

When Christmas Comes.

BY MARGARET E. BANISTER.

When Christmas comes,
The baby girl who scarce can speak,
The youth with bronzed and bearded
cheek,
The aged, bent with weight of years,
The sorrow-stricken spent with tears,
The poor, the rich, the grave, the gay,
Who fare along life's rugged way,
Are glad of heart when, in the sky,
The wondrous seraph wings sweep by,
When Christmas comes.

When Christmas comes,
The sailor on the seas afloat,
The traveller in lands remote,
The warrior by the camp-fire's light,
The courier in the palace bright,
The student by the midnight lamp,
The major deep in dust and damp,
Alike uplift, through riven skies,
The wondering look of glad surprise,
When Christmas comes.

When Christmas comes,
In field and street, in mart and farm,
The world takes on a lovelier charm;
Sweet-scented boughs of pine and fir
Are brought, like frankincense and
myrrh,
To make our hallowed places meet
For hands that clasp and tones that greet,
While hearts, worth more than gold or
gem,
Go forth to find their Bethlehem,
When Christmas comes.

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Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

Rev. W. H. Withrow, D.D., Editor.

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PRAYER-MEETING TOPIC.

DECEMBER 26, 1897.

The songs of heaven.—Rev. 7. 9-17.

THE BOOK.

The Book of Revelation is a most wonderful portion of Scripture. In it are many things which are hard to be understood. The descriptions which it contains of heaven are truly elevating, and calculated to inspire its readers with great encouragement and hope. What- ever may be the employment of heaven, there can be no doubt respecting one portion, viz., singing. Our lesson bears the title, "The Songs of Heaven."

A VISION.

Verse 9. John had many remarkable visions. This, which is the theme of our lesson, is more cheering than the one previously described. The number of heaven's happy inhabitants is much greater than could be inferred from what is said in the first vision. There were some thousands from each tribe, but here the multitude is so great that no man can enumerate them. In the former all came from one nation, but here they belong to every nation and kindred and people and tongue.

THE SONG.

Verse 10. "Salvation to our God." Salvation means deliverance from danger. This great multitude before the throne have escaped all danger and are forever safe beyond the power of evil. However sin may pain and afflict us on

earth, it can never in heaven. However adverse our circumstances may be in this world, there will be unceasing calm and uninterrupted peace in heaven.

The "Lamb" is mentioned, that is, the Lamb of God, through whose blood all stains of guilt are purged away. No spot of sin remains on any of heaven's happy inhabitants. They are clothed in white robes, emblematical of their purity, and the palms in their hands signify that they are conquerors.

THEIR EARNESTNESS.

Verse 10. "They cried with a loud voice." They are not afraid of being heard. They feel intensely happy, and from the fulness of their hearts they "cry aloud." It is worthy of remark that all the mention made in Scripture of worship, contains the feature of earnestness. "Praise the Lord with a loud voice, all ye nations, praise him, all ye people," is a passage that like many others is often found in the Book of Psalms.

THE CHORUS.

Verse 11. The angels do not join in the first part of the song. They were not redeemed, because they never sinned, hence they have no need of cleansing, as they were clean already. But what a joyful song of praise will be made when the angels and the elders all join with the hosts of the redeemed in ascribing "blessing and glory and wisdom . . . unto God forever and ever."

APPLICATION.

Will all our readers be there? You must be fit for the holy place. None but holy ones can enter heaven. It is a prepared place (John 14. 2), and those who go there must be a prepared people. No purgatorial fires can give you the preparation.

LUCY MARKHAM'S CALL.

She was standing at the gate, leaning on it, indeed, looking wistfully up and down the long, pleasant street. It was a beautiful September day, and Lucy felt a restless longing to go somewhere or do something, or have something happen quite different from the usual Saturday routine. In the distance she saw Miss Hollister, and waited for a greeting from her. How pretty she looked! dressed in white, with a graceful Japanese sunshade in one hand and a bouquet of bright-coloured flowers in the other.

"She is going to the children's ward with those flowers, I suppose," said Lucy. "What a nice, pretty life she has. I would like to dress up in white, and wear soft Suede gloves, and carry flowers to sick children. I think it would be just splendid to have nothing to do but good things like that. I don't suppose Miss Hollister ever had to wash the breakfast dishes in her life, or pick up the sitting-room, or get the potatoes ready for dinner, or do a hundred other disagreeable things." And here Lucy sighed.

