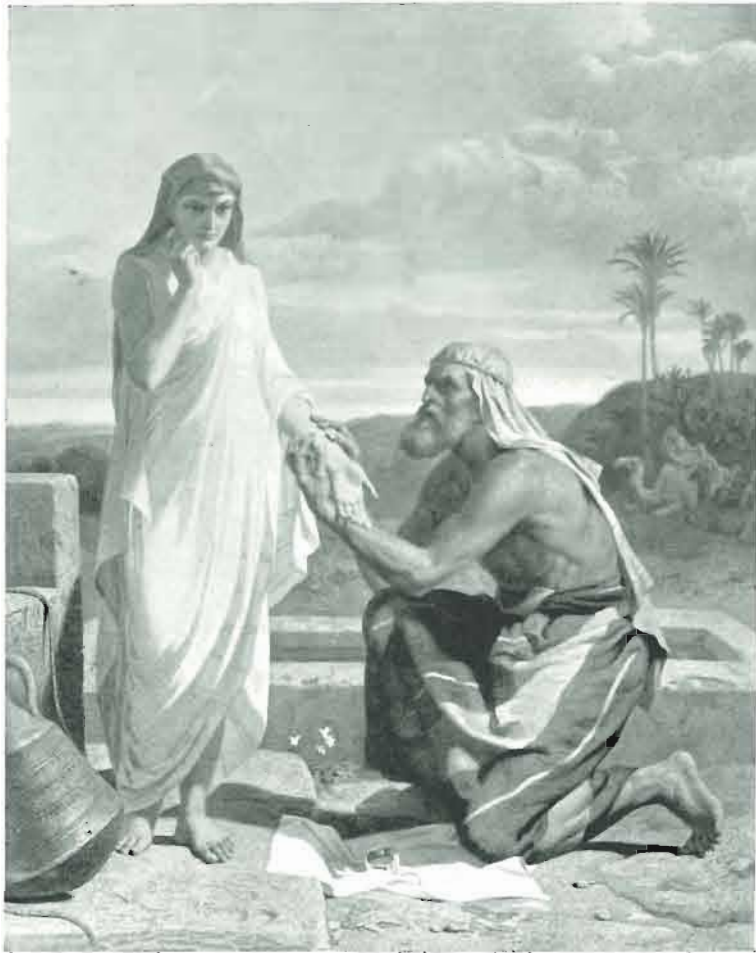




STORIES FROM THE
BOOK
OF
BEGINNINGS



By Permission of Art Union of London.

REBEKAH AT THE WELL (see ch. XII.).

BOOK OF BEGINNINGS

OR

STORIES FROM GENESIS

AND

How to Teach them

BY

MARIAN PRITCHARD

(‘AUNT AMY.’)

‘We wondered before we knew ; and must ever wonder again before we can know more.’—JAMES MARTINEAU.

London

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

ESSEX HALL, ESSEX STREET, STRAND, W.C.

1896

PRINTED BY ELSOM AND CO.
MARKET-PLACE, HULL.

TO
NORMAN AND VIOLET,
HUBERT AND COLIN,

GRAFTS OF THE SAME STOCK AS OUR OWN,

THESE PAGES

ARE LOVINGLY DEDICATED BY

A. M. D.



www.unitarian.org.uk/docs

CONTENTS.

	Page		Page
INTRODUCTION	7	CHAPTER VIII.	41
CHAPTER I.	11	Abram and Lot	42
How the World was made in Six Days	13	Teachers' Notes, p. 126.	
Teachers' Notes, p. 121.		CHAPTER IX	46
CHAPTER II.	16	The Burning of the Cities	47
The Garden of Eden	17	Teachers' Notes, p. 127.	
Teachers' Notes, p. 122.		CHAPTER X.	53
CHAPTER III.	20	Hagar and her Son	54
The Beginning of Sin and Sorrow	21	Teachers' Notes, p. 128.	
Teachers' Notes, p. 123.		CHAPTER XI.	56
CHAPTER IV.	25	Abraham's Sacrifice	57
The Two Brothers	25	Teachers' Notes, p. 128.	
Teachers' Notes, p. 123.		CHAPTER XII.	60
CHAPTER V.	26	The Choosing of Isaac's Wife	60
The Story of the Flood : Part I. : Noah's Ark	29	Teachers' Notes, p. 128.	
Part II. : The Rainbow	31	CHAPTER XIII.	65
Teachers' Notes, p. 124.		Isaac's Blessing	65
CHAPTER VI.	34	Teachers' Notes, p. 129.	
The City and Tower of Babel	35	CHAPTER XIV.	71
Teachers' Notes, p. 124.		Jacob's Dream	72
CHAPTER VII.	39	Teachers' Notes, p. 129.	
Teachers' Notes, p. 125.		CHAPTER XV.	75
		Teachers' Notes, p. 130.	

Contents

5

	Page		Page
CHAPTER XVI.	77	CHAPTER XX.	97
Jacob prepares to meet Esau	77	Joseph's Brethren visit Egypt	97
The Meeting of the Brothers	80	CHAPTER XXI.	101
Teachers' Notes, p. 130.		The Second Visit to Egypt	101
CHAPTER XVII.	83	Teachers' Notes, p. 131.	
Joseph Dreams	84	CHAPTER XXII.	110
Joseph and his Brothers	85	Jacob in Egypt	111
Teacher's Notes, p. 130.		The last days of Joseph	113
CHAPTER XVIII.	89	Teachers' Notes, p. 132.	
Joseph and the King's Butler and Baker	90	CONCLUDING CHAPTER	117
Teachers' Notes, p. 131.		Teachers' Notes, p. 132.	
CHAPTER XIX.	93		
Joseph and King Pharaoh	93	NOTES FOR TEACHERS.	121
Teachers' Notes, p. 131.			

FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS.


REBEKAH (<i>from Engraving of Picture by F. Goodall</i>)	FRONTISPIECE
OUTLINE MAP	38
AN ARAB ENCAMPMENT (<i>from Photograph by H. Baden Pritchard</i>)	Facing page 89
A PARABLE PICTURE (<i>drawn by Rosalie Whyte</i>)	116

INTRODUCTION.

ADDRESSED TO PARENTS AND TEACHERS.

'OUR little systems have their day ;
They have their day and cease to be :
They are but broken lights of Thee,
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.
We have but faith : we cannot know :
For knowledge is of things we see ;
And yet we trust it comes from Thee,
A beam in darkness ; let it grow.
Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell ;
That mind and soul, according well,
May make one music as before,
But vaster.'

Tennyson.

 MY purpose in these pages is to give the Stories from the Book of Genesis as far as possible in the words of the Bible, only altering them where it seemed advisable either for the sake of clearness or when some condensation was required.

It appears to me to be of the highest importance that no foreign matter should be introduced into the stories themselves ; and for that reason chiefly these have been set apart in larger type, leaving any suggestions or remarks of my own to be placed at the beginning or end of the chapters. At the end of the book will be found an Appendix, in which I have noted some few points that may be either helpful or interesting to Teachers.

Among the questions which have been forced upon our notice by the advances made in the study of Biblical literature during the past fifty years, that of How to deal with the stories enshrined in the Old Testament is one that calls for our earnest consideration.

For it can no longer be denied that the doctrine that every word from 'cover to cover' of the Bible is infallible, and comes direct from God Himself in some supernatural manner, is fast losing its hold

on the minds of the more thoughtful men and women of to-day. Students connected with all schools of theology are becoming more and more convinced that the so-called Higher Criticism is tending in the direction of Truth; and they do not now hesitate to speak of the Bible as a collection of books written at different times, for different purposes, and by men of higher or lower moral status. Only quite recently, F. W. Farrar, Dean of Canterbury, wrote: 'Some of these books of Scripture are separated from others by the interspace of a thousand years. They represent the fragmentary survival of Hebrew literature. They stand on very different levels of value and even of morality.'*

Under this changed condition of things we need to ask ourselves afresh, How will this affect our teaching of Bible stories? I do not think there is any need to fear that these favourite old-world stories will lose their honoured place among us; nay, rather I believe they will gain immeasurably by being rescued from the false position they are so often made to assume.

If we take up any of the popular collections of such stories, we shall invariably find that additions and special meanings have been so interpolated that the original story has lost much of its simple meaning. And, besides, when a compiler comes to put down on paper the ancient tradition, he cannot—I might almost say, he *dares* not—transcribe all the unworthy attributes imputed to God in the story; because he knows that the child would utterly fail to understand how a Being, whom he had been told was All Holy and All Wise, could act in such childish and revengeful fashion, or be ignorant of things that even he himself knows. And so the story is shorn of half its life and colour; though even in spite of this, the discrepancies

* *The Bible and the Child*, CHRISTIAN WORLD, 19th March, 1896, p. 216.

between the past and present ideal of God are sufficiently marked to cause confusion in the mind of the child.

But when we realise that these legends embody, not facts about the Deity and his methods of working, but only the thoughts of men about Him, all our difficulties cease. We may smile at the simple thought of the early seekers after God; as for instance, when He fashioned the sun and moon and set them in the firmament some days after the Light had been called forth. We may look back with some feeling of sadness that there could ever have been a time when anyone believed that the Heavenly Father would bid an earthly parent offer up his son as a sacrifice; but we shall look on all these things as indicating the steps of the ladder, up which mankind must pass by slow degrees on his way from lower to higher stages of mental and moral life.

And when we find, underlying all these early 'Wonderings,' such a spirit of reverent trust in the Maker of Heaven and Earth, such a strong belief that He is justified in all His ways as is displayed so constantly in the Book of Beginnings, we cannot help feeling that its work is not yet ended, and shall bid our children still go to the ancient stories, knowing that they may gather from them many a thought that shall be both pleasant and profitable.

M. P.

London, *May*, 1896.



Chapter I.*

'AND he wandered away and away
With Nature, the dear old Nurse,
Who sang to him, night and day,
The rhymes of the universe.

'And whenever the way seemed long,
Or his heart began to fail,
She would sing a more wonderful song,
Or tell a more marvellous tale.'—LONGFELLOW.

'EVERY field is like an open book ; every painted flower hath a lesson written on its leaves.

'Every murmuring brook hath a tongue ; a voice is in every whispering wind. They all speak of Him who made them ; they all tell us He is very good.

'We cannot see God, for He is invisible ; but we can see His works and worship His footsteps in the green sod.

'They that know the most will praise God the best ; but which of us can number half His works?'

Mrs. Barbauld's 'Hymns in Prose.'

HAVE you ever thought what a beautiful world it is that we live in? Just think for a moment. Think of the trees with their spreading branches and their green leaves. Think of the fields, with the bright yellow buttercups and pink-tipped daisies dotted all about among the grass. Or look up into the sky in the day-time when the sun is shining ; or in the evening, when the silver moon is there, and the thousands of tiny stars that twinkle, twinkle all night long. When we think of these things we must feel how wonderful they are!

Yes, they are indeed very grand and very wonderful ; and we cannot help saying, How did all these beautiful things come? Who made them? Men have asked this question and have been trying to answer it ever since there have been men on the earth who could think at all. And by people thinking and asking, and telling others what they thought about these things, we, who live in the world to-day, have come to know just a little about *how* it came to be formed so beautifully ; though even the wisest can only tell us a very little bit of all we want to learn.

* See Notes for Teachers, p. 121.

I have said that even in the days of long, long ago, men asked the question, How came this world into being? Who made it? And one answer seems to have been the same everywhere. Everywhere men said, 'The world must have been made by some Power greater than our own.' Each nation found a different name to give to this mighty Power, this mighty and mysterious Spirit; but the thought underneath was the same, so far as power and wisdom went. The Mighty One hath made the earth, said some; while others thought that so many marvellous works must have needed many different Gods to bring them forth. But everywhere the one thing was plain; man had not done it; man could not do it; he could only look at it all in wonder and in awe.

But what *was* the beginning of the world? Poets and thinkers in every land tried to explain how it all began to be, and many quaint and curious stories have been told to account for all the wonderful things that we see around us.

In this book we are going to read some of the Hebrew stories that were gathered together a long, long time ago, into a book which is called Genesis, or the Book of Beginnings, and which you will one day read for yourselves in the Bible. You will find this book has the very first place in the Bible; and it is put first because its stories are all about the beginning of things. One of the great beauties of these old stories is that they show how truly the Hebrews felt the presence of their God among them; and, because their leaders believed and trusted in Him so entirely, the stories that have come down to us from them are full of this spirit of nearness to Him; and that is one of the chief reasons why we love to read and think about these ancient legends even now, after so many, many years.

The Hebrew poets and teachers asked the same question as did every other nation; how did the world begin? And in the Book of Beginnings we have two answers given; two stories which we will read together. Here is the first.



HOW THE WORLD WAS MADE IN SIX DAYS.

THE Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and it was very dark.

And God said, Let there be light; and there was light; and God saw that it was good. And he divided the light from the darkness, and he called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

And on the second day God made the firmament, and divided the waters, so that some were above the firmament and some were below. And God called the firmament Heaven.

On the third day God said, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together, and let the dry land appear. And he called the dry land Earth and the waters he called Seas. And he

commanded the earth to bring forth grass, and trees that should bear fruit. And it was so. And God saw that it was good.

And on the fourth day God said, 'Let there be lights in the firmament, to divide the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years. And it was so.

And God made two lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament to give light upon the earth. And he saw that it was good.

Then the fifth day came, and behold! the waters brought forth fish at God's command, and he created the great sea-monsters. On that day, also, he made the winged fowl. And God saw that it was good.

On the sixth day God commanded the earth to bring forth cattle, and creeping things, and beasts of the field. And he said, Let us make man in our own image, and let them have power over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth. And he did so, creating man in his own image;

both male and female created he. And God blessed them.

And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

And all the heaven and the earth were finished; and God rested on the seventh day and hallowed it.

THIS is one of the Hebrew stories of how the world was made. I think it is very beautiful, don't you? If we were to ask our wise men of to-day to tell the story as they know it from all that has been learnt since the old, old days, they would be able to tell us an even more wonderful tale; but the best part would be exactly the same as the one we have just read. They would tell us that a higher Power than ours was needed to make this beautiful world;—a Great and Mighty Power whom we love to think of to-day as a loving, Heavenly Father; and those who know most about his works will be the most eager and ready to echo the words of the ancient story, 'BEHOLD, IT IS VERY GOOD!'

All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful,—
The Lord God made them all.

He gave us eyes to see them,
And lips that we might tell
How great is God Almighty,
Who hath done all things well.



Chapter II.

'God who created you, cares for you, too.'—G. S. TAYLOR.



WE have read the first Hebrew story of 'How the world began'; now let us turn to the second one.

Does it seem strange to you that there should be two accounts, two answers to this great question, given in the one Book of Beginnings? I do not think you will find it difficult to understand that this is so when you remember that the book was made up of stories and sayings which had been well known among the Hebrews for many years before this collection was made at all. And no doubt the men who put these traditions together thought—and thought rightly, too—that both these old familiar stories were worthy to be kept. That which we have read must have been composed by a true lover of nature who had watched with delight all the wonders of the universe; and so we have a story which reads like a beautiful poem, praising the works of the Mighty One, and declaring them all to be VERY GOOD.

Now let us turn to the second story, and listen to what it has to tell us. In reading it you will find that the name of the Great Creator is not quite the same as in the last one. There the old Hebrew writer simply used the general name of God, but in the second account we find another name, to which the first title has been added; these the translators of our English Bible have rendered 'Lord God.'*

* See Notes for Teachers, p. 122.

THE GARDEN OF EDEN.

THE Lord God made the earth and the heavens. And no plant of the field was yet in the earth, nor was there any herb in the field; for as yet there was no rain, and no man to till the ground. But a mist came up from the earth and watered it.

And the Lord God formed man out of the dust, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, and he placed in it the man whom he had formed. Every tree that was pleasant to look at, or that was good for food, the Lord God planted in the garden; and a river ran through to water it. And the river divided into four rivers outside Eden; and in the land around two of these were to be found gold and precious stones.

And in the midst of the garden the Lord God placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; and he put the man in the garden to dress it and keep it. And

the Lord God said to him, 'Of all the trees in the garden you may freely eat except of this one tree, but if you do eat of the fruit of that tree you shall surely die.'

And the man was alone in the garden. And the Lord God said, 'It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a help meet for him.'

And out of the ground he formed the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and he brought them to the man, who was called Adam; and Adam gave names to every living creature. But among them all was not found a help meet for him.

Then the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam; and, as he slept, he took one of the man's ribs; and of the rib made he a woman; and he brought her to Adam. And Adam took her as a helpmate, and the man and woman lived together in the Garden of Eden. And the woman's name was Eve.

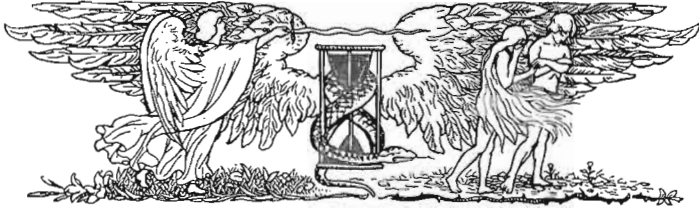
How different this story is from the other. The first reads like a beautiful poem, the second like some quaint fairy tale. We seem to see the pleasant garden with its river running through, and the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil planted in

the midst of it. And there the man stands; alone, quite alone, until the Lord God is able to make some one else who shall be fit to be his companion.

