

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1877.

STUDIES ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL.

SUNDAY, February 18th, 1877.—Elijah and his Sacrifice.—1 Kings xviii. 36-46.

COMMIT TO MEMORY. Vs. 36-36.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"The God that answereth by fire, let him be God."—1 Kings xviii. 24.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, 1 Kings xviii. 30-46. Tuesday, vs. 36; Numbers xvi. 23-50. Wednesday, vs. 36; Nehemiah ix. 22-31. Thursday, vs. 40; Deuteronomy xvii. 2-7. Friday, vs. 40; 1 Samuel xv. 24-35. Saturday, vs. 44; Matthew xv. 21-28. Sunday, vs. 45; 1 Samuel vii. 5-12.

ANALYSIS.—I. *Elijah's prayer.* Vs. 36, 37. II. *His sacrifice consumed.* Vs. 38. III. *Decision of the people.* Vs. 39. IV. *Slaughter of Baal's prophets.* Vs. 40. V. *Rain.* Vs. 41-46.

QUESTIONS.—What preliminary steps does Elijah take in preparing his sacrifice? Why does he take twelve stones with which to repair the altar? Why does he put water on the sacrifice? Why three times?

Vs. 36. What was the time for the evening sacrifice? Name one or two contrasts between the cries of the priests and the prayers of Elijah. How does Elijah show that the honor of God is his chief desire? What were the four specific requests in Elijah's prayer? Were his prayers in harmony with God's will? Jas. v. 16. What is effectual, fervent prayer? See examples, 1 Sam. vii. 9-12; 2 Kings xxii. 19, 20; Acts iv. 31.

Vs. 37. Why does Elijah wish the people to know that God had turned their hearts back? For what is God's mercy remarkable? Ps. cvii. 1. Will God's mercy, however, clear the guilty? Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7.

Vs. 38. What is this fire called? Why?

Vs. 39. What was the effect on the people? They now have a voice; to what question had they been dumb? Do any of the priests of Baal give glory now to God?

Vs. 40. Why was it not cruelty thus to slay these prophets? Deut. xiii. 6, 9.

Vs. 41. Why this command, "Get thee up, eat and drink"? What intimation is now given to Elijah? How long had the drought continued?

Vs. 43. Are God's treasures opened at our first knocking? Why not?

Vs. 44. When Christians see the "little cloud" of God's blessing, what should they do? Compare 2 Sam. v. 24.

Vs. 45. How far away was Jezreel? How could Elijah not only keep up with but run before Ahab's swift chariot? In all this is there any evidence that Ahab's heart is changed?

EXPOSITION.—Our last lesson left the Baal prophets unanswered even after the frantic endeavors had been prolonged till the middle of the afternoon, from which till night was the hour or period for "the evening sacrifice." They have failed, now Elijah is to try. He calls the people near (vs. 30) that they may better see, repaired Jehovah's altar (vs. 30), doubtless broken down at Ahab's command (xix. 14), for he will not pollute God's offering by using Baal's altar, uses twelve stones (vs. 31), in token that the two kingdoms, though in fact two of right ought to be one and never to have become two, or rather ought in fact to be no kingdom at all, but a theocracy, arranged the sacrifice as he had required the others to do and according to custom (vs. 23-33), but went beyond his requirement by drenching his altar and all on it with water, and even enclosing it in a trench filled with water, to make more certain the absence of deception and more signal God's answer. The word translated "barrel" is in some other passages translated pitcher (Gen. xxiv. 14-20; Judges vii. 16, 19); and is about equivalent to our word bucket. "Two hundred and fifty feet below the altar-plateau, there is a perennial fountain," from which the water could have been readily brought.

Verse 36.—At the time, etc. About 3 P. M. Come near. To the altar, the meeting place of God and man. Lord [Jehovah] God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel. See Ex. iii. 6, 15; iv. 5. This formula, given first by Jehovah himself, bound together the whole national life from its origin. How fit the formula now, when the very question of national existence was at stake, and, too, staked on the issue of the nation's choice or rejection of this Jehovah. And mark the use of *Israel* instead of *Jacob*, to strengthen the same thought. Let it be

known that, etc. Settle for the people the great question of vs. 21, which they could not or would not settle for themselves. And that I am thy servant. Elijah, as a prophet, specially represented Jehovah, and was so known. He has in mind Ahab's charge of vs. 17, and here he wishes a confirmation of his counter-charge against Ahab in vs. 18.

