SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

LESSON XIII.—DEC. 24, 1911.

Jesus Born in Bethlehem—Christmas Lesson.—Matt. 2: 1-12.

Commentary.— I. The coming of the wise men (vs. 1, 2). 1. When Jesus was born—The month and the day of Christ's birth are not definitely known, but the date now accepted, December 25, B. C. 4, corresponds to the facts which we have bearing upon the event. It appears inconsistent to say Christ was born four years before Christ, but it must be borne in mind that during several centries after the coming of Christ there was no uniformity among nations in reckoning time. Finally, in the sixth century, a learned monk, Dionysius Exiguus, was appointed to ascertain the time of Christ's birth, and it was ordered that history should be dated from that time; but Dionysius, who first published his calculations in A. D. 526, put the birth of Jesus about four years too late. In Bethlehem—Bethlehem means "House of bread." Bethlehem was situated six miles south of Jerusalem. Of Judea—There was another Bethlehem, which was situated in Galilee (Josh. xix. 15). The name Judea was given to the region comprising the southern part of Palestine. The greater part of Judea was formerly the territory occupied by the tribe of Judah. Herod—Herod the Great. He was an Edomite, and although a proselyte to the Jewish religion, was notorious for his wickedness and cruelty. He reigned thirty-seven years in Judea, and died a few months after the birth of Christ. At this time "the sceptre was departing from Judea, a sign that the Messiah was now at hand." Wise men—Or magi. "Originally a class of priests among the Medes and Persians, who formed the king's privy council." They were men of learning and wealth. Augustine and Chrysostom say there were twelve magi, but the common belief is there were but three. "The Persian magi believed in a Messiah or future Saviour, who should in the latter day appear and renew the world in righteousness."—Whedon. From the east—Perhaps from Media, or Persia, or possibly from Arabia. To Jerusalem—It was natural for them to expect to find Jesus, the new born King, in the Jewish capital. They had reason to suppose that the birth of a king would be generally known.

2. Where is he—This inquiry in Jerusalem brought Jesus into popular notice and called attention to the fact that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. Born King of the Jews—This was a title unknown to the earlier history of Israel and applied to no one except the Messiah. It reappears in the inscription over the cross.—Carr. Notice that Jesus was "born" a king. His star—Many interpreters, especially those who seek to eliminate the supernatural, explain the "star" or "sidereal appearance" by a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn, which occurred in May, B. C. 7, and again in December, with Mars added. It is, however, much more in harmony with all the facts to believe that the star which attracted the attention of the magi was provided for the occasion. To worship him—To do him homage. They were bold to confess the object of their coming.

II. Herod's distress and plot (vs. 3-8).

3. Heard these things—The inquiry of the wise men for the infant King was reported to Herod at once, and created a profound sensation. Was troubled—The remembrance of his past deeds of cruelty and oppression, and his knowledge of the Roman policy in making frequent changes in the rulers of her provinces combined to arouse his fears that his tenure of office was exceedingly uncertain. He feared that the King whom the wise men had come to worship was about to displace him. All Jerusalem with him—Fearing that he would make this an occasion for renewing his acts of bloodshed. 4. Had gathered—He assembled the Sanhedrin.—Lightfoot. Chief priests—This expression probably comprehends the acting high priest and his deputy, those who had been high priests—for at this time the office was often transferred by the Roman authorities—and "the heads of the twenty-four sacerdotal families, which David had distributed into so many courses." Scribes—The learned interpreters of the Mosaic law and the collectors of the traditions of the elders. Many of them were Pharisees. Demanded of them. Where the Christ (R. V.)—Or the Messiah, the official title of the promised deliverer. "The wise men had said nothing about the Christ, or the Messiah, but only about the King of the Jews. Herod saw that this King must be the expected Messiah."

