

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1881.

FIRST QUARTER.

Lesson XI.—MARCH 13.

THE SINNERS' FRIEND.

Luke vii. 36-50.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 47-50.

After the message to John, and the words of Jesus concerning him, Luke tells of the Lord's comments on the reception given John by different classes of people, and then narrates the occurrence forming the present lesson.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven."—Luke vii. 48.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

- M. The Sinners' Friend, Luke vii. 36-50. T. Anointed for his Burial, Matt. xxvi. 6-13. W. Pharisee and Publican, Luke xviii. 9-14. T. Seeking the Lost, Luke xv. 1-10. F. Finding the Lost, Luke xix. 1-10. S. Joy in Salvation, Rom. viii. 31-39. S. Jesus the Friend of Sinners, Luke vii. 36-50.

PARALLEL TEXTS.

- With vs. 37: Luke viii. 2; 1 Tim. i. 15. With vs. 38: Zech. xii. 10. With vs. 39: Luke xv. 2. With vs. 41: Matt. xviii. 28. With vs. 42: Psa. li. 1; Isa. xliii. 25; xlv. 22; Acts xiii. 38, 39. With vs. 44: Gen. xviii. 4; 1 Tim. v. 20. With vs. 45: Matt. xxvi. 48, 49; 1 Cor. xvi. 20; 1 Thess. v. 26. With vs. 46: Psa. xxiii. 5; xlv. 7; Matt. vi. 17. With vs. 47: 1 Tim. i. 14. With vs. 48: Matt. ix. 2; Mark ii. 9. With vs. 50: Matt. ix. 22; Rom. v. 1.

JESUS THE FRIEND OF SINNERS.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Jesus Permits the Sinner's Approach, Vss. 36-38. II. Jesus Maintains the Sinner's Cause, Vss. 39-46. III. Jesus Forgives the Sinner's Sins, Vss. 47-50.

QUESTIONS.—I. Vss. 36-38.—Where was Jesus when the events of this lesson took place? In what posture did persons then eat at a table? What was the supposed character of Pharisees? Who came as an uninvited guest? What did she bring? What did she do? What was her character? Why did Jesus permit her to approach him? Will Jesus refuse the approaches of any? (John vi. 37.)

II. Vss. 39-46.—What complaint did the Pharisee make when he saw what was done? Did he complain aloud? (Vs. 40-43.) Jesus applied this for the woman and against Simon in three respects; what are they? Like which debtor was she? Like which was Simon? What, then, did Jesus do for her cause?

III. Vss. 47-50.—What did Jesus say of the woman? (Vs. 47.) What to the woman? (Vs. 48.) How did this impress the company? (Vs. 49.) With what words did Jesus dismiss the woman? (Vs. 50.) How, then, are sinners saved? By faith in whom?

At the close of the "Witness of Jesus to John" (the theme of the last lesson), as given in Matt. xi. occurs that gracious invitation, which is not recorded in Luke: "Come unto me, all ye that labor," etc. Some suppose that the woman of this lesson heard that invitation, and that this was her response. Where this scene occurred, is not known. It should not be confounded with the scene in Bethany, as recorded in Matt. xxvi.; Mark xiv.; and John xii. The names of the hosts and the fact of anointing are the same. But Simon was a very common name, and the anointing may have happened more than once. This was in Galilee; that in Judea. This was before the second Passover; that, very near the close of Christ's career. This woman was of the abandoned class; the other was the loving disciple, one of the Bethany sisters. This Simon was a Pharisee, and a doubter; the other was a leper, who seems to have been a believer. There is no foundation for the tradition that this woman was Mary Magdalen.

NOTE.—Verse 36.—One of the Pharisees.—This Pharisee may have belonged to the better class of that sect (John

xii. 42); and, having heard the words of Jesus in vs. 34, desired to show that he, at least, did not take up the reproach against him. He went, etc. Jesus accepted the invitation. He did not seek, nor did he refuse to attend, such feasts. The physician must go among all classes of patients. Sat down to meat. Reclined at the table, upon a broad couch, on his left arm, according to Oriental custom. This would bring his feet behind him, accessible to the woman of the story.

