

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lesson for 1878.

SUNDAY, August 25th, 1878.—The Friend of Sinners.—Luke vii. 40-50.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 41-43.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"This man receiveth sinners."—Luke xv. 2.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Luke vii. 40-50. Tuesday, Luke xviii. 9-13. Wednesday, John viii. 1-11. Thursday, John xii. 1-9. Friday, vs. 47; 1 Cor. vi. 9-11. Saturday, Matthew xviii. 23-35. Sunday, Psalm xxxiii.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Jesus applies to Simon. Vss. 40-46. II. Forgives the loving one. Vss. 47, 48. III. Wonder excited. Vss. 49, 50.

QUESTIONS.—What other Simon than the one in the lesson entertained Christ? What other woman anointed him?

I. How do you account for Simon's inviting Jesus to be his guest? How do you account for our Saviour's acceptance of his invitation? Who entered Simon's house besides Jesus? What did she at once do? What doubt did Simon then have of Jesus? What parable did Jesus utter in reply? Who were denoted here by the creditor and by the two debtors? What hospitalities had Simon either forgotten, or designedly passed by? Did Christ blame him for this oversight? To what use did Christ put it?

II. On what did Jesus ground his forgiveness of the woman? Of what was her love the evidence? What was really the reason of the woman's pardon? vs. 50.

III. Vs. 49, 50.—Who alone can forgive sin? Mark ii. 7. What, then, must Jesus be?

What brought the woman in our lesson to Jesus? With what feelings must she have gone away? What Scripture does this lesson verify? Isa. i. 18; lv. 7; Rom. v. 20.

After the miracle at Nain, Christ dined with a Pharisee named Simon, and was anointed by a woman who was a sinner. Simon the Pharisee, and the woman who was a sinner, as related in this lesson, are not to be confounded with Simon the leper, and Mary, who anointed Christ later in his ministry. Matt. xxvi. 6-13; Mark xiv. 3-9; John xii. 1-9. Mary Magdalene (Luke viii. 2), is regarded as having been a woman of rank and quality. She seems to have been at, or to have shared, the expense of the spices for the Lord's burial. Mark xvi. 1. As probably a virtuous woman, her character is wholly misconceived by the Magdalens of all.

EXPOSITION.—Compare the much later, but strikingly similar scene, recorded in John xii. 2-8; Mark xiv. 3-9; and Matt. xxvi. 6-13. Read verses 36-39.

Verse 40.—Jesus answering.—See vs. 39. It was not so much to a question, as to a secret charge that Jesus did not know the character of the woman at his feet, and therefore could not be a true prophet. Isa. xi. 3, 4. Simon. Singularly, the same name as that of the host in Matt. xxvi. 6-13. But this was a very common name among the Jews. Nine of this name are mentioned in the New Testament; and of these, two were among the Twelve. I have somewhat to say unto thee. He arrests attention. Master. Teacher. A title of Christ, a Prophet, and used by Simon in courtesy, if not in faith. Say on. He could not decline, yet may have suspected something uncomplimentary.

Verse 41.—There was a certain creditor.—This is doubtless a parable, intended to be so understood. Five hundred pence. The word translated "penny" designates a coin worth fifteen cents. The two sums were thus \$75, and \$7.50; though a dollar had then at least ten times the relative or commercial value that it now has with us. The creditor represents God, the debtors sinful men, and the debts sin—either simply as sin, or as known to conscience. The difference of indebtedness, where man's indebtedness to God is compared with man's indebtedness to man, is represented as far greater. Matt. xviii. 24, 28.

Verse 42.—Nothing to pay.—Bankrupt. The exact condition of every sinner before God. Frankly forgave. Freely; or, as the literal translation is, graced them both. Tell me, etc. Simon, by this time, must have seen Christ's drift, and felt that his guest knew his heart.

Verse 43.—I suppose.—He was sharp enough to see that it was instantly to be turned against him. Thou hast rightly

judged. The man's own truth shall correct his error.

Verse 44.—Turned to the woman.—They reclined at table, with the left arm resting on a low couch, and the feet, not under the table, but extending back. Seest thou this woman? both the woman and the censor must be looked squarely in the face. I entered, etc. Simon: "Accounting, probably, the invitation itself as sufficient honor done to his guest, he had neither given him water for the feet (Gen. xviii. 4; Judg. xix. 21); nor offered him the kiss of peace (Gen. xxxiii. 4; Ex. xviii. 7); nor anointed his head with oil, as was ever the custom at festivals (Ps. xxxiii. 5; cxli. 5; Matt. vi. 17)." The entrance of the woman unbidden, agrees well with the freer customs of the East. Many similar examples are recorded by travelers. Washed my feet with tears. Tears in penitence for salvation. Observe by contrast the cause of Mary's tears, in John xii. 1-8. There it is the fulness of blessing received that causes tears of gratitude. Mark the contrasts.

