

doging his creditors, tendering payment at every chance.

We describe a very bad case of bankruptcy when we say the man owed everybody. Now Paul was no bankrupt. He was the debtor he was, not because he was so poor, but because he was so rich. This is no less strange. We do indeed sometimes see among those in elevated station something of a recognition of the French proverb "Noblesse oblige"—something of the feeling that duties go with rights, privileges and possessions, but we are not prepared to hear a rich man say that his wealth is simply the measure of his debts to his fellow-citizens. This virtually, is what we hear from Paul.

For the basis of Paul's indebtedness to the world was not what he had had from the world, but what he had for it. As to what he had had from the world, it would be hard to find a man who owed it less. Scars and bruises may be said to have been the digits in which that account was kept. We can fancy him pointing to one and another of these and saying, 'This I took at Lystra, this at Philippi,' and so on through his itinerary. Such items are generally footed up to be put to the account of revenge and hate, but Paul went upon quite another system of bookkeeping when he brought himself out a debtor to the world.

No, it was what he had for the world that made him its debtor. It was perishing for lack of knowledge, and he had the Word of Life—simply this. There is something analogous to it in the principle upon which one of the rules in the Code of Medical Ethics is founded: A true physician, it is felt, who makes a life saving discovery, will not run the risk of its dying with him. A man therefore, who pretends to such a discovery, and claims that he gives it to the public in the form of some secret nostrum, is a self branded impostor. At the best, his claims can be interpreted only as a confession that he has what belongs to the race, and will not surrender it. Such, in theory at least, is the sentiment of the medical profession! and every time we are sick, we bless God that there are so many men who are true to it.

Somewhat thus did Paul feel that he owed his whole self to the world of perishing men. He had in his gospel message what could alone save them. To every man who was unsaved, Paul felt himself a debtor; to every man who would consent to be saved on gospel terms, he was doubly such.

We sometimes fear that this spirit has died out in the church, but it is not so. There is too little of it to-day, as doubtless there was even in Paul's day, but it survives. More than this, it promises to be the special form of revival energy that the church is to display in the near future. The theology of the past requires but little refitting to adapt it to the exigencies of the times, and the times seem to be nearing the latter day, the day when the church is to pay its debt to Greek and barbarian alike, and these shall be brought to accept in payment the truth of Christ's salvation.—N. Y. Evangelist.

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger. Prayer-Meetings.

Mr. Editor,— It was my fortune or rather misfortune to stumble into a prayer meeting that made me sad. The church was without a Pastor. But the brethren were striving in the laudable endeavor to uphold a meeting for public prayer. The number in attendance was small, very few of the church members were in their places, but that was not the saddest part. The hour for commencing passed in silence. Three deacons were present, but sat as far apart as the dimensions of the building would allow. The congregation was composed of saints and sinners, and they followed the example of the deacons in sitting far apart. For one half hour silence reigned. The congregation looked first at one deacon than at the other in silent expectation. The deacons persistently examined their hymn books or looked into their hands. At last matters became unbearable. The younger portion of the congregation began to look at each other and make signs. Presently two young men from extreme sides of the house made their exit. This caused a shuffling movement and all three deacons looked up cleared their throats and settled down again. Another young man measured the length of the building and passed out. There were indications of a general stampede when the senior deacon began to interview his brother deacons separately on the situation. Matters were soon settled now. There was no lack apparently of knowledge or zeal. Prayer, song and exhortation, fol-

lowed each other in rapid succession. The wonderful metamorphosis was a glad surprise. But the effort was futile to erase the impression of the first half hour. What would have made a successful prayer meeting was wasted for lack of arrangement, purpose and punctuality. Christians are disappointed with such a meeting, and go away feeling sad at heart. Enquirers are lead to doubt the reality of Christian experience, and the ungodly presume to scoff. There is no good reason why meetings should be conducted in this manner; and when such is common, it is no wonder prayer meetings are not considered interesting. It is a shame to see good and earnest Christians squandering their talents and opportunities in this way. And it is no strange thing they find reason often for discouragement. Men do not thus engage in their worldly business, but they are upon the alert, they are systematic, energetic, persistent. Bring the same manner into the prayer meeting, it will be no longer "dry," but a perennial fountain of spiritual delight, and a field for successful spiritual endeavour. It will bind the bond of Christian love closer, it will open a wider and more hopeful avenue for Christian effort, and it will speak to the world with a power from above.

