

The Sunday School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

LESSON XXXII.

Aug. 3. } *ABRAM AND LOT.* } Gen. xiii. 1-18.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee."—Gen. xiii. 8.

HOME STUDIES.

M. Gen. xiii. 1-18....Abram and Lot.
Tu. Ps. xxvi. 1-12...."Gather not my soul with Sinners."
W. Ps. ci. 1-8...."Mine eye shall be upon the Faithful."
Th. Prov. iv. 14-27...."Remove thy Foot from Evil."
F. 1 Tim. vi. 6-16....The Love of Money.
S. Ps. lxxii. 1-12....Set not your Heart upon Riches.
Sab. Luke xii. 15-21....Beware of Covetousness.

HELPS TO STUDY.

At the close of our last lesson we found that Abram, shortly after his arrival in the Land of Canaan, was compelled by famine to sojourn for a time in Egypt.

Here, driven by the "fear of death" (Heb. ii. 15), from which even he was not entirely free, he sinned in concealing the fact that Sarai was his wife.

His sin brought him trouble, and the noble patriarch, the "friend of God" was subjected to the humiliation of receiving merited reproof from the lips of an idolater.

The Bible is the book of truth, and records the faults of good men as well as their virtues.

"There is no man that sinneth not" (1 King. viii. 46), but the good man strives against sin, and his failures in the strife send him to God for strength to enable him to overcome.

The teachings of our present lesson may be arranged under the following heads: (1) *Strife between Brethren*, (2) *The way of Peace*, (3) *A Good Chance and a Bad Choice*, (4) *A Blessing to the Liberal Soul*.

I. STRIFE BETWEEN BRETHREN.—Vers. 1-7. Pasture and wells of water were the chief subjects of contention in patriarchal times, especially the latter, about which we find difficulties arising between Abram and Abimelech (Gen. xxi. 25), as also between the herdmen of Isaac and the herdmen of Gerar (Gen. xxvi. 20).

Abram and Lot were brethren: (1) because they were both men; (2) because they were both Hebrews; (3) because one of them was the son, and the other the grandson, of Terah; (4) because they were both worshippers of the true God. Even where only the first and weakest of these ties exists there should be no strife except in behalf of truth and righteousness. The last is the strongest. The strife of sects, internal dissensions in Churches, quarrels in congregation and in professing families, do not tend to give religion a favourable aspect in the eyes of the Canaanite and the Perizzite who dwell in the land.

II. THE WAY OF PEACE.—Vers. 8-9. If poverty has its distresses, wealth has its own peculiar difficulties and dangers. Abram and Lot had become too rich to dwell together in peace. Their riches consisted largely of flocks and herds which required wide pastures and convenient water. In these circumstances it was but natural that their herdmen, zealous for the interests of their respective masters, should come into conflict.

Is not the whole land before thee? Abram never heard Christ's sermon on the Mount but the Holy Spirit had taught him the substance of it, and in his dealings with Lot he evinced the true spirit of Christian self-sacrifice. As the elder of the two he might have insisted on his own right to the choice of location; but this would not have been the way of peace; and there being no principle at stake, he sacrificed his own interest and yielded the choice to his nephew. There are those living in the world at the present day whose souls have all true nobility so trodden out of them that they cannot understand how anyone but a simpleton could act in this manner; and there are also those who are quite able and willing to appreciate and admire such generosity in others, but who, when an opportunity for its exercise is presented to themselves, instinctively recollect that "it becometh a man to be smart;" but all are not so, for even in the present age the Lord raises up "children unto Abraham," in generosity as in faith.

The following anecdotes from the "S. S. Times" are apt illustrations of the power of a soft answer to turn away wrath, and it is pleasant to think that such events are not at all rare occurrences.

"A good Quaker physician who was well known in the city in which he lived for his benevolence, when driving out one day in his carriage, accidentally got in the way of a dray. A Quaker immediately assailed him with the most violent abuse. The physician got out of the way, excused himself and said, 'My name is Dr. —; if any of thy friends should ever be sick and need help, send for me, and I shall gladly do them what good I can.' The angry man at once grew calm, and, with a good deal of shamefacedness, apologized for his unreasonable anger."

