

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1877.

SUNDAY, December 16th, 1877.—Paul at Rome.—Acts xxviii. 16-31.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vss. 28-31.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."—Romans i. 15, 16.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Acts xxviii. 11-31. Tuesday, Romans ix. Wednesday, Romans x. Thursday, Romans xi. Friday, Ephesians i. Saturday, Col. i. Sunday, Philemon i.

ANALYSIS.—I. Paul with the captain of the guard. Vs. 16. II. Addresses the chief Jews of Rome. Vss. 17-24. III. Prophecy fulfilled. Vss. 25-28. IV. Departure of the Jews. Vs. 26. V. Paul's subsequent life. Vs. 30, 31.

QUESTIONS.—How long was Paul detained at Melita? To what city did he then sail? To what next? How far is Appii Forum from Rome? Who met him here? How was Paul affected by the meeting?

Vs. 16, To whom does Julius, the centurion surrender Paul? How was Paul kept by a soldier?

Vs. 17. Whom does Paul at once seek out? What was Paul's heart's desire? Rom. x. 1. What does Paul say to the Jews?

Vs. 21. What do the Jews say to Paul?

Vs. 24. What prophecy did the Jews unbelief fulfil?

Vs. 28. What has been the great sin of the Jewish race?

Vs. 30. How long was Paul now a prisoner of Rome? Who were his companions? How was he employed during these two years? What royal converts did he have? Phil. iv. 22. Trace the journey of Paul from Caesarea to Rome?

JOURNEY TO ROME.—After a detention of three months at Melita, Julius placed his prisoners on board another Alexandrian ship—the "Castor and Pollux"—which had wintered at the island. About the beginning of February, A. D. 61 or 62, they sailed first to Syracuse, the capital of Sicily, distant about eighty miles, where they remained three days; and thence they beat up to Rhegium, on the Italian side of the Straits of Messina. After a day's waiting for the weather, a fair south wind sprung up, and carried them on the following day about one hundred and eighty miles to their destination at Puteoli, north of the Bay of Naples, one of the chief ports of the corn-trade, and therefore for the landing of passengers. As might be expected, at a port in such constant communication with the East, they found here Christian brethren, at whose desire Paul spent a week with them, the centurion being evidently eager to show him unbounded courtesy. And from thence, when the brethren in Rome heard of Paul at Puteoli, they came to meet him at Appii Forum, forty-three miles from Rome, and also at Three Taverns, thirty-three miles from Rome. He went up from Puteoli on the celebrated Appian Way, the usual route trodden by so many travelers. How many of these travelers must have looked down on the apostle and his escort with the same feelings with which we regard the weary and dismal march of a chained gang of convicts, little dreaming that he came a truer conqueror than any general who had led his legions along that road to enter Rome in triumph!

EXPOSITION.—Verse 16.—To the captain of the guard. The camp for the main body of his force, reckoned at 15,000, was on the northern boundary of the city. The commander-in-chief of these forces is here meant by "the captain of the guard" or "pretorian prefect." This officer "was the most important subject of the emperor. Burrus," one of the best of Nero's advisers, "held the office at the time of Paul's arrival." Paul was suffered to dwell by himself, with a soldier that kept him. Special privilege, given perhaps from the earnest intercession of Julius, the centurion, who had brought him to Rome. There was always a soldier to whose arm Paul's arm was bound (vs. 20; Phil. i. 14); but, of course, not always the same. A succession would do duty, and thus, by their reports, help to make Paul known in camp, according to Phil. i. 12, 13.

Verses 17-20.—Three days. On the third, called the chief of the Jews together. Not the Christians, but the unbelieving Jews (vs. 22), including, doubt

less, the officers of the synagogues. The purpose was to explain his true position, and so conciliate, in order to gain a hearing for the gospel. "Spake against," a mild representation of the facts. See xxv. 24. Not that I had ought to accuse my nation of. (vs. 19.) The Jews had only recently returned from banishment (xviii. 2), and would hence be very sensitive as to their standing with the Roman government; while the special favor shown to Paul indicated that he might have influence against them, if he chose to use it.

