

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1878.

SUNDAY, February 17th, 1878.—Joash Repairs the Temple.—2 Chron. xxiv. 4-13.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vss. 8-10.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Joash was minded to repair the house of the Lord."—2 Chron. xxiv. 4.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, 2 Chron. xxiv. 1-4. Tuesday, 2 Kings xii. 4-16. Wednesday, Exodus xxx. 11-16. Thursday, Leviticus xxvii. 1-8. Friday, John iv. 1-38. Saturday, Exodus xxxvi. 1-7. Sunday, Romans xii.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Repairs of the temple. Vss. 4-7. II. First plans fail. Vss. 8-10. III. New measures. Vss. 8-11. IV. The repairs completed. Vss. 12, 13.

QUESTIONS.—Who reigned in Judah after Jehoshaphat? Who was Jehoram's wife? Who reigned after Jehoram's death? Who influenced Ahaziah to reign wickedly? Who killed Ahaziah? What revenge did his mother Athaliah take? What infant son was provisionally spared? By whom? Where?

I. Vss. 4-7. Who had "broken up the house of God"? Who was Athaliah? What is better than outward devotion to the Lord's house? Ps. li. 6.

II. Vss. 8-10. What plans were first formed to repair the temple? Vs. 5. Why did they fail?

III. Vss. 8-11. What new measure was now tried? How did it work? Why so favorably?

Does God approve of beautiful Christian sanctuaries? What does he regard with more favor? John iv. 21-24. Why ought there to be system in benevolence? In what spirit should we ever work for the Lord? Rom. viii; Col. iii. 13.

HISTORICAL CONNECTION.—After Jehoshaphat's death (B. C. 889), his son Jehoram reigned wickedly. He married Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab, and now, having come to the kingdom, put his brethren to death, and established idolatry in Judah; because of which, Elijah the prophet warned him of his terrible doom; for an account of which, see 2 Chron. xxi. 12-20. Then Ahaziah (chap. xxi. 17), the youngest son of Jehoram, by Athaliah, reigned wickedly, for his mother was his counsellor. See chap. xxii. 3, 4. In the destruction that was sent upon the house of Ahab by the hands of Jehu, Ahaziah was included. Whereupon Athaliah arose in revenge and destroyed all but one of the royal seed of the house of David, and he Joash, a new-born infant, whom Jehoshabeath, a sister of Ahaziah, secreted in the temple. "And he was hid six years, and Athaliah reigned over the land." Then Jehoiada the priest, and husband of Jehoshabeath, formed a conspiracy and proclaimed Joash king in Judah. Hearing of which, Athaliah cried, "Treason!" and was slain. So perished the last member of Ahab's house. And all the land was quiet. Years passed on. Joash outgrew his pupilage, and among the first things to which he devoted his attention was the repair of the breaches of God's house. This work our lesson considers.

EXPOSITION.—For a parallel and more extended account of the repairs, see 2 Kings xii. 1-17. The two accounts differ, but are not contradictory. Each in a measure supplements the other.

Verses 4.—After this—After he had come to such maturity as to be married, and have children. Vs. 3. In 2 Kings xii. 6, we find that it was now in "the three and twentieth year of king Jehoshaphat." Joash—Another form of the name is Jehoshaphat. The house of the Lord (Jehovah). The temple at Jerusalem.

Verses 5, 6.—The priests and the Levites—Evidently those immediately connected with the temple service. Their residence in Jerusalem is implied in the words "go out," etc. The cities of Judah—Doubtless of the whole kingdom of Judah, including those of Benjamin, as all the king's subjects should participate. Gather of all Israel—"Israel," not as the name of the rival kingdom, but of Joash's own subjects as God's chosen people. The three classes of contributions are enumerated in 2 Kings xii. 4; comp. Ex. xxx. 13, and Lev. xxvii. 1-8. Hasten the matter—This urgency suggests that the first plan was not allowed to remain fruitless for several years. Strange that for the present work he should have needed

any urging by the king. Moses the servant of the Lord—This use of Moses' name and statute to sanction and enforce his appeal was eminently wise.

Verses 7.—That wicked woman—Her "sons." Her agents of like spirit with herself, for all the sons of Jehoram, except Ahaziah, had been put to death at an early day (xxii. 1), and only Joash survived of the males of the royal line Broken up, etc. These words most naturally imply actual violence done to the building, and not the results of mere neglect. The revenue of the temple had been turned over to Baal worship; and the vessels of the temple had been actually stolen, and carried away to the Baal temples erected in Judah. Enough had remained to allow the continuance of the regular temple service. See chap. xxiii.

