

Lesson XII.

THE BLINDING EFFECT OF SIN
—TEMPERANCE LESSON

June 22, 1913

LESSON SETTING—Amos is the earliest of the Old Testament prophets whose writings have come down to us. He was a herdsman, or small sheep-farmer in Tekoa, a small uplands town about six miles south of Bethlehem; and also a "pincher of sycamores," a tree whose fruit was more quickly ripened by being bruised or pinched. Although he was a native of Judah, the southern kingdom, he became a prophet to the northern kingdom, Israel. Amos prophesied about the middle of the eighth century B.C., a period of great prosperity in Israel. But, while outward religious observances were kept up with great regularity, there was much wickedness and forgetfulness of God throughout the nation. In his discourses or sermons Amos warned the rulers and people of Israel that God would surely punish them for their evil-doing. The Lesson is taken from one of these sermons.

GOLDEN TEXT—Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live.—Amos 5 : 14.

Memorize vs. 7, 8. **THE LESSON PASSAGE**—Amos 6 : 1-8.

1 Woe to them that are at ease in Zi'on, and 1 trust in the mountain of Samaria, 2 which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel 3 came !

2 Pass ye unto Cal'neh, and see ; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great ; then go down to Gath of the Philistines : be they better than these kingdoms ? or 4 their border greater than your border ?

3 Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near ;

4 That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall ;

Revised Version—1 to them that are secure in ; 2 the notable men of the chief of ; 3 come ; 4 is ; 5 sing idle songs to the sound of the viol ; that devise for ; 6 revelry ; 7 pass away.

Daily Readings—(By courtesy of I. B. R. Association, Mr. S. C. Bailey, Secretary, 26 Old Bailey, London, England.)—M.—The blinding effect of sin, Amos 6 : 1-8. T.—God's judgment, Isa. 5 : 8-16. W.—The source of woe, Isa. 28 : 1-7. Th.—An apostle's exhortation, Titus 2 : 6-15. F.—An example to observe, Dan. 1 : 8-16. S.—Children of light, 1 Thes. 5 : 1-11. S.—The woes of intemperance, Prov. 23 : 29-35.

THE LESSON EXPLAINED

I. WARNING.—1. Woe ; a solemn warning of approaching doom. To them . . . at ease ; the rulers of the nation, who are altogether careless of the threatening danger. In Zion ; a name for Jerusalem, the capital of the southern kingdom. The prophet would warn, in an earnest passing word, his own land of Judah, that sinful ease in the present will bring crushing woe in the future upon her, as well as upon her northern neighbor, Israel, to whom the prophecies of Amos were chiefly addressed. Secure (Rev. Ver.) ; hugging the delusion that no harm can come to them. Samaria ; the capital of Israel. Both Jerusalem and Samaria were splendidly situated, being defended by the surrounding mountains, and their people foolishly imagined that, however they might act, God would protect them. The notable men (Rev. Ver.). Men of mark, the great men of the two nations. Chief of the nations. Judah and Israel boasted themselves to be first amongst the nations of the earth. House of Israel (the people of the land) came. The meaning is, that the people of Judah and Israel went to the "notable men" for direction and guidance.

2. Cal'neh ; a large and powerful city, probably about seventy-five miles north of Hamath the great, on the Orontes river, one hundred and fifty miles north of Damascus, the modern Hamah, with 30,000 inhabitants. Gath of the Philistines ; that one of the Philistines' five cities, the other four being Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gaza and Ekron, nearest to the border of Judah. They should probably be "you ;" their should be "your," and your "their." The cities named, great and strong as they had been, were now in ruins ; how could Judah and Israel be so sure that they would escape destruction ?

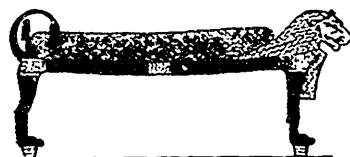
5 That 1 chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David ;

6 That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments : but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.

7 Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the 8 banquet of them that stretched themselves shall 7 be removed.

8 The Lord God hath sworn by himself, saith the Lord the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces : therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein.

II. SELF-INDULGENCE.—3, 4. Put far away ; postpone. Evil day ; the day of punishment. They could not really prevent or delay its coming ; but



EGYPTIAN BEDSTEAD

they could refuse to think of it, and persuade themselves that it would never come. Seat of violence ; the seat of the unjust judges who practised oppression. Beds of ivory ; couches inlaid with ivory brought from distant lands, a mark of extravagant luxury. Stretch themselves upon their couches ; the splendidly draped divans used for reclining at table. Eat . . . lambs . . . and . . . calves ; gluttonously devour the daintiest and tenderest food.

5, 6. Sing idle songs (Rev. Ver.). "Twitter" the word means, which the prophet uses to express his contempt for the music that enlivened these luxurious feasts. Viol ; harp. Invent . . . instruments . . . like David ; but use them for idle amusement only ; while he used them for the worship of God. Drink wine in bowls ; "by everfulls"—waterpotfuls, drink themselves drunk. Anoint themselves with the chief ointments ; oils of the choicest kinds, the first of the oils for the leaders of the first amongst the nations (see v. 1). Not grieved for . . . Joseph. Here the whole nation of Israel is named from its