

SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

LESSON XXXVI.

Sep. 5. } LOT'S ESCAPE FROM SODOM { Gen. xix
1880. } 12-26.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Remember Lot's wife."—Luke xvii. 32.

HOME STUDIES.

M. Gen. xix. 12-28. Escape from Sodom.
Tu. Luke xvii. 20-37. Remember Lot's Wife.
W. 2 Pet. i. 1-9. Example to the Ungodly.
Th. Judge 1-7. Vengeance of Eternal Fire.
F. Ps. xci. 1-16. The Godly Suffer.
S. Mark vi. 1-12. A Sadder Punishment.
Sab. Ps. cvii. 31-43. A Fruitful Land to Barrenness.

HELPS TO STUDY.

In our last lesson we found that two of Abraham's heavenly guests, on leaving him, went toward Sodom. Accordingly in the beginning of this nineteenth chapter we are told that "there came two angels to Sodom at even," and that they were met by Lot, who "sat in the gate," with offers of hospitality, which after considerable pressure they accepted.

If any evidence were wanting of the gross wickedness of the inhabitants of the city, it was abundantly furnished by the conduct of the mob that gathered around Lot's dwelling in the night with evil intent towards the strangers. Lot found himself powerless to protect them; and the wretched Sodomites, mad with ungoverned lust, and brutalized by indulgence in indescribably abominable sensuality, were only restrained when miraculously smitten with blindness by the angels, so that "they wearied themselves to find the door."

Here our present lesson begins. It may be divided as follows: (1) *The Warning*, (2) *The Escape* (3) *The Destruction of the Cities*; (4) *Lot's Wife*.

I. THE WARNING.—Vers. 12-14. The angels now declared the purpose of their visit, viz., the destruction of the place, and told Lot to collect his children and connections in order that they might escape. This behest he endeavoured to obey, but he had been silent all too long, and when at last his voice was raised in warning he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law.

Instead of a place (Sodom) put a condition (the state of sin in which all are by nature) and the warning to escape has an application to all who have not already done so. In order to get away from this condition and from the everlasting misery which may at any moment become the unalterable doom of those who remain in it, we must be converted—that is, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ as our own Saviour and finding our justification in the atonement which He has made, we must yield to the strivings of God's Spirit and turn (*verso*, I turn) from sin unto holiness. Those who are themselves converted will try to arouse others, especially those who are near and dear to them, and they are encouraged to persevere in their efforts—Hast thou here any besides?

II. THE ESCAPE.—Vers. 15-22. Lot had much to leave—property, luxurious life, neighbours, acquaintances, perhaps children—and he lingered. All these he must relinquish, and that very speedily, or perish with them, but still he lingered; and it was only by the exercise of a merciful violence that the angels placed him and his wife and daughters outside the city walls in time.

So it is sometimes with the half-awakened sinner; he is loath to leave his old life, his old habits and associations—things that by long use have become natural to him—his carnal heart pleads for respite. He sees no need of such a sudden and violent change. There is time enough he thinks. He purposes to break off his old courses gradually. He resolves to get away from his burning dwelling by and by, at his leisure. What the Word of God, all through, says to such a person is just what the angels said to Lot: Escape for thy life; look not behind thee; neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain lest thou be consumed.

Oh, not so, my Lord. "We wish to be saved, but we do not wish to be saved too much. We will follow Christ, but we will do so at an exceedingly respectful distance. There is great danger of being too holy. People will call us saints and mock us. Let us have moderation in all things—some prayer meetings and some ball-room festivities. Let us keep as far away from heaven as possible; it is very good to have such a place to go to after death, rather than go to hell; but while we are in Turkey we must do as the Turks do." If we must leave Sodom let us not be driven beyond Zoar at the farthest. As for this or that worldly practice to which we are addicted, it may be a sin, but is it not a little one? Such language as this would be frequently heard in our day if speech always agreed with conduct. If we are Abraham's spiritual seed we would need to have some better way of proving our descent than by exhibiting such a close resemblance to Abraham's nephew; and if we content ourselves with Lot's standard of piety we must expect to undergo Lot's course of discipline. He was chased from Sodom by fire and brimstone; he afterwards fled from his chosen Zoar in terror for his life, and needed no urging to make him climb the once dreaded mountain; and we are left to infer (for he is spoken of in Scripture as a "righteous man") that when he had only a cave to live in and probably but a few goats to sustain him, he at last gave himself unreservedly to God.

III. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CITIES.—Vers. 23-25. This instance of the divine wrath against sin is referred to in many passages both of the Old and New Testaments. See Deut. xxix. 23; Isaiah xlii. 19; Lam. iv. 6; Amos iv. 11; 2 Pet. ii. 6.

Thrice in the gospels is the Saviour's solemn warning recorded to the effect that it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the judgment than for the cities that saw His mighty works and repented not (Matt. xi. 24; Mark

vi. 11; Luke x. 12). And the warning applies with cumulative force to the cities and towns of modern times, for the evidences of Christianity are always increasing.

