

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1880.

THIRD QUARTER.

Lesson V.—AUGUST 1.

THE CALL OF ABRAM.

Gen. xi. 31, 32; xii. 1-10.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 1-3.

After God's covenant with Noah the repopling of the earth proceeded rapidly. The unity of the people was broken at Babel; the descendants of Noah are given (Gen. chap. 10); the confusion of tongues and the genealogy from Shem to Abram occupy Gen. chap. 11, up to the point where the lesson begins.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."—Gen. xii. 3.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

- M. The Call of Abram, Gen. xi. 31, 32; xii. 1-10.
T. Patriarchal History, Josh. xxiv. 1-8.
W. Patriarchal History, Acts vii. 1-19.
T. Leaving One's People, Ruth i. 1-22.
F. Leaving All, Matt. x. 34-42.
S. Blessed through Abraham, Gal. iii. 1-14.
S. The Obedience of Faith, Luke v. 1-11.

PARALLEL TEXTS.

- With vs. 31: Gen. xii. 1; x. 19; Neh. ix. 7; Acts vii. 4.
With vs. 1: Gen. xv. 7; Isa. xli. 2; Acts vii. 3; Heb. xi. 8.
With vs. 2: Gen. xvii. 6; xxiv. 35; xxviii. 4; Ex. i. 7; Deut. xxvi. 5; 1 Kings iii. 8; Gen. xxiv. 35; Gal. iii. 14.
With vs. 3: Gen. xxvii. 29; Ex. xxiii. 22; Num. xxiv. 6; Gen. xxii. 18; xxvi. 4; Ps. lxxii. 17; Acts iii. 25; Gal. iii. 8.
With vs. 5: Gen. xiv. 14; xi. 31; xvii. 8; xliii. 4; Ps. cv. 9, 11.
With vs. 9: Gen. xliii. 3.
With vs. 10: Gen. xxvi. 1; xliii. 1; Ps. cvi. 15.

THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH.

LESSON OBJECTS.—I. Command, Vs. 1, 2. Promises, Vss. 2, 3, 7. 3. Obedience, Vss. 31, 32, 4-10.

QUESTIONS.—By what name was Abram finally called? (Gen. xvii. 5.) Why was this change of name?

- I. Vs. 1.—From what three associations did God command Abram to depart? What was Abram's country? (Gen. xi. 27, 28, 31; Acts vii. 2, 4.)
II. Vss. 2, 3, 7.—What promise concerning another land was made when Abram was called? (vs. 1; Acts vii. 3.) How many promises are in vs. 2, 3? What promise was made when Abram reached Canaan? (vs. 7.)
III. Vss. 31, 32, 4-10.—When Abram left his own land did he know whether he was going? (Heb. xi. 8.) What was his age at that time? (vs. 4.) Why did Abram halt at Haran? Point out this place. With whom did he finally enter Canaan? Trace his journey through Canaan and into Egypt. How would the presence of famine in this land of promise affect Abram? Why did Abram obey One who promised matters so difficult? What should this example teach us?

EXPLANATORY NOTES.—Verse 31.—Terah . . . Abram . . . Haran: a city of Mesopotamia, north-east of Damascus; called also Charran. Sarai . . . Ur of the Chaldees: a city of uncertain location, four sites being assigned; probably the modern Orfa, twenty-five miles north of Haran. Canaan: the Holy Land, Palestine.

Verse 1.—Had said: before his start from Ur (Acts vii. 2); possibly the call was renewed in Haran. Abram doubtless was an eminent servant of God even then.

Verse 5.—Gotten in Haran: servants born to him. Gen. xiv. 14.

Verse 6.—Sichem: Shechem, the modern Nablus, between Mounts Ebal and Gerizim, thirty-five miles north of Jerusalem. Moreh: a plain and grove of oaks near Shechem. Canaanite: the natives.

Verse 7.—An altar: Abram's customary act in each new place. Appeared unto him: the first recorded appearance of the Lord (Jehovah.) At this same place Jesus first disclosed himself as the Messiah. John iv. 26.

Verse 8.—Bethel: a city twelve miles north of Jerusalem. Hai: same as Ai which the Israelites under Joshua destroyed.

