

The Christian Messenger.

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BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1875.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES. Heroes and Judges.

SUNDAY, June 13th, 1875.—A King Desired.—1 Sam. viii. 4-9.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes." Psalm cxviii. 9.

ANALYSIS.—I. The gathering at Ramah. Vs. 4-11. A king demanded. Vs. 5-11. Samuel displeased. Vs. 6-11. God and not Samuel dishonored. 7, 8. V. A king allowed. Vs. 9.

NOTE UPON THE MONARCHY.—Israel had been living under a theocracy for three or four centuries; that is, they had had God for their king. But human nature is sensational, and so Israel clamored for a change, preferring to have a human king, and thus be like the nations surrounding them. At all events, they were ready for the experiment, with all its incidental oppressions and burdens, and God gave them their desire by overruling it to his praise. Thus the monarchy began which lasted under different kingdoms for five centuries.

EXPOSITION.—Connection.—The close of our last lesson left Samuel the fully recognized Judge of Israel; the Philistines miserably routed and permanently humiliated; and Israel thus in the way of national independence and prosperity. From that time on Samuel continued to act as judge, the chief judicial officer of the nation, under God, who was the acknowledged Ruler. The length of time intervening is not stated. In vii. 13-17 is a brief account of the state of the country under Samuel's administration and of the sphere of his operations after the defeat of the Philistines.

Verses 4.—Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together. The occasion of this assembly is explained in part in vs. 1-3. Compare also xii. 12. Samuel seems to have been nearly as unfortunate in his sons as was Eli, though there is no hint that he was, like Eli, culpably lax in his government of them. It is unsafe to infer bad training from a son's bad conduct, though usually faithful parental care fruits in goodness of character and conduct in children. And came to Samuel unto Ramah. Thus they recognize him as the official head of the government, the representative of God. Their conduct also indicates a measure of confidence and respect which they and the nation felt, and with good reason. It was the birth-place and residence of Samuel, and within the circuit of his official travels, vii. 16, 17.

Verses 5.—Behold thou art old. How old it is impossible to say. Notes of time are to be found in iii. 1, 19; vii. 2. But these leave the matter indefinite. And thy sons walk not in thy ways. This unfortunately was true (vs. 3), Samuel is not reproached for their conduct, and his own course is honorably contrasted with theirs. These elders dreaded the coming of the time when such men, instead of being deputies merely, should succeed in full to Samuel's authority. They foresaw, or thought they did, a return of the nation's former distracted, subjugated, miserable condition. Foreseeing the evil, they wished in good time to avert it. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. This is their project, which they frankly and respectfully lay before him. They fully recognize his authority, and hence ask him to make or appoint the king. Their past misery had been obviously due, not the nation's form of government, but to a wicked disregard of the nation's law. Prosperity now and always came from God just as soon as the people turned to him; other nations with kings had been more miserable than they without, and their greatest glory had been their laws, customs, and form of government, as differing from others. God had expressly predicted the rise of such a desire as this, but rather with forewarning than commendation (Deut. xvii. 14-20). This was putting a manifest slight upon Jehovah, first, because it was for God, not them, to propose a change in his own government, and besides the change proposed was for the detronement of God. We need not suppose them to have seen clearly the evil character of their proposal. Few men are aware of the sin that poisons their thoughts and wishes, but the sin is not the less real and sinful. The absolute monarch of Eastern nations has absolute power over the property and lives of his conquered

enemies, his rebellious subjects, his own family, his ministers, over public officers, civil and military, and all the numerous train of domestics; and he may punish any person of these classes without examination or formal procedure of any kind. There was a tremendous risk in putting fallible men in such a place of power—as the Israelites found to their cost.

Verses 6.—The thing displeased Samuel. He saw the evil in it. He had reason to be displeased, first of all that God was thus dishonored. They might indeed have expressed their anxiety and asked for God's word; but instead they had thrust themselves uncalled and unbidden into his place as prophet. They had thus put contempt on his office, and on him as filling it. It was virtually an impeachment, implying either that he did not know God's will, or knowing, did not execute. And Samuel prayed unto the Lord [Jehovah]. The proposal was a national crisis. He was overwhelmed with the gravity of the situation. In perplexity he looked to him to whom he had ready access, whose wisdom was more than equal to the emergency. Happy the nation whose chief officers are such men of prayer.

