

Christmas Songs

"Christmas Day In The Workhouse"

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It is Christmas Day in the workhouse,
And the cold, bare walls are bright
With garlands of green and holly,
And the place is a pleasant sight;
For with clean-washed hands and faces,
In a long and hungry line
The paupers sit at the table,
For this is the hour they dine.

And the guardians and their ladies,
Although the wind is east,
Have come in their furs and wrappers,
To watch their charges feast;
To smile and be condescending,
Put pudding on pauper plates.
To be hosts at the workhouse banquet
They've paid for with the rates.

Oh, the paupers are meek and lowly
With their "Thank'ee kindly, mum's!"
So long as they fill their stomachs,
What matter it whence it comes!
But one of the old men mutters,
And pushes his plate aside:
"Great God!" he cries, "but it chokes me!
For this is the day she died!"

The guardians gazed in horror,
The master's face went white;
"Did a pauper refuse the pudding?"
"Could their ears believe aright?"
Then the ladies clutched their husbands,
Thinking the man would die,
Struck by a bolt, or something,
By the outraged One on high.

But the pauper sat for a moment,
Then rose 'mid silence grim,
For the others had ceased to chatter
And trembled in every limb.
He looked at the guardians' ladies,

Then, eyeing their lords, he said,
"I eat not the food of villains
Whose hands are foul and red:

"Whose victims cry for vengeance
From their dark, unhallowed graves."
"He's drunk!" said the workhouse master,
"Or else he's mad and raves."
"Not drunk or mad," cried the pauper,
"But only a haunted beast,
Who, to

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