

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1877.

SUNDAY, Aug. 26th, 1877.—Paul at Athens.—Acts xvii. 22-34.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vss. 24-31.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." 1 Tim. ii. 5.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Acts xvii. 16-34. Tuesday, vs. 23; 2 Timothy ii. 15-26. Wednesday, vs. 24; 1 Kings viii. 22-30. Thursday, vs. 26; 2 Corinthians v. 14-21. Friday, vs. 26; Genesis ii. Saturday, vs. 27; Psalm cxxx. 1-12. Sunday, vs. 31; John v. 19-29.

ANALYSIS.—I. Conciliatory introduction. Vs. 22. II. Limitation of natural religion. Vs. 23. III. The "unknown God revealed." Vs. 23. (a) Creator of all things. Vs. 24. (b) Independent of all things. Vs. 25. (c) Man's Maker and Benefactor. Vss. 26-28. IV. Application of these truths. Vs. 29. V. Man's present accountability. Vs. 30, 31. IV. Effect of Paul's speech. Vs. 32-38.

QUESTIONS.—With what was the Acropolis covered? What wonderful statue was here? Was it visible for any distance? Where was Mars' Hill situated? How was its summit made accessible? To what did Areopagus give its name? What distinguished philosopher was tried by this court? How long before Paul's visit was this? Ans. 450 years.

Vs. 22. What is the true rendering of "too superstitious"? How does this change the thought?

Vs. 23. How does Paul bring the true God to the attention of the Athenians?

Vs. 24. What work does Paul attribute to the true God? How does Paul say he differs from idols?

Vs. 25. What else does Paul now claim for the true God?

Vs. 26. Is there not in all mankind a unity of sin? Of moral accountability? Of condemnation? Did Paul think of Christ as a Jew? 2 Cor. v. 6.

Vs. 28. What is the sentiment Paul quotes from a Greek poet?

Vs. 29. Notwithstanding the great devoutness of the Athenians, to what conclusion does Paul now bring them?

Vs. 30. In what respect does Paul tell the Athenians that the times have changed?

Vs. 31. How does Paul enforce the need of repentance?

ATHENS, "the eye of Greece," was the capital of Attica, about four miles from the sea, on the southwest slope of Mount Lycabettus. It was adorned with public buildings by Pericles, B. C. 460-426. In the early Christian centuries it was one of the chief seats of learning in the world. The Romans sent their sons to Athens, as to a university, to complete their education. Several places in its topography must be noted. I. THE ACROPOLIS. This was a steep rock in the middle of the city, 150 feet high, 1,150 feet long, and 500 feet broad. Its sides had almost perpendicular slopes, excepting at the west end. At this western end, where access was alone practicable, were the magnificent Propylæa, the "entrances" built by Pericles. The summit of the Acropolis was covered with the Parthenon and Erechtheum, and with numerous statues of bronze and marble. Here, standing on a pedestal twenty feet high, was the statue of Minerva, fifty-five feet high, with helmet, spear, and shield, the first object on the Acropolis visible from the sea. II. AREOPAGUS, OR MARS' HILL. This was west of the Acropolis, though not as high, accessible on the south side by a flight of sixteen steps cut out of the rock. They are seen to-day. This hill gave its name to the celebrated council that held its sittings there. It was the most venerable of all the Athenian courts. Here the Areopagites sat as judges in the open air. Before this council Socrates was tried.

The Areopagus possesses peculiar interest to the Christian as the spot from which Paul delivered his memorable speech to the "men of Athens."

Paul's speech at Mars' Hill has given to Mars' Hill a celebrity "above all Greek, above all Roman fame." The apostle had been for days among the forms of great men, and deified heroes, among the temples, the statues, the altars, the gods of Greece. The one overpowering result was this: "His spirit was stirred within him when he saw the city," not "wholly given to idolatry," but literally, "full of idols." "It was easier," says a Roman satirist, "to find a god in Athens than a man." Athens had more images than all Greece put together. Xenophon, Socrates,

Cicero, Livy, Strabo, Lucian, and others, bear witness to the statement. Luke's accuracy is, therefore, noticeable, "full of idols." For some time Paul had mingled with the people in the crowded Agora, or market-place, in the valley south of Mars' Hill; had disputed with Epicureans and Stoics; and so greatly was their curiosity excited that they chose Mars' Hill as a place to hear him publicly, both for its convenience and its associations. To this place of Athenian eloquence Paul ascends. The Acropolis, with its thronging temples, statues, and gods, was before him. In the shadow of the goddess of Athens, whose statue was before him, he declared unto the Athenians the unknown God.

