

Sabbath School Teacher.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS

THE SONG OF MARY.

{ Luke 1: 46-55.

GOLDEN TEXT—My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.—Luke 1: 46, 47.

INTRODUCTORY.

The song of Mary—the Magnificat—so full of earnest devotion and holy hope, appeals to the universal human heart. Amid all the differences of religious opinion, and ecclesiastical schisms it finds a place in all rituals, and commends itself alike to the hearts of young and old. Varied and numerous are the musical compositions that in ancient and modern times have sought to give it expression. It is the lofty outpouring of a pious heart that has unlimited trust in God and seeks by entire consecration to be employed in the advancement of the divine glory. Though tradition has been busy in endeavouring to construct a biography for Mary the mother of Jesus, Scripture does not tell us much. She was of the royal lineage of David, and was in humble circumstances, a resident of Nazareth in Galilee. Her song of praise shows that she was well versed in the Bible and that she ardently cherished the Messianic hope, in common with the pious Israelites of her day. All the glimpses we get of her in the Gospel narrative present her in an amiable attitude but there is nothing whatever to favour the notion that she can rightly be regarded as a proper subject to receive divine worship. There is no countenance given in Scripture for the presentation of prayers to Mary. An angel was sent to Mary to announce to her that she would become the mother of Jesus the Saviour. After this she made a journey to the house of Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, to whom she was related. After the customary salutations Mary sings the inspired song that will never lose its meaning or its beauty while the world lasts.

I. Praise for Personal Blessings.—The devout soul turns first to God on receiving personal blessing. He is the giver of every good and perfect gift. The ungrateful spirit may content itself with rejoicing in the blessings received, but those who see God's hand in all mercies turn instinctively to Him with the voice of praise. Mary's spiritual nature was deeply touched by the thought that God was to bless His people, and that she should be honoured by being the mother of Jesus. Her soul declared God's praise. The utterance of her praise was accompanied by a deep and holy joy. Christ was to bring joy and happiness to the world and in this her spirit rejoiced. Her lot in life was a lowly one. It was as she sings "in low estate." Her home was poor, she was betrothed to a humble Jewish carpenter, but this honour which God had put upon her would elevate her to a distinction that was unapproachable. "From henceforth all nations shall call me blessed" not that she should have honours paid to her which it would be idolatrous to offer save to the Three-One God. Christ as a youth was subject to His mother. He loved and esteemed her while He remained on earth, and from the cross he tenderly commended her to the care and affection of the beloved disciple, but nowhere does He intimate by word or example that Mary was to be regarded as a mediator. Neither is there any trace of an idea that the Virgin Mary was to be worshipped to be found in the apostolic writings. Idolatry is simply an unwarranted human invention, thought of only after the faith and piety of the Church had been corrupted by error and superstition.

II. Praise for God's Goodness and Mercy.—He who made the promise to Mary was mighty—the Omnipotent. With God there is nothing impossible. The mystery of the incarnation, the salvation of men through the death of Christ on the cross, the resurrection from the dead are all within the scope of the omnipotence. It was this Mighty One who had condescended to make Mary a link in the chain of the divine beneficence. This Mighty One is also the Holy One, "holy is His name." God's entire revelation of Himself to man is a revelation of His holiness, and the more we contemplate the divine perfections the more vividly are we impressed by a sense of God's holiness. Between all of the divine attributes there is complete harmony. One is not set over against the other. They constitute an harmonious unity. So together with God's power and holiness Mary magnifies His mercy, that is, free, undeserved favour. That mercy is daily bestowed upon us all. Those who fear Him, who are impressed with a sense of God's daily nearness and presence, endeavour to love, serve and obey Him. God's mercy is continuous. It is from generation to generation. Age after age experiences the changeless mercy of Him who is merciful and gracious, long-suffering and slow to wrath.

III. Praise for God's Providential Dealings.—When God's arm is spoken of in Scripture it signifies His power. "He hath shewed strength with His arm." All past events in the history of Israel, all His dealings with the children of men had been exemplifications of the divine power. What would be accomplished by Jesus Christ in the establishment and perpetuity of His kingdom would be brought about by the exercise of the power of God, through the instrumentality of His grace and truth. "He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts." The foes who sought to subdue the kingdom of Israel were discomfited. The proud imaginings of the human heart are subdued in the presence of the cross of Christ. These words of Mary's song are prophetic as well as historical. All who have hitherto attempted to grasp universal dominion on this earth either in ancient or in modern times have failed, and should future attempts be made, they too are destined to failure. God's dominion only is an everlasting dominion. In that kingdom the humblest and lowliest are exalted, for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. "He hath filled the hungry with good things." This is true of God's bounty everywhere, but it has a special meaning in the kingdom of His grace. Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, those who feel their need of salvation, have ample provision made for the complete satisfaction of their wants. The Gospel feast is spread and the invitation freely given. The rich are sent empty away. The self-righteous are not conscious of their need of the spiritual blessings God has so fully and so freely provided. They turn away and come to suffer soul-hunger. They go away empty. The closing notes of Mary's song recall God's faithful care over His people. He remembered His mercy to them throughout all their history. The recollection of God's dealings with His people prompts them to remember His mercies, for all the paths of the Lord are truth and mercy sure. Promises had been made to Abraham and to his descendants. They had been promised of God's mercy, and in mercy they had been remembered and fulfilled. That mercy is for ever. So whatever God has promised will in His own time be completely accomplished.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

The praise of God is one of the loftiest exercises in which the human soul can engage.

