



BEDFORD GAOL.

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ABOVE is a picture of the gaol in which John Bunyan, author of "The Pilgrim's Progress," was confined. In 1660, when Charles II. became king, severe laws were enacted against the preaching of Dissenters from the Established Church, and Bunyan was arrested and put in prison. He was offered his liberty if he would promise not to preach again, but he said: "If I was out of prison to-day I would preach the Gospel again to-morrow, by the help of God." He was therefore continued in prison for twelve years. At this time he had a wife and four children, and in the day-time he aided in maintaining himself and them by making tags and laces, which they sold. His nights were spent in reading the Bible and Fox's "Book of Martyrs" (the only books he had), and in writing. During the early part of his imprisonment his gaoler befriended him, and allowed him to go out and visit his friends, and even to preach. One night Bunyan was at home with his family, but could not sleep, and felt impelled to return to the gaol. Very early the next morning a messenger sent by his enemies arrived at the gaol, and inquired, "Is John Bunyan here?" "Yes," was the reply. "Let me see him." He was called, and appeared, and thus the gaoler escaped from blame. After this, probably by a change of gaoler, his confinement became more rigid. At length the time came when he was set at liberty, at the end of 1672, or early in 1673. For two or three years before this his imprisonment had again become more lenient, and in 1671 the Baptist Church in Bedford had chosen him as its pastor, which relationship he sustained till his death.

LESSON NOTES.

FIRST QUARTER.

OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY.

B.C. 1837(?).] LESSON IX. [March 4.

SELLING THE BIRTHRIGHT.

Gen. 25. 27-34. Memory verses, 31-34.

GOLDEN TEXT.

The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.—Luke 12. 23.

OUTLINE.

1. The Hunter, v. 27-30.
2. The Supplanter, v. 31-34.

CONNECTING LINKS.

1. The death of Sarah (Gen. 23.) 2. The marriage of Isaac (Gen. 24.) 3. The death of Abraham (Gen. 25. 7-10.) 4. The birth of Esau and Jacob (Gen. 25. 19-26.)

EXPLANATIONS.

"A cunning hunter"—A skilful hunter; a man who loved an adventurous life. "A

plain man"—A man of simple, gentle manners. "Dwelling in tents"—A lover of home—domestic. "Isaac loved Esau because he did eat of his venison"—This means not so much because Isaac shared in Esau's hospitality as because of Esau's fascinating, energetic temperament. "Rebekah loved Jacob"—The active mother loves the gentle child. "Jacob's sod pottage"—Prepared boiled food, made of lentils. (See below.) "He was faint"—Exhausted. "That same red pottage"—The lentil broth was red in its colour, as Esau was red in his complexion. "Therefore was his name called Edom."—Edom means red, and Esau got his nickname from the hasty

words he used in describing the food he so much wanted.

"Thy birthright"—To some one line among the descendants of Abraham God had promised the land of Canaan as an earthly inheritance, and that peculiar covenanted blessing which carried with it a promise of the Messiah and the germ of spiritual blessings to all the world. It included not only a double portion of the father's property, but the official authority of the father, or sheikhood, and the functions of the domestic priesthood. All these had been lightly looked on by Esau, but earnestly desired by Jacob; and now, when Esau returns from the field exhausted and hungry, Jacob proposes to give him relief if he will relinquish his birthright. "At the point to die"—Tired almost to death. "What profit shall this birthright do to me"—What signifies a birthright to the man who has only a short time to live? "Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him"—Jacob's demand of the oath evinces a mean suspicion. Esau's giving the oath shows a low sense of honour. "Pottage of lentils"—The leaves of lentils are much used in the East for food. "Despised his birthright"—He must have regarded it with contempt, or mere hunger would not have led him to part with it.

PRACTICAL TEACHINGS.

Where in this lesson are we taught—

1. The evils of favouritism in the family?
2. That we should prize our privileges?
3. That forfeited blessings cannot be regained?

THE LESSON CATECHISM.

