

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1875.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, October 24th, 1875.—The Vine and the Branches.—John xv. 1-8.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"By their fruits ye shall know them." Matt. vii. 20.

ANALYSIS.—I. Christ the true vine. Vs. 1. II. Fruitful and unfruitful branches. Vs. 2. III. Disciples fitted for fruitfulness. Vs. 2. IV. Abiding in Christ. Vs. 4-7. V. Evidence of discipleship. Vs. 8.

NOTE UPON THE VINE.—This comparison sets forth the close, the vital, and fruitful union of Christ and his disciples. It shows a nearer connection between the vine and its branches than between the shepherd and his sheep, or between the Lord of the vineyard and his vines—a connection of real organic life; a sacred, indivisible, indestructible unity; a grand communion and fellowship of life and of love, united to the same glorious Head; like some beautiful coral-cluster, whose distinct and separate parts are clasped and riveted together by firm and living links, making one organization one substantial whole. So by the union of the branches with the vine is the wonderfully strengthening truth set forth, that Christ and his disciples are one, for ever one—ONE IN CHRIST.

EXPOSITION.—The words recorded in xv. 1-8, were spoken after Christ and the eleven had arisen to go out (xiv. 31), and before they had reached Gethsemane, and probably before they were out of the city (xviii. 1). The nature of the discourse, and of the prayer, would rather favor the view that they were still in the quiet retirement of the room.

Verse 1.—I am the true vine. The wine just used in instituting the Lord's Supper, was called "the fruit of the vine." The Jewish nation were presented in Psalm lxxx, and in Isaiah was a vine, and once, at least, Christ had seized upon the passage in Isaiah to furnish the material for a parable. Matt. xxi. 33-43. He constitutes his disciples real branches by imparting life and growth. He is the "true" vine, not simply as that which was symbolized by the natural vine, and typified by the literal Israel, but also in contrast to the false and degenerate vine, such as Israel had become—just as he was the Good Shepherd, in contrast to false teachers, such as the Scribes and Pharisees. He was the root of David, and indeed of Israel, in so far as it was a truly spiritual people. The true Israel, the spiritual Israel, consisted of his disciples of all times and climes, and of these each one was a branch in him. And my Father is the husbandman. More than merely vine-dresser, but it includes the idea of the owner of the soil. Christ is thus careful here, as elsewhere, to disclaim any mission, office work, or wish, as in separation from the Father, or in opposition to him. He does not here separate himself from the Father, as though a mere creature, as though distinct in his higher nature. Such use of his words is mis-use; such interpretation mis-interpretation. The life and fruitfulness of the vine is the will and delight of the husbandman, and if the vine be one which has will also, as in case of Christ, then are the two wills at one, if not strictly one.

Verse 2.—Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away. Here, and throughout, we must take care to use the figure only so far as the nature of the case allows. Below, the disciple is said to be the branch. A disciple in so far as he is one, does bear fruit, because the spirit of discipleship is fruit. Gal. v. 22, 23. But in a vine there may be living union and no fruit. Not so of the believer. Hence Christ here uses the language of appearance. Those who profess to be mine, having a place and name with my people, found in the church of God, etc., such not having in them the fruits, that is, the spirit of discipleship—not having faith, love, obedience, good works—shall, in God's time and way, be severed and separated from the people of God, and from their nominal and outward connection with me. We are reminded of Christ's own delineation of the final judgment, and of the separation of the sheep from the goats, though here he refers also to that historic process of judicial separation and removal ever going on in this world. We find here no doctrine of "falling from grace," or rather, of the failure grace. And every branch in me that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Here he refers to those who are truly disciples, born of God, as in the pre-

vious part of the verse he referred to those who were such only in appearance. And notice, he says every one of these is the object of God's care and keeping—treated quite differently from the other branches. Differently, and yet to appearance much the same; for it is purged, or pruned.

