

History

THE BONDAGE IN EGYPT.

Poor Joseph was carried into Egypt, and there sold again to a rich man, whose name was Potiphar. Potiphar was very proud of his new slave, so tall and strong and beautiful was he ; and for a time Joseph dwelt most happily in his new home. But Potiphar's wife was a bad woman. And because he refused, at her desire, to do evil, she had him thrown into prison ; and to Potiphar she told such stories about the boy that for a time Potiphar himself was deceived, and so permitted Joseph to be in prison, giving him no opportunity to prove to his master how untrue these stories were.

Now, in prison with Joseph were servants of King Pharaoh. One morning, when Joseph went to them, they were downcast and sad.

"Why look ye so sad ?" said Joseph.

"We have dreamed dreams, and we have no one to interpret them," they said.

"It is God who sends dreams," said Joseph. "Tell them to me. It may be I can interpret them for you."

Then one of the servants told his dream. "I saw in my dream a vine ; and in the vine were three branches. They budded, the flowers came, the fruit ripened. Then I took Pharaoh's cup, gathered the grapes and pressed them in the cup, and gave it to Pharaoh."

"Take courage, my brother," said Joseph, "for it is a good dream. The three branches are three days. The dream means that in three days Pharaoh will liberate thee, and thou shalt give the cup into his hands.

"And do not forget me when thou art again free. For I have been sold into bondage and stolen away from Canaan. Neither have I deserved to be thrown into this dungeon. Speak then to Pharaoh for me, and beg him to free me from this prison."

Then the other servant told his dream : "I had three baskets of meat upon my head. They were baked meats for Pharaoh. The birds came and ate the meat from the baskets."

"Alas !" said Joseph, "the meaning of thy dream is this : In three days Pharaoh shall hang thee upon a tree ; and the birds shall come and eat thee."

Now, as it proved, Joseph had interpreted the dreams aright ; for the power of vision had been with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob before him.

But the servant who went back into Pharaoh's home forgot Joseph when once he was free himself ; and so for two long years Joseph lay in prison.

Then Pharaoh himself had two strange dreams, and no one in the land could interpret them. Then the old servant, remembering how Joseph interpreted his dream for him so long before, told Pharaoh of him ; and Pharaoh at once freed him from prison and bade him come before him to interpret his dreams.

"I dreamed," said Pharaoh, "that I stood beside a river. Seven fat kine came out from it and fed in the meadow. Soon seven more came out, thin and bad. Then the seven lean kine ate up the seven fat kine.

"Then I awoke. But when I slept again, I dreamed that seven good ears of corn came out upon one stem. And soon after, seven more, thin and bad. And the seven bad ears ate up the seven good ears."

"The dream, great king," said Joseph, "means this : There shall be seven years of great fruitfulness in the land. Then shall come seven years of famine. And the seven years of famine shall eat up all the fruitfulness of the first seven years.

"Now let Pharaoh take warning. Let him hoard up all the corn that can be spared in these first seven years. Then, when the years of famine come, there will be corn for all who dwell in the land."

Pharaoh was pleased with the wisdom of Joseph. He appointed him at once to have charge over the corn, and commanded the people to obey him in all that he bade them do. Then the king gave him a ring and a chain of gold to wear upon his neck. He dressed him in fine linen and made him a golden chariot. And the people loved Joseph and obeyed him.

(To be continued.)