

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1877.

STUDIES ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL.

SUNDAY, April 15th, 1877.—Naaman the Leper.—2 Kings v. 1-14.

COMMIT TO MEMORY. Vs. 10-14.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."—Psalm li. 7.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, 2 Kings v. 1-14. Tuesday, vs. 1; Numbers xii. Wednesday, vs. 5; Esther vi. 7-14. Thursday, vs. 10; John ix. 1-41. Friday, vs. 11; Luke xvii. 11-19. Saturday, vs. 12; 1 Corinthians i. 18-31. Sunday, vs. 14; Joshua vi. 3-20.

ANALYSIS.—I. Help needed. Vs. 1. II. Help suggested. Vss. 2-4. III. Help sought. Vss. 5-7. IV. Help offered. Vss. 8-10. V. Help rejected. VI. Help obtained. Vss. 13, 14.

QUESTIONS.—What climates are prolific in skin diseases? What were some of the symptoms of leprosy as known to the Jews? How did they regard it?

Vs. 1. How had Naaman, under God, been of service to Israel? How had his greatness not saved him from sadness? Does honor purchase health?

Vs. 2. Where in these verses are to be seen the cross ways of divine providence? Why is it the glory of God to conceal a thing? John xiii. 7.

Vs. 3. What hint have we of pious parental instruction?

Vs. 4. Was this reporter truthful?

Vs. 5. Can a thought of mercy ever be objectionable? See John x. Is it man's gift of silver and gold, or God's free gift of grace, that will save his soul? Rom. iii. 24; Rom. xxi. 6; xxii. 17; Eph. ii. 8; Isa. lv. 1.

Vs. 7. Do we not, like Jehoram, often misjudge other people's motives?

Vs. 8. What occasion has Elisha to reproach Jehoram?

Vs. 9. How does Naaman come to Elisha? Is a man any better for being self-important?

Vs. 10. Why must Naaman plunge seven times?

Vs. 11. Why was Naaman wroth?

Vs. 12. What reply does Naaman make? How is human nature still like Naaman's?

Vs. 13. What great thing would not men do to be saved? What great things do the heathen do? What the Mussulmans? What the Roman Catholics? What simple thing only must be done?

Vs. 14. What must obedience be to be rewarded? How do the Gospels report this miracle? Luke iv. 27.

The Egyptian and Syrian climates are very prolific in skin diseases, especially in rainless atmospheres. The predominant and characteristic form of leprosy in Scripture is a white variety, covering either the entire body or a large tract of its surface; such were the cases of Moses, Miriam, Naaman, and Gehazi. Ex. iv. 6; Num. xii. 10; 2 Kings v. 1, 27. The principal morbid features amongst the Levitical symptoms (Lev. xiii. 14) are a rising or swelling, a scab, or baldness, and a bright or white spot, but especially a white swelling in the skin, with a change of the hair of the part from the natural black to white or yellow, or an appearance of a taint going deeper than the skin. The Hebrews regarded the disease as a living plague set in the man by the finger of God.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 1.—A great man, etc. Held in the highest esteem, not simply for his official position, but especially for his signal service. By him the Lord [Jehovah] had given deliverance unto Syria. The Assyrian monuments show that "an Assyrian monarch had pushed his conquests as far as Syria exactly at this period, bringing into subjection all the kings of these parts. But his conquest was not permanent. Syria revolted after a few years, and once more made herself independent, in which condition she is found at the accession of the monarch's son." "It was probably in this war of independence that Naaman had distinguished himself." A mighty man of valor. More literally, "a hero of strength," that is, a valiant hero. To match and master Assyria must have required consummate ability. A leper. Neither office nor greatness serving as defence against that prevalent and dreaded foe. This leprosy was only partial, since vs. 11 speaks of it as confined to a "place." The Syrian law or customs evidently did not require the leper's separation from society, as did the Hebrew law.

Verse 2.—The Syrians had gone out by companies, etc. The close of the war described in 1 Kings xxii. must have

left the kingdom of Israel peculiarly exposed to these incursions of armed and organized bands. A little maid. Stolen and sold or given to Naaman.

Verse 3.—Would God, etc. She would seem to have been kindly treated by both her master and mistress, and to have felt very kindly to them. Her very strong language shows a deep interest.

Verse 4.—One went in.—Rather "he," that is, Naaman "went in." His Lord. The king was Naaman's lord, as Naaman was lord of the maid. Thus and thus, etc. Repeating her words as in vs. 3. Little mouths can speak great truths.