Verses 8-10.—Chest—With a hole in the lid (2 Kings xii. 9) made under Jehoiada's inspection. This was to contain the money set apart solely for repairs, and thus to stimulate a freer giving Without the gate—In 2 Kings xii. 9 it reads: "Set it beside the altar, on the right side as one cometh into the house of the Lord." The altar was near the door within the court, but the box was just without the door, yet not in front of the altar and door, but to the side. There is no conflict. Rejoiced—The unanimity and heartiness of the response are thus strongly stated.

Verses 11-13.—The king's scribe and the high priest's officer—This was to put it in bags, and weigh it (2 Kings xii. 10) in readiness both to make report to the people, and to use it in payment for work. Day by day—every day. Masons and carpenters—Suggesting the greatness of the needed repairs.

I. The Design. Verse 4.—It respected a needed and important work, betokened the king's piety, and thus the value of that godly training which he had received in the family of the high priest.

II. The First Plan. Verses 5, 6.—(1.) It was promptly formed. The king did not content himself with a mere purpose, but as a man of business put the purpose into form, and so started it toward execution. (2.) It was vigorously urged. Committed to the proper agents for execution. Joash tried to infuse his own zeal into the agents. He followed those agents up, called them to account. One must not only form a plan for good works but must follow up that plan, and see that it does not end and die simply as a plan. (3.) It was a failure. Nothing came of it. The king had done his best, had tried honestly and earnestly, and had failed. He was doubtless disappointed and vexed. He seems to speak sharply even to the venerable Jehoiada. He throws the blame upon others.

III. The Occasion of the Design. Verse 7.—If the plan had failed because of the negligence of the agents, the design had been made necessary by the wickedness of his predecessor in the government.

IV. The Second Plan. Verses 8-13.—(1.) It is very noteworthy that the king formed a second plan. He might have insisted upon the first in a mixture of pride and obstinacy, refusing to own that he could have made a mistake. How often do we see that, and what mischief comes of it. Again, he might have given up the whole design, neither insisting on the old plan, nor trying a new. It was specially the business of the ministers of God's house to have the care of God's house. (2.) He learned from the failure of the first plan what was needed for success. There had been no separation before of the money for repairs from the money for current expenses. Three evils resulted; first, people would not give as much, not having a definite object in view; second, more money was used for current expenses than was really necessary; third, the agents executing the plan had not the same heart and zeal as when a specific end was before them. So the king remedies all by the plan of the box. (3.) Renewed effort was made to waken interest in the new plan. No plan for raising money, or anything else, is self-executing. (4.) Success was speedy and abundant. Get a man's heart, and you get his money. Men refuse to give money for God's service only because they have first refused to give their hearts. Hence covetousness is rightly called idolatry. It has been said that conversion has three stages—of the head, of the heart, and of the pocket.

So was the temple repaired, the king and people made glad, and God honored.—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, February 24, 1878.—Uzziah's pride punished.—2 Chron. xxvi. 16-23.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall"—Proverbs xvi. 18.

The Story of the Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

Joash was hid in the Temple when he was a baby, to keep his wicked grandmother from killing him. He lived there till he was seven years old; when the high priest, Jehoiada brought him out and crowned him king. The boy-king had passed nearly all his life in the house of God, and he loved it. But it was much broken and soiled; for, of late years, it had been treated badly, and its treasures taken for the idol Baal. But Joash had not much money; so he called the priests and Levites, and told them to go to all the cities of Judah, and collect money to repair the Temple. He said they must go every year till they had plenty, and to make haste. But they did not seem to care; so Joash told the priests who served in the Temple to take collections among those who came to worship. But the priests kept the money for themselves. When the Israelites were building the Tabernacle in the wilderness, the Lord told Moses that each one should pay half a shekel (about a quarter of a dollar). Josiah had a chest made, with a hole in the lid, and told Jehoiada to make the people bring this sum. Jehoiada opened the box every day and counted it; a writer wrote down the amount, and the money was given to the workmen who repaired the house of the Lord. There was enough left to make new basins, bowls, etc., for the altar.

Booths' Department.

Little Blue Bonnet.

