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No. 3.

Vol. I.

THE CHILD'S  
BIBLE EXPOSITOR;

OR

Lessons and Records of the Sunday School.

BY MRS. LEONARD.

“When thy word goeth forth, it giveth light and understanding  
unto the simple.”—PSALM cix, VERSE 130.

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TORONTO, SATURDAY, JANUARY 9, 1841.

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# THE CHILD'S BIBLE EXPOSITOR.

NUMBER III.

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MRS. ARNOLD AND HER PUPILS.

*Lesson from the thirteenth to the fifteenth verse of the second chapter of St. Matthew.*

*Mrs. Arnold.*—Repeat the first verse of your lesson, Mary.

*Mary.*—“And when they were departed, behold the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt; and be thou there until I bring thee word; for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.”

*Mrs. Arnold.*—Although the persecution and malice of the wicked began with the first days of our Saviour's life, yet it was then as it has been ever since, and as it is at this time. Though multitudes are opposed to the religion of Jesus, and many more are careless and indifferent to its truths, yet there have always been a few in all ages who have worshipped him in sincerity. The wise men and the shepherds have left an unquestionable testimony that he was the Son of God, and the Redeemer who had long been promised to a lost and perishing world. The Jewish people, we are told, heard and

wondered at the things which the shepherds told them. But they were under the fear and influence of kings and priests, and were not prepared to believe in a Messiah who came to them under a form of so much lowliness and humility. They had looked for him in the person of some powerful Prince or noble, who should be able at once to strike terror into his enemies, and encourage and reward his friends. Their pride and their prejudices were all arrayed against a King whose first appearance was in the feebleness of infancy, and with no apparent protection against his vindictive and powerful enemies. Therefore it was that though he was born, according to the promise of the Most High, of the family of Abraham and in the midst of the Jewish nation, "He came to his own, and his own received him not." The gifts that had been presented to our Saviour by the wise men of the East were probably designed as a providential supply for the expenses attending their flight into Egypt, for Joseph and Mary were poor, and without this resource would have been at a loss by what means to escape from Bethlehem or to subsist in a land of strangers, whose inhabitants had always been hostile to the people of God. The warning too came suddenly upon them, for it appears that the angel of the Lord came to Joseph on the night after the shepherds departed, and that Joseph arose and took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt. During their exile into this unfriendly country, it is probable that the circumstances attending the birth of Jesus Christ were never mentioned by his parents, but that they hid them in the greatest obscurity; and being among people who were not likely to afford them any shelter or protection

if their circumstances had been known, it was the last place in which Herod or his soldiers would have expected to find them. Their banishment from their own country however was not of very long continuance, for Herod lived but a few months after these events took place. Repeat the third verse of your lesson, Susan.

*Susan.*—"When he arose he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt,

"And was there until the death of Herod; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, 'out of Egypt have I called my son.'"

*Mrs. Arnold.*—The particular prophecy which is here alluded to, is found in Hosea. Find it, Hannah, and read the first verse of the eleventh chapter.

*Hannah.*—"When Israel was a child then I hear : him, and called my son out of Egypt."

*Mrs. Arnold.*—The deliverance of the children of Israel out of the bondage in which they were held in Egypt, and out of the power of Pharaoh, is always considered as a type of the deliverance of the world from the bondage of sin and the tyranny of Satan, which was effected by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we have a good deal of time on our hands this morning, we will read a few passages which seem to connect the words of the prophet which we have just read with the protection and favour which was shown to the Israelites in those days, as well as with the fulfilment of the promise made to them of a Saviour who was to be a descendant of Jacob, and who was to bear a sceptre which was to rise out of Israel. Find the thirteenth chapter of Exodus, Lucy, and read the eighteenth, and the twenty first and twenty-second verses.

*Lucy.*—“But God led the people about through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea; and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt.

“And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud to lead them the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, to go by day and night.

“He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.”

*Mrs. Arnold.*—Pharaoh and his army followed the children of Israel in great form and with many chariots and horses, with the intention of forcing them to go back into bondage again. But they had the same watchful protection that stood between our Saviour and those who would have destroyed him, and their enemies, however numerous and powerful, were not so mighty as those against whom they fought, so that when the army of Pharaoh approached

“The angel of God which went before the camp of Israel removed, and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud that went before their face was removed, and stood behind them.

“And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of the Israelites; and it was a cloud and darkness to *them*, but it gave light by night to *these*, so that the one came not near the other all the night.

“And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.

“And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground, and the waters were a wall to them on the right hand and on the left.

“And the Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horsemen, his chariots and his horses.

“And the Lord said unto Moses, *Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and upon their horsemen.*

“And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned in his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.

“And the waters returned, and covered the chariots and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them.

