

Christian Messenger.

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THE TEACHER.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1872.

ELISHA AND ISRAEL.

SUNDAY, April 7th, 1872.—The Mantle of Elijah.—2Kings ii. 9-15.

GOLDEN TEXT.—O Lord my God thou art very great thou art clothed with honor and majesty. Who maketh his angels spirits, his ministers a flaming fire. Psalm civ. 1, 4.

SCRIPTURE SELECTION.—Isaiah xxix.

SUMMARY.—The Lord takes away his servants that seem essential to the welfare of his people, but leaves with them what often proves even a greater blessing than what is taken away.

ANALYSIS.—1. Elijah's preparation for his departure, and his translation, 9-11. 2. Elisha's exclamation and his conduct, 11-14. 3. The witnesses of Elijah's translation and their conduct towards his successor, 15.

EXPOSITION.—It appears to have been previously made known to Elijah that he should be taken up to heaven. Elisha and the sons of the prophets appear to have had some intimation of it also. Elijah wished to visit Bethel and Jericho—places in which he had established schools for the sons of the prophets, and seemed desirous of being alone, but Elisha was unwilling to leave him or allow him to proceed without his accompanying him. In each place the sons of the prophets spoke to Elisha of their expectation of soon losing Elijah. They evidently had a clear perception of a heavenly state, and of a future life in that state. This event may have been for the purpose of teaching them this great truth, and so representing, typically, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Elijah's outer garment was shewn to be the instrument of miraculous power, and rendered essential service to both master and servant.

Verse 9. Ask what I shall do for thee. Elijah may have suspected that some request he might make would be beyond his power to grant, and that he would entreat God to give it to him.

A double portion of thy spirit.—The common acceptance of this request, is that Elisha wished to have the power of working miracles to a much greater extent than Elisha. "A double portion" was however used to indicate that which was bestowed on the first-born, and the request would therefore appear to be that he might be made heir of his master in his prophetic office and gifts.

Verse 10. Thou hast asked a hard thing.—Elijah would not arrogate to himself to decide this, but evidently regarded it as a matter which God alone could bestow. He nevertheless gave him a sign on which he might depend as to whether he should be so favored. He would by this be anxiously watching and waiting and, concerned as he was for the cause of Israel, he would also be praying that they might not be left without a prophet.

Verse 11. A chariot of fire and horses of fire. See vi. 17. In that case, the chariots and horsemen were not visible until the eyes of Elisha's servant were opened to see them. In this case no such preliminary was necessary. A tempest or storm appears to have prevailed. See Isaiah xxix. 6.

Verse 12. My father.—Elisha knew now that his wish would be granted. It may have been an expression of despair, and his calling out was part of the grief and sorrow indicated by the rending his clothes. The possession of Elijah's mantle was a clear proof, if that were needed, that Elisha had seen his master when taken up, and with this he was to commence his exercise of the prophetic office.

Verse 13. The God of Elijah.—Elisha still acknowledged his master and sought for his God. The trial having proved his possession of prophetic power he knew that his request had been granted, and was prepared to take up the work Elijah had left.

Verse 14. The spirit of Elijah.—The heir's portion—the double portion—had fallen upon him and he became Elijah's successor. The sons of the prophets would now without hesitation recognize Elisha as Elijah's successor, and they exclaim as they do, "The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha."

They bowed themselves, in token of reverence for his official character as the prophet of the Lord.

QUESTIONS.—Where were the two schools of the prophets which Elijah wished to visit? vs. 2, 4. Where were these two places? How many of the sons of the prophets watched Elijah and Elisha going toward Jordan? vs. 7. What miracle did they there see Elijah perform?

How did Elijah show concern for his servant? What request did Elisha make of his master? What was the meaning of this request?

Did Elijah promise to fulfil this wish? What were the conditions? Was the gift in the hands of Elijah for him to bestow? What were the messengers sent from heaven for Elijah? What were the two engaged in when these appeared? What is a whirlwind? Was this in harmony with the event of Elijah's translation?

