

INTERNATIONAL S. S. LESSONS.**November 24. Isaiah v: 11-23.**

The passage selected is intended to point the moral of total abstinence from alcoholic beverages, which is an entirely right and proper lesson to learn, and one which all religious communities, but those under Christian influences, have incorporated with their ethical and moral standards. The Law of Opposites, which brings about the degradation or in version of the highest ideals, may be the reason of the particular susceptibility of Christians to the evil influence of the Gods they worship. The True Vine of the New Testament identifies the Genius of Christianity with the Vine God Bacchus, and the sacrament of Bread and Wine, derived from the rites of Ceres and Bacchus, in its degraded and sensual phases becomes manifested in the gluttony and drunkenness of Christendom. Leaders in the church defend the manufacture and sale of liquors obtained from the artificial rotting of the grape, sacred to Bacchus, and the corn, sacred to Ceres; the debasement of these symbols in this manner is only what might be expected among those who have lost the knowledge of natural truths and law symbolised by the deities of the ancients, supplanting them with artificial creeds and dogmas, which are as effete as the mythological gods themselves.

Isaiah's meaning is evidently symbolical in this passage. The chapter commences with a parable elaborated by Jesus (Matthew xxi: 33), which indicates the point of view to be taken. The "well beloved" has a vineyard, and the fruits of that vineyard can only be enjoyed in the Kingdom (Luke xvi: 18). Woe is denounced (verse 20) upon those who call evil good, and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, and bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. This is the sin of formalism and sectarianism.

December 1. 1 Samuel xvi: 1-13.

Samuel's choice of Saul, which he alleged to be inspired by God, proved ill-advised, and the prophet had another

inspiration after the manner of psychics. His reputation was somewhat formidable, as the elders of Bethel testified by their attitude. The psychic inspiration of Samuel is well illustrated in the judgment of the sons of Jesse (6-10), and this response to the inner voice is the strength of Samuel's character. But the psychic voice, so often mistaken for the voice of the Lord or Master, is not the spiritual voice nor the divine voice, the Voice of the Silence, which, could Samuel have heard it as Elijah did, would not have led him into the God-attributed error of crowning Saul. Man still looks upon the outward appearance, for the inner heart is far below the surface veils.

December 8. 1 Samuel xvii: 38-51.

The life of David is illustrative in the highest degree of the mystical life of the aspirant. David is the "beloved," he had passed beyond the first seven stages as indicated in the seven older sons of Jesse; he lived seventy years, seven of which he reigned in Hebron, and thirty-three in Jerusalem. The encounter with Goliath, the soothsayer, as the term implies, seems to symbolise the subduing of some of the lower forces, and the five smooth stones which he gathered from the "brook" and placed in his "vessel" appear to represent the five tatwas by the control of which the subjugation of the lower powers is accomplished.

December 15. 1 Samuel xx: 32-42.

The artifice by which Jonathan gains an opportunity of speaking to David, his "beloved," perhaps illustrates many of the expedients to which the seekers after the higher things of life have recourse or are forced into by their conditions. The line of least resistance is the scientific course, and Jonathan saves friction and avoids endangering the life of his friend by an expedient which harms no one and is justified by its purpose. It is in matters of this sort that the rarest of gifts, right discrimination, is necessary, so that there may be no selfishness, no injury to others, no neglect of duty, no lack of moral courage and no failure of moral will.