

**A BOYS AND GIRLS
LIFE OF CHRIST**

THE NEGRO CHILDREN'S STORY OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Por lil brack sheep don strayed away,
Don los in de win' and de rain,
An' de Shepherd He say, "O hirelin',
Go fin' My sheep again."
But de hirelin' frown, "O Shepherd,
Dat sheep am brack and bad."
But de Shepherd He smile like dat lil brack sheep
Was de onliest lamb He had.

And He said, "O hirelin', hasten
For de win' an' de rain am cold;
An' dat lil brack sheep am lonesome
Out dar so far from de fol'."
De hirelin' frown, "O Shepherd,
Dat sheep am all soiled with de clay."
But de Shepherd He smile like de lil brack sheep
Wuz fair as de break o' day.

An' He said, "O hirelin', hasten.
Lo, here am de ninety-an'-nine,
But dar far off from de sheep-fol'
Is dat lil brack sheep ob Mine."
An' de hirelin' frown, "O Shepherd,
De res' ob de sheep am here."
But de Shepherd He smile like dat lil brack sheep
He hol' de mostest dear.

An' de Shepherd go out in de darkness
Where de night was col' an' bleak,
An' dat lil brack sheep He fin' it
An' lay it against His cheek.
An' de hirelin' frown, "O Shepherd,
Don' bring dat sheep to me."
But de Shepherd He smile as He hol' it close
An'—dat lil brack sheep was—me.

*The Bible for
School and Home*

by J. Paterson Smyth

The Book of Genesis

Moses and the Exodus

Joshua and the Judges

The Prophets and Kings

*When the Christ Came:
The Highlands of Galilee*

*When the Christ Came:
The Road to Jerusalem*

St. Matthew

St. Mark

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J. Paterson Smyth

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CONTENTS

THE FIRST BOOK

I.	STORIES OF WONDER AND ROMANCE	1
II.	THE WORLD FROM WHICH HE CAME	5
III.	BEFORE HE CAME	10
IV.	THE ANGEL'S MESSAGE	13
V.	HOW JESUS CAME	18
	ONE OF OURSELVES	24

THE SECOND BOOK

I.	HIS BOYHOOD IN NAZARETH	29
II.	SOME PICTURES OF HIS BOYHOOD	34
III.	WHEN HE WAS TWELVE	41
IV.	JESUS THE CARPENTER	47

THE THIRD BOOK

I.	HIS BAPTISM	53
II.	HOW JESUS FOUGHT HIS GREAT BATTLE WITH THE DEVIL	57
III.	YOUNG JOHN THE DISCIPLE'S STORY	63
IV.	THE WEDDING IN CANA OF GALILEE	69
V.	WHEN JESUS WAS ANGRY	74
VI.	WANDERINGS IN SPRINGTIME	78
VII.	HOW JOHN THE BAPTIST DIED	81

THE FOURTH BOOK

I.	A PICTURE OF GALILEE AND THE LAKE	89
II.	WHEN JESUS CAME TO CAPERNAUM	94
III.	PREACHING IN THE WHITE SYNAGOGUE	97
IV.	THE MAN WHO CAME THROUGH THE ROOF	102
V.	HOW JESUS CHOSE HIS APOSTLES	106
VI.	THE STORY OF TWO DINNER PARTIES	111
VII.	PICTURES OF A DAY WITH JESUS	115

CONTENTS

VIII.	THE KINGDOM OF GOD	120
IX.	THE KING BEGINNING HIS KINGDOM	125
X.	THE CAPTAIN AND HIS SERVANT.	129
XI.	A BOY'S FUNERAL	133
XII.	GOING ON HOLIDAY	137
XIII.	WHAT STOPPED THE HOLIDAY	141
XIV.	A WONDERFUL WEEK	146
XV.	HOW THEY SAW JESUS IN HIS GLORY	150
XVI.	GOOD-BYE TO GALILEE	155

THE FIFTH BOOK

I.	HOW HE STARTED ON THE JERUSALEM ROAD. . .	161
II.	HARVEST FESTIVAL IN JERUSALEM	164
III.	HIS THREE STORIES ABOUT THE FATHER	170
IV.	HOW HE BROUGHT LAZARUS BACK FROM THE DEAD	175
V.	HOW THEY PLANNED TO KILL HIM	181
VI.	THE END OF THE ROAD	185

THE SIXTH BOOK

I.	PALM SUNDAY	193
II.	THE BEGINNING OF THE END	199
III.	THE FAREWELL SUPPER	203
IV.	IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE.	208
V.	JUDAS AND ST. PETER	214
VI.	SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE	219
VII.	ON THE CROSS	225
VIII.	THE SATURDAY BEFORE EASTER DAY	230
IX.	HOW THE BOYS AND GIRLS OF EPHESUS HEARD ABOUT EASTER	232
X.	HOW THE LORD WENT BACK HOME TO HEAVEN	239
	GOOD-BYE	243

From the Author

BOYS AND GIRLS,—

I am trying to tell you the most wonderful story in the whole world.

But I warn you beforehand that you have got to help me. For I want to write not a simple little story for small children, but a real full Life of Christ for thoughtful boys and girls who are willing to think and use their brains. I have a high opinion of your brains if you will only use them, and I have no intention of writing you a mere childish book. You are fit for better things than that.