Verse 3.—Now [already] ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. A fact, and its explanation. Does he mean that the eleven were perfect, needing no more "purging"? They were clean, just as is every believer, as contrasted with an unbeliever. Faith is the principle of life, and in so far as one has faith he is clean, just as one in whom God's seed remains "cannot sin;" that is, in so far as he has that seed. Faith is the fruit-bearing principle in every disciple, and thus to the extent it has sway one is "clean;" that is, fruit-bearing, because Christ-like. "Faith comes by hearing, and bearing by the Word of God." Religion is for rational beings. We are children of the light, and the light is the truth of God, the gospel of Jesus; and that was just the word which Jesus had spoken to his own. The more they learned and received of the truth, the more complete was their spiritual life. So are we regenerated and sanctified through the truth, carried by it ever forward into a higher purer life, it we receive it in the love of it. Precious word of God! The soul's meat and drink; sweeter to the believer than honey and the honey-comb. False doctrine makes corrupt lives, abounding in the fruits of iniquity. These words of Christ are an earnest plea to us to study our Bibles.

Verse 4.—Abide in me, and I in you. A command and promise. The lesson is made practical, and urged home. This is an address to believers, who have already come to be in Jesus. They are to keep in him, of choice, will, resolution, effort—not feel that, once converted, their piety will take care of itself. A command bidding us look not alone to outward works, but to the inward principle; to live, first of all, not for, but in Christ; for him, because in him; have strength in order to use it. The promise, "I in you," answers to the command. Life is communion. Jesus is always in those who trust him. The root and trunk send life into and through the branch, if the branch do not wilfully break away. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in me; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. This puts forcibly the fatal consequence of disobeying the preceding command. It shows that our union with Christ is vital as well as voluntary. We must be "new creatures," with a changed nature. Change of walk, without change of spirit, is but a cloak.

Verse 5.—I am the vine, etc. "Much fruit," provided the connection be made and kept complete. The degree of life varies with the closeness and perfection of the union of branch and vine-stock. A most important lesson, and one urging us to live in Jesus wholly. For without me ye can do nothing. More exactly, "apart from me," as when the branch is severed from the trunk, there is no true spiritual life.

Verse 6.—If a man abide not in me, etc. A Christian is often tempted to abandon Christ wholly. There is an abstract possibility, and a practical danger of such abandonment. The result of such apostasy would and could be only direful destruction. Heb. vi. 1-8. Faith helps only while faith lasts. In Heb. vi. 9, the verse following the solemn admonition, the writer adds: "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." They are burned. Rather, they burn, or are burning; as though to express the endlessness of it.

Verse 7.—If ye abide, etc. A condition, with promise attached. The condition is virtually a command, or exhortation—Asking God, according to the Scriptural idea, is a genuine communion—man's will becoming one with God's, and so drawing down into his own and others' lives the divine will and its operation. This manifestly comes through faith in Jesus.

Verse 8.—Herein, etc. The conclusion of the whole matter.

GENERAL QUESTIONS.—How generally diffused is the vine as a plant? How far does its range extend? Of what is it a beautiful emblem? What probably suggested the use of the vine as an illustration to Jesus? What kind of a connection with Jesus does the figure of the vine and its branches typify?

QUESTIONS.—Vs. 1. What does our Saviour mean by calling himself the "true vine"? What by calling his Father "the husbandman"? Cf. Isaiah v. 1-7.

Vs. 2. Can a man be in Christ at all, and bear no fruit? What kind of a union is meant therefore by "every branch in me that beareth not fruit"? Is a man necessarily a Christian because he is a professor of religion? Cf. 2 Tim. iii. 5. As a matter of fact, when fruitfulness ceases what becomes of the vine? What advantage to a fruitful vine is gained by pruning it? Is divine discipline a proof of God's hatred or love of his people? Heb. xii. 6-11.

Vs. 3. What is indicated by "now ye are clean"? Was there any exception to this? Chap. xiii. 11.

Vs. 4. What is meant by the words "Abide in me"?

Vs. 7. When men pray and receive not, what is the trouble? Are prayer and purity of heart related? Psalm lxxvi. 18.

Vs. 8. What kind of fruit is intended here? How does such fruitfulness glorify God? Matt. v. 16. Will Christ abide in us if we give him but part of our hearts? Cf. Matt. xii. 30.

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, October 31st, 1875.—Friends and Foes of Jesus.—John xv. 11-19.

Youths' Department.

