

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1876.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, Sept. 3rd, 1876.—Intemperance.—Prov. xxiii. 29-35.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 29-32.

GOLDEN TEXT.—'Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.' Ephesians v. 18.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Daniel i. Tuesday, Isaiah v. 11-24. Wednesday, Isaiah xxviii. 1-10. Thursday, Habakkuk ii. 9-16. Friday, Genesis iv. 1-15. Saturday, Jeremiah xxxv. Sunday, I Corinthians viii.

ANALYSIS.—I. Questions and answers. Vs. 29, 30. II. Solemn warning. Vs. 31-34. III. Confession. Vs. 35.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 29.—The vice of intemperance is taken up in vs. 20, and in that and the following verses dwelt upon and condemned. Licentiousness is joined with it as kindred in nature and its usual fit and ruinous attendant. The form of the question in the original is more sententious, and nervously forceful than in the translation. Who hath woe? The root, from which comes the word for woe, means to wail; it denotes an effect of strong drink. Who sorrow? The word translated "sorrow," is from the root meaning to desire or want, and thus means want, poverty; and so the wretchedness consequent on extreme destitution. See in verse 21 this effect of intemperance noted. Who contentions? Contentions, showing themselves not in words only, but quite often in blows, and even in the deadly use of deadly weapons. Who babbling? The word for babbling signifies speaking to one's self through anxious solicitude, and is frequently translated complaint. Who wounds without cause? Another of the effects of the drunken carousal, and whether the wounds come through fight, or fall, or other accident, they are "without cause," other than the crazing drink. Ah, but besides the bruises of body the poor soul is all bruised and battered, and even though healing come the scars stay. Bruised character, bruised and broken reputation, bruised or demolished fortune, bruised family, bruised blasted hopes. Who redness of eyes? The word rendered redness means, first, dark, or black; and Gesenius refers it here to "the dark flashing of the eyes of a person excited with wine." Others render blurred. The position of the question, as the last in the series, would favor the idea of the permanent redness which is the well-known signal of shame which drunkenness cannot but flaunt at the very windows of the soul.

Verse 30.—In this verse is the answer to all the preceding questions. They that tarry long at the wine. This long tarrying characterizes the confirmed drinker, who has as a slave given himself over to wine as his master. Though only "wine" is mentioned, the wine represents all intoxicating drink, all ardent spirits, many of which are so much worse than wine. The principle of this passage respects not merely intoxication, but any and every habit, whether of drinking, eating, or aught else that tends to give the body mastery over the mind, that tends to enslave man to things of sense, and so rob him of that self-mastery and noble freedom which God intends us to acquire and enjoy. They that go to seek mixed wine. It was usual to mix wine with spices, etc., for a better flavor, and doubtless with harmful drugs, to give it more power, and this improvement the toper craves, and will have if he can get it. He goes to seek such wine in preference to the more pure and simple.

Verse 31.—A warning. Look not. A common motto for temperance societies is, "touch not, taste not, handle not" (Col. ii. 21); but this is even stronger and more radical, because before one "touches" he sees, and if he refuse to see, to look upon the glass, he need not be warned against touching, and then tasting, and at the last handling. The eye is wont first to give the temperance entrance to the soul. Shut him out from the eye, and your victory is usually secure. And in this case, as almost always, sin comes clothed in a beauty seductive to the eye. Hence what follows. When it is red. Or, as Stuart translates, "shows itself as ruddy." Giveth his color in the cup. Literally, "gives its eye," having reference to the

beads which form, and in their sparkle and shape resemble the eye. Moreth itself aright. The writer presupposes that the one whom he warns knows the taste of the wine described, and hence feels as he would not otherwise the tempting fascinating power of the sight. But he is in the right when he warns against even the longing look. Here we may extend the looking, as to principle, to all the charms that attend its use in the beginning, the sparkling wit enkindled by it, the genial, jovial companionship, and all that attractiveness of circumstance that heathen and so-called Christian bards have sung. Look not upon any of these seductive aspects of intemperance, these delightful beginnings of it.

Verse 32.—At the last. In verse 31 the first, in this the last; there the start, here the stop; that the promise, this the fulfillment. It biteth like a serpent. Painters and orators have been wont to represent Satan as hideous in aspect and terrible in appearance. Most falsely to nature. He comes in the most pleasing and winsome of forms, full of graceful goodness and beneficent promise. He knows how to reserve his bite till the opportune time, but he knows not how to omit the bite and sting. To people dwelling in a country infested with venomous serpents no description would be more terrible. The beginning, the end! What a fearful contrast! How wide apart they seem! How impossible ever to traverse the distance! But, ah, how near together that beginning and that end! How quickly, alas, and how often traversed!

