

**CHRISTMAS
IN LEGEND AND STORY**

CHRISTMAS
IN LEGEND AND STORY

BY

ELVA S. SMITH

AND

ALICE I. HAZLETINE

YESTERDAY'S CLASSICS
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PREFACE

In our experience in library work with children we have learned that it is very difficult to find Christmas stories and legends which have literary merit, are reverent in spirit, and are also suitable for children. This collection has been made in an endeavor to meet this need, and thus to be of service to parents, teachers, and librarians.

Most of the stories and poems in this book are of the legendary type. They have been chosen from a wide variety of sources and represent the work of many writers. There are other stories also, which, although not strictly traditional, have the same reverent spirit and illustrate traditional beliefs and customs. These have been included for their literary value and their interest for young people.

In the arrangement of the selections we have followed the natural order of the events in preference to grouping the stories for boys and girls of different ages.

Although no attempt has been made to adapt the legends for story-telling, most of them may be used

for that purpose. Many of the selections are also well suited for reading aloud.

Above all it is hoped that this book may bring real joy to the boys and girls for whom it has been compiled.

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“THE GRACIOUS TIME”

ACCORDING to tradition, on the Holy Night there fell upon Bethlehem of Judea a strange and unnatural calm; the voices of the birds were hushed, water ceased to flow and the wind was stilled. But when the child Jesus was born all nature burst into new life; trees put forth green leaves, grass sprang up and bright flowers bloomed. To animals was granted the power of human speech and the ox and the ass knelt in their stalls in adoration of the infant Saviour. Then it was that the shepherds abiding in the field with their flocks heard the angels praising God, and kings of the Orient watching in their “far country” saw ablaze in the heavens the long-expected sign. Even in distant Rome there sprang up a well or fountain which “ran largely” and the ancient prophetess, Sibyl, looking eastward from the Capitoline hill heard the angel song and saw in vision all the wonders of that night.

There are many such traditional tales of the nativity, of the “star-led wizards” and of the marvels wrought by the boy Christ. They tell of the bees singing their sweet hymn of praise to the Lord, of the palm-tree bending down its branches that the weary travellers fleeing from the wrath of Herod might be refreshed by its fruit, of

CHRISTMAS IN LEGEND AND STORY

the juniper which opened to conceal them and of the sweet-smelling balsam which grew wherever the drops of moisture fell from the brow of the Boy “as He ran about or toiled in His loving service for His Mother.” Quaint fancies some of these, perhaps, and not all of them worth preserving; but oftentimes beautiful, and with a germ of truth.

From the centuries between then and now, come stories of holy men, of bishops and peasant-saints, and of brave men who preached the White Christ to the vikings of the north or on Iona’s isle. As in popular belief, with each returning eve of the nativity the miracles of the first Christmas happen again, so in these tales the thorn-tree blossoms anew and wonderful roses bloom in the bleak forest.

Other stories tell how on each Christmas eve the little Christ-child comes again to earth and wanders through village or town, while lighted candles are placed in the windows to guide Him on His way.

These various legends and traditional tales, which sprang up among the people like flowers by the wayside and became a part of the life of the Middle Ages, are still of interest to us of to-day and have a distinct charm of their own. And when the childlike faith and beauty of thought of the finest of these have found expression in literary form they seem particularly suited for our reading at “the gracious time.”

THE ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS

ST. LUKE, II, 1-16

AND it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.

And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.

And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judæa, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; because he was of the house and lineage of David:

To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

CHRISTMAS IN LEGEND AND STORY

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.



THE ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS
From Painting by Bouguereau

THE CHILD BORN AT BETHLEHEM

HORACE ELISHA SCUDDER

ABOUT six miles to the south of Jerusalem is the village of Bethlehem, lying along the slope and on the top of a gray hill, from the steep eastern end of which one looks over a broad plain, toward a range of high hills beyond. At any time, as one drew near the place, coming from Jerusalem, he would pass by rounded hills, and now and then cross little ravines with brooks, sometimes full of water, sometimes only beds of stone; and, if it were spring-time, he would see the hills and valleys covered with their grass, and sprinkled abundantly with a great variety of wild flowers, daisies, poppies, the Star of Bethlehem, tulips and anemones—a broad sheet of color, of scarlet, white and green. Perhaps, very long ago, there were trees also where now there are none; and on those hills, gray with the stone that peeped out through the grass, stood the mighty cedars of Lebanon, stretching out their sweeping branches, and oaks, sturdy and rich with dark foliage, green the year round. At any rate, then, as now, we may believe that there were vineyards upon the sunny slopes, and

THE CHILD BORN AT BETHLEHEM

we know that the wind blew over corn-fields covering the plains that lay between the ranges of hills.

