

Christmas Ships.
 Blow fair, sweet wind, upon the distant seas;
 Blow fair, and kind,
 For many sails are for a favoring breeze
 Where none they find.
 Your graces they court,
 For Christmas port.
 Some ride the waves with strong and buoyant prow,
 And canvas white,
 Others with straining spars the dark seas plough
 In solemn plight.
 Make them your care,
 Kind wind, blow fair.
 Many are faring home from havens far,
 After long years;
 And eyes are gazing out across the bar
 Through gathering tears.
 Bring the ship near,
 For Christmas cheer.
 Wherever ships should speed upon the wave,
 Go, friendly breeze;
 But when the hollows fiercely rock and rave,
 Lull them to ease.
 Let joy abide
 At Christmas tide!
 —Harper's Weekly.

IN THE CHRISTMAS DAWNING.
 One Answer to the Triumphal Summons of the Adeste Fideles.

With the dawn of Christmas Eve, snow began to fall and when Night, scattering darkness, winged her silent course across the steel-gray heavens, the snow ceased falling, and, one by one, the starry words swung out their lights, eternal guides for the celestial messengers forever traversing the realms of space. The wind piped its wordless song, not in catching gasps and sobs as if a chained heart followed in its wake, but in ringing trills and grace-notes. With it another song, or rather the breath of a song, was mingling, subtle, sweet, and low. What was it? The vibration of the leafless boughs, faint echoes hither wafted from some far southern land, or the frequent repetition of Christ's joyful natal song? Souls dwelling in the valley where earthly din and tumult reign, though their ears are strained and pleading hands are lifted, hear not this heavenly music; but they who stand, tip-toed, upon the still, light encircled mountain-top, are transported by its rapture. And they carry in their hands golden bugles through which they blow, to the ears beneath, the sweet song's mystic meaning. Hence the world is glad at Christmas time; the blinding tears are brushed away, and peace, like the soft snow covering earth, falls gently over human hearts.

All day long and far into the hours of the night, a constant, restless tide of men and women had surged over the broad streets of the city. The light snow, under their feet, had been beaten into a surface as hard as the asphalt it concealed, like hearts grown callous beneath the pressing march of Time. Grinding wheels and ringing of bells, cries of drivers and shouts of children, laughter and merry greeting, those had the tired hours heard; then quiet fell, broken at intervals by the street cars rumbling past. The light faded from the windows leaving the streets enveloped in gloom, save where an occasional electric lamp threw its circle of trembling rays.

But in the stately houses lining those deserted streets were waking eyes, for the ghosts of our lives are not fastidious; they will keep us company in the shadows as well as in the light; indeed they rather prefer the shadows, for there their white, accusing faces flash more vividly before our eyes. In one of those houses, with carved lions guarding its gateway, with grand armorial ensigns ornamenting its walls, a man sat alone. The fire that had gleamed so brightly on the gay family circle an hour before had dwindled into a few dying embers, that flickered feebly ere falling into the ashes beneath; and as each fell a cry resounded in his ears, the cries of the ghosts with whom he was spending his Christmas Eve. Faded hopes and shattered dreams, broken friendships, blighted loves, crowded around him sitting there. But as the last ember fell, a face shone full on him, so suddenly, so distinctly, he threw a protecting hand before his eyes, as if that shield of flesh were proof against one of memory's poisoned darts! Then by the feeble rays shining across the bed of dull, gray ashes on the hearth, he read the allegory of a woman, who had once stood, like some fair angel, upon the still, light-encircled mountain-brow, and who, gazing down, had caught a cry of yearning, perhaps, of anguish, surely, from an earth-clogged soul beneath. She ventured down that dizzy height to whisper words of cheer and comfort, and found but earth where she had thought she caught a glimpse of heaven. Then! — a shiver ran along his frame although the room was warm.

He left his place by the hearth and stole into the next apartment, where a lamp shed its softened gleam over the cot of a sleeping child, and shivered again on seeing, against the lace pillow, the face of the woman of the allegory; for Innocence wears on all the same expression. Remorse and penitence, clasping hands, knocking at his soul's door, gained admittance, and kneeling humbly, he cried to Bethlehem's King for pardon, as over the listening world rang the joyous bells of Christmas night.

Again peace and quiet on the snowy streets, peace and quiet in the watching heart.

pulsing around was abruptly broken by a woman's laugh, the laugh of her who had lived the tender, pure, beautiful ideal of her youth into a cruel, scathing, bitter mockery. It fell on the listener's ears, sending a tingling pain along his nerves, causing his heart to cease its calm pulsations. The echoes of the deserted street caught up that laugh, repeating again and again its hollow, biting mirth. Other laughs filled the silence, yet he heard but one, for treacherous memory had bounded forward to aid the echoes in its reproduction. Then he realized his penalty was to hear, throughout all time, in every sound, that woman's laugh, to see on every countenance that woman's face.

