

Bible Lessons for 1878.

SUNDAY, January 13th, 1878.—Asa Faithful to God.—2 Chron. xiv. 1-11.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vss. 2-5.

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

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, 2 Chron. xiii. Tuesday, 2 Chron. xiv. Wednesday, vs. 1; 1 Kings xv. 1-8. Thursday, Psalm i. Friday, vs. 5; Malachi iii. Saturday, vs. 11; 1 Samuel xiv. 1-23. Sunday, Psalm xxi.

LESSON OUTLINE.—*I. Asa on the throne.* Vs. 1. *II. His Piety.* Vs. 2-5. *III. His policy.* Vs. 6-8. *IV. His posterity.* Vs. 9-11.

QUESTIONS.—Who reigned after Rehoboam? What was Abijah's character? What did he succeed in doing?

I. Asa on the Throne.—Who reigned after Abijah? What took place in his time?

II. His Piety.—What reform did Asa at once enter upon? What did he take away? What places did Asa not take away? Chap. xv. 17. How do you account for this neglect?

III. His Policy.—Wherein was Asa patriotic as well as pious? How large was his army?

IV. His Prosperity.—By whom was the Kingdom of Judah now invaded? To whom did Asa resort in trouble? What victory did God now give to Asa?

What foreign force did his military preparations bring upon him? Are short prayers often more sincere than long ones? Why?

Evil times are not wanting in good men to reform and purify them.—The main care of a good ruler is to clear his kingdom of sin.

SETTING OF THE LESSON.—After Rehoboam, Abijah, his son, came to the throne of Judah. Rehoboam had reigned seventeen years, and Abijah three; both twenty (B. C. 975-955). Abijah was, by no means, a godly man. 1 Kings xv. 1-8. He possessed, however, vigor and capacity; and, wherein Rehoboam had failed, he succeeded in dealing a blow against Jeroboam, the king of Israel, that gave great superiority to Judah. Nevertheless, he sinned by walking in all the ways of his father, and was speedily removed. Then came Asa, the son of Abijah, who did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord. His name, which signifies *curing*, was significant of his work.

EXPOSITION.—*Preliminary Comments.*—Verse 1.—*Slept with his fathers.*—The usual phrase for the death of Hebrew kings suggests, but does not necessarily imply immortality. *City of David.*—The name specially of Mount Zion, as distinguished from Moriah or the other parts of Jerusalem, because David took that Mount from the Jebusites and erected his palace on it. 1 Chron. xi. 4. The sepulchres of the kings were on this Mount, and kings that were infamous were not placed in it, sometimes not buried even within Jerusalem. xxviii. 27; xxi. 20; xxiv. 25. "The royal sepulchres were probably chambers containing separate recesses for the successive kings."

Verse 3.—*Strange gods.*—The gods of foreign nations, as distinguished from Jehovah, the true God, who was the God of Israel. *High places.*—The tops of high hills and mountains were chosen, against God's command, as places peculiarly fitted for the worship even of Jehovah, as they were for heathen worship. The term is also used of the buildings there erected for this forbidden worship. *Images.*—Idols, especially of Baal.

Verse 6, 7.—*Fenced.—Fortified. Gates.* Literally, double gates. The land is yet before us. In our peaceable possession, thus allowing us to do this work at will without interruption.

Verse 8.—*Targets.*—Large shields, often four feet long, and covering the whole body, more commonly called *bucklers.* *Shields.* Small ones. *Drew bows.* Literally, *trod bows*, because the foot was placed on the heavy bow, and thus both hands used for drawing the string in order to bend the bow for the arrow. *Two hundred and eighty thousand.* A large number for Benjamin. xv. 9.

Verse 9.—*Zerah.*—Thought by some to have been the king of Egypt, but of Ethiopian extraction.

Verse 10.—*Zepthah at Marashah.*

Toward Egypt, whence the invaders came.

Verse 11.—*It is nothing with thee, etc.* A better translation is, "There is no one with thee [that is, beside thee], to help between one having power and one without power [that is, to help the powerless that he may conquer the powerful]." See xx. 6; Ps. lxxiii. 25.

Analysis.—If we regard vs. 12-15 as virtually included in vs. 11, and therefore in our lesson we have Asa presented to us with prominent reference to (1) His Piety, (2) His Prudence, (3) His Prosperity.

