



CURRENT TIMES

Celestial Sights and Signs

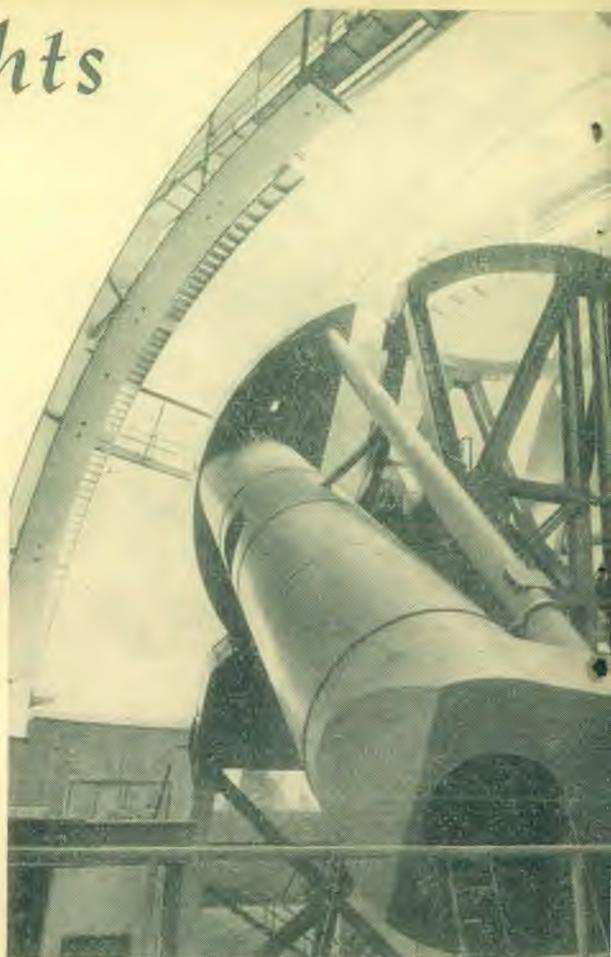
By Arthur S. Maxwell

INDICATIVE of the tension of the times, and the growing fear that something terrible is about to happen, are the many reports in the newspapers concerning supposedly supernatural phenomena in the heavens.

Fresh in all our memories are the stories of the "flying saucers," particularly those said to contain miniature men from Mars or Venus (who, however, were never produced for inspection).

More recent are the reports of great green balls of fire flashing through the sky over New Mexico. Even the sober *Time* magazine gave a column to this strange phenomenon, remarking that "a fall of nine bright meteorites in a year over a comparable area would be considered exceptional," whereas these eight bright objects had streaked by in thirteen days, behaving "like nothing ever seen by earthlings before." Dr. Lincoln La Paz, of the University of New Mexico, was quoted in the *San Francisco Chronicle* as describing these "meteoric displays" as "the most remarkable concentration reported in historic times."

Coming close upon this report was perhaps the most astounding claim of all—that none other than Pope Pius XII himself had recently seen the sun "girling" in the sky in the same way that it was said to have done at the so-called "miracle of Fatima" thirty-four years ago. To give some sort of credence to this story, *Life* magazine published an old picture (taken by an amateur Portuguese photographer on October 13, 1917) showing a dark sun near the horizon at "12.50 p.m." The sun's blackness, according to *L'Osservatore*, official Vatican newspaper, was caused by "its very rapid rotation" as it "danced in the sky" when the vision of the Virgin Mary appeared!



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The giant telescope at Mount Palomar, California.

Blue Suns and Coloured Rain!

Yet another extraordinary account of a supposed celestial phenomenon came from Switzerland, in September, 1950, where the normally staid citizens of Basle are said to have rushed into the streets of their ancient city shouting, "The end of the world is coming!" as they saw the sun turn sapphire blue and shine "like a neon light." Shortly afterward a similar report came from Stockholm, Sweden, where "the sun stopped traffic as people paused to study its unusual blue colouring." About the same time the *Sheffield Telegraph*, reported that "an electric blue sun shone through a haze for about half an hour" at Blackpool and other places in the British Isles, adding that "fears that the end of the world had come were voiced by anxious telephone callers who

harassed weather experts, observatories, and newspaper offices with inquiries."

The following night it was reported "from London, Manchester, and Bridlington that the moon had turned a similar blue." As if this were not enough, shortly afterward "blue rain" fell at Gracedieu near Coalville, Leicestershire, which "left windowpanes glistening with inky spots, and made stains on the ground," the coloured shower being "about 100 feet wide."

Such reports remind one of the words which Shakespeare put into the mouth of Calphurnia the night before Julius Cæsar's murder:

There is one within . . .

Recounts most horrid sights seen by the watch . . .
Fierce fiery warriors fight upon the clouds,
In ranks and squadrons and right form of war,
Which drizzled blood upon the Capitol:
The noise of battle hurtled in the air;
Horses do neigh and dying men did groan;
And ghosts did shriek and squeal about the streets.
O Cæsar! these things are beyond all use,
And I do fear them.—*Julius Cæsar*, Act II, Scene ii.

Obviously it is nothing new for people to become alarmed by strange and inexplicable phenomena in the sky. All down the centuries, as history abundantly testifies, unusual occurrences in the heavens have always struck terror to the hearts of the ignorant. And despite all the enlightenment resulting from scientific research, man's fear of the unknown, and particularly his fear of things beyond his reach, things that might possibly have a supernatural origin, is as real and deep as ever.

