The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1875.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, *October 17th*, 1875.—Many Mansions.—John xiv. 1–7.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly." Hebrews xi. 16.

ANALYSIS.—*I. Sweet consolation.* Vs. 1. *II. Heavenly mansions.* Vs. 2–4. *III. Questions of Thomas.* Vs. 5. *IV. Answer of Jesus.* Vs. 6, 7.

EXPOSITION.—*Verse* 1.—*Let not your heart be troubled.* Spoken not to Peter alone, as was the preceding verse (xiii. 38), but to all the eleven—*your*, not *thy* heart. Judas had gone out for the betrayal, xiii. 30, and thus there was no uncalled, unwashed, uncongenial spirit among them. The word "troubled" is used in xii. 27, and xiii. 21, of Christ; in the first passage of his "soul," in the second, of his "spirit." The word thus rendered, denotes as we saw, extreme disturbance, even violent agitation. It is perhaps significant that here it is the "heart," not soul or spirit that is named, for the heart is "the organ of faith," Rom. x. 10, and the call here is to preserve amid all trials an unshaken and immovable confidence in God. The history of the days following shows what need there was of this exhortation, what danger that their hearts be thrown into such disturbance as to shake their faith out of them. Let not *your* heart, *our* heart, be troubled. *Ye believe in God, believe also in me.* The Greek word translated believe has the same form in both the imperative and and indicative. Belief here is predominantly confidence, or trust, such as keeps one calm when all things seem wrong. "Trust in God," then, as having control over the forces of evil, as carrying out his purpose by those forces, as caring for and keeping his servants despite such forces. "Trust in God," and at the same time in me, as being God's Son, in storm not less than in calm, not abandoned, not crushed, not lost, whatever the seeming. "I and my Father are one." "The Word was with God, and the Word was God." In God by being in Christ.

Verse 2.—*In my Father's house are many mansions.* "*My Father's.*" Mark here the solid confidence of Jesus, such as that to which he exhorts the eleven and us. The Temple he elsewhere calls his Father's house, ii. 10, the place where God dwelt, his palace, his home, where he was to be met, and where he gathered and kept about him his children, and revealed himself. The God of the Bible is not mere law not impersonal being, but a person, with heart and will, to receive and to give love, to be sought and found, to be a Father with all his children about him, in real, holy, happy home life. *Many mansions.* The word translated "mansions" is only once besides used in the New Testament, and that in vs. 23 of this chapter. It means an abiding place. The following, in Lange's Commentary, is quoted and translated from a little book of his on "*The Land of Glory*": "Seek not to persuade us that all those vast regions [the starry heavens] are destitute of inhabitants. Seek not to persuade the pilgrim, wandering through the darkness, that yon cottage, whence a hospitable light streams forth to greet him is without an inhabitant. So on us there shimmers from above light of 'many mansions.' It is a city of God that beams on us, whose golden streets stretch forth into remotest infinitude. We see not its furthest battlements; its nearest ones *do* meet our gaze. And when we consider that light from there is thousands of years in reaching us, that starting from a certain point it is millions of years on its way, we may well call the City of God 'an eternal city.' Probably not more could be revealed to us in this state, where our conceptions are all shaped by earthly relations. "*Many* mansions," room for the vast multitude of saints. *If it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.* Lange makes this a question (which the original allows), and reads: "If it were not so, would I have told you: I go to prepare a place for you?" Hardly an improvement on our version. The Saviour declares to them now that he has excited no delusive hopes. For them, and for all like them, there shall be the promised good. "To make ready a place," is not here to build a world, or remodel a sphere. It was rather to complete the atonement, and thus become a Mediator and Saviour. Heaven becomes heaven to the believers, only because of Christ's vicarious sacrifice.

Verse 3.—*And if I go. . . I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also.* Separation from Christ was the dreaded evil. This was to be but for a while. He went but to return, left them but in order the the better to take them. This promise embraces all the manifestations of Christ to his own, and all the taking of them to his own and the Father's heart; but especially signifies the second coming, and the final admission of all to completed glory.

Verse 4.—*And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.* He had told them most plainly that it was by his self-sacrifice in death. Taken as in our version, he declares that they have a knowledge of the Father (and hence of that which makes heaven), and also a knowledge of the way of access to the Father, a knowledge given them as his disciples.

Verse 5.—*Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?* Thomas was like many now who thought of place, external condition, form, and could make out nothing certain and how to reach it.

