

THREE LITTLE KINGS.

"We three kings of Orient are,
Bearing gifts we traverse afar,"

sang three small boys, as they marched along to the Sunday-school festival. They had on long coats and big hats, and they pushed their hands deep down in the huge coat pockets lest Jack Frost should nip their fingers. Their names were Bob and Willie Dresser, and Dudley White.

"We three kings of Orient are," they sang again, as they came away from the festival, but now their hands were no longer in their pockets, which were stuffed to overflowing with gifts, candies, and nuts.

"Let's play we were the kings," said Bob.

"That's just what we can't do," answered Dudley, "because they brought presents on Epiphany, and we're carrying presents away."

"Let's bring 'em, like as they did," cried Willie.

"How?" asked Dudley.

"Why, we could take all the candies and things to some poor child who hasn't any, and that would be something like them."

"Yes, and we could go down to West street: there are lots of poor children there, and then we should be travelling from the East, just like the three kings. And we are something like three kings, for we are 'inheritors of the kingdom of heaven,' you know," said Dudley.

"But where's the star?" asked Bob.

"There it is," cried Willie, pointing towards West street, where, in the sky, shone a bright spot. It was not a star, however, but a golden cross on the top of a tall spire, and the setting sun made it shine.

The little boys looked at it with reverence. "Maybe God made it shine like that to lead us to the poor child," whispered Willie.

"But we must ask mother if we can go," said Bob. So they all ran home.

Mamma was much pleased with the idea, and offered to go with them. She said, too, that it would be giving gifts to the Lord Jesus, since He had said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

The star-cross was still shining when they started. It was not a long walk. Soon they stood in front of the church that bore the cross-crowned spire, but no poor child was there.

"See," cried Bob, "here's a little street that's very poor; let's go down it."

There was a smile on mamma's face, for she knew the street well. "Suppose you try the first house," said she.

They tip-toed up the steps, and timidly knocked at the door. A slim girl opened it.

"We're three kings," began Willie, and then retired, abashed, behind the others.

Mamma hadn't come up the steps; some-

body must say something, so Bob spoke up. "Merry Christmas!" he said, and then remembered that it was the sixth of January.

"Thank you," answered the girl. "Won't you come in?"

That seemed to be the right thing to do, so they went in. The room into which they went was already almost dark, because of the narrow street. Beside the one window sat a boy about as old as our boys, but much thinner, and with no rosininess in his cheeks. He had a piece of fir in his hands, and he was trimming it with bits of colored paper.

He smiled when the boys came in. "Did you come to see me?" he asked.

"Yes," said Bob; "I guess you are the one the star pointed to."

The poor boy opened his eyes wide, for he did not understand what Bob meant, but he was pleased to have callers, and set himself to entertaining them.

"I'm making a Christmas tree," he said. "Sis found this green on the church steps, and I'm pinning on these bits of paper, and playing as how they was candles and presents and candy. Don't I wish they was them! but they look pretty anyway. My back's so bad I couldn't go to the Sunday school tree; but Sis went, and she told me how it was. She brought me back a present too; it's marbles. I guess they didn't understand about my back, but I'm going to give them to the boys next spring, and then perhaps they'll be willing to stand still, and answer my questions."

Bob squirmed uneasily, and felt in his pocket. How about the little paint box that had come to him off the tree? He had another at home. What fun the poor boy could have with the paint! He had meant to keep this against the time when he should have used up the other paints, but now he pulled it out and laid it on the poor boy's lap. Willie started, turned red, then, diving into his own pocket, brought out a picture book. This was too much for Dudley, and soon a mouthorgan lay beside book and box.

"Why," cried the boy, and his eyes shone, "you ain't giving all those things to me?"

"Yes, we are," cried Dudley; "we're bringing gifts, same as the three kings, because we're so thankful that the Saviour is born."

"We've got something more!" cried Willie, in glee, and the big pockets poured forth candies, nuts, and oranges. When some of these were arranged on the branch of fir, it was quite like a Christmas tree. The slim sister had brought her father and mother to see the wonderful sight. Mamma had come in, too, and she suggested the singing of a carol. I don't know who was happiest.

"We'll come again," cried the little boys, as they turned toward home. "We didn't know what happy times three kings could have."—*Mary M. Burgess.*