The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1876.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, *February 6th*, 1876.—David Sparing Saul.—1 Sam. xxiv. 1–16. B. C. 1060.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 9–15.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Recompense to no man evil for evil." Rom. xii. 17.

DAILY READINGS.—*Monday*, 1 Samuel xxi. *Tuesday*, 1 Samuel xxii. *Wednesday*, 1 Samuel xxiii; xxiv. 1–16. *Thursday*, Matthew v. 33–48. *Friday*, Acts vii. 54–60. *Saturday*, Psalm lxiii. 1–42. *Sunday*, 1 Peter ii. 19–25.

ANALYSIS. — *I. The cave at En-gedi.* Vs. 1–3. *II. Saul's skirt cut off.* Vs. 4, 5. *III. Saul's life spared.* Vs. 6, 7. *IV. Innocence urged.* Vs. 8–15.

HISTORICAL CONNECTION.—After his sad parting with Jonathan, David betakes himself to Nob, a sacerdotal city, situated on an eminence near Jerusalem. Chap. xxi. 1, etc. Of Ahimelech the priest takes Goliath's sword. Chap. xxi. 8, 9. Then fled, for fear of Saul, to Achish, the king of Gath (vs. 10); but the servants of Achish being in doubt of him, he departs to the cave of Adullam, at the foot of the Judæan hills. Robinson describes one such cave in the neighborhood, 100 feet long, excavated in the soft limestone. Thence, with hundreds of malcontents, having joined their fortunes with his, he comes into "the forest of Hareth, in Judah (chap. xxii. 5); thence to Keilah, a town on the Philistine border; thence to the Wilderness of Ziph, between Hebron and En-gedi (En'ge-di). Here he meets Jonathan for the last time. Chap. xxiii. 16. Thence he flees to Maon, near to Ziph: hearing of which Saul, with inveterate hate, pursued him. "*And David went up from thence, and dwelt in strongholds at En-gedi.*"

EXPOSITION.—This chapter falls into three equal sections. We have, I. Saul's Expedition. Vs. 1–7. II. David's Expostulation. Vs. 8–15. III. Saul's Confession. Vs. 16–25. The Scripture assigned takes in only one verse of the last section; but that verse is the key-note of the section. Compare chap. xxvi.

I. The Expedition.—The narrative of this vividly sets before us Saul's pursuit, his exposure, and David's forbearance.

The pursuit.—Vs. 1, 2. The cause of it was Saul's uncontrolable hatred; its aim was David's destruction; its occasion was the report of David's escape to En-gedi; its time was Saul's return from the Philistine expedition. This expedition had called him from a previous attempt to capture David. *En-gedi* was on the western coast of the Dead Sea, about half way down the coast. Precipitous rocky peaks and ridges prevail there, in which are many caves. Wild goats are still found in the region, and outlaws conceal themselves in the caves and chasms. David's flight to such a place shows the extremity of his danger.

The exposure.—David had with him six hundred men. Vs. 13. An enormous cave, answering to the description of this, having recesses in the side, exists in the vicinity of En-gedi. Saul may possibly have taken a part of his force within, and in supposed security all may have slept. It is, however, hard to believe that many of his men should have gone in thus without exploring the place thoroughly with torches, in order to find whether his game were there. If, however, the king alone, or with only a few attendants, stepped in to remain for a while, the smallness of the opening and the darkness within would naturally have made the impression that the cave was small and unoccupied. Only from the connection is it made certain that Saul, and whatever attendants may have entered with him, fell asleep; for the phrase, "to cover his feet," does not necessarily express this.

The forbearance.—Vs. 4–7. Saul was caught—in the hand and power of David. His men urge him to use his power, and refer to a promise of the Lord which he may thus fulfil. Whether this alleged promise was found by them in his appointment as king, in the providence of God in David's behalf, or in a prediction known to them but not recorded for us, is uncertain. They evidently and naturally thought it both the privilege and the duty of David to make an end of Saul's power and his own exile. To do so they thought was Heaven's permission, or even decree. David seemed about to comply; for he advanced to the unconscious king, sword in hand, and cut off, not the head, but the skirt. Only that, and even for that he was conscience-smitten. His men were astonished, and indignant that he did no more. Hence David's explanation, he kept his loyalty to the king. The forbearance of David is made doubly striking by this resistance of the demands of his own band.

II. The Expostulation. — Vs. 8–15. This contains David's salutation to Saul, his vindication of himself, and his appeal to God to judge between them. These in their combination constitute an eloquent expostulation against the king's treatment of him as though a criminal and an outlaw.

