

LETTERS FROM FORMOSA.

The following letters addressed to Rev. Dr. Wardrope, convener of Foreign Mission Committee, have been forwarded for publication.

MY DEAR BROTHER.—I have considered your communication of May 5th, and therein I find the following: "The Committee are not in a position to make any new appointments to Formosa, etc." Just abide by that, and let the Committee bear the responsibility of sending or not sending.

(1) I conscientiously state that another missionary is *not* required here now.

(2) Another man means for passage, ground, house, salary, etc., in a short time \$10,000.

(3) The more natives employed the better. *Ten* can be supported on the salary of one missionary. They do the work. *Four* of my old students taught in Oxford College and girls' school day by day with great skill. Please consider them missionaries and pray for them.

(4) Mr. Jamieson will soon be a *real* helper.

(5) Never think of putting two missionary families under the same roof.

(6) No need of another man; may need money for more chapels on east coast. Yours sincerely, G. L. MCKAY.

Tamsui, Formosa, July 1st, 1884.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have no doubt but you will be at this time anxious to know how affairs are with us in Formosa. For some time past the quiet routine of mission work and mission life has been disturbed by the rude alarms of cruel war. You will of course have seen by the public prints what has already been done by the French war ships in the contest with China. While the struggle was confined to the Tonquin territory, we could speak of it and read the report without much discomposure, but when the roar of the cannon comes to be heard almost at our own doors it is quite a different thing. No sooner did we think the matter was amicably settled than hostilities broke out afresh, and without much warning the port of Kelung, some ten miles distant from Tamsui, was bombarded, and since then Foo Chow also has been taken by the French. So far at Tamsui we have seen none of the French ships, but no one can tell the time when they may come to attempt an attack. The Chinese have been making preparations to oppose their entrance to this port, torpedoes have been laid at the mouth of the river, also several junks filled with stones have been sunk, and there is a report that they intend soon to block up the passage entirely. While these events have been taking place around us, we have been endeavouring as well as possible to care for the interests of our mission, but of course not a little anxious as to what the future may bring. A time of trouble such as this is fraught with danger to converts, preachers, and chapels; for the Chinese are a people easily excited, and if once roused to violence, no one can tell to what lengths they may go. Also the greater part of the people make no distinction between French, English, German, or any other European nation, but class them all as *barbarians*. So far we are glad to report all as quiet over our mission field. There have been threats of violence against converts, and one man reported that he had even seen Dr. McKay's head cut off, but fortunately these have so far ended in words. Dr. McKay caused proclamations to be posted up in all the towns and villages where we have chapels, stating that the missionaries have nothing to do with the war against the French, and that the head men of the villages would be held responsible for the safety of the mission property. These proclamations have already done much good in pacifying the people. We are glad to say that the Chinese officials have shown themselves willing to assist us in taking these precautions.

In regard to the mission work proper, it of course suffers considerable interruption, owing to the unsettled state of affairs. The preachers at the various stations have been advised to be as circumspect as possible in their intercourse with the people, and to avoid whatever would be likely to make disturbance. So far Dr. McKay has been exerting himself to do all that lies in his power for the protection of our people, and we can but trust ourselves and the future in God's hands. We hear and read many alarming reports, but this we know our God rules over all. It would not be pleasant for us to find that Tamsui was to be bombarded, nor to learn that Formosa was to be a French possession, yet such results may lie before us in the future. We can only pray that God will watch over and protect his own Church and people, overruling these events now taking place in this Empire for the greater extension of the Redeemer's Kingdom. We all believe that although the lesson is a hard one, it will in the end be for the good of China, for her rulers and officials have yet to lay aside much pride, ignorance, conceit and duplicity before they can properly fill the positions which they now occupy.

You may not have heard that a new chapel is being erected at one of the inland stations in memory of Dr. McKay's father, and is to be called the "Mackay Church." The station is bordering on the savage territory, and is counted the most dangerous. Here some time ago the preacher and a number of converts were murdered by the savages. The present chapel is to be a strong substantial stone building,

and is erected by subscriptions from preachers and converts in this mission field. Just now we hear it is advancing towards completion. We trust it will be another fort against the great enemy of souls, and that within its walls there may be trained many faithful soldiers of our great captain.

I am glad to say we all enjoy good health. Mrs. J. and I are still busy with the language, so far as these occasional distractions will permit us.

Still remember us all at the throne of Grace, and seek that God may bestow richest blessings upon this portion of his vineyard. We do not forget you, and all our many dear friends in Canada. We are glad to trace every onward movement of God's work amongst you.

