

child-hearts at home to be gladdened. For the first time the tears rushed to her eyes. "They were so happy last year," she sighed, remembering the loaded stockings and the good hot dinner.

That night when Benny and Janie were asleep she asked Richard if they could spare anything for Christmas. At first he shook his head, and then he said "Maybe."

"Of course we can't touch what we have laid by to live on," he said. "But there are two days to Christmas yet, and if I can earn anything in any way to-morrow, you may have it, wife, for our youngsters."

So the next day he went forth, while his wife waited in hope, taking care of her little ones and telling them stories of summer time and summer doings, for fear they would get to thinking about Christmas.

"For he may not get one cent," she thought to herself anxiously. But if he could get even five cents, she would not despair. She had not lingered for nothing by the penny stands on the avenue.

She put the children early to bed, and sat waiting for Richard, while at the same time she ripped up some old bead trimming she had once had on a cloak. He came in at last, with a gloomy face enough, and her heart sank.

"I've stood about all day," he said, "and the only thing I could get to do was to carry a pile of wreaths half a dozen yards, from the pavement into St. Luke's church. And there's twenty-five cents to keep Christmas with!"

He tossed it to her as he spoke. She didn't cry, nor even look gloomy. On the contrary her face grew bright.

"All we want is to make them happy," she said cheerfully, "and I guess we can do that with twenty-five cents."

"All right, go ahead," he replied, brightening as she brightened. She got up and put on her shawl and hood.

"I'm going shopping," she said, laughing; "only just round in the avenue. You stay here, Rich, and if you want work, ravel out that old stocking leg!"

Then down she sped, and hurried to the street corner where she had seen an old German woman selling little Christmas trees. Very little they were, only about ten inches high, but they were true green cedar, and set in a solid round foundation. And there were two small white wax doves lodged in the twigs. Only five cents for a Christmas tree! She made her selection, had it wrapped up with care, and then stepped into a neighboring grocery where she bought an ear of popcorn and two clay pipes. Three cents more for all that! Then she paused.

"I will just step round to the penny stands in the avenue," she said to herself, and directly she became one of the hurrying throng of eager, happy people, who were all out getting ready for Christmas. At the first stand she bought a little penny doll, a penny cradle, and a penny whistle. Then she went on some distance and paused again at a stand where a girl was selling tiny wax candles, a penny apiece. She bought two, a blue one and red one.

"Thirteen cents gone!" she calculated. "That's enough for to-night. I can run out again to-morrow." And she turned homeward, casting keen glances at the store windows as she passed to see what possible bargains might lurk there for her.

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed Richard, when she came into the room with radiant face, and displayed her treasures. "Of all things, a Christmas tree! You do beat everything, Jane!"

The precious tree was hid safely in the closet, and the toys laid beside it. And then Jane shelled the ear of corn and Richard popped it in the spider. It popped beautifully.

"Now we will string it," said she, and that was done.

"Did you ravel out the stocking leg?" she asked next; and Richard showed her triumphantly the yarn all wound in a tight ball.

"Does it bound?" He threw it to the floor and it bounded.

"Just right for a ball for Benny," said Jane, "and I have a bit of scarlet cloth and a bit of black to cover it with. I must cover this ball, and make a wee bit nightgown for the dolly, and a little spread for the cradle before I go to bed."

"I won't be outdone!" said Richard, going to the little box of kindlings and taking out a piece of pine. "I used to be a master hand at whittling."

So Jane stitched and he whittled. He made a really nice set of jackstraws for Bennie, including a tiny ladder, a little gun, a barrow, a rake, a spear, and a bow, among all the host of straight simple straws.

"Why, that is splendid!" cried his wife. "Now do make something for Janie."

So he found some more pieces of pine, and cut out a cunning little bedstead; just large enough for Janie's dearly loved doll, Sophy, who was six inches high when she stood up.

"There's that empty salt bag I washed the other day," said Jane. "It would make a nice mattress if I had anything to fill it."

"I'll fill it," said Richard. "Here are some old newspapers, help me strip them up into shreds." That done, they filled the white bag with the soft, springy mass, and there was the mattress complete.

"I'll make pillows to match to-morrow," said Jane, delighted, "and the little sheets, too. Why, it's after ten o'clock! We must hide these things away."