The salutation.—Vs. 8. He waited till Saul and his men were off at a safe distance before he made himself known. His prostration in presence of the king was a declaration, by act, of his loyalty, which by word he was about to assert.

The vindication.—Vs. 9–11. We have here, in vs. 9, a respectful but emphatic arraignment of the king for his unjust suspicion of him; and in vs. 10 and 11, the proof that the suspicion is unjust. In proof of his loyalty, he appeals to his treatment of the king in letting him go unharmed, though just now in his power first stating to him the fact, and then, in confirmation, exhibiting the piece of the king's robe. The question in vs. 9, "Wherefore hearest thou men's words," etc., refers to the reports made to Saul by David's enemies. See xxii. 9; xxiii. 7, 12, 19, 20, 24. There would be plenty who, though having nothing against David, would yet try to advance themselves with the king by such a despicable service. That David's enemies should misrepresent him, was to be expected. Some, probably, honestly believed him to be disloyal. The character of his men was not such as to allay suspicion. xxii. 2. "Into the hand" here, as often, means "into the power," because the hand is the instrument of power, and so of execution. Did the opportunity tempt David to kill Saul? So also did his men. See above. Both were powerful incentives. David resisted both. He shows Saul, therefore, that nothing can make him disloyal. See the skirt of *thy* robe in *my* hand, for in that *I* cut it off, etc. Proof of innocence most irrefutable—a plea that must stand. And when it is made, with power, yet respectfully, he adds: "Yet thou art hunting my soul, to take it." What a contrast between the two characters—between their courses of conduct toward each other! With such a case David can safely make his appeal to God.

The appeal.—Vs. 12–15. He commits his case to God, declares that his hand shall never be raised to avenge himself, shows thus the absurdity of Saul's efforts, and re-commits his case to God. The word avenge shows that David expects such injustice as Saul's to bring retribution at the last judgment; but no wish for the king's harm or injury is expressed. Sin must be punished, unless repented of and forgiven. Here is an example for us, as from Paul we have the exhortation not to avenge ourselves. God will execute judgment. We may not, must not. The proverb in vs. 13 can have a double reference here—either to the wickedness that the king's hand is trying to execute, or the retaliation which David's hand refuses to seek. There is something of friendly though emphatic sarcasm in the questions of vs. 14, as answered by David. To hunt a *dog* were bad enough; but David, the lone, loyal fugitive, is as harmless as a *dead* dog. For a child even to chase a flea, is ridiculous; but the king of Israel himself is chasing David, who is as harmless as "*one* flea." The word "one" is in the Hebrew.

III. The Confession.—Vs. 16–22. Saul is overwhelmed, this appeal, is too much. As David called him "father," both as being king and his father-in-law, he again, as of old, calls him "son," lifted up his voice, and wept, confessed David the coming king.

QUESTIONS.—To what city did David go after parting from Jonathan? Who was its priest? What relic did David take from him? To what Philistine king did he flee? Thence to what cave? Thence to what forest? Afterward to what town? Thence to what wilderness? What friend met him here for the last time? Afterward to what strong-hold? What writings are associated with these flights? What is the reason of the Psalms being so dear to the universal Christian church?

Vs. 1. Where is the Wilderness of En-gedi? Meaning of it? Is the site known to-day, and where?

Vs. 3. Who is the East use caverns as sheep-cotes to-day?

Vs. 4. Did David act impetuously in cutting off Saul's skirt? How much of it was cut off? Are not impetuous men sometimes pretty good? John xiii. 8, 9.

Vs. 5. Why did David's heart smite him?

Vs. 8. Where have we proof of conscious integrity here?

Vs. 10. Is it not quite natural to improve a good opportunity for revenge? Is it Christ-like? 1 Peter ii. 3. Is self-defence justifiable? Is private revenge? To whom belongeth vengeance? Rom. xii. 19. What first martyr illustrated Christ's merciful spirit? Compare Acts vii. 60 with Luke xxiii. 34.

Abridged from the *Baptist Teacher*.

SUNDAY, *February 13th*, 1876.—Saul and his son slain.—1 Samuel xxxi. 1–6. B. C. 1060.

YOUTHS' DEPARTMENT.

For the Christian Messenger.

The Painted Elephant.

