

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1875.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES. SUNDAY, December 5th, 1875. — Jesus and Mary. — John xx. 11-18.

GOLDEN TEXT. — "Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene." Mark xvi. 9.

ANALYSIS. — I. Mary weeping. Vs. 11. II. Interview with angels. Vs. 12, 13. III. Jesus taken for the gardener. Vs. 14, 15. IV. Recognition. Vs. 16. V. Message to disciples. Vs. 17, 18.

SKETCH OF EVENTS. — Joseph of Arimathea, having permission from Pilate (Matt. xxvii. 57-60), aided by Nicodemus (John xix. 39-42), took Jesus down from the cross, from 3 to 6 P. M., Friday; wound the body in linen clothes and spices, and laid it in a new sepulchre, near to the place of crucifixion. The next day the Sanhedrim obtained leave from Pilate to seal up the sepulchre and to set a watch, lest the body of Jesus should be stolen (Matt. xxvii. 62-66). Thus Saturday passed. Early Sunday morning there was a great earthquake, and an angel, descending, rolled the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and sat upon it. Immediately after, Mary Magdalene and other women came to embalm the body (Mark xvi. 1). Beholding the stone rolled away, Mary Magdalene runs to inform Peter and John (John xx. 1, 2). The other women proceed and meet an angel (or angels), who tells them of the Lord's resurrection (Luke xxiv. 2-8). Then they depart, and Peter and John, hearing the story of Mary Magdalene, hasten to the sepulchre; and Mary follows them. They enter the sepulchre, but find it empty (Luke xxiv. 12; John xx. 3-10). Then they return, leaving Mary behind weeping; to whom, however, Jesus appears, and gives her a message to bear to the disciples (John xx. 11-18.)

EXPOSITION. — Verse 11. — But Mary stood [was standing] without at the sepulchre weeping. In her first visit other women accompanied her, as the other evangelists narrate; but John mentions only her because his purpose was to bring out the Lord's revelation to her alone. The Hebrew Michaa, according to Hayman, defines a sepulchre as "a cavern about six cubits square, or six by eight [nine feet, or nine by twelve] from three sides of which were recessed longitudinally vaults, each large enough for a corpse. On the fourth side the cavern is approached through a small open-covered court or portico of a size to receive the bier and bearers." The ponderous stone which closed Christ's sepulchre had been miraculously removed (Matt. xxviii. 2-4), and the sepulchre was open. At her first visit with the other women she seems only to have learned that the sepulchre had been opened and the body removed, and not to have waited, as the rest did, till the angels appeared and announced the resurrection. She seems to have eagerly at first sight of the empty tomb, hurried to Peter and John, and returned after them. They were now gone, and Mary was alone, and her sole thought was that even the body of her beloved Lord was lost; that thus he was totally, utterly lost. As she wept she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre. She looks though she knows it to be empty.

Verse 12. — And seeth two angels in white. Angels are seen before the Lord, the dawn before the light. Multitudes of them announced his birth. White is the symbol of heavenly purity, and hence the white robe or garment of light is the fit garb of those who appear as heavenly visitants. Sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, etc. The posture of sitting implies rest, quietness, the completion of their ministry. But why had they staid when Jesus had gone? At his bidding, to do his will, and for just this ministry to this one sad woman. What comfort is here. Jesus knows who is and who will be sad with the sadness of this Mary. Jesus in some way provides the needed comfort.

Verse 13. — And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? The question is one of kindly interest, such as a friendly stranger might and naturally would ask. It is preparing the way for that which is to follow. Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. This shows that at her first visit she could not have remained with the others to hear and see what is recorded in Luke xxiv. 3-7. She still believed that enemies had robbed the disciples of their Master, and completed thus their ruin.

Verse 14. — She turned herself back. Perhaps at the sound of approaching footsteps. The vision of the angels, for the reason just given, does not absorb her attention and rivet her gaze as at other times it would. And saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. The sound of some one coming may have caused her simply to glance back and see vaguely, hurriedly, the form of some one.

Verse 15. — Jesus saith unto her. The Lord himself. Comfort is near, oh, wondrously near, yet all unknown, as though it were not anywhere, and could never come. Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? Jesus in this word still disguises himself as a friendly, courteous stranger merely. Thus he too, like the angels, further prepares the way for the revelation. She supposing him to have been the gardener. She does not look closely at him even when he speaks. Sir, if thou have borne him hence, etc. It seems now to just dawn on her that possibly after all it was not the enemy, but a friend that had removed the body, and that therefore the precious body is not "clean gone forever." In saying to him, "I will take him away," she assumes that the stranger must know whom she seeks, and hence she simply says "him," without stating whom.

