

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS.

Messenger friends, our Christmas wishes to all have this year so far overrun our space that we have had to make our paper half as big again to hold them all. Never before have we been able at one time to give you so many good things, and by the time Christmastide is over we expect to have you show almost as much satisfaction with your surroundings as the quaint little pair on the first page. "Oh," we sometimes think "if only our holidays could last forever!" But they never do; work clamoring for our attention is always at our elbow, and sooner or later we must turn to it. What kind is waiting for you? Have you any special plans ahead for this winter? Of course you have, but a few more, we are sure, will not come amiss. They will only help you the better to carry out the rest.

One that we are specially interested in, along with people young and old in every county, town and village in Canada is set forth on the last page. How many of you are going to join this band of young historians? Every boy and girl in Canada we hope. Last year one thousand one hundred and ninety-seven boys and girls sent us stories of Canadian history, and we hope that four or five times as many more will do it this year. The inducements offered are greater even than before, the Canada prize being worth four times as much as that won last year.

And now just a word about our circulation. Of course every reader wants that increased, and we wish again to thank all those who have worked so faithfully to this end. For special inducements to continue this we would refer you to the back of the supplement. We do not think we are mistaken and we are sure no one will accuse us of boasting when we say that we believe the *Northern Messenger* to be, as we aim to make it, the best paper of the kind in Canada. From one school, in writing a few days ago for a renewal of a club of fifty which was dropped last December, we have this testimony:

"We have had your paper in our school heretofore and all seemed disappointed when we made the change." H. FORD, *Milton, Queen's County, N.S.*

How it is regarded by many in far away lands you have already seen. Thanking our friends again for all their help in the past we send our Christmas number to all near and far with our best wishes for

A MERRY, MERRY CHRISTMAS.

TAKE THE ANTIDOTE.

Some persons seem impelled to read every infidel publication that comes in their way, cherishing a false notion that they are shutting their eyes to the truth, or at least to candid investigation, if they refuse to receive spiritual poison as well as spiritual food in their minds. Others, in these days of cheap print and free libraries and abundant books, imbibe the poison of infidel views before they fairly know that it is poison. To all such we should say: Take the antidote. Go out into the open air. Take the simplest flower in your hand, pull it to pieces, see the arrangement of petal and corolla and stamen and calyx; then look at the hand which pulls the flower to pieces; notice its wonderful joints, the flexible adaptations by which it takes hold of the minutest leaf, the admirable arrangement of all those many bones; then think of the eye which beholds the flower that you pick to pieces; consider its lenses, its muscles, its retina, that minute picture gallery which we carry about with us. Then from the eye let the thought pass upward to the brain which tells the eye to see and the hand to pluck, and which announces to the senses that the flower is beautiful. If any one is steeped in atheism he can scarcely take one tiny flower in his hand without crying out; "There is a God."

It is an old story which is related of the sceptic, Hume, that after spending a whole day in his study writing a treatise to prove the non-existence of God, he stepped out on the balcony of his house with his friend, Andrew Fuller. It was just after night-fall, and through the sweet summer air the light of ten thousand stars came twinkling down. The sceptic could convince himself in his study that there was no God, but under the stars it was a different matter; for, grasping his friend's arm, he pointed up at the heavens and cried out: "O Andrew, there is a God, there is a God." Such involuntary confessions are worth a hundred labored testimonies, for they are interpreted and reinforced by the unbidden cry of every soul that is open to the truth when brought into contact with the work of the Creator. The exclamation of conviction is coming from every candid soul, "There is a God!" "There is a God!"—*Golden Rule.*

CHRISTMAS.

Oh, Master, comest thou to me again?
And I unmoved! How many times before
Have thy sad footsteps falt'ered at my door,
Or paused beside my sheltered window pane?
How many times? God knoweth. Oft there came

The Man of Sorrows. What had I with him?
And then the Comforter. Mine eyes were dim
With multiplying tears. He called my name

More soft than June wind, and more tenderly,
Then said my soul, "There is no comfort but
Forgetfulness." And so the door was shut.
"Come not again, I have no need of thee."

