

The Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, N.S., MAY 12, 1875.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1875.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES. Heroes and Judges.

SUNDAY, May 16th, 1875.—A Praying Mother.—1 Sam. i. 21-28.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord." 1 Sam. i. 28.

ANALYSIS.—I. Elkanah goes to Shiloh. Vs. 21. II. Hannah remains at home. Vs. 22, 23. III. Samuel brought to Shiloh. Vs. 1V. Presented to Eli. Vs. 25. V. Pledge redeemed. Vs. 26-28.

HISTORICAL CONNECTION.—The theocracy, that had existed upward of three centuries, is about to be set aside, and a monarchy, to exist for five centuries, is waiting to be ushered in. In the place of a divine people prefer a human king. Samuel, the last of the judges and the first of the prophets, is called to introduce the change. A character like his has not arisen since the day of Moses, the story of whose mother, birth, childhood, manhood, and age is one of the most interesting in God's word. When simply told it cannot fail to please the very youngest in the infant class.

EXPOSITION.—Introductory.—The two books of Samuel appear as one in the original Hebrew. The Septuagint first made the division. These books carry the history of the Jews directly on from where the book of Judges left it. Ruth, as we last week learned, was interposed to bring forward the genealogy of David and of Christ, though the events there recorded occurred in the midst of the period of the judges. These books show us the transition from the period of the judges to that of the kings, and take us to the close of David's reign, a space of about one hundred and twenty-five years, B. C. 1140-1015. Samuel, it has been thought was the author of a part of the book, but as we have the account of his death in 1 Samuel xxv. 1, it is clear that all from that point was written by another, or by others. Probably historical records were kept by contemporaries, and the two books put into their final and present form by some prophet of later times—after the division of the kingdom. 1 Sam. xxvii. 6; comp. vi. 18; 2 Sam. vi. 8; 1 Sam. ix. 9; x. 12, and the like. Its authority as God's word is sufficiently secured by Christ's and the apostles' recognition of the Old Testament, of which this book forms a part.

Verse 21.—The man Elkanah. Verse 1, and 1 Chron. vi. 22-28. He was a Levite, of the family of Kohath. The name, which means, "God created," or "God possessed," seems to have been a common one in the tribe, for no less than six men of this name are mentioned. His home was at Ramathaim Zophim, the same as Ramah, where subsequently Samuel had his home and his burial place. vii. 17; xix. 18; xxv. 1; xxviii. 3. The site of this Ramah and Elkanah and Samuel is by many identified with Nefy Samuil, on a lofty and remarkable eminence, about four miles northwest of Jerusalem, an eminence even higher than Jerusalem, and "the most conspicuous object in all the landscapes of that district." "The modern village, though miserable even among the wretched collections of hovels which crown the hills in this neighborhood; bears marks of antiquity in cisterns and other traces of former habitations." The exact situation of Ramah is uncertain. And all his house. Except Hannah and her child. Vs. 22. He had two wives, and by Peninnah had children. Vs. 2. Went up. That is, to Shiloh. Vs. 3. Here, as we have before learned, the sanctuary was placed in Joshua's time. Joshua xviii. 1. It was in Ephraim, the highway, between Bethel and Sichem, some twenty-five miles north of Jerusalem. To offer unto the Lord [Jehovah] the yearly sacrifice. Literally, "sacrifice of the day," "the days" appointed for the yearly sacrifices. For the law requiring this yearly attendance and sacrifice, see Ex. xxiii. 23; Deut. xvi. 16. And his vow. That is, without doubt, an additional sacrifice pledged in, or appropriate to, the vow which he in common with his wife, had taken with reference to Samuel's birth. Vs. 11.

Verse 22.—But Hannah went not up. The law required the men, and permitted the women, to go to the feasts. It was customary for devout women to go when able. See vs. 4-18. Until the child be weaned. Which, it is said, according to

Hebrew custom, would not be until the child was three years old. Then I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord [Jehovah] and there remain forever. Forever here means to the end of his life, without limit of time. "Before Jehovah" was in the sanctuary. The place of his presence and abode, where he was wont to manifest himself. Hannah here refers to her vow (verse 11), which held her to set apart this child to be a Nazarite for life. She could not consent to take from the sanctuary the Lord's child, when once he had appeared there. He would be committed to the care of some of the pious Hebrew women employed in connection with the sanctuary (ii. 22), and would have his place in some of the buildings opening upon the court. Here his education would be conducted amid associations calculated to awaken and develop the sense of God's nearness, and of the sacredness of his own calling.