Verse 4.—Go to, go. "Go, depart," that is, "By all means, go, at once." I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. To insure for him a favorable reception, honorable treatment, and every possible facility for accomplishing his errand. This shows that at this time the two kingdoms were at peace, despite all grievances and distrusts. He departed, etc. Evidently without delay, showing an eagerness for cleansing. Bodily health is more desired than spiritual.

Ten talents of silver. A talent is a weight "equal to about 93 lbs.," and hence the value of this silver in coin would be about \$16,500. Six thousand pieces of gold. Shekels instead of pieces, and as 3,000 shekels made a talent, there were two talents of gold, estimated at about \$60,000 in coin. Though "some think the gold shekel of the Jews corresponded to the Persian daric." If so, the amount would be about \$34,000. Ten changes of raiment. Formerly, and still, a favorite kind of gift in the East. Gen. xii. 42.

Verse 6.—Now when this letter, or a quotation from this letter, sent by Syria's king to Israel's king Jehoram. The letter betrays ignorance of the relations of Jehovah's prophets to earthly kings. It assumes that the prophet was merely a servant, perhaps a tool, of the king. Hence the letter runs "that thou mayest recover," etc., that is, through thy servant. As though God's power were thus put at the disposal of Jehoram!

Verse 7.—Rent his clothes, etc. The usual sign of a sudden and strong emotion of grief, or rage. Am I God, etc. recognizing that only God had and could exercise such power. This language has by some been thought to imply that the king did not think of Elisha. It is quite as probable that it rather implies his knowledge that he could not command the prophet's services. Wherefore consider, etc. Addressed by the king to his councillors. See 1 Kings xx. 7. Evidently that there is distrust of the Syrian king, and a recognition of his superior power. This suspicion betrays a knowledge of the ways in which wars are often originated.

Verse 8.—He sent, etc. Elisha, as directed by the Spirit, moves first, and indeed was the first, who could give assurance of giving what Naaman asked.

Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? A suggestion that the king ought first to have consulted the prophet, to know whether the request could be granted. Let him come, etc. Implying the promise of healing the leper. He shall know, etc. Speaking not for his own honor, but for God's.

Verse 9.—Describing the pomp with which the great officer visited the humble prophet.

Verse 10.—Sent a messenger. Sent Gehazi. He did not show the general the honor to come out in person. Elisha had to maintain God's honor, as Naaman did Syria's, and while Naaman stood thus upon his dignities, the prophet felt bound not to show deference.

Verse 11.—Naaman was wroth and went away. Failing to understand the prophet's conduct, and taking it as a purposed slight and insult. Behold I thought, etc. Literally "said within myself." Showing that he had an idea of the suitable way—doubtless gathered from his knowledge of Syrian and other magicians. God's way in saving the soul is quite other than ways of man's devising.

Verse 12.—The water of these rivers of Damascus "was brighter, clearer and colder than that of the Jordan." He seems to have thought that the cure was to come rather from some virtue in the means, than from immediate divine power: that if he were to wash, the water, and not simply obedience, must be taken into account.

Verse 13.—His servants. Doubtless high military officers, but subordinate. My father. Expressing both subordin-

ation and affection. If the prophet, etc. Sound sense, which rage had prevented Naaman from exercising. These men seemed to see that obedience was the thing needed. Salvation from sin often turns on a decision with reference to some small thing.

Verse 14.—Then he went, etc. Not ashamed to take reproach and advice from his subordinates. This obedience was prompt, and exact, and successful. So in doing God's will we get his blessing.—Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, April 22nd, 1877.—Gehazi the Leper.—2 Kings v. 20-27.

Select Serial.

DORA'S BOY.

BY MRS. ELLEN ROSS.

CHAP. IX.—LISA MAURICE.

While Mrs. Haldane and her boy were enjoying Matthew Pedder's hospitality, in his cosy back room, the little girl who had given Hughie the halfpenny stood outside peeping furtively within, in the hope of seeing more of the sweet singer and the little pale lad.

She was a thin, ill-clad child of about his own age, and her teeth chattered with cold as she kept peering into Matthew's shop. But she was used to cold and exposure in all weathers, and she took the shivering as a matter of course, feeling that there was nothing to do but endure it bravely until warmer days should come again.

She was an uncommon-looking child, with large, soft, black eyes, a profusion of lank black hair, which hung in disorder about her thin swarthy face, hair which was, however, so fine and shining in texture that it never looked a tangled mop as the unkempt heads of some children do. An observant stranger would have pronounced her a foreigner; but she was not wholly foreign. Her mother, who had been dead some time, was a French woman, a descendant of the Huguenots, who sought refuge in this country after the massacre of Saint Bartholomew, and settled in Spitalfields as silk-weavers. Her father was descended from the same stock on the maternal side, but his father was an Englishman. Hence little Lisa Maurice had more of French than English blood in her veins, and she had certain very marked traits of French character, being of a sanguine, vivacious, demonstrative temperament, while at the same time she was possessed of some of our best English characteristics—self-reliance, appreciation of sober, homely pleasures, and a strong sense of duty.