What Does the Bible Say?

It is therefore of the utmost importance that all should know exactly what the Bible has to say upon this subject. Otherwise some may be deceived by some charlatan who may cause fire to come down from heaven, or by the devil himself, should he ever transform himself into an angel of light. (2 Cor. 11:14.)

Strangely enough it was Christ Himself, by whose power the sun, moon, and stars were created, who referred most frequently to this theme. Answering His disciples' question, "What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matt. 24:5), He said to them: "Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and *fearful sights and great*

signs shall there be from heaven." Luke 21: 10, 11.

So it is right to expect impressive phenomena in the skies as signs of our Lord's second advent. But what is to be their nature? Jesus made this clear. Said He: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Matt. 24:29, 30.

Notice that there is to be a sequence of great signs in heaven beginning at a certain time in the story of the church—the end of its tribulation during the Dark Ages—and proceeding on till Christ's return in glory. This tribulation, during which millions of Christ's true followers were cruelly put to death, began to ease in the eighteenth century and came to a close in the 1770's. Then it was—on May 19, 1780—that the famous Dark Day occurred, followed by a night when the moon appeared as blood. Half a century later, on November 12-13, 1833, the greatest star shower of history took place, when the entire heavens covering most of North America and elsewhere were covered with meteors, falling "even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind." Rev. 6:13. Abundant evidence of the occurrence of all these celestial phenomena can be found on pages 355 to 362 of *God's Good News* by the esteemed editor of this journal.

Next and last on the list of signs is the shaking of the powers of heaven. The meaning of these words is not too clear. Dr. Moffatt renders the passage: "The orbs of the heavens will be shaken." Exactly how this will happen has not been revealed. But remember this: even if this prophecy were to be fulfilled by the "dancing" of the sun in the sky—which we do not believe—this would not happen in order to give support to some false doctrine about the mother of Christ, but instead to announce the immediate reappearance in power and glory of Christ Himself. For it is "*then* [there] shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven" and "*then* shall . . . they

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No God But GOD!

By Kenneth A. Elias

suffice to cure it. Hence the Son of God came from heaven to earth to do two things. He came to die man's death and thus set him free; and, equally important though often ignored, He came to teach men how to live in harmony with God's commands that their new-found freedom might continue.

It is not surprising then that in His first sermon Jesus magnified the law. He made His position crystal clear when He declared: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law; . . . I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." Matt. 5:17. Jesus had come to keep, to obey the law, to "fill it full."

The first command is simple and straightforward. "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." Exod. 20:3. Here is the basic precept of all.

A Justifiable Demand

Nor is the reason for this command difficult to see. Here is no petty tyranny of a jealous-minded God, seeking to bind the allegiance of His vacillating people, but a rule of absolute necessity if life is to be maintained here as well as hereafter. Remember that that life lies only in Jesus. "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." John 14:6. None other has become a substitute for our transgression, therefore to trust in any other is to trust in a worthless counterfeit, and the result of that can only be death eternal.

It surely is clear then that the object of this command is to safeguard our existence. It is simply a warning that there is only one God and a declaration that in Him alone lies safety.



By C. S. Dixon

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The young Hebrews refuse to bow down before the golden image which King Nebuchadnezzar set up.

IN our last issue we considered the commandments of God in a preliminary way. We discovered that, far from being done away with, as is so often claimed nowadays, these precepts are still vital to both God and man.

The breaking of the law in Eden, insignificant as that break was by modern standards, inevitably and naturally brought trouble, misery, and death upon mankind. So desperate was the disease that only a desperate remedy would

Should there still be doubt about this seemingly obvious fact, look again to Calvary. Where is there love like that? Nothing in the annals of world mythology approaches this. The gods of paganism were openly and repeatedly reputed to kill, to punish, and to torture. Appeasement of the gods was, and still is, the full-time job of the heathen. But with the God of "Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob," how absolutely different the picture is. Where else has a God been known to be tortured and finally killed for His subjects, that they might live? This very love alone demands that He be first in our affections. Apart from that fact, of course, no other true God exists anyway.

Notice now how the rendering in Deuteronomy differs slightly from the formal commandment given in Exodus twenty. It declares, "Ye shall not go after other gods." Deut. 6:14. Here action is involved—the action of actually going after false gods. The disregarding of this plain warning was a great curse to Israel. They literally went out of their way to bow down to Baal, the sun god, for instance. This was the first recorded incident of sun worship among God's people. It is a revelation indeed of the consequences involved in going after "other gods," when we realize that this sun worship is still perpetuated among Christian people, howbeit unwittingly, in Sun-day observance to-day.

Modern False Gods

Of course, the gods of the people round about us now are not usually gods of wood and stone! We are far too sophisticated in this modern age for that. But twentieth century man does have gods nevertheless. As Christians we must not, yea, we dare not, go after them, for that is the way of the valley of shadows indeed.

What then are the gods at whose shrine civilized man bows and in whose cause he mentally flagellates himself?

