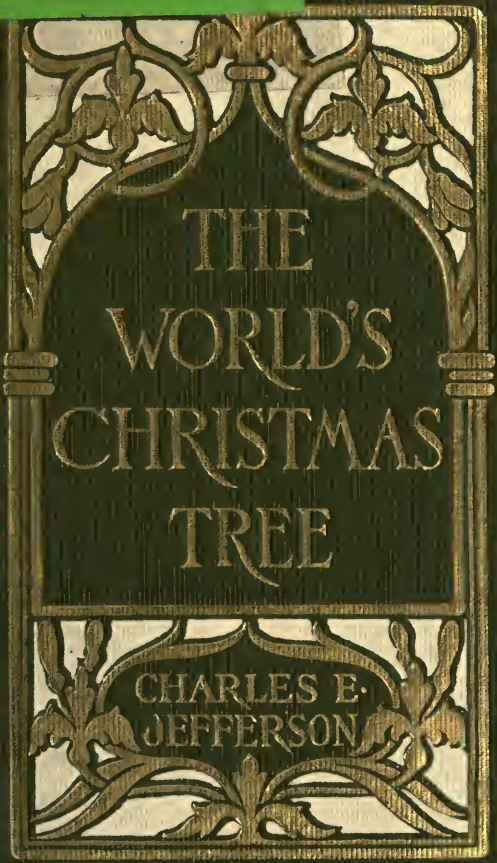


A
0
0
0
6
7
6
1
7
0
4



INDEX



University of California
Southern Regional
Library Facility

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA
SAN DIEGO



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

The World's Christmas Tree



The World's
Christmas Tree

By Charles E. Jefferson



New York

Thomas V. Crowell & Co.

Publishers

COPYRIGHT, 1906, BY THOMAS Y. CROWELL & CO. .

PUBLISHED SEPTEMBER, 1906

COMPOSITION AND ELECTROTYPE PLATES BY
D. B. UPDIKE, THE MERRYMOUNT PRESS, BOSTON

The World's Christmas Tree

IT was the evening before the 25th of December, and I was in the spirit, the spirit of Christmas. In a vision I saw the whole Christian world making ready for the great festival. In imagination I roamed over my own country, looking in on the cities and the villages and the towns and the hamlets and the isolated farmhouses and the cottages and the huts on the slopes of the mountains and far away on the plains, and everywhere I found people thinking and talking of Christmas. I saw fathers and mothers in their plannings, and I saw boys and girls with faces radiant with expectation. What a festival there was everywhere, and what glowing and exquisite dreams!

And in my vision I saw Canada from

The World's Christmas Tree

the lakes to the ice fields of the north, and as far as I could see, men and women were getting ready in their households for Christmas. These people were under the English king, and yet they were thinking and doing the same things as the people living under the stars and stripes.

And then I glanced southward. I saw Mexico and Central America, and all the countries of that great continent which extends into the south. It was a sight which thrilled me, for these people, speaking languages different from my own and living under governments diverse from one another, seemed to be moved by a common impulse and exhibited a common joy. They were all getting ready for Christmas.

And then in my vision I looked across the broad ocean and saw Europe, from the east to the west, and

The World's Christmas Tree

from the north to the south. Silently I visited all the great capitals, and then I went into squalid villages and obscure towns, and wherever I traveled I heard the same bustle of preparation and saw the same light in men's eyes. There was a diversity of languages, most of which I could not understand, but my heart shared in the gladness, and my soul understood the music.

And in my vision I visited all the continents and I know not how many islands of the sea, and in every home to which the name of Jesus had been carried I found everybody planning and getting ready for Christmas. It awed and wellnigh overwhelmed me to see so many millions of human beings differing in racial features, language, custom, tradition, costume, ambition, all united in the common work of preparation, and all alike in having

The World's Christmas Tree

a light upon their forehead and a joy of expectation in their heart.

