

The House Of Christmas | G.K. Chesterton

There fared a mother driven forth
Out of an inn to roam;
In the place where she was homeless
All men are at home.
The crazy stable close at hand,
With shaking timber and shifting sand,
Grew a stronger thing to abide and stand
Than the square stones of Rome.

For men are homesick in their homes,
And strangers under the sun,
And they lay their heads in a foreign land
Whenever the day is done.
Here we have battle and blazing eyes,
And chance and honor and high surprise,
But our homes are under miraculous skies
Where the yule tale was begun.

A Child in a foul stable,
Where the beasts feed and foam,
Only where He was homeless
Are you and I at home;
We have hands that fashion and heads that know,
But our hearts we lost – how long ago!
In a place no chart nor ship can show
Under the sky's dome.

This world is wild as an old wives' tale,
And strange the plain things are,
The earth is enough and the air is enough
For our wonder and our war;
But our rest is as far as the fire-drake swings
And our peace is put in impossible things
Where clashed and thundered unthinkable wings
Round an incredible star.

To an open house in the evening
Home shall men come,
To an older place than Eden
And a taller town than Rome.
To the end of the way of the wandering star,
To the things that cannot be and that are,
To the place where God was homeless
And all men are at home.

How Far is it to Bethlehem

How far is it to Bethlehem?
Not very far.
Shall we find the stable-room
Lit by a star?

Can we see the little Child?
Is He within?
If we lift the wooden latch,
May we go in?

May we stroke the creatures there —
Ox, ass, or sheep?
May we peep like them and see
Jesus asleep?

If we touch His tiny hand,
Will He awake?
Will He know we've come so far
Just for His sake?

Great kings have precious gifts,
And we have naught;
Little smiles and little tears
Are all we brought.

For all weary children
Mary must weep;
Here, on His bed of straw,
Sleep, children, sleep.

God, in His mother's arms,
Babes in the byre,
Sleep, as they sleep who find
Their heart's desire.

A CHILD OF THE SNOWS

There is heard a hymn when the panes are dim,
And never before or again,
When the nights are strong with a darkness long,
And the dark is alive with rain.

Never we know but in sleet and in snow,
The place where the great fires are,
That the midst of the earth is a raging mirth
And the heart of the earth a star.

And at night we win to the ancient inn
Where the child in the frost is furled,
We follow the feet where all souls meet
At the inn at the end of the world.

The gods lie dead where the leaves lie red,
For the flame of the sun is flown,
The gods lie cold where the leaves lie gold,
And a Child comes forth alone.

THE WISE MEN

Step softly, under snow or rain,
To find the place where men can pray;
The way is all so very plain
That we may lose the way.

Oh, we have learnt to peer and pore,
On tortured puzzles from our youth,
We know all labyrinthine lore,
We are the three Wise Men of yore,
And we know all things but the truth.

We have gone round and round the hill,
And lost the wood among the trees,
And learnt long names for every ill,
And served the mad gods, naming still
The Furies the Eumenides.

The gods of violence took the veil
Of vision and philosophy,
The Serpent that brought all men bale,
He bites his own accursed tail,
And calls himself Eternity.

Go humbly . . . it has hailed and snowed . . .
With voices low and lanterns lit;
So very simple is the road,
That we may stray from it.

The world grows terrible and white,
And blinding white the breaking day;
We walk bewildered in the light,
For something is too large for sight,
And something much too plain to say.

The Child that was ere worlds begun —
(. . . We need but walk a little way . . .
We need but see a latch undone . . .)
The Child that played with moon and sun
Is playing with a little hay.

The house from which the heavens are fed,
The old strange house that is our own,
Where tricks of words are never said,
And Mercy is as plain as bread,
And Honour is as hard as stone.

Go humbly; humble are the skies,
And low and large and fierce the Star,
So very near the Manger lies
That we may travel far.

Hark! Laughter like a lion wakes
To roar to the resounding plain,
And the whole heaven shouts and shakes
For God Himself is born again
And we are little children walking
Through the snow and rain.

The Truce of Christmas

Passionate peace is in the sky—
And in the snow in silver sealed
The beasts are perfect in the field,
And men seem men so suddenly—
(But take ten swords and ten times ten
And blow the bugle in praising men;
For we are for all men under the sun;
And they are against us every one;
And misers haggle and madmen clutch,
And there is peril in praising much,
And we have the terrible tongues uncurled
That praise the world to the sons of the world.)

The idle humble hill and wood
Are bowed upon the sacred birth,
And for one little hour the earth
Is lazy with the love of good—
(But ready are you, and ready am I,
If the battle blow and the guns go by;
For we are for all men under the sun,
And they are against us every one;
And the men that hate herd all together,
To pride and gold, and the great white feather,
And the thing is graven in star and stone
That the men who love are all alone.)

Hunger is hard and time is tough,
But bless the beggars and kiss the kings;
For hope has broken the heart of things,
And nothing was ever praised enough.

(But hold the shield for a sudden swing
And point the sword when you praise a thing,
For we are for all men under the sun,
And they are against us every one;
And mime and merchant, thane and thrall
Hate us because we love them all;
Only till Christmastide go by
Passionate peace is in the sky.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's lap

The Christ-child lay on Mary's lap,
His hair was like a light.
(O weary, weary were the world,
But here is all aright.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's breast
His hair was like a star.
(O stern and cunning are the kings,
But here the true hearts are.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's heart,
His hair was like a fire.
(O weary, weary is the world,
But here the world's desire.)

The Christ-child stood on Mary's knee,
His hair was like a crown,
And all the flowers looked up at Him,
And all the stars looked down

'A Christmas Carol' poem

I

The shepherds went their hasty way,
And found the lowly stable-shed
Where the Virgin-Mother lay:
And now they checked their eager tread,

For to the Babe, that at her bosom clung,
A Mother's song the Virgin-Mother sung.

II

They told her how a glorious light,
Streaming from a heavenly throng.
Around them shone, suspending night!
While sweeter than a mother's song,
Blest Angels heralded the Savior's birth,
Glory to God on high! and Peace on Earth.

III

She listened to the tale divine,
And closer still the Babe she pressed:
And while she cried, the Babe is mine!
The milk rushed faster to her breast:
Joy rose within her, like a summer's morn;
Peace, Peace on Earth! the Prince of Peace is born.

IV

Thou Mother of the Prince of Peace,
Poor, simple, and of low estate!
That strife should vanish, battle cease,
O why should this thy soul elate?
Sweet Music's loudest note, the Poet's story,
Didst thou ne'er love to hear of fame and glory?

V

And is not War a youthful king,
A stately Hero clad in mail?
Beneath his footsteps laurels spring;
Him Earth's majestic monarchs hail
Their friends, their playmate! and his bold bright eye
Compels the maiden's love-confessing sigh.

VI

Tell this in some more courtly scene,
To maids and youths in robes of state!
I am a woman poor and mean,
And wherefore is my soul elate.
War is a ruffian, all with guilt defiled,
That from the aged father's tears his child!

VII

A murderous fiend, by fiends adored,
He kills the sire and starves the son;
The husband kills, and from her board
Steals all his widow's toil had won;
Plunders God's world of beauty; rends away
All safety from the night, all comfort from the day.

VIII

Then wisely is my soul elate,
That strife should vanish, battle cease:
I'm poor and of low estate,
The Mother of the Prince of Peace.
Joy rises in me, like a summer's morn:
Peace, Peace on Earth! The Prince of Peace is born!