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INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Fourth Quarter Lesson 19, Dec. 9, 1901

MOSES AND PHARAOH.—
Exodus 11: 1-10.

GOLDEN TEXT.—The angel of his
presence saved them.—Isa. 63: 9

HISTORICAL SETTING.

Time.—The plagues lasted nine
or ten months, from June to the
following April. In B. C. 1492-91,
by the common reckoning; about
1300, according to Prof. or Price.
The monuments of Egypt, refer-
ring to the death of a son of Manepthah
and various uprisings in 1276 B. C.
Place.—The meetings of Moses
with Pharaoh were at the capital,
Zaan (Tanis), and the central place
of the "marvelous things" was the
field of Zaan. Moses—80 years
old.

JUDGMENTS THAT WERE MERCIES.

The object in view was the deliv-
erance of the Israelites, and the
forming them into a nation which
should be the representative of the
one true God, and the means of
bringing the whole world into his
kingdom.

Two things were necessary: (1)
Pharaoh must be made willing to
let the people go free; and (2) the
people must be willing to go.

The first work of Moses and
Aaron was to convince the people
that God had sent them, that the
people could escape from bondage,
and that the time had come. They
did this by calling the elders to-
gether and telling them their mes-
sage from God. Then they worked
three miracles,—the rod and the
serpent, the leprous hand cleansed,
and some Nile water changed before
them into blood (4: 1-9), as signs
that God had sent them.

The result was that the people
believed.

The second work was to present
their request to Pharaoh in the
name of the Lord God of Israel,
"Let my people go." At first the
request was to go three days into
the wilderness on a special service
of worship. To demand more might
have seemed extravagant. It was
an honest request, and the condi-
tions would have been complied
with. But it would have led to
larger requests in due time.

The result was an indignant re-
fusal, and an intensifying of their
sufferings. The people blamed
Moses for their sufferings.

The Third Work. Moses for a
time was greatly discouraged. But
God comforted him, renewed his
promises; told him that the refusal
of Pharaoh would work out good
(5: 20-6: 13). The people would
be more ready in the end to break
their chains. Moses therefore went
again to Pharaoh and wrought be-
fore him the three signs he had
shown to the Israelites. But the
magicians counterfeited what Moses
did. After three thousand years,
their successors are still performing
the same curious trick. The
Egyptian juggler takes up in his
hand the naja,—a small viper,—
and, pressing a finger on the nape
of its neck, puts it into a catalepsy,
which makes it motionless and
stiff, like a rod; and when it re-
gains its power of motion, the
bystanders fancy that the magician's
rod has been changed into a serpent.
Moses showed the difference
between the two kinds of work by
his rod swallowing up the rods of
the magicians.

The result was that Pharaoh still
hardened his heart, and refused to
let the people go.

Increase in severity. The plagues
gradually increase in severity till
the last terrible plague accomplishes
the desired result. If a small
trouble had made Pharaoh willing,
that is all that would have been
inflicted. But it had to go on with
increasing severity till the object
was accomplished.

The purpose of the plagues. The
purpose of these plagues was
double: (1) to make Pharaoh un-
derstand and honor the true God,
and realize the evil of resisting his
commands, till he should release
the people; (2) to exalt God in the
hearts of the Israelites so that they
would trust in him.

A blow against idolatry. Each
plague was directed against some
object of idol worship, "dealt a blow
upon the priesthood or the sacrifice
or invaded a sphere which some
deity should have protected. They
ranged through all nature, and
showed that Jehovah was the one
God, and mightier than all the
forces the Egyptians trusted in.
He could send and he could remove.
The fact that Hebrews were exempt
from the plagues proved the superi-
ority of their God."

FIRST PLAGUE: TURNING THE
WATERS OF EGYPT INTO BLOOD, in
June, for seven days, was directed
against the Nile, which was wor-
shiped by the Egyptians.

SECOND PLAGUE: THE FROGS
(autumn) assailed the worship of
frogs. "An ancient vignette repre-

sents the father of Rameses II.
offering two vases of wine to a frog
enshrined in a small chapel, with
the legend, 'The sovereign lady of
both worlds.'"

THIRD PLAGUE: OF THE LICE
(October to November). The word
includes poisonous flies and insects.
Sir Samuel Baker says that in
Africa "there is a kind of tick
which lives in hot sand and dust,
and is the greatest enemy to man
and beast. From the size of a grain
of sand, in its natural state, it
swells to the size of a hazel nut
after having preyed for some days
upon the blood of an animal." The
plague struck at idolatry, inasmuch
as it came from the dust of the
sacred soil.

