

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1880.

Lesson XII.—DECEMBER 19.

QUARTERLY REVIEW.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

- M. 1. Isaac's Prosperity, Gen. xxvi. 12-25.
2. Jacob and Esau, Gen. xxvii. 22-40.
T. 3. Jacob at Bethel, Gen. xxviii. 10-22.
4. Jacob's Prevailing Prayer, Gen. xxxii. 9-12, 22-30.
W. 5. Joseph sold into Egypt, Gen. xxxvii. 1-5, 23-36.
6. Joseph in Prison, Gen. xxxix. 21-23; Gen. xl. 1-8.
T. 7. Joseph the Wise Ruler, Gen. xli. 41-57.
8. Joseph and his Brethren, Gen. xlv. 30-34; Gen. xlv. 1-8.
F. 9. Jacob and Pharaoh, Gen. xlvii. 1-12.
S. 10. The Last Days of Jacob, Gen. xlviii. 3-22.
S. 11. The Last Days of Joseph, Gen. i. 14-26.

The work of the entire year may now be gathered up. The work of the connected six months should by all means be so linked. In the First Quarter, we saw "God Creating," and "Man Acting." Here we see "God Blessing," and "Man Acting."

I. God Creating:—Lesson 1.

II. Man Acting:—Lessons 2-11.

[Adam, Cain, Noah, Abraham, Lot.]

I. God Blessing:—

- 1. Isaac:—Prosperity. (1.)
2. Jacob:—Bethel. (3.)
3. Joseph:—Ephraim and Manasseh. (10.)
II. Man Acting:—
1. Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, Esau. (2.)
2. Joseph's Brethren:—The sale. (5.)
3. Joseph:—Humiliation. (6.)
Exaltation. (7.)
Graciousness. (8.)
Steadfast. (11.)
4. Pharaoh:—Extending Welcome. (9.)

Upon this basis, the lessons may be studied as a group, and also severally. The outlines will suggest the few questions which time will permit to be asked.

Of the eleven lessons under review, one is given to the career of Isaac; three tell the story of Jacob; five are devoted to the history of Joseph; while two, the ninth and tenth, bring Jacob and Joseph together in the same lessons.

1. Have your class give a brief outline of each lesson; an analysis with the most striking points, together with the Titles and Golden Texts. This is a very important exercise for the young. There is no reason why a child of average ability should not be able to give such an outline of the whole quarter's work.

2. Select six or seven most prominent characters in the lessons, and draw out from your class the facts which centre in them.

3. Take some theme set forth in the lessons, and show how it is illustrated in the careers of these patriarchs. Take, for instance, The true road to Prosperity. What is it? Where does it lead us? Your class will be interested and profited by this. Isaac was prosperous. Jacob's true prosperity began with his conversion on the way to Padanaram and came afterwards through Prayer and Faith. Joseph was prosperous. But the pit and the prison were on the road to honor. The elements of his prosperity were purity, integrity, diligence, capacity, a cheerful courage, a willingness to bide God's time, and, above all, the fact that the Lord was with him.

4. Or, confine your review to the fascinating history of Joseph. Take Gen. xlix. 22-26, Jacob's blessing of Joseph, as your central text, and show how his course fulfils it.

The parallel between Joseph and Christ, which makes him a type of our Lord, gives an interesting study. Christ, like Joseph, was envied (Matt. xxvii. 18); sold (Matt. xxvii. 9); tempted (Matt. iv. 1-11); like Joseph, he suffered wrongfully (John xix. 4); was in humiliation (Phil. ii. 8); was highly exalted (Phil. ii. 9); forgave his persecutors (Luke xxiii. 34); is a great Saviour.

EXPLANATORY NOTES.

I.

Isaac's prosperity, here described, was the sequel of his obeying God in remaining where he was when Divinely

directed so to do, instead of going to Egypt, according to his previous apparent purpose.

Be such in character, that God will bless your posterity for your sake.

II.

Divine Revelation makes no concealment of the sins of good men.

Jacob's prosperity tended rather to the furtherance of God's designs, than to Jacob's own personal benefit.

Recognize, in the Providential displacement of Esau by Jacob, the sovereign, disposing hand of Him to whom no creature may say, "Why doest thou thus?"

