

A CHRISTMAS FOR SALE.

Hetty was cross, or she would not have said it; and Max was teasing—Max was usual teasing. He loved his pretty sister, but he could seldom be made to see that her small tribulation were anything but funny, and he was more inclined to be aggregating than sympathetic.

It was the day before Christmas, and the father and mother had been unexpectedly called away from home to meet an old friend who was about to sail for Europe. The thought of spending the holiday without them seemed forlorn enough to Hetty, especially as a friend of hers, who could usually be depended upon to brighten what Max called "such orphaned occasions," was too sick to come to them. Last of all, a dainty bit of China, which Hetty had painted as a gift for the invalid, had just come back from the firing range, and it was too late to do another.

"Never mind, my dear Mehetabel; accidents will happen," said Max, in the serene tone of one who had no appreciation of artistic labor, or what such a loss meant. I suppose another soap dish, painted another day, will answer."

"It wasn't a soap dish, and you know my name isn't Mehetabel!" answered Hetty.

"Well, then, my Hetty without-any-able, I consoled that tomorrow is Christmas."

"It won't be worth calling Christmas," said she petulantly. "I'd sell my share of it very cheap."

"You would? Advertise it then," advised Max. "That's the surest way to get rid of what you don't want to keep."

But Hetty was in no mood to be laughed at, and she responded very promptly when Bridget summoned her from the room. Left to himself, Max looked around the pretty place which Hetty secretly called her studio, and presently his idea flashed into his mischievous head, which he acted upon in hot haste. He printed a large placard—"Christmas for Sale, Cheap"—and hung it in the window where the shade would hide it from within, but where it could be plainly read from the street. Hetty would be sure to go over to her friend's in a few minutes, and then she would be sure to discover it, her brother thought, laughing to himself as he pictured the look her face would wear when she saw it.

He sauntered off, and Hetty, returning to the quiet room, did not go out that afternoon. Two hours later, when Max returned, he had forgotten his joke in fresher interests. He and Hetty were chatting before the fire when the door-bell rang, and Bridget brought a little boy into the room.

"I can't make out what he wants," she said. "I want to buy a Christmas," said the little fellow, looking at Hetty.

He was not more than six or seven years old; his toes were peeping out from his worn shoes; all his clothing was poor and thin, but the childish face was bright and intensely earnest.

"Buy a Christmas!" Hetty repeated. "Yes'm; I don't know whether you'd sell one for a dime, but that's all I've got, and the sign in your window said you'd sell 'em cheap."

Hetty stepped to the window, whirled the card around, and flashed a look at Max.

"Oh, I've nothing to do with that," she said. "It is this young man who attends to selling the Christmases. You must talk to him about it."

Max looked confused, but the small customer did not notice it as he turned to him.

"I don't know much about 'em, for we never had any at our house, but if I could get any kind of a one for ten cents, I'd like it. Ted knows about 'em, and he'd planned for sure to have one this year. Ted's my big brother; he's twelve

years old, and he sells papers. There's only him and grandmother to earn much—she washes some, and she knits stockin's. I'm going to make a lot of money when I get a little bigger. Ted, he'd promised Tude and Baby a Christmas, but he hurt his foot, so he feels awful bad 'cause he can't buy 'em anything. I earned this ten cents myself, runnin' errands for folks today, and when I see your sign, I come in."

He was such a sturdy little figure, his blue eyes so honest and eager, and the small hand which held out the treasured coin was so rough and red with cold! Max's throat swelled, and he looked appealingly at his sister.

"I'm afraid we haven't any of that kind of Christmases left on our shelves," he said, "but maybe we can find something that will do. Can't we, Hetty?"

Hetty arose without a word, produced a market-basket of goodly size, and into it went packages from pantry, cellar and wardrobe, with candy and nuts to make it "look Christmasy." Then Max gravely pocketed the dime, because, as he said, he "wouldn't for anything deprive the little man of the satisfaction of feeling that his Christmas was honestly bought and paid for with his own hard earnings."

"We don't usually deliver our goods," explained Max, "but as we have no other customers just now, and as the basket is too heavy for you, I don't mind going along to carry it."

The early dusk had fallen and Hetty threw a cloak around her and donned her hat.

