

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1877.

STUDIES ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL.

SUNDAY, January 7th, 1877.—The Kingdom Divided.—1 Kings xii. 12-20.

COMMIT TO MEMORY. Vs. 16-20.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him."—1 Kings xii. 8.

ANALYSIS.—I. Forsaking Wise Counsel, v. 12-15. II. Forsaken by Israel, v. 16-20.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday.—First fruits of folly.—1 Kings xii. 12-20.

Tuesday.—Forsaking wise counsel.—2 Chron. x. 1-11.

Wednesday.—Rejecting Wisdom's warning.—Prov. i. 24-33.

Thursday.—Warning against forsaking God.—1 Kings ix. 1-9.

Friday.—Forsaken by Israel.—2 Chron. x. 12-19.

Saturday.—Israel's revolt foretold.—1 Kings xi. 26-39.

Sunday.—Safety of Wisdom's way.—Prov. iii. 21-26.

QUESTIONS.—Where had the tribes assembled? For what purpose? What great man had been invited there? (v. 2.) Where had he been? Why? (xi. 26-40.)

Vs. 12. Who was Rehoboam? What conditions had the people put before him previous to his being made king? (v. 4.) By whom? What reply did he give them?

Vs. 13. How did he treat the people? Whose counsel in governing is generally the best—that of young or old men?

Vs. 14. Whose counsel did Rehoboam adopt? What reply did he give to Jeroboam?

Vs. 15. What had the prophet at Shiloh previously told Jeroboam? (xi. 31.)

Vs. 16. What effect had this treatment on the people? How did they speak of Rehoboam's grandfather?—Why? What was the cry raised?

Vs. 17. What Israelites did Rehoboam still reign over?

Vs. 18. Who was the tax-gatherer the king sent out? What reception did he get? What then became of the king?

Vs. 19. Against whom was the rebellion raised?

Vs. 20. What course did the people pursue respecting Jeroboam? How many tribes revolted? Which tribe continued under Rehoboam?

Time. B. C. 975, two hundred years before the Olympiads, the beginning of Grecian history; two hundred and twenty-two years before the founding of Rome. Sheshonk I (the Shishak of 1 Kings xiv. 25) king of Egypt.

The kingdom of Israel was now at the height of its prosperity and glory, extending from the Mediterranean Sea to the Assyrian Desert, and even to the Euphrates.

CONNECTION.—Rehoboam could not object, although he would doubtless have preferred that the assembly should have been held at Jerusalem. Both Saul and David had received the crown under certain covenants with the people, and with certain limitations, which had been overlooked. They resolved that this mistake should not again occur, and that the new king must accept the throne under stipulations for redress of grievances, and of reigning in accordance with the principles of the old covenants. This course was perfectly constitutional. Even Rehoboam, high as were his notions of royal prerogative and of his divine rights as the heir of David, had sense enough to see that it was such, and therefore proceeded with his course to Shechem, to accept the crown in the presence of the assembled states.

Rehoboam. Solomon had one thousand wives and concubines, yet but one son to bear his name and he a fool. It is generally supposed that he had no other (two daughters are mentioned in Ch. iv. 11-15.) It is not always seen—perhaps not often seen—that wise fathers have wise sons. How is this? It may be that the wisdom of the son—the formation of his character—depends more on the mother than the father, and that a wise mother is even more essential than a wise father to the formation of a wise son. Rehoboam's mother was an Ammonitess, and being such, was, we may presume, one of those women who seduced Solomon into idolatry; for the gods of the Ammonites are specified among those he worshipped. That Solomon was conscious of the imbecile

character of his son there can be no doubt. It is impossible to resist the conviction that he speaks in Eccl. ii. 18, 19, from the bitterness of his own misgivings: "I hate all my labor . . . because I should leave it to the man that shall be after me, and who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool. Yet shall he have rule over all my labor wherein I have labored, and wherein I have showed myself wise under the sun."