5. By the prophet—The prophecy is found in Mic. 5: 2. 6. Art in no wise least (R. V.)—Micah says, "Though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel." This made Bethlehem "in no wise least." Although Bethlehem was little, yet it was exalted above all the other cities of Israel." This made Bethlehem "in no wise least." Although Bethlehem was little, yet it was exalted above all the other cities of Israel. The princes—"The thousands" (Mic. 5: 2.) The tribe had been subdivided into thousands, and over each subdivision there was a chieftain or prince.—Morison. A Governor—To control and rule. Who shall be shepherd (R. V.)—To feed and care for his flock as a shepherd. Christ is both Shepherd and King. My people Israel—Israel was God's people in a peculiar sense. 7. Privily called—Herod desired to keep the time of Christ's birth as secret as possible lest the Jews, who hated him, should take occasion to rebel. Enquired of them diligently—"Learned of them exactly."—R. V. He inquired of them the exact time and received positive information as to the time the star appeared. Assuming that the star apepared when the child was born, he would thus have some idea of the age of the child. 8. He sent them—He assumed control; but they followed the directions of the Lord. Search diligently—Herod was honest in making this charge to them; he greatly desired to receive definite word concerning the new King. And worship him also—Herod had no desire to worship Jesus. His only object in desiring to know about him was that he might put him to death, but he was to be defeated in his cruel purpose.

III.—The Finding of Jesus (vs. 9-12). 9. the star . . . went before them—The same star which they had seen in their own country now again appears. The star had disappeared for a time, and this led them to inquire in Jerusalem for the young King whom they sought. Supernatural helps should not be expected where ordinary means are to be had. stood over—The star pointed out the very house.—Benson 10. they rejoiced—The Greek is very emphatic. They rejoiced exceedingly because they saw they were about to find the child, and because they had such unmistakable proof of being in divine order. That alone is enough to cause rejoicing. 11. fell down—They prostrated themselves before him according to the eastern custom. "In this act the person kneels and puts his head between his knees, his forehead at the same time touching the ground. It was used to express both civil and religious reverence."—Clarke. gifts—The people of the East did not approach into the presence of kings without bringing them presents. The custom still prevails in many places. gold, etc.—Gold would always be useful, while frankincense and myrrh were prized for their delicious fragrance. These were the very presents Isaiah mentioned: "All they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense" (Isa. 60:6). "Incense, or frankincense, is a resinous gum, flowing from a tree, gashed for the purpose, growing in Arabia and Lebanon. Myrrh is also a gum obtained from a tree in Arabia."—Whedon.

12. warned of God in a dream—God communicated his purpose to them in a manner that they understood, and the impression or conviction was so clear that they at once obeyed. should not return to Herod—The command had been given them by Herod to return to him with a report regarding the child Jesus, but now there came a command from a higher source not to return to Herod. God could have preserved the life of the infant Saviour, even if Herod had known all the facts about him, yet he saw fit to blend human agency with divine in his protection. another way—They could easily have gone east from Bethlehem, and thus returned to their homes without going back to Jerusalem.

Questions—Where was Jesus born? When? Who was king of Judea? What was the character of the king? Who came to Jerusalem seeking for Jesus? From whence did they come? Why was Jesus called King of the Jews? How had the wise men been led in their search? Why was Herod troubled? Why was Jerusalem troubled? Whom did Herod gather together? For what purpose? What charge did Herod give the wise men? Why? How did they approach Christ? What warning was given to the wise men? After leaving Jesus, what did the wise men do? How are we rewarded for seeking Jesus?

PRACTICAL SURVEY.

Topic.—The vital question.

I. Propounded by wise men.

II. Investigated by rulers.

III. Solved according to scripture.

I. Propounded by wise men. "Where is he?" No greater subject ever engrossed the attention of mortals than pressed upon the wise men who journeyed to Jerusalem in search of him who was "born King of the Jews." The inquiry of the wise men was pointed and direct. It admitted no doubt as to the actual birth of a new king. Their question was important. It meant that a change was at hand. It touched the interests of all he world and inspired glorious hope to believing hearts. The faith of the wise men stood in strong contrast between the Gentiles and the unbelief of the Jews had been fully verified in the course of history. The first chapter of this gospel points out the part of the Jewish people had in connection with the Messiah. His genealogy and birth show that salvation was of the Jews. This second chapter presents the interests of the Gentile world in Christ. The star was the first ray of light to the Gentile world. The wise men were not in fear of any loss by the advent of a new king, though he was born of another nation. They were not guilty of any crimes against his people and so they were beneffited by each new revelation respecting him. They were not only wise for their much learning but because they sought full enlightenment regarding God's revelation to the world of which they had gained only a faint glimmer. Their course had been straightforward since the first light fell upon them. From the first to the last they were divinely guided. They were encouraged in their hopes by an inward inspiration. The star had given testimony. Their hearts credited that token and they went to Jerusalem, the centre of Jewish worship, to gain a more perfect knowledge.