God is to be praised for His power, His holiness and His great mercy.

God is the only object of worship, and Jesus Christ is the only Mediator between God and man.

The remembrance of God's mercies should lead to deeper trust in His promises.

The manifestation of God's glory in the likeness of sinful flesh to take away sin in the flesh will form the theme of eternal praise.

Prayer. Ps. cvii. I Sam. ii. 1-10. I Chron. xxix. 10-15. Isa. xii. Eph. i. Rom. xii. Ps. cxxxv.

Sunday, January 12.—Sermons. The Future Glory. Isa. ii. 1-5. Dan. ii. 34, 35.

COLIGNY COLLEGE, OTTAWA.

The closing exercises of the first term of this institution took place on Thursday evening, 19th ult. The hall, which was artistically decorated, was densely filled by parents, friends of the pupils and leading citizens. Principal MacVicar, of Montreal, presided, and the entire programme, which consisted chiefly of vocal and instrumental music with recitations by English and French pupils, was executed in the most successful manner. The *Cantata* in two parts, as well as other items, elicited many expressions of admiration. This is felt to be all the more satisfactory and creditable to the principal, Mrs. Crawford and her staff, when it is remembered that the college was opened, under its present administration, only two months ago.

There are already seventy pupils in attendance with the prospect of a considerable increase during the next term. The spirit of unity and enthusiasm unmistakably manifested among teachers and pupils is full of promise for the future. All appreciate highly the privileges of a truly Christian home, and appear eager to take advantage of the special educational facilities afforded them.

In the interval between the two parts of the programme, Dr. Warden, the Treasurer and financial manager, addressed the assembly. He explained the nature and aim of the work undertaken by the directors of the institution, emphasizing the fact that the education given would be thorough in every department and pervaded throughout by the principles of Christianity. Whilst managed by a Board of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church nothing narrow or sectarian would find a place in its curriculum. Special care had been taken to secure the services of a highly accomplished lady-principal of strong Christian character and large experience and capable of moulding young persons entrusted to her care. All the teachers had been appointed with the same end in view; and it was to him a source of the utmost satisfaction to observe the harmony, earnestness and success with which they prosecuted their mission. He believed all the pupils without exception would return to their homes to speak of the college in similar terms, and to seek to induce others within the circle of their acquaintance to become sharers in the happiness and benefits they enjoyed.

He ventured to promise for himself and in behalf of the management that no effort should be lacking to improve and perfect the equipment as might be warranted by the progress of events.

Dr. MacVicar congratulated the principal and staff upon the admirable organization of their work and the results which, in so short a time, they were able to exhibit to the public. It was no small matter in a few weeks to have brought together such a large number of pupils and to have secured their confidence and esteem. The divine gift of teaching was not very widely distributed, but he believed it was possessed in a high degree by Mrs. Crawford and her associates.

He congratulated the citizens of Ottawa upon the existence among them of such an institution. It should flourish in the Capital and in close proximity with the magnificent Parliamentary buildings of the Dominion. The situation was unrivalled, the building so suitable, the grounds so ample and in such a quiet, retired and healthful position.

He spoke of the Principal and her daughter, who is one of the teachers, as ladies of British and European reputation as educators. They were equally accomplished in English, French and German, and brought with them the highest testimonials as to their culture and skill in music, drawing and painting. Of the other teachers he spoke in commendatory terms from personal knowledge of their qualifications. He believed Ottawa and Canada were to be congratulated upon the Christian and educational work there inaugurated, and hoped that, under the divine blessing, its beneficial influence would be felt far and wide. He had confidence in the skill and devotion of the teachers, the energy and wisdom of the business director, and in the loyalty of the pupils. Upon their efforts and conduct in and out of college success very largely depended.

He wished them all a happy Christmas and New Year, and in the name of the Principal and Board of Management cordially thanked all citizens who had aided in decorations or otherwise in connection with the closing exercises. It was intimated that the second term will begin on the 13th January, and that calendars and all other information can be procured from the Rev. Dr. Warden, 198 St. James St., Montreal.

OBITUARY.

REV. JAMES M'KUTCHEON.

