



SCHOLARS' NOTES.

LESSON XII.—Dec. 20., 1896.

Matt. 2 : 1-12.

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

Commit to Memory Vs. 10, 11.

GOLDEN TEXT.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not ; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.—Luke 2 : 10.

LESSON OUTLINE.

- I. The Coming of the Wise Men. Vs. 1-6.
- II. The Finding of the Place. Vs. 7-10.
- III. The Worshipping of the Child. Vs. 11, 12.

HOME READINGS.

- M. Luke 1 : 26-33.—The Announcement to Mary.
- T. Luke 1 : 46-55.—Mary's Song.
- W. Mic. 5 : 1-7.—The Birth in Bethlehem Foretold.
- Th. Matt. 1 : 18-25.—Jesus to be the Saviour.
- F. Luke 2 : 1-20.—The Birth of Jesus.
- S. Luke 2 : 21-38.—The Infant Jesus in the Temple.
- S. Matt. 2 : 1-12.—The Visit of the Wise Men.

Time.—B. C. 4, February. Place.—Bethlehem.

HINTS AND HELPS IN STUDY.

Prophecy had declared that the Messiah should be born in Bethlehem. Wednesday's Reading. Mary, who the angel Gabriel had said should be the mother of the Saviour, was living at Nazareth. A decree of the Roman emperor obliged her to go with Joseph, her betrothed husband, to Bethlehem to be enrolled. There Jesus was born, and thus, the arbitrary decree of a heathen ruler brought about the fulfilment of prophecy. The crowded condition of the caravanserai, or inn, compelled Joseph and Mary to lodge in the stable. An angel announced the birth of the holy child, to shepherds near Bethlehem, and a chorus of angels sang praises to God. Friday's Reading. The shepherds hastened to search for the child and found him lying in a manger just as the angel said they should. The baby was circumcised on the eighth day, and named Jesus—'Saviour.' On the fortieth day he was presented in the temple at Jerusalem. Saturday's Reading. The holy family then returned to Bethlehem, where they lodged, though probably not in the stable but in some dwelling house. Here occurred the visit of the wise men.

QUESTIONS.

Who was the mother of Jesus? Where was Jesus born? How came Mary to be at Bethlehem? Who came to Jerusalem to visit the infant Jesus? What did they ask? How did Herod feel when he heard their question? What did Herod do? What did he ask? What answer was given him? Whither did he send the wise men? With what directions? What did the wise men do when they found Jesus? What warning did they receive? What did they do?

WHAT THE LESSON TEACHES.

- 1. In many ways God would lead us to Jesus.
- 2. The coming of Christ troubles wicked men.
- 3. We should be glad to find the way to Christ.
- 4. We should offer our heart's best gifts to Jesus.
- 5. Plots against God's anointed must always fail.

THE LESSON STORY.

A strange thing happened one day a long time ago in the city of Jerusalem. Some wise men came there looking for a baby King of the Jews. There was already a king named Herod, who ruled over the people, and he was a very wicked man. You can believe that it troubled him to hear that men from far away were looking for a new king. These wise men said that they

had seen the star of the baby King in the east, and had come to worship him.

Herod sent for the priests who knew the Old Testament Scriptures to come and tell where Christ was to be born. They said that the prophet had foretold that he would be born in Bethlehem. Then Herod told the wise men to go there and find the new King and come back and tell him so he could worship him too. He meant so that he could go and kill him.

When the wise men started to go to Bethlehem the star went ahead of them and stopped over the stable where the young child lay. The wise men gave him presents of gold, and frankincense, and myrrh, and worshipped him. But God told them in a dream not to go back and tell Herod, and so they went home by another way, and Herod was disappointed in his evil plans.

ILLUSTRATION.

Jesus' enemies. Herod was troubled, V. 3, the chief priests and scribes were indifferent, Vs. 4-6. They were both against him. Matt. 12 : 30. A man walked seven hundred miles to see Niagara. Coming within seven miles of the falls he heard what he thought might be the roar of the torrent, and asked a man walking by the roadside if it was so. The man said, 'Maybe, I don't know, I've never been there.' Within seven miles of the great scenery, and had never gone to look at it! These priests and scribes lived close to the infant but never went to see Him. Out of the Bible they told the traveller the way to Jesus, but not one step did they take themselves. One may be 'near to Christ in point of privilege, but a long way off in point of piety.'

Jesus' worshippers. They were 'Wise.' Vs. 2, 11. The greatest and wisest have owned their allegiance to him, through all the centuries. Jonathan Edwards, the learned metaphysician, was a Christian; Herschel, the great astronomer; Benjamin Franklin, the wise philosopher; John Milton, the wonderful poet; William Blackstone, the great law commentator; General Gordon, the brave warrior; David Livingstone, the self-denying explorer; Earl of Shaftesbury, the mighty statesman, were all worshippers of Jesus. If you would follow the example of the wisest and best men you must be among the worshippers of Jesus.

