down And glory shone around.

Many are the carols in which Britain's ancient holly figures. "Then drink to the holly berry," pledges one writer of songs, while another in "Under the Holy Bough" summons "All ye who have scorned each other or injured friend or brother, come gather here."

And then there's that grand old hymn "Adeste Fideles," sung in every church in this land and in others, at this Christmas season:

Oh, come, all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant! Come ye, oh, come ye to Bethlehem!

Christmas would not me Christmas, of course, if the "waits" were to neglect one other of the most beautiful of old carols:

Holy night, peaceful night! Through the darkness beams a light.

Holy night, peaceful night! Through the darkness beams a light!

Yonder, where they sweet vigils keep O'er the babe, who, in silent sleep, Rests in heavenly peace, Rests in heavenly peace.

If there are any of you who have in mind an after Christmas dinner evening of song to the accompaniment of a harpsichord, a spinet, a lute or a piano or even the modern and much advertised disk machine, it might be well to try this on the company:

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 the angelic host proclaim Christ is born in Bethlehem. Hark! The herald angels sing, Glory to the newborn king!

O holy, blessed Christmas-time, Of perfumed censor pealing chime, The fairest gifts we pray, In boundless measures, full and free,

Bestow on those across the sea, So sore their need today!

The old and frail, forget them not; And those around whose lives are wrought

So much of hope and prayer— Our little ones, the coming race— Bestow on them thy tenderest grace To grow in wisdom fair!

Sweet Yuletide, of the fulest bring Peace unto hearts now sorrowing, And unto great and small, To man, bird, beast—to all that lie— Thy richest benediction give, Thy happiness to all!

That something long centuries ago on the plains of Bethlehem that has changed humanity's outlook into the future, no matter how full of gloom its present may seem, few men will deny.

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GLAD TIDINGS THAT SHALL YE PROVE TRUE

Luella C. Poole

Against the lurid western sky, Where looms the titan cross of war, Where ruthless hate does crucify, All that which lies its path before, So heavy hangs the awful pall, With saddened hearts we greet the Day:

With questioning lips we feebly call, And grope bewildered on our way! Was it in vain the Christ Child came That stilly night so long ago— The Prince of Peace, O blessed name! To save a sinful world from woe? Love was the message that the Star Flamed out in gold athwart night's blue; And peace on earth,—alas how far The straying path men's feet pursue?

Hush doubting heart and question not— Love, in the end must yet prevail— The love the Galilean taught, For man and beast the strong, the frail! More love, more love, for this we pray A keener sense of brotherhood— This be the world's best gift today From Him, the Giver of all good!

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