Sabbath School.

BIBLE LESSONS.

Adapted from Peloubet's Select Notes.

FIRST QUARTER.

Lesson IX. Mar. 4. Gen. 25: 27-34

SELLING THE BIRTHRIGHT.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment."—Luke 12: 23.

THE FICTION OF HISTORY includes chaps. 23-27.

EXPLANATORY.

THE TWIN BROTHERS. Vs. 27, 28 Twenty years after the marriage of Isaac, two sons, twins, were born.

27. "Esau," the elder, "was a cunning hunter," betokening his wild, restless, self indulgent character, and leading him probably to society with the heathen Canaanites round about. "A man of the field." This is antithetic to what follows, "a dweller in tents." Instead of spending his life in the society of his family, returning to his tent after the day's labor at night, he roved over the country, like the uncivilized hunters in half savage lands. "Jacob was a plain man." This is an inadequate rendering of the word, translated "perfect" in Job 1: 1-8, meaning "upright," a man of general integrity. He had a great force of character, and a capacity for strong and enduring affection, which is closely allied to a deep religious nature. "Dwelling in tents" A man of steady, domestic, moral habits, staying at home, attending to the pasturing of his flocks and the business of the family, instead of wandering abroad in search of pleasure and amusement. Jacob inherited from his mother a tendency to shrewd bargaining and sharp practice. He would gain by his intellect what Esau would gain by physical strength.

28. "And Isaac loved Esau." This was a natural result of the contrast in their characters. Isaac saw in his son some ideal characteristics he had often wished for himself. He admired his burly form, his physical daring, his expertness in all manly exercises. Moreover, "he did eat of his venison" which he especially liked. This was no such special weakness as many commentators make out. Every healthy person has special likings as to food. "But Rebekah loved Jacob." Out of contrast in part, and in part because he was much at home with her, and inherited similar tastes.

POSSIBILITIES. There were great possibilities in each of these characters. Esau might have become an attractive and useful man, using his strength to defend virtue and innocence; his courage, energy and skill to war against all evils, and to defend his home from enemies; his healthy open-heartedness and good nature to attract men to the true religion, and pure morality. What a character he might have ripened into. Jacob, on the other hand, was a natural-born business man, a splendid talent when rightly used. He knew a good bargain by instinct. He had far-reaching plans. He could have been a power for good. He could have developed all things that made for the good of his clan. He could have found means for spreading the true religion. He had also the nature that could climb the heavenly ladder toward God, and stand upon the Mount of Transfiguration.

THE SALE OF THE BIRTHRIGHT. Vs. 29-34 The Two boys grew up into young men, developing their tendencies and determining in this period their entire future. Be careless, if you will, in old age, or even on the brink of the grave; but it is the supremest folly, almost the unpardonable sin, to be thoughtless in the golden hours of youth. They were about thirty-two years old when occured the transaction to-day's lesson

THE BIRTHRIGHT was the headship of the family. Esau was, by right of birth, the head of the family, his prophet, priest, and king; and no man can renounce such privileges, except as a sacrifice required by God, without "despising" God, who gave them. But more than this: he was the head of the "chosen" family; on him devolved the blessing of Abraham, that, "in his seed all families of the earth should be blessed"; and, in despising his birthright, he put himself out of the sacred family, and so became a "profane person." His sin must not be overlooked in our indignation at the fraud of Jacob, which, as we shall see presently, brought its own retribution as well as its own gain.

FITNESS FOR THE BIRTHRIGHT. In the first place it had been foretold before their birth (25: 23) that the elder should serve the younger. Doubtless Jacob's mother had told her favorite son of this prophecy, and he knew that he was to have the birthright. Then Jacob's natural character better fitted him to be the head of the family and the high priest of their religious life. But still more was he fitted by the tendency of his life and the growth of his character. "The free-hearted and careless, the shaggy, energetic hunter, shows off for a time to far greater advantage than the plodding, quiet, astute dweller in tents. But a closer study of the whole lives of the two does not support this earlier estimate. In Jacob, we have a struggle against baser elements of character, gradually resulting in the triumph of the nobler; in Esau, the original good darkens, as he grows older, into overmastering evil."

THE BARGAIN. 29. "Jacob sod pottage." "Sod" is the past tense of 'seethe,' "to boil." The word rendered "pottage" signifies "a dish made by boiling." The dish was served up in a "liquid" form. The people of the East are exceedingly fond of "pottage," which they call "kool." It is something like gruel, and is made of various kinds of grain, which are first beaten in a mortar." This pottage was made of lentils, "a species of pulse belonging to the pea tribe," of a yellowish red color, which "are still a favorite dish in Egypt and Syria." "And Esau came from the field." The wild land where he had been hunting. "And he was faint"—exhausted, the term being used of one who is both wearied and languishing.

