

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1875.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, December 19th, 1875.—Jesus and Peter.—John xxi. 15-22.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Lovest thou me?" John xxi. 17.

ANALYSIS.—I. Peter questioned thrice. Vs. 15-17. II. Peter's death foretold. Vs. 18, 19. III. Peter's interest in John. Vs. 20-22.

CONNECTION OF LESSON.—The Evangelist has ceased to specify days. Probably there had been some considerable interval since the last manifestation of Jesus to the disciples, bringing us nearer to the ascension than we are to the resurrection. The greater number of the forty days intervening have already passed, and seven of the apostles, Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, John, and James, and two others unnamed, have returned to their vocations as fishermen on the Sea of Galilee, to whom, after a night of unsuccessful fishing, Jesus reveals himself really and corporeally, though unexpectedly, and in a way quite unearthly. A miracle of a great draught of fishes is repeated (chap. xxi. 6), and a meal of fishes and bread is eaten on shore (chap. xxi. 12, 13). After which the touching interview, contained in our lesson between Jesus and Peter, occurred.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 15.—So when they [verse 2] had dined. Or, rather, breakfasted; for such is the meaning of the Greek word, and such, in fact, was this meal. Vs. 4. Jesus saith to Simon Peter. "Simon Peter" is the full name, in its Greek form—Simon, the original name, designating him personally, apart from his office, and Peter, the official name, given him as a Christian disciple and apostle. Matt. xvi. 17-19. The Hebrew form of his name was Simon Cephas. Here, as in our last, we see that the appearance of Jesus was both for the common good, and for an individual purpose. There, it was Thomas, here Simon Peter—characters most unlike, each with his own fault, and each needing and getting from the Master separate and special regard. Simon, son of Jonas. Matt. xvi. 17. Andrew was his brother i. 41, 42. "Son of Jonas," ignoring thus his official character and relation. This was an intended recognition of Peter's fall in the denial of Christ, and so is an intended reflection upon him, as though he had forfeited his apostleship. This brings the address into perfect harmony with the substance and tenor of what follows. Lovest thou me more than these? More than these other disciples then present. There is a reference to that self-confident assertion which preceded his fall. Matt. xvi. 33. The question has a keen edge. Though kind, it is corrective. Peter needed to know himself, and to know that Jesus knew him. Not in every sense are we to "forget the things [even the sin] that are behind." He saith unto him. A prompt, positive answer, out of an honest, earnest heart. Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. Here is implied, what in vs. 17 is affirmed—Christ's omniscience—by virtue of which he beats the divine title of "Searcher of hearts." i. 42, 47, 48; ii. 25; iv. 29; vi. 64, 70; xi. 11; xiii. 1, 11, 38; xvi. 19, 30; xviii. 4; xix. 28. The words are thus equivalent to a justifiable oath. Peter does not add "more than these." He has learned modesty by his fall. Enough that he can declare thus strongly his love. Comparison with others he will not again make. The Greek has two words signifying "to love." The one designates love in its highest character, and is used of the love which has a moral quality. The other designates love as a personal affection, as a conscious emotion. The Saviour uses the former word in his first two questions, the latter in his third question. Peter uses the latter in each of his three answers. Feed my lambs. Christ here recognizes himself as the Great and Good Shepherd and Owner of the sheep, and re-instates Peter in his office of a shepherd under him, from which his first denial of Christ, in some sense, deposed him. The "lambs" are not simply children, but disciples, young, immature, and weak in their discipleship. Jesus, though the Mighty One, cares for the lambskins, for each lambskin, not less than for the grown-up, full-sized sheep. The gardener, who cared nothing for the tender plant in its germ, would surely be a miserable failure as a gardener. Christ implies that love to him is the first most essential qualification in a pastor, and that whatever

else may be present, if this be absent one is unfit to act the shepherd.

Verse 19.—He saith to him again the second time. Corresponding to Peter's second denial. Simon, son of Jonas. As before. Not even now does he call him Peter; for now he wishes to go back to the man, to that in the man, whence came the denial. Lovest thou me? He now omits the words, "more than these." Yet for this very reason the question searches more deeply. Then the question was on the degree of his love, and seemed to assume its existence. Now the question is whether he have love at all. It is more searching also, because it follows at once Peter's declaration of attachment. Yea, Lord, thou knowest, etc. Peter must have been astonished; but what else can be said than what he had said? It was the simple, honest truth, which almost said itself. He has, he can have, no other answer. He confesses a second time, therefore, as squarely as on that night he a second time denied. Feed my sheep. Or, rather, "shepherd" them, tend as a shepherd—a more general word than that used by the Saviour before, which is properly translated "feed." This includes the more general care of a flock, or church, as well as teaching. This is thus a more explicit re-instatement of Peter in his office—a second restoration answering to his second fall.