"Two farmers, who had hitherto been close friends, quarrelled about the possession of a brook which afforded good trout-fishing. Neither would yield to the other, and the case was taken to law. Before the matter was decided, however, the person whose claim seemed to be the stronger said to himself, 'If I gain this case I shall lose my friend.' He at once went over to his neighbour, and told him that he resigned all claim to the brook. The other, not to be

outdone in generosity, refused to accept his offer. Finally they came to an agreement by which the use of the brook was secured to both. This mutual forbearance put an end to strife, and united them in closer friendship than before."

III. A GOOD CHANCE AND A BAD CHOICE.—Vers. 10-13. Lot was a good man—as one said, "a good man with a great many faults." He is spoken of in the New Testament (2 Pet. ii. 7) as a "just" man, whose soul was "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked;" but his conduct on this occasion betrays a deficiency in self-denial, in wisdom, and in true nobility.

Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan. A truly noble soul would have echoed Abram's generosity, courteously declined his offer, and requested him, as the superior in every way, to make whatever arrangements he considered best for both. But Lot was too mean for that. He clutched at the offer, and made a hasty choice, on extremely low considerations, sacrificing the moral to the material, and apparently preferring the well-being of his cattle to that of his children.

But the men of Sodom were wicked, and we can scarcely suppose that Lot was not aware of that fact. He had been in the country before, and the wickedness of Sodom was notorious. His error was that he was altogether too careful in keeping his religion distinct and separate from his worldly affairs. This error he probably discovered afterwards; but at the time of his making this choice he appears before us as the representative of a large class who think that religion is all very well in its own place and at its own time—its place being the church, and its time the Sabbath—but that it should never be allowed to break out of these bounds or intermeddle with the ordinary affairs of life, or even with its important decisions, such as the choice of an occupation and the formation of business and family alliances. Lot could drag out a "vexed" existence in Sodom without falling into the gross sins of its inhabitants; but what of his children and his children's children?

IV. A BLESSING TO THE LIBERAL SOUL.—Vers. 14-18. Abram lost nothing by his generosity. The repetition of the promise shows that it was not affected by the transaction with Lot. The inheritance was still unbroken. He prospered abundantly; but he had a joy such as no earthly possession could give, in looking forward to the fulfilment of the promise in its highest aspect, for he saw the day of Christ "and was glad" (John viii. 56).

WHERE THE NOBLE HAVE THEIR COUNTRY.

Brighter than the glorious sunsets
Which delight this earthly clime,
Than the splendours of the dawns
Breaking o'er the hills of time,
Is the richness of the radiance
Of the land beyond the sun.
Where the noble have their country,
When the work of life is done.

With the deep, mysterious problems
Of their earthly life made plain,
All the bitter turned to sweetness,
All the losses golden gain;
And the new life's heavenly rapture
Far exceeding griefs of this,
Earth's hard toiling all forgotten
In the restfulness of bliss.

And the music of their welcome
From angelic lyres of gold,
Shall full often be repeated,
Yet it never shall grow old;
Music higher than earth's noblest,
Than all eloquence of words,
Than the sweetest of the carols
Of the gladdest of the birds.

—Springfield Republican.

THE RELIGION OF CHILDREN.

The religion of children is not so intensely spiritual, but it is intensely sincere. When your little boy says: "Ma, I'll feed the calves, or pick up the chips for you; I'll bring in the water," there is more religion in it than in many a long, cold, formal prayer. When your little girl offers to wash the dishes or sweep the kitchen, she means to be good, and be a Christian, and seeks some way to express it. Children join their faith and works together, and we are too apt to underrate these hopeful signs of a religious life. We think they ought to do these things naturally and willingly, yet we know it is not human nature to be always obliging and accommodating; but, on the contrary, it is natural to be selfish and lazy. So, when the boy of ten who loves fun wants to help the little six-year-old wash his face and comb his hair, kindly puts on his comforter and brings his hat and mittens, then takes him by the hand and they start off together on a slow gallop, just fast enough for the little fellow to keep up and enjoy the fun, set it down as a very hopeful sign that the older boy is a Christian, and the little one soon will be. If we fail to recognize the spirit of the Master in that little boy's conduct, it is because we are blind and cannot see afar off. When the little girl who likes to sleep long in the morning, conquers her desire to please herself, and rises early, helps her mother by taking care of baby and making herself useful, the only true reason for it all is, that she is trying to be a Christian. It is the dawning of a religious life manifesting itself in good works.