Verse 6.—*Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life.* This justifies, nay requires, the more spiritual interpretation already given above to the first and second verses. God is to be thought of as spirit, and the approach to him is a spiritual approach, and is to be made by a spiritual experience. Christ connects God and humanity, and the spirit of self-sacrifice coming out in his life and death is that which brings together God and sinful humanity. Into this spirit must one come to find God, and in thus finding him one has the "truth," the satisfying reality craved by the soul; and this reality appears as "the life," because man is a living person, and God, who fills the soul, is "The Living God." "The way"—access to God. "The truth"—the satisfaction of the soul. "The life"—the form in which this eternal satisfaction exists. Christ is all this, and he *gives* all this.

Verse 7.—*If ye had known me*, etc. Here, as often elsewhere, asserting, not indeed that they had *no* knowledge of him, but that their knowledge was very imperfect, and mixed with such error as to lead them astray. They were ever looking at or for the seen, when their gaze should have been upon and into the unseen. *And from henceforth*, etc. Not from that minute, but in general from that time, after that crisis of separation, and from the time of the Holy Spirit's descent, according to promise.

GENERAL QUESTIONS.—What feast had Jesus and his disciples just observed? What memorial have they also just instituted? Have they as yet left the "upper room?" How was the after supper hour spent? What evening of the week was it?

QUESTIONS.—Vs. 1. Why were the disciples "troubled"?

Vs. 2. Is heaven a place? What is meat by "many mansions"? In what way has Jesus prepared a place for his people? compare Heb. x. 12, 19, 20. Has it been eternally prepared in the purpose of God? Matt, xxv. 34.

Vs. 3. What is meant by "I will come again"? Heb. ix. 28; I Thess. iv. 16, 17.

Vs. 4. How ought they to have already known "the way"? Matt. xvi. 21; Luke ix. 22; xviii. 31, 32.

Vs.. 5. Who had before qestioned the Master? Chap. xiii. 36. What others besides Thomas interrogated him? Vss. 8, 22.

Vs. 6. In this triplet of claims what strikes us most? Ans. *Its tremendous self-assertion.—Liddon.* Is it consistent on the theory that Christ is a man only? What then, is Christianity? Ans. CHRIST IS CHRISTIANITY. Cf. Gal. ii. 20.

Vs 7. How does knowing Jesus reveal the Father? Matt. xi. 27. Is there any way of being saved but by Jesus Christ Acts iv. 10-12. "If any many is saved, the Lord Jesus must have a hand in the work." —*Luther.*

Abridged from the *Baptist Teacher.*

SUNDAY, *October 24th*, 1857.—The Vine and the Branches.—John xv. 1–8.

NOT MY PLACE.

A dispute having long subsisted in a gentleman's family between the maid and the coachman, about fetching the cream for breakfast, the gentleman one morning called them both before him, that he might hear what they had to say, and decide accordingly. The maid pleaded that the coachman was lounging about the kitchen the greater part of the morning, and yet was so ill-natured that he would not fetch the cream for her, notwithstanding he saw she had so much to do as not to have a moment to spare. The coachman alleged that it was not his business.

"Very well," said the master: "but pray what do you call your business?"

"To take care of the horses, and clean and drive the coach," replied he.

"You say right," answered the master; "and I do not expect you to do more than I hired you for; but this I insist on, that every morning, before breakfast, you get the coach ready, and drive the maid to the farmer's for milk; and I hope you will allow that to be part of your business."

The coachman and the maiden soon after came to terms.—*Once a Week.*

Youths' Department.

THE BELL OF ST. JOHN S.

BY RUFUS SARGENT.

In a huge and smoky foundry close by the wharves in the town of B—, a gang of workmen were getting ready to cast the largest bell of the St. John's cathedral chime. Only an hour more, and they would let the glaring, bubbling metal, flowing from the huge furnace, into the mould which was buried deep into the black earth close by.

It was just at evening, and in the gathering twilight the lurid blue flames that burst from the top of the tall chimney flashed unearthly gleams upon the neighbouring windows and house-tops.

The scene within the foundry was weird and almost awful. The swarthy forms of the workmen partially lighted by the yellow glare, moved about like Tartarean shadows, and the sooty beams and ponderous chains crossing half black, half golden, under the glowing roof, recalled the engines of the Cyclops under Mount Ætna.

The town-clock struck six. It was time for supper. All the men threw down their tools, and ran and put on their outer clothing.

"Be back in half an hour sharp!" cried the forge-master. "We shall make the cast at a quarter of seven."

"All right, sir!" cried the men in response.

"I hear some of the town-folks are coming down to see the work," said one.

"Yes," said another, "and it'll be something to open their eyes. There was never such a bell cast in the whole State as this one will be."

In a moment more only one workman and the master were left in the foundry. The former was to stay and watch the "blast." He had brought a double allowance of dinner, and he would make a supper on what remained.

"Perhaps we can get the 'Inventor' to stay with you, George," said the master, laughingly, as he prepared to go.

"Yes, where is he?" returned the man in the same jesting tone.

