

Yule-tide



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YULE-TIDE

Lang sheddas sklentit doun on hame an haa. The sun bored his hinmaist rays throwe the mist at hung on the hill, an spread his plaid o the gloamin licht ower the sacred land. The hush o the burn raise to the clachan as it bickered by, like a hyme at the nichtfaa in praise o the day at wis gane.

The mire mirk hung ower the warld. The wuds war cauld an bare. Ilka tree wis rifled o its galore. The gerss wis grey an nithert. The bleatin yowes on the far braes scurried hame til the buchts for the nicht. The last echoes o the bairns' mirth war floatin awa throwe the glacks o the hills.

Ilka fire wis bleezin bricht, an the yule logs flung their sparks on the flair, an the lum raired loud wi the dancin lowe.

The simmer's wark wis by, the thrang o the hairst wis past. Ilka barn wis packit weel. Nature's haun hed bin fou an scailin. The guidman's haire wis blythe an merry. Nae want, nae care. The saison hed keepit its tryst wi him, an haundit him doun meikle store.

It wis the sort o nicht whan fowk wud thank God for his guidness, an bide his blissin. A nicht whan the ee wad wanner heivenwart an steal a luik ayont the blae intae the Halie Plece.

It wis a nicht at titched the pathos an the haire o a body, an swung him back intae by-gane times whan Jehovah hed trysted wi his faithers. Memory trudged back the rod o promise, an peered ahint the cruiks an thraws, eident tae trace the tramp-marks o God's purpose.

Unco the sights he saa - the great Aamichtie comin

doun an broodin ower an haudin grip o his ain fowk. He saa a God at his face wis turned til the yirth, at his ee wis ey on fowk's richt an wrang; ane at mixed i the stramash o fowk's daeins, an grippit the threids o human action an warped them intil his ain loom.

It wis glorious tae staun an listen tae the click o the great divine shuttle, an hear the whirr o the sacred wheel, an the whoop o the threids as they cam thegither - a strange crimpson streak twined an twistit throwe aa the wob.

The rod wis lang an dreich, an the skulls an carcasses at lay on the wey telt o monie a brulzie an monie a sair fecht: the warslins o will hairts ettlin the richt rod tae gang - tryin tae fallow the track whaur Providence hed glimmerit his licht. Whiles a backart mairch intae the mirk, whan they tint their gait for the want o yin at kent the wey; an forrit again wi a sang an a gallop whan the richt seer spak Jehovah's wull.

In their saul wis a dream; they greened for something they kentna what. Like starns at shot throwe the dirk, great men shot out frae the lave an shoutit the cry at wis needit. Ilka ane at comes on to his day cairries forrit the cry, an a hecht at maun come true.

A tear stole ower his ee as he thocht o the days gane by. "We hae nae sang on our toung, nae joy in our haire, nae gleam i the ee. Nae mirth, nae pleasure rings throwe the land." He saa great hosts tramp by - the rise an faa o by-gane glories - nations hurlt tae the fit o the hill, an driven intil the grund, aa their micht an their pride dumfoonert an cowed an braken tae bits.

The souch o the wind cam til his ear as he wannert ower the lanelie hills o Judah, an trudged by the dowie hauchs o Jordan. His haire stouned wi grief, "My fowk's din.

Their glore's by wi. There's nae prophet, nae priest, nae king. The auld harp lies by, therms aa wizzent an fustit; nae peg stauns ticht in its plece; the music is out an the tune is gane at Jehovah wis yaised wi."

The sun sent the hinmaist sheddass athort the land as he sank doun ower the braken hills, lea'n the auld warld for iver. The nicht wis fraucht wi mystery. Quate brooded solemn ower aa. The efter glow hung lang on the hills. It bathed their crests wi a gowden licht, an ran ower their shouthers, an trickled doun til it met the nicht i the howes. The vast blae sea o the welkin wis shiverin an agitate. Here an thair a star peepit throwe timrouslie, gin they wad hae leave tae shine. The yirth reponed wi a kindly walcome, an beckoned them doun throwe the faulds o the nicht. Yirth an lift seemed tae crack thegither, the stars souchin saft ower heicht an howe, sootherin the yirth wi their titch.

