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The Sabbath-School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Fourth Quarter-Lesson V—Nov. 3.

DAVID'S REBELLIOUS SON.
—2 Sam. 15:1-12

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

David's sin marks an era in his life. Although "at evening time there was light," yet from the time of his sin a dark cloud threw its shadow over him. "His piety takes an altered aspect. It is no longer buoyant, glad, exulting, triumphant; it is repressed, humble, contrite, patient, suffering. The bird which once rose to heights unattained before by mortal wing, filling the air with joyful songs, now lies with maimed wing upon the ground pouring forth its doleful cries to God."

Throughout the twelve years covered by this lesson we see the working of the evil leaven which David's sin brought into his life. The sin must be rebuked and branded as evil, even while the royal penitent is forgiven, lest men take, from even the divine forgiveness, encouragement to sin.

THE DISOBEDIENT SON.—Not long after David's sin became known his eldest son committed a most dastardly crime. David was very angry, but he took no steps to punish his son. How could he? This weakness was one of the results of his own sin. Then Absalom, Tamar's own brother, after waiting two years, made himself the Avenger of Blood, and slew Amnon. Absalom's revenge may have been encouraged by the hope that if Amnon was out of the way, he himself might become David's successor. Absalom, fearful of his father's anger, fled to the court of his maternal grandfather, Talmai, king of Geshur, in Syria. He continued in exile three years. David began to long for his son. Absalom was brought back to Jerusalem, but for two years more he was a semi-prisoner and was not permitted to see his father's face. At length there was a reconciliation, and Absalom was restored to favor again, but only to misuse his opportunities against his own father.

Absalom was renowned for the beauty of his personal appearance and for his marvellous head of hair. He was vain, crafty, and ambitious.

PLOTTING AGAINST HIS FATHER.—Vers. 1-6. *And it came to pass after this.* After the apparent reconciliation of Absalom to his father. *Prepared him chariots and horses.* Absalom set up a carriage and horses, and fifty men as runners before him. Absalom did not plunge at once into open rebellion. He began by assuming a semi-regal magnificence. *Absalom rose up early.* Public business in the East is always transacted early in the morning, the kings sitting an hour or more to hear causes or receive petitions, in a court held in the open air, at the city gateway. *Beside the way of the gate.* By the way of the road leading to the gate of the king's palace, when he sat to transact business. He interrupted the litigants, and poisoned their minds before they brought their matters to the king. *Any man that had a controversy.* He artfully flatters each suitor by pronouncing a favorable decision on his case. If the man lost his cause, after this flattering opinion by Absalom, he would set it down as gross injustice, and be rebuffed against David. *There is no man disputed of the king.* There is no official hearer appointed. It was impossible for the king to hear every case in detail. *Oh that I were made judge in the land.... I would do him justice.* It is so easy for the "outs" to criticize the "ins"; and many imagine, because they can see some details where they could make improvement, that therefore they could do the whole work better. *Put forth his hand.... and kissed him.* Instead of allowing people to do him homage as the king's son, he took him by hand, and saluted him familiarly with a kiss. He was an unscrupulous politician. *So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.* Never was a word more fittingly employed. In unjust ways he obtained what belonged to his father.

OPEN REBELLION.—Vers. 7-12. *And it came to pass after forty years.* The probable reading is four years, as in Josephus and the Syriac and Arabic versions. They date from the commencement of Absalom's criminal schemes, which began on his return to Jerusalem. *Let me go and pay my vow.* To blind the eyes of his father he became very religious in appearance. The sins of Absalom were many; and one of the most dreadful was this putting

