

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1877.

STUDIES ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL.

SUNDAY, May 27th, 1877.—The Death of Elisha.—2 Kings xiii. 14-21.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vss. 14, 20, 21.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"He being dead yet speaketh." Hebrews xi. 4.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, 2 Kings xiii. 14-21. Tuesday, 2 Kings ii. 1-14. Wednesday, vs. 16; 1 Corinthians ii. 1-16. Thursday, vs. 17; Isaiah xlii. 1-21. Friday, vs. 19; Matthew xiii. 45-58. Saturday, vs. 20; Psalm xc. Sunday, vs. 21; Mark v. 24-34.

ANALYSIS.—I. Elisha "fallen sick." Vs. 14. II. Visited by king Joash. Vs. 14. III. Predictions before his death. Vs. 15-19. IV. His death. Vs. 20. V. Miracle after it. Vs. 21.

QUESTIONS.—Where do we first hear of Elisha? What was he doing? What time was this before Christ? How long was he a servant or companion to Elijah? How long after Elijah's ascension did Elisha live? What idolatry did he live to see destroyed out of Israel? How old was he at the time of his sickness? How was Elisha's departure different from Elijah's? Why is it well we do not know when or how we shall die? Amos iv. 12; 2 Kings xx. 1.

Vs. 14. How long is it since we have heard from Elisha? Who visited him? What was the character of Joash? How do you account for Joash's exclamation?

Vs. 15. Why is Joash bidden to take "bow and arrows"? What prophecy is in this symbol?

Vs. 16. Why does Elisha put his hand on the hand of Joash? Will human effort alone save this world? 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5.

Vs. 17. Why was the arrow shot eastward? Where was Aphek situated?

Vs. 18. Why was Joash bidden to "smite the ground"? Why did Joash smite three times only? Why was Elisha "wroth"? When may Christians impoverish themselves? Matt. xiii. 58.

Vs. 20. How was Elisha buried? Why does not the Bible say so?

Vs. 21. What strange miracle occurred after his death? What miracles of kindred character have we in the New Testament?

ELISHA'S RECORD.—This lesson seems to us to be chronologically misplaced. Jonah, though born (B. C. 850) before Elisha's death, probably prophesied, as in last lesson, about B. C. 825-810. From the date of the last lesson, therefore, we must go back to B. C. 838 (see Smith's Tables, O. T. Hist., p. 590). Elisha has lived a long life. His name is first mentioned to Elijah in the cave at Horeb (1 Kings xix. 16, 17); he is first introduced to us, however, when ploughing in the fields of his native Abel-meholah. Vs. 19-21. This was about B. C. 903. Allowing that he was not at this time over twenty years of age, he must have lived eighty-five or ninety years at least, and must have been in active public life from Elijah's ascension (B. C. 896) nearly sixty. His long life began possibly at the close of the second dynasty of Israel, continued through the third, that of Omri (B. C. 925-884), and to the forty-sixth year of the fourth (B. C. 838). Baal-worship, established in Samaria when Elisha was but a child, and successfully challenged by his predecessor Elijah, but prevalent still, was utterly rooted out in Israel under Jehu long before Elisha's death. To Jehu, Elisha was a real prime minister; to his country, a champion and friend. He does not again appear till we find him on his death-bed in his own house, possibly in Shunem, not far from Jezreel. Elijah had dwelt in the desert, and from a place unfrequented, save by the wanderer's feet, ascended to heaven; but Elisha was a man among men, and among men he died.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 14.—Now Elisha, etc. He was upwards of eighty years old at his death. Joash the king of Israel, etc. This Joash is described in vs. 11 as having persistently sinned. This, however, would not make him incapable of feeling towards Elisha genuine respect on account of his prophetic office and character. Wept. No doubt in sincere grief. O my father, my father, the chariot, etc. The very words uttered so many years ago by this same Elisha, when he saw his master Elijah ascending in the chariot of fire with its horses of fire. It was clearly intended as a quotation, and to be so taken by Elisha, a recognition that Elisha had been to

Israel what Elijah had been before him—the nation's defence. How well he deserved this recognition.

Verse 15.—Take bow and arrows, etc. Evidently the prophet here speaks with reference to the foreboding to Joash, and is moved as a prophet to promise and pledge relief.

Verse 16.—Put thine hand upon the bow. The prediction is to be made vivid and impressive by symbolic representation. The king was head of the nation, the army in warring was directed by him, and its action was his, so he puts his hands on the bow. Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands. Elisha stood as the representative of God, and so his hand represented divine agency.

