

Sabbath School Teacher.

LESSON XIX.

May 11, 1873.

THE REPORT FROM EGYPT.

Gen. xlii. 29-38.

COMMIT TO MEMORY VERSES 35, 36.

PARALLEL PASSAGES.—Rom. xii. 17, 20, 21; Ps. liii. 5.

With vs. 29, 30, read Prov. xxii. 5, and xviii. 19; with v. 31-38, Matt. vii. 2; with v. 34, Ps. ix. 12; with v. 35, ch. xliii. 21; with v. 36, Ps. xxxiv. 19; with v. 37, ch. xliii. 9; with v. 38, Rom. viii. 38.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—The way of transgressors is hard (Prov. xliii. 15).

INTRODUCTION.—Famine in Canaan (v. 1), Jacob's sons helpless—get advice from Jacob (v. 2), and go to Egypt for corn—all but Benjamin (v. 4), the only child of Rachel left.

Unconsciously the brothers fulfil Joseph's dreams (v. 6). He knew them; they did not know him. Twenty years would not change ten men fully grown, as they would a lad. They in the garb in which he saw them last; he, with shaven head, and beard, Egyptian dress, and studied Egyptian speech (v. 12), and still more, never expected to be there, is not recognized.

He proceeds to test them, find out how Benjamin is treated by them, and to recall to them the wrong they had done him, under color of a charge—spies—so that he can imprison them. They are completely in his power. What was a dream is now a reality. He learns regarding his father and Benjamin, and after three days' confinement sends them away with food, keeping Simeon as a hostage for their return with Benjamin. Possibly he remembered him as particularly hard upon him (see ch. xli. 5). They did not accept his proposal to send back one (v. 16).

His object was served: they remembered their sin (v. 21), and owned it to one another, in his presence: Reuben acts as an outside conscience (v. 22). Joseph hears; is moved; binds Simeon; is rough in manner, but most kind in meaning (v. 25, 27, 28).

So God often does with men. He seems to wound when he is healing; and his very mercies sometimes perplex us.

They return to their father; and we can witness the interview, as it were, in this simple history. We know the facts already, and we can now remark whatever is worthy of notice in their report, and the family council that followed.

I. THEY TELL THE TRUTH.—They had been reminded of the sin regarding Joseph, and had connected their present trouble with it, as retribution; and they tell the trouble to Jacob. He had been their adviser when they were lacking in vain in each others' faces, and did not know what to do.

Yet they do not put in every minute point; for example, they omit the offer to send one for Benjamin. Yet they probably declined that for this, among other reasons, that the shock of one returning would have been dreadful to their aged father. Omission is not error, remember. And they mention Joseph's suggestion that if proved true men they might "traffic in the land." But the historian omits that, in his account of the interview. Yet no one doubts that he tells the truth, or quarrels with the consistency of the two accounts. But many objections to Scripture, as in the Gospels, for example, are founded exactly on such omissions.

II. JOSEPH APPEARS WELL IN THEIR REPORT, as ruler of Egypt.—He had a store of corn, for the Egyptians. It was humane to sell to others; but for their own food, not for trade. He sees the foreigners himself, and gives a "permit" to buy. He is in their eyes the "lord of the land"—he is vigilant. They came from a quarter whence Egypt had suffered; spies were commonly sent before an invasion (Numb. xxi. 32; Josh. ii. 1). He uses precautions becoming the lord of the land; acts in character; does not wish them to recognize him, for the present.

III. HE APPEARS WELL ALSO, AS WE CAN SEE HIM, as the son of Jacob. He had good cause to be angry with them. It is impossible to say how far this just anger moved him at first.

He had good cause to suspect, when the ten are there without Benjamin, "Have they made away with him also?" He is naturally concerned about his own brother. His charge—"spies"—though feigned, yet awakens conscience to their real guilt, and though they can indignantly deny this, they lack courage, because they do know of a great crime (and it had to do with Egypt), of which they do not suppose he is aware.

