

south of the lake, and three being detained at Uganda.

The Free Church Nyassa Mission is too far south of the Victoria Nyanza to render immediate help, though the time is coming when that lake must be connected by road, and ultimately canal, with the comparatively near Tanganyika. But, providentially, long before the receipt of the instructions sent at the end of October, Mr. Stewart would be well on his way, with native subordinates, to the London Missionary Society's two agents on Tanganyika. In his letter of the 8th July to Mr. Stevenson, chairman of the Nyassa sub-committee, he wrote: "Our intention is to start immediately after Dr. Laws' return from the Cape, and thoroughly to examine the district between latitude 11° south and the Kambwé. We shall then be in a position to decide where our principal station is to be. Having done this, we intend to push on to Lake Tanganyika. We will, of course, visit Mbeté, as you inform me the London Mission party is or will be there." By subsequent instructions Mr. Stewart would learn that it was desirable to meet Mr. Hoare to consult on the subject of a track-road from the north end of Nyassa to the south of Tanganyika. With a steamer on the latter, of a larger size than our own "Ilala," Christian civilization would command the London Missionary Society's lake as it already dominates Nyassa, and sweep away the slave-trade for ever, substituting Christian schools and churches and a lawful commerce.

The fact—for which, as individuals and a Church, we must express humble and hearty thanks to God—that the Free Church has been led to command the Zambesi, Shiré, and Nyassa approach to the heart of Africa, lays upon us the greater responsibility. It is not missionaries only, but the president of the Royal Geographical Society, who look forward to the time when the problem of "forming a line of communication, chiefly by water, between the mouth of the Zambesi and the Victoria Nyanza, and so to the Nile," shall be solved. These calamities, both on Tanganyika and Nyanza, shew that the key has been placed in the hands of the mission which commands the route from the Indian Ocean to the head of Nyassa, and is surveying a road to Tanganyika.

On the east coast our American and Baptist brethren are not idle. The Congo Mission of the latter is advancing. The result of the study by Dr. Means of our own and other like missions is that the American board have resolved to use the noble Otis bequest of nearly £200,000, partly in penetrating towards the Upper Zambesi from St. Paul Loanda, by the Coanza river, first establishing a mission on the elevated plateau of Bihé. Thus, from east as well as west and south, Africa is being taken possession of for Christ, amid hardship and toil, sickness and death, but with many a token of the favour of Him in whose name the enterprise goes on, and with the sure hope of glorious success.

THE officials of the London Missionary Society have received letters from their mission at Ujiji. Messrs. Hue and Hubley of that mission were alive and well when these letters were written, in June. There has been a great deal of anxiety as to the condition of affairs at this mission, no letters of later date than January having been received until now. It is hoped that some of the difficulties which the Arabs have put in the way of this mission have been removed by this time.

HERE is a short sermon that will do good to everybody. It is from the pen of Dr. S. Irenæus Prime, for a long time the editor of "The New York Observer." Dr. Prime has ever been known for his gentleness, and he has not as much to regret on the score of harshness as most of us have. But we give his language: "If I had another life to live and two thousand letters to write again, with God's help, I would not hurt the feelings of the humblest of all God's creatures honestly trying to do good. He might be as big as Daniel Lambert, and I would not call him fat and unctuous; he might be as lean as Calvin Edson, and I would not call him a bag of bones. I would count each day lost on which I had not made some hearts gladder than they were in the morning; on which I had not plucked up some thorns, or planted some flowers on the path of human life. No man can so live without enjoying life. Dogs will snarl at him, but angels are around him. He may never have riches or fame, but better than both are friends and God."

SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

LESSON I.

Jan. 4. } THE INFANT JESUS. { Matt. ii. 1-12.
1880. }

GOLDEN TEXT.—"For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given."—Isa. ix. 6.

HOME STUDIES.

M. Luke i. 26-33..... The Annunciation.
T. Luke i. 46-56..... Mary's Song.
W. Luke ii. 1-20..... Birth of Christ.
Th. Matt. i. 1-25..... Jesus the Saviour.
F. Mic. v. 1-7..... Out of Bethlehem.
S. Luke ii. 21-38..... Presentation in the Temple.
Sab. Matt. ii. 1-12..... Infant Messiah.

HELPS TO STUDY.

We now enter upon a course of studies in the history of the Saviour during His sojourn on earth, in the body.

All the sacred writings point more or less directly to Christ, but it is in the first four books of the New Testament that we are, as it were, brought face to face with Him in the flesh.

