

Where Shines the Star?

BY ALICE E. IVES.

"Oh, where did the beautiful star go—
The beautiful star in the East?
Did it set forever that Christmas morn
When its wonderful mission ceased?

"Or was it a planet like the rest,
Wish earth and water and sky,
Which the dear Christ in his downward flight
Smiled on as he passed it by?

"Quick when it caught the wonderful gleam,
So bright when it pierced all space,
It could not choose but light the whole world
And point to the glorified face."

My little girl's eyes were full of thought
As she asked me this question grave;
And I, like one in the presence of kings,
Was an awed and silenced slave.

She weighed my wisdom and found it void,
Ah! yes; it was very plain
From that day forth I must abdicate,
— And be oracle no'er again.

So I said, "My darling, I cannot tell;
Perhaps it was as you say,
The beautiful star caught its wondrous light
As the Christ sped on his way.

"But if it is so or not, I think
It has never sunk quite out of sight."
And she cried out quick in her joyous way,
"Oh, let us go find it to-night!"

Ah! little one, we are not shepherds, or wise,
But may we not see as they did?
Not with our eyes, but down in our souls,
The star not quite veiled or hid,

But shining clear, with a living light,
With a light that'll never dim,
Till it pierces e'en through the outer night,
And leads us straight to him.

Christmas in Foreign Lands.

In Burgundy, carols are exceedingly popular—indeed not more cherished is the German's Christmas-tree, with its glittering ornaments, and the Christ child; or the Englishman's red holly-berries, mystic mistletoe, blazing hearth fire, and smoking plum pudding, than are the ditties sung all through Advent until Christmas eve, by the good folk of that province.

Fireside gossip mingles with the quaintly-worded praises of the "little Jesus." Bagpipes drone in the village streets. The strolling minstrel is always accounted a welcome addition to the neighbourly hearth-side gatherings; and when Christmas-eve is passed, the piper makes the round of the houses, whence he fails not to issue with many compliments, as well as some small coin, by way of reward for the playing of his uncouth and shrill-sounding tunes.

Wine and chestnuts provide refreshments up to Christmas-eve; then a big supper is furnished forth to as many as can assemble under one roof. Burning brands support the huge *Suche*, or Yule-log, which is believed by the small-fry of Burgundian humanity to fetch in its wake a delectable shower of sugar-plums. Therefore are these little people as quiet as their superabundance of vitality will permit, for they know that, if good, something nice will be found to reward them—in their slippers or wooden shoes—on the morrow.

On the score of noise and hilarity, the grown-up folk atone for all deficiencies of the youngsters. "No-ll Noel!" echoes and re-echoes everywhere until the midnight mass is said, to attend which the pious carry diminutive, parti-coloured tapers, amidst the jubilation of the chiming church-bells.

In Sweden, when at their brightest, the aurora boreales make scintillate their crimson falchions, which read the golden sky-curtains to let one see

the purple fleets of cloudland pass in an enchanting position before the silver blink of the stars, then do the peasants dance on the straw in honour of Yule-tide, and rustic damsels throw straws at the roof-timbers, to ascertain, by the number of straws sticking thereon, how many groomsman will stand beside their brides at the altar during the ensuing year.

Songs and tales, brandy and nut-brown ale, and a great Yule cake, cheese-crowned, apple-wreathed, and set as the base for the three branched candlestick, are all objects of importance at Swedish Yule-tide festivities.

In a country not far from where "the two spirits of the globe, the magnetic and the electric"—according to Michelet—do nightly hold carnival in the polar circle, the poor Icelanders are allowed, as a rare treat, to have bread to eat with their Christmas mutton and milk porridge.

In Southern Lapland, should the householder neglect to provide an ample store of fuel for the season's needs, in popular belief the disgusted Yule-swains, or Christmas goblins, will so befoul the wood-pile that there shall be no getting at its contents. There also it is that the girl who wishes, nuptially speaking, to learn her fate, places a table in the centre of a vacant chamber, and on it two glasses—the one of water, the other of brandy; then, taking a broom, she must sweep the room three times carefully, against the sun, and if she is to enter the married state, her future husband will appear before she completes the third round, and drink from the water glass, if a sober man, or from the brandy glass if he be a drunkard.

