

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lesson for 1878.

SUNDAY, September 22nd, 1878.—Warning against Covetousness.—Luke xii. 13-23.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 16-20.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Take heed, and beware of covetousness."—Luke xii. 15.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Luke xi. 14-54. Tuesday, Luke xii. 1-23. Wednesday, Matthew xxii. 15-22. Thursday, Job xx. Friday, Psalm xlix. Saturday, 2 Cor. viii. Sunday, 1 Tim. vi.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. A request denied. Vss. 13, 14. II. Admonition uttered. Vs. 15. III. Parable of "The Rich Fool." Vss. 16-23.

QUESTIONS.—I. Vss. 13, 14.—What request was made of Christ? Why was it denied?

II. Vs. 15.—Against what sin did Christ warn his disciples? What is covetousness? Of what commandment is covetousness a violation? What did Paul call it? Col. iii. 5. Why does not wealth satisfy a man's life? Matt. xvi. 26; Prov. xxiii. 5; Psalm lxiii. 10.

III. Vss. 16-23.—What is meant by "brought forth plentifully"? What does this rich man lack? 1 Tim. vi. 6; Heb. xiii. 5. How does the ruling desire to be rich affect the mind? 1 Tim. vi. 9. What did the rich man say he would do? What did God say to him? In what did his folly consist? What treasures can be laid up in heaven? Matt. vi. 20; Heb. xi. 26. What is meant by "not rich toward God"? 2 Cor. viii. 9. Whose heirs may we all be? Rom. viii. 18.

What examples of covetousness have we in the Bible? Num. xxi. 17; Josh. vii. 20, 21; 1 Kings xxi. 2; Matt. xxvii. 3-10; 2 Tim. iv. 10. What curses are pronounced against it? Prov. xv. 27; Hab. ii. 9; 1 Tim. vi. 9.

How may the pursuit of wealth be laudable. Covetousness is overcome only by the higher love of Christ. 2 Cor. v. 14-17.

NOTE.—One of Christ's hearers, having little interest in spiritual truth, but with an eye to worldly interests, desired that he would make his brother divide his inheritance with him. Jesus, not having come to settle civil matters, denied his request, and uttered the parable of the Rich Fool—a parable that is one of the most practical and solemn ever uttered—on a sin which is the first to move in corrupt human nature, and the last to die; for covetousness is the Alpha and Omega of the Evil One's alphabet.

EXPOSITION.—Note the connection of this lesson with the three preceding. The whole of the Scripture between that of the last lesson, and that of today's lesson (xi. 14-54), is an exposure, in different forms, of the inevitable antagonisms of the spirit of Christ to that of Satan and the world, and a preparation of the disciples, especially of those called to be teachers, to stand fast and firm, whole and wholly, in the Divine Spirit, and out of and against the world's spirit.

Verse 13.—One of the company or crowd, mentioned in vs. 1. The original has the same word in the two verses. It is hard to see in vs. 1-12 anything to have suggested this man's request. Possibly something not recorded may have led to it, or he may have thrust it in from sheer covetousness. Master [Teacher], speak to my brother, etc. The great wisdom of Christ is conceded, and possibly, even his Messiahship; which, on the man's view of his temporal character, would imply Christ's authority to rule and regulate in temporal affairs, like Moses in ancient Israel. On the law of inheritance among the Jews, by which the oldest son had "a double portion," see Deut. xxi. 15-17. Here, probably, complaint lay against the older brother.

Verse 14.—Christ's reply.—A refusal, correction, and reproof, all in one. Man, who made me, etc. Almost a quotation of Ex. ii. 14. Christ's work was in another sphere than that of Moses—that he could not be received simply as a second Moses. The Israel which Christ was to gather and form into a nation, and lead as Redeemer from bondage into Canaan, was the spiritual Israel. Questions of civil law, the making and the administration of civil law, were not in his province, because his kingdom was "not of this world." John xviii. 36, 37. Earthly government has its sphere; Christ's kingdom its. State churches and church

states are alike monstrosities. Christ does not mean to forbid such action as is enjoined in 1 Cor. vi. 1-6.

