

was because he did not care that the honor to be put upon him should be a public spectacle. Both Moses and Enoch had passed away alone, probably without the witness of a human eye. When Elijah and Elisha left Jericho, fifty students followed them to an eminence, overlooking the Jordan, "to view afar off." The two crossed the Jordan, which opened a pathway for them as the prophet smote it with his mantle. Elijah spake to his faithful attendant: "Ask what I shall do for thee before I be taken away from thee." He did not ask for the prophet's staff, or his mantle, or riches, or greatness, or honor, but for a double portion of Elijah's spirit, the portion of the son who was to be the heir and successor of his father (Deut. 21: 17). Like Solomon, he wished to be gifted so as to take the lead in completing his work. The answer to this request was conditioned on Elisha's personal fitness (v. 10). Only a spirit, purged enough to behold the vision of the ascending saint, was pure enough to receive the double portion which Elisha asked.

It is interesting to note that just as Elijah had a special interest in the pupils in the schools, the pupils had a love and reverence for the aged prophet. It is right that this mutual interest of age and youth in each other's welfare should be wedlocked and padlocked with no possible divorce. We need the aged for council and the youth for action.

"They still went on and talked." Like the conversation of the two disciples with Jesus on the way to Emmaus, we can do little more than imagine the theme. Suddenly a bright, flaming light shot from the sky. It seemed like a chariot of fire and horses of fire. It came between them, parted them, and Elijah was gone as regards the flesh, but present as regards the spirit. Elisha had met the conditions; he had prayed and watched; now the double portion was received. He had "been faithful over a few things"; now "he was to be ruler over many things." The prophet's mantle that came into his possession was nothing in itself without Elijah's spirit. The outward and visible are useless without the inward and spiritual. Possessed with the spirit, and inheriting the office and cloak of his predecessor, he smote the waters of the Jordan as Elijah had done, and the "Divine amen" assured him of his right and title, and the sons of the prophets, spectators of the scene, understood the divine token and said (v. 15).

We have a better legacy than Elisha had. When Jesus ascended, He sent the Holy Spirit to be with His people forever. "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

LESSON 7.—AUGUST 14, 1898.

The Shunammite's Son.

(Lesson Text: 2 Kings 4: 25-37. Memory Verses: 32-35.)
(Read the chapter.)

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee."—Psa. 55: 22.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday: 2 Kings 4: 8-17. Tuesday: 2 Kings 4: 18-24. Wednesday: 2 Kings 4: 25-37. Thursday: 2 Kings 8: 1-6. Friday: Luke 7: 11-17. Saturday: Luke 8: 41, 42, 49-56. Sunday: Psa. 116: 1-13.

The Heart of the Lesson.

The famous artist, Thomas Nast, once, when giving an exhibition of his skill, performed a strange feat with his brushes. On a piece of canvas he rapidly sketched a beautiful rural scene, with green meadows and grazing cattle, cornfields, orchards, gardens, farm-houses, and buildings, and over all the bright-blue sky with fleecy clouds seemed to pour

heaven's benediction on the scene below. As he stepped to one side the audience heartily applauded the work of the artist's brain and hand. Then, dipping his brush into darker colors, he seemed to apply them recklessly to the canvas, obliterating the sky, blotting out the fields and meadows, until it seemed there was nothing left but a wretched daub. Again the artist stepped aside. The audience gazed perplexed on what seemed to be the blurring of former beauty. He then called his attendant to put a gilded frame around the ruined work of art and turn it to a vertical position; then the mystery was solved. Before the audience a panel picture of a beautiful waterfall was revealed, the water plunging over rocks, with overhanging trees and verdure. Then the audience again made the air ring with rounds of applause.

That was but a faint illustration of the way the Great Artist changes and metamorphoses our lives and their environment. Nast knew, though his audience failed at first to see it, that every stroke destructive of the landscape was a constructive stroke of the waterfall. Even so it is with God in His dealings with men. What in His providence seems strange to us is very clear to Him. This truth is brought out in this lesson. The story is one of the sweetest, tenderest, and best known in the Bible; it is full of practical lessons for those who suffer, and lessons for those who work.

The first picture represents the hospitable home on the farm at Shunam, where the prophet was received and made welcome by a God-fearing woman, who was great in faith, great in hope, and great in love. She was rich, yet made no display; careful for the welfare of her husband and the comfort of her guest, the honored man of God, who visited her home on his frequent journeys to Carmel, where stood the altar made famous by Elijah, which was a gathering point where the faithful assembled to worship God on the new moons and Sabbath days. Elisha desired to repay the woman for her kindness shown to himself and servant; so he offered to use his influence to secure royal favor for herself and her husband (v. 13). She was not ambitious. She had no desire to be lifted into a conspicuous place; so she replied, "I dwell among mine own people."

Though unspoken, her life was lacking one great blessing. Like Sarah and Hannah she had no son, and it was reckoned a calamity by every Jewish wife to be without children. A child was promised, and in due time she embraced a son. Then, what congratulations of friends, what joy of parents, what eager questions would rise in their hearts concerning the future!

"A child, more than all other gifts
That earth can offer to declining man,
Brings hope with it and forward-looking thoughts."

As the boy grew up to youth, the hospitable house was the picture of joy and contentment. Then the picture was changed. To have is not to hold. Blessings sometimes come like glints of sunshine through a cloud-rack, only to make the gloom deeper by the clouds again obscuring the brightness. One hot day in the reaping fields, the boy had gone to join his father and the reapers. Suddenly he was smitten with sun-stroke, crying to his father, "My head, my head." He was carried home and laid on his mother's knees, where he died at noon. Late won and early lost. Broken-hearted, the mother carried the body and laid it on the bed in the prophet's chamber and went out to do what could be done.

A little girl just recovering from a severe illness,