

The Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, N. S., JUNE 3, 1874.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1874.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, June 7th, 1874.

The Serpent of Brass.—Num. xxi. 4-9.

GOLDEN TEXT.—As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.—John iii. 14, 25.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 6-9.

SUMMARY.—As by the living serpents came death, so by the brazen serpent came deliverance from death.

ANALYSIS.—The sin. vs. 4, 5. II. The judgment. vs. 6. III. The praying. vs. 7. IV. The salvation. vs. 9, 10.

EXPOSITION.—The interval.—Last Sabbath, we saw Israel assembled a second time at Kadesh, after nearly thirty-eight years of nomad life in "the wilderness of wandering." Nearly all who were over twenty years old at the exodus were probably in their graves, and instead of the fathers were the children. But the fathers' old spirit of unbelief we found still alive and active, bursting out after its old fashion in murmurs against God and Moses, and in cowardly, senseless longings for Egypt, even with its bondage. After the miracle of "the smitten rock," Moses made ready to march. His plan was to strike out eastward through "the land of Edom," and then move to the north, on the east side of the Dead Sea, and enter Canaan, as he afterward did, by crossing the Jordan. The whole distance would have been little more than one hundred miles. Before starting, he sent to the king of Edom for permission to pass peacefully through his territory. This was refused. xx. 14-21. Near the border of Edom, on Mount Hor, Aaron, the brother and constant assistant of Moses, the first high priest of the nation, the father of the priestly family, now more than 120 years old, died. He might not enter Canaan, because he, with Moses, had not honored God at Kadesh. His priestly garments were by Moses taken off, and put upon Aaron's son, Eleazar, as successor. xx. 24-29. After thirty days of mourning for Aaron, the Canaanites of the south of Canaan, under their king Arad, made war on Israel, were utterly defeated, and both their army and their cities destroyed. vs. 1-3. At this point our lesson finds Israel.

Verses 4.—Mount Hor. Now called Jebel Haroun—the mount of Aaron. There was another Mount Hor, mentioned in xxxiv. 7, 8, at the north of Palestine, and is thought to have been either Lebanon, or some peak of Lebanon. Mount Hor is on the eastern side of the great valley that runs south from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Akabah, the Red Sea, of this verse, and is "the most conspicuous of the whole range of the sand-stone mountains of Edom," having on its eastern side, though not visible from its summit, "the mysterious city of Petra." It is 4,800 feet above the level of the Mediterranean, and 4,000 feet above the valley of Arabah, which runs by it on the west. "It is marked far and near by its double top, which rises like a huge castellated base from a lower base, and is surmounted by the circular dome of the tomb of Aaron." From its summit one has a view of the valley of Arabah to the west, and of "the wilderness of the wandering," and of the southern mountains of Canaan beyond. "On the east were the rugged mountains of Edom, and, far along the horizon, the wide downs of Mount Seir." Here the Israelites had waited at least thirty days, and now they set forth, by the way of the Red Sea, which was down the valley called "the Arabah," to the Gulf of Akabah, the part of the Red Sea forming the eastern boundary of "the Peninsula of Sinai," as we saw in previous lessons. This is, in fact, an extension of the valley of the Jordan, and between the Dead Sea and the Red Sea is over 100 miles long. It varies in breadth from some fourteen or sixteen miles at its northern end, to three or four at its southern. On its west side are long horizontal lines of the limestone ranges of "wilderness of the wandering," from 1,500 to 1,800 feet high, broken through by many small valleys. Its eastern side is a wall of granite and basaltic mountains, from 2,000 to 3,000 feet high. There are two principal wadis, or valleys, entering the Arabah from the east, one, the Wady Itam, just above the Akabah, or "Red Sea," leading to the east of Edom, and doubtless taken by the Israelites, on turn-

ing from the Arabah. To compass the land of Edom. The name Edom, meaning Red, was given to Esau, Jacob's brother, and thence to the country inhabited by his descendants, which was also called Idumea, Mark iii. 8; and the mount of Esau, Obad. 8, 9; and originally, Mount Seir. Gen. xxxii. 3. It was "a narrow, mountain's tract (about 100 miles long by 20 broad), extending along the eastern side of the Arabah; from the northern end of the Gulf of Elath [Akabah], to near the southern end of the Dead Sea." "While Edom is wild, rugged, and almost inaccessible, the deep glens and flat terraces along the mountain-sides are covered with rich soil, from which trees, shrubs and flowers now spring up luxuriantly." "The name Edom, or rather its Greek form, Idumea, was afterwards given to the country lying between the valley of the Arabah and the shores of the Mediterranean." The Edonites were ever a warlike people (Gen. xxvii. 40), and hostile to Israel from the first. Though conquered by David (1 Kings xi. 15, 16), they revolted and gained their independence under Jehoram (2 Chron. xxi. 8). After a half century they were again conquered, and long held in subjection (2 Chron. xxv. 11, 12). Discouraged because of the way. They were going directly away from Palestine, back over the tracks their fathers had come nearly forty years before, and there was little of either water or vegetation, unless they had turned from this to go up on the east side of Edom in a similar way.

