

The Sunday School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

LESSON XXX.

July 27. } VICTORY OVER DEATH. { 1 Cor. xv. 50-58.
1879.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."—John 11: 25.

HOME STUDIES.

- M. Matt. xxviii. 1-20... The resurrection of Christ.
T. John xi. 21-44... Christ the resurrection and the life.
W. 1 Cor. xv. 1-11... Buried and rose again.
Th. 1 Cor. xv. 12-34... Christ the first fruits of them that slept.
F. 1 John 19-29... The dead shall hear His voice.
S. 1 Cor. xv. 35-58... Victory over death.
S. Dan. xii. 1-13... As the stars for ever and ever.

HELPS TO STUDY.

In this wonderful chapter the curtain of the hereafter is lifted, and we are permitted to look upon the mysteries of the eternal state. Its theme is the resurrection, a doctrine which rests upon God's word only, and is without proof except from the pages of holy writ. The apostle discusses the general subject under four divisions: first, the evidences of a resurrection (ver. 1-34); secondly, the resurrection body (ver. 35-54); thirdly, the condition of saints living at the time of their Lord's appearance (ver. 51-54); fourthly, the practical and present application of the doctrine (ver. 55-58). The last two topics are treated upon in our lesson. The living saints shall be changed into the likeness of their risen Lord, while those that sleep in him shall break forth from their graves at his summons, robed in new, immortal bodies, and death shall be at an end for evermore. Over this glorious prospect the apostle bursts into a song of triumph, anticipating the conquest, and offering adoration to Him by whose might the victory shall be won.

I. A GREAT CHANGE.—vers. 50-53.

This I say: An emphatic summing up of the argument concerning the character of the resurrection-body (v. 34-51), which he has asserted will be—Celestial—Incorruptible—Glorious—Mighty in power—Spiritual. Give proofs of each. **Flesh and blood:** While in Paul's writings the word "flesh" is generally employed to mean the condition of sinfulness, this expression "flesh and blood," denotes our physical, moral nature. **Cannot inherit:** "Are not able to inherit." As the ocean cannot be crowded into a lake, so the narrow limits of the physical must fail to receive the eternal. **Kingdom of God:** Not the gospel kingdom here, set up in the heart; but the heavenly and eternal realm hereafter. **Corruption:** That which by the laws of its being doomed to decay cannot possess immortality. These earthly bodies are noble, but too lowly for the heavenly estate.

Behold: An exclamation, to call special attention to what follows. Lift up your eyes to the glorious picture I present. **I show you:** "I tell you." As if answering the question, "What shall become of those living when the resurrection takes place?" **Mystery:** A truth hitherto concealed, now for the first time made known. God reveals truth, not all at once, but by slow unfolding, as the minds of men are ready to receive it. **We:** The humblest disciple may feel honoured in the thought that he is included in the apostle's "We." **Shall not sleep:** In the New Testament no saint is spoken of as dead; but the departure of a disciple is always called sleep. Children of God may fall asleep, but they never die. The reference here is to those Christians who may be living on the earth at the time of our Lord's appearing. **Be changed:** There will be a transformation, without the pangs of death, from the earthly, decaying state, to the immortal resurrection body.

A moment: Literally, "in an atom, or instant of time." **Last Trump:** As trumpets are sounded to assemble armies, so at the close of earth's history, the final trumpet blast shall summon the nations of the living, and the innumerable hosts of the dead. Christ's calls to men may now be unheeded, but his command then must be obeyed. **Incorruptible:** The flesh which shall then ensnare the souls shall be immortal, and beyond the reach of death and decay. **And we shall be changed:** After the resurrection of the sleeping saints will come the glorification of the living believers—1 Thess. iv. 15. **Must:** Literally, "it is necessary," because the earthly body cannot endure the weight of glory and immortality. **Put on:** "Become clothed with." The resurrection body is represented as a new garment enrobing the spirit. "We must be clothed with grace here, if we would be clothed with glory hereafter."

What a hope this is! Then there will be no more sin, but a rapture of holiness. As now we bear the image of the earthly, then we shall bear the image of the heavenly—the degraded likeness of man will be transformed to that of the glorified Christ!—John i. 12; Rom. viii. 29; 1 Cor. xv. 48, 49; Eph. ii. 10; Ph. iii. 10, 21; 1 John iii. 2; Rev. xxi. 7.

II. A GREAT VICTORY.—vers. 54-57.

The saying that is written: A free translation, such as was usual in quotations from the Old Testament, of Isa. xxv. 8, "He will swallow up death in victory." Death is swallowed up: The Prophet Isaiah describes a glorious future, to be ushered in by the Messiah; but according to the prophetic custom, presents a picture in which events far

and near are grouped together; while Paul definitely fixes the period of this triumph to be at the resurrection. In the page of the New Testament is revealed clearly what in the Old is shown with uncertain vision.

