

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1879.

SUNDAY, February 16th, 1879.—The way of the Righteous.—Psalm i. 1-6. Date—probably in Solomon's reign.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 1-6.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."—Proverbs iv. 18.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Psalm i. Tuesday, Prov. i. 10-19. Wednesday, Psalm xxxvii. Thursday, Matt. vii. 13-29. Friday, Luke xvi. 19-31. Saturday, John xv. 1-8. Sunday, Rev. xxii.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. The godly, negatively. Vs. 1. Positively. Vs. 2. Comparatively. Vs. 3. II. The ungodly, character. Vs. 4. Doom. Vs. 5. III. Resume. Vs. 6.

QUESTIONS.—How many Psalms are there? Which is the shortest? Which the longest.

I. Vs. 1-3.—What is a first thing a godly man will not do? Prov. i. 15; iv. 14, 15. What is a second thing a godly man will not do? What is a third? What, now, is the positive side of a godly man's life? To what is he like?

II. Vs. 4-6.—What description is here given of the ungodly? What is to be his doom? What reason is rendered? How should this affect the wicked? Compare Jude, vs. 14, 15: Eccles. xi. 9.

TALK ABOUT.—The prosperity of the righteous has apparent exceptions, but in the aggregate is strictly true. Vs. 3.—The Judgment Day will solve all mysteries, and settle all destinies. Vs. 6.

This book is called, in Hebrew, "The Book of Praises;" in the Septuagint, "Psalms," from their adaptation to instrumental music. "It is the most miscellaneous of the sacred books, containing a hundred and fifty compositions, each complete in itself, and varying in length from two verses (Ps. cxvii.), to a hundred and seventy-six (Ps. cxix.). As classified by authors, one is ascribed to Moses, seventy-two to David, twelve to Asaph, one to Ethan, and eleven to the sons of Korah. More than fifty are anonymous. The Psalms belong, as a whole, to two or three periods of Jewish history—to the age of David, B. C.—1080-1015; to that of Hezekiah, B. C. 726-698; and to the exile and return from the Babylonian captivity, B. C. 606-536.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 1.—Blessed is the man.—Literally: Blessedness of the man. This word, in the Hebrew, corresponds to the Greek word, translated in the same way in the Beatitudes, in Matt. v. (1.) Walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly. The word rendered "ungodly," may equally well be translated "unrighteous." Counsel means both purpose and advice. The righteous man follows a law, looks out of himself for it, but to God, not to the wicked. (2.) Nor standeth in the way of sinners. Men of open and confirmed wickedness, whose "way," or course of life, is known as evil. The righteous man refuses to enter upon and follow out this descending way. (3.) Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. This is a further, and the last stage of progression in iniquity. Here the wicked openly mock at God's law, truth, people, and cause. To "sit in the seat of the scornful," may fairly be understood to take a seat with them as a scorner with the scornful, having permanently settled down with them to be and remain one of them, as well as with them. Drawn on at first by wicked advice to leave the right and follow the wrong by walking, one is next seen remaining in the company of the openly wicked by standing, until he at last takes his place even with mockers, to make there his final stay—himself a mocker there, settled, sitting.

Verse 2.—Describes the same characters positively, by contrast and opposition with the preceding negative description. But his delight is in the law of the Lord. "The law of the Lord" must here be understood as the word of God, in so far as it had at that time been revealed to Israel. The Pentateuch, as containing the fundamental law, not only for Israel as a nation, but also, in principle, for mankind as human. His heart delights in the law, and in the God of the law. This is old Testament piety, which is identical with New Testament piety, and with all genuine piety. And in his law doth he meditate day and night. Joshua i. 8, Deut. xvii. 18, 19; vi. 6-9, etc. We devote ourselves to

that which takes possession of our inmost being. That is not Christian piety which is only inward, and that is not Christian piety which is only outward. "Faith without works is dead." Verse 3.—Of such character and life, the fruitful tree is an emblem. Like a tree planted by the rivers of water. Man is not merely an animal, but also spiritual. The law of God is the means and medium of this rooting, and the man's love and study of the law are the process of this Divine rooting. The tree is well rooted in good and well-watered soil. That bringeth forth his fruit in his season. It answers the end of its being. The figure may have a lower reference to the good works of a righteous man in this life, and the full, final satisfaction of our being—salvation achieved, eternal life. "In his season." Fail not to mark that clause. His [its, that is, the tree's], leaf also shall not wither. The perpetuity, the unending, eternal perpetuity of the good man's good, is here suggested—fadeless, amarantine. And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. He shall prosper in whatsoever he doeth. The doctrine the same with Paul's: "All things work together for good to them that love God"; and both are the same with Christ's: "He that loseth his life shall save it."