I have tried to make the chapters short so as not to tire you. Sometimes I cannot do that without spoiling the story, but any longer chapters are divided into parts so that you can stop anywhere whenever you have read enough.

Now, mind, I am trusting you. I cannot tell the story as I want to without your help.

J. P. S.

The Château, Montreal.

Christmas, 1928.

THE FIRST BOOK

*Telling how the Lord Jesus
came from Heaven to visit this
World, which He had made long
ago.*



Writing the Gospel story.

I

STORIES OF WONDER AND ROMANCE

ONCE upon a time (it was the year A.D. 1630) a strong, rough-looking young foreigner was working in the great shipbuilding yard in Deptford, England. Every day he worked at his bench, every night he slept in the big dormitory shed. He walked and talked and played games with his English comrades as one of themselves. Then one day, when he had thoroughly learned his business, he went home, and the others forgot him.

But later on there came one day to the shipyard a romantic story of a great prince holding court in a foreign land, and later still of a powerful king whose name was famous in Europe. And they learned that this was that young foreigner who had come to learn shipbuilding to teach his people, that he was really a prince of royal blood in disguise, and now sat on the throne of the proudest kingdom in the world, the Emperor of All the Russias. I don't know if he ever came back to visit them again, but I feel sure that they were proud of that romantic story and that old workers in

A BOYS AND GIRLS LIFE OF CHRIST

the shipyard would often in their old age boast that they had worked at the bench side by side with the disguised lord of Russia.

There are several stories like this in history of kings and princes going about amongst the people in romantic adventure disguised as ordinary men. We call them "Stories of Wonder and Romance." But, after all, there is not so much of wonder in them. For these disguised kings and princes when they went home to their palaces were still but ordinary men like ourselves, only living in palaces and wearing grand clothing. Young Peter of Russia, with his robes and palaces, was still just an ordinary man, little better than his old comrades in the shipyard.

Just once in the world's history, only once, 1,900 years ago, there was a real startling "Story of Wonder and Romance," the story of an adventure that has stirred the whole world to its depths. It is the *one central wonder-story of the world*.

In a warm, sunny land beyond the sea, two weeks' journey from England, there was a little country boy playing with his comrades on the village green and afterwards working as a carpenter to support his mother, and afterwards murdered by wicked men because of his brave opposition to their wickedness. And then when they buried Him in a tomb, He rose up from the dead.

And so there came the most startling discovery in all history, that this was really the Lord from Heaven in disguise come down from beyond the stars on a

STORIES OF WONDER AND ROMANCE

visit to this earth, which He Himself had made long ago! If you want a real story of wonder and romance, you surely have it here. It is almost too wonderful for anyone to believe.

I have been asked to try to tell you that story. I refused at first, for I am so afraid of spoiling it. I don't think anyone could tell it properly. But I will try to tell it as well as I can, trusting you to help me.

In telling of His life I ought, of course, to begin at the beginning. But where is the beginning? If I were writing the life, say, of Prince Peter who worked in the shipyard, I should begin at his birth. That is his beginning. But that is not at all the beginning here. In the life of this village Boy (Jesus of Nazareth, He was called), our thought must go back to the eternal World from which He came, the World where He belongs. You know that beyond this world which we see, beyond the blue sky, beyond the stars and planets, is the Real World, the World of Eternities, the World of God and of the holy angels, the World from which this and all worlds come. We cannot see that World. We cannot map out its continents and shores. No gleam of its golden cities has ever touched our eyes. But we believe that it is above us and around us always.

From that unknown World above the sky, Jesus came for the great adventure. In that great central Heaven He had always lived. From His home there in the far-back eternities He had made this world and all the worlds that you see floating in the skies at night. So you see you could never get back to any beginning

A BOYS AND GIRLS LIFE OF CHRIST

of His life even if you went back ages and ages before the Genesis story when “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” ages and ages before He appeared on earth as a little baby when “Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king.” But I have only to tell the story of His visit to earth. And since He began His life on earth as a little baby, we have to begin our story there.

II

THE WORLD FROM WHICH HE CAME

IT will help you to understand that story better if you think for a little while about that world from which He came. He has told us some lovely things about it. Before He came people down here used to wonder about that unknown world above them and often they were frightened about it. When they heard the thunder rolling in the sky, and the fierce storms smashing the trees, and the wild beasts raging in the forest, they would cry to the powers above not to hurt them. And sometimes when they were not frightened, when the sun shone and the world looked beautiful, they would look out on the glory of the sunset like a golden gate of Heaven and wonder what the great God above was like. Did He ever know when they were in trouble? Did He ever care when their child died? Did He ever think about them at all? They did not know.

So they made images to pray to, ugly wooden idols and big golden images to protect them from dangers that might come from that mysterious world. That was

A BOYS AND GIRLS LIFE OF CHRIST

the kind of religion they had, not a happy religion, a religion that kept them rather frightened and uneasy.

Think of the delightful surprise when Jesus came down. "Oh, you are all wrong," He said, "about our World above. Wait till I tell you what it really is like." So as He talked to them day by day, they learned very delightful things about that World that He came from.