Verses 45, 46.—Mark here the contrasts: No single kiss, "ceased not to kiss"; the head, where the kiss of equality is imprinted; the feet, in token of profoundest reverential honor. No anointing—anointing, perhaps, abundantly.

Verse 47.—Wherefore.—In view of these facts. Her sins. Hers, in suggested, and not pleasant, contrast to his. Which are many. Though perhaps the guilt, as God judged, might have been far less than Simon's. For she loved much. This is stated, not as the reason why she was forgiven, but as the reason why Jesus can declare her to have been forgiven, on Simon's own principle. To whom little is forgiven, etc. Love is a conscious exercise, and springs from conscious relationship—from the appreciation of relations and blessings, and not from the relations and blessings simply by themselves. That the love of penitent gratitude is proportionate to the conscious experience of forgiving mercy, does not imply that great love to God is impossible save to those who have greatly sinned. The life of Jesus himself forever disproves such a view.

Verse 48.—He said, etc.—Declaring to her an experience already her own, but not before assured fully to her own heart.

Verse 49.—They that sat at meat.—The host's friends, and Pharisees of like spirit with himself. They doubtless sympathized with Simon in his defeat. Also. Or, even as though he were God. Thus is implied a denial of Christ's divinity.

Verse 50.—Said to the woman.—To assure her against the discouraging and depressing effect of such a question and implied charge. Thy faith hath saved thee. God saved her through her faith, which was her reception of his favor—her union with Christ. Go in peace. Heed not the fears of your own heart, or the taunts of these enemies.

COURSE OF THOUGHT.—We have to-day a false charge to be answered, the principle of the answer established, the evidence given, the open declaration made.

I. The charge.—Verse 40.—Compare verses 36-39. (1.) It was a double charge—against the woman, as morally unfit to come near a prophet; and against Jesus, as proved to be no prophet, but a fraud, because he allowed her to come thus near. (2.) It was a secret charge—kept in his own heart, not spoken. There are such charges often. (3.) It was a charge perfectly known to the Lord. There are eyes upon us—unseen eyes, which see the unseen within us, even better than we see it, even much that we see not.

II. The Principle.—Verses 41-43.—(1.) It is brought out in order to answer the charge against the defenceless penitent, not against himself. Jesus is the "Advocate." He undertakes and manages the cause of the helpless disciple. (2.) Incidentally the charge against himself is refuted. He shows that he knows the heart of the accuser. A fore-gleam of final judgment—when no man can answer his Judge. (3.) The accuser is made to see and own the principle which refutes him. (4.) The principle is, that the intensity of penitent love is proportioned to the sense of forgiven sin; and hence, that penitent love is the clear evidence of such

forgiveness. (5.) The right answer is approved and confirmed by the Lord. The harmony of conscience and Divine law. The answer of conscience to the word, and of the word to conscience.

III. The Evidence.—Verses 44-46.—(1.) The principle established was silently carried into, and carried through, the statement of evidence. (2.) The evidence is put plainly before the eyes of the accuser—"Seest thou this woman?" (3.) It was made in a way to expose his sin and error together. The error had sin as its root, and Christ would tear out root and plant together. It was not pleasant for Simon, and surely not for Christ. (4.) It was brought out, in a series of sharp and manifest contrasts between Simon's conduct and the "sinner's."

IV. The Declaration.—Verses 47-50.—(1.) It was based on the solid facts in evidence—"Wherefore." Men now call out for facts. There are moral facts, involving principles of righteousness. (2.) It was the application of the established principle to the facts in evidence. Simon had affirmed the principle; Simon could not deny the facts. Christ's declaration brought facts and principle together. (3.) It was announced both to him and to her. (4.) It stirred up enmity. So does the word and work of grace even now. (5.) This enmity might not disturb the peace of the forgiven one.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, September 1st, 1878.—Return of the Seventy.—Luke x. 17-24.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see."—Luke x. 23.

