

Our Young Folks.

All My Life Long.

BY JOSEPHINE VOLLAPO.

All my life long have my steps been attended Surely by one who regarded my ways; Tenderly watched over, sweetly benighted, Blessings have followed my nights and my days. Tears have been quenched in the sunshine of gladness.

Drowning the Baby.

As a missionary was walking by the River Ganges in India one day, he noticed a Brahmin woman and her two sons, a beautiful boy of twelve years and a little baby a few months old, with two female servants going towards the river.

The priests tried to arouse the mother; and at last she opened her eyes. When she remembered what was going on, she sank back saying: "Is there nothing that will save my child?"

"No," said the priest, who expected a large sum of money for performing the ceremony—"no. You have vowed to give him up, and you must do it. But the gods want you to be willing to do it. Are you willing? Say so, and let the goddess take her own."

"No, no!" cried the mother; "I am not willing. If I break my vow, I can only be cursed. Let the curse come. I would rather die than do."

"Yes," said the angry priest, "the curse shall come, but not on you. It shall come on that lad there," pointing to the elder boy, "on the darling of your heart. You shall go home to-morrow taking your worthless babe with you, it is true, but leaving your noble boy, the hope of your house. Do you still refuse?"

The poor mother could not speak; and the priest added, "Then wave your hand as a sign that I may throw your babe into the river."

The sign was given; the child was thrown. One little splash was heard; but the next moment the mother had it safe in her arms once more. Wild with grief, she had plunged in, and saved it.

"No, no; Gunga shall not have him!" she cried. "I was mad, quite mad, when I made that vow. If it were a daughter, perhaps I could give it up; but I cannot see my baby-boy drowned before my eyes."

The priest threatened her with still more dreadful things. She was made to say again she was willing; and the priest was just ready to throw the child into the water, when his arm was drawn back by the missionary, and he was thrown down by a soldier who was close behind.

"Thank you, thank you a thousand times, sir! You have saved my darling. You have made my mother's heart rejoice. Oh how could I have lived without my baby! I can do nothing for you, sir, but the God of the universe will reward you. I will always pray to our gods to send you their blessings."

Relieved and happy, the mother said to her servants—"Come, Dasse and Tara, let us go to our boats and leave this dreadful place. The gods grant I may never see it again!"

Since the Gospel has been carried to India, these dreadful things very seldom happen; and, if all Christian people would do what they could to send missionaries there, the time would soon come when they would never happen. What can you do?

We do not believe immortality because we have proved it, but we forever try to prove it because we believe it.

Do not insist too strongly on your own opinion. If you are sure of something, and an important cause demands that you shall set it forth, do so. It is your duty then to be close, exacting, persistent. But in the small matters of every day life it is better to give up a good deal than to insist too strongly. Two persons quarreling over what proves to be practically nothing, exhibit a lack of sense that is remarkable. Half the quarrels of the Church would be avoided if good people would get to understand the miserable insignificance of opinions which they, in passion and prejudice, make terms of communion with their brethren.

Sabbath School Teacher.

LESSON I.

THE KINGDOM DIVIDED. 1 Kings xlii. 23.

COMMIT TO MEMORY, vs. 16, 17. PARALLEL PASSAGES.—2 Kings xvii. 21; Ps. lxxxix. 30-32.

SCRIPTURE READINGS.—With v. 12 read v. 5; with vs. 13, 14, read Prov. xviii. 6, 7; with v. 15, read 2 Cor. i. xxv. 20; with v. 26, read 2 Sam. xi. 1; with v. 17, 20, read 1 Kings xi. 35, 36.

The place to be identified on the map are Shechem (v. 1) and Jerusalem. The one to be identified are Rehoboam, Jeroboam, Abijah, Adoram.

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

CENTRAL TRUTH.—Bad counsels bring division.