Verses 21, 22.—Their reply is marked with kindness. Paul started for Rome soon after his appeal, and might well have reached the city before either letters or an official accuser from the Jews. The sense of the last part of the verse is Neither did any one of the brethren come and report or speak any harm of thee concerning this sect. That is, the Christians. In xxiv. 14, the word here translated "sect" is translated "heresy." There was a considerable church at Rome, but the Jews cautiously mention only a general report ("everywhere"), as made by others to them, and so are as careful to avoid stirring up Christian hostility to themselves, as was Paul to avert theirs. They asked just what Paul wanted to give—a statement of the gospel.

Verses 23-25.—They named the day. His "lodging" is the place where he was now guest (so the Greek indicates) not his "hired house." Vs. 30. From morning till evening. Showing that his discourses and discussions sometimes had a fullness that is not even suggested by the reports of them in the Acts. Verses 24 and 25 show the results which usually attended his preaching to the Jews, as it usually attends the proclamation of the gospel in all communities. But here note the entire absence of any outcry and open opposition. They dare not thus move in Rome, as matters now stood.

Verses 25-28.—Paul's "one word" was spoken when he saw the division and its cause, as they were about to leave. This quotation is from Isa. vi. 9, and is also in Matt. xiii. 14, 15; John xii. 40. It was a fearful, but true description of the unbelieving Jewish leaders, and of the nation as by them represented. The final words (vs. 28), are those which we have found him using so often—blessed words to us who are Gentiles, though it is sad enough that such sin off the Jews should have first occasioned them.

Verse 29.—The best authorities decide against the genuineness of this verse, and therefore omit it. Its substance is given in vs. 25.

Verses 30, 31.—His own hired house. Dr. Hackett quotes Josephus's account of the imprisonment of Agrippa the First at Rome, in which it appears that, after a short period of severity, he was treated in much the same way with Paul. During this time Paul had opportunities to labor with the brethren at Rome, and for those of his former fields "The care of all the churches was on him." His communications with them, by letters and messengers, were kept up. He now wrote the Letters to the Ephesians, Philemon, the Colossians, and the Philippians. They were years of rest from conflict, though of humiliation as a prisoner. For the humiliation he little cared, since it was for the furtherance of the gospel. Phil. i. 12-20.

THE JEWS AT ROME.—The Jewish community in Rome had its first beginnings in the captives brought by Pompey after his eastern campaign. Many of them were manumitted, and thus a great proportion of the Jews in Rome were freedmen. Frequent accessions to their numbers were made as years went on, chiefly from mercantile relations which existed between Rome and the East. Many of them were wealthy, and large sums were sent annually from Italy to the northern country for religious purposes. Even the proselytes contributed to these sacred funds. In the early years of Nero, which were distinguished for a mild and lenient government of the empire, the Jews in Rome seem to have enjoyed complete toleration, and to have been a numerous, wealthy, and influential community.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher. SUNDAY, December 23rd, 1877.—Paul's last words.—2 Tim. iv. 1-8.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."—2 Tim. iv. 7.

The Story of the Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

At last they were in Rome, and Julius, the centurion, must now deliver his charge into the keeping of the emperor Nero's chief captain. Paul was allowed to live by himself; only he was always chained by the arm to a soldier. He had only been in Rome three days, when he sent for the principal men among the Jews, to tell them why he had been sent a prisoner from Jerusalem, and was waiting a trial before the emperor. They told Paul that they had not received any letters from Judea against him, nor had any Jews who had come to Rome spoken any harm of him. They would like to hear what it was he taught, for all they knew was that these Christians were everywhere spoken against; and a day was set for a meeting, to be held at his lodgings. Many came, and Paul spoke all day long—proving to them, out of their own Scriptures, that Jesus was their long-promised Saviour. Some believed, but some would not; and Paul solemnly warned them that their own Isaiah had said that some would close their eyes and ears, lest they should see and hear, and be converted; and that, if they would not take this salvation, it would be given to the Gentiles, and they would hear it. Paul now hired a house, and lived there for two whole years, preaching Jesus to all who came.

Select Serial.

From The Day of Rest. DORA'S BOY.

BY MRS. ELLEN ROSS.

CHAP. L.—LISA GETS A SITUATION.