He told them that it is a very wonderful and glorious World, a World of wonder and romance and beauty where everyone is happy and nobody does wrong. And especially He told them what they loved best of all to hear, that it is an infinitely kindly, friendly World, that they on that side are all keenly interested in us on this side. The galleries of that World are crowded with friendly faces watching with deep interest our lives on earth, wanting to make us happy, wanting to make us good.

"You are never to be afraid of our World," said Jesus. "You are never to be afraid of God except when you are doing wrong. For God is the kindest, tenderest friend you have. Never think of Him as cruel or unkind. When you think of Him, think of the friend who is so interested in you, who cares for you more than a father cares for his child. Whenever you pray to Him always call Him 'Our Father.' "

One day, for instance, He was talking to some people who had been wicked and were sorry for it and afraid that God would not forgive them. So He told them a story of a boy here on earth, a bad boy who ran away from home and nearly broke his father's heart by

THE WORLD FROM WHICH HE CAME

his wicked life in a big city far away. When all his money was spent and he was starving, he began to be sorry and to long for his old happy home, but he was afraid to go back to face his angry father. At last he ventured timidly to go back, and there on the road back he got the surprise of his life! Instead of the angry father that he expected, lo and behold! at a turning of the road he saw that dear old father hurrying to meet him with a great joy in his heart at getting back his boy from that wicked life.

And Jesus said, That is just like God when you do wrong and are sorry. That is how God feels. That is how our great World above the sky feels. There is pain in God's heart when any of you do wicked things, but "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents of doing wrong."

Another day He was sitting with children around Him and a little boy standing at His knee, and He said to the big people there, Do you know what important people these children are? That in our great World above there are angels watching over these boys and girls down here on earth, guardian angels "who always behold the face of the Father who is in Heaven."

Was not that a wonderful thing to learn about those boys and girls and about you boys and girls who are reading this story now? That in that wondrous World of love and light and glory they are watching over you as if you were young princes and making delightful romantic plans for you?

I know the romantic dreams you youngsters have

A BOYS AND GIRLS LIFE OF CHRIST

of exciting adventures. How in your play you dress up and imagine yourselves princes and princesses and warriors and Indian chiefs and travellers and all sorts of things, and the stupid big people tell you such things will never happen.

Don't you believe them. Jesus said that in that World above far more wonderful and exciting things are planned for you. And they will all come true one day. All the lovely adventures that you dream of are not half as exciting as the adventures that will come to you some day in that World. Some of your comrades who have died and gone there are in the midst of those wonders now. Oh, you are pretty wonderful beings, you boys and girls.

Jesus just loved to tell things like that about that kindly World, so different from what people thought, so deeply interested in this poor world down here. It is because of that deep interest, He said, that I have come down to tell you the good news about our Kingdom and the Father's love for you, and to help you to get to it yourselves by and by.



Jewish house with a chamber on the roof.

III

BEFORE HE CAME

PEOPLE had been a long time living in this world before Jesus came. I don't know why He did not come earlier, for I know surely that this poor world always needed Him. But I know there must have been some good reason. And I know that long before they thought of Him He had been thinking of them and planning to come to them.

You know that our Bible has two parts, the Old Testament, which belongs to the time before He came, and the New Testament, which belongs to the time after He came. And in that Old Testament before He came we can read of things happening which were really to prepare for His coming, though the people who did those things did not know that at the time.

For instance, a long time before He came we read of a great shepherd camp in a hot Eastern land, and ignorant people who worshipped idols, and a thoughtful boy named Abram, who was puzzling himself thinking about the idols and about God. The Jews had some queer stories about that boy. That one day he went into the idols' room and smashed some of them with a big

BEFORE HE CAME

club and put the club into the hands of the big idol at the back. By and by his father came in a rage about his broken gods. "Who broke my gods?" he cried. And the boy said: "Father, look at the big idol with the club." "How could a wooden image do that?" cried his father. "Well, father," said the boy, "if these gods cannot do anything, why should we pray to them?"

They said, too, that he used to lie in the fields puzzling to find God. When he saw the glorious sun lightening the world, he would wonder, Can this be God? When he saw the moon sailing in the midnight sky he thought, Can that be God? But the sun passed away every evening and the moon vanished at dawn and the boy said, No, these are not God. I must still seek for the God who made all things.

These stories are not in the Bible so I don't know if they are true or not. But all the rest of the stories about him are in the Bible and we believe that they are all true. Evidently the boy was thinking hard and God put it into his mind when he grew up that he should go away from that land of idols and start a new life in a land that God would show him. So a new people grew up in that new land that we call Palestine and became a nation. They were called Hebrews or Jews. They were kept by themselves and trained to learn real religion, and God told Abram, perhaps in a dream, that through this new people one day all the families of the earth should be blessed.

Then among these Jews God put it into the minds of prophets and holy men that some Great One was

A BOYS AND GIRLS LIFE OF CHRIST

some day to come, and they wrote down strange things about Him which God had put into their minds, such as this: “He shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, and of His government there shall be no end.” And again: “Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. He is wounded for our wickedness and bruised for our sins and by His stripes we shall be healed.”