FOURTH PLAGUE: FLIES (Novem-
ber). This appears to include
winged pests of all kinds,—stinging
flies, cattle flies, cockroaches, and
beetles. "This was a blow at
idolatry, since the most sacred
symbol of the Egyptian religion
was the scarabæus or common dung
beetle of the country. It was
sculptured on every monument,
painted on every tomb, and on
every mummy chest, engraved on
gems, worn round the neck as an
amulet, and honored in ten thous-
and images of every size: sad of all
materials."

FIFTH PLAGUE: THE MURRAIN
(December or January), still not
uncommon in Egypt, struck at "the
worship of Isis and Osiris, to whom
the cow and the ox were sacred, and
of the great god Amon, of whom
the ram was the living symbol." A
physician, for many years a resi-
dent in Cairo writes to a German
paper that when the Nile has
fallen the ground is filled with de-
cayed animal life. "There can be
no doubt that such a condition of
affairs would bring a pestilence
among the cattle. At present such
a cattle plague is developed just in
this way, and takes the shape of an
inflammation of the spleen." The
miracle lay in the unusual numbers,
at a definite time, in a succession
of such great plagues, and in the fact
that Goshen was exempt.

SIXTH PLAGUE: BOILS OR BLAINS
(Luther calls them "black blains").
They arose from a symbolic sprink-
ling of ashes from furnaces,—the
special emblem in Scripture of the
bitter slavery of the Hebrews. "In
various Egyptian towns sacred to
Set or Typhon, the god of Evil—
foreigners, perhaps often Hebrews,
were yearly offered in sacrifice to
this hideous idol. After being
burnt alive on a high altar their
ashes were scattered in the air by
the priests, in the belief that they
would avert evil from all parts
whither they were blown." But
ashes now brought boils instead of
blessings. "The Upper Nile Valley
is the home of the smallpox, which
there appears in its severest, or
black form. This sickness afflicts
not only people, but also nearly all
kinds of domestic animals."

SEVENTH PLAGUE: HAIL, from a
storm of fearful thunder and light-
ning, in February, as we learn from
the state of the crops destroyed.

EIGHTH PLAGUE: LOCUSTS.—
Wherever they appear they cover
the ground for miles, and sometimes
to the depth of two or more feet. It
is in vain to attempt to drive them
away. Only when the last bit of
grain or grass is devoured do they
depart.

NINTH PLAGUE: DARKNESS.—
"In April, there begins in Egypt a
period of fifty days in which pecu-
liar meteorological phenomena occur.
During this period the south wind
at times brings a fine sand storm in
great masses. Wherever the storm
passes is heard a cracking sound as
of electric sparks. A nervous de-
pression seizes mankind. The
period of this depression often lasts
for several days. This is the
Egyptian darkness. It is not im-
possible that it should result even
in total darkness for the period of
two or three days." Artificial
light at such times is of little use,
for it cannot pierce the opaque air.
The streets are perfectly empty, and
a deep silence, like that of night,
reigns everywhere. Other plagues
were worse in some ways, but this
tended most to awe Pharaoh's
heart with a ghastly foreboding.
He commanded that Moses should
see his face no more.

TENTH PLAGUE: DEATH OF THE
FIRSTBORN.—VS. 1-10. All lesser
punishments had failed in render-
ing Pharaoh willing to let the
people go; but they had prepared
the kings and the people so that
the last great plague could succeed;
so that not only he will let you go
hence, but he shall surely thrust you
.....hence altogether. In prepa-
ration for this the people were
advised to obtain some small por-
tion of what they had earned. Let
every man borrow of his neighbor
.....jewels of silver andgold.
The translation of two words in
this account, "borrowed" and "lent"
(Ex. 11: 2; 12: 35, 36), has been
peculiarly unfortunate, because it
gives an entirely false impression,
and charges a dishonest command
on the part of God, and a dishonest
transaction on the part of the

Israelites. The Israelites did not
borrow, but "asked for," as in R. V.
jewels of silver and jewels of gold,
and garments. And the Egyptians
did not lend but gave, "let them
have" them. The custom is uni-
versal to give presents at the close
of any service, as an expression that
the service was satisfactory. The
Israelites did exactly what is done
down to the present day, only the
Lord made them unusually liberal.
Thus the Israelites had some reward
for their long services, and we
understand how they had so much
silver and gold in the wilderness.

