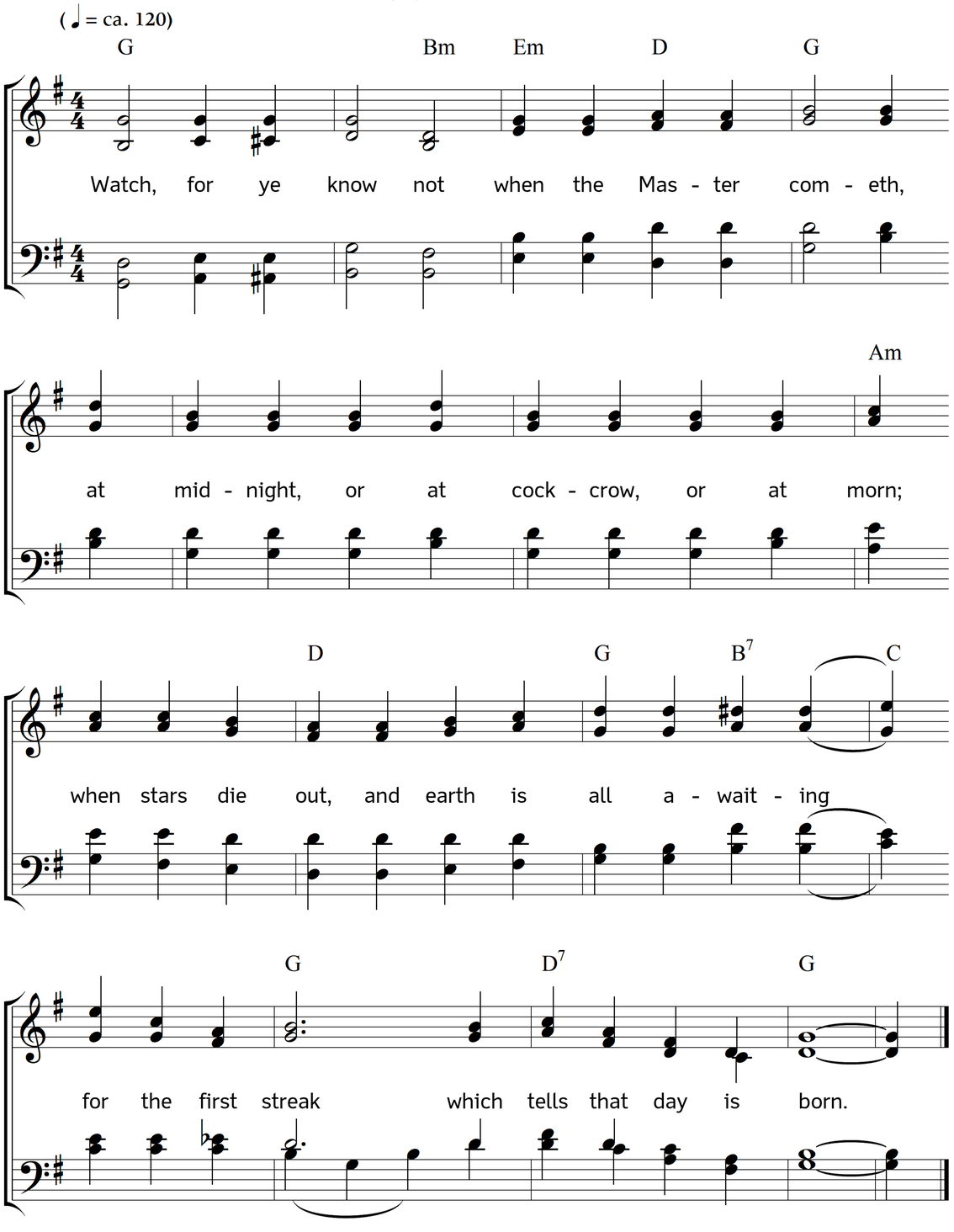
WATCHING FOR THE MASTER



2. Long has he tarried, long his weary household
have, from their eastern lattice, looked and sighed.
Why comes he not? their eyes and hearts are failing,
with faith and hope so long and sorely tried.

3. Through the cold ages, when abounding evil
chilled their warm love, they watched, but watched in vain.
The foe waxed stronger, faith and hope grew weaker; –
'Lord, come,' they cried, again and yet again.

4. Again and yet again; but still he came not:
dark centuries of evil came and went.
'O Master, tarry not,' they cried. He spake not.
It seemed an everlasting banishment.

5. Evil still reigned; the good still few and feeble,
the church's haters numerous and strong;
error more subtle, truth more sad and silent,
faith's anguished cry still rising, Lord, how long!

6. Long has the world, the Master's rule disowning,
hating his presence and his holy sway,
cried, 'Where is now the promise of his coming,
and where the signs of the long-promised day?'

7. But still, above the scoff, and taunt, and laughter,
the still small voice ariseth, 'Watch and pray;'
and still, to cheer the hours of lonely waiting,
'Behold, I come,' we hear the Master say.

8. It may be that the night will yet grow darker,
it may be that the storm is not yet spent;
it may be that the times will wax more evil,
earth braving heaven, and scorning to repent.

9. It may be that the church's eye shall weary,
that hope, so long deferred, at last shall faint;
that dark delay the buoyant heart may sadden,
and shake the faith of many an eager saint.

10. Still let us hear the Master daily saying,
Behold, I come; awake, arise, prepare!
for but a little, and there sounds the summons,
ascend, my saints, to meet me in the air!

11. Then end at once our weary years of watching,
cometh the vision and the vernal day;
cometh the Master to his waiting household;
the sunlight bursts, the shadows flee away!

12. Error and darkness hide their heads for ever, –
truth, light, and righteousness make up our morn;
earth rises up in newer, holier splendour,
than when at first in prefect beauty born.

Words: Horatius Bonar. Music: Johannes Thomas Rüegg.
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