It was not much of a bonnet, just big enough to cover the top of the shining little head. But it was light blue in colour, so that the eye saw it half a street away. However, the words, Little Blue Bonnet, in the mouths of the neighbours, really meant its wearer. This was Girtie Ansell, whose rather pale but lovely face, with her soft brown eyes, matched the bonnet very well.

She knew all the babies within a quarter of a mile of her parents' house. What is more, all the babies knew her. Every one of them had exchanged a smile and a kiss with her. It was through this that I first came to know of Girtie. One day I was passing across the dingy square in which her parents lived, and at the door of a house at the corner there was a woman nursing a very ill-tempered child.

"Oh dear!" the tired mother was saying, "I wish Little Blue Bonnet was here. She is the only one who can manage you when you are in your tantrums."

Before I got to the top of the street, I saw coming my way a little girl, not more than five years old, walking gravely along beside a not very clean and not very mild-looking dog. Its whitey-brown back rose quite up to her elbow. I instantly knew it must be Little Blue Bonnet, for she was wearing that very article on her head. She and the dog were talking;—I mean, she was talking, and the great animal carefully listening.

"If I were you," she was whispering as they went by me, "I would wash myself a bit whiter. There is plenty of water in the gutters after showers, if your tongue is not wet enough." I turned and followed close behind the two. The next words I clearly heard were these: "The last time I saw you you promised me you wouldn't fight with the other dogs. I asked you, and you gave me a lick, which meant yes. But here is a piece of hair gone from your neck, and the skin ever so red," stroking the part gently. "I doubt you have been quarrelling again." The whitey-brown dog turned his head still more towards her, and, shooting out a great tongue, licked her cheek. "Well," she said warningly, "you may kiss me this time, but remember I cannot let you do it again, if you bark and worry and bite other dogs. I should be

ashamed of you, a big nice dog like you." At the tone of the earlier words, he had drooped his large head, but he now again looked up into her face.

Just then, as she neared the street corner, the sound of the crying baby met her ears. She started, "That is Mrs. Watson's poor baby," she quickly said. "Good bye," stooping to stroke the dog. "I don't know your name, but be a good doggie." The reply was a fresh lick, and a vigorous embrace with the raised forelegs, from which she had to free herself. "Good-bye," she again said, wiping her face with one hand, and with the other turning his head down another street. Away she ran to the neighbour's door. Not a minute passed before the crying baby was laughing and crowing at Little Blue Bonnet standing swaying herself about on tiptoe before it on the door step.

But what I wanted to tell about Girtie Ansell was the way she helped a little water-cress seller. I looked out for the bonnet and the sweet little face under it whenever I went that way, and I often met her. We even got into talk. She could not pass anybody, whose eyes met hers, without a smile, and as I smiled back we soon were friends. The first time I spoke to her was either the day I saw her in the little square in the midst of a flock of hens fluttering and hopping round her for crumbs of bread, or else when she was helping a chased hurt cat down from a window-sill, where it had taken refuge. But I really must go on to tell about the water-cresses.

A little way round one of the corners of the square was a small shop where a man sold vegetables of all kinds. One morning when she was not at school, "Little Blue Bonnet" saw a boy, scarcely any older than herself, who had a wooden box strapped to his back, turning away from this man's shop, looking very downhearted. As was pretty sure to happen in such a case, she went to him, touching him softly on the shoulder. She had seen him before, and knew, little as she was, he sold water-cresses.

In answer to her asking him what was the matter, the little fellow looked at her not in a very well-pleased way at being spoken to. But nobody could keep ill-tempered looking at "Little Blue Bonnet." His grey eyes wavered as he said, "I haven't got any money this morning to pay for the cresses, and he won't trust me."

"Trust?" she asked. "Isn't that not paying for them?"

His face flushed and he said angrily, "But I should have come back and paid him as soon as I had sold 'em."

"Did you say so?"

"Yes."

Little Blue Bonnet looked embarrassed. She said, "Then, he wouldn't believe you?"

"No, he wouldn't."

"Had you told him a story some time?"

"No, I hadn't. And how can I go home, when little Jimmy is bad and crying for victuals? My money had to go this morning to buy him some stuff from the druggist's."

Blue Bonnet's eyes began to fill with tears. They had gone on a little way in talking, and were now in front of a door. "Aren't you going to sit down on this step and cry?" she asked. "Shall I sit down and cry with you?"

