

Boys and Girls.

The Nativity.

(Thomas Buchanan Read.)

The air was still o'er Bethlehem's plain,
As if the great night held its breath,
When Life Eternal came to reign
Over a world of death.

All nature felt a thrill divine
When burst that meteor on the night,
Which, pointing to the Saviour's shrine,
Proclaimed the new-born Light.

Light to the shepherds! and the star
Gilded their silent midnight fold;
Light to the wise men from afar
Bearing their gifts of gold.



'WHEN SHEPHERDS WATCHED THEIR FLOCKS BY NIGHT.'

Light to a realm of sin and grief;
Light to a world in all its needs;
The Light of Life, a new belief
Rising o'er fallen creeds.

Light on a tangled path of thorns,
Though leading to a martyr's throne;
A light to guide till Christ returns
In glory to his own.

There still it shines, while far abroad
The Christmas choirs sing now, as then,
'Glory, glory unto our God!
Peace and good will to men!'
—'Wait.'

Mrs. Mariner's Mince Meat.

(By Laura J. Rittenhouse.)

The pleasant, motherly face of plump little Mrs. Mariner wore a serious air quite unusual to it, that bleak, cold December day, as she sat by the well-scrubbed kitchen table chopping apples.

A new tub more than half full of chopped beef, and great yellow bowls of currants, raisins, preserved citron and orange peel told plainly that some of Mrs. Mariner's famous mince-meat was in course of preparation.

'I'll just own up, I feel blue, Huldah. First, the drought burnt up half the corn crop and spoiled a chance of Irish potatoes, then them three big hogs up and died, and that meant good seven hundred pounds of pork lost, that we'll need before spring. And right on top of everything else, the colt must needs go and break his leg and have to be shot, and your father was to a-got a hundred dollars for him from Dr. Arter, so's he could pay the interest on the money we borrowed to send Tom to college.'

'Yes, it does seem discouraging, mother, but after all, things might be worse. Selim and Queeny are left, and if we can't raise the money any other way, we can sell one of them,' said Huldah, the only daughter, and the sunshine of the Mariner homestead.

'Sell Selim or Queeny! Why, Huldah Mariner, I'd a-most as soon sell one of the family. It'd be a sin and a shame to sell one of them faithful old critters,' Mrs. Mariner said reproachfully.

'Of course, we'd not do it, mother, unless the very worst should come, and I hope and believe it will not.'

Mrs. Mariner smiled a little. 'What a child you are to see only the bright side of things, Huldah. Well, land knows I'm glad Mr. Sampson wanted to buy so much of my mince-meat, at any rate. It'll help out wonderful, for we was beginning to need sugar and coffee and sech like, and with Tom comin' home for Christmas, and bringin' his

does, and if nobody ever gets to drinking till my mince-meat makes 'em do it, I guess they'll all die sober,' Mrs. Mariner said sharply.

'But, mother, some man who is trying to stop drinking might be tempted to begin again, if he got a taste of brandy in your mince-meat. Suppose, for instance, Tom, or some one else we loved, were trying to begin a new life after he had fallen, wouldn't you be afraid to let him taste a drop of brandy, no matter how much it might be disguised in other things?' asked Huldah, her sunny face growing serious.

'I declare I never thought of it that way before, Huldah. Maybe I'd better leave the brandy out, after all. You may get the grape-juice, but I know the mince-meat 'll taste flat as a pancake, and like enough Mr. Sampson won't take it. He's awful fond of his brandy, you know,' said Mrs. Mariner, reflectively.

'Another good reason for not using it, then,' Huldah said, cheerily, greatly relieved that her mother had been so easily influenced.

So the mince-meat was finished, and to any unpurged taste would have seemed almost perfect in quality. The two women carried it out and placed it in the light spring waggon, and Huldah drove briskly down to Mapleton to Mr. Sampson's grocery store.

That gentleman saw her and came out and carried the tub of mince-meat inside, where it was deposited on the counter with a flourish.

'I'm glad it's come,' he said to Huldah. 'I've had at least a dozen orders for it already. Every one knows what splendid mince-meat your mother makes, and they all want some for Christmas. Only a hundred pounds,' he said, as he weighed it. 'Pity there isn't more. Do you want the money, Miss Huldah, or is there anything you'd like to buy to-day?'

Huldah gave him quite a list of things needed, and he hustled around to fill her order, pausing, however, long enough to taste the tempting mince-meat.

'Why—Miss Huldah, there's something the matter with it, isn't there? It doesn't taste one bit like your mother's mince-meat,' he said in blank surprise.

Huldah's face turned crimson.

'We hadn't any cider, and mother used vinegar,' she said, 'but we put in grape-juice instead; we thought that would make it quite as good.'

Mr. Sampson took another taste and shook his head disapprovingly.

'It lacks something besides cider. Oh! I know what it is—it's brandy! There isn't any in it, is there?'

'No!' she answered simply.

'Didn't you have any? I can give you some, and you can stir it in right here.'

'No, thank you. We've concluded it isn't right to use brandy in mince-meat, and we never shall again,' she said firmly.

'I thought you and your mother were too sensible to get such cranky notions in your heads,' he said, making an effort to speak pleasantly, though any argument for temperance always angered him.

Huldah said nothing.

'I don't want to hurt your feelings, Miss Huldah, but you'll have to put some brandy in this, or my customers won't buy it,' he said decisively.

'I'm sorry, Mr. Sampson, but indeed I can't do it. My conscience will not allow it.'

'Very well, then, you can take the meat home and eat it yourselves. I'm not going

high-toned friend with him, I don't know what we'd a-done. There! I'm through choppin' apples, and I'm not sorry, I can tell you. I'll dump all the ingreiences in the tub and mix 'em up.'

Silence for ten or fifteen minutes, while Mrs. Mariner poured raisins, currants, orange peel, citron, suet and odorous spices into the tub of chopped meat, and Huldah vigorously stirred the cake she was making.

'Hand me the vinegar jug, Huldah, please. My hands are too sticky with mcllasses to touch anything. Seems like this mince-meat won't be fit to eat without cider to mix it with. If only the apple crop hadn't been so scarce, we might have had plenty of it, same as usual.'

'Well, I'm glad we haven't. I've never felt right about using cider since Mr. Saxton preached about it last summer. I've seen Tom drink more of it than was good for him several times,' said Huldah.

'Well, he'll not do it this winter, because there ain't any. My! if this vinegar don't spoil the mince-meat, it'll be a wonder. It don't smell one bit like my mince-meat. Oh! I'd most forgot the brandy. Give me the decanter, Huldah. It's in the pantry on the middle shelf, in the right-hand corner,' said Mrs. Mariner, intent upon mixing the mince-meat, which almost filled the tub.

Huldah drew a little, quick breath. She had hoped her mother would forget the brandy, and now that she had not, the girl was at a loss what to do.

'Mother, don't put any in this time, please,' she said coaxingly.

'What! not put any brandy in my mince-meat? Huldah Mariner, are you stark crazy? Why, it wouldn't be fit for anything then, sure enough.'

'Oh, yes, it would be, mother. Let me open three or four cans of grapes and pour their juice in, instead. They say it is finer than brandy, and no danger of making any one want to drink intoxicants afterward.'

'Nonsense! You needn't tell me grape-juice could give the snap to it that brandy