Verse 33.—The description of "the end," so far as this world discloses it. Strange women. Tayler Lewis translates, "Strange things," as the Hebrew word admits, and the context favors. Thus the clause describes that thronging trooping reveling of all dire and strange infernal images that come to him who is in the delirium tremens. Utter perverse things. These terrible fancies and visions of the ruined brain set in motion the organs of speech, and the result is a bedlam jumble of monstrous perversities, a chaos of mad sentences.

Verse 34.—Lieth down, etc. The mariner in his boat out at sea, using neither oar, nor rudder, nor sail, but helpless, stretched out flat on his boat's bottom, and so the certain victim of the mighty deep when storms lash into fury; certain victim, helplessly swallowed up and lost forever, not even a friend to speak a last word of love, and smile a last smile of cheer; not even a grave to be marked by the kindly monument and visited by surviving friends. Upon the top of the mast. Climax; marking the utmost recklessness; the extreme certainty, suddenness, and conspicuousness of causeless yet helpless destruction. What a representation of the drunkard's end.

QUESTIONS.—Vs. 29. What picture have we in this verse? Does the picture of intemperance look any better now-a-days than it did in Solomon's time?

Vs. 31. Is it really an act of civility or incivility to offer another, in high or low life, a glass of wine? What is it but putting temptation in another's way? Ought we to live by fashion or by principle? What principle will surely save us from the perils of intemperance? What total abstinence family do we read about in the Bible? Jer. xxxv. 6, etc. What boy? Daniel i. 8.

Vs. 32. Is it because men are ignorant of the end of intemperance that they persist in drinking? How do you think intemperance is to be stayed in our land if men do not teach and practice total abstinence? Have Christians themselves anything more to do for the temperance cause than they have done? Ought liquor-dealers to be members of a church? What do you think of rum-sellers?

—Baptist Teacher.

Sunday, Sept. 10th, 1876.—The Excellent Woman.—Pro. xxxi. 10-31.

God is a kind father, He sets us all in the places where he wishes us to be employed; and that employment is truly "our Father's business." He chooses work for every creature, which will be delightful to them if they do it simply and humbly. He gives us always strength enough and sense enough for what He wants us to do; if we either tire ourselves or puzzle ourselves, it is our own fault. And we may always be sure, whatever we are doing, that we cannot be pleasing Him if we are not happy ourselves.—Ruskin.

YOUTHS' DEPARTMENT.

A Message on Temperance.

THE SUNDAY-SCHOOLS OF AMERICA.

By JOHN B. GOUGH.

My dear young Friends: I have been requested to send a message to the Sabbath-schools in behalf of the total abstinence cause. I wish I could write to you all that is in my heart on this great question, but my time and ability are limited and my message must be short. We are sometimes told that total abstinence is not temperance. What is temperance? Let me give you a short reply. Temperance is the lawful gratification of a natural appetite. Is the appetite for intoxicating liquors a natural appetite? No. Therefore temperance is total abstinence from intoxicating liquors as a beverage.

This principle is a sensible principle. When you are as old as I am, you will regret many things you have learned in the past; but you will never regret that you did not learn to use intoxicating liquor. I have never met a person, nor do I believe that you can find the person in the world, who would say, "I am fifty years of age, and I never drank a glass of liquor in my life, and I regret that I did not learn to drink it when I was young." No. When you meet one who has never drunk, he tells you, "I am glad of it," or, "I am proud of it." A man once called on me, and said, "Mr. Gough, I want to tell you something. I am not a reformer. I care little for reforms, or missions, or Sunday-schools. They are all very well in their way, but they are not in my line. I have been an actor since I was eighteen, and I am now forty-three, and I never drank a glass of ale, wine, or spirits in my life. What do you think of that? I am proud of it." He had little care for reform, but he never drank liquor in his life, and was proud of it.

Dear children, you would be shocked if you could read some of the letters that lie in my desk, that have been written to me by persons of all grades in society—young men, old men, lawyers, physicians, ministers of the gospel, teachers, mechanics, clerks, and some ladies—who have acquired the appetite for strong drink. One says, "Dives in hell never longed for a drop of water, as with all the power there is in me I long for drink." Another says, "God knows how near I have been to self-destruction through drink" and so on.

