

Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, N. S., JANUARY 31, 1872.

THE TEACHER.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1872.

JESUS, AFTER HIS ASCENSION.

SUNDAY, February 4th, 1872.

To the Church at Ephesus.—Revelation ii. 1-7.

SUBJECT.—A letter from the Lord Jesus to the Church at Ephesus addressed to its minister.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

SCRIPTURE SELECTIONS.—2 Peter ii. 1-17; Matt. xxi. 33-43.

ANALYSIS.—1. What is approved in the character and conduct of the Ephesian Christians, vs. 2, 3. 2. The charge against them. 3. The exhortation. 4. The promise.

EXPOSITION.—Ephesus was the nearest to Patmos of the seven cities to which epistles were to be written; and the most celebrated. It was called "the light of Asia," and was the metropolis of the country.

An examination of the letters to these seven churches shews that two—Smyrna and Philadelphia received unmixed praise. Two—Sardis and Laodicea were nearly altogether censurable; while Ephesus, Pergamos and Thyatira had some things which demanded censure and others that were praised. Wherever these characteristics are now seen there the same blame or approval may be pronounced.

Paul labored here upwards of two years and subsequently ordained Timothy as overseer or bishop. It was famed for the temple of Diana—one of the wonders of the world. It is likely that the Apostle John was living there previous to his being taken to the island of Patmos.

"Holdeth" and "walketh" are figures of sustaining, and moving about with continuous activity, and so guarding the churches from all assaults of outside enemies. John commences his writing Ch. i. 4, by referring to the seven churches regarding them as the depositories of the revelation about to be made.

Verse 2.—Christ assures John of his omnipresence. He was not oblivious of their good works, but gives them full credit for all they had borne for him.

Them which are evil.—False brethren. The direction to "bear one another's burden" Gal. vi. 2, is rather their weakness not their wickedness. The gift of discerning of spirits belonged to the Apostolic church. Paul had given the Ephesian brethren warning of false brethren. Acts xx. 28-30. Jerome speaks of a writing of one of the presbyters of Ephesus in which he gives an account of some of Paul's acts. John convicted the author of its spuriousness and condemned the work.

Say they are Apostles.—The Ephesian church had discovered their hypocrisy. These were probably the teachers who would have led them back to Judaism.

Verse 3 presents the contrast of vs. 2 in many respects. Whilst they could not bear evil, they had borne and labored for Christ's sake. Not fainting, or not become weary with labor, and obliged to rest.

Verse 4.—There was still one defect which rested upon all their work. They had not retained the same affection and zeal they at first exhibited. 1 Timothy v. 12; Ephesians i. 15. It was now thirty years since Paul had written his epistle to them and they had allowed their love to Christ to cool off, whilst they held the faith in all its correctness 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

Verse 5.—A reconsideration of what they had formerly felt would shew a great contrast. Do the first works. Their first love would be apparent by their conduct. To feel would not be enough. Works must appear to prove the love genuine. Or else if these works are not seen they would soon become extinct as a people. The lampstand would be taken away. The church has ceased to exist there, but there are said to be two or three christian families still at Ephesus.

Verse 6.—Lest the believers should be discouraged, he mentions one valuable trait of their character. They had shewn their dislike of the conduct of the Nicolaitans—a loose sect, supposed by some to be the followers of Nicolaus one of the seven, Acts vi. 3, 5; by others to be a party led by one Nicholas and again by others as having that general name, signifying in the Greek, "Conqueror of the people" applied to them. Vs. 14, 15 shews something of what they

were. He that hath an ear, meaning every person. The Spirit saith, The presence of the Spirit to direct was to be recognized and his teachings sought and they would find abundant to satisfy every real want from the hand of Jesus. He would restore to them all that was lost by the fall in Paradise. This promise had been often given before with more or less distinctness. See Proverbs iii. 18; xi. 30; xiii. 12; xv. 4 and xxii. 2, 14, Ezekiel xlvii. 12.

The tree of life.—No other tree is here mentioned as there was none required to call up the loss man had sustained by partaking thereof. A restoration to the place where God is, is sufficient to meet all man's requirements Ch. xxi. 3.

The christian must be seeking conquests for the Master. His religion is no selfish system allowing a man to be satisfied with being saved, and going himself alone to Heaven. He must be seeking to overcome and win others to His service, and so be a follower of the Master.

