

Month's Department.

BIBLE LESSONS.

SUNDAY, MARCH 2ND, 1862.

Read—MATT. xxvii. 39-53: Death of Christ. EXODUS xxiii. : The Sabbatical year.
Recite—MATTHEW xxvii. 29-31.

SUNDAY, MARCH 9TH, 1862.

Read—MATT. xxvii. 24-66: The burial of Christ. EXODUS xxiv. : Israel's covenant with God.
Recite—MATTHEW xxvii. 24, 25.

"SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES."

Write down what you suppose to be the answers to the following questions.

121. What is the first disease mentioned in Scripture?

122. In the case of an Israelite becoming a servant, or slave, to a stranger, what was the manifest contrast to modern slave-trading?

Answers to questions given last week:—

119. In Egypt. See the history of Joseph in the book of Genesis.

120. Elisha. 2 Kings iv. 42-44.

Skiping and Skimming.

Two bad habits are increasing among the young folks,—some of them, at least. Why, is it bad to skip or to skim? you ask, perhaps. That depends upon how and what you skip and skim.

I find there is a great deal of skiping and skimming in the way the children read their books in these days and that is bad. It is a loose, careless, hasty way of reading, which snatches up only the story, and hardly that, leaving out all the instruction, though purpose of the book, and making pretty much all of it a confused jumble.

'We have so many books.' Yes, some of you have, and it is almost a pity, I sometimes think, for you do not value them as the few I used to have in my childhood. These few were not only read with great attention the first time; but they were read and re-read, put away, brought back and read again, and the consequence was, they made an impression. I feel their power to this day. The true way to read is first to select, or to have selected for you, a book that is worth reading; then read it carefully, thoughtfully, attentively. Read it to remember it, and read it accurately.

Let me tell you about a little boy. His aunt gave him some cards with the kings and queens of England pictured on them. Then, as he was inquisitive to know who they all were, she used to tell him the history of their different reigns, and the good and the bad things they did. Her stories interested the little boy, and he listened very attentively. As he was playing with his cards one day, his papa took one up and asked him whose face that was on the card. The little boy told him, and moreover gave a good account of that king's reign. His papa was much surprised, and asked him about another; and so he went on, and gave a correct little story of them all. Papa was very much pleased, and next day gave his little son three large volumes of English history. The child could not read yet,—he was only three years old; but he was so attentive.

When he was eight years old, this same little boy read a book, which, forty years after he quoted accurately from by memory, when writing a lecture to be delivered before a body of learned men; nor had he ever seen the book since. How carefully must he have read it! How clear it must have been in his mind! No skiping or skimming there, I reckon; no confused jumble. That little boy became a distinguished teacher, the famous Dr. Arnold of Rugby School. This is the kind of reading and hearing which makes good memories and stores up useful information.—*Family Treasury.*

To Let.

There are more things "to let" than are placarded. Hearts to let every day; old hearts, young hearts, stricken hearts—all empty—all to let.

There are heads to let; to any new thing, to isms, ologies and ists; heads without a tenant.

There are hands to let. Hands plump and fair; hands lean and brown. Those to love, these to labor; these for rags, and those for rings.

There are consciences to let; elastic, accommodating, caoutchouc; at five per cent a month, sixty per cent a year. To let on bond and mortgage, and a pound of flesh.

And so it goes, from sods to souls; almost everything to let; almost everything with its price; everything in the market but griefs. They are never quoted, never at a premium, never "to let."

Playing Cards.

No devoted, praying Christian ever yet countenanced the use of cards, even as an apparently innocent amusement to fill out an hour of relaxation, or of social enjoyment. The tendencies of their use are too apparent. The unholy purposes to which they are put, and the many souls ruined in time and eternity, by their fascinating influences and associations, point to possible results to the young who may indulge in them, too direful to be overlooked by a clear-sighted, spiritual mind. Here is an extract from

a letter from a soldier, published in the *Evangelist*, in which a lesson is given, which might benefit some of our fashionable Christians. Professors of religion playing cards! Can that man be a faithful follower of Christ, who, by his influence and example, wilfully becomes, even indirectly, an active emissary of Satan?