Verse 17.—He saith unto him a third time, Simon, etc. This third is the severest and most searching of all the questions; first, because it seemed not to accept as enough Peter's two previous declarations; also because it referred to his third denial; and finally, because now Jesus uses the lower word for love—that which designated mere personal affection. As though Christ would say, "Well, to say nothing of the higher love to me, do you have, are you really sure you have, as you say you do, even so much as friendly attachment? Have you even this?" Peter had denied Christ, Christ seems to doubt Peter. Peter was grieved. The word here translated "grieved" designates pure, unmixed sadness—grief with no mixture of indignation—just downright, outright sorrow. It corresponds to that which Peter had when he went out and wept bitterly—corresponds to it, and yet how unlike it! And he saith unto him. The more approved reading gives "said" instead of "saith." Peter's answer was doubtless now as prompt, as ready as each time before. He could speak, must speak—had no need, no power to be speechless. His heart was full of love, and so full of the confession of this love. Lord thou knowest all things. States explicitly what each previous answer implied. See above, oh vs. 15. Thou knowest that I love thee. The word here translated "knowest" differs from that used in each case before, and is the one used where God is said to know his own, and not to know those not his—a knowledge of personal, loving acquaintance. The love of Peter here shows both its genuineness and its unquerable might. This strength is now shown, and is not, as once before, merely declared. Feed my sheep. The same word for "feed" as in the first case; but here it is not, as there, lambs. The thought here is of that work of instruction and edification which must be the chief work for churches organized—for the whole body of believers. Thus does Christ complete the recognition and open endorsement of Peter, as having in full the office of apostle.

Verse 18.—This is a prediction of Peter's fidelity to his trust—an assurance that henceforth he is to be Peter, and not simply "Simon, son of Jonas." Tradition states that Peter was crucified, head downward, at Rome.

Verse 20-22.—The disciple whom Jesus loved. John, the apostle and evangelist. As John survived the destruction of Jerusalem, it is not unnaturally thought that Christ here refers to that event as his coming. But John carefully warns his readers against interpreting the words as meaning that he was not to die.

QUESTIONS.—Vs. 15. Who are referred to by "they"? To what avocation had they returned? Vs. 3. With what success? Vs. 5, 6. How were they supplied with fish? Vs. 6. What is meant by "Lovest thou me more than these"? Had Peter boasted of his bravery? Matt. xvi. 33. Is he boastful or humble in his reply to Jesus? What are meant by lambs?

Vs. 16. What is meant by "sheep." What by "feed" here in this verse? Ans. Govern, protect.

Vs. 17. Why was the question asked three times?

Vs. 18. How did Peter die? What says tradition of the manner of his death?

Ans. That he was crucified in the reign of Nero, A. D. 67, with his head downward.

Vs. 20. Who was the disciple whom Jesus loved? See chap. xiii. 23-26.

Vs. 21. Has curiosity respecting other people's affairs wholly died out?

Vs. 22. What responsibility will be as great as we can bear? Rom. xiv. 12. Has this year's study of God's word increased our responsibility? Matt. xiii. 12. How, then, should we all walk? Isa. ii. 5. Why should we love the Bible? Ans. It reveals to us our Saviour.

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY December 26th, 1875.—REVIEW. The Ministry of Jesus.

Youths' Department.

A LITTLE SERMON FOR LITTLE FOLKS.

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."—John 13: 17.

I. "These things;" that is, your duties. You have duties wherever you are.

1. At home, obedience and respect to parents, and kindness to brothers, sisters, and servants.

2. At school, respect to teacher, faithfulness in study, and fairness in play.

3. On the street—good manners, modesty, kindness, minding your own business.

II. How should you do your duty?

1. Not for pay. That is a low motive. Some always ask, "What will you give me?"

2. But from love. So the Saviour did when a boy at Nazareth. So the angels do God's will (which is only another name for duty). This will make you do it cheerfully.

3. Better every day. By trying to do your duties, you will become more skillful. So you improve in reading, writing and music. Peter says, "Grow in grace."

III. Doing duty makes you happy. Sin cannot make you happy. Sin did not make Eve happy, nor Cain, nor Judas. Disobedience at home does not make you happy; idleness, unkindness, bad manners, no kind of sin can make you happy. But happiness comes from doing your duty. That is God's reward. This is the promise in the text. Think of this every day for just one week, and see how true it is.

