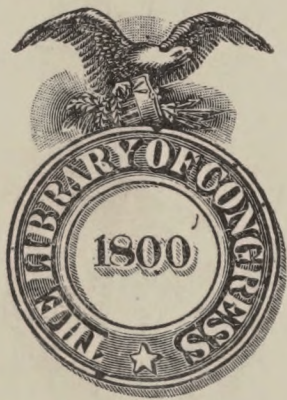


BIBLE STORIES TO TELL CHILDREN



WILLIAM D. MURRAY



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Bible Stories to Tell Children



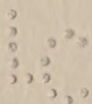
WILDE'S BIBLE PICTURES. 8.

JOSEPH AND MARY, ARRIVAL AT BETHLEHEM.

OLIVIER L. MERSON.

Bible Stories to Tell Children

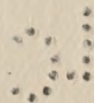
By
WILLIAM D. MURRAY



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Pine

*To my Mother and
all other Mothers, those
best of all story tellers*

Preface

THE writer hesitates to add another Bible story book to the many good ones we now have, but he nevertheless ventures to send forth this book, because he believes it to be different from the others. The purpose of the author has been to put only a few of the old familiar stories into modern English, using the constructive imagination to complete the pictures. We know, for instance, that when it became necessary to hide Moses from the Egyptian soldiers his mother and sister must have talked about it ; when David came to the place where his brothers were in Saul's army a much more extended conversation must have taken place than the writer of the history has recorded. The author has tried to imagine what these people said to each other and to put it in words.

We are only just beginning to recognize the great importance of the story in education, and we ought to use it even more than we do. It is hoped that these stories will serve in some degree as models, so that those

Preface

who use this book will be led to put many more Bible stories into their own words, filling in such details as any one knows must have accompanied the incidents. Any parent or teacher can do this; and remember, stories must be told with eyes and hands, as well as voice, so that the scene is brought vividly before the listening child.

The author wishes it understood that no attempt has been made to include all useful Bible stories. The ones in this book are only a few of those which for years he has been telling to little children, and he feels from his own experience that if Bible stories are told as these have been, lasting impressions for good will be made upon the hearts of the children who hear them.

WILLIAM D. MURRAY.

New York City.

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I

The Christmas Story

LONG, long ago, before the first Christmas, in a country far away across the sea, a lot of people lived, who were called Jews. God had given them the most wonderful book in the world—the Bible; that is, they had the part of the Bible called the Old Testament. The land in which these people lived was not like our happy country, for they were ruled by kings who were often very cruel and wicked. If the king wanted to he could even kill people and no one could stop him. The people who lived there didn't know how to be kind; for if a poor man became crazy, instead of taking care of him, as we would do now, they just turned him out in the fields to take care of himself, to live or die; and in some places they made men fight with wild animals, while great crowds of people sat in safe places and laughed at it as if it were fun.

But in their Bible the people of Palestine, for that was the name of their country, had read that a wonderful child was to be born

some day. The old time preachers, who were called prophets, and whose sermons they found written in their Bible, had told them that some day this baby would be born and that He would become their king and would be good to them and would help them when their enemies were bad to them. So every time a little boy baby came to one of the Jewish homes his mother wondered, "Can this be the one the prophets have told us about?" and always she wished and hoped it was.

At the time we are thinking about, when the first Christmas was drawing near, a man named Herod was king and he lived in a beautiful palace in Jerusalem, a great city which was the capital of the country. He hadn't been a good man, and he really had no right to be king, so like people who are bad he was very often worried about things.

There were two other places besides Jerusalem which we ought to know about. One was Bethlehem, a little village not very far from the capital. It was the place where David, the king, had been born. The king at Rome, under whom King Herod served, had made up his mind to find out how many people he had in his kingdom, so he had sent word all over the land that the people

must come together in their home towns to be counted. This meant that every one who was related in any way to King David would have to go to this little town of Bethlehem. It wasn't a very big place; it was like a village; and of course it wasn't easy to take care of all the people who came crowding into it just now. The man who kept the little hotel must have had hard work looking after all his guests, as the crowds kept pouring in.

The other place we must remember was a little village, a long way from Bethlehem, called Nazareth. This was a very small place up on the side of a hill, and was filled, I imagine, with romping boys and girls, as well as men and women, just like other villages. The family in which we are most interested wasn't a family at all yet. But there lived in Nazareth a carpenter named Joseph, who was a relative of David, and he was going to marry a young woman named Mary who happened also to be related to King David. When Joseph and Mary heard the order of the king about going to their home town to be counted they knew that meant that they must make the long journey to Bethlehem. So they started out together. I don't know just how they travelled, but I

think Mary would ride on one of the little donkeys they had in that country and Joseph would walk by her, leading the donkey.

Over in another country, how far away I don't know, there were some men whom we call wise men. In some way, it may be from reading the Bible, they had heard about the wonderful child who was to be born : it said in the Bible that He was to be called Wonderful. They understood He was to be King of the Jews, the people who lived in Palestine. Just at this time while they were thinking about this new king, they saw a bright, new star in the sky, and this made them wonder still more as to what was going to happen. I don't suppose they knew exactly what to do, but perhaps one of them said, "Let us go over to the place where the star is shining and see if we can find this new king." So they started on their journey, every one taking with him some present to give to the king when he found Him. One had something made of gold and the others had some sweet perfumes. As they walked along they were surprised to see the star moving. I imagine one of them said to the others, "Let's follow the star," and so they did.

When David was a boy he used to tend his father's sheep in the fields around Bethle-

hem. I think it was in these very fields that he had led his sheep by still waters and made them lie down in green pastures, just as he afterwards told us in the Shepherd Psalm. Well, out in those same fields one holy night the shepherds of Bethlehem were watching their sheep. As they sat there in the quiet night, many a time they would talk with each other about the wonderful child who their Bible told them was to be born some day. One would say, "Don't you wish that baby would come who is going to be our Saviour ; who is going to help us against these cruel kings who rule over us?" And another would answer, "Indeed I do ; I wish He would be born this very night." And no doubt the shepherds were there when Joseph and Mary came along the dusty road from Nazareth that first Christmas eve. Anyhow the shepherds were watching their sheep as Joseph and Mary went into Bethlehem, their home town, to be counted ; and out there in the fields those shepherds stayed that night.

When Joseph reached the village the first thing he did was to go to the man who kept the inn or hotel to see if he could get a place where Mary and he could stay that night, for they were tired after their long journey ; but the man could not give them any place,

because so many people had come to Bethlehem that every part of the house was crowded. Joseph couldn't think of letting Mary stay outdoors in the night time, and he just had to find some place where she could sleep. Finally the innkeeper said they could stay in the stable, if they didn't mind, and, as there was no room for them in the inn, Joseph said all right. I should like to have seen them as they were getting their strange bedroom ready, putting down fresh new straw and making it as comfortable as possible. Of course the sheep wouldn't be there; they were out in the fields with the shepherds; but I feel pretty sure that the cows were there looking with big, wondering eyes at the people who had come to live in the barn. After a while it grew dark and everything was quiet; night had come and the people had settled down and gone to sleep; all the animals were resting quietly.

But outdoors in the sky over the fields where the shepherds were watching their sheep a strange thing was happening. A curious light had driven away the darkness of the night and the shepherds were greatly frightened: they had never seen anything like that before. And then while they were

wondering what it was all about they were frightened still more by seeing an angel standing near them who said, "Don't be afraid. I have brought you good news. The baby you have been hoping for so long has been born over there in Bethlehem. You will find Him in a stable, wrapped up in His baby clothes, lying in a manger." And then a great crowd of angels appeared in the sky and began to sing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men." And it was all true. That night as Mary and Joseph were resting in the barn a little baby boy came to them, a little boy whom an angel had once told Joseph was to be called Jesus, because that name meant Saviour and He was to be the people's Saviour. Of course, Mary didn't have a crib all ready for the baby, but she made a nice place in the hay in one of the mangers and there she laid the baby Jesus.

I don't believe it took the shepherds very long to run into the village to find the baby the angel told them about. And when they got there they found other people there, too, for they had heard there was a baby in the barn; and then the shepherds began to tell the people, who were looking at the baby lying in the manger, how the angel had come

to them in the fields and had told them that this was the baby they were all hoping would soon be born. The people were greatly surprised to find that this poor little child was really the Christ Child, but Mary remembered what the angel had told her and she too wondered what it all meant.

In the meantime the wise men, following the star, had come to Jerusalem, for they thought of course, if a king was to be born he must be in the palace in the big city. If anybody had told us a hundred and more years ago that some day a baby was to be born who would grow up to be the great Abraham Lincoln, I don't believe we would have thought of looking in a little cabin in the woods in Kentucky. We would have looked for him in some great city : and that is what these men did. So they began to ask, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? We saw His star, and we have come to worship Him." No one could tell them. By and by news of these strange looking men reached King Herod in his palace and when he heard that they had come looking for a new king who was to be born, he was worried for he didn't want any one else to be king ; and the people were worried too, for they knew what trouble it made when one king tried to take

the place of another king. So Herod sent for these strange visitors and called all his own wise men together and asked them if they could tell where this new king was to be born. Herod's wise men answered that He was to be born in Bethlehem, for it said so in the Bible, and they read it to him. Then he spoke to the strange wise men and asked them all sorts of questions about the star and their journey, and said to them, "You go to Bethlehem, for that's where He's to be born ; find out all you can about this child and come back and tell me so that I can go there to worship Him too." Herod didn't really want to worship Him, he wanted to destroy Him.

They listened to what the king said, and then started for Bethlehem, and as they started, there in the sky above them they saw again the beautiful star, which had been leading them, and which now led the way again. This made them very happy, and as they walked the star went before them until it stood over the house where the Christ Child was. They went into the stable and there they saw Mary and the baby Jesus. They bowed down and worshipped Him and took out the presents they had brought and gave them to Him : the golden things and the sweet perfume.

II

The Story of Noah

LONG, long ago, when God looked upon the earth He saw so many bad people that He was sorry He had made it at all ; for everywhere He looked He saw people doing all sorts of wrong things. But there was one family of good people, people who loved God and tried to do what God wanted them to do. The father's name was Noah, and he had a wife and three sons. These boys' names were Shem, Ham and Japheth and each of them had a wife. And because Noah was good God was his friend ; so one time He came to Noah and said, "Noah, I shall have to destroy everybody on the earth ; they are so bad I can't stand it any longer. But I want to save you and your family. I want you to make a boat, for I am going to make it rain so hard and so long that the earth will be flooded and everything on the earth shall die." And then God told Noah all about how the boat, or ark as it was called, was to be

built. It must have looked like a house on a boat. Then God spoke to Noah again, and said, "After the ark is built I want you to take your wife and your sons and their wives and go into the ark ; and you must take with you two of every kind of animal as well as of birds that fly in the air and the insects which creep on the earth ; and you must also take enough food for yourself and your wife and your sons and their wives, as well as for all the animals."

Noah was greatly surprised, but he went right to work ; what else could he do ? God had told him what he was to do and that was enough for him ; he did it.

You should have seen Noah, and Shem and Ham and Japheth when they began to build that great boat. There wasn't any water near their home ; it seemed very strange to their neighbours. They called out to the carpenters who were working at it, "What are you making?" and the carpenters answered back, "A boat." "Why, what do you want with a boat ? you can't sail it anywhere, there's no water." And the carpenters said, "That's so ; we don't see what anybody wants a boat for." And by and by Noah came out and told the people how displeased God was with them because they had

disobeyed Him, and how He was going to send a flood upon the earth, and how He had told him to make this boat so that when the flood came he might save his family. And do you know I think some of those people would laugh and say, "What a queer thing that is Noah is doing over there in his yard ; the idea ; you couldn't flood this earth." But Noah and Shem and Ham and Japheth kept right on working, for they believed that what God said was true.

Then one day it began to rain, and of course the people didn't think very much about it at first, for they often had rain-storms ; but after a while when they looked over where the ark was standing they saw a strange procession, for the animals and the birds and the bugs were going into it two by two ; and of some, like the pigeons, there were more than two ; lots of food was being carried in ; perhaps some of Noah's neighbours helped to carry it. At last all the animals and birds and bugs were in the ark and Noah and his wife, and Shem and Ham and Japheth and each of their wives went in and God shut the door after them. I don't know what the other people did when they saw what had happened. Pretty soon Noah's neighbours began to wonder whether what

Noah had told them about a flood might not be true ; and it rained and rained, harder and harder, and by and by the ark began to float and as Noah looked out he could see the water getting deeper and deeper, until at last one day he looked out and he could see nothing but water: the trees were covered, the high mountains were covered, and nobody was left on the earth besides himself and his wife and Shem and Ham and Japheth and their wives and the animals and birds and bugs which had come into the ark with them. Many times while they were in the ark Noah got his family together and kneeled down and thanked his heavenly Father for telling them about the flood and saving them when so many people had to be destroyed.

For five months, as long as July and August and September and October and November, they sailed around in the rain in the ark, until God saw that it was time to let them come out. Then one day the rain stopped and the water began to dry up, and after they had been shut up in the ark for one hundred and fifty days the great boat stuck fast on a mountain, the top of which was just a little under the water. By and by Noah opened a window in the roof and let out a raven, but he flew away or else he

found something floating in the water on which he could rest for he never came back.

Then Noah let a pigeon go, to see if the water had really dried up, but pretty soon the pigeon came back all tired out, because there wasn't any place to light on except the ark. This of course showed Noah that the earth was still under water. He waited a whole week before trying again and then let out another pigeon, and this time it came back at evening with some leaves in its mouth ; so Noah knew that the water was drying up so that some of the trees were out and that very soon he could go out. And finally at the end of another week he let out another pigeon and this one didn't come back at all, because it must have found a tree or a house or something not covered with water on which it would rest. And as he looked out day by day Noah saw more and more of the land getting dry until it was all dry again.

And God spoke to him and said, "Come out of the ark, Noah, with your wife and with Shem and Ham and Japheth and their wives ; let out all the animals and the birds and the bugs and start a new world." And Noah went forth, and his wife and his sons and his sons' wives with him ; every beast, every fowl and every creeping thing went out of the ark.

Do you think Noah was glad? Do you think he wondered what had become of all his friends, the people who used to live near him and who wondered why he was building a boat on the dry land? Do you think he remembered as long as he lived how good God had been to him? I do. And I think Noah sometimes would wonder whether or not there would be another flood, and as he looked at his children and grandchildren he would wonder whether they would be good so that God would take care of them ; or bad so that God would have to punish them. But God is like a kind father and He loved Noah, so one day He said to him, "Noah, you needn't worry ; there will never be another flood ; I will put the rainbow in the clouds, so that every time you look up into the sky when there are clouds and rain, and it looks as if a flood might be beginning, you will remember My promise and feel safe."

III

Disobedient Jonah

WE sometimes think that God doesn't care for people who are far away from us ; they seem to us to be far away from Him, too ; and we call them heathen. But this isn't true : God has always been anxious that every one should know about Him, and that those of us who do know should tell the others who do not know Him. He has always been sorry for those who lived in countries where they hadn't yet heard about Him. In the days long ago there was a great heathen city called Nineveh, in which there were thousands and thousands of people, none of whom knew anything about our God. They had gods of their own. For many years these people who lived in and about the great city of Nineveh had been very bad to God's people, the Israelites, so that these Israelites hated them, and thought God didn't care anything about them. But all the time God was thinking about them, and one day He

called one of His servants named Jonah, who was what we call a minister, but was then called a prophet, and said to him, "Jonah, I have seen how wicked those people in Nineveh are, and I want you to go and tell them what will happen if they keep on."

Jonah was greatly surprised at being asked to go on such an errand. He was an Israelite, and like other Israelites, he didn't think God cared for anybody but Israelites, and really he didn't want God to be good to anybody except the Israelites. Jonah knew how bad the people of Nineveh had been to his own people and he hated them. So he said something like this to himself, "I won't go; I know God can be kind, for He has been kind to us many times; He just wants to be good to those heathen people, and I want Him to punish them: I won't go." Then, when his mind was made up, Jonah felt that he must go away somewhere, and the further it was from Nineveh the better he would like it. He seemed to think he could get where God couldn't find him. So he hurried as much as he could and went to a place called Joppa on the seashore. At last he found a ship that was going to sail for Tarshish, a place in Spain. This was in exactly the opposite direction from the one in which

God had told him to go. He bought a ticket for Tarshish and when the ship sailed Jonah was on board.

But God made a great wind blow which made the sea so rough that it looked as if the boat would be swamped. The sailors, who were heathen, were frightened, and began to throw overboard everything they could, to make the ship lighter. Then they prayed to their gods to save them. Jonah must have been very tired, when he went aboard, for even in this awful storm he was down in his cabin fast asleep. So the captain had to go to him and say, "How can you sleep in this storm; don't you see we are in great danger? We have been praying to our gods but it does us no good; now you get up and pray to yours and ask Him to save us."

In those days they had a curious way of finding out who had done anything wrong. They used to put each man's name on a piece of paper and put all the papers into a basket. Then they would shake the basket, and the name on the first paper which jumped out they thought was that of the guilty man. This is what the captain proposed now. "Let us cast lots," he said, "and see which of us is the cause of this storm." They

made up the basket, shook it and the first paper to jump out had Jonah's name on it. "Tell us," the sailors said to Jonah, "who you are, what is your business, and where do you live? Why has all this trouble come upon us?" Then Jonah said to them, "I am an Israelite; I worship the God who made this sea as well as the land. He told me to go to Nineveh, and I didn't want to, and now I am running away from Him." Then they were frightened and said to him, "Oh, Jonah, why did you do this? Is there anything we can do to you so that this awful sea will get calm?" For it kept getting rougher and rougher. And Jonah said, "Yes; there is one thing you can do. I know God has sent this storm upon us because I disobeyed Him. If you throw me overboard the sea will be calm."

But the sailors, though heathen, didn't like to do that; and they rowed as hard as they could to get to shore, but the sea got worse and worse. Finally they prayed to Jonah's God and said, "O God, don't drown us all because this man has disobeyed you; and don't punish us for killing him." Then at last, when it seemed as if there was nothing else to do, they threw Jonah into the sea.

But, even then, God was good to Jonah and had a great fish ready. When Jonah reached the water the fish swallowed him, and strange to say, Jonah stayed alive. By and by he began to pray to God and after three days the fish put him out on the dry land alive and unhurt.

God thought He would give Jonah another chance, so He said, "Now, Jonah, I want you to go to Nineveh and tell them what I said." And this time Jonah went straight there, and began to preach to the people and tell them that God would destroy them for their sins, if they didn't stop. They had never heard anything like that in Nineveh before. But they believed what Jonah said, and they were sorry.

The king told them to pray to God to see if He wouldn't save them. So they prayed and began to do good things and God said He wouldn't destroy them. But all this time Jonah supposed that God would destroy the wicked people of Nineveh, who had been so bad to his people, and he went outside the city, and built a sort of camp, and sat there to see what would happen. But when he heard that God was going to be good to the people in Nineveh he was so angry he wanted to die. God was good to

Jonah again. He made a vine grow up in one night, and it covered the camp with leaves so that when the hot day came Jonah would have some shade. This made Jonah very happy ; then when the sun got very hot and made the vine wither, he got angry again, and the sun beat down on Jonah so that he fainted and wished he might die. But God said, " Why, Jonah, is it right for you to get angry about the poor little gourd ? " " Yes, it is, " said Jonah ; and then God said, " Now see, you feel sorry because a vine died, which you didn't have to care for, and which wasn't worth anything ; don't you think I ought to be sorry for the people of Nineveh, thousands of whom are little children ? "

The story doesn't tell us what Jonah's answer was, but I feel sure that after that he never forgot that God did care for the people in Nineveh and in all of the world.

IV

A Broken Promise

LONG, long ago, when God's people, the Israelites or Jews, were living in Palestine, their heathen enemies, the Assyrians, made war upon them, and because God's people had been wicked and had disobeyed Him, He used these enemies to punish them. In Jerusalem the Israelites had built a wonderful temple, which to them was the most sacred place in the world.

But when enemies came over into Palestine, and got into Jerusalem, they said, "We must destroy this temple. These people think this is the most wonderful place in the world; we'll show them that it isn't anything." So with their heavy instruments they pulled the great stones down and set fire to the parts made of wood and when they got through with the temple it was anything but beautiful. You can imagine how it made the people feel to see their beautiful church in ruins. And then, as they often did in those old days, these Assyrian soldiers got thou-

sands of the Israelites together, as prisoners, and made them march hundreds of miles across the desert to Assyria their country, and put them in the great city of Babylon as their slaves. There they lived a long, long time. Some of them didn't care very much and even built themselves houses in this strange city to which they were taken.

And I suppose for a while before they got used to them, the Assyrians looked upon these Israelites as a queer people, just as we would look at Indians if a lot of them should come to live in our city, for their faces were different from the Assyrians and they dressed very differently. And it seems as if the Assyrians even used to try to make them sing ; I suppose they wanted to hear the strange language which the Israelites spoke. But the poor Israelites were almost broken-hearted and when their keepers would say, "Sing us one of the songs you used to sing at home," they could only answer, "How can we sing our songs away off here in a strange land?" and they put away their harps and other musical instruments.

So it went on for many years. Some of the captives died ; those persons who still lived had grown up to be old men and women ; lots of babies must have been born.

