

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lesson for 1878.

SUNDAY, August 18th, 1878.—The Widow of Nain.—Luke vii. 11-17.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 12-15.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And when the Lord saw her he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not."—Luke vii. 13.

"He trembled, and sat upright in his shroud, and, while the mourner hung upon his neck, Jesus went calmly on his way to Nain."—N. P. WILLIS.

DAILY READING.—Monday, Luke vii. 11-35. Tuesday, Luke viii. 41-56. Wednesday, John xi. 1-46. Thursday, 1 Kings xvii. 17-24. Friday, 2 Kings iv. 31-37. Saturday, Acts ix. 36-43. Sunday, Matthew xi. 1-6.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Walk to Nain. Vs. 11. II. Scenes outside the gate. Vs. 12. III. The compassion of Jesus. Vs. 13. IV. The son raised to life. Vs. 14, 15. V. The effect of the miracle. Vs. 16, 17.

QUESTIONS.—Introductory.—Where was Nain? What towns were in its neighborhood? In what direction was it from Nazareth?

I. Vs. 11.—What is meant by "day after"? How far and in what direction from Capernaum was Nain?

II. Vs. 12.—What was this scene? How extended was the public sympathy? Why was it outside the gate?

III. Vs. 13.—What do the words "weep not" show that Christ came to do? Revelation xxi. 4. Where and why did Christ weep? John xi. 35; Luke xix. 41.

IV. Vs. 14, 15.—What one word did Christ utter at the bier? Had he before this raised any one to life? What two other persons after this did he raise to life? Luke viii. 41-56; John xi.

V. Vs. 16, 17.—What was the effect of the miracle? What prophet was Jesus thought possibly to be? Mal. iv. 5.

Of what was Christ raising the dead a proof? Matthew xi. 1-5. Of what was his power to raise from physical death a symbol? Ephesians ii. 1. When will he raise the dead again? John v. 28, 29.

The site of ancient Nain was undoubtedly that of the modern village of Nain, situated on the northern declivity of "Little Hermon," where the ground falls into the plain. Esdræon, over an intervening branch of which, but three miles across, Tabor is distinctly visible. Nain is but a few miles south of Nazareth. Shunem and Endor are in the neighborhood. The village of Nain is now little more than a cluster of ruins, among which dwell a few fanatical Moslems.

EXPOSITION.—Versell.—The day after.—After the miracle of our last lesson. Verses 1-10. Went. Or, rather, was going, that is, was on his way. A city called Nain. The distinction between the "cities" and the "villages" of the New Testament is that the former were surrounded by a wall for defense, and the latter were not. The distance from Capernaum is given as twenty-five miles. Many of his disciples. . . much people. The twelve were chosen from among a larger body of avowed followers (vi. 13). These twelve, and others of this larger body, are here contrasted with the "much people."

Verse 12.—Came nigh to the gate of the city.—Thomson (The Land and the Book, ii, page 158) says: "It is in keeping with the one historic incident that renders it [Nain] dear to the Christian that its only antiquities are tombs. These are situated mainly on the east of the village, and it was in that direction, I presume, that the widow's son was being carried on that memorable occasion." There was a dead man carried out. Out of the city through "the gate," to bury, according to their custom outside the city. The exceptions mentioned, 1 Samuel xxviii. 3; 1 Kings ii. 10, etc., were only for distinguished persons. They buried on the same day of the death, save when the death occurred at or near evening. The only son of his mother, and she was a widow. His age is not more nearly indicated than by the term translated "young man" in verse 14—a term applicable to one "in the prime and vigor of manhood, up to the age of forty years." The two specially affecting circumstances are those here given. Much people, etc. Her case had excited deep and general sympathy in her own town.

Verse 13.—When the Lord saw her.—This title was used of our Saviour cur-

rently after his resurrection and ascension. Had compassion on her. He may have been intimately acquainted with her, and with all her history, as Nain was only a few miles from Nazareth. Compare John xi. 3, 4, 14, 15. The exceeding depth and tenderness of Christ's natural sensibilities frequently appear. Weep not. Better, lament not. The Greek term designates the audible lament, or wailing, common in the East on occasions of death and burial.

