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INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Fourth Quarter-Lesson XI.—Dec. 15.

SOLOMON'S FALL.—1 Kings
11:4-13.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Wherefore let him
that thinketh he standeth take heed
lest he fall.—1 Cor. 10:12.

THE INFLUENCES WHICH LED SOLOMON ASTRAY.—Ver. 4. For it came to pass when Solomon was old. Between 50 and 60 years old. His wives turned away his heart after other gods. Solomon, largely for the sake of making friendly alliances with the neighboring states, had taken 700 wives, princesses,—the daughter of Pharaoh, and women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites. Through his heathen wives Solomon was thrown into bad company and unholy influences. No one is strong enough and wise enough to be safe in constant intercourse with persons of wrong principle and false religion any more than one is healthy enough to be safe physically in a malarial or fever-laden atmosphere. Indeed one who goes by choice into bad company is already more than half-fallen.

SOLOMON'S FALL.—Vers. 4-8. Solomon's fall was not sudden, but gradual. He did not take his multitude of wives at once, nor suddenly fall under their influence; but he kept on defying more and more the law of his kingdom. And his heart was not perfect with the Lord, as was the heart of David his father. Not that David was a perfect man; but he never swerved from his loyalty to God. His service of God was imperfect indeed; but he never served other gods, and his bitter repentance shows that in heart he was always loyal and true. Solomon was not whole-hearted in God's service. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth. Solomon never entirely forsook the worship of God. "He continued his attendance on the worship of Jehovah, and punctually made his offerings three times a year in the temple." How far he actually joined in the worship of idols is not stated; but "even the building of altars for idols was a participation in idolatry, which was irreconcilable with fidelity to the Lord." And it is not likely that he kept entirely away from the temple he built. Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians; inhabitants of the rich and ancient Phoenician city of Zidon (or Sidon) on the Mediterranean, 20 miles north of Tyre. Ashtoreth was the highest of the Phoenician deities. Her worship, which was not exactly known, was most probably associated with indecency. Solomon built an altar to her. Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites; descendants of Lot, inhabiting the mountainous country on the east side of the Red Sea. Milcom, probably another name for Molech, was worshipped by the Ammonites with human sacrifices, especially children. The Jews were repeatedly allured to adopt this idolatry. There were certainly no child sacrifices at Jerusalem in Solomon's time; they were first offered under Ahab. Then did Solomon build a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab. The supreme deity of the Moabites was a sun-god, who was worshipped as king of his people, and as a god of war. In the hill that is before Jerusalem. That is, east of Jerusalem. The hill is the Mount of Olives. Molech; the same as Milcom. The ground disgraced by these heathen altars was afterwards called the Mount of the Destroyer. And likewise did he for all his (foreign, heathen) wives. All were treated alike.

Solomon having committed the double crime of polygamy with heathen wives could only with great difficulty avoid tolerating idolatry. But it was like tolerating worms at the roots of the trees, weeds in the garden, wild beasts in the home. Extravagance. The wealth of Solomon was enormous. The king was proportionately extravagant. Oppression. He appears to have copied the Pharaohs not only in magnificence, but in disregard for human suffering. The Canaanites were reduced to the position of helots; multitudes were torn from their homes to fell timber in the forests or hew stones in the quarries. The greatness of the oppression is clearly seen not long after in the appeal of the citizens to Rehoboam to lighten their burdens.

SAFEGUARDS TO PREVENT HIS FALL.—Vers. 9, 10. Solomon was not left to himself; but every possible good influence was thrown around him. And the Lord was angry with Solomon. The Lord's anger is not a burst of passion, but a burning indignation against wrong. All good beings must have this anger; and it is the more intense in

proportion to the purity of the person who feels it, and his clear perception of the evil, and the love for those who are injured by the wrong. Which had appeared unto him twice. First at Gibeon, at the beginning of his reign and then at Jerusalem, about the middle of his reign in the very height of his prosperity. These were special warnings and encouragements because of his great danger. And had commanded him: both in the visions and in his Word. He was 50 to 55 years old, and had enjoyed a larger observation and a fuller experience of life than falls to the lot of most men. God's promises had been fulfilled to him, and God had given him every earthly blessing it was possible to bestow. All the influences of the purest religion in the world were thrown around him. Solomon was a teacher, writing books and giving counsel to his fellow-men. The Way of the Transgressor is very hard, not only on account of the punishment at the end, but because so many barriers must be broken down and restraining influences must be overcome in order to gain on in sin:—the love of God; the consciences and moral nature; the Word of God; the Holy Spirit; the sacrifice of Christ; the sense of honor; God's goodness; early training; the influences of religion.

