



LESSON.—SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 1908.

Review.

Read Psalm xviii.

Golden Text.

And David perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake. II. Sam. v.

Home Readings.

- Monday, September 14.—I. Sam. x., 17-27.
- Tuesday, September 15.—I. Sam. xv., 13-28.
- Wednesday, September 16.—I. Sam. xvi., 1-13.
- Thursday, September 17.—I. Sam. xviii., 6-16.
- Friday, September 18.—I. Sam. xxvi., 17-25.
- Saturday, September 19.—I. Chr. x., 1-14.
- Sunday, September 20.—Ps. xviii., 1-24.

FOR THE JUNIOR CLASSES.

In our study to-day we are to review some eleven lessons about the early history of the Kingdom of Israel. Here in Canada as far back as we can go we have always had a king or a queen, and the Indians before we came always had a chief over each tribe, and to-day our country is so well governed and united that it is hard to imagine what the land where the Israelites lived so long ago was like at the time we are studying about. Just try to imagine that we in Canada didn't have any king at all or any parliament, that the people in Quebec sometimes fought with the people in Ontario, or the people in Alberta sometimes fought with those in Manitoba, and all the time we didn't know when the people in the United States were not going to swoop down on our land, burn the towns, and kill the people or carry them away prisoners. It was something like that you know long ago in Palestine, because the different tribes of Israel (something like our provinces) often got to quarreling, and all the time they didn't know when the Philistines in the country next to their's might not come with great armies and burn up their towns and carry away their crops, their cattle, and, worst of all, perhaps their dear little children. But Samuel came along and he taught the tribes how to work together instead of quarreling, and to worship and serve God. He grew to be an old man, however, and the people were afraid he would die and there would again be no one to lead them, so they asked him to choose a king for them. Who knows the name of this first king of Israel? Saul, to be sure, and he was a farmer's son before he became king. But there was another king of Israel, the second king, that we have also been learning about, and his name was —? David. David was a shepherd boy before he became king, and in these lessons we have learnt how the farmer's boy and the shepherd boy each became king in turn, so let us see how much we remember about them.

FOR THE SENIORS.

The whole secret of the failure and success of the first two kings of Israel is strongly suggested in the point of view that the quarter's golden text says David took of his exaltation as opposed to that which Saul's actions show he had taken of his sudden rise to power. 'And David perceived that the Lord . . . had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake.' In other words, he realized that he was appointed by God and that for the people's sake, not for himself. Saul seems to have thought that he was chosen and appointed by the people, whom in consequence he feared to oppose,

yet while humoring them he ruled not for them but for his own glory. This appears to be hinted at in his remark in I. Sam. xviii., 8; he saw that the greater glory was ascribed to David by the people, 'and what can he have more but the kingdom?' The expression used by David (II. Sam. i., 24) may have only referred to the increased prosperity of the kingdom, but it also may have referred to a lavish display maintained by Saul to please the people; the love of display was in himself as is proved by his bringing Agag home to grace his victory (I. Sam. xv., 9), and by his punctiliousness in forms at court (I. Sam. xx., 5, 27). The man in power with Saul's point of view is the great political question of the day. David's view point among statesmen and politicians would mean an end of all political scandals and graft. If any one could have looked at Saul and David as each stood at the beginning of the path towards the throne, such a spectator in the light of this world's experience would have unhesitatingly predicted the greater success of Saul. His commanding presence, his 'practical' outlook, his tendency to act at once and think it over after, were in sharp contrast to the slim youth, 'ruddy, and of a beautiful countenance,' with his songs, his music, and his visions of God while out in the desert with his sheep, and his caution and thoughtful weighing of the consequences (I. Sam. xxvi., 8-11). 'But the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.' In five of these eleven lessons Samuel has a prominent place; in three of them Jonathan shines out in bravery, loyalty, and love; in the first four Saul has and loses his opportunity; and in the remaining ones David is put through the strange schooling that leaves him fit for the throne at last. These four men present tremendous possibilities of study. An interesting exercise is to examine the Psalms and try to place those by David in their possible places in his life, such as the psalms of contemplation (viii., xix., xxiii., xxix., etc.) composed possibly while out with the sheep; the hymns of praise and trust (ix., xi., etc.), and the powerful appeals for divine assistance (x., xiii., xvii., xxii., xxviii., etc.), composed probably during the years of his wanderings and exile. Some of the psalms such as xxxiv., lii., lvi., lvii., lix., and others, are ascribed by Jewish legend to particular times in his experience, and are so noted in our Bibles by way of an introduction.