The Story of the Bible Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

A rich man named Simon invited Jesus to dine with him. Simon was a Pharisee, one of those who make a great show of religion, but do not really love God. A woman who was well known as a great sinner came in and, going behind Jesus, began to wash his feet, not with water, but with her tears, and to wipe them not with a towel, but with her hair. She cried much because she was sorry for her sins. Then she kissed his feet and poured costly ointment on them. Simon was angry when he saw this woman show so much love for Jesus, and he thought, "If this man was as wise as people say he is, he would have known what kind of woman this is." But Jesus not only knew all the bad things she had done, but he saw into Simon's proud heart. So he said, "Simon, I have something to say to thee." Simon said, "Say on." Then Jesus told him of two men who owed money; one owed much, the other little, but neither had anything to pay with, and the man they owed said to both, "You need not pay me." Which would love the man most? Simon said, "The man who owed the most." Jesus said, "That is right." Then he showed Simon how he had not brought him water to wash in, or given him a kiss, but she had done more than this. Then said Jesus to the woman, "Thy sins are forgiven." Simon and his friends were angry. They thought he had no power to forgive sins, but Jesus spoke again to the woman: "Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace."

We are gratified to learn that at the request of an established publishing house, Rev. William Cathcart, D. D., author of "The Papal System" and "The Baptism of the Ages," has undertaken the preparation of a Cyclopaedia of the Baptists. It will comprise sketches of eminent Baptists and Baptist Institutions all over the world, and will be a complete magazine of all that relates to the growth, the history, the biography, and the literature of the denomination. It will be similar in size and style to the "Cyclopaedia of Methodism" prepared by bishop Simpson. A number of eminent writers in the denomination have already promised their co-operation in the preparation of the work. It will probably be brought out within three years.

Church attendance in Boston. It has been ascertained by actual count that the total average attendance at 10 of the leading churches of Boston is 7,593, the full seating capacity of the churches being 12,950. The largest attendance was at Tremont Temple, which, with a seating capacity of 2,000, had for four Sundays an average attendance of 2,093. The average attendance at the Park Street Church was a little over 400.

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

A Holiday at Grand River, C. B.

Over a sea of almost unruffled smoothness, and under a cloudless sky, a pastor and his family passed in a white-walled, white-winged schooner from Halifax Harbor to an apology for a harbour at L'Ardoise, Cape Breton. This was retasting "Old Times." Is it not good for wearied brains, unstrung nerves and exhausted flesh to quit the city, not by the thundering screeching train, or the bustling thudding steamer, but by an old-fashioned vessel, accustomed to depend on the breezes of the heavens? The worn flesh and spirit bless the sails that flap so leisurely, and the sea that moves so gently, and so deliberately, inviting the repose and rest desired and sought. By day and by night the book of nature is open, and its unlettered and delightful chapters can be read leisurely, and without fatigue. It is a privilege to get an opportunity to look at the stars.

ARRIVAL AT L'ARDOISE.

About four o'clock on Sabbath afternoon, after a gentle rocking of three days on the surface of an undulating sea, the keel of the Sea Way, grated on the bottom, inside of a block of a break-water, detached from the shore, in front of the little French fishing village of L'Ardoise; and there she stuck, and there from choice we all remained with one of the kindest of sailing masters and best behaved crews that ever manned a sea going vessel. Not a loud word, nor a vulgar word, nor an unkind word did we hear while our home was in the Sea Way. No sooner had the vessel grounded, that the harbor was all astir with little fishing boats, filled with shouting chattering boys. We learned that the strange language was a compound of English, Gaelic and French. Whatever defects it may have had, it certainly lacked nothing in fluency. Had we not known it in any other way, this liberty on the Sabbath would have informed us that we had not arrived at a place inhabited by the followers of John Knox; for neither he nor his Bible teaches his children to keep Sabbath afternoon in this fashion.

Joseph Mattheson Esq., and his kind wife shewed us no little kindness. They opened their doors to us, and their horse and carriage was put at our service, to transport us seven miles across the peninsula to Grand River. Mr. M. will be a candidate in the coming election, in the interests of the Government, for the Local Legislature.

ARRIVAL AT GRAND RIVER.

At this point the elements reminded the household how much discomfort might have been suffered during the three days which had passed so pleasantly. A cold driving rain gave all hands a hearty welcome. The kindness in the heart of Hector Murchison, Esq., our bachelor-Post-master, transported a cooking stove from his kitchen to the kitchen of the little white cottage on the hill. Fuel, contributed before hand by the kindness of John Murchison Esq., soon burned in the stove and blazed in an open fire-place. Who ever saw the place so dull that would not be cheered by a glowing fire on the hearth?