IV. LOT'S WIFE.—Ver. 26. Her name and lineage are unknown. Whether Lot brought her with him from Ur of the Chaldees or found her in Sodom is not stated. Nothing is recorded of her but her conduct on this occasion and her sad end. The angels' order to Lot and his family was "Look not behind thee." This order she disobeyed and she became a pillar of salt. She was outside the walls of the doomed city, well on her way across the plain; a place of safety was in sight; but her heart yearned after her household gods, whatever they might have been, and she looked back toward the city that contained them. She was almost saved, but she perished after all. *Almost saved means lost.* And this is the reason why the loving Saviour, in describing the nature of His kingdom, the necessity of an unreserved self-surrender on the part of those who would enter it, and the danger of half-heartedness, has left us the words of our Golden Text, Remember Lot's wife.

THE PRESBYTERIAN S. S. TEACHER'S STUDY.

LESSON I.—OCTOBER 4.

I.—The Fivefold Book of Moses.

Pente, five; *Teuchos*, vessel or instrument for holding—hence book.

1. The Book of Moses Ezra vi. 18.
2. The Law of Moses Ezra vii. 6.
3. The Book of the Law of Moses Neh. viii. 1.
4. The Book of the Law by the hand of Moses 2 Chron. xxxiv. 14.
5. The Book of the Covenant 2 Chron. xxxiv. 30.

These are unquestionably our first five books of Scripture: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

The names are all of Greek origin—

Taught to the people in the reign of

Jehoshaphat 2 Chron. xvii. 9.

Found in the temple in the reign of

Josiah 2 Chron. xxxiv. 14.

The manuscript is one single roll 2 Kings xxiii. 2.

With sections larger and smaller, under two divisions; affirmative and negative precepts; one fivefold book; one main subject—Redemption; written by one author (except Deut. xxiv.)—Moses; appealed to by Jesus Christ Luke xvi. 29-31; Luke xxiv. 27, 44; Luke xx. 37; John v. 46-47.

"The one source of Jewish literature, law, doctrine, faith, life, the dawning of literature in its oldest productions involved in obscurity, may be accepted from Him who claimed the name of Truth, to be the first and surest testimony for all inquiry which retains confidence in the words of Christ."—*Sack*.

Fivefold unity with a fivefold form of vital connection in part first—

1. Promise Gen. xv. 13-17.
2. Prophecy " xlix. 1-28.
3. History " xxxix. to xli.
4. Divine purpose " xvii. 1-9.
5. Dispensation. See "S. S. Teacher's Companion," p. 26.

II.—Characteristics of the five parts of the Book of Moses.

1. Genesis—the chapter of beginnings. See Normal Class Lesson in "S. S. Teacher's Companion," also "Presbyterian Normal Class Teacher," p. 32.

2. Exodus—the birth of the Israelitish nation by their exodus.

Their condition and preparation

for departure Exod. chap. i.-xii.

Their march from Rameses to

Mount Sinai Exod. chap. xii.-xix.

Their abode in the desert and giving

the Law Exod. chap. xix.-xl.

3. Leviticus—the hand-book of law for the priests.
(1) Laws on worship.
(2) Civil duties.
(3) Laws regulating sacrifices, chaps. i.-vii.
(4) Appointment and duties of the priesthood, chaps. viii.-x.

(5) Directions for ceremonial cleanness, chaps. xi.-xv.
(6) Laws concerning feasts, chaps. xvi.-xxvii.

4. Numbers—
(1) The census and organization of Israel at Sinai, chaps. i.-x.

(2) The journeying for forty years and the laws given, chaps. xi. and xiv.

(3) Rebellion of Korah, chaps. xvi.-xviii.

(4) Incidents of the forty years, chaps. xx.-xxxvi.

5. Deuteronomy—a review and summary of all the way and work of God.

(1) Summary of the narrative, chaps. i.-iv.

(2) The spirit of the law, chaps. v.-xi.

(3) The letter of the law, chaps. xii.-xxvi.

(4) The sanctions of the law, chaps. xxvii.-xxxiii.; or four farewell addresses, chaps. i.-xxx.

(5) The law committed to the priests, chaps. xxxi.-xxxii.

Supplemental notices of Moses—his death-blessing, and an account of his death.

Drill thoroughly on this classification and its enumerated details. It will give freshness to the reading of the books.

JOHN McEVEN.

WIDOW LIFE IN THE ZENANA.

BY MRS. MURRAY MITCHELL.

