

THE MAN NOBODY MISSED

"Thirty and two years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years, and departed without being desired. Howbeit they buried him in the city of David, but not in the sepulchres of the kings" II Chronicles 21:20.

In this verse we have a post-funeral recital and a dread, dark drama it is to review. It refers to the estimate of the life of Jehoram, the king of Judah.

Two old-timers met after months of separation, and one said, "Have you heard of Sam's death?" The other astonished, replied, "No, what was the complaint?" "No complaint; everybody was completely satisfied." This may be irreverent, but it is not irrelevant. It is exactly what happened with Jehoram who died at the age of forty, with no one to regret his death. "He departed without being desired." As we read this text, we think by way of contrast of people whom so many of us have missed and felt that we could not live without, so keenly did we feel their loss.

When some people die, many mourn, but not to be missed by anybody when you are gone is certainly a great tragedy. It spells failure in capital letters. It is an awful condemnation for one to live in the presence of countless opportunities to serve humanity as well as to make himself respected, honored, and loved, and then to prove himself such that nobody misses him when he is gone.

What were the reasons why nobody missed Jehoram when he was gone?

I. Bad Blood.

Jehoram had the advantage of having a good father, Jehoshaphat, but his mother was a bad woman. The father may fail, but let the mother fail, and God pity the child. Nero's mother was a murderess, and no wonder Nero fiddled while Rome burned. Jehoram's mother was a murderess too, and no wonder he destroyed his father's good intentions and built his kingdom in blood. The mother of Coleridge taught him Bible stories from the old Dutch tile of the fireplace and no wonder he was a Christian as well as a poet. Patrick Henry's mother was eloquent and that is why every school child knows "Give me liberty or give me death."

Jehoram was the first-born of eight brothers, and the throne was his by right of primogeniture, but when he came to the throne, he inaugurated his godless regime by murdering all his brothers and every prince of Israel whom he thought might possibly stand in his way. He reigned for eight years. During those years of misrule he compelled the people to follow until God smote him with a dreadful disease that brought to an end his miserable life. When he died, there was no one to regret his passing. His death was his most creditable contribution to society. The people said it was the best thing he ever did. When his throne was vacated, it was an occasion for great joy. They refused him a sepulchre among the kings. After his diseased body went into a dishonored grave, his name fled from human lips and from divine literature. You can look the pages of history through and find from their silence alone that he was a forgotten man.

When Jehoram died, Ahaziah became king because his elder brothers had been murdered. When he was killed, his mother "arose and destroyed all of the royal seed of the house of Judah." This battle of blood brought destruction to generation after generation.

We have come to know the cost of bad blood by the labor of such men as Professor Richard Dougdale. He has given us the famous contrast between the Jukes--Edwards families. He studied 200 descendants of the Jukes. They were called Jukes because they "ducked" their responsibility to society. Not one of the 1200 had a good common school education. 310 were professional paupers; 310 died in infancy; 50 of them were debauched women; 400 of them were men and women with venereal diseases; 130 of them were convicted criminals; 7 of them were murderers. This family cost the state of New York \$1,200,000.00.

Dougdale contrasts their record with that of about the same number of persons in the Edwards family, the family of Jonathan Edwards and his descendants. Jonathan studied Latin at the age of six. At twelve he was prepared in Greek and Hebrew and entered Yale University. At Northampton, Mass., he built the largest Protestant church in America at that time. He was called to the presidency of Princeton University, but he died before taking up his work. From his descendants we have 285 college graduates from 45 different colleges; 13 of them later became college presidents; 65 of them became college professors; 30 of them judges; 100 of them clergy men; 126 of them lawyers; 80 of them were elected to public offices other than judges; and 3 of them became governors. This group published 135 books of merit.

II. Bad Marriage.

Jehoshaphat made one of his most serious mistakes when he married his son, Jehoram, to Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. It is sad to note that the father for reasons of state and temporal advantage, betrayed the son into the ruinous connection. Athaliah was exalted in station, beautiful in person, and gifted with high mental endowments, but she was of depraved instincts. This should be a warning to parents not to sacrifice their children's spiritual good to worldly interests and especially in the fundamental particular associations in life. It made Jehoram an idolater, a worldling, and a profligate. Because a man's surroundings help to make or to mar him, it was not at all surprising that Jehoram's life turned out as it did with Athaliah for a wife, Ahab for a father-in-law, and Jezebel for a mother-in-law.

Modern society has many problems, but none more serious than that of marriage. The foundation stone of civilization is the home. The home is no stronger than the marriage relationship. So far as my limited observation goes, I have never known a broken home where both parties were faithful Christians, members of the same church, and regular in church attendance.

III. Bad Politics.

Jehoram acceded to an exalted throne, and became a ruler of a promising people and a growing empire. He slew his brothers who were better men than he, after having married into a foreign family in order to gain political prestige and power.

IV. Bad Religion.

It was in the realm of religion that Jehoram made the greatest of all his mistakes. He forsook the God of his fathers, and plunged into the idolatry of his wife's family. He became a devotee of Baal. He established altars for heathen

worship, and what he did was not done through ignorance on his part. He knew what was right, but he refused to do it. He chose the popular and easy road to power. His life was a wicked one.

But are we not told that "the ungodly are like the chaff which the wind driveth away?" His army destroyed, his palace plundered, his kingdom extinguished, his family deported, himself smitten of God with a loathsome disease at the early age of forty, a nuisance to himself and everybody else, unloved in life, he died without being desired. He was gone and nobody missed him. Men were glad to see the last of him.

Do you want to be missed when you are gone? If you don't, you have a queer idea of life, and a most unworthy one. To each interested soul the great Master of life comes whispering the secret of abiding remembrance and everlasting love. He says that he who would be remembered by others, must be forgetful of himself. "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it."

I sincerely hope that you may not depart without being desired; that you may not be one of those whom nobody will miss when you are gone.