

CHRISTMAS EVE.

ANNO DOMINI, 24TH DECEMBER.—IN JUDÆA.



ARK, cold is the night, as the winter clouds flying,
Across the blue dome of the Orient sweep ;
Chill, chill are the sheep on the mountain-side lying,
Bright, twinkling the stars from the firmament
peep.

Deserted the flocks o'er the hill-tops are straying,
To Bethlehem's town have the shepherds
returned,

They kneel at a manger, and lowly are praying,
With a flame of devotion their spirits are burned.

Pale, white fall the moon-beams on streamlet and
mountains,

Grim, ghastly the walls of the cities appear ;
No sound wakes the echoes by Elim's * dark fountains,
The elements hush as though breathless in fear.
Dark torrent of Cedron, now rushing and roaring,
Seems check'd by the hand of some spirit from high,
Now silent its waves through the valley are pouring ;
Hush ! hark ! what grand chorus descends from the sky !

A light flashes out from the dark-clouded heaven,—
It gleams on the hill-tops, it shines o'er the vale ;
As though the last trumpet's last peal had been given,
The echoes start up on the wings of the gale !
Mount Olivet's heights with a radiance are beaming,
Rough Golgotha's ** summit in splendour is bright,
The Valley of Giants—Jehosopha's gleaming,
Jerusalem's temple is flooded with light.

The echoes Judæan are rising and singing
The notes that descend from the still winter sky !
Hark ! hark ! o'er the mountains and valleys is ringing,
"Glory ! all glory to God the Most High !"
The Seraphim hosts from the heavens are singing,
"Glory ! all glory to God the Most High !"
The echoes are catching, repeating and ringing,
"Glory ! all glory to God the Most High !

* The twelve fountains where the Israelites drank in the Desert of Sin.

** Hebrew for Calvary.