

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1877.

STUDIES ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL.

SUNDAY, February 4th, 1877.—Elijah and Ahab.—1 Kings xviii. 5-18.

COMMIT TO MEMORY. Vs. 15-18.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? The Lord shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones."—Josh. vii. 25.

CONNECTION.—While at the house of the widow of Zarephath, towards the close of his stay, Elijah raised to life her only son, supposed by some to be the prophet Jonah. The results of this miracle were at least these two: (a) It convinced the mother (so she said) that Elijah was a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in his mouth was God's truth; and (b) It gave Elijah a fresh experience, by no means out of place at that time, that God hears prayer, and that he might depend on other answers in his time of need. "After many days," probably refers to the duration of Elijah's sojourn at Zarephath; "In the third year" refers to the drought. The New Testament says the drought in Elijah's days continued for three years and six months.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 6.—Obadiah, governor of his house. That is, chief steward. His name means "servant of Jehovah." Ahab could hardly be ignorant of Obadiah's faithfulness to Jehovah; he was no time-server, but a decided Israelite. Go into all fountains and brooks. In a common Syrian summer, the country is all parched up except in the vicinity of springs of water. A poor fellow, with a basket of palmyra leaves on his back and a kind of hoe in his hand, strolls from fountain to brook, and no sooner does he see a green patch of verdure than he runs eagerly to the spot. To save the horses. He has no higher object than to save his stud,—his mules and horses! let them be saved; let fountains and brooks and patches of verdure be diligently sought for them, but let the people be left to their miserable fate!

Verse 6.—Ahab went one way, Obadiah another. This journey of the king in person in search of herbage is a somewhat remarkable example of the simple manners of those ancient times. It is the same among the emirs of Arabia, the chiefs of Central Asia, and the kings of Southern Africa at the present time. By himself. Not unaccompanied by a retinue, but each apart from the other.

Verse 7.—As Obadiah was in the way. Obadiah went westward from Jezreel to the marshy grounds near Carmel, at the bottom of Esdraelon, and there Elijah met him. My lord Elijah. A solitary and venerable personage, girded as a traveller and covered with a mantle, whom he immediately recognizes by his dress and appearance as Elijah, and prostrates himself in profound respect before him. "Art thou that my lord Elijah?" he asks. Is it possible?

Verse 8.—Tell thy lord. Elijah, in answer, transfers the title of honor to Ahab. "Call him thy lord, not me."

Verse 9.—What have I sinned? What sin had he committed that should cause the Lord to lead him into this fatal trouble? Ahab to slay me. He fears that if he goes and returns with the king, Elijah will in the mean time have disappeared.

Verse 10.—There is no nation or kingdom. This can scarcely have applied to such countries as Egypt or Syria; but Ahab may have been powerful enough to exact an oath from the neighboring Hittite, Moabite, and Edomite tribes; perhaps even from Ethbaal, his father-in-law, and the kings of Hamath and Arpad.

Verse 12.—The Spirit shall carry thee. This apprehension of Obadiah might have been formed from the circumstance that Elijah, after he had announced the approaching drought to Ahab, disappeared, and notwithstanding all searches for him by the king, was nowhere to be found.

Verse 13.—Jezebel slew the prophets of the Lord. We have no details of this deed of blood, nor do we know even the time when it was accomplished. Some have conjectured that it was the answer of Jezebel to Elijah's threat

(Ch. xvii. 1), and that the command given him to hide in Cherith alone saved him from being one of the victims. Prophets of the Lord. Probably "sons of the prophets," or those under training in the schools of the prophets. An hundred prophets. Not men endowed with the extraordinary gifts of the prophetic office, but who were devoted to the service of God, preaching, praying, praising, etc. (1 Sam. x. 10-12.—Fed them with bread and water. These articles are often used to include sustenance of any kind. As this succor must have been given them at the hazard, not only of his place, but his life, it was a strong proof of his attachment to the true religion. By fifty. Fifty in each cave. Cave. The limestone formation of Judea and Samaria abounds with large, natural caverns, the size of which is easily increased by art. These caverns were perhaps in Mount Carmel, which is full of clefts and grottoes.

Verse 15.—I will surely show myself to-day. The reply of Elijah convinced him that he fully intended to meet the king.

Verse 16.—And Ahab went to meet Elijah. He quickly obeyed the summons.