But over the street's sudden noise a sweet voice was borne, singing the "Adeste Fideles." At its magic note, the din of the revelers ceased. Each prisoner soul awoke and began to cry piteously for freedom; but the cries were instantly stilled, save by one woman.

"Come!" and her breath as she sent out the word, falling on the cheek of her companion, stung like red hot needles, while her eyes seemed to shoot out sparks of fire.

Unconscious of the wind and snow, she stood as motionless as one of the fluted pillars supporting the church's lofty piers.

"Adeste Fideles," again came the invitation, angel-voiced. Dared she? She stepped forward, then stopped.

"Ah! not for you, not for you, my lost soul," lifting her eyes, now dull and sorrow-charged, to the snow-wreathed church. "Long ago you discarded your claim to that title." Yet she stood, straining her ears to catch each well-remembered note; while in the stately house opposite, sat another listener, his face buried in his hands.

"Adeste Fideles," and the words, by their magnetic power, led her from the street, across the narrow strip of yard, to the foot of the high steps.

She glanced around, half in fear, wholly in shame. What if she were venturing as far as the vestibule! She looked across the yard, and the print of her steps upon the snow were like angry words of accusation; but lo! flakes were swiftly, silently hiding the marks of her desecration. She continued to gaze until where she had passed was again a soft, unbroken surface. The great God communicates with man in various ways. On that first Christmas night He sent all heaven's choir to proclaim to earth the tidings of redemption; to night it came in the snowflakes' feathery falling. Her heart gave a throb of joy as she mounted the stone steps, but soon passed, for she thought over her trampled, stained life never should the snow of innocence fall.

A shaft of light slipped out between the swinging doors, and by it she saw, from Memory's pages, the festive scene the inside of that church presented. The wreaths of holly circling the marble altars, the silver rays, reflected a thousand times, in rainbow hues, from dangling prisms, the white-robed priest, the kneeling people—she saw it all, and, seeing, she remembered. She, too, had knelt before those altars. When life was young, and purpose strong, and her heart untouched by sin. Often on such Christmas mornings she had come hither, not as now, shrinking from the eyes of men, but as a favored child of Heaven. And now! She sank on her knees, screening her face from the bar of light, while over her, recollection of the girlhood, lived within the shadow of this old church, was surging.

the gold and myrrh and frankincense the Eastern sages brought.

Inside, the music had ceased but she stilled not until the sound of coming feet aroused her. As the door was pushed forward, she sprang up, but in hurrying away she missed her footing and was hurled down to seek a nurse. Some man stumbled over her in the yard below, and the hastily-brought light discovered her lying in the snow, which was stained a bright crimson by the blood flowing from a gash in her temple. The eyes fluttered open once to see the white-robed priest bending over her, while strange voices were reciting the familiar prayers of her childhood. She moved her lips, but the sounds died unuttered. The dying eyes saw the cross raised over her in solemn benediction and then closed forever on the things of earth. But when they opened in another life, they beheld great bands of angels hastening down, with songs of joy and glad thanksgiving for a bark, that, despite loud winds and tossing waves, had drifted safely into port that happy Christmas morn.

LEGENDS OF THE NATIVITY.
 The Wonderful Light of the Holy Night—Beautiful Significance of Symbols.

One of the most beautiful legends of the Nativity is that which is given in the "Protevangelium" in regard to the miraculous calm of the holy night. Joseph, having left the Blessed Virgin in the cave, goes out to seek a nurse. And I, says he, "was walking and was not walking; and I looked up into the sky and saw the sky astonished; and I looked up to the pole of the heavens and saw it standing, and the birds of the air keeping still. And I looked down upon the earth, and saw a trough lying and work people reclining, and their hands were in the trough. And those that were eating did not eat, and those that were carrying anything to their mouths did not carry it; but the faces of all were looking upwards. And I saw the sheep nor statue can tell sheep stood still; and the shepherd raised his hand to strike them, and his hand remained up. And I looked on the current of the river, and I saw the mouths of the kids resting on the water and not drinking, and all things in a moment were driven from their course." This is an idea which neither painting nor sculpture can express; for though, strangely enough, it is only a description of what one sees in every statue and in every picture—a momentary action fixed in a beautiful rest—yet neither picture nor statue can tell us that the rest continues; that the interpretation is that it is only an immeasurably brief instant in that ever-changing current of life which flows through all things. But poetry can do that which lies beyond the power of the other arts; and we find this idea of immobility and profound quietude of the heavens, at least, expressed in Milton's "Ode to the Nativity":

The stars with deep amazement stand fixed in steadfast gaze,
 Bend as if way their precious influence;
 And shut out takes their flight
 For all the morning light,
 Or Lucifer, that often warned them hence.