Bennie and Janie did not know next day what their mother sewed upon while she sat with her back towards them. They did know, however, that their father carried some packages for a grocer and got paid in molasses, for that was a great event, and their mother immediately made some ginger cookies. But no one but she and Santa Claus knew that there was a cookie shaped like a horse, and another like a boy, in the pan.

Toward evening she slipped out again, and bought a very small candy cane for Benny, and a candy basket for Janie, one cent each. Also a little horn of sugar plums for each child, two cents more—for a little candy does make Christmas sweeter, say what you will. And nuts make Christmas merrier, too, so she bought three cents worth of nuts. Then, last of all, would you believe that a little set of dishes could be bought for five cents? Very small dishes, indeed, and very few, it is true, and not the best of china, but still a set of dishes, and what could make little Janie gladder than that?

Why, it was the very happiest holiday season that Richard and Jane had ever known! They were really excited over it. They shut the wondering children off in one room, while they arranged the tree and the presents on the table in the other. A tree, strings of pop-corn, lighted candles, a dolly in a cradle, jackstraws, a bedstead all furnished, a set of dishes, a red and black ball, a gingerbread man and horse, a whistle, and nuts and candy. And only twenty-five cents spent. Then there were the pipes, they didn't make much show just then; their glory was to come afterward.

At the last moment Richard Flint brought in an armful of green twigs, which had been swept out of the gateway of St. Luke's when the decorating was done. And he and Jane dressed their own little room with fir and cedar, to welcome blessed Christmas, but they had to do it in a great hurry, for little voices were calling the other side of the door, and little hands were knocking to be let in.

"Come, darlings!" cried the father and mother, opening the door.

The little child-hearts as nappy as any in the land? There were breathless Oh's of admiration, and shouts of joy, and then delighted appropriation of one thing after another. The ball began to bound, the cradle began to rock, the whistle began to whistle, the dishes were set out, the nuts began to crack, and Oh, it was such fun for Bennie, Janie, and father and mother, too!—*Christian Union.*

A CUNNING DOG.

Bob, our mastiff, was always on friendly terms with the cats and kittens of the house, and nothing pleased them better than to crouch up to his warm, curly coat and have a snooze. He always received these attentions from his frisky friends with great kindness and condescension on his part, but I am sorry to say he was guilty of a good deal of hypocrisy towards them and their mother. He would never drive them from a dish, or a dripping-pan, or anything else. Oh, no! but when he happened to see them eating out of either he quietly, but quickly, walked up to the coal heap and picking up as large a lump as he could well hold between his teeth, he would walk gently up to where his friends were feasting, and drop the lump of coal into either basin, dish, or dripping pan, looking quite innocent all the time. Pussies immediately licked their mouths, and walked away, while their amiable friend finished their meal for them. One of Bob's duties was to accompany our waggoners on their journeys in taking out our goods (we were manufacturers). This he did not at all approve of, and in order to shirk his duty he at first absconded as soon as he saw any signs of packing and loading of waggons, and would not be found till after he knew that waggons and waggoners were gone and at a safe distance. This he must have learnt by watching them off. He then returned to society, looking as amiable and as affable as ever. But, being of a social disposition, he got tired of secluding himself in solitude, so, in order to escape the toil of travel and to enjoy the pleasures of society he adopted another expedient, for which, I think, he merits the title of being "a very knowing dog." It was this:—His enquiring eyes were always on the watch, and after he had given up absconding, whenever he saw packing and preparation for a journey going on, he became distressingly lame, first with one leg, then with another, but with one or other constantly, frequently lying down as if too lame to stand, much less to walk. But as soon as the waggons were well away Bob's lameness vanished, and he could walk and run as well as ever.—*Leisure Hours.*

IF I BE IN CHRIST—WHAT THEN?

