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The First Christmas at Bethlehem

By ISABEL GORDON CURTIS.



IN a poor home at Bethlehem, hundreds and hundreds of years ago, lived a little maid, whose name was Leah. Her father was a shepherd, and sometimes she spent long summer days with him on the hills or the plains where he fed his sheep. These were the happiest days in Leah's childhood, following through the rocks and over the long grassy slopes, the slow feed of the sheep. When she reached the hilltops, it seemed to Leah as if there the sky hung bluer and nearer and sunnier. And there were beautiful flowers in shadowy spots; then overhead the lark sang merrily and throughout the livelong day she could hear the moaning of doves from the vineyards and olive gardens. But most wonderful of all to the little Jewish maid was the glimpse she had of Jerusalem, the Holy City, as it was called by everyone in Judea. Leah could see glistening in the sunshine marble—palaces of the king, the noblemen and the high priests. On an opposite hill rose the temple, built of snow-white marble with cedar roofs and parapets of gold.

"Some day, father," said Leah, when the shepherd sat beside her on the hill-top with his eyes bent upon the Holy

City, "some day you promised to take me to Jerusalem to see the temple."

"Some day, little maid, I will," he said, and he sighed, "but not now."

Leah turned to her father with questioning eyes.

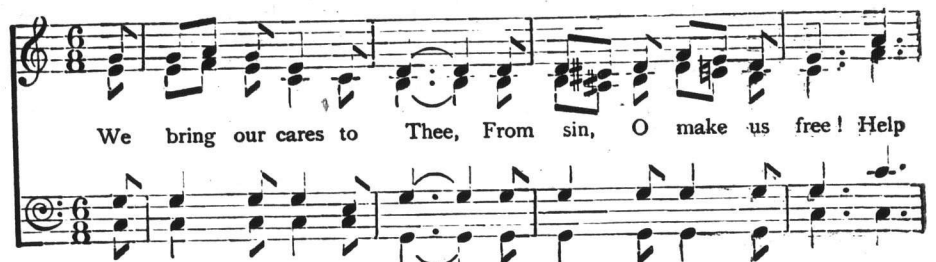
"During these days," he answered, "the city is thronged with people, rough and gentle, from all parts of Palestine. They wear no happy faces, the country is full of murmuring and discontent and dread, Bethlehem or these gentle hills are better places for a little maid."

"I have watched all day," she said, "the people coming—always coming—up and down the white dusty roads. Look." She pointed to the winding highway in the valley; over it moved great companies afoot or on horseback. "Who are they, father?" she asked. "Caesar has ordered every Jew to set his name on a great roll so he may know how many people there are in our nation. Then he will raise the taxes. Those men and women have to journey to the home of their fathers that their names may go on the roll, also to take an oath to Caesar and King Herod. Alas! we no longer are a free people."

Leah's gentle face grew grave. She did not understand wholly about Caesar and taxes, but it troubled her to feel her father and mother were unhappy. She knew that food grew scarcer and poorer in the little home.

She laid her hand confidently on her

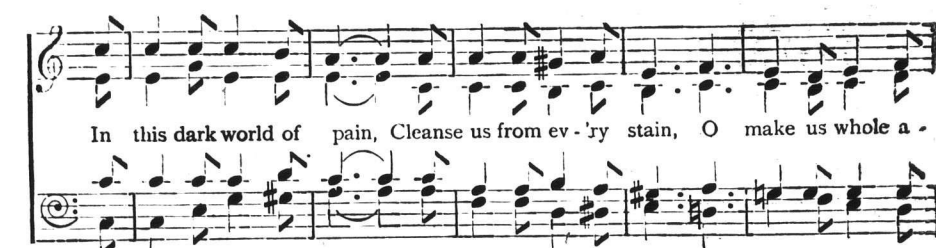
THOU SAVIOUR OF US ALL.



We bring our cares to Thee, From sin, O make us free! Help



us to pray to Thee, Thou Sa-viour of us all! Thou Sa-viour of us all!



In this dark world of pain, Cleanse us from ev-ry stain, O make us whole a-



-gain, Thou Sa-viour of us all! Thou Sa-viour of us all!

We bring our cares to Thee,
From sin O make us free!
Help us to pray to Thee,

Thou Saviour of us all!

In this dark world of pain,
Cleanse us from every stain,
O make us whole again,

Thou Saviour of us all!

Lord Jesus, 'tis Thy love,
That draws our souls above,
Holy Celestial Dove,

Thou Saviour of us all!

For us Thy blood was shed,
And thou wast captive led,
And number'd with the dead,

Thou Saviour of us all!

Chas. D. Powell, Winnipeg.

For us, too, Thou didst rise
Triumphant to the skies,
Bearing with Thee the prize,

Thou Saviour of us all!

To all who follow Thee,
A crown of life shall be
Ever to dwell with Thee,

Thou Saviour of us all!

Keep us, dear Lord, we pray,
For ever in the way
That ends in perfect day,

Thou Saviour of us all!

That we at last may stand
Within the Glory Land,
A happy, holy band,

Thou Saviour of us all!