

and distress, physical and spiritual, let us call upon the name of the Lord. "The Lord is our King; He will save us," Isa. 33 : 22.

2. *Israel rebellious and smitten of God.* Deliverance and victory by the hand of the Almighty were immediately followed by murmuring and rebellion against Him. (a) The offenders plead hardships and privations as their excuse, v. 5. But who was to blame for all those things? Had they not brought them upon themselves? The root of their offences was inveterate unbelief. (See Ps. 78 : 22-25.) (b) Therefore, "the Lord . . . was wroth and so he kindled a fire against . . . Israel," Ps. 78 : 21. "He sent fiery serpents among the people," v. 6. In Isa. 14 : 29 and 30 : 6, "fiery flying serpents" are spoken of, but there is nothing in the language of our lesson suggestive of winged serpents. The Hebrew *seraph* means to burn, the reference being to the heat and thirst caused by the poisonous bite of the serpents. (c) According to Deut. 8 : 15 the region in which Israel suffered this plague was infested by serpents and scorpions. This, too, is the testimony of modern travellers. The words of v. 6, however, convey the idea of a special infliction of judgment by the hand of the Lord. He "sent fiery serpents" He "commanded" the serpents, Amos 9 : 3.

3. *Israel penitent and divinely healed.* (a) After there had been great mortality in the camp (v. 6) the people confessed their sin, the sin of calumny against God's providence, v. 7; Ps. 140 : 3. (b) Their penitence drove them to Moses in humble acknowledgment of guilt, and he successfully entreated God in their behalf. Read 1 John 1 : 9. (c) The remedy—a serpent of brass upon a banner-staff, viewed in itself, could neither hurt nor heal. God's omnipotence effected the cure; and faith was the connecting medium between Him and the dying. "Everyone that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live," v. 8. To "look" in the language of Scripture is to believe, to trust. "Look unto me, and be ye saved," etc., Isa. 45 : 22. (Compare Jno. 3 : 14-17.) We can hardly imagine the unutterable joy of the people when they discovered the miraculous efficacy of God's remedy. One look, and they were healed: thousands of men, women and child-

ren thus instantly saved; their mourning turned into dancing, the whole camp a scene of grateful joy. And so it is when Christ, who was typified by the serpent of brass, is accepted. There was "great joy" in Samaria when the people believed Philip, who preached Christ unto them, Acts 8 : 8.

For Teachers of the Boys and Girls

The Golden Text of this lesson is indeed golden. It sets up the cross, from which flows healing and life eternal. The Golden Text should therefore be taken as the pivot on which the teaching of the lesson shall turn; or rather the point to be reached and made memorable. These three divisions may mark the way :

1. *Faith triumphant.* It is nigh forty years since our last lesson, forty years of desert wanderings, 14 : 28-34. They are now back at Kadesh, whence the twelve spies had set out. The Promised Land is before them. The hard desert life has made them "fit." They have learned to trust God. Hence we look for victory in this battle with the king of Arad, v. 1. A reverse at the first drove them to God, v. 2; and their trust in God brought victory. (For the nature of vows and of this vow in particular, see Exposition, under v. 2.)

2. *Faith lost.* Their out-cousins, the Edomites, had refused them passage through their territory, ch. 20 : 21. Nothing remained but to make a long loop round, going as far south again as the "way" (caravan route) "of the Red Sea." Delay and disappointment, as they often do, wore out their trust in God. We are apt to be weakest at our strongest point. The very men who had won a victory through faith, now cry like children in the dark. (Work out the details of v. 5.)

3. *Unbelief punished,* v. 6. See that the talk about the sort of serpents, etc., does not lead the class away from the main point, namely, that the people were bitten of the deadly serpents because they had sinned against God. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

4. *Faith restored.* It came back by the pathway of penitence. Alas! that God should have to smite our hearts before they will melt. But let us be thankful for the smiting;