

sins of sinners. Nothing will more surely arouse God's indignation than to have his people fall into sin. v. 1.

4. One sinner among God's people weakens the entire body. The Church of God is a unit, and when one member is injured, all suffer; when one sins, all are affected by it. There is nothing that weakens the power of the Church more than sin in its membership. vs. 2-5.

5. Sin in God's people brings sorrow to God's leaders, defeat and discouragement to God's cause, shame to those who love God, and dishonor to God's holy name. vs. 6-9.

6. Sin among God's people must be put away, if God's Church is to be relieved of its responsibility. God will not own even his own people if they keep sin among them.

### An English Teacher's Notes on the Lessons.

BY SARAH GERALDINA STOKER.

A REVERSE is always harder to bear when it is a thing wholly unlooked for, disappointing and nullifying all previous calculations, and throwing a dark uncertainty over the future. Of such a character was the defeat at Ai. It was a calamity in itself. For the army of Israel to be smitten and chased down the heights by a victorious enemy was a serious matter. It was likely to raise the hopes of the Canaanites and to dispirit Israel, and we are told in fact that the "hearts of the people melted and became as water." But it is the part of a valiant commander to bear up under such a reverse, and without losing heart to rally his men afresh for the contest. A general may lose a battle and yet be successful at the end of the campaign, and many an army which has at the onset of the struggle suffered sorely has eventually marched to victory. But Joshua's behavior looks like that of a man whose courage and energy have utterly collapsed, and who has given way to despair, and the elders of Israel followed his example in abandoning themselves to grief. How came the bold leader thus to succumb to the first blow?

It was because the calamity was no ordinary one. It was not a failure such as might soon be retrieved by courage and resolution. Joshua knew that the enterprise he had undertaken was beyond the power of man to accomplish. The hosts of Israel could never have dislodged the "seven nations greater and mightier than themselves" (Deut. 7. 1) who were in possession of the land of Canaan; they could never have captured those fortified cities. They depended for their success entirely on the performance by Jehovah of the promises he had made to them. Until the last twenty-four hours these had been gloriously fulfilled. Terror had filled the Canaanites, Jordan had divided, Jericho's walls had fallen. Then there was a sudden reversal of the whole. Israel was vanquished, the enemy triumphant.

It looked as if the promises of God had failed. And if they failed once, where was the security for the future? The firm ground on which the Israelites had stood seemed utterly cut away from their feet; there was nothing sure, nothing they could

depend on. Was it any wonder they were utterly weighed down with despondency?

Many young people, thank God, are setting out on an undertaking similar to that of Joshua and the Israelites. They have undertaken something which of themselves they can never bring to a successful issue. They have started as the servants of God on the way Zionward, in faith that he will be with them, will strengthen them against temptation, will give them the victory over their spiritual enemies, and bring them safely through every conflict and trial. They have made blessed proof of his faithfulness at the onset, but suddenly comes a reverse—and perhaps not one, but many; they find things very different from what they expected, and are really making no progress at all. Far better for them to be down, like Joshua, mourning in the dust, than to remain unconcerned about this matter.

But despondency is no cure. What is wanted is to seek for the cause of failure. The answer of God to Joshua's prayer was not one of consolation and encouragement. That came later, Chap. 8. 1. The word now was a call to diligent search, "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?" The failure lay not in the promises of God, but in Israel.

The city of Jericho, the first conquest of Israel in the land of Canaan, with all it contained, had been pronounced *cherem*; or, as the Rev. Ver. renders it, "a devoted thing." According to the law in Lev. 27. 28, 29, this meant the putting to death every human being in the place, and in certain places the destruction of all belonging to it. See Deut. 7. 2; 20. 17; 1 Sam. 15. 3. It was thus that the wickedness of the Canaanites, to whom God had shown such long-suffering, at length met with its just doom. But the gold, silver, brass, and iron found in the city were to be given up, not to destruction, but to the service of God. This solemn command had been disobeyed. Both that which should have been destroyed, the Babylonish garment, and that which should have been consecrated "wholly to the Lord," the gold and silver, had been taken into the midst of Israel and put "among their own stuff." Here was the cause of failure, and before the blessing of God could flow down unhindered on the people the matter had to be laid bare and the devoted thing, which had become a curse, to be put away from among them.

It teaches us a double lesson. There are things displeasing to God—things which his servants are required to put away entirely; devoted to destruction. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean things.... and I will be a Father to you," etc. (2 Cor. 6. 17, 18); the promise is linked with a condition. And there are things which should be consecrated to God's service, devoted to him—"holiness to the Lord;" health and strength, talents and opportunities, wealth and influence. If these are put among one's "own stuff," reckoned as belonging to self and used for self, the blessing of God must be stayed; the promises cannot be made good.