

HERO TALES FROM HISTORY

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ILLUSTRATED



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PREFACE

AN interest in history and a love of historical reading will be most readily acquired by those children who approach this rich field of literature through the medium of stories of the great figures of the past. Such stories, if properly selected and told, give children those vivid concrete pictures of men and of events which are vitally essential to any real understanding of bygone days. At the same time such history stories may be so selected as to hold up right ideals of conduct and of character. Moreover, by their appeal to the emotions, which lie very near to the springs of conduct, they move to action. Tales of gentleness, of honor, of justice, of courage, of fortitude in suffering, of intrepidity in danger, of dauntless resolution, of iron will, inspire children to an emulation of those virtues. These "Hero Tales from History" have been written in the faith set forth in this paragraph. Through these stories the author aims to inculcate the fundamental virtues just named and at the same time to acquaint children with the names and achievements of some of those great men and women whose lives and characters are a part of our racial and national inheritance.

In the selection of the tales in this book the author has drawn upon all ages. Here are mighty men of the ancient world and makers of modern America. Some of the characters chosen as the heroes of these stories are great figures in world history, but the greater part of them were selected because they are among the foremost heroes of our own country and of our own culture. Of course in a book of this

size many valuable stories had to be omitted. But it is believed that all the tales included are typical and representative.

These "Hero Tales" are not biographies of the men about whom they are told, neither has any attempt been made to join them into a connected historical narrative. They are just stories from the past told with constant thought of the stage of mental development of the children for whom they are intended. Each story has a hero, each is full of action, and the author has tried to tell each one in clear and simple language. The author has also tried to make each story teach its intended lesson without any moralizing on his part.

The history of the past can never become a vital thing to us until the men of the past are live, flesh and blood men. It is the author's hope that these "Hero Tales from History" will help to make threescore great figures from our past something more than names to the children who may enjoy this book.

SMITH BURNHAM.

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MIGHTY MEN OF LONG AGO

MOSES, THE GREATEST LAW-GIVER, AND THE MEEKEST MAN

LONG ago in the land of Egypt there lived as slaves to the Egyptians a race of white people called the Hebrews. There were so many of them that the Egyptians began to be afraid that they would over-run the land. So the cruel king, or the Pharaoh, as he was called, commanded that all the baby boys of the slave race should be thrown into the River Nile. But one little child escaped this fate, for his poor slave mother disobeyed the king and hid her baby in her hut. When he was three months old, his mother was afraid she could not keep him quiet any longer. So she made a basket, and plastered it inside with pitch, so that it would be water-tight and float like a boat. Into this basket-boat she put her baby.

The mother set the strange little boat on the edge of the River Nile, among the tall reeds called bulrushes, very near the place where she knew the king's daughter came every day to bathe. It was a cool spot, well guarded and safe from the terrible crocodiles that lived in the Nile. After making sure that the little boat would not sink, the mother went back to her work, leaving her daughter Miriam to see what became of her baby brother.

Just as the wise mother had planned, the princess soon came with her ladies-in-waiting, and spied the cradle basket rocking on the waves near the shore. She told one of her

maidens to bring it to her. The king's daughter knew too well of her father's command to drown or kill all the boy babies of the Hebrew slaves. So when she found a baby crying there, she pitied the poor mother who had obeyed the king by putting him in the river, still fondly hoping to save his life.

When the Pharaoh's daughter saw the babe, she said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children!" There was a pleading look in the face of the little child. He seemed to ask the princess to take him in her arms. The princess herself was married but she had no children. That baby, smiling through his tears, touched her mother-heart. How could she help saving his little life from her father's cruel law by claiming him as her own?

Just then Sister Miriam bowed before the princess and said, "Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?"

The king's daughter was pleased and said, "Yes, go." So the happy sister ran and brought her mother to the great stone palace of the Pharaohs. Then the princess said, as if the mother were only a child's nurse, "Take this child away and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages."

So, besides saving his life, that mother was royally paid for taking care of her own son instead of working as a slave out in the hot sun. Besides, she had a good chance to tell him, as he grew up, of the one true God. What if her boy should save his father's people from slavery, when he became a man in the palace of the Pharaohs?