Satisfied. Where the star 'stood' they rested with 'exceeding great joy.' Vs. 9, 10. A little girl patiently listened to her mother as she told her the first chapters of the story of Ben-Hur; how the wise men in the Arab desert saw the bright star in the sky and followed it. How they travelled, watching eagerly the wonderful light of the heavens which was to bring them to the Light of the world. When finally, after much description, the story teller brought the wise men to the manger, where with the star they stopped, the little girl drew a long breath and said, 'Oh! I'm so glad we've come to Jesus.' A sight of the Saviour brings fullness of joy. Jno. 15 : 11; joy unspeakable and full of glory. 1 Pet. 1 : 8.—Arnold's Practical Commentary.

True Love Sacrifices Self.

I.

'No, no; I wur a fool to hope or think sic a thing. There be anither man tha lovest; a younger man, a better man nor me. It be Will Benson. Dunnot answer, lass, I know it. Well, forgi' me what a' said. Good-bye, Jessie, and God bless thee, lass; God bless thee!'

Thus spoke Steven Armstrong, as he turned away from the cottage where Jessie MacDavitt lived; that cottage with the gay flowers round its porch that made the one bright patch of brightness in this dismal, dust-begrimed country side, blackened everywhere by coal, saddened by the lives of men whom destiny had cast to delve and burrow beneath the fair earth that other men might grow rich.

But, somehow, to-day Steve Armstrong could see no brightness in anything. He had been a fool, and no mistake, this great, stalwart, broad-shouldered miner! He was well past forty; his hair becoming gray, and sparse on top—quite old to her.

He had been a bachelor all these years. He might have known it was sheer madness now to lavish all the wealth of his great manly heart on pretty, winsome Jessie. She did not want an old fogey like him.

At first she seemed to hear his tale with gentle tenderness and pity. Then a word

or two she dropped almost unconsciously had revealed the truth. Of course, Will Benson was the man. Will was twenty years younger than himself, and was just the lad to please the girl's fancy.

And so, having settled that matter in his own mind, Armstrong walked slowly and sadly away about his business.

II.

It was Saturday night. Bar and parlor of the Miners' Arms were crowded with men. Here the hard-earned money flew merrily; money which should have gone to wife and weans at home—money which might have been as a tower of strength in fighting the battles that labor and poverty always have to fight.

Will Benson was there, in the midst of a noisy throng, reeking of beer, spirits, and rank tobacco. He had had a great deal too much to drink already. Suddenly some one laid a hand upon his arm. He turned tipsily, and encountered the serious, steadfast gaze of Steven Armstrong, who was not drunk and had only just entered the public house.

'Dunnot tak' ony moor,' the latter whispered, gently, but firmly.

'Who told thee to interfere, Maister Preacher?'

'No one. I ask thee not to for t' sake o' t' girl—who loves thee.'

'Did she tell thee to coom pryin' ather me?'

'Tha knows better no that. I ask thee for her sake and for tha own good.'

'Bah! I've heard yond' stuff fro' t' blue ribbon fowk afore now. A' be none o' thein. I ask thee not t' spend all t' neet here. Think o' her who'st o' be tha wife. These chaps do thee no good. They'll mak' thee spend tha brass, and when 'tis all gone they'll only laugh at thee.'

'Shew me t' mon as 'll laugh at me. Ye daren't. It's tha thyself as are doin' it. Come outside, then, and we'll see who's t' best mon.'

'I winna fight wi' thee—and certainly not now,' Armstrong answered slowly and with dignity. It was not the retraction of a coward. His well-meant remonstrances had proved worse than useless, and from that time those two men felt each other to be rivals.

III.

Horror and consternation are spreading far and wide through the grimy Lancashire town. A terrible explosion has just been heard. They know only too well what that means, and the poor women, both young and old, are rushing wild and terror-stricken to the pit's mouth.

Down in the 'workings' the excitement is at its height. Men are running to the bottom of the shaft—running for their lives, for the noxious after-damp is choking them, and they know only too well that many of them are destined never to see the light of day again. The cage is going up and down again as quickly as may be, but it will only hold a limited number. They must patiently wait their turn, and that turn may mean life or death.

'There be room for one moor,' the miners shout. 'Come along, Steve Armstrong; it be tha turn.'

But he does not move. 'No,' he answers; 'I be old a' alone. Here's a young fellow as a gotten a mither; let un go instead this time.'

It was Will Benson who stood by his side. 'You, Armstrong! You mak' room for me!' he exclaimed.

'What dost suppose a'd do? A' fight fair—when a' want to fight.'

'Yo do this for ma sake?'

'Not for thine, mon; for hers! Go!'

The words were few—there was no time for more—but they had a rough, heroic dignity about them. Benson stepped into the cage without another word; the signal was given, and they went up toward the light and air above.

From those about the pit's mouth a ringing cheer arose as the cage reached the surface. They knew that so many, at least, of their mates were safe, and some of the women went away with hearts full of joy and thankfulness. The word went quickly around that Steve Armstrong had sent up Will Benson instead of himself. Pretty Jessie MacDavitt was there. When she heard the whisper she understood. A woman's in-