I don't think the people understood what all this meant, but at any rate it set them thinking and wondering and expecting. It was preparing the world for the coming of Jesus. But for hundreds of years things went on as before. Nothing happened. God still kept silence.

At last one day “in the fulness of the time” God sent forth His Son! Jesus came. Born into the world as a little helpless baby! Should you ever have thought that the Lord of Heaven would come in that simple way?

IV

THE ANGEL'S MESSAGE

HERE is the story of how Jesus came.

Of course I had known this story since I was a child, but somehow, because it was in the Bible, I had a queer child notion that the place where these things happened was somewhere away out of the world. But as I grew up I knew better—that I could get into a train in my own town and then into a ship and sail away to the place where Jesus had lived long ago. All my life I had wanted to go. But I could not get away. But in beginning to write this story for you I felt that I must go and see the place for myself, and try to see in my mind the things as they happened.

So I started to sail from Canada across the ocean. I sailed past England and after many days came to the sunny Mediterranean Sea. (Look in the map for that.) Then at the far end of that great sea I saw before me the shores of Palestine, and landed in Jesus' country. There I travelled about with Jesus' story always in my mind, walking where Jesus had walked long ago, seeing what Jesus had seen. And the story became very real to me,

A BOYS AND GIRLS LIFE OF CHRIST

until at times I felt as if I were back in those wonderful old days with Jesus and His friends.

You know that on earth He was always called Jesus of Nazareth. Well, one day I was up among the hills of Galilee in Nazareth, the village where He lived the most of His life, where He had played as a child in the village street and worked in the carpenter's shop to support His mother; the village where His mother had lived as a girl. And there, walking in the very streets where Jesus had walked, I was thinking of what happened there 1,900 years ago.

What I saw was only a plain little town on the hillside, but the lovely memories of the places made it all-wonderful for me. The shabby little street was wonderful to me because Jesus had walked there, and the Nazareth boys on the roads set me picturing that Nazareth Boy of old walking on those self-same roads. There is a carpenter's shop there where a carpenter was making furniture and cattle yokes for the people, and near it is an old village well which has existed for ages and which must have been the very same well from which His mother drew the water for her home.

I felt as if I were back in the old Nazareth with the carpenter's shop in the village street and a strong country carpenter working at his bench with saw and chisel and hammer, making chairs and tables and cattle yokes for the country people, with the happy thought in his heart of his coming marriage and the home that he was preparing for his young bride. His name was Joseph. Somewhere down the village before me lived

THE ANGEL'S MESSAGE

the girl whom he loved, Mary the daughter of Anne, a simple country girl working in her home, spinning and breadmaking and drawing water from the village well with the other girls in the evening.

It all seemed so real to me as I moved on to the well, that very same well, and watched the village girls filling their stone water-pots as those other girls did long ago when Mary was with them. I could imagine her there laughing and talking with the others, a girl gracious and modest, with a beautiful face to match her beautiful soul.

And I thought of Joseph the carpenter who loved her. He was older than she was, and I am sure he loved to watch her passing and to dream of their coming life together and to meet her in the evenings after his work and tell her of his plans and hopes. I feel sure they sometimes talked of greater things too. They were not careless lovers thinking only about themselves. They were religious people who loved God. Joseph, we are told, was “a righteous man,” and Mary was a thoughtful, loving-hearted girl, fit to be chosen for God’s great purpose.

Surely they would sometimes talk of what many religious Jews were thinking just then—the Great Hope of Israel, the Great Someone who was some day to come. And I could imagine the girl going home down that street after these meetings to pray for her lover’s life and her own, and the Great World above listening to her prayers and thinking of their wonderful secret, the

A BOYS AND GIRLS LIFE OF CHRIST

wonderful surprise they were preparing for her and for the world.

Of course she knew nothing about it. She never thought in her village home of the excitement above the bright blue sky, where the glorious inhabitants of that World above were preparing just then for their Lord's visit to this earth. But already some of them were preparing to come down and tell her. So the quiet days passed in Nazareth. Then—one night at her prayers—came suddenly on the girl a stirring of her whole being, a feeling of awe and wonder, and a lovely white angel stood before her with his message from the World above:—

“HAIL THOU THAT ART HIGHLY FAVORED
THE LORD IS WITH THEE.”

And as she bowed there, frightened and astonished, came to her the tremendous message that the great hope of Israel, the hope of the long ages was to be fulfilled at last.

“FEAR NOT MARY, THOU HAST FOUND FAVOR WITH GOD.
FOR BEHOLD THOU SHALT CONCEIVE AND BRING FORTH A SON
AND THOU SHALT CALL HIS NAME JESUS.
OF HIS KINGDOM THERE SHALL BE NO END.
WHEREFORE THAT HOLY ONE THAT SHALL BE BORN OF THEE
SHALL BE CALLED THE SON OF GOD.”

Did ever any other girl in the whole world get such a surprise as that! How could she sleep that night! How could she bear alone in her heart that exciting secret!

The angel had told her that another baby boy was coming to her cousin Elizabeth, the wife of a country

THE ANGEL'S MESSAGE

priest down in the south country, the hills of Hebron, and that this boy was to prepare the way for Jesus. We shall hear a good deal about this other boy later on. So Mary, all wondering and excited, hurried away to tell Elizabeth and to talk with her about God's great plans for their boys. Then with the great wonder in her heart she came home to Nazareth to wait.

