

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1876.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

Sunday, Aug. 13th 1876.—The Call of Wisdom.—Prov. i. 20-23.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 20-23.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Revelation iii. 20.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Proverbs i. 1-19. Tuesday, Proverbs ii. Wednesday, Isaiah v. 1-7. Thursday, Romans ii. 4-11. Friday, Galatians vi. 1-8. Saturday, James v. 1-11. Sunday, Psalm i.

ANALYSIS.—I. Cry of Wisdom. Vs. 20, 21. II. Three classes of sinners. Vs. 22. III. Appeal and warning. Vs. 23-31. IV. Contrast drawn. Vs. 32, 33.

PROVERBIAL TEACHING.—Proverbial teaching has been employed from remote antiquity, and was particularly adapted to the simplicity of the early ages. When books were but few and the long reasonings of philosophers were unknown, moral precepts concisely uttered were very valuable, especially to the young. In every nation the maxims of proverbial wisdom become current with the people.

As all forms of human composition, find their highest illustration in Scripture—as there is no tragedy like Job, no pastoral like Ruth, no lyric-melodies like the Psalms—so we would affirm that only he who is "greater than Solomon" has excelled in wisdom the Proverbs of Solomon.—Trench. The Book of Proverbs is for all times, all conditions, all countries. It has for all ranks and classes "a word in season." In few and terse words it enforces the loftiest religious and moral principles. The youth of all lands will do well to read them often and ponder upon them.

EXPOSITION.—Of the Book of Proverbs, the first twenty-five chapters are ascribed to Solomon as author, though the twenty-fifth was not published till Hezekiah's time. Of these, i-x are to inculcate piety in youth, and x-xxv are miscellaneous. An extended commerce with Phœnicia, Arabia, Persia, Syria, Ethiopia, and perhaps India, was extremely likely to import into Palestine very false notions respecting morals. It became, therefore, of the utmost importance that God should provide his people with correct teaching on these points.

Verse 20.—Wisdom crieth without. Wisdom (or wisdoms, for it is plural), is here personified and represented as a preacher; in ix. 1-5 as a prince; and in viii. 1-35 as the eternal companion of God. The word "without" is explained in the clauses which follow, and characterizes the instructions of wisdom as open, public, universal—given to all. There is a contrast intended between this and the secrecy which wickedness is wont to observe. Even the vicious usually make an outward show of morality, and hide from public view their iniquities. She uttereth her voice in the streets. Hebrew poetry finds its rhythm in a correspondence of one verse with another, or more often of one line with another, and this is called parallelism. "The streets," literally "the broad places," thronged with people, corresponds to the word "without" in the previous clause, as the expression, "uttereth her voice" corresponds to "crieth." A similar correspondence can be traced in all the following verses.

Verse 21.—This verse is parallel with the preceding, expressing the same thought in a slightly different form. It would make as emphatic as possible the fact that God calls upon every one of the people, and upon the people as whole, to heed and obey his voice. The opening of the gates. The gates were "places of public resort, either for business or to converse and hear news," as also "for public deliberation, administration of justice, or audience for kings, rulers or ambassadors." In the city. This is the most general and comprehensive term.

Verse 22.—How long, ye simple ones, etc. "Simple ones" and "fools" here, as so often in Scripture, are moral terms. Piety is wisdom or knowledge (verse 7; Ps. cxi. 10), and impiety is folly. Ps. xiv. 1. The simple ones are therefore the wicked, who disregard God and his law. Sinners know by ex-

perience that sin has only mischief for them; yet the more they sin the more they incline to sin. A Christian or saint may sin, but sin is not the central and ruling principle of the man. Of such an one it can be said that he "delights in the law of God after the inward man," and "the evil which he would not, that he does." Rom. vii. 14-25. The last clause of this verse states negatively what in the first verse is stated positively.

