

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1876.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, March 12th, 1876.—Absalom's Rebellion.—2 Sam. xv. 1-14.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 4-6.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it."—Proverbs xxx. 17.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, 2 Samuel xii. 1-10. Tuesday, 2 Sam. xiii. 19-39. Wednesday, 2 Sam. xiv. Thursday, Ex. xx. 1-17. Friday, Romans i. 28-32. Saturday, Proverbs i. Sunday, Prov. iv.

ANALYSIS.—I. Stealing the hearts of Israel. Vs. 1-6. II. Paying a vow at Hebron. Vs. 7-9. III. Rebellion planned. Vs. 10-13.

HISTORICAL CONNECTION.—There are many things suffered in the Old Testament that are not justified. It was so with polygamy, the sad results of which appear in David's experience.

By Ahinoam, the wife of his wanderings, (1 Sam. xxvii. 33), he had Amnon, a dearly-beloved son. When king at Hebron, he had by Maachah, daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur, a Syrian district of north-eastern Palestine, Absalom and Tamar, both of royal descent and very beautiful. Still, Maachah was a foreigner, with whom a Jew was forbidden to marry. Josh. xxiii. 12, 13. When tempted by indolence as king of Jerusalem, "he took his wife" Bathsheba, wife of Uriah, one of his thirty faithful captains. It was a mingled drama of lust and blood, quickly followed by its natural fruits and special judgments in his family. For "the thing that David had done displeased the Lord." David sincerely repented and was forgiven, but even "godly sorrow working repentance unto eternal life" could not avert the temporal consequences of his sin. He had outraged the sanctities of domestic life. What marvel would it be if his first-born son, Amnon, should be guilty of lust? So it proved in his sickening and wicked passion for Tamar, his half sister. 2 Sam. xiii. Hearing of which, Absalom dissuaded her from taking immediate revenge, intending to do so himself in his own way. In a short time Amnon's death was brought about by Absalom, after which he fled from David his father, to Talmai, his father-in-law, in Geshur. Here he remained three years, and then, by the craft of Joab, David was entreated to "fetch home again his banished." He returned to Jerusalem, and for two years was excluded from the court. By the request of Joab, however, the king became reconciled to his son, and received him with a kiss of peace. But all this while Absalom was planning rebellion. He surrounded himself with runners. He sat at the place of judgment and gave general redress. By his crafty and popular policy he "stole the hearts of the men of Israel." He went to Hebron, ostensibly to pay a vow, but in fact to make it a rendezvous for his adherents, the seat of his rebellion; all of which unchecked proceedings seem to indicate that the once popular king had lost much of his hold upon the nation. Alas for David! Alas, too, for ungrateful Absalom!

EXPOSITION.—The life of David presents a series of striking contrasts. The Scripture of our lesson sets before us almost unparalleled infamy, for Absalom was not only an honored subject, but also a beloved son.—The judgment upon David, as from God, was most just, as from Absalom, most atrocious. Wickedness is none the less wickedness because divinely used for holy ends.

I. The Preparation.—Verse 1-6.—Its time.—It seems from verse 1 to have begun immediately after Absalom's first admission to his father's presence after his return from Geshur. See xiv. 28-33. Whether that interview had been sought in hope of securing David's recognition of him as successor to his throne, and had failed of its purpose, does not appear; but if so it would explain his subsequent course. The length of time occupied in the preparation was probably four years, as the word forty, in vs. 7, it is thought should be four.

The retinue.—The use of horses and chariots had hitherto been unknown in Israel, and was probably introduced in consequence of the victory over the

Syrian army. x. 18. They were not, however, employed by Israel in the army, but only, as here, for display in time of peace. See the prediction, 1 Samuel viii. 11; Deut. xvii. 16. Absalom's design was not simply to gratify his vanity, but to captivate the people.

Litigants seduced.—Verse 2-6.—The way of the gate, in verse 2, is the way leading through the gate, evidently of Jerusalem, where was the court of final appeal, or the Supreme Court, for the trial of the weightier cases not disposed of in the inferior courts. See Deut. xvi. 18-20; xvii. 8-13. "The gate" was the original place of trial and judgment. The persons coming on such business would be men of considerable prominence. If, as seems to have been true, David's administration had come to be notoriously negligent, Absalom had a splendid chance to turn this wide-spread body of influential men into malcontents and adherents. Mark the particularity of Absalom's inquiry. He would have his men, and know where to find them, and flatter them by showing them this interest. Their answer, *thy servant is of one, etc.*, of course gave the exact information asked for. Flattered by the preliminary attention of the great and popular prince, the litigants would be in just the mood for the artful expression that followed. Three points does Absalom make: 1. Your case is a good and clear one. 2. But you must fail, because you cannot get justice from government as it is. 3. Were I at the head of affairs such causes as yours should have speedy and ample success.

