

"Not so. But a great tenderness and a great compassion feel I for this world of men; for the ache of my soul is the ache of the soul of the world. Mine its loss, its death, its sin: and I know its exceeding sorrow, and gentle is my heart thereto. But nearer to the proud and sinful love of my youth that bitterness of hate than this tenderness of compassion."

Then the saint knelt before her in prayer, and on her lips he laid the cross. Into her glazed and troubled glance there came a fear and then a hope. Soon he saw that she was dying.

"What seest thou, my daughter?" said he at last.

"I see," she murmured, "the fir branches above. After many years they greet me with healing."

"And what hearest thou, my child, my beloved?"

"I hear the murmur of the wind, and

no human sound is in it; and sweet is the music unto mine ears."

Thus her life ebbed away; and it was almost gone.

"What seest thou, my daughter?"

And she made answer: "I see a great throng of shining ones, and my form is not among them: blessed be God!"

"What hearest thou, my child, my beloved?"

And she answered him, "I hear my mother's voice."

Thus Elva died, and the villagers buried her. They proclaimed that she was a saint, inasmuch as her lips, white in life, in death were red as blood. But the old saint would not have them thus honor her.

"Yet hath she escaped," said he unto them: "but even as by fire was the soul lost that it might be found."

So only the children of Heinrich heaped red roses on her grave.

## SAINT ANTHONY.

## A CHRISTMAS EVE BALLAD.

BY MRS. E. W. LATIMER.

## I.

**M**ORE than eight hundred years ago—  
How changed is the world since then!  
Man's nature remains the same, we know,  
Man's joys and sorrows, man's weal and woe.  
But how changed are the ways of men!  
Who cared in those days for the weak or the poor,  
For the patient dumb beast or the child?  
For the wretches whose work-day worth was o'er,  
Or the leper sin-defiled?  
Not Baron or Burgher. Our Mother the Church  
Was sole friend to the poor and the old;  
She stretched out her arms from the convent gates;  
She gathered them into her fold.

It was Christmas Eve; a snow-storm passed  
O'er the hills that o'ertop Vienne.  
The flakes fell fast, and a furious blast  
Swept over the landscape, while gathering fast  
Rose a mist that obscured the hills, and cast  
Deep gloom over gorge and glen.

The women and girls in the low-built town  
Watched the flakes as they hovered down.  
"Our Lady," said they, "is spinning to-day,  
And the fluffs of her wool fly over our land.  
Catch one, and should it not melt in your hand,  
It may bring you luck," they say.

But not long lasted so gay a mood:  
For, "Where is my child?" shrieked a mother, aloud.  
"And where is my child?" "And mine?"  
Were echoed in chorus by all the crowd.  
For each had some loved one in mist and cloud  
Herding the goats or tending the swine.

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Soon the church was filled with mothers and wives  
 Wrestling in prayer for the precious lives  
 Bound up in the bundle of life with theirs.  
 Oh, blessed are prayers when love would fain  
 Bring solace to sorrow or soothing to pain!  
 For it is when all human efforts seem vain  
 That God strengthens our weakness and answers our prayers.

By-and-by came dropping in  
 The dear ones for whom they prayed,  
 And many a fond caress was given,  
 And many thanksgivings went up to Heaven  
 For rescued man and maid.  
 Not so many thanks as there had been prayers:  
 We think lightly of blessings, but magnify cares.

All who had been prayed for were housed and safe  
 Ere the curfew rang its call—  
 All who had been prayed for—not all—for yet  
 Out on the mountain-side, cold and wet,  
 Frightened, bewildered, and shivering, sat  
 Two orphan children—little Linette  
 And her younger brother Paul.

## II.

Deep in a cave the little ones hid, weeping;  
 Their swine close huddled near them in a crowd.  
 Paul, into Linette's sheltering bosom creeping,  
 Bewailed his hunger and the cold aloud.

"Look up! take heart, dear Paul!" she answered, brightly.  
 "Ere long I'm sure we'll safely reach the town."  
 And here she chafed his aching feet, and tightly  
 Wrapped them more closely in her tattered gown.

