

Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, N. S., JANUARY 17, 1872.

THE TEACHER.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1872.

JESUS, AFTER HIS ASCENSION.

SUNDAY, January 21st 1872.

The All sufficient Lord.—2 Corinthians xii. 1-10.

SUBJECT.—The grace of the Lord Jesus is sufficient to overcome all obstacles in the way of His servants.

GOLDEN TEXT.—My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

SCRIPTURE SELECTIONS.—Deut. iii. 21-29; Matt. xxvi. 26-44.

ANALYSIS.—1. The servants of Christ are not the best judges of the condition in which they may most effectually serve Him. 2. The foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God stronger than men.

3. Prayer may be offered for what seems to be desirable, and the answer is given either in the thing sought or what is better.

EXPOSITION.—The Apostle Paul had been called on to defend his claim to the apostleship, and here as in the previous two chapters he presents the reasons for his holding the office. These manifestations of Christ to him rendered him peculiarly competent to speak on heavenly subjects. He had told of his sufferings for Christ, and now he speaks of his privileges.

It is not expedient, &c.—It would be improper for me to boast seeing what I have been. I will not speak of my own acts but I may mention the favors I have received of the Lord.

Visions.—An appearance passing before the mind showing what was to occur at some future time, or what had occurred in the past.

I knew a man in Christ, &c.—I was acquainted with a Christian. Romans xvi. 7.

It is evident that he refers to himself, but refrains from speaking more directly of himself lest he should lay himself open to the charge which had been made against him of boasting. It is not uncommon for men to speak of themselves in the third person. There was sufficient to prevent his being unduly exalted. vs. 7.

About fourteen years ago.—Making it several years after his conversion. This could not therefore have been the trance at his conversion mentioned in Acts ix. 9. It is supposed to have been whilst he was praying in the temple after his return to Jerusalem, when he was directed to return to the Gentiles. Acts xxii. 17, and intended to sustain him while on his journey.

Whether in the body I cannot tell.—He did not understand how such a revelation could be made to a person while on earth, or whether the soul had been temporarily taken from the body and carried to heaven. Acts vii. 56. It is evident that for the time he had lost all consciousness of earthly things. He did not attempt to explain it but referred it all to God.

To the third heaven.—The Jews, sometimes speak of seven heavens, and Mahomet has borrowed this idea from the Jews. But the Bible speaks but of three heavens, and among the Jews in the apostolic ages also the heavens were divided into three. (1) The aerial, including the clouds and the atmosphere, the heavens above us, until we come to the stars. (2) The stary heavens, the heavens in which the sun, moon, and stars appear to be situated. (3) The heavens beyond the stars. That heaven was supposed to be the residence of God, of angels, and of holy spirits. It was this upper heaven, the dwelling-place of God, to which Paul was taken, and whose wonders he was permitted to behold—this region where God dwelt; where Christ was seated at the right-hand of the Father, and where the spirits of the just were assembled. The fanciful opinions of the Jews about seven heavens may be seen detailed in Schoettgen or in Wetstein, by whom the principal passages from the Jewish writings relating to the subject have been collected. As their opinions throw no light on this passage, it is unnecessary to detail them here.—Barnes.

Into Paradise.—This word is used three times in the Holy Scriptures: Luke xx. iii. 43; 2 Cor. xii. 4; Rev. ii. 7. It is found in other scriptures but translated as garden. A question has arisen with some whether the Apostle means the same place by the two terms "paradise" and "the third heaven." They both doubtless refer to the place of the just men made perfect.

Not lawful for a man to utter.—It was not proper or possible to make known what

he had seen. Others have returned to earth after death but have not made known the state of the departed: Lazarus. John xi. Many saints. Matt. xxvii. 52; Enoch and Elijah. This is not required as we learn from Luke xvi. 31.

False religions have given details of what some of their devotees are represented to have seen. Mahomet's stories of what he saw are evidently an imposture. It may be asked, Why was Paul forbidden to make these revelations known? Barnes gives five reasons, which we summarise as follows: 1. It was designed for the support of Paul himself.

2. It is probable that others would misunderstand them or not comprehending would make an improper use of such knowledge.

3. There are some truths not yet communicated to men and can only be known in heaven.

4. There is quite sufficient information respecting heaven already given to enable men to seek after its enjoyments.

5. It is intended that we shall walk by faith not by sight, and exercise confidence and trust in God.

Verse 5.—Rosenmüller explains "I can indeed justly boast of my being caught up to heaven as of a thing, the whole glory of which pertains to him who has thus exalted me; but of myself, or of anything in me, I will not boast."