These old people never forgot Jerusalem, the city where their temple had stood. Often they must have thought of the beautiful building where so many times they had worshipped God, but now they could only think of it as in ruins. No doubt the fathers and mothers and the old grandfathers and grandmothers would tell their little children stories about the beautiful church which they used to have, when they lived in their old home; and they would tell them, too, how the cruel soldiers had come upon them and destroyed their sacred building and brought them away to this strange city. I imagine some of them would wonder if they ever would see Jerusalem again.

When the people were taken captive and were marched over to Babylon Nebuchadnezzar was King of Assyria; but at the time we are now thinking about he had died, and Cyrus had become king in his place. In some way God had put it into the heart of this heathen king to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. One morning when the Israelites went outdoors they found in different parts of Babylon a notice something like this: "To the Israelite captives living in Babylon: Your God has told me that He wants me to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem

which Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers destroyed. I want to do this, so if any of you want to help in this work I will let you go free if you will promise to go back to Jerusalem and restore the temple. If any of you do not care to go but want to stay here in Babylon, you can give something towards the expenses of the work." This would be signed by the king.

I should like to have seen those Israelites when they went out into the streets of Babylon that morning and read that notice. For many long years they had been prisoners ; at last they could go free ! To some it seemed too good to be true ; they thought it was a dream. At last they could go free ! How they must have talked it over among themselves. "Have you heard about the king's offer?" one would say as he met a friend on the street. "He says that any of us who want to go free can do so, if we will go back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple." "Yes," the other would answer, "I've seen the notice ; what are you going to do?" They would talk it over at home : some would be anxious to go back, others would want to stay in Babylon where they were so comfortable. How long this went on I don't know. Anyhow after they had thought it all

over and those who wanted to go back to rebuild the temple had given their names to the king, it was found that there were more than 40,000 of them, counting young and old. These people really said to the king, "We will accept your offer: if you will set us free we will promise you to go back to Jerusalem and build up the temple."

Finally they got started. It was a long hot journey, for it was over the desert; but they were happy because they were no longer slaves. We are told that they took with them two hundred men and women who could sing, a sort of choir. I feel sure that they must have sung very often the psalm which we know as the one hundred and twenty-sixth:

"When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.

"Then was our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them.

"The Lord hath done great things for us whereof we are glad."

Besides this great crowd that started back to Jerusalem there were a good many of the prisoners in Babylon who for one reason or another could not accept the king's offer

of freedom, but who wanted to have a part in the work of rebuilding the temple; so they made contributions to the expenses of the work. The people who marched out of Babylon carried with them these gifts of gold and silver and various kinds of goods which they were to use in buying material for the temple and paying the workmen.

At last the returning captives reach their old home land and find themselves in the city of Jerusalem, and they soon see all that is left of the grand old temple which had been so dear to the people in the past.

There were some very old men in the company and when they saw the ruins and remembered how the temple had looked before it was destroyed they just cried; but the young men who had never seen the beautiful old temple shouted for joy—they were so glad to be in Jerusalem. By and by, after getting settled, they began work—they were set free in order to do this work; they had promised the king that they would do it, and they started to fulfill their promise. But like some other people who make promises, they began to get tired and to forget, and besides King Cyrus was now a long way from Jerusalem.

They did some work on the temple, but

pretty soon they began to say to themselves, "It isn't a good time to build the temple now," and it wasn't long before they stopped entirely.

They kept right on working for themselves, however, although you remember they had promised the king that they would build the temple and he had set them free because they had made that promise, and now here they were busy building houses for themselves, and looking after their farms. But the farms didn't do very well: when they expected a big crop it turned out a small one; nothing seemed to go well with them.

I have wondered whether they used for themselves the money given to them by the people who stayed behind in Babylon, for a good many of them seem to have had pretty nice houses for themselves. And so it went on for one, two, five, ten, yes, sixteen long years.

But God didn't forget. He wanted His temple rebuilt: they had promised to rebuild it. God was very patient; He waited these sixteen years, but one day when the people are gathered together for a great outdoor festival, a strange old man appears among them. He waits for a good chance and when they are all quiet and wondering who he is, he begins

to speak. At first they don't know what to make of him, but while they listen they soon find out. This old man is Haggai, one of God's preachers, who has been sent to tell them what a mistake they were making in not keeping their promise. "How can you say it isn't time to build God's house?" he begins. "Is it right for you to build your own houses while God's house lies waste? Think for a moment what has been going on: you are not prosperous, nothing that you do is satisfactory, your crops are poor, you can't save any money. Think about it. Why is it? I'll tell you: You have broken your promise; you have been disobedient. Gather together the wood and the stone and go to work on the temple. Keep your promise. Obey, and God will bless you."

Among those who heard Haggai that day was the governor of the country and the high priest. They saw he was speaking the truth, and so they got the people together and started at once to work on the temple. "Now," said Haggai, "God will bless you, because you are obeying Him." And after they began to keep their promise, everything went better with them; their crops prospered; they could save money; God did bless them.

The Faithful Daniel

IN the days when the people of Israel, who were God's people, lived in Palestine, they had a great many heathen enemies ; and one thing these enemies liked to do was to send their soldiers over into Palestine and swoop down upon the poor Israelites, and carry away as many of them as they could. One time when some of these foreign soldiers were successful they carried away among others a boy named Daniel.

He must have been a splendid looking little fellow, for when the king of the foreign country wanted some especially nice-looking servants, and asked one of his servants to pick out a few of the best looking boys among the prisoners, Daniel was one of those chosen. And he grew up to be a good man there in the city of the heathen king. After a while King Darius wanted some men to help him rule his country and when he appointed three men to be at the head of the government, Daniel was chosen again ; he was one of the three.

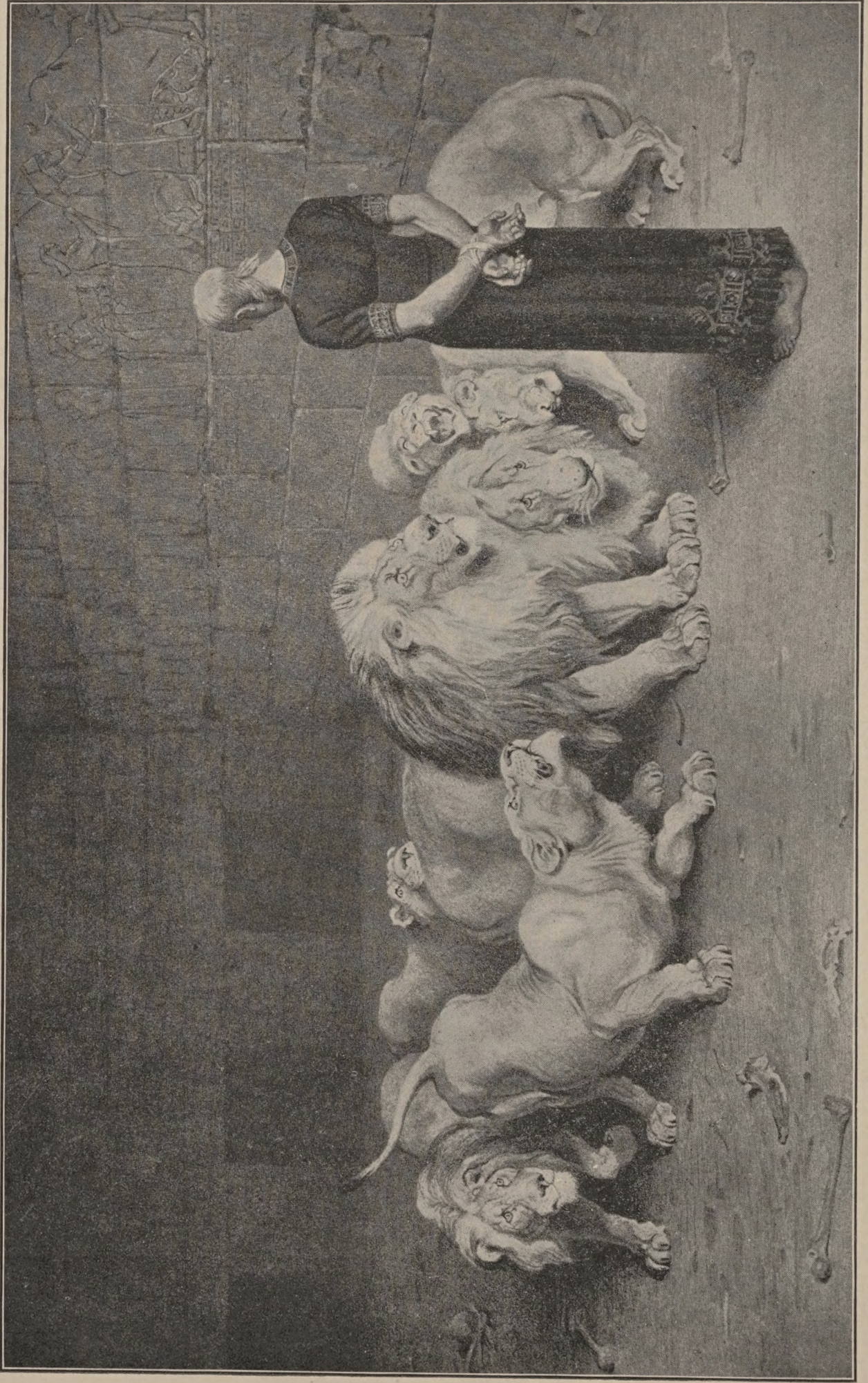
Now there was one thing Daniel learned when he was a boy at home and that was to pray to his heavenly Father. I suppose his mother taught him; and although he was a long way from home, and among strangers who were heathen, he never forgot this, but morning, noon and night he kneeled down and asked God to take care of him. Some people thought he was too religious. But at the same time he was the smartest man among them, so much so that King Darius thought it would be a good thing to make Daniel the ruler of the whole country.

The other men were very jealous. They got so that they couldn't stand Daniel; I suppose that when they wanted to steal things from the king, Daniel wouldn't let them, so they said, "We must get rid of Daniel; we can't do anything while he is around." But when they thought it over and wondered what they could complain about to the king, they couldn't find a thing that he had done that was wrong. Finally they said to each other: "There's only one way; he doesn't worship our gods; we've got to find something about his religion." Then they talked it over again and laid a trap for Daniel. They thought they would catch him; but we shall see. These wicked men knew that in that

country after the king had made a law it couldn't be changed. So they said, "Let's go and tell the king that we want a law made that if anybody prays to any god or any man except the king, for a whole month, he must be thrown into the lions' den; Daniel will keep on praying to his God and we'll have him. It won't take the lions long to destroy him."

This seemed so good to them that they went right to King Darius and said, "O king, all the men whom you appointed to help you rule your country have agreed to ask you to make a law that if anybody during the next month prays to any god or any man, except you, he must be thrown to the lions." Now this wasn't true; not all of them had agreed to this; the very man the king thought the most of, Daniel, didn't know anything about it. But the king felt flattered, and of course when they said all of them had agreed he thought that meant Daniel as well, so he made the law.

As soon as it was made these enemies of Daniel got it and told everybody, "The king has made a law that if anybody for a whole month prays to any god or man except him, that man will be thrown in among the lions." After a while Daniel heard it, and do you



suppose he said, "Dear me; that's too bad, I can't pray to my heavenly Father for a whole month"? Not a bit of it. He went into his house and kneeled down by the open window and prayed just as he had always done, morning, noon and night, and anybody going by could see him praying. I imagine some of his friends thought he was foolish, and told him that if he must pray he would better go further back into the room where people couldn't see him; but he kept on.

Of course his enemies were greatly pleased; they thought they had him now. They rushed off as fast as they could run to the palace, found the king and said, "O king, didn't you make a law that if anybody prayed to any God or any man except you for a month he would be thrown to the lions?" "Yes," said the king, "I did; and that law can't be changed." Then they told him that Daniel still prayed to his God three times a day. I wish you could have seen the king when he heard that; he began to think that these men were playing a trick on him, for he really loved Daniel. He was greatly provoked and he called together the men who were his lawyers and they worked until the evening to find some way to save Daniel. The men who had fixed this trap for Daniel

got very anxious; it looked as if they were going to fail, and at last they went to the king and said, "You mustn't forget that when once you make a law it can't be changed," and the poor king had to say, "I know it; that's so." And when it began to get dark he sent for Daniel, and said to him, "Your God will take care of you, I know," and then Daniel was thrown into the lions' den, and a big stone was put over the mouth of the cave where the lions lived.

Usually in the evening King Darius would have some kind of entertainment in the palace, dancing or music of some sort, but this night he wouldn't let anybody play music; he just walked up and down in his room and the servants saw by the way he shook his head that something was troubling him. By and by he went to bed, but it was no use; he could not sleep; he kept thinking all the time of that poor man down among the lions, and every once in a while he would say to himself, "I wonder if his God is really able to take care of him; I hope He is." How glad he was when daylight came. He got up while it was still very early, and ran as fast as he could and when he came to the lions' den he had a servant lift up the stone and he called out

with a trembling voice, "O Daniel, has your God taken care of you?" Then there came up a very quiet voice that said, "Why, yes, O king, my God sent His angel and shut the mouths of the lions; they haven't hurt me a bit. This was because I have done nothing wrong." Then the king was glad; he called his servants and said, "Take Daniel up out of the den," and when he came out they looked at him and didn't find a single scratch. Then the king was angry, and he sent for the wicked men who had made him do this bad thing to Daniel and had them thrown into the den of lions, who very soon destroyed them.

VI

The Boy in the Temple

AT one time there was a temple in a place called Shiloh, where the people used to go to worship. Eli was the priest, and he had two boys whose names were Hophni and Phinehas. They were also priests, but I am sorry to say that they were not good young men, and did not help their father very much. They did many things that were wrong and sometimes made their father Eli very sorrowful.

The people came up to this temple once a year for a great festival, and among those who came were a man and his wife, named Elkanah and Hannah. Hannah was very sad because God had never given her a little baby boy, and when she went up to the temple the thing she would pray for most was that a little boy might be sent to their home. She even told God in her prayers that if He would give her a baby boy she would give him back to Him forever. And by and by a little baby did come to her home, and because she

was sure that God had sent him, she named him Samuel, which means "Asked of God."

How Hannah loved that little boy and what good care she took of him! She remembered that she had promised to give him to God, so she wanted him to be the sweetest little boy that ever grew. When he was still quite a baby, just old enough to get along without his mother, she took him to the temple. There she spoke to Eli and said, "This is the little boy for whom you heard me praying; I promised God that if He would give a baby boy to me, I would give the boy back to Him forever; so I have brought him to you that he may grow up here in the temple with you." Eli took little Samuel into the temple and his father and mother went back home. How they must have missed the little fellow, for they only saw him once a year, when they came to the festival, but they knew that he was in a good place and that no harm could come to him there with Eli. His mother often thought of him as she made clothes for him which she took to him when she went with his father to the temple on their yearly visit. I think that when he was old enough he would write letters to his mother, although in those old days it wasn't as easy to send letters as it is now.

I don't know exactly what this little boy did in the temple, but little as he was Eli gave him some kind of work to do and whatever it was we may be sure he did it well, for everybody liked him. Eli's bad sons were not much comfort to him and Samuel seems to have helped Eli more than his own boys. Both of them, Eli and Samuel, slept in the temple, and as Eli was old now and partly blind, when he wanted anything he asked Samuel to get it for him.

One night after they had gone to bed, Samuel heard some one call his name. He thought of course it was Eli, so he jumped up and ran in where Eli was and said, "Here I am." But Eli said, "I didn't call you, Samuel; go to sleep." Samuel hadn't been in bed very long before he heard his name again. He couldn't imagine how anybody else would call him, there in the temple, where he and Eli lived, so he ran into Eli's room and said to him, "You must have called me; here I am." "No," said Eli, "I didn't call; go lie down again." So Samuel went back to bed, but very soon he heard some one calling again, "Samuel, Samuel," and he hardly knew what to think. Twice before he had gone to Eli when Eli hadn't called him. But he jumped up just the same and ran in

where Eli was, and once more said: "You surely called me this time; I heard my name as plainly as could be; what do you want?" Then Eli knew that it was God who was calling this little boy, and that it was God who wanted to speak to him, so Eli explained to Samuel. "Samuel," he said, "this is God calling you. You go back to bed and if you hear your name again you will know it is the Lord. You must listen to what He has to say. When He calls you say, 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.'"

Samuel went back to bed once more. He must have been rather tired by this time, jumping up and down in the night, and some boys would have been just a little bit cross. But as soon as he heard his name again he seems to have been as sweet and gentle as he was the first time the voice called, for he answered at once, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." He meant that he was ready to hear whatever God had to say to him; and not only to hear it but to obey it. And because he was so ready to hear, after that, God told him some wonderful things which He didn't tell to anybody else. God always tells His best things to those whom He loves, to those who are willing to listen to Him.

VII

David and the Giant

ONE time two armies had come out to fight; one was on a mountain, on one side of a valley, and the other was on a mountain, on the other side of the valley. One army was made up of God's people, the Israelites, and had as its general King Saul; the other army was made up of the enemies of God's people, called the Philistines.

For a long time the soldiers of the two armies looked at each other from their camps across the valley without doing anything, except what I am going to tell you. In the army of the Philistines was a giant, named Goliath, who used to come out in front of the army of Israel each morning and afternoon and call out, "Why have you prepared to fight? Can't you choose one of your soldiers and let him fight with me; if he can beat me all our soldiers will be your slaves, but if I beat him you will have to be our slaves." When Saul and his soldiers heard this they

didn't know what to do. It didn't seem as if any one of their men was big enough to fight with this giant, for he was very terrible. He was bigger than anybody they had, for he was twelve feet tall; and he was terrible to look at, for on his head he had a great brass helmet which shone in the sun and he was covered with an iron coat, which weighed one hundred and fifty pounds; even his legs were protected by strips of brass.

He carried a great iron spear which looked like a big beam and the head of it weighed twenty pounds; in front of him stood a man carrying the great shield which Goliath held up when he fought with anybody. Twice a day for more than a month he came out and stood there and called out, "I defy the armies of Israel; give me a man that we may fight together." I don't wonder that when they saw him Saul and his soldiers were very much afraid and said to each other, "What shall we do? We haven't anybody in our army as big as that man Goliath. If we send even our best soldier against that great big man he will surely destroy him." And they didn't know what to do.

Back in the country lived a farmer named Jesse, who had eight boys. Three of these

boys wanted to be soldiers and were in the army of King Saul; they saw and heard this great giant as he came out in the morning, and again in the afternoon, day by day. Jesse often thought of his boys in the army and wanted to know what they were doing and how they were getting along, so he called his youngest son, a little boy whose name was David. We hear a great deal about this boy in the Bible. He was the same David who wrote our Shepherd Psalm, and he must have learned about sheep while he was a boy, for that was his work on the farm, to take care of the sheep. They must have thought that David was too young or too small to be a real soldier.

But now his father had some good things to eat put in a basket, I suppose by the boys' mother, and then he had a little package with a present for the captain of the company the boys were in; and he said to David, this little boy, "David, I want you to take these things and go out to the army. Give the food to your brothers, and give this present to their captain. Find out how your brothers are, and ask them if they want anything." And David rose up early in the morning; he could hardly wait; he wanted to see those soldiers, and he wanted

to run as quickly as he could on the errand his father had asked him to do. He arranged with a man to watch the sheep while he was gone and took the things his father had provided and went as fast as he could to the soldiers' camp. Just as he got there, King Saul was getting his army ready to fight; they must have made up their minds not to listen to that giant any longer, but to begin a battle; and so David found them getting ready to march and making a great noise as if they were very brave. By and by he found his brothers, and while he was talking with them out came that great Goliath again and called out, so that everybody, even David, could hear, "I defy the armies of Israel; give me a man that we may fight together," and when Saul's soldiers saw him they ran away.

The soldiers began to talk to each other, and one said, "What a man that Goliath is; what can we do? They say that if any man will fight him and kill him, King Saul has promised to make that man a rich man and to give him the princess, his daughter, as a wife." David wasn't quite sure he understood what this soldier said, so he asked him, "What did you say the king would do for the man that killed that great giant who is causing so much trouble to God's people?"

And the man said to David just as he had said before, "King Saul will give a great deal of money to any one who overcomes that giant and will also give him the princess, his daughter, for his wife."

I am sorry to say that one of David's brothers who was standing there got mad when he heard what David, his little brother, said. I think it was because David was the only one who was not afraid of the giant, and this big brother was provoked to think that this little fellow was braver than he. So this brother, whose name was Eliah, said to David, "What did you come here for anyway? I know; you thought you'd see a battle, didn't you? Well, you ought to be at home taking care of those sheep of yours; this is no place for you; we are soldiers, we'll do the fighting." And then I suppose the brother laughed and said to himself, "The idea; a baby like him fight!" David didn't like being treated that way by his brothers, so he went up to one of the soldiers and talked with him, until finally the soldier told King Saul what David had been saying, and how he didn't seem a bit afraid of the giant. So Saul sent for David, and when the little fellow came in, and Saul spoke to him, David said, "I wish you wouldn't be

frightened at the giant; I will fight him if you want me to." Saul was so surprised he hardly knew what to say. "You fight the giant? Why, that's impossible. He is a soldier and you are only a boy." But David saw that the king didn't know how brave he was, so he began to tell the king about what he had done. "When I'm home I take care of my father's sheep; one day a bear came after the sheep and another day a lion, and I went after them and killed both of them, and God didn't let either the bear or the lion hurt me, and I am sure the same God will take care of me if I fight Goliath and he will soon be as dead as the bear or the lion." This pleased the king so much that he said to David, "Go ahead; I know the Lord will be with you."