INTRODUCTION.—The books of Kings, taking up the narrative of 2nd Samuel, report the history of the Jewish people while the government was monarchical, from Solomon's accession till the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, and cover a period of about 450 years. It is the "decline and fall" of the Jews—not, indeed, the final fall, which was after the rejection of Christ.

One period is concluded with Solomon's reign. Our lesson begins the second in the division of the kingdom. The books are properly called "Kings," for the character and acts of the kings are mainly dwelt upon, as they represent the people, and as they were in substance, so were the people. The rulers and the ruled are apt to be much alike, and they stand or fall together. The value of this record to us largely lies in the illustrations it gives of God's government, of His hatred of evil, and His favor to them that fear Him. Only it has to be borne in mind that prosperity and punishment followed good and evil more visibly and promptly, probably, than now, for two reasons: (a) The government was theocratic, i.e. God was the ruler, and idolatry was direct rebellion; and (b) The Scripture canon not being yet complete, men then saw in God's providence what we now see in the perfect word.

The history shows how many causes may go to produce one effect, namely, the revolt of the tribes. Let us see them.

I. THE OLD FEUD between the two strong tribes Judah and Ephraim. See illustrations of it in Judges viii. 1, 2; xii. 1; 2 Sam. ii. 9, 10; xix. 41-48. This explains the prophecy of Isa. xi. 13. This ill-feeling has its counterpart in modern sectarianism, which is not a fruit of religion, but a trait of corrupt human nature. These strong tribes eyed one another with jealousy. So strong churches sometimes do, when they will patronize weak "bodies"; so strong men, even ministers, will look askance at their equals; when they will be quite courteous to those whom they do not count rivals.

This feeling on the part of the ten tribes, of which Ephraim was the head, probably led to the meeting at Shechem. Examine Joshua xxiv. 1, for proof that it was linked with the memory of national gatherings. Abimelech had set up for the throne there. It is very ancient (Gen. xlii. 6). The son of Hamor got his name from it, or gave his name to it. It was in Ephraim's bounds (see v. 25). Now it is called *Nabulus*, which is only a corruption of Neapolis, or "new town." It was doubtless frequently rebuilt, with some changes of site.

II. ANOTHER cause is in REHOBAM'S INDISCRETION. He might have conciliated the people, but he only irritated them. Still, we may lay on him too much blame. He was advised to "serve" them, by the politic old counsellors, who would have him "speak their fair" to get power over them. But it is not a true king's province to be subservient, but to rule and lead, and there is a certain meanness about such fair-speaking. On the other hand, there was no need to use the language of an intemperate tyrant, as he did at the suggestion of the heady young counsellors (v. 13, 14). Such rough speech only justified to them what was with them a foregone conclusion (see evidence of this in v. 8), namely, to reject him.

III. ANOTHER cause is JEROBOAM'S AMBITION. Solomon noticed his energy, and made him superintendent over the public works in Ephraim (see 1 Kings xi. 28). He probably saw the growing discontent of the people; hoped to succeed where Absalom failed; was encouraged in his aims by the prophetic utterance of Abijah (1 Kings xi. 29-40). This drew on him Solomon's anger; drove him to Egypt, where he rose in power, being patronized, possibly from policy, as a thorn in the side of a rival kingdom. He came back to Ephraim on Solomon's death, and set up in state and strength in his native place (1 King xi. 40). He was able to get himself put at the head of the disaffected northern tribes, as their representative man and leader of the opposition. He was their natural king when they revolted, and he made Shechem his capital (v. 25).

IV. But behind all these, and controlling and using them all, was the Divine will. Solomon had fallen away from his fidelity as a king and his duty as a man. God has declared His anger and intention to punish this (see 1 Kings xi. 11, 12), which fixes the time and the extent of the secession—one tribe, Judah (see v. 21), being left, for David's sake. Hence a succession of insurgents against Solomon's sceptre, of whom Jeroboam was last, and successful, because the Lord's time had come. He was an Ephraimite, and his success pleased his tribe and their sympathizers.

