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Christmas Eve

Frank E. Broun

Outside my window whirls the icy storm,
And beats upon its panes with fingers white;
Within, my open fire burns bright and warm,
And sends throughout the room its ruddy light.

Low on the hearth my good grimalkin lies,
His supple, glossy limbs outstretched along;
Now gently sleeps with softly closed eyes,
Now, half awakened, purrs his even-song.

Near to the fire, touched by its gentle heat,
A silent, welcome friend, my armchair stands.
Its cushioned depths invite me to its seat,
And promise rest for weary head and hands.



Within its depths mine eyes unheeded close,
And comes to me a vision wondrous sweet.
Such sights and sounds no wakeful hours disclose
As then my resting, dreaming senses greet.

I am where gentle shepherds on the plain
Keep sleepless, faithful watch o'er resting sheep;
I hear them chant the Psalmist's sweet refrain,
That Israel's God will sure his promise keep.

Then quick the air is full of heav'nly song,
And radiant light illumines all the ground,
While angel voices sweet the strain prolong,
And angel faces shine in glory round.

I see the shepherds' faces pale with fear,
Then glow with joy and glad surprise, for then
"Glory to God!" from angel lips they hear,
And "Peace on earth, good will to men."

And then the light marks out a shining way,
And swift the shepherds are the path to take.
I long to go! O laggard feet, why stay?
Alas! the vision fades, and I awake.

Within, the smould'ring fire is burning dim;
Without, the whirl and beat of storm have ceased.
I still can hear the angels' peaceful hymn,
And know the vision hath my peace increased.

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