"Good-morning," said Miss Hollister, with her brightest smile; "you are the very one I am looking for, I believe. Don't you want to do a little missionary work?"

"I would like nothing better if I could," said Lucy eagerly. "I was just thinking about it."

"That is fortunate; I was in search of a helper. You know my afternoon class down at the Mission?"

Lucy nodded.

"Well, it has grown very large, and I find I have not time enough for all the things I need to do. I have decided to take in a young girl, who can pass the cards, and papers, and tie on the hats of the wee ones, and do a dozen little things which are always needing to be done. I had thought of one of the older girls, but I don't know but you will do quite as well, perhaps better; and you will be learning, meantime, how to manage the class." Lucy's face was radiant. What an opportunity for a girl not yet twelve years old! What would the girls say? And she was one of the youngest in Miss Hollister's morning class.

"I should like it of all things, if you think I can do it." This was the reply which she made in words, and the sparkle in her eyes said the rest.

"Very well, then," said Miss Hollister, smiling. "I think you will do nicely; you are rather young, to be sure, but I have noticed that you were quite womanly, and have a fashion of 'mothering' little people, which is just what I need."

For two Sabbaths following, Lucy Markham was overflowing with satisfaction. The girls in their class all envied her, as she knew they would, and she got along beautifully with the children. Miss Hollister said so.

On the third Sabbath, as she came to the sitting-room in search of her papers, her mother said, "Lucy, child, do take

baby out under the chestnut-tree and amuse him a while; he is very fretful to-day, and I am so tired I can hardly hold my head up."

"Why, mother!" said Lucy, stopping short in the middle of the room, with dismay on her face. "It is time for me to go. Miss Hollister said I must be sure to be there ten minutes before the hour for opening, to help seat the children."

"Is it so near three as that?" the mother asked, and drew a weary sigh as she spoke. "Oh, well! go on. It does seem as though Miss Hollister might have selected somebody who had not a little sister and a baby brother at home; but I suppose you must go."

And Lucy went, but she carried a grave face with her. Neither did it brighten under the hissing voice of little Effie Stauts, who had her verse perfectly, and repeated it to her young teacher with evident pride: "And the theop follow Him, for they know Hith volth."

"That is very nice," she said to Effie, but the smile which accompanied the words flitted instantly, leaving her face graver than before. In truth she was startled. Was it his voice speaking to her heart that day? Was she one of his sheep? She wanted to be; and if so, she must understand his voice and follow him, however hard the path might be. It was hard; she could not keep the tears from her eyes as she passed the cards, and tied on the little capes, or helped on the tiny sacks, and thought that it was probably for the last time. But her decision had been made. She began to feel very sure that his voice had spoken to her.

It seemed very strange that she had not heard it before. "Miss Hollister," she said, lingering, and helping about setting the desk in order after the children were gone, "I am afraid I will have to give up my place to some one else; any of the girls would be glad to help. I know they all want to."

Miss Hollister looked surprised and disappointed. "Are you tired of it already?" she asked. "I am very sorry to hear it; I thought you were doing so nicely. I quite looked forward to training you for a teacher."

Then a great tear did roll down Lucy's cheek, and she turned her head quickly, so Miss Hollister should not see. "It is not that," she said, after a minute, her voice quivering a little; "I love to do it; I can't tell you how much. But mother, you know, has baby all day Sunday with nobody to help her; and he is large and heavy, and is getting his teeth, and has to be amused every minute when he is awake; and mother looked so tired when I came away, that I thought perhaps I ought not to come, and afterwards, when little Effie recited her verse about his sheep hearing his voice and following, I began to be sure that he was calling me to take care of baby, and let mother rest."

There was silence for a minute in the Mission schoolroom, then Miss Hollister put an arm around the little assistant and kissed her.

"You are quite right," she said; "I am so glad you keep your heart open, ready to hear his call. It was selfish in me not to think of you being the oldest daughter at home. Take good care of baby, and as soon as he is large enough to bring with you we will make a place for him; then you shall be my secretary. Some people do not know that the very sweetest, most important mission field is the home. I am very glad you have thought of it."—Pansy.

THE SILKWORM.

