

Sunday Reading.

Christmastide.

Brighter than the morning ray, Sweeter than the lark's first strain, Comes the blessed Christmas-day, To our heart and homes again. Comes to homes, with faces bright, Joyous greetings, welcomes sweet, And with many a pure delight, For the holy season meet. Comes to hearts, and makes them sing, Even in the winter drear, For the love of Christ their king, Who was born, and sojourned here. But how many homes are sad! And how many hearts are cold! Gracious Saviour, make them glad, All Thy love to them unfold!—Sunday at Home.

The Morning Star.

A CHRISTMAS HQMELY.

By Rev. Thomas Henson.

The Bible makes much of the stars. When the earth's foundations were sunken, and its corner-stone was laid, the event was celebrated by the "morning stars" as a chorus of singers, "and all the sons of God shouted for joy"; may we not indeed regard these "sons of God" as the stars, and both as the angels? Their song shows their deep interest and thrilling delight in every new manifestation of their Divine Creator's glorious power. In the book of Revelation, Jesus Christ designates His messengers stars, which He holds in His right hand—a beautiful thought that, in which every labourer in the Word and doctrine of the Lord Jesus—ministers, Sunday-school teachers, and others—may rejoice; for of them all we must understand the words of Daniel, "They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever." But it is with stars, as they relate especially to Jesus Christ, that we have here and now to do. Himself "the bright morning Star." He is heralded into the world amongst us by a star of more than usual brilliance; "we have seen His star in the east," said the wise men, and been long informed. Many centuries before, from the top of Peor, Balaam, the son of Beor, the man who heard the words of God, and whose eyes were opened, said— "I see it, but not now, I behold it, but not nigh, There shall come a Star out of Jacob; And a sceptre shall rise out of Israel; And shall smite the corners of Moab, And destroy all the children of Sheth." Num. xxiv. 17. Rev. Eug. Bib. Doubtless David, the future king of Israel, first comes to fulfill the vision of the Star, and then, more distant still, David's greater Son and Lord, Jesus Christ. There seems to be a gradation in the manner in which the star is used in relation to Jesus Christ. Though Balaam, from the top of Peor, could take in with his natural eye one of the most far-reaching and comprehensive of earthly views, yet spiritually, both he, and the many thousands even in Israel who lay under his glance, were in darkness as to the glorious things to come; they were still in the thick darkness of a spiritual night, the morning of which was yet far from breaking. But the inner eyes of the unholty, covetous man having been opened, he saw in the distance the Morning Star; he saw the direction out of which it was coming, out of Jacob. He saw the star in a somewhat binary form, to the nearer view, David, but yet more distant, Jesus; but in both there was deliverance for the people, light for those who were in darkness, liberty for those in bonds. The morning star was then too distant to be seen by unaided eyes; some centuries more of night must pass, bringing on the morning in whose dawn it would become more visible. The Star was there, shining with resplendent lustre, but too deep in the infinite distance for human ken; yet it was ever coming on. Like a new planet, invisible to the thousands of eyes looking up to the star-lit sky, but suddenly throwing its light into the telescope of a Herschell or a Ross, by whom its advent may be proclaimed. Here we have the first grade of Divine starlight. Leaving the chronologists to settle

