

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lesson for 1878.

SUNDAY, October 6th, 1878.—Warning against Formalism.—Luke xiii. 22-30.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 24-27.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."—Luke xiii. 24.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Luke xiii. Tuesday, Matthew vii. 13-29. Wednesday, Matthew, xxv. 1-13. Thursday, Romans viii. 1-17. Friday, Acts xiii. 44-52. Saturday, Proverbs i. 24-33. Sunday, Revelation v.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Number of the saved. Vss. 22, 23. II. How to be saved. Vs. 24. III. When to be saved. Vss. 25-27. IV. Surprise of the lost. Vs. 28. V. "The last shall be first." Vss. 29, 30.

QUESTIONS.—Vss. 22, 23.—What question is put to Christ? By whom? With what motive? What is it to be saved? Acts xvi. 30, 31; Mark xvi. 16. On what did the Jews chiefly trust for salvation? John viii. 39; Luke xviii. 11, 12.

II. Vs. 24.—How does Jesus answer the question put to him? What is meant by "strive"? What other allusions similar to it are in the New Testament? 1 Cor. ix. 24-26; Heb. xii. 1. What is meant by the "strait" or narrow gate? Is it too narrow for any one to enter it who will? John vi. 37. For what must all, therefore, be diligent? 2 Pet. i. 10.

III. Vss. 25-27.—On what do many trust in vain for salvation? (With vs. 26 compare Matt. vii. 22.)

IV. Vs. 28.—How does the broad way, that begins with "eating, drinking, and making merry," end?

V. Vs. 29, 30.—Matt. viii. 11, 12.—How does this truth apply to-day? Isa. iii. 11. Whence shall they who are saved come? Vs. 30; Rev. v. 9.

How does this lesson guard us against presumption? How against despair?

NOTE.—From our present lesson, to Luke xix. 28, with very few exceptions, the record is peculiar to Luke, and forms a most valuable addition to the narratives of the other Evangelists.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 22.—Herod Antipas, son of that Herod called the Great, who was king at Christ's birth, was at this time "tetrarch of Galilee and Perea," and was watching the movements of Jesus in that spirit of mingled hatred and cunning which was displayed by him when Christ was sent to him for judgment by Pilate. Vss. 31, 32; xxiii. 8-11; Matt. xiv. 1-13. Cities and villages, the former were walled towns; the latter unwall. This, at least, was the more general distinction. Toward Jerusalem. Where he was so soon to be crucified.

Verse 23.—One.—It might be one of the apostles; it might be one who was not a disciple even. Lord, are there few that be saved? Mark, here, that this question is put to the Lord, and not to our own reason, or to our sympathies, or to "the spirit of the nineteenth century." It will be at least courteous, if having asked him, we allow him to answer. And is there really any one more fit to be asked—more able to answer? And is his answer false, if it was true? The meaning of the question must be found in the light of the Saviour's teaching, which very naturally gave rise to it. See chapter xii., as a sample. He had made prominent the danger of destruction—and that not a temporal, but an eternal destruction. If of this there was such danger, how obvious the question whether in fact from this there would be an escape by most, or by all. It is noteworthy that Christ had so revealed God's love as to leave room for the question. He said unto them. Did not direct his answer to the one asking him, but to all. Perhaps all shared the speculative curiosity prompting the question. Certainly all needed the practical lesson carried by the answer.

Verse 24.—On this and the following verses, compare the similar words spoken by our Lord, in the beginning of his ministry, given in Matt. vii. 13-23. Strive [ye] to enter in at [through] the strait [that is, narrow] gate [door]. The approved reading here gives "door," instead of "gate." The conception is that of a house or mansion (not city), within which is safety, without which there will soon be ruin, into which there is, for the present, opportunity to enter; but the open door is narrow, and very difficult of entrance. The word translated "strive" designates the strug-

gle of the athletes for mastery over each other. Exertion is needed, partly to find the door, partly to force a way through it when found. We march to heaven in single file. Salvation is a personal, individual matter. For [because] many, I say unto you [emphatic assurance], will seek to enter in, and shall not be able with such seeking, to enter in. The Gospel awakens a wide spread, if not universal interest, and stirs desires, and some kind and degree of endeavor for the good which it sets before mankind, even in those who do not truly obey it. By such the Saviour was thronged throughout his ministry. The inability was not absolute, and such as to excuse; but rather inherent in the sinful disposition and conduct.