The manner of the revolt is vividly given in v. 16; the old seditions cry is raised (so long does a bad, smart watchword live!) as by Sheba (2 Sam. xi. 1), and David's name being used for the head of the family. The great influence of David and Solomon had repressed, but not destroyed, the old jealousy, which we may guess, from the readiness with which the people accepted a new religious establishment, was mingled with some feeling of a divine worship. At least, even God's house at Jerusalem was regarded coldly because it was not in their domains. There were mem-

bers of the ten tribes (v. 17) residing in the bounds of Judah who owned Rehoboam's away. It was in a great degree a question of local jealousy (see v. 23), which is always a most dangerous element in a nation.

The attempt at recovering the lost people was very unfortunate (v. 18), the collector-general being "sent"—perhaps because he was supposed to know the grievances—to win them over, or propose redress. Tax-gatherers are rarely popular. The people had made up their minds, and they made the breach deep and wide, and reconciliation impossible, by stoning him, Rehoboam himself being so alarmed as to flee speedily (v. 18).

The choice of Jeroboam as king followed. It was the recognized right of the people (see, in proof, 2 Sam. ii. 4, v. 3, and 1 Chron. xii. 38) to own and do homage to the king providentially given them (as the churches solemnly receive the ministers whom only God can make). So they had done with Saul (1 Sam. xi. 15), with David (2 Sam. ii. 4), and with Solomon (1 Chron. xxix. 22). This the tribes, setting themselves up as a separate kingdom, did with Jeroboam (v. 20).

The following lessons may be taught from this portion of Hebrew history.

1. Excessive taxation will always be vexatious to a people, and a corrupt government is likely to be expensive and excessive. Bad men have to be used and paid, and having their employers in their power, they make their prices high.

2. Wrong-doing tends to divide men. (See Cain and Abel; Joseph and his brethren; Ephraim and Judah; and this separation.) Well-doing unites them. The fear of God represses envy and strife.

3. Evil men may be used as God's instruments, and yet He has no share in the evil. The tribes and Jeroboam are carrying out God's mind, but they only think of carrying out their own. (See two other notable cases in Isa. x. 6, "The Assyrian, the rod of mine anger," and Acts ii. 23.) Yet does not God's will destroy man's will. He pleases himself in sinning against God, and yet God uses him as His instrument.

4. Prophecy early came to have its use in the growing corruptness of the people. The "Kings" and the "Prophets" can be read together like the "Acts" and the "Epistles."

5. Folly punishes itself. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God." Suppose Rehoboam had said, "My father carried on great public works which made heavy taxes. These burdens will not be needful, and I shall try to lighten other burdens."

6. How close the connection between the moral character of rulers and the condition of the people. So we should pray for, elect, and sustain good public officers, and pray for them when elected (1 Tim. ii. 2).

SUGGESTIVE TOPICS.

The period—the men here mentioned—their respective characters—previous history—aims—the feeling between Ephraim and Judah—the plan of mutiny—why chosen—the object—ancient custom—"making" of kings consisting of what—Rehoboam's word—the effect—the cry of revolt—the extent of it—the end of Adoram—and the danger of Rehoboam—and the lessons.

LESSON II.

THE SIN OF JEROBOAM. 1 Kings xli. 23-3.

COMMIT TO MEMORY vs. 28-30. PARALLEL PASSAGES.—Ex. xxxii. 4-9; 1 Kings xvi. 26.

SCRIPTURE READINGS.—With v. 25, read Judges ix. 45; with v. 26, read Prov. xxix. 25; with v. 26, compare the second commandment, Ex. xx. 4-6; with v. 28, read Isa. xxx. 1; with v. 29, read Josh. xviii. 18, and Judges xviii. 28; with v. 30, read Ps. cvl. 20; with v. 31, read Ezek. xiv. 7, 8; with v. 32, compare Lev. xxiii. 38, 34; with v. 33, read Matt. xv. 6.

