

THE BETHLEHEMITES.

(From the German, By Julie Sutter.)

PART II.—"IN HIS NAME SHALL THE GENTILES TRUST."

CHAPTER III.—AT HEBRON.

A girl of fourteen, and a youth some two years older, were sauntering through a spring wood on the hillside, at a little distance from the ancient city of Hebron.

"I want to hear more, brother," the girl was saying.

And the youth resumed: "The people came streaming down the mount of Olives, pressing through the city gate in spite of the Roman soldiers who attempted to keep them back. Through the narrow streets the crowd went heaving, their cries filling the air. Nearer and nearer they came to the temple; and, as though moved by a higher impulse, we Levites came forth to meet Him, the white-robed children that serve Jehovah taking the lead. And suddenly silence descended on the people. At the entrance of the temple we saw Him sitting upon the colt of an ass, He, the meekest of men, yet a King. But ah, how sad He looked! As we went near to receive Him, the children burst into a loud Hosanna, the people responding: 'Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!' And we saw that the multitude had spread their garments, had cut down branches and strewed them in the way. But He dismounted, entering the court of the Gentiles, and with surprise we saw Him overthrow the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sell doves. 'My house shall be called the house of prayer,' He said, 'but ye have made it a den of thieves.' And He cast out all that sold and bought in the temple. Thereupon, he went into the inner court, and sat down to teach. And soon the chief priests and scribes came to Him with upbraiding looks, asking by what authority He did these things. But he met them with another question, and they could not answer Him. They went away with angry looks toward us Levites, but we heeded them not, rather joining in the people's renewed Hosanna; and then we listened to the wondrous teaching that flowed from His lips, not thinking of meat or drink till He rose and left the temple.

"And as the people made way for Him, He stood still a moment, looking up at the proud pinnacles of the temple, and then passed a slow gaze over the faces of the multitude, on which the setting sun was casting a brilliant light. Ah, sister, it was a look to be remembered! All were silent, as He went through their midst.

"We sung the psalms on that evening with a deeper feeling than we had ever done before. And ever and again between the words of David, we heard a glorious Hosanna. None of us could think of sleep, the long night passing as a sunset hour. In the morning He returned from Bethany, whither He had retired, and again he taught us, His face being more and more sorrowful, and yet so full of love and tenderness, it moved many of us to tears. I felt constrained to hasten home this day, and tell you about these things, but I must return early in the morning, anxious to be where He is. I greatly fear the high-priests and scribes seek to lay hands on Him to kill Him. If they do, what may not be the end? For He would never permit us to rise and fight for Him."

"So late home, Asenath?" and the mother put down her babe, three other children lifting their heads from the pillow, when their sister entered.

"Forgive me, mother! Joshua had so much to tell me of things happening at Jerusalem, the time passed, we knew not how."

"I can understand it," was the gentle reply, "but take my place now with the little ones."

And the mother quitted the chamber. "Have you brought me the red lilies?" asked Ruth, a bright-eyed maiden.

"No, darling, I forgot all about it. I listened to such wondrous things that I never remembered my promise about the flowers."

The little creature pouted. "Nay, Ruth, you must forgive me. Go to sleep now, and to-morrow we will look for lilies."

"What did Joshua tell you, that was so wonderful?" queried a curly-headed boy, some three or four years old.

"He spoke to me about Jesus, the prophet, to whom mother brought you once, and surely you remember how tenderly He took you up in His arms, putting His hands upon you to bless you."

"Yes, I remember," cried the little boy. "And I!"

"And I!" the three voices repeating in chorus: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the Kingdom of God."

And Asenath thereupon told them how happy the children of the temple had been that day, how they had sung praises to the Messiah. And then the elder sister herself sang the children to sleep.

Far into the night, Joshua with his parents and Asenath was sitting upon the roof, repeating to them again and again the wonderful words of Jesus. The moon had risen, casting a pale glory upon the sepulchre of Abraham in the distance, and upon the plain of Mamre, where the angel of the Lord of old spake of the Child of Promise, in whose seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed.