The remedy is attainable with little effort. It requires a plan in which the brethren concur, and a faithful adherence to the plan. There are always a few who are willing to bear the responsibility. Let them take the burden, if burden it is, and it will soon become a pleasure. Nor will they be alone long. The circle will enlarge, and joy will reign in place of sadness and gloom.

Incidents of Ministerial Life.

A TALE AND SOMETHING MORE.

CHAPTER VIII.

After Mr. Alethes accepted the invitation of the church at Taxis to become their pastor, there was nothing to do but to make arrangement for his ordination; which took place in due course and passed off satisfactorily. There was no subscription paper circulated for the new pastor: each one had learned to give according to his means, a definite sum to the cause of Christ. They had done this so constantly that it was always regarded as the Lord's money; and when the late pastor died, no one thought of withholding his contribution to the cause; to have done so would have seemed to them, worse than robbing the government of lawful duty or tax. Hence the treasurer of the church had means to keep the pulpit regularly supplied; and they were immediately able to tell the pastor elect what salary they could give. Mr. Alethes was content with the amount given to his predecessor. Had a subscription been made for the man, his popularity might have largely increased the sum; but they wisely discountenanced a financial inflation as the surest way of preventing a collapse. When afterward, in natural course, the revenue of the church increased, the pastor in part received the benefit.

It makes a great difference whether a subscription be made for Christ and his cause, or for a particular man as minister. In these days, either a Paul, Apollus, or a Cephas, will be very careful how he trusts his family upon a salary made up for himself in particular. There was some complaint, even at Taxis, that the wealthier were not doing their part; but, to an unusual extent, things were arranged so that one should not be eased and another burdened; and they were very much disposed to do their duty as unto God rather than to man. The strength of the church lay very much in the fact that the weaker took part in support of the pastor. He who still sits over the treasury, often saw the mites cast in. Many who helped in the support of the ministry, were not getting over five dollars a week to provide for their families, but they reasoned that, even in their penury, one cent on a dollar, given for such a purpose as the cause of God could not injure them, and they gave it cheerfully.

Once every year a social tea-meeting of the contributors to the various interests was held, when a financial statement was made, giving particulars of money received for all purposes, and the manner of its expenditure. The pastor, on his part, gave an outline of the year's work. Usually every one was gratified and encouraged to strive together for the furtherance of religion. The whole church did not possess more wealth than the average country churches. Yet by their zeal and order they nearly always owned one of the leading ministers of the Association, who reflected honor upon his people wherever he went.

Mr. Alethes did not think it needful to make much change in the order of services. Some young ministers have great antipathy to what are called "the old ruts," forgetting that these same ruts are an evidence that the Gospel chariot has done good work on the same way in the past. It will be often needful to mend the ways, and take advantage of modern improvement in church work; but new pastors have sometimes upset the whole affair by sudden changes forced upon the people. All that was needed at Taxis was a continuation of the abiding presence of the Spirit of God, and an unction from the Holy One permeating the soul of the pastor.

Besides the two brethren whose names have been mentioned, there were two younger deacons, Mr. Ardor and Mr. Adraios, who also superintended the Sabbath School. Church deacons are so much open to adverse criticism that the four good men at Taxis were supposed by some to have been chosen by miracle; but, in truth, there was nothing supernatural in the matter. When a new deacon was needed, the church looked for the man whom Providence had pointed out for the office. The Lord's deacons are the men who can do the work of the church in a proper spirit; (Acts 6. 3) to discover such no special revelation is needed; and disaster is sure to attend disobedience to the Divine rule. Diotrophes has nearly always been spoken of as the greatest sinner in Zion; but the people at Taxis had greater abhorrence of apathetic, half hearted men, who, without a pang of regret, talk of the cause dying out, until one after another of zealous pastors are driven away, and a majority of the church paralyzed.

Mr. Alethes became enamoured of his deacons; they had his implicit confidence, and were consulted on every matter of importance. One seemed the counter-part of his brethren, and each was influenced by the other three. Mr. Prudens was a very cautious man, but was never known to throw cold water on any proposals for necessary church work, and the zeal of Mr. Ardor seldom overstepped the bounds of prudence. They were all steady in purpose, and at all times manifested good will both to the church and their pastor.

