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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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The Three Kings (Poem)

When the star in the East was lit to shine
The three kings journeyed to Palestine;
They came from the uttermost parts of earth
With long trains laden with gifts of worth.
The first king rode on a camel's back,
He came from the land where the kings are black,
Bringing treasures desired of kings,
Rubies and ivory and precious things.
An elephant carried the second king,
He came from the land of the sun-rising,
And gems and gold and spices he bare
With brodered raiment for kings to wear.
The third king came without steed or train
From the misty land where the white kings reign.
He bore no gifts save the myrrh in his hand,
For he came on foot from a far-off land.
Now when they had travelled a-many days
Through tangled forests and desert ways,
By angry seas and by paths thorn-set
On Christmas Vigil the three kings met.
And over their meeting a shrouded sky
Made dark the star they had travelled by.
Then the first king spake and he frowned and said:
"By some ill spell have our feet been led,
"Now I see in the darkness the fools we are
To follow the light of a lying star.

"Let us fool no more, but like kings and men
Each get him home to his land again!"
Then the second king with the weary face,
Gold-tinct as the sun of his reigning place,
Lifted sad eyes to the clouds and said,
"It was but a dream and the dream is sped.
"We dreamed of a star that rose new and fair,
But it sets in the night of the old despair.
"Yet night is faithful though stars betray,
It will lead to our kingdoms far away."
Then spake the king who had fared alone
From the far-off kingdom, the white-hung throne:
"O brothers, brothers, so very far
Ye have followed the light of the radiant star,
"And because for a while ye see it not
Shall its faithful shining be all forgot?
"On the spirit's pathway the light still lies
Though the star be hid from our longing eyes.
"To-morrow our star will be bright once more
The little pin-hole in heaven's floor—
"The Angels pricked it to let it bring
Our feet to the throne of the new-born King!"
And the first king heard and the second heard
And their hearts grew humble before the third.
And they laid them down beside bale and beast
and their sleeping eyes saw light in the East.
For the Angels fanned them with starry wings
And the waft of visions of unseen things.
And the next gold day waned trembling and white
And the star was born of the waxing night.

And the three kings came where the Great King lay,
A little baby among the hay,
The ox and the ass were standing near
And Mary Mother beside her Dear.
Then low in the litter the kings bowed down,
They gave Him gold for a kingly crown,
And frankincense for a great God's breath
and Myrrh to sweeten the day of death.
The Maiden Mother she stood and smiled
And she took from the manger her little child.
On the dark king's head she laid His hand
And anger died at that dear command.
She laid His hand on the gold king's head
And despair itself was comforted.
But when the pale king knelt in the stall
She heard on the straw his tears down fall.
And she stooped where he knelt beside her feet
And laid on his bosom her baby sweet.
And the king in the holy stable-place
Felt the little lips through the tears on his face.
Christ! lay Thy hand on the angry king
Who reigns in my breast to my undoing,
And lay thy hands on the king who lays
The spell of sadness on all my days,
And give the white king my soul, Thy soul,
Of these other kings the high control.
That soul and spirit and sense may meet
In adoration before Thy feet!
Now Glory to God the Father Most High,
And the Star, the Spirit, He leads us by.

And to God's dear Son, the Babe who was born
And laid in the manger on Christmas morn!