Verse 37.—A woman in the city, etc. Well known in that city as a fallen woman. It was not Mary Magdalen, as some have supposed. When she knew, etc. The whole story, as well as this expression, implies that she had seen and heard Jesus before. Perhaps it was the invitation of Matt. xi. 28, uttered just previous to this, that broke her heart, and caused repentance and saving faith. In the free life of the East, an ordinary uninvited person might, at the time of an entertainment, go in and out without remark. Brought an alabaster box of ointment. Alabaster, a peculiar white stone from which vessels for unguents were made. These vessels were of various shapes. Nothing is here said about the costliness of the ointment, as in Mark xiv. 5; but it was, doubtless, an expensive offering. Love does not falter at any sacrifice. The lavish use of perfumes characterized the class to which this woman belonged, (Prov. vii. 17; Isa. iii. 24.)

Verse 38.—Stood at his feet. The position of one reclining at meals should be kept in mind. Began to wash, etc. Literally, to wet. Her tears of shame, penitence, gratitude, love, joy, fell so profusely, that they moistened the Saviour's bare feet, from which the sandals had been removed. It was not a premeditated "washing"; for she was provided with no cloth to wipe them, and therefore used her dishevelled hair. It was against social law, and a disgrace, for a woman to appear with unbound hair.

Verse 39.—When the Pharisee saw it. Simon judged Jesus by his own standard. Contrast his view of such an event with the view of the angels. (Luke xv. 10.) Spake within himself. With a self-satisfied tone, as having detected the falsity of Christ's claim as a prophet. Would know. Jesus did know; but the defect in Simon's reasoning was, that Jesus, knowing who she was, would not suffer the "sinner" to touch him; whereas Jesus came to touch, and to be touched by, sinners. Simon's objection was to the touch, as giving ceremonial defilement.

Verse 40.—Jesus answering. He answered the unspoken thought. See Matt. ix. 4; John ii. 25. I have somewhat to say unto thee. A direct, personal address, knowing what was in the Pharisee's heart. To each of us, the Lord has something special to say. Master. Teacher. A word of respect, full address, and recognition of his character as Rabbi.

Verse 41.—Creditor. Money lender. Compare this parable with that of the Two Debtors, in Matt. xviii. 23. There, the contrast between the sums owed, is, in our money, between dollars and millions; here, the debts are within the range of common experience. Jesus here uses the Socratic method of teaching, so far as causing the accuser to witness against himself, though with no desire for mere triumph; but to show Simon his own lack of love, and of forgiveness. The lender represents our Lord. Two debtors. The Pharisee, and the woman. Five hundred pence. . . . fifty. The penny is the denarius, equal, to about one-sixth of a dollar. Hence, the fifty pence would be from seven to nine dollars; and the five hundred pence, ten times that amount. Often, the greatest debtors, or sinners, have the least sense of guilt, or conviction of sin. Both were debtors. Even Simon would plead guilty to a few minor infractions of the law.

Verses 42, 43.—Nothing to pay. Both insolvent; both conscious of it; both confessing it. Neither good works, nor grateful love, can pay any part of the debt. Frankly forgave, etc. Forgave freely, not as a matter of merit, but of grace. It is not within the province of this parable to teach the atonement as the basis of pardon. Which of them will love him most? The point of the story is not in the different amount of sin, but in the different conscience of

sin. Thou hast rightly judged. "And in so judging, hast condemned thyself."

Verses 44, 45, 46.—Thou gavest me no water for my feet. Jesus directs the Pharisee's attention to the woman, and contrasts his cold, measured welcome, with her expressions of love. While he does not charge Simon with absolute incivility—as the marks of honor spoken of were not always given to guests—yet he shows that he had taken no special pains to manifest affection or reverence by such courtesies. The invitation had been from a desire to patronize, rather than to honor Christ. See the custom as to water for the feet. Gen. xviii. 4; Judges xix. 21. Thou gavest me no kiss. A kiss was sometimes given as a mark of respect to a Rabbi, or honored guest. See Matt. xxviii. 69; Acts xx. 37; Rom. xvi. 16; 1 Cor. xvi. 20. Simon gave not even the one kiss of greeting; but the woman rained ceaseless kisses on his feet. My head with oil, etc. See reference to the custom here spoken of in Psa. xxiii. 5; xlv. 7; Eccles. ix. 8. Note the contrast between this olive "oil" refused by Simon, and the more costly "ointment" used by the woman; also between Christ's head, which received from him no honor; and Christ's feet, abundantly honored by her. In the Pharisee's own house, it was she, prompted by love, who performed the part of host, in welcoming with the heart.

