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BIBLE LESSONS.

STUDIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.—GENESIS.

First Quarter.

Lesson: VI. Feb. 6. Gen. 13: 1-13.

LOT'S CHOICE.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.—Matt. 6: 33.

I. THE RETURN. 1. *And Abram went up* (from the lowlands to the hilly country) *out of Egypt.* Abraham did not remain long in Egypt. It was a strange country; it was not promised to him, and hence he builded no altar there. Among a powerful, rich, and luxurious people, he could not easily keep his family and his self safe from contamination, and perhaps could not be personally safe. *Into the South.* Not southerly from Egypt, but into the southern portion of Palestine.

2. *And Abram was very rich.* The danger of riches appears prominently here, in the very first case in which riches, as such, are mentioned. *In silver.* It is characteristic of early times, that silver is mentioned before gold among Abram's possessions, for it was very much more rare in Egypt, and was known as "white gold."

3. *And he went on his journeys.* By his stations, or according to his encampments. *Bethel; Hai.* The place was about 12 miles north of Jerusalem. "A conspicuous hill, its topmost summit resting on the rocky slopes below, and distinguished by its olive groves, offering a natural base for the altar, and a fitting shade for the tent of the patriarch."

4. *Called on the name of the Lord.* That is, re-established public worship and again acted the part of a patriarchal missionary. Doubtless Dean Stanley is right in saying that Egypt represented to him what we call the "world." And Abram had shaken off its dust from his feet, and returned to "a closer walk with God."

II. AN OCCASION FOR STRIFE AMONG BRETHREN. 5. *And Lot.* Abraham's nephew and brother-in-law. *Which went with Abraham.* This implies that Lot's riches came in part through his companionship with Abraham, the man of faith.

6. BLESSED ARE THE COMPANIONS OF THE RIGHTEOUS. Those who cast in their lot with the friends of God are often blessed for their sakes. The blessings of the good overflow upon those around them. The light which shines upon them shines also on every side.

6. *And the land was not able to bear them; i. e.,* the land did not furnish space enough for the numerous herds to graze. But there may have been a *moral inability,* arising from the perverse disposition and unkindness of their servants.

7. *There was a strife between the herdmen.* Originating, doubtless, in the increasing scarcity of herbage for the subsistence of their flocks, and in their eagerness for the possession of the wells, or fountains of water. *And the Canaanite.* "The lowlander," the descendants of Canaan, fourth son of Ham, after whom the land was named. *And the Perizzite.* The highlander, or dweller in the hills and woods of Palestine; in the open country and in villages, as opposed to the Canaanites, who occupied walled towns. *Dwelt then in the land.* The presence of these powerful tribes is mentioned to show (1) why Abram and Lot were so straitened as to pasturage; (2) to signalize the impropriety and danger of their quarrelling among themselves; and (3) to show that Abram felt that the eyes of these idolaters were upon him.

III. THE STRIFE PREVENTED BY BROTHERLY LOVE. 8. *And Abram said unto Lot.* As the older, as the richer, as the more favored of God, as the better and more generous man, Abraham speaks first. *Let there be no strife . . . between thee and me.* "It is evident that Lot was beginning to take part with his herdmen, and regard himself as an injured man." *For we be brethren:* in kinship, in love, in interests, and especially in religion. If we are brethren, let us act like brothers, and not like enemies. The love between brethren of the same family or church should overcome the danger of strife.

9. *Is not the whole land before thee?* That is, I willingly give you the choice of the whole.

ABRAHAM'S BROTHERLY LOVE. (1) It was a most unselfish act, renouncing his own interests in favor of his friend. (2) It was a giving up of his rights. Abraham had the first right to the land. It was promised to him, and not to Lot. Then he was the elder and the richer of the two. Lot had accompanied him, not he Lot. (3) It was an act of faith; for it seemed to be giving up to others, for the sake of peace, the land promised to himself.

