

I, too, have waited. And each night I have prayed that I might live to see His day. It has dawned at last; the Prince is born! And shall I not pay Him homage?

For a moment they regard him in reverential silence. Then one exclaims; 'Father, if indeed thine heart is set to find the King, then I will go with thee to do Him homage.'

'And I, also,' says another.

The Sage bows his head. 'It is well,' he says. 'We will set forth on the third day hence.' Then, after a pause: 'The vigil is ended forever. Let us seek our fellows.'

With joyful haste they descend from the rock and make their way to the temple.

It is a long journey from the East to Jerusalem. Lofty mountains, mighty rivers, and broad deserts lie between. But these can form no barrier to those who are seeking the King. At first, the star shines brightly on their path, but later it fades and finally disappears. But this does not discourage them. Day after day they journey westward. Often the Sage draws from his bosom a scroll and reads therein. Sometimes he converses with his companions on the coming King and the glories of his reign. Then, again, he falls into a long and deep meditation. Thus the days become weeks, and the weeks, months.

At length one afternoon the towers and bulwarks of Jerusalem rise into view. The sight is glorious, but the travelers do not pause to consider its beauties. They press on and seek admittance at the Water Gate.

Even when they are within the walls they do not rest, but begin at once to inquire for Him who is the object of their visit. The narrow streets are thronged with natives of every clime. The Roman soldier, the Greek proselyte, the Jewish rabbi and the heathen courtier are all present, but are all too busy to pay any heed to the strangers who have just arrived. These continue their search, however, with unwearied zeal. They turn their steps in a northerly direction and soon come to Herod's temple. There they pause and gaze with wonder and admiration upon that pile of marble and gold. As they stand thus a Levite passes out and approaches them. As he draws near the Sage addresses him with the oft-repeated question:

'Sir, where is He that is born King of the Jews?'

The Levite stops. 'A King born to the Jews? I know not. No prince hath been born within the palace these many years.' And he passes on.

It is late now, and they seek an inn where they may rest for the night. Early the next morning, however, they renew their search. This time they descend to the lower city and roam about among the shops and bazaars. They see everything displayed for sale, from an Arabian veil to a pair of sandals. A restless crowd passes to and fro along the street. The air is filled with the jargon of many tongues. The noise and confusion almost bewilder those who have spent their lives in quiet study and meditation. They are about to leave the quarter when they notice a man standing in the market-place. His broad phylacteries and deep fringe proclaim him to be a Pharisee. He may have time to answer their question, so they address him:

'Tell us, we pray thee, where is He that is born King of the Jews?'

'What say ye?' he asks, awaking from his reverie.

'Where is He that is born King of the Jews?'

'The Jews have no true King,' he replies. 'Know ye not that a hated Edomite hath usurped the throne of David?'

'Yea,' they answer. 'But hath not the Promised One, the Great Deliverer, been born? For we have seen His star in the East, and are come to worship Him.'

'Ah! ye are seeking the Messiah. We also long for His coming. The time is at hand, but He hath not been revealed.'

'But we have seen His star in the East.'

'It cannot be. He would show Himself first unto Israel, and we have seen no sign.' And he turns coldly away.

All day they search the city for the King, but they find Him not. At sunset they return to the inn. There they find a friendly merchant.

'Who are ye?' he asks as they enter the courtyard. 'And whence come ye?'

'We are strangers from the East,' they reply, 'who have come hither seeking the King

of the Jews. Canst thou tell where He dwelleth?'

'Ah!' replies the other, 'I have heard of you. Ye have set all Jerusalem in an uproar by your coming. Some say "What meaneth this star in the East? Hath the Messiah indeed come? We must look into this matter." Others say, "Will the Messiah reveal Himself unto the Gentiles and not to the Jews?"'

'But hath no sign been given you?' asks the Sage.

'Nay, nay,' replies the other, 'there hath been no sign. And yet this doth remind me of a wondrous story I heard a year ago. Some keepers of the temple flocks declared that as they watched one night upon the plains an angel spoke to them, and bade them go to the neighboring village where they would find a newborn babe lying in a manger. They went as they were bidden and found the child. Him they devoutly believed to be the Messiah of Israel. But it was an idle tale, it came to naught.'

The listeners watch the narrator with closest attention, that no word may escape them. As he continues their faces light up with hope, but as he closes they drop with disappointment. Indeed, the Sage arises quickly and ascends to the roof. He who has waited sixty years in hope is now despondent, and he who has traveled five hundred leagues with cheerfulness is now cast down.

'Have I left my native land for naught?' he cries. 'Have I come hither only to be mocked?' Then he looks at the blue vault above him and exclaims: 'Nay, nay! It cannot be. Men may prove false, but the heavens—never! I will seek Him another day.'

Just as he utters these words he becomes conscious of a lad standing before him.

'Sir, there is a messenger below who desires to speak with thee,' he says.

Immediately the Sage descends to the gate, where he finds his companions waiting for him. A voice from the outer darkness whispers:

'Are ye the strangers from the East?'

