

Christian Messenger.

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THE TEACHER.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1873.

SUNDAY, April 13th, 1873.

The Dreams of Joseph.—Gen. xxxvii. 3-11.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Matt. xi. 25.

COMMIT TO MEMORY.—Verses 3, 4, 9-11.

SUMMARY.—The lad, because upright in heart, his father's favorite, and honored of God, was hated bitterly by his brothers.

ANALYSIS.—I. Favoritism and its fruits vs. 3, 4. II. Dream of the sheaves. vs. 5-8. III. Dream of the heavenly lights. vs. 9-11.

EXPOSITION.—The interval.—We left Jacob, last week, alone, yet not alone, at the ford of the Jabbok, in the morning twilight, a victor, yet maimed, newly blessed and greatly strengthened with a title conferred by his heavenly King, and like the title Christian, more honorable, a thousand fold, than monarchs are wont to confer on their chief subjects, nay more honorable far than the title of king, or emperor, or president. Soon after, he saw his wrathful, dreaded brother advancing; but, lo! the victory of the night has been a victory indeed, for as Esau sees him he runs to meet him, not to strike him dead, but to embrace, and kiss him, and mingle his tears with the tears of Jacob. Such a reconciliation! So unexpected! There was one whose touch had softened the hard heart, who had quenched the fury of murderous passion, and instead, had kindled the fire of penitent and brotherly love. So in peace Jacob came to Canaan, and settled in the heart of the land, first in Shechem, and then in consequence of the treacherous deed of his sons, in Bethel, where he had spent the memorable night, the first in his flight from Esau, when the vision of the ladder was given him. Here Rachel the beloved Rachel, died in child-birth, leaving Joseph her oldest, and Benjamin, which name means "Son of sorrow," son whose birth was the cause of his father's deepest sorrow, because it caused the death of his darling wife, still loved as devotedly and far more tenderly and sweetly than in the earlier years. Beautiful love, so constant, so pure, so blissful.

"Oh, these are the sweets that kindly stay—From youth's gay morn to age's night; When beauty's rainbow tints decay, Love's torch still burns with a holy light. Esau had settled beyond the limits of Canaan, the desert region stretching far away to the south from the Dead Sea, and there his family increased, and was growing to be a great people. Here we come to the Scripture of our lesson.

Verses 3.—Israel loved Joseph more than all his children. Partly, no doubt, both because he was the son of the woman whom he loved beyond all other human beings, but who had so recently died; and because of the inherent loveliness of the lad, now seventeen years old. vs. 2. But also because he was the son of his old age. One may wish and try to love equally his children, and yet be unable. It is not possible, and it is not needful, to have just the same natural affection for each one to whom we hold exactly the same relation. Yet it is possible, and our duty, to desire and seek alike the good of all; to avoid those discriminations which create jealousies and bitternesses. The coat would seem to be mentioned here as an indication of a constant discrimination in Joseph's favor, so marked as to make the rest of the children feel that he was the favorite, to their prejudice. If so, it is a fact to Israel's discredit. It marks a folly, a sin. Of many colors. This is regarded as a wrong translation. There is much better authority for the translation "a coat [garment] reaching to the feet."

Verses 4.—When his brethren saw, etc. Ah, how much is told in these words! Boys have keen eyes, and these boys of Jacob, men though they were now grown up to be, had, from Joseph's birth, marked and felt keenly, bitterly, angrily, wickedly, the father's preference of Joseph. They saw it. Nothing so sharpens the sight as envy and jealousy. They hated him. It was no fault of Joseph's that his father loved him. But passion is always unreasoning. Could not speak peacefully unto him. The phrase thus translated, may, according to Hebrew idiom, mean that

they could not greet him. The form of greeting was, "Peace to thee." We shall see hereafter, that while all the brothers of Joseph (Benjamin, the infant, of course excepted) were envious, they were not all equally malicious.

Verses 5.—Dreamed a dream. Not an ordinary dream, but a supernatural and prophetic dream. And he told it to his brethren. He perhaps knew that his brethren were not kindly disposed to him, but he could not have known the full depth and meaning of their envy. He seems to have told the dream in a frank, honest, kind, brotherly spirit, with no purpose to claim to be the favorite of heaven as well as of his father, or to make his brothers feel that he felt himself their superior. How well he understood the dream, does not appear, but it was so plain that his brothers and his father saw its general import. They hated him yet the more. It was bad enough that he should be their father's favorite, but that he should be preferred above them by God also, they could not bear.