Verse 10.—Famine: Abram does not return to his own land (Heb. xi. 15), but follows the call. Egypt: the land lying south-west of Canaan.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

Four hundred years passed away after the flood. The world had forgotten God again, and worshipped the moon, and stones, and trees, and idols. God chose out one family, and taught them about himself, that through them all the earth might learn. But God wanted his people to be separated from worshippers of idols. So God said to Abram, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee."

He was one of three brothers, Abram, Nahor, Haran. They were living with their father Terah in the land of the Chaldees; and there Haran died, leaving a son named Lot. When Abram left his old home, the whole family set out with him to go to the land of Canaan, though they probably knew nothing of the call. They marched as far as a place called Haran, where they must have lived some time; there Terah died, and the brother Nahor made it his home. But the call came to Abram again to rise up and leave relations and home, and go farther to a land which he was to receive. He went out, not knowing whither, but obeying the command, and believing the promise which had said, "I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing." Lot, the son of his brother Haran, went with him into the land of Canaan.

Their first long resting-place in the land was at Moreh; there the Lord appeared to him; there he built the first altar to the Lord in his new country. But he was not to make his home in that place; his children, not he, were to own the land. He moved his tent from place to place; he went on to a mountain on the east of Bethel; there, as wherever he went, he built an altar and prayed to the Lord. Then the rain failed, and the grass and corn withered; so he went south to Egypt, where there was generally more food, as it was a well-watered country, and did not depend so entirely on the rains.

Boys' Department.

Bible Enigma.

No. 82.

From the holy Scriptures show Natural objects named below;

- 1. First, God's hosts upon the wing, Marshalled bands that have no king?
2. Next, a green and fruitful tree, David's trustful simile?
3. Thirdly, Esau's savoury meat, Which his father loved to eat?
4. Next, the fierce tempestuous gale, When by Crete Paul's shipmen sail?
5. Fifth, what toiling Israel used, When their straw had been refused?
6. Sixth, the seed by Satan sown, In the day of harvest known?
7. Next, the mean and prickly thing Once compared to Judah's king?
8. Sweet the eighth! yet sweeter far, True and righteous judgments are?
9. Next, where twelve rich jewels shone, Only name the last but one?
10. Tenth, what creature's horns were those Wherewith Joseph pushed his foes?
11. "Not the brier," Isaiah said— But what tree shall grow instead?
12. Last, the fourth most precious stone, Where the twelve foundations hone?

Let the several objects named Be in one acrostic framed; There the Saviour's question see, Thrice to Peter—thrice to me! Would that I, like Peter, may Three times truly answer, yea!

CURIOS QUESTIONS.

No. 70. From the letters in "Be a star" make one word signifying along side of.

From "No more stars" make a person well versed in the heavens.

From "Great helps" make what aids greatly in communicating with friends.

From "Ever in us" make what describes the substance of all worlds.

Answer to Bible Enigma.

No. 81.

- 1. D ia 1...2 Kings xx. 11.
2. E sa u...Gen. xxvii. 35.
3. M usi c...1 Sam. xvi. 25.
4. A nthem a...1 Cor. xvi. 22.
5. S ardi s...Rev. iii. 4, 5.

DEMAS—LUCAS.

ANSWERS TO CURIOS QUESTIONS.

DECAPITATIONS.

No. 68. Sprig, prig, rig, Sham, ham, am, Stable, table, able, Whale, hale, ale, Plate, late, ate.

No. 69. D A R T A R E A R E A R T A R T

Getting Married.

BY DR. JOHN HALL.

It is very unfortunate for many that a subject so practical and important as marriage is often spoken of as if it were a mere jocular incident in human life. The opportunity to fill young minds with just and pure ideas concerning it is sometimes turned into a horrible tragedy.

Marriage has its social side. Persons rise or fall, or are kept from rising or falling, in a great measure, by the companions for life whom they select. Mr. Small would never by himself have amounted to much, but he had the good fortune to marry a capable, energetic girl, and the result is the Small family stand among the foremost in the town.

Marriage has its prudential side. When the young people set out in disregard of the first principles of honest living, they lay the basis of many a bitter sorrow. When self-denial, forethought, and careful calculation are made at the beginning, and even over-mastering affection is made to bend to practical wisdom, they have laid a foundation for safe future prosperity. Tom Fawcett was desperately in love with Miss Greer, but he knew just how much it would take to "set them up," however modestly. He told her his ideas and plans; he got a savings bank book; she kept it for him; it was a salutary check on any little extravagances to which she might have been tempted. Mr. Fawcett is now a bank president, and Mrs. Fawcett keeps four domestics, and makes every one of them keep a savings bank book.

