

DR. TALMAGE'S SERMON. The Eventful Epoch.

"I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth."—Job 1: 24. Our eyes dilate and our heart quickens its pulsation as we read of events in the third century, the sixth century, the eighth century, the fourteenth century; but there are more far-reaching events crowded into the nineteenth century than in any other, and the last quarter bids fair to eclipse the preceding three quarters. We read in the daily newspapers of events announced in one paragraph and without any especial emphasis—of events which a Herodotus, a Josephus, a Xenophon, a Gibbon would have taken whole chapters or whole volumes to elaborate. Looking out upon our time, we must cry out in the words of the text: "Wonders in the heaven and in the earth."

A PERIOD OF DISASTER. I propose to show you that the time in which we live is wonderful for disaster and wonderful for blessing, for there must be lights and shades in this picture as in all others. Need I argue this day that our time is wonderful for disaster? Our world has had a rough time since by the hands of God it was bowed out into space. It is an epileptic earth. Convulsion after convulsion. Frosts pounding it with sledge hammer of iceberg, and fires melting it with furnaces seven hundred times heated. It is a wonder to me it has lasted so long. Meteors shooting by on this side and grazing it, and meteors shooting by on the other side and grazing it, none of them slowing up for safety. Whole fleets and navies and armies and flotillas of worlds sweeping all about us. Our earth like a fishing smack off the banks of Newfoundland, while the Gallia and the Botnia and the Arizona and the Great Eastern rush by. Beside that our world has been damaged in its eternal machinery, and ever and anon the furnaces have burst, and the walking-beams of the mountains have broken, and the islands have shipped a sea, and the great hulk of the world has been jarred with accidents that ever and anon threaten immediate demolition. But it seems to me as if our century were specially characterized by

DISASTERS VOLCANIC, cyclonic, oceanic, epidemic. I say volcanic, because an earthquake is only a volcano washed up. When Stromboli and Cotopaxi and Vesuvius stop-breathing, let the foundations of the earth be ware. Seven thousand earthquakes in two centuries recorded in the catalogue of the British Association! Trajan, the emperor, goes to ancient Antioch, and amid the splendors of his reception is met by an earthquake that nearly destroys the emperor's life. Lisbon, fair and beautiful, at 1 o'clock on the first of November, 1755, in six minutes 60,000 have perished, and Voltaire writes of them: "For that region it was the last judgment, nothing wanting but a trumpet!" Europe and America feeling the throbb; fifteen hundred chimneys in Boston partly or fully destroyed.

But the disasters of our century have had their counterpart in our own. In 1812, Caracas was caught in the grip of the earthquake, in 1822, in Chili, 100,000 square miles of land by volcanic force upheaved to four and seven feet of permanent elevation; in 1854, Japan felt the geological agony; Naples shaken in 1857; Mexico in 1858; Medosa, the capital of the Argentine Republic, 1861; Manila terrorized in 1863; the Hawaiian Islands by such force uplifted and let down in 1871; Nevada shaken in 1871; Antioch in 1872; California in 1873; San Salvador in 1873; Ischia in 1883; Charleston in 1886.

But look at the cyclonic, the disasters cyclonic. At the mouth of the Ganges are three islands—the Hattiah, the Sundep and the Dakin-Shalpoor. In the midnight of October, 1870, on all those three islands the cry was: "The waters, the waters!" A cyclone arose and rolled the sea over those three islands, and of a population of 340,000, 215,069 were drowned. Only those saved who had climbed to the top of the highest trees. Did you ever see a cyclone? No. Then I pray God you may never see one. I saw one on the ocean, and it swept us eight hundred miles back from our course, and for thirty-six hours during the cyclone and after it we expected every moment to go to the bottom. They told us before we retired at nine o'clock that the barometer had fallen, but at eleven o'clock at night we were awakened with the shock of the waves. All the lights out. Crash! went all the lifeboats. Waters rushing through the skylights down into the cabin and down on the furnaces until they hissed, and smoked in the deluge.

