

CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR.

CONDUCTED BY S. JOHN DUNCAN-CLARK.

WORLD'S O. E. PRAYER CHAIN, SUBJECT FOR JULY:—"Pray that the fellowship typified by the Christian Endeavor movement, based upon fidelity to Christ and loyalty to one's own Church may prevail, and that it may be greatly promoted by the International Convention at Washington."

Books and Reading.

DAILY READINGS.

First Day—Read to remember—Prov. iii. 1-6.

Second Day—Read understandingly—Neh. viii. 1-8.

Third Day—Read zealously—Acts viii. 26-39.

Fourth Day—Burn the bad books—Acts xix. 13-20.

Fifth Day—Choose wise books—Eccl. xii. 8-14.

Sixth Day—The Book of books—2 Tim. iii. 10-17.

PRAYER MEETING TOPIC, July 19—BOOKS AND READING; HOW TO GET GOOD THEREFROM.—Prov. iii. 13-23; 1 Tim. iv. 13.

BOOKS.—Next to men themselves, books are either the greatest friends or the greatest enemies of mankind. Books are not mere aggregations of pages in pasteboard covers, books are concrete thought, and since thought is at the foundation of character, and the source of action, their relation to human affairs is of the greatest importance. For this reason one should be as careful in choosing his books, as he is in selecting his life companions. Ruskin in his beautiful essay entitled "*Sesame and Lillies*," which I would advise every one to read, divides books into two great classes, the books of the hour, and the books of all time; each of these he again subdivides into good and bad. The good of both classes have their place and purpose to fulfil. The one is useful for the moment, telling us perhaps the facts of passing events, or happily and healthfully whiling away the weary hour. But they are not to be counted as "books" in the fullest sense of the word, they are merely the multiplications of the pleasant talk of some person whom we could not otherwise hear. "A book is written" says Ruskin "not to multiply the voice merely, not to carry it merely, but to preserve it. The author has something to say which he perceives to be true and useful, or helpfully beautiful. So far as he knows, no one has yet said it; so far as he knows, no one else can say it. He is bound to say it, clearly and melodiously if he may; clearly, at all events. In the sum of his life he finds this to be the thing, or group of things, manifest to him;—this the piece of true knowledge, or sight, which his share of sunshine and earth has permitted him to siege. He would fain set it down forever; engrave it on rock, if he could; saying, 'This is the best of me; for the rest, I ate, and drank, and slept, loved and hated like another; my life was as the vapor, and is not; but this I saw and knew; this, if anything of mine; is worth you memory.' That is his 'writing'; it is, in his small human way, and with whatever degree of true inspiration is in him, his inscription or Scripture. That is a 'book.'" These are wise words, and words to be heeded. Let us cultivate the friendship of good books for all time, giving them first place in our reading, and allowing the books of the hour, good though they be, to stand as men chance companions, pleasant for the gossip of a passing moment.

READING.—Reading is an art that must be cultivated. To understand the surface meaning of certain words in certain order is not to read. To read is to get at the writer's thought, and the first question to settle before reading is whether the writer's thought is worth getting at. This being so we should discriminate in what we read; we should read with a purpose; and read with a plan. If you prefer the company of the newspaper Sojourner, to the wisdom of Socrates or Marcus Aurelius, it is an indication that your mental digestion is out of order and needs a tonic. Exert your will power, and compel yourself to choose the books you intend to read from those that the flight of years has stamped with the mark of permanence. Soon you will find your taste growing under the training, to crave for such substantial food, and to despise the sweetened dainties of the ephemeral press. In all this we have not mentioned the one great Book, the Bible. It is of course supreme; and no other course of reading will so effectively train our minds to reject the useless and harmful, and to seek the best and most helpful in literature, as a study of the Divine Word. We cannot do better than close with the counsel of the Master, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have Eternal Life and they are they which testify of Me."

