

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1878.

SUNDAY, April 7th, 1878.—Josiah's Early Piety.—2 Chron. xxxiv. 1-8.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 1-3.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Remember thy Creator in days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."—Ecclesiastes xii. 1.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 1-8. Tuesday, 2 Tim. i. Wednesday, 1 Sam. iii. Thursday, 1 Kings xiii. 1-10. Friday, Proverbs ii. Saturday, Ecclesiastes xii. Sunday, 1 John v.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Josiah. Vs. 1. II. His character. Vs. 2. III. His deeds. Vs. 3-8.

QUESTIONS.—Who succeeded Manasseh? Who succeeded Amon?

Vs. 1. Who was Josiah's mother? What made Josiah so good a boy? 1 Cor. iv. 7.

Vs. 2. Whose example did Josiah follow? Why is piety in youth praiseworthy? For what was Josiah's youthful piety remarkable? What makes the young so generally uneven in spirit? Vs. 2.

Vs. 3-8.—How old was Josiah when he began to destroy idolatry? What idolatries did he put away? Where did he strew the dust of the idols? Why did he burn the bones of the priests upon their altar? To what did Josiah now turn his thought? How long had the temple been without repairs? What things are observable in the progress of these repairs?

Talk About.—The marked tendencies of good and evil in children.—Influences that correct these tendencies.—The law of God the guide of youth.—Usefulness measured by labor for the public good.—Nations never so prosperous and happy as when the righteous rule.

In the accession of the youthful Josiah a better day dawned upon Judah. He surpassed his most religious predecessors, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, and Hezekiah, in zeal for the reformation of the national religion. He totally extirpated idolatry, not merely in Judah, but throughout all the land. The vessels of the temple that had been put to unhallowed uses were consumed; and the worship of the host of heaven was suppressed; the filthy rites of the Sodomites were forbidden; all the high places were destroyed; the bones of idolatrous priests were disinterred and burned to ashes. "A second time the kingdom of Judah seemed to revive to vigorous and enduring life."—Milton. Most blessed was Josiah's influence upon his people. "And all his days they departed not from following the Lord, the God of their fathers." 2 Chron. xxxiv. 13.

EXPOSITION.—With the account of Josiah's reign here given, we should compare that in 2 Kings xxii, xxiii, and the first few chapters of Jeremiah's prophecy which discloses the moral and religious condition of the nation at the time. The account in Kings is in part identical, but there are fewer references than in Chronicles to the order of time.

Verse 1.—Josiah.—See also Zephaniah, who lived at this time. The name means Jehovah heals—a fit name for this king. Eight years old. Of course the actual duties of government were at first performed by another, or others, a regent, or council. From the mention of the twelfth year, in verse 3, it is suggested that twenty may have been the lawful age. Josiah's father, Amon, was murdered when twenty-four years old (xxxiii. 20, 24), and hence was sixteen years old at Josiah's birth. The mother's name was Jedidah. One and thirty years. A long reign, yet if we take out twelve years of minority, it leaves only nineteen years of actual rule. The king was slain in his prime, when only thirty-nine years old.

Verse 2.—This verse is intended to set forth the course of the man in his entire life, and his character as revealed by that course. The narrative following is an exposition of this verse. The literal meaning of right, and of the word so translated, is straight, and thus well fits the description of his life as a passage along a way, without stepping aside to right or left. David his father. See xxix. 2, where, as here, David is called the king's father, because the integrity of that remote ancestor reappears. Josiah's own father was a monster of iniquity. xxxiii. 22, 23. Probably Josiah

had been providentially put under the tuition of some godly priest or prophet, and his mother also may have been a godly woman, for the worst of men sometimes have the best of wives.

Verse 3.—In the eighth year of his reign, etc. When sixteen years old. Here was a case of genuine conversion in early life, for the expression "began to seek," etc., naturally points to the crisis in his religious character. Began to purge, etc. Perhaps he now first came to act as king. He "began" then. The business extended through many years, and hence in Kings is recorded after the account of the discovery of "the book of the law," six years later. That discovery greatly quickened the king's zeal. He began, very fitly, at the very centre and core of his kingdom, but afterward went even beyond its limits (vs. 6). High places. This may include the structures built for worship on the high places, and that whether for the worship of Jehovah or of idols. Manasseh's repentance and reform we saw to be enforced, external, and partial. Much of irregular and false worship remained at his death, and Amon hastily brought in a whole flood of additional corruption. Hence the state of things implied by this verse.

