

## UNIVERSITY SERMON.

ON Sunday afternoon (Dec. 17th.) Principal Grant conducted a special Christmas service in Convocation Hall. The choral part of the service was appropriate to the occasion, several Christmas carols being rendered. The following is the sermon:—

## THE INCARNATION AND ITS BEARING UPON OUR IDEAL OF LIFE.

We shall not meet again as a congregation till January 14th, and I therefore take the present opportunity of wishing you a happy Christmas and a good New Year. We stand on a great natural summit of time, looking back over one annual course of the sun, and looking forward to another on which he is entering. This is the week of the winter solstice, and before the week ends we shall have commenced a new year, according to the division of time made by nature. The oftener I stand on such a summit, the more insignificant time—with all its noisy and feverish bustle—appears, and the more near and overwhelming the realities of Eternity. The more must it be seen by us that the one thing needful is to be united to the Eternal.

The world offers so much of unsatisfactoriness that at times the most hopeful gets caught with life-weariness, and cries out with Elijah, "it is enough; take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers," or with Paul, "I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." But such seasons are not our best. The true believer is a worker, and the true worker is a singer. This is a very practical world, with plenty of hard work daily offered to our hands to do. Even when little can be known, there is always plenty to be done. And this is the season of the year when hope should be most exultant.

What word have I for you at such a time? I know none better than that with which the Lord Jesus commenced and ended the earthly teaching of His scholars; Follow thou me. Again and again He uses the same word during His ministry to all who desired any relationship with Him. It indicates the key-note of His dealings with men. It is His word to us at all times. It is His word to us now.

Who is He that speaks so authoritatively to men? By what right does this man assume such a superiority over us? Holy Scripture answers, He is "the Word of God" "made flesh." Therefore He speaks by divine right.

On this truth, the truth of the Incarnation, is based the hope of humanity. Well might the announcement of it be called tidings of great joy. As the choir has just carolled, the fact that God's Son took our nature is "the great joy." If it is not true, then this is a horrible world, and the only possible theory of life is Pessimism. But it is true. The Christ was born at Bethlehem. Born after a method unique, mysterious, transcendent, but in perfect harmony with what He was, in harmony with His work and His life. For such a life as His, His birth was natural. So was His death. So was His resurrection. His birth, His character, His teaching, His miracles, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, each by itself is inexplicable. Take all together, and we have a symmetrical whole. We have the most charmingly natural and unaffected biography that ever was written. And the whole chain depends on the first link, the Incarnation.

In the Calendar of Christendom, the birthday of Christ is associated with the return of the sun to the earth, and with the festival kept on that occasion by all nations, and called Yule by our Saxon and Scandinavian forefathers. The day on which Christ was born is not given in the New Testament. But if a time was to be selected, what time so suitable as that on which all nature rejoices at the

annual return of light and life. It was a happy thought to associate the two days. New hope for earth when the sun begins again to come nearer. New hope for the world when the Son of Righteousness dawns on its horizon.

We read in to-day's lesson the circumstances of His birth, the simple and touching incidents that cluster round His cradle. He came to save Jew and Gentile, and to both His birth is heralded. To whom among the Jews? In God's sight, Herod the King and his men of war are not the representatives of the people. Neither are the Scribes and Elders. They are apparently wise, learned and pious men. They are deeply read in the Commentaries of the Rabbis. But a man may have mastered tomes of theology and yet be without the heavenly wisdom that a simple loving heart supplies. He may have busied himself all his life with the verbiage of controversy, and may have the reputation of learning, and yet know less of God and nature, less of truth and fact than a shepherd, a gardener, a weather-wise sailor has learned. Fitly, then, is the message concerning the coming of the King sent to lowly shepherds who have learned reverence, humility, and some portion of truth from reading the book of the heavens in their nightly watches. And the Gentile world is also divinely summoned. Its representatives are grave, wise and noble men. But they, too, had been accustomed to commune with nature; and in loving her they had learned to discern the signs of the times. Who they were or from what part of the East, what kind of a star they saw or how it led them, we know not and are not careful to inquire. In the East there have ever been such wise men. Balaam's prophecy was not forgotten in lands where such words are handed down from generation to generation. Not in vain had the Jews been scattered over the East. Not in vain had Esther shared the throne, and Daniel ruled the Empire of the Great King. It was believed that a Saviour King would come, and about this time there was a general expectation that He would be born in Judea.

They who seek shall find. They are led a long and toilsome way to the Holy City, to the men who had in charge the inspired oracles. God never gives unnecessary light. What man can do or tell, He leaves to man. So when the seekers get to the law and the testimony, the star disappears.

Two classes are found in Jerusalem. First, the religious world that rests in the letter; the men who believe themselves everything, but who do nothing for the world. They know the place where the Saviour is to be born, and they know the time, but they will not take a walk of five or six miles to seek Him. Are there not men now who believe in all the creeds of the Church, but who go not out to seek Christ, not even into the next street where hearts are breaking, outcasts perishing, poor little children crying? Side by side with this religious world is the political world that desires to use religion for its own ends. It believes in God in a kind of a way, but believes also that it can evade His will by the diplomacy of falsehood, deceit and cruelty.

The Scriptures having been opened to the seekers, Christ is not far away. A walk of five miles, and Bethlehem is seen crowning a ridge that overlooks one of the most fertile valleys in Judea; and lo, the star reappears and stands over the place. And they rejoiced with great joy! Thus, ever press on, O seeker, and to you the star shall arise, and a joy fill your heart that the world understands not. Men may say, we see no star. Or, it is no better than other stars shining in the heavens. Or, it can be explained by ordinary causes. No, no, the truly wise man answers, it is the star of Bethlehem.

To what is the divine light pointing? Come and see. To a babe; a babe lying in one of the stalls, excavated for cattle out of the rock, adjoining the public Khan or