I. His Piety.—Verse 1-5. (1.) It was practical, shown in deeds rather than in words, or dreamy contemplation. (2.) It cared first and most for sacred things. True piety is not indifferent to the object or objects of worship, to places, times, forms of worship, to the ornaments, ministers, books of religion. (3.) Its general description is that it was a doing of the good and the right in the eyes of Jehovah his God. Its outward manifestation was of that which Jehovah saw only to approve as it exactly fitted his law of command. (4.) Its particular description shows it as a holy zeal on the one hand against the wrong, and on the other for the right. As loving attachment it constrained others to the same devotion to God which the king himself felt and practised. As king it was his business to command; as king in a kingdom which was still essentially a theocracy with the fundamental, and civil religious law, both directly from Jehovah and both compacted together as the one organic law, it was his business.

II. His prudence.—Verse 6-8.—"God helps those who help themselves," when they can, and who would fain help themselves even when they cannot. That is not genuine trust of God that neglects a watchful and diligent use of means to ends, of right and appropriate means to right and appropriate ends. The best "life of trust" is that which trusts in connection with the diligent and industrious use of such means to such ends. Asa was as sensible as he was pious; had good, round, solid sense called "common," though it is not as common as it ought to be. The narrative calls attention (1) to Asa's opportunity. In verses 6, 7 this opportunity is noted as consisting in the general peace enjoyed. The nation had internal harmony. The sister nation and rival on the north ventured no hostile attack since its defeat by Abijah, and as yet the "Gentile" kept away. This opportunity is said to have been God's gift. (2.) The preparation made for the future was complete. He both made fortified cities to render more easy the nation's defence, and he created the best and largest possible army to conduct the defence. Many men do things by halves, either half doing the whole, or wholly doing the half. A bridge which reaches half way across the river is as good as no bridge at all. Thoroughness of preparation for God's service, and thoroughness of service, is what Christ wants, and we should give.

III. His prosperity.—Verse 9-11. (1.) There is first described his *peril*. The force against him was double his own. They were doubtless trained and veteran warriors. The advantage of war-chariots was on their side, possibly also of cavalry, though not here mentioned. (2.) Asa's *promptness* appears. He boldly and at once confronts the foe, and that on the extreme border of Judah. In all business this readiness for an emergency, this alacrity to meet it is indispensable. In Christian work, whether in or out of church, this is just as needful as in money making or in war. Especially in meeting the great foe of our souls is this wisdom and safety. "Resist the Devil and he will flee." (3.) Asa's *prayer*. God is the God of battles; yes, is, as well as *was*. The prayer was not the cry of cowardice, but of dependence and faith. Asa did not want God to fight while he and his armies stood still, but to help, and make effectual their efforts. The men of true prayer are men of earnest action. The more perfect man's rest on God, the more earnest man's work for God, with God, and under God, whether in strictly religious, or in other business.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, January 20th, 1878.—The Covenant Renewed.—2 Chron. xv. 8-15.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Be ye strong, therefore, and let not your hands be weak; for your work shall be rewarded."—2 Chron. xv. 7.

The Story of the Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

Asa, the son of Abijah, was the third king of Judah. He began at once to break to pieces the images which his father, Abijah, and his grandfather, Rehoboam, had made, and to cut down the groves and take away the altars where they had been worshipped. He even burned his own grandmother's idol, which she had kept in a grove, and threw the ashes into the brook, and would not allow her to be queen any more. He also commanded the people not to worship idols, but to keep the law of God. There was now no war in the land, for God prospered Asa; and the king thought it was the right time to prepare for enemies, when they should come. So he made his cities strong with walls and towers, and got a great army of five hundred and eighty thousand men—some with spears, and some with bows. All was peaceful for ten years; then Zerah came from Ethiopia, with an army nearly double that of Asa; for he had a million of men. Where would Asa find help from such an enemy? He asked for it in the only true place to get it. He cried unto the Lord his God, and said, "Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude."

Select Serial.

From *The Day of Rest.*
DORA'S BOY.

BY MRS. ELLEN ROSS.

CHAP. LIV. THE OLD FOLKS GO HOME.

It was ten o'clock the next morning before Matthew and Hugh got away from London: they had sat around Josiah's breakfast-table longer than they intended to, with Lisa as fellow-guest, and the time slipped away so that they missed their train.

