

lifetime, not as the utterance of the Apostle, but as a note of triumph breathed from the dying lips of one whose death eclipsed the sunshine of his own life. There can hardly be a page, I say, of this Book which has not thus its most sacred and solemn associations with the lives of all of us, with our deepest agonizings, our holiest remembrances, our sublimest aspirations, our cries of penitence and grief, our songs of joy and victory. And, as men are constituted, it is not the substance merely, but the very wording of these passages which clings to the heart and the memory; so that when even one word is altered, it is as though a false note had been struck on the instrument and the music of the soul had become harsh discord.

They will tell us that this is the most conservative, the most narrow of views of such a change as that which is now being made, when for the Old Word that has been as it were a part of our lives, a new one is being substituted. It may be so. Perhaps they are right when they say that a hundred years hence this new version will have gathered round it associations as sacred as those which cluster about the venerable volume which we now possess. Just so, when the hoary, ivy-grown shrine where successive generations have worshipped; where children and children's children have followed the fathers, treading the same church pavement, occupying the same old seat, kneeling at the same altar, until every stone of the sacred building seems to have its story for some of us, its holy association with the joys and sorrows of the past, is replaced by the newest, and handsomest, and most commodious of edifices, there must be many who in the secrecy of their hearts murmur, "that this is not the place they knew," and that to them at least the weather-stained, time-worn edifice that has been removed was dearer than the new shrine can ever be. Nor will ridicule, or common sense or hard logic change a sentiment which is interwoven with the deepest and truest instincts of humanity. The change may possibly be for the better; but in this world there can be no change, no innovation, without a birth-pang; and it is probable that millions are now feeling that the change which has given us this revised version of the Scriptures is one by which they themselves are sufferers.—*Leeds Mercury.*

INTERNATIONAL S. S. LESSON.

Sunday, July 17.

The Call of Moses. B. C. 1491. Ex iii: 1-14.

GOLDEN TEXT, v. 12.—And He said, certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth this people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.

Commit vs. 10, 12.

INTRODUCTION AND CONNECTION.

Forty years intervened between our last lesson and this. During that period Moses had fled from the land of Egypt into that of Midian, had become an inmate of the house of Jethro, the priest of Midian, whose daughter he had married, and the keeper of whose flocks he continued to be until the call came which constitutes our present lesson. During those forty years Moses had much time for reflection. Alone in the wilderness with his flocks, his mind would dwell much upon the history of his race, and especially upon God's dealings with them; his faith would have time to mature, and his spiritual nature to ripen in submission, meekness, and humility. At length, when God's time (see Gen. xv: 13) had come, He appeared to Moses, and armed him with Divine power and authority to be the deliverer of his nation.

LESSON NOTES.

(1.) *Now Moses kept the flock, &c.* It is supposed by some that his keeping the flock was commenced as an act of service for his wife. Whether so or not, it appears

that this service was continued for other reasons. He led his flock to the back side of the desert. The land of Midian at this time was the peninsula that lies between the two branches, or gulfs into which the Red Sea divides at its northern extremity. Much of this region was desert interspersed with fertile acres. The back side of the desert lay along the eastern side of this peninsula, and terminated in the nearer, or western slope of the Sinaitic range of mountains. Came to the mountain of God (the mountain where God manifested Himself) even to Horeb—the mountainous region in which Sinai and Horeb are situated.

(2.) *And the Angel of the Lord, —not a created angel, but THE ANGEL OF HIS PRESENCE—(Ex. xxiii: 20-23; I. lxiii: 9; Malachi iii: 1)—that is, the Lord Christ (v. 4; Dent, xxxiii: 18). In a flame of fire.* This flame of fire was not God; but it was a symbol, or type of His presence. Out (shining out) of the midst of a bush. And he looked, and behold the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. This simple figure of the bush unconsumed by the fire within its bosom, has been tortured to convey a number of meanings—such as Israel, not consumed by the cruelty of the Egyptians because God was in the midst; the Church, not crushed by persecutions because God was in her; the Saint, not destroyed by spiritual foes because of God's presence within him. But in all these the symbolic significance of fire is changed;—it is not God, but cruelty, persecution, or spiritual foes. Whatever value may be in these interpretations, they fall short of the true ideal of the type, which is that of *Christ in His Humanity.* As the material bush was enabled, unconsumed, to sustain the action of this divine symbol of God's presence, so frail perishable humanity was made able to unfold and sustain the true Divinity of God. This is a simple revelation of Christ, and should have nothing mixed up with it to divert or distract the thought from Him.

