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# Book for the Young;

BEING A

HISTORY OF THE KINGS

WHO RULED OVER GOD'S ANCIENT PEOPLE,

FROM THE

DEATH OF SOLOMON TILL THE BABYLONISH CAPTIVITY.

By MARY L. T. WITTER.

"All Scripture is inspired by God, and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."



HALIFAX, N. S.

A. & W. MACKINLAY.

1870.

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MY BELOVED HUSBAND,

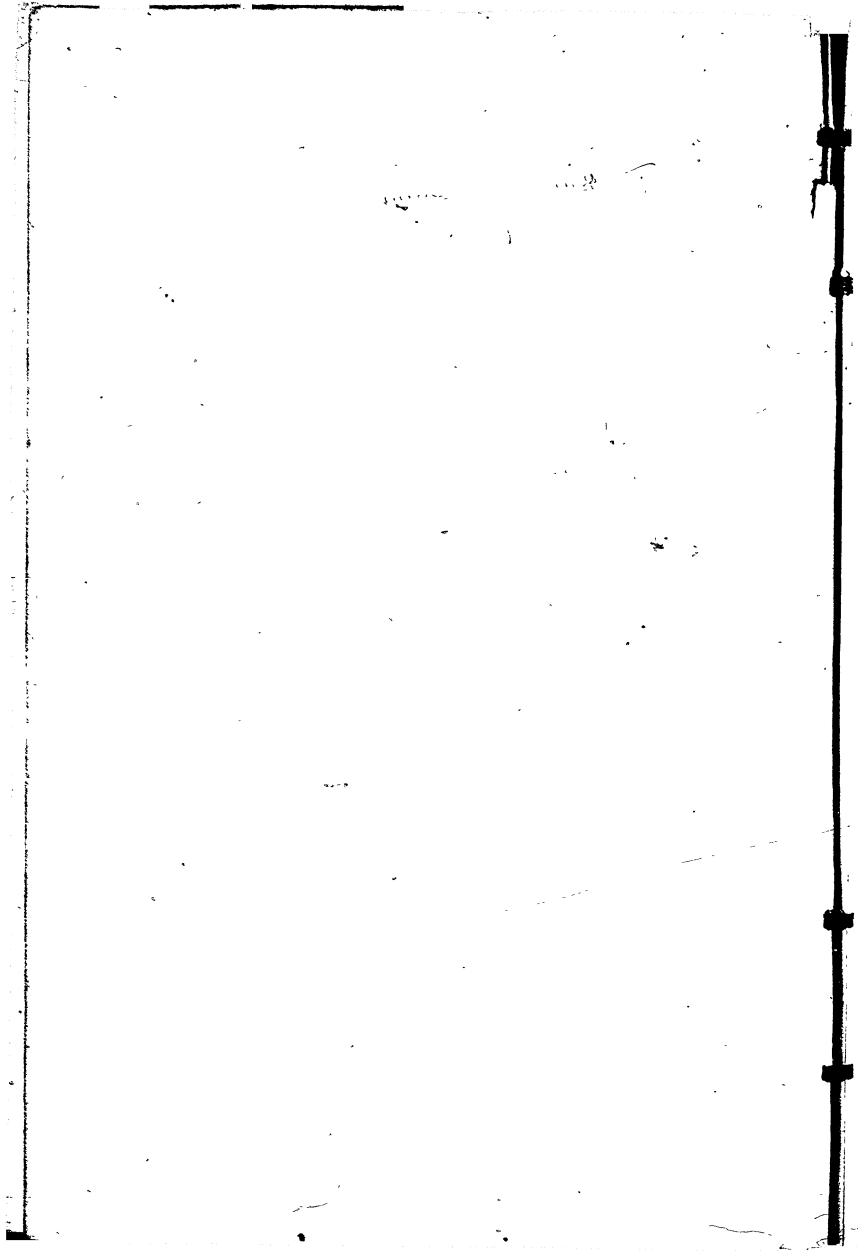
JAMES S. WITTER, .

This Little Work

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.

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## PREFACE.

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THE following pages have been written, with the hope, that they may be the means of awakening in the minds of the young a deeper interest in the study of that part of the sacred volume from which they have been principally culled. In the study of profane history there is danger that the great First Cause be overlooked in the multitude of secondary causes, which are pressed on the attention. In sacred history it is far otherwise. In it a victory is not ascribed to the skill of a Commander, or to the bravery of his men ; but to the favour of God. In like manner a nation's prosperity is not attributed to its industries or its commerce, but to His blessing. The historical as well as all other parts of the Scriptures thus plainly teach that God is Lord over all ; and that though men act according to their pleasure, they are either His agents or His instruments, and forward His designs.

In presenting this little Work to the Public the writer craves indulgence, as it has been

penned during the scanty leisure which falls to the lot of the wife and mother. Difficulties and apparent discrepancies have been passed over in silence, in part at least, from the fact that with these the writer has felt her inability to cope.

While every help within reach has been freely used, not a single thought has knowingly been borrowed without being acknowledged, or marked as a quotation. References and foot notes have been avoided as not generally attractive to the young.

The writer has endeavoured to keep the one object before her mind, and in her opinion the Work is as well fitted to benefit those for whom it is designed as if it were critical and elaborate.

MARY L. T. WITTER.

CANNING, NOVA SCOTIA.





## Preliminary Remarks.

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CANAAN or Palestine was the theatre of the events about to be recorded, and the home of the kings whose history I intend to write. The young reader will please to refer to a map of Asia and in the north-western part he will find this celebrated country. It is comprised within thirty and a half and thirty-three and a half degrees north latitude, and within thirty-three and a half east longitude in the south-west, and thirty-six in the north-east. It "is situated on the east of the Mediterranean, and south of the mountains of Lebanon. It is about two-thirds the size of Nova Scotia. Its length from north to south is one hundred and eighty miles, and the breadth seventy-five miles." Being about midway between the equator and the arctic circle, it has a genial climate, and was anciently very fertile. The country is mountainous, but none of the mountains are of great elevation. It has but one river, the Jordan, and not many other perennial streams. Its lakes are Merom, Gennesareth and the Asphaltic lake or Dead Sea. The Jordan passes through the first two of these, and loses itself in the last.

This small country was, at the time of which I write, divided into two kingdoms—Judah and Israel. The part known of the Kingdom of Judah was only about one-third of the country—not far from one-fourth the size of Nova Scotia—and was bounded by the Kingdom of Israel on the north; on the east by Jordan, the Dead Sea and the Land of Moab; on the south by the Land of Edom, and on the west by the Great Sea or Mediterranean.

The Kingdom of Israel, which was equal to about half of Nova Scotia, was bounded on the north by Phoenicia, the Mountains of Lebanon and Syria; on the east by Syria and the Land of Ammon; on the south by the Land of Moab, the Dead Sea and the kingdom of Judah; and on the west by the Great Sea and Phoenicia.

Besides the small extent of territory of which these kingdoms were comprised, the reader should take into consideration the great difference between that age, and this in which we live. The times of which I write were very long before gunpowder was invented and set at its work of death; and of course much longer still before steam was used to propel over land and sea, and the lightning of heaven made to convey the thoughts of man. Political and social institutions were too, very different then from what they are now. Take the institution of marriage. A man could be truly pious and yet have several wives. Polygamy, like slavery was one of those practices which in the early ages of the world God winked at. Were it otherwise it would be absurd to speak of the piety of Abijah, for instance, while he was the husband of fourteen women. Polygamy was the natural out-growth of the supposed inferiority of woman, and was calculated to perpetuate that feeling; and she never attained her proper position in society till the Christ was of woman born. To God manifest in the flesh is she indebted for the amelioration of her condition here, no less than for her hopes of eternal life hereafter. How much to comfort her, and raise her in the estimation of the other sex is there in the gracious words: "Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, my sister, and mother."



## PART I.

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# THE KINGS OF JUDAH.

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## CHAPTER I.

### REHOBOAM.

**J**UDAH, from whose descendants this kingdom took its name, was the son of Jacob, and the great-grandson of Abraham. The tribe of Judah was larger than either of the other tribes, and in some respects more important. "Judah," said the inspired Jacob, "thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise." The throne was filled not only by persons belonging to this tribe but to one family—the family of David—four hundred and fifty-six years. It is a fact unparalleled in history that the genealogy of this line of kings is traceable up to the creation of man, so that one can truthfully close by saying: "which was the son of Adam which was

the son of God." In this family are to be found some of the most renowned personages that ever lived. Among these are Enoch, Noah, Abraham, David and above all, the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Rehoboam, the first king who reigned over the Judahites, as a distinct nationality, seems to have been the only child of Solomon, who had one thousand wives. His mother was an Ammonitess by the name of Naamah; and his maternal grandmother, three generations back, a Moabitess. Thus he was a descendant of Haran, who lived and died in idolatry, scarcely less than of Abraham. He became king at the age of forty-one, nine hundred and seventy-five years before Christ.

The extensive buildings which Solomon had erected together with his court, his servants, his horses, and his chariots, had obliged him to impose heavy taxes on his subjects, and it is possible that many were, even during his lifetime, ready for a revolt. This feeling gathered strength from the following incident. The prophet Ahijah met Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who at the time held an office under government, and taking the new garment that was on him rent it into twelve pieces, and thus addressed him: "Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee." But the impolitic conduct of Rehoboam was, of itself, sufficient to cause his subjects to rebel. Scarcely had he been proclaimed

king ere he received a deputation from ten tribes of Israel, with Jeroboam at their head, praying for a diminution of the taxes from which they had been for some time suffering. The new king, following the advice of the companions of his pleasure rather than that of his father's counsellors, haughtily replied: "My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins. And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke I will add to your yoke; my father hath chastised you with whips but I will chastise you with scorpions." This reply gave the people a plausible pretext for declaring their independence; and they at once gave their watchword, "To your tents O Israel." Rehoboam, very naturally, determined on reducing his subjects to obedience. For this purpose every man in the two tribes who still remained faithful to him, who was capable of bearing arms, was enrolled: "A hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men which were warriors." They disbanded, however, without striking a single blow. One Shemaiah, a prophet, told Rehoboam that it was the will of God that the ten tribes should have a king of their own, and forbade him fighting against them. From that time the tribes of Judah and Benjamin were known as the kingdom of Judah, and the remaining ten tribes as the kingdom of Israel. It is probable that the population of the two kingdoms was more nearly equal than would be supposed from the number of tribes which belonged respectively to each. Idolatry was at once established in the kingdom of



Israel, and the Judahites still adhered to the worship of the true God, which caused the tribe of Levi, with the truly pious of all the other tribes, to connect themselves with them in order that they might enjoy the services of the temple.

The piety of the Judahites seems to have been but of short continuance. Rehoboam had reigned less than five years when the statement is made, that "Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed; above all that their fathers had done. For they built them high places and images and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree." In consequence of this defection the Lord sent against this people Shishak, king of Egypt, who took city after city till he came to Jerusalem, where Rehoboam appears to have remained inactive. Shemaiah who had forbidden Rehoboam to fight against the seceding tribes now visited him and the princes of Judah, and thus addressed them: "Thus saith the Lord ye have forsaken me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak." On receiving this message they acknowledged the righteous judgment of God and humbled themselves before him. No sooner had they done so than the prophet came to them again and told them in the name of the Lord that they should not become a prey to the Egyptian king: "Nevertheless," said the Lord, "they shall be his servants; that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdom of the

countries." Shishak entered Jerusalem and carried thence a vast amount of treasure, among which were three hundred shields of gold, which have been computed at about eight hundred and forty-three thousand nine hundred and five dollars. Shishak was the first plunderer of the sacred temple, and the spoil must have been immense.

The conduct of this king was altogether voluntary. Little did he know that the great God was using him as his rod to correct his refractory children; and powerful as he thought himself, he could not carry away any more than it was necessary that they should lose. This was the only foreign foe by which Judah was disturbed during this reign, but they and the Israelites lived in a state of continual hostility; so much so that the historian says: "There were wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually."

Rehoboam had in all, principal and secondary, seventy-eight wives. The names of but three of these are given, Mahalath, Abihail and Maachah: these were respectively the grand-daughter, the great-grand-daughter and the great-great-granddaughter of Jesse his great-grandfather.

Rehoboam, conscious of his weakness, builded and fortified fifteen cities. He died after a reign of seventeen years, at the age of fifty-eight. His talents were probably below mediocrity. May this not be inferred from his seeking companionship with the young and thoughtless, from Abijah designating him at the age of

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*forty-one* "young and tender hearted," and from the following lugubrious words of his father:

"Yea I hated all my labour  
Which I had taken under the sun;  
Because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me  
And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool;  
Yet shall he have rule over all my labour."

Solomon's fears were realized. Rehoboam succeeded to a large, powerful and wealthy kingdom: he bequeathed to his son one that was small, weak and poor. He was buried in the city of David by the side of his illustrious father and grand-father. It may perhaps be well to state that "the city of David" was a strong fort on mount Sion, which was long held by the Jebusites. It was finally taken by storm under the leadership of David's nephew, the hardy, indefatigable, heroic general Joab. It remained a place of great strength; and was used as the burial place of all the honoured of Judah's kings.



## CHAPTER II.

## ABIJAH OR ABIJAM.

**A**BIJAH succeeded to the throne of his father nine hundred and fifty-eight years before Christ. There are no data by which to ascertain his age either at the time of his succession to the throne, or at the time of his death. He evidently was, when he became king, a man of matured judgment. The handsome, brave, discriminating, and at the same time artful and unprincipled Absalom was his maternal grandfather. May it not be that in person and in some of the qualities of his mind he resembled that unfortunate prince? Is not his popularity thus readily accounted for? That he was popular is apparent; for severe as had been the drain on the treasury during the lifetime of his father he, early in his reign, found himself able to equip an army of four hundred thousand men. With these he entered the kingdom of Israel. We do not know the cause of this war. It was perhaps entered on as the readiest means of putting an end to the long existing feuds. The location of Abijah's army is said to have been "Mount Zemarain which is Mount Ephraim." Having chosen his ground he calmly awaited the approach of the enemy. Jeroboam came against him with an army double that of his own. Abijah, nothing daunted, ascended an eminence and de-

livered an harangue which reflects great credit on him as a man, and as a believer in the true God. He reminded them that the Lord had given the kingdom of Israel to the house of David forever, but that it had been wrested from that family by Jeroboam and his coadjutors, who also had set up false gods and cast off the tribe of Levi from the services of the altar; and that Judah, on the contrary, still worshipped the true God, and still offered the daily sacrifice by the hands of those whom the Lord had chosen for that purpose. He then told them that to fight against him was to fight against God himself, since He was the captain of the hosts of Judah; and finally reminded them that the true God was the God of their fathers.

If there were those in the army of Abijah who were not in the exercise of the most unwavering faith in God their hearts must have quailed with fear when they perceived that the enemy had surrounded them. One can almost hear the shrill sound of the silver trumpets, and the cry of the army as it ascends to God for help. For a moment the stillness of death prevails; but it is only for a moment. There is reason to believe that the great God by some means gave them an assurance of his assistance; for they shout; and as they shouted God smote Jeroboam and his vast army. The terror-stricken Israelites flee, the Judahites pursue, and ere the carnage stops more than half of Jeroboam's army lie weltering in their blood. By this signal victory the Judahites procured a considerable

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period of peace, and became the possessors of Bethel, Jeshanah and Ephraim with the surrounding villages.

Very little is recorded of Abijah after this victory except that he became powerful, married fourteen wives, and became the father of thirty-eight children, twenty-two of whom were males.

The sacred writer in this instance, as in many others, refers us to works which are not now extant. Had the works of Iddo been handed down to us, we doubtless might learn much to interest us relative to this excellent man.

Abijah died after a prosperous reign of three years. Were it not for the record that "he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him, and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father," we should be led to believe that he was nearly faultless. He was buried in the city of David—the fourth of the royal line there interred.

In the person of Abijah two branches of David's family were united; and he, who reared for himself a pillar, because he had no son to keep his name in remembrance, became the ancestor of a long line of kings. It is worthy of notice that Abijah's maternal great-great-grand-father was Talmai king of Gesher. Before David became king he smote the Gesherites; and it is possible that he was so much influenced by the beauty of Maacah, the Gesheritish princess, that while he waged against her people an exterminating war, he saved her and her father's house alive.

## CHAPTER III.

## ASA.

**A**SA succeeded to the throne of his father nine hundred and fifty-five years before Christ. At the beginning of the reign of Abijah there was a chronic war between his kingdom and that of Israel: at its close the latter kingdom was entirely powerless. The result was a long period of peace.

Asa used this season of quiet for the best of purposes: "He took away the altars of the strange gods and the high places, and brake down the images, and cut down the groves: and commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment." Having done all in his power to remove the temptations to idolatrous practices out of the way of his subjects, he, not presuming on perpetual peace, prepared for the defence of his kingdom. To this end he builded fortifications and reorganized and enlarged his army. It is remarkable that at this time the tribe of Benjamin furnished almost as many warriors as the tribe of Judah. One cannot suppose that there were as many men in Benjamin as in Judah who were capable of bearing arms. Does not the large number of warriors furnished by this remnant of a tribe shew that they were still noted for that activity, courage and cruelty which caused one, under the spirit

of prophesy, to say, "Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf."

The first war in which Asa was engaged was with Zerah the Ethiopian. Who this was, I confess myself unable to decide; but am most inclined to think that he was the king of Egypt, and the son and successor of Shishak. If this opinion be correct, is it not probable that he hoped to acquire as great wealth as his father had on a former invasion? and may it not be that the immense spoil with which Asa became enriched, was designed by the great God as payment for that which was carried away by Shishak during the reign of Rehoboam? But whoever Zerah was it is evident that he was possessed of great power. He came against the Judahites "with a host of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots." There is no doubt but that Asa felt himself unable successfully to oppose this vast host, he, therefore, with the greatest care and prudence disposed to the best advantage his comparatively small army, and then looked to God for help.

The prayer of Asa on this occasion is very remarkable: "Lord it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us O Lord our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee." The prayer was heard: "The Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah, and the Ethiopians fled . . . They were overthrown that they could not recover



themselves, for they were destroyed before the Lord and before his hosts." The question naturally arises, by what agency was this army destroyed? Did the Lord cause great fear to fall upon them, so that they fled, and their vast number obstructing their flight they became an easy prey to the Judahites? Did a suffocating wind sweep over them? or were they slain by spiritual invisible beings, those "ministers of His that do His pleasure?" This army being destroyed the Judahites "smote all the cities round about Gerar; for the fear of the Lord came upon them: and they spoiled all the cities; for there was exceeding much spoil in them."

One can scarcely conceive of the joy of the Judahites as they returned, driving vast herds of cattle, laden with spoil, and not one man missing. Victories are generally obtained by heavy losses even to the victors; and consequently while the nation is rejoicing many hearts are desolate. This was a season of universal joy throughout the kingdom. Before Asa made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, he was met by a prophet by the name of Azariah, who commended his conduct, encouraged him still to persevere in the service of God, and warned him of the danger of departing from Him. After the Judahites had offered sacrifices to the Lord "they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul; and that whosoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman." Was it not

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that the hearts of the people were permeated with the most ecstatic joy that caused this oath to be taken "with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets?"

In connection with the events just related the sacred historian brings to our notice a melancholy instance of defection from the service of God, by one of advanced age. I refer to Maacah, the grandmother of Asa. That Maacah was an idolatress when engaged in training her son Abijah, and her grandson Asa, the character of those princes most emphatically deny. The alternative is, that she, late in life, forsook the worship of the Lord God of Israel and turned to the worship of idols. One cannot suppose that Asa was ignorant of this; but it is probable that her elevated position—she being queen dowager—and the tender relation in which she stood to him prevented him from interdicting it. But now that the great God had given him so signal a victory over his enemies, gratitude compelled him to make any sacrifice in order to maintain His cause. The vengeance, executed on the idol, shews the mental effort Asa was obliged to make to gather resolution to destroy it. He cut it down, stamped it and burned it.

Judah's peace and prosperity attracted many from the neighbouring kingdom of Israel. To this Baasha, who then ruled over that kingdom, resolved to put an end. Having made extensive preparations he entered that kingdom; and protected by a large army, builded

a fortress at Ramah. This he intended should be well garrisoned, and thus be, for the future, an effectual barrier to further losses.

One cannot reflect on the conduct of the pious Asa on this occasion without pain. Can it be, one is ready to ask that, he, who, on a previous occasion, exercised such unwavering trust in God, now applied to a heathen power for aid? Such, however, was the case. This decline in Asa's faith is an instructive lesson on the weakness of human nature, and should teach even those who have the strongest faith to offer the prayer of the Psalmist :

“Hold thou me up and I shall be safe:  
And I will have respect to thy statutes continually.”

Instead of relying on God for help, Asa sent to Benhadad, king of Syria, to aid him in resisting the aggressions of the wicked king of Israel, with whom it seems Benhadad was then in league. Asa, in order to insure success, sent with his request an immense sum of gold and silver : he too at the same time reminded Benhadad that he had an hereditary right to his friendship. It is not likely that Benhadad cared for any treaty, however sacred, into which his ancestors had entered ; but the very large present which he had received and the knowledge that there were great quantities of the precious metals in the temple at Jerusalem caused him to comply. He, therefore, with as little delay as possible, entered the kingdom of Israel, and took several

important cities. Among these were the store cities of Naphtali. The advantages which were thus gained by Benhadad were only equalled by the loss to Baasha, and had the effect of recalling him from Ramah in order to protect his own kingdom. Asa seeing this, lost no time in undoing that which Baasha had done, at so much pains and expense.

The strength of the fortifications at Ramah may be inferred from the fact that there was carried thence sufficient stone and timber to build the towns of Geba and Mizpah.

About this time the prophet Hanani came to Asa and reproved him for his want of trust in God. Unlike one of his noble ancestors, who when told of his sin immediately humbled himself before God, he became angry with the prophet and cast him into prison. Asa does not appear ever to have regained his former status in regard to piety. When quite advanced in age he became diseased in his feet. Here again he shewed his lack of trust in God. "He sought not to the Lord but to the physicians." No doubt it was right for him to seek for medical aid; but his sin was in trusting to it, instead of relying only on the living God.

The name of Asa's mother is not left on record. Maacah, his paternal grand-mother, is called his mother. There have been various conjectures relative to this. The most probable of these conjectures is that his mother, dying in his infancy, he was adopted by

Maacah and known only as her son. Asa reigned forty-one years. But two of the kings of Judah—Uzziah and Manasseh—reigned longer than he. Though guilty of great faults yet he was emphatically a good man. His “heart was perfect with the Lord all his days.” The Judahites gave Asa an honorable burial. His body was embalmed, and vast quantities of spices burned, the ashes of which were placed around it; and then laid in the sepulchre he himself had prepared in the city of David.



## CHAPTER IV.

### JEHOSHAPHAT.

**J**EHOSHAPHAT succeeded to the throne of his father nine hundred and fourteen years before Christ. Asa had with his crown bequeathed to his son the war with Israel; and the young king was no less careful to preserve the conquests which had been made in that kingdom, than to keep his own in a posture of defence.

As Jehoshaphat had received religious training, had now arrived at the age of thirty-five, and had, for some years, borne with his father the cares of government, his reign might reasonably be expected to be a prosperous one: and it was pre-eminently so. It is worthy of remark that he is the only king who increased in

piety as he increased in wealth. While he was prosperous and happy at home, respected and feared by surrounding nations, had "had riches and honour in abundance—his heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord." He established the first mission on record. The missionaries, sent by him, were sixteen in number, and were all either princes, priests or Levites. They "had the book of the law of the Lord with them, and went about through all the cities of Judah, and taught the people."

Jehoshaphat was one of the few kings of Judah whom the neighbouring nations sought to propitiate with presents. Even the warlike Philistines disdained not to pay him a tribute, and the Arabians brought him of their flocks. No reader of the Bible can have failed to notice the vast increase in the army since the secession of the ten tribes. Then Judah could arm but one hundred and eighty thousand men: now one million one hundred and sixty thousand.

The great error of Jehoshaphat's life seems to have been his joining affinity with Ahab king of Israel by the marriage of his son Jehoram, with the princess Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab. I do not believe that this marriage was contracted to serve political purposes merely; but chiefly to gratify Jehoram's unbridled desires. As to the early history of our race "the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose," so the son of the eminently pious Jehoshaphat suffered

himself to become enamoured of this beautiful, talented but idolatrous woman. Had Jehoram had the fear of God uppermost in his thoughts he would no more have allowed his affections to be fixed on one who did not worship Him than he would injure the reputation of his neighbour, or lay hands upon his goods. It is a principle that runs through the whole of the sacred volume that the God-fearing man is under obligation to seek for a companion for life from among God-fearing women.

A few years after the unholy alliance between Jehoram and Athaliah, Jehoshaphat made Ahab a visit. Ahab had for some time been making preparations to take Ramoth-gilead from the Syrians; and was in readiness for the expedition when he received the visit from Jehoshaphat with his numerous attendants. Having been honoured with all due ceremony and about to depart Ahab said to him: "Wilt thou go with me to Ramoth-gilead?" Jehoshaphat consented though against his own better judgment. That he had doubts about the propriety of the undertaking is evident from his saying: "Inquire I pray thee at the word of the Lord to-day." Four hundred, who professed to have the spirit of prophecy were readily gathered together, and they as one encouraged the king to go to Ramoth-gilead, and promised him success. Jehoshaphat having no confidence in their predictions asked: "Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides that we may enquire of him." Ahab acknow-

ledged that there was another prophet; "but," said he, "I hate him; for he never prophesieth good unto me but always evil." This prophet was, however, brought before the two kings, and was at first so-intimidated as to unite with the other prophets in encouraging them to go on the proposed expedition; but when abjured to speak only the truth in the name of the Lord said: "I did see all Isral scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd; and the Lord said these have no master, let them return, therefore every man to his own house in peace."

It is astonishing that the pious Jehoshaphat would persist in an undertaking which he knew to be counter to the will of God. But one wrong step leads to another, and upright and talented though he was, he, in this instance, became the creature of one who in both these respects was his inferior.

