

## JOHN FREDERIC OBERLIN.

Oberlin was born in Strasbourg, on the Rhine, in the year 1740, and carefully educated in that city. When quite a lad, thinking that he would like to be a soldier, he got permission from some military officers to practise under their direction. His father preferred, however, that he should give his time to study, in order that he might enter a profession. No doubt his father's decision was wise, yet the boy laid in a good store of bodily strength as he went through the exercises of the military drill.

When twenty years of age he wrote out a solemn and formal agreement to obey the Lord, and from that time on he proved himself a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

In looking at the map of Europe, one can see between the river Rhine and the Vosges Mountains a spot of territory over which there has been much dispute. It is called by the French, Alsace, by the Germans, Elsass, and has belonged at different times to both nations. In the last century it belonged to France.

In this province is a mountainous canton called the Ban de la Roche. When Oberlin was born it contained five villages, in which were living less than a hundred families, simple and ignorant peasants. So very ignorant were they, indeed, that when their pastor, Monsieur Stouber, attempted to have the children taught to spell and read, the parents were frightened by the strange-looking syllables in the spelling-books, and thought that these must have some connection with evil spirits. When they found, however, that after learning how to spell, the children were able to read what they pleased, the grown people, too, became students of the spelling-book.

These simple folks lived in small huts on the mountain-side, and ate wild apples and pears, together with inferior potatoes. During their long winter, lasting from September to May or June, they were entirely shut in from the outer world, not having any way of reaching the larger villages or the cities.

When Oberlin, at the age of twenty-six, became their pastor, it was known that he would attempt to improve their condition. Accordingly, some of these half-savages formed a plan to waylay and beat him. When the day came for carrying out their design, Oberlin, who had been informed of their intention, preached a sermon on the text, "I say unto you that ye resist not evil." Afterward, he went to the house where he knew that the conspirators were talking together, and presenting himself to them, said: "Here I am, my friends. Your design upon me I am acquainted with. You have wished to deal with me in a practical manner, and to chastise me because you deem me culpable. If I have in fact violated the rules which I have laid down for you, punish me for it. It is better that I should deliver myself up to you and save you the meanness of an ambush."

The peasants were so impressed by their pastor's courage and nobility of spirit that they were ever afterwards willing to be guided by him.

One of the first improvements that Oberlin made was to build a road by which the natives of the Ban de la Roche could hold communication with the outside world. He could induce them to work upon it only by himself taking a pick-axe and setting the example; but after the road was built, and they were able to carry their produce to market, they were sufficiently proud of their work.

Another thing that the good pastor did was to get seed potatoes from other places, so that the quality of these vegetables might be better than it had been. Then he taught the people to build cellars deep enough to protect the potatoes from frost. He taught them, also, how to cultivate their ground; had young men trained to be masons, wheelwrights, smiths, carpenters, and glaziers; and in course of time gave instructions, either personally or through others, in weaving, spinning, knitting, straw-plaiting and dyeing. He also collected money from his friends in Strasbourg for the erection of a school-house, and afterward succeeded in getting one in each of the five villages. He also started an infant school, in which the very little children were taught while their parents were at work.

So it came to pass that in time Oberlin's parish grew to be a very happy and prosperous one. The people were no longer either idle or ignorant, but were so industrious and contented that they became quite famous on account of their changed condition. Besides learning to take care of themselves they had learned the lesson of Christian charity. They took care of the sick and of orphans, helped the poor who went to live among them, and raised money to send Bibles and missionaries to other places.

No wonder that they had come to love the friend through whose efforts all these wonders had been wrought. They called him "the good papa," and took great delight in listening to him as he talked to them of what he loved to talk of best—the truths of the Holy Bible. Sometimes, when they were gathered around him, the women working while they listened, he would say: "Well, my children, are you not tired? Have you not had enough?" They would generally answer, "No, papa, go on. We would like to hear a little more." Yet when tired they would say so and thank him, and then the teacher would stop.

When he grew to be a very old man, and no longer able to walk from one village to another in order to preach, the people would take turns in sending horses for him to ride. Sometimes as he passed through Waldbach, the village in which he lived, he would shake hands with every child he met, saying: "Jesus loved children; it was to those who resemble them that He promised the kingdom of heaven."