I paused in my travels just long enough to see what these multitudes were all doing. To my delight I found them all doing the same thing. They were all preparing gifts. They were going to give something on the morrow. Parents were tying up precious things in mysterious-looking packages and bundles, and brothers were perfecting plans to surprise their sisters, and sisters were putting the last stitch into lovely things to give their brothers. Husbands were putting away treasures which on the morrow were to be handed to their wives, and wives were guarding secrets which would not be disclosed until the morning came. Relatives and friends were thinking of one another, and each one had a gift to be presented on the morrow. Rich

The World's Christmas Tree

men were hoarding costly presents which would be distributed before to-morrow's noon, and poor men likewise had gotten together what they could in order to increase to-morrow's sum of joy. Aged men and women, with silver hair and furrowed cheek, looked young again in the light of that Christmas Eve, and the musical laughter and the mysterious whisperings of little children were to my ears as sweet as the music which the shepherds heard on the night in which the unspeakable gift was given. It is a sublime spectacle—a world getting ready for Christmas.

In my curiosity I approached the Christmas trees, with their spangles and festoons of decoration, and in the light of the flickering tapers I read carefully the names written on the labels. In many a home I examined

The World's Christmas Tree

the contents of the stockings, and I know not how many tables weighted down with precious things passed under the scrutiny of my eye.

But before I had gotten halfway round the world a fear sprang up in my heart which was increased by everything I saw. It dawned upon me that on the night before Christmas it is possible to forget the person after whom Christmas Day is named. Even into this garden of Eden at whose centre there stands the Christmas tree the serpent of selfishness had crawled, and I began to meditate on the spirit in which Christmas gifts are often given. I noticed in every country that parents gave gifts to their own children and the children gave gifts to their own parents, that grandparents remembered their own grandchildren and grandchildren remembered their

The World's Christmas Tree

own grandparents, that uncles and aunts were generous to their nieces and nephews, and that nephews and nieces were kind to their uncles and aunts, that teachers gave presents to their pupils and pupils gave presents to their teachers, that relatives gave favors to their relatives and friends bestowed good things on their friends.

In short, the human race had crystallized into a countless number of little circles, and from hand to hand around each circle the presents passed, few circles having for their centre Christ. "I shall give something to you, and I wonder what I shall get from you!" This was the unspoken thought in every country through which I passed.

And while I pondered I saw in my vision the human race rise up before me, the great, fallen, needy race of men.

The World's Christmas Tree

I had never seen humanity so clearly before. It stood before me tangible and concrete and real as a person. To me in my vision it was indeed a man. The man's visage was marred, in his eyes there was a wistful look. He did not speak, but when he turned his face full upon me I could imagine I heard him saying: "I am thinking of to-morrow, I am looking for Christmas."

Shocked by the spectacle I turned hurriedly around, and there full before me rose a Christmas tree. Such a tree I had never looked upon before. It was more majestic in its proportions than any pine tree in the Andes or the Alps. The tree was fashioned out of time. The tree was Christmas Eve. Its boughs were hours, its twigs were minutes, its seconds were tiny offshoots, even the smallest of them strong enough to sustain a gift. At a glance I saw that

The World's Christmas Tree

on this tree could be hung treasures sufficient to satisfy a world. All the nations could hang here their offerings, and still there would be room. And while I was musing a voice from above said to me:

“This is the World's Christmas Tree! What will you put on the tree for humanity? What gift will you give to humankind? What benefaction will you present to society? How will you celebrate the birthday of Jesus?”

Shamefaced and disconcerted I could not answer. This view of Christmas had never occurred to me before. I had made out my list of presents, and I had put down in the list the names of those nearest and dearest to me; but I had never once thought of including the world. I had been careful to remember my own family and those who had been specially kind to me;

The World's Christmas Tree

but as for humanity, it was not so much as once in any of my thoughts. And when I reflected that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that the world through Him might be saved, I began to wonder if our Christmas celebrations are after all genuinely Christian, and whether the ordinary family Christmas tree really strengthens in the world the spirit of Him who says: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

It now dawned upon me why I and so many of my friends are so seriously embarrassed, and sometimes even distressed, at Christmas. The trouble is we cannot give what we want to give; we want to give material things, and material things cost money. We make out our list of those to whom our good wishes must be expressed, and then we look into our purse only to dis-

The World's Christmas Tree

cover that the list is long and the number of coins is small. We cannot give to all who have a claim upon us, and we cannot give the style of gift which satisfies our heart; and so the Christmas season becomes to some of us a period of tribulation. We look forward to it with dread and shrinking, and we get through it with a sigh of relief. The great shop windows browbeat us and bring us into a state of feverish humiliation. They thrust in our faces things made of silver and gold and precious stones, of satin and silk and fur, of mahogany and all sorts of costly woods, and we turn away with a depressed heart, feeling that in the joy of the Christmas season we have no rightful part.