He could not take money from his own family; yet to have declined it, or openly returned it, would have raised surprise, and enquiry. The plan adopted kept alive concern, and made them think (v. 35). To arouse thought it is hard—to be made to think, needful to all good. See Isa. i. 8. He does not put Reuben in prison. Reuben meant well. He puts the next in age.

IV. But most of all God's controlling hand appears in all this. (a) Joseph hears the confession of their remorse for selling him, when they did not know that he understood them. "an interpreter" (v. 3) was employed.

(b) It was fitted to deepen remorse that they must say to Joseph and then to their father, "Our sin is not." How—they know too well.

(c) Still more must they feel when Jacob, old, impatient, stunned in his grief, (needing to say something) cries out, "Mo have ye bereaved." It was true as to Joseph. Perhaps he had begun to suspect it. In the same hasty way he says (v. 38), "My son shall not go down with you." Indeed in excitement. All men are inclined to be hasty; Reuben, with less guilt on his conscience, dares more than the rest. He will go and be responsible, even with his

sons, for Benjamin's return, a strong rather than a satisfying proposal, for obvious reasons.

(d) But it is darkest with Jacob before daylight. It is his extremity; God's opportunity. He is preparing plenty for the family; and he is preparing them for it.

From all this a teacher may bring many lessons, such as these.

(a) The terror of an evil conscience. Why did they look in each other's faces at the first? "Thou art corn." Ah! yes, but "in Egypt!" Joseph was sold there! And so when charged with another thing altogether, conscience brings, through twenty years, the sin against Joseph.

(b) The certainty of God's purpose. Joseph dreamed—Pharaoh dreamed—because certain events were to come. Long delay, but they do come. Yet men did not mean to bring them about. Nor did they feel constrained. They were acting freely. God is taking his way of feeding Jacob's family, teaching them, even leading Joseph to a higher level.

(c) The reading of all this should awaken us.

We have one "not ashamed to call us brethren." How are we treating him? If not believing him, "we are verily guilty concerning our brother." We reject him. "Be sure your sin will find you out." Numb. xxxii. 23. It must be mourned for here, or for ever. But if the Lord is showing us our sin, even by painful ways, let us be thankful. It is a sign of good to us. Let us confess our sin. "He is faithful," &c. 1 John. i. 9.

ILLUSTRATION.

The abundant supply of grain and other produce gave great advantages to Egypt, in the abundance of the necessities of life, and the profits of the surplus, for Egypt was a granary, where from the earliest times, all people felt sure of finding a plentiful store of corn. The right of exportation, and the sale of superfluous product belonged exclusively to the government; which did not interfere with the peasants regarding the nature of the produce they cultivated.—Wilkinson (Condensed), vol. 11. p. 3.

TESTIMONY FOR CHRISTIANITY.

Newton was a Christian! Newton, whose mind burst forth from the fetters fastened by nature upon our finite conceptions—Newton, whose science was truth, and the foundation of whose knowledge it was philosophy—not those visionary and arrogant presumptions which too often usurp its name, but philosophy resting upon the basis of mathematics, which, like figures, cannot lie—Newton, who carried the law and rule to the utmost barriers of creation, and explored the principles by which all created matter exists and is held together.

But this extraordinary man, in the mighty reach of his mind, overlooked, perhaps, the error which a minutest investigation of the created things of the earth might have taught him.—What shall then be said of the great Mr. Boyle, who looked into the organic structure of all matter, even to the inanimate substances which the foot treads upon? Such a man may have been qualified to look up through nature to nature's God. Yet the result of all his contemplations was the most confirmed and fervent belief in all which the atheist holds in contempt, as despicable and drivelling superstition.

