

The Family Circle.

The Picket Guard.

"All quiet along the Potomac," they say, "Except now and then a stray picket... Is shot as he walks on his beat to and fro, by a Hessian in the thicket."

"This nothing—a private or two, now and then. Will not content in the news of the battle; Not an officer lost—only one of the men, Moaning out all alone, the death-rattle."

All quiet along the Potomac to-night. Where the soldiers lie peacefully dreaming: Their tents in the rays of the clear autumn moon, Or the light of the watch-fires are gleaming. A tremulous sigh, as the gentle night wind Through the forest leaves softly is creeping: While stars up above, with their glittering eyes, Keep guard—for the army is sleeping.

There's only the sound of the lone sentry's tread As he tramps from the rock to the fountain, And thinks of the two in the low trundle-bed, Far away in the oak on the mountain. His mackerel falls slack—his face, dark and grim, Grows green with memories tender, As he mutters a prayer for the children asleep— For their mother—may Heaven defend her!

The moon seems to shine just as brightly as then, That night, when the love yet unspoken Leaped up to his lips—when low, murmured vows Were pledged to be ever unbroken. Then drawing his sleeve roughly over his eyes, He dashes off tears that are welling, And gathers his gun closer up to his place, As if to keep down the heart-swelling.

He passes the fountain, the blasted pine tree— The footstep is lagging and weary; Yet onward he goes, through the broad belt of light— Toward the shades of the forest so dreary. Hark! 'tis the night-wind that rustles the leaves? Was it moonlight so wondrously flashing? It looked like a rifle—"Ha! Ha! May, good-by!" And the life-blood is ebbing and flashing.

All quiet along the Potomac to-night— No sound save the rush of the river; While soft falls the dew on the face of the dead— The picket's off duty forever! Pitying Christian Advocate.

THE HAPPY NIGHT.

Nearly two thousand years ago some shepherds were in a field taking care of their flocks. It was night, and they were watching to prevent the wolves, and bears, and lions coming to devour their pretty lambs and harnesses.

These shepherds were good men; they loved God. When wicked men are sitting up together, they often amuse themselves with singing wicked songs, and with drinking and swearing, and they often end by quarreling and fighting. But these shepherds were a different sort of men from those, and had different ways from theirs; they were men who loved singing hymns, and talking about God and heaven.

A very wonderful thing happened that night—such a thing as had never happened to them before—an angel came! What a glorious creature an angel is! I never saw one, but I know that angels are bright like the sun, and their clothes are white like snow, and they are so good, so gentle, and so kind!

Yet when the shepherds saw this angel they were very much frightened. But the angel told them not to be afraid. "Fear not," he said; "I bring you very joyful news. A baby is born this day, who is the Lord, and he is wrapped in long clothes; and he is lying in a manger."

This was good news indeed. A long while before, God had promised to send his own Son down from heaven to be a babe. And why? That he might die instead of us wicked creatures, and have us from going to hell. These shepherds had often heard of God's kind promise, and now the angel told them this babe was really born—yes, the babe that was to save them from never ending pains was really born into the world.

When the angel had done speaking, the most beautiful sight was seen. A number of angels suddenly appeared! How bright they must have shone in that dark night! To see angels is charming, but what must it be to hear them sing. These angels began to sing. How sweet the sound must have been! It is sweet to hear children sing; it is sweet to hear them sing "That will be joyful," or "Glory, glory," but what is children's singing compared with the singing of angels! What is the singing of a rook compared with the warbling of a nightingale? and what is the singing of a sinful child compared with the singing of a glorious angel?

I can tell you the very words these angels sang, but I am not sure that you will understand them. This was their song: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." It was because the Son of God was born that they sang this song—Jesus, the Son of God—came to bring glory and peace, and good will and all happiness into this wicked world.

The angels did not stay very long. How sorry the shepherds must have been when the song was over, and the angels were gone back into heaven! Could they ever forget that song? I think not. Well, I hope we may hear angels sing one day, and that we may sing with them. Now we could not sing an angel's song, but one day we shall be able. (I mean, if our sins are forgiven, we shall.)

See the good shepherds in the field alone with their sheep! What did they talk of now? Of that sweet babe who was lying in a manger. They knew he was in the next town, a very little way off, and they said one to another, "Let us go and see him." So they left their sheep very quickly indeed. There were other babes in Bethlehem, but most babies lie in soft cradles, or on their mother's pillow; but there was no cradle and no pillow for this baby, only a manger full of straw or hay.