Try, then, to know your duty. Be faithful in duty in doing it from love to God and man; then you will be happy every day on earth, and forever happy in heaven.

—The Myrtle

SEVEN WAYS OF GIVING.

One way is to give something to every cause that is presented, without inquiring into its merits. This is a careless way, but better than none.

A second way is to give from impulse, as much and as often as love and pity prompt. This is adapted to those of the rich who are kind hearted.

A third way is to save the cost of luxuries, and apply them to purposes of religion and charity. This is for the self-indulgent. With the frugal it is apt to be accompanied by narrowness, asceticism, and pride in good works.

A fourth way is to make a special effort to earn money for benevolent objects. This is for lazy people.

A fifth way is to lay aside as an offering to God, a definite portion of our gains, one-tenth, one-fifth, one-third, or one half. This way is adapted to all, but especially to the penurious, economical, the hard-working, the extravagant and the poor, whose gifts would be largely increased if it was generally practiced.

A sixth way is to give to God and the needy just as much as we spend on ourselves.

A seventh way is to limit our own expenditures to a certain sum, and give away all the rest of our income. This was John Wesley's way.

We should not confine ourselves to one way of giving, but practice and teach our children different modes, each in its proper place, as occasion requires.—Presbyterian at Work.

THE WIFE OF JOHN BUNYAN.

It has been observed by some one, we cannot recollect who, that there is only one instance in the whole history of England of a woman making her appearance at Westminster Hall, and before the Judges of Assize, in order to make a formal defence in favor of the unfortunate. That woman was the young and interesting wife of John Bunyan who had become the sacrifice for conscience sake.

Although Elizabeth stands alone among her sex as an advocate, yet there never was

offered a more eloquent and unsophisticated defence than that which she made on behalf of her husband. She, first of all, had the courage to appear before the House of Lords to ask the Supreme Court of Appeals to relax the rigors of persecuting law. Their Lordships, it is said, rudely told her to go to the Judges of Assize, who had condemned her husband, and without fail she did so. At the Assize Court Sir Matthew Hale presided, and he was accompanied by Judge Twisden, a magistrate of ferocious temperament, whose countenance and demeanor strangely contrasted with the mildness and placidity of the Lord Chief Justice. We are indebted to John Bunyan himself for a description of the conduct of Judge Twisden on this memorable occasion. He says, "Judge Twisden snatched my poor wife, Elizabeth, and angrily told her that her husband was a convicted person, and could not be released unless he would promise to preach no more."

But Elizabeth, however much she loved her husband, was more enamoured of the Gospel, and she gave the court to understand that her husband could not purchase freedom at the expense of keeping silence about the mercy and compassion of God.

"It is false," continued Elizabeth, "to say that he has done wrong; for at the meetings where they preached they had God's presence with them."

"Will he leave off preaching?" roared Twisden.

"My Lord," said Elizabeth, "he dares not leave off preaching as long as he can speak. But, my Lords," she proceeded, with tears in her eyes, "just consider that we have four small children, one of them blind, and all of them have nothing to live upon while their father is in prison, but the charity of Christian people. O my Lords, I myself smayed at the news when my husband was apprehended, and being but young and unaccustomed to such things I fell in labor, and was delivered of a dead child."

This was too much for Sir Matthew Hale who now interposed with the ejaculation, "Alas! poor woman?" He then inquired what was her husband's calling.

"A tinker, please you, my Lord," said his wife; and because he is a tinker, and a poor man, he is despised and cannot have justice."

Law is stronger than tears. The Lord Chief Justice told her that her husband had broken it; he told her that there was but one person in the realm who could pardon her husband, and that person was the king. But how was the broken-hearted wife of a tinker to find her way to the footstool of a monarch?

"Alas! poor woman," he said, "I am sorry for your pitiable case."

Elizabeth now became convinced how vain it was to expect justice and mercy from an earthly tribunal; and with a heroic glory which can only be found in the annals of Christian faith, she pointed to her tears as she departed, and uttered words which never should die as long as the English language exists.

"See these tears," said she; "but I do not weep for myself. I weep for you when I think what an account such poor creatures as you will have to give at the coming of the Lord."

This scene took place, we will add, not only before John Bunyan was known as the author of a book, but before he had ever conceived the outline of his "Pilgrim's Progress." He was kept in jail, in order that he might not preach; but by this persecution he was enabled to write a book in his prison cell, which was preached to England for many generations, and which will edify and enlighten the world to the utmost posterity.

