

The Sunday School

BIBLE LESSON.

Abridged from Peloubets' Notes. Second Quarter.

NABOTH'S VINEYARD.

Lesson V. July 31. — 1 Kings 21:1-16. Read Chapters 21 and 22. Commit Verses 4-6.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, Ex. 20:17.

EXPLANATORY.

I. THE GRADUAL WORKING OUT OF ELIJAH'S REFORMS. — 1 Kings 19:19-20:43. After the events of our last lesson, Elijah seems to have retired from public life, whether in the land of Israel or not we do not know, but evidently he was at work, for a little later we find him connected with the schools of the prophets as their leader. He was thus working as the still, small voice of God, and spreading the true religion, though he seems to have kept himself in the background (2 Kings 1:1-8).

II. A DOUBLE TRAGEDY IN REAL LIFE. — Vs. 1-16. This story is given because it was the outward expression of Ahab's depraved character, which led to his doom; as a bull expresses bad blood, or a furred tongue the inward fever.

Scene I. DISCONTENT IN A PALACE. — V. 4. "At Samaria." Adjoining Ahab's palace ground in Jezreel, on one of the spurs of Mt. Gilboa, was the homestead vineyard of a native Jezreelite named Naboth. Ahab wanted to buy this vineyard, to enlarge or complete his pleasure grounds. Naboth refused to sell.

4. AND AHAH CAME, from Jezreel, INTO HIS HOUSE. In Samaria, as we gather from vs. 14, 16, 18, and chap. 20:43. AND HE LAID HIM DOWN UPON HIS BED. The bed-chamber was in the most retired and secret part of the palace (Ex. 8:3; 2 Kings 6:12). AND TURNED AWAY HIS FACE, AND WOULD EAT NO BREAD. Such an open manifestation of ill temper is thoroughly characteristic of an Oriental king. It accords with Homer's representation even of the Greek heroes.

Scene II. BAD COUNSEL AT HOME. — Vs. 5-7. 5. BUT JEZEBEL HIS WIFE, like Clytemnestra of Aeschylus and Lady Macbeth of Shakespeare, comes forward to help her husband to sin, not to do right. He is like wax in her hands. Satan's most dangerous agents are not revolting creatures. I have no doubt that Jezebel was very handsome, very tasteful in her dress, and very fascinating in her manners. But she was wicked, and she encouraged Ahab to do wickedly. By that token he ought to have known her for an agent of Satan. By the same token you ought to know that any one who influences you to sin is selling you to the devil, no matter how clever or gifted or interesting he or she may be.

7. DOST THOU NOW GOVERN? This sneer expresses in bitter irony her scornful wonder at one who "lets I dare not wait upon I would." Are you king? and can you not get possession of this pretty vineyard? Why not use your power? And yet to let Naboth hold his possession was infinitely more kingly, in the truest sense, than Jezebel's seeming sovereignty in getting the vineyard. ARISE AND EAT BREAD. In this invitation there seems a half-contemptuous recognition of a self-indulgent weakness of nature. Ahab is fit only to desire and to revel; it is for bolder spirits to act for good or for evil. I WILL GIVE THEE THE VINEYARD. "I" is the emphatic word here. Compare the words of Shakespeare's parallel character: "Infirm of purpose! give 'me' the dagger."

Scene III. THE TRIAL AND EXECUTION OF NABOTH. — Vs. 8-14. 8. SO SHE WROTE LETTERS IN AHAH'S NAME. It is customary in the East now, as then, for the government to proclaim one thing publicly, and at the same time to give private instructions to the officials, of a very different nature, with the design of blinding the eyes of European governments. AND SEALED THEM WITH HIS SEAL. Documents of every kind, from a royal decree to a private letter, and never signed with pen and ink in the East, but are simply sealed with a man's signet, which contains his name; a little ink is rubbed upon it, and it is pressed upon the moistened paper.

9. PROCLAIM A FAST. As if some great calamity were overhanging the city for their sins, like a black cloud portending a storm. (See Joel 1:14; 2:12; 1 Sam. 7:6). Something must be done immediately to avert the doom. SET NABOTH ON HIGH. On the platform of the court, to be tried.

10. SET TWO MEN, SONS OF BELIAL. Belial is not a proper noun, but simply means "worthlessness," "recklessness," hence the sons of Belial were those who inherited the very spirit of recklessness and depravity. Only such would bear such false witness as was required.

AND CARRY HIM OUT. A stoning always took place outside the city. (See Acts 7:58). AND STONE HIM. The legal punishment of blasphemy was indeed death by stoning (Lev. 24:16), and Naboth would have perished justly had he been guilty of the crime. THAT HE MAY DIE. It appears from 2 Kings 9:26, that Naboth's sons were put to death at the same time. Thus, there being no heirs, the property would revert to the crown.

The Jezreelites carried out her instructions, and Naboth was stoned to death, and word sent to Jezebel at Samaria. Scene IV. AHAH MEETS ELIJAH IN HIS ILL-GOTTEN POSSESSION. — Vs. 15, 16. 15. AHAH ROSE UP TO GO DOWN TO THE VINEYARD OF NABOTH. The Septuagint adds that "he rent his clothes and put on sackcloth, as though shocked at his crime, and anxious to prove his innocence to his own conscience and to the people. But the hypocrisy of the act was shown by his willingness to accept the fruits of the crime."

