



LESSON.—SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1, 1907.

The Death of Samson.

Judges xvi., 21-31. Memory verses 28-30.
Read Judges xiii-xvi.

Golden Text.

Be strong in the Lord and the power of his might.—Eph. vi., 10.

Home Readings.

Monday, November 25.—Judges xiii., 1-14.
Tuesday, November 26.—Judges xiii., 15—xiv., 4.
Wednesday, November 27.—Judges xiv., 5-20.
Thursday, November 28.—Judges xv., 1-20.
Friday, November 29.—Judges xvi., 1-20.
Saturday, November 30.—Judges xvi., 21-31.
Sunday, December 1.—Eph. vi., 1-18.

FOR THE JUNIOR CLASSES.

Have you ever tried to see how big your muscle is? But really there is no need to ask that question, for there isn't a boy who doesn't eagerly watch his muscles and work to make them firmer and stronger. Is it a good thing to be strong? Indeed it is, and we should all do what we can to make and keep ourselves strong. Does anyone remember the name of a very strong man who lived many, many years ago? Yes, there were both Hercules and Samson. (Talk awhile of the Greek hero, and then return to the Bible story). Our lesson for to-day is about Samson, a man whose name means 'sun like,' or 'sunny.' Probably his mother called him that because he was such a merry, bright little chap about the home, and perhaps, too, because God had given her this little boy in a very special way. Anyhow Samson grew up to be a man fond of fun, full of jokes, and some of his clever sayings are kept for us in the Bible. But more than anything else about him, we learn how very strong he was.

Tell in as graphic a way as possible, some of the incidents in Samson's life. Draw the lesson that God can make use of our strength if it is properly devoted to him, but if it is misused or if we break away from our service to God as Samson broke his vow, our great strength may lead us only to evil.

FOR THE SENIORS.

The force of to-day's lesson lies in its being the concluding chapter in the story of Samson's life. Separated as the stories are, it is not generally realized that Samson was a contemporary of Samuel, living much in the same region of Canaan. Material in the rough as Samson was, God could, and did use him for divine purposes so long as there remained in Samson the knowledge that he was bound to God by even so slender a cord as the outward performance of a vow. The crudity of Samson's faith is evident in his belief that his strength lay in his long hair rather than in the consecration of which that hair was a sign. But such a misapprehension is by no means unknown to-day. People still put their trust in the outward performance of duty while at any moment the misunderstanding heart may be snared by temptation. However, there is a real humanity about Samson that bears encouragement to anyone who feels it impossible to be a saint. The true consecration of the lower will lead to the acquisition of the higher powers. The fallen giant is a deeply pathetic picture. Blinded and imprisoned, put to the most menial of

work, brought out at last to afford in his misery a laughing stock to his captors, is there any wonder that the exercise of such an effective faith as his at such a moment has entitled it to remembrance?

(SELECTIONS FROM TARBELL'S 'GUIDE'.)

We can not pretend to say that Samson and Jephthah, hardly that Gideon or Barak, are characters which we should have selected as devout men, as servants, of God. We should, at least if we had met with them in another history, have regarded them as wild free-booters, as stern chieftains, at best as high-minded patriots. They are bursting with passion, they are stained by revenge, they are alternately lax and superstitious. Their virtues are of the rough kind, which make them subjects of personal or poetic interest rather than of sober edification; their words are remarkable not so much for devotion or wisdom, as for a burning enthusiasm, like the song of Deborah; for a chivalrous frankness, as in the acts of Phineas and of Jephthah; for a ready presence of mind, as in the movements of Gideon; for a primitive and racy humor, as in the repartees of Samson. Yet these characters are without hesitation ranked amongst the lights of the Chosen People; are fearlessly enrolled among God's Heroes; the men in whom we should be inclined to recognize only the strong arm which defends us, and the rough wit which amuses us,—are described as 'raised up by God.' In a lower degree, doubtless, and mingled with many infirmities, the wild chiefs of this stormy epoch, with their Phoenician titles, their Bedouin lives, and their 'muscular' religion, partook of the same spirit which inspired Moses and Joshua before them, and David and Isaiah after them. The imperfection of their characters, the disorder of their times, set forth the more clearly the one redeeming element of trust in God that lurked in each of them, and, through them, kept alive the national existence. 'By faith,' as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is not afraid to say, they, too, in their unconscious energy 'subdued kingdoms . . . obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions . . . escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.'—Stanley, in 'History of Jewish Church.'