Verse 17.—Open the window eastward. Syria was to the north-northeast, but Aphek, the place where the contest was to be, was on the road to Damascus, the capital of Syria, on the east of the Jordan, and thus the window opened in the direction of that battle ground. Shoot. The sign and symbol of war from Israel upon Syria. The arrow of the Lord's [Jehovah's] deliverance, etc. The word translated "deliverance" is more often translated salvation (comp. vs. 5), and thus translated suggests more readily a typical reference to "the great salvation." Elisha is here explaining explicitly what perhaps Joash had surmised as the meaning of the symbolic action. The salvation is called "Jehovah's," as from him shown, by Elisha's hands laid on those of Joash. The prophet adds one point not as yet conveyed by the action, and that is that the triumph over Syria would be complete, the utter overthrow and consumption of its power. But he puts that as a promise in order that the symbolism which shall show it may be given into the hands of the king. The completeness was contingent upon the king's faith.

Verse 18.—Take the arrows. Those lying there before them. Smite upon the ground. Certainly a wrong translation, conveying a wrong idea. It was not that he should smite the ground with the bundle again and again, but rather that he should shoot one after the other of the arrows down upon the ground, and thus smite the ground as in war the enemy with the weapon used as in war. See this use of the word in connection with bow and arrow in ix. 24; 1 Kings xxii. 24. Besides, they were now in the house, probably in a chamber, and the shooting would be from the open window as before. The prophet's change of the word from "shoot" to "smite," came from his purpose now to fix attention specially upon the effect of the shooting, which would be to smite the enemy, and smite them down to the earth in death. See the citations just given. Smote thrice, and stayed. Shot three arrows only.

Verse 19.—The man of God was wroth with him. Elisha was wroth, not simply as Elisha, but as "the man of God," as in this very thing zealous and jealous for the honor of the God whose "man" he was, and whom Joash had dishonored. The king knew the meaning of the symbolism, but had not entered into the divine purpose, either lacking confidence that he could expect a complete destruction of Syria, or not having a proper abhorrence of Syria as the enemy of God's people. Thou shouldst have smitten, etc. Faithful words—no hiding of unpleasant truths from considerations of courtesy. Truth is grander than civility, and civility is grand only as inspired by truth. Hollow civility, civility whose spirit is deceit, is neither desirable nor respectable; but no man can be lacking in general civility while "speaking the truth in love." It was true kindness to the king, and hence true courtesy, to tell him plainly his fault and its consequences.

Verse 20.—Died. Elijah went home by one road, Elisha by another, but both went home, and to the same home. They buried him. Josephus says, "he had a magnificent burial," but how little it matters whether magnificent or the reverse. The bands of the Moabites, etc. The Moabites were descendants of Lot, living east of Jordan and the Dead Sea. "They had been increasing in strength ever since the revolt from Ahaziah" (2 Kings i. 1). At the coming in of the year, which with the Jews was the middle of spring, "when in Palestine the crops began to be ripe." Verse 24.—As they. Indefinite, i. e.,

some men. A band. Or rather "the band;" i. e., the band which in that year were plundering the country. Let down. Literally, "went," representing the corpse as in motion towards and to the prophet. The sepulchres or tombs were more often on a slope, and the doors opened at the side and not over the top of the tomb. So in this case. Touched the bones. Seeming to imply that the body had already decomposed, leaving the bones only. Revived, etc. No coffins were used, but the bodies were laid in the tomb with the grave clothes as their only covering. Luke vii. 15; John xi. 44. The miracle attested the prophetic character of Elisha, and especially the truth of his predictions concerning Israel's enemies. For a somewhat similar condition of miracle-working see Acts v. 15; xix. 12.—Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, June 3rd, 1877.—The Lamentation of Amos.—Amos v. 1-15.

The Story of the Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

Elisha was very sick. When king Joash heard it, he came to see him, and said, "O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." Elisha wanted to show the king what would happen to Israel when he was dead; so he said, "Take bow and arrows." Joash took bow and arrows. Then Elisha said, "Put thine hand upon the bow." Joash put his hands on the bow, and the prophet laid his own hands on the king's hands. Elisha told him to open the window that looks to the east, and then said, "Shoot." And Joash shot. Then Elisha told him that the shooting of the arrows was a sign of victories over the Syrians, and said, "Take the arrows again, and strike on the ground." Joash struck three times with the arrows, and then stopped. Elisha said if he had struck five or six times, he would have entirely conquered the Syrians; but now he should have only three victories.

