

CHRISTMAS IN BETHLEHEM



Christmas in Bethlehem! What memories, what sacred traditions the words evoke! Where else can the feast of Christmas be so sublime and divine? Where else can a mortal feel himself so near to his God?

Bethlehem is always crowded with strangers from every part of the world on Christmas Eve. They come—these pilgrims of piety or curiosity—along the romantic and singular route from Jerusalem, and spend the night in the holy ceremonials, departing the next day.

The smart merchant from New York City follows the Russian landlady from the Volga or the Montenapartee with his belt filled with ancient daggers and pistols. The Turkish soldiers keep order with perfect good humor and with a certain contemptuous indifference which is apt to tell a little upon the nerves of nervous Occidentals, when they observe it for the first time.

The Church of the Nativity is the goal of all these pilgrims. Certainly this is the most interesting place in Holy Land. There all the divergent Christian factions meet at a common source, and there they learn tolerance and respect for each other.

The Emperor Hadrian, in the course of the second century, is said to have surrounded the place where stood the



THE LATIN PATRIARCH CONDUCTING THE FRENCH CONSUL TO THE GROTTO OF THE NATIVITY.

stable of the nativity with a wood sacred to Adonis, and even had the worship of Venus publicly celebrated there. Two centuries later the pious Helena raised a church, and of the ancient stable of course nothing absolutely authentic remains.

Nothing is more singular in Holy Land than the entrance to the sanctuary of the Nativity. At the end of the straggling hamlet the street spreads out into an oblong square which opens off an esplanade covered with great stone flags. This is the "atrium" of the ancient basilica. In the middle of which stood the baptismal cisterns for the ablutions which the Christians of old were required to practise before entering a church. A mass of white tombs, walls in one side of the esplanade; on the other arises a high wall which might belong to convent or prison. A few windows dot the wall here and there. But there are no signs of any door.

After a little search one finds a black hole, like the entrance to a cavern, and presently he sees people creeping into it, almost on all fours. Now and then the gallant Oriental on guard will offer his hand to a lady to help her down. That is the principal entrance to the sanctuary of the Nativity. Doors were suppressed in the days when Mahomedan intolerance was greater than it is now, and when it was necessary to wall up doors and to allow communication only with the upper stories, as the monks in Mount Sinai do nowadays. Gradually there grew up around this basilica a colony composed of the three principal sects, the orthodox Catholics, the Greeks, and the Armenians, and convents were built in such numbers that they overshadowed the church.

The interior, however, still reserves its ancient form. Once out of the gloomy entrance, one finds himself in a great hall traversed by four colonnades and surmounted by a modern roof, the beams of which appear.

Here and there, at the bases of huge red monoliths, crowned with Corinthian capitals, in a framework of old mosaics on a gold background, people are kneeling or sitting squatted on their haunches; soldiers of the Sultan are peacefully patching their shabby uniforms, women are nursing their babes, Franciscan and Greek monks

marked with the name of the sect to which it belongs.

There are stairways to the grotto, one belonging to the Latins, the other to the Greeks. Not long ago the Armenians tried to enlarge their territory in the church. They spread a carpet on the flags belonging to them. Next day the carpet had encroached a little on the rival territory; the next still more. The other sects saw the trick, and in the night cut the carpet in pieces.

France Presides.

When Christmas comes at Bethlehem the French Consul is in his glory. France is the protectress of the Holy

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THE NIGHT OF THE STAR

OT with sound of trumpets blown, No such throngings heard afar, Angels' whispering made it known, And the shining of the star.

Not with banners fair unfurled, Came the child of our delight, In the stillness of the world, In the silence of the night.

Not in pillared palace tall, With tapestries of gold, But with a stable's stall, In the lowliness manifold; Not in pomp of proud estate, Came the child of our delight, Known to shepherds, watching late, In the silence of the night.

Yet on all the anxious earth, Never such a birth had been! Never a momentous birth, That could mean so much to men! All the stings of Death were shorn, When the child of our delight, Came, and Life and Hope were born In the silence of the night.