QUESTIONS.—To whom was this letter written? To whom addressed? What is meant by the term "angel"? What name does Jesus here use to designate himself? What might they learn from the use to the terms "holdeth" and "walketh"? What does the term "know" signify in Psalm i. 6? What may it teach here? Who had the churches tried and convicted of falsehood? Had they maintained their steadfastness? What had induced this perseverance in labor? In what had the Ephesians declined? What was the only charge against them? Is a correct life deemed sufficient for a christian? What else is required? What desire will ardent love to Christ produce? For what were Ephesian Christians approved? Did they hate the sect of the Nicolaitans? What was the promise to the faithful ones? Was the promise given to the church or to the individual members? What reference is here made to the early history of mankind? What rendered paradise a desirable place?

Scripture Catechism, 11, 12.

Youths' Department.

"SUPPOSE."

Suppose, my little lady,
Your doll should break her head,
Could you make it whole by crying
'Till your eyes and nose were red?
And wouldn't it be pleasanter
To treat it as a joke;
And say you're glad 'Twas Dolly's,
And not your head that broke?"Suppose you're dressed for walking,
And the rain comes pouring down,
Will it clear off any sooner
Because you scold and frown?
And wouldn't it be nicer
For you to smile than pout,
Ann so make sunshine in the house
When there is none without?Suppose your task, my little man,
Is very hard to get,
Will it make it any easier
For you to sit and fret?
And wouldn't it be wiser,
Than waiting like a dunce,
To go to work in earnest,
And learn the thing at once.Suppose that some boys have a horse
And some a coach and pair,
Will it tire you less while walking
To say, "It isn't fair?"
And wouldn't it be nobler
To keep your temper sweet,
And in your heart be thankful
You can walk upon your feet?Suppose the implements you use
Don't work just to your heart,
Will it help to fume and mutter,
And act the "vixen's" part?
And wouldn't it be wiser,
With brow from anger freed,
To try, and try, and try again,
Until you do succeed?And suppose the world doesn't please you,
Nor the things some people do,
Do you think the whole creation
Will alter just for you?
And isn't it, my boy or girl,
The wisest, bravest plan,
Whatever comes, or doesn't come,
To do the best you can?

THE USHER'S STORY.

CHAPTER II.

"It might have been a fortnight after the conference between Palmer and the master, that, one day at noon, a loud shriek coming from the schoolroom disturbed the boys at their dinner in the refectory adjoining. In an instant every one was on his legs, and the sudden revival of the excitement, which had almost died

away, overpowering their sense of discipline, the whole school rushed from the table into the playground, on one side of which stood the school. Shriek after shriek resounded in their ears, when, presently, the schoolroom door was thrown open, and the voice of the master was heard shouting—'Stop thief,' as there ran down the schoolroom stairs into the playground a little monkey, grinding his teeth, and still shrieking, as he ran and climbed up the tree nearest the school.

"The master made his appearance with his fingers bleeding from the bite of the animal, which had compelled him to let it go. Breathless with his exertions, he stated, in few words that, not being hungry, he had sat alone in the schoolroom, while the rest were at dinner; that he was startled by hearing the window, next the tree where his spectacles were found hanging, cautiously opened: then a tiny pair of hairy legs intruded, followed by the body of a small ape. He watched the creature's movements. It rapidly ran over the forms, opened and shut, with a rapid noiseless action, several of the boys' desks, till presently, it found in one of them a parcel, which it seized in one of its paws, and making its way back to the window, when he closed the sash, and seized the creature. It instantly screamed, and struggled out of his hands. He chased it repeatedly round the room, screaming as it ran, till he caught it again, when the pain of its severe bite forced him to let it go; if then ran down by the stairs, and mounted its tree as they had seen.

"There was a shout of joy at this singular discovery; the master smiled, and requested Palmer to fetch a gun from the house, resolved to destroy the creature in the hope of having it thereby claimed. The gun was brought and levelled at the monkey, when the master paused a moment to ask if any one knew who was its owner. The master's eye scanned the expression of each upturned face and he kept the gun pointed at the creature, as Solomon might have looked at the two women when he ordered the living child to be divided between them, watching for the first gleam of tenderness to betray the real owner; but the master looked in vain. No one answered; and it was evident, from the way in which every one looked at everybody else, that nobody knew, or, at least, chose to know. The gun was again levelled at the tree, the monkey grinning a ludicrous defiance. Suddenly it flung at the master, as he stood aiming at it, something which struck him violently in the face, and, at the same moment, the gun exploded. The boys ran to the spot, and picked up the French master's missing watch. The monkey, wounded and terrified, raised another scream, and, running out to the end of the branch of the tree, swung itself off, ran and leaped upon Palmer's (the usher's) shoulder, showing him, with droll antics of pain, its bleeding paws.

