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DAILY BIBLE ILLUSTRATIONS:

BEING

ORIGINAL READINGS FOR A YEAR,

ON SUBJECTS FROM

SACRED HISTORY, BIOGRAPHY, GEOGRAPHY,
ANTIQUITIES, AND THEOLOGY.

ESPECIALLY DESIGNED FOR THE FAMILY CIRCLE.

✓
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LITERATURE,' ETC. ETC.

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SAMUEL, SAUL, AND DAVID.

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DAVID BIRN, ATTORNEY AT LAW

P R E F A C E .

It was originally contemplated that the "DAILY ILLUSTRATIONS," so far as founded upon the historical books of the Old Testament, should be completed in the Third Volume of this Work. As, however, the portion of Scripture intended to form the basis of that Volume is, in extent of materials, equal to that in the consideration of which the *two* previous Volumes have been occupied, it has been found practically impossible to realize this object without materially modifying the plan, and reducing the scale, on which the former Volumes have been framed. But the very favorable reception which has been given to those Volumes, and the approbation which has been bestowed upon their construction, seemed to indicate the inexpediency of any *essential* alteration; and it was felt that it would be really a less and more advisable change, to devote the Third and Fourth Volumes to the remaining equal portions of the historical books of the Old Testament, than to crush the plan in the attempt to force the substantial matter of two Volumes into one.

Even in this enlarged space, a careful selection of topics has been rendered necessary, by the more than proportionate increase of subjects suitable for the mode of treatment which has been adopted. It will therefore perhaps be found, that the present Volume has been, more than even the Second, occupied in the elucidation of the principles of the Hebrew institutions and government, and in the illustration of historical facts and circumstances. This has often been accomplished, less by the discussion of the subject than by the mode in which it has been stated; and if the

reader should find that his view of the matter under consideration has been in any degree freshened by the manner in which it is here presented to him, he will doubtless conclude that this result is achieved through the humble endeavor which has been made to make the statement itself embody the results of some careful inquiry into the facts and circumstances. Thus, although there may be somewhat less in this Volume of the forms of illustration and discussion, there is not less—there is even more—of the reality of this incorporated with the description and statement of the incidents. The Daily Papers of the present Volume will not, it is apprehended, be the less liked on this account; while there still remains enough of super-imposed illustration and investigation to satisfy those, to whom that mode of giving the results of inquiry may be more attractive.

In the present Volume, much care has been bestowed upon the character and history of David. This was felt to be required from us at a time, when the old and thrice-refuted aspersions and injurious insinuations of Bayle and Chubb have been so reproduced, as to appear like emanations from the critical spirit of our own day; whereas they indeed belong to a past age. It will be a great encouragement to the Author, if, while keeping free from indiscriminate laudation and advocacy, he shall be deemed to have contributed in any small degree, in this Volume, to relieve from undeserved obloquy, the high name and great career of “the man after God’s own heart.”

LONDON, *October*, 1850.

C O N T E N T S .



TWENTY-SEVENTH WEEK.

	Page
Woman,	9
Names,	13
Home,	19
Gleaning—Salutations,	24
Harvest Fare,	29
Threshing,	35
The Levirate Law,	39

TWENTY-EIGHTH WEEK.

Ruth's Recompense,	44
Two Wives,	49
A Loan to the Lord,	54
The Pillars of the Earth,	59
Tabernacle Abominations,	66
A Voice in the Night,	68
The Tidings,	72

TWENTY-NINTH WEEK.

Ichabod,	77
Dagor,	81
Telesmes,	86
The Ark Restored,	93
Israel at Mizpeh,	98
Ebenezer,	102
Corruption of Justice,	107

THIRTIETH WEEK.

	Page
The Holiness of God,	111
A Change Demanded,	115
Monarchical Institutions,	120
Tallness,	124
Strayed Asses,	127
The Seer,	132
A Constitutional King,	137

THIRTY-FIRST WEEK.

Saul among the Prophets,	140
The Law of the Kingdom,	145
The King Aroused,	151
The Call of the Tribes,	156
Relief of Jabesh-gilead,	161
The Inauguration,	165
Israel Disarmed,	169

THIRTY-SECOND WEEK.

Foolishness,	174
Saul's Transgression,	178
Honey and Blood,	182
The Public Enemy,	188
Samuel at Bethlehem,	194
David,	197
Music,	202

THIRTY-THIRD WEEK.

"The Lord looketh on the Heart,"	208
Goliath's Armor,	211
The Combat,	217
Clouded Triumph,	222
Snares,	225
Teraphim,	230
The School of the Prophets,	234

THIRTY-FOURTH WEEK.

	Page
The Sling and Stone,	238
The Farewell,	241
David at Nob,	245
David at Gath,	251
David in the Wilderness,	255
The Brotherly Covenant,	259
Magnanimity,	263

THIRTY-FIFTH WEEK.

Cush the Benjamite,	269
A Falso Step,	273
Reinforcements,	277
The Witch of Endor,	281
The Worthies,	286
The Song of the Bow,	292
David in Hebron,	296

THIRTY-SIXTH WEEK.

The Change,	302
The First Blow,	305
Abner,	309
Blood Revenge,	314
Treachery Punished,	319
The Blind and the Lame,	324
The Ark,	329

THIRTY-SEVENTH WEEK.

The Entrance Song,	334
Commerce and Arts,	338
The Philistine Wars,	342
The Throne Established,	346
The Decimation of Moab,	349
The Great War,	353
Hadad,	357

THIRTY-EIGHTH WEEK.

	Page
A Dead Dog,	361
Mephibosheth,	364
The Shaven Ambassadors,	368
Sin and Sorrow,	373
Tortures,	377
The Wages of Sin,	383
Absalom's Hair,	388

THIRTY-NINTH WEEK.

The Spilt Water,	392
Filial Ingratitude,	397
Two Hangings,	402
The Restoration,	406
Incidents,	412
Famine and Pestilence,	416
The Last Days,	422

DAILY BIBLE ILLUSTRATIONS.

Twenty-Seventh Week—Sunday.

WOMAN.

As if to prevent that man should take occasion, from her part in the sad history of the fall, to hold in too light esteem the appointed companion of his life's journey, holding her to be merely a

“Fair defect of nature,”

God has chosen to confer singular honors upon woman throughout the sacred Scriptures. They who disparage her capacities, and pour contempt upon her understanding; they who contemn her faithfulness, and distrust her truth; they who make her man's household drudge, or the mere instrument of his pleasures or convenience—have none of them any warrant in Scripture for so doing. Although we may not overlook the sad part which woman took in the fall of our race—yet that terrible damage, which was not, after all, wholly her work, may be held to have been fairly and fully counterbalanced by the part she had in bringing salvation. It was not without some such significance that the illustrious “seed of the woman” who took upon him “to bruise the serpent's head,” was “born of a woman,” and nourished from her breast.

But let us look at the women mentioned in Scripture, and observe how few of them are undistinguished by some useful quality or holy grace. Some are seen to have been endowed

before men with supernatural knowledge, being favored by the Spirit of God with the high gifts of prophecy—such were Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and Anna. Others are noted for their sagacity and understanding, for which indeed they were proverbial—such as the woman of Tekoah, and the wise woman of Abel-Bethmaacah. Sarah lacked not strong capacities of faith, and strong was the faith of Rahab, of Samson's mother, and of that alien woman whose faith won from Christ a blessing which then belonged to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" only. Some have shown greater courage for the church, and manifested firmer resolution, than men have done. Did not Deborah encourage Barak to the war against the innumerable hosts and iron chariots of Jabin, and adventure her presence with him to the war, when, without her, he—the selected champion—was afraid to go? And who could be more resolved to jeopardize her life for God's people than the beautiful Esther, when she uttered and acted upon the memorable words, "If I perish, I perish." Others are famous or memorable for various things. For attention to God's word—as the Virgin Mary, and as Lydia. For going far to seek knowledge—as the queen of the south to hear the wisdom of Solomon. For works of charity—as Dorcas. For works of pious zeal—as the women whose busy hands in spinning and needle-work, helped forward the labors of the tabernacle. For fervency in prayer—as Hannah. For patient waiting for God in daily fasting and prayer—as Anna. For the cordial entertainment of God's messenger for his sake—as the Shunamite woman, as Lydia, and as one of the gospel Marys. For the fear of God—as the midwives in Egypt. For courtesy to a mere stranger—as Rebekah. For humility and patience—as the aged Naomi; and for truthful and devoted affection—as the beloved Ruth. In Thessalonia, not only "devout Greeks," not only humble persons, but "chief women not a few," were among the first to receive the Gospel at the preaching of Paul and Silas; and among the learned of Athens, an Areopagite cannot become a believer without a woman,

Damaris, to join with him. In what have men been, in fine, renowned, wherein some women have not been remarkable? In wisdom, in faith, in charity, in love to the world, in regard for His servants, in fervent affections, and in the desire of heavenly things. If men have suffered imprisonments, cruel persecutions, and bonds for Christ—women have done no less. When persecuting Saul made havoc of the church, not only men but women were torn from their homes and committed to prison; and his commission had equally injurious respect to the believers, “whether they were men or women,” Acts viii. 3; ix. 2. And although we confine our illustrations chiefly to the Scripture itself, it is impossible in mentioning this, not to call to mind the numerous illustrious women who, in a later age, were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection, and who might say with Anne Askew in the prison-house—

“ I am not she that lyst
 My anker to let fall
 For every dryslynge myst;
 My shippe's substancial.”

Nay, more than this, have not the female worthies of the Scripture often, in many respects, surpassed the men of their own day and generation? Who entertained Christ so much, so devotedly, and so often as Martha and Mary? Who are in any texts noted to have contributed to our Lord's necessities, but women? Who, of all the ordinary followers of Christ, took note of the place where he was buried, but women? Who first went to the sepulchre to anoint his body with sweet spices, but women? In Acts xvi. 3, we may read of a congregation of women to whom Paul preached, being gathered together at the accustomed place of prayer, as being more forward in their faith, it would seem, at that time, than the men.

Some might count it tedious, were we to mention all the notable things reported concerning women in the Holy Scriptures, and the excellent graces that were bestowed upon

them. Yet may we not pass without a thought, the knowledge which Priscilla shared with her husband, in the ministry of the Gospel, which qualified her no less than him to instruct even the eloquent Apollos; nor Lois and Eunice, by whom the well-beloved Timothy was trained up in the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures; nor Persis, "who labored much in the Lord"—Phil. iv. 3,—as many other women did. But not to dwell further on particular instances, it may be well worth our while to note one great matter that deserves to be mentioned to their praise, and to be held in everlasting remembrance. We have read of men once held in high esteem, who became apostates—Demas, Alexander, Philetus, and others; but never, by name, in all the New Testament, of a woman who had once been reckoned among the saints. This is great honor. But not only have women been thus honored with extraordinary gifts; they have been otherwise favored with special marks of attention from the Lord. To whom but unto women did Christ first appear after his resurrection? Of what act did He ever so speak as to render it everlastingly memorable, but of that woman's who poured upon his feet her alabaster box of precious ointment, and to whom he promised that, wherever in the whole world his Gospel should be preached, there should her work of faith be held in remembrance!

Nor do the honors rendered to women in the Sacred Scriptures end here. One of the precious epistles of the beloved disciple is addressed to "the elect lady;" and in the Old Testament, two of the six unprophetical books that bear the name of individuals present to us those of women—those of Ruth and Esther. It is with the former of those names that we open this volume.

It is with the book of Ruth that we are now concerned. As this book appears to have been written for the purpose, principally, of tracing the genealogy of David to a source most honorable, and as it does contain a genealogy traced down to him, it must have been written during his reign, or soon after. Although it is expressly stated that the incidents took place

“in the days when the judges ruled,” this beautiful history does, therefore, connect itself as much with the period upon which we enter as with that through which we have passed. In one point of view, it is an appendix to the book of Judges; in another, it is an introduction to the history of the kings. With its interesting incidents we are therefore enabled to commence this volume. The simple and touching interest of the story—the beautiful and engaging rural scenery which it exhibits—the homely and honest manners which it describes—and the impressive and heartfelt piety which pervades the whole, render it the most remarkable picture of ancient life and usages extant, and give us a far more complete idea of the real conditions of Hebrew life, in the early ages of their settlement in Canaan, than we could otherwise possess. The young and the old read it with equally enrapt interest; and we have known strong and rough voices break down with emotion in reading aloud some of the passages that occur in the progress of the narrative.

TWENTY-SEVENTH WEEK—MONDAY.

NAMES.—RUTH I. 2.

It is worthy of remark that Bethlehem, which is connected with both the histories which form the appendix to the book of Judges, is also the scene of the history of Ruth, which is another appendix to that book, and seems to have anciently formed part of it. By virtue of these various intimations we are more familiar with the name, and perhaps better acquainted with the condition, of Bethlehem, than of any other place mentioned in the early Scriptures. This knowledge is kept up—the place is kept before us by various subsequent historical intimations—until at last the heavenly host hail there the hour in which the Son of God became man within its walls.

In a time of severe famine, a man belonging to this place

withdrew, with his wife and two sons, into the land of Moab for a subsistence. The names of all these persons are particularly given. The names of the father, Elimelech (*my God is king*), and of the mother, Naomi (*pleasant, happy*), indicate Divine favor and worldly prosperity; the names of the sons, Mahlon (*weakness, sickness*), Chilion (*consumption, decay*), imply the very reverse of health and comfort. Some old writers speculate curiously upon these names. Indeed, many of the Hebrew names are so remarkably appropriate to the persons who bear them, that it has been much questioned how this conformity was produced. Some have supposed that the names were changed as circumstances arose to render the old names inappropriate. In proof of this we are referred to this very book of Ruth, in which Naomi, in the sequel of the history, says, "Call me not Naomi, but call me Mara (*bitter*), for the Lord hath dealt very bitterly with me." Yet this seems rather a mode in which she expressed the sense of her condition, than an intention or wish for an actual change; and in fact there was no change, for she continued to be called Naomi. Instances of change of name do indeed occur; but the very instances are such as to show that the practice was not common, the change being generally mentioned as a memorable circumstance, and as imposed by God himself, or by some great public authority, mostly by a foreign king or conqueror, who imposes or confers a name proper to his own nation upon the person. Of the former kind, is the change of Abram's name to Abraham, Sarai's to Sarah, Jacob's to Israel; and in the New Testament, of Simon to Cephas (in Greek, Peter);—and of the latter, the change of Joseph's name to Zaphnath-paaneah, of Daniel's to Belteshazzar, and of those of his companions Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. In all the latter class of changes, and in some of the former, the original name still remains, notwithstanding, the common name by which the person is known; and in the exceptional cases of even the first class of changes—those made by Divine authority—the old and new names remain in concurrent use, save only

in the case of Abraham and Sarah, in regard to which it is probable that the slightness of the oral change led to the exclusive adoption of the new name. There is no example of a change of name by private or paternal authority, and certainly not any of a man making such a change himself. Indeed, as names are intended to identify men, and to distinguish them from each other, all the use and purpose of proper names would be lost were they to be frequently changed. Such cases occur among ourselves by change of titles used as proper names. The rarity of this case prevents the inconvenience from being very sensibly felt; but the degree of inconvenience which is experienced when, for instance, a Gower becomes an Egerton, and then an Ellesmere, and has a public reputation under each of these names, may show what confusion would arise were such a practice common among any people.

We find, in fact, from various instances, that the names which people use all their lives, were imposed at the time of birth, and were founded upon peculiarity of personal appearance,—as Esau, from his redness; upon some circumstance attending the birth,—as in the case of Jacob; or upon some hope or expectation which the parents entertained, or upon some sentiment or idea that was then prominent in the paternal mind,—as in the case of Cain, Seth, Noah, and the twelve founders of the tribes of Israel, not to mention later instances.

As to the question of appropriateness, it may appear that the point has been too much pressed by some writers. Most of the names of which we know the origin are appropriate to the *occasions* in which they originated; but not many of these, or of others, bear any special appropriateness to the *character or career* of the men by whom they were borne. Some of the names are manifestly inappropriate to the history of the persons who bore them. Thus even the wise Solomon was mistaken in giving the name of Rehoboam (*an enlarger*), to his son; for that son, instead of *enlarging* the dominions of the house of David, *reduced* it from the dominion over twelve tribes to two. So David gave the name of Absalom

(*father of peace*, or, as some make it, *father's peace*) to the son who proved the greatest disturber of his peace and happiness. So also Jehu signifies *a constant man*, yet the king who bore it proved inconstant in his latter days, and "regarded not to walk in the ways of the Lord God of Israel." 2 Kings x. 31. Naomi felt her name to be inappropriate, as it certainly was during ten years of her life; and such is the course of human life that there is no name, whether of pleasant or unpleasant import, which will not be suitable in some portion of any man's life, and unsuitable at another. Still there is a degree of appropriateness in many of the Scripture names considerably beyond what might be expected, and sufficient to justify surprise. Some go so far as to suppose that parents were often inspired to bestow names upon their children predictorily indicative of their future state and career. A pious and intelligent writer* remarks, on the very case before us, "Perhaps the names were respectively given by the suggestion of the Holy Spirit to indicate the mournful contrast between the once flourishing condition of the hopeful pair, and the subsequent sore adversity and blighting desolation of the family." That this was sometimes the case we know. How far it was so in this particular case we know not; but it is quite possible that both Chilion and Mahlon were such weakly children as to suggest a difficulty in rearing them, and to indicate the probability of that early death which actually befell both of them. In a learned American writer † we find a remark on the general subject which well deserves consideration. He is speaking with regard to the name of Gideon's aspiring son, Abimelech, which means "my father a king," and hints that the name may have prompted to the ambitious course he pursued, by reflecting upon the import of the name. "The influence of names," he adds, "in the formation of character, is probably much greater than is usually imagined, and deserves the especial attention of parents in their bestowment. Children should be taught that

* Bush, in his *Notes on Judges*.

† Hughes's *Female Characters of Holy Writ*, ii. 26. 1846.

the circumstance of their bearing the names of good men or women who have lived before them, constitutes an obligation upon them to imitate or perpetuate their virtues." This observation has peculiar force in America, where the people are prone to give the surnames of noted persons as first names to their children.

