

Sabbath School Teacher.

LESSON XII.

MARCH 22. DEFEAT OF AMALEK. Exodus xvii. 1-16.

COMMIT TO MEMORY, v. 15, 16. PARALLEL PASSAGES.—Deut. xxv. 17-19; 1 Sam. xxx. 1, 17.

With v. 8, read 1 Sam. xv. 2; with v. 9, Heb. ii. 10; with v. 10, 11, Jas. v. 19; with v. 12, Heb. vii. 25; with v. 13, 14, Prov. x. 7; and Rev. xvii. 14; with v. 15, Ps. lx. 4; and with v. 16, Numb. xxiv. 20.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—We conquer through him that loved us.

LEADING TEXT.—When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back; this I know; for God is for me.—Ps. lv. 9.

CONNECTION.—This portion of the book shows us how Israel was led (ch. xvi., and xvii. 1-7), defended (ch. xviii.) and governed (ch. xix.). Our lesson falls under the second head, and records the first war in which Israel was engaged. The passage furnishes an easy and beautiful order, which we shall follow—the battle below; the pleader on the hill; the power in heaven; and the monuments of the victory.

I. THE COMBATANTS ON THE PLAIN.—Israel and Amalek. Trace the history of Amalek—a wandering tribe from the shores of the Persian gulf, that came at length to Arabia, mentioned in Gen. xiv. 7. This people was probably at first distinct from Amalek, a "duke" of Edom (Gen. xxvi. 12, 16), but became one with Esau's descendants, the strong incorporating the weak (Gen. xxxvi. 16). The Amalekites lived by flocks and herds, with which they wandered over the plains. At this time of the year they found the plains hot and the grass withered, and sought the mountain ranges, but the Israelites were in their way, and they attacked them, not only as wandering tribes still fight about pasture, but possibly remembering and fearing that Jacob (Israel) should rule over Esau (Gen. xxi. 23). Hence God's anger (x. 16). The Amalekites had a leading place among the tribes of this region. (See Numb. xiv. 25 and illustration.) This made their punishment severe; their conduct being all the more blameworthy if they were even in part descendants of Esau; and so kinsmen of Israel, and fighting against Israel as God's favoured people.

Moses here calls Joshua to the front, and we meet him for the first time. Hosen, his original name, is dropped here, and that name given in the history which was given in fact nearly forty years afterwards by Moses (Numb. xiii. 16). He was probably writing or revising the history, near the end of his life. No wonder would leave his work open to such an obvious objection. Joshua was a man of courage, decision and purity. He well deserved the confidence Moses placed in him. (See Deut. xxxiv. 9, and Josh. xxiv. 18.)

Yet Moses does not expect human valor to win the battle; nor will he let Joshua or the people forget the power that God employed in their behalf. "To-morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand." He who fought for them in Egypt is still to be trusted. "And Joshua did," &c. (v. 10).

II. THE PLEADER ON THE HILL. "Moses, Aaron, and Hur" (see ch. xv. 14), grand-father of Bezael the artist (see ch. xxxi. 2-5), and of the tribe of Judah (anted by Josephus to be the brother-in-law of Moses), these three went to the top of the hill (not identified) overlooking the plain. It is not said that prayer was the object, nor is the rod further mentioned. So it has been said—Moses was simply directing the battle; but the account of Aaron and Hur "holding up his hands" a phrase that has become proverbial, showing how much our Bibles have formed our speech, does not give this impression. It would harmonize with the idea of his stretching forth or lifting up the wonder-working rod. But no reasonable doubt exists that it was the attitude of prayer he took; that the value of Moses to the people was thus being shown as a living, powerful intercessor for them, and that the Hebrews and the Church were to see in him (1) the efficacy of intercessory prayer—not of dead but of living saints; and (2) the type of the mediator who ever liveth to make intercession. It went well with the troops on the field as the plea went up from the hill, just as the church is strong in the measure in which the hearer of prayer is relied on. For

III. THE POWER THAT DISCOMFITED AMALEK (v. 13) was through Moses and by Joshua indeed, but from the Lord (v. 15) And here we have an illustration of truth for all time. When Pharaoh would not let the people go, God fought for Israel till Israel was set free. Israel did not fight. "Stand still. The Lord shall fight for you" (xv. 14). So in the question of delivering men from Satan and from guilt, men do nothing. It is all of God. Jesus fights the battle alone and unaided, and sets his people free, brings them out, so to speak.

