

Seeking the Christ-Child.

"One golden morn'g Aline's home they came
The angel-beards of a sweet babe
With loving care,
Adine, thy home prepare,
For Christ, the Lord, this day shall be thy guest.

"With awe, Aline the heavenly messenger heard,
A holy hush fell on her heart and face,
And going to and fro,
She whispered low,
'To-day his presence shall make glad this place.'

"Long hours she watched, and while she bent her ear,
And thro' the twilight strained her eager sight,
A shadow crossed the floor,
And at the door
A sad-eyed child begged shelter from the night.

"But Aline, waiting for her kingly guest,
With hope and fear at war within her heart,
No thought or care
The weary child could spare,
And with miraculous aims bade him depart.

"Then suddenly the childish form was changed,
And with a look that smote her like a sword—
All fair and bright,
In robes of silvery white—
He turned and said, 'Adine, behold thy Lord.'

"And while with trembling hands her face she hid,
The glory faded that through the place had shone;
The sheen of pinions fair
Swept thro' the silent air,
And in the twilight dim she stood alone.

"Still for the master's coming Aline waits,
But help from those who need no more withhold,
For, evermore
In all who seek her door,
Aline the image of her Lord beholds."

This quaint little legend, so sweetly told in the verses I have quoted, is repeated in many languages, and the tradition lingers, though in different forms, in all nations who have heard the story of the Christ-child.

The Russian peasants believe that an old woman—the Baboushka—was at work in her house when the wise men from the East passed on their way to find the child.

"Come with us," they said; "we have seen his star in the East, and go to worship him."

"I will come, but not now," she answered. "I have my house to set in order; when that is done, I will follow and find him."

But when her work was done, the three kings had passed on their way across the desert, and the star shone no more in the darkened heavens. She never saw the Christ-child, but she is living and searching for him still. For his sake she takes care of all little children. It is she who, in Russian and Italian houses, is believed to fill the stockings and dress the tree on Christmas morning. The children are awakened by the call, "See, the Baboushka!" and spring up, hoping to catch a glimpse of her before she vanishes. She fancies, the tradition goes, that in each poor little one whom she warms and feeds she may find the Christ-child whom she neglected ages ago.

Very likely, as we read or listen to these simple fables, which, though different, are at heart the same old story of neglected happiness, because of the work and worry of our daily lives, or of ambition which cannot see our Lord in the simple vesture of a little child, we feel as if they were not for us; that the prose and hurry of our daily life make the world a very different place from what it was in the misty, wonderful "long ago," when Christ was a living presence among men.

The Baboushka, looking out, saw the light of a miraculous star streaming across the desert, and kings on their way to him bearing royal gifts. We fancy that if such mighty marvels had ever told us of him we would not have waited to finish our

day's work before setting out to find him. Yet it is all of us, as to the woman in the story, the king comes of her race, upon our lips. "The Christ-child found! Come and worship him! Through the influence of one of our own little children, perhaps, from our mother's tender words, in many ways has the message come. And if we are indeed eager to find him, to have him our guest, we need not search the world to reach his presence. He is with us now, at our side, within our sight, and the quickest way to touch his hand at this especial season is to find the children—the hungry, cold, helpless babies, that wait for us in every alley.

Adine waiting for a kingly guest, could not see the child-Saviour. The Baboushka seeks the Christ-child in every little one, only to be disappointed. But we shall not be disappointed. He has told us that we shall find him in the least of these his brethren. And thus his presence, unseen but felt in every scene, will hallow our Christmas-tide, and bring home to every heart the hope that—

"He who was born and cradled in a manger,
And gladdened our poor earth with hope and rest;
O, best beloved, come not as a stranger,
But tarry, Lord, our friend and Christmas Guest."
"Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Peace, Goodwill to Men.

Lo, the shepherds watch were keeping
O'er their flocks by night;
Swift and silent came the angel,
Glorious with light.

Sing aloud the joyful chorus,
Peace, goodwill to men!
Glory, glory in the highest!
Shout it back again.

"Fear ye not," said he, "for tidings
Glorious I bring;
Unto you is born a Saviour,
Jesus Christ, your King."

Joyful, then, they bowed before him,
Cradled in the stall—
We would also bring our tribute;
Crown him King of all.

All the world must know the story,
Jesus came to save;
Tell it to the high and lowly,
Over land and wave.

Stamps.

WALTER'S grandpa lives in an old-fashioned farmhouse, with four great square rooms below, and four square chambers above, with a wide garret over the whole.