To the same effect an old writer* observes on the place before us: "And here note, in all their names, how significant they be, which the Hebrews did ever observe in naming their children. True it is, that good names have no virtue in them to make men better, nor names without significance to make any worse; yet, for reverence of our holy profession, let us give our children good names, significant and comely—not absurd, ridiculous, and impious, as some have done, out of the spirit of profaneness."

Christopher Ness makes substantially the same remark, adding, "Our very names should mind us of our duty." He pleasantly applies this view of the use of names to the case of Elimelech: "A good name (in its sense and signification) may be of great comfort to a man in an evil day. Thus it was to this man, whose name signified, *My God is king*. He might make a believing use thereof, pondering in his mind after this manner:—'Although there be a famine in the land of promise, whereby I am driven out of my native country, and constrained to dwell in idolatrous Moab—yet my God is king over all—over all persons, over all nations. He hath an uncontrollable sovereignty over all men and matters, and is not bound to give an account of any matter to any man.† 'Tis good for me to be where my God, who is my king, will have me to be. I am, wherever I am, evermore upon my Father's ground; for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.' "‡

Let us recollect that these names, which are to us abstract and unintelligible proper names, were to those persons ap-

* Richard Bernard, "Preacher of God's Word at Batcombe in Somersetshire," in his *Ruth's Recompense*. London, 1628.

† Job xxxiii. 14.

‡ Psalm xxiv. 1.

parent in their full meaning whenever used. This is rarely the case with us; for although most of the names we employ are significant, their significance lies hid in the foreign languages from which they are derived; and even if we use the very same names the Hebrews employed, they would not appear to us, unless specially instructed, in the same force and meaning which they had to them. Yet we are disposed to regret the increasing disuse into which names consciously significant—at least to those who give and to those who receive them—have fallen. They are even treated with something like disrespect. We have lived to hear the use of one of the most touching and beautifully significant names of Scripture received, as a name merely—and merely from its unusual sound—with coarse merriment in one of the highest assemblies of our nation. Let the scorers refer to 1 Chron. iv. 9, 10, and “laugh” no more. “And JABEZ was more honorable than his brethren; and his mother called his name Jabez (sorrowful), saying, Because I bare him with sorrow. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me. And God granted him that which he requested.” This is in fact an illustration of the *use* the Hebrews made of their significant names; and precisely of the kind which is suggested by Ness, although he takes no account of this proof. The application in which the name originated we see clearly enough; but the interesting recognition of it in the last words of his prayer escape notice in a translation. In the original, the word *grieve* (“that it may not *grieve* me”), is the verb from which his own name (sorrowful) is derived.

TWENTY-SEVENTH WEEK—TUESDAY.

HOME.—RUTH I. 3-16.

At the end of ten years, of the four persons who went to the land of Moab to preserve their existence, one only remained alive, and that one was Naomi. They died amidst the plenty of Moab. They could but have died amid the dearth of Israel. The Jewish writers generally think, that they did wrong in leaving their own country to go and live among idolaters. It was a privilege to dwell in the chosen land, and among the chosen people, under the ordinances of religion, which was justly highly esteemed by the Israelites, and which they deemed as not to be lightly abandoned. Was famine a sufficient reason? If it were a sufficient reason for one, it was for another; and therefore under its full operation, the land would have been forsaken of its people. Observing that the law of the old covenant contained promises of unfailling subsistence to those who trusted in God, it is held that it had been the more faithful part for them to have remained, trusting to the Lord for their sustentation. The Jewish feeling on this subject is well expressed by the Psalmist—"Abide in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." As it is, these persons went to avoid famine from the land of the Lord's inheritance, and in the land of their choice they found death, which the Jewish writers believe to have befallen them as a judgment. First the father died, and then the two sons, leaving Naomi alone; and yet not wholly alone, for these sons had espoused in the country two of the daughters of Moab, whose names were Orpah and Ruth. Some venture to suggest that the judgment of premature death, and that childless, was inflicted upon them partly on account of these marriages, which were affirmed to have been unlawful under any circumstances; while others allow that it was not unlawful, although not commendable, in case they were proselytes, as there is little doubt that both these damsels became.

Intermarriages with the condemned nations of Canaan only, were forbidden by the law (Deut. vii. 3); and from the case before us, as well as from others, it appears not to have been at first considered to extend to other nations, unless as idolaters; though in a later age, when the people were few, the law was more stringently interpreted, and intermarriages with the Moabites and Ammonites were decreed to have been as unlawful as with the women of any other nation. This is clearly seen in Ezra ix. 1, 2; and Nehemiah xiii. 23, 25, 26. It seems, indeed, that the two sons of Naomi carried the matter with a high hand. In respect of persons so young as they appear to have been, and entering into their first marriage, it is usually intimated that the father or the mother provided wives for them, as Hagar did for Ishmael; but here it is said that "they took them wives,"—a kind of phrase which usually occurs in a bad sense, as done without the concurrence of their parents, or not left so entirely to them as custom required. The inference is, that they acted against the wishes of Naomi, who contemplated a return home with them, and their marriage in the land of their nativity, among the daughters of their own people; a matter which the Israelites justly deemed of great concern—whereas they seem to have deemed it as well to establish themselves in a strange country, and to that end married in the land of Moab, which the lapse of years had rendered a home to them. The nine or ten years, which appear but as a short portion—too short to deaden the love of home and country in persons of advanced years, is half of life, the more conscious half, to persons of twenty or thereabout; and beyond that age marriage was rarely deferred among the Israelites. To one of that age, the ten last years—seeing that his past has so little (a part of which was unremembered infancy) beyond that period for him to look back upon—is by much the most vital portion of his existence; and Moab, rather than Israel, may very well have been regarded by these young men as their real home. Parents do not always apprehend the essential difference between their own ideas and those of their children

in this respect. The offence of the sons of Naomi, if they offended at all, seems to have lain rather in this, than in their marriages considered in themselves. We are not, indeed, able to urge the fitness of these marriages in this instance, from the fact that a pious man like Boaz afterwards became the husband of Ruth, which, it is alleged, he would not have done, had such marriages been wrong. Ruth had been already married to an Israelite, and was no longer to be regarded as a Moabite, but as one who had already been introduced into the house of Israel, and had thence acquired certain rights which had not belonged to her in that condition from which her first marriage had removed her. Boaz had not to regard her as a woman of Moab merely, but as the widow of a near relation, towards whom he had certain duties to discharge.

The death of her sons, however disastrous, enabled the widow to gratify her heart's longing to return home. To account for her being able to return, it is stated that she had heard "the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread." It does not follow that the famine had lasted all the ten years. Ten successive years of famine would, we think, destroy any nation. Yet even this is not incredible. Herodotus* records a scarcity in Lydia, that lasted eighteen years; and that, even then, the famine not abating, the king divided his people into two parts, and cast lots for one to tarry at home, and for the other to quit the country, himself retaining the command of those whose lot it was to stay. This fact is worth noticing, as pointing to emigration as an ancient resource against famine at home. Indeed, it is more ancient than this, as we find not only by the case before us, but by that of the patriarchal family going down into Egypt from the same cause. The natural operation of such emigration to cause a country to be depopulated, was in this case sagaciously obviated by restricting the emigration to a moiety of the population.

Neither does the instance imply that, although the famine

* Clio. 95.

had ceased, ten years had elapsed before she heard of it. It is very true that intelligence travels with wonderful slowness in the East—a slowness incredible to us with our newspapers, railways, and telegraphs. Letter-writing was but little practised. Indeed, in all the Scripture history, so far as we have advanced, no instance of epistolary communication on any subject has occurred. Intelligence was principally conveyed by travellers. A person hearing that some one was going to, or would pass through, a certain place, would desire him to say so and so to a particular person residing there, with, perhaps, a further intimation that he was, when opportunity offered, to send the same communication on to persons in other places. Travellers were glad to be the bearers of such messages, for it gave them a kind of claim to the hospitable attentions and friendly offices of the persons to whom they were delivered, whose anxiety to learn something more of places and persons, by questioning the stranger, gave to him the pleasant consciousness that he was conferring a favor, not receiving one, in accepting their hospitable solitudes. But the land of Moab, although not distant, being on the other side of the Dead Sea, and lying altogether out of the lines of route which the inhabitants of Southern Palestine might take to any place beyond, north, south, or east, would be very rarely visited by such travellers, and intelligence would reach it but slowly.

Nevertheless, we take not this resort; for the phraseology will very well imply that “she had heard” of this some time before, although now only, in consequence of the death of her sons, enabled to act upon the information she had received. The statement of the fact seems to be made in order to account for the circumstance that, having now concluded to return home, the famine which had occasioned the departure of the family no longer offered any obstacle, seeing that it had sometime before ceased. Certain it is, that when she does return, there are no signs of recent scarcity, but rather of such prosperity as would hardly have existed had the harvest then in progress been the first good harvest of the ten years.

It was the intention of Naomi to return alone. But, as friends and relations were wont to do, and as is still the custom in the East, her two daughters-in-law went part of the way with her to see her off. But when the moment of parting came—when they kissed each other and wept together—they both declared that they could not return, but would go to the land of Israel with her. Like a wise woman, she declined to take advantage of the impulse of passionate regret, which seemed adverse to their temporal welfare, and which their cooler judgment might not sanction, and urged them, by many strong arguments, to return to their parents, and leave her to pursue her bereaved course alone. Once more they wept, but Orpah was prevailed upon, and gave Naomi the farewell kiss. Ruth remained, and once more Naomi renewed her arguments with her. But poor Ruth realized, in her affectionate heart, a keen sense of her mother-in-law's forlorn condition. She knew that Naomi could not but most acutely feel how, when last she passed that way, she had been accompanied by a worthy husband and two hopeful sons; but had left them behind her in a foreign grave, and was returning alone—alone to her once prosperous, but now desolate home. Ruth could not consent to abandon her under these circumstances. The reply is beautiful beyond expression, in the tenderness with which the firm purpose of an affectionate heart is expressed: "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me."

Surely, the simple eloquence of the mouth that speaks out of the abundance of the heart, never found more beautiful and touching expression than in these words of this young widow.

TWENTY-SEVENTH WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

GLEANING—SALUTATIONS.—RUTH II. 1-4.

It was the commencement of the barley harvest when the two women came to Bethlehem. In that part of the country this is usually in the middle of April.* We are thus at once introduced into the most engaging scenes of the active season of agricultural labor. The fact suggested to Ruth that she might contribute something to their mutual subsistence by going forth to glean. Naomi cheerfully consented to this—knowing that the law of Moses, and the usage founded on it, gave the poor a right to glean in the harvest fields: and *they* were poor indeed. This right of gleaning was one of the legal provisions for the poor of Israel—and as the landholders were not subject to money taxes for the support of the poor, this claim was liberally construed by them. Yet still, as its rude assertion by the poor as a right, might subject the operations of the field to serious inconvenience, and occasion undue pressure upon particular fields, it appears that the proprietor retained the power of nominating the persons who were to glean after his reapers. In other words, the poor applied to the proprietors for permission to glean in their fields. Hence Ruth did not enter abruptly, and commence gleaning where she chose; but asked permission of the overseer, who very kindly and readily gave it. Some have thought this right of gleaning so absolute, that they incline to ascribe Ruth's demeanor to her being a foreigner, not well

* The first fruits of the barley harvest were, as we know, presented at the passover, before which it was not lawful to begin the harvest. In Egypt the harvest was a little earlier than in Judea—in Phœnicia a little later—and in both countries they began cutting their barley as soon as the cuckoo was heard. Hence the comedian calls that bird the king of Egypt and Phœnicia (Aristoph. in *Avibus*). Even with us this bird is heard in April—sometimes as early as the 9th, but not usually until a fortnight later.

acquainted with the nature of this right in Israel; but it is to be observed that Naomi herself sanctioned her impression that she was going to glean in the fields of him "in whose sight she should find grace;" and that on Ruth's return, she herself ascribed the success of her daughter-in-law to the favor of the master of the field.

This Mosaical institution, founded upon the absence of any *regular* legal provision for the poor, no doubt gave rise to the popular notion as to the right of the poor to glean the fields after the harvest in this country also, which did formerly, and does still to a great extent, prevail in our rural districts. It is probable that, had no compulsory provision for the poor by rates been made, the right of gleaning would never have been questioned. But since then it *has* been questioned in the courts of law; and the decision has been against it as a matter of right. A case, which has been regarded as settling the question, is reported in the law books. It was a solemn judgment in the Court of Common Pleas, that no such right could be claimed at common law. Mr. Justice Gould, however, dissented, quoting the passages in the Levitical law which bore on the subject,* together with a recognition of the custom or privilege in the private enclosure act of Basingstoke parish. The other judges, however, were of opinion, that it would be dangerous and impolitic to admit gleaning to be a right, and would, in fact, be prejudicial to the poor themselves, now provided for under various positive statutes. They also remarked, that the custom of gleaning was various in different places, and was in many places restricted to particular kinds of corn, and could not, therefore, be set up as a universal common-law right; that it would be opening a tempting door to fraud and idleness, and had never been specially recognized by any judicial determination.

Nevertheless, gleaning seems to be still regarded by the rural poor as one of their rights, and is generally exercised, by consent of the farmer as to the persons. Some farmers, however, resist it, excluding the gleaners, and after the har-

* Lev. xix. 9, 10; xxiii. 2. Deut. xxiv. 9.

vest raking the fields themselves. We have had occasion to witness the resentment, amounting to animosity, felt and expressed against the one farmer, in a rural district not more than twenty-five miles from London, who followed this practice.

It is said that not "the field," but "the *part* of the field," to which Ruth was providentially directed, belonged to Boaz, a near kinsman of Naomi's late husband. This is explained by what we have already had occasion to mention, that the lands of the respective proprietors are not separated by enclosures, but the whole cultivated in one unbroken field, the separate lots being distinguished only by land-marks and narrow trenches, seldom visible when the corn is grown, up.

By-and-bye the master himself came to the field from Bethlehem. The salutations exchanged between him and his reapers, strike us forcibly as beautiful indications of the pious and simple courtesy of a people brought up under the Law. The manner in which this impresses us, arises much from the unhappy lack of similar usages among ourselves; for in the East such salutations, both between equals, and between superiors and inferiors, are still common. Under the same circumstances, a master in the same land would still say to his men—"Peace be to you;" and they would answer—"To thee be peace, and the mercy of God, and his blessing." It is to be regretted that we, whose law enjoins us to "be courteous," should suffer even Mohammedans to outdo us in this respect. These common courtesies, especially when clothed in the expression of a pious wish, are of more real importance than we are apt to suppose. They are in fact of more real importance to *us* than they would be to any people. The tendency of our civilization—and it is a great evil among the many benefits this civilization has produced—is to segregate the classes, and widen the distance between them; and it therefore the more behooves us to cultivate the amenities which may keep before the mind a consciousness of the fact, that there is a link between man and man in the brotherhood

of a common faith and a common nature. It would do no harm. The servile demeanor of the poor in this country is hateful to every well-ordered mind. It has grown out of circumstances which there has been too little effort to resist; and we may go to the East to learn how the poor may be treated with courtesy and attention, and be continually reminded, in every passing form of speech, of their natural and religious brotherhood, without being thereby encouraged to disrespect or insubordination, but by which rather a cheerful and willing character is imparted to their obedience.

Among the Moslems, the salutation, as above given, is used by all classes, and is a sign of their brotherhood in religion, and their actual equality before God. It is therefore not in the same form used to those who are known to be of another religion. Whether this restriction existed among the Hebrews or not, there is no authority that informs us directly; but it is probable, from the nature of things, that it did. We find among the Mohammedan books, that the Jews of Arabia in Mohammed's time, always used a different salutation to Moslems from that in use among themselves, often changing it into a malediction. Hence Mohammed directs—"When a Jew makes a salam to you, and he says, *Al-sámo álaica* ;* then do you answer, *O-álaica*." † When a Moslem discovers that he has inadvertently given the salutation of peace to one not a Moslem, he usually revokes the salutation, saying, "Peace be on *us*, and on [all] the right worshippers of God." The giving it by one Moslem to another is a duty; but one that may be omitted without sin, though the returning the salutation of another is absolutely obligatory. The chief rules respecting salutation, given by Mohammed, and usually followed by modern Moslems, are—The person riding is to salute first him who is on foot; and he who passes by, the persons who are sitting down or standing still; and a small

* So near in sound to the salutation of peace, *Al-salámo-álaica*, that it might pass by an unobservant ear for it, but *sam* means death, and the meaning is, "May you die."

† That is, "Be the same to you."

party, or one belonging to such a party, should give the salutation to a large party; and the young to the aged. It may be observed, that these rules are irrespective of any social difference between the persons. The Orientals have modes of indicating such differences; but not in the salutation of peace, which is the same for all. We have before us a book of the acts and sayings of Mohammed, as reported by his associates, from which one or two illustrations of his own views and practice, which regulate those of his followers, may be drawn—"A man asked his majesty [Mohammed], 'What quality is the best of a Musleman?' he said, 'Giving food to others, and returning the salutation of acquaintance or strangers.'" "Anas said, Verily his majesty passed by some boys, and made a salam to them." The khalif Ali reports, that he heard Mohammed say—"There are six duties from one Musleman to another: To salute each other when they meet; to accept each other's invitations to dinner; to say, God have mercy upon you, after sneezing;* to visit the sick; to follow each other's biers when dead; and for one Musleman to wish for to another what he wishes for himself." Jabir reports: "Verily, his highness passed by a party of women, and made a salam to them;" but on this the commentators add—"This practice was peculiar to his highness; for it is bad for a man to make a salam to a strange woman, or a woman to a strange man, unless it be an old

* This illustration has escaped the notice of those who have written on the antiquities of sneezing, and of the *universal* custom, not extinct among ourselves, of blessing the person who sneezes. The account of the subject given by Mohammed is copied, with some little alteration, from the Rabbins, who state that—"Sneezing was a mortal sign even from the first man, until it was taken off by the special application of Jacob. From this, as a thankful acknowledgment, this salutation first began, and was afterwards continued by the expression *Tobim Chaiim*, or *vita bona*, by by-standers upon all occasions of sneezing." (Buxtorff, *Lex. Chald.*) It is in this doubtless that Mohammed gives his history of Adam's first sneeze. The custom also prevailed among the heathen, and is still found in the East. The subject is curiously illustrated in Brand's *Popular Antiquities*.

woman." Abuhurairah reports that he heard Mohammed say—"You will not enter into paradise until you believe; and you will not complete your faith until you love one another; and that is shown by making salam to friends and strangers." A Moslem generally accompanies the verbal salutation, whether as given or returned, by the very graceful motion of laying his right hand upon his breast; or else by touching his lips, and then his forehead or turban by the same hand. This was not the custom of the Jews, though they had some equivalent motion; for Mohammed says—"That person is not of us who likens himself to another. Do not copy the Jews or Christians; *because a Jew's salam is making a sign with his fingers*; and that of a Christian with the palm of his hand."