When we compare the two stories I think we shall all feel that the 'God' of the first one is much higher and wiser than the 'Lord God' of the Garden of Eden, who could not quite succeed in making what he wanted until after several trials. That is to say, the writer of the first story had a truer and grander idea of the Great Creator than the writer of the second. Still there is this beautiful thought in the second story; the 'Lord God' was full of kindness for Adam, planning for his comfort and his happiness; and it is this thought that we too must cherish. God careth for us all, and surrounds us with blessings on every side. Let us never forget this.

'BLESSED be Thy name for ever,
Thou of life the guard and giver!
Thou can'st guard Thy creatures sleeping,
Heal the heart long broke with weeping;
God of stillness and of motion,
Of the desert and the ocean,
Of the mountain, rock and river,

'Blessed be Thy name for ever!
Thou who slumberest not, nor sleepest,
Blest are they Thou kindly keepest:
God of evening's parting ray,—
Of midnight gloom, of dawning day
That rises from the azure sea
Like breathings of eternity,—
God of life that fadeth never,
Blessed be Thy name for ever.'



Chapter III.

'Thy ways, unknown or understood,
Are merciful and just.'—MONTGOMERY.



IN the last chapter we read the first part of the story of the Garden of Eden. As we go on to the second part we shall see that the writer was not thinking about how the world began so much as about another beginning, the beginning of sorrow and sin.

Men in olden times wondered how such sad things were allowed a place in this beautiful world at all; and men and women of to-day are still trying to find its true explanation. I dare say even you, boys and girls, are puzzled sometimes to understand why the good God allows things to go wrong. When Jack fell off a cart and broke his leg, how hard it seemed that he should suffer so much pain! When our baby sister was taken ill and died, how heartsick and sorrowful we felt! And there is something even sadder than death; and that is sin. Can we imagine anything more terrible for a father and mother to bear than the knowledge that the son or daughter, whom they love so dearly, has turned out of the right path and has fallen into wicked ways. Yes, these things do puzzle even the wisest among us, and people are sometimes tempted to ask how the Great God can be all powerful and all good, and yet allow such trials and troubles. But the writer of the old story does not say this; he trusted that the 'Lord God' had a reason for all He did; and in this trust we, too, may share, while we follow the simple wonder story that was told in the far-off days.

THE BEGINNING OF SIN AND SORROW.

ADAM and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden. Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the beasts that the Lord God had made. And the serpent came to Eve and said,

'Hath not God said, Ye shall not eat of the trees of the garden?'

And Eve answered, 'Of the fruit of every tree we may eat, except the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden; God hath said that if we eat of that tree we shall surely die.'

Then the serpent said unto the woman, 'Ye shall not surely die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.'

And when Eve saw that the tree was good for food and pleasant to look upon, she took of the fruit and did eat it; and she gave also to her husband, and he did eat.

And before they had eaten of the tree of knowledge the man and the woman were naked, but they were not ashamed; but now that their

eyes were opened they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons.

Then they heard the voice of the Lord God as he walked in the garden in the cool of the evening, and the man and his wife hid themselves among the trees.

And the Lord God called unto Adam, saying, 'Where art thou?'

Then Adam said, 'I heard thy voice in the garden and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.'

And the Lord God said, 'Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the fruit whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?' And the man said, 'The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me the fruit and I did eat.'

Then the Lord God said to Eve, 'What is this that thou hast done?' And Eve said, 'The serpent tempted me and I did eat.'

And the Lord God said to the serpent, 'Because thou hast done this, cursed art thou above all cattle and above every beast of the field.'

And he commanded that henceforth the serpent should no longer walk as the cattle or the beasts of the field; but that he should grovel on the earth, biting the dust; and he declared that between him and all mankind there should be enmity for evermore.

Unto the woman the Lord God declared that pain and sorrow should come to her because of her disobedience; and that henceforward her husband should rule over her.

And unto Adam he said, 'Because thou hast eaten of the tree, cursed is the ground for thy sake. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.'

And the Lord God said, 'Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.' And he feared lest Adam would take also of the tree of life and live for ever; and therefore he sent him forth out of the Garden of Eden, to till the ground. So the Lord God drove them out;

and at the east of the garden he placed an angel with a flaming sword, which turned every way, to keep the way of the Tree of Life.

Now what may we learn from this ancient parable story? I think it may teach us three things, at least. Shall I tell you what they are?

First, we must never try to get even *right* things by wrong means. It is right to gain a knowledge of good and evil; to strive to learn as much as we can so that we may understand the laws of God, and become wiser and holier; but we must not even do this by wrong means. Suppose you were so poor that you had no money to buy food for your little brother, would it be right to steal a loaf? No, you know it would not be right. Or suppose father told you not to touch a book of his, and you had taken the book and read something in it that had made you learn some new fact, would that excuse your act of disobedience? I don't think it would; there is always a right way of getting right things; let us try to remember that and never, never do evil that good may come.

The second lesson the story seems to say to me is, When we have done wrong, don't let us put the blame on some one else. It is mean, very mean and cowardly to do this, is it not? and we, none of us, want to be cowards, do we? No; if we have sinned, let us confess our fault and be ready to bear the consequences bravely.

And the third point in this quaint old story is the one I have already mentioned. There is no hint in it of any sense of unfairness or injustice on the part of the 'Lord God.' The old writer felt certain that his God was justified in all He did; and though we may smile at some of the simple childlike explanations of the mysteries of sorrow and trouble, yet we shall do well to hold fast, with him, to the thought that 'The Lord is righteous in all his ways.'

Chapter IV.

THE TWO BROTHERS.

'He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.'—PROV. xvi. 32.



OUR last story gave us the old Hebrew idea as to why sorrow came into the world; how it came as the consequence of sin; and truly, sorrow is a consequence of sin. We shall note this thought again in our story for to-day, which deals with a very terrible sin—that of an anger so fierce that it made a man kill his own brother.

NOW Adam and Eve had two sons; and the name of the elder was Cain, and the name of the younger was Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel also brought of the firstlings of his flock.

And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very angry.

And the Lord said unto Cain, 'Why art thou angry? If thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well sin is at thy door. But do not let it master thee, be thou

lord over it.' But Cain said unto Abel, his brother, 'Let us go into the field.' And it came to pass when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

And the Lord said unto Cain, 'Where is Abel, thy brother?' And he answered, 'I know not; am I my brother's keeper?'

Then the Lord said, 'What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.' And the Lord declared that the earth would no longer bear fruit in return for Cain's labour, and that henceforth he should be as a wanderer on the face of the earth.

And Cain said. 'My punishment is greater than I can bear! Behold, thou hast driven me forth this day, and from thy face I shall be hid. And I shall be a wanderer in a strange place, and anyone who findeth me shall slay me.'

Then the Lord commanded that no one should slay Cain; and he set his mark upon him, lest anyone finding him should smite him.

And Cain went from the presence of the Lord and dwelt in the land of Nod.

WE do not exactly know what the writer meant by the Lord not 'having respect' to Cain's offering, but from what goes afterwards we feel that the Lord was justified in the writer's eyes. Possibly the meaning was that Abel had had more success in his occupation than Cain. In olden times this worldly success was thought to be sent as a direct reward, and the want of it as a direct punishment. In any case it was plain that Cain grudged the favour of the Lord towards his brother, and, in spite of the kind remonstrance, he allowed sin to master him, and so he came to slay his brother!

But while we think with such horror of what Cain did, are we quite sure that we are above temptation? If father and mother take Robert out with them, leaving Jack behind, is Jack glad that his brother is having the treat, or does he feel jealous, and mutter, 'it isn't fair.' And when Mary has a new dress and Lizzie has only an old one done up, does Lizzie pout and look sulky, or is she pleased for Mary's sake?

Let us strive hard to conquer that dreadful monster of Envy, who tries to overcome us all at times. There is only one weapon that can slay him. Shall I whisper the name of the weapon? It is Love. Love alone is strong enough. Are you envious of your brother? Love him more; love him more than you love yourself; and you will rejoice in his pleasures, in his good fortune. Are you jealous of your sister? Do you think mother does more for her than she does for you? Try to love more, my child, and you will be glad in your sister's gladness. And then, too, through the power of love you will be able to see more clearly into your mother's heart, and will be ready to trust her, even when you cannot understand just why she acts in a certain way.

And if we have learnt to love and trust father and mother when we are young, it will help us, as we grow older, to love and trust our Heavenly Father. We shall then be ready to believe that always, and at all times, whether we understand his works or not, the Great and Wise Creator 'doeth all things well.'



Chapter V.

'In darker days and nights of storm,
Men knew God but to fear his form.'
THEODORE PARKER.

If there is a river near where you live I dare say you have noticed that at certain times there is more water in it than there is at others. And it happens even in England, now and then, that when a great deal of rain has fallen, so much water runs into the river that it overflows its banks and pours into the streets; and then people have to row about the streets in boats. Once I was going to Manchester from London just during a very wet season; and as our train went through the Midland counties we saw a number of fields under water, and in a few of them boys and men were actually bathing.

Now in some countries the rivers overflow their banks every year, and the people prepare for it and are glad. For the water carries with it a great deal of rich mud, and this makes the land more fertile, so that corn and other grain can flourish. But in these countries it happens sometimes that there is too much water, and then it rises higher and higher until the huts of the people are covered, and their flocks destroyed; nay, even men and women are drowned if they cannot escape in time.

In the history of most Eastern nations are to be found old traditions of such disasters, and very often the floods are spoken of as having destroyed the whole world. For you must remember that the 'whole world' known to the early nations was only a little bit of the world as we know it to-day; so that it was possible then to think that such a flood might cover all the countries that were then known, though to-day it would be difficult to believe that this could ever have happened. Let us now turn to the Hebrew account of the Flood.

THE STORY OF THE FLOOD.

Part I.—Noah's Ark.

THE Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth.

And the Lord said, 'I will destroy man whom I have created; both man, and beast, and creeping thing, and fowl of the air; for it repenteth me that I have created them.'

But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, for he was a righteous man and blameless. And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

And God commanded Noah that he should make an ark of wood, which should be three stories high, with a light towards the top, and a door in the side. And he said, 'Thou shalt come into the ark, thou and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee. And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female. And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten and gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for

thee, and for them. Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.

And it came to pass after seven days that the waters of the flood were upon the earth. Then were all the fountains of the deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and the mountains were covered.

And every living thing was destroyed which was upon the face of the earth; both man, and cattle, and creeping thing, and the fowl of the heaven; and Noah only was left, and they that were with him in the ark. And the waters remained upon the earth for a hundred and fifty days.

And God remembered Noah, and He made a wind pass over the earth; and the fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the waters decreased. Then in the tenth month, the tops of the mountains began to appear; and after forty days Noah opened the window of the ark and sent forth a raven. And the raven went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth.

And he sent forth a dove; but the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark; and Noah put forth his hand and took her and pulled her into the ark.

And he stayed yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark; and the dove came in to him at eventide; and lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf; so Noah knew that the waters were abated from the earth.

And he stayed yet other seven days; and sent forth the dove; and she returned not again to him any more. And Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and behold, the face of the ground was dried.

Part II.—The Rainbow.

AND when Noah had come forth from the ark with all those who had gone with him into it, he builded an altar unto the Lord; and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

And the Lord smelled the sweet savour and said in his heart, 'I will not again curse the ground for man's sake. While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and

heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.'

And God blessed Noah and made a covenant with him. And he said,

'The fear of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every fowl of the air and every fish of the sea. Every moving thing that liveth shall be food for you. But whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man. The waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature; I do set my bow in the cloud; and it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature that is upon the earth.'



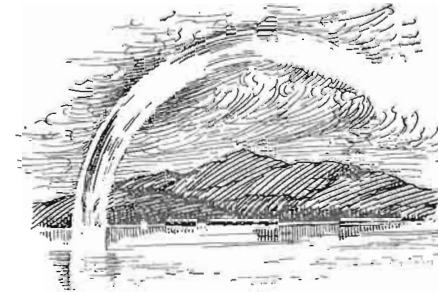
THIS is how the old Hebrew nation accounted for the rainbow—it was to them the messenger of peace and goodwill between man and God. Do you not think it is a beautiful idea? I suppose you have seen a rainbow, with its lovely colours, reaching from earth to

heaven. We know now how it is that it happens; that it is caused by the light of the sun falling on the tiny drops of rain as they come down from the heavy clouds; and we can understand how the early nations must have gazed with awe at this strange and wonderful sight.

There is a parable lesson too in the rainbow; when we think of it let us remember that even though clouds of trouble and sorrow may be around us, yet if we have the sun of love shining into our eyes we shall rest in peace, because the presence of the Heavenly Father will cause our very tears to be glorified.

'THOU knowest all: we lean our head,
Our wearied eyelids close;
Content and glad awhile to tread
The way our Father knows.

'And he has loved us! all our heart
With answering love is stirred;
And poverty, and toil, and smart
Find healing in that word.'



THE CITY AND TOWER OF BABEL.

THE whole earth was of one language and of one speech. And it came to pass as the people journeyed in the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.

And they said one to another, 'Go to, let us make brick and burn them thoroughly.' And they had brick for stone and a kind of tar for mortar.

And they said, 'Go to, let us build a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven, and let us make us a name; lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.'

And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, 'Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is what they begin to do; and now nothing will be withholden from them, which they purpose to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.'

Chapter VI.

'Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain who build it.
'Except the Lord keep the city the watchman waketh but in vain.'

PSALM CXXVII.



If you went across the sea to France and wanted to have a game with the boys and girls living there, you might find it difficult, because they would be speaking in French and you would be speaking in English.

Or you need not go across the sea to find people who talk differently from ourselves; the train could take you to many places in Wales and

Scotland where you would be just as puzzled to understand what was said.

How is it that everyone does not speak the same language? Have you ever wondered why it is? For many years now clever men have been studying the subject, and they are able to tell us something about how the differences have come to be. But in olden times there was no means of learning how it all happened, so men had to be content with guessing at the answer.

We will read presently how the ancient story in our Book of Beginnings accounts for this strange variety of language.

The scene of the story is still placed in the east; this time in the plain of Shinar, which is part of the country of Babylonia. Scholars tell us that there was no stone for building, so that the temples and houses had to be made of brick. These bricks were not burnt in a brick-kiln, but were just baked by the fierce heat of the sun. And then, sometimes, after a place had been built, some brushwood was heaped up against it and burnt; this would fire the surface of the brick and make it more weather-proof.

So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth; and they left off to build the city. Therefore was the name of it called BABEL; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth; and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.



If we look into our Bibles (*Gen. x. 8-11*) we shall see the name Nimrod mentioned as 'a mighty hunter before the Lord.' It says there that 'the beginning of his kingdom was Babel (or Babylon)—meaning Gate of the God; and this, to the Hebrew, would sound very much like his word 'balal,' to confound.

Although we must feel that the idea of God which is expressed in this story is not a lofty one, yet it shows how men were, even then, striving to find out all they could of his works and ways, and that they always acknowledged his presence. Do we strive as earnestly to learn his will, let us ask ourselves? we, who have had so many more opportunities than they, of coming face to face with the fuller knowledge that each century has laid at our feet.

Chapter VII.



WE have now read all the stories that are contained in the first part of the Book of Genesis. What a collection of beginnings! let us count them up.

1. The beginning of the universe.
2. Another beginning of the earth and all living creatures.

3. The beginning of sin and sorrow.

4. The beginning of crime—murder.

Next comes the story of the flood which drowned every living thing on the earth except one family; so that this may be called

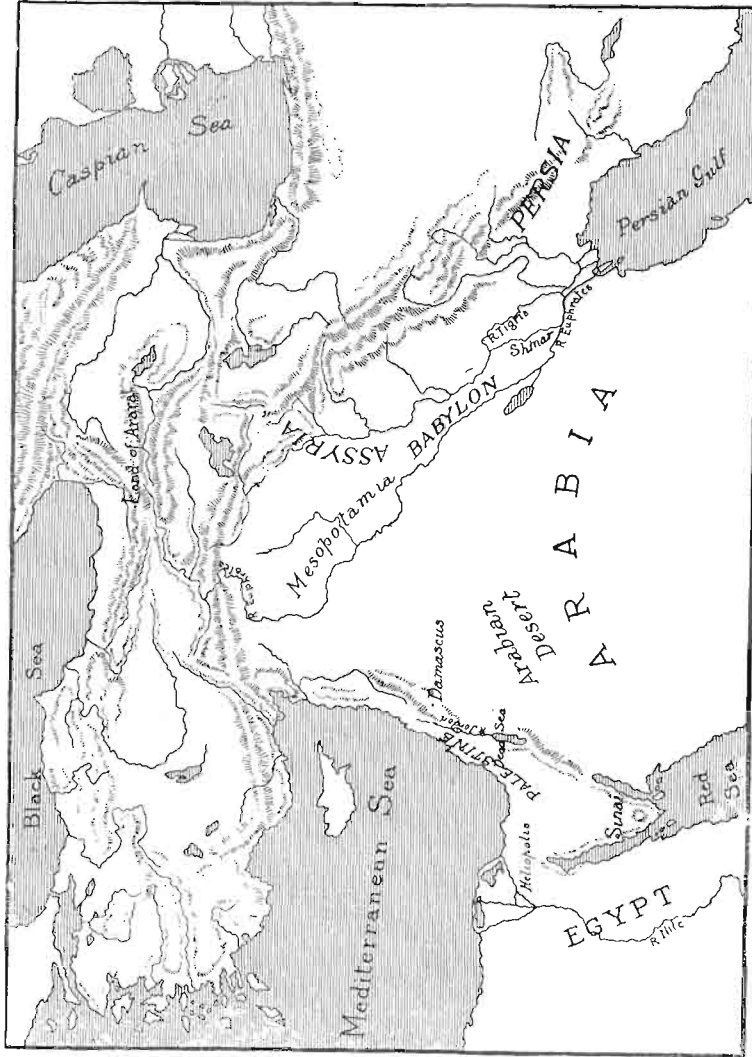
5. The second beginning of mankind. And lastly,

6. The beginning of different languages.

The rest of this book deals with another beginning; the beginning of the Hebrew nation. We shall have many delightful stories to read all about the great men whose names were loved and honored as the fathers of the race; the *Patriarchs*, as they are commonly called.