Two rather exciting things happened soon after. The first was her marriage day, when she became the wife of Joseph the carpenter and went to her new home beside the carpenter's shop. Joseph knew the great secret of the Angel's message and the Divine Child that was to be born of her. And scarce was she settled in her new home when one day the royal messengers went through the villages declaring the Emperor's orders that there should be what we call a Census, such as we have in our own country every ten years, to find out how many people there are in the country and to learn all about them. They were all to go back to their own towns where they were born and write down their names in the big Government book. So Joseph had to go a three days' journey to his native town Bethlehem, the town where King David had lived in olden days. And he took Mary with him. That is how it happened that "Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the King."

V

HOW JESUS CAME

AS I thought there in Nazareth about that ancient story, and how Joseph and Mary started on their journey to Bethlehem, I thought I would go to Bethlehem too, and see the very place where Jesus was born long ago. So I started from Nazareth in the early morning down the road where they had gone, 100 miles of hills and valleys where great things had happened long before their day in Old Testament stories, and I arrived in Bethlehem on Christmas Day, on Jesus' birthday!

Bethlehem is far down in the south, about five miles from Jerusalem. (Look at the map.) Those last five miles as I came near to Bethlehem were very interesting to me. For I could see in my mind that day long ago, when on that very bit of road was passing a straggling procession of travellers for the Census, some on foot, some on donkeys and camels, and amongst them a young countrywoman wearily riding, with her husband beside her leading the ass. And all around were more of the interesting places where things had happened in the Old Testament stories. Joseph, of course, knew

HOW JESUS CAME

all about them. He had walked and played all around there when he was a boy. And I think he would point them out to Mary as they passed.

As I thought of Joseph pointing them out to Mary I looked around to see them for myself. And I saw just where Joseph and Mary were looking at that day, where Ruth gleaned in the fields of Boaz, and where David, the shepherd boy, was minding his sheep that day when the lion and the bear came after them. That hollow to the right near the village is the place where the three brave men had risked their lives to bring David a drink of water from the well of Bethlehem. Here beside the road I saw Rachel's tomb, that spot sacred to all Jews where the light of Jacob's life went out that day when, as he says, "Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan, and I buried her by the roadside on the way to Ephrath" (which is Bethlehem).

Now they come to the white houses of Bethlehem and Joseph must hurry to find rest and shelter for his companion. These last few miles had been very tiring for her. I suppose he expected to stay with old friends in his native town. But the place was crowded with travellers for the Census. No place anywhere, not even in the inn.

Poor Joseph did not know where to go. At last he came on a stable in one of the caves with asses and camels tied up for the night, and there he found an empty stall and piled up a bed of hay and brought in his poor tired young wife to rest. And there that night in her loneliness and pain, with no kind woman to help

A BOYS AND GIRLS LIFE OF CHRIST

her, her baby was born. “She brought forth her Son and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes”—there was no one else to do it—and laid Him in the manger with the cattle around Him for His first infant sleep. That is how the Lord from Heaven entered this world that first Christmas night.

Did ever a baby enter this world more humble and helpless! And somehow I think we love Him the better for it. One would think that if the Lord of Heaven should humble Himself to come down to earth, at any rate we should expect Him to be born in a palace with princesses around Him and high priests in attendance. I think I love Him best this way, a helpless winsome little baby whom nobody noticed, as if trusting Himself to us, wanting us to be fond of Him.

That is the tremendous thing, the lovely, wonderful, joyous thing which happened that Christmas night when “Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the King.” And because of it in all the ages since, the thoughts of the whole Christian world turn every year at Christmas time to that little town. For nineteen hundred years past from all over the world, Christian travellers have been crowding every year to the little town of Bethlehem to see the place where Jesus was born.

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold Him
Born the King of angels;

HOW JESUS CAME

O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

In their loving reverence they have built a big church over the place, a big, ugly church which really spoils the whole picture. I wish they had let it alone, though I cannot help feeling with them in their desire to do honor to their dear Lord. But as I thought of the vast crowds, the great ones and the humble ones who have kept His birthday there for nineteen hundred years, I could not help thinking of His first lonely little birthday to which nobody troubled to come.

But that thought passed as I came out of the great church and saw in the sunny plain below the Field of the Shepherds with its wonderful story. It was not true, after all, that nobody troubled to come to His birthday.

For if princesses and high priests did not come to His birthday, there were visitors a thousand times greater who came. Just as He opened His eyes in that shabby old stable, suddenly came the distant sound of music sweeter than ever heard on earth, and outside over the stable and over the fields around the air was full of lovely white angels rejoicing and singing glad songs of welcome. For near by in the pasture fields under the stars, the Bible says, "There were shepherds abiding in the fields keeping watch over their flocks by night"—rough-looking shepherds in their loose cloaks sitting around the fire which they had built to keep them warm and to frighten away the wolves. Just common ordinary shepherds at their common ordinary work.

