

miracle, but we can imagine how the news would revive the hope, courage, and energy of the Israelites.

They carved the words "Emigravit" on the tomb of Albert Durer, the great German painter, saying, "Dead he is not, but departed; for the artist never dies." This lesson-story is the expression of the great fact that the influence of our lives does not end with us. We are doing good or evil among men long after our bodies are turned to dust. Joseph, while he lived, saved much people alive from famine; but, as an instance of special providence, and as an example of untarnished excellency and purity amidst temptation, Joseph being dead, yet speaketh.

A myriad of waves roll landward to bear a vessel into the harbor. Each wave did its part and ceased from its labors, but the cargo of the vessel is still for distribution.

The dying prophet was like a wave which lifted the vessel of God's purpose and sent it forward towards victory. So, in a sense—and that the most important—Elisha was himself immortal, because he was (to change the figure) a link in an immortal chain. The end of Elisha, like Elijah, was precious in God's sight. The one escaped the grave; the other defeated it while lying in it. Elijah went up to heaven a type of the ascending Christ; Elisha was a type of Christ, who, through death, destroyed the power of death, and proved Himself to be the resurrection and the life.



LESSON 11.—SEPTEMBER 11, 1898.

Sinful Indulgence.

(Lesson Text: Amos 6: 1-8. Memory Verses: 3-6.)
(The quarterly temperance lesson.)

GOLDEN TEXT.—"They also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way"—Isa. 28: 7.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday: Amos 6: 1-8. Tuesday: Prov. 23: 15-23. Wednesday: Eph. 5: 6-21. Thursday: Isa. 24: 1-12. Friday: Isa. 47: 5-11. Saturday: James 4: 1-10. Sunday: 1 John 2: 12-17.

The Heart of the Lesson.

It is a law of revelation that great prophets always appeared at critical points in the history of God's people. Elijah and his successor, Elisha, appeared like two storm birds, presaging the troubles that should end the dynasty of Omri, and fifty years after the death of Elisha, God crowds in three prophets at once, Jonah, Hosea, and Amos, as a final effort before the destruction of the kingdom and the captivity of the people. All of them died before the overthrow, and none are known to have succeeded them.

The prophets generally exercised their ministry in the kingdom to which they belonged. Amos was an exception to the general rule. He was of Tekoa, a village south of Bethlehem in Judea, but his ministry was exercised in Israel. His book is the beginning of written prophecy. Like the apostles, he was unlettered, untaught in the schools. "No prophet," "Neither," "A prophet's son." He was from the humble ranks of the people; he was a hard-working peasant, earning his living by watching flocks and herds on his native hills, and another part of the year by cutting open the coarse figs of the sycamore, used for food by the poorer classes.

Amos made his first public appearance two years before the great earthquake in Uzziah's reign, when Jeroboam II., the grandson of Jehu, had been on the throne of Israel fifteen years. The scene of his labors was Bethel, twelve miles north of Jerusalem; here was one of the royal palaces (Amos 7: 13).

The reign of Jeroboam II. was one of brilliant

military success. The spoils of conquered nations came suddenly, and were unevenly distributed. The burden of the war fell most heavily on the lower classes, and the ravaged wealth came chiefly to the wealthy; the poor became poorer, and the rich more wealthy. The wealth, ill-gotten, bore a curse in its heart, and prosperity increased sin. The more wealth, the more idol altars were built, the better obelisks or pillars to the heathen gods were erected.

Travel and observation made Amos acquainted with the condition of the nation. In addition to their idolatry, drunkenness and debauchery spread apace. "The priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink; they are swallowed up of wine; they are out of the way through strong drink." They were indolent, "at ease in Zion." They were slothful, and took pride in doing nothing; lying "upon beds of ivory," stretching "themselves upon their couches." They rested when they should have run, humoring themselves in their indolent and selfish indifference. Like Savonarola at the Duomo in Florence, Luther at the Diet of Worms, and Jesus in the Temple, Amos went to Bethel at the time of one of the feasts. With considerable tact, he began his message by denouncing the sins of surrounding nations, and showing the effects of sin upon these nations. The people approved his words against those who so well deserved punishment. Then, like Nathan before David, Amos showed they had witnessed against themselves.

We are ready to witness against the idolatry, intemperance, indolence, pride, and luxurious extravagance of the Israelites. Are we prepared to see that this is as true a picture of our times as it was of Israel three thousand years ago?

The golden calves have been replaced by the love of the world, mammon-worship, and haste to get rich, the rich becoming more wealthy and independent of their fellow-men, the poor becoming poorer and more dependent upon their fellow-men. The multimillionaire and the tramp are at the extremes of society, as at present constituted; the first is an offence against the law of poverty, and the second is an offence against the law of labor. All should work; all should need to work; and all should have opportunity to work. "The idle brain is the devil's workshop."

"Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do."

The enchanted land of to-day, where many Christians are "at ease," is in the magic of being ministered to in spiritual things, and, like Bunyan's Hopeful, ever ready to take "one nap."

A Kentucky slave, during the civil war, said to his mistress, "I've listed." "Why, what do you mean, Sam? You are indolent, and always complaining. What use will you be?" "Oh," said he, "I've listed in the invalid corps." There are some professing Christians in the nineteenth century who, I fear, have listed in the "invalid corps." Like Meroz, indolent and irresponsible, they come not forth "to the help of the Lord" against the mighty.

This is clearly a question of personal resolution and effort. Every flower in a landscape contributes to the magnificence of the whole, and the individual determines the character of the mass. The single saint makes possible the glorious church or nation. Temperance means self-denial—self-control in the presence of temptation. No one is good without self-denial in something, and self-control in all things. Yielding to luxury, indolence, and appetite, at the expense of self-control, always means decay and ruin to the individual, the church, and the state.