

The Elder Brother

The sun was set. The twilight dim had gathered, And 'gainst the window-pane The fierce north wind sent sudden, spiteful flurries

Of mingled sleet and rain. My easy-chair was drawn before the fire, Benny was on my knee,

When low he whispered, "I don't see, Aunt Dolly, When folks are small like me,

"How they get on without a nice big brother. "Why, even Tommy Stead— Who bullies all my mates—don't dare to touch me;

He's afraid you see, of Ned." Just then he shyly pointed o'er his shoulder,

With such a proud, fond look, At his tall brother Edward sitting near us, Intent upon a book.

"He carries the umbrella when 'tis raining, And gives the most to me: And helps me find the very far off places In the geography;

"And explains the suns, and maps the fractions easy." Here Benny heaved a sigh,

"I don't like rifeftic; but Ned says, 'Benny, Be brave, my lad, and try.' "He has long patience, and he's very clever,

Why, once he made a cart, And once he made a trap that caught a sparrow; And 'cause it hurt my heart

"To see the wild thing flutter, he soon freed it, And smiled when off it fled, And when I'm scared because it's dark, or lightens,

He takes me in his bed. "Our pastor said, last Sunday, that Lord Jesus,

Up in the heavenly host, Our Elder Brother is: It makes me love him Like my dear Ned.

The blue eyes closed. Perhaps the gentle sandman Had touched the golden head;

For low it dropped. But smiles still curved the sweet lips; He dreamed, perhaps, of "Ned."

—Elizabeth Cummings, S. S. Times.

The Sunday School.

January 23.—Noah and the Ark.—Genesis 6: 9-22. GOLDEN TEXT.—Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him.—Gen. 7: 5.

EXPLANATIONS. Noah just and perfect: not absolutely; for since the fall of Adam no man has been free from sin except Jesus Christ.

But as living by faith he was just (Gal. 3: 2; Heb. 11: 7.) and perfect—i. e., sincere in his desire to do God's will.

11. The earth was filled with violence: in the absence of any well-regulated government it is easy to imagine what evils would arise.

it above: a direction to raise the roof in the middle, seemingly to form a gentle slope for letting the water run off. 17-22. And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood; the repetition of the announcement was to establish its certainty (ch. 41: 22.). Whatever opinion may be entertained as to the operation of natural laws and agencies in the deluge, it was brought on the world by God as a punishment for the enormous wickedness of its inhabitants.

January 30.—The call of Abram.—Genesis 12: 1-9. GOLDEN TEXT.—"I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing."—Gen. 12: 2.

EXPLANATIONS. 1. Now the Lord had said: it pleased God, who has often been found of them who sought him not, to reveal himself to Abraham perhaps by a miracle; and the conversion of Abraham is one of the most remarkable in Bible history.

Get thee out of thy country: his being brought to the knowledge and worship of the true God had probably been a considerable time before.

This call included two promises: first, showing the land of his future posterity; the second, that in his posterity all the earth was to be blessed.

Abraham obeyed, and it is frequently mentioned in the New Testament as a striking instance of his faith (Heb. 11: 8.).

5. Into the land of Canaan they came: with his wife and an orphan nephew. Abram reached his destination in safety, and thus the first promise was made good.

The place of Shechem: or Shechem, a pastoral valley then unoccupied (cf. ch. 33: 18.). Plain of Moreh: rather the "terebinth tree" of Moreh, very common in Palestine, remarkable for its wide spreading branches and its dark green foliage.

It is probable that in Moreh there was a grove of these trees, whose inviting shade led Abram to choose it for an encampment.

7. Unto thy seed. . . give this land: God was dealing with Abram not in his private and personal capacity merely, but with a view to high and important interests in future ages.

That land his posterity was for centuries to inhabit as a peculiar people; the seeds of divine knowledge were to be sown there for the benefit of all mankind; and considered in its geographical situation, it was chosen in divine wisdom the fittest of all lands to serve as the cradle of a divine revelation designed for the whole world.