Find in the atlas the following places, Shechem, Penuel, Dan, Bethel.

GOLDEN TEXT.—And he shall give Israel up, because of the signs of Jeroboam, who did sin, and who made Israel to sin.—1 Kings xli. 15.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—Self-pleasing leads to idolatry.

This section of Hebrew history is of great interest. It describes a now and bad departure of the Israelitish kingdom, of the effects of which we have many later notices. And it illustrates many far-reaching principles, which civil rulers and Christian Churches need to ponder. Happily the facts and principles are intelligible by the young no less than the old. May we have the help of the Holy Ghost while we study them!

Jeroboam is now established on the throne of Israel. Ten tribes obey him. His ambition is gratified. He proceeds to strengthen himself in his place.

But a man may be king and yet not happy, nor secure. He was haunted with the fear of returning loyalty among his people (v. 26). He feared not only for his throne, but for his life, as he well might. (See Isa. lvii. 1, 2 Sam. iv. 7.) It is a dangerous fate to have one's safety and dignity depending on the caprices of men, especially if we owe either to their errors; for then we are tempted to perpetuate the errors. So it was with Jeroboam. The national worship at Jerusalem had been a bond of union among the people. To have his subjects freely mingle with their countrymen in their feasts and religious gatherings, would have been dangerous to their steadfast loyalty to him. He must make a separation, and keep it up. (Is not this the real objection of Roman Catholics to public schools? Do they not fear the free commingling of the young, and desire to keep their children by themselves, so that their loyalty to Rome may not be endangered?) He understood the charm of fellowship; the attraction of Jerusalem in its situation; the gladness with which men went up to the house of the Lord; the drawing together of the people at their national temple. He must arrange that such influence shall not tell on his people. He must, if possible, isolate his people. Yet the true worship. So he provides a worship of his own for them (v. 26, 27).

It is always thought well to get some

countenance from antiquity for one's religious innovations. Aaron had in a moment of folly and sin satisfied the people by making for them a "golden calf." He did not mean to alienate them from the God of Israel, but to have them worship God through the calf. Neither did Jeroboam. He only meant to give them a visible object to fix attention, and satisfy a people who would not trust an invisible God. Jeroboam made two calves, the outside of plating of which was gold. He did this with the advice of his counsellors. It was a public, state measure. The uses and places were fixed. The intimation, in the very language of Aaron, was to this effect:—This is not a new religion, but a more expedient form. We do not set aside the God of Israel; we only represent him by these. The plea set up was convenience. The real design is concealed. Men who use religion, or who modify its forms, for their own ends, are commonly hypocrites, who have something to conceal.

The objections to this course were the following, as we see from the word itself, in the lesson.

(1.) It was without any divine authority. It had no higher origin than Jeroboam's own heart (see v. 33). His counsellors had the same motive for this course that he had (v. 28). He was making religion a state tool.

(2.) It was again a plain command of God, and was condemned in the most forcible way when Aaron did it (Ex. xxxii. 7-9). When men tell us how ancient usages are, we are to inquire, *Were they lawful?* They may have been old and wrong. All manner of evil is very ancient.

(3.) This worship was suspiciously like the Apis-worship, in Egypt and elsewhere, of which we have remains in the winged bulls.

