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The Sabbath-School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Third Quarter, Lesson V, July 31, '98.

NABOTH'S VINEYARD.—I Kings 21: 4-16.

Read Chapters 21 and 22.

Commit verses 4-6.

GOLDEN TEXT:—Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house.—Ex. 20: 17.

HISTORICAL SETTING.

Time.—Probably five or six years after the reformation on Carmel, B. C. 900, common chronology; or 853, revised chronology.

Place.—Samaria, the capital and metropolis of Israel; and Jezreel, twenty-five miles to the north; a favorite royal residence, "the Windsor of Israel."

Rulers.—Ahab, king of Israel, Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, Benhadad II., king of Syria, now a prosperous kingdom. Shalmanezar, king of Assyria.

Elijah, accompanied by the young Elisha as his assistant, is living in retirement, part of the time, perhaps, out of the kingdom; but probably more of the time doing his work among the schools of the prophets, which seem to have been revived (2 Kings 2: 35; 1 Kings 20: 35). Ahab was too busy with enemies and war to pay much attention to him.

Other Prophets.—Micaiah Elisha, an unknown prophet, and the sons of the prophets.

THE GRADUAL WORKING OUT OF ELIJAH'S REFORMS.—1 Kings 19: 19-20: 43. (1) After the events of our last lesson, Elijah seems to have retired from public life; but evidently he was at work, for later we find him connected with the schools of the prophets. He was thus spreading the true religion. (2) Persecution had ceased. The prophets had no longer to be hidden in a cave. During all these years which follow the flight and return of Elijah, he and his fellow-prophets are not only tolerated, but are influential at the court of Ahab. (3) Ahab and the people were brought to a sense of their sinful course by two terrible invasions by Benhadad, king of Syria. They devastated the land. (4) Baal's prophets showed themselves helpless to deliver the land from these oppressors, which tended to destroy faith in them, and to alienate the nation from their worship. (5) But Jehovah through his prophets came to the aid of Ahab and the people. (6) The doom of Ahab and his house was pronounced. For even while God was helping him, he disobeyed God. They were so joined to their idols that the idolatry could not be destroyed without destroying the idolaters.

A DOUBLE TRAGEDY IN REAL LIFE.—Vs. 1-16. This story is given because it was the outward expression of Ahab's depraved character, which led to his doom. Adjoining Ahab's palace grounds in Jezreel was the homestead vineyard of a native Jezreelite named Naboth. Ahab wanted to buy this vineyard, to enlarge his pleasure grounds. Naboth refused to sell. (1) He had a perfect right to retain his home with all its associations which no money could pay for. (2) The permanent sale of the paternal inheritance was forbidden by law (Lev. 25: 23-28). The refusal of Naboth threw Ahab into a fit of the sulks. And Ahab came from Jezreel, into his house. In Samaria. And he laid him down and would eat no bread. It is a strange sight, a king in an ivory house with every luxury, complaining like a spoiled child that he cannot have one thing more.

BAD COUNCIL AT HOME.—Vs. 17-20. But Jezreel his wife comes forward to help her husband to sin, not to do right. She was wicked, and encouraged Ahab to do wickedly. Doth thou now govern? Are you king? and can you not get possession of this pretty vineyard? Why not use your power? I will give thee the vineyard. "I" is the emphatic word here.

THE TRIAL AND EXECUTION OF NABOTH.—Vs. 21-24. So she wrote letters in Ahab's name. It is customary in the East now, as then, for the government to proclaim one thing publicly, and at the same time to give private instructions to the officials, of a very different nature. And sealed them with his seal. Documents of every kind in the East are simply sealed with a man's signet, which contains his name. The custom is necessary where so few are able to read and write. Each had his own seal, and it was death for any seal-cutter to make two seals alike. Proclaim a fast. As if some great calamity were overhanging the city. Set Naboth on high. On the platform of the court, to be tried. Set two men, sons of Belial. Belial is not a proper noun, but simply means "worthlessness," "recklessness." Only such would bear such false witness as

was required. Blaspheme God. The true Oriental, however careless his life, is fanatically zealous for the honor of God's name. To blaspheme Allah in any place where Mohammedans congregate would probably result in the death of the blasphemer on the spot. And the king. It would be easy to find some faint foundation for this charge in a pious man. Such a man could not help protesting against the evil done by Ahab. When one is determined to commit a crime against another it is easy to find an excuse. And carry him out. A stoning always took place outside the city. And stone him. The legal punishment of blasphemy was death by stoning. That he may die. It appears from 2 Kings 9: 26, that Naboth's sons were put to death at the same time. Thus, there being no heirs, the property would revert to the crown. The Jezreelites carried out her instructions, and Naboth was stoned to death, and word sent to Jezreel at Samaria.