The things which other people are giving and the things which our friends most want are completely be-

The World's Christmas Tree

yond our purse; and Christmas, instead of being an angel from the court of heaven communicating a new joy, seems more like a demon from the pit sent to tantalize us and torment us by making us feel afresh our poverty and limitations.

But when I saw the World's Christmas Tree and saw humanity standing near by waiting, I realized as never before that none of the things in the big store windows are really needed by our race. Humanity does not need either satin or silk or fur. It has no genuine need of silver or gold or diamonds. The artisan cannot fashion anything, nor can the artist paint anything, nor can the genius create anything, which will satisfy the deep want of the world's heart. Therefore let the man who has neither silver nor gold hold up his head and take courage. No matter how poor

The World's Christmas Tree

a man is in the goods of this world he can put on the World's Christmas Tree gifts which will cause rejoicings forever. //

Christmas Day, after all, is for poor people. It is not simply for millionaires and kings. Wage-earners and the commonplace man in the street can enter into its spirit and help perpetuate its message. There lives not a man anywhere on the earth too poor to put something on the World's Christmas Tree. What does the world need? What will make the world most happy? What will banish its darkness and augment its joy? Surely none of the things in the store windows. Even if the tree should be loaded down with these splendid creations, the poor world would be as miserable and disconsolate as ever.

|| What the world needs is faith and

The World's Christmas Tree

hope and love, justice and sympathy and temperance, conscience and truth and courage, patience and fidelity and kindness. These are the things which have been needed from the beginning, and they were never more needed than just now. And to give all these is within the power of every soul that God has made. Is it not strange that we grow glum because the shop window is beyond us, when the shop window contains nothing which the world really needs; and is it not still stranger that we do not put out our hands and take the precious things piled up for us in the open treasure house of God?

The things upon which the world's highest life depends are everywhere within the grasp of the humblest and poorest of us all. God simply flings the door of his treasury wide open, saying: "Come, take as many of these

The World's Christmas Tree

as you can handle, and give them as presents to the world.”)

Away then with despondency and humiliation! Children of the King ought to be able to shout and sing “Hosanna!” especially at Christmas. What will you give? It is for you to decide. You can give anything which you will. Christmas Eve is a good time in which to reach a decision. The evening is lost unless in it the question is decided. Would it not be well to give something you have never given hitherto? A wise man ought to bring out of his treasure house things new as well as old. There are more things hidden in our soul than are dreamed of in our philosophy. If you are convinced you do not possess a certain treasure, reach for it in the deep places of your spirit and you will find that it is there. By giving a new

The World's Christmas Tree

gift to the world you will not only help to renew society, but for yourself the coming year will become new.

It may help you to decide what your gift shall be if you ask what particular thing your community just now is most in need of. The world becomes poor from time to time in various virtues and graces, and the gift most needed is one which will do the largest service. No matter what the grace or virtue is which your part of the world now lacks, you can put that grace or virtue on the Christmas tree, and by so doing manifest your gratitude to Christ. In order to assist you in your work of self-examination let me mention several good things which would be fitting presents in this particular year of our Lord.

In a world like this a conscientious regard for duty is a valuable commod-

The World's Christmas Tree

ity. There is so little of it that in many a community the man who will bring to his work a new sense of obligation will be the means of lifting life to a higher level. When the great Englishman said: "England expects every man to do his duty," every sailor who heard the words understood what was meant; but there are circles in which the word "duty" has lost its lustre, and there are other circles in which the word has become almost obsolete. It is a sad day for a soul when it drops from its vocabulary such expressions as "I ought!" and "I ought not!" Just a little conscientiousness introduced on Christmas would work a reformation in many a factory and many a store and many a home. Put it on the tree!

A steadfast adherence to the truth is more valuable than rubies, and even

The World's Christmas Tree

scarcer. We hear people talking now and then of "white lies," just as though a lie could ever be of any color other than black. The talk of society is filled with fabrications and prevarications and equivocations, and I know not what other abominations in Latin names. We love to cover the edges of our misdoings by the soft velvet of imported words. David in olden times said in his haste that all men were liars, but he would probably be tempted to say the same thing even at his leisure were he now living in many a community which has a conspicuous place on the Christian map.

