

quietly said:—"Joey, God knows all about it, and He has sent us something nice for Christmas."—*Exchange.*

#### QUESTIONS FOR ADVENT.

BY MARAH.

When we go to meet the Master,  
When this world the spirit leaves,  
Will it be as faithful laborers,  
Bearing home our garnered sheaves?

Will the Master bid us welcome?  
Will He say to us, well done?  
Are we using all our talents,  
Even though we have but one?

Are we hiding in a napkin  
What the Lord would have us use?  
Do we weakly shrink from duty?  
Do we any gift abuse?

Will the world be any better  
For the life that we live here?  
Are we doing all our duty?  
Serving God in love and fear?

Do we strive to conquer error,  
Battling nobly for the right,  
Standing firm for Truth and Justice,  
Battling in the Saviour's might?

Truly, these are solemn questions,  
Solemn must the answers be;  
Advent is no time for dreaming,  
God has work for you and me.

#### CHRISTMAS DAY AND FAMILY LIFE.

About the infancy and childhood of the Lord Jesus Christ the writers of the four gospels are almost silent. And yet it is true that he was once a child, and was subject to the authority of both Joseph and Mary. It is also true that even after he reached manhood he continued to walk for some years in the quiet paths of life. The moral perfections of God were translated into those unostentatious virtues which constitute the dignity and the happiness of a human home. Within the narrow limits of the family the Lord Jesus Christ revealed the glory of the divine righteousness and the divine love.

What was large enough for Christ during thirty years of his earthly history must surely be large enough for most of us. There are men and women who resent the mean and poor conditions under which they have to do the will of God, and who dream of what they might achieve if they had ampler space for their activities. They have not room enough, so they think, to be very good. They have it in their hearts to show a regal compassion to the miserable, and heroic chivalry and courage in the vindication of the oppressed. But for royal virtues they think that regal resources are necessary; and they suppose that heroic circumstances are necessary for the manifestation of the heroic spirit. It may be well for them to remember on Christmas day that for thirty years Christ lived a divinely perfect life within the walls of a peasant's home, and that in the trade of a carpenter, and in his relation to his friends and neighbors in an obscure town among the hills of Galilee, he was able to show a glorious fidelity to the eternal laws of righteousness.

For all of us our life at home must constitute a great part of that life in which, by patient continuance in well-doing, we have to seek for glory, honor, and immortality; for many of us it practically constitutes the whole. There are millions of women, millions of girls, to say nothing of little children, who have no life worth speaking of beyond the boundaries of the family. Whatever fidelity to God, whatever love for Christ, whatever justice, whatever kindness, generosity, and gentleness they are to illustrate in their spirit and conduct must be illustrated there. And even men who have their business and their profession to follow during the greater part of the day find occasion in their home-life for forms of well-doing and ill-doing that are not possible elsewhere. I like a broad and rich life for myself—full of varied interests; and I should like to see the lives of most men, and of most women too,

animated by the inspiration and refreshed by the free air of activities and interests outside their own home. But no shining achievements elsewhere can palliate the guilt of coldness, injustice, ill-temper in the family; and the noblest public virtues have their roots in the gentleness, the industry, the self-sacrifice, and the truthfulness of which only those who are nearest to us have any knowledge.

And so on Christmas morning it will be well to ask ourselves whether the obscure duties which lie nearest to us—duties with which for thirty years Christ was perfectly content—are being faithfully discharged. Are there none at home to whom we could be more just, in whom we could repose a more generous confidence, whom we could cherish with a warmer affection, who claim from us a more patient forbearance? If we are parents, is our authority exercised at once with firmness and consideration? If children, do we yield a frank and cheerful obedience? Whatever we are, do we find at home occasions for showing that sympathy with sorrow and with joy which heightens the happiness of the happy and almost charms away the grief of the sad? What are the burdens which our strength might enable those nearest to us to bear more easily? What are the anxieties which our thoughtfulness and care might diminish?

On Christmas day, which is as much a festival of the family as a festival of the Church—estrangements which have separated hearts that cling together notwithstanding estrangement should cease, and the ties which unite them should be drawn closer and firmer. It is the day of all the year for children to forget, if their parents have worried and vexed them; for parents to forget, if their children have been undutiful and ungrateful; for brothers and sisters to brush away the jealousies and resentment which have troubled their mutual confidence, and lessened, or rather repressed, their mutual affection; for husbands and wives to renew the romance of their courtship. There may be faults to forgive; of course there are; but you will never come to an agreement if you try to estimate how much wrong there has been on one side and how much on the other. The heart is a bad accountant; it was never yet able to draw up a balance-sheet that any impartial auditor would sign. Let by-gones be by-gones; kiss, and have done with them.—*Good Words.*

#### AN OLD CHRISTMAS LEGEND.

On a Christmas Day, many years ago, when there was more forest than corn-land on the earth, a woodman was hastening to his home. The trees were bare of leaves, but snow was falling, and only one who knew the forest could have found his way in the gloom. This was a poor man, with rough hands, and coarse, home-spun clothing. Many a sad hour he had spent at his lonely toil in the wood. But on this particular day there is neither sadness nor look of poverty in his face. The joyful thought is in his heart: "It is a half-holiday, and I am going to spend it eating a Christmas dinner with my wife and my little ones."