Verse 17.—Art thou he that troubleth Israel? It has been the lot of the best and most useful men to be called and counted the troublers of the land. Even Christ and his apostles were thus misrepresented. Ahab charged Elijah with being to Israel a second Achan.

Verse 18.—I have not troubled Israel. This stern rebuke led the poor king to feel that he had his master before him. He quailed before him. Ye have forsaken the commandments. What was the special sin which Elijah here holds up to view as the chief cause of the whole calamity? Is it the intemperance or the covetousness, or the frivolity, or the unchaste life of Ahab, and of his father's house? No; it is their departure from God's word and statutes.

SUNDAY, February 11th, 1877.—Elijah and the Prophets of Baal.—1 Kings xviii. 19-29.

Bonths' Department.

A beautiful Incident.

A CHILD'S LETTER TO SANTA CLAUS.

The Chicago Tribune tells so beautiful a little story of what occurred the week before Christmas in that city, that we must put it where our readers will see it:

On Saturday one of the mail-sorters in the Post-Office found a letter addressed to "Santa Claus." As that mythical personage has no local habitation within reach of the carrier, the officials opened the envelope and read the contents. The letter was written by a little girl named Amy McKenzie, living with her parents at No. 58 Emerald street, and in it she made a touching appeal to Santa not to forget her or her folks. Her little brother wants a new pair of shoes; father would like a new hat; mother would be pleased with a new dress; and the little writer adds: "Now, dear Santa Claus, if you have just one little doll left, please bring it around to me, and I'll promise to be a good little girl all next year."

The touching pathos of the missive and the simple faith of the little girl made a deep impression upon the officials, and after a brief consultation, it was decided that the little one should have a satisfactory Christmas. Postmaster McArthur and one of his clerks drove to the residence, and found that the statements of the little girl were correct. On their return down-town they drove around to several business acquaintances, and it is needless to say that they in a very short time collected enough to more than satisfy the longings of the little petitioner. A pair of shoes was got for the little brother, and two or three pairs more for other members of the family; the father's and mother's wants were supplied, and a handsome doll was secured for Amy. A purse of \$25 was made up and sent along with the other gifts; and in no household in Chicago was there a happier Christmas than that in the little cottage on the obscure street whose guardian angel is Amy McKenzie.

"Ma, go down on your hands and knees a minute, please." "What on earth shall I do that for, pet?" "Cause I want to draw an elephant."

Select Serial.

"Fred and Maria, and Me."

A STORY OF NEW ENGLAND BAPTIST LIFE.

CHAPTER 6.

We had an early spring, and Fred said the doctor told him I'd better not stay in New York till warm weather came. So I wrote to Sam Avery and told him I was a coming home in May, and I thought I ought to tell him how I had gone contrary to his advice and signed away all I'd ever lent Fred, and made him a life member of the Bible Society and others. And I asked him not to feel hard to me, and to see that the Widow Dean had my room ready against I got back. Maria was stiller than ever, and hardly ever talked at all, and Fred looked full of care, and yet more as he used to when he was a boy. And we parted kindly, and Maria as good as said she was sorry to have me go, only it was time to take the children out of town. Fanny, she said she was a going with me, and she got a little trunk and put her things in it, and was as busy as a bee folding and packing. And when I saw her heart so set upon it, I felt a pang I never felt before, to think I hadn't got no home to take her to, and how it wouldn't do to venture her on the Widow Dean, who couldn't abide children. Well! her pa had to carry her off by main force when the carriage came, and I had a dull journey home, for I didn't seem to have no home, only the name of one. For I never took to boardin'.

It was past five o'clock when I got to Goshen post-office, and thinks I, Sam Avery won't be upbraiding me to-night for it's quite a piece from his house over to the widow's. But who should I see a waiting at the depot but Sam and his chaise. "How d'yed, Aunt Avery? Glad to see you home again," says he; "jump right into the chaise and I'll get your trunk. Amanda, she's waiting tea for you, and I rather think you'll find it bilin' hot," says he.

"But I was a going to the Widow Dean's," says I.

"Don't talk of Widow Dean's to me," says Sam, "but you just get into that chaise o' mine and go where you're took to, Aunt Avery."

And how nice and clean and shiny Amanda's house did look, to be sure! And how she kissed me and said over and over 'twas good to get me home again. And how that tea did build me up, and make me feel young and spry as I used to feel in old times.

