

"In the Field with Their Flocks."

BY FREDERICK WILLIAM FABIAN.

In the field with their flocks abiding,
They lay on the dewy ground;
And glimmering under the starlight,
The sheep lay white around.
When the light of the Lord streamed o'er them,
And lo! from the heaven above,
An angel leaped from his glory,
And sang his song of love.
He sang that first sweet Christmas
The song that shall never cease.

CHORUS.

"Glory to God in the highest,
On earth, goodwill and peace."

"To you in the city of David,
A Saviour is born to-day!"
And sudden a host of the heav'nly ones
Flashed forth to join the lay!
Oh, never hath sweeter message
Thrilled home to the souls of men,
And the heavens themselves had never heard
A gladder choir till then;
For they sang that Christmas carol,
That never on earth shall cease.

And the shepherds came to the manger,
And gazed on the holy child,
And calmly o'er that rude cradle
The Virgin Mother smiled;
And the sky in the starlight silence
Seemed full of the angel lay:
"To you in the city of David
A Saviour is born to-day."
Oh, they sang, and I ween that never
The carol on earth shall cease.

THE BOY CHRIST.

BY MARY ALLAINE.

NEARLY two thousand years ago a tiny baby lay in its bed at Bethlehem. Warm, rosy, smiling, dimpled, as we know babies; yet in all time there has never been so wonderful a baby as this one. Centuries before he was born prophets foretold his coming, and kings and wise men and all the faithful of one nation had prayed for and looked for his birth. Angels announced his coming, singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and goodwill toward men." The shepherds heard, and soon found the infant Christ, and worshipped him. Wise men in the East followed the great star till it stood still over the place where the baby was. When they found him they, too, knelt and worshipped him, and presented their gifts to this wonderful baby, who was the Prince of Peace, the Son of God.

Wonderful Christ-child! As this baby was helpless like other babies, so it grew like other babies. It had birthdays, days that no doubt Mary, the mother, remembered in the way that all Hebrew mothers remembered their children's birthdays. The Christ-child was one and two years old, and began to walk and talk, just as our babies do; then three and four and five, beginning to learn in the way that all Hebrew children of his time were taught; but we know nothing of this wonderful Christ child until he was twelve years old. Read the second chapter of Luke, beginning at the thirtieth verse, and you will read what occurred when he was twelve years old. Now he was a boy, and lived a boy's life. We have no reason to doubt that he played as other boys played, learned as other boys learned, was a favourite, no doubt, among boys, for he won men to him when he became a man. No doubt he and John were very happy together when they met. This we know—that Christ as a boy must have been a manly boy. He could never have done a mean action, he was honest and true, firm to do what he knew was right, and his influence must have been for good among those brought in contact with him. No doubt he helped the little boys; was tender and

gentle toward the sick and feeble. He was a peacemaker, because he was a child of God. His lovely eyes responded, grew bright with sympathy and luminous with tenderness, when he found those who needed his care. No voice was ever raised in pain for one moment because of any action of his.

His mother! Oh, the depths and richness of love he gave his mother! Do you not remember, in that dreadful hour on the cross, how tenderly he left her in the care of the friend he loved best? In his agony he did not forget her. As a boy he remembered her comfort, her wishes, what she enjoyed, and when he returned from the hillsides about his home no doubt he brought her bunches of flowers and clusters of berries. No thought that he need hide from her ever found a resting-place in his heart. No comparison that would cause her to tremble for her boy was chosen by him. Pure, tender, simple, honest, helpful, studious, and manly was the boy-Christ. He was always tender to mothers and gentle with children.

Luke tells us "the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom." Strength and wisdom are the fruits of honesty, truth, studiousness, gentleness, helpfulness. If the most wonderful boy that ever lived—the boy who was King of all the world—excelled in these qualities, are they not worth your cultivating? Can you not follow the boy-Christ, and grow into the image of the man-Christ?