AHAB MEETS ELIJAH IN HIS ILL-GOTTEN POSSESSION.—Vs. 15, 16. Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth. He rent his clothes and put on sackcloth, as though shocked at his crime. But the hypocrisy of the act was shown by his willingness to accept the fruits of the crime.

News of the crime had come to Elijah. God bade him go down and meet Ahab in the vineyard. When Ahab came to the vineyard to take possession of it, there stood the prophet.

Half in anger, half in anguish, Ahab cried: "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?"

"I have found thee," said the prophet, speaking in Jehovah's name. "Thou hast sold thyself to work evil before me." His sin had found him out. Then Elijah spoke to him his doom. The dogs should lick his blood in the very spot where they licked Naboth's blood. His sons should be slain, his wife, Jezreel, perish miserably, his whole dynasty come to an end.

VOICES FROM NABOTH'S VINEYARD.—Ahab's heart was a nest of vipers. Avarice, discontentment, oppression, impiety, abject moral weakness, base hypocrisy, robbery, lying, murder.

Mark the progress of sin from covetousness to discontent, to evil counsel, to lying, to robbery, to murder, to retribution on self, to ruin of family.

All these sins were a growth. Ahab was once an innocent boy.

Covetousness is a root of all evil to the covetous one and to others.

There is no true success through crime and wrong. "Be sure your sin will find you out."

The worst thing that can happen to a man is the loss of his own soul.

"What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

A Chinese Account of the United States.

We are always told that the countries of the foreign devils are grand and rich, but that cannot be true, else what do they all come here for? It is here that they grow rich. But you cannot civilize them; they are beyond redemption. They will live weeks and months without touching a mouthful of rice, but they eat the flesh of birds and sheep in enormous quantities. This is why they smell so bad; they smell like sheep themselves. Every day they take a bath to rid them selves of their disagreeable odors, but they do not succeed. Nor do they eat their meat cooked in small pieces. It is carried into the room in large chunks, often half raw, and then they cut and slash and tear it apart. They eat with knives and prongs; it makes a civilized being perfectly nervous. One fancies himself in the presence of sword-swallowers. The opium poison, which they have brought us, they do not use themselves. But they take enormous quantities of whiskey and champagne. The latter is very good. They know what is good, the rascals! It is because they eat and drink so much that they never rest. A sensible, civilized person does nothing without due consideration; but the barbarians hurry with everything. Their anger, however, is only a fire of straw; if you wait long enough they get tired of being angry. I worked for two of them. The one we used to call the "Crazy Flea," because he was always jumping about; the other we named the "Wooden Gun," because he never went off, though he was always at full cock.

They certainly do not know how to amuse themselves. You never see them enjoy themselves by sitting quietly on their ancestors' graves. They jump around and kick balls, as if they were paid to do it. Again, you will find them making long tramps into the country; but that is probably a religious duty, for when they tramp they wave sticks in the air, nobody knows why. They have no sense of dignity, for they may be found walking with women. They even

sit down at the same table with women, and the latter are served first. Yet the women are to be pitied, too. On festive occasions they are compelled to appear almost naked before the men.

The Hard Nuts.

Every Bible student should have a shelf on which to lay the nuts which he may find too hard to crack. Life is too short to spend one's time trying to understand the unknowable when there is so much that is knowable awaiting our attention. The man who feels that it is his duty to interpret every passage of Scripture he reads is to be commended for his zeal rather than for his wisdom. (Forbid that we should say anything of his vanity.) The favorite argument of these good people to whom the Bible is perfectly plain is that God would not put anything in a message to his children which they could not understand, and that we have only to find the key and every secret treasury of the Scriptures will open to him. It would be very amusing if it were not so pitiful. We are not the only children to whom God has sent this message; nor is the message confined to matters which we need to learn to-day. There is something in it for childhood, for early manhood, for old age, for fatherhood, for motherhood, for trouble, for sunshine—for every relation and circumstance of life. And there are doubtless parts of the message which shine for every Christian, and for Jewish Christians, that are obscure to us now; and parts which will shine out for the children of God who are yet to come. Because God would not put a passage in the Bible that did not mean something is no reason why we should insist that we have the right and the power to get at its meaning. Because there are stars in the heavens which we have not seen is no reason why we should insist that we can find them with the naked eyes, or that we can see them in the northern when they may be visible only in the southern hemisphere. He that would make real progress in Bible study must set aside many a hard nut as he goes along. By-and-by under different circumstances he may return and try some of these hard nuts again with better success.—Bible Reader.

