

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1877.

SUNDAY, Oct. 21st, 1877.—Paul and the bigoted Jews.—Acts xxii. 17-30.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vss. 17-21.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"But woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men."—Matt. xxiii. 13.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Acts xxii. 1-30. Tuesday, vs. 17; Acts ix. 23-30. Wednesday, vss. 19, 20; Tim. i. 12-17. Thursday, vs. 22; Luke xi. 37-54; chap. xvi. 34-40. Saturday, Galatians ii. Sunday, vs. 30; Matthew xxvi. 57-75.

ANALYSIS.—I. Paul's account of his trance. Vss. 17. II. God's word to him in it. Vss. 18-21. III. Mob violence renewed. Vss. 22, 23. IV. Paul about to be scourged. Vss. 24-26. V. The chief captain perplexed. Vss. 27-29. VI. Paul before the Sanhedrim. Vss. 30.

QUESTIONS.—Who gave Paul liberty to speak? Where? In what language? Against what charge does he reply? vs. 28? On what errand was Paul going when converted? How did the memory of this persecuting spirit affect Paul? 1 Tim. i. 12-17.

Vs. 17. When Paul returned to Jerusalem, what occurred? How long after his conversion was this? Gal. i. 17, 18; Where was he praying? What is a trance? Compare x. 10.

Vs. 18. Whom did Paul see? What did he say?

Vs. 19. What history does Paul now review? Why?

Vs. 21. What did the Lord now say to Paul? How "far hence" did Paul travel among the Gentiles? Rom. xv. 19?

Vs. 22. What is meant by "this word"?

Vs. 23. What did they then do? 2 Sam. xvi. 13.

Vs. 24. What did the chief captain then do? What is meant by "examined by scourging"?

Vs. 25. What did Paul say, as he was being bound? Why did they bind him?

Vs. 26. What does the centurion at once do?

Vs. 27. In what perplexity does Lysias now find himself?

Vs. 28. How was Paul free born?

Vs. 29. What became of Paul's accusers? Why is Lysias afraid?

Vs. 30. What does he do on the morrow? Why had he kept Paul bound till then? Whom did Lysias at once summon together? Why? What is meant by "brought Paul down"? How far may a Christian value his civil rights? How far may he defend them? Who made Paul to differ from his race? Gal. i. 11.

EXPOSITION.—See verses 1-16.—Our lesson begins with the part of the speech which states the circumstances and reason of his being sent from Jerusalem to preach Christ to the Gentiles. It was this part, and especially the closing sentence containing the word "Gentiles," that brought on the new outbreak of madness; and for this reason is given for our study. The lesson falls into three divisions: Paul's defence of himself; its effect upon the Jews; and the consequent decision of the Roman commander to try him by torture.

I. The Defence. Verses 17-21.—The accusation against which he defends himself is (xxi. 28) a mere and sheer fabrication; not, however, forgotten by Paul, but used when the right time came. xxiv. 18-21. He was acting in conformity with both the spirit and letter of the Hebrew Scriptures.

The argument of the defence through the whole address is merely the plain facts of his own life as explaining and justifying his course, and in the part before us, the facts as to his being sent away from Jerusalem, as against his leaving of his own choice, through lack of love and loyalty to his people. (1.) His voluntary return to Jerusalem from Damascus, after his three years in Arabia (Gal. i. 18, 19); (2.) his reverence for Israel's God, and Israel's Temple of God, as shown by his praying to that God in the courts of that Temple; (3.) a trance or vision there granted him, also marked his orthodoxy as a Pharisee. (4.) the command from Jesus ["him"] communicated in the trance, and thus clothed with divine authority, leaving him no liberty, as a good Hebrew, to consult his own preference; (5.) the substance of that command, viz., instant and swift flight from the holy city of his ardent and reverent love; (6.) the reason of that command—which was, not his want of love to God and the nation,

but the nation's murderous madness at him, and the refusal of his testimony (vs. 18); (7.) his own protest against this command, arising from his love of Israel and the seeming impossibility that the Jews, with all their perfect and personal acquaintance with his history, could reject his testimony, as once boldest and foremost in the continuous arrest and imprisonment of believers everywhere (vs. 19), first and chief in the killing of Stephen for daring to be a witness to attest Christ as Messiah, and his doctrine as God's gospel (vii. 58-60), and taking charge of the clothing of the executioners while stoning Stephen, as if assuming all responsibility for them (vs. 20); (8.) the final silencing of this protest by the Jesus of the vision in the command "go," that is, at once; and finally, (9.) the explicit assurance from that same Lord and Master that he was by him to be sent to the Gentiles, far as well as near, according to the Great Commission (Matt. xxviii. 20), and conduct of Paul, thus far, and his larger purposes and desires (Rom. xv. 23, 24; vs. 21—all these facts are here put clearly, and packed closely, and urged mightily as his sole and sufficient justification for his conduct. It is only such close study and analysis that will give us a just sense of the great power of Paul's words, spoken or written. He was a Master of both thought and expression.