It is of the time long since that we are thinking, when there were no massive buildings on Bethlehem hill, such as are to be seen in the town as it now appears. Instead, there were low houses, many of mud and sunburnt brick, some so poor, doubtless, that the cattle were stalled, if not in the same room with the people of the house, yet so near that they could be heard through the partition, stamping, and crunching their food. There was an inn there, also; but we must not think of it as like our modern public-houses, with a landlord and servants, where one could have what he needed by paying for it. Rather, it was a collection of buildings for the convenience and accommodation of travelers, who brought with them whatever they required of food, and the means of preparing it, finding there only shelter and the roughest conveniences. The larger inns of this sort were built in the form of a great courtyard surrounded by arcades, in which people stayed, and kept their goods, if they were merchants.

The inn at Bethlehem was not probably one of these great caravanserais,—as they are called now in the East, because caravans stop at them; and it is even possible that the stables about the inn were simply caves scooped out of the soft chalk rock, for the country there has an abundance of these caves used for this very purpose.

From the hill on which Bethlehem stands, one can see travelers approaching, and at that time, long ago, no doubt the people who lived there saw companies of

CHRISTMAS IN LEGEND AND STORY

travelers, on foot or mounted, coming up to the village. For it was a busy time in Judea. The Emperor at Rome, the capital of the world, had ordered a tax to be laid upon his subjects, and first it had to be known just who were liable to be taxed. Nowadays, and in our country, people have their names taken down at the door of their own houses, and pay their tax in the town where they live. But then, in Judea, it was different. If a man had always lived in one place, and his parents before him, well and good: there his name was taken down, and there he was taxed. But if he was of a family that had left another place, he went back to the old home, and there his name was registered. There were many, it may be, who at this time were visiting Bethlehem for this purpose.

At least, we know of two amongst these travelers; devout and humble people they were; Joseph, a carpenter, living in Nazareth, a village of Galilee, sixty miles or more to the northward, and Mary, his wife. Together they were coming to Bethlehem, for while Nazareth was now their home, they were sprung from a family that once lived in Bethlehem, and though they were now poor and lowly, that family was the royal family, and King David, the greatest king that ever sat on the Jewish throne, was their ancestor. Perhaps, as they climbed the hill, they thought of Ruth, who had gleaned in the corn-fields just where they were passing, and no doubt they thought of Ruth's great-grandson, King David, who was born here, and here kept his father's sheep,—such sheep as even now they could see on the hillsides, watched by the watching shepherds.

THE CHILD BORN AT BETHLEHEM

They came, like the rest, to the caravanserai, but found it already filled with travelers. They could not have room with other men and women, and yet there was shelter to be had, for the place where the horses and beasts of burden stood was not all taken up. It may be that many of those now occupying the inn had come on Joseph's errand, and, not being merchants, had come unattended by the beasts that bore the goods of merchants, who were there occupying the inn; and what were they there for? We can only guess. All is forgotten of that gathering; men remember only the two travelers from Nazareth who could find no room in the inn, and made their resting-place by a manger.

For there, away from the crowd, was born to Mary a child, whom she wrapped in swaddling-clothes and laid in the manger. She was away from home; she was not even in a friend's house, nor yet in the inn; the Lord God had made ready a crib for the babe in the feeding-place of cattle. What gathering of friends could there be to rejoice over a child born in this solitary place?

