

THE ONTARIO EVANGELIST.

"Go speak to the people ALL the words of this Life."

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POETRY.

AT THE DOOR OF THE YEAR.

The corridors of Time
Are full of doors—the portals of closed years;
We enter them no more, though bitter tears
Beat hard against them, and we hear the chime
Of lost dreams, dirge like, in behind them ring
At Memory's opening.

But one door stands ajar—
The New Year's; while a golden chain of days
Folds it half shut. The eager foot delays
That presses to its threshold's mighty bar;
And fears that shrink, and hopes that shout aloud,
Around it wait and crowd.

It shuts back the Unknown,
And dare we truly welcome one more year,
Who down the past a mocking laughter hear
From idle aims like wandering breezes blown?
We whose large aspirations dimmed and shrank,
Till the year's scroll was blank?

We pause beside this door,
Thy year, O God, how shall we enter in?
How shall we thence thy hidden treasures win?
Shall we return in beggary, as before,
When thou art near at hand, with infinite wealth,
Wisdom, and heavenly health?

The footsteps of a Child
Sound close beside us. Listen! He will speak,
His birthday bells have hardly rung a week,
Yet has He trod the world's press undetected,
"Come with me!" hear him through his smiling say,
"Behold, I am the Way!"

Against the door his face
Shines as the sun. His touch is a command,
The years unfold before his baby hand!
The beauty of his presence fills all space,
"Enter through Me," he saith, "nor wander more,
For lo! I am the door."

And all doors openeth He,
The new-born Christ, the Lord of the New Year
The threshold of our locked hearts standeth near;
And while he gives us back to us the Key
Our Future on us with his eyes has smiled
Even as a little child.

—LUCY LARCOM.

SELECTIONS.

THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS.

John I : 41.

Such was the joyful announcement made by Andrew to his brother, Simon Peter. It implies prolonged expectation, ardent desire, tireless research, and satisfying and complete assurance. We will readily appreciate the delight of Andrew, if we will only remember that at the time of his discovery the Jewish nation was anxiously looking for a wonderful Deliverer—the Messiah, or God-anointed One, the Prophet greater than Moses and to whom Moses bore witness, and a King grander than David, and of whose sufferings and triumphs David sweetly sang. It was this anticipation which Zacharias regarded as on the eve of fulfilment when John, his son, was given to him in his old age, and which he celebrated in the exultant words, "The Lord hath visited and redeemed His People;" and it was this longing which inspired the song of Simeon, the thanks of Anna when Mary presented the infant Jesus in the temple. A former generation had turned its eyes with hope toward Simon Maccabæus, as one still earlier had toward Zerubbabel; but the error was soon most keenly felt, and the attention of the people, influenced by prophecy and by political disaster, had gradually centred in the period which witnessed the origin of Christianity. The belief that Malcha Meschia was then about to appear was so general that impostors, some of whom are mentioned by Josephus, were encouraged and actually deceived many; and it was so well known that various Roman authors alluded to it. Suetonius wrote in the *Life of Vespasian* "An ancient and constant tradition has obtained throughout all the East that in the Fates it was decreed that about that time some one who should come from Judea would obtain the dominion of the world;" and Tacitus, when referring to the prodigies which preceded the destruction of Jerusalem, said that "many understood them as forerunners of that extraordinary person whom the ancient books of the priests did foretell should come about that time from Judea and obtain dominion." Thus the knowledge of Israel's hope was current among the pagans and

aroused their curiosity, not unmingled with suspicion and apprehension.

But the Jews are not the only people who have cherished the faith that the Invisible and Infinite would be revealed in some glorious Being on earth who should bring moral and physical disorder to an end restore what Virgil calls "Saurman" days again. The Egyptians longed for a living manifestation of the hidden God, and taught that He would be the child of Isis; the Chinese looked for a Coming One who should be the Truth Itself; and in the sixth century, B. C., Confucius said, "He would arise in the west;" the Goths craved an Odin who should sympathize with human sorrow and travel from city to city, comforting and healing; the Greeks, as is recorded in one of the Platonic dialogues, determined to "wait for One, be He God or an inspired man, to instruct us in our religious duties, and, as Athene says to Diomed in Homer, to take away the darkness from our eyes;" and the Romans shared in these anticipations, as is proven by the famous eclogue of Virgil, in which he erroneously greets the new-born son of Pollio as the destined restorer of happiness:

The base, degenerate, iron offspring ends,
A golden progeny from Heaven descends.
See, laboring Nature calls thee to sustain
The nodding frame of Heaven, and earth, and man;
See to their base restored, earth, seas, and air,
And joyful ages from behind in crowding ranks appear.