"I think I'd better go, too, and carry this pie," she said. "It would be a pity if it should fall off the basket."

At a shabby little house which stood by itself at the end of an alley the child stopped. Hastily depositing the basket on the steps, and leaving him to make his way in alone, Max and Hetty retreated. From the shelter of a tree across the street they could see through the uncurtained window and catch a glimpse of hurriedly moving figures.

"Wouldn't I like to hear him tell his story," laughed Max. "The older ones would think he had invented it, if it were not for the basket."

The last trace of despondency was gone from Hetty's glowing face, and her eyes were shining with something more than mirth.

"To think of all we have, Max! I don't believe I'll ever be so cross and ungrateful again."

"I think we might do quite a business in this kind of Christmases. If I live till another year I mean to manufacture a stock of them," declared Max.

But Hetty understood the earnestness under the fun.

"O little town of Bethlehem, how far its light shines!" she said.

The Olive Branch.

The inner affects the outer,—in actions and in indelible impress upon the features. Despite all precautions, the inner self may be seen in the face. That inner self, as we are all aware, though it is an unpleasant fact, is hateful and proud and selfish and sensual. That inner self can never be "cleaned up" by any action of our own—it can only be made what it ought to be by the regeneration, the new birth from God above. Only when God plants his new and real spiritual life in us shall we be what we ought to be,—and shall we ever know what sheer happiness is.

If Christians are poor in this world, they should be rich in faith, if rich in this world, they should be poor in spirit.

EXPOSITION.

MAN'S WISDOM

"The Wisdom of God."

(Rev. Joseph H. Smith)

These two comprise the major subject of that great deliverance of the Apostle Paul in 2 Cor. Chapter 2. For convenience more than for closest accuracy, we shall entitle this exposition,

EDUCATION VS. REVELATION

Paul himself, we will remember, was no mean scholar, and yet he avows here his determination to discuss philosophy as pulpit material. (We say "philosophy," for in his vocabulary philosophy and the wisdoms of men are synonymous.) For the decision he implies three forceful reasons. The wisdom of this world would displace the "testimony of God" (v. 1.). Next it would obscure the Cross of Christ (verse 2.) And third, it supplies no proper ground for the faith of the Christian (v. 4.) Now this determination of this truly scholarly apostle, to refuse to figure as an "encyclopedia," not to turn the pulpit into a library of general learning, but to limit himself to the word and to the word and to the testimony of God concerning His Son Jesus Christ and the Cross in order that "their" faith stand in the power of God" commands the emulation of all of us who would be able ministers of the N. T. Only thus can we claim "the demonstration of the Spirit and of power." Fear of not seeming learned or being accounted behind the time has misled many a preacher into halls of philosophy instead of to the upper room at Jerusalem in preparations for his ministry.

There is a wisdom, however, which is to constitute a very chief part of the minister's equipment. (We pause a moment to remind ourselves and when speaking of wisdom in either case, we are not speaking of elementary learning. Thus, we may not go amiss to identify this wisdom with the "excellency of the knowledge of Christ" spoken of elsewhere. Or with that higher knowledge of Himself which Jesus promised to His disciples should be theirs after Pentecost. (See John 14:25). And before we would tabulate on our own salvation. "Even the hidden wisdom or higher learning, or excellency of knowledge, we should note its bearing, as here declared, upon our own salvation. "Even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory." Hence, while the apostle is projecting somewhat of a Spiritual University Standard upon our attention, it is not of some post-graduate degrees, nor of something "elective," but a required course. "Ordained to our glory." Jesus Himself discredits that sentiment which is abroad concerning men being "saved by their ignorance": for He says, "This is eternal life, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Hence, as **worldly learning is needed for place and part in this world, so the wisdom of God is needed for place and part in the next world.**

Now then, we notice (1) it is spoken of as the Hidden Wisdom. Nature may have illustrated it, but has not shown it. The natural man may **approximately it, but can never apprehend it.** And this marvelous fact for some reason is the occasion of Christ's special satisfaction. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent." Possibly not in any penal or judicial sense, but in transcendent love He has reserved for revelation to His own, treasures and secrets which were beyond the reach of man's natural powers even at their very best in intelligence as represented by "the wise and prudent" of the world.