Yet poor little Lisa had not been privileged with any good training. The room which her father rented and called home, where they ate and drank and slept, where his old-fashioned spinning machine stood, which was supposed to earn him and his child their living,—these four walls, up three flights of stairs, constituted only a very poor and unhomelike home, and little Lisa learned nothing there, nor in the surrounding neighbourhood, to make her a good girl, and so fit her for being a good and useful woman in the future.

But Lisa was found by devoted servants of the Lover of children, men and women who throw the salt of their influence and pious deeds into these pestilential moral wastes, and prevent them from becoming mere sinks of corruption. Lisa was found and held in the tight clasp of loving-kindness by those who recognized the excellence of her disposition, and were determined that she should not sink down into the moral slough in which so many of the unhappy children around her were content to be, and where, sadder still, their natural guardians were well content to leave them.

So, on one day in seven, and on two week-evenings, Lisa made her way to a large, cheerful room, which was cool and airy in summer, and warm and bright in winter, and sat there with washed face and hands, and smoothed hair, and eager, enquiring eyes, drinking in lessons of love, and mercy, and goodness, which blessed her poor young life, and threw gleams of light across the gloom of her daily lot. This is how it came to pass that she knew the simple hymn which Dora Haldane sang, and that she gave her the one solitary halfpenny that she possessed, thinking it would be a great boon to the sweet, pale singer. It was that halfpenny that had brought

Lisa out into the streets on such a bitterly cold night: her father had given it to her, as he frequently did on Saturday evenings, 'for being a good girl,' and she had run out to wander up and down the streets, looking in the tempting shops, trying to decide what she should buy with her precious halfpenny out of all the goodies displayed there. But no sooner did she hear the soft strains of her favourite hymn, and see the pale, thin faces of the mother and boy appealing for help which they would not ask, than Lisa forgot herself, and at once decided how she would dispose of her halfpenny that night. Her little heart swelled with happiness when she saw how eagerly Hughie accepted it, and heard his hearty "Thank you" for it. And when a little later on she saw Dora totter and fall forward, how she longed for strength and ability to minister to the poor woman and the distressed little boy!

With the keenest interest she watched Matthew Pedder catch her in his arms and kindly carry her into his shop, and, from that hour, the vehement feeling which she had cherished against him moderated, and gratitude and kindness rose up in her heart towards him instead. She knew Matthew Pedder's shop well enough: it was not far from her home, and she had often looked in at the gay stuffed birds in his window, at the chatty parrot inside, and at the scores of live prisoners in the tiny, close cages. It was concerning the latter that her little heart had so often been filled with indignation and bitterness against Matthew: but he was wholly unconscious of the feelings he excited in the breast of that small person. He was unconscious even of her existence, until one day she made a bold dash on behalf of some little birds in the window, whose suffering she had observed until she could keep silence no longer, and went in and confronted big Matthew with her face flashing with compassionate indignation.

"Please, sir, there's a little bird in the window has caught his claws in the cage, and he's hanging downwards and can't help himself; and there's another as is pecked nearly to death by a savage old thing; and there's another keeps going to his can to look for water, and there ain't none, and its cryin' ever so, and please, sir, do go to 'em."

Matthew's eyes twinkled with amusement as he encountered her upturned face, and listened to her passionate pleading.

"Don't upset yourself about them paltry insects, my dear," he said laughing. "They're only birds, ye know; they ain't mortal flesh to feel things like you and me! I guess that fellow as is hangin' 'll learn a lesson if I do go and pick him up: he'll do his gymnast's head-foremost next time, I'll warrant, and put his feet where natur' intended 'em. And the other young spark wants water, does he? Well, water he shall have, and plenty of it, too, outside and in, for axing of it out o' time. Birds is like critters so far as they must be taught their manners; and as for that young sinner, as shows a fondness for live poultry, he's as bad as a cannibal he is, making tit-bits of his own kind; and the best thing I can do with him, is to keep him on air for a week, or else wring his worthless neck,—what d'you think, little gipsy?"

The sneering tone, the heartless laugh, the cruel indifference made little Lisa more hotly indignant; and in the most impolitic manner, which was fatal to her fond hope of securing succour for the suffering birds, she cried vehemently. "You don't care for 'em one bit! If you was in their place, wouldn't you like somebody to come and help you? Ain't it cruel and wicked of you to keep a bird-shop, and not attend to 'em?"