Jacob suffered heavily, in consequence of his deceit.

Jacob, notwithstanding his faults, was a pious man; while Esau, notwithstanding his good points, was a profane man.

III.

In the midst of Jacob's saddest experience, God still mingles grace with discipline.

Jacob's vision of heavenly messengers ascending and descending is an anticipation of New Testament doctrine of the ministration of angels. Heb. i. 14. It requires nothing but qualified eyes to behold God in every place.

IV.

Urge the promises of God, to support your pleas with him in prayer.

Learn that God is well pleased to be pleaded with in the spirit that says, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

V.

Note the injurious effect of parental partiality.

Mark, in the sequel of the brothers' plot against Joseph, how wicked cunning overreaches itself, and is made by Divine Providence to bring about, through its devices, the very results against which its devices are contrived.

VI.

The history of Joseph is a striking illustration, if not type, of the history of the Redeemer.

The same Joseph who, in his humiliation, was at the mercy of his brethren, had, in his exaltation and glory, his brethren at his mercy; so Jesus, once humiliated to suffer the shame of the cross at your hands, is now exalted and glorified to judge and to punish you, unless you repent.

As Joseph saved his brethren that sold him, so Jesus is willing to save us that crucified him.

VII.

Joseph, in his inexperienced young manhood, was more severely tried in character by the immense prosperity that now suddenly came on him, than he had been by his previous adversity.

Much religious meditation and prayer, not expressly reported in the narrative, must have characterized that life of administrative activity on Joseph's part, to keep him so steady, so simple, so generous, to the last.

VIII.

It was habitual reverence toward God that had so kept alive and fresh in Joseph's bosom the instincts and impulses of natural affection.

Recognize in the dealings of your fellows with you, the overruling hand and providence of God.

God blesses the world at large for the sake of those whom he will save out of the world.

IX.

It is perfectly natural and reasonable that God should bless you for the sake of his Son, if you are truly of that Son's kindred by faith and obedience.

From Joseph's instructions to his brethren, to disclose the exact truth respecting themselves to Pharaoh, learn that perfect truthfulness is generally quite reconcilable with shrewd, worldly policy.

The pagan king, Pharaoh, survives now in human remembrance only from his connection with his pious servant, Joseph.

The history of human redemption, by Jesus Christ, is the true clue to the understanding of all human history.

X.

Learn to recognize the various blessings of life as gifts from God.

Recognize the free, sovereign, unconditional electing or choosing grace of God exemplified now again in the preferment of the younger over the elder of Joseph's sons, as before in the replacement of Esau by Jacob for the inheritance of the birthright, and for the leadership of his race.

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XI.

Badness finds it hard to comprehend goodness.

Conscious guilt breeds distrust, genuine repentance makes trust easy.

From Joseph's tears over his brethren's unworthy attitude towards him, take a hint of God's sorrow over his apostate, false, unbelieving creatures—enemies to him by wicked works.

Remark Joseph's faith in God's promises, as evinced in his desire to have his bones removed to Canaan.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

Any one of several methods of review may be pursued with both pleasure and profit.

1. Long ago we saw that, though the path of Joseph's life often lay through dark places, yet, after all, there was a light shining on it all the time. (November 7.) The Bible says that the path of the just shines more and more unto the perfect day; and we see that this is true. Mark the principal scenes in Joseph's life, and show how God made all things in his life to work together for good.

2. Draw out a few of the traits of Joseph's character, in which he was like Jesus—such as, Loving, Kind, Forgiving, Comforting. Press home on the children the need for their being like Joseph and Jesus.

3. The blessings contained in these lessons. In Lesson I, we saw that "the blessing of the Lord maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow therewith." II. Esau came too late for a blessing. Isaac had but one. Our Father has one for us all. III. Jacob, at Bethel, had a threefold blessing, "I am with thee"; "I will keep thee"; "I will not leave thee." IV. Jacob blessed by the angel at the brook. Jesus is that angel, ready to bless us. V and VI, do not seem, at first sight, to contain a blessing. Yet the Lord was with Joseph; and what blessing can compare with that? VII, shows us the worldly blessings showered on Joseph. VIII. Joseph blessing his brothers with his full forgiveness. This is Christ's blessing to us. IX. Jacob blessing Pharaoh. X. The last blessing of Jacob. XI. The blessed memory of the just Pray that the blessing of the Lord may rest on each scholar.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

Booth's Department.

