

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1877.

SUNDAY, December 23rd, 1877.—Paul's last words.—2 Tim. iv. 1-8.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vss. 5-8.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."—2 Tim. iv. 7.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, 2 Timothy i. Tuesday, 2 Timothy ii. Wednesday, 2 Timothy iii. Thursday, 2 Timothy iv. Friday, vs. 3; 1 Timothy iv. Saturday, Hebrews xi. Sunday, Hebrews xii.

ANALYSIS.—I. Paul's last charge to Timothy. Vss. 4, 5. II. Paul in prospect of martyrdom. Vss. 6-8.

QUESTIONS.—How long was Paul imprisoned at Rome at first? What Epistles did he write in these two years? How was he killed? By whose imperial order? Ans. Nero, who reigned A. D. 54-68. Just before his death, what Epistles did Paul write?

Vs. 1. Where was Timothy now? By what solemn events does he urge Timothy to fidelity? What is meant by Christ's appearing?

Vs. 2. Why is the living voice the best vehicle of Christian truth? Is the preacher to be negative or positive in his utterances?

Vs. 3. Why is "sound doctrine" opposed by this world? What kind of preaching does the world best like? Have church members privileges of truancy that their pastors have not?

Vs. 4. When men turn from the truth what do they not most readily accept?

Vs. 5. Explain the four counsels in this verse.

Vs. 6. Upon what does Paul now look as already present?

Vs. 7. What one thing does he say he has kept?

Vs. 8. What does Paul see in store for him? What does he mean by the "crown of righteousness"? What should be the attitude of all concerning Christ's appearing? Matt. xxiv. 42; 2 Thess. iii. 5.

PAUL'S FIRST IMPRISONMENT AND RELEASE.—(A. D. 62-64.) Luke gives us a definite statement of the duration of Paul's residence in Rome, "in his own hired house" (Acts xxviii. 30), "with the evident implication that, at the end of this time, his condition changed. Paul had unusual freedom during these two years, though he continued to be guarded by a Roman soldier. Phil. i. 13, 16. The interruption of his personal intercourse with the churches caused the apostle to address them by letter, and thus the restraint on his liberty proved the means of opening to him a sphere of activity which has given him access to all nations, and made him the contemporary of every age."—Hackett. During this first captivity, he wrote his Epistles to the Ephesians, the Colossians, the Philippians, and to Philemon. The quite uniform opinion of scholars is that, under his appeal to Nero (A. D. 64), he was acquitted, and that, casting aside his chains, he went forth again to preach the gospel." See Phil. i. 22; ii. 23, 24; Philemon 22. After his release and journey to Asia Minor, and possibly to Spain, he doubtless returned to Asia Minor and to Macedonia, and there wrote his First Epistle to Timothy, and his Epistle to Titus.

PAUL'S SECOND IMPRISONMENT AND MARTYRDOM.—After three or four years of successful missionary labor in the East, to which Paul had returned, he was doubtless apprehended again as a leader of the Christian sect; was brought a second time as a prisoner of Christ to Rome; was tried there, and condemned to death. "His Roman citizenship exempted him from the ignominy of crucifixion; hence, according to the universal tradition, he was beheaded by the axe of the lictor, or executioner. The same testimony places his martyrdom in the year A. D. 68, the last year of Nero's reign." It was while daily expecting this event that he wrote the last of his Epistles, the Second to Timothy. Thus the time of Paul's first and second imprisonments was clear gain to the Christian Church. "As the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' which Bunyan wrote in Bedford Jail, is now the world's book, so Paul's Epistles, written while a prisoner at Rome, are now read in all parts of the earth."—Dr. Hague. Thus is the wrath of man made to praise God.

EXPOSITION.—In the second imprisonment, Paul was treated less leniently than in his first. Nero acted with less

moderation in the last part of his reign than in the first. In particular, soon after Paul's release, he had let loose his fury upon the Christians of Rome, on a charge of burning the city, made to turn the public wrath away from himself, the real author of the crime. Paul had not, in his second imprisonment, the favorable friendly intercession of Roman officers to shield him; and so perilous was his situation, that even his Christian companions dared not remain with him, especially when he was first brought to trial. See 2 Tim. iv. 10, 11, 16; ii. 9; i. 16. This last verse is explained by the fact that the different counts of a charge were tried separately, at different times; and does not refer to the trial on the charge that first took him to Rome.

