

Teacher and Scholar.

BY REV. A. J. MARTIN, TORONTO.

Aug. 30th, 1896. } ABSALOM'S DEFEAT AND DEATH. { 2 Sam. xviii: 9-17, 31-33.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Ps. i: 6.

MEMORY VERSES.—32-33.

CATECHISM.—Q. 76, 77.

HOME READINGS.—M. 2 Sam. xvi: 1-14.

Tu. 2 Sam. xvi: 15-23. W. 2 Sam. xvii: 1-14.

T. 2 Sam. xvii: 15-29. F. 2 Sam. xviii: 1-17.

S. 2 Sam. xvii: 18-33. Sab. Ps. cxliii: 1-12.

Last week we noted the gradual estrangement of Absalom from his father, which culminated in the son's rebellion and the father's flight. Everything seemed to be in Absalom's favor. He had a large following and had obtained possession of the capital city without a struggle. He was surrounded by men of great sagacity, and everything looked promising. Yet our lesson for the week gives us the final issue of Absalom's effort, and shows how that Prince's name has come down to us as the synonym for all that is unfilial, and a reminder that the end of the transgressor is shame. The story is told in our Home Readings, of all the events which led up to the disastrous battle at Mahanaim. What we have to say we shall try to gather up under the heads, "A Son's Destruction" and "A Father's Sorrow."

I. A Son's Destruction.—Absalom was apparently quite confident of the ultimate success of his effort. He had been flattered and pampered until he was ready to listen to any counsel which appealed to his vanity. Therefore he did not withhold himself from anything which would impress the people with the contempt he had for his father. Not only did he take possession of his father's household, but he went out in all his glory to accomplish the utter annihilation of his father and his following. He did not ride upon a war horse, for that would indicate that there might be some difficulty in crushing the opposition to his wishes, but upon a mule with rich trappings, as though he were going upon a holiday jaunt. But God had suffered him thus to vaunt himself in his folly, that his destruction might be the more terrible, so as to serve as a warning for all future ages. Joab and his tried veterans persuaded David to remain away from the battle, and went out with the king's last command ringing in their ears, that they should "not touch the young man Absalom." These old veterans chose their ground skillfully, and succeeded, through taking advantage of the clump of trees and broken ground, in inflicting a crushing defeat upon the rebellious army. Then Absalom joined in the flight. His mule rushed under an oak tree, and in some way Absalom's head became caught so that he could not extricate it. His mule rushed out from beneath him, and left him hanging in the tree. Then one ran to tell Joab, and that doughty old warrior, though he had done everything he could do to secure Absalom's forgiveness and restoration to his father's favor when he was in exile at his grandfather's court, yet now felt his heart harden within him; and unheeding the reminder as to David's wishes, took their darts and with them killed the rebel son. Then his body was taken down and cast into a pit, and upon it a great heap of stones was cast. Probably this was intended to mark the abhorrence felt for his crime. Even to-day Orientals will cast a stone in contempt upon the tomb of one whom he execrates, as these loyal Israelites must have execrated Absalom. What an ending to Absalom's ambition! Killed like some trapped animal, and buried like a dog! What a contrast to the end he had calculated on. He aimed at being king, and had already had prepared a royal tomb for himself, which should be a lasting monument to his greatness and glory. Instead he was dishonored as a rebel, and execrated in his burial. Why was this so? Had he remembered to honor his father he might have become king, and might have had his desire. But because he dishonored his father, because he dishonored God and sought only his selfish pleasure, he met with the end which such conduct deserves.

II. A Father's Sorrow.—Joab sent messengers at once to tell the king of the victory. One who had at first been forbidden to go, and was afterwards allowed, outran the other and told David of the victory, but dissembled about Absalom. The other blurted out the dreadful truth and well-nigh broke David's heart. What a picture of a father's love do we find in David here. His kingdom, yes, even his life, is at stake in the battle raging not far from the city in whose gate he sits. But what cares he for the kingdom! What reck he how the battle goes! There is one in that battle whose safety is dearer to him than aught else. The king is swallowed up in the father. How eagerly he asks, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" That is the principal thing, the safety of his boy. True, he has suffered wrong at the hands of this son such as must be hard to endure; yet he forgets everything else save that he is his son. Nothing more pathetic was ever heard than the heart-wrung utterances of the stricken father—"Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" Let no boy or girl ever forget that the warmest and most unselfish love on earth is the love which father and mother bear to them. And let them not miss the warning which comes, not only from the destruction of Absalom, but from the sorrow of David, that God will not overlook the sin of despising father or mother. But above all, let us in David's love for his sinful, wayward boy, see some slight illustration of the love of Him who so loved us that He died for our redemption. Shall not the love of Christ possess us?

strict. A good student to replace Mr. Wilson is greatly needed.