But this error might, perhaps, arise from a want of due attention to the foundations of human judgment, and the structure of that understanding which God has given us for the investigation of truth. Let that question be answered by Mr. Locke, who, to the highest pitch of adoration and devotion, was a Christian—Mr. Locke, whose office was to detect the errors of thinking, by going up to the very fountains of thought, and to direct into the proper track of reasoning the delirious mind of man, by showing him its whole process, from the first perceptions of sense to the last conclusions of ratiocination; putting a rein upon false opinion, by practical rules for the conduct of human judgment.

But these men, it may be said, were only deep thinkers, and lived in their closets, unaccustomed to the traffic of the world, and to the laws which practically regulate mankind. Gentlemen! in the place where we now sit to administer the justice of this great country, the never-to-be forgotten Matthew Hale presided; whose faith in Christianity is an exalted commentary upon its truth and reason, and whose life was a glorious example of its fruits; whose justice, drawn from the pure fountains of the Christian dispensation, will be, in all ages, a subject of the highest reverence and admiration.

But it is said that the Christian fable is but the tale of the more ancient superstitions of the world, and may be easily detected by a proper understanding of the mythologies of the heathen. Did Milton understand those mythologies? No. They were the subject of his immortal song, and though shut out from all recurrence to them, he poured forth from the stores of a memory rich with all that man ever knew, and laid them in their order as the illustration of real and exalted faith, the unquestionable source of that fervid genius which has cast a kind of shade upon all the other works of man.

"He passed the bounds of flaming space, Where two angels tremble while they gaze. He saw, till blasted with excess of light, He closed his eyes in endless night."

But it was the light of the body only that was extinguished; "the celestial light shone inward and qualified him to justify the ways of God to man."

Thus you find all that is great, or wise, or splendid, or illustrious, amongst created beings; all the minds gifted beyond ordinary nature, if not inspired by its Universal Author for the advancement and dignity of the world, though divided by distant ages, and by clashing opinions, yet unite, as it were, in one sublime chorus to celebrate the truths of Christianity, and lay upon its holy altars the most fervent offerings of their immortal wisdom.—Lord Krishna.

Our Young Folks.

A DREAM FULFILLED.

Dora was a dreamer. She liked nothing better than sitting by the fire with little to do but to think. She would sit with folded hands, looking into the blaze, and thinking of many strange fancies for hours together, if she were not disturbed. Those who spoke to her then would sometimes smile at the absent look in her eyes, and the vague answers which she gave to simple questions. The fact was that, when she was dreaming, it was difficult to recall her thoughts, and fix them upon the commonplace subjects to which the questions referred. The consequence was that some very absurd things were occasionally uttered.

"Dora, what is the time?" asked her mother once.

"A blue mountain lake," replied Dora dreamily.

Of course there was a merry laugh at Dora's expense, which brought the color to her cheeks, and caused her to put away her dreams for that day. But she loved them too well to deprive herself of them for long together. Indeed they were constantly in her thoughts. The first thing in the morning, as soon as she was awake she commenced her castle-building. All the day her fancies were not far from her. When she was at work, her mind was roaming far and wide; and you will not be surprised to learn that often her work was not as well done as it should have been. When she went to bed at night, she often lay thinking instead of going to sleep, which would have been the more sensible way.

And yet her thoughts were good ones. She was all the time dreaming, not of her own pleasure, but of what she might do for others. The only thing was that she lost much time and was no nearer to the accomplishment of the good that she wished to do. But Dora had a cousin, who came to visit her just at the time when her coming was of very great service. She did not laugh at Dora nor call her names as her brothers did. But she quietly watched her, and noticed all that she said and did until she understood what was passing in the dreamer's mind. And then she spoke to her.

"Dora, dear, are they very happy thoughts which you have when you are so quiet?"

"Yes; they make me happy."

"But you do not mean to be always content with dreaming, do you?"

"No. I hope some day my dreams will be realities."

But if they are, you will have to do much of it yourself, and at present you do not seem to have begun to accomplish what you wish."

