

that the kingdom, with the exception of one tribe, would be taken from his successor, are told in ch. 11 : 1-13. In vs. 26-40 we have an account of the prophet Ahijah's announcement to Jeroboam that he should become king of ten tribes and of Jeroboam's subsequent flight to Egypt from the suspicious jealousy of Solomon. Vs. 41-43 record Solomon's death. It will be remembered that it had taken the strong hand of David to bind together for a time Judah and the Northern tribes (see 2 Sam. 5 : 1-5). Tribal divisions asserted themselves again and again (see 2 Sam., ch. 20), and when Solomon died, heavy taxes and forced labor had so exasperated the Northerners that there was imminent danger of division. The people assembled at Shechem and demanded of Rehoboam a lightening of their burdens.

I. Advice, 6-11.

V. 6. *Rehoboam*. "Enlarger of the people" the name signifies, but the new king, by his foolish arrogance, was to prove himself, in reality, a "diminisher" of his kingdom. *Took counsel* (Rev. Ver.). The king had bidden the people who sought redress for their grievances, to wait for three days and come again, v. 5. In the interval, while right warred with selfish impulse in his heart, he sought advice. *Old men*; old, that is, in comparison with Rehoboam, who was forty-one when he began to reign. *Stood before Solomon*; as counselors of the king, experienced men who knew politics and knew the people.

V. 7. *Be a servant . . . this day*. Speak the people fair; tell them that you will yield to their demands. *Thy servants for ever*. The people, content with smooth words, would scatter to their homes, leaving the king to do as he pleased. Probably the old men had in mind just a fair promise, a civil answer,—"long promises, short performances." In any case their advice took account only of the exigencies of the present moment, and aimed at nothing more than securing for Rehoboam loyal subjects pliable to his will.

Vs. 8, 9. *Forsook the counsel*. The old men's advice did not please him, being opposed to his natural desire, his aristocratic temper and his jealousy of the royal prerogative. *Consulted with the young men*; literally,

"boys," rash and inexperienced advisers, Rehoboam's companions while he was a petted prince at Solomon's court. Possibly the mother of Rehoboam, Naamah, an Ammonitess (see ch. 14 : 21), had something to do, behind the scenes, with his headstrong, tyrannical conduct. *Make the yoke . . . lighter*. The yoke laid on the necks of oxen pictures the heavy load of taxes and toil which Solomon had put upon the people.

Vs. 10, 11. *My little finger*, etc. As the loins of a man are thicker than his little finger, so would Rehoboam prove himself stronger than Solomon by making his burdens heavier than his father's,—this was the foolish brag that the youthful counselors put into the young king's mouth. *Whips . . . scorpions*. In the forced labor or corvée exacted by Solomon, which is still found amongst Oriental peoples, pitiless taskmasters used scourges to compel the laborers to work. Rehoboam's taskmasters would be more terrible than Solomon's; their scourges would sting like the scorpion. An ancient authority says that by "scorpion" here is meant a narrow leather bag filled with sand and armed with sharp spikes. The Romans had a scourge which they named a scorpion.

II. Refusal, 12-15.

V. 12. *Jeroboam*; the leader of the people in their demands. (See Connecting Links.) He was an Ephraimite whom Solomon had made overseer of the labor gangs of his tribe, ch. 11 : 26-28. He had been recalled from Egypt, whither he had fled from Solomon (ch. 11 : 40), to become the spokesman of the discontented Israelites.

Vs. 13-15. *The king answered the people roughly*. Rehoboam treated the people like a haughty imperious despot, caring nothing for his subjects, regarding the people as existing only to be exploited, to be used as slaves. *It was . . . brought about of the Lord* (Rev. Ver.); in order to punish the nation which had followed Solomon into sin (see ch. 11 : 6) by permitting it to be divided, so that it might not reach the greatness which would have been possible, had the kingdom remained undivided. In the old Hebrew thought everything fell out by divine appointment; whatever happened was of God's