The wannerer awoke tae the mood o the nicht, an fand an unco gaun on atween heiven an yirth. Heiven wis laich doun, an as near as cud whisper a saicret til't. An a list'nin humour at lay ower the land gart him hearken along wi't tae get the threid o the passin tryst.

He sat aneth a cedar, bummin the sang o the Captivitie. He hard the tramp o the passers-by as they trudged the rod at the fit o the hill. A ying maiden, sittin a cuddie, neiboured bi her man, gaed by, an anterred out o sicht along the rod tae Bethlehem. The fowk thringed doun frae aa airts at the biddin o the haun at held the sceptre. Aa the clan o Dauvit forgethered i the wee toun. The place wis asteer in iv'ry neuk an back court. Ilka houss an hovel wis taen. The first tae come war best sered, the hinmaist got the warst farin.

Joseph, an Mary on the cuddie, cam til the inn an socht bield for the nicht. A stable wi aa they cud get. The din o the toun quaitened doun tae rest frae its hammerin souch, the eerie nicht cam ower the streets, an silence claimed the plece.

There's nichts at hes hallowed memories twined about them - nichts at aabodie's mind traivels back til. This nicht wis the maist oncommon o aa the nichts at hed gane. The haun o Providence wis fou o his biggest gift, an this nicht he wad pass it ower tae mankind.

Heiven wis waitin, wheeshtit an still, an ilka starnie at blinkit throwe the blae abune seemed tae focus on the wee toun o Bethlehem. The herds out on the hill fendin their hirsels thocht the augurs war bodin, an wunnered at the nicht-faa what Jehovah hed tae divulge. Whiles they crackit about ancient days as they dandered on the braes. The faithers hed visions frae the Aamichtie, an angels caa'd doun til this warld langsyne. Hed the angels bang'd out o sicht an closed heiven's curtains for iver? Hed they striven wi our forbears an left the yirth til itsel - ill-taen wi its wrangs an feckless wamble?

While they mused like this a bricht bruch o licht wis shinin aa roun, an a divine figure drew near them. As the winds o October shiver the ash leaf, they trimt at the voice o the angel tounge: "Fear nocht. I'm bringin ye gude news o meikle gledness. It's for aabodie. For een tae you an aa mankind is born this verra day in the toun o Dauvit a Saviour, whilk is Christ the Lord. An this'll be an arles tae you: ye'll fin the bairnie rowed in a barrie-coat, lyin in a maunger." An as they gazed intil the starry lift they hard



sounds, like whispers frae afar, o a heivenlie host. An the wurd at fell on their ears frae the far-aff lilt soundit like “Glore ... Peace ... Airth ... Guidwull ... Man.” The sky seemed tae apen up, an the great hosts o heiven drappit throwe the rift, singin the sang o angels’ guidwull, an heraldin the advent i the little toun - the staa wi the wee bairn at wis born.

It wis an unco sicht for a bodie tae see in a world like this: heiven’s glorie comin doun tae the laichs, an a band o angels laudin i the mids o the glorie. The herds cudna bide the grandeur o’t. They war fley’t tae meet the onkent world whan it cam i the garb o an angel host. But the dreid at first fleggitt their hairts wis sune past. The music wis sweet, an the wurd war winnin, an the beautie sune wiled their hairts back tae guid faith. Their likin grew strang as they listened the message o joy: a Saviour wis gien tae the world frae God. “Glorie tae God i the heichest heichts, an on the yirth, guidwull tae man.”

The angels gaed awa ahint the curtains o the nicht, an stole their weys back hame.

The herds war fou o gleefu crack. They war brimmin ower wi happiness. Their faces beamed i the dirk, as if the angels hed left their glorie wi them. As they trampit across the fields they war proud at hairt acause God hed lippent them wi the news, an trustit them as leal men.

They war aiblins God-fearin at waited for news like this. They thocht the time hed come whan the by-gane hechts micht be fulfilled. They kent the days war lang gane sin God hed sent his messengers tae the world, an neathing hed bin hard o him for hunners o ears. The hairt o their kintramen wis wearied out waitin sair for the comin

back o Jehovah's wurd. Whaur hed God gane frae his ain fowk?

The fremmit haun held the swird ower their heid. Dool an wae depressed them aa. Their hairts wudna rise til the thocht o their God. They hedna freedom tae caa him their ain. The sangs o Dauvid war nae mair hard , an the dirge o the saum wis lossit.

