

Our Contributors.

THAT CHRISTMAS STAR.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

One of the most intensely interesting of my recollections of Palestine is the memory of my ride down from Bethlehem and across the fields that lie eastward towards the Jordan. I said to myself, "It must have been in some of these fields that the shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks on that most wondrous night in the history of our world. Up in the midnight sky hung the star that guided the wise men to the sacred spot. And up yonder hill-side trooped the shepherds to find that miracle of all miracles, that babe lying in the manger who was the incarnate Son of God!" How differently has human history read since that memorable night when the *Star of Redemption* shone out upon a world that had lain in darkness and spiritual death! With that star came the descent of the promised Christ—"God manifest in the flesh." With Jesus Christ came a new gospel of human brotherhood—a gospel whose keynote was *love*. With Jesus Christ came a new civilization founded on the golden rule. With Jesus Christ came the perfect model for human conduct; with Him came the atoning sacrifice for sin and deliverance from the powers of hell. With Him came the redemption of a countless host of immortal souls, into an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

When the Christ of Bethlehem had finished the transcendent work of redemption on the cross and became the ascending Christ of Bethany, the lustre of that star began to be visible beyond the narrow limits of Palestine. Apostles, baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire, went everywhere preaching the new Gospel of salvation. The most extraordinary man of the age with his great soul illuminated by this star, wrote to Greek philosophers and sceptics, "I am determined to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." Every minister who has done the best soul-saving work during the past twelve months has done it by preaching the faithful saying that Christ came into the world to save them; he has led his hearers where the star was shining. Not only has he guided them by that star to the only place of pardon, but to the only model and motive for a pure, strong, useful and happy life. To teach sinful, tempted and wayward men and women to steer towards eternity by that infallible and unchangeable star—is not that the great purpose for which pulpits were built and God's ambassadors placed in them?

There are many readers of this paper to whom the year now closing has been a year of suffering and sorrow-stricken homes. You have seen dark hours. In one house there is an empty crib, and in another house an empty chair at your Christmas table. No human consolation was even a farthing-candle to cheer your aching hearts. You wanted not guesswork or conjecture—but a light straight from heaven itself—a light that could illuminate the grave, and could bring a blissful eternity into view. And

oh, what an uplift it was to you when the star of Bethlehem became the star of Bethany's comforted household and resurrection victory over the tomb! Over the plot in "Greenwood" where the dust of my three precious children is slumbering, that Christmas star is shining. "I am the resurrection and the life;"—"them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him;"—"I do not leave you comfortless"—these are the sweet words which the Christmas angels are singing. Our faith, listening to these voices from heaven, answers back again:

"My Jesus, as Thou wilt!
Though seen through many a tear
Let not my star of hope
Grow dim or disappear;
Through sorrow, or through joy,
Conduct me as Thine own,
And help me still to say,
My Lord, Thy will be done!"

Through many years I have been conversing with many of the readers of this excellent paper in its columns. And now let me tell you that some of you make the sad mistake of crowding your Christmas into one day, or a single week. You ought to have the Christmas star beaming into your hearts and into your homes all the year round. You are generous in giving once a year; why lock up your bounties during the rest of the time? You try to make your children happy at Christmas time; can't you love them as well, and do as much to put sunshine into their young hearts the other one and fifty weeks of next year? You remember the poor, and make their tables smoke with your bounty; but they cannot live on a Christmas turkey for twelve months. You let the star of Bethlehem gladden your heart and cheer your spirits on one day of the calendar. But you cannot live on that single glimpse of the blessed light and joy that Jesus sheds. The only healthy and happy Christian is the one who runs his or her Christianity through every day's experience and conduct.

Some people keep their religion for Sundays; and on Monday they fold it up and put it away with their Sunday clothes. Some thaw their hearts and purses out on a Thanksgiving day or in a Christmas week, and then freeze them up again. Periodical religion is a sham and a reproach. A healthy, vigorous, cheerful working and Christ-serving religion cannot be maintained on Sabbath and on festival days alone. Every day has got to be a "Lord's day." Every step in your life has got to be taken by the light of that unerring, unsetting star that rose over the hills of Bethlehem twenty centuries ago. You and I must walk in the constant light and constant love of our blessed Jesus if we expect to reach heaven or to help others there.

SATURDAY SERMONETTE—CASTE.

"WHAT FOOLS THESE MORTALS BE."
Mid-summer's Night Dream.

It was in a city far away—from London—and the night was wild and stormy. If the "wind is tempered to the shorn lamb," there was no lamb on the wind-swept corner at the little transfer station that night, so we hurried in out of the cold and huddled around the fire. The door opened bringing in a gust of

sleet and ice-cold air, and seemingly blew in a poorly-clad woman. She had no furs and seemed chilled to the bone. None of us gentlemen (?) saw her, for as the door opened we looked intently at the fire and hugged it a little closer. All but one man, who sprang up and as courteously as if she had been a very great lady gave her his chair and place at the fire. He was only a workingman I noticed, and I was not surprised that he showed such kindness to one of his own "order." I am a little near-sighted—at times—and cannot see some things—as quickly as others.

But a moment later the door opened and a bright, laughing girl came in, her cheeks glowing, her eyes shining. She came in—blown by the wind—a little more quickly than she intended, which made her low, sweet laugh so contagious, that we involuntarily smiled. She was evidently on good terms with the storm that had brightened her eyes and painted her cheeks. She was richly and fashionably dressed, and a half dozen hats came off and a half dozen chairs were offered her.

It was a strange coincidence, but during the fifteen minutes we waited for our car, fifteen different castes were represented in that waiting room, one for every minute, a pretty good record for a stormy night.

There was the first one that came, the thinly clad woman without any furs; then the woman with a cheap fur, and then up through the gamut of furs to the costliest, and there was just as much superciliousness and no more friendliness nor affiliation between those who wore them than between the original wearers from whom they had been stolen, for there is caste in the forest as elsewhere.

I got on an early train one morning and watched the railway people as they got on at the stations and junctions going to the railway town for a day's outing given by the railway magnates. The wives and children of all the railway men were invited, regardless of caste distinctions, and all the men who were off duty, regardless of position. The brakeman's wife got in first. I knew she was the brakeman's wife for he came in and talked with her between stations until the toot of the engine called him back to duty. I know she was his wife, for she did not giggle and he did not show off.

And then the conductor's wife came in and gave the brakeman's wife a curt nod, but did not sit beside her, although at that time they were the only ladies on the train. The conductor's wife owned the car until his superior's wife came on board and then she owned everything, and so it went on all day and the car kept changing owners until it could go no higher, when the great Mogul's wife came in wearing her diamonds and having "passes" that would have taken her to San Francisco, and a look of indignation that would have taken her somewhere else—because there was no private car for her until she got to —. Twenty-seven different castes on that trip, and it was not a long trip, either.

I had not been very well the week before, and I was just a little scared, so I went to church, and because I wore a meek look and a seedy overcoat, and had no ring on my finger, the lordly usher put me in a draughty pew near the door.

It was missionary Sunday and the minister told us how caste in India was the greatest hindrance to modern missions; there were thousands of them in India, and they were as numerous as bacteria in the police court; only the minister used another illustration. He was very thankful, he said, "that there was no caste in Canada," and then we all said Amen, and went home, thanking God that we were not as other men, who would be cast out into outer darkness because of caste.—*Thaddeus, in St. John Star.*

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