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Christmas Comes Again

Elizabeth Drew Stoddard

Let me be merry now, 't is time;
The season is at hand
For Christmas rhyme and Christmas chime,
Close up, and form the band.

The winter fires still burn as bright,
The lamp-light is as clear,
And since the dead are out of sight,
What hinders Christmas cheer?

Why think or speak of that abyss
In which lies all my Past?
High festival I need not miss,
While song and jest shall last.

We'll clink and drink on Christmas Eve,
Our ghosts can feel no wrong;
They revelled ere they took their leave—
Hearken, my Soldier's Song:

"The morning air doth coldly pass,
Comrades, to the saddle spring;
The night more bitter cold will bring
Ere dying—ere dying.
Sweetheart, come, the parting glass;
Glass and sabre, clash, clash, clash,
Ere dying—ere dying.
Stirrup-cup and stirrup-kiss—
Do you hope the foe we'll miss,
Sweetheart, for this loving kiss,
Ere dying—ere dying?"

The feasts and revels of the year
Do ghosts remember long?
Even in memory come they here?
Listen, my Sailor's song:

"O my hearties. yo heave ho!

Anchor's up in Jolly Bay—
Hey!
Pipes and swipes, hob and nob—
Hey!
Mermaid Bess and Dolphin Meg,
Paddle over Jolly Bay—
Hey!
Tars, haul in for Christmas Day,
For round the 'varsal deep we go;
Never church, never bell,
For to tell
Of Christmas Day.
Yo heave ho, my hearties O!
Haul in, mates, here we lay—
Hey!"

His sword is rusting in its sheath,
His flag furled on the wall;
We'll twine them with a holly-wreath,
With green leaves cover all.

So clink and drink when falls the eve;
But, comrades, hide from me
Their graves—I would not see them heave
Beside me, like the sea.

Let not my brothers come again,
As men dead in their prime;
Then hold my hands, forget my pain,
And strike the Christmas chime.



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