on of the cloak of religion. He knew his father's sore heart would be delighted by any appearance of piety in his sinful son. And he plays upon this piety to gain his purpose. *In Hebron.* The fact that Hebron was his birthplace would make the wish to pay his vow there instead of at Jerusalem seem sufficiently natural. It was a natural centre, had probably many inhabitants discontented at the transfer of the government to Jerusalem, and contained many of the friends of Absalom's youth. *For thy servant vowed a vow.* Whether Absalom ever made any such vow as he here pretends is altogether uncertain. Most probably it was only a pretext to enable him the better to carry out his plans of rebellion. *Go in peace.* David readily gave him leave to go to Hebron. *But Absalom sent spies.* Secret emissaries had been sent out before he went to Hebron, to prepare all the disaffected ones for revolt. *As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet.* Absalom arranged a succession of trumpeters at proper stations from south to north, so that he could be proclaimed by a telegraph of sound, on the same day through all the land. *Absalom reigneth in Hebron.* So the first news the people would have of the rebellion would be that it was an accomplished fact. *Two hundred men.... that were called.* Invited to the sacrificial feast as Absalom's guests. In all probability they were men of distinction, and would naturally be regarded, both at Jerusalem and at Hebron, as accomplices in the conspiracy. No doubt Absalom hoped that many of them, finding themselves thus compromised, and seeing the number of his supporters, would decide to join him; or failing this, they might be held as hostages. *They knew not anything.* This shows the extreme secrecy with which the conspiracy was conducted, and accounts for David's having no suspicions.

AND ABSALOM SENT FOR AHITHOPHEL. David's chief counsellor, and a man of marvellous sagacity. Absalom doubtless knew that he was disaffected with David; perhaps from the dishonor done to Bathsheba, his granddaughter; perhaps from his perception of the growing discontent among the people. *The Gilonite.* Belonging to Giloh, a few miles south or south-west of Hebron.

THE RESULT.—The rebellion proved to popular and general. It was at first a great success. As soon as David heard of it, he proposed flight from Jerusalem. (1) He would not fight against his own loved son. (2) David's kind nature induced him to spare Jerusalem in the horrors of a siege, and the risk of being taken by assault. He probably judged too, and lightly, that delay would be unfavorable to Absalom's plans. (4) It is also remembered that in time of peace David had no standing army with which to resist this sudden attack from so unexpected a quarter. (5) Possibly, too, the remembrance of Nathan's prophecy tended to paralyze David's natural vigor, and incline him to gentle counsels. (6) He could not know how strong the conspiracy was in the city, and whether he might not be betrayed if he remained. His flight was not from cowardice, but from prudence; for he felt that he should be fighting against God. So he appears as a penitent man rather than a vigorous captain. David's feeble health at this time may also account in part for his course.

PRACTICAL HINTS.

David continues to reap the harvest from the seed he has sown. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Repentance and forgiveness cannot avert all the consequences of wrongdoing, lest men be led to think lightly of sin.

Sins against the family will be followed by sorrow in the family.

"How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child."

In Absalom we see the effect of defective training in youth, and alienation from his father's home and his father's religion.

Bad home training is the ruin of many of the young.

Yet there are around all many good influences, and each one chooses which path he will take, and to which influences he will yield.

Every parent should surround his children with all possible good influences.

We see in Absalom the baseness of ingratitude and rebellion against God.

Many people are captivated by plausible appearances, abundant promises, and free criticisms of things as they are.

Political wiles, hypocrisy, and flattery seemed to succeed at first, but ended in failure and death.

WASHINGTON CHARACTERS.

Peculiar People Who Constitute an Interesting Feature of Capital Life.

One of the saddest features of the always varying life in Washington, says a correspondent, is the gradual disappearance of the "old-timers." I do not want to call them the "Colonels," "Majors" and "Judges," for that would include some who do not really belong to the charming and clever parasites who are meant by the "old-timers." They are broken-down gentlemen, persons who have seen "better days," who never did and who never would work, but who are yet persons of fine attainments, charming conversationalists, agreeable in their manners, and yet always waiting near some genteel bar for the invitation that will surely come to indulge in something genial and exchange a flash or two of brilliant wit or narrate some thrilling story of romantic personal experience in the days when they were rich in slaves and land and lived the lives of veritable sybarites.