10. *And Lot lifted up his eyes.* From the hill near Bethel, where they probably were, a wide range of country could be seen. *And beheld all the plain of Jordan.* "The Ghor," or depression near the mouth of the river, and one of the most remarkable depressions in the world. *Jordan.* This is the first reference to this river. Its name means "descender", for in its swift course of 200 miles (136 in a straight line), from the roots of the Anti-Lebanon mountains to the Dead Sea, it falls over 3,000 feet. It is from 45 to 180 feet wide, and from 3 to 12 feet deep. *That it was well watered everywhere.* This was the great necessity in the East. It seemed to him a paradise. *Before the Lord destroyed,* etc., as described in Lesson 9. This doubtless changed the face of the country. *Even as the garden of the Lord.* Even as the paradise from which Adam was cast forth. *Like the land of Egypt.* The richest and most fertile land then known. *As thou comest unto Zoar.* Rather, Zoar. Zoar was the garden land of Egypt, through which Lot and Abraham must lately have passed, which fact makes the reference natural.

11. *Then Lot chose him all the plain.* Not on account of its great fertility, but because his region lay on the great route of Eastern travel, and promised to the keen eye of Lot a rich market for the produce of his flocks, as well as the luxuries and refinements of wealth.

THE UNWISE CHOICE. (1) Lot's choice was selfish. (2) The choice was made in the wrong spirit; for worldly advantage, without regard to spiritual things. (3) By this choice he left the company of God's people. (4) He went into the company of sinners. He chose it voluntarily. (5) Apparently he gained the end he sought. His worldly circumstances at first were improved. (6) But he was not happy, for he "vexed his righteous soul from day to day" (2 Pet. 2: 8). (7) He became tainted in his own character, as we see by his later history. (8) He soon lost everything, first by war, and when that did not cure him, by the flames.

12. *Abram dwelt in the land.* The country, in distinction from the cities. *Lot dwelt in the cities.* The walled towns. *And pitched his tent toward Sodom.* Making his removals in that direction. We may suppose that Lot fully intended to keep at a safe distance from that scene of abominations; but, having once come within the perilous vicinity of the tents of sin, he is imperceptibly drawn onward.

PITCHING THE TENT TOWARD SODOM. (1) Any wrong or selfish act, unforsaken, will naturally draw us toward evil. (2) There are great outward attractions to many sins. (3) The approach to great sins is gradual. (4) He who keeps bad company pitches his tent toward Sodom. (5) He who indulges a doubtful pleasures pitches his tent toward Sodom. (6) He who pitches his tent toward Sodom will probably soon find himself in the city. (7) The only safe way is to keep as far from sin and as near to God as possible.

13. *But the men of Sodom were wicked.* This is stated to show the mistake of Lot's choice, and the danger he encountered from pitching his tent near them. *Sinners before* (or against) *the Lord exceedingly.* That is, so openly and boldly sinners that their sin was a defiance of God, and demanded the attention of heaven.

ABRAHAM'S REWARD. Immediately after the departure of Lot, God appeared again to Abraham, as if to reward him for his generosity, and to show him that his apparent losses for the sake of peace and love were no real losses, but would be made up to him a thousand fold in a higher and better way.

No Room for Old Mother.

"Going north, madam?"

"No, ma'am."

"Going south, then?"

"I don't know, ma'am."

"Why, there are only two ways to go."

"I didn't know. I was never on the cars. I'm waiting for the train to go to John."

"John? There is no town called John. Where is it?"

"Oh! John's my son. He's out in Kansas on a claim."

"I am going right to Kansas myself. You intend to visit?"

"No, ma'am."

She said it with a sigh so heart-burdened the stranger was touched.

"John sick?"

"No."

The evasive tone, the look of pain in the furrowed face, were noticed by the stylish lady as the gray head bowed upon the toil-marked hand. She wanted to hear her story; to help her.

"Excuse me—John in trouble?"

"No, no—I'm in trouble. Trouble my old heart never thought to see."

"The train does not come for some time. Here, rest your head upon my cloak."

"You are kind. If my own were so I shouldn't be in trouble to-night."