SEVEN HUNDRED PEOPLE PRAYING, blaspheming, shrieking. Our great ship poised a moment on the top of a mountain of phosphorescent fire, and then plunged down, down, down, until it seemed as if she never would again be righted. Ah! you never want to see a cyclone at sea. But a few weeks ago, I was in Minnesota, where there was one of those cyclones on land that swept the city of Rochester from its foundations, and took dwelling-houses, barns, men, women, children, horses, cattle, and tossed them into indiscriminate ruin, and lifted a rail-train and dashed it down, a mightier hand than that of the engineer on the air-brake. Cyclone in Kansas, within a few months; cyclone in Missouri, cyclone in Wisconsin, cyclone in Illinois, cyclone in Iowa. Satan, prince of the power of the air, never made such a cyclonic disturbance as he has in our day. And am I not right in saying that one of the characteristics of the time is disaster cyclonic?

DISASTERS OCEANIC. But look at the disasters oceanic. Shall I call the roll of the dead shipping? Ye monsters of the deep, answer when I call your names. *Vita et Haavel* The Schiller, *City of Boston* The Medville, *The President*, *The Cimbric*, *The Orignal*. But why should I go on calling the roll when none of them answer, and the roll is as long as the white scroll of the Atlantic surf at Cape Hatteras breakers. If the oceanic cables could report all the scattered life and all the bleached bones that they rub against in the depths of the ocean,

what a message of pathos and tragedy for both beaches! In one week eighty fishermen perished off the coast of Newfoundland, and whole fleets of them off the coast of England. God help the poor fellows at sea, and give high seats in heaven to the Grace Darlings and the Ida Lewises and the life-boatmen around Goodwin's Sands and the Skerries!

The sea, now owning three-fourths of the earth, proposes to capture the other fourth, and is bombarding the land all around the earth. The moving of our hotels at Brighton Beach backward from where they once stood, a type of what is going on all around the world and on every coast. The Dead Sea rolls to-day where ancient cities stood. Pillars of temples that stood on hills, geologists find now three-quarters under the water, or altogether wrecked and merged. The sea having wrecked so many merchantmen and flotillas, wants to wreck the continents, and hence disasters oceanic.

DISASTERS EPIDEMIC. I speak now of the plague in the fourth century that ravaged Europe, and in Moscow and the Neapolitan dominions and Marseilles wrought such terror in the eighteenth century; but I look at the yellow fever, and the cholera, and the diphtheria, and the scarlet fever, and the typhoids of our own time. Hear the wailing of Memphis and Shreveport, and New Orleans, and Savannah, of the last two decades. From Hurdwar, India, where every twelfth year three million devotees congregate, the caravans brought the cholera, and that one disease slew 18,000,000 in eighteen days in Borsarah. Twelve thousand in one summer slain by it in India, and twenty-five thousand in Egypt. Disasters epidemic. Some of the finest monuments in Greenwood, and Laurel Hill, and Mount Auburn are to doctors who died battling with Southern epidemic.

AN ERA OF BLESSING. But now I turn the leaf in my subject, and I plant the white lilies and the palm-tree amid the nightshade and the myrtle. This age no more characterized by wonders of disaster than by wonders of blessing. Blessing of longevity. The average of human life rapidly increasing. Forty years now worth four hundred years once. A short time ago I came from Manitoba to New York in three days and three nights. In other times it would have taken three months. In other words, three days and three nights now worth three months of other days. The average of human life is practically greater now than when Noah lived his 950 years, and Methuselah lived his 969 years. Blessing of intelligence. The Salmon P. Chase and the Abraham Lincoln and the Henry Wilsons of the coming time will not be required to learn to read by pine-knot lights, or seated on shoemaker's bench, nor the Ferragons have to study astronomy while watching the cattle. Knowledge rolls its tides along every poor man's door, and his children may go down and bathe in them. If the philosophers of the last century were called up to recite in a class with our boys at the Polytechnic, or our girls at the Packer, those old philosophers would be sent down to the foot of the class because they failed to answer the questions! Free libraries in all the important towns and cities of the land. Historical alcoves, and poetical, and magazine tables for all that desire to walk through them or sit down at them.

QUICK INFORMATION. Blessings of quick information; newspapers falling all around us thick as leaves in a September equinoctial. News three days old rancid and stale. We see the whole world twice a day—through the newspaper at the breakfast-table, and through the newspaper at the tea-table, with an "extra" here and there between.