A POTATO STORY WHICH BEGINS WITH A BEAN-POLE.

Mr. Rockaway, being asked to tell one of his "ten-minute" stories, said: "If it will content you, I will tell you a Potato story which begins with a Bean-pole.

"Once there was a Beanpole which was stuck into the ground by the side of a Potato-hill.

"Dear me!" cried a young cabbage growing near, "what a stiff, poky thing that is! And of no earthly use, standing there doing nothing!"

"But very soon a Scarlet Bean, running about in search of something to climb upon, found this same Bean-pole.

"All right!" cried the happy little Bean. "You are the very thing I want. Now I'll begin my summer's work."

"Well, to be sure!" cried young Cabbage. "Everything comes to some use at last. But who would have thought it?"

"The Scarlet Bean was a spry little thing. She ran up that pole just as easy! Being of a lively turn, she began, at last, to make fun of the Potato-plant.

"How sober you are!" said she. "Why don't you try to brighten up and look more blooming?"

"The poor Potato-plant, though doing her best, could only show a few pale blooms.

"You don't mean to call these things flowers?" cried the frisky Bean. "Just look at my beautiful blossoms!"—and she held up a spray of bright scarlet.

"The Potato plant kept quiet.

"What stupid, useless things," said young Cabbage, "those Potato-plants are! and how much room they take up!"

"Summer passed. The Bean began to fill her pods, and proud enough she was of them.

"Why don't you do something?" she cried to the Potato-plant, down below. "Only see what I've done! There's a summer's work for you!" And sure enough, she had hung her full pods all up and down the pole.

"Yes, why don't you do something?" cried Cabbage. "Your summer is gone, and nothing done! Can't you come to a head? Anything but idleness!"

"The Potato-plant still kept quiet. But when digging-time came, and the hill was opened, and the pile of 'Long Reds' appeared, her neighbors could hardly believe their senses.

"Dear me! what a surprise!" cried the Bean. "So we can't always tell by appearances!"

"I declare!" cried Cabbage. "Then you were doing something all that time! But how could I know? There's that Bean—she hung her pods up high, so that everybody could see. Well, well, well!—after this, I'll always say of a plant which makes but little show: 'Wait, Potatoes inside there, may be.'"

"There are a great many Scarlet Beans among the people I know," said Mr. Rockaway, "and some Potato-plants, too."

"And perhaps a few young Cabbage-heads," said Uncle Peter, looking slyly around at the children.—St. Nicholas.

LET THE BABIES DIG IN THE DIRT.

We once asked an old Winnebago squaw how it was that she cured her family by simply covering them every day with fresh earth, leaving only a breathing-spot for their noses, and she said: "Earth our mother. Earth, make she, and earth take good care to make she papoose strong; squaw-mother make she papoose sick. Earth-mother make she papoose well

again. She can't tell white squaw any more." Now this poor Indian woman was wise according to her light. Without knowing why, she saw that the earth was a friend to her children, and therefore gave them to its healing embrace. If the mother be fortunate enough to live in the country, she has the cure of many of her children's ills quite at hand. Encourage baby to play in the fresh earth, preparing it properly for its enjoyment and cure, with as careful an eye to the comfort of the little thing, as you would if it were to take any sort of a bath. If it has no old dresses make it a suit of cheap print, tie upon its head a light hat that will protect its eyes from discomfort, and give it freedom to delve in the warm, soft earth, where the sunshine can comfort and invigorate it. If it is a city child, and city child, and circumstances forbid a trip to the country for the sake of the weak convalescent, have a sand-heap made on the warm side of your yard. Instinct will teach it to dig, and digging hardens the muscles, and brings strength to the bones, while from the heart of the earth rises a subtle and strong power of healing that we can neither explain nor understand for ourselves, though we have both seen and felt its potency.—The Metropolitan.

TEN QUESTIONS.

1. What trade is it which, being introduced into a missionary settlement, would the most neutralize the good previously effected by the missionaries?

