

phrase is obscure. The translation of the Authorized Version "with their mattocks," that is, axes, seems to be equally admissible.

7. Sun images—A reference to the worship of the sun by the Jews will be found in 2 Kings 23. 11, where the chariots and horses dedicated to the sun-god are spoken of as having been removed from the gate of the temple. The worship of the sun at Jerusalem is also mentioned by Ezekiel (Ezek. 8. 16). This particular form of idolatry was common both among the original inhabitants of Palestine and among the Babylonians, and from these in all probability it was copied by the Jews.

8. Shaphan—According to 2 Kings he was a scribe.

The recorder—Marginal reading, "the chronicler."

9. And they came to Hilkiah the high priest, and delivered the money—In the account in 2 Kings we read that they were sent to Hilkiah with a message to him to "sum," that is, to reckon the total of the money collected in the temple. The account of the repairing of the temple (verses 9-13) reminds one strongly of the similar undertaking carried out by Joash a century earlier. "But Jehoiaha the priest took a chest, . . . and set

it beside the altar, . . . in the house of Jehovah: and the priests that kept the threshold put therein all the money that was brought into the house of Jehovah. . . . And they gave the money that was weighed out into the hands of them that did the work, that had the oversight of the house of Jehovah: and they paid it out to the carpenters and the builders, that wrought upon the house of Jehovah, and to the masons and the hewers of stone, and for buying timber and hewn stone to repair the breaches of the house of Jehovah, and for all that was laid out for the house to repair it" (2 Kings 12. 9, 11, 12).

12. The overseers—There is no parallel in 2 Kings for the rest of this verse or for verse 13.

The sons of the Kohathites—The descendants of Kohath, the second of the three sons of Levi, mentioned in Exod. 6. 16; Num. 3. 17; 1 Chron. 6. 1, 16; 23. 6.

Levites—Members of the priestly tribe of Levi who were set apart for the special service of religion in Israel. How manifold were their duties is indicated in part in this verse and the next, some being **skillful with instruments of music**, and others being **scribes, and officers, and porters**.

The Lesson Exposition

A BAD FATHER'S GOOD SON

What surprises us first of all is that Josiah, being descended from a bad father and a bad grandfather, was not equally bad as they, or worse. Our second surprise is that he was not only a good boy, but that he grew in moral strength to manhood and continued righteous to the end of his life. We are inclined to expect that a bad man's son will break down sooner or later. We assume that the hereditary foundation in such a case is unsound, that there are cross grains of moral weakness in the framework of such a life that will certainly give way and break when the inevitable pressure comes. But Josiah appears to have had a sound nature in which the severe tests of many years did not reveal any weak places—which requires us to think a little more carefully about the law of heredity. We must give up the idea that heredity is a sort of fatality. In some cases inherited propensities may dominate the life; but except in these rare cases personality is a stronger factor than heredity.

THE MOTHER ELEMENT

Besides, in the study of heredity, we must not leave out another very important factor—the mother element. Bad husbands frequently have good wives, and so the sons of bad fathers may have good mothers. It may have been

so in the case of Josiah. His father, Amon, we know was wholly evil. But what of Jedidah, his mother? (2 Kings 22. 1.) Her name meant "Beloved," and her character may have corresponded to her name. If so, there was enough to account for the character of Josiah; not simply by way of heredity, but, what in many cases is much more important than heredity, by way of personal influence during those eight years before he became king—and in the early years of his reign, during which the queen-mother may have been the moral power behind the throne. Of course, we are not certain of this in the case of Josiah; but we must not leave the mothers out of the account in studying the lives of men. We know as a matter of fact that the children of many men are only saved from moral ruin by the influence of their mothers. I know some men of honor and moral worth who properly should not be spoken of as the sons of their fathers, but as the sons of their mothers.

THE DIVINE FACTOR

But back of both father and mother in the case of Josiah, and more potent than either, stood God. He was a chosen instrument for fulfilling God's purposes. This fact must be set clearly before us, that Josiah and the work that he did were predicted by one of God's