

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1880.

FIRST QUARTER.

Lesson VII.—FEBRUARY 15.

THE TONGUE AND THE TEMPER. Matt. v. 33-38.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 34-37.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."—Matt. v. 48.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

- M. The Tongue and the Temper, Matt. v. 33-48.
T. Love to Enemies, Luke vi. 27-36.
W. Christian Charity, 1 Cor. xiii. 1-13.
T. The Good Samaritan, Luke x. 25-37.
F. Suffering as a Christian, 1 Pet. iv. 12-19.
S. The Mind of Christ, Phil. ii. 1-11.
S. Goodness of the Lord, Psa. cvii. 31-43.

PARALLEL TEXTS.

- With vs. 33: Lev. xix. 12; Num. xxx. 2.
With vs. 34: Matt. xxiii. 16-22; Jas. v. 12.
With vs. 38: Ex. xxi. 24; Lev. xxiv. 20; Deut. xix. 21.
With vs. 39: Prov. xx. 22; Isa. l. 6; Rom. xii. 17-19.
With vs. 40: Ex. xxii. 26, 27; 1 Cor. vi. 7.
With vs. 42: Matt. x. 8; John xiv. 14; James iv. 3; Deut. xv. 8-10.
With vs. 43: Lev. xix. 18; Deut. xxiii. 6.
With vs. 44: Rom. xii. 14-20; Acts vii. 60.
With vs. 45: Rom. v. 8; Job xxv. 3.
With vs. 48: Gen. xvii. 1; Col. i. 28.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE KINGDOM.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Oaths, Vs. 33-37. II. Retaliation, Vs. 38-42. III. Goodness, Vs. 43-48.

QUESTION.—What is the topic of the present lesson? By what examples does Jesus here illustrate the true righteousness?

I. Vss. 33-37.—What is meant by "for swear"? Where in the Scriptures is this act forbidden? (See Parallel Texts.) What law on swearing does Jesus lay down? What four particulars does he name? Why name these? Does this rule prohibit the civil oath? What does it prohibit?

II. Vss. 38-42.—What law of retaliation does Jesus quote? Where is it recorded? (See Parallel Texts.) What abuse of this law had become common? Jesus corrects this abuse in five particulars—name them. Explain what he meant in each. How did Jesus act under similar abuse? (1 Pet. ii. 22-24.) What should we do in such cases? (1 Pet. ii. 21.)

III. Vss. 43-48.—What saying concerning neighbors and enemies does Jesus quote? Where is this found? (See Parallel Texts.) What four duties to those who treat us ill are enjoined? What high honor belongs to those who act thus? In what are they and God similar? Why is it not enough to love and salute our friends and brethren? How does Luke give this law? (Luke vi. 36.)

In nine topics, the Saviour illustrates the deeper meaning of the Law, viz.: Murder, Adultery, Divorce, Oaths, Retaliation, Conduct toward Enemies, Alms giving, Prayer, Fasting. Our lesson comprises the fourth, fifth, and sixth.

I. Oaths (vs. 33-37.) Also Lev. xix. 12. Tradition made a false distinction between oaths made directly to God, and in those made to man, and without God's name. Swearing prohibited in private life, includes the little oaths and bad words which border on profanity so common. Simplicity of speech is enjoined.

II. Retaliation (vs. 38-42.) See Ex. xxi. 24. Christ's law is not for governments, but for individuals. Christian love will lead one to yield more than is demanded, discourages law-suits, as well as private quarrels.

III. Conduct towards Enemies (vs. 43-48.) Love them. Return kind words for evil ones. Do them good—by loving, active deeds. (Rom. xii. 20.) Pray for them. This is to be like God.

EXPLANATORY NOTES.—Verses 33-37. By them.—(Lev. xix. 12; Num. xxx. 2) seem to allow the practice of swearing in good faith. But swearing of every sort the Saviour now forbids. Cometh of evil, from the Evil One. Heb. vi.

13-17; vii. 21. Our Lord used a form of solemn asseveration very frequently—"Verily, verily," Paul says, (Gal. i. 20), "Behold, before God, I lie not." Again, (2 Cor. i. 23), "Moreover, I call God for a record upon my soul," etc. Yet again, (Rom. i. 9), "For God is my witness," etc. See also Rom. ix. 1-3; 1 Cor. xv. 31. These examples seem to make it clear that there may be proper exceptions to the rule of abstaining from oaths.