TWENTY-SEVENTH WEEK—THURSDAY.

HARVEST FARE.—RUTH II. 5-14.

THERE were no doubt some distinctions of costume and appearance between the Israelites and Moabites, and Ruth was too poor to have, as yet, rendered her habit wholly conformable to that of the women of the place. Then there was something about her that showed that she was not a woman of Israel; and it was this probably that drew the attention of Boaz towards her, and led him to inquire of his overseer who she was. The man informed him that it was "the Moabitish damsel who had come back with Naomi out of the country of Moab." The story, it seems, was well known in Bethlehem, and this information sufficed to apprize Boaz of the whole case. Being himself a good man, the goodness she had evinced in her conduct to her mother-in-law won upon his heart. He accosted her kindly, and desired her to avail herself of all the privileges of the harvest-field, so that while she gleaned for her own benefit, she

might partake of the refreshments and advantages of those who labored for him. He begged she would keep to his grounds during the harvest, and not, in the hope of bettering herself on the one hand, or in the fear of presuming on the other, remove to the lands of any other person. And it will be observed how, in the absence of enclosures, he gives her the means of knowing his grounds, by telling her to adhere to the society in which she already finds herself, that of his own laborers, among whom she might rely upon perfect safety. We gather that the persons employed in the field were men-servants, women-servants, and day-laborers—the women being, seemingly, chiefly employed in ministering to the wants of the men engaged in active toil, and in performing some of the lighter labors. One of the most important provisions of the harvest-field was water, often necessarily brought from some distance, and placed so as to keep cool. The labors of the hot harvest-field could not be carried on without the occasional refreshment of a draught of water, and the importance attached to this is shown by the particular mention which Boaz makes of it in desiring Ruth, “When thou art athirst, go to the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn.” This seems to be a special indulgence to a gleaner—at least it was one of which a young stranger, so diffident as Ruth, might dislike to avail herself without distinct permission. In the tomb-paintings of Egypt there are representations of harvest scenes which strikingly remind us of this. Among such analogies we perceive a provision of water in skins, hung against trees, or in jars upon stands, with the reapers drinking, and women, perhaps gleaners, applying to share the draught.

Overpowered by this unexpected kindness, poor Ruth humbly acknowledged her deep sense of it, and her great surprise; on which Boaz told her that he knew her deeply-interesting story, and that her generous self-denial could not but win for her the respect of all good men, and ensured her the protection and blessing of him “*under whose wings she had come to trust*”—a beautiful figure, derived, as some think,



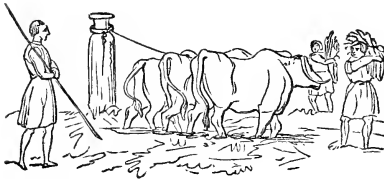
EGYPTIAN HARVEST SCENE.

Page 30.



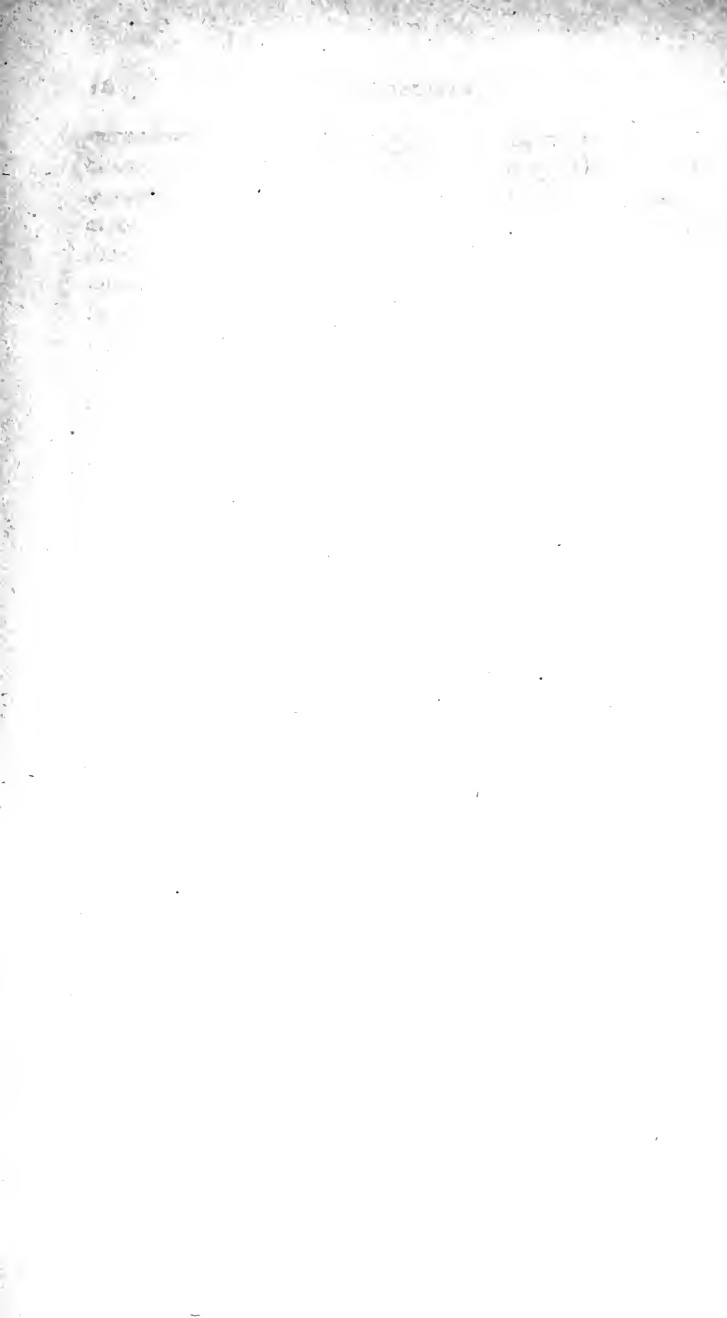
EASTERN VEILS.

Page 36.



THRESHING BY TREADING OF CATTLE.

Page 37.



from the cherubim whose wings overshadowed the mercy-seat; or quite as probably from the act of a parent bird in fostering and sheltering its callow brood underneath its wings. In the latter sense the idea is familiar in Scripture. So in the last address of Moses to the people, "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings, so the Lord alone did lead him." * And again, more emphatically, our Lord himself over Jerusalem, "O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not?" †

Heart-touched by this short conversation, the good man continued still more kindly to attend to Ruth's comfort, and to show the interest he took in her welfare. It seems that there was a tent pitched in the field of labor for the more perfect refreshment of the reapers, particularly at the noon-tide meal and subsequent repose. This is what is called "the house"—the word for house being often applied to a tent in Scripture. It was here, seemingly, that Boaz held this conversation with Ruth, for he goes on to say, "At meal-time come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar." On this we have to remark, that "bread" is a general term for any kind of "provisions" that may have been prepared, and which was probably not confined to bread. On the contrary there seems to have been generally liberal diet prepared on such occasions. We know of the large store of various food, provided even by the niggardly Nabal, for his shearers; and it is not likely that the no less important labor of the reapers would be less bountifully considered by the liberal Boaz. However, the chief meal in the midst of harvest labor seems to have been in the evening, at supper, after the labors of the day had closed; and that this at noon-tide, after which labor was resumed, was a comparatively slight meal, such as we should call a lunch, as is still the case in the East. A full meal at mid-day would have

* Deut. xxxii. 11, 12.

† Luke xiii. 34.

been little suited to the resumption of active labor. Indeed, this is implied in the fact, that when Boaz retired to rest on a subsequent night, it was "when he had eaten and drunken, and his heart was merry." So in Homer, although in his beautiful description of harvest labor, as depicted in the shield of Achilles, large provision is made for the reapers, it is for the supper at the close of the day, while refreshments of a lighter kind are provided for intermediate use. This picture is such as the reader forms in his mind of the field of Boaz:—

"There, too, he form'd the likeness of a field
 Crowded with corn, in which the reapers toil'd,
 Each with a sharp-tooth'd sickle in his hand.
 Along the furrow here, the harvest fell
 In frequent handfuls; there they, bound the sheaves.
 Three binders of the sheaves their sultry task
 All plied industrious, and behind them boys
 Attended, filling with the corn their arms,
 And offering still their bundles to be bound.
 Amid them, staff in hand, the master stood
 Silent exulting, while beneath an oak
 Apart, his heralds busily prepared
 The banquet, dressing a well-thriven ox
 New slain, and the attendant maidens mix'd
 Large supper for the hinds, of whitest flour."

—ILIAD, xviii. (COWPER.)

The "vinegar" has engaged some attention from its being something much apart from our own usages. Some have questioned that it was vinegar at all, rather supposing that it was some weak acid wine, such as the small table wine of France and Germany. We would rather take it to be proper "vinegar," which the Jewish writers describe as being used for its refrigerating qualities by those who labored hard in the heat of the sun. Such was the ancient, and probably first, opinion of its virtue in this respect; and Pliny describes it as being refreshing to the spirits, binding and bracing the nerves, and very sustaining and strengthening for labor. It is said to be still used in Italy in harvest time, when the weather is

hot. It seems from more particular description that in that country they used, and still use, instead of wine, vinegar mixed with a good deal of water, which they call household wine, to which, it is said, that if oil and bread be put, it makes a cooling meal, good for laborers and travellers in the heat of the sun. The use of vinegar by reapers is alluded to by Theocritus in his tenth Idyll. This is supposed to be what the Targum means by pottage boiled in vinegar. We know also that the Romans had an "embammia," or sauce made of vinegar, in which they dipped their food. We have ourselves a vinegar sauce, with herbs, to use with lamb, which is not improbably derived from the sauce used by the Jews with the paschal lamb, the same into which our Lord dipped the sop he gave to his betrayer. The "mint" which we commonly use, may represent the "bitter herbs" used by the Hebrews on that occasion. The sauce which the law prescribed to be used with the paschal lamb, was probably not confined to that occasion. Here, in like manner, Ruth is directed to "dip her morsel in the vinegar."

At the refectation itself, which followed soon, it is stated that "she sat beside the reapers." This is a point of more importance than the cursory reader may suppose. It has been imagined by many from the analogy of modern eastern customs, that men and women among the ancient Israelites, did not eat together; but this passage affords evidence to the contrary, and is, we apprehend, the only passage which clearly shows that they did. This is one among many indications which confirm us in the opinion we have long entertained, that the women among the Israelites enjoyed far more social freedom than is now allowed to them in Western Asia, and that we should often err in representing their condition too rigidly by comparisons drawn from the existing customs of the East. It might indeed be urged that the customs of the harvest-field do not adequately illustrate, in this respect, common domestic usages. And to this we are unprovided with any satisfactory answer, as we do not recollect any other Scriptural instance of the two sexes taking their meals to-

gether. All we mean to say is, that according to the present customs of the East, the incident as here described could not have occurred even in the harvest-field.

Of this meal Boaz himself partook with his reapers; for it is said that "he reached her parched corn, and she did eat." Of this parched corn we may allow Dr. Robinson to speak, under date May 22, on the road from Gaza to Hebron:—"The crops of grain were good. In one field, as we approached Ruheibeh, nearly two hundred reapers and gleaners were at work: the latter being nearly as numerous as the former. A few were taking their refreshment, and offered us some of their parched corn. In the season of harvest the grains of wheat, not yet fully dry and hard, are roasted in a pan, or on an iron plate, and constitute a very palatable article of food; this is eaten along with bread, or instead of it. Indeed, the use of it is so common at this season among the laboring classes, that this parched wheat is sold in the markets. The Arabs are said to prefer it to rice; but this we did not find to be the case. The whole scene of the reapers, the gleaners, and their parched corn, gave us a lively representation of the story of Ruth and the ancient harvest-home in the fields of Boaz." He adds: "Of the vinegar mentioned in the same chapter we saw nothing."

There is another mode of parching corn in the East, very similar to that which still exists in the western islands of Scotland, where this mode is called *gradden*, from the Irish word *grad*, signifying quick. A woman sitting down, takes a handful of corn, holding it by the stalks in the left hand, and then sets fire to the ears, which are presently in a flame: she has a stick in her right hand, which she manages very dexterously, beating off the grain at the very instant when the husk is quite burnt; for if she miss that, she must use the kiln; but experience has taught them this art to perfection. The corn may be so dressed, winnowed, ground, and baked within an hour after reaping from the ground. This and other analogies between eastern usages and such as now or recently subsisted in the highlands and western islands of Scotland,

go some way to substantiate Mr. Urquhart's claim of an eastern origin for the inhabitants.

TWENTY-SEVENTH WEEK—FRIDAY.

THRESHING.—RUTH II. 17; III. 2.

THE Book of Ruth is so rich in its indications of oriental and ancient Hebrew customs, that, in dealing with them, we are—to use an *appropriate* figure—but as gleaners in the harvest-field which it offers.

We are told that Ruth having continued her gleaning until the evening, then “beat out what she had gleaned.” This is contrary to our custom—for our gleaners carry home the corn with the straw. One reason for this may be, that the gleaners were more bountifully considered among the Hebrews, and were thus enabled to collect a quantity of corn greater than they could conveniently transport with the straw. This was certainly the case with Ruth—for her corn, when threshed out, formed no less than “about an ephah of barley”—being not much less than a bushel. Such produce of one woman's gleaning for one day, would not be regarded with much satisfaction by our cultivators. Nor was it usual among the Hebrews, for it excited the surprise of Naomi when her daughter-in-law brought home the rich produce of her day's labor. But Ruth had been specially favored through the delicate attention of Boaz, who had privately instructed the reapers to let fall some of the handfuls, and leave them on purpose that she might glean them; and to suffer her to glean even among the sheaves without rebuke. This custom of beating out the corn upon the harvest-field still subsists in Palestine. Robinson remarks, in passing a harvest-field near Gaza:—“Several women were beating out with a stick handfuls of the grain which they seemed to have gleaned.”

Corn, though more bulky in the straw, is with us more conveniently carried in that form; and one reason for threshing it out on the spot, doubtless arose from the facility which the dress of the eastern woman affords of carrying away the corn when separated from the straw. It will have occurred to the reader to ask how Ruth could bear away nearly sixty pounds' weight of corn. One of our own women could carry corn only in her apron, and she could not carry much of it so, in fear lest the strings should break or be unloosened. But the eastern woman has an unfailing resource in such cases in her veil. It was in this that Ruth on a subsequent occasion bore away a still larger quantity of corn that Boaz presented her with at the threshing floor. This veil is among poor women made of cloth quite strong enough for such services, and coarse enough not to be damaged by it; for which, indeed, it is much used.

In the East, corn is not stacked, as with us, and taken to be threshed as occasion requires. All but the last process of grinding the corn is performed at once, upon or close by the harvest-field, and forms part of the proper labor of the harvest season. Thus we find that Boaz not only threshed his corn, but winnowed it immediately after it was reaped. In this state, ready for the mill, all corn is stowed away in the East until it may be required for use.

Both the threshing and the winnowing are performed in the open air. This would be impossible with us, on account of the uncertainty of the weather. But the Syrian agriculturist has no thought of the weather at harvest time. He *knows* it will not rain, and therefore makes all his arrangements accordingly. Rain in the time of harvest was so much out of the course of nature, that when at that season thunder and rain came at the call of Samuel, it was recognized by all the people as a miraculous sign. 1 Sam. xii. 17, 18. This gives a degree of certainty and regularity to the laborers of harvest, which strangely contrasts with the anxiety, interruption, haste, and pressing labor which accompany that season in our more variable climes, where the most arduous

and unintermitting exertions are often necessary to secure the crop in some possibly brief interval of fine weather. Hence not only days, but often nights, of toil in harvest time. The eastern cultivator may also labor by night, yet it is not from haste or apprehension, but to avoid the oppressive heat of the day; or, in the case of winnowing, to take advantage of the evening breeze.

The threshing-floor is a clear and level space upon the ground, laid with a well-beaten compost of clay and cowdung. The small quantity of corn which rewards the industry of the gleaner may be beaten out with a staff; but the large produce of the harvest-field is never thus dealt with in the East. It is either beaten out by the frequent treading of cattle, or forced out by some heavy implement being dragged over it. The former was the more ancient and common mode, and is often alluded to in Scripture. The sheaves being opened out upon the floor, the grain is trodden out usually by oxen, arranged from three to five abreast, and driven in a circle, or indeed in any direction, over the floor.

It was one of the lesser laws of mercy, of which many are found in the books of Moses, that the oxen engaged in this labor should not be muzzled to prevent them from tasting the corn.* This freedom of the laboring animals is now the rule throughout the East; nor do we remember, in any instance in which the operation came under our own notice, to have seen them subject to any restraint in this respect. It is probable that the harvest of Boaz was threshed by oxen. But this is not certain, for we find threshing instruments in use not far from Bethlehem in the time of David, to whom Araunah offers them for fuel, and the oxen by which they were drawn for sacrifice.† Their existence is also implied in the expression which occurs in Scripture—"made them like the dust by threshing,"‡ which is a result not so much of the treading of cattle, as of the working of the threshing implement, which cuts up the straw, and makes it fit for fodder. The ancient Hebrews seem to have possessed both of

* Deut. xxv. 4.

† 2 Sam. xxii. 21.

‡ 2 Kings xiii. 7.

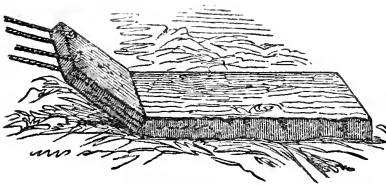
the implements now in use. One of them, very much used in Syria, is composed of two thick boards, fastened together side by side, and bent upward in front, to prevent its course being obstructed by accumulations of straw. The under part is furnished with rough stones, embedded in holes made for the purpose, and sometimes with iron spikes instead of stones. This is commonly drawn over the corn by oxen, a man or boy standing upon it to increase the weight.