Napinka.—Here Mr. James Stuart, a young man from Ireland and a graduate from Princeton, N. J., is stationed, and doing faithful service. The field is somewhat limited owing to various causes, but the young missionary is working it to the best advantage.

Melita has been accorded the status of an augmented congregation, and a promising charge it is. Melita, Elva and Broomhill constitute the charge. There are about fifty families in the congregation, the Elva station being composed largely of the clan MacRae. A number of the people are men of great intelligence, of thorough loyalty to the Church—that loyalty has been tested recently and stood the test nobly—and it is greatly to be wished that a pastor may be speedily settled.

Pierson lies west of Melita, the congregation extending south to the international boundary. The field had in different supply during the summer of 1895, was vacant all last winter, and when the late Mr. J. H. Brown took charge he found things in a very unsatisfactory state. This weighed a great deal on his mind and impelled him to do more than his strength warranted. His life and work have had a marked effect on the people. Who will take up his work? Mr. J. Mackay, a Zorra boy, is there now and doing good work, but he is only beginning his studies and must soon return to college. Shall this field be thrown back again through lack of winter supply? There are forty-four Presbyterian families, and sixteen single men on their homesteads in the field, or sixty households in all, besides a number of adherents of other churches. They had some financial difficulties, but these are past; here is the promise of a good congregation, continuous supply alone being needed.

Gainsboro is adjacent to Pierson, and supplied by an Arts' student of Manitoba College, of rare devotion to his work. The field has suffered through removals, but these are now over, and population may be expected to increase. The strength of this mission is about the same as that of Pierson. The Newlaw station of this field and Lyleton of the Pierson field have a considerable number of Scottish families, strongly attached to the Church of their fathers. Shall they go this winter again without supply?

Carnduff is cared for by the Rev. John Cairns, whose labors are much appreciated by his people. He supplies six stations. There are over forty Presbyterian households in the field, and an average Sabbath attendance of over 200; but this charge too has suffered through removals. These, however, have stopped, and some of those who left are returning, not having discovered the conditions of making a better home elsewhere.

Oxbow and Alameda are respectively sixteen and twenty-four miles from Carnduff, and both with stations to the north formed hitherto a mission charge supplied by the Rev. T. R. Scott. Mr. Scott has been of great service in the district, and his work has been much blessed. To the south of Oxbow lies the Boscurvis Mission, supplied this summer by Mr. Robertson of Manitoba College and doing efficient service. It is proposed to rearrange stations, and to constitute Oxbow, Hope and Boscurvis station one mission, and Alameda, Dalesboro and Roscoe another. For Alameda a strong student is urgently needed at once, if we are not to suffer in name and influence. The interest of the people was seen in the large attendance at all the meetings held. The Boscurvis and Hope people gave up a picnic they had arranged for, and advertised for weeks, in their desire to see the superintendent and impress on him the necessity of having winter supply provided for this field. Were the people I met here and to the east in the classes in our colleges, there is no doubt but that winter supply would be provided for Home Missions during the winter.

For some years past the rainfall in this part of the Territories has been scanty, and hence crops have been light. Last year, however, and this year the rainfall has been abundant, and crops last year were good, and this year they are promising. Some of those who left during the dry years are returning, and the prospects are brightening. The Hirsch Jewish Colony has all disappeared with the exception of seven or eight families. It would not seem as if they were well suited to this country, and hence lack of success. If the Presbyterian cause is not to be disintegrated and discredited we must provide winter supply for these important missions.

J. ROBERTSON.

Alameda, Assa., Aug. 7th, 1896.

THE NEW "DAYSRING."

