

IS IT RIGHT?

"My home," said a Manchester gentleman, "is situated in the suburbs of this great commercial city. I love my home, and desire to do all in my power to surround my family with all the enjoyments of life, and to screen them, as far as possible, by God's blessings, from evil associations. At the back of my house is a beautiful garden, in which I delight to spend many of my hours. Some time ago the fumes from the chimney of the chemical works about half a mile from my house began to injure the bloom and foliage of my plants and trees.

"I consulted my lawyer, and he assured me that the law of the land was so strict on such matters that he had no question whatever of being able to stop the 'nuisance.' He applied to the Court of Chancery for an injunction, and, after hearing evidence from professional analysts on the question, the judge speedily decided in my favor, and the nuisance was removed.

"But is the law of England equally just with regard to other and greater evils?"

"On the opposite side of the street, in front of my house, is a huge gin-shop. At night it is lighted up most brilliantly, and holds out many inducements to entrap young people of both sexes into drinking and other evil habits.

"The foul language which my family and servants are often obliged to hear from both men and women who have been made drunk in that house is too sad to relate. To my coachmen, stablemen, gardeners, it has truly been a curse; for much of the money which ought to have gone for the support of their wives and children has gone into the publican's till instead. The evil is not confined to the six working days of the week, as was the case with the chemical works, but on Sunday the withering influence of the trade carried on in that house continues.

"But when I remonstrated and tried to remove this nuisance, my lawyer shook his head and said: 'The law of the land enables you to protect your flowers, but it gives you no power to remove the greater curse of the gin-shops from your boys.'

"To my remonstrances with the man whose business is withering and blighting my earthly comforts far more than the chemical works, he boldly draws out from his pocket a paper signed by the magistrates—who are the representatives of the Queen and Parliament of Great Britain and Ireland—and with a look of scorn and derision he says the withering words, 'Here is my licence to do it!'"—*Alliance News.*

THE MISSING LINK.

Not long since an article appeared in *The Christian Advocate*, from the pen of the Rev. A. N. Craft, D.D., with the title, "The Missing Link between the Church and the Sunday-school." It is characterized by vigor and frankness, and contains some pungent truths that the Church will do well to heed.

After referring to the difficulties in the way of securing the conversion of the children in our Sunday-schools, the writer develops his plan for supplying "The Missing Link." He says:

"This work must be done in the Sunday-school. The class-meeting people and the revival-loving people must become workers in the Sunday-school. We must have thoroughly Christian teachers, who will be both teachers and class-leaders. Let there be a Sunday-school prayer-meeting once a month, fifteen minutes long. Let the opportunity for rising for prayer be given as often. Let the appeal be short, but as earnest as those which are given at protracted meetings.

"All ten years of age and younger" will respond at once. Most of the boys and girls in their teens will soon be reached. Some adults will yield. I have tried this experiment, and would pledge myself to go into any Sunday-school and secure this result. Any good superintendent can do this without the aid of the pastor.

"Let a secretary be appointed, whose sole duty it will be to keep a record of those who have become seekers, of their age, home influence, their state of experience, their baptism, their teacher and leader, and report to the pastor those who are judged to be ready for full membership in the Church. Let the bell tap five minutes before the close of the lesson as a signal for the teachers to speak to their scholars especially on the subject of experimental religion. Let the pastor, superintendent, or teacher invite those who from time to time especially need

it to a place of private conference and prayer. This, we think, if carried out would supply the missing link between the Sunday-school and the church."

A pastor in the State of New York writes us, referring to this article:

"If our Sunday-school workers could all catch the idea suggested by Dr. Craft, and throw themselves into the work in that line with inspiration and enthusiasm for Christ, thousands of our children might be brought to Christ. We must act quickly, and with vigor and love, or they are lost to us, to the Church, and to heaven, many of them.

"It seems to me that we are not as largely securing the conversion of our children as we should, and yet what interests are soon to be committed to these children! The salvation of our country and the world is suspended upon this issue. Has there ever been a time when it has been as important as now—the early conversion of the rising generation?"

"The thought of what is before our children and youth is to me well-nigh overwhelming. May God help us all to do with our might what our hands find to do in this direction."

It is a hopeful sign when the hearts of our faithful pastors turn in the direction of practical results in our Sunday-school work.—*S. S. Banner.*

DON'T.