Whenever they went out to fight in those days the soldiers used to cover themselves with armour made of iron and brass, to protect themselves from the spears and arrows of their enemies. Goliath, you remember, was dressed in this way when he came out day by day. So of course the king and the soldiers thought that David ought to wear armour; they had never seen any one fight without it. The king was so pleased to have some one fight for him that he got his own

armour and put it on David, a brass helmet on his head and an iron coat on his body and then gave David his own big sword. But when David tried to walk with this heavy armour he found it was so heavy and so much in the way that it was no use, and he told the king he would have to take it off. And he did ; he laid aside all the armour and carried only his staff that he used when he took care of the sheep, maybe the very one he used when he killed the bear and the lion ; and over his back was his shepherd's bag, in which he used to carry things when he was out in the fields with his sheep. Now David had a good deal of spare time while the sheep were resting or feeding quietly, and like all boys he liked to throw stones ; so he used to make slings and practice throwing stones with them, until he learned to throw straight.

As he went out he had one of these slings in his hand. He knew smooth stones would go straighter than rough ones, and he knew where to look for them, so down to a brook he went and picked out five smooth ones and put them in the bag by his side. Now he was ready, and there stood that giant with the man with his shield, and all covered with iron and brass, with his sword and spear in his hands, in front of his army,

as David walked out in front of Saul's army. I wonder what his brothers thought as they saw their little brother going out really to fight that terrible giant; and what must those frightened soldiers have thought as they saw this brave little boy walk up so boldly to where Goliath stood? Poor Goliath, he didn't know what to make of it. He looked at David and saw only a stick in his hand. I don't suppose he could see the sling. He must have thought that David expected to hit him with the stick as a man would hit a dog. So he called out to David, "Come over here and I will kill you and let the birds and animals eat you."

But David answered, "Goliath, you don't understand; the army of Israel has a God, and I come from Him; He is the one who is going to fight you, and you will be killed, so that everybody may know that our God is a great God who doesn't need swords and spears such as you have; this is His battle and He will win it." Then Goliath was angry and he started towards David; but David reached into his bag, took out one of those smooth stones, put it in his sling, ran towards the giant, swung the sling around his head two or three times, then let go: out flew the stone right straight at Go-

liath and struck him so hard right on the forehead that it sunk in and killed him. When David saw that the giant was dead he ran up to him and with Goliath's own sword cut off his head. And how the Philistines and the enemies of God's people did run, when they saw their champion dead! Saul's army ran after them, shouting and singing for joy because their enemies were overcome. And when they came marching home the women came out in great crowds to welcome the victorious army and to sing for David the brave shepherd boy and Saul the king.

VIII

Three Brave Young Men

A GREAT heathen king, Nebuchadnezzar, once came over from Babylon to Palestine with his soldiers and carried away as prisoners a lot of Hebrews, the people who lived there and who worshipped the true God. Among them were three young men named Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. After these men had lived in Babylon a while the king asked his servants to pick out some of the best-looking prisoners, and train them to be his special servants. So these three young men were chosen. This was because they were beautiful to look at and were very intelligent. Then their names were changed to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. After they had been in this heathen country for some time they were so useful that they had been promoted to important places in the government. But the people of the country didn't like this; they didn't like to see these foreigners holding important offices.

One time Nebuchadnezzar, the king, had a great golden image made and when it was finished he told all the people to come to the dedication. Then he had a man go around, and blow a trumpet, while another man called out so that every one could hear, "When you hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music fall down and worship the image the king has set up. If anybody doesn't fall down and worship it he will be thrown into a burning fiery furnace."

And then almost all of the people came and bowed down on their knees and worshipped the image which the king had set up. But these men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego didn't; so some of the people, who didn't like them, went to the king and said, "O king, you said that when the people should hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer and all kinds of music, they must fall down and worship the golden image which you have set up. There are some Hebrews here who have not obeyed you, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego; they won't worship the golden image. They don't care for you."

This made the king very angry, because

he expected every one to obey him ; and he said, "Bring Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego here to me." When they came in the king said, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not worship the golden image I have set up? Now I will give you another chance ; if when you hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery and dulcimer and all kinds of music you will fall down and worship the image I have set up, very well ; if you don't, you will be thrown into a burning fiery furnace."

Then these young men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, showed how brave they were, for they spoke right up and said, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, the God whom we worship can save us from the burning fiery furnace if He wants to ; but even if He shouldn't save us we will still worship Him only ; we will not worship the golden image you have set up. We can only worship God."

You can imagine how angry this made the king. He wasn't used to having people speak to him in that way ; his people always obeyed him at once in anything that he said, no matter what it was, and here were three Hebrews who wouldn't obey him. He called some servants and said, "Make the furnace

ready; make it seven times hotter than usual. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refuse to worship the golden image I have set up, and I am going to have them thrown into the burning fiery furnace." The servants prepared the furnace and when it had burned up and was so hot that no one could go near it, the king called some of his strongest soldiers, and said to them, "Take Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego just as they are; tie their hands and feet as fast as you can, and throw them in the furnace."

The soldiers took them with their hats, coats and all the rest of their clothes on, tied their hands and feet and threw them one by one right into the terrible burning fiery furnace. The king sat where he could see what was going on. The fire was awful hot; so hot that when the soldiers who were carrying Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came near enough to throw them into the fire, as they opened the door of the furnace and threw them in, the flames rushed out and burned the soldiers to death. And there they were, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, with their hands and feet tied so that they couldn't move, lying right in the fire.

But all of a sudden the people saw the king stand up with a look of astonishment

on his face. "Come here," he called to one of his officers. "How many men did you throw into the furnace? Three, wasn't it?" "Yes," they said, "O king, we threw in the three you told us to throw in, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego." "And didn't you tie their hands and feet so that they couldn't move?" "Yes," they said again, "O king, we did tie them every one." "Then how is this?" said the king. "Look there; don't you see four men with hands and feet loose, walking up and down in the flames, and the fire doesn't seem to hurt them? The fourth man looks like a son of the Gods."

Nebuchadnezzar the king was all overcome, and he went as near the furnace as he dared and called out in a loud voice, "O Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, you who worship the real God, come out of the furnace;" and at once Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego walked out just as if they were coming out of an ordinary house. When the king and the great men who were with him went up to them and looked at them and felt of them they saw that the fire hadn't hurt them in the least. Their clothes weren't burned, nor was their hair singed; they couldn't even smell any smoke about them. Then the king spoke up and said,

“Blessed be your God, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego; you trusted in Him and He has taken care of you. You would rather die than worship a God you didn't believe in. After this if anybody says anything against your God, I will have him cut to pieces and his house destroyed. There never was a God who could save people in such a burning fiery furnace as this.”

Then he promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to higher places than they had before and they were better off than ever.

IX

Joseph and His Brothers

I

THERE was once a rich man named Jacob who lived in a country called Canaan. He had a large family, twelve of the children being boys. These sons used to help their father take care of his sheep, for in those days men who were rich didn't have money as we do now, but they had cattle, sheep, camels, oxen and all kinds of precious stuff, like linen and silk and satin. Jacob seems to have had lots of sheep, for all these boys except maybe the two youngest ones, Joseph and Benjamin, were shepherds of the sheep. The father, Jacob, was especially fond of his boy Joseph, who was next to the youngest, and he had a very beautiful coat made for him. The other boys didn't like this at all, and they began to hate Joseph and wouldn't speak to him.

Sometimes after he had gone to sleep Joseph would dream. One time when he was out in the fields with his brothers he said

to them, "I had a funny dream last night. I thought we were all out in the fields each one of us tying up sheaves of wheat, when suddenly the sheaf I was tying stood up straight as if it were alive and then each of your sheaves came and stood near mine and began to bow down to it." Then Joseph's brothers said, "Do you think that you are going to be our ruler?" and they didn't like it at all.

By and by Joseph had another dream and he told this one to his brothers and to his father. He said, "I dreamed that the sun and the moon and eleven stars bowed down to me." His father didn't like it and said, "Why, Joseph, do you think that your mother and I and all your brothers will some day bow down to you?"

One time all the boys except Joseph and Benjamin went quite a long way from home to find a good place for the sheep to feed. While they were there their father Jacob wanted to find out how they were getting along, so he called Joseph and said, "Joseph, I wish you would go and find your brothers and see how they are and how the sheep are doing and come back and tell me." As soon as Joseph heard he said, "I'm ready; I'll go at once," and started off. When his brothers, who, you remember, didn't love him any

too well, saw him coming they began to talk to each other before Joseph got close enough to hear them. One of them said, "Here comes Joseph, the boy who has those dreams he thinks are so wonderful; let's kill him and throw him into one of these old dried up wells and when we go back home we'll tell father some wild animal must have eaten him up. We'll see what becomes of his dreams."

But another one of the brothers, Reuben, didn't like the idea, so he said, "I don't think it's right to hurt Joseph." But they wouldn't listen to him. And Joseph of course was frightened and he begged them not to do anything to him, but it made no difference. Finally Reuben said, "Let's just throw him into one of these pits; that will be bad enough for him." His idea was that by and by he could come back alone, and pull him out of the old well and take him back home. So they finally decided to do as Reuben had suggested.

When Joseph came they took off his beautiful coat and threw him into one of the dry and empty wells. Then they sat down to eat their lunch, just as if nothing had happened. While they were eating they looked up and saw a lot of men coming on camels, who

were on their way to Egypt to sell their goods. It so happened that Reuben was not there, and another brother, Judah, said, "Here's a good chance to get rid of Joseph; sell him as a slave to these men." And even those who before wanted to kill him were satisfied, and they pulled him up out of the pit and sold him to those men, who took Joseph down with them into Egypt.

By and by Reuben came back, and went to the well alone to get Joseph. He looked down into it and found that Joseph wasn't there. Then he didn't know what to do. He came up to his brothers and cried out, "Joseph isn't in the well; what shall I do?" But his brothers didn't tell him what they had done.

After the men had gone away with Joseph his brothers took his beautiful coat, which you remember they took off before they threw him into the pit, and dipped it in the blood of one of the kids they had killed. When they went home they took the coat with them all covered with blood, and showed it to their father and said, "We found this coat; you know whose coat it is, don't you?" Jacob knew it at once, and said to them, "It's Joseph's coat; a wild beast has eaten him up. My dear son Joseph is no doubt torn to

pieces," and although his children tried to comfort him, it was no use. For days and days he cried, and kept saying, "I will mourn for Joseph my son until the very end of my life," and nobody could comfort him.

II

South of Canaan, where Jacob lived, was the great country of Egypt. The people there did not worship the true God as Joseph did, but worshipped animals and images. Their king was named Pharaoh, and at the time of our story the king had a chief officer whose name was Potiphar. The men to whom Joseph's brothers had sold him brought him into Egypt and sold him as a slave to this man Potiphar, and Potiphar took Joseph to live in his own house and made him a sort of head servant. Joseph you remember was one of those who worshipped the true God, and because Joseph was so good God was good to Potiphar in whose house he was living. One day Potiphar's wife got angry at Joseph and told her husband some stories about him which were not true, but which made Potiphar so angry that he put Joseph in the prison where the king's prisoners were kept. But here again

even in prison Joseph's God was good to him and made the captain of the guard friendly to him, so that he put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners, and whatever Joseph did succeeded.

One time two of the king's servants, a butler and a baker, did something which displeased the king, Pharaoh, so he sent them to the prison where Joseph was. After they had gone to sleep one night, each had a dream, this butler and this baker, which troubled him because he couldn't understand what the dream meant; and when Joseph came to see them in the morning he saw something was the matter, and he said to them, "Why do you look so sad to-day?" Then they told him that they had had a dream, and no one could tell them what the dream meant. But Joseph said, "Tell it to me."

The butler began: "In my dream I saw a grape-vine with three branches; and while I was looking at it buds came out, then blossoms and finally bunches of ripe grapes. I had King Pharaoh's cup in my hand and I reached out and took the bunches of grapes and squeezed them so that the juice ran into the cup." Then Joseph said to the butler, "This is what your dream means. The three branches mean three days.

Within three days the king will let you out of prison and make you his chief butler again; and you will again be the one to hand him his drinking-cup. When you get out and see the king won't you remember me back here in prison, and ask King Pharaoh to let me out? For I was really stolen away from my home in Canaan; and while I have been in Egypt I have done nothing that they should put me in this prison." The baker was standing there and heard what Joseph said to the butler about the dream, so he began: "In my dream I thought I had three white baskets on my head, one on top of the other and in the one on the very top were all kinds of cakes made for King Pharaoh, and the birds came and ate the cakes." Then Joseph told the baker what his dream meant: "Your three baskets mean three days. Within three days King Pharaoh will hang you, and the birds will eat your flesh." The third day after that was Pharaoh's birthday when he had a great birthday party for all his servants. He called the chief butler out of prison and made him a butler again, but the baker was taken out and hanged, just as Joseph had said. But somehow or other the butler forgot all about Joseph and didn't ask the king to let him out of prison.

III

For two long years Joseph stayed there in prison until one day the king himself had a dream which troubled him very much, because he couldn't understand what it meant. He called all his wise men but not one of them could tell him what the dream meant. The butler, who had been in prison with Joseph, was standing there and heard what was said, and when no one could help the king by telling him what his dream meant, he spoke up and said, "O king, I remember my faults now. When you put the baker and me in prison over two years ago, he and I both had dreams one night. We didn't know what they meant, but there was a young man named Joseph in the prison with us at that time, and when we asked him what they meant he told us, and what he told us came true. And he asked me to tell you about him but I forgot. He could tell you what your dream means." When King Pharaoh heard this he sent for Joseph and had him brought to his palace as fast as he could, and as soon as Joseph came in the king said, "I have had a dream; and they tell me you understand dreams and can tell what they mean." But Joseph was modest and answered, "I can't do this; it's God who does it; He will tell

you what your dream means." Then King Pharaoh began to tell his dream. "I thought I was standing on the bank of the river Nile, when I saw seven fat and healthy cows come up out of the water and eat the grass along the bank. And while I was looking at them seven other cows, very poor and thin, worse than any I ever saw in Egypt came up out of the water. And the lean cows ate up the fat ones, and after they had eaten them up they were still as lean as before. Then I woke up. And by and by I went to sleep again and I had another dream. I saw a stalk of corn grow up with seven good full ears on it; and while I looked at it seven poor thin ears came on the same stalk and ate up the seven good ears. And now when I tell these dreams to my wise men, not one of them can tell me what they mean."

Then Joseph answered King Pharaoh: "God has shown you by these dreams what He is going to do. Both dreams have the same meaning. The seven good cows mean seven years and the seven good ears mean seven years; and so also the seven lean cows mean seven years and the seven lean ears mean seven years. God has shown you what He is going to do. Your dreams mean that the next seven years are going to be good years

when everything will grow abundantly all over Egypt, your country; but after that there will be seven years of famine, nothing will grow; the famine will be so great that people will forget all about the seven good years. The two dreams mean that God is going to do this very soon. Now what you ought to do is to find some wise and careful man and let him appoint other men who, while these good years last, will be gathering great quantities of food and putting it in storehouses, so that when the seven years of famine come and everybody is hungry you will have something with which to feed your people."

Pharaoh was very much pleased with what Joseph said and said to him, "God has showed you these things. We can't find any man wiser than you are; all my people shall be ruled by you." Then the king took a ring off his own finger and put it on Joseph's and clothed him in white linen and put a gold chain about his neck. He also gave him a chariot in which to ride. And when the people saw him they knew he was the ruler and bowed down before him.

IV

During the seven good years, Joseph, who was now next to the king in power, gathered

a great deal of corn and stored it away, and, just as he had said, when these seven years were ended the famine began: nobody could find anything to eat. Pretty soon the starving people began to ask the king to give them food, but he said, "Go to Joseph," and when they came Joseph sold them food.

The famine was not only in Egypt, but also up in Canaan, where Joseph's old home was; the people there couldn't get anything to eat either. So when Jacob the old father heard that there was food in Egypt he sent all his sons but the youngest, Benjamin, down to Egypt to buy some. Jacob had remembered how he had lost one of his little boys, Joseph, so he wouldn't let the other one, Benjamin, go away from him.

It was a long journey from Jacob's home in Canaan to Joseph's new home in Egypt but at last the ten brothers reached it. Joseph knew them as soon as he saw them, but they didn't know him; they thought he was some great man, and when they came near him they bowed down to the ground. This made Joseph think of the dream about the stalks and the stars he had had so long ago. He made believe he couldn't understand their language and had a man stand by him who told him what they said. He didn't want them

to know yet who he was. He was rough to them and said, "Where are you from?" "From Canaan," they answered. "I don't believe it," said Joseph. "You are spies; you have come to see how poor we are in this time of famine." "No," they said, and called him lord and master, and said they were his servants. "We are not spies; we are all brothers and we have come to buy food." "I don't believe it at all," said Joseph. "You are spies; and you have come to see how poor our land is." Then one of the brothers spoke up and said, "We are twelve brothers; we live in the land of Canaan. Our youngest brother is at home with our father and one brother is not." That was all they could say about Joseph. Again Joseph said, "I don't believe you, but we'll soon find out whether you are speaking the truth or not. One of you must go back home and bring this youngest brother you tell me about. In the meantime I am going to put the rest of you in prison." So they were put in prison. But after three days Joseph felt sorry for them so he said to them, "I worship the same God you do; I don't want to do anything that would displease Him. I am going to let nine of you take food back to your home where you say there is a famine, and I

am going to keep one of you here in prison until you bring this youngest brother to see me." When they heard this they said to each other, "This is because we were bad to our brother Joseph; when he begged us to treat him kindly we wouldn't listen to him." And Reuben said, "Didn't I tell you; didn't I ask you not to hurt Joseph, but you wouldn't listen to me?" They didn't know Joseph understood them, but he did, and it just made him cry to hear them, and he had to turn his head away so they couldn't see his face. Then Joseph picked out Simeon and put him in prison.

After they had bought the corn they wanted Joseph gave them some food to eat on the way home, but he told the men who were filling the sacks to put each man's money back in the top of his bag. When they got their asses loaded they started out on the journey home. Pretty soon it was time to feed the asses so they opened one bag and the man who opened it cried out in surprise, "My money is all here in my bag," and it frightened them, for they thought Joseph would think they were thieves, and they began to ask each other, "What is it God has done to us?"

When at last they reached home they told

Jacob, their father, how they had met a man in Egypt who thought they were spies and who wouldn't believe anything they said. "We told him there were twelve brothers of us; one was home, we said, and one is dead. As soon as he heard we had a brother at home he said one of us had to stay in Egypt until we brought Benjamin our other brother down to show him that we were telling the truth. So Simeon had to stay behind."

They began to empty the corn out of their sacks and there in each man's sack, right on top, was his money. This frightened them. But Jacob wouldn't let Benjamin go with them. He said, "Joseph is dead; Simeon is I know not where; and now you want to take Benjamin away from me." And even although Reuben declared that he would be responsible for Benjamin's safe return his father wouldn't listen. "He shall not go down with you," he said; "his brother is dead and he's the only one I have left. If anything should happen to him it would just kill me." And that was the end of it; they couldn't persuade him to let Benjamin go.

V

Little by little Jacob and his family ate the food which they had brought from Egypt,

and hardly anything grew in the field. Every little while one of the sons would ask the old father if he didn't think it was time for them to go back to Egypt for more food, and he would say no, for he remembered how Joseph was lost to him, and how Simeon didn't come home, and how they wanted to take Benjamin away from him. But the food kept getting less and less, and by and by it was all gone. Then poor old Jacob couldn't do anything else, so he said to his sons, "You'll have to go and buy some more corn; but I can't let Benjamin go with you." Then Judah spoke up and said, "But it won't be any use to go without him; the man told us so. Send him in my care; if he doesn't come back with us you can blame me." "Well," said his father, "go ahead. Take Benjamin with you. Take also a nice present for the man you met there and take back your money. I guess it was a mistake putting it back in your bags. My prayer is that God will take care of you and that you may bring back Benjamin and Simeon, too."

So they made the long journey again and came to Egypt. When they arrived Joseph was going out and he looked at them and saw little Benjamin with them. Then he said to one of his servants, "Invite those men to

dinner with me to-day." When the servant came and told them Joseph wanted to see them they were frightened. They thought it must have something to do with the money they had found in their bags, and that Joseph wanted to have them where he could get hold of them and make slaves of them. But they had to go. When they came to the house they were terribly frightened and one of them went up to one of the servants and said, "We are not thieves and spies ; we did really come to buy food and now we have brought back the money we found in our bags ; see here it is ; and we have some more money to buy more food. We don't know who could have put the money back in our bags : we didn't even know it was there till we stopped at a hotel for lunch and opened one bag to get some corn to feed our animals." The servant saw how frightened they were and felt sorry for them, so he said, "Don't be frightened ; your God did this for you," and then he brought Simeon back to them. As soon as all the brothers were together the servant said, "You are invited to dinner with our ruler," and he took them into the house where Joseph lived. Here they had time to wash and get their present ready for Joseph, and when he came home they

gave it to him and bowed down before him. Joseph said to them, "How do you do? How is your father?" One of them answered, "Father is very well," and again they bowed down before Joseph. "And is this the youngest brother you told me about? God bless you, my son," he said, putting his hand on Benjamin. This was too much for Joseph; it made him cry and he had to go into another room for a while; by and by he washed his face and came back. Then came a grand dinner at which they enjoyed themselves very much. All the brothers sat down together, but somehow Benjamin got a great deal more than any of the others.

