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Poetry.

The Angels' Search.

I heard the glorious multitude, I saw
their lights afar,
As, mounting up the golden stairs, they
passed from star to star;
Each robed in snowy whiteness, all
crowned with sunless light,
They swept athwart the ether, in the
still and solemn night.

I saw the trail of glory—a glowing path-
way laid,
As the vision, hasting onward, a golden
splendor made,
Each Angel drooped his pinion, a palm
enfolded each.
But from those forms celestial came
neither voice or speech.

Each wore the air of one who, going forth
to find,
Intently gazeth forward, forgetting
things behind;
Each bore the air of one who knows,
that not in vain,
Are bent his footsteps onward,—he shall
return again!

Lo! 'tis a shout triumphant, afar that
shout is raised;
"We have found the King Messiah—
God's holy name be praised!
Behold His Star appeareth; out-shining
with its ray,
All other orbs of Heaven in its bright-
ness melt away."

Then swift along the golden line a burst
of music thrills,
Till night awakes in wonder, and earth
with gladness fills.
The heavenly host descending, where
glory opens wide,
In rapt, adoring wonder, proclaims—our
Christmas-tide.

I saw the glorious multitude, their light
shone out afar,
As, passing down those shining stairs,
they swept from star to star;
Till guided by that herald light, and
following where it led,
They knelt before a manger, around an
infant's bed.

"The mystery of godliness," Royal Da-
vid's son behold!
In hushed and solemn silence their
snowy wings they fold;
They see no cradle lowly, no weeping
weakness there,
But Deity incarnate, content our flesh
to wear.

Then from those lips angelic, breaks
forth that song of praise,
Whose echoes still float o'er us, in these
our Christmas days;
"The Lord is come, with man to dwell,
is come in very deed!"
Awake my heart; take up the song, the
joyful message speed.

"To us this day, a child is born, to us a
son is given."
O, weeping Mary, cease to weep, be
thine the joy of heaven.
For God's good gift to us this day, His
well loved, only Son,
Brings peace to earth, good will to man,
and joy to every one!

Though from the cradle looms the cross,
though tears through gladness shine,
Yet far beyond, all radiant, all crowned
with love divine,
Redemption stands omnipotent, and
waits to see the end,
When Peace embrace Righteousness,
and Truth and Mercy blend!

"GLORIA IN EXCELSIS"

Many a man who has been a negli-
gent husband, decorates his dead wife's
grave with flowers. Why not take the
bouquets home beforehand?

No man can be brave who considers
pain to be the greatest evil of life; nor
temperate, who considers pleasure to
be the highest good.

The Bible is not to be read once, or
twice through, and then laid aside; but
to be read in small portions of one or
two chapters every day; and never to
be intermitted, unless by some over-
ruling necessity.

The church in the world is like a ship
on the ocean. The ship is safe enough in
the ocean, so long as the ocean is not in
the ship. The church is safe enough
in the world, so long as the world is
not in the church.

Religious.

Merry Christmas to All.

Christmas Day was originally a hea-
then festival, and was adopted into the
Christian calendar by ecclesiastics, for
the purpose of securing the adherence
of the people to the change. It may
be traced back to the Saturnalia of the
Romans, whose history again goes far
back beyond the foundation of Rome.
Great license was then given, so that
slaves and masters mingled in common,
and each partook of the freedom of the
time.

The mode of observing the season
differs greatly in the different countries
of Europe. It was formerly connected
with the worship of Odin, among the
Scandinavians. With the English it is
a mixture of ancient mythology and
Christian story, which may be seen in
the Druidical mistletoe, having so
prominent a place in the social gather-
ings of the time. The effort to give it a
new name, and so to connect it with the
Birth of Christ, and all the attendant
circumstances of gifts and carols and
social enjoyment, has been more or less
successful in every land, where the
story of Jesus coming as a babe is
read.

