

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1876.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, March 13th, 1876.—Absalom's Death.—2 Samuel xviii. 24-33. B. C. 1023.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: vs. 32, 33.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"He that pursueth evil, pursueth it to his own death." Prov. xi. 19.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, 2 Samuel xv. 14-37. Tuesday, 2 Samuel xvi. Wednesday, 2 Samuel xvii. Thursday, 2 Samuel xviii. Friday, Psalm li. Saturday, Ezekiel xxxiii. 1-16. Sunday, Psalm iii.; Matt. xxiii. 37, 38.

ANALYSIS.—I. The watchman over the gate. Vs. 24-27. II. Report of Ahimaaz. Vs. 28-30. III. Report of Cushie. Vs. 31, 32. IV. Anguish of David. Vs. 33.

CONNECTION WITH LAST LESSON.—On the day of David's flight from Jerusalem he crossed the territory of Benjamin about noon, and rested at the fords of the Jordan at night. About midnight he was aroused by Ahimaaz and Jonathan, who had narrowly escaped with their lives, bringing a warning to cross the river that same night. On receiving which, he crossed the Jordan before morning, and took up his abode at Mahanaim, the capital of his rival, Ishbosheth, while he reigned in Hebron. On this morning the third Psalm was probably composed: "I laid me down and slept. I awaked; for the Lord sustained me." Hushai, in the meantime, had sent the warning which led to David's crossing the Jordan. Absalom assumed royal state at once, and was anointed solemnly as king. With Amasa as captain of the host, in place of Joab, he crossed the Jordan in pursuit of David, and pitched his camp in Mount Gilead. David was prepared to receive him with his usual military skill. He was confident in his veterans, and still more in the help of God, yet greatly solicitous for the safety of his rebellious son. "Deal gently with the young man Absalom for my sake," was his charge to his captains as they went out to the battle. The armies met in the forests of Mount Gilead. 20,000 of the untrained hosts of Absalom were slain, and he himself, in the scattered flight, riding as became a king on a mule, was carried beneath a spreading terebinth, whose low branches caught him and held him hanging by the head, though Josephus says by his hair. Here he was slain. Upon receiving tidings of which the poor exiled king breaks out in a strain of agonizing fatherly affection. So ends the life of Absalom, the abhorrence of whose memory finds expression in the use that is made of the pillar, or monument, erected by himself in the valley of Jehosaphat, "to keep his name in remembrance." 2 Samuel xviii. 18. "It is not uncommon," says Dr. Hackett, "to see Mohammedans, and especially Jews, stop as they pass here, pick up a stone and throw it at the tomb, often dismounting from their horses to pelt the abhorred sepulchre."

EXPOSITION.—Verse 24.—David remained in the city Mahanaim (xvii. 27) at the urgent request of his army, against his own inclination. (Vs. 2, 3.) For such an old hero, it was no small self-denial thus to stay behind. Sat between the two gates. The cities were universally walled in with strong walls for protection. In these thick, strong walls at the entrance were two strong gates, an outer, and an inner, leaving between them a space or room. In this sat David, awaiting news of the battle. This gateway was arched over, with possibly a tower of observation surmounting it, on whose roof the watchman posted himself, looking the way of the battle in order to give first tidings whether of the retreat of their own men, of the coming of the foe, or as here, of the hurrying of messengers. There were no telegraphs and no steam cars then. There seem not to have been with the army even horses for the messengers. A man running alone. Seen in the far distance as a speck.

Verse 25.—Cried [shouted] and told the king. With eager excitement. It was a crisis of awful import to both David and the kingdom. The king was, of course, below the watchman. If he be alone, there is tidings in his mouth, or joyful tidings—good news. Came apace, swiftly. He had a motive. He was the king's friend and wished to

break the news to him kindly, (vs. 21, 22), not at once telling of Absalom's death, as he knew Cushie, or the Cushite, the Egyptian, must do according to Joab's orders. This explains the eagerness of Ahimaaz, as shown in vs. 19-22. He did not take the same road with the Cushite, and hence got by him unperceived (vs. 23); otherwise the Cushite might have added to his speed and come in first.

Verse 26.—Another man. Considerably behind, after the first came near; as neither personal devotion, nor a feeling of rivalry had added wings to his speed. Called unto the porter. The porter and king were together, or near each other, so that his call would be to either, or rather to both. He also bringeth tidings. Good news, as above.

