



LESSON VI.—AUGUST 6.

Josiah's Good Reign.

II. Chronicles xxxiv., 1-13.

Golden Text.

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.—Eccl. xii., 1.

Commit verses 1-3.

Home Readings.

Monday, July 31.—II. Chron. xxxiv., 1-13.

Tuesday, Aug. 1.—II. Chron. xxiv., 1-14.

Wednesday, Aug. 2.—I. Kings xlii., 1-10.

Thursday, Aug. 3.—II. Kings xxiii., 1-11.

Friday, Aug. 4.—II. Kings xxiii., 12-20.

Saturday, Aug. 5.—Ps. cxix., 1-16.

Sunday, Aug. 6.—Eccl. xi., 7-xii., 7.

(Davis W. Clark.)

The pendulum of national life in Judah swung often to heathenism and stayed there inveterately. Some powerful personality must needs rise to neutralize the magnetism before the chosen people could return to even the semblance of the pure faith. Such a condition now maintained. There were horses and chariots dedicated to the chief of the planets, and priests were burning incense to all the host of heaven. Sexual force also was deified, and phallic signs and symbols were displayed. Idolatry was dominant in Church and State. As the northern kingdom was practically blotted out, and the places of the exiles taken by pagan foreigners, the whole of Palestine was to all intents submerged by the polluting streams from heathen fountains.

It was the hand of a young man that was to loosen the pendulum of national life from the magnet of heathenism. It proved an uncommonly skillful hand as well as a resolute and strong one.

Josiah was a lily on a dunghill. He exhaled the fragrance of a pure spirit above the lascivious putrescence of his times. He donned the purple at eight years, and straightway gave himself to God. History is silent about the influences which immediately surrounded him. But as his father is known to have been a contemptible weakling, it is supposed that this is another instance in which the hand that rocked the cradle ruled the world. Aside from this there were few advantages in the boy's environment. There was no Bible, for the Book of the Law was lost. There was no regular public worship of Jehovah. It had been two hundred years since any repair had been put upon the temple. It was practically in ruins and the ritual suspended.

Yet in the darkness of the hour the rare and radiant flame of the pure theistic faith shone out, and that not with an intermittent or waning lustre, but with an ever-augmenting radiance. The young king was not simply negatively good; he was positively aggressive against evil. He was not only pious, he was powerful. The record is significant. At eight years he began to reign, and at the same time seek after the God of his fathers. When he had reigned twelve years he began to purge Judah. He thought that what was worth doing at all was worth doing well. He also gave personal attention to the work. It was done in his presence. Down came the high places, with their altars. The images, both carved and molten, were pulverized and strewn upon the graves of those who had worshipped them in sign of the impotence of that worship. One other object lesson was given. It was made necessary by the crudity of the age. Graves of the priests of Baal were opened and their bodies burned upon

the very altars at which they had officiated. The young reforming king carried his havoc of heathenism even into the almost forsaken northern kingdom. In the ruins of the chief cities of four of the tribes, at least, he did that which he had done in Judah. Only when his programme was finished did he return to his own capitol.

Six years later, as a natural consummation, he undertook the great task of repairing the temple—the money and material having been collected in the interval, and all the plans matured. He showed great and practical wisdom in associating the public officials with himself. All should see and know that this was a national undertaking and not a private enterprise of the king. The narrative indicates an orderly method of procedure, and the overseers are honored by having their names entered in the sacred record. 'And the men did the work faithfully.' Significant! Sufficient!

Josiah shares the laurel with Hezekiah. These two kings of Judah, among all of them, were in all respects worthy successors of David, their father. It is a very simple, but under all the circumstances, a very expressive notation. 'They did right. They turned neither to right nor left.'

KEY AND ANALYSIS.

1. Attraction of heathenism to Israel. Dominant in this epoch.
2. Achievement of a young man. Youthful king, Josiah, counteracts the influence of heathenism. His personality and life story.
3. Destructive effort—altars, images, groves, etc.
4. Constructive effort—repair of the temple.

THE TEACHER'S LANTERN.

An American professor signalized his departure to take the chair in Oxford to which he had been invited by the extravagant assertion, that men over sixty did nothing comparatively, and that the world's work that was worth while was mostly done by men under forty.