THE CHANGE OF OCCUPANTS EXPERIENCED BY THE WHITE COTTAGE ON THE HILL.

Less than a year ago, where now a Baptist minister and his family sit warming themselves and enjoying an asylum from a dreary rain, there sat a Presbyterian pastor and his beloved wife, passing their twentieth year among those whose love and kindness they had enjoyed and for whom they had laboured cheerfully for that period. The common enemy, and the last to be conquered, came and the pastor went to his grave, and his widow went away weeping to make her home, and to remember twenty years experience and its abrupt termination, among the dear ones of her own kindred.

Up and down this Grand River and East and West scores of households mourn the loss of Mr. Ross and the removal of Mrs. Ross. I wondered why an aged woman who speaks no English shook my hand with such demonstrations of joy; but it was explained afterwards when I learned that she was reminded of visits from her pastor which ceased about a year ago. Another aged widow,

who knows no English burst into weeping after giving her jug of milk to cheer the strangers, and explained her tears by uttering the words "Mr. Ross Gaelic."

THE PEOPLE.

The grand parents and most of the older parents came originally from the Highlands of Scotland. Before a door I stepped on the upper millstone of a hand-mill that had ground oats to make porridge in Scotland a century ago, and was brought to this place to do similar duty, but it has been superceded by larger stones driven by the power of water. Those were not delicate fingers nor tender feet that Rossshire sent to Grand River to clear away the forest and catch fish. If any one doubts this, let him engage a brave old widow of about four score years, as I did, to guide me along some difficult miles one hot morning. Had it not been for sheer shame, I should have cried, "moderation" as the old woman, who in her younger days trained the Celtic limbs on the braes of Rossshire, seemed to fly along the ways, causing me to toil, pant, perspire almost to breathlessness while she carried on a rattling conversation in broken English illustrating her points in all kinds of ingenious ways, as she did by stooping to take some earth between her thumb and fore finger and snapping it away to shew that some poor shiftless fellow who had come to the place, did not own as much land as she had just snapped from her fingers: let the doubter of the toughness of the immigrant Celts to Grand River look out on Sabbath morning, and see their old men and women coming in on foot from miles around in all directions to worship. I saw an old lady begin a seven miles walk one evening with her shoes and stockings under her arm.

The line of travel is miles to the north and the shallowness of the coast and harbours keeps away the strangers that would come by sea, so this people have been left to self-development and culture. The Bible, the minister and the public worship have been the chief agencies.

They enter the Church at eleven o'clock on Sabbath morning; till about one they worship God in Gaelic: from that time till about three they worship God in English, and from that time till nearly four a part of the congregation study the Bible; then they go to their homes, situated at every point within a distance of fifteen miles. Having been trained in the West, and taught when on foot to look out for my own life, I kept my eyes behind me on returning from church for the purpose of quick dodging, to get out of the way of horses, dashing off under the crack of the whip, and the touch of the spur; but to my joyful surprise the young bloods at Grand River, do not know that after worship is over they have a right to splash mud on one's Sunday clothes, whirl dust into one's eyes, and make one trust to one's nimble heels to keep one's head from bothering the hoofs of horses and the wheels of newly painted waggons. No, no, the young men, the middle aged men and the old men at Grand River are of the opinion, and act upon it, that people in fact have some rights. They make their horses walk till after they are out of the crowd. I was astonished, I exclaimed, What an unlooked for triumph of Christianity!

The warm Celtic hearts of the people overflow with kindness. Milk, butter, fresh eggs, and fresh fish are supplied us and all pay is spurned except in some rare instances money is accepted for eggs and butter. In return, contrary to my instructions I have taken on two Sabbaths, the English service for Mr. McQuarrie, the schoolmaster, who preaches in the absence of the minister.

All the people are Presbyterians, I have seen only one Baptist and that one came to meeting from a distance of fifteen miles, when she was on a visit. This may not be true, some of those fine mornings, if one man does not curb incipient enquiry which is evidently at work in him, as was demonstrated by the fact that he asked me, Where in the Bible, they were told to "shake" water on the babies where they baptized them, as their ministers did. I, of course, told him I never saw such a passage in the bible. If the enquiry dies there, he will remain a Presbyterian, if it lives and flourishes he is in great danger of being shaken out of Presbyterianism into Baptist faith.