

HOW SHALL WE TREAT OUR ENEMIES?

By William F. Ellis.

The International Sunday School Lesson for December 15 is "Joseph Forgives His Brothers" (Gen. 45:1-25).

It was a long way from a cavern in Dothan in the primeval mountains of Egypt, just as it has been a long way from Ligeia to Versailles; but the end of the road was sure in both cases. Truth always reaches her goal, though her pathway may be long and tedious. That must be so; for if there is not justice rampant in the universe, then there is no God. The faith that sustained the allies of Joseph in Egypt, just as it has sustained the allies of the Allies in the world war, is a basic belief in God and in his care for righteous men. Joseph's story is no more a vindication of the ways of Jehovah than many incidents in this world war.

All the world rang with the atrocities committed upon the Armenians by the German-ruled Turkey, just within four years, for the million Armenians who perished, there were two and a half million Turks who suffered a like fate. Three years ago the Kurds revolved in blood-drenched properly, the lot of Syria and Armenia. Now the Kurds are dying in distinction far exceeding that of their victims. "Sure is the wheel, God's retribution is as certain as the sun. Germany vaunted her civilization, her 'Entente' as superior to the Christianity of other nations; but, in after a collapse and humiliation unmatched in history, she shows the cravenness and ignominy of her soul by whining and whimpering and yelping like a whipped dog. It seems as if Eternal Justice, having a fine sense of what is fit, repeats in kind; the proud become abject; the arrogant, the violent, the violent abject.

Nothing invented ever matches real life. This is the outstanding message from the story of Joseph's dealings with his brothers which the Sunday school are studying this week. Fiction and real life have no rival for the true tale of this Hebrew lad, sold into slavery by his cruel and unfeeling brothers, who, through vicissitudes beyond imagination, walked in his integrity to the highest post within the gift of Pharaoh, as the ruler of Egypt and as 'almighty of all his world.

Eyes should be opened to the wonders of the living present by this parable from the real life of a long-distant past. Every day holds great stories before our vision; behold what God is doing in our own time in our

very presence! If we had but the eyes to see, we could read in the life about us more beautiful love stories than the books portray; nobler deeds of charity than have come down from the Middle Ages; spectacular successes like chapters from fairy lore; and divine providences resembling the records of Holy Writ. Blind spirits are plucking for the painted life of the great cities, and missing the romances of their own neighborhoods.

Great Comes to The Top.

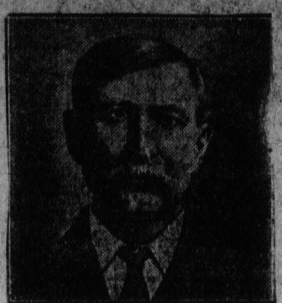
Next to Pharaoh, Joseph is supreme in Egypt, in this lesson. After all the best have a way of rising highest. A rascal may become an alderman, but he is not likely to be sent to his nation's legislative halls. The high-spirited may get on, but the idealist is usually his superior officer. More and more, as the world grows better, the righteous have a way of coming to the top. The young generation should not be allowed to lose sight of the fact that in this present war the great words of righteousness and religion have been spoken by President Wilson, King George, Marshal Foch, Lloyd George, General Pershing, Admiral Beatty, and the other first figures in the struggle.

This Joseph-lesson is written large in our time. Evil does bend the knee, ultimately, to good, though it may seem a long while about it, as in the case of the Central Powers and of Joseph's brethren. The sons of Jacob, who had foully dealt with their brothers very many years in learning that his dreams had come true; and that their wickedness was being punished. Over and over again, as we recall the collapse of German arms, the shameful fate of the German fleet, the complete disintegration of proud Austria, the utter fall of murderous Turkey, and the fate of Russia's autocrats and traitors, we need to drive home to our hearts the truth, that God's mills may grind slowly, but that they never cease to grind. Every page of the daily paper nowadays seems to cry aloud the homely, old-fashioned message that wrong does not pay; and that "righteousness exalteth a nation" and a man.

