

A SLACKER'S CHOICE

By William T. Ellis.

"The International Sunday School Lesson For October 13th is 'Abram Helping Lot.' Genesis 13:5-11; 14:1-14-16.

A celebrated slacker and an immortal hero are the outstanding characters in this lesson. The incident reveals the essence of slackerism—which is to choose the comfortable place for one's self, in the assumption that one is more entitled than others to ease and privilege and safety.

Of course, the slacker is such in his spirit long before he begins to dodge a draft or a duty. He holds the childish and stupid notion that he is some sort of superior creature who has a right to special consideration. It may be because he is rich, and has always slept in soft beds and ridden in his own automobile; or because his father was a distinguished man; or because he is of the socially elect; or because he is "sensitive" and hates the sight of blood; or because he has political influence—whatever the reason, it easily seems adequate to the one who entertains it. He feels justified in asking odds of life. Others may stand up under the average man's burdens, but he claims exemption. All of which is a roundabout way of saying that the slacker is a small and selfish soul, tinged yellow.

That may sound like a harsh characterization when applied to a Bible character. Nevertheless, it fits Abraham's nephew, Lot. He was the spoiled favorite of fortune; and in the hour of decision and opportunity, he played the contemptible part. Had he lived at the present time he would have used his uncle's influence to secure him a position, with good rank and little work, a "bullet-proof" job at Washington or Ottawa or London.

Assuredly it would have to be in the city. Lot—Captain Lot or Major Lot he would be, of course—was essentially a city man. He would confide in you, with a somewhat aggrieved air, that his relatives were too countrified to understand him; but that all his tastes were urban and refined. He was a man of the world, who needed the society of sophisticated people. He was at his best parading the principal street with smart friends, especially ladies—not with Mrs. Lot, for she was "too domestic"; he meant that she was too much of a trumper for his polished taste. And he had long ago outgrown the old-fogy notions of Uncle Abe concerning the proprieties, for

"When you are in Rome you must do as the Romans do."

That City Nephew.

Circumstances had necessitated a separation between Abraham and Lot. There had been strife among their herdsmen over pasturage, and the old man, with spacious and unruffled wisdom, had proposed that the two companies divide. Magnanimously, he gave his nephew first choice. That was Lot's chance to show his mettle. He should have met generosity with equal generosity and displayed the deference due seniority. All oriental traditions as well as instinctive sensibility required this.

But Lot was a slacker; what was fitting and honorable concerned him less than what was easy and of present advantage to himself. He was the sort who would have seen in a world war primarily a chance to make money. His obligations to his Uncle Abraham, his debt to the proprieties his opportunity to be unselfish, all meant less to him than the chance to pitch his tents down in the fat valley, by the great cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Truth to tell, he was rather glad to get away from his uncle's religious talk and his old-fogy ways.

Life was softer and easier down in the Jordan valley. Lot was pleased to escape the high winds and chilly nights of those hills. In the valley everything was luxuriant. The first glimpse of this Jordan Depression, down by the Dead Sea, as I can testify, is of tropical luxuriance. There wave the palm trees, while the banana fronds make whispering music night and day. Truly does the lesson writer liken it to "the garden of the Lord." Who that has tasted them can ever forget the refreshing, sweet lemons of Jericho? It was a place of rich fruits and balmy air and effortless life that Lot chose when he elected the Jordan lowlands.

Then there were also the cities. Lot deemed himself a city man, "too big" for the slow-going and pious tents of Abraham; the progressive and cosmopolitan city was his metier. Ah, Lot, you were not the only self-inflated man who, brushing aside family obligations and traditions, sought the enervating airs of the city, only to fall prey to its seductions. Of course you did not mean to succumb to the snares of the city; what moth ever feared the flame? But it was rather a delicious sensation to dally with its delights, wasn't it? You would show your poky old uncle that you could handle pitch and not be defiled.

When Bigness Meets Littleness. Conflict uncovers the character of

a man. His real bigness or littleness will then appear. Abraham proved his size by the way he dealt with Lot. He did not cast him an ingrate and a cad and a selfish slacker. He kept his own spirit sweet, and sent his nephew off with a blessing. If the sense of injustice rankled in his own bosom, he gave no sign of it. In shining generosity, he acted as if Lot's choice was perfectly satisfactory to him.

Abraham proved his religion in this episode. It takes more than natural gifts; it needs the grace of God, to enable a man to preserve his poise and serenity in such circumstances. As we muse upon this evidence of Abraham's calibre and character, we are reminded that in life we have to deal with the little offender than with the big; and that the difficult thing is to conduct ourselves toward the small and the selfish without pettiness. To refrain from being sharp toward the sharp; censorious toward the censorious; intolerant of intolerance, calls for all the qualities of greatness a man possesses. It is only the rare Abraham who can remain unruffled by a Lot. In this division of pasturage, Abraham won his own spirit, while his nephew got only the material advantage.

A Man of Peace Fights.

Old Abraham was the sort of peace-lover of whom we approve. He hated strife. He had pleaded for peace with Lot, when the hired men got to squabbling and he had rendered his own rights in order that Lot might select the best of the pasturage. No brawler or quarrelsome man was Abraham; he understood what it meant to be too proud to fight over an inadequate or unripe occasion. This old patriarch would rather walk under the stars musing upon God and His promises, than share the turbulent life of his neighbors.