While of Paul's companions, only Luke was with him at the time of writing the second letter to Timothy (iv. 11), he had communication with the Christians at Rome, though perhaps, for prudential reasons, only through Luke. Timothy is evidently still on his field of labor, which was Ephesus and its vicinity. The apostle has not, as in his first imprisonment, any expectation of release; but, on the contrary, a full assurance that he will be put to death.

Our lesson consists of a two-fold charge to Timothy, and the reasons enforcing it.

Part I.—Verses 1-4.—Verse 1.—I charge thee, therefore. Meaning to call earnestly to witness. Before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ. In their presence, as witnesses of the transaction. To Paul, the presence of Christ was something more than a fancy, or a rhetorical figure, as vs. 17 shows. God's presence was manifested in and through Christ's presence; for Christ is Mediator, and God was and is in him. Who shall [is to] judge the quick and the dead. Man's relation to Christ determines his eternal destiny. The "quick," that is, the living, are here those who shall be alive at "the second coming" of Christ, and the "dead," those having died before that coming. See 1 Cor. xv. 51-53; 1 Thess. iv. 13-18. The final judgment is thus represented as taking place in connection with the second coming of Christ. Rom. ii. 5-11. At his appearing and his kingdom. "Appearing" i. 10; 2 Thess. ii. 8, and elsewhere. Christ will be recognized as Lord by the whole universe, whether willingly or unwillingly. Rom. xiv. 11.

Verse 2.—Preach the word. Publicly proclaim—the gospel: the first, and most distinguishing work of an evangelist. Vs. 5. Be instant in season, out of season. Use earnestly all opportunities, for Christ, whether opportune or inopportune, convenient or inconvenient, for yourself. See vs. 3. Reproce [convince], rebuke, exhort. Forms in all of which Timothy must be "instant." In all long-suffering and doctrine [instruction]. Unfailing kindness unerring guidance.

Verses 3, 4.—For the time will come, etc. Literally, For there will be a time, etc. Hence the need of using the present time; the existing opportunity. Compare John ix. 4. "Sound doctrine" is health-giving doctrine. Correctly, Scripture regards truth as food to be eaten and digested—thus building up a healthful spiritual life. After their own lusts, etc. Self-pleasure in contrast with that of God's pleasure. The words "heap up" imply that they would flit from doctrine to doctrine, and so from teacher to teacher, seeking the novel rather than the true. The "itching ears" indicate a desire of hearing for momentary gratification, as distinguished from a hunger for solid food. And they shall [will] turn, etc. Pleased to hear, "Fables," or the myths—words of human invention, instead of the word of God's revelation and life.

Part II.—Verses 5-8.—Verse 5.—Watch. In opposition to the condition of spiritual sleep. Endure afflictions. That is, for the gospel, as Paul was even then doing. i. 8; ii. 3, 9. The times were evil, and would bring such afflictions. Do the work of an evangelist, "an itinerant missionary." Timothy had the general oversight of the churches in an extensive region. See the First Epistle. Make full proof, etc. Leaving no duty undone from either fear or favor.

Verses 6, 7.—Paul had done what he commends. For I am now ready to be offered. Rather, For I am even now being poured out as a drink-offering.

Compare Phil. ii. 17, written in his first imprisonment. Num. xv. 1-10, Paul's death was so imminent as to seem to him a present reality. Departure. As of a ship about to sail to another land—weighing anchor. Phil. i. 23. I have fought a [the] good fight. Not the fight of war and battle, but the contest of the gymnast, in wrestling, boxing, etc. 1 Cor. ix. 24-27; 1 Tim. vi. 12. My course. The course, or race, as in Acts xx. 24; Phil. iii. 12-14. Kept the faith. Proved true to his commission in preaching the gospel of faith.

Verse 8.—Now Paul fixes his eye on the eternal world, into which he is about to enter. A crown of righteousness. Not given in the way of justice, as a debt due, but as consisting of God's completed righteousness, in opposition to a laurel crown. Rev. vi. 11; vii. 9, 13, 14. Which the Lord, etc. "The righteous judge," in contrast to the unjust human judge. Most think he refers to the judge who is soon to condemn him to die. And not to me only, etc. All who run and hold out win; not merely the foremost runner. 1 Cor. ix. 24. Here, then, was encouragement for Timothy, as there is for us.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, December 30th, 1877.—Review.