Jesus Himself gave us a clue to our answer when He described so clearly the characteristics of our age. Speaking to His disciples He declared: "As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man." How was it in the days of Noah? Why "they did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark and the flood came,

and destroyed them all." Luke 17:26, 27. In other words, their one absorbing interest was the same overpowering pagan materialism that is the curse of modern civilization. The gods that twentieth-century man serves are the apparent means of gratifying his all-consuming desires for possessions, position, and ease. Thus wealth, worldly popularity, and personal comfort are the "be-all" and "end-all" of the existence of countless millions of men and women to-day. They just have no time for the God of the universe, for their lives are spent in humble, constant obeisance at the shrines of these earthly and deceptive deities.

Not Systems But Man Is to Blame

The terrible results of this pagan materialism are all too apparent to-day. The results, we repeat, are apparent, yet how rarely is the true cause of the situation appreciated. Communism is blamed, socialism is blamed, likewise capitalism and liberalism, but none of these carries the major responsibility of the chaos of our day. Man himself is to blame because he has insisted upon putting other gods before the only true God, the Saviour and Creator of us all; is it then surprising if the stark and terrifying consequences have now caught up with him? Writing under inspiration Paul declares: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, . . . lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; . . . from such turn away." 2 Tim. 3:1-5.

Here then is the first commandment, the primary safeguard given to mankind. It has a truly vital message. To trust in self or wealth, influence, or "security," is to trust in a bruised reed indeed. At the best they can but make this life a trifle more bearable; at the worst they can, and will, ruin completely our chances of life eternal, for so exacting are their strident demands that they are quite all-exclusive. They leave no room whatsoever for the worship of God in whom alone our salvation lies.

The challenge of Elijah is appropriate here. Standing before idolatrous Israel he declared, "If the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him"! The Lord is God, so let us follow Him devotedly and exclusively. "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." No more beneficial command has ever been given to man—nor indeed could be.

Are the Dead Alive?

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By Peter L. Parker

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SOMEONE once said to me that it is no good speculating about what happens after we die, for the simple reason that nobody has come back from the dead to tell us about it. No matter how many theories men may devise, no one living can be consulted to confirm them.

This, however, is a mistake which can be recognized by a moment's thought. Somebody *did* come back. Someone whose word we do not doubt has some clear, easy-to-understand things to say. Jesus not only came back from the grave, but was seen afterward by as many as five hundred people at one time. (See 1 Cor. 15:6.) Of course He did not *need* to pass through the valley of the shadow of death in order to learn what would happen. As God Himself, manifest in the flesh, He had Himself planned those events, but by returning and showing Himself to men He demonstrated both His divinity and the authority of His utterances.

After Lazarus had died, Jesus told the disciples that he was "sleeping." John 11:11. By which He meant that the "sleep" of death is an unconsciousness from which one day there will be an awakening. Martha, the sister of Lazarus understood this when Jesus spoke to her. She knew also that this awakening would come at the end of the world. "Martha saith unto Him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the Resurrection, and the Life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." John 11:24, 25.

Each instance in the Bible of a resurrection is a proof that all will one day rise from the death-sleep state. "Marvel not at this: for



Jesus raises the daughter of Jairus.

the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." John 5:28, 29.

Creation, Death, and Re-creation

A clear understanding of this doctrine of the sleep of death is seen when we consider it in relation to the creation of man in the beginning. Adam's physical body was made perfect in every form and feature including the heart, lungs, brain, and every other organ. Yet he did not live until God did just one thing, which was to breathe into his nostrils the breath of life. Then he became a living soul. (Gen. 2:7.) Put as a simple equation: Body + Breath of God = Living soul.

From this it follows naturally that if God were to take away the breath of life from any man, he would die. As it is written: "Thou hidest Thy face, they are troubled: Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust." Psa. 104:29. "Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel

broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." Eccles. 12:6, 7. "Spirit" in this last verse means in the original language "breath" just as in the previous quoted text. Even the beasts are dependent upon this same breath of life. (See Eccles. 3:19.)

The Intermediate State

David said: "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." Psa. 146:5, 4. Solomon wrote: "For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun." Eccles. 9:5, 6. Martha's hope of a resurrection at the last day is also expressed by Job: "If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer Thee: Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thine hands." Job 14:14, 15.

If God so wished, He need not wait until that latter day to call men and women up from the grave. He can do so at any time. In fact it would have been no harder for the Lord Jesus to call to life everybody who had ever lived, than it was for Him to call Lazarus from the dead. He has this power always to exert.

We find in the Bible a few cases where men were raised to life before that day yet to come. In each case they were saints of God. One was Moses. (See Jude 9.) Elijah did not even die but was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind. (See 2 Kings 2:11.) These two were seen by Peter, James, and John with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration. (See Matthew 17:1-4.) We also read of the raising to life of certain other saints at the time of the crucifixion. (See Matthew 27:52, 53.) These, together with Enoch, whom God also took without seeing death (see Genesis 5:24), are an earnest of the multitudes who are at present in their graves awaiting resurrection.

Our loved ones who have died, then, are asleep in the grave, resting, and no more con-

scious of what is going on in the world. They know nothing of the trials and difficulties that we may have. The dead cannot watch their bereft relatives for they are not conscious. Wicked people who have died or been hanged as murderers cannot in spirit form haunt any who are left behind. Those in the world of the dead can neither worry nor help us, for there is neither thought nor action once the silver cord of life is broken.