the vexed question as to the length of time between the gates of paradise and the manger of Bethlehem, we are aware that the night, morally and spiritually, was long—long, that is, as men reckon time. The starlight shone into it truly, but so dimly that men could not resolve its nebulous form into distinctness. In promise and covenant its light gradually but slowly, came nearer. Abraham saw it more clearly than Adam or Noah did. Devout men among the patriarchs and prophets were continually looking for it, sometimes with the patience of faith, sometimes with the agony of weariness. In promise, type, and prophecy it came nearer, yet with such long intervals of obscurity that we may fairly use the language in Isaiah, and suppose many of them often to ask, "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" Isaiah himself, blest with spiritual ecstasy of vision, saw the starlight more clearly, perhaps, than any of his predecessors or contemporaries, but he was yet many centuries from its shining forth. God has an hour for every event, and to His hand the "fulness of time" always comes. He has given the sun and the moon their times to rise and to set, to wax and to wane, and nothing but His own will can ever interfere with their regularity. And it is so in the spiritual and the providential. In strict chronological truth we may not be able to connect Christmas, as we now have it, with the time of Christ's birth, but universal custom will have it so, and it now is our commemoration of the first real dawning of the "Morning Star" upon the world. And what a dawning it was! A babe born in Bethlehem—but the appointed spot—and cradled in a manger. As yet, the extraordinary brilliance is seen less in the child than in the outer events. A calm, soft-aired night would be just the time in which Oriental shepherds would be busy with their flocks and their thoughts. Into their midst on such a night, there came a heavenly visitor, such as their fathers had been much more accustomed to than they had; around him shone the glory of the Lord. The celestial visitor had but delivered His short, sweet message, when suddenly a light or heavenly music. Meanwhile, in the far east, another scene was being enacted. A star of unusual meteoric splendour was filling the minds of the learned magi with thrilling astonishment and wonder. The star set out with a significant course to the minds of these star-gazers, and a Divine impulse upon their hearts led them to follow it until it led them to the very spot where He lay of whom it was but the symbol. The Morning Star had that day dawned upon the breaking night, filling with signs and wonders. Public sentiment was aroused and bewildered. Royal jealousy was excited and maddened into brutal and criminal fury. Devout hope and pious faith were about to reap their first-fruits of waiting. Mary has sung her Magnificat, Elizabeth has rejoiced over her John, Zacharias has prophesied in his boy the herald of "The Dayspring from on high," Mary has a mother's joy in her infant Jesus. Simeon, the devout old man, who has a long time waited, can die in peace now, for he has seen the Lord's salvation in His holy temple, and Anna has given her thanks unto God, and carried the news of the Child through the streets of Jerusalem as a Divine secret to those who were looking for the Morning Star. Thus Balaam's star has come much nearer. A second grade. When the Apostle Peter speaks of the day-star arising in the heart, his words seem by their connection with the day-dawn to indicate Christ as the light-bringer to the soul that has been in the night-darkness of sin, and doubt, and fear. He assures "the scattered" who have obtained precious faith in God, that though they were spiritually in obscurity, and even in darkness, yet they had a sure light, even though it were but the light of a lamp. They had a lamp full of sure prophetic light, to which it was well for them to look till the day dawned, and the day-star arose in their hearts. That Christ is Peter's day-star there, need not be a doubt, and His arising like a sunrise in the believer's heart seems to the apostle to be the climax of good to him upon earth. Abraham saw the day of Christ

not live and walk in it. Now the believer lives, and walks, and enters its light. Paul enters into the thought when he speaks of Christ in us, the hope of glory. Christ entering into the regenerate soul is the beginning of that heavenly day which has no night. It is the dawning of its morning, but its dawning shall go on unto perfection as the morning sun goes on to midday splendour. Walking in the light of Christ as the day-star in his heart, the Christian is ever leaving the night, and all its concomitant ills, further and further behind him. I borrow the words of Samuel Cox here as far better than mine:—"This is the climax of the apostle's sequence of thought, the point to which he rises, in which he rests. Alas! how far are we from resting in it, even when we have once gained it. We touch it at times indeed. At times we feel that through the grace and spirit of Christ, we need no other than this inward proof that truth is true, or that love is loveable." The truth within us recognises and welcomes the truth without us; the love within us respond to the love above us! This is a third grade, Balaam's star has not only come nigh to us, it has arisen within us. Shine on, O thou resplendent Star of day! When Jesus calls Himself "the Bright and Morning star," He indicates more than either Balaam or Peter could do. His "brightness" eclipses all other stars; they pale before Him, or melt into His light. In Balaam's time He was too far off for human vision to discern Him, lustrous as He was; only such as were borne away into the infinite depths could then get even a glimpse of Him. In the days of His humanity He was the dayspring preparing to give forth His glorious light as the light of men. In Peter's thought He is within us; chasing darkness of every form away from us; and giving a light of abiding love. But in His own words there seems to be a contemplated completion. The kingdom is set up; all doubt as to who He is, what He is, and the validity of His claims are for ever set at rest. Other stars, there may be, but they shine with His brightness and walk in His train. Other magi with them in their unathomable counsels of God, but they all revolve with their systems around Him, in His light; He is the one only Bright Morning Star in God's great universe. Suns, moons, and stars of every magnitude, from the highest seraphim down to the humblest soul redeemed by His blood, come to bow down before Him, to kinde their own splendour at the fountain of His uncreated and mediatorial glory; His brightness will penetrate through the illimitable; will suffice all finite beings within the infinite circle. This is the fourth grade. The thick darkness of a fallen world's long, long night has passed when the morn of glory breaks in His uprising, never-setting light. May these recurring Christmas days be happy and merry to us as the mirth of angels when they sang Creation's song, or as when they sang the Saviour's birth-day. All true mirth is born of purity and love. The light of the Morning Star is pure light. He who would be truly merry with his Christmas must be pure with his Saviour.

A Christmas-day Service.

The following may be made a pleasing variation for the Sunday before Christmas Day, or in the family at the time of family prayer, on Christmas Day in the morning, all having Bibles, and finding the passages, and reading them responsively with the one who is accustomed to conduct worship. Leader.—Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. All.—Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord, Leader.—The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. All.—Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Leader.—And thou Bethlehem in the land of Juda art not the least among the princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come a Governor that shall rule my people Israel.