The Story of the Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

While Paul was in prison in Rome, the second time, just before his death, he wrote this, his second letter, to his dearly-loved Timothy. We think it was the last letter the aged apostle ever wrote. Timothy was now pastor of the Church of Ephesus, where Paul himself had preached three whole years. Paul's heart longed after both pastor and people, and he wrote to Timothy some earnest words about his solemn duties as a minister. Paul was shut up in a damp, dark dungeon, expecting to be led out only to die. Though he had been used to having loving friends around him, he is now, in his time of trouble, left almost alone in that great and wicked city; for only Luke is with him. He had the great sorrow of seeing Demas, who had professed to love him dearly, forsake not him only, but Jesus also; yet, in the midst of all this suffering, his words are a grand, triumphant shout of victory: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day."

Select Serial.

From The Day of Rest.
DORA'S BOY.

BY MRS. ELLEN ROSS.

CHAP. LI.—A BOLD STAND FOR CONSCIENCE.

Upon her arrival at Colton Hall Lisa was met by the old housekeeper, who had resided there for years, she having been in the former Mr. Barnet's service. She received her kindly, being much struck by the open pleasant face and hearty, natural manner of the new lady's maid, who seemed a great improvement upon some of the haughty demoiselles who had previously filled the post.

"It's a warm afternoon, and you look dusty and tired," said the kind old housekeeper. "Come and take a cup of tea in my room before you go upstairs to your own."

Lisa gladly accepted the offer, and turned into a sunny little room, where they sat down to chat till tea was ready. Presently Lisa ventured to ask a question or two about the grand people she had come to live with; and when, in a passing remark, Mrs. Eldred alluded to the fact of their being the Barnets of brewery fame, Lisa flushed up as if somebody had struck her a blow, and rising in agitation from her seat, she exclaimed quietly, "Oh, I cannot come to this place, ma'am, I dare not! Please take me at once to Mrs. Barnet that I may thank her for her kindness, and tell her so. Oh, I would not touch bread in this house,—there's a curse on it! Pray, excuse me for saying so," she added, with tears in her eyes, seeing that the housekeeper looked displeased.

"Don't think me ungrateful for your kindness in wishing me to take tea with

you. But oh, I couldn't: it would choke me! Oh, you don't know what I have suffered through drink! But I won't say any more to vex you, if you will please take me straight to Mrs. Barnet. It is to her I should say this, of course, not to you. Pray, excuse me, and let me go at once."

Mrs. Eldred did not reply, but by leaving the room for a moment. When she returned she said, not unkindly, "Sit down again a minute, child."

Lisa did so, and nervously put on her gloves, which she had but just taken off. Her face glowed with excitement, and her dark eyes flashed like diamonds, when she raised them to look at a footman who entered in a minute or two to say that Mrs. Barnet would see her maid. With a graceful bow Lisa wished the housekeeper good-bye and followed the footman upstairs, where he ushered her into a charming room, which seemed to her to be all white and blue and gold, as she glanced round for a moment upon entering. This was Mrs. Barnet's boudoir, and she formed a striking picture in it as she reclined in one of the blue and gold easy chairs, dressed in rich black silk, the ample folds of which lay about her feet on the soft, moss like carpet; a profusion of costly lace was about her neck and wrists, and she displayed far more jewellery than a refined taste would have permitted.

As Lisa entered, Mrs. Barnet did not rise from her regumbent position, but merely remarked, "So you have safely arrived, Maurice?"

Lisa had made a slight obeisance, and in a low voice said, "Good afternoon, madame;" but this was not noticed by Mrs. Barnet.

"Yes, madame," answered Lisa, to Mrs. Barnet's words. She had got into the habit of addressing ladies thus since she had been with Madame Michaud. "But," she added, hesitatingly, while the colour mounted to her temples, and her eyes grew dark and glittering, "I am sorry to say, madame, that I cannot stay with you. I did not know before I came here—Miss Marner had not told me—that you—you—Lisa hesitated a moment, and Mrs. Barnet sat upright in her chair, and with a frown on her face waited for her to go on. "Pray excuse me, madame, if I say anything which you think rude and ungrateful, or anything to wound your feelings," Lisa went on, impetuously, and unconsciously clasping her hands as she spoke, "but indeed, madame, I must say what I have to."

"Pray proceed quickly about it, Maurice," said Mrs. Barnet, with haughty impatience. "All this is very enigmatical to me."

"I am sure it must be, madame; and fear you will not understand the feelings which prompt me to speak and act like this. But I must tell you, however much I shrink from the task, that since Mr. Barnet is the rich brewer, whose name I have so often seen about London public-houses, I could not, oh, I could not enter your service, madame!"

