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FOURTH QUARTER.

Lesson IX. Dec. 2. Judges 2: 11-23.

ISRAEL UNDER JUDGES.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."—Heb. 3: 12.

I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH THE ISRAELITES WERE PLACED. The government was a theocracy; *i. e.*, God himself was the chief ruler, and there was no visible central supreme power, either in king, president, or congress; a most excellent plan if the people all remained good. Each tribe was independent. The laws were the laws given them through Moses, and no new ones were made. The priests were the ultimate appeal in cases of dispute. The high-priest was a kind of prime minister of God. There was a central place of religious worship at Shiloh, for the whole nation. Here were the tabernacle, the ark, the altar for daily sacrifices; and hence at this place the tribes were to assemble three times a year for the great feasts. In seeking to understand the history of Israel under the Judges, we must bear in mind that only 67 years before the death of Joshua they had been slaves in Egypt, and that a mixed multitude of Egyptian descent had come up with them to Canaan. The effects of Egypt are plainly seen.

II. THE ISRAELITES FALL INTO IDOLATRY. 11. *And the children of Israel did evil* They first forgot God (ver. 10), and then evil actions naturally followed. *In the sight of the Lord*: evil that the Lord had forbidden; evil that was abhorrent to his holy nature; and evil in his sight, in the presence of his mighty works, and his positive commands. "Did evil in the sight of the Lord" is the usual phrase for falling into idolatry. *And served*: the true religion is a service of love and reverence; but all false religion is a service of superstition and terror. *Baalim*: Baalim is the plural of *Baal*, a Semitic word, signifying owner, lord, or master, and in the highest sense denoting the deity. Strictly, Baal meant the highest male god (the sun or planet Jupiter), as Ashtaroth or Astarte did the highest goddess (the moon or Venus). The plural *Baalim* is used (1) either because of the multitude of idols and images of Baal; or better, (2) it refers to the different offices and attributes of the god. This latter conjecture receives the general consent of scholars.

12. *And they forsook the Lord*: probably not all, but enough to represent the nation. The grand success of the reformation achieved by Samuel, and such glimpses of Hebrew life as are given in the Book of Ruth, seem to imply that, as a whole, there was always a latent religious life in the mass of the people, needing only to be roused and purified. *Which brought them out of the land of Egypt*: who had done such wonders for them; to whom they owed their very existence as a nation. This is stated to show the ingratitude, the folly, and the treason the Israelites committed in forsaking God. *Bowed themselves unto them*: "public worshipped." *Provoked*: did that which moved God to punish them. *To anger*: not passion, but to indignation and punishment on account of their sins.

13. *Ashtaroth*: the plural of Ashtoreth, as Baalim for Baal, and probably for the same reasons. Ashtaroth, "most happy, or fortunate, the supreme source of happiness," was the female deity corresponding to Baal, the moon or the planet Venus, as Baal was the sun.

III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR FALL. FIRST. 14. *And the anger of the Lord was hot.* The Lord's indignation at their sins was intense, like a burning fire. He could not love righteousness and not be indignant at sin. The more intense the love, the more intense also the indignation. If the feelings against sin do not flame and burn, then the love also is a feeble thing.

SECOND *He delivered them*: for punishments. Their enemies were only the instruments in the hands of God. From whatever source the punishment of sin comes, it is from God. *Into the hands of spoilers*. Ancient warfare was always attended by the greatest cruelties; it was always predatory, the property of the people was taken away, and the people themselves carried in bonds as slaves. *He sold them*. As the judge was used to sell the criminal, or the creditor the debtor, for a slave, that the injured party might be reimbursed by their price, so the Lord recovered, as it were, that glory, by punishing Israel, of which they had robbed him by their sins, and he made the Canaanites the instruments of his righteous indignation. *They could not any longer stand*: in battle. The previous successes of Israel had been gained only by the favor of God; and when that favor was withdrawn, the nation was utterly weak.

