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*THE AUGUSTAN BOOKS OF
ENGLISH POETRY*

A CHRISTMAS
ANTHOLOGY,

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LONDON: ERNEST BENN LTD.
BOUVERIE HOUSE, FLEET STREET

The Augustan Books of English Poetry

(Second Series)

Edited by Humbert Wolfe

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Acknowledgments are due to Mr. Robert Bridges, Mr. Thomas Hardy, Mr. W. G. Collingwood, and Mr. J. A. Chapman, for use of poems; and to Mr. John Murray, for Mr. Bridges' poem. The compiler considers, too, that the public owe him thanks for giving them at least one first-rate poem which will be new to everyone but a few Lake-landers, Mr. Collingwood's "Masque." That "Masque" is supposed to be written by an early seventeenth-century parson, and acted by his parishioners, to the light of candles, the drone of bagpipes, and the rustle of reeds underfoot. It is taken from Mr. Collingwood's story, "Dutch Agnes Her Valentine."

Two further notes: Crashaw's poem is printed without its opening and closing choruses; it is a complete and better poem without them, and they introduce a false element, only too common in Christmas verse, which I have hoped to exclude. Then, Milton's spelling matters, and there is no excuse for changing "sovrán" and "wisards." We get only part of a poet's mind if we miss his philology; and Milton by his spelling reminds us that the Three from the East were both wise men and Magi.

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Early Carol

• **I**SING a maiden
That is makeless;¹
King of all kings
To her son she ches.²

He came all so still
There His mother was,
As dew in April
That falleth on the grass.

He came all so still
To His mother's bower,
As dew in April
That falleth on the flower.

He came all so still
There His mother lay,
As dew in April
That falleth on the spray.

Mother and maiden
Was never none but she!
Well may such a lady
Goddès mother be!

ANON. (*Fifteenth Century*).

¹ Mateless.

² Chose.

The Burning Babe

AS I in hoary Winter's night
Stood shivering in the snow,
Surprised I was with sudden heat,
Which made my heart to glow;
And lifting up a fearful eye
To view what fire was near,
A pretty Babe, all burning bright,
Did in the air appear,
Who, scorched with excessive heat,
Such floods of tears did shed,
As though His floods should quench His flames
Which with His tears were fed.
"Alas," quoth He, "but newly born,
In fiery heats I fry;
Yet none approach to warm their hearts
Or feel My fire but I.
My faultless breast the furnace is,
The fuel, wounding thorns,
Love is the fire, and sighs the smoke,
The ashes, shame and scorns.
The fuel Justice layeth on,
And Mercy blows the coals,
The metal in this furnace wrought
Are men's defiled souls,
For which, as now on fire I am
To work them to their good,
So will I melt into a bath
To wash them in My blood."
With this He vanished out of sight,
And swiftly shrunk away;
And straight I called unto mind
That it was Christmas Day.

ROBERT SOUTHWELL.

From "The Cherry-Tree Carol"

I

AS Joseph was a-walking,
He heard an angel sing :
"This night shall be born
Our heavenly King.

"He neither shall be born
In housen nor in hall,
Nor in the place of Paradise,
But in an ox's stall.

"He neither shall be clothèd
In purple nor in pall,
But all in fair linen,
As were babies all.

"He neither shall be rockèd
In silver nor in gold,
But in a wooden cradle
That rocks on the mould.

"He neither shall be christened
In white wine nor red,
But with fair spring water
With which we were christenèd."

II

Then Mary took her young son
And set him on her knee :
"I pray thee now, dear child,
Tell how this world shall be."

"O I shall be as dead, mother,
As the stones in the wall;
O the stones in the street, mother,
Shall mourn for me all.

“And upon a Wednesday
My vow I will make,
And upon Good Friday
My death I will take.

“Upon Easter-day, mother,
My up-rising shall be;
O the sun and the moon, mother,
Shall both rise with me!”

ANON.

Saint Stephen was a Clerk

SAINT STEPHEN was a clerk
In King Herod's hall,
And servèd him of bread and cloth
As ever king befall.