In a part of India, which for manifest reasons I will not indicate more distinctly, I once knew a Hindu lady, who,

from the first moment I saw her, interested me profoundly. She was young, remarkably fair in complexion, and her countenance was full of a grave, sweet intelligence which made her beautiful. She was the wife of an elderly gentleman, who was high-caste, rich, well educated, and occupied a highly influential position in the place where they lived. He had been a widower when he married this young girl, and he was devoted to her. She was childless, always a great sorrow to a Hindu woman; but this made no difference in his love and kindness to her. She was better to him than many sons; they were deeply attached to each other, and she was happy. Her face shewed it at once. It shewed something else too, when I first saw her. It was evident she was a cultivated and thoughtful woman. Her dress and her apartment told the same tale. The women in the zenanas are generally clothed to scantily, but she was dressed becomingly and with perfect propriety; while her room, though as usual almost devoid of furniture, was neat and orderly, and had a look of womanly occupation pleasant to see. A small round table stood at one end, on which lay some books, a work-basket, a photographic album, and some sewed mats. Among the books was a large Bengali Bible, which bore signs of much use, and an English New Testament, to which she pointed with much pride, and from which she afterwards read some verses with ease, in a tolerably good accent. She also shewed me a handsome sewed rug, which she had worked for her husband "to pray upon."

It was evident that the zenana lady-teacher had found entrance here. The truth was, her husband being an intelligent and educated man, and finding his young wife with tastes and mind capable of cultivation, but with a strong desire to be taught, and to be a real help-meet and fitting companion to her husband, he made inquiries after a teacher—the result being, that for several years the lady who now accompanied me in my visit had been her instructress, and was the trusted friend of both husband and wife.

But their lives were not without trials. They had not a house to themselves. According to the usual custom among Hindus, they lived under the family roof, among brothers and uncles and their wives, the men in their part of the house, the women in theirs. This family was Brahminical and very bigoted, being most zealous after the rites of their own religion. Some of the elder women and the brothers looked with great disapprobation at the employments of their sister-in-law, and the liberty allowed her, though they dared not then openly oppose, her husband being head of the house. So she went on, adding to her acquisitions, delighting in her books and her work, and living as happy and rational a life as was possible in the seclusion of the zenana.

She was exempted from joining in idolatrous ceremonies by her husband's permission; and though not baptized, she was a sincere and humble, though necessarily hidden follower of the Lord Jesus. She said she and her husband read the Bible together daily, and she hoped he would yet "come out" with her, and they would be baptized together.

But one sad day the teacher came and told me the bitter news: the husband had been suddenly seized with cholera and was dead; her beloved pupil was a widow. A widow!—ah! dear friends, you little know what a terrible significance attaches in Hindu society to this single word.

"What will be her fate?" I exclaimed.

"What, indeed!" she answered through her tears. "She is a widow, and that tells it all."

We visited her once or twice, and then were forbidden the house. And what a change! Her beautiful hair had been shaved off; her jewels taken away; her nice clothes were changed for a coarse white sheet with a black border, which was wrapped round her person. She must now sleep on a mat on the floor, no longer on a bed; she must have only one scanty meal in the day, and that must be eaten alone; she must, besides, fast twice in the month for twenty-four hours at a time; she must do the most menial work of the zenana, and be the drudge of any one who chose to order her about. Worse than all this, her work was taken from her, and her beloved books were all burned. In a word, she was subjected by her bigoted relatives to all the privations and horrors of a Hindu widow's life, and with even more than usual strictness because of their former jealousy. Her kind protector was gone, she had no son, she was in their power; and henceforth "lamentation and mourning and woe" must be written over her life. The result need not be wondered at. Her reason soon gave way, and a deep dark cloud of melancholy settled on her mind.

I have told this true sad story of Hindu life to illustrate the condition of widows in India. And this is no extreme nor unusual case. It is Hindu law, as well as practice, that widows should be treated thus. In all heathen homes where Brahminical influence is paramount, these things are now done. What makes the lot of the widow especially hard is the fact of infant-marriage. A girl is married when quite a child. The lad, her husband, may die, and then she is a widow for life. It does not matter though she is only betrothed, her real marriage may not have taken place; still she is a widow for life. Hindu law ordains that every woman must be married once, but that no high-caste woman can be married twice.

"If we allowed our women to marry again," said a Bengali gentleman once, "we husbands should all be murdered."

Thus a poor girl may lie under the doom of perpetual widowhood, and all that this dreadful fate implies in India, from early years to old age. I have seen it stated that there are upwards of a hundred thousand widows in India under the age of sixteen! Think of it, dear friends.

In the zenanas, where a little of the light of Christianity has been let in, these practices are modified; the fate of the widow is less cruel, she is treated with more humanity. Is not this another reason for sending education and the Gospel, and for being more earnest and quick about it? Sending these "a little faster," as the dying woman entreated us to do. May I ask the honoured widows of our own privileged land to espouse especially the cause of those hapless widows, their poor sisters in India, who are described by one of their own countrymen as "accursed," and who can only be redeemed from their cruel condition by receiving of that glorious liberty with which Christ has made His people free?