Marriage has an intellectual side. A man with a handsome face and figure, but without brains or any wish for knowledge, makes it hard for a wife of average capacity to maintain the "looking up" attitude. On the other hand, a refined and educated woman with an active mind lifts up a man who has inherent force, though, perhaps, without early advantages. A wise young fellow ought to say to himself, "When that hair is less thick and glossy, when that cheek is paler, when that eye has less luster than now, will there still remain a mind that will stimulate and strengthen mine?"

Marriage has a moral side. Harry Bell admired his "girl," but he did not respect her. There was nothing wrong about her, but he did not in his heart do honor to her principles. She dazzled others, she fascinated him, he was proud of her in society. But that was all. When he had his home and his wife in it he did not keep away the men whose looseness or coarseness would shock a good woman. Wit might be wicked, but she enjoyed it if it was witty. So his tone was not kept up, but let down; and, unfortunately, the boys are "bad," and the girls are "not turning out well." It might have been different if Mr. Bell had set up a higher standard of goodness.

Marriage has a personal side. A little high temper, a little dull moroseness, a little looseness of the tongue, a little—a very little—jealousy of disposition, may be the ruin of two lives that ought to have been happy as one. Dear Edith was a lovely girl, but her girl friends knew that she had a temper of her own; and, unfortunately, now that she—temper and all—is Charlie's, he knows it, likewise. He is most cautious in her company. A man who carries about a bag of gunpowder needs to avoid sparks. She might blow him up. On the other hand, Dick Brown is, in many respects, a nice fellow, extremely precise in manner, but so jealous that his wife's own relations are watched, snubbed, and at length driven from his house by him, lest they should get the affections of his wife. He has in various small ways "cribbed" cabined and confined her, till a sprightly, warm-hearted girl, with frank manners and an honest nature, is changed into a restrained, timid, hesitating woman. It is pitiable to see her side-long glance at him, that she may

cordially receive an old friend of her childhood. Dick might scold her sideways all the evening if she showed too much warmth.

These and many such matters are little thought of by too many young persons, and hence, the "incompatibility," the "unpleasantness" and quarrels, ending too often in separation. The union was formed under the influence of admiration, or self-love, or ambition, or sordid gain, and it was not happy. Ah, Mr. Looker, you may buy gold too dear.

There is a curious felicity some have in the circumstances of their marriage, which gives them a good "send-off." They do not surprise any one when it is announced. People say it is just the thing. They do not run about the town, telling everybody of the "catch," but they cement the friendship of many years by timely confidences, which say, informally, "I wish you as one of my friends to know it." Their wedding is nice, there is no meanness, and no "splurge." "Her own minister," who has long known her, watched over her, and shares in her hopeful satisfaction, marries her, and his voice trembles a little as he says, "The Lord bless you!" He feels as if giving his own child to another's custody, and the bridegroom knows again from the very tones of the clergyman that he would be bad and base beyond expression if he held lightly that sacred trust. Quietly and naturally the young couple settle down into their new life, forgetting no civilities, taking on no airs, and provoking no criticism. They are beginning as they mean to end. They will not be the "talk of the town," they will never occupy the time of a divorce court.

How to mend matters is a hard problem; but rash, inconsiderate, selfish, wicked marriages are a sore evil in society. The making of such matches is a topic of talk which in itself demoralizes, and the breaking of them, later, with more or less of form, renews the malignant influence. When old Congressman Kiteflyer married Miss Hopper, who was poor, showy, and ambitious to get to the capital, the talk about it corrupted the place. It was a bad play which everybody saw acted on the stage of actual life. He had no real love for anybody, except old Kiteflyer; and she had no true love for him. And when a year or two after, the "old fool" sent her home, and settled with her lawyers how much he should pay, the stench was again over the place. Health officers are much needed to abate nuisances that pollute the air and send poison into the lungs; but who shall drive away the bad gases and noxious smells that blight all delicacy, and poison the gentler feelings of our people?

Temper at Home.

