

the Syrians (2 Chron. xxii. 5). The circumstances of his death are recorded in 2 Chron. xiii. 7-9.

The seven years which followed the death of Athaliah may count among the saddest periods of Judah's history. To all appearance this line of David was extinct, and the act of an idolatrous queen had frustrated the purposes of God! \* \* \* One infant life, however, secretly preserved, was to continue the great succession, and to prove that the Most High had not suffered his faithfuls to fall. Jehoash, the high priest, had married Jehoash, the daughter of Jehoram, king of Judah, most probably by a former marriage; half-sister, therefore, of the slain Athaliah. In the slaughter of the royal children by their grandmother, the youngest, Jehoash, was taken by his aunt of his and concealed in a store-room of the high priest's house. Athaliah meanwhile reigned securely, unaware of the elements of ruin that were gathering so near. The infant prince was after a while removed with his nurse to one of the apartments of the temple, where he could remain unsuspected among the children of the Levites. \* And Athaliah did reign over the land."—*Dr. S. G. Green.* It is remarkable that while Baal-worship was vigorously pushed by this idolatrous queen, and a heathen temple, images, and priests were established in Jerusalem (2 Chron. xiii. 7), yet she did not interfere with the Levitical priesthood or desecrate the temple of Jehovah during the years of her usurpation. The 23rd chapter of 2 Chronicles contains the account of Jehoash's plans for placing the child-king upon the throne, and their successful completion. Then they "set the king upon the throne of the kingdom, and all the people of the land rejoiced; and the city was quiet after that they had slain Athaliah with the sword."—verses 20, 21. During the minority of Jehoash the kingdom was governed by Jehoash, whose influence upon the young king seems to have been of the best kind.—2 Chron. xiv. 2. As the king progressed towards years of maturity he began to show considerable enthusiasm in the service of Jehovah.

Our lesson contains an account of his zeal in repairing the temple, which must have suffered considerably during the reigns of Jehoram, Athaliah, and the queen usurper Athaliah (see verse 7). We may consider (1) the work proposed; (2) the work retarded; (3) the work pushed forward; and (4) the work completed.

#### THE WORK PROPOSED, v. 4, 5, 7.

V. 4. After this—that is after he was married and settled in his kingdom, Jehoash. This is a contraction of *Jehoram*, the latter form being used in 2 Kings xii. He was the youngest king of Judah, and reigned forty years (verse 1). He seems to have been a man of fine impulses; but the late events of his life show him to have been easily led by his advisers, and lacking in moral courage. Compare verse 2 with 17, 18, &c. Was minded. He himself, not Jehoash, seems to have been the prime mover. To repair. Compare verse 7. The temple was 130 years old. It had been kept in good repair to the end of Jehoshaphat's reign, but had suffered very much from neglect and pillage during the 11 years following.

V. 5. The priests and the Levites. To the temple naturally, as we have by appointment beforesaid the duty of caring for the temple, and of collecting the taxes necessary for its repair. To this fund all the people were expected to contribute. Money. This consisted of pieces of silver of different sizes which were weighed at every transaction. Coined money had not yet been introduced. See Gen. xxi. 16; Ezra vii. 25; Jer. xxiii. 9. From year to year. Apparently, Jehoash proposed to form by yearly subscriptions, a regular fund for keeping the temple in repair. See that ye hasten. The king was thoroughly enthusiastic in the matter, and it requires immediate attention.

#### THE WORK RETARDED, v. 5, 6.

V. 5. The Levites hastened it not.—"They seem to have used the funds thus gathered for their own support, instead of secretly devoting them to the cause for which they were given. On no other hypothesis can the king's subsequent action be explained."

V. 6. Why hast thou not? This looks as if the chief blame rested on Jehoash. The collection \* \* \* of Moses. A half-shekel tax laid on the people for their offerings. \* \* \* the tabernacle, (see Exod. xxx. 12-16.) The precise taxes which the king proposed to devote to this purpose are given in 2 Kings xii. 4.

#### THE WORK PUSHED FORWARD, v. 5-12.

V. 8. Made a chest. Compare 2 Kings xii. 9, which gives fuller particulars. Notice how the king took the matter into his own hands.

V. 9. A proclamation. "It is easily conceivable that such a solemn call, and the announcement that a special 'chest' was assigned to contributions towards the restoration, would have the effect described in the next verse of causing all classes of the people to flock to Jerusalem and fill the chest with their offerings."—*Sp. Com.*

V. 10. Until they had made an end.—that is, either 'until they had given all they had, or, until they had given enough.'

V. 11. At what time.—"The chest, it appears, was from time to time (when it seemed to be pretty fully removed from its place to a royal office, where it was emptied in presence of the high priest (or his deputy) and of a royal scribe; after which it was taken back to the temple. The money was 'laid' placed in bags, and made over to the overseers of the work (2 Kings xii. 10, 11).—*Sp. Com.*"

V. 12. To such as did the work.—that is, to the overseers of the work. See 2 Kings, xii. 11, 12.

#### THE WORK COMPLETED, v. 13.

V. 13. Perfected—in the sense of completion. They set the house of God in its state.—rather. They set up the house of God in its portions.

