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## BACK FROM THE BUSHES.

By William T. Ellis.

"The International Sunday School Lesson for Jan. 12th is "Moses, the Leader of Israel."—Exodus 3:1-4:17.

Despite the fact that a few untaught pacifists are now lifting up their voices to tell us how to run the world, the lesson has really been learned by mankind in the war that safety is not first; that pain is not the worst peril; that death is more desirable than dishonor; and that "the right is more precious than peace." Craven consideration for the carcass, which is the essence of pacifism, has been repudiated by our gallant soldiers, who loved honor and duty and patriotism and righteousness more than the prolongation of their own existence.

We are in a mood to study about Moses, the first patriot who dared to strike a blow for the sake of the oppressed. When Moses, palace-trained, but a Hebrew to the last drop of his blood, saw an Egyptian smiting a Jewish slave, he did the natural, manly, and chivalrous thing, and felled the tyrant with a blow. Evidently, in his princely training, Moses had not known the sufferings of his people. When first he came face to face with the plight of the poor, all his noble manhood surged up in protest. The simple explanation for the continuance of many wrongs in the earth is that the exempt and favored few have not really known or felt them. Wise with the wisdom of Moses is the young man or woman who invests his or her life in the service of the unfortunate, and makes common cause with the masses. Right at the outset Moses found the disappointing condition which ultimately drives every fastidist and shallow sentimentalist out of benevolent activity. The persons whom he sought to help did not appreciate him. When he intervened between two quarrelling Hebrews, they scorned him and betrayed him as the slayer of an Egyptian taskmaster. That was a hard blow for the patriotic ardor of the young reformer. It was a bitter discovery. Many persons have felt exempted from further charitable service because they have found that not all Belgians are grateful; that some Armenians are unworthy; that there are importers among the Syrians; that certain Ottoman Greeks are capitalizing their misfortune; that the poor generally are unappreciative. This is shallow thinking. It help were to be given only to the wholly worthy and thankful, philanthropy and reform would cease. "God is kind to the evil and the unthankful." Moses, like most of us, had a hard time learning how to be patient with the provoking people who did not deserve his service.

Knights for New Days.  
Our day has arrived at the Moses mood, quick, hard blows at popular evils. He rode forth righting wrongs. His attitude toward all injustice and oppression was that of the knights of the new day. All the world is waking up to the conviction that wrongs are not to be endured, but to be remedied. Patriotism expresses itself in fearless championship of all who suffer. We have seen shining examples of zeal for their own countrymen, and for the universal liberty, by the Czechs and Rumanians and Slavs who are in exile from their homelands. They are of the Moses type.

This passion for human rights, which has made Moses a vital factor in our own day, and caused his laws to be the buttress and hope of liberty everywhere, has come to new power since the war. Millions of soldiers have had long, long thoughts concerning it; for it is the cause to which they devoted their lives. In the recent remarkable celebration at Philadelphia of the signing of the Declaration of Independence by the Middle European nations, when a new Liberty Bell was unveiled, a Jewish speaker reminded the people that the message of the bell, and of the cause, came from the law of Moses. "Proclaim Liberty throughout the land, and unto all the inhabitants thereof." Nobody can have an intelligent zeal for liberty without acknowledging his debt to Moses.

Tranquillity is no longer a goal of life. Soldiers have taught us that truth's tumult is better than error's ease. Moses would have missed life had he remained in the palace; he achieved manhood and success by striking a blow, an audacious, risky blow, for freedom. The persons

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whose chief fear is that they may be unpopular or uncomfortable have not much standing in the world to-day. Timorous shrinking from criticism gets scant respect or consideration. In these times we award all palms to the fearless champions of conviction, who are willing to affront tradition and convention, if only they may help make and keep the world free. There are two classes of people in the world: The few who do things, and the many who talk about those who do things. As we stand with Moses, God's blessing may be as least the great lesson of courage for righteousness' sake.

Into the Desert.  
British military railways now thread the desert that stretches between the palace home of Moses and the tents of Horeb to which he fled, when he learned that he was known as the slayer of the Egyptian. Dr. Pringle made the flight in an aeroplane from Cairo to Jerusalem in four hours. Ere these words are printed I shall be well on my way to Palestine, for a last look at Bible times, before civilization effaces them forever. The desert and its splendid thought-compelling isolation, doomed, instead, I suppose we shall retreat for meditation to the distant heights above the clouds.

It does seem as if a great desert experience is essential to every man with a great work to do. Moses was sent off into this school of seclusion, deprivation and meditation. So was John the Baptist. So was Jesus. So was Paul. There they all learned how non-essential are most of the things that civilization prizes; and how essential are the things of the spirit. A feat may be a more royal abode than a palace. France has been, in some respects, a desert of experience for our soldiers. They have learned in the army that a man's life consists not in the things he possesses. There existence has been stripped to the essentials for them. They have achieved their sublimest heights without any of the comforts of home or conventional living. Luxuries or even conveniences are not essential to great living.

The First Lesson From the Trenches.  
Nolan Rice Best, editor of the Canadian, returned from France with this sense of superiority to hardship as his first impression. "No man is yet a free soul who imagines that he has to be comfortable in order to be happy. To millions of Americans the recent war has brought the meaning of deliverance from that illusion. They have learned how possible it is to be happy though inconvenienced. From painless barracks, sheetless cots and innumerable mess halls on this side of the Atlantic, our soldiers have packed with three-layer banks and swing-shelf tables packed with suffocating space economy into the holds of ocean transports bound for France. Landed on the other side of the ocean, they have learned in lessons on scaling down life's necessities as they tramped interminable distances under enormous packloads along stony highways, rode farther yet by rail in freight cars shared often with their battery horses, took both the heat of the sun and the trench of the clouds without protection from either; and under the ineffectual shelter of pup-tents camped in the open fields, now smothered with dust and again submerged in liquid mud.