But now that they are out, and that Satan and the flesh (like the Amalekites, kinsmen of Israel), attack them, as they are sure to do, they have to fight. "Resist the devil" (Jas. iv. 7, and 1 Pet. v. 9). Yet it is God that wins the victory. Moses still holds the rod, only now the Lord fights in and through them, and they conquer in the strength of that Saviour who is on high pleading for them. (See in proof, Rom. viii. 37; and in illustration, Acts i. 20.) Satan and the flesh attack pardoned men or their way to heaven, but through the Holy Ghost sent down, and dwelling in them, they overcome. And they ascribe their victory to the Lamb" (1 Cor. xv. 57). As the Hebrew did not vanquish Pharaoh, nor bring down bread, nor draw water from the rock, so believers do not obey law, nor make atonement, nor bring in righteousness, nor in any way or sense save themselves. God did all that for them through Christ; and they stand still and receive the benefit. But now having received the benefit, when assailed they must go down to the battle field and fight all day "until the going down of the sun" (v. 12), until they are fatigued and weary through their fighting. Jesus is on high sending his Spirit (John xiv. 26), and making them conquer in his victory. (See Job

xvi. 30.) What right have we to reason thus? See 1 Cor. x. 11.

But mark how much greater Christ is than Moses, whose hands hang down. Jesus never wears. (Read Rev. i. 18, and Watts hymn, "Jesus, my great high priest.")

"His powerful blood did once atone, And now it pleases before the throne."

IV. THE MEMORIALS OF THE VICTORY, which, as this was the first assault from "the nations," was important. Three in number, each with a use of its own. First there is a record (v. 14), "Write in a book." Has this book perished? It should be "the book." Then God ordered an account of these events, and it was a known history. Then it is the very book we are reading. Then writing (first mentioned here, though implied in "book," Gen. v. 1) was understood among the Hebrews, as we know it to have been among the Egyptians. This kind of help the people might count upon, and Joshua should remember when he becomes leader.

Second, there is an altar, the first since Jacob's time, expressive of dependence on God, unworthiness, and acceptance through a sacrifice. It commemorates the victory, "Jehovah-nissi," which the margin renders correctly, "The Lord my banner." (See meaning of it, Ps. xx. 5-7.)

The third is a prediction—in part a threat. It has been ingeniously rendered, "because the head (i. e. of Moses), in prayer, is under the throne of God, therefore." &c. But the Hebrew is against this. The marginal reading is accepted by the best authorities. It is most solemn "Because the hand (of Amalek) is against the throne of the Lord, therefore the Lord will have, &c. No longer could he have inserted this, and v. 14, while Amalek remained. But Amalek did remain, by the book itself, until David. (See the history in Deut. xxv. 19, 1 Sam. xv. 32; 2 Sam. i. 1, and viii. 12.)

SUGGESTIVE TOPICS.

The condition of Israel—how fed—how provided with water—by whom attacked—who were the Amalekites—their mode of life—motives for attack—the Hebrews commander—by whom slain—Moses' part—his companions—his attitude—meaning of the rod—of hands held up—the result—the victory—severity of the battle—the memory of it—how preserved—what book—why rehearse to Joshua—meaning of "altar"—of name—war with Amalek—why—difference between this deliverance and that from Egypt—illustration of what in Christian life, and how God makes saints conquerors.

A Well-Organized School.