In the first point he joins himself to the man; in the second he disjoins the man from his king; in the third he joins the man to himself. This conduct shows the confirmed rascality of the prince, the utter moral rottenness which was robed in beauty of person, elegance of manners, fineness of intellect, and magnificence of display.

It seems more natural to take verse 5 as referring to such of the litigants as gave in their adherence to him after his reasonable interview. The "obedience" would thus be the recognition of him as the choice of their heart for king instead of David, and his kiss of them would be the kiss of treasonable conspiracy. How well is the nature of Absalom's conduct expressed in the phrase, "stole the hearts of the men of Israel." It was a great fraud and theft. He stole that which was the dearest and most precious to his father and king.

II. The opportunity.—Verse 7-9.—What has been secretly preparing must have time and place for culmination. The same consummate skill is here manifest. Absalom must be away from the king, unsuspected, in a favorable place. Hebron was the best place in all Israel, for it was of historic renown, and there had been the seat of David's government. It was also Absalom's birth place, in the heart of Judah, far enough from Jerusalem to be away from the king's eye, and near enough to make possible a sudden onset upon Jerusalem. The Hebronites may have been sour that their city had not been retained as the capital, and so the more ready to welcome one who would make it so again. The king of Geshur was Absalom's grandfather. The vow which he pretended to have made there (vs. 8) was, of course, never made.

III. The maturity.—Verse 10-12.—We see thus far that everything has worked to a charm in favor of the traitor. We come now to the critical hour when the plot comes to maturity. He dispatches "runners" (such is the Hebrew word for "spies,") to act as heralds, and stations on the hill-tops, at proper distances, his trumpeters, so that when the moment comes, a blast at Hebron shall be taken up by all the trumpets within hearing, and the sound of treason thus roll and reverberate throughout Israel. The two hundred men, of vs. 11, were probably chief men, incorruptibly devoted to David, whom Absalom knew too well ever to approach with words of disloyalty. In the traitor's power at Hebron, they could do him no harm, even though they refused to give him help. The clause, "while he offered sacrifices," refers to Absalom's offering at Hebron, at which he wished Ahithophel to be present. Giloh was in the south of Judah. See Josh. xv. 51.

IV. The disclosure.—Verse 13, 14.—Of course Absalom took care that no trumpet should be sounded in or near Jerusalem, and that no herald should

make proclamation there. Hence the first news which David would receive would be from some loyal volunteer flying to inform him that the country was risen, and still rising against him. "David had no standing army with which to resist this sudden attack." He rightly thought that safety was in flight. He knew Absalom well enough to be sure that he would act promptly and efficiently, and that his stroke would be one of destruction. Alas, what a contrast between David as he is, fleeing helplessly from before his son, and David as he was last week saw him; between David as he is, and David as he might have been.

QUESTIONS.—Who was the mother of Absalom? What statute did David violate in marrying her? Was David sorrowful for sin? Does sorrow for sin always prevent its temporal consequences? Did it in David's case? 2 Samuel vii. 14. What murder in the family of David was Absalom guilty of? Where then did he flee? How long was he away from Jerusalem? How long in Jerusalem before seeing the king? What was he planning, doubtless, all this while?

Vs. 1. What prophecy is a clue to the course of this narrative? 2 Samuel xii. 10, 11. Does God help forward his cause at times by means of human wickedness? Gen. i. 20; Matt. xxvi. 24; Ps. lxxvii. 10.

Vs. 7. What advantage did Hebron offer to Absalom's conspiracy?

Vs. 8. Do any now-a-days make a formal worship of God serve their wicked designs?

Vs. 9. Why did the king say, "Go in peace?"

Vs. 12. Who was Ahithophel? How was he related to Bathsheba? What were some of the causes of the general dissatisfaction with David?

Vs. 14. Why did David flee from the city? What commandment was Absalom now breaking? Ex. xx. 12.

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, March 19th, 1876.—Absalom's Death.—2 Samuel xviii. 24-33.

YOUTHS' DEPARTMENT.

Baby's Dress.

Baby, baby, bless her;
How shall mamma dress her?

The summer cloud
Is not too proud
To find soft wool to dress her.

The blue bell
Is a true bell,
And will find the blue to dress her.

The cherry tree
Is a merry tree,
And will find the pink to dress her.

