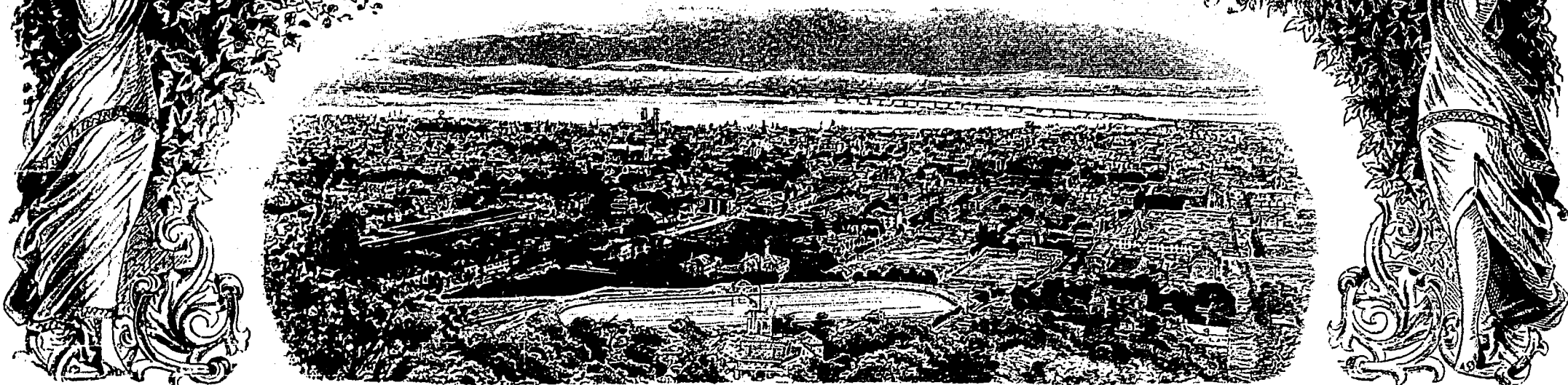


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THE NATIVITY.

It was the winter wild,
While the heaven-born Child
All meanly wrapt in the rude
manger lies:
Nature, in awe to Him,
Had doffed her gaudy trim,
With her great Master so to
sympathize:
It was no season then for her
To wanton with the sun, her
lusty paramour.

Only with speeches fair
She woo'd the gentle air,
To hide her guilty front with
innocent snow:
And on her naked shame,
Palliate with sinful blame,
The saintly veil of maiden
white to throw;
Confounded, that her Maker's
eyes
Should look so near upon her
foul deformities.

But He, her fears to cease,
Sent down the meek-eyed
Peace:
She, crowned with olive-green,
came softly sliding
Down through the turning
sphere,
His rosy harbinger,
With turtle wing the amorous
cloud dividing:
And, waving wide her myrtle
wand,
She strikes a universal peace
through sea and land.

No war, or battle's sound,
Was heard the world around:
The idle spear and shield were
high up hung;
The hooked chariot stood
Unstained with hostile blood:
The trumpet spake not to the
armed throng:
And kings sat still with awful
eye,
As if they surely knew their
sovereign Lord was by.

But peaceful was the night,
Wherein the Prince of Light
His reign of peace upon the
earth began:
The winds with wonder whist,
Smoothly the waters kissed,
Whispering new joys to the
mild o'cean,
Who now hath quite forgot to
rave,
While birds of calm sit brood-
ing on the charmed wave.

The stars, with deep amaze,
Stand fixed in steadfast gaze,
Bending one way their precious
influence;
And will not take their flight,
For all the morning light,
Or Lucifer that often warned
them thence:
But in their glimmering orbs
did glow,
Until their Lord Himself be-
spoke, and bid them go.

And, though the shady gloom
Had given day her room,
The sun himself withheld his
wonted speed,
And hid his head for shame
As his inferior flame
The new enlightened world no
more should need:
He saw a greater Sun appear
Than his bright throne, or burn-
ing axle-tree, could bear.

The shepherds on the lawn,
Or ere the point of dawn,
Sat simply chatting in a rustic
row:
Full little thought they then,
That the mighty Pan
Was kindly come to live with
them below;
Perhaps their loves, or else their
sheep,
Was all that did their silly
thoughts so busy keep.



When such music sweet
Their hearts and ears did
greet,
As never was by mortal finger
strook:
Divinely-warbled voice
Answering the stringed noise,
As all their souls in blissful
rapture took:
The air, such pleasure loath to
lose,
With thousand echoes still pro-
longs each heavenly close.

Nature, that heard such
sound,
Beneath the hollow round
Of Cynthia's seat, the airy re-
gion thrilling,
Now was almost won
To think her part was done,
And that her reign had here its
last fulfilling:
She knew such harmony alone
Could hold all heaven and earth
in happier union.

At last surrounds their sight
A globe of circular light,
That with long beams the
shame-faced night arrayed;
The helmed cherubim,
And sworded seraphim,
Are seen in glittering ranks with
wings displayed,
Harping in loud and solemn
choir,
With unexpressive notes, to
Heaven's new-born Heir.

Such music (as 'tis said)
Before was never made,
But when of old the sons of
morning sung,
While the Creator great
His constellations set,
And the well-balanced world on
hinges hung:
And cast the dark foundations
deep,
And bid the weltering waves
their oozy channel keep.

Ring out, ye crystal spheres,
Once bless our human ears,
If ye have power to touch our
senses so:
And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time:
And let the bass of heaven's
deep organ blow:
And, with your ninefold har-
mony,
Make up full consort to the
angelic symphony.

For, if such holy song
Enwrap our fancy long,
Time will run back and fetch
the age of gold;
And speckled vanity
Will sicken soon and die,
And leprous sin will melt from
earthly mould;
And heaven, as at some festival,
Will open wide the gates of her
high palace hall.

But wisest Fate says No,
This must not yet be so:
The Babe yet lies in smiling in-
fancy,
That on the bitter cross
Must redeem our loss:
So both Himself and us to glo-
rify:
Yet first, to those onchained in
sleep,
The wakeful trump of doom
must thunder through the
deep.

With such a horrid clang
As on Mount Sinai rang,
While the red fire and smoul-
dering clouds outbreako:
The aged earth ash-blast,
With terror of that blast,
Shall from the surface to the
centre shake:
When, at the world's last ses-
sion,
The dreadful Judge in middle
air shall spread His throne.