The Christian Union gives, with comments, the following example of what a Sunday-school should be:

A school that is not well organized, nor making itself felt as a power after twenty-five years' experience, has certainly failed to recognize its mission. Such schools, burdened with a stagnant life, are to be found almost everywhere, and they need a more than human hand to wake them out of their lethargy. The most we can do is to set examples before them to follow. Here is a school in Philadelphia celebrating its twenty-seventh anniversary, and justly taking pride in what it is doing and how it does it. In the first place, the superintendent is a man of the "wide-awake" order, and every Sunday morning, at nine a.m., he and his assistant hold a teachers' class, where they all talk over, and exchange ideas on the lessons of the day. Their scholars thus get the benefit of a wider range of thought from their teachers. The infants are collected in a department by themselves where their buzzing won't disturb the rest, and where their attention is kept by a superintendent who has the rare gift of knowing just how to manage and interest them. In the main school, besides the usual classes, there is one for "mothers" and one for "fathers," both conducted by competent teachers. The pastor's wife has a Bible-class, and the "ruling elder," who is generally supposed to concern himself with only the weightier matters of the church, also appoints among the instructors. Under this organization the school prospers; it is a unit of influence in its sphere; it contributes to benevolent and missionary objects, and aims to develop its inward life. Every slow-going school, do likewise, and become something more than you are.

Saying and Doing.

Two brothers used to go to school together. One evening they thought they should like to have a holiday the next day; so they asked their father to give them one. He said, "I cannot, because it will put you back in your studies; so mind you go to school." One of the brothers said, "Yes, I will," but the other said he would not, and his father was very angry with him. The next day the one that said "Yes" played truant, but the one that had refused went to school. Then the father said to them in the evening, "Both of you are in the wrong; but you that promised to go and broke your promise are the worst of the two."

Our Father in heaven speaks to us every day, and says, "Do my will; and whenever you kneel down and say "Thy will be done," we answer God and say, "Yes, I will." Now if we say we will do God's will, and yet do not try to do it, are we not like the boy that first made a promise and then broke it?

Some people never pray to God at all, and never promise to do His will. Perhaps you are inclined to say, "They are very bad people." But if you promise and do not try to keep your promise, are you not worse than they?—Parables for Children.

CIRCUMSTANCES.—Make circumstances your servants instead of your masters. They are sure to be one or the other, according to your own strength of purpose. If they do not serve you in the way you want them to, it will do no good to grumble at them; but set yourself in readiness to do what they serve in another way.

Our Young Folks.

How to Make Yourself Unhappy.

BY MISS W. O. CONANT.

"It's a real shame I can't go. Aunt Jane won't let me do anything. I wish my mother had left me somewhere else," said Alice Bonton as she flung herself into the sitting-room and slammed the door violently behind her.

Her pouting face harmonized well with the dismal storm that was going on outside, although, it is sad to confess, there was more evidence of tempest within than in the elements without. The rain was coming down with a delirious and perseverance that was irritating enough to one who usually found her pleasure out of doors.

"I might go just as well as not," said Alice, as she stood by the window and nursed her grievance. "As if such a rain could hurt any one who had a water-proof and rubber! It's only a mile, too; but Aunt Jane won't let you do anything."

At this moment Aunt Jane passed through the room. She seemed very much occupied, but there was a kind, helpful expression on her absorbed face that did not agree with her niece's opinion of her. Like other people, Alice's judgment was apt to be as angry when anger was on the throne.

The rain held forth no sign of departure, and as the last command to Alice had been to in all things obey Aunt Jane, there was nothing for it but to give up her desire to walk to the village to spend the forenoon with Miss Gilbert.

"Well there is one thing I will do, I'll crack some nuts, anyhow, she said to herself with very unnecessary emphasis, for no one had any objection to her doing that whenever she liked.

While she is getting ready I will tell you that Alice had a sister who was an invalid, and her mother and father had gone to France with her to see if her life could be saved in a warmer climate, and Alice had been left with her mother's sister in their absence.