BY WOLSTAN DIXEY.

Don't imagine because a boy wears shabby clothing that he is a shabby boy. Just bear in mind there is more than one way of being shabby. When Edison, the great inventor, first came to Boston it was mid-winter, and he wore a pair of yellow linen trousers, probably the best he had; but they might have been called Seven-League Boots, if people had known what strides he would make into fame and fortune.

Don't think because a boy lives in a plain house and has a very plain face that he doesn't amount to much. Abraham Lincoln's early home was a log cabin; as for his face, it was noted for its homeliness.

Don't suppose that, because a boy isn't bright at his lessons, he doesn't know anything. Sir Walter Scott was thought to be a dull boy at school, and was chiefly noted for his good fighting, however he turned out to know a thing or two. Hogarth, the celebrated painter and engraver, was a stupid boy at his books.

Don't be sure that because a boy's parents are ignorant he will be. Shakespeare's father couldn't write his own name.

Don't get the idea that a boy who is slow, awkward, or clumsy in any way is certainly going to get left away behind in the race of life. Demosthenes had a harsh and stammering voice, but in spite of that he became one of the greatest orators that ever lived.

Don't despise or look down on any boy, or man either. For two reasons, don't do this: In the first place, because it is mean and unchristian and ungentlemanly; and secondly, because it is quite likely, no matter how well fixed you are now, that some day he will be in a position to look down on you.—*Treasure Trove.*

THE DYING TEACHER.

In Chicago, a teacher, whose health was rapidly failing, was missing from his class one Sunday. Mr. Moody, the now renowned evangelist, tried to teach that class, but failed to do anything with them. They were an awful class of girls. Early on Monday morning this young man came into the store where Mr. Moody worked, and, tottering and bloodless, threw himself upon some boxes, saying, "I have been bleeding at the lungs, and they have given me up to die." He was not afraid to die, but said, "I have got to stand before God and give an account of my stewardship, and not one of my Sunday-school scholars has been brought to Jesus. I have failed to bring one, and I haven't any strength to do it now." Mr. Moody got a carriage and took that dying man to each of the homes of his scholars. To each one he said, as best his frail voice would let him, "I have come to ask you to come to the Saviour," and then prayed for them as he never did before. In just ten days that whole class was brought to Jesus. "Some of the very best and most constant teachers Mr. Moody had before going to Europe were converted at that time, and they, in turn, have gathered many sheaves." Even Mr. Moody was led by this incident to throw up his business and give himself wholly to the work of God in saving souls.

Who can estimate the number of souls that dying Sunday-school teacher, directly and indirectly, brought to Christ with the little strength he had remaining? It will be possible to know the aggregate number only at the great judgment day.

Ye who are yet clothed with youthful vigor, strength, and possibilities for good, go forth weeping and bearing precious seed. Like that dying man, do earnest personal work for the Master. Let each of your scholars feel that you care for his soul—that no joy would be greater to you than to see each of them coming to Christ.

Then pray, study and work, till the Master calls for you, that you may, with rejoicing, bring many sheaves with you, and hear it said: "Well done, good and faithful servant,.....enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Whoever well succeeds in life,
In persevering in the strife
To rescue souls from hell's dark door,
Shall shine in heaven forevermore.

SCHOLARS' NOTES.

(From *International Question Book.*)

LESSON VIII.—FEBRUARY 20.

ABRAHAM PLEADING FOR SODOM.—GEN. 18: 23-33.

COMMIT VERSES 23-25.

GOLDEN TEXT.

In wrath remember mercy.—Hab. 3: 2

CENTRAL TRUTH.

The Christian's desire and prayer for the salvation of others.

DAILY READINGS.

M. Gen. 17: 1-8, 15: 22.
T. Gen. 18: 1-22.
W. Gen. 18: 23-33.
Th. Heb. 7: 1-23.
F. Rom. 8: 12-23.
Sa. John 8: 51-59.
Su. Ex. 32: 7-14, 31-39.

ABRAHAM.—Now 99 years old, with one child, Ishmael, son of Hagar. Sarah, 90 years old, and still childless.

INTRODUCTORY.—Fifteen years' pass away with few events, save the birth of Abraham's son Ishmael. Then the Lord appeared twice within three months, renewed his promises, changed the names of Abraham and Sarah as a token of their fulfillment, and established the covenant of circumcision. The lesson today is in connection with the second of these two appearances, or the sixth from the first call in Ur.

HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.

THE HEAVENLY VISITANTS—three angels, in the form of men visit Abraham and are welcomed. He was hospitable, and "entertained angels unawares" (Heb. 13: 2). THE THREATENED PUNISHMENT—God reveals to Abraham his purpose of destroying Sodom, where Lot lived. Sin had borne its fruit, and the wicked few must be destroyed in order to save the whole race from corruption. THE INTERCESSOR—Abraham. He had this privilege on account of his life of faith and obedience (v. 19). The prayer of the righteous man availeth much. Jesus Christ is our intercessor. FOR WHOM HE INTERCEDES—Lot, who had selfishly chosen Sodom, and for the wicked city which hated Abraham and his religion. 23. ABRAHAM DREW NEAR—to the Lord, who had come in the form of one of the three men (v. 22). DESTROY THE RIGHTEOUS WITH THE WICKED—in war, pestilence, earthquakes, this seems to be so; but note (1) that we do not always know the full circumstances; (2) God cares for each individual and will permit only what is good for him (Rom. 8: 28); (3) life is not limited to this world; heaven will make all right; (4) often the righteous are partakers in the sin, when they have not done all they could to make the sinners better. 26. FIFTY RIGHTEOUS . . . I WILL SPARE ALL THE PLACE FOR THEIR SAKES—because so many good would be a holy heaven to keep the whole from being so wicked; and saving the others for their sakes would tend to lead them to repentance.

QUESTIONS.

INTRODUCTORY.—How many times did God appear to Abraham with promises? (See Progress of Events) Which of them is recorded in our last lesson? How many years between that lesson and this? What occurred during these 15 years?

SUBJECT: PRAYING FOR OTHERS.

I. A CITY EXPOSED TO RUIN.—Where was Abraham's home? What three visitors came to him one day? (18: 2; 19: 1.) Who was one of them? (Comp. Gen. 22: 11 with 18; Ex. 3: 2 with 6.) How did Abraham treat them? What duty is enforced by this incident, in the New Testament? (Heb. 13: 2.) What are we twice commanded by Paul to be? (Rom. 12: 13; 1 Tim. 3: 2.) To whom?

What did these angels reveal to Abraham? What was the moral character of Sodom? (13: 13; 18: 20.) Was it justice or mercy, or both, to destroy such a city?

Why is it necessary that sin be punished? Is just punishment cruelty or mercy? Show how the whole nation and the whole world would be corrupted if sin were not punished? Show that punishment of the few is mercy to the many.

II. THE INTERCESSOR (v. 23). Why was the divine purpose revealed to Abraham? (vs. 17-19.) What is said of the prayer of the righteous? (James 5: 16.) Why can only the righteous be effectual intercessors for others? (John 15: 14, 15.) Who intercedes for us? (Heb. 7: 22, 25.)

Is the power of interceding for others one of the fruits of a righteous life? Why do men need an intercessor? Why can God in answer to prayer, save men from punishment which would otherwise be inflicted? Is there any change in God's desire to save them, or in their circumstances, by means of prayer? Does this throw any light on the atonement?

III. FOR WHOM HE INTERCEDED.—What righteous man lived in Sodom? (2 Pet. 2: 7, 8.)

Did Abraham pray for him alone? How were the Sodomites enemies of Abraham and of his religion? Why should he pray for such people? What precept of Christ did he fulfil? (Matt. 5: 44, 45.)

IV. THE INTERCESSION (vs. 23-33).—What was Abraham's plea? Does God punish the righteous with the wicked? (See Helps.) For whose sake did Abraham ask God to spare Sodom? How many times did he make this prayer? What was the least number who would save the city? How would the presence of the few righteous make it safe to spare the city? (See Helps.)

Was the prayer answered? Were the righteous destroyed with the wicked? Does God always hear our prayers for others? Give Scriptural examples of interceding for others? (Ex. 32: 7-14, 30-35; 1 Sam. 7: 3-10; 2 Chron. 6: 1-42; John 17: 1-26; James 5: 17-20.)

LESSON IX.—FEBRUARY 27.

DESTRUCTION OF SODOM.—GEN. 19: 15-26.

COMMIT VERSES 15, 16.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Escape for thy life.—Gen. 19: 17.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear!

