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Bethlehem.

PHILLIPS BROOKS.

O little town of Bethlehem!
How still we see thee lie;
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep,
The silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee to night.

For Christ is born of Mary,
And gathered all above,
While mortals sleep the angles keep
Their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars together
Proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing to God the King,
And peace to men on earth.

How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is given;
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming,
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still,
The dear Christ enters in.

O Holy child of Bethlehem!
Descend to us, we pray,
Cast out our sin and enter in,
Be born in us to-day.
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell;
O, come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Emmanuel.

A Christmas Meditation.

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto myself."

Whether or not the twenty-fifth day of our December is the anniversary of the birthday of Jesus Christ we do not know, but we know that on some day in a year now past, by a little more than nineteen centuries that event occurred in reference to which we now date all other events in the calendar of time; and if at this season of the year our minds are turned particularly to the contemplation of that day which stands supreme among the birth-days of the sons of men, the result to us should be most profitable.

In much of the sentiment that finds expression in the celebration of Christmas there may be nothing deeply religious, but that which ever so faintly reflects the glory of that divine event which gave a Saviour to the world is not to be wholly disregarded and despised. Whatever of goodness, of sweetness, of purity and kindness is framed into the picture of the Christmastide, is a reflection from the light which rose upon the earth in the birth of the Babe of Bethlehem. Whatever of beauty and purity, of truth and righteousness is to be found in the home life of the people, in their marts of business, in their schools of learning, in their civic and national councils, is not apart from Jesus Christ. Happy is that people that knows the joyful sound of the Christmas bells, and happy the lands where the children are taught to connect the joy of the gladdest season of the year with the coming of the Son of God to earth.

But to the true believer Christmas has an immeasurably deeper meaning than it can have to the world at large. To him the light which rose on the world in the advent of Jesus Christ is not the faint radiance of a star on the distant horizon,—it is no pale reflection of a far-off glory, but a sun that blazes in the highest heavens and fills the world with light and vivifying power. To him the Christ of Bethlehem and Calvary stands not merely for some gracious influence which, among many other influences, has touched the lives of men and communities to refine and sweeten and elevate; to him the incarnation embodies God's supreme revelation of love and power. It is the love of the Cross prostrating the believer in repentance, but raising him into holy fellowship with Christ, and binding him in willing service to his Sav-

iour. It is the power of the resurrection, giving the consciousness of present peace and the assurance of comfort and final victory hereafter. To the Christian who is coming to know Christ in the fellowship of His sufferings and the power of His resurrection, the story of the advent is not merely some sweet story of old, a sort of religious romance which serves to tinge with a softer light the hard facts of history, soften the asperities of life and promote kindlier feelings among men. It is the central, the most vital and significant fact of human history. It is the measure of God's love and of man's largest hope. It is the story of One who comes to bruise the serpent's head; to purify unclean hearts, to subdue unholy lusts, to vitalize impotent wills, to begot love, to slay despair, to make death the portal to eternal life, to make men Sons of God and to teach their lips to sing songs of redemption and everlasting victory. If the Christian's idea of the significance of the coming of Jesus Christ into the world is the true one, then the day which marked his advent is indeed the day from which we well may reckon all other days and all other events in human history.