THIRD 15. *The hand of the Lord was against them*: his power and influence. The Almighty God was against them. "The atheistic saying of Napoleon, that God always favors the strongest battalions, is contradicted by all history. He succeeds who has God for an ally." *As the Lord had said.* Particular reference is had to Lev. 26: 15-17 and Deut. 28: 25, where these very judgments are expressly denounced against them in case they should thus apostatize. God is as true to his *threats* as to his promises.

FOURTH. The heathen nations were left to be a trial and a trouble to Israel; a perpetual thorn in the flesh.

IV WHAT GOD DID TO SAVE THE PEOPLE. FIRST. All these sufferings were sent in love, to lead the people to righteousness (Deut. 8: 2; Zech. 13: 9).

SECOND God raised up deliverers for them. 16. *Nevertheless*: in spite of all the people's sins and rebellion, and although God sent the punishment. *The Lord raised up judges*: in various ways, by various means: sometimes by a direct call, sometimes by natural methods of his providence. But in all cases it was the Lord who did it. They received no salary, imposed no tributes, made no laws, but merely exercised, for the deliverance of Israel, the personal ascendancy conferred upon them by "the Spirit of God." There were fifteen judges in all. Eight were military heroes, five seem to have led more peaceful lives; while Eli the high-priest and Samuel the prophet stand apart with peculiar missions. *Out of the hand* (the power) *of those that spoiled them*: took their property as a spoil of war.

17. *Yet they would not hearken*: obey the exhortations and commands of their deliverers to serve God only. They were willing to be saved from the consequences of their sins, but not willing to leave the sins which brought the consequences, at least only for a time.

THIRD. God's long-suffering mercy. 18. *Then the Lord was with the judge*: as he was with Moses and Joshua. The fact that the judges had been the means of delivering the people gave them a vantage ground for urging the people to obedience. *For it repented the Lord*. He altered the course of his providence, as a man would do if he had repented.

19. *They ceased not from their evil doings*: the things which seemed pleasant to themselves and most conducive to happiness, although contrary to God's commands. *Nor from their stubborn way*: their hard way. Hard, as proceeding from a hard and perverse heart; hard, in the sense of being stubbornly persisted in; and hard or grievous in its consequences. It is the term applied to the obstinate and intractable conduct of Pharaoh.

V WHY GOD DID NOT DRIVE OUT THE NATIONS. 22. *That through them I may prove Israel.* They would be scourges and instruments of wrath to punish and test the Israelites. In Ex. 23: 29, 30; Deut. 7: 22, an addition reason is given for the gradual extirpation of the Canaanites: "lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee." But God could have accomplished this end in other ways had the Israelites done their duty and driven out the Canaanites But both objects were now accomplished at once.

Sadie's Scheme.

KATE SUMNER GATES.

"If we were only rich as Croesus or even poor as Job's turkey; but this being neither the one thing nor the other, and pretending to be the other is what is fast bringing me to an untimely grave," said Sadie Metcalf, half whimsically and half in earnest.

"What is it now, gloves or ribbons, or worse yet, a new gown?" asked her sister Helen, laughing. Helen always laughed, Sadie was wont to say almost impatiently.

"It is all those and half a dozen things more," answered Sadie, desperately. "And I just *wont* go to father for a cent, nor run up a bill either. I heard him talking with mother the other night, and he was dreadfully blue; he said he did not see how he could make both ends meet any way in the world. He was counting up the bills he had to pay. I'll you, Helen, we have lots of them. I believe that they are killing father, and we are sitting here folding our hands, keeping up appearances and running up more bills all the time. I only wish I was a boy, or, as I said, that we were downright poor, and I'd go to work at something in a twinkling. I would now if mother would only let me."

"Why don't father ask Uncle John to help him?"

"Helen Metcalf, would you be willing to wear a pair of gloves or a ribbon that his money bought when you've got health and strength enough to earn them yourself? I wouldn't, and I've made up my mind to one thing; I will either go without or get them myself hereafter. I have racked my brains to see if I could not think of something that I could do until I am just about wild."

