

Messenger and Visitor

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Christmas.

To our readers old and young—one and all—we extend a hearty Christmas greeting, wishing you all the happiness that health and a good conscience, with an abundance of material good and spiritual blessing can enable to enjoy.

Christmas day and the Christmas season have come in recent years to occupy a larger place in the thought and life of our people than they did formerly, and it seems well that it should be so. This restless, fast-living age would be in danger of consuming itself entirely in its strenuous pursuit of business and its almost equally strenuous pleasure-seeking, if there were not at least once a year such a holiday as the Christmas season affords. And we value Christmas not only because it permits for many work-worn people a little relaxation of the strain of business and also because it prompts in many hearts a kinder interest in the welfare of others, but also, and especially, because it emphasizes the home life of the people. It affords an opportunity for family reunions, brings the sons and daughters back to the old homestead, keeps fresh the dear memories of the past and prompts tender thoughts of some who are far away. Thus something of ideal charm and grace is added to plain and humble homes, the sacred ties of family fellowship are cemented and ideals are cultivated which are of immense importance for the promotion of national virtue and of a wholesome, vigorous national life.

A great many people—young people especially—are doubtless expecting to get a great deal of enjoyment out of the Christmas now just at hand. Some will, no doubt; and some will be disappointed, not so much because the conditions are not favorable, but because they are not taking the right way to secure the best things that Christmas has to give. We are all so apt to be blind to the fact, both at Christmas and at other times, that real happiness is not to be secured by thinking chiefly about ourselves and making it a grand aim to have a good time, but rather by thinking about others and endeavoring to promote their happiness and welfare. It may be indeed that in many families, there is sickness or pain or trouble which no expression of kindness and sympathy on the part of friends can remove. But in any family, if there be on the part of each member a loving effort to make Christmas happy for each other member, it is certain that the result will be a much larger measure of happiness to each and all than could have come from each one seeking merely his own enjoyment or brooding over his own trouble. And if this is true for Christmas day it is equally true for the rest of the year. And what is true of the family in this respect is true of all communities, of schools, of churches, of villages and cities and the great world itself. There is, no doubt, such a thing as selfish enjoyment. It is perhaps possible for a human being to enjoy himself, as a brute does, without any regard to the comfort or the misery of those around him. Happiness—if we may call it such—on so low a plane may be proper enough for brutes, but surely is unworthy of beings so largely endowed with intelligence and power of sympathy as men and women. The highest happiness is that which results from promoting and sharing in the happiness of others. The happiest Christmas then, we may be sure, will be theirs who do their best to make others happy.

If Christmas has for us any religious significance, and surely it ought to have, it must touch most strongly the chords of love and gratitude in all Christian hearts. When we bestow our little benefactions in expression of our good-will and sympathy with our fellowmen, shall it not be in memory of that unspeakable gift in which God's love for a

ruined world finds expression, and in memory of that love through which the Divine Son entered into bonds of brotherhood with sinful men, that he might taste the bitterness of death for us, and through his victory over death and sin, make us participants with him in all the wealth and blessing of the Father's house and the Father's love. If we try to put what is best of us into our Christmas life and make it an expression of our highest ideals, let us devoutly recognize that these noblest ideals and aspirations find their source and inspiration in Him who was the Babe of Bethlehem and who is the Son of God.

"By His Son."

Next Sunday being Christmas day, the attention of many in our Sunday Schools will doubtless be turned, in connection with the alternative lesson in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, to the thought of our Lord's coming into this world. This is a subject which can never cease to be for increasing millions of the human family one of profoundest interest. It is certainly the wonder of all history that the advent of Jesus, the man of Nazareth, should have come to seem to the world a matter of so transcendent importance. How has it come to pass that this man of a despised and hated race is accorded, in all the foremost nations of the earth, a place of eminence incomparably above that to which any other among the sons of men dare aspire? If we speak of Jesus as historians are accustomed to speak of men, we must say that he was of humble origin. His home was with the peasants of Galilee, and among them, for the most part, his life was spent. Until he was about thirty years of age, even the little world of Palestine had heard nothing of him. After this he lived but three years, and though his teaching and works made a profound impression in Galilee and Judea, many counting him a prophet and a few regarding him as their long expected Messiah, yet his doctrine aroused the bitter enmity of the leading and ruling classes among the Jews. The few men whom he closely associated with himself were simple and unlearned men, of humble station and destitute of worldly influence. And after those three short years the malice of his enemies triumphed. Accused of heresy and blasphemy and denounced as an enemy of the State, he was condemned amid the execrations of rulers and rabble, and died the death of a common criminal upon the cross.

