

GRANDPAPA AND GRAND-
MAMMA'S HEALTH.

Upon the threshold of the past
We linger o'er its joys and a sea,
And when the year is waning fast
We love to watch it as it goes.

With some the time has sped away
With care and sadness overcast,
But many a sorrow laden day
Has ripened into joy at last.

And some look back with longing eyes
Adorn the misty track of time,
Where visions of the past arise
Of ardent youth and happy prime.

But yet, unbidden tears will start;—
On all a touch of sadness falls,
And from the fountains of the heart
A voice mysterious ever calls.

But let us bless the dying year,
And all the years that we have seen
The future is not dark with fear,
Whatever the past to us has been.

And let us drink a modest cup
With loving friends whom time has tried
Come, fill the glasses! fill them up!
And bless this happy Christmas-tide.

Our Queen and country shall not need
To seek within our hearts a place;
To commerce give its proper meed,
To valour yield a fitting grace.

And laws and learning, science, art,
Shall each with due respect be heard;
They all shall have an equal part,
And all shall share a kindly word.

To all such themes our thoughts may roam,
But there is yet a dearer toast,
And one that comes much nearer home:
We drink our hostess and our host!

He gave his love, he gave his life,
To her when they were bright and young,
Together they have shared the strife
That fortune on their path has flung.

She cheered him when his heart was low,
She helped him when his hand was weak,
And tears of sorrow ceased to flow
Before the words that she would speak.

Together they have climbed the hill,
They gaze together down the vale;
And, hand in hand, through good and ill,
They bide the finish of the tale.

They reap the harvest they have sown,
And look to life's eternal goal;
While all the pleasures they have known
Return, like echoes, to the soul.

The memory of a well-spent life
Is theirs to cheer declining days;
And father, mother, husband, wife,
Applied to them, are words of praise.

Come, fill the glasses! fill them up!
With trusty friends whom time has tried
We'll drink a last and loving cup,
And bless the happy Christmas-tide.



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CHRISTMAS IN BRIT-
TANY

Brittany is the country of mysteries. In the barn of the richest farmer of the village, the inhabitants of Finistere represent the nativity and the adoration of the Magi. Nothing is wanting to the completeness, not even the angels who come to announce the glad tidings. It is true that the wings of the latter are of paste-board, and the cloth which covers the ladder whereon one of them is suspended, hardly conceals the fact, but the spectacle is none the less interesting and none the less the object of pious enthusiasm. The spirit of evil, or, in other words, the devil, comes to disturb the festival, hidden in a sheep's skin, but the exterminating angel, with his sword of genuine iron, drives him away ignominiously.

In the environs of Amboise there is another ceremony for Christmas. The third stroke of the midnight mass sounds from the village church. After an evening spent in singing the popular *noels* of the country, the father of the family goes to the barn and takes therefrom a huge log kept in reserve for the *terfeu*, or three fires, because it must last three days, and places it on the hearth. The mother, detaching from the head of the bed the cedar branch placed there on Palm Sunday, proceeds therewith to bless the fireside, that it may be preserved from getting cold. Meantime, the young girls carefully sweep the hearthstone, in order, according to the tradition, that the Madonna may come down at midnight without soiling her garments. The neighbours drop in, lantern in hand, and the silhouettes of the pious group are soon visible in the snow which covers the road to the church, while the joyous flame of the *terfeu* illumines the house and prepares a warm, pleasant return to the simple inhabitants.



CHRISTMAS IN BRITTANY