

**A GARLAND OF CHRISTMAS
CAROLS, ANCIENT AND
MODERN. INCLUDING SOME
NEVER BEFORE GIVEN IN ANY
COLLECTION**

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A garland of Christmas carols, ancient and modern. Including some never before given in any collection by Joshua Sylvester

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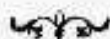
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JOSHUA SYLVESTER

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EDITED, WITH NOTES,

BY JOSHUA SYLVESTER.

Hotten, John Camden



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INTRODUCTION.¹

SOME years ago I walked down to Seven Oaks, in Kent, to enjoy the blessed Christmas. This village is one of a few in the vicinity of London uncontaminated by a railway with its crowd of giddy visitors from the great city.

I had just returned from abroad, after a long residence there, and even the minor observances and customs of the season possessed a pleasing novelty and charm. As I passed through Bromley I observed the shops, filled with viands for the great yearly feast, decorated with the emblems of the season.

¹ The above representation of a Wassail Bowl is from a carving on a chimney-piece of an old mansion formerly existing at Birling, Kent. The terms *Wassail* and *Drinkhail* are both from the Anglo-Saxon. The former is equivalent to the modern phrase, "Your health;" and the latter means, in plain English, "Drink health." See under "Festive Carols," page 161.

The little cottage on the road-side had its sprigs of holly in the window, and ruddy children stood at the door with faces that betokened how near was the general holiday. As I drew towards my destination I occasionally passed a peasant carrying the, to him, sumptuous meal for the morrow,—perhaps the bountiful gift of the good lady at the manor-house—or bearing on his shoulder a block to light up his cottage hearth in honour of Christmas-tide. I could not help thinking, as I moved along, that on the eve of this glorious day all nature seemed to sink into repose after the labours and storms of the past year.

The quiet village of Seven Oaks exhibited that neat and cleanly aspect so often admired by visitors to this country when passing through our more orderly rural districts. The trimmed hedge-rows, whitened door-steps, and glistening window-panes, with the prim and happy old people passing about making preparations for the morrow, pictured forth a delightful scene of order and contentment.

Fatigued with my walk, I retired to rest early. A bright moon was shining into my chamber, and through the window I could see lights moving about the apartments of Knowle House,² a short distance

² The magnificent seat of the Earl Amherst, formerly the residence of the Sackvilles, Dukes of Dorset. The house covers upwards of five acres of ground, and furnishes specimens of the architecture of various ages.