

## The Sabbath School.

## INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

## PROSPERITY RESTORED.

April 13th.] [Job xlii: 1-10.

GOLDEN TEXT:—Behold we count them happy which endure.—James 5: 11.

HOME READINGS:—M. Job 26: 1-33 T. Job 37: 1-24. W. Job 39: 1-41. Th. Ps. 88: 1-18. F. Job 40: 1-14. S. Job 42: 1-16. S. James 5: 1-20.

Although from its high antiquity and peculiar structure there be many things in the book of Job hard to be understood, the lessons which in the main, it is designed to teach are plain enough. Job was perhaps the wealthiest of all the patriarchs, the head of "a very great household," and the father of a large family, ch. 1: 2, 3. He was highly respected, ch. 29: 5-11, and, withal, an eminently good man, who, like Abraham, had his altar and observed family worship continually. Ch. 1: 5. Into this happy household Satan—the adversary—(so called for the first time ch. 1: 6), was permitted by God to come and afflict Job for the trial of his faith and patience. In a single day all his earthly possessions were swept away, and, to complete the tragedy, he was deprived of his ten children by one fell stroke. To all this Job meekly replied, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord," ch. 1: 21. His three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar come to condole with him, ch. 2: 11; but, instead of comforting, they aggravate his distress by reproaching him. Christ denounces the kind of argument they used in Luke 13: 1-5. At length Job yielded to the frailties of humanity; he quarreled with his friends, ch. 16: 2, and began to expostulate with God, chs. 9, 10. At this time Elihu is introduced in the capacity of a Moderator, and in a masterly address, exposes Job's weakness, chs. 32-37. God Himself next addresses Job in language of incomparable grandeur, chs. 38, 39. In the Lesson we have the end of the whole matter—Job's complete submission. While in the act of praying for his friends who had grievously injured him, he is restored to health and happiness and twice as much worldly substance as he had before.

Vs. 1-3. Job answered, not as formerly by remonstrating, but in deep humility. I know that thou canst do everything—I am convinced of thine omnipotence. No thought withholden, i. e., nothing that the Lord purposed can be hindered. Who in he that hideth counsel—quoting God's words in ch. 38: 1, and acknowledging that in effect he was the guilty man. What I understood not Job and other patriarchs and prophets uttered many important truths which they themselves did not fully understand, e. g., in ch. 19: 25 Job speaks of the Redeemer and the Resurrection, concerning which his knowledge must have been very limited; but here the reference is to his imperfect knowledge of God's reason for afflicting him. Vs. 4-6. Hear I beseech thee—as a humble petitioner: demand, ask. By the hearing of the ear. In youth he had been taught the wisdom and goodness of God, but now he knows by experience. V. 6. I abhor myself. The language of true penitence, Isa. 6: 5. Rom. 7: 24. Repent.—Repentance is a turning from sin. (Shorter Catechism). V. 7. These words—the words of God in chs. 39-41. Eliphaz had been foremost in arguing against Job, so God speaks to him particularly. Elihu, having been more judicious, is not here mentioned. Job now appears a type of Christ "making intercession for the transgressors." Isa. 53: 12. So fulfilling the law of Christ Matt. 3: 44.

LEARN that godliness is great gain: not to judge others harshly: the uncertain tenure by which we hold earthly possessions, and the uses of sanctified affliction.

## QUEEN ESTHER.

April 20th.]

[Esther iv: 10-17.

GOLDEN TEXT:—Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.—Psalms 37: 5.

HOME READINGS.—M. Es. 1: 1-22. T. Es. 2: 1-23. W. Es. 3: 1-15. Th. Es. 4: 1-17. F. Es. 5 and 6. S. Es. 7 and 8. S. Es. 9 and 10.

The charming story of Esther reads like a romance all the way through. Though its imagery belongs to Oriental times, its moral is of universal application. Strangely enough the name of God is not mentioned in the book, but the hand of God is plainly visible in the preservation of his people. The best teaching of this lesson will be to recite the whole story in abbreviated form, giving emphasis in passing to the moral and religious teachings with which it abounds. AHAZERUS, king of the vast Persian Empire, consisting of 127 Provinces, began to reign 486 B. C. In his third year he convened a great council at Shushan, the capital, 200 miles S. E. from Babylon, which lasted 180 days, and which probably had reference to his expedition against Greece, undertaken soon after with an army of 5,000,000, of whom only 5000 returned. For refusing to comply with an unreasonable request Queen Vashti was deposed, and 4 years later, Esther was instated in her place. The time of the lesson is about thirty years after the return of the Jews to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel. Many, however, still remained in Babylon, among whom MORDECAI, a Benjaminite, and his niece, and adopted daughter, Esther—an orphan maid, in Hebrew named Hadassah, (Myrtle), noted for her beauty, wisdom and virtue. Haman, an Amalekite, a born enemy of the Jews, and chief of the king's household, picks a quarrel with Mordecai who refused to bow down and reverence this upstart and base flatterer, ch. 3: 2, whereupon Haman vows vengeance on all the Jews in the land. He obtains a royal decree that they should all be murdered on a given day, ch. 3: 12-13; and then the king and he sat down "to drink," ch. 3: 15. What a picture this of an Oriental despot carousing with his prime minister while thousands of unoffending subjects are doomed to destruction! "But the city of Shushan was perplexed," the hardest hearts revolted from such cruelty. Mordecai, among the first to hear of the decree, was distressed beyond measure on his own account and Esther's (for she being of Jewish descent was necessarily included: as well as his countrymen's. How was the impending calamity to be averted? He entreats Esther to interpose, at whatever risk, and here we have her struggle against etiquette, her resolution nobly taken, and in the succeeding chapters, her triumphant success, Haman's overthrow and the salvation of the Jews.

LESSONS.—(1) High rank is no security against trial and danger. Esther, raised to the highest position, is in imminent peril of her life. (2) Talent, wealth, culture, influence and opportunity are the measure of our accountability—who knoweth whether thou art come, &c., v. 14. Every man has his own peculiar mission, and Christianity expects that every man shall do his duty. (3) V. 16. The fear of consequences should not deter from duty—"If I perish I perish." So said Paul, Acts 20: 24. So said Luther and Knox. (4) Vs. 13, 14. Helping to save others is the best way to ensure your own safety. (5) The true source of courage and help is in God, v. 16. Fast for me, implies pray for me.—teaching us to pray for others as well as for ourselves. (6) There is a design in all the providences of God. The Christian can ever say "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, &c. Ps. 23: 4. (7) Pride will have its fall, Prov. 16: 18.