All.—Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Leader.—I will declare the decree, the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. All.—Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulders, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Half the School.—Where is He that is born King of the Jews? The Other Half.—Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. A READING OR RECITATION. It is the calm and solemn night; A thousand bells ring out and throw Their joyous peals abroad, and smite The darkness, charmed and holy now. The night that erst no name had worn, To it a happy name is given, For in that stable lay, new born, The peaceful Prince of earth and heaven. In the solemn midnight, Centuries ago! Leader.—And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, All.—Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men. Half the School.—Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. The Other Half.—And they found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. Leader.—And Simeon came by the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for Him after the custom of the law. All.—Then took he Him up in his arms and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation. Leader.—Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins. ALL SING. There is no name so sweet on earth, No name so sweet in heaven; The name before His wondrous birth To Christ the Saviour given, We love to sing around our King, And hail Him, blessed Jesus; For there's no word ear ever heard So dear, so sweet as Jesus. The Sabbath in the Cuneiform Records. The Presbyterian Review for October, contains a valuable paper, under the above title, by Prof. Francis Brown A.M. The writer seeks to emphasize the points of difference between the Babylonian- Assyrian Seventh day, and the Hebrew Sabbath. Prof. Brown is eminently conservative, venturing nothing on probabilities, or general deductions from facts already established. This gives a certain specific value to his conclusions when compared with the less conservative opinions of Smith, Sayce, Talbot and others. Even when taken by itself, Prof. Brown's paper establishes the fact that "the study of Babylonian and Assyrian history, in the light of modern discoveries, has confirmed and explained in a noteworthy degree, the historical statements of the Old Testament." Mr. Brown deems it more difficult to establish a connection between the religious institutions of the Hebrews, and the Asiatics, at the present stage of information, since religious traditions and institutions are more likely to be affected by "myths" than historic facts are, and since much remains to be discovered in the religious field. Nevertheless, Prof. Brown recognizes several points as being already well established. "In 1875 appeared the fourth volume of the Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia, containing some calendar texts, and in connection with these, Sayce took occasion to confirm the statements of Smith, and gave a translation of the requirements for the seventh day. "Oppert was the first to call attention to a cuneiform tablet containing a list of stars, seven in number, connected each with a deity, the whole list corresponding to the deities whose names our days bear; the list concludes, according to him, with the words: 'These are the seven chiefs of the days of the week (mas). That the Hebrews did not invent the week, appears from the knowledge of it among the ancient Arameans. They could not have learned it in Egypt, for there the week was ten days long. Thus we are pointed back to the early home of the Canaanites

(Hebrews and Phoenicians) in Babylonia. After thus noticing the historical probability, Schrader then brings in the inscription which Oppert had translated laying stress upon the order and names of the Gods to whom the stars were said to belong: Shamah, sun; Shin, moon; Nergal, Mars; Zerkis, (Venus); Nebo, Mercury; Woden; Merodach, Jupiter; Thor; Ishtar, Venus; Freia; Adar, Saturn. The inference is that the names of the seven weekdays originated in Babylonia." The Babylonian- Assyrian Sabbath was undoubtedly less religiously sacred than the Hebrew Sabbath, as the perversion of any truth or ordinance is inferior to the original. But when we remember that many, if not all, the fundamental truths of our religion find a primeval and universal expression among the times and peoples far anterior to the Hebrew nation; it is illogical and incredulous to deny the primal and universal revelation of a system of religion in which the week, and the Sabbath, as now named and numbered held a prominent place. Thus does modern research hasten to vindicate and establish at an opportune moment, a vital truth and an important institution of religion.—Outlook. The future is not a harvest field into which we can wander at will and reap the golden grain; it is an up-sown field, to be plowed and sown, and watched and worked upon with hourly fidelity and daily toil, if its furrows are to be hidden by the waving grain. There is nothing there but the soil upon which to work; everything else the worker must furnish. Opportunities will crowd the days, but will pass empty handed, unless we recognize and hold them; suns will shine, rains fall, dews lie sweet and fresh under the morning sky, but the end of the year will find us as empty and poor as the beginning, unless we yoke all these elements of success and drive them with a firm and steady purpose.—Lyman. Predominant opinions are generally the opinions of the generation that is vanishing.—Disraeli. FOREIGN MISSIONS. Letter from the Missionary Link. The writer, Mrs. Carrie, was formerly one of our own missionaries—Miss Armstrong of Wolfville: A TELUGU CHRISTIAN WEDDING. Dear Link.—The first year we spent at Tuni, that last year of famine, you remember, when all about us poor people were suffering from want and starvation, among the number of those who sought relief at our door were two little girls, aged respectively about eleven and eight years. Clothed with a few rags, altogether looking miserably poor, without father or mother, alone in the world, they appealed very strongly to our sympathies. It had been their custom to beg during the day, and at night to seek shelter with a kind hearted poor woman among the Malas, who allowed them a corner in her mud hut. At that time we were living in one room, and had no extra accommodation for any one; neither were there funds in hand for school purposes. But the probable future of these girls was fearful to think of, so it was determined to take them on trial. "If it should seem best to keep them, I will write to our Canadian sisters and ask them to assume their support," said I. They were soon made happy by good clothing and a portion of rice and curry. Their wants were few and simple—two good meals daily of curry and rice, which they cooked for themselves out of doors—a mat in a corner of the little room used for a school, at night, and they were happy. Their names were Maluzshini and Papama (sic). This latter name I did not like, and as the little one was a merry little thing, we called her "Hope"—or "Hopia," as the Telugus say. A year or so before the above took place, a few dear little girls connected with the Sabbath School at Wolfville, Nova Scotia, formed themselves into a Mission Band, and by a yearly sale of fancy and useful articles made by themselves, raised a sum of money which they sent me. With the consent of the Band, this money was taken for the support of the girls while they were being educated, and has