Verse 4.—Baalim.—Plural of Baal either because Baal was represented with many images, or with different characters. In his presence. The king showed his hearty determination by his personal presence. The images that were on high, etc. Margin "sun-images." Baal was regarded as the sun-god, and was thus represented, as Ashtoreth was the moon-goddess. See 2 Kings xxiii. 5; Zeph. i. 4, 5. Brake in pieces, and made dust, etc. Thus showing that he would utterly abolish corrupt worship. Upon the graves, etc. Cemeteries were places of uncleanness. Compare 2 Kings xxiii. 6.

Verses 5-7.—The bones of the priests.—Taken from the sepulchres. See the explanation in 2 Kings xxiii. 16, and 1 Kings xiii. 2. The mattocks. Rather, "in their wastes," or "ruins."

Verse 8.—Shaphan.—Frequently mentioned in Jeremiah. Called in 2 Kings xxii. 3, "the scribe," a high officer. The repair was required, in part for the buildings around the court, and in part for the utensils and furnishing of the temple, probably also for the temple building itself. See vs. 11, and 2 Kings xxii. 6. On the repair of the temple by Joash two hundred and twenty-three years before, see xxiv.

The title of our lesson is "Josiah's Early Piety." The Scripture of the lesson, however, treats of his entire reign. It gives, first, a general estimate of his course; and, second, facts justifying that estimate. These facts are his good beginnings, his abolition of false worship, and his establishment of the true worship.

I. The Estimate.—Verses 1, 2.—(1.) The time. Long enough to form and test character, whether good or ill. (2.) Josiah's course was right in the sight of the Lord. It therefore sprang from a right spirit and character, for God's eye is on the heart, which he "searches." (3.) His character and conduct conformed not to his own father's, but to a remote and godly ancestor's. The children of wicked parents need not themselves be wicked, and one may be powerfully influenced for good even by a remote ancestor. (4.) His course was persistently consistent, straight-forward to the very end.

II. The Beginnings.—Verse 3.—(1.) The first sixteen years of the king's life is mainly unrecorded experience. The streams are fed by springs whose waters come out of the unseen and hidden places. (2.) At sixteen was conversion, the beginning, so far as appears, of his future life and labors. The earnest turning of the boy's whole soul to know God, and to do his will, a thorough, personal work. (3.) At twenty he began to correct religious abuses in the state. This doubtless was as soon as he had official authority in his own hands. The inward and personal preparation appears thus in the external official action.

III. Destruction.—Verses 4-7.—(1.) Note the fact of destruction. Holiness hates as intensely as it loves; its antagonism is as strong as its devotion. To love the right is to hate the wrong, and the spirit which moves one to build up the right, therein moves to tear

down the wrong. (2.) The nature of the destruction. He demolished that which had no right to be, and which he, as king, had both right and duty to cause not to be. (3.) The extent of the destruction. Thorough work, and that through the whole kingdom.

IV. Construction.—Verse 8.—The true was put in place of the false. Men are made for worship. A false faith must be battered down only that the true faith may have place and power.—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, April 14th, 1878.—The Scriptures found and Searched.—2 Chron. xxxiv. 14-22.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life."—John v. 39.

Youths' Department.

Dark Days.

(Concluded.)

Dick, scared and horrified at the idea of a doctor being needed for Polly, hurried off in the gathering darkness to Dr. Stanley's house. He rang twice before the bell was answered, and then the maid just opened the door a crack, and, to his timid questions, answered, "Not at home," and shut it again with a bang; so Dickie, miserable and shivering, sat down in the light of the surgery lamps and cried.

He fancied he had been sitting there for hours, when a carriage stopped quite close to him, and a gentleman jumped out and ran up the steps. Dick slunk away and crouched up in a corner, but not before the gentleman had seen him, and stooped to touch his shoulder.

"What is it, my boy?" he said; "do you want to see Dr. Stanley?"

At the voice and touch, all Dick's troubles broke loose and overwhelmed him. "Oh yes, I do," he said, drying his eyes; "and, please Sir, he's not at home—and Polly's raging in fever—and I can't put baby to bed, and Mrs. O'Flannighan will have to go to Billy; please, Sir, if you're a doctor, couldn't you come and help us?"