Yet there were some, friends of the child and of the child's mother, who welcomed its birth with great rejoicing. It may be that when Mary was laying Him upon His first hard earthly resting-place, there was, not far off, such a sight as never before was seen on earth. On the hilly slopes about Bethlehem were flocks of sheep that, day and night, cropped the grass, watched by shepherds, just as, so long before, young David, in the same place, had watched his father's sheep. These shepherds were devout men, who sang, we may easily believe, the songs which the shepherd David had taught

CHRISTMAS IN LEGEND AND STORY

them; and now, in the night-time, on the quiet slopes, as they kept guard over their flocks, out of the darkness appeared a heavenly visitor: whence he came they knew not, but round about him was a brightness which they knew could be no other than the brightness of His presence which God cast about His messengers. Great fear fell upon them—for who of mortals could stand before the heavenly beings? But the angel, quick to see their fear, spoke in words which were the words of men and fell in peaceful accents:—

“Fear not!” said he, “for see, I bring you glad tidings of a great joy that shall be to all the people. For there has been born to you, this very day, a Saviour, who is the Holy Lord, born in the city of David; and this shall be its sign to you: ye shall find a child wrapped in swaddling-clothes lying in a manger.”

And now, suddenly, before they could speak to the heavenly messenger, they saw, not him alone, but the place full of the like heavenly beings. A multitude was there; they came not as if from some distant place, but as angels that ever stood round these shepherds. The eyes of the men were opened, and they saw, besides the grassy slopes and feeding sheep, and distant Bethlehem, and the stars above, a host of angels. Their ears were opened, and besides the moving sheep and rustling boughs, they heard from this great army of heavenly beings a song, rising to God and falling like a blessing upon the sleeping world:—

“Glory to God in the highest
And on earth peace,
Good will to men.”

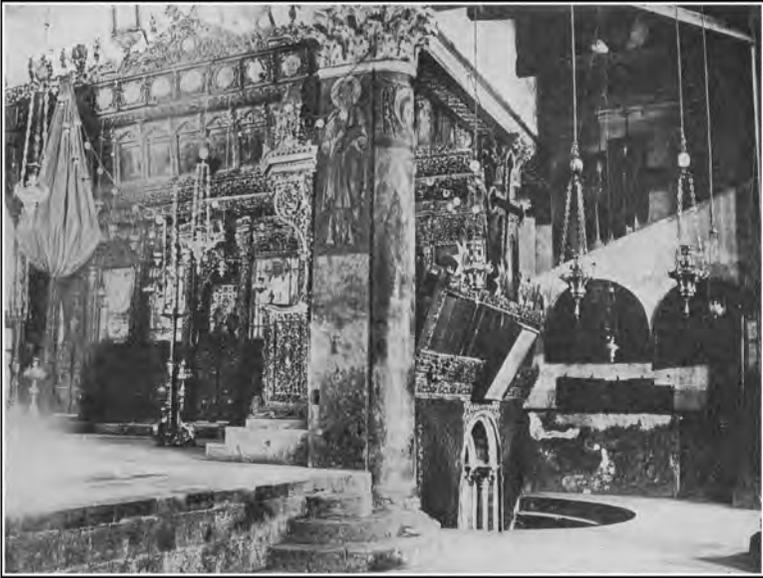
THE CHILD BORN AT BETHLEHEM

In the lowly manger, a little child; on the hillside pasture, a heavenly host singing His praises! Then it was once more quiet, and the darkness was about the shepherds. They looked at one another and said,—“Let us go, indeed, to Bethlehem, to see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord hath made us know.”

So, in all haste, with the sound of that hymn of glory in their ears, they left the pasture and sought the town. They went to the inn, but they looked not there for the child; where the mangers were, there they sought Him, and found Him lying, and by Him Joseph and Mary. There were others by the new-born child, some who had doubtless come out from the inn at hearing of the birth. “Whence are these shepherds?” they might have said to themselves, “and what has brought them to this birthplace?”

To all by the manger, the shepherds, their minds full of the strange sight they had witnessed, recount the marvel. They tell how one appeared with such brightness about him as in old times they had heard gave witness that the Lord God would speak to His people; how their fear at his presence was quieted by his strange and joyful words; and how, when he had said, “Ye shall find a child wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger,” they suddenly were aware of a host of angels round about them sounding praise, to which God also listened.