"Lie not one to another," thundered an apostle long ago, but his words do not seem to have reached a surprisingly large number of men and women to whom the New Testament is not altogether unknown. To lie is everywhere

The World's Christmas Tree

and always disgraceful, a scandal and a shame, even though many respectable persons do not seem to know this. Falsehood is an evidence of weakness, and frequently of something even worse.

Lying is not only wicked, but also uncomfortable. One cannot tell one lie without going on to tell another. Eden was spoiled in the first instance by the telling of a lie, and the seer who saw the vision of the city of God observed that no liars are permitted to enter its gates. The world has suffered every day of its existence because mortals have been unwilling to utter the truth, and the golden age will never dawn until men cease to deceive. "I am the truth," said the man whose birth Christmas Day commemorates. Of all the lovely things which one may hang upon the Christmas Tree none proba-

The World's Christmas Tree

bly is more acceptable to Him than a fresh resolution to speak at all times and in all places and at all costs the unvarnished and unadulterated truth.

Honesty is finer than fine gold. It is worth more than anything which money can buy. "An honest man's the noblest work of God;" so declared an English poet long ago, and the line has stuck like a burr in the memory of everybody, even of the rogues themselves. There are a few virtues so divine that we admire them even though we do not care to take the trouble to possess them. Even a thief cringes when he is called a thief. No two words of human speech jar and jab the heart as "thief" and "liar." Yet dishonesty is rampant even in the shadow of the steeples of Christian churches. Many a city rich in gold is poor in honesty. If a man can give to his town

The World's Christmas Tree

an honest heart, he is giving a treasure whose value is beyond computation. He is adding to the imperishable wealth of the world.

The newspapers render a service to the community in bringing thieves to judgment. It is well that the defaulters and the grafters and the unprincipled financiers should be pictured and pilloried and made a byword and a hissing to all who pass by. One may be tempted to judge the world too harshly by the exclusive reading of the papers, and assent to Hamlet's cynical remark that to be honest as this world goes is to be one man picked out of ten thousand. Against this temptation to deal in wholesale judgments, every man who loves justice must be always on his guard. The honest men do not get into the papers, and a world of honorable dealing is passed by every day

The World's Christmas Tree

unnoticed. But it is also true that the dishonesty in the world is appalling in its dimensions, and that every man who is interested in the progress of the race ought to set his face like flint against dishonesty in its every form. What better gift can one make, then, on Christmas than a determination to keep free through the coming year from every sort of dishonesty in word and thought and deed? Such a determination is a gift to the world, for "he serves all who dares be true."

Or why not give the saving grace of a cheerful heart? The world is in dire need of sunshine. There are many burdens and many tears. Many souls, like so many chimneys, fill the air with smoke. A heavy mist hangs dark above the land. The air is filled with farewells of the dying and also lamentations of broken hearts over the bodies

The World's Christmas Tree

of the dead. A little laughter is a beam of sunshine, and a happy face is like a piece of blue sky seen between the rolling clouds of a storm.

Worry is one of the most fatal of all transgressions. It is a sin against not one organ of the body, but against the body as a whole. It is a demon whose pressure is felt upon the heart, and there is not a capillary in any gland or tissue which does not shrink under the glance of its gloomy eyes. A man who worries is slowly draining the springs of life. He not only stunts himself, but he makes it harder for others to grow and blossom. Depression is a vice, and like all vices it must be dealt with firmly and with vigor.

What is the effect of your presence in your home? Does your look fall like a sunbeam or a shadow across the breakfast-table? Does your conversa-

The World's Christmas Tree

tion lie like a strip of summer sky or a patch of midnight across the family life? Upon what subjects do you speak with largest freedom and keenest relish?—your aches and failures, or the things which are beautiful and fine and high? For your own sake and for the sake of others you ought to bring your soul into a jubilant mood. All Christian virtues grow best under a sky filled with sun, and the man or woman who persists in being gloomy and sour and moody will have his home filled at last with weeds and brambles and briars. An intention to be joyous would be a fine contribution to the Christmas Tree.