No man has come to true greatness who has not felt in some degree that his life belongs to his race, and that what God gives him he gives for mankind.—Phillips Brooks.

Man's wisdom is to seek
His strength in God alone;
And e'en an angel would be weak
Who trusted in his own.
—Cowper.

(FROM PELOUBET'S 'NOTES'.)

To appreciate the faith of Samson it is necessary to understand the temptations and difficulties in face of which he performed his task. . . . If Samson had cared only for the satisfaction of his coarse and selfish impulses, the road to an infamous fame would have been wide open. But read his story. You will see that he always fought on one side,—the unpopular, the dangerous, the apparently hopeless side. His conduct is the more remarkable when we remember that his own people wanted no war. They dreaded the disturbance of their grovelling peace; he made enemies of his brethren by his persistent and terrible raids upon their enemies; they opposed and feared him almost as much as the Philistines; they even attempted to deliver him up as a peace-offering to the vengeance of their oppressors. He was between two fires all his life,—a lonely champion with relentless foes on the one hand, and, on the other, the cowardly fears of friends. And if he seemed to fight from pure love of fighting, or for the sweetness of revenge, we do him injustice if we do not look beneath the seeming, and see that, in spite of all his waywardness and his easy yielding temptations of the flesh, he

he always felt the awful obligation of his vow impelling him to the one terrible work to which the Lord had called him.—The Rev. Ira S. Dodd.

'Instead of stumbling at the lives of these old heroes, we ought to bless God who has given us examples not above the level of the lowest, showing us that there is a place for even rudest gifts in his service.'—The Rev. Ira S. Dodd.

BIBLE REFERENCES.

I. Cor. xvi., 13; Eph. vi., 10, 13; Jer. ix., 23, 24; II. Sam. xxii., 23; Psa. lxxxiv., 5; II. Cor. xii., 10; Phil. iv., 13.

Junior C. E. Topic.

Sunday, December 1.—Topic—The beauty and utility of gratitude. Ps. cxl., 1-10. (A Thanksgiving consecration meeting).

C. E. Topic.

PRaise MEETING.

Monday, November 25.—Habakkuk's message. Hab. ii., 1-4.
Tuesday, November 26.—Habakkuk's prayer. Hab. ii., 1, 2.
Wednesday, November 27.—Zephaniah's message. Zeph. i., 14.
Thursday, November 28.—Zephaniah's exhortation. Zeph. ii., 3.
Friday, November 29.—Zechariah's song of praise. Zech. ii., 10-13.
Saturday, November 30.—A psalm of praise. Ps. cl.
Sunday, December 1.—How two prophets praised God. Hab. iii., 17-19; Zeph. iii., 14-17. (Consecration meeting).

The Reward.

The best thing any Sunday School can do for itself is to work for missions. History and experience prove that the surest way to make the work at home prosper is to be actually engaged in spreading the gospel abroad. Pastor Harms urged upon his people the duty of carrying the gospel into Africa. Though neither great in numbers nor rich in money, they built a mission ship, and, in 1854, sent a band of missionaries to Zululand. During the seventeen years following, Pastor Harms's parish at Hermannsburg in Hanover was visited by a continuous revival, in which ten thousand souls were converted.—Selected.

Be Faithful.

Some teacher, officer, or older scholar, questioning what life-work to choose, may be unconsciously waiting to hear the call of God to such service; the tender heart of some little child may be open to receive the divine impulse that by and by will send it forth a herald of the cross. Therefore be faithful in presenting the claims of the mission field, and 'pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth laborers into his harvest' from your school. It is a great privilege to have a representative on the mission field. The best thing any member of your school could do for that school would be to go and let those who stay contribute to his support.—Selected.

Filling up the Clusters.

Miss Lizzie Smith says ('S. S. Times'), that one use she makes of the blackboard is to mark attendance. Instead of using a class-book every Sunday, in one corner of the board I have the picture of a grape-vine, in which the children are very much interested. I draw the vine without any fruit upon it—no clusters of grapes, but naked cluster stems; and above each of these naked stems I put a child's name, and then, each Sunday, as they come, I place one grape upon it. Of course, the one who attends most regularly has the largest cluster at the end of the quarter; when the old vine is erased, and a new one pictured.