II. The Effect. Verses 22, 23.—At first there was profound silence and close attention, vs. 2; xxi. 40. This began, indeed, because of the peculiarity of the situation, before the utterance of a word. Paul was beyond their reach, guarded by soldiers, at the very door of the castle. To many, the words "Jesus, the Nazarene," in vs. 8, and the constant assumption, and even assertion, that Jesus was the Messiah, were offensive; but there had been changes in the national mind. Thirty years of success had established that name and made it familiar.

At last, the outcry. Paul's last sentence broke the spell. In vs. 22, "word," as the Greek shows, means the whole statement, "I will send thee," etc. of vs. 21, and not the single word "Gentiles" in that sentence, though this one word was its very sting and torment. The acts of vs. 23 express furious rage, and were designed to influence the commander.

III. The Proposed Trial. Verses 24-30.—The cause of this decision was the new outcry, and Lysias' conviction that some great crime had provoked it. He probably did not understand Paul's speech, because it was in Hebrew. It was not to gratify the Jews (hence in the fortress), but to get the facts, in order to judge his prisoner.

The method of trial, viz., by physical torture (vs. 24), was common under the Roman government. The first clause of vs. 25 reads literally, And as they stretched him forward for the things—either, as is probable, the thongs or cords to bind him to the whipping-post, which, for convenience of scourging, may have been not perpendicular, but inclined; or for the "things" or lash of the whip, being already bound.

Paul's protest was at this critical moment, and to "the centurion"—captain of a company who had the whipping in charge. As at Philippi (xvi. 35-40), he claims his right as a Roman citizen, making two points: (1), that as a Roman, he could not be scourged even after the conviction of crime; (2), much less without conviction, or even trial—both points correctly taken.

The arrest of trial was instant. Paul was believed, because to claim citizenship falsely was "a highly penal offence," and, in this case, sure to be speedily discovered. Hence the sudden terror and stay. Lysias was evidently in the castle, not caring to stay in the yard for the horrid scene. His question (vs. 27) expresses the incredulity of surprise, rather than positive disbelief. Surprise, that such an one, Jew and criminal could have this honor. Even he himself had obtained Roman citizenship at large cost. At this time, we learn, it was becoming customary for the Roman authorities to confer the honor for money. Paul shows that his title was by birth, and hence the more honorable. His father had possessed it, and hence the son inherited it. xxi. 39.

The end. Paul was safe from Jewish

hate and influence, under the protection of Roman law, even against the purpose of the officers of the law. Says Cicero: To bind a Roman citizen is an evil deed; to scourge him a heinous offence."—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, Oct. 28th, 1877.—Paul before the Council.—Acts xxiii. 1-11.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake."—Acts vi. 10.

The Story of the Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

Paul told the crowd the story of his life—that he was a Jew, like themselves; and, though born far away, in Tarsus, he had been brought up in Jerusalem in the strictest rules of their religion, by a teacher whom they all knew. He told how he had hated the Christians and put them in prison, and the wonderful way in which he became a Christian. Afterwards, when he came back to this same city of Jerusalem, and was praying in this very Temple, that Jesus had told him to hurry away from the city, before they killed him. And that though he wished to stay and teach those who knew how he had beaten and put in prison the Christians, and how he had even helped in the martyr Stephen's death, that Jesus still said, "Go, for I will send thee far away to the Gentiles." As soon as this hated word was spoken, the people yelled louder than before, Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live." They threw dust into the air and tore off their clothes, as if ready to fight. The Roman captain, who did not understand Paul's Hebrew speech, ordered him to be taken into the castle, and beaten with rods until he told the truth. As they were tying his hands and feet to the whipping post, Paul asked whether it was lawful to beat a Roman.

Select Serial.

From The Day of Rest.

DORA'S BOY.

BY MRS. ELLEN ROSS.

CHAP. XLII.—THE DAWN OF SUCCESS.

The cold March evening had set in, lamps were everywhere lighted, Matthew had prepared a cosy tea, and had some time been waiting, ere Hugh returned from his important errand. He came in with his face radiant with excitement, and without saying a word he spread his portfolio wide open on the table to shew that it was empty, and then diving into his trousers' pocket with assumed fustiness, he brought forth a five-pound note which he spread out on the empty portfolio with great ceremony.

