





" Not a man here shall taste my March beer Till a *Christmas Carol* he does sing." *Old Robin Hood Ballad.* 

"Then came the merry masquers in, And carols roared with blithesome din; If unmelodious was the song, It was a hearty note, and strong." Sir Walter Scott.

## A LITTLE BOOK

OF

## CHRISTMAS CAROLS,

THE ANCIENT MELODIES TO WHICH THEY ARE SUNG ;

WITH

INCLUDING THE

#### Celebrated Boar's Mead Song,

Annually Sung on Christmas-day at Queen's College, Oxford.

COLLECTED AND EDITED BY

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### PREFACE.

THE practice of *Carol* singing is of very great antiquity, and may be traced back to the time of the early Christians. The custom is referred to both by St. Paul and St. James; and Pliny the Younger, in his letter to Trajan respecting the Christians, A.D. 107, says, "They were wont to meet together on a stated day, before it was light, and sing among themselves alternately a hymn to Christ as to God."

According to Durand, the bishops, in the earlier ages of the Church, were accustomed on Christmas-day to sing hymns among their clergy, from whence may be derived our Christmas hymns or carols. Bishop Taylor observes, however, that the 'Gloria in Excelsis,' the well-known hymn sung by the angels to the shepherds at our Lord's Nativity, was the earliest Christmas carol. The term *Carol* appears originally to have signified songs intermingled with dancing, or a sort of divertisement; and it is used in that sense in 'Le Roman de la Rose,' and by Chaucer and other old writers. It was afterwards applied to festive songs, and as these became most prevalent during Christmas, it has for a long time past designated (though not exclusively) those sung during that feast; but these should in strictness be distinguished from Christmas hymns, which are of a more solemn nature, although they are now generally confounded together under the name of carols.

The custom of singing carols became general in the fifteenth century; and in some of the early ones scraps of Latin will be found introduced, adopted probably from the Christmas hymns, for which these songs were intended as a substitute. So popular did they become, that Wynkyn de Worde, one of the earliest printers, was induced to print a collection of them in the year 1521, containing, amongst others, the celebrated ' Boar's Head Carol,' anciently sung upon the introduction of that dish on Christmas-day. In the instructions given for the regulation of the household of Henry the Seventh, the ceremonies to be observed on the several feast-days during the Christmas are set forth ; even describing the particular robes and dress to be worn by the king on each of them. On Twelfth-day he is to go

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crowned, and wear his robes royal; and on Twelfth-night is the following direction :---

"Item, The chappell to stand on the one side of the hall, and when the steward cometh in at the hall-dore with the wassell, he must crie three tymes Wassell, wassell, wassell; and then the chappell to answere with a good songe; and in likewise if it bee in the great chamber."

This "good songe," above referred to, was no doubt a carol; and in the book of expenses of Elizabeth, queen of Henry the Seventh, in the eighteenth year of his reign, we may see the value of one in those days, as William Cornyshe, who appears to have been a favourite poet and composer at court, then received 13s. 4d. in reward "for setting a carrall upon Christmas-day." In the British Museum, additional MSS., Nos. 5465 and 5665, being collections of ancient songs in the time of Henry VII. and VIII., are some carols and pious songs, with the music in three and four parts. Among the composers are Edmund Turges, Gilbert Banaster, and the before-named William Cornyshe; and perhaps the 13s. 4d. carol may be in the collection.

The price of a collection of carols in the sixteenth century was equally moderate with the reward given for

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setting one, for in the churchwarden's accounts of St. Mary-at-Hill, London, A.D. 1537, is an entry, "To Sir Mark, for Carolls for Christmas, and for 5 square Books, iiis. iiiid." In the regulations of the Duke of Northumberland's household in 1512, it appears that the children of the chapel were allowed an extraordinary compensation of 6s. 8d. for singing 'Gloria in Excelsis' upon "Christmasday in the morning." Carols continued much in vogue throughout this century. Tusser mentions one to be sung to the tune of King Solomon; and it would have been very desirable if some of the genuine and popular caroltunes of that age had been preserved, which may, however, be the case in the following collection, although difficult of proof.