Verse 47.—Wherefore. Not on account of her tears and anointing, but as evidenced by her grateful conduct. Her sins, which are many, are forgiven. The five hundred pence debtor is truly forgiven. It is a supposition, in her case, no longer. This declaration is to Simon, and is given as an explanation of the woman's demonstrations of love. Her conduct is the fruit of love, and love is the fruit of pardon previously given. For she loved much. Because of the deep sense of her sin, and of her appreciation of pardon. He loved little; having little sense of sin, or of need, and remaining unpardoned.

Verses 48-50.—Thy sins are forgiven thee. This, to the woman, declaring a fact which had existed, whose fullness she now receives. Who is this? etc. It must have startled the guests, to hear one among them calmly assuming this Divine function. Thy faith hath saved thee. Not thy love, nor thy deeds of gratitude, "thy faith" as the medium through which salvation comes. Go in peace. Greek, into peace, as into a new element. A new world to her, and to all who receive peace through "the blood."

Simon, a Pharisee, invited Jesus to eat with him. He was doubtless a very religious man in his own estimation, and in that of his acquaintances. His life had probably been free from outward blemish, and he was scrupulously careful as to the character of his associates.

We learn, from Christ's method with this sinning woman, how to deal with the wretched, and fallen, and vile.

Dearer to Christ are the expressions of love which may even break through social proprieties.

When one has absolutely "nothing to pay," the small debt is as fatal as the large. All alike need the perfect righteousness of Christ.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

The teacher may to arouse curiosity, say, "I wonder who said, 'Thy sins are forgiven?'" I wonder to whom Jesus said it? He said it to a very wicked woman.

Where did she stand? What doing? Where did her tears fall? etc. The ointment was very sweet-smelling. What was the ointment in?

Did any one see this woman as she kissed Jesus' feet? Yes; for she did it while Jesus was at dinner. There were others at the table; it was a dinner-party. At whose house? Explain how the company reclined. You may allow a child to illustrate the position. Discretion must be used, however, in introducing such illustrations.

Simon thought that Jesus should not let such a woman touch him. He was very much surprised, when he saw that Jesus did not send her away. Could Jesus read the woman's heart? What did Jesus know about her that Simon

did not know? Do you suppose Jesus knew what Simon was thinking about? We will see.

Read vs. 40-48. Hold attention by letting children supply words occasionally as, "Thou gavest me no water for my feet"; but she hath washed my feet with . . . ; etc. Vs. 40-43, also last clause of vs. 47 should be omitted with little ones.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

Boys' Department.

Scripture Enigma.

No. 114.

- 1. First find the badge of Judas' sin, Who stole what others put therein? 2. The place where Achan's crime was found— Soon after levelled with the ground: 3. The best beloved of Jacob's wives, Whose name at Ramah still survives. 4. The tribal name Judge Elon bore, Who ruled the land in days of yore. 5. The father of a warrior famed, Whom Absalom for his captain named. 6. The spotted beast that Daniel sees As one of four great monarchies. 7. That son of Jacob in whose race The line of Israel's priests we trace. 8. The last of twelve stones, rich and rare, Foundations of a city fair. 9. Earth's sweetest odours—yet abhorred. When offered unto Israel's Lord?

Th initials make the worthy name Of one whom David owned as friend; The finals tell us whence he came, And where he chose his days to end. —Selected.

CURIOS QUESTIONS.

- 174. A man without eyes, Went out to view the skies, He saw a tree with apples on it, He took no apples off, and left no apples on it. 175. A four letter Word square. 1. A wooden sole; 2. a beast of burden in South America; 3. a Jewish measure; 4. kind of dress. 176. A five letter word square. 1. Vegetables of the bean kind; 2. a Burmese measure of 12 miles; 3. a person afflicted with a disease; 4. a little fish; 5. terra firma. 177. My 1st is a man both good and great; My 2nd is three-fourths of illumination; My 3rd an article, small but good, Oft made of brass, sometimes of wood; My whole a man of poetic fame, Who had a queer ride—come, tell his name.

Answer to Scripture Enigma.

No. 113.