At the same time "news of the black crime had come to Elijah, probably in his lonely retreat in some cave at Carmel." God bade him go down and meet Ahab in the vineyard. When Ahab came to the vineyard to TAKE POSSESSION OF IT, there stood the prophet in his hairy garb. "So had Moses stood before Pharaoh, and Samuel before Saul, and Nathan before David. So was Isaiah to stand hereafter before Ahab, and Jeremiah before Jehoiachim, and John the Baptist before Herod, and Paul before Nero."

Half in anger, half in anguish, Ahab cried, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" "I have found thee," said the prophet, speaking in Jehovah's name. "Thou hast sold thyself to work evil before me, and I will requite it and extinguish thee before me." Surely the Lord saw yesternight the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons.

His sin had found him out. Then Elijah spoke to him his doom. The dogs should lick his blood in the very spot where they licked Naboth's blood. His sons should be slain, his wife, Jezebel, perish miserably, his whole dynasty come to an end.

An Army Tragedy.

A captain on the staff of a division commander at the battle of Gettysburg, who afterward became a general and commanded a division himself for a time, once told me that if he had it he would willingly give a million dollars if he could forget and never recall a Gettysburg tragedy.

"We needed every man in line," said the General. "Orders had been given to let no well or unwounded man go to the rear. Our general had told the whole staff that if we couldn't stop stragglers any other way to shoot them down. As soon as the firing began a certain class fled from the front and the staff flew at them on their horses and pushed them back into the ranks. It was always a job I hated. It made me mad to see a fellow run away from his comrades when they were in trouble, and I used to be rougher with them than I wanted to be with any class of God's creatures. The enemy was pressing our line very hard. A break was greatly feared. Back came another cluster of stragglers, big, hearty fellows, who never stay under fire a second longer than they are forced to stay. I made direct for three of them with my drawn sword. Two of them went back to duty. The third told me to go where it was hotter than it was that hottest day at Gettysburg, and said he was going back, no matter if the whole staff stood in the way. 'Go back to your place instantly,' I demanded. At that he cocked his rifle and was lifting the barrel so that I would get its contents. Down went my sword to the ground and out came my revolver. Quicker than I can tell you it cracked and the man fell dead. Yes, it was a case of shoot him or be shot. I only wanted to disable him, but that was no time to hunt for a good place to disable without killing. A second more and he would have killed me."

"Then, why do you say you would give a million dollars to forget the incident?" "It is an awful thing to kill a human being. I can see just how that man fell back with an oath on his lips. I don't like it. You wouldn't. I have commanded companies, a regiment, a brigade, and a division to do wholesale killing in battle. That was what we enlisted to do. That is different from shooting a man, one of your own soldiers at your side. I shall always regret that it became my duty to have a hand in that army tragedy." — Chicago Times Herald.

ANAEMIA, OR BLOODLESSNESS.

Its Victims are Pale in Color, Subject to Dizziness, Palpitation of the Heart and Other Distressing Symptoms. From the Echo, Plattsville, Ont.

Anæmia, which literally means bloodlessness, is prevalent to an alarming extent among young girls and young women of the present day, and is a fruitful source of "decline" and consumption. The symptoms of this trouble are many, but among the most noticeable are pallor of the face, lips and gums, shortness of breath on slight exertion, dizziness, severe headaches, weakness of the vital organs, palpitation of the heart, and dropsical swelling of the limbs. The more of these symptoms shown, the greater the necessity for prompt treatment. Among those who have suffered from anæmia and found a cure is Miss Emily Webb, a young lady residing near Wolverson, Ont. Miss Webb says:—"My illness first came on when I was about sixteen years of age. My complexion was a pale wax color: I was troubled with general weakness, dizziness and palpitation of the heart. I was placed under medical treatment, but the medicine prescribed by the doctor did not appear to do me the slightest good. As the time went by I was slowly but surely growing worse. I was unable to do any work about the house, and my limbs would tremble to such an extent at the slightest exertion that I could scarcely stand upon my feet. Then my stomach became so weak that I vomited almost everything I ate; I grew despondent and feared I would not recover. While in this condition a friend urged me to try Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and I followed the advice. After I had used two boxes I noticed an improvement and my heart was gladdened with the hope of renewed health. At the end of six boxes my appetite had fully returned, and with it strength, color to my cheeks, and brightness to the eyes. I still continued taking Dr. Williams' Pink Pills until I had taken in all 123 boxes, and I can truthfully assert that I am healthier and stronger than I ever was before. I owe this to Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and I would urge all girls who suffer as I did to give them a fair trial."

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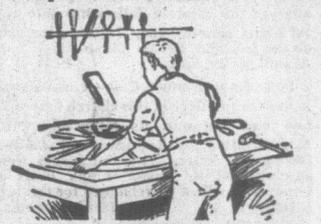
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