Short cuts to goals usually run across concealed ditches. Later on, when with the lawful and orderly processes of God, spells disaster for the interloper. Crooks commonly get their "come-uppance." The Bolshevik trick which the jealous brothers played upon Joseph was no more clearly nullified by time than the godless programme of those who have

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wrought red ruin in Russia. Justice does not come by way of injustice; and an era of brotherhood cannot be introduced by fratricidal strife. The brothers suffered from young Joseph's inconsiderateness. It is true; but they, in the same of Germany, while there is evidence ad nauseam that she is sorry for herself, there are few signs that she is sorry for her crimes against civilization. Also there are criminals to be punished, for if murderers could wipe all states clean, then jails would be empty and justice would no longer dwell upon earth.

When the sons of Jacob were forced by famine to go to Egypt for food, their brother recognized them, but Joseph had his chance to be small or to be great. They were in his power, he could "get even" in a capital spirit; the moment if that were his disposition. He had all the opportunity imaginable to deal and snarl and tyrannize over those who had injured him. This hour, tested both the brother on the throne and the brothers suppliant and helpless before him.

Of course, Joseph showed himself big. Most men do in an emergency. There is unsuspected capacity in the average person. The war has revealed how fit the average man is for great deeds when opportunity calls. All the wonderful reorganization of nations and international co-operation, that we have witnessed within the past four years, is due to the calibre and capacity of individual patriots who rose to the occasion. There is breadth and bigness abroad in the world.

The mighty are magnanimous. So after making sure of their repentance—for even God Himself does not forgive the impenitent—Joseph forgave his brethren. By various acts and conditions he made sure of their reformation, for their smallness had been overruled by God's greatness. So he wiped out the old scores, and gave them a new chance.

After all, they were his brothers, the sons of his father. The revelation and reconciliation was a touching scene, that moves the reader today. We love Joseph best as we see him step down from his throne of state to weep on the necks of his sequestered brethren.

The New Relationship.

All of this story is of ancient interest today; because we do, have the problem of how to deal with our fellows who come seeking peace, if not forgiveness. There is no more difficult question before the Christian world today than that of how the Central Powers should be treated by their conquerors. The case is not on all fours with that of Joseph and his brethren, but the same large considerations apply. First, Joseph, even while proving his brethren, fed them. We shall not let the Central Powers starve. We feed even the condemned murderers in our jails. Then sincerity and contrition have to be established; and in the case of Germany, while there is evidence ad nauseam that she is sorry for herself, there are few signs that she is sorry for her crimes against civilization. Also there are criminals to be punished, for if murderers could wipe all states clean, then jails would be empty and justice would no longer dwell upon earth.

When the many-minded, who would be wrecked by Germany's "propaganda," need to be reminded that although Joseph forgave his wicked brethren, when they brought forth fruits meet for repentance, yet even so the old relationships were never re-established. It could not be. Only God can blot out sin from the book of His remembrance. The brothers of Joseph had created a new status for themselves; in which there was no petty squabbling, and no recriminations. Nevertheless, a gulf which wrong had created existed between Joseph and the ten other sons of his father.

Joseph showed forth his religion. He displayed magnanimity. To his estranged companions he pointed out the providence of God. It was his aim to instill the principles of religion in them, and to lead them to recognize the sovereignty and mercy of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Lord had overruled evil for good. As ever, the plans of the wicked had been confounded.

There we leave the subject. God had been in the midst of the family affairs of Jacob. Most of his good gifts, as ever, had to be in spite of, and not because. As we take the long, long look, we from our distant point of vantage, perceive that the Eternal and Omnipotent One was working out a high and holy purpose for His Chosen People. Joseph had been sent, by a way that he knew not, to a throne in Egypt in order to save his family in Canaan. The plots of his bitter brothers had been utilized to fulfill the divine design; just as the fell ambitions of Kaisers and Junkers have become the means, at fearful cost, of freeing Israel, of bringing safety to the Land of Promise, of delivering the Armenians, Syrians, Greeks and the dozens of little peoples of the Balkans and the Caucasus; of creating a world sense of responsibility for all mankind's welfare; of insuring safety to all the earth; and of bringing to a new era wherein the spirit of Christ will be dominant. Joseph's words gather up the whole lesson: "It was not you—but God."

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