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The Glory of Christ.

BY LINA JEANETTE WALK.

"If this were twenty centuries ago,
And three wise men should seek my house, and say,
'We bring glad tidings! Christ is born to day.
Arise and follow yonder star, whose glow
Will lead you to the Christ!'
Would I obey,
If this were twenty centuries ago?"

THE message that comes to us to-day is a glorious one, full of hope and promise. Centuries ago, when the glad tidings of Christ's birth first came to man, it was received in awe and wonder; when the heavens declared it in the bright and shining star that, like a fiery finger, pointed the way to the inn at Bethlehem, and the angel choir repeated it in joyful and thrilling notes. All who saw and heard, journeyed to where the Child and his mother were lying in a stall, and bowed down and worshiped, confessing their belief in the Saviour.

But what of to-day? Would the implied doubt in the last lines of the quotation above be in the heart or upon the tongue if this were the first Christmas morning? 'Tis true that many anxious questionings have stirred the soul and many honest doubts have arisen since the story of the Babe of Bethlehem was told to the wondering people. But despite all these, most Christians feel the same thrill of joy and gladness when the anniversary of the birth of Christ dawns again upon the earth and the same homage claims their hearts.

It seems remarkable that Christ should have come to the earth as a little child, and that his glory should be revealed in the life and character recorded in the Bible. He could have come as a Prince in pomp and splendor so great and marvelous that all would have bowed down to him at once and acknowledged him as their sovereign. But he came as a little child in order to teach us that humility and purity which are essential to the growth and well-being of the soul.

The chief glory of Christmas is in the Christ-like atmosphere which seems to pervade all during this season; even those who at other times do not feel especially impelled to benevolent acts are inspired by the spirit of altruism which manifests itself in all directions and among all classes around them. A happy Christmas depends more on the spirit in which a gift is bestowed or received than upon the gift itself. A gift is twice a gift if it is given thoughtfully and in accordance with the desires and needs of the recipient. Christ's chief glory is in giving himself as the one absolute need for us all. All things were made for Christ's glory, and if we would please and honor him we must live our lives according to the standard he has set for us.

The Gift of Persuasion.

IT is interesting to notice the recurrence in Paul's letters of the words, "I beseech you." It was not enough for him to state and explain a truth and then leave it to work its way in the conviction of his readers; it was not enough for him to point out the way of duty and then leave it to their unaided decision to follow it. He bent his soul in a great effort of persuasion. To get them to act on his teaching was his supreme aim. The end of all teaching is action; so also of prayer. Even worship is only half-rendered until expression is given to love and faith in holy deeds. But Paul has no compulsory power. No one obeyed him unless he first had a mind to, very rarely did he command; he preferred appeal. As an Apostle he had certain authority in the churches; he sometimes gave rules for their government. But he rarely relied on his authority as an Apostle. Instead of that he appealed to them as brethren and urged them to highest service by appealing to loftiest motives—"I beseech you, brethren,"

was his familiar mode of speech. He was a master of the art of suasion.

The need of moral pressure is felt by us all. Knowing our duty is only preparatory to the doing of it, we lack the strong purpose to do. In other words, we need urging and enticement in order to overcome the resistance from the flesh and the devil. There are some who say they do not believe in urging any one to become a Christian, or to join the church, or to undertake any duty or give money for any cause. They do not know human nature and its strength of resistance to all good things. Many a one has taken the right step through a simple appeal spoken at the right time. There are horses that need neither whip nor spur, and some people are like them, but they are very few. It may be a great pity because any are so sluggish, and unwilling in the service of God. Of course it is an infinite pity we are spiritually lethargic. But such is our condition. God's greatest victory is the overcoming of our unwillingness. Faith triumphed in Peter, when wearied and of contrary opinion to Christ, he roused himself and said, "Nevertheless, at Thy word I will let down the net." Most of God's best servants are at first unwilling to assume the duties laid upon them. Moses resisted to the point of refusal. Paul was an exception in his readiness to obey, but he was so mightily stirred that flesh and blood had no chance to oppose. We all need the help that comes from the encouragement and exhortations of others. He is a powerful man who can lead us in the doing of good, and move us to the heavenly life. The scriptures say "Exhort one another daily." The word is the same as Paul uses when he beseeched the brethren. Mutual persuasion, mutual provocation in the best sense, mutual encouragement, are essential to continued and energetic faithfulness. There was a prince of magnetic eye who was said to be able to get others to do whatever he wished if once he set his eye on them. It would be a rich endowment of power if God gave unto us ability to dispose others to do what duty and love suggest. Not only preachers, but parents, teachers and leaders in churches, need to know the secret of successful appeal.