THE CONSEQUENCES; JUDGMENT AND MERCY. Wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon. Probably by a prophet. I will surely rend. I will violently take away. The kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. This made the decree the more bitter. A "servant" should be heir to his glory.

PRACTICAL HINTS.

Neither age nor experience brings release from temptation.

The best worldly gifts of God, bring with them peculiar temptations. The higher one climbs the farther it is possible for him to fall. The more sensitive also to pain.

The fall of men is usually preceded by sins that have been preparing the fall.

Sins are social. One sin is almost always accompanied by many others.

Wisdom and knowledge are not a sufficient safeguard against sins of the heart.

Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.

There are few partnerships which are so lightly entered into as the one which lasts for all life. And yet how completely is a man's honor, prosperity, and peace in his wife's keeping (and a woman's in her husband's).

Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

God puts many barriers in the way of the sinner,—conscience, the Word, the Holy Spirit, his Providence, the example of others,—that the way of the transgressor shall be so hard that he will turn away from it.

Guilt is aggravated by the warnings and influences in spite of which it is committed.

No one can sin and avoid the consequences of his sin, to himself or to others.

They that sin must eat of the fruit of their own way.

THIRTY CENTURIES OLD.

Something About the Latest Find of Cuneiform Tablets in Egypt.

The latest find of cuneiform tablets in the valley of the Nile is one of unusual interest. Workmen excavating for bricks in the mounds at Tell El-Amarna, a village about 100 miles south of Cairo, discovered 375 of these tablets on the side of the palace of one of the Pharaohs, King Amenophis IV., who reigned about 1,300 years before the present era, or 3,189 years ago. They are about three inches square, composed of the soft clay which was in common use among the Babylonians. Several of them have been deciphered. Some are found to constitute a diplomatic correspondence between Burnabariash, King of Babylonia, and Amenophis touching an alleged outrage on a Babylonian subject by the latter's Government for which an explanation and indemnity are asked. The letters show that human nature in that gray antiquity was about the same as now and that diplomatic intercourse has changed little. They begin with all the formality and courtesy of diplomacy of the present day.

To Naphuria (surname of Amenophis) the great King, the King of Egypt, thus speaks Burnabariash, the great King, the King of Babylonia, thy brother. To me and my house, to my horses, and chariots, to my officers and my country, may there be abundance of peace. To my brother and his house, to his horses and to his chariots, to his officers and his country, may there be an abundance of peace.

Another installment is found to be a portion of a correspondence between Dushratta, King of Mitanni, a province of Mesopotamia, with Amenophis III., father of the preceding Pharaoh, which contains the outline of two pretty love stories. Mitanni was a famous hunting ground and Amenophis a mighty Nimrod who is credited on a scarabæus with a hundred lions slain by his own hands. In one of these expeditions he had met Thi or Thna, Dushratta's daughter, fallen in love with her, and subsequently married her. In the other case the same Dushratta pleads the suit of Mane, his brother's grandson, for the hand of the daughter of Amenophis IV. Alas! even in those old days hearts were bought with gold, for Dushratta not only sets forth his own regard for Amenophis as a reason why Mane should be allowed to visit his

daughter, but sends him gold and rich gifts and intimates that if Amenophis will only consent to the marriage still richer gifts and gold galore will follow. We do not know whether Dushratta was successful, but the analogies from that day to this would indicate that in all probability Mane made a triumphant tour from Babylonia to Tell El-Amarna with his camels loaded down with ivory, gold, sweet spices and precious stones, and carried off his swarthy bride of the Nile.

