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Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, N. S., JANUARY 15, 1873.

THE TEACHER.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1873.

SUNDAY, Jan 19th, 1873.

The Fall and the Promise.—Gen. iii. 1-8, 15.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” Romans v. 18.

COMMIT TO MEMORY.—VERSES 1-6.

SUMMARY.—Ruin by Satan, redemption by Christ.

ANALYSIS.—I. The temptation. vs. 1, 5 II. The fall vs. 6. III. The shame. vs. 7, 8. IV. The promise. vs. 15.

EXPOSITION.—Introductory.—We have in our last two lessons seen the universe opening into existence at God's command, and the fair and sinless ancestors of the race placed by a loving Father's care in a garden of pleasure, with the wealth of a world at their disposal, and the possibility of glorious existence in communion with God and the angels, for both themselves and their descendants. Thus far all has been beautiful and good, alike in fulfillment and promise. We fondly linger upon this. We are loath to leave it. “It might have been,” saidlest of all sad words.” Such a history for mankind might have been! The millions of the race each robed in the glory of God, purity in the heart, purity in the thought, purity in the purpose, purity in the speech, purity in the life. Light, the light of truth and goodness everywhere, and always. It might have been. But it has not been. We turn from all that now, and deal to day with what has been.

We have taken and treated these first chapters of Genesis as history, and not as myth or fable. We shall continue to do so. Those who take the narrative to be in the form of history, only to represent spiritual facts, will be able to draw no line between the real and fictitious history. Besides, if the narrative is so well fitted to express spiritual truths, then the facts of the narrative are just what we may judge to have been realized, for it is God's way to reveal truth, first in the actual shaping of historical facts, and then in the record of those facts. Such a record is the Bible,—both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Vers. 1.—“The serpent.” Plainly, the narrative refers to a literal animal serpent, and not solely to a wicked spirit under the name of a serpent. He was a beast of the field. It is called subtle, or wily. It is destitute of arms or legs by which to escape danger. It is therefore thrown back upon instinct, aided by a quick and glaring eye, and a rapid dart and recoil, to evade the stroke of violence, and to watch and seize the unguarded moment for inflicting the deadly bite. Hence the wily and insidious character of its instinct. See Gen. xlix. 17. But while a literal serpent, a beast of the field, is in mind, not that only is intended. The power of speech and of reason, plainly belonged to none of the animals named by Adam, among which he found no companion or help meet. He named no such animal as this serpent shows himself to be. Who this serpent was, that could reason and speak, lie and tempt, appears from Rev. xii. 9. We are thus fairly

shut up to the common view, that the natural serpent was the instrument of Satan, the medium through which he approached the woman. Though animals have no moral natures, and hence, in the high sense of the word, no characters, they have natural traits which are analogous to traits of character. Hence the use made of them in Scripture as types or symbols, the dove, the lamb, the lion, the serpent, dogs, etc. There was thus a fitness in the medium through which Satan tempted Eve. We naturally think of the demons taking to the swine. Matt. viii. 30. Why he appeared in this form rather than as “an angel of light,” we are not told. It may have been by God's restraint, so that there should be the less excuse for Eve. No temptation was brought to bear upon her which could strike her with awe, and, as it were, overpower her. As to the existence of a personal devil, there is really no more reason to doubt it than to doubt the existence of human sin and human sinners. The Bible encourages no such doubt. As to his access to men, and his evil influence in tempting; the Bible teaches both, and there is not a whit more difficulty in the doctrine than in the quite too common fact that men tempt each other to evil. If we stop here to ask why does God allow it, we cannot stop long enough to get a full answer. Our temptations are not sin. Only yielding to them is sin. Otherwise, Christ could not have been tempted, nor indeed could Adam and Eve. But temptations are a discipline in virtue, a means of attaining a higher life, a better character, if rightly met. God allows us to be tempted to sin, but does not tempt us. James i. 13. He tries us, however. Gen. 22. Temptations beset us, Satan has many ways of access to us. We need to “watch and fight and pray.” To feel safe is to be unsafe. If in Eden the tempter appeared, he will also be with us even in a Christian home, in the house of worship. We are safe nowhere, only when we keep close to God and let God help us. “Yea, hath God said?” Is it really true? Can it be? Is it possible? Such is the spirit of the question. An insinuation that it is a strange thing, unreasonable; but how artful the insinuation.