Verses 6.—Hear I pray you, etc. Polite, unsuspecting. Verse 7.—The form of the dream or vision was determined by the sleeper's occupation. It is so throughout the Bible. Revelations from God are made through men, and take on this or that form, according to the character and condition of the medium. This dream of the sheaves may have been in a night following a day spent in harvesting the grain. There is great simplicity, naturalness, and beauty in this dream, but its meaning was quite too plain to make its narration at all palatable to the brothers.

Verses 8.—He stops. They break out wrathfully. Shall thou indeed reign over us, or shall thou indeed have dominion over us. They had not yet learned that it is "not by might nor by power," but by the Lord's Spirit; that against God's purpose human purposes are unavailing. Hated him yet the more. Already stated in vs. 5, but repeated for emphasis. This hatred is the pivot on which Joseph's story turns. For his dreams, and for his words. They were mad when they thought of the dream and its meaning, and yet madder when they thought of Joseph's telling them the dream, and perhaps making comments on its import, and the probable purpose of God in regard to the brothers.

Verses 9.—Yet another. Not the same, though involving the same prediction, and something additional. The father rebuked him, yet in no such spirit as that which his brothers had. Kalisch says, on the difference of these dreams, that "one moves in a terrestrial, the other in a heavenly sphere; the former, therefore, typifies only Joseph's wealth and worldly position, the latter promises eternal favor and universal homage, for sheaves of corn are an emblem of a prosperous and peaceful life, spent in comfort (Job v. 26), while the heavenly lodges are the symbols of dominion and imperishable renown."

QUESTIONS.—Where did our last lesson leave Jacob? What are the principal events of his history between that time and the time at which our present lesson finds him? How many sons had he? Their names? Chapter xxxv. 22-26. Vs. 3. Where was Jacob now living? vs. 1. How old was Joseph? vs. 2. His mother's name? Chap. xxv. 24. His younger brother? How did Jacob regard him? Why? Vs. 4. What is said of his brother? Vs. 6, 7. What dream had Joseph? How came he to have such a dream? To whom did he tell it? What was its meaning? Did Joseph probably understand it? In what spirit do you suppose he told it? What was Joseph's character? Vs. 8. How did his brothers understand it? How did it affect them? Vs. 9. His second dream? What did this mean? To whom did he tell it? Vs. 10, 11. What said his father? In what spirit? What effect on the brothers?

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher. Scripture Catechism, 110.

SUNDAY, April 20th.—Joseph sold.—Gen. xxxvii. 23-28.

Most young men consider it a great misfortune to be poor, or not have capital enough to establish themselves at their outlet of life in good business. This is a mistaken notion. So far from poverty being a misfortune to him, if we may judge from what we every day behold, it is really a blessing; the chance is ten to one against the youth who starts with plenty of money. Let any one look back twenty years, and see who commenced business at that time and trace them down to the present day. Taxation is said to bear equally on all classes, from the fact that it hardly presses on the rich and presses hardly on the poor.

Youths' Department.

LETTER FROM BURMAH.

AMHERST, March 26, 1873.

Dear Bro. Selden,—

Rev. W. George has kindly written the enclosed letter to our Sunday School. You are at liberty to publish it, or any part of it, for the benefit of the other Sunday Schools.

Yours affectionately, D. A. STEELE.

HENTHADA, BURMAH, Dec. 25, 1872.

My dear young friends,—

Allow me to wish you "A Happy Christmas." The day will have been long past before this reaches you yet I would like for you to know that on this day of sweet memories of cheerful greetings, I have thought of you and prayed for you. May you all be spared to see many "Merry Christmases," and may each of you find your hearts fonder of Him from whom the day derives its name.

Christmas in Burmah is very different from that delightful day in Nova Scotia, yet we have some pleasures that you do not have. If we have no ice for skating or snow for sleighing or snowballing, no fat turkeys or doughnuts; we have a lot of fruits and beautiful flowers, and as for snow and ice, the boys and girls can form no idea of it, and do not feel the loss at all. We have tried to teach something about those wonders of cold countries, but they can not understand how it can be cold enough to make water so hard that a horse could walk on it.