Verses 5.—The people spake. A general complaint, made probably to Moses, through the leaders. Wherefore, etc. We recognize yet again that same old wicked cry of unbelief, as though the nation had learned nothing by all its history. No bread, neither water. A month or so before they had received water from the rock, and were still receiving "bread from heaven"—the manna—but of this they say, Our soul loatheth this light [vile] bread.

Verses 6.—And the Lord [Jehovah] sent fiery serpents among the people. At Kadesh, in answer to the same complaint, he sent an abundance of water; now he sends serpents. Then it was mercy, now it is judgment. Had they rightly received that they would have avoided this. But they did not know that "the goodness of God" was to lead them to repentance. These serpents are called "fiery," either because of their color, or, as is more commonly believed by scholars, because of the burning effect of their bite. They need not be identified with "the fiery flying serpent" of Isa. xxx. 6, and xiv. 29. Niebuhr speaks of a serpent found in the Arabian desert called Baetan—"a small, slender creature, spotted black and white, whose bite is instant death, and whose poison causes the body to swell in an extraordinary way." They bit the people, and much people of Israel died. The number of serpents would seem to have been great. The people were encamped in the valley, extending over a large territory, and peculiarly exposed to just such an attack. These numerous deaths helped to the fulfillment of the prophecy in xiv. 22, 23.

Verses 7.—The people came to Moses. To Moses, so recently reviled and abused. Like men now, who blaspheme against God and rail against his ministers, until death lays his hand on them. Then they wish to see the minister, and they exchange cursing for entreaty. We have sinned, etc. When their sin found them out, they found it out—some of them when it was "too late," others in time to ask Moses to pray for them. Blessed are they whose conviction of sin comes in time to enable them to ask for the prayers of God's servants, and the saving mercy of God. And Moses prayed for the people. According to Christ's command in Matt. v. 44. We may now fitly ask for the prayers of God's people, or, as his people, pray for others. But we are all to go, each for himself, to Jesus Christ, "who ever liveth to make intercession." Heb. vii. 25. His word is, "Come unto me"; not, "Go to the priest." There is no priest but Christ.

Verses 8, 9.—We have here the command and the compliance. The command was to make "a fiery serpent," and in compliance "a serpent of brass" was made. This somewhat favors the view that the serpents were called fiery because of their color, but is not decisive. It was raised on a high pole, that it might be seen from all parts of the camp, as it shone in the sunlight. Whoever looked at it, when bitten, would be cured. But, of course, the healing power was not in the look, and not in the brazen serpent; but in God only, who made this arrangement partly in

order to show, by type, how the salvation of sinners is effected through Christ. This is proved by John iii. 14, 15. In the type, the bite represents sin; the deadly effect of the bite, the condition of the sinner out of Christ, under condemnation unto death; the pole, the cross; the brazen serpent, that which in Christ's death was forever nailed to the cross; 1 Cor. v. 21; Heb. ii. 14, 15; Col. ii. 14, 15; Epistles. ii. 15, 16; Gal. iii. 10-14; Luke x. 18, 19; the upward look, the sinner's look to the cross; the expectation of recovery, the sinner's faith in God, through Christ; the recovery itself, the sinner's salvation, comprising inward healing and deliverance from death.

QUESTIONS.—Where did our last lesson find and leave Israel? What events occurred between that lesson and this? xx. 14-29; xxi. 1-3.

Vs. 4. From what mountain did Israel journey? What do you know of this mountain? xx. 22-29. Where was there another Mount Hor? xxxiv. 7, 8. What was this "way of the wilderness"? Answer.—The deep desert valley extending south from the Dead Sea to the Red Sea. Meaning of the words, "to compass"? What do you know of the land of Edom, and its inhabitants? Gen. xxv. 30, xxxii. 3; Obad. 8; Gen. xxvii. 37-40; Num. xx. 15-21; 2 Sam. viii. 14. What discouraged the people?

Vs. 5. What did the people say? Vs. 6. What did the Lord do? What is meant by a "fiery serpent"? What mischief was done by the serpents? What did God send to the Israelites when they murmured at Kadesh? xx. 11. What lesson is there in this for us?

Vs. 7. To whom did the people now go? For what? Who is our Intercessor? Heb. vii. 25. Who prayed for Israel?

Vs. 8, 9. What did God bid Moses do? Did he do it? What was the result? Of what was this a type? John iii. 14, 15. Show in what respects?