Dear Children,—

I thought you would like to know something about the painted Elephant, and why they painted it! When I was a boy, and dear little girls, I am not a boy now, but, it is time, not paint, that has made the difference. In Oxford, it was reported they made their horses grey to attend a grand wedding, some said, white-wash did it. But they did not white-wash the Elephant. Boys and girls did you ever see one? They are such monsters, it would require a number of horses rolled together to be as big and heavy as an Elephant. My father once let me climb up the ladder, and join about 20 boys and girls, who were having a ride on the Elephant, he walked about as though we were twenty big feathers, and had 40 more found room, the burden would have been light, so great is his strength. The Elephant's legs are as big round as your body, and he has a cushion at the bottom of his foot so that he makes no noise, and does not jar his heavy massive frame. Now I will tell you why they painted the Elephant, it was to do honour to our dear Queen's son, the Prince of Wales, who as you all know is now visiting his mother's subjects in India. They number many millions, and are doing all kind of things to show regard to one, who is destined to be their future ruler.

And we are interested because our Missionaries are labouring in India, to bring men to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus.

It was at Baroda, the Mahratta capital, over which the youthful Gaekwar rules, the Prince saw the many coloured Elephants.

Says the *Times* correspondent, the Prince taking the Gaekwar by the hand "passed out to the steps of the station, before which was an elephant of extraordinary size, on which there was a howdah which shone like burnished gold, and which was either made of gold or of silver gilt. It was covered with a golden canopy, and it was shining in the morning sun with surpassing splendour. This exquisitely burnished carriage was placed on cushions covered with cloth of gold and velvet, which were fastened upon the embroidered tissue that almost concealed the outline of the beast, which stood swaying his painted proboscis to and fro as if he kept time to the music of the bands outside. His head was coloured saffron, and on this ground were traced quaint scrolls of different coloured patterns. His proboscis was especially ornamented, and his ears stained of a pale yellowish green. His tusks had been sawn off to the length of 3ft., and false tusks of greater diameter, also shortened, were wedged on over them by bands of gold. His quaintly-painted legs were encased in thick round coils of gold. The mahout was attired in a costume befitting such a gorgeous charge. Attendants stood by with State umbrellas, fans of peacocks' feathers, yaks' tails, and streamers of scarlet and cloth of gold, or held the silver ladder to the howdah." The other elephants, each painted and stained in different fashion from its fellow, and with its own peculiar trappings, stood in line. At the word of command they knelt down and remained so, making salaam till the Prince had passed. In all probability this is the first time an elephant has done homage to the Prince.

But little children did as much homage as the elephants, at Madras, 14,000 children — Christian, Parsee, Hindoo, Mohammedan— not only met together, but feasted. Thus striking a tremendous blow at India's curse, caste prejudice. The people were so glad to see the *Prince of Wales, our Prince, their Prince*, they set the sea on fire, described as a strange and awful spectacle was the "illumination of the surf," which was witnessed by the Prince, who sat in the open air out of the reach of the spray. The sea was all ablaze, and the flights of rockets from the vessels riding at anchor presented the appearance of volcanoes emitting volumes of coloured flames.

And it is said, wherever the Prince of Wales goes the enthusiastic loyalty of all classes is unbounded, and when a town has been dropped out of the programme, owing to the prevalence of cholera, the disappointment, almost amounting to grief, has been universal. To render each visit memorable, the Indian nobles are most lavish in their expenditure. The Maharajah of Cashmere, for instance, will send £50,000 on the occasion of the Prince's sojourn of two days in Jummoo. As if this were not being sufficiently prodigal of wealth, the Maharajah of Puttiala has had a coat made to wear at the durbar of the Prince of Wales which has cost no less a sum than £150,000, being set with precious stones, and fringed about the collar and cuffs and front with large pearls. It was to honour the Prince, they painted the Elephants, set the sea on fire, and wore coats that cost £50,000 and £150,000 each. Let us pray that they may soon know the *true Prince and Saviour Jesus Christ*, and declare in the same measure to Emanuel their loyalty and love.

Your friend,

J. F. AVERY.

Halifax.

Lazy Lily's Strange Dream.

Once upon a time, a very long time ago, on the borders of a lovely forest, lived a poor widow with her only daughter. She was a very pretty. good little girl, but she had one great fault; she was most terribly idle, and cared neither to go to school nor to help her mother in her household work. This was the more unkind of Lily, as, since her father's death, her mother was obliged to work very hard to find bread for herself and child.

One bright summer's day her mother was suddenly sent for to do some needlework. Before leaving she called Lily, and begged her to do what she could to tidy the house, and make things nice and comfortable before her return. But Lily sat listless by the open door a long time after her mother left, gazing idly into the depths of the forest, and watching the pretty butterflies and birds that darted hither and thither through the waving trees. All at once she noticed a beautiful patch of yellow primroses by the side of the sparkling brook that ran through the wood.