Verses 7.—And the Lord [Jehovah] said unto Samuel. The answer was to him what in form prayer's answer may not be to us—a prophetic revelation; but not more certainly did answer come then to him than now to the humblest saint. Hearken unto the voice, etc. That is, accept and carry out their proposal. For they have not rejected thee, etc. The root of the difficulty lay in want of faith in God, though that also carried lack of faith in the prophet. The words do not mean that no slight had been put on Samuel, but that he was not the one chiefly wronged.

Verses 8.—According to all their works, etc. How well have our previous studies prepared us to understand this reference to the past! How true to themselves to be thus false to God! And served other gods. Noteworthy, because it shows that the same principle which had led to idolatry, now led to the request for a king. In both cases the evil influences of surrounding nations appeared. In both the great fault was unbelief in God.

Verses 9.—Howbeit protest solemnly unto them. Gratify, but rebuke them. It was desirable that they should know God's view of their conduct. Show them the manner [Hebrew idiom, "judgment"] of the king, etc. This we have in vs. 11-18. Its effect is described in vs. 19, 20. This settled the question, and determined that change which had so much to do with Israel's history and destiny.

QUESTIONS.—Vs. 4. What time is referred to by "Then"? See vs. 3. Where was Ramah?

Vs. 5. What indelicate allusion is there in this verse? How should the aged be treated? Lev. xix. 32. From the character of Samuel's sons (vs. 3), what truth is learned? Ans. That grace runs not in family blood. Eph. ii. 8. What does the demand for a king imply? Ans. Unsettled affairs among the tribes. What the wish to be like other nations? Ans. Unbelief in God.

Vs. 6. How did Samuel interpret this demand? To what refuge did he flee?

Vs. 7. What did God say to him for his comfort? What words of Jesus are of similar import? Matt. x. 24; John xv. 18-20.

Vs. 8. Can you name some of the evil that would be incidental to the kingdom? See vs. 10-18. Meaning of theocracy? How long was its duration? Meaning of monarchy? How long did it continue? What government is most blessed? Ps. xxxiii. 12. Who changes national life? Ps. lxxv. 6, 7.

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, June 20th, 1875.—Saul Chosen.—1 Sam. x. 17-24

Youths' Department.

VISIT TO A TURKISH HAREM.

BY AN AMERICAN LADY.

Constantinople.—I have realized my long cherished wish and made my first visit to a harem in Constantinople. Madame L., a French lady, who has lived here many years, visits in the harems of several pashas and invited me to accompany her. I donned the best my trunk afforded and at eleven o'clock we set out, each in a sedan chair. I had often wondered why the ladies I saw riding in them sat so straight and looked so stiff, but I wondered no longer when the stout Cretans stepped into the shafts, one before and the other behind, and started off. The motion is a peculiar shake, as if you went two steps forward and one back. It struck me as so ludicrous, my sitting bolt upright like a

doll in my little house, that I drew the curtains and had a good laugh at my own expense.

Half an hour's ride brought us to the Pasha's house in Stamboul—a large wooden building with closely latticed windows. We were received at the door by a tall Ethiopian, who conducted us across a court to the harem. Here a slave took our wraps and we passed into a reception room. A heavy rug of bright colors covered the centre of the floor, and the only furniture were the divans around the sides. The Pasha's two wives, having been apprised of our intended visit, were waiting to receive us. Madame L. was an old friend and warmly welcomed; and as she spoke Turkish, conversation was brisk. She presented me and we all curled ourselves up on the divans. Servants brought tobacco in little embroidered bags, and small sheets of rice paper, rolled up cigarettes, and soon all were smoking.

The Pasha is an "old style" Turk and frowns on all European innovations, and his large household is conducted on the old-fashioned principles of his forefathers. His two wives were young and very attractive women. One, with a pale, clear complexion, dark hair and eyes, quite came up to my idea of an oriental beauty. Not content, however, with her good looks, she had her eyebrows darkened, a delicate black line under her eyes, and a little well applied rouge and powder (I regret to confess) made her, at a little distance, a still more brilliant beauty. I doubt if any women understand the use of cosmetics as well as the harem ladies. Her dress was bright cherry silk, the waist cut low in front, the skirt reaching to her knees. Trowsers of the same, and slippers to match, completed her costume. The other wife was equally attractive, with lovely blue eyes and soft wavy hair. She was dressed in a white Broussa silk waist richly embroidered with crimson and gold braid, blue silk skirt, white trowsers and yellow slippers. They both had on a great deal of jewelry. Several sets I should think were disposed about their persons with great effect, though not in what we should consider very good taste. Being only able to wear one pair of earrings, they had the extra pairs fastened to their braids, which were elaborately arranged about their heads and hung down behind. There half a dozen slaves in the room, who, when not waiting on their mistresses, squatted on the floor, smoked and listened to the conversation. Coffee was brought almost immediately, the cups of lovely blue and white china in pretty silver holders, on a tray of gilt filigree.

