

**THE FIRST
CHRISTMAS,
A PLAY**

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The first Christmas, a play by Albany James Christie

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ALBANY JAMES CHRISTIE

**THE FIRST
CHRISTMAS,
A PLAY**

A M. D. G.

The First Christmas.

A Mystery Play.

BY

ALBANY JAMES CHRISTIE,

A. J.



LONDON:

BURNS AND OATES, PORTMAN STREET,
AND PATERNOSTER ROW.

1876.

147. g. 536

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN.
ST. GABRIEL.
ST. JOSEPH.
ST. ELIZABETH.
MEROB, a Jewish Lady.
KEZIAH, her Servant.
ASAPH, } Shepherds.
ABNER, }
Chorus of ANGELS.
" PROPHETS.
" SHEPHERDS.
Hostess at Bethlehem.
Inhabitants of Bethlehem.

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS.

—
Chorus of Prophets.

RORATE, cœli, desuper, DROP down dew, ye
et nubes pluant Justum. heavens, from above,
and let the clouds shed
down in rain, the Just
One.

Behold, O Lord, the affliction of Thy people :
send Him whom Thou art about to send : send
forth the Lamb, the Ruler of the earth from the
Rock in the desert to the Hill of the daughter of
Sion, that He may Himself take away the yoke of
our captivity.

Drop down dew, &c.

Comfort ye, be ye comforted, My people: thy salva-
tion is soon to come : why art thou wasted away
with grief, for sorrow hath changed thee : I will
save thee ; fear not, for I am the Lord thy God,
the Holy One of Israel, thy Redeemer.

Drop down dew, &c.

SCENE I.—THE ANNUNCIATION.

*A Room in the Cottage at Nazareth.**The BLESSED VIRGIN is seen with the book of the Prophets in her hands.**The Blessed Virgin.* O God, how good, how wonderful Thou art !

Can what I read be true : that Thou, O God,
 Wilt dwell with men, a Virgin Mother's Son?—
 Under King Achaz, seven hundred years ago,
 Isaias prophesied and wrote these words,
 Which fill my soul with wonder and with awe :
 Behold, he says—

Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son,
 and His Name shall be called Emmanuel, that is,
 God with us.

A Child is born to us, and a Son is given to us,
 and the government is upon His shoulder, and His
 Name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God,
 the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the
 Prince of Peace.

A Virgin shall be Mother, and her Son—
 He shall be God—Emmanuel—God with us !
 O Blessed Virgin, happier than Sarah,
 Wife to our honoured father, Abraham :
 More blessed far than Isaac's wife Rebecca,
 Or Leah, Jacob's spouse and Judah's mother,
 The ancestress of kings ; happier far
 Than Anna, who bore Samuel ; happier
 Than Judith, who delivered Israel
 From Holofernes and his Gentile host ;
 ' happier than Queen Esther, who preserved
 ' Jewish race from Aman's massacre.

Who, who shall be this chosen one of God?
Would I might see her, and have leave to serve
Her and her Son with glad and lowly service. [*Kneels.*
Hasten, O God, the Advent of Thy Christ,
Soon may He come like fresh'ning dew from heaven,
Soon like a flower from earth's bosom spring.

Enter the Angel GABRIEL.

Gabriel. Hail, full of grace; the Lord is with
thee, hail!

Thou blessed amongst women!

The BLESSED VIRGIN rises and retires, as surprised:

Nay, fear not, Mary, *God* hath sent me to thee;
And I am Gabriel—sent to bring thee joy.
Five hundred years ago the Prophet Daniel
Prayed as I found *thee* praying; I was sent
To tell him of Messiah that should come;
Now I am sent to *thee* that thou mayest know
The longed-for Saviour, who is close at hand,
Chooseth a Jewish maiden for His Mother.

Mary. Oh, tell me where to find her; I, just now
Was praying I some day might look on her
And be her handmaid.

Gabriel. God hath heard thy prayer
And hastes His Advent: He hath chosen *thee*
To be the Saviour's Mother.

Mary. *Me!* hath chosen *Me?*
Me, to be Mother of the promised Seed?
Me, a poor peasant girl? one, all unknown
And hidden from mankind? Nay, blessed Spirit,
How can this be? Besides by holy vow
I am the Lord's, and consecrate to Him.

Gabriel. Thus saith the Lord—

The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the
power of the Most High shall overshadow thee:

and therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God ; and behold, thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren : because no word shall be impossible with God.

The Lord respects thy vow and it is safe :
Yea ! for thy very love of purity, He wills
To make thee purer by thy motherhood.

Mary. Behold
The handmaid of the Lord ; be it to me
According to Thy Word.

Gabriel. [*Kneeling before* JESUS CHRIST, *the Word now made Flesh.*]

ET VERBUM CARO FACTUM EST.

Mary. [*kneeling and covering her face with her hands.*]

GOD :—GOD :—GOD.

Hymn.

Mother of God ! my life, my hope, my treasure,
Look on thy child, and hear me from above ;
Mother of God, what joy, what untold pleasure,
Thrills through the soul, that thinks on all thy love.

Mary ! dear Mother ! thy love impart,
Nothing shall sever thee from my heart.

Mother of God ! my infancy caressing,
Fondly thine eye watched o'er my cradle bed !
Mother of God ! each moment counts a blessing,
Which o'er my soul thy watchful love has shed.

Mary ! dear Mother, &c.

The First Christmas.

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Mother of God ! my heart, o'erwhelmed with sadness,
Found sweet relief when raised to thee in prayer ;
Mother of God ! the breath of holy gladness
Came to my spirit from thy tender care.

Mary ! dear Mother, &c.

Angels of heaven ; in choir sublime adoring,
Mark this my vow in heaven's bright sphere above ;
Mother of God ! my grateful heart's outpouring
Is pledged to thee in everlasting love.

Mary ! dear Mother, &c.

Mother of God ! if e'er my heart forgetting
Thy love unceasing that has guarded me,—
Mother of God ! oh, then, may deep regretting
Recall my soul to love of God and thee.

Mary ! dear Mother, &c.

SCENE II.

The Road to Hebron.

The Blessed Virgin [alone]. Thanks be to God,
thus far from Nazareth
I've travelled safely : I've journeyed seventy miles,
And ten remain :—but now, where two ways meet
I know not which to choose.

*Enter a company of Travellers; among them
MEROB, a Jewish lady, and her servant KEZIAH.*

Here comes a company
Of travellers ; I'll ask that serving-maiden :—
[To KEZIAH,
I beg your pardon :—Will you kindly tell me
The road to Hebron ?