Happy and solemn were the thoughts of the priest and his gentle wife, as they listened to the words of their son, his glowing account waking echoes in their hearts of the goodness and mercy of Jehovah.

"Then you will go back to-morrow, my son," said Caleb, blessing him; "is it worth while for two days only?"

"Detain me not, father," pleaded the youth, "I would fain listen to Him again!"

"Nay, my boy, go in peace, and the God of Abraham be with thee," replied the priest.

"Yes, go," added Rachel, his wife, laying her hand on the brow of her first-born, but return to us to eat the passover.

CHAPTER IV.—BACK AT BETHLEHEM.

It was toward sunset. Virginia in deep emotion was pacing the roof of the old house, her childhood's home; Helia and the younger Virginia sitting apart, pale and saddened.

Zillah too, and Anana were there. But Zillah's face shone with a new light. Peace had taken the place of mourning. She looked like one who having come through great tribulation, had found Him that could comfort her soul.

"What gain is it!" cried Virginia passionately; "what gain to me that you say, He lives, if I cannot see Him? For thirty years my heart has longed for Him, hungered for Him and ever since we left Rome, it has been my one thought that now I should be satisfied. And reaching Jerusalem I am told of His Death on the cross!"

"What gain is it to me that Titus keeps saying: 'Truly this man was the Son of God!' I knew He was, and I wanted to see Him! Titus stood by the cross when He died; he saw Him laid in the tomb, he watched the chief priests and Pharisees, making sure of the sepulchre, by sealing the stone—and now ye tell me He is risen indeed, and ascended to Heaven. What gain this to me who wanted to see Him, and have Him speak to me!—I cannot understand you, Zillah; you told me life had left you nought but sadness, and now you say your mourning is turned to joy, because you know Him! Well, you at least have seen Him before He went to Heaven. But I came too late! Too late! too late!" she kept sobbing, shaken with grief.

"Noble lady," responded Anana, "He Himself said: 'Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed!'"

"Did He! Are those His very own words?" cried Virginia. "But, alas, how am I to believe?"—and she covered her face with her hands.

"Should He, at whose voice the dead returned to life not have had power to rise from the grave and ascend to the right hand

of God?" returned Anana solemnly. "And we know He will come again."

"If it is, as you say, why could He not have saved Himself, but died the death of transgressors?"

"He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows," said Zillah softly; "yea, He was wounded for our transgressions, and with His stripes we are healed. . . . And rising again for our justification He has ascended to be our advocate with the Father. Far nearer He is to His people now than if He had remained visible upon earth. Dearest Virginia, will you not believe, and have a part in Him also? Let me take you to those who were with Him when He was carried up into Heaven. Better than I they can tell you the wondrous things of God."

"I long to believe," said Virginia.

"I will take you to Rachel in the morning," concluded Zillah; "her husband and son are disciples of Christ, and they know those who were with Him in the time of His blessed ministry, even the apostles whom He loved."

The morning sun was shedding a rosy light over the valley of Bethlehem, when a little band of Christians, white-robed, met for baptism by the brook where David



NEW HOPES.

of old sung psalms to his God.

Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, young and old, oncemore they were together; from Europe, Asia and Africa they were gathered to bow the knee to Jesus, the Crucified.

They were added to the church by one of those who had followed Him when He lived among men.

"In the name of the

Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost," he said, "I baptize you into His death. Let your life be hid with Christ, growing in His love, for He has bought you with a price. And He will come again to take you to Himself. Even where He has risen we shall see Him,\* though He tarry a while! Remember how long His people waited, till the angel at last brought good tidings to the faithful in this place. And now to you and your children is the promise, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord shall call. Go ye now and do His will, abiding the coming of the King! In sorrow and joy ye have His word: 'I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.'"

Thus then, it has been the Christmas-carol ever since:

EMMANUEL—GOD WITH US.

\* The early Christians believing in the speedy return of Christ.

FROM THE PRISON TO THE SENATE

Outside the gates stood a man. He had worked out his time within the dingy walls of the State prison, and once more he is out in the great world. But there is no friend there to meet him. Where is he to go? No home doors are open. He feels disgraced and expects people to shun him.

