

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1877.

SUNDAY, Sept. 2nd, 1877.—Paul at Corinth.—Acts xviii. 1-11.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vss. 7-11.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.”—Romans xii. 11.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Acts xviii. 1-11. Tuesday, vs. 3; 2 Thessalonians iii. Wednesday, vs. 3; 1 Corinthians ix. 9; Ezekiel xxxiii. Saturday, vs. 10; John xiv. 18-31. Sunday, vs. 10; Ephesians i.

ANALYSIS.—I. Paul at Corinth. Vs. 1. II. Manual and spiritual labor. Vs. 2, 4. III. Cheered by friends. Vs. 5. IV. Turning to the Gentiles. Vs. 6-8. V. Emboldened by a vision. Vs. 9, 10. VI. Time spent in Corinth. Vs. 11.

QUESTIONS.—How far was Corinth from Athens? Where was it situated? On what was the citadel of Corinth built? How many miles was Corinth in circumference? What trade did Corinth command? Corinth was full of material wealth in architecture and art, but what was its moral character?

Vs. 1. What led Paul to Corinth? Vs. 2. What Jew did he meet here? Where had Aquila and Priscilla probably been converted? Why did they leave Rome?

Vs. 3. Why did Paul abide in Aquila's family? What made tent-making a lucrative employment?

Vs. 4. Where did Paul spend his Sabbath?

Vs. 5. Who now arrive from Macedonia? Where had Paul sent for them? Chap. xvii. 15.

Vs. 6. How did the Jews in Corinth treat Paul?

Vs. 7. After leaving the synagogue, in what house does Paul hold public worship?

Vs. 8. What was the usual character of the converts? Comp. 1 Cor. i. 26 with vi. 10, 11. Who was probably the first convert in Corinth? Rom. xvi. 5.

Vs. 9. Paul is much depressed; how does God encourage him?

Vs. 11. Why is Paul's stay in Corinth protracted so long? What Epistles does he without doubt write here? Ans. First and Second Thessalonians. Did Paul usually write or dictate his Epistles? 2 Thess. iii. 17; 1 Cor. xvi. 21; Rom. xvi. 22.

Corinth, forty-five miles from Athens, was a city on the "Isthmus of Corinth." This isthmus connected the Corinthian Gulf on the west with the Saronic on the east, and in its narrowest part was about five miles across. The territory of Corinth embraced the greater part of the isthmus. The poets called it "the city of two seas." In the north and south of Corinth the country is mountainous, but in the centre it is a plain, with a solitary and steep mountain rising from it, the Acrocorinthus, nineteen hundred feet in height, which served as the citadel of Corinth. The city itself was on the north side of this mountain, and its walls, including the Acrocorinthus, were nearly nine miles in circumference. It became very early the emporium of the trade between Europe and Asia. It was adorned with magnificent buildings. Julius Caesar recognized the importance of Corinth as a military and mercantile position, and sent thither a colony of Italians. Jews also in great numbers settled here, on account of its facilities for commerce. It was at this time the capital of the Roman province of Achaia, and the residence of the Pro-consul Gallio. Athens now had the memory only of its pre-eminence, while Corinth held the keys of commerce. Corinth had gained much of its ancient greatness. But with all this were associated a luxury and licentiousness which made its name proverbial even among heathens.

The reasons for Paul's going to Corinth were doubtless these: (1) His discouragement at Athens. (2) Corinth was a large mercantile city: the gospel once established in Corinth would rapidly spread everywhere. (3) From the advantages the city offered for trade, the Jews established there were numerous.

EXPOSITION.—This Scripture is a mere glance at Paul's life in Corinth, and brings before us his preparation for his ministry (vss. 1-3), his ministry to the Jews (vss. 4-6), his ministry to the Gentiles (vss. 7, 8), and the explanation of its continuance (vss. 9-11). The two letters to the Corinthians help us to understand this lesson, as the letters to Galatians, Colossians, Philippians, and

Thessalonians, have helped in the previous lessons.

I. The Preparation. Verses 1-3.—This consisted in his journey to Corinth (see above Abbott's first Note), his formation of new acquaintances there, and his arrangement for a home and his own support. Aquila and Priscilla (written also Prisca), mentioned in Rom. xvi. 3; 1 Cor. xvi. 19; 2 Tim. iv. 19, though Jews, yet as was the wont of Jews, living among Romans, had taken these Roman names. They were expelled from Rome as Jews, not Christians, and their business only is mentioned as the reason why Paul staid with them. The Jews had a saying that "the man, either of poverty or wealth, who did not teach his son a handicraft, taught him to be a thief." Tent-making was an extensive business, and how common it was in Paul's native province is suggested by the fact that the tents were extensively made of a coarse goat's haircloth, called cilicium. Paul's reason for supporting himself thus is given in 1 Cor. ix; 2 Cor. xi. 7-12; where he also asserts, and argues, the right of pastors to a good support by their people, and the consequent duty of the people to give such support.