BANK OF MONTREAL

Ninety-Fourth Annual Meeting of Shareholders.

The Bank of Montreal has just completed 94 years of business in Canada, which in the history of a young country is no inconsiderable period. The 94th annual meeting was held on December 4th, with President R. B. Angus in the chair. In many ways the meeting was one of the most memorable in the history of the bank, owing to the fact that the net profits for the year were the largest on record and that the retirement of Sir Edward Clouston as general manager was announced. Another feature of more than ordinary interest was the re-adjustment of the values of the bank premises. For years these were valued at $600,000, but a recent appraisal increased this to $4,000,000. The $3,400,000 thus secured was partly used in increasing the rest account, which now stands at a sum equal to the paid-up capital, while the balance was carried to the profit and loss account.

The total assets of the bank now stand at $230,000,000, making it one of the strongest financial institutions on the continent. A more detailed examination of the report shows that the net profits for the year amounted to $2,276,518, as compared with $1,797,992 for the previous year. The balance of profit and loss carried forward for the present year was $1,855,185, or practically double the figures for 1910, which amounted to $961,789. Premiums on new bank stock issued by the bank during the year amounted to $365,677, while the re-adjustment of the bank premises account brought in an additional $3,400,000. Thus a total of slightly over $7,000,000 was made available for distribution this year, of which $1,440,000 was expended in dividends, $3,000,000 credited to the rest account and $708,000 to new premises account, leaving a balance of $1,855,000 to be carried forward as balance of profit and loss. A further examination of the report shows that the bank has deposits bearing interest of nearly $136,000,000, while its deposits now bearing interest amount to over $46,000,000. The amount of call and short loans in Great Britain and the United States consists of over $42,600,000, while the current loans and discounts in Canada and elsewhere amount to over $121,000,000. The latter shows an increase of over $9,000,000, which indicates that the bank continues to do its full share in furthering the development of the country and that it continues to grow with the country. To call and short loans which the bank keeps in New York and London, while returning only a small rate of interest, is found to be a wise provision. The call of these loans placed in London and New York is far less disturbing to Canadian business than if they were on call in Canada.

Altogether the showing made by the Bank of Montreal is a very satisfactory one and reflects the highest credit upon the directors and upon the general manager, who is now relinquishing the position which he has held for so many years. His successor will be Mr. H. V. Meredith, who has been associated all his life with the bank, whose affairs he will in future direct.

The address of President R. B. Angus was, as usual, a careful resume of the financial, commercial and industrial expansion of the Dominion. The Bank of Montreal, with its many branches scattered throughout the country and its intimate relationship with every phase of our national life, is able to present authoritative reports regarding the country's growth and development. Without exception this year's report by the president was full of optimism. That this was not unfounded is shown by the bank's record for 1911, which was the most successful in the 94 years of its history.

CHRISTMAS SNOWDRIFT.

The term Christmas box was first used in England in 1611.

The goose, as a Christmas dish, comes from Scotland.

There is no historical mention of a Christmas tree before 1605.

Peacocks at one time took the place of turkeys on the Christmas table.

Last year 3,700 tons of Christmas evergreens entered London, their aggregate cost being about £33,000.

Christmas cards are a comparatively modern institution. The idea came from the French New Year cards.

Paris uses fifty thousand Christmas trees each year, of which about twelve thousand are bought by foreigners residing in Paris.

In the old days plum pottage—the original form of plum pudding—was always served with the first course of a Christmas dinner.

The largest Christmas candles made are nearly six feet high, weigh about forty pounds, are of pure white beeswax and cost five pounds apiece.