Verse 23.—Do what seemeth thee good. Showing his thorough sympathy with her in her vow and purpose. Only the Lord [Jehovah] establish his word. Referring to the prayer of Eli, in vs. 17, which would be regarded by them as not less a prediction than a petition.

Verse 24.—When she had weaned him she took him up with her. To Shiloh. The father also went with her. See vs. 25 the word "they." The chief business in this visit to the sanctuary was the fulfilment of her vow. With three bullocks. So in the Hebrew, though the Septuagint has it "a bullock of three years." One was offered in connection with the dedication of the child, and hence its mention. See Num. vi. 1-21. The other two were probably for the usual yearly sacrifice. See on vs. 21. And one ephah of flour. About one and one-ninth English bushels. A bottle of wine. According to Num. xv. 10, called a drink-offering, about five English quarts. The "bottle" was of skin, usually made of goat-skins, drawn off whole from the animal after its head, tail, and feet had been cut off. The house of the Lord [Jehovah]. The tabernacle, not strictly a house. Solomon first built to Jehovah a house, the temple at Jerusalem.

Verse 25.—Brought the child to Eli. The high priest who would have oversight and control of the child.

Verse 26.—I am the woman that stood by thee here, etc. "Here," in this very spot where I now am, three or four years ago, and very sacred and precious to the mother by its associations. See vs. 12-18.

Verse 27.—The Lord hath given me my petition. The child was given.

Verse 28.—Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord. The Hebrew word for asked, the same as in another form means, and is here used for, "lent," or given, enters into the name Samuel. Vs. 20. The name means, "asked of God." And he [the father] worshipped the Lord there. This consecration of their child to God is an act to be imitated by all. Children are given to us that we may give them back to the Giver. What encouragement for parents, and especially for mothers. How great, unspeakably great, the value of a godly mother.

QUESTIONS.—Vs. 21. Where did Elkanah live? Vs. 1. In what tribe? How many wives had he? What were the names of Elkanah's wives? Which one was childless? How did Hannah regard it? Ans. As a great affliction. See vs. 11. To whom did she pray? Vs. 10. Where? Vs. 9. How did she pray? Vs. 13. For what? Vs. 11. Why for a man child? Ans. Every Jewish mother hoped her child would be the Saviour of the world. See Isaiah ix. 6. What answer to her prayer did Hannah receive? Vs. 17. Where did Elkanah go to offer sacrifice? Vs. 24.

Vs. 22. How old was Samuel when weaned? Ans. About two years.

Vs. 24. What does Hannah's sacrifice teach us? That prayer and alms giving always go together. See Acts x. 4. Where was Shiloh? Judges xxi. 19.

Vs. 25. Who was Eli? Vs. 9.

Vs. 28. What is meant by "lent to the Lord"? To whom should all children be lent? Why? Matt. ix. 37, 38.

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, May 23rd, 1875.—The Child Samuel.—1 Sam. iii. 1-10.

A BAD MARK.—"I've got a boy for you, sir."

"Glad of it, who is he?" asked the master workman of a large establishment. The man told the boy's name, and where he lived.

"Don't want him," said the master workman, "he has got a bad mark."

"A bad mark, sir? What?"

"I meet him every day with a cigar in his mouth. I don't want smokers."

Youths' Department.

DARNING.

A long, thin needle went in and out, under one thread and over the next, under the third and over the fourth, and so on until the bright steel shone through a network of stitches for a moment, and then left a long thread which helped to fill up and strengthen a weak place. Eliza Wallborne bent her head over the work, watching it so closely, that when presently her father entered, and she looked up, her eyes were misty and dim.

"What is the matter, Eliza?"

"Nothing is the matter, papa. Why do you ask?"

"Because you look as if you had been crying."

"It comes of sticking so closely to this work."

"What work is it?"

"Darning stockings."

"Is it work that you like?"

"No, papa, I hate it."

Eliza said this with so much emphasis, that there could be no doubt at all but that she meant it. But her father did not quite like to hear that, and he said, "hush."

"Well, papa, I think you would hate it too, if you had as much of it to do as I have."

"Perhaps I should, my child; but I should be sorry for it, because it is so much better to love than to dislike one's work."

"I know that, but if I cannot like it, what am I to do?"