The arguments for and against total abstinence are so well known to all intelligent people in these days, that there is no occasion to repeat the conversation which passed between the Vicar, Matthew Pedder, and Hugh, on that July afternoon. The Vicar was too sincere a Christian to combat the two on the subject of personal responsibility and tender regard for 'weaker brethren.' But yet he would not accede to Hugh's wish that he himself should become president of the little society that he intended to form for the good of the village lads. 'I would like to study the question more deeply before I give my adhesion to the Temperance party,' he said, honestly. 'Of course I should very soon be drawn into public debate, so I must be ready to meet antagonists at all points. Besides,' urged the Vicar, 'I feel that my little society will flourish better with Hugh for president, than it would do with myself: he is of the same age [as my waywards lads, and he has won their confidence even more than I have.'

The little society was duly formed, and worked well, although it met with opposition and ridicule, even in that small world. At the end of a year or two, Mr. Smithson publicly announced himself a Temperance Reformer, and worked heartily with Hugh; fruits were soon seen in reclaimed lives; but, although they laboured earnestly and delicately to win the publican Reany and his wife, they miserably failed. Alice came home for a short time every summer, and always paid a visit to Matthew's cottage. At first she was overwhelmed with sadness, and would not be comforted; but after a time she showed less emotion when speaking of her wretched home and parents; and as the five years of her apprenticeship were drawing to a close, she expressed a determination never more to visit her native village, when once she had begun business on her own account in London. 'What's the use of fretting?' she asked, despairingly; 'I've fretted till my heart's sick, and I'm not going to bother about any more. They must go their own way, and I'll go mine.'

What her way was, Lisa hinted to them, when paying a day's visit to Matthew in the last year of her apprenticeship. She had always spent her holidays with Miss Marner, who came over to England every summer, though for three years past she had wintered at Nice, for her brother's sake, and so greatly to his benefit, that she talked of going to reside in France altogether. When Lisa was staying with her for a week each summer she had on three occasions, allowed her to go for a day to see her old friends in Kent. And those

were days never to be forgotten in all her after life, so full of brightness and beauty, and innocent delight were they. It was hard to say whether Lisa, Matthew, or Hugh, enjoyed them most, so happy were the three in one another's company, in a quiet country scene of surpassing loveliness.

'Lisa ought to come out and live here some day,' said Matthew, on the last occasion of her visiting them, as they walked home from the Station in the soft evening light, after seeing her off. 'I'm gettin' a old chap in earnest now, and I feels I'm growin' shaky, and you'll want a companion when me and Dorothy's gone, my lad.'

Hugh's face slightly flushed, and he did not reply. Matthew looked into his face anxiously, and their eyes met. Then Hugh smiled and said, 'That's what I've thought about Lisa, sir: she shall come and live here, if she will, but not yet.' 'That's right, lad!' exclaimed Matthew, with a radiant face. 'And may God bless ye both! You're wise enough to choose the right time, so I shan't say nothin' more about it.'

It was a great pleasure to them both to hear subsequently from Lisa that her lot was to be cast in their village; but she would not tell them any particulars, she said, until she could come and tell them by word of mouth.

This was how it came about: Miss Marner had for several years been known by Mrs. Barnet in her works of philanthropy. Mrs. Barnet, having no children to engage her time and attention, indulged mildly in a form of philanthropy herself, which consisted in sitting at home in velvet slippers and getting her good works done by proxy. Miss Marner had several times been deputed to dispense her charities; and as that estimable lady had had no intercourse with her save on such pious business as this, she naturally thought her a kindhearted, Christian lady, possessed of immense wealth.

At the time of the expiration of Lisa's apprenticeship to Madame Michaud, it came to Miss Marner's ears that Mrs. Barnet required a lady's-maid, a Frenchwoman preferred. Miss Marner was most anxious to see Lisa comfortably settled in this capacity, before leaving her for a lengthened residence at Nice, and she at once applied to Mrs. Barnet, personally on her behalf, and secured the situation for her. On this occasion she found upon reaching Grosvenor Square, that Mrs. Barnet was in great trouble.

Miss Marner expressed a heartfelt hope that it was nothing serious, to which Mrs. Barnet replied with a forced smile, 'No, perhaps not. We all have our troubles and anxieties, haven't we? And mine is—I don't mind telling you, dear Miss Marner—that my husband spends too much of his time at Baden-Baden. He has just left me for the Continent, and I know not when he may return. I came up to town yesterday to try to dissuade him from going.' She finished with a slight sob, which greatly affected Miss Marner's susceptible heart. She said all she could to comfort her, and when the arrangement was concluded for Lisa to go to her, she assured her that she would find in Lisa a faithful and devoted attendant, and though she was not altogether a Frenchwoman, she would find her possessed of French taste and ability in a marked degree. Mrs. Barnet announced that she was going back to her country house for a month, and that she would expect to see Lisa there the following week.