Vers. 2, 3.—“The woman said,” etc. She seems not to have suspected harm. She talked with her tempter. Innocence is in danger when it enters into conversation with strategy. Christ met the devil only in the way of resistance. He did not give place to his insinuations. The tempter “had nothing in him.” “Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” Her answer was frank and true. Some have thought that in the words “neither shall ye touch it,” she added to the prohibitions and exaggerated the restraint laid upon them. There is no need so to take it. She said only what the prohibition implied, even if it was not expressly stated. They probably were not to touch the fruit, to handle it, and so have their appetite for it awakened, and their strength to leave it weakened. “Lest ye die” How did the first pair know the meaning of death? No one knows how much time passed between the beginning of Adam's existence and this temptation, or in how many ways the knowledge of death may have come to them.

Vers. 4, 5.—“Ye shall not surely die.” His insinuation had done its work in part. It had fixed the mind of Eve quite distinctly on the fact that she was under restraint, had made the restraint prominent, and so had tended to excite the wish to escape it. But she is held back by the fear of consequences, kept to obedience by fear? He must remove the fear. So he makes his bold stroke to sweep that away, and thus carry his point. It has been well remarked that though he contradicts God, he yet so keeps the appearance of truth as not to shock the unsuspecting. “As gods,” or rather, as God. What a liar, and yet what seeming truth! We meet those who speak of the restraints of religion quite in that old serpent style, and like him, make a mock of hell.

Verse 6.—The woman began with listening to the tempter. She now looks on the fair fruit, a hundred-fold fairer to her, no doubt, because she feels as never before, that it is denied her. “Stolen waters are sweet.” We want most what we are bidden not to have. Looking soon gives way to taking. Fatal deed. She gives to her husband. He eats. The enticed turns enticer. True, perfectly, to the principles of our nature, just what we see every day. But what a shock was that “of man's first disobedience.” It propagates itself through all the generations. In the fall of those two all fell. So Scripture teaches,

and so also the facts of life teach. Shall we ask why they were left thus to sin? Why are we left to sin? No sufficient answer has ever been given by man. If one of these questions be answered the other will be. We may not say God could not have prevented sin. We know that he did not, and hence that it was both right and best that he should not. The existence of evil is a dark problem, but our duty remains duty, our sin, sin, just the same, whether we do or do not solve that problem. For their sin both Eve and Adam were without excuse, as also are we, and even the heathen. Rom. i. 20. They each tried to throw their own blame upon the tempting one, just as we try to throw it upon our associates, or our circumstances, or our first parents, or as sometimes, even upon God. Vain trial, always vain.

Verse 7.—Shame, this came with their new knowledge. This was remorse. They felt themselves, knew themselves guilty, and so would hide themselves from each others' gaze, from the eyes of the brute creation, nay of inanimate nature even. Their eyes were open, but to know evil. To them it is now a thing which makes them objects of loathing. “Aprons,” or rather, girdles.

Verse 8.—“The voice of God,” who possibly, as afterward, in the person of “the angel of the Lord,” appeared in human form, to converse with man. God comes down to meet us in such way as our needs require. Hence he came in the flesh in the person of Christ. Sin cut these visits off. It always breaks up and prevents communion with him. “Hid themselves.” No longer as in innocence, ran to meet their heavenly Father, their bountiful Benefactor. Enmity and shame both drove them from him. Only love seeks to be with its object. Here we see the death of their souls, which carried with it, in due season, physical death, and all the woes which have since cursed the earth.

Verse 15.—Immediately on the fall God begins to redeem. “The seed of the woman.” In particular, Christ, but also the whole body of Christ's followers. “Thy seed.” All who side with Satan as against Christ. The victories of Satan are but transient and seeming. “A bruising of the heel.” Those of Christ are permanent and real, “a bruising of the head.”

QUESTIONS.—Where did our last lesson leave Adam and Eve? With what character? Does this one find them the same? What kind of a world would this be if they had not sinned?

Vs. 1. Who was the tempter of Eve? Rev. xii. 9. What question did he ask? Why that question?

Vs. 2, 3. What answer did Eve give? did she suspect evil? What reason did she name for not eating the fruit? What besides fear should restrain from sin?

Vs. 4, 5. What did the tempter next say? What had God said? vs. 17. Was there any truth in the serpent's words? vs. 7. What ought the woman to have done? James iv. 7.

Vs. 6. What harm in looking at the fruit? Is it a sin to be tempted? What followed the looking? What followed the eating? Who besides themselves suffered? Rom. v. 12-21.