Verse 16. — Jesus saith unto her, Mary. Not as before, the courteous "Woman," but now the familiar "Mary." She turned herself. How quickly, eagerly, excitedly, transformed by the word and tone. Rabboni, my Master. The answer of his word to her, quick, involuntary, surprised, reverent, joyous, worshipful.

Verse 17. — Touch me not. She was about to embrace him. But this was not less an extreme than was her previous despair. So for her good she is gently but firmly, and with authority, checked by this command. For I am not yet ascended to my Father. This refers to the ascent at the end of the forty days and to the new settled spiritual relations between him and his disciples consequent on that ascension. But go to my brethren. First servants, then disciples, then friends; after the resurrection, brethren. I ascend unto my Father, and your Father. "My Father," otherwise than yours; mine eternally, essentially, by nature, immediately. "Your Father" by union with me, and hence by adoption. And to my God, and your God. The Deity of Jesus was no infringement on his humanity, and hence the person Jesus was truly fully Christ-man, and needed and had all that man needs and must have, and so first of all, chief of all, a God, as well as Father; a God who was Father, and a father who was God.

Verse 18. — Mary came, etc. In a spirit wondrously in contrast with that in which so recently she had hurried to tell Peter and John that their Lord was lost.

QUESTIONS. — In whose tomb was our Lord buried? What did the Jewish rulers do to the tomb the day after the crucifixion? How long was Jesus in the tomb? Ans. One day and two nights. On what day of the week did he rise? At what time of day?

Vs. 11. What Mary was this? Was there anything peculiar in her weeping?

Vs. 12. Why were these two angels probably so stationed?

Vs. 13. Must not Mary have been brave to have continued weeping in the presence of angels?

Vs. 14. What may have prevented her seeing Jesus? Was not his form assumed?

Vs. 15. Why did she think it was the gardener?

Vs. 16. How did her name strike her ear?

Vs. 17. Why did Jesus say, "Touch me not"? Who are Christ's brethren? Matt. xii. 50.

Vs. 18. Was the first woman who saw Jesus, "Mary the Holy Virgin"? Who was she? See Mark xvi. 9. What does Paul call the risen Christ? 1 Cor. xv. 20. Shall we too, if believers, be raised from the dead? 1 Cor. xv. 51-53. Then, what will be the about? 1 Cor. xv. 55.

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY December 12th, 1875. — Jesus and Thomas. — John xx. 24-31.

PRESIDENT BUCHANAN AND BAPTISM. — At a recent conference of Baptist ministers in New York, Dr. Samson described a visit which he paid to the late President Buchanan, in company with the Rev. Mr. Gurley, a Presbyterian minister. — The president turning suddenly to Mr. Gurley says, "Our friend Samson and the Baptists are right. I was brought up Presbyterian, but I tell you the Baptists are right in regarding immersion as the true Scriptural baptism." He then described how he saw thousands baptized in holes cut in the ice in Russia. The result of his investigations, in connection with the Greek Church, which has practised immersion since the days of the apostle, led him to this conclusion.

Youths' Department.

TO GAIN LOVE BESTOW LOVE.

BY S. O. HALL.

It is but a dog: will you give him a blow? He cannot complain to your parents, you know. You may strike him, and kick him, and that without fear: There's no one to blame, for there's no one to hear. Is there no one? Who is it hears when you cry? And, when sick, those who love you sit sorrowing by. With heart-prayer to your Maker your health is renewed. He who made the poor dog is the God who made you. Think that mercy is God's dearest gift from above. And be sure that the cruel can never have love: Take this rule as a rule that with time will not fade. To gain love bestow love on all God has made.

ON THE SEA.

BY B. P. SHILLABER.

In a city at the Equator, where the sun at noon shines directly overhead and all the shadow a man has is what comes from his broad-brimmed hat, which falls like a round cloud upon the ground, the yellow fever was very severe, and a great many people died of it. Ships that arrived there would lose a large part of their crews, and one ship from England was so unfortunate as to lose all, except a little Scotch cabin boy, about twelve years old, who was very sick, but recovered.

He could not be coaxed to live on board of the ship; and so he went on shore, and was kept by benevolent people until the ship should be supplied with a crew, when they thought to put him on board and send him home.

He got a hint of their plan! but the idea of going on board that ship again was horrible to him. He could not agree to the plan at all, and, being a shrewd little fellow, he was continually contriving some way by which he could escape. He said nothing, however, like the owl; but kept up a good deal of thinking.