"Granny'll think we're lost," said Matthew, uneasily, as they were reaching their home, having accomplished their journey by a slow train, which made Matthew nervously impatient. In the brilliant morning sunshine they hastened towards the cottage, and on reaching it were surprised to find all the blinds down, and the door closed and locked. Matthew had been so upset by the tragic event of the preceding evening, that he felt quite unnerved to-day, and turned pale with apprehension when he found that the door was locked.

"Don't be nervous, sir," said Hugh, cheerily, as he looked at Matthew.—"Perhaps grandmother has overslept herself. You stay there, and I'll go and get in by the back window, and open the door for you."

In a minute or two Hugh's step was heard in the silent house, and he unlocked the door for Matthew. There was no fire in the grate: everything was left as it was the night before, Dorothy's chair drawn up to the hearth, and her Bible and spectacles lying on a little table beside it.

"Sit down, sir; and I'll get a fire directly I have seen after grandmother," said Hugh. And he sprang somewhat nervously up the little staircase, and after knocking at her door without receiving an answer, he stole into the dim silent room, and found her lying peacefully asleep with one hand under her withered cheek. A close eager glance and a shrinking touch told a tale that almost made his heart stand still. In the silence and darkness of the night, with no friend at hand, she had passed away to death as her daughter Dora had done, with none to smooth her dying pillow, or wish her a last good-bye.

Hugh stood for a moment with his hand across his eyes, and then nerving himself for his task went downstairs and gently broke the news to Matthew. It was almost too much for the old man in his present nervous state; and it took him some time to recover from the shock. Then he said tremulously, "D'you remember where she left off in that psalm she was a-sayin' yesterday, Hugh?"

"Yes, sir; I was much struck by the way she repeated it."

"Ah, well, I hope and trust, she went on with the next verse when the messenger came for her last night: 'Yea,

though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.'" I hope the good Lord helped her to say that, with heart and soul, Hugh."

"I earnestly hope so," responded Hugh, in a low, unsteady voice. They presently went away to their best friend in the village—the vicar—to tell him their tales of sorrow; and very soon afterwards it got abroad throughout the village that Dorothy Sharpe had died suddenly in the night, and that Alice Reany had committed suicide in London the evening before. The excitement which these items of news caused was intense, especially that about Alice Reany, and the Inn was besieged throughout the day with Reany's customers, anxious to know all the details of the sad affair. But he could tell them nothing until he had been to Matthew's cottage; and then Hugh told the wretched, besotted father everything, and with affectionate earnestness said things to him about his terrible example to Alice, about the desperation to which she was driven on account of her miserable home, of her years of sorrow about it, which in the end changed to despair and recklessness, of the devastating drink by the sale of which he got his living,—all of which made the miserable man cower and shrink with shame and horror, until at length he buried his face in his hands and groaned, "God forgive me! I'd get out of it if I could!"

"And so you shall," eagerly answered Hugh. "And we'll all help you."

And so it came to pass that good came out of Alice's pitiful death. In the course of time Reany's Inn got shut up, and he and his wife became members of the vicar's Temperance Society, he being more than ever devoted to the great cause, and working as zealously as the oldest veteran in the field.

During the following summer the village temperance men had the honour and pleasure of enrolling as a member of their society one of the unluckiest persons under heaven; and this followed upon an event which startled the whole village like an earthquake, and was felt throughout London and beyond it: it was the crash of the great brewery business of Barnet. About the walls of Colton Hall and the surrounding neighbourhood, as well as in the London papers, appeared advertisements of the sale of Colton Hall, with its furniture and effects, all of which took place in a certain day in June, when the whole affair was discussed by everybody, and it became generally known that Mr. Barnet's princely fortune had been squandered away at foreign gaming-tables, and that they were reduced to absolute beggary. Mrs. Barnet fled from her disgraced and ruined husband, and sought refuge amongst some of her relatives in a humble line of life, in the north of England. No one could tell what had become of Mr. Barnet, the kind-hearted, genial gentleman, whom everybody had loved and respected, until one evening in August, after the sun had set, a knock came to Matthew's door, and upon Hugh answering it, he recognized in the dim light Mr. Barnet, and welcomed him gladly.