Blessing of Gospel proclamation. Do you not know that nearly all the missionary societies have been born in this century? and nearly all the Bible societies, and nearly all the great philanthropic movements? A secretary of one of the denominations said to me one day in Dakota: "You are wrong when you said our denomination averaged a new church every day of the year; they established nine in one week, so you are far within the truth." A clergyman of our own denomination said: "I have just been out establishing five mission stations." I tell you Christianity is on the march, while

INFIDELITY IS DWINDLING into the imbecility that was demonstrated not long ago at Rochester, N. Y., where after the blowing of the trumpets and the gathering of all the clans there assembled a small group of semi-idiot to denounce the Christian religion and eulogize one of their dead patrons, a libertine, arrested in New York and Boston again and again for scattering obscene literature—that dead man the patron saint of the whole movement. While infidelity is thus dwindling and dropping down into imbecility and indecency, the wheel of Christianity is making about a thousand revolutions in a minute. All the copies of Shakespeare and Tennyson and Disraeli and of any ten of the most popular writers of the day, less in number than the copies of the Bible going out from our printing-presses. Two years ago, in six weeks, more than two million copies of the New Testament purchased—not given away, but purchased, because the world will have it. More Christian men in high official position to-day in Great Britain and in the United States than ever before. Stop that falsehood going through the newspapers—I have seen it in twenty—that the judges of the Supreme Court of the United States are all infidels except Judge Gray. By personal acquaintance I know three of them to be old-fashioned evangelical Christians, sitting at the holy sacrament of our Lord Jesus Christ, and I suppose that the majority of them are staunch believers in our Christian religion. And then hear the dying words of Judge Black, a man who had been Attorney-General of the United States, and who had been Secretary of the United States, no stronger lawyer of the century than Judge Black—dying, his aged wife kneeling by his side, and he uttering that sublime and tender prayer: "O Lord God, from whom I de-

rived my existence and in whom I have always trusted, take my spirit to Thyself and let Thy richest blessing come down upon my Mary!" The most popular book to-day is the Bible, and the mightiest institution is the Church, and the greatest name among the nations, and most honored, is the name of Jesus.

WONDERS OF SELF-SACRIFICE. A clergyman told me in the northwest on one of my visits, that for six years he was a missionary at the extreme north, living 400 miles from a post-office, and sometimes he slept out of doors in winter, the thermometer sixty and sixty-five degrees below zero, wrapped in rabbit skins woven together. I said: "Is it possible? you do not mean sixty and sixty-five degrees below zero?" He said: "I do, and I was happy." All for Christ. Where is there any other being that will rally such enthusiasm? Mothers sewing such comforters off to educate their boys for the Gospel ministry. For nine years no luxury on the table until the course through grammar school and college and theological seminary be completed. Poor widow putting her mite into the Lord's treasury, the face of emperor or president impressed upon the coin not so conspicuous as the blood with which she earned it. Millions of good men and women, but more women than men, to whom Christ is everything. Christ first and Christ last, and Christ forever.

Why, this age is not so characterized by invention and scientific exploration as it is by gospel proclamation. You can get no idea of it unless you can ring all the church bells in one chime, and sound all the organs in one diapason, and gather all the congregations of Christendom in one Gloria in Excelsis. Mighty camp meetings, mighty Ocean Grove, Mighty Chautauques, Mighty conventions of Christian workers, Mighty General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church, Mighty Conferences of the Methodist Church, Mighty Associations of the Baptist Church, Mighty conventions of the Episcopal Church. I think before long the investments will not be in railroad stock or Western Union, but in trumpets and cymbals and festal decorations, for we are

ON THE EVE OF VICTORIES wide and world- uplifting. There may be many years of hard work yet before the consummation, but the signs are to me so encouraging that I would not be unbelieving if I saw the wing of the apocalyptic angel spread for its last triumphant flight in this day's sunset; or if to-morrow morning the ocean cables should thrill us with the news that Christ the Lord had alighted on Mount Olivet or Mount Calvary to proclaim universal dominion.

Oh, you dead churches, wake up! Throw back the shutters of stiff ecclesiasticism and let the light of the spring morning come in. Morning for the land. Morning for the sea. Morning of emancipation. Morning of light and love and peace. Morning of a day in which there shall be no chains to break, no sorrows to assuage, no despotism to shatter, no woes to compassionate. Oh, Christ, descend! Scarred temple, take the crown! Bruised hand, take the scepter! Wounded foot, step the throne! "Thine is the kingdom!"