It was early in October, and the weather was perfect for the time of year. Lisa was overjoyed to hear that she was to go and live with a kind Christian lady, whose home was in the village where Matthew and Hugh lived. She was also hoping that she might meet once more with Alice Reany, whom she had lately lost sight of. A rumour had reached her during the past few days that Alice had gone home, and this had relieved her mind somewhat. She had been deeply anxious about Alice since she left Madame Michaud's in the spring; for her fits of sadness had for some time past given place to reckless carelessness and outward gaiety; and it was well known to her associates that she was indulging in secret drinking.

When the day arrived for Lisa to leave town, her eager anxiety to see Alice mitigated the sorrow which she felt in parting with Miss Marner for an indefinite period. After comfortably starting

Lisa to her situation, Miss Marner was to go straight to Dover, en route for her future home in France, so that now Lisa felt that she had no home but the grand house to which she was going; and she resolved to do her duty faithfully and make herself valuable to her future mistress.

It was a lovely afternoon when she reached the end of her journey. But few persons travelled by her train, and when she stepped on to the platform of the little Station there was no commotion, no cab or omnibus to be seen, and there was no one to meet her, Lisa having started by an earlier train than she had intended, to accommodate Miss Marner, who wished to see her off before she took train to Dover.

So she put her box in the left-luggage office, and decided to go and have a chat with her old friends before going to Mrs. Barnet's. The sun was shining warmly, but the sky was not absolutely clear: a golden haze hung about the gorgeous trees of brown and red and yellow, and the lanes were thickly strewn with the leaves which autumn had shaken down over the bier of summer,—covering with beauty the grim presence of death.

But not even the falling leaves suggested anything of death to Lisa as she walked on, drinking in the loveliness of the scene on every hand, as only those do who have an insatiable craving for the beautiful. She was too happy just then, to be depressed by any considerations of decay and death around her: the plaintive trilling of the robins amongst the rustling leaves was full of gladness to her, and the melancholy beauty of the mellow sunshine said nothing to her of the ruthless winter that was treading hard upon the heels of the languid autumn, gliding slowly down to death itself, after the summer that was past and gone.

When Lisa reached Matthew's cottage, she was disappointed to find that no one was at home. But she would be down in the village again presently to fetch her luggage, she said to herself, and then she would call in and tell them everything.

(To be continued.)

Be a Man, or a Mouse.

The hopelessness of accomplishing any great undertaking without a proper amount of that quality which the world is pleased to designate as "pluck" could not be better illustrated than by the following fable, which is said to be of Persian origin. A poor mouse living in the house of a famous magician was kept in such continual distress by its fear of prowling cats, that the necromancer pitying its sufferings turned it into a cat. Immediately it began to display the greatest fear of dogs, and the kind-hearted wizard converted it into a dog; but no sooner had it assumed proper canine proportions than it began to be in great fear of tigers.

The magician was now wearied with his futile endeavours, and he changed the timid creature to a mouse again, exclaiming as he did so, "As you have only the heart of a mouse, it is impossible to help you by giving you the body of a noble animal." It is just so with a timid man! He may be invested with ample prerogatives, and placed in positions where men of stout souls would make their influences felt, but having only the "heart of a mouse" his deeds will never leave an impression on the age in which he lives.

Bull-fights are to form one of the attractions of the forthcoming Exhibition at Paris. In order to spare the sensitive susceptibilities of the public the bulls are only to be tortured, not killed outright. We are not told what conditions as to the treatment of the toradors are to be imposed upon the animals; but if these latter are of the famous Agricultural Hall breed, their antagonists need not be very much afraid.—World.

THE RELIGIOUS PAPER.—A correspondent of an exchange, speaking what he knows, says it is not difficult to see that the families which read well conducted religious newspapers are more intelligent, active and efficient in the Church than those who do not. Ministers see the difference among the members of their congregations. This fact has often impressed itself on the mind of the writer. He has invariably found the families that read our church papers more intelligent, active and useful than those who do not. This fact alone shows that the families themselves are amply rewarded for the time spent in reading and cost of the paper.