

W. B. M. U.

LESSON ON AFRICA.

First essentials, a good map and a bright teacher.

Let the following questions and answers be divided among the classes at least three weeks before Mission Band Day, so that, when called upon, each scholar may be able to come to the map and point out the places.

Give the boundaries of Africa. Why is Africa called the Dark Continent?

Ans. Africa is called the Dark Continent because until within the last few years all the vast region in the interior was marked on our maps "unexplored." We knew little of Africa except its six thousand miles of sea coast, and its great desert, and that narrow border of country which lay next the ocean or lined the Nile. It is also the "Dark Continent" because its people know nothing of the Light of Life, for darkness covered the land, and "gross darkness" reigned.

When was the Christian religion first introduced into Africa? Ans. Recite Acts 2: 5-11, and Acts 8: 26-39.

What special interest attaches to Egypt?

Ans. The Egyptians are the earliest people known to us as a nation. While Abraham and his countrymen were moving about in tents and wagons, the Egyptians were living in cities, they had cultivated agriculture, they had invented hieroglyphics, and written their kings' names and actions on the massive temples they raised, while the records upon their monuments imply great antiquity. The earliest date assigned for the founding of that Egyptian monarchy, which in the time of Abraham was evidently already well established, is B. C. 5000; the lowest date is B. C. 2691; probably the true one. The popular religion of ancient Egypt was idolatrous to a degrading extent; animals, birds, and even such reptiles as the crocodile, being regarded as representing the deities and worshipped as divine. What has been learned of late years of "the wisdom of the Egyptians" in the time of Moses, fully justifies all that the Bible says upon that subject. The history of the country has been much like that of other ancient nations, ending finally in a condition which fulfills those prophecies in Isaiah and elsewhere, which, while threatening the judgment of God upon the land for its vile idolatries, also clearly foretold how to this people, as to all the rest of the world, the Gospel should in the latter days be given.

Next call for "The Story of the Child Jesus in Egypt," (dictated by one or more), as found in Ps. 89: 8; Pa. 33: 10; Matt. 2: 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21; 1 Chron. 16: 34; and The Story of the Child Moses in Egypt, Acts 7: 17 and 20; Ex. 2: 3-10. (These to be written out so that each forms a complete story.)

Will some one give us the names of some of these many lakes we see on this map of Africa?

Ans. Among the many lakes of Africa we note the principal: Lake Nyassa, Lake Victoria Nyanza, Lake Tanganyika, Lake Albert Nyanza, and Lake Bangweolo.

Call for the following facts in connection with these Lakes:

1. Lake Nyanza is as large as the whole of Scotland.

2. The African Lakes Company was formed in 1878, to assist the various Missions then established, and now there is a road known as the Stevenson Road, connecting Lakes Nyassa and Tanganyika, built at his own expense by Sir James Stevenson.

3. Within the hearing of the waves of Lake Nyassa "beeps" that young soldier of the Cross, Rev. Alex. Bain. The memory of how he toiled and suffered and died, all for love of Africa and Africa's Saviour, will lead others to do likewise. The torch he helped to hold aloft is not trampled out, but burns more brightly; and other hands will speed it on till the whole of the Dark Continent is won to God.

4. The heroic Livingstone, entering from the south, seeking to know something of the unknown, and opening a path for the missionary, died on his knees in a grass hut amid the swamps near Lake Bangweolo, early in May, 1873. The last words ever spoken by him were to his servant at night: "All right, you can go out now." So alone with his Godylike Moses of old, the missionary entered into rest. His Arab servant found him in the morning, kneeling as if in prayer, by the side of the bed, his head buried in his hands.

We will now ask for the rivers of Africa, and then for some facts in connection with them.

Ans. Africa has four great river systems. On the west, the Congo;—second only to the Amazon in the volume of its water,—and the Niger; on the east, the Zambesi; on the north, the Nile. These rivers once formed vast internal seas, which, finally breaking through the mountain barriers, descended by cataracts and canyons to the ocean, leaving great areas of rich deposits of wonderful fertility.

On the Congo there are no beasts of burden, the porters being the natives of the Bantongo tribe. These men are slight, and only poorly developed; but when you have seen them carry on their heads from 60 to 100 lbs. weight for twenty miles a day, you pronounce them men of singularly sound stamina, their only food each day being an ear of two of corn, a little manive root, or a handful of peanuts. Small boys of eight or nine

years of age are frequently met carrying loads of 25 lbs. weight.