Verse 6.—Paul here states that if he desired to boast, it would not be empty boasting; he might speak of what he had done, and shew well-founded truthful claims which none would deny. He was willing however that his life should testify respecting him. He had no desire to make his apostolic privileges a cause of exulting.

Verse 7 shows that the Apostle had abundant reason for humility. Having so much calculated to raise him above others, he was in danger of being lifted up by pride, but means had been used to keep him humble.

A thorn in the flesh.—A sharp pointed thorn, a figure of some constant cause of irritation. There have been various conjectures as to what is here referred to. It was evidently some bodily affliction. Some have supposed that it was a periodical sickness, an attack of which he suffered at Galatia. Galatians iv. 13. Whether it was traceable to Satanic influence more than the common notion held by the Hebrews that all diseases were from him, is uncertain. Job ii. 6, 7. The effect of this "thorn in the flesh" was to "buffet" him or strike as on the face so as to produce humiliation.

Verse 8.—Wishing to be released he had repeatedly prayed to have the thorn taken away. Whether thrice means a constant recurrence of prayer for this relief, or that he had on three separate occasions made it a matter of earnest prayer does not appear. It may mean either. A similar expression is given respecting our Lord's prayer, that the cup might be removed from him. Matt. xxvi. 44. In both cases the prayer was not answered but strength was given to endure the trial. It has been so in many other cases in the experience of good men.

Verse 9 is the culmination of a better answer than that sought. It would appear that the Saviour again appeared to him or spoke to him audibly: "He said unto me." Those who feel strong in themselves are not the proper recipients of the strength of Christ. Most gladly, He was made willing and exceedingly happy to bear his affliction when he found that he would be so fully sustained. The causes of sorrow had become reversed by this promise, and assurance of support.

For Christ's sake.—This lends sweetness to all the affliction and causes of trouble, and in it would be glory and feel strong for all service of labor or suffering.

QUESTIONS.—In what had Paul been especially favored? Was this any reason for boasting on his part? What is a vision? What is a revelation? Who does he mean by "I knew a man in Christ"? What was the Jewish theory of the three heavens? Had Paul before made know this heavenly vision? Does he here use it as a source of glorying? In what does he glory? What terms does he use for the infirmities laid upon him? What effect had his trouble upon him? verse 8. What was given to him instead of relief? Was he satisfied with this answer to his prayer? How does he shew this?

Scripture Catechism, 5, 6.

"THEY NEVER SPEAK ROUGHLY."

I was walking lately with a young, unconverted friend, in whom I felt a great interest, and in the course of conversation I said:

"How many of your companions do you think are Christians?"

In reply, she gave me the names of four: J. F., A. L., M. M., and S. L.

I said: "Why do you think they are Christians?"

"Because," she replied, "they never speak roughly."

Is not this a lesson to any children of God, of the deep importance of "words"? —Exchange.

Youths' Department.

EVER TO THE RIGHT.

SONG FOR THE SCHOOL-BOYS. Ever to the right, boys, Ever to the right! Give a ready hand and true, To the work you have to do— Ever to the right.

Ever to the right, boys, Ever to the right! Never let your teachers say, Why my wishes disobey? Ever to the right.

Ever to the right, boys, Ever to the right! To every study well attend, To every schoolmate be a friend— Ever to the right.

Ever to the right, boys, Ever to the right! No known duty try to shun, Be faithful, frank to every one— Ever to the right.

Ever to the right, boys, Ever to the right! Speak the truth, the right pursue, Be honest in all you say and do— Ever to the right.

Ever to the right, boys, Ever to the right! Time is gold; do what you can, To make your mark and be a man— Ever to the right.

THE HALF-WAY PLACE.

"John," said the teacher, "have you found the beloved disciple's place in Jesus' bosom? Are you with him to-day?"

John's eyes and glad smile said even more than his "I hope so."

"And, Fred, how is it with you?"

"I guess if there is any half-way place, I'm there," said Fred, who had been halting some time between Christ and the world.

"And how long do you mean to stay there?"

"I don't know. I can't get any further."