In the engagement which took place at Ramoth-gilead Jehoshaphat, being mistaken for the king of Israel, was soon hemmed in by the Syrians. Like all true children of God he, in his extremity, called on Him and did not call in vain. "The Lord moved them to depart from him. Benhadad had attributed this war to Ahab, not to the king of Judah or to the people of Israel; and had charged his troops saying: "Fight ye not with small or great, save only with the king of Israel." They, therefore, perceiving their mistake left Jehoshaphat unharmed; and he returned in safety to his kingdom. He had hardly reached home



when he was thus accosted by the prophet Hanani: "Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from the Lord. Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken the groves out of the land and hast prepared thy heart to seek the Lord." There is reason to believe that the words of Hanani brought the king to repentance; for though his repentance is not recorded, yet he resumed his former wise administration; and appears to be more zealous than ever, for the good of his subjects, and the glory of his God. I do not know that there is, in the annals of history, any saying of any sovereign, which manifests greater depth of piety than the following charge given by Jehoshaphat to the judges in his kingdom: "Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment. Wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be with you: take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons nor taking of gifts." When Hanani reproved Jehoshaphat for helping the ungodly and loving them that hated the Lord, he did not refer solely to aid given to Ahab, but also to his having joined his interest with Ahaziah—who reigned conjointly with his father—in ship-building. The ships were wrecked, and this probably had much effect in working repentance in the mind of Jehoshaphat. Even good men seldom feel the enormity of any sin till for it they are made to suffer.

We once more find the king of Judah in league with the king of Israel. Ahaziah, who died without issue, was succeeded by his brother Jehoram, and as he was a better man than his father, or elder brother, one feels less surprise in finding the two kings together. They, with the king of Edom, went on an expedition against the king of Moab. Their march seems to have been ill planned; for they would have died of thirst had not water been supplied to them by a miracle. When reduced to great extremity the king of Israel yielded himself to despair; but the king of Judah, with characteristic piety, asks if there is not some prophet to whom they can go for direction. Having learned where Elisha could be consulted, they present themselves before him. The prophet, not at all flattered by a visit from the three crowned heads, told them that it was only out of respect to the piety of the king of Judah, that he consented for them to enquire of the Lord. He called for a minstrel, and as his mind is soothed by the sweet strains of music, he becomes the subject of divine afflatus. One can almost see the majestic form of the prophet, who had just reached manhood's prime, as he stands in his robe of camel's hair, fastened with a leathern girdle, his head closely shaven, which is in strange contrast with his flowing beard. And one almost hears the deep tones of his voice as he says: "Make this valley full of ditches. For thus saith the Lord. Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled

with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle and your beasts. And this is but a light thing in the sight of the Lord: he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand."

The valley, as the prophet had commanded, was made full of ditches, and the Lord caused them to be filled with water. This the Moabites saw, as it was reddened by the reflected rays of the sun; "and they said: "This is blood, the kings are surely slain, and they have smitten one another: now, therefore, Moab to the spoil." They were probably led to this conclusion from their knowledge of the fact that there were no streams of water in that part of the country. Being thus deceived they threw down their arms, and ran heedlessly on, eager only to possess the wealth of their enemies. What was their dismay when they found those whom they supposed slain, set in battle array, and ready to receive them! A horrible carnage ensued. The Moabites appear to have thought that if they could gain access to the Edomites they might be induced to join them in opposing the forces of Judah and Israel. To this end the king of Moab, with seven hundred chosen warriors, made a desperate sally, but without avail. He then took his eldest son, the heir apparent to the throne, and offered him in sacrifice to his god. But the Moabites, seeing that no advantage had been gained by this shocking act, fled in the greatest disorder.

There was still another war in which Jehoshaphat

was engaged. The Moabites and the Ammonites with their allies were the aggressors. Their motive is not apparent. It may be that Moab wished to avenge herself for her late losses, and that Edom hoped to become independent. The Ammonites were naturally the allies of the Moabites; and we lack proof that either of these three nations ever had any true friendship either for Judah or Israel. In no incident, connected with the life of Jehoshaphat, is the high tone of his piety more conspicuous than on this occasion. When he learned that these peoples had come against him "he set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah." This call seems to have been heartily responded to. The prayer of Jehoshaphat on this occasion is one of the most beautiful left on record. He refers to the relation in which they stood to God:—"God of our fathers"—to his sovereignty—"art thou not God in heaven? and rulest thou not over the kingdoms of the heathen"?—to his almightiness—"in thy hands is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee"?—to his former loving-kindness"—our God who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever"—to his covenant to aid—"when we stand before this house and in thy presence"—to the justice of their cause, and finally to their utter helplessness and their hope in God—"we have no might against this great company, that cometh

against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee." While Jehoshaphat and the assembled families of Judah were still in the posture of worship, the spirit of the Lord came upon one of the Levites present, who told them that they need not fear; for God would fight for them, and that they were only to stand still and see his salvation. On hearing this the king reverently "bowed his head, with his face to the ground; and all Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the Lord worshipping the Lord." In obedience to God's command they arose early the next morning and went out to meet the enemy. On their way the king gave the order to halt, and exclaimed: "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets so shall ye prosper. And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the Lord, that they should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say praise the Lord for his mercy endureth forever." As the prophet had foretold the Judahites were not required to strike a single blow. The Lord, who has sovereign control over the affections and wills, as well as the bodies of his creatures, caused the Ammonites and the Moabites to rise up against the Edomites and slay them; and then to slay each other; "And when Judah came to the watch-tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped." The foe being thus destroyed they began

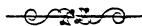
at once to remove the gold and precious jewels from off their corpses. This occupied three days, and the spoil was more than they could carry away. They then assembled in a valley, thence called Barachah, collectively to thank the Lord for this great deliverance: after which they returned to Jerusalem with the king at their head; and as they marched, praised the Lord with psaltery, harp and trumpet.

This victory was attended by more important advantages than the increase of wealth; for "the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries, when they heard that the Lord fought against the enemies of Israel."

It seems probable that Jehoshaphat lived only about five years after this remarkable victory. He was sixty years old at the time of his death. His reign had been a very prosperous one, and he undoubtedly enjoyed a larger share of happiness than generally falls to the lot of crowned heads. In all his ways he acknowledged God; and He directed his paths. He, like all his predecessors on the throne of Judah, was buried in the city of David.

There are few persons, with whose history we are acquainted, who are more faultless than Jehoshaphat: his sins having their origin in the kindness of his nature, or perhaps parental fondness. Eli was inexcusable for passing over the heinous sins of his sons with the mild rebuke: "Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: ye make the Lord's people to

transgress." David, doubtless, erred egregiously in allowing Adonijah to grow to years of manhood unrestrained, without even the implied reproof: "Why hast thou done so." And if Jehoshaphat joined affinity with Ahab in compliance with the wishes of his son, he too sinned; but his sin belonged to that class to which good men are most prone. The natural tendency of true religion is to refine the feelings and to make one averse to give pain, either mental or bodily; and to put the best construction on the conduct of others. There consequently may be danger that the pious father be too indulgent.



## CHAPTER V.

### JEHORAM OR JORAM.

**J**EHORAM succeeded to the throne of his father at the age of thirty-two, eight hundred and ninety-two years before Christ. As his father was an eminently pious man and he had on different occasions been associated with him in the government of the kingdom, it might reasonably be expected that he would be a good man and a good king. But it was far otherwise. The very first act recorded of him after his father's death but too plainly shewed his great depravity. I refer to his murdering his brothers. Jehoshaphat had, during his lifetime

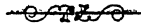
wisely made provision for all his sons; and there is no proof that they attempted or even wished to dethrone their elder brother. Jehoram had for some years been united in marriage to the talented, but most unscrupulous Athaliah; and as her subsequent history shews that she was quite capable of designing so tragical a scene, it is probable that it was at her suggestion that the horrible crime was committed. If one seeks for the motive by which she could have been actuated there seems to be none more likely than avarice. She may have coveted the gold, silver and fortified cities assigned them. This hateful fratricide so seared the conscience of Jehoram that he proceeded to other acts of cruelty and blood without compunction. Finding that there were several persons connected with the family into which he had married that were displeasing to his wife, he seems just quietly to have hinted to some of the tools of his injustice to put them out of the way. During this reign the Edomites revolted "and made a king over themselves." Jehoram, being resolved not to permit his authority to be thus ignored, "went over to Zair and all his chariots with him." But he found himself surrounded by his foes. He was in a similar condition to that in which his grandfather was placed when he fought against Jeroboam and gained a complete victory. But Jehoram had not like Asa the aid of Omnipotence: he had forsaken the Lord and so was shorn of his strength. Perhaps he, in his extremity, did the best that mere



human prudence could suggest. Having learned where the enemy were least able to make resistance, he arose in the night, while they were in a profound sleep, and cut his way through them and returned to his own kingdom. The Edomites did not pursue them, for all they desired was to be let alone. "So," says the historian, "the Edomites revolted from under the hand of Judah unto this day."

About this time Jehoram received a document which had been written by Elijah who had been translated during the former reign. The great God, before whom all things, present, past, and future are equally plain, foreseeing the character of this prince inspired this noted prophet to write a suitable warning for him, took care for its preservation, and so ordered that it was placed in his hand at the proper time. In this document he was told that on account of his sins, the Lord would smite his people and his children and his wives; and that he should die of a most loathsome and painful disease. This solemn warning was altogether disregarded; and from that time commenced a series of calamities which terminated only with his life. During the late reign the Philistines and Arabians brought a tribute to the king: now not content with withholding that tribute, "they came up into Judah, and brake into it, and carried away all the substance that was found in the king's house and his sons also and his wives; so that there was never a son left him, save Jehoahaz the youngest of his sons. And after all this the Lord

smote him in his bowels with an incurable disease. And it came to pass that in process of time, after the end of two years, his bowels fell out by reason of his sickness; so he died of sore diseases. And his people made no burning for him, like the burning of his fathers. He departed without being desired: howbeit they buried him in the city of David, but not in the sepulchre of the kings."



## CHAPTER VI.

### AHAZIAH, AZARIAH, OR JEHOAHAZ.

**A**H A Z I A H came to the throne eight hundred and eighty-five years before Christ, at the age of twenty-two. The circumstances by which he was surrounded were most unfavorable. The kingdom had been drained of its treasures; its tributaries had become independent; its army greatly reduced; his father remembered but to be despised; his mother the most depraved of women; and all his brothers either slain or in a state of captivity. When one adds to these considerations that he held the sceptre but one year, little could be expected of him, even had he been a man of independent thought and action. Such, however, does not appear to have been his character. His was one of those plastic natures which readily take the impress of those about him, whether

good or evil. It is observable that as often as his wickedness is spoken of, there is a reference to his surroundings. We are reminded that he had wicked counsellors, or that he was connected with a wicked family. Though noted for his impiety, he was what is generally termed a kind-hearted man. This is shown both by his visiting the invalid king of Israel and by his retaining the children of his deceased or captive brothers as members of his household.

The only warlike expedition in which this king was engaged was that in which he and the king of Israel endeavoured to retake Ramoth-gilead from Syria. There the king of Israel was so severely injured that he was obliged to return to Jezreel in order to be healed. During his illness Ahaziah visited him, and himself received a wound which ultimately occasioned his death. There is some difficulty in forming a correct judgment of the statements of the historian. The circumstances seem to be as follows: He went out with the king of Israel to meet a company of armed men. Finding that the army of his friend and ally was in a state of insurrection he fled. In his flight he received a wound from Jehu, (the newly anointed king of Israel) or some of his attendants. The wound does not appear to have been severe, for he eluded his pursuers and hid himself in Samaria. Perceiving that the place of his retreat was discovered, he again fled. Having gone as far as Megiddo, some eighteen miles, he was unable to proceed further. There the wound,

together with fatigue and anxiety, soon terminated his life. There appears to have been some controversy among his attendants as to whether he should be buried at Megiddo or carried back to Jerusalem and buried in the city of David. The latter proposition was concluded on, partly out of respect for the piety of his late grandfather, and partly because he, young as he was, had there prepared for himself a sepulchre. Ahaziah is the first king of Judah, whose death was occasioned by violence.

The downward course of this family is an impressive lesson on the evil of ungodly marriages. The calamities which at this time befell it being traceable to such an alliance. Had Jehoram not married Athaliah he would not have had as strong temptations to evil, nor would have left to his son the sad inheritance of evil counsellors; and had not Ahaziah been under the influence of evil counsellors he had not brought his kingdom to the brink of ruin, nor, but for a seeming accident, occasioned the total extinction of the royal line of David.



## CHAPTER VII.

## ATHALIAH.

**T**HIS is a very dark chapter in the history of Judah. One of the worst women that ever lived now sat on the throne. In few instances is the truth of the proverb: "As is the mother so is the daughter" illustrated more clearly than in the characters of Jezebel and Athaliah. They both possessed the intellect of man, and almost infernal wickedness united to their womanly tact. The great God created woman that she might be a helpmeet for man. Alas! neither men nor women are what they were when they came from the hands of the Creator; yet woman has ever been far more frequently the restrainer than the prompter of evil in the other sex. It cannot be denied, however, that there are melancholy exceptions to this rule. Athaliah was one of these exceptions. Indeed, she is the only woman in the Scriptures of whom it is said that "she was her son's counsellor to do wickedly." To me it seems absurd to claim for woman intellectual equality with man; that she is greatly his inferior in physical strength is too apparent to need assertion; but morally and spiritually she is his equal; and as far as her emotional nature merely is concerned his superior. But Athaliah seems to have had no tender feelings. No further proof of the truth of this statement is needed than the fact that as soon as she "saw

that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal of the house of Judah." To these unnatural murders she was evidently incited by ambition. Though no woman had ever worn the crown of Judah, she on the death of her son at once conceived the plan of usurping the government of the nation herself. Her influence in the kingdom must have been great, for she seems to have found no difficulty in finding those who were willing to assassinate the late king's children and proclaim her queen. It is worthy of remark that though she was at the head of the nation six years, of her conduct in that position the Scriptures contain no record. It is my opinion that Joel prophesied during this reign. If this opinion be correct, the land was at this time visited by vast swarms of locusts. How graphic the description of the devastation thus caused:

"He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree;  
He hath made it clean bare, and cast it away;  
The branches thereof are made white."

And then, as if the soul of the prophet was pained to witness the sufferings which man's sin had brought upon the lower animals, he exclaims:

"How do the beasts groan!  
The herbs of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture,  
Yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate."

Was it not that they were suffering from famine and its sad concomitants,—that the line of David had (as they thought) become extinct, and a woman ruled over

them, which brought them to reflect on their transgressions against God?

While Athaliah supposed herself without a rival, there was a little Prince, in one of the rooms belonging to the temple, tenderly watched over by a pious uncle and aunt. This prince was Joash, the infant son of the late king. When Athaliah slew all the seed royal of the house of Judah, Jehoshabeath, the half sister of Ahaziah, secretly carried him and his nurse away, and concealed them in the house of the Lord. There they lived in the greatest privacy six years. Jehoshabeath and her excellent husband, who was a priest by the name of Jehoiada, doubtless watched over the health and comfort of the royal infant with the greatest care, and as his mind developed instructed him in the law ~~of~~ God.

The reader may think it incredible that a child could be-nursed in the temple, as in it the priests only were permitted to enter. I would reply that the temple proper, that is the holy place, and the most holy, were entered only by the priests: the holy place daily, the most holy on one day in a year. The temple being not a place in which men met to worship God, but a place in which God himself dwelt by his manifested presence. The name temple, however, was given to all the apartments, courts or inclosures connected with it; so that the whole space which was so called was about a half mile in circumference. As into the interior court none but the priests were per-

mitted to enter, and there were several rooms connected with this court, for their use, if they could be induced to favour the concealment of the prince, there could be no difficulty in keeping his very existence a secret.

While Joash was most carefully concealed, Jehoiada embraced every opportunity of ascertaining the feeling of the nation, both towards the supposed extinct family and the usurper who then filled the throne. When he saw, at the end of six years, that the yoke, which Athaliah had lain on the neck of the Judahites, was too heavy longer to be endured, and that they were ripe for a revolution, he gathered together the chief men in the kingdom and caused them to enter into a covenant to serve the Lord, and to return to their allegiance to the house of David, if it should be proven that any of that house still survived. When this covenant had been solemnly ratified he, to their surprise and delight, shewed them the late king's son. They proceeded without delay to prepare for the young prince's coronation. Their measures were so well advised, and so heartily did the people acquiesce in the arrangements, that the ceremony was undisturbed; and the usurper was ignorant of what was being transacted till she heard the clapping of hands, together with the shout: "God save the king." Athaliah at once went to the temple. Ah! who can conceive of her astonishment and dismay when she saw one whom she supposed to be dead arrayed in royal vestments,



the crown upon his head, and guarded by those whom she deemed among her adherents. She rent her clothes and cried, "Treason, treason." Jehoida, who had been the instrument in bringing about this revolution, appears not to have been quite certain but that there might be some who would still befriend her; for when he gave the command: "Have her forth without the ranges," he added, "And him that followeth her kill with the sword." It does not appear that even one attempted to aid her, or in any way shewed himself her friend. She was slain while endeavouring to make her escape. There is no proof that she received burial. It may be that like her wretched mother's her mangled body was eaten by dogs. Thus perished the last relic of the house of Ahab. We lack data from which to learn the age of Athaliah at the time of her death. As she had been for some time a grandmother, she could not have been very young; and as her mother died but a few years before, and then died of violence, it is improbable that she was far advanced in age.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## JOASH OR JEHOASH.

**J**OASH, or Jehoash, was proclaimed king at the early age of seven, eight hundred and seventy-eight years before Christ. He reigned forty years. None of the kings of Judah succeeded to the throne so early in life, and but three reigned a greater length of time. During his minority Jehoiada, the priest, was virtually king; indeed, he exercised a very powerful influence over him during his whole lifetime. The first care of Jehoiada was to induce the people to return to the worship of the true God. For this purpose he "made a covenant between Him and between all the people and between the king, that they should be the Lord's people." This done, they resorted to the house of Baal, which they destroyed, with its altars and images. They also slew the priest who was in attendance on the altar.

The first act of this reign which can be said to be the king's was the repairing of the temple. On the erection of the tabernacle God commanded that a poll tax of a half shekel (about thirty cents) should be levied on all male Israelites above the age of twenty. This was to be a fund for the current expenses of that edifice, and afterwards of the temple. When Joash called the priests and Levites and commanded them to go into the cities of Judah and collect money for the

repairs of the temple, it was this tax to which he had reference. The execution of this command was deferred till the three-and-twentieth year of his reign. As the king had expressed a desire that the matter should receive prompt attention, and as Jehoiada was a truly pious man, entirely devoted to his interest, there must have been a sufficient reason for the delay. May it not be that the good priest feared that the collection of this impost would render the king unpopular, and make the people averse to the costly services of the temple? Is it not questionable whether such policy can be justified? When Jehoiada was called to account for his seeming negligence, he persuaded the king that for the present it was not best to enforce the payment of the tax, and he accordingly had recourse to the voluntary principle. By the king's command Jehoiada caused a chest to be made, and placed at the gate of the house of the Lord. This chest was closed, and had an aperture in the lid of just the dimensions required to allow the money to pass through. The plan worked well, for the people were rejoiced to have this opportunity to shew their attachment to the service of God. The chest was again and again filled, till there was even more than was needed for the repairs of the temple.

The king appears to have conducted wisely, and the nation to have enjoyed prosperity during the lifetime of Jehoiada. And his life was a very long one—a hundred and thirty years. Then, as now, few lived

more than three score and ten years; and it was a special favour to Judah that the life of this good man was prolonged for so great a period. It is probable that the leading men in the kingdom were never hearty in the reformation effected by Jehoiada, for after his death they went to the king and induced him to leave the worship of the true God for that of idols. The Lord did not suffer the people to relapse into idolatry unrepented, but sent his prophets to exhort them steadfastly to adhere to his worship. Among these prophets was Zechariah, to whose mother the king was indebted for the preservation of his life, and to whose father he owed his crown. On one occasion, when the people were assembled in the temple courts, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Zechariah, and he told them that as they had forsaken the Lord they could not prosper. The scene which followed is an indelible stain on the character of Joash, for, notwithstanding his deep indebtedness to both Zechariah's parents, the sacredness of the place, and the fact that he was under oath to serve the Lord, he commanded that the prophet should be stoned. Zechariah looked with calmness on the infuriated people, and asking not for mercy or even justice from his earthly king, he appealed to the King of Heaven to avenge his cause: "The Lord," said he, "look upon it and require it."

The remainder of this reign was most unfortunate. About a twelvemonth after the martyrdom of Zechariah an army of Syrians came against the Judahites,

killed many of the princes and great men among them, and carried off their wealth. The king remained supine till some of his cities were taken. This aroused him, and he sent all the strength of his kingdom against them; and as the invading army was small, he felt certain of success. But it might be said of Joash, as was said of Samson, that he knew not that the Lord had departed from him; and, so far from this army being the victors, they were cut to pieces by the Syrians. There being no longer an army to oppose, they marched towards Jerusalem, killing the inhabitants and enriching themselves with their goods. In this dilemma "Joash, king of Judah, took all the hallowed things that Jehoshaphat, and Jehoram, and Ahaziah, his fathers, kings of Judah, had dedicated, and his own hallowed things, and all the gold that was found in the treasures of the house of the Lord, and in the king's house, and sent it to Hazael, king of Syria." As is common in such cases the period of peace was too dearly bought. The Syrians returned at the end of the year, and Joash, being now too poor to purchase another peace, was obliged to fight. The battle was lost, and Judah for the time completely ruined.

The Syrians left Joash "in great diseases." It is probable that the loss of his army, the loss of his treasures, the reproaches of his subjects, and the remorse of his own conscience, so preyed on his mind as to destroy his health. It may be that pain of body, and anguish of mind rendered him irascible beyond endu-

rance. He was assassinated by two of his servants. As they do not appear to have made any effort to leave the kingdom, nor to have aspired to the crown, it is probable that they but carried out the known wishes of the people. He was the first king of Judah who was assassinated. So abhorred was he that he was denied burial "in the sepulchres of the kings." Though this honour was not allowed him, it was conferred on Jehoiada, through whose efforts he had been made king. Jehoiada was the only person laid there whose head had never worn a crown. He was there interred "because he had done good in Israel, both toward God and toward his house.

Joash died at the age of forty-seven. His sins seem to have been altogether without excuse. From childhood he had been instructed in the law of the Lord; and during the greater part of his reign he had the counsel of the good, disinterested, self-sacrificing Jehoiada. The repairing of the house of the Lord is the only act recorded of him which is worthy of praise. Though he adhered to the worship of the true God while sustained by the counsel and influence of Jehoiada; yet when that priest died he was easily persuaded to worship idols.

## CHAPTER IX.

## AMAZIAH.

**A**MAZIAH succeeded to the throne of his father at the age of twenty-five, eight hundred and thirty years before Christ. His mother's name was Jehoaddan. She was a Jewess. Amaziah, when compared with some others, may be called a good king. Indeed, his conduct appears to have been for some time irreproachable. "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, yet not like David his father: he did according to all things, as Joash, his father, did." By those who are acquainted with the two kings referred to, this short sentence may be considered a pretty full biography. David was guilty of grave faults, yet "his heart was perfect with the Lord his God." Joash was never really whole-hearted in the service of the Lord." "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart."

Amaziah felt himself bound by honour to avenge his father's death, and his first act as a king was to slay the murderers. In accordance with the law of the Lord the children were not punished for their father's crime. This incidental reference to the Pentateuch is one of the many proofs of its genuineness.

The reader of course remembers that a little before the death of Joash his kingdom was invaded by the

Syrians, by whom his army was almost annihilated. Accordingly Amaziah, early in his reign, set about organizing another army. He was the more earnest in this work as he was threatened with an invasion of the people of Seir. He found he had but three hundred thousand men fit for war. This he considered too small a number successfully to oppose the invaders. He therefore hired a hundred thousand men of Israel, for whom he paid a hundred talents of silver, a sum about equal to a hundred and sixty thousand dollars. This is a large sum in itself considered, but the more especially so, as the kingdom of Judah was at this time exceedingly poor.

When Amaziah was about to march against the Edomites he was told by a prophet that the Israelites ought not to go with him, because the Lord was not with them. The effort with which the hundred talents had been raised may be conjectured from the importance attached to it. On hearing the words of the prophet: "What," cried the needy monarch, "shall I do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel?" His anxiety was, however, soon allayed by the answer of the prophet: "The Lord is able to give thee much more than this." The Israelitish soldiers were dismissed. They were extremely unwilling to return, though they retained their wages as if they had endured the campaign.

Amaziah now marched his army a distance of some fifty miles, to the valley of salt, where he gained a



decisive victory over the men of Seir. He slew ten thousand men, and took another ten thousand prisoners, whom, according to the barbarous custom of many ancient nations, he dashed to pieces by throwing them from a precipice.

While the Judahites were pursuing their victorious career, their unprotected families were suffering from the depredations of the Israelites. The hundred thousand men whom Amaziah had dismissed, instead of returning to their own land, entered his kingdom, killed many of the inhabitants, and carried off their goods. On the hearing of this, Amaziah returned, and the marauders consequently fled. The king of Judah demanded reparation for the lives and property of his subjects; and this being refused he declared war against Israel. The reply of Joash on hearing this declaration, was a very haughty one, but it had been well for Judah had the taunt been meekly borne.

There is little doubt but that Amaziah would have been victorious over Israel, as he had been over Edom, had he steadfastly adhered to the worship of the true God; but instead of doing so, "he brought the gods of the children of Seir and set them up to be his gods, and bowed down himself before them, and burned incense unto them." The great God condescended to expostulate with him by the mouth of one of his prophets; but Amaziah refused to listen to the message. It was to punish him for these sins that he was delivered into the hands of the king of Israel. In the

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battle which was fought between the two nations, "Judah was put to the worse before Israel, and they fled every man to his tent." The engagement took place at Beth-shemesh, a town nearly west from Jerusalem, at a distance of about fifteen miles. Here the poor king was taken prisoner and carried to his own capital, where he was probably obliged to witness the demolition of its walls for a distance of some six hundred feet. The Judahites ransomed their king, for the payment of which they gave some of their chief men as hostages.

