

SINGABOUT

CHRISTMAS 2022

CHRISTMAS VERSE

Over the years, newspapers have published many pieces of verse submitted by their readers or reprinted from overseas sources.

In this sample of old newspaper items I have focused on items submitted by Australian readers to our newspapers which are available online in the National Library's *Trove* collection.

The first, though over 100 years old, covers some issues which are very familiar in our current world. Have we really made much progress as a society?

The second is Christmas from a very Australian perspective, though 2022 might be a little cooler and wetter than 1871 when the poem was written.

The final item is slightly more recent and is looking at what Christmas can mean for those who are separated in various ways.

While looking at these, I also found an interesting article on a Christmas Poem that had its origins in an Austrian village. The original title translates as "Song from Heaven", but it is now known in the English world as "Silent Night". The link is:
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article39090662>

A Christmas Poem. (FOR THE WORKER)

Ring, ye bells of Merry Christmas ! and in every heart enthrone
Truly practical religion, that is born, of love alone,
For the march of nineteen cycles of our earth-time is nigh o'er,
And the Christ of human sympathy is daily needed more
By the desolate ones and wretched, in their alleys weeping sore.

Ring, ring, ring, ye bells of Christmas ! for the starving young and old
Are despairing in their hovels, while the wealthy roll in gold.
Christ ! We see thy temples shining with their pinnacles reared high,
But their splendors mock us— mock us— when the Christians pass us by
With averted heads in silence, so to Heaven we lift our cry.

Ring, ye chiming bells of Christmas, with a world-wide pitying tone ;
Entering cottage, mansion, castle, and the precincts of each throne,
Till the heart of social systems shall with reformation beat,
For the slum-born and abandoned, who are listening for the feet
Of the Christ to chime Hope's music on the pavement of our street.

Ring, ring, ring, ye bells of Christmas, to the world Love's message clear,
For our darkness is black darkness, and we would that Christ were here.
Ay ! The filthy slums and alleys, and the worst lives of the worst ;
Ay ! The criminal and harlot He would stoop to succour first,
And the Hell of old religion He would fling aside accurst.

Ring your loudest, bells of Christmas, with a melting Christ-toned roll,
For we sink down faint and helpless, outcast, bleeding heart and soul.
Hasten, Old Year ! with the burden of our sorrows haste away,
Opening wide the Future's portals for the advent of that Day Which,
with soul-compelling Christ-love for our lives, will shine its ray.

Ring, ring, ring, ye bells of Christmas ! for the noble hearts and brave,
Who make sacrifice of Selfhood our dark outcast world to save.
O Thou Christ of wondrous pity ! In each human breast be born ;
Then God's Fatherhood shall glisten in a spiritual Christmas Morn,
And the Christ-child's crown of goodwill shall the brow of Man adorn !

DEVOTION. Redfern, Sydney, 1899.

From National Library of Australia, Trove Collection.

"A Christmas Poem." *The Worker (Wagga, NSW : 1892 - 1913)* 23 December 1899: 2. Web. 20 Dec 2022 <<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article145905000>>.

CHRISTMAS POEM.

OLD Christmas comes ! his airy steeds
The warm north winds which waft him on,
No grand yule log he bears, nor needs,
For snows and biting frosts we've none.

No howling storms his train attend,
No icy gales around him play ;
But balmy winds their wings unbend,
And sport amid his locks of grey !

No bright green holly we may twine,
His old and wrinkled brow to grace ;
But better far a wreath of vine
Will here become his merry face !

Old Christmas comes, and with him, too,
He brings a sheaf of golden grain ;
A heavy fleece of snowy hue
Finds place amid his num'rous train !

He brings the clust'ring grape that would
Suffice an epicurean taste ;
He brings the juicy pine, a food
On which the gods might love to feast !

The dainty pear, the melting peach,
The apple rosy-cheek'd; whate'er
A southern clime may yield to each
He brings, the hearts of all to cheer.

W. PORTER, Narrabri.

From National Library of Australia, Trove Collection.

"CHRISTMAS POEM." *Illustrated Sydney News (NSW : 1853 - 1872)* 23 December 1871: 7. Web. 20 Dec 2022 <<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article63618420>>.

Christmas Night.

The lamps will be lit over seas to-night,
And the feast of the year be spread,
And the girls will gather with faces bright
And the wine will sparkle red ;
And hands will close on the glass's stem
And over the Christmas cheer
The boys will be drinking "Long life to them !"
On the happiest day of the year.

And spite of the sorrow that hides for shame
In the brown locks streaked with grey,
Though a father may frown at a whispered name,
Yet a mother will have her way ;
For a son's disgrace is a sword to smite,
But Time is a balm to heal,
And in many a home in The North to-night
They will drink to their ne'er-do-weel.

The township streets will be full to-night
With the bushmen from far and near,
Who have ridden to share in the wild delight
Of the merriest day in the year ;
And men will come from the dusty street,
And stand at the crowded bar,
And maybe a memory soft and sweet
Will float to some heart from far.

A flashing of lights in a lordly home,
And a glitter of lifted hands.
As they drink to the health of the boys who roam
In those different distant lands.
And there in the midst of a noisy host,
In a sorrow that none can feel,
Will be fashioned, it may be, a silent toast
In the heart of some ne'er-do-weel.

—W. H. Ogilvie.

From National Library of Australia, Trove Collection.

"Christmas Night." *Western Star and Roma Advertiser (Qld. : 1875 - 1948)* 16
December 1908: 4. Web. 20 Dec 2022 <<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article97438710>>.