

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good-will toward men'"

Oh, the sound of the rejoicing that filled that upper air! Even since in my heart have I caroled that foretaste of heaven?"

The old shepherd passed with such a light on his upturned face that he seemed to his awe-struck listeners to be hearing again that same angel chorus the chorists that ring down from the watch-towers of heaven across earth's lowly sheep-fold, on that first Christmas night.

There was a solemn hush. Then he said, "And when they were gone away and the light and the song were no more with us, we spake one to another, and rose in haste and went to Bethlehem. And we found the Babe lying in a manger with Mary His mother; and we fell down and worshipped him."

"Thirty years has it been since the birth of Israel's Messiah, and I sit and wonder all the day, wonder when he will appear once more to his people. Surely the time must be well-nigh here when he may claim his kingdom. O Lord, let not thy servant depart until these eyes that beheld the Child shall have seen the King in his beauty!"

Joel remained kneeling beside old Heber, perfectly motionless. He was striving together the links that he had lately found. A child heralded by angels proclaimed by a star, worshipped by the Magi! A man changing water into wine at only a word!

"I shall yet see him!" exclaimed the voice of old Heber, with such sublime assurance of faith that it found a response in every heart.

There was another solemn stillness, so deep that the soft fluttering of a night-moth around the lamp startled them.

Then the child's voice rang out eager and shrill but triumphant as if inspired: "Rabbi Phineas he it was who changed the water into wine—This friend of Nazareth and the babe of Bethlehem are the same!"

The heart of the carpenter was strangely stirred but it was full of doubt. Not that the Christ had been born—the teachings of all his lifetime led him to expect that; but that the chosen One could be a friend of his—the thought was too wonderful for him.

The old shepherd sat on the couch, feebly twisting his fingers, and talking to himself. He was repeating bits of the story he had just told them. "And lo an angel overhead!" he muttered. Then he looked up, whispering softly, "Glory to God in the highest—and peace, yes, on earth, peace!"

"He seems to have forgotten everything else," said Nathan, signalling to the men outside to lead him home. "His mind is wired away entirely that it may keep unspotted the record of that night's revelation. He tells it over and over, whether he has a listener or not."

They led him gently out, the white-haired white-souled old shepherd Heber. It seemed to Joel that the wrinkled face was illuminated by some inner light, not of this world, and that he lingered among men only to repeat to them, over and over his one story. That strange, sweet story of Bethlehem's first Christmas-tide.

(To be continued.)

ROCKS FROM THE SKY'S

Meteoritic stones, in single masses and in showers, have fallen from the atmosphere at various, and in many cases uncertain periods—throughout the world.

The largest of these meteoric bodies known until the past few years is in the Province of Tucuman, in South America in the midst of an extensive plain. It weighs 30,000 pounds.

A mass in the Imperial Cabinet, in Vienna, was brought from Agram, in Croatia, where it fell in 1751. It was seen by the inhabitants while falling from the air, and is said to have appeared like a globe of fire.

Prof. Pallas in his travels in Siberia, found a mass in the mountains of Kemir, weighing 1,680 pounds, which the inhabitants told him fell from the sky.

About 150 miles from Bahia, in Brazil, is a mass of crystalline texture weighing 14,000 pounds.

There is a specimen in a cabinet at New Haven, Conn., weighing 3,000 pounds, which was brought from the Red River Valley, in Louisiana.

The largest meteor now known descended on a farm in the township of Claysville, Pennsylvania, a few years ago. It required three men several days to unearth the monster. It had penetrated the earth until it came in contact with a stratum of limestone when this sudden check of its fearful velocity caused it to break into many pieces, of all sizes and shapes; yet when the earth was removed from around it, it still preserved its original shape. Its weight was estimated at 200 tons.

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Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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

TORONTO, MAY 30, 1896.

QUEEN VICTORIA.

One of the ladies in waiting on Queen Victoria, in a letter to a friend in this country, told an amusing story of the Queen's kindness and tact. During her stay at Osborne Castle, an Irish nurse came with her little charges, the children of the Duke of B., to visit the children of the Princess of Battenberg. While the party were at tea in the nursery, the Queen entered unexpectedly. Irish Nelly stood up, pale and trembling. The Queen presently saw her, and said, kindly:

"The children do credit to your care of them."

On this Nelly fell upon her knees, in a frenzy of embarrassment, crying out: "Yes, O Queen! No, O Queen!" bending her head with each sentence. "It's from County Cork I came, an' little does me father know I do be acquainted this day wid the great Queen of the world!"

The children burst into shrieks of laughter, but the Queen, checking the smile which rose to her own lips, shook her head at them, gently bade the woman rise, and sent her upon an errand until she could recover her wits.

The early biographies of Victoria describe her as imperious in manner, and fully conscious of the gulf which separated her from the rest of mankind. The Duke of Wellington, after an audience with his youthful sovereign, once shrugged his shoulders as he came out, saying with a laugh:

"How the little lady does love to rule!"

But the officials who surround her at court, now in her old age, represent her as kind and considerate of the feelings and comfort of her poorest servant or neighbour, and apparently forgetful, in her attention to the great questions of the day, of her own exalted rank.

The great Queen ruling for more than half a century over a large portion of the globe is taught by years, like the ordinary woman, to soften the judgment of

youth, and to feel that all men, rulers and ruled, stand on one level as children of the same Father.

