

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1877.

SUNDAY, July 22nd, 1877.—Paul at Lystra.—Acts xiv. 8-20.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: VSS. 13-17.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king."—Jeremiah x. 10.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Acts xiv. 1-20. Tuesday, vs. 9; Matthew ix. 18-30. Wednesday, vs. 12; Exodus xx. 1-26. Thursday, vs. 14; Matthew xxv. 57-68. Friday, vs. 15; Jeremiah x. 1-16. Saturday, vs. 16; Genesis i. 1-31. Sunday, vs. 19; 2 Corinthians xi. 16-30.

ANALYSIS.—I. The apostles work a miracle. Vs. 8-10. II. They are supposed to be gods. Vs. 11, 12. III. Are about to be worshipped. Vs. 13. IV. These heathenish ideas corrected. Vs. 14, 18. V. Persecution renewed. Vs. 19, 20.

QUESTIONS.—Why did the apostles leave Antioch? To what city did they proceed? In what direction from Antioch was Iconium? At what distance? Where in Iconium did they preach? What was the result of their missionary labors here? Whose hostility to the Christian doctrine did the Jews arouse in Iconium? To what places do the apostles now go? Of what province? What was the character of the people? By what were they influenced in belief? What divinities did they worship? What tradition confirms the Scripture narrative in our lesson?

Vs. 8. How great was this cripple's infirmity? Of what other man does this one remind us. Acts iii. 2.

Vs. 9. How had this man obtained "faith to be healed"? What is meant by this faith? Comp. Matt. ix. 21, 22, 28, 29; Luke vii. 50; xvii. 19; xviii. 42.

Vs. 10. What are the differences between this miracle in Lystra and the one in Paphos?

Vs. 11. What is meant by the speech of Lycaonia? In what language did the people have intercourse with foreigners?

Vs. 12. What did they call Barnabas? Who was Jupiter? What did they call Paul? Who was Mercurius? What was there in Paul and Barnabas to suggest these distinctions to the people?

Vs. 13. What did the priest of the temple of Jupiter now propose to do?

Vs. 14. When the apostles discovered what the people were about, what did they do? Who only is to be worshipped in this world?

Vs. 15. What do they call the heathen gods? How do they describe the true God?

Vs. 16. Why had God left the heathen so long to themselves? What is meant by "suffered"? See Acts xvii. 30.

Vs. 17. How has God left himself not without witness even in the heathen world? What internal moral witness of God is in every man? Roman i. 20; ii. 15.

Vs. 19. How is the scene now changed? In what letter does Paul probably refer to this stoning in Lystra? 2 Cor. xi. 25. In what condition was Paul left?

Vs. 20. What young disciple may have been in this group? ch. xvi. 1; 2 Tim. iii. 21. Whither do Paul and Barnabas now go? What limit have we now reached? Name the places the apostles passed since beginning their first missionary tour. Through what places do they now retrace their steps? Ans. Lystra, Iconium, Antioch, Perga, Attalia, from which port they embark for Antioch in Syria.

HISTORICAL CONNECTION.—Having been expelled from Antioch in Pisidia, the apostles proceeded to Iconium, a large city, ninety miles southeast of Antioch. Similar events happened here to the apostles, to those that occurred in Antioch. They preached in the synagogue. Great numbers, both of Jews and Greeks—i. e., proselytes or heathen—believed the gospel. The unbelieving Jews raised an indirect persecution, by means now of the Gentile population, against those who received Christian doctrine. The apostles were loaded with insult, and were in danger of being stoned. Because of which official persecution they withdrew still farther southeast to the small towns of Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia. These towns spoke a rude dialect, and were influenced in belief by primitive superstitions. The people, in common with many ancients, held that the gods occasionally visited the earth in the form of men. What wonder was it that the Lystrians should believe that their Jupiter, whose temple was before their city gate, would willingly visit his favorite people? Besides, the expeditions of Jupiter were usually represented as attended by Mercury. He was the companion, the servant, the messenger, of the god. When a cripple

in Lystra was healed so suddenly and so completely as to confound the most skilful and skeptical physicians, the illiterate people readily thought that supernatural powers were now indeed among them. Their feelings found expression in their mother-tongue; they said: "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men." They took Barnabas to be Jupiter, and Paul to be Mercury; Barnabas being "majestically benignant" in his appearance, and Paul "in personal aspect comparatively insignificant."