Vs. 7, 8. Did they know evil after eating? In whom was the evil? Did their guilt make them ashamed? Why did they flee from God?

Vs. 15. What does this promise mean? How is it being fulfilled?

Scripture Catechism, 93.

SUNDAY, Jan. 26th.—Cain and Abel.—Gen. iv. 3-10.

Youths' Department.

“POP CORN'S” TRIAL.

BY ETHEL LYNN BEERS.

“WELL, Pop, how's trade?” Silas Boyd was the engineer of the 9:30 train from Barreburg, and had been in that position three years already. Not uncomely to look upon, as he stood leaning against the side of the small den where his days were spent in guardianship of the great engine that was breathing in its noisy way beside him. Not unkindly either; as he looked down from his six feet of manhood on a small, slight boy who had clambered around the tender, and now stood warning two red hands, very far out of shot by jacket sleeves, by the fire.

“How's trade, Pop Corn? Nice business that. Light to carry, and lots of profit; handy for lunch too, filling, and cheap. Hello! what's the matter, Pop? Down in the mouth?”

“I say, don't you go and feel like that. If you had trouble like me, now—but a jolly little chap like you! No, it aint the wind in your eyes makes 'em water, either. It aint the wind makes your un-

der lip tremble. Anybody licked you? You just tell me the man, and I'll shake him into the middle of next week.”

All the while the two red hands had been opening and shutting in the pleasant warmth, as if they were gathering and packing in the hard palm a fund of heat for future use. All the while two big blue eyes stared and winked at the dial plate that fronted him, but their owner was not reading its report of the steam-pressure at all; he was thinking of the harsh voice of the conductor, who had bid him stand out of his way, adding a threat of refusal to let him sell his corn on the train at all. Nobody seemed to care to buy his wares this afternoon, and he seemed to be in everybody's way.

“I was kind o' disappointed, I guess, and things have all gone wrong to-day; you know they do sometimes;” and the thin face looked up to Silas wistfully.

“Sometimes, when a fellow tries the hardest, everything goes agin' him. I hate to tell mother, too, what poor luck I've had, for she wont eat half enough anyway. Joe—that's my brother that pops the corn for me—he's lame, and can't do anything for himself. It's queer, aint it, Silas? An' I did want to buy that 'rhythmic so, to study up nights, and now here's no trade all day. In that car right next, there's a boy 'bout my size startin' out to go to school; good clothes on, money in his pocket, and a chance to get learning; and yet he's grumbling at his father all the way out about going. And here's me—well, mother says we must n't grumble at our lot, for God knows what it all means; but it's mighty hard not to think grumble, aint it?”

Silas laid his hand on Charlie's shoulder with a woman's tenderness, and his brown eyes shone a trifle dim as he looked at him, silently at first, and then said cheerily:

“Never you mind, Pop. I aint much of a preacher, I know; but I do believe he's bound to take care of the fatherless, any way. ‘Pears to me I read it plain enough in old aunt Patty's Bible. And have n't I seen him do it myself? When baby Nancy was left in the middle of the track, in front of the engine, do you s'pose it was any mortal hands took her off one side? Did I ever tell you about that?”

“I was on the engine Firefly, comin' round the Willow Bend with a heavy load of steam on, and the straight line over the meadows ahead, when I saw three children walking on the track. One was a small girl with a red hood on, holding a wre baby-girl by the hand, and on the other side walked a boy in a blue jacket. They were holding little Nancy between them, so she could walk on the rail, as I found out afterward. I began to feel worried when I came near enough to see the boy's curls shine in the sun, for they did n't seem to hear us at all.

“Well, Pop, if that old Firefly did n't screech and yell till they looked round, and only made things worse by running to and fro. Did n't I whistle down brakes and turn her head about quicker than ever before! There they were just ahead, little red head pulling the baby one way and blue jacket off the other, then each cutting go, just as the poor little thing turned round, and holding up its chubby hand, crowded and laughed. I shut my eyes, Pop. I'd done all I could, and couldn't stand no more.

“I wa'n't much of a prayer when I said, ‘God help her! and may-be such prayers as mine don't count for much; but the words were scarcely ended when the train stopped. Shall I ever forget the sight I saw? the two little things laughing and crying over the unharmed head of baby Nancy, safe and sound on the tank beside them! The fireman says she toddled off herself, just as we came near enough to blow her little cape one side; but it seemed to me I saw a shiny silver angel floating by just then, and I'll always think so, though, to be sure, it might have been a wreath of smoke. Now I want to know if he didn't look after baby Nancy? Seems to me he did.”