Verse 25.—The master of the house. This represents Jesus, our Saviour. Is risen up, and hath shut to the door. He himself, of his own will, had given and continued the opportunity of salvation; and so also that he, by his own will and deed, will bring to an end the opportunity given. Ye begin to stand without. When opportunity of entrance has passed. And to knock, etc. The closing of the door will be an event which will startle out-siders into a vivid and frightful consciousness that they are outsiders, and will suddenly reveal to them the fact that the only door of entrance was the door not entered by them, and now closed against them. To this knocking belongs not the promise of xi. 9. I know you not whence ye are.—To "know" here, and usually in the like connections, is to know as a friend.

Verse 26.—Eaten and drunk in thy presence.—The emphasis is on the clause, "in thy presence." It was literally true of many in Christ's ministry that, while not his true disciples, they had "sat at meat with him." Thou hast taught in our streets. This, too, was literary true. But the principle is, that men are wont to regard themselves as the special friends of the Lord, on the evidence, not of the use made by them of the privileges of the Gospel, but rather of the enjoyment of those privileges themselves. A common, but a senseless and fatal delusion.

Verse 27.—But [and] he shall say.—Christ's view of the case. I tell you, Emphatic assurance. I know you not, etc. Emphatic repetition. The irreversible decision of a judge. Depart from me. The parley must end, because judgment has been given, and there is neither ground nor time for argument. All ye workers of iniquity. The ground of the judgment—on their side iniquity, on his, righteousness.

Verse 28. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.—This is the wages of sin, as described by Jesus Christ—REMORSE AND DESPAIR. Abraham, etc. The spiritual Israel.

Verse 29.—Here is a glance into the universal triumphs of the Gospel. Compare Rom. xi.

COURSE OF THOUGHT.—1. Through toil to sacrifice. 2. The question of curiosity: How many? 3. The answer to the conscience; "Strive to save thyself? 4. For the possibility of thy failure is seen in the fact that others fail. 5. The Lord who gives opportunity will also bring it to an end. 6. Opportunity wasted will never return, and a Lord disowned becomes a Lord disowning. 7. Not the enjoyment, but the improvement of privilege avails. 8. Destiny hinges on our personal relation to God not to the saints. 9. The solemn reversal.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, October 13th, 1878.—The Gospel Feast.—Luke xiv. 15-24. December, A. D. 29.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God."—Luke xiv. 15.

The Story of the Bible Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

Warning against Formalism.

In those Eastern cities the entrances to the houses are sometimes narrow gates. They have to be looked for to be found, and are opened only to those who knock; and when the sun goes down and the night comes on, they are shut and locked; it is then too late to get in. Jesus says that the way to heaven is like that; it is narrow; we cannot get in if we carry our sins; there is not room for them. We must strive hard; no half-hearted way of seeking; or we cannot

find it. By and-by it will be too late! The door will be shut! Then many will try to get in; they will knock and say, "Lord, Lord, open to us." But he will say "I do not know you." They will tell how they had heard him teach; but that is not enough; they should have come in before, while there was yet time. He will say, "I tell you, I do not know whence you are; depart from me." In that day there will be great sorrow; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth and bitter crying, but it will be of no use now. Many shall come from all lands, and shall sit down in heaven, but all who do not come in time shall be thrust out. There will be some who were poor and unhonored in this world who will be first there; and some who were first in riches and fame and honor here who will be among those who cannot enter there.

Youths' Department.

Fun with a Spider.

Spiders, in many respects, are just like other animals, and can be tamed and petted and taught a great many lessons which they will learn as rapidly as a dog or cat. But you must take the trouble to study their ways and get on the good side of them.

One day I had been reading in a book how spiders managed to get their webs across streams and roads, and from the top of one small tree to another. I went out and caught a large garden spider, one of those blue-gray sprawling fellows, and fixed him up for my experiment.

I took a stick about eighteen inches in length, and fastened a piece of iron to one end of it, so that the stick would stand up on that end of itself. Then I put this stick in the centre of a large tub half full of water, and placed the spider on the top of the stick. I wanted to see if he could get to the "land," which was the edge of the tub, without any help. He ran down first one side of the stick and then the other; each time he would stop when he touched the water, and shaking his feet as a cat does, he would run up again. At last he came to the conclusion that he was entirely surrounded by water—on an island in fact. After remaining perfectly quiet for a long while, during which I have no doubt he was arranging his plans, he began running around the top of the stick, and throwing out great coils of web with his hind foot. In a few minutes, little fine strings of web were floating away in the slight breeze that was blowing. After a little, one of these threads touched the edge of the tub and stuck fast, as all spider webs will. This was just what Mr. Spider was looking for, and the next minute he took hold of his web and gave it a jerk as a sailor does a rope, when he wishes to see how strong it is, or make it fast.

