

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1876.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, 16th January, 1876—David and Goliath—1 Sam. xvii. 38-51. B. C. 1063.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 45-49.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Philippians iv. 13.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, 1 Samuel xvi. 14-23. Tuesday, 1 Sam. xvii. 1-37. Wednesday, Psalm xlv. Thursday, 1 Corinthians i. 19-30. Friday, Judges vii. 2-7. Saturday, Exodus xiv. 13-18. Sunday, 1 Samuel i. 1-10.

ANALYSIS.—I. "Our clothes" preferred. Vs. 38, 39. II. Staff, stones and sling. Vs. 40. III. Goliath scorned David. Vs. 41-44. IV. David's trust in God. Vs. 45-47. V. Goliath slain. Vs. 48-51.

EXPOSITION.—The Scripture of our lesson falls into these natural divisions: we have in verses 38-40 David's preparation; in verses 40-42 David and Goliath approaching each other; in verses 43-47 their conversation; in verses 48, 49 the final encounter. These will be taken up in order, under the heads of Preparation, Approach, Conversation, and Encounter.

I. The Preparation.—Verses 38-40.—Under this we have 1, Saul's method; 2, David's: the first a failure, the second a success; the first cumbersome, the second natural; the first the type of worldly equipment for Christian warfare, the second the type of spiritual equipment for spiritual warfare. See Eph. vi. 10-20, and 1 Cor. 3-5, especially vs. 4, beginning, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty," etc. Not improbably Paul may have had in mind David's equipment. So has it always been; worldly men, trying to advance Christ's cause, as they often do, always rely on worldly means.

Saul's Armor.—Verses 38, 39.—Saul armed David with his armor. Literally, clothed David with his garments. Helmet of brass upon his head. To protect the head from the enemy's weapon. Its name in Hebrew is from a root meaning "to be high," and so merely designates it as rising and rounding up over the head. Assyrian helmets of the time were conical, sometimes terminating in a point above, and sometimes ornamented at the top with crests of various patterns. "The pointed helmet usually had one or two rings around the base, and generally a half disk directly in front, over the forehead. Sometimes, however, there was appended to it a falling curtain covered with metal scales, whereby the chin, neck, ears, and back of the head were protected. More often it had in lieu of this effectual but cumbersome guard, a mere lappet, or cheek piece, consisting of a plate of metal attached to the rim, which descended over the ears in the form of a half oval or semi-circle." They were commonly of iron. Armed [clothed] him with a coat of mail. The Hebrew word translated "coat of mail" is from a root meaning to interweave. It designates a breast-plate, which was made of scales, or small thin pieces of metals, as the Hebrew in vs. 5 shows, where the literal translation is "breast-plate of scales." The Assyrian coat of mail at this time reached no lower than the waist (though in earlier times reaching to the knees, or feet), and was composed of alternate bands of dissimilar arrangement, and perhaps of different material. The scales of metal were "sewn on to a shirt of linen or felt." Some of the scales were oblong, squared at one end, and rounded at the other, from two to three inches long, and placed side by side. Others were not more than one inch long, pointed at one end, and laid horizontally, each a little overlapping its fellow. This gave to the breast-plate a degree of flexibility. It had commonly a short sleeve extending about half way down to the elbow. The only weapon of offence mentioned is the sword, though Goliath had also his immense spear (vs. 7). The sword in use was shorter than ours. That of Ehud (Judges iii. 16; the word "dagger" is wrong; it should be "sword") was eighteen inches long, and two-edged. That of Goliath was not too large for David to wield, vs. 51. For the first mention of such weapon, see Gen. iii. 24.

The Trial.—Verse 39.—Assayed [attempted] to go. The shepherd had had never before been thus equipped; and, besides Saul's clothes were too big, and his armor too heavy for the youth. He put them off, not, of course, without Saul's consent.

