

Bethlehem, just below the convent hill, where once "shepherds kept watch over their flocks by night." And I could look up to the blue sky, once radiant with the glory of angelic presence and musical with the song of the advent. I was glad to turn from man's idolatry to the heaven of man's hope and destiny, and I thanked God for the gift of his Son to the race, as Teacher and King, as Saviour and Friend.

The Holy Child.

My heart goes back in pity,
O Mary, faint and worn,
As thou dost take thy weary way,
Ere yet the Babe is born,
From Nazareth to Bethlehem,
Slow toiling night and morn.

I see thee pale and weary,
But ever full of cheer,
For still I wis the angel's hail
Sweet soundeth in thine ear,
And up the rugged heights thy path
Shines beautiful and clear.

Slow drops the purple twilight,
Swift gathers midnight cold;
The winds are wild and wailing,
The lambs are in the fold.
Hark! far away the gates of heaven
To music are unrolled.

Oh, strange, mysterious moment!
The Wonderful, the Strong,
The Prince of Peace whose gleaming sword
Shall smite the ancient wrong,
In mother's arms a babe is laid;
Break seraphs into song!

Lo! at his feet are bending,
As dawn unfoldeth gray,
Wise men who came from orient lands
To greet the world's new day.
Star-led, that star it riseth still
To light earth's troubled way.

O Mighty One incarnate,
Through all the lifted skies
The choiring ranks amazed behold
The Babe that helpless lies,
The little one who comes to be
The atoning sacrifice.

Sweet Mary, in thy bosom
The Holy Child shall sleep,
And thou above his infant rest
Thy tender watch wilt keep.
No mother of us all so blest,
None doomed to woe so deep!

The centuries have drifted
In dark and light away
Since broke upon Judaea's plains
The first fair Christmas day.
To Jesus nations lift their praise,
And thousand thousands pray.

His love makes childhood sacred,
His grace makes weakness strong;
In his dear name to hallowed rites
Rejoicing armies throng.
The very thought of Christ, the Lord,
Is music, mirth and song.

For him the glad ships whiten
The waves of every sea;
For him to alien shores we go
To set the bondmen free;
In him to live is life indeed,
And light and liberty.

In him to live is triumph,
But what in him to die!
'Tis soaring swift through boundless space,
'Tis straightway drawing nigh,
And dwelling where his own dear face
All want shall satisfy.

Chime on, glad Christmas chorals,
Ye cannot half reveal

The mystic joy that surges through
The souls his love who feel,
As lowly to the Infant King
To-day the nations kneel.

The Christmas Angel.

It was Christmas eve. George and Frank and their little sisters were all assembled in the same bright sitting-room, to await the visit of the Christ Angel, which had been promised by Pelz-Nickel. Their papa and mamma and Cousin Herbert were in the drawing-room adjoining, the door of which had been mysteriously closed all the afternoon, and the children forbidden to approach it.

George and Frank were whispering and laughing in a corner, and George had something wrapped in a bundle, which he had refused to show to his little sisters, telling them that they must wait until their father and mother and Herbert came in.

Very soon one of the folding doors was opened a very little ways, and the three favoured ones made their appearance, closing the door carefully after them.

"Oh, oh! Master Herbert," said Frank; "George has found something, we know who old Pelz-Nickel was!"

"You do, eh! Master Frank? and how did George and you find it out?"

"Why," said Master George, "I more than half believed last night that you were Pelz-Nickel, and this afternoon mamma sent me up to your room to get something for her out of the bureau drawer, and I found this and all of Pelz-Nickel's other things in the drawer."

And he triumphantly brought forth the fur cap, which had so excited Frank's wonder.

"Well, little ones," said Herbert, "you have fairly found me out. And so, as Pelz-Nickel was a humbug, you wouldn't believe in Christkindchen now if you were to see him, and I suppose that I had better tell you a little German story about him instead of waiting for you to see him, after which we will see the wonders of the drawing-room."

"Oh, do; Cousin Herbert," exclaimed all together, and they prepared to listen.

"It was on the holy Christmas eve that a poor woman sat with her two children in the narrow little room of a small house in the suburbs of a city in Germany.

"The father of the children died, after he had been sick a long time and had earned nothing. Therefore the family was in great want. But the mother could not work, for she was obliged to stay by the youngest child, and to care for and nurse it, because it was always sick. So the poor mother sat and cried secretly, for she had no wood to warm the chamber with, and on the day on which everything rejoices, and all parents light a Christmas tree for their little ones, she must sit in the dark, because the last oil in her lamp was burnt out.