"Palmer instantly turned pale, and attempted to beat off the creature, exclaiming, angrily and disconcertedly, 'It's not mine—it's not mine!'"

"But, if he wouldn't own the monkey, the monkey owned him, and clung to him in mingled terror and affection, as one who wouldn't be repudiated."

"Then the detective was right," I exclaimed, interrupting the narrator; "there were accomplices, and they were not boys after all!"

"True," said our tutor; "and the man and the ape are no unapt symbols of such complicities in crime. It is generally a case of a rogue and a fool that get together; and, if the rogue makes use of the fool, the fool in the end betrays the rogue, and both are punished. But don't interrupt my story. The master heard Palmer's gratuitous disclaimer—'It's not mine,' when no one said it was; marked that none of the boys appeared to notice it; and calmly said to the usher, 'Palmer, carry the poor beast into the study.' Palmer immediately obeyed, and the evidence against his complicity grew stronger every step he moved. The ape, perfectly willing to accompany him, hobbled after him with the instinct of a dog following his master.

"He hadn't even the presence of mind to affect a little coercion in forcing the creature to accompany him. His countenance fell—happily no eye except the master's witnessed it; he mechanically moved into the study; and there his first act was to seize the poker, and, with one blow, before the master was well in the room, the monkey was struck dead at his feet."

"You're done for, at least, you brute," he exclaimed bitterly, as he kicked the little carcass aside and confronted his pa-

tron, the deadly weapon still in his hand.

"The master closed the study door, and, seating himself at the table, bade Palmer sit down too."

"Palmer neither stirred an inch, nor uttered a word. An expression of sturdy rage, shame, and bravado—as if all the evil that was in him was turned at bay—retorted the master's hurt and indignant look, as if he would say, 'Do your worst, I am ready for you.'

"Alas! alas! All the confidences and kindnesses of a dozen years seemed blotted out in a moment, as if by a moral explosion, leaving behind a scorched and blackened mass of hideous ingratitude, with a conscience seared, and affections charred, against the touch of sensibility. His face was like some such an incarnation of the fiend as painters represent the boy possessed of devils in the Gospels."

"Sit down, Palmer," said the master sadly, in a tone more in sorrow than in anger at what had been discovered. The usher stood frowning a sullen defiance, doggedly set his teeth, and clenched the deadly instrument in his hand.

"Sit down, Palmer," was said again—a little sternly this time; 'let us talk this over. You denied that this poor ape belonged to you, but your dumb accomplice contradicted your assertion, and would be owned. Such witnesses may be trained to steal, but know not how to lie. Besides, no one said the ape was yours. You betrayed yourself, Palmer: he who excuses himself accuses himself; further concealment is useless. Tell me, are you alone in these wretched crimes?"

"The usher ground his teeth, as if holding back some words of meanness or confession that struggled to get out behind them; but made no other answer."

"Where are the missing articles? No answer."

"In that tree?" Not a word.

"You will accompany me to search there?"

"Palmer at this point exclaimed, 'One of us shall never leave this room alive. You may kill me, but you sha'n't disgrace me before the boys. They sha'n't shout, and point at me—'There's the usher thief.' I'll be torn in pieces first!"

"Palmer here brandished his formidable weapon, and grew livid with rage and terror."

"Hush!" said the master, calmly, yet earnestly. 'The house will hear you, Palmer; and why should you publish your own shame? Listen to me. I don't want you to make any search now. Your tremor and your language disclose to me all I wish to know; and as to you threats of violence, poor, pooh, boy, you know they could have no weight with me; I have but to pull this string in my hand, and the bell would instantly bring those who would not only disarm you, but discover all.'

"Palmer trembled slightly, but with unabated malignity scowled sullenly on his patron, as if to dare him to do it."

"The master said, 'Palmer, I need not remind you of the desolation in which I found you; of the confidence and affection with which, for many years, I have treated you. God is my witness how I loved and trusted you. Palmer, I would have promoted your interests in life. You must feel it to be my duty to society to bring you before a court of justice, and consign you to the infamy and punishment which your crimes have merited, lest you should abuse your trust in others' service as you have in mine; but that is not my intention."

