

The Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, N. S., MARCH 25, 1874.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1874.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, March 29th, 1874.

The Song of Moses—Exodus xv. 1-11

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" Exodus xiv. 11.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verse 8-21.

REVIEW OF LESSONS FOR THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1874.

- The House of Bondage... Exodus i. 7-14. The Birth of Moses... Ex. ii. 1-10. The Call of Moses... Ex. iii. 1-10. The Plagues... Ex. vii. 1-22. The First Plague... Ex. vii. 14-22. The Passover... Ex. xii. 21-30. The Red Sea... Ex. xiv. 1-31. The Exodus... Ex. xv. 22-27. Bitter Waters Sweetened... Ex. xv. 22-27. Bread from Heaven... Ex. xvi. 1-5, 31, 35. Defeat of Amalek... Ex. xvii. 8-15.

SUMMARY.—The nation that afflicted Israel God afflicted; the army that would have destroyed Israel God destroyed; and the Israel that had no power to save themselves God saved.

ANALYSIS.—I. God Israel's Saviour. vs. 1-3. II. The Red Sea Victory. vs. 4-10. III. The Doxology vs. 11.

EXPOSITION.—Introductory.—On this our last Sabbath of the first quarter of the year, we are to review the last twelve lessons. The committee who arranged this series, have proposed to make the review in connection with this 'Song of Moses' at the Red Sea.

Verse 1.—Then sang Moses and the Children of Israel this song. "Then," that is, while encamped on the eastern shore of the Red Sea, after they had seen the overthrow of their pursuers. This overthrow of the Egyptians may be counted as an eleventh plague. It swept out of existence the flower of Egypt's army, and in all probability Egypt's king. How long it had been since the first plague, which was the change of the Nile waters to blood, is not known. It is thought about ten months. Moses who now sang this matchless song, which, for its power and sublimity, has been the admiration of the ages, was born eighty years before. Forty years he lived in proud, powerful Egypt, with all the privileges of royal rank and forty years under the eye and hand of God in the desert near Sinai, with his father-in-law. His song must thus be understood to look to all the series of redemptive miracles by which Jehovah had taken the whole people out from under Egypt's power, and to celebrate them all as being concentrated in this one. If Moses had only looked on the past and present, there was not the greatest reason for exultation, for though beyond their task-masters, they were also beyond the fertile fields and goodly fare of their Goshen. They were a horde of exiles in a strange land—and that a desert land. But Moses well knew that beyond the desert was Canaan, and that it was just as certain that Israel was to dwell in Canaan, as that it had dwelt in Egypt. Moses, by his faith in God, knew the future to be what God had pledged himself to make it.

The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. So it was every time when God appeared for his people. He who touched the Lord's anointed to do them harm, went down beneath the might of God's terrible arm. So it is with all that which wars against the soul of the disciple of Jesus. It shall be smitten down, and the soul go free, and at the last this soul clean escaped from the last enemy with a victor's shout shall cry, "O death, where is thy sting; O grave where is thy victory?" All that makes against God's children, then, shall be to them as were these dead Egyptians—buried in the sea—harmless forever more.

Verse 2.—I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him. That is just what we want to do—God wants us to do—to make for God a place, a habitation, a home. We must give him place in our hearts—build for him there a place of abode. And so, too, we look out on the world of men—on this entire earth, and long to have the world changed into one great living temple of God to be perpetually filled with the glory of his gracious presence of which this radiant cloud was but a faint symbol. The desire to do for God is further kindled by the memory of the past. My father's God, I will exalt him. There was a very ancient purpose to bless Israel, and a promise, too, which dated back to the time of

Abraham, nay, to the time of Adam. So as Moses celebrates the enemy's overthrow and Israel's deliverance not this once only, but again and again it expands his gratitude, and strengthens his purpose to do for his Saviour. And what power there is in this consciousness of union with the great family of God, in this conscious communion with all the saints, and especially in the memory of the past. On the strength of this sense of union we may well resolve to exalt God, to speak his praise, and to give him room in human affection.

Verses 3, 4.—The Lord is a man of war. These verses are a thankful recognition of the fact that God wields a sword, and visits upon the ungodly retribution. Our lessons for the quarter have set forth strikingly this fact. Unconsciously, no doubt, our sympathy for Israel has caused us to share in the joy at the disaster of the oppressors. But there is abroad a feeling that we may not rejoice in the punishment of sin. The imprecatory Psalms are to many a stumbling block. But this softness which cannot be glad when righteousness is asserted, is a weakness. It is not the product of that Christian love which cannot be devoted to God without thereby being abhorrence of sin. He is no loyal subject of government, human or divine, who is not both glad and grateful when causeless and obstinate rebellion meets with just retribution.

