

The Sunday-School.

THIRD QUARTER,
LESSON V.—July 31.

OMRI AND AHAB.

1 KINGS 16: 23-33.

THE LESSON.—Read 1 Kings 15: 25 to 16: 34, passing in review the history of the upper kingdom from the close of the reign of Jeroboam I to the beginning of Ahab's reign. There is no parallel in Chronicles.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people.*—Prov. 14: 34.

HISTORICAL SETTING.—Time under review, 35 years, from the accession of Nadab to that of Ahab, and the beginning of Ahab's reign. Ahab came to the throne B. C. 918 (common chronology), or B. C. 876 (revised chronology).

Place.—Omri reigned six years in Tirzah, and then transferred his capital to Samaria, six miles west of Shechem.

Rulers.—Asa, king of Judah, was contemporary with all six kings of Israel whom we study to-day. During Ahab's reign Ben-hadad II was king of Syria, Mesha king of Moab, and Ethbaal (Ithobal) king of Tyre and Sidon.

Prophets of the Period.—Azariah and Hanani in Judah. Jehu in both kingdoms. Elijah, growing up in the northern kingdom.

Monuments.—The Moabite Stone, see Section II below.

Place in the History.—The downward progress of Israel under evil kings, culminating in Ahab's marriage with Jezebel and the introduction of Phœnician idolatry.

Learn by heart Vs. 30-33; 2 Tim. 3: 13, 14; 2 Cor. 6: 14.

A SUCCESSION OF EVIL KINGS.—1 Kings 15: 25 to 16: 22. While Judah, under only four kings of an unbroken dynasty, was growing steadily in strength and influence, Israel was distracted by civil wars, resulting in three dynasties and the accession of eight kings, five of whom reigned but briefly.

While Judah was progressing in character and power, Israel was retrograding in two respects. During Jeroboam's reign, the introduction of idolatry drove the best citizens into the southern kingdom, Jeroboam's son, Nadab, fulfilled in his brief reign and tragic death the doom which Ahijah had prophesied. Baasha, a soldier of the tribe of Issachar, conspired against Nadab and murdered him and all his kindred, so that the family of Jeroboam became extinct. Baasha followed in all ways the evil example of Jeroboam, and the extinction of his house was pronounced by the prophet Jehu. Elah, Baasha's son, repeated the history of Nadab, reigning but two years, and meeting a violent death in the midst of a drunken revel. Zimri ruled, after the assassination, only a week, and perished miserably. The army chose Omri, its commander-in-chief, to succeed Elah. The people, however, preferred Tibni, and there was civil war for four years. The army was victorious, and the death of Tibni gave Omri the undisputed sovereignty.

The Lesson for Us. While all this turmoil and terror is crowded into the history of Israel, Asa was ruling wisely in Judah, and was to rule ten years longer. This contrasted history shows us:

1. That godliness is rewarded even in this world.
2. That the punishment of the wicked begins here.
3. That a man's sons, and his kindred, and sometimes his entire nation, must suffer for his sins.
4. That the doom God pronounces upon the unrepentant sinner is certain to fall, though it may be averted, by penitence.
5. That idolatry—any departure from the true worship of Jehovah—produces inevitable results of ruin.
6. That the tendency of sin is always downward.

OMRI GOES FARTHER IN EVIL.—Vs. 23-28. In the thirty and first year of Asa. The fiftieth year of the divided kingdom. *Began Omri to reign.* Omri, the sixth king of Israel, founded the third dynasty, which lasted for sixty years and four kings. *And reigned twelve years.* From his election as king. *He bought the hill Samaria.* Six miles from Shechem. Politically it was more central than Shechem. In a military point of view it was admirably calculated for defense. Samaria remained the capital of Israel as long as the kingdom lasted. *For two talents of silver.* About \$4,000 in our money. *Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord.* Men thought him rich and prosperous, but God looks on the heart. *And did worse than all.* All sin tends to increase. *Walked in the way of Jeroboam.* Oh, the fearful power of an evil example! *Provoke the Lord . . . to anger.* Not passion, but indignation against sin. *With their vanities.* False gods and other worship. *The rest of the acts of Omri and his might.* He warred with Syria. He subdued Moab. Wicked men are not always weak. They have often a great deal of power in their way, and dazzle the eyes of the foolish by the might they show. *Book of the chronicles.* Not the Book of Chronicles in our Bible, but historical annals now lost. *So Omri slept with his fathers.*

The Moabite Stone.—This marvelously preserved witness to the accuracy of the Bible is a stone of bluish-black basalt, two feet wide, nearly four feet high, and four and one-half inches thick. It was found at Diban (the ancient Dibon, Num. 32: 3; Isa. 15: 2) by Rev. F. Augustus Klein, a Prussian missionary, in August, 1868. While French and German archaeologists strove for the possession of it, the Arab's suspicions were aroused and they broke it up for amulets. Most of the pieces, however, have been recovered and put together by means of a paper impression that had been made, and the tablet is now in the Louvre at Paris. The inscription of thirty-four lines is in very ancient Phœnician, almost identical with Hebrew, and "reads almost like a new chapter of Second Kings." It was made about 850 B. C. by Mesha, king of Moab, a contemporary of Omri and Ahab, to commemorate his deliverance from the yoke imposed by Omri. It mentions Omri and Jehovah, and confirms in many ways the history and geography of the Old Testament.