In Shakspeare's time, carols were sung at night during Christmas about the streets, and made a pretext for collecting money. The Reformation also having abolished Latin hymns in the established church, Christmas carols came into general use in the country churches.

"Christmas carols at this time," remarks Mr. Sandys, the author of an elegant collection published in 1833, "were probably divided into two sorts: one of a more Scriptural or serious nature, sung in churches, and through the streets, and from house to house, ushering in the

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Christmas morning, and sung afterwards, morning and evening, until Twelfth-day; the other of a more convivial nature, and adapted to the season of feasting and carousing. The convivial, or " jolie carols," as Tusser calls them, were sung by the company, or by the itinerant minstrels that attended the feasts for the purpose, during the daily revelry, at the houses of the wealthy throughout the Christmas. Some of them were called Wassel Songs, and may be traced back to the Anglo-Normans, who were very prone to conviviality, and encouraged everything that was likely to aid it."

Bishop Andrewes, in his thirteenth sermon 'Of the Nativitie,' preached on Luke ii. 14, "on the 25th of December, 1619, being Christmas-day," celebrates the day as "glorious in all places, as well at home with *Carolls*, as in the Church with Anthemes." And Thomas Warmstry, D.D., the author of a very rare tract entitled 'The Vindication of the Solemnity of the Nativity of Christ,' in 1648, thus judiciously delivers his sentiments concerning the practice under consideration: "*Christmasse Kariles*, if they be such as are fit for the time, and of holy and sober composures, and used with Christian sobriety and piety, they are not unlawful, and may be profitable, if they be sung with grace in the heart."

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The practice of carol-singing continued with unabated zeal till the end of the last century, since which it has declined, and many old customs have been gradually becoming obsolete.

In the northern counties, and in some of the midland, carol-singing is still preserved. In the metropolis a solitary itinerant may be occasionally heard in the streets, croaking out "God rest you, merry gentlemen," or some other old carol, to an ancient and simple tune.

E. F. R.

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)	1. THE FIRST NOWEL THE ANGEL DID SAY	2	t
>	(Nowel, i. e. Noel, derived from the Latin natalis (the dies natalis of our Lord), which soon became naturalised in our language and literature.)		0
5			5
,	2. A VIRGIN MOST PURE, AS THE PROPHETS DO TELL	6	4
)	(This carol is still very popular in the west of England. A		¢
)	variety of different carols are sung to the same air.)		4
)	3. GOD REST YOU, MERRY GENTLEMEN	10	9
	(The most common and generally popular of all carol tunes. It is frequently sung in both the major and minor keys.)		00
)	4. ANOTHER VERSION OF THE SAME	14	¢
	(This tune is well known in Cornwall and in the west of England.)		00
)	5. I SAW THREE SHIPS COME SAILING IN	16	4
	(This beautiful air, like the four previous ones, has been handed down by oral tradition.)		00
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They looked up and saw a star Shining in the East beyond them far, And to the earth it gave great light, And so it continued both day and night. Nowel, &c.

And by the light of that same Star, Three Wise Men came from country far; To seek for a king was their intent, And to follow the Star wherever it went. Nowel, &c.

This Star drew nigh to the north-west, O'er Bethlehem it took its rest, And there it did both stop and stay, Right o'er the place where Jesus lay. Nowel, &c.

Then did they know assuredly Within that house the King did lie; One entered in then for to see, And found the Babe in poverty. Nowel, &c. Then enter'd in those Wise Men three Most reverently upon their knee, And offered there, in his presence, Both gold, and myrrh, and frankincense. Nowel, &c.

Between an ox-stall and an ass, This Child truly there born he was; For want of clothing they did him lay All in the manger among the hay. Nowel, &c.

Then let us all, with one accord, Sing praises to our heavenly Lord, That hath made heaven and earth of nought, And with his blood mankind hath bought. Nowel, &c.

If we in our time shall do well, We shall be free from death and Hell, For God hath prepared for us all A resting-place in general.

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Nowel, &c.





In Bethlehem city, in Jewry it was, Where Joseph and Mary together did pass, And there to be taxed, with many one more, For Cæsar commanded the same should be so. Rejoice and be merry, &c.

