

Rouse thee from sleep. The heavens glow with fire, and surely something marvellous doth happen.' Then as the boy stirred and murmured in his waking, Bani mingled warnings with his entreaties. 'Have thou care, O Asabel. Wake not the servants, I beseech thee! Come, let us go to my father; he will show unto us the meaning of the marvel.'

When fully conscious of his surroundings, Asabel was as eager to understand the wonder as Bani could possibly be. The two little figures stole rapidly down the outer stairway and fled along the silent streets. Reaching the summit of the hillside they looked out once more upon the wider view.

The splendor had deepened into something indescribable in the eastern quarter of the sky. And now a multitude of moving objects, dazzling in their brightness, passed swiftly down that path of heavenly glory and paused above the Temple pasture land. As the children looked up with reverent faces, there came a burst of distant music in the air, as though a chorus of singers was voicing from the far-off azure strains of immortal praise. So soft and sweet it was, so unlike earthly music, that the tender childish hearts were filled with ecstasy and their eyes brimmed over with sudden tears. Not till the last faint note had died away did they move; then Bani cried imploringly to his friend, 'O Asabel, it is the Messiah! Let us hasten to him!'

With flying feet they trod the rough road descending to the fields, then fell into a slower pace, for the light was fading rapidly and it was hard to see. Breathlessly they urged each other on, a great fear rising in their minds that they should miss the meeting with the Son of David. At last Bani stumbled and fell, bruising himself severely; and then a panic seized him. He burst into a flood of tears, crying, 'O Asabel, I fear, I fear! We shall never find him, and it is so dark!'

The elder boy strove to raise his comrade, calling out encouraging words. 'Bani, Bani, there is nought to fear. No man is near us, and see how silent is the night. Come, let us hasten onward; is not thy father near at hand?' But Bani only laid his head upon his arm and sobbed on, 'It is so dark, and I am sore afraid!'

By and by the sound of hurried footsteps became clearly distinguishable, and Asabel, whose courage had been sorely tried by Bani's giving way to terror, sprang up with a quick cry of relief. For he heard also familiar voices, and he knew that they who were approaching were shepherds of the Temple flock. A moment later Micha lifted his little son into his arms, and the boy, still sobbing, put his head down upon the strong shoulder which supported him and lost his fears.

'What seeketh my child upon the hillside in the darkness of night?' said Micha tenderly. 'Verily thou art a lost lamb, Bani! It is well for thee that the shepherd came this way.'

'I seek, O my father, I seek the Messiah! From the housetop of Abiah we saw the glory and we heard the wondrous music; and we thought he had surely come. So we stole down the stair and ran swiftly through the town to meet him. But the singing ceased, and the light faded from the sky; and then great fear overcame us, and I knew that I was only a little child, out on the hills alone in the blackness of night.'

Micha clasped his boy still more closely. 'But the shepherd hath found the straying lamb, my Bani, and the father his son. Fear thou not.' Then he turned to his companions to say, 'Let us hasten, friends, upon our joyful errand; for time speedeth swiftly.'

As they hurried up the hill, Micha, holding Bani in his arms while Asabel ran by his side, the shepherds spoke again. 'Hearken my little ones, as I tell you the story of what I have seen this night. Ye did see the glory in the sky, though not so wondrously as did we; for it streamed all about us as we lay in the field with our flocks. Ye did hear the singing, but your ears could not catch the words which told us of the love of the Lord Jehovah for men. And ye did not know that angels from the highest heaven were the singers. They floated in the air above us, the radiance of the shining light falling upon their white garments, and our hearts melted in us for wonder and awe. One of them, the first to come, spake to us a message from the Lord. Listen Asabel and Little Bani: "Unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour

who is Christ the Lord." And when he had finished, the multitude of the heavenly host burst into praises, singing, "Glory to God!"'

'Born this day? in the city of David?' asked Bani, suddenly raising his head. 'Why, my father, he will be a babe and not a man!'

'Yea, my son,' answered the shepherd, 'he is born this day, a babe. We are even now in search for him, and the angel told us as a sign by which to know him, that we should find him lying in a manger.'

The boy cried out in great delight. 'O my father! I can take thee to him. Surely I know where he may be found!'

Micha stood still in sheer surprise. 'Thou knowest, child? Thou art dreaming. How couldst thou know?'

'Yea, I know, I know,' called Bani, exulting; 'do I not, Asabel? There are two Galileans at the khan, who are so noble in their bearing that all who see do feel deep reverence for them. There was no room in the khan, yet could not Josiah send them away; and he gave them lodging in the cave. Surely they must be the parents of the babe!'

'Son, it may be that thou hast found him for us,' said Micha, greatly wondering. He called hastily to his friend and told them the story related by the children. Then they all set forward with redoubled speed.

The lamp burning before the doorway marked the khan now crowded with sleepers. Walking cautiously around it, the little group of shepherds approached the opening of the cave where another light burned low. And here they met a tall, quiet man of more than middle age, to whom they told their errand.