Before we go on to these I want you to look at the little map we have here; but first, your teacher will show you a map of the world, or a globe, perhaps.

We all know to-day that our world is round; you have learnt this at school, no doubt; but at the time when these old stories were first gathered together the earth was supposed to be flat. People thought that the dry land rose out of the vast waters, and that the heaven or firmament was a solid dome-shaped covering, which rested on the 'everlasting hills.' The sun, moon, and stars were watched with intense interest and awe by those who lived on the plains or on the hills, where they could see the heavens stretching over a wide expanse all round them; their movements being noted much more narrowly by those people than they are by many of us who live in crowded streets and so can only see a small slice of the vast heavens. Therefore it was that in those ancient days, the heavenly bodies were looked up to as messengers of their nation's God, through whose means he often showed his approval or displeasure.



Outline Map, showing position of the different countries mentioned in these stories.

Now if we cover the globe except where the countries shown in our map are marked, you will be able to see roughly how small a portion was thought by the Hebrews to be 'the whole world.' Yes, to speak of 'the whole world' in those ancient times meant something very different to the 'whole world' as we know it to-day.

On the little map you will find some names which you will like to know in connection with the stories we have read. The Tigris and Euphrates were two of the rivers which were said to have flowed out of the Garden of Eden; it was on the mountains of Ararat that the ark of Noah was supposed to have rested, while on the plains of Shinar the tower of Babel had its place.

But at the time when these stories were collected the Hebrews were living a long way from those places; they were then dwelling in the land of Canaan, or Palestine. Originally springing from shepherd tribes, wandering with their flocks from place to place, they had now settled down and had become a nation; and when this happened they naturally desired to gather together all their old traditions, and so make a beginning of the history of their race.

They knew that their forefathers had come from Egypt; their deliverance under the leadership of Moses was not likely to be forgotten. They remembered, too, many stories of one, Joseph by name, who after many trials was raised to a high position in the Egyptian court.

But there were traditions of earlier times still. Their very name Hebrew (meaning 'from the other side') pointed to far away times when their people dwelt on the other side of THE RIVER, the name by which the Euphrates was known; and with the countries lying round about it many of their ancient stories were connected, as we have just seen. Tradition pointed to the honored name of Abraham as that of the real father of the race; and the Hebrew traced his journey from 'the other side,' and on, in a south-westerly direction, to Palestine itself, where it was told how he and his son, and his son's sons had settled there for many years, only leaving it when famine drove them to seek corn in Egypt.

Now it is with these traditions of the Patriarchs, the Fathers of the Hebrew race, that the rest of the Book of Genesis is filled, and it is these that we will begin to take in our next chapter.

Chapter VIII.

'Lives of great men all remind us
We may make our lives sublime,
And departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time.'—LONGFELLOW.



IN our Book of Beginnings we hear that Abraham, or Abram, as he was first called, went with his father out of the land of Ur, and that they settled at Haran, with their flocks and herds, remaining there until the father was dead. Then we read that the God of Abram commanded him to go away from his country and his kindred to a land which he would show him, saying, 'I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and make thy name great.'

So Abram took Sarah, his wife, and Lot, his brother's son, and all his servants, and passed out of his own country, making his way to the south-west, and coming at last into the country which is called Canaan, or Palestine.

We may imagine Abraham in his long white cloak, dressed not unlike the Arabs of to-day, surrounded by his people, and ruling them as the head of a clan; or resting in his tent, when the sun shone so fiercely in the middle of the day. Their custom was to journey on until they came to some stretch of green grass where the flocks might feed; and here the encampment would remain until the cattle had eaten up all that there was to be had; and then on they would go again until they reached another fertile spot.

It is said that the Arabs at the present time still keep up many of these old world customs, and so you may like to see the picture of an Arab encampment (see Chap. XI.) just making ready to start, after resting for the night in the desert.

We are told that Abraham built an altar to his God when he was come into Palestine, and that he called the name of the place Bethel, which means House of God; because God had appeared unto him there, saying, 'Unto thy seed will I give this land.'

Later on we hear that there was a famine in Palestine and then Abraham went further to the south-west, into the land of Egypt, afterwards returning once again to Bethel.

ABRAM AND LOT.

Part I.—The Quarrel of the Herdmen.

AND Abram was very rich in cattle, and in silver, and in gold. And Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks and herds and tents. And because of their number the land was not able to bear them, and there was strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle.

Then Abram said unto Lot, 'Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between thy herdmen and my herdmen, for we are brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me; if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou wilt take the right hand, then I will go to the left.'

Then Lot lifted up his eyes and beheld the land round about the river Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, like the garden of the Lord. And Lot chose this part of the land and went there; while Abram moved his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron; and built there an altar unto the Lord.

Part II.—The War between the Kings.

NOW after Lot had gone to live in Sodom, which was one of the five cities of the plain, there was battle between the kings of those cities and four other kings, who came down to make war against them.

And the five kings were defeated; and two of them fell into the slime pits of the vale, while they that remained fled to the mountain.

Then the four kings took all the goods from Sodom and Gomorrah, and all the food; and they took Lot also, and his goods, and departed.

And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram, the Hebrew. And when Abram heard that Lot was taken captive, he took his trained servants and pursued them and smote them. And he brought back all the goods; and also brought again his brother* Lot and his goods; and the women also, and the people.

And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return; as also did Melchizedek, king of Salem, and priest of the most high God. And Melchizedek brought forth bread

* Meaning 'kinsman.'

and wine, and ministered unto Abram, and blessed him.

And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, 'Give me my people, but take the goods for thyself.'

And Abram said, 'I have lifted up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet; and that I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abram rich. Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion which belongs to the men that went with me; let them take their portion.'

CAN we wonder at the love and reverence which gathered round the honoured name of Abraham, the father of the Hebrew nation, when we read these ancient stories?

And does it not seem strange that just the same difficulties come to us to-day as came to people who lived in Palestine so long ago? How often we could save a quarrel if we acted as the good Abram did! Will you think of this next time when you want the same box of toys as your brother? It will be so much better to divide them than to quarrel, will it not? And suppose one set is better than the other, what will you do? Abram was the chief, but he did not say 'I must have first choice.' No, we find that he did as the New Testament writer bade his followers to do, 'not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others';

will you act in this spirit? I hope so. I think we should none of us wish to follow Lot's example, who grasped at the best, taking advantage of Abram's generosity.

And again, how we like to read of Abram's promptitude in going to help Lot when he had been carried off captive in the war. We see him here as a brave, wise general; but the best part of the story to my mind is where he refuses to be paid for what he had done; no, not even 'from a thread to a shoelatchet.' Let us always try to help those who are in trouble and distress without thinking for one moment of any gain or reward, and thus follow not only the teaching of Abram, but also that of Jesus, who taught us to 'do good, hoping for nothing again.'



THE BURNING OF THE CITIES.

Part I.—Abraham and his Three Guests.

Chapter IX.

'Oh God, man's heart is darkened,
He will not understand!
Show him Thy cloud and fire;
And, with Thine own right hand
Then lead him through his desert,
Back to Thy Holy Land.'—A. A. PROCTOR.



IN the last story we read how Lot went to dwell in the rich cities of the plain, cities 'like the garden of the Lord.' To-day we are to see that wickedness could find an entrance even in this rich and fertile spot, and we shall hear of the terrible punishment which was said to have been brought about in consequence.

This story has always been associated in our minds with the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea, the water of which is so salt that fish cannot live in it, is terribly desolate, and the land of the district both lonesome and dreary. Curiously-formed rocks are to be found at one end, made up of clay, earth and salt, and travellers tell us that these 'pillars of salt,' many of them, look very weird and strange. For a long time it was supposed that the once fertile plain was actually covered by the waters of the Dead Sea; but the Bible does not say so. And geologists, as those men who study the formation of the earth are called, consider that this Salt Sea must have existed long before the time to which the story refers. Students agree in placing this plain near the Dead Sea, but whether on the north or the south is not certain.

You will notice an alteration in the name of Abram in the rest of the stories which are told about him. Henceforward he is called Abraham; the change having been made, we are told, by the Lord when he made a covenant with the Patriarch, and promised that the land of Canaan (or Palestine) should belong to him and to his children as an everlasting possession; saying, 'Thy name shall be Abraham; for the father of a multitude of nations have I made thee.'

AND the Lord appeared unto Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the tent door in the heat of the day.

And he lifted up his eyes and looked; and lo, three men stood over against him; and when he saw them he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself to the earth and said,

'My lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant; let now a little water be fetched, and wash your feet; and rest yourselves under the tree. And I will fetch you a morsel of bread and comfort ye your heart; after that ye shall pass on.'

And they said, 'So do as thou hast said.'

And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, 'Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it and make cakes.'

And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, and he hastened to dress it. And Abraham

took butter, and milk, and the calf that he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat.

And they said unto him, 'Where is Sarah thy wife?' And Abraham answered, 'Behold she is in the tent.'

And the Lord said, 'I will certainly return unto thee when the season cometh round; and lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son.'

Part II.

AND the two men rose up and looked towards Sodom, and turned and went towards the city, but Abraham stood yet before the Lord.

For the Lord had spoken unto him, and had told him that the cry from the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah was great because of their sin, and he said, 'I will go down now, and see whether they have done wickedly or not.'

And Abraham drew near and said 'Wilt thou consume the righteous with the wicked? If there are fifty righteous men within the city, wilt thou not spare the city for their sake?'

And the Lord said, 'If I find in Sodom fifty righteous men, I will spare all the place for their sake.'

Then Abraham spake again, 'But if there are five less than fifty; wilt thou destroy the city for lack of five?' And the Lord said, 'I will not destroy it if I find forty and five.'

Again Abraham spoke, 'Perhaps there shall be but forty.' And the Lord said, 'I will not do it for the forty's sake.'

And Abraham said, 'Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. Perhaps thirty may be found there.' And the Lord said, 'I will not do it if I find thirty there.'

Then Abraham pleaded again, 'Perhaps there shall be twenty found there.' And the Lord said, 'I will not destroy it for twenty's sake.'

And Abraham said, 'Oh, let not the Lord be angry; and I will speak yet but this once; perhaps ten shall be found there.' And the Lord said, 'I will not destroy it for the ten's sake.'

And the Lord went his way, and Abraham returned to his place.

Part III.—The Destruction and Lot's Escape.

AND the two angels came to Sodom in the evening; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom; and Lot saw them, and rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face to the earth, and he said, 'Behold now, my lords, turn aside, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your way.'

But they said, 'Nay, but we will abide in the street all night.'

And Lot urged them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.

But before they lay down the men of the city gathered round about the house and called unto Lot, 'Where are the men who came in to thee this night? Bring them out to us.'

And Lot went out to the people, and shut the door after him, so that his guests might be safe.

And he prayed them not to do harm to the men that were under the shadow of his roof.

But they said, 'Stand back'; and they pressed sore against Lot, and drew near to break the door.

Then the angels put forth their hands and drew Lot back into his house. And they smote the men of the city with blindness, so that they could not find the door.

And the angels said unto Lot, 'Hast thou here any besides? if so, bring them out of this place, for the cry against the city is great because of its sin; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it.' And Lot went out and told his sons-in-law what the angels had said, but he seemed unto them as one that mocked.

And when the morning arose, the angels hastened Lot, saying, 'Arise, take thy wife and thy two daughters who are here; lest thou be consumed.'

But Lot lingered; so the angels laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful unto him; and they brought him forth and set him outside the city, saying,

'Escape for thy life; look not behind thee,

nor stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.'

But Lot begged to go not to the mountain but to the small city called Zoar, and he was allowed to go there.

The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot came unto Zoar. Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.

But Lot's wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

And Abraham got up early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord; and he looked towards Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld; and lo, the smoke of the land went up as the smoke of a furnace.



Chapter X.

'Where envyings and strife are, there is confusion and every evil work.'—JAMES iii. 16.

You will remember that we heard how Abraham had received a promise from his God that he and his children should dwell in the land of Canaan, or Palestine. Now we are told that Abraham and Sarah had no child at that time, and they both felt very sad; for in olden times it was considered a reproach when a wife had no son to keep the father's name in the earth. And so Sarah did what was sometimes done in those days; she gave one of her slaves, an Egyptian girl, to her husband, for a wife; and the slave's name was Hagar.

And Hagar had a son who was called Ishmael, which means 'God heareth,' for Abraham and Sarah thought that perhaps through Ishmael the promise of their Lord would be fulfilled.

But in the story told in the last chapter, when Abraham entertained the Lord and his two messengers, the Lord had promised that Sarah would have a son of her own. And the son came as the Lord had said, and they named him Isaac.

So Abraham had two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. Now between Sarah and Hagar there was much ill-feeling. Even before Ishmael was born, Hagar had despised her mistress for having no son, and Sarah was so angry with her that Hagar left her home for awhile; but now that Sarah had a little child of her own, she did not rest until she had persuaded Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away.

Abraham was very sad, but his God appeared to him and bade him do as Sarah desired, promising that the children of each of his sons should become a nation. Now we will read the story.

HAGAR AND HER SON.



ABRAHAM rose up early in the morning, and took bread and a bottle of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder; and he sent her away with the child, Ishmael. And she departed and wandered in the wilderness.

And after a time all the water was spent. And Ishmael was so thirsty that Hagar feared lest he should die. Then she laid the child under one of the shrubs and sat down over against him a good way off, and she lifted up her voice and wept, saying, 'Let me not look on the death of the child!'

And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her,

'What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not, for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand, for I will make him a great nation.'

And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well

of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink.

And God was with the lad, and he grew; and he dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. And his mother gave him a wife out of the land of Egypt.



THE Arabs look to Ishmael as the founder of their nation and to Abraham as their father, as well as do the Hebrews or Jews. This story was the explanation commonly received among the Hebrews, which accounted, in their way, for the two nations who both claimed Abraham as their father. While not denying that Abraham was the founder of both races, they naturally wanted to make it clear that they were the most honourable branch of the family; for, they would ask, was not their mother, Sarah, the true wife? while Hagar, the mother of Ishmael, was no more than an Egyptian slave.

I think this is a very sad story altogether, don't you?

We who live in England can scarcely understand what terrible sufferings are often caused by want of water. We shall find that a great deal is said about the wells of the countries in these old stories, for without a proper supply of water neither men nor their flocks and herds could thrive. The same thing happens to-day in other lands; only two or three summers ago there was so little rain in some parts of Australia that an immense number of cattle died; even here in England we had much less than usual, and our flocks and herds became miserably thin. So you see that the gift of water is a most precious one, and Hagar might well be grateful to the 'Angel of God' (or as the other verse has it, God himself) for opening her eyes so that she might see the well.

ABRAHAM'S SACRIFICE.

Chapter XI.

'Thou delightest not in sacrifice; else would I give it:
Thou hast no pleasure in burnt offering.'—PSALM lvii. 16.



IN olden times, when men wanted to gain the favour of the God they worshipped, they would take one of their own birds or beasts, something that they valued themselves, and kill it and burn it on a heap of stones, called an altar. This is what was meant by 'offering a burnt sacrifice.' Men were bidden to do this also if they had done wrong, so that by giving up something of their very own, they could show that they were sorry for their sin.

There is something very simple and childlike in this custom, and one can understand how, in the beginning, it helped the people to be stronger in the right; but after a time it came to be looked upon by some people, that they could *pay* for doing evil by offering a sacrifice. And so we find teachers and prophets, in later years, condemning this practice, and saying, 'Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice;' 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O Lord, thou wilt not despise.'

Some nations did more than offer up a bird or beast; they would even take their own little child, whom they loved dearly, and kill it and burn it on the altar. Is it not sad to think that at any time people could believe their God would be pleased with such a sacrifice.

We are glad to read that the ancient Hebrews learnt in early times that this could not give pleasure to the Most High. And as they would want to show that it was not because they were lacking in love and obedience to Him that they refused to offer up their children, but because God did not desire it, this story of the faithful Abraham would naturally have a place among their most honoured traditions.

AND it came to pass that God did call to Abraham and said, 'Abraham!'

And he said, 'Here am I.'