There are two other noteworthy legends in regard to the Nativity. One, which is common to several of the apocryphal books, describes the dazzling supernatural light which filled the cave with glory. The other is narrated in the book which is called by the name of Matthew: "And on the third day after the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, the most blessed Mary went forth out of the cavern and entering a stable, placed the Child in the stall, and the ass and the ox adored Him. Then was fulfilled that which was said by Isaiah the prophet, saying: "The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his Master's crib." Both of these legends have been freely accepted by the artists. There is hardly one of them who does not introduce the ox and the ass; and sometimes the latter animal is represented with open mouth, lifting up his voice in audible adoration. The miraculous radiance has been employed by some of the painters to produce wonderful effects of light and shade. A famous example of this is Coreggio's picture in the gallery of Dresden.

There are also certain symbols or mystical emblems which are frequently introduced into pictures of the Nativity. The cross is placed in the hand of an angel or of the little St. John to remind us of the future of the Holy Child. The lamb is the type of His purity; and when it is bound with cords it represents His sacrifice. The dove is the emblem of the Holy Spirit; it also speaks of meekness and innocence. The gold finch, because of the red spot on its head, is connected with the memory of Christ's death. A sheaf of wheat is often used as a pillow for the infant Jesus, or a few ears of it are placed in His hands, as a symbol of the bread of life. When He has His finger laid upon His lips it is to remind us that He is the Word of God. The palm is the symbol of martyrdom and glory; the olive is the emblem of peace; the globe represents His kingly authority. Thus in the silent language of signs the artists have expressed the thoughts of wonder and worship which have gathered through the ages about the cradle of Christ—From "The Christ Child in Art," by Henry Van Dyke.

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A Protestant's Praise.

In the course of a sermon preached in Plymouth pulpit, New York, the Rev. Dr. Lyman Abbott said: "The differences between the Roman Catholic and the Protestant are wide and fundamental. But there are some things I have not forgotten: I have not forgotten the services of the Benedictine monks who traveled over Europe establishing schools and laying the foundations of seminaries and colleges. I have not forgotten the sacrifices of Roman Catholic missionaries who could be deterred by no burning heats and no frigid zone from bearing, after their own manner, the message of the Gospel of Christ to the people that were in darkness. I have not forgotten the preaching of the Franciscan Friars, who, working in the poor and miserable hovels in the cities of Great Britain, laid there by their Gospel the foundations for freedom, civil and political, as well as for the Roman Catholic tutor and instructor of that Simon de Montfort who may almost be called the founder of the English Parliament, and so the creator of the American Constitution. I have not forgotten the Brothers and Sisters of charity who are leading the world in their self-sacrifice, their generosity, their devotion, their good works. I have not forgotten the Roman Catholic hospital in this city, nearly all of whose surgeons are Protestants, or at least non-Catholics, and whose doors swing as readily to let a Protestant as a Roman Catholic enter. At Gettysburg, in the crucial moment of that critical battle, a regiment made up of Roman Catholics was ordered to a charge. There were five minutes before the charge was to be made, and in that five minutes the Roman Catholic chaplain offered one short prayer and gave absolution to the regiment; and then came the command Charge, and the whole Roman Catholic regiment rushed on to death. Who has shown more love for America than that Roman Catholic regiment?"

A Time for Rejoicing.

It would be unlawful to be sad to-day, for to-day is life's birthday; so the birthday of that life which, for us dying creatures, take away the sting of death, and bringeth the bright promise of the eternal gladness hereafter.

Rejoice, O thou that art holy; thou drawest nearer to thy crown. Rejoice, O thou that art sinful; the Saviour offereth thee pardon. Rejoice, O thou Gentile; God calleth thee to life.—Christmas Sermon of P. e. Leo the Great.

The Festival of Childhood and Motherhood.

Christmas is truly the festival of childhood; but it should also be the festival of motherhood, for the child, even the holiest, is not divided from the mother. We may learn to think of infancy as sacred in the light that flows from the manger cradle of Jesus. Yet it seems to me we cannot receive that truth perfectly unless we first learn to think of motherhood as holy in the memory of her whose virgin and stainless love found favor with God to receive and guard and cherish the Son of the Highest.—Henry Van Dyke in "The Christ Child in Art."

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 Dear Christ, Thy coming m-
 swore,
 Turn in those stricken he-
 Lord,
 Mourn against the loss of fir-
 Passed to the silence of far
 O Star, shine clear! O Chi-
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FIVE-MINUTE STORIES
 Fourth Sunday of
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