

## The Quiet Hour.

### The Kingdom Divided.

S. S. LESSON—1 Kings 12: 12-20. July 3, 1904.

GOLDEN TEXT—Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.—Prov. 16: 18.

BY REV. W. J. CLARK, LONDON, ONT.

And the king answered the people roughly, v. 13. These subjects had come to the young king with a respectful request, presented in a respectful manner, and he deliberately met them, not only with a refusal, but a refusal expressed in contemptuous and brutal terms. It seems an incredible folly, and yet folly is to be found in the world today as well as in the world of Rehoboam's time. The king's action showed a deplorable ignorance of human nature, and an ignorance, too, that was culpable, for the old men had given him good advice. We should bear in mind that tyranny and brutality are always folly, and should be ready to give heed to the teachings of experience.

The king hearkened not unto the people, v. 15. The king's conduct is spoken of here as an instrument to bring the will of God to pass in the affairs of the kingdom. But we must not be led to think that such divine direction clears the king of responsibility for his course of action. There was no supernatural constraint compelling Rehoboam to speak and act in the way that he did. His conduct was the outgrowth of his own nature and disposition, and he was in large measure responsible for the disposition peculiar to him. It is not given to man to disentangle the various elements which go to make up character, and state their relative value. But no argument can blind us to the fact that, when we do a foolish thing, we are to blame for our folly. But we see it is true that all the follies of which men are guilty are overruled by God for the furtherance of his own wise and righteous purpose.

So Israel departed into their tents, v. 16. Here we have a loyal people who are transformed into a nation of rebels. Many such another story has been told in the history of the nations, where people, driven to despair of justice in peaceful ways, seek it in hot rebellion. Charles the First of England was another Rehoboam in his day, and George the Third in his treatment of the American Colonies was guilty of the same sort of folly. But not only kings and those in high places are tempted in such ways, but everyone who has a measure of authority is tempted to oppress those under him; and wherever there is unrighteous oppression there is danger of awaking the spirit of rebellion. All rule should be exercised in accord with the spirit of justice, and only such rule can hope to be stable.

And all Israel stoned him with stones, that he died, v. 18. As far as the record informs us, Adoram was the accomplishing of his duty, in obedience to the king's command, when he met with his violent death. There are two thoughts suggested by this incident which carry instruction. The one is that no man, be he king or subject, can do foolishly, and himself bear the full consequence of his un wisdom. No man liveth to himself. Every life is intertwined with other lives, and the action of each has some effect upon others. Rehoboam's pride and hardness of heart led to a great deal of suffering, and was the cause of Adoram's death. Many of the associations of life are

to a degree outside our own control, but many, on the other hand, are matters of free choice. Where this latter is the case, we should realize how important a thing it is, the people with whom we company, and should choose our associates with great care. The other thought is the lengths to which angry passions lead men. When a people are thus roused to wrath, they are not in the mood to discriminate, and are as ready to visit vengeance on the servant as on the master.

King Rehoboam made speed, v. 18. What a contrast to v. 14 and the king's brag! Doubtless in that hurried flight he looked back on his conduct with regret and shame. We cannot always, indeed we very seldom can, foresee the outcome of our words and actions. Had Rehoboam foreseen the way in which the people were going to act, he would have attuned his tongue to milder terms. The one thing that is better than any foresight, is the knowledge that right-doing will bring forth fruit that will give peace, and ill-doing will bring forth fruit of shame and suffering. This is the only guard against the future. Had Rehoboam thought of the people's side of the case, he never would have been guilty of such harshness, and would not have had to flee, a fugitive in fear of his life.

There was none that followed the house of David, but... Judah only, v. 20. It is hardly possible for a man to be either so foolish or so wicked that he will have no friend to stay by him. One tribble clung to Rehoboam. The very loneliness in which the sinner is will strengthen the loyalty of the friends who still cleave to him. In this we surely see some sign of the mercy of God. He does not leave us utterly alone, and there is always hope of a way back, if only we earnestly and humbly seek it. That hope of a way back stands between many and despair.