Verse 14.—Came and touched the bier.—A signal to the bearers to stop. The word translated "bier" is the more usual word for coffin. It was common to bury without a coffin, at present the corpse is carried to burial in its best dress, and the shroud of white cotton cloth is wrapped around the body at the grave. Young man, I say unto thee, arise. For the two other cases of resurrection by Jesus, see viii. 54, and John xi. 43, in each case by the simple word of command. Contrast the accounts of resurrection in connection with the agency of mere men. 1 Kings xvii. 21; 2 Kings iv. 33, 34; Acts ix. 40; xx. 10. The spoken word was rather for the by-standers who heard, than for the dead man.

Verse 15.—Sat up.—See on verse 14. Delivered him to his mother. What a gift! Christ gives royally. Mark here the sublime silence and reserve of inspiration. No attempt is made to paint the scene of the son's welcome back to life and heart and home by the mother, or to answer our questions of curious speculation.

Verse 16.—There came a fear on all.—Fear, but not terror. A great and solemn awe and reverential dread, because among them stood one of their own form, and flesh, and blood, and nation, and kin, in whose hands was power over all worlds. Glorified God. Owned this to be God's power, and, not like some referred it to Beelzebub. A great prophet. According to Deuteronomy xviii. 15-18. Compare Malachi iv. 5. God hath visited his people. The "people" of Israel. Visited in mercy for their deliverance. Jeremiah xv. 15. God is also said to visit the wicked when he executes upon them judgment. Isa. xxiii. 7. But this mercy and this judgment are but the two sides or aspects of one and the same act.

Verse 17.—This rumor.—The report of this miracle. Judea. This name is usually confined to the southern section of Palestine, but the connection seems to indicate that it may here have a wider application, designating the whole land of the Jews, or Palestine.

COURSE OF THOUGHT.—Our lesson presents to us a meeting, a mastering, and a reward. The Lord of Life meets death, masters it, and wins glory for God his Father.

I. The Meeting.—Verses 11, 12.—(1.) It was in the way of Christ's ministry. "He went about doing good." So did he fall in with those in woe and want. So does he now in this same ministry by his church. (2.) An incessant ministry. (3.) A public ministry. His disciples about him, the crowd following. (4.) A ministry occasioned by death. A ministry to sorrow, to the bruised, to the crushed.

II. The Mastery.—Verses 12-15.—(1.) The Lord masters the master death. He did, he does. It is he, not we. (2.) The spring of his mastering power is compassion. (3.) The silent intercession of his afflicted friends touches that spring, and evokes compassion and power. (4.) He speaks the word of comfort, be it the written word, or "the still small voice," it is his word. (5.) He arrests the march of events; the silent hour of preparation for his mighty work of reviving grace. The bearers stood still. (6.) The word of command, spoken with authority. The gospel of God at the hour of preparation charged with a living authority to each soul singly, as though each were called by name, "I say unto thee." (7.) The immediate answer, life from death. The love of Christ speaks out from souls newly made alive.

III. The Reward.—Verses 16, 17.—(1.) Holy fear. (2.) Praise to the Father. (3.) Confession of the Son. (4.) And this through all the universe. On Christ's notice in raising the young man, Steinhilber says: "Our view is that our Lord has here shown a type of what was to be accomplished in himself at no very distant time. The raising of

Lazarus by Jesus has often been judged as a prelude to his own resurrection.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

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

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

The Story of the Bible Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

The day after Jesus cured the centurion's servant he went on a journey of twenty-one miles to another city called Nain. He did not go alone; his disciples were with him, and many people now followed him wherever he went. As they came near the gate of Nain they saw a sad procession. It was a funeral; that of a young man, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. Many people were also with them, for every one was sorry for the poor mother left with neither husband or child. They were all weeping loudly, but Jesus did not need to be told what the trouble was; he knows all our sorrows. He pitied this poor mother, and said to her in tender, loving tones, "Weep not." Then he touched the bier on which lay the body of the young man, and those who carried it stood still; then Jesus said, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise." The young man was not sick, as the servant had been, but dead; how could he rise? But the dead hear the voice of Jesus, because he is God, and the young man heard and sat up, and began to speak. And Jesus gave the son back to his mother, whose tears must now be those of joy. All who saw this felt afraid, and said, "A great prophet has risen up amongst us," and that God had sent him; and they were right, for Jesus was a greater prophet than Moses or Elijah, and there will come a day when all the dead shall hear his voice and arise.

