



# Leaves of Holly

(1911-1923)

by

Cotton Roe

*To*  
*Rowena Foley Noe*

## A Sonnet of the Season

The Carol in my heart I send to you:

It comes from out the depths of brooding time  
To cheer and bless in every place and clime;  
To purge the false, to chasten and subdue;  
To lift the drooping life, inspire the true  
To nobler deeds and thoughts of love sublime.  
This anthem, which I sing in sonnet rhyme,  
Judean shepherds heard and angels knew.

And now we fear no longer war's alarms,

For red-eyed Mars has fled at last our home;  
Christ took the little children in his arms  
And blessed them saying, "Suffer them to come  
To me that all the sons of men may find  
My kingdom here within the child-like mind."

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## Christmas Tide

Evergreen and tinsel toys,  
Drums and dolls and bursting joys—  
Blessed little girls and boys!

Holly, bells, and mistletoe,  
Tinkling sledges, here we go—  
Youth and maiden, o'er the snow.

Chilling winds and leaden days,  
Vesper songs and hymns of praise,  
Silver hair and dying blaze.

Christmas morn and Yuletide eve,  
Dear Lord, help us to believe  
Naught but blessings we receive.

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## Holiday Thoughts

The Night was like some monster omen ill,  
Whose shrieking chilled the marrow of my bones;  
But Day dawned clear (though white as polar zones),  
The Bluebird shouting, "Spring," from every hill:  
The world lay parching in the noonday grill,  
And blades of corn were twisting into cones;  
But night brought rain, and then, like golden thrones,  
The fruited shocks defied December's chill.

Dear Lord, I would that we might live by faith,  
However cold and dark the day may seem,  
And trust that every cloud is but a wraith,  
And every shadow a dissolving dream.  
O Master, grant our eyes may see the lights  
That gleam forever on the beacon heights.

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## Worship

The crown of Caesar glittering on his brow,  
The sword of Nero clanking at his side,  
His giant hand made crimson in the tide  
Of Life, insatiate Mammon feigns to bow  
Before the altar of the Prince of Peace.

How long, O God in heaven, wilt thou bide  
This mockery of the lowly Christ, who died  
That sin and greed and enmity might cease?

Not Holy Wars, nor death of heretics,  
Nor rich cathedrals towering to the sky,  
Nor bended knee before the crucifix,  
Nor any faith in form can sanctify;  
But Brotherhood devoid of selfish strife,  
And Love, the incense of a noble life.

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## Fellow-Travelers

Old comrade, must we separate to-day?

Sometimes my feet have faltered, sore and tired,  
And sometimes in the sloughs and quicksands  
mired,

But it has always helped to hear you say,

“The road is fine a little further on.”

Your always genial smile and hearty cheer  
Have made the journey pleasant, good Old Year,  
And I, in truth, regret to see you gone.

Young New Year whom you leave me as a guide,

In doubt would have me pledge a lot of things  
Before we start, and make some offerings

To gods whose love, I fear, will not abide,  
And yet I like my new companion's face.  
Old Year, lend him your wisdom and your grace.

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## A Rhymeless Sonnet

Sardonic Death, clothed in a scarlet shroud,  
Salutes his minions on the crumbling thrones  
Of Tyranny, and with malicious leer  
He points a fleshless finger towards the fields  
Of Belgium: "No harvest since the days  
Of Bonaparte and Waterloo hath filled  
My flagons with a wine of such taste—  
Your crowns ye hold by rights divine indeed!"

Appareled in a robe of shining white  
Another lifts his hands as if to bless:  
"The Truth enthron-ed in Democracy  
Has twined the holly round Columbia's brow—  
A crown of 'Peace on earth, good will to men'—  
I am the Resurrection and the Life."

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## Christmas Nineteen-Seventeen

All of the old dreams have gone,—

The thrice told tale around the hearth,

The holly and the mistletoe and mirth,

And shouts of innocence and joy before the dawn.

All of the old dreams are gone,

And in their stead a million shattered souls, inert,  
And Hunger's piercing cry.

