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—AND—
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The Sabbath-School

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Fourth Quarter—Lesson XII—Dec. 19.

JOHN'S MESSAGE ABOUT SIN AND SALVATION.—I. John 1 : 5 to 2 : 6.

Read the First Epistle of John.
Commit Verses 1 : 8-10.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.*—I. John 1 : 9.

HISTORICAL SETTING.

Time.—This Epistle was written probably about A. D. 97 (Farrar); possibly earlier, but not before A. D.

Place. — Either Ephesus or Patmos.

To Whom Written.—This is called a catholic Epistle, that is, one for all the churches. Farrar thinks it was written to the churches of Asia.

Author.—The apostle John in his old age.

Rulers. — Domitian, last of the twelve Cæsars, emperor of Rome, A. D. 81-96; Agricola, Governor of Great Britain.

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN. The First Epistle of John, says Farrar, "it is probable, was meant to accompany copies of the gospel, as an appendix to it, and a practical commentary There are fully thirty five parallel passages in the gospel and the Epistle." It was written when many questions that troubled the early church were settled." To James and Peter, salvation in Christ was a flower yet folded in the bud. To Paul and John, a flower opened wide, and the fruit forming within the flower.

The subject of the Gospel of John is the Son of God; the subject of the Epistle of John is the sons of God. The whole Epistle is divided into two parts: the first (chaps. 1, 2) shows us the family with their Father; the second (chaps. 3-5) gives us the family in their life in the world.

GOD IS LIGHT. — V. 5. God's nature is expressed to us by the three mightiest and most glorious things that exist: —

GOD IS LIFE. GOD IS LIGHT.
GOD IS LOVE.

The message which we have heard from him, from Jesus Christ. By word, and by his own person, for he was 'the brightness of the Father's glory." The greatness of this fact grew on the apostles as they rose to loftier heights of Christian experience. *That God is light*, absolutely, in his very nature.

Light is the best expression and symbol of God's nature. Light is mysterious in nature, ineffably bright and glorious, everywhere present, swift winged, undefiled, and undefilable. Light is the source of life, of beauty, of manifested reality, of warmth, comfort, and joy, of health and of power. It destroys all darkness; it unites in itself purity and clearness. Without it the world would be but a mass of coldness and death.

God is our intellectual light. Everything is clear and plain to him. He is the source to us of knowledge, of wisdom, of clear views, of broad views, of the truths we should know, of the way we should go.

God is our moral light. He is to our spirits what the natural light is to the world. He is the source of life, of truth, of activity, of power, of purity, of comfort and joy, of holiness, of spiritual beauty and glory.

THE LIGHT IS OPPOSED TO DARKNESS.—*In him is no darkness at all.* Where the light is perfect there can be no darkness.

There is a fourfold darkness—of nature, of ignorance, of misery, of sin. All these, God, as light destroys.

WALKING IN THE LIGHT, THE CONDITION OF FELLOWSHIP.—Vs. 6. 7. *If we say.* If we should profess. *That we have fellowship.* Belong to him, are his children and are like him. *And walk.* 'Walk' signifies the ordinary course of life. *In darkness.* The exact opposite of the light in which God is. In sin, error, falseness. *We lie.* We say what is false, for it is not possible to have fellowship with God and yet continue to do the deeds of darkness. We cannot be in love with sin, in sympathy with evil, vicious, selfish, and yet be in fellowship with God. *And do not the truth.* Our life is as false as our words. *But if we walk*, live habitually, *in the light*, in God's light, in sympathy with him, according to his Word. *As he is in the light.* Made in his image, possessing his nature. *We have fellowship one with another.* Since we are all partake of God's nature and feelings, we must have fellowship with one another, being one in sympathy, love, character, purposes. We may know that we love God because we love the brethren.

