

and prayer will not avail to remove the evil consequences of such deeds, especially those of national magnitude.

19. The people refused. They had set their minds on royalty, and a king they would have. No argument or persuasion will convince or change those who have determined in advance to risk all consequences. **The voice of Samuel** in such a case is less potent than "the voice of the people" (ver. 7).

20. We also... like all the nations. Here is seen the main idea that controlled their action. They gloried more in certain things of other nations than in the lofty privileges of their hallowed relationship to Jehovah. **Our king may judge us.** Here was not, perhaps, a reflection on Samuel's administration as judge in Israel; but rather on that of his sons (comp. verse 5). **Go out before us.** Here we note their ideals of pompous parade. How grand to have a regal chieftain, arrayed in barbaric splendor, to move forth like a conqueror at the head of the host! **Fight our battles.** Here we see that their ideal of a king was also that of a mighty warrior. The warlike movements of the king of Ammon were, according to chap. 12, a controlling influence in this action of the elders of Israel. They felt they must also have a warlike king to guard their national interests.

In this lesson we note:

1. A most devout and holy man may be made to suffer by impious and unworthy children.
2. The voice of the people is as likely to be inspired by delusive notions of the world as by that which is holy and good.
3. The popular mind is governed more by outward forms and pretensions than by spiritual truths.
4. The value of prayer in times of trial and when under heavy responsibility.
5. Monarchical government is incompatible with the highest ideals of personal liberty and right.
6. Hasty popular votes too often entail evils which generations and centuries cannot remove.
7. When the people of God show more yearning after the glory of the world than after soul purity and power with God they are sowing for a bitter harvest.

English Teacher's Notes.

There are few words to which a more repulsive idea is attached than the word *tyrant*. Call a man a tyrant and you mean he is a self-willed and cruel oppressor. This was, however, not the case with the first persons to whom the name is applied. The early Greek "tyrants" were often wise, humane, and benevolent. The word then signified a man who, not being the rightful king of a state or city, had grasped for himself the supreme power and become absolute ruler. A tyrant meant simply a usurper, whose rule was arbitrary and despotic, and whose subjects, whatever other advantages they might be possessed of, did not enjoy freedom. As the tyrants themselves gradually degenerated in character so did their name degenerate, until it came to be associated with the idea of wickedness and cruelty.

In the passage for to-day we are presented with the picture of a tyrant. The portrait was sketched by Samuel at the divine command for the Israelites who had asked for a king to reign over them. It is the portrait of one who without any special moral fault followed his own will and pleasure at the expense of his subjects. The Israelites were warned that not only their lands and possessions would be at the king's disposal (vers. 14, 15, 17), but that he would also demand

from them whatever personal service he pleased, whether military (vers. 13, 16), agricultural (ver. 12), or domestic (vers. 13, 16). They would in fact lose their freedom when he was established on the throne, and would feel painfully the contrast with their former position (ver. 18).

I have said that the portrait drawn by Samuel was that of a tyrant, but it may be objected that he was describing a "king" properly appointed to the throne, and not one who had usurped it unjustly.

True, Saul did not actually usurp the throne, yet the place he filled ought never to have been his, for his appointment was the result of Israel's rejection of their rightful king. They professed themselves dissatisfied with the administration of Samuel's sons. But there was a deeper reason for their request for a king. "They have not rejected thee," said the Lord to Samuel, "but they have rejected me, that I should not be king over them." They were weary of the direct rule of God himself (through the medium of priest and judge and through the Book of the Law), which was their distinguishing and glorious characteristic as a nation. In their hearts they longed for something else. And what was this thing which seemed to them more to be desired than the rule of Jehovah? It was "a king... like all the nations." It was conformity to the world round about them after which they hankered, and it was this which lost them their freedom and set over them one who actually became a tyrant (comp. chap. 14, 24; 32, 2). There is a deep lesson in this. We see just the same rejection in the present day. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8, 7). And so when the claims of Christ are set forth the cry often is, "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19, 14). What then is chosen instead? Something that has no right to the supreme rule over man's heart and life; the "course of this world" (Eph. 2, 2), behind which is the guiding hand of the great adversary.

And the world always does and always will turn out to be a tyrant. It may give much at the first, and promise more, but it demands the utmost devotion, the most unsparring labor, whether in the service of business or of pleasure. And when it has worn out the best years of its votaries it has nothing to make up for what they have expended on it. At the end it is "vanity of vanities" (Ecc. 1, 2, etc.).

Against this tyrant the teacher has to warn his class. He has to show on the one side the hard and unrecompensed service which the world demands, and on the other the claims of the rightful king whose absolute rule is the rule of supreme love, and who gave his own life and gives himself for those whose devotion he seeks. May the grace of God cause some hearts to yield to the testimony given in connection with this passage!

Cambridge Notes.

From the pure theocracy we pass now to the theocratic monarchy, at this momentous revolution requires us carefully to examine our terms. A theocracy is often mistaken for hierarchy or government by ecclesiastics—a most disastrous misconception. It is strictly a government in which God reigns through representatives specially accredited by him, so that every act of government is directly determined by God's will. Carried on through human instruments, it had necessary imperfections, and it was partly because of these, partly through the craving for a military rule like that of their neighbors, that Israel asked for a king instead of a prophet to govern them. In some respects the change