

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1883.

FOURTH QUARTER.

Lesson XII.—DECEMBER 23, 1883.

DEATH OF SAUL AND JONATHAN.

1 Sam. xxxi. 1-13.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Va. 11-13.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous bath hope in his death."—Proverbs xiv. 32.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

- M. Saul Forsaken of God, 1 Sam. xviii. 3-25. T. The Lesson, 1 Sam., ch. xxxi. W. David's Lamentation, 2 Sam., i. 11, 12, 17-27. T. Israel Rejected, Luke xix. 41-48. F. Suicide of Judas, Acts i. 15-26. S. The Future of the wicked, Mark ix. 38-50. S. Future of the Righteous, 2 Cor. iv. 11-v. 9.

THE FATE OF THE REJECTED KING.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Defeat, Va. 1-3. II. Suicide, Va. 4-6. III. Dishonor, Va. 7-13.

QUESTIONS.—Vs. 1-3.—What was the result of the battle of Mount Gilboa? What became of Saul's sons? What hope of Jonathan's was disappointed? ch. xxvii. 17.

Vs. 4-6.—Of what was Saul a type? What dreadful deed did Saul commit? Why? What steps led to it? What similar case in the New Testament?

Vs. 7-13.—What did the Philistines gain by their victory? What dishonor was done to the body of Saul? How will the wicked be remembered? Prov. x. 7. How did the Philistines feel? What did they do? What results from being abandoned by God? For what did Saul's death open the way?

Scripture Searchings.—Give the points of likeness and of contrast between the two Sauls. Make a list of all respects in which David seems to be a type of Christ.

The penitence of Saul was short-lived. For, when the Ziphites came again to inform him that David could be taken, he set out with his army, under Abner, to seize him. David again had Saul in his power, and magnanimously spared him. But, weary of being hunted "as a partridge in the mountain," he went again among the Philistines, where he remained sixteen months. Saul, forsaken of the Lord, had recourse to the Witch of Endor, and desired to have Samuel called up from the dead, to inquire of him. Samuel appeared, and foretold the death of Saul and his sons on the morrow, in battle. The Philistines gathered in great numbers against Saul, and our lesson gives an account of the battle and of the fulfilment of Samuel's prophecy.

NOTES.—Vs. 1, 2.—The Philistines fought against Israel. For position of the two armies, see xxviii. 4. The Philistines had boldly invaded the very heart of the country of Israel, far up at Shunem, at the base of little Hermon. The Israelites were on the lower slope of Gilboa, below the valley of Jezreel (or Esdraelon) lay between the camps. Their positions were the same as those held respectively by the Midianites, and Israel, one hundred and eighty-three years before, when Gideon gained his great victory. But now the issue of the battle was very different. The Philistines began the assault, and Israel, infected with the trembling spirit of their king (xxviii. 5), fled from before the Philistines, who drove them up the sides of Mount Gilboa, where they fell down slain. The Philistines followed up their success, and slew the three sons of Saul who were in the battle. Jonathan and his brothers met their death, probably, in trying to rally their panic-struck troops, and to save their father, against whom the Philistines had concentrated their attack. Of Abiathar, and Melchishua, we know nothing, except as this account gives us a picture of their bravery and faithfulness. How strange that such a gloomy and desperate king should be blessed with such noble sons. But the brightest spirit that departed that day was Jonathan. Strange providence that he—so fit to live—the living friend of David, should be cut off in the midst of a grand career.

Vs. 3-5.—With his sons dead, the battle went sore (was heavy) against Saul. He had now to bear the brunt of it. The archers hit him. Or, found him with their arrows. Sore wounded. Bible Union Version, trembled greatly. Despair paralyzed his courage, and his wounds began to tell upon his strength. And fearing that he might be taken alive by the Philistines, to be subjected to humiliation and insult (Josh. viii. 29; x. 24), he said to his armorbearer,

Draw thy sword and thrust me through, lest these uncircumcised come, etc. Saul did not realize that true circumcision is of the heart (Rom. ii. 29), and that by becoming a breaker of the law, his own circumcision was made uncircumcision (Rom. ii. 25). His armor-bearer may have feared "that divinity that doth hedge a king," or his fear may have come from inward panic; at any rate, he would not. Then Saul took his attendant's sword, and fell upon it. And his armor-bearer, according to an ancient custom, fell upon the same sword and died with him. This sad story is given in the Scriptures without comment; but we cannot doubt that the words of David with reference to Abner, are applicable to both of these suicides: "Died Abner as a fool dieth."