A good man and a faithful servant of Christ was called to his rest and reward on Thursday morning, December 19. Our dear brother, the late Rev. James McKutcheon, Presbyterian minister of the united congregations of Coruana, Mount Pleasant and Bervie Church, in the Presbytery of Sarnia. The news of Mr. McKutcheon's death will cause sincere regret throughout the wide district in which he laboured with great zeal and fidelity for over fifteen or sixteen years. When he took charge of that field he found the cause there at a very low ebb indeed. The few earnest workers were greatly discouraged—a spirit of indifference seemed to have taken hold of the people. The villages along the river-front were anything but centres of religious light and influence. And all experienced and earnest workers in the Master's vineyard knew what time, labour, patience, faith and perseverance it takes to revive spiritually in such old and callous districts. Such was the condition of things when Mr. McKutcheon began his labours there. But by the blessing of God on His servant's faithful, persevering and self-denying labour during these many years, great good has been the result.

On week-day and Sabbath he was busy about his Master's work. He frequently walked from station to station on Sabbath and preached three times a day. He could be seen trudging through the mud on week-days visiting from house to house, reading and expounding the Word of Life to them, praying with them and for them, commending them all—old and young, strong and weak, sick and afflicted—"to God and to the word of His Grace," and often it would be well on towards the end of the week before he could return to his lodging place, so intent was he on doing good. He, in the true sense of the word, like his Master, went about doing good. Mr. McKutcheon told the writer of this memorial that he believed himself to have been undoubtedly guided by the One who cannot err to that field of labour—although he had before coming there calls and invitations to more promising and comfortable fields. It was the necessities and discouragements of the work that attracted and held him there.

Such was the man who laid aside his armour and entered into rest on the morning named. May many more like him come to the front and take up fields of a like kind and continue in them until the Chief Shepherd shall signify His will. There are scores of such fields as Mr. McKutcheon chose within the bounds of this very province of Ontario. I verily believe more difficult to work, certainly more thankless, and much less attractive than the majority of our Home Mission fields, in Manitoba and the North-West Territory. It is the very essence of mission work to revive and build up the old and spiritually dead portions of the home field. The waste places of our Zion, in city, town and country, are in need of the very best men—men in heart, mind and spirit like the noble standard bearer who has just ceased from his labours but whose works will follow. Mr. McKutcheon was a Scotchman by birth and education and was never married. He spent some time in the East as a missionary. He visited his native land last summer after twenty years of absence, and returned about the beginning of last October to resume his work.

reported to the effect that the cases of the first three named were regular and recommended them to the senate of Manitoba College. In regard to the case of Mr. Polson, whose case was special, it was agreed, after testimonials had been submitted, that he receive the standing of a first year student in theology subject to the approval of the General Assembly, and that he take such classes in the arts course as in the opinion of the senate he may take with profit. The committee appointed at the last meeting of the Presbytery, on the subject of Presbyterial visitation, reported as follows: Your committee "to prepare a scheme of Presbyterial visitation defining its objects and methods" ask leave to submit the following report: 1. The object of such visitation is to help the congregations to feel the oversight of the Presbytery is a reality, to give practical proof of its sympathy with the work of each congregation under its supervision, and to make such supervision felt for the benefit of all concerned. 2. As to the method, the General Assembly has given direction in the Book of Rules and Forms of Procedure in a formula of questions to be put to the minister, to the elders, to the session and managers or deacons' court. The answers to these questions will fairly indicate the financial and spiritual condition of the congregation on the ground of which the Presbytery may give such counsel and encouragement as may be helpful in stimulating to greater efforts in the work of the Lord. Anything further as to method can only in a general way be indicated. Such visitations are often begun with a formal service of public worship. But your committee would advise that the whole time of the meeting be given to the special affairs of the congregation as these may be ascertained from a previous conference with its pastor or from the replies given to the questions of the formula. If there is opportunity, addresses of a missionary or evangelistic character might be given. The committee also recommended the division of the Presbytery into four groups for convenience of visitation with four ministers and three or four elders to each group. It was also recommended that collections be taken up at the meetings to defray the expenses of the deputations. Dr. Bryce submitted the report of the Home Mission Committee, of which the following are the principal items: That Rev. J. F. Sutherland be continued at Keewatin for the time being; that Rev. E. Thorpe, now at Selkirk, be continued there in the meantime; that opportunity be given Dominion City to hear ordained ministers. The following resolution was received from the Synod of Rupert's Land: That while on the one hand this Synod would endorse any changes in the educational policy of this country that would lead to the removal of the objectionable features of the present system, on the other hand this Synod would strongly assert the necessity, in the truest interests of education, of some non-sectarian religious teaching in the public schools of this country; and that a committee be formed to confer with the representatives of other religious bodies with a view to carry out the views of this Synod in regard to primary education, and to take any action that may seem to them advisable. Carried unanimously. The consideration of the foregoing communication was deferred until after the consideration of Dr. King's resolution on the same subject, which was seconded by Dr. Bryce, and is as follows: This Presbytery, while cherishing and expressing a decided preference for a thoroughly unsectarian public school system, embracing all schools maintained by the State, is resolutely opposed to any system of state-supported education in which prayer and the reading of the Bible and the employment of its teachings to inculcate and enforce Christian morality are prohibited as un-defensible in principle, almost certain to be prejudicial in operation, and, moreover, as wholly unnecessary and useless as a measure of conciliation, and it appoints the following members, Dr. King, Dr. Duval, Dr. Bryce, Professor Hart, Joseph Hogg, D. Anderson, C. H. Campbell and Dr. Agnew a committee to act either by itself or in concert with similar committees of other bodies, with a view of securing that, if possible, effect be given to the views embodied in this motion in any legislation relative to public school education at the approaching session of the Provincial Legislature. The resolution was discussed at length, and was finally adopted, and the Clerk was instructed to answer the letter of the Synod of Rupert's Land in the light thereof. Rev. Dr. Laing, of Dundas, was nominated as Moderator of the next General Assembly. A petition from Greta congregation asking that Mr. A. C. Manson be sent to them again, was read and referred to the Home Mission Committee. The committee appointed to prepare a minute expressing regret at parting with Mr. Spence, late of Kildonan, presented its report, which was adopted, and a copy ordered to be sent to Mr. Spence. The Presbytery then adjourned to meet again on the first Thursday of March, 1890, at half-past seven p.m. On the following day the Presbytery will receive a deputation from the Woman's Presbyterial Foreign Mission Society, and in the evening a public meeting will be held under the auspices of the Society, and will be addressed by members of the Presbytery.—ANDREW BAIRD, Pres. Clerk.

