

conversion to Christianity must be comparatively easy. They have not the ancient Scriptures or the abstruse theology or philosophy of the Hindu or Mussulman to stand between them and the simplicity of the Gospel. It is true that mission work in Chhota Nagpur is far more successful among the aborigines than among the Hindus or Mussulmans. But, after all, the very fact that the Kols' conception of religion is so degraded and worldly, indicates him as so much the less fit to understand a spiritual religion, or to perceive his want of it. Besides; he dearly loves his rice beer and other intoxicants, while temperance is insisted on by S. P. G. missionaries as a condition of admission into the Church.—*Selected.*

A CHRISTMAS MEDITATION IN FOUR PARTS.

(American Church S. S. Magazine)

I.

THE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS.

THE idyllic beauty of the story of the birth of Christ never loses its power or its freshness as the years pass on. It is a delight to us in childhood, an inspiration to us in our youth, and a divine and helpful truth to us in maturity.

The snow of Christmas time, the carols of the children, the decking of our churches with the beauty of Lebanon, the fir tree, the box tree, and the pine tree together, to beautify the temple of the Lord, all unite to give a fragrance and an aroma to this day unlike any other in the Christian year.

We leave our doubts to-day at the outer court of our faith; we put aside our boasted reason and our mechanical beliefs, and, with the shepherds who sang praises and the wise men who offered their rare and costly gifts, we go anew every Christmas even unto Bethlehem "to see this King whom the Lord hath made known unto us."

We never tire of this season of cheer and joy; it is always a fresh spring in the desert place of life's pilgrimage.

We look upon the group in the stable of the inn at Bethlehem, and the light which shines there comes, as in Correggio's picture of the nativity, alone from the face of the divine Christ. We call to mind the happy memories of childhood, and the words of Milton's wonderful hymn of the nativity comes to us every Christmas time with a divinely hallowed memory:

"Say, Heavenly Muse, shall not thy sacred vein
Afford a present to the infant God?
Hast thou no verse or hymn or solemn strain
To welcome Him to this His new abode,
Now, while the Heaven by the Sun's team untrod
Hath took no print of the approaching light,
And all the spangled host keep watch in squadron bright!

"See! how from far upon the Eastern road,
The star-led wizards haste with odors sweet;
Oh! run, present them with thy humble ode,
And lay it lowly at His blessed feet.
Have thou the honor first thy Lord to greet,
And join Thy voice unto the angel choir,
From out His secret altar touched with hallowed fire."

II.

THE MOTHER OF OUR LORD.

We think loving thoughts of Mary, the mother of our Lord, at Christmas time. Every Christian heart is as loyal to this great personality as were the Red Cross Knights of the Crusaders who developed modern chivalry out of loyalty to "Our Lady"—the mother of Christ.

Blessed mother!

Highly favored art thou among women, for, behold, from this time all generations shall call thee blessed! We would not dishonor such a noble nature by indifference, or fail to sing most joyfully the glad Magnificat because others have erred in offering to the mother of our Lord divine homage. Ever to all Christian hearts the mother of Jesus will be loved and honored as one worthy of the martyr's palm and crown, for the prophetic sword of Simeon pierced her soul throughout her life, from the day when Herod sought the young child to destroy Him; until that saddest of all afternoons when they took the dead Christ down from the cross and laid Him in the tomb.

Who can rightly estimate the influence of Mary upon the growing character of her Son? From our Lord's remarkable insight into feminine nature, from His judgment upon woman's character and her springs of action, there must have been some human one who stood very near to Him. Friendship such as that which the household of Bethany exhibited could never take the place of that strong attachment, that living in the life of another, which the relationship of man and wife or parent and child implies. Mary, the mother of Jesus, must have been the one being on His human side who taught Him the full meaning of human love, and gave by her devotion to Him that knowledge of human nature, and especially woman's nature, which on its human side could only have come from experience. The Virgin Mary must have been in many ways a true and strong character. There was no weakness or feebleness about her. She who brought forth the Saviour of humanity was herself a rich, full-matured woman. There must be a basis for all this lavishness of art upon the Virgin's person. So, then, while we lament the dogma of Mariolatry, we can understand something of the way in which it has arisen, and will not allow this foggy superstition to obscure the bright glory of the beloved Virgin Mary, who was indeed blessed above women. How can we ever realize how much we owe to that dear