Vs. 6, 7.—His three sons. Leaving one alive, Ishbosheth, who afterward contended with David for the kingdom. All his men. Not the whole army, but probably his body-guard. This disastrous defeat caused so great a panic among the Israelites on both sides of the Jordan, that many towns were depopulated by the flight of their citizens, and the Philistines came and dwelt in them.

Vs. 8-10 describe the indignities put upon the bodies of Saul and his sons. They cut off Saul's head, and sent it about to their temples, in honor of their idols; and at last placed it in the temple of Dagon (1 Chron. x. 10), either in Gaza or Ashdod. His armor they put in the house of Ashtorath, in Askelon (2 Sam. i. 20). See David's treatment of Goliath's head and armor (1 Sam. xvii. 54). The bodies of Saul and his sons (v. 12) they fastened to the wall of Bethshan, a town about twelve miles south of the Sea of Galilee, and four miles west of Jordan. There the bodies were hung on the wall by the gate, that all passers-by might join in exultation over the defeat and disgrace of Israel.

Vs. 11-13.—Jabesh-gilead. A city east of the Jordan, and ten miles from Bethshan. This was the city delivered by Saul from Nabash the Ammonite, when he demanded their right eyes (1 Sam. xi. 1-11). The valiant men of that city, moved by grateful memories of Saul's kindness, made a night expedition to Bethshan, and rescued the bodies of Saul and his sons, and took them to their home and burnt them there. The cremation was not perfect, however; but merely a burning of the skin and flesh. The bones they buried under a tree (oak tree, 1 Chron. x. 12). Fasted seven days. In token of their mourning. See Gen. i. 10.

SUGGESTED LESSONS.

Saul is an instance of a man with great opportunities and with many excellent qualities, who made a wreck of himself, through lack of simple, steadfast faith in God. Every man's life is a failure who turns his back upon the Lord.

Help for Parents, or for the Teacher of the Primary Class.

We now come to the closing lesson in the present year. Six months will elapse before we shall consider the further history of David. Our last lesson closed with a covenant between Saul and David. The oath of the latter never was broken, though he was often in dreadful straits; and he proved to Saul on a second occasion, that he would not take the life that was in his power. When at last the Philistines came up against Saul "he was afraid, and his heart trembled" (xxviii. 5). Notice here that in his extremity and distress, Saul unavailingly sought God. No answer came.

Saul's kingdom had been in considerable part practically rent from him. A portion of the country was in the hands of his enemies. Another part was, in an important sense, under control of David. The whole people were dispirited. Saul himself was without hope. The words of the Bible were true of him: "Be sure your sin will find you out." He had forsaken God; and he forsoke God is to be lost, now and perhaps forever. You will notice how patient God was with Saul; how judgment was delayed, that he might have abundant time for repentance.

The death of Jonathan and his two brothers made the way more clear for David, as only one of Saul's children afterward contested his right to the throne.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

The best things are nearest; breath in your nostrils, light in your eyes, flowers at your feet, duties at your hand, the path of God just before you. Then do not grasp at the stars, but do life's plain, common work as it comes, certain that daily duties and daily bread are the sweetest things of life.

Sunday Reading.

O Paradise!

BY LUCY WARDEN BEARNE.

"O Paradise! O Paradise! 'Tis weary waiting here."

Thus sang the village choir, in solemn way, Within an ancient church one summer day, While just below them, in the narrow aisle, Her lips half parted by a happy smile, A little, simple, village maiden sat, In Sunday-frock of white, and country hat, Which shaded earnest eyes, of wondrous blue.

Half serious, yet eager to look through The great church door; for it was opened wide

This sultry Sabbath morn, and just outside A branch of apple-bloom the child could see, The fragrant haunt of many a honey-bee; And fluttering 'mid the flowers, a little bird, Whose music, in the quiet, she almost heard, Until the choristers, in chorus sang, And through the church their solemn anthem rang.