Mrs. Barnet turned white with passion. "You—you!" she exclaimed in a quivering voice, "you venture—dare to look down upon me! Do you think that I don't know all about you, though you may now put on airs and graces! Do you think I don't know that you are no better than a pauper at this moment, and that you were once a miserable street-beggar, sweeping crossings, and living on the verge of starvation? Dear me! who are you to look down on a lady in my position?"

Mrs. Barnet's cold eyes glittered like steel, as she drew herself up with a jerk, and dashed her hand into the rustling folds of her dress. The light had died out from Lisa's eyes now, the flush had also died away from her face, and she suddenly grew strangely calm. A melancholy expression pervaded her now, and tears sprang to her eyes; but her voice was perfectly steady, as she answered in a low, soft voice, "Yes, madame, I was once a crossing-sweeper, though never a street-beggar; I was in my childhood very often on the verge of starvation; and I knew scores of miserable children who were in even worse plight than myself, and from the same cause. That cause, madame, was drink,—the drink which has made your name famous in London and other places, and made you a grand fortune by which you can surround yourself with luxury and beauty. But for my part, madame, I would rather go back

to the poverty of my childhood, than live in this grand house upon money that has the curse of ruined men and women and starved children upon it! There is a curse upon it, madame, there must be a curse upon it!"

Mrs. Barnet was dumb with rage. If only she could wreak her anger upon this daring, wildly outspoken creature before her! If only she could say something to wither her to the earth, to sting and wound her to her inmost soul! But what could she say or do to the calm, dignified, sorrowful-looking girl before her, speaking in a quiet voice words of burning condemnation that made her quail? Lisa's next words seemed to afford her some hope of revenging herself. Seeing that she did not respond, Lisa added, "I am sorry, madame, that I was not told of your profession before I consented to come: it would have saved me the pain of speaking these words, and you of hearing them. Even if I could have seen my dear friends, Mr. Pedder and Mr. Haldane, as I came through the village just now, it would have saved me from this; but they were both out. They would have prevented my coming here, even could I have felt disposed to do so." The slight flush which rose on Lisa's face and lingered there after mentioning Hugh's name, gave Mrs. Barnet a clue to proceed by. She paused to consider what she should say, and then she remarked in a quiet, satirical tone, "I happen to know a little of those persons, who, I fancy, must be versed in hypocritical arts. So you think Hugh Haldane worthy of advising you in such a matter as this?" She raised her eyebrows, and nodded her head with a meaning smile, Lisa eagerly marking each word and expression. "So much for your judgment and penetration!" Mrs. Barnet went on, with the malicious smile still on her white face. "A fellow who can bring himself to be always in a public-house (a place which he has professed to despise and abhor) just because he happens to be madly in love with the publican's daughter,—a pretty adviser that for a girl who professes to have a conscience!"

Lisa was not versed in the arts of dissimulation, and could never conceal strong feeling. So now she turned deadly pale, and being much overwrought by this interview, she did not pause to consider what foundation of truth there might be under these words, but let them sink down into her heart, weighting it like lead. In a moment there flashed through her mind the thought of Alice's annual visits to her home during the past five summers, and of how often she and Hugh must have met,—of her being at home now after having declared that she would never again return thither after leaving Madame Michaud's. A slight shiver passed through her, as if she was cold; but it was only the girl's heart that was suddenly chilled. Mrs. Barnet, seeing that her shaft had struck home, resolved to allow no more to be said. She rose, with haughty mien, and rang the bell, at the same time waving her hand, and saying, "I have no more to say to you. You may go to your estimable friends!"

Lisa turned and left the room, making a respectful obeisance as she went out. On the handsome staircase a servant met her, and at her request showed her the way out.

She walked through the magnificent grounds to the lodge-gate which she had entered but a short time ago in the highest spirits, admiring everything with an artist's enthusiasm. The same trees, and flowers, and velvet sward were still there, with the golden sunshine over them; but now she saw neither brightness nor beauty. All was cold, and dim, and unlovely, and she walked with a dull and heavy step.

Mrs. Barnet was painfully discomposed after Lisa left. "Why did I not say more to her?" she asked, in impotent rage. "Why did I let her off so easily after insulting me? A curse on my house and wealth indeed!—the impudent chit!"

She could not rest; but paced to and fro in great agitation. Her beautiful boudoir was too close to contain her. She swept out into the corridors of her grand mansion, in and out of magnificent rooms; and everywhere a voice sounded beside her, "There is a curse upon it!"

(To be continued.)