Bible Enigma.

No. 102.

Answer the following questions correctly and you will find that the initial letters form the name of a young lady, who by kindness to a stranger so commended herself that she afterwards became the wife of a rich patriarch:

- 1. What woman once saved her life by an act of kindness?
2. What priest was himself punished because he did not restrain his sons?
3. Who tried to curse the Israelites but could not?
4. Who was supplied with food by unclean birds?
5. What was the name of Abraham's second wife?
6. To whom was Christ first promised?
7. On what mountain did the first Jewish High Priest die?

CURIOS QUESTIONS.

139. Of the following described words form a Triangle of words, the same when read from top to bottom as left to right:

- 1. A turbulent ocean.
2. Men who constantly use a steel bar.
3. A distinguishing costume.
4. A woman's name.
5. An abbreviated name.
6. The secret of success.
7. The verb, to be
8. One hundred.

140. Form a square of words as follows:

The name of an insect my first. My second, things and men all possess, My third is the close of a prayer And my fourth is a sheiter. Now guess.

Answer to Bible Enigma.

No. 101.

- A binadab.
H annab.
A lexander.
S ova.
U zzah.
E ber.
R ehoboam.
U z.
S ennacherib.

"AHASUERUS."

ANSWERS TO CURIOS QUESTIONS.

- 138. ANAGRAMS—BATTLES.
(a) Austerlitz. (e) Lexington.
(b) Gettysburg. (f) Germantown.
(c) New Orleans. (g) Bannockburn.
(d) Waterloo. (h) Bosworthfield.

Jack Frost's Song.

I ride on the wings of the northwest wind From my home in the frozen seas, Where I lie and rest with a quiet mind When bloweth the summer breeze.

I flit the rainbow from out the skies And place it on maple leaves, I whisper the swallow, away he flies From his nest beneath the eaves.

I work in the dark of the blackest night, And paint pictures upon the pane; What though the sun in his noonday might Dims them, I limn them again.

I draw, as I please, the tender spray Of fern, with its feathery grace; And if that dies out in the sun's warm ray I put a pine in its place.

But this is only my pleasant play While sunbeams lie and dream, For I clasp in my chilling clutch by day The throat of the gurgling stream.

I still its music. I strip the trees Of their leaves, and kill the flowers; I hush the hum of the busy bees, Who work during summer hours.

I tumble the fences, and lift the grain From where it lies in the soil, I pinch the poor on their way to gain Their bread by their daily toil.

But when spring days come I change my mind, For I am a fickle soul; So I mount on the wings of the south-west wind And ride to the Arctic Pole.

The Art of not Hearing.

When the telephone was first introduced, the newspaper "funny man" did not fail to remark that Mr. Edison was on the wrong track; what people needed was not a machine enabling them to hear things far off, but something that would help them not to hear things close by. The saying had more sense in it than its source would lead one to expect. Who has not sighed, when pestered during a busy hour by some bore, for a machine that would make him oblivious to the rattle of his tormentor's tongue?

But, though no machine has yet been invented for this purpose, the art of not hearing may be cultivated to an almost unlimited extent. So many things are said which are coarse, abusive, profane,—so many others rasp the temper,—that the better way is to cultivate one deaf ear, and turn that to all such things. The power of the will in this respect is astonishing. Another good effect of having a judiciously deaf ear, is that when people find you do not hear what they say, they soon become tired of talking. Many a quarrel would be saved if the one to whom a hasty, cross word is spoken did not hear it. Some things are better ignored than noticed. The art of not seeing is as valuable as that of not hearing, and both should be taught and practised in every well-regulated family. It is a great thing in a teacher or parent, or in anybody who has to do with children, to know when not to see and hear things. Breaches of discipline are sometimes venial, and a wise man sometimes will not observe that there has been any breach.