"And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men to myself." That calm declaration of Jesus, uttered in the midst of a swirling sea of passions and forces working for his destruction and for the effacement of his name and influence from the world, has had a wonderful, though it be as yet but a partial, fulfillment. More and more, as years and centuries have passed, have the thoughts of men been turned toward him. They have been held by a spell they could not resist. In every path that they have gone the face of the Crucified has risen up before them, everywhere in human affairs the hand that was pierced has been working to overturn and to build anew. Surely it is no dead face, no dead hand, that the world has seen and felt. The influence of Him whom Jewish bigotry and Roman skepticism united to crucify is, beyond all comparison, the mightiest and the most beneficent that the world has seen. It has laid hold upon hearts, homes, communities, governments and nations, with a power for regeneration and sublime inspiration such as has come from no other source. It has begotten the noblest ideals and worked most mightily for the realization of them in the individual lives of men and women; it has worked to create clean hearts and to renew right spirits; it has implanted and nurtured the spirit of love, gentleness and truth in the home life; it has inspired and cultivated the spirit of sympathy and kindness in communities, teaching men to be pitiful and helpful toward one another; it has built hospitals for the sick and the insane, homes for the orphaned and the aged, and inspired numberless philanthropies for the relief of human want and suffering; it has been the supreme inspiration of all the holy ministries of self-denying love; it has sent forth men and women to brave hardship and disease, danger and death, in every form, and in every uttermost part of the earth, that they might tell men everywhere the story of Bethlehem and Calvary; it has wrought for soundness of body and sanity of mind, for virile manhood and virtuous womanhood, for intellectual quickening and the largest education, for the promotion of enterprise, the extension of commerce, the development of human intellect and material resources and for all that is most admirable and beneficent in modern civilization. The influence of Him who was cradled in the manger of Bethlehem upon the whole circle of human thought and activity is immense, incalculable. The world's literature in all its highest aspiration and noblest productions reflects His influence. He has touched the world's learning, and it has expanded into lengths and breadths, into heights and depths immeasurably beyond the reach of pagan thought, He has touched

the world's art,—and its painting, its architecture and its music have been lifted into sublimer heights and made to express a spiritual beauty that seems almost divine.

And these are but beginnings. The world has only begun to apprehend the significance and glory of the Incarnation. For as yet how far does the prophecy of Jesus, that He will draw all men to Himself, fall short of its complete and final fulfillment! It is only in a superficial and half-conscious way that the world at large can be said to have been drawn to the Christ. To some degree it has seen and heard and wondered; it has been attracted as to the eye and the ear and the intellect, but it is only as it were a soul here and there that has experienced that profounder attraction which binds the heart to Him in faith and love, in spiritual fellowship and service. To how many millions the story of Bethlehem is but an idle tale,—a superstition, a myth or religious romance; how many are there who, looking back through the long centuries, profess some sort of homage to the Christ of the Manger and the Cross, but who are really as far from submitting their wills and hearts to Him as their King, as were those who condemned and slew Him, and how many of earth's millions there are still to whom the story of Bethlehem and Calvary has never been told. And if the fruits of the incarnation are even now, through the influence of those who have believed and loved so vast and so beneficent, what shall the blessing and the glory be when every knee shall bow to Christ and every tongue confess Him Lord, when by the divine right of an eternal Kingship the Virgin's Son shall reign King of kings and Lord of lords?

Surely we may and must believe that the attractive power of Him who has been lifted up is to be exerted in far greater and more glorious measure than the world has yet seen. We can do no otherwise than hope and pray believingly, that the blessing shall come in all its wealth and power. Shall not they of Japan and India come? Shall not the millions of China and of Africa behold the Uplifted Saviour? Shall not His gospel be given to all the world; are not the heathen his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth, shall they not become His possession? Let the church then still watch and wait, in prayer and expectation, for larger endowments of the power from on high and fuller manifestations of the Priestly and Kingly glory of her Lord. Let her expect another and a greater Pentecost, that in the divine energy of a new baptism of fire she may arise from the dust and impotence of worldliness, put on the armor of light, and with talents, learning, wealth and every faculty and possession consecrated to her Lord, go forth to larger and still more fruitful service in His name.

Peace on Earth.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

"What means this glory round our feet,"
The Magi mus'd, "more bright than morn?"
And voices chanted clear and sweet,
"To-day the Prince of Peace is born!"
"What means this star," the shepherds said,
"That brightens through the rocky glen?"
And angels answering, overhead,
Sang, "Peace on earth, good will to men!"
'Tis eighteen hundred years, and more,
Since those sweet oracles were dumb;
We wait for Him like them of yore;
Alas! He seems so slow to come!
But it was said, in words of gold
No time or sorrow e'er shall dim,
That little children might be bold
In perfect trust to come to Him.
All around about our feet shall shine
A light like that the wise men saw,
If our loving wills incline
To that sweet Life which is the Law.
So shall we learn to understand
The simple faith of shepherds then,
And kindly clasping hand in hand,
Sing, "Peace on earth, good will to men!"