It was a grave face into which the eager shepherds looked. It was marked by many lines of care and anxious thought, but it wore also an expression of mingled strength and sweetness which was wondrously attractive. At the close of the recital he said simply: 'It is even as the Lord Jehovah hath revealed it unto you by the messengers from heaven. The babe is here; and ye may now behold him.' Then turning he led the way into the humble cavern which had become the dwelling of the Son of God.

Upon a heap of pillows placed on the raised portion of the farther wall reclined Mary the Nazarene. The look upon her face expressed more than the first rapture of motherhood, marvellous as this is to those who see it. She was the guardian of a secret beyond her power of understanding, which lifted her above the level of daily human life and into the atmosphere of heavenly things. Closely folded in her arms was a little sleeping babe, whose head rested upon her breast, and she looked down upon him with her whole soul in her eyes, so that she scarcely knew what took place about her.

The shepherds fell reverently upon their knees and gazed in silence at the slumbering child. Asabel and Little Bani crept nearer, until they were close beside the couch; and the eyes of Mary the mother suddenly beheld them, while her face grew luminous with a tender smile. From a far-off distance, somewhere, came the faint sweet echo of music, as though the chorus of the angels were still sounding in the sky. And as the glory shone yonder in the highest heaven, so the peace of God brooded over the little cavern in the hillside at ancient Bethlehem.

Christmas Lesson.

(Emilie Poulsson.)

Again the loved old stories
We read at Christmastide,
Oh! may their blessed lessons
Deep in our hearts abide.

Be ours the choice to follow
A heav'n enkindled star,
E'en though its rays point forward
Through lonely ways and far.

Aid like the simple shepherds,
As swift and glad as they,
May we our heavenly visions
In joyful awe obey.

The inn was all too crowded—
Oh! may we heed this sign
And in our hearts keep ever
A place for the Divine.

Little Dan's Christmas.

(Ernest Gilmore, in the 'Christian Intelligencer'.)

Little Dan was the smallest newsboy on the street. Such a little fellow to be peddling papers! But he had the grit to do it.

'I can paddle my own canoe,' he said, to himself, bravely swallowing a troublesome lump that threatened to choke him. 'Dad said I'd have to, an' I can.'

Poor little Dan! My heart goes out to him. His mother was dead and his ne'er-do-well father had forsaken him.

And Dan was only ten years old. If he had been born under happier circumstances he would have been considered a handsome boy. While Dan's father was with him he was accustomed to abusive words, and blows, to hunger and cold, and neglect. But now it was not so hard. He shared an attic room with several other newsboys. His bed was an old mattress on the floor with only a single covering, an old comforter, and no pillow. He went to bed early to keep warm. He was up early out in the cold after the morning papers. He did his best, but he was always hungry and tired. One stormy November day, just after he had sold his last paper and had started for 'Old Ma'am Rose's' shop for a 'bit of lunch,' something happened. A nurse, pushing a baby carriage across the street, became confused in the noise and left her charge, a beautiful smiling baby girl, to the mercy of the approaching trolley. Dan saw the whole thing, the trolley on one side, the prancing horses on the other, the baby in her perilous position, and then—I do not know how it was done, but there he was right in it. He was just in time. Something surpassingly sweet and clear rang in his soul, making him glad, for he had pushed the smiling baby in her carriage out of danger. Then, suddenly, following the gladness, came a great pain, ending in darkness. When he awoke from that darkness he was in a white bed, and there was a sweet-faced, white-capped nurse near by.

'How'd I get here? An' where be I?' he asked wonderingly.

'You're in the hospital. They brought you here in an ambulance. You got hurt saving Mrs. Swift's baby.'

A light came into Dan's eyes.

'Oh,' he cried, 'I'm glad I saved the baby. I was afraid mebbe I couldn't. She's got a mother, hasn't she?'

'Yes,' the nurse said, 'a lovely one.'

The light deepened in Dan's eyes.

'Then she's glad, too. She'd felt awful if the baby'd been killed. She wasn't even hurt—was she?'

'No, she wasn't hurt the least bit. I'm sorry you were hurt.'

'Somebody had to be, an' it's lucky 'twas me. I ain't got no mother to feel bad about me, an' if dad knew I was hurt he wouldn't care. I don't care—myself—only—only—'

A spasm of pain made him gasp for breath. Then, suddenly, with a great effort, he finished his sentence, 'Only it must be nice to hev a mother to care.'

The nurse did not answer, she could not just then.

'What's the matter with my legs?' the boy asked, 'I can't move 'em.'

'They're broken, but they'll be all right after a few weeks. You'll have to just stay here and be as patient as you can until you get well.'

The light came into his eyes again.

'It's nice here,' he said, 'I'd like to stay if I'm not too much trouble. I've never been in such a white, white place before, an' it's so clean!'

'Don't talk any more just now,' the nurse said, gently.

When he awoke again a beautiful young woman was sitting beside him. A great bouquet of red carnations on a small stand near his bedside breathed their fragrance over him. Dan looked at the visitor questioningly, and she—in answer—stooped and kissed his forehead.

'I'm the baby's mother, little Dan,' she said, gently stroking the thin hand that rested on the white spread.

'Oh,' he cried out, 'Oh!' his face becoming radiant.

'How glad she must be!' was his thought. 'She kissed me, oh, oh, she kissed me.'