—Baptist Commonwealth.

The Shepherd and the Sheep.

LETTING our thought pass beyond the specific and immediate applications of the similitudes of the sheep and the Shepherd, they suggest certain vital and essential Christian truths upon which we do well to ponder until they germinate and fructify in the inner life.

One of them assuredly is that the relation of the disciple to Christ is not exterior and mechanical; it is personal and vital. The sheep recognize the voice of the Shepherd. There is an inner response, born of long association and warm affection, that moves in the heart when those tones are heard. Every day we see this response in animals to those to whom they are attached. Your dog is almost transported when, after a long absence, your footfall is heard at the gate, and the sound of your voice reaches his ear. But we only find the highest development of this response in human relations. The heart is moved as no eloquence or music can stir it by the voice of those we love. It is not the vocal sounds that do it. We recognize in the voice the personality that we love. It is the soul of the one we love that moves us. The relation of the disciple to Christ is like that. It is not formal, but real; not mechanical, but vital; not compelled, but spontaneous; not legal, but affectional.

Then, too, our Lord teaches that this response of the soul to Him is the secret of entrance into the fold, of guidance and of protection. This vital relationship carries with it everything that Christ can do for us. The great word of the New Testament is "faith," but faith in essence is not belief, or love, or obedience. But faith lies

back of them all, and they are only ways in which it reveals itself. Fellowship with Christ is the great thing. How does it come? Can you tell how that consciousness of sympathy, of mutual comprehension, and soul-union sprang up in your heart which has manifested itself in the great human love that blessed your life? But however it came, it brought with it everything the one you loved was, or could do for you. We should be more willing to let the best experiences of human affection interpret the relation of Christ to us.

And there is no limit to the devotion of Christ to those whose hearts have responded to Him. The Good Shepherd gives the last proof of love: He lays down His life for the sheep. We are always tempted to estimate the strength of the tie that binds us to Christ by our own devotion to Him. But He would measure it by His devotion to us. Is there not some significance in the fact that a sheep should so constantly be taken as the type of man? It is the silliest and weakest and most defenceless of animals. Its very nature seems to be to go astray. About its only merit is that it can respond to the voice of the shepherd. Is not that a just type of humanity? But the tie that unites the Shepherd to the sheep is so strong on the part of the Shepherd that He lays down His life for it. Does not that suggest some aspects of the gospel that incite to the largest gratitude and hopefulness as to the future?

On Faces.

OCASSIONALLY you see two people whose countenances are so alike that you find it difficult to distinguish between them. Usually, of course, they are twins. But a closer familiarity with them makes you wonder that you ever could have mistaken them for each other. To some eyes most Negroes or Chinamen or Japanese look alike; but the people of their own race see as much difference in their countenances as we see in each other. And we have heard crusty old bachelors say that all babies look alike, thought every young mother or father knows that that is not true. But, when you come to think of it, is it not wonderful that two eyes and a brow, a nose, a mouth, and a chin—each of them occupying the same relative position,—produce such an infinite variety of impressions? But probably the variety in faces is not due so much to the difference in their component parts as it is in the faculty the human countenance possesses of expressing the temper of the soul. Fear and love, anxiety, submission, delight, and awe register themselves at once in the countenance, and we remember people and distinguish them from others, not so much by their features as by the moods which their countenance expresses. Each of us has his prevailing mood, that leaves its lines upon the countenance. Any portrait painter will tell you that the lines of the face worn by joy or care or conquest or defeat or passion are the most significant things about a human countenance.

The following words of truth from David Starr Jordan are worth every boy's learning: "Boys who have formed the cigarette habit are like wormy apples—they drop long before harvest time. They rarely make failures in after life, because they do not have any after life. The boy who begins cigarette smoking before his fifteenth year, never enters the life of the world. When other boys are taking hold of the world's work, he is concerned with the sexton and the undertaker."

We hear of a church in a Maine town which keeps a record of the attendance of the resident members at the prayer meeting. Each month an announcement of the number attending is made from the pulpit. This practise has had a good effect, increasing the attendance and interest.