EXPLANATORY.—12. All the people came. To Shechem (now Nablús), on the flank of Mount Gerizim and opposite Mount Ebal, whose central position made it a convenient place, for the general assembly of the tribes, the tribes had assembled without any intention of revolting. They were prepared to accept Rehoboam for king, and to join in the usual acclamations. (1 Sam. x. 24; 1 Kings i. 39.) The point of grievance with the people was excessive taxation. The luxury and cost of Solomon's court, i. e. his family establishment, his harem, and his political relationship had become so severe that the masses were at one in demanding relief from Rehoboam as the condition of their allegiance. Rehoboam met this demand as a grave question; deferred his answer for three days, and sought advice. The older counsellors, as usual the wiser, advised him to make concessions. The young men brought up with himself in luxury and self-indulgence, advised a defiant answer, threatening heavier burdens.

13. The old men's counsel. It is clear that this counsel did not suit the king's humor. He was in search of such advice as would afford a sort of sanction to the course he was most inclined to follow.

14. Counsel of the young men, who had been chosen for his associates, and who, by the fact of their having led the same kind of life as himself, were doubtless quite as inexperienced in state affairs. Their advice was that he should give to the audacious varlets, who dared to exact conditions from their sovereign, such an answer as would teach them to know their master. My father made your yoke heavy. Solomon raised a levy of 30,000 men (Israelites). Of these 10,000 were always one month in service, and free the two following; 150,000 men (hewers of wood and bearers of burdens) were not changed. These were strangers and not Israelites (see 1 Kings 5). The nation must have attained to general prosperity through the wealth which flowed into the country from the trade carried on by him and the taxes of several tributary nations; so that there could be no reasonable occasion for any real complaint.

Whips and Scorpions. This is to say—if we are to explain the simile—that whereas his father had scourged them with simple whips, he would scourge them with twisted lashes armed with sharp and lacerating points; for to such the name of "scorpions" was given.

15. The cause was from the Lord. The origin of this separation is declared to have been a divine judgment for the idolatrous worship introduced by the foreign wives of Solomon. Had this offence remained unpunished, so contagious an example would have infected the whole mass of the people, who would have irretrievably sunk into idolatry and vice. Ahijah the Shilonite. A prophet of Shiloh, of whom we have two remarkable prophecies extant,—one, 1 Kings xi. 31-39 (here referred to,) the other delivered in extreme old age to Jeroboam's wife, in which he foretold the death of the king's son (xiv). These prophecies give a high idea of the prophet's faithfulness and boldness.

16. What portion have we in David? We hereby renounce all subjection to the posterity of David, whom by way of contempt they call the son of Jesse, referring to the meanness of his origin. Neither inheritance in the son of Jesse. We do not belong to him by race derivation, as Judah. To your tents, O Israel! Let every one return to his tribe and his home, without acknowledging Rehoboam. Now see to thine own house. See how you can reign over your own tribe in the future, for you have no right to us any more.

17. Israel—in the cities of Judah. The Israelites proper, or members of other tribes, who happened to be settled within the limits of the land of Judah.

18. The king sent Adoram. Rehoboam could not easily comprehend the extent

of his misfortune: that a revolt could be so real and general. The son of Solomon suffered himself to believe that he still reigned. Adoram, the head tax-gatherer went to collect in this very place the burdensome taxes of the naturally turbulent Shechemites. They rose upon this unlucky comptroller of the taxes, and pelted him with stones till he died of the injuries he received. This very broad hint opened the king's eyes, and he lost no time in mounting his chariot and driving off full speed to Jerusalem, which he reached in safety. Adoram. No doubt the same who is called Adoniram in the list of Solomon's chief officers. If he is identical, also, with the Adoram, chief of David's tribute (2 Sam. xx. 24,) he must have been over eighty years of age. Perhaps he thought they would regard a venerable old man who was a servant to David and Solomon. All Israel stoned him. The usual mode in which mobs took vengeance on those who had offended them.

19. Unto this day. The time of the writing of the Book of Kings by Jeremiah, four hundred years after. The kingdoms were never reunited.

20. All Israel. In verse 1, the representatives of the ten tribes are intended. Here the tribes themselves are meant. By the return of their representatives from Shechem, it became known to all Israel that the great Ephraimite was come back. Called him unto the congregation. In order that that might be done regularly and in solemn form. The rank, the talent, the known energy of the late exile, pointed him out as the fittest man for the vacant post. With Solomon expired the glory and the power of the Jewish empire, which had extended from the shores of the Euphrates to the Mediterranean, from the foot of Lebanon to the desert bordering on Egypt.