2. What trade will cause an increase of crime and social misery in proportion to its success?

3. What trade is it, which the more a working man encourages, the more destitute his home becomes?

4. What trade is it, on the success of which the pawnbrokers mainly depend?

5. What trade is it that drives so many to assemble at the workhouse door for a loaf of bread?

6. What trade is that which furnishes the greatest number of patients to asylums for the insane?

7. In what trade is a man likely to be ruined, if he becomes a good customer to his own shop?

8. What trade furnishes the greatest number of applicants to the charitable institutions?

9. To what trade do the judges of our land ascribe the greatest proportion of criminal offences?

10. What trade is it which, if it were introduced into some retired village, would demoralize the population now distinguished for its moral worth and frugal industry?

THE SUGGESTIVENESS OF SMELLS.

The great practical object of the sense of smell is, doubtless, in man as in other animals, to assist in the choice of food. In this it acts preliminary to the organ of taste; and there exists a natural sympathy between the two organs. Besides this practical employment of the sense, it affords to man a refined, and delicate, and not over-obtrusive enjoyment; silently, and perhaps unobserved, enabling him to stamp an additional character of sweetness upon what is lovely in form and color; and, fortunately, the beautiful in scenery is generally allied with what pleases and gratifies this sense. The mountains of Switzerland we associate with the flavor which the sun exhales from her pine forests. The banks of Tweed's "silvery stream, glittering in the sunny beam," are ever in our minds seasoned with the odor of the whin blossom, among which in boyhood, we searched for the linnet's nest. A single puff of peat-reek will make the man of business, immured in his counting-house, stop his pen that he may muse on the seclusion of the Highland glen. Many persons find the suggestive powers of odors greatly superior to those even of vision; the reason may be, that whereas vision at once reveals its object, and in the act satisfies our intelligence, the sensation of scent is generally anticipative, the mind is for a time in a position of suspense, dwelling on the sensation, and busied predicating the cause; the impression thus becomes vivid and indelible. Thus every country and every large city we visit has its distinct savor interwoven with its other wonders into the mind, and which, like a mysterious and invisible genius, hovers over it. The coal smoke of London fills the nostrils of the visitor, and never leaves them; the damp, greasy flavor of the narrow streets of Paris, the turf smell of Holland, and the putrid effluvia of Constantinople, give a smack and character to each place which is not easily forgotten.—Physics and Philosophy of the Senses.

"DON'T GIVE UP, BUT TRY."

A gentleman, travelling in the northern part of Ireland, heard the voices of children, and stopped to listen.

Finding the sound came from a small building used as a school-house, he drew near; as the door was open he went in, and listened to the words the boys were spelling.

One little fellow stood apart, looking very sad.

"Why does that boy stand there?" asked the gentleman.

"Oh, he is good for nothing," replied the teacher. "There's nothing in him. I can make nothing of him. He is the most stupid boy in the school."

The gentleman was surprised at this answer. He saw that the teacher was so stern and rough that the younger and more timid were nearly crushed. After a few words to them, placing his hands on the noble brow of the little fellow who stood apart, he said:

"One of these days you may be a fine scholar; don't give up; try, my boy, try."

The boy's soul was aroused. His sleeping mind awoke. A new purpose was formed. From that hour he became anxious to excel. And he did become a fine scholar, and the author of a well-known commentary on the Bible—a great and good man, beloved and honored. It was Dr. Adam Clarke.

The secret of his success is worth knowing: "Don't give up; but try, my boy, try."—Christian Advocate.

A MONOSYLLABIC MEDITATION

BY ELBERT S. PORTER, D. D.

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 some thing 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 were 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 of our sun nor moon, for the Lord God shall be the light and the 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.—Christian at Work.

TOO MUCH STRESS ON WATER.—The following morceau we clip from the Philadelphia Public Ledger:

At a recent christening in Northumberland, Pa., the parents of the little one baptized requested that it might be permitted to drink the water used in the ceremony, giving as a reason that if it should drink the water so used, sickness would be kept from it through life.

You smile at the silly superstition of these simple-hearted parents, and yet if there be any mystical virtue in a little water to alter the spiritual status of a child it seems to us that the internal administration would be likely to be the more effectual, because thus it would find immediate access to every part of the system.

We think our Pedobaptist brethren should be a little more careful in charging us Baptists with having too much faith in water.—Baptist Teacher.