

of the player, and disperse its melting notes again, or whether, like the fabled swan, it has sung its death song and is silent forever.

These reveries, however, are put to flight by the noisy entrance of our expected friends, hilarious, and alas! with blackened faces, they having essayed a negro entertainment at our Penny Readings for a charitable purpose. To go carol-singing in such disguise is felt to be incongruous. So our young friends, with protestations of regret (which their black faces and white teeth make absurdly insincere), bid us good-night. When we were again alone, my friend, the organist, stood looking musefully into the fire; then suddenly shaking off his abstraction, said with a cheerful air: "Let us take out the harmonium, you and I, and sing a few things to the cottagers beyond the village." To this suggestion I readily agreed, when fortunately finding his handy-man not yet in bed, horse and van were soon ready, and he, I, the driver and the harmonium were on the dark road.

close that I could have touched it easily. There was no curtain to the window; some one had applied a light to a few small candles on the mantelpiece, making the interior of the room visible. There were three children sitting up in bed, who, when we had finished our anthem, called to their father to open the window. This the father proceeded to do, and peered out into the darkness.

"Ask them to sing again," said the oldest of the three.

"I can't see them," replied their father. At that moment my friend struck up the well-known hymn, "While shepherds watched their flocks by night." He had a voice of the resonant kind, and the first notes were bawled directly into the parent's ear, who drew his head in hurriedly, exclaiming, "Why they are right against the window!" The hymn was sung to an old and familiar tune in which there is some repetition; this the children enjoyed amazingly, accompanying us in pretty shrill treble with the utmost vigour.

"Can you see us?" called the oldest, a girl of

not in vain in the Lord," was the promise he claimed, and with such encouragement he urged Sunday-school teachers to deeds of self-denial and endurance, and on this theme he had written some verses; the first and last are here given:

What promises sweet do the Scriptures afford
Each Sabbath-school teacher that's taught of the Lord,
And oh! how consoling the mind to sustain,
To know that his labour shall not be in vain.

And should there but meet me on Zion's blest shore,
A child of my class who arrived there before;
Methinks he will say when he sees me again,
Dear teacher, your labour has not been in vain.

A musical friend of his had composed a tune for the verses, and a remarkably sweet and attractive melody it was. I knew it well, and my friend, who could vamp an accompaniment to almost anything, was familiar with the air, so we determined to serenade the worthy author, and awaken him to a consciousness of the blessed day with the music of his own song.

Having become a little more familiar with the gloom, we were not long in reaching his house, to the front of which we drew up. We sang the



"And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger."

It was nearly midnight, and intensely dark and damp. The mist was so heavy that it gathered on the branches of trees and fell in occasional drops like rain.

There were some dozen or so cottages in a group just beyond the village; the place was known as Picardy. It was an umbrageous nook, the first to welcome with primrose and daffodil the tender spring—glorious in summer time, and even of greater enchantment when the autumnal tints coloured the verdure of the trees and hedges; but on this Christmas eve it was so dark that we could distinguish nothing. However, we drew up somewhere near one of these humble dwellings as quietly as possible, and sang a simple anthem, one of Clarke's. The words are:

"Lift up your head with joyful hope,
Salute the happy morn;
Each heavenly power proclaims the glad hour,
Lo, Jesus the Saviour is born."

We had only sung a few bars, when a small illuminated casement grew out of the darkness, so

about ten. On my replying in the affirmative, she and her two sisters immediately plunged beneath the bed-clothes, where we left them kicking gleefully, and shouting a chorus of happy Christmas in smothered voices. By this time a few feeble lights appeared at other windows, where, no doubt, the first glad tidings of that Christmas morning had been also heard.

Now about three miles distant from where we then were, there lived a rather remarkable man—one Mr. John Featherstone by name; he was a school-master professionally, but his forte lay among Sunday-schools. He would hold a number of children spell-bound by his forcible and distinct utterance, and a happy choice of anecdote and figure suited to the capacity of his youthful audiences. He addressed thousands at the "Crystal Palace." There was no buffoonery in his method. He was a man of sterling piety. Fervour and spontaneity illumined every appeal he made for the cause he loved so well.

"Forasmuch as ye know that your labour is

whole six verses, but no light appeared, and we began to suspect that he was absent from home, when a deep voice which we recognized as his addressed us from the doorway. He had got out of bed, and in dressing-gown and slippers was dimly visible on the door-step. In a voice trembling with emotion, he thanked us again and again. "So kind of you," said he, "such a dark night, and so damp."

After wishing him health and happiness, and not to keep him out in the night, we bade him an affectionate adieu.

"It certainly is an unfavourable night for singing in rural lanes," said my friend with a shiver, "but I am glad we came. What two sentimental fellows we must be."

Well, this happened some years ago. If the children we sang to that night are living, they must be women by this time.

John Featherstone some few years since crossed to that other and happier shore, where mayhap he was welcomed not only by one "child of his class," but by many others.

R. P. C.