Well, after tea, I put on an apron she lent me, we washed up and cleared away, and Sam, he read a chapter and we had prayers, and I went to bed, and I never knew nothing after I laid my head on the pillow, but slept all night like a little baby.

At breakfast I expected Sam would begin about Fred, but he didn't, and we two, we washed up the dishes and swept the floors and made the beds, and Amanda she let me do jest as I was a mind to, and it didn't seem like boardin' at all. And after a while I left off expecting Sam to hector me about Fred, and got to feeling easy in my mind. And we had the minister to tea, and his wife and children, and you never saw nobody so pleased as they was at their things. For of course I wasn't going to New York without getting a black silk gown for my minister's wife, and a doll for little Rebecca, and wooden cats and dogs for the rest of 'em. Sam Avery he was a going and a coming more'n common this spring, and he says to me one day, "Aunt Avery, don't you go to looking at the old place when you're wanderin' out. You see Squire Jackson's been a cutting and a hacking, and there's a good deal going on there, and it might rile your feelings to see the mews," says he.

So I didn't go near the old place, and I didn't want to, and the time it slipped by and I got to feeling that nothing aggravating hadn't never happened to me. Folks came for Aunt Avery when they was sick jest as they used to, and the minister he dropped in every now and then, and Deacon More he had over plenty of them rough sayings of his that didn't mean nothing but good-will, and so I felt quite at home. There wasn't but one thing a stingin' of me, and that was Fred and his ways, and Maria and her ways. And I kind o' yearned after them children, and couldn't help a thinkin' if I hadn't been and sold the

old place, ther'd always been a home for them in the summer time, and a plenty of new milk and fresh eggs.

Well! it got to be well off into July, and one afternoon, Sam Avery he come in, and says he, "Aunt Avery, you put on your bonnet and get into the chaise and go right down to the old place. There's somebody down there wants looking after," says he.

"Dear me, is any of 'em sick?" says I. And I put on my things, and Sam whipped up the old horse, and next news we was driving up to the house. Things didn't look so changed after all. Them trees was gone, there's no denyin' of it, but there wasn't nothing else gone, and when I went in there wasn't none o' old Squire Jackson's red and yellow carpets on the floors nor none o' his things a laying about. But there was my little light-stand a setting in the corner, and my old Bible on it with the spectacles handy by jest as they used to be, and our cat she come a rubbing of herself against me, as much as to say, "Glad to see you back, Aunt Avery," and them two little children, they come running up, and one kissed me and the other hugged me, and 'twas Fanny and Matildy, and then Fred Avery, he walks up, and says he, "Welcome home, Aunt Avery!" and Maria she takes both o' my old hands and a squeeze of 'em up to her heart, and then says she, "Here's our new baby come to see you, and her name's Aunt Avery," says she, and she put it into my arms and twasn't bigger than a kitten, but it had a little mite of a smile a shinin' on its face all ready a waitin' for me. By this time I was a most beat out, but they set me down in my old chair, and them children they was round me, and Fred a smiling, and Maria a smiling, and Sam Avery a shakin' hands with everybody, and I didn't pretend to make nothing out o' nobody, for I knew it wasn't nothing real, only something I was reading out of a book. Only that 'ere little baby that was named Aunt Avery, it held tight hold o' one o' my fingers with its tiny little pink-hand, and that wasn't nothing you could read out of a book no how. And then Amanda she opened the door into the big kitchen and there was a great long table set out with my best china and things, and our minister and his wife and all them children, and Deacon Morse and the Widow Dean, they'd come to tea. And the minister he stood up, and says he, "Let us pray." And in his prayer he told all about it, though I guess the Lord knew before, how Maria had made Fred sell that big house of his, and how he'd bought me back the old place, and how we was all come to tea, and a good many other things I couldn't rightly hear for the crying and the sobbing that was a going on all round. And then we had tea, and I never thought when Amanda made me fry all them dough-nuts and stir up such a sight o' cake what 'twas all a coming to, for it's my opinion that nobody knows when they does a thing, what's a going to come next, though the Lord He knows all along.