Dryden's Translation.

Traces of a similar belief are to be found even among the Indians. Dawson, in his *Fossil Men*, represents them as having "traditions of a great benefactor, a teacher of arts, and introducer of humanity and civilization. Among the Peruvians, he is Manco Capac; among the Mexicans, Quetzalcoatl; among the Crees, Gephuchican; among the Aztecs, Coatlicue; and the Iroquois, the origin of the tradition forms the basis of Longfellow's "Hiawatha." He is described as a "benevolent hero, or demi-god of the olden time who has left the world or been spirited away, and is to return." It would seem then, that these yearnings have been well-nigh universal, and, such being the case, it must follow that they are not only the outgrowth of the soul's deepest needs, but are of sufficient significance to warrant the inquiry as to their ever having been met and fulfilled in any great historic personage.

Christianity claims that they have, and asserts that Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth, is the Being, and the only Being, who has realized in Himself the expectations of Israel and the visions of all other nationalities. He Himself assumed to be Messiah, the "Son of the Blessed." While He did not do so in a way to create public excitement and foment revolt against constituted civil authority, He never hesitated, at proper times and under fitting circumstances, to announce Himself as the predicted Anointed One. When the woman of Samaria said to Him, "I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ," He saith unto her, "I that speak unto thee am He." The confession of Peter, to the same purport, He accepted, and added, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven." When He was solemnly questioned by Caiaphas as to whether He was the Christ, the Son of God, He answered, "Thou hast said." And thus He stakes His standing in the judgment of posterity on the righteousness and truthfulness of this declaration. He challenges investigation at this point and is willing to abide the decision of candid scrutiny.

GEO. C. LORIMER.

THE DAY OF THE NATIVITY.

The only indication of the season of our Saviour's birth is the fact that Shepherds were watching their flocks in the field at that time, Luke 2 : 8. This fact points to any other season rather than winter, and is therefore not favorable to the traditional date, though not conclusive against it. The time of pasturing in Palestine (which has but two seasons, the dry and the wet, or summer and winter) begins, according to the Talmudists, in March, and lasts till November, when the herds are brought in from the fields, and kept under shelter till the close of February. But this refers chiefly to pastures in the wilderness, far away from towns and villages, and admits of

frequent exceptions in the close neighborhood of towns, according to the character of the season. A succession of bright days in December and January is of frequent occurrence in the East, as in Western countries. Tobler, an experienced traveller in the Holy Land, says that in Bethlehem the weather about Christmas is favorable to the feeding of flocks and often most beautiful. On the other hand strong and cold winds often prevail in April, and explain the fire mentioned John 18 : 18.

No certain conclusion can be drawn from the journey of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, and to Egypt; nor from the journey of the Magi. As a rule February is the best time for travelling in Egypt; March the best in the Sintric Peninsula, April and May, and next to it autumn, the best in Palestine; but necessity knows no rule.

The ancient tradition is of no account here, as it varied down to the fourth century. Clement of Alexandria relates that some regarded the 25th Pachon (i. e. May 20), others the 24th or 25th Pharmuthi (April 19 or 20), as the day of Nativity.

The traditional 25th of December is defended by Jerome, Chrysostom, Baronius, Lamy, Ussher, Petavius, Bengel (Ideler), Seyffarth and Jarvis. It has no historical authority beyond the fourth century, when the Christmas festival was introduced first in Rome (before A. D. 360), on the basis of several Roman festivals (the *Saturnalia*, *Sigillaria*, *Juvenalia*, *Prumalia*, or *Dies natalis Invicti Solis*), which were held in the latter part of December in commemoration of the golden age of liberty and equality, and in honor of the sun, who in the winter solstice is, as it were, born anew and begins his conquering march. This phenomenon in nature was regarded as an appropriate symbol of the appearance of the Sun of righteousness dispelling the long night of sin and error. For the same reason the summer solstice (June 24) was afterwards selected for the festival of John the Baptist, as the fittest reminder of his own humble self-estimate that he must decrease, while Christ must increase (John 3 : 30). Accordingly the 25th of March was chosen for the commemoration of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary, and the 24th of September for that of the conception of Elizabeth.

The 6th of January has in its favor an older tradition (according to Epiphanius and Cassianus), and is sustained by Eusebius. It was celebrated in the East from the third century as the feast of the Epiphany, in commemoration of the Nativity as well as of Christ's baptism, and afterwards of his manifestation to the Gentiles (represented by the Magi).