Verse 4.—The ungodly are not so.—Contrast and opposition in character, and also in destiny. Righteous, success; wicked, failure. Like the chaff, etc. Threshing was done on a level place upon a hill, and the winnowing was by tossing up the grain into the wind, when the chaff was driven away. The worthless, rootless, lifeless, doomed chaff, in contrast with the tree of life.

Verse 5.—Therefore the ungodly. At the final judgment, when probation, or opportunity ends. Nor sinners in the congregation, etc. The true Israel shall be all gathered in one assembly. This takes clearest shape in the New Testament—"the sheep on his right hand."

Verse 6.—For the Lord [Jehovah] knoweth, etc. That is, approves. But the way, etc. He does not know, but disapproves it.

SUNDAY, February 23rd, 1879.—The King in Zion.—Psalm ii. 1-12. Date unknown.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."—Acts ii. 36.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

Draw on the black-board two paths, one leading upward, and the other downward. Write over them the words Godly and the ungodly.

Explain how one is not so very wicked all at once. Illustrate by Peter "walked, followed afar-off." Luke xxii. 54. "Stood, and warmed himself." John xviii. 25. "Sat down among them." Luke xxii. 55. Eve, Cain, Achan, Gehazi, will all serve to show these steps downward.

The godly man does not take these steps, his way is different, he reads the Bible, and thinks about it constantly. Tell how a Christian is like a tree. A tree must first be planted. Who plants trees? The Lord is the great gardener. Read what he says in Isa. lxi. 3. Where do trees seem to like to grow? Where do they grow best? By the water. What do Christians delight in? Show how God's word is like water to a tree, keeping it fresh and green. An acorn does not become tree in a day; a little child cannot act and feel like one who has been a Christian for years; but if planted by the River of Life, they will grow. Draw from class, and write down, that a tree has root, branches, fruit. Show how love to Jesus is the root of a Christian's life; how Jesus calls his people the branches; what fruit a Christian must bear.

Let the class name the uses of such a tree, then how a Christian is useful. Let them also tell what a tree needs, such as sun, light, water, care, and show how Jesus gives all these to the Christian.

The ungodly are not so. Here shew an evergreen, and a dry, lifeless branch. What is the difference between these? One has life, while the other has not. Have also a handful of chaff. What the wind does not blow away the farmer gathers up and burns. Show that is just the fate of wicked.

Give, if thou canst, an alms; if not, afford instead of that a sweet and gentle word.

Answer to Scripture Enigma.

- No. 6. John the Baptist. Matt. xi. 7-10. 1. J oa b. 2 Sam. xvii. 25; xx. 8-10. 2. O meg a. Rev. xxi. 13. 3. H ar p. Gln. iv. 21. 4. N igh t. John ix. 4. 5. T alma i. 2 Sam. iii. 3. 6. H erodia s. Mark vi. 17-29. 7. E gyp t. Ezek xxix. 15.

Scripture Enigma.

- No. 7. 1. My first's a place by Nabal's presence shamed. 2. My second is the place by Geshem named. To Nehemiah as a meeting place. 3. My third, as he had neither sword nor mace, Did use an ox-goad in the stead. 4. My fourth is one to whom a leper came. 5. And for my fifth the leper's country name. The initials read down, and finals up, name two brothers celebrated in the Old Testament.

Select Serial.

Ponape; or, Light on a Dark Shore.

BY MRS. HELEN S. THOMPSON.

CHAPTER VII.—The last day at home.

As Alice's prospects became known in outside circles, well-meaning friends had much to say in the shape of censure, suspicion, and ridicule, thus keeping alive the flickering flame of unrest and disquietude in the mother's soul. Among these came one of high social position, wealth, and culture, laying siege to the oft-tried citadel of Alice's heart, bringing every motive that these, with love and powerful will combined, could exert to move her from her purpose. Again did the tempted mother plead, but was silenced by the "It is written, 'Be not tempted of evil.' 'No man that putteth his hand to the plough and looketh back is fit for the Kingdom of heaven.'"