Among the many beautiful spots on the Zambesi river is one near the Victoria Falls, which has a special interest for us. The banks and islands which appear here and there amid the streams are richly adorned with trees and shrubs of various colors. While Dr. Livingstone was here in 1862, Mrs. Livingstone was taken very ill with fever; and, after only a few days of suffering, passed away just as the sun was setting on Sabbath evening, April 27. They laid her to rest under the shadows of a great Baobab tree. Much had been hoped from her coming. As the daughter of Moffat she had an immense influence over the savage tribes of the interior. But God took her, and Livingstone was left to pursue his lonely way.

We have also heard of the deadly climate of Africa, so fatal to many of our missionaries. Can you tell us about it?

Ans. The greatest part of Africa lies in the torrid zone, the equator passing through the centre of the continent. Nubia, a little north of the equator, is the hottest place on the earth. There are two belts of Africa in the torrid zone—the northern, which is the hotter, not only because of its greater width from east to west, but because it is a vast plain; a great part of this is occupied by the low sandy desert of Sahara, which so radiates heat that the hot winds coming from it are felt as far as Italy and Switzerland. The southern belt is a table land. In Africa, therefore, there are two varieties of climate—that of the flat coast lands, and that of the terraces leading up to the great plateaus. The flat coasts, which are often overflooded in the rainy seasons, have a very oppressive atmosphere, and from the muzziness at the mouths of the rivers a pestilential malaria arises. The missionaries at first settled near the coast, and from the unhealthiness there fancied that the interior must be even worse; but now it has been found that this southern belt, formerly a vast table land, is depressed to the lake region at the centre; and that consequently near the broad lakes and rolling rivers there are healthy uplands, with their gushing springs, sparkling brooks, and a beautiful climate.

What of the people inhabiting this country?

Ans. It is said that the 200,000,000 of people in Africa, may be divided into six hundred and eighty-three tribes. In the north is the Berber race, in the Western and Central Soudan and the Upper Nile, the Negro; in the south, the Kafirs and Hottentots, while the vast regions of Central Africa are peopled by variations of the great Bantu race.

Tell us something of the manners and customs of these people.

Ans. In general, we may say that the men are fierce warriors, the women poor drudges, and the children untaught and rude; that the people live in miserable huts, rather than houses, wear very little clothing, and are uncivil in manners; that they have very little regard for human life, and practice dreadful cruelties when they have the power; and yet in the whole country certain people and tribes can be found to whom such a description does not apply. The ordinary native dwelling is called a kraal. It is often circular in form, covered with thatch, and resembles an enormous beehive. Sometimes the cattle share the hut with the human occupants. The fireplace is a hollow in the ground floor, while the door must do duty as a chimney also. Mats are the only beds, and the pillow is a block of wood. A few cooking utensils are the only furniture. The B. chuanas of South Africa, however, are said to build quite substantial and comfortable dwellings; but here, as in everything else, the most of the labor falls upon the women, the men simply looking on and giving advice. The most dreadful curse of Africa is the slave-trade, and slave-traders hunt the poor Africans, and tear them from their homes without a spark of pity for their grief, or of tenderness in the care of them. Stanley tells of whole villages destroyed, the houses burnt, the warriors killed or driven away, the women and children, fettered and half-starved, carried into hopeless bondage.

What is the religion of the country?

Ans. Some of the tribes are so low sunk in barbarism that they come as near as any people to no religion. A missionary, speaking of the religion of Africa, says: "The people acknowledge God but worship only devils. They are guilty of every form of uncleanness and robbery, tyranny and murder." The deep shadows of heathen superstition rest upon this land. Slavery in its worst forms curses the people, and scenes of horror too awful to relate were witnessed by the first explorers. Says Dr. Wilson: "Nowhere in the world is the demoralizing and debasing influence of a false religion more markedly visible than in Africa."

The religions are divided into Fetichism, Mohammedanism, and the Abyssinian. Fetichism (fa-tish-ism). It is a word derived from an African corruption of the Portuguese term feitiço, signifying a charm of sorcery. A fetich (fa-tish) is something that will bewitch a person; it formerly signified an object of worship, not representing a living creature; but now it includes snakes, and such other living objects as the later fetichism have invested with superhuman powers and associated with magic. The women of Guinea