(3.) *I will now turn aside and see, &c.* Here was human curiosity which turned eagerly to investigate what he probably, for the moment, regarded as only a natural, but surprising phenomenon.

(4, 5.) This movement was, however, speedily checked by the warning voice of God, speaking from out the flame—*Moses, Moses, draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet.* The taking off of the shoes, or sandals, when entering a place that was esteemed holy was a custom with which Moses must have been familiar; as it was then, and is still practised in the east. It was virtually a confession of defilement, and unfitness to stand in the presence of holiness. *Holy ground*—not holy in itself, but holy because of God's presence.

(6.) The announcement *I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,* was, doubtless, an unexpected to Moses as it was terrible. He had waited forty years, to have the belief that God would use him for the deliverance of Israel confirmed, but it had not been done; and, probably, he had long since ceased to think of himself in connection with that event. *He hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.* This, we may suppose, was the first time God had appeared to Moses under any visible form.

(7.) *And the Lord said, I have surely seen, &c.—literally, seeing, I have seen—not only seen, but felt, sympathized with, pitied—(see again Is. lxiii: 9.) And I have heard, &c.—(Is. lix: 1.) I know their sorrows.* The Lord had seen, heard, and known; therefore He said—

(8, 9.) *I am come down to deliver them, &c.* These words were used in an accommodated, or human sense. God was acting as a just and pitiful ruler would act under similar circumstances. He was condescending to take the matter of His people's wrongs into His own hands; in order to deliver the oppressed and to judge and punish the oppressor.

(10.) *Come, now, therefore, I will send thee, unto Pharaoh, &c.* What a word was that! Moses alone, with no army, no influence, no hold upon the confidence and affection of his nation,—for forty years a fugitive in Midian, and forgotten in Egypt, what could he do? Nay; it was not what Moses could do but what God could do through Moses. This was what God was about to teach him.

Bring them up . . . unto a good land and a large, (compared with Goshen) unto a land flowing with milk and honey—these were products in which Canaan abounded—unto the place of the Canaanite, &c. Here, in connection with the deliverance

of the Israelites, God was about to execute a double judgment; first, upon the Egyptians for their cruelty and remorseless oppressions, and, secondly, upon the Canaanites for their abominable wickedness—(see Lev. xviii: 24-28) (11.) *Moses' consciousness of helplessness and of his utter lack of influence and power, finds expression here—who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh? This was the position to which all God's dealings with Moses had been intended to bring him—the realization of his own weakness and insufficiency, of himself, to do the work proposed. This was really Moses' best preparation for effective service. (12.) Certainly I will be with thee.* This assurance should always be enough. If God is with His people, He who is with them is more than all that can be against them. *This shall be a token—(a sign) unto thee that I have sent thee.* This token is understood in three different ways—some have taken it to be the bush, burning, but unconsumed; some, the presence of God with Moses; and others, the worship of God that was by and by to take place on that mountain.

The first seems to present fewest difficulties, and to be best calculated to serve the purpose of a token, or sign.

(13.) *And Moses said unto God—behold when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say to them—the God of your fathers hath sent me to you,—and they shall say to me,—what is His name?—what shall I say to them? The Egyptians had names for all their gods—the Israelites would naturally want to know the name of theirs. Moses was going, both to his people and to the king of Egypt, in the character of an ambassador;—to know the name of the God who sent him, would be useful for him also.*

(14.) *And God said to Moses, I AM THAT I AM . . . say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me to you.* Dr. Clarke says of this "it is difficult to put a meaning on the words;—they seem intended to point out the eternity and self-existence of God,"—and possibly, where we know and understand so little, this is enough to say.