After sitting here a while, exchanging the compliments of the day, we passed to the next room, a large saloon with windows and door opening into the court. Here a fountain threw up a sparkling jet of water, and several trees and flowering shrubs, with a profusion of ivy on the walls, made it a very attractive place. The child of the eldest wife, a bright-eyed little boy, was floating chips in the basin of the fountain, laughing and clapping his hands when the falling water upset them or wet his face. The floor of the apartment was covered with large, handsome rugs, and had luxurious divans around the sides, little other furniture seems necessary in a Turkish house. We followed our hostess' example and seated ourselves on the divans, though not as they did, with their feet under them, and refreshments were served on a large gilt salver, in the middle of which was a handsome covered dish of Bohemian glass, on a gold stand, filled with sweetmeats, and on each side were vases to match, one holding queer shaped little spoons with golden bowls. There were also four glasses of water and four minute little glasses of pale yellow cordial. Fortunately the tray was passed first to Madame L., so I watched her movements and knew what to do. She took a spoon from one vase, dipped it in the sweetmeats, and, after eating, placed her spoon in the empty vase. Then she took some water and drank a glass of cordial. So we each did (it is polite to taste but once), and placing the soiled spoon in the vase for that purpose. I did not need to be told that the sweetmeats were rose leaves, for the flavor was perfectly preserved.

Madame L. kindly repeated most of the conversation, which was chiefly composed on their sides of questions concerning Madame L.'s family; was her husband as kind to her as ever, had he made her any presents lately, was I married, my husband's personal appearance, did I love him, how old I was, where from and where going to? These and similar questions

they asked, with the curiosity of children. They are the topics usually discussed when their friends visit them, and are considered perfectly proper. Then we were invited into a third room, where we were served with violet sherbet, cake and Turkish paste. After partaking of these the ladies sent for their jewel boxes and displayed their treasures, which consisted of pins, earrings, necklaces, head and belt ornaments, some very handsome, and all composed of precious stones of more or less value: for a Turkish woman does not value an ornament that is not set with precious stones. This was an agreeable change from the former conversation, and when we had admired their jewels, breakfast was served, the servants brought a scarlet rug of soft, shaggy stuff, which was spread on the floor; a low, round brass table, two feet high and three feet in diameter, was placed in the centre of this rug, and we four ladies seated ourselves around the table a la Turk. A servant brought a basin, which was like an immense wash-bowl, with a cullender in it, turned upside down; we washed our hands over this, water being poured over them from a large coffee-pot (I should call it) with an unusually long nose, and wiped our hands on handsome towels embroidered at the ends with gold thread. A dish of small fried fish was placed on the table for the first course; each helped herself to one, laying it on the table before her (we had no plates, knives, or forks), picking it to pieces and eating it with her fingers. When this was ended the debris was thrown on the platter and removed, the table wiped off, and a dish of rice and mutton brought: for this we had spoons, but all ate from the dish. Then came an immense cauliflower covered thick with strange tasting cheese, and here the Turkish ladies used their thumb and two first fingers in conveying it to their mouths. I am very fond of cauliflower, but this was not inviting. The next course was onions cooked in oil; I had to be excused from this, also: the sight of their dripping fingers was enough. Then we washed our hands and ate oranges; washed again and, lighting fresh cigarettes (they had smoked nearly all day), retired to our divans, sipped coffee, and listened to an old negress (the story teller of the harem), who, squatted before us, related marvellous stories in eastern style. More sweetmeats and confectionary were passed with coffee; and our visit ended.

A European woman could not support such a life,—at home perfect inactivity, eating, smoking, gossiping, an occasional visit to or from a friend, a trip to the bazaar, and a drive—if they possess a carriage,—or a row in a caique to the Sweetwaters on Sunday. This is the life of a Turkish woman of rank.—N. Y. Observer.

TOBACCO.

