

In the Country Nigh to Bethlehem

Kate Bartlett, ca. 1878.

Gertrude Hine.

In the country nigh to Bethlehem
On a starry night of old,
There were in the fields abiding,
Shepherds with their flocks in fold.
Round the flocks the faithful shepherds
Kept their watch from eve till morn,
Lest their sheep, so weak and helpless,
Should by evil beasts be torn.

Haply, through their long night-watches,
They made hill and valley ring
With the songs of holy gladness
Which King David used to sing.
Songs of praise to God their shepherd,
Who defended them from ill,
And their weary, wandering footsteps
Guided to the waters still.

As they watched, a burst of glory
Shone around them from above,
And a mighty glorious angel
Calmed their fears with words of love:
"Fear not, for behold, I bring you
Tidings full of greatest joy,
Joy eternal, full of gladness,
Joy which nothing can destroy."

"Unto you in David's city,
As was told by prophet's word,
Christ is born, your God and Savior,
Christ is born, your king and Lord."
Suddenly a host of angels
Raised their voices high and sang,
Till the vaulted arch of Heaven
With the echoing chorus rang:

"Glory, glory, in the highest,
Unto God, and peace on earth;
To all nations joyful bring we
Tidings glad of Jesus' birth."
Lift we now our hearts and voices,
Join we all with cheerful cry,
Learned by shepherds from the angels,
"Glory be to God on high!"