DAILY READINGS.

M. Gen. 19: 1-7.
T. Gen. 19: 15-26.
W. 2 Pet. 2: 1-9.
Th. Prov. 1: 20-33.
F. Luke 17: 20-37.
Sa. Matt. 11: 16-30.
Su. 1 Cor. 8: 9-23.

LOCATION OF SODOM.—There are two opinions.

1. Till of late the general opinion was that the plain was at the southern end of the Dead Sea. About one-third of the distance from the southern end is a long peninsula, running nearly across the sea. North of this the sea is 1,200 feet deep; south of it, only three to thirteen feet deep. This southern bay, about fifteen miles long, is supposed to have been a fertile plain and the site of the cities destroyed at this time, but now sunk beneath the water. 2. The best scholars now regard the plain as situated at the northern end of the Dead Sea, near the mouth of the Jordan.

INTRODUCTORY.—The two angels who left Abraham went that same evening to Sodom, where Lot was sitting in the gate. He welcomed the two men to his home, where they were assaulted by the Sodomites. The angels afflicted them with blindness. This may have made Lot know they were angels with God's message. They told him that Sodom would be destroyed. He went to his sons-in-law and warned them; but he was to them as one that mocked.

HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.

17. TO THE MOUNTAINS—the Moabite Mountains, that rise abruptly on the east side of the sea. 19. I CANNOT ESCAPE TO THE MOUNTAIN—it was at some distance, he was old, with women under his care; the mountains were wild, and infested with wild beasts, and perhaps with robbers. 20. THIS CITY—Zoar (Little) among the foot-hills. 21. I HAVE ACCEPTED—God heard his prayer, although it was a foolish prayer, and Lot soon left it (v. 30). God knew better than he. 22. RAINED . . . BRIMSTONE AND FIRE—i.e., burning brimstone or bitumen; the word includes both. Sodom was in an oil region. The soil abounded in petroleum and bitumen. With earthquake and lightning, probably, God set this soil on fire, as sometimes occurs in our oil regions. 26. HIS WIFE LOOKED BACK FROM BEHIND HIM—she had lingered behind the others, and was overtaken by the flames. PILLAR OF SALT—she was probably incrustrated with the salts that abound there, and looked like a pillar or mound.

QUESTIONS.

INTRODUCTORY.—What three persons had visited Abraham? Where did two of them go while he was pleading for Sodom? How did Lot receive them? How was he rewarded? Where was Sodom situated?

SUBJECT: ESCAPE FROM THE CITY OF DESTRUCTION.

I. UNHEEDED WARNINGS.—What announcement did the angels make to Lot? (v. 13.) Whom did he warn? (v. 14.) How did they treat his warnings? Why did they not believe? Do men still treat God's warnings in the same way? Why? What will be the result? (Prov. 1: 24-31.)

II. ESCAPE FOR THY LIFE (vs. 15-22).—What did the angels say early the next morning? What would tend to make Lot linger? What was the need of haste? Who escaped with Lot? Why must they not stay in all the plain? What favor did Lot ask of God? Why was it a foolish prayer? Was it granted? Did it do Lot any good? (v. 30.)

What angels does God send to warn us? Why is there need of haste in escaping from sin? Where alone is safety? What warnings does Christ found on this lesson? (Luke 17: 28-30.) What other Scripture warnings are there?

What passage in the New Testament does Lot's experience illustrate? (1 Cor. 3: 11-15.) What did Lot lose by going to Sodom to live? Why is it foolish to so live that our life work is lost, even if we are saved? Was Lot's prayer a mark of faith or unbelief? Are we wise enough to insist on any definite thing from God?

III. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (vs. 23-25).—What was the fate of Sodom? What other cities suffered with it? (Deut. 29: 23.) Were there any natural causes of this overthrow? Why was this punishment just? Show how it was also merciful. Will sinners be punished in like manner if they will not repent?

Give a fuller description of the natural causes of this destruction. Was it also miraculous? What is there in our natures through which God punishes sin? Is the punishment all natural?

IV. THE FATE OF THE BACKSLIDER (v. 26).—Who failed when partly escaped? What became of her? What lesson does Christ teach from this? (Luke 17: 32, 33.) What leads people now to look back? What warning does Paul give to backsliders? (Heb. 6: 4, 6.)