Those to whom they told these things were amazed indeed at the strangeness. What did the marvel mean, they wondered. They could know no more than the



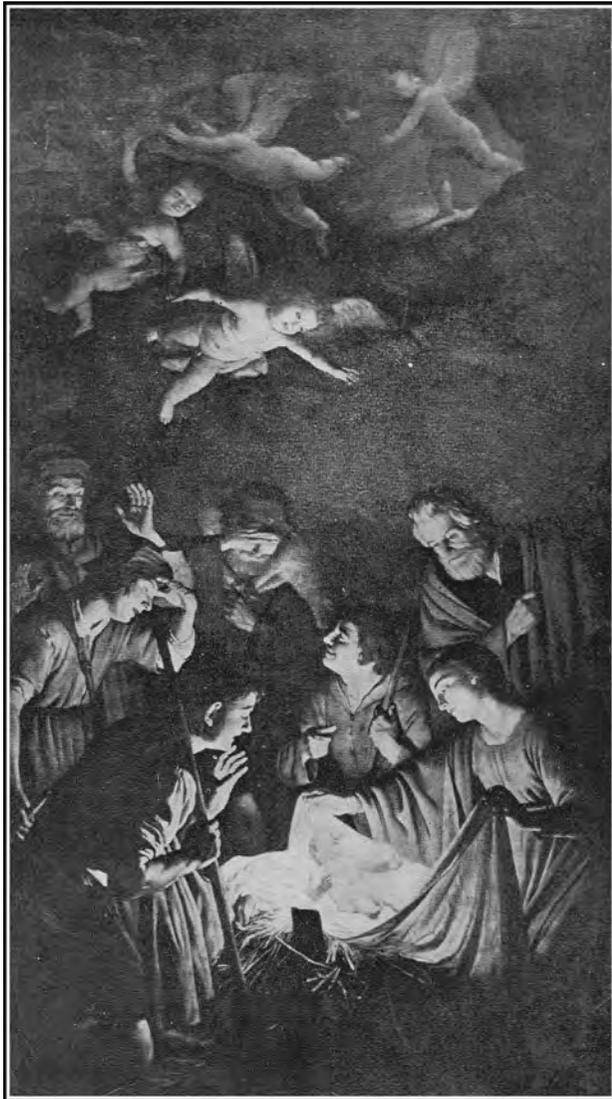
CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY, BETHLEHEM,
MARKING THE TRADITIONAL BIRTHPLACE OF CHRIST

THE CHILD BORN AT BETHLEHEM

shepherds had told them, and as for these men, they went away to their flocks again, praising God, for now they too, had seen the child, and it was all true, and with their human voice they caught up the song of rejoicing which had fallen from angelic lips.

There was one who heard it all, and we may think did not say much or ask much, but laid it away in her heart. It was Mary, and she had, in the treasure-house where she put away this wonder, other thoughts and recollections in company with it. There, in her inmost heart, she kept the remembrance of a heavenly visitor who had appeared to her when she was alone, and had quieted her fear by words that told her of this coming birth, and filled her soul with the thought that He whom she should bear was to have the long-deserted throne and a kingdom without end. She remembered how, when she visited her cousin Elizabeth, she was greeted with a psalm of rejoicing that sprang to the lips of that holy woman, and from her own heart had come a psalm of response.

And now the child was born—born in the place of David, yet born to be laid in a manger. A name had been given it by the angel, and she called the child Jesus; for Jesus means Saviour, and “He shall,” said the angel, “save His people from their sins.”



THE ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS

From Painting by Honthorst

AS JOSEPH WAS A-WALKING

OLD ENGLISH CAROL

As Joseph was a-walking
He heard an angel sing:—
“This night there shall be born
Our heavenly King.

“He neither shall be born
In housen, nor in hall,
Nor in the place of Paradise,
But in an ox’s stall.

“He neither shall be clothèd
In purple nor in pall;
But in the fair, white linen,
That usen babies all.

“He neither shall be rockèd
In silver nor in gold,
But in a wooden cradle
That rocks on the mould.

“He neither shall be christened
In white wine nor in red,
But with fair spring water
With which we were christenèd.”

CHRISTMAS IN LEGEND AND STORY

Mary took her baby,
She dressed Him so sweet,
She laid Him in a manger,
All there for to sleep.