'We are,' they reply.

'Then make haste and get you to the palace, for Herod desireth to speak with you there. But tell no man.' Then there was silence.

A few moments later the visitors leave the inn. They thread the narrow streets, now dark and deserted, pass through the Gennath Gate in the old wall that has stood since the days of King David, and enter the palace grounds. There they follow a walk which winds through a grove to the palace. Herod with his taste for beautiful architecture has not spared any expense on this structure. It is second only to the temple in magnificence. Even in the starlight the visitors can mark its broad extent, its lofty towers and numerous porticoes. On entering they are led through stately courts and chambers until they come to a large hall, lavishly decorated and richly furnished. There they are bidden to await the king's pleasure.

In a few minutes he enters. He is an old man burdened with the weight of many years mispent.

'Are you the men,' he asks, 'who have troubled Jerusalem with your talk concerning a star?'

'Most noble king,' they reply, 'we are Magi from the Far East who have come hither, not to trouble your kingdom nor to disturb her peace, but to worship Him who is born King of the Jews.'

'But if ye have come from the Far East,' asks Herod, 'what do you know concerning the King of the Jews?'

Then the Sage stands forth and says: 'Most noble king, our forefathers received a promise that war should not always desolate the earth, nor injustice oppress the sons of men; but at some time a Prince should come who would rule with judgment, and a King who would reign in splendor. And that at His birth a star would appear in the heavens. The people believed the prophecy, and wrote it in a book. That book we have.'

'But,' says Herod, growing impatient, 'tell me concerning the star. Have ye seen it?'

'We have,' they reply. 'As we kept watch upon the Mount of Victory we saw it arise in the east.'

'How long since it appeared?'

'More than twelve moons have waxed and waned since then.'

'But tell me more plainly. Did it appear at planting or in harvest?'

'The almond trees were blooming.'

'At what hour did it arise?'

'At midnight.'

'It is well,' says His Majesty. 'The King whom ye seek is at Bethlehem, for there, it is written, He should be born. Go, search for Him diligently, and when ye have found Him bring me word, that I may come and worship Him also. I have commanded the gatekeeper to allow you to leave the city.'

So they leave the palace and start for Bethlehem. When they are without the city walls the star which they had seen in the East bursts on their sight.

'Now will we praise God, the Just and Holy One,' they exclaim, 'for He hath not forsaken us, but hath sent His star to guide us. We will see Him whom we desire; we will worship Him whom we seek.'

They reach Bethlehem just as the dawn is streaking the eastern sky with light. It does not take them long to find the house. It is a humble dwelling not intended for the abode of a king. They enter, however, and find within the foster father, the young mother, and the King—a child upon her knee.

'I have found Him,' murmurs the Sage, and drops on his knees in adoration.

Presently he opens a casket which they have brought with them, and takes from it a wallet of gold coin and jars of rare spices, both frankincense and myrrh.

'O King, thou Blessed One!' he says, 'accept our homage and receive the gifts we now present to Thee.'

They tarry in Bethlehem that day, but the next morning they depart for their own country. As they journey the strength of the Sage fails. He grows weaker day by day. At length it becomes apparent that he will never see his native land again. As his companions gather about him to bid him farewell, he sees their grief, and says:

'Weep not for me, my children. Why should I live any longer? Mine eyes have seen the King; my knees have bowed before Him; my hands have given Him of my treasure. What more could I desire?' Then, raising his hands toward heaven, he exclaims, 'It is enough, I die happy!'

Yuletide Music.

(Margaret S. Haycraft, in the 'Friendly Visitor'.)

Oh, heart, whate'er may be thy need,
A song of praise be singing!
O'er snowy wood and hill and mead
The Christmas bells are ringing;
'The Friend of friends draws near,' they say,
'The Prince of Peace is born to-day.'

For every wound He beareth balm,
For every trouble healing;
Through every storm His voice of calm—
His whisper sweet—is stealing;
Oh, heavy-laden and oppress'd!
He bears for thee His dower of rest.

The Christmas chimings comfort bring
To every soul that hearkens;
For at the coming of the King
Each shadow-cloud that darkens
Shall vanish 'neath His smile Divine,
And day shall break, and light outshine.

He comes, our Help, our Strength, our Stay,
With royal gifts and graces,
To bear our sorrows far away,
And wreath the life's desert places—
The gentle Shepherd ever kind
Comes down to earth His sheep to find.

Let young and old thanksgiving swell,
And chant the Christmas story;
Resound the music, field and dell!
Oh, waves, repeat His glory
Who left the Home that knows not sin
To bring the lost, the needy in.

Wilt thou receive the Heav'nly Guest,
Oh, heart of mine, for ever?
His love shall make thy Noël blest,
And leave thee lonely never;
Oh, Prince of Peace, unworthy I,
Yet of Thy mercy, Christ, draw nigh!

It is almost as presumptuous to think that you can do nothing as to think that you can do anything.—Phillips Brooks.