Where is thy sting? Death is figured as a venomous beast, armed with a poisonous, deadly sting. The apostle, with prophetic anticipation, standing in the resurrection light, sees death despoiled of his power, a conqueror in chains. **Grave... thy victory:** Over the whole world the grave is victorious, dragging all mankind into its bosom, until earth becomes one vast field of sepulchres. The Christian looks forward to a day when its conquests shall be ended, and its prison doors shall be thrown open. **Sting of death is sin:** Sin alone brought death into the world; sin alone makes death to be dreaded; sin alone gives death power to lay beyond the grave. **The strength of sin:** The power of sin. That which makes any act sinful is the law against it, for without law there can be no responsibility or obligation.

Thanks be to God: Let us never forget that all our victories and our power to obtain them, come from the grace of the Omnipotent. **Who giveth:** The expression is in the present tense, for the victory is in the future, the promise and gift of it are ours now. Faith grasps that which is to come, and turns expectation into enjoyment. **Through our Lord Jesus Christ:** As the Father is He from whom our triumph proceeds, so the Son is He through whom it is received. Christ is the channel through which every honour and blessing comes to men. Without Him we are slaves in chains waiting for our doom; with Him we are triumphant champions waiting our crown.

"The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law." But Christ has taken away the sting of death, because he has taken away our sin; and He has robbed it of its power, because He has fulfilled the law. Through his own death He has destroyed him who has the power of death in order that He might "deliver them, who, through fear of death, where all their lifetime subject to bondage"—John xi. 25, 26; Rom. v. 17, 21; vi. 7; viii. 3; Ph. iii. 10; 2 Tim. i. 10; Heb. ii. 14, 15.

III. A GREAT WORK.—Ver 58.

Steadfast, unmoveable, abounding: These three words form a climax: first, firmness of faith in the resurrection; then resistance to every storm of opposition; lastly, energetic action, impelled by confidence in the divine promises.

Because of the victory that every believer shall obtain through Christ, he ought earnestly to work for the Saviour while he is here. "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless."—Col. ii. 7; Eph. ii. 8-10; 1 Thess. iii. 12; iv. 1; 2 Thess. i. 3; 2 Tim. iv. 2; Jas. ii. 14; Heb. xiii. 21.

IF THE SAHARA IS FLOODED, WHAT?

The only important objection which has thus far been urged against the undertaking has arisen in the apprehensions expressed by a few scientists that the evaporation produced by so large and so shallow a body of water, exposed to the tropical sun, would be sufficient to deluge northern Europe with incessant rains, and to reduce materially the temperature in all the countries north of the Alps. It has even been feared that winds freighted with moisture on crossing the cold summits of the Alps, would precipitate vast volumes of water and produce a degree of cold which would give Denmark and Northern Germany a semi-Arctic climate and produce a glacial epoch farther north. It is not probable that all such apprehensions arise out of a misunderstanding as to the topography of the Sahara and North Africa? The entire region to be flooded is practically shut in by mountain chains on all sides. The Atlas mountains on the north, lifting their snow-clad peaks in some instances 12,000 feet, afford a sufficient bulwark for the protection of Europe from increased humidity. The only possible northerly outlet for air currents from El Juf would be across Tunis in a north-easterly direction over the widest part of the Mediterranean. Currents moving in that direction, if they reached Europe at all, would touch the shores of Greece after they had lost most of their humidity. M. de Lesseps, after a careful examination of the question, is convinced that it would result in the general improvement of the climate of Europe rather than to its detriment. The advantage of the increased evaporation to North Africa cannot be over-estimated. The snow-clad cliffs of Alban, lying to the east of the proposed sea, and the Kong Mountains to the south, would bring down upon the parched desert grateful rains, which, with the assistance of cultivation, would in time, no doubt, redeem thousands of square miles from the desolation of the sands.—*Scribner for July.*

JAPANESE ROCK-CRYSTAL.

In every house of the better sort in Japan there is a *tokonoma* or raised special place for keeping objects of art and beauty. The evolution of the aesthetic out of the useful is nowhere better illustrated than in the history of the *tokonoma*, which was anciently the sleeping-place or recess for the bed. Now it is a place of honour, occupying one-half of a side of the parlour or best room, its finish and appointments being superior to those of any other part of the house. It is a recess two feet deep, and raised four or six inches above the matting covered floor. In it hang suspended on the wall a *kakemono*, or scroll-painting on silk, a bronze or porcelain vase of flowers, a fan-holder with its tiers of open fans ready for use, besides other works characteristic of native art.

