



LESSON XII.—DECEMBER 22.

The Passage of the Red Sea.

Exodus xiv., 13-27. Memory verses 13-16. Psalm cvi., 7-12.

Golden Text.

I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously.—Ex. xv., 1.

Lesson Text.

(19) And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: (20) And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night. (21) And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. (22) And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. (23) And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. (24) And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, (25) And took off their chariot wheels, that they drove them heavily; so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians. (26) And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen. (27) And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.

Suggestions.

After the Passover feast on that awful night in which the firstborn of Egypt, the pride of every household and the finest of the cattle which they worshipped, were slain, the Israelites who had all previously prepared themselves, started on their journey. The Egyptians were glad to have them go, they gave them silver and gold and precious metals and did not lift a finger to keep them in their land that first night. But it took several days for that great company to get fairly underway, and by the time they had reached the Red Sea, Pharaoh had again changed his mind and with a large company of horsemen pursued after the Israelites and almost overtook them. But God was with his people, guiding them with a pillar of fire by night and cloud by day.

When the Israelites saw the Egyptians coming after them, in battle array, they began to grow frightened and to doubt God's power, and they reproached Moses for having brought them away from Egypt. Fear of man destroyed their faith in God and they could see nothing before them but death. Moses prayed for the people and encouraged them to trust God's promises. He himself knew that God would take care of his people, but he could not see how it was to be done. Then, God told him to waste no time wondering, but to speak to the people that they should go forward.

How could they go forward? An immense multitude of men, women and children with their enemies behind them, and the waters of the Red Sea stretched as an apparently impassable barrier in front. But God who is ruler of the land and sea commanded Moses to stretch out his rod over the waves, and as he did so a strong wind blew the waters back from the sand until a dry place was left for the people to cross over to the other side. 'Any easterly wind, from northeast to

southeast, would be called an east wind in Hebrew. This was probably a northeast wind. In the poetic form of Moses's song, this scene is described as 'a fearful storm. 'And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as a heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea' (Ex. xv., 8); so in Psa. lxxvii., 16-20. Josephus says, 'Showers of rain also came down from the sky, and dreadful thunder and lightning, with flashes of fire. Thunder-bolts also were darted upon them; nor was there anything which God sends upon men as indications of his wrath, which did not happen at this time.' It is expressly said that God used natural agencies, the forces himself had made, as the basis of this miracle. 'A northeast wind would tend to drive the water out of the narrow bay. It will be noticed that this was soon after the full moon of the vernal equinox, when there would be a very low ebb and a very high flood, and that the tide rises from five to seven feet opposite Suez, and from eight to nine feet when aided by strong winds, returning with unusual suddenness and power after the ebb.'—Newhall. 'M. de Lesseps mentioned to me the extraordinary effects of this kind which he had witnessed in such storms as occur only at intervals of fifteen or twenty years. He had seen the northern end of the sea in places blown almost dry, and again had seen the waters driven far over the land toward the Bitter Lakes.'—Pres. S. C. Bartlett. 'The terrific accompaniment of darkness, wind, and rain is almost paralleled, according to the reports of the Ordnance Survey, by the wild northeasterly storms that sometimes at the present day rage at the head of the Gulf of Suez.'—President Dawson.—'Peloubet's Notes.'

The Israelites marched ahead when they saw the way clear before them, but the Egyptians also marched ahead to overtake them. It was night, and with the darkness and storm the Egyptians could not see very well where they were going. The Israelites had the pillar of fire before them and their enemies had also been following this light. But now the pillar moved round to the back of the Israelites, showing them the light and turning the cloudy side toward the Egyptians, greatly adding to the confusion of the latter. Thus did the Lord God of hosts stand between his people and their enemies.

When the Israelites had all safely crossed to the other shore, God told Moses to stretch out his hand again over the sea that the waters might return to their usual place. Now the Egyptians were still in the dry bed of the sea, so when Moses stretched out his hand, and the sea rolled back, that great host of fighting men were buried in the waters. Pharaoh himself was not with those who were drowned.

Christmas Lessons from the Exodus.

I. Like the Israelites, the world was under the bitter bondage of sin.

II. Jesus Christ came into the world as the great Deliverer. His coming was the great era of the world, that changed all its future existence.

