



LESSON X.—DECEMBER 8.

Moses and Pharaoh.

Exodus xi., 1-10. Memory verses 4-7. Read chapters iii. to x.

Golden Text.

'The angel of his presence saved them.'—Isaiah lxiii., 9.

Lesson Text.

(1) And the Lord said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence; when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether. (2) Speak now in the ears of the people, and let every man borrow of his neighbor, and every woman of her neighbor, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold. (3) And the Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover, the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people. (4) And Moses said, Thus saith the Lord, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt: (5) And all the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maid-servant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts. (6) And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more. (7) But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel. (8) And all these thy servants shall come down unto me, and bow down themselves unto me, saying, Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee: and after that I will go out. And he went out from Pharaoh in a great anger. (9) And the Lord said unto Moses, Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you; that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt. (10) And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh; and the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart so that he would not let the children of Israel go out of his land.

Suggestions.

When Moses and Aaron, his brother, first went before Pharaoh they asked only that he should allow the Israelites to go three days' journey into the wilderness to worship Jehovah, the true God. Pharaoh replied roughly that he did not know who the Lord was, and that he knew of no reason for letting the people go. Moreover, Pharaoh was so enraged at these people for asking this small favor, that he at once commanded that their work should be made a great deal harder. They had been hard at work making bricks without pay and now he commanded in addition to their making the same number of bricks every day as before, they should also find their own straw to put in the bricks.

Then the people of Israel complained to Moses that his efforts had only increased their bondage. Moses wondered why this had happened and he asked God what he should do next. The Lord God sent Moses and Aaron to perform miracles before Pharaoh that he might see that their God had supernatural power. When Pharaoh paid no heed to these miracles, God sent plagues upon him and his people. All of these plagues were blows against the heathen worship of their river, their cattle, the sun and moon. The plagues were as follows:—I. Turning the rivers into blood. II. Frogs. III. Lice. IV. Flies. V. Murrain on the cattle. VI. Boils. VII. Hail. VIII. Locusts. IX. Darkness that could be felt. X. Death of the firstborn.

After the ninth plague, the fearful darkness that could be felt, with its accompanying terrors of depression and awe, Pharaoh commanded Moses that he should see his face no

more. Moses had replied with dignity that he would indeed see his face no more. Pharaoh had during every plague promised to let the Israelites go, but always as soon as the terror was past he hardened his heart and refused to keep his promises. Then the Lord God sent upon Pharaoh and the Egyptian the last plague, that terrible judgment which made the whole country glad to get rid of the people whose God was Lord of life and death. The last plague was a terrible retribution. The Egyptians had sought to cripple and decimate the Israelites by destroying their infant sons, now the God of the Israelites announced that for their wickedness and hardness of heart, he would destroy all the firstborn of the Egyptians and of their cattle. In every household mourning and lamenting should be heard for the eldest child. But none of the children of Israel were to suffer, the curse was withheld from them that all the world might see that they were the chosen people of the great omnipotent God.

All lesser punishments had failed in rendering Pharaoh willing to let the people go; but they had prepared the king and the people so that the last great plague could succeed; so, that not only he will let you go hence, but he shall surely thrust you. . . . hence altogether.

In preparation for this the people were advised to obtain some small portion of what they had earned. Let every man borrow of his neighbor, . . . jewels of silver, and . . . gold. The translation of two words in this account, 'borrowed' and 'lent' (Ex. xi., 2; xii., 35-36), has been peculiarly unfortunate, because it gives an entirely false impression, and charges a dishonest command on the part of God, and a dishonest transaction on the part of the Israelites, at the very time of their most exalted spiritual services. The Israelites did not 'borrow,' but 'asked for,' as in R. V., 'jewels of silver and jewels of gold,' and garments. And the Egyptians did not 'lend' but 'gave,' 'let them have' them. The word 'is the same as when Sisera "asked" water and Jael gave him milk, and when Solomon "asked" wisdom, and did not "ask" long life, neither "asked" riches, neither "asked" the life of his enemies.'—Chadwick. It was the same as asking 'backshish' in these modern days among the Orientals. Having no banks, they carry their property on their persons in the form of jewels as well as money. The custom is universal to give presents at the close of any service, as an expression that the service was satisfactory. The Israelites did exactly what is done down to the present day, only the Lord made them unusually liberal. Thus the Israelites had some reward for their long services, and we understand how they had so much silver and gold in the wilderness.—Peloubet's Notes.