Verse 5-10.—These verses, with varying phrases, assert the glory of God as shown in the swift and utter destruction of Israel's enemy.

Verse 11.—In the miracles which we have studied during the quarter, this course of things is interrupted again and the God of nature comes out before us, and in manifest freedom does a work which proves him to be above all forces, and supreme over them. We of this day, and in this land, all scout the notion that the idols of the heathen are anything. And yet "the most advanced thinkers," as they style themselves, and are by others styled, have set up other gods to which they ascribe all the power that exists. God has taught us that these gods, "the law of nature," cannot take the place of the God of nature. So we also say, Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?

QUESTIONS.—When did Moses sing this song? What event does it celebrate? May it be regarded as celebrating also all the miracles which we have studied during the quarter? Is it a truly Christian song? What has given it its power over Christian hearts?—What is said in Revelation xv. 3. Why is it said he sang this song to the Lord? What are the foes of our soul? When is the triumph to be complete? What did Moses propose to do for God? Vs 2. How can we prepare him a place of habitation? How can we exalt God? What prompts a redeemed man to work for the Redeemer? What is God called in verse 3? Have our lessons shown this to be a proper title? Ought we to rejoice that God punishes sin? Does our love forbid us thus to rejoice? Does his love forbid him to punish? What is meant in verse 11 by "the gods"? Why should our quarter's study make God seem near to us?

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher. Scripture Catechism, 177, 178.

SUNDAY, April 5th, 1874.—The Ten Commandments.—Exodus xx. 1-17.

Youths' Department.

THE LITTLE BIRD.

A little bird with feathers brown Sat singing on a tree; The song was very soft and low, But sweet as it could be. And all the people passing By looked up to see the bird That made the sweetest melody That ever they had heard. But all the bright eyes looked in vain, For birdie was so small; And with a modest, bark-brown coat, He made no show at all. "Why, papa!" little Gracie said, "Where can the birdie be? If I could sing a song like that, I'd sit where folks could see." "I hope my little girl will learn A lesson from the bird, And try to do what good she can, Not to be seen or heard. "This birdie is content to sit Unnoticed by the way, And sweetly sing his Maker's praise From dawn till close of day. So live, my child, all through your life, That be it short or long, Though others may forget your looks, They'll not forget your song.

THE LIGHT IN THE WINDOW.

BY LOUISA CHANDLER MOUNTON.

He plodded on, through sleet and snow, with step awkward and shuffling, yet with a certain resolution in it. Other men might have turned aside, unwilling to breast the full force of such a storm. Not so Daniel Newton—"Shuffling Dan," his fellow-workmen called him. He was no great favourite among them—silent, brooding, sullen fellow, they thought him—but he lived a life of which they understood very little. It had been consecrated for fourteen years to one object; and there was in it an element of chivalrous self-sacrifice of which he was utterly unconscious himself. He passed a corner, where some of his comrades were lounging, then the forge, with the door invitingly open, and the bright-red light streaming out of it cheerily, into the murky, gathering night. For a moment he was tempted just to go in and warm himself a little in that glow; but he shook his shaggy head, and turned away. "She'll be waitin'," he said, as he drew up the collar of his coarse coat; "the lamb, she'll be waitin'."

And then, as if the thought had given him new life, he plodded on again valiantly. On through sleet and snow, till he came at last in front of a small cottage. A light streamed forth from its front window over the white pathway. It had shone there for him every winter nightfall for many a year; and he never saw that beacon-ray without blessing his "little-lamb" over and over again. How warm she had kept his heart! And yet among the hard things in his life, people who took the trouble to speak of him at all always reckoned "that crippled child." When his wife died, and left him her hour-old baby to bring up as best he could, they commiserated him, and wondered what he was to do. And when it was found that the child would never be able to walk, they thought his burden was heavier than he could well bear. But he knew—only he could not have told them or reasoned about it—what had been his sweet compensation. At first, to be sure, it was a hard blow when he found that the little one he loved was never to be quite like other children—that she never would come toddling down the path to meet him, clinging to his hard hands with rosy little fingers—but this very grief about her made his love all the more tender.