One Small Girl's Error.

A great mystery has been cleared up, and Rev. James Plumbe, pastor of South church, Nunda, N. Y., vindicated. The trouble was all started by a little child in district school No. 8, who rushed home from school and cried, "Teacher said Mr. Plumbe was a blackleg."

The report spread, and by night had reached the ears of not only the Rev. Mr. Plumbe, but the trustees of the church. The teacher was not mentioned as the author. The good old deacons and elders were shocked. They called a special meeting, and Mr. Plumbe was urged to explain the charge. He could not, and the deacons and trustees decided to close the church until matters could be satisfactorily straightened out by the almost broken-hearted and desperate pastor. Then Rev. Mr. Plumbe started to visit every house to run down the report. After two days' diligent inquiries, he traced the story to the little girl. She said the teacher had said it, and went with him to the teacher's house.

The school teacher protested her innocence in having started the rumor, but the little girl said: "Why, teacher, don't you remember in the geography class the other day you told us that Mr. Plumbe was a blackleg?"

The schoolmaster's eyes brightened. She explained that she had only said that "plumbago was black lead," and her remark must have been misunderstood and translated to "Plumbe was a blackleg."

The cloud was lifted, and the little south church is again open for worship. The story has an obvious moral.

Thought of Her Boys.

During the early part of a dinner given in Washington, the guest of honor, a young married woman who is the proud mother of two very small boys, suddenly paused, with a startled look, in the midst of an animated conversation with her host, and cried: "There, if I didn't forget those boys again! Have you a telephone in the house, and may I use it?" Her host, says the Argonaut, conducted her to the telephone, and presently she returned. "I do hope you will pardon me," she said; "but you see I always have Georgie and Eddie say their prayers to me before they go to sleep. In the hurry of getting off I forgot it to-night, so I have just called up their nurse. She brought the children to the phone, and they have just said their prayers over the wire, so my mind is relieved." Philadelphia Record.

WHICH IS THE ENEMY.—A boy, bright-eyed and fair faced, was found in the street by Frank Hals, a celebrated Dutch painter. The lad knew no name but Hals, so Hals called him Hals Finding, and went at the work of teaching him. The boy proved an apt pupil; but, as he progressed in art and increased in years, his works took on a strange character for one so young. They were of drinking houses and drinking scenes, painted with a truthfulness and vividness that was wonderful. He went in for a short life and a merry one. At the age of thirty, he had drunk so much, so deeply and so long, that his life was literally drowned out of him.

Give me wine! he cried to his physician.

No, no; it must be water, Hals.

Must it? Ah, well, I'll try to love my enemy!

The physician took the young man's hand and said: Hals, I am going away for a time, as I have others to visit. No, look you; I want to leave a solemn question for you to answer. There is a bottle of wine, and there is a flagon of pure water. Which is the enemy? Dear boy; if you will solve this problem, as I hope you will, you shall be saved, not for a merry life but for a useful one. If you decide in behalf of the foul fiend, no power can save you. The physician went away. When he returned he found the young painter in tears.

Doctor, save me! save me! and I will be a useful man! He had decided that the bright wine was his enemy.

The good physician saved him, and Hals lived many years, an ornament to society, and a grand contributor to the world of art.—The Youth's Companion.

They Never Fail.—Mr. S. M. Boughner, Langton, writes: "For about two years I was troubled with Inward Piles, but by using Parmelee's Pills, I was completely cured, and although four years have elapsed since then they have not returned." Parmelee's Pills are anti-bilious and a specific for the cure of Liver and Kidney Complaints, Dyspepsia, Costiveness, Headache, Piles, etc., and will regulate the secretions and remove all bilious matter.

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Hints for a Christian Home.

1. We may be quite sure that our will is likely to be crossed during the day, so let us prepare for it.
2. Every person in the house has an evil nature as well as ourselves, and therefore we are not to expect too much.
3. Look upon each member of the family as one for whom Christ died.
4. When inclined to give an angry answer, let us lift up the heart in prayer.
5. If from sickness, pain or infirmity, we feel irritable, let us keep a very strict watch over ourselves.
6. Observe when others are suffering, and drop a word of kindness.
7. Watch for little opportunities of pleasing, and put little annoyances out of the way.

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Is caused by torpid liver, which prevents digestion and permits food to ferment and putrefy in the stomach. Then follow dizziness, headache, insomnia, nervousness, and, if not relieved, bilious fever or blood poisoning. Hood's Pills rouse the liver, cure headache, dizziness, constipation. 25 cents. The only pills to take with Hood's Sarsaparilla.

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