David's own Equipment.—Verse 40.—He took his staff in his hand. His shepherd's staff, which served the double purpose of a weapon against foes, and a crook for the management of flocks. He well knew how to use that. Five smooth stones out of the brook. Smooth, for such would go through the air with more speed and accuracy. Sling, that is, a bag or wallet. And his sling was in his hand. What skill could be acquired in its use is shown in Judges xx. 16, which speaks of three hundred Benjaminites who, with their left hands, could "sling stones at an hair breadth and not miss."

II. The Approach.—Verses 40-42.—And he drew near to the Philistine. In full view of the two hosts. And the Philistine came on, etc. Each moving toward the other to meet in the centre of the valley of Elah, vs. 2, in full view of the two armies, ranged respectively on the hill-sides above, every eye turned and fastened on them. David alone without armor, Goliath with a bearer of his shield and panoply. They are but a few rods apart. They stop. Goliath looks sharply at David. He disdains him. Think of the contrast. The wonder is that Goliath did not treat it all as a joke, and turn back. Perhaps he was maddened just because he thought it a joke to make game of him in such a presence.

III. The Conversation.—Verses 43-47. Opened by Goliath, very naturally, as he had made the challenge, and regarded himself master of the situation.

Goliath.—Verse 43.—Am I a dog that thou comest to me with staves? The word "dog" was used as the most contemptuous epithet for a person. He seems not to have noticed the sling which was after all the main weapon. Cursed David by his gods. That is, by Dagon the national god of the Philistines, as we learned in studying Samson's history. Judges xvi. 21-40. "Dagon was represented with the face and hands of a man, and the tail of a fish." 1 Sam. v. 4. This cursing was the most emphatic expression of utmost wrath and

Goliath (resuming).—Verse 44.—Come to me, etc.—Not mere brag, but the honest statement of his purpose and expectation.

David.—Verse 45.—Thou comest, etc. His answer is ready. The big threat has not struck him dumb. He tells the giant first exactly where his (the giant's) whole trust is, viz, in his weapon; of course implying that it was also in his physical power to use them. He thus contrasts the ground of his own confidence, which was Jehovah, Israel's God, defied by Goliath, and hence moved to avenge himself. He knew, that Jehovah would vindicate his honour, and he on his part, dared to honour God. In vs. 46, he as a prophet, not with boasting, tells Goliath the issue of the matter, and the reason of it. The issue for Goliath should be what he had just threatened David. The result should be not Goliath's glory, but God's. It had seemed as though the Almighty had abandoned Israel; it should now be seen that he had not. Israel's enemies had grown bold; they should now learn to fear God is not always "on the side of the heaviest battalions."

IV. The Encounter.—Verse 48-51.—It turned out just as David predicted. Each hastened toward the other, but the stone was hurled before the huge spear could be used. The powerful arm the consummate skill of the shepherd, acting under inspiration and guidance of God, yet acting with all his heart and power, had sent the smooth stone to its place and work of death, the giant's sword cut off its owner's head. Disgrace most disgraceful. So quickly, so miserably perishes earthly glory, power, purpose, when the angry breath of an insulted God smites it. Mighty is the child of God against the giant of the earth. To be with God is always to be on the winning side. His side wins always in the end. Christ arises for his people to maintain his honour and cause.

QUESTIONS.—Where were the Philistines now encamped? Where the Israelites? What delays the conflict? How tall was Goliath? Vs. 4. How heavy was his coat of mail? Vs. 5. How

heavy the head of his staff? Vs. 7. How came David to fight Goliath? What brother opposed his first purpose? To what events did David appeal in proof of ability?

Vs. 38. Where had Saul seen David before? What was a coat of mail?

Vs. 39. Does assumption of power not really our own ever help us to true success? For what thing bearing upon this point did David pray? Ps. xix. 13.

Vs. 40. Why did David have five stones only? What was a sling? How accurate was its ancient use?

Vs. 42. Why did Goliath disdain David? Elijah once offered a peculiar prayer for a young man; what was it? 2 Kings vi. 17.

Vs. 43. By what God did Goliath curse David? Judges xvi. 23. What was his form?

Vs. 45. Is great bluster usually brave? Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

YOUTHS' DEPARTMENT.

