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Among the pleasant fields of Holy Writ,
I might despair. —Tennyson.

The International Sunday-School Lesson.

FIRST QUARTER. LESSON XI. MARCH 16, 1902.
ACTS VIII, 29-39.

The Ethiopian Converted.

We may never know how the dusky proselyte was first converted to the Hebrew faith. The Jews were already scattered far and wide, especially in the capitals and commercial centers of the world. Then, as now, they were money-lenders. Perhaps it was in his capacity as treasurer of the Abyssinian Empire he came in contact with some first-century Rothschild, who was intent upon doing good as well as getting a high premium on his money. Over the bonds and consuls the Hebrew may have peered into the Ethiopian's heart, and, discovering its noble traits, coveted them for God. He may have payed the way to conversion by unfolding the miraculous history of Iseral, in which no intelligent person fails to be interested, and of whose truth few, if any, candid minds fail to be convinced.

Or the motives of the unknown proselyter may have been mixed, or even wholly bad. He may have been one who deserved Jesus' scathing rebuke. But whatever the incentive of the sectarist may have been, the proselyte was a noble and noble accession to the Hebrew Church.

He showed the genuineness of his conversion by the long journey, which he took at his first opportunity to the seat of his new found faith. It was some three thousand miles to Jerusalem and back. Yet this happy convert, to whom tradition gives the name of Judich, hesitated not at the toil and expense. As his chariot rolled along the banks of the Nile, under the tapering shadow of obelisk and pyramid, and by temple and treasure-city, no doubt he thought, if he did not exclaim: "This is that Egypt where God did those wonders for his people, and for which he delivered them with an outstretched arm!"

Another evidence of the depth and sincerity of his interest was the length of time he tarried in Jerusalem. He had gone up to the Feast of Pentecost, but we find him staying on through the martyrdon of Stephen and the conversion of the Samaria—not, however, that he was concerned in these events, even if he was aware of them.

Still a stronger evidence: He purchased a copy of the Hebrew Scriptures, and it cost him a small fortune, no doubt. It was to be no center-table ornament in his Nubian palace, either. It was for use. Indeed he could not wait until he reached home; but, in his jolting chariot on that rough Judean road, he was reading, not selfishly to himself either, but out loud, so that his charioteer and whole cavalcade might have the advantage.

There goes the Bible-reading Ethiopian. But now another person breaks in upon the scene. How strange—unreasonable, in fact—the providences of God often appear! The revival in Samaria was at its height. Its genuineness had been confirmed by the apostles in the bestowal of miraculous gifts. It seemed as if no one could shepherd the converts so well as the evangelist who had first brought them to Christ But the Spirit called Philip away; and that, too, not to another populous city, but to a desert way.

In this incident it is as if the curtain were lifted, and we could see the hand of God shaping events according to his will The paths of these two men—the devout and inquiring nobleman and the holy evangelist—are made to converge They come into actual conjunction at the precise moment when the nobleman's eye is on the passage which, more than any other, contains the gist of the gospel.

And the Spirit said to Philip: "Go near and join thyself to this chariot." The man who, the day before had given instant obedience to the unaccountable command of the Spirit, and had exchanged stirring scenes and opportunities of a great awakening for a solitary post on the road through a desert, did not hesitate now, though he could plainly see that the traveler was a prince and a foreigner.

There was a witticism, a play on words, in Philip's address to the Ethiopian, which is lost in the translation. He said: "Do you know what you know?" The wit of Philip was the edge of the wedge that opened the Nubian prince's heart wide to the gospel.

The question anticipated a negative answer and received it: "How can I except some man should guide me?" The Ethiopian is a lovely example of the sincere inquirer after truth. No penknife of a destructive critic was in his hand. Nor was he asking with Pilate's cold superciliousness, "What is truth?" He had become a little child—docile, loving, trustful, of whom Jesus said, "Of such is the kingdom."

He bade the chariot stand still He took up the tramp, covered with sweat of his long and hasty journey afoot. He seated him upon the gorgeous upholstery of his Egyptian chariot, and, oblivious to the fact that the eyes of all his attendants were upon him, he bent over the old yellow Septuagint manuscript with the unknown and wayfaring man. The place where he was reading was, "He was lead as a sheep to the slaughtsr," and his utter confusion of mind was betrayed by the question, "Of whom speaketh the prophet this—of himself or of some other man?"

Then Philip opened his mouth, taking that very verse as a text, and (literally) "declared to him the glad tidings, Jesus." The Ethiopian saw, believed, was baptized. That chariot was transmuted into a car of salvation. On it rolled, with its load more precious than the ivory and gold of a continent. It rolled a thousand miles up the Nile, and carried the gospel to the heart of Nubia, where, in spite of the unfriendliest environment, it has remained intrenched ever since.

THE TEACHER'S LANTERN.

Special providence and missions. The historic summer shower and the "haystack prayer meeting," in which the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions has its origin. The conversion of the Wyandot Indians under John Stewart. The opening of the zenanas of India "by a woman's needle." (See Pearson's "Crisis of Missions.")

Contrast the probable Ethiopian's Bible and the cheapness of Bibles to-day. The scarcity of bibles then, present abundance of them.

The use and limits of with and humor in the pulpit and in Christian work. Wit a characteristic of the pioneer preachers, and the greatest possible aid to them in their frequent emergencies.

The missionary cause of to-day is the perpetuation of Philip's effort. It transmutes the chariots of commerce into cars of salvation, freighted with priceless wares of grace, and sends them rolling toward the heart of great continents.

"He arose and went." In the quadrangle of those four words is compressed a world of obedience, faith, courage.

The Ethiopian had no disposition to be a clandestine follower even of the despised Nazarene. No motives of policy control his action. He does not question, "What would my royal mistress say?" "How would this affect my tenure of office?" He put his light on the lampstand of the palace. in its shining his queenly mistress and all her subjects may have found life.

Last time I ever saw Bishop Simpson was on a train, returning from a session of a Conference. The car was crowded with preachers. There was the usual fusillade of wit and argument. The bishop was oblivious to all. Turned toward the window, and under cover of his student stoop, he was reading a little, well-worn Bible. The Bible is the best of traveling companions. . . . The expression, "Join thyself to this chariot," has had a special significance to me since, in the South of Italy, a mendicant monk put his hand upon the fender of my carriage and half supported his weight as he ran along side begging. In some such manner, but with a nobler purpose, Philip joined himself to the chariot.

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—*Philadelphia Press.*

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De Wet has lost his only gun;
John Bull has gone to find it.
And if he hunts industriously,
He'll find De Wet behind it.
—*Detroit Tribune.*

Probably a Traveling Man.

"His wife says they were married for three years before they had their first quarrel."

"Was he away on business?"

A Daily Thought.

(Edward Young.)

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