Verse 15.—The general lesson drawn from the occurrence. Take heed, and beware of covetousness. The disposition to get, to have, and to hold—always reaching out and drawing in—self, the great centre. Covetousness, which takes on a thousand forms, and is "a root (so should we read in 1 Tim. vi. 10, not 'the root,' as though it were the sole root) of all evil." For a man's life consisteth not, etc. There is no censure of an "abundance," no declaration that it is worthless for its own ends and uses; but simply that it is not, and gives not, the true life—that which is the satisfaction of man's nature, the end of man's existence, the very essence of manhood. Christ denies what the universal judgment, as disclosed in current language, affirms, that a man's worth is measured by his money.

Verse 16.—A parable.—Given simply to illustrate and enforce the precept and principle already explicitly stated. Herein it differs from the parables of our previous lesson. The ground, etc. "The rich man" of this parable is not presented, and should not be thought of, as having made his gains dishonestly, but the very reverse.

Verse 17.—And he thought within himself.—We are taken into the secret of his heart. Such men are not very likely to talk out such purposes. Shrewd men—that let us read their plans in their deeds. What shall I do? etc. We may conceive that there was before his mind the question whether to use the surplus in benefactions, in helping forward enterprises for the welfare of his fellow-men—that he had been solicited to this, and the duty laid on his conscience, so that the alternative of giving or hoarding was clear in mind; and hence that this choice to hoard was an explicit refusal to give.

Verse 18.—This will I do.—If he hesitated at all, it was not long; and when he resolved, it was with a whole heart. He had much; he would have more. Great barns should give place to greater. Till man is fed with God, he is hungry and wretched.

Verse 19.—I will say to my soul.—To my self. We need not find in this word "soul" any other meaning here—any intended distinction from body, or spirit. His "goods" should be his good. That was his thought, that his mistake, that his sin. Oh ye, who are working for a fortune to enjoy? Mark this man's soliloquy to his soul, and hear your own thought spoken out into the light.

Verse 20.—We have heard the man; now we hear the forgotten, but not forgetting God. Fool, this night, etc. That was, that is, God's judgment. To make this world one's good, is to act the fool; partly because this world cannot satisfy while we have it, and partly because even if it could, we have it but a day. Whose shall those things be? etc. Compare Job xxvii. 16-19; Psalm xxxix. 6. To use money as God's stewards, is to lay that money up in heaven—to transmute it into eternal life.

Verses 22, 23.—Therefore, etc.—The lesson of vs. 15 again enforced, but now expanded and more painfully applied. The word translated "life" in these verses, is the same as that translated "soul" in vs. 19, 20, and here, as there, means the self, or the man. God would have us take no such care even for needed earthly good, as shall overshadow or exclude our care for him. We are to make him first in all things, and do his will. Even if we starve, then shall our starvation be for our good. We live when God lives and reigns in us.

COURSE OF THOUGHT.—1. The worldling's prayer to the Lord. 2. The prayer denied by the Lord. 3. Its spirit to be guarded against, because it carries a deadly error. 4. Covetousness grows by prosperity. 5. It makes self the centre of all desires and aims. 6. Its hopes are bounded by the seen and temporal, and shut out God and eternity. 7. It cheats its victim by promises that are false and delusive. 8. God reverses its judgments, and his judgments reverse its promises. Death ends the dream. 9. Therefore let every man make God his good and so have a life which satisfies

while it remains, and remains eternally; which knows what to make of the things of this life, and makes of them its instruments and servants; which changes earthly wealth and woe alike into heavenly treasure, and is itself unchanged and unchangeable—ETERNAL LIFE.—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, September 29th, 1878.—Review, Temperance or Missionary Concert.

The Story of the Bible Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

Once, while Jesus was talking to a great crowd of hearers, one of the company asked Jesus to make his brother divide with him the money and land his father had left. Jesus told him it was not his work to divide worldly goods, and he said unto them all, "Take heed and beware of covetousness." To show that great riches will not make us truly happy, or give us life either now or hereafter, Jesus told this story: There was a rich man who had a large farm; his fields brought forth so much grain that he did not know where to keep it all. He thought to himself, "What shall I do?" Then he said, "I will pull down my barns, and I will build them up much larger; then I will gather my goods into them." So he planned to live a merry life of pleasure without care for many years. He did not think of the God who had given him such rich harvests, nor of the poor who needed food. But God said unto him, "Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee, then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" Jesus said all who only cared for the riches of the earth were like this fool. He told us that we must not be anxious or worry about what we shall eat or wear, for he who gave us life will send us food, and he who made our bodies will clothe us.

Boys' Department.

After many Days.