Lady January.

You mean to keep warm, Lady January, and have wrapped yourself up very snugly. Everything in its season, to be sure; but you know that all the furs that ever kept out Arctic cold will not take the place of warm blood in circulation? You must eat wholesome nourishing food; you must not be afraid of stirring briskly about every day in the open air; you must ventilate your sitting room and chamber, and make sure of pure air to breathe, if you wish to have rosy cheeks and bright eyes and warm fingers and toes. But let us tell you another thing; if you do not carry a warm heart under your furs; if you do not have pity on the poor who are wretchedly clad this cold month; if you shut yourself up in heated houses and take no thought of the misery that is increased by self neglect, you will not be admired or loved, even if you do lead in the procession of the year. We have heard some hard things said of you, my dear lady, but we will not believe them. You are sent, as all of us are, an mission of loving kindness; and your cold manners are not the sign of ice at your heart. We know you wish to fill these long winter evenings with home delights, and the short days with study and care for the suffering. Only good lady, don't be a coquette. Of all things we dislike that affectation of summer called a January thaw.—Work and a ray.

The Deacon's Singing School.

"I am going out to see if I can start a singing school," said the good man, as he stood buttoning up his overcoat, and muffling up his ears, one bitter cold night this winter.

"A singing school!" said his wife, "how will you do that?"

"I have heard of a widow around the corner a block or two who is in suffering circumstances. She has five little children and two of them down sick, and has neither fire nor food. I thought I would just step around and look into the case."

"Go, by all means," said his wife, "and lose no time. If they are in such need we can relieve them some. But I can't see what all this has to do with starting a singing school. But never mind, you need not stop to tell me now; go quickly, and do all you can for the poor woman." So out into the piercing cold of the wintry night went the husband, while the wife turned to the fire-side and her sleeping babes, who, in their warm cribs, with the glow of health upon their cheeks, showed that they knew nothing of cold or pinching want. With a thankful spirit she thought of her blessings; as she sat down to her little pile of mending. Very busily and quietly she worked, puzzling all the time over what her husband could have meant by starting a singing school. A singing school and the widow! how queer! What possible connection could the have?

At last she grew tired of the puzzling thought, and said to herself, "I won't bother myself thinking about it any more. He will tell me all about it when he comes home. I only hope we may be able to help the widow and make her poor heart sing for joy!" "There!" she exclaimed, "can that be what he meant? The widow's heart singing for joy. Wouldn't that be a singing school? It must be; it is just like John. How funny that I should find it out!"—and she laughed merrily at her lucky guess. Taking up her work again,

she stitched away with a happy smile on her face, as she thought over again her husband's words, and followed him in imagination in his kind ministrations. By and by two shining tears dropped down, tears of pure joy, drawn from the deep wells of her love for her husband, of whom she thought she never felt so fond before. At the first sound of footsteps she sprung to open the door.

"O John, did you start the singing-school?"

"I reckon I did," said the husband, as soon as he could loose his wrappings; "but I want you to hunt up some flannels and things to help keep it up."

"Oh, yes! I will; I know now what you meant. I have thought it all out. Making the widow's heart sing for joy is your singing school. What a precious work, John! Pure religion and undefiled is to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction. My own heart has been singing for joy all the evening because of your work, and I do not mean to let you do it alone. I want to draw out some of this wonderful music."

There are many hearts which would be the better if there could be singing schools started in them. Let you and I do all we can. Perhaps others may catch the key-note, and help to swell the song, until many a widow's heart shall be comforted, and the fatherless be fed.—Advocate and Guardian.

Locust-eating.

We read in the Bible that the food of John the Baptist was "locusts and wild honey." A great deal of pains has been taken by commentators to prove that it was not what we call locusts, but the fruit of the wild carob-tree, that John ate with the honey that he found in the wilderness where he lived.