Why not make some new sacrifice for the Christian church? It may be that you have never made such a sacrifice in all your life. You have thus far held aloof from the church, you

The World's Christmas Tree

have criticised it, you have sometimes scoffed at it. You do not utterly forsake it, for you listen to its songs and sermons, but you have steadfastly refused to identify yourself with it. This has been your attitude because of the church's many faults—you are not blind, and you can see that professing Christians are far from perfect; you know church members who are hypocrites; you have chronicled many a defect of work and worship, and can repeat a long list of crimson sins.

But I would not do this on Christmas Eve. The spirit of criticism is not the spirit of Christmas. Christmas is a kind and charitable time, a loving, forgiving time, and even the Christian church ought to be thought of tenderly on the night before Christmas. I will not defend the church against any of the accusations which you bring against

The World's Christmas Tree

it. She is indeed a sinner, but God is the friend of sinners, and you ought to be their friend also.

The church has done many things amiss, but has it never done anything noble or right? Can you remember anything which it has done for the poor, or for women, or for little children? Can you think of anything it has done for the sorrowing, the bereaved, the bewildered and the forlorn? Are you not grateful that over the casket it has said for nineteen hundred years: "O death, where is thy sting?" and by the side of the open tomb it has cried: "O grave, where is thy victory?" Is it not something to thank God for that in a world like this there exists an institution which holds up the life of an ideal man, and which repeats in sermon and anthem straight onward through the years:

The World's Christmas Tree

“God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son”? Is it nothing to you that in a world so worn and weary, a company of the followers of Jesus have been willing to keep alive his word: “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”?

It may be that you have never been grateful before, and that an appreciative word for the church has never escaped your lips. Why not begin to be grateful on the night before Christmas? A little bit of gratitude placed on the Christmas tree is one of the very best gifts which a soul can offer.

It may be that you will offer a prayer for the salvation of the world. Christmas Eve is one of the best of all evenings for praying. You say you have never prayed, you do not believe in prayer, you know scientific reasons

The World's Christmas Tree

why men ought not to pray, you can ask questions which wise men cannot answer, you have read somewhere that prayer is of no value, it has been told you by some book that speaking to God is both futile and foolish. But if it be true that somebody has said we need not pray, it is also true that somebody else has said: "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint."

Whom will you believe on Christmas Eve? The men whom you have heard talk against prayer are no doubt clever and plausible people, but they have not been able to set people singing in five continents. For my own part I prefer to listen to Jesus of Nazareth, and when I see him praying I will follow his example. Why not put a prayer on the Christmas Tree?

"More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of."

The World's Christmas Tree

And if you and all who intend to keep the Christmas season will offer up a prayer for God's benediction on all homes and hearts, this old world of ours will be this Christmas season bound with golden chains about the feet of God.

Why not make a gift of your will? On whose side have you cast your life during the past year? Have you been drifting with the current? Have you been the sport of circumstances? Have you been the slave of your environment? Have you been carried hither and thither by every wind that blows? Have you fallen into the prevailing customs and practices of the day, saying with a laugh that when one is in Rome he must do as the Romans do? Life all around you has been narrow and barren and sordid, ideals have been low and ambitions have been petty—

The World's Christmas Tree

why not throw yourself on the other side and labor to make life noble and rich and fruitful and sweet? Why not fight a good fight? Why not finish the course? Why not keep the faith? Why not start to-night to win a crown? What will you give the world? On this side stands the great Christmas Tree—on that side stands the world. Having gazed into the world's sad eyes for a moment, will you not put on the tree a prayer, an aspiration, a resolution, a purpose? If you will do this, angels will sing at this Christmas as they sang at the Christmas long ago.

Yes, Christmas is a season for giving, but unless the best gifts are given, we miss the meaning of the festival. The man who has set all the world to celebrating his birthday was a poor man to the day of his death. Silver and gold had he none, but of such things as he

The World's Christmas Tree

had gave he to men. He had courage and patience and kindness, he had purity and mercy and faith, he had joy and hope and love, and all these he gave freely to the world. He himself was a gift of God. God had from the beginning showered good things on the nations, but when the time came to give the best of all gifts, it was not silver nor gold nor precious stones which He gave, but a man; and not a rich man either, but a man who was simply kind and true and good. It would seem, then, that the very best gift which God himself can bestow is a man, and it would seem also that the best gift which a man can give is not silver nor gold nor precious stones, but just the inspiration of a stainless mind and the boundless sympathy of a loving heart.