EXPOSITION.—To day's lesson is occupied chiefly with Paul's speech to the Athenians, and very briefly with its results.

I. The Speech. Verses 22-31.—1. The introduction. Vss. 22, 23 is courteous and conciliatory, shaped to win attention and get the ears of those before him. His first statement (vs. 22), should be translated I observe that you are in all respects unusually religious [reverential toward divinities]. The next justifies this compliment by saying: for going about and closely observing your objects of worship, I found an altar also [in addition to all the other sacred objects] on which had been inscribed "TO AN UNKNOWN GOD." The conception of a deity or divine power beyond all their supposed gods, was thus expressed by them, as it is also in some of their recorded prayers.

2. The theme, or subject—The true God and his true worship. Paul here also, conciliating his hearers, lays hold on their own solemn confession of a deity not known to them, whom without knowing they worship. His own knowledge he strongly affirms; for in the Greek "I" in the last clause of vs. 23, is very emphatic.

3. The argument, or development of the theme. (1) The sole supreme sovereignty of God, as contrasting him with all the known or supposed heathen divinities. This is grounded, first, in general, in the fact of his being the Creator of the universe. See the same fact in Gen. i. 1. It is the solid foundation of true religion. It was more or less clearly acknowledged by some of the best Greek philosophers, and hence not wholly new to Paul's hearers. We must conceive of Paul as speaking under the clear arching heavens, and in view of a vast expanse of sea and land, with boundaries of majestic mountains. We thus gather the force of his words in vs. 24. But again, in particular as Author and Sustainer of all life, and especially man's life, God needs no such ministry as was given to heathen deities. Worship he deserves and accepts, but not support by sacrifices, etc. The word "worshipped" in vs. 25 is unfortunate, and a wrong translation. (2) Man's universal brotherhood before God, and God's universal providence over man. That mankind are one in origin, nature, and essential relations to God and his government. Without a supernatural revelation men are "without excuse." See in Rom. i. 18-20. (3) Man made in God's likeness—natural sonship. This is in part deduced from the previous position, and in part is artfully asserted as a truth announced by heathen writers, by the poets of his hearers, which they may well accept with its consequences. One of these is that God is the Infinite Person, and idol worship unreasonable and unworthy of man. (Vs. 29.)

4. The practical application—the duty of immediate repentance, grounded especially in God's new revelation of himself in Jesus Christ. The light of nature is comparatively feeble, and hence when it alone shines men are necessarily in comparative ignorance, and hence less responsible and guilty, and so treated more leniently by God. (Vs. 30.) The new light is a call to take a new position toward God in repentance. This duty is enforced by the revelation of a judgment to come upon all the ungodly world. (Vs. 31.) This judgment must be by Jesus Christ, and hence by the principles of Christ's words and gospel, and this has been made sure by the resurrection of Christ; since thus God shows both that Christ was what he claimed to be, and next that there is a resurrection, and so a

future life for man. Besides, the death of Christ was for sin as its curse, and the resurrection of Christ was God's acceptance of him for those, and only those, who accept him.

II. The Results. Verses 32-34.—They took him to be a "babbling," or, literally, "a seed picker," picking up seeds of thought which the wise had here and there dropped, but without system or philosophy of his own. They had listened spell-bound to his beautiful, artistic, philosophical, majestic discourse, till he spoke of the resurrection. Then many derided him as a fool, failing to see that in this foolishness of God all wisdom centres. One was a member of that famous court. The name of a woman is also given.

—Baptist Teacher.

