



LESSON,—SUNDAY, APRIL 4, 1909.

Peter and Cornelius.

Acts x., 1-20. Memory verses, 13-15. Read Acts X., 1—XL, 18.

Golden Text.

In every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him. Acts x., 35.

Home Readings.

- Monday, March 29.—Acts x., 1-16.
Tuesday, March 30.—Acts x., 17-33.
Wednesday, March 31.—Acts x., 34-43.
Thursday, April 1.—Acts xi., 1-18.
Friday, April 2.—Gal. iii., 7-14.
Saturday, April 3.—John iv., 1-14.
Sunday, April 4.—Isa. lx., 1-11.

FOR THE JUNIOR CLASSES.

In our lesson to-day we have the story of two dreams or visions. Visions we must call them, because they did not come during sleep as our dreams do, nor were they at a' like our dreams. When you fall asleep at night and dream, your dreams don't mean anything, do they? Yet in them you seem to see a great many things that would surprise you very much if they happened when you were awake. You would be surprised something like Cornelius was in our lesson to-day at the very strange thing he saw. Who knows anything about Cornelius? He was a Roman soldier, and the captain, or leader, of a band of about one hundred other soldiers. He was a very good man and worshipped and served God as well as he knew how. While he was earnestly praying one afternoon, what do you think happened? Why, one of God's angels came to bring him a message. Now, although Cornelius was a brave Roman soldier, he had never seen an angel before and he was quite frightened. But the angel told him how God had heard his prayers and had seen how kind and good he was to the poor, and how God had thought about him and now wanted him to learn more about God. So the angel told him to send for Peter who would teach Cornelius what he ought to do.

FOR THE SENIORS.

The lifelong habits and repugnance that Peter must have overcome in obedience to the vision are difficult for us to comprehend in this day. Nor was Peter alone in his sacrifice of personal feelings on this occasion. If it was hard for the Jew to ignore his ceremonial law and join company with the gentiles, it was hard for the Roman soldier, an officer of the conquering nation, to put aside social standing and receive with honor this Jewish fisherman who had lately been staying in the despised home of a tanner. Cornelius was evidently well prepared for the message that God was sending him. The importance of this story in the history of the church is great, and the care with which the historian records it is evidence that he considered it so. The story of the vision accorded to Cornelius is given four times (Acts x., 3-6, 22, 30-32; xi., 13, 14). It is evident also that Peter realized the importance of the step he was taking since he was careful to take with him those who would be accepted as competent witnesses (Acts x., 23; xi., 12). Moreover, it is the occasion of two direct and supernatural revelations of God's will. The brotherhood of man is as fundamental in the Christian religion as is the Fatherhood of God. It was proclaimed by Christ himself (Matt. xxiii., 8, 9). The giving of the Holy Spirit before baptism (Acts x., 44, 46, 47) should be sufficient to disprove any claim for saving efficacy in the baptism itself, yet the prompt attention given to this subject by Peter is proof of the very great importance which attached to this sacra-

ment in the mind of the apostles. Nor was an outward manifestation of the presence of God's spirit with a believer necessary before baptism was permitted as witness the case of the Samaritans who believed and were baptized under Philip's preaching (Acts viii., 11, 14-17). Belief only was needful before baptism was allowed. Nor was the laying on of hands recorded in the case of the Samaritans (verse 17), a preliminary to the reception of God's Holy Spirit by the gentiles in to-day's lesson. All of which goes to prove that God alone rules in His church, working according only to the dictates of His own divine will, and the soul that truly believes in Him is not barred from finding Him by any impossibility of priestly ministration whether in sacrament or the laying on of hands, yet that it is God's will that the sacraments be held in honor and His chosen servants on earth, such as Peter and his fellow apostles, be regarded with all due respect. The great truth that Peter enunciated at the beginning of his address (Acts x., 34, 35) should be given particular attention.

SELECTIONS.

The Lick Observatory is not built on the coast where fogs and mists at times obscure the heavens, but above all such obstructions, on top of Mt. Hamilton, where the air is clear. The vision of truth and duty does not come to the man who dwells always on the levels, where his sight is limited to self and self's interests with their obstructing mists, but it comes to the man who mounts to the heights where he can hold communion with God and receive His messages.—Tarbell's 'Guide.'