"But can I begin, Mary?" asked Dora, wistfully, "I should be so thankful if there were any way, but I see none."

"There is only one way, Dora. It is the only way known to me by which we can accomplish any of the works which we long to do—it is to do faithfully, and conscientiously the duty that lies nearest to us."

"But I do not see how that can help me," said Dora.

"It will do so, nevertheless, dear. But will you tell me your secret?"

Dora blushed. She did not like to talk about the things that were so frequently in her thoughts. She had never told anyone, partly because she was afraid of being laughed at, and partly because she liked to keep her own secrets. But she knew that her cousin would not laugh at her, though she might think her very ambitious and even presumptuous.

"Do not tell me if you would much rather not, dear," said Mary, seeing that she hesitated.

"Yes, I will tell you," said Dora; "and then perhaps you can advise me what to do. Ever since I went to the seaside with mother, I have thought of a good work which I should like to do, and which I will do if ever I am rich. You know we went into Wales, and saw the glorious mountains and lakes, and waterfalls, as well as the beautiful sea. I was not well when I went, but I got well almost directly I arrived. I think it was partly the sea-air, and I am sure it was partly the beauty of the place that did me good; and I wished I could take every invalid whom I knew to the same place, and then I sat and thought how tenderly I would nurse them, and what nice things I would provide for them, and how delightful it would be to see the color come into their faces, and the brightness to their eyes, and know that they were almost certain to recover. That is what I think of still. In my thoughts I can see the place, with shady glens, and happy people resting in them. I can see them round my table, too, and sometimes I can almost hear them singing hymns in the evening. O Mary! it is lovely, lovely! I feel as if I would almost give my life to have it come true. Do you think God will let me do it some day? Or is it wrong of me to think so much about it?"

"I do not think it is wrong, dear," said Mary gently. "I cannot, of course, tell whether God will let you do it. I hope He may, if it would be a good thing. But I am sure it is not right of you to do nothing but dream, and as long as you can content yourself with that you will be as far as over from what you wish."

"Tell me what to do, Mary."

"I have told you already. Do as well as you can every duty which God sends you. Tell Him what you wish, and ask His blessing upon it. Then read books about nursing when you have the opportunity to do so, and when any people round about you are sick try to nurse them. By these means you will be prepared for the work which you hope to do in the future."

"Thank you, Mary, I will try to do as you say."

Years afterward, Dora remembered this conversation with gratitude. There came a day of great joy to her. She had by this time not only read, but written several books about the best ways of nursing sick people, and the doctors said that she herself was a very good nurse, and that if any one could bring those who were ill back to life again it would be Dora. That was because she always prayed for her patients,

and all because by hard work and unweary study she had made herself thoroughly efficient.

It was in consequence of this that several ladies and gentlemen gladly gave their money to help Dora establish just the home in just the place of which she had often dreamed. So it all came true; only Dora felt even more happy and thankful than in her girlhood's days she knew how to feel.

I have told you this story in case any of you should be dreamers. Our day-dreams are not always of the right kind, and they are not always fulfilled. But when they are, it is certainly because we ask God's blessing upon them, and then conscientiously and patiently do the duties that lie the nearest to us, for if we use the opportunity we have, God will give us others, and help us to perform even greater works.—London Christian World.

AFTER THE STORM.

"Arthur, take this letter to your mother, and here is your week's pay. You have a good mother," added Mr. Powell, looking intently into the lad's face as he took the message with a polite "Thank you, sir."

"DEAR MAMAM:—We are sorry to return your son Arthur with this; but repeatedly articles, and occasionally money, have been missed from the store. No one but he could have taken them. It is very trying, we assure you, to have such an issue forced upon us, for we had supposed him incapable of any sort of dishonesty."