AN ELOQUENT ADDRESS

The subject of the protection of American missionaries in Turkey was under discussion in the United States Senate recently, and in the course of the debate, Mr. Frye, of Maine, delivered a brief speech which was so effective a piece of impromptu eloquence as to be worth every American's reading. Schoolboys might well adopt it as a declamation, and all readers, old and young alike, will find themselves stirred by its patriotic appeal. Let us hope that the United States may never fall behind England's example in protecting American citizens wherever they may be, or whoever may seek to outrage them. We subjoin an abstract from Senator Frye's speech:

Mr. President: I think that one of the grandest things in all the history of Great Britain is that she does protect her subjects everywhere, anywhere, and under all circumstances. I do not wonder that a British subject loves his country. This little incident, with which you are all familiar, is a marvellous illustration of the protection which Great Britain gives to her subjects:

The King of Abyssinia took a British subject named Cameron, about twenty years ago, carried him up to the fortress of Magdala, on the heights of a rocky mountain, and put him into a dungeon, without cause assigned. It took six months for Great Britain to find that out. Then Great Britain demanded his immediate release. King Theodore refused the release.

In less than ten days after that refusal was received ten thousand British soldiers, including five thousand Sepoys, were on board ships of war and were sailing down the coast. When they had disembarked, they were marched across that terrible country, a distance of seven hundred miles, under a burning sun, up the mountain, up to the very heights in front of the frowning dungeon; then gave battle, battered down the iron gates of the stone walls, reached down into the dungeon, and lifted out of it that one British subject, King Theodore killing himself with his own pistol.

Then they carried him down the mountain, across the land, put him on board a white-winged ship and sped him to his home in safety. That cost Great Britain twenty-five million dollars, and made General Napier Lord Napier of Magdala.

That was a great thing for a great country to do—a country that has an eye that can see all across the ocean, all across the land away up to the mountain heights, and away down to the darksome dungeon, one subject of hers out of her thirty-eight millions of people, and then has an arm strong enough and long enough to stretch across the same ocean, across the same lands, up the same mountain heights, down to the same dungeon, and then lift him out and carry him to his own country and friends. Who would not die for a country that will do that?

"The Pioneers. A Tale of the Western Wilderness." Illustrative of the adventures and discoveries of Sir Alexander Mackenzie. By R. M. Ballantyne. London: James Nisbet & Co. Toronto: William Briggs.

Few writers have done more than R. M. Ballantyne to make Canada's Great Lone Land of the far Northwest known to the world. He was for many years in the employ of the Hudson Bay Company, traversed the vast prairies and threaded the streams and forests of the H. B. territory. Sir Alexander Mackenzie was one of the most energetic and successful of the discoverers who explored the vast wilderness of British America. He traced the great river which bears his name, one of the largest in the world, to its outlet in the Polar Sea. He was the first to cross the Rocky Mountains in those high latitudes and descend to the Pacific Ocean. In the form of a story Mr. Ballantyne has given us an outline of a very important period in the history of our own country. This book is one of a series of seventeen describing pioneer civilization in many lands at the cheap rate of a shilling each. It

would make a valuable addition to any library. The boys, and girls, too, would read these books with avidity.

"The Story of Princess Alice. An Ideal Woman." By Eliza F. Pollard. New York: Thomas Whittaker. Toronto: William Briggs.

The Princess Alice was a favourite of her father and of the English nation. It was she who watched by her father's death couch, and who ministered to the sick in the hospitals during the Franco-Prussian war, and who received the fatal infection of diphtheria from kissing her sick child. Her last words were "Dear papa." The book has several portraits and engravings of scenes in the life of the Princess Alice.

PRAYER-MEETING TOPIC.

JUNE 7, 1896.

The Shepherd Psalm.—Psalm 23. 1-6.

The situation of a shepherd was well understood in the East. David, the author of this Psalm, was himself a shepherd when selected by God to be King of Israel. In speaking of God as a shepherd, he meant to convey the idea that whatever good characteristics pertained to the shepherd, pertained also to God in a much higher sense, hence the exclamation of the first verse read.

THE PROVISION HE MAKES.

Verse 2. Provender and water are essential for the welfare of the sheep. Without both are provided, the sheep will be sickly and faint, and soon die. Jehovah like a good shepherd feeds his people—the sheep of his flock, with such food as he knows to be best suited to their growth, and gives them to drink from that river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God.

Verse 3. God's people, like stray sheep, sometimes ramble in by-paths, and lose both comfort and strength, but the good shepherd looks well after them, and brings them to the fold again, where they can dwell in safety. The path which they are to pursue is a right one. Righteousness is the girdle of their loins. They aim to do right, because only such actions are well pleasing in the sight of God.

DEATH CONTEMPLATED.

Verse 4. No one likes to think of dying, but all must die. There is no discharge in this war. It is appointed unto man once to die. But see with what calm confidence the writer of the Psalm contemplates this last event in the life of man? The rod and staff of the Shepherd, which were so important and essential, would be there to render aid.

CONFIDENCE INCREASES.

Verse 5. The good shepherd seeks for the best pasture available for his sheep, so our good Shepherd supplies all the needs of his people, and so abundantly does he do this, that one has said, "I have been young, and now I am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

JOYFUL ANTICIPATION.

Verse 6. No feeling of dread for the future, but a feeling of certainty is enjoyed for both worlds. The house of the Lord, where the Psalmist is to dwell forever, is the heavenly home that is being prepared.—See John 14. 1-2.

When great lords of France hurried to announce to the little boy, Henry the Fifth, that he was now king, the court officer who was sent out into the grounds to summon him had great difficulty in persuading the child to come: "That's all nonsense, sister; don't let's stop playing."

This story is a good one to laugh over; but you, who have been so often summoned to enter into your kingship, and whose constant answer has been, "Don't let's stop playing," cannot dare to laugh. It is not forced upon the unwilling to accept the heirship of the kingdom of heaven.

It doesn't make much difference which end of the gun you are at if it kicks as hard as it shoots.