IN THE LIGHT IS CLEANSING FROM SIN.—Vs 7-10. *And the blood of Jesus.* His death on the cross, expresses the love of God and of his Son for man. *Cleanseth.* Not only forgives, but removes. The cleansing is present and continuous. Only those who walk in the light are cleansed. *From all sin.* All kinds of sin, all degrees of sin. *If we say that we have no sin.* If we think we are altogether free from sin and sinful nature. *We deceive ourselves.* We do not know our own hearts in their depths. No man knows himself who supposes that in all respects he is perfectly pure. *And the truth is not in us.* The truth about God's holiness; the truth about righteousness in its purity and perfection; the truth about our own character. *If we confess our sins.* To God always, and to men for the offences committed against them. *He is faithful*, to his nature and to his promises. *And just* righteous. Righteousness loves to forgive whenever forgiveness tends to increase righteousness. *And to cleanse us.* God's righteousness led him to devise a way to save men from their sins, in accordance with his own righteousness. *We make him a liar.* God's scheme for forgiving sin, and his call upon all, would be deceitful, if men have not sinned. *His word is not in us.* His gospel, his revelation of the needs of men.

THE WAY OUT OF SIN.—Vs. 1, 2. *Write I . . . . that ye sin not.* This was his great desire for those he called his children. He was now a very old man, between ninety and one hundred years old. *If any man sin.* There is every danger of falling into unexpected and unintended sin. *We have an Advocate.* One who stands by us to defend, strengthen, comfort us. *And he is the propitiation for our sins . . . . for the sins of the whole world.* Jesus was the means by which all men can be brought into a state of salvation, and thus be reconciled to God.

THE TEST WHETHER WE ARE WALKING IN THE LIGHT—Vs. 3 6. *Hereby we do know that we know him.* With the experimental knowledge of love and fellowship, the knowledge that comes from abiding in him and he in us. *If we keep his commandments.* Obedience is the proof of saving knowledge of God, as the shining of the rays is the proof that the lamp is lighted. If it is lighted, it must shine *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar.* He declares what cannot be true. The outflow from the heart proves what is in the heart If the plant bears thistle-blooms or bramble briars, it cannot be a grapevine. *But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected* The commandments of God are the expression of perfect love, what perfected love would naturally do. Therefore, when our lives, in thought and word and deed, are in perfect accordance with God's Word, we know that our love to God is perfect, is complete. We cannot claim perfect love till we have a perfect life in every respect conformed to God's Word. Then, too, God's love to us has perfected its work in us Love in its very essence is reciprocal. It is not complete till it has the answer in the love of the one loved. *Hereby know we that we are in him.* Not by spiritual enjoyments, but by the power to do his holy will in absolute self surrender and consecration, do we know that we have union with God. *Ought himself also to walk, even as he walked.* Christ is not only the principle of holiness, but also the pattern of holiness to his people. How did he walk? The answer is written at large in the gospels.

Business.

He came to my desk in the school room, at the end of a day's duty. I had not seen him before. I have not seen him since. He belonged to the genus tramp, and was in search of his next meal. Inferring that I could, would, and should assist him in his search, he appealed to me as a man and brother.

In accordance with my custom. I subjected him to a brief inquisition as to his personal habits:

'Do you drink beer or whiskey?" I asked.

"Not now—I haven't had money enough to buy a drink for some time—but I have spent forty thousand dollars in drink!" he artlessly replied.

"Ah, yes," I continued, "It is always so. Men spend all that they have on drink, and then depend upon other for assistance. Why do you come to me rather than to a saloon-keeper? Do you really think that I, a total abstainer, should assist you, you have spent all your living on an institution to which I trace crime and misery?"

He thought that I was under obligation so to do; and, more than that expressed the opinion that I was a 'Prohibitionist." For his part, he said, he favored the saloon, because it helped "business."

"How does it help business?" I asked.

He did not know, but was convinced that I took a "wrong view of the situation,' although he frankly admitted that it had not helped him personally.

Evidently not, for his hat, clothing, and shoes, were of a deteriorated sort, and his linen was sadly soiled. Having spent forty thousand on drink, he was unable to patronize hat-maker, tailor, shoemaker, shirt-maker; and obliged to tramp the trail in search of his next meal. I proposed to do more than a saloon keeper would do, and so offered to supply him with supper; but he failed to appear at the restaurant, preferring fifteen cents in his hand to a supper in the future. —Ex.

The Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World.

Professor Creary denominates these battles "decisive," not alone by reason of their immediate result, but because in each a reversed victory would have changed materially the history of the world.