As she stood over Him
She heard angels sing,
“O bless our dear Saviour,
Our heavenly King.”

THE PEACEFUL NIGHT

JOHN MILTON

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 kist,
 Whispering new joys to the mild Ocean,—
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
While birds of calm sit brooding on the
 charmèd 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 bespake, 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 burning axletree could bear.



THE HOLY NIGHT
From Painting by Grass

THE CHRISTMAS SILENCE

MARGARET DELAND

Hushed are the pigeons cooing low
On dusty rafters of the loft;
And mild-eyed oxen, breathing soft,
Sleep on the fragrant hay below.

Dim shadows in the corner hide;
The glimmering lantern's rays are shed
Where one young lamb just lifts his head,
Then huddles 'gainst his mother's side.

Strange silence tingles in the air;
Through the half-open door a bar
Of light from one low-hanging star
Touches a baby's radiant hair.

No sound: the mother, kneeling, lays
Her cheek against the little face.
Oh human love! Oh heavenly grace!
'Tis yet in silence that she prays!

Ages of silence end to-night;
Then to the long-expectant earth
Glad angels come to greet His birth
In burst of music, love, and light!

NEIGHBORS OF THE CHRIST NIGHT

NORA ARCHIBALD SMITH

Deep in the shelter of the cave,
 The ass with drooping head
Stood weary in the shadow, where
 His master's hand had led.
About the manger oxen lay,
 Bending a wide-eyed gaze
Upon the little new-born Babe,
 Half worship, half amaze.
High in the roof the doves were set,
 And cooed there, soft and mild,
Yet not so sweet as, in the hay,
 The Mother to her Child.
The gentle cows breathed fragrant breath
 To keep Babe Jesus warm,
While loud and clear, o'er hill and dale,
 The cocks crowed, "Christ is born!"
Out in the fields, beneath the stars,
 The young lambs sleeping lay,
And dreamed that in the manger slept
 Another, white as they.

These were Thy neighbors, Christmas Child;
 To Thee their love was given,
For in Thy baby face there shone
 The wonder-light of Heaven.

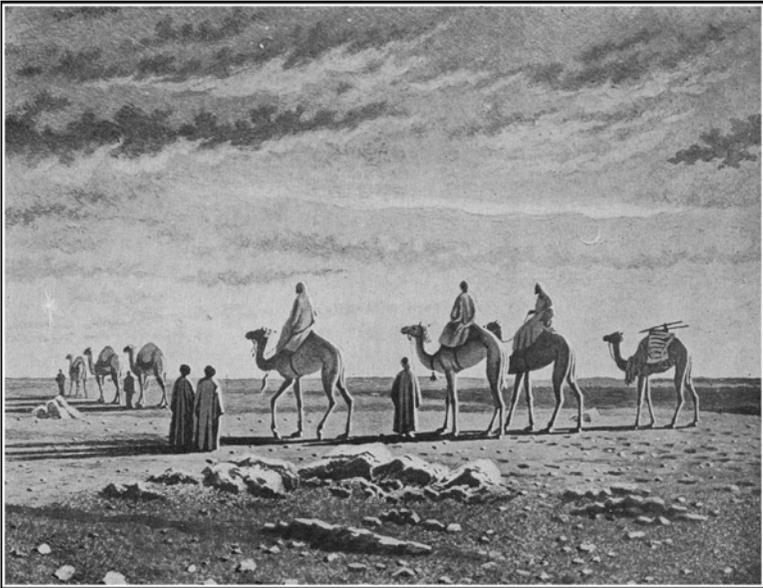
CHRISTMAS CAROL

FROM THE NEAPOLITAN

When Christ was born in Bethlehem,
'T was night, but seemed the noon of day;
 The stars, whose light
 Was pure and bright,
Shone with unwavering ray;
But one, one glorious star
Guided the Eastern Magi from afar.

Then peace was spread throughout the land;
The lion fed beside the tender lamb;
 And with the kid,
 To pasture led,
 The spotted leopard fed;
In peace, the calf and bear,
The wolf and lamb reposed together there.

As shepherds watched their flocks by night,
An angel, brighter than the sun's own light,
 Appeared in air,
 And gently said,
 Fear not,—be not afraid,
For lo! beneath your eyes,
Earth has become a smiling paradise.