One day, however, there came news of a different sort of war toward the East. His kinsman Lot was in peril. This foolish nephew had found himself entangled in the troubles of the cities. He had chosen Sodom and Gomorrah; and with them he must suffer as well as sport. There had been a great battle of kings, four against five, and it had raged over the Jordan Plain and into the mountains of the South. The archaeologists have been busy about those names, and they identify Amraphel with Hammurabi, the king of Babylon whose code of laws is one of the most important discoveries of modern times. He and his confederates had invaded the domain of the rich Jordan cities, and after much fighting had looted them.

Among the captives was Lot, with his household. Doubtless Lot had pleaded that he was only a visitor in the city, and in general slackerwise had tried to escape the penalty of his associations. This unexpected "raid" caught Lot, who really deserved no immunity from the fate of the city in

which he lived, and he was carried off captive.

Standing by a Friend.

This fighting ranged over the region that has of late figured largely in the daily papers in connection with General Allenby's great victories over the Turks. Were ever maps of the Holy Land so popular as to-day? The daily paper is making real and present this territory which is so interwoven with the Bible story that it has been called "The Fifth Gospel."

When the tidings came to the tent of Abraham—and news travels swiftly in the East—the patriarch did not say, after the method of some moderns, "Well, it is none of my business. I am safe and untouched by this great battle of city kings." Nor yet did he cynically and self-righteously proclaim to his household, "There, I told you so! Lot has made his bed, and he will have to lie in it. I wash my hands of the matter."

We commend the example of Abraham to those people in our day who point to the blunders of Russia and China and Mexico, and would let them all stew in their own juice. It is not the real desert of a person in trouble, but his hands, that constrains us to aid him. If we demanded perfection of all our allies in this war, we should have to abandon them every one—and they us! There is a great lesson of broadminded tolerance and fidelity in the example of Abraham, which all of us need, if we learn in this war. We are going to stand by all those who have claims upon us, regardless of any shortcomings or backslidings. Abraham reached that noble attitude which is best characterized by the Scripture, "God is kind to the evil and the unthankful."

Lot was in trouble, sore and desperate trouble. That was enough. It gave him claim upon all the powers of his kinsman and friend. When one is bound to us by ties of blood or affection is in need, then is no time for philosophizing or advice-giving or blame-apportioning. By strategy and surprise, he came upon the detachment carrying off Lot, and smote them, and put them to rout, recovering the booty they had borne away. It was a clear-cut victory for loyalty and righteousness. That Lot did not demerit does not alter the situation; this part of the story is of Abraham's conduct and character. He carried back the recovered prisoners, and loot, and refused all reward for himself; he was no mercenary, but a friend.

These are the days when, as a nation and as individuals, we need to sit at the feet of Abraham, the fighting friend. When subtle and insidious forces are seeking to separate our allies one from another, or to cast suspicious glances upon their loyalty and aims, and to magnify trifles into occasions of difference, it is good to look back at Abraham and learn how to show militant constancy. The enemies of our friends are also our foes.

Soldiers in France have learned what fidelity to a comrade means. They practise the Abraham virtue. Not for an instant does a soldier hesitate to risk his life for a friend. He gladly goes over the top, or returns to the zone of fire, to rescue a companion. Let us hope that this same quality will be enhanced in civil life; and that we may all learn how to defend, actively and with risk to ourselves if need be, the good repute and welfare of a friend who is under attack. It is not without significance that royal-hearted Abraham won the title, "The Friend of God." For he was the sort of friend that even God himself prized.

To Have Night Classes.

Renfrew, Oct. 10.—At a special meeting of the Board of Education it was agreed to continue night classes this fall and winter, at which dress-making, millinery, bookkeeping, mechanical drawing and physical culture will be taught, as well as plain sewing and cooking for school girls. Last winter the mechanical drawing and bookkeeping classes were well attended, but other classes were not so well patronized. The board is desirous of meeting the wishes of returned soldiers and subjects which they desire will be taken up.

WAR PUZZLES



FRENCH TOOK 1200 PRISONERS In Chaumes Wood, two years ago to-day, October 26, 1916. Find another prisoner. YESTERDAY'S ANSWER Left his thumb nose at elbow.

Remarkable Experiments upon Human Subjects

Astonishing body-building power of Bovril proved by famous Physiologist

It was a notable hour for the scientific world when Professor Thompson, of Dublin, a physiologist of international prestige, carried out his experiments with Bovril. He had been asked by a Government Department to give an independent report upon the value of this food. Proceeding in a deliberate scientific way, he gave a standard diet to human subjects, until their weight was constant. He then added Bovril to the diet, and the weight of the subjects went up in an altogether astonishing way, proving the body-building powers to be from 10 to 20 times the amount of Bovril taken.

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THIS is the longing of the girl who is pale, weak and anemic. She is lacking in energy and strength, and is so easily tired out that she does not feel like taking outdoor exercise, or joining others in social gatherings. The healthy, happy outdoor girls get in the way of leaving her to herself, and she gets lonely, discouraged and despondent. The source of trouble is in the condition of the blood, which has become thin and watery, and utterly lacking in nutritive qualities. The anaemic condition is shown in the pallor of the lips, the gums and the eyelids, as well as in the pale face and angular form. Nature has provided for the purifying of the blood by having it sent to the lungs periodically to come in contact with the fresh air and take up new oxygen. Unfortunately this plan of nature has been defeated by human beings living too much indoors and breathing over and over again the vitiated air of ill-ventilated rooms. This is the usual cause of anaemia, as well as a reason for its continuation. The blood gets ever thinner and more watery, until the human system is literally starved.

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