In the subsequent verse God gives those clearer and better known titles so familiar to every Israelite, and then adds—*this is my name forever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.* The *this* and *this* may mean that I AM is His name, and the *God of Abraham, &c.*, His memorial; or both may be used for the one designation.

SUGGESTED THOUGHTS.

God's thoughts and the thoughts of even the best of men are very much unlike. Moses had thought it was time to deliver Israel forty years before God saw fit to do so.

To Moses it doubtless seemed some times as though God was very unkindful of His people—that He did not regard their cry. To see how greatly he mistook read again vs. 7 and 8.

That Moses was now fitted to begin work for God, is best seen in his own sense of unfitness. His loss of confidence in himself had fitted him for implicit confidence in God.

LEARNING AND PIETY.

If we may believe some Christians, and especially some Christian writers, there is nothing that so needs consideration as the intellectual side of religious profession and enterprise, and hence of the questions that claim the attention of scholars and critics. They talk exclusively of readings and manuscripts, exegesis, the relation between religion and science, Biblical scholarship, and the all and singular that is comprehended in the literature of the Scriptures and associated studies. So enamoured do they become of these pursuits, that simple piety loses its fragrance for them. While regarding it as a sin and a misfortune not to be saved, they yet esteem it an almost equal obliquity to be a Christian without the philological accomplishments.

It would be hard to tell how greatly the world and the church have been indebted to the men who have given their minds this kind of direction. They have been part of its glory. They still exist as those who, if not its chief ornaments, are yet its noble represent-

atives, and to whom it turns in times of danger for light and vindication. But there is such a thing as being made mad by much learning, and, in the zeal of that which is scholarly and nothing more, of forgetting other things which are of vastly more importance. The life of Christ in the soul, nourished and cherished there as an experience, and exhibited in the daily walk and conversation, is of more value than all the technical study and philosophy that may be gained in a lifetime. He is the happiest man who has the most of it, and the best one besides. And as to influence upon the world in the way of commending the truth and in persuading men to believe in the Lord, one such man is worth more than an academy full of servants with all their learning and showy accomplishment of proof and pedantry, in whom a vigorous piety is wanting.

For this reason, amid the growing disposition to test everything by criticism, there ought to be a more urgent care to cultivate that higher life of faith and devotion to the Lord. There are hundreds of religious philosophers who are accounted "leaders" in the line of scholarship, who yet weigh but little in the way of the profounder experiences of the Gospel. They are called deep, but are shallow. They name themselves distinguished, and yet are but little known except as the newspaper gives them advertisement. They claim that they have gone to the bottom of all disputed facts involved in the religious questions of the day, when they have but lived a superficial life, gleaned amid debris that a rightly exercised Christian would have thought beneath his notice. The deep man, the man of real learning, and who is properly and efficiently a "leader" in the things that pertain to the Gospel, is one who, having a good knowledge of the Scriptures, has proved the truth of them by his communion with God; and when the hard terms and pedantic philosophizing of the other have been forgotten, the flavour of his piety will still be sweetening and stimulating the souls of his fellowmen.—*United Presbyterian.*

GOD'S PROMISES TO CHEERFUL GIVERS.

"Honour the Lord with thy substance and with the first fruits of all thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty." (Prov. iii. 9, 10.)

"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again." (Luke. vi. 38.)

"He that hath pity on the poor lendeth unto the Lord, and that which he hath given will he pay him again." (Prov. xix. 17.)

"He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." (2 Cor. ix. 6.)

"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God has prospered him." (1 Cor. xvi. 2.)

"Blessed is he that giveth to the poor; the Lord will remember him in time of trouble." (Psalm xli. 1.)

"The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." (Prov. xi. 25.)

"The liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand." (Isaiah xxxii. 8.)

"He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed, for he giveth of his bread unto the poor." (Prov. xxii. 9.)

"He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack." (Prov. xxviii. 27.)

"God loveth a cheerful giver." (2 Cor. ix. 7.)—*Selected.*