"So am I," said a voice from the hall. "Just you hold on a minute and I'll be with you, for 'misery likes company,' you know, and I'm on the verge of distraction myself. Here I've been and gone and torn a miserable three-cornered hole in my best coat, and I'm a thousand miles, more or less, from home and mother, and invited out to-morrow evening. I've come to you for sympathy."

"And brought your coat along with you to be—sympathized (!) with also, haven't you?" asked Sadie, dryly, as her cousin came into the room.

"With what unerring instinct you grasp the situation. You see I knew that you would *insist* upon mending it, so I did bring it. I tell you what it is, Sadie, every college coat to have a professional mender. You've no idea the straights we fellows are put to."

"Considering the frequency with which you come to me for—sympathy I should say I might have some idea," said Sadie, laughingly.

"Well—yes, perhaps; that little circumstance slipped my mind; but every fellow hasn't a cousin by, you know. Those who haven't have my heartfelt sympathy; they've some of them hinted repeated y that I might lend the loan of mine. I think I'll endow a chair for this long felt want, and recommend you to fill it; you would make money hand over fist. What is it, pinched your finger?" he asked, as Sadie uttered a quick little exclamation.

"No," she said, "but I've gotten an idea, and I want you to keep still a minute, and let me think it over."

"All right, only hurry up, for I want to know what it is; you will tell me, of course."

"Certainly, for I shall want your help. I guess you are what Aunt Jane calls a special providence. I want to earn some money the worst way. I have to have so many things, and I hate to keep asking father for money; it just occurred to me when you were talking, that perhaps if they really wanted things done—perhaps you could get them for me to do—if they did really want some one to do them, you know. Would there be any harm, and would you do it?"

"Will I? Of course I will, and I rather reckon there won't be any harm. Why, the fellows will consider me a patron saint, and our various mothers will call down innumerable blessings on your devoted head."

"Could we keep it just between ourselves?"

"Oh yes, you need not fret about that; I'll work it for you so that Mrs. Grundy won't know a thing about it. No, I won't tell a single fib, and you shall have all the stocking to darn and coats and things to mend that you want. I shouldn't wonder a bit if you came out in a seal skin this winter."

"How are the mighty fallen!" said Sadie to herself with a laugh, after Will had gone.

"I used to think that I would do some great thing or other, and here I've agreed to mend stockings for pin money. Well, what is the odds as long as it helps, and besides it is about all that I could do. I can't play Old Hundred through correctly, nor paint a rosebud so that you could tell it from a sunflower; as for writing, I doubt if I could write a two page essay; but even if the fine arts are not in my line I won't be a dead weight on my poor father any longer, not if I can help it."

One bright, sunshiny Sunday morning Sadie came down in a new and pretty winter suit.

"How do you like it, papa?" she queried, with a queer little twinkle in her eyes

"It is very becoming, daughter, but I hate to speak of it; I am somehow unusually short just now, and I hope you haven't run up much of a bill."

Then Sadie laughed outright.

"It's paid for, every cent, you poor, dear, blessed father, and what is more, I don't mean to have you pay any more bills for me right away; it is time I took care of myself, I think."

"The dear sakes!" she said softly to herself, as she brushed away the tears in her own room just before going to church "who ever would have thought that I could please him so much just by darning a few stockings. I declare it more than pays me, though there have been some awful holes, and I am not particularly fond of darning."—*National Baptist.*

An Ostrich Race.

A writer in the Providence *Journal* gives some interesting facts in regard to an ostrich farm near Los Angeles, Cal., owned by Dr. J. C. Sketchley. He has sixty acres devoted to ostriches, having imported thirty pairs of these birds directly from Africa, landing them at Galveston, Tex. He also brought with them four Madrassee men and women, these people being thoroughly familiar with the habits of the ostrich. Their food is corn and alfalfa,—the latter, a kind of California grass, of which at least half a dozen crops are frequently cut off the same ground in one season. These ostriches weigh from three hundred to four hundred pounds each. The male bird is black and the female gray; and they are valuable chiefly for their feather, the finest of which sell for $4 apiece, according to the account, while good common feathers bring $200 a pound. The price of a full grown pair of birds is from $700 to $800; and young birds, six months old, cost from $150 to $200. They are a very long lived creature, sometimes reaching the age of eighty years. The article closes with the following account of an ostrich race:—