Stephen out of kitchen came,
With boar's head on hand,
He saw a star was fair and bright
Over Bethlehem stand.

He cast adown the boar's head
And went into the hall:

“I forsake thee, King Herod,
And thy workès all.

“I forsake thee, King Herod,
And thy workès all;
There is a child in Bethlehem born
Is better than we all.”

“What aileth thee, Stephen?
What is thee befall?
Lacketh thee either meat or drink
In King Herod's hall?”

“Lacketh me neither meat nor drink
In King Herod’s hall;
There is a child in Bethlehem born
Is better than we all.”

“What aileth thee, Stephen?
Art thou wode¹ or ginneſt to breed?²
Lacketh thee either gold or fee³
Or any rich weed?”

“Lacketh me neither gold nor fee,
Ne none rich weed;
There is a child in Bethlehem born
Shall helpen us at our need.”

“That is all so sooth, Stephen,
All so sooth, I-wis,⁴
As this capon crowè shall
That lieth here in my dish.”

That word was not so soon said,
That word in that hall,
The capon crew *Christus natus est*
Among the lordès all.

“Riseth up, my tormentors,
By two and all by one,
And leadeth Stephen out of this town,
And stoneth him with stone.”

Tooken they Stephen
And stoned him in the way,
And therefore is his even
On Christès own day.

ANON.

¹ Mad.

³ Material wealth.

² Become (mad).

⁴ Gewiss, certainly.

Preparations

YET if His Majesty, our sovran lord,
Should of his own accord
Friendly himself invite,
And say "I'll be your guest to-morrow night,"
How should we stir ourselves, call and command
All hands to work. "Let no man idle stand!

"Set me fine Spanish tables in the hall;
See they be fitted all;
Let there be room to eat
And order taken that there want no meat.
See every sconce and candlestick made bright,
That without tapers they may give a light.

"Look to the presence: are the carpets spread,
The dazie¹ o'er the head,
The cushions in the chairs,
And all the candles lighted on the stairs?
Perfume the chambers, and in any case
Let each man give attendance in his place."

Thus, if a king were coming, would we do;
And 'twere good reason too;
For 'tis a 'duteous thing
To show all honour to an earthly king,
And after all our travail and our cost,
So he be pleased, to think no labour lost.

But at the coming of the King of Heaven
All's set at six and seven;
We wallow in our sin,
Christ cannot find a chamber in the inn.
We entertain Him always like a stranger,
And, as at first, still lodge Him in the manger.

CHRIST CHURCH MS. (? *Seventeenth Century*).

¹ Dais.

The Nativity

Written in the year 1656.

PEACE? and to all the world? Sure One,
And He the Prince of Peace, hath none!
He travels to be born, and then
Is born to travel more again.
Poor Galilee! thou canst not be
The place for His Nativity.
His restless mother's call'd away,
And not deliver'd till she pay.

A tax? 'tis so still! we can see
The Church thrive in her misery,
And, like her Head at Bethl'em, rise,
When she, oppressed with troubles, lies.
Rise?—should all fall, we cannot be
In more extremities than He.
Great Type of passions! Come what will,
Thy grief exceeds all copies still.
Thou cam'st from Heav'n to Earth, that we
Might go from Earth to Heav'n with Thee:
And though Thou found'st no welcome here,
Thou didst provide us mansions there.

A stable was Thy Court, and when
Men turned to beasts, beasts would be men:
They were Thy courtiers; others none;
And their poor manger was Thy throne.
No swaddling silks Thy limbs did fold.
Though Thou could'st turn Thy rays to gold.
No rockers waited on Thy birth,
No cradles stirred, nor songs of mirth;
But her chaste lap and sacred breast,
Which lodged Thee first, did give Thee rest.

But stay : what light is that doth stream
And drop here in a gilded beam?
It is Thy star runs page, and brings
Thy tributary Eastern kings.
Lord! grant some light to us, that we
May with them find the way to Thee!
Behold what mists eclipse the day!
How dark it is! Shed down one ray,
To guide us out of this dark night,
And say once more, "Let there be light!"