(4.) Like all departures from God's ways it made other illegal courses necessary. Priests had to be found, and true children of Levi would not take such places. So priests had to be made of the lowest, or, more correctly, of all classes of the people, without regard to their being Levites (v. 31), to officiate. The places had to be chosen; but God had "chosen Zion." So, to get as much seeming authority from tradition as possible, he chose Dan, in the extreme north of the kingdom, once *Lais*, of which we read in Judges, ch. 18, where the Danites had set up worship, and had won a descendant of Moses (v. 30), who had been a private chaplain to Micah, as their priest. It was convenient for the north. Then as to Bethel, in Benjamin (see Josh. xviii. 13, 22), it was consecrated in some degree by Jacob's two visions (Gen. xxviii. 11, 18, and xxv. 9-16), altar, and the name he gave it—*house of God*. (It is now called *Bretin*.) Now, God has reserved the right to choose the place of worship. (So particularly Dent. xii. 5-8, of which all this was a flagrant violation.) He had respect to "traditions," but at the cost of the Divine Word. But if God has a right to be worshipped, it is a part of our obedience to worship as He ordains. Nor did the evil end here. He had to set up a "house of high place" (v. 31), for the calves must be suitably lodged; and this beginning once made, other "houses" followed, as we see even so soon as in 1 Kings xlii. 32. Something had to be devised as a substitute for the shechinah of the true temple. Just as there is suggestion of contempt in the name "calves" as imitations of the cherubim, so there is in the "high places"—not a temple, but an imitation of it. He also changed the time of the festival, taking the same day of the month, but a month later than the feast of the tabernacle in Jerusalem, some think because the vintage was later in the north than in the south. This he devised, like the rest, "of his own heart" (v. 33). From v. 32 we infer that Bethel only was the place of this feast, and from v. 32—"he offered upon the altar"—we infer that he himself took a priest's place, possibly to give eclat to the new establishment.

Of course the true Levites left the region. Their possessions would naturally go to maintain the new-made priests. They, on the other hand, took refuge in Rehoboam's dominion, as we see from 2 Chron. xi. 13, 14. So the new system was inaugurated, and became a sin (v. 30), for the people—all the people, even unto Dan—went to one or the other (such seems to be the meaning of v. 30; which is obscure), for then, as in later times, the idea would prevail that if men did not take the priests and religion "the crown" provided, they were not thoroughly loyal. It was evil all through.

The following points may be impressed on the minds of the pupils:

1. Will-worship, or forms and plans substituted for God's plainly-revealed methods, can never be acceptable to God. Their being costly, or ancient, or common, or tasteful, or convenient, or polite, or anything else, was not then, and is not now, a defence for them. Of course, in matters where God has left no rule (as, for example, the frequency with which the supper should be observed), Christian wisdom, following the analogy of the Bible, must guide us.

2. Such efforts are unwise, as well as unlawful, even for the ends in view. He aimed at perpetuating his kingdom by a human expedient. But the Lord had prescribed the way in which a "sure house" would be his (1 Kings xi. 38). Faithfulness to God would have secured the end. But Jeroboam was not a man of faith.

3. The success of expedients is no proof of their goodness. Jeroboam was able, politic, shrewd, and he succeeded in his aim of keeping up a breach between the tribes. But it was none the less sin in him, and in the people.

4. No one secures peace of mind by disobeying God. See the threat denounced in 1 Kings xlii. 10, to which, indeed, v. 33 properly belongs.

SUGGESTIVE TOPICS.

Jeroboam's aims—strong places why selected—his fears—the ground of them—his plan—places chosen—images set up—reason for "calves"—defect of the priesthood—time of festival—how devised—evils of the plan—guilt of it—consequences that followed—places needed—Levites driven away—whether—lack of faith implied—in what manner—and the lessons to be learnt.

Naturalness in a Prayer Meeting.

It is prayer meeting night in the village of A. As we enter we see a wide space of empty seats between the heavy-hearted minister and the audience. Twenty five or thirty worshippers are present, eight of them men, two or three boys, and the rest women or young girls. The pastor has spoken as best he could, and called upon the brethren to improve the time. Hymns, prayer, exhortation—sometimes at long intervals—have followed, and now the benediction is pronounced. It was but a chilly impression the meeting made upon you, and only one thing redeemed it. You know they felt their coldness and longed for something better. Then, as they went, tongues were let loose, and friends chatted by the door or at the stove, and what real life and interest there were appeared.