"Coming, father, coming!" As the clear voice floated in to him, the deacon gently drew his spectacles from his dim, tired eyes, and with a smile laid his hand caressingly upon the low chair beside his own. In a moment more Christabel stood in the doorway. Spring beamed as truly from out her glad, young eyes, as in the broad face of nature just without, youth's spring-time, which is the best of all. Radiant and joyous as the fresh morning itself is Christabel, and yet she was plucked as a brand from the burning, and if now she is as pure as the flowers so dear to her, it is due, through God, to the loving heart and firm decision of him she calls father.

"Did you think I was never coming?" said she, crossing the room in the light, springy way, that when life is young and health unspoiled, is so natural to a maiden. Drawing the sleeves down over her arms, which to facilitate her work had been pinned high up on her shoulders, she settled herself down in the chair beside the deacon.

"Did you get very impatient, father?" she said, laying her hand upon the wrinkled one resting upon the deacon's knee.

"No-o," responded the deacon with a smile, drawing his hand from the loving clasp that held it to stroke the girl's brown, curly head. "Sunshine, although we cannot always have it close beside us, is none the less cheering, and I knew you would come presently."

With a low laugh the girl nestled her head on the old man's shoulders, for truly was she the sunshine of the house, making glad the two so near the end of their journey by her fond heart, and winning ways.

"What chapter shall it be to-day, father?" said Christabel, after a short pause, touching reverently the blessed Book which she had taken upon her lap; for it was with a chapter from between its covers that the two always commenced their day. With a gentle smile, each met the other's eye, as evidently to an off-read page, the book seemed to open of itself. Reading consent in the mild eyes bent upon her, the child—for she was little else, for all her sixteen summers—read with low voice our Lord's dear words: "In my Father's house are many mansions—" Without, the light breeze moved among the

leaves, and not far away a wee bird was singing.

Down came the rain in steady pours a few evenings later. Miss Dorothy sat close by the window to gather the last rays of light, and with quiet regularity, slipped the stitches from her knitting needles. Ever and anon the worker raised her eyes to gaze upon the storm without. In the kitchen, and with a song trembling on her lips, Christabel passed to and fro. The tea-kettle was merrily humming its home-song on the fire, and sending out great clouds of steam in token that its mission was nearly filled, that the water within was ready to pour upon the fragrant tea. The little housekeeper assured herself that the biscuits were done to a turn, and gave a backward glance at the teatable, all neatly spread in the adjoining room. Then she stepped quickly to where Miss Dorothy still sat knitting, her pursed-up mouth and stiff bearing giving little sign of the loving heart that beat true within the forbidding exterior. "I feel quite worried about father, aunt Dolly," said the girl, in that crisp, clear way of hers.

"Stuff and nonsense," returned the spinster, with a rough assurance her sinking heart was far from feeling. "Stuff and nonsense! Dye's s'pose, Belle (she never would give further concession to her brother's poetical choice of a name) the deacon'd be such a dunce as to come out in such a storm? A man of his years and with the cold he's got? Of course he'll stay at Mr. Robson's till the rain's over, which'll go as suddenly as it came, most like." But for all, Miss Dorothy gave a start of the click of the gate-latch came to her ears, and she returned Christabel's frightened glance with one almost as much so. "Oh, father, father," said the girl a moment later, as she opened the door for the old man dripping wet with the rain, against which an umbrella had been scant protection.

"It was foolish, puss," said the deacon, feebly.

"He must go to bed straight off and have some hot-tea," said Miss Dorothy imperatively, who had come forward, knitting in hand. "Such foolhardiness! If you don't catch your death, I'll be thankful!" But there were tears in her eyes and a tremble in her voice.

The next morning the deacon thought he would not get up. "Such a pain in his bones, and a fever too," he said, and only raised a little from a stupor to tell Christabel so much when she came in to awaken him, much alarmed at his non-appearance at the breakfast table.