It was very pleasant to be at Aunt Jane's country home, a mile from the village, in summer or the bright autumn days; as Alice had often found by experience; but a rainy day was a trial, and not without reason. Of books and papers there was no great supply and those that suited Alice's young taste were quickly devoured. Aunt Jane was kind but very busy, and Uncle John and his one hired man usually took themselves off on such days to put things to rights at the upper farm, a mile or two away on the hillside, and so removed from the house and its surroundings nearly all the life it ever had.

But Alice had one fault which shut the door to a great deal of happiness, and on this occasion she lost very heavily by it. Aunt Jane, in the kindness of her heart, and feeling that life at her house was rather monotonous for her young niece, had, early in the week, invited several little girls from the village to come on this particular day and spend the afternoon and take tea with Alice. Knowing her niece's impatience under disappointment, she had not dared to mention this prospective pleasure lest something might interfere with the execution of her plan.

Cracking her nuts on the broad stone hearth of the kitchen, she had partly recovered her better spirits, when a very hard shell, which required more and harder blows than usual to break it, slipped from her grasp and the hammer fell with great force upon her finger.

Alice cried aloud with pain in which there was a large admixture of anger. Aunt Jane dropped the pastry she was preparing to roll and brought arnica and linon for the wound.

"I am so sorry you hurt yourself, let me put this on it," she said kindly as she bent over the little girl who still sat on the hearth.

Alice replied by crying harder and shaking her whole body in an angry "no."

"Yes, let me put this on it," said her aunt; but Alice only responded with an angrier shake.

Aunt Jane turned unwillingly to her work, while Alice continued, long after the pain had ceased, to squeeze out small tears and faint sobs.

Too angry with her aunt and the hammer she would not enjoy the rest of her labor, but went sulkily to an adjoining room to watch the pitiless rain and to accuse her aunt as the author of all her misfortunes. Finally her thoughts wandered off to other subjects, and making quite a leap, settled upon a box in the attic which Aunt Jane had said she might have. In her mind she saw what a nice trunk could be made of it for her play-house, to hold her doll's wardrobe; but how could she get it? For it was one of her aunt's most express commands that she should never go to the attic alone, the stairway of which was dangerous, being straight, narrow and unprotected. The more she thought of the box and the occupation it would afford, the more she felt she must have it; but her unkind feelings would not let her enquire of her aunt by what lawful means it could be obtained. Poor Alice! if she could have made a stand right at this point against the evil spirit that was mastering her, how much trouble she would have been spared.

Instead of that she resolved to carry out her desire—Aunt Jane would never know it, she said to herself—and in the privacy of her own room converted the box into a beautiful trunk. The rain was diminishing, and brighter light coming through the lessened clouds, but Alice, bent on her purpose, did not observe it; but stole softly up the stairs, and then mounted the narrow ladder that gave access to the attic. She unlocked the box and paused to amuse herself a little by looking at some of the discarded articles which the great room contained; and to enjoy the view from the window which she knew so well and which was so curiously different from this altitude. After spending more time in this way than she felt it consistent with the gravity of her errand, she started in haste to descend, when a slight slip of her foot threw

her across the narrow opening, and unable to recover an upright position, she fell heavily down the passage and upon the floor below.

So sudden was the change she could not for a moment imagine what had happened to her. She lay silent at the foot of the ladder, wondering if she were in the body or out of the body. Soon a terrible pain and confusion in her head, an aching and soreness of her whole body and limbs, and an overwhelming feeling of helplessness and inability to move made her cry aloud for help. None appearing, she slowly gathered up what seemed the scattered fragments of her former self, and with much difficulty made her way down the next flight of stairs. With no feigned sobs and tears this time, and calls for help, she made her way to the sitting room, where her Aunt Jane, overhearing her, came in haste to see what new calamity had befallen.

"I'm almost killed, Aunt Jane. Oh, I'm afraid I'm killed," cried Alice, catching sight of her aunt.

"Why, what have you done? What has happened to you?" said her aunt hurrying forward to help her.

"Oh, I fell down stairs," said Alice, crying loud.

"Fall down stairs," exclaimed Aunt Jane, "what stairs?"