I am safe, whatever this present year may bring; nay, my night is far spent, my day is at hand. The wilderness is nearly traversed; Canaan and Jerusalem are almost within my view; and the summits of the everlasting hills are already appearing. What manner of person, then, ought I to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God? I must press forward; and so much the more as I see the day approaching, I must be consistent and heavenly-minded, so walking worthy of my calling, and setting my affections on things above. For what have I, who have a crown in prospect, a kingdom in reversion, to do with the vanities or pleasures of this poor passing world? My eye is above; my treasure is in heaven; shall not my heart be there also? If I am in Christ, I must seek to be like Him, and to follow Him more and more closely, as the night is hastening to an end, and the day about to break. If I am in sorrow I shall call to mind that weeping endureth but for a night, joy cometh in the morning. If I am in comfort, I must see that this prosperity which God has given me is making me a holier man, and a more self-denying worker for Him who loved me and washed me from my sins in His own blood. If I am poor I shall rejoice that my day of wealth is just at hand. If I am rich I shall take this gold which my Lord has given me and lay it all at His beloved feet. Mine must be no half discipleship—no service of two masters—no divided heart. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. What remains of this brief life of mine must be given wholly to the Lord.—*H. Bonar, D. D.*

ADVANTAGES OF RELAXATION.

I have been employed these last three hours with John Elliot and other boys in trying how long we could keep up two cricket balls. Lord Minto caught us. He says he must send me on a mission to some very young monarch, for that I shall never have the gravity of an ambassador for a prince turned of twelve. He, however, added the well-known and admirable story of Henry IV. of France, who, when caught on all fours carrying one of his children, by the Spanish envoy, looked up and said, "Is your excellency married?" "I am, and have a family," was the reply. "Well, then," said the monarch, "I am satisfied, and shall take another turn round the room;" and off he galloped, with his little son flogging and laughing. Boyish habits; but reflection has satisfied me that it would be very foolish, and that I should esteem it a blessing that I can find amusement in everything, from tossing a cricket ball to negotiating a treaty with the emperor of China. Men who will give themselves entirely to business, and despise (which is their term) trifles, are very able in the general conception of the great outlines of a plan, but they feel a want of that knowledge which is only to be gained by mixing with all classes in the world, when they come to those lesser points upon which its successful execution may depend. Of this I am certain. Besides, all habits which give a man light, elastic spirits are good.—*Sir John Malcolm.*

SCRIPTURE ENIGMAS.

III.

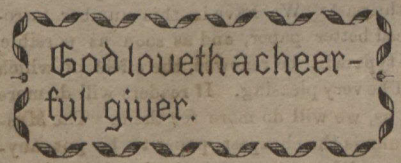
1. The father of Dathan and Abiram.
2. The beloved physician.
3. The surname of a traitor.
4. The name of a miraculous spring.
5. The mount of cursing.
6. Where a herd of swine perished.
7. A valley where a famous event took place.
8. A city of Phrygia to which Paul addressed an epistle.
9. The place where a Syrian captain was defeated.

The initials of the answers will give the name of a sojourner in the land of Moab, and the initials that of his native town.

IV.

1. An Israelitish leader who conquered the host of Midian.
2. A cunning hunter.
3. A prophet, a native of Elkosh.
4. One whom the Lord refused for his appointed.
5. The wife of Zebedes.
6. The second son of Kohath.
7. The chief ruler of the synagogue at Corinth.

The initials and initials of the answers will give the names of two books of the Bible.



SCHOLAR'S NOTES.

(From the International Lessons for 1877 by Edwin W. Rice, as issued by American Sunday-School Union.)

LESSON III.

JANUARY 21.]

OMRI AND AHAB. [About 826-810 B. C.]

READ 1 Kings xvi. 23-34. REWRITE vs. 25, 30, 33.

GOLDEN TEXT.—But evil men and deceivers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.—2 Tim. iii. 13.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—"Wicked men grow worse and worse."

DAILY READINGS.—M.—2 Kings xvii. 7-17. T.—Micah vi. 1-16. W.—Deut. vii. 1-11. Th.—Ex. xxxiv. 10-17. F.—2 Tim. iii. 1-13. Sa.—Rev. ii. 20-29. S.—Josh. vi. 17-27.