The other consists of a frame, in which are fixed three rollers, armed with iron teeth, and surmounted by a seat in which the driver sits—not so much for his own ease as to add the advantage of his weight. It is drawn by two oxen, and breaks up the straw more effectually than the one first described, and is in other respects a better implement; but it is now not often seen in Palestine, though often enough seen in other parts of Syria, and very common in Egypt.

The winnowing was performed by throwing up the grain with a fork against the wind, by which the broken straw and chaff were dispersed, and the grain fell to the ground. The grain was afterwards passed through a sieve to separate the morsels of earth and other impurities, and it then underwent a final purification by being tossed up with wooden scoops, or short-handed shovels, such as we see figured in the monuments of Egypt.

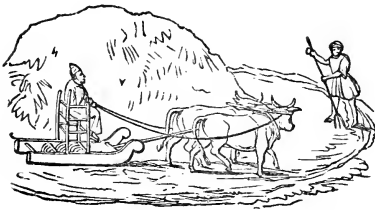
How exactly the ancient agricultural customs of the book of Ruth are preserved to this day in Palestine, may be seen from the following extract from Robinson:—"The wheat harvest here in the mountains (or Hebron) had not yet (May 24) arrived; but they were threshing barley, adas or lentiles, and also vetches, called by the Arabs kersenna, which are raised chiefly for camels. The various parcels had apparently lain here for several days; the people would come with their cattle and work for two or three hours, and then go away. Some had three animals, some four; and once I saw two young cattle and a donkey driven round together.* In several

* This conjunction, even in labor, of diverse animals, was forbidden by the law of Moses in ploughing, which prohibition must also have



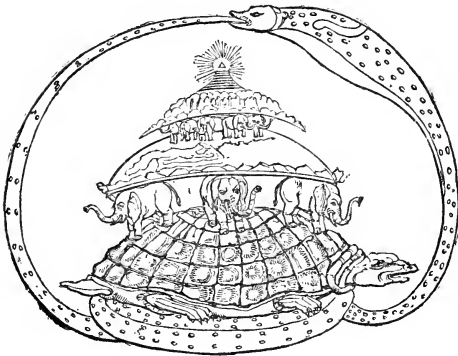
THRESHING IMPLEMENTS.

Page 38.



THRESHING IMPLEMENTS.

Page 38.



HINDOO COSMICAL SYSTEM OF THE UNIVERSE.

Page 60.

1870
1871
1872
1873
1874
1875
1876
1877
1878
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of the floors they were now winnowing the grain by tossing it up against the wind with a fork.

“Here are needed no guard around the tent; the owners of the crops came every night and slept upon their threshing floors to guard them, and this we found to be universal in all the region of Gaza. We were here in the midst of scenes precisely like those of the book of Ruth, where Boaz winnowed barley, and laid himself down at night to guard the heap of corn.”* The custom is by no means confined to the neighborhood of Gaza. Throughout the East, the owner guards thus the precious produce of his fields at night while thus exposed—and that in person, like Boaz, unless he be a very great man indeed, or unless he has sons to perform the duty for him. Boaz had no sons; and although he had an overseer of the laborers of the field, he watches his corn in person, that too great temptation to connive at depredation might not be placed in the way of persons whose interests were not altogether one with his own.

TWENTY-SEVENTH WEEK—SATURDAY.

THE LEVIRATE LAW.†—RUTH IV.

ACCORDING to the custom described yesterday, Boaz went one night at the close of the harvest, and lay down at the end of the heap of corn which had been winnowed. When

extended to threshing. The ox and ass are particularly mentioned, and the instance before us gives the practice against which the injunction was levelled. The unequal nature of the animals must have rendered the conjunction distressing to both, and the horns of the ox could not but have been of some annoyance to the ass.

* *Biblical Researches*, ii. 445, 446.

† This term is usually employed to designate the law which required the nearest relative to marry the widow of a man who had died childless.

he was fast asleep, a woman came into the field, and approaching very softly, uncovered his feet, and lay down there. At midnight the man awoke, and was much startled to find some one lying at his feet; he then turned himself, and perceived that it was a woman.

The incident thus far has been well illustrated by Mr. Postans: *—"Natives of the East care little for sleeping accommodations, but rest where weariness overcomes them, lying on the ground. They are, however, careful to cover their feet, and to do this have a chudda, or sheet of coarse cloth, that they tuck under the feet, and drawing it up over the body, suffer it to cover the face and head. An Oriental seldom changes his position, and we are told that Boaz did so because 'he was afraid;' the covering of the feet in ordinary cases is consequently not disturbed. I have frequently observed the singular effect of this custom, when riding out in a native city before dawn; figures with their feet so covered lying like monumental effigies in the pathway, and in the open verandahs of the houses—a practice that at once explains the necessity for clearing the city gates when it is dark, as we read was the case at Jericho, in Josh. ii. Neither men nor women alter their dress at night, and the laboring class, or travellers in a serai, where there are men, women, and children, rest together, the men with their feet covered, and the women wrapped in their veils or sarees."

Boaz soon found that the woman was Ruth. She had come there at the suggestion of Naomi, who informed her that Boaz was the nearest kinsman of her deceased husband; and seeing that he had died childless, on him, according to the old patriarchal practice, adopted by the law of Moses, devolved the duty of making her his wife, in order that, if she had children, the eldest should be counted the legal heir of the deceased, so that his name might not be lost in Israel, nor his heritage pass into another family. This was a public duty, which a man could not refuse to discharge without discredit; and it was of great importance to the woman, seeing

* *Journal of Sacred Literature*, iv. 48.

that her place in the social system of the Hebrews, and all the consideration that belonged to motherhood, depended on it. We see an ancient instance of this in the anxiety which Tamar manifested that the conditions of this obligation should not be left unaccomplished. Gen. xxxvi. To Naomi it was of special importance; for if Ruth married thus, the first child born to her would be accounted as belonging to her deceased son—therefore her grandson; and she would thus be once more restored to her place as a mother in Israel.

This was the mode in which Ruth was to claim from Boaz the discharge of this solemn duty to the living and to the dead. The act is strange and startling to us. It must be accounted for partly by the customs already alluded to; partly by the simple manners of these ancient times; and much by the consideration of the difference of ideas as to modest demeanor in different ages and nations. Thus, for instance, the exposure of the face to public gaze, is at this day regarded as the height of infamy and immodesty by an eastern woman, which yet with us is the common practice, and is consistent with the most perfect decorum. We can hardly suppose that so serious and godly a woman as Naomi would have given such counsel, had there been anything, according to the views of the times, conventionally wrong in it, or calculated to offend the moral sense of the age. Had that been so, she must have been aware of the danger of disgusting such a man as Boaz, instead of ensuring his protection; and we think that *his* appreciation of at least the *motives* of the proceeding, must be regarded as stamping its true character—when he emphatically declared, “All the city of my people do know that thou art a virtuous woman.” It shows, in every case, the perfect confidence which Naomi had in the virtue of Ruth, and in the honor of Boaz, whom indeed she regarded as already, in the eye of the law, the husband of her son’s widow.

It seems to have been necessary that the woman, in this case, should claim from the kinsman the performance of this duty in a certain form, by saying to him, as Ruth does now—

“Spread thy skirt over thine handmaid, for thou art a near kinsman.” This, although essentially figurative, has some literal meaning in it; for, even to this day, it is customary among the Jews for a man to throw the skirt of his talith or prayer-veil over his spouse, and cover her head with it. We still think, however, that the *occasion* for making this demand was unusual, and to a certain degree indiscreet. This may be gathered, from the anxiety which Boaz himself eventually expressed—while doing the utmost honor to her character and motives—that it should not be known a woman had been there. He must have feared that evil tongues might misconstrue, to his and her discredit, a proceeding far from evil when rightly understood. It is not unlikely that when this matter had been first suggested by Naomi, Ruth, as a stranger, had shrunk from making this claim publicly in the harvest-field, and that Naomi had, therefore, to spare her in that respect, devised this mode of enabling her to do so in private, in which she would find less difficulty, seeing that Boaz had already won her confidence by his fatherly consideration for her. It may be that desire to evade one difficulty, somewhat blinded this good woman to the danger that may have lurked in the other alternative.

Boaz cordially responded to the claim; but he informed Ruth, that Naomi had labored under a mistake. There was a kinsman, nearer than himself, on whom the right devolved. If, as was possible, that kinsman should decline to assume the obligation, then, said Boaz, “will I do the part of kinsman to thee, as the Lord liveth.”

The next day he accordingly took the necessary measures for bringing the matter to a close. All the circumstances of the process are interesting and suggestive; but we must forbear to dwell upon more than one or two of them. In those days, and in the absence of lawyers and written documents, public business was, as we have before had occasion to observe, transacted in the gates of towns, both for convenience of attendance, and to ensure the presence of witnesses. The elders of the town seem to have been in the

habit of repairing thither to transact such business in the early morning, when the people would be going forth to their business at the market, or in the fields. So Boaz went to the gate, and when the nearer kinsman passed by, he called him aside, and requested ten of the elders present to give particular attention, as witnesses, to the proceedings.

Knowing the man he had to deal with, Boaz began with the circumstances involved in the transaction, instead of with what was really its main feature. He apprized him that Naomi meant to sell, for her present necessities, such right as remained with her in the lands of her husband; the right of purchase, he added, belonged to the person he addressed as nearest of kin; but if he declined, Boaz himself stood next, and was ready to make the purchase. The man liked the land, and declared himself ready to do what was expected from him. But on being apprized that it was clogged with the condition of marrying the widow of Naomi's son, in order that the first-born might take the heritage of this land in the name of the deceased, the land lost all value in his eyes, and he declined, lest he should "mar his own inheritance." Some have thought from this, that he was married and had children already, and disliked the increased burden and divided inheritance. We think otherwise; because the law relieved one who had already children from the obligation of taking the widow of his deceased kinsman—Deut. xxv. 5, 6; and therefore it would rather seem that he objected, that his first-born son, with the uncertainty that there would be any other, should be counted the son and heir of a dead man.

In the law itself, the course directed to be taken was this:—When a man's brother refused to marry the widow, she was to go up to the gate and complain to the elders—"My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel." Then the elders were to call the man, and if he persisted in his refusal, the woman was to come forward, and "loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face," and was to say—"So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house."—Deut. xxv. 5-10. It

would seem, however, that when the man was not a brother, the more ignominious part of this ceremony were omitted; for, in the case before us, the man took off his own shoe, and delivered it to Boaz, to signify that he transferred his right to him.

Except in a recent work,* which contains much notice of the Jews in a country (Barbary) where their simple ancient customs are perhaps better preserved than in many other parts, we have not seen any notice of the subsisting use of the shoe in connection with Jewish marriage ceremonies: "At a Jewish marriage, I was standing beside the bridegroom when the bride entered; and, as she crossed the threshold, *he stooped down, and slipped off his shoe*, and struck her with the heel on the nape of the neck. I at once saw the interpretation of the passage in Scripture, respecting the transfer of the shoe to another, in case the brother-in-law did not exercise his privilege. The slipper being taken off in-doors, or if not, left outside the apartment, is placed at the edge of the small carpets upon which you sit, and is at hand to administer correction, and is here used in sign of the obedience of the wife and the supremacy of the husband. The Highland custom is to strike for 'good luck,' as they say, the bride with an old slipper. Little do they suspect the meaning implied. The regalia of Morocco is enriched with a pair of embroidered slippers, which are, or used to be, carried before the Sultan, as among us the sceptre or sword of state."

Twenty-Eighth Week—Sunday.

RUTH'S RECOMPENSE.—RUTH IV. 13-22.

UPON a monument which has already outlasted thrones and empires, and which shall endure until there be a new

* Urquhart's *Pillars of Hercules*, i. 305. Lond. 1850.

heaven and a new earth—upon the front page of the New Testament, is inscribed the name of RUTH. Of her came David—of her came a long line of illustrious and good men—of her came Christ.

These were great honors. Little did this poor foreign woman think, when she left her native home to comfort the destitution of her mother-in-law—little did she suppose when she humbly sought leave of Boaz's servant to glean in his master's field—little when she labored homeward beneath the burden of her corn—what high honors awaited her. She was by her marriage with Boaz raised perhaps to the highest station which a woman in Israel could at that time attain—as the wife of one of the most prosperous and honored elders of Bethlehem. Henceforth nothing of comfort or honor were lacking to her; and, although her husband probably died before her, for he seems to have been advanced in years, the station she occupied as the mother of his son—the heir of a two-fold inheritance, gave her a consideration no less honorable and exalted than that which she had before enjoyed. But, far above that was her interest in the great future—in which was given to *her* that part for which the woman of Israel sighed—which was the object of their most intense desires, excited by the ancient prophecies that from the seed of Abraham should come the bruiser of the serpent's head—HE in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed.

But there was a cause. That cause was in the faith which God had enabled her, under most peculiar and trying circumstances, to exercise for his glory. To her was given the opportunity, which, in the even tenor of their way, few women in that age could find, of honoring God conspicuously by the greatness of her decision—by the marked manner in which she forsook her paternal gods for Him, and cast in her lot with his people. It was no mean sacrifice. One of a nature so affectionate as hers, could not but feel the rending of the human ties, interwoven with most of her past existence, which that decision involved. She did not the less

feel the ties she left behind, because she preferred those that lay before. So far as the human abnegation of self is concerned, women have made as great sacrifices for husbands—for children—for parents. They did their duty. She made her sacrifices for her mother-in-law—a relation not usually of the highest or tenderest nature—not so exacting as the others upon the score of duty. No one could have blamed her, had she, like Orpah, kissed her mother-in-law, and bidden her farewell. Many would have said that that was the right and proper decision for her to make. But Ruth thought not so; she failed not in the trial. God upheld her heavy heart. The words passed—to be no more recalled, no more repented—“Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.” There is more in this than simple regard for Naomi, though so mixed with it as to escape much of the attention to which it is entitled.

Ruth, brought up amid the low and limited ideas of the Godhead which idolatry presented, and knowing nothing better than the degrading worship of Chemosh, had learned from this Hebrew family the pure and grand conception of Jehovah's nature, attributes, and government, which he had disclosed to the chosen people; and she had been privileged to witness most intimately the effect of these views in the consistent conduct and beautiful life of this pious household. This won her heart; she feared to have any more to do with idols. This God should be hers—this privileged people hers, even unto death. That this is the right view of her conduct is shown by what Boaz said to her in the harvest-field—which, indeed, evinces further that this is the impression concerning her which was generally entertained—for Boaz knew her then only from the appreciation of her motives and feelings which was current in Bethlehem. “It hath fully been showed me,” he said, “all that thou hast done to thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband; and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come to a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The Lord recompense thy work; and a full reward be given thee

of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust."

Boaz knew—and we know—better than Ruth herself did, that from the moment she had cast her world behind her back, and thrown herself in simple trust upon God, his blessing surrounded her and overshadowed her, and would not fail to be manifested in due time. They that honor Him, he would honor. And she had honored him by her faith, and He was bound by all his covenants of mercy, to honor her before men and angels. Boaz knew that godliness has the promise of this life, and of the life to come; he knew that they who truly fear God, and yield up anything for him, are entitled to look up for the recompense of reward, which in due time they shall receive to the full—double measure, and pressed down, and running over—if they faint not. Boaz knew all this when these words were uttered; but he did not then know the important part secured for himself in the providence of God in being the instrument of blessing to her, and of sending down, through her, blessings to distant generations.

It is admitted that the blessings of the Old Testament have generally a more material character than there is any reason to expect since the Gospel brought life and immortality—the blessings beyond the grave—into fuller light than had previously shone upon them. Yet God is one; and he has at all times taken pleasure in the prosperity of his servants, although he has retained the right to judge wherein the *true* prosperity of all his servants lies. He has fixed *our* eyes upon the treasures of heaven, and has taught us to garner up all our hopes there. Yet he has not shortened his own hand, or precluded himself from allowing his servants so much temporal prosperity as may be safely permitted to them, without danger to their great spiritual inheritance. If he give trouble—if he withhold prosperity, it is for our sakes; it is owing to the weakness of our hearts; it is because we cannot endure much prosperity without finding this world becoming too dear to us, and our desires less fervent for the

treasures which he has laid up for those that fear him. No doubt, if man, who is but dust, were able to bear worldly prosperity uninjured, it might be otherwise; and if, indeed, there be those who, through his grace, are so strong in faith, so raised above the world, as to be able to bear an unbroken flow of temporal blessing—that may be their lot, and in fact is their lot, so far as their real welfare will allow. Indeed, the words of our Lord himself respecting such as had left all to follow him, furnish the best commentary and the most striking parallel to the words which Boaz addressed to the woman who had, according to the light of her day, left all, that she might come to put her trust under Jehovah's wings: "Verily I say unto you, that there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or lands, for my sake, and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life." Mark x. 29, 30. This is as ample a promise as any the Old Testament contains of earthly blessedness, for "now—in this time," with the gospel addition of far more distinct and still greater blessings for the world to come—the blessings of eternal life, than any which the Old Testament affords. This magnificent extension of the promise richly counterweighs the gospel limitation of "with persecution," as connected with blessing in this world. But, indeed, that also is part of the blessing; seeing that it pledges that God's fatherly care is to intermix the temporal benefits afforded to us with such trials as may be needful to hedge up our way, and to prevent the blessings of the life that now is from becoming too dear to us, and from leading us to forget that we are but strangers here, in the midst of all the enjoyments that may be afforded to us in this house of our pilgrimage.

TWENTY-EIGHTH WEEK—MONDAY.

TWO WIVES.—I SAMUEL I. 1-12.

THE first chapter of the first book of Samuel is of peculiar interest, from the picture of domestic life which it offers; from its furnishing the only description in the Old Testament of the visit of a family to the place of ritual service at the yearly festivals; and from the glimpses which are afforded of the course of proceeding on such occasions at the holy place.

