

The Story of the First Christmas Day.

BY ALFRED M. LYNES.

LONG ago, my dearest children,
Runs this tale of Christmas day,
Lived a race of Hebrew people
In a country far away.

In their land there was a village—
Bethlehem an ancient town;
Here was born the great King David,
Here lived men of much renown.

Now these Hebrews had been promised
By their prophets—men benign,
That to them would come a Saviour,
Born of David's royal line.

As a sign of his appearing
"Alas!"—said these prophets wise—
"Shall a star of wondrous beauty
Brightly beam in Eastern skies."

Long, long years they had been waiting
For this promised Saviour's birth;
He, they thought, would re-establish
David's reign upon the earth.

Now there comes an evening peaceful;
Nature slowly falls asleep;
From the pastures, homeward wending,
Shepherds lead their flocks of sheep.

Weary caravans of camels
Up the hillside slowly steal;
In their stalls the large-eyed cattle
Patient wait their evening meal.

At the great well of the village,
Maidens stand their jars to fill;
While their talk and merry laughter
Echo through the highway still.

Fast and faster falls the evening;
Faint and fainter grows the day;
Darkness covers vale and mountain;
Now the light has passed away.

In the fields along the valley,
Just outside the village line,
Are the wise men and the shepherds
Watching for the promised sign.

High above them brightly twinkling,
Glow the lanterns of the sky;
From the walls the faithful watchmen
Call the hours passing by.

Soon the watchers see with gladness,
Shining in the sky afar,
Growing brighter every moment—
Beaming there—the promised star!

And its beams like golden rain drops,
Through the darkness streaming down,
Fall upon a stable lowly
In that little peaceful town.

In the manger of the stable,
Close beside his mother mild,
Sleeping softly, sweetly dreaming,
Lies the new-born Christmas child.

From the fields, and through the gateway,
Haste the watchers to the place
Where the little child is lying,
Born of David's royal race.

To the place arrive the wise men;
In their hands rich gifts they bear;
These they offer as their welcome
To the Saviour lying there.

Through the doorway step they softly;
Silent steal they to the place,
And with love and adoration
Gaze they on the baby face.

O'er the stable poor and lowly,
O'er the manger where he lies,
Hover angels, softly chanting
Heaven's sweetest lullabies.

In the street outside the stable,
Shepherds this glad carol sing:
"Hallelujah! about the tidings,
Unto us is born a king!"

Like an echo of their carol,
Come to singers on the street,
Borne by breezes from the desert,
Wondrous strains of music sweet.

Near and nearer, swells the music;
Grand and grander, grows the strain;
Now o'er desert, village, mountain,
Bursts the hymn of glad refrain:

"Glory be to God in heaven!
Peace on earth; to men, good will;
Christ is born; the great Messiah!
He God's promise will fulfil."

Thrilled with rapture and emotion,
Shepherds hear this wondrous song,
Sung by all the choirs of Heaven,
Angel voices clear and strong.

Now the sunbeams of the morning
Through the darkness make their way;
Soon the sun in royal splendour
Greeted the first known Christmas day.

Then all Nature wakes from slumber;
Morning carols sing the birds;
Back again to fields and pastures
Shepherds lead their flocks and herds.

From the Jordan to far Egypt,
Over plains and deserts drear,
Fly the tidings of the morning—
"Christ the Prince of Peace is here!"

In the homes upon the mountains,
In the homes along the sea,
Happy people sing "Hosannas,"
Make the day a jubilee!

This, dear children, is the story
Of the first glad Christmas day,
When to earth there came dear Jesus,
He who in the manger lay.

But before I close this story,
Let me tell you how this child
Lived and grew to perfect manhood,
One most holy, tender, mild.

How he fed the poor and hungry;
How he healed the sick and blind;
How he passed his life of sadness
Doing good to all mankind.

Of his death, and his ascension
To God's home in Heaven above,
Where ten thousand holy angels
Welcomed him with songs of love.

