

sing with glad rapture the strains of Bethlehem.

I see the manger now. I see the worshiping wastrels. I see the sweet-faced woman. I see the Child Jesus. And can I not also see the Holy Spirit far above the baby form? He will descend some day: dovelike he will descend. And the voice will fill the ears of the man who has come to the hour of the beginning of the great ministry with the marvelous words, "Beloved Son." I see it all. I accept it all. I praise Thee, Father of Love, for it all: and I worship Thee, oh Christ, Thou Son of the everliving God.

CHRISTMAS ONCE IS CHRISTMAS STILL.

The silent skies are full of speech,
For who hath ears to hear;
The winds are whispering each to each;
The moon is calling on the beach;
And stars their sacred wisdom teach
Of Faith and Love and Fear.

But once the sky its silence broke,
And song o'ertowered the earth:
The midnight air with glory shook,
And angels mortal language spoke,
When God our human nature took
In Christ the Saviour's birth.

And Christmas once is Christmas still;
The gates through which He came
And forests wild, and murmuring rill,
And fruitful field, and breezy hill,
And all that else the wide world fill,
Are vocal with His name.

Shall we not listen while they sing
This latest Christmas morn,
And music hear in everything,
And faithful lives in tribute bring,
To the great song which greets the King
Who comes when Christ is born.
—Phillips Brooks.

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS NIGHT.

One by one those Judean shepherds had gone to sleep, each lying where he had sat. The night, like most of the nights of the winter season of the hill country, was clear, crisp, and sparkling with stars. There was no wind. The atmosphere seemed never so pure, and the stillness was more than silence. It was a holy hush, a warning that heaven was stooping low to whisper some good thing to the listening earth.

By the gate, hugging his mantle close, the watchman walked. At times he stopped, attracted by a stir among sleeping herds. The midnight was slow coming to him; but at last it came. His task was done; now for the dreamless sleep with which labor blesses its wearied children. He moved toward the fire but paused; a light was breaking around him, soft and white like the moon's. He waited breathlessly. The light deepened; things before invisible came to view. He saw the whole field and all it sheltered. A chill, sharper than that of the frosty air—a chill of fear—smote him. He looked up; the stars were gone; the light was dropping as from a window in the sky. As he looked it became a splendor; then in terror he cried: awake! awake! Up sprang the dogs and howling ran away. The herds rushed together bewildered. The men clambered to their feet, weapons in hand. What is it? they asked in one voice. See, cried the watchman; the sky is on fire! Suddenly the light became intolerably bright, and they covered their eyes and dropped upon their knees; then as their souls shrank with fear, they fell upon their faces blind and fainting, and would have died had not a voice said to them, "Fear not." And they listened. "Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people."

The voice, in sweetness and soothing, penetrated all their being and filled them with assurance. They rose upon their knees and looking worshipfully, behold, in the centre of a great glory,

the appearance of a man clad in a robe intensely white. Above its shoulders towered the tops of wings, shining and folded. A star over its forehead glowed with steady lustre, its hands were stretched towards them in blessing; its face was serene and divinely beautiful. They had often heard, and in the simple way talked of the angels, and they doubted not now, but said, in their hearts, "The glory of God is about us, and this is He, who, of old, came to the prophet by the river of Plai." Directly the angel continued: "For unto you is born this day, in the City of David, a Saviour, which is Christ, the Lord!" Again there was a rest while the words sank into their minds. "And this shall be a sign unto you," the Annunciator said next. "Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger." Voices, as of a multitude, chanted in unison, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men!" Not once the praise, but many times. When the shepherds came fully to their senses they stared at each other stupidly, until one of them said: "It was Gabriel, the Lord's messenger unto men." None answered. "Christ, the Lord, is born; said he not so?" Then another recovered his voice and replied, "That is what he said. And did he not also say in the City of David, which is our Bethany yonder? And that we should find him a babe lying in the manger?" The first speaker said, "Brethren, let us go see this thing which has come to pass. The priests and the doctors have been a long time looking for the Christ. Now he is born, and the Lord has given us a sign by which to know him. Let us go up and worship him." "But the flocks," "The Lord will take care of them. Let us make haste." Then they all arose and left the mureh. Around the mountain and through the town they passed and came to the gate of the Khan, where there was a man on watch. "Here," said the watchman, "are people looking for a Child born this night, whom they are to know by finding him in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger!" For a moment the face of the stolid Nazarene was moved, and turning away he said, "The child is here." They were led to one of the mangers, and there the Child was. The lantern was brought and the shepherds stood by mute. The little one made the shepherds no sign. It was as others just born. "It is the Christ," said the shepherds at last. "The Christ," they all repeated, falling upon their knees in worship. And the simple men, never doubting, kissed the hem of the mother's robe, and with joyful faces departed. To all the people aroused and pressing about they told the story, and through the town and all the way back they chanted the refrain of the angels, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will towards men."—Extract from Ben Hur, by Lew Wallace.

