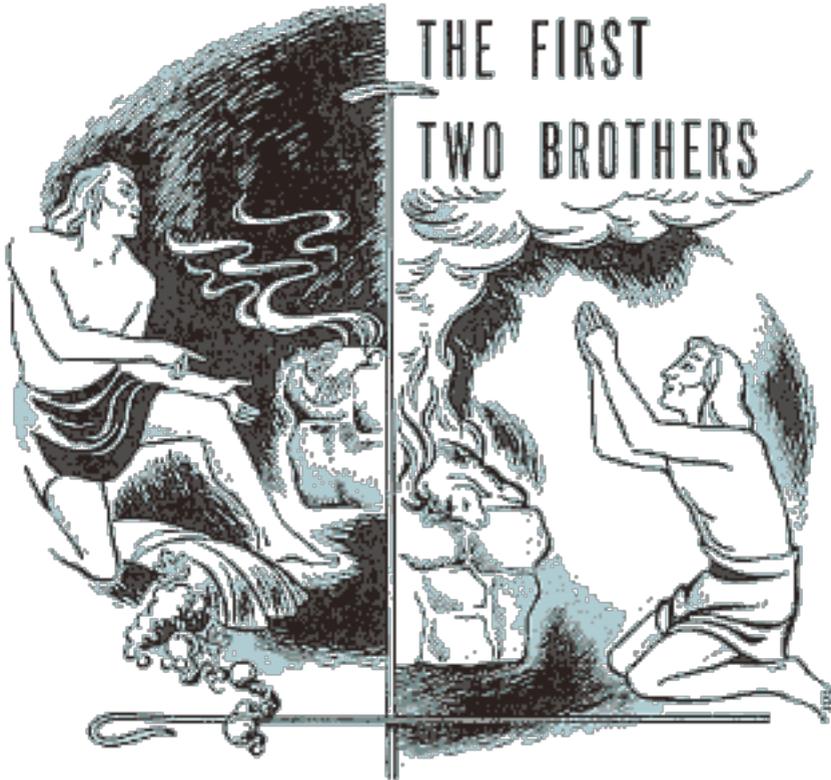


THE FIRST TWO BROTHERS



CAN you imagine what it must have been like when there were only two boys in the whole world? Just think what that would mean! No one to go to school with; no other children to play with—just two boys, all by themselves. Yes, you're right, Adam and Eve, the first man and the first woman, were the father and mother of these two boys.

For a little while there was only one boy, and when he was born his mother named him Cain. To mother Eve the name Cain meant that this boy had been given to her by God, and this made her very happy.

As we learned in our last story, Adam and Eve both did what God told them not to do. Because of this God made them move out of the beautiful garden he had prepared for them. They didn't find things as nice outside of the garden. Fruit, vegetables, and other

foods were scarce, and hard to grow. The country outside the garden was very much like a desert. The land was dry and hot, and it required a great deal of work to grow enough food to keep them from being hungry. I am sure Adam and Eve were often hungry, and very tired. It was their own fault, though, because if they had obeyed God they could have stayed right in that beautiful garden where good food was plentiful, and everything was pleasant. Well, they must have had many dreary, unhappy days after they had to move out of the garden, and they probably thought that God had forgotten all about them. Well, he hadn't. They were being punished, but God remembered them, and mother Eve had the right idea when Cain was born—he had been given to her by the Lord.

No wonder she was glad!

It was not so very long after this that God gave Adam and Eve another boy, and his mother named him Abel. This was especially nice for Cain, for now he was no longer the only boy in the world. My how happy Cain must have been to have a brother!

Do you think Cain and Abel went to school just as boys and girls do today? The Bible doesn't tell us everything they did, but I hardly think they went to school as children do now.

How do I know?

Well, I don't see how there could have been schools without children, do you? As Cain and Abel were the first children, and for a long time the only children, I guess we will have to decide that they didn't go to school; at least not the kind children attend now.

But don't start wishing you were Cain and Abel just because they didn't have to go to school, and didn't have homework to do. The Bible tells us that when they grew up to be young men, Cain was a vegetable farmer and Abel was a raiser of sheep. Now you can figure it out for yourself that they had to learn how to do these things while they were growing up, so after all, in this way they went to what we might call a school, didn't they?

Yes, they had much to learn.

Let's imagine that Adam, the father of these first two boys, was their schoolteacher. The reason children go to school is to learn the things they will need to know when they grow up. What Cain and Abel needed to know was how to farm and to raise sheep. Well, the very best way to learn was to help their father do those things, so I can just see Cain out in the field helping his father dig up the ground and plant the seed, and later care for the plants by pulling out the weeds.

Oh yes, they had weeds too! The Bible calls them thorns and thistles, which are the worst kind of weeds. There weren't any weeds in the Garden of Eden, but there were plenty of them outside, and they surely did cause Adam a lot of trouble.

Adam knew that Cain also would have trouble with the weeds, so he taught him what to do with them, and how to care for the various kinds of plants he wanted to grow in order to provide food for the family. So, you see, there was a great deal for Cain to learn, and maybe his back was quite tired sometimes from tilling the soil and pulling the weeds. But that was really good for him. A little work doesn't hurt boys and girls. In fact, it makes them strong and healthy.

