

THE VIGIL OF THE SHEPHERDS.

O'er Judah's quiet hills, from height to height
Drooped slowly down, the curtains of the night,
In matchless beauty, gemmed with stars of light.

Seated beneath the shadow of the rocks,
Their shelter from the heat or tempest's shocks,
A band of shepherds watched their slumbering flocks.

Deep stillness hung above them, such as reigns
In those calm hours, when night in silence wanes,
And men in deepest sleep lose joys and pains.

Till, turning to the glory of that sky,
Of Israel's royal bard the numbers high,
Broke from their lips at once in melody.

Then, loud and clear, they sang with glad acclaim,
"The heavens, O Lord! on high declare Thy fame,
The firmament extols Thy glorious name!"

Day speaketh of Thee to the coming day,
And night, whose countless orbs Thy word obey,
Doth to the following night Thy praise display."