30. "And Esau said unto Jacob, Feed me (literally, let me swallow, an expression for eating greedily), I pray thee, with that same red pottage;" literally, of that red, red (sc. pottage), or thing, in his excitement forgetting the name of the dish, or indicative of the haste produced by his voracious appetite.

We must remember that it was not customary to have food already prepared in an Eastern home as it is with us. There was no thing cooked and ready except Jacob's pottage, and Esau would have been compelled to wait quite a long time in his famished state before food could have been prepared for him.

31. "And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright." It is plain that this matter must have been dwelling in Jacob's thoughts. He was wondering how and when the prophecy relating to him would be fulfilled. Now he sees an opportunity of taking the matter into his own hands, instead of leaving all to God's time and way.

32 "And what profit shall this birthright do to me?"—literally, of what (use) this (thing) to me (called) a birthright? signifying, according to the sense attached to the foregoing expression, rather, Of what use can a birthright be to a man dying of starvation? or, The birthright is not likely ever to be of service to me, who am a most certain to be cut off.

33. And Jacob said, Swear to me." He would make it as solemn and binding as possible, for he knew that Esau when his hunger was satisfied would be likely to change his mind. "This day." He would have the bargain confirmed on the spot, before Esau had eaten.

33, 34. "And he sold his birthright unto Jacob . . . Thus Esau despised his birthright," by selling it at all; by selling it so cheap, for a mess of pottage. "Ye have sold yourselves for naught." Judas sold his master for thirty pieces of silver.

OUR BIRTHRIGHT. As children of God we all have a birthright far more valuable than Jacob or Esau could dream. We have promises beyond the range of their highest imaginations. We are heirs of God, of His character, His love and care, His heavenly home, His joy and peace.

SELLING OUR BIRTHRIGHT. Whenever we give up these things for temporary pleasure, or worldly gain, whenever we yield to temptation, whenever we do wrong that we may have wealth or honor, we are selling our birthright for a mess of pottage. Dr. South says, A bad man "sits retailing away heaven and salvation for pence and half-pence, and seldom vends any commodity, but he sells his soul with it, like brown paper into the bargain."

V. WINNING THE BIRTHRIGHT. About twenty-five years (or as some think forty-five) pass away. Very probably Esau had forgotten his bargain, or at any rate had no intention of carrying it out. But Isaac, feeling the infirmities of age, though he lived many years after this, wished to devolve the care of his family upon his eldest son, and proposed at a feast to bestow upon him the birthright blessing, which would have made Esau the head of the family. Jacob remembered his purchase, and Rebekah, the prophecy. Jacob was her favorite son. The two were afraid that the desired boon was slipping away from them. They did not trust God, but took the matter into their own hands and conspired together to palm Jacob off upon his blind and aged father as Esau, the eldest son. Thus by fraud he obtained the birthright. Esau returned too late and wept bitter tears over his loss, but the decree was irrevocable, and his repentance was vain, on this transaction.

AN EXAMPLE OF the contrary plan was shown by David when he refused to kill King Saul, although the kingdom had been promised to him. He waited God's time, and refused to do evil that good might come of it. (See I Samuel 24: 1-7).

MODERN APPLICATIONS. It is a very common thing to seek to do good things in a wrong way. "We will take things before the time. The vineyard is yours, every cluster of grapes is yours; but do not touch one atom of fruit till the sun has wrought out his ripening ministry upon it. We may not touch even things that are our own until the right time comes." We are tempted to gain riches or honor by dishonest, underhanded ways; to maintain our rights by trickery or deceit. We are tempted to gain the truth in an argument by misrepresenting our opponents; to promote a reform by hard words towards those who differ from us; to advance the cause of right and holiness by scolding and ill-temper and bitter condemnation, to advance the religion of love and freedom by persecution, to gain money for religious and charitable uses by lotteries or extortion. And the result is always a curse mingled with the blessing.

ESAU repented bitterly with tears, but it was too late. For it was not true repentance. He repented of his loss, not of his sin. And, like all such, he really lost nothing by what Jacob did. He had flocks and herds in great abundance. He became the chief of a wandering tribe. The birthright blessing he would not have used well nor enjoyed. Had he repented of his sin, he could have been forgiven, and grown up into a noble and useful character. No amount of sorrow for the more consequences of sin fits one for heaven.

Literary Note.

