

THE ADVENT SEASON.

All the little readers of the DOMINION CHURCHMAN knows that the four weeks before Christmas from the Advent Season. Do they all know what it means? "Advent," means *coming*. Who is coming? Christ is coming back to this world some of these days. When? Nobody knows. It may be this year; no one can tell. It may not be for a hundred years; no one can tell. What is He coming for? Among other things to take the tangle out of our lives; to make plain many hard questions that your parents cannot answer; to put an end to wrong and punish wrong doers; to put up righteousness and goodness and truth and honor and obedience and make them mighty; to rejoice all His people and give them exceeding great rewards. What I desire for all the readers of this is, that when Christ comes back again they may be glad and not sorry to see Him.

THE SHEPHERD'S CROOK.

In 1849, a missionary was travelling near Simla under the shadow of the great Himalaya mountains. One day his path led to a narrow bridle-path cut out on the face of a steep ridge. Along this narrow path, that ran so near a great precipice, he saw a shepherd leading on his flock, the shepherd going first, and the flock following him. But now and then the shepherd stopped and looked back. If he saw a sheep creeping up too far on the one hand, or going too near the edge of the dangerous precipice on the other, he would at once turn back and go to it, gently pulling it back. He had a long rod, as tall as himself, around the lower half was twisted a band of iron.

There was a crook at one end of the rod, and it was with this the shepherd took hold of one of the hind legs of the wandering sheep, to pull it back. The thick band of iron at the other end of the rod was really a staff, and was ready for use whenever he saw a hyena, or wolf, or some other troublesome animal come near the sheep; for, especially at night, these creatures prowled about the flock. With the iron part of the rod he could give a good blow when any attack was threatened.

In Psalm xxiii. 4, we have mention made of "Thy rod and thy staff." There is meaning in both, and distinct meaning.

God's rod draws us back, kindly and lovingly, if we go aside from His path; God's staff protects us against the onset, open or secret, whether it be men or devils that are the enemies watching an opportunity for attack. In this we find unspeakable comfort. The young, inexperienced Christian may reckon on having the crook of that blessed rod put forth to draw him back from danger and wandering; and also may expect that the staff of it shall not fail to come down upon those that "seek his soul to destroy it."

WHERE AM I GOING.

One summer evening, as the sun was going down, a man was seen trying to make his way through the lanes and cross-roads that led to his village home. His unsteady way of walking showed that he had been drinking; and though he had lived in that village more than thirty years, he was now so drunk that it was impossible for him to find his way home. Quite unable to tell where he was, he at last uttered a dreadful oath, and said to a person going by, "I've lost my way. Where am I am going?"

The man thus addressed was an earnest Christian. He knew the poor drunkard very well, and pitied him greatly. When he heard the inquiry, "Where am I going?" in a quiet, sad, solemn way, he answered: "To ruin!"

The poor, staggering man stared at him wildly for a moment, and then murmured with a groan, "That's so."

"Come with me," said the other, kindly, "and I will take you home."

The next day came. The effect of drink had passed away, but those two little words, tenderly and lovingly spoken to him, did not pass away. "To ruin! to ruin!" he kept whispering to himself. It's true, I'm going to ruin! O God, help me, save me!

Thus he was stopped on his way to ruin. By earnest prayer to God he sought the grace which made him a true Christian. His feet were established on the Rock. It was a rock broad enough to reach that poor, misguided drunkard, and made a useful, happy man of him.

CAN THE LIKE OF US GET IN?

Coming rather late, one stormy afternoon in November, to the place where children's services were to be held, I was surprised to find a group of little ones standing outside the door, in the heavy rain, apparently waiting for something. They were strangers to me, asking eagerly, "Is there anything to pay to get in?"

"Nothing, dear children," I said; and in the three ran at once.

But two little ragged ones, with bare feet, still lingered outside, till one of them shyly asked me, "Can the like of us get in?"

Glad was I to be able to say, "O yes; all are welcome;" and we went in together.

But I had learned a lesson from the children which I hope I shall never forget. They had all been invited to come. They were cold and weary outside, and they wanted to get in. The door was open, and a kind welcome awaited them inside. They kept themselves out by thinking the invitation could not be meant for them—that they were not fit to come in. Here, then, is my lesson: God has in his infinite love, provided a rich feast to which He freely and fully invites all. Before God could give you and me—guilty sinners—this full and free invitation, His only begotten Son had to suffer and die in the sinner's stead, in order that He might take away the mighty barrier of guilt that blocked up our way to heaven. But now there is "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh" (Heb. x. 19, 20); and in every one who enters, Jesus sees of the travail of his soul and is satisfied.

Jesus, then, wants you to come. The Father is waiting to welcome you. He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Him and live. The Holy Ghost saith, "To-day, if ye hear His voice, harden not your heart." And God's messengers are sent out to say, "All things are ready: Come!" "Whosoever will, let him come." "Whosoever;" that means you; you will never get a fuller invitation.

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