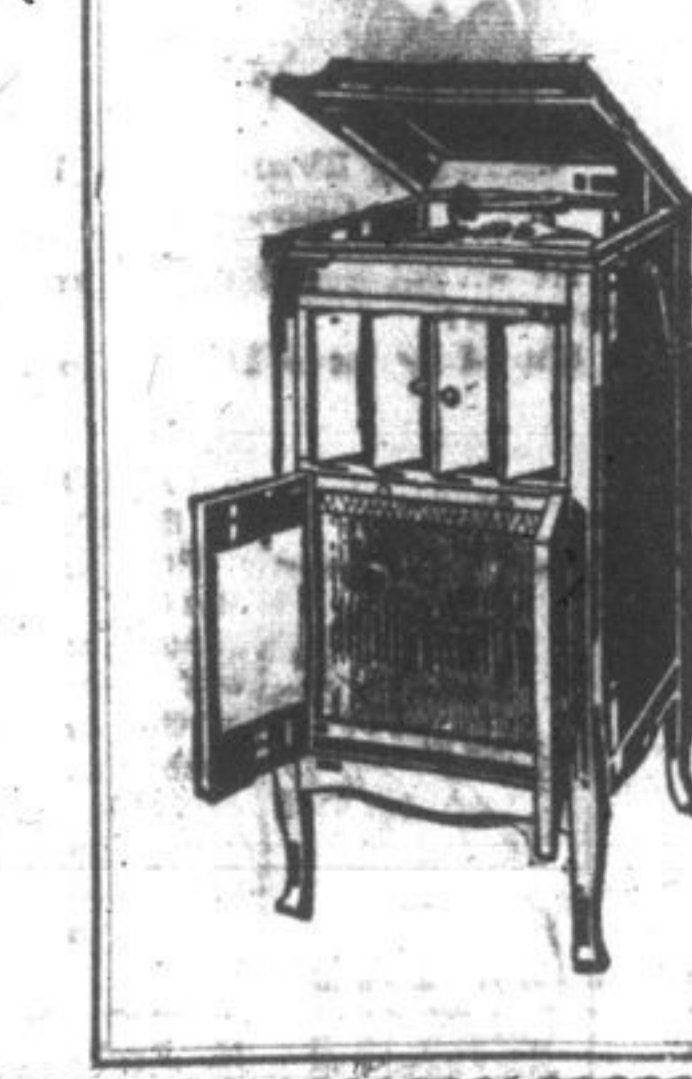
Still beyond all this they came to their weeks and weeks of trench duty, where even a dream of cleanliness was possible only in wild delirium, where escaping the intimate company of vermin was a far greater miracle than escaping the shell-fire of the line, and where the acme of good fortune and luxury was a chance to squat on the earth floor of some Stygian dugout and eat one's dinner of 'slum and spuds' out of a battered tin pan.

Counting out battle risks altogether, and all the hideousness of mortal conflict, man to man, it yet remains true that war relentlessly stripped from these fine-grained and finely nurtured young Americans practically every shred of outward amenities which had been supposed to constitute the peculiar boons of civilization. "But did these young gallants find life intolerable when its facile conveniences and its pleasant indulgences thus disappeared? Entirely otherwise; life under these sterile conditions daily took on for them ampler meaning as its risks were husked off and they came nearer and nearer to the core of it. "They found themselves happiest when they possessed least. "Most of all, the war-time experiment in defying obnoxious circumstances will afford men new courage to disdain an unfriendly world warring against their consciences. "The man who would smite an old abuse and cry down an evil creed is always answered by the world's one favorite threat: 'If you don't keep quiet, we will rob you of your living.' "But the soldier who has fought overseas will surely answer: 'You cannot frighten me that way. In France I learned to live without a living.'"

The Message of the Bush.  
Paradoxically the lonely places are crowded with the loftiest thoughts. All desert peoples are philosophical. Dwellers in the far spaces, the seas and the sands, have time to think about the greatest themes. Moses acquired the high art of meditation, which is more valuable than any of the mysteries of Egypt, during his long years of sojourns as a shepherd on the Sinai Peninsula. He developed an inquiring mind; he shepherd a crook is but an elongated question mark. So when he saw a bush aflame he turned aside to see the great sight. Some stogy brains that we all know would never have looked twice for the meaning of the marvel. Mrs. Browning's familiar lines must be quoted: "Earth's crammed with heaven,

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And every common bush affre with God: But only he who sees, takes off his shoes. The shepherd found it and pluck blackberries. Everything in life hangs on "I!" hooks. If Moses had not been alert and of an investigating turn he would never have heard the voice of the bush calling his own name. Lo, it was Jehovah, revealing Himself to this doubly-drifted deliverer, trained in Egypt's face, the shepherd-statesman heard his own commission to save the Hebrews from Pharaoh. God accredited Himself as the covenant-keeping One which should have been credentials sufficient for Moses, too. "I can stand anything that anybody else can stand, and I can do anything that anybody else can do," quietly said a traveler to a friend in coming hardships. Moses lacked this confidence; but he became disloyal when he distrusted God. When the Lord says "Go" it is no time to respond, "Who am I?" The only answer to Moses' "Here am I," God's greatest servants have ever been those who developed the habit of saying "Here am I" to His calls—even when they are a summons back from the bushes and desert to the palace of Pharaoh. "If by a still small voice He calls, To paths that I do not know, I'll answer, 'Dear Lord, with my hand in Thine, I'll go where you want me to go.'"

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