Amaziah does not appear to have profited by the calamities through which he passed. Indeed his conduct soon became unbearable. His subjects conspired against him, and he, remembering the tragical end of his father, fled from Jerusalem, and took refuge in Lachish. But hither he was pursued by his exasperated subjects and slain. His corpse was, however, carried back to Jerusalem and buried in the city of David.



## CHAPTER X.

## UZZIAH OR AZARIAH.

**UZZIAH** succeeded to the throne of his father eight hundred and ten years before Christ, at the age of sixteen.

One cannot fail to be struck with the fidelity of the Judahites to the house of David. Though the grandfather and father of Uzziah had become exceedingly unpopular—so unpopular that they were assassinated—they lost no time in proclaiming the young Uzziah king. It is not improbable that on hearing of the murder of his father he went to some retired place, solicitous only for his own safety. The phraseology of the historian is somewhat peculiar. "The people of Judah *took* Uzziah . . . . and *made* him king." He reigned fifty-two years, his being, with the exception of that of Manasseh, the longest reign in the history of Judah. Isaiah, Hosea and Amos began to prophesy in this reign. In this and in all similar instances the prophecies should be read in connection with the history, they mutually throwing light on each other.

Uzziah's mother's name was Jecoliah : she belonged to Jerusalem. She probably early instructed her son in the duties of religion, and to that instruction, no less than to the influence exercised over him by

Zechariah, is his long period of prosperity to be attributed.

Early in this reign the town of Eloth was rebuilt. It was situated on the Red Sea, and formerly belonged to the Edomites. It was taken by Solomon, but by succeeding kings had been suffered to go to decay. Its situation rendered it a place of considerable importance. The Edomites, to whom reference has been made, were the descendants of Abraham; but Esau, from whom they took their name, though descended of pious parents, was a very wicked man. He sold his birthright, with all its high spiritual privileges, for the mere gratification of his appetite. He also married two Canaanitish women, and soon relapsed into idolatry. As we meet with this people, sometimes tributary to the descendants of Jacob, sometimes independent, we are reminded of the prophetic words of Isaac: thou "shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck."

Uzziah's next work, after building Eloth, was to humble his hereditary enemies, the Philistines. For this purpose he demolished several of their cities, and builded others for himself in their territory. These he doubtless strongly garrisoned. He also gained important advantages over the Arabians who dwelled at Gur-baal and the Mehunims, who probably inhabited Arabia Deserta.

During the reign of Amaziah a considerable portion

of the wall around Jerusalem was destroyed. This Uzziah re-built and greatly strengthened. He was not, however, so intent on providing for the safety of his capital as to neglect other parts of his kingdom. Believing that the true wealth of the nation must be derived from the earth, he encouraged agriculture; and had in his employ both husbandmen and vine-dressers. He is the only king of Judah of whom it is said, "he loved husbandry." While engaged in these peaceful arts, he did not forget that he had warlike neighbours; and wisely deemed preparation for war necessary for the preservation of peace. For this purpose he organized a large army, officered by men of acknowledged valour, and provided both defensive and offensive armour. In this connection is found the remarkable statement that he "made in Jerusalem engines invented by cunning men, to be on the towers, and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal." "This," as Dr. Clarke observes, "is the very first intimation on record of any warlike engine for the *defence* or *attack* of besieged places: and this account is long prior to any thing of the kind among either the Greeks or the Romans." Since he was the inventor of these engines it can create no surprise that "his name spread far abroad." This state of prosperity did not continue during the whole of his reign. "When he was strong his heart was lifted up to his destruction; for he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into

the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense." One cannot fail to admire the resolution and intrepidity of Ahaziah and the accompanying priests on this occasion. One can almost see the pious priest in his sacerdotal robes as he follows the king into the holy place, to the altar of incense which stood before that symbolical veil "of blue and purple and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work," and hear him exclaim: "It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary, for thou hast trespassed, neither shall it be for thine honour from the Lord God." Uzziah appears to have felt indignant that one of his subjects would dare thus to address him, and he might have persisted in offering the incense had not the Lord at that moment smitten him with leprosy. He at once felt, and the priests saw, that he was a leper; and he was now not less anxious to leave the precincts of the holy temple than were they that he should do so. The leprosy, painful and nearly incurable as it was, was peculiarly distressing to the Jew, as, by the Mosaic law, the leper was required to dwell alone. The law was put in force on this occasion, which is somewhat remarkable, as the nation had grievously departed from God. The testimony of Isaiah relative to Judah at this time is: "Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves; everyone loveth gifts and followeth after

rewards : they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them."

It is possible that Uzziah's dwelling apart was not altogether out of regard to the law. He may have become too loathsome a spectacle to be endured as chief magistrate ; indeed his sufferings may have been too severe to leave him ability for the duties, or even desire for the estate of royalty. During his illness his son Jotham was regent.

In the year in which Uzziah died Isaiah saw one of the most wonderful visions ever vouchsafed to man, and heard those mysterious symbolical beings, here called Seraphim cry one to another :—

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts,  
The whole earth is full of His glory."

It too was during this reign that Hosea, in the name of the Lord, uttered the pathetic expostulation :

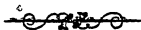
"O Judah, what shall I do with thee ?  
For your goodness is as a morning cloud,  
And as the early dew it goeth away."

While Hosea was uttering this tender entreaty, Amos was sent with the terrible message—

"The Lord shall roar from Zion,  
And utter his voice from Jerusalem ;  
And the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn,  
And the top of Carmel shall wither."

Uzziah doubtless died in the retired apartments in

which, since his leprosy, he had lived. He was buried in a field which was probably used as a place of interment for the younger brothers and female members of the royal family.



## CHAPTER XI.

### JOTHAM.

**J**OTHAM succeeded to the throne of his father seven hundred and fifty-eight years before Christ. He was at that time twenty-five years old, and he reigned sixteen years. His mother's name was Jerushah, and she probably belonged to the tribe of Levi. She, doubtless, was careful that her son, who was destined to fill a throne, should be early instructed in the law of the Lord; and to the blessing of God on that instruction the eminent piety of this prince is to be attributed. His character, as far as it is made known, is without a single blemish, except that he married an idolatress, and of that we have but presumptive proof. He had for some years before his father's death been king in every thing but name; and he appears to have been, during the whole of his public life, devoted to the good of his people and the service of his God. He "became mighty because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God." He did not, like his father, presume



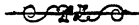
to enter the temple, but manifested his respect for that edifice by making such repairs as were needed about its enclosures. The wall around his capital next received his attention; and extensive as had been the repairs during the preceding reign, some portions of it were found to be extremely pregnable; and he, with as little delay as possible, added to the strength of such portions. "On the wall of Ophel he built much." He, too, "built cities in the mountains of Judah, and in the forests he built castles and towers." His deep religious character, so far from interfering with the proper discharge of the duties of his station, caused him to be the more diligent in the performance of those duties. That piety is alone genuine which has this effect.

The Judahites, during this reign, enjoyed a period of profound peace, if we except the rebellion of their tributary the Ammonites. The efforts of this people to throw off the yoke of Judah were entirely ineffectual. They were not only reduced again to subjection, but for three consecutive years were required to pay a much heavier tribute than that previously imposed.

The historian tells us that "in those days the Lord began to send against Judah Rezin, the king of Syria, and Pekah, the son of Remaliah." By these words we are probably to understand that the Lord caused them to plan an invasion of this kingdom, but withheld them from putting their plans into execution. The piety of the king caused the Lord to spare his sub-

jects. As guilty Sodom could not be consumed till Lot made his escape; as rebellious Israel could not be destroyed while Moses interceded for them; so Rezin and Pekah had no power over the Judahites while the pious Jotham pleaded their cause before God.

Jotham died at the age of forty-one. Death can never come unseasonably to the believer, for with him to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. But one always regrets the early removal of those who are eminently useful here. May it not be that such are needed in heaven? May it not be that Jotham rendered more important services there, than it was possible for him to render on earth?



## CHAPTER XII.

### AHAZ.

**A**HAZ succeeded to the throne of his father seven hundred and forty-two years before Christ. He was at the time twenty-two years of age, and in many respects his father's antipodes. Good a man as Jotham was, I cannot avoid the conclusion that he married an idolatress. It is scarcely possible that Ahaz could so early have become an adept in wickedness had his mother been a believer in the true God. We learn from sacred and profane history that it is no unusual thing for pious men to

have wicked sons, but pious women generally leave their impress on the characters of their children.

Ahaz was, when he came to the throne, both a husband and a father. It may be that Jotham, being convinced of the error he had committed in his own ungodly marriage, made it his care to have his son early united to one who feared and served the Lord. But powerful as is the influence of a wife, for good or for evil, the influence of a mother is more powerful still; and the mind of Ahaz had in childhood and youth become so permeated with idolatry that his wife's efforts to win him over to the worship of the true God were ineffectual. The young king soon became famous, or rather infamous, on account of his great zeal for the worship of idols. To it he gave the full weight of his influence and example. And as if idolatry was not in itself bad enough to suit his depraved heart, he practised it in its most revolting forms, even sacrificing his own children in the valley of Hinnom, which was situated at the south of Jerusalem. This valley took its name *Hinnom* from being once owned by persons of that name. It was also called *Tophet* from the name of an instrument which was played there in order to drown the cries of the miserable victims as they were consumed. The valley was probably selected for the horrid rites of pagan worship on account of its shade and privacy. It was doubtless to Moloch that Ahaz offered his children. This object of idolatrous worship is thus described by Barnes. It "was of

brass, adorned with a royal crown, having the head of a calf, and his arms extended as if to embrace any one. When they offered children to him they heated the statue within by a great fire, and when it was burning hot they put the miserable child into his arms, where it was soon consumed by the heat; and in order that the cries of the child might not be heard, they made a great noise with drums and other instruments about the idol."

Ahaz was the first king of Judah who sank so low in iniquity as to offer human sacrifices. It may be said he multiplied idolatries, for the testimony of God's word is: "He sacrificed also and burnt incense in the high places and on the hills and under every green tree." As a chastisement for his sins the Lord delivered him into the hands of Rezin, king of Syria, and into the hands of Pekah, king of Israel.

It is surprising that even Ahaz, wicked as he was, should in this dilemma seek aid from a heathen power; for soon after these kings came against him the Lord sent the prophet Isaiah to him with the following message:

"Take heed and be quiet;  
Fear not, neither be fainthearted,  
For the two tails of these smoking firebrands,  
For the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and the son of Remaliah,  
Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah,  
Have taken evil counsel against thee, saying,  
Let us go up against Judah and vex it,  
And let us make a breach therein for us,  
And set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Abi-beal:

Thus saith the Lord God,  
It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass,  
For the head of Syria is Damascus,  
And the head of Damascus is Rezin,  
And within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that  
it be not a people."

Ahaz, instead of relying on the word of God, sent to Tiglath-pileser for aid. Rollin says of this king that "he is supposed to be the first that reigned at Nineveh after the destruction of the ancient Assyrian empire." Tiglath-pileser complied with the request of the king of Judah; his efforts were, however, more particularly directed against Syria than against Israel. "He went up against Damascus and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin." For these services the Assyrian monarch extorted such vast sums of money that in reality he left the kingdom of Judah in a much worse condition than he found it. In the emphatic words of the historian he "distressed Ahaz and strengthened him not." The straits to which they were reduced in order to satisfy the demands of Tiglath-pileser may be inferred from the fact that for this purpose he "cut off the borders of the bases, and removed the laver from off them, and took down the sea from off the brazen oxen that were under it, and put it upon a pavement of stones. And the covert of the Sabbath that they had built in the house, and the king's entry without turned he from the house of the Lord."

While Tiglath-pileser was at Damascus Ahaz visited

him, and saw an altar with which he was so much pleased that he "sent to Urijah the priest, the fashion of the altar, and the pattern of it, according to all the workmanship thereof."

Urijah seems to have been more zealous in the service of his king than in the service of his God, for he at once set about the required task, and had the altar completed when they returned to Jerusalem. Ahaz, in order to bring the temple service into disuse, lost no time in offering sacrifices on the new altar; and gave command that henceforward the daily sacrifices should on it be offered. And lest there should be some in his kingdom who were so true to God's appointments as still to use the brazen altar, he claimed that as his private property. "That," said he, "shall be for me to enquire by."

It is improbable that Ahaz enjoyed a very long period of peace. The king of Israel again made war against him. He was encouraged to do this, as the Judahites were now sunken into idolatry, and the history of that people proved that when they had forsaken God they became an easy prey to their enemies. There appears to have been but one battle. In this the victory gained by the Israelites exceeded their most sanguine expectations. They slew of the valient men of Judah one hundred and twenty thousand. The domestic circle of Ahaz was, too, invaded; his son, Maaseiah, together with others of the most valued members of his household, were slain. The victorious

Israelites then returned to Samaria, laden with spoil, and carrying two *hundred thousand* women and children captive. They intended to make these captives slaves; but so far from this being carried into effect, they were liberated and conveyed in safety to their own land. Some of the circumstances connected with their release are without a parallel in the annals of history. The captives, as before remarked, were women and children. Their fathers, husbands and brothers had been recently slain. They had been forced to travel a considerable distance unshod and uncovered, and the male portion of the children in a state of nudity: They now trembling stand at the gate of Samaria awaiting their doom. Suddenly a man of God, by the name of Obed, comes before the hosts of armed men, and boldly utters the stern language of reproof: "Behold," said he, "because the Lord God of your fathers was wroth with Judah, he hath delivered them into your hand, and ye have slain them with rage that reacheth up to heaven. And now ye purpose to keep under the children of Judah and Jerusalem for bondmen and bondswomen unto you; but are there not with you, even with you<sup>r</sup> sins against the Lord your God? Now hear me, therefore, and deliver the captives again, which ye have taken captive of your brethren, for the fierce wrath of the Lord is upon you."

It is quite possible that the warriors, flushed as they were with recent conquest, would have demurred to comply with the demand of the prophet, had not other

influences been brought to bear upon them." The leading men in Israel had assembled in Samaria in order to give the victors a proper reception, but on hearing the words of Obed some of these added their authority to his exhortation. They positively forbid the entrance of the captives into their city. On hearing this "the armed men left the captives and the spoil before the princes, and all the congregation." The scene which followed was one on which He who delights in mercy must have looked with complacency. The captives were tenderly cared for, clothed and fed, and the feeble among them being provided with the means of conveyance, were escorted a distance of some thirty miles to the town of Jericho. The sacred writer, in narrating these events, takes pains to remark "to their brethren" to show that they were not left unprotected.

The Judahites were not as generously treated by other nations. Edom, one of their hereditary enemies, had smitten them, and carried away many of them captives, who no doubt died in captivity. The Philistines, too, invaded them, and took possession of several of their towns and villages.

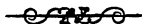
Though there are many who while in prosperity live in forgetfulness of God, there are comparatively few who do not try to seek him in the day of their calamity. Ahaz was, however, an exception to this rule: "In the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord;" and, as if this was the dis-



tinguished trait of his character, it is added: "This is that king Ahaz." He appears to have become more and still more wicked. He worshipped the gods of Damascus: he shut up the house of the Lord, and multiplied altars to heathen gods, and gathered together the sacred vessels of the temple, and cut them in pieces.

Ahaz died at the age of thirty-six, and was buried in the city of Jerusalem, but not in the sepulchres of the kings.

During the year in which this king died the prophet Isaiah uttered a prophecy against the king of Babylon, which is incomparable for majesty of style.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### HEZEKIAH.

**H**EZEKIAH came to the throne of his father at the age of five-and-twenty, seven hundred and twenty-six years before Christ. It has been well said: "God can raise up good men to do his work in the worst of times." The character of Hezekiah is an instance of the truth of this statement. When one reflects on the character of Ahaz, and the idolatry which prevailed throughout his kingdom, it is reasonable to expect his son and successor to be not less wicked than himself. But I think there were good

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influences even in that licentious, idolatrous court, which were the means, in God's hand, of preserving the mind of the young prince comparatively pure in the midst of moral contagion. I refer to the influence of his mother, who was a Jewess, the daughter of Zechariah. It may be that she was a truly pious woman. She probably lived in the closest retirement, contented to be unknown, if she was but permitted to train her son in such manner as to fit him to serve God in the elevated position which he was destined to occupy. If she indeed were a pious woman, there could have been but little fellowship between her husband and herself; and it must have been refreshing to her mind to have one member of her family, to whom she could express unblamed her conviction of the righteousness of God's law, and the solemn obligation all are under to conform their lives to its requirements. While she doubtless mourned over the general defection, and her consequent inability publicly to worship the true God, she felt deep satisfaction in the consciousness that He knew her heart, and would accept of her desire for actual service. "The head of the woman is the man," and it is natural and proper for a woman to look to her husband or father for sympathy and guidance in the momentous concerns of religion; but this being denied, there is, perhaps, no one else who can supply the want as well as a son. Sweet must have been the fellowship which was enjoyed by Abijah and the excellent Hezekiah. It must have

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been with intense anxiety that she watched him, on his succession to the throne, lest in his altered condition he should forget the lessons that she had, with so much care, endeavoured to impress on his mind; and with deep satisfaction must she have observed that his piety was but strengthened by the high responsibilities he had assumed.

The kingdom, on the succession of Hezekiah, was in a most miserable condition. During the late reign it had suffered loss of territory, loss of treasures, and loss of subjects, and had become tributary to Assyria. In these circumstances one would not have been surprised had he made it his first care to better the temporal condition of his people. But he felt that it was alike easy for God to defend the weak or the strong, and consequently sought first of all to secure His favour. Scarcely had he been proclaimed king, and the ceremony of his coronation been performed, when he opened and repaired the doors of the house of the Lord. Having rendered the sacred enclosures easily accessible, he gathered together the priests and Levites, and commanded them to sanctify themselves, and then prepare to cleanse the Lord's house. He reminded them of the sins of which they as a nation had been guilty, and of the miseries which had in consequence come upon them; and then told them that it was in his heart to make a covenant with the Lord his God, and exhorted them to co-operate with him in his endeavors to bring about a reformation. As he wisely deemed it

unreasonable to expect that the people would be won over to the worship of the true God while the altars on which they had been accustomed to offer sacrifices, and the idols to which they had offered these sacrifices continually met their eyes, he, with commendable zeal, removed these temptations. In this connection we meet with the remarkable statement that up to that time the brazen serpent, made by Moses, had been an object of idolatrous worship. It is very surprising that many as had been the pious kings who had reigned over Judah, and extensive as had been the reforms from time to time effected, this had been allowed to remain from generation to generation. But remiss as had been former good kings in regard to this idol, (for idol it had become), Hezekiah shewed no lack of zeal in the matter. He brake it in pieces, and called it Nehushtan. It may be that he sent the pieces to different workers in brass to be mixed with the same material, so that no one in the future could say, "This is a relic of the brazen serpent."

When the priests and Levites were called upon to assist in the work of reformation they appear to have been taken by surprise; and for a little to have been undetermined as to what course to pursue. But after consultation among themselves, twelve men, chief of the families of the Levites, "gathered their brethren, and sanctified themselves, and came according to the command of the king, by the word of the Lord, to cleanse the house of the Lord." Though these men

had hesitated to profess their willingness to co-operate with the king, in again introducing the worship of the true God, yet they manifested their sincerity by the manner in which they proceeded with the work. The law permitted the priests only to enter the temple, and they, even in the cleansing of this sacred edifice, carefully adhered to this law; they themselves going into the temple, and carrying thence into the courts whatever ought not to be there. The Levites then conveyed these things outside the walls of the city, and threw them into the brook Kidron.

Eight days were occupied in sanctifying the house of the Lord, and another eight days in cleansing the altars, the table for the shew-bread, and the sacred vessels. They then went to the king and informed him what they had done. "Then Hezekiah the king rose early, and gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the Lord. And they brought seven bullocks, and seven rams, and seven he goats, for a sin offering for the king, and for the sanctuary, and for Judah. And he commanded the priests, the sons of Aaron, to offer them on the altar of the Lord. So they killed the bullocks, and the priests received the blood and sprinkled it on the altar: likewise, when they had killed the rams, they sprinkled the blood upon the altar. And they brought forth the he goats, for the sin offering before the king and the congregation, and they laid their hands upon them: and the priests killed them, and they made reconciliation, with

their blood upon the altar, to make an atonement for all Israel: for the king commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for all Israel. And he set the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the King's seer, and Nathan the prophet; for so was the commandment of the Lord by his prophets. And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with trumpets. And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David King of Israel. And all the congregation worshipped and the singers sang, and the trumpets sounded: and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished. And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all that were present with him bowed themselves, and worshipped." Hezekiah then invited those who had consecrated themselves to present such offerings as they desired to the Lord. This invitation was gladly responded to. Seventy bullocks, a hundred rams, and two hundred lambs were offered up to the Lord by fire. There were at the same time consecrated to the service of the Lord six hundred oxen, and three thousand sheep.

After these things Hezekiah resolved to keep the passover which, as is well known, was a feast instituted on the night on which the Israelites departed from

Egypt, in memory of the destroying angel passing over their dwellings while the firstborn among the Egyptians were slain. At this feast, the carcase of a lamb, dressed and roasted whole, was eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. When the lamb was slain the blood was sprinkled on the posts and lintels of the doors of their houses which procured for its inmates safety while surrounded by death. There is much of an interesting nature connected with this feast, especially the fact that the lamb was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Hezekiah, as I have already said, resolved to keep the passover, and he was desirous that not only his own subjects, but that all who wished in the neighbouring kingdom of Israel should also enjoy this privilege. To this end he consulted the princes, and leading men in his kingdom; and with their approval sent written invitations to Judah and Israel requesting them to meet for this purpose, at Jerusalem. It was on the fourteenth day of the first, not of the second month, that the law required this feast should be celebrated; but it at the same time permitted those who for any reason could not keep it on that day, to observe it on the fourteenth day of the second month. From this Hezekiah and his counsellors justly inferred, that in their peculiar circumstances the privilege might be granted to the whole nation. The circular, which was sent on this occasion, was well calculated favourably to impress the minds of those who received it. As if the king would

have them, for the time forget that they formed distinct nationalities, he refers to their common ancestry, and addresses them all as children of Israel; and he adverts to the fact that on account of their departure from God they had both suffered from aggressions of the Syrian kings. He too reminded them that some, who to them were dear, were captives in a foreign land; and that He who is gracious and merciful would restore these, if their brethren returned to Him with all their heart. On receiving the letter the Judahites, as one man, came to Jerusalem to worship God before his temple; but by the great majority of the people of Israel the message was treated with contempt. There were however several belonging to the tribes of Asher, Zebulun, and Manasseh who gladly availed themselves of the opportunity.

As the priests had a little before removed from the temple all that pertained to idol worship, so now the assembled multitude, ere they killed the passover, gathered together all the idolatrous altars in the city and cast them into the brook Kidron.

The people, in observance of this feast, were both sincere and earnest; and the service was acceptable to God, though from circumstances connected with it there were necessarily irregularities. This was more particularly the case in regard to those who came from the kingdom of Isaael, where idolatry had been all but universal, for a period of about two hundred years.

After having kept the passover seven days with



great gladness, the people were so unwilling to separate that it was concluded to continue the festival seven days more, the king and princes providing for the assembled multitude. This is the only instance in which the feast of the passover continued more than seven days. Would not the people have derived greater spiritual advantage had they confined themselves to the time allotted by the great Lawgiver? When the services were ended, the worshippers, fired with religious zeal, went through the kingdom of Judah and some parts of the kingdom of Israel, and destroyed all the images, groves and altars used for idolatrous purposes, before they sought the quiet of their respective homes. The service of the temple being thus heartily entered on, the king made arrangements for its continuance, and for the maintenance of the priests.



## CHAPTER XIV.

HEZEKIAH — (*Continued.*)

**J**UDAH appears to have enjoyed a season of profound peace from the coronation of Hezekiah till the fourteenth year of his reign. Sennacherib, king of Assyria, then came against them with a large army. He was emboldened to do this as his late father had but a few years previously added the kingdom of Israel to his dominions. The imme-

diatē cause for this invasion was that Hezekiah had refused, or at any rate neglected, to pay the tribute which Ahaz had promised to the grandfather of Sennacherib. When Sennacherib entered the kingdom Hezekiah sent him the following very submissive message: "I have offended; return from me; that which thou puttest on me I will bear." Sennacherib, on receiving this message, promised to leave the kingdom if Hezekiah would pay him three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. In order to raise this sum the king gave all his treasures, and the treasures of the house of the Lord, and even the gold plating of the doors and pillars of that sacred edifice. The immense sum imposed was at length duly paid; but the Assyrian king, disregarding his promise, pushed on the war as vigorously as ever. Hezekiah, perceiving this, assembled the chief men in his kingdom to consider what was to be done. They at length determined to stop all the fountains and the brook that ran through the land, and to strengthen the wall around the city. They also "made darts and shields in abundance." The whole male population doubtless became soldiers, the most valiant and experienced taking the command. The pious king, having done all in his power to preserve his subjects in safety, encouraged them to trust in God. Strong indeed must have been the faith which enabled him to say, when several of his towns had been taken, and his very capital besieged by the powerful Assyrian monarch:

“There be more with us than with him; with him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles.” The besiegers called to Hezekiah, with the hope that he would come out to them, and they would thus obtain possession of his person; but his subjects entreated him not to adventure himself. It is worthy of remark that the historian does not say that Eliakim, Shebna and Joab were sent to the officers of the Assyrian monarch, but that they “came out” as if their coming was a voluntary thing. The message of the Assyrians was a very insulting one. The king of Assyria speaks of his former conquests, and tells the Judahites that it is utterly vain to hope successfully to oppose him. He refers to the futility of trusting to Egypt, “the staff of this bruised seed,” and artfully insinuates that God had become their enemy; for, said he, “Is it not He whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away?” and then invidiously compares the strength of Judah with that of Assyria: “Now therefore, I pray thee, give pledges to my lord the king of Assyria, and I will deliver thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them.” Finally he assures them that they come against Jerusalem by the command of God: “The Lord said unto me go up against this land and destroy it.” The Assyrian king also sent a letter to Hezekiah in the same insulting style. The officers of Sennacherib then address the people of Judah, and beg them not to suffer

themselves to be duped by their king, and thus incur certain death, but to come out to them with a present, that is, acknowledge themselves tributary; and then they would be permitted to enjoy in peace the luxuries of their own land till they were removed to one equally fruitful.