And often triumphed o'er by doubt, when none
Were near to aid, I saw the Counsellor;
Beneath his touch I felt my weak heart stir?
Then sigh, "Lord, not Thy will but mine be done."

Alas! alas! the joyous Christmas bells,
That sound so merrily in others' ears,
But open up the plain of bygone years,
Through which the stream of mem'ry falls or
swells.

Sometimes when bruised and broken by the
length
Of a fierce war with sin, whose lovely face
Yearned longingly to my withheld embrace,
I conquered—yes—but was it my own strength
That saved me? That sure strength on which
I lean?
Or did the Saviour stand beside me there?
To him I gave no thanks, I made no prayer,
And yet the weight of the unknown, unseen

Is heavy on me. What of Heaven's bliss
Would we not give for one touch of his hand?
What faith for just the power to understand?
What joy for His own garments' hem to kiss?

Oh, heav'nly Child, who comes so oft in vain,
Year after year with gifts of love and peace,
Break our hard hearts, and bid our doubtings
cease,
And make us little children once again.

—*Ethelwyn Wetherald in The Week.*

"PEACE ON EARTH! GOOD WILL TO MEN."

BY MARY D. BRINE.

Ere the old year descends his throne,
And lays his crown aside,
A holy Festival he keeps,—
The joyous Christmas-tide.
And far and near the bells we hear,
Throughout the Christian land,
Ringing the tidings which all hearts
Should know and understand.

O happy Christmas-tide, which helps
Us feel how near and dear
To human lives, and human hearts,
Though life be bright, or drear,
The blessed Saviour loves to be,
And bids us trust his love,
E'en though all crowned with majesty,
He reigns in heaven above.

O are there hearts where strife has lain?
Or lives by malice marred?
Have there been words and deeds unkind?
Are tender memories scarred?
Then harken to the Christmas bells!
What message do they give?
"Tis "Peace on earth! Good will to men!"
And by it men should live.

Dear Lord, with close of Christmas-tide,
The dear old year must die!
What record, Saviour of mankind,
Must go to Thee on high?
Forgive the past, let peace unite
All hearts in truth and love,
The while the Christmas cheer shall teach
Thy message from above.

HAVE YOU A MOTHER?

Have you a mother? If so, honor and love her. If she is aged, do all in your power to cheer her declining years. Her hair may have bleached, her eyes may have dimmed, her brow may contain deep and unsightly furrows, her cheeks may be sunken; but you should never forget the holy love and tender care she has had for you. In years gone by she has kissed away from your cheek the troubled tear; she has soothed and petted you when all else appeared against you; she has watched over and nursed you with a tender care known only to a mother; she has sympathized with you in adversity; she has been proud of your success. You may be despised by all around you, yet that loving mother stands as an apologist for all your shortcomings. With all that disinterested affection, would it not be ungrateful in you if in her declining years you failed to reciprocate her love and honor her as your best, tried friend? We have no respect for a man or woman who neglects an aged mother. If you have a mother, love her, and do all in your power to make her happy.—*Christian at Work.*

SCHOLARS' NOTES.

(From International Question Book.)

LESSON XIII.—DECEMBER 29.

REVIEW.

GOLDEN TEXT.

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

DAILY READINGS.

M. Prov. 23:1-35.
T. Isa. 6:1-25.
W. 1 Cor. 3:9-27.
Th. Prov. 26:1-30.
F. Dan. 1:1-21.
Sa. Prov. 24:1-31.
Su. Rom. 6:1-23.

PERIOD.—Eighty years B.C. 1055 to 975.
PLACE.—Palestine, centering around Jerusalem.

PROPHETS.—Samuel, Nathan, Abijah, Gad.
KINGS.—David and Solomon.

QUESTIONS.

KING DAVID.

I. EARLY LIFE.—When and where was David born? His parents? His duties? His appearance? What feats of strength and skill did he perform? How was he introduced into Saul's court? Where and how did he spend the rest of his life till he was thirty years old?