II. Ministry to the Jews. Verses 4-6.—Only the Sabbath discussions in the synagogue are mentioned, and the other days may have been mainly occupied with his manual labor. As soon, however, as his companions arrived all was changed. Pressed in spirit, Dr. Hackett translates, "was engrossed with the word;" that is, wholly given to the ministry of the gospel. He had more time at his command, as Paul and Silas probably brought him funds with which to pay his bills. 2 Cor. xi. 9; Phil. iv. 15. Their presence also strengthened and sustained him.

The same old effect, resistance rising to blasphemy, and so the final rejection of Christ and Christ's. Matt. xii. 24-31. Not that every Jew rejected. God had his elect ones, and gathered them unto Jesus, and into his flock, before the break. Vs. 8. "Blood" was the symbol of life given up, and hence of death; and here of that death which is the wages of sin unpardoned, of which physical death is but the shadow. Comp. Matt. xxvii. 5; Ezekiel xxxiii. "Clean," in vs. 6, means blameless; that is, in this matter. The turning from the Jews here means only from those of Corinth.

III. Ministry to the Heathen. Verses 7, 8.—The synagogue belonged to the Jews, and was left to the unbelieving Jews no more to hear in it the gospel. Hence a new place for the meetings of Christians. Thus arose that sharp antagonism of church and synagogue indicated in Rev. ii. 9; iii. 9; comp. John xvi. 2. The formal public change of places from synagogue to the house of Justus is meant in vs. 7. Crispus, as his former office shows, was a Jew; but he is doubtless named because of his great influence in the further progress of the work. Sosthenes has been his colleague in office, or chosen after his expulsion. Vs. 17. The multiplication of converts in Corinth, as stated in vs. 8, in the original, is represented as going on continuously—a work in progress, and not as the English Version gives it, a bare fact accomplished.

IV. The Continuance of the Ministry. Verses 9-11.—It is clear from vss. 12, 17, that there came such a crisis as had again and again forced Paul to leave his field. He perhaps saw it coming, and took home the question of flight. At such a dark hour God gave him to know that he was to stay, not flee. There was both the sight (vision) of a person, and the hearing of a voice (spake). This plot of violence, known doubtless to Paul, may have been in mind in 1 Cor. ii. 3. Trust God and do duty, is the lesson. The purpose of election is plainly affirmed in the same verse. In answer to this vision Paul set his mind at rest, and worked on for eighteen months, a long pastorate for him; but he seems to have extended his labors to the whole of the neighboring country. 2 Cor. i. 1.

—Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, September 9th, 1877.—Paul at Ephesus.—Acts xix. 1-12.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer."—1 Thess. i. 5.

Select Serial.

From The Day of Rest. DORA'S BOY.

BY MRS. ELLEN ROSS.

CHAP. XXXV.—LIGHT AFTER DARKNESS.

Scarcely knowing what she wanted of Matthew Pedder, nor why her feelings should dictate her to run to him, Lisa burst into the shop, pale and breathless, and astonished Matthew and Hugh as they stood behind the counter, Matthew mending a bird-cage, and Hugh poring over his home-lessons.

It was very seldom that Lisa went near Matthew Pedder's now, she was always so much engaged; but when she found herself with half an hour to spare she walked round that way just to keep up the acquaintance with him and Hugh, or to tell of anything that happened to relieve the drear monotony of her life in any way.

"Well, Lisa!" exclaimed Matthew, looking up astonished, "what ever's the matter? What have scared ye so?"

"It's dad, please, sir," answered Lisa in a hoarse, choking voice. "I'm feared he's dyin', and there ain't nobody about our place as I'd like to call in to him: it wouldn't be no use. And, oh! please, sir, I'm took all of a tremble like, so that I can't do anything for him, and I can't stay there by myself either. Oh! please, sir, if you could jest come and stay with me for a teeny bit, or Hughie, jest to see what's goin' to happen, or what can be done for him, poor dad!"

"How's he ill? What's the matter with him, Lisa?" asked Matthew kindly, feeling touched by the sight of her misery and filial anxiety.

