

The Holy Child.

Many years ago, there was a baby born at a place called Bethlehem, in the land of Palestine, where the Jews lived. Bethlehem was a quiet little town, built upon a hill. Down the slope of this hill there were vineyards where beautiful grapes grew, and below there were fig-trees, and olive-trees, and corn-fields, and meadows.

One day two travellers came to Bethlehem, a carpenter named Joseph and his wife Mary. They had come a long way. They went to the inn, to see if they could spend the night there. This inn was nothing but a large hall, with places all round it like rooms without doors where travellers might sleep. It was quite full now, for a number of people had just come to Bethlehem. There was no room for Joseph and Mary, and they had to take shelter in the stable, where the horses and donkeys were put up for the night. And here God sent Mary a little baby.

Who do you think were the first people to hear about the new baby? Not the people in the inn. Some shepherds, who were spending the night in the fields below, taking care of their sheep, were the first. There were some other people too, a long way off, of whom you shall hear another time. An angel from heaven was sent to tell the shepherds.

While it was still dark everywhere, they saw all at once a bright light round about them, more glorious and beautiful than the brightest sunshine, and they were quite frightened. But the angel told them not to fear, for he had brought them good news. This was the news: "Unto you is born this day in the city of David" (that is Bethlehem) "a Saviour, which is Christ, the Lord."

They had been looking a long while for the Saviour to come, but they never thought He would come in this way—a poor woman's baby, born in a stable. But this was the way He chose to come. He was the Son of God, and He chose to be born a poor child. The angel told the shepherds He was to be the great King, who should reign for ever and ever. And then the sky all round about was full of bright angels, who sang and praised God, because this Holy Child was born. This was the song they sang: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men."

When the angels had gone back to heaven, the shepherds said to one another: "We must go to Bethlehem, and see the baby who has been born." So as early morning was beginning to dawn, they left their sheep, and came up the hill to Bethlehem. God must have shown them where to go, for they found their way to the stable where Joseph and Mary were. There they saw the baby, wrapped tightly round with a piece of linen, and lying in the manger where the animals fed. Joseph and Mary heard the wonderful story which the shepherds had to tell, and they understood it. For an angel had told them long before that Mary's babe was to be the Son of God. Then the shepherds went and told their story to every one they met.

But we are not told that any one else except the wise men came to see the Holy Child. Perhaps they were too busy with their work and their pleasure, their buying and their selling, to pay much attention to what the shepherds said.

The Jews always used to name their babies when they were eight days old. Mary and Joseph had not to think what name they should choose for the baby. The angel had already told Joseph what His name was to be. It was Jesus, which means, "He shall save." Jesus is the sweetest and grandest name ever heard.

When the Holy Child was six weeks old, He was taken to the great city—Jerusalem. The beautiful temple where the Jews worshipped God was at Jerusalem. Every Jewish mother used to take her first little baby-baby to the temple, to present him to God. And each one always brought with her a thank-offering. The rich mothers brought a lamb, but God had said the poor might bring two doves instead, for doves were very cheap. Mary was a poor woman, so she brought two doves with her baby.

There was a very old man living in Jerusalem, named Simeon. God had promised him that he should not die before he had seen the "Saviour, Christ, the Lord," whom he had long been expecting. God put it into his heart to go into the temple just when Mary and Joseph were there with the Holy Child. When Simeon saw the baby he was very glad. He took Him up in his arms, and began to praise God. And he said that this child should be a Light for all the world. Just then a woman came in, named Anna. She was a widow and very old, and she loved to be in the temple. She, too, had long been looking for the Saviour to come. And she gave thanks to God when she saw the child, and went and told many others who had been longing for Him.

Years after, when this Holy Child was grown up, He went about doing good, healing the sick, and helping the troubled, and teaching those who wanted to know about God. But at last some wicked people

who were jealous of Him, took Him and nailed Him to a cross. They could not have done it unless He had chosen to let them. He chose to die for our sakes, to bear the punishment for all the wrong things we have done. And when He died, those who loved Him thought they had lost Him. But it was not so. On the third day He rose from the dead, and then they knew that He was indeed the Son of God. Then He went back to heaven, and from His throne there He watches over little children, and loves them, and cares for them.

The Robin's Christmas Song.

The sound of praise is in the air,
Within God's house ascending,
And songs of sacred gladness there
In one full tide are blending.
All minor notes have died away,
Joy reigns alone—'tis Christmas Day.

And all around the pillars twining
The holy wreaths are seen;
With their bright berries ever shining
The glossy leaves between.
Without the world is cold, but lo!
Inside the walls there's warmth and glow.

The holy words rise up again—
"Glory to God on high!"
Then soft and sweet another strain
Afresh makes melody.
Not from the choir this voice is heard—
It is the carol of a bird.

He crept in with his ruddy breast,
A strange new visitor:
Where'er he goes, a welcome guest,
Why should he not be here?
And Robin thought, "What shall I do?
Others are singing—I'll sing too!"

Adding his little mite of praise,
Unconscious, to the whole.
But conscious may we ever raise
Thanks from our inmost soul:
Though faint and weak, yet all along
Swelling the one grand Christmas song.

Christmas Thought.

In every parish in this city, and, it may fairly be said, in every parish throughout the land, it is upon the energy and activity of woman that a large share of the Christmas preparations fall. Upon her devolves the purchasing of gifts for the children, the training, oftentimes, for chant and carol, the marshalling of Sunday school forces, and the distribution of gifts. In the Church her work is apparent, for her deft fingers have designed and wrought the exquisite embroideries on stole and chasuble, on altar vestments, fair linen, and chalice veil. Her hands have cared for the sacred vessels, the polished brass of cross and vase, and decked the altar with flowers for this festive time.