C. E. Topic.

Sun., Dec. 8.—Topic.—The right use of ability. Matt. v., 13-16.

Junior C. E. Topic.

TRAVELLERS OF OLD.

Mon., Dec. 2.—He went by faith.—Heb. xi., 8.

Tues., Dec. 3.—Dreaming at Bethel.—Gen. xxviii., 10-12.

Wed., Dec. 4.—Jonah's voyage.—Jonah i., 4-7; 11, 12.

Thu., Dec. 5.—The Magi of the east.—Matt. ii., 1-2; ii., 7-10.

Fri., Dec. 6.—The Ethiopian's return.—Acts viii., 26-28.

Sat., Dec. 7.—Paul's travels.—Acts xviii., 1; xxi., 1-3; xxviii., 11-14.

Sun., Dec. 8.—Topic.—Lessons from Bible travellers. (Abraham, Jacob, Jonah, the Wise Men, Paul, Ethiopian Eunuch.)

Be earnest in the lesson. Have something interesting to say. That was not vanity which led one to say: 'I know I am not as clever as many, but if I take twice the pains I can do as well as most.' Ah, that's the secret. Time and pains. It is not the brilliant teacher before the Sunday-school class or the brilliant preacher in the pulpit who does the best work. The men and women of moderate talent who are really in earnest, whose hearts are alive to truth and the best interests of those whom they serve—these confer the greatest blessing upon their fellows.



Over Life's Low Tide.

(By E. L. Vincent, in 'American Messenger'.)

'I don't suppose you have anything for me to do, have you?'

The young man to whom this question was addressed turned slowly and looked at the stranger, who had come in so quietly that he had not heard his footsteps.

'Oh, I'm nothing but a tramp,' the newcomer went on, seeing the questioning look on the face of the owner of the mill. 'I might have gone on and spared you the trouble of refusing me. I know what you will say—hard times, low prices, little to do. It is all true. Good day.'

David Gregg stared at the stranger curiously. This was such a change from the way men usually approached him for work.

'See, here!'

There was a command in David's tone, and the stranger came back.

'What can you do?'

'A little of everything. I suppose I would look best out there shovelling coal into the engine.'

'Think you could keep steam up? It is no play to run that engine. If it fails to do its work, the whole mill stops.'

Did David see something like a smile shining in the stranger's eyes?

'I know something of an engine.'

'Come this way.'

David led the way to the engine-room, and for half-an-hour watched the man as he handled the engine. He seemed to understand the machine perfectly.

They went back into the office, and David said:

'There isn't any steady work just now, but our engineer wants a few days off, and if you would like the place you may come to-morrow morning.'

David held out a piece of money as he spoke. The man shook his head.

'Not till I have earned it,' and he passed from the room.

David thought of the stranger many times that day. How did it come about that a man of so much intelligence should be going about in that way? He must know more about him before he went away.

David Gregg was a young man to hold the responsible position of owner of such a great mill. Not long before, his father had died, leaving him this factory as a legacy. But he had learned the business thoroughly during his father's life-time, and was succeeding well. He had the rare gift of reading men's faces, and it seemed to him that in his visit of that afternoon there were great possibilities. When the man came back next morning David noticed a great change; he was cleanly washed and brushed. The smile certainly was on his face now.

All that day the stranger stood at his post like a watchful sentinel. The monster engine obeyed him like a child in the hands of a giant.

So things went on for several days. Then the regular engineer returned, and the new man went into the office to receive his pay before going. The smile had taken its departure.

'So you are out of a job again,' said David, cheerfully.

'Yes.'

'And you are sorry?'

'Of course, I don't want to crowd the old man out. It has been a comfort to have something to do, though.'

'Did you ever do anything in the way of office work?'

'I kept a set of books for some time. I am rusty now.'

The sad look deepened.

'Well, it happens just now that I could use a bookkeeper. I have been keeping my books myself; but orders are coming in fast, and I wish you would stay with me for a while.'

The look which came over the stranger's