Then, with a sudden look of strange surprise, The little maiden raised her pretty eyes In wonder; for she could not understand How one could weary of this summer-land. And as she listened to the plaintive strain, So full of pathos and of yearning pain, She wondered, in her simple, childish way, If Paradise were really half as gay

As this green earth. And if the blossoms there Could with our own sweet summer flowers compare!

What trouble did these grown-up people fear That they should sing, "'Tis weary waiting here!"

"Ah, me!" she sighed, "when I am old and wise, Must I, too, learn to long for Paradise?"

Long years have passed, and many a Sabbath day Had brightly dawned, and quietly passed away

Since that fair morning, when a child had heard The song of Paradise, which first had stirred Unconscious yearnings in her nature gay, To find some joy, that could not pass away.

And now the child, into a woman grown, Stole once again, sad-hearted, and alone, To find within God's sacred House of Prayer, Relief from sorrow, and a balm for care. Then, stealing through the temple, still and dim, She heard once more that old familiar hymn. And soothingly, upon her listening ear, The sweet words fell, "'Tis weary waiting here."

Alas, those words held bitter meaning now, And o'er the woman's weary, wistful brow, A shadow stole, which told of long-felt pain, As from her heart she joined the plaintive strain,

"O Paradise! 'Tis weary waiting here!" For, as she sang, in accents sweet and clear, She thought of dear ones, who already trod Within that sinless Paradise of God; And gently prayed, in loneliness and care, That she ere long might also join them there.

Through tribulations great, 'mid tears and sighs, The little maiden had grown "old and wise." * * * * *

Within the same quiet church, one autumn day, When yellow leaves bestrewed the church-yard way,

The sweet choir sang around a silent bier, "O Paradise! 'Tis weary waiting here!" But one sad voice was missing in the strain Which it would never join on earth again.

The pilgrim's weary waiting time was o'er, And she would sigh for Paradise no more.

"Baptist Doctrines."

While other denominations are rising and falling, and while their history has, for the most part, been a history of blunders and changes, the Baptists have held on to the even tenor of their way, glorifying God, and blessing the world. Though their churches are entirely separate and independent, they nevertheless harmonize in doctrine, because the Scriptures constitute the bond of union. They are perfectly satisfied with their creed, believing it to be of heavenly origin, and best suited to the wants of men and the will of God.—Rev. C. A. Jenkins.

Each human soul is responsible to God for the discharge of its own duty. Every one must repent for himself, believe for himself, and obey for himself. The faith and obedience of my parents or friends will not avail for me, and 'compulsory or involuntary baptism is no more allowable than compulsory or involuntary taking of the Lord's Supper.' If faith, prayer, obedience of any kind, is an individual duty, then baptism, which in the Scripture is always joined with faith, is also an individual duty, and, therefore, the baptism of an unconscious, unbelieving infant is in violation of this principle, since it not only lacks the elements of personal faith and persona

obedience, but robs the child, when it can believe, of the unspeakable privilege of personally obeying a command of Christ, as baptism is an ordinance to be administered but once. There are duties, very important religious duties, which parents owe to their children, they should not only feed, clothe and educate them, but they should bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and by constant prayer and earnest effort seek to secure their salvation; but, as the scriptures do not require them to repent, believe and be regenerated for their children, and as, in the nature of the case, it is impossible for them to perform these personal acts for their offspring, so baptism, which is equally a personal act, cannot be performed by a parent for a child.—Rev. T. H. Pritchard.

The Gospel, to the ancient Greek, was foolishness; and so it is now to some scientists, because it was neither discovered, nor can be fathomed, by the intellect. There is no flavor of man's wisdom in the Cross; there is no detecting by men's microscopes the operation of the Spirit in the new birth, nor the dropping of the seed of a divine faith into the penitent heart. From the eye of mere culture, the spiritual world is hidden, and therefore men say that it does not exist. Hence the restlessness, and more, the antagonism, which this levelling doctrine of the new birth encounters among many cultivated men, and the intense desire to carry it into the region of the head, and there settle it, when its sphere is distinctively that of the heart. For it is the heart, and it is the will, that are the seat of moral death and ruin, and it is with the heart that man must believe unto righteousness. A man bitten by a deadly serpent may have in his hand the sufficient remedy for the poison which is coursing through his veins, and which is about to bring congestion and death; he may hold it up to the light and admire it, and talk learnedly about its ingredients, and tell just how the medicine, when taken, will counteract the disease; and yet he may perish, and will, if he does nothing more.—Rev. E. G. Taylor.

