

Parish and Home.

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FOR PARISH AND HOME.

FROM MALACHI TO JOHN THE BAPTIST.

(Continued from November.)

In the remarkable career of Judas Maccabeus, we have been permitted to see how one man of rare military genius, fighting for God and country, and leading a handful of determined patriots like himself, can keep at bay, and even defeat with great loss, the choicest armies of a strong military power, backed by determination, wealth, and the best equipment of the time. History has few more inspiring pages. Both the grandeur of the cause and the personal character of the leader combine to rivet the interest upon the story.

It is, therefore, with great sadness that we hear of the subsequent defeat of Judas. But, after all, the truth is that Judas was attempting the impossible. Single-handed, his country was utterly incapable of keeping up a struggle against so formidable an enemy. It was small, and poor, and unwarlike, and, though at the outset Judas was able to inflict terrible defeats upon vastly superior forces, the endless resources of the enemy were bound to conquer in the end. No sooner was one army defeated than another, still larger, was ready to take the field. The Greek generals grew more cautious with time, and familiarized themselves with the tactics of Judas. He, moreover, was the mainstay of his country. On his death there would be none to take his place, and victory would cease to be possible. Yet, for all this, the struggle was not without result. It was undertaken in defence of the Jewish religion, and the wonderful thing is that whatever suffered loss in the vicissitudes of the years that followed, the religion of the oppressor struck no root in the soil, and the Jew kept his faith. It was only a provisional system. The day was not far distant when it would make way for the complete

revelation in Christ Jesus; but until the hour ordained of God had struck, all the powers of earth combined could not drive out or destroy the religion of Sinai land.

On the death of Antiochus Epiphanes, Lysias assumed the government as guardian of the boy king, Antiochus Eupator. His first act was to despatch an immense army of 100,000 foot and 20,000 cavalry to relieve the Greek garrison shut up in Jerusalem, and reconquer the country. Advancing very rapidly on Jerusalem from the south, he encountered Judas at the head of a small force at Beth-Zacharias. With his usual military instinct, Judas had chosen a very strong position, where it was impossible to outflank him, and which must be taken, if at all, by desperate fighting. But the forces arrayed against him were out of all proportion to his little band. Besides, a new difficulty for him appeared in the thirty-two elephants which accompanied the Greek army. Surprise is often the secret of success in arms, and this new method of attack outwitted the Jews. From a tower on the back of an elephant archers kept up an incessant shower of arrows, and a regiment of 1000 infantry and 500 horsemen accompanied each elephant. The Jews were terror-stricken. Judas encouraged his men in vain. His brother Eleazar, to show how easily the elephants might be overthrown, rushed underneath the leader and transfixed him with a spear, and was crushed beneath the animal as it fell. But it was all to no purpose, and Judas retired to Jerusalem. At once Lysias prepared to besiege the capital. It was a Sabbath year, and no corn had been sown. The Jews, therefore, suffered double miseries, and it was impossible to hold out long. The revolt was practically at an end, and all the brilliant achievements of the Maccabees would be without result. But suddenly, as if by the direct intervention of Providence, the whole situation was changed by a piece of news that reached Lysias.

Philip, the foster-brother of Antiochus Epiphanes, had been appointed by the dying monarch as guardian of his heir, and was now hurrying from Persia to Antioch. As Lysias had no intention of letting power slip out of his own hands, he must give up the siege and proceed at once to Antioch. A peace was hastily concluded, on the understanding that the Jew should not be compelled to give up his religion. Reaching Antioch, Lysias at once besieged it, and on its fall slew his rival, Philip.

The year 163 has thus ended happily for

the Maccabean cause. In the following year, Demetrius, the nephew of Antiochus and rightful heir to the throne, returned from Rome, where he had been sent as a hostage. He seized Lysias and the boy Antiochus Eupator and slew them both, and ascended the throne himself. And now civil dissension broke out in Judaea. A new high priest, Alcimus, had recently been appointed by the Greeks. He belonged to the party that sympathized with Greek influence, and accused Judas as a traitor before the new king. By the help of foreign soldiers he took the field against the Maccabees, lest he should lose his office. The latter, however, proved too strong an antagonist, and Alcimus had to flee to Antiochus. And now a new Greek general was despatched by Demetrius to subdue the stubborn Jews. At the head of a large army Nicanor entered Palestine, but, warned of the dexterity of Judas, he tried to get possession of him by subtlety. Failing in this, and obliged to obey the orders of Demetrius, he attacked Judas at Capharsalama, not far from Modin, but was defeated with the loss of 5,000 men. Soon after another battle occurred at Adasa, a little village four miles north of Jerusalem and not far from Beth-horon, the scene of the first victory of Judas. It was the feast of Purim, which recalled the days of Esther, when Israel was threatened with death, and its religion seemed doomed as now. But again the genius of Judas triumphed over an immensely superior army. The first onslaught settled the day, and Nicanor, the Greek general, was numbered among the slain.

This was the last victory of Judas. It was clear to him now that the defeat of the Greeks by the Jews alone was an impossibility. Another large army would soon take the field again, and the Jews were becoming exhausted. To hold out successfully an ally must be secured, and this ally was soon found in the formidable power of Rome. The Romans were hostile to Demetrius and were glad of an eastern ally in their conflict with him. Such an alliance speaks very highly for the political sagacity of Judas. He was more than a successful soldier. He saw that times had entirely changed since the days of the Judges, and that without an alliance of some kind his countrymen would be annihilated. The Roman was an excellent ally, being renowned for his toleration of the religions of all subject nations. Nevertheless the result of this was the ultimate supremacy of Rome in Palestine, brought about by the dissensions of the