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SUNDAY SCHOOL. HE SEES FOR HIMSELF

Lesson X.—Fourth Quarter, For Dec. 8, 1912.

THE INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

Text of the Lesson, Matt. xviii, 1-14. Memory Verses, 2, 3—Golden Text, Matt. xviii, 10—Commentary Prepared by Rev. D. M. Stearns.

The question of the disciples with which this lesson begins, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" carries us far back in the history of man on the earth, even to the suggestion of the old serpent to Eve, "Ye shall be as gods" (Gen. iii, 5). His own ambition is seen in Isa. xiv, 13, 14: "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. . . . I will be like the Most High." The significance of the title "Most High God" is seen in the first use of it in Gen. xiv, 18-22, where it evidently refers to God as the possessor of heaven and earth. The great adversary's ambition, therefore, is to possess the earth and the people upon it.

The late Dr. Weston said that the Bible is the record of the conflict between God and the devil for man and his inheritance, the earth. When people join house to house and field to field, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth (Isa. v, 8), on which principle all trusts and combines seem to be carried on, it is not difficult to recognize the unseen ambitious, wicked one back of it all, who offered to our Lord all the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them if He would worship him (Luke iv, 5-7).

The man will yet come, if he is not already in sight, who will accept this offer of the devil, and all the world will worship him whose names are not in the Book of Life (Dan. xi, 36-38, 43; Rev. xiii, 8). We need to understand this in order to be delivered from the ambition to be great even in the kingdom. He must be blind indeed who would desire greatness or power in this present evil age unless he could use it wholly for God. The lifelong motto of every believer should be, "The Lord alone shall be exalted" (Isa. ii, 11, 17).

Not only on this occasion did the idea of personal greatness lay hold of the disciples, but just after He had the second time foretold His death they by the way disputed among themselves who should be the greatest (Mark ix, 31-34). On another occasion both James and John and their mother asked for seats on His right and left hand in His kingdom and glory (Matt. xx, 20, 21; Mark x, 35-37). Then again at the last passover, on the night of His betrayal, after He had indicated Judas as His betrayer, there was a strife among them which of them would be accounted the greatest (Luke xxii, 21-24). He always taught them that genuine humility was true greatness, and as to places in His kingdom, the Father had arranged all that, and we must leave it with Him.

On the occasion of our lesson He called a little child and set him in the midst and by an object lesson taught them humility and true greatness and also that to enter the kingdom one must become as a little child (2-4). A little child does not suggest innocence as its principal feature, for it is marvelous how early a very little child shows willfulness and temper, yet I once heard a Roman Catholic bishop use these words about becoming as little children as a proof of the need of a purgatory, where we could somehow work off our sins until, as when we were innocent children, we would be fit for the kingdom.

The Scriptures, the reading of which the Roman Catholics do not encourage, teach us plainly that only the blood of Jesus can cleanse our sins and that His absolutely perfect righteousness, which He gives freely to all who receive Him, is our only fitness for the presence of God (Rom. iii, 24; v, 1, 9; I Cor. i, 30). A very little child is helpless, teachable, trustful, comes when called, as this child did. When we come to Him in our emptiness all His fullness becomes ours, and then we become indeed His little ones, who believe in Him (verse 6), and He counts all treatment of such little ones as done to Himself (verses 5-9).

Awful indeed are some of the words in these verses and in Mark ix, 42-48, concerning the possibility of being cast into everlasting hell fire, but how blessed the assurance that this fearful place was never prepared for man, but for the devil and his angels; that the Lord is not willing that any should perish and that those to whom He gives eternal life can never perish (verses 5, 14, 25-41; II Pet. iii, 9; John x, 28). The ministry of angels is beautifully referred to in verse 10, and that they always have access to our Father in heaven, that they minister to us here on the earth, is taught by Heb. i, 14, and many other passages. It is blessed to be able to say, because we really believe it and know something of the joy and peace of it, "I am never alone; the Lord Jesus and the angels are always with me."

In verses 11-13 we have what might be called a summary of the three parables of Luke xv, showing the joy in heaven over one sinner repenting. If we are not thus seeking lost ones, can we be said to have the mind of Christ? The incident in Matt. xix, 13-15, which is also found in Mark x, 13-16; Luke xviii, 15-17, of the little children whom He took up in His arms and blessed and said, "Of such is the kingdom of God," when the disciples would have driven them away, shows us again His heart toward them and reminds us of Eccl. viii, 5.

