

CAIN AND ABEL . . . the first murder  
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(GENESIS 4:1-10)

Alas, tragedy had overtaken the happy couple, and their sorrow was all the more poignant because they realized they had lost their greatest opportunity. The Creator had desired to share with them eternal life, but everything had depended upon their choice. The tree of life had been placed in the midst of the garden, and had they taken of its fruit they would have partaken of the divine nature. Beguiled by the evil one, they had eaten at the wrong tree; and with the entrance of sin, the way to the tree of life had been closed. "Lest," said God, "they eat, and live for ever." They had lost their great opportunity, they had lost their sinlessness, they had lost their radiant joys; but-and this was their solitary comfort-they had not lost God. His grace had provided the coat of skins, and their shameful nakedness had been hidden

The Simple Training.

The entrance of sin had corrupted their souls, and even if every subsequent action had been in accord with the will of God, their nature would yet have remained sinful. It became clear that evil had tainted their lives, and had been transmitted to their children. The understanding eyes of that first mother recognized the traits in the characters of her sons, and probably she ably supported her husband as he endeavoured to instruct his children. It has been said that Adam's home was the first Christian home in the world. Every day he taught his sons the lessons of life, and their religious instruction was not overlooked. He taught the truth which he himself had received from God. The sacrificial lamb had atoned for human guilt; the way to the divine heart was through an offering. Thus the two boys grew up in the atmosphere of a Sabbath school; but their knowledge brought added responsibility.

The Serious Trouble.

"Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And . . . it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell." Then discord spoiled the fellowship of the brothers. Abel had profited from the instruction of his father. He approached God with a lamb. Cain, the self-sufficient, was proud of his agriculture; he offered the work of his hands, and God was grieved. He said, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, the sin offering lieth at the door." But Cain's pride had been stung to fury. He was intensely proud of his best, and that best had been treated as though it were filthy rags. Why should he imitate his brother and take a lamb of the flock? And inbred sin asserted itself. This had not been possible in Adam's temptation, when the challenge had to come from an outside source. Alas, a sinful nature had been transmitted to Adam's son, and this occupied the throne of his affections. He needed a new heart.

The Staggering Tragedy.

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Abel lay where he had fallen, and the ground was stained with blood. With arm uplifted, the slayer stood above his victim; then suddenly the colour drained from his cheeks. His face became ashen as he looked at his hand. What had he done? His brother was dead. He had murdered him. "And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper? " Poor Cain; he was struggling in the quicksands of sin, and every new movement increased his danger. Anger, jealousy, murder, lies—these were the milestones on his path to disaster. "And God said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now thou art cursed . . . And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord." Poor, poor man.

The home was silent; neither Adam nor Eve had anything to say. Memories hurt, as their sins came back to them. Eve's face was tear-stained; she had lost two boys—and she knew it was her own fault. Adam, strong and resourceful, yet pathetically incompetent to deal with this tragedy, remained morose and sad. He realized that "the way of transgressors is hard." Oh, that he had walked God's way!

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