SUNDAY, January 14th, 1877.—The Sin of Jeroboam.—1 Kings xii. 25-33.

Youth's Department.

The Pin and the Needle.

Lem Smith, the philosophical editor of the Madison Record, tells the following witty fable, which is as good as anything as we have seen out of Æsop:

A pin and a needle, says this American Fontaine, being neighbors in a work-basket, and both being idle, began to quarrel as idle folks are apt to do.

"I should like to know," said the pin, "what you are good for, and how you expect to get through the world with out a head?"

"What is the use of your head," replied the needle, rather sharply, "if you have no eye?"

"What is the use of an eye," said the pin, "if there is always something in it?"

"I am more active, and can go through more work than you can," said the needle.

"Yes, but you will not live long."

"Why not?"

"Because you have always a stitch in your side," said the pin.

"You are a poor, crooked creature," said the needle.

"And you are so proud that you can't bend without breaking."

"I'll pull your head off if you insult me again."

"I'll put your eye out if you touch me; remember your life hangs by a single thread," said the pin.

While they were thus conversing a little girl entered, and, undertaking to sew, she very soon broke off the needle at the eye. Then she tied the thread around the neck of the pin, and, attempting to sew with it, she soon pulled its head off, and threw it into the dirt by the side of the broken needle.

"Well, here we are," said the needle.

"We have nothing to fight about now," said the pin. "It seems my misfortune has brought us to our senses."

"A pity we had not come to them sooner," said the needle.

"How much we resemble human beings, who quarrel about their blessings until they lose them, and never find out they are brothers till they lie down in the dust together as we do."

One of the "Fizzle" Family.

There was once a very smart boy, whom, to begin with, we will call Little Fizzle. He was one of those wide-awake boys who poke their noses into

almost everything they see, and think they know half as much as all the rest of the world. He went to school very young, and his mother wanted to have him learn to read and write well before he did anything else; but he preferred to study "geog'fry," grammar, and 'rithmetic besides. As he was so very bright, he soon learned to write very badly spelled words, and could tell you in quite incorrect language what a verb or an adverb was. If he was likely to say Michigan was "bounded" by Connecticut, why, other boys of his age, it may be, never heard of either place. For, young as he was, you see little Fizzle had come to a point where he must choose between two ways. He could half learn a little about a great many things, or he could well learn all about a few things. He made up his mind he would do the first; and that's the way he went on, and grew into a big Fizzle.

When he wanted to read he never to read he never took one nice story and read it every word, but he skimmed over the easy parts of a dozen, and jumbled them all together in his mind. As soon as he owned a tool-box, he almost made a cart, and began a fine table, and finished a remarkably pretty rocking-chair, which tipped over instead of rocking. But then it was "so stupid" to spend time and trouble in making only one thing and making it perfect.

As he grew older people liked him, because he could talk about all things under the sun, and was really very entertaining if they did not want to get any genuine information. He was not worth a last year's almanac to anybody who was after facts.

He thought, when he grew up, he would be a lawyer, but he began by studying medicine. By-and-by he knew more about physic than a lawyer needed to know, and not half enough about medicine for a doctor; then he had a smattering of other things. He painted big animals whose skins were colored very handsomely, but whose legs were not shaped like any living beast's. After a while he began to wonder what ailed him that he failed in everything he tried. He grew poorer and poorer, while men who had been boys with him, boys who had worked like drudges over a few things, these grown up became great men, rich men, famous doctors, lawyers, and ministers, while he was a little Fizzle grown into a big Fizzle. Then folks began to sneer and to snub him. Each year he grew poorer and more discouraged. At twenty he thought himself a great genius, at forty he used to hang around a blacksmith's shop, and wished he had learned to shoe horses. At sixty he had given up all hopes of being a lawyer, a doctor, or an artist, or a blacksmith, and he kept his soul and body together by cleaning old feather beds.

Now, if anybody wants to know how to become such another big Fizzle, let him begin at once to be a little one, to half learn everything he begins, to begin something new as soon as it gets hard to understand the last thing he undertook. Follow up such a course faithfully and he will not fail of neglect, self-disgust, and a poverty wherein he may not even be able to find old feathers to clean.—Church Journal.

Hurtful Reading.