These four books are not four different Gospels, but the one Gospel, written by four different men: "The Gospel, according to Matthew," "The Gospel, according to Mark," "The Gospel, according to Luke," "The Gospel, according to John."

These men wrote under divine inspiration, and independently of each other. Each records some sayings and doings of our Lord not mentioned by the others, but the accounts are never contradictory. It has been observed that in Matthew we find most prominently what Christ said; in Mark, what He did; and in Luke and John, how He felt.

Matthew was one of the twelve apostles. He had formerly been a publican or tax-gatherer (Matt. ix. 9; x. 3), and is identical with the person mentioned in Mark ii. 14, under the name of Levi, the son of Alphaeus. He accompanied the Saviour during the greater part of His public ministry and seems to have written this book shortly after the Ascension. Writing primarily for the Jews, he gives minute details of circumstances connected with the Saviour's birth, which are not mentioned by any of the other evangelists, but which are of much value in identifying Jesus of Nazareth with the Messiah of prophecy.

Although Matthew wrote in the first place for the Jews, he wrote not for them alone, but for us also. In our lesson we find representatives of two classes of people, distinguished from each other by their attitude towards Christ. These two classes still exist, viz.: those who honestly and anxiously seek Christ—represented in the lesson by the wise men; and those who seek Him hypocritically or with an evil design—represented by Herod. The following would therefore be a suitable division: (1) Seeking and Finding, (2) Seeking in Vain.

I. SEEKING AND FINDING.—Under this head four subdivisions may be made, viz.: (1) The Sought One, (2) The True Seekers, (3) Their Object, (4) Their Success.

1. The Sought One.—ver. 1. He was the Creator and upholder of the universe, but He had at this time just entered his estate of humiliation, and the obscurity of His position rendered a search necessary.

Now when Jesus was born. In chap. i. 21, we are told why He was called by that name. Joshua or Jesus means Saviour.

In Bethlehem of Judea. So called to distinguish it from another Bethlehem, in Zebulun. It was situated about six miles southwest from Jerusalem, and was the birthplace of David.

2. The True Seekers.—vers. 1, 2. Wise men. They belonged to a sacred order to be found at and before that time in different countries of Asia. They were well advanced in some sciences, especially Astronomy, and any unusual appearance among the stars would at once attract their notice. As to how they knew the meaning of "the star" we can only suppose that they received special illumination and direction from Heaven.

From the east. Jacobus thinks they may have come from Chaldea, the native land of Abraham.

3. Their Object.—ver. 2. Perhaps they did not recognize Christ as the Saviour, or feel their own need of Him in that capacity. They spoke of Him merely as King of the Jews, but there is at least a close analogy between these wise men and the true seekers in all ages. They came

To worship Him, thus recognizing His divinity, and they may have been afterwards more fully enlightened.

4. Their Success.—vers. 9-11. Having searched for Him in vain among the great ones of the earth—kings, priests, and scribes—they once more cast their eyes upwards and rejoiced with exceeding great joy to find again the star which had formerly led them. It is from above that the light comes that leads to Christ; and those who really and honestly seek Him shall certainly find Him. They may not be rich enough to bring Him

"Gems from the mountain and pearls from the ocean,
Myrrh from the forest and gold from the mine,"

but they give Him their hearts, and that is what He values most.

II. SEEKING IN VAIN.—There are some who seek Christ, in a sort of a way, and do not find Him, e.g., (a) those who seek some one to save them from punishment but not from sin; (b) those who wish to be saved some time, but not at present. Augustine was at one time in the habit of praying, "O Lord save me, but not now." That was not a very long prayer, but he soon found that he had to make it shorter. (c) Others make a pretended search for Christ, in order to injure His cause. None of these can find Him. Of this part of the lesson also, four divisions may be made: (1) The False Seeker, (2) His Pretended Object, (3) His Real Object, (4) His Failure.

1. The False Seeker.—vers. 3-8. Herod the King. This was "Herod the Great," noted for the usually incongruous qualities of bravery and cruelty.

He was troubled lest the kingdom should be taken away from him. He had got it through violence and bloodshed, and would fight even against God to retain it. If he believed that a prophecy, predicting the birth of a "King of the Jews" at that time, would be fulfilled, he ought also to believe that it would be utterly useless for him to attempt to hinder that "King" from coming to the throne.

2. His Pretended Object.—ver. 8. In order to induce the wise men to bring him word again after they should have found the young child he stated his object to be,

That I may come and worship Him also; but this was very far from being his real object. "God saw and heard these plans of Herod, and He knows all the secret devices of iniquity, and all the motives and purposes of every heart.—Jacobus.

