



### A Christmas Dream.

'Twas Christmas-eve, snow drifting deep,  
But all the house was warm and bright:

And grandmamma lay fast asleep,  
The scarlet silk and laces white  
Making a glow of tender grace  
Over the calm and placid face.

Where smiles were flitting to and fro,  
Where sudden lights and shadows fall.  
"Children, step lightly and speak low,  
And softly spread the fleecy shawl;  
Her dreaming soul mayhap doth keep  
Some fairer Christmas in its sleep."

Then quickly o'er the household steals  
The hush of thoughtful, loving calm,  
Until through waiting silence peals,  
Like jubilant, triumphant psalm,  
The ringing, singing bells that say,  
"To-morrow, friends, is Christmas-day."

The sleeper woke, and lay serene  
With clasped hands upon her breast,  
"Dear God!" she said, "so sweet a dream!  
Could it come true, I were so blest,  
So blest! such Christmas feast to keep,  
Ah, Mary, I have been asleep,

"And dreaming, dear—a wondrous dream:  
I saw my home so strangely fair;  
Its halls with such soft lights did gleam;  
Its gardens were beyond compare;  
And, lo! I heard a voice which said,  
'Come, love, the Christmas feast is spread.

"Your father's voice, dear child, I know;  
It ringeth yet through heart and brain:  
It called me fifty years ago,  
"Just so it called to-night again.  
O faithful love! O blessed home!  
Do I not weary till I come?"

She lay all night with wistful eyes,  
To earthly love both deaf and dumb;  
But just as dawn touched Christmas skies,  
She cried aloud, "Sweet love, I come!"  
And none could weep, for that they knew  
Her happy Christmas dream was true.

### THE SINGER'S STORY.

**I** WAS a born musician. When I was a child of two, I would spend hours softly touching the piano-keys, and listening with exquisite delight to the sounds. More, I had a beautiful voice—so beautiful, that when I sang lullabies to my dolls, strangers would stop at the door in passing.

I was a fisherman's daughter.  
I grew up healthy and free, and my voice became stronger and sweeter. When I was sixteen, my uncle took me to Philadelphia, and commenced my musical education.

I loved refinement and art; I was pretty; and soon they adopted me. All that sympathy, encouragement and education could do for me became mine. My uncle Archibald was very proud of my voice, and determined that it should reach its full compass.

"You have a bird in your throat which can win you both fame and gold, Gabrielle," he used to say.

Not that he had any definite plans for me. It was enough for him to sit and listen while I played and sang in the twilight—to have the crowded room suddenly hush when my voice took up the song. He took the most exquisite pleasure and pride in my successes.

When I was eighteen, he gave me a reception, at which people of high rank and talent paid me so many compliments that I could not but believe in my own powers.

I had not naturally much confidence in my-

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self, and it always required a considerable effort to play or sing before strangers. I always made it, however, when Uncle Archibald wished. I realized that I owed it to him that I was a well-educated, accomplished young lady, instead of an ignorant girl, living obscurely and humbly. I had no taste for the sphere of life into which I was born, and gladly escaped it. After five years' residence with my uncle, I seemed always to have lived in Philadelphia.

One evening when I had been singing to him, he said:

"Gabrielle, I am going to send you abroad."

I turned, and saw that he was in earnest.

"When?"

"In a few weeks—as soon as you can be ready."

"How?"

"In care of your pastor's family, who will start this Spring. But you will not go solely for sight-seeing; you go to study. Your musical education can be finished only in Paris."

I was pleased at the thought of going abroad, although I did not much enjoy the company of my pastor, who was aged, cold and formal. His wife and daughters were also very dignified and precise. But this was the arrangement my uncle had made for me, and I found no fault with it, for I knew, if not congenial, the Sunderlands would keep me strictly to my lessons and practice.

In a month we set sail.

I spent two Winters in close study in Paris. The remainder of the two years I traveled with my friends. Of all lands, I loved Italy the most dearly. The golden-blue skies, the landscapes, the people, the songs, all gave me the most exquisite pleasure, and I vowed never to forget this land of beauty. I felt that I owed it a debt of gratitude for all I had enjoyed there.

We had returned to Paris, where I was finishing a course of lessons, when there came a startling letter from my uncle. I was recalled home. He had failed in business.

I crossed on the steamer alone, and hurriedly sought my uncle's house. Closed shutters, silence, darkness.

I hurriedly questioned the servant. Her master was very ill.

Worn out with striving and disappointment, my good Uncle Archibald lay in a darkened chamber—a shadow of his former self. Though this disaster in business had been feared for a year, he had kept me at my studies and pleasures abroad, and never let me know the trouble he was in.

"And you are a poor man now, Uncle Archibald?"

"I shall be, as soon as my house is sold."

I bent and kissed the forehead of this noble and kind old man, who had been my greatest earthly benefactor, vowing that his home should never be sold. While he had wealth he had given it freely unto me. Now that he had it not, I would restore it to him!

Yes, I would commence public life as a singer; though, as I said, constitutionally timid, shrinking from whatever made me conspicuous, I promptly decided upon this course of life.

For the first time delighting in my powers, I hastily sought the leader of a superior opera troupe and offered my services.

He was much pleased. He knew me well, having heard me sing several times at my uncle's house, and he had repeatedly advised me to sing in public.

"But you would need more courage, more confidence. It would greatly aid your success," he used to say.

Now, on my application, enthusiastically in earnest and quite forgetful of self, I must have appeared differently, for he said:

"So you begin to understand yourself—to appreciate our powers. That is good. I shall have great delight in ringing you out."

I had a few weeks of preparation, which were, however, sufficient.

"Don't hurt your health by too close study;