What relationship did Elisha claim on seeing Elijah taken? See 1 Sam. 26, 21. Psalm 72, 14; 116, 15. Give the circumstances of Elijah calling Elisha to attend him. See 1 Kings 19, 21. Of what was the rending of the clothes the sign? What had Elijah left behind for Elisha? To whom did Elisha now appeal? vs. 14. Being on the other side of the river and wishing to return what means did he use to enable him to do so?

What conclusion did the sons of the prophets draw from seeing Elisha return through the bed of the river? What was the sign of their submission to him?

Scripture Catechism, 29, 30.

SUNDAY, April 14.—The Waters Healed. 2 Kings 2: 19-25.

COMPULSORY THEM TO COME IN.

Under this heading the Sunday School Times gives the following:

A new face was seen at our prayer meeting one Sabbath night. A stranger had come in about the time we commenced one of "our boys" on either side of him.

He looked deeply interested. Just before the meeting closed, our leader said,—"My young friend, we are glad to see you here. Have you a word to say?"

"Yes," was the quick reply. "I want to say I'm glad I came. These two friends made me come. They have called for me many times. Sometimes I told them rudely 'I will not go!' Last week I ran out of the house when I saw them coming. Today I had to come or else—well, I hardly know what they would have done, but I know they would have felt so grieved that I was compelled to come, and now I thank them for it. I don't feel fit to meet with you. I'm not good enough but I'm glad I came. Pray for me. I'm sick of myself and my old ways of living. Pray that I may give my heart to the Saviour."

They did pray earnestly—O! how earnestly!

PRAYING AND WORKING.

A sea-captain once stood up in a prayer meeting in New York, to say a few words about the benefit of prayer, and the importance of working as well as praying.

"Let me tell you a little story of what once happened to me," said he. "This will illustrate them both at the same time."

"We were overtaken by a severe gale, and were in danger, in very great danger. The wind blew a perfect hurricane, and in the midst of this our ship sprung a leak. The water was rushing in on us rapidly. It seemed as if we must certainly go down in a short time. The men worked hard at the pumps. Still the water gained on us. Death stared us in the face. I ran down into the cabin, and offered a short prayer to Jesus to save us. The Bible was lying on my table. I opened it to see if I could find something to comfort me. My eye rested on these words: 'Fear not, for I am with thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.'" Is. 41: 10.

"I closed the Bible, and said—'I thank God! That is enough!' I ran up on deck and told the men what I had been doing, and the sweet words I had just read in God's blessed book. I said, 'Men, I don't think we are going down this time. I feel sure that God will help us. But then we must help ourselves all we can. Now, my lads, let's pump and pray, and pray and pump.'

"And they did it with a will. And by God's help we pumped and prayed our vessel safe into Cork harbor." The captain finished his little speech by saying— "When there is a leak in a ship, and the storm is beating upon her, what is the use of praying without pumping?"—Dr. Newton in S. S. World.

Sow an act, and you reap a habit; sow a habit, and you reap a character; sow a character, and you reap a destiny.

There is plenty to do in this world for every pair of hands placed upon it, and we must so work that the world will be richer because of our having lived in it.

Youths' Department.

MY "LITTLE MEN."

Oh what a noise and clatter! Feet and tongues go patter, patter, Do you ask me, What's the matter? 'Tis my noisy "little men!"

This morn, at half past four, (I'm sure 'twas little more) Bang! went the nursery door, In came the "little men."

"Mamma! We both are here, Please tell that story dear, That fairy story queer," Said the teasing "little men."

So they climbed upon the bed, And they tumbled o'er my head, Till my patience almost fled With the jolly "little men."

But the story then I told, While my arms must doubly hold The dear heads of brown and gold Of my precious "little men."

Then we laugh and talk till light Sends away the dusky night, And the golden sun shines bright On my merry "little men."

Then through all the livelong day, I must join the fun and play; And the quarrels soothe away Of my naughty "little men."

And I often ask, perplexed, With my spirit sadly vexed, Surely what can I do next? For my restless "little men."

But when falls the twilight grey And they softly kneel to pray, Oh how earnestly I say, God bless my "little men."

And my weary heart finds rest As I think of Him who press'd Little children to His breast. There I leave my "little men."—Congregationalist.

THE HORSE AND THE UMBRELLA.

I am indebted for the following anecdote to J. Coates, Esq., Secretary to the Grand Jury of the County of Antrim, Ireland.