But the story does not end here, and why not? Why did not the story of Jesus of Nazareth, his teachings, his wonder works, his tragic death, gradually fade from the memory of men, leaving the historian little or nothing to record concerning him? Why is it that the name of Jesus the Nazarene is written so large across the face of the centuries? Why is it that the name of him who was crucified stands in dignity and glory unapproachable above all the greatest names in human history? Why is it that men are ever studying so earnestly and devoutly his life and words and works, while the literature which finds in him its subject and its inspiration grows constantly vaster, and every year draws from the scholars of the age new commentaries upon his sayings, new histories of his life? Why has the name of the despised and rejected Nazarene become so great that nations do him reverence, numbering the years and centuries from his birth, while millions of the sons of men bow in worship at his feet, adoring him as their Saviour and their Lord?

This unique personality of Jesus who is called Christ, the place which he has come to occupy in the world's best religious life and in its profoundest thought, and his transcendent influence in shaping the destinies of men and of nations are facts which the skeptic who denies the divinity of the Son of Mary is bound to account for. And how shall we account for Jesus Christ in history and in the hearts and lives of men but by accepting Paul's declaration that he has been declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead?

Quite in harmony with the supremely exalted position which the name of Jesus occupies in the consciousness of the Christian world today is his character as set forth in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Here he is presented as the Son of God, the begotten of the Father, the shining forth of his glory, the true impress of his sub-

stance, the heir of all things and the upholder of all things,—through whom God speaks his consummate word, through whom the ages are fashioned, through whom the sins of men are purified, whose place is on the right hand of the Majesty on high, whose throne is the throne of God, whom all the angels worship and whose joy is God-given and supreme. The teaching of this lesson may be gathered up in the divine admonition, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him." God has spoken to the world in many ways, in many places and through many voices. He has spoken through inarticulate voices of nature and more distinctly by the tongue of man; he has spoken by lawgivers and prophets, by lives of holy men and women, by father's counsel and mother's love; but through none has he spoken so distinctly, with so full an expression of His compassion and his power and with such fulness of divine authority as in this consummate, final manifestation given through him who is himself the eternal "Word" and who has ever been uttering himself through every voice which has declared the truth of God. What does it mean for us? It means purification from sins and fellowship with the Son of God in his eternal joy and victory, if we will. But how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation offered by the Son of God and purchased with his blood?

Editorial Notes.

—It is stated that the students of Regent's Park College, London, intend to erect a memorial in the College to the Regent's Park men who have laid down their lives on the Congo in connection with the Mission of the Baptist Missionary Society. Between February, 1883, and July, 1897, seven Regent's men have fallen in the service of their Lord in that unhealthy clime.

—Events appear to be verifying the fears of those who predicted that the admission of Utah to the statehood in the American Union would result in the recognition of polygamy as an institution of that State. It is stated that Brigham H. Roberts, who is a representative from Utah to Congress, is a polygamist in practice as well as belief. The Women's Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian church has started a movement to secure Roberts' exclusion from Congress, and is asking the Women's Home Mission Societies of other denominations to co-operate. It is expected that the influence of 1,000,000 earnest American women can be brought to bear for the exclusion of the polygamous Congressman before the fourth of March.

—The American Revisers have a grievance against the British Revisers for having brought out what they call "The American Revised Bible," which is an edition of the Revised Version in which the renderings preferred by the American revisers are incorporated in the text. The American revisers appear to feel that by this action a march has been stolen upon them, since, by the terms of their agreement with the British revisers, they—the American revisers—were precluded from issuing an American edition until 1899. They state that they have been diligently engaged in amending and perfecting their original work, which, so far as it varied from the text of the Revised Version was embodied in Appendices, and they protest that an injustice has been done them by incorporating these Appendices in the text (as the British revisers have now done) as though they represented the final result of the American committee. The American revisers therefore announce that they will issue next year "The American Standard Bible" in which the full results of their work will be incorporated.

—The re-conquest of the Soudan and the establishment of Anglo Egyptian rule over the country will afford conditions far more favorable than have heretofore existed, not only for the development of the country as to its natural resources, but also for the propagation of Christianity in all that part of Africa. It is stated that the Church Missionary Society will at once open stations at Khartoum and Fashoda, and other societies will no doubt follow in the work of evangelization. The extension of the authority of the United States over Cuba, Porto Rico and the Philippines will involve a like improvement in conditions for the work of Protestant missionaries in those countries. The American Bible Society has already received a report from its agent, Rev.

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