

child. He cannot say "king." Herod dissembles successfully before strangers. No Jew would have placed much faith in the sincerity of his pious professions. He had a heart like Judas, he would pretend to worship while he meant to kill. He would make spies of these simple men to aid him in his murderous designs.

9. When they had heard the king, they departed: and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

10. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy—They travelled by night to avoid the extreme heat of the day. Evidently they had not seen the star since they left home. "Went before them."—The star therefore moved southward as they did. This shews that it was a wholly miraculous luminary since the stars apparently move from east to west. This view is further confirmed by its coming so near the earth as to indicate a single house in a village.

11. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Ma'ry his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh—"The house," i. e. the house

indicated by the star. Not the stable, or cave, of the nativity. The crowd of visitors had by this time left, and better accommodations were found. Joseph is not mentioned. He may not have been at home. No homage is paid to Mary. "Treasures," the bales or chests containing their gifts. "Gold," the tribute due to a king (Ps. 72: 15). "Frankincense," a resinous gum obtained from a tree growing in Arabia and India, giving out a fragrant odor when burnt. It is still used in religious rites and is symbolical of prayer. Hence the gift is taken to be emblematic of Christ's divinity. "Myrrh," a resinous production obtained from a tree growing in Arabia, India and Africa. It was mingled with the wine given to Christ on the cross (Mark 15: 23). Used also in embalming the dead (John 19: 39). The poetic mysticism of the early church saw in this gift a prophecy of his death.

12. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way—The words imply that they had asked directions. They had some suspicions in regard to Herod. They went directly to the Jordan valley instead of returning through Jerusalem. There is no plot of villany so secretly laid but God knows all about it and can frustrate it.

PRACTICAL LESSONS.

The world never wearies of the beautiful lessons of Christmas-tide. The echo of the angels' song is heard anew, we gather with reverent joy around the manger cradle, and the bright stars above us are dearer because one of their number led the wise men to Bethlehem long ago.

THERE SHALL COME A STAR OUT OF JACOB.



I AM THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR.

There never was a story so full of dramatic interest as this, apart altogether from its bearing upon our Salvation. No fairy tale or fable, most cunningly invented, will enchain the hearts of children as it does. Tell it over and over again and they revel in this delightful narrative. The simple shepherd, the white-robed angels, the gentle Mary and her babe, the bearded magi

and their gifts, the grave Sanhedrim, the guiding star like the lamp of an angel, and, in the background, the terrible Herod and the murdered innocents. We should not confine ourselves closely to the lesson text, but talk about the whole story. Help the little ones to love the Christ-child, and teach them to make others happy because Jesus has made them glad. Like these wise men bid them come to Jesus, lay their offerings at his feet and worship him.