Verse 37.—Hear me, O Lord [Jehovah], hear me. Elijah was a whole-hearted servant, and was even vehemently intent on his Master's triumph. He did not argue that God had decreed and promised to send fire, and therefore would send it whether he prayed or not. The very certainty inspired and moved him. Thou hast turned their heart back again. The heart is the man. Where the heart is there is the man. "Love is the fulfilling of the law."

Verse 38.—Then the fire of the Lord [Jehovah] fell. Compare Lev. ix. 24. Consumed, etc. It had been a fair and full victory, a clear, sufficient and final answer, if only the wood and offering had been burned, but such fire as this, which consumes stones, dust, and even water as readily as timber, was nothing less than the fire of Jehovah. There was no trick, no sleight of hand by a cunning magician.

Verse 39.—Fell on their faces. Convicted, astounded, confounded. The suddenness, completeness, and glory of the answer awed them, and they involuntarily, and as one man, took the attitude of deepest reverence. What a lesson for us. God changes not. As he was he is and will be, and there comes to his enemies "the day of wrath." The Lord [Jehovah] he is God. Repeated, like the prayer in vs. 37, for emphasis expressing the excited earnestness of conviction. In vs. 21 they could not speak, now they cannot but speak.

Verse 40.—Take the prophets, etc. He speaks still, in all things according to God's word. Vs. 36. If any one has fault to find, let him blame, not Elijah but his Master, who is also our Master. Elijah is nothing. He had no cause of his own—no quarrel with these prophets. God in his holy majesty is vindicating his own honor. This was a "day of judgment." They took them. The people obeyed. They saw and felt it right. Their consciences approved, and their hands executed. Elijah brought them down, etc. He caused them to be brought, leading the way, perhaps.

"The summit was one thousand feet above Kishon, which nowhere runs so close to the base of the mount as just beneath *El-Mohhraka*," the place of the altars. This brook; or rather ravine, or wady, was probably dry at this time, but it has been suggested that the prophets were there slaughtered and left, that the coming rain, filling the torrent bed might sweep their bodies away into the sea. On the manner of their slaughter, see xix. 1. Whether it was done in part by Elijah's own hand the language does not determine. The Levitical law required the execution not only of idolatrous priests, but of an idol worshipper (Deut. xvii. 2-7), but without such law, God's present word to and through Elijah was enough.

Verse 41.—Get thee up, etc. Spoken to Ahab at the mountain's base, after the slaughter. The intense excitement of the day had given no time or disposition to eat. The sacrifices were usually followed by feasting, and he was to go up to the place of sacrifice. The multitude may have been at once dismissed. Sound of abundance of rain. Literally, "Voice of the sound of rain," doubtless meaning, that he as prophet was assured of the shower's speedy coming.

Verse 42.—The top of Carmel. Going up still higher than the place of sacrifice, a little to the west and northwest, where there is a view of the sea. Cast himself, etc. The position was unusual, but indicated earnestness, and is said to be still imitated in the East. While Ahab eats Elijah prays—prays in order that he and all the nation may continue to eat.

Verse 43.—Go up. Showing that he expected an answer. Seven times. Persistence.

Verse 44.—A little cloud, etc. The sign of a coming shower, and very fitly used of those first fruits of converting grace which follow the pleadings of a Christian church and precede the glorious revival. Prepare thy chariot, etc. The torrent Kishon would rise, and the roads become heavy.

Verse 45.—Jezreel, where he had a palace, was about ten miles east, in view across the plain.

Verse 46.—Rain, etc. Loyal to both God and the king. The Bedouins still run thus with the speed of a fleet horse.

—Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, February 25th, 1877.—Elijah at Horeb.—1 Kings xix. 8-18.

Select Serial.

From the Day of Rest.
'Poor Michel.'

"But very soon after poor Madame's death, it became evident that there was something very strange about the boy. He began to be subject to fits,—he would fall writhing and foaming on the ground half-a-dozen times a day,—no one knew from moment to moment when he was going to be seized with one of these dreadful accès and though his body and his limbs grew, he himself seemed to stay just as he was when his mother died. When he had the strength and body of a child of ten, he was in reality a baby of three. Long before that time he was under my care, Monsieur le Comte having left the Chateau and the country, in a fit of mortification and despair.