"The attic stairs," sobbed Alice, her fear and pain forcing the truth from her lips before she had time to think about the expediency of such a confession.

Aunt Jane led her to the lounge and hastened for pillows and arnica, to which no objection was made now, and proceeded with utmost kindness to heal the bruises and learn the extent of the damage. The bruises were legion, but worst of all was a broken arm.

Alice was old enough and intelligent enough to understand cause and effect in this calamity, and she was in too much pain and fear to be otherwise than honest with herself as she lay alone on the lounge. Her fears and her anguish were very severe and in real bitterness of spirit she prayed to God to spare her life, and promised to never be so angry and disobedient again. No one would have seen the Alice Bonton of the morning in the pale, swollen, submissive girl in Aunt Jane's room.

After some hours the doctor came, set the broken bone, prescribed quiet and very light and simple food.

"Aunt Jane," said Alice, "who was it knocked at the door so many times when the doctor was here?"

"Some little girls came to see you," said her aunt.

"What little girls?" said Alice.

"Maggie Ford and Susie Smith, and the last one was Sarah Adams."

After thinking a while Alice said, "How did it all happen that they all came to-day, I wonder?"

"I invited them to come and visit you to-day and take tea," said Aunt Jane.

Alice lay very still for a long time. Finally she said, "Was that what you was making cakes and tarts and all those nice things for this morning?"

"Yes," replied her aunt.

Alice could not speak. She forgot her injuries and bruises in thinking over this loss.

That night before she went to sleep she put her one whole arm round her aunt's neck and begged to be forgiven for all her wrong conduct that day. Her submission was perfect, and her patience and obedience in the weary days that followed evidenced the thoroughness of her repentance.

It was weeks before Alice was sound and well again. Little girls came occasionally, and materially shortened several long and lonely days. Alice often referred to that lost tea-party.

One day her aunt said, "Supposing we go back and have that lost day over again."

"I wish we could, but we can't," said Alice, sadly.

"Well, we will come as near as we can to it, then, my dear."

So the same little girls were invited again, and when the day came it rained just the same. Alice did not fret, but helped her aunt all she could, and said, cheerfully, "If it rains all day they can come to-morrow, can't they?"

But it did not rain all day—the afternoon was bright. The little girls all came, and a delightful visit they had, for Alice was a kind and self-denying hostess.

Two Hundred Pounds a-year.

"It will be asked, if ministers with £200 a year are somewhat straitened, what becomes of those who have only £150, or less? This is a question the United Presbyterian Church will need to face very speedily, as they cannot long expect students with so many attractions round them, voluntarily to embrace poverty in a Church that is fast becoming wealthy. A poor minister in a rich church is an evil that ought not to be endured. We do not choose to answer what becomes of such ministers and their families. That, unless they have private means, they are unable to keep a servant; that the minister sees the inside of a new back; that the clothes of the family have been turned and mended till they will stand no further manipulation, are the least of the evils. We dare not put on paper what we know on this subject; but anyone who knows the expense of living at the present moment, and what the demands are on one occupying the position of a minister, can find it out for himself by a little arithmetic. We have not put down anything from imagination. We believe that want of consideration, and of a high sense of honour have much to do with the denial of a sufficient income from prosperous congregations; and we are not without hope that the matter having been brought forward in the definite way, appropriate congregations will imitate the example of their brethren who are adding £50 and £104 to their own means, and be enlarged to their minister's stipend."—United Presbyterian Magazine.

The Old-Catechism.

A good man, solicitous for the good of others, one day asked a careless sailor—a sinner reckless and defiant—to go with him to the place where a number of children were to be catechized. "No," was the blunt answer. "No, if it were not for that Catechism, I might do as I please."

