

"DREAMS OF THE STAR IN THE EAST"

A Christmas Pageant by Clara Davy,  
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"Leave me here a little, Leah, dear. Soon I will join you and the other maidens for our evening prayer, but now I would be alone for awhile, as I watch the stars come out over Mizpah for the last time."

Adah's voice broke a little over the word, for she loved the beautiful home she would never see again and she was worn with the emotions of these last days. Gone was the fiery storm of patriotic fervor that made her life seem a little thing to sacrifice for her country's welfare and her father's honor; gone, too, the grief of renunciation and the nervous physical shrinking from pain. There was left only a gentle sadness as of farewell to the little loved things of daily life--the drowsy tinkle of bells in a distant sheepfold, the chirp of the cricket in the grass at her feet, the solemn sound of the night wind in the pine trees.

The brief southern twilight faded into night, the stars grew thick over the hills of Gilead. One star shone brighter than all the rest, its splendor streaming down till her eyes were dazzled by its rays. It lit up the plain below her where, as in a dream, she seemed to see an innumerable host of women, some weeping, some with still white faces lifted to the star. The whole land was filled with their voiceless woe.

"These," a strange voice told her, "are the women from whom war has taken all they hold dear. Not you alone, oh Adah, but millions of your sisters left desolate. Women of Judah, women of the hated tribe of Ammon, daughters of races far beyond the seas, dusky Hindus, haughty Romans, fair-skinned Gauls, daughters of nations yet unborn sending their crusaders to fight for this fair land of yours, pioneer women braving the savage warfare of a new world, 'Gold Star mothers' giving their sons that the world might be free."

Then the voice seemed to swell to a trumpet peal, "Rejoice, rejoice for the Prince of Peace cometh, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide your feet into the way of peace."

The faces of the women turned to the star and their sorrow faded before the dawn of a great joy, "and the glory of the Lord shone round about them. And suddenly the heavens opened and there was a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men.'"

The light faded, the angels' song died away into silence. Only the sleepy twitter of a bird on its nest, the chirp of a cricket in the grass at her feet broke the stillness, as Adah turned with joy in her heart to join her comrades. Though Death and Sorrow still dwelt on the earth, to her, and to all the world, the Star had promised PEACE.

Song, "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" or "Cantique de Noel."

II.

The morning sun streamed gaily into the quiet upper room where Ruth, the wife of Boaz, lay with her infant son on her arm. No happier household could be found in all Israel, and the sweet-faced woman was the center from which radiated all the peace and joy of that home. Deborah, Boaz's grouchy old nurse and foster-mother, had at first resented the coming of "the Moabite woman" into the household that she had ruled with an iron rod, but very soon she had yielded to the girl's gentle charm, and now she vied jealously with the mother-in-law, Naomi, in her watchful care of Ruth and of little Obed, whose coming had completed their happiness.



Deborah was quietly putting the pleasant room in order, while Naomi sat by Ruth's bedside, telling her of the little happenings of the household.

"But, Ruth," she broke off, "you are not listening. What are you thinking about, with that far-away look in your eyes?"

"I'm thinking of the dream that came to me in the night watches--a wonderful dream, yet strange. I thought I sat here in my own room, watching my baby in his cradle, with Boaz standing beside me. Suddenly I realized that the baby was not Obed, but another child, and the man stooping over him was not Boaz. He raised a dark, laughing face to me: 'Mother-mine, don't you know me? I am Obed grown into a man and this is little Jesse, your grandson. Watch closely and you will see in these baby faces the future of our line.'

"Even as I looked a change came o'er the scene. Instead of the handsome, smooth-faced youth, a man with an older, bearded face bent over the cradle with a murmured, 'David, son of my old age, 'round thy infant head hangs much of prophecy. A warrior, a poet and a king, says old Samuel, but to me thou wilt always be just my baby boy.'

"The lusty, fair-haired baby smiled into the old man's face as the scene faded once again. The room was changed from one of simple homely comfort to one of royal state. The baby's cradle was of rare and costly wood inlaid with gold, its coverings of finest linen, its silken hangings heavy with gold embroidery. Above it bent a handsome, kingly figure, with the red-gold hair of David darkened now a little and tossed back from a brow lined with care and the record of burdens bravely borne, of a conquering of self not easily achieved.

"Solomon, my son, the prophets say thou shalt be wise and rich and great. See also that thou art good, else the rest goes for naught.'

