

sometimes to fifteen or twenty. And so the great feast of fasting is over. Far on into the night they sing lullabies to the *Caro Bambino*, and laudations to the *Madre di Deo*.

At midnight three guns from St. Elmo send out their reverberations over city and sea. The churches are thronged with visitors to the representations of the manger scene. Then the crowds flock homeward. A partial hush falls upon the streets. A bomb explodes in the distance, and from the depths of an orange grove in our neighbour's garden a single rocket ascends, with its streak of flame among the stars. We have hardly closed our eyes to a sound sleep when another gun wakes the echoes, and over St. Angelo and the islands breaks the morning sun, staining the vapour of Vesuvius with amethyst, and tipping a little later the blue waves with gold. The scene itself is an anthem of praise, a glorious psalm sung to its Maker and Lord. No masses to the Madonna, or the Christ, kindled, I can venture to say, a purer flame of devotion, or carried the thoughts more surely up to Him, whose coming into this His own world was being commemorated that day.

Bright and early in the morning the tinkle of a bell and clatter of hoofs were heard on the marble staircase, followed by the steps of the goatherd, and going out we found Federigo, the household pet, with chubby little hands, feeding the milk-white goat with outer leaves from the Christmas salads, and Lena, the Swiss servant, talking bad Italian to its owner, who stood poising the glass of milk between his thumb and finger, waiting for his Christmas box. Next—all before breakfast—the tall splendid-looking porter, who called successively at the door of each of the ten families occupying the *palazzo* in his keeping; then a Dominican monk, in a mask, who held his little box conspicuously forward; and soon, all who were dependants, or ever had been, and all who hoped they ever might be, and various others—for “this is a great day” they inform you. This universal and chronic expectation of presents among the humbler classes diminishes materially the pleasure of making gifts. But to the children it is a pure delight. There is the never-failing plate of sweetmeats; and the manger, a favourite gift, with its meek mouse-coloured oxen, and the toy-bell of pottery, with