Pretty soon, after they had bought their food, it was time to start back. And Joseph said to the men who were filling the sacks with corn, "Put their money back again, and put my silver drinking-cup in the bag of the youngest brother." They started early in the morning, but they hadn't gone very far before a man came running up to them and said, "You mean fellows. The ruler was good to you, and here you are running away with his silver cup; that's a nice way to treat him." The brothers were very angry, and one of them said, "Why do you say that? Didn't we bring back the money we found in our bags;

would we do that if we were thieves? If you find that any of us has that cup you can kill him and all the rest of us will be your slaves.”

“No. I won't do that,” the man said; “I'll make a slave of the one who has the cup. I don't care anything about the rest of you.”

Then there was a great time; all the bags were taken off the asses and each one was opened. First came Judah's, the oldest brother, but it wasn't there; then the next oldest, but it wasn't there, and so one after the other until they came to the last, the youngest, Benjamin's, and there sure enough was the king's cup in Benjamin's bag.

They didn't know what to do; they cried and tore their clothes, the way people used to do, when anything awful happened to them. At last one of them said, “Let's all go back and see the man; we can't let this man take Benjamin,” so they tied up their bags again and started back, a very sorry lot of brothers. They found Joseph in his home and again they bowed down to him. Joseph pretended to be angry and said, “Don't you know God has told me how to find anything that is hidden away? Did you think you could steal my cup and not be found out?” Then Judah, the eldest brother, got up and said, “I don't know what to say;

I don't see how this thing happened. We once committed a great sin and now God is punishing us for it. You can make slaves of all of us." "No," said Joseph, "I don't want to punish all of you. I'll make a slave of the one who had the cup; the rest of you can go home." Judah was terribly distressed, and he walked close to Joseph and said, "Don't be angry with me; let me say just a word. When we were here before you asked us if we had a father or a brother. And I told you we had; you remember I said, 'Our father is an old man, and he has with him now our youngest brother, a little boy, and his brother is dead; our father loves this little fellow very much.' Then you said, 'Bring him here; I want to see him,' and I told you he couldn't leave his father; his father would die. But you said there wouldn't be any use in our coming back for more food until the little fellow came with us; and when we told that to our father he said, 'I can't let Benjamin go. Joseph went out one day and wild beasts destroyed him; if you take Benjamin away it will kill me.' And now if we should go home without Benjamin, the boy our father loves so much, it would surely kill him. Besides I told him before I left home that I would be responsible for Benjamin's safe

return. Let Benjamin go home with the others; take me as a slave in his place. How can I go home without him?" This was more than Joseph could stand, so he sent everybody out of the room except his brothers and then he said to them, "I'm Joseph; don't you know me? Is it true that my old father is still alive?"

I wish you could have seen them, Judah and Simeon and all. They were so surprised they couldn't say a word. But Joseph said, "Don't be sorry you sold me to those men that day; God knew there would be a famine and He has sent me down here to get food ready for you; He has made me a ruler here in Egypt. Go home and tell our father that I am alive, and bring him down here to live with me. The famine won't be over for five years yet." Then they kissed each other and talked about the things which had happened since that day Joseph was sold.

You can imagine how fast they went back to Canaan, with all the food they could carry and how they told their old father Jacob all about it. As soon as they could they packed up everything in their old home, got all their wives and children together and came back to Egypt where Joseph picked out the best land there was, and gave it to them. Here

they built new homes and lived for a long time and I think they must often have gathered together to hear what Joseph had to tell, and to thank God who had been so good to them.

X

A Story of Two Brothers

IN the time when the world was not very old, and that means a long, long time ago, there lived a man named Isaac, with his wife Rebekah. Into their home were born two boys. The elder of these two boys had hair growing all over him, so he was called Esau, which means "hairy." The other boy was named Jacob. These boys grew up together, but they were very different, as boys in the same home are now.

Esau liked to be out-of-doors, roaming over the country, and, I suppose, often slept in the woods. He became a great hunter. He learned to use the bow and arrow, for these were what they used in those days. Jacob was just the opposite. He didn't care to go away from home. When night came you would always find him in his tent, and during the day he wouldn't be far away from home. All the people lived in tents then, for it was before they had begun to build houses. I am sorry to say that the mother Rebekah

loved one boy the best and the father Isaac loved the other best. Esau would go out and shoot deer and bring them home, so that Isaac his father grew to be very fond of venison. This made him like Esau, while Rebekah, their mother, was more fond of Jacob, the boy who stayed at home, and helped her when she needed help about the tents which were their home.

In those days when a father died everything that he owned belonged to his eldest son. It is this way in some countries now, though not in the United States. This meant that when Isaac, his father, died, all his property would be Esau's because he was the eldest son. This was called Esau's birthright; which means that he had a right to it because he was born before any of the other boys in the family. A curious thing was that this eldest son could sell his birthright to one of his brothers if he wanted to.

So they lived on, this father and mother and their two boys, Esau busy with his hunting and camping in the woods, Jacob working away at home. Jacob grew to be very sharp, as we say; that is he was very good at making bargains and getting things for himself. I imagine that very often he would think about all the things Esau was going to

have some day, because he was the elder, and wished that they were his : all the tents, and sheep and camels and everything else that Isaac had, and he made up his mind that when he got a chance he would find some way to get these things for himself.

One day, just as usual, Esau started off on one of his hunting trips, and like other hunters he sometimes had a bad day. This seems to have been one of those bad days, for when he started for home he hadn't killed anything, and he hadn't had anything to eat. He was tired out, and nearly famished, and felt as if he would faint. Just as he got near the tent he smelled something cooking, and when he was near enough he saw his brother Jacob cooking lentils for supper.

Esau rushed up and called out, "Let me devour some of that red stuff you are cooking; I am so hungry I am going to faint." Jacob must have said to himself, "Here's my chance." And instead of doing as a good brother would have done he said to Esau, "I'll give you some, if you will give me your birthright." Poor Esau; have we not been telling people ever since how foolish he was? He began to say, "What good is my birthright? I don't care for it. I won't live to enjoy it; I'm starving; I'll die. What I

want is something to eat now, not a lot of things after my father dies. Give me the lentils, Jacob, and you can have the old birthright." "But," said Jacob, "you must surely give me your birthright; say it surely is mine." So Esau said it surely was Jacob's and sold his birthright for the supper. Then Jacob gave him some bread and some of the lentils he had been boiling and Esau ate them and went away, never thinking any more about the precious thing he had sold to Jacob for so little. I don't believe that either of them told their mother or father what they had done.

The years went by and Isaac became a very old man. He was blind now, and could not see his boys, who had grown to be men. He still liked to eat the venison which Esau brought home from his hunts. So one day when he and Rebekah were sitting there, he called Esau, and said to him, "My son, I am growing old; I don't know how much longer I shall live. I wish you would go out and shoot some venison for me. Bring it home and cook it for me, for I would like to eat a little more of it and bless you before I die." There was nothing that Esau liked better than hunting and it did not take him long to get started.

As soon as he was gone Rebekah went to Jacob. You remember she loved Jacob more than Esau, so she said to him: "Jacob, I just heard your father ask Esau to bring him some venison so that he could eat it and bless him before he died. I want you to get the blessing instead of Esau your brother. You do what I tell you. Get two kids from the flock of goats and I will cook them so that they will taste like the venison your father likes so much; you can give it to him and he will bless you." Then Jacob said, "But, mother, Esau's skin is hairy and rough, while mine is smooth. Maybe my father in his blindness will feel of me and he will find out that I am deceiving him and instead of blessing me he will curse me." Rebekah answered, "You leave that to me; go and get the kids." So Jacob got the kids. Then Rebekah prepared the meat the way Isaac liked it, and put the hairy skin of the kids on Jacob's hands and neck, and made him put on some of Esau's clothes, and take the meat in to his blind father. As he came into the tent where Isaac his father was he said, "Father," and his father answered, "Who are you, my son?" Then Jacob told a horrible lie. He answered, "I am your son Esau. Here is the venison you told me to

get for you. Eat it and bless me." When any one tells a lie one of the worst things about it is they have to keep on telling them, so when Isaac said, "How did you get it so soon?" Jacob had to tell another lie, and he answered, "God showed me how to find it." But Isaac wasn't satisfied; the voice didn't sound like Esau's; so he said, "Come here and let me feel you, so that I can see whether you are really my son Esau." When he passed his hands over the hairy skin Rebekah had put on Jacob's hands and neck he said, "Your voice is Jacob's voice; but your hands are Esau's hands." This seemed partly to satisfy the poor old blind father, so he blessed Jacob, although even now he wasn't quite sure, so he said again, "Are you really my son Esau?" Once more Jacob had to tell a lie and he said, "Yes, I am." Then Isaac said, "Bring the venison and I will eat it and bless you." After he had eaten his father said, "Now, kiss me," and when Jacob kissed him he smelled Esau's clothes which Jacob had on and they smelled as if they had been out in the woods; then he blessed Jacob thinking he was blessing Esau.

Jacob had hardly gone out of the tent when in came Esau with his venison. He didn't know what Jacob had done, so he cooked the

meat, and took it in to his father. Isaac was surprised and asked him who he was, and when he said, "I am your son Esau," Isaac was greatly excited and said, "Who did you say? Who was it that I blessed? Who brought me the venison I have eaten?" Esau saw what had happened and he began to cry and say, "O my father, bless me too, bless me too," but his father could only say, "Your brother has been here and deceived me; he has stolen your blessing." Poor Esau cried as if he were broken-hearted. "He robbed me of my birthright," he said, "and now he has taken away my blessing." From that day Esau hated Jacob and declared that as soon as he could he would kill him. When Jacob heard this he had to run away from home, and for many years he didn't dare to come back where his brother was. This is what came of Jacob's deceit and falsehood.

XI

A Kind Daughter-in-Law

ONCE upon a time a man named Elim-
elech with his wife Naomi and their
two boys lived in the little town of
Bethlehem in Judea. By and by there came
a famine in that part of the country; nothing
would grow and people were starving, be-
cause they could get very little to eat. Elim-
elech, of course, felt that he must take care
of his family, so he looked around and found
that over in Moab, a country just across the
Jordan River, the people had more to eat than
they had in Judea. So he moved his family
over there. After they had lived there
a while, how long I don't know, Elimelech
died. And then the two boys, who had
grown to be men, got married. Each chose
for his wife one of the women who lived in
Moab, one named Orpah and the other Ruth.
Both of these young women were good to
Naomi and for ten years they lived happily
together in Moab. But a sad day came when
first one son and then the other died, so that

poor Naomi was left without any husband or sons, and Orpah and Ruth were left widows too.

In some way Naomi had been hearing about what had been going on in her old country, Judea, and she learned now that there was no longer any famine over there, for God had made the corn and fruit grow again, so that the people had plenty of food. I suppose that all the time she was in Moab she was longing to get back home, and now when her husband and her two sons were dead, she made up her mind that the best thing she could do was to go back to her old home and her old friends. So she started back, her daughters-in-law with her.

Now Naomi, although she loved Orpah and Ruth, didn't feel that it would be right for her to take them away from their own fathers and mothers and their own country, so as they walked along she said to them, "Why don't you go back each of you to your own mother's home? You have been very kind to me and I pray the Lord to be kind to you. May you find other husbands, each of you, and good homes." Then they kissed each other and began to cry. At first both Orpah and Ruth said they would rather go to Judea with Naomi, and they started on again, but she talked with them a while until finally one

of them, Orpah, kissed Naomi and began to cry again and at last turned and went back home. But Ruth wouldn't listen to Naomi, and when her mother-in-law said, "Ruth, your sister-in-law has gone back home, you ought to go too; it isn't right for me to take you away from your own people into a strange land," Ruth said, "Don't ask me to go back, for whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." And when Naomi found that it was no use, that Ruth loved her so she couldn't bear to be separated from her, she didn't say anything more about Ruth's going back home, but the two of them, the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law walked on together.

At last, just at the beginning of the harvest season, they reached the old home town, Bethlehem. It wasn't a very big place. It was more like one of our villages, I should say, where everybody knows everybody else. So when the people saw Naomi coming back, with only this strange woman with her, there was a good deal of excitement. Some of the old people would remember the

time when Naomi and her husband and her sons went away, and as they looked at her, coming back, poor and forlorn, they said to each other, "Can this be Naomi?" When she heard them she said, "Yes, I'm Naomi; but don't call me by my old name, for that means 'pleasant'; call me rather Mara, which means 'bitter.' For God hath dealt bitterly with me. I've suffered a great deal since I've been away."

In those days the rich men were the farmers, those who had great flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, and big fields for pasture and for growing grain. One of these rich farmers just outside of Bethlehem, whose name was Boaz, was a relative of Naomi. He was a very rich man, and employed a great many men and women on his farm. Not only was he a rich man, but he was a very good man. When he went into the field where his men were working he would say to them, "The Lord be with you," and they would answer, "The Lord bless you." And he provided a place where they could get good water to drink and had a luncheon prepared for them. He knew that in his Bible there were certain rules about farmers, one of which was that when a man was reaping his harvest he shouldn't try to rake up the very last wisp



of straw and head of wheat or barley, but if some of the grain should be scattered on the ground he should leave it, so that the poor people could come into the field and pick it up. And the poor people did often go along in the fields after the reapers gathering up, or gleaning, as we call it, the scattered straw and grain.

Ruth was anxious to help her mother-in-law, so one morning she said to her, "Mother, let me go over on some farm and glean some of the grain, so that we will have something to eat." Naomi was very glad when she heard this, and told Ruth to go ahead. So Ruth started out. Fortunately, she happened to go into one of the fields belonging to Boaz, where his servants were reaping barley. During the day Boaz came out to see how they were getting along, and said to the men and women who were at work, "The Lord be with you," and they answered, "The Lord bless you." By and by he saw Ruth. He would know as soon as he looked at her that she wasn't a Jew, as he and his servants were, for the face of a Moabite was quite different from the face of a Jew, just as the face of a Chinese is different from our faces.

I think, too, her clothes would be different. Anyhow Boaz saw this strange woman and he

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called his overseer to him and said, "Who is that peculiar looking woman over there?" "Why," the overseer answered, "that's the woman who came back from Moab with Naomi. She came this morning and asked me if she could glean after the reapers. I told her certainly, and she has worked here ever since; except that she rested a little while." Boaz said, "Yes, I remember Naomi; she's a relative of mine. She went away some years ago to Moab while we were having that famine; and I heard that one of her sons married a woman over there whose name was Ruth. This must be she. I've heard about her. After her husband died, and Ruth's husband died they came to Naomi's old home in Bethlehem; Naomi wanted her to stay in her own land among her own relatives, but Ruth wouldn't do it. She saw that Naomi was all alone in the world and poor and old and she insisted on coming back with her and taking care of her." Then he called Ruth and said to her, "My daughter, don't go away from my fields; follow after my reapers until the end of the harvest and glean what they let fall. If you are thirsty go over there where my servants have drawn the water and get a drink." Ruth was greatly surprised, and she did as people used to do in those

days when they wanted to be polite, she bowed down to the ground and said to Boaz, "Why is it that you are so kind to me, a stranger?" And Boaz answered, "Ah, Ruth, I've heard how good you have been to Naomi. They have told me how you have left your own father and mother and your own land, and have come back to this strange land away from all your friends, to be with your mother-in-law. I've heard how good you have been to this poor old relative of mine. That's why I'm trying to be good to you. I pray that God, our God, may reward you for what you have done." Ruth thanked him for his kind words to her, a stranger. Then Boaz told the reapers about Ruth and said, "Don't be too particular as you are reaping; if she comes right in among the sheaves don't scold her; sometimes you might pull out some barley from the bundles on purpose and leave it on the ground so that she can get it. Don't be cross to her." When meal-time came Boaz invited her to eat with the reapers. I suppose he had told them about Ruth's kindness to Naomi, for they too were good to her. They gave her not only all she wanted to eat herself, but so much that she saved some for her mother-in-law. While they were eating Ruth asked

them who the man was who had been so kind to her and they told her his name was Boaz. After dinner she went out to the field again and worked until evening. Then she sat down, and with a stick beat out the heads of grain and gathered up the barley and found that she had nearly a bushel.

As it was near night she took the grain and went back to Bethlehem to her mother, and showed her all she had gathered. Then Ruth gave her the bread and corn she had saved from the lunch she had with the reapers. After supper Naomi said to her, "Ruth, where did you glean to-day? Some one must have helped you." Then Ruth told her all about meeting the kind man and what he said to her, and said, "His name is Boaz."

Naomi knew as soon as she saw the barley Ruth had brought home that some one must have been good to her, so when she heard that it was Boaz she was very glad and said, "I hope God will bless him. He's a near relative of mine." Then I suppose they spent the evening talking about Boaz and at last Naomi said, "Ruth, don't go into any other field to glean, but keep right on in Boaz's field." So all the rest of the season until the end of the harvest Ruth gleaned in that field which Boaz owned.

I suppose Boaz must have seen Ruth often in the field during the busy harvest season, for he fell in love with her and after a while she became his wife. By and by when a little baby came to the home of Boaz and Ruth, the old grandmother Naomi was very happy and I haven't a doubt but that she spent a good deal of time, just as grandmothers do, taking care of that precious baby.

XII

The Story of Mordecai and His Cousin Esther

ONE time the King of Persia was having a celebration, in Shushan the palace, attended by the great men of his kingdom; and his beautiful wife, Queen Vashti, was at the same time giving a dinner in another part of the palace for the women, for it was not considered proper in those days for women to go in where the men were eating and drinking. But, as too often happens, the king drank too much wine, and that made him forget what was courteous, and he sent his servants to tell Vashti that she must come in and show his friends how beautiful she was. They brought back word that the queen refused to come and this made the king very angry. When he asked his wise men what he ought to do they said, "Turn Vashti out and make some one else queen in her place." This pleased the king, for he was very angry, so he turned her out. Then there was a great commotion when

they tried to choose a new queen, for the people were anxious that the king should have the best woman in the land for his wife, for she would be their queen.

In one part of the city there lived a Jew named Mordecai, who once lived in Jerusalem, but had been brought as a captive with lots of other Jews into this strange land. Among these captives was Mordecai's uncle and his wife, both of whom had died leaving a beautiful daughter named Esther, who was living with Mordecai. When the king sent out an order that all the beautiful women of the country should be brought to the palace so that he could choose a queen, for that was the way they did in those days, Esther went with the others. Of course most of them were Persians, but Esther was a Jew; but nobody knew it, except Mordecai. It must have been that she didn't look very much like a Jew. One by one the women were brought to the king, but he wasn't satisfied until he saw Esther; then he said, "Esther shall be queen," and he put the queen's crown on her head. After that they had a great time, with all sorts of dinners and parties and presents, when Esther and the king were married.

Mordecai never forgot his little girl, who

was like his own daughter, and did all he could to see that no harm came to her. He used to stay as close to her as he dared, sitting oftentimes in the gateway of the palace. One day when he was sitting there he heard two men talking. Of course they didn't know that he was at all interested in the king, so they weren't very careful, and Mordecai heard them tell how they were going to kill the king. As soon as he could he told some of the soldiers and the men were arrested and hanged, and the king was saved. Then they wrote an account of what had happened in a book in which they kept the history of the kingdom.

Things were going on all right until the king made a man named Haman ruler over the land. This meant that the people should reverence him by bowing down to him ; but Mordecai, being a Jew, thought it was wrong to bow down to anybody except God, and he told them so ; he would not bow down to Haman. When Haman heard this he was so angry that he made up his mind he would destroy all the Jews in that country. One day when he was talking to the king Haman said, " There are a lot of strange people living here in Persia ; their laws are different from ours and it isn't safe for you to let

them live. Let them be destroyed," and the foolish king said, "Go ahead; do whatever you want with them." Haman didn't wait long. He got together all the men who could write and sent letters as fast as he could all over the country. The letters were not very long; each one said, "Kill all the Jews you can find, young and old, on the thirteenth day of the month."

When Mordecai got hold of one of these letters he put on sackcloth, the way they used to do when they were very sad, and cried bitterly, "What shall I do? All my people are to be destroyed! What shall I do?" And all over the country when the Jews heard what was to happen on the thirteenth, they too wept and wailed.

When Esther, the queen, heard that her Cousin Mordecai was going around in the city wearing sackcloth, she knew that something was wrong, so she sent one of her servants to ask him what was the matter. He gave the servant a copy of the cruel letter and said, "Show this to the queen and tell her she must go to the king and ask him to save our people." Esther listened to the servant and said, "Go back and tell my cousin that no one can go to the king unless the king asks him to come and holds out his

golden scepter to him ; if he does go when he is not invited he will die. The king hasn't asked me for a whole month." But Mordecai wasn't satisfied with this. He said, "Tell the queen that all the Jews are to be killed and that means that she cannot escape even if she does live in the palace. Tell her that if she doesn't go to the king and ask him to spare us, we will be saved some other way, but she will perish. Try to make her see that now, just when the Jews need help, she, a Jew, has been put in a place where she can help them."

