

## REV. D. H. FLETCHER IN JERUSALEM.

The following letter from the Rev. D. H. Fletcher to the congregation of McNab street Presbyterian Church, Hamilton, will, we have no doubt, be read with interest by many of our subscribers:

MY DEAR FRIENDS,—Though far from me you are frequently the subjects of my thoughts and prayers, and it is to me also a matter of great comfort to cherish the confidence that I am often borne on your spirits in your approaches to the throne of our heavenly Father. When exposed to perils by sea and land, the felt assurance that petitions for my safety and guidance are sent up to the divine Protector by my dear people is a source of continual comfort to me. You will be glad to know that, with the exception of a temporary cold from which I suffered for two weeks, I have enjoyed good health since I left home. After visiting Rome and other Italian cities, and after a most delightful passage of four days across the Mediterranean Sea we arrived in Egypt on the 11th of May. There one coming from America or Europe finds himself in an entirely new world; the people, in dress, manner and other respects, forming a strong contrast to what he has been accustomed to see at home. The two largest cities in Egypt are Alexandria and Cairo, the latter, which is the capital, has a population of about half a million, and contains upwards of four hundred mosques or places of Moslem worship. Many of the streets, especially the oldest, are extremely narrow and thronged with human beings, intermingled with a multitudinous mass of beasts. The rulers of Egypt, especially the late Khedive, have a mania for building splendid palaces, and certainly some of those which we visited are truly magnificent. But, alas! while the rulers have been living amid such costly splendour, the poor, miserable subjects are living in wretched mud huts. It is impossible to conceive of dwellings more squalid and repulsive in their appearance than those of the *fellahs*, the farming peasantry of Egypt, and the money which has been lavished so freely in the erection of these palaces has been wrong by a system of merciless taxation from the oppressed and degraded people. Poor people! As one learns the extent of their oppression and degradation, he burns with moral indignation against their selfish and tyrannical rulers.

Through the British Consulate I obtained a pass which entitled me to admission to all the mosques of Cairo. I visited a few of the most ancient as well as some of those most recently erected. Some of the Moslem places of worship are of vast magnitude. Each has one or more minarets from the top of which a Sheikh calls the people to prayer seven times every twenty-four hours. The response is such as to teach a solemn lesson to Christians.

I spent some time in El-Ashar, the great university of the Moslems, situated in the very centre of Cairo. There are at present twelve thousand students in attendance from all parts of the Mohammedan world. In one large open court I saw over two thousand students seated on their mats poring over the Koran, the great Moslem text book in theology, philosophy and jurisprudence. It is impossible to observe the manner in which the professors and students apply themselves to their work without feeling convinced that the religion of Mohammed has a powerful hold on their hearts, and that they are thoroughly determined to maintain and disseminate it.

Of all places in Egypt which I visited the one that absorbed my attention most was Heliopolis, the ancient city of On, whose high priest was Joseph's father-in-law, and where Moses was learned in all the wisdom of Egypt. The spot where it is alleged the granaries of Joseph stood was pointed out to me; also the place where Moses was found by the King's daughter, and where the holy family dwelt during their sojourn in Egypt, whither they fled to save the life of the infant Saviour from the hands of Herod. But in reference to these and other places, the question always presented itself to my mind, is this really the place? What is the evidence? Is it satisfactory? With regard to Heliopolis, however, there is no room to doubt. There stands that solitary, magnificent obelisk of red granite, with its inscriptions as distinct as the day it was cut, to point out where the once famous Temple of the Sun stood. Standing there when Abraham came down to Egypt to escape the famine in Canaan, it has witnessed the material glory and degradation of the land of the Pharaohs. May God grant that at no distant day it may witness

Egypt again rising, through the power of the Gospel, to a truer and greater glory than it ever possessed in the days when these stupendous monuments of its greatness were erected!

The United Presbyterian Church of the States has done a noble work in Egypt, and has now a Presbytery consisting of twenty-eight members, called the Presbytery of Egypt. Dr. Lansing and Dr. Watson, who are at the head of the mission work and college in Cairo, are both able and devoted men. On Sabbath morning I heard Dr. Watson preaching in Arabic to a large congregation. In response to Dr. Lansing's invitation I took his service, and preached the English sermon. As I entered the pulpit the thought that I was about to preach the Gospel in the capital of that land where the ancient people of God sojourned for a season filled me with emotions such as I will not attempt to describe.