EXTRAORDINARY BELL INSCRIPTION.—The McShane Bell Foundry of Baltimore some time ago received an order from Prince Edward Island for a large church-bell with the following queer inscription to be cast on the metal:

Stranger! would you know my name, Who placed me here, and whence I came? From Baltimore I came, then know. Cast by the renowned McShane & Co. Placed here, observe, through zeal and pains Of McKenna, Rev. Father James, Assisted by the willing, able, Generous people of De Sable. I beg to add, I did arrive In eighteen hundred and seventy-five. Sixteen hundred pounds my weight is found. I can be heard for miles around. I'm here, the world and you to tell That I'm the great St. Joseph's Bell.

The bell was completed and shipped to its destination a few days ago.

"SACERDOTAGE" is the word used punningly to describe the state which the English Church is now in.

THE DUSTMAN.

BY MRS. M. F. BUTTS.

Here's the dustman? Dust, ho?
Up and down the street I go.
Up and down, far and wide,
Taking dust on every side,
Sweep the dirt, every bit:
I'm the man that calls for it.
Sun may shine, winds may blow,
Here's the dustman! Dust, ho!

What has stretched my mouth so wide?
Calling dust on every side.
Much I fear 'twill never close
Properly beneath my nose.
All the housemaids laugh and jest,
Though I look my very best;
And the urchins as I go
Shout together, "Dust, ho!"

Useless 'tis to change my place,
"Dust" is written on my face;
Little hope I have in life,
Dust is lying on my wife;
Sweep the dirt, every bit,
I'm the man that calls for it;
Growing old, still I go,
Shouting, "Oh! dust, ho!"

When I've carried dust enough,
And my form is old and tough,
I shall go the way of man—
Close my mouth, if close it can;
Changed to dust I then shall be;
Other men will carry me,
Murmuring in a chorus low,
"Here's the dustman! Dust, ho!"

—Christian Weekly.

THE MYSTERIES OF EDITING.

The world at large, Henry Ward Beecher has said, does not understand the mysteries of newspapers; and, as in the watch, the hands that are seen are but the passive instruments of the spring, which is never seen, so in the newspaper the most worthy causes of its prosperity are often less observed or unknown. Who suspects the benefit the paper derives from the enterprise, the vigilance, and the watchful fidelity of the publisher? Who pauses to think how much the pleasure of reading is derived from the skill and care of the printer, if they exist, but seldom see the excellencies.

We see a hearty dinner, but do not think of the farmer who raised the materials thereof, or the cook that prepared them with infinite pains and skill. But a cook of vegetables, meat, pastries, and infinite bon-bons has a paradisical office in comparison with the editor! Before him lies in review all the exchange papers. He is to know all their contents, to mark for other eyes the matter that requires attention. His scissors are to be alert, to clip with incessant industry all the little items that together form so large an interest in the news department. He passes in review each State of the Union through the newspaper lens. He looks across the ocean and sees strange lands, and, following the sun, he searches all around for materials. It will require but one second's time for the reader in what two hours' search produced. By him are read the manuscripts that swarm the office like flies in July. It is his hand that condenses a whole page in a line. It is his sternness that restricts sentimental obituaries, that gives young poets a twig on which to sit and sing their first lays.

A gentleman once warmly eulogized the constancy of an absent husband in the presence of his loving wife. Yea, yes," assented she, "he writes me letters full of agony of affection; but he never remits me any money." "I can conceive of that," said the other; "for I know his love to be unremitting."

Dr. Simmons, of New York, referring to the centennial work in which he is engaged, says in the *Examiner & Chronicle*: "A generous, far-seeing and wealthy Baptist, who has given as high as fifty thousand dollars to one of our colleges, besides liberal amounts to others, assures me that had he not begun by giving his dollar when he was a boy, he should never have given his tens of thousands when he became a man! Pastors, may there not be such a boy in your congregation waiting for your moulding hand? Think of it."

At a late meeting of the Central N. Y. Yearly Meeting (Free Will Baptist and Open Communion), it was

Resolved, That no person should be recognized as a member in full church relation unless baptized.

A curious slip occurs in a catalogue issued a short time ago by a well-known bookseller. A work on Xylography—block-printing, at the beginning of the fifteenth century—is catalogued, which is said to contain "sixty-nine engravings either from wood or metal, twelve of which bear inscriptions representing scenes of Christian mythology, figures of patriarchs, saints, devils, and other dignitaries of the Church."—N. Y. Ex.

Goodness is beauty in its best estate.—*Marlowe.*