

ENGLISH TEACHER'S NOTES.

BY SARAH GERALDINA STOCK.

THERE is no idea more naturally delightful to the youthful mind than that of an unlimited choice. Many have been the fairy tales built upon that idea; and children will amuse themselves (as I have myself done with the "wish bone" or merry-thought of a fowl) in wishing for something, although they know perfectly well that the fulfilment of their wish is a mere dream of the imagination. We read of but one person to whom the unlimited gift was ever made, "Ask what I shall give thee." Very similar words were addressed by Elijah to Elisha before their parting, but in that case there was a measure of uncertainty whether the request could be granted.

If such an offer were sent out through the land to every person, there would probably be a thousand different answers. But, apart from the various tastes of individuals, three things would principally determine their choice:

1. Their knowledge of the person who made the offer. The requests would be limited by what they supposed to be his competency to grant them. The laborer's child would hardly ask its parents for a carriage and horses. But let it discover that its father is a millionaire, and the carriage and horses would be too small a demand. Again, a millionaire might be unable to procure for a young man the place and the power that he desired; but let the offer come from one at the head of the State, and he would have no hesitation in putting forward his wish.

2. Their knowledge of what tends to their own welfare. There is a fairy tale which relates how King Midas wished that everything he touched might turn to gold. His desire was granted. And forthwith his couch turned to gold, and no longer gave him the needed repose; his food turned to gold and no longer gave him the needed nourishment; his arms were changed into the same cold and lifeless metal. The wishes of many young people, could they be gratified, would prove, although less absurd, no less disastrous.

3. Their present circumstances. The invalid, lying helpless on his couch, would wish for health and vigor; the sufferer for freedom from pain; the prisoner for freedom; the drowning man for rescue; and some would choose renewed life and health for those they love best. The young who were leading a quiet, monotonous life would wish for change and excitement; the aged and weary for rest and peace.

Now see how these three things determined the choice of Solomon. 1. He knew some-

thing of him who said: "Ask what I shall give thee." He knew he could not ask too much when the Lord himself made the offer. Riches and power would have been poor things to demand; many were in possession of these who were strangers to God. They might be won by diligence, or cunning, or by even worse means. But wisdom was not to be bought, or earned, or conquered. It was a gift that could only come from above. "The Lord giveth wisdom, out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." Prov. 2. 6. 2. He knew something of what would assure his welfare. Many would have thought themselves wise enough already. They would not have seen the value of such a gift. But Solomon knew that wisdom is "more precious than rubies, . . . a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one that retaineth her." Prov. 3. 15-18. 3. He had regard to his present circumstances. He was king of a great, a highly favoured nation. He was young and inexperienced. He felt himself as a "little child" in the midst of his captains and officers and governors. Ver. 7; 1 Chron. 1. 2, 3. What need was there that he should be clothed with wisdom from on high? And so to his young son who should succeed him he repeated, later on, what he had himself felt—the words chosen for our Golden Text—"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom."

Was his choice a good one? There can be but one answer to this question. His speech "pleased the Lord." And God granted him not wisdom only, but that which he afterward declared to be in wisdom's "left hand," "riches and honour," (ver. 13.) while that which he spoke of as being in her "right hand," "length of days," was promised on condition of obedience. Ver. 14; Prov. 3. 17.

But was it the best choice? Bearing in mind such passages as Prov. 8 and 1 Cor. 1. 24, 30, in which all wisdom is shown as summed up in a Person, Christ the Son of God, we might answer, Yes. But Solomon does not appear to have asked for it in this high and comprehensive sense. He prayed for "an understanding heart to judge thy people," (ver. 9); "wisdom and knowledge that I may go out and come in before this people." 1 Chron. 1. 10. Contrast it with David's wish: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple." Psa. 27. 4. Solomon asked for a distinct and valuable gift to be made over to him; David craved for the perpetual presence of Jehovah. Solomon chose a "goodly pearl;" but David could be satisfied only with the "Pearl of great price."