There are also in this notable collection letters from the ruler of Alashia, an unknown country, and numerous reports from Egyptian Governors at Sidon, Jaffa, Ascalon and other places on the Phœnician coast and in the interior of Palestine, written in the Babylonian language, showing that it was the polite language of the time, and that the domination of Egypt in that day was far extended. Prof. Jastrow, who contributes to the Nation a detailed description of the find, is inclined to the belief that it is only the beginning of most important revelations concerning the early history of Babylonia and Egypt, and says:

There is little reason to question now that the soil of Egypt contains further treasures such as have been found at Tell El-Amarna. The discovery of this remarkable correspondence is as rich in the direct gain which results from it. A few years ago several cylinders inscribed with cuneiform characters were found in Egypt, which, upon examination, proved to be documents deposited by the great Nebuchadnezzar in the sixth century while in Egypt, in commemoration of his campaign against the land of the Nile. Between the days of Burnabariash and those of Nebuchadnezzar the contact between Mesopotamia and Egypt, now more close, now less so, now of a friendly, now of a hostile character, was never entirely broken. We may confidently look forward to having one day in our possession tolerably complete records of this contact.

Apart from the historical, geographical and ethnological value of these documents now coming to the light of day after their sleep of three thousand years in the Egyptian mounds there is a peculiarly romantic interest connected with their discovery, says the Chicago Tribune. They bring us face to face with them and women who lived in the days of Abraham and Jacob. The Aryan race had hardly begun its great migrations to India and Europe when these letters were written. The Teutons were savages roaming about the huge forests in skins of wild beasts. It is doubtful whether the English islands were populated at all. Greece was unknown, for her traditions do not run back to that time. Old Homer had not yet sung his immortal epics. Romulus and Remus had not suckled the wolf. The great Caesars were not born. The wealth, refinement and civilization of the world were contained within that comparatively small area through which flowed the Nile on the one hand and the Euphrates and Tigris on the other. And now, after three thousand years have passed away, these little bricks with their cuneiform inscriptions appear among the railroads, steamboats, telegraphs, telephones and fast mails of to-day to tell us that although the material world advances and human skill and knowledge increase human nature remains the same.

DECEITFUL WIVES.

How They Pull the Wool Over Their Fond Husband's Eyes.

"Some of the funniest and even strangest things that ever take place anywhere occur in the lobby of a theater," said Walter Sinn recently to a Brooklyn Eagle reporter. "It will pay you as a newspaper man to hang around here for awhile," he continued, "and keep your ears and your eyes open." I followed his advice, and the first thing I heard persuaded me that some married men pay much too heavily for their theatrical amusements. Two ladies walked up to the window where Treasurer Richardson presides with ability and patience. One of the ladies asked for two seventy-five-cent seats. She was shown the box-office sheet and the location of two good seats not yet sold. She said the seats would do very well, and began to look for the money for them. Her companion said:

"Wait a minute, mister. Say, Mary, why don't you buy two fifty-cent tickets? He won't know the difference, and we can have some ice-cream."

The proposition was promptly agreed to. On the evening of the same day, just as the audience was leaving the theater, a man, his wife and a lady friend stopped, and the last mentioned lady stepped up to Manager Sinn and warmly thanked him for some kindness which she seemed to think he had done her. All of the three persons were entire strangers to him.

The following day he got an explanation. The lady had gone through her husband's pockets and treated him to an evening at the theater, where she could never get him to take her. She practiced a little deceit upon him by getting her friend to tell him that she (the friend) had received the tickets as complimentary from the management of the Park. The profuse thanks to Mr. Sinn were only a finale to the clever little deceit.

Health Requires Action.

That action is necessary for the maintenance of health is not only demonstrable from the fabric of the body, but evident from observation of the universal practice of mankind, who, for the preservation of health, in those whose rank or wealth exempts them from the necessity of lucrative labor, have invented sports and diversions which, though not of equal use to the world with manual trades, are yet of equal fatigue to those who practice them, and differ only from the drudgery of the husbandman or manufacturer, as they are acts of choice, and therefore performed without the painful sense of compulsion.

Good Names to Have.

Both James and John are good names for boys, yet James appears to be a better surname than any other for a candidate for President of the United States. We have had as many as five Jameses in the Presidential chair within the century—James Madison, James Monroe, James K. Polk, James Buchanan and James A. Garfield. Moreover, the father of President James Madison was named James Madison and the father of President James Buchanan was named James Buchanan. After the Jameses, the Johns have panned out next best—John Adams, John Q. Adams and John Tyler.

To Prevent Sick Headache.

Very many attacks of sick headache can be prevented if those who are subject to them are careful about their diet and largely restrict the same to vegetables and fruits easy of digestion. They must forego meat, cheese, pastry, beer, wine, etc. in fact, neither eat nor drink any thing which is stimulating in character and all likely to tax the digestive organs.

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