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher. Scripture Catechism, 192.

SUNDAY, June 14th, 1874.—The True Prophet.—Deut. xviii. 9-16

Youths' Department.

For the Christian Messenger.

ANOTHER LILY GATHERED.

MARY WELTON, a dear child who has lately gone to heaven, was nearly always called May. We do not know why she so generally went by that name; but as May is sometimes used as a pet name for Mary, we can give some reasons why we like it, and why we think it appropriate here. May, is the name of the month of spring flowers and tender plants and opening buds; and in this dear girl's character we saw the first evidences of a truly pious life. She loved Jesus, his people and his ministers. Her bible and other good books were her delight. She was obedient, humble, and patient. All these traits of character in a young person are as lovely and fragrant as the flowers of early summer.

Our first acquaintance with her took place about fourteen months ago, just before we took up a temporary residence at her home. She said she would get her a bunch of May flowers and set them upon the table in our room, a promise which, with a disposition as pleasing as the flowers themselves, she fulfilled.

Only one year has passed away since she did this, yet the checks then so rosy now lie in the cold ground and her happy spirit has gone to be with Jesus.

When little May was quite young, she was led to trust in the Saviour. She had been troubled to think that though young yet she was sinful; but she knew that God could forgive the sinner for Jesus' sake. One evening, after she had been heard singing with unusual joy and happiness, she went to her pious mother and said, "Ma, I feel so happy to-day, I think the Lord has pardoned my sins." There is no doubt that the Lord did pardon her sins, and make her his child. It was seen that the love of Christ was shed abroad in her heart. Religion never does that. May's soul was full of youthful joy, and we loved her because she showed us that piety can guide the young christian amid the joys of youth, even as it supports the aged saint in the decline of life.

Toward the end of last summer it was seen that her earthly course would be a short one, and we also observed that her spirit was preparing to quit the frail tabernacle of the body. She was often heard singing, while playing the tune on the organ, the well known hymn,

"I want to be an angel,
And with the angels stand."

She sang so thoughtfully it seemed that she really wished to be an angel; and many a silent tear was shed by those who listened, fearing that it would not be long before she would leave this world to join the company of those around the throne of God, who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

"Around the throne of God in heaven,
Thousands of children stand,
Children whose sins are all forgiven,
A holy, happy band.
Singing glory, glory, glory."

And now another spirit has joined that happy band. She passed away very peacefully on Sabbath morning the 3rd of the present month, eleven years of age.

Many young people will read this sketch and some of them may die early. Dear children, do you love the Saviour? He alone can make you happy in life and in death.

Bereaved christian parents may find much comfort in anticipating happy reunions beyond this parting vale.

"Sweet flowers, so soon to fade and droop and die;

While fond affection must their loss deplore,
Hope shows them blooming far above the sky,

Where death's relentless stroke is felt no more.

Then check the rising sigh, the falling tear,
And wait the welcome call to join them there."

H. BOOL.

OUR NEIGHBOR'S CHILDREN.

A farmer was walking with a friend through a beautiful meadow, when he chanced to observe a thistle growing thriftily on the opposite side of the fence. Immediately he sprang over, and cut in off close to the ground.

"Is that your field?" asked the other. "Oh, no; but bad weeds do not care much for fences. If I should leave that thistle to blossom in my neighbor's field, I should soon have plenty in my own."

His answer may serve as a hint to fathers and mothers. It is of importance to them how their neighbor's children turn out. Heart-weeds care less than thistles for boundary fences. Boys and girls who go to the same school, or who live in the same neighborhood, catch many a trait from each other. It is our duty as well as our interest to do what we can for the benefit of our neighbor's children.

THE FLAW-HUNTERS.

There are people who have a preternatural faculty for detecting evil, or the appearance of evil, in every man's character. They have a fatal scent for carrion. Their memory is like a museum I once saw at a medical college, and illustrates all the hideous distortions, and monstrous growths, and revolting diseases by which humanity can be troubled or afflicted. They think they have a wonderful knowledge of human nature. But it is a blunder to mistake the Newgate Calendar for a biographical dictionary!

A less offensive type of the same tendency leads some people to find apparent satisfaction in the discovery and proclamation of the slightest defects in the habits of good men and the conduct of public institutions. They cannot talk about the benefits conferred by a great hospital without lamenting some insignificant blot in its laws, and some trifling want of prudence in its management. Speak to them about a man whose good works everybody is admiring, and they cool your ardor by regretting that he is so rough in the manner, or so smooth—that his temper is so hasty, or that he is so fond of applause. They seem to hold a brief, requiring of them to prove the impossibility of human perfection. They detect the slightest alloy in the pure gold of human goodness. That there are spots in the sun is, with them, something more than an observed fact—it takes rank with a priori and necessary truths.