In due time the daughter of the king adopted the young Hebrew as her own son, and named him Moses, which means "Saved," because she had rescued him out of the river. When Moses was old enough he went to live with

his royal mother, where he was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, who at that time, nearly four thousand years ago, were the most learned people in the world. Although he studied in the college of the priests, who believed in the Sun, the Moon and many other gods, Moses never forgot what his mother had taught him about the true God.

Young Prince Moses had a great deal to do while he was growing to manhood. He is said to have become commander-in-chief of the Egyptian army that conquered the black and savage race living a thousand miles up the Nile.

In the Bible story are these words:

"And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren.

"And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.

"Now when Pharaoh heard this, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian."

This Pharaoh was not the father of Moses' foster mother, who was now dead. It is said that this king was afraid Moses would drive him from the throne and become Pharaoh himself.

For forty long years the exiled prince lived in Midian, studying, planning, and writing. It was during this time that he made the great decision of his life. He resolved to save his own people, the million Hebrews who were slaves to the Egyptians.

At last, Moses and his brother Aaron appeared before the Pharaoh, and announced that God had demanded that the king should let the children of Israel go free. It was a hard thing to ask, for the Egyptians still needed the great army of slave men to build great pyramids and temples.

The king refused, and consented, and refused again, until plague after plague was sent upon the land of Egypt. At last, when the king's son, and the oldest child of every Egyptian family in the whole country had died in one night, the terrified and heartbroken king "called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go.

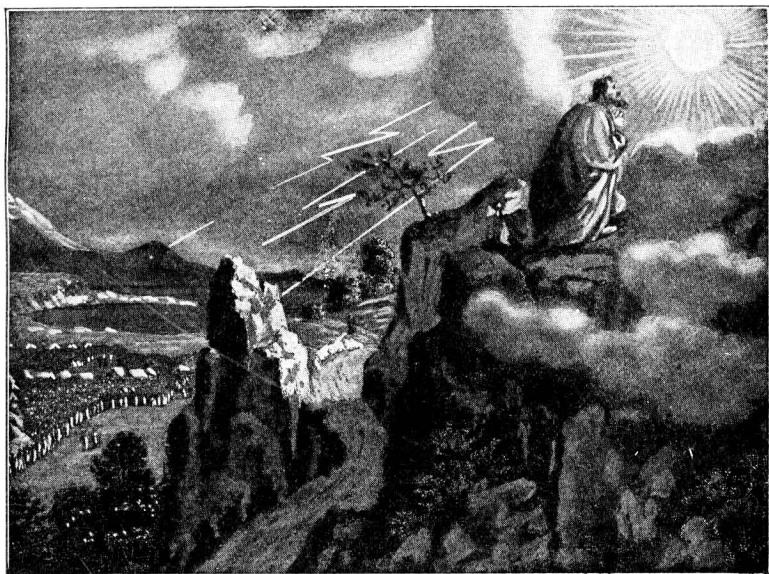
"And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders."

This going out of the Hebrew people bound for the Promised Land, nearly four thousand years ago, is called "the Exodus." To this day it is celebrated by the Jews every year as the Passover.

When the Pharaoh realized that the great stone temples and pyramids of Egypt might never be finished, he was afraid because he had let the slave people go. So he ordered out his horses and chariots and drove hard after them till he caught them in camp beside the Red Sea. The frightened Hebrews began to cry and accuse Moses of deceiving them and leading them out into a great trap, to be killed like a million helpless sheep, by Pharaoh's army.

But Moses told the wailing crowds not to be afraid. Before the king's horses and men caught up with them a strong east wind came up and kept the tide from running in, thus leaving a bare sand bar right in front of them across that arm of the Red Sea. Moses commanded the people to march over as on dry land, an order which they lost no time in obeying. Then the Pharaoh and his horsemen came up behind and drove hard after them upon the

sand bar. But the heavy chariots stuck in the mud beneath the sand, and when the Egyptians reached the middle the wind changed, and the tide, which had been held back so long, rushed in and drowned Pharaoh and his army. Then



From an old print

MOSES PRAYING ON MOUNT SINAI.