"And listen, Paul (for I must keep on praying),  
 For the far tinkle of the convent bell.  
 I heard one day a Reverend Father saying  
 That good Saint Anthony loves swine-herds well,

"That all his life he cherished living creatures.  
 He sent his holy relics to our town.  
 You know, Paul, how he looks, how kind his features,  
 And how the pig peeps out beneath his gown.

"Take courage! I am here. Keep close beside me.  
 Dear God, take pity upon Paul and me!  
 Paul has but me to save or help him. Guide me!  
 For we are orphans. We have only Thee."

So she knelt, praying—praying, but still trying  
 With words of love Paul's courage to uphold,  
 Who all the while she spoke sat softly crying,  
 And growing drowsier in the biting cold.

"Paul, it is Christmas Eve, I now remember;  
 Perhaps our pigs may speak to us," she said.  
 "They say beasts talk on this night in December,  
 When Jesus lay a babe in cattle shed.

"Oh, Paul, suppose it's true! Our swine might tell us  
 How to Saint Anthony's to find our way.  
 We'll tell the Reverend Fathers what befell us;  
 I know they will not turn Christ's waifs away.

"Father—our only Father; we've no other—  
 Hear us and help us. Other help we've none.  
 Be good to us, because we have no mother.  
 Save Paul! save me! I can't leave Paul alone!"

"FOR HE SAW TWO LONELY CHILDREN SLEEPING SOFTLY SIDE BY SIDE."—[See page 309.]



And so she prayed, most piteously calling  
 For help to Him who she believed could save;  
 But as she prayed, faster the flakes kept falling,  
 And dark, dark night closed round them in the cave.

Her voice grew faint. It rallied, then grew weaker,  
 But the brave heart to the last moment prayed;  
 While little Paul grew drowsier, and the speaker  
 Grew the more earnest as she grew afraid.

At last she ceased. Were both the children sleeping  
 That sleep to which no work-day waking comes?  
 Would they awake still orphans spent with weeping?  
 Or, angel tended, awake in heavenly homes?

Nay, suddenly the cave grew brighter, larger;  
 Their tearful, wondering eyes grew fixed and big.  
 Five creatures entered it—a gallant charger,  
 Two lions, and a raven, and a pig.

They had no fear of lions, for Paul thought them  
 Great, warm, soft cats. He seized their mighty paws,  
 Lifted their tawny manes, and, smiling, caught them  
 By the huge beards dependent from their jaws.

The lions stooped and licked the children's faces,  
 The life returned that had so nearly fled;  
 And when revived by warmth, with queer grimaces,  
 The raven dropped on them a loaf of bread.

They ate. Soft smiles lit up Linette's pale features;  
 She thanked the God who sent them help in need;  
 And at His holy name the reverent creatures  
 Bowed their proud crests, and thus outspoke the steed:

"Leave every hundred years," he said, "is given  
 To us one hour on Christmas Eve to speak,  
 And do, in honor of our saint in heaven,  
 One deed of kindness to the poor or weak.

"Mount on my back. The bells will soon give warning  
 We must depart. Our moments fleet away.  
 All children should be happy Christmas morning;  
 The Saviour's Birthday is the Children's Day.

"Paul, take this little pig—'tis lame and weakly—  
 And hug it close; its warmth may warm you too.  
 Remember how the marble saint smiles meekly  
 Down on his pig, and think he smiles on you."

## III.

Down the steep hill, half frightened still,  
 The children rode the horse;  
 The raven fluttered the flakes away;  
 The lions slowly broke the way  
 Down to the rocky gorge where lay  
 Saint Anthony's Convent, lone and gray;  
 But a struggling moonbeam cast a ray  
 Of light on its tower cross,  
 And lit up its gold till it shone afar,  
 And Linette thought it the Bethlehem star.

It was Christmas Eve, as I said, and late  
 When they reached St. Anthony's Convent  
 gate.  
 Within the chapel was warmth and light  
 Such as befitted a Christmas night;  
 But every Brother was in his cell  
 Waiting the sound of the midnight bell.  
 Not one of them guessed, we may well believe,  
 How their chapel was filled on that Christmas  
 Eve.