These things I say because I want you to be alert. I want you to be watching all these wonders unrolling from the heavens and the earth. God has classified them, whether calamitous or blessing. The divine purposes are harnessed in traces that cannot break, and in girths that cannot slip, and in buckles that cannot loosen, and are driven by reins that must answer. I preach no fatalism. A swarthy engineer at one of the depots in Dakota, said: "When will you get

ON THE LOCOMOTIVE and take a ride with us?" "Well," I said, "now, if it suits you." So I got on one side the locomotive and a Methodist minister, who was also invited, got on the other side, and between us were the engineer and stoker. The train started. The engineer had his hand on the agitated pulse of the great engine. The stoker shoveled in the coal and shut the door with a loud clang. A vast plain swept under us and the hills swept by, and the great monster on which we rode trembled and bounded and snorted and raged as it hurled us on. I said to the Methodist minister on the other side the locomotive: "Why should I quarrel about the decrees and free agency? You see that track, that firm track, that iron track; that is the decree. You see this engineer's arm; that is free agency. How beautifully they work together! They are going to take us through. We could not do without the track, and we could not do without the engineer."

So I rejoice day by day. Work for us all to do, and we may turn the crank of the Christian machinery this way or that, for we are free agents; but there is one thing that we cannot do without. THE TRACK LAD so long ago no one remembers it; laid by the hand of Almighty God in sockets that no terrestrial or Satanic pressure can ever affect. And along that track the car of the world's redemption will roll and roll to the great Central Depot of Millennium. I have no anxiety about the track. I am only afraid that for our indolence God will discharge us and get some other stoker and some other engineer. The train is going through, with us or without us. So, my brethren, watch all the events that are going by. If things seem to turn out right, give wings to your joy. If things seem to go wrong, throw out the anchor of faith and hold fast.

There is a house in London where PETER THE GREAT, Czar of Russia, lived a while when he was moving through the land *incognito*, and in workman's dress, that he might learn the wants of the people. A stranger was visiting at that house recently, and saw in a dark attic an old box, and he said to the owner of the house: "What's in that box?" The owner said: "I don't know; that box was there when I got the house, and it was there when my father got it; we haven't had any curiosity to look at it; I guess there's nothing in it." "Well," said the stranger, "I'll give you two pounds for it." "Well, done," the two pounds are paid, and recently the contents of that box were sold to the

Czar of Russia for fifty thousand dollars. In it, the lathe-machine of Peter the Great, his private letters and documents of value beyond all monetary consideration. And here are events that seem very insignificant and unimportant, but they encase treasures of divine providence and eternities of meaning which after a while God will demonstrate before the ages as being of stupendous value. As near as I can tell, from what I see, there must be a God somewhere about.

GOD AT THE HELM. When Titans play quills they pitch mountains; but who owns these gigantic forces you have been reading about on the last few years? Whose hand is on the throttle-valve of the volcano? Whose foot suddenly planted on the footstool makes the continents quiver? God! God! He leaeth upon the mountains and they tremble. He toucheth the hills and they smoke. God! God! I must be at peace with Him. Through the Lord Jesus Christ this God is mine and He is yours. I put the earthquake that shook Palestine at the crucifixion against all the down-rockings of the centuries. This God on our side, we may challenge all the centuries of time and all the cycles of eternity.

THE INCOMING FLEET. A short time ago I was at Fire Island, Long Island, and I went up in the cupola from which they telegraph to New York the approach of vessels hours before they come into port. There is an opening in the wall, and the operator puts his telescope through that opening, and looks out and sees vessels far out at sea. While I was talking with him, he went up and looked out. He said: "We are expecting the *Arizona* to-night." I said: "Is it possible you know all those vessels? do you know them as you know a man's face?" He said: "Yes, I never make a mistake; before I can see the hulks, I know them all by the masts; I know them all, I have watched them so long." Oh, what a grand thing it is to have ships telegraphed and heralded long before they come into port, that friends may come down to the wharf and welcome their long-absent loved ones. So to-day, we take our stand in the watch-tower, and we look off through the glass of inspiration or providence, we look off and see a whole fleet of ships coming in. That is the *ship of peace*, flag with one star of Bethlehem floating above the top-gallants. That is the *ship of the Church*, mark of salt wave high up on the smoke-stack, showing she has had rough weather, but the Captain of salvation commands her, and all is well with her.