This foe of cleanliness, decency, health and good manners, increases in fifty and nastiness, not only in bar and club rooms, but in steamboats, railroad cars, and nearly all public conveyances. We cannot go up Broadway but what the sickening smoke is puffed upon every breeze into the face and eyes of all passers-by. On the North River steamboats the devotees of tobacco use the best places, both fore and aft, filling the air with its perfume. It seems not only to destroy all sense of obligation to society and respect for ladies, but to benumb the whole character, so that they think anti-smokers have no rights which tobacco is bound to respect.

The London Observer says Dr. Drysdale availed himself of the meeting of the medical Association, at Norwich to fire off a most formidable counterblast to tobacco. He said "it was a violation of the laws of public hygiene," and declared, it the duty of every man to "speak out." "For his part," he roundly declared, "he charged tobacco with causing blindness, palpitation of the heart, paralysis, and diseases of the teeth, mouth, and tongue. He alleged that it was a foe to cleanliness and good manners. He knew that it was injurious to workers in tobacco factories, and he therefore contended that it was not true luxury and never a necessity."—National Temperance Advocate.

The French Government have seized a number of paintings belonging to M. Courbet, the artist who sided with the Communists, and who caused the Vendôme Column to be pulled down. The pictures are to be sold, and the proceeds will go towards defraying the expense of re-erecting the column.

WHICH IS BEST?

This world is dark and dreary,
When we make it so;
This world is bright and cheerful,
When we take it so.

Our friends are cold and distant,
When we doubt them;
Our friends are true and loving
When we trust them.

Is it best to live in the dark,
Doubting day by day,
Or live in the light of love,
Trusting day by day?

FINDING FAULT.

The Advance says: "A bit of advice which Mr. Moody gave in a meeting in Liverpool may contain a useful hint over here. Some people, he says, come to the meeting to find fault. He never knew a meeting yet without a fault. It don't take genius or heart to find fault. Any fool could do that. The question was, could they do it better? If so, let them come by all means, and he would pray for God's blessing upon their efforts and stand aside.

"THAT'S HOW"

After a great snow storm, a little fellow began to shovel a path through a large snow-bank before his grandmother's door. He had nothing but a small shovel to work with.

"How do you intend to get through that drift?" asked a man passing along.

"By keeping at it," said the boy cheerfully; "that's how!"

That is the secret of mastering almost every difficulty under the sun. If a hard task is before you, stick to it. Do not keep thinking how large or hard it is, but go at it and little by little it will grow smaller and smaller until it is done.

LONG WORDS.

"Rob," said Tom, "which is the most dangerous word to pronounce in the English language?"

"Don't know," said Rob, "unless it's a swearing word."

"Pooh!" said Tom, "it's stumpled, because you are sure to get a tumble between the first and last letter."

"Ha! ha!" said Rob. "Now I've one for you. I found it one day in the paper. Which is the longest word in the English language?"

"Valetudinarianism," said Tom, promptly.

"No, sir; it is smiles, because there's a whole mile between the first and last letter."

"Ho! ho!" cried Tom, "that's nothing. I know a word that has over three miles between its beginning and ending."

"What's that?" asked Rob, faintly.

"Beleaguered," said Tom.—St. Nicholas.

Inside the hat of a cattle-thief recently arrested in Detroit were found pasted the following maxims:—"Remember that truth is a jewel; do not covet; respect old age; be content with what you have; live that men will take your character as an example." In consideration of the excellent principles governing the man's life the Judge kindly allowed him to return to the printed slip containing them during his year's sojourn in the penitentiary.

For assaulting one of his parishioners in the parish churchyard, the Rev. Samuel Smith, Rector of Landulph, Cornwall, was on Tuesday fined £5. During the proceedings in court an old Act of Parliament of Edward VI., still on the Statute Book, was read, which contained a clause providing that if any person shall smite or lay violent hands upon another in any church or churchyard, then ipso facto every person so offending shall be deemed excommunicated and be excluded from the fellowship and company of Christ's congregation. In consequence of the discovery of this Act, some of the parishioners talk of refusing to pay tithes to the rector, with whom they are at variance.

A CHANCE FOR THE "LITTLE ONES."—These who believe in the wholesome, restraining influence of public executions, will appreciate the tender thoughtfulness of a Maryland sheriff, at a recent hanging over which he presided. Stepping forward, he said, with true fatherly feeling: "There is a good many little boys and girls here, and you big people must fall back against the fence, and let the little ones come up around the gallows, so as they can see."