"Ah, you mistake. Where is the half-way place? Where would it have been to the prodigal, had he stopped there? Still a long way from home. No father in sight; no home near; no food; no clothes; no fatted calf, no golden ring; the feast not made. He never would have heard those precious words, 'My son was lost and is found.' He would still have been lost. Half-way home would have been no better than the far country. But there is no half-way place. Half a Christian is still a sinner. Half way to heaven is nowhere near the pearly gates. Half-way to Christ is still on Satan's ground, for 'he that is not with me is against me.' Christ wants your whole heart or none.

"Do you like half-way friends?"

"No; I despise them."

"Do you suppose Christ wishes such friends?" Do not stop any longer where you are. If the Lord be God, serve him; if Paal, follow him.

"The half-way place, if such there be, is Satan's favorite ground."—S. S. Times

NELLY DINGLEY.

Eastwood did very little toward supporting fashion-makers or fashion-merchants. Most of the women made their own and their children's dresses; and, strange as it may seem, some of them made their husband's coats too; you would believe it if you could only have seen some of their Sunday coats, innocent as they were of any attempt to fit the human form, and free as they were from the impress of the tailor's goose!

But there were ladies there who wanted a dress-maker, and they had one,—a quite little flaxen-haired girl, who went from house to house, fitting and sewing twelve or fourteen hours a day, as her employer might require, for the modest sum of seventy five cents.

One, looking at the little dress-maker as she sat sewing, might have thought the world would have lost nothing but a pretty face by her leaving it,—there was so little worldly ambition in those kind blue eyes, so little promise of future labor in those thin white fingers. But nature often veils the noblest and strongest spirits in the frailest forms.

Nelly Dingley had come to Eastwood from a distant town, and seemed as thankful to find employment there as many women would have been to find a fortune. The minister's wife had taken her into her heart the moment she read her introduction from her own Pastor, and made her call the parsonage "home" till she was fairly established in business. When

strangers asked her if her parents were living, she always said, "My mother died four years ago," and that was all. Her gentleness commended her to the tender-hearted, and even the gossips forgave her for withholding her history. Aunt Hepsy "could not understand the girl," and frequently said so. "She isn't worldly-minded, that's certain," she said, "for she never goes to the dances at the tavern, nor yet to the sleigh-rides nor picnics, though everybody wants her; and she always goes to the weekly prayer-meeting. But I'd like to hear her talk more about religion, for 'out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;' and I'd like to have her give money to good objects, and watch o' night with sick folks, and go up to the Edwards Place and read to the poor people after the Sunday-school and the third meetin's all over, of a Sunday. She don't do any of these things, and what she can do with all the money she earns is a mystery! She must be layin' it up, so's to retire and live on it by and by; forgettin' that 'covetousness is idolatry.' And yet, for all, I can't help lovin' the young thing when I see her, and my little Dick says he wants to kiss her every Sunday, in meetin', for Christ's sake!" The week she worked for me,—Aunt Hepsy had just had her quarter century black silk made,—"I felt as if we were havin' covenant meetin' all the time,—as if it was a spiritual Thanksgivin', without any special cooking for it. She seemed to bring heaven to the house with her, and to leave it behind her. There was a sort of peace in the touch of them thin little fingers, and in the look of them soft eyes. I felt all the time as if she was singing psalms of praise in the sitting room alone; but when I'd go to the door to hear the words, she wasn't singing at all,—it was only a sort of a feeling I had, as if there was praise going up all around me! There's something very strange about that child; and if she would only talk more, and bustle about and do something in the world, I should say she was most an angel!"

Nancy Mayhew chanced to be at the Squire's making pickles and preserves when Nelly Dingley was there sewing. She pronounced her at first "a pretty little kitten;" and remarked that "though she seemed a pious little soul, the powers of darkness would never be shaken by what she'd do in the world!" But she changed her opinion before they parted. The Squire and his sons loved their wine, and they let it flow pretty freely at dinner. One day when the two humble helpers were at table with them, the Squire said jocosely, "I never offer wine to my wife, because she'd look diggers at me if I did, and I never offer it to Aunt Nancy because she neither takes it herself nor gives it to other folks till she has charged it well with thoroughwort! But I've taken a great fancy to Miss Dingley, and I'm going to share my old sherry with her," and he passed her a glass. "I never take wine, thank you, sir," she replied modestly, but with firmness.

"Then begin now, child; it will do you good. It will brighten up those cheeks of yours. These women are very cruel to each other, I fear. If one of them wants a new dress, she will work another to death to get it made. I have more feeling for these martyrs to the needle. Come, little girl, take this glass."

"No, sir."

"Why? you are not afraid of it, surely?"

