



**A COPY OF VERSES FOR 2010, HUMBL Y PRESENTED TO ALL MY WORTHY MASTERS
AND MISTRESSES, IN THE PARISH OF ST. MICHAEL, CORNHILL,
BY NICHOLAS DIXON, BEADLE.**

The tradition of London parish beadles distributing verses at Christmastide dates back to the early 18th century when one particular printing office, Messrs. Reynell of Piccadilly, specialised in producing broadsheets for the beadle to deliver to all the homes in his parish in return for a 'Christmas-box'. These often hackneyed and plagiarised lines were parodied by Thomas Hood in his Comic Annual of 1839, and continued in some places until the end of the 19th century. In Dickens's 'The Pickwick Papers', Tony Weller says "No man ever talked in poetry 'cept a beadle on Boxin' Day, or Warren's blackin', or Rowland's oil, or some o' them low fellers..." This year, following my appointment as beadle, I have decided to revive this tradition. Inspired by the recent parish outing to the Players Theatre, I offer an adaptation of that popular Victorian ballad 'The Volunteer Organist', with apologies to W.B. Gray, in addition to some more traditional loyal lines – both of which I hope will be instructive in the year to come. I wish you all a merry Christmas! – N.D.

THE VOLUNTEER BEADLE

The preacher in St. Michael's Church one Sunday morning asked,
 'Our beadle he is ill today, will someone play his part?'
 An anxious look crept o'er the fore of every person's face,
 As eagerly they watched to see who'd lift the ancient mace.
 A man then staggered down the aisle whose clothes were old and torn,
 How strange a drunkard seemed to me in church on Sunday morn!
 And as he took the golden staff without a single word,
 The procession that followed was the slowest ever stirred.

*The scene was one I'll ne'er forget as long as I may live,
 And not to see it e'er again, all earthly wealth I'd give.
 The congregation, how they gazed, the curate, how he frowned!
 Pay heed, and keep a trusty beadle once he has been found!*

Each eye shed tears within that Church, the churchwardens grew pale,
 The beadle in his plodding step had told his own life's tale.
 The sermon of the preacher told of life's long weary way;
 The people in the pews thought of the beadle here today.
 And when the service ended, not a soul had left a seat,
 Except the wayward beadle, who started toward the street.
 Along the aisle and out the door, he darted out apace,
 The preacher rose and loudly barked, 'By Jove, he's got the mace!'

*The scene was one I'll ne'er forget as long as I may live,
 And not to see it e'er again, all earthly wealth I'd give.
 The congregation, how they gazed, the curate, how he frowned!
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ON THE QUEEN

As year rolls on to rolling year, and more vain fashions depart,
 Still one fixed point remains that is ingrained within our heart,
 A place for our dear, noble Queen – God preserve her health!
 God grant her many years to live, in comfort and in wealth!
 The inheritance of countless ages, let the people mark in her;
 The wisdom of centuries' experience, with that let us concur.
 A life of service to the nation, a life upon the upright path;
 For that let us show approbation, this Christmas at each English hearth.