

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1878.

SUNDAY, March 10, 1878.—Hezekiah's Good Reign.—2 Chron. xxix. 1-11.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vss. 3-6.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And in every work that he began, . . . he did it with all his heart, and prospered."—2 Chron. xxxi. 21.

DAILY READING.—Monday, 2 Chron. xxix. 1-11. Tuesday, 2 Kings xvi. 10-18. Wednesday, vs. 5; Exodus xix. Thursday, 1 Kings viii. 22-10. Friday, vs. 5; Matthew xxi. 12-16. Saturday, vs. 6; Matthew x. 32-39. Sunday, Psa xxiv.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Hezekiah on the throne. Vs. 1. II. His character. Vs. 2. III. His restoration of religion. Vss. 3-11.

QUESTIONS.—Vs. 1.—Who was Hezekiah?

Vs. 2.—What is said of Hezekiah's character?

Vs. 3-11.—What was Hezekiah's first act? Why are the ruler's first acts so important? Would there be any progress if no one improved on other people? Luke xiv. 26. To what purifying work did Hezekiah summon the people? What would he renew with the Lord? What ancient symbol did Hezekiah now destroy? Why? 2 Kings xviii. 24.

How did he show his faith in good resolutions? What is the record of his life's work? (Golden Text)

A good character stands great tests. Vs. 2.—If not all, much earthly chastisement has a traceable cause. Vs. 9.—All good as well as evil purposes have their origin in the heart. Vs. 10.—Prov. iv. 23.—Some good things outlive their usefulness, 2 Kings xviii. 4.

Never was there a greater contrast than between Ahaz, a father, and Hezekiah, a son. The father surrendered himself, with seeming infatuation, to the influence of national idolatry. The son, at the very beginning of his reign, endeavored to reverse the policy of his father by inaugurating measures of national reformation. Promptly and earnestly he set about the recovery of his people to the supreme love and worship of God. "The reign of Hezekiah was the culminating point in the history of the kings of Judah. He was first of the royal family since David. Isaiah was his counsellor. Micah uttered in his ears a wild dirge against the moral evils of the times. Hezekiah was stirred, and the people with him."—Stanley. Our lesson chronicles a part of the blessed results.

EXPOSITION.—See another account in 2 Kings xviii. Compare also chap. xxix, and xxx, xxxi, and parts of the Book of Isaiah. In the time of Hezekiah, Micah prophesied.

Verses 1, 2.—Hezekiah.—The name means—"Strength of Jehovah," and was thus very suitable to the character and history of the king. Five and twenty years old. According to xxviii. 1, and 2 Kings xvi. 2, Ahaz was only thirty-six years old at his death. Abijah. The name was borne by six persons mentioned in Scripture, of whom two were women, and the rest men. In 2 Kings xviii. 2, we have the short form, Abi. Of her father, Zechariah, nothing further is known. Did that which was right. In contrast with the character of his father's reign. According to all that David, his father, had done. The word "all," understood of the general course of his conduct. There is a delicate and touching pertinency in omitting all reference to Ahaz, and in calling David "the father" of Hezekiah; for as to character, Ahaz was not his father, but David was.

Verses 3.—In the first year of his reign—showing his promptness, and his moral perception, when he became king. In his first month. The month Nisan, the month of the Passover, and corresponding nearly to our April. See xxx. 13-18. Opened the doors. The doors into the Temple proper, that is, into the Holy Place, from the courts, closed by Ahaz. Compare vs. 7 and xxxviii. 24. This verse sums up what is given, in detail, in the following verses.

Verses 4, 5.—The priests and the Levites.—Because it belonged to them, by Divine appointment, to do such work as that now to be enjoined upon them by the king. The east street. Or, rather, the level, open space on the east of the sanctuary; not one of the courts within the sanctuary. Sanctify now yourselves, etc. The Levitical law required that they should be clean who

"bear the vessels of the Lord," or had to do with the sanctuary. Compare 1 Chron. xv. 1-14; Num. iii, iv, viii. Filthiness. Literally, "abomination;" that is, all that which had been brought in for Baal worship. See 2 Kings xvi. 10-18. Even the brazen serpent was wisely destroyed, because it had come to be used as an idol. 2 Kings xviii. 4. Holy Place. The word so translated designates the entire sanctuary.