Five years ago, when I first began an intimate acquaintance with the variegated life of this political capital, there were perhaps a round dozen notable hangers-on of this type. Hardly one of them but could quote the Latin and Greek classics by the ream in the original tongue; most of them were well read in elegant literature of all times, and could discuss it in the most charming manner; all of them had been actors in real romances and tragedies of luxurious social life, and scarcely one had any parts so objectionable as to make him shunned by the best gentleman with whom he came into contact. Now they have dwindled away to two or three. That is, there is only that number in sight. Several are dead.

One has just come forth after several months in the hospital, and immediately began to strike his old friends for the generous entertainment which was the means of sending him into retirement. One has actually abandoned the hospitable precincts of the hotel bars and the appetizing and inexpensive free lunch, and is making a threadbare living by copying and letter writing for this and that one of his friends, who like to encourage the old boy in his novel attempt to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. It was a departure that was frowned upon in an almost savage manner by the others of his crowd as being not only degrading, but as a pernicious innovation upon a time-honored precedent which tended to bring them all into contempt. It was a daring thing to do, and has resulted in the utter ostracism of the bold old boy, but he has stuck to it bravely in the face of many temptations and discouragements. I fear there will be a change soon, however. Evidently the luncheon that comes by purchase is not as liberal as that which comes without money and without price. The poor man grows thinner and thinner, his voice sounds as though there were a vast vacuum in his stomach, and if he does not find starvation preferable to receiving the cut direct from his old friends he will doubtless soon be seen at regular intervals hovering about the best layouts of free luncheons to get the freshest salads and fish-balls and pork and beans and cold meats when they first appear. Not one of them has a watch. That useful bit of gentlemen's wear long ago went the way of their "uncle" to everlasting oblivion, but some mysterious intuition informs them to a second of the time when the free lunch will be spread, and the moment when this or that friend who will set up the drinks will present his welcome face upon the scene.

They have been a great study to student of human nature in this town queer characters, but their race will soon be ended, and there is none to take their place. Their tribe will become extinct with the dropping out of two or three tottering forms which are yet to be seen in their favorite haunts, and what that means to Washington you who are not to the manner either born or educated will never know. It means the passing away of figures which more than all else suggest the life of the aristocratic South before the war, and in their indolence and inability to do the least thing for their own maintenance tell of the immeasurable effect of the curse of human slavery.

MODERN COURTSHIP.

The Scientific Way in Which a New York Man Won a Sweetheart.

There is a girl of astonishing loveliness who has just become engaged to a middle-aged member of a certain yacht club, and if I can believe the story that I heard from the unsuccessful rival of the yachtsman in the race for the sweet creature's favor, the prize was won in a decidedly unique and ingenious way, writes a New York correspondent. The successful suitor owns a large steam yacht and also a small racing cutter. On one recent afternoon when there was a smart breeze blowing he had a little company take a spin with him down the bay aboard the cutter. The beautiful prize made one of the party, and merry indeed was the dash out to sea and return, to the jolly tinkle of banjos and the pleasant refreshment of a champagne luncheon. As the cutter bobbed up the bay and into smooth water the company was sprinkled about the deck talking and singing and having a generally good time. The beautiful girl was lying back against the mainsail near the mast, listening to the compliments of the owner of the cutter, who stood just forward of the mast. Suddenly, and before any warning could be given, the man at the tiller permitted the boat to luff. That brought the main boom round with a rush. The beautiful girl was swept without any shock whatever clean off the rail, and dropped with a splendid splash into the water. Without hesitation the yachtsman jumped over the side, and soon had the spluttering girl grasped tightly in his arms. In less time also than it takes to tell it the boat was rounded up alongside of them, and they were lifted dripping to the deck.

"It was an act of inhumanity and foolhardiness," said the young fellow who lost the girl. "The old fellow was willing to risk her life in order to place her under obligations to him. But it is just here. She has promised to marry him, but I shall be within hailing distance of her, and if I don't break the match then I'll stay a bachelor the rest of my days. I have one last resort when I can't win her by honest attentions."

"What is that?" I inquired, startled at the insinuation.

"I own that man at the wheel who let the boat luff. I got him a place on the yacht of a friend of mine, and I'll pay him a hundred dollars if I find that his testimony is needed."

It looks very much as though courtship in these latter days was developing into a science.

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