It should not be inferred that any special meed of praise is due to those who labour in the Master's service. They do but their duty, and their reward is in their own hearts, but it is patent to the keen observer that the work among Churchwomen is more extensive, more general, than ever before. Within a few years Sunday schools have increased largely in every parish, and altar societies have been formed in many churches hitherto without them. When one considers the thousands of children in our churches throughout the land, one gets some idea of the numbers of women at work for them in the Christmas season.

To-day, in many a hospital, the gentle ministrations of the sisters bring a gleam of comfort to the sufferers. In prisons, hospitals and asylums, the Christmas Letter Mission, planned by the tender thought of a woman, sends a welcome message, bearing "glad tidings of joy" to the inmates. Canada, Australia, India and Africa are among the distant lands to which these greetings go.

"As an historical fact it has been Christianity which has transformed woman into the high and holy power of philanthropy which she is to-day." True it is that the coming of the divine Child, nearly nineteen hundred years ago, elevated woman from bondage to honour and brought to her the immeasurable possibilities of life and freedom.

Not a few people say, "I dislike the holiday season. I am glad when it is over." Is it not because the true spirit of Christmas is not within us if we feel this? We have been wearied with the rush, the excitement, and have not paused to realize the meaning of the season and to "hear the angels sing." At least we are selfish if we cannot be glad of the happiness of the children and the poor.

Doubtless there are many who to-day are crushed by some sorrow, but its shadow should not be allowed to fall upon the young. Sympathy, too, and love may arise best, perhaps, from a sorrowing heart, and

may extend, not only in the home, but to all humanity.

Women of wealth to-day provide the means for the development of some of our best Christian charities, and the exertions of others, who give their time and abilities, count for much in the work of the season.

There are few among us who have not some special poor to whom to give whether it be a gift in money, clothing, or provisions. "A gift is part of thyself," writes Emerson, and so it is, or should be. It should be a gift in thought; and flowers for the sad at heart; fruit for the invalid; a cheque for the needy friend or relative; provisions for the poor, are finding their way to many a home at this season from generous, thoughtful women.

Let us not put aside with the passing of Christmas the kindly feelings that the time awakens. Let us go forth with a more liberal spirit, a broader, freer mind, into the duties of the future, whether at home or abroad. Let narrow prejudices rest, and resentments be forever forgotten, if they exist within us. Thus may Christmas be, indeed, a blessed time to us, and in the new year, so soon to dawn upon us, shall

"Universal peace
Lie like a shaft of light across the land,
And like a lane of beams athwart the sea,
Thro' all the circle of the golden year."

The Eternal Child.

In vesture white, the Eternal Child
Lay on His mother's lap and smiled;
What joy to see that longed-for sight—
Her spotless lily of delight.
Her love, her dove, her undefiled!

She recked not of the anguish wild,
The sorrow upon sorrow piled,
His dead Form swathed one awful night,
In vesture white.

Oh, let our hearts this Birthday bright
The sorrow and the joy unite;
While, by the twofold grace beguiled
Of suffering Man and infant mild,
We walk with Him on Faith's calm height
In vesture white!

The Rose of S. Bridgid.

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

It was the *Holy Night*! what a wealth of sacred reminiscence lay around this fascinating time! How truly a *Holy* night, pregnant as it was with the destiny of a world at enmity with its Creator—utterly gone out of His way. Groaning it lay at His feet, awaiting in agonies of doubt the coming of the long-promised Deliverer. He came, you Christian boys and girls all know that, and say, *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*, with the Angels: and in earth was peace again to men of good-will. Nature lay hushed in sleep. All the fields—those holy fields of Palestine lying about Bethlehem, are shrouded in the cold silver gossamer mists of winter nights—even as they are in the gay spring-time thickly bespangled with a hundred varieties of fair wild flowers. But not only has Dame Nature cloaked them all in her pale grey gauzes of fairy lightness and texture, but King Frost and a host of his fairies and elves have been holding high revel on their way to the mountains, marking their path by decking the earth in all-glorious array. Every twig, every blade of grass, glistens and sparkles in its raiment of jewelled hoar-frost. The clumps of the prickly pear and the dwarf hedge-rows are hung with garlands and festoons of the same snowy gossamers, and the pearl-like enamelling of fairy flowers. All things are radiant and shimmering and sparkling with the lustre of its snow-white beauty.

Far away, like dusky giants, rise the everlasting hills, each one sacred with scenes of Bible story, wrapped in their purple and silver hazes, saturated with dew; and above all, Hermon and Carmel crowned with their coronals of snow. Here and there, thrown out into all the greater prominence by their deeper purple and jet-black richness, lay the deep treacherous gorges, overgrown with thick undergrowths of scrub and brushwood. Great masses of cedars and olives, twisted and gnarled by the lapse of years, lay on this side, silver-flaked in the moonlight, while on the other—discovered only by the clear shining of the silver ship of the moon, which rides with a queenly superbness through the calm, almost transparent, eternal spaces of the liquid turquoise sea of heaven—dances and sparkles in a perfect shower of gem-like splendour a fast-rushing stream, refusing to be awed into silence by the icy finger of the frost, and casting itself off the rocks, it rolls in a veritable sheet of glass below, where falling, it froths and bubbles like yeast, only tarrying for a moment to weave itself into fantasies of fairy lace-work, and to throw out an aureole of scintillating diamond dust, as it trembles in the intense agitation of all the glory of a diamond cluster on the edge of