The Great Awakening

When a man is taken away in death, at that moment, his thoughts perish, and his next thoughts will be at his resurrection day. When Stephen was cruelly martyred, God gave to him a vision of the glory of God. The next thought of Stephen will be on the day when he is resurrected to be taken up with the Lord to live with Him for ever.

There are those who profess to be able to communicate with the spirits of dead people. While we do not deny that there is a world of spirits (i.e., the angels) and that contact may at times be made with the spirit world, we can see from God's Word that it cannot be with conscious spirits of any humans.

If they claim to be humans they are lying spirits whom we should avoid. God does indeed wish us to have a clear understanding of what happens to us after we die. That answer is clear and open to all those who prayerfully search His Word. God wants us to be prepared for death by living sober and righteous lives, and be ready to meet Him, unafraid and unashamed, on that day of our resurrection.

Celestial Sights and Signs

(Continued from page 5.)

see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

We may therefore properly be concerned by "fearful sights and great signs" in heaven; but we are never to be afraid of them. They should not cause us panic, but rather stir within us a great, new hope. For the celestial signs for which God is responsible are those which have one purpose, and one purpose only, to proclaim the imminence of the second advent of our Lord. "When these things begin to come to pass," said He, "then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." Luke 21:28.

WITH MOSE

By W. L.



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Above.—The mountain town of Es Salt.

Right.—The road up into the hills of Moab from the plain of Jordan.



THE motor road from the Allenby Bridge over the Jordan runs up the green valley of the Wady Shaib, whose grassy slopes drop down to the rushing tree-lined stream in the bottom of the wady.

Passing a sign-board indicating that we had reached "sea-level" again, we soon began to climb more steeply into the hills. The sandstone rock of the lower wady gave place to limestone, the slopes changed from a tawny brown to greyish white and the slopes became barren and bare save for scattered scrub. Only along the streams which raced down the wadies was there green grass and bushes.

At last, in a hollow of the hills at the confluence of two gorges four thousand feet above the Jordan valley and two thousand seven hundred feet above sea level, we came upon the little town of Es Salt with its houses climbing up the slopes of both valleys like an Alpine village.

Salt has been identified by some with

Mahanaim to which Jacob came after leaving Laban (Gen. 32:2), while the ridge of Jebel Osha, over which a steep mountain road runs from Salt down to the Jabbok, has been

suggested as that which he "passed over" on his way down to the river after the night experience which transformed his life. (Gen. 32:21.)

Dr. Nelson Glueck, however, who has most recently surveyed this whole region, puts Mahanaim north of the Jabbok and Penuel

just where the Jabbok gorge opens out into the Jordan valley. If Dr. Glueck is correct, then Salt was not on the line of Jacob's return march, nor was it this same city of Mahanaim where David found refuge while awaiting the outcome of the battle between his forces under Joab and those of his rebel son, Absalom. But, however that may be, the hills around were certainly once covered by the "woods of Ephraim" in which Absalom lost his life after his decisive defeat. (2 Sam. 18:6, 9.) Salt, indeed, gets its name from *Saltus Hieraticus*, which means "sacred grove."

Beyond Salt the road turns east and after sixteen miles of ascent across rough, hilly country, scored by wooded gorges, we reached the high russet-coloured plateau of Moab, some 5,000 feet above the Mediterranean and 4,500 feet above the Dead Sea. Across these high uplands we drove to Amman, the capital of what is now the Kingdom of Jordan, but in ancient times was Rabbath-Ammon, the

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chief city of the Ammonites. (Gen. 19:38.)

Some centuries before the beginning of the Christian era, the Greek colonists in Syria left by Alexander the Great, established their city of Philadelphia on the site of Rabbath-Ammon, and in later years it became the most southerly of the cities of the Decapolis mentioned in the Gospel story. (Matt. 4:25.)

In the City of Og

Amman is strangely located in a shallow valley, hemmed in on all sides by bare hills, some three hundred feet high, with the houses climbing the slopes from the tree-lined river and meadow at the bottom of the valley right up to the rim of the surrounding hills, one of which is occupied by the royal palace and another by the ancient citadel.

Here the great bedstead of the giant King Og of Bashan was exhibited long after his death at the hands of Joshua. (Deut. 3:11.) The lower city by the stream was "the city of the waters" which Joab first took at the command of David. (2 Sam. 11:1.) The upper city which he later attacked was probably on the citadel hill. Before the walls of the earlier fortress, Uriah was killed, making it possible for David to take Bathsheba as his wife. (2 Sam. 11:17, 22-27.)

Among the modern houses of the city are the remains of Christian churches, pagan temples, a forum, and one of the largest amphitheatres in Syria, which recall the Arab, Byzantine, Roman, and Greek periods of the city's history, while the dolmens and monoliths on the hills around take us right back to the days when the Israelites broke through to reach the crest of the Moabite ridge at the descent to the Jordan.

Coming of the Amorites

But now if this was the land of the Ammon-

Desert Trails Beyond Jordan.—3

ites, how is it that the Amorites appear in the picture and why were they and not the Ammonites the first of the nations to fall before the advance of victorious Israel? The answer to this question and a wonderful confirmation of the biblical record has been provided by modern archæological research.

