

was an extraordinary occasion. Hence Levitical laws and customs, appropriate for other circumstances, were not considered binding here. **Samuel cried.** A loud, far-sounding cry of supplication for divine help in that hour of peril. **The Lord heard.** Rather, "answered." Thus illustrating how powerfully the supplication of a righteous man avails in its working (James 5. 16).

10. As Samuel was offering. The enemy paid no attention to these acts of worship, but probably deemed it a favorable time to begin the attack. **The Lord thundered.** Here was a supernatural display of divine power in behalf of Israel. **With a great thunder.** Rather, "with a great voice." Loud peals of thunder from the heavens seemed like the voice of God shouting against the Philistines, and putting them in terror and confusion. **Discomfited them.** Put them in consternation and dismay. **They were smitten.** As Israel had been before them on the former occasion (see chap. 4. 3, 10).

11. Pursued the Philistines. They improved the great opportunity thus granted them, and chased the terrified Philistines, and **smote them**, probably for several days. The word here rendered "smote" is different from that rendered "smitten" in verse 10. That denotes a judgment-stroke of heaven; this refers to the blows and slaughter incident to battle. The Israelites followed and beat down their foes **until... under Beth-car.** The situation of Beth-car is now unknown, but it was probably on or near the border of the Philistine plain, and occupied some commanding height, so that those who fled by it would be spoken of as "under" it.

12. Took a stone. For a memorial monument of the nation's gratitude. **Between Mizpeh and Shen.** Both these names have the article, and may be translated as appellatives: "the watch-tower and the tooth." Shen, which means a tooth, was probably some sharp, tooth-shaped rock or cliff, but its location is unknown. Samuel set up his monument at the place where Jehovah's help had been notably conspicuous, and called it **Eben-ezer**, which means "stone of help." It seems to have been erected at the place where Israel was smitten and the ark captured twenty years before (see chap. 4. 1; 5. 1). **Hitherto.** Up to this point; so far.

In this lesson learn—

1. Penitence and prayer without the ark are better than ark, priests, and armies without penitence and prayer.

2. God's favor, in answer to prayer and reform, is mighty with all weapons of war.

3. One great reformer is worth more to a nation than many mere military chieftains.

4. There is propriety in monumental exhibitions of gratitude to God.

English Teacher's Notes.

PERHAPS the most striking part of the story told us in the passage for to-day is that related in the third verse when read together with the first clause of chap. 4. 1. In the latter verse we read that "the word of Samuel came to all Israel." Then in chap. 7. 3 we get a glimpse of a long, long season of spiritual drought, together, as we infer from ver. 4, with temporal bondage, the nation of Israel being under the rule and oppression of the Philistines. The period of gloom during which there was nothing to chronicle for future ages lasted nearly twenty years. But at the end of that time a change had come over the nation, and "all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord." Here was the sign of restoration to follow. But what has brought this about?

There stands on the table beside me as I write, a

primrose which three months ago was adorned with fair white blossoms, with plenty of buds half open and others ready to follow. But the promise which these gave was never fulfilled. As the already open blossoms faded away, those which should have succeeded all died in the bud, and the leaves began to wither and shrivel up. I wondered what was the cause, till one day, emptying a little water which had run through into the saucer beneath, I found a worm in it which had evidently been preying on the plant. This having been removed the question arose as to whether the spoiled plant with the leaves gone from one side and no sign of any possible blossom to come should be kept or not. I kept it, warred as it was, and tended it day by day, giving just so much water as was needed, placing it in the light, though not in the hot sun. And now a sweet odor is rising up from some shoots which are lifting their heads, and the delicate, creamy buds are just beginning to appear again.

Just so during those sad twenty years God did not leave Israel uncared for. There was a prophet among the people. And his holy example as well as his faithful words were as light in the darkness, as springs in the drought; and long and helpless as the time must have seemed, at the end of it the tiny buds of repentance began to appear, promising the fair blossoms of restoration and peace and gladness. The "reform" under Samuel was preparing silently and steadily. The prophet did not waver or weary in repeating the word of God, and at length he had to answer a definite inquiry which must have been made of him by the people and bid them "put away the strange gods" and "prepare their hearts unto the Lord and serve him only."

The long, patient, almost unrecorded service had now to be followed by prompt, vigorous, and heroic action. There was first the fast at Mizpeh, the public expression of Israel's repentance; next, the open assumption of authority by Samuel in defiance of the Philistine rule; then the attack of the enemy, the sacrifice, the prayer, and the victory; and then the setting up of the stone "Eben-ezer" in commemoration of the Lord's deliverance. These events followed fast the one upon the other, and stand out in bold relief on the page of Scripture history. But where had they been without the long years of patient working and waiting?

It is not every one who is called to such a work as that of Samuel. It is only once in a while that we meet with the reformer of a whole nation. But on a small scale a similar work may come to many in the class. Each one who knows and serves the Lord Jesus is bound to be a "reformer." However obscure and unknown, there is some one whom he may influence, some one whom he may help to carry out our Golden Text and "cease to do evil" and to "learn to do well." But let the fact be emphasized that it is the quiet, steady, unwavering witness for Christ that tells on others. Now and then the occasion may come for bold and spirited action like that of Samuel with regard to the Philistines. But the ordinary way of "reform" is by persevering, whole-hearted, faithful continuance in well-doing. And this, by the grace of God, may be accomplished even through a child.

Cambridge Notes.

1 Sam. 7. 1-12.

At the time of our lesson Samuel had apparently reached the age of thirty, at which so many prophets began their public work. With his labors came deliverance, but the Philistines were only temporarily checked. Their tyranny was even heavier in Saul's reign, and after the disruption their still-born hostility was a thorn