Is Peter's vision on the housetop,—sudden, astonishing, bewildering,—necessarily more divine than those daily compunctions, and hints, and dissatisfactions, and hauntings, of something wrong in his attitude toward men, with which Peter might have been visited every day for weeks past? We have no record of such things, but they are not difficult to conceive. Suppose Peter's mind had in many more common ways gotten turned toward this question of the relation of God to the Gentile, and it had kept vexing him, and he had felt distressed over it. Suppose that it kept returning to his mind in one shape or another until he had been worked up over it, and his whole being stirred and troubled over the question, until at last his mind was moving in an unwonted direction, focussing gradually upon a conclusion quite contrary to his original thought. In what possible respect can we suppose it less divine for God to use such means as these if He chose? At last comes the vision. Is it less divine because of the possible preparation of a slower and more unnoticed sort?—'S. S. Times.'

Peter plodding over the dusty hills to reach Cornelius, may seem to have lost the glory which was on his face while he sat and thought upon the vision, and caught glimpses of the essential nobleness of man—but the vision was at the soul of his journey all the time, and was what made his journey different from that of any peddler whom he met upon the road.—Phillips Brooks, in 'Visions and tasks.'

A Modern Instance.—From every nation on earth immigrants are pouring into America, men of all languages, beliefs, customs, helpful and hurtful, blessings and scourges. The work of home missions is to believe in all these, love them all and win them all for Jesus Christ.

'A million immigrants!
A million opportunities!
A million obligations!'
—Josiah Strong, D.D.

'The Christian churches in America stand face to face with a tremendous task. It is a challenge to their faith, their devotion, their zeal. The accomplishment of it will mean not only the ascendancy of Christianity in the homeland, but also the gaining of a position of vantage for world-wide evangelization.'—The Rev. E. E. Chivers, D.D.

Junior C. E. Topic.

Sunday, April 4.—Topic—A life lived for others. Acts ix., 36-43. (Consecration meeting.)

C. E. Topic.

Monday, March 29.—The great lesson: wisdom. Prov. i., 1-9.

Tuesday, March 30.—Obedience to God's Word. Prov. iii., 1-10.

Wednesday, March 31.—Avoidance of evil. Prov. iv., 14-27.

Thursday, April 1.—Diligence. Prov. vi., 6-11; xxiv., 33.

Friday, April 2.—Value of righteousness. Prov. xi., 1-11.

Saturday, April 3.—The value of silence. Prov. xxv., 8-15.

Sunday, April 4.—Topic—Life lessons for me from the book of Proverbs. Prov. viii., 1-17. (Consecration meeting.)

Religious News.

A missionary writes from Kodananal:—'Mrs. Macrae had sad news about two of the girls in her boarding-school lately. The mother was converted about four years ago, and baptized some time later. She suffered much persecution, as the father is strongly opposed to Christianity. About nine months back the two girls were sent to the boarding-school, and the elder one—about thirteen years of age—was very diligent in trying to learn to read. One day the father sent a woman under a false pretext to bring the two girls home, but he met them half-way, took them off to a village twelve miles distant, and married the elder one to a heathen man that very night. He also made arrangements to marry the little one the following week. The next day, when the poor woman came in expecting to see her children, she found that both were gone. We are praying that the Lord will turn this evil into good, and that these girls may be the means of telling the Gospel message in the places where they are. As, of old, God used the little captive maid, so He can use these girls.'

The Basel Mission tile works are known all over India and Ceylon. Last year 13,000,000 roof tiles, 500,000 floor tiles, 500,000 prest bricks, etc., were shipped to all parts of those countries. The workmen are native Christians, only the managers are German lay missionaries. The mission looked upon it as their duty to provide means of support for the natives who had left all for conscience's sake and to accustom them to steady work. The other industry successfully carried on by the mission is cotton cloth-weaving.

A missionary writes from Teheran: 'The work of the past two months has been full of encouragement. All the departments have been busy. More people have been attending the religious services this year than in any former year. The school never had more pupils. Five Moslem converts have been baptized. One of these is a prince, the son of a lieutenant-colonel of cavalry in the army; another a graduate of the boys' school, and now a teacher in it. Two of the others are women, one of them a pupil of the girls' school. The fifth is a man who came twenty-two days' journey in quest of baptism and instruction. A year or two ago he procured a Bible, and by reading it repeatedly had acquired a wonderful grasp of Christian doctrines. It was almost startling to hear him explain spiritual truths with an understanding seldom found in maturer Christians.'

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