Respectfully,

R. POWELL & CO

Mrs. Howard perused the note, and then, without looking up from her sewing, gently bade her boy remove and thoroughly dry his overcoat, whitened by the driving snow. She could not just then look upon that young joyous face. He should not know a breath of this foul suspicion, but should go to his pillow, unconscious of the stain upon his good name. In the morning she would visit the firm.

While Arthur slept, his mother passed the anxious hours in alternate watchings by his bedside and prayers at her own. The restraint which she had placed upon herself was now removed.

Toward daylight the storm subsided, and the morning dawned on a fair day.

The calm comforted her, and when Arthur rose from the breakfast-table, she said cheerfully—

"I am going out this morning, dear, and you must remain at home. Be a good mother to brother and sister, and if any work comes in, remember carefully all particulars; but first run out and sweep me a clean crossing through the fresh snow."

Quickly wrapping herself, she proceeded to the gate. She stood resting against it and gazed on the pure scene—the trees, the hedges, the roofs of buildings, every nook and crevice piled up with glistening snow. But purer than all was her son Arthur, in her eyes the fairest feature of the picture. His clear eye was "not that of a thief!" and the mother's face beamed upon him with confiding love.

At this moment Mr. Powell came toward mother and son.

Mrs. Howard received him as calmly as she had his letter, bidding Arthur run over to Mrs. Ames, to "Old John's," and to one or two other children's homes and sweep off their paths.

Mr. Powell was full of regrets and apologies for the note sent on the previous evening. Accidentally the real culprit had been discovered and Arthur fully cleared.

"The firm wish him back. They will increase his wages, give him every opportunity for improvement; in short, they will atone, if possible, for the cruel wrong so hastily done."

Mrs. Howard replied: "On one and only one condition can he return, and that is, that neither he nor any of the clerks in your employ learn one word of this affair. I would not have him suffer the knowledge of this suspicion for worlds. I would not have his self-respect injured."

The next morning found Arthur in his accustomed place, and the pleasure with which he that evening communicated to his mother his delight and astonishment at a sudden increase of salary was without a shadow.

Years after, the firm proposed receiving Arthur into it, and in response to his glad thanks Mr. Powell placed his hand on his shoulder, and said:

"No thank, my boy. Thank your mother. Only on the shining shore can you know her worth."—Caroline Kimball.

BOYS, READ AND HEED THIS!

Many people seem to forget that character grows; that it is not something to put on, ready made, with womanhood or manhood; but, day by day, here a little and there a little, grows with the growth and strengthens with the strength, until, good or bad, it becomes almost a coat of mail. Look at a man of business—prompt, reliable, conscientious, yet clear-headed and energetic. When do you suppose he developed all these admirable qualities? When he was a boy? Let us see the way in which a boy of ten years gets up in the morning, works, plays, studies, and we will tell you just what kind of a man he will make. The boy that is late at breakfast, and late at school, stands a poor chance to be a prompt man. The boy who neglects his duties, he they ever so small, and then excuses himself by saying, "I forgot! I didn't think!" will never be a reliable man. And the boy who finds pleasure in the suffering of weaker things will never be a noble, generous, kindly man—a gentleman.

Every parent is like a looking-glass for his children to dress themselves by. Therefore parents should take care to keep the glass bright and clear, and not dull and spotted, as their good example is a rich inheritance for the rising generation.

KEEP UP FAMILY ATTACHMENTS.

One of the saddest things about a large family who have lived happily together for years under the old roof-tree, is the scattering to distant homes, which takes place as they grow up, one by one, to years of maturity. It is often the case that, in the cares and bustle of business, letters grow more and more infrequent, and finally brothers and sisters will sometimes entirely lose sight of each other. These kindred ties are much too sacred to be thus lightly severed. It takes such a little while to write a letter, and the expense is so trifling, that there can hardly be an excuse for the neglect.