The *National Repository* states that
"the Christ-child with his gifts and
masked attendants is a product of Ger-
man antiquity. Mistletoe and holly,
Yule log and Yule candle, are classed
in the same category. Decking the
houses and temples with evergreens at
Yule-tide, was a Druidical practice.
Holly and mistletoe were the favourite
hanging. The mistletoe was particu-
larly venerated. Its berries of pearl
were symbolic of purity, and were thus
associated by them with the rites of
marriage. Chaplets of the mystic
flower were worn about the head, a
practice to which the phrases "whisper-
ing under the mistletoe," and "kissing
under the mistletoe," are allusions.
Our pagan progenitors also kindled
bonfires upon the hills during this
festive season, and in their homes burned
great logs and a mammoth candle.
Hence the applications of these ob-
servances to the Christmas-tide.

The Christmas-tree is also of Ger-
man origin. Its pagan prototype was
the Ygdrasil, a great tree whose roots
were hidden deep in the ground, but
whose top reached to Walhalla, the
old German paradise, where its leaves
nourished the goat upon whose milk
fallen heroes restored themselves.
During the Twelve Nights a fir-tree to
represent the Ygdrasil was decorated
in honor of Berchta, the goddess of
spring. When Christianity was intro-
duced in Germany, Christmas usurped
the customs of the Twelve Nights, and
the tree of Berchta became the Christ-
mas tree. So the evergreen tree, em-
blematic of spring-time, became sym-
bolic of an eternal spring. No
longer the symbol of a heathenish prin-
ciple, it has been borne wherever Ger-
man civilization has penetrated. Lad-
den with rich varieties of golden fruit,
and radiant with light, the tree has
taken root, and now lifts its gay
branches under every sky, flourishing
alike amid Norwegian snows and
beneath Italian suns, on the banks of
the Neva and the Thames, the Hudson
and the Rio Grande. Formerly, the
distribution of holiday presents occurred
on St. Nicholas eve, the fifth of Decem-
ber, but in order to invest the festival
with additional importance in the eyes
of the children, it was transferred to
Christmas eve.

Efforts are made by some Christian
bodies to give the Day a great degree
of sacredness, which is not warranted
by the Sacred Scriptures. By others
it is regarded as only a slight remove
from its ancient heathen character, as
may be seen in the encouragement
given to eating and drinking on that
day beyond any other in the year.
We think the observance of the day as
a celebration of the Saviour's birth far
more in accordance with the spirit of
the gospel, when it is made a time of
family joy. We have no precept for

its observance as a time of public wor-
ship, nor do we find in the Acts of the
Apostles, that such a season is ever
even alluded to by the early christians.

The 500th Anniversary of Bible Translation.

The celebration of the 500th Anniver-
sary of Wyclif's translation of the
Bible into the English tongue, was re-
cently held under the auspices of the
American Bible Society, in the New
York Academy of Music. Rev. Dr.
Storrs, of Brooklyn, was chosen as the
orator of the evening, and his oration
appears to have been well worthy of
the occasion. It occupied an hour and
a half in its delivery, and was listened
to with unflinching interest. Our
readers will not fail to appreciate the sub-
lime thought embodied in it. We copy
a few extracts. The first of these is a
grand comparison between the finishing
of Cologne Cathedral which was begun
about 600 years ago, and completed
this year:

On the left bank of the Rhine, on the
site of the ancient Roman camp, after-
wards an imperial colony—which is
associated in the history with Tiberius
and Germanicus, with Agrippina,
mother of Nero, and with the early
fame of Trojan—has been recently com-
pleted a magnificent work of religion
and art, of which more than six centuries
have witnessed the progress. After de-
lays immensely protracted—after such
changes in society and government, in
letters, arts, and in prevalent forms of
religious faith, that the age which saw
its solemn foundation has come to seem
almost mythical to us—by contributions
in which people have vied with princes,
and in which separate countries and
communities have gladly united, the
Cathedral of Cologne has been carried
to its superb consummation, and the last
finial has been set upon the spires
which at length fulfil the architect's
design.