Following the wandering star, Wise men brought out his feet Precious favors from afar, Incense and frankincense sweet, (What things precious make we wear To the child of our delight, In the silence of the night?)

Now the sound of trumpets blown, And the shining of the star, From glad throngings heard afar, Of the shining of the star!

Be the banners bright unfurled, To the child of our delight, In the gladness of the world, In the glory of the night!

A. W. BEGLAW.

NORA'S VICTORY.

T was Christmas and the occasion would be appropriately celebrated by the people of Thompson's Corners. All the children, and old folks, too, had gathered to the school house to take part in the exercises and witness the distribution of presents.

Ellis was managing the evening festivities. She had been busy for days and days with trips to town and journeys to the school house.

In the midst of it all Nora had thought now and then what Christmas meant and her heart had been softened when her fancy conjured up the star in the East; when that finer arc which never bends less than heavenly music caught the rhythm of that anthem which filled the sky one distant night in a distant land. Yet one thought troubled her and that was to forget Ed Morrow and his quarrel, but the thought would come back and confront her. She remembered how happy she was in the summer time, when she walked with him along this same plain road and thrilled at the good girl will when he had kissed her and rumbled the waters of her waiting soul. He had wandered away with the sun, as the summer ended, and she heard of him now and then from friends who drove to Hendricks County. Once or twice he had drifted up and she never saw him. Rumor, that agile assassin, declared he was "going with" Eliza Raines, and honest Nora could wonder, in the midst of her pain, what he found in the girl to admire. He would come to the Christmas tree, that brazen creature staked her eyes with looking upon her.

Everything was as ready as it could be at the school-house. The day had filled the eye of Christmas lovers. Snow lay upon the ground, and through it the sleigh tracks had beaten like a sort of canal between high banks of white. Sleighbells rung a greeting to laughing parties, rich with life and hungry for enjoyment. Nora did not conduct the exercises. She was manager of the distribution of the Sunday-school superintendent upon the narrow stage to ask for order and announce successively the programme numbers.

In Indiana we always aimed to mingle with all our caravals. There were debating societies and the "reading part" at singing schools; they were declamations and original essays at every gathering, till the sun of composition waxed warm and full in the season of revivals. In the night, beside the distribution of presents, there were songs in which Nora had trained the children; recitations in which the children had mostly trained themselves; a tableau or two and a jubilant chorus. Nora, looking through a parrot-hole in the curtain, saw Ed Morrow sitting close up to the front, but far away from the women. If he came with that girl he had done the very ungraceful thing of leaving her to shift for herself in a stranger company and pushed his way to the point most near the woman whose heart had followed him in all his wanderings. He could not see her and she stood for a moment until time came for the outer curtain to rise, filling her hungry eyes with the blessed picture of his stalwart frame and head and eyes a little higher than the rest, his handsome face laughing above a brilliant scarf, his bearded lips parting to return a greeting from some of the former boys. For Ed was a favorite everywhere. Then she moved aside into what might be called the dressing-room, while the children sang:

In a manger, laid so lowly, Came the Prince of Peace to earth; While a choir of angels holy Sang to celebrate his birth.

She tried to forget the man out there beyond the curtain; tried to join her heart with the swinging rhythm of the carol; tried to rise a little higher than the rest, his handsome face laughing above a brilliant scarf, his bearded lips parting to return a greeting from some of the former boys. For Ed was a favorite everywhere. Then she moved aside into what might be called the dressing-room, while the children sang:

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THE POSTMAN

Her form behind the shutter The merry girl installs; Her heart is in a postman's call, And if her lover's missive Does not arrive in time, The wretched letter-writer Feels guilty of a crime!

He brings us bills that make us feel very blue, And bigger invitations, To swell our receipts, too. Sometimes a check of value From publishers not blind, But in the post respectively declined.