Baptism, then, is something more than a rite, it is a symbol which expresses the grandest, sublimest truth of our evangelical faith. But let immersion give place to sprinkling or pouring and the symbolical significance of this divine ordinance is at once destroyed. As Stanley says: 'It is a greater change even than that which the Roman Catholic Church has made in administering the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in the bread without the wine. For that was a change which did not effect the thing that was signified: whereas the change from immersion to sprinkling has set aside the larger part of the apostolic language regarding baptism.'

By some this is regarded as a matter of slight importance. But is it? Who instituted this ordinance, in which, such great truths are so impressively set forth? Was it not our King, who just before he entered the swiftly flowing stream, addressing the hesitating John, exclaimed, 'So it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness?' As I write these lines, on the other side of the globe, in the mountain fastnesses of Afghanistan, English troops are standing in battle array. A sacred silence rests upon the long lines—the solemn hush which precedes the deadly charge, and now the colors are unfurled. Beautifully they wave in the soft breeze of the early morning. Strong hands grasp the staff. Soon the order to advance is given, and the troops are in motion. The roar of artillery follows, and then, as the assailants near the enemy's works, the crack of musketry. The color bearer falls. A comrade seizes the flag, and it is borne on with the advancing lines. Again and again it falls, but again it is caught up by those who love it, and are ready to die for it. But why this devotion to the flag? Is it not seen that it draws from the enemy his deadliest fire? Let it then be furled, or substitute something for it! It is only a symbol! A symbol? Yes, and because it is a symbol, these men reply, we cherish it. It is our country's flag, and was placed in our hands by our gracious queen as a sacred trust. Nothing else can take its place. And

on they go. What though the ranks are thinned by every successive volley? There is something worse than death to such men; and as we follow them with straining eyes, our hearts are stirred as in the battle front, dimly seen through the smoke of the conflict, moves the flag which they faithfully bear.

So it is with baptism. It is only a symbol, some tell us. Yes, but it was committed to our care by our heavenly King, with the promise of his presence and aid in the conflict in which we are engaged. To uphold it courage may at times be required; but a true soldier will have courage. And when the order is given, 'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, immersing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,' he will neither furl his flag nor cast it aside; but with a desire to be true to his sovereign, bearing aloft the sacred symbol of the sacramental host of God's elect, he will press forward conquering and to conquer.—Rev. H. S. Burrage.

MISSIONARY INTELLIGENCE.

(From the Helping Hand.)

Translation of a Chinaman's Letter, Received by Miss Daniells, M. D.

This is the first month, the Western Kingdoms' second month. At this time, when the peach-blossom is red, just like beautiful-brocade silk, and the willow is green and pliant, like silk threads, I send a letter to the young lady doctor's residence, presenting it at the side apartments beneath the blue gauze window.* Carefully examine this plain, simple paper. I have heard that your honorable kingdoms' missionaries have for many years come to this worthless region to preach and to teach the gospel, exercising love to men and doing righteousness. This fact is known in China and in outside kingdoms; and the believers should be numerous as the clouds, and the church should day by day increase.

I, as one awakened from a dream, continually at the chapel hear the gospel and worship. I ought carefully to regard the precepts concerning the use of opium, but I cannot endure the suffering connected with abstinence. I know that the young lady gratuitously heals, using valuable medicines, which are not inferior to a physician who can thoroughly heal. Formerly, she had medicine for the cure of the opium habit, taking which, one is cured. Therefore, I carefully unfold this letter, and worshipfully place it in her side apartments.*

I earnestly beseech you to give me medicine for the cure of the opium habit. Then, I shall be able to give it up, and not come to violate the holy commands. This will be to you for great merit.

Respectful salutations of peace with-out end. ANG HU'S writing. The 10th of the cycle, 1st month, 19th day.

*An expression of great humility.

Widow Marriage.

BY MRS. JEWETT.

From time to time in our paper, the Madras Times, appears a cheering note from Rajahmundry, large Telugu town north of Nellore. The Western Society has done so well in sending a memorial to the queen, I feel that I want to send you, as its secretary, the following from the Times of August 15:—

ANOTHER WIDOW MARRIAGE AT RAJAHMUND-DRY.

