

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lesson for 1878.

SUNDAY, January 6th, 1878.—Rehoboam, First King of Judah.—2 Chron. xii. 1-12. B. C. 971.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vss. 5-7.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“When he humbled himself, the wrath of the Lord turned from him.”—2 Chron. xii. 12.

DAILY READING.—Monday, 2 Chron. xi, xii. Tuesday, 1 Kings xiv. 22-24. Wednesday, Ecclesiastes vi. Thursday, Psalm cxviii. Friday, Deuteronomy xxx. Saturday, 1 Timothy vi. Sunday, Nehemiah ix. 24-38.

LESSON OUTLINE.—Sins of Rehoboam. Vs. 1. II. Invasion of Egypt. Vss. 2-4. III. Rebuke by the Prophet. Vs. 5. IV. Rehoboam is humbled. Vs. 6. V. Is delivered in part. Vs. 7. VI. People enslaved and robbed. Vss. 8-12.

QUESTIONS.—Into how many parts was the Jewish nation, after Solomon, divided? What advantages had Judah over Israel?

Vs. 1. Who was Rehoboam? Who was his mother? How old was he when he began to reign? How many years did he reign prosperously? How did he afterward sin?

Vs. 2. Whom did God use in punishing Rehoboam? How large was Shishak's army? What cities did he take?

Vs. 3. Who rebuked Rehoboam on the eve of this public calamity?

Vs. 4. What now is the action of the king and princes?

Vs. 6. How is God's anger turned from Judah?

Vs. 7. What two evils is Judah yet to suffer?

Why should Christians, in prosperous times, carefully guard their faith? Are wicked men, used by God in punishing his people, guiltless in so doing? When is a partial reformation acceptable to God? What Scripture is verified by this lesson? Neh. ix. 30, 31.

Judgment and mercy are wonderfully intermixed in human history. Vs. 7, 8; Ps. ci. 1.—God will ever regard and save a penitent. Vs. 7; Luke xviii. 14.

HISTORICAL CONNECTION.—We studied, last year, the northern Kingdom of Israel, from the time of Jeroboam, its first king, to its overthrow and captivity by the Assyrians—a period of two hundred and fifty-four years (B. C. 975-721). We are to study this year the most favored portion of the divided kingdom, namely, the Kingdom of Judah, having advantages for spiritual prosperity not possessed by the Kingdom of Israel. It had the Temple, the royal city, the house of David, and the house of Aaron; and it might have prospered had it obeyed Jehovah. But Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, whom we left last year fleeing from Shechem, never to return (1 Kings xii. 18), after reigning well for three years, led the Kingdom of Judah into the evil ways of Israel. “He did evil because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord.” 2 Chron. xii. 12-14. And now, as a Divine infliction, Judah was once more threatened with Egyptian bondage.

EXPOSITION.—Preliminary Comments. Verse 2.—Shishak.—The Egyptian form of the name is given as Sheshenk. The date of the reign of Sheshenk I is found to fit this account, and he “has left a record of this expedition sculptured on the wall of the great temple of Elkarnak.”

Verse 3.—Chariots.—Low two-wheeled vehicles, usually drawn each by two horses, and carrying one, and sometimes two persons with weapons, in addition to the driver. Solomon imported them from Egypt. 1 Kings x. 26. Horsemen.—That is, cavalry. Lubims.—That is Lybians, of North Africa. “westward of Egypt,” and at this time tributary to Egypt. See xvi. 8; Nahum iii. 9; Dan. xi. 43. Sukkims—that is, booth-dwellers; perhaps so named as living in tents, like Arabians, which they may have been.

Verse 4.—Fenced cities.—Fortified, and especially enclosed by a wall.

Verse 5.—Shemaiah.—See verse 15, and xi. 2. There was a false prophet of the same name in Jeremiah's time. Jer. xxix. 24-32. Because of Shishak. Driven in fear before him as he advanced.

Verse 9.—Shields of gold.—See ix. 16, and on the “treasures” see that whole chapter especially verses 13-28. Three hundred shields each having gold to the amount of \$187.50.

THE COURSE OF THOUGHT proceeds naturally from its beginning to its close.

We have First, The Impending Destruction; Second, The Promise of Deliverance; Third, The Deliverance Promised.