There are people who, if they hear an organ, find out at once which are the poorest stops. If they listen to a great speaker, they remember nothing but some slip in the construction of a sentence, the consistency of a metaphor, or the evolutions of an argument. While their friends are admiring the wealth and beauty of a tree whose branches are weighed down with fruit, they have discovered a solitary bough, lost in the golden affluence, on which nothing is hanging.

Poor Hazlitt was sorely troubled with them in his time. "Littleness," he said, "is their element, and they give a character of meanness to whatever they touch."—Good Words.

Temperance.

THE TEMPERANCE PLEDGE.

BY MRS. J. P. GRANT.

Edward E. was in affluent circumstances, surrounded by friends who admired and esteemed him, not only for the wit and talent with which he was gifted, but what was of infinitely more importance, the sterling qualities of his heart. He had lately married that one only being who alone could make him happy, and she was all that his idolizing love had imagined. With such prospects, who would not have prognosticated for him a long-continued scene of uninterrupted love and happiness? who would not have said his life would be a bright exception to the general rule that "man's days are full of evil!" But alas for human hopes and anticipations: Edward E.'s page of prosperity was short, whilst his chapter of adversity proved long and bitter. Gradually, and by almost imperceptible degrees, he became addicted to the heart-hardening, soul-killing, vice of intemperance. In vain his friends warned, remonstrated, entreated. He either could not, or would not, release himself from the iron grasp of his tenacious enemy. In a few short years he had lost a lucrative situation, was deserted by his warmest friends, and the late seemed inevitable, that he must eventually fill a drunkard's grave. But there was one gentle being who, unlike all the rest, still remained true to the lost, wretched, Edward, one who loved him with that true love "that hopeth all things, believeth all things, that suffereth long and is kind." It was his own meek, uncomplaining wife, who thus hoped, thus believed. She had again and again been entreated to return to her father's house, where she could enjoy those comforts and luxuries to which from her youth she had been accustomed; but what to Mary was comfort and luxury, without him who alone formed her happiness! "No," she would reply to all their persuasions, "am I not his own wedded wife? have I not sworn to love him through everything? and Edward will yet be reclaimed." I know he will. And oh, blessings on that fond trusting woman's heart, Edward was at length reclaimed, and through her gentle influence and instrumentality. True, she had to go through long years of humiliation and suffering; true, she had to endure poverty, pride's neglect, and the world's scorn, but it was for his dear sake; and God, who holds in His hands the hearts of men, had prepared for her a rich reward, even the consummation of that for which alone she lived.

It was a dark rainy night in November. In an upper apartment of a small house, situated in the suburbs of the town, sat Mary, still lovely, though the bright bloom of health seemed to have faded forever from her fair young cheek. The room was poorly furnished, but scrupulously clean and neat, a small fire burned cheerfully in the grate, and on a table placed near it was a scanty supper, apparently for one. Mary was seated near a cradle, which ever and anon, as its little inhabitant moved, she would bend over or rock with her foot. She had been for some time absorbed in deep, and it would seem, troubled thought, for as she gazed in the fire, a large tear had gathered in her eye, and hung heavy on the long dark lash. "I am afraid he will not come," at length she murmured; "and yet he promised so faithfully he would." Mary sank upon her knees; her lips moved not in prayer, but there was more of beseeching, imploring earnestness in those raised eyes than any language could have expressed. At that moment a low knock was heard at the street door. Mary sprang up, rushed to the top of the stairs and stood leaning eagerly forward to catch the first sound; it was indeed his voice, and the step seemed steady as it ascended; she returned to the room and stood leaning against the wall for support. Edward entered, not with his usual flushed face, unsteady gait and excited manner; his face was animated, it was true, but it was the animation of an approving conscience, the consciousness of having gained a greater victory than earth's conquerors ever achieved—namely, a victory over himself and the demon of intemperance. He advanced to Mary; and, placing his arm round her waist, he began: "My own Mary"—and his voice was soft and low—and to her ear as musical as in happy years long since flown. "My own Mary," he went on, "my guardian angel, whose love has been a sweet unquenchable light in my dark path of sin and degradation, ever alluring me back to virtue, let this," and as he spoke, he placed the temperance pledge in her hand—"which I have this night signed, and which, with God's blessing, I hope to keep, be to us a pledge of returning happiness." Oh, who can paint the love, joy, gratitude, that leaped into those late melancholy eyes, or the bright blood, that suddenly crimsoned cheek, neck, brow, and as quickly ebbed back to her too happy heart, as she hid her face in his throbbing breast and wept aloud. Edward E. is now a dotting husband, an affectionate father, steady, industrious man, a I have no doubt, will soon be a prosperous one. For "have been young and am now old, yet have I never seen the righteous man forsaken, or his seed begging their bread."

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