1. What was noticeable in the boys, Esau and Jacob, as they grew toward manhood? "They grew apart in sympathy." 2. What sad fact was noticeable on the part of their father and mother? "Each had a favourite son." 3. What did Jacob do when his brother Esau, exhausted and faint, asked him for some food? "He refused to give him any unless he paid for it." 4. What price did he demand? "Esau's birthright." 5. What ought both to have remembered? Golden Text: "The life is more than meat," etc.

DOCTRINAL SUGGESTION.—The freedom of the will.

CATECHISM QUESTIONS.

How was the Redeemer consecrated? The Holy Ghost, who was signified by the anointing oil, descended upon him.

To what office was our Lord consecrated? To be a prophet, a priest, and a king.

A TRADE FOR BOYS.

If I had my way, I would insist that every boy should learn a trade. It was so in the olden times, and it should be so now. The man who has a trade is a thousand times better equipped than the man who has none. Let every boy select the trade that best suits his ability, and promises the highest honours and remuneration. When he has mastered his trade, if he dislikes it, or it is not profitable, he can begin to study a profession, or enter upon a commercial life. If he should fail in both of those, he is still master of a good trade—something

that no one can take from him, no matter what exigencies may arise. The man who is master of a good trade is as independent as a millionaire. He need never want; he can find profitable employment in any corner of the world.

I say not one word against a professional career. But I do say emphatically that the man who has a trade and a profession as well, need have no fear of the future. The boy who wants to can master a trade between the years of sixteen and twenty, and if he dislikes it, he still has time to study medicine, the law, or any other of the learned professions. But if he waits until he is twenty or over, he may not have an opportunity or feel inclined to learn either.—Foster Coates, in the Ladies' Home Journal.

A Little Light.

'Twas but a little light she bore
While standing at the open door;
A little light, a feeble spark,
And yet it shone out through the dark
With cheerful ray, and gleamed afar
As brightly as the polar star.

A little light, a gentle hint
That falls upon the page of print,
May clear the vision, and reveal
The precious treasures doubts conceal,
And guide us to an open door
Where we new regions may explore.

A little light dispels the gloom
That gathers in the shadowed room
Where want and sickness find their prey
And night seems longer than the day,
And hearts with many troubles cope
Uncheered by one slight ray of hope.

It may be little we can do
To help another, it is true;
But better is a little spark
Of kindness when the way is dark,
Than one should miss the road to heaven
For lack of light we might have given.

A FORWARD MOVEMENT IN CHICAGO.

WITH the proposed forward movement the Epworth Leagues of Chicago are to be closely identified. A chorus choir of a hundred Leaguers will lead the singing. Our young men will act on committees of invitation and as ushers. Some of our most active young workers will speak to the people. We bespeak the prayers and co-operation of all our Leagues. The need is great and crying. Hundreds of people in that section of the city never hear a hymn or a prayer or a Gospel sermon. They are low down, and constantly going lower. They are as pagan as the people who live in the heart of China and Africa. They will never come to us. Some of them do not understand us. They think churches are for well-to-do people, who wear fine clothes and are moderately good. Others are so given over to sin that they do not care. If these people are ever saved we must go where they are and lift them up. It is easier to induce them at first to go to a theatre near their own doors than to a church a mile away. Once aroused, they will go to church. The salvation of the teeming thousands in the city slums is the great burning question of our times. How glad we are that our young people are enlisting in such Christ-like service!—Epworth Herald.

JOHN BUNYAN'S TOMB.

The great Puritan preacher and writer, John Bunyan, was buried in Mr. John Strudwick's tomb, in the "Dissenters' Burial-ground" of Bunhill Fields. Twelve



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other persons were subsequently interred in the same grave, and their names were inscribed on the head-stone, with this brief record of Bunyan: "Mr. John Bunyan, Author of the 'Pilgrim's Progress.' Ob. August, 1688. Aet. 60." As time passed the inscription grew almost undecipherable, and it was several times refreshed. Later, however, it was felt that some more worthy monument of the great writer ought to be raised to his memory, and the result is the beautiful memorial here represented. On the top is a recumbent figure of Bunyan; at the foot is a tablet bearing the original inscription, and on the sides two bas-reliefs, the one representing Christian toiling up the hill with his burden on his back; and the other, Christian with his burden rolling off at the sight of the cross.

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