Let me tell you of our Christmas. We had a Sunday School festival, and seventy-four Burman girls and boys were present, some of them were eighteen years old and some not more than seven. A few were the children of those who have learned to love Jesus, but the most of them were the children of Pagans who do not believe that God made man or that Jesus came into the world to redeem us from misery. We met in the mission chapel at 11, A. M., and after singing a translation of "Happy Greeting" I read to them the 103rd Psalm, and an old native preacher prayed. As he prayed for these poor little blinded children his sense of their state, and of the state of millions of his poor countrymen nearly overcame him, and he wept like a child. After prayers I talked to them about Jesus and told them why all men had reason to rejoice on this day, then one of the preachers talked a few minutes and we sang "Praise God from whom all blessings flow," all was done in Burmese of course. Then the little ones remained sitting round the chapel on their mats while the teachers handed round the things for the feast. What would you think of a festival without a cake or pie or tart or a bit of bread even? Well we had none of these things, our feast was of Plantains and a peculiar kind of confectionary made by the Chinese, of which the Burmans are very fond. One sort was composed of parched rice and molasses, another of some kind of coarse flour and honey, and some two or three kinds were very like what we get at home. As sweet things are cheap we got for about three dollars enough to feed them all they wanted, and each one to carry home a little parcel for future reference or to give to friends.

A few minutes ago one class came in to say good-bye before they went home, and this is the way they did in accordance with Burman etiquette, they knelt down in front of Mrs. George and placing the palms of their hands together above their forehead, they bowed till their faces nearly touched the floor saying at same time "I go now please; Custom requires that the salutation be returned by saying "Go please."

You will be interested to learn how those dusky children are progressing in their studies, what they study, &c., &c. In the day schools their studies do not differ materially from primary schools at home, our Sunday school differs very much, the plan adopted is as follows. The teacher takes a class of about ten and begins by telling them about the creation, and fall of man in the garden of Eden, and after a while asks them questions; this process of teaching instead of their reading for themselves must be carried on till the last with this people, with very few exceptions; they listen to what you tell them and many are quick learners but they do not study; what the teacher tells only do they regard as possible to get. But when the spirit of God takes hold of their hearts it is wonderful how soon they learn, and rest

on those sublime truths that relate to salvation. As an illustration, the other evening I talked a little while to the girls of the boarding school that come in either morning or evening to our family worship, one chocolate coloured little beauty of ten years when I asked her if she made use of any vile words, replied that she had formerly done so, but now as Jesus was not pleased with them she had put away the practice, I asked her why Jesus-liking or not liking the practice had anything to do with her. She said, as He had died to redeem her from hell she could not practice that which was displeasing to Him. That He had given her a new heart which did not want to go contrary to His law. How do you know He has given you a new heart? I asked. Because I love Him and desire to obey Him, she replied. Another little bronze beauty whose face fairly shone with health and intelligence told me she had left off bad words because she loved the Saviour of mankind. She is only seven years old—I told her that there were a great many people in the world and she was a very little girl, and asked what reason she had for thinking Jesus would know or care whether she used bad words or not. She replied He is God and knows all things by His own power.

Now I would like to know how many of you are restrained from bad words because you love Jesus, you have sent many that these heathen children may know of the Saviour. And many of them love Him, I expect to baptize some of them soon, they have become children of God. Will you neglect that which you are so anxious to send to these poor little children—you have fine homes, good clothes, pious teachers and christian parents but all these will not, can not, save you if refuse to give your heart to Jesus, you know He is the only Saviour and are anxious that all may know and be saved. Do you love these heathen children better than you love yourselves? Have you ever made as much effort to be saved as you have to make known a Saviour to the children of Burmah. O! I implore you to seek first the pearl of great price, and then give a sanctified life to the service of your own Saviour and to the salvation of others.

Three years have passed away since I saw you, no doubt many of your number have passed away, and some are becoming men and women. Oh! that I knew that you are growing strong for lives of devoted christian service. May God bless you all.

Your affectionate friend, Wm. GEORGE.

EXPOSED BY AN ELEPHANT.

ONE of the most striking illustrations I ever heard of the extraordinary sagacity of the elephant is related in Pettit's work on the Tinnevely Mission. It runs somewhat as follows:

"While the large chapel at Nagercoil was building, the missionaries obtained the loan of a trained elephant for drawing the larger timber used in its erection. The late Mrs. Mault kindly saw the animal regularly fed, lest the food should be stolen by the attendant. One day the allowance of rice seemed very deficient in quantity, and the good lady expostulated on the subject with the keeper. Raising his hands to heaven, the man loudly, and with great apparent earnestness and sincerity, repudiated the idea of his having taken any of the rice. Do you think, madam, that I would be capable of doing such a thing? No, never! no more than I would deprive my own children of their daily food." While he was speaking and gesticulating, the intelligent creature slyly extending his trunk; unfastened the man's waist-coat thereby spilling out the missing rice, which had been concealed in a corner of the cloth, and exposing the dishonesty of the attendant. I have been assured of the authenticity of this anecdote by Mrs. Mault herself.—The Quiver.

