

Christmas Poems

THE GIFTS OF GOD.

When the first Christmas presents came, the
straw where Christ was rolled
Smelt sweeter than their frankincense, burnt
brighter than their gold,
And a wise man said "We will not give; the
thanks would be but cold."

"Nay," said the next, "To all new gifts, to
this gift or another,
Bends the high gratitude of God, even as
He now, my brother,
Who had a Father for all time, yet thanks
Him for a mother.

"Yet scarce for Him this yellow stone or
prickly smells and sparse,
Who holds the gold heart of the sun that fed
these timber bars,
Nor any scentless lily lives for One that
smells the stars."

Then spoke the third of the Wise Men; the
wisest of the three:
"We may not with the widest lives enlarge
His liberty,
Whose wings are wider than the world. It
is not He, but we.

"We say not He has more to gain, but we
have more to lose.
Less gold shall go astray, we say, less gold,
if thus we choose,
Go to make harlots of the Greeks and huck-
sters of the Jews.

"Less clouds before colossal feet redden in
the underlight,
To the blind gods of Babylon, less incense
burn to-night,
To the high beats of Babylon, whose mouths
make mock of right."

Babe of the thousand birthdays, we that are
young yet grey,
White with the centuries, still can find no
better thing to say,
We that with sects and whims and wars
have wasted Christmas Day.

Light Thou Thy censor to Thyself, for all
our fires are dim,
Stamp Thou Thine image on our coin, for
Caesar's face grows dim,
And a dumb devil of pride and greed has
taken hold of him.

We bring Thee back great Christendom,
churches, and towns, and towers,
And if our hands are glad, O God, to cast
them down like flowers,
'Tis not that they enrich Thy hands, but they
are saved from ours.

—CHESTERTON.

THE NATIVITY.

The thatch on the roof was golden,
Though dusty the straw was and old,
The wind had a peal as of trumpets,
Though blowing and barren and cold,
The mother's hair was a glory,
Though loosened and torn,
For under the eaves in the gloaming
A Child was born.

And the rafters of toil are still gilded
With the dawn of the star of the heart;
And the wise men draw near in the twilight,
Who are weary of learning and art,
And the face of the tyrant is darkened,
His spirit is torn,
For a new King is enthroned; yea, the stern-
est,
A Child is born.

And the mother still joys for the whispered
First stir of unspeakable things,
Still feels that high moment unfurling
Red glory of Gabriel's wings.
Still the Babe of an hour is a master
Whom angels adorn,
Emmanuel, prophet, anointed,
A Child is born.

—CHESTERTON.

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BETHLEHEM.

In a manger old and worn,
In the town of Bethlehem,
Jesus Christ our Lord was born.
Would I had been there to see
On the road to Bethlehem;
Mary, Joseph, pray for me!

Eastern Kings are on their way
To the town of Bethlehem;
Shepherds run ere break of day
At His feet their vows to pay
In the town of Bethlehem,
Where a God Incarnate lay.
Would I had been there to see
On the road to Bethlehem;
Mary, Joseph, pray for me!

Christian souls, with one accord
Come to Holy Bethlehem;
Meet Him at His Holy Board;
Praise the Saviour, praise the Lord,—
In the town of Bethlehem.
Who on us His glory poured!
Would I had been there to see
In the town of Bethlehem;
Mary, Joseph, pray for me!

—R. H. BENSON.

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The world His cradle is;
The stars His worshippers;
His "place on earth," the mother's kiss
On lips new pressed to hers.

For she alone to Him
In perfect light appears,
The one horizon never dim
With penitential tears.

—FATHER TABB.

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My God the Baby is
That rests on my knee.
Into those eyes of His
I gaze mine own to see,
And He looks up to meet in mine
Reflected all the love Divine..

A Maid my mother is:
And I a sireless Son.
No other deed like this
Has Love eternal done—
To make her motherhood for Me
The mirror of Divinity.

—FATHER TABB.

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Wrapped in His swaddling bands,
And in His manger laid,
The hope and glory of all lands
Is come to the world's aid:
No peaceful home upon His cradle smiled,
Guests rudely went and came, where slept
the royal Child.

But where Thou dwellest, Lord,
No other thought should be,
Once duly welcomed and adored,
How should I part with Thee?
Bethlehem must lose Thee soon, but Thou
wilt grace
The single heart to be Thy sure abiding place.

Still as the day comes round
For Thee to be revealed,
By wakeful shepherds Thou art found,
Abiding in the field.
All through the wintry heaven and chill
night air,
In music and in light Thou dawnest on their
prayer.

—KEBLE.

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Art thou a child of tears,
Cradled in care and woe?
And seems it hard thy vernal year
Few vernal joys can show?

And fall the sounds of mirth
Sad on thy lonely heart,
From all the hopes and charms of earth
Untimely called to part?

Look here and hold thy peace;
The Giver of all good
E'en from the womb takes no release
From suffering, tears, and blood.

If thou wouldst reap in love,
First sow in holy fear;
So life a winter's morn may prove
To a bright endless year.

—KEBLE.

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