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The Nativity.

By Thy birth at Bethlehem,
By Thy manger cradle,
Swaddling bands and bed of straw,
Save us, O Sweet Jesu!

Let us picture to ourselves the holy grotto in which was accomplished that greatest of wonders, foretold to Eve after her fall, foretold to the Jews after a long succession of Prophets, foretold to the ancient heathen nations by the Sibyls, which is summed up in the words of the Gospel—"and the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt amongst us" God became man that he might make man god. *Shine, O Bethlehem, for the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee: exult and rejoice, O Zion, for the pure Virgin glorifieth thee by her exalted Child-birth!* Mary bends over the crib of her Divine Son, saying,

Sleep sweet babe! my cares beguiling,
Mother bendeth o'er Thee smiling;
Sleep, my Darling, tenderly!

Joseph stands, leaning on his staff. He is that *Just* man, the most blessed and highly exalted among men, whom the Lord placed over His Own household.

Hovering overhead is the choir of Angels, singing,

Glory be to God on high,
And on earth Peace
To men of good will!

Their leader, perhaps, being that same glorious and mighty