

**THE GOOD OLD DAYS OR  
CHRISTMAS  
UNDER QUEEN ELIZABETH  
BY ESMÉ STUART**

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The Good Old Days or Christmas under Queen Elizabeth by Esmè Stuart by Amélie Claire Leroy

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**AMÉLIE CLAIRE LEROY**

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THE  
GOOD OLD DAYS

OR  
Christmas under Queen Elizabeth

BY  
ESMÈ STUART

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLORS FROM DRAWINGS  
BY H. STACY MARKS, A.R.A.



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## THE GOOD OLD DAYS.

### CHAP. I.—THE PENNYFEATHERS.

**Y**OU should have seen the great farmhouse on a dewy morning the day before Midsummer Eve in the year of our Lord 1570. It was Master Pennyfeather's farm, and he was but a strange boor indeed who had not heard that worthy yeoman's name for ten, aye twenty miles round Sandhill. The farm itself was called Sandy's Hollow, though who "Sandy" had been even Master Pennyfeather himself could not have told, or whether Sandy had ever been a living man at all, unless indeed he had been a Pennyfeather. Had not that family been in possession of Sandy's farm for generations past, and as no one had ever handed down Sandy's name, did not this show that he had lived before records were kept, and when tradition alone treasured up a man's name in its archives? What gables Sandy's Hollow could boast of! and the black wood-work crossed and recrossed itself on the old walls about as often as the bars of a tartan plaid

The windows were made so as to allow the light and air to come in in moderate quantities, but not one drop of rain could penetrate into the interior. Master Pennyfeather could hear the patter of the rain-drops as they fell from the eaves or poured down through a curious funnel-shaped mouth of wood which served him for a water pipe, but as to rain coming in through the windows, such a thought had never entered the yeoman's head! But why talk of rain so near to Midsummer Eve? In the good old days when Queen Bess ruled the land the weather knew what was expected of it, and held up its head on Midsummer Eve and May Day, for all the folks danced on the green and did not come home till morning. I have not mentioned the roses which had climbed up the gables, or the sunflowers and lupins, nor all the old-fashioned plants which Master Pennyfeather cultivated in the neat flower-garden behind the house—nor have I spoken of the green lawn with its great yew hedge at the bottom, because I hope that by-and-by you will hear all these particulars;—and if not, let your imagination conjure up all these things before you, as Sir Philip Sidney said of the early English stage scenery: "Now you shall see three ladies walking to gather flowers; and then we must believe the stage to be a garden!"

Master Pennyfeather was blessed with a wife, who had endowed him with six goodly children, four of them fine, well-made sons and daughters, worthy of being of the race of Pennyfeathers. His farm prospered, his wife was the soul of neatness and order, and could rule her maid-servants wisely and well; then, lastly, his six children were the joy of his heart. "Pride must have a fall," is an old proverb, and one which the yeoman had oftentimes heard though never taken to heart. His fall had not come, and I am sorry to say that, in what he

considered a harmless manner, Master Pennyfeather was exceedingly proud.

Maurice was his eldest son, but blue-eyed Annys was his first-born. Ben, when my story opens, was a sturdy lad of fourteen, and Eve, with her hazel eyes and white teeth, caused Dame Pennyfeather many an anxious hour. "She was so full of conceits," the good mother would say. The two youngest were twins, by name Prudence and Rachel, fair, delicate creatures, of whom their father would say that they were no true Pennyfeathers, and only sorry damsels. Nevertheless he loved them right well, and would not have them thwarted.

Dame Pennyfeather came of a gentleman's family, but no one had thought it beneath her when she married the rich yeoman, John Pennyfeather. Could not he boast of a pedigree as long as any knight in the shire; and, what is more, he did boast of it, and was never too short-winded when this subject was brought forward.

The family were all assembled now for their dinner in the great room, sometimes called the hall, sometimes the kitchen, and which served both purposes excellently well. Could you have entered Sandy's Hollow on the 22d of June, 1570, you would have seen as joyous a sight as well could be. The table groaning beneath the weight of good things—not only fine joints, but delicacies in the shape of fish, fowls, and pastry. Master Pennyfeather prided himself on the good cheer always to be found in his house; "Whether he be prince or beggar who knocks at my door, there will be always a seat ready, and such viands as beseemeth both:" the father would say, and truly never had either rich or poor been turned from the door. The farm labourers and maids sat at the lower end of the table, below the salt, two of them taking it in turn to serve the whole assembly.