"Yes, sir; I am more afraid of wine than I am of a serpent; I have very little influence, but what I have is against it."

The Squire blushed a little; but rallying from his surprise at such a decision where he had not expected it, he said pleasantly, "Just talking about my sherry has given you red cheeks, my child; perhaps drinking a glass will fix the color; take it to please me. My wife refuses it for 'example's sake;' but your example won't affect me any."

"I'm not sure of that, sir. You may think of it when I'm gone. I wish you could know how much I sacrifice to principle in refusing to take even the glass in my hand. No one shall ever say that I, by an act or a smile, helped him to be a —, to indulge in wine."

"The next day the Squire told his wife that he would have his wine in his office alone, after dinner, that it need not be set on the table. "Why," said he, "I believe those two women regard me as a drunkard!"

Nancy Mayhew went back to the village in perfect triumph. "Aunt Hepsy may fuss and flutter about folks not 'doing,' but I tell you there's more ways

of showing your religion than by talk and bustle. That poor pale little girl has struck a blow that the old Squire will remember every time he lifts his wine glass to his lips. His wife is true to principle, but she's feared to speak her mind as Nelly Dingley did at that table.

Silver and gold, this meek little disciple had none; but the service of a strong true heart was laid on God's altar with a spirit of submission that added a charm to the sacrifice.

Nelly had not been brought up to hard toil. She was the petted child of a mother, over whose sky a dark shadow had fallen in her early married life. Her trust had been betrayed, and her home made desolate, through the serpent in the wine cup.

When her husband saw that his property and his honor were gone, he left her child to battle, as best they could, with the world; and had long led a life of sin away from all restraint. On the death of her mother, Nelly went to live with an uncle, who hated and who was always condemning the man who had destroyed his sister's peace. And Nelly hated him, too, until the hour when God showed her the evil of her own heart, and led her to love her enemies, and to pray for those who had despoiled her.

Not long after this, in the absence of the family, her father presented himself one day before her. He cast himself, a poor, shattered wretch, on her mercy, and begged her, by all her own hopes of heaven, to lead him there.

"If there were no ardent spirits in the world I might be a man yet," he said. "Can't you put me where there is none?" he begged piteously of the helpless girl. "I am sick of sin, and I want to forsake it now, and get pardon for the past; but my courage and strength are gone. You must take me, child, to your mother's God."

Nelly had then a taste of the joy there is in heaven over one repenting sinner; and she longed to tell the joyful news. But it was met with coldness; and she was forbidden ever again to speak to "the man who had murdered her mother."

She was young and dependent, therefore she was helpless; and she sent a boy with a note to the village tavern to tell her father so. But that night, in the silent hours, God came to the sweet child while all around her were sleeping, and laid that ruined, hopeless man upon her heart.

"There is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance;" "I came to call not the righteous, but sinners to repentance." These, and like passages, came before her as if written in letters of fire in the darkness, and there the glory of working with Christ for the lost seemed to her the only work worth living for; and there on her pillow she resolved to do her duty to her fallen father, though she should thereby make herself homeless and friendless. She had a little income of two hundred dollars a year; and this she resolved to use for his support, so far from temptation as to make him safe.

This was madness in the eyes of her friends, who strove to dissuade her from it; but she replied, "I have promised God, and I can't take it back."

Her Pastor entered fully into her feelings, and justified her course. He also, by the aid of the minister of Eastwood, found a home for the fallen man with a farmer, far up among the hills, two miles from tavern or store. And then Nelly applied herself to business. She learned a trade; and by advice of the minister's wife, took up her abode in Eastwood, where she could get work and be within ten miles of her father. And once every month she spent the Sabbath with him, and rejoiced in his efforts to crush the foe of his peace, and in his humility and sorrow in view of his sin and its fearful results, and not long after the time of which we write, she shared in the joy of heaven over this repenting sinner. She had learned to love as well as to pity her father, and was looking forward to the day when she should live with and take care of him,—for the fruits of sin had ripened in his constitution, and he was henceforth to be a burden on his frail child while life lasted.

Is it any wonder that she never gave money to missions abroad or to the poor at home? Is it any wonder that, with her delicate health, toiling at the needle twelve and fourteen hours a day, she had no strength for watching with the sick by night? She moved on, doing the work God had laid upon her, patiently, and asking no one to help her, nor yet to pity her. In weakness she was strong; and from her lowly place she exercised an influence yet to be seen over those above her. While she abode there she was one of the Saints of Eastwood.—Christian Banner.