

The Legend of Babushka

A Russian Legend

BABUSHKA

(A Russian Legend)

Babushka sits before the fire
Upon a winter's night;
The driving winds heap up the snow,
Her hut is snug and tight;
The howling winds,—they only make
Babushka's more bright!
She hears a knocking at the door:
So late—who can it be?
She hastes to lift the wooden latch,
No thought of fear has she;
The wind-blown candle in her hand
Shines out on strangers three.
Their beards are white with age, and snow
That in the darkness flies;
Their floating locks are long and white,
But kindly are their eyes
That sparkle underneath their brows,
Like stars in frosty skies.
“Babushka, we have come from far,
We tarry but to say,
A little Prince is born this night,
Who all the world shall sway.
Come, join the search; come, go with us,
Who go our gifts to pay.”
Babushka shivers at the door:
“I would I might behold
The little Prince who shall be King,
But ah! the night is cold,
The wind so fierce, the snow so deep,

And I, good sirs, am old.”
The strangers three, no word they speak,
But fade in snowy space!
Babushka sits before her fire,
And dreams, with wistful face:
“I would that I had questioned them,
So I the way might trace!
“When morning comes with blessed light,
I’ll early be awake;
My staff in hand I’ll go,—perchance,
Those strangers I’ll o’ertake;
And, for the Child some little toys
I’ll carry, for His sake.”
The morning came, and, staff in hand,
She wandered in the snow.
She asked the way of all she met,
But none the way could show.
“It must be farther yet,” she sighed;
“Then farther will I go.”
And still, ’tis said, on Christmas Eve,
When high the drifts are piled,
With staff, with basket on her arm,
Babushka seeks the Child:
At every door her face is seen,—
Her wistful face and mild!
Her gifts at every door she leaves;
She bends, and murmurs low,
Above each little face half-hid
By pillows white as snow:
“And is He here?” Then, softly sighs,
“Nay, farther must I go!”