At a command from the doctor, one of the Madrassee keepers opened the doors of one of the pens; and, in response to the doctor's call, two superb ostriches came running to him. After caressing the gentle creatures for a few moments, he showed them a handful of figs, of which they are extremely fond. Two of his men then restrained the birds by placing nooses about their legs until he and myself had walked to the other end of the course. Then, at a signal from the doctor, the birds were released, and the race began. It was a rare sight. Ornithologists tell us that the stride of the ostrich, when feeding, is from twenty to twenty-two inches; when walking, but not feeding, twenty-six inches; and, when terrified, from eleven and one-half to fourteen feet.

It seemed to me that, in this race for a handful of figs from their master, these gigantic birds covered the last named distance at every stride. Like the wind they came, their great necks stretched forward and upward to their utmost length, their wings, like arms, working with a motion similar to that made by their legs, and filling the air with a mighty sound like the rushing of a whirlwind. Nearer and nearer they came, their speed increasing with every moment, till I was almost terrified lest they should run us down, feeling certain that we could not withstand the shock. They kept well abreast for nearly half of the distance, and then one began to forge ahead. He steadily increased his lead till within a few feet of us, when he turned his head, and, seeing that his competitor was considerably in the rear, he slackened his pace, and, jogging up to the doctor, received his reward in figs and caresses.—*The Christian Register.*

—The first joy the Christain feels, is the knowledge of sins forgiven. A little girl knelt to pray, but the memory of a wrong done that day came between her soul and Christ. She had disobeyed her father. She rose and went to his room.

"Papa," said she, as the tears filled her eyes and choked her voice, "I have to tell you something that I did that was wrong to-day. I want to ask you to forgive me."

"I do not want you to tell me; I forgive you freely without it."

He dried away her tears and sent her away rejoicing. As she knelt once more for her heavenly Father's blessing she realiness of her earthly father to forgive her, was to her a type of the Divine forgiveness. She realized that "God pardons like a father who kisses the offense into everlasting forgetfulness."

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BUDS AND BLOSSOMS

and use it to help us, as heretofore, in the Work. Unless aided by Christians generally, we must suffer financial loss. This can be, should be, and will be avoided if advertisers will encourage, and those who read this subscribe. Send for circulars and specimens, and you will see what others think and say about BUDS AND BLOSSOMS.

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SEVERY LATTA.

—HENRY CLAY AND THE GOAT.—The following anecdote of Henry Clay has just been published. As he came out of the Capitol at Washington one day, seeing a frightened woman in the street striving to ward off the attack of a sportive goat, he gallantly, in spite of his years and office, seized the goat by the horns. The woman thanked him warmly, and sped hurriedly on. Mr. Clay would have liked to move on also, but the goat had its own views about the interference which his species amusement. As soon as the woman's danger passed, he took hold of the two horns, the animal now physically on his hind legs and prepared for a charge. In his own defence Mr. Clay now took the animal as before by the horns, and thus for a time they stood, while a crowd of street boys gathered about, immensely amused at the unusual spectacle of a Senator and a goat pitted one against the other in a public street. As long as Mr. Clay held the goat by the horns, all was well; but the moment the quadruped was free, came a fresh preparation for a charge. Not a boy offered assistance, but after awhile one ventured to suggest "Throw the billy down, sir."

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A Sleeping Car runs daily on the 17.15 train to Halifax.

On Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday a Sleeping Car for Montreal will be attached to the Quebec Express, and on Monday, Wednesday and Friday a Sleeping Car will be attached at Moncton.

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Accommodation,	12.55
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Day Express	6.30
Truro Accommodation	16.00
Express for St. John and Quebec	18.00

A sleeping car runs daily on the 18.00 train to St. John.

On Monday, Wednesday and Friday a sleeping car for Montreal will be attached to the Quebec Express and on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday a sleeping car for Montreal will be attached at Moncton.

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Truro Accommodation	8.15
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