"Why, what good would that do?" said the lad.

However, as he had no cresses to sell, down he did sit, and she seated herself beside him. He did not quite cry, though he was not far from it. Little Blue Bonnet did shed some tears. At last, she spoke again:

"I wonder if he would let you have some cresses if I asked him? I could give him my orange penny on Saturday."

"Will you ask him?" cried the boy.

On her saying yes, he seized her hand, and nearly dragged her to the shop. There, standing with her chin just up to the board, she asked:

"Do you mean," laughed the man, "that you'll go bail for him,—that you'll pay if he never comes back again?"

"Yes," said Little Blue Bonnet; "you shall have my orange pennies."

The man put his hands to his sides, and laughed again. "Well," he said, "I know nothing of this lad; I expect he tells lies like all the rest of them. But I'll trust you, Little Blue Bonnet. I know you. Though you are the smallest customer I ever gave credit to yet.

Remember," he laughed, "you are in my debt till he comes back."

The lad's box was then partly filled with cresses, and with flashing eyes he pointed to the door step they had come from, saying to her, "You sit there till I come back. I'll show you how soon I'll be."

Not many minutes after this, Little Blue Bonnet's mother appeared on the scene. The greengrocer had sent a messenger for her, telling her of it all. She found Blue Bonnet quietly sitting on the step. The mother asked, "Why, what are you doing here?"

"I am in debt," was the calm answer, "and I have to sit here till a little boy comes back to pay."

The little boy did come back, and very soon, for he sold his cresses that morning more quickly than ever before. "You are an honest lad," said this surprised greengrocer. "I'll let you have cresses any time. But it is that little lady you have to thank for it."

The tiny fellow did stammer out some thanks to Little Blue Bonnet. But, as her mother led away, she did not seem to think she had done anything unusual.

PRUDENTIA.

All round the Year.

BY ELAINE GOODALE,

The Berkshire Poet, at Thirteen Years Old.

All round the year the sun shines bright, The pale moon sheds her softer light; The day a brilliant beauty shows, The night in drowsy stillness goes; The massive links of mountain chains, The dimpled swells of fertile plains, The boughs of trees, the roots of flowers, At least are always here, And Nature keeps her sacred powers All round the year.

All round the year the brave hearts beat, The ruddy limbs are strong and fleet; With youth and health the tokens lie Of glowing cheek and flashing eye; No chilling influence need we know In Summer's shine or Winter's snow; Warm hands to clasp, warm lips to press, Warm friends forever dear; Warm life, and love, and happiness All round the year.

All round the year the trusting soul May find the word of promise whole; The eye of Faith, once firmly stayed, No doubt can move, no sorrow shade; The flight of time, unknown above, Breaks not our Father's boundless love; Unbroken be the tranquil light That folds our lesser sphere— As ever pure, and calm, and bright, All round the year.

Then mourn not, friend, the cutting air, The field so white, the trees so bare; Let no false grief employ your tongue, Nor wish the year forever young; The flower must fade, the leaf must fall, But one great Power is over all; If, through the ceaseless round of change, One changeless Will appear, Unmoved, undaunted may we range All round the year.

—Sunday Afternoon.

The Bird with eight Legs.

"How many legs has a bird?" asked Fred, coming in from the garden.

"Two, of course," said May, laughing; "birds and hens, and everything with feathers."

"Well, I saw one fly off our grape arbor with eight legs."

"Frank Barton!" said May, in a tone of solemn rebuke.

"Yes, eight. I counted fairly, six up and two down."

"What sort of a bird?" asked May.

"A cat-bird. I heard him mew, just a little before, then he flew up. I thought he looked queer, and when he lighted, I counted all the legs, one—two—three—four—five—six—seven—eight; and away he went."

May stared, and then said: "Never a bird did!"

"I don't expect he has got more than two now," said Frank, after a little.

"Where are they?" asked May.

"The six up ones belonged to a grasshopper, said Fred. "He had a big one tight in his bill; he looked funny enough!"

"But," said honest May, "the bird only had two legs, after all."

"I said I saw him fly off with eight, and so I did," laughed Fred.

May laughed too.—Congregationalist.

Duty is the voice of God, and a man is neither worthy of a good home here, or a heaven, that is not willing to be in peril for a good cause.

Soon or late the strong needs the help of the weak.