THE SHIP OF HEAVEN, mightiest craft ever launched, millions of passengers, waiting for millions more, prophets and apostles and martyrs in the cabin, conquerors at the foot of the mast, while from the rigging hands are waving this way as though they knew us, and we wave back again, for they are ours; they went out from our own households. Ours! Hall, Hall! Put off the black and put on the white. Stop tolling the funeral bell and ring the wedding anthem. Shut up the hearse and take the chariot. Now it comes around the great headland. Soon she will strike the warf and we will go aboard her. Tears for ships going out. Laughter for ships coming in. Now she touches the warf. Throw on the planks. Block not up that gangway with embracing long-lost friends, for you will have eternity of reunion. Stand back and give way until other millions come on. Farewell to sin. Farewell to struggle. Farewell to sickness. Farewell to death. All aboard for heaven!

Reason Why Men Whistle. Whistling was invented to give a man a chance to add a noise to the other noises in creation. The other noises in nature are all attuned to the character of the article that produces them. The breeze makes its gentle sigh, the brook has its peculiar sound, the storm has its crash and its roar. Everything made a noise in the world except man when he was alone. A man can't talk to himself; it is idiotic, although it is astonishing how many people do it. A cough is not a very enjoyable sound, and it irritates the lungs to produce it. A sneeze always goes with a cold in the head. True, a man can sing; that is, he can *try* to sing, but if it is at all agreeable, it seems not paid an admission fee to hear it. That's why women have such a terrible reputation for talking. They can't whistle, and they have nothing to relieve the restraint when they are alone; so when they get hold of anybody they make up for it. But whistling was invented to conceal music. You don't need to have music in your soul to whistle. It is simply the noise of a vacant mind. The loud laugh of Oliver Goldsmith that bespeaks the vacant mind applies to a crowd. The whistle shows the vacant mind in its solitary state. When you hear a man whistle who palpably does not know a tune, he is either a very good fellow or a very bad fellow. Did you ever notice that Jews don't whistle much? They haven't got much vacant mind. When it isn't needed in their own business they rent it to other businesses. But of all whistlers the young gentleman going home about 1 o'clock in the morning, who whistles "Il Trovatore" with all the band parts, takes the bakery.

A Monster Trout. A monster trout was captured recently in the river Itchen, at Winchester, weighing sixteen pounds two ounces, and measuring thirty-two inches in length and twenty-one inches in circumference. The bait was a live minnow, and he was not landed till two hours after he was hooked. He had haunted the stream for years, was almost as well known in the city as Queen Anne's statue in the High Street, and had acquired quite a reputation for the number of rods he had broken and the quantity of fishing tackle he had carried away. His captor was a laborer named Turpin, who disposed of him for £1 to a fishmonger, on whose slab it attracted almost as many visitors as a monarch lying in state. He was in splendid condition, and has now gone into the hands of a taxidermist for preservation.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON. SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 1895.

The Smitten Rock. LESSON TEXT. Num. 21: 1-13. Memory verses, 7-8, 9.

LESSON PLAN. TOPIC OF THE QUARTER: God's Covenant Relations with Israel.

GOLDEN TEXT FOR THE QUARTER: Only be strong and very courageous, to observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest have good success whithersoever thou goest.—Josh. 1: 7.

LESSON TOPIC: Supplied in need. Lesson: Desperate Need, vs. 1-5. Answered Prayer, vs. 6-8. Abundant Supply, vs. 9-13.

GOLDEN TEXT: They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.—1 Cor. 10: 4.

DAILY HOME READINGS: M.—Num. 20: 1-13. Supplied in need. T.—Exod. 17: 1-7. Water supplied at Rephidim. W.—Exod. 16: 1-15. Manna and quails granted. T.—Psa. 84: 1-12. No good thing befel them that sought the Lord. F.—Psa. 105: 26-45. Unnumbered mercies. S.—John 6: 22-35. Jesus the true bread. S.—John 4: 1-15. The water of life.

LESSON ANALYSIS. I. DESPERATE NEED. I. Desert Places: The whole congregation, comes into the wilderness (1). He found him in a desert land,.... the waste howling wilderness (Deut. 32: 10). He... shall inhabit the parched places (Jer. 17: 6). She shall be... a wilderness, a dry land, and a desert (Jer. 50: 12). Wandering in deserts and mountains and caves (Heb. 11: 38).