Verse 38.—Hath been said, from Ex. xxi. 24. See also Lev. xxiv. 19, 20, and Deut. xix. 21. Christ's disciples are not even to seek vengeance through the forms of law. Suffer injury, rather, in patience and silence.

Verse 39.—But I say unto you, Christ reveals the law's true significance—not to resist evil—much less seek to revenge it, even through forms of law. If a man strike you on one cheek, do not strike back, do not appeal to the magistrate, to get him struck back; but—offer him the other cheek, and let him strike that too, if he will." This representation of our Lord is to be taken as figurative, rather than literal. His own example is proof. Struck on the face in the judgment-hall, he does not appear to have presented his face for a second blow.

Verse 40.—Thy coat, the garment worn under the cloak, used also a covering at night.

Verse 41.—Compel.—(Matt. xxvii. 32), a legalized custom, by virtue of which, under certain circumstances, any man was liable to impressment. Twain. Two.

Verse 42.—The precept of this verse must be taken with limitations to give it force by making it practicable.

Verse 43.—Not in the Bible. Love to neighbors is enjoined, (Lev. xix. 18), but not hatred to enemies.

Verses 44, 45.—Your enemies. You are to have no enemies. Some may call themselves your enemies. Such enemies, (admitting, for the moment, their own description of themselves), you are to love. His sun. It is good to think of things as God's peculiar possession. "The sea is his," says the Psalmist. "His sun"—it is a noble and beautiful phrase.

Verses 46, 47.—What reward.—That is, from God. The publicans. A hated class, the gatherer of taxes, to support their heathen domination. Brethren only. Fellow-disciples, members with you of the same religious body.

Verse 48.—Be better than you are, until you reach the point of perfection. See Phil. iii. 12, 13, 14.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

Show how the Third Commandment is broken by the use of such words as Gracious! Mercy! Goodness! They all really mean the Lord, who only is gracious, merciful, and good; so that their use is taking his name in vain. Speak also of the use of slang phrases; and try to make such an impression as shall keep the children from ever forming such a habit. Exaggeration is another sin of the tongue children are much given to. Tell what the Saviour said of "idle words" (Matt. xii. 36.) How much more, then, of wicked ones!

If love for God is in our hearts, what sort of words will our tongues say? What sort of temper will we have? Let this lead to the duty of love to enemies. Instead of cross, angry words, making matters worse, we should give, not only gentle words, but words of prayer. Give instances where Jesus did this. Show how little we deserve all our heavenly Father does for us. —Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

Boys' Department.

Bible Enigma.

No. 58.

1-2. Two mountains in Palestine, the first of which was (according to tradition) the wonderful scene of the transfiguration of Christ. The second is frequently spoken of in the Old Testament, its copious dews as emblematical of the descent of spiritual blessings.

3. A village where our Saviour, on the eve of His resurrection, made Himself known to His two disciples at the breaking of bread.

4. A Roman governor who, in order to please the Jews in their malice, left an apostle in bonds.

5. A faithful mother commended by Paul for the training of her son.

6. The successor of Paul in the care of the church in Corinth.

7. A Moabitish woman who showed her strong attachment to her mother-in-law by following her into Judea, and was rewarded for her fidelity by a happy marriage, becoming the ancestor of the royal house of David.

8. Her sister-in-law who went back to her country and her gods.

9. The successor of Felix in the government of Judea under the Roman yoke.

10. A woman noted for her kindly acts to the poor, whom the apostle Peter raised to life.

11. A wicked woman at whose instigation a prophet of the Lord was beheaded in prison.

12. The mother of the murdered prophet.

13. The grandmother of Timothy.

14. A friend of the apostle Paul residing at Ephesus, of whom he wrote, "He often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain."

15-16. The first and fifth son of Jacob.

The initials of these names shew a lesson of King David, and which was often reiterated in the Proverbs of his son.

—Watchman.

CURIOS QUESTIONS.

No. 31. Make a diamond shape of three words, having in them all but three letters:

- 1. A perpendicular and horizontal.
2. The smallest number and a cypher.
3. An established opinion.
4. A bag with holes.
5. A consent.

Answer to Enigma.

No. 57.

- 1. Caleb.....Joshua xv. 14.
2. Hephzibah.....2 Kings xxi. 1.
3. Rechabites.....Jeremiah xxxv. 6.
4. Italian band.....Acts x. 1.
5. Saron.....Solomons Song ii. 1.
6. Tyranus.....Acts xix. 9.
7. Ishmaelites.....Judges viii. 24.
8. Abana.....2 Kings v. 12.
9. Noah.....Genesis vi. 14, 22.