"Well, my eye!" exclaimed Matthew, his amused expression giving way to a displeased one, as he marked her angry face, and the way in which she finished her sentence by stamping her bare foot on the floor. "Now, I ain't used to curtain-lectures or that, not being troubled with female tongues 'cept Dorothy's; but I'm blessed if that 'ere ain't something like a lecture! Why, it's a good job you ain't a varmint with claws, young 'oman, or else you'd fly at me and spoil my beauty for cert'n sure! Pr'aps you'll do me the honour to wish me a very good mornin'; and go about yer business, for fear as I should be 'clined to give ye a taste of a shower-bath as well as my 'factory dicks."

Lisa turned to go, feeling her helplessness, and her inability to make any impression. But at the door she turned and discharged a parting shot, which was as futile as the random ones which had preceded it: "I wish you was a bird, I do, and shut up in a 'teeny cage!" she cried. And as she disappeared, she heard Matthew break into an uproarious laugh, which caused the parrot to shriek out a jumble of enquiries, and set several canaries wildly singing.

From that day, Lisa regarded Matthew as a complete ogre, in whose breast not one spark of kindness, or pity, had ever been kindled. But when she saw him carry the fainting street-singer so kindly into his shop, and heard him invite her to take tea by the fire in the back-room, she wondered greatly, and asked herself whether she had been thinking too hardly of him all along. "Surely he must be a little bit kind, though he's so bad to the birds," she said. And her heart softened towards him.

She lingered about the doorway for a considerable time hoping to see Hughie and his mother come out; but they lingered so long that she grew weary of standing about with her benumbed feet, and at length gave up the hope of seeing them again, and went home.

(To be Continued.)

The Devil an' Billy Bray's 'Tatars.

I was goin' to tell the story that I heard from dear old Billy Bray. He was preachin' about temptations, and this is what he said:

"Friends, last week I was a diggin' up my 'tatars. It was a poor yield, sure 'nough; there was hardly a sound one in the lot. And while I was a diggin' the devil come to me, and he says 'Billy, do you think your Father do love you?'"

"I should reckon he do I says."

"Well, I don't," says the tempter, in a minute.

"If I'd a thought about it, I shouldn't a listened to him, for his 'pinions ben't worth the leastest bit o' notice."

"I don't," says he, "and I'll tell 'ee what for; if your Father loved you, Billy Bray, he'd give you as pretty yield o' 'tatars, so much as ever you do want and ever so many on 'em, and every one o' them as big as your fist. For it ben't no trouble for your Father to do any thing, and he could just as easy give you plenty as not. An' if he loved you he would too."

"O' course I wasn't goin' to let him talk o' my Father like that so I turned round 'pon him; 'Pray, sir,' says I, 'who may you happen to be, comin' to me an' talkin' like this here? If I ben't mistaken, I know you sir, and I know my Father too. And to think o' your comin' a sayin' he don't love me! Why, I've got your written character home to my house, and it do say sir, that you be a liar from the beginnin'! An' I'm sorry to add, that I used to have a personal acquaintance with you some years since, and I served you faithful as ever any poor wretch could, and all you gave me was nothing but rags to my back, and a wretched home, and an achin' head—an' no 'tatars—and the fear o' hell-fire to finish up with. And here's my dear Father in heaven; I've been a poor servant of his, off and on, for thirty years. And he says that he'll take me home to his palace to reign with him forever and ever. And now you come up here a-talkin' like that!'"

"Bless'e, my dear friends, he went off as if he'd been shot,—I do wish he had, and he never had the manners to say good-morning."—Dan'l. Quorum.

Hints for Winter.

During the winter fair and unfair creatures adorn themselves with the coats of other fair or unfair creatures; but not always with the discrimination shown by the original owners. This decidedly should not be. For instance:

The fur worn by young ladies in an educational establishment quite evidently should be minx.

Widow ladies and others unhappily compelled to go into mourning would naturally choose sable.

The fur of the American squirrel does very well for sleeves and skirts, but is not at all suitable for the neck, for the reason that it is a chin-chiller.

The kind of fur most commonly met with is rabbit, ostensibly something else, but unmistakably rabbit. Avoid this, ladies who wish to have a hare distinguished.

Elderly ladies, who are susceptible to cold, should always endeavor to get otter.

Fox is best avoided by those who dislike getting wet. Whoever wears this kind finds it Reynard.

In the neighborhood of the Five Points a great variation from Fifth Avenue tastes is observable. In this locality the prevalent fashion is, unhappily, bare skin. Let us hope that the warm and well-to-do will not forget the poor when the charity appeals find their way into the papers.—Harper's Bazar.