"I'S PUT A PEBBLE IN DAT BOTTLE."

A HOME mission teacher of freedom relates the following:

"An old colored brother, who had toiled away his energies, and was left with a stiffened, trembling frame, crowned with snow-white hair, was asked how old he was. Brightened up at being noticed and questioned by a "white gemman," he replied:

"Well, sah, I doesn't know how old I is. Dat, is, I can't tell ye how many years I have lived as a child. But, bless de Lord, I kin tell ye how old I is as de Lord's

chile." Hurrying away into his cabin, he soon came out with a bottle, joyfully rattling something in it, and resumed his happy tone: "Now, sah, if ye'll jest take and count dem pebbles, ye'll see how old I is as de Lord's chile. I was born again jest afore Christmas a long time ago. When de next Christmas comes around I jest tho't I would keep account ob de years I was agwine to spend in de Lord. I couldn't write none, so I tho't I'd put a pebble in a bottle and put it away, and I tole 'em all in my cabin what dat bottle for, and nobody never tech him. So every Christmas since I was born agin I's put a pebble in dat bottle, and if ye'll jest count 'em, ye'll see how old I is as a Christian. I can't see how old I is and I disremember how many there is!" The pebbles were counted, and fifty one of them told of his long life as "de Lord's chile."

DIFFUSING SUNSHINE.

WHEN the sun travels over the continent, ere long it will certainly ripen all the orchards which men have planted on purpose; but it will ripen, too, all the nuts and fruits on the countless acres that men know nothing of. The summer's sun will take care of the farmer's corn and wheat; and so it will take care of the infinite variety of seeds which nestle in the grass and on the ground all over the uninhabited territory of the continent. The summer's sun will work with the worker; and it will also work where no man is. It is the patron of the city, of the village, of the country, of the wilderness, east, west, north, and south, in the valley, and up and down the mountain-side. Everywhere the sun is bringing forth abundant fruit. The summer is ripening all things that are for man, and beast, and bird, and worm, and insect.

So men go forth. They are almoners of God's bounty in the things which they mean; and if they be large, and rich, and ripe, they are also almoners of the bounty which they do not mean, and of which they are not conscious. They shed abroad their influence on every side of them, and enrich all that are near them.—Becher.

NO ROOM IN THE INN.

The inn is full—but there is none to yield? She is so weary—must she go afield? Oh had I chanced that night to be a guest, Thrice welcome Mary to my place of rest. Are such thy thoughts? then hast thou room for all?

Hands for the fallen; ears for every call? Christ claims our love in many a strange disguise:

Now fever-stricken on a bed He lies, Friendless He wanders now beneath the stars, Now tells the number of His prison-bars, Now bends beside us crowned with hoary hairs;

No need have we to climb the angels' stairs, And press our kisses on His hot and hands; In every saint who suffers here the Man of Sorrow stands. —Sunday Magazine.

A LITTLE BOY'S LETTER.

One summer's day a little boy that I love very dearly went into the garden, and because he felt cross and a bit ugly broke off a branch of beautiful flowers from a rare tree. But his better self soon came out, and at the tea-table, in the evening, we found a letter printed with a pen, which I will copy for the good of other tempted boys and girls:

"I WANT TO BE A GOOD BOY AND I WILL TRY. I CAN IF I LIKE. SOMETIMES I GET CROSS AND THEN I FEEL SORRY, AFTERWARD. I WISH I COULD ALWAYS, THEN I COULD NEVER BE CROSS AND BE AS THIS NOON. I WAS NAUTY AND HAD TO BE SENT IN."

Now children, if you do forget sometimes to be good, will you not try to remember that you can be true and obedient if you only ask the loving Jesus to help you! —Congregationalist.

Who taught the parrot his "welcome"? Who taught the raven in a drought to throw pebbles into a hollow tree, when she espied water that it might rise so as she might come to it? Who taught the bee to sail through such a vast space of air, and to find her way from a flower in the field to her hive? Who taught the ant to bite every grain of corn that she burieth in the hill, lest it should take root and grow? —Bacon.

It is said that if you take two letters from money there will be but one left. We have heard of a man who took money from letters and there wasn't any left.

Pride breakfasted with plenty, dined with poverty, and supped with infamy.