

Carroll Yesteryears  
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The Watch on Christmas Eve  
By Mary Ann Ashcraft

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The Watch on Christmas Eve  
By Mary Vernon

Close by the chimney, on Christmas Eve  
Are huddled two tiny forms.  
The rafters creak, and the windows shriek  
And the night is wild with storms.  
'Tis a lonely watch, for the spectre doubt  
Has entered a childish breast,  
And faith to-night must be lost in sight,  
And the spirit laid at rest.

"Are you sure he'll come?" says a tiny voice;  
"Oh, say you are certain quite!  
Oh, what could we do if it shouldn't be true,  
And nobody came to-night?"  
But the sweeter tones of a childish trust  
Break in on the other's doubt:  
"Oh, never you fear, you'll see him here,  
When the midnight bells ring out."

"Perhaps they have told us a story, though,  
You see we're such little boys;  
I should feel so bad if I thought they had  
That I'd hate the Christmas toys.  
Do you think he'll come for the wind and rain –  
They say he's getting old –  
With that heavy pack on his poor hump back,  
And the night is so very cold?"

"I tell you the reindeer brings him here,  
And the load of toys is light;  
His coat is warm, and he laughs at storms,  
I know he'll come to-night.  
There never can be a doubt, I say,  
Oh, never a cause to fear;  
Our watch we'll keep while the others sleep,

And we're sure to see him here."

But the minutes drag and the small heads drop,  
When soft through the parlor door  
Two shadows creep, while the bright eyes sleep,  
For the bold night watch is o'er.  
They cram the stockings with lots of toys,  
And then, with stealthy tread,  
They lift each form in its nightgown warm  
And put the watchers to bed.

*Mary Ann Ashcraft is a library volunteer at the Historical Society of Carroll County*



*Image credit: Historical Society of Carroll County*

*Image caption: This c.1900 postcard depicts the anticipation that children feel at Christmas.*