Verses 6, 7.—Our fathers.—His own father's reign of sixteen years. Turned away their faces, etc. Shown contempt for. They had in fact visited the sanctuary, but only to profane it; which was the acme of contempt. Turned their backs. Margin, "Given the neck." Put out the lamps. The lamps, and golden altar of incense, were in "The Holy Place," whose doors had been permanently shut in contempt. Ex. xxxvii, xxxviii. The Holy Place. Here also, the sanctuary in general. Unto the God of Israel. They had offered there to the gods of the heathen. 2 Kings xvi. 15, 16.

Verses 8, 9.—The wrath of the Lord. His just judgments. Judah. The whole kingdom; and especially upon its capital, Jerusalem. Hissing. A powerful picture of degradation. Jer. xviii. 16; xix. 8.

Verses 10, 11.—Make a covenant, etc.—Uniting in a solemn pledge before God, and in his courts, to return to obedience. This had been repeatedly done, and has served as an example for Christians. Fierce wrath. "Fierce," not as passionate, but as intense—proportioned to the greatness of the sin. My sons. A friendly address.

"Hezekiah's Good Reign," is presented as good (1), by an inspired testimony to that effect; (2), by his own charge to the ministers of religion; (3), by his confession of the national sins; (4), by his recognition of the just judgments upon their sins; (5), by his desire for a national covenant of repentance.

I. The Testimony. Verses 2, 3.—(1.) His course had a positive, consistent character. He moved along one line steadily and persistently, so that the whole could be called good. (2.) The king "did right in the sight of Jehovah."

We have no goodness worth the name, if it be not a goodness which is such in God's sight as well as man's. (3.) He took the best men for his exemplars. So wise is it to keep company with the best, whether of the living or the dead. (4.) He began right. The first step is the most important. (5.) He tried to set right what his father had made wrong. A son whose father is bad can himself be good. We need not drift with the currents of evil.

II. The Charge.—Verses 4, 5.—It shows the goodness of Hezekiah, in its respect for God's law, with reference to religious places, ministers, ordinances, and ends. It shows that he had carefully studied the Divine law. He does not, like Uzziah, aspire to take on himself the honor given to others, but honors God by honoring God's arrangements. Hezekiah's example is salutary.

III. The Confession.—Verses 6, 7.—(1.) It was truly confession, and not accusation. It is bad simply to accuse others of sin; but it is well to confess their sins, especially when, as in this case, we stand in close and even organic connection with the sinning persons. (2.) It was a full confession. The whole, even to the worst, is owned and deplored.

IV. The Recognition.—Verses 8, 9.—(1.) Hezekiah owned that their condition was utterly miserable. It often takes much sense, backed by much principle, and even courage, to look full in the face the fact of our misery, and own it. (2.) Hezekiah owns that this national misery was from God's hand. It was not bad luck, or misfortune. (3.) He owned that God had sent it in righteous judgment for the sins confessed. There was no murmuring, no mere stoical submission to the inevitable.

V. The Desire.—Verses 10, 11.—Such a recognition could not be apart from an earnest desire for God's favor. This return to God is a consecration—a renewal of covenant. This is repentance and reform.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, March 17th, 1878.—Hezekiah and the Assyrians.—2 Chron. xxxii. 9-21.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles."—2 Chron. xxxii. 8.

The Story of the Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

Although Ahaz was so wicked, his son Hezekiah was the best king Judah ever had. He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. Perhaps he had been taught to do right by his mother, who was the daughter of that good Zechariah who had taught Uzziah. Before he had reigned a month he opened the house of the Lord, which Ahaz had shut up, and began to repair it. But he could not worship there; for it was full of filth, and even idols. He called the priests and the Levites together, in a street near by, and told them how sad it was to have the Temple in that condition, and that God had brought trouble on Judah because their fathers had forsaken him. Then he asked the priests to clean out all the inside of the Temple, and the Levites to carry the filth and throw it in the brook. Their New Year's Day was in the middle of March, and on that day they began the good work. The altar that Ahaz had made was taken away for rubbish. They even broke the brass serpent which Moses had set up in the wilderness; for people now worshipped it, and Hezekiah called it Nehustan, which means, "only a piece of brass." The priests worked hard, and finished in sixteen days; for Hezekiah had told them they should burn incense and serve at the altar when all was done.