Miriam and Moses and Aaron led these million freed slaves in a grand victory chorus of song about their hairbreadth escape.

But the people were always scolding and complaining against Moses, the dear, gentle leader who had saved them from their cruel bondage. It was his patient love for his thankless people, while through forty years they wandered in the wilderness, that gave Moses the name of being the meekest man that ever lived.

At Mount Sinai Moses received from God and gave to the people the Ten Commandments, written on two tablets of stone. He spent his time during the long years of wandering in the wilderness in planning the laws and religion for his beloved people. He himself never entered the Promised Land, but died in the wilderness, somewhere on a mountain called Nebo. The Bible makes this statement of his death:

“So Moses the servant of the Lord died there. And he buried him in a valley, but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.”

DAVID, THE GIANT-KILLER KING

NEARLY three thousand years ago a bright, handsome Hebrew lad was playing a harp while watching his father's sheep on the hills of Bethlehem.

One dark night there was a great stir among the sheep, and David saw a bear making off with one of the lambs. There were no guns in those days, but David had a sling, and he could fling a pebble almost as swift and straight as a boy can shoot a bullet to-day. So David ran and killed the bear by driving a stone through the big brute's eye into its brain. When he took the trembling lamb back to its mother, what should he see but a lion starting off with a sheep in his huge jaws. There was no time to gather pebbles. Grabbing a jagged rock in one hand, David seized the great beast by the mane with the other, and aimed quick blows at the lion's eyes, breaking his skull before the lion could drop his prey and fight back.

That was a great night's work for one lone lad. After quieting his frightened flock, David took his harp and made up a song of thanks to the God of Israel for saving him alive from the jaws of the lion and the paws of the bear.

Not long after this, David's old father sent out to the hills for him. When the youth came down to the house, he found Samuel, Prophet of God and Judge of Israel, waiting for him. David's seven older brothers stood around eyeing him strangely, as the prophet said, "This is he," and baptized him by pouring oil on his head.

"What did the prophet anoint me for?" David asked his father.

"To be king of Israel instead of Saul."

"But I am only a boy, and King Saul is so big and strong—head and shoulders taller than other men. Why did not the prophet anoint our Eliab? He is almost as tall as the king himself."

"The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

After that David went back and herded his father's sheep, but his brothers were jealous of him because he had been anointed to be king.

As had often happened in the days of the Judges, the heathen Philistines came up and made war against the people of Israel, and the eldest three of David's brothers were in the king's army. Many weeks went by, but no word came from the camp. So the father sent David down with provisions for the brothers and a present for their captain.

The shepherd boy found the two armies in camps opposite each other, across a narrow valley. Every one was excited

over Goliath, a giant who came down every day into the valley from the army of the Philistines and challenged the king of Israel and all his men. Goliath was nearly eleven feet tall. He wore a bronze helmet about as big as a bushel measure, and his spear was like a weaver's beam. Even King Saul and David's tall brother Eliab were much too small to fight with the Philistine giant.

David could not bear to hear Goliath calling the king and his soldiers cowards and repeating wicked words about the God of Israel. So he went and told Saul he would like the chance to go down and fight the insulting giant.

The soldiers laughed at this, and Eliab told his young brother to go home and mind his "few sheep in the wilderness." But David would not be put off. He told how God had helped him kill a lion and a bear in one night. The lad was so earnest that the king consented to let him try.

The only weapons David took were his staff and his sling. On his way to meet the giant he stopped at the brook and picked up five smooth pebbles. Both armies looked on breathless at the strange combat. Great Goliath laughed at little David, as if the king of Israel were playing a joke on him. He cursed David by all the gods of the Philistines, and yelled:

"Am I a dog, that thou shouldst come to fight me with a stick? For this I will feed thy little carcass to the birds."

Then David shouted back to Goliath, "I come in the name of the God of Israel whom thou hast defied."

All the Israelites and Philistines saw the boy make a quick motion with his sling, and heard a thud. The giant dropped his heavy spear, threw up his huge hands and fell, with a groan and a great clatter of armor, face downward on the ground.