B. C. 390
The victory at Marathon,
Greece over haughty Persia won.
B. C. 431
At Syracuse the Spartan's name
Attained in Hellas naval fame.
B. C. 331
From Arbela Darius fled,
While Alexander onward sped.
B. C 207
On the Metaurus Rome foretold
The speedy doom of Carthage old.
A. D. 9
With Varus into wilds decoyed,
Rome trusted legions were destroyed.
A. D. 431
By Vieigoth and Roman spurned,
The "Scourge of God" from Chalons turned.
A. D. 732
At Tours fierce blows from Charles "Martel"
The "Infidels" retreat compel.
A. D. 1066
At Hastings fought the Saxon lords,
When Norman William claimed their swords
A. D. 1429
Joan of Arc, of France the pride,
At Orleans turned the battle tide.
A. D. 1588
Spain's huge Armada, greatly feared,
In English waters disappeared.
A. D. 1704.
At Blenheim Marlborough held sway,
While Prince Eugene helped win the day.
A. D. 1709
Pultowa saw a triumph famed
Which Russia over Sweden claimed.
A. D. 1777
At Saratogo, in our States,
Burgoyne gave up his sword to Gates.
A. D. 1701
The young democracy of France
At Valmy checked their foes' advance
A. D. 1815
But great Napoleon we view,
Vanquished at last at Waterloo.
—Julia M. Colton, in N. Y. Advocate.

A Sunday-School Through the Winter.

I have come to the conclusion that when a Sunday school goes into winter quarters the fault invariably lies in the officers. I am not a superintendent, but have been for many years assisting our superintendent in the discharge of his duties. I live in a prairie country where the roads get as bad in winter as any I have ever seen. It was our custom to go into winter quarters regularly, and sometimes quite early in the season. I began to realize that for a Sunday-school to go into winter quarters rendered it as nearly no Sunday-school as could be, or that its existence was more in name than in fact. I began to cast about for a remedy, and am thankful to be able to say that the prescription acted like a charm, and further convinced myself, if no one else, that my diagnosis of the case was correct. The remedy is simply this: I made a proposition that if any two persons would meet me at the church each Sabbath morning we would have Sunday-school. At last two agreed to the proposition, and we, instead of going into winter quarters, as was our custom, continued to meet regularly, and sometimes with only three, but never failed to have Sunday school; and I may state here that at one of the most interesting Sunday schools I ever had the pleasure to attend there were but three present. As soon as the people began to see that the Sunday-school was going on our numbers began to increase; and the school has never suspended from that day to the present, which has been for the space of six or seven years. Now let some one else try the remedy, and let me know how it works.—Onward.

With a Stop to It.

"Come in and take a sip of something good," said bloated old Jack Sanders to Tommy Bristow as he was passing the saloon door on his way to school.

"I'm a temperance boy," answered Tommy, and I've signed a pledge neither to touch, taste, nor handle."

"Oh, that's all right," answered the old toper; you can take a glass of beer or wine and still be a temperance man. You don't need to keep on drinking until you're a drunkard. Thats all nonsense. You can take a drink and stop right there.

If they have that kind of liquor in there, answered Tommy, who was a bright little fellow for his years, I don't know that I would mind taking a glass, just to see what it tastes like. You are sure they have that kind, are you?

What kind, demanded Jack

Why, the kind that has a stop in it. I guess not many of the men of this town have ever drank that kind. They drank the kind that had a keep on, and they kept going right on. But if you've got the kind in there that has a stop to it I'll go in and take a glass.

Jack Sanders hung his head. He knew what the boy said was true, and that the nonsense was all on his side—talking about taking a drink and stopping when he felt like it. The trouble was he didn't please to stop, nor did any of the others. And Tommy was exactly right. It isn't safe for any boy or man either, to take the first drink until someone invents the kind that has a stop to it. Our Morning Guide.

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Deceiving Children.

Thoughtlessly parents do much harm in this way. "The bad man will catch you!" The spooks will carry you off!" "There are witches in the closet!" ect. How often are children frightened into restraint or into obedience by such falsehoods, and how much harm is done them thereby! Sooner or later they discover that "the bad man" does not catch, that there are no "spooks." that witches do not lurk in closets—in short, that the parents have been deceiving them in this matter, and their hitherto abiding faith in father's truthfulness is irreparably shattered.

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