

THE APPROACH OF CHRISTMAS.

{L'Echo de la Timbrologie}

It was the calm and silent night!
 Seven hundred years and fifty three
 Had Rome been growing up to night,
 And now was queen of land and sea!
 No sound was heard of clashing wars,
 Peace brooded o'er the hushed domain;
 Apollo, Pallas, Jove and Mars
 Held undisturbed their ancient reign,
 In the solemn midnight,
 Centuries ago.

'Twas in the calm and silent night!
 The Senator of haughty Rome
 Impatient urged his chariot's flight,
 From lordly revel rolling home!
 Triumphal arches, gleaming, swell
 His breast with thoughts of bound'ess sway;
 What reeked the Roman what befel
 A paltry province far away,
 In the solemn midnight,
 Centuries ago?

Within that province far away,
 Went plodding home a weary door;
 A streak of light before him lay,
 Fallen through a half-shut stable-door,
 Across his path. He paused, for naught
 Told what was going on within:
 How keen the stars! his only thought;
 The air how calm, and cold, and thin,
 In the solemn midnight,
 Centuries ago!

Oh, strange indifference!—low and high
 Drowned over common joys and cares;
 The earth was still, but knew not why;
 The world was listening—unawares!
 How calm a moment may precede
 One that shall thrill the world forever!
 To that still moment none would heed,
 Man's doom was linked, no more to sever,
 In the solemn midnight,
 Centuries ago!

Is is the calm and silent night!
 A thousand bells ring out, and throw
 Their joyous peals abroad, and smite
 The darkness—charmed and holy now!
 The night that erst no shame had worn,
 To it a happier name is given;
 For in the stable lay, new-born,
 The peaceful Prince of earth and heaven,
 In the solemn midnight
 Centuries ago!

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