Having satisfied himself that it was fast at the other end, he gathered it in till it was tight and straight, and then ran on it quickly to the shore; a rescued castaway, saved by his own ingenuity. Spiders are not fools, if they are ugly, and He who made all things, has a thought and care for all. The earth is full of the knowledge of God.—Cong.

The Bitter Fruit.

In the days of King Solomon there lived among the Jews a wise man named Lokman. Many stories are told about him, and various fables and parables are said to have been written by him. He was a native of Ethiopia; and after being a slave in many countries, he was finally sold among the Israelites. Some suppose him to have been the same with Aesop, and all agree in saying that he was a truly good man, "remarkable for the love of God and reverence of his holy name."

"Always speak the truth without disguise," said he, "Strictly keep your promises," and "Do not meddle with what does not concern you."

Good advice, certainly; but what I want to tell particularly is the following incident. His master once gave him a very bitter kind of lemon, called the coluquintida; he ate it without making wry faces or speaking a word.

"How was it possible for you to swallow so nauseous a fruit?" asked the master.

Lokman answered, "I have received so many sweets from you that it is not

wonderful I should have swallowed the only bitter fruit you ever gave me."

The master was so much charmed with this reply that he gave Lokman his liberty.

The beautiful answer might teach us a lesson. We take the gifts from our heavenly Father with a smiling face; but when he sees best for our good to send us something we do not like, our countenance falls, and even if we do not speak, our sullen discontent is apparent to all.—S. S. Visitor.

Binding of the feet in China.

The custom of binding the feet in China does not prevail among the Manchu Tartars, who are the dominant race but only among the pure Chinese; and it is observed with more strictness in the southern than in the northern provinces. Among the pure Chinese, it is only the labouring women, and those who are not respectable in character, who have feet of the natural size; and among the respectable women there is as great a difference between the large and the small footed as between the coarsest labouring woman and the most cultivated lady in America.

The small feet are not confined to any class, but may be adopted by any family who can afford it. It is a mark of gentility, and the labouring people are anxious to bind their little girls' feet that they may have a chance of marrying into a class above them. In the same family are often found girls with the large feet and those with small feet. The latter must be supported as ladies, while the former can never be anything but servants.

There is a great difference in the dress of the two classes, though they may belong to the same family. The lady with the small feet wears long garments reaching to the floor; she may dress in silks of bright colours, may wear costly ornaments, and dress her hair in elegant style. The large-footed woman wears short pantalettes just covering the knee, usually goes barefooted, and can wear bright colours only on her wedding day, when the garment is usually hired for the occasion.

The degree of compression varies in different provinces. In some the foot is reduced to about half the natural size, and in some it is made much smaller. In some the compressed foot is only simulated, the fullgrown foot being bandaged and the toes thrust into a little shoe, so that the woman walks on tip-toe. Sometimes the peculiar hobbling gait of the small foot is secured by putting a block of wood under the centre of the shoe. Where this is the custom the labouring women go with natural feet until their work is done and then assume their imitation feet.

Different accounts are given of the origin of this dreadful custom. One story is that many years ago an empress of the Flowery Kingdom had club feet, and therefore ordered all the ladies of her court to bind their feet to keep her company. Others say that many centuries ago the men became jealous of their wives, and ordered their feet bound to keep them in seclusion. Another account is that eleven hundred years ago one of the wives of an emperor had naturally very small feet, and, conceiving it to be a great beauty, she bound them to make them still smaller, and her influence made all ladies covet small feet. But the practice has obtained so long that probably the real origin is forgotten.

The binding of the feet begins when the child is six or seven years old, and is a very painful process. The toes, with the exception of the great toe, are turned under the foot and held there by cloth bandages, while the heel is pressed forward towards the great toe in a way virtually to break the instep. Once a day the bandage is removed, and then the quickening of the circulation causes fearful pain. After four or five years the foot is dead and the pain ceases; but the bandages must be continued through life to give firmness enough to the foot to enable one to walk at all. At best, however, it is a disagreeable, hobbling gait, and often the lady must be helped by a cane, or a servant upon whose shoulder she leans. Notwithstanding all this trouble and pain, mothers insist upon the operation, and even the little girls are anxious to have it begun, so dreadful is it in China, as well as in other places, not to be stylish and fashionable.