THE WISE MEN GUIDED BY THE STAR

From Painting by Warren

A CHRISTMAS HYMN

RICHARD WATSON GILDER

Tell me what is this innumerable throng
Singing in the heavens a loud angelic song?
These are they who come with swift and shining feet
From round about the throne of God the Lord of Light
to greet.

Oh, who are these that hasten beneath the starry sky,
As if with joyful tidings that through the world shall fly?
The faithful shepherds these, who greatly were afear'd
When, as they watched their flocks by night, the heavenly
host appeared.

Who are these that follow across the hills of night
A star that westward hurries along the fields of light?
Three wise men from the east who myrrh and treasure
bring
To lay them at the feet of him their Lord and Christ and
King.

What babe new-born is this that in a manger cries?
Near on her lowly bed his happy mother lies.
Oh, see the air is shaken with white and heavenly wings—
This is the Lord of all the earth, this is the King of kings.

THE SONG OF A SHEPHERD-BOY AT BETHLEHEM

JOSEPHINE PRESTON PEABODY

Sleep, Thou little Child of Mary:
Rest Thee now.
Though these hands be rough from shearing
And the plough,
Yet they shall not ever fail Thee,
When the waiting nations hail Thee,
Bringing palms unto their King.
Now—I sing.

Sleep, Thou little Child of Mary,
Hope divine.
If Thou wilt but smile upon me,
I will twine
Blossoms for Thy garlanding.
Thou'rt so little to be King,
God's Desire!
Not a brier
Shall be left to grieve Thy brow;
Rest Thee now.

Sleep, Thou little Child of Mary.
Some fair day

THE SONG OF A SHEPHERD-BOY AT BETHLEHEM

Wilt Thou, as Thou wert a brother,
 Come away
Over hills and over hollow?
All the lambs will up and follow,
Follow but for love of Thee.
 Lov'st Thou me?

Sleep, Thou little Child of Mary;
 Rest Thee now.
I that watch am come from sheep-stead
 And from plough.
Thou wilt have disdain of me
When Thou'rt lifted, royally,
Very high for all to see:
 Smilest Thou?

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS ROSES

ADAPTED FROM AN OLD LEGEND

THE sun had dropped below the western hills of Judea, and the stillness of night had covered the earth. The heavens were illumined only by numberless stars, which shone the brighter for the darkness of the sky. No sound was heard but the occasional howl of a jackal or the bleat of a lamb in the sheepfold. Inside a tent on the hillside slept the shepherd, Berachah, and his daughter, Madelon. The little girl lay restless,—sleeping, waking, dreaming, until at last she roused herself and looked about her.

“Father,” she whispered, “oh, my father, awake. I fear for the sheep.”

The shepherd turned himself and reached for his staff. “What hearest thou, daughter? The dogs are asleep. Hast thou been burdened by an evil dream?”

“Nay, but father,” she answered, “seest thou not the light? Hearest thou not the voice?”

Berachah gathered his mantle about him, rose, looked over the hills toward Bethlehem, and listened. The olive trees on yonder slope were casting their shadows in a marvellous light, unlike daybreak or

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS ROSES

sunset, or even the light of the moon. By the campfire below on the hillside the shepherds on watch were rousing themselves. Berachah waited and wondered, while Madelon clung to his side. Suddenly a sound rang out in the stillness. Madelon pressed still closer.

“It is the voice of an angel, my daughter. What it means I know not. Neither understand I this light.” Berachah fell on his knees and prayed.

“Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.”

The voice of the angel died away, and the air was filled with music. Berachah raised Madelon to her feet. “Ah, daughter,” said he, “It is the wonder night so long expected. To us hath it been given to see the sign. It is the Messiah who hath come, the Messiah, whose name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. He it is who shall reign on the throne of David, he it is who shall redeem Israel.”

Slowly up the hillside toiled the shepherds to the tent of Berachah, their chief, who rose to greet them eagerly.

“What think you of the wonder night and of the sign?” he queried. “Are we not above all others honored, thus to learn of the Messiah’s coming!”