And it's fun, too!

When you are helping mother or father with their work, just make believe it is a game, and you will really enjoy it. But if you say to yourself, "My, this is awful the way I have to work," then you won't enjoy it a bit, and it won't do you nearly as much good.

Abel had a lot of things to learn, also. He decided that when he grew to be a man he would own a big sheep ranch. Well, there's a lot more to a sheep ranch than merely sitting down watching the sheep. You have to know how to take care of the sheep—where to find the best grass for them, and good water, too. And you should know how to take care of them when they get hurt, or become ill, as sheep sometimes do, just like boys and girls.

Aren't you glad that someone knows how to take care of you when you are sick?

Well, probably sheep feel the same way about it, and if Abel was to be a good sheep-raiser, that was one of the things he had to learn. So, you see, he went to school also, not in a big brick or a wooden schoolhouse, but out in the fields where he could watch the sheep and learn to do all the things necessary for them to be healthy and to grow.

Finally, school days for Cain and Abel were over. They were no longer boys, but young men. Don't try to think of them, though, as wearing long trousers, because men didn't wear trousers back in those days. Both children and grownups wore only a simple robe or cloth around the body. But I doubt if folks thought much about clothes then, as they were kept busy growing food. They couldn't go to a grocery store or a vegetable stand and buy what they wanted, because there were no such places. If they didn't grow food for themselves they just didn't have any.

Cain and Abel must have learned their lessons well while they were growing up, because they seemed to be very successful in farming and in raising sheep. Probably they both were hard workers, too, and that is very important.

But even if they did work hard, Cain and Abel were very thankful to God for everything they had, and because they wanted to show God how much they appreciated what he had done for them they brought gifts to him from what he had given to them. Gifts to God are sometimes called offerings, and sometimes they are called sacrifices. In those days offerings to God were placed on an altar, which was usually a pile of stones. When God was pleased with the gift he caused it to catch on fire.

Well, Cain's gift to God was from the fruits and vegetables he had grown, and Abel gave God one of his sheep. God was very much pleased with Abel's gift, but he did not accept the offering made by Cain. Of course this was rather strange, but God had a very good reason for it. God has a good reason for everything he does. He doesn't always tell us the reason, and it is not necessary that we should know. But God always knows what is best. That is what the Bible tells us, and we know that the Bible is true!

God wants us all to learn that we should do things the way he wants them done, because he is so much wiser than we, and his way is ways the best way. It's just the same as when mother or father wants us to do something. It might not seem right to us, but they know best. Mother may ask Mary to wash the breakfast dishes, but thinks she would rather make the beds. Well, of course, it's a good thing to have the beds made—there's nothing wrong with that at all—but mother has a reason for wanting the dishes washed first. She may not tell Mary the reason, but if Mary is a good, obedient girl she will do what mother wants done, whether she knows why or not.

That is the way Cain should have thought about it. When he found that God was pleased with the offering of a sheep, he could have asked Abel for a sheep. Then he could have made an offering that would have been pleasing to God. But he didn't do that. Instead, he became jealous of Abel. Wasn't that terrible!

Just think, these two boys grew up together. They had played and worked together, and now Cain became jealous of his brother. He started to argue with Abel one day, and became so angry—well, I hate to say it, but he killed Abel.

I told you before about Lucifer, who also became jealous. Jealousy is an awful thing. Never, never allow yourself to be jealous. If you do, you will be very unhappy, and you may do things for which you will be very, very sorry.

The Lord was angry with Cain, and Cain ran away. He was punished, too, for he was marked in such a way that everybody who saw him knew that he had done wrong. You know, if we do wrong, people will surely find out about it. The only way to be happy is to do the best we can to please God.

Adam and Eve, Abel's father and mother, must have missed him terribly. But God is very good, and he gave them another boy to take Abel's place. Eve appreciated this very much. You see, when Adam and Eve did as God told them not to do, God said that he would send someone who would punish Satan. Eve seemed to think this would be one of her children. Maybe she thought Abel would be the

one, and now that God had sent another son to take the place of Abel, she was sure he was the one.

God spoke of the one he would send to punish Satan as the “seed,” which simply means a son, and when Eve’s third son was born she said, “God has given me another ‘seed’ instead of Abel.” She named him Seth.

Yes, Eve still loved God, and was very glad to think that he would do something for her family. Of course Seth was not really the seed whom God had promised. It was to be a great many years before God would send that seed! But God has never forgotten that promise. In fact, he has already sent the real seed, or Son of promise, as we will learn in a later story. I mention it now because it shows why God was pleased with the gift Abel brought to him. The blood of Abel’s lamb was shed, and this offering was like a much more wonderful offering which would be brought to God thousands of years later; one that would be very pleasing to God, brought to him by his Son, Jesus.

Jesus was God’s Lamb, who shed his blood so that Adam and Eve, and all the people in the world, can by and by return to the Garden of Eden, which will then be the whole earth made beautiful.

QUESTIONS

- What were the names of the first two boys who ever lived, and who were their parents?
- Did the first two brothers ever go to school?
- Why was God pleased with the offering which Abel made to him?