

'Twas Xmas-time, and her parents poor  
 Could hardly drive the wolf from the door,  
 Striving with poverty's patient pain  
 Only to live till summer again.

No gifts for Piccola! Sad were they  
 When dawned the morning of Xmas-day;  
 Their little darling no joy might stir,  
 St. Nicholas nothing could bring to her!

But Piccola never doubted at all  
 That something beautiful must befall  
 Every child upon Christmas-day,  
 And so she slept till the dawn was gray.

And full of faith, when at last she woke,  
 She stole to her shoe as morning broke;  
 Such sounds of gladness filled all the air,  
 'Twas plain St Nicholas had been there!

Now such a story who ever heard?  
 There was a little shivering bird!  
 A sparrow that in at the window flew,  
 Had crept into Piccola's tiny shoe!

"How good poor Piccola must have been!"  
 She cried, as happy as any queen,  
 While the starving sparrow she fed and warmed,  
 And danced with rapture, she was so charmed.

Children, this story I tell to you,  
 Of Piccola sweet and her bird, is true.  
 In the far-off land of France, they say,  
 Still do they live to this very day.

—Celia Thaxter.

#### THE LITTLE GRAY LAMB

Out on the endless purple hills, deep in the clasp of  
 somber night,

The shepherds guarded their weary ones—guarded their  
 flocks of cloudy white,

That like a snowdrift in silence lay,  
 Save one little lamb with its fleece of gray.

Out on the hillside all alone, gazing afar with sleepless  
 eyes,

The little gray lamb prayed soft and low, its weary face  
 to the starry skies:

"O moon of the heavens so fair, so bright,  
 Give me—oh, give me—a fleece of white!"

No answer came from the dome of blue, nor comfort  
 lurked in the cypress-trees;

But faint came a whisper borne along on the scented  
 wings of the passing breeze:

"Little gray lamb that prays this night,  
 I cannot give thee a fleece of white."

Then the little gray lamb of the sleepless eyes prayed to  
 the clouds for a coat of snow,

Asked of the roses, besought the woods; but each gave  
 answer sad and low:

"Little gray lamb that prays this night,  
 We cannot give thee a fleece of white."

Like a gem unlocked from a casket dark, like an ocean  
 pearl from its bed of blue,

Came softly stealing the clouds between, a wonderful  
 star which brighter grew

Until it flamed like the sun by day  
 Over the place where Jesus lay.

Ere hushed were the angel's notes of praise the joyful  
 shepherds had quickly sped

Past rock and shadow, adown the hill, to kneel at the  
 Saviour's lowly bed;

While, like the spirits of phantom night,  
 Followed their flocks—their flocks of white.

And patiently, longingly, out of the night, apart from the  
 others—far apart—

Came limping and sorrowful, all alone, the little gray  
 lamb of the weary heart,

Murmuring, "I must bide far away;  
 I am not worthy—my fleece is gray"

And the Christ Child looked upon humble pride, at  
 kings bent low on the earthen floor,

But gazed beyond at the saddened heart of the little gray  
 lamb at the open door;

And he called it up to His manger low and laid His  
 hand on its wrinkled face,

While the kings drew golden robes aside to give to the  
 weary one a place.

And the fleece of the little gray lamb was blest:  
 For, lo! it was whiter than all the rest!

In many cathedrals grand and dim, whose windows  
 glimmer with pane and lens,

Mid the odor of incense raised in prayer, hallowed  
 about with last amens,

The infant Saviour is pictured fair, with kneeling Magi  
 wise and old,

But his baby-hand rests—not on the gifts, the myrrh,  
 the frankincense, the gold—

But on the head, with a heavenly light,

Of the little gray lamb that was changed to  
 white.

—Archibald Beresford Sullivan.

#### THE RUGGLESES DINE OUT

STAGE: A barren kitchen. A door at the back  
 and to the right a row of chairs, seven in number, with  
 the woodbox and coal hod, are placed diagonally across  
 the stage, the coal hod nearest the door. A single chair  
 is facing the row of chairs. When the curtain rises Mrs.  
 Ruggles is seated stiffly on this chair with the nine little