

CHRISTMAS PRESENTS.

The first Christmas Present was the Babe of Bethlehem, given to Mary and the world. Angel hosts celebrated his birth, while representatives, wise men from the East, opened their treasure caskets and presented their kingly gifts. For this Babe was to be the King of Kings as well as the Saviour of the world.

Joseph acted as father and protector, while Mary both loved and adored her divine Son. We think that God chose with infinite care the best mother He could find.

We notice that at the age of twelve Jesus apparently felt like casting aside the parental restraint and entering upon His life of teaching and ministry. But just a word from His mother was sufficient, for his parents had trained Him to obedience. "And he went down with them. . . . and was subject unto them." Luke 2:51. The children of the Bible who became great and useful, were trained to know God and his word and to obey their parents. Jesus was no exception to this rule.

After entering His ministry at the specified age for priests, His outstanding characteristic was obedience to His Father's will. It was His meat and drink, as He told His disciples at Jacob's well. This principal of obedience led Him through the suffering and temptations of the forty days' fast in the wilderness. In Gethsemane we see Him sweating, as it were, "great drops of blood." Luke 22-44. And hear Him saying, "Not as I will but as Thou wilt." The wonderful climax of obedience is Calvary with its agony and shame. Obedience to the Father's will led the Son of God to the cross, where He hung between heaven and earth deserted by His disciples—"They all forsook Him and fled"—Then that bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Yet, God is Love. It was by this suffering that Jesus learned the meaning of obedience, Heb. 5:8. It was by this that He was made perfect. By this obedience that He could be "the author of eternal salvation to them that obey Him." Heb. 5:9. Without perfect obedience there could have been no salvation from the curse following the disobedience of Eden. Thus obedience is the passport to paradise restored. Obedience makes heaven, disobedience makes hell.

There was great joy when Sarah received her gift from the Lord. Isaac was her Christmas present. In him were centered all the promises to Abraham. Isaac was to be the father of all the chosen people of God, and through him were all the nations of the earth to be blessed by the coming of the Babe of Bethlehem, the great Christmas present from God to the world. Again, God chose the best parents He could find. It is impossible to separate God's plan for Isaac from the dominant note of obedience. His father Abraham was pre-eminently a man of unswerving obedience and one of whom God said, "I know him, (that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." Gen. 18:19.

We cannot fail to notice also that all the blessedness promised to Abraham was conditional upon his obedience. Had he

failed even in being willing to slay his son, Isaac, God would never have fulfilled His wonderful promises to Abraham and his seed.

This reminds us forcibly of Eli and his wretchedness. God had made him great and precious promises. Then when his sons were not "restrained," but allowed to grow up in disobedience, God withdrew His blessings, and sent curses. Not until yesterday did I notice the connection between this curse and the fifth commandment. There, long life is promised as the reward of obedience to parents. So now God vowed that all the sons of Eli, even to all generations, should have short lives.

God blamed the father, Eli, and punished both him and his sons for all generations, whereas, because of the obedience of Abraham, God praised him and blessed him and his seed and all nations of the earth to the end of time.

We wonder about the first babe, the one of whom its mother said, "I have gotten a man from the Lord." This was Mother Eve's Christmas present from the Lord.

But, like Eli, she and Adam failed in their trust, by allowing their first son to grow up a spoiled boy.

A babe we like to think of is Moses. Some good man was needed to do a great work for God. The story begins, "A man of the house of Levi," Exodus 2:1. Thus God chose parents who would be true to their trust. The fact that Moses upon reaching manhood, "refused to be called the Son of Pharaoh's daughter," and "chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God," speaks volumes regarding the training of his early years, while he was yet with his own parents. This instance gives us light as to when a child's character is made or marred. Was it not a Catholic priest who said, "Give me the children until they are seven years of age: after that you may have them, but always they will be good Catholics."

God intends children to bless the world. If they do not, the fault lies with the parents. Every babe should be accepted as a Christmas present from the Lord, and then held and trained for God as was the child Smauel, whom the mother Hannah asked of the Lord. The greatest blessing and the richest legacy parents can bestow upon their children is to train them in obedience and the fear of the Lord.

Without this birthright a child is like a ship at sea, robbed of rudder, chart and compass and headed for the shoals and reefs, whither the storms of life drive it with relentless energy.

Hitherto Christmas has always suggested to my mind, gift and happiness. But now I find there lies beneath the superstructure and partially hidden, a granite-like foundation of obedience unto the death, and all resting upon the bed-rock of God's loving purpose to bless mankind.

H. C. SANDERS.

It does not take a mental giant to tell what God does for the obedient soul. It simply takes some one who knows what they are talking about, someone only who have themselves become partakers of the fruit.

TIME'S REDEMPTION.

The close of the year brings anew the thought of the value of time. As the years pass time grows more precious. We do not value the well until the stream ceases, nor the electric current until it fails and we go back to candles and kerosene. How much of the "three-score and ten" are in the past? At thirty-five you are half-way through. At sixty you may feel as young as ever, but the candle is burning to the socket. The wick even now is wavering.

We must redeem the time that remains from abuse. People confess to "killing time" as though "tempicide" were a venial thing. The murdered minute has its mute testimony in the court of character. In one minute so lightly held by some you have been swung 1,080 miles in the earth's journey round the sun. The ray of sunlight that now falls on the page one minute ago was 11,160,000 miles away. During the last sixty seconds eighty new babies raised their voices in protest against this cold world, and in that same time as many of all ages wearied with the task gave forth the last sigh. In a minute the express train has covered a mile and the track walker has covered sixteen rods. In a minute a man may be born again or commit a crime that will shut him eternally from heaven. A minute may register the supreme deed of a life, the wreck of a character, or the fall of an empire.

Let us remember that the minutes which fall like grains of sand are all from the hour glass of God. They are His gift for which good stewards will give accounting. Time spent in training the mind is redeemed. Time spent in soul culture is wise use. Oh, that there might be a renaissance of soul culture in the devotional use of the Bible and great spiritual classics. In the name of God, Amen. Time spent in bringing home love, joy and good cheer is time well spent. Men—many of them—think of the home as a place to eat and sleep and get away from. To the wives and mothers it is worship, studio, nursery—a host of careers in one are made there. Men, take joy home with you and fill the home minutes with it.

There must be time spent in doing good, keeping friendships in repair, time for church night, visiting night. He who has no time to think of others has so much business in his head that it spills over into his heart and puts out the fires of religion and love. In a minute you can call a friend over the phone and wish him a happy New Year. In a minute you could write a postal with "lots of love." These like the lilies, do not require toil, but like the lilies, what pleasure do they give to those who need them. The French had a famous war post on which was inscribed "The last quarter of an hour." Fidelity to the duty of love, loyalty and devotion that is faithful to the last quarter of an hour—this is the Christlike sort and the only worthy of emulation. Faithful use, not misuse or abuse, is time redeemed.—Northwestern Christian Advocate.

When the enemy comes as a house-breaker, he does not seek for the strongest part of the castle, but for its very weakest parts.