One of the objects often seen is a *dai*, or stand, gold-lacquered, or made of perfumed, carved or rare wood. The *dai* is one or two feet high, and has on the top a black velvet or crimson crape cushion, or a silver claw, whereon reposes a globe of rock-crystal. Pure, flawless, transparent, a perfect sphere, it seems like a bubble of spring water hovering in the air. Often the *dai*, or stand, is a piece of elaborate art in bronze, porcelain, or lacquer, representing a beesting crag or lofty inaccessible rock, crested with the flawless jewel. Around the base the waves curl and foam, and up the side moves in crackless coil a jealous dragon, with eager, outstretched jaws, and claws ready to grasp and bear away the precious prize. Or, on a pyramid of waves hardened in bronze, with silver foam, flecks on the polish of the rolling mass, will repose inviolate the gem sphere.

The Japanese virtuoso loves to have among his collection at least one bronze of wave and stormy petrel, where amid the recesses of the hooked foam, nestle a half-dozen or more of small crystal balls, from the size of a marble to that of an apple. In nearly all Japanese art and bric-a-brac stores will be seen these gems on sale, and unless the foreign buyer's nerves are very strong, the prices asked will be very likely to startle him as though he had been touched by an electric cell.

The merest tyro in Japanese art, be he admirer or purchaser, can not have failed to notice the dragon clutching in his claw a ball or a pear-shaped jewel. In the various forms of their art expression, crystal, both in China and Japan, commands a high value, both pecuniary and symbolic. In the airy realms of imagination, and in the markets where men buy and sell, rock-crystal is among the precious things.—*Harper's Magazine for August.*

QUEEN ELIZABETH'S HOUSEHOLD ACCOUNTS.

Elizabeth had returned to Hatfield. The most interesting relic of the time is her account book from October, 1551, to September, 1552, a kind of confidant in which it is delightful to search in order to obtain some indications of character. Her cofferer was still Thomas Parry, whose re-instatement she had obtained during the summer of 1549. In truth, Sir Robert Tyrwhit, in his examination of accounts, on the occasion of the great and painful inquiry of January, 1549, had found the cofferer in default. But it would seem that Parry had shown himself a more trustworthy guardian of his young mistress' secrets than exact administrator of her income, and that she had forgiven him this minor offence in consideration of his more important service. Besides, it seems as if all was accurate afterward. The year's income was good enough—£5,890 sterling, worth £30,600 at the present time. Elizabeth's household was composed of thirteen gentlemen and several servants. Her personal expenditure is very small. What in the way of dress in a year are a couple of bodices at twelve pence, lining at fifteen pence, silk at four pence? We are just in the height of Puritan strictness. A Bible at twenty shillings—another Bible and some other books at twenty-seven shillings—no books of light reading—some presents to lute and harp players—as alms, a little more than seven pounds—a sum that may be considered as sufficiently remarkable in comparison with the excessive parsimony afterward displayed on this head. On the whole account, this budget balances with a credit of fifteen hundred and seven pounds in favour of the receipts. It is creditable to know how to keep accounts, and not to get into difficulties. But the whole gives us an impression of hardness, almost deception, as if under a smiling country, volcanic rocks were found at the first blow of the pick.—*From Youth of Queen Elizabeth, by Louis Wiesner.*

A "Life of Dr. Talmage, of Brooklyn, U.S.A., with a History of the Tabernacle, Specimens of his Pulpit Oratory, and a new Portrait," has been published in London.

DURING May, the missionaries of the American Sabbath-school Union in the North-west organized and aided 167 Sabbath-schools, with 617 teachers and 4,543 scholars.

BETWEEN fifteen and sixteen thousand Sabbath-school children took part in the procession at this year's Lancashire Festival in Manchester, England. The festival continued a week.

IN Hungary the Government seems determined to provoke a contest with the Protestant Church. It has decided to place the Protestant school under the exclusive control of the State, the aim being to destroy the Lutheran element in the numerous German schools.

THE Pure Literature Society of England recently celebrated its silver wedding in London, the Earl of Shaftesbury presiding. In its active work it does not publish any book or paper but examines and selects and promotes the circulation of approved publications from all sources.

A PRESBYTERIAN minister in Colorado has within a year organized two churches, built one house of worship and a parsonage, bought a church organ, established two Sunday schools and three prayer-meetings, taught three catechism classes, and supplied six preaching stations.

AN extensive revival is in progress in Germany and promises to be fruitful of good results to the church. The movement extends along the entire Rhine Valley and at Dusseldorf alone 200 conversions are reported. Conference has been organized on the English plan and as to be held in that city on June 5th and 6th. Prof. Christlieb has taken great interest in the work, and a little tract written by him and entitled "The Gospel of Marah" has had a wide circulation and done much good.