

So we mused ; and so we whispered, sadly musing, each to each ;
 For the spirit-thrilling silence set a key-note to our speech ;
 Till the music of the silence grew too heavenly-loud to mar,
 As the heart of God grew vocal in the pulse of star on star ;

And, anon, a hush came o'er us. From the heaven there seemed to fall
 On the tranced earth some new born Influence celestial ;
 Such as though great Nature, swooning into slumber, in her sleep
 Opened spirit-eyes, and, seeing Godhead, mirrored deep in deep.

Died on every lip the whisper, paused the pulse in every vein :
 Through the flood-gate hour outsweeping, down o'er stardit hill and plain
 All the heart of heaven came pouring, voiceless, wondrous, from above,
 Islanding from sense our spirits in an ocean-tide of love.

And, behold ! upon a sudden, drawing sharply on the sward
 Our hushed shadows, round about us shone the glory of the Lord ;
 And a Presence stood before us, and a Voice unto our ears
 Spake in tones whose music echoes down the memories of long years.

" Fear not ; for I come a bearer of glad tidings unto men ;
 And the nations, mewed in darkness, shall walk forth to light again.
 Lo ! to earth is born a Saviour, the Messiah, Lord and King.
 Rise, and gird your loins, and bear him a whole-hearted welcoming.

Whereunto, a sign and token leading to your heart's desire :
 Ye shall find the Son of David in the city of His sire ;
 Wrapt in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger hid from ken.
 Praise in heaven to Him the Highest: peace on earth, good will to men."

And, straightway, the wide air blossomed into being : tier on tier,
 Touching earth, and reaching heaven, its marshalled myriads did appear ;
 And, all round, the echoing hill-tops rang their anthem back again --
 " Praise in heaven to Him the Highest: peace on earth, good will to men."

And we knew not how or when it passed, the Vision and the Song ;
 And we knew not how we set forth, nor if time were short or long
 Ere we knelt within a stable, hewn from out the hillside wild ;
 And, before us, lo ! the manger, and the Mother and the Child !

Strange it was to see that Mother kneel her new-born Babe before,
 Rapt into the heartfelt silence of a soul which doth adore.
 Fair she knelt, with hand-crossed bosom, snatching ever and anon
 Glance at Him 'neath eyelids drooping as before the mid day sun.

Sooth, she seemed a royal Maiden hid in lowly peasant-weed ;
 Sooth, she seemed a queenly Mother exiled from her regal meed ;
 Girt around with virgin prudence, like a garden none may see,
 While the wider grace shone o'er her, sun-like, of maternity.