

Rob, the "big brother" of nine years.

"He'll be lookin' out'n the window an' sayin' what keeps them childer so long," said his little pet, Barbara.

"He'll be so lonely," sighed his daughter, hurrying the group as she spoke.

Was grandpa lonely—let us see.

He was an old, old man, with thin, shrunken cheeks, a back bowed by care and trouble and with long, floating locks of lint-white hair that was as fine as silk. He had drawn his arm-chair in front of the window so that he could see the "children" when they came across under the street lamp, which was lighted so early that it shone like a taper in the yellow and red atmosphere of a setting sun, and a young moon blended with the fading daylight. The old man fixed his eyes on the struggling light, but they wavered from that and sought the sky, where—

In the dim and distant ether
The first star was shining through,
And another and another
Trembled softly in the blue.

Soon he had unseen company, and was no longer lonely. A sweet, young face, radiant with the bloom of immortality, and that light which never was on sea or land, came close to his, and he could feel the very thrill of her kisses on his dull cheek. Then she brought him their first-born, that lovely babe—his first and only son. Then two children were at his knee, and the young mother lay with a sweet smile on her lips, where the weary are at rest. But he only saw his boy—his dear, dear boy—now a merry youth—then the helmet of a soldier shading his frank, blue eyes—then a soldier's record, promotion—the epaulets of a brave officer, and so proud to wear them and have his father walking with him, and hearing how he fought this battle and won that, and what he meant to do when the war was over.

"And they had unseen company
To make the spirit quail."

But they knew it not, and the proud young victor rode away to his death on that dreadful battlefield from which he never returned.

The old man saw the troops in the sky, he saw their gay banners, he saw his son—the General—proud, handsome, unspoiled by the admiration of a world—he saw—ah, Heaven! he saw him dying alone on the field of battle, and it was Christmas eve. No hand to

give him even a drink of water, to raise that beloved head, to wipe the death foam from the pallid lips, only the pitiless stars and the cold moon to note his dying agonies!

But stay. "He shall give his angels charge concerning thee." His peace passeth all understanding. Who knows that he died alone? Who can deny that his young mother leaned over him and whispered words of sweetest comfort—that the pain and memory and longing of earth were not swallowed up and forgotten in the foreshadowing of the bliss of Paradise.

The sky changed; the old man saw only the tinted field of Heaven. A chime of bells rung out soft and clear:

"Light on thy hills, Jerusalem,
The Savior now is born."

But what is this? A little child again—a child with radiant brow, crowned with a wreath of immortelles, and above his head a bright and shining star.

"Tis the star that shines on Bethlehem,
Shines still and shall not cease."

"Grandpa, grandpa! Wake up, grandpa," cried the children.

"Dranpa, I've got sumthin' for 'er," said pet Barbara.

Then the children all went crying to their mother and said they could not wake grandpa.

A Funny Present.

One Christmas Grandma Melville sent something from the farm to be hung on the Christmas tree for Ava.

It was alive, so it couldn't really be hung, you know. It was snow-white, but it wasn't a rabbit with his winter coat on. It had feathers and a pair of bright eyes, but it wasn't one of Grandma Melville's doves—not a bit of it.

Papa made a little cage for it by nailing slats across a box; and then he put it behind the Christmas-tree.

They unloaded the Christmas-tree in the afternoon, because there were lots of little cousins who must get home before dark; but when the blinds were shut tight, and the lamps lighted, it was a good deal like night-time.

All of a sudden, breaking right through the talk and laughter, came a sharp little "Cut—cut—cut—cut—da—cut! Cut—cut—ker—da—cut—da—cut—da—cut!"

"What is it? Oh, what is it?" cried Ava.

"What do you guess?" asked papa, laughing.

"It sounds like a hen-biddy," said