"Ah!" thought Lily, "any time will do for my work. Mother ought not to expect me to keep in-doors this fine summer day."

So away she ran, and commenced picking primroses, and every wild flower she could find, until, quite wearied out' this disobedient child threw herself down to rest beneath the shade of a large oak tree, and there slept long and soundly. Suddenly lifting her head, Lily thought she heard a very strange noise, which seemed to come nearer and nearer, and springing to her feet, imagine her surprise and dismay on beholding all her neglected work advancing toward her! First came the bundle of fagots, and the coal-scuttle, with an old newspaper, fluttering between them; then the kettle, on three little legs, toddled, after them; then the broom, pail, flannel, duster, work-box, bustled along; and lastly, her own Sunday white stockings, that her mother had particularly requested her to mend very carefully, were now very quietly walking toward her, the great holes in the toes showing to advantage in the bright sunlight. As soon as this extraordinary assemblage of forgotten duties came up to Lily, they set up most appalling noises, shouts of unearthly triumph, till the frightened child was almost stunned by the hideous noise and clatter.

"Light us quickly!" cried fagots and coals, tumbling over each other. "Fill me from the spring!" sang the kettle, at the top of its voice. "Mend us!" roared the stockings. "Sweep, wash, scrub, and dust with us!" vociferated the broom, thundering down upon her with wild yells of delight. Not content with shouting, the broom commenced belaboring Lily so soundly, that away she started at full speed homeward, thinking the best thing she could do was to clear up the place as quickly as possibly, unless she wanted the broom to break itself across her shoulders.

Lily, like a good many little boys and girls, could work very well if she pleased; and soon the fireplace was nicely swept, the fire lighted (all the household utensils having reached home), and oddly enough, they none of them looked as though they had moved — indeed, it might all have been a dream for all I know—the floor nicely cleaned, the porch carefully swept out, and supper laid neatly on the table; while the flowers that had occasioned her such trouble, arranged in an old vase, brightened up the humble tea-service wonderfully.

Having made everything neat and nice, Lily washed and dressed herself, and sat down to darn the old and neglected stockings. She was awake enough now—but her dream had taught her a lesson.—*Little Folks.*

[Published by special request.]

Spurgeon and his Cigar.

DEAR SIR:—I address you as an Elder, who am also an elder, respecting your late public defence of the use of Tobacco. Through a London pulpit and London press, you would give the world to understand that you smoke, and will smoke and smoke to the glory of God, who ever may oppose.

Had you told us, my dear sir, that you used tobacco occasionally as an anodyne or medicine, what rational man, what man of sense would have questioned your unqualified right so to do? But when you vaultingly defend your habit as a *habit*, and tell us it is an indifferent act, a small affair and no sin,—when your challenge us to prove from the Bible that it is a sin, you arm us against your position and compel us to resist this outrage upon Christian civilization. Your voice my Brother, is potent for good or evil. It is somewhat like the "English drum beat, heard round the globe." Thousands this side of the Atlantic read your defence of this demoralizing, destructive habit, who never read your sermons. Thousands will copy your vice who will never copy your virtues.

For many years I was a victim of this baneful narcotic, hence I speak *ab imo pectore*, that which I do know, and testify that which I have seen. You assign ONE REASON for using Tobacco—your reasons amount to but one. *Were it necessary we might give forty reasons to show that a preacher of the Everlasting Gospel should be ashamed to use it.*

1st. It *tends* to make him a slave. The habit once formed and fondly indulged becomes imperious and despotic beyond description, proverbially a match for that of Alcohol or Opium. The genuine devotee will steal Tobacco, who will steal nothing else, rather than do without it, for nothing else has he such a monstrous appetite. To appease its demands, proud ships have been hailed and stayed in mid ocean, and armies have threatened to rebel from right to left if not furnished with it. "Sir," we said to a neighbor: "Do you use tobacco?" "No, Sir," was his reply. *Tobacco uses me.*" "Dear Sir, we said to a brother clergyman, do, I pray you, give up Tobacco. "Not I, not I," was his reply, "I will use it if it shortens my life seven years. It will live while I live." If this is not slavery what is slavery? It is not a sin to practice a habit which makes an abject slave?

2nd. The habit tends to paralyze the preacher's power to battle Intemperance. The alliance between Rum and Tobacco, I take it is known and read by all men. They are both deceivers—both intoxicants—twin devils as is often said, and both must be fought with pretty much the same weapons—must they not?