Over the altar, clear and bright,  
 Saint Anthony stood in the Christmas light.  
 With hand outstretched he signed the cross  
 O'er children and lions, pig, raven, and horse;  
 And then he slowly faded away,  
 Like the lingering light of a dying day.

## IV.

The gallant charger raised his head,  
 And with a faltering voice he said:  
 "Patient in hardship and trusty in need,  
 I was Sir Anthony's own steed  
 When forth he went a Christian Knight,  
 For God and honor and truth to fight—  
 One of the world's great Champions Seven,  
 Whose swords were consecrate to Heaven.  
 "Living creatures, great or small,  
 Feathered or furred, he loved them all.  
 A wondrous faculty of speech  
 God gave him too, that he might preach  
 His will to birds and beasts and fish,  
 What each should do, what each might wish.



"HE FRAYED ME AWAY WITH A FEEBLE HAND."

For he believed that to each beast  
Is given a germ-soul at the least—  
A something that can make us thrill  
With joy in God. Albeit still  
Much that man knows of good and ill  
Is hidden from us by God's will.

"He told us of a coming day  
When God would wipe all tears away  
From human eyes. 'And,' said he, 'then  
You too shall share the joys of men;  
That day will bring your own release  
From servile fears. Your toil shall cease,  
Lions and lambs lie down in peace.—

The Gospel that I here proclaim  
In the Babe of Bethlehem's name—  
He who, when a tender stranger,  
Shared with ox and ass His manger—  
Is a message of salvation  
Not alone to every nation,  
But to God's world-wide creation.'

"My master, Sir Anthony, rode on me  
All the days that he fought so valiantly  
For the honor and glory of Italy.  
Me it was that he bestrode  
When to that tournament he rode  
Where all the warriors of the East  
He challenged at the Emperor's feast.

"There, in bright steel and housings blue,  
I and my master overthrew  
Seven Grecian Knights, who came  
Honor at our hands to claim;  
And from the rising of the lark  
We held the lists till the day grew dark.

"Some impulse, all unknown to me,  
Prompted Sir Anthony suddenly  
To cross the seas to that strange land  
That lies half buried under sand,

Where Earth the first faint glimmer saw  
Of both the Gospel and the Law;  
Where first the infant Moses smiled,  
And where first spake a Holier Child.  
There, following some inward call,  
We went in search of aged Paul,  
An anchorite who many a year,  
In penitence, with fasts austere,  
Had dwelt in solitude severe.  
Not mine my master's will to cross—  
What was I but his faithful horse?  
But it has always seemed to me  
That God's good purpose it must be  
That in a world He once called good,  
Every created being should  
Be just as happy as it could."

Here his voice failed. His lips were closed,  
And the hoarse raven interposed:

V.

"I was soaring high in the air  
O'er the sands of the desert bare,  
When a fallen Knight I spied  
Stretched on the earth by his horse's side.  
Down I flew, with glad surprise,  
Whetting my beak to pick out their eyes.

"As my shadow fell across  
The dying Knight and his dead horse,  
He frayed me away with a feeble hand,  
And spake in words I could understand:

"Avaunt, thou cruel bird of prey!  
Spare my horse—my gallant gray.  
Never Knight had steed so good.  
I charge thee, by the Holy Rood,  
With which I sign thee, touch him not.  
But to-morrow to this spot  
Hasten back, and thou mayst dine,  
Not on his eyes, but on mine."



"As he spoke thus, in my breast  
Something stirred. I went in quest  
Of a little stream not far away—  
I had flown over it twice that day.  
I dipped my black wings in the pool;  
I drenched myself in the water cool.

I fluttered over him where he lay;  
I sprinkled his face with the cooling spray,  
Till he rose refreshed, as from trance or dream;  
And I guided his steps to the healing stream.  
That night a sand-storm buried the corpse  
Of his gallant comrade, the good gray horse."