I. The impending destruction. Verse 1-4.—The reason why the destruction was at hand was, Rehoboam, the king, “and all Israel with him,” “forsook the law of Jehovah.” The sin was national—not in the king alone, nor in the people alone, but in both together as one body, with one common life. Hence the punishment should be national. The sin was aggravated. Judah is here called Israel this holy covenant name to show how great the contrast between the wicked conduct and the holy name. The act was also a back-sliding from a better state, and an open ingratitude. Compare vs. 1 with xi. 13-17. The controlling cause is, God as justly angry. The instrumental cause was Shishak. The reason given in verse 2 for his coming is not the one which was to him and in his mind a reason, but in God's mind the reason for causing him to come. Ambition stimulated by the intrigues of Jeroboam his old friend, and Rehoboam's rival and enemy, is the natural explanation. See 1 King xi. 40. The unprincipled craftiness of Jeroboam is shown in 1 Kings xii. 25-33. The nature of the destruction was to be utter subjugation to Egypt by military power. This implied the loss of all that was dear to Judah, even to slavery again, as of old. Vs. 3. The nearness of the destruction is shown in the victories already won by the enemy over the chief strongholds of the nation and the consequent approach even to Jerusalem, the capital, the holy city, the last hope of the nation. Verse 4, with which compare xi. 5-12.

II. The promise of deliverance. Verses 5-8.—We are first told through whom and from whom it came. Shemaiah came in his character of prophet, which was established and recognized in Judah. Hence he could begin his address by the words, “Thus saith Jehovah.” Of course, as Jehovah was the Sovereign, and only he could avert it, and his word was needed to give hope. They to whom it came were the nation's leaders, formally assembled. They had evidently been leaders in the sin, as they were now in the conduct of affairs. They also represented the whole nation. The occasion when the promise was given was evidently soon after their enforced retreat to Jerusalem, and on their assembling to discuss the situation and determine what next. “Man's extremity” was “God's opportunity.” The first message was not the promise, but a preparation for it, an admonition, a statement of the cause of trouble. The effect was a confession of their sin and God's righteousness. How far this was merely formal and outward, and how far it was genuine inward repentance, is not said. Conscience had at least been aroused, and God so far recognized as to justify a promise. The second message is thus the promise itself, a small amount of deliverance, the promise referring to time. The hostile army would despoil them of the treasures, but would, in a short time, withdraw, and leave them still a nation. The relief promised was indeed thus to be only partial in degree, but it was still a great deliverance. The design of its incompleteness was thus to teach the nation by a bitter, but wholesome, experience, the difference in both the nature and the effects of submission to God's and the world's dominion—a lesson just as needful now for each individual as then for that nation. 1 Chron. xxix. 30.

III. The fulfilment of the promise. Verses 9-12.—Here, as ever, the exact agreement of fulfilment with promise appears. There is further war for a time. There is also only partial relief, as the city was clearly surrendered. But strangely the enemy retire without cutting up the nationality of Judah by the very roots. The humiliation and pecuniary loss were great, yet the nation remained in its integrity. Even the old show of splendor was retained by substituting brass for gold, and the brass perhaps answered that purpose just as well. The emphasis given to the procuring cause of this fulfilment is to be marked. It is given again in verse 12, because there was the great lesson which was to hold good in all ages for all men. It is the lesson of God's grace to man, and man's duty to God. It is the gospel of salvation to the guilty who are about to perish. The settled state of Judah subsequent to the fulfilment is

also noted—“Things went well.” There were good words [things] in Jerusalem. So now for the repentant sinner, they go well, forever and supremely.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, January 13th, 1878.—Asa Faithful to His God.—2 Chron. xiv. 1-12.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power.”—2 Chron. xiv. 11.

The Story of the Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

As soon as Rehoboam found that his kingdom was strong, he forsook the law of the Lord and began to worship idols; and his people followed his example. The Lord bore with them for two years; then he sent a punishment. Shishak, the king of Egypt, came against Jerusalem with a great army. On their way, they took all the cities that Rehoboam thought he had made so strong. The prophet Shemaiah came to Jerusalem, where the king and his princes had met together, and said, “Thus saith the Lord, Ye have forsaken me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak.” They felt humble, for they knew they deserved it; so they all said, “The Lord is righteous.” Then the Lord sent word to them again by the prophet that, as they had humbled themselves, Jerusalem should not be destroyed, but that they should be the servants of Shishak for a time, that they might know the difference between the service of the Lord and that of strange princes. Shishak came to Jerusalem, and took away the treasures from the king's palace and the Temple. He took the golden shields which Solomon had made, and Rehoboam had some brass ones made. When he went to the Temple, the guard brought these shields and held them before the king, and then took them back to the guard-chamber.

Select Serial.

From The Day of Rest.