"I do not see how you can go, Alice," said Hattie, one morning, "while mother is so unhappy about it, even though you have her consent."

"Hattie, I am so sure that this is right and God's will, and that he will bring her to rejoice in it, that I am constantly comforted about her. I believe that richest blessings will be the fruit of this sorrow to our mother."

"But, Alice, I am sometimes afraid that reason or life will be the cost of this trial. This morning I passed through the dining-room when she was ordering lunch, and was startled at her wan pale face. I could not resist the impulse to stop and embrace her, whispering, 'Dear mother!' She started as if I had struck her, dropping the fruit-basket from her hand, and threw up her arms with such a cry I hope I may never hear it again. 'O, Hattie,' said she, 'the devil is determined to have me!'"

"Poor mother!" sighed Alice. "But I am sure that there are more angels of light than of darkness about her path, and she will come off victorious."

And so it proved, for as this sorely-tempted soul ceased to strive against God her temple-tost bark found anchor in the peaceful waters of serene trust, and she could see that in this child of her love her own and husband's early consecration was accepted. Thus in the "fennel-tinctured" cup held to her lips there were found to be some drops of balm. As our extremities prove to be God's opportunity, so from behind the purple-draped clouds of this woman's sorrow a voice of ineffable sweetness was whispering,

"God is near thee, Therefore cheer thee, sad soul!"

During these days not the least of Alice's trials arose from the persistent entreaties of the new suitor, who insisted, if she went on a mission, she would ruin not only his hopes, but his soul, for "no other hand could guide him heavenward but hers." But when too sorely beset, her refuge was the "mercy-seat," from which she came back to the world with such an assured and peaceful light on her countenance that all who saw her wondered and ceased to doubt.

kindly attentions of her future son-in-law, who robbed her but to set a jewel upon her crown. Nor was she disappointed. Mr. Elmore's familiarity with foreign scenes, his easy flow of language, interspersed with anecdotes of native character and habit, and, above all, his ardent love for his work and Master, set the seal of goodness to a face charming in its mingled fire and sensibility. Then with what gentle grace did he help to heal the wound which his hand had made, and tenderly point out to the yet sore heart of the mother the many compensations in her sacrifice!

Mr. Elmore had been for ten years a laborer in the islands of the South Pacific. Although many hardships and heavy trials had been his portion, his labors were always returning a harvest in marks of civilization, expanding intellect, and Christian growth. Enthusiastic in his devotion to his people and in longing to be used as a means towards fulfilling the prophecy, "Even the isles shall praise thee, and wait for thy law," his soul burned with desire to hasten back to his chosen field. Therefore all preparations were necessarily forwarded with despatch for their departure. Who can tell what mingled tears and prayers, hopes and longings, and ardent love were woven into the many bridal garments, blended with hurried stitches, and packed with precious souvenirs and treasures that were to adorn the island home! As the church of which Alice was a member had begged the privilege of providing her housekeeping outfit, there was left to the home friends the more time for the last lingering love touches, which distilled a hallowed aroma, choicer than Araby's spices, over every article of vertu. Oh, reader, do you sigh sometimes that you have no precious vase of alabaster to break at the Saviour's feet?—no gift choice enough to prove your love? If ever you are called upon to yield your heart's idol at God's call, you need no longer sigh, for the exquisite fragrance of mingled love and pain mount heavenward, a sweet-smelling savor, from off your altar of sacrifice.

Mr. Elmore was a fine singer, and consequently many hours of never-to-be-forgotten enjoyment were spent over the piano and guitar in Fleda's sitting-room, followed by loving converse and such union of hearts as is found nowhere else on earth but in the charmed circle of home—a home where love is drawn from the one fountain-head. But days of heavenly communings like these were as the green pastures of the land Beulah, a tonic from the air of heaven, to prepare the soul for its coming conflicts; and indeed Fleda seemed the only perfectly happy one in the circle. She would lie for hours holding Alice's hand and listening to Mr. Elmore's talk, with rapt face and eyes which he declared to be a constant inspiration. Very tender were the eyes bent upon that beaming, upturned face, feeling that they were photographing last glimpses upon the heart's tablet.