The spectacular pronouncement has had the ridicule it deserved, but it has, at the same time, served to call attention to the fact that youth should be encouraged to do, and not be too long retarded in processes of preparation. George Eliot's caution against being worn out on the way to great ideas needs to be heeded.

A long catalogue is that which records the achievements of young men and women. A few examples only are here given: Mozart filled all the world with unearthly melody before he was thirty-five, and Raphael gave us all his glowing canvases before he reached that age. Luther was thirty-four when he nailed his theses on the church door. William Cullen Bryant wrote 'Thanatopsis' when he was nineteen. Garfield was a college professor at twenty-six. Edison became the wizard before thirty-five. Summerfield preached all his sermons before he was twenty-seven. Wm. Nichols Crouch composed his serenade, 'Kathleen Mavourneen,' at nineteen. The author of 'Die Wacht am Rhein' was twenty-one when he wrote it.

The world has just celebrated the one hundredth anniversary of the death of the poet Schiller. It has not forgotten the early influences brought to bear upon his genius; namely, his father's high character and learning, and his mother's own poetic fervor and her sympathy with her son's aspirations. In the case of the young king, Josiah, it was probably his mother only who guided him toward his high career.

Every boy and girl is an heir-apparent to a kingdom. It is not a realm of gold lace and empty functions, but a kingdom of character and service. Clear vision of this—careful preparation for it—courageous entrance upon it is the only genuine royalty.

There is a subtle meaning in the original Hebrew word translated 'destroyed'—'the houses which the kings of Judah destroyed'—literally, 'destroyed by neglect.' They did not need to raise iconoclastic hands against the sacred building. All that was necessary was to leave it alone. To cease repairs. It costs as much as would build a small cathedral every year to keep St. Peter's in Rome in re-

pair. And other things besides buildings can be 'destroyed by neglect.'

The vacuum must be filled. When Josiah had emptied the land of paganism he filled it with theism and restored the worship of Jehovah. It is not enough to destroy evil. One must go on to construct good.

Here is a fine example of organization and co-operation. Josiah did not attempt to do the work single handed; he associated others with him and proceeded by a carefully arranged programme.

Josiah had a political purpose and ambition as well as religious. His tour into the Northern Kingdom indicates that he hoped for a restoration of the ancient limits of the monarchy, and the conditions seemed favorable, for at that very time the Assyrians were losing power before the Medes.

C. E. Topic.

Sunday, Aug. 6.—Topic—First fruits for God. Leviticus xxiii., 9-12; Deuteronomy xvi., 9-12.

The Hebrew religion surpassed in symbolism. Its rites were pure and highly significant. No other ethnic religion approached it in this particular. So faithfully do these old Levitical ceremonies portray the attitude which the soul should maintain toward God, that figurative use can be made of them to this day. Among all of them none is more beautiful or expressive than that in which the first sheaf of harvest was presented to God. It was public acknowledgment of him as God of Harvest. It meant that not one sheaf, but all was his, to be possessed, enjoyed and used for his glory.

Junior C. E. Topic.

CROSSING A RIVER.

Monday, July 31.—God's promise. Deut. xi., 31.

Tuesday, Aug. 1.—Its fulfilment is near. Josh. i., 10, 11.

Wednesday, Aug. 2.—They come to Jordan. Josh. iii., 1-4.

Thursday, Aug. 3.—They sanctify themselves. Josh. iii., 5.

Friday, Aug. 4.—The ark goes first. Josh. iii., 6-11.

Saturday, Aug. 5.—Twelve men chosen. Josh. iii., 12, 13.

Sunday, Aug. 6.—Topic—Crossing the river. Josh. iii., 14-17.

Don'ts For Teachers.

(The Rev. A. Y. Haist, in the 'Evangelical S.S. Teacher'.)

'Don't let your scholars slip away.'—Many 'drop out' and 'slip away' and the teacher may not make earnest inquiry. What an awful responsibility. A great many of the non-church-going young people of our day are made up of these 'slip-aways' and 'drop-outs' from our Sunday-schools, and as a result the church never reaches them.

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