been thus far more than sufficient for their wants, so that there has been no need of aid from any other quarter. On the first day of the year 1882 a baptism took place here, and Maluzshini was then "buried with Christ by baptism." She had been on probation for six months, and I believe has tried to live as a Christian should. I have related the above facts, because about a month ago a wedding took place here, and I thought some of you might like to hear something about it. We wished to keep Maluzshini with us another year, but she has gone to help brighten the home of one who is engaged in the Lord's work at Akidu. Benjamin, one of Mr. Craig's preachers, asked her in marriage, and, after the usual preliminaries, the 19th of July was set as the happy day. Among the upper classes of Hindas it is the custom to make their weddings occasions of great joy and of ruinous expense. They will at such times rush into debt on an enormous scale, which hampers them for the rest of life. Should we venture to tell them the folly of such a course? "It is the custom," is with them a sufficient answer. Those who, though respectable, are too poor to obtain such credit, will for months go about soliciting contributions for the important occasion. The outcasts or malas often have no ceremony beyond a small feast for the neighbors, and many dispense even with that. The Christians, of course, are married by a religious ceremony somewhat similar to that customary at home, and are allowed a small feast besides. It is the custom for the bridegroom to provide the feast, which on this occasion consisted of coffee and oppos (a pancake made of rice flour and coconut milk) in the morning, and a dinner of curry and rice, with cakes and fruit. The Christians have so few holidays we encourage them to make as much as possible of these joyful occasions, so the school was given a holiday. The bride is as anxious to be well dressed and appear pretty as are those in similar circumstances among more civilized people. The usual saffron anointing was omitted, but for *anthodium* (joy), first the *pendli komarudu* and *pendli komarthe* (bridegroom and brides, literally, wedding son and wedding daughter) had their faces and necks daubed with a mixture of sandalwood powder and water—then all the wedding guests came in for their turn. To be well dressed among Hindas consists in being as far as possible covered with jewellery. If these people have any money they put it into jewellery, but for a wedding it is a common custom to borrow or hire jewels. Our bride's toca was of muslin, with a border of gold thread one end of which was carried over the head as is customary in a public assembly. Maluzshini was sensible enough to wear only a very small nose jewel and one pair of earrings. The remainder of her adornment consisted of a handsome necklace of gold and pearls, presented by the bridegroom, also finger and toe rings of silver, another necklace and silver bracelets borrowed from a friend. The bridegroom was quite elegant in cambric jacket and fine muslin garments, one piece of the muslin being artistically arranged over the shoulder and falling behind. He had trimmed up the chapel and entrance very prettily with plaitain and cocoonat boughs and flowers, showing excellent taste in the arrangement. At 9.30 a. m. all gathered in the chapel, a hymn was sung, a short address on the duties and responsibilities of married life given, and then the ceremony was performed. Instead of a wedding ring the bridegroom tied the *tali botu*, or marriage badge, a circular piece of gold, around the bride's neck by a string—and with prayer and the singing of another hymn the ceremony was ended. The following Monday evening the newly-married couple bade us farewell, and with many good wishes, hopes and prayers for their future usefulness and happiness, we saw them depart on their long journey of more than 100 miles. We have since heard of their safe arrival at Akidu, where they are at work. May their work be greatly blest in that field. M. A. CURRIE. Tuni, August 18th, 1882.