

his wife, Sapphira, heard about this, and down in their hearts they planned a way to make all the new church praise them and say how generous they were. They owned a piece of land and they sold it; but instead of taking all the money to the disciples as Joseph had, they kept a part of it for themselves.

Proudly Ananias carried the money to the disciples and laid it down before them. He did not say, "This is all of it," but he intended every one to think that it was. But instead of the praise he had expected, Peter said sadly and sternly: "Ananias, why did you do this thing? Was not the land your own? And after you sold it was not the money your own? You did not have to give it to God, and you have told a lie, not to us, but to God."

There were many people there, and every heart was full of a great sorrow. The new church was just beginning. Wicked people would say that all Christians were like Ananias. Worse still, if a terrible sin like that began among the Christians, it would grow until there were no Christians and then there would be no church. Ananias fell down, sad and ashamed, and lay very still. And by and by they saw that his spirit was gone, and Ananias was dead. It must have been a sad, sad day, the first great trouble that had come to the happy new church.

Ananias did not come home to tell Sapphira what the people had said about their fine gift, so after waiting a long time, she went to the

place where the disciples were meeting. Yes, Peter knew about their gift, for when she came in he asked, "Did you sell the land for one hundred pieces of silver (or whatever the price was)?"

"Yes," she answered. Then Peter talked to her as he had to Ananias, and told her that she must be punished as he had been. And Sapphira died as her husband, Ananias, had died.

And in all the homes that night, with sad, hushed voices, the people talked of how terrible it was to tell or to act what was not true, and I think the boys and girls all said, "We will never do it."

And then perhaps some of the fathers and mothers told the children the story of the boy Samuel, who long ago lived in the temple with the good old priest Eli. One night God's voice spoke to him and told him a message to tell to Eli, a sad message about something that would make the kind Eli very sad. Samuel loved Eli very dearly, and when Eli asked him about the message he did so want to tell only part of it. But though it made him unhappy, he bravely and truthfully answered all of Eli's questions, and told him all of God's message.

Let us be sure every day that our lips, our eyes, our hands, our feet, tell the truth. God knows always all that has happened, he sees down into our hearts and minds, and he will help us when it is hard to be brave.

FROM THE PLATFORM

A Straight Road

Write on the blackboard, A STRAIGHT ROAD, and tell of the wise old teacher, loved and trusted by all about him, who once said in conversation: "Well, I never knew any one to get lost on a straight road." Now bring out in some detail, the facts in the lesson narrative. Help the scholars to see that the disaster and ruin which comes upon Ananias and Sapphira were due to their not walking in "a straight road." Instead of being straight-forward and sincere in their religion, they resorted to deceit and hypocrisy. Let the purpose of this blackboard talk be to deepen in the minds of the scholars the love of truth and uprightness, and the horror of anything that even looks like lying and dishonesty.