But memory and love can never die—

Dear God, help us to bear the hurt.

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## **Christmas**

**Not in bells and mistletoe,  
Evergreen and tinsel show,  
Not in incandescent glow  
Is Christmas.**

**Neither in the poet's rhyme  
Is there Christmas every time;  
Prose and verse are sometimes art;  
Only in the loving heart  
Is Christmas.**

**Not in merriment and fun,  
Flaming candle, roaring gun,  
Not in snow or cloud or sun  
Is Christmas.**

**Neither always in the gift—  
Maybe this is sometimes thrift,  
Practiced with a little art;  
Only in the throbbing heart  
Is Christmas.**

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## My Carol

The rhyme I send is all my gift to you,  
And though its music's jangled out of tune—  
September skies that would be only June—  
It's but the hand—the minstrel's harp is true;  
For if you heard the song my heart would pen,  
'Twould be the choral that the angels sang  
That night the hills of old Judea rang  
With anthems, "Peace on earth good will to men."

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## Dreams

Vanishing with the cycles—

All but the dreams:

The lads that gathered round the hearth,

The sweethearts of our crimson youth,

The tales we used to tell,

Even the songs we knew and loved;

But children's shouts around the Christmas Tree

Will be forever musical and sweet,

Because of dreams.

Dear God, we thank Thee for the dreams.

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## At the Christmas Tree

I saw the Master at the Christmas Tree.  
Radiant He sat apart and watched the scene—  
The children's jubilee,  
The candles and the evergreen  
The golden and the tinsel sheen.  
Tenderly He listened to the din,  
And looked upon the faces still unscarred by sin.  
I saw Him note poor crippled Nancy Dove  
And little orphan Joe,  
Both laden with the gifts of love;  
And then I understood the words he uttered long ago:  
"Suffer the little children to come to me."

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## The Simple Art

I met a jolly chap to-day  
As I came down the Great Highway.  
He had a pack upon his back  
That almost blocked the road.  
Yet on he came beneath his load  
Singing a roundelay.  
"Aha!" I mused, "some peddler, he,  
I wonder what his wares can be?"  
As though he read my thoughts he stopped  
Left off his song, looked up and dropped  
His pack, and thus saluted me:  
"Now let us see," he said, said he,  
"If you remember me."  
His beard was like the polar snow,  
His cheeks were ruddy as the glow  
Of sunset in a winter sky.  
At first I knew not what to say.  
I looked him sometime in the face,  
I looked him in the eye,  
Until there came the vaguest trace,  
And then the perfect memory  
Of fifty years ago to-day:—  
An old man and a tiny boy,  
A tin horn and unbounded joy!  
But still it was beyond my ken  
That he seemed younger now than then  
By half a century.  
"Your secret, Santa Claus," cried I;  
"How do you Father Time defy?"  
He laughed outright, "The Simple Art  
Of keeping Christmas in the heart."

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## Christmas In The Heart

As I came down the Great Highway  
I met the same old chap today  
Who carries in his giant pack  
Enough to break a Titan's back.  
Yet on he strode beneath his load,  
Singing his roundelay.  
Now I declare I think his hair  
Was whiter than a polar bear,  
And yet his voice and what he sung  
Were proof that Santa Claus was young.  
I hailed him, "I demand the truth,—  
Your secret of eternal youth."  
"I told you once — The Simple Art  
Of keeping Christmas in the heart." "  
"But, Santa Claus, will you explain  
Just how I can this Art attain?"  
"By trusting much to faith and love,  
Believing, though you can not prove;  
By giving more than you receive,  
And taking less than you achieve;  
Forgiving base ingratitude,  
The insult and the angry mood,—  
Forgetting all the hurt and wrong."  
And then he raised his blithesome song,  
And started on beneath his load  
Of gifts that almost blocked the road.  
"Dear Santa Claus," I cried, "but how,  
How can one practice such an Art?"  
His mellow voice was trembling now,  
"By keeping Christmas in the Heart!"