Other writers have selected some day in February (Hug, Wieseler, Ellicott), or March (Paulus, Winer), or April (Greswell), or August (Lewin), or September (Lightfoot), who assumes on chronological grounds, that Christ was born on the feast of Tabernacles, as he died on the Passover and sent the Spirit on Pentecost), or October (Newcome). Lardner puts the birth between the middle of August and the middle of November; Browne December 8; Lichtenstein in summer; Robinson leaves it altogether uncertain.

PHILIP SCHAFF.

CORRESPONDENCE.

CHINA LETTER.

NANKIN.

Nankin is one of the great cities of China. The name means "southern capital" and it has been the capital under several dynasties, the last time under the Ming dynasty A. D. 1368—1403. The Taiping rebels also made Nankin their capital. The city has been slowly recovering, since their expulsion in 1865, from the terrible destruction caused by them. It is wonderful to see the ruins of houses and temples wherever one goes, and if one desires to make a small garden plot plenty of bricks and tiles can be collected from the ground to make a good wall around it.

The wall of the city is over thirty miles in circuit, 30 ft. wide and from 40 to 85 ft. high. It is built partly of stone, but mainly of large bricks 15 in. long, 7 in. wide, and 4 in. thick. This immense enclosure is not all occupied by a dense population. The southern part away from the

river—Nankin being situated on the south bank of the Yangtze—is flat and occupied by shops and dwellings built on narrow and dirt streets. The northern and larger portion is hilly, the tops of the hills being covered with graves or temples, and the valleys laid out in small market gardens, beautiful groves of bamboo and other trees, with winding paths in all directions paved with brick or broken tile, making altogether a beautiful park where one can take most pleasant walks often not being able to see the path ahead for more than a few rods, and being surprised and startled at the whizz of pheasants rising frightened by his approach. The small farmers or gardeners raise rice, wheat, Indian corn, flax, peas, beans, broom corn, tobacco, cotton, celery, onions, cucumbers, squash, melons, and fruits such as plums, peaches, apricots, pears, persimmons, pomegranates, etc. Water is collected in ponds formed in the bottoms of valleys, and irrigation done by a kind of pump, and also by hand.

I have rented a house out in this rural retreat, and I may as well describe my dwelling, which is part of a Buddhist monastery. In front is a two storied brick building with plain roof of tiles, the brick walls are hollow, and are braced by a frame work of wood which supports the roof. Behind this is a single storied building formerly a temple. The gable walls of the two buildings are prolonged and joined; making a court between the houses, which is paved with brick. Another court behind is formed by a continuation backward of the gable walls of the old temple. Nearly all houses in China are either thus enclosed by a high brick wall which is a continuation of the walls of the house, or by a separate wall which surrounds several houses. The windows and doors open into the enclosure; rarely are their openings to the outside. A street of residences often looks very blank, and one wonders at first where they get their light.

There are three main gates to the city on the east, two on the west, two on the north, and one on the south. The gateways are high and arched and a lesser wall surrounds the gateway forming an enclosure for greater protection. The gates are closed at nine or ten o'clock at night and opened at the dawn. Moderately wide avenues paved with stone and brick extend between the gates north to south, and east to west, but none of them would accommodate carriages and wagons such as we have at home. Transportation is carried on throughout the city in various ways. There are canals by which goods can come without change from the Yangtze to quite a number of points. Man power occupies about the second place. One man carries from sixty to one hundred pounds in two baskets or bundles hung to the ends of a pole across the shoulder. Larger loads 100 lbs. to a ton are carried by two men with a pole between them, or several pairs of men can get a purchase on a larger bundle or box by suspending it from the point where the several poles intersect. Next come donkeys carrying loads in pails, baskets, or bundles fastened to pack saddles. Grain and flour are put into long bags and balanced on the bare backs of the animals. Sometimes there is a driver for each donkey, and sometimes one man has a drove of them. Wheelbarrows with a large wheel projecting through the centre of the platform, are also used to carry loads, the wheel being covered in by a frame. Men go about on foot, on donkeys, mules or horses, or in sedan chairs, and occasionally wheelbarrows are used as in Shanghai. The roads are not adapted to jinrikishas. Donkeys are good, and one can have a very pleasant trip on them.

Nankin is the centre of government for three provinces the combined population of which is about 75,000,000. The city itself has a population of about 500,000. It is one of the great centres of learning of the Empire, and an excellent centre for Christian effort.

W. E. MACKLIN.

NANKIN, OCT. 11th, 1886.

At a Universalist convention in New England "they had no cheering reports to make of rapid growth in numbers or influence as an organized body, but they were full of enthusiasm over the approximation of other denominations to their liberal views, and prophesied that many Congregational pastors would become essentially one with them."