Boys' Department.

Our Baby's Prayer.

BY REV. C. A. CRESSY.

Last night, beside her mother's chair, Our little Alice knelt in prayer;

And while her mother softly said The words, repeating, Alice prayed:—

"O Lord! I pray Thee bless to-night Thy little Alice; till the light

Of morning o'er the hill shall peep Be Thou the guardian of my sleep!

Bless dear papa, and mamma, too, And sister, and our friends so true.

And when the end of life shall come, Take us, dear Lord, to heav'n, our home!"

Thus far her prayer was said, and then She paused, and mother said, "Amen."

But Alice lingered, and instead Of this, her child-lips sweetly said—

"Mamma, think you God will care If I put kitty in my prayer.

And say, 'Dear Lord bless kitty too?' I don't think God will care, do you?"

And mother said, "Dear Alice may To God pray what she wants to pray."

Again the child's eyes closed in prayer, And o'er her features soft and fair,

Devotion like a halo spread, The while her sweet lips softly said—

"Dear Lord, bless all our friends so true, And bless my little kitty too;

And when the end of life shall come, Take us, dear Lord, to heav'n our home!"

With looks I cannot tell, she then Said, "Mamma, now I'll say Amen."

O childish faith! O love unfeigned! Would I such faith and love had gained,

That I might to my Saviour bear In holy faith in trusting prayer,

Whatever things my heart concerns, And all for which it rightly yearns;

His promise holding ever true, That what I ask, His love will do.

Like Alice, thou, 'twere sweet to bear, To God my ev'ry wish in prayer.

—Zion's Herald.

Working Children.

"I don't think I ought to work, mother, when I go to school," said a bright-eyed little girl of thirteen, as she stood on the brick floor of the dairy, tingeing the shining milk pans with the rose tints of her fresh calico dress.

"I only ask an hour a day, Mary. I get very tired with both house and farm work, and I cannot get help, you know," said the weary mother in a sad tone.

"But children never work, mother," said Mary, pettishly.

Mary's mother said no more, but went on scalding milk pails and pans and turning them up in the sunshine. The little girl took her crocheting and sat down on the cool porch.

If Mary's mother had no word for her, we have; and for every other girl, or

boy, who "rests" while a weary mother toils.

"Children never work." Alas, little Mary, you, and all little folks, whose pink dresses and polished skirts come shining from the hand of a mother, little know what some children do in the world.

If such heartless young folks could go to the coal mines and cotton factories of England, they would see children not up to their waists, harnessed into little carts drawing loads like cattle, or standing from day-break till night-fall at looms, till their backs are bowed, and their limbs bent like old men and women, and all this for the privilege of starving in work, rather than out of it.

How we wish the little grumblers had to go over the sea to learn that some children have to work hard, and under stern masters. But alas, they need not go out of the United State to see factory children fainting at their toil and oppressed by taskmasters, till the Legislature comes to the rescue, and limits the hours of work and demands for them a certain amount of schooling.

This hard working of children is not always the fault of the mill manager. Parents, pressed by poverty, or laziness, which is too often the parent of poverty, sue for work for their children, and sacrifice their health for their own present gain or ease. What, compared to this, is a little help given a smiling mother in a cheerful home?

It is a rare thing to see a child overworked at home, the danger lies in the other direction; the over-indulgent mother in moderate circumstances, too often wears her own life out that her children may enjoy the ease they do not need.

We have heard of boys, and to their shame be it said, who allow their mother to draw water, split wood, make fires, and to do many other things which are really boy's work, while they play croquet, go fishing, ride horseback, or blow their breath through fifes and flutes.

We have heard of girls who let their mother do all the washing, ironing, and other housework, while they embroider sofa pillows, or drum on the piano.

Have such children any hearts! Remember and pity the children who do "work," and relieve these loving mothers before they are worn out serving you.

Making Sunshine.

"Oh dear, it always does rain when I want to go anywhere!" cried little Jennie Moore. "It's too bad! Now I've got to stay in doors, and I know I shall have a wretched day."

"Perhaps so," said Uncle Jack; "but you need not have a wretched day unless you choose."

"How can I help it? I wanted to go to the park, and play on the grass, and pull wild flowers; and now there is not going to be any sunshine at all, and I shall have to stand here and see it rain all day long."

