

THE ROCK CITY OF PETRA.



**P**N the lonely desert of Idumea, or Stoney Arabia as it is called, just-beneath the summit of Mount Hor, where you will remember Aaron died and was buried, (Numbers xx. 23-28) is a narrow pass among the mountains. "The cliffs, says a recent traveller, "rise from eighty to three hundred feet on either side, frequently not more than twelve feet apart, and seem almost to touch at their summits. On, on," he continues, "my amazement growing with every step as each new turn brought a fresh surprise. Under my feet were the stones of the old road bed. It required no great stretch of fancy to imagine the days when this pavement rang with the clatter of the hoofs of the war-horse, or trembled beneath the soft and heavy tread of the immense caravans of camels which filed along it, freighted with the untold treasures which, from over land and sea, were brought to this gateway of the East and West. Still on for a mile I wandered amid the winding maze; tombs on the right of me, tombs on the left of me; till all at once I came to an open space, and a large magnificent temple stood before me—El Kusneh. (See engraving.) The cliff from which it is cut, one solid piece, rises many feet above it, and is of a beautiful rose colour. Its height is a hundred and fifty feet. The perfection of its preservation is marvellous—the finest carving looking as though but a day from the touch of the chisel—and only here and there a column or a figure has perished."

Near by is an amphitheatre, hewn out of the solid rock, capable of holding three or four thousand persons. Ed Dier,—"the convent,"—cut out of the solid rock, is 150 feet long and 240 feet high. The lower columns are seven feet in diameter. From unfinished work, it is evident that the artists began at the top and carved their way downward. The very existence of this rock-hewn city—the depot of the wealth of the East, was forgotten, till it was re-discovered by Burckhardt in 1812.

"And now of all its monuments," says a traveller, "those which alone remain, with few exceptions, are the records of death. Tombs everywhere, and in the midst a theatre! 'I said of laughter, it is mad, and of mirth, what doeth it.' What a fulfilment of God's Word: 'O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldst make thyself high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the Lord. Also Edom shall be a desolation: every one that goeth by it shall be astonished.'"

LESSON NOTES.

B. C. 445.] **LESSON V.** [Feb. 2.]

THE READING OF THE LAW; OR, THE HOLY WORD. Neh. 8. 1-8. **Commit to memory verses 1-3.**

NOTES.—While building the wall, Nehemiah accomplished several reforms—particularly for the relief of poor debtors. After the wall was completed, he met with much trouble from his enemies without and their emissaries within the walls, but he triumphed over them all simply by watchfulness and implicit reliance on God.

OUTLINE.

1. The Book sought. v. 1.
2. The Book brought. v. 2-6.
3. The Book taught. v. 7, 8.

GOLDEN TEXT.

The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple. Psa. 119. 130.

1. Be found among those who study God's word.
2. Pay attention to those who teach God's word.
3. Seek to understand the lessons of God's word.

Find when and where Joshua read the law to all people.... Who found the book of the law in the time of Hezekiah.... When and where Christ, after his resurrection, caused his disciples to understand the Scriptures.

B. C. 434.] **LESSON VI.** [Feb. 9.]

THE KEEPING OF THE SABBATH; OR, THE HOLY DAY. Neh. 13. 15-22. **Commit to memory verses 19-22.**

NOTES.—After the reading of the law, the people kept the feast of tabernacles, and then entered into a solemn covenant to keep all the law of the Lord. Read chapters 9 and 10. Nehemiah, after a time spent in Babylon, returned to Jerusalem, and found the people disobeying God's law.

OUTLINE.

1. The day profaned. v. 15-18.
2. The day sanctified. v. 19-22.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Exod. 20. 8.

1. Avoid the company of Sabbath-breakers.
2. Encourage others in keeping the Sabbath.
3. Seek God's blessing on the labours of the Sabbath.

Find in Luke what Christ's habit was in regard to the Sabbath.... In Isa. 58, what is the blessedness of keeping the Sabbath.... In Exod. 20, what the Sabbath is a memorial of.... And in Heb. 4, of what it is a type.