CONNECTED HISTORY.—Jeroboam had reigned over "Israel" twenty-two years; Nadab, his son, two years; Baasha, captain of the army, slew Nadab and his house, and reigned as king twenty-four years; his son Elah reigned two years; Zimri, captain of the army, slew Elah and all Baasha's sons, and reigned seven days, and burned himself in his palace when Omri was about to take him prisoner. Omri became King over half of Israel, and Tibni over the other half; Omri, after four years' war, defeated and slew Tibni, and reigned twelve years (including the four years of civil war); Ahab reigned twenty-two years. While these kings ruled over "Israel" (the ten tribes) at Shechem and Samaria, the following ruled over "Judah" (the two tribes) at Jerusalem; Rehoboam, seventeen years; Abijah (for Abijah), three years; Asa, forty-one years; Jehoshaphat, twenty-five years; the latter king had ruled about four years at the time of the death of Ahab, King of Israel.

TO THE SCHOLAR.—Study with care the names and order of the kings of Israel from Jeroboam to Ahab, and also the names and order of the kings ruling over Judah at the same time. This will aid you in gaining a clear idea of this portion of Bible history.

NOTES.—*A-sa*, third king of Judah, after the division, son of Abijah and great-grandson of Solomon. He obeyed God, and had a long and prosperous reign of forty-one years.—*Omri*, sixth king of Israel after the division, and founder of the third dynasty; he was captain of the army, defeated Zimri, the murderer of King Elah, and also defeated Tibni, who was made king by part of the people. Omri reigned twelve years, six at Tirzah, and six at Samaria; possibly was a temporary capital before Samaria was built. His modern name is *Tell-Asad*, in the mountains, north of Nablus.—*Sa-ma-ri-a*, a city, and capital of Israel after the division; founded by Omri; twice attacked by Syrians; taken by the Assyrians; improved by Herod; the ruins are found at *Sebastiyeh*, a poor village about seven miles north-west of Nablus.—*A-hab*, seventh king of Israel; son of Omri; married Jezebel; established Baal-worship; was very wicked; died of a wound received in battle, and the dogs licked his blood.—*Jes-e-bel*, a Phoenician princess, daughter of Eth-baal, and wife of Ahab, a wicked woman; slew the prophets of the Lord; supported a large number of priests of Baal and Astarte; caused Naboth's death; was slain and eaten by dogs. 2 Kings ix. 30-37.—*Eth-baal*, a Phoenician king of Zidon; he slew the ruling king, and usurped the throne about fifty years after King Hiram of Tyre.—*Zi-do-ni-ans*, people of Zidon or Sidon a Phoenician town about twenty miles north of Tyre, now called *Saida*, and has about ten thousand population.—*Ba-al*, the great idol-god of the Canaanites and Phoenicians.—*Jer-i-cho*, a city near the mouth of the Jordan.

EXPLANATIONS AND QUESTIONS.

Lesson Topics.—(I) SINS OF OMRI. (II) SINS OF AHAB.

I. SINS OF OMRI. (23.) *Asa . . . Omri . . . Tirzah.* See Notes. (24.) *Samaria*, see Notes; two talents, probably equal to about \$3,500. (25.) *wrought evil . . .* worked at evil; worse than all, was not content to follow others, but must exceed them in wickedness. (26.) *the way of Jeroboam*, his evil way (ch. xii. 28); vanities, idolatries. (27.) *might that he showed*, in the wars with Syria (see 1 Kings xvii. 2); *chronicles*, not the "Chronicles" of the Bible, but a work known when this book of Kings was written.

I. Questions.—Who succeeded Jeroboam as king? 1 Kings xv. 25. How long did he reign? Who was king after Nadab? How did he gain the throne? ch. xv. 27. How long did he reign? Who was the next king? For how long? How was he slain? How long did Zimri reign? State his chief act. How did he die? v. 18. Name the two persons next chosen kings. Which finally became sole king? What was the character of these kings? Whom did they follow in sin? Which of them outdid Jeroboam in sin? State the central truth of this lesson.

II. SINS OF AHAB. (30.) *did evil . . . above all*, Omri was more wicked than any before him; now Ahab is more wicked than Omri. (31.) *Jezebel*, God had forbidden such marriages. Deut. vii. 3. See Notes. (32.) *house of Baal*, temple built for this idol. (33.) *grove*, or *Asherah*, a goddess (*Heb*); hence her image or statue which Ahab set up. (34.) *In his days*, wickedness became so common that Hiel dared to build Jericho in the face of the prophecy.

II. Questions.—Who became king after Omri? What was his character? Who became his wife? Whose daughter was Jezebel? What temple did Ahab build? What did he place in it? What is a "grove"?