CHRISTMAS IN LEGEND AND STORY

“Yea, and Berachah,” replied their spokesman, Simon, “believest thou not that we should worship the infant King? Let us now go to Bethlehem, and see this thing which has come to pass.”

A murmur of protest came from the edge of the circle, and one or two turned impatiently away, whispering of duty toward flocks, and the folly of searching for a new-born baby in the city of Bethlehem. Hardheaded, practical men were these, whose hearts had not been touched by vision or by song.

The others, however, turned expectantly toward Berachah, awaiting his decision. “Truly,” said Jude, “the angel of the Lord hath given us the sign in order that we might go to worship Him. How can we then do otherwise? We shall find Him, as we have heard, lying in a manger. Let us not tarry, but let us gather our choicest treasures to lay at His feet, and set out without delay across the hills toward Bethlehem.”

“Oh, my father,” whispered Madelon, “permit me to go with thee.” Berachah did not hear her, but turned and bade the men gather together their gifts.

“I, too, father?” asked Madelon. Still Berachah said nothing. Madelon slipped back into the tent, and throwing her arms around Melampo, her shepherd dog, whispered in his ear.

Soon the shepherds returned with their gifts. Simple treasures they were,—a pair of doves, a fine wool blanket, some eggs, some honey, some late autumn fruits. Berachah had searched for the finest of his flock,—a snow-white lamb. Across the hills toward

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS ROSES

Bethlehem in the quiet, star-lit night they journeyed. As they moved silently along, the snow beneath their feet was changed to grass and flowers, and the icicles which had dropped from the trees covered their pathway like stars in the Milky Way.

Following at a distance, yet close enough to see them, came Madelon with Melampo at her heels. Over the hills they travelled on until Madelon lost sight of their own hillside. Farther and farther the shepherds went until they passed David's well, and entered the city. Berachah led the way.

"How shall we know?" whispered Simon. And the others answered, "Hush, we must await the sign."

When at last they had compassed the crescent of Bethlehem's hills, they halted by an open doorway at a signal from their leader. "The manger," they joyfully murmured, "the manger! We have found the new-born King!"

One by one the shepherds entered. One by one they fell on their knees. Away in the shadow stood the little girl, her hand on Melampo's head. In wonder she gazed while the shepherds presented their gifts, and were permitted each to hold for a moment the newborn Saviour.

Melampo, the shepherd dog, crouched on the ground, as if he too, like the ox and the ass within, would worship the Child. Madelon turned toward the darkness weeping. Then, lifting her face to heaven, she prayed that God would bless Mother and Baby. Melampo moved closer to her, dumbly offering his companionship, and,

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raising his head, seemed to join in her petition. Once more she looked at the worshipping circle.

“Alas,” she grieved, “no gift have I for the infant Saviour. Would that I had but a flower to place in His hand.”

Suddenly Melampo stirred by her side, and as she turned again from the manger she saw before her an angel, the light from whose face illumined the darkness, and whose look of tenderness rested on her tear-stained eyes.

“Why grievest thou, maiden?” asked the angel.

“That I come empty-handed to the cradle of the Saviour, that I bring no gift to greet Him,” she murmured.

“The gift of thine heart, that is the best of all,” answered the angel. “But that thou mayst carry something to the manger, see, I will strike with my staff upon the ground.”

Wonderingly Madelon waited. From the dry earth wherever the angel’s staff had touched sprang fair, white roses. Timidly she stretched out her hand toward the nearest ones. In the light of the angel’s smile she gathered them, until her arms were filled with flowers. Again she turned toward the manger, and quietly slipped to the circle of kneeling shepherds.

Closer she crept to the Child, longing, yet fearing, to offer her gift.

“How shall I know,” she pondered, “whether He will receive this my gift as His own?”

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Berachah gazed in amazement at Madelon and the roses which she held. How came his child there, his child whom he had left safe on the hillside? And whence came such flowers? Truly this was a wonder night.

Step by step she neared the manger, knelt, and placed a rose in the Baby's hand. As the shepherds watched in silence, Mary bent over her Child, and Madelon waited for a sign. "Will He accept them?" she questioned. "How, oh, how shall I know?" As she prayed in humble silence, the Baby's eyes opened slowly, and over His face spread a smile.