"Well, let's make a little sunshine," said Uncle Jack. This made Jennie smile through her tears, showing that Uncle Jack had manufactured a few rays already. So Jennie agreed to be his partner in this new business, and went to work according to these three rules:

First. Don't think of what might have been if the day had been better.

Second. See how many things there are left to enjoy.

And lastly. Do all you can to make other people happy.

Jennie began by amusing her little brother, who was crying. By the time she had him riding a chair and laughing, she was laughing too. After that she found many a pleasant amusement, and when bed-time came she kissed her uncle good-night, and was even far more happy than if she had spent the day in playing on the grass and gathering wild flowers. But that was not all. She dreamed that night that Uncle Jack had built a great house, and put a sign over the door which read:

SUNSHINE FACTORY.

She made her uncle laugh when she told her dream; but she never forgot what you must remember: A cheerful heart makes its own sunshine. A cheerful heart is one in which the Saviour dwells. If you follow him, you will not walk in darkness; all days, and all duties, will be bright and beautiful.

What the Elephant does.

What schoolboy has not seen him lumbering along in the circus procession, or performing his tricks for the amusement of the crowd? Doubtless many a boy has thought as I used to think, that the only thing useful an elephant could do was to come to this country to show his bulky form and wonderful sagacity. But a few years' residence in British Burmah convinced me that the sagacity and strength of the elephant make him one of the most useful and valuable of domesticated animals.

As you pass up the river Salween on the quarter-deck of one of the British India steamers, you have a first-rate chance to see them manipulate the timber in the large mill-yards at Mopoon, just below the city of Maulmain. Manipulate is not a bad word to use in this connection, for one elephant, with a man to direct him, will handle more timber in a day than "two yoke of cattle" and a dozen men, for he is able to do the work of both man and beast. If a large square needs moving, he walks up to the end, fastens a chain around, and then draws it away. If it must be placed in position, he puts his heavy head and tusks against it and pushes it to its place, or if not too heavy kicks it along with his foot. Then the large butts or ends of the logs he picks up with his trunk and tusks, and carrying them along piles them wherever he is told.

But the elephant is very useful also in tropical countries as a bearer of burdens and a traveller. Perhaps you would like to know how he is made ready for a journey. Imagine yourself a missionary in one of the jungle villages ready to start at sunrise. While eating your breakfast of rice and curry, the tinkle of a bell is heard, and looking out, you see an elephant jogging along with a boy sitting on his head, who guides him down to the nearest stream for a bath. When he returns, the boy makes him stretch himself on the ground, and then an attendant hands half a dozen stiff hides of buffalo or deer, which are placed on his back like the roof of a house. The howdah, an oblong framework made to adapt itself to the back, is placed on the top of the hides, and then the elephant rises to his feet. The whole is then secured by a stout rope used as a girth. The boy guides him to the veranda of the chapel where you have been staying, and after seeing your goods safely packed in each side of the howdah, and your comforter which has been used as a mattress neatly folded for a cushion, you step from the veranda to the elephant's head, and turning around, sit with your feet resting on his shoulder-blade. The boy takes his place on the animal's head, gives one or two hitches, and he starts off at a brisk pace, soon leaving village and villagers behind.

After a few miles you come to a place apparently blocked by the bamboos which have fallen across the path in every direction. You may be dismayed, but the driver is not, for he draws his trusted sabre, and after a few vigorous slashes calls out to the elephant, *bo*. He lifts his trunk, catches hold of the limbs that are entangled, and bringing them down, puts his foot on them and walks along.

Of course travelling all day on his back is monotonous, and you will sometimes wish to get down and walk. I well remember one incident of a long journey, with which I will close this talk. After waiting some time to rest me, I wished to mount the elephant again, and the driver guided him to a tall stump to favor me as I was a little lame. Just as I climbed on the stump, that elephant took occasion to blow his nose, and I soon found myself several rods away, instead of being on his back. The Karens who were following could hardly suppress their mirth; but the driver gave him a sound drubbing for being so unmannerly as to blow his nose in the presence of a white man.

UNCLE STEPHEN.

—Watchman.

Most men are afraid of a bad name, but few fear their conscience.

When we know how to appreciate a merit, we have the germ of it within ourselves.

Reproaches, unsupported by evidence, affect only the character of him who utters them.