Originally this whole region from the Jabbok to the Arnon was the domain of the Ammonites who, with the Moabites, were descended from the family of Lot after their escape from Sodom. The Ammonites had their capital at Rabbath-Ammon, while the territory of the Moabites lay across the Arnon as far south as the Zered, which divided their land from that of Edom.

Shortly before the arrival of the Israelites, however, the Amorites had come in from the desert, pushing the Moabites southward and the Ammonites north toward the Jabbok. As the Ammonites succeeded in retaining their capital at Rabbath, Sihon, king of the Amorites, established himself at Heshbon. As a result it was the alien Amorites and not Israel's kinsmen, Moab and Ammon, who were right



Photos by the Author

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Above.—An Arab ploughing just below the ridge of Nebo.

Left.—Cairn marking the summit of Mount Nebo.



in the track of their drive to the Jordan. (Num. 21:24-35; Deut. 2:24-32.)

By the time the Israelites arrived, Sihon had strongly fortified his capital, Heshbon, and other cities, which thus barred the way of the Israelites. These, however, proved impotent to arrest the advance of the divinely-led people of God, and with the defeat of Sihon, the hosts of Israel were able to march without further opposition down the Wady Heshban to the Jordan plain.

To Pisgah and Nebo

It was on the ridge of hills overlooking this plain that two important incidents in Israel's journeyings took place—Balak's appeal for Balaam's curse upon the people of God, and Moses' farewell view of the land of promise from Mount Nebo.

Naturally, I was anxious to walk where Moses' feet had trod, so on a bright winter morning we set off from the Philadelphia Hotel in Amman for Nebo.

The road passed beside the remains of the great Roman amphitheatre and climbed out of the town in a southerly direction, crossing a little Roman bridge near the source of the stream which waters the valley. It then struck out across the high plateau through arable fields and pasture land in a south-westerly direction. Ploughmen were at work turning over the red earth and I saw a sower walking up and down his plot of land, reminding me of the illustration which Jesus used so effectively in His parable of the sower.

At Heshbon, the ancient capital of Sihon, the Amorite, the road crossed the head of the Wady Heshban down which the hosts of Israel marched to the plain below. Some six hundred feet below the summit ridge down the grassy wady is a copious spring called Ain Heshban, which also goes by the name of Ain Musa, or the springs of Moses, and quite justifiably, for it is certain that if the Israelites came down this way, they must have watered their animals as well as filled their own water skins here.

We did not go down the wady, however, but kept on some seven or eight miles across the uplands to Medeba, an important city taken by Joshua and given to the tribe of Reuben (Num. 21:30; Joshua 13:16), and which changed hands time and again during the wars of the Israelitish kings.

In Maccabean days Medeba was a Jewish fortress and in the Christian era it became a city of churches, the ruins of which can still be traced among the buildings of the modern town.

The Famous Map of Medeba

In Christian times it was noted for its school of mosaic workers and the most famous existing fragment of their work, dating from the end of the fifth century, was rediscovered in 1894 below the floor of one of the churches during rebuilding. It is a wonderful mosaic map which it is said once portrayed the whole of the Mediterranean region and Middle East from Babylon to Rome. The greater part is now destroyed, but what remains is now carefully covered by the floor boards of the church which are ceremoniously lifted at the request of visitors.

There was no one about when we went into the church so we began to remove the planks which cover the historic map ourselves, much to the indignation of a priest who came in just as we were eagerly tracing its details.

Despite the reproof administered to us, however, we were glad to have seen this famous work of art which has been of considerable aid to scholars in identifying some ancient sites of the Bible. To mention only one, it confirms the fact that Punon, one of the stopping places of Israel during their wanderings, was at the end of the Wady Feinan, halfway up the Arabah to the south of the Dead Sea and so provides a valuable evidence as to their route.

Where Moses Stood

From Medeba a road turned westward across the reddish wheatfields of the plateau toward the Nebo ridge. Where the road ended, we left the car and continued on foot across a field sloping gently up to the crest of the ridge. Just below the summit a peasant was busy driving his wooden plough pulled by two oxen just as the tribesmen of Reuben must have done when they occupied this region in the wake of the advancing Israelites.

He stopped and came to meet us and then led us up to the cairn on the edge of the ridge where the view down into the Jordan Valley suddenly spread out before us.

"Neba," he said briefly.

It is difficult to describe our feelings at that

(Continued on page 12.)

Help Me, O Lord!

By Mary J. Vine

HELP? Of course I need help, and I don't have to seek far in the Sacred Book to know that I don't need to be ashamed to admit it. Remember Noah for instance.

Noah, the Record says, "found grace in the eyes of the Lord."

"Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations."

Noah "walked with God."

"Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he."

Noah—surely here was a father to respect and love and honour.

Yet was there ever a graver example of filial disloyalty than that given to us by the wretched Ham? Did ever godly lips breathe a bitterer curse? Noah, that immovable preacher of righteousness and of "things not seen as yet," the ark-builder and careful follower of God's designs, Noah, the just and perfect, was betrayed in his moment of weakness by his own son.

Take the manner of man that Moses was, a man trained to be a king, "mighty in deed and word," Moses, whose uplifted hand could bring forth such fearful judgments, such great terror, the world's greatest law-giver, the one who companied with God alone on Sinai and again was deemed worthy to company with His Son in that transcendent hour on another blessed mount, Moses' sons surely should have come to honour and found a name in the annals of God's people.