Do not be afraid for our safety and welfare in these times of trial. We are resting on the Rock of Ages. Ps. xlv.

JOHN JAMIESON.

Tamsui, Sept. 1, 1884.

Sabbath School Teacher.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

Nov. 9. } THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON. { 1 Kings 10. 1884. } 1-13.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Behold a greater than Solomon is here."—Matt. 12:42.

TIME.—B. C. 995.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

Notes and Comments.—Ver. 1. "Queen of Sheba:" Where was Sheba? This question cannot be positively answered. There are two claimants for the honour, Ethiopia and Arabia, both countries have traditions connecting this queen with their history, and in both countries government by queens was common, for reasons, however, which we cannot detail here, it is pretty unanimously agreed that the Arabian Sheba is the one intended; "fame:" through "the name of the Lord:" with the reports of Solomon's wisdom and greatness had gone forth the statement that all this was from the blessing of Jehovah, the God whom he served; "to prove:" by asking questions to test his sagacity and wisdom.

Ver. 2. "Came:" the journey would be from twelve to fifteen hundred miles; in that region, even to-day, a journey of from two to three months; "great train:" a large train of beasts of burden and servants; "spices:" the Arabian Sheba was the great spice country of the ancient world; "gold," Ver. 10, "a hundred and twenty talents;" "precious stones:" no doubt of the character still found in Arabia; "all in her heart:" the thoughts and questions she had prepared beforehand.

Ver. 3. "Told her:" answered all her questions without an exception. There are Jewish traditions of the questions asked and answered, but we do not trouble teachers with them; they would only cause a waste of time to repeat to a class.

Vers. 4, 5. "Seen Solomon's wisdom:" i. e., the practical manifestation of it in the ordering of the affairs of the Kingdom, and in his personal accomplishments; "the house that he had built:" the royal palace; not the Lord's house, into which she was not permitted to enter; "meat:" the vast variety furnished for meals; "sitting-servants:" the apartments in the palace assigned to the servants or ministers; "attending:" or standing, probably these were a lower class than the preceding, as the standing would indicate; "apparel:" very gorgeous, doubtless provided by the King; "cup bearers:" whose duty was, among other things, to pour out the wine and present it to the King; "ascend:" the private passage from Solomon's palace, which must have been on a lower elevation—to the Temple; "no more spirit:" she was overpowered by all the vastness and splendour, see Daniel 10:17.

Vers. 6-7. "A true report:" but it had appeared so incredible that she had taken a long journey to test it; "the half was not told:" this report that appeared so exaggerated was really not half the truth; "prosperity:" or goodness, the original word may mean either.

Ver. 8. "Happy—these—which stand continually:" so of the servants of a far higher King does David speak in Psa. 84:4.

Ver. 9. It may have been true, as Jewish writers tell us, that the Queen was converted by the influence of Solomon to the worship of the true God, yet nothing is said of her offering sacrifice, which had she been converted she would certainly have done; "to do judgment:" not simply to live in ease and splendour.

Ver. 10. "She gave a hundred and twenty talents of gold:" about \$3,500,000, so it was prophesied; Psa. 72:10; "abundance of spices:" see on ver. 2. Ancient historians speak of the vastness of the spice trade.

Vers. 11, 12. These two verses are a parenthesis, they have really no connection with the narrative of the lesson, except as suggested by the mention of the Queen of Sheba's presents; "navy:" the ships were Solomon's but the sailors were subjects of Hiram; "almug trees:" generally supposed to be sandal wood, a fragrant tree, still very abundant in some districts of India; "pillars:" or balustrades; the balustrades of the stairways in the temple and in the palace were made of this wood; "harps:" the Jewish harp was of triangular shape, and ordinarily had ten strings; "psaltery:" also a stringed instrument of a triangular form.

Ver. 13. "Gave—all her desire:" so great a king as Solomon could not suffer the Queen of Sheba to exceed him in gifts, so he gave her anything she desired to possess as a memento her visit. Asking for presents is common in the East, and is practised alike by prince and peasant.

HINTS TO TEACHERS.

Topical Analysis.—(1) Wisdom sought, Ver. 1, 2, (2) Wisdom found, 3-7, (3) The blessedness of those who find wisdom, 8-13.