An American vessel came into the place about the time, and having discharged her cargo, prepared for her return. In about a fortnight she was ready, and after waiting several days for fair wind she spread her sails and went to sea. The wind was fresh and the sea smooth, and the vessel went on very nicely. When she was about four days out of port, early one morning, one of the sailors came to the captain, holding by the arm a sickly little boy.

"Hollos!" cried the captain. "Who have you got there, Jack?"

"Found him down in the run, sir," said Jack. "Don't know how he came there, sir."

The captain looked severely at him; but seeing what a poor little chap he was and that he was trembling very violently, he said, in a kind tone: "How came you here, my little man?"

"Got on board in port, sir, and hid away," was the reply.

"Why?" asked the captain.

"Because, sir," said he, bursting into tears, "they wanted to send me home in the fever ship 'Greenock,' and I couldn't go. All my shipmates on board of her died, sir."

"What is your name?" inquired the captain.

"Donald Stewart, sir," replied he; "and I have a mother in Glasgow, sir."

"Did anybody see you come on board?" asked the captain.

"No, sir."

"Well, then, you stop here in the cabin with me, be a good boy, and I'll take care of you."

The boy dropped on one knee and kissed the captain's hand, wetting it with his tears. Little Donald was sick and the captain paid great attention to him. The mate of the vessel was also sick in the cabin, and the captain was kept pretty busy. By and by the mate grew worse and died, greatly to poor little Donald's grief and terror, for death seemed to be following him everywhere.

The mate was buried in the sea on a lovely day. There was not a breath of air stirring and the vessel did not move in the water at all, but lay rolling about like a log. This was a severe trial to Donald's nerves, who looked over the side of the vessel, as if he were thinking that his turn might come next. For two days the vessel was becalmed, and at the close of the second day little Donald, with a very hopeful face, said to the captain:

"Please, sir, they say in Scotland that if you stick a knife into the foremast it will break up a calm. Shall I, sir?"

"Indeed!" said the captain, smiling. "Well, Donald, you may; but be careful and not stick the knife in too far, because you might raise a hurricane."

Donald promised to be careful and went forward. A few moments afterward he returned; and in a very short time, sure enough, the wind began to blow, just as if what he had done had broken the calm, and the vessel moved on, arriving at New York in a few days. The sailors were much pleased with Donald, and told every one how he raised the breeze for them when becalmed; and the captain, though he didn't believe this, felt a warm attachment for the little fellow.

He was going to Liverpool in his vessel the next voyage, and so he took Donald to his home, to stay with him till he should be ready. In the meantime the "Greenock" returned to England with a new crew, who reported all the first crew dead; and Donald's mother, who was a widow, was terribly grieved at the loss of her little son.

In about a month after this the American brig "Hesper," Captain Simpson, was reported at Liverpool, and the good captain, taking tickets for himself and Donald in a steam-car set out for Glasgow. It was something of a long ride; but they at last reached it, and Donald and his friend, the captain, went at once to the widow's.

The door was closed, and the captain gave a loud knock, putting Donald behind him. A pleasant-looking lady opened the door and asked the stranger in.

"Are you the mother of little Donald Stewart, of the Greenock?" he asked.

"I am sir," replied she sadly; "or I was. But he died abroad."

"I knew him madame," said the captain. "But I didn't know he was dead. He wasn't when I saw him last."

"Tell me, sir," cried she almost wildly, "when did you see him?"

"Why," said he, with a choking in his throat, "I saw him—two days—I mean two months ago. Hang it, madame, I can't hold out any longer. Here, Donald, tell your own story." And the boy darted out from behind the captain, and was clasped in his mother's arms.

That widow's house was the happiest in Glasgow, and the captain felt that it was one of the grandest moments of his life.—Independent.

CORRECTIVE SERMONS. — The best sermons are not always those that comfort us, but those that make us displeased with ourselves. What said George Whitfield? Said he, "It's a poor sermon that gives no offence; that neither makes the hearer displeased with himself nor with the preacher." One of the best compliments that was ever paid to a preacher was that which was paid to Massillon by Louis XVI. He remarked, "I don't know how it is, but when I hear other preachers I usually go home praising them; but when I hear Massillon, I go home condemning myself." If a man, after hearing a preacher's eloquence, should go away saying, "I did like the preacher," he would merely go away extolling a mortal man; but if he went home saying, "I did feel condemned under the sermon," it might send him on his knees at once to pray to Almighty God.