Hilton Head Island, Port Royal, Dec. 1, 1861.

"And now about cards. My dear father, I was overcome with anxiety, and knew not what to do on shipboard. The bunks were not fit to lie in, and to read on deck was next to an impossibility, and I had no one to talk with (as I—, I am sorry to say, had taken to cards, and was at it all the time.) I knew not what to do with myself. To walk about the ship all alone was to get the blues and feel homesick, as all that I had done wrong came in my mind, and I was the most miserable of beings. But then I turned my thoughts to my Saviour, and my burden was lightened; then I prayed to Him for His blessing and help, which soon made it flee away, and gave me new courage and strength. I determined: I would not yield to the temptation to play cards, which had come so often to my mind. But, my dear father, my resolution was like to have been overthrown; it certainly received a powerful discouragement when I went into the cabin and saw at the table at one end—who do you think? our Colonel, our own Captain, and Lieutenant—all, or all but the last known professors of religion, playing cards! And it nearly made me alter my mind about playing myself. But Satan was doomed still to disappointment, and the Christian was again free by the help of his God and Saviour.

"Thanks to my Heavenly Father, I left the ship at the end of nearly three weeks without playing a game, and I made a solemn vow with God, that, by His help, I will never touch the dangerous paste-board with black and red spots on them. Dear father, I will never play cards. O how good the Lord has been to me, and how thankful I ought to be to Him for preserving me through the storms and trials of life, and bringing me out a Christian man, as I sincerely hope."

A short Sermon on the word Malt.

The Rev. Mr. Dodd, a very worthy minister, who lived a few miles from Cambridge, had rendered himself obnoxious to many of the Cantabs (students at the Cambridge University) by frequently preaching against drunkenness; several of whom meeting him on a journey, they determined to make him preach in a hollow tree, which was near the roadside. Accordingly, addressing him with great apparent politeness, they asked him if he had not lately preached much against drunkenness. On his replying in the affirmative, they insisted that he should now preach from a text of their choosing. In vain did he remonstrate on the unreasonableness of expecting him to give them a discourse without study, and in such a place; they were determined too to take no denial, and the word MALT was given him by way of text; on which he immediately delivered himself as follows:—"Beloved, let me crave your attention. I am a little man, come at a short warning to preach a short sermon, from a small subject, in an unworthy pulpit, to a small congregation. Beloved, my text is MALT: I cannot divide it into words, it being but one; nor into syllables, it being but one; I must therefore of necessity divide it into letters, which I find to be these four, M, A, L, T. M, my beloved, is Moral; A, is Allegorical; L, is Literal; T, is Theological. The Moral is set forth to teach you drunkards good manners; therefore, M, my masters; A, All of you; L, Listen; T, To my Text. The Allegorical is when one thing is spoken, and another thing is meant. The thing spoken of is Malt; the thing meant is the juice of Malt; which you Cantabs make—M, your Master; A, your Apparel; L, your Liberty; and T, your Trust. The Literal is, according to the Letter—M, Much; A, Ale; L, Little; T, Trust. The Theological is according to the effects that it works; and these I find to be of two kinds: first in this world; secondly, in the world to come. The effects that it works in this world are, in some—M, Murder; in others, A, Adultery; in all, L, Looseness of Life; and, in some, T, Treason. The effects that it works in the world to come, are,—M, Misery; A, Anguish; L, Lamentation; and T, Torment.—And so much for this time and text. I shall improve this, first, by way of exhortation—M, Masters; A, All of you; L, Leave off; T, Tippling; or, secondly, by way of commination—M, my Masters; A, All of you; L, Look for; T, Torment. Thirdly, by way of caution, take this. A drunkard is the annoyance of modesty, the spoiler of civility, the destruction of reason, the brewer's agent, the ale-house benefactor his wife's sorrow his children's trouble, his own shame, his neighbours' scold, a walking swill-bowl, the picture of beast, and the monster of a man."

