

Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, N.S., DECEMBER 24, 1873.

THE TEACHER.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1873.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES. SUNDAY, December 28th.

- REVIEW OF THE LESSONS OF THE PAST QUARTER. 1 Parable of the Sower... Matt. xiii. 18-23. 2 Walking on the Sea... Matt. xiv. 22-33. 3 The Cross Foretold... Matt. xvi. 21-28. 4 The Transfiguration... Matt. xvii. 1-8. 5 Jesus and the Young... Matt. xix. 13-22. 6 Hosanna to the Son of David... Matt. xxi. 8-16. 7 The Lord's Supper... Matt. xxvi. 26-30. 8 Jesus in Gethsemane... Matt. xxvi. 36-46. 9 Jesus before the High Priest... Matt. xxvi. 59-68. 10 Jesus before the Governor... Matt. xxvii. 11-23. 11 The Crucifixion... Matt. xxvii. 45-54. 12 The Resurrection... Matt. xxviii. 1-8.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Matthew xxviii. 20.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Matthew xxviii. 18-20.

SUMMARY.—Words with works, life from death, glory after shame; love, sacrifice, salvation.

ANALYSIS.—The twelve Lessons may be grouped in pairs, each pair furnishing a striking contrast, thus: I. Words and works. Lessons I, II. II. Darkness and light foretold. Lessons III, IV. III. Humility and exaltation. Lessons V, VI. IV. Feasting and wrestling. Lessons VII, VIII. V. Jews and Gentiles condemning. Lessons IX, X. VI. Death and life. Lessons XI, XII.

COMMENTS.—Lesson I.—The seven parables that are recorded in this thirteenth chapter divide themselves into two smaller groups; the first four being spoken to the multitude while he taught them out of the ship; the last three, as it would seem, on that same day, in the narrower circle of his disciples at his own home. In the parable of the sower we notice (1) the seed which is all and only good, the pure word of God, and the gospel of grace. This parable is thus distinguished from that of the tares. (2) The sower. This is first and chiefly Christ, the great Teacher, but with him also all who publicly or privately speak "the truth as it is in Jesus," whether by sermon, tongue, sign, or life, in pulpit, Sunday-school, at home, or wherever else. (3) The soil. This is of four kinds, the trodden way, the thin rocky soil, the thorny place, and the good ground. (4) The four results; no effect, temporary promise, the long but fruitless conflict, the rich harvest. Only the last one of these stands for the class of men who are truly born of God. The others represent worldly men, of different degrees of religious susceptibility.

Lesson II.—The last lesson taught us that Christ's kingdom grows in this world by spoken words. Here we see that divine power goes with the words to make them effectual. This miracle seems to have been three-fold; in himself, as supporting his own body on the waves; in Peter, as supporting his body on the waters; and in nature, as causing the sudden calm. It thus shows that Christ is master of his own movements, and master of his disciples' movements, and master of the natural world. It teaches, too, that his power goes with his loving affection to bless and help his disciples, and deliver them from distress, and that they have reason to trust him wholly in storm and calm, in life and death—to trust HIM, but not themselves.

Lesson III.—Though such a Master, yet a man; and a man under law for us sinners, and with us the guilty, though himself, as in himself, guiltless. At the end of his brief life, journey, therefore, stands a cross, and that cross he has all along foreseen; but now and henceforth, as he nears it, its shadow falls upon his spirit more and more darkly, and he speaks of it more often to his friends and followers, for "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." But he will not use his power to escape it. He rebukes as Satan him who would keep him from it. He tells us all that if we are his, and are to be such, we too have before us the cross; that we must be as ready to die with and for him, as was he to die for us. He that will save his life by refusing, for Christ's sake, to suffer, shall lose his life eternal; and, with that lost one has no more a price to pay as a ransom. He has thrown away the one only ransom price.

Lesson IV.—But if he will lose his life, he shall find it; and this the transfiguration taught—taught Christ, as it brought

this home to his consciousness as a fixed reality in this most blessed experience which followed the full explanation of the coming death, and taught and does teach it to disciples who need to know that though religion has in it a cross, it has in it something besides and beyond a cross. Nor must we in review pass unnoticed the unity of law and prophecy and eternal love in the divine Redeemer as our sacrifice, for the conversation on that mount was of his "decease" or exodus.

