

## Book of Christmas

Thea Gilmore

A week to Christmas  
Cards of snow and holly  
Gimcracks in the shops  
Wishes and memories wrapped in tissue paper  
Trinkets, gadgets and lollipops  
As is through coloured glasses we remember the childhood thrill  
Waking in the morning to the rustling of paper  
The eiderdown heaped in a hill  
Of dogs and bears and bricks and apples  
The feeling that Christmas Day was a coral island in time  
Where we land and eat our lotus  
But where we can never stay

There was a star in the east  
The Magi in their turbans brought their luxury toys  
In homage to the child born to capsize their values  
And wreck their equipoise  
A smell of hay, like peace in the dark stable  
Not peace, however, but a sword  
To cut the Gordian Knot of logical self-interest  
The fool-proof golden cord  
For Christ walked in where philosophers tread  
But armed with more than folly  
Making the smooth place rough  
And knocking the heads of church and state together

In honour of whom  
We have taken over the pagan Saturnalia for our annual treat  
Letting the belly have its say  
Ignoring the spirit while we eat  
And conscience still goes crying through the desert  
With sackcloth round his loins  
A week to Christmas  
Hark the Herald Angels beg for copper coins