A BOYS AND GIRLS LIFE OF CHRIST

I don't know why anything wonderful should happen to them. I think that very likely they were religious shepherds talking, perhaps, and wondering about the prophecies in their Bible about the Great One who was some day to come from Heaven. Then as they sat looking up into the deep blue sky, spotted all over with glittering stars, suddenly there was a glory in the sky above them like what you sometimes see at evening in a glorious sunset. And as they sprang to their feet, pointing to the sky, they were gazing at a lovely angel with wide outstretched wings sailing down the sky—they were listening to the sweetest voice ever heard on earth. "Fear not," said he, "for, 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."—"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good-will to men!"

It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth
To touch their harps of gold;
Peace on the earth, good-will to men
From heaven's all-gracious King;
The world in solemn stillness lay
To hear the angels sing.

The poor shepherds, of course, were astonished and frightened. They did not know at first what it all meant. But we know. And we know who those lovely white angels were. They were the people of Jesus' world

HOW JESUS CAME

beyond the sky, who had been watching for years while their world was preparing for Jesus to go down to earth, and now, when the time had come, they broke through in their gladness to rejoice over the world to which their Lord had come.

I think now, as we close this chapter, you might read over in your Bible that little story of the angels (Luke ii. 8-14), and try to picture it in your minds and try to think why the angels were so glad for us and why we should be glad for ourselves that the Son of God came down to visit our world on that first Christmas night long ago.

ONE OF OURSELVES

I am thinking of that helpless little baby lying in his mother's lap, smiling into his mother's face, kicking his little heels about, not able to do anything for himself nor caring to do anything, just a little helpless baby like one of ourselves.

And as I look and wonder I begin to see the lovely thing he has done, the lovely meaning of Jesus coming to us. He might have come as a compassionate stranger, an outsider looking down in pity and saying, "You poor people, I pity you, I am sorry for you and I want to help you." But Jesus said, "No; I am not going to be an outsider, I am coming right into their lives, coming right into the family as one of themselves."

That is why the little baby is there in his mother's lap. That little baby is the brother of all little babies. The growing child is the brother of all other children. You bigger boys and girls are the brothers and sisters of Jesus. The carpenter is the comrade of all the working men, bearing his troubles, sweating at his work just like the others. He is no stranger, just the elder brother of the family.

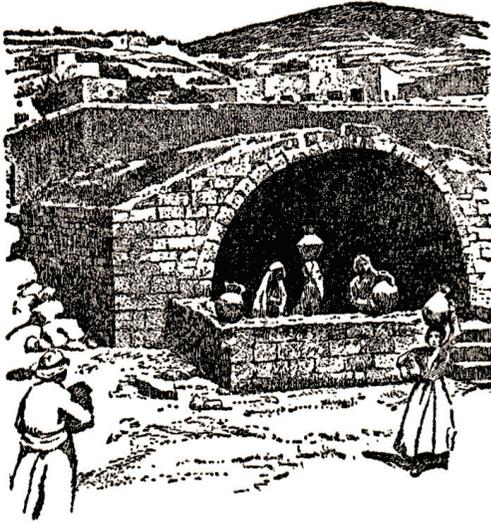
Just as you in your own family would love to see

ONE OF OURSELVES

your brothers and sisters happy and would be troubled at any bad thing happening to any of them, so with Jesus in the great human family He was born into. They were His brothers and sisters. He took the care of them all on His shoulders. He wanted His brothers and sisters to be happy and good. He wanted to help them up to God. He loved them. He cared for them. He cared so much that at last He laid down His life for them. And then after He went back to Heaven He kept the family on His heart for ever. He was still their Elder Brother though He was the Lord of Heaven.

Now do you see the exquisitely lovely way that Jesus came to us, not as a Visitor, not as an Outsider, but as one of the family, that little baby that grew up amongst us as one of ourselves.

Of all the wonders in the story of Jesus, is there anything more wonderful than this, that the Lord of Heaven was born into our family One of ourselves!



Mary's well in Nazareth.

THE SECOND BOOK

*How He grew up as a Boy in Nazareth
and afterwards worked at a carpenter's
bench to support His widowed mother.*



Nazareth

I

HIS BOYHOOD IN NAZARETH

AFTER that wonderful Christmas night, when the angels had gone back into Heaven leaving their Lord behind them here to start His human life as a little baby, we see but little of the Divine Child. There is a story which I don't quite understand about Wise Men from the East following a star and coming to worship Him. They thought the new-born Child was to be King of the Jews. And the wicked King Herod got frightened at their questions, for he thought this Child might take away his kingdom.

So he tried to find Him, and when he could not he sent soldiers down to kill all the little baby boys in Bethlehem, hoping to kill Jesus. That was an awful night for the poor mothers of Bethlehem. But the Child Jesus was not there, for Joseph and Mary had warning and had fled away with Him into Egypt, and there they stayed till the cruel old King was dead. By and by they got back to their old home in Nazareth beside the carpenter's shop, and there in that little mountain village Jesus was reared up.

A BOYS AND GIRLS LIFE OF CHRIST

So we come back to Nazareth. How we should love to know the story of Jesus' childhood in Nazareth, all the delightful things that mothers tell about their children and, as He grew older, all the boy life with His comrades, the games and play and excursions together that boys love to think about. One feels disappointed that the Bible does not tell us that story. Perhaps because the writers had not known Him as a boy. Perhaps because they had so much more important things to tell. Except for one thing that happened when He was twelve years old we are only told, "the Child grew and waxed strong, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him."

