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Christmas Poem

Alan Stringer
Mary Oliver

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Christmas Poem

Mary Oliver

Cheerfully, \( \frac{1}{2} \) 108

Says a country legend

told every year:

Mezzo-Soprano

Piano

Mez.

Pno.
Go to the barn on Christmas Eve and see what the creatures do as that long
night tips over. Down on their knees they will go, the fire of an old memory
whistling through their
minds!

I went. Wrapped to my eyes a

against the cold I creaked back the barn door and peered in. From town the
church bells spilled their midnight music, and the beasts listened.

yet they lay in their stalls like stone.

Oh the heretics! Not to remember Bethlehem, or the star as
bright as a sun, or the child born on a bed of straw!

To know only of the dissolving Now!

Still they drowsed on -

--5--
citizens of the pure, the physical world, they loomed in the

dark: powerful of body, peaceful of mind,

innocent of history. Brothers! I whispered. It is Christmas!
And you are no heretics, but a miracle, im-
maculate still as when you thundered forth on the morn-
ing!
As for Bethlehem,
that blazing star still sailed the dark, but only
looked for me. Caught in its light, listening again to its
story, I curled against some sleepy beast, who nuzzled my
hair as though I were a child, and warmed me the best it could all night.