But no! Whatever they did has gone unrecorded. Others waxed valiant in fight and put to flight the armies of the aliens, others wrought righteousness and subdued kingdoms, but so far as Moses' posterity was concerned,

Gershom and Eliezer were scarcely of that metal. Moses could very well have been disappointed.

And then look at Samuel.

It is a comfort to God's struggling saints that it is given to them to know that His friend Abraham not once but often made mistakes, and that though he is called the father of the faithful, yet he too ran before the Lord with such far-reaching results that we even feel the repercussions in this our day. The Record gives no partial picture of God's servants.

Israel had been Jacob, the supplanter and deceiver; the beloved David, musician, hymn-writer, warrior, a man after God's own heart, had yet been down in the "horrible pit."

Of Samuel, though, there are no such portrayals. If ever a man trod the path of rectitude purposefully and to the end, Samuel did, and growing up at Ramah were two boys who should have brought just that into his life

The HOME CORNER

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Children are a great blessing but also a solemn responsibility.



that made it complete—joy, relief, companionship, and the knowledge that that for which he had given his life, the burden that he had borne so well, would still be borne bravely and well when he was gone.

But did he have such a joy and hope? The account is terse enough.

"His sons walked not in his ways but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment."

Certainly Samuel needed help.

I think too of another.

Chapter eighteen of the second book of Kings opens a propitious era in the history of the tribes of Judah.

"Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign . . . and he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father did. He removed the high places, and brake the images. . . . He trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him. For he clave to the Lord, . . . and the Lord was with him."

But Hezekiah was undone in his own home.

Manasseh, his son, "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, . . . and made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err and do worse than the heathen whom the Lord had destroyed," while his grandson, Amon, "trespassed more and more."

Good king Hezekiah obviously needed help sorely.

And so do I, and so do all of us to whom the Lord has entrusted the lambs of His flock.

That these great and godly patriarchs failed where we ourselves would desire so heart-achingly to succeed only emphasizes the need for diligence in seeking the help that we require, that we cannot do without.

Certain it is that the adversary makes a particular target of a godly home, insidiously working to counterbalance every good and holy influence. Noah, Moses, Samuel, Hezekiah—in the whole earth they were his first enemies, and by every means in his power the evil one worked to destroy their efforts, and how best than in their own homes. Each one of these men were standards of righteousness in tempestuous times—

Are we?

Not even before the Flood was the world in

so chaotic a condition as it is to-day and never before has Satan been so covetous of the souls of the saints. These, too, he will assail even more assiduously because these must bear the standard in the last, last hour—our children, yours and mine.

Friends, we need help, let us make no mistake about it, and thanks be, it is there for the asking and ours for the taking.

What a wonderful promise it is, "I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children." (You will find it in the forty-ninth chapter of Isaiah.) Did ever any father or mother long for more than that—deep down in their hearts?

With full confidence in that assurance then, let us daily fight the good fight on their behalf, not faltering or becoming discouraged, but momentarily lifting our hearts to Him for help and succour, and by example and precept walking worthy of His divine partnership. He and we together are well able. May He bless us every one.



With Moses on Nebo

(Continued from page 10.)

moment as we stood perhaps upon the very spot where Moses looked for the last time upon the promised land to which he had led Israel, but which he was not to enter.

To the south the flinty limestone ridge ended in a little spur called Jebel Siaghah, believed to be Pisgah (Num. 21:20), while the valley at the north-east end of the ridge called Talat es Sufa is no doubt the field of Zophim mentioned in the story of Balak and Balaam. (Num. 23:14.)

The cairn by which we stood, marking the highest point of the ridge, is Mount Nebo, or Neba as it is now known.

An Entrancing View

Below the ridge a complex of wadies and spurs dropped steeply over 4,000 feet to the plain of Abel-shittim in the valley of the Jordan, while beyond rose the hills of Judea, hazy in the afternoon sun.

With excited gaze our eyes travelled from the glassy surface of the upper end of the Dead Sea along the black serpentine course of the Jordan, up into the Judean hills round Bethlehem and Jerusalem, and north to the hills of Samaria, our view being limited there by the

THE CHILDREN'S



Pages

The Little Rose Tree

By Sheila Coppock

THE little rose tree lay on the shelf of the greenhouse. How warm the sun felt, and hope sprang within the little tree as the keen eyes of the master gardener scanned the neat rows of plants. Oh, how it longed to be chosen and given a chance to grow! Why, then it would grow larger branches, and bear fewer thorns and more flowers than any other plant in the whole garden.

Surely all would stand and admire it. "How big and beautiful is that tree!" it could almost hear the visitors say. It tried to thrust its tiny branches higher, and its leaves trembled with joy as the

master's hands lifted it from the shelf.

"At last, at last I shall grow," thought the little plant, as tenderly those master hands pressed the soft brown soil round the tiny plant.

The sun was warm, and the rain fell gently, washing the little tree's leaves. Day by day the master came and, bending low, would watch the tree lest anything should harm it. How the plant loved those kind hands, and strove to grow beautiful for their sake.