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

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

The Story of the Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

As Paul stood on Mars' Hill, almost everything he saw was either an idol, temple or a statue to an idol-god. But he told of the ONE GOD, who did not dwell in temples made with hands. The Athenians were a very polite people, and Paul addressed them in the same way: "Ye men of Athens, all things which I see show how you respect religion. For as I passed through your city and saw the gods that you worship, I found an altar with this inscription, 'TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.' He whom ye worship, though ye know him not, him I declare unto you." As though he said, "I do not bring you any new gods, but tell you of this one whom I know, though you do not." Then he shows that as God made the world and everything in it, he does not need to have houses made for him to dwell in; and as he gives life to all, he does not need their gifts. Pointing to the statues all around, especially an immense one of Minerva, made of gold and ivory, Paul says, "One of your own poets declares, 'We are also his offspring.' If we are, then you ought not to think that God looks like these things made of gold, silver or stone. Though he overlooked the past times of ignorance, now he commands men everywhere to repent; for he has fixed a day when Jesus, who was raised from the dead, will judge the world." For results read verse 32.

Select Serial.

From The Day of Rest. DORA'S BOY.

BY MRS. ELLEN ROSS.

CHAP. XXXIII.—A GLANCE THROUGH FIVE YEARS.

Five years passed away. The four little words are easily spoken or written; yet in them are bound up whole volumes of tragedy and comedy, stories of life's joys and sorrows, records of heroism, of oppression, of the eternal triumph of right, of the temporary triumph of wrong, which no human tongue or pen may recount, but which The Day shall declare.

Brief mention may be made of how those five years worked on Matthew Pedder and our other humble friends, —not one of whom was yet removed from life's stage,—not even little Lisa, through all her sufferings and privations, nor her father, though by his fatal habit he was hewing away at his life as determinedly and surely as a dexterous woodman hews away at a tree doomed to come down.

During those five years Hugh Haldane had grown into a tall, lithe boy of thirteen, with a face stamped with the impress of a noble mind. 'He's as good as a picture to look at,' Matthew many a time said to himself, as he gazed on his bright, open countenance, and looked into his clear-gazing, steady eyes. 'He's a splendid little chap, every bit of him, body and soul!' asserted Matthew, as evidence after evidence was presented to him while the months and years rolled by, of the boy's sense of right and wrong, of his devotion to duty, and of his many excellencies of character. He had a deep moral sense, and a spiritual insight which was remarkable. Policy was

never for a moment discussed by him in reference to anything, and consequently God's way was always straight before his face. 'Is it right? Is it wrong?' were the only questions he asked himself about any course: there was no middle road for him, no swerving to the right hand or the left; and guided by his enlightened judgment, and by the teaching of the worthy people who had his secular and religious education in hand, he found it easy to answer these two questions in reference to any and every matter, and so his soul was in as good health as his body.

It was a source of the highest gratification to Matthew to see him so healthy and vigorous; for on occasions when he was struck by his spiritual-mindedness, he was sometimes afraid that the boy was too good to live! But Hugh's un-failing good health, hearty appetite, and exuberant spirits, were sufficient to dispel this fear before it had long disturbed Matthew.

The change that had taken place in Matthew and in Dorothy during those five years was so slight, that it was scarcely perceptible to any but the Great Husbandman who was tending both with infinite patience. Hugh knew nothing of Matthew's secret history, save from the few expressions he had dropped concerning himself in the early days of their intercourse; and he had thought from them that Matthew was far too hard upon himself. So that now when he saw how humble-minded, and how eager to learn he was, he did not know that Matthew had become so gradually, by gaining a victory over his pride and hardness of heart, ever since the day when he had resolved to keep step with the little lad in his upward course. Not only did he stoop so far as to keep step with him, but he even sat at his feet. In no matter of great or small moment did he omit to say, 'What d'ye think o' this, Hugh?' although in his worldly-wise manner he managed to prevent Hugh's feeling that he was being led by him.

The two considerations which formed the basis of Matthew's repentance were his persistent, rebellious doubting of God's goodness, and his past profitless life. His repentance was not of a turbulent, overwhelming character; but a quiet, constant regret, a godly sorrow working repentance not to be repented of. 'It's been all a mistake,' he used to sigh sometimes when communing with himself. 'I've bin thinkin' wrong things about the Lord all the time, else how different I should ha' bin! Why, if I'd only had sense enough to believe in the Lord's love from the very first, I guess I should ha' bin a different critter all through; for it's in me as I can't help lovin' anyone as loves me.' Only to see how I loves that boy cos he've took to me so: why I'd give both my old eyes for him! And I guess I'd burn at the stake for the Lord, as pious folks have done in times past, as I've wondered at, if only I could take it in really and truly as the Lord loves me as my little chap seems to think He do. But there's the rub: I can't take it in as I'd like to. Summat keeps a-tellin' me as it's impossible as the Lord can love me, as have never cared a snap for Him the best part o' my life.'