She was the one idea of his life. The only absorbing feeling he had ever known was for her. He had liked her mother well enough; but it had been an ordinary, commonplace regard, until she died and left this tender, blue-eyed blossom, which he was half afraid to touch. The child consecrated the mother's memory, and he cared for her dead more than he had ever cared for her living. But it was little Eunice who filled his heart full, and sat on his throne queen-regent for evermore. He had her nursed carefully, and he cheerfully gave up every hour of his life to the task of being father and mother to her, both in one. When she was old and strong enough to sit in a little wheeled chair, in which she could trundle herself about the room, his delight knew no bounds. In summer she was always at the open door to meet him; and in winter her cheery lamp burned always at the cottage window. When she was twelve years old, she herself proposed to keep house for him. There were three rooms in their little cottage, all on one floor, besides the unfinished garret overhead. From room to room of these three she could trundle herself about. She contrived to do a good many household tasks; and, with a neighbour hired to come and help each day, she managed nicely, and was the proudest of little housewives. Of late, however, she had been growing weaker, and her father had insisted that she should not be left alone at all. So the neighbour who helped her stayed all day now, but went home at night when the father came, for he was not ready to give up the pleasure of having his darling quite to himself in the long evenings.

Now, as he came near, his step grew quicker. All that was shuffling and uncertain passed out of his manner, and he walked with the strong, firm tread of one sure of his welcome. Drawing near, he saw her face at the window, which the light illumined—a face of almost ideal beauty. Not the features so much—when you analysed them they were far from regular, and bore a curious likeness to his own. But the great blue eyes were full of light; the colour came and went on the cheeks in faint pink flushes, and the skin was transparent as the most delicate crystal. Around this wistful, loving, waiting face floated a mass of soft golden hair, like

the halos you see sometimes in old pictures around the heads of saints. He saw him the blue eyes kindled; then the face disappeared from the window, and when he opened the door there she was in front of it, with her lips uplifted for his kiss. The neighbour stood by, her things on ready to go, and it struck the father that there was a look of pity on her face. "You'd better not get too near the child with these wet things on," she said kindly. "She's but a weak little thing, and she mustn't take cold."

He started back remorsefully, and did not go up to the girl again until he had taken all his wet things off in his own room, and made himself quite dry and tidy. By this time the neighbour was gone, and he and Eunice sat down together to the supper which waited. He had the keen, hungry appetite of a working man, but it did not keep him from noticing, presently, that the food on his child's plate remained untouched. He laid down his knife and fork, and looked at her anxiously.

"Ain't you going to keep father company a little, deary? You ain't never hearty, I know, but I want to see you eat something."

She smiled faintly. "You know you don't let me work any more, father; and I can't get hungry like you, that are busy all day, working for me."

"Yes, lamb, for you," he repeated, as if the words gave him pleasure. "God knows it's all for you, and He knows how thankful I am to have you to work for. Folks talk about my lot bein' hard, but that's all they know. I wouldn't change places with no man. So long as He leaves me you, I'll never doubt that God loves me."

The girl sighed, and a look of pain quivered a moment about her lips.

"Take me up, father," she said, half-an-hour later, as they sat before the bright fire together. No mother's touch could have been more tender than that rough man's as he lifted the little twisted form into his arms, and laid the sunny head carefully against his bosom. She rested there for a while silently, looking fondly up into his face, and now and then touching his cheeks gently with her thin fingers. At last she said, with an air, earnest, yet slightly hesitating: "You do believe God loves you, don't you, father?"

"Yes, lamb, yes; so long as He leaves me you."

"But if He didn't leave me," she persisted, "wouldn't you believe that, too, was because He loved you?"

The man's face darkened with a sudden, sick terror.

"Look here," said he, in a voice of passionate entreaty, "don't talk about that, don't! It couldn't be love, no way, that wouldn't leave you. You're all I've got, child—all. God don't want to take all away, does He? That ain't love."

The girl stretched her arm up and drew it round his neck, then laid her face on his shoulder to hide the tears she could not keep back. But she made no answer. After awhile he asked a sudden question, as if a suspicion had pierced him with a pang too sharp to be borne—

"Has Dr. Peters been here to-day, Eunice?"

She trembled a little, but answered quietly, "Yes father."

"And he says you're goin' does he, the way your mother went? Child don't you believe him! You shan't go. My love will keep you alive. Hasn't it kept you now, fourteen year? Why, the doctor said you wouldn't live the first time he laid you in my arms! But you have lived and here you are, and here I'll hold you. Hasn't my love kept you so long?"