All the light of sacred story, Gathers round its head sublime. Lesson V.—Jesus bore the cross a long time before his cross of wood was made, though that wooden cross another had to bear for him. The real cross he had been all along carrying on his bowed and struggling soul, and that cross grew heavier as he neared the end of his journey. So did it bring him down into closest sympathy with the lowliest of earth, and make him feel, as without he could not have felt, the loftiness of lowliness, the greatness of littleness, the nobility of humility. It bound his heart to children, and those who loved and cared for children, and made him quick to rebuke a spirit which sees no greatness but worldly greatness, and finds no goodness but in a lofty self-attained merit, separate from God. "Suffer the little children to come unto me." "There is none good but one, that is God." The cross did two things—pressed him down into closest connection with man, and pressed him up into the fullest conscious union with God.

Lesson VI.—But in neither position does he forget who he himself is, why he is here with men, and what he has to do. So lowly, so dependent, he is yet a king among men, nay, the King over mankind. And this fact, at whatever cost, he must make known; his royal honor must maintain. And so, as now the hour has come, and the last week of his natural life has come; he must go into the City of God, as the anointed, decreed King, God's Son. It is Passover Feast, the feast of deliverance from bondage, the feast to celebrate God's kingly power breaking down and trampling on earth's kingly power. It is the hour of the deliverer of Satan's captives; the hour of Satan's deceiver and destroyer. So he rides as king amid the hosannas of his peaceful subjects. Type of the coming time when, in the end of the world, his loving disciples shall all together hail him King forever in the heavenly Jerusalem, eternal "City of our God."

Lesson VII.—Thursday comes, the night of betrayal arrives. The kingly entrance was but a type or symbol, and not the taking of a throne of ease. Now Jesus anticipates that which lies beyond the cross. He lives in the upper room with the twelve (or the eleven), the life which in all the generations he is to live with his church. There is his presence, he and his communing. There, too, is the remembrance of the cross and there is the perpetual life of faith. Each feeds on the broken bread of life. This ordinance instituted at the close of Christ's ministry, as baptism was at the beginning, or rather for the introduction of his ministry, stands in closest natural connection with baptism. The two together form the whole. They show respectively the beginning and the continuance of Christian life, and the facts in which this beginning and this continuing are rooted. They are joined together by their nature, and are not to be put asunder by man.

Lesson VIII.—That which had been so long foreseen and foretold has come. Into the depths of the anguish in the garden no man can enter. We can only stand with awe, and say, "This was for me. We, too, are left alone with God, and we have to say, "Not my will, but thine be done;" we have to say it, or go down and be lost. We can say it, and conquer, because Christ has said it for us.

Lesson IX-XII.—The end. Too fresh in mind are these sad, glad lessons, to need here the comments of review. We do well to follow Jesus through their scenes, and not to leave till we stand gazing into heaven after the ascending Lord. But then we will leave. "Why stand ye gazing?" We will leave and go into the world to work for Jesus, and wait in our working till "he shall so come again, in like manner as [we] saw him go up."

QUESTIONS.—Of whom have our last twelve lessons treated? The subject of the first lesson? What is a parable? Explain the parable of the sower. The subject of the second lesson? What is a miracle? What does this miracle teach us? In which part of Christ's ministry did he speak most often and clearly of his crucifixion? Why did he not avoid it?

How can we bear the cross? What need to do so?

What is a transfiguration? Who of the apostles were with Christ at his transfiguration? Who of departed saints? Why these?

How did Christ treat the young? How does he now regard them? How can his blessing be secured for them?

Why was Christ called "the Son of David"? At what time did he enter Jerusalem as a king?

What is the Lord's Supper? Its design? When instituted?

What caused Christ's anguish in the garden? What was his prayer? Is this a fit prayer for Christians?

The name of the Jewish court. Of the high priest at this time? Describe the scene at the court. Why was Christ sent to Pilate? The result?

Describe the crucifixion. Meaning of Christ's words. "It is finished"? What does Paul say of Christ's resurrection in 1 Corinthians xv. 12-24?

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher. Scripture Catechism, 159.

SUNDAY, January 4th, 1874.—The House of Bondage.—Exodus i. 7-14.

Youths' Department.

REAL CHRISTMAS ANGELS.

BY J. W. WATSON.

I'm a very plain and homely man, Just a little old or so, And the rheumatiz troubles me, off and on, Whether I will or no; And so, whenever that comes to pass, It drives me a'most in a craze, To think of the lots of time I lose,— The many working days.

For my old woman, Meg, and I, Agree on this, d'y eec, That I shall be sick when she is well, And I be well when she, For it's little of work that she can do, When well or ill, for bread, Yet many a stitch her fingers take From sunrise-time to bed.