Elisha died, and they buried him. About a year afterward, some people were burying a man. When they saw a band of soldiers coming, they were frightened, and let the dead body down into Elisha's tomb, to hide it. As no coffins were used, the dead man's body touched Elisha's bones; and as soon as it did so he came to life, and stood up on his feet.

Boys' Department.

My Little Gentlemen.

BY MARY D. BRINE.

There are five of them, and I presume all strangers to each other. One of them I met in the street-car one day—the ten year old boy who respectfully offered his seat to a lady whom no other occupant of the car appeared to see.

The boy looked tired, and had with him a heavy parcel which could not be trusted out of his hands. The seat had been comfortable, and he had thoroughly enjoyed it.

But this boy was too full of gentlemanly instincts, and too truly one of nature's little noblemen, to retain his seat while a lady was standing. And, by the by, had you seen how poorly she was dressed, and noticed the shabby purse from which she took her fare, you would have thought her only a poor woman, a seamstress, may be. Perhaps she was, I only called her a lady because she did as ladies usually do—accepted the seat with a smile and a "thank you, my boy"; which must have made my little gentleman well content to have yielded his place, and happy notwithstanding the fact that his small feet had only the ghosts of shoes upon them, and his jacket was a coat of many colors, where loving mother-hands had patched it.

Another of my little gentlemen I saw in the street soon after. He was dressed in the style of the season, and looked—the little aristocrat that he was. Several of his stylish little companions were with him, and they were having a grand sledding time as I approached. A beggar woman just then turned into the area of one of the handsome houses. I don't know whether she received help or no. But as she turned to come out, a second after, her foot slipped, and basket and all, she fell flat, amongst the

merry and wild boys. They laughed, as what boys would not? But my little gentleman—the best dressed of the group—checked his laugh, and kindly assisted the forlorn woman to her feet. Then he lifted the basket and with his daintily gloved hand gathered the cold pieces together until the basket was filled; and with a polite bow he handed it to the woman who stood grateful and speechless before him. When I passed a minute after I could not resist saying, "Your mother has a noble son, my boy!" And he answered confusedly, "O, that's nothing!" But it was something, my young friends, was it not, in the eyes of those waiting angels who carry our good deeds to the Great Throne above?

My third little gentleman I found also in a street-car. I had an armful of packages and sank wearily into the seat, two ladies rather unwillingly made room for me between them. Standing in front of me was a little fellow about twelve years of age. Poor and very scantily clothed he was, but I noticed his face and hands were clean, and his eyes had an honest straight-forward look that one likes to see.

Other passengers shoved him here and there, but he patiently clung to his strap and allowed others to swag him about as they liked. I had some difficulty in getting my fare out because of the bundles, but presently a low and rather timid voice said, "Please ma'am, I'll hold yer bundles if yer likes," and my gentleman took them from me as I thanked him. The passengers about him looked pleased at such an unlooked-for act of politeness on the part of the ragged boy, and he looked confused. But I shall never forget the little thankful act of this little gentleman of mine, and have no fear for the future of a boy whose heart is so noble.

The fourth of my class of noblemen was only a newspaper boy, quite unconscious of the title I soon gave him.

A blind man with his cane and the brushes he was trying to sell, came feebly along the street, hesitating now and then as the blind must, uncertain as to what might be before him.

Down the street came a crowd of newsboys, just from the offices of the different papers, and screaming at the top of their lungs. One of them—a bright-eyed little fellow—only nine years of age, I judged, noticed the blind man. "Hold on, feller!" he cried, "don't run agin that old cove now. What's the use of hurting him when he's blind and can't look out fur hisself?" I paused to watch the result. The other boys checked their speed a little and then hurried on, crying, "Oh, bother!" So my little gentleman stood beside the blind man until the crowd had passed and then silently withdrew. The old man, little dreaming of the youthful protector who had shielded him, moved silently on, and I opened my heart to take in another whose small head was already laurel-crowned in my opinion.

The fifth little gentleman was one of the better class of boys, that is, so far as station goes. He was passing along the street whistling and jingling a pocket-full of marbles. He seemed in haste—probably hurrying to join a comrade at their favourite game—but a little girl, thinly clad and bitterly crying, was crouching beside a cellar grating and peering down into the darkness below—I had just left the editor's office and stood a few minutes to wait for a car. The girl's sobbing attracted my attention and I turned to watch proceedings. "Hallo! what's up?" asked the boy, pausing.