There beside the crystal fountains,
There where streets are laid with gold,
There where mansions are of jasper,
Dwell the Shepherd and his fold.

Some day, children, there he'll call you;
There as angels you'll be known;
There'll you'll sing your Christmas carols,
There beside the big White Throne.

A CHRISTMAS LEGEND.

It was Christmas-eve. The night was very dark, and the snow falling fast, as Hermann, the charcoal burner, drew his cloak tighter around him; and the wind whistled fiercely through the trees of the Black Forest. He had been to carry a load to the castle near, and was now hastening home to his little hut. Although working very hard, he was poor—gaining barely enough for the wants of his wife and four little children. He was thinking of them when he heard a faint wailing. Guided by the sound, he groped about, and found a little child, scantily clothed, shivering and sobbing by itself in the snow.

"Why, little one, have they left thee here all alone, to face this cruel blast?"

The child answered nothing, but looked piteously up in the charcoal burner's face.

"Well, I cannot leave thee here. Thou would'st be dead before the morning."

So saying, Hermann raised it in his arms, wrapping it in his cloak, and warming its little, cold

hands in his bosom. When he arrived at his hut he put down the child and tapped at the door, which was immediately thrown open, and the children rushed to meet him.

"Here, wife, is a guest to our Christmas-eve supper," said he, leading in the little one, who held timidly to his finger with his tiny hand.

"And welcome he is," said the wife. "Now let him come and warm himself by the fire."

The children all pressed round to welcome and gaze at the little new comer. They showed him their pretty fir tree, decorated with bright coloured lamps, in honour of Christmas-eve, which the good mother had endeavoured to make a *fête* for the children.

Then they sat down to supper, each child contributing of its portion for the guest—looking with admiration at its clear blue eyes and golden hair, which shone so as to shed a brighter light in the little room; and as they gazed, it grew into a sort of halo round his head, and his eyes beamed with a heavenly lustre. Soon two white wings appeared at his shoulders, and he seemed to grow larger and larger; and then the beautiful vision vanished, spreading out his hands as in benediction over them.

Hermann and his wife fell on their knees, exclaiming, in awe-struck voices: "The holy Christ-child!" and then embraced their wondering children, in joy and thankfulness that they had entertained the Heavenly Guest.

The next morning, as Hermann passed by the place where he had found the fair child, he saw a cluster of lovely white flowers, with dark green leaves, looking as though the snow itself had blossomed. Hermann plucked some, and carried them home to his wife and children, who treasured the fair blossoms, and tended them carefully, in remembrance of that wonderful Christmas-eve, calling them *Chrysanthemums*; and every year, as time came round, they put aside a portion of their feast and gave it to some poor little child, according to the words of the Christ: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."—*St. Nicholas.*

A HAPPY NEW YEAR.

THERE is a serious aspect to this season—the close of the old year and the beginning of the new. It is a time for looking back on the past—its many mercies and blessings, its shortcomings and failures and sins—and for looking forward into the future. Oh, thank God for all his goodness! Seek his pardon for all you have done amiss, and ask his grace to help you to begin the new year in newness of life.

You know not what the year shall bring to you of joy and sorrow, or it may be sickness or death. But put your hand trustfully in God's, and go forward where he leads, and no scath nor harm can happen you. It is a precious treasure. Oh! use its golden moments well, and may it be for each one of you the very happiest year that ever you have known!

It's coming, boys, it's almost here:
It's coming, girls, the grand New Year!
A year to be glad in, not to be sad in;
A year to live in, to gain and give in;
A year for trying, and not for sighing;
A year for striving, and hearty thriving;
A bright New Year, oh, hold it dear,
For God who sendeth, He only lendeth,
The grand, the blessed, the glad New Year!

I wish you happy New Year!
Dear bright-eyed girls and boys;
May all its days and hours be
Filled full of wholesome joys.

I wish you happy New Year!
With health and true success,
And the best of all good fortune—
The power to aid and bless.