Booths' Department.

Farmer Penniman's Dream.

(Concluded.)

BY MRS. E. M. STEWART.

"Give her to the minister; we have nine cows left," was the reply."

The two went to the house and proceeded to load up the "big sleigh" which stood before the door. A barrel of pork, potatoes, turnips, beans, and "a monstrous grist," the children said, and away the two drove to the parsonage.

"Why, Mr. Penniman, haven't you made a mistake? What does all this mean?" exclaimed Mr. Goodman, running out of the house without his hat, as they drove through the great gate.

"What does it all mean?" "Only the tithes," replied Mr. Penniman, laughing.

"Here's your hat, father," said little Henry Goodman, holding up the missing article.

"Thank you, my son, now run into the house."

"Where shall I put your cow?" asked Mr. Penniman.

"My cow! Why Mr. Penniman, you can't afford—"

"Got nine left," interrupted Mr. Penniman. "Drive on, George, we'll find a place."

The little barn was a rickety, old affair, but Brindle was soon tied in one corner of the stable, and Mr. Penniman and his son stowed away the hay as best they could in the bay and shaky loft. The boards on the sides were some of them hanging by one nail, but George said the roof looked as if it would not leak, and he would drive a few nails in those boards before night.

Then came the unloading of the second sleigh, amid exclamations of wonder and delight from Mr. and Mrs. Goodman and the children, and such a time as they all had preparing the little almost unused cellar for such an unexpected supply of vegetables. Then the pork-barrel was, with much labor, lifted and pushed and twisted down the narrow stairway and stowed away back as far as possible "to make room for the rest that might come," Mr. Penniman said.

Two empty barrels were filled to overflowing with the best of flour, the bran and shorts for the cow found a place in some old barrels in the wood-shed, and

Mr. Penniman and George drove home delighted.

"What has happened to Mr. Penniman?" asked Mr. Goodman after they had gone. "Is he going crazy?"

"I asked him what it all meant, and he said he had a dream last Sunday which he would tell me sometime," replied her husband.

"The result of his dreaming will bless us all the year," said Mrs. Goodman gratefully.

"Mother, is that cow to be our very own, always?" asked one of the children.

"Yes. We all thank Mr. Penniman very much, and I am sure none of us will forget to thank Him who put the thought of this great kindness into Mr. Penniman's heart."

The afternoon and evening passed off as usual on such occasions, with one exception. The Penniman children had all faithfully tithed their nuts, popcorn and the money in their savings banks, and brought their gift to the children at the parsonage, and child-like, Robert told the story to a group of listening children, and some of larger growth.

"We are all tithed," said he; "George gave his tithes in money—mother and Mabel brought butter and eggs and dried apples, and ever so many cans of fruit, and father tithed everything in the cellar, and even tithed old Brindle, too."

"What is tithing? I don't know what you are talking about," said Willie Greene, the merchant's son.

"Why the Bible says folks must give to the Lord one tenth of all they can raise on the farm," replied Robert. "Clara and I read it there last Sunday, and that is just what we have been doing at our house. We have just begun, but we mean to keep on doing so all the time. I tell you, Henry Goodman, you'll get lots of eggs and chickens before summer is out, and I shouldn't wonder if you should get now and then a harvest apple. I have one tree that's all my own."

"That boy of yours has been telling quite a long story to the children about tithing done at your house," remarked Mr. Stevens to Mr. Penniman when they went out after supper to attend to their teams. "Haven't you changed your mind lately?" he asked.

"Yes, I have most essentially," replied Mr. Penniman, "but it is a long story; come to prayer-meeting to-morrow evening, and you shall hear all about it."

Twenty minutes later everybody in the house knew that Mr. Penniman would explain the reason for the change in his feelings and practice at the next prayer-meeting, and everyone had resolved to go to-morrow evening—not long to wait.

"Are you going to prayer-meeting to-night to hear Penniman tell his dream?" asked Mr. Greene, the merchant, of the first customer who made his appearance the next morning.

"Yes. I want to hear what he will say; it seems silly, though, to talk about a dream doing such wonders, for his donation was large for any one, and certainly wonderful for him."