"There!" he exclaimed, snatching it up delightedly, and going and thrusting it into Matthew's hand, "that's the first I've earned for you, Mr. Pedder; but it won't be the last! Now I'm going to be a profitable workman in good earnest; you'll say so when the gold and the notes come tumbling in; and, oh, such a delightful way of earning money!"

Matthew looked down at the note, which he held awkwardly, as if he did not like to touch it, and his eyes grew moist as he replied, "Take it and keep it, my lad, till we really need it. I couldn't have the heart to break into yer first earnin's so long as I'd got a penny of my own."

"Oh, Mr. Pedder!" exclaimed Hugh, sadly, "if you say that, you'll distress me dreadfully! Don't you know that it was to keep yours from all going that I've been so anxious to earn money? If you don't let it serve that purpose, I might just as well not have got it."

Matthew did not immediately respond, and Hugh persisted, "Now please, do take it, Mr. Pedder, and begin to spend it the very next time we want anything; you will now, won't you?" And he smilingly tried to close Matthew's big hand over it. Then turning to Mr. Hartlebury, he said, "You see, sir, how much I've got to be obliged to you for; and I do thank you very much for putting me in the way of getting this. I shall have reason to remember your kindness as long as I live."

"O! there's but small thanks due to me, my dear boy," replied Josiah, looking anything but radiant. Indeed, he had a grave expression in his earnest

face, an almost stern expression, for which Hugh could not account. "The credit's due entirely to yourself," he went on; "for if the drawings hadn't been really good, that house wouldn't have bought 'em. But while I'm glad that you've brought home a five-pound note to cheer your foster-father's heart, and to encourage ye to go on with your beautiful work, yet, at the same time, I feel indignant that a shabby advantage has been taken of your youth and want of experience of business. If those designs were n't thoroughly good, as good as they'd get from old hands, they wouldn't have took them off ye; but if they'd had to take them off old hands, they'd have had to purse out a pretty sight more than they've paid you; and I must say that sort o' thing makes me very indignant! I never see why a young worker shouldn't get paid as well as an old one if he does his work as well: what right have they to ask ye your age and experience before they pay ye? All they've got to do is look at your work: if it's ill done, let 'em reject it; if it's well done, let 'em pay ye fair and honest. That's what I call conscientious, and they haven't done so by you to-day. They'd no right to take that heap of designs off ye for five pounds!"

"Never mind," said Matthew, in a mollifying tone. "If they've acted shabby and wrong to the lad, that's between their conscience and the Lord, but it hasn't done him much harm. He's pleased to get five pounds for a start, and there'll be a blessing on it, while there won't be none on their side o' the transaction. He'll learn wisdom as time goes on, and learn how to dispose of his work to good advantage."

"Well," said Josiah, firmly "you won't take your designs to that house any more, now mind you that?"

"They said they would be glad to receive more at some future time, interrupted Hugh.

"They did so did they?" exclaimed Josiah, with a peculiar laugh. "Of course they did, if they get 'em on the same terms. But we mustn't encourage dishonest dealing, my boy. There are struggling middle-aged men, fathers of families, that dare not work at that rate; and of course you'd cut 'em clean out of employ if you were to supply their employers with good designs at that starvation price. There's enough o' that triekery and greediness in the business-world without us encouraging it. Look at the working-tailors, the sweaters, as they are called, and all the miserable men and women that work for shops, took advantage of by men that are making fortunes in business, say, and such advantage as kills 'em by inches, while they're struggling to make a living. Well, Hugh, I shall write to some Kidderminster houses for you, and to some of the carpet-factories in Yorkshire, and to a lace-curtain factory that I know of. So you just get some o' your best designs ready to forward as specimens, and I'll promise to look in again in the course of a fortnight; and I'll stand to ye in these business matters until you'll know how to make a good income out o' this profession by-and-by, 'cause I see your clever at it, and your heart is set right on it."

Hugh felt so completely happy by this assurance that he scarcely knew what to say. But his radiant face said enough. Matthew, too, looked brighter than he had done since his accident; and by-and-by, when Josiah had got over his annoyance about the advantage which had been taken of Hugh, he also grew bright and radiant; and as the three sat together enjoying their cosy meal, it would have been difficult to find a happier tea-party in all London.

The meal was scarcely concluded when some one entered the shop, and Hugh hurrying in found to his great delight that it was Lisa.