"I have a very good mare, named 'Fanny.' She is very gentle and quiet in harness, and very suitable for a family car. Formerly, she had acquired one very bad habit. She always shied at an open umbrella; she did not shy at anything else. So great, however, was her terror for this article, that whenever she met a person carrying one, she would start and run to the opposite side of the road at the imminent risk of upsetting the car against the bank. This was a serious fault, and the safety of my family required that I should at once either try some means of curing her bad habit, or part with her, which latter I was most unwilling to do, as 'Fanny' was such an excellent creature in every other respect. I therefore began to consider how she might be cured. Would whipping do? No, I said; that never cures a horse of shying; it generally makes him worse; for, after whipping, a horse is not only afraid of the object at which he shied, when he meets with a similar one again, but, remembering also the whipping, he is in expectation of a repetition of the punishment, and prepares to run off, hoping to escape both the object and the whipping by a more violent effort each time it occurs. I did not, therefore, approve of that plan; but thought of a milder and wiser one."

"Horses are generally fond of raw potatoes. I provided myself with a few small ones, nicely washed; and taking in my left hand a shut umbrella, I went into the stable; and after giving the mare a potato from my right hand, I presented her with one stuck on the point of the closed umbrella. Shortly afterwards I gave her another, with the umbrella slightly opened; then another and another, each time opening the umbrella still farther, and so on, until it was presented fully open. At first, 'Fanny' appeared alarmed at what she doubtless considered as her old enemy; but seeing the potato on the point, she soon became reconciled, and took it off, though showing a little shyness. The next time she took it with scarcely any fear. This lesson was repeated a few times, until she became so familiar with the open umbrella, and so fond of the potato presented with it, that she permitted it to be furled and unfurled, under and over her head, and about her in every direction;

and being ever rewarded by the potato, in the end she actually became fond of seeing me carry the umbrella, or make my appearance in the stable. But how would she act out of the stable? that was the question.

"Not long after these lessons were given, an opportunity occurred for testing her out-of-doors one rainy day. A person was met on the road carrying an open umbrella. Fanny was left with a tolerably free head, and the success of the experiment was fully proved. The mare actually went across, of her own accord, to the other side of the road, where the umbrella was, doubtless expecting a potato! She was disappointed for the moment, but was rewarded with one when she went home, and never after that did she shy at an open umbrella."

Thus, by taking a little pains, a valuable horse was made more valuable still. Kind treatment succeeded where whipping and severe measures would have failed; and the lesson learned by me, and which I wish to extend to others, is, that many of the faults which the horse acquires by bad training may, as in this case, be overcome by the exercise of a little reflection; a little pains, with patient perseverance and kindness.—From "Clever Dogs, Horses, &c., by Shirley Hibberd.

THE LITTLE BOY'S PRAYER.

During a season of special religious interest in one of the manufacturing villages of Rhode Island, a little boy some ten or eleven years of age was observed to be the subject of serious and powerful impressions. His countenance indicated his deep concern, and as he went sadly to the house of God, the praying souls who were gathered there longed and waited for the hour when he should confess his Saviour, and enter into rest through faith in Christ.

They waited long, the child shrinking from the cross which rested on him, till at length he went alone to a secret place and prayed:

"Lord, I want to go forward, but I am not big enough to go alone. Send father to go with me and I will go."

The little fellow went to the next meeting, and, when an opportunity offered, to his glad surprise the father arose in tears and broken-heartedness, saying to the assembled saints, "I am ready to go—I want you to pray for me."

Instantly the little boy was on his feet, exclaiming, "I can go now. Father has gone forward. I have prayed the Lord to send father to go with me. Now I can go."

It was a joyful hour when father and son both entered upon the heavenly path; and when the meeting closed the little boy hurried off home without waiting for his father, and, full of joyfulness, exclaimed as he entered the dwelling:

"Mother, did you ever know the Lord to answer prayer?"

"I don't know," said the mother, hesitatingly.

"Well," said he, "I have; for I asked the Lord to send up my father to go with me to serve the Lord, and he has started; and I know the Lord hears prayer."

Father and son still walk the heavenly road, rejoicing that He who hears and answers prayer is also willing to grant grace to help in every time of need.—The Christian.