Jesus gave himself, and therefore

The World's Christmas Tree

hath God highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name, and set men and women in every land to celebrating the day which commemorates His birth. What will you give the world this Christmas?

How Certain Men long ago
were led to the King

THE story of the Magi is a picture. Who can look at it once and ever forget it? The desert and the sand and the camels and the Oriental costumes of the travelers, and the great sky with stars burning in it, one star brighter than all the rest,—all blend together and form a picture which artists have loved to paint and musicians have loved to sing. Let us look again at the star.

It was the star that led these men to the King. They were astronomers, or in the old speech, astrologers, and their business was to study the stars. It was while they were doing their ordinary work that the hint came which opened a new era in their lives. Their study was the channel through which

How Certain Men long ago

intimations flowed by which they were guided to the feet of the King. God found these men in their work. This seems to have been his method from the beginning. Out of a man's work the Divine Voice ever comes. God set the first man to tending the garden, and it was among the trees that the first conversation between Man and his Creator occurred. Moses was a shepherd, and it was while he was tending the sheep that he came to know that it was God's intention to make him a leader of men. David was also a shepherd, and it was in the sheepfold that the Divine Voice was first heard. The greatest of Hebrew law-givers and the greatest of Hebrew kings came to the throne through their daily occupation. It was while Gideon was threshing and Elisha was ploughing and Amos was pruning the sycamore trees that the

Were led to the King

word of the Lord became to them audible, and they discovered what it was that Heaven would have them do. The method pursued under the Old Dispensation was not discontinued under the Dispensation which we call New. It was while Peter and Andrew and James and John were working with their nets that Jesus said to them, "Follow me." Fishermen they had been, and fishermen they are still to be, but on a wider and more dangerous sea. It was while Matthew sat at the receipt of custom, counting up his money, that his call came, and the pen that had been used in writing columns of figures was used thereafter in writing the story of God's love. The shepherds were at their work when they heard the angels sing, and the scholars of the East in their effort to extend the boundaries of their knowledge

How Certain Men long ago

were flooded with a light which made all things new. To one who reads the Scriptures with discerning eyes the entire Bible is a narrative relating how various types of men at different times and in sundry places have been led by divers sorts of stars to God.

May we not think, then, of our daily task as a medium of revelation? Why not consider our work a kind of Bible in which we are to read with increasing clearness the will of the Eternal? There are various reasons why we might expect to find heaven's fullest revelations in our work. In the first place we live with it. We abide with it day by day. We drop it only to eat or sleep or for a brief season of recreation, and then come back to it again. God has a better chance to reach us through our work than through any other medium. Moreover, we put our-

Were led to the King

selves into it. Into it, if we are faithful, goes the best energy of the brain and the strongest purpose of the heart. It becomes a companion, almost a part of one's self. By holding ourself close to it, it exerts an influence over us, moulding our disposition and fashioning our temper. When one stops to think how much of the discipline of the mind and spirit comes from the thing which we habitually do, and how not only the tone of the heart but the habit of the soul is influenced and shaped by our daily occupation, it is not difficult to see that in this work lies concealed the very hand of the Almighty, and that in ways we think not of He is moulding us day by day and hour by hour into vessels fit for His use. What is your work? Whatever it is, it is the angels' song. Follow it! No matter what it is, it is the star of Bethlehem.

How Certain Men long ago

Follow it! Our work rightly done leads invariably to the feet of the King.

In what direction is your work leading you? It is a question of cardinal moment. Work may lead away from the King. The work of Herod was ruling. He was so jealous of his rulership that when word came that a King had been born he laid plans to murder Him. It was his work which led Herod to hate Jesus. Judas also was destroyed by his work. He was treasurer of the Apostolic band. He carried the bag, and out of that bag the serpent crawled which poisoned and crushed his soul. Day by day as he counted the coins, his heart departed farther and farther from Jesus. The touch of the silver kindled in him a dislike of the loving touch of the Lord. His work was the avenue down which he reeled to destruction. Herod and Judas, two

Were led to the King

wrecked souls, stand as warnings in the New Testament story, reminding each succeeding generation of the awful peril of allowing one's work to lead the soul away from Christ. The sceptre of Herod led him away from Him; the shepherds' crook led them to Him. The bag of Judas led him away from Him, the star of the Magi led them to Him. What is your work doing for you?