The Jews on this occasion acted nobly. One can scarcely tell whether the conduct of the king, of his officers, or of the common people, is most worthy of admiration. The officers of Hezekiah were afraid lest some of the people might, by threats or promises, be seduced from their allegiance, and go over to the Assyrian king, and therefore begged the ambassadors of that monarch not to speak in the Jews language. But they misjudged their countrymen. They, in obedience to their king's command, "held their peace and answered him not a word." When Hezekiah heard the words of Sennacherib "he rent his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord," and then sent to the prophet Isaiah, requesting him to pray for them. The prophet told the messengers to say to the king: "Thus saith the Lord, be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me: Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and shall return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land." It was probably before Hezekiah received this message that he spread the

letter of Sennacherib before the Lord, and poured out his soul to Him in prayer. The more closely we examine this prayer the more we shall see in it to admire. Hezekiah appeals to God as the God of Israel and the Sovereign of Heaven and Earth, as He who dwelt between the cherubim which overshadowed the mercy seat, thus shewing that He was willing to dispense mercy; and then in words of deepest pathos entreats God to save them, and thus vindicate His own cause, and bring honor to His holy name.

One, while reading this narrative, is reminded of the promise :

“ And it shall come to pass  
That before they call I will answer,  
And while they are yet speaking I will hear.”

This prayer seems to have been hardly presented before God answered him by the mouth of a prophet. In glowing terms is the retreat of the invader predicted. The proud king of Assyria being likened to a stubborn animal brought into subjection by man. God considers his people's cause his own, and says :

“ Therefore will I put my hook in thy nose,  
And my bridle in thy lips,  
And I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.”

While the army of Sennacherib was besieging Jerusalem, Hezekiah was seized with a very severe illness, and during this illness Isaiah came to him and said :  
“ Thus saith the Lord ; set thy house in order, for thou

shalt die and not live." Hezekiah again goes to God in prayer and thus addresses him: "I beseech thee, O Lord, remember how I have walked before Thee, in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight." Having proceeded thus far his tears choked his utterance.

This prayer has, it may be, the appearance of being pharisaical, but it is so in appearance only. It should be remembered that he speaks of himself in his official character; and besides we do not know what confession of sin he intended to make had not his feelings so far overcome him that he was unable to speak.

One cannot be surprised that Hezekiah wished to live. He was at that time but thirty-nine years old, and as his capital was then besieged, he was desirous of seeing the siege raised, and his enemies overthrown. He too was at this time childless; and it was both natural and proper that he should wish to have a son to succeed him on the throne. To these considerations must be added the fact, that at this age of the world even good men had but obscure views of the future state. It is most emphatically true that our adorable Redeemer "hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

The Lord heard the prayer, and saw the tears of Hezekiah, and again sent Isaiah to him, to tell him that his life should be prolonged fifteen years, and that in three days he should go up to the house of the Lord. On the king requiring a sign he was told that

the shadow in the dial of Ahaz should, in accordance with his wishes, go either forward or backward ten degrees. Hezekiah demanded the latter, and the great God, in tender mercy, granted his request. I would remark in passing that this was probably effected by means of refraction. When Isaiah told Hezekiah that he should recover, he also reassured him that Jerusalem should be delivered out of the hands of the Assyrians. The Lord, he said, would send a blast upon him and he should hear a rumour. The rumour which Sennacherib heard was that Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, had invaded his dominions, and the blast was, as Dr. Clarke says, "a suffocating or pestilential wind by which the Assyrian army was destroyed as in a moment, without noise, confusion or any warning." If it should be objected that it is expressly said that the angel of the Lord smote the Assyrians, it may be answered that those things which are sent by God to execute his judgments, or dispense his mercy, are frequently called angels. The destruction of the Assyrians was immense, "A hundred fourscore and five thousand."

Hezekiah having been restored to health, and the invading army destroyed, a considerable period of peace and prosperity ensued, which was not devoted to the interests of religion. He appears to have concluded that the blessings, which had been bestowed in such rich profusion upon him, were but the reward of his superior piety; and to have

become inflated with pride. It may be that the *certainty* of living fifteen years, which in prospect seemed a long time, was the temptation to seek his own aggrandizement: "He made himself treasuries for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of pleasant jewels. Storehouses also for the increase of corn, and wine, and oil; and stalls for all manner of beasts, and cotes for flocks." These, indeed, were but a part of his possessions. His chief care at this time seemingly was to amass wealth. While thus engaged he received a congratulatory visit from the ambassadors of Mero-dach-baladan, king of Babylon. To these Hezekiah ostentatiously shewed all his treasures. They had hardly departed when Isaiah, who had so often visited him before, came to him, and asked who had been there, and what they had seen. The king frankly told him that they were from Babylon, and that he had shewn them all his treasures. Then answered the prophet: "Hear the word of the Lord of Hosts. Behold the days come that all that is in thy house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried to Babylon. Nothing shall be left, saith the Lord. And of thy sons which shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." The answer of Hezekiah shewed that though he had in some measure backslidden from God, yet he was a loving child still. "Good,"



said he, "is the word of the Lord." As such was the will of the Lord, he acquiesced in it, and acknowledged that it was an undeserved mercy that the predicted evils were not to occur during his lifetime.

Hezekiah died at the age of fifty-four: "and they buried him in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David; and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death."



## CHAPTER XV.

### MANASSEH.

**M**ANASSEH came to the throne of his father six hundred and ninety-eight years before Christ, at the early age of twelve years. Only two of the kings of Judah began to reign at an earlier age than he, and his reign exceeded in length that of any of the others by about three years. It seems unfortunate, as we speak, that Manasseh was left fatherless while yet a child, and thus without any counteracting influence was swayed by his idolatrous mother. That Hephizbah was an idolatress may be pretty safely predicated, for her son early in life was zealous in promoting idolatry, though his father had been a worshipper of the true God. For some years before Hezekiah's death his chief business seems to have been to amass treasures of every description.

May it not be that Hephizbah possessed immense riches, and that Hezekiah, dazzled by them, married her without any enquiries relative to her religious sentiments? If this conjecture be correct, it can occasion no surprise that Manasseh should, on the demise of his father, especially if his mother still lived, seek to introduce that form of religion which permitted him unrebuked to act according to the principles of his corrupt nature, instead of conforming himself to that law which required purity of heart and life. As for the Judahites, they seem at times to have had no consciences, whether moral or religious; but to have watched the predilections of their sovereigns, and to have regulated themselves accordingly. In this instance they were not long in suspense, for Manasseh went to work with as much earnestness in abolishing the service of the true God as his father had manifested in establishing it. To whatever influence it may be attributed, it is quite evident that Manasseh in early life became a giant in wickedness. He not only built again the high places, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, but he also built altars for idols in the courts of the Lord's house, and even within its consecrated walls. He, too, followed the wicked, revolting and most unnatural practice of his grandfather, Ahaz, and caused his children to be offered in sacrifice to the detestable idol Moloch; and as if he wished in every possible way to transgress the law of God, "he observed times and used enchant-

ments, and used withcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards."

Most of the idolatrous kings of Judah seem to have gone no further in promoting their own religion than to cease to worship the true God, practice idolatry themselves, and offer every opportunity and inducement to their subjects to worship idols too. Jehoram and Manasseh are the only ones who had recourse to force. The last named king "shed innocent blood very much, till he filled Jerusalem from one end to another." Notwithstanding the general defection, there may have been opposition to the carved image being placed in the temple of the great God, and this blood was perhaps shed in order to compel the inhabitants of Jerusalem to worship that image. We have no means of ascertaining exactly the length of time this persecution continued; but as Manasseh died at the age of sixty-seven, and his successor was but twenty-two years old, it is probable that he was not only an idolator and persecutor, but in the horrid practice of offering his children to Moloch the greater portion of his reign. By adversity he was at length brought to repentance. "The Lord brought upon Judah the captains of the host of the king of Assyria; who took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters and carried him to Babylon." It may not be out of place to remark that the Babylonian and Assyrian empires were at this time united. To use the words of Rollin: "After Merodach-baladan, there

was a succession of kings at Babylon, of whom history has transmitted nothing but the names. The royal family becoming extinct, there was an interregnum of eight years, full of troubles and commotions. Esserhadden, taking advantage of this juncture, made himself master of Babylon, and annexing it to his former dominions, reigned over the two united empires thirteen years."

Prior to the capture of Manasseh there was doubtless an engagement between the Assyrians and the Judahites, in which the latter were defeated. Manasseh fled, to avoid being taken prisoner; and being pursued hid among the thorns and brambles with which that land has ever abounded. Though the hands of Manasseh were stained with innocent blood, yet one cannot but pity him as he crouches amidst the thorns, deserted by all his courtiers, exhausted by hunger and fatigue, and trembling with fear. In the place where he lies concealed he hears the sound of advancing footsteps, as they draw nearer, their voices, and then their words are heard. The language in which they are talking he but imperfectly understands; but he hears his name mentioned, and knows they are seeking for him. They appear to pass his hiding place, a gleam of hope passes through his mind that perhaps he will still be allowed to remain in his kingdom; but they turn, he is surrounded by armed men, and is taken and loaded with chains. By and by he is conveyed a prisoner to the far-famed

Babylon. There in captivity he is brought to reflection. It may be that the seed sown by his father when he was but a little child now began to germinate. It may be that he remembered the lambs which were morning and evening presented to God, and that his father told him that this sacrifice was a type of Him, who in the fullness of time was to be wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. But whatever were the thoughts that passed through his mind, this is certain: "He besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him." One would like to know the prayer, or rather some of the prayers, which Manasseh offered when brought to a sense of his guilt; but they were not recorded, or if recorded have not come down to us. There is reason to believe that the prayer in the Apocrypha called the prayer of Manasseh is of a much later date. There is one expression in that prayer which is very beautiful, and which might with propriety have been used by this wicked king, or any other sinner under a just sense of his sins: "I am bowed down with many iron bands, that I cannot lift up my head." While we do not know the words Manasseh uttered, we know he offered the prayer of faith, for God "was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom." Though the sacred historian, passing over all secondary causes, says the Lord brought him to Jerusalem, yet there is no doubt

but that the event was brought about by natural means. It is probable that the Lord put it into the heart of the king of Babylon to ask but a small sum for Manasseh's ransom, and to the Jews gave the inclination, and the ability, to pay that sum.

From the time of Manasseh's re-establishment on his throne, till his death, he did all in his power to undo the evil effected in the preceding part of his reign. He does not appear to have been able to persuade his subjects to worship God in the courts of His temple. Was this because that sacred spot had been so desecrated that they deemed the worship there offered unacceptable?

Manasseh was probably saved, but there has been more sin and suffering than there would have been had he never lived. It is an overwhelming thought that the effect of our conduct passes beyond our control; whether for good or for evil, it passes on, on, on for ever and for ever.



## CHAPTER XVI.

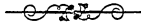
## AMON.

**A**MON, the son of Manasseh, succeeded to the throne six hundred and forty-three years before Christ, at the age of twenty-two, and reigned but two years. These two years appear to have been occupied in endeavouring to re-establish paganism in his kingdom. Like his father he sinned ; but he did not, like his father, repent. On the contrary he "trespassed more and more." He "sacrificed unto all the carved images which Manasseh his father made and served them." Though young he prepared for himself a sepulchre. His appears to have been one of those intensely selfish natures which had rather dig their own graves than in any way to labour for the benefit of others.

Amon was guilty of the fault, too, common with kings, of placing foreigners in posts of emolument and honour. It is possible that there were none but foreigners about him ; for his servants seem to be contrasted with the people of the land. It is not improbable that they were from Jotbah or Jotbatah, and were the friends and relations of Meshullemeth, the queen dowager. These foreigners, not satisfied with the power and advantages which they enjoyed, appear to have aimed at the royal dignity itself. The king's eldest son was but a child, unable to defend his rights ;

and they probably thought that Amon had been so unpopular that the Judahites would make little if any effort to defend his house. But if these assassins had hoped that one of their number would ascend the throne, they experienced a bitter disappointment. It is worthy of remark that this nation was always true to the house of David. This trait, in their national character, is in this instance very conspicuous. They seized the murderers of the late king and put them to death, and then with as little delay as possible placed the young Josiah on the throne.

Amon was laid in his own sepulchre, contiguous to the grave of his father.



## CHAPTER XVII.

### JOSIAH.

**J**OSIAH came to the throne six hundred and forty-one years before Christ. He was at that time but eight years old, being with one exception the youngest king who ever sat on the throne of Judah. The reign of Amon had fortunately, or more properly speaking by God's providence, been a very short one; and it is probable that the nation was quite willing to return to the worship of the true God. Whether the great God or idols was to be worshipped was with many a merely political ques-



tion, with which the affections and the conscience had very little to do, which made the transition from the worship of God to that of idols an easy matter.

Though the son of an idolator Josiah worshipped the true God. In this, as in many previous instances, the character of the king is, under God, attributable to the influence of his mother. As Amon was but sixteen years older than his son Josiah, it is highly probable that Manasseh had much to do in reference to the marriage between his son and Jedidah; and if the event occurred after his conversion, he would take great care that he should marry a pious woman. That Amon did marry, or at any rate that Josiah was born after Manasseh's conversion, is to my mind quite clear, from the amount of work accomplished after his return to his kingdom. If the reader will turn to the thirty-second chapter of second Chronicles, and read the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth verses, he, I think, will acknowledge that it is extremely improbable that all there related could be done in less than eight or ten years. If this supposition be correct it would not be difficult for Jedidah to prevent the young prince from being contaminated by the evil example of his father during the two years he occupied the throne. But whoever or whatever was the means of preserving the mind of Josiah untainted by idolatry, it is quite evident that he was thus preserved. The historian says: "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked

in the ways of David his father, and declined neither to the right hand nor the left." And again: "Like unto him there was no king before him that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul and with all might."

As the first twelve years of Josiah's reign are passed over in silence, one infers that the acts of that portion were not considered his. It may be that during that period he was under the control of his counsellors. We are told that when he had reigned eight years "he began to seek after the God of David his father." I am not certain what is to be understood by these words; but they mean either that now he engaged more earnestly than before in the worship of God, or that he experienced a change of heart; in other words that he was converted. When he had attained his twenty-first year he destroyed all the temptations to and remembrances of paganism, which up to that time existed in his kingdom. There is something very interesting in the statement that the altars of Baalim were broken in pieces *in his presence*. As if he wished to shew his utter abhorrence of the objects of idol worship, he not only "brake the images in pieces," but "made dust of them, and strewed it upon the graves of them that had sacrificed to them." This pious king did not confine his efforts to put a stop to idolatry to his own kingdom, but extended them to many of the cities of Israel. In the conduct of Josiah there was the fulfilment of a prophecy delivered more

than three hundred years previously. Jeroboam, the first who reigned over the ten tribes, was standing before the altar at Bethel, offering incense, when a man of God came to the altar and uttered the following words: "O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord; behold a child shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee; and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee." I presume the prophet referred to posthumous burning; and we learn that Josiah slew the priests of the high places on the altars, and no doubt, there burned their bodies. Relative to the altar of Bethel, we are told that Josiah "spied the sepulchres that were there in the mount, and sent and took the bones out of the sepulchres, and burned them upon the altar, and polluted it, according to the word of the Lord which the man of God proclaimed."

It is unaccountable that when an Asa, a Jehoshaphat, a Hezekiah and other pious kings had reigned over Judah, that high places built by Solomon should have been allowed to remain up to the time of Josiah. Such, however, was the case; and shews that the last named king possessed not only deeper piety but more energy of character than any of his predecessors. The magnitude of the work of purging the kingdom of all the vestiges of idolatry is shewn by its completion requiring a term of six years. This being accomplished, the king issued a command to repair the tem-

ple of the Lord; and faithfully and zealously was the work performed. There is one circumstance connected with these repairs which is of peculiar interest, namely, the performance of music by some while others were engaged at work. From it may be learned a lesson relative to the building of the spiritual temple. While some are performing a great work as missionaries, pastors and evangelists, and others who possess wealth build places of worship and endow colleges, there are many, especially among my own sex, who have little strength of body or mind, or even money to devote to the service of God, and yet most sincerely desire to serve Him. But cannot we, like these Levites, cheer those who are engaged in labour? and if this is all we *can do*, will not the great God accept it as service?

While at work in the temple Hilkiah, who was then high priest, found the book of the law which had been written by Moses. This he gave to one Shaphan a scribe who carried it to the king. He had long known that Moses, a little before his death, had written the law, and had deposited it in the tabernacle beside the ark, and that by some means it had been lost or destroyed. It may be that up to this time he had never read or heard the whole of God's law, with all its promises and threatenings. The book was read before him, and knowing as he did that the people over whom he reigned had most grievously sinned against God's law he must have been stricken with horror

as he listened to the awful words : " And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word among all nations whither the Lord shall lead thee !" or the more fearful words still : " The Lord shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of custom of the heart !" He manifested his grief, according to the times, by rending his clothes, and then calling to him some of his most faithful attendants commanded them to go and enquire of the Lord. The enquiry which he wished to have made evidently was whether the threats of God's law *must* be executed, or mercy might still be found. One would suppose that he would have desired the high priest to ascertain the will of God by the ephod or breastplate : or that enquiry would have been made of Jeremiah or Zephaniah as both of these were Josiah's contemporaries. They were, however, sent to the prophetess, Huldah, the wife of one Shallum. Though this is the only occasion on which this woman is referred to, it is evident, from the circumstances connected with the matter, that it was well known the word of the Lord was with her. She appears to have listened to their story in silence and then with all the intrepidity and solemnity becoming her sacred office, returned the following message : " Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah : because they have for-

saken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched. And as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, so shall ye say unto him, thus saith the Lord God of Israel concerning the words which thou hast heard; because thy heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humblest thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard thee also saith the Lord. Behold I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place and upon the inhabitants of the same."

Josiah's conduct, on the reception of this message, was most praiseworthy. He assembled all his subjects, rich and poor, young and old, male and female into the courts of the house of the Lord; and there read to them out of the book that had been lately found. Why was not the wonderful book read by some of the priests or Levites? Was it that the king feared that all the threatened judgments would not by them be read to the assembled multitude? or did he read it himself to shew his respect for God's law? The law having been read, the king, still standing on the pillar which was never pressed but by royal feet, "made a

covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant, which are written in this book." He also caused all Judah and Benjamin to solemnly renew their covenant with God. To this they steadfastly adhered during his life time.

The celebration, of the passover, shortly after the prophecy of Huldah, is invested with peculiar interest, as the Judahites knew that their destiny as a nation was sealed. In the keeping of this passover there was the most scrupulous regard to all the divine appointments relative to it. Josiah did not deem anything which God had commanded a non-essential. The historian has recorded the liberality both of the king and the princes on this occasion. They together contributed thirty-three thousand eight hundred cattle, and seven thousand six hundred lambs and kids. "There," we are told "was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet, neither did the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept." At this time the ark was again placed in the temple. It had been removed to save it from profanation, or perhaps from being carried away. The ark, though only about forty-five inches long, by twenty-seven broad, and as many deep, was of immense value. Every part of it, except the cover, was made of shittim wood plated on both sides with gold; and the cover—the mercy seat—was a massy slab of pure gold to

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which were attached cherubims, also of pure gold. It was not, however, its money value which rendered it particularly dear to the pious Jew ; but because between the cherubims there was the symbol of the divine glory. But to return to our story. The passover was celebrated in the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah ; and between this event and his death, which occurred thirteen years after, there seem to have been no transactions which it was necessary to record. We know it was a season of peace, and there is no doubt but that the king endeavoured to promote the good of his subjects. They were at this time professedly worshippers of the true God, but that their worship was insincere we learn from the following words of Jeremiah : "Judah hath not turned to me with her whole heart but feignedly saith the Lord." The nation was now ripe for destruction, and as the Lord had said that Josiah should be gathered to his grave in peace he must be removed before the threatened judgment comes upon them. His death was occasioned by his attempting to oppose Pharaoh-nechoh on his way to fight the Assyrians. It has been conjectured by some persons that the Egyptian king brought his troops by sea to Cæsarea, and that he intended to cross the Jordan at the southern extremity of the Sea of Galilee, as the shortest route to the Assyrian dependencies. Josiah's motive in opposing Pharaoh-nechoh is not evident. It was probably out of friendship to Assyria, or because he feared an invasion of his own kingdom. When Josiah was on



his way to oppose the Egyptian king, he received ambassadors from that monarch who stated that they had no intention of entering the kingdom of Judah; but that by the command of God they were hastening to fight against Assyria. Josiah however could not be dissuaded, but attacked the Egyptians at Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddo. He received a wound before the general engagement began, and turning to his servants said "Have me away; for I am sore wounded." The Judahites dispersed; and the Egyptians continued their march. Josiah was tenderly cared for; but he died on his journey, probably near Megiddo. The manner of his death does not impugn the veracity of the prophecy uttered by Huldah. The kingdom enjoyed uninterrupted peace during the whole of his reign. So averse were Pharaoh-nechoh and his army to fighting against him, that he was obliged to disguise himself before they could be induced to do so, and we lack proof that any others of the Judahites were slain. The sufferings of Josiah were probably less severe, and certainly far less protracted, than is usual when one dies of disease. That he was not neglected is shewn by his being conveyed from one chariot to another—his own chariot was perhaps rendered unfit for travelling, or it may be that the one to which he was removed was more convenient for a wounded man—and from his being carried back to Jerusalem. He died at peace with the neighbouring kingdoms; at peace with his subjects; at peace with his conscience, and at peace

with his God. The mourning for him was so great that it became proverbial. He was thirty-nine at the time of his death and had reigned thirty-one years. He was laid in his own sepulchre in the midst of his illustrious ancestors. He was the last king who was buried in the city of David.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### JEHOAHAZ AND JEHOIAKIM.

**J**EHOAHAZ succeeded to the throne of his father six hundred and ten years before Christ, at the age of twenty-three. Though his reign was short, only three months, it was long enough to show his great depravity. "He did evil in the sight of the Lord according to all his fathers had done." He had a brother two years older than himself, and why he was made king, to the prejudice of that brother, is one of the many problems which in this very brief history is left unsolved. He was deposed by the king of Egypt. The Scriptures do not inform us how it happened that he was in the Egyptian's power; but it is possible, perhaps, I might say probable, that he met Pharaoh-nechoh on his return from

Carchemish, and that there was an engagement, in which the Egyptian monarch gained a complete victory. His brother Eliakim was placed on the throne, now rendered vacant, and he himself loaded with chains, and carried to Egypt, where he was kept a prisoner the remainder of his life.

Pharaoh-nechoh, in order to show his supremacy over Eliakim changed his name to Jehoiakim, and imposed on him a tribute "of a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold," about one hundred and sixty-five thousand dollars. During this reign the Judahites were most grievously oppressed. Their condition would have been far from happy under this heavy tribute, even had it been levied in the most equitable manner; but from what we know of the character of this king, justice was not to be expected of him. He seems to have been a weak man, and a cruel tyrant. To him it mattered little whether Judah was independent or tributary to another kingdom, whether his subjects were in the enjoyment of plenty, or suffering from destitution, provided he could live in ease and luxury. He was to Judah what the unprincipled John was to England; but alas! for this wicked nation, God himself had become her enemy. They had walked contrary to God, and now He walked contrary to them. They were cursed with one of the heaviest of curses, a wicked ruler. One knows not whether most to detest the character of this prince, or the policy he

pursued. In reference to him the inspired Jeremiah says:

“Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness,  
And his chambers by wrong;  
That useth his neighbour’s service without wages,  
And giveth him not for his work;  
That saith  
I will build me a wide house and large chambers,  
And cutteth him out windows,  
And it is ceiled with cedar and painted with vermilion.”

Then, after a reference to the piety of Josiah, the same prophet says:

“But thine eyes and thine heart are not  
But for thy covetousness, and to shed innocent blood,  
And for oppression and for violence to do it.”

Jehoiakim was not permitted to be the Viceroy of Pharaoh-nechoh very long. Nebuchadnezzar made war against the king of Egypt, and took from him all his possessions from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates; and then invaded the kingdom of Judah. His reason for doing so probably was that it was tributary to Egypt. Jehoiakim became his vassal. The historian has left us in ignorance as to what tribute was imposed by his new master; but it is likely either that it was heavier than that formerly imposed, or that the people had become so poor that it was difficult, even by the most oppressive acts, to raise that tribute, and enough more to meet the expenses of his luxurious court. Having served the king of Baby-

lon three years, he rebelled against him. He may have thought that the king of Babylon was too busy with other matters to enforce the payment of the stipulated tribute. His expectations were vain. Bands of Chaldeans, Syrians, Moabites and Ammonites came against the kingdom of Judah to destroy it. They ravaged the country and killed many of the inhabitants, or made them prisoners. Among the prisoners was king Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadnezzar bound with fetters, with the intention of carrying him to Babylon. He, however, was not carried thither. He was put to some ignominious death in his own capital, and was denied burial. This we learn from the following words by Jeremiah :

“ He shall be buried with the burial of an ass,  
Drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.”

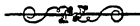
And again :

“ And his dead body shall be cast out  
In the day to the heat  
And in the night to the frost.”

Jehoiakim was, at the time of his death, thirty-six years old, and had borne the name of king eleven years. It is not clear whether he was acquainted with the prophecies which Jeremiah had pronounced against him ; but if ignorant, his ignorance was culpable. Being told of Jeremiah's words, he ordered the roll containing them to be brought and read before him. He was at the time sitting in his winter house by the fire.

Having listened to the reading of a few leaves, and perceiving that the contents were such as were not pleasing to him, he, as if to show his contempt, took his penknife and deliberately cut the roll into fragments and cast them into the fire.

There are, alas! some at the present day who neglect the study of the word of God, as if their ignorance of that word, wilful though it be, would be an excuse for neglecting to comply with its requirements.