A loving family circle, thus widely severed, is a place where no one can be kept informed of each other's welfare. The two most remote, on the first of each month, write a part of a page on a large sheet containing the principal news of the month, and this is sealed and forwarded to the family next in order. Some member of the household adds a little contribution, and sends it on to the next, and so on till the circle is complete. Thus the family circle goes its rounds twelve times a year, and each one is kept well informed of the joys, sorrows, pains, and pursuits of the others. Family gatherings are frequent in such households, and the old home attachments never grow cold.

Sons in particular away from home are apt to grow neglectful of letter writing. Oh, if they knew how many heartaches such neglect often causes to the loving breast that pillowed their tired heads in childhood, they would not be so thoughtless. If they knew the joy that a letter brought, and could see how its lightest words were dwelt over, and talked over by the inside, they would not be so sparing of time messages. And let some of us send in arrears in this particular.—Star in the West.

HOW TO EAT WISELY.

The great sources of mischief from eating are three: Quantity, Frequency, Rapidity; and from these come the horrible dyspepsias which make of human life a burden, a torture, a living death.

Rapidity.—By eating fast, the stomach, like a bottle being filled through a funnel, is full and overflowing before we know it. But the most important reason is, the food is swallowed before time has been allowed to divide it in sufficiently small pieces with the teeth; for, like ice in a tumbler of water, the smaller the bits are, the sooner are they dissolved. It has been seen with the naked eye that if solid food is cut up in pieces small as half a pea, it digests almost as soon, without being chewed at all, as if it had been well masticated. The best plan, therefore, is for all persons to thus comminute their food; for even if it is well chewed, the comminution is no injury while it is of very great importance in case of hurry, forgetfulness, or bad teeth. Cheerful conversation prevents rapid eating.

Frequency.—It requires about five hours for a common meal to be dissolved and pass out of the stomach, during which time this organ is incessantly at work, when it must have repose, as any other muscle or set of muscles, after such a length of effort. Hence persons should not eat within less than a five hours' interval. The heart itself is at rest more than one-third of its time. The brain perishes without repose. Never force food on the stomach.

All are tired when night comes; every muscle of the body is weary and looks to the bed; but just as we lie down to rest every part of the body, if we, by a hearty meal, give the stomach five hours' work, which, in its weak state, requires a much longer time to perform than at an earlier hour of the day, it is like imposing upon a servant a full day's labor just at the close of a hard day's work; hence the unwisdom of eating heartily late in the day or evening; and no wonder it has cost many a man his life. Always breakfast before work or exercise.

No laborers or active persons should eat an atom later than sundown, and then it should not be over half the midday meal. Persons of sedentary habits or who are at all ailing should take absolutely nothing for supper beyond a single piece of cold stale bread and butter, or a ship-biscuit, with a single cup of warm drink. Such a supper will always give better sleep and prepare for a heartier breakfast, with the advantage of having the exercise of the whole day to grind it up and extract its nutriment. Never eat without an inclination.

Quantity.—It is variety which tempts to excess; few will err as to quantity who will eat very slow. Take no more than a quarter of a pint of warm drink, with a piece of cold stale bread and butter, one kind of meat, and one vegetable, or one kind of fruit. This is the only safe rule of general application, and allows all to eat as much as they want.

Cold water at meals instantly arrests digestion, and so will much warm drink; hence a single teacup of drink, hot or cold, is sufficient for any meal.

For half an hour after eating sit erect, or walk in the open air. Avoid severe study or deep emotion soon after eating. Do not sit down to a meal under great grief or surprise, or mental excitement.—Hall's Journal of Health.

A moralist says: "Profanity never did any man the least good. No man is richer or happier or wiser for it. It commands no one to society; it is disgusting to the refined and abominable to the good."

The ancient city of Troy had but one gate. Go round and round the city, you would have found no other. If you wanted to get in, there was but one way. So to the golden city of heaven there is but one gate. Christ says, "I am the door." Christ is not known to the heathen; they have many doors to heaven. He then, who said, "I am the door," also said, "Preach my gospel to every creature."