Their secretary was a very useful man; he was not content merely by keeping the books, but interested himself in any matter claiming his attention. He was desirous to see that things were done decently and in order. He marked the attendance of members at the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, and called attention to any who had been long absent, and other cases requiring the discipline of the church. The books were kept as carefully as those of a merchant's office. Great interest attaches to church books. We are anxious to know how the roll compares with that of the "Lamb's Book of Life." In irony, some church books may be said to contain records of the battles of the Lord. New pastors may, in some cases, read the quarrels of the past, and observe the same names on the tombstones in the adjoining church-yard, where the combatants sleep in the peace of death;—on one stone there is a finger pointing to the skies, on another the assurance that "His end was peace." They had troubles, even at Taxis, but the record was expunged from the church books and buried in oblivion.

There is one other officer of great importance to the pastor who must not be passed by in this description—the treasurer. This gentleman had an easy office to fill. There was never a large amount raised, and what they had was laid out to the best advantage as soon as possible. There is something very peculiar about the Lord's money. However much worldly men may accumulate wealth and take care of it, it is quite certain God will not allow his money to be hoarded. It matters not whether it be the savings of ministers, the product of a bazaar, or cash raised by a church from the sale of a building, or what not, it is the hardest of all money to keep. Moneys raised for all purposes at Taxis was handed to the treasurer and by him spent as directed, and a full account rendered to the whole church annually.

It was not long before Mr. Alethes began to reap sheaves from the gospel seed sowing of the late pastor. Several as they came before the church, bore witness as others had done to the power of his earnest appeals. Being dead he yet spake; and the youthful pastor felt the hallowing influence of the life and work of his predecessor.

The first year of pastoral labour was stimulating. It was not without its difficulties, but Mr. Alethes was not the man to be readily elated or depressed. He had enjoyed the felicity of a living organization. The church at Taxis was as spiritual as it was orderly.

It was surprising how readily every one found something to do. Even the little Sabbath School children wanted to be employed in some way.

Among the female members of the church was a Miss Prudens, who moved around apparently unconscious of the fact that she was heart and soul in every good work. This young lady had been a great help to the aged pastor. She informed him when the sick wished for his presence, and looked for evidences of conversion among the young people of the congregation, and introduced them to him at the inquirer's meeting. "She reached forth her hand to the needy," until the sick-poor, thought her a ministering angel. "Favor is deceitful and beauty is vain but a woman that feareth God she shall be praised." (To be continued.)

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1884.

THIRD QUARTER.

Lesson VII.—AUGUST 17, 1884.

ABSALOM'S DEATH.

2 Sam. xviii. 24-33.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 23, 33.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death."—Mark vii. 10.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

- M. The Lesson.
T. David Fleeing Before Absalom. 2 Sam. xv. 14-30.
W. David Cursed by Shimei. 2 Sam. xvi. 5-13.
T. The Battle Between David's and Absalom's Armies. 2 Sam. xviii. 6-8.
F. The Death of Absalom. 2 Samuel xviii. 9-17.
G. David's Complaint Against Ahithophel. Ps. lv. 9-15.
G. David's Imprecation Against Ahithophel. Ps. cix. 2-20.

ANALYSIS.—I. Waiting for tidings, Vs. 24-27. II. Tidings brought, Vs. 28-32. III. David's sorrow, Vs. 33.

QUESTIONS.—Who took possession of Jerusalem when David fled? What was the counsel of Ahithophel? What advice did Hushai give? Whose counsel did Absalom take? With what result? Who slew Absalom, and under what circumstances? xviii. 14.

Vs. 24-27.—In what city was David at this time, and where was it located? For what tidings was he waiting? Where did he await the news? Where was the watchman? What did he see? What is the significance of the runner being alone? How many runners were there? Who was the first that arrived? How did the watchman know him, even when he was some distance away? What did the king say of him? What good service had he already performed for David? Why did David believe that he brought good tidings? Who was Ahimaz? For what was he noted?

Vs. 28-32.—What was the salutation of Ahimaz? What his announcement? In what posture did he give the news? What question came at once from David? What answer did Ahimaz give? Was this true?