"Indeed, when first it came home to him that the child his only son, his heir, was actually growing up an idiot, I think the shock almost killed him. Monsieur Barbet, the doctor, would often relate how, when he told him, at first he fell back half fainting, and how then he sprang up and uttered such a fierce volley of oaths and wicked words, and used such violent gestures, that Monsieur Barbet, who was himself no coward, said, that he trembled where he stood.

"It certainly was a hard blow to Monsieur, and a sad downfall to all his pride; but perhaps the saddest part of all was, that the child had taken such an aversion to him, that neither by threats nor promises, punishment nor rewards, could he be induced to endure his father's presence for a moment. The instant he caught sight of him, or heard his voice, he would shriek, and fall into a paroxysm of terror and rage, which nothing could allay, and which invariably produced an attack of epilepsy."

"Could I account for it, do you ask, Madame? No, I truly do not think that Monsieur le Comte had ever ill-treated the child meaningly, although, to be sure, when he was in one of his passions he was scarcely master of himself. As this hatred to his father dated from the very time of his mother's death, it almost seemed as if the child were filled with the notion of avenging that poor lady's wrongs, only he was such a mere infant at the time; nor do I know if he was ever a witness of any violence against his mother. But this is what we used to think; and that, though he had been too young to remember exactly what took place, the impression and horror of it had never passed from his mind. Perhaps it was that which made him an imbecile."

"And the boy—did his intellect never expand at all? I asked, now thoroughly interested.

"But yes, surely," is the answer, given, it seems to me, with a slight sense of offence. "At least—well! Madame will understand that I know little about intellect. But his heart!—Ah! never was there a child that grew so dear and good. There was not a creature on the place, from old Susanne, our farm servant, down to the very hens and chickens, that did not love him."

"Indeed! How long did you have the care of him?"

"He was seven—yes, just seven when he came to us. I was a widow then, Madame, and Georgette, my daughter, almost grown up, and there were only us two. So, having neither men's humours to consider, nor children of my own to see after, I begged and entreated Monsieur, for the sake of the old tie between us (we had been foster-brother and sister, as I told Madame), to let the boy come to us, instead of sending him away to some hospital or other, as Monsieur had a mind to."

"We took to the poor, friendless, motherless creature from the first, Georgette and I; and, as time went on, there is no saying how fond we grew of him."

"When he came to us he was a sickly,

miserable-looking child, with a great white face and thin body, limp, loose hands, and a scared, covering look about him that was sad to see. The woman who had had the charge of him knew no more how to manage the poor dear, than I should one of the great rushing steam-machines that go by on the railroad to Paris, Madame, but with us he very soon began to change for the better in every way. He hadn't much head to be sure, so it was difficult to teach him things, but for heart,—never had human being a kinder or a tenderer one. He could not endure to see anyone sad, or sorry, or in pain; and if, when he was naughty, Georgette or I looked grieved and unhappy, that was enough to subdue him at once. It was by his affections that we led him, and even taught him, in a great measure, to conquer the fits of passion which he was subject to when he first came to us."

"Was he very violent?"

"At first, Madame, he would throw himself on the ground, and kick, and scream, and it was no use to struggle with him then; but we taught him, when he felt the fit of passion coming on, to kneel down, and ask God to send the bad temper away, and it was really pretty to see how often he would save himself from an outbreak in this way. We told him, that when he was naughty, not only were we sorry, but God in Heaven was sorry too."

"Did he understand this?"

"He understood more perhaps than anyone knew, though he was so simple—so simple in some things. One day, just when he was in a violent passion, it came on to rain, and I shall never forget how shocked the child was. He was so fully persuaded that he had made "God cry." He was always sad during rain. "Oh! see, see," he would say, when it came down heavily, "many people are naughty to-day, and the good God is grieved, so grieved. Michel must be good, or He will cry yet more."

"I wonder what his notions of God were?"

"I am not sure altogether," said the old woman musingly, "but he knew Him to be everywhere, all-powerful, and all-loving, and I doubt, Madame, if the clever folks who talk a great deal, can tell us much more than that themselves—but there; I am a stupid old know-nothing, and prate of matters too great for me, and, Madame, must be tired of listening."

"On the contrary, I am much interested," I say; can you not think of something more to tell me about this poor lad?"

