

## SUPPLEMENTARY LESSON NOTES.

B.C. 1706.] LESSON V.

[May 1

ISRAEL IN EGYPT.

Exodus 1. 6-14. Gold. Text, Ps. 105. 24.

*Exodus* means *going forth*, and is applied to this book because the going forth of the children of Israel from Egypt is the principal event recorded in it.

Although her territory was small, Egypt was renowned for wealth, learning, and power, and boasted of a great antiquity. The pyramids, lakes, canals, cities, temples, gave evidence of a mighty population and immense resources. The most celebrated Greek philosophers and historians confessedly derived their treasures of history and philosophy from Egypt. At the time to which our lesson belongs, and for a few centuries afterward, Egypt was at the zenith of her greatness, her conquests extending far into Asia, and her great cities being the centres of learning, religion, wealth, and refinement.

The Egyptians were especially renowned in architecture, but also attained considerable proficiency in arts, manufactures, and agriculture. They were gross idolaters, worshipping even animals, reptiles, and vegetables, though it is said the doctrine of One God was taught secretly to the initiated. They believed in a future state of rewards and punishments, and in a resurrection; and in many respects their moral precepts were excellent. The priests were the ruling class, the government being a monarchy, but not absolute; the priests being also statesmen, and exercising much restraint over the king.

The religion of Moses did not start into being as something absolutely original and independent. Link by link the great chain formed which stretched down the ages until it reached the Messiah. The going down into Egypt had to do intimately with the purpose of God in the formation of His people. Had Jacob and his family remained in Palestine, it is probable that two unfortunate things would have happened to their posterity: 1. They would have intermarried with the people of the land, whose language and manners were nearly the same as their own; and, indeed, it was with great difficulty they had been preserved thus far from such alliances (Gen. xxiv. 1-3; xxvi. 34, 35; xxvii. 46). These intermarriages would have led, first, to the intermingling of the Israelites with the surrounding nations, and hence their extinction as a separate people; and, second, to their contamination through the idolatry and wickedness for which their neighbors were infamous. Their removal to Egypt brought them into contact with a nation whose hatred made intermarriages difficult or impossible. There was the same feeling then between the Egyptian (African) and Canaanite, as to marriage, as there is now between the American and the African.

2. Had they remained in Palestine, they would probably have remained migratory, pursuing the life of the shepherd; but, settling in Egypt, they gradually became acquainted with the ways and arts of civilization, thus preparing themselves for their own successful existence as a nation.

As the mightiest rivers may have their source in small springs, so the greatest nations often arise from a small family. Out of Jacob sprang the great nation of Israel. There was a great work to be done, and Israel was raised up to do it. There were wonderful moral problems to solve, touching upon life and its hardships, the value of good government, the necessity of a revelation from God in order to fully do His will, or comprehend one's destiny; such problems as these were to be solved for the good of the nations of the earth, and Israel was chosen as the instrument of their solution. They were to go in and out among the heathen peoples, and meanwhile the work of God was to be displayed through them. Even when another Pharaoh began to tremble upon the great fact of Israel's increase, and to adopt cruel measures to stop it, they only increased the more. God's purpose was too much for Pharaoh's plottings. Bitter bondage did the very thing the king did not want done. It made the bondsmen more brotherly. It knit them together. It turned their thoughts to the past and to the promise made to their father Abraham. It turned them to the future when God should hear their cry and come to their relief. Human devices against God's purposes always further those purposes. God favored Israel, and this was the secret of her growth. He had a great destiny not only for her, but for all the nations through her, and it was not in the power of man to stay this. Although another Pharaoh arose, of a different spirit from him who elevated Joseph, yet he was as much in God's hands as other men, and there was a way to make him feel this. He could not have it all his own way long. Take what precautions he might—slay the infants or enslave the people—all his devices must come to naught. Above every one else God reigns. Profounder than any other are the thoughts of God for the welfare of men. Wickedness is always cowardly and full of unjust suspicions. It makes one fear where no fear is. Israel would have been pleased to dwell on, indefinitely in Egypt. She felt herself bound to Egypt by the favors granted her ancestry. Nothing but cruelty upon cruelty could shake her faith and love. But Pharaoh seemed to prefer angry slaves to peaceful, loving citizens.

B.C. 1571] LESSON VI.

[May 8

THE BIRTH OF MOSES.

Ex. 2. 1-10. Gold. Text, Ps. 121. 5.

WHEN Pharaoh found himself foiled in his attempt to restrict the power of Israel as a