AHAB FALLS STILL DEEPER IN EVIL.—Vs. 29-34. Ahab's reign occupies the remainder of First Kings. It is treated at great length because it contained the ministry of the great prophet Elijah, and because it was a crisis in Hebrew history, a battle between Jehovah and Baal. *The thirty and eighth year of*

Asa, king of Judah. *Ahab . . . reigned . . . twenty and two years.* Ahab was like his father in energy as a ruler and soldier, and also in evil surrender to idolatry. His character was not destitute of ability, nor devoid of patriotism, not wanting in courage, but indifferent to his obligations. He was covetous, selfish, cruel. *Evil . . . above all that were before him.* Ahab was worse than preceding kings because he added to their calf-worship the worship of foreign and shameful deities. His wife was the source of Ahab's chief sins. *He took to wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal.* Her father was a priest of the licentious worship of Astarte. Jezebel inherited his wickedness, ferocity and idolatrous superstitions. She was complete master of her husband. It is no wonder that Ahab soon *went and served Baal, and worshipped him.* The worship developed into shameful and cruel rites, including the burning of little children. *He reared up an altar for Baal, etc.* A staff of 450 priests in their vestments ministered at the altars. *And Ahab made a grove.* A wooden pole or pillar, of licentious form and abominable significance, associated with the most indecent rites.

THE HEART OF THE LESSON.

The reign of Omri and Ahab are notable illustrations of the downward and cumulative power of sin.

1. *The terrible guilt of those that start evil deeds on their course.* Without Jeroboam, there might have been no Omri; without Omri, no Ahab. The boy who loosens the stone at the top of the hill is responsible for all the damage the stone does till it reaches the bottom.

2. *Every man is responsible for his own sin,* no matter how much evil has gone before him. It is possible to rise superior to it. Asa conquered the temptations of his father's evil court and bad example. Josiah overcame the wicked influences of Manasseh his grandfather, and Amon his father. Omri and Ahab might have done as well.

How One Teacher Holds Her Class.

She is not sensational, offers no premiums, uses no cunning devices, and yet there they are, Sunday after Sunday, twelve or fourteen pleasant maidens, ready to greet their teacher with a smile. She has had the class about five years, took them when they were mere girls, and now they are almost young ladies. If I may judge, she will hold the girls as long as she cares to teach.

Miss Fannie is quite a young woman, a graduate of our high school, and in society somewhat reserved and unassuming.

How does she manage? Well, let me think. I hardly know. It is not any one thing. Rather Wordsworth's "Little, nameless, unremembered acts Of kindness and of love."

For instance, when the girls were yet in the doll period, she would invite them to her home, and a whole afternoon would be spent in making dolls and in contriving doll-houses, closing with a good supper, including ice-cream and other dainties to tickle the childish palate.

Miss Fannie never forgets her girls. They are in her mind, and she is always devising something they will enjoy. Sometimes she gives cards, sometimes she sends letters. Last summer she took a trip east, and, while at Niagara,

Ayer's

Losing your hair? Coming out by the comb? And doing nothing? No sense in that! Why don't you use Ayer's Hair Vigor and Hair Vigor

promptly stop the falling? Your hair will begin to grow, too, and all dandruff will disappear. Could you reasonably expect anything better?

"Ayer's Hair Vigor is a great success with me. My hair was falling out very badly, but the Hair Vigor stopped it and now my hair is all right."—W. C. LOOSDON, Lindsay, Cal.
\$1.00 a bottle. All druggists. J. C. AYER & CO., Lowell, Mass.

Thin Hair

bought for each of her girls a pretty little picture of the falls. It is a souvenir the young ladies will prize as long as they live.

Last Friday she invited them to a regular tea party. The hour was five, an elegant spread at six, and then games and a frolic till ten. I called at the house in the evening, and, in an adjoining room, with a friend, was a witness to their innocent delight.

As the old saying is, to have friends you must show yourself friendly, and I suppose the mistake of the average teacher is in not showing sufficient attention to the boys and girls during the week. We think our duty ends with Sunday's lesson. Home, ours or theirs, is a large factor in the problem.—S. S. Times.

They Wake the Torbid Energies.—Machinery not properly supervised and left to run itself, very soon shows fault in its working. It is the same with the digestive organs. Unregulated from time to time they are likely to become torpid and throw the whole system out of gear. Parmelee's Vegetable Pills were made to meet such cases. They restore to the full the flagging faculties, and bring into order all parts of the machinery.

Preserve self-possession, and do not be talked out of conviction.

We All Have Missions in the World.—There is a work to do for every man on earth, there is a function to perform for every thing on earth, animate and inanimate. Everything has a mission, and the mission of Dr. Thomas' Electric Oil is to heal burns and wounds of every description, and cure coughs, colds, croup, and all affections of the respiratory organs.

We must live religion, or we cannot talk it.

So rapidly does lung irritation spread and deepen, that often in a few weeks a simple cough culminates in tubercular consumption. Give heed to a cough, there is always danger in delay. Get a bottle of Bickle's Consumptive Syrup and cure yourself. It is a medicine unsurpassed for all throat and lung troubles. It is compounded from several herbs, each one of which stands at the head of the list as exerting a wonderful influence in curing consumption and all lung diseases.