II. THE SOLDIER.—What qualities did David show as a soldier? Name some of his battles and victories. Was he ever defeated? How did he organize his army? (1 Chron. 27.)

III. THE KING.—When was David made king? At what age? How long was his reign? In what two capitals? When was he made king over all Israel? How far did his kingdom extend? What was the state of the kingdom under him? What were his qualities as a king?

IV. THE POET.—What poems did David write? Was he the first great writer of hymns? For what use were many of the Psalms prepared? How can hymns written so long ago be helpful to us?

V. VARIOUS EXPERIENCES.—What were some of David's great trials in his early life? Did these grow out of his own faults? How did they work out good for him? What were some of the trials of his later life? Were these the fruit of his sins? Was his life on the whole a happy and successful life? How old was he when he died?

VI. RELIGIOUS LIFE.—What was the general character of David's religious life? Was he faultless? Was his on the whole a good, and noble, and sincerely religious life? What does God say of him? (1 Kings 15:5.) What did he do when he had fallen into sin? What does this show? What do you find in him to avoid? What to imitate?

KING SOLOMON.

I. EARLY LIFE.—When and where was Solomon born? The names of his father and mother? How old was he when he became king?

II. HIS WISDOM.—What great choice did he make? What is said of his wisdom? In what ways did he show it?

III. HIS KINGDOM.—Trace out on the map the extent of Solomon's kingdom. (1 Kings 4:20, 21; 2 Chron. 9:26.) What promise was fulfilled in this? (Gen. 15:18-21.) What do you know of its riches? its commerce? its power? its glory? Describe the visit of the Queen of Sheba.

IV. THE TEMPLE.—What was the great event of his reign? Give some description of the Temple. For what did Solomon pray in reference to it?

V. HIS WRITINGS.—What books of the Bible did Solomon write? What else did he write? What is the character of the Proverbs? What can you tell about the Book of Ecclesiastes?

VI. HIS FALL.—What led Solomon into sin? Into what sin did he fall? What sad consequences followed?

VII. CLOSE OF HIS LIFE.—How long did he reign? In what year did he die? At what age? Why was not the promise of long life fulfilled? What do you find in his life and character to imitate? What to avoid?

FIRST QUARTER.

STUDIES IN LUKE.

LESSON I.—JANUARY 5.

THE FORERUNNER ANNOUNCED.—Luke 1:5-17.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me."—Mal. 3:1.

HOME READINGS.

M. Luke 1:1-22.—The Forerunner Announced.
T. Mal. 3:1-18.—The Forerunner Foretold.
W. Phil. 2:1-18.—"Blameless and Harmless."
Th. Psalm. 141:1-10.—Prayer as Incense.
F. Heb. 1:1-14.—Ministering Spirits.
S. Num. 6:1-8.—The Law of the Nazarite.
S. 1 Kings 18:21-46.—The Work of Elijah.

LESSON PLAN.

I. The Childless Pair, vs. 5-7.
II. The Joyful Announcement, vs. 8-14.
III. The Honored Messenger, vs. 15-17.

TIME.—B. C. 6, toward the end of the reign of Herod the Great, king of Judea; Augustus Caesar, emperor of Rome.

PLACE.—Jerusalem, in the temple.

NOTE.—Our Saviour was born B.C. 4, or four years before the date from which we number our years A.D. (Anno Domini, the year of our Lord). If this mistake had not been made many centuries ago, the present year would have been A. D. 1894.

OPENING WORDS.

Luke begins his Gospel with a brief introduction (vs. 1-4), in which he gives his reason for writing and the sources upon which he had drawn for information. Then follows in the remainder of this first chapter a record of facts preceding and connected with the birth of Jesus which is found only in this Gospel. Our lesson to-day tells us of the parents of John the Baptist, and of the annunciation to them that they should have a son who would be the forerunner of the promised Messiah for whose coming the world was waiting.

HELP IN STUDYING THE LESSON.

