

bad woman was equal to a dozen bad men. There is nothing too cruel or unjust for her to do. Jezebel has been compared to Lady Macbeth, and it has been suggested that she furnished Shakespeare with his idea of that wicked woman. Certainly, in coarseness and brutality, the real Jezebel exceeded the creation of Shakespeare. There are comparisons, as in this case, where she says, "I will give thee the vineyard," reminding us of how Macbeth could not bring himself to murder Duncan, and Lady Macbeth taunted him, saying, "Infirm of purpose, give me the dagger!"

In Jezebel's wickedness comes to its full climax. There is no redeeming trait anywhere.

*Ahab's doom.* His sin found him out. As always happens to such colossal criminals, he has sold himself for naught, as Achan did for a buried robe and a useless piece of gold, and Judas for the thirty pieces of silver which he could only dash down on the temple floor. Ahab turned away from the vineyard, which might well seem to him haunted by the ghosts of his murdered victims and its clusters full of blood.—*Paraphrase.*

It is said that a duke of Austria once hired some men to murder an enemy, and then paid them in counterfeit coin, saying, "False money is good enough for false knaves." So Ahab was paid when he sold himself to work evil.

Robespierre was beheaded by the same guillotine to which he had consigned so many in the French Revolution.

### Heart Talks on the Lesson.

The story of Naboth's vineyard illustrates the saying of Jesus, that "from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts." It is dangerous to have a bad heart. We never know what it may lead to. Evil thoughts may end in evil deeds—thefts, covetousness, murder. Many men and women have committed crimes at which they would once have shuddered, which are the outcome of evil left to grow in the heart until its natural fruit appears. Ahab is an example to warn us that notwithstanding remarkable evidences of God's power, God's goodness, and God's just punishment of sin, a person may, through a perverse heart, be led on from one degree of wrong to another until all hope of restoration is lost.

Near the palace of the king there was a vineyard. Ahab coveted it. Purely selfish as he was, Naboth's interests were no concern to him whatever. Selfishness is the root of all sin. Left to grow, it destroys every good plant in the soil of the soul. What did Ahab care that Naboth had

all the memories of his ancestry connected with this vineyard, and his religious convictions, too, were against disposing of it? Sentiment and conscience are of no account with selfishness. One cannot help despising such a mean, ignoble trait. Do let us tear it out, root and branch, before it gets the better of us, as it did with this wicked king.

In a pet because he could not have his own way Ahab lay upon his bed with his face to the wall. It required Jezebel's daring badness to carry out the evil thoughts of Ahab, though his heart was just as bad as hers. She conceived a bold plan by which the life of a good man should pay for the coveted possession. She accomplished her end. The vineyard was at last a part of the palace gardens, and no doubt they took great satisfaction in seeing the herbs growing where Ahab had thought it so very desirable to have them. Quite possibly they never gave a thought to the man they had killed, nor to his friends who had been made sad by their awful crime. The entrance of selfishness gives apparent satisfaction sometimes. Conscience may be so hardened that it does not hinder the enjoyment of very sinful pleasures. But that is a fearfully dangerous state. To be happy in willful wrongdoing is like dying of paralysis. There is no consciousness, no feeling, no pain, yet death is certain. Sin never pays in the end. The prophet Elijah, sent by the Lord, found Ahab in the vineyard, "whither he had gone to possess it." As is usual with wrongdoers, he calls the one who would have been his best friend his enemy. Jezebel was his enemy—not Elijah. If Ahab had listened to the prophet's warnings rather than to the wicked counsels of his wife, the woes Elijah foretold would not have befallen him. But he "did sell himself to work wickedness." He was a slave to selfishness. Would you be free so that you may never be the servant of sin? Yield your heart to Him who has redeemed you with his precious blood, "having your fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life."

### The Teachers' Meeting.

First make a plain geographical and historic background by means of sketch-map and review .... Ahab's sins: 1. Covetousness. 2. Discontent. 3. Conspiracy, in which Ahab was as guilty as his queen. 4. Falsehood—their charge against Naboth was a lying one. 5. Hypocrisy—for it was in the name of holy religion. 6. Robbery—for it was to obtain the possessions of another. 7. Murder—for it ended in Naboth's judicial slaughter.... A good blackboard exercise is to draw the outline of a vineyard to a