"There came a long succession of baby faces, each fading quickly into the next; royal infants surrounded by luxury, babes born in poverty and exile, into common-place, happy, middle-class homes, but all with the indefinable stamp of race, the inheritance of kingly blood. I grew dizzy with the flickering changes, when suddenly the cradle itself had vanished. In its place was a straw-filled manger where lay a child of such transcendent beauty that I caught my breath in awe. His youthful mother leaned over him, her gentle face illumed by the rays of the star that shone o'er the lovely scene. A sudden tumult was heard without, the cries of camel drivers, the hurrying gallop of horses' feet. Then, quietly, in reverent awe, there entered three kingly figures, one in the purple robe and falcon headdress of Egyptian royalty, one in the snowy white of a Median Magi, one in the resplendent dress of a lordly Brahmin. Approaching the manger, they knelt reverently and tendered the precious gifts they bore--gold and frankincense and myrrh.

"The dream faded but its radiance stays with me. Can it be that it was the promised Messiah, and that he will be a child of my little Obed in the ages to come?"

Naomi's eyes were shining as she answered, "Truly, my daughter, the dream must mean something. I shall go today to consult the high priest regarding it."

But Deborah, incensed by the pride that shone in Naomi's face, sniffed disdainfully. "It is just a silly dream, Ruth, such as all young mothers dream over their babies. When the Messiah, blest be his holy name, is born it will not be in a stable among the sheep and oxen, and he will be a real Jew, not the son of a Moabite woman."

Ruth laughed gently at her ill temper. "Never mind, Deborah, it was a beautiful dream and I shall keep it in my heart."

And to Ruth the Star meant HOPE.

Song, "Luther's Cradle Hymn."



III.

The Feast of Purim had ended. Queen Esther, wearied by the festivities, stood at the head of the grand stairway looking down the great colonnade of the royal garden, with its gay awnings of white and green and blue fastened with silver rings to the pillars of marble, its pavement of vari-colored marble and its riot of gorgeous blossoms gathered from every clime.

"I am tired, Miriam," she said to her cousin, the daughter of Mordecai and chief of her ladies-in-waiting, "Let us go to my apartment, and do you, Hatech, allow no one to disturb us."

Hatech, the lordly chamberlain, bowed low as he held back the heavy curtain of pomegranate silk, richly embroidered in gold and seed pearls, that hung in the doorway of the queen's apartment. Dismissing her ladies with a courteous word, the queen, followed by Miriam, passed through, and at Hatech's order a sentry with drawn sword took his station before the closed door.

The room beyond was all azure and silver, the royal colors of Persia. Its floor of dark blue tiles, veined in white, was strewn with priceless rugs, slender pillars of twisted silver stood out against the blue walls, the windows were hung with azure silk and the vaulted ceiling, softly lighted by hidden lamps, resembled the pale night sky illumined by the silver moon.

The women seated themselves on a broad couch beside a window, where the soft south wind brought the fragrance of roses from the garden below where a nightingale sang in the myrtles. All ceremony was cast aside and they were simply two girls talking over the events of the festival.

"Miriam," said Esther, at length, "my uncle talked with me yesterday of the great prophets of our race, how they long ago foretold the sorrowful exile that has come upon us and our eventual return from captivity. Some day the ancient glories of our people shall be restored a thousand fold, when the Messiah shall come to lead his people to triumph. Daniel said, 'And there was given him dominion and glory and a kingdom that all people and nations and languages should serve him.' Think of that, Miriam--even mighty Persia. And last night I dreamed that He had come, not to the palace in Jerusalem, but to the little town of Bethlehem, the City of David, as the prophet foretold. It may be that when our people return they will build a palace there, but I know not. In my dream the village was dark, only a great blazing star hung o'er the place where He lay, and the air was filled with heavenly music. I wished to go nearer, but a voice said, 'Not yet, Queen Esther, may you see the King. Five hundred years must pass before He comes to save His people.'"

"But is it not a triumph worth waiting for, Miriam, if, after long grief and pain, Israel shall conquer at last?"

The queen's face shone as she mused on her dream, not knowing that the great tragedy of her race was that to them, as to her, the star promised only ROYALTY and POWER.

Song, "Joy to the World" or "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing."

IV

"Tell us a story, Nursie, please. Tell us about when you were a little girl in Bethlehem and your father kept the inn," coaxed little Mary, as she leaned on Rachel's knee.

"And the Star in the East and the baby in the manger and the Three Kings who came to worship Him," added Martha, her eyes shining.



"Tell 'bout 'tar! Tell 'bout 'tar!" lisped little Lazarus, wriggling out of the young nurse's arms to curl himself up on the lap of his favorite sister. Martha cuddled the restless mite close, while all three children listened to the oft-told tale of the small daughter of the inn-keeper, who woke in the night to see, afar off, the heavenly vision and to hear a faint echo of the angels' song.