Twelve years old! On his way, walking over the dusty road, to that wonderful city, Jerusalem! Twenty-one years after, in this city, he prayed his Father to forgive his enemies when they crucified him as a criminal, this pure, holy Christ-child. In this same city he was stoned. Twelve years old! and he asks his mother, "Wist ye not I must be about my Father's business?" and then he began preparing for his work—so quietly, so humbly, that we know nothing of it. The most wonderful work that was ever done? and we do not know how he prepared. Yet we do. By their fruits ye shall know them. What were the fruits of Christ's boyhood, early manhood? The life he has made known to us—acts of kindness to the sorrowful, the sick, the blind, the helpless—yes, the sinful. Standing alone in the face of the whole world, at the peril of his life, to protest against sin and wickedness and oppression and uncleanliness. He knew no fear when it was right for him to raise his voice against evil. He never turned any away who needed his help. And, remember, Christ gave people the power to help themselves. That is the best help—what the world needs to-day most. Christ's boyhood was the seedtime of which his manhood was the flower and the fruit.

Wist ye not I must be about my Father's business? is a question that should be in every boy's heart. Who is this Father? God. Christ was the Son of God, and how often he tells us that we are the children of the Father! When he tells his pupils he is going to leave them, he says, "I go unto my Father and your Father." Christ is the Elder brother. When they told him that his mother and brethren were waiting to see him, he said, "They that do the will of my Father are my brethren."

Remember, the boy-Christ was but twelve years old when he asked the question, "Wist ye not I must be about my Father's business?"

If we see a precept in Christ's teaching that bears hard on the flesh, let us remember there is somewhere a promise to encourage obedience to it, and there is also the example of the Master himself for us to follow. Let us always connect the promise and the example with the precept.

A STORY FOR CHRISTMAS EVE.

Most children have seen a Christmas-tree, and many know that the pretty and pleasant custom of hanging gifts on its boughs comes from Germany; but perhaps few have heard or read the story that is told to little German children respecting the origin of this custom. The story is called *The Little Stranger*.

In a small cottage on the borders of a forest lived a poor labourer. He had a wife and two children. The boy's name was Valentine, and the girl was called Mary; they were obedient, good children, and a great comfort to their parents. One winter evening this happy little family were sitting quietly round the hearth, the snow and the wind raging outside, while they ate their supper of dry bread, when a gentle tap was heard on the window, and a childish voice called from without, "O let me in, pray! I am a poor little child with nothing to eat and no home to go to, and I shall die of cold and hunger unless you let me in!"

Valentine and Mary jumped up from the table and ran to open the door, saying, "Come in, poor little child, we have not much to give you, but whatever we have we will share with you."

The stranger-child came in and warmed his cold hands and feet at the fire, and the children gave him the best they had to eat. After supper they said, "You must be tired, too, poor child; lie down on our bed; we can sleep on the bench for one night."

So they took their little guest into their sleeping-room, laid him on the bed, covered him over, and said to each other, "How thankful we ought to be we have warm rooms and a cosy bed, while this poor child has only heaven for his roof and the cold earth for his sleeping-place."

When their father and mother went to bed, Mary and Valentine lay quite contentedly on the bench near the fire, saying, before they fell asleep, "The stranger-child will be so happy to-night in his warm bed."

These kind children had not slept many hours before Mary awoke, and softly whispered to her brother, "Valentine, dear! wake, and listen to the sweet music under the window!"

Then Valentine rubbed his eyes and listened. It was sweet music indeed, and sounded like beautiful voices singing to the tones of a harp:

"O, Holy Child, we greet thee! bringing
Sweet strains of harp to aid our singing.

The children listened, while a solemn joy filled their hearts; then they stepped softly to the window to see who might be without.

In the East was a streak of rosy dawn, and in its light they saw a group of children standing before the house clothed in silver garments, holding golden harps in their hands. Amazed at this sight, the children were gazing still out of the window, when a light tap caused them to turn round. There stood the stranger-child before them clad in a golden dress, with a gleaming radiance round his curling hair. "I am the little Christ-child," he said, "who wanders through the world bringing peace and happiness to good children. You took me in and cared for me this night when you thought I was only a poor child, and now you shall have my blessing for what you have done."

A fir-tree grew near the house; from this he broke a twig, which he planted in the ground, saying, "This twig shall become a tree, and shall bring forth fruit year by year for you."

No sooner had he done this than he vanished, and with him the little choir of angels. But the fir-branch grew, and became a Christmas-tree, and on its branches hung golden apples and silver nuts every Christmas tide.