One poor man, actually holding my feet, cried out, "O Mr. Gough! help me out of this hell. Drink is my curse." Yes, dear children, the cry comes from the inmates of lunatic asylums, "Drink is my curse;" from innocent victims—wives, mothers, children, "Drink is my curse;" from the burning lips of the dying drunkard comes the despairing cry, "Drink is my curse." There are broken hearts, blighted hopes, blackened characters, crushed intellects, and lost souls as the results of strong drink, and not a single individual but rejoices in his escape from it.

Is not the total abstinence principle sensible? But all who drink do not become drunkards. I know that; but if fifty young men begin to drink, some will assuredly be ruined by it. Then, there is a risk. Now we all desire safety and security. Suppose you desired to travel from New York to Chicago, and there were two lines of road—one on which there were accidents constantly occurring; on every train some disaster, passengers killed and wounded; in short a very risky road;—and on the other, never since its opening had there been the slightest accident. Which road would you take? If you are sensible, and regard your own welfare, you would take the safe one. Suppose some one should tempt you to take the risky road, by telling you how much more beautiful the cars were, and what a jolly company you would find on board the train. You would say, "I care not so much for gaudy cars and jolly company as for my safety. I want to be safe." Now, it is your safety we seek, when we urge you to abstain entirely from strong drink. There is no certainty that you will become victims if you begin to indulge, but there is a risk.

Some say, "I can govern myself, I have a mind of my own." What would you think of a captain of a steam vessel who would put on a full head of steam, and then knocked down the man at

the wheel? Or, of the conductor on a railroad, would let on the steam and then disable the engineer? You would say he was a reckless man. The steamer or the engine might get through without accident, but it might go crashing to destruction. So when a person, using that which weakens the power of his will depends on his weakened will to serve him,—using that which warps his judgement, and then depends on warped judgement to guide him,—using that which affects his self-control, and then trusts his deranged self-control, to keep him from danger—he is reckless. Simply because some men drink and do not become drunkards, can you? I once saw a man stand on a small platform outside the spire of a church, and look down on the pavement 150 feet below. Because he did it, can you? Think of these things before you run the risk, and remember what the risk is.

Our principle is lawful. We have been told it is contrary to the Scriptures. One gentleman said to me, "If you can find a command in the Bible, Thou shalt abstain from intoxicating liquors as a beverage, I will abstain; but not till then." Dear children, we want you to love the Bible, to obey the precepts of the Bible; but in view of the evils of intemperance, and in view of its cause, we ask of the Bible only a permission to let liquor alone. We lay our hand on this blessed book and ask, May we abstain? You do not search the Bible for a command, Thou shalt abstain from gambling; from dog fighting; from horse racing. Just in proportion to your love for the Bible will you abstain from these things, because they are detrimental to the best interests of society according to Bible principles. Therefore, since intemperance is caused by the use of strong drink; since in proportion to the use of such drink drunkenness increases or diminishes; and since the most that can be said for this drink is it is a needless luxury, and that the world would be the better and purer without it—therefore, you say, I will abstain, and give the weight of my influence, as long as I live, on the side of abstinence, sobriety, and purity. This is in accordance with the teachings of the Bible.

How many of us, who are growing old, wish we could be boys again! Why? Because we see so many things to regret, so many wrong turns we have taken. To be a boy, with life before you, with the clean page on which to write your record, with opportunities coming that you can improve—what a position, what a privilege! To be an old man with a record all strayed and blotted, knowing that no mortal hand can clean the page; with opportunities unimproved, and lost never to return—this is dreadful!

A wicked man who had been a stage driver, was, during the last few days of his life, very uneasy, and on his death-bed he constantly moved his feet, and looked distressed. When asked by his wife, "Harry, what is the matter?" he said, "Oh! I am on an awful down grade, and I can't find the brake." Dear young friends, your feet are on the brake. Keep them there. You have, under God, the future in your power; your destiny in your own control. Remember there is no one evil in the world before which so many fall as the evil of intemperance.

I most earnestly desire that the youth of our country, especially our Sabbath-School scholars, shall give all their influence against this great evil. May God help you to avoid the perils in life's journey, and the traps that are set for your feet, so that from your place of safety you may reach out your hand to help the tempted who are struggling in their chains, and may by self-denial be enabled to "fulfil the law of Christ," by helping some poor, burdened souls into the higher life of purity and freedom!