After leaving Egypt we landed in Palestine, at Joppa, on Sabbath morning, the 21st of May, and reached Jerusalem, the City of the Great King, on Monday the 22nd, at four o'clock in the afternoon. I rode on horseback from Joppa, and, though the ride was long and fatiguing, especially on the rugged Judean Mountains, yet the thought that I was that night to abide in the city of David and Solomon took such possession of my mind that I was almost unconscious of anything else. The first sight I had of the city I never shall forget. We entered by the Joppa gate, and rode directly to our hotel, which stands on the brow of Mount Zion, close to the place where David's house must have been. At once I ascended to the highest part of the flat roof, which commanded a complete view not only of the city itself, but of the surrounding country as well. There I remained for hours, filled with emotions that now and then made the tears drop from my eyes, till at last the sun, setting behind Calvary, bathed in a flood of golden light the Mount of Olives, a place which will ever be cherished in the hearts of Christians as one of those so often trodden by the feet of that blessed Saviour who came to seek and save that which was lost. We have already visited Hebron, the dwelling place of Abraham, Bethlehem, the birth place of Christ, the Dead Sea, the River Jordan, and numerous other places to the south and east of Jerusalem. To-morrow the British Consul is to send us a pass by which we will be admitted into the great Mosque of Omar, a place closed against all Christians till quite recently. On Thursday morning we purpose to go north to Bethel. May the Lord God of Israel, who revealed His glory in manifold forms in this wonderful land, command His blessing to rest upon you all, is the earnest prayer of your affectionate pastor.

D. H. FLETCHER.

## SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER.

## INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

## LESSON XXIX.

July 17  
1881.]

THE CALL OF MOSES.

Ex. xiv.  
1-14

GOLDEN TEXT—"And he said, Certainly I will be with thee."—Ex. iii. 12.

## HOME READINGS

M. Ex. iii. 1-14. The Call of Moses.  
T. Ex. iii. 15-22. The Message to Israel.  
W. Ex. vii. 30-36. The Voice of the Lord.  
Th. Isa. vi. 1-13. The Lord in His Glory.  
F. Isa. lxxiii. 1-19. By the Right Hand of Moses.  
S. Ps. cxviii. 1-4. Wait on the Lord.  
Sab. Ps. cxviii. 1-22. Lord Merciful and Gracious.

## HELPS TO STUDY.

Our last lesson left Moses sitting by a well, wearied with his long journey and, no doubt, disconsolate enough; discouraged, not so much by his own exile as by the apparently hopeless condition of his kindred in their alien thralldom; for in all his history we do not find him actuated by selfish motives.

Wells are few and far between in eastern countries at the present day, and they were still fewer and farther between in the days preceding the Israelitish exodus, so Moses could not sit long beside a well without making the acquaintance of some of the inhabitants of the country. Very speedily his noble and heroic instincts found fitting exercise in protecting weak maidens from lawless and barbarous men. Chivalry did not originate in Spain, neither was the first champion of woman's rights born in America.

It is no wonder that there was one among the seven daughters of Jethro who thought so well of the brave and generous stranger that she became his wife.

The following division of the lesson may be found suitable: (1) *An Adventurous Shepherd*, (2) *The Burning Bush*, (3) *The Commission Given*, (4) *Objections Answered*.

I. AN ADVENTUROUS SHEPHERD.—Ver. 1. "Thy servants are shepherds, both we and also our fathers," said Jacob's sons to Pharaoh when he asked them what was their occupation (Genesis xlviii. 3). It was a bold and

honest confession to make in the presence of an Egyptian king, for shepherds were "an abomination unto the Egyptians." Here we find a descendant of one of these shepherds taking kindly and contentedly to the occupation of his ancestors, although he had spent forty years of his life in the refined and elevated employments of a royal court and among an aristocracy that despised pastoral pursuits. There is some truth in the scientific doctrine of heredity, but there is still more truth in the fact that those who are taught of God learn in whatsoever state they are therewith to be content.

Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. Jethro is called "Reuel" in the preceding chapter; the latter designation is probably a territorial title. The word translated "priest" will bear the rendering *prince*, probably he was both. He seems to have been a perfect type of the Bedouin of the noblest class—generous and hospitable, a man of great prudence, minute local information, and wide general knowledge of human affairs. His wise counsels were afterwards of much service to Moses in organizing the civil government of the Israelitish nation. By birth he was a Kenite, a descendant of Abraham and Keturah. This race comes in contact with the chosen people at more than one point in their history, and always in a friendly attitude.

And he led the flock to the backside of the desert. Far beyond the limits of their wonted pastures the flocks of Jethro strayed and Moses checked them not nor turned them homeward. This was the rule of nomadic life, the wider the range the better the flock thrived; and Moses was none the worse a shepherd for being a philosopher and an explorer. But why did he cross the desert, and why did he come to what was afterwards known to him as the mountain of God? Probably he could not tell—not any better than thousands of the human race, since his day, can tell how they were led to Sinai, and thence to Calvary. God leads his own in a way which they know not.

II. THE BURNING BUSH.—Vers. 2, 3. Moses was a philosopher—a man who cannot content himself with asking what? but always asks why?—and he now found something to puzzle him. It has puzzled many a philosopher of more recent times to account for the continued existence and progress of the Church of Christ (which the burning bush represented) amid the fires of persecution and opposition. Moses soon had his difficulties solved because he drew near enough to have them solved; and there is a lesson here for all others who are in the habit of asking "why?"

The angel of the Lord that appeared to Moses could have been no other than God the Son, the Angel of the Covenant, for the being who addresses him out of the burning bush identifies Himself with the Deity.

III. THE COMMISSION GIVEN.—Vers. 4-10. Once Moses had essayed, in his own foolish, human way, to defend his enslaved brethren from oppression, and he had failed—now he receives a commission from on high, not only to defend, but to deliver them entirely from the bondage of centuries, and lead them—not merely from Egypt to Canaan, but from serfdom to freedom, a transition that could not be effected by mere travelling, but required instruction and training; for he who is a slave, and the son of a slave, cannot be changed into a free man merely by having his shackles removed.

Draw not high hither; put off thy shoes, etc. God is everywhere, but there are places in which His presence is specially manifested. There was a time when people erred by regarding sacred places with superstitious dread. Now the tendency is in the opposite direction. It will be a token for good when all our young people shew more reverence for the house of God than a very large number of them do at present. In the east the shoes or sandals are put off as a mark of respect before entering even a private dwelling, and no one there would ever think of approaching a place of worship unceremoniously.

I am the God of thy father. The word "father" is singular in the original as it is in the English version but it is to be understood collectively.

The God of Abraham. This connects Moses with the covenant. The God of Abraham of Isaac and of Jacob is the same God still, and the promise is to us even as it was to the earlier members of the Church. Let us take hold of the chain and claim our birthright.

I have surely seen the affliction of My people. Here it seems to be taken for granted that if God sees a wrong He will right it; other passages of Scripture teach us that He will certainly do so sooner or later, and of His omniscience there is abundant evidence.

Come now therefore and I will send thee unto Pharaoh. The task set before Moses was certainly an arduous one, and well might he shrink from it, but a wonderful strength is imparted to weak humanity by the command "Come now and I will send thee."

IV. OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.—Vers. 11, 14. "Now Moses was very meek, above all men that were upon the face of the earth" (Numbers xii. 2), and he certainly appears very meek and very humble in the passage before us; but it was the grace of God that made him so; forty years in God's school in the wilderness had wrought a wonderful change, it was no meek man that slew the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

Who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh? How beautiful the modesty and backwardness of Moses appear taken in connection with the perseverance and heroism which he afterwards displayed in carrying out his life-work—the true man is always better than his word.

I AM hath sent me unto you. Previous to this time God had made Himself known as EL-SHADDAI, God Almighty; now He reveals Himself as JEHOVAH—the one eternal, unchangeable being, the same yesterday, to-day and forever. Who else can always say "I am?" This was Moses' authority; by this sublime name he was to awaken the slumbering traditional religion of his enslaved brethren, and rouse them to strike for freedom. The Jehovah thus dimly made known to the Hebrews is still more plainly revealed to us in the person of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of Israel, the captain of our salvation.