When missionaries first went to China, it did not seem wise to interfere directly with a custom so firmly established; but with the progress of Christian principles, the natives themselves are beginning to feel its wickedness and absurdity. At a meeting of the Foochow Methodist Episcopal Mission, held in 1875, it was resolved to forbid altogether the binding the feet of children in families connected with the church. To prevent the reproach connected with the large feet, the missionaries invented a peculiar kind of shoe, in imitation of that worn by the empress, who, being a Tartar, of course has natural feet. This shoe is called the Christian shoe, and those who wear it are understood to have embraced the foreign religion.

Miscellaneous.

A floating bee house has been constructed by Mr. Perrine, a Chicago honey dealer, large enough to accommodate two thousand hives, which he is having towed up the Mississippi river from Louisiana to Minnesota, keeping pace with the blossoming of the flowers and thus stimulating the honey making ability of his bees. This is a European experiment repeated.

The eighty-third annual convention of the Congregational churches at Vermont has been held at Rutland. The number of congregations reported was 200. Considerable excitement was caused by the introduction of the following resolutions which was referred to a committee and postponed till next year: "To be a pastor of a Congregational church, and to claim fellowship with Congregational churches and ministers after any substantial part of the historic belief has been repudiated, is a breach of faith."

Arrangements have been completed by which four 100-ton guns, purchased by the Government from Sir W. Armstrong, will shortly be ready for mounting on board any ship that may be prepared to carry them.

A BAPTISM IN THE GREEK CHURCH.—An English clergyman spending his summer vacation among the hospitals in Southern Russia, describes his attendance on a baptism in a Greek church. The godfather held a lighted candle with the child in his arms. Prayers were offered—an exorcism of Satan from the child, which ended by the godfather's spitting into the face of the ejected spirit. The child was then undressed, anointed, and submerged three times in the font. Then the child was taken behind a screen. The priest with a spoon took from a box some small pieces of consecrated bread, poured some wine over it, and then administered it to the child. This was the Lord's Supper. The Greek Church, it seems, is not afraid to commune with its own baptized members—a lesson for Pedobaptists, especially those who complain of what is called "close communion."

THE LATEST WRINKLE.—Dr. S. H. Tyng, jr., of New York, is to be credited with the latest novelty in religious work. He calls it a "Gospel Garden." It is a sort of Gilmore's Garden on a small scale, minus the beer and plus a sermon. A hall near Seventh Avenue and Thirty-Fourth street, which was used as a mission chapel during the winter, has been fitted up with a fountain, floral baskets, urns of plants and whatever will give it an inviting appearance. To the ceiling are attached long linen fans, which are kept all the time in motion, and supply a cool and refreshing atmosphere. We do not see why the idea is not a good one. There are a large number of people who will be attracted to the hall on a hot evening by the inviting coolness of the place; and it not infrequently happens that such chance-comers are reached and permanently influenced by the sermon that they hear. The practical results of the experiment are excellent thus far, quite a number of conversions being reported.—N. Y. Examiner.

An industrious bookseller at Wurzburg has collected, according to the Academy, statistics of the newspapers of the different countries in the world, with the object of showing the proportionate representation of distinctively Roman Catholic opinions in the periodical press. It appears that Europe can boast of 13,960 newspapers and periodicals, of which only about 1 in 14, or 937, are Roman Catholic in tendency. The largest proportion is shown by Belgium—154 out of 250. Great Britain and France, a Protestant and a Roman Catholic country, have the same number of Roman Catholic journals, 42; only in Britain it is 42 out of 2,500, in France 42 out of 2,000. Germany exhibits the largest issue of newspapers, of which 1 in 14 is Roman Catholic; Austria, with a third of the total issue of Germany, shows 1 in 13. Here again the difference between the Protestant and the Roman Catholic Empire is very slight. Italy has 1 in 7; Spain only 1 in 8. Turning to North America, we find a total of 8,500, somewhat more than Britain, France, and Germany together, of which 113 are Roman Catholic; while the great Roman Catholic continent of South America shows, out of 1,000, only 11 newspapers, representing its dominant religion. Neither Africa nor Australia has a single Roman Catholic periodical, while Asia has 1 out of 375.