This touched her heart. She sent a message to Mordecai, "You get together all the Jews in the city and pray for me for three days and I will go to the king : it is against the law : if I perish, I perish." What a meeting that must have been when Mordecai got all those Jews together and they prayed to their God that Esther might be successful in her talk with the king. On the third day Esther dressed herself in her most beautiful clothes and stood where the king could see her. She looked so sweet that the king told her to come near him and then he held out the golden scepter to her. Then he said, "What do you want, Esther?" for he saw she had come to ask him something. She answered, "I wish you and Haman

would come to-day to a dinner I have prepared for you," and the king sent for Haman and both of them went to the dinner. While they were there the king said again, "What is it, Esther; what do you want? I'll give you anything you ask for." But Esther didn't want to tell him at once what she wanted, so she said, "Come to my dinner again to-morrow and then I'll tell you what I want."

Haman, of course, felt very grand at being invited to dine with the king and queen, but he couldn't endure Mordecai who still refused to bow down to him. So he got together his friends and said, "What shall I do? That miserable Jew, Mordecai, won't bow down to me, and you all know what a great man I am; why I was the only one, besides the king, invited to Queen Esther's dinner, and I'm invited again to-morrow." Then his wife said, "If I were you I'd build a big gallows and have Mordecai hanged on it." This pleased Haman and he told the carpenters to build it.

Somehow or other the king was restless that night and didn't sleep very well, and to quiet him he asked one of his servants to get the book where they wrote the history of his kingdom and read it over to him. He was greatly surprised when they read how two men had once agreed to kill him, the king,

but a man named Mordecai, whom he had never heard about before, had told the soldiers about it and so saved the king's life. "How has Mordecai been rewarded?" said the king. "Why," they answered, "nothing has been done for him so far." "Look out of the window and see who is there," said the king. It so happened that Haman was coming along the street to ask the king if he could hang Mordecai on the gallows he had built, and the servant answered, "Here comes Haman."

The king said, "Tell him to come in." When he came in the king said, "Haman, what ought to be done for a man whom I wish to reward?" Haman was very conceited and thought of course the king referred to him so he answered, "You ought to put some of your own beautiful clothes on him, and let him ride on your horse and put your crown on his head. Then let him ride through the city and let some one go ahead of him calling out, 'This is the man the king wishes to honour.'" The king thought this would be a good way to do, so he said to Haman, "All right; take the clothes and the horse and dress up Mordecai, that Jew who sits there by the gate, and let him ride through the city as you suggest."

There was nothing for Haman to do but

obey so he took the clothes and when Mordecai was dressed like a king, and had a crown on his head, he put him on the king's horse and he rode through the city with a man going ahead of him, calling out, "This is the man the king wishes to honour." You can imagine how Haman felt. He wouldn't dare ask the king to let him hang Mordecai now. He rushed home, and said to his wife, "O Zeresh, just see what has happened," and he told her all about Mordecai, how the king had honoured him. While they were talking together a servant came and said, "It's time for you to go to Queen Esther's dinner."

When they were seated the king said again, "What is it, Esther; what do you want me to do for you?" Esther saw that now was the time, so she said, "O king, if you love me do not let me and my people be killed. We have been ordered to be killed; Mordecai, who is my cousin and all the other Jews; if we had only been sold as slaves I wouldn't have said anything, but don't let them kill us." The king was greatly surprised. "Who would do such a thing? Show him to me." Then Esther rose up and pointed to Haman and said, "An enemy of yours, this wicked Haman here, he's the man who has done this." The king got up and went out-

doors very angry, leaving Haman and the queen alone ; and while he was gone Haman implored the queen to save him from the angry king. When the king came back one of the servants told him about the gallows Haman had built and how he had expected to hang Mordecai on it. "Hang Haman on his own gallows," said the king. And they did it, and gave Haman's house to Esther, and made Mordecai ruler in Haman's place.

The queen put Mordecai in the house in place of Haman. But those cruel letters about killing the Jews were still out, so the queen went once more to the king and said, "O king, if you love me, stop the letters which Haman has sent out ; I can't bear to see my people destroyed." So the king called all the writers together again and said to Mordecai, "Here is my ring ; write letters to the Jews and seal them with this ring. Anything that has my seal on it must be observed. I can't change the letters which have been written, but find some way by which the Jews can save themselves." Then Mordecai wrote something like this : "On the thirteenth of the month your enemies are going to try to kill you ; but the king says you may meet together and get ready for them so that when they come you can defeat

them." So when the thirteenth came the Jews were ready, and their enemies couldn't fight very hard for they had heard that the king had given the Jews permission to fight against them. The result was that instead of the Persians destroying the Jews, the Jews destroyed a great many of the Persians even in the king's palace and saved themselves. This was on the thirteenth. They rested on the fourteenth and fifteenth, and made these holy days. Mordecai wrote down what had happened and told the Jews that as long as they lived they should remember those days and keep them holy, so that even now the Jews keep this feast, which they call the Feast of Purim. Each year Mordecai became greater and greater until he was the next man in the kingdom to the king himself.

XIII

How They Got Out of Egypt

DO you remember how Joseph's father and mother and all his brothers went to live with him in Egypt? Well, as long as Joseph lived and the king who loved Joseph was on the throne they got along very well. But by and by Joseph died and the good king died, and, of course, after a while Joseph's family died too, but their grandchildren and great grandchildren lived and every year there were more and more of them. A time came when there were so many of these Hebrew people that the King of Egypt said, "We must do something to them, or it won't be long before there will be so many of them that they will be stronger than our Egyptian people." By this time a man had become king who had forgotten all about Joseph and the good he had done for Egypt,—a king was on the throne who hated the Hebrews. So he had them do all the hard work and had his men beat them as if they were nothing but lazy animals. There

were great buildings to be built, so this king made these Hebrews dig the clay and make brick out of it, and then carry them to the place where the house was going up, and put the bricks and the mortar together; he made them work on farms and plow and plant and dig. It was hard work, and when they didn't work as fast as their Egyptian foremen thought they ought to they would whip them.

While this was going on that little boy named Moses, who was found in the basket by the river, was living in the king's palace growing up so that people thought he was an Egyptian. He was being taught everything that it was good for a boy to know. I don't suppose King Pharaoh ever thought that he was training the man who was going to help the Hebrews so much. But that is just what he was doing. When Moses was grown to be a man, his people, the Hebrews, were suffering the worst; but Moses knew nothing about it, for he had always lived in the king's palace, just as if he were the king's son. But one day he found out about it. He went out in the country where the Hebrews lived and saw them at work. While he was looking at them an Egyptian began to beat a Hebrew. Moses couldn't stand this, so when he thought

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no one was looking he did a very wicked thing: he killed the Egyptian. But as always happens he was found out, and had to run away from his splendid home; because when Pharaoh heard that this Hebrew had really killed one of the Egyptians, he wanted to kill Moses. Moses had no other home to go to so he just wandered along the road till he was tired. At last he came to a well where he got a drink of water and sat down to rest. There he got acquainted with the children of a man named Reuel. When night came they asked him to stay at their house, so he went there and after a while he married one of these girls.

One day some years after this he was out in the field tending the sheep when a strange thing happened: a bush standing there in the field seemed to be on fire, and yet it wasn't burned up. Of course, he went over to see what it could be, and as he was looking at it his heavenly Father spoke to him and said: "Moses, I've seen how the Egyptians are treating our people, and I want you to go to Pharaoh and tell him he must let the Hebrews go away from his land where they have been so badly treated." Moses was frightened; he had never seen or heard anything like that before and at first he didn't

see how he, a poor shepherd, could go to that cruel king, and tell him what he must do. I think he remembered that wicked thing he had done in Egypt and was afraid to go back there. He didn't know that all the men who wanted to kill him were now dead. So he began to make excuses. But God said, "You must go, Moses." And then Moses said, "But if I do go the king will say, 'How do I know that you are telling the truth? You say your God has told you to say this to me. I don't believe it; your God never said anything of the kind.'" Then God said, "Moses, take that cane you have in your hand and throw it down on the ground." As soon as Moses threw it down it turned into a wriggling snake that frightened him. But God said, "Take hold of its tail," and when Moses took hold of it, it was just a plain stick again. God told him some other things he could do and said, "When you go to see the king show him what wonderful things you can do, and he will believe you." But Moses didn't want to go, so he began to make other excuses. This time he said, "I'm not a good talker; any one who speaks to a king ought to speak well." God was very patient with Moses and said, "I will help you; you need not be afraid; I will tell

you what to say." But once more Moses said, "Can't you send some one else?" I don't wonder that the patient heavenly Father became angry at him now, for you would have thought that Moses would have been proud to go on an errand for the God of heaven and earth. Then God said, "You have a brother, a little older than you, named Aaron ; he can speak well ; I will send him with you to talk to Pharaoh."

All this time the poor Hebrews back in Egypt had been praying to God asking Him to help them ; and it was because God heard their prayers, and wanted to help them, that He had arranged to send Moses to bring them out of Egypt.

So Moses got his family together and moved back to Egypt. Aaron, his brother who was still living in Egypt, came out to meet him and was delighted when he saw him. Don't you wish you could have been there and heard Moses telling Aaron what God had said ; and could have seen him showing Aaron how his cane would turn into a snake ? I would. Then they called together the Hebrews, both men and women, and told them about it and showed them the wonderful things Moses could do. The people were so glad that God had heard their prayers that

they bowed their heads right there and thanked Him.

After a while Moses and Aaron went to the palace and asked if they could see the king. When they were showed into the room where the king was, Aaron said, "Our God says you must let His people go to hold a feast to worship Him." But the king answered, "I don't know your God, and I am not going to let the Hebrews go. Why do you come here?" And then he turned to one of his men, and said, "This comes from those idle people; they haven't enough to do, so they want to go out into the country on a holiday. Make them work harder."

So the men in charge made them work harder and harder until the poor people couldn't stand it any longer, and they sent some of the men to tell Pharaoh about it. But he only said to them, "You are idle; you don't work enough; go back to your work." When Moses told his heavenly Father about it God said, "You will soon see what I will do to Pharaoh. He refuses to let My people go, does he? Pretty soon he will want them to go worse than he now wants them to stay. You go to Pharaoh again, and tell him he must let the people go away from this land." But it was no use;

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Pharaoh still said, "I won't let them go," although Aaron threw down the stick and made it turn into a snake.

The next day Moses went out and stood by the river, and when he saw Pharaoh coming down he said, "You must let our people go; if you don't I will turn all the water in Egypt into blood." And still Pharaoh refused; so Moses stretched out his wonderful cane over the river, and wherever there was water, in the river and in the kettles in the houses and in the fish ponds, everywhere, now instead of water, for a whole week, it was blood. The fish died, and the people could find no water to drink.

At the end of the week Moses came and said, "If you don't let our people go I will cover the land with frogs." Pharaoh didn't believe he could do this so he paid no attention to it, but once more the wonderful cane was held out, and in a moment everywhere you could see frogs, frogs, frogs. I suppose when Pharaoh turned back the covers to go to bed he would find frogs; when he got up in the morning there would be frogs in his bedroom; when he went to breakfast there they were on the table, frogs everywhere. He couldn't stand it, so he called for Moses and said, "If you will drive

these frogs away I'll let the people go." But when Moses made the frogs go away Pharaoh changed his mind and wouldn't let them go. After that Moses kept trying his best to get Pharaoh to let the people go, and Pharaoh would promise and then break his promise. Moses made disgusting lice come upon all the men and animals; he brought great swarms of flies into every part of Egypt; he made horrible sores come upon the Egyptian horses and upon the Egyptians themselves and upon their cows and sheep and camels; each time the king said he would let the people go if Moses would take these horrible things away from him, but he didn't. Then Moses tried again. God said to him, "Go to see Pharaoh once more; go early in the morning; tell him he must let the people go." Still he refused and Moses stretched out his hand, as God told him to do, towards the heaven and a great thunder-storm with hail and lightning came upon the earth; it was all over the land of Egypt except in the place where the Hebrews lived. There had never been anything like it before. It beat down and destroyed nearly all the vegetables; it killed the cattle and the people; everything and everybody outdoors was either struck by lightning or beaten to death by the rain

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and hail. This was the worst so far, and as the storm kept up Pharaoh sent as fast as he could for Moses and said: "I have done wrong, I should have kept my word; I'll let the people go now; only stop this awful storm before everything is destroyed and we are all killed." Again Moses did what Pharaoh asked, but as soon as he was out of his misery he changed his mind again and wouldn't let the people go after all. Then Moses made locusts, or grasshoppers, swarm all over the country and they ate up everything that had escaped the hail; he made it dark for three whole days, except in that part of the country where the Hebrews lived, there it was light. But still Pharaoh's heart was hard and he wouldn't let the people go.

Now came the last and the worst. God told Moses that this time Pharaoh would surely let them go. "Tell each of the Hebrew families," God said to Moses, "to kill a lamb and sprinkle some of the blood on the outside of their house. About midnight I will go through Egypt and in each house where I do not see blood I will cause the oldest child to die." It was a busy night for the Hebrews. In each home the lamb was killed and on the outside of each house the blood was sprinkled. I don't imagine that

they slept much that night. At midnight the death angel went over Egypt and while the Egyptians were sleeping, the awful work was done. When they awoke in the morning every house, from the king's palace down to the tiniest cottage, was filled with sorrow, for in each one the eldest son or the eldest daughter lay dead. I don't wonder that the king sent for Moses in a great hurry, even before it was daylight, and said, "Go, go; don't stay here any longer; get your people together and go away as fast as you can before we are all dead." So the Israelites got all their things together, including their cattle and their sheep, and at last really started to march away from the land where they had suffered so much.

XIV

How They Got Across the Sea

WE have read how God made Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, let the Israelites go away from Egypt, where they had been so badly treated. Now we come to the time when they have started for their new home. I couldn't begin to tell you how many of them there were, thousands and thousands and still more thousands. There were old grandfathers and grandmothers, and fathers and mothers, and boys and girls of all ages and sizes. Besides all the people, they had with them great herds of cattle and flocks of sheep, for you remember they were shepherds. Moses was their leader, going along with them like the general of an army. In order to show them which way to go, God made a great white cloud move along in front of them in the daytime and at night it became like a great ball of fire.

When the cloud moved they marched forward, and when it stopped they stayed still until it began to move again. Of course

they would have to live in tents just as soldiers do when they are in the field.

You remember how many times Pharaoh promised to let the people go and how he would always change his mind; it was so this time. The people hadn't been gone very long before the king said, "Why did we let them go? We have made a mistake. Harness the horses to the chariots; call the soldiers; run after them and bring them back to Egypt to work for us."

By this time the Israelites had come to a place where they didn't know what to do: on one side was a mountain; on the other side was another mountain and in front of them was the Red Sea. When they looked behind them they saw Pharaoh's army with horses and chariots. The cowards among them were frightened, and they were angry with Moses their leader. It seems as if they had entirely forgotten what God had done for them. Some of them even went up to Moses and said, "Did you bring us out here in the wilderness to die? Didn't we tell you when we were in Egypt that we would rather stay there and live, even if we were slaves, than come out here and die?"

Poor Moses, he was doing the best he could; but he must have been greatly pro-

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voked by these people for whom he had done so much. However, he said to them, "Don't you be afraid. You see those Egyptians back there? You will never see them again." Then Moses prayed to God and God said, "Tell the people to go ahead. Take your cane that turns into a snake, hold it out over the sea and the sea will open and make a path on which the people can walk over without even getting their feet wet. The Egyptians will try to follow you, but I will show them that I am taking care of My people."

When that day ended and night came God took the cloud from in front of the Israelites and put it behind them ; not only did He do this but He made the cloud bright and light on the side towards the Israelites, but black and dark on the other side towards the Egyptians, so that the Israelites were in the light but the Egyptians had only darkness. Then Moses went to the shore of the sea and held out his cane, as God had told him to do. When he did that God made a wind blow against the waters of the sea so hard that the water couldn't flow against it, and this left part of the bottom of the sea without any water. On this bare place the Israelites walked over to the other side just as if they

had been on dry land instead of in the middle of the sea.

The Egyptians thought of course they could go wherever the Israelites did, so they whipped up their horses and tried to drive them right through the sea. They had a good deal of trouble with their chariots that night; they didn't seem to run very well, and some of the soldiers wanted to turn back. They felt that some unseen power was helping the Israelites. But they didn't go back; they kept on, and when they got out in the middle of the sea, God said to Moses, "Hold out your cane over the sea again."

When he did this the water rushed back where it belonged and all the soldiers and horses were covered up and drowned; not one escaped. After a while when the Israelites looked along the shore of the sea there they saw hundreds and hundreds of dead Egyptian soldiers. This made the Israelites very happy, to see so many of their cruel enemies destroyed, so to show their happiness they sang a song which Moses had written for them beginning:

"I will sing unto the Lord,
For He hath triumphed gloriously;
The horse and his rider hath He thrown
into the sea."

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For a good while after this they were very obedient to Moses, and looked upon him as their best friend. And now that they were safely across the sea, they began the long, long journey to their new home.

XV

Through the Roof to the Doctor

IN a certain house in the city of Capernaum there is a sick man. For a long time he hasn't been able to get out of bed. His friends come to see him, and like those who come to see sick people nearly every one of them tells him what he ought to do in order to get well. One man comes in and says, "I'm sorry, Stephen; I wish I could do something for you, but I don't see what's to be done." The next day another comes with a glass of jelly and says, "Stephen, this may taste good to you; I wish I could tell you some way to get on your feet again." At another time a friend comes and tells about some medicine and says, "My friend John has been sick and he took some of this medicine and it helped him; you ought to get some of that, Stephen."

Then one day a friend comes in and says, "O Stephen, over on the west side of town there's a wonderful man. They call him Jesus. He is curing all kinds of sick people.

He could cure you, I'm sure." And then they would both be so sorry that Stephen was so sick he couldn't go to that great physician.

But one day a real friend comes in. I don't know his name. It may have been Peter. He is all excitement. "Stephen," he says, "I have just been over on the west side of the town. There I saw a man named Jesus who is doing wonderful things. I saw a man who was blind go up to Him and when he came away he could see. A friend of mine who had a lame leg had Him touch it and his lameness was all gone. You must go to Him and be cured." Poor Stephen, everybody was telling him what he ought to do and he was getting tired of hearing them.

So he said, rather crossly, "Don't talk that way, Peter; you know I can't stand on my feet, let alone walk away over to the west side. How can I go to this great physician?" Peter seemed to be lost in thought, then he jumps up without saying a word and rushes out into the street. There he meets three friends who happen to be going along, and he tells them as quickly as he can about poor, helpless Stephen and the wonderful physician he had seen. Then he says, "There's only one thing to do. There are

four of us here; let us each take one corner of Stephen's bed and carry him to Jesus to be cured." One of them smiles and says, "How would it look to be carrying a sick man on his bed through the street?" But Peter says, "Never mind how it would look, come along." So up-stairs they go, led by Peter into Stephen's room. They tell him what they are going to do and Stephen himself does not like it very much, but finally he consents, so off they go. It is rather awkward, for the streets are narrow and crowded, and it's a curious sight, a sick man being carried through the streets on his bed. But Peter keeps cheering them, telling about the wonderful man they are going to see.

All this time Jesus had been in the house where Peter had seen Him, and a big crowd had been drawn together to hear Him speak and to see His miracles. In the crowd were a good many of the distinguished men of that city, and others who had come a long distance to hear Him, so that when Peter and his friends turn the corner and see the house where Jesus is the street is black with people. They march right up to the crowd and Stephen's enthusiastic friends say, "If you please, let us come in with this sick man. We want to get him near Jesus to be

cured." Well, you know how it is with crowds. The man Peter spoke to turned his head and said, "Don't bother me. Don't you see that I am trying to get in there myself? I've been here for two hours, and I'm not going to give up my place to you." Peter goes round to another place, but it's just the same; no one will make room.

And then one of the helpers says, "I told you so; it was foolish to bring this sick man into this crowd." But Peter is a real friend. He just says to his other friends, "Put him down a minute. I'll soon be back," and away he runs, much to their surprise. By and by he came back and one of them says, "What's that he's got on his arm? Is that a rope?" It was sure enough. "What's it for?" asks the man at one corner of the bed. "You'll soon see," Peter answers. "Come along. Bring Stephen up here," and he points to the stairway running up the outside of the house to the roof. "Oh," says another of the men, "this is nonsense," and even Stephen thinks they would better give it up and go home. "No," says Peter, "come along; bring him up."

So up they go, while the crowds look at them wondering what they are trying to do with the poor fellow on the bed. Peter cuts

the rope into four pieces and ties one piece to each corner of the bed, while his friends wonder whether he has gone crazy. "Tear up the roof," he says to the men. They don't like to destroy property that way, but they see that Peter is in earnest and go at it. Soon there is a hole big enough to let the bed through, and they take hold of the ropes and lower Stephen down right in front of Jesus, to the astonishment of everybody.

Jesus looks at Stephen, He looks up at those friends who had done so much for him, speaks to him and says, "Your sins are forgiven; roll up your bed and go home." What a time those four men and Stephen must have had when they got back to Stephen's house, with Stephen a well man!