Verse 27.—Methinks the running, etc. In Hezekiah's reign (2 Chronicles xxx. 6-10), we find an establishment of running post-men, and the same name (runners) is given in Esther iii. 13-15; viii. 14, though at that time they rode on mules and camels." Somewhat similarly we speak of the post-office, though the mails are carried by steam cars. The importance of the telegraph to us may show the importance of fleet messengers. He is a good man. The key to the desire of Ahimaaz to bring tidings, and to his kind concealment of the news of Absalom's death in vs. 29.

Verse 28.—Called.—Shouted, doubtless, as soon as he could make his voice heard. All is well. Literally, peace, one word—the usual word of salutation or benediction—a most pleasant word, especially at this time. Fell down upon his face before the king. The usual way in the East of expressing the highest respect or reverence. Here it was in joyful, loyal hailing of David as again king. This mixture of the patriot, the saint and the runner, is particularly pleasant, as for such a character it is very natural and life-like. Lifted up their hand against. A picturesque, vivid, natural expression for rebellion, as the hand is the instrument for execution, and lifting it up in order to do; and in rebellion the doing is against the king, as the head of the government.

Verse 29.—Is the young man Absalom safe?—See vs. 5. A rare spectacle to see a king so tenderly anxious for the safety of the arch-traitor that has driven him from his throne, and is striking at both his power and his life. But David was a father, and Absalom was a son of his advanced age, and was to him still the young man. When Joab, etc. This answer was more kind than true; for Ahimaaz did know the facts as they were. Of such cases of benevolent lying we have in Scripture several. Persons are sometimes justified for the deed in which such deception has been practiced. But it is one thing to approve an act as a whole, and another to approve every element of that act. Sin mixes with our best deeds, and sin has place in the best men. A general approval is not an approval of every particular.

Verse 31.—Cushie.—The Cushite. See above in vs. 24. Tidings. "Good tidings," as before. For the Lord, etc. He recognizes the victory as of God.

Verse 32.—Is the young man Absalom safe? The uppermost thought. The Cushie, or the Cushite, answers the question as one who feels no special anxiety for the father's feelings.

Verse 33.—Much moved. Showing it by external signs. A sudden change at the report. He at once left his place and went up to the chamber over the gate. Retreating to a place of seclusion as genuine grief always seeks to do, and wept. No mock weeping was this, but the tears of a great, loving, heroic, forgiving soul. As he went, etc. In the hearing of the by-standers. O my son Absalom, etc. Justly admired as the most beautiful, tender, and pathetic lament that was ever penned or spoken by mere mortal. Mark the repetitions of the word son, expressing the relation in which alone David's heart would think of him, or his memory recall him. Death blots out the evil in our friends, and leaves them to us purer. A most kind provision, and one which accounts for much injudicious praise of the departed. Would God I had died for thee. This was no extravagance, but the most honest sincerity. For Absalom he could not die. David, with all his sins, was still God's servant and friend, and so must stand where God had placed him. Absalom was the enemy of both David

and God, and so must fall by the sword he had taken. Behold the severity of God on both David and Absalom: on David chastisement, on Absalom retribution.

QUESTIONS.—What was the extent of David's flight? How long was he in this place an exile? Ans. Three months. On the day of David's flight where did Absalom go? What counsel did he reject? Whose counsel did he accept? Which would have been better for Absalom to have heeded? Whom did he take with him as the captain of his host when he pursued after David? What river did he have to cross? Was David ready then for battle? What was the result of it. Does the Bible say Absalom was caught by his hair? May he not have been?

Vs. 24. What did this messenger's "running alone" indicate? Who was he?

Vs. 26. Who was this other man?

Vs. 29. Is there any excuse for this deception by Ahimaaz?

Vs. 33. How many times does David repeat the words "my son"? What does it plainly prove? How often should we forgive our enemies? What was the prayer of Jesus just as he was nailed to the cross? Is not God better than a David to Absalom to every sinner? Ezek. xxxiii. 11; 1 John i. 9.

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, March 26th, 1876.—REVIEW.

YOUTHS' DEPARTMENT.

For the Christian Messenger.

Settings for Boys and Girls about Hudsons and Missionaries.

It is said, "There is nothing like variety." Believing the truth of the maxim, "you may have too much of a good thing;" I resolved instead of continuing my jottings about Carey and his work in India, to write something about another missionary who worked so successfully among the North American Indians. And then, in another paper, to refer to our former hero, and the glorious work he accomplished in translating God's Word, and in planting the standard of Jesus on 'India's coral strand,' where, even yet, thousands, yea millions of poor heathens in their blindness, bow down to wood and stone.