God's hosts hed come doun aince mair. The lang doverin age wis bracken wi a sang, an heiven itsel cam back til the warld again.

The bonnie wee bairnie, wi its blythesome face, lay helpless in a stirkie's staa. Strange hou heiven wis pleased tae pit it thair, an no in a palace buskit an braw. Nane jaloused he wud come like this. Nor nane wud think tae look for him in sicna plece. In this wafflin stable i Bethlehem God's greatest gift lies i the lawliest heck - as if born bi chance , thrown in upo the warld wi'out a foreplan - as if ravellt fate grippit his destiny, an chance an mischanter deceived him. Nae blithemeat ready for him, awa frae hame, doun i the cauld stable - comfortless; nae saft or cosie cradle, nae couthie or kindlie surroundins - as if he wisna God's bairn ava.

The wind souched throwe the rafters, an played wi the strae. The stars glentit in throwe the riggin an blinkit at the bonnie wean, an sang til theirsels as they saa him thair. - the cantie wee cratur. Strange at heiven wis taen up wi this, at the angel hosts sang their joy about it. Strange at the universe wis waitin for't, an the weirds o the nicht soundit forth at the langed-for Visitant hed come. Strange at the herds war wannerin here seekin the door whaur God hed pleced his Child - in a neuk like this, in a battered auld

biggin, the Bairn o Promise hed come.

Inquirin faces peer in at the door an speir for the bairn they'r seekin. A glance roun at the plece is aa they need. They ken they ar richt, an the herds stap quate in-by. They ar blythe, bot serious an eager wi joy. They feel at their errand is sacred. They hed hard ower muckle an seen ower muckle this nicht tae be licht-hairtit. Their muid's wi the ee-sweet bairn.

They bend eident out-ower the bairnie. They luik for something mair nor naitur's common gift. They see a child at a king or a cottar micht be proud o - bot nocht mair. Aa thing is jist what naitur sud be - like their ain wee toddlers at hame.

Whit dis this mean? Is there nocht mair tae see? Can this be the end o our jurnay? Ar we, efter aa, at the richt plece? Is this what hes bracken the silences an stirred up the weirds o the nicht, an sent aa the stars sic a dancin, an the reid licht's faa on the hills an the glimmer o the sky as the sun gaed doun? Is this what rave the heivens in twa, an at aa the angels cam doun about? Is this the pith o the sang, in life - the sang o peace an guidwull an joy at sweepit the braes o Bethlehem? Is it here whaur aa the streams o human desire war tae meet? Is it here whaur aa the tides o the past flowed for? Wis it for this at aa the human agony an passion an howp an dreams war spent? Is this the crimpson streak i the wob o God's weavin? Hae the visions an symbols o the will an rugged past met aneth the shedda o the stable staa at Bethlehem?

The mystery is here: Nature's biggest ferlie - God's fouest haunfu - the warld's michtiest blissin - Heiven's greatest sacrifice.

Aa at cam tae see him left their blissin, an nane thocht him wrang. Among the lave war wise men frae the East at hed bin bambaized bi the strangeness o the heivens. They war at hame i the sky. They prowled throwe the welkin an pried intil its ferlies. They knet ilka blink o its omens an lippeden on its forebodins. They tuik the gate bi the licht o a star, an footit the onkent rod in search o its secret.

The world's day wis ready for the bairn, an nou he wis i the mids o its whirl. Heiven wis ower faur awa for fowk. They cudna rax tae God. Yit God ettled tae get nearerer fowk than he hed iver bin - tae leuk intil their face wi human een, tae speak wi a human tounge, tae grip their haun wi a human grip, an be as near til's as we ar ane til anither. Syne tae mak friens wi us he pits the Bairn's haun intil our luif. He lippens his Son til us at we may ken his hairt.

The world afore hed staned the prophets an blattert the seers at spak for God. But nou thir byganes is byganes. In the Bairnie i the maunger humanitie is seen in its perfeck state. Creation is redeemed. An God delytes in it.

The sang o peace an guidwull wis liltit ower an ower again as heiven's hosts saa lauchter an likin brocht back til's. The joy o the first Yule-tide begude in heiven: but on airth we can aa sing nou the sang at wis sung bi the angels:-

*“Glorie tae God i the heighest heichts,
an on airth peace! Guidwull tae man.”*