

**Noel: Christmas Eve, 1913**  
**Robert Bridges**  
**(Text for *In Terra Pax* by Gerald Finzi)**

A frosty Christmas Eve  
    when the stars were shining  
Fared I forth alone  
    where westward falls the hill.  
And from many a village  
    in the water'd valley  
Distant music reach'd me  
    peals of bells aringing;  
The constellated sounds  
    ran sprinkling on earth's floor  
As the dark vault above  
    with stars was spangled o'er.

Then sped my thoughts to keep  
    that first Christmas of all  
When the shepherds watching  
    by their folds ere the dawn  
Heard music in the fields  
    and marveling could not tell  
Whether it were angels  
    or the bright stars singing.

But to me heard afar  
    it was starry music  
Angels' song, comforting  
    as the comfort of Christ  
When he spake tenderly  
    to his sorrowful flock:  
The old words came to me  
    by the riches of time  
Mellow'd and transfigured  
    as I stood on the hill  
Heark'ning in the aspect  
    of th'eternal silence.