"Tree gangway" is usually a special Christmas privilege aboard ship in the navy. It means that any or all can go ashore as they please.

Mistletoe is common in several parts of the world. It is extremely plentiful on several apple trees in Normandy and Brittany.

In Devonshire the Yule log is known as the Ashton faggot. The faggot is composed of a bundle of ash sticks bound with nine bands of the same wood.

The great event of the old Christmas dinner four or five hundred years ago was the entry of the chief cook bearing the boar's head, garnished with rosemary.

The first Christmas tree in a British Royal palace was in the reign of George IV. Lord John Russell was present, and speaks of the tree being covered with colored candles.

Turkeys, mince pies and plum puddings are now regarded as the chief items in the Christmas dinner; but at one time they were mere side dishes in an enormous number of courses.

IF I WERE SANTA CLAUS.

If only I were Santa Claus I'd travel
east and west
To every hovel where there lies a
little child at rest;
I'd drive my reindeer over roofs
they'd never trod before,
I'd seek the tenements where sleep
the babies on the floor;
Where rags are stuffed in broken
panes to keep the wind away,
And where a warm and cozy room
is never known to-day.
For even there I know I'd find hung
up and stockings small
As signs that they expected me on
Christmas Eve to call.

If only I were Santa Claus, I'd pass
the mansions by
And seek the cold and cheerless homes
where pale-faced youngsters lie;
And as they slept I'd pause a while
and, bending low, I'd kiss
The lips of every little tot—not one
of them I'd miss;
And then I'd fill their stockings full
of toys and sugar plums,
And leave them sleighs and skates and
doll and Teddy bears and
drums.
I would not pass a cottage by, but
I would try to be
A Santa Claus to every tot who still
has faith in me.

If only I were Santa Claus—I'd make
the mothers glad,
The dear, hard-working mothers who
at Christmas time are sad;
The kind and patient mothers, who
rock their babies to sleep,
And through the lonely hours of
night sob bitterly and weep.
They see their precious little ones
half clad and hungry, too,
Knowing the sorrow that must come
to them when night is through;
To every mother's face I'd bring the
smiles once more, and we
Would spend a while together at her
babies' Christmas tree.

A CHRISTMAS COMMANDMENT.

(By Albert Frederick Wilson.)

This then shall make the Christmas heart: Love strewn like red, red roses across the Christmas dawn; not barter love, like merchandise exchanged upon the market places; but love thrown free and large from out the heart's red garden. Great handfuls scattered generously, yet tenderly, that Youth may not trample nor Old Age look with cynic eye. Love strewn like red roses; that the clutching hand may drop its sweated gold to place the red, warm bloom within a rusted bosom; that the barren hand in every hut and hovel may reach out and grasp its first real treasure. Yea, this shall make the Christmas heart.

And these shall make the Christmas prayer: Lips all sweet with gratitude; hands all strong from the workshop's close comradery; feet that are weary from field and street; backs that bend beneath the Samaritan load. Yea, these shall make the Christmas prayer.

And these shall make the Christmas carol: The prodigal's song upon the old home road; the scraping of ten thousand chairs in city barracks, where Salvation Army boards complain beneath the feast; the tread of giffolk upon the tenements' dark stairways; the laughter of little children in toyland's mystic realms; silver bells across the hills of snow; the whole glad world's pure ecstasy. Yea, these shall make the Christmas carol.

PURE MADE IN CANADA WHOLESOME

MAGIC BAKING POWDER

CONTAINS NO ALUM

RELIABLE ECONOMICAL

The Bride's First Christmas.

Mrs. John Vincent Harris entered the big department store and seated herself at the nearest counter. "No, nothing, thank you," she said to the solicitous clerk. "I just want to make sure I have my list with me. It is so difficult to shop at this time of the year, and it is always difficult to find anything for one's —husband. Yes, I suppose many people did their shopping earlier, but I didn't have him then. I mean—

"Why, you sell neckties, don't you? How fortunate! They are on my list. No, I don't think of any particular kind, but something for a tall man. He is a whole head taller than—You say a four-in-hand? Oh, I am afraid he couldn't tie that, but you might give me a two-in-hand. Thank you; that is very pretty, but it is blue. He doesn't like blue. Of course you couldn't know that. Not that one. Why, my papa wears them, and he is lots older. Yes, that one will do.