Again, if a Laplander at Christmas, before retiring, pulls off his boots and flings them over his left shoulder, he shall know, from the shoes point-toward the door, whether a long journey or death will be his portion during the new year; but if, on the other hand, the boots' toes turn inward, he can feel assured of another twelvemonth's lease of his present existence.—*December Table Talk.*

Christmas Memories.

BY BISHOP J. H. NEWMAN.

Why did the Lord delay his incarnation? From the first prediction of his coming to his advent, four thousand years elapsed. He might have come in the reign of Solomon, whose vast empire extended from the Mediterranean to the borders of Persia, from the Nile to the Black Sea, whose renown was world-wide, greater than that of Augustus under whose reign Jesus was born. What a reception Solomon would have given the King of Glory! But the great West was not then born. All beyond the eastern shores of the Mediterranean were barbarians. Greece was not, Rome was not, Carthage was not. But when he came, the West was in the glory of a high civilization, to be thrilled with his new life. Had his birth been in the time of Solomon, he would not have been the suffering Saviour, but the Messiah of triumph.

When he came, the East was old and the West was young. Both needed his Divine torch, one to be revived, the other to be inspired. It was altogether the happiest period of Roman history from Augustus to Titus. Peace had given rest to the warrior and statesman; the scholar had time for reflection. It was the age of universities, an age of thinkers and philosophers; and his people, the Hebrews, were everywhere, in China and India, in Persia and Mesopotamia, wherever the Roman legions marched and the Greek language was spoken. From all parts of the world they came annually to Jerusalem—their spiritual capital—and on their return they bore the glad tidings, "He's come! He's come!" At that time the venerable saying

was true: "I have set Jerusalem in the midst of the nations." Palestine was the "High Bridge" for all who went East to conquer, whether Romans, Macedonians, or Egyptians; and for all who came West to plunder, whether from Ecbatana, or Babylon, or Nineveh. It was the ancient pathway of trade along which the merchants of all lands passed to buy and to sell. When he came, Jerusalem was the best-known city in the world. It was a cosmopolitan metropolis. The three-fold inscription on the cross proclaimed it the Babel of mankind. In St. Luke's report of Pentecost he names the many lands whence the Jews had come: from Parthia, Media, Persia, the whole valley of the Euphrates, from the interior of Africa and all Egypt, and from all the vast Roman empire. So it was strangely true, what the Master said of himself: "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me." And from that place and hour went forth the news that "The Messiah has come!"

Christmas Evergreens.

GATHER the box, the fir, and the pine,
And brightest of berries red,
To welcome the day the Child divine
First lay in His cradle bed.

Cover with wreaths the walls at home,
And hang them up everywhere,
Let them swing down from the temple dome,
And wherever there's space to spare.

For Christmas day is, of all the year,
The brightest and cheeriest day,
With its glorious tidings of great good cheer
That opens a new, glad way.

A way of escape from doubts and fears
That stirred in our hearts such strife;
A way, though it's through a vale of tears,
Yet ends in eternal life.

Gather the brightest your hands can find,
And twine them with songs of joy;
For only thoughts that are sweet and kind
Should come to such blest employ.

Once the dear head was crowned with thorns
That hatred and malice wove,
But our wreaths to welcome the Christmas morn
Are the fruitage of faith and love.

Bits of Fun.

—City Boarder (with numerous progeny): "Are there any snakes here?" Jersey Farmer: "All around the fruit trees, ma'am."

—Mamma: "I hope my little boy while dining with friends remembered what I told him about not taking cake the second time?" Little boy: "Yes, mamma, I remembered, and took two pieces the first time."

—Little Dot: "Mamma, didn't papa say Gen. Greely said there'd be high winds to day?" Mamma: "Yes, my dear, he read it in the paper." Little Dot: "Well, they isn't high at all. They is so low down they 'most blowed me over."

—Prison Warden (to new prisoner): "We always like to assign the prisoners to the trades with which they are most familiar and shall be happy to do so in your case. What is your trade?" Prisoner: "I am a commercial traveller."

—Professor (to class in surgery): "The right leg of this patient, as you see, is shorter than the left, in consequence of which he limps. Now, Mr. Sarter, what would you do in a case of this kind?" Sarter: "I'd limp, too."

—Old as the hills—the valleys.
—Take your puzzle to the druggist—he's always ready with a solution.

—Jones: "The woman of the present day can't make such pies as our mothers did." Brawa: "No, it's a lost tart."