And God said, 'Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and offer him for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.'

And Abraham rose early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up and went unto the place of which God had told him.

On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off.

And Abraham said unto his young men, 'Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship and come again to you.'

And Abraham took the wood and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took in his hand the fire and the knife; and they went both of them together.

And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father,

and said, 'My father.' And he said, 'Here am I, my son.'

And Isaac said, 'Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?' And Abraham said, 'God will provide himself the lamb, my son.'

And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built the altar there, and laid the wood in order. And he bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, upon the wood.

And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

And the angel of the Lord called to him out of heaven, and said, 'Abraham, Abraham.' And he said, 'Here am I.'

And the angel said, 'Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son.'

And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked. And behold, behind was a ram, caught in the thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and

took the ram and offered him up as a burnt offering in the place of his son.

And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said, 'The Lord saith, Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thine only son, I will bless thee, and will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice!'

Then Abraham returned, with Isaac, unto the young men, and they rose up and went together to their home.



Chapter XII.

'Oh, the Father's hands are helping
In the work you have to do!
Have you never felt them lifting,
When the task was hard for you.
There is help for the faithful,
There is help for you.'—E. H. LELAND.

WE are soon coming to the end of the stories that are told of Abraham in our Book of Beginnings. We hear of the death of Sarah his wife, and how Abraham mourned and wept for her. And we read, too, of how Abraham bought a burying-place from the people of the land, which was called the Cave of Macpelah, and that here he buried his wife.

Then Abraham called his eldest servant* and sent him into the land beyond the River, from whence he had come long years before. He bade him go there to seek a wife for his son Isaac, for he did not wish his son to marry one of the daughters of Canaan.

THE CHOOSING OF ISAAC'S WIFE.

AND Eliezer took ten camels and went on his way to the land from which Abraham his master had come. And he reached the city of Nahor at the time of evening, the time when the women go out to draw water.

And Eliezer prayed to the God of Abraham; and asked that the maiden who should give drink to him and to his camels, should be the one whom the Lord had appointed to be wife to his master's son, Isaac.

* Tradition has given to this servant the name of Eliezer, who is mentioned as having been Abraham's steward before Isaac was born. *Gen. xv. 2* (see App. p. 128).

And it came to pass that before he had finished praying, behold, Rebekah came out with her pitcher upon her shoulder.

Now Rebekah was the grand-daughter of Nahor, the brother of Abraham; and the damsel was very fair to look upon. And she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up.

And Eliezer ran to meet her and said, 'Give me to drink, I pray thee, a little water out of thy pitcher.' And Rebekah said, 'Drink, my lord': and she hastened, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink.

And when she had done giving him drink, she said, 'I will draw for thy camels also, until they have done drinking.'

Then she hastened, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw; and drew for all his camels.

And the man looked steadfastly on her; holding his peace, to know whether the Lord had made his journey to prosper or not.

And when the camels had done drinking, Abraham's servant took a golden ring and two bracelets of gold and gave them to the damsel.

And he said, 'Whose daughter art thou? tell me, I pray thee. Is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge?'

And she said, 'I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Nahor. We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in.'

Then Eliezer bowed his head and worshipped the Lord, who had led him to the house of his master's brethren.

And Rebekah ran to her mother's house and told them; and her brother Laban came out quickly to the well. And when Laban saw the ring and the bracelets, and had heard all that the man had said to his sister, he bade Eliezer come into his house, and he welcomed him.

Part II.

And Laban ungirded the camels and gave them straw and provender; and he brought water to wash the feet of Eliezer and those of the men who were with him. And he set meat before them.

But Eliezer said, 'I will not eat until I have told my errand.' And Laban said, 'Speak on.'

Then Eliezer spoke; and he told how his

master Abraham had sent him to fetch a wife from among his own kinsmen for Isaac, his only son; and how he had prayed to the Lord that the maiden, whom he had appointed to be the chosen one, should come and give him drink from her pitcher, and should offer to give drink to his camels also. And he said,

'And before I had done speaking in my heart, behold, Rebekah came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went to the well, and drew; and I said unto her, Let me drink, I pray thee. And she made haste, and let down her pitcher from her shoulder and said, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also. And when she had told me whose daughter she was, I put the ring upon her nose and the bracelets upon her hands. And I bowed my head and worshipped the Lord who had led me into the right way. And now, if you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me: and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left.'

Then Laban, her brother, and Bethuel, her father, answered and said, 'The thing proceedeth from the Lord. Behold, Rebekah is before thee;

take her and go; and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the Lord hath spoken.'

Then Eliezer brought out jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah; he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things.

And on the next day Eliezer left Nahor; and Rebekah, and her nurse, and her damsels, rode upon the camels, following him. And they came again into the land of Canaan.

And Isaac was out in the field at the eventide; and he lifted up his eyes and saw; and behold, there were camels coming.

And Rebekah lifted up her eyes; and when she saw Isaac she lighted off the camel.

For she had said unto Eliezer, 'What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us?' And he had said, 'It is my master.'

And Rebekah took her veil, and covered herself. Then Eliezer told Isaac all the things that he had done. And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her. And Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

Chapter XIII.

'We're all children of one Father,
That Great God that reigns above;
Shall we quarrel? no, much rather
Would we dwell, like Him, in Love.'

Not long after the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah, Abraham died; and his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him, we are told, in the Cave of Macpelah, where his wife, Sarah, had been laid.

Isaac and Rebekah had two children, twin sons; and their names were Esau and Jacob. When these two grew to be men Esau became a clever hunter, a man of the fields, dearly beloved by his father Isaac; while Jacob, who was of a quieter disposition, spent most of his time in the tents, and was his mother's favourite.

Now it is said that one day Esau came in from the field faint with hunger. And his brother Jacob was making some lentil pottage.

And Esau said, 'Feed me, I pray thee, with the red pottage, for I am faint.' Then Jacob said, 'First of all, sell to me thy birthright.'

It was a very serious thing to give up one's birthright, but Esau thought 'I feel as if I should die. Of what use would my birthright be.' And so it came to pass that when Jacob had pressed him again, Esau did as his brother demanded, and after that Jacob gave him to eat, even of the bread and the pottage of lentils; and Esau did eat and drink, and rose up and went his way.

From this little story of the two brothers we can see that they did not love one another as brethren should do; and unhappily we find that Jacob is led on to steal his father's blessing from his brother, as you shall read for yourselves.

ISAAC'S BLESSING.

AND it came to pass that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim so that he could not see, he called Esau, his elder son, and said unto him, 'My son.' And Esau answered, 'Here am I.'

And Isaac said, 'Behold, I am old; I know not the day of my death. Now therefore, take thy bow and thy arrows, and go out into the field and get me some venison; and make me savoury meat such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die.'

And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake unto Esau his son. And after Esau had gone she called Jacob and told him what his father had done, and said, 'Go now to the flock and fetch me thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth: and thou shalt bring it to him, that he may eat and bless thee before his death.'

But Jacob answered, 'Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man and I am a smooth man. And my father will feel me and find out that I am deceiving him; and I shall bring a curse upon me and not a blessing.'

And his mother said unto him, 'Upon me be the curse, my son; only obey my voice and go fetch them to me.'

And Jacob went and fetched the kids and

brought them to his mother, who made them into savoury meat such as his father loved. And Rebekah took Esau's raiment and put it on him: and she put the skins of the kids upon his hands and upon the smooth of his neck, so that he might appear hairy like his brother; and she gave the meat and the bread into his hands.

And Jacob carried them to his father, saying, 'My father!' And his father Isaac answered, 'Here am I; who art thou, my son?'

Then Jacob said, 'I am Esau, thy first-born. I have done as thou biddest me. Arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me.' And Isaac said, 'How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son?' Jacob answered, 'Because the Lord thy God sent me good speed.'

And Isaac said to Jacob, 'Come near, I pray thee; that I may feel thee, my son, and know whether thou be my very son Esau or not.'

And Jacob went near to his father; and Isaac felt him and said, 'The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.'

And he knew him not, because his hands

were hairy as his brother Esau's hands. So Isaac blessed him.

And Isaac said again, 'Art thou my very son Esau?' And Jacob said, 'I am.' Then Isaac said, 'Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless thee.' And Jacob brought it near to him and he did eat; and he brought him wine and he drank.

And Isaac said, 'Come near now and kiss me, my son.' And he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, saying,

'See, the smell of my son

Is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath
blessed:

And God give thee of the dew of heaven,

And of the fatness of the earth,

And plenty of corn and wine:

Let peoples serve thee,

And nations bow down to thee;

Be lord over thy brethren,

And let thy mother's sons bow down to thee:

Cursed be every one that curseth thee,

And blessed be every one that blesseth thee.'

Part II.—Esau's Return.

And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had given Jacob his blessing and Jacob had scarce departed, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting.

And he also made savoury meat and brought it unto his father and said, 'Let my father arise and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me.' And Isaac said unto Esau, 'Who art thou?'

And he answered, 'I am thy son; thy first-born, Esau.'

Then Isaac trembled exceedingly, and said, 'Who then is he who hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? Yea, and he shall be blessed.'

When Esau heard the words of his father he cried with a great and bitter cry, 'Bless me, even me also, O my father!'

And Isaac said, 'Thy brother came deceitfully and hath taken away thy blessing.'

Then Esau said, 'Is he not rightly named

Jacob? for he hath supplanted* me these two times: he took away my birthright; and behold, now he hath taken away my blessing! Hast thou but one blessing? Bless me, even me also, O my father.' And Esau lifted up his voice and wept.

Then Isaac his father answered and said,
 'Behold, away from† the fatness of the earth
 shall be thy dwelling,
 And away from the dew of heaven
 from above.
 And by thy sword shalt thou live,
 and thou shalt serve thy brother.
 But it shall come to pass
 when thou shalt break loose,
 That thou shalt shake his yoke
 from off thy neck.'

And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father had blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, 'The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.'



Chapter XIV.

'Though like the wanderer,
 The sun gone down,
 Darkness be over me,
 My rest a stone;
 Yet in my dreams I'd be
 Nearer, my God, to Thee,
 Nearer to Thee.—S. F. ADAMS.

WE left off in the last chapter at a most exciting part, did we not? You will be anxious to hear what happened to Jacob after he and his mother had cheated Esau in that wicked way, and you will want to know whether Esau did kill Jacob, as he said he would.

I am glad to be able to tell you that Esau did not kill Jacob. I don't think he would in any case, if he had had time to get over his first burst of passion, for we see later on that he was not at all of a revengeful nature; but he did not have the opportunity, for Jacob was sent away from home.

Rebekah had overheard Esau's words, and was afraid for Jacob; so she went to Isaac, her husband, and suggested that Jacob should go to her kinsfolk, to that country 'on the other side' of the River, so that he might choose a wife from among Abraham's people, even as Isaac had done.

And when Isaac had consented, Jacob was sent away. How sad Jacob must have felt to have to leave his home, with the knowledge of his sin lying heavily on his heart. But there may have been one thought that made his going easier to bear, and it was this. In those days people believed that the different countries were governed by different Gods; and if Jacob believed this, he might hope that his sin would not be known by the God of the land to which he was going; and so he would escape punishment.

Foolish Jacob! is not punishment meant to heal you of the sin, as medicine heals diseases of the body? And if so, ought you to refuse

* Jacob means 'supplanter.' † See Notes on Chap. xiii. p. 129.

to drink the bitter cup, and like a coward, try to run away from the consequences of your wrong-doing. No, no. But perhaps we ought not to be so ready to judge this poor Jacob; for how few of us would act differently, even to-day. In future, let us think of this and pray to be saved from the sin, but not from the pain which is given to strengthen us and keep us from yielding next time we are tempted.

Whether Jacob had this ancient idea of God at the time of his departure from home or not, he was soon to learn that the God of Abraham remained still with him, even when his home country had been left far behind.

In those times when a good thought came to anyone, the people said, The Lord hath spoken it; and a beautiful idea it was, for all good gifts come from Him. But to their child-like fancy it seemed as if he was a man like themselves, coming and going and speaking just as they did, only, of course, they believed him to be much wiser and more powerful than they were. It was especially in dreams that he was thought to draw near to men, and in the rest of the stories of this Book of Beginnings we shall find that dreams take a most important place.

And now let us picture to ourselves how Jacob, going on his journey alone, finds himself at nightfall on a plain strewn with large stones. No trees, no bushes were to be seen, no grassy slopes on which he could rest; it must have seemed to him as if he was away from all living things, alone, quite alone.

JACOB'S DREAM.

THE sun was set, and Jacob took one of the stones of the place, and put it under his head, and lay down to sleep.

And he dreamed, and behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

And behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, 'I am the Lord, the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac; the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And behold, I will keep thee whithersoever thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land, for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken.'

And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, 'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not.'

And he was afraid, and said, 'How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.'

And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone he had put under his head, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil on the top of it. And he called the name of that place Beth-el (house of God). And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, 'If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come to my father's house in peace, then shall

the Lord be my God; and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth to thee.'

You will see by this story that the writer thought of God very differently from how we think of Him to-day. The main idea,—that of the ladder or staircase leading from earth to heaven is certainly most beautiful; and in the angels, or messengers, ascending and descending, we seem to see those loving true-hearted teachers who are to be found in every age, ready to lead us upward to God.

But when we come to the last part of the story and find Jacob making a sort of bargain with the Lord, then we feel that we are brought face to face with a less perfect thought; and we cannot help comparing this story with another night scene of some hundreds of years later. When Jesus was sorrowful and sorely troubled, he, too, was alone in prayer. But there was no thought of binding his God to do something for him; no, the burden of his prayer was just simply, 'Father, thy will, not mine be done.'

Then why do we want to read these stories, do you ask, if we can find others that are better? Tell me, have you a little sister at home who is just learning to talk? Do you not love to hear her say her funny little words? You would not like to hear your big brother speak in that way; you would say it was silly, because he was old enough to know better. Why then do you like to hear baby sister speaking like this? I think it is because you see how hard she is trying to speak plainly. It is always beautiful to watch this 'growing,' whether it is a seed as it peeps its head above the ground and grows into a plant, or a baby who is beginning to lisp some baby words, or—as you will understand better when you are older—there is even greater pleasure to see our boys and girls gradually learning to think and act for themselves in the right way. And that is just why we like to read these old world stories; they help us to see how men grew; grew in knowledge and in understanding; and, as they grew, they came to have a loftier and purer idea of the Great Creator.

Chapter XV.

'He that will have a cake out of the wheat must tarry the grinding.'—SHAKESPEARE.



IN the morning after Jacob had had his dream, we read that he 'went on his journey and came to the land of the children of the east.' And now I shall have to tell you what happened to him there.

When he came near to Haran (the place where Abraham and his father had dwelt) he saw three flocks of sheep with their shepherds waiting in a field; and in this field there was a well. At the mouth of the well was a big stone, and the shepherds had to wait, before they could give water to their flocks, until there were enough men to move this heavy stone.

Jacob began to talk with the shepherds, and he asked them if they knew Laban, his mother's brother. They said Yes, they knew him. And even as they were speaking they saw Laban's daughter, Rachel, coming with her father's flocks to the well.

As soon as she was come into the field, Jacob went to the stone and rolled it away; and he helped Rachel to water her flocks. Then he kissed her and told her who he was.

And Rachel ran to her father and said that Rebekah's son had come; and Laban welcomed Jacob and took him into his house. For a month Jacob remained with him, and after that time Laban offered for him to stay on, and asked, 'What shall thy wages be?'

Now Rachel was beautiful and well favoured, and Jacob loved her, so he said, 'I will serve thee seven years for Rachel, thy younger daughter.' And Laban agreed; so Jacob stayed for the seven years, and then claimed his uncle's promise.

But it was the custom at that time for the elder sister to be married before the younger; and Rachel had an elder sister, named Leah. So Laban determined to deceive Jacob. After all the men had been gathered together for the wedding feast, Laban took his daughter Leah in the dark of the evening, and gave her to Jacob as his wife, instead of Rachel. When the morning came Jacob found out that he had been deceived, and he was very angry.

But Laban said, 'It is not so done in our place, to give the younger before the elder.' So Jacob had to submit, and be contented with the promise that Rachel should be his also if he would serve Laban for another seven years; for in those times men often had more than one wife. When these seven years were ended he married Rachel, whom he loved very dearly.

Still Jacob stayed on with Laban; this time his wages were to be certain of the flocks and herds, and the story shows that Jacob had not yet quite overcome his bad habits, for he used much cunning in order to get the better share of the flocks for himself.

After Jacob had been married to Rachel for six years, he thought that he would take his wives and his sons and return to the land of Canaan. He had eleven sons by this time, but only the youngest, Joseph, was the child of Rachel.

Now Jacob was afraid lest Laban should object to his going away, so he waited until Laban had gone away to shear his sheep; and then he rose up and set his sons and his wives upon the camels, and gathered all his flocks and his goods together, and, passing over the River, set his face towards the south. It was not until three days afterwards that Laban heard that Jacob had gone, and forthwith he hastened after him; but before he overtook him, it is said that he was warned by his God in a dream that he should do Jacob no harm.

But something very bad had happened. One of the sacred images, a sort of household god, was missing from Laban's home; and when he came to Jacob he accused him of having stolen it. Jacob was very angry; and he told Laban he might search everywhere for it, and if it was found that anyone had stolen it, that person should be put to death.