Vs. 33.—How was the king affected by this intelligence? How did he give expression to his grief? What, do you suppose, were the special points in his sorrow? What did he say at the death of an infant son, about meeting him again? Had he any such hope with reference to Absalom?

Lesson Proving.—Where, in this lesson, do we find—1. An illustration of God's tenderness toward his erring children? 2. An illustration of the love which led Christ to die for us? 3. A good description of a true minister of Christ? vs. 27. 4. A warning to such as are in sin, to repent? 5. A confirmation of the truth that a man dies as he lives?

When David fled from Jerusalem, Absalom took possession of the city. The wise Ahithophel, who had joined him, advised the immediate pursuit of the king, while he was yet weak and unprepared. But Absalom listened to the counsel of Hushai, who was David's friend, and had been sent by David to counteract the counsel of Ahithophel. This advice was to gather a great army first, and then attack David. But this delay was fatal to Absalom—for David increased in strength; and, in the battle, Absalom's forces were defeated, and Absalom himself slain. Our lesson opens with the breaking of the news of his son's death to the king.

Notes.—When David fled before Absalom, his servants clung tenaciously to him, together with a company of six hundred men, under the command of Ittai, the Gittite. The people whom he met, as he passed eastward to the Jordan, wept for him. David was one whom discipline benefited. It was good for him to be afflicted. We see this in his consideration for the ark of the Lord (xv. 25, 26); in his gentle and subdued manner; in his conduct towards Shimei, who took this occasion to cast insults upon him (xvi. 10); and in that strong faith which finds expression in the Third and Fourth Psalms, which he wrote at this period of his humili-

tion. Absalom's fortunes seemed now in the ascendant; but the Lord, who had used him for David's discipline, now puts a hook in his nose. When David heard of Ahithophel's defection, he prayed: "O, Lord, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness." Absalom had to run counter to a godly man's prayer, and all his devices came to nought. At Mahanaim, across the Jordan, David found friends and refreshment. There, soldiers from all quarters flocked to his standard, and soon he was able to take the field against Absalom. But his heart yearned for his son, and he gave strict charge to his general to spare Absalom's life. In the conflict, Absalom's forces dissolved like snow, and Absalom was caught by his head in the branches of a tree; and it is most likely that his hair, which had been a source of vanity, became his destruction. The unscrupulous Joab, disregarding David's command, slew him with three darts; and his body was cast into a pit, and a great heap of stones placed upon it. But who shall bear the news to his father?

Vs. 24-27.—David was at Mahanaim, waiting for tidings as to the issue of the battle. His followers had dissuaded him from leading his forces himself, lest his life, so precious to Israel, should be taken. Like Eli, upon a former occasion, he was full of anxiety. Between the two gates. The outer and inner gates of this fortified city of Mahanaim. The watchman took a higher position, to look out for runners who should bring the news. In those days, men swift of foot were trained to run for hours, and for many miles, with messages of importance; and could accomplish long distances more quickly than horses. If he be alone. A sign of good tidings; for, in the case of the defeat of David's army, there would have been a crowd of fugitives also. The porter. The keeper of the gate below the tower. Ahimaz. This was a young priest, the son of Zadok, who was one of the two chief priests of David's time. Ahimaz had already proved his devotion to David. See 2 Sam. xvii. 17-22. He was noted for his fleetness and his peculiar manner of running. He had asked Joab to be permitted to "run and bear the king tidings" (xviii. 19), but was at first refused; for Joab thought him too tender hearted to carry news of Absalom's death, and therefore sent Cushai (more properly, the Cushite, or Ethiopian) in advance. Afterwards, Joab permitted him to follow Cushai; but, either being swifter of foot, or knowing a shorter route, he arrived at Mahanaim first.