But when they had entered the city so far, The number of people so mighty was there, That Joseph and Mary, whose substance was small, Could get in the city no lodging at all. Rejoice and be merry, &c.

Then they were constrained in a stable to lie, Where oxen and asses they used to tie ; Their lodging so simple, they held it no scorn, But against the next morning our Saviour was born. Rejoice and be merry, &c.

The King of all Glory to the world being brought, Small store of fine linen to wrap him was bought; When Mary had swaddled her young Son so sweet, Within an ox-manger she laid him to sleep. Rejoice and be merry, &c.

Then God sent an Angel from heaven so high, To certain poor Shepherds in fields where they lie, And bid them no longer in sorrow to stay, Because that our Saviour was born on this day. Rejoice and be merry, &c.

Then presently after, the Shepherds did spy A number of Angels appear in the sky, Who joyfully talked, and sweetly did sing, To God be all glory, our Heavenly King. Rejoice and be merry, &c.

Three certain Wise Princes, they thought it most meet To lay their rich offerings at our Saviour's feet; Then the Shepherds consented, and to Bethlehem did go, And when they came hither, they found it was so.

Rejoice and be merry, &c.

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In Bethlehem, in Jewry, This blessed babe was born, And laid within a manger Upon this blessed morn ; The which his mother Mary Nothing did take in scorn. O tidings, &c.

From God, our Heavenly Father, A blessed Angel came, And unto certain Shepherds Brought tidings of the same, How that in Bethlehem was born The Son of God by name. O tidings, &c.

Fear not, then said the Angel, Let nothing you affright, This day is born a Saviour Of virtue, power, and might; So frequently to vanquish all The friends of Satan quite. O tidings, &c.

The Shepherds at those tidings Rejoiced much in mind, And left their flocks a-feeding In tempest, storm, and wind, And went to Bethlehem straightway, This blessed babe to find. O tidings, &c.

But when to Bethlehem they came, Whereas this infant lay, They found him in a manger Where oxen feed on hay ; His mother Mary, kneeling, Unto the Lord did pray. O tidings, &c.

Now to the Lord sing praises, All you within this place, And with true love and brotherhood Each other now embrace ; This holy tide of Christmas All others doth deface.

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O tidings, &c.







And what was in those ships all three,On Christmas-day, on Christmas-day?And what was in those ships all three,On Christmas-day in the morning?

Our Saviour Christ and his ladie, On Christmas-day, on Christmas-day; Our Saviour Christ and his ladie, On Christmas-day in the morning.

Pray whither sailed those ships all three,On Christmas-day, on Christmas-day?Pray whither sailed those ships all three,On Christmas-day in the morning?

O they sailed into Bethlehem,
On Christmas-day, on Christmas-day;
O they sailed into Bethlehem,"
On Christmas-day in the morning.

And all the bells on earth shall ring,
On Christmas-day, on Christmas-day;
And all the bells on earth shall ring,
On Christmas-day in the morning.

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And all the Angels in Heaven shall sing,On Christmas-day, on Christmas-day;And all the Angels in Heaven shall sing,On Christmas-day in the morning.

And all the Souls on Earth shall sing,
On Christmas-day, on Christmas-day;
And all the Souls on Earth shall sing,
On Christmas-day in the morning.

Then let us all rejoice amain, On Christmas-day, on Christmas day; Then let us all rejoice amain, On Christmas-day in the morning.











[The original Carol, from "Christmasse Carolles newly enprinted at London in the fletestrete at the sygne of the sonne by Wynkyn de Worde. The yere of our Lorde. M.D.xxi."]

A Caroll bryngyng in the bores heed.

Caput apri defero Reddens laudes domino. The bores heed in hande bring I, With garlands gay and rosemary; I praye you all synge merely, Qui estis in convivio. The bores heed I understande, Is the chefe servyce in this lande; Loke, where ever it be fande, Servite cum cantico. Be gladde, lordes, bothe more and lasse, For this hath ordeyned our stewarde, To chere you all this Christmasse, The bores heed with mustarde.

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