## VI.

Here the lions, interrupting, took the story up, and cried:  
"We too helped the saintly champion after Paul the Hermit died.  
We could tell how, when the raven succor in his weakness gave,  
How on foot he crossed the sand hills to the aged hermit's cave;  
How he cast aside his armor and the sword and lance he bore;  
How he girded him with sackcloth; how a sheepskin cloak he wore;  
How he, tender as a woman, waited on the aged Paul,  
O'er whose eyes the mist of blindness day by day began to fall;  
How life's lowest, humblest duties he accepted cheerfully—  
He, Sir Anthony the Champion! he, the Knight of Italy!  
Wrestling with foul visions sent him by the tempter of mankind,  
Weeping, watching, fasting, praying, we were sure the Saint to find.  
Till one night when we were prowling o'er the sands in search of prey,  
Ere the dawning gave us warning 'twas the hour to steal away,  
Lo! we heard the Champion praying—'Heavenly Father, to this cave  
Send me some one who may help me dig Thine aged servant's grave.'  
Soon we scooped the grave he needed. In it holy Paul he laid,  
And the sign of man's redemption over him and us he made.  
Then we stole away and left him, as beside the grave he prayed."

## VII.

Said little Paul, the small white pig caressing,  
As close he hugged it fondly to his breast:  
"What did you do to bring the Saint a blessing?  
They say he loved you more than all the rest."  
"Nay," said the pig, "I only gave him pleasure.  
What did you think a little pig could do?  
I was his link to earth, his one sole treasure,  
And that he loved me best of all is true.  
"Tis what we *are*, not what we *do* for others,  
That makes us dear to those with whom we live;  
And that is nature's reason why fond mothers  
Raptures of love to helpless infants give.  
"The good Saint found me one day almost dying  
Upon the burning sands. He picked me up;  
He bore me home, in his own bosom lying;  
I shared his food, his shelter, and his cup.  
"I never grew, was always lame and ailing;  
For this he loved me more, I could discern.  
And how I loved him! Words are unavailing  
To tell the love I gave him in return.  
"His last caress to me was faintly given;  
For I was closely nestled at his side.  
Then his worn hands he clasped in prayer to Heaven.  
The angels came for him. And so he died.  
"Men came. They found us. Me they cast forth roughly;  
Called me unclean, unholy, and abhorred.  
Said it was shame to see me there, and gruffly  
Chased me away from my dear friend and lord.  
"They buried him at close of day. They cleft him  
A tomb in solid rock, and rolled a stone  
Before it. Then they went away, and left him  
Alone with God. But I was all alone.  
"I crept back to the cruel stone which shut me  
From the dear friend I had forever lost,  
For those cold-hearted men refused to let me  
Lie by his side, a few brief hours at most.



“As I lay dying, ere my life departed,  
A voice that with sweet music seemed to blend  
Spake thus to me: ‘Thou shalt no more be parted,  
Fond, faithful creature, from thy saintly friend.

“Know that in art thou shalt be found forever  
(Whether the artist work in stone or paint)  
Beside Saint Anthony. No hand shall sever  
His faithful pig from the dumb creatures’ Saint.”

VIII.

Here the pig broke off his story.  
Over town and glen and hill  
Rang the Christmas bells out. Glory!  
Glory! Glory! Peace—good-will!

And the monks, in long procession,  
Torches waving, banners spread,  
Filed into the Convent chapel  
With their Abbot at their head.

As he neared the lighted altar,  
“What is here?” the Abbot cried;  
For he saw two lonely children  
Sleeping softly side by side.  
And he added, as the others  
Gathered round Linette and Paul:  
“They are Christmas gifts, my brothers,  
That our Saint has sent us all.  
In a vision late I saw him,  
And he said: ‘Whilst I approve

All your zeal, one thing is lacking,  
Some frail living thing to love.  
Such a gift, bestowed by Heaven,  
Will your Convent soon receive.  
Look for it before the altar  
In your chapel Christmas Eve!”  
“Glory! glory!” sang the Fathers.  
“Blessed children, they shall be  
No more orphans. We will call them  
Children of Saint Anthony!”  
“Glory! glory!” sang the children.  
“Glory!” heavenly angels sang.  
Glory! glory! from each belfry  
Christmas bells in chorus rang.  
Glory! Glory! Let all creatures  
Join in hope the Christmas strain,  
Longing for that glorious Easter  
When the Lord will come again;  
For which, till then, all creation  
Travailleth awhile in pain.