MUNICH AND THE HOUSELESS. — At Munich it is said to be the custom that every child found houseless in the street shall be arrested and carried to a charitable asylum, and there, before the fifth is washed away from his face, or the rage in which he stands are changed, his picture is accurately taken; and when his education is completed, this likeness is presented to him, and he takes an oath to keep it all his life, that gratitude may be stirred within him when he thinks of the state from which he has been rescued, and the care by which he has been restored. Let memory paint for you and me the picture of abject weakness, loathsomeness, and leprosy in which Christ found us, that when as kings and priests we are sitting at his right hand in heaven, we may draw a stimulus for our halcyon as we cast our crowns before Him.—Arthur Mursell.

EXCUSING OURSELVES THROUGH OTHERS. — To bring forward the bad actions of others to excuse our own, is like washing ourselves in mud.

Our readers will be glad to learn that Mrs. Spurgeon is now out of immediate danger, and is, on the whole, decidedly better in health.—Freeman.

No one can be happy without a friend, and no one can know what friends he has until he is unhappy.

A MONOSYLLABIC MEDITATION.

To do a thing well, one needs to know the worth of deeds, large or small. The end may not prove the right aim, but a right aim is to be sought first, and then the deed may be left, where all men's deeds must be left, in the hands of God. There are folks who do not ask to know if a thing be right or wrong, but if it will do something to please the self, which is first in the thoughts of a bad mind. To put down this self, the love of Christ is meant to be at hand for our help. Love and law are at one. He who loves most what is right and good and true, will prove that law is the chief friend of all. It may be hard to see this so long as sin blinds our eyes. But the light of Christ's love drives black night off, so that with pure rays of God's truth, all things may be seen to be as they are, good or bad. Yet as love is life, we must know that where love is not, the law of God is a hard rule, and the heart turns to it as if it were a foe of peace. Now the part of the law may be to drive us to him who is the end of the law, but the part of love is to hold us by sweet and strong ties to the Rock cleft for us. There we are safe.

The rose is fair, for it draws its life from the sun, which is the source of that wealth of tint and shade which we find in earth and sky; but how much more do our souls need to draw from the Great Sun of our Faith all that can make them bright, and cause them to throw back the rays they get from on high, so that their light may shine clear and well in the ways by which we go to the house not made with hands. In that fair home of love and rest no eyes will be held in the dark, for there shall be light o' not sun nor moon, for the Lord God shall be the light and joy of those who dwell by his throne. It were well, then, for all who are here on this edge of time, by the shore of a vast sea, to walk with feet shod with peace, hands full of trust, eyes set on the mark, and hearts drawn by a great cord to the long rest, where shall be no storm, but the full calm for which we moan and pray, while the waves press and the winds beat on our weak barks.—E. S. Porter, D. D., in the Christian at Work.

Remarkable freaks of versification are being perpetrated in the Indian press on the subject of the Prince of Wales's visit. Many of them form excellent examples of what should be carefully avoided—bad workmanship in the making of metres. For instance, a Bengalee, who writes in English in a Bengali paper, sings sweetly as follows:—

Hail! hail! One hundred hails!
To the Mighty Prince of Wales!

and then proceeds to anticipate the feats which His Royal Highness will perform with his rifle:—

He will beautifully shoot
Many a royal tiger brute;
Turning on their backs they'll die,
Shot in the apple of the eye!

We might quote several other "poems" which have appeared in Bengal in honour of the Prince's visit, but they are simply stupid. The following translation of a part of a vernacular ode is, however, worth giving:—

The eldest-born of the Queen of England
Has come to us across the wild black water:
Let us therefore present to the elephant-headed God (Ganesa) rice and melted butter!

The fearful anti-climax of this is apt to remind one of the exclamation, "In the name of the Prophet—Egs!" but perhaps the absurdest verses which have yet appeared in honour of the Prince of Wales are not thoroughly "heathenish" as the above, but are the pious production of a Christian native of the Madras Presidency. The author is so much in love with his "Hymn" that he appears to be circulating it in yellow-coloured leaflets:—

Praise the Lord, my soul, O!
Praise His name always!
May He bless the Princess,
And her husband Wales!

Surely the force of loyalty can no further go!

THE REWARD OF FIDELITY. — Twenty-five years ago, Monsieur D. Conway, in becoming an Abolitionist, outlawed himself in his native Virginia; even relatives repudiated and shunned him. Since then he has made himself famous in the literary world, especially in England; and now, on returning to his native place, he is received with respect and affection by his kindred, and with honour by the whole community. The reunion is honourable on both sides, and typical of the new age in America.