Well, it begun to grow dark, and one after another they all come and bid me good night, till at last everybody was gone but me and Maria and them children of hers. And Maria came up to me, and says she, "Does the old place look pleasant, Aunt Avery?" but I couldn't answer her for them tears that kept a choking me. And so she said if I didn't mind, and it wouldn't be too much trouble, she wanted to stay with me the rest of the summer, till Fred could get a new, and honest home for her somewhere else. Wasn't that just like an angel now, after all the trouble I'd been and made for her, a settin' her against her husband, and a turnin' of her out of her beautiful house and home, and a making her buy back for me my old place? So she and me we undressed them children, and made them kneel down and say their prayers, and we put them to bed upstairs, and I began to feel at home.

And Maria she stayed till cold weather came, and she sat and read my old Bible, and talked to them children about the place Gustavus had traveled to, and she paid respect to our minister, and wiped up the china when I washed it, and fitted her ways to my ways quite meek and quiet-like. An Fred paid back every cent he'd borrowed, for he'd kept account, and knew all about it, and he started fair and square in the world again, owing nothing to nobody. So now I've a home for him and Maria and the children, and the old house is full of Avers once more, and so is the old pew, and all the taxes paid up regular.

So you are a rich man now, Fred, and you're a rich woman, Maria, for you've got a child up in heaven!

THE END

What her feet said.

An old colored Christian woman on the Island of St. Croix, in the West Indies, once said:

"This morning, my feet said to me, 'You had better not go to church; you are too weak, and might fall down on the road.' Then I answered, 'I will listen to the Lord, and not to you. He says: "Go, and I will strengthen you." You feet, when I was young, often took me in the ways of sin; but now I must have my way.' So I went to church, received a blessing for my soul, and returned safely."

Are your feet always ready to take you to church?—Little Missionary.

A word to Pilgrims.

Man hath but a short time to live. Whilst below there is no abiding city, Time to every man is measured. Everything moves forward; there is no release, willingly or unwillingly; time moves on and leaves his record on our book of life, scoring out as he goes the hours, days, months and years; showing no respect to persons, and making it apparent to others, if not to ourselves, that our journey and opportunities grow less each passing year. A year! How short the space of time thus measured! how soon it is gone! The rolling years seem to gather brevity as we watch their onward progress. How quickly the units of our life are passed. It requires but little stretch of memory to recall when we altered the figure 1860 to 1870, and now how easily we place in line another 7, and scarcely think much of our pilgrimage is thereby declared to be passed and gone forever. Let us take Moses' measuringline and for a moment calculate what is passed. In the Book of Calculus, Psa. xc. 10, we read (margin) "As for the days of our years, in them are 70 years." Here then we learn that one day in man's short week of time is gone, and few there are who reach the silvered sabbath of seventy; the pilgrims, as a rule, drop out of line long ere the tale is thus far told. Take, then, the old man's counsel, and in his words present the prayer, "Lord thou hast been our dwelling-place in generation and generation. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God. So teach us to number our days that we may cause our hearts to come to wisdom," ere wisdom comes to separate the wise and foolish. Let us give heed to our buying and selling during the new year, 1877, that our lamps may be trimmed, and oil ready to quicken and revive the flame when the cry is raised, "Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him."

Is some one saying, "Pilgrim to Zion, tell us what you hope for, in that far off, better land?"

We reply, "Spotless robes and crowns of glory, from a Saviour's loving hand." Hark! all the host takes up the glad refrain:—

"We shall drink of life's clear water, We shall dwell with God for ever, We shall dwell with God for ever, In that bright, that better land."

Does this chorus stir strange feeling in your hearts, and rouse the question? "Pilgrims, may we travel with you To that bright and better land?"

Then gladly in our Master's name we say:

"Come and welcome, come and welcome, Welcome to our pilgrim band."

Oh! prodigal child, do not hesitate, many returning pilgrims encourage you to join them. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come." And the invited swell the chorus:—

"Come, oh! come, and do not leave us, Christ is waiting to receive us, Christ is waiting to receive us, In that bright, that better land."

J. F. A.

*Margin—verse 1. †Verse 12.

Rev. Hugh Stowell Brown has been lecturing on "Christianity and Common Sense." Common sense and Christianity, he argued, were perfectly reconcilable, although he admitted there were many things in Christianity which common sense could not explain. He attributed the belief many people had in Christianity and common sense being at variance to the fact of people taking their ideas of Christianity from creeds, and doctrines, and churches instead of from Christ and the New Testament.