

### "No Room for Them at the Inn."

BY ELLA A. SMALL.

No room in Bethlehem's crowded inn  
For the infant Christ to lie,  
Though heralded by shining ones,  
Who greeted him from the sky :  
No home threw open its friendly doors  
To welcome a Saviour born,  
Though heaven rejoiced, and angels sang  
Their praise in the early morn.

No room in the inn for the Prince of Peace,  
Though a brilliant moving star  
Announced his birth on Judæa's plain  
To those who came from afar  
To kneel with their offerings at his feet,  
And worship with gifts and gold  
The holy Child, in his lowly place,  
By prophets so long foretold.

No room for he came in humble guise,  
And not with a gorgeous train  
No royal pageantry or show  
Ushered his coming to men.  
Opening his eyes in a manger rude,  
Fit prelude of days to come—  
For the birds have warm and cosy nests,  
But the Saviour had no home

No room for the Christ who came to save  
A world enshrouded in sin ;  
No room how it echoes adown the years—  
For the Son of God within.  
No room for him who brought to man,  
Through the Father's wondrous love,  
The hope of a changeless, better life  
With him in a home above.

No room for Jesus ! O can it be  
That he loved us so much in vain ?  
Can we close our hearts to his pleading voice,  
While he waits, and calls again ?  
No room ? While he listens to hear us speak  
In response to his loving call,  
Do we say, I know thou wouldst enter in,  
But I have no room at all ?

O blessed Christ ! Thy mercy and grace  
Are as limitless as the sea ;  
Let thy Spirit incline us now to say,  
There is room in my heart for thee !  
Make room for Jesus : to all we cry ;  
His friendship is constant and true,  
And when he gathers his people home,  
He will have a welcome for you.

### Christmas Time.

The origin of the festival of Christmas is attributed to Pope Telesphorus, who died A.D. 138, and it was first celebrated in the months of April and May. In the fourth century, Pope Julius I. ordered an investigation to be made concerning the day of Christ's nativity, and the theologians to whom the matter was referred united in agreement, fixing the day upon the 25th of December.

This day was chosen as a sort of compromise ; for it is certain that the archives of Rome were not always authentic. However, the decision was uniformly accepted, and from that time the Nativity has been celebrated throughout the Church on the same day. The truth is, that the day of Christ's nativity is not known beyond peradventure, and, indeed, prominent Jewish writers aver that the birth took place in the middle of the night.

Christmas day has always been considered in the double light of a holy commemoration and a cheerful festival. During the Middle Ages, it was celebrated by spectacles of dramatic mysteries, performed by personages in grotesque masks and outlandish costumes. The bishops and clergy joined with the people in singing canticles, or carols ; enlivening the scene by dances, music from guitars, violins, tambours, and organs—each person bearing in his hand a lighted taper.

Some of the canticles were very naive ; and the only ancient record of these mediæval carols is a single leaf, preserved in the Bodleian library, in

a volume of "Christmase Carolles," printed by Wynkin de Worde, in 1521.

The carols of the Welsh are especially celebrated, and have, as well as the French and German canticles, been collated and published. The Calabrians still preserve this custom, by descending from their mountain homes to Naples or Rome, chanting their wild music at the shrines of the Virgin Mother.

At midnight on Christmas-eve, it is the custom throughout England and the Continent to ring all the bells. The churches in France and Italy are magnificently adorned, and a collation provided for the assembled multitude.

In the Protestant districts of Germany and Northern Europe, Christmas is called the "Children's Festival." The Christmas-tree, which has become an institution among us, is of German origin ; and Christmas-eve is devoted to giving presents, especially between parents and children, brothers and sisters, by means of the so-called Christmas-tree. A large yew bough is erected in one of the parlours, lighted with tapers, and hung with manifold gifts, each marked with the name of the person for whom it is intended, but not with the name of the donor. The family party being all assembled, the *cadeaux* are distributed amid joyful congratulations and happy romping. But a more sober scene ensues ; for the mother takes this occasion to point out to the daughters, and the father to the sons, their errors and shortcomings.