### God Answers Prayer.

I know not by what methods rare;  
But this I know, God answers prayer.  
I know that He has given His Word,  
Which tells me prayer is always heard,  
And will be answered soon or late,  
And so I pray and calmly wait.

I know not if the blessing sought  
Will come in just the way I thought;  
But leave my prayers with Him alone;  
Whose will is wiser than my own,  
Assured that He will grant my quest,  
Or send some answer far more blest.  
—Selected.

FOR DOMINION PRESBYTERIAN.

### A Deceptive Definition.

BY C. H. WETHERBE.

Many a Christian harms himself and Christ's cause by accepting a defective and deceptive definition of Bible truths which have direct relation to spiritual life. It is a common thing for a large number of professed Christians to give a most deceptive definition to the nature and extent of sin, as related to Christian people. A man recently wrote to the editor of the Pennsylvania Methodist the following note: "I write to ask, do you sanction the clipping in your last week's paper, signed 'Rev. Dr. Warren G. Patridge'? The very first line says: 'We cannot become sinless.' Is this the teaching of God's word as to his power to save? I

want you to answer. If we cannot become sinless, what are the possibilities through the blood of Christ? How far can he save us?" Here was a good opportunity for the editor to give that erring correspondent such instruction as might lead him into healthful truth; but instead of doing so, he confirmed him in his blindness, as may be seen by this reply: "No, sir. Sin is the transgression of the law. Only those really transgress who mean to do so. If all our acts, words and thoughts are prompted by love to God and to man, God will not hold us responsible for mistakes of the judgment. Wrong motive alone constitutes real sin."

That editor puts his own contracted construction upon what God says in the Bible concerning the character and extent of sin, and it is a most deceptive one. He encourages that reader in the belief that he is pursuing a sinless life, and he commits sin in doing so, whether he intends to or not. It is true that sin is the transgression of law; it is also very true that thousands of the best Christians unintentionally transgress some forms or features of divine law, and they often do it. There is not a person on earth who has a complete knowledge of the whole length and breadth of God's laws and commands, and therefore a Christian may transgress a law or command without even knowing it at the time of his doing so. The Bible speaks of sins of ignorance, and it teaches that an atonement is necessary for such sins. I wonder if that editor imagines that he does not commit any sin when he prints unjust accusations against many of the noblest Christians in the land, including not a few in his own denomination. Verily, there is much self deception.

### A Mighty Force.

The mightiest force in the world today is Christianity. It used to be worth a man's life to confess Christ before the world—and it is yet, if the man would only see it in the right light. For nothing short of a whole life is either pleasing or acceptable to Christ. There never was a time in the history of the world when a man could lift his head with greater gladness or with more justifiable pride to say, "I thank God I am a Christian," than now. Thank God for Christ, Christians and Christianity. Christianity—it led a Savonarola to submit to gibbet and flames; it led a Cranmer to thrust his right hand into the flame that it might burn first because "it had written contrary to his heart"; it led a Luther to face an angry council—"an empire against a man"—and to exclaim in words that will never die: "Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise. God help me." It has led apostles to suffer lashes and imprisonment and death. It led Stephen to be bold enough to face the Sanhedrin and condemn it to its teeth, though his denunciation is immediately followed by his execution. It supports a Carey in India, a Livingstone in Africa, an Ashmore in China. It sends the brightest and best of all our fair land to the worst part of it, and only offers fever and trial and death as an inducement. Thank God that we are Christians engaged in Christian work! Everything must be subservient to this mightiest force in the world.—Christian Work and Evangelist.

Do not darken the pathway of life for others by turning the shadow of your own troubles upon it. Rather illumine it with the light of those truths which were committed to you for the comfort and good of the brotherhood, while in the secret of His presence.