A GOOD NEIGHBOR A GREAT BLESSING.—Themistocles, intending to sell a farm, caused the cryer to proclaim that it had, amongst other commodities, a good neighbor, being assured that this one circumstance would be advantageous to the sale, and much induce the chapman to purchase it. And surely he that hath a good neighbour had a good morrow; but a minister that liveth among such hath got a rich benefice; he may acknowledge, with David (*rebus sic stantibus*), that his lot is fallen into a fair ground, and bless God that he is not brother to the Dragons and a companion to the Esbriges of the times; nor constrained, to his great grief, to dwell with Mesheek, and to have his habitation among the tents of Kedar.

The Weekly Messenger.

The weekly religious newspaper comes into the family not only as a happy handmaiden to the Bible, for enforcing a spirit of thanksgiving for all the mercies of life, but it brings us, over-crowning all, a fund of knowledge, exceedingly interesting and inestimably useful. This knowledge it finds and embodies by assiduously watching the activities which transpire in the moral and providential departments of this great and busy world. Its columns, so to speak, are an arranged map of its towns, counties, states and nations, and as nature, providence, and the spirit of grace have wrought their respective works in them, it notes them, and stating where and when, it aims truthfully to narrate them, as in circumstances and effects they have been brought to pass. To read the columns of its pages through observingly, is like walking over the length and breadth of the civilized world, learning, seeing, and hearing what has been done, and is doing, in the varied paths of this broad field.

Hence, this weekly messenger in various essential things is a great helper. It is a happy social helper. It furnishes grand ideas of the Divine control over the natural and moral world. It quickens and expands the benevolent affections. It stirs up in the soul a proper sympathy for the human family, as they alternately meet the joys and woes of life. It helps in family government. It helps in the closet. It helps in the prayer and conference meeting. It is a helper to both preacher and hearer in the sanctuary. It helps very essentially in the missionary concert. Indeed, a family cannot be placed in any moral situation where it will not prove a valuable helper.—*Congregationalist.*

About Lying.

Rev. Dr. McLeod was proceeding from the manse of D— to church, to open a new place of worship. As he passed slowly and gravely through the crowd gathered about the doors, an elderly man, with the peculiar kind of wig known in that district, bright, smooth and of a reddish brown, accosted him.

"Doctor, if you please, I wish to speak to you."

"Well, Duncan," says the venerable Doctor, "can you not wait till after worship?"

"No, Doctor, I must speak to you now, for it is a matter of conscience."

"O, since it is a matter of conscience, tell me what it is; be brief, Duncan, for time presses."

"The matter is this Doctor: Ye see the clock yonder on the face of the new church. Well, there is no clock really there—nothing but the face of a clock. There is no truth in it, but only once in twelve hours. Now, it is in my mind very wrong, and quite against my conscience, that there should be a lie on the face of the house of the Lord."

Duncan, I will consider the point. But I am glad to see you looking so well; you are not young now; I remember you for many years; and what a fine head of hair you have still!"

"Eh, Doctor, you are joking now; it is long since I have had any hair."

"O, Duncan, Duncan, are you going into the house of the Lord with a lie upon your head?"

This settled the question; and the doctor heard no more of the lie on the face of the clock.—*Scotch Anecdotes—North British Review.*

Hidden ones.

No church has a right to say there are none of God's "hidden ones" save those which are embraced by its communion. There are trees of righteousness in every part of God's vineyard. Nay, more I hope there are some growing even over the wall, not transplanted, yet bringing forth fruit to His glory.

Near a hundred years ago, an old building was pulled down in one of the cities of Switzerland. A long time before, this had been part of a Carthusian convent, tenanted prior to the great Reformation. A box was found buried in the wall, and in the box had been deposited this prayer:

"O most merciful God! I know that I can only be saved and satisfy Thy righteousness by the merit, the innocent suffering and death of Thy well beloved Son. Holy Jesus, my salvation is in Thy hands. Thou canst not withdraw the hands of Thy love from me, for they have created and redeemed me. Thou hast inscribed my name with a pen of iron, in rich mercy, and so that nothing can efface it, on Thy side, Thy hands, and Thy feet."