"Oh! please, sir, I don't know," answered Lisa, quickly. "He's bin ill all the week, and now he seems as if he's really goin'. Oh! please, sir, do come, and see if you can tell me what to do."

The tears were streaming down her white face now, and Matthew could not stand the sight of them. "Yes, I'll come, Lisa, though I don't see what good I can do ye, my poor lass," he said, as he went into the kitchen for his coat and a Jim-Crow hat. "Pop yer cap on and come along," he said to Hugh; and the three went out together, Matthew locking the shop-door with his usual indifference to business.

His neighbors looked curiously after him as he went up the street in the soft light of sunset. The wind had moderated now, the evening was fresh and fair, and the sky was beautiful with rosy cloudlets scudding along before a brisk up-current.

Matthew and Hugh painfully felt the contrast when they stepped from the bright outside world into that dark and dreary room where lay Lisa's father. No sooner had she ushered them in and shut the door than she went quickly and knelt beside him, feeling his hands and listening for his breathing.

"He's alive," she exclaimed quietly. "Come and see him, Mr. Pedder: don't he look bad? He ain't drunk, ye know. No, he haven't touched a drop all the week: he's sober enough now, poor dad! And yet he don't seem to be in his senses. He keeps talkin' stuff as I can't understand, only now and then I hears him cry, "Lord! Lord!" Oh! Mr. Pedder," added Lisa, looking up at him earnestly, "I hope the Lord'll hear him. It seemed to me jest now as He've clean forgot us, cos He don't seem to answer if I prays ever so. Look at dad now: does it look as if the Lord was answerin' me after I've bin beggin' Him for years to make him a good man, and prepare him to go to heaven when he dies? Oh, dear! I lost all my spirit jest now thinkin' of it, and then everything looked so dark that I couldn't stay by myself, but jest run off for you. What d'you think about it, Mr. Pedder?"

Matthew glanced for a moment at the girl's upturned face, her brow drawn into wrinkles with the intensity of her anxiety, her eyes dilated and with a despairing expression in them; but quickly averting his own he gazed at the dying man, and with his hands in his pockets stood meditating what answer he should make.

"Well, Lisa," he said at length, "it seems to me there's nothing truer than that hymn Hugh's jest been learnin'—" "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform."

Don't the Bible say, "His ways are past findin' out?" and so they are. It looks as if there ain't much comfort for ye there, nodding in the direction of her father, 'certainly it do; but yet, for all that, who'm I to say as ye shouldn't be comforted, but jest misbelieve the Lord's goodness out-and-out? 'Cos, how d'ye know what the Lord's doin' this blessed minute for that poor dad o' yours? He works mostly in the dark, and don't make it plain before our eyes what He's doin'. But "all His ways are mercy and truth to such as keep His covenant," the good Book says; and you're one of His children, little Lisa."

Lisa burst into tears. The light was beginning to glimmer again; and the sun rose and chased away the darkness, when Hugh said softly, "We can't always see how our prayers are answered, Lisa; but, for all that the Lord does answer prayer. He has promised us to, and we must believe Him,—believe Him even if it's so dark that we can't see anything."

Almost before he had finished speaking, Lisa's father suddenly stirred: he turned his head wearily from side to side, groaned deeply, and cried, "Lord! Lord, have mercy!" Then in a moment a convulsion passed over him like the one that had so terrified Lisa before, he stretched himself out rigidly, with his eyes fixed upward; but, instead of relaxing as he did before, he remained in the same attitude so long, that Lisa looked up enquiringly at Matthew and said, "He had one o' them turns afore, but he soon came round: why don't he come round now?" She was going to throw herself beside him, but Matthew laid a hand on her shoulder and said, "Lisa, my poor lass, he won't come round no more." Matthew's voice trembled as he spoke, for he was dreading what would follow that announcement: he expected to see Lisa go off in a paroxysm of anguish, and he was trying to nerve himself for the scene. But, instead of that, after standing silent for a full minute, Lisa's face slowly brightened, and she exclaimed joyfully, "Ah! well, then, it must be all right with him now! The Lord 'ud never let me pray day and night for him like I have, without answerin' at the last. Poor dad! Well, the Lord have forgave him at the last hour, like He did the dyin' thief; but oh, I wish the answer had come sooner, so that I might ha' seen him doin' some good in the world afore he went! But never mind: he'll sing the Lord's praises all the louder now for His mercy to such a poor miserable sinner; and I guess, if dad could fret up there, he'd be on, all the time, to think what a shame it was as he didn't love and serve the Lord in this world for all His goodness and mercy."