EXPOSITION.—Verse 8.—There sat, etc. In the public square or market place for alms. See below on vs. 2. From his mother's womb, etc. From birth had never taken a step—incurable and known to be, hence the greatness of the miracle.

Verse 9.—The same [this one] heard Paul speak. There were but a few Jews at most. Steadfastly beholding. The same word as in xiii. 9 is translated "set his eyes on," i. e., fixed on him an intense, searching gaze. Paul's nature was intense, and when as now it centred on a single object, it went like burning fire through his eyes. Perceiving, etc. Attracted by the man's apparent interest, he saw in him the signs of faith, and the Spirit confirmed the inference drawn from the signs. Healed. Or rather, "saved."

Verse 10.—With a loud voice. Loud, because of the great earnestness of the apostle (perhaps also that the throng might all hear.) Stand upright, etc. The words in the Greek spoken by Paul are, "Stand up on thy feet erect," the first and the last words emphatic, because the upright position was one never before taken by the man. Leaped. Showing both the suddenness and the completeness of the cure. "What a thrill of new life and power! The walking about gave to all the multitude evidence of the genuineness of the cure."

Verse 11.—The people. "The crowds" present in the square, and those also drawn by the report of the miracle. Lifted up their voices. The shout of an excited multitude, reminding us of the scene at Ephesus. xix. 28. The speech of Lycaonia. In the dialect of the province, which Paul and Barnabas did not understand. Hence they could not tell what was proposed. Greek was understood and used by the people, and the missionaries addressed them in Greek. Strong feeling comes out spontaneously in mother-tongue. The gods, etc. They reasoned and concluded like heathen as they were.

Verse 13.—The priest of Jupiter, etc. The city was thus regarded as under his patronage. Brought oxen [bulls] and garlands. The sacrifice of cattle, and especially bulls, to the chief Grecian gods, is often mentioned. The gates. The city gates, not those of the house, and naturally the gates near Jupiter's temple, which would be the place for the ceremony. With the people. Priest and people were of one mind in this matter.

Verse 14.—Heard of. Perhaps on report of some intelligent convert. Vs. 20, Rent their clothes. In token of displeasure at such an act, which was not chiefly to the form of the worship, but to the fact of it. Ran in, etc. More accurately "rushed forth [i. e., out of the city] to the multitude." Oying out and saying. The first word refers to manner, the last to the matter. He would be heard, and heard for his message.

Verse 15.—Sirs. Respect. Why do ye, etc. Rebuke. These vanities. All gods, except Jehovah, are vanities—nothing—and so the Hebrew Scriptures call them. See also 1 Cor. viii. 4. They could not help or harm. The living God. This thought of "the living God" is expressed in the name Jehovah. See Ex. iii. 14. Which made heaven, etc. The doctrine of creation is the foundation of true religion.

Verse 16.—In times past. The ages before Christ. Suffered. Permitted. All nations. "All the nations" i. e., except Israel, all the heathen nations to which now the revelation is carried. In their own ways. Without giving the revelation as he did to Israel. See Rom. i. 18-23 for a full development of this and the next verse.

Verse 17.—Nevertheless, etc. Without excuse, but not without God's care. Rain, etc. In Lycaonia, as liable to droughts, rain was a signal example and

token of goodness. Fruitful seasons. In consequence of the "rain." Food. In consequence of such seasons. Gladness. In consequence of the food.

Verse 18.—Scarce restrained. Such was the wonder and enthusiasm.

Verse 19.—Jews, etc. With two exceptions it was Jews that stirred up persecution against Paul. xix. 23; xvi. 19. Stoning was a Jewish mode of punishment, but only in a heathen city would the stoning be permitted within city limits. vii. 58. Supposing. But erroneously.

Verse 20.—The disciples. Implying that some had been converted. Young Timothy may have been one of them. They came to see if he were dead, and to bury or nurse him, as the case might be. Rose up. Apparently by miracle. Derbe. Not far from Lystra, eastward.—Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, July 29th, 1877.—The Yoke Broken.—Acts xv. 22-31.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."—Gal. v. 1.