GOD MAKES NO MISTAKES.

In a town in Massachusetts, there is a young man of fine talents and capabilities for active life, who for years has been a cripple, paralytic, and so helpless that he would starve if left alone. A friend was commiserating his condition, when with deep earnestness he exclaimed, as he slowly raised his withered hand, "God makes no mistakes." How noble the sentiment! "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Is not this the spirit of true and devoted piety?

A PROBLEM.

A young man distinguished for his mathematical attainments was fond of challenging his fellow students to a trial of skill in solving difficult problems. One day a class-mate came into his study, and laying a folded paper before him, said, "There is a problem I wish you would help me to solve," and immediately left the room. The paper was eagerly unfolded, and there, instead of a question in mathematics, were traced the lines, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

With a gesture of impatience he tore the paper to atoms, and turned again to his books. But in vain he tried to shake off the impressions of the solemn words he had read. The Holy spirit pressed home his convictions of guilt and danger so that he could find no peace till he found it in believing in Jesus. He subsequently became a minister of the gospel he had once despised, and his first sermon was from the words, so eminently blessed to his own soul, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

CEDARS OF LEBANON.

Dr. Van de Velde gives a very graphic picture of the sacred grove as seen from a narrow ridge 10,000 feet above the sea-level. Of the apparent magnitude of the objects he says, you may form a comparative idea when I tell you of the far-famed cedar park as it appears from this lofty spot. You know, from the narratives of different travellers, that the old cedars, now only twelve in number, stand in a broad cleft of Lebanon, at 6,300 feet above the sea. You know that those venerable trees—perhaps the oldest in the world, and which some think must have sprung up soon after the flood—are giants above all other trees growing, and that this dozen is surrounded by an after-growth of 400 younger cedars, more or less. Such a park consequently comprises a considerable plot of ground, and the height of the cedars is in proportion to the ground they cover. Nevertheless, the cedar park, seen from the summit ridge where you cross Mount Lebanon from east to west, above the deep valley of Besharra, appears like a green spot of the size of a man's hand, a grove of such tiny dimensions that one might suppose it to be a solitary bush of oak.

The descent from this to the cedars occupies nearly an hour and a half. After that, one passes from the scorching rays of the sun under their splendid leafy arcades, where you find yourself transplanted at once into one of the most charming regions that this globe can show. A cool atmosphere, perfumed with the balsamic smell of cedar-wood, and the charm of the birds among the branches; you may imagine how the over-heated and wearied traveller feels at the change. Had not the praise of those cedars been so often sung by others, I would try to tell you something of the glory of God in His works,—the cedars which "He hath planted." (Ps. civ. 16). The Arabs call them the "trees of God."

A correspondent of The Christian, writing from Rome, speaks favourably of Mr. Spurgeon's sermon recently delivered in that city. "I must unhesitatingly and emphatically condemn," he says, "as absolutely false the reports circulated about that service. From first to last there was not a word or a gesture calculated to offend the most fastidious." The writer thinks it would be a good thing if a volume of Mr. Spurgeon's sermons were printed, say among the Tauchnitz edition of English books, so that they might be largely circulated on the Continent.

It is said that because the daily papers are so full of the records of crime, some prison authorities keep them away from convicts for the reason they are dangerous reading. Yet thousands of families admit any daily paper into the circle of young people and children, without a suspicion of impending evil.

As long as you make drinking respectable, drinking customs will prevail, and the plough-share of death, drawn by terrible disasters, will go on turning up this whole continent from end to end, with the long, deep, awful furrow of drunkards' graves.

LOAFERS—Different nations have different kinds of loafers, and each pursues a different way. The Italian loafer spends his time in sleeping; the Turkish loafer, in dreaming; the Spanish, in praying; the French, in laughing; the English, in swearing; the Irish, in begging; the Russian, in gambling; the Hungarian, in smoking; the German, in drinking; and the American, in talking politics.—Exchange.

Franklyn House, Spilsby, Lincolnshire, has been purchased by Lady Franklyn. Her ladyship proposes to convert the premises into a Museum of Arctic curiosities and relics of the last Arctic expedition under the command of her late husband.

Meditation is the mother of devotion, but the daughter of retirement.