DORA'S BOY.

BY MRS. ELLEN ROSS.

CHAP. LIIII.—A TRAGIC ENDING TO A YOUNG LIFE.

The only friend Lisa could think of, to whom she could go when she reached London, was Josiah Hartlebury. She knew where he lived in Westminster, for she had several times seen him since she first made his acquaintance at Matthew Pedder's.

Josiah was out when she called at his house that evening; but Mrs. Hartlebury received her kindly, and directed her to a comfortable lodging, and also gave her the names of two or three milliners in the neighbourhood, besides private persons, from whom she would be likely to get work. And in a day or two Lisa found herself earning money; and the busy way in which she spent her time helped to mitigate the sorrow of her heart.

She had been back in London about a fortnight, when she heard that, on a certain evening, Josiah was to preach at her old school at the East-end. So having finished her day's work by tea-time, and the evening being lovely, a young moon in the sky waiting to shed its silvery light over the great city as soon as the daylight should fade away, and the weather being quite mild for mid-October, Lisa resolved to walk to the Mission school, for ‘auld lang syne.’

Now it so happened that, the day before, Josiah had been urgently called away to a distance to see a relative who was dying; and while he was in a state of anxiety about getting a substitute for the following evening, who should appear at the door of his house but Hugh? He had come up to London ostensibly on business; but his real errand was, to see if he could find anything of Lisa,—not that he intended to say any thing to Josiah about her, as he did not for a moment think that he or his wife would know anything of her. His enquiries respecting her would be made in a totally different direction.

Josiah welcomed him heartily, and exclaimed, ‘Surely the Lord has sent you to relieve my mind, Hugh Haldane; for I know you will be willing to do His work for me to-morrow night, at the

Mission school!’ Hugh had never spoken in public, and he naturally shrank from the task, and feared he could not do it. But Josiah was urgent, and over-rode all objections, winding up with, ‘They're simple folks, and I know you'll be able to say a few anecdotes, or anything that has come under your own experience,—a bit or two from the early history of Lisa Maurice, for instance; bless her! she's a good lass.’

So, at length, Hugh agreed to undertake the work; and in wishing them good bye, said that most likely Matthew would wish to accompany him. ‘That being so,’ replied Josiah, ‘you will both come here and stay the night; so that I can hear, from your own lips, how you got on. I shall be back about ten o'clock, and shall expect to see you both here.’

Hugh heard nothing of Lisa that day; though had he made enquiries of Josiah, he would have had his heart's desire in not only hearing of her, but seeing her. Lisa was every day making enquiries about Alice Reany, as anxiously as Hugh was doing that day about her; but as yet she had found no clue to her whereabouts. A fellow-apprentice at Madame Michaud's, whom she met shortly after her return to London, told her that Alice was again in town, doing nothing, and that she had resolved never to go home again.

Matthew was quite excited when he heard that Hugh was to give an address at the Mission school. ‘Surely, surely, I shall go and hear ye, my lad, if granny don't mind being left,’ said Matthew, glancing across at Dorothy, who was leaning back in her arm-chair, with her hands listlessly folded on her lap, looking very pale and hollow-eyed. She had been ailing for a fortnight, but still got about at her work.

‘Oh, I don't mind,’ said Dorothy quietly. ‘Of course you'll be back first thing next morning, and I dare say I shall soon be better.’

‘But you look very poorly to-day, grandmother, and I'm sure Mr. Pedder will not leave you, if you would like him to stay,’ said Hugh, kindly, as he stood beside her and gently stroked her white hair, as her head lay back on the chair. She put up her hand and drew his down, holding it affectionately. ‘You're a dear, good lad to anybody that's ill,’ she said. ‘I'm so glad now to think as my Dora had you with her when she was sick and dying; you must ha' been a comfort to her.’

She paused a minute, and as Hugh did not respond, she said, ‘Yes, surely you shall both go to-morrow night, and I'll pray for ye at home. I don't mind being left, for “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters; He restoreth my soul; He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for His name's sake.”’

Hugh looked at her with tender concern, as she sat with her eyes closed, saying these words as if to herself. ‘I am sure you feel very unwell to-day, grandmother,’ he said, ‘and unless you are better to-morrow you shall not be left.’

‘Surely not,’ said Matthew decidedly. He also felt concerned about Dorothy.