She stood gazing at the still form with her hands clasped tightly together. Tears filled her eyes, yet her face was shining with an inward joy. Smiling through her tears, she spoke as if to herself, "But the Lord forgives us in a grander sort o' way than anybody else: He won't let poor dad fret though he have been such a bad one; He jest wipes away all tears, and don't let 'em bring any o' their sorrows with 'em up there, not even their repentance, which it seems to me is a happy sort o' sorrow. Won't poor dad be astonished above a bit to find how ready and willin' the Saviour was to forgive him when he cried to Him for mercy! Ah, we heard him cry, "Lord, have mercy!" jest at the last; and I know that the Lord must have answered me and him at the same time, and said, "To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise!"

Matthew put his hand gently on her shoulder and said, "Lisa, you're a happy girl to have sech faith in God!"

She looked up in his face and exclaimed, "Yes, I'm happy, though poor dad's lyin' dead there!" But as if to falsify her words, a great sob escaped her, and she burst into tears. As soon as she could command her voice she added, "Yes, I'm happy, though I'm cryin' like this. And haven't I got cause to have faith in God? If you knowed me as well as I knows myself, you'd pretty quick say I had: why, I could tell ye of times and times that the Lord have answered my prayers as plain and straight as if I was to come to you and say, "Matthew Pedder, please give me a piece o' bread," and then you was to give me a piece,—the

Lord have answered me jest so.' She paused a moment and then went on, "So I know the Lord must have answered me about dad, cos that's what I've prayed more for than anything else; and He's so pleased to save them as cry to Him. You see it was the drink as kep' dad from Him; but for more'n a week he hasn't had none, so he got a chance at last; and I'm goin' to believe that there was more goin' on between him and the Lord this last week than I knows of; and I shall expect to see him in heaven when I goes there myself."

Matthew and Hugh quietly rejoiced to see that in the hour that promised to be the darkest, there was light instead of darkness for Lisa. Her simple, strong faith took the sting out of this sorrow, and the peace of God filled her heart.

(To be Continued.)

Youths' Department.

A strange fiction and strange fact.

In "Madcap Violet" is the story of two men out in a boat, who were in danger of drowning: "Then one said to the other, 'You pray.' The second man replied that he had never prayed in his life. 'You pray.' After an interval, the storm grew worse, and the first man fell on his knees: 'O Lord, I haven't asked you for any thing for fifteen years. Only get us safely out of this, and I will not ask you for anything for fifteen years more.'" Though in a novel, the story is not quite incredible. The class of 1859 at Andover Seminary, a class remarkable for the number of its members who went as missionaries, graduated no more brilliant member than the Rev. A. L. Thompson, who died greatly lamented in the first year of his services among the Nestorians. When examined for license to preach, he told the following story of his first prayer. He was a little boy visiting his grandparents in a country village, where he had for the first time had some Sunday school instruction. About sunset he had been sent to the pasture for the cows. He could not find them. He went through the field into the dark pine woods beyond, and began to be frightened, not daring in the approaching darkness to go further, and afraid to return home without the cows. Thereupon it occurred to him that he had been told at Sunday school, that God would hear him if he prayed, and he knelt down by a stump, folded his hands, and offered his first prayer: "God, here I am, a poor little boy that can't find the cows. And now God, if you'll only help me find the cows this once, I promise you I'll never ask you for nothing else as long as I live and breathe!" He found them!—Independent.

The stream to the Mill.

"I notice," said the stream to the mill, "that you grind beans as well and as cheerfully as fine wheat."

"Certainly," clacked the mill; "what am I for but to grind? and so long as I work, what does it signify to me what the work is? My business is to serve my master, and I am not a whit more useful when I turn out fine flour than when I make the coarsest meal. My honor is not in doing fine work, but in performing any that comes, as well as I can."

That is just what boys and girls ought to do—do whatever comes in their way as well as possible, and those who act so are sure to get along nicely.—Children's Friend.

Willingness.

"When I was a little girl," said a lady, "my dear grandma asked me to bring her a glass of water. I was at play, and did not like to be disturbed, so I obeyed reluctantly. 'Thank you, my dear child,' said grandma; 'but it would have given me more pleasure had you brought it willingly.'" That was forty years ago; but the lady says it is to-day a little sorry spot in her memory.

We are not saved by faith without works, for there is no such faith in Christ. Nor are we saved by works without faith, for no works but those that flow from faith are acceptable to God.