Moses was very great in the land.
As the natural result of what he
had done. Will I go out. It was
distinctly God's work. All the
firstborn shall die. The heaviest
punishment, but the only one that
would allow the people to become
a nation. The maid-servant....
behind the mill. The mill consisted
of two flat millstones one upon the
other. A woman sat behind
it and turned the upper stone with
her hand. But against any of the
children of Israel. The distinction
would make it clear that it was the
Lord's doings, that his enemies
could not resist him, but his friends
would be protected. And all these
thy servants. Moses warned
Pharaoh that the next plague would
be so terrible that he would not
only be willing, but would urge,
that the people go. And the Lord
hardened Pharaoh's heart. 1.
"Hardened" is used nineteen times
in this account, in which it is said
eleven times that God hardened
Pharaoh's heart, three times that he
hardened it himself, and five times
simply the fact that it was hardened.

2. What the effect is depends
on the man. God did everything
with the express design of making
Pharaoh let the people go. The
revolving idea that God sends his
Holy Spirit to hearts with the ex-
press design of hardening them
finds no warrant in the Scriptures.
The office of the Holy Spirit is to
soften and win the soul. God did
to Pharaoh exactly what in the be-
ginning he did to Moses, and for
the same purpose.

3. Everything God did was right
and good, and this good was used
as the occasion for Pharaoh to
harden his heart. It is the same
to-day.

4. God made the natural laws un-
der which Pharaoh acted, and by mis-
using which his heart was hard-
ened. Every act of resistance and disobe-
dience always hardens the heart.

5. When Pharaoh had hardened
his own heart, so that there was no
possible hope of his yielding obedi-
ence, than God, by his providence,
by natural law, perhaps by the with-
drawal of special influences, let him
go on in his high-handed and blind
course to his own destruction. This
was the fruit and punishment of
Pharaoh's hardening his own heart.
God never hardens a willing and
obedient heart.

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Go On, Sir, Go On.

Arago, the great French astron-
omer, tells us that he became so
discouraged in the study of mathe-
matics that he almost resolved to
abandon his effort. He was just
about ready to give up when he
happened to notice something
printed or written under the paper
binding of his book. He unfolded
the leaf and found it was from
D'Alembert. The letter said: Go
on, sir, go on! The difficulties you
meet will resolve themselves as you
advance. Persevere and the light
will dawn and shine with increasing
clearness upon your path. This
striking passage made an impres-
sion upon the young mathematic-
ian's mind which he never forgot.
It was a perpetual spur to his
ambition, and came to him just in
the nick of time. He resolved
then and there that he would sur-
mount every difficulty; then he
would become a great mathematic-
ian himself. He tightened his grip
and urged himself on until fame
took him up and told the world the
story of one of the greatest astron-
omers of his time.

Hanging on was one of Grant's
strong points. He did not know
how to let go. He would keep
pegging away, no matter what the
obstacles, until he triumphed.

The race is to the plodder. I
have in mind several very brilliant
graduates of last year and years
before, who promised a great deal
and of whom friends predicted
great things, but somehow they
have disappointed all expectations,
simply because they lack sticking
qualities. They are good scholars,
and they imagined because they
ranked high in college that they
would rank high in life without
great effort.

But they lack the hanging-on
quality. They do not realize that,
in practical life, the race is to the
plodder, and not necessarily to the
swift. This is why so many brilliant
class leaders have become disap-
pointments to their friends. The
chain is no stronger than its weak-
est link, and lack of perseverance is
a fatal deficiency which nothing
else will supply.

Perhaps the greatest secret of
success in life is due to those stick-
ing qualities. Grip conquers the
world—the faculty of sticking and
hanging on when everybody else
lets go. It is the five minutes more
which wins the battle—the dogged
perseverance, the determination of
never giving up until death or
victory comes.—Siftings.

The Century Magazine

will make of 1902 a year of

HUMOR

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Mark Twain, F. P. Dunne (Mr.
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Remus), Edward W. Townsend
(Chimney Padden), George Ade, Ruth
McKenry Stuart, James Whitcomb
Riley, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Gelett
Burgess, Frank R. Stockton, Tudor
Jenks, Ellis Parker Butler, Carolyn
Wells, Harry S. Edwards, Chester
Bailey Fernald, Charles Battell
Loomis, Oliver Herford, Elliott Flower
Albert Biglow Paine, Beatrice Herford

Reminiscences and Portraits of
Petroleum V. Nasby, Josh Billings,
Mark Twain, John G. Saxe, Mrs.
Partington, Miles O'Reilly, Hans
Breitmann, Artemus Ward, Orpheus
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