John Eliot was one of the earliest missionaries to proclaim glad tidings to the Indians. Men, who although poor, ignorant and superstitious, appear to have learned some of their worst faults from the pale-faces who first visited their Western home. And it was the avarice and treachery, so often practiced, that brought out in many instances the bitter vengeance and hatred of the Indians' heart. There was a time when the wild, free man of the prairie and forest knew not the destructive fascination of fire-water, the maddening influence of strong drink. Doubtless they had their wild war-dances and terrifying war-whoop, which too often meant fire and destruction to both the wigwam and brave of some other tribe. We have all read of such wild scenes, and many thought, in times past, to pour among them the deadly slug and shot, was lawful and expedient, as a quick process of subduing and bringing their prairies and forests under the cultivation of modern civilization, and ridding the continent of an inferior race. Such is the judgment and policy of worldly men.

How great the contrast is the spirit and action of the missionary of whom I now write. Alone, unarmed, on foot, with an open Bible, he approached the Indian settlement. The natives, attracted by his strange appearance, gathered round him. Amid the solemn-silence, Eliot knelt upon the grass and poured out earnest supplication that God by his Spirit and Word would give light. He had, by years of patient study, mastered their language, and with a burning eloquence he spoke to the perishing ones around him. The result of that appeal was never forgotten by Waubon, their chief, whilst others seemed to drink in the word of life.

"On the night after the third meeting many were gathered in the tent, and had been listening earnestly to Eliot, when Waubon arose, and began to instruct all the company out of the things he had heard, with the wild and impressive eloquence of a son of the desert. Soon after, other chiefs came for teaching, and begged that their children might be educated in the Christian faith. The example spread, and the missionary was surprised at the success which had already attended his labours. He had found a people prepared for the Lord. Wrapped in a robe of marten-skins, a chief stood up and said.

"My heart laughs for joy on seeing myself before thee; we have all of us heard the word which thou hast sent us. How beautiful is the sun to-day! but lately it was red and angry, for our hands were stained with blood; our tomahawks thirsted for it; our women howled for the loss of their relations; at the least shriek of the birds at night, all our warriors were on foot, the serpents angrily hissed at us as we passed; those we left behind sang the songs of death. But now, our whole nation laughs for joy to see us walk on the same road with thyself to join the Father of Spirits. Our hearts shall make but one; come with us to the forests; come to our homes by the great river; there we shall plant the tree of life of which thou speakest, and our warriors shall rest beneath its leaves; and thou shalt tell us more of that land where there is no storm or death, and where the sun is always bright. Will not that be good? What dost thou say to it my father?"

To this invitation Eliot at once responded, and travelled with them, and formed a town called Nonantum. Here the Word of God prevailed, and the work grew mightily. Small towns and plantations arose in the wild prairies a testimony to the enlightening and civilizing influences of Christianity. Among the luxuriance of American scenery would be found the Indian wigwams, planted on the hill-side; in the valley below, the waving corn, and groaning orchards. Overlooking the plain you would find the schoolhouse and depot; in the outer-chamber the Indians hung their skins and other articles of value; and adjoining was the missionaries' little chamber, which was furnished like the prophet's chamber. Get your Bibles and turn to 2 Kings iv. 10, and you will have a list of Eliot's furniture.

"The necessaries of life were procured with little trouble. There was abundance of fish in the river, and cattle on the prairie grounds. Wolves and bears still dwelt in the woods and thickets at no great distance, and their howlings at night were distinctly heard; but Eliot would often go round in the darkness to see if all was peace in the dwellings, and every one at home.

In the savannahs and wilds of an immense district in which various tribes of Indians lived, he formed Christian congregations, amongst whom were members whose profession of faith in Christ had become powerfully influential. Savage wars would occasionally break out amongst the unconverted, but the praying Indians kept aloof from them as far as possible.

Till ninety years of age he continued this blessed work. As death approached, he felt it was like sleep to a weary man. "The evening clouds are passing away," he said, "the Lord Jesus, whom I have served, like Polycarp, for eighty years, forsakes me not. Oh, come in glory! I have long waited for that coming; let no dark cloud rest upon the work of the Indians, let it live when I am dead."

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." Dear children, let us "Work for the night is coming, When man works no more."

J. F. AVERY.

Halifax.

Absent minded People.