The temptation which overcame Herod and Judas still confronts us all. Herod feared and hated Jesus because Jesus was called a king. That is why men keep away from Him to-day. It is the authority of Christianity which offends and estranges. We want to be kings ourselves. We want to rule all the realms of our life. Religion seems an impertinence. Christ seems an intruder. There is no room for Him in the Judea of our life. He speaks as one

How Certain Men long ago

having authority, and we turn our backs upon Him because we want to do what we wish and go where we choose. Like Herod, we suspect and fear the Prince of Glory because He sets himself up as King.

Along with the jealousy of Herod runs also the covetousness of Judas. We have money, it may be, and we want more. We have knowledge, perhaps, and we want more. We have power, possibly, and we want still more. We carry the bag and we will cram it full, and Jesus keeps on saying to us: "Give!" It is for these reasons that our work may gradually eat out the life of the soul. Where are you going? In what direction is your face set? Is your star leading you to Bethlehem?

The question has peculiar significance addressed to the modern representatives of the Magi, the educated

Were led to the King

classes of the Occident. It is in cultured circles that one often finds the greatest indifference to Jesus and the densest ignorance of His person and work. University graduates hold aloof from the Son of God in such large numbers that the question is mooted from time to time just what the tendency of the educational world really is. Is present-day science hostile to Jesus? Does the philosophy of the modern schools extinguish the light of the star of Bethlehem? Does the observation of phenomena dim the eyes and chill the heart? Does a passion for investigation and the love of research unfit one to kneel at the feet of the King? These are questions to ponder over at Christmas time. We know that certain scholars of the East, by studying the phenomena of nature, were led by their study to the manger in Bethle-

How Certain Men long ago

hem. Why should not study always, if conducted in the right spirit, lead the soul to Him in whom all things consist? If the characteristic feature of the modern scientific spirit is docility, a willingness to study the facts and follow where they lead, may we not confidently expect that the world of scientific culture will sooner or later find itself casting its gold and frankincense and myrrh at the feet of the King? The passion for knowledge, which is the peculiar glory of our age, must lead men at last to the feet of the Teacher who calmly declares, "I am the truth." Not only is He the truth, but He is the way and the life, and no one comes to the Father but through Him. To know God, and Jesus Christ whom God has sent—this is eternal life. Men may make amazing conquests over the realms of nature and life, and

Were led to the King

they may pile up their knowledge in glittering heaps, but it is a fact borne in upon us with new force in our time that all knowledge is transitory, and all acquisitions are valuable only for a day. How quickly the text-books become worthless, how swiftly the wisest volumes in philosophy are outgrown! No century cares much for either the science or philosophy or theology or learning of the century which preceded it, so ephemeral are the most ambitious structures which mortals can build. Herod may be proud of his sceptre, but death soon breaks it; Judas may exult in the fact that his bag is full, but the treasures will soon be scattered, and the soul must stand alone before its Maker. In the first instant after death it may be that we shall see and hear and learn things which will supersede all the learning which by

How Certain Men long ago

years of industry we have acquired in earth's schools. There is only one thing, therefore, worth seeking, and that is a soul capable of adoring and serving the King. Who can make it capable but the King himself? How can the King work His miracle of grace upon it unless the soul finds Him and surrenders itself to Him? Christmas is a star which shines to lead men to Jesus. There was another wise man in addition to those already referred to, who nineteen hundred years ago found his way to the King,—Saul of Tarsus. Saul was among the most learned men of his day, and this was his conclusion in the maturity of his powers and at the noon of his life: "Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and

Were led to the King

have not love, I am nothing. . . . And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." Faith in God, Hope in God, Love for God, these are the things which endure, and these are the gold and frankincense and myrrh which, unless our eyes have been blinded and our hearts have been darkened, we will pour out, not only now at Christmas, but straight onward through the years, at the feet of the loving and adorable and omnipotent King.

The End

2
University of California
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024-1388

Return this material to the library
from which it was borrowed.

QL JAN 16 1996

RECEIVED

DEC 13 1995

ARTS LIBRARY

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 676 170 4

LIBRARY