And yet I feel that you are right in wishing to know about His life when He was about your own age. We like to know all we can about anyone that we really care for. And I think I know enough to picture His boyhood in my mind and help you to see it. For I know that He grew up like any ordinary Jewish boy and I know how other Jewish boys grew up in Nazareth.

So first I look at Nazareth as I saw it that day when I went up the hills of Galilee. Except for some changes in the houses of the town, the whole scene remains very much as Jesus saw it every day.

I see that little mountain town when Jesus lived there nestling white against the dark hills behind. I see those narrow, crooked streets that He saw, and the houses outside among the fields and gardens, and the vineyards on the terraced hills, and the green valleys bright in the springtime with lily and larkspur and

HIS BOYHOOD IN NAZARETH

dogrose and white anemone and all the lovely wild flowers of Northern Palestine in the springtime. There are the children playing in the streets and the girls in the evening at the village well, and out on the roads the country people in their queer dresses who, many of them, knew the Boy and were fond of Him. And the birds of the air that He often talks about; many of them birds that we know ourselves, the lark and the thrush and the robin and the crowds of common sparrows that He says God takes notice of, though He says you could buy them in the Nazareth market at two for a farthing. There I see the very mountain paths of His long walks, and the hill behind the town where on clear days He could see Mount Tabor and Mount Hermon and the mountains of Gilboa, where Saul and Jonathan died in that famous battle of Gilboa, and the highlands of Galilee spread out like a map, and far away the dark waters of the Mediterranean Sea.

That is Nazareth, His home. That is the boy world of Jesus which He thought of so often in later days. In the carpenter's cottage in one of these streets He lived, a natural human boy in a natural human family. In these fields and crooked streets He played with His comrades. On these mountain paths He walked and thought great thoughts as He grew up.

I think it must have been a wonderful time for His mother—often rather a puzzling time. You see, she knew what other people did not know. Just think of her listening to His childish talk and teaching Him His prayers and watching as He played with other boys or swept up the shavings in the carpenter's shop—and all

the time with the wondering thought in her mind of the great things which the angel had told her.

Shall I tell you what used to puzzle me when I was young? I wonder if it puzzles you. How could these things be if she thought of Him as God from Heaven? How could she ever train Him up as her child and teach Him and tell Him to do things? How could He ever grow up as a natural human boy with other boys?

I can see now, as I study my Bible more carefully, that she did not yet think of Him as God. She only learned that great secret later. She knew that He came from Heaven. She knew that He was the Great One whom God had sent to help the world. But I am sure she did not understand till long afterwards the full meaning of the angel's message—the tremendous secret that He who came from Heaven as a little child was actually the Lord from Heaven Himself.

I don't think even the Child Himself at first understood who He was or thought of Himself as God. It was only as He grew up that He remembered and knew. It was meant that He should grow up as a natural human boy, that He should play with His comrades as a boy like themselves. I don't know what strange thoughts might sometimes come to Him, visions, perhaps, in His dreams of some world of light and beauty that He seemed dimly to remember. I only know that He felt Himself a natural boy like you.

All this is very hard for you to understand. But you cannot help that. The whole story of Jesus is hard to understand—that God became Man and lived with men

HIS BOYHOOD IN NAZARETH

for thirty years that they might, in some degree, get to know Him and understand Him and love Him.

II

SOME PICTURES OF HIS BOYHOOD

NOW I am seeing pictures in my mind of that Nazareth childhood. If you shut your eyes and think hard you can make those pictures with me. I see His mother at night putting her child to bed, teaching Him His prayers, and telling Him what she knew about God, and always with that thought in her mind of what the angel had said to her.

Then I think of the Boy, six years old, going to the village school with His companions. I see them, not sitting at a school desk like yours, but seated in a half-circle on the floor, as Eastern children sit while the teacher taught the lesson. I wonder what sort of man was that village rabbi who had the teaching of Jesus. Was he a stupid old man? Was he a wise, thoughtful man, who knew and understood children?

The American poet Longfellow was once making this picture in his mind, as I am doing now, of Jesus at school and of His teacher:—

SOME PICTURES OF HIS BOYHOOD

“Come hither, Judas Iscariot,
Say if thy lesson thou hast got
From the rabbinical book or not.

* * * * *

And now, little Jesus the carpenter’s son,
Let us see how Thy task is done,” etc.

Nearly all the teaching was out of the Bible. Jewish writers tell us of children’s little books, such as the Story of Genesis. The children learned by heart their “Shema” which is like our Creed. For hymns they learned the easy simple psalms just as you know them. For history lessons they had the story of what God did for their country in olden days. You can read in your Bible in the Old Testament the very history lessons that Jesus learned by heart. When He was older He learned to read them for Himself in His Bible. But you could not read them. They were in queer square big letters and He had to read them backward! Jewish books are all read backward. Here is a bit of one of His older lesson books which you can read backward as He did.

בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ
earth the and heavens the God made beginning the In

Now you can feel proud that you have learned a lesson in Hebrew. If any of your friends are inclined to boast of their cleverness you can quietly remark that you have been reading part of the Hebrew Bible to-day!