#### PRACTICAL LESSONS.

1. God's purposes cannot be frustrated. This is illustrated in the preservation of the infant prince Jehoash from the evil design of Athaliah.
2. It is well to be "minded" to do a good thing, if we carry it into execution.
3. Those who want plans carried into effect had better see to them personally.
4. Voluntary contributions are better than State taxes for church purposes.

Feb. 24—Uzziah's Pride Punished—2 Chron. xvi. 16-23. About B. C. 765.

#### GOLDEN TEXT.

"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." Proverbs vii. 18.

#### INTRODUCTION.

After the death of Jehoash, who lived to the great age of 130 years, and whose services were recognized by his burial in the sepulchres of the kings (2 Chron. xxiv. 15, 16), idolatry was revived under the influence of "the princes of Judah," who easily seduced the weak king from the good ways that he had followed. "All the days of Jehoash the priest," "They left the house of the Lord"—which Jehoash had been so zealous in repairing—"And served groves and idols; and walk came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this man trespass." (2 Chron. xxiv. 18). When a remonstrance came from God by the

mouth of Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, instead of heeding it, they conspired and stoned him to death "at the commandment of the king, in the court of the house of the Lord. Thus Jehoash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoash his father had done to him, but slew his son" (2 Chron. xxiv. 21, 22). As Jehoash had done to the son of Jehoash, so did his own servants do to him: for they "conspired against him for the sons of Jehoash the priest, and slew him on his bed" (2 Chron. xxiv. 25). The next king of Judah was Amaziah, the son of Joash, who began to reign when 25 years old, and reigned 29 years. Like his father he began well, but in his later years lapsed into idolatry, and was finally the victim of a conspiracy which resulted in his assassination. The account of his reign will be found in the 25th chapter of 2nd Chronicles, and also in the 14th of 2nd Kings. The prophet Joel, perhaps the oldest prophetic writer of the kingdom of Judah, probably flourished during the reign of Amaziah.

Uzziah, or Azariah—as he is called in 2 Kings xv.—was only sixteen years old when he ascended the throne, and his reign extended over 52 years—a longer period than that of any other king of Judah. "He never deserted the worship of the true God, and was much influenced by Zechariah, a prophet who is only mentioned in connection with him (2 Chron. xvi. 3). So the southern kingdom was raised to a condition of prosperity that it had not known since the death of Solomon"—*Smith's Dictionary*. His career "is that of a powerful monarch, prosperous in commerce, rich in agricultural resources, powerful and determined in the arts of war."—*Idem*. Indeed Uzziah was "marvellously helped" (verse 5-7). The only exception to the excellent character of his reign was that recorded in our lesson (conclude chap. xxvi. 2); but that it was a very serious exception, we shall presently see. The lesson treats of Uzziah's pride and its punishment.

#### UZZIAH'S PRIDE, v. 16-18.

V. 16. When he was strong. He had been in this time about forty years on the throne, and had reached the height of his power. His heart was lifted up. "It is seldom that man can stand prosperity. It may be that Uzziah thought he had good reason for boasting, because at this very time the kingdom of Israel was suffering from the first Assyrian invasion."—*Barnes*. To his destruction.—rather, to do wickedly. Transgressed. "None but the priests might offer incense on the golden altar before the rail, or even, under ordinary circumstances, enter within the temple building, which represented the original tabernacle" (See Num. xvi. 1-7). Uzziah must have deliberately determined to invade the priest's office, thus repeating the sin of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram." (Num. xvi. 1-35).—*Sp. Com.* To burn incense. "His father had burned incense to the gods of Edom (2 Chron. xvi. 14), and Jehoash had burned incense to the calf at Bethel (1 Kings xii. 1); they had copied to the dignity of priests. Uzziah would cleave to God's altar, but he was inflamed with a similar ambition."—*Wordsworth*. "He wished to be both priest and king, an honour that appertained to One only."—*Barnes*. Altar of incense. See Exod. xxviii. 25-28; 1 Ki. xvi. 2; 2 Ki. 8, 24-25; &c.

V. 17. Azariah, the priest. Notice, his name is the same as that of Uzziah, as it occurs in 2 Kings. He was the chief priest, (verse 20). Fourscore priests \* \* \* valiant men. "Uzziah would doubt the temple with a considerable retinue, and it was possible that he might resist the high priest's attempt to expel him, Azariah seems to have intended in that case to use force."—*Sp. Com.* (see 2 Chron. xvi. 18, 19).

V. 18. They withstood Uzziah.—"Wherein they became an example of courage and piety to ministers especially, who must with-