So there Matthew lingered long, as so many awakened souls do, bowed down with a deep sense of their utter unworthiness, trembling on the threshold of the great golden palace of God's love, longing yet fearing to enter, until at length with quivering voice they essay to join in the resounding song, 'Worthy is the Lamb who hath redeemed us!' and then they find an abundant entrance is given them into its warmth and brightness.

Poor old Dorothy had lost all her serene self-satisfaction, and seldom talked cant to Matthew or Hugh now. She was uncomfortably conscious that somehow both were her moral superiors; and in having the Scripture misquotations which she flung at them, picked up and corrected by them, she found to her great astonishment that both—even that heathen Matthew—knew the Bible far better than she did herself; for in truth all she heard or read of it was in the lessons at church, while they had come to make it a habit of their lives to daily ponder over the little Bibles left as legacies to them by their loved and lost. She was far quieter than when she first began to work for Matthew, and went about her duties in a

very morose and spiritless fashion. She was a lonely, joyless old woman, dissatisfied with herself, with her views of religion, and with everything in life. Sometimes seeing how much Matthew and Hugh enjoyed each other's society, how content and happy the man seemed with the boy's smiling presence, she thought that perhaps she had made a great mistake in not appropriating her grandson five years ago; and she began to scheme for getting him under her control, and making him profitable to her.

CHAP. XXXIV.—THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

It is a painful fact to have to record that, notwithstanding all the strenuous efforts made in these days of temperance reform for the reclamation of drunkards, countless numbers of them prove irreclaimable, and go down to drunkards' graves.

More than once the reformers had laid a kindly grip on Lisa's wretched father, and had supplemented her daily efforts for his good, by special appeals to him to return from the error of his ways and lead a new life of strict sobriety. He was himself deeply conscious of the evil of his doings, no one more so, excepting his anxious little daughter; and yet he went on his downward course apparently with inflexible determination.

Silk-weaving had long since become a thing of the past; his eyesight was nearly gone; and even if he could have got work to do, his tremulous hands would have been unable to ply his task to any profit. He was out nearly all day now in the streets, picking up pence in any way he could, spending every farthing that came in his way upon drink, and by threats, acts of downright cruelty, or pitiful pleadings, getting money now and then from Lisa. She could never look to him for anything; she had to work every week of her life for the rent and to satisfy her own needs, as diligently as if she were an orphan, but with far more anxiety and sorrow than she would have done if left quite alone in the world.

She was now not only crossing-sweeper, but flower-girl, watercress-seller, match-vendor, according to the season and the state of trade; and by honest means of one kind or another she managed to pick up her living, and keep the same old lodging for her father and herself.

She was a rather tall girl now, with a pinched, serious face, not nearly so young-looking as it should have been, but yet comely to look upon, with its small, regular features, and yearning brown eyes, with a settled melancholy in them that seemed to tell that she had always had to look upon the saddest side of life.

The daily anxieties, disappointed hopes, and worries of those five years, without one bright and happy day in them all, were what no one could contemplate without shuddering, could only the weary sadness of such an existence be fully realised. But now all these sorrows were to come to an end, and one great one was to swallow up the minor ones.

Again the fair April days had come, fragrant of early flowers and blossoming trees, and soft airs whispering promises of greater beauty to follow. For a month or two past Lisa had been dealing in flowers, the occupation which she liked best of all that she was able to engage in. The violets and primroses which she hawked about seemed to tell her something of the woodland scenes where they had had their birth; and it was a small delight to her to arrange the delicate little bunches in her worn basket, which she always did with the instinct of an artist, readjusting here and there as bunch after bunch was sold, so that the general effect might not be marred by their loss.

One morning the Covent-Garden sales-people missed her from amongst their noisy group of juvenile traders, she being usually one of the earliest, quietest, and most fastidious of them all. Poor little Lisa had a heavier task before her that day than flower-selling. Her father, who had been ailing strangely for nearly a week, was worse than usual, too bad to be left, Lisa decided sadly; for to miss a day's work was a serious loss to her. However, no matter what loss she might suffer, her father must not be left, she said to herself; and so she sparingly made up a fire, and did what little she could to make her father