As he made his way through the blinding snow he heard the moaning of some one in distress. He stopped. He followed the sound; and at the foot of a tree, shivering with cold and hunger, and all white with flakes of snow, he found a strayed child. The sight went to his heart. The innocent grief, the tears, the wet clothes, the pinched face, made the tears come into his own eyes. He thought of his own children sitting beside the warm log fire, and of the joy awaiting them that afternoon. His thoughts went back to the time when he was a child himself, and to the times without number when, like this child, he had lost his way in this very wood. Then he imagined himself, or one of his children, in the place of the child before him. What would his wish be if he, or a child of his, were in this child's place? It was the work of a moment to think all this. In less time than I have taken to tell it he had lifted the child in his arms and was hastening on as before. And by-and-by he came to the little hut which was

his home. The mother and children were peering out, through the half open door, for the first sight of him, and waiting to give him a Christmas welcome home. But the child was a surprise. What was this in father's arms, so pinched, so cold, so thinly clad? The story of finding him was told at once. And at once also mother and children welcomed the little stranger to their home. Very soon the wet clothes had given place to dry, and the warmest corner at the fireside was given up to him.

How happy they all were in that little hut that afternoon! Never had Christmas Day been more joyfully spent! The humble cottage seemed to grow larger. The fire burned more brightly than ever they had known. And when they gathered around the table and stood up, after the manner of the wood folk, to sing a Christmas carol by way of grace, it seemed that every child had learned to sing more sweetly than before. And the poor, pinched, thin-looking stranger sang louder and happier than they all, and with a voice that seemed to belong to heaven, it seemed so sweet.

Then they sat down to their Christmas dinner. Everything tasted sweet. The black bread seemed not so black as its wont. And in the mouth it tasted like wheaten bread. The children noticed, also, that the pinched look left the face of the little stranger; the very clothes seemed to change and brighten, and when he spoke it was like listening to an angel.

Not on all the earth that day was there a happier Christmas party. And when at last it was over, and the children had to go to bed, it some way did not surprise them that the strange child prayed for all in the house who had been so kind to him. Then he kissed them all round.

In the morning he was gone. But the black bread was changed to white bread. The brass money in the mother's pocket was changed to gold. Then the pious hearts in the humble cottage knew that it was the Christ-Child Himself who had been their guest; but they did not know, they could not at once understand, that these things and the happy memory of his visit were the blessing with which he paid them for obeying the Golden Rule.

#### CHRISTMAS GUESTS.

The quiet day in winter beauty closes,  
And sunset clouds are tinged with crimson dye,  
As if the blushes of our faded roses  
Came back to tint this sombre Christmas sky

We sit and watch the twilight darken slowly,  
Dies the last gleam upon the lone hillside,  
And in the stillness growing deep and holy,  
Our Christmas guests come in this eventide.

They enter softly; some with baby faces,  
Whose sweet blue eyes have scarcely looked on life  
We bid them welcome to their vacant places  
They won the peace, and never knew the strife.

And some with steadfast glances meet us gravely, trod;  
Their hands point backward to the paths they  
Dear ones, we know how long ye struggled bravely,  
And died upon the battle-field of God!

And some are here whose patient souls were riven  
By our hard words and looks of cold disdain;  
Ah, loving hearts, to speak of wrong forgiven,  
Ye come to visit our dark world again!

But One there is more kind than any other,  
Whose presence fills the silent house with light,  
The Prince of Peace, our gracious Elder Brother,  
Comes to His birthday feast with us to-night.

Thou, Who, though born and cradled in a manger  
Hast gladdened our poor earth with hope and rest  
O best Beloved come not as a stranger,  
But tarry, Lord, our Friend and Christmas Guest.  
—*Good Words.*

EVER.—Ever is a little word, but of immense signification. A child may speak it, but neither man nor angel can fully understand it. It is a spring which fills as fast as it empties; an unfathomable ocean; a sea that can never be sailed over from shore to shore.