The Story of the Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

There was a poor cripple at Lystra, where Paul and Barnabas were now preaching, who had never walked; for he was born with weak feet. As Paul was speaking in one of the public places, he saw this poor lame man, and cried to him, "Stand upright on thy feet;" and he not only stood, but leaped and walked. The people who saw this were so much astonished that they shouted, "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men." They called Barnabas Jupiter, who was the king of their gods; and because Paul was the speaker they called him Mercury, who was supposed to go with Jupiter on his journeys, and do the talking. There was a temple of Jupiter outside of the city. The priest of this hurried and brought oxen, with wreaths of flowers, and was going to offer sacrifices to these men. When Paul and Barnabas heard of all this, they tore their clothes, to show how sorry they were, and ran among the crowd, saying, "Sirs why do ye these things? We are men like you, and preach to you a living God, who made all things." These people who were ready to worship them, were persuaded by some Jews who came from Antioch and Iconium to stone Paul. Then they dragged him out of the city, thinking he was dead. But, as some Christians stood sadly about him, he rose up and came into the city.

Select Serial.

From The Day of Rest.

DORA'S BOY.

BY MRS. ELLEN ROSS.

CHAP. XXVII.—MATTHEW RESOLVES TO LET WELL ALONE.

When Hugh reached home he gave Matthew a faithful account of all that had passed between him and Lisa since he went out. Matthew listened with great interest, interrupting him now and then by calling Lisa's father some bitter name, opining that he ought to have his neck wrung like a worthless bird, and all that sort of thing.

When Hugh mentioned that the miserable drunkard frequented the 'Hall of Science,' which cast its baneful shadow in the immediate neighbourhood, Matthew responded, 'Humph! so he goes to that crib for his comfort, do he?' But he did not venture to tell the boy that he himself had often gone to the same unsatisfying fountain, vainly trying to slake his soul-thirst there.

Hugh went on to recount all that little Lisa had said about the place and its teaching, to which Matthew replied merely by a thoughtful nod now and then; but in the end he remarked, 'She's a 'cute un, is that girl! Well, I guess she's about right: it's husky sort o' food as is offered poor souls there for their hunger. It seems to me as that as yer poor mother fed on was much soider somehow: anyway it kep' her up when she hadn't got no other sort o' comfort or support. And so the little lass thinks she'd do away with herself if she didn't believe no more in her father do, eh? We, she've got a pitiful sort o' life, I must say, and she needs

to get a bit o' comfort somehow; and even if there ain't nothin' in it after all, it won't do her no harm to believe it.'

Hugh looked up at Matthew with wide-open eyes, full of sorrowful reproach. 'Please, sir, don't say that: there is something in it,' he said earnestly. 'There was something in it for my mother, and so there is for poor Lisa and me. The Lord does really care for us: you don't know how He answered mother's prayers over and over again. When she got what she wanted she used always to say, "See here, Hughie, how the good Lord has answered me again." And since I began to pray in real earnest myself,' he added in a lower tone, 'see how He's answered me: He has made you so kind to me, and let you give me such a nice home; and I hope He'll soon answer poor Lisa, and give her what she seems to want so much. If it wasn't for that drink you see, sir, she'd be right enough. She thinks I must be so happy with you because you're teetotal.'

'And what makes me that same ought to make her father so, too,' replied Matthew, rather impatiently. 'It's jest because I've got a grain or two o' common sense in my old noddle. I've never had nothin' to do with yer teetotal stumpers as goes up and down the country convertin' drunkards: I don't think I ever heard one o' their speechifyings in my life, and I ha'n't never signed the pledge, either. I've only jest used my bit o' common sense; and years ago I says to myself, What's the use o' wastin' good money on what does ye more harm than good, and buyin' a sort o' drink that is dangerous, and that thousands o' people does without, much to their credit, and the good state o' their health and their purses? So I says, I'll have none of it: I'll keep my head as clear as I can, and I won't waste good money on that as I'm better without. If I lives to grow past work I've nobody but myself to look to, and so I puts by for a rainy day I do, and lets strong drink alone. It's what nobody can nat'rally take up with pleasure: everybody turns up their noses at it as if it was pison when they takes their first sup: yet by'n-by they comes to like it that much as they'll take the bread out o' their children's mouths to get it. So ye see, Hugh, my lad, if we lets common sense do its work we shall nat'rally be teetotal. I wish poor little Lisa's wicked old father was, for her sake.'

'And it isn't many years that he's carried on like this,' said Hugh. 'I asked her as I was coming away how long he'd been drinkin' so; and she said only since her mother died. He took to it then to try to make him forget his trouble.'

'He did so, did he?' said Mathew; and the hard look passed away from his face. 'So he felt his trouble too, did he? Well, trouble acts one way on one, and another way on another. It jest made an angel o' your mother, seemly, and it made me as hard as the nether mill-stone and it made Lisa's father a miserable sot. Well, well! I guess I'd better hold my tongue now about the poor old sinner; there's about six o' one and half-a-dozen o' the other; and it ain't 'xactly becomin' for the pot to be callin' the kettle black, is it now?'