HENRY VAUGHAN.

On the Morning of Christ's Nativity

THIS is the month, and this the happy morn,
Wherein the Son of Heaven's eternal King,
Of wedded Maid, and Virgin-Mother born,
Our great redemption from above did bring;
For so the holy sages once did sing,
That He our deadly forfeit should release,
And with His Father work us a perpetual peace.

That glorious form, that light unsufferable,
And that far-beaming blaze of majesty,
Wherewith He wont at Heaven's high council-table
To sit the midst of Trinal Unity,
He laid aside; and, here with us to be,
Forsook the courts of everlasting day,
And chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay.

Say, Heavenly Muse, shall not thy sacred vein
Afford a present to the Infant God?
Hast thou no verse, no hymn, or solemn strain,
To welcome Him to this His new abode,
Now, while the heaven, by the sun's team untrod,

Hath took no print of the approaching light,
And all the spangled host keep watch in squadrons
bright?

See how from far upon the eastern road
The star-led wisards haste with odours sweet;
Oh! run, prevent them with thy humble ode,
And lay it lowly at His blessed feet;
Have thou the honour first thy Lord to greet,
And join thy voice unto the angel quire,
From out His secret altar touched with hallowed fire.

The Hymn.

It was the winter wild,
While the Heaven-born child
All meanly wrapped in the rude manger lies,
Nature in awe to Him
Had doffed her gaudy trim,
With her great Master so to sympathise;
It was no season then for her
To wanton with the sun, her lusty paramour.

Only with speeches fair
She wooes the gentle air
To hide her guilty front with innocent snow,
And on her naked shame,
Pollute with sinful blame,
The saintly veil of maiden white to throw;
Confounded, that her Maker's eyes
Should look so near upon her foul deformities.

But He, her fears to cease,
Sent down the meek-eyed Peace;
She, crowned with olive green, came softly-sliding
Down through the turning sphere,
His ready harbinger,
With turtle wing the amorous clouds dividing;

And, waving wide her myrtle wand,
She strikes a universal peace through sea and land.

No war, or battle's sound,
Was heard the world around;
The idle spear and shield were high uphung;
The hookèd chariot stood
Unstained with hostile blood;
The trumpet spake not to the armèd throng;
And kings sat still with awful eye,
As if they surely knew their sovran Lord was by.

But peaceful was the night
Wherein the Prince of Light
His reign of peace upon the earth began;
The winds, with wonder whist,
Smoothly the waters kist,
Whispering new joys to the mild ocean,
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmèd wave.

The stars, with deep amaze,
Stand fixed in steadfast gaze,
Bending one way their precious influence,
And will not take their flight
For all the morning light,
Or Lucifer that often warned them thence;
But in their glimmering orbs did glow,
Until their Lord himself bespake, and bid them go.

And, though the shady gloom
Had given day her room,
The Sun himself withheld his wonted speed,
And hid his head for shame,
As his inferior flame
The new enlightened world no more should need;
He saw a greater Sun appear
Than his bright throne or burning axletree could bear.

The shepherds on the lawn,
Or ere the point of dawn,
Sat simply chatting in a rustic row;
Full little thought they than¹
That the mighty Pan
Was kindly come to live with them below;
Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep,
Was all that did their silly² thoughts so busy keep.

When such music sweet
Their hearts and ears did greet,
As never was by mortal finger strook;
Divinely-warbled voice
Answering the stringèd noise,
As all their souls in blissful rapture took;
The air, such pleasure loth to lose,
With thousand echoes still prolongs each heavenly close.

Nature, that heard such sound,
Beneath the hollow round
Of Cynthia's seat, the airy region thrilling,
Now was almost won
To think her part was done,
And that her reign had here its last fulfilling;
She knew such harmony alone
Could hold all Heaven and Earth in happier union.