I have peeped into quiet "parlors" where the carpet is clean and not old, and the furniture polished and bright; into "rooms" where the chairs are deal and the floor carpetless; into "kitchens" where the family live, and the meals are cooked and eaten, and the boys and girls are as blithe as the sparrows in the hatch overhead; and I see that it is not so much wealth, nor learning, nor clothing, nor town, nor country, nor station—as tone and temper that make life joyous or miserable, that render homes happy or wretched. And I see, too, that in town or country, good sense and God's grace make of life what no teachers, or accomplishments, or means, or society, can make it, the opening stave of an everlasting psalm, the fair beginning of an endless existence, the goodly, modest, well-proportioned vestibule to a temple of God's building, that shall never decay, wax old, or vanish away.—John Hall, D. D.

The sad story of little Mousey.

Once a mousey lived near a cheese, And she had a life of jolly ease. For half the night, and all the day, She nibbled and nibbled and nibbled away.

At last a lady came to see In what condition the cheese might be. She lifted her hands and said "Oh! oh!" Then she told her maid for a trap to go. When mousey woke from her evening nap, She started for supper, and saw the trap. She opened the door and in she went, And very soon began to repent.

For before she had even time to sup, The cat came along and ate her up. —Mrs. M. F. Butts.

Stoning.

One day travelling on camel-back through that portion of the Desert of Sinai called the Desert of Sin, my Arabs all of a sudden left their camels and me running on in front, leaving the caravan to come on as best it could. When I came up to them I found them congregated around a heap of stones and sand. They were crying out with loud voices, throwing stones, too, at this heap, and kicking up the sand with their feet, all of them in a most excited state, even spitting violently, which is quite an Eastern way of showing contempt or hatred. I called out to know what was the matter, but they began again, going on worse than ever, till they were quite exhausted. Then the following story was told me. Once upon a time a bad man, a very bad man, lived thereabouts, but, said they, "Praise be to Allah," which means "Thanks be to God," he was killed, and his body put in the sand there. Everybody was so glad he was killed that whenever a native went by the grave, he threw stones and sand at him, cursing at the same time the name and memory of the dead man. From the heap of stones and sand it showed that people must have done this for some time.

Among the Jews the most awful form of punishment by death was that of "stoning to death." The man condemned was taken out and stoned by all the people, and the awful character of the death would be that it was such a lingering death. The whole village or town would cast stones at him, not big rocks, as some people fancy, but stones. It is still quite an Eastern practice; whenever people wish to show hatred, they cast stones and dirt at you. I have had volleys of stones thrown at me merely because I was a Christian. The Jews in the Holy Land have still the same customs as their forefathers. In the valley of the Kedron, near Jerusalem there is a building called the "Tomb of Absalom;" all around it lies a great heap of small stones. I have often watched Jews passing it; when they came to it they would pick up some stones and cast them back again at the heap with every expression of contempt and hatred. We are told in the Bible that when Absalom was slain by Joab, his body was cast into a pit, a great heap of stones being laid upon him.

We are told that Absalom, having no son in his life-time, raised a pillar to himself in the "King's dale," to keep his name in remembrance. This so-called tomb I have told you of is situated at the entrance of what was the "king's dale" or garden. It is a fertile garden even now, for the water from Siloam passes through it. In all probability this so-called "tomb" marks the place where this "pillar" stood, so that this rebellious son is remembered to this day not, as he had hoped, with honor, but with horror and contempt because of his crime in rebelling against his too indulgent father, King David. Absalom forgot the commandment, "Honor thy father;" rebelling against him he lost his life, and to all time is an awful example of a bad son. See how God punishes rebellion against parents: look at the difference of the two sons, Absalom and Solomon; the one died a despicable death, the other came to great honor, being chosen by God to be king. He had the blessing and prayer of his father David, who asked God to give his son Solomon a "perfect heart" (1 Chron. 29: 19.) Solomon, too, was told by God to "ask what shall I give thee." His answer was, "Give me now wisdom and knowledge" (2 Chron. 1: 10). After that prayer God promised that because he had asked that, he would not only give it to him, but riches and honor such as no king had ever before or since. Dear children, ask that God will give you the grace to pray the prayer of Solomon, then his blessing will rest upon you forever.—Henry J. Harper, in Sunday at Home.

A cannon-ball passing through a four feet bore, receives its direction for the whole range. So the soul, in childhood, receives its direction for eternity.

The Bible, diamond-like, casts its lustre in every direction. Torch-like the more it is shaken, the more it shines. Herb-like, the more it is pressed, the sweeter its fragrance.