"Mr. Floorwalker, where are the collars? Thank you. (She approaches the counter.) You, please —are you busy? I want some collars for my husband. Oh, are these ladies' collars? How stupid! I told that man distinctly I wanted collars.

(At the right place.) "Are husbands' collars here? Well, I am glad I have found the right place at last. Size? You clerks always ask so many questions. I never bought any before, because we've been married only— No, his neck isn't very large. Why, I can reach—But he has real broad shoulders. How nice you are to think of that! Yes, a box of assorted sizes would be just the thing. Some of them would be sure to be right, and I could cut the others off—that is, if they were not too small. You'd better put in nearly all large sizes. You see, I am starting out as economical as I can be. I think it must be so discouraging for a a man to have a woman spend his money on frivolous things. Now, as I was coming down the street I saw a big sale of hats—men's hats. They had been in the window and were a little soiled, but I found such a nice clerk, and he said if I got some of that "1910" soap it would make them look like new. Mr. Harris is very particular about his clothes. He won't wear trousers unless they are pressed. So I bought three of these hats. Don't you think they will last him a long time and save money?

"Mr. Floorwalker, where are the gloves? Gentlemen's? Well, I hope he is. Why, he is my husband. Oh, I see what you mean! Yes, I want them for Mr. John Vincent Harris. (To glove salesman.) Now, don't ask me what size I want. Not too large and not too small. I should think you would learn some of the different sizes so you could tell people. (Holding out her hand.) It's lots larger than that. You think I wear a 6? Well, then, you'd better give me a 12 for him, for he can hold both my hands in one of his. Are these a special sale? Isn't 49 cents cheap for all that kid? Mine cost $2. No, I don't think he will want more than two or three pairs. Now for the hose.

(In the women's hosiery department.) "Are you busy? I have so many other things to get, please hurry. I just want to know where the other kind of hose are. It's for my husband. Thank you. (At the men's hosiery counter.) I want to get a hose—not like these, but —The size? Oh, about fifty feet. Why, of course, I want it longer than a man. I—I you don't understand. It isn't this kind I want. No, nor ladies' either. I just want a hose we can both use. Mr. Floorwalker, may I speak to you?

"That clerk isn't a bit nice, and I think you ought to punish him. No he wasn't exactly impudent, but he was too busy to answer my questions. Thank you. I have had so much trouble to find the right kind of hose. I want long—no, I've been to that counter. I want one fifty feet long. You see, we are thinking of moving to the country in the spring, and we shall want to water the yard. Oh, ought I to have asked for the common garden variety?

"Now I think I have everything on my list except cigars, and I may as well go to a cheaper place for them because John Vincent Harris always gives away all that I buy for him, he is so generous."—Chicago News.

A REAL CHRISTMAS

If yet there lurks in a dark corner of any man's heart the spirit of old Scrooge, why not re-read Dickens' classic "Christmas Carol?" And if the heart then refuse to warm to the season's cheer, Van Dyke's exquisite "The Other Wise Man" may save the day. Though there are some features of our present Christmas observances not altogether admirable, it is yet a splendid thing to put a child into the midst of this busy world, to light the candles on the tree and to distribute the gifts. And to live at least one day in the spirit of good-will—is it not an anticipation of the time when all men shall live in good-will all the days? It is December the twenty-fifth that keeps the world from growing old; every year on that day it renews its youth.

No custom is more beautiful than that of exchanging gifts. And is it not possible to preserve the giving spirit of Christmas, freed from all taint of commercialism? "It is more blessed to give than to receive" was declared many centuries ago. But when it comes to pass that he who receives a gift feels that he must give another in return, and of necessity of equal value—when Christmas giving comes to mean that I select something for my friends and my friends select something of the same value for me—it has fallen into a game of quid pro quo and has lost the genuine ring of Christian fellowship. He that gives thinking only of a return has yet to experience giving of the right sort. Let our giving be to remember friends, to cheer the lonely, to relieve the needy, and all to be in the spirit of Tiny Tim's "God bless us, every one!"