"I remember"—here the master's voice slightly faltered, and he dropped out of the ordinary 'you and yours,' into the more Saxon, loving, 'thee and thou'—'I remember when I found thee—a sharp, clever lad, but a deserted foundling whom nobody seemed to know or care for. I ought not to forget that thy childhood had no honest father's example, no mother's prayers, and the heart is apt to harden when there is no love to melt and mould it when it is young and soft. I can't dismiss thee without exposure and ruin, and, at least, risk to others, Palmer, and any risk there may be must be mine. I shall trust thee again. I forgive thee, Palmer.'

"As these words were drawing to their close the usher's hard eye gradually melted down—his pale face grew paler—he breathed quickly, as if the blood about his heart was sorely disturbed—the mouth opened wide, as if it tried to speak of its own accord, and failed, the poker fell heavily, as if from a dead hand, on the floor. Palmer got the words out at last—'O master, you'll kill me!' And, falling headlong forward, like a man stunned by a blow,

he would have fallen into the fire, but that the master caught him, laid him gently down, and, sprinkling water upon his face so long and ineffectually as to be almost tempted to ring for aid, at last revived him.

"Palmer's first act of returning consciousness was to fall at his patron's feet, bathed in a flood of tears, and then he confessed all."

"He had bought the ape in Bristol, from a seafaring man, who had warned him of the creature's habits of carry off and concealing any articles which took its monkey-fancy. But the lonely heart of the usher felt a lack of something to be attached to. He constructed a little cage, and kept his dumb companion and eventual accomplice in a loft above his bedroom, which, being apart from the house, and built over the school, (the space between his bedroom ceiling and the roof of the school,) had escaped noticed in the various searches which had been instituted. In this hiding-place the monkey had remained undisturbed for several months, never having been seen or heard even by the domestic who made the usher's bed, though she had occasionally complained of the rats or mice she heard running between the ceiling and the roof of the chamber. It seems, the cunning creature had learned to let itself in and out of its hiding-place at pleasure."

"The first intimation of its skill in this way had been detected by Palmer finding it seated on his bed one night, eating some of the fruits of its speculations from the boy's desks. Then he observed its manoeuvre in hiding one thing after another, which it abstracted from the school, mostly at night, in a natural hollow of an old tree which grew by one of the school windows. Its continued impunity became a snare to Palmer. He had formed no idea in his mind, at first, of profiting by the thefts, but the dumb thief had become attached to him, and he to it; and he feared to state the facts, lest he should be ordered to get rid of his favorite. To spare the ape, he sacrificed the peace of the school. He had never parted with, nor even laid hands on a single stolen article, though he knew where they were. Their accumulation at length tempted his cupidity, and he fell into the crime of deliberately purposing to apply them to his own use at the first fitting opportunity. He thus lost his self-respect. The contemptible secret of the mischief and concealment which had brought him to the verge of ruin. His patron's magnanimity alone saved him. Palmer, at the time he requested that the attempt at detecting the thief might be left in his hands, had determined upon some means of making known the existence of the booty hoarded in the hollow tree, but his courage failed him every time he fixed upon to act, till the master's discovery left him no alternative, except to seek his own safety by becoming a party to the destruction of the ill-fated creature, his possession of which had wrought so much evil."

"After this occurrence he remained in the school a humble, laborious teacher for twenty years. He devoted all his grateful energies to requite the generous man who, in spite of a great first fault, by trusting him again, has enabled him nobly to redeem his character, and reinstate himself firmer and fonder than ever in the affection and respect of his patron."

His patron's second trial of his fidelity was not thrown away; it nobly set aside the disappointment of the first, and was the means under God, of making him an honest and a christian man."

It is as important to know when it is merciful to forgive, as when it is just to punish.—The Family Friend.

MORNING HYMN.

Father, in the morning
We awake to thee;
Teach us, Lord! and mould us
Henceforth thine to be.Lord, this day preserve us
From each sin and snare;
Guide us and protect us
With a father's care.

EVENING HYMN.

At the close of every day,
Lord, to thee we sing and pray;
Make each one of us thy child,
Look on us with mercy mild.O! forgive and wash away.
All our naughtiness this day:
While we sleep, and while we wake,
Bless us for our Saviour's sake.

A Sunday-school teacher, examining his class, asked "Who was Eutychus?" "A young man who heard Paul preach, and falling down, was taken up dead." "And from this circumstance what do we learn?" "Please, sir, we learn that ministers should not preach long sermons."