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THE STAR.

BY FRANCES ERIN ALLISON.

Dear Mother Earth another Christmas Day
Is added to thy jewel casket old;
Thy children throng on every traveled way
With gifts of myrrh and frankincense and gold.

Again the age-worn story they repeat;
'Tis heard afresh by every listening ear,
Again the Star of Bethlehem they greet,
The heavenly chorus crowns the parting year.

And as the stately centuries pass along,
Dearer and dearer does the story grow,
Dearer the star, dearer the angels song,
The blessed family in the manger low.

Thy children all from care and grief beguiled
Seek with their gifts to-day a little child.

THE ORIGIN OF CHRISTMAS.

Long before the Christian era December 25th was religiously observed by the "sun-worshippers." On that day is about the first perceptible return of the sun to the northern hemisphere. His return would drive away the frosts and snows, warm up the frozen earth, and clothe the earth in beauty and luxury. The people looked upon the sun as a god, an intelligence, withdrawing to the south just long enough to let the people see what their home, the world, would be without his presence. His return on December 25th they hailed with delight. They rejoiced. They sent presents to their friends. They held their religious feasts, with music, mirth and dancing. Sometimes to great excess these feasts were carried. When Christ came, and His doctrine was preached among the "sun-worshippers," many were converted to Christianity. To break off their old habits was very difficult. When December 25th came, it brought the "sun-feast." There was the enticement to go and mingle. The Christian leaders were not slow to see what the influence would be, so they gave the day a Christian significance. They met in their meeting-houses. They gave presents to each other. They talked of Christ, the spiritual Sun, who had come to give light to and warm the spiritual world. He was the "light of the world." "The people which sat in darkness saw a great light," and "light had sprung up." "The light shineth in darkness, but the darkness comprehendeth it not." "The worlds were made by Him." Therefore the sun was made by Him. The sun-worshippers "worshipped the creature more than the Creator," but the Christians worshipped the "Creator, who is blessed for evermore." The superiority of this over that was soon made visible, and the masses were released from idolatry. It mattered not whether December 25th was the birthday of Christ or not, the effect was the same.—The Voice.

OVER LAND AND SEA.

At the beginning of the present century the Bible could be studied by only one fifth of the earth's population. Now it is translated into languages which make it accessible to nine tenths of the world's inhabitants.

By arrangements with a large body of New York pastors special services have for several weeks past been held in that city at different points and particularly in Cooper Union under the conduct of Mr Moody. So great is the

interest awakened by these meetings that they are likely to be continued for some time longer. Mr. Moody is reported as saying that he had never known New York to be stirred religiously as it is to-day. The interest seems to be rapidly spreading beyond the confines of the city and many pastors within a radius of fifty miles propose to begin daily evening services.

It is not often that there assembles in a parish church a congregation of worshippers so august as that which assembled in Crathie Church on Sabbath, 27th September. In the Royal pews there were present Her Majesty the Queen; the Emperor of Russia, whose rule extends from the Baltic to the Pacific, and who has 5,000,000 of soldiers at his command, and the Empress; the Prince and Princess of Wales, the Duke and Duchess, of York, with other members of the Royal Family. In the same congregation there were present the Marquis of Salisbury, Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, and M. de Staal, the Russian Ambassador to Britain. It was to a congregation including these august personages that Dr. Colin Campbell of Dundee preached, his text being—"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory."

Glasgow, Scotland, shows what a stronghold of Presbyterianism it is by the fact that it has two hundred and seventy-five Presbyterian churches. Their influence is felt for good in every department of life in that busy, thriving and wide awake city. They have it in their power to make themselves a still greater blessing among all classes of the growing population.

Dr Macadam Muir, the popular incumbent of our ancient Cathedral Church says the *Christian Leader* is strongly of opinion that a young 'centiate when he gets a church should throw himself heartily into the work and not be always looking for something better. A needed hint this to young preachers, certain of whom might well be distinguished "Solicitors, general,"—with such pertinacity do they beset vacant congregations with their attentions.

The Moderator-Designate of the Free Church for 1897 is the Rev. Professor A. B. Davidson, D. D., LL. D., of the New College. He is one of the foremost of living Hebraists, his *Hebrew Grammar* being the text-book, we should think, in all the Divinity Halls of the country. His contributions to the Old Testament exegesis and criticism numerous and highly prized. It is a remarkable coincidence that Dr. Mair and Professor Davidson were born in the same year, and in the same district of Aberdeenshire, attended Marischal College at the same time, and competed together for the same scholarship, graduated together with honors, and are now in the same year brought together as Moderators of their respective Churches.

The Very Rev. Dr. Donald Macleod has received from a lady the sum of £100, which she has distributed among the Schemes as follows:—Foreign, £20; Home, £10; Colonies, £10; Jews, £10; Endowment, £10; Small Livings, £10; Synod in England, £10; Highlands, £10; Life and Work, £10.