3. His Real Object.—This was nothing more or less than the destruction of the person whom he supposed to be his rival. In contemplating the horrible crime recorded in vers. 16-18 of this same chapter, one can scarcely wonder more at the tyrant's cruelty than at his folly.

4. His Failure.—ver. 12. Who can contend against God? Herod, with all his schemes and plans, failed utterly. The wise men did not return to him, but being warned of God in a dream, departed into their own country another way. He died miserably very shortly after the brutal "massacre of the innocents," and the sceptre for which he seemed ready at any moment to barter his soul was thus torn from his grasp.

BETHLEHEM.

With early morning we left Hebron, and made our noon-tide stop at the Pools of Solomon. From the Pools our route was northward, over a rugged country of broken limestone hills, to Bethlehem. It was startling to find that, so far back in the world's history, skilful engineering conveyed water from these reservoirs to Jerusalem. They seemed to lie in a hollow, while the temple stood on a platform 2,500 feet above the sea. But we followed the aqueduct around the mountain: des all the way to Bethlehem to which it yet carries water.

We had before seen Bethlehem at a distance, resting upon the ridge, terraced and olive-clad, which pushes itself westward from the lofty upland, but we now first entered it. The churches and monasteries, which cluster about the spot held to be the scene of the Saviour's birth, wear the aspect of a massive fortress, and such indeed they are, built to resist the attack of the Moslem oppressor. Two of the three gateways to the venerable church are built up and the third is narrowed to the smallest dimensions, to be the more easily defended in case of attack.

As we rode through the streets of Bethlehem (now Beit-lahm), a village of three thousand people, almost all Christians, our spirits rose and gladness filled our hearts. Sacred thoughts made the soul rejoice. After the Mohammedan bigotry of Hebron, the Christian atmosphere of Bethlehem is welcome to the traveller, even though it be a poor form of Christianity which meets him. Poor as it is, it makes the streets more clean, the men more frank, the women fairer and more free. The scowls of the Hebron rabble are replaced by smiling looks of welcome. The Mohammedan quarter was destroyed by the rough hand of Ibrahim Pasha, in 1834, and few followers of the prophet now live in Beit-lahm.

The huge pile of buildings at the eastern end of the ridge embraces three distinct and somewhat hostile convents, the Greek, the Armenian and the Latin. It was to the last that we turned our horses' heads. The crosses on the tombs in front of the church were grateful to our eyes, telling of faith in Christ—our Christ, and the kindly welcome to the Latin convent which met us made us feel restfully at home. And who would not feel restfully at home in the spot where Jesus, the Christ, the Saviour took our nature and, for us, became a babe—the Babe of Bethlehem? The sloping fields around spoke to us of Ruth gleaning in the fields of Boaz, and of David feeding his flocks and singing "Jehovah is my Shepherd;" but even these memories paled, as stars at day-dawn, before the thought of the rising of the Sun of Righteousness.

The magnetic centre of Bethlehem, around which cluster the churches and convents, is the grotto or cave, which has been recognized since the second century as the scene of the Saviour's birth. The Empress Helena, the mother of Constantine, in the year 327, built over it the Basilica which now covers it. Hence this is the oldest Christian church in the world. This venerable building, with its nave and pillared aisles that have echoed Christian worship for fifteen hundred and fifty-two years, might well attract pilgrims, but the attraction lies in the grotto beneath its choir. This grotto is reached by either of two stone staircases and is known as the Chapel of the Nativity.

It is a low vault, hewn in the solid rock, thirty-eight feet long and eleven wide. In a semi-circular recess, at its eastern end, a silver star is set into a marble slab in the pavement, on which are cut the words, "HIC DE VIRGINE MARIA JESUS CHRISTUS NATUS EST,"—"Here Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary."

That this is literally true, we may not say, but we may believe that this church stands over the spot where stood the house in the stable of which was born the Saviour of men. Nor is it impossible that this grotto was the cave stable of that house.

A place more tenderly touching the heart of the Christian is not to be found the wide world over.—J. W. D. in Westminster Teacher.

THE "Westminster Teacher" supplies the following hints on the study of the Gospel according to Matthew: 1. Read the Gospel through without regard to chapter or verse. This will take less than three hours. 2. Remember that it contains the life of Christ. 3. Learn all you can about its author. 4. Study its particular aim as distinct from that of the other Gospels. 5. Compare the account of Matthew with those of the other evangelists.