The *Review of Reviews* for February is strong in all of its departments. In the "Progress of the World" the important political, social and industrial events of the month are reviewed and their significance clearly and frankly set forth. This department alone contains fifty timely illustrations, chiefly portraits of well-known men and women. Among the portraits are those of President Dole and his cabinet and sketches, drawn from life, of Representatives William L. Wilson, of West Virginia; Charles F. Crisp, of Georgia; Thomas B. Reed, of Maine; Benton McMillan, of Tennessee; Thomas L. Johnson, of Ohio, and Julius C. Burrows, of Michigan. Apropos of the opening of the Manchester Ship Canal, the editor discusses that and various other waterway projects which are being considered by European governments.

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B. Y. P. U.

OUR OBJECT.

The unification of Baptist young people; their increased spirituality; their stimulation in Christian service; their edification in scriptural knowledge; their instruction in Baptist history and doctrine, their enlistment in missionary activity, through existing denominational institutions.

OUR FELLOWSHIP

All Young People's Societies of whatsoever name in Baptist churches, and Baptist churches having no organizations are entitled to representation. We depend for our unity not upon any young people's name or method. Our common bond is in the New Testament, in the full affirmation of whose teachings

WE ARE ONE PEOPLE WITH ONE MISSION.

Correspondents to this department should address their communications to REV. J. J. BAKER, St. John, N. B.

G. B. THEME.

For the Week beginning Feb. 20.

TOPIC: Giving Our Best to God.—Mark 12: 28-33, 41-44. God gives us His best. He has given us Jesus; and since he has given Him there is nothing good that He will withhold. He wants givers like Himself.

Our first gifts may be *very small* Some people always measure their gifts by what others give. If we give all we can that is our best however small. On the other hand, our gifts may look very large beside some other and still be miserably mean. You are to give as you may prosper, not as some other person prospers. Our best gift is the gift of *self* See 23rd verse. There may be whole burnt offering and sacrifice without love. God cares more for your love than for your money. If he has you he will have *yours*. "They first gave their own selves to the Lord." And this was the reason why their liberality abounded. *What* is my best? *When* should I give my best? What *reason* for giving my best? What is my special talent that I may give? Where ought I to give my best service? Short talk may be profitably given on these and other topics that will suggest them selves.

President Williams passed through the city on Wednesday last en route for the South. We know that the young people of the provinces join us in the prayer that he may be speedily restored, and be able to continue his work with us.

Attention is called to Bro. Goucher's note and the list of unions so far as reported to him. Examine the list, and if your name is not there please forward your name to him, with statistics. Several of the bills of last year are yet unpaid and there will be considerable expense in gathering the statistics for the coming convention. It was decided last August to request each union to pay an annual fee of one dollar. Some of us have been very slow in sending forward the dollar. We hope by thus calling attention to the matter that all those who are concerned will take heed and that the treasurer will soon be placed in funds.

ST. STEPHEN, N. B., Feb. 13th.

Below, we give the list of societies appearing on the membership roll of the Maritime B. Y. P. U.

It will be seen at a glance to be very incomplete, incompleteness due to the failure of many societies to report their existence. Will all societies not named in the list please notify the secretary-treasurer at once to that effect.

Only the societies opposite whose names appear a * have paid the annual fee of *one dollar*.

W. C. GOUCHER,
Sec.-Treas. Maritime B. Y. P. U.

LIST OF SOCIETIES BELONGING TO THE MARITIME UNION.

*Hantsport,	Guysboro,
1st Yarmouth,	*Springhill,
Ohio,	Sackville, N. B.
Bridgewater,	*Amherst,
Dayspring,	Upper Canard,
Pleasantville,	Belmont,
Mahone Bay,	Lockport,
Truro, Immanuel,	Fairville,
*Truro, Prince St.	Halifax (North Ch.)
*Cavendish,	Liverpool,
Sydney,	*St. Stephen,
Charlottetown,	Canso,
North Sydney,	Port Hilford,
Argyle Head,	Port Maitland,
*Frederiton,	Portland, St. John,
Melvern Square,	Isaac's Harbor,
New Germany,	Gibson,
Tabernacle, St. Jhn,	*Temple, Yarmouth
Berwick,	Andover,
Falmouth,	Milton, Yarmouth,
*Brussels St., St. Jhn,	Arcadia,
*Wolfville,	Digby,
*St. Martins 1st.	*Windsor,
Lunenburg,	Hebron,
Hartford,	1st Hillsboro,
Bridgetown,	*Woodstock, Alb St.
Carleton,	Sonard,
Freeport,	Great Village,
Elgin and Mapleton,	Moncton,
Onester,	Chester Basin,
*Port Medway,	Germain St., St. John
Leinster St St. Jhn,	Tabernacle, Halifax
*Williamston,	*Halifax 1st.