Build an altar: By this solemn act of devotion he made an open profession of his religion, established the worship of the true God, and declared his faith in the promise.

February 6.—Lot's Choice.—Genesis 13: 1-13. GOLDEN TEXT.—Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.—Matt. 6: 33.

EXPLANATIONS. 1. Went up . . . south: Palestine being a highland country, the entrance from Egypt by its southern boundary is a continual ascent.

2. Very rich: compared with the pastoral tribes to which Abraham belonged. An Arab sheik is considered rich who has a hundred or two hundred tents, from sixty to a hundred camels, a thousand sheep and goats respectively.

And Abraham being very rich, must have far exceeded that amount of pastoral property. "Gold and silver" being rare among these people, his probably arose from the sale of his produce in Egypt.

3. Went on his journeys: His progress would be by slow marches and frequent encampments, as he had to regulate his movements by the prospect of water and pasture.

3. Unto the place between Bethel and Ai: a conspicuous hill, its topmost summit resting on the rocky

slopes below, and distinguished by its olive groves, offering a natural base for the altar and a fitting shade for the tent of the patriarch." There Abraham called: he felt a strong desire to re-animate his faith and piety on the scene of his former worship; it might be to express humility and penitence for his misconduct in Egypt, or thankfulness for deliverance from perils—to embrace the first opportunity on returning to Canaan of leading his family to renew allegiance to God, and offer the typical sacrifices which pointed to the blessings of the promise.

7-10. And there was a strife: Abraham's character appears here in a most amiable light. Having a strong sense of religion, he was afraid of doing anything that might tend to injure its character or bring discredit on its name, and he rightly judged that such unhappy effects would be produced if two persons whom nature and grace had so closely connected should come to a rupture.

Waiving his right to dictate, he gave the freedom of choice to Lot. The conduct of Abraham was not only disinterested and peaceable, but generous and condescending in an extraordinary degree, exemplifying the scripture precepts, Matt. 6: 33; Ro. 12: 10, 11; Phil. 2: 4.

10. Lot lifted up his eyes: Travellers describe that from the top of this hill, a little "to the east of Bethel," they can see the Jordan, the broad meadows on either bank, and the waving line of verdure which marks the course of the stream.

11. Then Lot chose him all the plain: a choice excellent in a worldly point of view, but most inexpedient for his best interests. He seems, though a good man, to have been too much under the influence of a selfish and covetous spirit; and how many, alas! imperil the good of their souls for the prospect of worldly advantage.

February 13.—God's Covenant with Abram.—Genesis 15: 5-18. GOLDEN TEXT.—Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward.—Gen. 15: 1.

EXPLANATIONS. 1. After these things: The conquest of the invading kings. The word of the Lord: a phrase used, when connected with a vision, to denote a prophetic message.

Fear not, Abram: When the excitement of the enterprise was over he had become a prey to despondency and terror at the probable revenge that might be meditated against him.

Dispel his fear, he was favoured with this gracious announcement. Having such a promise, how well did it become him, and all God's people who have the same promise, to dismiss their fears, and cast their burdens on the Lord (Ps. 27: 3).

9: 12. Take . . . an heifer, &c.: On occasions of great importance, when two or more parties join in a compact, they either observe precisely the same rites as Abram did, or, where they do not, they invoke the lamp as their witness.

According to these ideas, which have been from time immemorial engraven on the minds of eastern people, the Lord himself condescended to enter into covenant with Abram. The patriarch did not pass between the sacrifice, and the reason was that in this transaction he was bound to nothing.

He asked a sign, and God was pleased to give him a sign, by which, according to eastern ideas, he bound himself. In like manner God has entered into covenant with us; and in the glory of the Only Begotten Son, who passed through between God and us, all who believe have, like Abram, a sign or pledge in the gift of the Spirit, whereby they may know that they shall inherit the heavenly Canaan.

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