

## THE OXEN – THOMAS HARDY

Christmas Eve, and twelve of the clock.  
'Now they are all on their knees,'  
An elder said as we sat in a flock  
By the embers in hearthside ease.

We pictured the meek mild creatures where  
They dwelt in their strawy pen,  
Nor did it occur to one of us there  
To doubt they were kneeling then.

So fair a fancy few would weave  
In these years! Yet, I feel,  
If someone said on Christmas Even,  
'Come; see the oxen kneel

In the lonely barton by yonder coomb  
Our childhood used to know,'  
I should go with him in the gloom,  
Hoping it might be so.