The opening of the chapter presents to us the singular spectacle of a man in private station possessed of two wives. It was not long ago we had occasion to allude to this case, and to remark that, although a plurality of wives was not forbidden by the law of Moses, the possession of more than one was exceedingly rare, except among chiefs and princes, as is still the case in those eastern countries where the same permission exists. The popular feeling, even in the presence of such a permissive-law, is, and we have reason to suppose was, averse to the exercise of this privilege, except in particular cases. This is evinced by the notion of some old Jewish commentators on the case before us, that one of this man's wives was childless, as a punishment upon him for having taken more than one. This shows the tendency of Jewish opinion; and among the Jews themselves, polygamy is scarcely ever practised even in those eastern countries where the public law offers no restriction. In the particular instance, however, it is far more likely that Elkanah had taken a second wife only because the first bore him no children. As to the modern Orientals, the country in which polygamy most prevails is Persia; but even there it is not common to find a man possessed of more than one wife. The extent to which public feeling is against it, particularly among the women themselves, may be judged of from a curious native book,* on "the Customs and Manners of the Women in

* Translated by James Atkinson, Esq., for the Oriental Translation Fund, among whose publications it appears. London, 1832.

Persia." In this we read—"That man is to be praised who confines himself to one wife; for if he takes two it is wrong, and he will certainly repent of his folly. Thus say the seven wise women—

'Be that man's life immersed in gloom
 Who weds more wives than one:
 With one his cheeks retain their bloom,
 His voice a cheerful tone;
 These speak his honest heart at rest,
 And he and she are always blest.
 But when with two he seeks for joy,
 Together they his soul annoy;
 With two no sunbeam of delight
 Can make his day of misery bright.'

To this the translator adds in a note:—"The learned seven have here, as indeed on all occasions, meritoriously shown a proper regard for strictly moral conduct, and the happiness of domestic life. They very justly insist upon it, that a man ought not to be burdened with more than one wife at a time, being satisfied that the management of two is beyond his power, if not impossible." To this effect he quotes the sentiments of a widow, named Wali, as expressed in the old eastern drama of "The Sultan:"—

"Wretch! would'st thou have another wedded slave?
 Another! What, another! At thy peril
 Presume to try th' experiment; would'st thou not
 For that unconscionable, foul desire,
 Be linked to misery? Sleepless nights, and days
 Of endless torment,—still recurring sorrow
 Would be thy lot. Two wives! O never, never.
 Thou hast not power to please two rival queens;
 Their tempers would destroy thee, sear thy brain;
 Thou canst not, Sultan, manage more than one!
 Even one may be beyond thy government."

To these Mr. Atkinson adds the short but decisive testimony of Mirza Abu Taleb Khan—"From what I know, it is easier to live with two tigresses than with two wives."

All the discomfort which these popular Oriental notions on the subject allot to him who dares to take two wives, were realized in the fullest extent by Elkanah. It is in some degree the story of Jacob and his wives over again—though it would appear that the fortunate wife Peninnah, the one favored with children, was more outrageous than Leah; while the childless one, Hannah, was certainly a more meek and pious woman than Rachel. As in that case, so also in this, the childless wife seems to have been the one whom the husband best loved. At least it is said, as if to point a contrast, that “he loved her,” although the Lord had shut up her womb.

The man was a Levite—and hence it peculiarly behoved him to be heedful to all the requirements of the law. By the law it was obligatory only upon the adult males to visit the place of the Lord’s house at the three yearly festivals. But it seems that pious persons took their wives and families with them. Thus Joseph took his wife Mary and her son, the blessed Jesus, with him when he went up to Jerusalem at the passover. We account for that instance, by observing, that this was when our Lord was of the age of twelve years, and that at that age, the obligation upon the males to attend the great festivals commenced. But from the case before us, we learn that whole families were taken to these holy solemnities, for Elkanah was accompanied not only by his two wives, but by the children of Peninnah—not only by the sons, but by the daughters. It seems that on these occasions, Peninnah was wont to make a special display of her ill-will for, and contempt of, Hannah, by reason of her having no children, and of her abortive prayers from year to year for that coveted blessing. From day to day poor Hannah was at home subject to these insults, and could then bear them better because they were unwitnessed by others. But as they journeyed in company with their neighbors to Shiloh and there consorted with them, the bitter sarcasms of Peninnah became more pointed, by her desire of mortifying and degrading her rival in the presence of others; and they were

then, in such goodly company, the more keenly felt by her who was the object of them. She had reason; for in Israel childlessness was not only a privation, but a disgrace; and we may calculate, that the most good-natured and considerate of the company, would scarcely suppress a smile at the cruel taunts which Peninnah delighted to shower upon Hannah's head. Sad was the contrast. There was the loquacious mother surrounded by her children—children afraid to manifest any of the kind attentions which their little hearts might prompt towards one whom their mother hated; and there was Hannah, by herself alone, wanting of all the little charities and kind solitudes of motherhood, and possessed of no comfort but in God, and in the kind attentions of her husband's unalienable love, which indeed enfolded her like a mantle, though it availed little to protect her from the keen shafts of a woman's scurrilous tongue.

At these festivals, it was usual for those who have the means, to present some lawful animal as a peace-offering, and after it had been slain, and the priest had taken his portion—the breast and the right shoulder—the rest was returned to the offerer, with which he might feast his family and such friends as he invited to partake of it. On this occasion, Elkanah failed not to give Peninnah and her sons and daughters becoming portions; but he signalized his esteem for Hannah, and his desire to comfort her with some mark of distinguishing attention, by the truly oriental mark of consideration, such as Joseph had in former times shown to Benjamin, of giving her “a worthy portion,” which some think to have been a double portion, but others suppose to have been a choice and dainty part of the meat. Such marks of consideration on the part of the husband, gave new venom to the sting of Peninnah's cruel tongue, whereat Hannah's grief of heart was such, that she could not taste the dainties Elkanah's love provided. He, on his part, was greatly touched by her affliction, and sought to comfort her. “Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?” Some

think from this that Peninnah had made him the father of ten sons. But it seems rather that the number is indefinitely used to express that the share she had in his affection—the assurance of his unalterable regard, ought to be as much a source of comfort to her as the possession of *many* children. There is, however, the more significance in this, if, as there is some reason to think, a woman who had given birth to ten sons was, as among the Arabians, deemed entitled to distinguished honors. In the Bedouin romance of “Antar,” we read:—“Now it was a custom among the Arabs, that when a woman brought forth ten male children, she should be Moonejeba, that is, ennobled, and for her name to be published among the Arabs, and they used to say that such a one is ennobled.”

Although sensible of her husband’s affection, the heart of Hannah was too deeply wounded to receive all the comfort his words were designed to convey. She had one resource—the best resource for the people of God in all ages, and under all the troubles that afflict them. When the meal was over, she quietly withdrew, and went to the tabernacle, where, being in “great bitterness of soul,” she “prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore.” The prayer ended with a vow that if the Lord would indeed remember her, and bless her with a man-child, that child should be given unto the Lord all the days of his life, “and there shall no razor come upon his head.” This means that he should be a Nazarite for life; and this is the only instance of such life-devotement, spontaneously imposed by the parent before the birth of the child. In the other instances, those of Samson and John the Baptist, the obligation was imposed by the will of God. Here it will be observed that any male-child which might be born to her would, as a Levite, be already given to the Lord. But the period of the Levites’ service did not begin till thirty years of age, and it was Hannah’s meaning that he should be devoted to the Lord’s service even from infancy, besides being under the vows of a Nazarite. It may farther be noted, that a wife had no right to make a vow of this nature without the

concurrence of her husband, or at least that, if made, he might disallow it if it met not his approval. We may therefore be sure that it had the after-consent of Elkanah, without which it would have had no force. The law on this point may be seen in Num. xxx. 8.

It also well deserves our observation that it is in this prayer of Hannah that God is, for the first time in Scripture, addressed as "the LORD OF HOSTS"—a magnificent title, which describes Jehovah as the creator and master of all the universe and its heavenly bodies—which are expressed in Scripture as "the hosts of heaven." The title indeed occurs in the early part of the chapter, but it is there the word of the historian, and therefore posterior in time to this use of it by Hannah. We may infer that it had by this time come into use in designed opposition to the worship of the heavenly bodies, which had, in this age, under one name or another, become universally prevalent.

TWENTY-EIGHTH WEEK—TUESDAY.

A LOAN TO THE LORD.—I SAMUEL I. 13-28; II. 18-21.

IN the time of Samson, the high-priest seems to have been Eli, who probably also exercised the civic functions of judge, which, by the theocratical constitution of the state, naturally devolved upon the high-priest, in the absence of the kind of dictatorship which "the judges," raised up from time to time, exercised. Some exception may be made in respect of such authority as may have been conceded to Samson in the tribes of Dan and Judah; but from the death of that hero we must regard Eli as exercising alone the authority which belonged to the office.

The last high-priest whom the history presents to us is Phinehas, the son of Eleazer, who was Aaron's eldest son, and the succession to the high-priesthood seems to be the

inheritance of that line. But this Eli is descended from Aaron's youngest son, Ithamar. We have no intimation how the change took place. It was not from the failure of the line of Eleazer, for that line subsisted, and was, in the person of Zadok, restored to the priesthood in the time of Solomon. Josephus places three high-priests between Phinehas and Eli—the same who are set down by the names of Abishua, Bukki, and Uzzi, in 1 Chron. vi. 50, 51—where they are placed in the line of Eleazer, so that Eli must have been the first high-priest of the line of Ithamar. It is possible that when Uzzi died, his son was too young to exercise the office of high-priest; and as that office was too essential to the theocratical institutions to remain in abeyance, it may be that Eli, as the eldest representative of the line of Ithamar, was appointed to the priesthood in his place. This is a circumstance that often happens in the regal successions of the East; and we have no reason to suppose that this was an usurpation or an unwarranted intrusion into the high-priesthood on the part of Eli.

Now, when Hannah went to the tabernacle to pour out her grief before the Lord, Eli was sitting "upon a seat by a post of the temple of the Lord." The "temple" is here, of course the tabernacle,—the original word being applicable to any sacred structure appropriated to the service of Jehovah. Sometimes the temple itself, afterwards built, is called a tabernacle in Scripture, as in Jer. x. 20. We do not understand that Eli's seat was by a post of the tabernacle itself; for while it may be questioned that even the high-priest had any right to sit there, it is certain that if he had been seated there, Hannah could not have approached near enough for him to mark the movements of her lips as he did. It would, therefore, appear that Eli had a seat by a post at the entrance of the court of the tabernacle, where, probably, he sat as high-priest and judge, to give advice in cases of difficulty, and to hear and decide any cases that might be brought before him.

Now we learn that Hannah "spake in her heart; only her

lips moved, but her voice was not heard." This is the first instance of unuttered prayer *recorded* in Scripture. Prayer is almost always oral in the East, even in public; and that this was the case in Israel, at least at the holy place, is shown by the fact that Eli did not readily comprehend this proceeding of the afflicted woman, but hastened to the conclusion that she had taken too much wine at the feast—in fact, that she was drunken. He therefore rebuked her. It must have seemed to her a great aggravation of her affliction that every one, except her husband—that even the high-priest of God—would misunderstand her, and that she must meet with misconstruction and reproof from the very quarter where she was best entitled to look for encouragement and support. She, however, humbly vindicated herself, and Eli finding he had been mistaken in her, said, "Go in peace; and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him." She did go in peace. She was no more sad. Her faith sustained her. She was persuaded her prayer had been accepted of God; and it had. In due time she had a son, and she called him SAMUEL (asked of God), because she had asked him of God.

From that time Hannah went not up with the family to Shiloh at the festivals. She purposed not to go up until the child should be weaned, and "then will I bring him, that he may appear before the Lord, and there abide forever." This would suggest a protracted age for weaning, if he was then to be of a fit age to be taken up and left at the tabernacle. In fact, weaning takes place much later in the East than with us. The Mohammedan law prohibits a woman from weaning her child before the expiration of two years from the period of its birth, unless with the consent of her husband. The Jewish commentators generally take the period, in this instance, to have been two years; and we know that the time was sometimes extended to three years or more. But even three years seems too early for the child to be taken from the mother, and left in the care of strangers at the tabernacle—still more, if we consider that his destination was to render

some service there. There may therefore be something in the observation of an old writer,* that there was a threefold weaning of children in old times: the first from the mother's milk, when they were three years old; the second, from their tender age, and the care of a nurse, when they were seven years of age; and the third, from childish ways, when they reached the age of twelve. We incline to the seven years, which is certainly not too early,—and twelve is perhaps too late; for Hannah, when she reappeared at the tabernacle with the child, expected that Eli would speedily call to mind their previous interview, an incident not sufficiently marked, one would think, however important to her, to be remembered after twelve years, by one who had, in the meanwhile, been in the habit of seeing numerous people under every variety of circumstance, from all parts of the land. However, we may not be too positive. Eli was an old man; and twelve years is but a short space to those who are advanced in life. Alas, our years shorten sadly, and pass with rapid wings, the more precious they become to us.

It is an interesting and touching picture to see that now glad mother appearing in the same place before Eli, leading her child by the hand up to the venerable man, who seemed as if he had not moved from that seat by the pillar of the Lord's house, in all the time since she saw him there last. "Oh, my lord," she said, "I am the woman that stood by thee, here, praying unto the Lord. For *this* child I prayed; and the Lord hath granted me the petition I asked of him. Therefore, also have I lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth shall he be lent unto the Lord."

After the event had been commemorated by proper offerings and sacrifices, and Hannah had given vent to her full heart in an exulting hymn, she returned with her husband to Ramah, leaving her child in the care of Eli. She did not, however, discontinue her maternal cares for him. She knew

* Comestor, *Historia Scholastica*, 1473, of which there is a French translation by Guyart, under the title *Les Livres Historiaux de la Bible*. Paris, 1495.

he was in safe hands ; but her motherly heart made her watchful for him, and solicitous for his welfare. Now she was constant in her periodical visits to the tabernacle, and witnessed with joy of heart the growth of her eldest son in person and heavenly grace, and in favor with God and man. “She made him a little coat, and brought it from year to year, when she came with her husband to the yearly sacrifice.” While her diligent fingers wrought that “little coat,” how pleasantly her thoughts dwelt on that son who was to wear it. She hoped great things for him, as mothers do : but her highest aspirations for him could hardly reach that exalted pitch of real greatness in Israel which lay awaiting him. The lad’s immediate duty lay in rendering such little services as his age allowed about the person of the high-priest ; and, eventually, in some of the lighter services of the tabernacle. Old Eli became greatly attached to him ; and he perhaps found, in the reverent affection and endearing ways of this little boy, some consolation under the grief and disappointment which the profligate career of his own sons occasioned. So impressed was he by the fine qualities of this child—so affected by the circumstances of his birth—and so gratified by the excellent conduct of the pious parents—that he bestowed upon them his solemn blessing, and prayed that they might have rich returns in kind for the child they had so faithfully and entirely *lent* to the Lord. And so it came to pass. Hannah had afterwards three sons and two daughters. This was large interest for her “loan.” But the Lord is a very bountiful paymaster ; and amidst all the fervid speculations which inflame the world, to lend to Him remains the best investment which any one can make of aught that he possesses.

TWENTY-EIGHTH WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

THE PILLARS OF THE EARTH.—I SAMUEL II. 8.

IN Hannah's song of gladness and thanksgiving, we meet with one expression which is calculated to bring some readers to a pause:—

“The pillars of the earth are the Lord's,
And he hath set the world upon them.”

There are many similar expressions in Scripture, which, however interpreted, certainly do not agree with that form and condition which is known, through the discoveries of modern science, to belong to the earth. The truth of this matter seems to be, that since the object of the sacred writers was not to teach natural science, they were left in all such concerns to express themselves according to the prevalent notions of their time and country. Had they done otherwise, they would not have been intelligible without such explanations, and such elaborate circumvallations of every phrase with elucidatory matter, as would have confused the meaning of their utterances, and rendered them a weariness to the mind. Under the teachings of the Holy Spirit, they were led in all things to set forth the Lord as the creator, sustainer, and governor of the universe; but in other respects they expressed themselves according to the prevailing ideas of the times in which they lived; and from their expressions, it is quite possible to collect what those ideas were, and even to detect some variation in them in the progress of time; and it is always interesting to trace the alterations of notions and usages which occur in the course of ages. It is indeed too much our habit to look upon the Bible without regard to the fact, that it covers a period historically of four thousand years, and in composition of two thousand. If we take the latter period only, and reflect upon the great differences of language, usage,

and civilization which have occurred in every known country within the nearly equal period since the birth of Christ—we may from the analogy reasonably expect to find very considerable variations in regard to external matters, and to the ideas of external things, between the earlier and later books of Scripture. It is true, and it has often been said, that certain ideas and customs have a somewhat stereotyped character in the East. Yet, nevertheless, certain changes must have arisen, and may be traced in the most fixed of nations; and, while making large allowance for the alleged permanency of eastern ideas, we may surely concede for two thousand years in the East, as much change as for a fourth of that period in the West. Yet it is probable that few read the Bible with any consciousness of the probability that the manners and ideas of the later scriptural period may have been as different from those of the earlier, as our own manners and ideas are different from those which prevailed in the time of the Plantagenets.

The earth is usually represented by the sacred writers as a vast and widely extended body, environed on all sides by the ocean, and resting upon the waters. But the earlier idea presented to us in the book of Job, seems to represent the earth as sustained floating in the air—or rather, perhaps, in empty space, by an omnipotent and invisible power. It is difficult to see what other signification to affix to the text to which we refer—Job, xxvi. 7, “He stretcheth out the north over the empty place,* and hangeth the earth upon nothing,”—a much finer and truer idea than is to be found in the gross cosmographies of the remote East, in which sundry coarse material supports are provided for the earth.

In the Hindu cosmical system of the universe, the three, or as more minutely subdivided, the twenty-one worlds, of this system, are sustained by a tortoise, the symbol of strength and conservative power, which itself rests upon the great serpent, the emblem of eternity, which embraces the whole within the circle formed by its body. These worlds form three grand regions, each subdivided into seven spheres, zones,

* The void—Hebrew, *tohu*.

or countries, which are supposed to be arranged spirally, or in concentric circles. The upper region is composed of the seven *Swargas* or *Lokas*, which are at the same time the domicils of the seven planets, and the residence of the gods. Below this is the earth, divided into seven isles, separated by different seas. Below, upon the back of the tortoise, is the lower region, or hell, in its seven *Patalas*. Three, sometimes four elephants, standing upon the tortoise, sustain the earth, and eight elephants, standing upon the earth, uphold the heavens. Mount Meru is supposed to traverse and unite the three worlds, and it is upon its topmost summit, in the most elevated of the spheres, that we behold the radiated triangle—the symbol of the Yoni and of the creation.