But the next day Dorothy seemed so much brighter, that their fears for her vanished: she got about at her work, very quietly and slowly, it is true, but in good spirits. So when the afternoon came, and they had had an early tea, Matthew and Hugh started off to London, affectionately admonishing Dorothy to take care of herself, and to be sure to call her next-door neighbour if she wanted anything. Hugh felt a little fluttering of heart as he stepped on to the platform of the Mission Hall that evening in place of Josiah; but he was strengthened with Divine strength, and as he looked round upon his poor audience, many of them broken down with hard work and sorrow, and nearly all of them marred and wounded in the stern life-battle which they were fighting, his heart yearned over them, as it had often done over his peasant lads at home; and looking upon these men and women before him as but children of a larger growth, he spoke simply and earnestly to them of the things affecting their temporal and eternal peace, and soon won their hearts as fully as Josiah would have done. In speaking to an audience like that, whose chief foe was drink, it would have been culpable on

his part to overlook temperance in his address. So he earnestly spoke on this theme, in passing, and from Lisa's history he gave passages which touched the hearts of his hearers, and drew tears from their eyes.

Away in a corner, hidden behind a burly costermonger, sat Lisa, listening with rapt eagerness, and but seldom venturing to steal a glance at the speaker, lest he should see and recognize her. She had expected to listen to Josiah, and great was her astonishment when she saw Matthew and Hugh walk in, and Hugh take Josiah's place on the platform. Listening to his fervent prayer and hearty address, all the doubts of him which had disturbed her during the past fortnight melted away, and she said exultingly to herself, ‘It's his dear old self after all: he is no hypocrite! I have done him a wrong in doubting him for a moment.’

With a strange feeling for which she could not account, she wanted to avoid him that night: she could not make up her mind to stay and speak to him at the close of the meeting. So directly it was over, being at the back of the room, she was one of the first to slip out; and away she walked with rapid steps, intending to go all the way on foot.

Matthew and Hugh presently came out, and Hugh was about to hail a bus to take them home as they had come, when Matthew said, ‘Don't, my lad; I think I'm game for a good walk, and we can take our time, ye know, as Josiah won't be home till ten o'clock. The night is so warm and fine that it'll do us good to foot it; and we can take our time a-lookin' at all the old places.’

‘Very well, sir, take my arm, then,’ answered Hugh. And turning their faces to the west, where shone the crescent moon in the clear, starry sky, on they went, unconsciously tracking Lisa's footsteps all the way.

Her heart was so much lighter that evening, that her step kept time to its lively beating, and with a quick, elastic tread, she went gladly on her way homeward. When she reached Westminster Bridge, she slackened her steps a little to enjoy the scene, lamps twinkling with a pale light everywhere under the brighter illumination of the sky, the dark waters of the hurrying river flecked with lamplight and moonlight; distant buildings lying so peacefully in the silver light, that had it not been for the subdued murmur of street-traffic, one might have thought that the great city was asleep. There were but few people about, and Lisa sauntered on, thinking dreamily of Hugh; when, in passing under a gas-lamp, she was arrested by a slight figure standing motionless in its shadow. ‘Alice, is it you?’ she quietly exclaimed, laying her hand on her friend's shoulder. She might well ask, ‘Is it you?’ for terribly altered was Alice's fair young face, as she stood there in a state of semi-intoxication.

‘Yes, it's me, and I don't want anything to do with you, so you'd better pass on,’ answered Alice, in a thick voice, as she lifted her heavy eyes to Lisa for a moment, and revealed a red face, dirty and marred with weeping.

‘No, I'll not pass on and leave a friend in distress,’ said Lisa, kindly. ‘Come home to my lodging, and tell me what your trouble is, dear Alice.’

At these kind words Alice burst into a passionate fit of weeping, and for several minutes could not speak. Lisa said all she could to soothe her, and presently tried to get the story of her sorrow from her. But it was all no use; she resolutely refused to stir a step with Lisa; and all she said was, ‘I've got no home, no father or mother, no anybody, and I'm ruined and miserable, and I want to be let alone.’ This she kept repeating with tipsy persistence, wringing her hands piteously as she moaned out the words. Lisa begged and begged that she would go home with her, but it was all in vain. What could she do? To leave her thus was out of the question; and to stay there pleading to no purpose was useless. ‘I wish you'd go now there's nobody about,’ Alice suddenly said, as she gave Lisa an angry push. Lisa looked to and fro: in the distance two men were coming slowly, and in the opposite direction a policeman was leisurely approaching. ‘Do go!’ added Alice, vehemently. ‘See, there's one of those horrid policemen coming!’ Lisa turned her head, and quick as lightning Alice sprang up on the parapet, and in a moment would