III. One of the great difficulties in the way was that many of the people did not realize their need deeply enough to make them willing to throw off their bonds.

IV. Jesus, like Moses, wrought great miracles to show them the goodness and the power of God, who called them from the bondage of sin to the glorious liberty of the sons of God. This helped them to believe. He pictured before them the promised land, to awaken hope.

V. When they were in the dark and felt the powers of evil and the threatenings of conscience, and knew not which way to turn, then they were bidden to go forward, for if they thus trusted God, the way would open before them.

VI. He sent his Holy Spirit to be their light and guide, like the pillar of cloud and of fire.

VII.—Conversion to Christ, like the crossing of the Red Sea, is the great era and epoch of any life. It is a being born again.

VIII. This act is from God, who only can regenerate the heart, but it is also the act of faith and obedience on the part of men.

IX. Conversion, like the Exodus, is but the beginning of a new life. So was Christ's coming into the world but the beginning of its redemption. Many trials, many joys,

much discipline, many victories, many good deeds, lie between this beginning and the promised land.—'Peloubet's Notes.'

C. E. Topic.

Sun., Dec. 22.—Topic.—Our gifts to our King.—Matt. ii., 1-12.

Junior C. E. Topic.

WELCOMING THE SAVIOUR.

Mon., Dec. 16.—The world's neglect.—Matt. viii., 20.

Tues., Dec. 17.—Rejected at Nazareth.—Luke iv., 28-30.

Wed., Dec. 18.—Simon and the sinner.—Luke vii., 44-47.

Thu., Dec. 19.—A guest of Zacchaeus.—Luke xix., 5-6.

Fri., Dec. 20.—Welcomed at Bethany.—John xii., 1-2.

Sat., Dec. 21.—Christ knocks at your heart.—Rev. iii., 20.

Sun., Dec. 22.—Topic.—How different persons received Jesus.—Matt. ix., 9; John i., 11-12. (Christmas meeting.)

**My Christmas of Shame.**

(By Alice Leigh.)

The Christmas of 187— I shall never forget. It stands out from the past with a vividness which I hardly know whether to regret or rejoice in. We had been married for little more than a year, and the happy months had flown so fast I could scarce believe I had been a wedded wife so long. But there was our child in its cot smiling in its dreams, and, after all, was it possible that I had only been twelve months in my own home? Could so much of gladness have been pressed into a space so small? It was a bleak night, and within, in our room, where the fire roared in the chimney, I shivered at times. Maybe it was the thought of what was coming. But no. My waking dreams were as pleasant as those which haunted the babe's soft slumber. Once or twice, as the hours passed, I opened the door and looked out, thinking I might hear the well-known step as it rang on the hard road, see the form that I loved in the moonlight. But the cold night wind smote me cruelly, and I was glad to seek again the warmth within. How late George was! Yet I did not wonder. For they were good friends of ours whither he had gone, and a merry company had gathered, and they would not reckon as I did the passing hours. Still, I fancied that for my sake he might leave before all was done. Amid the throng one, however popular and talented, would not be missed, and he knew how I longed for his coming. I should have been with the rest, but an unlucky stumble had crippled me for a week or two, and I was useless in the dance.

But how much he would have to tell me when he came—how many had been there that we had seen a year ago, and how the ladies were dressed. For he had never been inattentive to these things, and I had tested him many a time, and, since we had become man and wife, I had taught him to observe and report. How often we had laughed at his quickness. How we smiled as we thought of the innocent diversion which this good lady and the other had, all unwittingly, given us. How I glowed with delight when he caught some slight change in my toilet, and showed his appreciation of my taste. I was not ill-pleased to be complimented by others, but how passing sweet it was to have him applaud! I need not describe the dress I wore that night, for its glories would seem dim enough were I to tell of them now. The fashions have altered many a time since then, and, I suppose, I should laugh to see myself robed in it to-day. But then it was the fashion's height, and I knew that it became me well. He had told me so, and I had blushed acquiescence as he kissed my cheeks. Not a costume for the ballroom, it could not compare with the dancers' dresses, but it was rich and tasteful, and would suggest no disparaging contrast. It had light enough