"What is your trouble? Maybe I can help you."

"It's hard to tell it to strangers, but my old heart is too full to keep it back. When I was left a widow with three children, I thought it was more than I could bear; but it wasn't as bad as this—"

The stranger waited till she recovered her voice to go on.

"I had only the cottage and my willing hands. I toiled early and late all the years till John could help me. Then we kept the girls at school. John and me. They were married not long ago. Married rich, as the world goes. John sold the cottage, sent me to the city to live with them, and he went west to begin for himself. He said we had provided for the girls and they would provide for me now—"

Her voice choked with emotion. The stranger waited in silence.

"I went to them in the city. I went to Mary's first. She lived in a great house with servants to wait on her; a house many times larger than the little cottage—but I soon found there wasn't room enough for me—"

The tears stood in the lines on her cheeks. The ticket agent came out softly, stirred the fire, and went back. After a pause she continued:

"I went to Martha's—went with a pain in my heart I never felt before. I was willing to do anything so as not to be a burden. But that wasn't it. I found they were ashamed of my bent old body and my withered face—ashamed of my rough, wrinkled hands—made so toiling for them—"

The tears came thick and fast now. The stranger's hand rested caressingly on the gray head.

"At last they told me I must live at a boarding-house, and they'd keep me there. I couldn't say anything back. My heart was too full of pain. I wrote to John what they were going to do. He wrote right back a kind, long letter for me to come right to him. I always had a home while he had a roof, he said. To come right there and stay as long as I lived. That his mother should never go out to strangers. So I'm going to John. He's got only his rough hands and his great warm heart—but there's room for his old mother—God bless—him—"

The stranger brushed a tear from her fair cheek and awaited the conclusion.

"Some day when I am gone where I'll never trouble them again, Mary and Martha will think of it all. Some day when the hands that toiled for them are folded and still; when the eyes that watched over them through many a weary night are closed forever; when the little old body, bent with the burdens it bore for them, is put away where it can never shame them—"

The agent drew his hand quickly before his eyes, and went out, as if to look for the train. The stranger's jewelled fingers stroked the gray locks, while the tears of sorrow and the tears of sympathy fell together. The weary heart was unburdened. Soothed by a touch of sympathy the troubled soul yielded to the longing for rest, and she fell asleep. The agent went noiselessly about his duties that he might not wake her. As the fair stranger watched she saw a smile on the careworn face. The lips moved. She bent down to hear:

"I'm doing it for Mary and Martha. They'll take care of me sometime."

She was dreaming of the days in the little cottage—of the fond hopes which inspired her, long before she learned, with a broken heart, that some day she would turn, homeless in the world, to go to John.—*The Current.*

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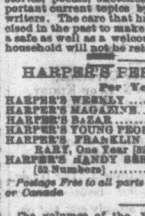

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"All those two certain lots, pieces or parcels of land, situate in the Parish of Portland, in the county of Saint John, lately belonging to one William Wright and bounded or described as follows, that is to say: Beginning at the angle formed by the intersection of the Northern line of Wright street by the Eastern line of Victoria street, thence Northerly along the line of the latter street one hundred and ten feet to the lot hereafter leased by the said William Wright to Joseph Moore, thence at right angles Easterly along Moore's lot aforesaid and a prolongation thereof two hundred feet, to the Western line of a reserved lane or street laid out by the said William Wright, and called by him Prospect street, thence Southerly along the last mentioned road or street, one hundred and ten feet to Wright street aforesaid, and thence along the same Westerly, two hundred feet to the place of beginning, together with all and singular, the buildings, improvements, privileges and appurtenances to the said premises belonging or in any wise appertaining, and the reversion and reversions, remainder and remainders, rents, issues, and profits thereof, and all the estate, right, title, interest, dower and right of dower, property claim and demand whatsoever, both at law and in Equity of them, the said defendants, of, in, to, out of, or upon the same premises and every and any part thereof."

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HUGH H. McLEAN,
Referee in Equity.

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