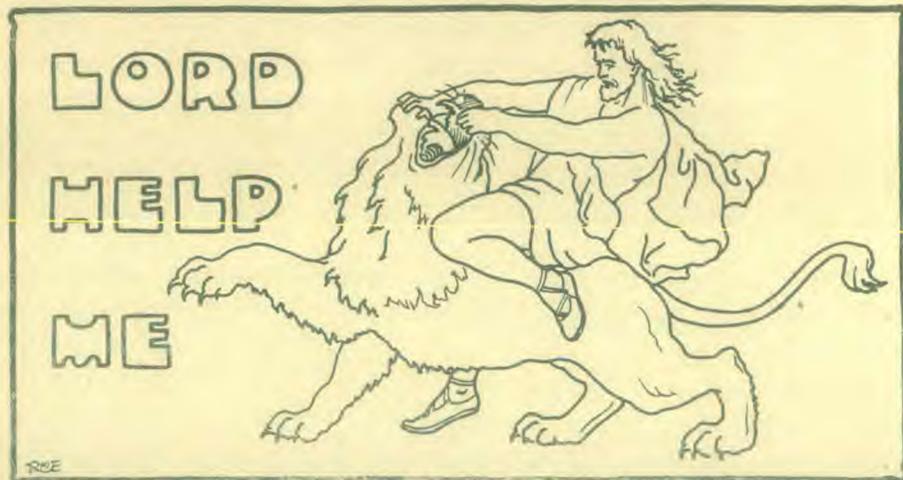
Then one day cruel sharp steel claws were thrust against its branches until only half of the stems were left. The little plant drooped, and it was torn

with anguish. How could it ever grow beautiful now? How could those same kind hands which had tended it so patiently now come and tear it, until its very life was almost gone? The little tree could not understand, but strove to hide its bitterness.

Days, weeks, and months passed. Gradually the wounds healed, leaving only white scars, and the little tree once more felt the joy of life surge through its branches. What matter if it had only a few, they were strong and straight—even stronger than before.

Spring came, and the little tree proudly lifted up its branches. Soon it would be ablaze with blooms, for it had countless buds. But one day the master came, and stooping over the little rose tree, he looked deep into its leaves. Instead of a smile, the tree saw a frown upon the face it had grown to love. The tree trembled. Again sharp steel claws descended and tore away bud after bud. "Am I never to bloom?" thought the tree in sorrow. "One bud—one bud only have I left"—and the tree's heart was filled to overflowing.

Many weeks later the little tree heard voices. It heard



See how nicely you can paint this picture and send it with your name, age, and address to Auntie Margaret, The Stanborough Press Ltd., Watford, Herts., not later than February 21st.

happy voices praise the beauty of orchid, pansy, and carnation. The tree felt sad and humbled. It had only one flower—how they would scorn it! The voices came nearer, and the little tree tried to hide its one bloom.

"This is my most cherished possession," came the voice of the master. How the little tree's heart thrilled to have such words of praise!

"Yes," came the voices, "it is the most exquisite white rose we have ever seen. The petals have no flaw, and how straight the stem is! Its perfume fills the air!"

The rose tree trembled, and

The Snow Man

See the little snow man
Made by mittened hands.
Chunks of coal for features;
Like a guard he stands.

Watching in the darkness,
Moonbeams shining down,
Barked at by the neighbour's dog,
Snow man wears a frown.

Sunshine comes in morning;
Children run and play.
But before the evening comes
Snow man's gone away.

Mrs. J. F. Underhill.

shyly looked about. But, hush, the voices spoke again.

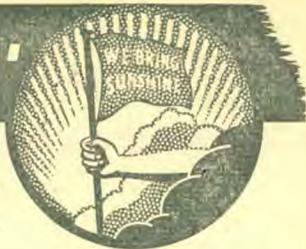
"What endless care you must have taken to train so perfect a rose!"

"See the pruning scars," said the master. "But was it not worth it?"

Then joy rushed through the veins of the little rose tree, and it loved the master who, through pain, had helped it to bear so perfect a rose.

With the rose tree, shall we pray: "O Master who moulds my life, I will bravely bear the pain which Thou dost know is for my good, that my life, with Thy care, may bear as beautiful a testimony of Thy love."

THE Sunbeams' CORNER



Your Letter

My Dear Sunbeams,

How are you enjoying 1952? I think our Sunbeam promise number three is a fine one to think about at the beginning of the year. It is: "I will help someone every day." Of course, you all have special jobs to do around the home; but how about a secret pact with yourself that this year you will do some extra little kindness, something no one is expecting—a real surprise.

Just watch Mother's face when she comes home tired from shopping to find the table set. Or Father's face when he comes up the garden path to find it newly swept. There is no end to the happy surprises you can work on your family and friends. My guess is that you who do the good deeds, will be the happiest of all. Let me know how it works.

I know you will be glad to make the acquaintance of the first Sunbeams to join our Band in 1952. They are: Kathleen and Glenys Tickner of Birmingham, and Michael Parish of Norwich. We all join in giving you a hearty welcome. Don't forget I am looking forward to letters from you all.

I have a letter from Ann Trimble who is ten, and she would like to have a pen friend. Will someone about her age please write to her? Her address is: 44 Lionwood Road, Plumstead Estate, Norwich.

Before I finish this letter I must thank Margaret Bond of Raynes Park for a very fine photo of herself. It is so nice for me to know what my Sunbeam nieces and nephews look like, and I shall be delighted to receive pictures of yourselves from more of you.