Attendant pomps, of royalty and pre-
lacy, were naturally assembled on such
an occasion, but they can have added
no real impressiveness matching its lofty
and lovely proportions; the vast columns
of the nave lifting up their plumelike
pillars; the majestic choir, of stone and
glass, with its soft brilliance and ex-
quisite tracery, beautiful as a poet's
dream; the soaring open work of the
spires, absorbing and moulding hills of
rock in their supreme and ethereal grace.
It seems impossible not to apply to it
the words which Gibbon applied to St.
Peter's: "The most glorious that has
ever been applied to the use of religion."
It is impossible not to rejoice that the
common sentiments of beauty and of
worship survive the changes of civiliza-
tion, so that distant centuries join hands
in the work now finished and crowned,
and the completion of this grandest of
cathedrals in Northern Europe fitly
attracts the attention of Christendom.

It is a work at first sight insignificant
in comparison with this which we have
met to commemorate this evening—the
translation of the Scriptures into the
common English tongue; begun by John
Wyclif five centuries ago, and brought
to completion in these recent days by
the hands of English and American
scholars. It may seem that the vision
of the majestic cathedral is too stately
and splendid to be set in front of a story
so simple, and in parts so familiar as
that which we are here to recall. But
I think it will appear that the work
which we celebrate is the nobler of the
two; that from all the costly and skilful
labors now completed on the banks of
the Rhine we arise to this—even as there
one advances to the altar, supreme in
significance, through the decorated door-
ways, along the vast nave, under the
rhythmic and haughty arches. To us,
at least, the voice of God becomes articu-
late through the Book; while the
building only shows us the magnificent
achievement of human genius, patience
and wealth, bringing to Him their un-
surpassed tribute.

The following is a fine description of
the influence of Wyclif's Version of
the Bible:—

"How vast the impression produced
by the version which thus burst into
use, not on language, but on life, in the
whole sphere of moral, social, spiritual,
even political experience, who shall
declare! To the England of his time,
confused, darkened, with dim outlook
on this world or the next, the Lutter-
worth Rector brought the superlative
educational force. He opened before
it, through the Bible, long avenues of
history. He made it familiar with the
most enchanting and quickening sketches
of personal character ever pencilled. He
carried it to distant lands and peoples
—further than Crusaders had gone with
Richard; further than Alfred's mes-
sengers had wandered. It saw again
the "City of Palms" in sudden ruin,
and heard the echoes of cymbal and
shawm from the earliest temple. The
grandest poetry became its possession;
the sovereign law on which the blaze
of Sinai shone, or which glowed with
serener light of Divinity on the Mount
of Beatitudes. Inspired minds came
out of the Past—Moses, David, Isaiah,
John, the man of Idumea, the man of
Tarsus—to teach by this version the
long-desiring English mind. It gave
peasants the privilege of those who had
heard Elijah's voice; of those who had
seen the heaven opened by the River
of Chebar; of those who had gathered
before the "temples made with hands,"
which crowned the Acropolis. They
looked into the faces of apostles and
martyrs, of seers and kings, and walked
with Abraham in the morning of time,
They stood face to face amid these
pages with One higher than all, and
the Kingliest life ever lived on the
earth became near and supreme to the
souls which had known no temper in
rank save that of disdain, no touch of
power which did not oppress. Not
only again, in lurid column, the pillar
of fire marshalled God's hosts; not only
again were waters divided and fountains
made to gush from the rocks—angelic
songs were heard once more above the
darkened earthly hills. Again, as afore-
time the Lord of Glory walked as a
brother from Nazareth and from Bethany,
strewing miracles in his path, yet lead-
ing the timid to the Mount which burn-
ed with peaceful splendor, showing the
penitent his cross, walking with mourn-
ers to the tomb. From the paradise of
the past to the paradise above the vast
vision stretched, and gates of pearl were
brightly opened above the near and
murky skies. The thoughts of men
were carried up on the thoughts of God,
now first articulate to them. The
lowly English roof was lifted to take
in the heights beyond the stars. Cre-
ation, Providence, Redemption appeared,
harmonious with each other and har-
monious with Eternal Wisdom; a light
shot forward on the history of the
world, a brighter light on the vast and
immortal experience of the soul, the
bands of darkness broke apart, and the
Universe was explained.

Early Irish Churches

The early Irish churches were not
of Romish origin, and did not recognize
the authority of the Papal Church, or
hold its peculiarities, until the English
invasion of 1171, when they were
forced upon them.

