

days. In this story the father still retains the chief authority over his estate. *His living*; lands and flocks and herds. *Not many days after*. He had already made up his mind what to do. *Gathered all together*; and so had no further claim on the home when he finally quitted it. *Far country*; beyond reach of the restraints of home. *Wasted his substance*; scattered his wealth in all directions. *Riotous living*; debauchery: literally, living so recklessly, that he was apparently past saving.

Vs. 14-16. *A mighty famine*; not uncommon in Palestine, Acts 11 : 28. The prodigal's want was also spiritual, Amos 8 : 11. *Joined himself*, etc.; practically became a slave. *A citizen*; evidently not a Jew, for he sent him into his fields to feed swine. The occupation was most loathsome to a Jew (see Lev. 11 : 7). It shows how far he had fallen. *Husks*; pods of the carob tree, a kind of locust (see illustration, HOME STUDY QUARTERLY). This was swine's food. *No man gave*. Pity often dies in famine, when each has little enough for himself.

II. The Home-coming, 17-24.

Vs. 17-19. *When he came to himself*. He began to think who he was. The true self is always lost in a life of selfishness, ch. 9 : 24. To regain self-respect is the first step upwards. *How many servants*, etc. "What a rich home I left!" The first step in repentance is to think with desire of his father's home. *And I*; the son of a father who had given me such love. *I will arise and go*. True repentance issues in immediate action. *To my father*. He knows enough of him to be sure that he will not be utterly disowned. *I have sinned*. Hard to say; but far better to say it, than to perish in pride, too foolish to own to having done wrong. No excuse, no claim, nothing but the simple hard fact of sin, and no refuge but in the father's mercy. *Against heaven, and before thee*. Heaven here stands for God. Every sin is against heaven first (see Ps. 51 : 4), whatever woe it may have caused, whatever injury it may have inflicted. *No more worthy*. He has neither claim to, nor fitness for, a son's place; he scarce dares ask for a servant's.

Vs. 20-22. *Yet a great way off*. On the

first sign of his return, the father is ready to receive. *Had compassion*. Not justice, but love, provides the reception. *Ran, and fell on his neck*. Note the father's eagerness. God does not hate the sinner, Ezek. 33 : 11. *Kissed*; tenderly or fervently. *Father, I have sinned*, etc. The son is true to his purpose, and repeats all but the request to be made a hired servant. After the warmth of his father's welcome his heart tells him that such a request would be out of place. Or perhaps the father's reply cut him short. *Bring forth quickly* (Rev. Ver.). That reply is to load him with honor; not forgiveness alone, but a joyous restoration. *Best robe*. "These tattered garments hide his true sonship. On with his proper garments, the robe that will honor him most, quick!" *Ring*; a signet ring, the sign of authority as a son: not only for wearing, but for sealing documents. *Shoes*. Slaves went barefoot.

Vs. 23, 24. *The fattened calf*; always kept ready in prime condition for any great occasion. *Son was dead*; to all intents and purposes, so far as the father was concerned. *Was lost*; out of sight for years, though never out of mind. *Began to be merry*. A great welcome for one who had come home, as he thought, in deep disgrace.

III. The Angry Brother, 25-32.

Vs. 25-32. *In the field*; faithful as usual in all his duties. *Asked*, etc.; offended because he had not been consulted as to such a feast. *Thy brother is come*. This should have been, in his eyes, a sufficient reason for the feasting. *Angry*. Almost unintelligible; and yet this was the attitude of many self-righteous Jews, when they saw the good news of the gospel offered to, and accepted by, publicans and sinners. *Serve thee . . . never transgressed* (Rev. Ver.); rather a self-righteous claim to the performance of duty. *Killed . . . the fattened calf*; as though rejoicing more in the prodigal, than in the one who had always done his duty. *Son, thou art ever with me*; as loving a welcome for the elder son, in its way, as for the prodigal. *It was meet*. The elder son is as dear as ever, even though, at the moment of the prodigal's return, the father's heart overflows with joy at this unexpected pleasure.