

The Sabbath School.

LESSONS FOR MARCH.

FIRST SABBATH.

SUBJECT:—*The Red Sea.*—Exodus xiv. 13-31.

We have before us in these verses a wonderful proof of God's fatherly care for His ancient and chosen people Israel. How close and mysterious was the link in that great chain that stretches from Joseph to Moses. Glance back a moment at the previous lessons, and trace God's hand in the going down of the three score and ten souls into Egypt, of their settlement in Goshen, their wondrous increase, notwithstanding the repeated efforts of the Pharaohs to prevent it. Out of this little band, consisting altogether of seventy-five souls, including, as Paul means, in Acts vii. 14, the grandsons of Joseph, born in Egypt, there sprang a great multitude, numbering not less, it is thought, than three millions. We are told the Israelites increased greatly, and when God led them forth by the hand of Moses, after a bondage of 430 years, (Exodus xii. 40) they had an army of men ready to bear arms and fit for active service of 600,000. Let us follow them now to the Red Sea, and behold God's great deliverance. No sooner had they gone than Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he made ready his army and pursued the Israelites. At the sight of their pursuers the Israelites are greatly terrified, although they had a great army. Moses with that great faith in God that seldom faltered, commands them to stand still and see the salvation of Jehovah. "The Lord (he says) shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace. But the sea is before them, forbidding all advance, whilst the angry Pharaoh and his proud host are behind, cutting off all hope of retreat. Paralyzed with fear, the host of Israel look with awe and wonder in the face of their leader, as he stands calmly on the shore waiting the coming day, which is to bring deliverance to Israel, and a terrible overthrow to Egypt. As the pillar of cloud—called here the Angel of God—moved slowly backward and came between the two great hosts, encamped for the night near each other, how strange must have been the sight to both peoples. To the Israelites it was light, a symbol of God's favour and protection, while it was darkness a symbol of wrath to their enemies. It was an effectual barrier between the Israelites and their pursuers,

and not only protected them but concealed their movements from the Egyptians.

But the morning has come. Moses stands on the shore, and at the command of the Almighty stretches out his rod and arm over the angry waters and bids them divide and make a highway for the people of the Lord. What a sight must that have been when Moses and Aaron stepped down before the astonished host on the untrodden sand, and waved to the people to follow. And as the three millions of men, women and children filed along that wondrous avenue, with the blue waters like walls of glass standing up "on the right hand and on the left," how strange must have been their feelings. How vividly is the whole scene pictured! How can it be otherwise than real! How strange that men should try to whittle away what is so plainly the manifestation of God's power. The people of Israel and their enemies had two eyes and ears as well as we have, and they must have known the facts. They saw Moses stretch out his hand and rod over the sea; they saw the waves part, and they trod the dry bed of the sea, and touched the blue walls as they passed along to satisfy their doubting hearts. No ebb-tide, as some suggest can account for it. No long continued wind driving the water before it in an unusual manner, and leaving the long sandy beach bare, can explain away the miraculous character of the event. No! we must see and admire the great goodness of God to His people in this great interposition. How often do the inspired writers point back in triumph to that great deliverance wrought by God's hand. (See Psalm lxvi. 5; Ps. lxxiv. 9; Ps. cxxxvi. 13; Isai. lxiii. 12; 1 Cor. x. 1; Heb. xi. 23.)

23. "And the Egyptians pursued and went in after them to the midst of the sea." It is thought the darkness caused by the intercepting cloud concealed from the Egyptians the real nature of the ground on which they drove in pursuit of the Israelites. They heard the sound of the fugitives before them, and pushed on without being aware that they were pacing the bare floor of the sea.

24. "The Lord looked through the cloud and troubled them." This probably means that the side of the pillar of cloud towards the Egyptians was suddenly illuminated with a blaze of light, which, in contrast with the darkness preceding, caused fear and trembling to man and beast, and threw the whole host into confusion.

25. "Let us flee," is the cry of the terror-stricken Egyptians, one to another, as their trembling ranks rushed upon each other. But it was too late. All attempts at flight are vain.

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