The Irish Presbyterians believe that
those early churches were orthodox and
evangelical, and claim to have been of
their own faith and order.

The Episcopalians also claim them
and claim their "Apostolic succession"
through this source—a source "Inde-
pendent of the Romish Apostacy."

That those churches adhered more
closely to the New Testament order and
apostolic practices than either, is appar-
ent from the fragments of their litera-
ture and history that have come down
to us.

The reason their history and charac-
ter are not better known, arises from
the fact that many of their books and
manuscripts perished in the destruction
of their churches and colleges, in the
war of invasion, conquest, and rebel-
lion, and in the persistent efforts of the
English Government to blot out the

Irish language. Again, the books and
manuscripts remaining fell mostly into
the hands of the Romanists, who have
covered up with lying legend, mis-
leading names and titles, and misrep-
resentations, the doctrines and history
of the older and purer faith. Yet there
is considerable reliable material if col-
lected and sifted. There is material in
the work of the Irish historians and
antiquarians, and in their manuscripts
and histories of the various churches
and colleges founded by their mission-
aries, in the British Islands and on the
continent of Europe. From some of
these sources I will endeavor to present
a few selections illustrative of their faith
and practices.

We read in Irish history, that "in
the year 443, St. Patrick determined to
visit Tarah, then the residence of the
Irish monarch, his route lying through
Drogheda. On his approach to that
town, the fame of his sanctity flying
before him, induced many of the inhab-
itants, then Pagans, to go out to meet
him. About two miles from the town,
the holy man preached to them the
tidings of salvation. Advancing to
Drogheda, he there finding a well, pro-
ceeded to baptize those who were
desirous of receiving that rite, and
subsequently founded contiguous to it,
a monastery in which he placed some of
his disciples; for it seems to have been
his practice to settle some of his breth-
ren, as missionaries, in every promising
situation, where they might water the
good seed he had sown, by their precept
and example; and to this practice do
we owe almost all the religious estab-
lishments in Ireland. And as baptism
was the rite of admission into the
Christian church, the societies were in
all cases, when practicable, planted near
the wells first used. And hence the
origin of "holy wells," so abundant in
Ireland.

Archbishop Usher says that "St.
Patrick baptized his converts in Dublin,
including Alphin, the King's son, in a
well near St. Patrick's Church, which
in after ages, became an object of de-
votion, and so continued, until it was
inclosed within the foundations of a
house, in the seventeenth century."
MacGeoghagan, in his "History of
Ireland," and others, make the same
statement.

"There is a beautiful octagonal well
in the rear of Doulogh's Church near
Dublin, which was formerly its baptis-
tery."

"The well of Tubber, MacDuach,
Co. Galway, like many others of the
same description, was used by the
saints, whose name it bears, for the
purpose of baptizing converts to Chris-
tianity."

Thomas Moore, in his history of Ire-
land, says: "The convert saw, in the
baptismal font where he was immersed,
the sacred well at which his fathers
worshipped."

That the use of wells, springs, and
pools for baptism was not confined to
Ireland, is stated by Dean Stanley, who
in his recent article on Baptism, says:
"In that early age, the scene of the
transaction was either some wayside
well or spring, as for the Ethiopian, or
some rushing river like the Jordan."
"There was no waiting; the river, the
wayside well was taken, the moment
the convert was disposed to turn, as we
say, the new leaf in life."

We here see that those wells, springs,
and pools, called the "Holy wells of
Ireland," derived their supposed sanc-
tity and virtue from being first used as
the baptisteries of the ancient churches.
In later ages, Rome perverted the
whole institution: The subjects, from
willing and obedient converts to uncon-
scious infants; the mode, into a super-
stitious rite; the places once used to
obey the Divine command, into objects
of superstitious veneration, from the belief
that these wells have healing virtues
and can cleanse from sin.

While many of the churches had
wells, others had magnificent baptis-
teries. Rev. D. C. Potter, in his illus-
trated lectures on "The Verdict of
Antiquity on Baptism," delivered at
Saratoga and Point Chautauqua, gave a
beautiful view of the ruins of the bap-