The shepherds found out in which stable the baby was, and they went in. And what did they see? There, in the midst of the oxen, and the cows, and the asses, they saw a babe, and near him was his mother, a poor woman, named Mary. His Father was in heaven, for God was his Father; but there was a good man in the stable named Joseph, and he was the husband of Mary.

All kind people like to look on a little helpless infant. Do not you like to look at a baby, and to take it in your arms? But there never was such a baby as this. Though he was so weak and small, he was the Son of God, and had made the world, and the moon, and the stars. How did the shepherds feel as they looked at him? They knew that baby loved them,

and had come down from heaven to save them. O, how they loved that baby! Did they kiss his sweet forehead? I cannot tell you, for it is not written in the Bible. The shepherds did not know all the pain that tender babe would have to bear when he was grown to be a man. Those little hands, with fingers folded up, afterward had nails thrust through them; and those tender feet, which had never touched the ground, were afterward fastened to the cross of wood. O, to have looked upon that babe, and to have thought of all it would suffer, might have made the hardest heart feel sorry. But that babe is happy now—O, very happy. After dying upon the cross he was made alive again, and he went up into heaven, and there he is now, and the shepherds with him, singing the angels' song. One day he will come to this world again, shining brighter than angels do; and the shepherds will come with him, and all people who have ever loved him.

If you grow to be a man, I hope you will be like one of those good shepherds. Perhaps you will not have to take care of sheep. I cannot tell what you will do, whether you will buy and sell things, or work in the fields, or go to sea, or preach in a church; but whatever you do, I hope you will be a good man and love God.

Those shepherds often talked about Jesus; they told everybody about the baby in the manger, and about the angels in the sky, and they praised God with all their hearts for having let them see and hear such wonderful things.

You have heard about the babe in the manger, though you have not seen him. There are many children who have never heard about him. God has been very kind to you in letting you hear about him. I hope you will love Jesus. Some children do. If they were to die, the angels would come and fetch their souls, to be with Jesus in heaven. This history is written in Luke, ii. 8: 20.

"Once in Royal David's city Stood a lowly cattle-sheep, Where a mother laid her baby To be nursed by his best Mary was that mother mild, Jesus Christ her little child.

He came down to earth from heaven Who is God and Lord of all; And his shelter was a stable, And his stable was a stall. With the poor and mean and lowly, Lived on earth our Saviour holy.

And through all his wondrous childhood He would honor and obey Love and watch the lowly maiden, Whose gentle arms he lay. Christian children all should be Mild, obedient, good as He." —Streaks of Light.

A FAMILY RELIGIOUS PAPER.

With a proper supply of windows, and a proper supply of fuel in open fire-places, fresh air is comparatively easy to secure when your patient or patients are in bed. Never be afraid of open windows, then. People do not catch cold in bed. With proper bed-clothes, and hot bottles, if necessary, you can always keep a patient warm in bed, and will ventilate him, in bed. Never to allow a patient to be waked intentionally or accidentally, is a sine qua non of all good nursing.

It is a curious but quite intelligible fact, that if a patient is waked after a few hours' instead of a few minutes' sleep, he is much more likely to sleep again; because pain, like irritability of brain, perpetuates and intensifies itself. If you have gained a respite of either in sleep, you have gained more than the mere respite. Both the probability of recovery and the ease with which it will be diminished, whereas both will be terribly increased by want of sleep. This is the reason why a patient waked in the early part of his sleep, loses not only his sleep, but his power to sleep. The more the sleep sleep, the better will they be able to sleep. A good nurse will always make sure that no door or window in her patient's room shall rattle or creak; that no blind or curtain shall, by any change of wind; especially will she be careful to see that the door is closed, and the window shut, if it is blowing hard, or if it is raining, or if it is snowing, or if it is very cold, or if it is very hot, or if it is very dark, or if it is very bright, or if it is very noisy, or if it is very quiet, or if it is very still, or if it is very moving, or if it is very calm, or if it is very stormy, or if it is very peaceful, or if it is very warlike, or if it is very kind, or if it is very unkind, or if it is very good, or if it is very bad, or if it is very wise, or if it is very foolish, or if it is very brave, or if it is very cowardly, or if it is very honest, or if it is very dishonest, or if it is very true, or if it is very false, or if it is very pure, or if it is very impure, or if it is very clean, or if it is very dirty, or if it is 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