- 10. Mordecai.....Esther ii. 7.
11. Elijah.....2 Kings ii. 11.
12. Samuel.....1 Sam. ii. 18.
13. Semei.....Gen. v. 32.
14. Emmaus.....Luke xxiv. 13-29.
15. Nymphas.....Col. iv. 15.
16. Goliath.....1 Samuel xvii.
17. Eschol.....Numbers xiii. 24.
18. Rome.....Rom. xviii. 16.

CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

ANSWERS TO CURIOS QUESTIONS.

No. 30. Jeremiah xxvi. 2, 8.

Select Serial.

Florence Walton, OR, A Question of Duty.

BY MAY F. MCKEAN.

CHAPTER III.—MRS. WALTON'S SUNDAY AFTERNOON.

At the gate they were joined by Dr. Ronselle and Clifford Walraven, who walked with them to church and occupied seats just behind Miss Markwell's pew.

Dr. Lyman was a man past the meridian of life, with silvery threads mingled very freely among the once dark locks, but with bright piercing eyes and a clear ring in his rich voice. His text this morning was, "Go work to-day in my vineyard;" and as he closed the Bible, having finished his discourse, Florence wondered how Ethel could ever think him "stupid."

Perhaps the solution of this mystery would have been apparent could she have known that at that very instant her cousin was taking a mental inventory of the articles of clothing worn by Maud Glanning, three pews before them, with the probable cost of each, and wondering if Mr. Walraven would think Maud's hat, gloves, and dress were a better match than her own. She hoped not; she knew what fastidious taste he had in regard to shades and colors, and could not help feeling annoyed in the consciousness that there really was just the least trifle of difference in the shade of the steel-colored silk and the steel-colored kids. "Work" of any sort was stupid to her: what wonder if she thought the minister and sermon were so too?

"Well, Florence, what did you think of our minister? And the church, is not that beautiful? The fresco-work back of the pulpit would do honor to

any meeting-house in the State. Then those stained-glass windows, did you notice what exquisite designs? The upholstery, too, is very generally admired; did you notice that?" Auntie Grace asked when they met again at dinner.

"It is the handsomest church-building I was ever in," returned Florence, "and I liked Dr. Lyman ever so much. He is direct and earnest. Then he had such a fruitful subject this morning. It was work—work for Christ. I think his words were very encouraging, for he says every one can do something for him."

"Do you remember the text, Miss Ethel?" asked Dr. Ronselle with a mischievous twinkle in his eye.

Ethel looked confused; not that it was any rare thing for her to forget where the text was, but she knew the question was asked her because she really did not know. Almost any other time she would have flung back some merry cavilling answer in the same spirit, but somehow she did not care to come in contact with her conscientious little cousin again. They had jostled several times already, and she did not feel exactly pleasant after it. Besides that, Aunt Walton was looking straight at her, waiting to know what the text was.

"I don't remember exactly. It was something about somebody working in a vineyard somewhere," she answered, her eyes bent on her plate.

Dr. Ronselle's eyes twinkled all the merrier as he turned toward Florence:

"Perhaps, Miss Walton, you can help us out of this fog?"

"Certainly," Florence hastened to reply, fearing the doctor's mirth would find expression in something which would further embarrass her cousin. "It was in Matthew, twenty-first chapter, twenty-eighth verse."

At that moment, a violent ring at the door-bell brought the conversation to an abrupt close, much to the relief of Ethel, who looked up quickly:

"That must be for you, Dr. Ronselle; no one would ever ring in that barbarous manner if it were not a case of life and death."

Sure enough, a moment later Lottie appeared, saying a child wished to see the doctor, who immediately left them.

"Shall I help you to your room, mamma?" Florence asked as they rose from the table.

"Oh, sister, you surely will not be so cruel as to deprive us of your company this afternoon?" Miss Grace said in surprise as she elevated her finely marked eyebrows.—"And, Florence, I thought you would have an opportunity to get acquainted with some of the young folks this afternoon. You cannot be going to shut yourself up in your room?"

And Ethel put in her plea in this wise: "Yes, Cousin Florence, some of the young folks will surely be here—they always are Sunday afternoons—and they will expect to see you."