B. Y. P. U. MARITIME PROVINCES—Your Transportation Leaders are hard at work. We are interviewing railway and steamboat authorities and writing for information to headquarters. Present prospects are, that over 6000 delegates will attend the convention. Of this number the Maritime Provinces are booked for 50. If 50 persons will pledge the leaders to attend, we can arrange a grand excursion, and probably at less cost than a one fare trip which now the C. P. R. offers us from any point in the Maritime Provinces. We will reach every Union, we know of, by circular giving full information as to cost of ticket, board, etc., etc., as soon as possible. Will Secretary Goucher give us a list of the unions, with the address of the president or secretary, in the Maritime Provinces. Either forward to us by mail, or publish the list, and everybody can see where we are. Brother, sister, can you go? Drop us a postal, and we will add your name to the list, and then we beat the "one fare" trip.

New Brunswick and P. E. Island please address, A. H. Chipman, post office drawer 22, St. John, N. B. Nova Scotia unions will write to S. L. Walker, M. D., Truro, N. S.

Very tru'y yours,
A. H. CHIPMAN,
S. L. WALKER,
Transportation Leaders.

ST. MARTINS—Our St. Martins C. E. Society is persevering in its good work. The gracious revival in the fall and the subsequent illness of the pastor, have delayed somewhat the realization of our plans for study. But the Christian culture class has been meeting frequently of late, and has examined the first sixteen lessons, so that we have brought the work almost up to date. Our cottage meetings have been commenced again amid hopes for a repetition of last year's blessing. The society took charge of two of the Sunday evening services during the pastor's illness, presenting the interesting and instructive conquest meeting programmes on China and Japan

Mr W. Kierstead, of the Seminary, has kindly consented to conduct the Christian culture class during the next three months. C. W. W.

A Reflection.

I saw a pretty bit of conjugal felicity recently. Possibly some other people may share my enjoyment of it if I reproduce it as well as may be in black and white.

An old gentleman who had long retired from a business which had fairly "feathered the nest" for old age, came from his morning walk. His wife met him at the door her custom for more than fifty years and soon they were seated in their respective easy chairs.

"Where do you think I went this morning, mother?"

"As far as any youth of your time, I dare say," she said proudly.

"I went up to the old neighborhood, mother."

They looked straight into each other's eyes in sympathy, and for a little while were silently thinking.

"Yes," he resumed, "I walked up and down past the house where we lived so long, where Anne was married, and where so many things happened. Then I went into Pemberton's grocery to rest."

"That was a taste of old-time, to be sure," said "mother."

"Pemberton was there himself. Dear, dear, how old he looks! He introduced me to a fine looking customer, and what do you think he said about us?"

"Oh, something about the days when we were first married, I presume."

"He told the gentleman that he served us with goods for forty years, and never had a chance to send us a bill."

"That was a blessed truth."

"And I told the gentleman that ever since the first week we went to housekeeping I had given you the allowance of money, much or little, as I could afford; and you had kept our expenses inside, always."

"Yes, dear."

"I told him about the Christmas when you surprised me with the bead purse you had knit for me—seems as if I could see you now, knitting every evening and trying to turn the beads outside, just as easy—and I did not guess that it was to hold fifty dollars in gold pieces which you had saved out of the years' house money."

"Well, you had not missed it from the table, or anywhere else?"

"No, no; always enough to eat, and the house as tasty as the housekeeper."

"Well, husband, perhaps there were not as many temptations for a housewife to spend money in those old-fashioned times."

"Perhaps not, Jane. But new-fashioned times make long faces and long bills and short lives, I notice."

Now, this picture ought to be etched upon young lives—love and confidence which had walked hand in hand through fifty five years of married life, with a "pay-as-you-go" principle, which walked while others rode, to the sure end of comfort in old age. They had met many riders coming back on foot, as far as the poorhouse, or some condition of homelessness and dependence upon the favor of friends.

This is a prime maxim of Bible lore: "Owe no man anything, but to love one another;" and it should be accepted as one of the keys to "good housekeeping."

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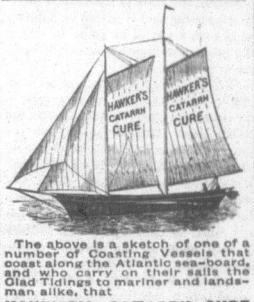

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