Now Rachel had taken it, but Jacob did not know this. And when Laban came to search for the image, Rachel hid it under her on her camel, and pretended that she was not well enough to get up from off its back. Thus you see that Rachel, too, had the same temptation to deceit as her father and her husband.

At last Laban and Jacob became friends again. And they gathered a heap of stones as a witness of their friendship, and they did eat there by the stones. Then Laban kissed his sons and his daughters and blessed them and returned unto his own place, while Jacob and his people went on towards the land of Canaan.

Chapter XVI.

'Breathes there a man with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own, my native land.
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned
As home his footsteps he hath turned,
From wandering on a foreign strand.'—*Scott*.

JACOB and his large company were now nearing the land of Canaan, and he began to think of his brother, and to wonder how he would be received by Esau. He was naturally anxious to make friends with him, and you will like to read this part for yourselves, I think.

JACOB PREPARES TO MEET ESAU.

AND Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother. And he commanded them to say unto Esau,

'Thus saith thy servant Jacob; I have stayed with Laban until now: and I have oxen, and asses, and flocks, and menservants and maid-servants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may have grace in thy sight.'

And the messengers returned unto Jacob, saying, 'We came to thy brother Esau, and even now he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men are with him.'

Then Jacob was greatly afraid: and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks, and the herds, and the camels, into two companies; for he said, 'If Esau come to one company and smite it, then the company which is left will escape.'

And Jacob prayed to his God, saying, 'I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies that thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two companies. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, for I fear him, lest he come and smite me, and the mother, and the children.' And Jacob reminded the Lord of what had been promised to him in the dream at Bethel.

Then Jacob took two hundred ewes, and twenty rams, thirty camels with their colts, forty kine (cows) and ten bulls, twenty she-asses and ten foals. And he sent them as a present to Esau; and he said unto his servants, 'Pass over before me, and put a space betwixt drove and drove.' And to each of them in turn he said, 'When Esau my brother meeteth thee, and

asketh thee, saying, Whose art thou? and whither goest thou? and whose are these before thee? then thou shalt say, They be thy servant Jacob's; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau; and behold, he also is behind us.'

For Jacob thought, 'I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face, and he may accept me.' And he rose up that night and took his two wives, and his two handmaids, and his eleven children, and passed over the ford at Jabbok.



THIS was the preparation Jacob made; but as we shall presently see, he had mistaken his brother altogether, for Esau had no bad intentions towards Jacob, and probably only came with his large number of men to give him a heartier welcome. But Jacob did not know this; and so we read that that night he was disturbed. It is said that another of those curious visions or dreams came to him, and that he wrestled with a man until the breaking of the day, until at last Jacob saw that it was no man who was striving with him, but God himself; so that when the divine combatant presently said 'Let me go, for the day breaketh,' Jacob answered, 'I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.'

Then the Lord blessed him, saying that henceforward his name should be called 'Israel,' meaning 'he who striveth with God.'

This idea of men in olden times having to prove their worth by wrestling with Gods is of frequent occurrence; and indeed there is a most beautiful truth embodied in it, for no blessing can be gained from God without earnest striving on our part. The next day he was to meet Esau, and you shall now read about this meeting.

THE MEETING OF THE BROTHERS.

AND Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked; and behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids.

And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost.

And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him; and they wept.

And Esau lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and the children; and he said, 'Who are these with thee?' Jacob answered, 'The children whom God hath graciously given thy servant.'

Then Esau said, 'What meanest thou by all this drove which I met?' Jacob said, 'To find grace in the sight of my lord.'

At first Esau refused the gift, saying, 'I have enough,' but his brother urged him and he took it.

Then Esau said, 'Let us take our journey, and I will go before thee.'

And Jacob answered, 'My lord knoweth that the children are tender, and that the flocks and the herds have their little ones; and if they overdrive them one day all the flocks will die. Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant, and I will lead on softly, according to the pace of the cattle that is before me, and according to the pace of the children, until I come unto my lord at Seir.'

Then Esau offered to leave some of his servants behind, but Jacob said he needed them not; so Esau returned unto Seir.

And Jacob went on to Shechem, and bought a piece of ground outside the city for a hundred pieces of money. Here he spread his tent, and here, too, he erected an altar; and he called it the altar of 'God, the God of Israel.'

I THINK we must all begin to like Jacob better now, don't you? It was pleasant to listen to him while he looked back on the gifts that his God had given him. When he went into the strange land he had nothing but his staff or stick, but now he is rich in cattle, and in all kinds of possessions;—and to his God he gives the glory!

How tenderly he loved Rachel and her one boy ; his wife, who had only been won after fourteen long years, is still his dearest treasure, and we note that he puts her and her boy in the safest part of the cavalcade during the journey.

And then, too, I like to think of his care for the weaker ones, those that needed leading on softly, lest they came to harm. All these things make us feel that Jacob had learned something since he left his father and mother twenty years before. And in the meeting with Esau we see him taking the younger brother's place, and acknowledging the 'lordship' of the elder, as if the early grasping at the birthright and blessing had been quite given up.

As for Esau, rough and impetuous as he is represented, we see that he was both generous and loving-hearted. No suspicion of unkindness is in his words ; and, as we read of him running to embrace his brother, we cannot help thinking that when Jacob saw him he must have been ashamed of his late fears.

And now our stories bring us again into the land of Canaan.

Jacob, as we have seen, pitched his tents by Shechem ; but soon, owing to difficulties with the people round about, he moves further south. He passes by Bethel and on to Ephrath (afterwards called Bethlehem), and here a terrible sorrow falls upon him. For his best beloved wife, Rachel, is taken ill and dies, just after another little son has come to her. Poor Jacob ! how sad he must have been to lose her ; we read that he set up a pillar to mark her grave, and that spot was for a long time afterwards called the Pillar of Rachel. The little baby was called Benjamin ; and Joseph and Benjamin, Rachel's two boys, were the youngest of Jacob's twelve sons.



Chapter XVII.

' No act falls fruitless ; none can tell
How vast its powers may be,
Nor what results enfolded dwell
Within it silently.'—T. HINCKS.



YOU will remember that Jacob had twelve sons. It would be difficult for you to remember all their names, but perhaps you will like to have them written down for you here ; so that you may know the names again when you see them.

These sons were not all the children of Leah and Rachel ; for just as we read of Sarah giving her maid, Hagar, to Abraham, as a kind of lesser wife, so did Leah and Rachel each give a handmaid to Jacob ; thus we may say Jacob really had four wives.

The sons of Leah were six :

REUBEN.	JUDAH.
SIMEON.	ISSACHAR.
LEVI.	ZEBULON.

Rachel had two : JOSEPH
BENJAMIN } Jacob's youngest sons.

Rachel's handmaid, Bilhah, had two ; DAN and NAPHTALI.

Leah's handmaid, Zilpah, had two also ; GAD and ASHER.

In the stories we are going to read to day we shall find Jacob near Shechem. The sons are shepherds as their father had been, but there are also signs of their having begun to cultivate the land and grow corn. Jacob is beginning to be old, and he gives some offence to his elder sons by making a favourite of Joseph. It is always a sad thing when one son is loved more than the others, even when he is worthier than the rest ; and we shall see that it brought trouble to the whole family in this case also.

And now we are coming to more dreams. But I want you to understand that the people believed thoroughly that their God really spoke to them in these dreams, and not that the person dreaming only imagined it. Unless you quite realise this you will think that Joseph was full of vanity and conceit, and not, as was thought in those days, simply a witness of a heavenly vision.

JOSEPH DREAMS.



Now Israel (or Jacob) loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the child of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours. And his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren; and they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it to his brethren, saying,

‘Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and behold, your sheaves came round about, and bowed down before my sheaf.’

And his brethren said unto him, ‘Shalt thou indeed reign over us?’ And they hated him yet the more for his dreams and for his words.

And he dreamed another dream, and told it to his brethren, and said,

‘Behold I have dreamed yet a dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars bowed down before me.’

And he told it to his father and to his brethren; and his father rebuked him, saying, ‘What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?’

And his brethren envied him; but his father kept the saying in his mind.

FROM the reference to the mother it seems likely that this story refers to the time when Rachel was still living. When a dream came twice it was considered that the thing would really come to pass, and so Joseph's dreams were doubly important. We can quite understand that the brothers would be vexed at the idea of having to bow down before the younger son; though I am quite sure you will be sorry to learn what happened through their not gaining the mastery over their envious feelings.

JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS.

AND Joseph's brothers went to feed their father's flocks in Shechem.

And Israel said unto Joseph, ‘Come, I will send thee unto them. Go now, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flock; and bring me word again.’

So Joseph came to Shechem. And a certain man found him, and behold, he was wandering

in the field; and the man asked him, saying, 'What seekest thou?'

And Joseph said, 'I seek my brethren; tell me, I pray thee, where they are feeding the flock?' And the man said, 'They are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan.'

And Joseph went after his brethren and found them in Dothan. And they saw him afar off, and before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him, saying,

'Behold, this dreamer cometh. Let us slay him, and cast him into one of the pits, and we will say, An evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams.'

And Reuben heard it, and he said, 'Let us not take his life. Shed no blood; cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, but lay no hand upon him.' Reuben said this that he might afterward deliver Joseph and restore him to his father.

And it came to pass that when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript him of his coat, the coat of many colours that

was on him; and they took him and cast him into the pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it.

And they sat down to eat bread; and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and behold, a travelling company of Ishmaelites came from Gilead, with their camels bearing spices, going to carry it down to Egypt.

And Judah said unto his brethren, 'What profit is it if we slay our brother and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him unto the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be on him; for he is our brother, our flesh.'

And his brethren hearkened unto him. And they lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver; and the Ishmaelites took Joseph and brought him into Egypt.

And Reuben returned unto the pit; and behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes. And Reuben returned unto his brethren, and said, 'The child is not: and I, whither shall I go?'

And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a he-

goat, and dipped the coat in the blood; and they brought the coat of many colours to their father, and said, 'This have we found; know now whether it be thy son's coat or not.'

And Jacob knew it, and said, 'It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt torn in pieces. And Jacob rent his garments, and put sack-cloth upon his loins, and mourned his son for many days.

And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, saying, 'I will go down to the grave unto my son mourning.'



POOR Joseph! was this to be the finish to his happy childhood? To be stripped and thrown into the pit, that would have been bad enough; but to be sold as a slave, to be carried off into another country, that was terrible indeed.

We must feel sorry for Reuben, I think; for he had evidently been absent when the bargain was made with the travelling company of merchants. Simeon was the most to blame, for he suggested that they should actually get money for their brother. 'What profit shall we have if we kill Joseph,' said he; and so they sold him for twenty pieces of silver!

When we read what envy and jealousy can make men do when they hold the mastery, does it not make us say to ourselves, we will try with all our heart and with all our strength, to gain the victory over such terrible foes when they come across our path.



AN ARAB ENCAMPMENT.

Chapter XVIII.

'Let the road be long and dreary,
'And its ending out of sight,
Foot it bravely—strong or weary;
Trust in God and do the right.'



JOSEPH was now a slave, and in Egypt.

What a change it must have been for him, after holding such a favoured place in his father's household.

The people of Egypt were more clever and more learned than the nations round about; and if any of you have the chance of visiting the British Museum, you may see there some wonderful statues that were actually in Egypt about this

time, figures of the great kings, and of the Gods they worshipped thousands of years ago.

Now the Ishmaelites took Joseph, and sold him to Potiphar, an officer of the King of Egypt. And Joseph—how do you think he acted? It must have been a hard time for him, almost enough to take the spirit out of anyone; but he was brave and true of heart, and he did his work so faithfully that everything prospered in his hands. Before long he had gained the entire confidence of his master, so that Potiphar made him overseer of his house, and all that he had he put into Joseph's hand. And 'the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake,' the old writer tells us.

Now we may imagine Joseph happy in his busy life; looking after everything, so that his master had none of the cares of the household. But this happiness was not to last. Potiphar had a wife, and she was not a good woman, and she tempted Joseph to sin. But he was strong and pure hearted; so he resisted the temptation, saying, 'Behold, my master hath put all that he hath into my hand; there is none greater in this house than I, neither hath he kept back anything from me. How then can I do this great wickedness, and

sin against God?' Then Potiphar's wife was very angry; and she went to her husband and told lies to him, accusing Joseph of acting falsely; and her husband believed her, and Joseph was thrown into prison! But even there Joseph's brave spirit was not daunted, and he found many ways of rendering service to the keeper of the prison, so that before long he was entrusted with the whole management of the prison; 'and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it.' And again, we hear that 'the Lord was with him, and that which he did the Lord made it to prosper.'

And now you shall read for yourselves what happened next to Joseph, and you will see that we have not done with dreams yet.

THE KING'S BUTLER AND BAKER.

AND it came to pass that the butler of the king of Egypt, and his baker, offended their lord. And Pharaoh was wroth against his two officers, and he put them into the prison; and the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he ministered unto them.

They dreamed a dream, both of them in one night. And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and saw them; and behold, they were sad. And he asked them, saying 'Wherefore look ye so sadly to-day?'

They said unto him, 'We have dreamed a dream, and there is no one to interpret it.' And Joseph said unto them, 'Do not interpretations belong to God? tell it me, I pray thee.'

And the chief butler told his dream, saying, 'In my dream, behold, a vine was before me; and in the vine were three branches; and it was as though it budded, and its blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes. And Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand.'

And Joseph said, 'This is the interpretation of it; the three branches are three days; within yet three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thine office; and thou shalt give Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler.'

'But have me in thy remembrance when it shall be well with thee, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house; for indeed I was stolen out of the land of the Hebrews; and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon.'

When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said unto Joseph,

'In my dream, behold, three baskets were on

my head: and in the uppermost basket there was of all manner of bakemeats for Pharaoh; and the birds did eat them out of the basket upon my head.'

And Joseph answered and said,

'This is the interpretation thereof: the three baskets are three days; within yet three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee.'

And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast unto all his servants. And he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again, but he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted.

Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him.

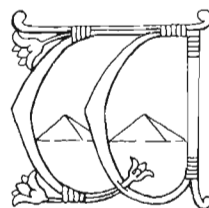
So Joseph remained in prison, and for yet another two years he continued to work and to wait.

These dark days were the days for the trying of his faith, the testing of the real worth of his character; and as we read the story we cannot help asking ourselves, should we have been as brave, should we have done our duty so manfully, had we been in his place?

Chapter XIX.

JOSEPH AND KING PHARAOH.

'Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.'—GALATIANS vi. 9.



HE left Joseph still in prison at the close of the last chapter. Two years had passed and he had heard nothing more of the king's butler; and no doubt he must have begun to think that he would never have a chance of regaining his freedom. But we shall presently see that the dark days of his life were passing away, and a brighter time was in store for him.

AND it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed; and behold he stood by the river. And there came up out of the river seven kine, well favoured and fat; and they fed in the reed grass.

And behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill-favoured and lean, and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river. And the ill-favoured and lean kine did eat up the seven well-favoured and fat kine. And Pharaoh awoke.

And he slept and dreamed a second time; and behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, fat and good. And behold, seven ears, thin and blasted with the east wind, sprang up after them. And the seven thin ears swallowed up the seven fat and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and behold it was a dream.

And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent for all the magicians of Egypt and all the wise men thereof, and Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was none who could interpret them.

Then the chief butler thought of Joseph, and he told the king of the young Hebrew who had interpreted rightly his dream and the dream of the chief baker. And Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon; and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh.

And Pharaoh said, 'I have heard say of thee that when thou hearest a dream, thou canst interpret it.'

And Joseph answered, saying, 'It is not in me; God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.'

And when Pharaoh had told Joseph his two dreams, Joseph said,

'The dream of Pharaoh is one; what God is about to do he hath declared unto Pharaoh.

'The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years; the dream is one. And the seven lean and ill-favoured kine that came up after them are seven years, and also the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind; they shall be seven years of famine. Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt; and there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten, and the famine shall consume the land, for it shall be very grievous. And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice, it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.

'Now therefore let Pharaoh look out for a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. And let him appoint overseers to take up the fifth part of the seven plenteous years. And the food shall be for a store against

the seven years of famine, that the land perish not through the famine.'

And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and he said,

'Forasmuch as God has shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou; thou shalt be over my house, and according to thy word shall all my people be ruled.'

And Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand, and put it on Joseph's hand; and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; and he made him ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, 'Bow the knee.' And Pharaoh set him over all the land of Egypt.

Thus was Joseph raised to this high position in Pharaoh's court, being at that time thirty years of age. The king had indeed made a good choice, for Joseph was discreet and wise; and he threw himself heartily into the work he had to do.

The seven years of plenty came, and Joseph laid up corn 'as the sand of the sea,' so much that it could not be counted. And when this time of plenty was followed by the seven years of famine Joseph opened the storehouses and sold the corn. And men of all countries came into Egypt to Joseph to buy corn; because the famine was sore in all the earth.

Chapter XX.

'Our deeds still travel with us from afar,
And what we have been makes us what we are.'—GEORGE ELIOT.