TOPICS FOR THE WEEK OF PRAYER.

Sunday, January 5.—Sermons. The Church of Christ. Prayer for the power of the Holy Spirit to work a great revival among Christians. Ephes. i. 15-23.

Monday, January 6.—Confession and supplication. Confession of sin and failure in the past, and prayer for consecration to a holier life. Prayer for the Church universal, that there may be more of love and co-operation among Christians of every name; for the gift of the Holy Spirit; for greater faithfulness to Gospel truth; for large accessions of consecrated young men to the ministry; for pastors and other labourers in Christ's vineyard. Psalm xxxii. Nehem. ix. 1-21. Eph. iv. 16. Heb. xiii. 7-21. I Tim. iv. Cor. iv. 10-14. 1 Cor. iv. 35-38.

Tuesday, January 7.—Nations and their rulers. Prayer for all in authority; for the enactment of wise laws and their faithful administration; for the abolition of the traffic in intoxicating drinks; for the repeal of all laws which protect vice; for the sanctification of the Lord's Day; for social purity and all other needed reforms, and for the recognition by all men that "righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." I Pet. ii. 12-25. I Tim. ii. 1-4. Eph. v. 18. Acts xvi. 15. I Pet. ii. 12.

Wednesday, January 8.—The Young. Prayer for special grace and wisdom for those who are charged with their training; for a great increase in the number of earnest Christian teachers in schools, colleges and universities; for more abundant spiritual fruit from Sunday schools, and from organizations of young men and young women. Eph. vi. 1-18. Ps. cxix. 1-16. Acts xx. 28-38. Prov. viii. 9. Col. iii. 1-17. II Tim. i. 1-13. Joel ii. 28-29.

Thursday, January 9.—The Church at Home. That the Church may be awakened to an appreciation of her increased opportunities and responsibilities for bringing the Gospel to every home in cities, rural districts and new settlements, and to our immigrant population. Isa. lxii. 1-4. Joel i. 35-46; xvii. 20-23. Mark ii. 3-5.

Friday, January 10.—The Church Abroad. Prayer for missionaries; for those who are preparing to enter the foreign work, and that their number may be greatly increased; for native pastors and helpers; for missionary schools and colleges; for native churches and converts, especially such as endure persecution for Christ's sake; for the suppression of the opium traffic, the rum traffic, and the slave-trade; for the manifestation of Christ as the promised Messiah to God's ancient people, Israel, for the quickening of nominal Christians; for the conversion of Mohammedans and heathen. Rom. xi. II Cor. iii. Jer. xxxi. 1-14, and 31-40. Joel iv. 31-43. Matt. ix. 27-38. II Cor. v. 8-21.

Saturday, January 11.—Thanksgiving. For manifold blessings, spiritual and temporal, public and private; for the maintenance of peace among the nations; for answers to prayer; for the progress of Christ's kingdom; for a growing spirit of Christian love and co-operation; for the increasing number of those who have dedicated themselves to the service of missions; for the privilege of being permitted thus unitedly to lay our requests before God during this Week of