We wish all our readers a very Merry Christmas.

CHRISTMAS.

And well our Christmas sires of old
Lov'd when the year its course had
roll'd,
And brought blythe Christmas back
again,
With all its hospitable train,
Domestic and religious rite
Gave honor to the holy night
On Christmas eve the bells were rung.
Sir Walter Scott.

"21 For Dinner—And I Love It"

"Yes! Sniff all you like! Does smell good, I guess. I've been so busy these past days I haven't even had time to sniff.

"I declare I'm as excited as a child. Well, I never. Not in all my life did I see such fruit. Henry'll have to holler me out a punkin. I'll put it on the table, filled to spillin' over with oranges, apples, grapes and bananas.

"Come on, if you want, right into the kitchen. I'm all done, now. Yes, child, peek all you like. Why, I don't think that's many pies. Mary Ellen Bangs, she makes 15 kinds, but I tell Henry that's all nonsense. Ten's plenty!

"Wait! I'll name 'em to you. Mince, apple-sweetened-in, punkin, apple-sweetened-out, cranberry-tart, squash, sweet potato, lemon, raisin and cream. Then there's an apple-custard pudding and a baked chocolate one. The cakes are in the dinin' room cupboard. Want to see them? We have them in the evenin' with ice cream, when nobody feels like much.

"There's Lady Washington, and Martha's dark chocolate, and Hannah's mother's fruitcake, and gold and silver, and sponge layer, besides three kinds of jumbles. Yes, work. Why, I'm going to fix you a boxful to take home. Yes, I will so. And a cream pie. I'll warrant your husband'll like that. Men always do. There.

"Yes, there'll be 21 to sit down. We have Henry's folks for Christmas. There's too many all at once.

"Hard for me? Bless your heart! I love it! Those two big turkeys are stuffed full of pleasant thoughts besides breadcrumbs and sausage meat. All the time I've been puttin' sugar and butter and eggs and spices together, I've been just thinkin' of all the poor things that are too stylish for havin' real Christmas, any more.

"Tapers I could give thanks at dinner in a hotel, if I had to, but I always fancy to see you mind all your little words, and all politics, and there's four families to cater, all ages. And lively—don't say a word. The doin's those young ones think up— But we just like it. They come to breakfast. Yes, sir. To eat chicken and dumplings, and stay 'til late evenin'. Oh, it's a day. How they do visit, big and little.

"There's one Great Grandmother. She's wonderful. And two grandmothers, besides the mothers and fathers and all the children. And eat—Well!

"Give me a good plateful of turkey and cranb'ry jelly and vegetables, I say, and never mind the ongtrays.

"Then after dinner we rest a while, usually. The old folks just visit. The young ones go out to walk, or kick a football 'round the lot. Then when dinner's kind of settled, why we all play games and do tricks.

"Of course, it isn't all joy and gladness. There's empty places, very now and then. In the evenin' before the lamps are lighted, we talk of those that have been here, times past, so's the children shan't forget. But we don't talk mournful. We speak of how they'd want us to be happy, even without them, and how they're never forgot in our comforts. It belongs them quite close. And we are thankful for the day.

Clean, Dry Heat

Clean, dry heat, with no smoke or odor and with no flying ashes or soot—that is what you get with a Perfection Smokeless Oil Heater.

PERFECTION SMOKELESS OIL HEATER

The Perfection is the most reliable and convenient heating device you can find. It is always ready for use. There are no pipes or flues or wires to bother you. You can pick it up and take it wherever extra warmth is wanted.

Every mechanical improvement that experience could suggest was already embodied in the Perfection Heater. This year we have tried to add to its appearance. The drums are finished either in turquoise-blue enamel or plain steel, as you prefer; nickel trimmings; as ornamental as it is indispensable to comfort.

A special automatic device absolutely prevents smoking. All parts easily cleaned. Cabinet frame; handsome burner. Cool handle; damper top. Finishes exceptional; as shown by illustration similar to any system of [illegible]

The Queen City Oil Company, Limited