And so 'tis no disgrace to us, With the rheumatiz and all, That sometimes Meg, for hunger's sake, Should have to pawn her shawl; But then 'tis woeful hard to me, When the winter nights are cold, For I miss the shawl on my old legs,— If the words be not too bold.

Yet Meg and I get somehow on, For poverty isn't crime, And we never think nothing about it Until it comes Christmas-time; For we have a memory, Meg and I, Of a Christmas long ago, When we both were strong and hearty, And never knew want or woe.

And so it happens that Meg and I Have been waiting in hope and fear, To see if the Christmas coming Will be like the one last year; For then we were all right happy, Meg and the neighbors and I, And the very remembrance of it Is enough to make one cry.

It was all on the Christmas morning, When we hadn't a loaf of bread, And Meg and I, to keep life in, Were obliged to go to bed. The shawl it was in the pawn-shop, And we hadn't a cent,—not we,— So we thought it the hardest Christmas We ever had chanced to see.

Meg sat in the bed a sewing, I reading the Bible to she, When there came to the door a tapping, Like a woodpecker-tapping a tree, Meg cried for the knock to enter, And a rosy face peeped in, With hazel eyes and blustering curls, White teeth and a dimpled chin.

There was sunshine in a moment To break away the gloom, And a voice like an angel's whisper, Went sweetly through the room. It said, "Accept this turkey, Some potatoes and coal, if you please; It is merry Christmas Day, And no one must starve or freeze."

Oh wasn't Meg up directly! But the angel had vanished in air; And a stout man stood with a bushel of coal, And the turkey it lay on a chair. And didn't we have a feast, In a good old-fashioned way; And wasn't we warm and jolly fed That glorious Christmas Day?

So that is my tale all told,— A homely tale at the best,— A tale that Meg and I repeat, Each night when we go to rest. I have heard of angels with wings, Who noiselessly flit through the air, But the angel of angels that we like best, Left a turkey upon the chair.

A CHRISTMAS IDYL FOR CHRISTMAS EVE.

BY TWELVE VOICES.

[In performing this idyl a boy—the best reader in school—should be selected to stand at the desk, or on one side of the platform, with an open Bible before him. Christmas trees supplied with tapers or candles, may stand on each side of the stage. After reading the first verse as appelted below, there may be a voluntary performed on the melodeon or organ, during which two girls may light the tapers on the trees. The twelve voices then take their place on the platform, after which the music ceases, and the reading again commences.]

Reader. "Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea, in the days of Herod the king."

[Voluntary on melodeon—tapers lighted—voices arranged.]

Reader. "And there were in the same country, shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night."

- 1. Night! 2. Quiet night! 3. Calm and holy night! 4. Blest as is no other night! 5. Stars ne'er shone with softer light; 6. Never moon so clear and bright; 7. Never flocks so snowy white As reclined on Bethlehem's plain On the night that Jesus came. 8. Wrapped in meditation deep, Holy shepherds could not sleep. 9. Looking from their flocks away, Where the quiet Bethlehem lay: Towards the hills with light o'erspread, 10. Towards the starry skies above. 11. Towards the moon with face of love.

Holy shepherds, blest are ye, Gazing heavenward silently!

Reader. "And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid."

"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

"And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God."

- 1. Night! 2. Beautiful night! 3. Blessed, holiest night! 4. Hallowed ever be the night! 5. When from Judah's plains so bright, Shepherds saw a startling sight, And fell down in wild affright. 6. Why, oh shepherds, tell me why, Uttered ye that fearful cry? 7. Oh, they saw beside the moon, Light beyond the glare of noon; 8. Angels furrow so bright and fair, Peopled then the midnight air. 9. But a song so heavenly sweet, With the love of God replete; Song that we may not repeat, Fought them wondering to their feet! 10. Angel-song! Oh shepherds, say, Can you chant that wondrous lay? 11. Do you know the words they sang, When their notes through heaven rang? 12. Sister, in this book divine, Written are the words sublime; Words that thrilled the hosts of heaven, Words of joy to mortals given.

Reader. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

12. "Glory to God in the highest," &c.

"Glory to God in the highest," &c.

[If this sentence can be chanted by the Church choir, just after it is repeated by the class, it will add to the interest of the exercise.]

- 1. Centuries have passed away, Since Messiah's natal day; 2. Still that angel song we hear, Ringing through the heaven clear. 3. "Glory to the Lord of heaven, 4. "Peace, good will to earth, be given." 5. And we will with angels pay, Honor to the "Christmas Day." 6. Honor shall this night receive, Blessed, welcome "Christmas Eve."