## CHAPTER XIX.

### JEHOIACHIN.

**J**EHOIACHIN was placed on the throne formerly occupied by his father, five hundred and ninety-nine years before Christ. He began to reign at the age of eighteen, and reigned three months and ten days, Jeremiah had said of the late king: "He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David." But I do think that his words failed of fulfilment; for not only did Jehoiachin sit there, but for a very brief period, but while there, was merely a vassal, being by the king of Babylon elevated to the throne, and at his pleasure deposed.

This prince is known by three different names, Jehoiachin, Jeconiah and Coniah. He was, as well as his father, a *very* wicked man; for short as was the

time he occupied the throne, and little as was the power he possessed, still of him it is recorded, "he did evil in the sight of the Lord." The utter abhorrence in which he was held by the great God, who looks not so much on the conduct as on the heart, may be inferred from the following words by Jeremiah :

"As I live, saith the Lord,  
Though Coniah, the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah,  
Were the signet upon my right hand,  
Yet would I pluck thee thence."

The prophet then proceeds to tell of the miseries which should fall upon this prince; and as if his sins were so notorious that all would acknowledge the justice of the punishment, exclaims :

"O earth, earth, earth; hear the word of the Lord."

We are not told why Jehoiachin was deposed. The probability is he rebelled against the king of Babylon. This of course would not be permitted. An army was immediately sent to besiege Jerusalem. The city was not in a condition to make much resistance. The king, with a degree of resolution, hardly to be expected of him, bravely met the fate which he found himself unable to avert, and "went out to the king of Babylon, he and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers." They thus saved their lives; but they were all made prisoners. Jerusalem was then entered, the

temple despoiled, the royal treasures seized, and all who could be either useful in Babylon, or injurious if left in Jerusalem, taken prisoners. The number of captives carried at this time to Babylon, exclusive of females, was eight thousand.

Jehoiachin remained a prisoner at Babylon till Evil-merodach began to reign, a period of thirty-seven years. The Scriptures do not inform us by what means his release was effected. But there were many thousand Jews residing in Babylon, and it is probable that they, in accordance with the advice of Jeremiah, sought the peace of the city whither they had been carried captive, and thus gained the esteem of their conquerors. If such was the case it is easily conceivable that they, on the succession of a new monarch, might have petitioned for the release of their fellow-countrymen, the descendant of a long line of kings, and that their petition was granted.

Jehoiachin was, when liberated, fifty-five years old, probably grey-headed, his face deeply lined, and bearing the impress of suffering and anxiety. Though his prison garments were changed, his throne set above those of the other captive kings, and he privileged to eat bread before Evil-Merodach all the days of his life, yet he felt himself to be the prisoner still. He died, and was buried at Babylon.



## CHAPTER XX.

## ZEDEKIAH.

**W**HEN Nebuchadnezzar desposed Jehoiachin, and carried him to Babylon he placed his captive's uncle Mattanish on the throne which was thus rendered vacant. Mattaniah was own brother to Jehoshaz. Three of the sons of Josiah successively wore the crown, which is a thing wholly unique in the history of this people. As the king of Babylon had a few years previously changed the name of Eliakim to Jehoiakim, so now he changed the name of Mattaniah to Zedekiah. This, as in the former instance, was done to manifest his supremacy. It had been wise in Zedekiah to endure his vassalage patiently; but he, either from love of liberty, or to rid his people of the heavy tribute by which they were oppressed before very long, planned a revolt. He was encouraged to do this by the ambassadors of the kings of Edom, Moab, and others. While thus engaged the prophet Jeremish came to him, and told him that he had received a command from the Lord, to make bonds and yokes, and to put them on his neck as a symbol of their subjection to the king of Babylon; and also to send these symbols of servitude to the nations who had their representatives at Jerusalem, saying that it was utterly vain to oppose Nebuchadnezzar, as the Sovereign of the universe had given all nations into his

hands, and that they should serve him, and his son, and his son's son; and that afterwards many nations should serve themselves of him.

Though Zedekiah did not give full credence to what Jeremiah said, yet his conduct was so much affected by it that the destruction of Jerusalem was deferred several years. It is difficult for one to conceive of the distracted state of the public mind during this reign. While Jeremiah told the people that their only hope was in submission to Nebuchadnezzar, another who also professed to be a prophet of the Lord, encouraged them to assert their independence, promising that in two years from the date of his prophecy they would be free; and that those who were then in captivity would return to their own land. Jeremiah, on hearing these words, added his solemn Amen to manifest that such was his most earnest wish; and then turning to the false prophet said: "The Lord hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. Therefore thus saith the Lord, behold I will cast thee off from the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the Lord." Hananiah, that was the name of the false prophet, died that same year. This for a short time caused the people to place entire confidence in whatever Jeremiah told them in the name of the Lord. Jeremiah's next opponent was one of the captives of Babylon, who pretended to be endowed with the spirit of prophecy. The incident which called forth his opposition was

this, Jeremiah had written to his brethren in captivity exhorting them to be good citizens, to build houses, to plant gardens, and to contract marriages, telling them that they were to remain there seventy years. The pseudo prophet not only exerted all his influence in Babylon to counteract the effect of this letter, but also wrote to the leading men at Jerusalem, telling them that the communications of Jeremiah had an injurious effect on the minds of their brethren in captivity, and intimating that such a one should not be at large. But these were not the only persons who opposed Jeremiah. The whole of his prophetic life illustrated the truth of the statement of the great God at its commencement:

“And they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee;  
For I am with thee to save thee,  
And to deliver thee, saith the Lord.”

Zedekiah and his counsellors were for a long time undecided whether to follow the advice of Jeremiah or of those who encouraged them to oppose Nebuchadnezzar. They finally concluded to follow the advice of the latter. That this step was deliberately taken after having increased the fortifications, and provisioned their city, is apparent from the fact that, though but a few years before they could offer but little resistance, they now sustained a siege of eighteen months. During this time Jeremiah again and again told them in the

name of the Lord that the only possible means of preserving their lives was by yielding themselves up to the besiegers. At one time, when reduced to great extremity, they concluded to do so; and willing to make a shew of piety by giving up that which would be of no value if retained, gave liberty to the Hebrew slaves, whom they had long held in direct opposition to the law of God. Shortly after this the Chaldeans, hearing that the king of Egypt was coming to the relief of Zedekiah, withdrew from Jerusalem in order to intercept his march. This raised the hopes of the Jews, and they again reduced to slavery the men and women they had so lately freed. As has already been intimated the Jews, when the Chaldeans withdrew for a little from Jerusalem, indulged the hope that they would soon be obliged to raise the siege; but these hopes were entertained against Jeremiah's most solemn protestations: "Deceive not yourselves," said he, "saying the Chaldeans shall surely depart from us; for they shall not depart. For though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained but wounded men among them, yet should they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire." One looks with admiration on the intrepidity of Jeremiah, and with mingled contempt and pity on the vacillating conduct of the king. At one time he releases the prophet from prison and gives command that he should receive kind

treatment; and at another time, yields him to the will of his enemies, whether that will be life or death.

There was perhaps, to the mind of Zedekiah, some difficulty in reconciling the statements of Jeremiah with those of Ezekiel. The last named prophet said :

“And I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans,  
Yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there.”

And Jeremiah said : “Zedekiah, king of Judah, shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes.” The apparent difficulty was probably greatly increased by the specious reasoning of the pseudo prophets.

The Jews were, during this siege, reduced to such extremity that they ate human flesh. “I will cause them,” said the Lord by his prophet, “to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend in the siege and straitness, wherewith their enemies, and they that seek their lives, shall straiten them.” And we, too, hear the same prophet, in strains of melting pathos, lament :

“The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children,  
They were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my  
people.”

But all the horrors of famine did not cause the infatuated Jews to yield. A breach was ultimately

made in the wall, through which the Chaldeans entered; and it is probable that famine and pestilence had so thoroughly done their dreadful work that little resistance could be made. It was when the kingdom of Judah had existed about three hundred and eighty-seven years, "in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, in the ninth day of the month, that the city was broken up. And all the princes of the king of Babylon came in and sat in the middle of the gate." Zedekiah, seeing that the city was in the hands of his enemies, fled under covert of night, being accompanied in his flight by his sons, his princes and his men of war. They were pursued by the Chaldeans, and overtaken in the plains of Jericho. The king, in this extremity, was deserted by all his army, and himself and sons were made prisoners and carried to Riblah to the king of Babylon. As Zedekiah had taken the oath of allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar, the latter had a right to act as judge, and he appears to have been disposed to exercise that prerogative rather than to dispense mercy. Zedekiah was obliged to witness the execution of his sons; and as if it was intended that that horrible sight should ever be vivid to his imagination, his eyes were put out; he was then bound with fetters of brass and carried to Babylon.

While these atrocities were being committed at Riblah, the Chaldeans at Jerusalem were going on with their work of plunder and of death. "They slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanc-

tuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man or him that stooped for age." Their wanton cruelty may be inferred from the following words:

"Oh daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed;  
Happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee  
*As thou hast served us.*"  
Happy shall he be,  
That taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones."

If children were subjected to such barbarous treatment, what must have been the fate of adults? The heart sickens at the thought.

The bodies of the vast multitude who died during the siege, or were afterwards slain by the sword, were thrown into the valley of Tophet and became food

"For the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth."

The temple furnished spoil of very great value. The Chaldeans preserved many of the most curiously wrought vessels for future use; and many others were broken in pieces, and with the plating of that sacred edifice, with all its elaborate workmanship, valued only as so much of the precious metals. The walls of the city were broken down; and the houses of the great men, the palaces of the princes, and even the glorious temple itself, were consumed by fire. The temple had stood reckoning from the time of its dedication, four hundred and seventeen years.

Nearly all the Jews who escaped the sword were

made prisoners. Many were carried to Babylon ; and a few of the very poor were left to till small portions of the land, and dress the vines.

Zedekiah died a prisoner in Babylon ; and was buried, by his countrymen, according to the rites practised in his own land. One can scarcely conceive of reflections more painful than those which would naturally occupy the mind of this captive, sightless, childless king. One of his brothers was a prisoner in Egypt, another had been slain and denied burial, and a son of that brother was with himself a prisoner at the court of Babylon. His kingdom, too, had been rendered desolate, his capital demolished, and his subjects slain or made prisoners ; and he knew that all these calamities were the effect of the righteous displeasure of the great God.

The territory which had been occupied by the Judahites was not, on their removal, colonized by foreigners ; but, comparatively speaking, it was allowed to lie waste. God had commanded that the land should be untilled every seventh year, and the command had been violated from generation to generation, which was one reason why God caused his people to endure a seventy years' captivity. The land by this means enjoyed a season of rest equal to that which it would have had, had the sabbatical year been steadily observed. The neglect of this law was, however, not among the chief sins of this people, for " All the chief of the priests and the people transgressed very much



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after all the abominations of the heathen, and polluted the house of the Lord, which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place; but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, *till there was no remedy.*"





## PART II.

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# THE KINGS OF ISRAEL.

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## CHAPTER I.

### JEROBOAM.

**J**EROBOAM, the son of Nebat, began to reign nine hundred and seventy-five years before Christ. He belonged to the large tribe of Ephraim, and was born at Zereda. His father died when he was young, and his mother, for many years, if not for the remainder of her life, lived in widowhood. Her name was Zeruah. Jeroboam was early noted for strength of body and energy of mind. Did not Solomon make him the collector of impost in his own tribe, because he feared his restless spirit would become dangerous if unemployed? The result was not what the king expected; for while it gave Jeroboam employment, it at the same time gave him

abundant opportunity to witness the discontent which prevailed, and the influence which he himself was capable of exerting. It is quite possible that he expressed his regret relative to the tax which it was his duty to collect, and like Absalom said: "O that I were made judge in the land," thus intimating that if such were the case they would be relieved of their burdens. His ambitious schemes, probably took no definite form till he was told that it was the will of God, on the demise of Solomon, to invest him with the sovereignty over ten tribes. But no sooner does the thought of possessing sovereign power obtain a lodgement in his mind than he becomes impatient of delay, and meditates a rebellion. His acknowledged prowess, his popularity, and the general discontent encouraged him to hope that he might effect a revolution. He may have raised an army, which being met by the king's forces, were defeated, and he obliged to flee in order to preserve his life. This, at any rate, is certain, Solomon sought to kill him, and he fled to Shishak, king of Egypt, for protection. It is not probable that when, a few years after this, Shishak invaded Judah, Israel owed her safety to the friendship formed during this period? Though the people had sent to Jeroboam, and recalled him from Egypt, he appears to have quietly gone to his own family, and there to have remained till he was requested to head the deputation to the new king;

and then again to have sought the privacy of his widowed mother's dwelling.

Israel asked Rehoboam for a diminution of taxes. Their petition was scornfully rejected. This was most impolitic. Could he have failed to see it would cause the dismemberment of his kingdom? One can only say that God permitted him to take the advice of the young and thoughtless in order to bring about his own designs. It is observable that on receiving this answer the reply is not by Jeroboam but by the people; and that they, after declaring that they had no portion in David, "sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel."

The Lord forbade the king of Judah to fight against the seceding tribes, and consequently Jeroboam became king of a new nationality without the shedding of blood. One of his first acts was to build, or rather rebuild Shechem, and fit it for a royal residence. This city—the Sychar of the New Testament, and the Naplouse of modern times—is very ancient. It suffered very severely from the ravages of Simeon and Levi, some seven hundred years previous to the events just adverted to. It is situated about thirty-five miles north of Jerusalem, between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. This city, or at least the valley in which it was situated, and these mountains, were the scene of one of the most august ceremonies ever witnessed by man. I refer to the blessings and the curse here pronounced, and to the *Amen* added by those on

Mount Gerizim to the former, and Mount Ebal to the latter. May it not be that it was because its historic associations rendered it dear to the Israelites that Jeroboam made it his capital? He next rebuilt Penuel, a city on the east side of Jordan, near the brook Jabbok. Penuel, as well as Shechem, has a previous history. In it occurred one of the most remarkable incidents recorded in the Bible. Jacob wrestling with God and being victor! A worm overcoming omnipotence!

Jeroboam indulged the hope that either Shechem or Penuel would become Jerusalem's rival. But he was anxious still, and "said in heart now shall the kingdom return to the house of David, if this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem," and at once set about devising means to prevent the tri-annual gatherings in that city. He consulted with a few of the leading men in the kingdom, and with their approval set up objects of worship at both its extremities; and invited his subjects at these places to perform their devotions. He kept his real motive out of sight, and artfully insinuated that, in making this arrangement, he was prompted by a desire to promote their ease and comfort.

It is perhaps impossible to ascertain what caused Jeroboam to select the calf or ox as the model for his gods. It may have been in imitation of Apis worshipped by the Egyptians; but it is more probable that this form was chosen on account of its resemblance to

those mysterious beings the cherubim. That they generally resembled the ox in form more nearly than any other creature, is deducible from the fact that in the description given of them by Ezeziel, he in one instance uses the word *ox*, and in another *cherub*, as if they were convertible terms. As they were symbolical, the probability is that their form varied according to the objects or attributes they were used to symbolize. If those that overshadowed the mercy seat resembled the ox, is it not conceivable that the Israelite would more easily be induced to worship before that, than any other form?

Jeroboam's plans were eminently successful: the great majority of the people acceding to his proposal, and offering their sacrifices either at Bethel or at Dan. This was the first step in preparing the people for the darkest and most revolting forms of idolatry, and caused the contriver ever after to be known as he "who made Israel to sin."

Some of the Israelites were too true to their God to "worship any likeness of anything," and voluntarily parted with home and its privileges, and removed to the kingdom of Judah, in order to worship the true God, in the courts of the temple. There appear to have been some of the priests and Levites who were so much ensnared by Jeroboam's plans that they were willing to officiate before these golden gods; for we are told that "Jeroboam and his sons cast them off from executing the priest's office unto the Lord." Do not

these words too shew that they professedly worshipped the true God while they worshipped *before calves*? Though the family of Levi were ejected from the priesthood, it was open to all others who chose to accept it; and the king sometimes acted the priest himself. An incident of great interest is recorded in connection with his acting in that capacity. While he was offering incense before the altar at Bethel, a man of God came and uttered a prophecy against the altar and against the priests; and added that, in proof of the truthfulness of his words, the altar should be rent and the ashes poured out. This occurred almost as soon as the words were spoken. Jeroboam became so exasperated that he attempted to seize the prophet with the intention of incarcerating him, or of putting him to death. But to his astonishment he found that he had lost all power over that outstretched hand. This at once convinced and humbled him; and he begged the prophet to entreat the Lord on his behalf. Prayer was offered, and the withered hand healed. Jeroboam did not profit by this admonition: he "returned not from his evil way, but made again of the lowest of the people priests of the high places." About this time he was visited by domestic affliction. His son Abijsh being seized with a severe illness. The fears of Jeroboam became strongly excited; and he desired his wife to take with her a present, and go to the prophet, who had foretold his elevation to the throne, and enquire whether or not the young prince would recover. The Lord told the prophet that this

woman was coming, and gave him a message for her, of which the following words form a part: "Him that dieth of Jeroboam in the city shall the dogs eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat: for the Lord hath spoken it. Arise, thou, therefore, get thee to thine own house; and when thy feet enter the city the child shall die. And all Israel shall mourn for him and bury him: for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel." The record of the death of Abijah is very brief: "And when she came to the threshold of the door the child died;" but it is one which no mother can read without being deeply moved. How inexpressibly painful were the feelings of this woman on the return from Shiloh to Tirzah. Though only about eighteen miles, to her it seemed an almost interminable distance. How earnestly she wished, that she had remained at home to minister to her beloved son during the closing hours of his life. At length she reaches the city, and enters the palace. She thinks of the prophet's words: "When thy feet enter the city the child shall die;" but she cannot, she will not, really believe them. "It must be," she mentally exclaims, "that he still lives, that I once more shall hear him say *Mother*, once more feel the pressure of his hand, and receive a parting kiss." She rushes to his apartment, but, ah! though still warm, with that incomprehensible principle called life, life itself is gone. The spirit which but a moment before was there, is now in the invisible



world, as truly beyond recall as if it had passed away before the flood. How thin the partition which divides time from eternity! In what proximity lies this state of mixed joy and pleasure, to one of unchanging joy or woe! Dear reader, if unexpectedly called away, into which of these states would you enter?

During the first seventeen years of Jeroboam's reign he was engaged in no actual warfare, but he and his neighbour Rehoboam lived in a state of continual hostility. In the eighteenth year of his reign Rehoboam, king of Judah, was succeeded by his son Abijah; and soon after, there was a battle fought between these two nations, in which the Israelites were miserably defeated, losing of their chosen men five hundred thousand, and being obliged to surrender three important towns with the surrounding villages.

Jeroboam never recovered from these disasters. The historian says: "The Lord struck him and he died." It is probable that the loss of so large a part of his army, the loss of some towns and villages, together with the loss of a beloved son, and the knowledge that his family was to become extinct, so preyed on his mind as to destroy his health, and ultimately cause him to die. He reigned twenty-two years.

Neither the age of Jeroboam, nor that of any of his successors is recorded. Had he kept the commandments of God, He had made him "a sure house;" but he chose to forsake Him, and found it an evil and bitter thing.

## CHAPTER II.

## NADAB AND BAASHA.

**N**ADAB succeeded to the throne nine hundred and fifty-four years before Christ. He, when compared with his late father, seems a harmless character, but we do not know that he had a single virtue. "He did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin." That is, he worshipped the gods of gold himself, and encouraged his subjects to do so too. It could hardly be expected that he would do otherwise than follow his father's policy; for he came to the throne amidst very un-auspicious circumstances, a large part of the army having been recently cut to pieces, and the nation over which he reigned aware of the fact that the house to which he belonged was doomed to utter extinction. He reigned but two years. His only warlike expedition was an effort to take Gibbethon from the Philistines. He was unsuccessful. We are left entirely to conjecture as to the manner of his death. It is possible that as they were besieging the town some dispute arose between him and Baasha as to the best manner of conducting it. Baasha was obliged to yield his judgment to that of the king; but he determined on revenge. Knowing that the king was despised and hated; and that he himself was very

popular, he resolved to avenge his own quarrel, and serve the nation, by putting the king to death. It may be that like as Ehud, some six hundred years previously, had slain Eglon king of Moab, so Baasha went to Nadab, and saying, "I have a message from God unto thee," stabbed him to the heart. If the king was thus slain, it is highly improbable that the murderer attempted to flee, but rather that he came to the army, declared what he had done, and was received with shouts and acclamations: "Long live king Baasha" sounded from thousands of voices; and the walls of Gibbethon echoed back "Long live king Baasha."

The body of the wretched Nadab was thrown aside, to become the prey of ravenous beasts or birds; and the army, elated by the elevation of their general to the throne, raised the siege of Gibbethon, more anxious to destroy the house of their late king, than to humble their hereditary enemies. Tirzah, of proverbial beauty, had been for some years the capital of this kingdom, and to it the new king at once returned. Being attended by an army devoted to his interests, the civilians accepted him as their sovereign without remonstrance. There appears to have been no blood shed excepting that of the house of Jeroboam. That house was exterminated, to it there was not left any that breathed.

Baasha began to reign in the third year of Asa king of Judah; before Christ nine hundred and fifty-three years. He reigned twenty-four years. Finding him

self established on the throne, he made preparation for a war against the kingdom of Judah. To this he was incited by his lust of domination and thirst for blood; and perhaps to avenge the injuries the kingdom had sustained during the reign of Jeroboam. While Baasha was pursuing a career of wickedness the Lord sent him the following message: "Forasmuch as I exalted thee out of the dust, and made thee prince over my people Israel, and thou hast walked in the way of Jeroboam, and hast made my people Israel to sin, to provoke me to anger with their sins; Behold I will take away the posterity of Baasha, and the posterity of his house, and will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. Him that dieth of Baasha in the city shall the dogs eat; and him that dieth in the fields shall the fowls of the air eat." Notwithstanding this admonition he went on in his plans for his own aggrandisement.

Ever after the secession of the ten tribes it had been the practice of the truly pious in Israel to forsake their homes and remove to the kingdom of Judah. Baasha appears to have thought himself in a position to put a stop to this, and accordingly made extensive preparations, and indeed began to build a fortress within the limits of that kingdom. This measure seems a bold one; but it is probable that he was protected by so strong an army that he knew that the king of Judah could offer no resistance. But his schemes were thwarted by the treachery of his ally, Benhadad,

who was evidently one of those men, to be found in all ages of the world, and in all ranks of society, ready to sell themselves to the highest bidder. Though he well knew that Baasha was depending on his friendship, yet when he received Asa's magnificent present, accompanied with a request for his aid, he did not hesitate to comply. With as little delay as possible he sent his forces into the kingdom of Israel and took several cities. Baasha on hearing this—as Benhadad hoped and expected—left off building Ramah in order to defend his own territory. Thus were the well laid plans of this wicked king baffled, and the immense quantities of building material which he had collected, served to enrich the very kingdom against which his plots were designed.

Baasha must have been, during the last years of his life, one of the most wretched of human beings. He knew not only that his family was to become extinct, but that all of them, however tender and delicate, were to be eaten by dogs or by birds of prey; and though his ideas of the future may have been very vague, he must have felt that a fearful retribution awaited him. He died a natural death, and was buried at Tirzah, which was at that time the capital of the kingdom.

## CHAPTER III.

## ELAH AND ZIMRI.

**E**LAH succeeded to the throne of his father nine hundred and thirty years before Christ. He reigned but two years. That he sinned and caused Israel to sin is recorded, but not one act except that he was drinking himself drunk at the time of his assassination. He, like Nadab the son of Jeroboam, was the second and last king of the dynasty to which he belonged. Some may perhaps say that his knowing that he should come to a miserable death was an excuse for his transgressions. This is a very wrong view of the subject. All are under obligation to repent and turn from their sins independently of the hope of forgiveness. "There is no hope; no, I have loved strangers and after them I will go" is not so much the language of despair, as of rebellion.

I cannot conceive of one appearing more contemptible than Elah does in the picture in which the historian presents him. Regardless of his dignity or the good of his subjects, he sought only the gratification of his appetites and passions, for this purpose he left his palace and went to the house of his steward.

The reader doubtless remembers that an effort had been made, some quarter of a century previously, to take Gibbethon from the Philistines and that the Israelites had been diverted from the undertaking by

the murder of Nadab, and the elevation of Baasha to the throne. The Philistines appear to have been undisturbed in their possession of that fortress from that time till the second year of the reign of Elah, when we again find Israel encamped around it. One Zimri, captain of half the army of Israel, was dispatched from Gibbethon with a message to the king. He went to the royal palace, but the king was not there, he then went to the house of Arza the steward where he found the king in a state of intoxication: his face is bloated, his eyes dull, and with trembling hand he is endeavouring to carry still another glass to his feverish lips. Zimri addresses him, and is answered only by a senseless stare, and fiendish laugh: a frown passes over the face of the veteran, his eyes dart fire, as with closely pressed lips he rushes from the presence of the king to the armed men by whom he had been attended from Gibbethon, they consult a few moments then dash into the house of Arza, slay the king and his dissolute companions, and proclaim their captain king. Now commences a scene of slaughter which knows no respite till the whole house of Baasha, and all his friends are slain. No respect is shewn to the man of grey hairs, nor mercy, to the tender infant lying in its mother's bosom. Zimri knew that having taken the sword, he must defend himself by the sword, or by it perish. He had been been in the enjoyment of royalty but seven days when Omri the captain of the other half of the army came to Tirzah and besieged it. The city

was altogether unprepared for a siege, and the citizens Etle inclined to endure one, had they been prepared. The brave, warlike, ambitious, but unfortunate Zimri seeing all was lost, determined not to endure the scoffs of the conquerors. He shut himself up in the palace, and setting fire to it, burned both it, and himself together. Thus miserably perished the only king of the third dynasty which reigned over this turbulent people.



