

A CHRISTMAS HYMN.

It was the calm and silent night !
 Seven hundred years and fifty-three
 Had Rome been growing up to might,
 And now was queen of land and sea.
 No sound was heard of clashing wars,
 Peace brooded o'er the hushed domain ;
 Apollo, Pallas, Jove, and Mars,
 Held undisturbed their ancient reign
 In the solemn midnight,
 Centuries ago.

'Twas in the calm and silent night,
 The senator of haughty Rome,
 Impatient, urged his chariot's flight,
 From lordly revels rolling home ;
 Triumphal arches, gleaming, swell
 His breast with thoughts of boundless away ;
 What rocked the Roman what befell
 A paltry province far away,
 In the solemn midnight,
 Centuries ago ?

Within that province far away
 Went plodding home a weary boor :
 A streak of light before him lay,
 Fallen through a half-shut stable door
 Across his path. He passed, for nought
 Told what was going on within ;
 How keen the stars, his only thought—
 The air, how calm, how cold, and thin,
 In the solemn midnight,
 Centuries ago !

O strange indifference ! low and high
 Drowsed over common joys and cares ;
 The earth was still but knew not why,
 The world was listening unawares.
 How calm a moment may precede
 One that shall thrill the world forever !

To that still moment none would heed
 Man's doom was linked no more to sever,
 In the solemn midnight,
 Centuries ago.

It is the calm and silent night !
 A thousand bells rings out, and throw
 Their joyous peals abroad, and smite
 The darkness—charmed and holy now !
 The night that erst no name had worn—
 To it a happy name is given ;
 For in that stable lay, new-born,
 The peaceful Prince of earth and heaven,
 In the solemn midnight,
 Centuries ago.

ALFRED DOMETT.

CHRISTMAS AS AN ANSWER TO PRAYER.

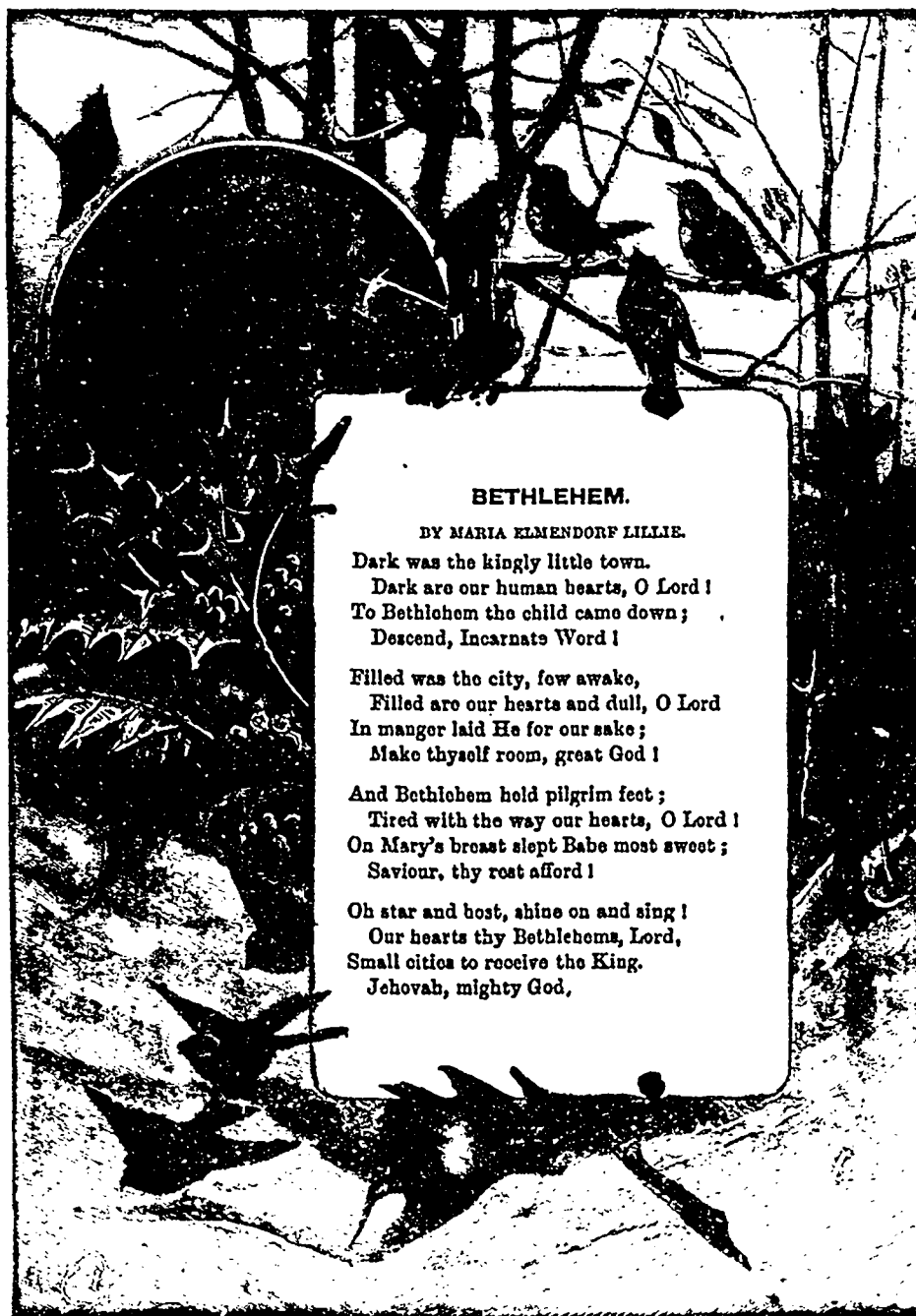
The fact that the birth of our Lord was an answer to prayer often is overlooked. For centuries, however, devout Jews had been imploring Jehovah to send them a Messiah. They rested their faith on the divine promises. They realized their bitter and increasing need of a Redeemer. They feared the utter demoralization of their people under the stern oppression of the Romans. That they looked for and doubtless prayed for a temporal deliverer, some irresistible conqueror, is not wholly surprising in view of their history and circumstances. With whatever motives offered and in spite of no matter how great misconceptions there can be no question of the sincerity of their petitions.

