

illustration. When the queen placed two wreaths before the monarch, and asked him to tell which was real and which artificial, he opened a window, and a bee alighting upon the golden wreath, told him what he wished to know.

4. All Solomon's wisdom. As shown in his conversation and in his magnificent surroundings. **The house.** Solomon's palace or series of palaces. His palace at Jerusalem had a vast hall for public business one hundred and seventy-five feet long and more than fifty feet high. According to Josephus it contained a great banquet hall, and was surrounded by spacious and luxurious gardens.

5. The meat. Solomon fared sumptuously (1 Kings 4. 22, 23). **The sitting.** "The number and titles of those who attended the royal banquets," their splendid apparel and apartments. The queen may have seen them gathered at a meal.

Servants . . . ministers. State officers and personal attendants. **Apparel.** The rich and costly dress of Eastern courtiers and attendants is sometimes furnished by the king (Gen. 45. 22; Dan. 5. 7). **His ascent.** "Different interpretations are given: (1) The imposing ceremonies and sacrifices of worship. (2) The numerous and splendid retinue accompanying him. (3) The stairs leading

to the temple."—*Tuck*. "The private entrance or passageway, magnificently wrought, by which he ascended to the temple from some part of his own house. From this it appears that the palace was at a lower elevation than the temple, and probably on a southern slope of Moriah."—*Terry*. **House of the Lord.** Which, it would seem, she was not permitted to enter, but only saw the ascent to it by which the king went up. **No more spirit.** She was overcome with astonishment.

6. A true report. She was not blinded by pride or prejudice from acknowledging Solomon's excellence. **Heard.** From travelers and others.

7. Prosperity. Or possibly "goodness," but prosperity is probably meant.

8. Happy. "It is a great advantage to be in good families, and to have opportunity of frequent converse with those that are wise and good."—*Henry*. (2) *We should congratulate ourselves on the privileges of the King's family.*

9. Blessed be the Lord. "She, a heathen, saw the superiority of Israel's God over the gods of the heathen. The Jews have a tradition that the queen was converted to Judaism."—*Gray*.

10. A hundred and twenty talents. Over three millions of dollars.

CRITICAL NOTES.

Verse 1. The queen of Sheba. It is now generally agreed that the Sheba of our lesson was a country which includes the most of what was known as Arabia Felix, celebrated for its spices, gold, and precious stones, and corresponds in part to modern Yemen on the Red Sea. Professor Glaser has made some interesting discoveries in regard to this ancient kingdom, which confirms the old tradition that the Sabaeans were celebrated for their extensive commerce and business enterprise. In Matt. 12. 42, she is called "the queen of the south." There is no foundation for Josephus's remark, saying that she was the Queen of Egypt and Ethiopia. She had probably heard of Solomon through the merchants and traders employed by him on the caravan routes or through the sailors who went to Ophir for gold. The fact that Ophir is mentioned in the preceding verse favors this view. **Concerning the name of the Lord.** This must refer to the fame of Solomon as the builder of the temple at Jerusalem, and as the person whom Jehovah had especially filled with almost superhuman wisdom. **She came to prove him with hard questions.** The word rendered "hard questions" is from a verb meaning to tie or twist. It is especially used in regard to enigmas or in the sense of intricate questions or riddles. The ancient inhabitants of the Orient, and especially the Arabs, were exceedingly fond of testing each other's wit and intelligence by verbal puzzles of various kinds.

2. With a very great train. This was to be expected. A queen of her wealth would require a large retinue, not only for protection but also to bring the many presents expected from one of her rank. Her train would follow one of the great caravan routes connecting southern Arabia, central Palestine, and the Mediterranean Sea. **With camels that bore spices.** Herodotus, Diodorus, and other ancient historians tell us that Arabia Felix was noted for its spices, consisting of myrrh, frankincense, ladanum, etc. **And very much gold.** It is not sure that gold was ever found in the country supposed to have been Sheba. Gold, however, was an article and medium of commerce in general use at a very early age, and thus any country could obtain it in exchange for its various commodities. Moreover, classic writers bear witness to the immense wealth of the Sabaeans and their lavish use of gold and precious stones. Pliny enumerates a large variety of the latter, such as amethyst, onyx, and emeralds.

3. There was not anything hid from the king. He answered every question and solved all the mysterious problems propounded by the queen. Many are the stories related in regard to this royal visit and the questions proposed by her to Solomon. Here is a sample of one of the hard questions with which she tested the king's wisdom: She dressed a large number of boys and girls in the same dress and asked the king to distinguish the boys from the girls. He ordered basins of water