After school don’t you like to think of Him “playing in the market-place”? It seems to bring Him so close to ourselves. Just think of it. Jesus, our blessed Lord in Heaven, the children’s Lord and the children’s Friend,

A BOYS AND GIRLS LIFE OF CHRIST

once was a child and played at His merry games like you. Surely He would understand the feelings of children in school or at play, in happiness or in trouble. Nobody understands a child as Jesus does. I came one day on a delightful discovery—Jesus, as a man, remembering the games of His childhood.

In the child world of long ago they seemed to play the same sort of games and sing the same sort of rhymes as children do to-day. One often hears young children dancing in a ring and singing “London Bridge is broken down,” or “Round and round the mulberry bush.” Just like that you might have heard the Nazareth children long ago singing in their game of “Weddings and Funerals”:

“We have piped and ye *non rakedtoon*,
We have mourned and ye *non arkedtoon*.”

And long afterwards Jesus remembered that little rhyme one day when He was preaching.¹ He was blaming the people for their foolishness. “You are just like a set of children,” He said, “playing in the market-place and calling to each other:

“We have piped and ye *non rakedtoon*,
We have mourned and ye *non arkedtoon*.”

It means in English,

“We have piped unto you and ye have not danced,
We have mourned unto you and ye have not wept.”

We cannot make it rhyme in English or in the Greek language of the New Testament, but it does rhyme in

¹Luke vii. 32.

SOME PICTURES OF HIS BOYHOOD

the language of the Nazareth children. It must have been the song of a children's game, and I shall never again hear village children singing in the market-place without thinking of that rhyme and the child Jesus at play.

I think those little memories of His childhood often came back at other times too when He was a man. In one of His sermons He told of a woman making bread and mixing leaven into three measures of meal. I have often wondered why He said *three measures*; probably it was because that was the amount His mother used every week for her bread-making.

So I think of that mother making her bread and a little boy no higher than the bread-board running His fingers through the meal and asking His childish questions as to what His mother was doing and why she was mixing leaven in it. I think that childish memory was in His mind when He told of the woman mixing leaven in three measures of meal. We older people have often little childish memories like that coming back in our minds.

By and by as He grew bigger I can picture Him in the older games of boyhood, or tramping over the hills with some of the more thoughtful boys. I wonder what they talked about.

I remember a little story I once heard of Jesus and the Nazareth boys. It is not in the Bible. I don't know where it comes from, but it is a true picture of what Jesus was like. We learn afterwards that He could always

see any little good in people whom others thought all bad.

This story tells that the boys one day saw a little dog dead by the roadside. "What an ugly little brute," they said. "What a nasty smell!" Then young Jesus came up. "Oh, what lovely white teeth," said He. "They are whiter than ivory." You see He just saw at once the only beautiful thing in that ugly little dog. That was just like Him when He met people afterwards that other people thought were altogether bad. If there was any little bit of good in them He would see it at once. He always looked for the good in everybody.

One caution I must give you before this chapter closes. We have been thinking of Our Lord in His childhood, in home and school and play as a natural human boy like ourselves, not yet thinking who He really was or the reason why He was here on earth. But we must not make too free with our thoughts of Him. We must always keep in mind who He really was. I suppose the other Nazareth boys, His comrades whom He played with, thought of Him as just one of themselves, braver perhaps and better and more pleasant as a comrade—one who never did or thought anything mean or cowardly or unkind. But still an ordinary Nazareth boy. They knew no better.

But we know better and must always reverently keep in mind that this was really the Lord from Heaven growing up to bless the whole world for ever.

God was very close in the heart of that Divine Boy. He must always have felt happy in the presence of the

SOME PICTURES OF HIS BOYHOOD

Father in Heaven. In all the enjoyment of play with His comrades He would feel that the Father in Heaven was looking on them and loving them and liked to see them happy in their play. All children ought to feel that. But nobody would feel it as He did because He knew. And all the world around He would feel as His Father's world. He saw God everywhere. Everything was teaching Him His lovely happy religion.

I think of Him out on the hillside seeing God's green hills and pleasant streams, and God's sun coming to light the world and sinking at evening in crimson glory into the Great Sea; seeing the Father's birds and flowers and beasts, and delighting in them and loving them, and feeling that the Father also delighted in them and loved them. In all His teaching afterwards He makes us feel this. He tells us that God is behind it all, interested in it all. That God loves the little lambs sporting in the fields. That God watches the poor sheep going astray. God feeds the birds of the air which toil not neither do they spin. God sees the young sparrow fallen out of the nest. He clothes the grass of the field. He paints for His pleasure the wild flowers of the hillside so that "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

Surely Jesus, who knows our child-world so well, would like us all to have that same happy childlike religion with the thought of that kindly Father so near to us always. Surely Jesus was a happy Child in that free, simple boyhood in Nazareth before the thought of the world's sin and pain began to press upon His heart. So gradually humanly, as the Bible says, "the Child grew

A BOYS AND GIRLS LIFE OF CHRIST

and waxed strong in spirit, and the grace of God was upon Him, and daily He grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and Man.”



Carrying water from the well.