He was hungry and weary, and they did their best to make him comfortable. They gave him a homely but enjoyable supper; after which they began to talk, and Mr. Barnet told the whole story of his ruin and abject folly, omitting to mention, however, that he had many a time been driven from home by the outrageous disposition of his wife, and so had more readily fallen into the snares spread for such generous, unsuspecting characters as he.

And Matthew and Hugh delicately but but courageously attacked the trade of which he had been such a prominent member, and condemned it at every point in a manner that made Mr. Barnet feel guilty,—guilty of having spent a worse than useless life, of having largely assisted to foster and propagate the deadliest evil that afflicts our country.

He was now without home and occupation, though the latter he was daily seeking in London. "As for a home," said Matthew, heartily, "whenever you can make yourself comfortable in our small way, sir, we shall be right-down glad and honoured to see ye here, sir, and for so long as you like, too." The end of this chat was that Mr. Barnet signed his name to Hugh's pledge-book, and resolved to build up as far as he

could where before he had only pulled down.

Since Dorothy's death Matthew and Hugh had kept house for themselves as they used to do in London; but after being so long used to Dorothy's presence and help, they did not get on so comfortably now as they used to do. Matthew frequently said, "When are ye going to fetch Lisa, my lad?" to which Hugh always answered, "We must wait a wee, sir;" until one day, to Matthew's great delight, the answer varied, and Hugh said, "I'll fetch her before Christmas, sir."

"Thank God for that!" ejaculated Matthew, earnestly. "I've many a time been afeared lately that I should have to leave ye all alone in this place; but, thank God, Lisa's comin' now, so whatever happens ye'll have somebody with ye to love ye and comfort ye."

Hugh looked with tender anxiety at his old friend. He could not shut his eyes to the fact that Matthew was fading: he made no show of attempting to work now: the bird-stuffing and mounting had not been touched for many a week, and he seemed to be 'only waiting till the shadows had a little longer grown.'

But now in the eventide of his life, which had once been so dark and despairing, all was light. And his beloved boy, through whom, in trying to bless, he had greatly blessed himself, was with him, still adding comfort and joy to his declining days.

It was at Christmas time when Matthew went home, satisfied with life, tired with life's work, and ready and glad to go. Hugh and his happy young wife were beside the old man's dying bed, to soothe his last hours, and close his dying eyes. And when at length the gentle spirit had peacefully departed, Hugh turned to his weeping, clinging wife and said, "I fancy, Lisa, that I can hear his welcome: 'Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful in a few things: Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!'"

THE END.

Honesty.

"Honesty is the best policy," said Harry aloud; "and I mean always to be honest."

"What does 'best policy' mean?" asked his sister, Ada, looking up from her work.

"Why this," replied the boy; "that if you are honest, even though it may not seem the wisest thing for yourself at the time, you will get off best at the end."

"I don't think," replied his sister, "that is a good reason; because if you saw dishonest people getting on better for a long time, you would, perhaps, get tired of waiting for the time to come when you would be 'best off,' and begin to be dishonest too."

"Ada, he is right," said her mamma, coming into the room; "be honest because it is right, my son; that is the only safe reason. Try to please God whether any gain comes from it or not. You will sometimes not be able to see how doing the right thing is profitable in a temporal point of view; but it will matter little, when you come to die, whether you have been best off in this world or not."

"Thank you, mamma," said Harry. "In future I will endeavour to do right because it is right and is pleasing to God, whether it seems to my advantage or not."

Speak Kindly.

A young lady had gone out to take a walk, she forgot to take her purse with her and had no money in her pocket. Presently she met a little girl with a basket on her arm.

"Please, miss, will you buy something from my basket?" said the little girl, showing a variety of book-marks, watch-cases, needle-books, etc.

"I'm sorry I can't buy anything to-day," said the young lady; "I haven't any money with me. Your things look very pretty." She stopped a moment and spoke a few words to the little girl: and then, as she passed, she said again, "I'm very sorry I can't buy anything from you to-day."

"Miss!" said the little girl, "you've done me just as much good as if you had. Most persons that I meet say, 'Get away with you!' But you have spoken kindly to me, and I feel a heap better."

"That was 'considering the poor,' how little it costs to do that! Let us learn to speak kindly and gently to the poor and the suffering. If we have nothing else to give, let us, at least, give them our sympathy."