[Let the choir, class and congregation, join in singing.]

"Mortals awake, with angels join," &c.

[The first verse by the choir, second by the choir and class, and the remainder by the whole congregation, after which let the class say in concert:]

Kindest friends, our thanks receive; Joyful be your Christmas Eve; Soitly glide the night away, Merry be your Christmas Day!"

—S. S. Teacher.

He who does nothing is in a fair way to do mischief.

AN AUSTRALIAN FERN-DELL.

The general opinion of Australian scenery is that it is monotonous, but the monotony is rather in the travellers, who seldom leave the beaten track. The truth is, most of Australia is virgin soil, and with virgin modesty she hides her beauties from the common gaze. But in the recesses of her ample bosom she has gems of tropical splendor. These are her fern-dells. Come with us and see one.

The sun is sinking fast behind the ledge of this broad plain over which we have been riding; let us rest for the night among these bushes and by the side of this melodiously purring rill. We tie our horses' forefeet together, that they may not stray and then light a fire. This massive fallen trunk makes a capital back-log, and there are plenty of dead branches about for fuel. Our kettle soon boils and after a frugal meal with a fragrant cup of Souchong, we stretch ourselves in our thick woolen covers or bush-beds, and gaze up into the starry magnificence of the southern sky. The silence is interrupted occasionally by the shrill cry of a night-bird, and by crackling noises in the trees. The latter are made by the opossums, which feed by night on the leaves and flowers of the eucalyptus or gum-tree. These sounds are soon lost in slumber, and a kangaroo ret hops in among us, and steals a crust or two, without being disturbed.

Suddenly we are awakened by louder voices. It is the magpie salutes the morn. Our coverings are wet with dew and lie heavy upon us, but our backlog still glows. We spring to our feet and call to the rest to awake. Suddenly loud laughter resounds on every hand as if we were mocked by demons. It is the laughing-jackasses, or birds. Many a traveler has been made to shudder by their half-demonic, half-human laughter.

Breakfast over, bed-covers dried and tied, we set off in a trot over the hard ground towards the mountain. We already meet pickets of ferns, like groups of graceful ladies waving their huge fans at us. The road gets steep. We begin to mount, and then we dismount, and lead our horses. O, how hot it is! how grateful a cup of water would be! but there is none on this side the mountain. But the parrots in their beautiful plumage, and the cockatoos with their top-knots seem to care neither for the hot sun, nor for us. By noon it is different. There is not a breath of air. Not a leaf stirs. Not a beetle hums. Not a bird is seen. All animal life seems to have departed. Only from a distance come regular tones, like those of an axe. Many a weary traveler has been filled with hope by these tones, imagining they came from a neighboring settlement. But he was sadly deceived. His cry of Oo-oo (the bush-cry) was not answered, yet the strokes continued. They are the notes of a frog,—but another disappointment—his presence is no sign of water.

We descend into the valley and a sudden bend reveals to us the fern-dell in all its unsuspected beauty, in luxuriance which dazzles the eyes—a picture, stretching for miles, framed by mountains. We enter and walk from one green hall to another, of which the stately columns are the trunks of the fern-trees, 10 to 30 feet in height, each extending its palm-fans on every side above us, and seeming to shut us in altogether from the world. These again are adorned with every sort of mosses, fungi, lichens, and smaller ferns, and between them hang festoons of vines and creepers, often so strong and close that we might make ham-mocks of them. The fallen trunks form luxurious seats, with their thick cushions of moss. But all is moist. The air is like that of a forcing-house, though cool compared with that outside. A crystal rill threads its way beneath us. Above blazes the fierce sun, but it has no power on us. Only it fills with sapphire light the translucent foliage. Words cannot express the beauty of these emerald halls, these garlands, these velvet ottomans. We feel that we must be in a fairy grotto. Where are the dryads? Why do not Titania and Oberon come forth to welcome us?

But on, further yet! The defile gets narrower and is almost impassable. Then we have to coast this sea of greenness. Here is a mighty bridge before us. A colossal eucalyptus has fallen across and spans the wide ravine. And in what splendor is it clothed! From its mossy cover hang creepers in delicate festoons and make us think it fell on purpose to heighten the charms of the forest-scenery. It is not a dead solitude. Gay birds make it their home, and bright lizards dart hither and thither among its shady nooks.

After a visit to such a palace of beauty you will not say that the monotony of Australian scenery is not varied by brilliant episodes.—Ere.