CHRISTMAS.

And well our Christmas sires of old
Loved when the year its course had
rolled,
And brought blythe Christmas back
again,

With all its hospitable train.
Domestic and religious rite
Gave honor to the holy night
On Christmas-eve the bells were rung.
—Sir Walter Scott.

"Not yet believers" is the courteous term always used for the heathen by some of the missionaries in Japan. As Dr. Partridge, the bishop of Kyoto, says: "It is much superior, even to the term 'unbelievers' or 'non-believers,' because it does not accuse them of any opposition to the faith, but rather implies an interest in it which a further study will surely deepen." St. Paul's "Gentlemen of Athens" states a principle always to be remembered.

A CHRISTMAS SONG.

"My soul doth magnify the Lord." There could be no better words than these to make the constant refrain of the heart. It would make life a different thing to many of us if we could meet each experience with a smile and say: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." The Thanksgiving song should be the Christmas anthem, and should become the unceasing music of all the year. "God be praised. I rejoice in God."

All the good we have is from God, and he is in all the experiences of our life. Mary lived always in the sense of his goodness and his presence, and her song was but the glad utterance of her living faith. God desires this faith in each of us. It is what he is ever seeking. The "heart of the Father which in its hunger is so exacting will out of that same hunger never despair and never forsake. It will never cease from the pursuit of that responsive trust which it desires; it will make allowances, it will permit delays, it will weave excuses, it will endure rebuffs, it will condescend to persuasion, it will forget all provocation, it will wait, it will plead, it will repeat its pleas, it will take no refusal, it will overlook all obstacles, it will run risks, it will endlessly and unflinchingly forgive, if only, at the last, the stubborn child heart yields, and the tender response of faith be won." This is what God wants. For this the Son of God was born of Mary.

Mary saw God in all things. Do we see him? Can we truly sing:—

"In each event of life how clear
Thy guiding hand I see,
Each blessing to my soul more dear.
Because conferred by Thee?"

And what Mary felt, she sang. "Things are so different in the house," said one. "There is always song now. It used to be that there was no one in the kitchen who sang any, but now you can always hear some one singing at her work. Everyone is cheered and brightened by it." There is an old line which reads, "Give us, oh give us, the man who sings at his work!" If our hearts are glad, let them express it. Even if we cannot sing very well, our song will be sweet if it accompanies good toil.

Some people are shy about acknowledging God. They take the credit for what they do, or they give it to chance. And if they fail, they comfort themselves with the thought that they could not help it, or that fate was against them. But there is neither chance nor fate, and we would have no strength at all if it were not for God who strengthens us. We ought not to be shy to recognize and confess the truth, and with Mary's wisdom to see and declare God's hand.

How wonderful it is that this simple Jewish girl's song should be the best-known song in the world! More people have read it than any other song. How can we account for this except by believing that the story of the song and of its meaning is true?

BIBLE READINGS.

Mon.—Micah's song (Mic. 5:14).
Tues.—Zachariah's song (Zech. 14:20, 21)
Wed.—"The Sun of Righteousness" (Mal. 4:2, 3).
Thurs.—The angels' song (Luke 2:13, 14)
Fri.—Zacharias's song (Luke 1:68, 79).
Sat.—Simeon's song (Luke 2:29, 35).
—S.S. Times.

When Christ came to this earth man gave him only a stable and a manger-cradle; but when man goes to Christ he gives him a "house not made with hands eternal in the heavens."

SUNDAY, Dec. 22, 1907. The Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55).