The latest enlargement in Christian Endeavor is in the Senior Society. It is composed of older Christians and graduates from Young People's Society. The pledge of the Senior Society is made applicable to the mid-week prayer meeting. The society holds no meetings of its own and its purpose is wholly to strengthen the mid-week church services and to retain the interest of the older Christians in active church work.

FOR THE SABBATH SCHOOL.

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International S. S. Lesson.

LESSON III.—THE ARK BROUGHT TO JERUSALEM.—JULY 19

(2 Sam. vi. 1-12.)

GOLDEN TEXT.—"O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee." Ps. lxxxiv. 12.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—National Religion.

ANALYSIS.—

The Ark
Uzzah's
The Blessing

SOUGHT, v. 1-5.
IN, v. 6-10.
SECURED, v. 11, 12.

TIME AND PLACES.—B. C. 1047. Kirjath-jearim or Baale of Judah; Nachon's threshing floor; the home of Obbededom, near Mount Zion.

INTRODUCTORY.—The multiplication of David's wives and a war with the Philistines are the two events noted between the last lesson and this. David brought the ark to Jerusalem because that had become the political center of a nation the government of which was understood to be in the hands of God. God's "house" and the king's house should be close together, if the king was to God's vicegerent.

VERSE BY VERSE.—V. 1 "All the chosen men."—These are always "chosen men" in all communities, who have made themselves such by their own choice of that which is noblest, truest and most knowing to God. Would you be one of God's "chosen men?" You may be, if you choose.

2. "To bring up the ark of God."—The ark in those days was visible manifestation of God's presence, the national emblem of religion. For a long time it had been neglected and forgotten, and God had lost His place in the life of His people. Now David went to bring it up again to Zion. We, as servants of God, are charged with this duty in our civic and national life, of keeping prominent the fact that God rules, and that all human legislators and governors owe to Him and His laws their first allegiance.

3. "A new cart."—It was a vehicle specially constructed, and doubtless carefully made for the sacred duty it had to perform; but it was a human device, and not God's plan for the carrying of the ark; and this neglect to follow the divine method was the one of a number of causes that resulted in the death of Uzzah. How many "new carts," are made to-day to do God's work. Human schemes, ingenious contrivances, and worldly wise methods of all kinds are enlisted in the cause of Christ and service of the sanctuary; and the results are similar. The work is hindered and delayed, and those who thus attempt it become often spiritually dead.

5. "Played before the lord."—True religion is a joyful thing, and they who would make it otherwise are liars on the name and character of God. Of course the religion of Jesus Christ is not frivolous, but on the other hand it is not funereal. Reverence and solemnity need never exclude happiness and joy.

V. 6. "Uzzah took hold of it."—Uzzah's sin was irreverence. That he failed to recognize the sanctity of the ark, and not he only, but David as well, is evident from their disobedience to God's instructions as to the method of carrying it. This spirit of irreverence required to be checked, because it threatened safety of the nation. Had the ark been carried into Zion under an inadequate appreciation of its awful holiness, disaster might have followed its presence as it did in the Philistine cities. Thus Uzzah became a warning to the people, and fell a victim to his rashness, in accordance with God's law, (Num. iv. 15.)

V. 9. "How shall the ark of the Lord come to me?"—We see evidences of the salutary effect produced by Uzzah's death in those words of David. The red solemnity of the work he is doing now dawns upon him with increased force, and he fears to go further, until he knows more definitely God's will and way for the accomplishment of this noble purpose.

V. 11. "The Lord blessed Obbededom."—This is the natural result of a reverent recognition of God's presence in the home. Then the ark of God could be but in one place at one time; to-day every believer is an ark of God, and should be a source of blessing wherever he may dwell.

V. 12. "Brought up the ark."—No doubt David had improved those three months by finding out God's plan for doing the work, and now returned to Obbededom's house ready to follow the Divine guidance, with the result of unqualified success. Do not be discouraged if your work, that you think is for God, fails. Get back to God; give up your own cherished plans, learn His way; and then return to the work, ready to be lead and guided in all things by the Holy Ghost.