

also in Departmental Graded Teacher's Quarterlies. (To be read responsively or in concert by the whole School.) It is expected that each scholar will have his or her Bible, and so be prepared to take part in this reading, which may form part of the opening exercises of the School.

**Hymn for Opening Worship**—Hymn 18, Book of Praise; given also in Departmental Graded Quarterlies.

**Lantern Slides**—For Lesson, B. 1252, Defeat through Drunkenness (Temperance Lesson). For Question on Missions, C. 669, Mission Hospital, Changte, Honan. (These slides are obtained from the Presbyterian Lantern Slide Department, 96 Queen St. East, Toronto. Schools desiring slides made may procure them on short notice by sending negatives, prints or photographs. Slides are colored to order.)

## THE LESSON EXPLAINED

By Rev. J. M. Duncan, D.D.

**Time and Place**—About B.C. 900; Samaria.

**Lesson Setting**—The lesson describes an episode in the conflict for supremacy which had been going on between Israel and Syria for more than a century. In the reign of Ahab, the king of Syria, Benhadad, invaded Israel with a huge army and laid siege to Samaria, the Israelitish capital. The Syrian king sent an imperious message, demanding of Ahab the surrender of his throne. Ahab basely yielded; but when he sent a second message, declaring that he was coming to strip the houses of Ahab and his officers of all their treasures, he was met with a spirited defiance, vs. 1-9.

Benhadad returned the boastful reply of vs. 10, 11, in which he threatened utterly to destroy Samaria. The great city is pictured as ground to powder. The Syrian king declares that his army is so numerous that the dust of the city would not make a handful for each,—a truly Eastern exaggeration. Ahab's retort is a pithy proverb like the Latin, "Do not sing songs of triumph till the victory is gained," or our, "Praise not the day till evening;" "Do not sell the skin of your bear till you have caught him."

### I. A Drunken King, 12.

V. 12. *Ben-hadad*; the second of three Syrian kings of this name mentioned in the Bible (compare ch. 15 : 18 and 2 Kgs. 13 : 24). *Heard this message*; the bold defiance of Ahab. *As he was drinking*; at a banquet, so confident was he of success in the siege. *He and the kings*; rather, "kinglets," petty princes, vassals of Benhadad, who commanded the thirty-two divisions of his army, v. 1. *Pavilions*; booths or huts made of branches, like those used at the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23 : 42), built, during military expeditions, to shelter the king and his chief officers. *Set yourselves in array*; all

one word in Hebrew. It is a technical military term, used either of the formation of attacking parties or of the erection of battering engines.

### II. An Encouraging Prophet, 13-15.

V. 13. *Behold . . . a prophet*. At every important juncture in the history recorded in Kings, a prophet appears, sometimes to give counsel, usually only to predict the issue. His appearance and message would make it clear that the victory to be achieved was due, not to human power, but to the might of Jehovah. *Unto Ahab*; who, in this dark hour, would welcome help and guidance even from one of those whom he had permitted Jezebel to persecute (see ch. 18 : 4). *Thus saith the Lord*; whose representative and spokesman the prophet was. *This great multitude*; of Benhadad's army, numbering more than 130,000 (see vs. 25, 29, 30). *I will deliver it*. Even so great a host is helpless before Jehovah. *Into thine hand*; into thy power. *Know that I am the Lord*. Jehovah's power to reveal the future testified to his supremacy.

V. 14. *By whom?* Ahab seeks guidance about the strategy which is to win success. Nor is he unwilling to take advice from one of those prophets whom he and his wicked queen, Jezebel, had despised and persecuted. *By the young men*; the squires or attendants of chieftains, who were in training for military leadership; they had little experience, but plenty of courage and dash. The answer is practically a bidding to trust wholly in Jehovah, who made victory depend upon faith shown in implicit obedience to his command. *Princes of the provinces*; leaders from the various districts of Israel. *Order the battle*; make the attack. *Thou*. Ahab was to take the offensive,—a wise plan, even from a purely military point of view.

V. 15. *Mustered* (Rev. Ver.) . . . *young men*