"He's been around the works long enough to know when any thing goes wrong. Hallo, hallo, I say! Where's the Inventor? Come here! Ah, there he is!" And in silent answer to the summons, a shock-haired fellow, with large gray eyes and a pale, vacant face, appeared from behind a pile of castings.

He had on his back a gray shirt much soiled with dust, and he wore a pair of huge pantaloons, held up by a single suspender.

"Well, Mopus," quoth the man George, slapping him rather roughly on the shoulder "suppose you've got wit enough to help yell if anything's the matter?"

The young fellow looked stupidly around and nodded his head.

"Then sit here and look at that furnace, and don't take your eyes off."

The poor lad smiled, and meekly did as he was ordered—just as an obedient dog would have laid down to watch his owner's coat.

A queer fellow was this "Mopus;" stupid enough in ordinary things to need a world of watching, but withal wonderfully fit to watch a furnace. He knew all the working of the foundry, by what seemed a sort of brute instinct, though really his strange sagacity in this was a remnant of a once bright mind.

If anything happened, or went on in an unusual way, he would always notice it, and say what ought to be done, though he could not tell, perhaps, *why* it ought to be done.

Two years before, he had been an intelligent, promising lad. He was the son of a designer connected with the foundry company, and had always been allowed free access to the shops, and to mingle with the men and watch their work. But one day a great lifting-chain broke, with its load, and an iron fragment struck him on the head inflicting a dangerous injury. From this he partially recovered, and only partially, for his reason was impaired. But his natural love for machinery and mechanical experiments remained; and as he regained his bodily strength he spent most of his time making small wheels and shafts, and putting together odd contrivances, which he would exhibit with immense pride and satisfaction.

This peculiar trait in the young fellow gained for him the humorous title of the "Inventor." All the men felt a great kindness for him, even though their manner towards him was occasionally harsh and impatient.

Such was the person left to help watch the great blast for the casting of the king bell of the chime of St. John's. Faithfully he kept his place before the furnace, while the man George sat down at a little distance and began to eat his supper. Doubtless the latter intended to keep a general oversight, but he certainly made the Inventor's eyes do most of the looking. Whether he felt a kind of reckless trust in the instinct of his half-witted companion, or indolently concluded that nothing wrong could happen, he was sadly to blame for charging himself so little with the important duty before him.

Not a word was said by either watcher, and only the deep roar of the furnace-fire was heard through the vast foundry.

George finished his supper, and sauntered into one of the tool-shops to find his pipe. "Inventor" sat all alone before the great blast. The one rational faculty of his feeble mind enabled him to comprehend what it meant, and even something of the magnitude of the enterprise that was ripening inside those burning walls. He knew that the furnace was full of valuable metal, and that close beside him, buried out of sight in the deep sand, was the huge mould so soon to be filled with the precious cast. He knew and could see that all the channels for the flow of the fiery liquid were ready, and that near the mouth of the furnace stood the long iron rod that was to be used when the moment came, to "let on" the molten stream.

All this his limited thoughts took in by habit. Dimly conscious that something great was soon to be done, he sat with his eyes on the furnace, absorbed and intent.

Suddenly something startled him. There was a slight noise, and a burning red crack and a scorching brick fell out and rolled to the ground at his feet!

The lad opened his mouth to shriek, but so terrified was he that the sounds stuck in his throat, as if he had been in a fit of nightmare.

A thin red stream followed the fallen brick, and thickled down the furnace side like running lava. Then came another alarming noise, and a thin gap half-way down the masonry let out more of the hissing metal.

Where was George? Was the unfaithful fellow still hunting for his pipe? The furnace was bursting, with only a poor half idiot lad to guard it!

What could *he* do? He did what perhaps a lad in his right mind would not have dared to do. Rushing to the mouth of the furnace, he seized the long iron rod that stood near, and tapped the vent. One desperate thrust with the sharp point up the terrible funnel—a few quick, prying strokes! Stand back, now! The confining clay fell away, and the yellow-white flood spurted out with resistless force. It leaped into the clay-lined troughs, and hissed its way flaming, down to the mouth of the bell-mould.

The "fool" had done a deed worthy of a general on the field of battle.

Was it too late? Every moment new fissures opened in the doomed furnace. Some of the upper stones toppled over. Still the metal poured out into the mould. But the waste was great from those gaping flaws. The pressure was relieved by the opened vent, but the leaks multiplied continually. It was Art running a race with Ruin.

Poor "Mopus" stood powerless before the coming catastrophe. His knees knocked together and his head swam.

A great heap of red-hot bricks and rubbish fell at his feet. He had barely thought to get out of the way and save his life. He heard a wild shout of human voices in the distance, then an awful roar behind him, and he saw and *felt* himself burned by surges of seething fire. Sharp, blistering pains pierced his flesh at a hundred points. The rest was all a horrible, unintelligible dream. It was as if he had suddenly sunk into the earth and been swallowed up forever.

