

International Lessons.

LESSON 6.

Aug. 10, }
1884. }

ABSALOM'S REBELLION.

{ 2 Sam. 15 :
1-14. }

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."—Ex. 20 : 12.

TIME.—About twelve years after the last lesson. B.C., 1023. The 12 years are made up as follows: One year after David's sin came Amnon's crime. Two years later, Amnon was slain by Absalom, who thereupon fled to the court of his maternal grandfather at Geshur, where he remained three years; then two years in Jerusalem without seeing the king, and after the reconciliation, four years of intrigue and preparation for the rebellion.

PLACES.—Jerusalem and Hebron, this latter, like Damascus, one of the most early and most interesting cities in the world. Its original name was Kirjath-arba, it is also called Mamre, and is situated at a spot in the south highlands of Judah, having the name of Macphelah, its present name is Khulil, so named after the Arabic title of Abraham.

Introduction.—Our last lesson was on David's repentance. Through the infinite mercy of God he was forgiven his great sin, the cloud rolled away and he could again look up and see the face of his Father in Heaven, but he was never again just the man that he had been. The remembrance of his sin is with him, and the sentence is still upon him. "Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house." He loses the exultant gladness of his early life, he is as one who goes down to his grave mourning, his active history is past, henceforth he is passive merely; his early life, not without many faults, has yet on the whole a noble and grand history; his later life, with much that is beautiful in it, develops more strongly the unworthy elements in his character. He is still a servant of God, a son, but how different is his service and feeling to what they had been—that one sin darkened his life. Our lesson is one of the incidents which most strikingly show the truth that: "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap;" he had sown lust, deceit, treachery, murder, and this is a part of the harvest.

Notes and Comments.—Ver. 1. "Absalom:" his mother's name was Maachah, daughter of the king of Geshur; he was the third and favorite son of David. Beautiful in person, remarkable especially for his luxuriant hair; (Chap. 14 : 25, 26.) his moral man was of the basest sort, he was ambitious, crafty, unscrupulous, and could play the hypocrite well, when it suited his purpose. "Chariots and horses:" he would bring himself into notice, so he affects the retinue and style of royalty. "Fifty men:" still further to the same end, great men were accompanied by running footmen. (1 Kings 1 : 5.)

Ver. 2. Having attracted notice, his next step is to win popularity. "Rose early:" it was his custom—a good one, but here with a bad purpose. "Gate," the place where the low business of the kingdom was transacted. Unhappily for himself, David, who should have sat there, had lately neglected the duty, nor had he appointed any one to perform it for him. "Controversy:" matter of complaint, law-suit—called "of that city," pretending an interest in his affairs.

Vers. 3, 4. "Good—right:" his object was to get favour, so he would not care for looking into the case, likely he said the same thing to both litigants. "I judge," and those thus flattered by him doubtless wished so too, for he had pronounced their causes good. "Justice:" the justice of a matricide and a would-be parricide. Yet how plausible the king was neglecting the matters of his subjects to their

great loss, and here was one, a prince too, ready to devote himself to their interests.

Vers. 5, 6. In these verses we have a still further bid for popularity, and that successfully. "Came nigh—obeisance—kissed him:" on approaching the king's son, the people would have done him the reverence given to a superior, but instead of allowing that, Absalom would draw the man to him, embrace him, and give him the kiss of friendship; no wonder that he "stole the hearts of the men of Israel," either deceived (as Gen. 31 : 20, 26) or stole their affections, this latter we prefer.

Vers. 7, 8. "Forty years:" evidently an error of some later Jewish scribe; the Syriac and Arabic versions read *four years*. Josephus gives the same time, and it is without doubt the true reading; it would be four years after his restoration to the King's favour. "Vow:" undoubtedly a mere pretext—he would deceive the king as he had deceived the people. He well knew how the heart of his father would rejoice at this apparent piety of his favourite son. "Hebron:" his birthplace, and the old capital of the kingdom, doubtless there were many friends of his youth there, his companions ready to take his part; at the same time the wish would seem to the king very natural that Absalom should choose Hebron for the purpose.

Ver. 9. "Go in Peace:" poor David, a little thought of the kind of peace Absalom was preparing for him. But, it may be asked, was all this four years of intrigue unknown or unobserved by David or Joab, or any of the true friends round David? We can hardly think so, but in all probability the king refused to see any evil in the actions of Absalom; unsuspicious in the extreme, he thought that all was right; he would not believe anything to the contrary until the news of v. 13 reached him.

Ver. 10. "Spies:" secret messengers to sound the people, and if they found willing hearers to dwell on the evils of the present reign; the advantages of having a young and popular man like Absalom on the throne; that this was to be, and that its accomplishment was to be proclaimed by the "Sound of the trumpet;" which they could explain to their neighbours as meaning that "Absalom reigneth in Hebron," that it was not a rebellion but a revolution, that all was settled and the new king enthroned in his capital.

Ver. 11. "Two hundred men—called:" invited to the feast; most likely men of position and eminence, whose presence would, it was expected, be regarded as an approval of the movement; "simplicity"—sincerity—knew not—deceived—like the king.

Ver. 12. "Ahitophel:" David's most trusted counsellor. The importance that David attached to this defection may be judged from the prayer he offered when the fact was told him, v. 31, so in Psa. 41 : "Yea, mine own familiar friend," etc.; again in Psa. 55 : "It was not an enemy—thou my guide," etc. No doubt Absalom knew his man, and was sure of receiving his support; if, as is almost certain, he was the grandfather of Bathsheba, another reason may be supposed for his treachery. "Gilead:" was upon the mountains of Judah, to the S. or S.W. of Hebron.

Ver. 13. "Messenger:" some one from Hebron, friendly to David. Any way ill news flies apace, and such news as this would not take long to travel.

Ver. 14. "Arise—let us flee:" where is the faith and courage of David now? Alas! it is true that "Conscience doth make cowards of us all." He had said: "My sin is ever before me," and he would feel at once that this was a part of the retributive justice of God. That there were military and social considerations likewise is certain; in the excitement of the first news and the exaggeration that would come with it, his cause would perhaps appear desperate; then he might not have enough troops to defend Jerusalem, uncertain also, as he was, of the loyalty of the people; fur-