XVI

How Elijah Helped a Poor Woman

ONE of God's servants named Elijah once told a wicked king, named Ahab, that there would be no rain nor dew for years. Of course this meant that everything would dry up, and nothing would grow. Then for three whole years there was no rain. Many people died for they couldn't get anything to eat. Even the king was greatly worried.

This good man Elijah might have died, too, only God took care of him. God told him to go out in the country and live by a brook that ran down to the river, so that he might have water to drink, and God also told the ravens, those big black birds, like crows, to bring him food each morning and each evening. But the brook could not last long without rain and by and by it dried up, and then God said to Elijah, "You go into the city; I have asked a woman who lives there by herself, with her only son, to take

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care of you.” Of course Elijah obeyed, and as soon as he came to the city gate he found this woman in the street picking up some pieces of wood. He called to her and said, “Won’t you bring me a drink of water?”

She seems to have been a kind woman, for she started right off to get the water. And as she was going Elijah called to her, and said, “When you come back with the water, I wish you would bring me a piece of bread, too.” Then she felt very badly for she was very poor, so she said, “I don’t know what to do: I haven’t any bread in the house. You know there has been no rain for a long time and everything has dried up, so we have no flour. I have just a little meal and some oil, and I came out here to get some sticks of wood to build a fire, then I was going to mix the oil and meal together and bake a little bread for my son and myself. That would be our last meal; everything we have would be gone when we had eaten this and then—well, I suppose we would just die of hunger.” But Elijah said to her, “Don’t you be afraid. Go ahead and build your fire and bake your bread. But first bring me a piece and then you and your son eat some, for God has told me that your meal and oil will last as long as the dry season, and you

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will always have something to eat." So she hurried away and made the bread. She gave Elijah some and then ate some herself and all through that dry time whenever she went to the barrel where she kept her meal, sure enough, there was some still there, and whenever she took up the oil bottle to pour out some oil, the oil was there too; neither the oil nor the meal even came to an end as long as she needed them.

XVII

How the Baby Moses Was Saved

YOU will remember that at the time of the famine Jacob and his family, who were Hebrews, went to Egypt to live, where one of the sons, Joseph, had stored up a lot of food. These Hebrews lived there in Egypt a long, long time, and of course each year there were more and more of them. So that at last the king said: "I'm afraid that by and by there will be more Hebrews in this land of ours than there are Egyptians. I shouldn't like that, for this is our country. We will make them work hard so that maybe a lot of them will die. It might so happen that if we had a war these Hebrews would join with our enemies and fight against us." I think the king said this because he knew that the Egyptians hadn't been very good to the Hebrews.

They had really been very bad to them: they had made slaves of the Hebrews and made them do all the hard work. But the hard work didn't seem to hurt them much,

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for every year there were more and more Hebrews. At last the king said, "I'll tell you what we'll do: whenever a boy is born in a Hebrew home we'll drown him; we'll throw him into the Nile." Many and many a time there was a sad home in Egypt. A little boy would be born and all the other children would be so happy, but the poor mother would be worried. She loved the little fellow so much, but by and by one of the king's soldiers would come to the house and take the sweet little baby away, and he wouldn't come back, for the Hebrews were only slaves to the Egyptians. And so it went on.

One day one of these baby boys was born in the home of a slave, and he was such a splendid baby his mother made up her mind to do everything she could to keep him away from the king's soldiers; for even if she was a slave she loved her own baby boy just as much as any mother could. So what did she do but hide the baby! This she could do pretty well while he was real little, for then he would be asleep most of the time, and it wouldn't be very hard to keep him still.

But when he was about three months old he had grown quite strong and sometimes

he would cry pretty loud. This made his mother afraid, for a soldier might be going past the house just at the time when this baby had one of his fits of crying. Then she knew what would happen : the soldier would come in and take the dear baby away from her. She couldn't bear to think of such a thing, but she knew she couldn't keep him in the house much longer. I suppose the king's soldiers would be watching the slave's houses pretty nearly all the time, so that they would know whenever a baby came to any of them. This made his mother decide to hide her baby in some place where the soldiers wouldn't be looking for babies.

The baby had one little sister, named Miriam, and I am sure the poor mother would say to Miriam, " O Miriam, what shall we do ; I'm so afraid the soldiers will find out that your little baby brother is here. We must hide him somewhere away from our house, and perhaps we could take turns taking care of him. I could watch him a while and you could watch a while and so he would be safe." So after thinking of all sorts of places Miriam said, " Down by the banks of the Nile the grasses grow very tall ; they are taller than you or I. Couldn't we make something to hold little brother and hide

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him in these grasses? The soldiers would never expect to find a baby there." This was the best they could think of, so Miriam and her mother went to work and made a little basket, something like a cradle, and lined it inside with soft wool from their sheep, and stopped up all the cracks so that no water could get into it. Then they put the dear baby into it and after it was dark took him down by the riverside and hid the basket and baby in the high grass.

How anxious they must have been as they watched it! What a time they must have had when they wanted to feed him, for fear he would make a noise loud enough to attract a soldier's attention. But everything went along all right, with first his mother and then Miriam and maybe his father, now and then, watching near by.

Up in the palace lived the king who had given this cruel order about drowning the Hebrew babies. I don't know how many children he had, but he had at least one daughter and she, having a king for a father, was a princess. Down by the river was a place where the king's children used to go in swimming, and it happened to be right near the place where the baby boy was hidden. And one day when the princess came

down for her bath, she heard a strange noise over in the grass. She looked but she couldn't see anything. Pretty soon she heard it again, and so she said to one of her servants, "That's queer, I thought I heard a baby cry over there in the grass; I wish you'd go over there and see what it is. That would be a funny place for a baby to be." So the servant went; and sure enough it was the cry of a baby and there was the little basket with the baby inside.

All this time Miriam was standing where she could see what was going on and her heart was beating so fast she thought it would break through. They brought the basket to the princess and she was so surprised; she looked at the nice basket, and opened the cover and the little fellow inside was frightened and cried. When the princess saw the baby she exclaimed, "What a beautiful child; he belongs to one of those Hebrew slaves, and my father said that all their boy babies should be thrown into the Nile. But this one won't be; he is so beautiful, he is going to be mine," and being a princess of course she had her own way.

Something made Miriam understand that the princess liked the baby so she went up to her and said, "Wouldn't you like me to

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get you a Hebrew nurse for this Hebrew baby?" "Why, yes," the princess said, "I am going to have this little boy for my own; he needs a nurse, so run and find one for me if you can." Do you suppose Miriam ran home as fast as she could? I do. She would come into her mother's house all out of breath and say, "Oh, mother, the princess has found little brother down by the river and wants a nurse for him. She was going in bathing and just then he cried, and when she heard him she took the basket and opened it, and now she says she is going to keep him for her own child. I told her I could get a nurse for him and so she said I might do so. You come and we will tell the princess that you'll be his nurse, and so we will be able to keep our dear little baby in the house with us after all."

It didn't take Miriam and her mother long to get back to the place where the princess stood admiring the beautiful baby and very soon the princess said to the baby's own mother, although she didn't know it was his mother, "Take this baby home; be his nurse; take good care of him and I'll pay you." So Miriam and her mother went back home carrying the baby and two happier people you never saw.

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By and by when the princess was wondering what to call the baby she remembered that the word "Moses" means "taken out of the water," so as he was taken out of the water she named him Moses.

XVIII

Naaman, the Leper

ONE of the countries in which the people of Israel lived long ago was called Samaria. A great many people lived in that country and among them lived a wonderful man whose name was Elisha. He could do things nobody else could do.

One time a poor woman in Samaria, whose husband had died, owed a lot of money which she couldn't pay, and the man she owed it to came to her house and said he would take her two children and sell them as slaves to pay the debt. This made the poor woman feel very badly indeed, and so she went to this wonderful man Elisha to see if he could help her. When she told him her story, he asked her some questions about what she had in the house, and found out that all she had was a can of oil. "Go home," Elisha said to her, "borrow all the pots and kettles you can from your neighbours and pour the oil into

them." She did what Elisha told her to do and you should have seen how surprised she was when the oil kept right on coming out of the can long after she thought it was empty. She kept calling to one of her boys to bring more kettles, but at last he had to say there were no more: everything they had was full of oil. When she told Elisha what had happened he just said, "Sell the oil and pay your debt." She did so and saved her children.

There was a certain road Elisha used to walk on a great deal and a woman who very often saw him going along said to her husband, "That is a good man we see going past here so often; let's get a room ready for him in our house so that he can stay with us when he wants to." This was the way Elisha became acquainted with the woman, and he often used to stay in the little room she fixed up for him. But one day her only little boy went out in the field to see his father who was working there, and was sunstruck and died. The poor mother didn't know what to do, but she thought at once of the good man who had stayed with them, and who no doubt had often played with her little boy, so she sent for Elisha. When he got there he went into his own room where the

poor mother had laid the little boy and by and by he came out leading the boy by the hand : he had made him alive again.

And this was the way Elisha lived, always doing such wonderful things. There was one family in Samaria in which there was a little girl who used to see him do some of these things, and in the evening as they sat at home she would hear her folks talking about what Elisha had been doing, and how it was his God who helped him do all these things.

There was another country not so very far away from Samaria called Syria, and the people who lived there were not very friendly to the people in Samaria. Every once in a while a great company of the Syrian soldiers would come marching into Samaria and before the poor Israelites could do anything, the Syrians would take a lot of them prisoners, men, women and children, and carry them away to make slaves of them in Damascus or one of their great cities.

One time when the Syrian soldiers came to Samaria they captured this lovely little girl, who knew about Elisha, and carried her away. She was so bright and sweet that when the wife of Naaman, one of the great captains in the Syrian army, wanted a maid this little slave girl was given to her and she

became her lady's maid. But the family of Naaman couldn't be happy, because he had a terrible disease called leprosy, which nobody in Syria could cure, and it kept getting worse and worse. This little girl would often see him trying to fix up his poor sore hands and she felt very sorry for him, although it was his soldiers who had made her a slave.

One day while she was talking to Naaman's wife she said, "There's a wonderful man named Elisha over in my country. He can even make dead people come to life and I am sure he could cure your husband if he would let him. I wish he'd go and see him." Then some one went to Naaman and said, "There's a little Israelite girl who waits on your wife; she says there is a wonderful man named Elisha in her country who she thinks can cure leprosy; why don't you go to him?" Of course, Naaman couldn't go out of the country without asking his master, the king, so he went to the king and said, "A little girl whom we carried away from Samaria, and who waits on my wife, says that there is a man over in her country who can cure leprosy. I don't like to go away over there; we ought to have better doctors than they, but nobody

seems to be able to help me here, and I'd like to try what they can do in Samaria." "All right," the king said, "I'll give you a letter of introduction to the king of Israel, who lives in Samaria."

You see, he thought that when any great thing was to be done, it would have to be done by the king. So he sat down and wrote to the king of Israel. "This will introduce you to my servant Naaman. I have sent him to you that he might be healed of his disease; he has leprosy." Then Naaman got together a great company of his servants, for he was a great man in Syria; he had been a successful general in their wars, and the people thought a great deal of him. They had horses and chariots, and they took all sorts of presents made of gold and silver, and beautiful clothes, which they were going to give to the king of Israel.

So they started out, Naaman and his soldiers and servants in beautiful chariots, and by and by they reached Samaria. A servant told the king of Israel that Naaman from Damascus in Syria wanted to see him, and when the proper time came Naaman was shown in where the king was sitting. He handed up the letter from the king of Syria

which he was carrying, and the king read :
“ This will introduce to you my servant Naaman. I have sent him to you so that you might heal his disease ; he has the leprosy.”
When the king read that he was greatly worried and said, “ Does this man think I am God? Here’s a man with an incurable disease, leprosy ; does he think I can cure him? He is trying to pick a quarrel with me, that’s what he is doing.” And there was great sadness in the palace for they knew what it meant to have to fight the Syrians. But it wasn’t long before Elisha heard what had happened up at the palace, and he sent to the king and said, “ Don’t be worried ; let Naaman come to me and he will find out that some one in Israel can do something for him.”

So they sent word to Naaman that he had made a mistake ; he must go to Elisha ; he was the one who would help him. I imagine Naaman thought it was very queer that the king should treat him that way, but anyhow, he started off and pretty soon he with his horses and chariots and servants stood at the door of Elisha’s house. He probably told some one to go in and tell Elisha that he, Naaman, the great captain from Syria, wanted to see him, and he

thought that Elisha would come out-of-doors where he was and pray to God and wave his hand over the place where the leprosy showed and cure him. But Elisha did no such thing: he didn't care how great a man Naaman was; he didn't even come out. He called some one into the house and said, "You go out and say to Naaman, 'Go and wash in the river Jordan seven times and your flesh will come again, and you will be clean.'"

When this man came out and told this to Naaman he was very angry. "What," he said, "go wash in that dirty old Jordan to get clean! Are not our rivers, Abanah and Pharpar, better than all the rivers over here? Can't I wash in them and get clean?" And he turned away from Elisha's door just as mad as he could be. He couldn't understand how such a simple thing as washing in a river could cure a disease which all the doctors in his country had found incurable.

But one of his servants stepped up to him and said, "My father," not because Naaman was really his father, but because he wanted to be polite, "my father, if the man had told you to do some hard thing in order to cure the leprosy you would have done it, wouldn't you? Why not do it then, when he tells you

to do such a simple thing as washing in the river?"

In the meantime Naaman had cooled off, as we say, and I suppose he said to himself, "Well, it can't do any harm, though it's foolish enough; I'll try it." So down he went to the river, he and his servants and soldiers, and found a good place and dipped himself in the river one, two, three, four, five, six, seven times, just as Elisha had told him to do, and you can imagine how delighted he must have been when after the seventh dip he looked at his hands, where the awful sores had been, and they were all well and his skin looked as soft and sweet and clean as that of a little baby.

Naaman rushed back to Elisha's house and said, "Now I know that there is no God, except in your country; let me give you a present in return for what you have done for me." But although Naaman urged him to take the present, Elisha said he wouldn't take a thing. Then Naaman said, "At any rate give me a few baskets full of your ground to carry back with me, for I won't worship any God hereafter but the God of your land. Sometimes, though, when my master, the king of Syria, goes into the temple to worship his God, I will have to appear to worship

with him, but I hope I will be pardoned for doing so." Then they dug up some of the dirt of Samaria and gave it to Naaman, and he carried it back home to Syria rejoicing, a well man.

XIX

Samson, the Strong Man

LONG, long ago, a man named Manoah and his wife lived in a place called Zorah. This was in Judah and they were Israelites, people who worshipped the true God. Their Bible was part of what we now call the Old Testament, and it told them that they mustn't go with people who were not Israelites. They had been unfortunate though, and just now their enemies, the Philistines who had conquered them, were their rulers.

These two people, Manoah and his wife, were very sorry they had no children in their home, for in those days a home without children was thought to be a very poor place. I suppose they had often asked God to give them a boy baby and one day God sent an angel to tell Manoah's wife that a baby boy was coming to their house. She could hardly believe it was true for she did want a little boy so much, so she rushed off to find Manoah who was out in the field and said,

“What do you think? We are going to have a baby boy in our home.” Then Manoah wanted to see the angel too, so he prayed to God and said, “O Lord, let the angel come again and tell us how to take care of this baby boy.” God heard his prayer, for Manoah was a good man, and one day He sent the angel again to the place where they lived.

But somehow Manoah wasn't in the field when the angel came, but his wife was; so she ran as fast as she could and said, “O Manoah, come, come, here's the angel who told me about the baby the other day; come and talk to him.” You can imagine how he would run. As soon as he was near enough he spoke to the angel and said, “Tell us what kind of a child this baby will be, and what he will do.” Then the angel told them how this boy was to be a strong, pure boy, and was to be a real servant of God. “You must never cut his hair,” the angel said. All this pleased the father and the mother very much though the part about the hair must have seemed strange, and they wanted to do something for the angel to show him how much they appreciated what he had told them, but the angel said, “No, there is nothing you can do for me,” and

he went back to heaven. Sure enough this little baby boy came to their home and they called him Samson, a name we all remember.

We don't know very much about this boy, but we remember how the angel told his mother that they should never cut his hair—why this was we shall see after a while—so I suppose Samson went around with his hair longer than other boys. But all the time his heavenly Father was taking care of him while he was growing up, getting stronger and stronger every day.

He seems to have been somewhat spoiled, as only sons are apt to be, and so when he grew up to be a young man he wanted to have his own way a good deal. This was what made him marry a woman who was a Philistine, although his father and mother wanted him to marry one of his own people, as their Bible said they should. It was while he was going to see this young woman one day, that he met a lion in the road, and killed him with his bare hands, he had grown so strong.

One day he got very angry at his wife's people, the Philistines, and set fire to their corn and burned it. Then he ran away and hid himself. Of course this made them very angry so they called out a great lot of their

soldiers, and went up where they thought Samson was. When they got hold of him they tied him with a rope. They thought it would be easy enough to destroy him now ; but his great strength began to show itself and he broke the ropes and grabbed up the first thing he found which was a big bone lying on the ground, and began to use it as a club until he had killed a great many of his enemies ; and the others ran away. But they were always trying to get hold of him ; they never forgot how he had burned up their corn. One time they heard that he was in a city called Gaza, so they went there. While they waited outside the gate for morning to come so that they could see what they were doing Samson got up, took the big gates right off their hinges and put them on his back and carried them up to the top of the mountain, just to show them what he could do when he wanted to.

After a while he fell in love with a woman named Delilah, and these Philistines who wanted to kill him went to her and said, "Can't you find out what makes him so strong? If you can and will tell us we will give you a lot of money." So Delilah said to him, "Samson, if any one wanted to hurt you how could they tie you?" And Sam-

son told her that if they should bind him with seven green twigs he would be as weak as other men. Then they thought they had him. They gave the seven green twigs to Delilah and she tied them around Samson, and called out, "The Philistines are after you," but he just stretched himself and the twigs broke in pieces.

Then Delilah said, "Samson, you did not tell me the truth ; really, tell me how would any one tie you if he wanted to hurt you?" and Samson told her that if he should be bound with a piece of brand new rope he would be no stronger than any other man. So she got a piece of new rope and tied him with it, but when she called out, "The Philistines are after you," he stretched himself again and broke the rope just as if it had been a piece of thread.

Delilah was getting angry, but she spoke to him once more and said, "Now, Samson, you have been fooling me ; tell me this time how any one could bind you." I suppose he looked around the room and saw the loom on which Delilah was weaving cloth and he said, "If you weave my long hair in the web you are weaving I won't be strong any more." So that night when he was asleep she wove his hair into the web as if it

had been part of the silk she was using and drove a stake into the ground to hold it. Then she called to him again, "Samson, the Philistines are after you." But he just got up out of bed and lifted the whole thing, loom and peg and all.

Then Delilah said, "O Samson, you don't love me; three times you have told me stories; you haven't told me what it is that makes you so strong." She seems to have wanted to get the money those Philistines had promised her, for every day she kept asking Samson to tell her what made him so strong. By and by he got so tired of hearing her that he just said, "I'll tell you; my long hair has never been cut: if it is cut then I will be no stronger than other men."

This time she knew he had told the truth. So she sent for the Philistines, Samson's enemies, and said, "Come, for now he has told me the truth. He says that the reason why he is so strong is that his hair has never been cut, and that if it is cut he will be just like other men. Bring me the money you promised me and I will cut off his hair as soon as he goes to sleep, and then when he is weak you can easily make him your prisoner." That was just what they wanted, those enemies of his, so they came to the house and

brought the money they had promised to give Delilah.

Pretty soon Samson went to sleep, and while he was asleep, and without his knowing anything about it, Delilah had his hair cut. Then when she called out, "O Samson, the Philistines are after you," he woke up and said to himself, "I will do just as I have always done," but this time he found that he wasn't strong and when he felt his head he saw what was the matter; his hair was cut off. So his enemies got hold of him without much trouble and the wicked men blinded him and put chains on him and took him back to Gaza where they lived. There they had a place where they used to make a horse turn a mill, and in this place they put Samson and made him do the grinding. But after hair is cut it doesn't stay short very long, as we all know: it grows a little every day, and Samson's was just like other people's; his hair began to grow and kept on growing.

Some time after this the Philistines had a great feast in honour of their God, who, they said, had helped them capture Samson. There were so many of them that the great house was crowded full and people were on the roof looking down into the court. While

the feast was going on some one suggested that they bring out Samson so that he could amuse them by showing them some of the things he could do, because he was so strong. They brought in this poor blind prisoner, a little boy leading him by the hand, and made fun of him, but they seem to have forgotten that all the time his hair had been growing and with it his strength had been coming back.

After Samson had given his performances they let him rest and then he said to the boy who had been leading him, "Let me feel the pillars which hold up the roof; I want to lean against them," so the boy led him over to them. He took hold of one pillar with each arm and then he prayed, "Oh, God, remember me and strengthen me just this once." Then he said, "Let me die with the Philistines," and pulled the two pillars together with all his might. Down came the roof and Samson and a great many of the people were killed.

A Great Victory

IN the days of Elijah, one of God's prophets or preachers, a good many people had turned away from the true God, and had begun to worship a heathen god, called Baal, and a good many couldn't make up their minds which God they ought to worship. Elijah thought it would be a good thing to show the people that this Baal, whom they called a god, wasn't a real god; that there was only one God, the God whom he worshipped.