Good-bye, Sunbeams, and don't forget promise number three, will you?

Yours affectionately,

AUNTIE MARGARET.

Results of Competition No. 25

Prize-winners.—Kenneth Flowers, 79 Quebec Road, Norwich, Norfolk; Carole Westwood, 85 Kingswood Road, Watford.

Honourable Mention.—Jean Hocking (Liskeard); Maurice Kerry (Norwich); John Rich (Launceston); Lawrence Wroe (Chapelton); Yvonne Burgess (Watford); Albert Wagstaff (Rickmansworth); Miriam Harris (Cambridge); Ann Trimble (Norwich); Pat Cowles (Nr. Bristol); Paul Martine (Beccles); Lydia Harris (Maxey); Barbara Case (Birmingham); John Yeemans (Homerston); Molly Rich (Launceston); Maureen Smith (Stoke-on-Trent); Pearl Rich (Launceston); David Balderstone (Watford); Christine Sanders (St. Austell); Elaine Bryan (Hove); Ruth Balderstone (Watford); Marianne Horne (Gloucester).

Those who tried hard.—Susan Tye (Bristol); Ruth Owens (Leeds); Margaret Higgins (Surrey); Henry Foster (Burton-on-Trent); Susan Johnson (Bristol); Michael Parish (Norwich); Gerald Warren (Wood Green); Robin James (?); Nigel Payne (Bishops Cleeve); Kay Arnold (Croydon); Winifred Lavis (Bargoed); Victoria Terry (Portslade); Richard Payne (Bishops Cleeve); Leonard Spofforth (Liverpool); Carol Jones (Burton-on-Trent); Patricia Neale (Bristol); Pauline Elsdon (Ilford); Clive Walley (Bishops Cleeve); Lilian Blackledge (London); Sylvia Barrett (London); Ruth Alderman (Winchester); Lucy Wade (York); Teddy Short (London); Kenneth Wright (Hyde); Leslie Smith (Homerston); Valerie Smith (Manchester); Irene Smith (Barrow-in-Furness); Dorothy Perry (London); Dilwyn Davies (Denbigh); David Wroe (Chapelton); Dorothea Mann (London); Patricia Jones (London); Anthony Wheeler (London); Pauline Waters (St. Leonards); Amy Randlesome (Beccles); Connie Freeman (London); Robert Lee (Croydon); Peter Carter (Liverpool).

The Bible and OUR TIMES

(Formerly "Present Truth")

Vol. 68. No. 3.

Price 3d.

Printed and published in Great Britain fortnightly on Thursday by

THE STANBOROUGH PRESS LTD.,
WATFORD, HERTS.

EDITOR: W. L. EMMERSON

Twelve months 9/9 post free
Six months 5/- post free

Straws in the Wind

A PRIMARY SOVIET OBJECTIVE

"THERE cannot be the slightest doubt," writes Stewart Alsop in the *New York Herald Tribune*, "that the 'Persian Gulf area,' which V. M. Molotov once demanded of Von Ribbentrop, is still a primary Soviet objective. And there can be very little doubt that the men in the Kremlin expect ultimately to gain this rich prize without risking so much as a platoon of the Red Army, just as China was gained without committing a Russian soldier."

COMIC BOOKS DENOUNCED

DENOUNCING American comic books which are flooding into this country, Miss Dee Sinnott at a conference of school teachers said: "The themes of these books include murder, torture, double dealing, armed robbery, beating up, and blackmail. There is hardly a page where someone is not strangled."

NOT THE ANSWER

"THE struggle against Communism," declares the Rev. Edward Pruden, pastor of Mr. Truman's church, in an article in *Presbyterian Life*, "has convinced us more than ever that

ecclesiastical totalitarianism is not the answer to political totalitarianism." Hence the Protestant churches' opposi-

FORGETTING

By Ruth L. Gruesbeck

Lord, help me to forget the things
That irked me yesterday;
The petty things; the slights and
stings,
The words of blame that sorrow
brings—
Help me to put away.

My many sins Thou hast forgot;
For this I thank Thee, Lord.
My neighbours' faults, no matter
what,
Help me to reckon them as
nought;
This I can well afford.

Oh, touch my lips, and touch my
heart.

And keep me free from fretting;
Endue me with the kindly art
To be like Jesus in this part—
This gentle grace, forgetting.

tion to the appointment of an American Ambassador to the Vatican.

INTO ISRAEL

SINCE the establishment of the Israeli state, 684,000 im-

migrants have been admitted. During 1951, 174,000 came in and in 1950, 169,000.

FIRST GUIDED-MISSILE SHIPS

Two 13,600-ton heavy cruisers are to be converted by the U.S. Navy into the first guided-missile ships in history.

"CONFEDERATE" RATHER THAN "FEDERAL" EUROPE

"Now that the Pleven Plan for a European defence community has been greatly modified," says the *Economist*, "Mr. Churchill should find it easier to make his case for British policy toward Europe. He will be able to point to the growing support on the Continent for confederate, as opposed to federal, institutions—in fact something much more like the British Commonwealth than the United States."

ARAB REFUGEES

No fewer than 875,000 Arab refugees are being cared for by U.N. relief workers and funds in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. Besides these there are 127,000 who, while they still have their homes, are cut off by the Israel partition from their lands and markets.