The time of Merry Christmas Is about to make him sad, For loaded like a wagon, He's very nearly mad. The packages he handles Are quite sufficient cause No retailer carry him about— This modern Santa Claus!

It may be, but I fancy, But I shouldn't think, Somewhat of a postman, Were ever, ever known. And I'm sure no postman's baby Would ever deem it right To make his weary father Sit with it half the night!

PRESENTS FOR OLD PEOPLE.

What to Give Grandmas and Grandpas for Christmas.

It is hard to select presents for those who have passed the sunny side of life and who no longer take an active interest in its frivolities, its fads and its changes of fashion. Grandmas and grandpas are dear old people, with hearts as young as the youngest, and minds capable of enjoying everything. But one can scarcely expect grandpas to begin wearing a new style watch chain in a new way, nor will grandma want a set of the new-fangled hairpins. "Such things are pretty on young people," says grandma and grandpa, with a smile and a sigh. "But the old way is the best for two after all." What, then, can one select for the occupant of the armchair? What can one give them which will be just the thing needed for comfort and luxury?

Grandpa does not care for many ornaments, but he is fond of a nice necktie. Give him one or two, just like those he usually wears, and give them to him with a gold-letter pin standing for his last name, which can be used for a scarf-pin if he fancies it. He probably has a cane. But has he a nice black top hat? Buy one for him. Does he like to smoke notice the style of his favorite pipe and get another just like it. Get him a pound of his favorite tobacco and put it in a fine tobacco jug. So much for grandpa!

Grandma has neck trimmings, if she has any. See her style. Observe and select the right things. If she has no chair of her own in the dining-room, give her one which shall be more comfortable, perhaps, than the dining-chair. Give her an individual set of pretty plates, cup and saucer and butter dish for her own use. Notice if she has plenty of cushions and footstools in her room. There are little creature-comforts, too, of which grandma is very fond. She could make use of a tiny gas stove for warming flaps and broths. A hot-cup, with a salicer which fits on top, is sure to be treasured. Warm, soft slippers; gray to behold; lamb's wool petticoats, snug woven jackets and great downy robes for the bath are deemed very delightful for grandma, who should have every simple luxury. Both grandma and grandpa have foibles. You probably know what they are. Watch for them and then it will be easy to select your gift.

At Yule-Tide, Heigho, the Winter! he brids the holly, The frolic of Yule's enchanted tree; And the mistletoe—now, by my foily, There will be a kiss for thee and me! Heigho, sweetheart! with a soft down derry!

We'll sack the wood of its treasures now But oh, there's never a brauble berry Is laid on the tree, it is true— Nelly Booth Simmons, in Godey's

A Christmas Card. I have no purse of gold, say de, I wish to which to buy a dainty thing; The purse is empty, and the gold Has flown away as if on wings. So, sweetheart, buy me every simple thing, 'Till you possess the greater part, I'll give to you on Christmas Day Another fraction of my heart.

Thoughtful Husband. "Get trying ter raise money enough ter buyin a new dress for Christmas, sah," said Uncle Ebony to Mr. Featherstone. "Ah, I see; you want me to give you some shawls and bonnets, sah? Well, no, sah; I tought perhaps you could git de old lady a job at washin," said "Cook Revie."

BETHLEHEM MOTHER CHADLING HER CHILD.

pass talking and gesticulating, and merchants beseech you to buy oranges, rosaries, mother-of-pearl ornaments and sweetmeats. Time was when the Arabs also stabled their sheep in the sanctuary. This was due to the fanaticism of the Greek monks. Fifty years ago it pleased them to separate the nave from the choir, and thus one-half of the oldest church in the world is exposed to the vandalism of the ignorant peasants.

There is a legend that a "Sultan of Egypt" once tried to carry off the beau-

Fuller Triars—Say, bubby, I'm Santy Claus. See? Somebody stole my clo'es an' reindeer. Jus' give me a nicker an' I'll give you two, as was sayin' Santa Claus—Judge.

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