"Trust in the Lord, and do good." Psalm xxxvii. 3.

ANSWERS TO CURIOS QUESTIONS.

- 170. M E A T E M M A A M E N T A N K 171. O V I D V A S E I S L E D E E R

- 172. Ezekiel iv. 9. 173. Straight is the path of duty, Curved is the path of beauty; But follow one, and thou shalt see The other ever following thee.

Select Serial.

A Thorny Path.

BY HESBA STRETTON.

CHAPTER IX.

A TROUBLED CONSCIENCE.

Hagar remained in the hospital until she began to feel as if it was her home, so long she laid there in the same bed, seeing the same faces from day to day. That there was no other home for her made her cling more to this hospital ward, and dread the day when she would be well enough to be dismissed. But in spite of her dread and of her homelessness, the time came when she was pronounced cured; and though she was still unfit to face the cold world again, alone and feeble, it was necessary for her to make way for another yet more helpless than herself. If there was no other place to go to, the work-house was always open to her.

Hagar hardly cared what became of

her; the bitter despair and weariness of life that possessed her when she abandoned her father and her little girl was not yet cast out of her soul. Remorse was blended with her despair now, for day and night the picture of her blind old father and the helpless child as she had seen them last was present to her mind. It was this which made her recovery so slow; outwardly she was silent and submissive, always obeying her nurse and the doctor, but inwardly she was fretting and chafing herself with tormenting thoughts.

At length the day came when she must go; her own tattered clothing was brought to her, made to look as clean and respectable as it could be, and she dressed herself in it silently, hating the very sight and touch of these rags, which seemed a badge of her utter poverty and friendlessness. What could there be before her but to wander about the streets, hiding her head anywhere she could for a shelter, and dying in some hole at last, uncareful and unknown. A fitting end for one like her, she said to herself.

"Abbott left a message for you yesterday," said the nurse to her, when she was ready to go. "If you have no where else you want to go to, we are to send you in a cab to the house where he lives, and he will be at home to-night. His cousin, who is a dressmaker, lives at the same place, and will be there to take you in."

Hagar lifted up her drooping head, and the almost sullen gloom of her face brightened a little. Abbott's messages to her had been the only link between her and the outer world, and had brought the only gleam of hope to her dark mind. She had seen him once, and his face had been the face of a friend. He had told her, too, that the same coffin held his mother and her baby; and it seemed as if this formed some kind of kinship between them.

Very bitterly and sadly she looked out on the busy streets as she drove through them in the cab, until the high, naked branches of the trees in Kensington Gardens came into sight; and there rushed upon her more keenly than ever the recollection of that dreadful day in November. She would have given the world to bring that time back again, and meet once more the trouble and the difficulty from which she had fled then. She knew now that it would have been better to have suffered death than to have fled from her duty: "It was cowardly and cruel to forsake those two helpless creatures, so closely bound to her. God had bound them to her; she had received life from one and what could she answer when she was called to judgement and God asked her what had become of them?"

She had not recovered from the terror of her own thoughts when she reached the house where Abbott lived. His cousin the dressmaker was expecting her, and received her with a pleasant heartiness, as if she were some welcome visitor. She led her up to a little room in the attic, where a fire was burning brightly in a tiny grate, and tea was laid out on a little spindle-legged table, beside which stood a comfortable, warmly padded old-fashioned chair for her to rest in.

There was a wide and cheerful view from the high window looking over a few roofs across to green fields, and a sky-line broken by green trees to the west. Hagar had seldom looked out on so great a space of sky, already flecked with early sunset clouds, and she stood at the window gazing out at it, while the dressmaker lingered a few minutes pouring out boiling water on the tea, and looking about to see if there was anything lacking for Hagar's comfort.

"I have no time to spare," she said kindly, "or I would stay while you get your tea; but my cousin Abbott asked me to make you welcome. I laid that little baby of yours beside my good old cousin in her coffin; and, my dear, my heart bleeds for you. There now! Don't you cry; come and take your tea while it's hot and refreshing."

Hagar could not speak for weeping. This was so like coming home, and yet it was not coming home. Abbott knew nothing about her and her great sin, and when he did, would not be and this good, kindly woman shrink with horror from her? A true, strong, good man like him could never understand her despair or forgive her for yielding to it. And, oh? where are they now—her