The highly poetical and figurative language of the book of Job, may however leave us in some doubt how far the notion there exhibited is to be regarded as the expression of a current theory or fixed opinion. It is indeed certain, that the passages which disclose the other view are not only far more numerous, but much more distinct. So the Psalmist calls upon the Lord, “that stretched out the earth above the waters.”* There are passages which appear to assign to the earth even a more substantial basis than the water. In Job himself, this notion may be detected:—“Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who hath laid the foundations thereof?”† And so Isaiah—“Hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.”‡ It is quite clear that, in these passages, the earth is compared to a building, whose foundations are deep and immovable. It is under this idea, and with reference to a building clearly,

* Psalm cxxxvi. 6.

† Job xxxviii. 4, 5, 6.

‡ Isa. xl. 21.

that Hannah speaks of “the pillars of the earth.” To the same essential purport are the words of Solomon, who, in Proverbs viii. 29, represents Divine Wisdom as saying—“When he appointed the foundations of the earth, then I was by him;” and also those of Jeremiah—xxx. 37—“If heaven can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel.”

In such passages as these, the waters, on which the earth is supposed to rest, do not immediately appear. But the subsistence of this idea as to the lowermost waters, is in all evinced by the fact, that when the sacred writers describe some great convulsion of nature, such as an earthquake, they in their accumulated images of terror, speak not only of the mountains being rent, and the foundations of the earth being shaken, but of the lower waters being disclosed by the riven earth. So the Psalmist: “The earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken. Then the channels of the waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered.”* Finally, the prophet Jonah is very clear for the opinion of the earth being above the waters; for in expressing his condition when entombed in the body of the fish, he very poetically supposes that he had gone down to these lowermost waters, where the earth lay over his head. “I went down,” he says, “to the bottoms of the mountains: the earth with her bars was about me forever.”† He was, as it were, shut down in the lower mass of waters, by the floating earth, without the hope that he should ever rise again. In fact it would seem that the popular cosmological ideas of the Jews bore considerable resemblance to that which still subsists among the Persians, who hold that the earth floats in the water, like a melon‡ in a round pool. This was also not very dissimilar from the view

* Psalm xviii. 7, 16.

† Jonah ii. 6.

‡ *Hindouâny*, a species of Indian melon, otherwise called *kharbouzeh hindy*. See Chardin's *Description de la Perse*, iv, 448, and Langles' note.

of some of the old Gentile philosophers, and it was likewise entertained by the ancient Christians, by whom it was probably founded on the scriptural intimations. Under such views, it could not of course be supposed that there were any antipodes; and as only the upper surface, that above the water, could be habitable, it follows that the inhabited parts of the earth were of very limited extent compared with the fact, which allows the entire land surface of the globular earth to be habitable. Even if the world had been supposed round, only the part of it rising out of the water could under this view be inhabited. The earth, under this system, was no other than an extended level surface, except for the inequalities occasioned by the mountains. The Israelites do not, however, appear to have supposed that it was round. In the Hebrew the earth is never called a ball, nor by any name corresponding to those employed by the Latins *orbis* and *globus*—the word (*thebel*) rendered *orbis* in Latin versions of the Scripture, means simply the world as it exists, and in particular the habitable world. There are, contrarily, passages which distinctly describe the earth as extended or stretched out upon the surface of the waters. Thus in Isaiah xlii. 5: “He that created the heavens and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh forth of it.” And, again, the Psalmist: “Him that stretched forth the earth above the waters.” Psalm cxxvi. 6. In both these texts the word rendered “stretched” is the same, or rather from the same root as that rendered in other places “firmament,” or more properly “an expansion,” as applied to the visible heavens above—showing the analogy of ideas under which the term is in both respects used. This upper firmament is regarded as a sort of dyke against the waters above, to prevent them from falling upon the earth; and so the lower expansion, the earth, keeps down the waters on which it lies, and prevents them from breaking forth and reducing the world to its ancient chaos.

It is doubtful whether any distinct figure were, under these impressions, assigned to the earth. Some have supposed that

it is described as being square, seeing that God is said to gather his elect from “the four corners” of the earth, Matt. xxiv. 31; or “from the four winds,” Rev. vii. 1, xx. 7; and in the glorious prediction of the Messiah’s dominion over all the world, it is said, “He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river to *the ends of the earth.*” Psalm lxxi. 8. We cannot however build too much on this: but it is certain that the ancient heathen geographers supposed the habitable earth to be more long than broad; and that its extent was greatest from east to west, and least from north to south.

TWENTY-EIGHTH WEEK—THURSDAY.

TABERNACLE ABOMINATIONS.—I SAMUEL II. 12–17.

THE sons of Eli were “men of Belial”—that is, men of profligate disposition and conduct—men who had no regard for their own character, or for the honor of God, whose commissioned servants they were. This pervaded their demeanor, and their misconduct was by no means limited to the particular instances recorded. Yet these instances are so remarkable as to claim special attention.

The custom of sacrifice was, that *burnt offerings* were wholly consumed by fire upon the altar; and that *sin offerings* were eaten by the priests. But in the case of *peace offerings*, the internal fat alone was consumed, first of all, upon the altar; then the priest had for his share the breast and the shoulder, after these had been waved before the Lord; and the remainder of the carcass was returned to the offerer, to be eaten by himself and his friends, or such as he invited. This was ample allowance for the priest, who had the whole of the sin offerings, and some principal parts of the peace offerings. But Eli’s sons thought not so. Not satisfied with the breast and the shoulder of every victim, they begrudged

the offerer the remainder. Properly their interest in the matter ceased as soon as they had received their allowance. But they pursued the remainder with greedy eyes; and at length they ventured to introduce the custom that, while the meat was boiling for the offerer and his family—which was done in some part of the tabernacle, as afterwards of the temple—a servant was sent round “with a flesh hook of three teeth in his hand.” This trident, which no doubt had the prongs wide enough apart, the man thrust into the boiler, and claimed as the perquisite of the priest whatever the instrument brought up; and this could not but frequently make a serious reduction of the food with which the offerers were used to entertain their friends, and to extend their bounty to the needy.

Even this mean and ludicrous greediness did not long satisfy the sons of Eli. Finding that this exaction was submitted to by the people, they went further yet. After the breast and shoulder had been given, but *before* the remainder had been put to boil, the servant came and demanded the raw meat, alleging that the priests did not want it boiled, but to roast. This might be one reason, although there were the breast and shoulder which they might roast if they liked: but the real reason probably was that the three-pronged fork, striking somewhat at a venture, did not always afford such large or such choice portions as the avidity of the priests required. To secure this exaction, and to prevent all evasion, this demand was made even before the fat was offered upon the altar, which, as it belonged to the Lord, and the offering of it was a highly religious act, should have been, even if only for the sake of decency, first of all performed. But knowing that the offerers could not withdraw till the Lord’s portion had been presented, the demand was made before the fat was offered. The people could not but feel the gross indecorum of this proceeding; and the manner in which they meet this new exaction is in all respects praiseworthy, and shows that the men who brought the offerings had more religion at heart, and were more concerned for the honor and glory of God,

than were his own ministers. They implored them to allow the Lord's offerings to be first presented, and then, said they, "take as much as thy soul desireth." The answer of the man to this becoming remonstrance and handsome offer was usually: "Nay, but thou shalt give it me now; and if not, I will take it by force."

What wonder that the people were disgusted at these proceedings, and that the result was that they abstained from bringing their peace offerings to the altar, seeing that their doing so subjected them to such insult and oppression, and produced circumstances so revolting to their religious feelings. "Wherefore," we are told, "the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord: for men abhorred the offering of the Lord."

This was their offence, and a very terrible one it was—amounting to a betrayal of the high trusts committed to their care. Nor was this all—for we are told that they behaved themselves most vilely towards "the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation." Who were these women? That is a question of greater interest at this day, than the historical fact connected with it. The question has indeed been much discussed. The most obvious and common sense view as suggested by this text alone, would seem to be that they were women who went there for worship, and who, not being admitted into the interior of the court, assembled in front of the entrance, the curtains of which being drawn aside on such occasions, allowed them a view of the interior, and of the solemn proceedings there. It has been thought, however, that there is some reference to a particular class of women, habitually attending at the tabernacle in discharge of some special duty or vocation. Some fancy that they came upon business which it belonged to women to do there, such as to wash and clean the rooms. But in that case they would be assembled, not "at the door of the tabernacle," but *within* it. And then we do not know that there were any rooms to wash and clean at the tabernacle—though there were at the temple; and, more than all,

such offices, and many others (such as even the washing of clothes) usually performed by women in the West, are as usually discharged by men in the East, except in the apartments appropriated to the use of women. In this, as in a thousand instances, we arrive at erroneous conclusions by arguing from the analogy of our own customs, without proper inquiry whether those of the East may not be very different. Others imagine that the women came to sew and spin at the tabernacle; as if, because the "women that were wise-hearted did spin," at the original construction of the tabernacle, they did so always after. This is a curious instance of generalizing upon a particular passage of Scripture, having reference to a merely temporary and occasional matter. Some spinning and sewing might be necessary to renew the priestly vestures, but this was doubtless done at home—as, indeed, the original dresses and the hangings of the tabernacle were,—and probably in the families of the priests themselves. It is preposterous to suppose, that the little spinning and sewing that might be necessary to keep the attire of the priests in order, should be carried on at the door of the tabernacle. The Jewish interpreters usually understand, that the congregation of females was caused by the attendance of women who had recently given birth to children, and who came with their offerings of purification—and as these were attended by their female friends and relations, a few of these parties (and there must have been several every day) would collectively form a considerable crowd at the door of the tabernacle.

Upon the whole, however, we incline to regard the first and least special explanation as the most reasonable—admitting, however, that a certain proportion of the women may have been, and probably were, such frequent and regular attendants from devout feelings, that they became well known at the tabernacle—like the communicants of a church as distinguished from the general congregation—and might be pre-eminently distinguished as "the women who [habitually] assembled at the door of the congregation." To go beyond this, as some have done, and suppose that there was a body

of devout women who had specially consecrated themselves to the service of the tabernacle, and to a holy life, in a state of celibacy, is more than we can find in the Bible, and seems to us a Romanist invention, wrought out of some incidental expressions, which admit and require a different interpretation; and this for the purpose of producing a show of Scripture authority for the practice of female ascetic devotement, to which both the spirit and the letter of the Old Testament and of the New, are decidedly opposed, and which has been, and is, one of the resources wherein “the proud mind of the flesh” seeks nourishment.

TWENTY-EIGHTH WEEK—FRIDAY.

A VOICE IN THE NIGHT.—I SAMUEL III.

SAMUEL was introduced to his prophetic office very early, and in a very remarkable manner.

It seems that old Eli attached him to his person, to render such little services to him as his condition rendered necessary, for from extreme age, “his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see.” For this reason, apparently, it was that the lad slept at night within call of the high-priest, retiring to his own rest after the old man had lain down, and all his little duties had been performed. It would appear from the tone of the statement, that these circumstances took place within the enclosure of the tabernacle. This is not, indeed, distinctly stated; and the mention of the time of the tabernacle lamps going out, may merely be a mark of time. We know that later, under the temple, there were tenements within the enclosure for the priests and the Levites on duty. But this was for the accommodation of those who performed their duties in rotation, and came for that purpose to the temple, generally leaving their families at home. But under the tabernacle, the priests at least were not so numerous as to allow of

this arrangement, and they seem to have been all in attendance at the place of the tabernacle with their households. This, therefore, scarcely consisted with residence inside the enclosure—where the constructions could hardly have been of the permanent nature required for constant habitation. We therefore suppose that the priests lived in the town, repairing to the tabernacle when the discharge of their duties required. But the Levites, who must have been too numerous to be all in attendance at once, and who, indeed, as we know, dwelt in dispersed towns of their own, might remain in lodges in or about the tabernacle enclosure during their term of service. While engaged in the discharge of a temporary service, men can and do dispense with the accommodations and domestic conveniences, which are needful in their permanent abodes. Nor was the arrangement materially different in the temple, the accommodations being for those separate from their families, on temporary service, and not for such domestic establishments as they all possessed in their proper homes. Even the high-priest was not in constant residence, that is, not in domestic residence, at the temple—much less, therefore, at the tabernacle. In the time of our Lord it is distinctly stated, that the high-priest had his residence in the city. To compare modern things with ancient, and political with ecclesiastical office, it was the same with the high-priests as with our chief ministers of state, who have their official residence in Downing Street, but have their private and domestic abodes elsewhere. Yet it has happened that a minister without family (as was the case with Pitt) might reside altogether in Downing Street; and so might a high-priest at the temple; and thus Eli, who was now an aged man, apparently a widower, with all his family grown up and settled in their own households, might, both from feeling and convenience, incline to reside constantly at his humble official lodge, under the shadow of the tabernacle. The proper place of Samuel at night would have been among the attendant Levites; but on account of his personal services to the aged high-priest, he rested not far from him.

And that Eli was in the habit of requiring his services during the night, appears from the readiness of the lad in concluding that the voice which called him one night by name, was that of Eli.

It has been thought by some that Samuel had some charge about the lamps of the tabernacle, for it is said, "Ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep." But this attendance on the lamps was a higher Levitical office than was likely to devolve upon a lad; and it appears to have been a mode of marking time merely, which had grown into use at the tabernacle. "The lamp" is, of course, the golden candlestick with its seven lamps. These were lighted every evening, and they burned until the morning, by which time some of them at least usually went out, and if any remained burning, they were put out by the Levites, when they came in the morning to attend to them. The Jewish writers indeed affirm that one of the lamps—the western one—was always kept burning day and night, being so well filled as to burn until the morning, and being then replenished instead of extinguished.

It was, then, in the dead of night, towards morning, but before any of the lamps had gone out, that the slumbers of the young Samuel were broken by a voice which pronounced his name. With prompt attention the lad started from his couch, and hastened to the bedside of his aged lord, who, he supposed, had called him. This he repeated three times, for so often was he called, and each time supposed that Eli called him. The strangeness of this, at length, led the high priest to see something more than human in the circumstance; and he directed the boy to go and lie down once more, and if again called, not to come to him, but say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth!" Samuel did as he was directed, and the Divine voice then declared the terrible judgments which should speedily fall upon Eli and upon his house. Upon his sons because they had "made themselves vile;" and upon him because "he restrained them not."

As this is the first circumstance which throws light upon the character of one who was destined to become a great man in Israel, it behooves us to regard it well. Most lads of his age evince much eagerness in communicating anything surprising, without much regard to the pain it may be calculated to inflict. Samuel knew that he had been highly honored by a special communication from God; and he must have been too well instructed not to be aware of the extraordinary and important character of the distinction thus conferred upon him. Yet his young heart was not elated, nor was his tongue impatient to proclaim this honor which had come to him from God. The burden of a great doom had been imparted to him, and such secrets of high import it is hard for youth to bear undisclosed. But with Samuel there was one consideration that overruled every other. The secret concerned his venerable lord, who had been as a father to him, and could not fail to afflict his spirit. Therefore, with a pious and generous discretion, far beyond his years, and altogether worthy of manhood, he purposed to keep it all to himself. He lay quiet until the morning, and on arising from his rest, he proceeded about his ordinary business, as if nothing remarkable had happened.

Nevertheless, Eli himself perceiving that he had risen, and that he had not come to him as usual, suspected that something had transpired which he was afraid to communicate. He therefore called him, and solemnly charged him to hide nothing from him. Thus adjured, Samuel was constrained to make known all that had passed. And when Eli heard that dreadful sentence, every word of which must have fallen like molten lead upon his heart, the poor old man, so small in active daring, but so great in passive suffering, broke forth into no vain lamentations or complaints. "It is the Lord," he said, "let him do what seemeth him good!" for, as Bishop Hall well paraphrases, "whatever seemeth good to him cannot but be good, howsoever it seems to be. Every man," he adds, "can open his hand to God while he blesses; but to expose ourselves willingly to the afflicting hand of our

Maker, and to kneel to him while he scourges us, is peculiar only to the faithful." This is a charitable judgment, and it commends itself to our esteem, much better than the austere censures of those who accuse Eli of hypocrisy, because he took no means to correct the evil by which this doom had been brought down. But this is a harsh judgment. He was old and dim-sighted now, and little suited for a task of paternal correction and theocratical reform, from which he had unhappily shrunk in the days of his strength and vigor. He found it easier to leave the matter in the Lord's hands, whether for judgment or for mercy. It was for judgment—for the Lord's justice required to be satisfied, and the honor of his institutions vindicated.

TWENTY-EIGHTH WEEK—SATURDAY.

THE TIDINGS.—I SAMUEL IV. 1-18.

THE doom upon the house of Eli, for the enormities by which the Lord's service had been dishonored, was not first denounced through Samuel, nor was this the first warning the high-priest received. Before this a prophet had been sent to declare the judgment of God upon such high offences. That this warning had been followed by no effectual results—had not roused the old man to a more stringent exercise of that authority which belonged to the pontiff and the father, could not but give the more force to the denunciation delivered through Samuel, and the language of Eli, on that occasion, may be as much the expression of hopeless incapacity as of pious resignation. The doom consisted in the deposition of the family from the high-priesthood—the sudden death of the offenders in one day—the impoverishment and premature deaths of the family—and the doing of a deed which should "cause the ears of all that heard of it to tingle." The event to which this last intimation has refer-

ence, has been differently understood, for there were two historical circumstances, to either of which the words would be awfully applicable. The first, the capture of the ark by the Philistines, with the death of Eli's guilty sons in the battle, with his own death when the news came to Shiloh, together with that of his daughter-in-law, in giving premature birth to a son; the other, that of the slaughter of the seventy priests at Nob, by the order of Saul, at a later date, which nearly effected the extinction of Eli's house.

Without pretending to determine to which of these events this remarkable denunciation refers, the former of them is that which demands our present attention.