"Why do you dislike it?"

"Partly because it needs so much patience, and I have very little, and partly because it seems stupid to spend so much time in filling up holes."

"But Eliza's father shook his head.

"There are a many more foolish things than that," he said. "It certainly needs patience, but so does all work, and, at least, you have the pleasure of knowing that some good is accomplished by it. Do you know that I think a woman can scarcely be engaged in any better work than darning?"

"O, papa, what do you mean? If that is all that women are fit for, I am sorry I am a girl."

"I assure you Eliza, that one of the best women whom I have ever known spent her life in darning."

"Papa, how could she?" I should call it a wasted life."

"Would you, my child? Then you would certainly miscall it very much. It was a most useful and satisfactory life."

"It could not have been a happy one."

"It was, though."

"There must have been something strange about the woman and her life, or she never would have been content."

"Shall I tell you something of her?"

"Yes, please, papa. I confess that I am a little curious, though the story of a darning's life cannot be very interesting."

"As for that, you shall judge for yourself. Miss Mayfield was fond of darning when she was a little child. She had a dear old grandmother, who wore one of those old-fashioned, high-crowned caps, and glasses, but who had a gentle voice and willing hands; and this grandmamma taught Miss Mayfield to darn. She was only six years old when she mended the first hole in her father's stocking, and he was so pleased with it that he gave her half a crown."

"That would encourage her."

"Yes, it did. She was not very proud of her first efforts, but she was diligent and persevering, and so anxious to become proficient in the art that she offered to darn all the family stockings."

"Thinking that practice would make perfect."

"Exactly so; and it made her a most beautiful darning. When she was twelve years old her darning was admired by every one who saw it, and her school-fellows were often told to try to imitate her. I think she was about fifteen when, as she was quietly working along one evening, a thought came to her—it was this: 'These holes are like many things in life, they are very unsightly and very uncomfortable, and it would be a good thing to stop them. I wonder if I, who can darn stockings, am able to mend homes that have holes in them?'"

"What a funny idea!"

"But you understand what she meant, do you not, Eliza?"

"O, yes, papa. I know she did not mean that she wanted to be a carpenter, bricklayer, and plasterer, but that she

meant to be a peacemaker, and a person who should, as far as possible, change wrong into right."

"That was her aim; and while she sat and darned stockings her thoughts were busy about other holes and rents, and the best way to mend them. She thought that she would first begin on herself. She had one fault which often brought trouble to her—it was the fault of procrastination. She never meant to neglect duties, but often she put them off until the opportunity to discharge them was gone. She was, in consequence, not to be relied upon for punctuality, and her friends used often to say that Mary Mayfield was sure to be late. Well, she set to work over this hole in her character; and she found it much less easy to mend than the holes in stockings. She saw patient people are almost sure sooner or later to conquer."

"It is so with darning, I know. If I keep putting stitches in, they are sure in time to fill up a hole, however large it is."

"Yes, and Miss Mayfield afterward became a most punctual person. But others had holes to fill; and she was courageous enough to try to do something for them. Her brother had a bad habit of speaking more or less than the truth. She thought it would not do to attack him openly about it, and scold him for it, for that would be like beginning to mend the hole in the middle, instead of at the sides; but she waited and watched, and put a stitch in now and then, until that hole too was filled up. Next, as she darned her stockings, she remembered the home of a friend, and how sad it was. It might, indeed, be called a torn home, for nobody was united, and every member of the family seemed to be keeping apart from the rest. Not a day passed without a quarrel, and angry tones and frowning faces were quite common things in that house."

"But what could Miss Mayfield do?"

"First of all she examined the hole, and then she prayed, and watched, and waited. Next she witnessed one of the boys do a really noble deed, for he sprang into the water after a companion who was drowning, and rescued him. He said nothing about it to his family, but Miss Mayfield did, and she told them in such a way that they could not help feeling proud of him."

"That was a good beginning."

"Yes, and she kept on. She waited quietly until a good opportunity came, and then she eagerly seized it. After a few months the broken home was mended, and it became quite whole, and like a new one."

"That was very good."

"So good that Miss Mayfield decided to give her life to this kind of darning; and I believe she did as much real good in the world as half a dozen ordinary women would have done."

"I will try to be a good darning, too," said Eliza.—London Christian World.

THE UNCONSCIOUS CHRISTIAN.