Formerly, and still in Northern Germany, the presents made by the parents were sent to one person, who, dressed in high buskins, a white robe, a mask, and an enormous flax wig, is called the *Kuecht Rupert*. Thus, becoming the hugh-car of the children, he goes from house to house, received with comic pomp and reverence by the parents, calls for the little ones, and distributes the gifts intended, according to the character which is given them for obedience.

The charming Dutch superstition of Santa Claus, the rubicund, little, fur-clad, white-bearded friend of children, who drives over the housetops on Christmas-eve, with his sleigh full of toys, drawn by reindeer, and, dropping down the chimneys, stuffs every little stocking with presents, still lingers in the customs of domestic life, if not in its beliefs. I hope it may be many an age before the little stocking ceases to be hung at Christmas-eve near the chimney-piece, where Santa Claus will be sure to see it, and to be taken down at daylight full freighted with gifts.

In England, Christmas has always been a religious and merry-making festival, without distinction of rank or caste. The revels begin on Christmas-eve, and used to continue—in old times—till Candlemas (February 2nd), every day being a holiday till the twelfth night (January 6th). In the houses of nobles, a "lord of misrule," or "abbot of unreason," was appointed, whose office it was to "make the rarest pastimes to delight the beholder." His dominion lasted from All-hallow Eve (October 31st) till Candlemas.

The larder was always stocked with capons, hens, turkeys, geese, ducks, beef, mutton, venison, pork, puddings, pies, nuts, plums, sugar, and honey—the tenants being entertained in the hall, and the lord of the manor encouraging everything conducive to mirth.

The "yule log," or Christmas block, was placed upon the fire, and expected to last until Candlemas. The time was passed in wassail ; together with music, conjuring, riddles, hot cockles, fool-plough, snapdragon, repartees, and forfeits. The favourite dish and *pièce de résistance* was a soused boar's head, borne to the table, with great so-

lemnity, upon a silver platter. The tradition is, that this custom originated at Queen's College, Oxford, in commemoration of the valour of a student who, while promenading, absorbed in Aristotle, being suddenly attacked by a wild boar, rammed the volume into the throat of the aggressor, crying "*Græcum est*," till he had fairly choked the beast to death. The custom is still observed at Queen's College, where the dish is brought in to the chant of an old half-Latin ditty :—

"*Caput apro defero  
Reddens tuius Domino,  
The boar's head in hande bring I  
With garlands gay, and rosemary ;  
I pray you all syngo merrily,  
Qui estis in convivio.*"

The custom of decorating houses and churches with evergreens, is derived from ancient Druid practices. The holly, ivy, rosemary, bays, laurel, and mistletoe, were the favourite trimmings, and never removed till Candlemas. Chaplets of these were worn about the head, and "kissing under the rose," and "whispering under the mistletoe," are allusions to this practice.

But the old customs in England have lost their primitive character ; the gambols and carols are nearly gone by ; family re-unions and evergreen decorations being nearly all that remain of the old festivities.

The way in which our forefathers celebrated this day may be imagined by reading the following descriptive lines :—

"On Christmas-eve the bells were rung ;  
On Christmas-eve the mass was sung ;  
That only night in all the year  
Saw the stoled priest the chalice rear.  
Then opened wide the baron's hall,  
To vassal, tenant, serf, and all ;  
Power laid his rod of rule aside,  
And Ceremony doffed his pride.  
The heir, with roses in his shoes,  
That night might village partner choose.  
All hailed with uncontrolled delight  
And general voice, the happy night,  
That, to the cottage as the crown,  
Brought tidings of salvation down.  
England was merry England when  
Old Christmas brought his sports again.  
A Christmas gambol oft would cheer  
A poor man's heart throughout the year."

### Companion Pictures.

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