Months have gone. We will look in again for the room is brilliantly lighted and evidently full. We enter, and one of those dull, impressive elders of last summer has his eye upon us in a moment, and we find a seat. The audience is "well closed up" about the desk. After a few words from the leader's warm heart, he throws the reins upon the neck of the meeting and it starts off with life and spirit. Inquiries, confessions, requests, and short, pointed prayers follow; exhortations have meaning and heart, and the hour passes all too soon.

What is the difference? Among those cold Christians were the salt and fire of the church and the roots of the last meeting went deep into the soil of the first. It is not sufficient to say God's Spirit has come. That is the great reason, but not quite all. The one service was a reality, the other very much a form; through which however, God saw a dull, numb longing for his presence, and answered the real desire, while the spoken petitions melted in thin air. In the one meeting Christians spoke and prayed about what they thought should interest them; and in the other of what actually did.

Revival seasons have peculiar interests, questions, hopes, and fears. The excitement passes and a new set of circumstances arises which must be met. The runners have entered the race, all of them, perhaps, that we can now expect, and need instruction and help as they press forward. But Christians, while they feel they have somehow lost their grip on the hearts of men, talk still as when they cried, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate," and have little to meet the present want.

Practical questions and difficulties of the pilgrim life should now be the staple of thought. This is the field of the private and young Christian. By training and necessity of his position the minister becomes, to a certain extent, professional, and needs the eyes of the pews; and Christians advanced in the Great Master's school forget how hard they found their primer. Here the young convert can be of greatest use; and an earnest question about a real difficulty will often make the difference between a successful meeting and a failure.

We have among our late accessions a noble young man, fighting his way to some post where he can serve the Master, who asks a great many questions, and whose abraded, brief remarks often go to the point. A few weeks ago, along in the meeting, he said, "I had something I wished to say; but such a remark," alluding to something already spoken, "started me off on another track. I forgot myself and lost the last prayer, and my wife has just come back. Can you elder Christians tell me what to do with wandering thoughts? I know I've wronged they are. But what do you do with them? Pastor can you tell?"

I turned the question over to a good brother, and we had an interesting time comparing experiences in ruling the heart, and we gained a step in learning how to make a service so attractive that the thoughts would prefer to stay at home. It was a practical question, and all wanted to hear what would be said.

Live issues give life, and with changing circumstances we need to change our teaching and prayers. Information as to the absent and those in trouble and sympathy with them, helpful experiences of older Christians, practical difficulties and their solutions, the real necessities and processes of the life which flows from it to every branch, and His glorious supplies and how to get at them, should be the subject matter of the prayer-meeting, because they are our needs at such seasons.

Revival scenes are but one aspect of the kingdom which shows from every side "the manifold wisdom of God," and the muster-in is but the entering of the service with its marches and battles. There is no need that interest should die away, for the attractiveness of a practical meeting is irresistible to a true Christian. But to this end it must be kept alive by being made real.—Selected.

Reason and Faith.

While the bright eyes of reason are all of piercing and restless intelligence, his ear is closed to sound; and while faith has an ear of exquisite delicacy, on her sightless orbs as she lifts them towards heaven, the sunbeam plays in vain. Hand in hand, one brother and sister, in all mutual love, pursue their way, through a world on which, like ours, day breaks and night falls alternate; by day the eyes of reason are the guide of faith, and by night the ear of faith is the guide of reason. As is wont with those who labour under these privations respectively, reason is apt to be eager, impatient, impatient of that instruction which his infirmity will not permit him readily to apprehend; while faith, gentle and docile, is ever willing to listen to the voice by which alone truth and wisdom can effectually reach her.—Henry Rogers.

The most heart-rending of all the troubles and agonies of life is to know that some trusted friend has deceived us.

The labors of the missionaries at Ningpo, China, are much discouraged by the increasing love of the Chinese for intoxicating beverages. It is announced that active efforts are being put forth by the missionaries to check the spread of drunkenness.