Hugh did not see the full force of this remark; for he did not consider Matthew by any means hard as a mill-stone, nor to be compared for a moment with Lisa's father for culpability. But he did not know Matthew so well as Matthew knew himself; and when the man thought of his past years, and then compared himself with a person like Dora Haldane, for instance, without venturing to look higher than the human, he felt that much as he hated and despised Mr. Maurice's sin, he dared not set himself above him.

The discontent with himself which would not be smothered made him uncomfortable again; and as he sat over his fire that night after Hugh had gone to bed, he brought himself to book in this fashion:—'Now, Matthew Pedder d'you think yerself a fit and proper person to have the bringin'-up of that prayin' woman's boy?—you that have never been tryin' to get, for many a year past, anything better put into yer head and yer heart than what you've got from that precious Hall of Science. Didn't you give the lad a shock to-day, when you sneered about his religion? And now jest ask yerself, is that the right thing to do? What would ye like him

to be? If you thinks your way o' thinkin' and carryin' on is the right one, why then you'd better burn his Bible for him, and take him to the Hall o' Science with ye every Sunday, and dare him to talk about such things as the Lcrd's love and goodness, which you knows you don't believe in yerself; and jests set him on his way in life with his back turned up on all them notions about heaven and a Saviour's love, and the Lord's care, and all that. Well, old Matthew,' he resumed to himself, after a thoughtful pause, 'ye ain't quite prepared to do that are ye? I s'pose you could wish nothin' better for him than that he should grow up a true Christian: I guess it 'ud keep him right all through life; it 'ud make him good and useful to other folks; it 'ud get for him love and respect; and it 'ud brighten him up when he'd get as far as his death-bed. So if its all nothin' after all, it's best for himself, and best for the place he lives in, that he should be a Christian. That bein' so, I shan't say no more to that little chap against his religion: if I can't say nothin' for it, I won't say nothin' against it. And I guess I'll take a peep into my Patty's Bible now and then jest to see what they do believe; for I'm sure the bit I used to know is nearly clean swep' out o' my head.'

And with that resolution of the noble Bereans, to 'search the Scriptures,' Matthew went away to bed.

CHAP. XXVIII.—STUMBLING AND STRIPPING FORWARD.

The early months of the year passed peacefully by for Matthew Pedder and the child of his adoption; and the sweet exhilarating breath of spring made itself felt even among the narrow streets and stifling courts of the East end, and quickened the languid pulses of its pallid population.

Hugh was looking for the spring with eager anticipation; for Matthew had promised him that he would see about sending him to school when the winter was over. Dorothy Sharpe had rated him on this point several times, urging that the boy would be worth so much more to any one who had to do with him when he grew up, if he got a sound bit of education now in his young days.

Matthew knew all that. He often sighed over his own limited acquirements; but he could read and write and add figures, and for that he was thankful, and tried to make himself content, thinking it was too late now to attempt to improve himself in the matter of secular education.

He gave what attention he was capable of to Hugh during those winter months; in evenings he made him do small sums on a slate and practise writing, and read aloud; so that if the boy had not gained much, he at least had not gone back.

He frequently told him to take for his reading-lesson some portion of Scripture, which he allowed Hugh to choose for himself; and in this way the dramatic narratives of the Bible, which he had almost completely forgotten, came back to him invested with freshness and novelty, and charmed his ear as they do that of childhood listening to them for the first time.

As the little lad read the parables of the New Testament, and the story of Christ's pure and loving life, Matthew felt his long-cherished distaste and contempt for these things gradually dying out, and if he felt nothing higher he at least began to entertain a respect for the beautiful record and the Divine Subject of it.

He ceased attending the Hall of Science; but when Hugh had started off to the Sunday-school, he sat down to spend the morning over the Sunday paper, which afforded him aliment fully as unwholesome as that which would have been served up to him at the Hall.

After a time Matthew began clearly to discern how pernicious was the influence which his demoralising Sunday papers exercised over him. Before Hugh started off to his Sabbath-school he would ask Matthew to allow him to repeat to him a few texts of Scripture, and the little hymn which he had to learn by heart, and Matthew would listen with interest, and even with pleasure some times. Then when the boy was gone, he would turn to his Sunday paper, not finding that the better had given him a distaste for the worse; but finding, very soon after he had begun to read, that the worse aroused in him contempt and dislike for the better—so much