I have called several times on Mrs. C, and had conversation on spiritual matters. At the time of which I write I had become satisfied in reference to her faith in Christ, and said to her: "You ought to make a profession of religion."

At this she seemed startled, and replied by saying: "Did not our Saviour say to Nicodemus, 'Ye must be born again?'"

Now, I have always thought that meant a change of heart, and that I have never had; and she seemed very sad. I thought I saw her difficulty, and said: "I want to ask you a few questions. Please answer frankly so that we may understand each other." She assured me she would, and I asked: "Is it your great desire now to be a Christian?"

"If I know my own heart it is."

"Are you willing to live as becomes a Christian?"

"Not only willing, but I earnestly desire to."

"You go to church, hear the Word, bow the head in prayer; do you do it because it is the custom, or do you take delight in it, receive comfort from it, and would you feel it a loss were you deprived of it?"

"I am sure it is a comfort and delight to me."

"Do you love Christians, and Christian conversation; for instance, you would have been pleased to see me to-day as your pastor; but would you have been pleased if I had said nothing on religion?"

"Oh! I should have been disappointed if you had not?"

"Do you pray for yourself and others, and do you find comfort in so doing?"

"Yes, daily, and I hope to get that change of heart."

After further questioning and conversation in the same vein, I said: "Now, I want you to look back five years, and think of yourself just as you were then—your thoughts, purposes and desires. Did you then have the desire which you now have to be a Christian?"

"No."

And so I went through the list of questions which I had just asked, and all were answered, No. I then said, "Mrs. C, I ask you a number of questions about yourself to-day, and you answer them all 'Yes;' I asked you to think of yourself as you were five years ago, and asked you the same questions, and you answered them, 'No.' Now, has there been a change?"

Manifesting greater surprise than I can tell, she said: "Is that the change? I thought I would know just when it occurred."

"Yes," I said, "you wanted to be knocked down to the ground as Paul was, or you wanted some marvellous thing to happen; but show me anywhere in the Bible, any warrants for this or any other 'change' than this. You now love God, his Word and worship; you love Christ and Christians and Christian conversation, and once you didn't love any of these. This is the change—a change of purpose, desire, enjoyment, no matter when or how it was brought about."

She was satisfied, united with the church, and for twelve years adorned the Christian profession. During that time she was always a cheerful and efficient Christian. For nineteen days in succession I saw her before she died, heard her last words, and closed her eyes in death, and never saw or heard a more cheerful, hopeful, and, at the same time, intelligent testimony to the power of divine grace.

All over the land were the gospel is preached are such fearful yet earnest souls. Ministers are too few, and have too great a burden of official duty to seek out each case and give the needed instruction individually. A wide field is here open for the working lay members of the church. Will they enter it and gather golden sheaves for the Master, and unspeakable reward for themselves when the light of eternity dawns?—The Christian.

A HAPPY HOME.

There can be no greater blessings than to be born in the light and air of a cheerful, happy childhood—if there be health and a good constitution—but it almost makes sure a virtuous and happy manhood, and a fresh young heart in old age. We think it every parent's duty to try and make their children's childhood full of love and of childhood's proper joyousness; and we never see children destitute of them through poverty, faulty tempers, or wrong notions of their parents, without a heart ache.

Not that all the appliances that wealth can buy are necessary to the free and happy untolding of childhood in body, mind or heart—quite otherwise; but children at least must have love inside the house, and fresh air and good play, and some good companionship outside—otherwise young life runs the greatest danger in the world of withering or growing stunted or sour or wrong, or at least prematurely old and turned inward on itself.

SHADOWS.

The clouds hang heavy round my way I cannot see; But through the darkness I believe God leadeth me.

'Tis sweet to keep my hand in His, While all is dim; To close my weary, aching eyes, And follow Him.

Through many a thorny path He leads My tired feet; Through many a path of tears I go, But it is sweet.

To know that He is close to me, My God, my Guide, He leadeth me, and so I walk Quite satisfied.

To blind my eyes He may reveal No light at all; But while I lean on His strong arm I cannot fall.

Richmond Christian Advocate.

AMUSEMENTS.

The Artists.—Each player draws the head of some person, animal, bird or fish, and, turning down the paper passes it to the next, who draws a body and passes it to a third, who finishes the picture, of course without knowing what has been done by his predecessors. On opening the paper a singular figure is the result.—Parlor Amusements.

Not long departure following written by us for perur cation. V grace of G cation of l place in ou Dear Bro

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