BY ELIZABETH DAVIS FIELDER.

Their real names were not Jack and Jill, but mamma called them that because of their likeness to the pair famous in nursery history for "tumbling down."

In their "tumbings" Jack and Jill found many queer things which they did not understand, and were always interrupting mamma with questions. So a basket was placed in the back hall, and the things which Jack and Jill wanted to know about were put into that basket. After supper it was brought into the sitting-room, and they had a lesson in little things before going to bed.

This evening mamma selected a bit of ribbon from the basket. It was evidently Jill's property. "Who made it? and how? were the questions. They had learned about cotton—how it grew and the process by which it was made into cloth—but this was not cotton.

Mamma took down a big book and turned the leaves until she came to a page on which were the pictures of a great many bugs and worms and flies.

"That," said mamma, pointing to the picture of a very common-looking ugly worm, "is what makes ribbon, or, rather, the silk from which ribbon and other beautiful things are made. I saw the

silk-worms at work once. A young lady who was very anxious to go to college, but whose father was not able to give her the money, determined to earn it herself. She lived in the country, and there were not many opportunities for her to make money, but at last she determined to try silk-raising. She went to Washington City and procured the eggs, which hatched out hundreds of worms. When I saw them she had shelves around three sides of a large, sunny room, and on these shelves were scores of trays filled with the worms. They were feeding on leaves from the mulberry and Osage orange, which the young lady gathered for them in great basketfuls. They seemed to me to be very idle, ugly little creatures, with appetites altogether out of proportion to their size, for they ate all the time. But after a while they stop eating and go to spinning, and at the end of five days we have a small ball, or cocoon, with the silk-worm inside. It seems too bad that the little spinner must die when the work is only begun; but if left in the cocoon, it will eat its way out, and so injure the silk that it is almost useless. The cocoons are dropped into boiling water. This kills the worm, and also softens and prepares the silk for reeling. It would take too long to tell of the many processes through which it is taken before it is ready to go to the loom and be woven into silks and velvets and other beautiful things. The greater part of the silk which we use is made in far-off countries across the seas, where the little silk-worm is at home, living and working out of doors on the trees which furnish it food, and thus requiring little help from any one."

"Just a worm!" Jill said as she thoughtfully folded the ribbon away. "Who would have thought that a worm could do all that?"

"Did the young lady go to college?" Jack asked, with an eye to all points in the story.

"Yes; I am glad to say that she did. Sometimes the worms would sicken and die, sometimes the silk they made was inferior; but she kept faithfully to the work, and I felt very happy when I saw her stand up to receive her diploma, knowing how it was earned."

"HOW OLD MUST I BE?"

"Mother," a little child once said, "how old must I be before I can become a Christian?"

And the wise mother answered: "How old will you have to be, darling, before you can love me?"

"Why, mother, I always loved you. I do now, and always shall." And she kissed her mother. "But you have not told me yet how old I shall have to be."

The mother made answer with another question: "How old must you be before you can trust yourself wholly to me and my care?"

"I always did," she answered, and kissed her mother again. "But tell me what I want to know." And she climbed into her mother's lap and put her arms about her neck.

The mother asked again: "How old will you have to be before you can do what I want you to do?"

Then the child whispered, half guessing what her mother meant: "I can now, without growing any older."

Then the mother said: "You can be a Christian now, my darling, without waiting to be older. All you have to do is to love, and trust, and try to please the one who says: 'Let the little ones come unto me.' Don't you want to begin now?"

The child whispered, "Yes." Then they both knelt down, and the mother prayed, and in her prayer she gave to Christ her little one who wanted to be his.—Revivalist.

THE LITTLE WAIF.

A poor, little shivering girl crept into a church and warmed her hands, one Sunday, by the stove. Nobody turned her out, for those who love God love his poor likewise, and want to comfort and help them. The preacher was telling of the prodigal son, and how he came home to his father, and his father forgave him and kissed him; and the little lassie began to sob aloud, and the people heard her cry, "I wish my father would kiss me!" What a tale the child's words told! A cold, neglectful father was hers; perhaps some poor drunkard, who cared nothing about her. I hope she heard of her Father in heaven, and of his great love and pity for her; but, oh, dear children, you who have good fathers and mothers, thank God for them every day, and be loving and obedient to them while they are spared to you.