No sadder day ever came to the mountain canton than that on which the good pastor died. In his eighty-sixth year he bid adieu to those among whom he had so long lived and labored, and went to receive his reward. A whole parish trained in useful arts and in Christian virtue was the monument of John Frederic Oberlin.—*Cousin Lois, in Christian Intelligencer.*

## WORDS FOR THE NEW YEAR.

Are you going to make this future year a happy one, my little readers? Now is the time to begin! Everything lies before you like a pure sheet of paper; and it remains for you to keep the days as pure, or to let them be sullied with the marks of sin.

For a week at least our thoughts have been more kindly, our sympathies more active, our self-love less selfish; and during the Christmas-tide we have sent forth many a kind deed and tender wish from hearth to hearth. Surely we are not going to forget, when the holidays have passed, the Holy Child whose birth we have been celebrating? Ah, no! We must let Christ's presence be always in our hearts to make our words and works be Christ-like. We must let the sunshine of a better life shed itself abroad; we must learn to know that mighty love which made the Father spare not His only Son.

Is there any one among you too bad to plead for pardon, too weak and petty to ask for help? If so, then remember that He who deigned to be cradled in the lowly manger at Bethlehem will never turn His ear from the pitiful cry of His little ones.

Make a rule, and pray to God to help you to keep it, never to lie down at night with angry hearts or wicked thoughts; never to forget that, by night or by day, in darkness or in light, "Thou God seest me"; and never, never to neglect your daily prayers.

Pray in the name of Christ to the good and loving God for everything you want, in body as well as in soul; for the least as well as the greatest thing; for nothing so too much to ask God for, or for Him to grant us; and as we pray thus so let us thank Him. Let us have grateful hearts towards that Father who has given us all things, and who, if we would but give ourselves to Him, would so gladly gather us in His loving arms. There is so much that even the smallest child can do! What if it be but the loving smile, the willing message, the kindly word, or the widow's mite? Christ sees and understands, and loves us for our efforts, no matter how tiny they be.

Try to begin this New Year well—try to make brave resolutions, and, what is better still, look to Jesus to help you keep them. But do not do what a little friend of mine once did. His name was Harry, and he had been very good for some days after the New Year; and then he failed, was naughty, cross, and disobedient all that day; and what do you think happened then? Wouldn't any sensible little boy or girl have begun again, very sorry and humble about the misspent day, but determined, by God's help, to do better in future? I should have

thought so. But Harry only said, like the stupid little boy he was—

"What a pity I was naughty yesterday; now I must just wait till next year comes round, and then begin afresh."

And in the meantime he might be as naughty as he liked, consoling himself by the thought of how hard he would try not to slip next January.

I'm sure you will agree with me in thinking that he was very, very foolish.

The good God is not angry, nor does He punish us for failures, for He knows how weak we are: He only feels more pitiful towards us, and His loving heart rejoices when He sees His children fighting bravely on in spite of all drawbacks.

And to those who love that heavenly Father and serve Him faithfully, every day will be as the beginning and ending of a Happy New Year.—*Children's Friend.*

## SCHOLARS' NOTES.

(From International Question Book.)

## LESSON II.—JANUARY 9.

SIN AND DEATH.—Gen. 3: 1-6, 17-19.

COMMIT VERSES 17-19.

## GOLDEN TEXT.

By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.—Rom. 5: 12.

## CENTRAL TRUTH.

Paradise lost by sin.

## DAILY READINGS.

M. Gen. 3: 1-14.  
T. Matt. 4: 1-11.  
W. Rom. 5: 12-21.  
Th. James 1: 1-15.  
F. 2 Peter 1: 1-11.  
Sa. Eph. 6: 10-17.  
Su. 1 Pet. 1: 1-16.

NEW TESTAMENT TEXT, THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS.—Matt. 4: 1-11.

## HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.

1. THE SERPENT: a real serpent, but used by Satan, who is the great serpent,—the dragon. SUBTILE: crafty, cunning, tricky, and hence used by Satan. 3. LEST YE DIE: body and soul. Death began the moment they disobeyed; they were shut out from the tree of life, and so their bodies began the process of decay. And sin is spiritual death. 4. YE SHALL NOT SURELY DIE: Satan first planted a doubt of God's goodness; now he denies His truth. 5. YOUR EYES SHALL BE OPENED: to see things now wholly hidden from them. BE AS GODS: angels, or as God. The holy beings they had had communion with. KNOWING GOOD AND EVIL: they understood a knowledge of good by experiencing it; he knew it would be by losing it. This is the worst kind of lie, which has the form of truth. 17. IN SORROW (or in TOIL) SHALL THOU EAT OF IT; i.e., the wilds outside of Eden, whither they were driven. 18. THORNS AND THISTLES: these would grow naturally, and good fruit could be had only by toil. 19. DUST THOU ART: his body was made of dust. UNTO DUST SHALL THOU RETURN: instead of being immortal or transformed, as were the bodies of Enoch and Elijah in ascending to heaven.

## SUBJECT: HOW PARADISE WAS LOST.

I. MAN IN HIS BEAUTIFUL HOME.—Where was the Garden of Eden? What were Adam and Eve to do there? What two trees there are mentioned? What was the Tree of Life for? What was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? What freedom of enjoyment was given to man? What restriction was laid upon them? What was the object of this command? Did God wish them to fall?

Is this a type of our lives? What is the forbidden tree to us? Why was a test needed whether they would obey? Could they have known good and evil by resisting temptation better than by yielding to it?

II. THE BATTLE WITH TEMPTATION (vs. 1-5). Who came into Eden to tempt man? (Rev. 20: 2.) of what animal did he make use? Why did he not come in his own form? (Prov. 1: 17; 2 Cor. 11: 3, 14.) What was his first suggestion to Eve? Her reply? What did he say in direct contradiction to God? Was there any apparent truth in what he said? Would they know good and evil? What did he know would be the real effect? Are lies in the form of truth the most dangerous of falsehoods? Could Eve have resisted?

SCRIPTURE ILLUSTRATIONS.—Compare this temptation with the temptation of Christ. (Matt. 4: 1-11.) How did He resist the devil? How was Moses tempted? (Heb. 11: 24-27.) How the Rechabites? (Jer. 35: 12-19.) Are we tempted in the same way? Give examples. Why does God permit us to be tempted? (Leut. 8: 2; Zech. 13: 9; James 1: 2, 3; 1 Pet. 1: 7.) How can we gain the victory? (Eph. 6: 10-18.)

Show what Satan meant them to understand, and what he knew was the truth. Have any since preached Satan's sermon? Is it a proof of love to tell men they shall not surely die if they sin? What is the true way of becoming like God? (2 Pet. 1: 3.)

III. DEFEAT AND RUIN (vs. 6: 17-19).—What was the result of this temptation? Show how it grew out of unbelief. How was Adam induced to yield? What was the first effect of this sin? (vs. 7-10.) Why were they afraid of God now? What was the punishment? Were the thorns and thistles within Eden or without? Where were Adam and Eve compelled to go? What was the effect upon the race? (Rom. 5: 12.) Was there any hope or promise left?

What did Adam and Eve lose by their fall? In what state did they fall? Was the nature of the ground changed? Was it better for them, now they had sinned, to be shut out of Eden and compelled to labor? What reasons have

you to think that we would have done no better if in their place? Is this the most natural and simple account of the present character of man?

## PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

I. God has done all that is possible for the happiness of man.

II. But there are limits and laws, to break over which is to lose paradise.

III. Satan does not come in his own form, but under the guise of innocence and privilege.

IV. God calls after the lost, and while He punishes seeks to restore.

## LESSON III.—JANUARY 16.

CAIN AND ABEL.—Gen. 4: 3-16.

COMMIT VERSES 9-12.

## GOLDEN TEXT.

Am I my brother's keeper?—Gen. 4: 9.

## CENTRAL TRUTH.

Faith leads to a noble character and God's blessing;

Unbelief leads to many sins and sorrows.

## DAILY READINGS.

M. Gen. 4: 3-16.  
T. Heb. 11: 1-10.  
W. 1 John 3: 1-18.  
Th. Jude 1: 11-25.  
F. Matt. 23: 23-30.  
Sa. John 8: 31-47.  
Su. Prov. 1: 20-33.

CAIN.—The first-born of the human race. His name means Possession. He was a farmer, and about 125 years old at the time of this lesson.

ABEL.—A little younger than Cain. His name means Breath.