Charlie quite forgot his troubles, as Silas meant he should do when he commenced his story, and stood still thinking about it, while Silas added:

“Keep up your courage, Pop. Come in to warm when you like, and never mind old Check; he wont be cross to-morrow, and trade will come up. By the way, I want a dozen bags of corn; I'm going to set up a little shaver in a small way over in our street; never mind the change. At'n station! Hello! here we are; ten minutes for refreshments!

“Charlie, you just take this in, and tell

Jake to fill it for me. Tell him who it's for; he knows the kind;” and Silas thrust a small flask in Charlie's hand as he was climbing down to take his basket around once more among such passengers as might be tempted by the fresh sugared and salted pop-corn he carried.

He carried the flask in to the waiter of whom Silas had spoken with a heavy heart, for he guessed it was brandy that would fill it. He could not well refuse when Silas had just been so generous and kind to him. So he performed the errand, and returned with it to Silas.

“All right, Pop; just to keep the cold out, you know,” said Silas, as he drank eagerly from the mouth of the flask, and put it in his pocket, as the bell rang and the passengers all came back to take their seats in the cars. A run of two hours brought them to the end of their route. As they passed a line of brick cottages just outside the depot, Charlie saw Silas look long and earnestly among the groups outside, while they were waiting for a train to give them room. When at last his eye found what it had been seeking, a shadow fell on his face, and he lifted both smoke-grimed hands to cover its gloom, or to shut out the sight of a maudlin drunken woman on a door-step.

Charlie saw only the crowd, the dishevelled yellow hair and torn shawl of the woman fluttering in the wind, and touched Silas on the arm, thinking to divert him:

“Look at that drunken woman! Now she is laughing at something that sailor said. What pretty hair, and what little hands!”

Silas gave one swift glance, shuddering as he did so, and then resumed his attitude. “Aint you goin' home, Silas?” said Charlie timidly.

“Home? I've got no home.” “Wont your wife be looking for you?” “Charlie,” said a thick and broken voice, “I was 'fraid of this when I sent you for brandy.”

“That drunken woman yonder is my wife! Yes; she was n't so low always. I've seen that yellow hair all laid round her head in pretty braids, and those little hands as busy as birds about her work, when she was waitress in the big house; and now she is the curse of my life, Charlie. I don't tell many folks how I feel, Pop; but somehow I can't help thinking how I might have had a boy as big and bright as you, if that—” pointing over his shoulder, “had n't let my three-year old Jerry drop over the banister, to lie for hours unconscious, and then go softly down the valley all alone. I'm glad he went; yes, Charlie. I'm glad he went before he knew his mother's shame. He had big blue eyes like you, Charlie. My little Jerry!” and then through the grimy fingers the hot tears, that man lets fall but seldom, trickled down and gave a tiny hiss as they touched the boiler and vanished.

“Silas,” the little boy came up close beside his big friend, and laid his chapped red hand on the stout arm—“Silas, I'm awful sorry for you. I know my trouble aint like yours; but you told me just now that he wont leave anybody forlorn who wants him to help 'em; and my Sunday-school teacher tells me so, and my mother says she is sure of it. If he took the trouble to send a busy angel down to take Nancy off the track, don't you think he'll help you too?”

“Don't try that, Silas,” and Charlie touched the bulge in the breast-pocket that outlined the flask inside. “I Jerry should be lookin' out of them stars that have just opened their shutters up there, he couldn't be happy, seems to me, if he was in heaven.”

Silas looked up at the great bright star that was already shining, but did not speak until Charlie touched his hand to say, “Good-by, Silas; I'll see you to-morrow morning;” and then ran to his cheery little home, where patient Joe sat waiting, and mother with her quick step and busy hands had set up the savory stew made from small scraps of meat and big potatoes. She was worried over Charlie's solemn face, for he felt that Silas' sorrow was one he could not speak about even to his mother yet; but she was too wise a woman to ask, “What's the matter?” until the story came of itself.

There had been a collision at Willow Bend. There were dark red spots on the snow where bloody heads and hands had laid in agony. There were broken cars and a disabled engine, surrounded by the inseparable throng of curious inquirers and idle gossips, and questions and answers went to and fro among them. There was no lack of tongues to tell the story, how the