Provisionally a Christian man comes along, asks him where he is going, and finding that the man has no path marked out, invites him to walk with him to Hartford. At first he shrinks; he had been so long shut away from companionship with men that it takes some time for manhood to assert itself, but as this is the only way open he accepts the invitation.

As they walk along they converse freely of the past and the hopes for the future. He tells how he was brought to the prison, speaks of its gloom at first, but there he found Jesus, and He is able to light even the cell of a State prison. Although he had been brought there by sin, there was no necessity for continuing in sin, and he had there promised to lead a true and upright life. Another good thing had come to him there, and that was a good trade, some-

thing he had never had, and one of the best things a young man can have; one that is a good shield from the many temptations young men are subject to.

The man whom the Lord sent to him that morning at the prison gate took him to a large manufactory and introduced him to the proprietor, who was made acquainted with all the facts in the case. He then gave him a place in his shop, among the great number of men employed by him, after first telling the men who he was and where he came from, as the man desired this. There he commenced life again. Ten years later this man owned the factory. Years after he was a senator in the legislature of one of the largest New England States.

There is no place in life to sit down and be discouraged. Life to a great extent is what we make it. All boys cannot become senators, neither can all be Presidents or governors, but all boys can make honest, straightforward men, and these are needed everywhere. And it rests with you whether you are to be such. Never mind your circumstances. Some of the greatest men we ever had have come up through the most trying circumstances. Aim to be men in the highest sense, men who can be trusted. Keep as far from sin as possible. Never stop to ask how near you may go to a doubtful thing; the only safety is in shunning everything that has the appearance of evil. So often we hear boys say, What's the harm? showing by the very question that there is a little uncertainty in their own minds; they are not quite satisfied. There is danger of our looking at sin so often that it becomes less and less distasteful to us, and at last we relish it; so, beware, trifle not with your convictions of right.

Then, in standing firmly against sin, you help to strengthen your character. Be thorough in all things; never allow yourself to carelessly do anything. There is so much superficial work everywhere. The scholar in school often by being careless the first year, feels the effects most when passing his final examination—he then reaps the fruits of his carelessness. Many of our young people come from our schools with just a smattering of a good many studies, but thorough in nothing. They have had a way of gliding through, and deceiving their teachers, and they have graduated in name only.

Daniel Webster once said: "There is always room upstairs. The walks of skilled labor are not over-crowded. But the great army of 'incapables' is almost beyond limit." There is an old saying, that if you fit yourself for a place, the place will call for you. That, as a rule, is true; somebody will see your fitness for the place, and your employer will recognize the fact that none can fill your place. Aim for the best things for time and eternity.—*Christian at Work.*

"LIKE AS A FATHER."

A good story is told of a gentleman who, accompanied by his little son, was one day riding after a pair of mettlesome young horses. Alighting to adjust some portion of the harness the horses for some reason became fractious and unmanageable. Madly they resisted all efforts at control and fiercely strove to break away from the driver's hand. Though in constant danger of being trampled to death beneath their iron feet, the father, nevertheless, mindful only of the imminent peril of his boy, clung desperately to the bridles of the frantic brutes, until at length, in the fearful struggle, the carriage was overturned and out rolled the precious eight-year-old safe and sound. Too thankful now for utterance and unmindful of bruises, cuts, broken carriage, or any other minor matters, the father with the utmost composure saw the maddened steeds go tearing wildly down the street. His darling boy was safe! It was enough. Bearing his unharmed child in his arms he eagerly, joyfully, in triumph, returns to his anxious and welcoming home. "Like as a father." What a comment on a certain well-known and very precious text. "Like as a father." Ah, yes. Thus fondly is the heart of God set upon his own:—so devotedly indeed, that if necessary He could doubtless with utter, supreme composure witness the swift and total ruin even of His whole universe, so only His precious children were forever secure.

THOU ART WISE if thou beat off petty troubles, nor suffer their stinging to fret thee.—*Tupper.*