

CHAPTER IV.
JEROBOAM'S QUESTION TO REHOBOAM.
(1 Kings, xii. 1-5.)

WHEN Solomon was dead, his son was king over the whole land.

His name was Rehoboam. Would you not expect him to be wise, as his father, was so wise But there are many wise fathers who have foolish sons; and Rehoboam was a foolish man, as you will see.

Do you know what is the highest sort of earthly wisdom? Is it knowing the names of many places, and trees, and stars? Oh, no! very silly person may know a great deal. Is it knowing how to speak many languages, such a French, Latin, or German? Oh, no! Is it knowing how to do hard things, such as building a ship, making a watch, or painting a picture? Oh, no!

Wisdom is knowing what is the best thing to do. *Heavenly* wisdom is shown in fearing God, and *earthly* wisdom is shown in knowing how to behave to everybody.

Rehoboam had no wisdom at all, as you a will soon see.

At first the people of Israel were willing to have Rehoboam for their king. They came to a town in the middle of the land, to make him king. That town was Shechem.¹

But some of the people did not like Rehoboam. What was their reason? They thought he would treat them as Solomon had done. Had not Solomon treated them well? He had done some things they did not like. Solomon had made them pay many taxes; for he had built such fine houses and such strong towers, and he had made such beautiful gardens and lakes, that he wanted a great deal of money. Also Solomon had been a strict king, and had punished thieves and murderers; and this was right. But some of the Israelites wanted to have a king that would let them do as they liked. These Israelites sent messengers to Egypt to ask Jeroboam to come to Shechem.

Was not Jeroboam pleased to be invited to come? Yes, he was. He came quietly to Shechem; and he told the Israelites what they ought to say to Rehoboam. So Jeroboam went with the people, and spoke to Rehoboam these words: 'Thy father made our yoke heavy; if thou wilt make it lighter, we will serve thee.'

What did Jeroboam mean by a yoke?

It is a heavy piece of wood put on the necks of oxen when they draw carts.

Jeroboam meant that Solomon had been a very severe, unkind king, and had made his people work too hard. Was this true? No, indeed. The people had never been so happy as in his days. Had not the Queen of Sheba cried out to Solomon, 'Happy are thy servants! Because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made He thee king, to do judgment and justice.'

This is what the Queen of Sheba had said; and yet now the people had grown discontented, and called Solomon unkind.²

¹ Shechem was called Sychar in our Saviour's days, and Jacob's well was there.

² Solomon had not Made his *own* people do hard work, but he had made the heathen, who were left in the land, do the hard work. 'Upon all the people that were left of the Amorites did Solomon levy a tribute of bond service, but of the children of Israel did Solomon make no bondmen.' 1 Kings, ii. 20,23.