How important is this point in the child's history, and

how careful we ought to be not to cast a stumbling block in the way. If we fail to see the effort it costs our little ones to do what they are trying to do, and we blame them where we ought to encourage, they soon give up trying to please, and only do what we compel them to do, in a hard, defiant manner, instead of the cheerful, loving way in which they first set about it. While we are in sympathy with them all they do for us is spontaneous, and gushes out like a spring of pure water; but when we push and drive they become sluggish and lose their love, consequently lose their religion—for love is religion and religion is love. Christian parents too often fail to see these beautiful buds of promise, and blast them before they develop into perfectly rounded symmetrical Christians.—Mrs. Humes.

GOING HOME.

Heimgang! So the German people
Whisper when they hear the bell
Tolling from some gray old steeple
Death's familiar tale to tell;
When they hear the organ dirges
Swelling out from chapel dome,
And the singers' chanting surges,
'Heimgang!' Always going home.

Heimgang! Quaint and tender saying
In the grand old German tongue
That hath shaped Melancthon's praying
And the hymns that Luther sung;
Blessed is our loving Maker,
That where'er our feet shall roam,
Still we journey towards 'God's Acre'—
'Heimgang!' Always going home.

Heimgang! We are all so weary,
And the willows, as they wave,
Softly sighing, sweetly, dreary,
Woo us to the tranquil grave.
When the golden pitcher's broken,
With its dregs and with its foam,
And the tender words are spoken,
'Heimgang!' We are going home.

WEARY WOMEN.

Nothing is more reprehensible and thoroughly wrong than the idea that a woman fulfils her duty by doing an amount of work that is far beyond her strength. She not only does not fulfil her duty, but she most signally fails in it, and the failure is truly deplorable. There can be no sadder sight than that of a broken-down, over-worked wife and mother—a woman that is tired all her life through. If the work of the household cannot be accomplished by order, system and moderate work, without the necessity of wearing, heart-breaking toil, toil that is never ended and never begun, without making life a treadmill of labour, then, for the sake of humanity, let the work go. Better live in the midst of disorder than that order should be purchased at so high a price, the cost of health, strength, happiness, and all that makes life endurable. The woman who spends her life in unnecessary labour is unfitted for the highest duties of home. She should be the haven of rest to which both husband and children turn for peace and refreshment. She should be the careful, intelligent adviser and guide of the one, the tender confidant and helpmate of the other. How is it possible for a woman exhausted in body, as a natural consequence in mind also, to perform either of these offices? No, it is not possible. The constant strain is too great. Nature gives way beneath it. She loses health and spirits and hopefulness, and, more than all, her youth, the last thing that a woman should allow to slip from her; for, no matter how old she is in years, she should be young in heart and feeling, for the youth of age is sometimes more attractive than youth itself. To the over-worked woman this green old age is out of the question; old age comes on her sere and yellow before its time. Her disposition is ruined, her temper is soured, and her very nature is changed by the burden which, too heavy to carry, is dragged along as long as wearied feet and tired hands can do their part. Even her affections are blunted, and she becomes merely a machine—a woman without the time to be womanly, a mother without the time to train and guide her children as only a mother can, a wife without the time to sympathize with and cheer her husband, a woman so over-worked during the day, that when night comes her sole thought and most intense longing are for the rest and sleep that very probably will not come, and, even if it should, that she is too tired to enjoy. Better by far let everything go unfinished, to live as best she can, than to entail on herself the curse of over-work.—Sanitary Age.

NEITHER ILL NOR THIRSTY.

A man of temperate habits was once dining at the house of a free thinker. No sooner was the cloth removed from the dinner-table than wine and spirits were produced and he was asked to take a glass of spirits and water. "No, thank you," said he, "I am not ill." "Take a glass of ale." "No, thank you," said he, "I am not thirsty." The answers produced a loud burst of laughter.

Soon after this, the temperate man took a piece of bread from the sideboard, and handed it to his host, who refused it, saying that he was not hungry. At this the temperate man laughed in his turn. "Surely," said he, "I have as much reason to laugh at you for not eating when you are not hungry, as you have to laugh at me for declining medicine when not ill, and drink when I am not thirsty."