"Oh I've come out this evening to hear a lecture or sermon that's going to be preached at our school, by Mr. Hartlebury," explained Lisa, with smiles and blushes. "Miss Marnar would have come, too, because she likes him, only master was too poorly to be left to-night. So as I was too early for the meeting, I've called in to see ye. And how's Mr. Pedder?"

He had recognized her voice, and now came into the shop to answer for himself. She had wonderfully improved in speech, manner, and appearance during the last year, and was a bright, intelligent-looking girl, modest in dress

and behaviour, very winning, and pleasant to look upon.

"Well Lisa," exclaimed Matthew. "I'm right down glad to see ye, and you're lookin' as fresh and fair as a rose in June. The world's treatin' you pretty well I can see, and it ought, to be sure. You must tell her of yer good luck, Hugh." "Oh yes, of course" responded Hugh. "And he eagerly told all about his afternoon errand, but without saying anything about being underpaid.

"Well, it is good news!" said Lisa, heartily, when he had finished. "And I'm more glad than I can tell ye that you've got such a good start. Now I'll tell ye what I think you ought to do with that money, Hugh," she added. "Miss Marnar was talking to me one day about giving the first out of our earnings to the Lord. Well now, don't you think it would be nice and proper to give the first out of that five pounds to the Lord? a tenth part they used to give in the good old time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, ye know."

Hugh looked thoughtful for a few moments and then responded, "Yes, it would be just the right thing, I'm sure, and I'm glad you've put me in mind of it, Lisa. I should like to do it, please, sir, if you don't object." And Hugh looked up enquiringly into Matthew's face.

"Not I, my boy. For the matter o' that all we have is the Lord's; for how could we get anything if it wasn't for Him blessin' us with health, and strength, and reason? But he means us to live by what we earn, yet, at the same time, we ought to remember His work in the world. So give yer tenth by all means if ye like; and I guess it would be seemly for ye to give yer first earned money to an orphan asylum, which same you are yerself."

"Ah! yes," said Hugh, with a bright face. "We will do that, Mr. Pedder."

"And now I've got a bit of good news to tell you," said Lisa. "And that is, that I'm going to give up service and learn a business. I'll tell ye how it came about: last Christmas Miss Marnar was busy for weeks making the loveliest little things for a Christmas tree; and when I begged her to let me help she said she'd give me a trial. And though I've never had much to do with needles and cotton, yet some how I felt as if I could do some of the pretty things she was doing. So she gave me some bits of lace and ribbon, and lovely flowers, to make a doll's hat; and I set to and made one that pleased her so much that I made nearly a dozen after that. Then our cook asked me to pick one of her old bonnets to pieces and make it up again: and when I'd done it she showed it to Miss Marnar; and she said I'd make a first-rate milliner, if I was put to learn the business, and so she's going to put me to learn, and then she says I could be a lady's-maid some day, or get my living at millinery. Now isn't that good news?"

"It is," replied Hugh, looking pleased. "It will be nicer for you to get your living with clean hands than with dirty ones."

"Yes," said Lisa, "I always like flower-selling better than crossing-sweeping, though I never turn up my nose at anything I've got to do."

"Good lass!" exclaimed Matthew, warmly. "I hope you'll be prospered. So you're going to hear Mr. Hartlebury, are ye? Well that same gentleman is at this moment in our kitchen, and I've made up my mind to go and hear him to-night. So we'll get shop shut up at once, Hugh, and all go together."

Lisa looked rather flustered when she heard that the speaker of the evening was so close at hand. She had a peculiar reverence for public characters, which is common to imaginative children, who regard them as a superior order of beings. But when Hugh had put up the shutters and locked the shop, and she found herself walking through the streets with the preacher, she acknowledged to herself that he was "very much like any other man."

(To be continued.)

PRAYING FOR RAIN IN INDIA.—An interesting ceremony took place some days ago in Indore, which was shared in by everybody, from the Maharajah down to the lowest peasant. Early in the morning the whole community, led by His Highness the Maharajah, the Maharana, and the Royal family, set off for Bangunga, a place some two miles from Indore, where a gigantic picnic was held, and where they passed the whole day. The object of this curious proceeding was to invoke the gods by prayer and poojahs to send rain, which was sadly wanted there as elsewhere. About 15,000 persons were present, and every one had been forbidden under serious penalties to cook anything under cover; it must all be done in the open air. When the poojahs were over, the Maharajah in person ploughed a piece of land, her royal Highness the Maharana attending him as a peasant's wife. Strange to say, rain almost immediately followed, and thoroughly soaked the royal party before they could reach the town of Indore.