"What a dreadful state of affairs!" said the gentleman, in a pleasant, cheery voice. "Yes, I am a doctor, and I can spare ten minutes to come and see Miss Polly if you like. Here! jump into the carriage, and tell me where to drive to."

"Number 10 Crowe's Alley," said Dick, briskly, "up two flights, in the garret;" and so he drove away side by side with one of the best men and one of the cleverest doctors in London, to the dingy room in Crowe's Alley, where Polly, with the light of reason shining in her eyes again, was lying exhausted with her hot tangled head on Mrs. O'Flannighan's shoulder.

The doctor's first thought, as he came into the room, was a shuddering horror of the dinginess and gloom and emptiness of this unhomelike home; the next, when he turned to the corner with the bed, where the one dip guttering on a chair threw a fitful light on Polly's flushed face, was to recognize as by instinct that here, in this dreary room, and on this childish face, was concentrated all the careful love and tender patience that can make a home anywhere.

For Polly raised her head painfully with a cheery, patient smile, and tried to speak; and Mrs. O'Flannighan rose hastily, and dropped a long-forgotten courtesy to the doctor, for she was not as ignorant as Dick, and she knew the great man by sight.

He nodded to her kindly, and took the place she had left vacant by the bed, feeling the flickering pulse gravely, while he asked her many questions about Polly, that she answered with tears in her eyes.

Then the doctor laid the wasted hand down tenderly and said, "Rest and quiet and patience, Miss Polly, and you'll do."

"But the children?" faltered Polly. "Oh, never mind the children," said the doctor; "we'll look after them, and you're to think of no one but yourself. And while you can't earn money, Miss Polly," he added, in his gentle way, as if he were telling her the most natural thing in the world, "I'll take care of the household expenses for you, and Mrs. O'Flannighan here shall be your nurse, if she will."

"Thank you," said Polly, accepting the goodness as quietly as he offered it.

"I was wondering about the children; but Dickie earns a bit with his blacking, and baby's getting a deal less trouble with his teeth."

Those were strange days to Polly, and dark times came among them—times of racking pain and feverish thirst, of delirium and misery and horrid dreams—out of which she awakened one February morning into a life of stillness, of utter weariness, and utter content; when her sight was dim, and the hum of life in the alley came as from afar off to her feeble ears; and she could not speak to Dick when he came and sat on the bed beside her and told her how beautiful it was out-of-doors.

The doctor staid with her a whole hour that day, and gave her beef-tea and brandy every little while, and spoke gently to her, and read to her out of the torn Bible about the streets of gold and the water of the River of Life; and he kissed her when he went away, and said, "God bless you, Polly;" for he thought himself that by the next morning she would know more about the city of God than the Revelation could teach her.

But Polly surprised them all. The crisis passed safely over, and the wave of life that had ebbed away, and left only the wasted body that they all loved and tended, swept slowly landward again, and Polly was safe. The doctor told her so one day, kneeling by the bed, and smoothing back the short rough locks from the gentle face; and Polly said, "Thank you, Sir—God won't forget all we owe you—the boys and me: I'm one of the least of these," she said, smiling faintly, "and I think, Sir, you did it to the Lord."

And then the doctor went home, and talked to his sister for an hour of the gratitude of this so-called ungrateful world, and of the good that lies dormant in nearly every human soul. "There's Crowe's Alley," he said, "the worst place in London; and Mrs. O'Flannighan, that the very police are afraid of, sitting up night and day with a little child who is down with fever, and all the neighbors coming in now and then to bring her bits of things, and oranges, or pictures, or to take the baby out for an airing! Depend upon it, if we went deep enough, we should find a stratum of good every where."

And his sister thought, though she did not say it, for the doctor hated to be praised, that you would not have to go very deep for the stratum of good in some people.

I showed you Polly first on a glorious July day, clinging to the railings in Grosvenor Square, with all her family around her; I show her to you, for the last time, on a sunny April afternoon, when she had crept out into the Park for her first walk, and was standing, with the boys, close by the Marble Arch, watching the grand carriages sweep in and out, with their burdens of smiling faces, that looked as happy as faces are apt to do in the spring.

Polly was weak and tired; and what with the dizziness and the flicking sunshine and the noise, she was standing in a kind of dream, half forgetting the boys, who had made a holiday of Polly's first day, and were perfectly happy.