wore on their garments and about their fetiches made of straw. Rings of straw as fetiches protected the dead on their journey to another world. Almost every natural object might be an instrument of demonic power, from a shell on the seashore to the loftiest mountain. The most usual shape of a fetich is that of the head of a brute or of a man supplied with a large pair of horns. A local fetich at Cape Coast is believed to protect the fishing interests. It is a rock that projects into the sea, and to this rock annual sacrifices are offered by a prophet of fetichism, with frantic gestures and mystical invocations. A famous fetich is a large house built of skulls. Some fetiches are worshipped by an entire tribe, as the tiger in North Guinea and Dahomey, and the serpent, by the negroes of Wydah and their descendants in Hayti. It is said by Rev. Mr. Wilson that the witchcraft which fetichism produces more deadly in Africa than all other causes combined. [Read "A Terrible Picture," in the Kingdom, February, 1888.] A fetich is made of almost anything consecrated by the priest for the purpose; the stranger the matter employed, the greater is the confidence which appears to be placed in it. The most common articles to be worn on the person, or hung up in the house or garden, are heads, claws, bills, and bones of various kinds of birds, animals and reptiles, enclosed in sheep's horns, or in leather or cloth. We have known instances in which negroes have obtained a lock of a white man's hair, or the paring of his finger-nails, for a fetich, having a high opinion of their power to preserve them from evil.

Mohammedanism teaches that there is one God, but also Mohammed his prophet. Only those who believe in this prophet are rewarded with Paradise or heaven—all others go to hell. They make many prayers; but they are vain repetitions. There is no love to God; no love to man. Therefore robbery and murder are the order of the day, and they force their religion at the point of the sword. Can there be a greater contrast than the religion of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, who "hath called us to peace."

The Abyssinian is a mixture of several religions, consisting chiefly in outward forms, and, as a consequence, has no reforming power in heart or life; so comfort for the sorrowing, and no hope for the dying. A Baptist missionary writes of seeing a man and woman killed in order that a neighbor's wife who had died might not go alone into the spirit land. Another man and woman were placed alive in the grave in a sitting posture with the corpse, on their knees, thus buried alive. Verily, they need the "Light of Life" in this dark land.

Let the teacher close with a few earnest words.

The next exercise will take up mission work in Africa.

In collecting material for the above, besides Books of Travel, we have drawn largely on the Missionary Review, A. B. M. U. publications, as well as "The Crisis of Missions."

The responsive reading in connection with the above may be had at a reduced rate after 29th March, in printed forms, from W. L. Bars, Esq., Superintendent Baptist Sunday-school, Dartmouth, N. S.

We ought to measure our actual lot, and to fulfil it; to be with all our strength that which our lot requires and allows. What is beyond it is no calling of ours. How much peace, quiet, confidence, and strength would people attain, if they would go by this plain rule.—H. E. Manning.

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MY LEGACY.

BY HELEN HUNT JACKSON.

They told me I was heir; I turned in haste, And ran to seek my treasure;

And wondered as I ran how it was placed— If I should find a measure

Of gold, or of the titles of fair lands And houses would be laid within my hands.

I journeyed many roads; I knocked at gates; I spoke to each wayfarer

I met, and said: "A heritage awaits Me. Art not thou the bearer

Of news? Some message sent to me whereby I learn which way my new possessions lie?"

Some asked me in, naught lay beyond their door; Some smiled, and would not tarry;

But said that men were just behind who bore More gold than I could carry!

And so the morn, the noon, the day, were spent, While empty-handed up and down I went.

At last one cried, whose face I could not see, As through the mist he hastened:

"Poor child, what evil ones have hindered thee? Till this whole day is wasted?

Hath no man told thee that thou art joint heir With one named Christ, who waits the goods to share?"

The one named Christ I sought for many days, In many places, vainly;

I heard men name His name in many ways, I saw His temples plainly;

But they who named Him most gave me no sign To find Him by, or prove the heirship mine.

And when at last I stood before His face I knew Him by no token

Saw subtle air of joy which filled the place; Of greeting was not spoken.

In solemn silence I received my share, Kneeling before my Brother and "joint heir."

My share! No deed of house or spreading lands, As I had dreamed; no measure

Heaped up with gold; my Elder Brother's hands Had never held such treasure.

Foxes have holes, and birds in nests are fed; My Brother had not where to lay His head.

My share! The right like Him to know all pain Which hearts are made for knowing;

The right to find in loss the surest gain; To reap my joy from sowing

In bitter tears; the right with Him to keep A watch by day and night with all who weep.

My share! To-day men call it grief and death; I see the joy and life to-morrow.

I thank our Father with my every breath For this sweet legacy of sorrow;

And through my tears I call to each, "Joint heir With Christ, make haste to ask Him for thy share."

—Christian Advocate.

The power of the Gospel was primarily the power of a new vitality; the enthusiasm which it kindled lay in the conviction it inspired that the divine life might repeat itself in the breast of all humanity, and that the disciple might in some measure be partaker with the Master.—Matheon.

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An extensive revival in progress in Sweden 1,000 persons have been

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