“But the children of Israel walked upon dry ground in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.”

From this providential interference in behalf of the Israelites, and the destruction of Pharaoh and his host in all the pride of their power, Herod might have learned that the purposes of God were not to be changed by the devices of man, and have seen how hopeless was his own attempt to destroy the infant, who, having been so long foretold by the prophets, seemed by his destiny to be placed beyond the reach of human power. But the malignant and jealous feelings of the Jewish king had been roused by the report of the wise men, and he was still more enraged when he found that his treachery was discerned, and that they did not intend to return to Jerusalem as he had commanded them. Having waited in the expectation of hearing from them where he might

find his victim, until it was apparently impossible to discover him by any ordinary means, he came to the most cruel and wicked resolution that ever entered into the heart of man to conceive, and one which it seems scarcely possible that he could have found agents so cruel as to execute. He sent out soldiers—hard-hearted and merciless men,—and murdered all the children in the town of Bethlehem and in the country round about it, who were two years old or under; thinking that by taking so wide a range he could not fail to destroy the infant he so much feared.

In these days, my dear children, and in this country, where all are under the protection of mild and equal laws, we can scarcely realise such a dreadful state of things. But we may imagine in some degree what we should suffer, were those we love and cherish most tenderly to meet with so dreadful a fate. We all know how bitterly we should be grieved to see their blood shed before our eyes by the hands of inhuman murderers, and to see rude soldiers coming forcibly into our homes to destroy the little ones who are the objects of our greatest care and affection. The mothers and sisters of Bethlehem were no less attached and affectionate than those of the present day, and it is not surprising that throughout the land the voice of lamentation and weeping and great mourning should be heard. Turn to the thirty-first chapter of Jeremiah, Charles, and read the fifteenth verse.

*Charles.*—"Thus saith the Lord—a voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children; refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not."



*Mrs. Arnold.*—Many of the descendants of Rachel were among the infants murdered in Bethlehem, and as she lay buried between Rama and Bethlehem, she might well be represented as weeping inconsolably for their slaughter. Find the ninth chapter, Lucy, and read the first verse.

*Lucy.*—“Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.”

*Mrs. Arnold.*—It is not supposed that these words have any direct allusion to the murder of the innocents by Herod, but in attempting to give any idea of the sorrow and confusion occasioned in Bethlehem by this dreadful massacre, I find no language so descriptive as that of the Scriptures; and when you become familiar with them, you will find that whenever your feelings are strongly awakened upon any occasion, you will naturally seek to express them in the language of the Bible.

Very soon after this dreadful act of cruelty, Herod was on his death-bed. But it does not appear that the unhappy king was visited in his last hours by repentance, or by any softening of his hard and revengeful heart. His disease was a very painful and miserable one, and reduced him to so loathsome a condition that it was scarcely possible for any one to go near him in his last hours. But so far was he from being subdued or reformed by these heavy chastenings, that he seems to have been only anxious to make the most of the little time he had left for the commission of more cruelty and crime. His son Antipater, who was the heir to his throne, had joined with him in the endeavour to destroy our Saviour, but as Herod's death approached it is pro-

bable that he looked with envy upon the youth and health of his son, and could not bear that he should live to enjoy the kingdom he himself would so soon be forced to resign. He therefore ordered him to be executed upon some trifling pretence of jealousy or suspicion.

Knowing that he was generally hated and dreaded by the Jews, and that his death would occasion a general rejoicing as soon as it was announced, he summoned all the principal Jews of the kingdom to assemble in Judea, and when they obeyed his orders, he caused them all to be shut up in a secure place, called the circus; he then sent for his sister, Salome, and her husband, and gave directions that as soon as he was dead, a party of soldiers should be sent into the circus, to murder all the Jews who were there; in order, as he said, to cause a general mourning throughout Jerusalem, and all the country of the Jews, though it would not be for him.—Salome, however, was not so wicked as to perform such a bloody command, and when Herod died, a few hours after, the poor Jews were released from their confinement, and permitted to return in safety to their homes.

It appears scarcely possible to us that so wicked a man as Herod should ever have existed, but when the heart of man is not converted and subdued by the restraining grace of God, and by the mild influence of religion, there is scarcely any degree of depravity to which the evil tempers and passions of our nature are not capable of leading us. Read, *Harriet*, the third and fourth verses of the twenty-seventh chapter of Proverbs.

*Harriet*.—"The sand is weighty, and a stone heavy; but a fool's wrath is heavier than them both.

"Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand against envy."

