

in remembrance. The mice are not mentioned before—it was a plague like some of Egypt's. The Philistines conquered Israel—the mice shall conquer the Philistines. They afterwards sent a large number of golden mice, ver. 18, one for each village or city.

The history of Egypt was known and improved, ver. 6. The lingering hope that it was a chance had not disappeared yet, ver. 9. *Beth-shemesh*. A city of Judah belonging to the Levites, ten miles west of Ekron.

II. The Ark leaves Ekron, ver. 10-14.

Without further debate or delay, the plan is adopted. The kine were very unlikely to go willingly to Beth-shemesh; yet though unaccustomed to the yoke, though on an untrodden path, deprived of their calves, their udders strained with milk, they, guided only by God, took the ark to its destination, the field of Joshua beside the great stone; not to idle men, but to busy reapers. God was not obliged to give this sign, because the Philistines chose to try him thus.

III. The Ark at Beth-shemesh, ver. 15-21.

The Levites—were inhabitants of that city. None but Aaron's family could touch the ark, Num. iv. 15. The sacrifices were made probably on the rock, or on an altar of earth—it was irregular to offer them out of the tabernacle.

The lords of the Philistines seem to have followed with the retinue to see what reception the ark would get.

50,070 men. This number is supposed to be erroneously copied. Some copies have it 5,070. Some suppose it to include those smitten among the Philistines. It is very unlikely that so many as 50,070 could be guilty. The mystery that usually hung over the ark made it now an object of curiosity. God did not smite the Philistines for touching or looking into the ark—they knew no better. The Israelites are as glad to get quit of the ark—as the Philistines were.

#### APPLICATION.

1. *We should be more anxious to get quit of sin than of suffering.* The Philistines were not so. Yet sin will surely end in suffering. To get quit of sin is a radical cure. Sin—not poverty, not ignorance, not pain—is the greatest evil. The world does not think so; but write it in your heart, act on it—rather suffer than sin. Joseph, Daniel—all the martyrs. Are you getting quit of sin itself?

2. *God will conquer at last.* How foolish to contend with him! "Harden not your hearts like Pharaoh," was a good advice. It is mercy to the sinner, not God's weakness, that lengthens out the contest, Psalm ii. 10. "The stone," Daniel ii. 35. How long have you contended? Is it over now?

3. *How to appease an angry God is a difficult question.* The Philistines found it so, ver. 2. Man will find it so always. The Bible has answered it, Micah vi. 7; Matt. v. 25. It must be by the "one offering," the "only way."

4. *God will secure His honour though man dishonours Him.* Mice can overcome his enemies. The oxen will serve Him, Psalm i. 12; Job xxii. 2.

5. *God will not accept any service instead of reverent obedience,* ver. 19. He had forbidden any to touch the ark; and though they were joyful, and showed their devotion by many sacrifices, these men were fearfully punished. Our God is a consuming fire, Heb. xii. 2-9. So Aaron's sons, Lev. x. 1. Uzzah, 2 Sam. vi. Are you willing to serve God in his way, not your own? By poverty, by suffering, by difficult disagreeable duty. Jonah; Abraham, Gen. xxii. 2.

#### SUBORDINATE LESSONS.

1. How foully men cling to the doctrines of "Chance"—how unwilling to believe in God's universal government! ver. 9.

2. How much more strictly God visits sin in his own children than in strangers! Israel felt this, ver. 20. So for one heart-sin, Moses and Hezekiah suffered.

3. We need a Mediator to stand before "this holy Lord God," ver. 20.—*Edin. S. S. Lessons.*

#### "THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD."

The joy of the Lord is the strength of His people. Faith displaces fear in every member of the little flock. Its appropriating power enables each of them to say, "The Lord is my Shepherd." Wondrous word! I am a creature of yesterday—yet the eternal God is my keeper! I, a frail and dying mortal—yet the Self-existent is my Preserver! His hand has led me all my life long; His bounty has supplied my wants; His, long-suffering has borne with the perverseness of my heart; His gracious Spirit has spoken comfort to my soul.—Marvellous has been the love of Christ! He came from heaven to seek me; He called with His voice to find me; He brought me into His fold to secure me; He shed His blood to cleanse me; He has sent the Holy Spirit to revive me. His fullness shall supply me; His wisdom shall direct me; His power shall preserve me; and into His everlasting fold He shall receive me, for He is "my Shepherd."—*Rev. J. Street, serm.*