"When now the elder boy heard his mother sobbing, he fell upon her neck and said:

"Ah, mother! if we only had a light! If I could only see you! I believe I would no longer be cold then, and you would not weep any more if you could see your children."

"Then the poor woman's heart almost broke with grief, and she put her hand in her pocket and said:

"Now! go, then, my child, and bring oil. Here you have my last groschen. I wished to buy bread with it to-morrow, but who knows whether the holy Christ will not bestow bread upon us in another way."

"The boy took the money and ran off with it, and looked on the right and on the left in hopes that he could see a Christmas tree burning behind a bright window. But in this street lived none but poor people, and most of the houses were dark, except here and there glimmered an oil lamp through small, dim panes of glass.

"Farther and farther ran the boy, and came into large, broad streets, where one store ranged itself after another, out of which bright lights beamed towards him. In the high houses lived only rich people, for everywhere gleamed through the large window panes glittering Christmas trees.

"Then he came to the market, where stall after stall stood, and he could not wonder enough at all the splendid things which were there offered for sale—the sweet dainties, the bright-coloured playthings, the burning Christmas trees. He ran to and fro, looked here and there, and was so happy he did not feel how his hands and feet were benumbed with cold.

"At length he came to a booth which was illuminated particularly brightly, and before which many men had collected. When he saw into it he was bewildered, for he beheld here exactly before him everything that his mother had so often told him, of the birth of the holy Christ-child, formed finely and skilfully out of wax. In a stall sat the Virgin Mary, who held the infant Jesus upon her lap; before her the shepherds knelt and prayed; round about lay cows and sheep, and over the child hovered waxen angels, with waxen wings. He had never before seen anything so beautiful, and he might have stood and wondered long but he was pushed away by men crowding near, and suddenly remembered that his mother sat at home in the dark with his little sister, and that he ought to carry the oil.

"But how terrified he was when he felt that the groschen had fallen out of his benumbed hand. He began to cry aloud, although the men pressed around and near him, and bought, and passed hurriedly along with the purchased splendours in their hands. Still no one asked what ailed him—he remained unnoticed in his distress.

"So he now went slowly back again through the illuminated streets, and

looked neither to the right hand nor to the left, for nothing made him joyful now, until he arrived at length again in the dark street where his mother lived.

"When he now reflected how sad his mother would be over the lost groschen, he could not resolve to go home, but seated himself upon a large stone, and wept bitterly.

"Ah!" thought he, 'the Christ-child brings joy to all men to-day; only my mother it leaves in sadness, and I grieve her now still more.'

"So he sat for a long while and lamented, until he at last heard the watchman call out the hour. He came with his lantern down the street, and sang:

'In the still and holy night,
Christ from heaven came down to earth;
Peace to all men hath he brought,
Joy to every Christian hearth.'

"Then the boy saw by the light of the lantern something before him shining in the snow, and picked it up as a plaything. But the watchman walked up to him and asked, why he sat upon the street in the night and cold, and did not go home. Crying, the boy related how he had lost the last groschen, with which he should have bought oil; how his mother always wept so much since his father died, and that he could not bear to see how she would grieve for the lost groschen.

"Then come with me," said the friendly watchman, 'I will give you oil; but then run quickly home; your mother will distress herself about you.'

"When he took the child by the hand, he felt something hard in it, and asked what it was. The boy showed him the shining thing and said that he had just found it in the snow.

"Indeed!" cried the watchman; 'behold what Christkindchen has here given you! This is certainly a gold piece! For a gold piece you will receive a quantity of groschens, and your mother can buy bread and wood to-morrow.'

"Then the boy was very happy, and after he had received the oil from the watchman, he ran to his mother, who awaited him with anxiety, and related to her everything that he had seen, and how he had lost the groschen and found the gold piece.

"Then the mother wept, but for joy, and took her children upon her lap and taught them to thank the holy Christ-child, that he had not forgotten them in their need, and had made them so rich."

By the time Herbert had finished his story, for which all the children thanked him, their papa and mamma announced that it was time to open the drawing-room. Mrs. Elliot rang a little silver bell which was near her hand, and immediately the doors were thrown open. What a blaze of light there was, and what wonders met their eyes! There, in the centre of the room, was the most beautiful Christ-