Now when we read this prayer over, we picture that honest-hearted old monk kneeling to repeat it in the silence of his narrow cell; and while we mourn over the mistake of his asceticism, we cannot refuse to believe that he who could pray like this must have been one of the "hidden ones" of God.

A bird has built its nest and reared its young in the letter-box of the parish of Sparham, Norfolk, England. Notwithstanding the frequent approach of the public to deposit letters, and the postman's daily calls to take them, the bird is not disturbed. Sometimes the postman has taken the letters from the bird's back.

The industrious and virtuous education of children, is a far better inheritance to them than a great estate.

Treat your enemies as if they would some time or other be your friends.

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

Letters to a Young Preacher.

LETTER xxviii: USE OF COMMENTARIES.

My Dear Brother,—

In the study of the holy Scriptures, which contains matters of infinite moment, it is desirable that, as much as may be, every man should see with his own eyes, and judge for himself. For one whose business it is to impart religious instruction to others, this is peculiarly requisite.—He who implicitly adopts the opinions of another, can not speak with the same certainty of the correctness of what he advances, as the man who impartially and attentively examines for himself.

It is desirable, therefore, that a preacher, when his text is selected, should first exercise his own skill and judgment in investigating it, and ascertaining its exact import. One that understands the original should by all means examine his text in it. Although a translation may be correct, yet it can not in every case convey to the mind all that may be learned by a careful inspection of the Hebrew or Greek. All competent judges are agreed in this. In some instances an examination of other Versions, and in different languages, may afford aid, by suggesting the exact idea. I am not aware that I ever read any considerable portion of the Scriptures in any Translation, made in any language, without deriving benefit in this respect. The best Versions have their imperfections, and sometimes fail to express the true sense; and those of an inferior order have their excellencies, and occasionally convey the meaning of the inspired original more accurately. Our Common Version is in general an improvement on that of Geneva; but the latter is sometimes preferable. For instance, in 1 Cor. iii. 9. where ours reads, "We are laborers together with God," it reads, "We together are God's laborers." This is accordant with the Greek, and with the context. The same word in the same case (Theou) is correctly rendered "God's" twice in this verse—God's husbandry—God's building. In verses 5-8 the Apostle speaks of himself and Apollos, not as "workers together with God," but as means in His hand, wholly dependent on Him for success; "Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." So in 2 Cor. vi. 1. "We then, as workers together with Him," where the supplementary words "with Him" are unnecessary; and convey an incorrect idea, the Geneva has simply "workers together." In both these texts it accords with the Versions of Tyndale, Diodati, and Ferreira. The obscurity which naturally rests on Rom. v. 7. though literally and correctly rendered, "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die," is removed by Scio, in his Spanish Version, by substituting for "a good man," "bienhechor," a benefactor. See Matth. vx. 15.

As Scripture is the safest and best expositor of itself, parallel texts, which may be found by Marginal References, or a Concordance, should be attentively compared. This may be done by every preacher; and it should never be neglected by any one.

When the passage has been thus prayerfully and attentively investigated, and the minister has formed his own conclusions, and drawn his own inferences, Commentators may be profitably consulted. Men of learning, talent, and piety, who have devoted much time and attention to the study of the sacred Oracles, with peculiar advantages, may be reasonably expected to afford assistance in the understanding of them. The affectation of despising or disregarding such aid, as unnecessary or useless, evinces arrogance and weakness. Such light as can be obtained from these writers, by a careful examination of their comments, and the reasons assigned for the views expressed, should be readily received, and diligently improved. (All this advice applies to the general study of Scripture.)

What Commentators may be most advantageously consulted, is a point on which a diversity of opinion may be expected to exist. In some respects it depends on the attainments of the preacher. If these be moderate, a plain practical Commentary will be more suitable than one of a critical kind, which would be desirable for a literary man. Without presuming to dictate, I may doubtless be permitted to offer a few suggestions with reference to some of the Commentaries in general use.

As I have perused all the Notes and practical Observations in Brown's Self-Interpreting Bible, Williams' Cottage Bible, and Edwards' Family Bible, I am prepared to speak of these from my