## CHAPTER IV.

### OMRI AND TIBNI.

**T**HE army, which was encamped before Gibbethon, no sooner heard of the usurpation of Zimri than they proclaimed their general king. What determined their choice is not known. It is possible that Omri was noted for his patriotism; but it is probable that his martial qualities were his chief recommendation. It has generally happened that those, who have been raised to supreme power by the soldiery, have themselves been soldiers. Omri lost no time in marching to Tirzah, and Zimri as has been already stated, put an end to his own life

The people were not unanimous in their choice, a large faction were in favour of elevating one Tibni to the throne. A civil war ensued in which the strength of opposing parties was so nearly equal that it continued



six years. One can scarcely conceive of the injury thus done to the nation; for civil wars are unmitigated evils. A defeat of either party is a national loss. It is but reasonable to suppose that all the males, who were capable of bearing arms, were enrolled as soldiers; and that agricultural operations, as well as the care of flocks and herds, devolved on aged men, women and children. If such were indeed the case, the land must have been in a great measure untilled; and as a natural result a scarcity of provisions ensued. From how many domestic circles too was the means of support taken away, aged parents left to pine in want, wives made widows, and children fatherless!

The war was at length brought to a close, by a complete victory of the forces of Omri over those of Tibni. "So Tibni died and Omri reigned." Omri began to reign, if we reckon from the time that he was proclaimed king by the army, nine hundred and twenty-nine years before Christ, and he reigned twelve years.

It is not probable that the kingdom ever wholly recovered from the effects of this war. Not only were numbers of those who may be termed the bulwarks of the nation slain; but all classes became demoralized. During such a period as that through which Israel had just passed, military prowess is most likely to become most emphatically *the* virtue to which every thing else is subsidiary. More especially is this the case, when the conflict is not entered on in defence of right, but merely to gratify ambition. Omri resolved to change

the royal residence. The palace had been burned just before he became king; and probably during the commotion which ensued all its surroundings, which rendered it desirable as a residence had been destroyed. The place chosen for the new capital was the hill of Samaria, for which he paid a sum about equal to two thousand eight hundred and thirty dollars.

It has been said of Augustus Cæsar that it had been well for the people of Rome if he had never been born, or had never died. This cannot be said of Omri, for though it might have been well for Israel if he had never been born, the prolongation of his reign was anything but desirable. He came to the throne through seas of blood, but so far from making any atonement, he disgraced the throne thus reached, and injured the people through whom it had been reached: "He wrought evil in the sight of the Lord, and did worse than all that were before him." His exceeding wickedness may be inferred from the fact, that when the prophet Micah, long afterwards, was denouncing judgments on Israel one of the charges brought against them was, that the statutes of this king were by them observed.

We are not told the age of Omri at the time of his death, nor indeed of any of the kings who reigned over Israel. It is worthy of notice too that the name of but one of their mothers has been left on record.

Omri was buried in Samaria, which was henceforth the burial place of the kings of Israel.

## CHAPTER V.

## AHAB.

**A**HAB succeeded peaceably to the throne which it had cost his father a six years conflict to obtain. He began to reign nine hundred and eighteen years before Christ and reigned nineteen years. Judging of the little we know of Omri he pursued his course of wickedness without restraint or warning, compunction or remorse. The Lord appears to have left him, as he might justly leave any of us, to choose his own way, and eat the fruit of his own doings. With Abab it was far otherwise. Again and again was he visited by Elijah to encourage, counsel or warn him, as the exigencies of the case required. And at one time he went on in the most fragrant transgressions, at another he walked humbly before God. His, appears to have been one of those impressible natures which are very much affected by circumstances. Had he had the advantage of early religious training; and had his chief wife been a pious woman, he would probably have been free from any great transgressions. But precisely the opposite state of things existed. The first lessons he received were on treachery and deceit; and he early became familiarized to scenes of cruelty and blood. As he entered on the responsibilities inseparable from manhood, his surroundings were equally unfavourable to the develop-

ment of a religious character. He was young when he married Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians. That she was even then noted for her wickedness is apparent, for this marriage is referred to as one of Ahab's most heinous sins. The nation, over which he was called to rule, was so thoroughly demoralized that he did not risk his popularity by indulging in the grossest vices. All these circumstances combined caused him, as he came to the throne, to pursue a course of high-handed wickedness. He made the concerns of religion his chief care; but his religion was most irreligious, his piety, most impious. He lost no time in building a house and rearing an altar for Baal in his own capital; and even planted a grove, in order that every facility might be afforded for the obscene rites of idol worship. There was one however in his kingdom who often caused him to pause in his evil course, and who, it may be, was ultimately the means of leading him to true repentance. This was the renowned prophet Elijah, to whom reference has already been made. This man acted so conspicuous a part during this reign that he requires more than a passing notice. His origin is enveloped in obscurity. This has given rise to many conjectures, some of them the most extravagant. Some supposing him to have been an angel, and others a divine personage. That he was neither the one nor the other is proven by "Elias was a *man* subject to like passions as we are." None can deny, however, that there is something very

remarkable in the manner of his entrance into public life; and wholly unique in his departure from earth. We first see him as he comes before Ahab, and announces an impending judgment in a most impressive manner: "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand there shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word." The Apostle James tells us that Elijah "prayed earnestly that it might not rain," and he doubtless received the assurance that his prayer was answered before he made the announcement to the king. The reader may perhaps enquire, as to whence arose the desire in the mind of the prophet that there should not be rain. It was to vindicate the honour of his God. It was the belief that the idols worshipped by the wicked Ahab, and still more wicked Jezebel, had power over rain, and the prophet wished to show the falsity of the belief. Having made the statement to the king, and thus rendered himself obnoxious, he secreted himself as God directed, sometimes in one place, and at other times in another. It would be interesting to follow him in his wanderings, but it would be foreign to my present purpose.

The kingdom of Israel suffered a drought of three years and six months, during which time Ahab sent to all the neighbouring nations to seek for Elijah, and on his not being found, an oath was required to the effect that the place of his concealment was unknown. No doubt it was the imperative duty of Ahab to seek the favour of God, from the chastisement of whose

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hand he and his people were suffering, and then to use his most earnest endeavours to mitigate the evils. But while we look on his impenitence with grief and surprise, we cannot withhold our admiration, as we observe his energetic, self-sacrificing conduct. When he saw that the flocks and herds were suffering from want of pasturage and water, he called his faithful servant Obadiah and recommended that a careful search should be made throughout the length and breadth of his kingdom, in order to ascertain whether some fertile spot or bubbling spring might not yet be found. His care would have been commendable even had he entrusted the carrying out of his plan entirely to others; but how much more so when he engages in the arduous undertaking himself. He and Obadiah divided the land between them, each determined to make the most careful survey of his portion. They had not parted far asunder when Elijah, who had so long been sought for in vain, presented himself to Obadiah, and bade him go and tell Ahab that he was there. In the meeting between the king and the prophet the holy intrepidity of the latter is very conspicuous. In answer to Ahab's question: "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" he boldly replied, "I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim. Now, therefore, send and gather to me all Israel unto Mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal, four hundred and fifty; and the pro

phets of the groves four hundred, which did eat at Jezebel's table." The request of Elijah was complied with, without delay or remonstrance. It does not seem probable that the prophets of the groves came at the command of Ahab; over them he may not have exercised any control.

When the people had assembled at Mount Carmel Elijah addressed them, and exhorted them to come to a decision relative to the proper object of worship. He proposed settling the claims of the various deities by agreeing to acknowledge him to be God who answered by fire. The priests, perhaps, would have declined the test, but they were in a manner forced to it by the people. In accordance with the wishes of Elijah one bullock was given to him, and one to the prophets of Baal. They presented their offering first. Having slain their bullock, cut it in pieces, and laid it on the altar, they vehemently called on Baal from morning till noon; "but there was no voice, nor any that answered." Elijah then "mocked them and said, cry aloud; for he is a god, either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked." As either of these suppositions were, to their minds, within the range of probabilities, the bitter sarcasm had the effect of increasing their vociferous supplications. They too "cut themselves with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them." They imagined that if Baal could not be moved by their entreaties, or by the blood

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of the bullock, he perchance might be, by *their blood*. They were evidently sincere, and expected that fire would descend and consume their sacrifice; "and they prophesied till the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, and there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded." Elijah now called on the people to witness his preparations for the offering of his bullock. There was an altar on Mount Carmel on which sacrifices had formerly been offered to the Lord. This he repaired, and around it he placed twelve stones, he then dug a trench around the altar of considerable dimensions, and cut the bullock in pieces and laid it on the wood. These preparations being made, he desired those present to fill four barrels with water, and to pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood. This, by his request, was repeated three times. Elijah knew that fire would descend, and he wished the bystanders to be absolutely certain that it was not the kindling of some latent spark. Had fire been there, it would necessarily "have been extinguished when the water was poured on the burnt offering, and on the wood." Elijah then, in the presence of the assembled multitude, thus prayed: "Lord God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Israel let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and thou hast turned their heart back again." The prayer was no



sooner offered than "the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt-sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench." The people were deeply affected; and although the great majority of them had been idolators some sixty years, when they saw the fire they "fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord he is the God; the Lord he is the God." The prophets of Baal were now, by the command of Elijah, taken and slain. In this fearful work he appears himself to have assisted. It is not clear whether this was done with the consent of Ahab, or whether he became so intimidated that he dared not oppose. Elijah now told Ahab that there was a sound of abundance of rain, and shortly after urged him to make no delay in returning to his palace, if he would escape the coming storm. Ahab at once entered his chariot, and drove to Jezreel, which was a distance of something more than thirty miles. He must have been surprised on arriving at the city to find that Elijah, though on foot, had reached the place before him. One would like to know why Ahab returned to Jezreel, rather than to his capital, Samaria. Was it merely that he might have the sympathy of Jezebel, or did he hope that she, inventive and energetic as she was, would devise some way to undo, what had on that day been effected, or at any rate to have revenge? He lost no time in telling the remarkable events of the day, and especially of the massacre—for such he doubtless

represented the execution of the prophets of Baal. On hearing this she became exasperated and sent to Elijah the following message : " So let the gods do to me and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time." As Jezebel was vindictive and cruel, one would rather have expected that instead of this message, she would have sent one of her creatures to take his life, or at least, take him into custody. I cannot avoid the conclusion that even she, hardened though she was, scarcely wished to imbrue her hands in his blood. She may have had doubts whether it would be possible to make that man her prisoner, through whose agency fire had been brought down from heaven, and the rain restrained. Consequently what she most desired was to be rid of him. The means employed were well calculated to bring about this end. She threatened his life and at the same time allowed him ample opportunity to escape.

The character of Ahab seems to have been made up of contrarities : the next time he comes before us he appears as a believer in the true God. Benhadad, king of Syria, with a large army besieged Samaria, and sent to Ahab demanding not only his gold and silver, but all his wives and children. Ahab, knowing that opposition was useless, and perhaps hoping to obtain safety for his subjects by personal sacrifices, submissively replies : " My Lord, O king according to thy saying I am thine and all that I have." Benhadad, not satisfied with these concessions, sent another mes-

sage, more insolent than the first, in which, in addition to his former demands, he claimed the privilege of searching the houses of Ahab's servants and of carrying thence whatever he pleased. Ahab, feeling that he had no right thus to dispose of his subjects' goods, called together the chief men in his kingdom, and laid the matter before them. They advised him resolutely to answer no. Ahab accordingly sent word to Benhadad that the first demand would be complied with, as his word had been passed, but it was useless to demand any thing further. Benhadad, vexed that one so much weaker than himself should dare to oppose his wishes, haughtily replied: "The gods do so to me and more also if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me." Ahab answered this insolent, revengeful speech in the language of a proverb: "Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off." Benhadad now prepared to take the city, and the Israelites determined on the most vigorous defence. While they were thus engaged, the Lord sent a prophet to Ahab with the promise of a complete victory over the besieging host. The mind of Ahab was prepared for this message; he gave it entire credence, and was only anxious to learn the will of God as to how he was to proceed. His whole available force consisted only of seven thousand two hundred and thirty-two men, and these were opposed by an immense host, no small part of which were cavalry. But not a doubt, not a fear

crossed the mind of Ahab. The language of his heart evidently was: "Hath the Lord said it, and shall he not do it? hath he spoken it, and shall he not make it good? Like the pious Asa he could say: "Lord, it is nothing with thee to help whether with many or with them that have no power." But while Ahab's whole confidence was in God, he evidently used every means that human prudence could suggest to secure a victory. For this purpose he chose, as a battle ground, a spot where the surface was so uneven that the Syrians could derive little if any advantage from their horses and chariots. He, too, ordered that the attack should be made at the hour of noon, knowing that they at that time would be engaged in feasting.

When Benhadad was told that certain men had come out of the city, he supinely remarked that he wished them to be taken alive, whether they had come for peace or for war. He does not appear to have left his pavilions. Secure in his immense army he hardly supposed that Israel would dare to offer battle; and it does not seem to have occurred to his mind that a defeat was possible. The two hundred and thirty-two princes were immediately followed by seven thousand men. The slaughter at once commenced, and each of the seven thousand two hundred and thirty-two slew a man before the Syrians struck a single blow. Though the enemy had, but an hour before, regarded Israel with the utmost contempt, they were now panic struck. While they believed that the living and true God was only as

one of the gods of the nations, they felt that he was fighting against them, and that they were not in a condition to receive aid from their own deity. They had no heart to fight, but were, by a comparative handful of men, put to a complete rout, and Ahab, taking advantage of their confusion, caused their horses to be slain and their chariots rendered unfit for use. Benhadad seeing all was lost escaped to his own land. But on the return of spring he, with another very large army came again against Israel. Ahab's faith in God appears to have remained unshaken during the year, and he fearlessly prepared a second time to meet Benhadad, who in the plains of Aphek was waiting his approach. The two armies seem to have been nearly as disproportionate as during the previous campaign. "The children of Israel pitched before them like two little flocks of kids, but the Syrians filled the country." The Israelites were again victorious. They slew one hundred thousand men. The rest of the Syrian army took refuge in Aphek. It is probable that Israel undermined the walls of this city, for they fell and by this means twenty-seven thousand more of the Syrians were slain. Benhadad was now solicitous only to preserve his life. For this purpose he, with the few who still remained faithful to him, concealed himself in an inner chamber. How transitory is human greatness! He, who but a twelve-month before had haughtily demanded gold, silver wives and children now humbly petitions for life. He

was but illy supplied with provisions and knew that if he remained in his hiding place he would escape the sword only to die by famine. He and his attendants consulted as to what was, in their extremity, to be done; and the latter concluded to clothe themselves in sackcloth and put ropes upon their heads, and to go to Ahab and ask for the life of their master. They then went in this humiliating manner and presented their petition: "Thy servant Benhadad saith, I pray thee let me live." The impulsive Ahab replied: "Is he yet alive? he is my brother." The Syrians eagerly caught the tender word brother, and answered "thy brother Benhadad." Ahab, who was probably sitting in his chariot at the head of his victorious troops, gave command that Benhadad should come to him; and when he came invited him to a seat. Benhadad improved the opportunity still further to conciliate his conqueror. "The cities" said he, "which my father took from thy father I will restore; and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria." With this arrangement the Syrian king was permitted to return to his own land.

The conduct of Ahab relative to his fallen enemy might be considered generous were it not that the context shews that the Lord had commanded him to put Benhadad to death; therefore to allow him to return to his own land in safety is no more to be commended than would be the conduct of a sheriff, who should permit one to escape, who by the

laws of his country had been justly condemned to die. God's will whenever it is made known, not our feelings, is the rule of conduct.

Though Samaria was the capital of the kingdom of Israel; and Jezebel was the favourite wife of Ahab we never meet with her at Samaria; but on more than one occasion meet both her and Ahab at Jezreel. May it not be that the palace in the last named city was her own property? and that she chose to reside there that she might have the better opportunity to practise the horrid rites connected with idolatrous worship?

It is apparent that Jezebel exercised a very powerful influence over the mind of her husband and that she was one of the very few wives who have used their influences for evil purposes. Was it owing to her influence that Ahab always appears to disadvantage, and at times contemptible at Jezreel? One is at a loss whether most to abhor his wickedness, or despise his weakness, in connection with the incidents connected with the death of Naboth. This man owned a vineyard near the royal palace, Ahab coveted the vineyard and offered the owner a better vineyard in exchange, or if he preferred, the value in money. At first sight the proposal seems reasonable, and one to which a subject should have conceded, in order to oblige his sovereign. But the matter has a very different aspect if one bears in mind the fact that the real estate of the Israelite was unalienable. Ahab had no right to tempt Naboth

by offering a better vineyard; nor had Naboth a right to sell it except on the condition of its being returned at jubilee, the observance of which had gone into desuetude. He therefore respectfully, but positively declined parting with his inheritance. On his refusal the king, the soldier, the man acted the part of a child. He laid down on his bed and refused to take any nourishment. Jezebel went to him and affectionately enquired the cause of his grief. On learning it she rather reproached him for his pusillanimity, and told him if he would permit her to use his name and seal she would put him in possession of the wished for vineyard. It is observable that he assented only by silence. He was willing to have the benefit of her act, but he shrank from incurring the responsibility. Jezebel soon compassed the death of Naboth, in which she manifested a degree of tact, a strength of resolution and a depth of depravity seldom, if ever, surpassed. The letters, which were written by Jezebel on this occasion, are the first of which we have any record.

As Naboth had suffered death under the charge of disloyalty to his king and impiety towards God, his estate was confiscated. Ahab therefore hesitated not to go and take possession. While congratulating himself on his new acquisition he saw the Tishbite approaching him. He quailed before the eye of his subject, and with stammering tongue asked "hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" "I have found thee," said Elijah, "because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in



the sight of the Lord." Elijah then proceeded to tell the king that the Lord had determined to cut off his family as He had cut off the families of Jeroboam and Baasha; and that Jezebel should be eaten by dogs at the wall of Jezreel. "When Ahab had heard these things he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and lay in sackcloth and went softly." The great God, who delights in mercy, saw Ahab's repentance, and in consequence promised that the threatened evils should not occur during his lifetime.

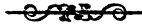
The next time we see Ahab he is entertaining the king of Judah and persuades his guest with him to make an effort to retake Ramoth-gilead from the Syrians. A prophet by the name of Micaiah had faithfully told the king what would be the result of the proposed expedition, and as a reward for his faithfulness was imprisoned by order of his impulsive, vacillating master. "Feed him," said he, "with the bread of affliction, and with the water of affliction until I come in peace." Ah! little did he think that he never would return.

Early in the engagement, which took place before Ramoth-gilead, Ahab was mortally wounded and perceiving that he could be of no further use in the army he desired his charioteer to drive him a little aside, but not so far away but that he could still give orders. The deadly conflict was obstinately maintained from hour to hour and the dying king, unable to sit unsupported and yet more concerned about the issue of the

battle than his own fate, was "stayed up in his chariot." The losses on both sides were probably nearly equal, and a few of the chief men of Israel knowing the condition of Ahab did not feel themselves in a position to make any further efforts to take the city; the proclamation was therefore made: "Every man to his city, and every man to his own country." It may be that these words were the last that ever fell on the ear of Ahab. As the army was retreating, and the day drawing to its close, the soul of this fearfully wicked but repenting king, took its flight, may one not indulge the hope, to be forever with the Lord. But however opinions may differ relative to his spiritual state, none can fail to admire the fortitude and patriotism exhibited as he drew near to death. In vain was he entreated to allow himself to be removed from his chariot and to seek the repose of a couch. In vain was he warned that every command he issued but caused a greater effusion of blood. He felt the blood gushing from his wound, he saw it trickling down his armour and then coagulate at the bottom of his chariot, and mentally exclaimed what matters it if Ramoth-gilead can but be regained!

Ahab's patriotism is the more remarkable, as he knew that his family was to become extinct. His corpse was carried to Samaria, a distance of about thirty miles, and was laid by the side of his father. The chariot in which he had died, and the armour which he at the time wore, were washed in the pool of Samaria and dogslicked up his blood.

During this reign Jericho was rebuilt by one Hiel, who, as Joshua had predicted, laid the foundation in his first-born, and in his youngest son set up its gates. "Heaven and earth," says Christ, "shall pass away but my words shall not pass away."



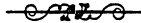
## CHAPTER VI.

### AHAZIAH.

**A**HAZIAH the son of Ahab began to reign eight hundred and ninety-eight years before Christ, in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, consequently during the lifetime of his father. It is possible that Ahab was too much occupied with preparations to take Ramoth-gilead to attend to the domestic policy of his kingdom. Ahaziah reigned but two years; and his death therefore must have occurred about the same time as Ahab's. The silence of the Scriptures as to any thing he affected, leads to the inference that he was quite satisfied with the name of king, and the splendour of royalty, and cared little for its toils and responsibilities; and that while his father was engaged in preparations for war his talented and ambitious mother was virtually ruler. One is compelled to form a very unfavourable opinion of his character, for he walked in the way of his mother, who was one of the worst women that ever lived. His death was

occasioned by his falling through a lattice in his upper chamber. He appears to have apprehended danger as soon as he received the fall; and calling to him some of his most faithful servants sent them to Ekron a town some thirty miles south west of Samaria, to enquire of its tutelary god, Baalzebub, whether or not he should recover. While pursuing their journey they were met by Elijah, who bade them return to their master, and deliver a severe reproof to him for consulting a heathen oracle, and tell him he certainly would die. On receiving this news the king sent a company of armed men to Elijah, peremptorily demanding him to come down to Samaria. Having reached the place where the prophet was, the captain thus addressed him: "Thou man of God the king hath said come down." Elijah answered, if I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven and consume thee and thy fifty. He had scarcely spoken when fire descended and consumed them. A second company of men was sent with the same message and shared the same fate. The enraged king lost no time in sending a third deputation. The captain of these men was evidently awed by the manifest judgment of God. "He fell on his knees before Elijah and besought him, and said unto him, O man of God I pray thee, let my life and the lives of these fifty thy servants be precious in thy sight. Behold there came fire down from heaven and burnt up the two captains of the former fifties with their fifties, therefore let my life now be precious in thy sight." The prayer of the

captain was accepted, and the prophet by the command of God presented himself before the king and fearlessly told him of his impending fate. The king died soon after this interview. He left no issue. He was denied burial, his body being thrown out and eaten by dogs.



## CHAPTER VII.

### JEHORAM OR JORAM.

**J**EHORAM or Joram the son of Ahab and the brother of Ahaziah came to the throne eight hundred and ninety-six before Christ, which was the eighteenth year of the reign of Jehoshaphat. Early in this reign there occurred one of the most remarkable events that have ever transpired since the creation of man—the translation of Elijah, the most renowned prophet of Israel. He had been faithful to his God, and in an eminent degree experienced the fulfilment of the promise, “Them that honour me I will honour.” Elijah was the first man who ever raised the dead to life; and one of the only two of the whole race of Adam who have exchanged worlds without passing “through the valley of the shadow of death.” No one can fail to admire his humility on this remarkable occasion, nor the affectionate interest of his disciple. In vain was the latter requested to allow his master to proceed without him. As often as

solicited, his reply was, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." "And it came to pass as they went on and talked, that behold there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." The chariot and horses of fire were no other than the cherubim which were seen in so many different forms in olden times. If asked why all, who were living in the surrounding country, did not witness this phenomenon as well as Elisha, I would ask why do not we see the angels of the Lord encamped around those who fear him? They have been seen by mortal eyes, as by Jacob on his way to meet Esau, and by Elisha and his servant on a later occasion. Is it not a *subjective* rather than an *objective* change which is required to enable us to see spiritual beings?

The Moabites, who had been tributary since the time of David; and who had, since the secession of the ten tribes, been partly under Judah and partly under Israel, now rebelled. As is well known the Moabites were the descendants of Lot; and they, as a people, were noted for their wickedness. But vile as this nation was in its root, and not less vile in its outgrowth, from it one was chosen as ancestress of our adorable Redeemer. Is there not a latent reference to this in the following words by Isaiah?

"Send ye the lamb to the ruler of the land  
From Sela to the wilderness  
Unto the mount of the daughter of Zion."

The name of the king who ruled over Moab at this time was Mesha. One cannot be surprised that he should seek to become independent, if there was the least hope of obtaining so desirable an end. On the supposition that he paid the same tribute to Judah as to Israel there would be the annual drain on his kingdom of two hundred thousand lambs, and two hundred thousand rams. Moab must have been at this time a comparatively strong nation, or the two confederate kings would not have wished for the assistance of Judah's tributary, the king of Edom. Jehoram seems to have shewn considerable tact in the manner in which he obtained the assistance of the Edomites. He left the route which they should take, entirely to the judgment of Jehoshaphat, who thus seemed, by courtesy, to be required to recommend that which would secure the services of his tributary. In this expedition the three kings, with their respective armies, together with their servants, sutlers and herds of cattle, came near dying of thirst. The hopeful spirit of Jehoshaphat and the despondency of Jehoram are illustrative of the difference between the righteous and the wicked in the hour of trial. As the manner of their deliverance was dwelt upon at some length in the former part of this work, it is necessary here only to state, that they were miraculously supplied with water; and that, the Moabites were slain.

The next time we see Jehoram he is in perplexity, relative to a letter sent by the king of Syria, by

Naaman, the captain of the Syrian army. The letter was accompanied with a very large present, and in it was a request that he would recover the bearer of his leprosy, "And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter that he rent his clothes, and said: am I God to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? Wherefore consider I pray you and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me." One would be inclined to think that the king of Syria did indeed seek occasion for a quarrel, did he not know the circumstances which led to the request. The Syrians, a short time previously, had gone out in companies, entered the kingdom of Israel and carried away several captives. Among these was a little girl, who was so pleasing in her manners, or so beautiful, that she became an attendant on Naaman's wife. Her sympathies became enlisted in behalf of her master; and she revolved the thought in her own mind whether or not he on whom the spirit of Elijah rested, could not cure even leprosy. She knew that these renowned prophets performed miracles, not by their own power, but by the power of the Lord God of Israel, with whom nothing was impossible: and so drew the conclusion that with him leprosy was as curable as any other disease. She knew that both her master and mistress were worshippers of Rimmon, and feared to give offence by speaking of the prophet



of the God of Israel, as possessing greater power than his prophets.

