

8. THE ANIMALS' CAROL by Charles Causley

Christus natus est! the cock
Carols on the morning dark.

Christ is born

Quando? croaks the raven stiff
Freezing on the broken cliff.

When?

Hoc nocte, replies the crow
Beating high above the snow.

This night

Ubi? Ubi? booms the ox
From its cavern in the rocks.

Where?

Bethlehem, then bleats the sheep
Huddled on the winter steep.

Bethlehem

Quomodo? the brown hare clicks,
Chattering among the sticks

How?

Humiliter, the careful wren
Thrills upon the cold hedge-stone.

Humbly

Cur? Cur? sounds the coot
By the iron river-root.

Why?

Propter hominess, the thrush
Sings on the sharp holly-bush.

For the sake of man

Cui? Cui? rings the chough
On the strong, sea haunted bluff.

To whom?

Mary! Mary! calls the lamb
From the quiet of the womb.

Mary

Praeterea ex quo? cries
The woodpecker to pallid skies

Who else?

Joseph, breathes the heavy shire
Warming in its own blood-fire.

Joseph

Ultime ex quo? the owl

Solemnly begins to call.

Who above all?

De Deo, the little stare

Whistles on the hardening air.

Of God

Pridem? Pridem? the jack snipe

From the harsh grass starts to pipe.

Long ago?

Sic et non, answers the fox

Tiptoeing the bitter lough.

Yes and no

Quomodo hoc scire potest?

Boldly flutes the robin redbreast

How do I know this?

Illo in eandem, squeaks

The mouse within the barley-sack

By going there

Quae sarcinae? asks the daw

Swaggering from head to claw.

What luggage?

Nulla res, replies the ass

Bearing on its back the Cross.

None

Quantum pecuniae? shrills

The wandering gull about the hills.

How much money?

Ne nummum quidem, the rook

Caws across the rigid brook.

Not a penny

Nulla resne? barks the dog

By the crumbling fire-log

Nothing at all?

Nil nisi cor amans, the dove

Murmurs from its house of love.

Only a loving heart

Gloria in excelsis! Then

Man is God and God is Man