

Parish and Home.

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THE GIFT TO THE KING.

The Master painted a picture
With tender touch and true,
And colors of royal beauty
That only the Master knew;
And in our poor home He labored
To fashion the perfect thing,
To place in the royal palace
As His Son's gift to the King.

And dearly we learned to love it,
Because it was very fair,
And because, while His work was with us,
The Master, we knew, was there.
We watched it with tender wonder
As it grew 'neath the gracious Hand
To the fullness of perfect beauty
That the Master Himself had planned.

Fair as the morning glory,
As the lily undefiled,
So fair was the finished picture,
And the Master saw and smiled.
When the autumn sunlight kissed it,
One beauty the more to bring,
The Master stooped and took it,
And brought it to the King.

And aye, since that autumn evening—
Ah, Christ! but the years are long—
We have longed for the vanished picture
With aye-remembering that grows more strong—
More strong for aye, till the Master
His people at last shall bring,
And we shall behold our treasure,
Safe, safe with our Lord, the King.

—H.H.D., in *Parish Visitor*.

CHRIST OUR REFUGE.

BY THE REV. W. J. ARMITAGE, ST. CATHARINES, ONT.

I. THE CITIES OF REFUGE.

In the early Jewish economy appointed of God for the settlement of the Promised Land, six cities of refuge were especially set apart and given rights of asylum and certain

well-defined conditions. It was intended that they should afford shelter and protection to those who committed homicide unintentionally, or, in the language of the Scripture, unawares and unwittingly.

The word city in ancient times carried with it the idea of protection. The first city of which we read was founded for that purpose. Cain built the first city and called it after the name of his son Enoch. The city of Enoch was not, of course, a city in the modern sense, with its civil government, its lines of streets and squares, its houses and factories, its churches and shops; but a fortified place, built for the greater protection of those who congregated together for safety and social intercourse. Its first and leading thought, like the Saxon "burg," is that of security. In later times the term gained a wider significance, and to the Greeks and Romans a city furnished opportunity for collective and corporate life upon social and political lines.

The cities of refuge were placed so as to provide readiness of access, three on either side of Jordan, and nearly opposite to each other. The approach to them was to be left open, with good roads at least forty-eight feet in width, and bridges were provided wherever necessary. At the cross-roads finger-posts were to be erected, with the inscription upon them "refuge," "refuge," in plain characters so that the runners might read it as they ran. In the cities themselves an abundant supply of food and water was to be constantly kept against all exigencies which might arise, and no weapons of war were to be allowed within the walls.

The need of the cities arose from the old custom of the avenging of blood by the nearest relative of the deceased, a practice common in the East still, and which, to a greater or less degree, was recognized in nearly all the nations of antiquity. Layard, in his "Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon," declares that however repugnant it may seem to our ideas of justice, it must be "admitted that no power vested in any one individual, and no punishment however severe, could tend more to the maintenance

of order and the prevention of bloodshed amongst the wild tribes of the desert." The Mosaic law by this provision, while it upheld the sanctity of human life and inspired horror at the thought of the shedding of blood, even by accident, furnished some protection to the innocent.

The refugee was safe the moment he entered the gate of the city of refuge. But as a safeguard, and in order not to screen real criminals, the elders of the city and of the place from which he came instituted an inquiry into the facts of the case, and reached a decision as to whether the act was involuntary or the result of malice. If he was pronounced a murderer, the nearest kinsman of the person slain executed in his own person the sentence of death. If he was adjudged innocent of wilful murder, he was protected in the city of refuge, and on the death of the high priest he was no longer counted as a fugitive, but was allowed to return home to his relatives and friends. This merciful provision of the cities of refuge acted as a preventive to idolatry; the involuntary man-slayer was not driven to seek a home among the heathen nations around, but was allowed to live in his own land, among his own kindred, who held like him a common faith in God.

The cities of refuge were not merely civil institutions serving a local purpose. They were also types of heavenly things, and taught Scriptural lessons of very deepest significance. They pointed to Christ in His office of our great High Priest, in His work as Redeemer and Saviour. They were an object-lesson of the meaning of sin, of the punishment which it deserves, and of the only way of escape, and furnished a marvellous resemblance to the way of salvation in Christ our only refuge.

The cities of refuge appear to have been prepared and designed of God to point to Christ as the sinner's refuge, and that in more ways than one. Christ is the city of refuge. The six cities of refuge belonged to the priestly tribe of Levi. The forty-eight cities of Levi possessed the right of asylum, but the six cities of refuge were bound to re