Out of the dream, however, and out of the gloom of the overshadowing archway, came a pretty Victoria, with a dainty chestnut, arching its neck proudly, as it was drawn up against the railings on the opposite side. Polly hardly saw the carriage, however, and hardly noticed the horse for she was looking intently at a face in the carriage—the face that had stood out distinctly in her mind through nine weary months, in a sunny frame, against a background of gloom and misery—the face of the lady who had ridden into Grosvenor Square on that hot July day. With a cry that Dick did not hear, she stooped her head and darted swiftly under the railings into the road. She heard the clear ring of hoofs close beside her, a smothered exclamation, and a clatter on the road, as a horse was reined sharply up on her right hand; but when she glanced up with frightened, wistful eyes, and saw it was the doctor, she just nodded her head, re-assured; and he, looking after her, saw her dart between the lines of carriages, and spring up to the steps of the Victoria.

The lady in it was leaning back talking to a young man on the other side, and she paused abruptly as Polly's eager face came on to a level with her own,

and turned toward her; while the young man put up an eyeglass, the better to suppress the audacious beggar, just as Polly brought her hand out of her pocket, and cast the nineteen shillings and sixpence into the lady's lap.

"It's the change," she said, breathlessly.

"What change?" said the lady, with a sudden shy blush rising to her face, as she saw people beginning to collect, and whisper, and stare—as she saw the doctor, who had dismounted and was leading his horse, stand beside Polly with an amused smile on his face.

"Don't laugh, Paul," she said to him, half laughing herself. "What is it all about? I don't understand."

"Nor do I," he said; "but this is a little patient of mine, Margaret. Come, Miss Polly, I thought you were so poor—where did the money come from?"

"Don't you remember?" said Polly, turning her sweet, perplexed face on to that other beautiful face beside her. "A day last July? It was in Grosvenor Square, and you were riding a chestnut horse with white stockings, and you gave Dick—that's him yonder, my brother—a sixpence to post a letter; but it was a sovereign, and we kept the change to give you."

The lady sat quiet for a minute, with her eyes bent down and her delicate gloved hands touching one after another the shillings that lay in her lap; then she raised her eyes, that looked sweeter than ever, with just the shadow of tears in them, and said, giving a quick glance round, and then looking straight past every one at the doctor, "Wny, Paul, it was nine months ago—and I never even missed it!"

They were all quiet for a minute, while Polly stood looking from one to another, wondering and perplexed. Then the doctor touched her and said, "Come, Miss Polly, we shall have you ill again. I'm going to put you and the boys into a cab and send you home. Good-by, Margaret, until to-night." He spoke in a different voice when he turned to the sweet face and shining eyes, and he did not call her "Lady Margaret" as other people did, for he was going to be married to her in three days.

Well, that was the end, or rather the beginning in many ways, for Polly—for there was no want or misery or loneliness for her any more; and Dickie, in after-years, used to say their fortune turned on the day when the lady rode into Grosvenor Square with the letter.

But Polly on her knees sometimes thanks God for a temptation she resisted one miserable night in winter—for who else knows, or can ever know, how great the temptation was? and loyal Polly ignores or for forgotten how nearly Dick fell into the temptation too.

Here is a Mission Band hymn for some little boy or girl to learn.

Little Gleaners.

We are a little gleaning band,  
We cannot bind the sheaves,  
But we can follow those who reap  
And gather what each leaves.  
We are not strong; but Jesus loves  
The weakest of the fold,  
And in our feeble efforts, proves  
His tenderness untold.

We are not rich, but we can give  
As we are passing on,  
A cup of water in His name  
To some poor fainting one.  
We are not wise; but Christ, our Lord  
Revealed to babes His will,  
And we are sure from his dear Word  
He loves his children still.

We know that with our gathered grain  
Briars and leaves are seen;  
Yet, since we tried, he smiles the same  
And takes our offering.  
Dear children, still hosannas sing,  
As Christ doth conquring come,  
Casting your treasures as he brings  
The heathen nations home.

A man has no more right to say an uncivil thing than to act one: no more right to say a rude thing to another than to knock him down.

He that prays to God with a troubled and discomposed spirit, is like him that retires into a battle to meditate, and sets up his closet in the out-quarters of an army, and chooses a frontier garrison to be wise in.

Self-love is a medium of a peculiar kind; it magnifies everything which is amiss in others, at the same time that it lessens everything amiss in ourselves.