

own account of his exploits on the tablets of Nineveh we are reminded at once of the style of his ultimatum as given to Hezekiah. In one of these inscriptions he calls himself, according to Rawlinson, "The great, the powerful king, the king of the Assyrians, of the nations, of the four regions, the diligent ruler, the favorite of the great gods, the observer of sworn faith, the guardian of law, the establisher of monuments, the noble hero, the strong warrior, the first of kings, the punisher of unbelievers, the destroyer of wicked men." On another tablet he tells the story of his conquests in the region of Judah, thus referring to the scene delineated in the passage before us: "And Hezekiah himself I shut up in Jerusalem, his capital city, like a bird in a cage, building towers round the city to hem him in, and raising banks of earth against the gates to prevent his escape." Thus the Almighty causes the wrath of man to praise him, and uses the weapon of his foes to confirm the testimony of his Word.

2. The arrogance of Sennacherib may be paralleled here and there in Scripture, as well as in secular annals. Pharaoh's utterance, Exod. 5, 2, is a specimen of a kindred spirit of proud and scornful opposition to Jehovah: "Who is Jehovah, that I should hearken unto his voice to let Israel go? I know not Jehovah, and moreover I will not let Israel go." The bragart demeanor of Goliath of Gath, when he "cursed David by his gods" (1 Sam. 17, 43) and defied all the armies of Israel, affords another striking instance of this disposition. And Byron, in his tragedy of Cain, gives a vivid and terrifying portrayal of the same spirit in the words of Lucifer, who is thus pictured as denouncing the Creator:

"Homage He has from all—but none from me:  
I battle it against him, as I batted  
In highest heaven. Through all eternity,  
And the unfathomable gulfs of Hades,  
And the interminable realms of space,  
And the infinity of endless ages,

All, all will I dispute! And world by world,  
And star by star, and universe by universe,  
Shall tremble in the balance, till the great  
Conflict shall cease, if ever it shall cease,  
Which it ne'er shall, till he or I be quenched!"

The literature, if it may be called such, pertaining to a certain blatant form of modern skepticism, is full also of this same spirit of scornful defiance, of hateful arrogance. The king of Assyria mentioned in this lesson is not the only one who "wrote letters" and other productions wherewith "to rail on the Lord God of Israel, and to speak against him." Some of the literature of agnosticism in our time contains railings and mouthings just as foolish and wicked as the utterances of Sennacherib and his servants.

3. In verse 20 "the king and the prophet" are represented as closely mated in prayer. That was their normal relation when the sovereign was willing to yield to the guidance of the divine messenger. The latter was raised up as a counselor to the former; his function was prayer, advice, comfort, sympathy, help, to be administered to the man on the throne and to the people in extremity of need and peril. Usually the prophet was in all respects a greater man than the king—wiser, more unselfish, more devout, and a better statesman. This was particularly the case with Isaiah and Jeremiah, who were chief among the men endowed with political wisdom in their time.

4. The utterance of the Wise Man (Prov. 16, 18), "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall," is vindicated in this story of the humiliation of the imperious and boastful king of Assyria, who instead of carrying out his threats returned to his own land in shame and defeat. His impiety, his vaingloriousness, his contempt and hatred of God, his scornful haughtiness, were all rebuked and punished in the outcome of his campaign. We might cite as an historical parallel the case of Napoleon the Third, in the campaign which proved his overthrow.

## The School of Practice

1. For Hezekiah to have surrendered at the command of the king of Assyria would have been cowardly and wicked. I admire the courage of his refusal. But it is just as cowardly and wicked for me to surrender to the demands of temptation. I will try to remember this during this week, and in whatever form it may come refuse to surrender to sin.

2. I see that while Hezekiah's deliverance came at last from God in answer to prayer he did not neglect anything he could do for himself. He built up the walls and strengthened the gates and made abundance of armor. In my fight this week with temptations by which I am assailed I will first do all that I can to protect and defend myself, and then I will in prayer call upon God for his help.

## The Lesson Digest and Teacher's Guide

### General Preparatory Work

I. *Lesson Material.* 2 Chron. 32; especially the printed verses, 9-27.

II. *Parallel Passages.* 2 Kings 18, 13 to 19, 37; Isa. 36, 1 to 37, 38.

III. *Connecting Links.* At the close of 1904 our consecutive study of Old Testament history was sup-

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