At last surrounds their sight
A globe of circular light,
That with long beams the shame-faced Night arrayed;
The helmèd Cherubim,
And sworded Seraphim,
Are seen in glittering ranks with wings displayed,
Harping in loud and solemn quire,
With unexpressive notes, to Heaven's new-born Heir.

¹ Then.

² Simple.

The lonely mountains o'er
And the resounding shore,
 A voice of weeping heard and loud lament;
From haunted spring and dale,
Edged with poplar pale,
 The parting Genius is with sighing sent;
With flower-inwoven tresses torn
The Nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets
 mourn.

In consecrated earth,
And on the holy hearth,
 The Lars and Lemures moan with midnight plaint;
In urns and altars round,
A drear and dying sound
 Affrights the Flamens at their service quaint;
And the chill marble seems to sweat,
While each peculiar Power forgoes his wonted seat.

Peor and Baalim
Forsake their temples dim,
 With that twice-battered god of Palestine,
And moonèd Ashtaroth,
Heaven's queen and mother both,
 Now sits not girt with tapers' holy shine;
The Lybic Hammon shrinks his horn,
In vain the Tyrian maids their wounded Thammuz
 mourn.

And sullen Moloch, fled,
Hath left in shadows dread
 His burning idol all of blackest hue;
In vain, with cymbals' ring,
They call the grisly king,
 In dismal dance about the furnace blue;
The brutish gods of Nile as fast,
Isis and Orus, and the dog Anubis, haste.

Nor is Osiris seen
In Memphian grove or green,
Trampling the unshowered grass with lowings loud;
Nor can he be at rest
Within his sacred chest;
Nought but profoundest Hell can be his shroud!
In vain with timbreled anthems dark
The sable-stolèd sorcerers bear his worshipped ark.

He feels from Judah's land
The dreaded Infant's hand,
The rays of Bethlehem blind his dusky cyn;
Nor all the gods beside
Longer dare abide,
Nor Typhon huge ending in snaky twine;
Our Babe, to show His Godhead true,
Can in His swaddling bands control the damnèd crew.

So when the sun in bed,
Curtained with cloudy red,
Pillows his chin upon an orient wave,
The flocking shadows pale
Troop to the infernal jail,
Each fettered ghost slips to his several grave;
And the yellow-skirted fays
Fly after the night-steeds,¹ leaving their moon-loved maze.

But see, the Virgin blest
Hath laid her Babe to rest;
Time is, our tedious song should here have ending;
Heaven's youngest-teemèd² star
Hath fixed her polished car,
Her sleeping Lord with handmaid lamp attending;
And all about the courtly stable
Bright-harnessed angels sit in order serviceable.

JOHN MILTON.

¹ Nightmares.

² Newest-born.

TITYRUS :

No, no! your King's not yet to seek
Where to repose His royal head;
See, see, how soon His new-bloomed cheek
'Twixt's mother's breasts is gone to bed.
Sweet choice, said we! no way but so
Not to lie cold, yet sleep in snow.

Chorus: Sweet choice, said we, etc.

BOTH :

We saw Thee in Thy balmy nest,
Bright dawn of our eternal Day!
We saw Thine eyes break from their East,
And chase the trembling shades away.
We saw Thee: and we blest the sight,
We saw Thee by Thine Own sweet light.

Chorus: We saw Thee, etc.

RICHARD CRASHAW.

Noel: Christmas Eve, 1913

Pax hominibus bonae voluntatis

A FROSTY Christmas Eve
when the stars were shining
Forth I fared alone
where westward falls the hill,
And from many a village
in the water'd valley
Distant music reach'd me,
peals of bells aringing.
The constellated sounds
ran sprinkling on earth's floor
As the dark vault above
with stars was spangled o'er.

Then sped my thought to keep
that first Christmas of all
When the shepherds watching
by their folds ere the dawn
Heard music in the fields
and marveling could not tell
Whether it were angels
or the bright stars singing.