"Now you must be off to bed," ordered Rachel. But Martha could not sleep. She stole from her bed to the cradle where Lazarus lay, a sturdy, roly-poly baby in the sweet, deep slumber of healthy childhood. She tucked the covers about him and kissed the plump little hand that was thrown over his head.

"The baby Jesus must be a big boy now," she thought. "How I wish we could find Him. Some day I know we shall, and you, little brother, will be His friend. I shall bake little honey cakes for Him, with raisins and spices, as Rachel taught me, and He shall have my pet lamb, and He'll tell us stories of the heavenly country from whence He came."

No doubt of His divinity marred her childish faith. With the same trust and confidence that marked her after life, she drew back the curtain and looked up at the high, bright stars that were shining somewhere over the little lad of Bethlehem, and breathed a childlike prayer that He might come to play with them soon. And to little Martha the Star seemed to whisper, "Have FAITH."

Song, "Silent Night" or "The First Noel."

## V.

"How lovely is Ephesus in the light of the setting sun. Truly your home is a beautiful one, Electa, a blessed oasis of rest, where the hunted and persecuted Christian may find a little repose, a breathing space in which to gain strength to renew the struggle." The man, not old in years, but worn by fasting and toil, aged before his time by the cruel persecution that beset the followers of the Christ, sighed with contentment as they entered the cool shade of the garden of palms where comfortable seats and a table spread with tropical fruits--golden oranges, dates, figs, luscious pomegranates, great clusters of purple and amber grapes--awaited their coming.

The woman beside him was a stately figure, erect and beautiful still, though her hair was threaded with silver and her dark eyes dimmed by years.

"I am glad to share it with our brethren," she said. "It is but a little thing to do for the Master. Perhaps I may some day be called to a harder witnessing for Him. But let us forget the troubles that beset us and talk of that early, blessed time when He first came to earth, when you knew Him as a boy in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth. Have I told you of how I first heard of the Light of the World? When I was a child in far-away Chaldea my father was steward to Melchoir, a rich and powerful priest of the ancient Temple of the Seven Spheres at Barsippa. How we children feared him! a silent, austere man, whose eyes were fixed on unseen things and to whom human beings seemed scarcely to exist. Many a time I have hidden in some cranny of the half-ruined temple when he passed by.

"Once Melchoir and my father went on a long, mysterious journey, and when they returned it was as if the master were another man. His face had grown infinitely gentle and kindly, shining with the light of an inner joy. No longer withdrawn and austere, he delighted to gather the children about him and tell them wonderful stories of the long journey and of the Star that guided him and his companions; how, when they found the infant king they were seeking, he lay in no fair palace, but in the manger of a village inn. But the glory that shone around Him made that lowly place divine. As the Wise Men knelt with their gifts the baby smiled and stretched out His little hand. At that touch all



Melchoir's icy reserve melted away and his heart was flooded with love--love for God and for all mankind. Never again did he walk apart, clothed in a garb of austerity and disdain. He fed the hungry, clothed the naked and ministered to the poor and the oppressed, the prisoner and the slave. More than all he loved the children, and to us he imparted a little of that love for all mankind that the Christ-child had given him and taught us to be ready to love and serve the Master when He should make Himself known to us, in the fullness of time. Do you wonder, my father, that I was ready for Barnabas' message and that I received it with joy? For Melchoir had already taught me that the light of the Star was LOVE.

Song, "Come, All Ye Faithful," or "We Three Kings of Orient Are."

This pageant can be carried out beautifully in the chapter room if the characters dressed in the point colors appear as each story is told. A colored spotlight would add to the effect. The music may be furnished by a soloist or a chorus, as deemed best. The reader should stand on an elevated platform and a lighted star should hang in the East to make the best effect.

OPENING & CLOSING SONG (Tune: America)

Opening

Star of the East! arise!  
Guide where our duty lies,  
Bright Star above!  
Oh, may our meeting be Type of sweet harmony,  
Sisters and brothers, we Shall reign in love.

In shadow of thy wing,  
Angel of peace we sing,  
Thy song of love.  
Often and oft, again,  
Sing we thy glad refrain.  
"Peace on earth, good will to man!"  
Thy song of love.

Closing

Gently in golden West,  
Sinketh our Star to rest  
A-dieu! a-dieu!  
Now with our labors done.  
Turn we toward setting sun,  
As links drop one by one,  
A-dieu! a-dieu!

O. L. S. GRAHAM  
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