Florence looked more astonished than ever, but her mother answered immediately: "It has always been our custom to spend the Lord's Day afternoon in reading and studying the Bible. When my husband was with us we had, of course, greater advantages, but even now we would not give up the practice. So you must excuse us from your Sunday afternoon company."

"Well, did you ever?" was Miss Grace's exclamation when they were out of hearing.

"Auntie, I do think they are two of the queerest people I ever heard tell of. I only hope Florence will outgrow some of her foolish notions. She will be terribly stupid if she does not," Ethel said with more energy than usual.

"Oh, don't fear for that. Of course she is rather verdant yet. You know she has never been away from her country home before, but she's naturally quick, and will soon learn. What does Dr. Ronselle think of her, do you know?" asked Auntie Grace after a little pause.

"I think he admires her, and I'm quite sure she admires him. In fact, she was so enrapt with his praises that she could not see anything to merit the least approbation in Clifford. She had really no eyes for him;" and Ethel laughed a little as she thought of the demure "lecture" she had received the previous afternoon.

"That would make a splendid match, now wouldn't it?—that is, for Florence.

Dr. Ronselle is so wealthy, you know. I really hope the poor girl won't throw such a rare chance over her shoulder," remarked Miss Grace with an air of patronizing complacency, as if in selecting for her niece a wealthy husband she was conferring upon her the greatest of earthly blessings.

"She, will, though, auntie, depend upon it," laughed Ethel. "She gave me her entire views upon the subject yesterday afternoon, and rather took me to task for being so kind to Clifford—'encouraging his attentions,' she called it. She thinks it is wicked for a person who is a member of the church to marry one who is not. I doubt not she has placed herself upon entirely too high a pedestal of virtue ever to stoop to the level of one who has not reached her standard of perfection by becoming a church-member. Indeed, you have no idea how positive she is upon the subject."

"Nonsense! You don't know what you are talking about, child; neither does she. I guess if she loses her heart, she will lose those foolish notions along with it."

Callers were soon announced, and a lively time ensued in the parlor. The young people of the town seemed to be out en masse; and, as they were always sure of a bright welcome at Miss Markwell's elegant home, this seemed to be a favorite resort. They dropped in by twos and threes, and after discussing for a while the latest fashions, parties, boatings, and picnics past and to come, left to make room for others. Indeed, Sunday was a general visiting-day for most of the young folks of Westtown, and thus the sacred hours of the day were desecrated without the slightest hesitation.

The sound of their merry, frivolous chatter came up to Mrs. Walton and Florence through the open window, and struck a discordant note in the otherwise sweet harmony of this Lord's Day afternoon, spent by those two just as so many other Sunday afternoons had been spent.

Florence had wheeled the comfortable easy-chair into the most desirable position as regarded light and air before the window for her mother—had placed the ottoman just at the right distance from it to be satisfactory as a rest for the slippers feet. Then a glass of ice-water was placed on the stand within reach, the Bible and commentary taken from the book-shelves, and they were ready for the afternoon's occupation. But before either were opened, Florence said,

"Did you not tell me, mother, that Aunt Grace is a Christian?"

"Yes," answered Mrs. Walton with a sigh; "she became a member of the church when she was about nineteen years old;" and then she seemed lost in thoughts of the past.

Florence was looking far out of the window and thinking how strange it all seemed, and how unlike the Sundays spent in their quiet home. But presently she took up the Bible as she asked,

"Where shall we read this afternoon, mother?"

Mrs. Walton answered slowly, as if but just recovering herself from the realm of thought,

"About the 'talents,' dear. You will find it in Matthew—about the twenty-fourth or fifth chapter, I think."

Florence turned the leaves slowly, "Yes, here it is," she said after a few moments—"in the twenty-fifth chapter, beginning at the fifteenth verse." She handed her mother the Bible, and opening the commentary she began reading in a low clear tone that most expressive of all the beautiful parables given by our Saviour while on the earth. Before she had proceeded very far both thought they heard footsteps in the hall near the door, but listening a moment all was quiet, and Mrs. Walton remarked,

"I think it was only Lottie on her way up to her room. Poor child! she always walks so softly one may never be quite sure if it is she—as if she were afraid of some one." Florence thought it must have been she, and so continued, but after a few moments, the sound was repeated, and this time the curly brown head of Lottie appeared, as she, sitting on the hall floor, had forgotten, in her interest in the story, to keep herself concealed behind the door.