That the divine answer to their prayers was not what they expected does not alter the fact that the birth of our Lord was this answer. God loves to hear prayer, and there must be something in the very ignorance

and error of those who pray for what would do them more harm than good which touches the wise and tender heart of our Heavenly Father deeply and would impel Him, did He need prompting, to bestow that which He sees to be required. The birth of the Christ meant for the Jews, although few of them appreciated it, the real, the best, the only fitting answer to their prayers.

Christmas still comes as an answer to prayer. We ask God daily for pardon, help, and peace, or His watchful care, for such opportunities as may be best for us. Our needs are manifold, and we tell Him of them. Christmas, rightly understood, is His answer. Its recurrence is the assurance that He has heard us. It reminds us of what He has done for the world through nineteen centuries and of what He has done for ourselves during our own lives. It reminds us that His love never fails, that His care never relaxes, that His arm never weakens, and that whatsoever is best for us He stands ready to grant.

The setting of a great hope is like the setting of the sun. The brightness of our life is gone. Shadows of evening fall around us, and the world seems but a dim reflection,—itself a broader shadow ; we look forward into the coming lonely night. The soul withdraws into itself. Then stars arise, and the night is holy.



BETHLEHEM.

BY MARIA ELMENDORF LILLIE.

Dark was the kingly little town.
 Dark are our human hearts, O Lord !
 To Bethlehem the child came down ;
 Descend, Incarnate Word !

Filled was the city, few awake,
 Filled are our hearts and dull, O Lord
 In manger laid He for our sake ;
 Make thyself room, great God !

And Bethlehem held pilgrim feet ;
 Tired with the way our hearts, O Lord !
 On Mary's breast slept Babe most sweet ;
 Saviour, thy rest afford !

Oh star and host, shine on and sing !
 Our hearts thy Bethlehem, Lord,
 Small cities to receive the King.
 Jehovah, mighty God,