COMING straight out of prison to be made ruler in the land; this was indeed a wonderful change for Joseph. He was now second only to the great Pharaoh himself in Egypt, and he had received from the king a strange sounding Egyptian title. The linen garment referred to in the last story was a sign that he had been admitted to priestly rank; and for a wife he was given Asenath, the daughter of an Egyptian priest.

No wonder that when his first son was born he named him MANASSEH, which means 'making to forget'; for Joseph said, 'God hath made me forget all my toil.' And he had a second son whom he called EPHRAIM, 'for,' said he, 'God hath made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.'

And in the meantime, what was happening to his father and his brothers? The famine was sore in the land of Canaan as it was elsewhere, and at last the time came when Jacob called his sons and commanded that they should go down into Egypt to buy corn. But Benjamin was not allowed to go, lest he might come to harm. And now the story tells how the 'word of the Lord,' that came to Joseph in his boyhood's dream, was made to come true.

JOSEPH'S BRETHERN VISIT EGYPT.

NOW Joseph was the governor over the land. And Joseph's brethren came and bowed themselves to him with their faces to the earth.

And Joseph saw his brethren and he knew them; but he made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly, saying, 'Whence come ye?'

And they said, 'From the land of Canaan to buy food.' And Joseph said, 'Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come.'

And they said unto him, 'Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come. We are all one man's sons; thy servants are no spies. We are twelve brethren; and behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not.'

And Joseph said, 'Hereby shall ye be proved. By the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither. Send one of you and let him fetch your brother; and ye shall be proved; or else ye are surely spies.'

And he put them all together into ward for three days. And Joseph said unto them the third day, 'This do, and live; for I fear God: if ye be true men, let one of your brethren remain in prison; but go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses; and bring your youngest brother unto me.'

Then did Joseph's brethren remember how they had sinned against their brother in the old days, and they said among themselves, 'We saw the distress of his soul when he besought us and we would not hear. Therefore is this distress come upon us.'

And Reuben said, 'Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear! therefore behold, his blood is required.' They knew not that Joseph understood them; for there was an interpreter between them.

And Joseph turned himself from them, and wept; and he returned to them, and spake to them, and took Simeon from among them, and bound him before their eyes.

Then Joseph commanded to fill their vessels with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack, and to give them provision for the way; and thus was it done unto them. And they laded their asses with corn, and departed.

And as one of them opened his sack to give his ass provender in the lodging place, he espied his money; and behold, it was in the mouth of

his sack. And he said to his brethren, 'My money is restored; and lo, it is even in my sack.'

And their heart failed them, and they turned trembling one to another, saying, 'What is this that God hath done unto us?'

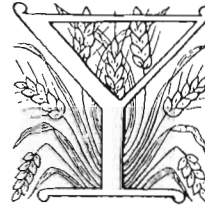
Then they came unto Jacob, their father, unto the land of Canaan, and told him all that had befallen them, saying, 'The lord of the land spake roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country.'

And it came to pass as they emptied their sacks, behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack: and when both they and their father saw the bundles of money they were afraid.

And when Jacob their father had heard all, and that the lord of the land of Egypt required that Benjamin should be brought before him, he said, 'My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he only is left; if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.'

Chapter XXI.

'O brother man! fold to thy heart thy brother;
Where pity dwells, the peace of God is there.
To worship rightly is to love each other,
Each smile a hymn, each kindly deed a prayer.'—WHITTIER.



YOU will be anxious to know what happened next. After a time the food that Joseph's brothers had brought from Egypt was all gone, and there was still famine in the land of Canaan. So Jacob called his sons and asked them to go again to Egypt to buy a little food.

But Judah reminded his father that it was useless for them to go unless he would let Benjamin accompany them; and after refusing several times Jacob at last gave his permission. And he sent all kinds of presents,—honey, spices, nuts, and almonds,—in order to win favour from the great Ruler of Egypt; and he told his sons to take double money, and also the money that they had found in their sacks on their return home, after their last visit; and he said, 'God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may release unto you your other brother and Benjamin. For if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.'

THE SECOND VISIT TO EGYPT.

AND Jacob's sons rose up and went again down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph.

And when Joseph saw Benjamin with them he said to his steward, 'Bring the men into the house, and make ready; for they shall dine with me at noon.'

And the men were afraid because they were brought into Joseph's house, and they said, 'Because of the money that was returned in our sacks at the first time are we brought in.'

Then they spoke with the steward and told him all, and he said, 'Peace be to you, fear not; your God and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks; I had your money.'

And he brought Simeon out unto them; and he gave them water and they washed their feet; and he gave food to their asses.

And when Joseph came home, his brethren brought him the present, and bowed themselves to him to the earth.

And Joseph asked them of their welfare and said, 'Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive?' And they said, 'Thy servant our father is well; he is yet alive.'

And he lifted up his eyes, and saw Benjamin his brother, his mother's son; and said, 'Is this your youngest brother of whom ye spake to me? God be gracious unto thee, my son!'

And Joseph yearned after his brother, and he made haste and entered his chamber and

wept there. Then he washed his face and came out, and said, 'Set on bread.' And they set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians, which did eat with him, by themselves; because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews.

And they sat before him according to age; and the men marvelled one with another.

And he sent messes unto each of them; but Benjamin's mess was five times as much as any of the rest. And they drank and were merry with him.

Part II.

AND Joseph commanded the steward of his house, saying, 'Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put every man's money into his sack's mouth. And put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, and his corn money.' And he did so.

As soon as the morning was light the men were sent away, they and their asses.

And when they were gone out of the city, Joseph said unto his steward, 'Up, follow after the men; and when thou dost overtake them,

say, Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good? Is not this the cup in which my lord drinketh, and whereby he divineth? Ye have done evil in so doing.' And the steward overtook them and spake unto them these words.

And they said unto him, 'Wherefore speaketh my lord such words as these? God forbid that thy servants should do such a thing. Behold, the money which we found in our sacks' mouths, we brought again unto thee out of the land of Canaan: how then should we steal out of thy lord's house silver and gold? With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondmen.'

And the steward said, 'Let it be according unto your words; he with whom it is found shall be my bondman; and ye shall be blameless.'

Then they hasted, and took down every man his sack to the ground, and opened every man his sack. And he searched, and began at the eldest, and left at the youngest; the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.

Then they rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass and returned to the city.

Part III.

AND Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house; and he was yet there; and they fell before him on the ground.

And Joseph said unto them, 'What deed is this that ye have done? Know ye not that such a man as I, can indeed divine?'

And Judah said, 'What shall we say unto my lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the sin of thy servants; behold, we are my lord's bondmen, both we, and he also in whose hand the cup is found.'

And Joseph said, 'God forbid that I should do so; the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my bondman; but as for you, get you up in peace unto your father.'

Then Judah came near unto him and said, 'Oh, my lord, let thy servant I pray thee speak a word in my lord's ear, and let not thine anger burn against his servant.' And Judah reminded Joseph how he had asked them about their father and their brother on their former visit, and how that he had demanded that Benjamin

should be brought to him, if they came again to Egypt for corn. Then he told Joseph that they had given this message to their father, and said, 'Then my father answered us, saying, Ye know that my wife bare me two sons; and the one went out from me, and I said, Surely he is torn to pieces; and I have not seen him since; and if ye take this one also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.'

And Judah said, 'Now, therefore, when I come to my father and the lad is not with us, he will die. For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then shall I bear the blame. Let me, therefore, I pray thee, abide instead of the lad, a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren.'

Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, 'Cause every man to go out from me.'

And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.

And he wept aloud, and he said,

'I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?'

And his brethren could not answer him, for they were troubled at his presence.

And Joseph said unto his brethren, 'Come near to me, I pray you.' And they came near.

Then he said, 'I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. And now, be not grieved nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life.'

And Joseph told them how the famine, which had already lasted two years, should continue for yet five more. And he said, 'Haste ye and go up to my father, and ye shall tell him of all my glory in Egypt, and all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring my father hither, so that he may be near me. And I will nourish him and his children, and his children's children, lest he and his household come into poverty.'

Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept. And he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them; and after that his brethren talked with him.

Part IV.

AND the news was heard in Pharaoh's house that Joseph's brethren were come; and it pleased Pharaoh well.

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, 'Say unto your brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts and go, get you unto the land of Canaan; and take your father, and your households, and come to me, and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land.

'Command them also, saying, This do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours.'

And the sons of Israel did so; and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way. To all of them he gave changes of raiment; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five changes of raiment.

And to his father he sent after this manner: ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt;

and ten she asses laden with corn, and bread, and other food for his father by the way.

So he sent his brethren away, and they departed; and he said unto them, 'See that ye fall not out by the way.'

And they went up out of Egypt and came into the land of Canaan, unto Jacob their father.

And they told him, saying, 'Joseph is yet alive, and he is ruler over all the land of Egypt.'

And his heart fainted, for he believed them not. Then they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived: and he said, 'It is enough; Joseph, my son, is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die.'

And Jacob took his journey with all that he had and came to Beersheba, and offered a sacrifice unto the God of his father Isaac.

And God spoke to him in the visions of the night, and said, 'Fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will make of thee a great nation.'

JACOB IN EGYPT.

Chapter XXII.

'Little by little the world grows strong,
Fighting the battle of Right and Wrong;
Little by little the Wrong gives way,
Little by little the Right has sway;
Little by little all longing souls
Struggle up nearer to shining goals.'—LEON HERBERT.



WE have now followed the young shepherd prince through days of sunshine, nights of gloom, and finally again to the daybreak of a brighter morrow; and when we hear how the great Pharaoh raised him to be Ruler over Egypt, our thoughts wander to the story told by Jesus some hundreds of years later, of the faithful servant to whom his Lord said, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'

We can imagine Jacob's delight in hearing that his son Joseph was yet alive; it was almost more than he could bear. And we are glad to think of him making ready to come with his household into Egypt, so that he may look on the face of his beloved son once more before he dies.

We read how 'the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, to the number of sixty-six, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent.' So that the family of Jacob who dwelt in Egypt was seventy in all; for Joseph and his wife, and his two sons must be added to the families of Israel.

And Joseph met his father in the land of Goshen, which lies on the east side of the river Nile. Goshen was an outlying district of Egypt, and Joseph chose it for his people; for they were shepherds, and he knew that shepherds were 'an abomination' to the Egyptians; he therefore felt that it was better for the two races to live somewhat apart.

AND Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to Goshen to meet Israel his father, and he presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck and wept a good while.

And Israel said unto Joseph, 'Now let me die, as I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive.'

And Joseph said, 'I will go up to Pharaoh and will tell him that my brethren and my father's house are come unto me.' And he went up unto Pharaoh and told him.

And from his brethren he took five men, and presented them unto Pharaoh.

And Pharaoh said, 'What is your occupation?'

And they answered, saying, 'Thy servants are shepherds, both we and our fathers. To sojourn in the land are we come; for there is no pasture for thy servants' flocks in Canaan; therefore, we pray thee, let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen.'

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, 'Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee; in the best of the land let them dwell, even in Goshen;

and if thou knowest any able men among them, then make them rulers over my cattle.'

And Joseph brought in Jacob his father; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh the king. And Joseph gave to his father and brethren the best of the land of Egypt, as Pharaoh had commanded. And he nourished his father and his brethren, and all his father's household with bread, according to the number of their little ones.

DURING the rest of the years of famine Joseph worked with continued zeal for his master the king, though in reading the account we must feel that it was rather a hard time for the Egyptians.

For the famine was so great that men had to give up their cattle and their land to buy corn, until all the land belonged to Pharaoh except that held by the priests; these were given corn so that they were able to retain their land.

Then Joseph called together the people and gave them seed to sow in those fields that had once been their own; and for the use of it they were to give to Pharaoh one-fifth of all the produce thereof, while the other four parts they were allowed to keep for their own food and for the food of their little ones. And the people agreed to this, saying, 'Thou hast saved our lives; let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants.'

And so the years of famine went by, and when they were over the Hebrews still remained in the land of Goshen.

At last, seventeen years after he had left Canaan, we read that Jacob died, after giving his blessing to his children and a double blessing to Joseph, through his sons Ephraim and Manasseh. When the days of mourning were over, Joseph asked leave to go with his brethren to bury his father, and Pharaoh granted his request; so they all went into the land of Canaan and buried Jacob, and then returned again into Egypt.

THE LAST DAYS OF JOSEPH.

THEN Joseph's brethren were anxious lest he should remember their old sin against him now that their father was dead. And they sent unto him saying, 'Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the sin of thy brethren, for that they did unto thee evil.' And they fell down before his face and said, 'Behold, we be thy servants.'

And Joseph wept when they spake unto him; and he said, 'Fear not; for am I in the place of God? And as for you, ye meant evil against me; but God meant it for good; to bring it to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now, therefore, fear ye not; I will nourish you and your little ones.' And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.

And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he and his father's house; and he lived a hundred and ten years. Then Joseph said unto his brethren,

'I die; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to

Jacob; and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.' So Joseph died, and they embalmed him. And his brethren and their families yet remained in the land of Egypt.



WITH the death of Joseph the Book of Beginnings is brought to an end, and before we come to any further tidings of the Hebrews we shall find that a great change has come in their condition. When we next meet them they are no longer the honoured guests of the great King of Egypt, and even Joseph himself is unremembered. For gradually they fell from their high position and came to be no other than Egyptian slaves; and terribly hard they found their cruel task-masters. But with that part of their story this book has nothing to do.

We have thus seen how the Hebrews traced the beginning of their religious history from the very Creation of the World, and I hope you will now understand what was meant when I spoke of the intense belief they had in the power and the nearness of their God. They felt that every good gift came from Him and that He was justified in sending every evil thing. Is there not something at the root of this thought from which we can learn a great deal?

May we all take to heart the lessons of the past, and ever choose the higher path, however hard the way may appear at first! Let us obey the gracious Spirit in Milton's 'Comus,' when he says:

'Mortals that would follow me,
Love Virtue, she alone is free;
She can teach ye how to climb
Higher than the sphery chime;
Or, if Virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her.'



A PARABLE PICTURE.
What does it mean?

Concluding Chapter.

' Whene'er a noble deed is wrought,
Whene'er is spoken a noble thought,
Our hearts, in glad surprise,
To higher levels rise.'—LONGFELLOW.



CAN you guess what is the meaning of the parable picture on the other side? Let me tell you why I have had it drawn and put in this little book for you.

Sometimes when we have been to school and have learnt a number of things out of the good books that have been written for us, and which our teachers have explained, we come home and are apt to think ourselves much cleverer than those around us, because we know a few facts more than they do. We may even look on our knowledge as a thing we have won all by ourselves, and by our own merit.

Now it is quite true that the amount of good we shall gain depends largely upon whether we are idle or industrious; but the real reason why the boys and girls, and men and women of to-day have a wider knowledge than our great grandfathers had, is just because our great grandfathers toiled so bravely to make steps up the Mountain of Progress, that we, their children, are able to make use of the result of their labours.

But we must not be content to stand on the step that they have hewn out of the rock. That would be acting disloyally to them. As they have made the upward path easier for us, so we, in our turn, are bound in honour to carve out our step, in order that those who follow after us may be the better for our work.

Now let us look at the picture together. You will see the steps going up and up. The top of the mountain only looks like a line, lost in the bright rays of Heavenly Light. There at the foot sits an old man, whose cloak of skins and club mark him out as one of the earliest workers of the world. His labours are long since completed, and he is being crowned by the Angel; for that first upward step that he made, hidden though it is from our sight, has been trodden upon by all worthy souls who have lived after him.

Next is a sad figure; the hatchet falls from the tired hand, the hand which has grown weary with ceaseless toil. The world may call this man Failure, and as yet no crown is offered him; but he has made his step, and many a future traveller has blessed the unknown friend who has enabled him thus to mount up higher and gain a more extended view over the Kingdom.

Just above him, leaning against the mountain as he rests from his labours, we see a strong and beautiful youth in Greek dress, bearing a torch in his hand. It is flickering out now, though even yet we can see its smoke ascending heavenwards. His mission was to cheer the worker with his torch of Beauty, to dispel the shadows from the path, and to light the footsteps of the labourer in order that he might see the glories of the universe.

A few steps higher, and we see a woman seated. Roses, whose perfume tells of a sweet and holy life, are in her lap; and she herself is holding up a little child, so that *he* stands above all others. The child is young and weak; and yet *because* of those strong workers who have cut the way before him, he has been able to get higher up the mountain than any of them.

What will he do? The recording angel is on the watch; his good mother holds him safely now, while he begins with his tiny hammer to make a fresh step. But when he grows older and the

protecting hand is no longer strong enough to guide him, how will it be then? Will he go on, filled with the high purpose of completing his step, so that he may help those who come after him; or will he content himself with that high position which the work of others has enabled him to take? Nay, will he be so base as to forget to pay reverence to the mighty workers of the past, and to look down with contempt on those strong-hearted souls who have lived, and wrought, and suffered, so that he may mount.

Ah, let him beware! If he looks down he will grow dizzy and will fall. It is only by fixing his eyes upward and onward that he can stand firm; only by continuing steadily to work out his own step that he will be able to maintain the position to which he has been lifted.

Do you understand the parable? and will you try to take its lesson to your heart?

