179. What was Hezekiah's answer?

The king assured the prophet that he had made no commitments of any kind (39:8) but he did admit that he had shown the Babylonians the royal treasures.

180. What harm was there in that?

The envoys had come to congratulate Hezekiah on his recovery, and evidently they did it in true oriental fashion, with extravagant promises and compliments, profuse flattery, and ingratiating insinuations. Having won his confidence it was comparatively easy to persuade him to let them see the inner chambers of the royal palace and the national treasury. It was an extremely stupid thing for even a childish king to do, for it put the Babylonians into possession of every Hebrew secret, and the reports carried back to Babylon put Judah at the mercy of Merodach-Baladan.

181. Did Hezekiah have much to show?

In spite of the fact that the little land had no mineral resources and never was intended to support a people lavishly, the trade that crossed the Land of Promise did put considerable wealth within reach of the Hebrew kings; and in the temple, the royal palace, and other public buildings Judah had accumulated some precious and valuable things. Foremost among Hezekiah's treasures were stores of gold, silver, bronze, and precious stones. The golden vessels of the Temple were worth a king's ransom, and to a conqueror who was as badly in need of funds as Merodach-Baladan was the knowledge of Hezekiah's treasures could not have failed to be a temptation.

182. What was Judah's attitude toward the revolt?

There were three political parties in Judah. One was all for the revolt. This party consisted of the rural landowners, upon whom the burden of taxes fell most heavily because the rich members of the government machine were able to pass the burden on to them. Another party was in favor of an alliance with Egypt, its plans for the revolt corresponding very closely to those of the first party. But it was made up mostly of rich capitalists in Jerusalem who were exposed to Egyptian intrigue. Yet one other party was to be reckoned with—the prophetic party under the leadership of Isaiah, which was opposed to any alliance with an outside power, and which counseled acceptance of the Assyrian terms, hard as they were. Against the nobles who favored the Egyptian alliance Isaiah spoke out sharply (30:1-3, 6-7), reminding them of the hollowness of all promises that came from the region of the Nile. They, in turn, reprimanded Isaiah in vigorous terms (30:11), which moved him to make a second historic decision.

183. What was that second decision?

The criticism of the pro-Egyptian nobles so stirred Isaiah (30:13-14)

that he determined to make a written record of his activities and attitudes so that posterity might judge of his wisdom and loyalty in the crisis (30:8); and to this decision we owe the existence of the book in the Old Testament which bears his name.

184. Did he write scripture?

It is a fact that he did write scripture, but he did not write it for scripture. As in the case of Amos and Hosea, the idea of scripture was not yet born, and no man of that period wrote anything with the thought that it would ever be scripture.

185. Was the revolt a success?

The new Assyrian monarch, Sennacherib, was an energetic ruler who knew the advantage of swift action. Merodach-Baladan was forced to flee; a puppet was set upon the throne; and then the Assyrian turned west to deal with the coconspirators. It was at this point that Isaiah reached one of his historic convictions which he formulated into a doctrine that was to rest at the foundation of Hebrew thought for more than a hundred years.

186. What did Sennacherib have to do with his conviction?

No one knew the wickedness of the heart of Assyria any better than Isaiah did. The tales of her atrocities and barbarities had been his daily fare since his earliest recollection. But suddenly Isaiah came to the conviction that, wicked though the Empire was, it had been chosen by Jehovah as the rod with which Judah was to be chastened. When she had been so used then God would turn and deal with Assyria according to her deserts (10:5-27). In his imagination the prophet saw Assyria marching on Jerusalem (10:28-32); yet he was not afraid, for *he believed that the city of Jerusalem would never be destroyed!*

Was not the capital the dwelling place of Jehovah? Was not his Temple, his beloved altar, the very fountain of his worship within the city? Could he allow Jerusalem to be destroyed without suffering irreparable loss of prestige? Would he allow profane hands to be laid upon that holy place? It became central in Isaiah's belief that Jerusalem was inviolate (10:33-34), and this conviction gathered strength with the succeeding years and experience.

It was not that Judah alone was to be punished for her sins, but the surrounding nations were to feel the harsh hand of Yahweh also (14:24-27), for they were all guilty alike before him. Isaiah believed the deliverance would not come by force of arms, but by the direct intervention of Yahweh (9:2, 4, 6-7). In this we have an expression of his deep faith which was probably his most outstanding characteristic.

187. What about Isaiah's faith?

His concept of faith is to be found in two passages (7:1-9; 28:16). Con-