There were a lot of men in that country who called themselves prophets of Baal, while Elijah was the only prophet of God who was left. So one day Elijah sent word that all the people and all the prophets of Baal should come to Mount Carmel. A great many came there and Elijah stood up and said to them: "Why don't you choose now whom you will serve? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him." The people didn't know how to answer so they kept still. Then

Elijah said, "You see how it is: the king has killed all of God's prophets except me; I'm the only one left; while there are four hundred and fifty who are Baal's prophets. Let Baal's prophets take an ox, cut him in pieces the way we do when we offer a sacrifice, and lay the pieces on the wood on the altar, but don't set the wood on fire. I will take another ox and cut it in pieces and put the pieces on wood on another altar and I won't light the wood either. Then we will pray to our Gods; you pray to yours, and I will pray to mine, asking Him to set the wood on fire and burn up the offering. Whichever God sends the fire will be our God." This pleased the people and they said, "All right; you have said the right thing, Elijah."

Then Elijah turned to these prophets of Baal and said, "There are so many of you, you begin first." So these four hundred and fifty prophets took an ox, cut it in pieces and put the pieces on the wood which had been laid on the altar. They didn't light the wood, but when everything was ready they began to pray to their god, Baal, asking him to send fire to their altar. They began in the morning, calling out loud, "O Baal, hear us; send us fire; O Baal, answer us." But the fire didn't come. Elijah stood there looking at

them. Finally they jumped up on the altar, and cried out, "O Baal, answer us; Baal, answer us," but it was no use; no one answered.

After this had been going on all morning Elijah began to make fun of them. He came near their altar and said, "Call louder; he is a god, you say, and must hear you. But maybe he is talking with some one, or he has gone away, or perhaps he has gone to sleep and you will have to wake him up; call louder." This, of course, made them angry so that they made more noise than ever. "O Baal, hear us; O Baal, answer us." But the fire didn't come.

The people who worshipped heathen gods thought that their gods were pleased if they did something to themselves that hurt; just as nowadays in India we sometimes see men who think they are pleasing their gods by lying on a bed of sharp nails. So these men began to cut themselves with sharp knives, so that the blood ran out. But it did no good. There stood the altar with the pieces of the ox on the wood all ready to burn, but no fire came. And so it was all afternoon; nothing happened in answer to their prayers.

Towards evening Elijah asked the people to come over to where he had built up an

old broken-down stone altar. Then he made them dig a deep trench all around it and had the people fill the trench full of water. You see he didn't want anybody to say that the fire came from anywhere near the altar. When this was done he put a lot of wood on the altar and cut up an ox and put the pieces on the wood just as the prophets of Baal had done. Elijah was so sure that God would answer his prayer that after everything was fixed he called some men and said, "Get four barrels of water and pour it on the wood," and when they had poured the four barrels of water over the wood and the altar, so that everything was as wet as could be, he said, "Do it again." So they filled the barrels and poured them over the altar once more. But even then he wasn't satisfied for he said, "Do it once more," and once more the barrels were filled and the water poured out over the altar. Nothing could have been less likely to take fire than that wet wood when Elijah got through with it.

Elijah must have been a curious-looking man. He had lived outdoors so long that he must have been browned by the sun, his hair and beard would be long, and his clothing would be just a long rough coat tied around his waist with a leather belt. And

there he stood that day, in the midst of the people, the only prophet of the true God among four hundred and fifty prophets of the false god.

And now that everything was ready, Elijah stretched out his arms towards heaven and prayed to God who sent the ravens to feed him and who had taken care of him all through his lonely years: "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, let these people know to-day that you are the true God, and that I am your servant and that what I have done here to-day I have done because you told me to do it. Hear me, O Lord, hear me: send the fire and burn up this offering." Almost before he had finished speaking such a great flame of fire came down from heaven that it not only burned up the wood and the ox, but also the stones of the altar and dried up all the water in the trench around the altar. Of course the people were astonished. They bowed down on the ground and began to say: "The Lord He is God; the Lord He is God." So Elijah and Elijah's God had a great victory that day.

A Famous Shipwreck

THERE once lived a great Christian missionary named Paul, who, because he told the people who were Jews some truths they didn't like to hear, made a good many enemies. These Jewish enemies became so angry at Paul that they made up their minds that they would kill him as soon as they could. They watched for a chance, and one day when a great crowd was gathered about their temple in Jerusalem, they found Paul in there with some men who were not Jews. This made them still more angry, because they thought that it was not right for any one but a Jew to go into the temple.

Paul had a right to go in, because, although he had become a Christian, he was by birth a Jew. As soon as they saw Paul these enemies of his began to call out to the crowd, "Here's the man who has been talking against us Jews, and our law and our temple; and besides you see what he has done; he has brought these Greeks into our

temple ; he ought to be killed." This made a great stir : there was a regular riot in Jerusalem. Some of the crowd caught hold of Paul, who was a little man, and not able to do much in such a crowd, and dragged him out of the temple and began to beat him.

As they were beating him and dragging him away to kill him, somebody, who must have been a friend of Paul's, ran to the barracks where the soldiers lived and said to the captain, "There's a riot over by the temple ; they are killing a man." As soon as he heard that the captain took some of his soldiers and marched them down to the place where the crowd was. As soon as they saw the soldiers the men who were beating Paul let him alone and the captain took him. Of course the captain must have thought that Paul was a very wicked man and had done something terrible to make the people so angry. It so happened that some time before this a man came from Egypt and had persuaded thousands of men in Jerusalem and Judea to kill people. The captain thought Paul was this man ; though he wasn't sure. So he had Paul tied with chains, the way they treated dangerous prisoners.

Then the captain began to inquire about

him. "Who is this man?" he said to the crowd. "What has he done that you are creating such a disturbance over him?" But there was so much noise, one man saying one thing and another something else, that nobody could tell what any one said; and as they kept crowding upon him and were calling out, "Kill him, kill him," the captain thought the best thing he could do would be to protect Paul until he could really find out something about the trouble. So he called his soldiers and took Paul to the castle.

But before he took him inside, while he was standing on the steps of the castle, Paul said, "Will you let me say something to these people?" And the captain said, "Go ahead." Then Paul told them about himself; who he was and how he was a Jew who had become a Christian. This only made the people more angry and they shouted, "Kill him; he isn't fit to live." More than forty of them formed themselves into a sort of secret society and said they wouldn't eat or drink until they had killed Paul. But the captain found out about it and one night he sent Paul down to Cæsarea where the governor lived, with a guard of soldiers.

Finally Paul saw that the people of that country wouldn't be fair to him so he said, "I want to have my case tried in Rome before the emperor." This he had a right to do because he was a Roman citizen. This meant that they would have to send Paul from Cæsarea across the sea to Rome.

If you will look at your geography you will remember that this sea is called the Mediterranean and that Cæsarea was on the coast of Palestine and Rome was in Italy, that land shaped like a boot, which sticks out into this sea. Finally a day came when a sailing vessel was to start for various ports in the Mediterranean. They took Paul and some other prisoners and put them on board in charge of soldiers. Paul had one consolation; some of his old friends went with him; one was the "beloved physician" as he called him, Dr. Luke, who had often travelled with Paul on his missionary journeys and who is the one who tells us this story.

And so they sailed along until they came to a place called Myra where the soldiers with Paul and his friends and the other prisoners were put on board a ship going to Italy. Counting the sailors there were 266 people in all. Now their trouble began. The wind was in the wrong direction so that

they had to go slowly, but at last they came to a place called Fair Havens, where they stayed, as Paul thought, too long. For now the stormy part of the year was at hand and Paul said to the captain of the soldiers, "I am afraid that we are going to lose the ship and with it our own lives; we ought to stay right where we are," but the soldier thought Paul didn't know much about ships and wouldn't listen to him. Paul, however, kept on praying to God to save them.

After a good deal of discussion they decided to leave Fair Havens, so one day they weighed anchor and set sail. Things kept getting worse and worse. The wind blew so hard and the sea was so high that the ship was in danger of breaking apart. However, they managed to fasten it together with ropes, but at last the wind was so strong they had to lower the sails and let the ship go where the wind drove her.

The storm kept up so that the next day they threw a lot of the freight overboard to make her lighter and the third day the sailors cut away the masts and rigging, hoping in this way to save the ship. But it was no use. The storm grew worse and worse, so that for many days they couldn't see the sun nor the stars, and they didn't

know where they were. In those days they had no compass, and when they were out of sight of land they steered by the stars at night and the sun by day. The captain and the sailors were so excited that they even forgot to eat.

But one night the God whom Paul had loved and served, and for whom he was willing to give his very life, sent one of His angels to the ship. He came into Paul's cabin and said, "Paul, don't be afraid; you have asked to have your case tried at Rome before the emperor and you will surely get to Rome, and God has heard your prayers and will save the men who are on the ship with you, but the ship itself will be wrecked." It's a good thing to be in good company. The next morning after the angel's visit Paul went out on deck and said, "Listen to me. You ought to have listened to me before when I told you it was dangerous to leave Fair Havens at this time of year; but even now, bad as it is, I want you to be of good cheer. We will lose the ship but all of us will be saved. I know this because the God whom I love and serve sent me one of His messengers last night to tell me so. Therefore, cheer up; I am sure God can do what He says."

At first the sailors didn't care much for what Paul said, but one night after two weeks of tossing about in the tempest, they thought they were coming near some land. When they dropped the lead down in the water three or four times to see how deep it was they found it was getting shallower all the time, and as the wind was blowing towards the land they put four anchors out from the stern and sat down in despair longing for daylight.

As usual there were some mean men on the ship who wanted to save themselves no matter what happened to the other people; so pretending that they were going to put out more anchors they lowered the rowboat into the water; they intended to row over to the shore and let the rest take care of themselves the best they could. When Paul saw it he was angry and told the captain of the soldiers that if the men didn't stay on the ship, nobody could be saved, and so the soldiers cut the rowboat adrift. Then when day came Paul persuaded them that they ought to eat something, for they were getting weak from lack of food. When the food was ready, Paul, like the good man that he was, thanked God for it and they all took some.

After they had eaten, they all felt better, and began to make the ship still lighter by throwing more of the cargo overboard. Nothing, however, seemed to do any good, so they decided to beach the ship and save themselves. They hoisted sail, cut away the anchors and let the wind drive the vessel on the shore. When she struck the bow stuck fast in the sand but the stern remained afloat, and the big waves dashed against it so hard that it was soon broken.

Some of the soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners, for it was the law in those days that if a keeper let his prisoner escape the keeper should be killed, and these keepers saw that now their prisoners were going to escape. But the captain of the soldiers had become a friend of his prisoner, Paul, and wanted to save him, so he wouldn't let the other soldiers do anything of the kind; but he told everybody who could swim to jump overboard and go ashore first; then the others, including Paul, on planks and other floating things from the ship, were helped ashore until every one was saved. Paul was right, the ship was lost but the 266 people were all saved.

XXII

A Strange Dream

IN Jerusalem, where God's people lived, was a beautiful temple, one of the most beautiful buildings in the world, I suppose. It was built of marble and inside it was decorated with all sorts of precious woods and stones. Many of the utensils which they used in their worship were made of gold and silver, and the people thought a great deal of them. They were very sacred: only the priests were allowed to use them.

But, sad to relate, one time a lot of soldiers from Babylon, under a king named Nebuchadnezzar, had come over to Jerusalem and after they had conquered the Hebrews, they tore down the beautiful temple and carried a lot of the people back to Babylon as slaves, and they also took with them all the gold and silver things out of the temple. Finally Nebuchadnezzar died and his son Belshazzar was the king.

One time when he was having a great dinner, where there was a good deal of wine drink-

ing, he thought it would be smart to use these sacred cups to drink from, and show that he didn't care for the Hebrews' God; so he had the cups and other vessels brought into the dining-room and filled with wine, just as if they had been common drinking cups. Then he and all the people who had come to the dinner drank wine from them, and told how wonderful were their own gods; gods made of gold and brass and iron and wood and stone; gods which couldn't hear or see or know; they said, "These are the real gods; that God of the Hebrews can't do anything," and then they drank out of the sacred cups. But while they were using the sacred cups in this way, suddenly part of a great hand appeared, just the fingers and palm, nothing else. Up there on the wall where the light from the candlestick made it plain, this hand wrote four strange words: Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin.

This was enough to frighten anybody and you may be sure the king was frightened. When he saw this great hand his face grew pale, his knees knocked together, and he could hardly think, let alone speak. However, he managed to cry out at last and asked his wise men to come and tell him what these strange words meant. They

came in and they were as much surprised as anybody to see those curious words on the wall. "Whoever will read that writing up there," he said, pointing to it, "and tell me what it means, I'll make him ruler of this country." But no one of them could help him. They couldn't make out what those curious words were, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. Then there was a great commotion; nobody seemed to know what to do, and the king was so frightened he looked sick. This bothered his servants, for they were frightened, not only at the strange words, but at the condition of the king; they didn't know what would happen.

When the queen heard what had happened she went into the dining-room and said, "Don't be frightened. One time, some years ago, your father Nebuchadnezzar had a curious dream, and a man named Daniel, one of the Hebrew prisoners, was the only one who could tell him what it meant. Why not send for him?" This seemed like a good suggestion, so Daniel was sent for. As soon as he came in the king said, "Are you the same Daniel that my father's soldiers brought from Jerusalem? I hear that you can tell what curious things mean. Well, here's one. You see those strange words up there on the

wall? The fingers of a great big hand came in here and wrote them, and I've asked the wisest men I have to tell me what they mean, but not one of them can do it; I promised to do all kinds of things for them, but it's no use. Now, if you can read those words and tell me why they came there and what they mean, I will give you money and make you one of the rulers of the country." Then Daniel said, "I don't want your money, but I'll read those words for you, and I'll tell you what they mean. God made your father a great man and gave him everything anybody could wish for; He made him a ruler over all sorts of people everywhere; he could do whatever he pleased with them. But he became very proud and conceited: he thought he was doing it all and that God had nothing to do with it. God had to punish him, so He made him like one of the wild animals out on the plains, and he went out there and lived like one of them; he ate grass like an ox and slept outdoors, until he learned that it was God who had control of everything in the world. You know what happened to your father, but nevertheless you've been doing the very things God had to punish your father for doing. You have even gone so far as to take the sacred ves-

sels from our temple and use them as common drinking cups ; you have praised your wooden gods and stone gods, which can't see nor hear nor know anything ; but our God, who can do anything He likes with you, you have neglected. God sent that hand and wrote those words up there, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN."

This made the king very uneasy ; he didn't like to hear that the God whom he had insulted was the author of the strange writing. Daniel went on, "This is what the words mean: Mene, your kingdom is about to end ; tekem, God has found you to be no good ; upharsin, your kingdom is to be cut up and given away." As soon as could be Daniel was rewarded as the king said he would be and was made one of the rulers of the country, but that very night King Belshazzar was killed.

XXIII

Gideon's Curious Cattle

THE people of Israel and the Midianites who lived near each other were enemies. Oftentimes just when the Israelites' crops were ready for harvesting great crowds of Midianites would rush across the country, cut down the grain and burn it or carry it away. They would drive off their sheep and oxen. There were such crowds of them that the poor Israelites couldn't stop them; indeed sometimes the Israelites had to leave their homes and live in the caves in the mountains so that their enemies couldn't find them.

Sometimes after they had thrashed their grain they would put it in the great dry tower-like places where they squeezed out the grapes to make wine. I suppose they thought their enemies wouldn't think of looking in such a place for grain, and then after their enemies had marched away they could come back and get it.

But the Israelites, you remember, wor-

shipped the true God; some of them however had forgotten Him and had built altars to heathen gods; that was really why God let these enemies hurt them. In fact a great many of them had become just like their heathen neighbours and worshipped the gods of the heathen; but after their enemies had destroyed all their property and had driven the people into the mountains and they didn't know what to do, they had a prayer-meeting and prayed to the true God to help them.

They knew that He had helped His people in days gone by and they knew He could help them now. They remembered how He brought their great-grandfathers out in Egypt, and they felt sure He could still do something for them. God heard their prayer and answered it. He sent one of His preachers to the Israelites who said to them, "Surely you haven't forgotten how God brought you out of Egypt, or how He has always helped you against your enemies? Don't you remember how He told you not to be afraid? But you have been disobedient." Nevertheless God was going to help them, as we shall see.

In one of the towns in the country where the Israelites were now, there lived a man

named Joash. He was poor and nobody thought much of his family. His house would have been the last one you or I would have looked in to find a great man. He had quite a number of sons and the youngest of them was named Gideon.

In those days the youngest son wasn't thought much of by his older brothers. But one day this young man Gideon had a great surprise. He was thrashing wheat and hiding it in their wine-press, when suddenly an angel stood beside him and called him a mighty man of valour, and said, "God is with you." When Gideon heard that, and thought of his poor home and all the brothers who were older than he, he could only say, "How can God be with us? See how these enemies of ours treat us. No, God has forgotten us." But the angel said, "God has chosen you, Gideon, to be the one to save the people from their enemies." Even then Gideon couldn't believe it was true and he answered the angel, "How can I save the people from their enemies?" Then the angel, who was really the Lord, answered, "Surely I will be with you, Gideon; you will be able to destroy these Midianites as if they were only one man."

But still Gideon couldn't feel sure that it

was the Lord speaking to him, so he said to the angel, "Show me something that will make it sure that the Lord is really talking with me." Then Gideon went back to the house and prepared a present for the angel such as they used to give in those days: some meat and bread in a basket, and some soup in a dish. When he gave them to the angel, the angel said, "Put the meat and the bread on the rock," and as soon as Gideon had done it, the angel touched them with a stick he held in his hand, and fire came out of the rock and burned them up. While they were burning the angel disappeared. Gideon felt so sure now that the Lord had been there and had spoken to him that he was frightened, for in those days people understood that no one could look upon the Lord and live. But the Lord said, "Don't be afraid, Gideon, you will not die."

Those were the days when people worshipped God by burning some kind of an animal on an altar. These altars were very often mere heaps of stones, on which wood was placed; then the wood was set on fire and the animal was killed and put on the burning wood. They thought that the smoke rising up from the fire and the smell of the burning animal were like so many prayers going up

to God, and that God in that way knew that they were worshipping Him.

After Gideon had gone to bed on the night of that wonderful day when the Lord had talked with him, the Lord spoke to him again. "Gideon," he heard Him say, "I want you to break down that heathen altar your father built, and in place of it build an altar to Me; then when it is built offer to Me one of your father's oxen." Gideon was afraid that the men of the city, if they should see him breaking down this altar, would stop him; so instead of waiting until daylight, he got some men and went right to work that very night, so that in the morning when the people began to go past his house they saw the old altar torn down and the new one standing in its place. It was just as he thought, the men were angry. They came together in crowds, and you could hear them say as they pointed to the altar, "Who did this?" When they heard that Gideon had done it they began to call out, "Bring out Gideon; we want to kill him for destroying our altar." But Gideon's father went out and talked with the men, so that by and by they went away.

Some time after this Israel's old enemies, the Midianites, attacked them again, just as

they had often done before. They came over in the country near where Gideon was living, and when he saw them he remembered how the Lord had told him that he was to be the one who should save the people from their enemies. As quickly as he could he sent messengers out through the country and called the soldiers to join his army. Great crowds of them came.

It seems as if Gideon was not quite sure even now that he was the one who was to be their general, so he prayed to the Lord, "If I am really the one who is to lead these soldiers against our enemies show me this sign: I will put a bunch of wool outdoors to-night; if the wool is wet with dew in the morning while the ground all around it is dry, then I'll know that God means that I should do this." When he went out in the morning the ground was dry and the wool was so wet he could wring water out of it.

But even this didn't satisfy him, so he spoke to God again. "Don't be angry with me," he said. "Give me one more sign. I'll put the wool out again to-night, and now if the ground is wet with dew in the morning and the wool is dry then I shall know surely that God means that I should be the leader in this war." So once again he put the

bunch of wool on the ground and in the morning the ground was wet, while the wool was dry. Gideon was now convinced; he knew that God meant him to be the general to lead the soldiers against their enemies.

When God saw that Gideon had over thirty thousand soldiers He thought Gideon might think that he and these soldiers had won the victory through their own strength, so He said, "Gideon, you have too big an army. Go out and tell them that anybody who is afraid can go home now, before the war begins."

Gideon must have been not only astonished, but worried when he saw what happened. He must have thought that all of his soldiers were going to leave him, for when he said, "All who are afraid may go home," more than half the soldiers turned round and went back. Instead of thirty-two thousand he found he had only ten thousand. Still they seemed too many to God; still He thought Gideon might say, "We won the victory ourselves." So He said, "You still have too many. Let them march down to the river, and I will pick out those who are to go with you into battle." Gideon got them in order and they marched off until they came to the river.

Then God said, "Watch these men and see how they drink. Some will be in a hurry to drink and will bend over on their knees and lap up the water the way a dog does; others won't care how long it takes; they will reach out their hands and lift up the water little by little to their mouths. Count the number of men who drink in each of these ways." After they were counted Gideon found that only three hundred had lapped up the water, while all the rest had dipped it up with their hands. Then God said to Gideon again, "The three hundred are the men you want for your army. Let the others go back to their tents." Again Gideon must have been astonished, for now instead of thirty-two thousand soldiers he had only three hundred. Only three hundred men, and down there in the valley he looked upon the great sea of tents where the enemy was encamped!