There, with the spider's web, emblem of perseverance, on one side; and, on the other, the lily of purity, rooted in the heart of love which sends forth its upward shoots and blossoms into heaven itself, stands the mountain of Progress, which overlooks the Kingdom of God. We all must tread its pathway; up some of the steps we have indeed been carried in the arms of Time; but where shall we stay? Do not let us be content with any lower foothold than the very highest that our strength permits us to make; and let us, with hearts full of loving gratitude and reverence to those who have gone before, bend all our energies to make our own step broad and strong, so that the world will be just something better for our having lived.

NOTES FOR TEACHERS.

Introduction.

THE following method of using these stories in Sunday school classes is suggested.

The first essential is that the teacher should have given half-an-hour's preparation to the lesson beforehand, and that he should always be on the lookout for illustrations, pictorial or verbal, likely to interest the children.

The portions in smaller print are intended for the teacher to read, or better still, to master and give in his own words. The story should then be read round by the children, explanations of words being given as required; and questions freely asked, in order that the attention of the class may be well kept up. A blackboard is a most valuable help for writing down difficult words, etc.

After the reading the teacher should gather up the threads of the story and point out its beauties. Finally, he should read it straight through aloud to the children, throwing as much interest and power into it as he can, in order to awaken the enthusiasm of the class for these quaint and beautiful traditions.

Each succeeding lesson should commence with a few questions on the last one.

It would be a good plan for the teacher to write down on pieces of card the names of the chief subjects mentioned in the different stories, ADAM, EVE, etc.; and to keep these cards in a bag, every now and then letting the children take them out haphazard and say what they remember of each one.

It is most important that the children's minds should not be unsettled in their sense of right and wrong by confusing the ancient conception of God with the higher ideal of to-day. If the teacher clearly has this difference in his own mind he will be able to impart it almost imperceptibly. It is of the highest importance that children should be made to understand that all these stories *reflect man's conception* of God and nothing more; so that as man increases in wisdom and in goodness so will his ideal of Him grow in holiness and purity.

N.B.—Here and there some passages will be found among the notes which are intended for the teacher rather than for the class. For it is good that we should have a fuller knowledge of our subject than we give out, in order to make what we say clear and interesting.

'WHATSOEVER is spoken of God, or things appertaining to God, otherwise than truth, though it seems an honour, yet it is an injury. And as incredible praises given unto men do often abate and impair the credit of their deserved commendation, so we must likewise take great heed lest, in attributing to Scripture more than it can have, the incredibility of that do cause even those things which it hath most abundantly to be less reverently esteemed.'

Richard Hooker.

NOTES ON CHAPTER I. (See *Genesis* i., ii. 1-3.)

'Wonder is the basis of worship.'—CARLYLE.

TRY to bring out the sense of wonder in the children. We are all too apt to lose sight of the marvels of the universe because we are so used to see them.

Take a few seeds and get the

scholars to tell you how it changes and grows into a plant; show an acorn and the picture of an oak tree, or better, tell the children where they may see one growing.

Talk of the sun and moon and

stars, and speak of the curious ideas people had in the olden times before they had been able to learn much about them. The old Hebrew idea was that the sky was a solid covering; and that the sun, moon and stars were set in it, so that they might give light to the earth. They thought that water was stored up behind this solid covering (firmament), and that this was opened to let it through, when the rain came.

When the first story is read the children will see how this thought is embodied in it.

After the story has been read in

NOTES ON CHAPTER II. (See *Genesis* ii. 4-24.)

IN one or two places, notably in ver. 5, the Revised Translation differs from that of the Authorized Version. I mention this in case the discrepancy may be noticed.

Some little confusion will be noted in the fourth paragraph of this story, where the 'Lord God' forbids the eating of the fruit of the one tree,—which the sequel shows to have been that of the knowledge of good and evil—though it was afterwards evident that he did not mean man to take fruit from the tree of life either.

This confusion has suggested the explanation that probably the words 'tree of life' were not in the original story. (*Gen.* ii. 9.)

We must, of course, be careful to show the children by our manner that this story represents what the people of old thought of the ways of the God they worshipped, and not allow them to think of it as what actually happened. At the same time we

class go over the difficult words which have been explained during the reading. Then get the children to tell you the order of creation as imagined by the writer,—*i.e.* the work of the six days,—and let them note how everything was to be prepared for man, who was, in his eyes, the final and the greatest work of the wise Creator.

It will be well here, to point out that by patient study men have now learnt that the universe has really been ages of time in the making; but the central lesson must be strongly emphasized, 'Behold it is very good.'

must not lose sight of the positive beauties of this quaint old legend, namely, the desire of the 'Lord God' for the good of man, shown more especially in his efforts to give Adam a real companion and 'help-mate.'

In some of the stories the Hebrew God was called ELOHIM, while in others the name was JAHWEH* (usually written in our Bibles JEHOVAH). It is thought that, when these books were compiled, the editor joined the two names together in the second story to show that the god there was the same as the god in the first—Jahweh Elohim, translated in our Bible 'Lord God.'

These differences of name in the various stories have helped students considerably in apportioning the various parts of Genesis to different authors, the two principal of whom are often spoken of as the Elohist and the Jahvist.

* Or Yahweh, the 'J' being more akin to our 'Y.'

NOTES ON CHAPTER III. (See *Genesis* iii.)

A WORD with reference to the small picture at heading of Chap. III. Behind the angel on one side, and Adam and Eve on the other, two wings are stretched. The Hebrew poet pleads, 'Hide me under the shadow of thy wings' (*Psa.* xvii. 8), and the same thought is expressed in Ruth ii. 12. It seemed to me that the symbol might be fitly used here to suggest to the child's mind that even sin does not remove us from the shelter of His love. It will be well to remind the children how the chickens take refuge under their mother's wing in time of danger. A conventional representation of wings was often found in Egyptian temples, one of which is introduced on page 84, above the little picture of Joseph's dream.

We may well illustrate the three points, given after the stories, by a few anecdotes bearing upon them.

If the children are old enough to express wonder, such as 'Why does God let pain come to us?' the question should not be checked; but the children candidly told that though we can often see the loving thought behind the seeming ill, yet even when we cannot, we must *trust* Him still, because we have so many evidences of His goodness. Perhaps the following anecdote may be acceptable; it seemed to me, when I saw the incident, that it was quite a parable.

NOTES ON CHAPTER IV. (See *Genesis* iv. 1-16.)

IN reading this story in the different translations I find that one passage (ver. 7) is marked as obscure by some authorities. I have therefore taken that translation which seemed to me to contain the real meaning rather than that which may be more verbally

A little white chicken had hopped through the tiny door of her house into the yard, and when she wanted to go back she could not find her way. Such an indignant cry she gave, as much as to say, 'I can't get home, I can't get home!' And then chickie flew up against the wall of the yard and was rather hurt. So she cried again; saying, no doubt, in chicken language, 'What a horrid wall, why does it want to hurt me.' Just then a woman came out to sweep down the yard, and when she saw what was the matter she tried to push the little white chicken towards its house with her broom. This made it more angry, and the screaming began again louder than ever. The woman was very unkind, chickie thought. But the good woman knew it was the only way to get the little thing to go in the right direction; and so she went on, guiding it along with the broom, pushing it first one way and then that, until at last chickie found herself close to the opening. Then it ceased crying and hopped through, forgetting its trouble now that it was once more safe under the mother's wing.

Are we not, all of us, rather like that little chicken? Some day, perhaps, we shall understand that all our trials and troubles are just the 'pushing' needed to strengthen and help us to reach the goal of a higher life.

correct; and this I found in Luther's Bible, though in the marginal note of the R.V. the meaning is almost the same.

We may here point to the words of Jesus with respect to offerings; it almost seems as though he were think-

ing of this story when he said, 'If thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there

thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.' *Matt. v. 23.*

NOTES ON CHAPTER V. (See *Genesis* vi.-viii. 20.)

THE ideal of God is far lower here than in the first story. He 'repents' of his work of creation, He sweeps away the creatures whom He has made, and then He may be supposed to have regretted this wholesale destruction for He promises not to do so again.

But the point to note for oneself—and to explain to the children, if possible—is that the writer in those early times had not the same ideas of right and wrong as we have to-day. He did not think that he was lowering the estimate of his God by attributing these things to Him; he was concerned simply to justify the acts of God. There was a tradition of a universal flood; well, then, thought the writer, the people must have been very wicked or they would not have been punished; for, as we have said before, prosperity and adversity were supposed then to have been simply divine rewards or punishments. And so, probably, such a story grew.

NOTES ON CHAPTER VI. (See *Genesis* xi. 1-10.)

Of late years students have learnt to read many of the inscriptions found on cylinders and tablets which have been discovered in these Eastern lands; and they have shown us how many of their old-world legends are like our Bible stories, which is an

evidence that they come originally from the same source.

Though no Babylonian version of the City and Tower of Babel has yet been found, the writing on some fragments of a tablet seem to refer to it,† where mention is made of 'the holy

* *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, ch. I. p. 3.

† *The Higher Criticism and the Verdict of the Monuments*, by Rev. A. H. Sayce.—S.P.C.K., 1894.

ground,' and of how 'small and great mingled in Babylon,' and how the god in his anger destroyed the secret design of the builders, having 'made strange their counsel.'

This story has no special moral lesson of its own, though several have been imported into it in later times. But I think it is a pity to strain a meaning; and I should therefore give it simply as a quaint old legend. You might tell the children, if you like, that in after years additions were made to the stories; as may be seen in the account given by Josephus, the Jewish historian, who lived soon after Jesus.

Probably with a view to justify his God for this supposed evil, Josephus

sets forth that God had commanded the sons of Noah and their families to separate and form colonies, so that the earth might be peopled once again, the flood having destroyed all the rest of the inhabitants. But, excited to disobedience by Nimrod, they remained where they were; and Nimrod determined to build a tower which would be too high for the waters to reach, if God attempted to drown the world again; and it was to punish this act of impiety that the confusion of tongues was sent. No hint of this is given in *Genesis*.

We see, in this story, some indications of belief in more gods than one, in the phrase, 'Let us go down,' etc.

NOTES ON CHAPTER VII.

THIS will be a convenient time for recapitulating the first stories; and the bag of cards, mentioned in the teachers' introduction, should help to make this a very pleasant change for the children.

Please also take with you for this lesson, a map of the world, or better, a little globe, if you have one. Then if you cut a hole in a piece of paper just large enough to take in the countries shown in our map, and cover the globe with it, that will give a rough idea of the portion of the world known to the Hebrews about the time these stories were first collected. It will be well to point to England to show both its position and its relative size.

The children may then trace the journeying of the Hebrews across the river to Palestine, by Damascus, south to Egypt and back to Palestine; at the same time it will be well to point out that the exact position of some of the ancient places—Ur, for example—

cannot be fixed with absolute certainty.

It may be of interest to the *teacher* to note the curious way in which the legends of the ancient heroes were arranged so as to justify the conduct of the people of Israel, or to account for some geographical fact. It is told how Abraham had bought the cave of Macpelah, and how he had received a divine promise that his seed should inherit the land; thus justifying the re-taking of the country in later times. Many of the stories too, are symbolic of racial or territorial differences; thus Ishmael and Isaac represented the Arab and the Hebrew races.

In the stories of Esau and Jacob and the twelve sons we may see how the writers try to account for the different divisions into which the land of Palestine was divided, when history was beginning to be put together. This method of symbolising different parts of a country under the name of 'sons of the country' is very general in early history. In Greece, for in-

stance, we have Hellen with his sons, Eolus and Dorus, and his grandson, Ion, who represent the land in a similar way; and even at the present time

the same idea is expressed in such phrases as 'sons of Albion,' when speaking of Englishmen.

NOTES ON CHAPTER VIII. (See *Genesis* xiii., xiv.)

In the Book of Genesis we have no account of how Abraham came to give up the worship of the sun, moon, and stars (with fire as their symbol), which was the religion of his people. But a story has come down to us in the Koran, which is quite worthy to rank with those we have in the Bible, I think. You will remember that the words of the Koran were supposed to have been uttered by Allah, the God of Mohammed, to his faithful servant. The 'revelation' runs thus:*

'Thus did we show unto Abraham the kingdom of heaven and earth, that he might become one of those who firmly believe.

'When the night overshadowed him, he saw a star, and he said, This is my Lord; but when it set, he said, I like not gods that set. And when he saw the moon rising, he said, This is my Lord; but when he saw it set, he said, Verily if my Lord direct me not I shall become one of the people who go astray. And when he saw the sun rising, he said, This is my Lord, this is the greatest. But when it set, he said, O my people, verily I am clear as to whom we should worship; henceforward I shall direct my face unto him who hath created the heavens and the earth.'

The name of Abraham is held in such reverence by Hebrew and Mohammedan alike, that there are innumerable legends collected in the

writings of both nations. Some of these are quite grotesque. One of them you may like to read; it gives an example of what we so often see in ancient records, namely, that what is esteemed virtuous in the childhood of the world, is not to be admired in later ages. The purpose of the writer was to emphasize the zealotry of Abraham for the honour of his God, and the story must be looked at entirely from that point of view.

'Terah, Abraham's father, was a maker and seller of idols; and one day, when he had gone out, his son was left in the shop. When a customer came in to buy an idol, Abraham asked him "How old art thou?" "Lo, so many years," was the ready answer. "What," cried Abraham; "is it possible that a man of so many years should wish to worship a thing which was only made yesterday?" The customer, being ashamed of himself, went his way, and so did all other customers who were asked similar questions. Then an old woman brought a measure of fine flour and wished to give it as an offering to the gods. This so enraged Abraham, that he took a staff and broke all the images excepting the largest, in whose hands he fixed the staff.

'When his father came and asked his son who had destroyed the gods, he answered, "An old woman placed an offering of flour before them, which made them all fight together, for each

one was hungrier than the rest; but the biggest god killed all the rest with his staff, which thou now seest he still holds in his hands." The father was so angry that he threw him into his furnace, but God, the Holy One, brought him safely out of it.*

Of course this legend must have sprung up at a time when people did not think of right and wrong as we do to-day, or it would not have made its hero destroy his fathers' goods and say what was untrue. The one thing which was in the mind of the writer was Abraham's zealous desire to do away with the worship of idols, by showing the foolishness of bowing down before the work of a man's

hands, rather than to the Creator of the whole universe.

It is interesting for us teachers to note how the higher nature of man seems always to follow the same course of development. For instance, strength and power would in early times be the qualities which excited the greatest admiration. Filial affection and obedience to the head of the clan ranked far above honesty and truth for many a century; and indeed, the virtue of hospitality, and several others, were acknowledged long before those qualities were thought to be virtues at all. Perhaps truth is one of the last steps up the ladder of moral progress.

NOTES ON CHAPTER IX. (See *Genesis* xviii., xix.)

ONE of the chief Eastern virtues was that of hospitality, and in these stories we have an illustration of this. Note how both Abraham and Lot hastened to greet their guests, laying before them the best food they could prepare on the spur of the moment.

Explain the relief to the traveller, when hot and dusty with walking, to have water brought for washing the feet.

Unleavened bread. Bread that is made with leaven (which is a little piece of dough left over from the last baking which, having turned sour, acts like yeast, as a ferment) takes some time to prepare, as the dough must be left to rise. There was no time for Lot to make ordinary bread; hence the unleavened cakes.

In strong contrast to Abraham and Lot we have the conduct of the men of Sodom, who demanded that Lot, contrary to all laws of hospitality, should give up the guests who had

eaten at his table—incontrovertible evidence of their great unworthiness. For to have broken bread with another was to make the guest sacred, and secure from harm.

Looking back. This symbol of half-heartedness and want of complete trust is found in many old world stories besides those in the Bible. As for example, in Orpheus and Eurydice, and in the Black Stones from the Arabian Nights. Jesus emphasizes the same thought when he says, 'No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.' No doubt, each teacher can find a few anecdotes to illustrate this lesson, that will help to impress the thought on the minds of the children.

In the preparation of these stories I have constantly been surprised to find how many ideas have been 'read into them,' for which there is no warrant in the Bible at all. That no

* See Koran, chapter vi.

* See Hershon's *Talmudic Miscellany*, pages 4 and 59.

mention of the Flood was to be found in the Tower of Babel story will have struck many readers with surprise; and in this chapter I think there are very few who have not taken it for granted that Sodom and Gomorrah were submerged in the Dead Sea, though there is no word of it in

Genesis. In Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible' we read 'That the Dead Sea was formed by the catastrophe which overthrew "the Cities of the Plain" is a mere assumption. It is not only unsupported by scripture, but is directly in the teeth of the evidence of the ground itself.'

NOTES ON CHAPTER X. (See *Genesis* xxi.)

THE lessons which will naturally suggest themselves will be from Hagar, of the sin of pride in our heaven-sent gifts, which have come to us from no merit of our own; and from Sarah, of the sin of allowing our passions to make us act cruelly to others, when we are in the more favoured position.

NOTES ON CHAPTER XI. (See *Genesis* xxiii.)

IN talking over this story with our children, we shall have an opportunity of speaking of this 'giving' to God. We may point out that to sacrifice Isaac was to give something which really did not belong to Abraham; for though in olden times people considered that the child did belong absolutely to the father, now we feel differently. The child owes dutiful obedience to his parents, but he has his own sacred 'self,' of which even his father has no right to dispose.