The sailor was well advanced in years, and hampered by long intemperance and many sins. From his youth he had been accustomed to face perils, and most quaking disasters, but repeated and wonderful deliverances had led him to God. Many a storm had but to open him with sudden violence—saw a dark day had passed over him uncertain whether he would see his close or the narrow's sunshine—many a yawning grave had opened before him, and closed over shipmates and companions, but through all he lived on, reached the turn of life and began its dotage, and was still an impatient and godless man. He was of Scottish birth, and this fact explains the answer which he gave to the good man who would have led him right. It was the Westminster Catechism of which he spoke so scornfully and so indignantly. He was doubtless trained by godly parents after the fashion of their Presbyterian land. The Catechism was, after the Bible, their guide to truth, and in affectionate wisdom they sought to place its contents in the minds of their child, hoping that what was in the mind might pass into the heart, and thus control the life. They may have had few earthly possessions to send him forth with into life, but they could at least endeavor to lodge in his mind, associated with all the thoughts of his early youth and the memories of his home, a system of doctrine which might, in after years be as a guide to Christ, and through him, to a happy heaven.

It was manifest from the man's words that they had in part succeeded. They had placed the words of the venerable Catechism securely in his memory. They had fixed solemn and holy truths in the mind of their child so deeply and abiding that they could not be dislodged. The wanderer did not heed them—perhaps hated them—but he could not forget them. He had been a terrible sinner for many years, he had seen great vicissitudes, he had looked upon strange faces and places; he had gone down into dens of wicked men, and stained his soul by many transgressions, but neither change, nor wanderings, nor guilty crime could banish from his remembrance the lessons of the Sabbath evenings in his father's house. He would have banished these remembrances if he could. He would have torn the solemn truths thus taught him from his mind, and cast them out. He longed to escape from them, that he might make himself as wicked as he wished to be. But they restrained him, checked him, led him away, it is possible, at times from out-breaking wickedness. He longed to do as he pleased: "that Catechism" held him back.

We never heard of the man again, but we have been ready to believe, at least to hope, that in some hour of his after life the old truths which had lain so dormant in his mind, or which sprung into activity only to arouse his anger, came upon his heart with a living, divine power, and wrought in the shining soul that new life which only the Spirit of God, working with and through the truth, can begin and perpetuate. The Day will declare it.

But do Christian parents comprehend the influence of a system of Christian doctrine over a mind early and thoroughly imbued with it? Do they know how tedious it is; how permanent is its hold upon the intellect, if it fail, as it may for a time, to affect the heart? Let them consider its power in the case of this wanderer from God, striving to forget, but finding himself incapable of forgetting—heavily writhing, in his blindness, to escape from truths which would not yield their hold, and confessing that the last restraint upon him was the Catechism which he had learned at his mother's knee, or heard expounded by a venerable pastor in the days of his early youth.—Philadelphia Presbyterian.

Between the Books.

The Canon of the Old Testament close with the prophecies of Malachi. A period, therefore, of about four hundred years separates the last book of the Old from the first of the New Testament Scriptures. This period is one of Supreme importance in the history of the Jewish nation. During it the Jews were brought under the most varied influences. (1) First they were subject to the dominion of Persia; (2) for nearly a century and a half they were under Greek rulers; (3) for a century they enjoyed independence under their native Asmonæan princes; (4) and for more than half a century, while nominally ruled by the family of Herod, they were in reality subject to the power of the great Roman Empire. In the course of this period a remarkable change was wrought in the condition of the Elect Nation.—Bible Education.

A Baby Missionary.

Baby is only six or seven months old; but she does real missionary work. Would the children in America like to know how she does it? She goes on the Drophorus with her mother on a steamer which stops at various places for passengers. A through passenger like our baby missionary can do no good in her way. Her way is to open her large blue eyes, and look with interest and smiles on those around her; and her fair skin, her sweet face, her neat dress, and her loving ways, are sure to attract attention. People soon begin to talk to the mother, who improves this introduction to tell them about Him who was born at Bethlehem. When these friends that the baby finds leave the steamer, their looks awakened interest call for a prayer from the mother's heart that must be recorded in heaven, and must some time bring a blessed reward to the little innocent worker.—Loving Mother for Little Ones.