V. 5. Herod.—Herod the Great, the founder of the Herod family. *Course of Abia*—one of the twenty-four classes into which the priests were divided, 1 Chron. 24:1, 4, 10. V. 6. *Righteousness before God*—in a righteous state as God saw them. *Walking*—habitually living. *Commandments*—moral precepts. *Ordinances*—rites and customs appointed by God. *Blameless*—without fault. V. 7. *Well stricken in years*—quite old. V. 8. *Before God*—at God's altar in the temple. V. 9. *His lot*—his appointed service, as arranged among the priests. *Incense*—a compound of sweet-smelling gums for burning. (See Ex. 30:1-10; Num. 16:1-40.) *The temple*—here the holy place. V. 10. *Without*—in the temple courts. V. 11. *An angel*—a heavenly messenger sent from God. V. 13. *Thy prayer*—for a son, and for the coming of the Messiah, *Is heard*—with favor, and shall be answered. V. 15. *Drink neither wine*—a Nazarite specially set apart to God's service. (See Num. 6:1-4.) *Filled with the Holy Ghost*—made holy and guided by him. V. 16. *Shall he turn*—cause to forsake their sins. V. 17. *Before him*—before the Messiah. *Elias*—Elijah. *To turn the hearts*—to heal family dissensions. *Prepared*—ready to receive the Messiah.

QUESTIONS.

INTRODUCTORY.—Who wrote this Gospel? What do you know about him? What other book in the New Testament did he write? Title of this lesson? Golden Text? Lesson Plan? Time? Place? Memory verses?

I. THE CHILDLESS PAIR, vs. 5-7. Who was Zacharias? Meaning of the course of Abia? From whom was Elizabeth descended? What was the character of this pair? What was lacking in their home?

II. THE JOYFUL ANNOUNCEMENT, vs. 8-14. What duty was assigned to Zacharias as a priest? Where was the incense burned? Where were the people during this service? What were they doing? Who appeared to Zacharias? How did the sight affect him? What joyful announcement did the angel make? What name was Zacharias to give his son? What should his birth bring to his parents? What to others?

III. THE HONORED MESSENGER, vs. 15-17.—What was this son to be in the sight of the Lord? What was foretold concerning his manner of life? What special blessing would be his? What would be the result of his preaching? Before whom would he go?

WHAT HAVE I LEARNED?

1. That there have always been good people in the world even in the most wicked times.
2. That we should seek to be blameless and pure in all our life.
3. That God sends his angels to comfort his people and minister to them.
4. That God both hears and answers prayer.
5. That while Christ our High Priest offers intercession for us within, we should be praying without.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW.

1. Who was Zacharias? Ans. A priest in the time of Herod the Great.
2. What was his character? Ans. He was righteous before God.
3. Who appeared to Zacharias in the temple? Ans. An angel of the Lord.
4. What did the angel promise him? Ans. A son who should be a prophet.
5. Who was this son? Ans. John the Baptist the forerunner of the Messiah.

LESSON CALENDAR.

(Fourth Quarter.)

- Oct. 6. The tribes united under David. 2 Sam. 5:1-12.
- Oct. 13. The Ark brought to Zion. 2 Sam. 6:1-12.
- Oct. 20. David's Thanksgiving Prayer. 2 Sam. 7:18-29.
- Oct. 27. Sin, Forgiveness, and Peace. Ps. 32:1-11.
- Nov. 3. David's Rebellious Son. 2 Sam. 15:1-12.
- Nov. 10. David's Grief for Absalom. 2 Sam. 18:18-33.
- Nov. 17. David's Last Words. 2 Sam. 23:1-7.
- Nov. 24. Solomon's Wise Choice. 1 Kings 3:5-15.
- Dec. 1. The Temple dedicated. 1 Kings 8:51-63.
- Dec. 8. Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. 1 Kings 10:1-13.
- Dec. 15. Solomon's Fall. 1 Kings 11:4-13.
- Dec. 22. Close of Solomon's Reign. 1 Kings 11:25-43.
- Dec. 29. Review and Temperance. Prov. 23:29-35.