Now blessed be the tow'rs
that crown England so fair,
That stand up strong in prayer
unto God for our souls :
Blessed be their founders
(said I) an' our country folk
Who are ringing for Christ
in the belfries to-night
With arms lifted to clutch
the rattling ropes that race
Into the dark above
and the mad romping din.

But to me heard afar
it was starry music,
Angels' song comforting
as the comfort of Christ
When he spake tenderly
to his sorrowful flock :
The old words came to me
by the riches of time
Mellow'd and transfigur'd
as I stood on the hill
Heark'ning in the aspect
of th' eternal silence.

ROBERT BRIDGES.

The Oxen

CHRISTMAS Eve, and twelve of the clock.
“Now they are all on their knees,”
An elder said as we sat in a flock
By the embers in hearthside ease.

We pictured the meek mild creatures where
They dwelt in their strawy pen,
Nor did it occur to one of us there
To doubt they were kneeling then.

So fair a fancy few would weave
In these years! Yet, I feel,
If someone said on Christmas Eve,
“Come; see the oxen kneel

“In the lonely barton by yonder coomb
Our childhood used to know,”
I should go with him in the gloom,
Hoping it might be so.

THOMAS HARDY.

Christus Natus Est

CHRISTUS *natus est* the Cock
Croweth to the lazy clock.
Christus natus est he crows;
Christus—and the Raven knows,

And the Lambs, as you shall hear.
Loudly croweth Chanticleer,
With an eager piercing sound,
To the Beasts that lie around;
And they question and reply,
While the Sun mounts up the sky.

Quando? Quando? and again—
That's the Duck who's asking *when?*
In hac nocte the Raven croaks
From the old snow-laden oaks.
Quando? Quando? from beyond
The willows by the frozen pond.
In hac nocte croaks the Raven
From its bare winter's haven.
Ubi? Ubi? Listen there—
That's the Bull who's asking *where?*
In Bethlehem the Lambs do bleat,
And seek their dams with happy feet.
Ubi? Ubi? the Bull lows,
Standing black against the snows;
And the Lambs *In Bethlehem*:
It was God who told it them.

JOHN ALEXANDER CHAPMAN.

A Christmas Masque

THE CHORUS :

A BACK of the North, where Yule is Yule,
And winter snowy and summer cool,
(Patience, friends, if we play the fool!)
Aback of the fells, where snow lies white,

And windows shine in the fire-light,
Folk are carolling into the night.

Here together to sing together and dance together we meet;
Hands are ready and hearts are ready and ready are nimble
feet;
And the piper sits with his bag blown out, piping merry
and sweet
With a drone :
Up to the rafter, down to the hearthstone, woven melodies
chime;
Figuring craftily, fading daintily, buzzing like bees in
thyme;
Pipe the ballad and dance the measure and clap at the clash-
ing rhyme,
With a drone.

Round and round we tramp, lads,
By the light of the flickering lamp, lads,
And all together we stamp, lads,
To the drone.

The THREE KINGS enter.

We be three kings come out of the East,
Into the North for a Christmas feast,
And all afoot for lack of a beast.
Tinker's crown upon head we bear,
Robe of woollen our only wear,
And a hollin¹ staff for a sceptre rare.

Singing, out of the realm of Araby, out of the morning
land,
Travelling far by firth and fell and over the sunken sand,
Hither we hie to make your merry-night; here for a dance
we stand
To the drone :

¹ Holly.

Fluttering bagpipe, lift it, carry it, forth to a frosty moon;
Following voices, praise it, raise it, up to the stars aboon;
Pattering footstep, mark the measure, and clatter the staves
 in tune,
To the drone.

And under the swinging lamp,
Round and round we tramp,
Turn together and stamp,
With a drone.

KING HEROD *and his MEN enter.*

Here stand I, *Judæorum rex*,
Here stand I, *Annas pontifex*,
And here's the sword shall Rachel vex!
Shoulder to shoulder and knee to knee,
Who be lords of the world but we,
O'er Saracen, Paynim and dark Chaldee?