"A dream!" sneered Mr. Greene, brushing his coat-sleeve; "conscience more likely."

"I don't know about that," was the reply; "Mr. Penniman is close, but he is honest, and true to his word—always pays when and what he agrees to pay; his subscription is always paid in advance, if possible."

So passed the day; in every house, and in every shop and store the subject of tithing was thoroughly discussed, always concluding with a wise shake of the head and the sage remark: "The Pennimans won't hold out long. No farmer can afford to give away one-tenth of what he raises, cattle and all." But they went to the prayer-meeting, and for once the cold cheerless little church was packed full.

Mr. Goodman opened the meeting as usual, and then remarked:—"Brethren and friends, I know you are all anxious to hear the message which Brother Penniman brings us to-night, and we will listen to him now."

Slowly Mr. Penniman rose to his feet and looked around on the congregation. His face was deadly pale, and his lips quivered for a moment. Then, in a calm, distinct tone, he said:

"My first duty to-night is confession. I have frequently said, in the presence

of many of you, my brethren, that our minister's salary was amply sufficient to support his family without donation parties; that he must be extravagant, or he would not get into debt. Now, that was all wrong; I am sorry for it, and ashamed of it. In the first place, the statement was not true, though I did not intend to falsify. I made the mistake which we farmers are apt to make; we only reckon our money outlay, and count as nothing what we consume.

"Yesterday I took my books and deducted the amount of family supplies I had sold from the amount produced on my farm last year, and I was surprised. Now, I only wonder how, with the closest economy, our pastor's family could live comfortably on his salary and our donations too. But if my assertion had been true to the letter, it was no business of mine how he spent the money he had honestly earned, any more than it is how any other man spends the money he earns. The only question for me, as a member of this church, to decide is whether Mr. Goodman's labors among us are worth the salary which we agree to pay. If so, my portion of his salary is to be paid promptly and fully, like any other debt, and he and his family left to the expenditure of the money, well and faithfully earned, without remark or hindrance. This shall always be my course toward him and every other pastor hereafter."

"Last Sunday I sat in my easy chair, listening to my wife and children as they read and conversed about the Jewish law of tithing, till I fell asleep with the very comfortable feeling that, for myself, I had brought all the tithes into the store-house—and I really believed it."

"I dreamed that I went to the anticipated donation visit with my family, and carried about my usual donation—a bushel of flour, a bag of potatoes, a few pounds of pork, and a bag of apples—and thought I had done well, for I was very sure the minister did not need even that with his salary."

"The evening passed as usual, we farmers talking of the crops of last year, and discussing our plans for the coming season. I was well satisfied to find, by comparison, how abundant my harvest had been."

"When I came in sight of my home that night I saw my well-filled barn in flames, my garnered treasures gone beyond hope of rescue. It was a terrible blow; and as I stood there helpless—for nothing could be done—and saw the product of my hard toil a great, blazing mass, how I wished I had given more of that burning wheat to my pastor. But it was too late now. I had only enough left for bread and for seed, a few bushels put in another barn for lack of room."

"It was summer; my oats were sown, my corn and potatoes planted, the cattle and sheep were in the pastures; but there was no rain. Day after day, the sun rose without a cloud, and night after night the moon and stars shone with undimmed beauty. So the summer months passed—not one drop of rain, no harvest. The winter came, and still no moisture for the thirsty earth. I had no grain in store, it had been burned; no hay for my cattle, the grass had not grown. The cattle died, one after another; and through the long winter it was a fearful struggle to get bread to eat."

"Spring returned, and yet no rain. I had no grain to sow and others began to be in want. We grew weak and sick at heart. We were in the midst of what this country had never known—a real famine. Terror took hold of the soul, while hunger tormented the body."

"Day and night we prayed for relief, and the answer, always the same, echoed and re-echoed everywhere: 'Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse; for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.'

"Summer's burning heat poured down upon us, and one after another my whole family sickened and died. Oh! the agony of watching over sick-beds with nothing to alleviate their suffering! To see our dearest friends dying of starvation! Yet so my loved ones died, and I lived on. I buried them with my own hands, for the famine had taken all sympathy from the community; each was fully occupied with his own sorrow."

"Day after day I wandered through (See seventh page.)