"Ay, truly, my head is full of his sayings and doings, but I am stupid—stupid, and cannot tell them properly; Georgette would relate them to Madame much better than I."

"I like to hear you," I say.

"Well, then, as I was saying, poor Michel had a wonderful notion of God's goodness, and of His being everywhere with him, and not the least bit of fear, as some of us have. He used to fancy God talked to him in the night, and—and, sometimes, do you know, Madame," said the old woman hesitatingly, "I'm not so sure but what He did! And he would talk to God quite as if He had been a friend, Madame, asking Him for every little thing he wanted, and quite believing, poor child, that God answered him. One day, I remember, he was trying very hard to open the door, and his poor limp fingers could not manage it. So, in a moment, down he fell on his knees,—Please, dear God, open the door," he said. Of course he knew no better, added the old woman apologetically, wiping away a tear from her brown cheek.

"M. le Pasteur, he came one day, and seemed rather shocked with our poor boy for talking of God in such an everyday sort of way, and he tried to impress upon him how great and mighty God was, but he could not make our boy understand him. He only shook his head sorrowfully, and said, "Poor Michel's God good—loves poor Michel—sends him pretty flowers and ripe plums." So M. le Pasteur had to give the boy up as a bad job."

"Whatever Michel liked he always said God had sent him, and he was so grateful. One day, I remember, my daughter, Georgette, found him in the garden looking very unhappy, the tears rolling down his cheeks. He kept on saying he was afraid God had gone away

—pointing to two apples lying in a basket. We could not understand what he meant at first. But at last Georgette made out that he wanted to give them to God. God had given him so many that he wanted to give God something in return, and he had put these two beautiful apples in the basket for God, and asked Him to take them, and now he was unhappy because God had not answered his prayer. It made the tears come into my eyes to hear the simple soul talk so, and to remember how little we, who should know better, think of giving to the good God who gives us so much. But, indeed, I should not have known how to answer the child. I am a stupid old woman, as I tell Madame. But Georgette, my daughter, seemed all ways to know what to say. She told him at once that she was quite sure God would be pleased about the apples, for He loved His children to be grateful; but that Michel must not be impatient, he must wait and see what God would do. God was never in a hurry.

"We felt very doubtful what to do about the apples, we did not like to touch them—they seemed somehow sacred to us; but fortunately, that very afternoon, a poor ragged little girl came begging at the gate, and Michel was quite satisfied when we told him that God had sent the little girl for them, and he made her take besides, a great piece of cake which we had just given him for his supper. When we told him he need not give that, that a piece of bread would do as well, he was quite hurt and begged that we would let him send God 'the nicest.'"

(To be continued.)

For the Christian Messenger.

The Broken Circle.

My home has been a pleasant one,
My children long have stood
Beneath the old paternal roof,
United, strong and good.With faces often seen in smiles,
And never dimmed with tears,
They worked together well for me
Through many happy years.But now at last beneath my roof
There is an empty seat,
The vacancy is keenly felt,
The circle incomplete.Yet was my child not torn from me,
As often others part,
By sudden wrench, with cruel pangs
And agony of heart.But sure decay has done its work,
And I am now bereft,
Yet I'll strive on, and work away
With those that I have left.Still, losses are not light to bear,
To tell the honest truth,
I sorely miss at dinner-time
That old familiar tooth. S. S.

TEMPERANCE.

A Plea for Help.

BY REV. T. A. GOODWIN.

I mean no disparagement of western Christians when I say that we are largely dependent on our Eastern brethren for help, especially in moral reform. Yours is a land of steady habits; you have a character. Our habits are yet unformed; our character not established. That portion of our common country known as the West, or Northwest, has, within a life-time, received contributions from every kindred, tongue and people, including large accessions from the South. It will take another half century to unify these diverse elements. We hope, when it is done, it will be a resultant of which our children will not be ashamed.

Just now we need help in the temperance cause, and we look imploringly to New England. You have not our difficulties to contend with. Let me ask, in behalf of a languishing cause, that you take an advance step, and take it boldly. We will follow soon. The crusaders began in the West, but their mission soon ended, with comparatively little permanent good except the development of women's ability to agitate.

To clearly state our condition would exhibit a horrible picture of woe. I allude to the devastations the destroyer is making in the families of our religious and temperance people. The children of men who were famous in Church and State and business, as temperance workers, twenty-five years ago, are dying of drunkenness at a fearful rate. The son