The lily bright
Will find the white,
The beautiful white to dress her.

The leaves in the wood
Are sweet and good,
And will find the green to dress her.

The honey-suckle,
With buds for a buckle,
Will make a girdle to dress her.

The heavens hold
Both silver and gold
In the stars, and they will dress her.

Good Words for the Young.

The Saw of Contention.

"Look, Frank, see how hot my saw gets when I rub it. When I draw it through the board quickly, it seems almost hot enough to set fire to it."

"That's the friction," said Frank, who was two years older than his brother Eddie.

"Yes," said sister Mary, who was passing. "It's the friction; but do you know what it makes me think of?"

"What is it, sister Mary?" asked both the boys at once.

"Of two little boys who were quarrelling over a trifle this morning, and the more they talked the hotter their tempers grew, until there was no knowing what might have happened if mother had not thrown cold water on the fire by sending them into separate rooms."

The boys hung their heads, feeling heartily ashamed of the bad tempers they had shown earlier in the day.

"Room upstairs."

A young man thought of studying for the law, but he would first go and ask the advice of Daniel Webster about it.

"They tell me, sir," said the young man, "that the profession is full, and that there are more lawyers now than are needed. Do you think there is any chance for me?"

"There is always room upstairs," was Webster's reply.

Room enough upstairs! That is true; for the first class of workmen is small, and the demand large. First-class farmers, mechanics, physicians, lawyers, ministers, always find a plenty of room, plenty of work, and good pay. Whatever your calling is, if it be an honest one, be determined to go into the upper story of it. Put Christian character into it. Fear God and do your best. Do not try to rise by a leap or a jerk; you will certainly fall that way. Begin at the bottom, and patiently and manfully ascend step by step. You will have earned your place.

Indian Jugglers.

One day at Parell in India his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales had an hour of quiet amusement in camp, watching the tricks of some Indian Jugglers and snake charmers, which have been described a hundred times over, and which never lose their interest for the spectator. After breakfast a ragged frain of fellows leading apes and carrying bags were seen coming up the main street of the camp to one of the tents. These were followed by seven or eight ugly, shapeless, elderly women in bright drapery, carrying what are considered here musical instruments. They all squatted under the shade of the trees in front of one of the tents apart—conjurers, ape leaders, singing women.

The jugglers and snake charmers were the first to show off. They were only two—old, chatty fellows, whose skin hung on their bones as if it were cracked brown paper. They did some clever "passes," swallowed and spat out fire, produced an enchanted inexhaustible water vessel, walked on wooden pattens held on by the action of the feet making a vacuum—in fact the withered, vivacious old juggler and his ragged old confederate performed all the orthodox tricks of their confraternity. Where did he get the cobras which he produced suddenly out of two baskets which had been turned over, inside out, in our presence? It was not the drumming of his friend nor the playing on the dry gourd which drew the reptiles out of cover.

Meanwhile a mango under the dirty cloth was growing, and in an interval of snake work the old fellow dashed at the latter and exposed a fresh bright green mango tree some eighteen inches high in the ground, where he had apparently only put in a mango seed. Expressions of wonder followed; then the cloth was thrown over the tree and another of the famous legendary legerdemain feats was executed. A shallow basket about eighteen inches high and three feet long, with a cover, was placed before the Prince. It was plain there was no deceit. At a call there came out from the group of natives near at hand a lad of twelve or so, slight of figure and pleasant of face, with not an article of dress save his loin cloth and a dirty turban. Him the old man, chattering the while, bound hand and foot a la Brothers Anyone in twine. Then a sack, made of strong netting, was produced and the old fellow slipped it over the lad, whom he squeezed down on his haunches so that he could tie the cords securely over his head and lift him from the ground to prove how secure he was. He seemed to use great force to put the lad into the basket and to have much difficulty in fitting the lid on the top of him. When that was done the music was renewed by one, and the other juggler began to talk to his basket. Presently the lid was agitated, and the cord and net were jerked out and fell on the ground. Then the juggler ran at the basket in fury, jumped on the top, crushed in the lid, stamped on it, took a stick and drove it with force through the wicker work. The basket was empty. Then came a voice as of the lad who had been inside, and lo, there was just such a youth upon one of the trees. The mango tree, when next uncovered, appeared hung with tiny fruit.—Dr. Russell, in London Times.

