

The Night Before (McLaughlin) Christmas

'Twas the night before Christmas and all through the College
Not a creature was stirring, to anyone's knowledge.
The Master, or as we now call him, the Head
Was safely at home snug asleep in his bed.
And Vicky and Lil were both taking their ease,
Since working from home had been less than a breeze.
The Fellows were mostly at home marking papers
To keep from engaging in holiday capers.
The students, all having abandoned their screens,
Were happily dreaming of Covid vaccines
And hoping that holiday jellies and jams
Would help them forget about midterm exams.
Custodians' labours for now were complete
And they could retire to some holiday treat.
But if they'd been there in a virtual way
What would they have seen at the end of the day?
For sure, not a sleigh with eight tiny reindeer
But a fine vintage Buick with one forward gear,
And at the controls, not a jolly Saint Nick,
But old Sam McLaughlin, now that's quite a trick.
Since Sam has been gone a for a very long time,
Though his name is recalled by his College in rhyme.
He must be a ghost, like the ones penned by Dickens,
Who came to scare Scrooge, oh note how the pulse quickens!
But does he bring presents, as did Santa Claus?
Or does he bring warnings to give us all pause?
The risk to the climate from automobiles
Would be a strange theme from this man and his wheels,
Who lived to make Oshawa famous for cars,
So warning or presents, what's found in our stars?
If warning there be, it will come with a gift.
He won't want to leave all his hearers adrift.
If gas-powered automobiles pose a threat,
How can Mr. Sam serve to settle the debt
Incurred when with General Motors he strove
To keep making cars until everyone drove?
Now here is the present for scholars eclectic –
GM will now strive to make autos electric.
The plant once abandoned again will be seen
Making cars run on voltage and not gasoline.
"Merry Christmas," called Sam, as he took off in flight.
"Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night."

But as he embarked, did he offer a toast
A wish of good health, to the Colleges' host?
Some heard him in Gaelic call out "Slainte mhath"
But some were quite certain he said "Oshawa!"

Robert Drummond
University Professor Emeritus, Political Science
Former Dean, Faculty of Arts