It may be that the Syrian leper had heard of some physician whose skill had seldom been baffled by any disease, and that at immense pains and expense he had been brought to Syria, into the mansion of the invalid nobleman. It may be that the little captive maid was in attendance on her mistress, and with her listened with intense interest to every word that dropped from the lips of the physician, as he examined the loathsome sores of the mighty warrior and able statesman, but most wretched leper. It may be that when the lady perceived that her husband's case was considered hopeless, even by this man, so renowned for his skill, she gave vent to her feelings in a flood of tears; and that the emotions of the timid little captive became so much excited that she, forgetful of the possible consequences, exclaimed: "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of leprosy." This saying was immediately reported to Naaman; and he, both because he knew the little girl to be truthful, and because it seemed to be his only hope, determined at once to make trial of the prophet's skill. He therefore told his king, and that led to the letter, the contents of which had given Jehoram so much uneasiness. The king of Syria probably addressed the king of Israel, either because he did not know the prophet's address, or because he

supposed so remarkable a personage would be a resident at court.

When Elisha heard what Jehoram had done, he sent to him telling him that his alarm was needless; for if the leper would come to him he should know that there was a prophet in Israel. It is not necessary, for our present purpose, to refer to the particulars of the cure of this leper, the only one who ever received a cure before our glorious Redeemer became man; but there is one incident connected with it which I cannot pass over in silence. Naaman, finding that by following the prophet's directions he was indeed cured, went back to him and presented the gifts sent by the king of Syria. These Elisha positively refused to accept: he would not even allow them to be bestowed on his servant. It is not likely that Gehazi—this was the name of Elisha's servant—dared to express his feelings to his master; but he was annoyed that an opportunity of enriching themselves had been lost. As soon as he was left alone he resolved to avail himself of the Syrian's generosity. He ran to him, therefore, and told him that though his master would not accept anything for himself or any member of his family, yet as two young men, sons of the prophets, had just then arrived from Mount Ephraim, he would for them thankfully receive a talent of silver and two changes of garments. One in reading this story is, by the contrast, reminded of the following words of Young:

"I wish him joy that's awkward at a lie."

Gehazi was far from awkward. He was evidently in the habit of lying. The reader will notice he enters into particulars, they were young men, sons of the prophets, come from Mount Ephraim. Naaman did not for a moment doubt the truth of his statement, and most cheerfully not only granted his request, but gave him two talents of silver instead of one. Gehazi carefully concealed his treasure and then went out, and as usual, stood before his master, little thinking that the all-seeing God had made known to him his sin. Being questioned as to where he had been, he denied having been from home at all. Elisha then addressed him thus: "The leprosy, therefore, of Naaman shall cleave unto thee and to thy seed for ever." The fearful curse at once took effect, and Gehazi went out of the presence of Elisha in an incurable state of leprosy. The lesson taught by this story is too evident to need to be pointed out. It is one of the most solemn warnings against covetousness and lying, contained in the sacred volume.

Not long after the events just recorded, the Syrians invaded Israel. We do not know under what pretext. They wished to take the army of Israel by surprise, and for that purpose concealed themselves where the Israelites were expected to pass; but they were repeatedly disappointed. At length, Benhadad suspected some one among his own troops of treachery. An investigation was made, and he became convinced that Israel's prophet occasioned his disappointment.

Having learned that this prophet was residing at Dothan, "he sent thither horses and chariots and a great host: and they came by night and compassed the city round about." This host was, in answer to the prayer of Elisha, smitten with blindness. He then led them into Samaria, when the Lord, in answer to his prayer, again opened their eyes. Jehoram, seeing his enemies in his power, submissively but almost impatiently enquired: "My father, shall I smite them? shall I smite them?" Elisha told him that so far from smiting them he should treat them hospitably. Jehoram at once acted on this suggestion, and "prepared great provisions for them; and when they had eaten and drunk he sent them to their master." This generous treatment caused Benhadad to withdraw his troops, and for a time "the bands of Syrians came no more into the land of Israel." There was, however, one more invasion of Israel by Syria, during this reign, and this time Benhadad "gathered all his host and went up and besieged Samaria." The siege was so protracted that the citizens were reduced to very great extremity, so great that in some instances they ate human flesh. There is an incident recorded in connection with the siege which throws much light on the character of the king. One day, as he was passing upon the wall, a woman called to him to help. On enquiring into the cause of her complaint, she told him that herself and a neighbouring woman had, on the previous day, eaten her infant son, with the promise

that the neighbour referred to would, on that day provide food for both by slaying her son; "but," said the complainant, "she hath hid her son." The king did not pretend to judge between them, his emotional nature was stirred to its very depths. In his agony he rent his clothes and determined that the besiegers should be induced to retire, though for this end he should be obliged to put Elisha, his most faithful friend and counsellor, to death. Do not the words of Jehoram show that Assyria made war against Israel to avenge the injury done them by Elisha during the former invasion? and that they promised to raise the siege if the prophet's head should be given them?

The king, in accordance with his expressed resolution, sent to decapitate Elisha. This intended murder certainly cannot be justified; but it is an extenuation of the crime that he felt himself forced to it by the sufferings of the most helpless of his subjects. He had not a proper sense of justice; but must he not have had great tenderness of heart? Does not the conduct of Elisha on this occasion shew, that great and good a man as he was, he was not altogether free from the frailties of human nature? Were not the words: "this son of a murderer" prompted by anger?

When Jehoram and his attendants came to Elisha, he told them that they need have no further anxiety relative to the existing famine; for on the day following the city would be plentifully supplied with provisions, so plentifully that in its gates a measure of

fine flour would be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel. The king, glad to spare the life of Elisha, and believing incredible, as it then seemed, that his words would be fulfilled, returned to his palace. How safe are they who have God for a helper! On that evening at twilight, "He made the host of the Syrians to hear the noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians to come upon us. Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life." The tidings were, during that night, brought to the porter of the city by some lepers, and without delay carried to the king. I cannot suppose that Jehoram was found asleep, but rather that as he had been wearing sackcloth upon his flesh, so this night was spent in pleading with God for the promised deliverance. The king at once arose and held a council with his nobles as to what was to be done. Though they knew that deliverance would by some means come, they feared that the departure of the Syrians was but a stratagem to take them prisoners, and gain possession of their city. One proposed that five men, mounted on horses, should be sent to make a survey of the camp. This was considered too great a risk. They at length sent two. With trembling did these men hear the gates of the city close against them. They momentarily

expected to be taken and slain. But their fears were at once dispelled when they saw the disorder in which the camp was left, and the manner in which the road was strewn, with raiment and armour which the Syrians had cast away in their haste. They pursued the road which the enemy had travelled as far as the Jordan,—a distance of some twenty miles—and returned and told the king. How long their time of absence had appeared! how many fears had been entertained relative to their safety! And when they came and confirmed the tidings of the lepers, what tumultuous joy! The rush that was made, from the late besieged city, may be inferred from the fact, that the keeper of the gate was trodden to death. But while the joy was general, it was not universal. With the shout of joy was mingled the wail of woe. Many had died of starvation; others had become so weak that the sudden supply accelerated their death; and others still had been slain to provide food for the survivors. I think I see the mother who had killed and eaten her infant son, as she stands with her garment rent, beating her breast. I hear her wail of woe: "O my child, my murdered child! how could I take thy life to save my own!"

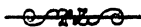
Ramoth-gilead had, for some time, been in the possession of the Syrians; and soon after the accession of Ahaziah to the throne of Judah, he and Jehoram went thither with the determination of wresting it out of their hands. While there, Jehoram received so severe

a wound, that he was obliged to return home in order to be healed. It is observable that he did not return to Samaria, but to Jezreel where his mother resided. Was it that he might have her company, sympathy and attention? Ahaziah appears to have left Ramoth-gilead at about the same time his uncle did; and the conducting of the siege devolved on Jehu, the captain of the host of Israel. The siege might have had a successful termination, had not an unseen occurrence diverted the mind of the commander from this object, to one, which appealed much more strongly to his ambition, namely his being anointed king over Israel. Jehu had received the anointing in private, and we lack proof that it was the will of Him who "putteth down one and setteth up another," that he should, without delay, assume sovereignty, and execute God's wrath on the house of Ahab; but the work was so well suited to his "natural make and temper" that he was eager to engage in it. When, after receiving his commission, he rejoined his companions, he feigned an unwillingness to communicate the prophet's errand; but he had no sooner done so than the fickle soldiers shouted "Jehu is king! Jehu is king!" Jehu was one of those who knew how to lead, by appearing most obsequiously to follow. He feared that there might be some who were still faithful to their king; and that they would hasten to Jezreel to advise him of what had taken place in the army. In order to prevent this, he very submissively remarks: "If it be your



minds, then let none go forth nor escape out of the city to go to tell it in Jezreel." Jehu, now knowing that Jehoram would be unprepared for his coming, entered his chariot, and attended by a large number of horsemen, proceeded with all speed to Jezreel. As soon as this company came in sight, the watchman on the tower informed the king. A horseman is immediately sent, who instead of returning seems to have become one of the company; a second horseman is sent and the same result follows. They have now drawn so near that their speed is discernible. The earth seems to tremble beneath their horses' hoofs. "The driving," says the watchman, "is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi; for he driveth furiously." Jehoram, forgetful of his weakness, ordered his chariot to be made ready, and went out to meet his rebellious subjects. "Is it peace, Jehu?" asked the king. "What peace," he angrily replied, "so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many." Jehoram, knowing that resistance was entirely useless, and wishing, if possible, to preserve the life of his nephew, the king of Judah, by whom he was accompanied, turned to flee: "And Jehu drew a bow at his full strength, and smote Jehoram between his arms, and the arrow went out at his heart, and he sank down in his chariot." This occurred near the vineyard once owned by Naboth the Jezreelite, and into it Jehoram's lifeless body was cast, and was eaten by dogs, as

was the body of his wicked mother a few hours afterwards. Jehoram reigned twelve years. On reviewing his character we see much to admire. He possessed that patriotism which was indigenous to his family, to which he added fidelity to friends, and great tenderness of heart. As there was in Abijah, the son of Jeroboam, so there seems to have been in him, "some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel." He was the fourth and last king of the fourth dynasty.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### JEHU.

**J**EHU was made king eight hundred and eighty-four years before Christ. His first care was to exterminate the house of Ahab: having slain Jehoram and thrown his body aside as unworthy of burial, he proceeded to the palace where the infamous Jezebel held her court. She with great intrepidity refused to allow him to enter; and looking out at a window tauntingly reminded him of the tragical death of Zimri, who put an end to his own life after having worn a crown seven days. Jehu, strong in the knowledge that he was not an usurper, but that he had received his commission from Him by whom kings rule, cried, "who is on my side? who?" Some of the officers of her household, on hearing his words, presented them-

selves, and in accordance with his command threw her down from a window of her palace; and she was trodden to death under the horses' hoofs. Jehu now entered the palace which was so lately hers; and probably ate of the food which had been prepared for her. Having refreshed himself, he gave orders that Jezebel should be buried "for," said he, "she is a king's daughter." And they went to bury her; but they found no more of her, than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands. Thus was the word of the Lord fulfilled; "In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel."

Jehu exhibited no small tact in procuring the death of the other sons of Ahab, who appear to have been children and youth under guardians. So far from commanding the murder of these princes he wrote to those under whose care they had been placed, recommending them to select the prince, whom they considered best fitted for the duties and responsibilities of sovereignty, and to set him on the throne of his father. He, at the same time, reminded them that they would be required to support his claims by the sword. This they were little inclined to do. Their own lives were too dear to them to be sacrificed in support of a family now fallen into disgrace. They accordingly sent to Jehu expressing their willingness to do his bidding. This was what he both wished and expected; and he wrote a second letter to the effect that if they were indeed devoted to his interest, he wished them, within

twenty-four hours, to bring to Jezreel the heads of their master's sons. The request was no sooner made than complied with. On that very night the heads of these princes were sent to him in two baskets. Jehu, on learning that they had been brought, gave command that they should be laid in two heaps at the entering in of the gate. When the morning had arrived the new king came and stood by these heaps of heads, and called the attention of the people to them. He then acknowledged that he had slain his master, "but who," said he, "slew all these?" He paused for a reply, but no reply being given, he observed that by whomsoever they had been slain, the act was in accordance with the will of Heaven. Thus he ingeniously justified his own conduct, while he seemed to be only vindicating the conduct of others. It is indeed true that the great God made choice of Jehu as his instrument to execute his wrath on the house of Ahab; but did he not exceed his commission? Was his putting the priests and great men of Samaria to death any thing less than murder? While his hands were reeking with their blood, he met Jonadab, the son of Rechab, whose memory is still fragrant on account of his total abstinence principles, and inviting him to a seat in his chariot said, "Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord." Jehu, now under the pretence of offering a great sacrifice to Baal, desired all the prophets, priests and servants of that idol to assemble in the house dedicated to his worship. They came and

were all slain. Every vestige of everything that pertained to the worship of this idol was then either destroyed or put to the vilest of purposes. "Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel."

Jehu reigned twenty-eight years: died a natural death, probably at an advanced age, and was buried in Samaria. We know little of this reign after its commencement, except that he "took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart;" and that energetic and warlike as he was, he lost very considerable territory, even all the possessions of Israel on the east side of Jordan. Jehu did well in executing the wrath of the great God on the house of Ahab. He too did well in putting an end to the worship of Baal. But did he not do this work, rather because it was congenial to his disposition, than that it was the Lord's will?



## CHAPTER IX.

### JEHOAHAZ.

**J**EHOAHAZ, the son of Jehu, succeeded peacefully to the throne eight hundred and fifty-six years before Christ. He followed the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, of such unenviable notoriety. So aggravated became the sins of both the king and the people that "the anger of the Lord was

kindled against Israel, and He delivered them into the hand of Hazael, king of Syria, and into the hand of Benhadad, the son of Hazael, all their days." By these kings Israel was greatly oppressed; so low were they brought, that there remained in the whole kingdom "but fifty horsemen, ten chariots and ten thousand footmen." None of the doings of Jehoahaz are left on record. It is possible that he gave himself up to pleasure to the neglect of the affairs of his kingdom, till he found himself on the brink of ruin. A man of Jehu's ardent temperament, unflinching courage, indomitable energy, and overweening self-conceit, would not be likely to share the burdens of state even with his son, the heir apparent to the throne; and it may be that up to the time of Jehu's death, Jehoahaz was as ignorant of his politics or the state of the kingdom as any of the humble peasants in the most obscure villages; and that when called to the throne he valued his elevation as an addition to his income, or as enabling him to place the associates in his guilt and folly in honourable positions. Had it been otherwise one can scarcely believe it possible, that no effort would have been made to repress the aggressions of the cruel and ambitious Syrian king. Jehoahaz reigned seventeen years, and it is probable that during by far the greater part of his reign Israel was under Syria's oppressive yoke. The king was at length roused from his state of inaction, and brought to reflect on the grievances under which his subjects groaned. That he

had some knowledge of the history of his nation is shewn by attributing their depressed condition to their transgressions against God. "He besought the Lord, and the Lord hearkened to him." In answer to his prayers, "the Lord gave Israel a Saviour." May one not reasonably hope that while this king asked for, and received temporal deliverance, he exercised unfeigned repentance towards God and was accepted of Him?

The great God generally brings about his purposes by the use of means: it was so in this instance. While the unprincipled Hazael oppressed the Israelites, and for them there seemed no helper, God remembered them still, and was providing for them a deliverer in the person of the young prince Joash, whom He for that purpose had invested with martial qualities of no ordinary character. We know not when he began to enquire into, and redress his country's wrongs; but we find him in the fifteenth year of the reign of his father associated with him in the government. From that time the affairs of the kingdom wore a different aspect. Soon Israel went out from under the hand of the Syrians, and dwelt in their tents as beforetime. Jehoahaz died a natural death and was buried at Samaria.



## CHAPTER X.

## JOASH OR JEHOASH.

**J**OASH, the son of Jehoahaz, began to reign eight hundred and forty-one years before Christ. For some time he ruled conjointly with his father, whose death, it is probable, was scarcely noticed outside of the domestic circle. Of the moral character of Joash little that is favourable can be said: "He departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat." But he had a genius for government. His success in repairing the injuries his kingdom had suffered is apparent. "Before he became associated with his father, the whole military force consisted of fifty horsemen, ten chariots and ten thousand foot; and but few years had elapsed when he was in a condition to hire to the king of Judah "a hundred thousand mighty men of valour." The letting of these men finally resulted in a war between the two kingdoms. The circumstances were nearly as follow: The king of Judah, when about to march on his expedition against Sier (it was to fight that people that the Israelitish troops had been hired) was told by a prophet that these men ought not to form a part of his army. He therefore desired them to return to their own land, but at the same time allowed them to retain the hundred talents of silver which they had received as a compensation for their services. They con-



sidered themselves insulted, and in revenge entered several of the cities of Judah, killed the inhabitants, and enriched themselves with the spoil. When the king of Judah returned from his expedition, and found the king of Israel unwilling to make any reparation, he declared war against him. Israel was completely victorious. Those of the Judahites who were not slain fled, and left their king a prisoner in the hands of the victors. Joash carried his royal captive to Jerusalem, and after breaking down a considerable portion of the wall, plundering the sacred temple, and the king's house, and exchanging the king for some of the principal inhabitants, returned to his kingdom. This victory is remarkable as being the first gained by Israel over Judah.

It was not long after the events just recorded that "Elisha was fallen sick of the sickness of which he died." He had long sustained the relation of prophet to Israel, and it is highly probable that the success of Joash, in his wars, was in part attributable to his counsel. Joash visited the venerable prophet. Men seldom weep. Those who are accustomed to war and bloodshed, and who have become familiarized to death in its most dreadful forms, weep more seldom than other men. But here we see the man of war bathed in tears. Joash enters the chamber of the prophet, his eyes meet the eyes of the dying man; and the heart that never quailed before any danger now throbs with anguish. He leans over the

wasted form of the prophet, kisses his marble brow, while the hot tears fall in quick succession on the pale face; and when his tumultuous feelings permit him to speak, he exclaims: "O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." He could say no more; no more needed to be said. By these few words he manifested the intensity of his emotion, the deep respect he felt for the dying saint, the tender relation in which they stood to each other, and his appreciation of the prophet's public services.

Elisha was a true patriot. Even the certainty that he must soon die was insufficient to quench the flame that burned in his bosom. He told his royal visitor to take bow and arrows, and to open the window eastward, and then placing his feeble hands on the hands of the king bid him shoot, and as the king shot the prophet exclaimed: "The arrow of the Lord's deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria; for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou hast consumed them." The prophet then commanded the king to take arrows and shoot upon the ground. The king smote three times and stayed. A frown passes over the face of the dying saint, and he said: "Thou shouldst have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it; whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice." It is possible that these were the last words that Elisha ever spoke; and that

with his heart filled with anxiety relative to the family of God on earth, he joined the family of God above.

The prophetic words of Elisha encouraged Joash to fight against Syria. He won three victories, and recovered the cities of Israel.

Joash died after a reign of sixteen years. He was buried in Samaria, by the side of his father and grandfather. He left the kingdom in a much better condition than he found it.



## CHAPTER XI.

### JEROBOAM II.

**J**EROBOAM, the son of Joash, began to reign eight hundred and twenty-five years before Christ, and reigned forty-one years; about thirteen years longer than any other king who reigned over Israel. Of these forty-one years we have but a very brief sketch. The record of the whole reign being contained in a few sentences. This brevity is in some measure atoned for by what may be gathered from the writings of Hosea and Amos, who prophesied during this reign. Jeroboam II, like Jeroboam the son of Nebat, sinned and caused Israel to sin, and like him, was a brave soldier, and an able politician. No king of Israel was more

prosperous than he, and at his death the kingdom comprised the same extent of territory that it did at the secession of the ten tribes. It really seems as if the infinite One made the experiment if perchance they who had hardened their hearts under the chastisement of his hand, might not be won by his mercies. But in the midst of their prosperity they departed further and still further from God, insomuch that he exclaimed.

“My people are bent to backsliding from me.”

And again, as if the Father's heart yearned over his rebellious child:

“How shall I give thee up Ephraim?  
How shall I deliver thee Israel?  
How shall I make thee as Admah?  
How shall I set thee as Zeboim?  
Mine heart is turned within me,  
My repentings are kindled together.”

Then as if the resources of infinite Love, infinite Wisdom, and infinite Power were exhausted, one hears, with astonishment, the tender expostulation:

“O Ephraim *what shall I do unto thee?*”

O what a mystery! what amazing condescension! what incomprehensible love! Can it be that the Creator, the ever-blessed God, yearns over his rebellious creatures? Yes, He does. Jesus is even now *standing* at the door, he, desires our hearts, he

is willing to come and sup with us. Dear reader, will you not permit him to be your guest?

But to return to Jeroboam. Amos, as has been already said, prophesied during this reign; and in the book which bears his name there is an incident related which represents the king in a favourable light. One Amaziah, a priest of Bethel, came to Jeroboam and told him that Amos had conspired against him. He probably hoped to be rewarded for revealing this pretended conspiracy, and to procure the death of his rival; but he was disappointed. The king was too well acquainted with the character of Amos to give credence to the report; and so treated the slanderer with contempt. It is probable that less blood would have been shed for treason had all kings, in succeeding generations, acted as wisely.

The prevailing sin during this reign seems to have been covetousness. To so lamentable a degree did this sin prevail that the people grudged the time set apart for the duties of religion. In their eagerness for gain they said:

“When will the new moon be gone that we may sell corn?  
And the Sabbath that we may set forth wheat?”

The prophet too accuses them of

“Making the ephah small, and the shekel great,  
And falsifying the balances by deceit.”

Idolatry, drunkenness and adultery were also among their common practices.

Jeroboam, doubtless, died a natural death, and he was buried with his fathers in Samaria. Of all the houses who reigned over Israel, Jehu's is the only one in which the crown descended from father to son for four generations. This house, too, affords the only instance in which four kings, who reigned consecutively, received sepulchral rites.



## CHAPTER XII.

### ZACHARIAH AND SHALLUM.

**T**HE death of Jeroboam appears to have been followed by an interregnum of eleven years. The Lord had said:

“I will rise up against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.”

And there can be but little doubt that this was a period of civil war. Menahem, it may be, supported the claims of Zachariah, while Shallum, at the head of another party, endeavored to obtain the crown for himself. It would be interesting to learn the marches and counter-marches of these armies, the battles which were fought, and the heroes who were slain, till at length the loyal party so far gained the ascendancy as to be able to place Zachariah, the son of Jeroboam, on the throne. He was proclaimed king seven hundred and seventy-three years before Christ; and had he

been his father's equal, in mental qualities, he might have held the sceptre for many long years, but, as far as one has means of judging, he was greatly his inferior. His moral status is given in the usual but most comprehensive formula: "He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, as his fathers had done; he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin."

Nothing is less probable, than that the wickedness of this king rendered him unacceptable to the people; but by some means he had become very unpopular. It may be that he took no pains to reward those who had freely shed their blood in the promotion of his cause, and that offices of trust and honour were bestowed on the party whom he feared, not on those to whom he was indebted; or it is possible that his imbecility rendered him totally unfit to govern. This is certain, a conspiracy was formed against him, and he was slain after a reign of six months. It is not at all probable that Zachariah was honoured with a burial; but rather that his lifeless body was thrown into the street and eaten by dogs; and that thus, the blood of Jezreel was avenged on the house of Jehu. Zachariah seems to have been the most wicked and the most unfortunate prince of the dynasty to which he belonged.

There can be no doubt but that Shallum aimed at the crown when he imbued his hands in the blood of the 1st king. The murder had been committed in the presence of the people. He probably thought that

he had but carried out their wishes, and expected to be immediately proclaimed king. He, like many other ambitious men, experienced a heavy disappointment. A twelvemonth seems to have elapsed ere he was invested with regal dignity. Another civil war probably ensued, in which he was again and again obliged to engage in deadly strife with the serried ranks of Menahem, till he feared that if he was made king it would be over a depopulated kingdom. It may be that a signal victory was at length obtained, and that his friends, taking advantage of it, had him crowned without delay. He occupied his elevated position but one month, and it is highly probable that it was the most miserable month of his life. For a crown he had sacrificed ease, friendship, character and conscience. And now what would it procure for him? Could it gain for him esteem? Could it win for him love? Could it save him from pain? Could it shield him from death? How utterly vain then his glory!

If my conjecture be correct, it is probable that Menahem, on his defeat, fled to Tirzah, and there remodeled and enlarged his army, determined to wrest the sceptre from the hand which held it. With so much vigour were his preparations prosecuted, and so well advised were his measures, that by one month from the time of Shallum's coronation he was in Samaria at the head of a powerful army. The Scriptures are altogether silent relative to the manner of Shallum's death. May it not be that those whom he called



his friends, seeing that his cause was desperate, saved their own lives by betraying him into the hands of Menahem, and that he was summarily despatched. Shallum had sowed the wind, and he reaped the whirlwind.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### MENAHEM.

**M**ENAHEM, the son of Gadi, began to reign seven hundred and seventy-two years before Christ, and reigned ten years. He was probably faithful to the house of Jehu, till that house became extinct; and then it was in accordance with the wishes of the majority of the nation, as well as the large army, of which he had the command, that he slew the murderer of Zachariah and assumed the sovereignty himself. In the brief sketch we have of this king, much is left to conjecture, and the most probable conjecture is that on his march to Samaria he called at the city of Tipsah and demanded quarter for the large army which attended him. This the citizens thought proper to refuse. He did not care to waste time then, by forcing a compliance with his wishes, but no sooner did he find himself established on the throne than he resolved on vengeance, such vengeance as to render his name hateful to all generations. He desolated the

surrounding country, took the city by assault, slew all the inhabitants, and made helpless woman, in her most helpless state, the chief object on which to glut his more than savage cruelty.

During this reign Israel was invaded by Assyria, the first time that this power is adverted to after the days of Nimrod, its founder. Menahem aware of his inability to repel the invasion by force, bribed Pul, the Assyrian monarch, to depart, and allow him the peaceable possession of his kingdom. For this purpose Menahem paid him a thousand talents of silver, a sum not far from one million five hundred thousand dollars. "Menahem," says the historian, "exacted the money of Israel, even of all the mighty men of wealth, of each man fifty shekels of silver." One is surprised that there should have been *fifty thousand* men in Israel who could be designated "mighty men of wealth."

Menahem was probably a good general, but he was not a good king; he was both cruel and despotic. He not only did evil in the sight of the Lord, but he did evil all his days. If the chronicles of the kings of Israel were extant, one would not care to search them in order to learn more of this detestable man. Let the name of the wicked rot.