But I do not think that any one who has travelled in Arabia, or found rest and shelter in a Arab's tent, and been a guest at his hospitable board, would thus judge of what the Bible means by "locusts." In Turkey, Persia, Arabia, and all that region of country, locusts—genuine, bona-fide locusts—have been eaten from remote antiquity; and to this day they form an important item of the food used by the common people. The Bedouins collect them in immense quantities, and after a partial drying, pack them in sacks. Then at their convenience, when the season for collecting is over, they steam the insects in close vessels over a hot fire, winnow them in bread baskets to remove the legs and wings, and then pulverize between flat stones. When wanted for food, they are only moistened with a little water, just as the Arabs do in preparing their date-flour, and then the repast is all ready.

The Turks eat locusts in the same way, and by very many other Orientals they are regarded as the choicest of dainties.

The Moors boil or fry them, seasoning with salt, pepper, and vinegar; and they pronounce them even superior to quails and pigeons. The Hottentots make from the eggs a delicious soup; they also roast the locusts over a slow fire, and eat them as we do caramels or bonbons. Dr. Livingstone says he used them at first from necessity, when deprived of all other food; "but strange to say, grew daily more fond of them, and at last preferred them to shrimps or oysters."—St. Nicholas.

How to increase the Sunday School.

- 1. Have a good School room, with commodious seats and good ventilation.
2. Have a good library of well assorted books for the use of teachers and pupils.
3. Have a live superintendent, who has an ardent love for children and who knows just how to manage them.
4. Have teachers whose hearts are all aglow with desire for the salvation of the precious immortals committed to their care.
5. Let the Sunday School be made a special subject of prayer in the Church and at the family altar.
6. Let it have the whole hearted sympathy of the pastor and deacons of the church, and also of the parents of the children.
7. Divide your community into sections and let your teachers go out and canvass for scholars.
Adopt these simple rules and act upon them heartily, and your school will very soon double its present number.

A good Church Member.

He believes in his church. He loves it. He gives himself to it. He prays for it, and speaks kindly of it. He does not put a stumbling-block in the way of his brethren, and avoids those things which may grieve them or cause them to offend. He is charitable in his judgments, and promotes peace. He feels it a duty to build up his own congregation rather than another congregation. He cheers his brethren and his pastor by regular attendance upon the public services. He helps the pastor, and does not leave him to preach to empty pews, with an aching heart, or to carry on the prayer meetings alone. It is no slight excuse that keeps him from the Lord's Supper. The appointments of his church and the memory of his Saviour are sacred to him. He does not trifle with either. He does not long continue derelict in duty to the church, so as to become liable to discipline. He keeps his covenant, solemnly made with his church when he entered its fellowship. God bless our good members, old and young, and constantly increase their number! Let lively stones be laid into the spiritual temple.—Reformed Church Herald.

Settle Difficulties Right.

Nothing is settled permanently until it is settled right. Shifts, concealments, subterfuges and evasions amount to nothing. A wrong may be apologized for, defended, endorsed, covered up, lied about, daubed over, winked at, or silently endured; but so long as it exists, there is trouble in store. Build your house as big as you like, if there is a wrong in the foundation, you have put powder under the whole concern. While that is there, nothing can make the structure safe. By-and-by, the spark will find the train, and then comes an explosion, and the whole mass goes hurtling in the air.

From every wrong decision there lies an appeal. It may be to conscience; it may be to impartial men; or it may be to the righteous Judge upon the great white throne. However the matter may be stifled, smoothed over, or misrepresented, every wrong not righted will come up and keep coming up.

II.

What a number of beautiful and solemn verses swing upon this little hinge, allow me to point out some:

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.

Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.

If I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me.

If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink.

If the son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

And if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him that we may be glorified together.

If God be for us, who can be against us.

If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.

Finally, my brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise think on these things.

If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

The cost of firing a gun is a matter in which our readers may take some interest. The battery charge of 110lb. of pebble powder for a 35-ton gun costs £2 13s. 6d. The empty projectile, if a Palliser, costs £4 13s. To this we must add 3s. 4d. for the powder to fill the shell, and three small amounts beside, making a total of £7 11s. 4d. The cost of firing a 10-inch gun with a Palliser shell is £4 10s.