Along the country road the maiden sped a little later, leaving Miss Dorothy at home to watch and tend with foreboding fears her sick brother. For that this was the case beyond their simple remedies the frightened women needed no one to tell them. So, while one watched timorously at home, the other sped for the doctor. Little noted Christabel the daisies' modest beauty that like white stars sprinkled thickly the grass she passed over, she did not even feel the soft spring air, or notice old Brindle who pressed her nose against the bars of the pasture. Small comfort did the physician bring when he came. He strove to infuse hope into his tones, but the first ominous shake of the head, the first expression in his eyes, when they looked upon the unconscious sick man, told the tale to these anxious watchers. It was but a little while the good man lingered. Gentle always even in his delirium, the pathos of it all brought tears of bitter grief many and many a time to the eyes of his young nurse. For it was Christabel, the little wif whom he had picked as a pearl from the gutter, the little child who by his love had grown to be a good and noble woman, who took almost the sole charge of the dying man. Miss Dorothy, stricken in years herself, was rendered well-nigh incapable by the grief that was tearing at her heart-strings. Wringing her hands and making no attempt to check the tears that found ready channels in the wrinkled cheeks, her brusqueness all gone, she was a pitiable sight, and touched Christabel's heart almost as much as the sufferer whose days would so soon be ended on earth.

At last the end. As the sun with gorgeous colour was sinking to rest in the west, the angel came, no grim-visaged spectre, to the pure soul of this aged man, but rather a lovely vision with hope in his eyes and promise in his

hands, a messenger from the Father was he. The deacon had been conscious almost all the day.

"Don't mourn so, Dolly," he said; "the way is very short between us; I but go before."

"What should I do without you, dear?" he murmured, as Christabel, with gentlest touch, raised him to take some nourishment, and then, as he noted the rush of tears to the young girl's eyes, repeated, "Only a little way, may dear, only a little way." Very quiet was the last. A gentle rousing from a little sleep, a quiver, a gasp, and he was gone. Radiant was the aged face just before the soul took its flight, as if even now the glory of the heavenly city shone full upon it. "My daughter," he murmured, and although his hand returned feebly Christabel's loving pressure, his eyes looked beyond as if made glad by something sought for, found at last. If mayhap his first heavenly greeting was for her who had left him years before, his last earthly thought was for her who had filled her place below.

Christabel and Miss Dorothy lived on for many years in the old house, the younger ever caring for and succouring the older. As time rolled on Christabel became a happy wife and mother, but always cherished was the quaint old lady whose life else would have been so desolate. And when, at the last, in very fullness of years, her days were ended, it was the hand of the little foundling who made sweet her last hours. Then the wif, who would have drifted, no doubt, into the great sea of sin but for him they both loved, made smooth her deathbed.

CONVENTION SERMON.

Christ, the Successful Worker.

A SERMON PREACHED AT FREDERICTON, N. B., ON MONDAY, AUG. 26, BEFORE THE BAPTIST CONVENTION OF NOVA SCOTIA, NEW BRUNSWICK AND P. E. ISLAND.

BY REV. G. B. DAY, M. D.

(Published by request of the Convention.)

Isaiah xlii. 4: "He shall not fall nor be discouraged till he have set judgment in the earth."

When Napoleon stood before the Alps, which barred his progress into Italy, he said to Marescot, the chief of his engineers:—"Is it possible to cross the mountains?" "It is possible, Sir," was the reply, "but with a great deal of difficulty." "Then," said Napoleon, "let us set out at once." The attempt was made, and success was the issue. When the Messiah was contemplating the work for which he was anointed, numerous and great were the obstacles that lay in his path. A mighty gulf separated between God and man. Deity could not cross to humanity; man could not cross to God. Divine holiness, which cannot make any allowance for sin, and which must preserve continual antipathy to every form of evil, was there. Infinite Justice, which guards the eternal throne, stood in threatening array against every offender. The fearful announcement was, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." The difficulty of maintaining the dignity, and righteousness of the Divine government while humanity was reached, uplifted and saved, was another obstacle. The depravity of man; his inability to raise himself to the heights of innocence and happiness, and his disinclination to act as a penitent prodigal returning home, interposed another barrier in the way of Him who was to come "with dyed garments from Bozrah, travelling in the greatness of His strength." In view of all these obstacles he calmly exclaims, "Lo, I come, I delight to do thy will, O my God." And He inspired Isaiah to prophesy concerning himself, "He shall not fall nor be discouraged until he have set judgment in the earth."

Mirabeau, a renowned statesman, a man of genius and of almost superhuman energy, said to his secretary, who objected that it was impossible to do a certain amount of work in a given time:—"Impossible! Never repeat that stupid word." Centuries before, the man of Nazareth enforced the same lesson. "All things," says he, "are possible to him that believeth." Paul was persuaded that this saying was true. For while he declares that he is "the least of the Apostles," under the warming influence of the Spirit he rises from the zero of doubt to that lofty altitude when he exclaims, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." It would seem, therefore, that to over-