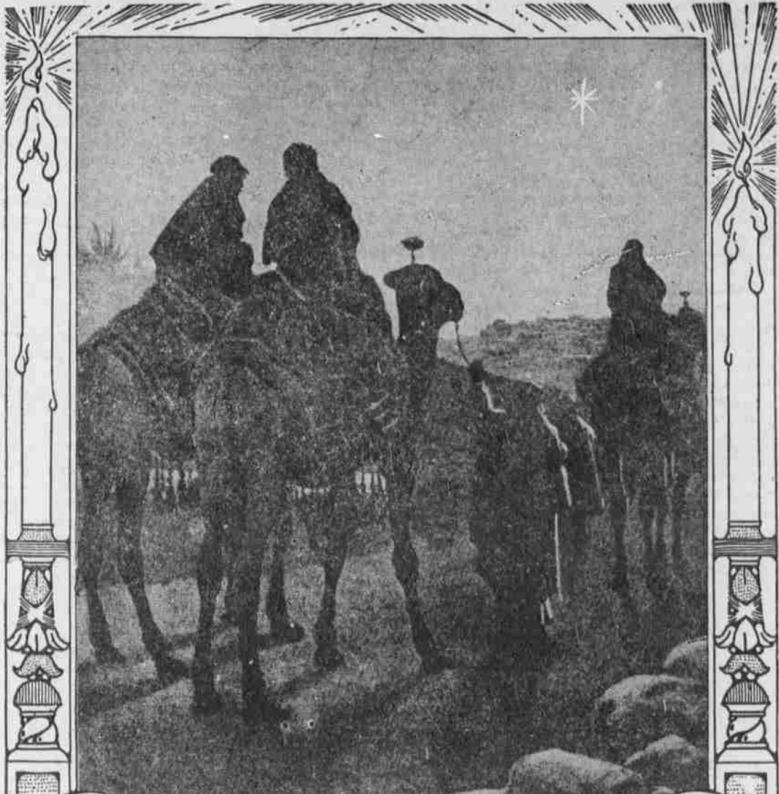


# Glad Tidings in Poetry



## CHRISTMAS AND THE DARKEST DAY

By JOHN E. DOLSEN  
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**EVERY** day the sun grows colder,  
Riding lower through its arc.  
Will it, as the year grows older,  
Leave us always in the dark?

But we know that science teaches  
'Twill begin its upward climb  
When its lowest point it reaches,  
At the solstice—Christmas time.

Earth to all her utmost regions  
Shuddered 'neath the march of Rome,  
Whose triumphant, pagan legions  
Dragged their loot and captives home.

Must her rule go on, unceasing?  
Would her armaments be hurled,  
With an insolence increasing,  
'Gainst a servile, helpless world?

Were Rome's gods alone undying?  
And must other nations crook  
To her Caesar, deifying  
Him with suppliant word and look?

When it seemed her ruthless power  
Nothing on the earth could stem,  
In that saddest, darkest hour  
Christ was born at Bethlehem.



## Christmas Dawn



By EDWIN L. SABIN.  
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**H**OW sweetly rests this winter night  
Upon a waiting earth!  
Until the light of Christmas light  
Shall spread the Christmas birth.  
The curtain of the dusk be drawn,  
And sleeping hosts afar  
Shall wake to read in radiant dawn  
The message of the star!

The dawn goes marching from the east  
Across a joyous world  
To usher in the Christmas feast  
'Neath Christmas treads unfurled.  
Now swiftly on the glory spreads,  
The miracle fulfilled,  
To bless a myriad bended heads  
And souls by Christmas thrilled.

Behold it sweep a mighty land,  
Long leagues of list'ning snow;  
From whitened firs to where midst sand  
The palm-trees glow.  
On English thatch and tile it lies,  
Chateau and hut forlorn,  
And frozen steppes and tropic skies  
Acclaim the Christmas morn.

No region too remote for this,  
Too difficult no tongue,  
The Christmas wreath, the Christmas  
kiss,  
The Christmas music sung,  
No heart with grace so incomplete,  
No head with age so gray,  
No hearth so poor it does not greet  
The dawn of Christmas day.



### THE CHRIST CHILD'S MANGER.

Pretty but Obsolescent Feature of the Latin Christmas.

All through the Italian and Hungarian quarters in New York city may be found traces of the manger at Christmas time. The Italians call it the "presepio," which means manger; the Hungarians the "Bethlehem."

The manger is an exceedingly old and interesting devotion in the Catholic countries of south Europe. St. Francis of Assisi, who was born in 1182, introduced it into Italy, and it is still the sign of Christmas in south Italy, as much as holly in the windows is the sign of it in New York. It is not many years since a carpenter could not be had for weeks before Christmas in Naples or Rome. They were all busy putting up mangers in the houses of the wealthy, while the poorer folk were busy fabricating their own.

This quaint old devotion is fading out of the cities of the mainland, but in conservative Sicily it remains in full force. Every family there still erects its presepio some time from the 1st to the 15th of December. It is not a manger alone, but a whole mountain side, made of the rough, flexible bark of the cork tree. Peaks and crags and precipices abound, with winding trails, houses and castles of colored cardboards, forests of evergreen twigs and sometimes tiny pipes to furnish brooks and lakes.

In the center is the grotto, with the holy family within, surrounded by the cattle. A sky of blue paper is stretched above, with the star of Bethlehem upon it. Over the hills come shepherds bearing gifts to the infant, and, though they are in Sicilian costume and carry good Sicilian cheese and wine upon their donkeys, they are all the more interesting for that.

Sometimes the presepio fills only a corner, sometimes the whole side of a room, according to the means of the family. It is kept year after year until worn out, but it needs to be freshened up each year, always a welcome task to the mother and daughters of the house.

### FIRST CHRISTMAS FEAST.

The first feast to be celebrated on Dec. 25 was established by Commodus, emperor of Rome, who reigned about 185 years after the birth of Christ. After that there are many references in history to meetings of the new sect called Christians, who gathered on this day to celebrate the birth of the God-man. It is not until a century after the time of Commodus that we find a particular reference to the persecutions that the Christians underwent at the hands of the pagan emperors, culminating in a Christmas day massacre.

When Rome was no longer a pagan state the feast began to be celebrated in Christian style, and those who observed the birth of Christ in those days did so in widely separated countries and frequently at widely different periods of time and according to no set program. The ancients agreed on one thing, however—that the festival commemorating the birth of Christ should be the most magnificent of the year. In some cases it was kept up for days.

**Origin of the Yule Log.**  
The Yule log in England is a relic of druidism. Its name is believed to be a corruption of the wheel log, a wheel in druidical symbolism typifying the march of the sun. The lighting of the Yule fire is reminiscent of the sacred fires kindled by the druids at midwinter in the round towers which yet remain in many parts of Great Britain, Ireland, France and Spain.

# HOLIDAY SPECIALS

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