

The Sunbeam.

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CHILDREN OF BETHLEHEM.

THE little boy and girl whom you see in the picture are just such children as you would meet to-day if you were walking in the city where the Holy Child Jesus was born. Perhaps that boy will be a shepherd like David. If so, he must, like David, be brave and hardy; for now, as in David's time, tending sheep is not the peaceful occupation it is with us. The shepherds have to watch their flocks night and day, lest some wild beast, or some equally wild Arab, should seize the straying ones, or even enter the fold.

When that little girl is a few years older, she will not be dressed quite as she is now. She will wear a long veil, very much like the one that Ruth wore, and which was large enough to hold the six measures of barley that Boaz gave her to take home to her mother. But this is more like a hood than a veil, for it does not cover the face. Very likely this little girl will be a gleaner, too. Dr. Thompson says that he saw reapers in the fields near Bethlehem cutting barley, followed by women and children who were gleaned, while some of them could be seen beating out the grain they had gathered, just as Ruth did.

What joyful tidings were brought to the children of Bethlehem on the first Christmas, nearly nineteen hundred years ago!

"While shepherds watched their flocks by night,

All sleeping on the ground,
They saw a flood of glorious light,
They heard a joyous sound."

And this was what they heard—I want you all to learn the words:—"Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto

you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord.

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to-ward men."

That Christmas Gift—God's great gift of His Son for all men—is freely offered to every child who reads these words. O, accept His blessed Gift with gladness. Love Him with all your heart; and when you die you shall be happy with Him forever.

CHRISTMAS.

WAKEN, Christian children,
Up and let us sing,
With glad voice the praises
Of our new-born King.

Come, nor fear to seek Him,
Children though we be;
Once He said of children
"Let them come to Me."

Haste we then to welcome,
With a joyous lay,
Christ, the King of glory,
Born for us to-day.

KEEP SINGING.

WE had a servant once who always used to be singing—whether outside the door whitening the steps, whether washing the linen, cleansing the tea-things, or cooking the dinner, she would be constantly singing or humming over something. I said to her one day, "Betsy, what makes you sing so?"

"Well," she answered, "I think it keeps bad thoughts away; and if I didn't sing, sometimes I should get so low-spirited I shouldn't know what to do with myself!"

A good deal of philosophy in Betsy: because you know that boys, if they have to go through a church-yard at night, always begin whistling to keep their spirits up.