"I dropped my pennies down there, and—oh—mother! she beat me sure when I go home, oh, dear!" "Never you mind sis," said the boy. "I haven't much time, but I'll see if I can find them for you. Wait here." Then he entered the store and asked permission to go down into the cellar. Leave granted, he searched for the pennies until they were found, and returned to the weeping girl. Her tearful smile was pleasant to see, and though she hadn't time to say "thank you," so speedily did the little boy run off, yet it was in her heart, no doubt, and I had one more to add to my adopted family of "Little Gentlemen."

Little gentlemen make big ones we know, and fine clothes are by no means necessary to prove the fact. Only an accident of birth makes the difference between a nobleman and a noble man, and the first, perhaps, may hold his nobleness only in his title, while the latter receives from the hands of his Maker the title which makes him one of the Great Court above. —From Wide Awake for May.

Select Serial.

From The Day of Rest. DORA'S BOY.

BY MRS. ELLEN ROSS.

CHAP. XVIII.—DORA'S SMALL LEGACY.

In a very leisurely way Moses turned to the heap of things which lay on a chair; and in the most careful and precise manner, proceeded to fold up each article, now and then glancing at Hughie with a smile which was meant to be winning. Matthew stood, with his hands resting heavily on the counter, watching him in imperturbable and patient silence.

"A handsome boy, that!" remarked Moses, smiling at Hughie.

"Humph!" responded Matthew.

"I was not aware that you had a son, Mr. Pedder," said Moses.

"Nor I," said Matthew, without moving.

"Oh! I make a mistake, then," said the Jew, nodding deprecatingly. "He is, perhaps, your grandson—your nephew, I mean?"

"No," replied Matthew, placidly.

"Ah! then you take much interest in him for a friend. But perhaps somebody makes it worth your while?" said Moses, with an insinuating smile.

"You think so, eh?" remarked Matthew.

"Most certainly; else you would not throw cash down so readily for him. You have bought him good clothes; you have paid freely what I ask," said Moses, gesticulating with his jewelled hands as he spoke.

But Matthew was impervious to his flattering words and manner, and merely remarked, ironically, "That's only what you'd do for a stranger, eh, Mr. Moses?" "Oh, no! it is not in human nature, that sort of thing," replied Moses, slowly shaking his head. "It is clear to my mind, Mr. Pedder, either that this beautiful boy is a relation of yours, or else that you are well paid to keep him. But I forgot! perhaps he is only on a short visit?"

"Now why didn't ye think of that at first?" said Matthew, putting his head on one side and smiling at Moses in a manner that irritated him sorely.

"Ah, well, you are very kind; if everybody was so kind to their visitors it would be better for trade," said Moses, satirically.

"I know jest how much of that you believe now, Moses!"

"Of what?" asked Moses, innocently opening his eyes.

"Of your talk about my kindness," said Matthew, smiling.

"Ah well, you and me know the world, Mr. Pedder," said the Jew, with a significant nod. "It's the best policy to be kind sometimes, as for instance, when there's the vision of a legacy in the future as a reward. It's no doubt so in this case? The boy looks as if he belonged to somebody."

"I s'pose most boys do," said Matthew, drily. "Well, Mr. Moses, time will tell ye all you want to know, I desay, if ye'll only have a bit o' patience. It'll very likely be the case that this won't be the last time you'll see this little chap, though it's the first. And I'd be 'bliged to ye if you'll send up a cap or two to try on him: I forgot that this mornin', when I gave my order. I think he'd look well in a Scotch un, with a spicy silver thistle at the side, and them streamer tails at the back, ye know."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Moses, with a series of nods, as he tied up his parcel. "I will send them at once, Mr. Pedder."

He felt much annoyed that he had failed to gain the coveted information about Hughie; but he was determined to make the most of the little he had seen, having been favoured above his neighbours so far as to be admitted into Matthew Pedder's shop, and see the boy for whom the suit had been ordered.

When he had left, Matthew turned to Hughie and said, "There now, my lad, I want ye to learn a lesson from that, to keep yer bisniss to yerself. When 'quixitive folks axes ye questions as they've no right to, jest keep puttin' 'em off the track, or else tell 'em downright to mind their own bisniss, and you'll mind yourn. This is a queerish neighbourhood as you've come to live in, and when they sees ye stoppin' on with me week after week, it'll set a hundred tongues waggin', and they'll