Some people possess these arts to perfection. A well-bred man or woman never hears a vulgar or ill-natured remark, even when made to him personally unless it is so made that he cannot avoid noticing it. What a gift it would be if every pastor could be endowed with this faculty. People then would not talk scandal to him, knowing that he never heard anything of the sort. They would spare him those ill-natured criticisms that now occasionally vex his soul; and that flattery which is more pleasant, but also more dangerous. Our advice is, cultivate the art of not hearing things. It is a more valuable thing than the "cultivated ear" on which so many pride themselves.—Examiner.

Be helpful to the aged, respectful to those in the prime of life, companionable to the young and useful to all.

Be kind, open-hearted and generous, with a friendly word and a helping hand for every one. Kindness costs little and gains much.

The Largest Oak in Britain.

In spite of a rival claim put forward on behalf of an oak at Newland, in Gloucestershire, a writer in the Antiquary believes that the largest oak in Britain—and our island home can boast of not a few giant oaks, many of them famous too, for their historical associations—stands in the parish of Cowthorpe, three miles from Wetherby, in the West Riding of the county of York. The Cowthorpe oak (Quercus sylvestris pedunculata), whose age has been computed to exceed 1,500 years, has, as may be supposed from its extraordinary size, been noticed in numerous works devoted to natural history and forestry. The circumference of its trunk close to the ground was, at the close of last century, according to Evelyn's "Sylva," seventy-eight feet. Shortly after the publication of this work, earth was placed around the base of the trunk, with a view to the preservation of the tree, which by covering over some very considerable projections, reduced the girth of the stem at the ground line to sixty feet. In 1829, Rev. Dr. Jessop measured the tree, and communicated its dimensions to Strutt's "Sylva Britannica." We transcribe the reverend doctor's details which, he assures us, may be relied upon:—Circumference at the ground, 60ft.; circumference at the height of one yard, 45ft.; height of the tree in 1829, 45ft.; extent of the principal remaining limb, 50ft.; greatest circumference of ditto, 8ft.

Tradition asserts that at one time the branches of this tree over-shadowed half an acre of ground. A large branch which fell about the commencement of last century is said to have extended to a wall ninety feet from the trunk of the oak. On this wall, which still remains, the villagers, so the story runs, used to mount and pick the acorns from the over-hanging branches. The leading or top branch fell before the date of any record concerning the tree. The manner in which it is said to have fallen is, however, remarkable. The main trunk having become hollow, the perpendicular shaft dropped down into the empty space and could never be removed. There it remained wedged in, doubtless tending to strengthen the hollow cylinder, and prevent concussion from the pressure of its enormous branches. In 1772, one of the side branches was thrown down in a violent gale of wind and on being accurately measured, was found to contain upwards of fifty tons of wood. The largest of the living branches at present extends over forty feet N. N. E. from the trunk. So great was the fame of the Cowthorpe Oak, that formerly small saplings raised from its acorns were sold in pots to visitors by the villagers for as much as a guinea each.

A Timely Suggestion.

Do not keep the alabaster boxes of your love and tenderness sealed up until your friends are dead. Fill their lives with sweetness. Speak approving, cheering words while their hearts can be thrilled by them. The things you mean to say when they are gone, say before they go. The flowers you mean to send them for their coffins, send to brighten and sweeten their homes before they leave them.

If my friends have alabaster boxes laid away, full of perfumes of sympathy and affection, which they intend to break over my dead body, I would rather they would bring them out in my weary hours and open them, that I may be refreshed and cheered by them while I need them. I would rather have a bare coffin without a flower, and a funeral without an eulogy, than a life without the sweetness of love and sympathy. Let us learn to anoint our friends beforehand, for their burial. Post-mortem kindnesses do not cheer the burdened spirit. Flowers on the coffin cast no fragrance backward over the weary days.—N. Y. Evangelist.

The memory of noble and useful acts wrought in early youth is like the coral islands—green and sunny amidst the melancholy waste of the ocean.

Never treasure up any of those little trespasses which youth is so liable to commit, and which, after all, spring more from inexperience than evil intent. Out of the babe grows the child; from the child, the youth; from the youth, the man; and from the man, the immortal. Let this be remembered and ever acted upon.