Vs. 28-32.—All is well. He rushed into the king's presence, calling out the one word, Shalom, peace. Then he fell down . . . before the king, in the attitude of reverence, and delivered his message—a pious, graceful, and poetic announcement of victory. But there was yet a terrible burden on the king's heart, which the good news of triumph could not relieve. His only answer was: Is the young man Absalom safe? All interest in the battle seemed lost in his concern for his son. See Joab's indignant words in xix. 5-7. I saw a great tumult, etc. An instance of evasion and prevarication. How hard sometimes to declare unwelcome truth. Impatiently the king bade him stand aside, while he questioned the second messenger, Cushai. Tidings, my lord the king. Good tidings is implied. The Lord hath avenged, or judged. The Lord has given judgment in the matter at issue, and it is in thy favor. Again did David ask the one question which had first place in his heart: Is the young man Absalom safe? There is a father's tenderness in the wording of the question. To him, Absalom, steeped in crime, was the young man, the boy of his earnest love. The enemies of my lord the king, etc. We note the delicacy, the tact, yet the unmistakable plainness of the answer. With Cushai's words the bolt falls, and David's heart is broken with grief; for now he knows that Absalom is dead.

Vs. 33.—Much moved. And he had need to be; for Absalom was cut off in his sins. He made no question about the manner of his death, but withdrew to his chamber over the gate, and was alone with his grief. But as he went, he uttered that wonderful plaint which has found an echo in the hearts of so many bereaved and stricken parents. My son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! etc. There is nothing equal to it in pathos, save our Lord's lament over Jerusalem. Would God I had died for thee. Alas! it had been better if he had lived for him, and had disciplined and trained him in the ways of righteousness in his early youth. David could say of his infant son that died: "I shall go to him" (xii. 23); but the bitter ingredient in his cup of sorrow now was, that the separation between him and Absalom was, in all probability, forever.

The Lesson for the little Ones.

In order to show strongly the sorrow caused by the wicked Absalom, the teacher should study the touching incidents of the flight of David from his own son. Tell of the man who took a viper or serpent, which he had found frozen, and carried it in his bosom, and petted and nursed it. When it was warmed, it turned and stung him.

Tell vividly the story of the battle, the fate of the ungrateful son, the loving father's waiting in the gate, his sorrow, etc.

If you have sinned as Absalom did go to Jesus and ask him to forgive you, then, and then only, are you really safe.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

Boys' Department.

Original and Selected.

Bible Enigma.

No. 289.

In the book of Esther there is a question consisting of sixteen letters making four words. Find out the answers to the following, and the initials will give you the letters:

- 1. What small animal is mentioned but once in the Bible?
2. What was the name of the queen of Nineveh?
3. To what small creature did Solomon send certain persons for instruction?
4. A large city north of Palestine.
5. What plant cannot support itself but clings to the wall for support?
6. One of Peter's names.
7. The doubling apostle.
8. The sign of bondage.
9. What Jacob used a stone for.
10. A river on one side of Eden.
11. Herod's office.
12. A province of Palestine.
13. The port Jonah sailed for.
14. The grandson of King Saul.
15. The king of Bashan.
16. The prophet who reproved king David.

CURIOS QUESTIONS.

No. 274.

Take a kindly word of five letters; transpose them and you have the name of a beverage; again and you have a strong light; again and you have great.

No. 275.

A Charade.

My first is a rapid motion. My second is the entrance with an ivory guard. My whole is one of the prettiest towns of Nova Scotia.

No. 276.

Form a word square of 1. The first man who did not die. 2. Saltpetre. 3. A water animal. 4. What we believe. 5. A large number of cattle.

No. 277.

Form a diamond of words: 1. The middle of two. 2. An insect's egg. 3. The plural of a facial organ. 4. Men who use knowledge aright. 5. A serpentine act. 6. To plant. 7. The centre of one.

No. 278.

Supply the vowels in the following: Wh'r Gd dmth bst, f las r gn, T mk m if cmplt, Wh't m pth, f t b j y r pn, Wlk wth wling ft, Lf's nrd ws, nd h will mk t pin, Whn h shll dm t mt.

Find answers to the above—write them down—and see how they agree with the answers to be given next week.

Answer to Bible Enigma.

No. 288.

- T imothy,
H oshes,
O phir,
U ziah,
G ath,
O nesimus,
D amaris,
S amuel,
E dre,
E lijah,
S tephen,
T yrannus,
M ary,
E noch.

ANSWERS TO CURIOS QUESTIONS.

No. 268.

Be not swift to take offence; let it pass. If at once you don't succeed, try, try again.

No. 269.

CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

No. 270.

Hat-red.

No. 271.

Shallum. Bible Questions.

No. 272.

Jezebel. No. 273.

Gedaliah.