Verse 23.—Turn ye at my reproof. The voice of wisdom, or of God, who is Wisdom. The "reproof" is the warning of vs. 20-22. Reproof is thus for correction, not condemnation and rejection. Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you. These words have their most perfect fulfilment in that gift of the Spirit which in both time and nature followed the exaltation of the Lord Jesus. God stops not with instruction, warning and appeal; to win some words he joins the winsome, constraining, efficient power of his gracious Holy Spirit, and thus proves the honest earnestness and earnest honesty of his interest in man. The word "pour" suggests copiousness of supply, as at Jerusalem of "the Day of Pentecost." I will make known my words unto you. Coming as this does immediately after the Spirit's promise, it is best understood of that inward, experimental knowledge which is consequent on the Spirit's indwelling, and is thus equivalent to the promise, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." Jer. xxxi. 33, 34. Compare Heb. viii. 10.

Verse 24, 25.—In these two verses God states how the obdurately and finally impenitent meet and treat his kindness to them. He sees them going to ruin. He calls on them to stop; they hear, but refuse to heed. He comes very near to them and holds out to them the helping hand, that he may lead them to light and life; they show the contempt of neglect. How true to life this picture of the impenitent.

Verses 26, 27.—If it seems unfit to think of God as laughing at man's calamity and mocking at his fear, we have to remember the words of the second Psalm: "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision." Not that in God there is such a spirit as that which in man is wont to come out in mockery and derision—just as God's "wrath" is not like ours—but when the day of mercy ends, as it will end, justice in retribution will have its way as infallibly as does human wrath when unrestrained by human pity. God is the same, but relations have changed. "Your fear," is either the evil feared, or the unspeakable terror which takes the place of sinful security when once the sinner wakes to the fact that God's words of warning are true. Rev. vi. 16. The suddenness and unexpectedness of sin-wrought ruin are often and powerfully presented in Scripture. Psalm lxxiii. 18; Dent. xxxii. 35.

Verse 18-31.—Here is a peculiar parallelism of verses, in which verses 28 and 31 correspond to each other in giving an effect of which verses 29 and 30, similarly correspondent, give the cause. In the two former verses the certainty of retribution is brought out. In verse 28 we are taught that the cry of terror shall not stay the arm of justice. In verse 31, this certain ruin is represented as the result of one's own chosen course. Men destroy themselves because sin is their choice; and to choose sin is, in fact, to choose its end. And it matters not whether one foresees the end; the sin has its own nature, and works out its own results.

Verse 32, 33.—Here in these verses is an antithetical parallelism. Man, not God, is the author of man's sin. Man's work is havoc; God's security. Not only here, but everywhere in the Bible, the relation of God's agency to our sin is represented as very different from the relation of his agency to our holiness. Rom. vi. 23.

QUESTIONS.—How long has the world been accustomed to proverbs? What things are essential to good proverbs? Whose proverbs are the best in the world? To whom are they applicable? What age of life should be especially heedful of the Proverbs of Solomon?

Vs. 20. In what character does Wisdom speak in the Bible? What does Wisdom say is the beginning of all knowledge? How has Wisdom cried to man?

Vs. 22. What classes do the terms of this verse indicate? Do sinners usually go from worse to better, or the reverse? "Easy is the descent to hell."

Vs. 24. Does not God exhaust the resources of mercy before he condemns? 2 Peter iii. 9; Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

Vs. 32. What can be greater misery than for a man to know that his ruin has been brought on by his own act? Who is the embodiment of Divine wisdom? John i. 1. Who gives wisdom? James i. 5.

—Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, Aug. 20th, 1876.—The Value of Wisdom.—Prov. i. 20-23.

YOUTHS' DEPARTMENT.

The Penny Offering.

A child a penny gave,
With which a tract was bought:
That tract a heathen chief
To the dear Saviour brought.

A little church was built:
Men turned from idols old,
Till fifteen hundred souls
Were gathered in the fold.

How many more shall come
In joy with Christ to dwell,
The fruit of this small seed,
Eternity must tell.

Oh! many a man has sought
To do some mighty deed,
And yet no change has wrought
Like this one tiny seed.

Why should the little one
Be more than strong man blest,
Had love not borne the deed
Nearer the Saviour's breast?

Oh! it is not in might
To bring the blessing down;
But faith and love shall win
And wear the victor's crown.

When every little hand
Shall sow the gospel seed,
And every little heart
Shall pray for those in need;

When every little life
Such fair, bright record shows,
Then shall the desert bud
And blossom as the rose.