A bad book, magazine, or news-paper is as dangerous to your child as vicious companions, and will as surely corrupt his morals and lead him away from the paths of safety. Every parent should set this thought clearly before his mind, and ponder it well. Look to what your children read, and especially to the kind of papers that get into their hands, for there are now published scores of weekly papers with attractive and sensuous illustrations, that are as hurtful to young and innocent souls as poison to a healthful body.

Many of these papers have attained large circulation, and are sowing broadcast the seeds of vice and crime. Trenching on the borders of indecency they corrupt the morals, taint the imagination, and allure the weak and unguarded from the paths of innocence. The danger to young persons from this cause was never so great as at this time, and every father and mother should be on guard against an enemy that is sure to meet their child.

Look to it, then, that your children are kept free as possible from this taint. Never bring into your house a paper or periodical that is not strictly pure, and watch carefully lest any such get into the hands of growing-up boys.

The Household.

HOUSE DRAINAGE.—The health of a family depends very much on the efficiency of the drainage from the kitchen and out-houses. The following account of arrangements on the Ogden Farm from one who has given much attention to the subject will be found practicable and valuable.

The drain, from the corner of the house to the cistern—a kerosene barrel set in the ground—is of 3-inch vitrified pipe, with cemented joints, so there can be no leakage anywhere between the house and the cistern. The pipe enters the barrel about ten inches below the top, the latter being divided vertically from top to bottom by a wire cloth screen which separates the inflow pipe from the outflow, acting as a strainer, which removes all the solid matter from the slops. From the lower part of the barrel run three earthen drain-pipes which extend fifty feet into the garden, six feet apart, and from eight to ten inches from the surface of the ground. The outflow from the barrel passes through these pipes, and is absorbed by the soil—the joints being left open. This apparatus works perfectly well at all seasons, only requiring the protection of a covering of leaves or straw in cold weather, to keep the cistern free from frost. The solid matter accumulating inside the barrel may be disposed of to good advantage by composting and using for fertilizing purposes. The cistern has never been offensive in the warmest weather, and requires but little attention to keep it in perfectly sanitary condition. Where this system cannot be applied, the drainage of a house may be disposed of by filtering it with a cask filled with earth, which will probably require renewal three times a year. A similar arrangement is employed with satisfactory results in disposing of the bedroom slops, which in most country dwellings, become in one way or other a serious nuisance. In country houses the earth-closet, or something constructed on the same principle, should, for economic as well as sanitary reasons, be employed.

CARROTS INSTEAD OF EGGS.—An exchange says:—It is not generally known that boiled carrots, when properly prepared, form an excellent substitute for eggs in pudding. They must, for this purpose, be boiled and mashed, and passed through a coarse cloth or hair sieve. The pulp is then introduced among the other ingredients of the pudding, to the total omission of eggs. A pudding made up in this way is much lighter than when eggs are used, and is much more palatable. On the principle of economy, the fact is worthy of the prudent housewife's attention.

TO MAKE TEA GO FURTHER.—Steam the leaf before steeping. By this process, it is said, fourteen pints of good quality may be brewed from one ounce of tea.

RIDDING HOUSES OF VERMIN.—Two pounds of alum dissolved in three or four quarts of boiling water. Let it remain over the fire till all the alum has dissolved. Then apply it with a brush, while boiling hot, to every joint or crevice in the closet where ants and cockroaches intrude, to all the pantry shelves, and to the joints and crevices of bedsteads. Brush all the cracks in the floor and the mopboard with this mixture. A cement of chloride of lime and alum used to stop up rat holes, and the walls and cracks and corners washed with the above-mentioned hot alum and borax, will drive away rats as well as insects.

REMOVING INK FROM CARPETS.—Ink spilt on carpets may be removed with perfect success, it is said. First take up as much as possible of the ink with a teaspoon, and then pour cold, sweet milk upon the spot, and take up as before, pouring on milk until at last it becomes only slightly tinged with black. Then wash with cold water and absorb with a cloth without too much rubbing.

Brass cooking pans should be cleaned inside with vinegar and brick, then, rinsed, thoroughly dried at the fire, and wiped with a clean cloth. White enameled pans require only a little soda and warm water to keep them clean and free from grease.

Ashes and common salt, wet and mixed, will stop the cracks in a stove and prevent smoke escaping.