## CHAPTER XIV.

## PEKAHIAH AND PEKAH.

**P**EKAHIAH, the wicked son of a wicked father, succeeded to the throne seven hundred and sixty years before Christ. About all we know of him is that, "he did evil in the sight of the Lord; he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." He was probably a common place man, who ate and drank, talked and laughed, regardless of the effect that his conduct had on others. But if he was totally unfit to govern, he did not govern long. Though the people may have been at variance on most subjects, they agreed in regarding their king with hatred and contempt. Their two preceeding kings, though among the worst of men, were good soldiers, and this made the pleasure-seeking Pekahiah appear to the greater disadvantage. After he had reigned about two years, one Pekah, a captain of his, seeing that the people were ripe for an insurrection, and knowing his own popularity in the army, resolved to rid them of their worthless king, and to obtain the crown himself. Having communicated his design to fifty men, and finding them devoted to his interest, he determined no longer to delay the execution of his plans. With his strong band of assassins he entered the palace and killed the king and his attendants. Comparatively few knew that Pekahiah

was dead till they heard the shout: "Long live king Pekah." The people accustomed to sudden revolutions, and feeling that the change could not be for the worse, acquiesced in the choice of the army.

Pekah, the son of Remaliah, began to reign seven hundred and fifty-nine years before Christ, and reigned twenty years. Pekah was twice at war with Judah. In the first war he gained a complete victory. One hundred and twenty thousand were slain, and two hundred thousand women and children were carried captive. As the generous treatment these helpless captives received was referred to, at some length, in the former part of this work, it will be passed over in silence. It is a story, however, of which they who love mercy can never tire.

The second time that Pekah made war against Judah, Rezin, king of Syria, was his ally. Judah, remembering her late defeat, was filled with consternation when she learned that both Pekah and Rezin were coming against her. Isaiah, in recording these events, says of Ahaz, who then sat upon the throne of Judah, that "his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of wood are moved by the wind." There can be no doubt but these confederate kings meditated nothing less than the subverting of the reigning family, and the placing of a creature of their own on the throne. The wicked Ahaz, though promised the aid of Omnipotence, if he would rely upon Him, obtained at immense expense, the aid of Tiglath-

pileser, king of Assyria. The reader, no doubt, remembers that about half a century previous to this war, Jeroboam II. had recovered the territory east of the Jordan, which had for some time been in the possession of the Syrians. The Assyrians now took this territory again from Israel, and carried the inhabitants—the tribe of Reuben, the tribe of Gad, and half tribe of Manasseh—captive. From this captivity they, as a people, never returned.

Pekah, like many of his predecessors on the throne of Israel, died by assassination. It may be his gaining no pecuniary advantage from his victory over Judah, and his ill success in opposing Assyria, especially his allowing so many of his subjects to be carried captive, had rendered him exceedingly unpopular. If such were indeed the case, nothing could be in better keeping with the general conduct of this "seed of evil-doers," than to put him out of the way by assassination.

Hoshea, the chief conspirator, did not find it as easy to establish himself on the throne, as to render the throne vacant. There may have been other aspirants to the throne, or perhaps a party who wished for a republican form of government. Was it not they, who disgusted with their wicked rulers, enquired: "What then should a king do to us?" The various factions were, after a period of anarchy, either united, or that which was in favour of Hoshea became so powerful that the others deemed further opposition useless.

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Pekah was the seventh king who was assassinated in a period of two hundred and thirty-six years. Such a state of society needs no comment.

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## CHAPTER XV.

### HOSHEA.

**H**OSHEA, the nineteenth, and last, king of Israel, came to the throne seven hundred and thirty years before Christ. Between the death of Pekah and the revation of Hoshea there seems to have been an interregnum of about nine years. It is probable that the kingdom was again devastated by civil war.

With the exception of Shallum, who reigned but one month, Hoshea is the only king of Israel of whom it is not said that he walked in the ways of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. Oh! of what unutterable anguish must this noted king have been the subject, as one after another of his successors went to the world of woe from having followed his example! How earnestly he must have wished it were possible for him to stop the tide of influences which he had set in motion! It is an awfully solemn thought that in the eternal state, to the wicked, as well as to the righteous, will be given the reward of their hands. Dear reader, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

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Though Hoshea came to the throne through treachery and blood, he was one of the best of Israel's kings. This, however, is not saying much either as regards his morals or his religion. In these respects kings generally compare unfavorably with other men. Those who reigned over Israel compare unfavorably with other kings. They, with the exception of Hoshea, were all idolators, if not during the whole, during a part, of their reigns. Several of them offered human sacrifices to their idols, even causing their own children to pass through the fire to Moloch. Of Hoshea it is recorded that "he did, that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, but not as the kings of Israel that were before him." But the nation's cup of iniquity was now full; and the day of vengeance could not be much longer delayed. God determined to remove Israel out of his sight; and the instrument he made use of for this purpose was Shalmaneser, king of Assyria. Tiglath-pileser, the father of Shalmaneser had, during the reign of Pekah, taken very considerable portions of the kingdom of Israel. It may be that Hoshea attempted to recover this territory. But whatever may have been the cause this is certain, Shalmaneser invaded Israel and made Hoshea his tributary. After having paid the tribute a few years an effort was made to throw off the Assyrian yoke. For this purpose Hoshea made a league with So, king of Egypt, and took care to have Samaria well fortified, garrisoned and provisioned. He then ventured to omit the pay-

ment of the required tribute. This aroused the wrath of the Assyrian king. He invaded the kingdom, destroyed fortifications, burned cities, and killed the inhabitants, there being none able to oppose, as the whole army was concentrated in the capital. It is probable that one object that Shalmaneser had in view in devastating the country was to draw the Israelitish troops out of Samaria, that they might the more easily gain possession of that city; but Hosea was well aware that his strength was to sit still. At length the Assyrians came to Samaria and besieged it. For three long years it repelled their utmost efforts. Jerusalem in the days of Zedekiah sustained a siege of eighteen months; and the inhabitants were reduced to such extremity that they ate human flesh. What, then, must have been the condition of the people of Samaria during a siege of double that length of time? Did hundreds and tens of hundreds die of starvation? Were all who could not add to the strength of the city obliged to leave it? or did the strong for weary months subsist on the flesh of the weak? The heart sickens at the thought of either of these; but is there any other possible alternative? When at length the city was taken, the rage of the conquerors knew no bounds. Such fearful barbarities were committed that the people are represented as calling on the mountains to cover them, and on the hills to fall on them. Hoshea was taken prisoner as soon as the Assyrians entered his capital. He was not then slain, but was loaded



with chains, and kept in charge till the general massacre was over; and then he, and all his family, were put to death. In the emphatic words of the prophet he was "utterly cut off." Those who did not die of famine, or pestilence, or the sword, were carried into Assyria and placed "in Helah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes." These people are after their dispersion lost sight of. Where their successors are to be found is even now a subject of enquiry. May they not have become incorporated with the Jews? Is not this the legitimate inference from the following words by Isaiah:

"In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel,  
 And they shall come together out of the land of the north  
 To the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers."

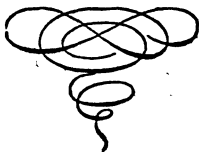
from the fact that one belonging to the tribe of Asher was residing in Jerusalem at the commencement of the Christian era? and from such phrases as "To the *twelve tribes* scattered abroad;" and "Unto which promise our *twelve tribes*;" &c.

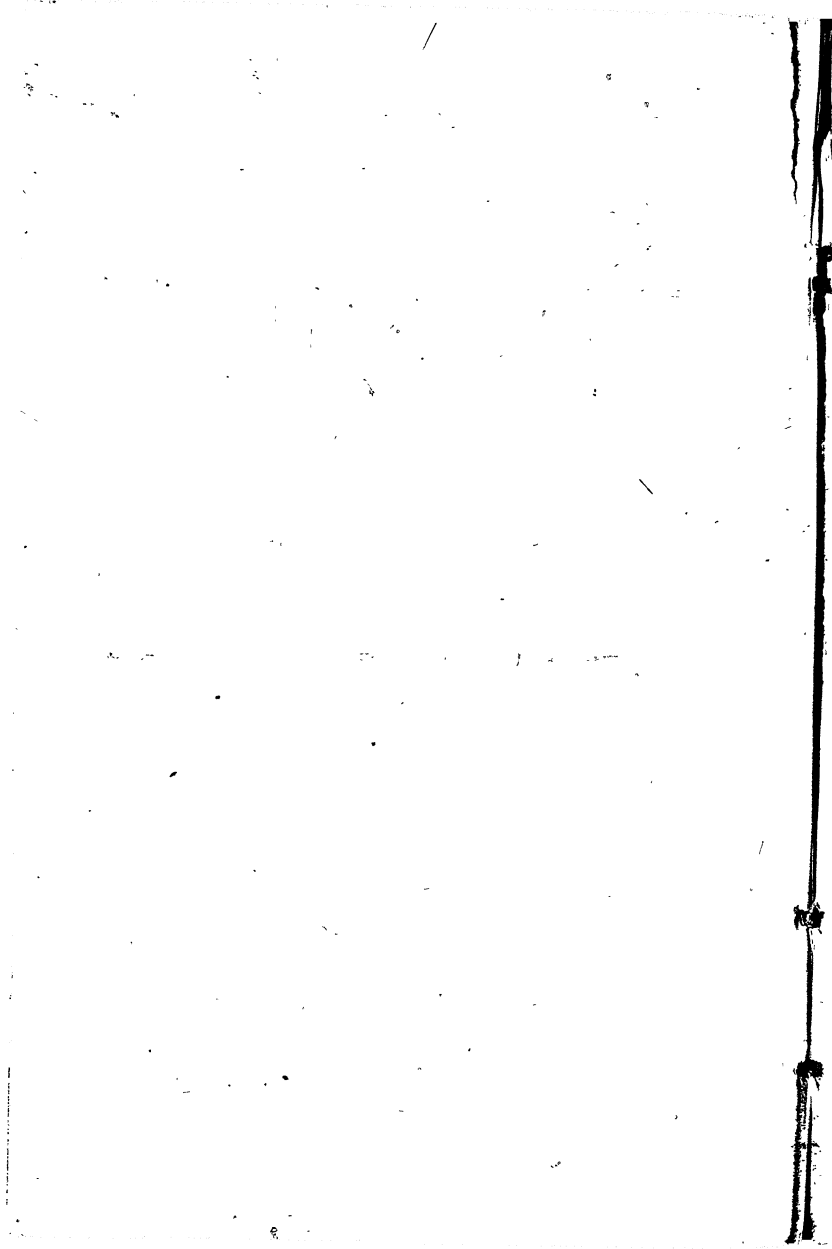
Israel existed as a separate nation two hundred and fifty-four years. During that time they were ruled over by nine different dynasties.

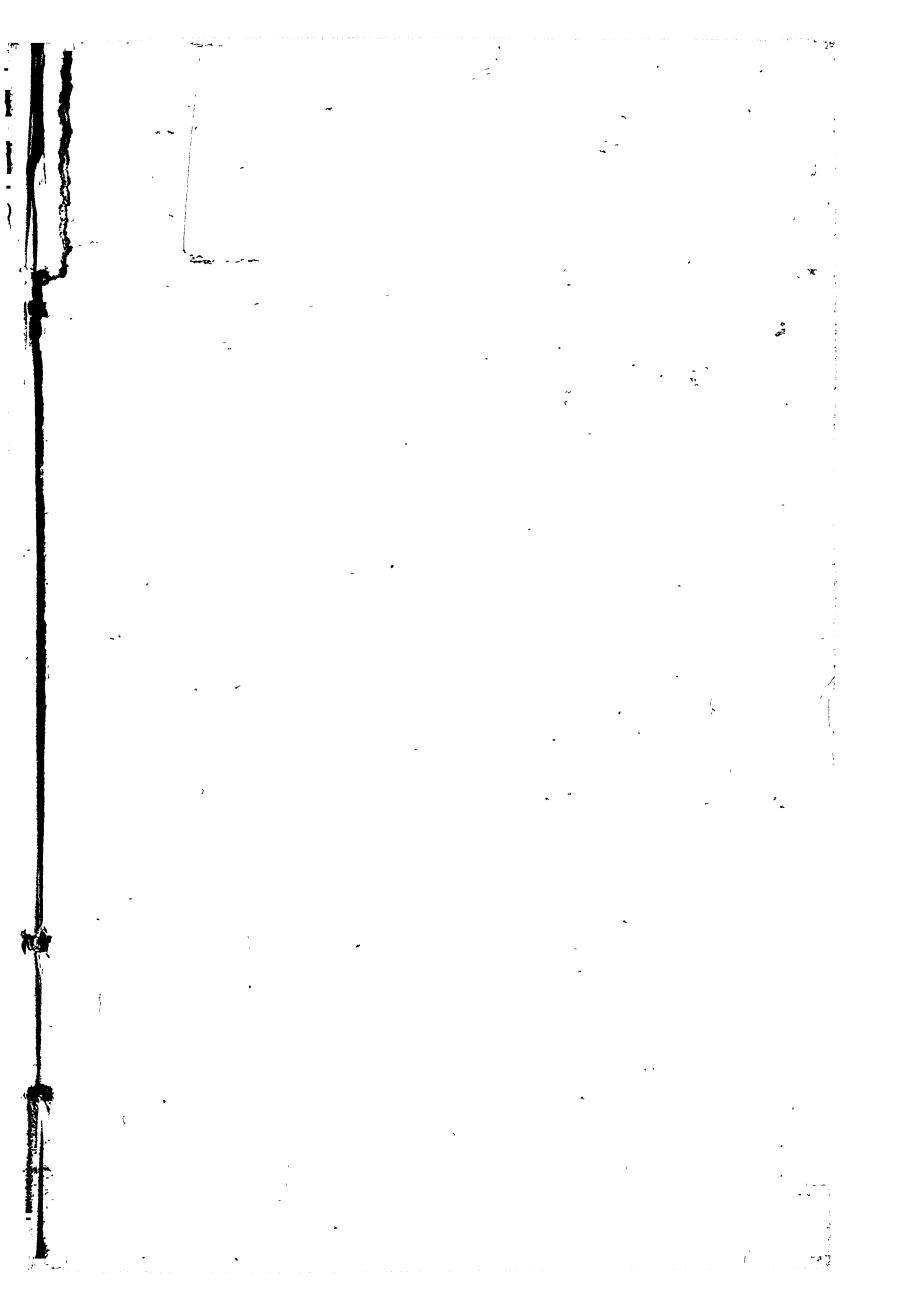
If "sin is a reproach to any people" Israel certainly is open to reproach; for "they left all the commandments of the Lord their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the hosts of heaven and

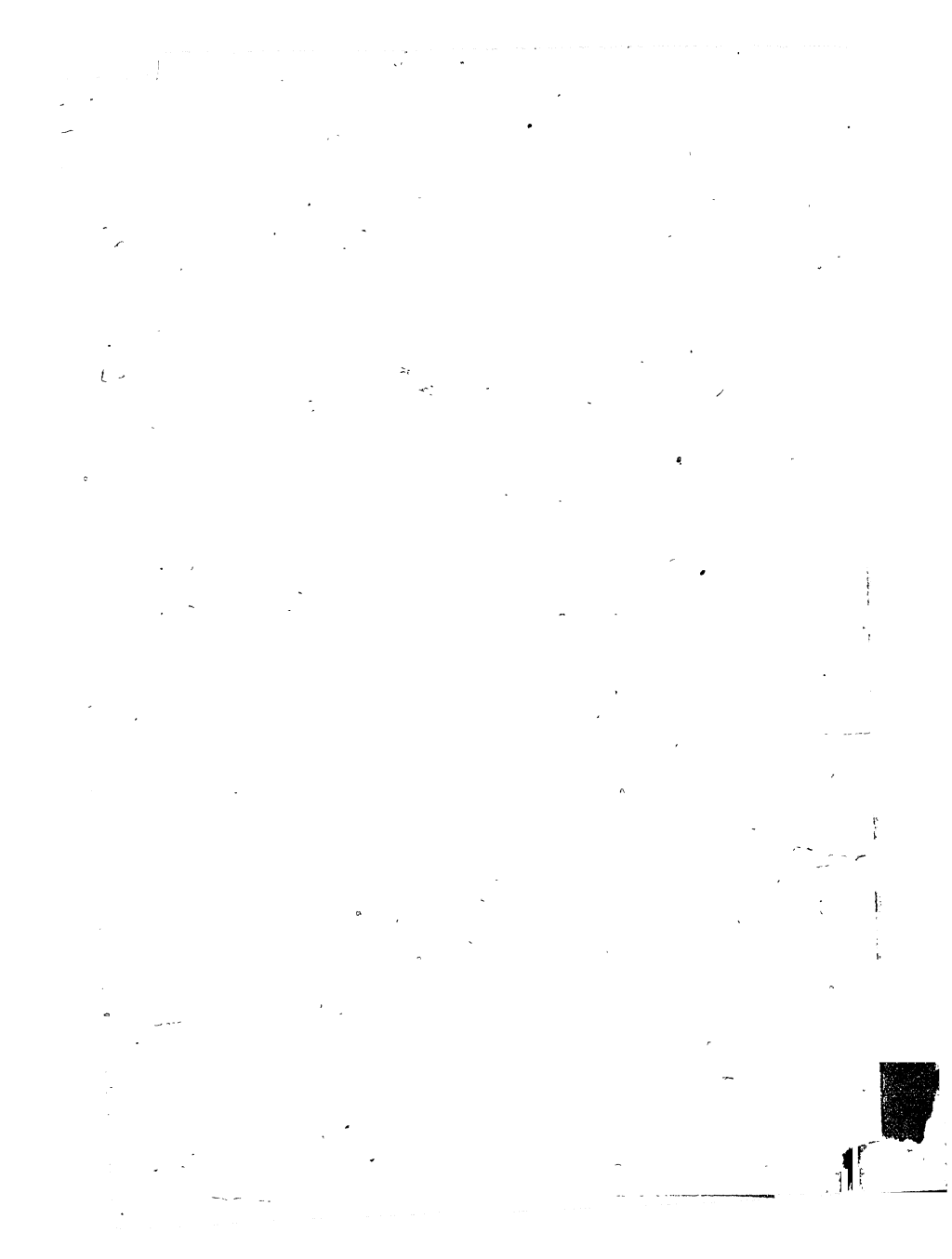
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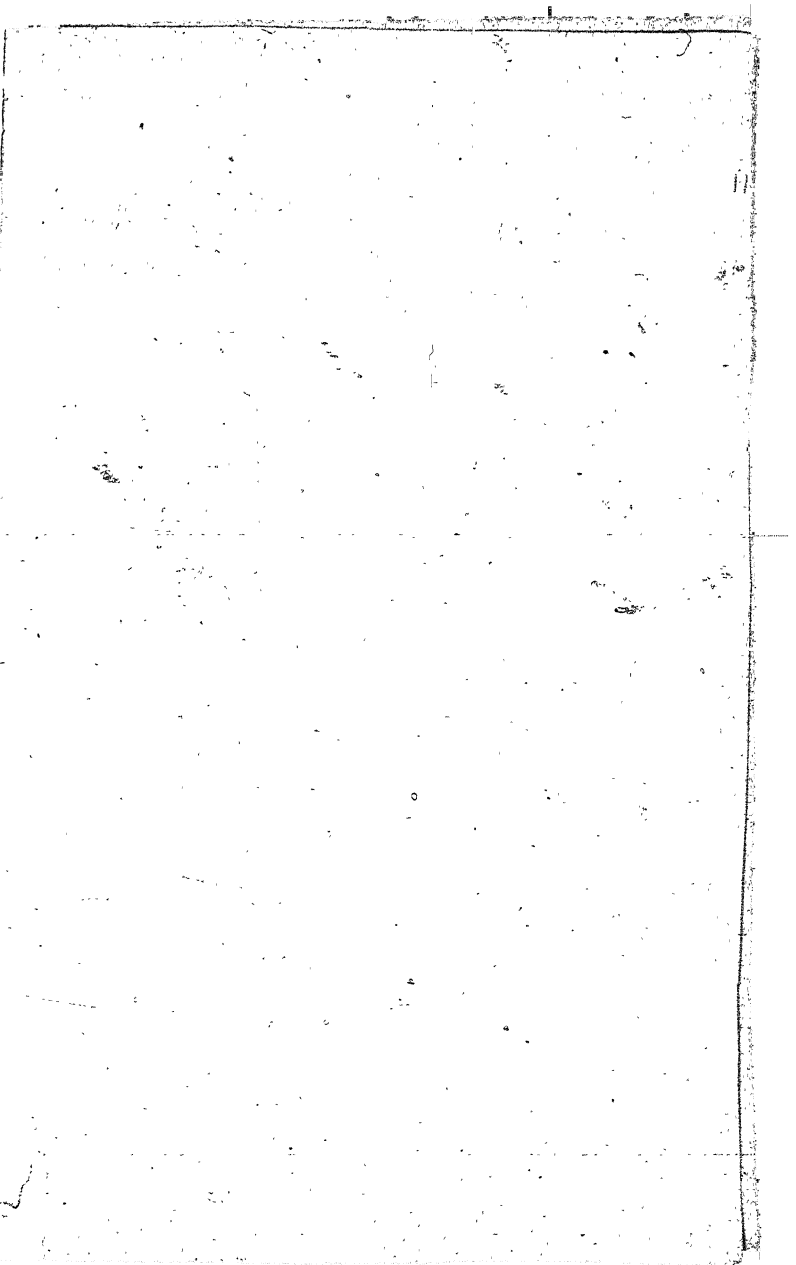
served Baal. And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger." They pursued this course of iniquity though favoured with the exhortations and warnings of two of the most renowned prophets that have ever lived—Elijah and Elisha, whose prophetic lives extended over a period of more than seventy years; and which was one of the three ages of miracles that were ever vouchsafed to earth. But promises, threatenings, mercies, judgments and miracles being all in vain God said "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone."

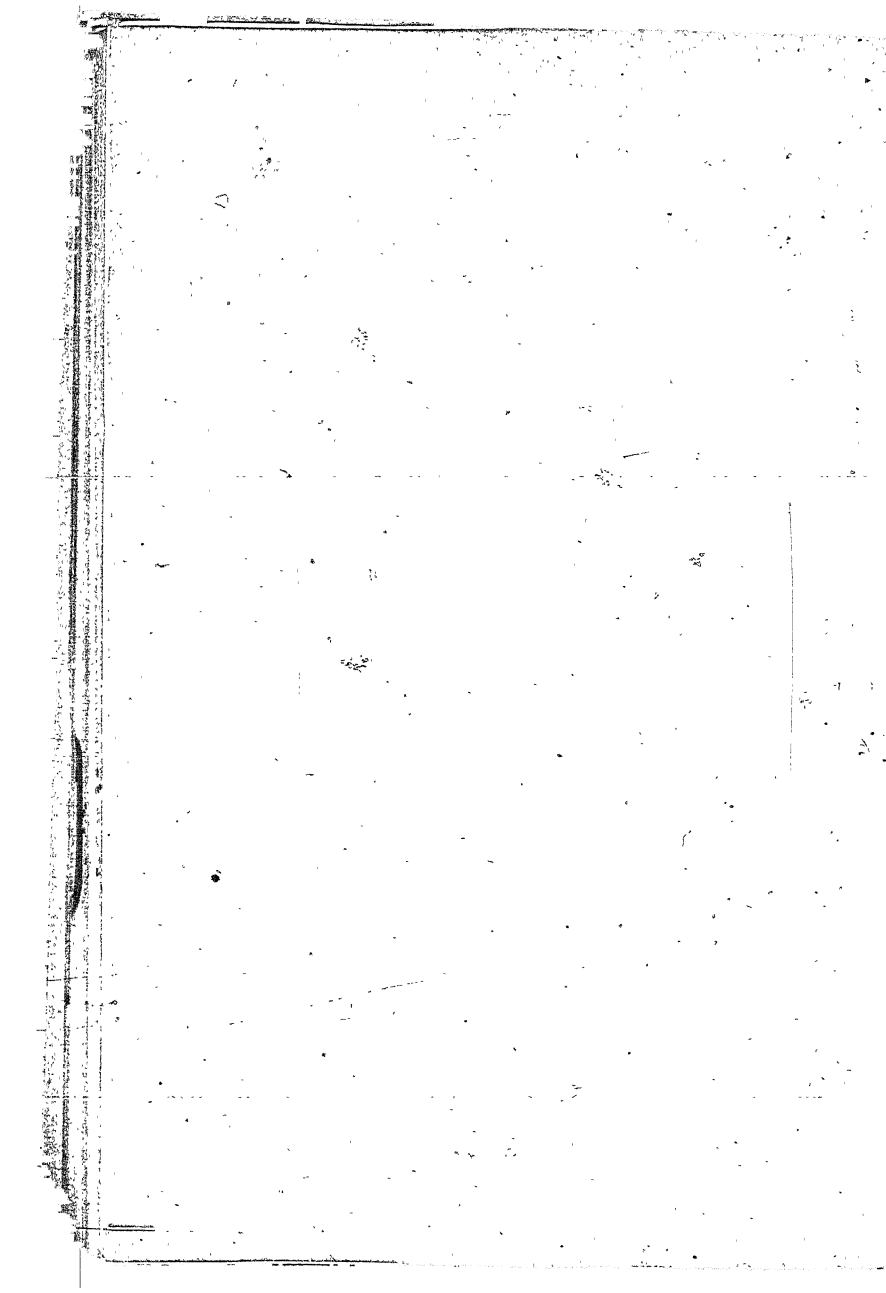












## ERRATA.

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- P. 9, line 9—For “fifty-six” read “sixty-seven.”
- P. 10, line 7—For “child” read “son,” and for “who”  
read “though he.”
- P. 25, line 26—For “as to” read “as in.”
- P. 75, line 28—Read “two hundred and fifty.”
- P. 96, line 6—Omit “custom of the.”
- P. 105, line 16—Read “do not think.”
- P. 118, lines 21 & 22—For “It is” read “Is it.”
- P. 167, line 20—After “Samaria” read “and the brethren  
of Ahaziah.”

The other errors the young reader can easily correct.

M. L. T. W.