

The Sunday School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

LESSON XXXVI.

Sept. 5, 1880. } LOTS ESCAPE FROM SODOM. { Gen. xix. 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.....Ensamble to the Ungodly.
- Th. Judge 1-7.....Vengeance of Eternal Fire.
- F. Ps. xci. 1-16.....The Godly Safe.
- 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 ungodly 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. The Hebrew word translated married is sometimes used to mean betrothal, and may possibly bear only that sense in this place; if the word is correctly rendered, then Lot had other daughters besides the two saved, and these (with their children if they had any) all perished.

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 (vultu, 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? Read the first chapter of Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress."

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 nephews; 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. Regarding the mode in which the four cities, Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim, were destroyed, the "Westminster Teacher" says: "The words should be taken quite literally. Brimstone and fire, that is to say, burning brimstone, fell from the sky. Some suppose that it was a storm of lightning; but lightning is never called fire and brimstone. Some suggest a subterranean eruption; but it is said here that Jehovah 'rained' the consuming fire 'from Jehovah out of heaven.' Others say that the bitumen with which the soil was charged was set on fire and exploded. But the language used excludes that thought. Besides, the idea of miracle is not shut out by supposing that the forces of nature were used in this act of God. The fact that the terrible conflagration took place at a time previously designated; that it was delayed till Lot had escaped; that Zoar was preserved—all shew the direct act and vengeance of God. Even so the use of water in the flood and in the overthrow of Pharaoh in the Red Sea, does not weaken in one jot or tittle the proper definition of a miracle."

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.

HIS SECOND CHOICE.

"Hester!" exclaimed Aunt Susan, ceasing her rocking and knitting, and sitting upright, "Do you know what your husband will do when you are dead?"

"What do you mean?" was the startled reply.

"He will go and marry the sweetest-tempered girl he can find."

"O, auntie!" Hester began.

"Don't interrupt me till I have finished," said Aunt Susan, leaning back and taking up her knitting. "She may not be as pretty as you are, but she will be good natured. She may not be as bright as you are, but she will be good natured. She may not be as good a housekeeper as you are, in fact I think she will not, but she will be good natured. She may not even love him as well as you do, but she will be more good natured."

"Why, auntie?"

"That isn't all," continued Aunt Susan. "Every day you live you are making your husband more and more in love with that good-natured woman who may take your place some day. After Mr. and Mrs. Harrison left you the other evening the only remark made about them was, 'She is a sweet woman.'"

"Ah, auntie?"

"That isn't all," composedly resumed Aunt Susan. "To-day your husband was half across the kitchen floor bringing you the first ripe peaches, and all you did was to look up and say, 'There, Will, just see your muddy tracks on my clean floor. I won't have my clean floor all tracked up.' Some men would have thrown the peaches out of the window. One day you screwed up your face when he kissed you because his moustache was damp, and said, 'I never want you to kiss me again.' When he empties anything you tell him not to spill it, when he lifts anything you tell him not to break it. From morning till night your sharp voice is heard complaining and fault-finding. And last winter, when you were so sick, you scolded him for allowing the pump to freeze, and took no notice when he said, 'I was so anxious about you that I could not think of the pump.'"

"But, auntie?"

"Hearken, child. The strongest, most intellectual man of them all cares more for a woman's tenderness than for anything else in this world, and without this the cleverest woman and the most perfect housekeeper is sure to lose her husband's affection in time. There may be a few more men like your Will, as gentle, and loving, and chivalrous, as forgetful of self, and so satisfied with loving that their affection will die a long, struggling death; but, in most cases it takes but a few years of fretfulness and fault-finding to turn a husband's love into irritated indifference."

"Well, auntie?"

"Yes, well! You are not dead yet, and that sweet-tem-

pered woman has not yet been found; so you have time to become so serene and sweet that your husband can never imagine that there is a better tempered woman in existence."—Advocate and Guardian.

CUMBERED ABOUT MUCH SERVING.

Christ never asks of us such busy labour
As leaves no time for resting at His feet;
The waiting attitude of expectation
He oftentimes counts a service most complete.

He sometimes wants our ear—our rapt attention,
That He some sweetest secret may impart;
'Tis always in the time of deepest silence
That heart finds deepest fellowship with heart.

We sometimes wonder why our Lord doth place us
Within a sphere so narrow, so obscure,
'That nothing we call *work* can find an entrance;
There's only room to suffer—to endure!

Well, God loves patience! Souls that dwell in stillness,
Doing the *little things*, or resting quite,
May just as perfectly fulfil their mission,
Be just as useful in the Father's sight,

As they who grapple with some giant evil,
Clearing a path that every eye may see!
Our Saviour cares for *cheerful acquiescence*,
Rather than for a *busy ministry*.

And yet He does love service, where 'tis given
By grateful love that clothes itself in deed;
But work that's done beneath the scourge of duty,
He sure to *such* He gives but little heed.

Then seek to please Him, whatso'er He bids thee!
Whether to do—to suffer—to lie still!
'Twill matter little by what path He led us,
If in it all we sought to do His will.

—Christian at Work.

WORK AND PLAY.

And then remember, my son, you have to work. Whether you handle a pick or a pen, a wheelbarrow or a set of books, digging ditches or editing a newspaper, ringing an auction-bell or writing funny things, you must work. If you will look around you, you will see that the men who are most able to work are the men who work the hardest. Don't be afraid of killing yourself with overwork, son. It is beyond your power to do that. Men cannot work so hard as that on the sunny side of thirty. They die sometimes, but it's because they quit at 6 p.m., and don't go home until 2 a.m. It's the interval that kills, my son. The work gives you an appetite for your meals, it lends solidity to your slumber, it gives you perfect and graceful appreciation of a holiday. There are young men who do not work, my son; young men who make a living by sucking the end of a cane, whose entire mental development is insufficient to tell them which side of a postage stamp to lick; young men who can tie a necktie in eleven different knots and never lay a wrinkle in it; who can spend more money in a day than you can earn in a month, but who will go to the sheriff's office to buy a postal card, and apply at the office of the street commissioner for a marriage license. But the world is not proud of them, son. It does not know their name, even a Nobody likes them, nobody hates them; the great, busy world doesn't even know they are there. Things will go on just as well without them. So find out what you want to be and do this: take off your coat and make a dust in the world. The busier you are the less deviltry you will be apt to get into, the sweeter will be your sleep, the brighter and happier your holidays, and the better satisfied will the world be with you.—Burlington Harbinger.

As flows the river calm and deep,
In silence toward the sea,
So floweth ever, and ceaseth never,
The love of God to me.

What peace He bringeth to my heart,
Deep as the soundless sea,
How sweetly singeth the soul that clingeth,
My loving Lord, to Thee.

A MORE glorious victory cannot be gained over another man than this, that when the injury begins on his part, for the kindness to begin on ours.

THE humble man, though surrounded with the scorn and reproach of the world, is still in peace, for the stability of his peace resteth not upon the world, but upon God.

Births, Marriages and Deaths.

DIED.

On Tuesday, 17th August, at his residence, Matland street, Toronto, Mr. Henry Hewlett, in the 73rd year of his age. He bore a long illness with quiet, submissive faith, and his end was peace.