Cousin Phil's Story.

"We have just a few minutes before tea," said Cousin Phil to us children one evening. "Come around me, little pets, and I will tell you a story: even a short one is better than none."

"O, Cousin Phil," cried Edie's little voice, "tell us about your dog Neptune."

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed Frank, "that's just what I should like you to do."

Cousin Phil smiled at the little pleaders, and then looked down into my face. "This childie would also like a story about my doggie. I can see it, though she does not say anything," said he, stroking my hair.

Of course I was delighted; and as we all gathered around our kind cousin, he thus began his story:

"I have told you things before about my old Nep, but I think there is one chapter in his history that you have not heard. I was out walking with the dog one morning, and coming home, passed through the little village near which, at that time, our home was situated.

"The door of one small cottage stood open, and Nep, who was always of an inquiring mind, made a sudden dash past me and into the little house. I followed him as quickly as I could; for I thought that, without intending to do wrong, his high spirits and rough habits might get him into trouble. I was too late, however; for as I stepped across the threshold, I heard a crash and a sharp cry of surprise and anger. There was Master Nep, sitting up on his hind legs in front of a child's high chair; a broken basin, from which a wide stream of bread and milk was flowing, lay at the dog's feet; and a little girl, thus rudely disturbed in her morning meal, was rapping the dog's face as hard as she could with her spoon.

"Go away, naughty, bad doggie!" she was saying as I approached. "I'll knock you with my 'poon."

"Nep did not resent this punishment in the least; in fact, he seemed to wish to make friends with the child, and to atone for the mischief he had done in jumping up at her. Just then the mother came in, and I offered all necessary explanation, and gave her money to replace the broken bowl. Then Nep and I went home.

"But this was not the last time that my dog had the pleasure of seeing his young friend—or enemy, as I suppose she would have regarded herself.

"He and I were strolling along by the old mill-stream bank one afternoon, lazily enjoying the sunshine, and all the sweet country sights and sounds of summer, when a sudden cry arose from a group of children who were playing under a tree a little farther along the bank: 'Help! help! Lettie's in the water!'

"In a moment I was on the spot; Nep also, with his eager eyes fixed on my face. I took him by the collar and pointed out a little white bundle floating down the stream. With a sharp bark of quick comprehension he dashed into the swollen current; and I, divesting myself of my coat and heavy boots, followed his example. He reached the drowning child before she sank the second time, and seizing her by the loose waist of her dress, turned and began to struggle back toward the bank. It was just at this moment that I reached him, and together we brought the little one to the shore, where her mother (whom one of the children had been to bring to the spot) received her from us with tears of thankfulness.

"It would be quite impossible to describe Nep's state of delight when the little girl began to recover consciousness. He leaped around the bed, he jumped up and licked her face and hands, while she stared at him with wide-opened eyes.

"Then it was that I recognized in her the child whose basin of bread and milk my dog had broken a week before. Presently Lettie sat up, rubbed her eyes, and then, with a little cry of joy, threw her arms around Nep's shaggy neck. 'Doggie! doggie!' she sobbed, 'Lettie'll never hit you with a 'poon any more!'

"I think, if Nep could have spoken, he would have said something like this: 'Little girl, I have forgiven and forgotten what you did to me when I saw you last; and if I were a child like you, instead of a poor dumb brute, I should try more and more to be tender-hearted and forgiving, never bearing malice, but seeking daily to be more like the true children of the good God who made both you and me.'—Child's Companion.

A Promising Pupil.

Some years ago a benevolent lady of New York took a little negro girl into her family, intending to give her a very thorough moral and religious training. Unfortunately, the child was much given to lying, and though the mistress strove incessantly by precept and example to eradicate this vice, her efforts were far from successful. One day, returning home after some hours' absence, the lady was met at the door by her sable hand-maid, who, with many tears informed her that she had broken a very valuable china pitcher, an heir-loom in the family.

Here was light in the darkness at last, strict truthfulness in the face of reprimand or punishment, and the good mistress was delighted. Such an opportunity to reward and strengthen virtue must not be lost; so the lady magnanimously forgot her annoyance at the loss of her cherished pitcher (one of a pair), and, taking out a penny said, kindly, "Well, Jenny, since you have been such a good girl and told the truth so quickly, I shall not even scold you. Here is a penny for you."