FOOD FOR TAME-WILD BEASTS.—A new lion and tiger house has been built at the Zoological Gardens, Regent's Park, and this week, the general superintendent, Mr. Bartlett, with the keepers, has been engaged in the exciting occupation of removing the animals to their future home. A writer in Daily News has given an interesting account of the process, but we refer to it more especially for the sake of citing a pleasant fact

suggestive of that "touch of nature" which furnished Shakespeare with one of his best lines. (At the Gardens, it seems, a meal for a leopard consists of seven pounds of goat's flesh or horseflesh, a lion or tiger requiring eleven pounds. Two pounds sterling is the average price for a horse destined as food for the wild beasts; but sometimes animals of considerably more value are, for various reasons sent to the Zoological Gardens. A man may have a horse, which though not past work, is so aged, that he compassionately resolves not to sell it to drag out a miserable existence in a four-wheeled cab, and so sends it to the Zoological Gardens, where he is sure of having it straightway killed. There are other cases in which a horse may have shown itself dangerous or treacherous, and the owner may condemn it to be killed and eaten. In this way Mr. Bartlett has bought for £2 a horse whose market value was a hundred guineas, the sole condition of the sale being that the animal should be instantly killed and its body given to the beasts. And now for the fact to which we have made allusion. One day a cabman brought an old grey horse which he wanted to sell because it was too slow for his work. It was a good horse, sound in wind and limb, and the man might have sold it for a fair price, only, being much attached to it, he could not find in his heart to condemn it to the service of a possibly unsympathetic master. Mr. Bartlett saw that the horse had a good many years work in it yet, and, while agreeing to give £2 for it to kill forthwith, he offered double the price if the owner would agree to sell it for service in the rubbish-cart. On the consideration that he might see the horse whenever he pleased, and convince himself that it was being well-treated, the cabman closed with this offer. For six years the horse worked in the gardens, and, without a single omission through all that period, the cabman and his wife visited the gardens every Sunday, and spent some time in the company of the horse. Last year signs of approaching dissolution becoming unmistakable, the old grey horse was killed, and the cabman and wife, declining the melancholy satisfaction of seeing it eaten by the lions and tigers, beheld it no more.—London paper.

Affecting Incident in a Deaf Mute School.

A beautiful incident is related to us, which occurred only a few days ago in the Home School to teach mutes articulation and lip reading, at Mystic River, Miss P., an interesting graduate of one of the oldest institutions for the education of deaf mutes, having a desire to speak and to read the lips of her speaking friends, was recommended by her old principal to try Mr. Whipple's school and she entered it last term. She made rapid progress, and was much aided by the natural alphabet, the invention of her new teacher. This alphabet curiously suggests sound, as well as form; and whenever a mute pupil can read and write it, he or she can generally give any of the forty sounds of our difficult language with great precision and discrimination, and often with remarkable correctness. This young lady filled with enthusiasm at every step, mastered the alphabet with little difficulty, and one day came to her teacher with something written on her slate, which she asked him to correct, her mind being agitated with emotion. It proved to be the Lord's Prayer put into the language of articulation. Perceiving her agitation, the teacher could scarce restrain his own tears, as he corrected the few unimportant errors of pronunciation, and delicately returned it. The next morning the lady came exultingly to her teacher, exclaiming, "I prayed last night for the first time in my life with my voice," and neither of them could restrain their emotions. He ventured to ask if she had never prayed before. "Oh, yes, I have thought my prayers, but I never spoke them before." "My lips shall praise thee, O God;" "Attend the voice of prayer." "Attend the voice of my supplications, O Lord." The earnestness and satisfaction of the devout mute who had now realized one of the bright dreams of her life admitted of no question and called for no reproof, if she was something of a literalist in her interpretation.—Norwich (Con.) Bulletin.

Young women should set good examples, for the young men are always following them.

Mr. Editor, As last week Somerset, a heavy fire soon, if you I will tell while away gin again.

A BIGOTTE Talking of er in Llanell differences, that he over and a Bapt dist was v Infant Bap Scripture; it could not was the tru several pas the discuss idly did th of it that r rather war that none Heaven." don't mean they do, th wasn't." Have yo

of Long Be nation, di or two. I year and I pel trump his home good to be he once h neighborh discuss. Baptist in Richardso same scho some hea Doctor. time "wh Father Ri me as a I upon you we won't both be l nity." H by the co you know 'em." Bu is Father may it be dying pill come; an the grass foot of m that may sweetest lays from shadow t The ne

A BAPT "Some Baptism Don't yo significant Saviour baptiz not be th either, a And bes that the will and many st to go in would r hard she Well, wo give you

from m little Be S. Wale be nam blunder and the into the chr spring young o ministe ger in t

"We our god term " actly th we und our U. their b pise an the pay those v Baptist C. M.