It must have been discouraging for a general to be left with such a small army before any battle had been fought. But Gideon believed that God knew best, so he sent all but the three hundred back to their tents, while this little company stayed with him.

God knew that Gideon would be afraid to go to battle with so few men so He said to

him that night, "Gideon, while it is dark go down into the enemy's camp and you will hear something." This was a curious errand for a general, but Gideon obeyed. He called one of his servants and the two went down the mountain into the valley where the great army was quietly sleeping in its tents. He was surprised to find so many men: they seemed to be as thick as sand on the sea-shore and they had so many camels he couldn't begin to count them. As he walked along in the darkness he thought he heard some one talking, and as he listened he found that one soldier was telling another a dream he had. This soldier said, "I had a queer dream last night. I thought I saw a round cracker roll along the ground into our camp, and it struck against one of our tents and upset it." Then the other soldier said, "It means that Gideon, the Israelite general, is going to beat us in battle."

These soldiers didn't know Gideon was there, so he went quietly back to his own little army very happy. He was sure now that God was helping them. That very night he called his men together, the three hundred men who were left. He told them that he knew that God was going to make them victorious. Then he did a strange

thing, he divided his army into three companies of one hundred men each, and instead of giving them spears, or axes or bows and arrows, as you would suppose he ought to have done, he gave each man a trumpet to carry in his right hand, and a pitcher with a light in it to carry in the other hand.

The soldiers looked surprised, and some of them said, "What in the world are these trumpets and pitchers and lights for? Does he expect us to fight with these things?" Gideon saw that a good many of the soldiers didn't understand what he was doing, so he said to them, "All you have to do is to watch me, and do just what I do. When you hear me blow my trumpet you blow your trumpets all around the enemy's camp and call out as loud as you can, 'For the Lord and for Gideon.'" It was now about eleven o'clock at night and very dark. In the darkness one company of Gideon's soldiers marched over to one side of the camp, another went to the other side, and Gideon with the other hundred men stood in front.

The soldiers were sleeping in their tents. As soon as Gideon got as near the enemy as he thought he ought to be, he blew a great blast on his trumpet, and then smashed the pitcher with it, and held the torch that was

in the pitcher in his hand. At once every one of Gideon's three hundred soldiers did the same thing: each one blew his trumpet as loud as he could and grabbed the torch out of the broken pitcher and held it up, as he shouted "For the Lord and for Gideon." Then they stood there in the dark blowing their trumpets and shouting and waving their torches.

When the soldiers who had been asleep heard this great noise and saw all the lights they were confused and hardly knew what to do. They imagined that a great army had come upon them because in the dark night they couldn't see how many of them there were. They got up as fast as they could and began to run away. It was so dark that they could hardly see each other, and sometimes they couldn't tell their own soldiers from Gideon's soldiers, so a good many of them killed the men in their own army. As they ran Gideon's men ran after them, and sent and called some of those who had gone to their tents, and before long Gideon and his little army had won a great victory. Best of all he didn't say that he and his soldiers had won the fight, but he was ready and glad to acknowledge that it was because God was on their side that they had won.

The Missionary Miracle

WE have in our Bible four stories of the life of Jesus. We call each of them a Gospel. This is an old-fashioned word meaning "Good news." Then we add the name of the man who wrote the story and speak of them as the Gospel of Matthew, of Mark, of Luke or of John.

These four Gospels are not exactly alike, for though they all tell us about Jesus some tell one thing and some another. For instance, that story we love so much, the birth of the baby Jesus in Bethlehem, is told only by Luke in his Gospel, and the story of the wise men's visit is told only by Matthew. It is the same with other parts of the life of our Lord. Sometimes only Mark tells the story, sometimes only John, or both Mark and Luke will tell it and not John and Matthew, and so on.

Now, when we begin to read the miracles which Jesus did, we find the story sometimes

in one Gospel, sometimes in another ; a few are in two Gospels ; and fewer still are in three ; only one is found in all four : in Matthew, in Mark, in Luke and in John. This seems to show that all these men must have thought this miracle was a very important one ; whatever else they left out they couldn't leave this out. I have called it the Missionary Miracle. See if you think that is a good name for it.

It was summer time in Galilee and in one of the small villages near the lake lived a little boy who wanted to spend the day out in the country, or as we would say now, he wanted to go on a picnic. So his mother put up some lunch for him, as mothers always have done, and he started out. He walked along the shore of the lake throwing in a stone every now and then, and maybe fishing a little, but I don't know surely about that.

By and by he found that a great many people were all going in one direction around the end of the lake, and when he asked one of the boys in the crowd what was the matter, this boy told him that a wonderful man had been in the city of Capernaum where he lived. He said this man had met a blind man and had made his eyes well so

that he could see. "Then," the boy went on, "he met a friend of mine who was a lame man and made his legs well, so that he could walk ; but the sick people crowded around this man so that he hardly had time to eat, and at last he got into a boat with some of his friends and they have sailed across the sea ; and now we are taking our sick people around by land to meet him when he comes ashore to see if he won't cure some more of them. You'd better come along and see some of the things he can do."

So our boy joined the crowd going around the lake, just as you would have done if you had been there. When he reached the other side, quite a long walk, there he found more people than he could count, and as he worked his way through the crowd he found the wonderful man right in the middle of the crowd, and he was speaking to the people. All around him were sick people who had been cured and they were looking up into the man's face so pleased and happy. The boy heard some one call the man who was speaking Jesus, and it was He, our Lord.

Although it was growing late in the day the people still stayed there, until near evening, these special friends of Jesus, His

apostles He called them, came to Him and said, "There isn't anything here for these people to eat; send them away so that they may go into the villages and buy food." But Jesus, when He looked at the crowd, over five thousand people, felt sorry for them. They seemed to Him like sheep without a shepherd. And I am sure that when God looks down on the great crowds of people in heathen lands, millions of them, He still feels sorry for them, for they too are like sheep without a shepherd. Indeed we know that God so loved the *world* that He sent His only Son, this same Jesus, to help us.

But Jesus said, "No, they need not go away: you feed them." Then these apostles looked at each other in surprise. "Feed five thousand people! How can we?" one said. And another, named Philip, said to Him, "Why, if we had two hundred shillings (that would be about fifty dollars of our money) we couldn't buy enough to give each one even a little."

In the meantime another apostle, named Andrew, had met the little boy with the lunch basket. I suppose the boy had eaten all he wanted and had some left over. So when Jesus asked, "How much bread have you?" Andrew said, "There's a little boy here who

has five barley loaves and two fishes, but that won't be very much for so many people." Of course it wouldn't be very much, if they were there alone; but Jesus was with them.

And as we think of the little we have and the great multitudes of needy people in heathen lands it seems very, very little. But Jesus is with us still.

We will see what happened to their little when Jesus helped. Jesus only said, "Bring the loaves and the fishes to Me." Can you imagine how that boy must have felt when Andrew came up to him and said, "Little boy, Jesus wants your bread and fishes." He must have said, "Why, this is mine; it's all I've got; if you take it I'll be hungry before I get home. You can't have it." And we often say just the same thing now when God asks us to give something we have so that He may use it to help the poor people whom we call heathen. But fortunately for the little boy Andrew persuaded him to give his lunch to Jesus. I say fortunately for the little boy, for as long as the Bible lasts, and that will be forever, this little boy will be remembered because he did something for Jesus.

Lots of men have lived since then who have done what people called great things,

built big houses, won great battles, made lots of money, and now we don't even know that they ever lived ; but this little boy who gave his little lunch to Jesus will never be forgotten. Good thing to do after all, wasn't it?

Then Jesus told His apostles to make the people sit down on the grass in groups of fifty or a hundred. You see He wanted to do everything in an orderly way. After they were all seated Jesus turned His face towards heaven and thanked His Father in heaven for giving them something to eat. Then He broke the bread into little pieces, and the fishes, too, and gave each of His apostles some of the pieces and told them to give them to the people.

Can't you see those twelve men, Andrew and Philip and the rest of them, going up and down, giving a piece of bread and a piece of fish to each one? And how the people must have wondered! And how queer it would have been if after the apostles had fed the first fifty or hundred they should have fed them over again, and then should go back and feed them, the same fifty or hundred, once more ; while all the other fifties or hundreds went hungry !

But do you know that is just what some people want us to do with the Gospel which

we sometimes call the bread of life? They want this group in the United States to be fed, and then fed again, and still again, over and over, while that group in India, and that group in China and those groups in Africa, all so hungry, or are not fed at all. But Jesus didn't do that way. Each one of the whole company was fed: each one got enough, including, I am sure, the little boy. "They did all eat and were filled," the story says. Jesus was careful not to waste anything, so He said to His disciples, after the people had finished eating, "Gather up the crumbs."

And now a very strange thing happened. You must remember that each one of the people got just one meal; but when the apostles gathered up what was left, each one of these twelve men had a big basket full of food, enough, I suppose, to last him several days, perhaps enough meals for a week. You see they had been helping Jesus and that is always the way: those who help Him get the most.

When Jesus saw that He and His apostles could not get any rest on that side of the lake He made His apostles sail away in the boat, then He sent the people back home, but He went off by Himself, as He often did, to pray.

The Missionary and the Slave

THERE was once a little city in Greece called Colosse. It was a heathen city, but some of the people had become Christians. At that time, only a few years after Jesus left the earth, most of the Christians were very poor. I don't think there were enough of them in one city to have church buildings, for they used to hold their church services in their own houses. In those days the rich people did one thing which we now think is wrong: even the Christian people kept slaves, that is, their servants were people whom they owned.

We don't know much about the people of Colosse, but in one of the houses lived a Christian family. They seem to have been well-to-do people. The man's name was Philemon, and he had a wife called Apphia. Some people think that the man named Archippus who lived in their house with them was their son, but I don't know about that. Philemon's house was one of those in which church services were held, and per-

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haps Archippus was a minister and conducted the worship; anyhow, the Christians in Colosse would often come to Philemon's house to worship, and he and his wife were kind to those among them who were poor. They did all they could to help them; in fact they did so much that people in other parts of the country heard about their kindness and were glad that there was such a fine Christian family in Colosse.

Philemon was one of those who kept slaves, and among his slaves was a man named Onesimus. No matter how kind their masters were I suppose some of the slaves would think that no one had a right to own them and they would want to go free. And then too there must have been a good many slaves who didn't know very much and who were not very careful what they did. Onesimus was like that. Even with such a kind master and mistress as Philemon and Apphia appeared to have been he didn't like being a slave: he wanted to be free. So one day he made up his mind that he would be a slave no longer. It may have been one night after he had done something wrong and was whipped for it. Anyhow, he stole some money and ran away.

At this time that man Paul, who was in the

shipwreck we read about, was in Rome where you may remember the soldiers had taken him as a prisoner. There he was in that great city in prison. I don't believe it was much like one of our prisons, for he hired the house himself and some of his friends lived with him, and others could come to see him at any time. Very often people came to his house and he preached to them, just as he used to do when he was travelling about as a missionary. One thing must have been very hard for him though, for he was an old man now; he was always chained to a soldier. Night and day one of the Roman soldiers was fastened to him by a chain. I suppose they did this so that he could not run away: wherever he went this soldier, his keeper, would go with him.

Poor Onesimus thought he would be safe if only he could get to some big city where there would be so many people that nobody would notice him, so he went to this great city of Rome where Paul was. I imagine he soon spent all his money, for things we get wrongfully don't last long. Very soon he must have been just like a tramp, with no money and no home and afraid all the time that some one would find him and take him back to slavery.

I don't know how he heard about Paul, but I imagine that one day he was talking with some one who had been up where Paul lived and had heard him preach. Paul was such a wonderful preacher that this man would say to this poor runaway slave, "Onesimus, if you want to hear a man who knows how to talk you go to hear Paul; he will be glad to see you and to talk with you, if you want him to." This would seem strange to Onesimus, for he was only a slave; he didn't suppose anybody cared for him. But he kept thinking about it, and he heard more and more about Paul from other men who had heard him. At last he said to himself: "I can't be any worse off; I'll go and hear him."

So one day there he is in the crowd listening to Paul talking to the people who have come to hear him. It isn't hard to tell what Paul would say, for when he preached there was one thing he was always saying to the people: "I was a great sinner once; I did a great many things that were wrong; but suddenly Jesus spoke to me and saved me and made a new man of me. I am a Christian. Won't you trust Him? He will save you too." As he listened poor Onesimus must have said, "He means me. He says Jesus will save any one who is poor and

lonely and wretched. That must mean me.” And as soon as he got a chance he went to Paul and had a talk with him. Paul welcomed him and said, “Yes, that’s just what I mean. This Jesus who saved me will save you too.” At last Onesimus decided he would be a Christian and Paul baptized him.

Onesimus seemed to be entirely changed, for after this he and Paul were great friends. Onesimus helped Paul in all sorts of ways, so that Paul looked upon him as his own child and loved him as if he had been his own son.

Onesimus must often have heard Paul pray, and I feel sure that one day he heard him pray for his friend Philemon who lived in Colosse, for Paul did pray for Philemon. After that Paul saw that something was troubling Onesimus, and he made up his mind he would find out what it was. So like the kind man he was he said one day, “Onesimus, where did you live before you came to Rome?” Onesimus told him in Colosse. “Oh, yes,” said Paul. “Although I’ve never been there myself, some of my friends have, and they have often told me about a Christian family living in Colosse. They say the man and his wife are very good to the poor Christians who love them. The

man's name is Philemon." As soon as he said that name Paul saw that he was on the right track, and he said, "Why, Onesimus, what's the matter?" for the poor fellow turned his face away as if he didn't want Paul to see him. And then it all came out. Onesimus said: "I lived with Philemon and Apphia. I am their slave. They were good to me, as they are good to everybody. But I was bad to them. I stole some money from Philemon and ran away. That's why I came to Rome." Can't you imagine how surprised Paul was? "That's bad, Onesimus," he must have said. "I would like to keep you with me, but there's only one thing to do. You are a Christian now; you must go back to Colosse and pay back the money you have taken from your master." Onesimus didn't like this. He told Paul how Philemon would have a right to kill him for stealing. "Yes, yes," Paul answered, "I know all that; and I don't know what I'll do without you myself, but you must go back." "But what shall I say?" asks Onesimus. "You needn't say anything. I have just written a letter to the Christians in Colosse, and my friend Tychicus is going there in a day or two with it. I'll write a letter to Philemon, and explain the whole matter.

He knows me and I think he'll do what I ask him to do. You can go along with Tychicus."

Then Paul sat down and wrote this beautiful letter which we still have in our Bible :

"DEAR PHILEMON, APPHIA
AND ARCHIPPUS :

"I often remember you in my prayers when I hear about the good you are doing. I'm an old man now, and I'm in prison ; I want to ask a favour for my child Onesimus, who was formerly your slave and who is now a Christian, and who is as dear to me as my own life. O ! I wish I might keep him here to help me, but I feel that he ought to go back to you. He has told me his story, and it may be God took this way of parting you and him for a little while in order that he might come back to you no longer a slave but a Christian brother. If you think of me as your friend, receive him as you would me. If he has stolen anything, I'll pay it for him.

"I am sure that you will do even more than I have asked ; and I wish you would get ready for a visit from me. Epaphras, from your town, who is here with me in Rome, sends his kindest regards, and so do the other friends who are here.

"Your friend,
"PAUL."

We know nothing more about Onesimus,

but can't you imagine him going back to Colosse and taking Paul's letter to his old master? How surprised Philemon must have been to see the runaway! And I am sure he treated him kindly for Paul's sake. Some people say that after that Onesimus became a splendid Christian man, and I don't wonder. How could he help it with such a friend?

XXVI

How Jesus Rose Again

WHEN our Lord was here on earth He walked all over the parts of the country called Galilee and Judea, curing sick people and telling everybody about His heavenly Father. Every little while He would tell His special friends that some day wicked men would kill Him, but that after He had been in the grave for three days He would come out of it alive. Well, the sad day did come at last. Wicked men in the city of Jerusalem took Jesus and put Him to death. They chose the cruelest way : they nailed Him to a cross where He died.

I am sorry to have to tell you that the very friends Jesus thought the most of seem to have forgotten everything He had told them about coming out of the grave, for when the soldiers had crucified Him, and He was dead, every one of them ran away. His poor mother, Mary, and a few other good women stood there by the cross where He was suffering, but the men had left Him.

In those days the people considered our Saturday their Sunday, that is, their Sunday began when the sun went down on Friday night, and lasted until the same time on Saturday. It was Friday when Jesus was crucified, and the Jews didn't think it was right to leave any one on the cross on their Sunday, so they were anxious that Jesus' body should be taken down as soon as possible.

There was a rich man living in Jerusalem who had been a sort of friend of Jesus—that is, he wanted to be His friend, but he didn't like to have his neighbours know that he was Jesus' friend. His name was Joseph. He was what we would call a prominent man in the city and was a rich man. Joseph had a garden just outside the city, and in it he had built a tomb in the rock where he expected to be buried when he died. People often did this in those days. When he heard that Jesus was dead he went to Pilate, the governor, and asked if he might bring Jesus' body to this new tomb in his garden. Pilate was greatly surprised and said, "Is He dead so soon?" and when they answered, "Yes," he told Joseph he could take the body and bury it. It was late now, so Joseph wrapped up the body of Jesus and hurriedly put it in



his new tomb in the rock. Over the doorway he rolled a great stone. Those cowardly men who had run away paid no attention to what was going on; only the few loving women sat there by the tomb crying.

On Saturday morning the Roman soldiers went to Pilate, the governor, and said to him, "We remember that this man when He was alive said that He would come out of the grave alive after three days. It is possible that His friends may go to the grave and take out His body and carry it away. Then they will tell the people that He has come out of the grave alive and the people will think He is a wonderful man. Let us seal the stone and guard it with soldiers so that nobody can get into the tomb and He surely can't get out." Pilate said, "Go ahead; make it as sure as you can." So the soldiers took a piece of string and stretched it across the stone which Joseph had rolled in front of the door of the tomb and fastened it to the rock on each side with some sort of sealing wax. Then they put some soldiers in front of the tomb to guard it. "Now," they said, "we'll see if He ever comes out of there again."

All day Saturday the soldiers were there on guard; and all that day the people were

worshipping in the temple and keeping their Sunday. I don't know what those other men were doing; those whom Jesus considered His especial friends. Some of them had been fishermen, and they seem to have started back to their old work. But the good women, they could hardly wait; they had seen the burial and knew it had to be done over again, but the law didn't permit them to do any work on Saturday, their Sunday. But all that day they were preparing the new cloth and the spices and ointment, the things which were used at funerals in those days.

But very early on the morning of the third day, that would be on Sunday, out in that garden of Joseph's there was an earthquake. An angel came down from heaven and rolled the stone away from the door of the tomb. The soldiers who were on guard were so frightened that they fell down as if they were dead. When they came to their senses again they ran to the city as fast as they could and told the people what had happened. This did not please the enemies of Jesus, so they gave the soldiers some money and said to them, "You must say that His friends came in the night and took Him away while you were asleep. If the governor should hear

that some of his soldiers had been asleep at their posts we will make it all right with him." After that, instead of telling the truth, the soldiers told the people that Jesus' friends had taken His body away in the night. A great many people believed it, and some believe it even now after so many years.

While that was going on Mary and the other women were walking along towards the tomb and the thing that troubled them most was how they were going to get in where the body of Jesus was : that high stone was in front of the door of the tomb, and how could they move it? They knew that they could do nothing unless they could get into the tomb, so they kept asking each other, "Who will roll away the stone for us?" You can imagine their surprise then when they came within sight of the tomb and found that the stone was already rolled away.

But their surprise was soon turned into sadness and fear for when they looked into the tomb it was empty ; they saw at once that Jesus' body wasn't there : they thought some one had stolen it, so one of them ran and found two of Jesus' particular friends, named Peter and John, and cried out, "Some one has taken Jesus' body out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have buried

it." Finally when all the women were standing near the tomb in fear and trembling an angel said to them, "Don't be frightened. I know you are looking for Jesus. You ought not to look for a living man here in a grave. Jesus isn't here; He has risen, as He said He would. Don't you remember He told you He would come out of the grave alive after three days? Come and see the place where Joseph put His body and then go and tell His friends what you have seen." When they heard this they ran as quickly as they could to the friends of Jesus and told them about it.

Many people, who had seen Jesus crucified and buried, came to the tomb and when they saw that it was empty they were frightened and hardly knew what to do.

One of the women who had come to the tomb, Mary Magdalene, to whom Jesus had been a good friend, still stood there crying. She stooped down and looked into the tomb, and as she did so she saw two angels. One of them said to her, "Why are you crying?" She looked at him and said, "Some one has taken away my Lord and I don't know where they have buried Him. Can't you tell me?" As she said this she heard some one moving, and turning she looked back and saw a man

she thought was the gardener. He came up and asked her the same question the angel had asked, "Why are you crying?" She answered Him, "Oh, sir, if you are the one who has taken Him away tell me where you have buried Him and I will go there." Then Jesus, for it was Jesus who stood there, called her by her name, "Mary." She looked up and knew who it was, and called Him by a name she often used, "Teacher." It was true indeed; He had come out of the grave alive.

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