

ther, he would not fight against his son if he could avoid it, in fact the impression left by the whole narrative is, that his first feeling was to accept the position, let Absalom reign and himself leave the kingdom. Worthier and more kingly resolves came with the fidelity and sympathy of those about him.

HINTS TO TEACHERS.

Preliminary.—Our last lesson in the last quarter was on "Obedience to Law;" we have here a striking lesson on "Disobedience," for that was the seed that blossomed into murder and hypocrisy, and that fruited in a bloody death. Throughout the lesson don't lose sight of the fact that this was not only a rebellion against a king, but against a father. Among the black-hearted traitors of the Bible, Absalom takes place with Judas, Balaam and Cain.

Topical Analysis.—(1) Intrigue 1-6; (2) Hypocrisy 7-9; (3) Rebellion 10-14.

We give this arrangement for those who may feel it convenient to use it, but in this lesson we prefer just to look at some aspects of Absalom's character as seen in the light of the narrative and judged by the word of God.

The first thing we would point out and teach is that: "*A very foul heart may dwell under a very fair exterior.*" This may seem a truth so well known as hardly to need repeating, yet all history tells us that it cannot be too often repeated and urged, upon the young especially. Here is a striking instance. What did the people of Israel know of the character of Absalom? Only evil; his record was of murder—murder of a brother, deliberate, long-plotted, committed under the guise of friendship and reconciliation. Then his conduct to Joab, to whom he was indebted for return from exile, was of the worst description; yet notwithstanding this record, the beautiful hair and the sweet looks, and the gracious, condescending, winning ways of the prince blinded them to it all, and he stole the hearts of the men of Israel. Our scholars need to have this truth impressed upon them, a beautiful form is often a dangerous possession, it has been called "a fatal dower," and so it has proved to many; he or she who has it, needs great grace to prevent it becoming a snare, a stumbling block and ruin. Teach emphatically, that character alone should be the test. "Handsome is that handsome does."

A second truth is that: *great gifts may be perverted to the worst purposes.* Absalom had great gifts—gifts which, if used wisely and religiously, would have made him the greatest man next to the king, he would have been able to supply those things which his father lacked in the administration of the kingdom, and instead of dividing the people and bringing bloodshed into the land, would, by the blessing of God, have knit the people more firmly into one nation; healed tribal jealousies, bound them more firmly to his father's throne, been a wise help and counsellor to Solomon, and thus, in all probability, the rending of the kingdom might have been long averted, perhaps never have taken place. So to-day, we are called from time to time to hear of men of great natural ability and acquired learning, who use all without reference to God or man; it is for self they live, for self they work, and it matters not who suffer in the pursuit of their end. Swindlers, forgers, speculators with other people's money, and unscrupulous politicians, such are specimens of this class. Teach that abilities, mental gifts, knowledge, are all from God, and to Him and to fellow-men should be dedicated. All are a trust from God, and of these, equally with wealth and opportunities, will he require an account at the last.

There is the further sad truth to impress, that a *pretended zeal for religion may be a cloak for evil deeds.* It was so here. Israel, as a nation was a religious nation. David was a religious king, and Absalom, to accomplish his purposes, had to appear religious. We are not told what pretence of religion he put on earlier in his career, but we may feel sure

that he would not omit that attention to the services of the tabernacle which would impress the best portion of the community with the idea of his religiousness and therefore fitness for the high position to which he aspired. At last came what Absalom thought the opportune moment, his plans were laid, his emissaries had prepared the way, and to cover the last move more effectually, he pretended to wish to fulfil a vow made in Geshur. The reply of the unsuspecting father was: "Go in peace;" and there, at Hebron, the mask was thrown off, and Absalom stood revealed in his native perfidy and blackness. Teach a strong detestation of hypocrisy, it is hateful alike to God and man. That there are hypocrites to-day, men, who, to serve their purposes, make a pretence of religion, there is too much reason to fear. Let your scholars see it so vile, that by the mercy of God they will avoid it forever.

INCIDENTAL TRUTHS AND TEACHINGS.

Punishment of sin sometimes comes in the love of the sin. In David's case, murder with murder, and the peril of his own life.

The sin of those in public positions, leads to sin in those beneath them.

Regard with suspicion those who profess a greater interest in your welfare than any one else has.

Reject, come from whom it may, familiarity that would make you a tool for selfish purposes.

Beware of the devil when he becomes very pious.

Man proposes, thinks he has accomplished, but God rules.

There are revelations of baseness and ingratitude that will unman, at times, the stoutest heart.

Main Lessons.—Filial obedience enjoined, disobedience to be punished—Ex 20: 12; 21: 15; Lev. 20: 9; Deut. 27: 16; Prov. 10: 1; 20: 20; 30: 17; Mark 7: 10.

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ABSALOM'S DOOM.

{ 2 Sam. 18
24-33.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Whoso curseth father or mother let him die the death."—Mark 7:10.

TIME.—Shortly after the last lesson.

PLACE.—Mahanaim (*two hosts*), so called by Jacob when he had divided his people into two hosts on his return from Syria.

INTRODUCTION.—Read carefully the incidents between the flight of David as narrated at the close of the last lesson, and the tidings of the battle in the woods of Ephraim as we have in this lesson, note the *spirit of David* in the matter of the cursing of Shimei: the *encouragements* he received in the warm attachment of so many to his cause, Joab and his brother Abishai, Hushai, Zadok, the priest, and his son Ahimaaz, and not least, Ittai the Gittite who though an alien could show a noble devotion to the fallen King; and again he had encouragement in the sympathy and assistance of so many who were able to give it, as detailed in Chap. 17: 27-29; these things must have strengthened David's faith, and been to him an assurance that although the Lord was chastening, He would not cast him off for ever. Then follows the story of the battle, with the death of Absalom, slain by Joab against the express command of David. As our lesson opens David is waiting news of the battle.

Notes and Comments.—Ver. 24. "Sat between the gates:" the outer and inner gate of the fortified city wall, between which there was a small court. His overpowering anxiety fastens him to the spot where his troops left him in the morning; all day long he has been waiting and watching and it is safe to say that his thoughts have been all of concern for Absalom. "To the roof:" the top