Alas! the next morning the lady, on returning home from market, was met at the door again by her promising pupil, who delightedly exclaimed: "Oh, missus! I've broke the other pitcher. 'Won't you give me another penny?'"

Further description of that good woman's state of mind would be superfluous.—EDITOR'S DRAWER, in Harper's Magazine for August.

No Secrets.

The moment a girl has a secret from her mother, or has received a letter she dare not let her mother read, or has a friend of whom her mother does not know, she is in danger. A secret is not a good thing for a girl to have. The fewer secrets that lie in the hearts of women at any age, the better. It is almost a test of purity. She who has none of her own is best and happiest.

In girlhood, hide nothing from your mother; do nothing that, if discovered by your father, would make you blush. Have no mysteries whatever. Tell those

who are about you where you go and what you do. Those who have the right to know, I mean, of course.

A little secretiveness has set many a scandal afloat; and much as is said about women who tell too much, they are much better off than women who tell too little. A man may be reticent and lie under no suspicion; not so a woman.

The girl who frankly says to her mother: "I have been here. I met so and so. Such and such remarks were made, and this or that was done," will be certain of receiving good advice and sympathy. If all was right no fault will be found. If the mother knows out of her greater experience that something was improper or unsuitable, she will, if she is a good mother, kindly advise against its repetition.

It is when mothers discover that their girls are hiding things from them that they rebuke or scold. Innocent faults are always pardoned by a kind parent.

You may not know, girls, just what is right—just what is wrong yet. You can't be blamed for making little mistakes, but you will never do anything very wrong if from the first you have no secrets from your mother.—N. Y. Ledger.

Girls Help yourselves.

There is real nobility in the power to help one's self. A genuine girl, in these days, ought to be above the accidents of changing circumstances. There may be foolish butterfly girls, who care supremely for dress and admiration, and who float on the sunlit current of to-day as though no storm could ever come. To them a word of advice and warning may seem as an idle tale. To the girl whose bright eyes have at all occupied themselves in looking about her, and seeing the events which befall people every day, it will appear otherwise. You may be living now in elegance and luxury, the petted darling of your father's spacious house, without a visible thorn or brier of care to prick you, but it may not be long before you are called on to face misfortune. The problem of how to live may stare you in the face, as it has stared others. If you are rich and well-to-do you have a great advantage over those whose limited means give them no power of choice. The destruction of the poor is their poverty. A poor girl cannot look about her and say, "There is this work which invites me, which I would like, which is congenial. I will take time and prepare myself to enter upon it." She must do what comes first to hand, whether or not it be agreeable, and be content with her wages. On the other hand, the young woman who is comfortably and pleasantly established can take her time and arm herself against the day of necessity by the acquiring of some useful art, trade, or accomplishment.

A Tradition of Saratoga Lake.

There is an Indian superstition attached to this lake which probably had its source in its remarkable loneliness and tranquility. The Mohawks believed that its stillness was sacred to the Great Spirit, and that if a human voice uttered a sound upon its waters, the canoe of the offender would instantly sink. A story is told of an English-woman, in the early days of the first settlers who had occasion to cross this lake with a party of Indians, who before embarking, warned her most impressively of the spell. It was a silent, breathless day, and the canoe shot over the surface of the lake like an arrow. About half a mile from the shore, near the centre of the lake, the woman, wishing to convince the Indians of the erroneousness of their superstition, uttered a loud cry. The countenances of the Indians fell instantly to the deepest gloom. After a minute's pause, however, they redoubled their exertions, and in frowning silence drove the light bark swiftly over the waters. They reached the shore in safety and drew up the canoe, when the woman rallied the chief on his credulity. "The Great Spirit is merciful," answered the scornful Mohawk; "he knows that a white woman can not hold her tongue!"—WILLIAM L. STONE, in Harper's Magazine for August.

MEN AND GOLD.—It is said that anything Midas touched was turned to gold. In these days touch a man with gold and he will turn into anything.