

from CHRISTUS NATUS EST

Countee Cullen

The manger still
Outshines the throne;
Christ must and will
Come to his own.
Hosannah! *Christus natus est.*



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CHRISTMAS

POEMS



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564-1616)

GILES FLETCHER (1588?-1623)

RICHARD CRASHAW (D. 1649)

GEORGE MACDONALD (1824-1905)

CHRISTINA GEORGINA ROSSETTI (1830-1894)

THOMAS HARDY (1840-1928)

FATHER JOHN BANNISTER TABB (1845-1909)

EUGENE FIELD (1850-1895)

COUNTEE CULLEN (1903-1946)

DONNA LEE DAVIS (B. 1945)

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CHRISTMAS IN VIRGINIA, 1971

Donna Lee Davis

Unseasonable, the warmth that marks
this strangest of Decembers;
(unreasonable, to waiting winter
children wishing snow.)

The Christmas Rose—white whimsy—blooms
exultant, shyly fondled
by breeze whose breath was frosted pain
but brief brisk days ago.

Our aging aspen wears a living
garland—quiet sparrows
bewildered by a tender dew
where icicles should cling;

while all our Blue Ridged world salutes
another Birthday morning
and ponders Love that makes a gift
of unexpected Spring.

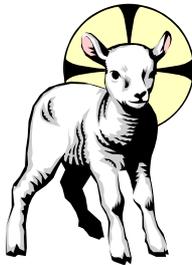


THE BOY JESUS

Fr. John Banister Tabb

Once, measuring his height, he stood
 Beneath a cypress tree,
And, leaning back against the wood,
 Stretched wide his arms for me;
Whereat a brooding mother-dove
Fled fluttering from her nest above.

At evening he loved to walk
Among the shadowy hills, and talk
 of Bethlehem;
But if perchance there passed us by
The paschal lambs, he'd look at them
 In silence, long and tenderly;
And when again he'd try to speak,
I've seen the tears upon his cheek.



SOME SAY . .

William Shakespeare

Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
The bird of dawning singeth all night long:
And then, they say, no spirit dare stir abroad,
The nights are wholesome, then no planets strike,
No fairy takes nor witch hath power to charm,
So hallow'd and so gracious is the time.



THAT HOLY THING

George MacDonald

They all were looking for a king
To slay their foes and lift them high:
Thou cam'st, a little baby thing
That made a woman cry.

O Son of Man, to right my lot
Naught but Thy presence can avail;
Yet on the road Thy wheels are not,
Nor on the sea Thy sail!

My how or when Thou wilt not heed,
But come down Thine own secret stair,
That Thou mayst answer all my need—
Yea, every bygone prayer.



THE OXEN

Thomas Hardy

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.



barton, coomb = farmyard, valley

CHRISTMAS EVE

Christina Georgina Rossetti

Christmas hath a darkness
Brighter than the blazing noon,
Christmas hath a chillness
Warmer than the heat of June,
Christmas hath a beauty
Lovelier than the world can show:
For Christmas bringeth Jesus,
Brought for us so low.

Earth, strike up your music,
Birds that sing and bells that ring;
Heaven hath answering music
For all angels soon to sing:
Earth, put on your whitest
Bridal robe of spotless snow:
For Christmas bringeth Jesus,
Brought for us so low.



A HYMN SUNG AS BY THE SHEPHERDS

Richard Crashaw

Welcome!
All wonders in one sight—
Eternity, shut in a span!
Summer in winter,
Day in night!
Heaven in earth,
And God in man!
Great little One whose
All-embracing birth
Lifts earth to heaven,
Stoops heaven to earth

To Thee, meek Majesty,
Soft King of simple graces
And sweet loves,
Each of us his lamb will bring,
Each his pair of silver doves;
Till burnt at last in
Fire of Thy fair eyes,
Ourselves become
Our own best sacrifice.



CHRYSTMASSE OF OLDE



Eugene Field

Better known for his poems for children, such as "Wynken, Blynken and Nod" and "Jest 'Fore Christmas," Field wrote this poem in Archaic English style.

God rest you, Chrysten gentil men,
Wherever you may be,
God rest you all in fielde or hall,
Or on ye stormy sea;
For on this morn oure Chryst is born
That saveth you and me.
Last night ye shepherds in ye east
Saw many a wondrous thing;
Ye sky last night flamed passing bright
Whiles that ye stars did sing,
And angels came to bless ye name
Of Jesus Chryst, oure Kyng.

God rest you, Chrysten gentil men,
Faring where'er you may;
In noblesse court do thou no sport,
In tournament no playe,
In paynim lands hold thou thy hands
From bloudy works this daye.
But thinking on ye gentil Lord
That died upon ye tree,
Let troublings cease and deeds of peace
Abound in Chrystantie;
For on this morn ye Chryst is born
That saveth you and me.

EXCELLENCY OF CHRIST

Giles Fletcher

He is a path,
 if any be misled;
He is a robe,
 if any naked be;
If any chance to hunger,
 he is bread;
If any be a bondman,
 he is free;
If any be but weak,
 how strong is he!
To dead men life he is,
 to sick men health;
To blind men sight,
 and to the needy wealth;
A pleasure without loss,
 a treasure without stealth.



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