MR. EDITOR.—I am happy to be able to inform your readers specially interested in the speedy evangelization of the New Hebrides, that harmony has at length been secured in regard to the new *Dayspring*. She has been employed in the service of the mission since the beginning of the year, and at the recent meeting of the Mission Synod held at Anelgauhat, Aneityum she was formally accepted as their mission vessel. The Victorian Committee was appointed a Board of Management and the *Dayspring* Board was requested to co-operate in conducting the maritime service. It is gratifying to learn that this action of the Synod was taken *unanimously*.

The minute containing this information has just reached me from the clerk, the Rev. W. Watt, of Tanna, forwarded by instruction of Synod for public information. The intelligence will be received with great satisfaction by the many friends of Dr. Paton and of the New Hebrides mission in Canada. Those whose sympathies have been enlisted in behalf of the new steamship may now contribute to her maintenance in the assurance that she is doing the work for which she was built.

Late information from Australia gives promise she will cost little more for annual maintenance than was paid by the mission last year to the Commercial Steamship Co., while she will do much work that could not be expected from a vessel whose main business was traffic. Let us pray that every one of the islands of this blood-stained group may soon be won to Christ and that the new *Dayspring* may be an instrument in hastening the day.

Yours sincerely,

J. W. MITCHELL.

Thorold, Aug. 10th, 1896.

A HOLY LIFE.

A holy life is made up of a number of small things; little words, not eloquent speeches or sermons; little deeds, not miracles or battles; nor one great heroic act of mighty martyrdom, make up the true Christian life. The little, constant sunbeam, not the lightning; the waters of Siloam "that go softly" in the meek mission of refreshment, not the "waters of the river, great and many" rushing down in noisy torrents, are the symbols of a holy life. The avoidance of little evils, little sins, little inconsistencies, little weaknesses, little follies, indiscretions and imprudences, little foibles, little indulgences of the flesh, the avoidance of such little things as these, goes far to make up at least the negative of a holy life.—Bonar.

A writer in the *Missionary Review* relates that "in 1839 the darkest hour came to Turkish missions, and the tyrant Mahmud ordered all Christian missionaries summarily expelled from the empire. Dr. Goodell quietly said: 'The great Sultan of the Universe can change all this.' In July of that year Mahmud died. That order for expulsion was not only never enforced, it was never again referred to!" The God of nations is still able to make the wrath of men praise him. In the time His wisdom chooses there will be a change in the condition of persecuted Armenians; and no seed sown by Christian missionaries shall fail to bear fruit.

ESTEVAN.

HOME MISSIONS—WINTER SUPPLY.

MR. EDITOR.—This week has been spent in visiting missions in the Presbytery of Melita, starting at Napinka and going west to Estevan. Owing to imperfect train service it was judged better to drive the whole distance. This town and district received some notice at the meeting of the Assembly and a few facts may be of interest. It is situated at the junction of the Souris branch of the C. P. R. and the "Soo" Line. For some time after the building of the railway, there was an insufficient amount of rainfall for agricultural purposes, and, crops failing, the great bulk of the settlers moved out. Last year and this the rainfall has been ample, and the soil being fertile, the crops have been good, and grass very abundant. The effect has been to check emigration, and to convince those who left that they acted too hastily. It is expected that a number will return next season. The C. P. R. people have repair shops, etc., at Estevan; some mounted policemen are here and to the south; and, owing to the presence of coal, which is being mined and shipped eastward in considerable quantities, the importance of the town is likely to increase. Twelve miles south lies the Dunbar settlement (wholly Presbyterian) and six miles south-east is the town of Portal on the international boundary. Estevan has a population, by actual count, of 198 souls, Dunbar thirty, and Portal about sixty. During the autumn and winter from seventy-five to eighty men are engaged in coal mining; at present there are only about a dozen. In the field the Presbyterian Church is the strongest, having, at present, twenty-one families, and five single men, and thirty-six communicants. The Sabbath attendance on services ranges from fifty-five in the forenoon to 110 in the evening. The people contribute about \$200 for the support of the student. Mr. T. R. Wilson, a student missionary of Queen's, is doing duty here at present, and is energetic and acceptable, but he is returning to college in September. The field had no supply last winter, and became a prey to evangelists of a type that is solely disintegrating and destructive. Unless we can man our fields better in winter we are in a fair way to suffer serious losses in several adjacent fields, for a pernicious leaven is extending through the entire dis-