A war arose with the Philistines—from what immediate cause we know not—and the armies confronted each other in battle. In the first action the Israelites were beaten with the loss of four thousand men. This result was received by the “elders of Israel” in a right spirit, in so far as it was ascribed to the absence of that Divine protection which would have rendered Israel victorious. But the inference was very mistaken, that if they had the ark of the covenant among them, they would be assured of the Lord's favoring presence therewith, and victory could not then fail to crown their arms. They, no doubt, remembered that the Israelites were formerly successful against their enemies when the ark was with their armies, Num. xxxi. 6, Job vi. 6; but they forgot that this was not simply because the ark was present, but because the Lord was with them. And now, instead of inquiring what there was wrong in their faith or conduct, which had drawn down the Lord's displeasure, and for which they might humble themselves before him, they think to settle the matter by a cheap ceremonial. “Much like hereunto,” as an old commentator remarks,* was the “superstitious practice of the papists, who, in time of common calamities, as the pestilence and unseasonable weather, would goe about in procession in the streetes, with their pix and the host, as though there were vertue in such ceremonies to appease the wrath of God.”

* Willet, *Harmonie upon the First Book of Samuel*, 1614.

With truer faith—a faith rising gloriously above external symbols—David, in a later age, refused to allow the ark to be removed with him in his retreat from Jerusalem, but chose rather to leave it there in the hands of his enemies. The priests had even brought it forth without the city, when he directed them to “carry the ark of God back into the city. If I shall find favor in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it and his habitation: But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee, behold here I am, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.” 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26.

We must not, however, overlook in the measure now taken, the providence of God, by which the guilty priests were thus drawn to their doom—to perish both in one day. The ark being removed, it was necessary that they should attend it to the scene of action, and there they fell, by the sword of the Philistines, in that day when the ark of God was taken. No such result was, however, anticipated, when the ark, borne in solemn state, with the train of priests and Levites, was seen slowly advancing towards the camp. The host of Israel hailed it with exulting shouts, as if their triumph were now secure. Their enemies, on the other hand, regarded it with downcast hearts. In their gross materialism—scarcely more gross, however, than that of the Israelites themselves—they regarded the ark as the god of the Israelites, or at least as the symbol with which the presence of their God was inseparably connected; and, remembering the wonders which had been wrought by that God for this people, in Egypt, and in the wilderness, they were filled with dismay, and anticipated nothing but ruin and disaster. The impression made upon them, at this distant day, by those ancient miracles, shows how materially those manifestations of the Lord’s presence with his people, and of the irresistible might exerted on their behalf, must have facilitated their original conquest of the land. The Philistines, however, although alarmed, did not lose all spirit. Though the impression made upon them was very deep, the inference they drew—but which we should scarcely have anticipated from the consternation they ex-

pressed—was that of brave men whom the desperateness of the emergency moved only to more heroic exertions. “Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants to the Hebrews, as they have been to you.” It was the Lord’s purpose that they should conquer in this war, and therefore were they thus inspirited to accomplish the purposes of his will. They did conquer. Israel was defeated—the priests were slain—the ark was taken. Thus did the Lord rebuke the vain confidence of the Israelites, and the dishonor they had brought upon his name before the Philistines, by the sanction which their proceedings had given to the pagan delusion, that the presence of God was inseparably connected with aught made with hands. In proportion as men neglect or misapprehend the thing signified, they take to render exaggerated honors to the sign or symbol. The ark was becoming an idol; and therefore the ark was suffered to be made captive by the unbelievers.

Still the ark was a sacred thing. It was the visible cynosure of a worship which was, in its forms, symbolical and ritual; and above it, in its place, the clouded radiance which indicated the Divine presence, visibly abode. Apart, therefore, from the false notions concerning it which had crept in, the loss of it might well be felt as a national calamity. It was so felt. The right-minded might tremble at the thought of the dishonor brought upon the Lord’s great name in the eyes of the heathen, who would not fail to consider that their own gods had at length triumphed over the great and dreadful JEHOVAH of the Israelites.

Many hearts waited, with unusual anxiety, the tidings from the battle. Among them was the blind old Eli, who caused his seat to be set by the wayside, that he might catch the first tidings that might come from the war, “for his heart trembled for the ark of God.” His sons were there; but it was not for them his heart trembled—he trembled for the ark. He was not, however, the first to receive the tidings. It was spread through the town before he heard it—for every one was reluctant to impart it to him. But he heard the stir

and the lamentations through the city ; and asked what this meant. The messenger, a man of Benjamin (some Jews think it was Saul), a fugitive from the battle, with his clothes rent, and earth strewn upon his head, as the bearer of heavy tidings, then came before him. Eli's blindness spared him the sight of these ominous indications. But let us note what passed. "The man said to Eli, I am he that came out of the army, and I fled to-day out of the army. And he said, What is there done, my son ? And the messenger answered and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines—and there hath been a great slaughter also among the people—and thy two sons, also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead—and THE ARK OF GOD IS TAKEN. And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from his seat backward, by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died."

The manner in which this sad tale is told, far excels anything of the kind which the wide range of literature can furnish. It is one of those traits of pure and simple grandeur in which the Scriptures are unequalled. The learned Madame Dacier compares these words, "Thy two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is taken," with those of Antilochus, who brings to Achilles the tidings of the death of his friend Patroclus—

"Patroclus is no more. The Grecians fight
For his bare corse, and Hector hath his arms,"

and she quotes the gloss of Eustathius upon this passage of Homer. "This speech of Antilochus," says this critic, "may be cited as a model of emphatic brevity in announcing tidings so terrible, for in two verses it contains all that really can be told: the death of Patroclus—by whom he was slain—the combat around his corpse—and that his arms were in the hands of the enemy. The tragic poets of Greece have not always imitated this grand simplicity ; and Euripides, in particular, has the fault of making long recitals on trifling occasions. But Homer only, in this, ought to be followed. In great distresses, nothing is more absurd than for a messenger to

impart his tidings in long discourses and pathetic descriptions. He speaks without being understood, for those to whom he addresses himself have no time or heart to pay attention. The first word which enables them to apprehend the calamity is enough to them, and they are deaf to all besides." Now this Homeric rule of fit brevity in messages of grief, is still more strongly, and with more exquisite propriety, exemplified in the Scriptures, which abound in passages unapproachable, even by Homer, for significant brevity and sublime abruptness; and is particularly observable in respect of those very cases, where, according to this sagacious canon of criticism, diffuse narration would have been unseemly and inappropriate. And notwithstanding that, in regard to such a book as the Bible, the literary beauties are of secondary importance,—the secondary matters of the Bible surpass in interest the first matters of other things; and although we do not, as the Mohammedans with their Koran, point to the mere literary composition of the Bible as a standing miracle, and a sufficient evidence of Divine authority, it is not the less advantageous and pleasurable to us to be able to show, that the book of God, though its various truths come to us through the necessarily imperfect channel of human language, surpasses in manner, no less than in matter, all other books.



Twenty-Ninth Week—Sunday.

ICHABOD.—I SAMUEL IV. 21.

THE deep concern evinced by some persons at the loss of the symbol of Jehovah's presence, which constituted the highest distinction and most sacred treasure of Israel, is very affecting, and affords a most impressive and gratifying indication of the exalted and just views and feelings by which the hearts of some superior persons were animated. We

have seen Eli fall to the ground and die, when he heard that the ark of God was taken—it being doubtful, as Bishop Hall quaintly remarks, whether his heart or his neck were first broken.

The same tidings wrought in the same family another death. The wife of one of the doomed priests, Phinehas, herself unnamed, although worthy of being held in lasting remembrance, was with child, and near to be delivered, when the doleful tidings of Israel's overthrow, and the capture of God's ark, came to Shiloh. Her husband's death—her father-in-law's death—the ruin of Israel—the capture of God's ark, threw her into such distress of mind, that her pains came suddenly upon her, and terminated her life. She appears to have been a woman of great tenderness of spirit, and of still greater piety. She felt deeply—how deeply, we may judge from the effects—the successive calamities that had taken place; but, like Eli himself, she felt most of all the one the messenger had last mentioned—the capture of the ark. Her father-in-law was dead. True; but his death was to be expected soon in the course of nature, and the loss could be repaired; for there would not be wanting a high-priest in the house of God. Her husband lay dead on the battle field, his priestly raiment defiled in dust and stained with blood. True; but his offence was rank; his sins, some of them, had not only been public wrongs, but private wrongs to her. But still in the deep caverns of her womanly heart, there lingered much love to the husband of her youth, the father of her children; and the loss of him—his life quenched in blood, would, under any ordinary circumstances, have been a devouring grief. As it was, it no doubt hastened the time of her travail; but it is clear, from her dying words, that a concern for the interests of religion, occasioned by the loss of the ark, lay nearest to her soul. This was the master-grief, in whose presence the others became pale.

The women around her bed sought to rouse her from her dying lethargy, by the most glad tidings a Hebrew woman could learn:—"Fear not; for thou hast borne a son!" But,

it is emphatically added, "She answered not, neither did she regard it." But as her last moment came, she roused herself so far as to indicate the name the child was to bear—by that name making him a living memorial of her despairing grief. She called his name I-CHABOD—which means *without glory*: saying,—“The glory is departed from Israel!” and with these words upon her lips, she died. That glory having departed, there was nothing of joy or hope for life to offer to her; it only remained for her to die.

This is a noble and refreshing example of deep concern, manifested even unto death, for the glory of God, and the well-being of his church. It is refreshing, because any experience of the sort has become rare in these latter days, in which the supreme anxiety of men, is to get on, to do well in the world, to thrive; and concern for the glory of God is a subordinate and tempered feeling, calling forth very little of that burning ardor, that restlessness of zeal and labor, in which the matters belong, more or less, to this life, are studied and pursued. No doubt there is abroad in the Christian world a certain kind of zeal for the glory of God. But how few are there in whom that zeal reigns paramount, above all the interests that belong to earth—in whom that zeal is as a burning fire shut up in their bones, which makes them weary with forbearing, which allows them no rest so long as their Lord's great name is unglorified, or his cause does not prosper.

Look at this woman; and if an instance of real patriotism, of true public spirit, be wanted, behold it here! and let the just admiration which it excites, teach us that it is not proper, far less is it godly, that the chief of our care should be given to the concerns of our private condition, or the affairs of our party, our sect, or our town. We have among us God's spiritual ark. Dangers often threaten it—clouds often obscure the lustre of its most fine gold—at times it seems as if it were going, as if it were gone, into the hands of the Philistines. Where is, then, “the exceeding great and bitter cry”—such as arises when some great reverse of temporal

fortune comes—when some plague reaps the life of the land—when some great ship, laden with souls, sinks into the deep—when one of our chief of men is smitten suddenly down in the noon-tide of his honors? Alas, we have a different standard for the measurement of the relative importance of these things, than that nameless woman of Israel, who amid the most cruel death agonies to which the human frame is subject, and in the severest reverses we can be called to suffer, called her new-born son Ichabod, not for these things, but “because the ark of God was taken.”

On this case, it is well remarked by an old writer, whose subject led him naturally to it (it is part of a meditation for a woman expecting to be delivered)—“She took no comfort in her deliverance, though she had a son, while the church of God was not delivered. O, that the same mind might be in me, that I might learn also to be more affected with the affairs of the church. Alas, what is my danger to the universal danger, my travail to the travail of the church? What comfort to me to have many children, unless I might see the good of God’s chosen? What content have I in being delivered of my pains, unless God deliver Israel from all its troubles? What delight had Abraham in all his mercies while he was childless, or I in all my children, if the children of God be comfortless? Oh my God, bless me out of Zion, and thus let me be blessed as those are that fear the Lord; let me not only be a fruitful vine, but let me see the good of Jerusalem all my days. Let me not only see my children’s children, but peace upon Israel.” *

To which we may suitably add the words of a still earlier writer:—“What cares she for a posterity which should want the ark? What cares she for a son come into the world of Israel, when God was gone from it? And how willingly doth she depart from them from whom God was departed! Not outward magnificence, not state, not wealth, not favor of the

* “*A Present to be given to Teeming Women by their Husbands and Friends.*” By John Oliver, less than the least of all Saints, London. At the Golden Bible on London Bridge, 1669.

mighty, but the presence of God in his ordinances was the glory of Israel; the subduing whereof is a greater judgment than destruction." *

TWENTY-NINTH WEEK—MONDAY.

DAGON.—I SAMUEL V. 1-5.

THE history of the ark in the hands of the victorious Philistines, offers several circumstances of striking and peculiar interest.

They had been permitted by the Lord thus far to triumph, for the accomplishment of his own high purposes. And it remained for Him now to vindicate the honor of his own great name, equally from the despair of the Israelites, and profane exultation of the Philistines. The latter, indeed, by making it a triumph of their own god over the God of Israel, rendered it inevitable that he should move his terrible right arm to redeem his name from reproach. It was the custom among the ancient idolaters to place among the captives, and to bear along in triumph, the idols adored by their enemies, and eventually to deposit them in the temples of their own idols, as memorials of their triumph. The prophet Isaiah predicts that the gods of Babylon should thus be treated by Cyrus. Instead of using the direct language of prophecy or description, he represents himself as seeing in vision the heavy laden animals and wains moving slowly along, pressed down by the weight of the captured gods that were to be borne to the distant land of the conqueror—"Bel boweth down, Nebo croucheth; their images are laid upon the beasts and upon the cattle. Your burdens are packed up as a load to the weary beast. They crouch, they bow down together; they cannot rescue the burden; themselves into captivity are gone." Isa. xlvi. 1, 2. It is very probable that in thus de-

* Hall's *Contemplations*, book xi. cont. 7.

riding the Babylonian idols for their inability to save themselves from captivity, he meant to glance back at the case before us, in which the ark of God came forth in triumph from captivity with the Philistines. Another prophet predicts that Ptolemy Euergetes should carry captive into Egypt the gods of the Syrians.* Jeremiah also foretold that Chemosh, the god of Moab, should be borne into captivity, to the shame and confusion of his worshippers.† There are several examples of this among the pagan writers.

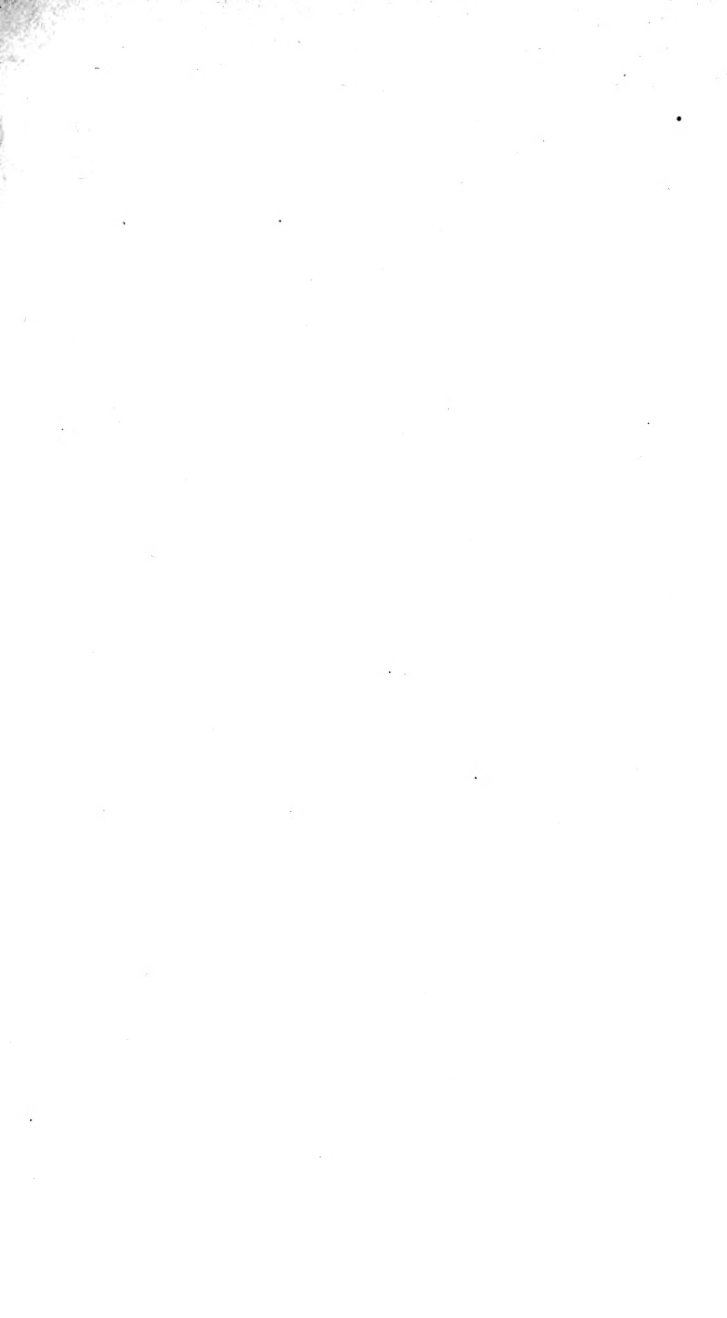
Plutarch relates, that till the time of Marcellus, the Romans had been content with really warlike trophies; but he first brought fine Grecian images and pictures of the gods to adorn his triumph on his return from Syracuse. This, he says, pleased the multitude; but thoughtful men were dissatisfied, doubting whether he had not brought upon them the malice and hate of the gods he thus pretended to make captive. He adds, the old men liked better the conduct of Fabius Maximus, who, when he took Tarentum, brought away indeed much gold and other useful things, but left the images of the gods standing in their places, observing, "Let us leave to the Tarentines the gods offended with them."

With the precedents before us, and with the result in view, we have no doubt that the ark was placed by the Philistines "in the house of Dagon their god," at Ashdod, in order to give honor to their own idol, by exhibiting him as triumphant over Jehovah; although some have fancied, that they placed the ark in this their sacred place, in order to render it honor, and even to adopt it as a god.

This people had reason to distrust the triumph of their idol, when, next morning, they found it lying on the floor, prostrate before the ark of God. But it might be an accident; so they set it up in its place. But the morning after it was not only fallen, but broken. The language in which this is related is remarkable. "The head of Dagon, and both the palms of his hands, were cut off upon the threshold; *only the Dagon was left to him.*" This raises a question as

* Dan. xi. 8.