The upper hall has never been papered, and in the plastering, close to the big wall-post of the banisters, is the plainly stamped print of a little hand. Before the plaster had hardened, after being spread, some little boy or girl crept up-stairs, and reached on the wall to pat the smooth, damp surface, and left in the soft plastering a deep print of their hand.

Perhaps no one found the stamp till the wall had grown so hard it could not be smoothed, and in all the eighty years since grandpa's house was built the print of those little fat fingers has been on the hall wall.

One day grandma found Walter standing on tip-toe trying to press the print of his chubby little hand in the wall, close to the mark that that old little boy or girl had left so many years before; but he could not; the wall was as hard as a white rock.

In their good night talk that night, grandma told Walter that though it was too late for him to print a stamp of his hand in the hard walls of grandpa's old house, that he was leaving stamps of himself on people's minds and hearts every day,

stamps that would last even longer than the print of the little hand in the wall.

"How?" Walter asked with wondering wide-awake eyes.

"Can you tell him, dear little children?"

"I want you to think of these points that you are making every day, and watch your lips and hearts close that the stamps you leave may be those of a kind, helpful, loving, honest little boy or girl.

LESSON NOTES.

FOURTH QUARTER.

STUDIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

B.C. 1312]

LESSON XII.

[Dec. 23

RUTH'S CHOICE.

Ruth 1. 16-22.

Commit to memory verses, 16-18

GOLDEN LEAF.

Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Ruth 1. 16

OUTLINE

1. The Voice of Love.
2. The Voice of Woe.

TIME.—1312 B.C.

PLACES.—The land of Moab. Bethlehem.

CONNECTING LINKS.—Our date has gone backward nearly two centuries. So there can be no connection between the lessons. This is a fragment out of the life of one of the families of Judah, and is valuable to the Bible story as it shows how the blood of Moab passed into the veins of Christ.

EXPLANATIONS.—*The Lord do so to me.*—That is, if I leave you, may God do so to me. *Steadfastly minded*—Firmly resolved to go. *All the city was moved*—Filled with emotion, with grief, compassion, and sympathy. *Went out full*—That is, with husband and two sons. *Home again empty*—All her family had died in the foreign land. *Beginning of the barley harvest*—In the month of April.

QUESTIONS FOR HOME STUDY.

1. *The Voice of Love.*
Who are the characters who appear in this lesson?
Where is the scene of the story laid?
To what period of Bible history does it belong?
Where was the country in which this Jewish family had been living?
What made Ruth use the language of ver. 16?
What kind of character is displayed by this language?
Why is Ruth of special interest to every Bible student?
Ruth 4. 17.
2. *The Voice of Woe.*
How were these two travellers received when they reached Bethlehem?
What was the meaning of the words *Naomi* and *Mara*? (See marginal notes.)
Was Naomi's speech true?
What great blessing had God in store for her?
Was she grateful to Ruth?
What was the attitude of Naomi toward God and the world?
Give an analysis of her character.
Was she not acting just as many of us act now?

PRACTICAL TEACHINGS.

See this picture of true devotion. Ruth forsook country unasked. Ruth left her home and kindred. Ruth went a stranger into a strange land. Ruth went among those who hated a foreigner. And it was all for love of her earthly friend.

Compare Christ's devotion. He forsook heaven, his father, glory, and power, to go into poverty, to those who hated him, and all for love of his enemies. Read John 3. 16.

HINTS FOR HOME STUDY.

1. Read the whole book of Ruth.
2. Study this particular chapter with care.
3. Commit to memory Ruth's words.
4. Trace the journey of these women.
5. Write Ruth's story as fully as you can without a Bible.
6. Find why this story is put into the Bible at all.
7. Study out the ancestry of the Moabites, and find how they were related to the Jews.

THE LESSON CATECHISM.

1. Whose story is told by the book of Ruth? Of Ruth, of Naomi, and of Boaz. 2. Who was Ruth? A heathen girl of Moab. 3. What was her destiny in Jewish history? To be an ancestor of Christ. 4. What was the moving principle of her life? Fidelity to her loved ones. 5. In what words did she express her loving purpose? Thy people shall be my people, etc.

DOCTRINAL SUGGESTION.—The love of Christ.

CATECHISM QUESTION.

14. What is the employment of the fallen angels? They tempt men to sin, and thus seek to bring them to their own place of misery. Matthew xxv. 41; Ephesians vi. 12; 1 Thessalonians iii. 5; 1 Timothy iii. 7.
15. Can they do what they please? No; God controls their power, and will save from their malice and subtily all who put their trust in him.