Who go yonder peacock-robed and prating over the floor,
Lustily singing, laiking¹ and dancing, one and another and
 more,
Up to the settle, under the lamp, down and away by the
 door,
To the drone?
Turn and defend ye, or turn and save ye? Fight with us
 here in hall,
Dog of a Saracen, Chaldee warlock, Paynim swarthy and
 tall!
Foot to foot, and eye to eye, up with weapon, or fall
Like a stone!

Steady, my mates, and slash, men!
At them now with a dash, men!
Thrice come in at the clash, men!
With a groan!

¹ Playing—if North-country readers will excuse explanation.

*(Then come between them JOSEPH and MARY with
the BABE on her arm, and ANGELS following.)*

Who brawls before the Prince of Peace,
Enthroned on earth for earth's release,
That storm should sink and tumult cease?
Fall back, good souls, and stay your din,
And range you now this hall within,
To let our Christmas song begin.

THE CHRISTMAS SONG.

Shepherds of old were sitting in fold and the stars were out
in the sky,
Shepherding folk with a shepherd's pipe, and played as the
stars went by;
And who be we but shepherding folk? and our pipes play
merry and high
To the drone:
Angels out of the silver stars and a wonder of golden light,
Glory, sang they, praise and peace to the child that is born
to-night!
And ever we sing their Yule-tide carol and follow the tune
aright
With our drone:

And softly the breezes sigh;
And stillly the waters lie;
And sweetly the voices die,
With the drone.

WILLIAM GERSHOM COLLINGWOOD.

Twelfth Night

NOW is the time to build the fire which shows
With what fair rites our Holy-tide must close;
For, as the Wise Men came with gifts, so we
Finish the Feast of God's Nativity
With incense such as puts their pomps to shame.
Laurel now gives up its green ghost in flame
And pungent mists that mount to roof and rafter,
Falling, a cloudy fragrance, brief while after.
Bright-blazing holly, brightlier-blazing yew,
Fierce-spluttering, die ; with sprigs of Mary's Dew,
And snapping, resinous pine (more sweet than myrrh)
And polished barberry, swart juniper,
Neat box, and ivy dull, and (last to go)
White-waxen-berried, tough-leaved mistletoe.
Nay, for the end, in pagan rite allow
To burn of sombre yew one crackling bough,
That so the gracious little Lars who dwell
With us and this our hearth have guarded well,
May take the spitting fire for leaping salt.
Nor will the Season's King impute for fault
That our glad spirits on this holy night
Invoked the flickering wraith of old delight.

EDWARD THOMPSON.

Ceremonies for Candlemas Eve

DOWN with the rosemary and bays,
Down with the mistletoe;
Instead of holly, now up-raise
The greener box, for show.

¹ Rosemary.

Until the dancing Easter-day
Or Easter's eve appear.

Then youthful box, which now hath grace
Your houses to renew;
Grown old, surrender must his place
Unto the crisped yew.

When yew is out, then birch comes in,
And many flowers beside;
Both of a fresh and fragrant kin
To honour Whitsuntide.

Green rushes then, and sweetest bents,
With cooler oaken boughs,
Come in for comely ornaments
To re-adorn the house.
Thus times do shift; each thing his turn does hold;
New things succeed, as former things grow old.

ROBERT HERRICK.

The Same

DOWN with the rosemary, and so
Down with the bays and mistletoe;
Down with the holly, ivy, all,
Wherewith ye dressed the Christmas Hall:
That so the superstitious find
No one least branch there left behind:
For look, how many leaves there be
Neglected, there (maids, trust to me)
So many goblins you shall see.

ROBERT HERRICK.

The Augustan Books of Poetry *Edited by Edward Thompson*

(First published during 1925 and 1926)

Uniform with this volume

ROBERT BRIDGES	F. W. HARVEY
EDMUND BLUNDEN	ANDREW LANG
RABINDRANATH TAGORE	LAURENCE BINYON
RUPERT BROOKE	EDITH SITWELL
HILAIRE BELLOC	HUMBERT WOLFE
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