MARRIAGE LAW.—Mr. T. Paynter Allen, secretary to the Marriage Law Reform Association, writes to the Times, stating that the present Government, following the example of Mr. Gladstone's Government, have just given their assent to a Bill to legalize marriage with a deceased wife's sister in the colony of New South Wales. The Royal assent had been already given to similar Bills for South Australia, Victoria, and Tasmania, and Mr. Allen considers that, "as a matter of course, a Bill for the same purpose which has just arrived from Queensland will shortly become law."

An author says that one of the uses of adversity is to bring us out. This is true, particularly at the knees and elbows.

How to lose One's Soul.

1. Be wise in your own conceit.
2. Be conscientiously what the best Christians condemn.
3. Do not study the Bible. A brief Sunday reading will do.
4. Keep ignorant of the Holy Spirit, except by hearsay.
5. Never pray audibly in the presence of others.
6. Have no special time or place for secret prayer.
7. Do not agonise for the conversion of sinners.
8. Never speak of religion except to argue or criticize.
9. Seldom assist in the prayer-meeting.
10. Choose sinners for associates.
11. Neglect church membership.
12. Have a broad liberality towards all forms of error.
13. Let your daily life be frivolous, worldly and selfish.
14. Find fault with Christians, especially earnest ones.
15. Cultivate self-content, obstinacy and unbelief.

The Safe Side.

An excellent lady, for many years a member of a society near the city of Pittsburgh, related to me the following incident: "Her father was a captain and owner of a passenger ship from Baltimore to ports in Europe, at the time of the trouble in France. On his return to this country he took on board Thomas Paine, the great infidel, escaping to the United States for his life. The old captain was also an infidel. On board this vessel was the captain's daughter. She had been converted at a Methodist revival in the city of Baltimore, and, as her father said, to save her from utter melancholy, he took her to France, and on the return he requested Paine to enter into a controversy with his daughter, and as he was a subtle reasoner, he could easily drive the young lady from her moorings. He approached her blandly, and said: 'I learn, young lady, you are a professor of the religion of Jesus.' She said, 'I am, sir; and just then she felt the power of the Divine Spirit in her heart. He said, 'Allow me to ask you a question?' 'Certainly, Mr. Paine.' He then proceeded to say, 'You Christians are looking for a day of judgment?' 'Yes, sir.' 'Now, young lady, suppose the long-looked-for day does not come? Where are all your false alarms and fear of a great day, and the future of which you dream and dread so much?' 'True, Mr. Paine. Let me answer your question by asking another.' 'Proceed, lady.' 'If, sir, the Bible is true, and if there will come a judgment day and a great future, what then, Mr. Paine?' 'Young lady, it is a noble answer, and true. If I am wrong, I lose all; if you are wrong, you have nothing more than I to lose. Lady, stick to your profession. I have not another word to say. I am taken in my own net.'—Christian Press.

THE THUNDERER.—The last of the newly completed ironclads has met with a terrible accident by which thirty-seven persons, including the chief engineer, have lost their lives. The Thunderer was a turret ship, said to be equal to half a squadron of ordinary ironclads, which had been recently launched and somewhat rapidly prepared for sea. On Friday last the speed of the vessel was being tested over the measured mile in Stokes Bay. She had been under weigh for about eight minutes when an explosion in the engine-room took place, which was felt in the town three miles distant. The whole of the front of the foremost starboard boiler was blown out. An inquest is now being held to ascertain the cause of the accident. Three telegrams have been sent by her Majesty expressive of her deep sympathy and regret. A subscription has been opened for the wives and orphans of the victims, headed by a donation of £100 from the Queen. Of course it is much too early to speculate upon the cause of the calamity, and Mr. Ward Hunt refuses to give any information but, as a contemporary observes, the boiler could have been exposed to no great strain in the short time during which the vessel was in motion. The real efficiency of our ironclad navy and its ability to rough it in actual warfare are still somewhat problematical, and if the coroner's inquest should disclose the possibility of her Majesty's ships going to sea with crazy boilers which fly to pieces under a slight pressure of steam, Britannia's rule over the waves is alarmingly frail.—Freeman, July 21st.

Is it by reasoning that the frightened child, bewildered in the dark, knows its mother's voice? No! Nor is it only by reasoning that the forlorn and distressed human heart knows the voice of its Saviour, and is still.