II. No Water: There was no water for the congregation (2). They went... in the wilderness, and found no water (Exod. 15: 22). There was no water for the people to drink (Exod. 17: 1). Wholed thee through... thirsty ground where was no water (Deut. 8: 15). In a dry and weary land, where no water is (Psa. 63: 1).

III. Death Imminent: That we should die there, and our cattle (4). There is but a step between me and death (1 Sam. 20: 3). The waves of death compassed me (2 Sam. 22: 5). The terrors of death are fallen upon me (Psa. 55: 4). My little daughter is at the point of death (Mark 5: 23).

1. "Miriam died there, and was buried there." (1) Miriam's life; (2) Miriam's death; (3) Miriam's burial. The righteous woman (1) in life; (2) in death. 2. "Would God that we had died." (1) Evil magnified; (2) Good minimized; (3) Life spurned; (4) Death desired; (5) Faith extinguished; (6) Sense triumphant. 3. "Wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt?" (1) By whose orders? (2) By what means? (3) For what purpose?

II. ANSWERED PRAYER. I. The Place: Moses and Aaron went... unto the door of the tent (6). Come before the Lord unto the door of the tent (Lev. 15: 14). Bring his guilt offering unto the Lord, unto the door (Lev. 19: 21). The Lord came down... and stood at the door (Num. 12: 5). Draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace (Heb. 4: 16).

II. The Posture: Moses and Aaron... fell upon their faces (6). They fell on their faces, and said, O God (Num. 16: 22). They fell on their faces, and were sore afraid (Matt. 17: 6). He went forward a little, and fell on his face (Matt. 28: 33). The four and twenty elders... fell upon their faces (Rev. 11: 16).

III. The Answer: The glory of the Lord appeared... And the Lord spake (6, 7). As Aaron spake... the glory of the Lord appeared (Exod. 16: 10). Moses and Aaron went into the tent: ... and the glory... appeared (Lev. 9: 23). He shall call upon me, and I will answer him (Psa. 91: 15). Before they call, I will answer (Isa. 65: 24).

1. "From the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tent." (1) Departing from men; (2) Going to God. 2. "The glory of the Lord appeared... And the Lord spake." (1) Glory displayed; (2) Instruction given. (1) Lowly supplicants; (2) Loudly replies. 3. "Speak ye unto the rock." (1) Insensate rock; (2) Resistless command; (3) Responsive streams.

III. ABUNDANT SUPPLY. I. The Rod: And Moses took the rod,.... as he commanded (9). What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod (Exod. 4: 2). And Moses took the rod of God in his hand (Exod. 4: 20). Thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take (Exod. 17: 5). Moses... smote the rock with his rod twice (Num. 20: 11).

II. The Rock: Shall we bring you forth water out of this rock? (10). I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb (Exod. 17: 6). Speak ye unto the rock before their eyes (Num. 20: 8). The rock of flint (Deut. 8: 15). A spiritual rock... and the rock was Christ (1 Cor. 10: 4).

III. The Rivers: And water came forth abundantly (11). Smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it (Exod. 17: 6). Waters gushed out, and streams overflowed (Psa. 78: 20).

Which turned... into a fountain of waters (Psa. 114: 8). And did all drink the same spiritual drink (1 Cor. 10: 4). 1. "And Moses took the rod from before the Lord, as he commanded him." The rod of Moses: (1) The wonders wrought by its use; (2) The power acknowledged by its use; (3) The faith shown in its use. 2. "Water came forth abundantly." (1) A strange source; (2) An abundant supply.—(1) To supply need; (2) To illustrate power; (3) To typify salvation. 3. "The children of Israel strove with the Lord." (1) The parties at variance; (2) The points at issue; (3) The results which followed.