*Mrs. Arnold.*—In the fifteenth verse of the next chapter of Proverbs, we find those words, which seem to apply closely to Herod's character, and shew that great as his tyranny and cruelty were, they were *not* greater than the wisdom of Solomon had been able to foresee in similar circumstances:—"As a roaring lion, and as a ranging bear, so is a wicked ruler over the poor people." In the book of Daniel there is also related an act of tyranny and persecution which still further supports the truth of these Proverbs, and shows another instance in which the malice of the most powerful earthly enemies is baffled by the protection which it pleased God to extend to his servants. Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, had set up a golden image in the plain of Dura, in the Province of Babylon, and had commanded that all people, of all nations and languages, who were within hearing of a certain signal to be given, should fall down and worship the image, and whoever refused to fall down and worship the idol, should, in the same hour, be thrown alive into a burning fiery furnace. Among the persons who were most highly trusted for their wisdom and integrity, even by Nebuchadnezzar, were three Jews, whom he had set as Governors over Babylon, and to whom he had shewn great favour; for even the wicked can value the high qualities of good and upright people, and acknowledge the great value of their principles, when they have any dealings with them. Those Jews, who were firm in their own religion, and worshipped the one true God of their fathers, resolutely refused to bow down to the image which Nebuchadnezzar had set up, preferring rather to suffer the heaviest penalty a cruel tyrant could inflict upon them, than offend against the commandment of God. There are always a sufficient

number of ill-disposed people, in all times and places, to carry reports against their neighbours, and especially against those who are, for any reason, objects of envy and jealousy, and it was not long before the King was informed that those Jews had refused to obey him. He was very much enraged, and sent for the men, whose names were, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and questioned them, whether they had disobeyed him, and if they refused to serve his gods, and worship the golden image which he had set up; and that they might be better disposed to obedience, he repeated to them what his heralds had already proclaimed, that all who refused to do as he had commanded, should be thrown into the fiery furnace; and then asked them scornfully, "Who was the God who was able to deliver them out of his hands?" Look, Elizabeth, for the third chapter of Daniel, and in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth verses, you will find the answer of the Jews to the King.

*Elizabeth.*—"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the King: Oh, Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.

"If it be so, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, oh King.

"But if not, be it known unto thee, oh King, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

*Mrs. Arnold.*—"Nebuchadnezzar was so much enraged by this answer, that he ordered the furnace to be heated seven times more than it had been usually heated, and he caused those poor men, whom he believed to be in his power, to be bound as they were, with all their clothing upon them, and cast into the fiery furnace; and

so closely had the servants of the King obeyed his orders, that the heat from the furnace killed the men who were employed to cast the Jews into it. After they had been for some time in this dreadful place, Nebuchadnezzar, in astonishment, called to his counsellors, and asked them whether three men had not been cast into the furnace. And they answered and said "Yes, oh King." "And Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, and walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

The King now hastened to call the Jews by name, and bade them come forth; and he called them servants of the Most High God. And well he might, for they came out of the furnace, and not a hair of their heads, or a shred of their garments, had been singed or injured; and the result of this wonderful interposition of the Most High, in favour of those who chose rather to suffer a painful death, than acknowledge any other God, was, that Nebuchadnezzar, wicked as he was, could not resist the conviction that their's was the only true worship, and he commanded that no other God should be worshipped in his kingdom but the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

As all Scriptures were written for our improvement, we must not read those narratives of the Old Testament merely as matters of history, and from the one you have just heard many lessons of faith and obedience and trust in the power and providence of our Heavenly Father may be learned. There is indeed no situation of trial in which it is worth while to sacrifice a principle to escape any consequences that may seem to threaten us in this world for our perseverance in that course which

we know to be right and acceptable to God, and just to our fellow-creatures. Let us persevere in this study of the Bible, my dear children, with a resolution to have no other standard of action, and in all difficult cases to refer to the Word of God to decide what course we shall pursue. Let that Word be "A lamp to your feet, and a light to your path," and you need fear no darkness, for it is "sight to the blind," and "strength to the weak," and "wisdom to the simple." It is only by neglecting and forgetting this unerring and unchanging guide that we are overcome by the trials and perplexities of our journey through life.

Had Herod and the wicked King of Babylon made use of such light as the Scriptures of the Old Testament afforded them, they could never have fallen into such depths of sin as we find recorded against them, and which are of a nature from which all our feelings revolt; but do not, when you read or hear of such a fearful degree of depravity, imagine that you have less of it than others, because it has not in you brought forth such terrible fruits; the human heart is deceitful and desperately wicked, and if we have escaped the commission of any gross offence against religion or morality, we should be thankful that we have not been placed in situations to be tempted to such an extent, and as there is no use in dwelling on the sins and offences of others, except with a view to look more closely into our own, we will not even indulge in our detestation of such crimes as those of Herod and the King of Babylon, without asking ourselves whether, in proportion to the instructions we have had, and the temptations we have been shielded from, we have any right to boast that we are better than others?

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