RAJAHMUNDREY, August 14. A Komati virgin widow marriage was celebrated last night under the auspices of the Local Widow Marriage Association. This is the ninth widow marriage and second Vinya marriage. The bridegroom is thirty years, and the bride sixteen.

I should say the Komati Vinya mentioned in the article are very high caste. God seems to be stirring up the minds of great numbers of his servants just now, in reference to the wonderful things he is preparing to do for the millions of India's women. Their "great wrongs" are constantly being suffered before our eyes. When my school of eighty caste girls was closed for vacation it was well known that the brightest and best of them could not return, because she was twelve years old. During the last few weeks, she had attended both day and Sunday-school by stealth only, whenever her father was absent from home. Like many others in the school she has no doubt been married several years. They do not call it betrothal, as I used to think they did. Dear little believing Pariah girls are taken out similarly, if their parents are not Christians, and married to heathen men quite against their will.

Burmah.

Rev. Dr. Stevens writes that in Rangoon they are rejoicing over fresh tokens of interest among the Burmans. On the 5th of August, sixteen persons were baptized by the new pastor of the Rangoon Burmese church.

Also, on the 19th, at Wah-kai-mah, the pastor baptized eighteen persons, mostly adults, all from among the heathen, the oldest being seventy years of age, and the youngest sixteen. Later, ten more were asking for baptism; and they are also moving to get a chapel built, which may answer the double purpose of chapel and school-house.

Dr. Stevens adds: "We trust that this may prove to be the work of the Lord. At least, we feel that we have reason to thank God, and take courage."

Rev. Mr. George, of Zesegon, reports five recent baptisms, making twenty-eight in all since his return. Eight or ten more seem to be ready for the ordinance.

India.

Rev. J. E. Clough, D. D., writes from Ongole, Aug. 30, 1883: "The Malas and Madigas have been converted by the thousand, as you know; but heretofore not many caste people have been baptized. The time is near when I believe the Sudras are coming to us in crowds. Many are converted men now, I believe, but they will break away from caste and Hinduism in the near future; and I long to be back to help them to come, and to guide them after they do come. Therefore, I do not want to be detained long in America; for I feel like work, and want to do a lot here in India before ten years more roll away. At our last quarterly meeting (July 14 18), the preachers, teachers, etc., from the new fields of Narsaravapetta, Baputla, and Vinukonda were here for the last time, unless they come as visitors. So we now suppose, at least. During that meeting, a hundred and twenty-three were baptized; and Brother Keirnan, our Eurasian evangelist, was ordained. Since the quarterly meeting, sixty-five others have also been baptized, making the number of baptisms for this year about sixteen hundred. Twenty three young men, a superior class, we think, went to the seminary at Ramapatam early in July, who hope to take the whole four years' course. Our boys' school, of which Miss Rauschenbush has lately taken the management, the girls' school, and the village schools, and all branches of our mission-work, were never more prosperous and encouraging."

Correspondence.

Dr. Saunders' Letters.

(Continued.)

IN DEFENCE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF ACADIA COLLEGE.

No. VII.

To the Editor of the Herald:

SIR,—The nature of the work connected with the new chair and the deficiency of normal school training, which it meets, have been considered in previous letters. No difficulty has attended this part of the discussion. The chair, standing by itself, and the help to teachers coming from the college through it are phases of the subject easily apprehended. But there are other advantages, clearly in prospect. These, however, are not advantages coming from this chair alone, but from the other professorships as well. Attempts have been made to prejudice the public mind against the new chair, as one having in itself no sympathetic connection with the denomination at large. To neutralize these prejudices, it may be necessary to make a few statements.

It is well known that educational progress has not been from the common school upwards, but from the university downwards. The college created the school; the school did not create the college. Public systems of education are dependent upon the university for their efficiency and success. In cases where government schools have been organized, so as to reach from the lowest grades to the doors of the university, it has been thought that the fostering care of the latter might be withdrawn; but so dependent are the schools below upon the universities above that they must still continue to cherish and help their own offspring. The New England States verily thought at one time that the high schools of the public system would furnish them with students; but it became necessary for the universities to supply the deficiency. They therefore resuscitated old academies and built new ones in order to keep university life and common school life vitally connected. It is well known, too, that the educational work in Scotland has come largely from her universities,