By seven o'clock comparative quiet reigned again on the scene of disaster. Ruins lay everywhere. The engines had quenched the flames that had caught the building, and the men, blackened with smoke, stood in silent groups about the remains of the furnace. It had fallen to pieces, and nothingwas left but heaps of steaming rubbish.

Poor "Inventor," who had been found with the tapping-rod in his hand, lying on his face in the sand, frightfully burned, had been carried to his home.

Little was said, but the few words spoken uttered with no mild emphasis the natural wrath of the master and the hands against the man George, whose excuses for himself only aggravated his offence.

"See what he's done," said they, a few days later, as they stood in the half-burned foundry." Five thousand dollars gone to waste in a minute! The best job in twenty years spoiled! The rascal, to go hunting for his pipe, and leave that stuttering idiot to watch! Is that all he can say for himself? Out upon such carelessness! Why, the boy didn't even know enough to bawl out, when he must have seen the furnace tumbling to pieces!"

The master, who had more at stake than the men, of course felt the loss more keenly than they. He almost wept with mingled grief and rage. Suddenly something peculiar caught his eye among the *debris*, and he cried, in a startled voice:

"Hallo! What's this? What's this?"

He snatched up a fragment of one of the troughs which had led from the furnace to the mould. There were traces of the stream of bronze still running in it. Then the possible meaning of the iron rod found in the injured boy's hand flashed upon him.

"Bring me a shovel, quick!" he shouted.

A spade was put into his hands, and he began nervously to heave away the hot mass that lay piled over the bell-mould. It was a Herculean task, but he worked like a giant, and three or four of his men took hold and helped him.

Brickbats, ore, slag and ashes flew in every direction. Presently the master's spade penetrated the sand, and touched something hard. He stooped down. Then he leaped up like one half-frantic, and plying his spade with redoubled energy, tore away the remaining sand, disclosing what looked like a great metallic ring.

"Men," he cried out, lifting his flushed face, "*the bell is cast!*"

"Who did this?" asked every excited voice, as soon as the cheering died away.

"Come with me, two or three of you!" cried the master. "I think I know who did it. It's a miracle!"

They hurried away to the home of the half-witted boy. The attendant met them with her finger on her lips.

"The poor lad is in a brain fever," said she.

"Does he say anything in his delirium?" whispered the master.

"O, yes: he raves all the the time about the big bell-mould. 'I hope it will fill—I hope it will fill,' he says."

The men exchanged glances. It was indeed true. The idiot had cast the great bell of St. John's. Just then the physician came out. "Perhaps he will recover his reason by this shock and sickness," he said. "Such things have happened."

"Do you think so? Pray Heaven he may!" solemnly ejaculated the master and his men; and they turned away, deeply moved.

Two months later the great bell rung from a huge derrick in the lathe-room of the factory, and beneath it stood a heavy truck upon which it was about to be lowered. A silence fell upon the group of workmen as the pale face and feeble form of "Inventor" appeared, borne in on a small soft reclining chair. He had recovered his reason, and was fast getting back his strength. His large grey eyes instantly fastened themselves on the bell—that splendid masterpiece, whose meaning meant so much to him. They had told him the whole story of the casting, and the disaster in the foundry, but it all sounded like a wild romance to him.

"I remember nothing that happened," said he, shaking his head with a smile. "Its all new to me, all new and strange—*so* strange!"

"Yes," said the master, devoutly, "it was God's hand."

Every eye was turned upon the invalid. Some of the men felt almost afraid, it was so much like a resurrection to have him there among them, the boy they had known so long under witted, now a young man keen and intelligent, as if changed into another being.

"I should like to strike the bell once," said he. Two men lifted him up and put a small hammer in his hand.

He struck one gentle blow.

A deep, sweet, mournful tone, solemn as the sound of distant waterfalls, rolled from the great bell and echoed through the foundry. Tears filled the eyes of the rough men as they heard it.

"Ah," said the master, there's a hallelujah in that, and it may well begin here. Long may this bell praise God! He saved it in the ruins of the furnace by one wise thought in the ruins of a human brain. Our furnace is rebuilt, and behold, this dear boy has his reason again! The bell and the boy shall glorify God together!"

"Amen!" murmured all the listeners.

Then the great bell was lowered, and as the truck rolled away with its melodious burden, the boy was lifted and carried after it, and both went out into the sunny day together, the rough men standing in the doorways, waving their hands.

Little "Inventor" afterwards well proved his claim to the title so lightly given him in his unfortunate boyhood. His name is now read on many a bell whose matchless richness of tone his genius and skill in metals alone created.—*Youth's Companion.*