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Martha or Mary—Which?

I cannot choose; I should have liked so much To sit at Jesus' feet, to feel the touch Of his kind, gentle hand upon my head, While drinking in the gracious words he said.

And yet to serve him! Oh divine employ! To minister and give the Master joy; To bathe in coolest springs his weary feet, And wait upon him while he sat at meat.

Worship or service—which? Ah! that is best

To which he calls me, be it toil or rest,— To labor for him in life's busy strife, Or seek his feet, a silent worshipper.

So let him choose for us: we are not strong To make the choice; perhaps we should go wrong, Mistaking zeal for service, sinful sloth For loving worship, and so fail in both.

—The Kingdom.

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 wings, 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 for 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 in his case. If the man lost his cause, after this flattering opinion by Absalom, he would set it down as gross injustice, and be incensed 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 unscrupu-

lous 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 Gilead, 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 the horrors of a siege, and the risk of being taken by assault. (3) He probably judged too, and rightly, that delay would be unfavorable to Absalom's plans. (4) It must also be remembered that in a 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.

Absalom failed because he was not the best one to rule the kingdom; his unfitness for it was proved by the very methods he took to gain it.

True principles, fitness for one's place, unselfish labors, and abiding God's time lead to true success.

A Remedy for Cramp.

An old three-score and ten man writes: "For the relief and comfort of old people, allow me to suggest a very simple but most effectual cure for this most troublesome complaint with very many during the night. It is simply to have the head raised about nine inches higher than the feet. For many years I suffered grievously from this affliction during the night, and had frequently to jump from bed and march through the room to drive it off, and latterly it became so bad I was telling my young folk I thought I would have to sleep in a chair. Fortunately, however, for me, an old gentleman told me of this cure, and now 'I am in a new world.' I gave it to an old lady who was similarly afflicted with it as myself, and it has proved in her case also a complete cure. The plan I have adopted is to put little square blocks of wood of about 7 inches in below the feet of the bed at the head of it, thus raising the body gradually from the feet upwards. Since doing this I now get peace to sleep in comfort, and it is certainly a mighty relief."—W. G.

Some English Names.

Many who have struggled hopelessly with the pronunciation of English proper names will be glad of this list, which deals phonetically with a few of the most difficult cases: Talbot is pronounced Tolbut. Thames is pronounced Tams. Bulwer is pronounced Buller. Cowper is pronounced Cooper. Holburn is pronounced Hoburn. Wemyss is pronounced Weems. Knollys is pronounced Knowles. Cockburn is pronounced Coburn. Brougham is pronounced Broom. Norwich is pronounced Norridge. St. Ledger is pronounced Sillinger. Hawarden is pronounced Harden. Colquhoun is pronounced Cohoon. Cirencester is pronounced Sissister.

Grosvenor is pronounced Grovenor. Salisbury is pronounced Sawlisbury. Beauchamp is pronounced Beechan. Marybone is pronounced Marra-benny. Abergavenny is pronounced Aber-genny.

A Story of Nilsson.

An anecdote of Christine Nilsson, the Swedish singer, told in America, illustrates her freedom from snobbery.

Christine was once at the house of a retired Chicago millionaire near New York. A distinguished company had been invited to meet her at dinner.

On entering the dining-room she dropped her host's arm, and hurrying in amazement to the stately young butler, seized him effusively by the hand and engaged him in conversation, while the other guests stood waiting and the entertainer looked on in astonishment.

"That man," she explained to the group when they were seated, "is the son of a kind old nobleman on whose estate my father worked as a day-laborer when we were children. Fortune has smiled on me, while it has frowned on my old playmate whom I find under such changed circumstances."—Selected.

Luck And Pluck.

A great deal that is called luck in this world is only the result of patient industry. A rich merchant of Liverpool, Sir John Walmsley, began life as a clerk on about a hundred dollars a year. His employers were grain merchants, and the young man determined to learn all there was to know about grain. The man who had charge of the warehouse, Old Peter, as he was called, saw that the boy was anxious to learn; so, twice a week, in the morning before breakfast, the two would go together to the stores and ships, examining the different kinds of grain. Old Peter would take a handful of all sorts, English, Irish, Scotch, American, European, and spreading them on a table, would ask the boy to tell the characteristics of each sample. The pupil was bewildered at first, but he persevered until he became an expert at the business.

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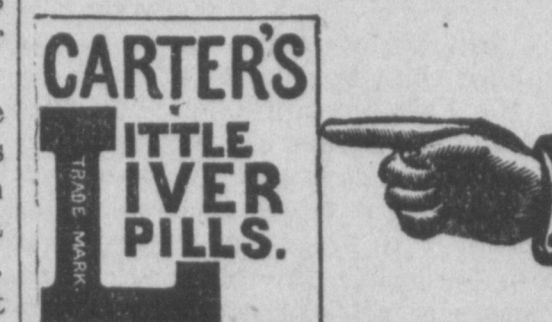
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