LESSON BIBLE READING. WATER FROM THE ROCKS. At Rephidim (Exod. 17: 1). At Kadesh (Num. 20: 1). Early in the journey (Exod. 17: 8). Late in the journey (Num. 20: 1, 1 c., 22). To meet necessities (Exod. 17: 1, 1 c., 3; Num. 20: 2-5). To answer to appeal (Exod. 17: 2, 4; Num. 20: 6). Smiting ordered (Exod. 17: 6). Speaking only ordered (Num. 20: 8). Smitten in both cases (Exod. 17: 6, 1 c.; Num. 20: 11). Supply abundant (Exod. 17: 6; Num. 20: 11; Deut. 8: 15; Psa. 78: 15, 16; 107: 35; 114: 8). Typical of salvation by Christ (1 Cor. 10: 4).

LESSON SURROUNDINGS. The unbelief of the people of Israel, narrated in the last lesson, is severely punished. At first the Lord threatens to reject the people, offering again to make of Moses a great nation (Num. 14: 11, 12), but Moses pleads with God in their behalf for the sake of the divine honor (Num. 14: 13-19). The Lord hears the plea, but announces that the entire generation of adults which came out of Egypt, save the two faithful spies, Joshua and Caleb, shall perish in the wilderness (Num. 14: 20-39). Immediate death seems to have been the punishment of the ten unfaithful spies (Num. 14: 37). Despite this announcement, and against the remonstrance of Moses, the people make an attempt to proceed directly northward into Canaan, but are driven back (Num. 14: 40-45). In chapter 15 we find directions for certain offerings (vs. 1-31), an account of the stoning of a Sabbath-breaker (vs. 32-36), and the regulation about the fringe of the garment by which the Israelites were so long distinguished (vs. 37-41). Another revolt is recorded in Numbers 16. Korah, a Levite, and Dathan and Abiram, two Reubenites, gather two hundred and fifty leading men, and complain of the assumption of authority by Moses and Aaron. Jealousy of the priestly dignity was probably the motive in the case of Korah, while the Reubenites may have fancied that the leadership held by Moses belonged of right to the tribe of the first-born son. The punishment of this rebellion was speed and awful: the earth opened and swallowed up the three leaders and their possessions, while fire afterwards consumed the two hundred and fifty. The censures they had used in putting their claim to a test were used as a memorial of their sin and its punishment.

Again the people rebelled against this judgment, and again rejection was threatened, but the intercession of Moses and Aaron proved availing. Over fourteen thousand persons, however, died from the plague that came in consequence of this revolt. Chapter 17 tells of the miraculous budding of Aaron's rod, the divinely appointed attestation of the validity of his claim to the priesthood. In chapter 18, tithes and perquisites of the priests and Levites are again prescribed, while chapter 19 presents a new rite of purification: the ashes of a red heifer burnt by the priest, were to be used, mixed with water, for sprinkling those defiled from contact with a dead body. It is probable that the exigencies of this time of mortality called for this regulation; hence its place in the record. The incidents of the present lesson follow.

Kadesh-barnea was the border-line place where the children of Israel rebelled against the Lord, and were sentenced to a wilderness life for a generation. From a comparison of the different accounts of the movements of the Israelites, it would seem that this place originally bore the name "Rittimah," or "Place of Retem,"—or Broom Brush (Comp. Num. 11: 35; 12: 16; 13: 26; 33: 16-18). And there is a trace of this name in Wady Retem, near 'Ayn Qadees, at the present time. When divine judgment was passed upon the Israelites at this place (Num. 13: 29; 14: 20-39), it might naturally have taken the name "Esh-Mishpat," or "Spring of Judgment," by which it was known when Genesis was written (see Gen. 14: 7). After their sentence to a nomadic life, the Israelites seem to have remained for a long time at Kadesh. As the record stands: "So ye abode in Kadesh many days, according unto the days that ye abode there" (Deut. 1: 46). This statement, indeed, is understood by some to mean that they had their rallying-point and main centre of religious life at Kadesh, during all "the days" of their wilderness living. The fact of the "tabernacle being at this centre, is quite likely to have given the name "Kadesh," or "Holy," to this sanctuary stronghold.

Certain it is that Kadesh was the point at which the Israelites were sentenced to their nomadic life, and that they abode there many days. Certain it is, also, that when the close of that life is at hand, and they re-gather for a new start to the Promised Land, it is at that same point that they rendezvous. It would seem reasonable, therefore, to suppose that there is a reference to this place as their general headquarters, in the opening verse of this lesson.

The time is fixed by a comparison of Numbers 33: 38 with 20: 22-29. Compare also Deuteronomy 2: 7.