

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

The Earth has grown old with its burden of care, But at Christmas it always is young; The heart of the jewel burns lustrous and fair...

THE STORY OF THE LAST SHEPHERD

The chance watcher of the path which wound up from the public well to intercept the main street of the little town would have seen, at the time we have in mind, two children, a boy and a girl. They might have been brother and sister, so much did they resemble one another. In fact they were cousins once removed, descendants of a common great-grandfather.



THE GOOD SHEPHERD PAINTED BY PLOCKHORST

The answer quieted the mother. In time the pressing work was done, and it was Esther's opportunity. "Mother," she began, "Judah and I were wishing that we might be allowed to gather in the village children of the village would be too that story about the night he watched the sheep. This is the same day of the year, Judah says. And we want to have him tell us about what the shepherds saw."

eyes filled, and his voice failed. The child knew what he wanted to say. "Will we tell the children to come this evening?" "Yes, I will try to tell it. This may be the last time I can bear witness to the things I saw. You may bring the children. The child went skipping from him. Turning at the gate of the court she saw that the old man had gripped his staff with both hands, and had laid his head upon his outstretched arms. "He is thinking of the story," she said, and went skipping on.

He was beginning the story by using almost the identical words he had employed in that memorable night. For it was he, the youngest of the shepherd group, who had taken the messengers at their word, and proposed the journey to the place where they saw the sight of the ages. As he gave utterance to his own words, there was a movement in the group of children, and also in the company of adults which pressed towards the gate. Something in the manner, in the tone, had thrilled them. They must not lose a word. After he had spoken these words he was silent again.

"Children," at last he began, "I don't know just how to make it seem to you. And that is what I want to do." And then he seemed to cast around again for a form into which to mould his thoughts. "You have all heard me tell this story more than once," he began again. "I believe that its power lies not in the manner, but in the spirit, in which it is told. May He help His old servant to tell it with His power!"

listening group. Only Judah dared break the silence. "Grandfather," the boy said, "how you feel? How did it seem to be with God?" "My boy," replied the old man, "we were all very much afraid. Not that any of us had done anything to be sorry for; but, O, my dear children, who can stand before the brightness of God's glory? "I didn't tell you that before we went to sleep we had been talking about the 'expectations of Israel.' You know that the devout people of our nation were looking for the fulfillment of prophecy. And every shepherd who watched that night shared that expectation. We had gone to sleep with our heads pillowed upon the sure promises of God. But for all that we were sore afraid."

(Continued on page 3, Col. 3.)