KING GEORGE IS A BIT OF A HAROUN AL-RASCHID.

Britain's Monarch Cannot Disguise Himself and Go About But Nevertheless He Loves to See His Subjects at Work and Understand Their Needs—The Queen at Tea With Farmer's Wife.

King George is the modern Haroun-al-Raschid. Like the ruler celebrated in "The Arabian Nights," he is set upon seeing how his subjects live. He cannot disguise himself and make midnight expeditions, after the manner of the Eastern caliph. Photography and the newspaper press make that impossible. Besides, at midnight there are few workers employed, and it is above all, his people at work that King George wishes to see. So in open day he goes among them, watches them at bench or loom, sees how they make iron and steel, how they get coal, how by rough and hard work with their hands they are helping to keep up the industries of England upon which the very existence of England's millions depends.

Here is something new in the annals of monarchy. No British sovereign, no sovereign of any other kingdom, no president of any commonwealth, has ever until now made a systematic effort to understand industrial processes and industrial problems by studying them on the spot. That is, of course, the only way to win any vivid knowledge of them. Print can give anything, but can with difficulty make it live. It is intimate personal impression that kindles the imagination; and without imagination the dry bones of fact and figure rattle tediously in the ear.

Other rulers may have read Blue-books about coal mines. What have they got from them, save headaches. King George goes down a coal mine. Takes a lamp and stumbles along dark roadways. Borrows a pick and learns for himself what it must mean to hew into the coalface for hours at a stretch. Other rulers may have studied reports on "Housing." The very term betrays the spirit in which they are written; shows that the matter has been taken from the free air of reality into the rapid vacuum of Parliamentary debate.

King George and Queen Mary are not content with arid details as to "cubic feet of atmosphere" or with Board of Trade "index numbers." They want to see the kind of houses in which those who do the rough hard work live. Hence their surprise visits to small houses in South Wales and South Yorkshire.

In only one case was any notice given. This was at Aberdare. It made very little difference, but it was not the King's plan. He wanted to see cottages and cottagers just as they are. Suddenly he would have his motor-car stopped. He would get out and ask the astonished owner, "May we come in?" At Slaithwaite the washing was hung up to dry on a square frame near the ceiling (a device, I think, peculiar to the North country). At Woodlands model village the housewife was cooking the midday dinner. At the little farm on the moors the farmer's wife was entertaining two friends at "farmhouse tea."

Queen joined them and said she thoroughly enjoyed it. And what is more the hostess and the other guests enjoyed it thoroughly too. It is worth notice that both Slaithwaite and the moor are in a constituency which used to return a Socialist member. In South Wales, also, a visit was paid to Mr. Keir Hardie's district. Most sovereigns would have left such places severely alone. That is not King George's way, nor Queen Mary's. Just as he seized the slander which affected them both and crushed it for all the world to see, so now he went boldly among those who were supposed—quite wrongly, as the event proved—to be hostile to the institution of monarchy.

In both districts they were received not with mere courtesy but with acclamations by the whole mass of inhabitants. From politics in the party sense King George, of course, holds scrupulously aloof. But he is entitled to congratulate himself on the happy issue of his courageous resolve, and further we must be grateful to him for having settled all doubts, if any existed, as to England and Wales being unanimous in support of the institution that forms the strongest tie between the different states of the Empire.

As an endurance test, these journeys made it plain that their Majesties are, happily, very strong. It would be absurd to say they were not tired after long days of motoring, with the noise of cheering about them and with hundreds, sometimes thousands of eager eyes upon them almost all the time.

The constant bowing, and lifting of the hat must have been positively painful at the close of such a day, varied by the fatigue of going over factories (sometimes three or four). Probably these domestic tours, as we may call them, were more fatiguing than the state processions of last year. En revanche, they were more interesting, both in their incidents, homely and human, and in their entire novelty, and happily their Majesties were never overtired.

The domestic tour, as an institution marks a new stage in the development of the relations between King and people. Acting upon their own judgment and good feeling, their Majesties determined that a new departure was desirable. In the old days, when nations were perpetually at war, monarchs identified themselves with the national life by leading our armies to battle. Now that peace is the settled state, only at intervals broken in upon rudely by the clash of arms, other means must be sought.

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3.28	6.38	" Maple Hill	" 12.25 9.50
3.37	7.47	" Hanover	" 12.17 9.42
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