This will lead to the question of gifts, and we should impress on the class that if we give what belongs, say, to father and mother, it is no gift of ours at all. Each gift to be worthy

NOTES ON CHAPTER XII. (See *Genesis* xxiv.)

The City of Nahor, the city of Abraham's kinsfolk; we find Nahor is the name of his grandfather and of his brother (*Gen.* xi. 23-26).

The Jews have a tradition that Abraham married three wives (Keturah, the third, is mentioned in *Gen.* xxv. 1), so that he might be allied with the three sons of Noah; namely, with Shem through Sarah, with Japheth, through Keturah, and with Ham through Hagar.*

must be the fruit of a loving thoughtfulness, and the result of some personal effort on our part.

If the children are old enough they should be taught something of the meaning of the exhortation (*Romans* xii. 1) to 'present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.' (See also Hymn 72, S.S.A. 'Hymns for children.')

With regard to human sacrifice, although the Hebrews did give up this custom long before the nations round about, yet now and again we hear of some of their people going back to the terrible custom at a much later date.

In this story I have ventured to depart from my rule of not inserting anything that is not in the Bible narrative, in so far as giving the name of

* Hershon's *Talmudic Miscell.*, p. 290.

Eliezer to the 'eldest servant of Abraham's house,' ver. 2. He is mentioned by name as the steward who would inherit in case of his master dying without a son, *Gen.* xv. 2, and it has been always assumed that he was the servant to whom this errand was intrusted, though the name is not mentioned in the narrative.

Let the children turn to the front-piece and find out all they can in the picture.

The nose-ring (here partly hidden by the fold in the cloth) was worn as an ornament, the nose being pierced in the same way as ears so frequently are in this country. Both barbarous customs, as it seems to me!

NOTES ON CHAPTER XIII. (See *Genesis* xxvii. 1-41.)

THESE stories of Esau and Jacob are always favourites with children. The deceit practised by Jacob and Rebekah should, of course, be made the foundation of the lesson for the day.

Esau's blessing, ver. 39. You will note that the words are here rendered differently from the A.V.; they follow the marginal note in the Revised. On looking up other translations I find

they all unite in the insertion of 'away from,' or 'apart from,' or 'without' before the words, 'fatness of the earth' and 'dew of heaven'; and this makes the sense much clearer, as it seems to me. These things had been the blessing of Jacob (ver. 28); to Esau the only thing left was the prophecy that when he rebelled against the yoke of his brother he should shake it off.

NOTES ON CHAPTER XIV. (See *Genesis* xxvii. 42-46 and xxviii.)

IT is necessary for us teachers constantly to bear in mind that this book of Genesis is made up of legends and traditions gathered together from different sources; that, being a composite production, we must not insist too strongly on the sequence of the events recorded. One narrative cannot be linked on to the next, for instance, in these stories of Jacob; for many of them bear evidence of quite independent authorship.

The commencement of this chapter will form a good introduction to a little chat on what is the use of punishment; and the difference between it and revenge should be made clear. This chat should be taken before going on to the dream.

The children should have the three verses of 'Nearer, my God, to thee,' which refer to Jacob's dream, read to them. The hymn is in almost every hymn book.

Sacred stones. In the history of almost all nations in early times we find that sacred stones had a great place in their religious worship. It will be well to tell the children of the Druids' circles, circles marked out by great stones, which are still to be seen in many parts of England. Stonehenge is composed of such immense slabs of stone that we cannot help wondering how they could have been carried to the spot, and how one could have been piled on another as they are.

NOTES ON CHAPTER XV. (See *Genesis* xxix.—xxxii.)

YOU will notice that there is no story in large print in this chapter; because, although I have endeavoured to give the gist of this portion of *Genesis*, it was not convenient to keep close to the text; and it is only where

I can do this that I use the larger type. If the children do not read it for themselves, it will be well to ask a good many questions, so as to keep their attention.

NOTES ON CHAPTER XVI. (See *Genesis* xxxii., xxxiii. and xxxv. 9-20.)

THERE is a great deal of dramatic power in this story, and the children will love to have it put graphically before them, which can easily be done if you try to realise the scene for yourselves first.

It would be well, if you can, to tell the children some other legend of a man striving with a divine messenger or with a God. One of the best is that in the fifth chapter of Longfellow's 'Hiawatha,' where Hiawatha wrestles three times with the youth, Mondamin, 'for the profit of his people'; and wins for them the Indian Corn, the bread which they so sorely needed. Parts of this beautiful poem the children might understand if read intelligently (which means with preparation); the rest should be told.

Dean Stanley in his 'Sinai and Palestine' (School Edition p. 108) thus describes the entrance of Jacob into Palestine:—'From the heights of Gilead, through the deep rent of the valley of the Zerka, or Jabbok (tributary of the Jordan), which forms one of the most remarkable features in the eastern view from the summit of Gerizim, Jacob descended

with his "two bands," probably by the same route as Abraham had entered the land. He advanced through the valley, which, leading direct from the northern fords of the Jordan, opens on a wide corn plain, and pitched his tent before the city.'

You will note that I only make mention, in the body of the book, of Jacob's travels so far south as Ephrath, so as to refer to Benjamin's birth and Rachel's death. It may, however, be interesting, in talking with the children, to point to Hebron, if you have a map of Palestine by you, and to tell them that we read that Jacob went on there to his father Isaac, whom the narrative says was still living; and that, on Isaac's death, his two sons, Esau and Jacob, buried him (*Gen.* xxxv. 27-29). Also that we read further on (*Gen.* xxxvi. 6, 7) that the people and the flocks of Esau and Jacob were too many for the one part of the land to bear them; and so, like Abraham and Lot, the two brothers had to separate, Jacob returning to Shechem, or rather to the plain outside the city and Esau making his way to the mountains of Seir again.

NOTES ON CHAPTER XVII. (See *Genesis* xxxvii.)

THE names of Jacob's sons should be written down on the cards (suggested for use in the Introduction to Notes); not one on each, but grouped together under the name of the mother,

on four cards. It is well that the children should be familiarised with these names, as they are met with so frequently in connection with Hebrew history.

NOTES ON CHAPTER XVIII. (See *Genesis* xxxix., xl.)

THE children must be shown Egypt on the map, with the river Nile. The Delta (the mouths of the river) should be pointed out, and reference made to chapter v., to the fact of the people looking with gladness at the overflowing of the river, because of the rich mud it brings to the land,

causing the corn to grow more luxuriantly.

The Pharaohs of Egypt were regarded as children of the Sun.' The name for the sun was Ra. In many countries we find the early kings were supposed to be descended from the Sun, the mightiest power known.

NOTES ON CHAPTER XIX. (See *Genesis* xli.)

THE 'magicians' of Egypt had a great influence in the land, for the people had an intense love of mystery, and their religion was full of it.

In Henty's 'Cat of Bubastes' we have a good illustration of many curious ideas of those times; and if the teacher has the book several passages in it will be interesting to read.

The custom of shaving the head

or of cutting the hair very short was usual among the Egyptians, as we see from the pictures on the walls of their ancient buildings; it was only in times of mourning that they allowed their hair to grow. Hence it is that we hear them described by Isaiah (ch. xviii. Revised Version, that in the A.V. is curiously misleading) as a nation 'tall and smooth.'

CHAPTER XX. (See *Genesis* xlii.)NOTES ON CHAPTER XXI. (See *Genesis* xliii. to xlv.)

WE have here again a reference to the magic powers so commonly believed in by the Egyptians,—the silver cup,—Joseph's 'divining' cup; by means of which he was supposed to be able to foretell future events. In the 'Bible for Young People,' Vol. I., page 286, we read how this kind of 'divination' was conducted:—'Little bits of gold or silver were thrown into a cup full of water, and sometimes precious stones, with certain characters carved upon them, were added. From the figures found in the water by the reflection of these objects, those skilled in the art made out the future. Others did the same thing with melted wax, and read the events of the future from the combination of the little pieces.'

This passage will give an opportunity of speaking to the children on the foolishness of believing in fortune telling and the like. In the early times it was excusable because men had so little opportunity of gaining exact knowledge that they had to 'guess' about many things which to-day we have learnt to understand better. The eclipse of the sun or moon was to them a miraculous sign (that is, something contrary to natural law); to-day we understand why it comes, and our astronomers can foretell the date of its appearances from this more exact knowledge; so also with the comets.

Let us impress on the children that our better knowledge of these things

should increase our reverence for those laws, which are so perfect that they need never be set aside.

We must discriminate between the prophecy that comes through knowledge, and that which comes from guess work. There is also a third kind of prophecy which is possible to a man here and there, who is able to judge the probabilities of the future from the present, because of his clear brain, reasoning powers, and intuitive faculties. This kind was evidently possessed by Joseph, as it has been by

some of the highest men and women in every age.

In connection with the 'magic cup' story, it may be well to tell the children that even now some people are foolish enough to think that they can read the future in the grounds at the bottom of a tea-cup! The belief in these superstitions has often caused real unhappiness, and therefore it is well to refer to them sometimes, in order to show the children what a mistake it is to be led astray by them.

NOTES ON CHAPTER XXII. (See *Genesis* xlvi.-1.)

I HAVE said but little of Jacob's blessing to his sons because probably this narrative would not have much interest for the children; but a quiet perusal of it ourselves will help us to understand what was said in the Notes on chap. vii. about the sons of Jacob being personifications of the tribes. If we look at a map of Canaan, 'as divided between the tribes,' we can easily understand how those who occupied the least favourable positions would be called sons of the handmaids, while the most fertile spot would natur-

ally be the portion assigned to the children of the renowned Joseph.

We shall note, however, if we read these chapters carefully, that we have more than one account of the blessing. That in the 49th chapter is in the form of a poem, as may be seen in the Revised Version, and here Joseph is treated as one tribe with the rest.

But in the 48th chapter we read how Joseph brought his two sons to his father, and how Israel gave a tribal blessing to each of them.

NOTES ON CONCLUDING CHAPTER.

CHILDREN generally love to find out puzzles, and they should therefore be allowed plenty of time to try to discover the meaning of the picture, the teacher only suggesting points, before the chapter is read to them.

In giving this lesson stress should be laid on the fact that knowledge acquired at school is but the beginning of wisdom; that it requires years of patient labour and growing experience

before its fruit can really be said to nourish our true selves. Young people who have had greater opportunities for learning than their parents were able to enjoy, are apt to think they 'know it all,' as a child of twelve told a friend of mine the other day, and to look down on their elders, ignorant that life's experience is a more practical, though a much sterner teacher than the class master at the day-school.

A LAST WORD TO OURSELVES.

'We may not think our fathers' thought,
Their creed our lips may alter;
But in the faith they dearly bought
Our hearts shall never falter.
'Twas faith in man, 'twas faith in God,
'Twas faith in truth and beauty;
In freedom's might and reason's right
And all-controlling duty.'

May I say, in conclusion, that the lesson emphasized in the parable picture is one that we all need to learn, and more especially should it be taken to heart when, in dealing with the ancient books of religion, we find that fresh knowledge requires us to reconsider our position towards them.

We must ever remember that this fresh knowledge is not the fruit of our own wisdom, but is the sacred legacy of the past; at the same time we must not forget that we have our own step to make; and if,—having managed to secure a foothold on a little higher ground,—we find that we are able to get a more extended view, we are in honour bound to make the best use possible of that clearer outlook; and, not listening to the 'voices from with-

out,' as Florence Nightingale says, be ever careful 'to bring the best we have, *whatever* that is, to the work of God's world.'

The Gospel that we have to preach to ourselves and to our children is that all men belong to the kingdom of God, and that His ways must be always best, whether we understand the working of His laws or not, because His name stands for the embodiment of Wisdom, Goodness and Love. We see dawns of this message of glad tidings in the ancient stories of the childhood of the world; we see it in our own lives to-day; and in this knowledge that 'we cannot be where God is not' we have the greatest comfort in times of sorrow, and the strongest incentive to hopeful labour.

'Great God of Nature, hail!
By Thee sustained we live.
Not once hast Thou appeared for all
And left us then
To fail and fall;
But year by year Thy presence shows
In winter's snows,
In summer's sun,
In life and death,
In joy and grief,
That Thou, and we, and all are one.'

THE END.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.
SUNDAY LESSONS FOR INFANTS
AT SCHOOL AND AT HOME.
WITH OUTLINE ILLUSTRATIONS BY C. L. MATÉAUX.

Crown 8vo. Cloth, 1/6.

The *Inquirer* says:—‘They are useful little lessons on Natural History; the object of the whole series, to quote the words of the author, being, “first, to lead the children, through their faculties of admiration and wonder, from the marvels of creation to the Great Creator, so that their hearts may grow in love and trusting obedience to Him who doeth all things well; and secondly, to urge them to be faithful to duty and helpful and loving to one another.” The lessons are on such useful and familiar subjects as the Earth and the Sky, the Sea, Birds, Beasts, and Fishes, Flowers, etc., and there is an excellent preliminary chapter for teachers.’

USEFUL BOOKS FOR TEACHING YOUNG CHILDREN.

- Hymns in Prose for Children.** By Mrs. BARBAULD. Cloth, 6d. Illus.
These well-known and beautiful prose Hymns are admirably suited for children's services, as well as for private reading.
- New Parables and Stories.** By DAVID MACRAE. Cloth, 1/6.
‘They inculcate trust, prudence, perseverance, charity, modesty, and kindness; and a child will learn more of the true character of Religion from them than from the most elaborately-devised definitions.’—*Inquirer*.
- Lessons for Little Boys.** By MARY DENDY. Sewed, 2d.
Chapters on Courage, Obedience, Truthfulness, Kindliness of Heart, and Industry. The language is quite simple, and teachers will find it a most convenient booklet.
- Lesson Stories for the Little Ones.** By MARY DENDY. Cloth 1/-. Illus.
These stories are written so as to convey helpful lessons in a bright and attractive way. They are illustrated by pictures of animals, and are sure to interest little boys and girls.
- Home Counsels.** By GERTRUDE MARTINEAU. Cloth, 1/-.
These delightful talks in twelve chapters on such subjects as Speaking the whole Truth, Courage, Courtesy, Obedience, etc., are well adapted for younger classes or for the family circle.
- Jesus: The Story of his Life.** By the Misses GREGG. Cloth, 1/6.
‘An attempt to present the Story of the Gospels and such illustrative information as is to-day available in simple modern language suited to the comprehension of little children. This has been well done, and is sure to interest the little ones.’—*Literary World*.
- Picture Pages for Little Children.** Illustrated boards, 1/-.
There are here a series of short, simple stories, with a full-page illustration to each.
- Nature Pictures.** By WALTER MAWER. Cloth, 1/- net. Post free, 1/3.
Natural History and other Sketches, for Children, with large type.

Biblical Manuals.

EDITED BY REV. J. ESTLIN CARPENTER, M.A.

'They are among the first of their kind, and they meet a real want.'—MRS. HUMPHRY WARD in *Nineteenth Century*.

- | | |
|---|--|
| Life in Palestine when Jesus Lived.
By the Editor. 4th Edition. Cloth 1/-. | The Prophecies of the Captivity
(Isaiah xl.-lxvi.).
By Rev. R. T. Herford, B.A. Cloth 1/6. |
| The Method of Creation.
By Rev. H. W. Crosskey, LL.D., F.G.S. 2nd
Edition. Cloth 1/-. | The First Three Gospels: their
Origin and Relations.
By the Editor. 2nd Edition. Cloth 3/6. |
| Chapters on Job for Young Readers.
By Rev. G. Vance Smith, D.D. Cloth 1/-. | The Epistle of Paul to the Gala-
tians.
By Principal Drummond, M.A., LL.D. Cloth, 1/6. |
| The Epistle to Philippians and
Philemon.
By Rev. V. D. Davis, B.A. Cloth 1/6. | The Gospel according to Mark.
A Study in the earliest records of the Life of
Jesus. By Rev. H. Shaen Solly, M.A.
Cloth 3/6. |
| The Story of Jeremiah and his
Times.
By H. Johnson. Cloth 1/6. | |

Uniform with the above.

The Childhood of Jesus. By Rev. W. C. Gannett. Cloth 1/6.

Lesson Notes for Teachers.

A Series of Small Handbooks.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Ten Lessons on Religion.
By Rev. Charles Beard, LL.D. Price 1d. | 5. In the Home: a Study of Duties.
By Rev. W. C. Gannett. Price 3d. |
| 2. Lessons for Little Boys.
By Mary Dendy. Price 2d. | 6. Outline Lessons in Religion.
By Rev. R. A. Armstrong, B.A. Price 6d. |
| 3. Lessons on the Growth of Moral
and Spiritual Ideas.
By Rev. P. H. Wicksteed, M.A. Price 4d. | 7. Talks about the Sunday Services.
By Rev. F. E. Millson. Price 3d. |
| 4. Lessons on the Title Page and
Table of Contents of an
English Bible.
By Rev. F. E. Millson. Limp cloth, 8d. | 8. The Three Stages of a Bible's
Life.
By Rev. W. C. Gannett. Price 4d.; cloth,
8d. |

RECENTLY PUBLISHED.

Practical Hints for Sunday School Teachers.

By HENRY RAWLINGS, M.A.

Limp Cloth, 6d. net. By Post, 7d.