(SELECTIONS FROM PELOUBET'S 'NOTES.')

'Tis not the fairest form that holds
The mildest, purest soul within;
'Tis not the richest plant that holds
The sweetest fragrance in.'—Dawes.

'Never forget for a moment that no face can be so beautiful and no form so divine but that a bad heart or a weak heart may make it hateful or worthless. In such beauty there is always a cloud, a film, that veils it. With all the power of the face to alter its expressions, it is a fearful tell tale. Through all its masks and shams, the gaze of God goes like an X-ray straight to the heart and soul.'—'Sunday School Times.'

Hard as the years of exile were for David to bear, yet they were most fruitful years to him, as his apprenticeship for the kingdom. In them he found what Hugh Miller called his schools and schoolmasters.

1. The exile experiences preserved him from the dangers to which his sudden elevation to power and popularity would expose him. He learned his weakness, and his need of divine help.

2. He learned entire trust in God under all circumstances; the value and necessity of religion. This led to the marvellous development of religious institutions, and of the service of song under his administration.

3. He had the best of opportunities for becoming acquainted with the people; their grievances under Saul; their needs; their dispositions and tendencies. He understood their spiritual as well as their temporal wants. His own weaknesses, in yielding to the temptation to falsehood, and to des-

pondency and unbelief, would help him to understand the people.

4. He had practise in the art of governing.

5. He gained experience in war.

6. He obtained a knowledge of the country, and of its enemies.

7. In this school of fighting men were trained those generals and wise strategists who in the golden days of David's rule commanded his armies, and raised Israel from the obscurity of an "Arab" tribe, who with difficulty held their own among the ancient Canaanites, to the position of one of the great nations of the old Eastern world.—Ellicott.

8. Many of his sweetest songs were wrought out by this long and hard experience, for the comfort and hope not only of his own people, but for God's children in all ages; for while they grew out of hardship and wrongs they are songs of victory, of light shining out of darkness, 'roses growing out of black soil.'

9. In spite of his few lapses from faith and perfect truth, he grew in character and manhood, he became strong in faith and virtue, large-hearted, wise, noble, consecrated to God.

God has called us to a crown and a kingdom (II. Tim. iv., 8; Jas. i., 12; I. Pet. v., 4; Rev. i., 5, 6; v., 10), a greater kingdom than David's, even the kingdom of heaven.

To be king over ourselves. 'He that ruleth his own spirit is greater than he that taketh a city.' A Syrian proverb runs, 'Escape from self is better than escape from a lion.' According to Dr. Thomson, in 'Brain and Personality,' the Will, which is the King in man, the ranking official, which 'can say to the thinking brain, "these thoughts are valuable, therefore keep them, those other thoughts are purposeless, and hence unprofitable, therefore dismiss them at once"; and so to the other powers of the mind—this "Will creates the man." "Will direction,' choice, decision, explains why men that use and train their will can, with inferior mental powers, outdistance others of the first rank. 'What is the finest mental machine in this life without will-power?'

Junior C. E. Topic.

Sunday, September 20.—Topic—Commending our Society. II. By supplying church workers. II. Tim. ii., 1, 2; Prov. xxii., 6.

C. E. Topic.

- Monday, September 14.—What the Pharisees said. Luke xv., 1, 2.
- Tuesday, September 15.—The lost money. Luke xv., 8-10.
- Wednesday, September 16.—Seeking the lost. Luke xix., 10.
- Thursday, September 17.—A lost soul. Mark viii., 35-37.
- Friday, September 18.—He came to save the lost. Matt xviii., 11.
- Saturday, September 19.—Like lost sheep. Ps. cxix., 176.
- Sunday, September 20.—Topic—Lost and found. Luke xv., 3-7.

The Ven. Archdeacon Blunt, of Sheffield, Eng., says:—"The ideal Sunday school teacher is an earnest, devoted diligent student of the Holy Scriptures. Such teachers have an acquaintance with God, and have a simple, and interesting way of teaching the children, and find a ready way of access to the scholars affections. All ought to feel it an honor and a privilege to join the ranks of the Sunday school teachers."

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