On the first topic picture this queen in her far-off realm hearing of the wonderful Hebrew King, of his wealth, his magnificence and especially of his wisdom, a wisdom which, as we judge, Solomon had publicly declared to be a special Divine gift, for the fame of Solomon was "concerning the name of the Lord," Ver. 1, and she determines to take the long journey, with all the risks and dangers attendant, to see this king, to find if his wisdom is really what was reported, and to prove him with hard questions. What her "hard questions" were we can only suppose, they were likely word puzzles in which eastern people did, and do still delight, but, however that may have been, it was to hear the wisdom of Solomon. The lesson that comes to us is very plain and is supplied by the Master Himself, "The queen of the South came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon and behold a greater than Solomon is here;" Matt. 12:42. Jesus Christ is Divine Wisdom incarnate. He is not only wise and true, He is the truth. We must then learn here that we should seek Divine Wisdom, and seek it where alone it can be found, in the life, the work, and the teachings of the Saviour. The wisdom sought by this woman was earthly; the wisdom Christ will give is eternal. Those who go to Jesus will be built up from this foundation with all the truths that make wise unto eternal life; "where shall wisdom be found?" only here; "therefore get this wisdom and with all thy getting get understanding."

On the second topic, we may show that here the seeker after wisdom did indeed find, and found so much more than she expected that she could say, "the half was not told me;" although that half was so wonderful that she would not believe unless she saw it with her own eyes. And the seeker after Divine Wisdom shall find. God hath promised and his promises are sure. "The Lord giveth wisdom," Prov. 2:6; "If any of you lack wisdom," see Jas. 1:5. Just as Solomon, in less than three of this quarter, asked wisdom of God and received it, so the true higher wisdom will be given to all who feel their need of it, and like the king, ask Him who not only can, but stands ready to bestow this blessed gift upon all who seek for it.

On the third topic much, very much might be said but we can only indicate a few thoughts. What did the Queen of Sheba find? More than she expected, far beyond her greatest thoughts was the magnificence and wisdom of the Hebrew king, and the seeker after Divine Wisdom, spiritual understanding, will find it in the service of Jesus with treasures of joy and peace and satisfaction, of which they had formed no conception. She received gifts from the king; she gave gifts to him, but the grandeur of what she had in return exceeded the presents she brought; so our king will give us out of His inexhaustible treasury all things that are right for us; temporal blessings, earthly wisdom and knowledge if to Him it seemeth good; but above all, spiritual blessings in princely abundance and power. Finally, show that *here was but an earthly temporary blessing*; she turned and went back to her own country, to the darkness of the heathenism, it may be, from which she came; as she went down the slopes of Zion into the Valley of the Jordan, and crossing its stream struck into the desert to her distant home, all the magnificence and glory of Solomon would die away, and would become only a memory; but the soul that has found and seen Jesus shall dwell in His presence, walk in the light and beauty of His countenance here, and when the border-line of time is passed, shall rise to the glory of His heavenly home, the glories which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man," 1 Cor. 2:9; and being changed into the same glory, shall abide with Him in an eternal increase of the glory of which Solomon's was only the faintest shadow.

Supplementary.—There is one lesson that must not be omitted, and it is best expressed in our Saviour's own words, before quoted: "A greater than Solomon is here," and if we refuse to listen to the wisdom of this Divine King, will not the Queen of the South "rise up in the judgment," and condemn us? How great are the privileges of our scholars, a thousand-fold greater than those of this ancient queen; let us take heed, greater privileges, greater responsibilities. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation," Heb 2:1-3.

INCIDENTAL TRUTHS AND TEACHINGS.

He that walketh with wise men shall be wise.

The honest seeker after truth shall find it.

The "hard questions" of our hearts can only be answered by Christ.

The highest wisdom is to be made wise unto salvation. The knowledge of God is a wisdom beyond all earthly compare.

Those who find Christ say that the half of His glory was not told them.

Solomon receiving the Queen of Sheba, a type of Christ. In the way he received her. In solving all her "hard questions." In showing her his glory. In accepting her gifts. In giving her greater gifts in return.

Main Lesson.—Get Wisdom (texts from the writings of Solomon, only.) Prov. 2:3, 13-17; 4:5-9; 7:4; 8:10, 11, 16:18; 19:8, 22:17, 18, 23:12-19-23; Ecc. 7:11, 12, 19; 9:16, 18.

THERE are 146 bequests for preaching special sermons in the churches of London.

At the beginning of the present year there were 2,280 newspapers and class journals issued in the United Kingdom. Of these 602 were in the metropolis, 1,220 in the provinces, 73 in Wales, 192 in Scotland, 113 in Ireland, and 20 in the Channel Islands. Liberal politics are advocated by 590; conservatives, 379; liberal-conservative, 54; independent or neutral, 1,235.