

hotels accommodate travelers, who now make the journey from Jerusalem by carriage road

and continue their drive over the plain to the Jordan and the Dead Sea.

THE LESSON APPLIED

A contractor asked a young employee once to estimate the probable cost of a house that he proposed building. After careful calculation he replied: "I think we can afford to build that house for \$3,000." "Very well," said the employer, "you go ahead with the house and you may have the profit you make." Now the young man was soon to be married and he thought he might increase his profit by using inferior cement, poor shingles, and cheap lumber and by covering up all defects by putty and paint. In this way he added considerable to his gains. By and by the wedding day came, and among his wedding presents he found one from his employer, —the deed to the house he had just finished. The bride was delighted, but John did not seem so enthusiastic. After their honeymoon, however, they moved into the house. At first all went well. But in the course of a few months the foundations began to settle; great cracks appeared in the walls and ceilings; the roof began to leak. He had built his own house, and so he could not complain. In youth we are building the characters that will be ours through life. If we put in poor material, rotten motives, warped ideals, vicious habits, or even just second grade qualities, we must remember that we cannot escape from the ultimate consequences. Zedekiah had exiled himself from God long before he was himself exiled in Babylon. He had destroyed his powers of spiritual vision long before he lost his natural eyesight. He reaped in manhood the harvest he sowed in youth.

"And he that shuts Love out, in turn shall be Shut out from Love, and on her threshold lie Howling in outer darkness."

The cruel fate Zedekiah brought upon himself and his nation was wrought in the face of repeated warnings and counsels to repent. The prophets had spoken and events had indicated the folly of continued disregard of God's will and laws. In a landslide in the village of Haverstraw on the Hudson many lives were lost. A pit had been dug by brick-

makers until the bluff above was partly undermined. Several times the owners of houses above were warned that they must move. On the day the misfortune occurred, the chief of police noticed a wide crack in the street, and he went to each house and warned the inmates to leave at once. "Oh, I guess the bank will hold a little longer," he was told again and again. Even after some houses had collapsed, people rushed into houses already tottering to their fall to save some of their property, and perished miserably. It is the height of folly to disregard the warnings of the Bible and the danger signals of life, the wreck of many a promising young person through careless habits and a flippant attitude to the things that are right. Recklessness is the road to ruin.

The career of King Zedekiah is a vivid illustration of the truth that "the way of the transgressor is hard." And that way is hard, not merely because of the certain punishment at the end, but also because of the many barriers that must be broken down before we can go on in paths of sin. Some of the barriers are the love of God, the warnings and reproaches of conscience, the Word of God, the influences of the Holy Spirit, the sacrifice of Christ, early training and the influences of religion.

Many years after this siege of Jerusalem, when the Jews returned from the exile were facing the formidable task for them of rebuilding the ruined walls, the Lord sent them a message through the prophet Zechariah,—"I will be unto her a wall of fire round about." What a striking picture of the perfect safety of those whom God protects! Before any foe can reach them he must make his way through the roaring, raging flames. But a condition is attached to this promise of safety,— "and will be the glory in the midst of her." Those who are to enjoy God's protection must make him their glory; they must honor him in heart and life. Because Zedekiah and his people had failed to do this, the walls of their city were as a spider's web before the attack of their enemies.