"Your love and God's love, father. But what if He thinks, now, that it's time for me to go home?"

And then they sat on silently, for a long still hour; and the wood fire burned brightly, and now and then a brand dropped on the hearth and that and the storm outside were the only sounds which broke the stillness, save when once or twice, a great gasping sob tore up from shuffling Dan's deep chest. At last he bent over, turned his girl's face toward him, and looked into it with eager, hungry eyes.

"It'll be a sorry world, lamb," he said, "when you're not in it—when there's nobody waitin' at the door, and no light burnin' in the window."

She looked up, her blue eyes full of tears. "Father," she said gently, "don't you know you've told me sometimes how the thought that I was waitin' made it easy for you to get home, when the storms drove ever so hard, and kept you from wantin' to turn into the theatre or tavern?"

"Yes, lamb, yes; but what'll keep me ed bitterly."

"I thought of the times you'd said that, father, after Dr. Peters went away, to-day; and I wondered if it wasn't G'd's love that was going to take me to the heavenly home so as to make it easier for you to come. I'll wait for you there, father; and I won't be lame any more, and I'll come to meet you, when you get on that threshold—as I never could here—strong and free father, strong and free. Won't it make it easy for you to come on, in spite of storms, and not turn aside by the way, when you know I'm waitin' there, just as sure as ever I waited here?"

But the father said nothing. He only held her against his aching heart, with a grasp that almost hurt her, as if to ease his pain—held her till bedtime came, and then carried her to her room, and left her there with a long, sad, silent kiss. Once alone, the passion of his agony clutched him in its grasp; but he suffered no sound to escape him which would reach her ears. Rigid as stone he sat before the fire, and never heeded when the room grew cold, and the last brand burned out and fell into grey ashes.

After that night he never returned again to the subject. He saw that she failed every day, but he could not talk about it, and she understood him too well to urge him. Every day he went to his work; now was not the time to fail, when she needed unwonted luxuries, and might need them no one knew how long. Every night he came home to her, his face pallid with apprehension. At last she grew too weak to sit up any more, and lay patiently all day on her little bed bearing without a moan her torturing pain, and never forgetting at night to have the lamp put in the window—the beacon-light for the father coming home.

Just at the last there was a time when all knew the end was near. That week her father did not go to his work. There was money enough for all she would ever need in this life, and more. So, motionless, except when he could do something for her comfort, he sat all day long by her pillow, and watched her, save when sometimes his agony grew too mighty to be borne and he had to rush away from her, out under the desolate sky, where the winter winds were blowing, and shriek out the madness of his woe to the pitiless heavens. Eunice watched him too, in her turn, with loving anxious, searching gaze, but she saw no hope in his face. She knew that he was hardening his heart. There came a night at length, when he was with her alone. A woman who had come to watch had fallen asleep in the other room. The father would not waken her: he was greedy of every moment in which he could have his girl all to himself. So he sat as usual looking at her silently, and she as silently gazed back into his face with her great, far seeing blue eyes. At last she said:

"Then I must not wait for you there, father? You won't come?"

He looked at her with startled gaze. He had never thought of the matter in that light before. She waited a moment, and then went on—

"I thought you'd want to come, father. I thought you'd see how God meant to draw you to him by taking me first. And I thought I could die easy, feelin' sure of your comin', and then wait for you there a little while. But you won't see God's love; and you won't feel that I'm waitin'."

Something touched his heart at last—her look perhaps, or her words, or her tone of piteous pleading, or all these combined. He sank sobbing on his knees beside her.

"God pity me!" he gasped; "God forgive me! Wait for me there, lamb—I'll come, surely. I'll walk in His way."

Does not my story fitly end here, where Eunice's work ended? Her life went out, after that, painlessly and quietly. Her hand was in her father's to the very last, and he murmured, in answer to the appeal in her dying eyes, "I'll come, lamb, surely!" He buried his girl beside her mother; but to him she is not dead. He believes, simple, literal soul, that God's love has given him one of the many mansions, and that she waits for him there at its window, her face illumined by a light that will never grow dim or fade away.

The blossom cannot tell what becomes of its odor, and no man can tell what becomes of his influence and example, that roll away from dim and go beyond his ken on their mission.

He who gives a trifle meanly, is far meaner than the trifle.