THE POPULATION OF THE WORLD AT THIS PERIOD.—In 125 years there might easily have been more than 100,000 descendants of Adam and Eve.

INTRODUCTORY.—A century has passed since the sad event of our last lesson: and we now come to some of the consequences of Adam's sin, and the growing conflict between the good and evil in the world.

## HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.

3. IN PROCESS OF TIME: Heb., "at the end of days;" after a number of years, or at the end of the week or year, a mutual time for offering. 4. OF THE FAT THEREOF: the fattest and best. HAD RESPECT: regarded it favorably; perhaps He sent fire from heaven to show this.

THE DIFFERENCE.—Abel had faith, which led to obedience, and Cain had not (Heb. 11: 4). This faith led (1) to good character and life, while Cain's was bad; (2) to bringing the best he had, while it is not so said of Cain; (3) to obedience, bringing the prescribed offerings; (4) to repentance and acknowledgment of need of atonement, by the kind of sacrifice.

5. COUNTENANCE FELL: scowled, hung his head in anger. 7. SIN LIETH AT THE DOOR; croucheth like a wild beast. UNTO THEE HIS DESIRE: sin wants to overcome him. THOU SHALT RULE: thou shouldst rule, be master over sin. Some make this last clause to mean that Abel should still look up to Cain as the first-born and chief. 8. CAIN TALKED WITH ABEL: he went out in the fields to see him. Note the number of sins in Cain,—envy, irreverence, unbelief, anger, murder, falsehood. 9. BROTHER'S KEEPER: we are our brother's keeper so far as we can help him. 11. CURSED FROM THE EARTH; cursed away from the land, or the curse will come from the land by its being unfruitful. It was both. 14. FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH: of the land of his home. FROM THY FACE HID: driven from the worship of God, and the place where He manifested Himself. 15. SET A MARK UPON CAIN: either gave him a sign, a visible token, or put some mark on him, that, while it would brand him as a murderer, would be a protection.

## QUESTIONS.

INTRODUCTORY.—How long had man been on earth at the time of this lesson? How many people might there have been? What great evil had befallen man in our last lesson? Is there any connection between that and the story of to-day's lesson? (Rom. 5: 12.)

## SUBJECT: THE FRUITS OF FAITH AND OF UNBELIEF.

I. THE TWO BROTHERS (vs. 3, 4).—Who was the first person born into the world? Meaning of "Cain?" How old he was at this time? What business did he follow? What was his character? (1 John 3: 12; Jude 11.) Meaning of "Abel?" What was his business? (v. 2.) What was his character? (Heb. 11: 4; Matt. 23: 35; 1 John 3: 12.) Did you see any evidence that these brothers were trained up religiously? Why should two brothers of the same family turn out such opposite characters and have such different careers?

II. THE TWO OFFERINGS (vs. 3-5).—Meaning of "in process of time?" What was the form of religious worship at this time? What offering did each of the brothers bring? How were they received? Why did God favor Abel more than Cain? (Heb. 11: 4.) In what ways were the faith and the unbelief manifested (1) in the offering (2) in the characters of the men?

III. THE CRIMINAL AND THE MARTYR (vs. 5-8).—How did Cain feel at the result of his offering? Against whom was he angry? Was anyone to blame but himself? Meaning of "his countenance fell?" What three questions did God ask Cain? What three statements did He make? Meaning of "sin lieth at the door?" What is meant by "unto thee shall be thy desire?" Who should rule over whom? What did Cain do to Abel? Why did he do it? (Matt. 23: 35; 1 John 3: 12.)

What does the Bible say of one who hates another? (1 John 3: 15; Matt. 5: 21, 22.) Are anger and envy as bad and as dangerous now as then? Why are there so many quarrels among brothers and sisters? How may this state of things be remedied? (1 John 3: 9-18.) Was Abel's life a success or a failure? (Heb. 11: 4.)

IV. THE FRUITS OF UNBELIEF (vs. 9-16).—How many different sins do you note in Cain? Are sins apt to go together? How did Cain's sin and him out? Should he have been his brother's keeper? What is meant by the blood crying from the ground? How was Cain's sin punished? Was the punishment too severe? Why was it necessary? Why did not the Lord permit Cain to be slain? What was the mark or sign given to Cain? Was his life a failure? What lessons can you learn from these two brothers that will help you in living a true life?