I have not told my readers of John Saybrook, the young minister to whom Hattie Hammond had pledged her hand and heart; but his character is not the less worthy of note; and as he bears a prominent part in our simple tale, a few words of introduction by and by may not seem out of place. Just at present he is expected in the Hammond house, that he may be present at the wedding-breakfast on the morrow, and accompany Hattie and the bridal pair to New York. Mr. Elmore's needed departure had made a change in the plans of the elder sister, who gladly set aside her own preparations to further her sister's. There had been some talk of a double wedding, but the thoughtful, unselfish love which had always characterized this elder daughter now shone forth with added lustre in her concern for her mother's welfare.

"She cannot give us both away at once, John," said she; "it would be too much, when her heart is so very sore. She needs me more than you do for a while." And thus the matter was settled.

"John has come, Fleda," said Hattie, entering her sister's room just at dusk on the eve before the wedding. "Will you let him carry you down stairs to the dining-room, so that we may have this last tea together?"

"Yes, indeed, if he is willing," replied Fleda, who loved her future brother-in-law with a real sister-love, as any one

could tell who saw the meeting between these two five minutes later.

"Why, Hattie, Fleda grows prettier every day, I do believe; just see what a color!" said John, playfully, to hide his sorrow at sight of that brilliant flush which spoke too eloquently of pain and disease. "Where are your roses, Hattie?" "Oh, John," interrupted Fleda, "my roses are at Hattie's expense. I give her but thorns. She has had so much care of late too; I wish she wouldn't grieve about me. See how much better I look than she."

"You never grieve, Fleda, do you?" asked John.

"Oh yes, sometimes, because I am so tired, and long to work; but it is a great disgrace, when everybody is in a loving conspiracy to make me happy and comfortable. This constant fellowship with pain, instead of being a cause for grief, ought to bring me into nearer union with the great Sufferer. Is it not so?" and the spot on Fleda's cheek burned brighter, while the eyes of brilliant lustre seemed to see far beyond the shadows encircling the tiny boudoir and the faces bent in hushed sympathy above her, and to look on things unutterable. Ah! she is resting her heart at Calvary's foot, and he the Crucified is waiting near to lift the cross and place a crown.

A summons to tea, and John lifts the child-like form with that gentle grace which is a birthright of a kindly heart: "Easy now, little sister. Pillow the chair, Hattie, and we will have her down and in it before she knows."

The grave faces gathered in the supper-room relaxed with genuine pleasure at the sight of the dear invalid, and forgot their weariness in eager efforts for her comfort. For although Fleda pulled hard on those heart strings that vibrate quickest with pain, she yet carried in her hand an invisible wand with which to wake the chords of joy. It was a tired group, however, that settled themselves to the refreshment of tea and toast and delicate waffles, with those appetizing adjuncts which put new life into fagging spirits and weary bodies. Ah! how much happy cheer is the result of even these lower gifts of our Father's bounty!

That arduous packing for a 3 month's sea-voyage and for years of residence abroad, requiring so much care and forethought, was at last completed; last adieus to cherish outside friends, so trying to give and receive, are over; cherished and hallowed spots have been visited for the last time. Oh, that word last! with what sickening force does it strike the heart! To-morrow Alice is to link her destiny with another life, and go forth to follow in the steps of one as fair as she, who five years before laid down her life in the coral isles of the sea. If, under such circumstances, even friends wore grave faces, who can chide or wonder? The nervous chords have been strained to their utmost, and each one feels the foreshadowing of the reaction to come, though struggling to keep up the flow of table-talk. But Fleda wearies, and timidly laying her hand on Mr. Elmore's shoulder, says:

"Come, Mr. Elmore, I want to go to the parlor with you to-night to hear Alice play the grand piano. Will you give me your arm?"

"I will, indeed, if you will give me my brother's right to-night, little sister. Call me Dwight, please," said Mr. Elmore, lifting her from the chair and supporting her across the hall. "I am quite inclined to be jealous of Brother John, over there," continued he smiling.

You have no need. I have known him longer; that is all. 'Dwight!' it is a good name. I shall love to call you it. Shall we carry our names with us to heaven, brother?"

"How I wonder what he calls his angel creature, Higher up than we can reach her!" murmured Alice from the piano.

"And I will write upon him my new name," answered John. "There will certainly be no incongruous or unsuitable names there, none such as strike here so painfully sometimes."

"It is Frederika Bremer that said, 'There are eyes that can never die.' I shall certainly know my friends in heaven by their eyes," said Mrs. Hammond, crossing the room and readjusting Fleda's pillows. "I think I should as soon miss my children's names. I shall love to call you all by name when entering the pearly gates. I