Sir Isaac Newton wanted his servant to carry out a stove that was getting too hot.

A fellow stole Sir Isaac's dinner before his eyes, and he afterwards thought he had eaten it because he saw the dishes empty.

A Scotch professor walked into the middle of a horse pond while pondering on Final Causes.

A gentleman in Troy received a letter in the dark, and used it to light a lamp; and looked about for it to read.

Pere Graty, one day in Paris, thinking he had left his watch at home, took it out of his pocket to see if he had time to go back after it.

Leander, the church historian, used to go to his lectures in his night cap and night gown.

But all these cases do not equal that of a man who takes a paper year after year, and forgets to pay for it.

ETTA'S MANOEUVRE.—A friend of the writer, residing in a farm in Illinois, has a four-year-old daughter named Etta, who frequently amuses herself by placing the chairs in a row and calling them a train of cars. One evening, while thus engaged, Mr. B—, a friend of the family, called, and unthinkingly occupied one of the "cars." Miss Etta, not wishing to have her play disturbed, stepped up and said, "Mister, dis is a train of tars."

"Oh!" said Mr. B—; "then I'll be a passenger, and take a ride."

Little Etta was not all satisfied. After hesitating a moment, she said, "Where do 'ou want to dit off?"

Mr. B—replied, "I'll get off at Bloomington."

"Well," said Etta, demurely, "dis is de place."—EDITOR'S DRAWER, in Harper's Magazine for February.

REV. DR. RITCHIE of Edinburgh, though a very clever man, has met with his match. When examining a student as to the classes he had attended, he said, "And you attended the class for mathematics?" "Yes." "How many sides has a circle?" "Two," said the student. "What are they?" What a laugh in the class the student's answer produced, when he said, "An inside and an outside." But this was nothing compared with what followed. The doctor having said to this student, "And you attended the moral philosophy class also?" "Yes." "Well, would you would hear lectures on various subjects. Did you ever hear one on cause and effect?" "Yes." "Does any effect ever go before a cause?" "Yes." "Give me an instance." "A man wheeling a barrow." The doctor then sat down, and proposed no more questions.

TEMPERANCE.

A Few Questions

WHICH MAY BE PUT BY RATE-PAYERS TO APPLICANTS FOR LICENCE TO SELL LIQUORS, WHEN ASKED TO SIGN THE APPLICATIONS.

Prepared by the City of Halifax Temperance League.

- 1. Is the article for which you wish a license, a cheap and nutritious article of food, such as the bulk of the community need to use?
2. Is it your endeavor to provide for our young men a perfectly harmless beverage, the use of which will be favorable to thrifty habits, industry, improvement of time and fidelity to their employers?
3. Will your establishment be a quite desirable place for young and old to frequent? A place not likely to be the resort for idlers and toppers?
4. Will your business lessen the need for a large police force, and thus reduce our taxes or will it increase the need? Will it tend to promote peace and good order in the city, or the opposite; to reduce the number of drunks and other unfortunates who figure in our police reports or add to them; to provide inmates for the city prison or diminish them?
5. Will your business enhance the value of property in the neighborhood where it is carried on, and will it benefit your customers as well as yourself?
6. Presuming that you intend (within legal restrictions) using your best efforts to sell as much liquor as possible, does not the use of strong drink create a love for it, and is not the love for that which intoxicates a terrible evil?
7. Has the number of liquor shops in our city an influence in causing the large amount of poverty which exists?
8. Can you remember any instances where frequenters of bar-rooms became wrecks in character and circumstances, or died in the prime of life?
9. Have you ever heard of crime being committed through the influence of strong drink? If so, were not those who sold the drink morally responsible for the crime? And do not those who sign petitions for the sale make themselves accountable for the sale?
10. The annual expense of the Poor's Asylum are about \$22,000
Of the City Prison about 6,000
Of the County Jail about 2,000
In the short term of seven years these would foot up \$210,000, or more than one fourth of the revenue of our Province. Various competent authorities estimate the proportion of the cost of such institutions caused by the liquor traffic at from three fourths to nine-tenths of the whole. What is your estimate?
11. Would the community lose or gain were the liquor business entirely abandoned?
If such questions as the foregoing cannot be answered satisfactorily, the failure in doing so will furnish ample grounds for declining to sign applications for licence.
Halifax, March 7, 1876.

I am no herald to inquire of men's pedigrees; it is sufficient for me to know their virtues. DILIGENCE is the mother of good luck.