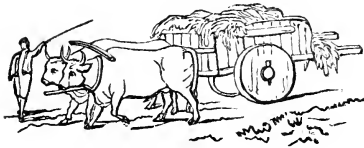
† Jer xlvi. 7. 13.





BABYLONIAN REPRESENTATION OF DAGON AND DERCE TO.

Page 83.



EGYPTIAN AGRICULTURAL CART AND SACRED CAR.

Page 93.

to the form of this idol, and what was "the Dagon" which remained after the head and hands were separated, and which gave name to the whole image. *Dagan* means "corn," in Hebrew, whence some have thought that Dagon was the Philistine god of agriculture. There is nothing but the mere name to countenance this notion, and every other circumstance is against it. Then, again, *Dag* means "a fish;" whence, and from the incidents, it has been generally understood that the image was that of a kind of merman—the upper part human, with a fishy extremity. Certainly the expression in the text, that "the Dagon" remained after the head and hands were broken off, is greatly in favor of this conclusion. This is the opinion of the Jewish writers; and it is supported by analogies. We know, in fact, that the neighboring Phenicians had an idol of this shape—essentially indeed the same, except that it bore a female form. This was called *Derketo*, otherwise *Atergatis*. The Babylonians had also a tradition, that in the beginning of their history, an extraordinary being, called *Oannes*, having the body of a fish, but the head, hands, feet, and voice of a man, emerged from the Erythrean sea, appeared in Babylon, and taught the rude inhabitants the use of letters, arts, religion, law, and agriculture; that after long intervals, other similar beings appeared and communicated the same precious lore in detail, and that the last of these was called *Odakon*—the resemblance of which to Dagon is very clear. It is not difficult to recognize in these fables the distorted tradition of more civilized persons, who, in ancient times, came by sea or river, and taught useful arts to barbarous nations, by whom they were, after death, worshipped as gods. Having no memorials of the Philistines, no figure of their Dagon has been found; but representations of the corresponding *Oannes* or *Odakon* of the Babylonians, and *Derketo* of the Phenicians, have been discovered, and answer to the general notion respecting the form this idol bore.

One would suppose that this event would have convinced the Philistines of the impotency of the idol they worshipped.

It seems, indeed, to have revived their former dread of the God of Israel; but it not lessen their devotion to their own idolatry. Nay, rather, it engaged them in a new form of superstition; for "Therefore neither the priest of Dagon, nor any that come into Dagon's house, tread the threshold of Dagon's house in Ashdod unto this day." It may be doubtful whether this was in reverence of the threshold, since it had been touched by the superior parts of Dagon's image, or in detestation of it, as having been instrumental in this mutilation of the idol. Henceforth, however, they were careful not to tread upon it, but stepped or leaped over it—a custom which, it seems, continued not only to the latter days of Samuel, the author of this book, but down to the time of Zephaniah, who seems to allude to it:—"In the same day will I punish them that leap on [or *over*] the threshold." * It is curious, that their very superstition led to the establishment of a custom which could not but serve as a standing memorial of the discomfiture of their idol in the presence of the ark of the Lord. Not unlike this in form, though different in principle, being a civil memorial of a thing done, and not a superstitious rite, is the ancient custom of the Jews in abstaining from the part, in the animals they use for food, corresponding to "the sinew that shrank" in the thigh of Jacob when the angel wrestled with him. †

Although this fact accounts for the reverence of the threshold among the Philistines, this kind of superstition was not peculiar to them. There are many traces of it with regard to other temples and among other nations. It comes before us, indeed, chiefly in the form of the votaries kneeling and kissing the threshold, in adoration or reverence. But this implies the not treading on it; for votaries do not tread beneath their feet that which they thus venerate. The allusions to this in the Roman poets are well known. The early Christians adopted this custom of kissing the threshold, in regard to churches particularly venerated. It is indeed still in use among Roman Catholics; and old Christopher Ness

* Zeph. i. 9.

† Gen. xxxii. 31.

remarks—" 'Tis pity such reverencing of the thresholds of temples should be found as among Pagans, so among Papagans also, who kiss the threshold of St. Peter's church at Rome to this day."

This ancient reverence for the threshold was not limited to temples. A sort of superstitious regard for the threshold generally, may be detected among many nations. The threshold was sacred to Vesta among the Romans, who held this deity in so much respect, that a bride, in entering for the first time the house of her husband, was not allowed to touch the threshold of the door;* and we learn from Tibullus,† that it was regarded as a very ill omen for a person to strike his foot against the threshold on quitting his house in the morning.

In the modern East, the indications of the same custom are abundant. The Persians, in particular, treat with great respect the thresholds of certain mosques, in which the remains of their holy men are deposited. They are usually covered with plates of silver; and to tread upon them is a crime not to be expiated but by severe penalties. Thus, immediately below the sixth distich, inscribed over the gate of the famous mausoleum at Kom, are the words:—"Happy and glorious is the believer, who through reverence shall prostrate himself with his head *on the threshold of this gate*, in doing which he will imitate the sun and the moon." In fact, before they venture to cross such thresholds, they kneel down and kiss them; and in passing over, are most careful not to touch them with any part of their feet or their raiment. This feeling is in a measure extended to the palaces of kings, and in a lesser degree to the thresholds of private mansions. In writing to a prince, it is usual to say:—"Let me make the dust of your threshold into *Surmeh* (collyrium) for my eyelids;" and Chardin relates, that in his time the threshold of the royal palace at Ispahan was one large stone of green porphyry, on which no one was allowed to tread.

* Lucan, lib. ii. 359.

† Tibullus, lib. i. Eleg. 3.

TWENTY-NINTH WEEK—TUESDAY.

TELESMES.—I SAMUEL VI. 1-5.

THE men of Ashdod, although impressed by the discomfiture of their idol, were not thereby moved to any immediate action with respect to the ark of Israel. Their obdurate determination still to retain this glorious monument of their triumph, drew down upon them further judgments to constrain them to render to Jehovah the glory which was his due. Men are most keenly sensible of the evils which touch their skin and their flesh. They were therefore smitten with a painful and grievous disease—the nature of which is not well determined, but which is supposed to have been the hemorrhoids or piles, which seems to have been in many cases fatal. This they rightly ascribed to the wrath of the God whose ark they detained; but instead of seeing at once that their best course was to restore it to the Israelites, their reluctance to part with it induced them to try the experiment of removing it to another of their cities—to Gath, in the hope that as the judgment was confined to Ashdod and its neighborhood, the indignation which had gone forth was against that particular place, and might not be extended to other towns. The people of Gath seem to have placed it in the open fields—if, indeed, it had not been removed to the open ground of Ashdod immediately after the judgment on Dagon, as they might naturally after that apprehend special judgment upon any building in which it was contained. This inference is built upon the language of the text (in the original) that the ark “abode in *the field* of the Philistines seven months.” The reason indeed is not conclusive, seeing that the word “field” may be understood generally of “land,” or “country,” and is here so understood by our translators. A probability in favor of that opinion is, that the next judgment was upon the fields—the produce of the ground being destroyed by immense swarms of field mice—if this were

not indeed simultaneous with the "emerods"—for by that grievous disease the men of Gath also were smitten, as soon as the ark of God arrived. This could not be borne; and the ark was removed to another town called Ekron. But the people there positively refused to receive it. Their language bore most emphatic testimony to the effect which had been produced: "They have brought about the ark of the God of Israel to us, to slay us and our people." This brought matters to a crisis; the "lords" or magistrates of the five cities constituting this state—as well as those that had not been visited by the ark, as those that had—came together in council to determine the course to be taken. The conclusion reluctantly reached was to send the ark back to the Israelites with all becoming observances, and not without such offerings as might, it was hoped, avert from them the wrath under which they so long had suffered. These were five golden mice, one for each of the Philistine cities; and seven golden emerods—as symbolical of the afflictions they had endured, and in recognition that they came from Jehovah, and that he alone could remove them.

This offering, so remarkable to our ideas, but so familiar to the ideas of the ancients and of the modern Orientals, does in various points of view well merit more attention than our limits allow us to bestow upon it.

It appears to us that these articles are to be regarded not merely as votive or trespass offerings; but as *telesmes* (talismans), specially formed under astrological calculations, to counteract the plagues, unless their effect were neutralized by the continued implacability of Israel's offended God; and we have little doubt that this course was suggested by the astrologers, who would not fail to be consulted on the occasion, as the best that under the circumstances could be adopted. The general reader can have little idea of the extent to which notions of this sort, founded on astronomical combinations, pervaded the ancient mind, and were even in Europe prevalent until a comparatively recent period, and are not wholly extinct among ourselves even now. We are not sure

of being successful in rendering the principles and the practical jargon of this branch of "science falsely so-called," intelligible to the reader, rendered, as its peculiar terms must be, out of the Hebrew, Arabic, Geek and Latin languages into our own.

It is, then, held that the forms of things here below correspond with the like forms of things above, and that the celestial forms have a ruling influence upon the sublunary. For example, the scorpion and the serpent in the heavens upon those in the earth. The wise, therefore, it is stated, carefully observing when a planet entered into any of these forms or signs, placed the planet on the horoscope, and engraved the form upon a stone—adding what else might be necessary to fit it for preservation or for destruction, according to the purpose of the operation. The *telesme* thus rendered efficient for good or for evil, was then completed. A great authority on these subjects, Ali Ibn Rodoan, illustrates this by an anecdote of a Saracen's servant, who had been stung by a scorpion, but was instantly cured by his master with a *telesme*, which had the figure of a scorpion engraven on it. In explanation of this the Saracen said, that the figure was cut when the moon was in the sign scorpio, and that the sign was in one of the four angles.

A man of note in this kind of lore was Apollonius Tyaneus, who was reported to have wrought such extraordinary effects by his skill in this branch of occult science, that there were not wanting among the enemies of Christianity, those who dared to compare the wonders wrought, or pretended to be wrought by him, with the miracles of Christ himself; and there were even those who gave the preference to the pagan philosopher—an enormity well shown up by Eusebius of Pamphylia. But it is nevertheless well to notice a few of the deeds of this man which bear upon the subject, and tend to illustrate the ideas concerning it which prevailed. His deeds were such, indeed, as, in their day, excited the doubt and perplexity of even orthodox believers, who, although they were unable to account for them, supposed that this

wonderful man had by means of his telesmes stilled the waves of the sea and the raging of the winds, and had protected countries from destructive vermin and the incursions of wild beasts. Take the following from an ancient author, cited by Joannes Antiochenus Melala, in the tenth book of his *Chonographia*. The original is in Greek, which may be thus translated:—"In the reign of Domitian, flourished the most learned Apollonius Tyaneus, who won for himself a great name by travelling about and making telesmes in all the places to which he came, for cities and for the countries to which they belonged. From Rome he went to Byzantium, and entering into that city (now more happily called Constantinople), he made there also many telesmes at the instance of the citizens, as that against the storks, that against the river Lycus, which passes through the middle of the city, that against the tortoises, that against the horses, and other strange things. Then afterwards, leaving Byzantium, he went and did the like in other cities. From Tyanis he came into Syria, and so to Antioch the Great, where also he was requested by the chief men of the city to make such telesmes as they had need of. And he made one against the north wind, and set it up in the east part of the city."

This author goes on, and describes at some length the charms of Apollonius against the gnats and scorpions; adding, moreover, that walking one day with the chief men of the town to observe the situation of the place, he came to a ruinous pillar, and on inquiring for what object it had been erected, was told that in the days of Caius Cæsar, when the city had been shaken by an earthquake, one Debboris, a talismanic philosopher, had set up this pillar as a telesme to protect the city in time to come. On the pillar he had fixed a brazen pectoral inscribed with certain words; but this had in process of time been consumed by lightning, and the citizens were now urgent with Apollonius to set up a new one. But the philosopher, fetching a deep sigh, refused to make any more telesmes against earthquakes.

That which has most bearing upon the present case is the

telesmes against scorpions. It is related that Apollonius caused an image of a scorpion to be molten in brass, and set it up upon a small pillar in the midst of the city of Antioch, whereupon the scorpions vanished out of all their coasts.

Telesmes of this kind are noticed as existing in various places. There was one at Hamah (the Hamath of Scripture) in Syria. In the midst of this town, says an Arabian geographer, there is a stone fixed in a wall, having upon it the figure of a scorpion; and when any one is bitten by one of these animals, he takes in clay the figure of this scorpion, and on applying this to the part affected, is immediately cured. It used to be reported that in the lower part of the district in which Cairo is situated, the crocodiles were harmless, but in the upper part devoured the people. To provide against this, the wise men cast a crocodile in lead, and inscribing it with an Egyptian charm, buried it in the foundations of a temple. The crocodiles of the upper region then became as harmless as those of the lower. But when, at the command of the Sultan Achmet-ibn Tulon, the image was melted down, the crocodiles again became as injurious as of old. This superstition was not confined to the East. It is related by Gregory of Tours, that at the repair of an old bridge in Paris, there were found the images of a serpent and a mouse in brass; and when they were taken away, the serpents and the mice came up in great numbers.

Travellers have speculated much upon the possible object of the Serpentine Column (now broken) in the grand square (hippodrome) of Constantinople. It consists of the bodies of three intertwined serpents, in hollow bronze. It formerly terminated at the top in three serpents' heads; but these have now disappeared, and it is related that when the victorious Mohammed the Second entered the city, either flushed with the excitement of triumph, or desirous of exhibiting his personal strength, he struck off one of the serpent's heads at a single blow. This curious work once belonged to the Persians, and was among the spoils taken from them at the battle of Plataea. It was even then supposed to have been very

ancient, and could not well have been less than 3000 years old. The result of our own inquiries on the spot as to the existing notions concerning its original design, coincide with the intimations of old authors—that it was a telesme designed to protect from serpents the locality in which it might be found. It is known that there once existed in the same square an equestrian statue set up against the plague, the destruction of which was supposed to have left the city exposed to fearful periodical mortalities.*

Again, there is said to have been in the same city a talismanic ship of brass, set up against the dangers of the tempestuous sea. While it stood entire the raging of that sea was repressed; but some parts having been (no one knew how) broken off and removed, the sea became again unruly and troubled. The cause of this being inquired into, the broken parts of the marvellous ship of brass were diligently sought out, and put together, and once more the wind and the seas obeyed the mighty spell thus laid upon them. That it might be seen beyond question whether this were or not really the cause why vessels could not safely come into port, the broken parts were again removed, and forthwith all ships that touched upon the coast were driven back by the violence of the waves. This confirmed the opinion that the injury to the brazen ship was the cause of the impeded navigation, and it was therefore most carefully repaired, to the great comfort of the city.†

The results of these examples, and of many others which might be cited, illustrate the prevalence of the notion that in case of any extraordinary plague, either of disease or of noxious creatures, visiting a town or country, it was usual by way of remedy to erect an image or symbol of the evil under the supposed influence of celestial configurations. That the Philistines meant something of this sort is in the highest de-

* Leunclav. *Pandect, Hist. Turc.* 130. Much more of this sort may be found in Mizald, *Cent. M.S.*, and Gaffurel, *Curiositez inouyes, sur la sculpture talasmanique des Persans*, etc. Paris, 1629; chap. 6.

† Zonare *Annales*, tom. iii. in Anastasio.

gree probable. Had the ark remained among themselves, these memorials would no doubt have been set up in the temple ; but as it was to be sent away, there was no mode of proper appropriation, but by placing these things thereon.

As to the mice, Parcelsus thought that he had found the way in which they might be prepared with reference to such an object. He gives this recipe for purging a house of mice : —“ Make an iron mouse, under the conjunction of Saturn and Mars, in the house of ♃. Imprint upon its belly ALBAMATA-TOX, &c. Then place the telesme in the middle of the house, and the vermin will instantly leave the place.” He furthermore declares that if a live mouse be tied to this image, it will die immediately.*

With regard to images of emerods, Maimonides, who lived in an age and country which entertained these old beliefs, supposes that they were so called, not from their external form—which indeed it would be difficult to give—but from a secret influence which resided in them, remedial against the malady.†

Again, the Philistine astrologers could not but have heard that *this* God had shown his divine complacency with the brazen serpent set upon a pole in the wilderness. This they, with their notions, would regard as a telesme, constructed on some such principles as have been indicated ; and as that image of a serpent was effectual against the plague of serpents, they might not unreasonably infer that similar images of their own inflictions might be equally effectual—indeed there have not been wanting persons to suggest that the whole of this set of ideas regarding telesmes may have originated in a distorted view of this transaction.

* *Archidox. Mag.*, iii. 135.

† *Morem Nevochim*, Pt. i., ch. 1.

TWENTY-NINTH WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

THE ARK RESTORED.—I SAMUEL VI. 7-21.

WITH all their anxiety to repair the error they had committed, the Philistines had a lurking suspicion that after all there might be no real connection between the ark of the Lord and the inflictions to which they had been exposed. It might have been "a chance" that happened to them. The plan to which they resorted for making this matter clear, doubtless seemed to themselves very ingenious and conclusive, and was certainly so overruled in the providence of God as to confirm them in the conviction that all these things were the work of His hand.

First, they prepared a "new cart." The word rendered "cart" is the same which is translated by "wagon" at an earlier period, in the mention of the vehicles which the king of Egypt sent to assist in transporting the family of Israel from Canaan. It would seem that carts, at least as adapted to purposes of travel, were not then used in that country, seeing that the king would scarcely have sent conveyances that might have been obtained there, and seeing that the view of them convinced Jacob of the truth of the strange story told by his sons. The Israelites themselves brought carts into Palestine; for although the more sacred utensils, as the ark, the altars, the table of shew-bread, and the golden candlesticks, were borne on the shoulders of priests and Levites, six covered carts were prepared in the wilderness, and employed in the removal of the parts of the tabernacle itself, each being drawn by two oxen. Num. vii. 3-9; compare iv. 4-15. In the pagan East, at the present day, wheel carriages or cars, are still used in the conveyance of the idols in sacred processions; but in *south-western* Asia carts are only used for the transport of agricultural produce. They are of rude construction, with solid wheels, and exceedingly like those represented in Egyptian paintings. Indeed *all carts* so represented

have the wheels solid, although all *chariots* have light wheels with spokes. We find that although the sacred arks of the Egyptians were usually borne on the shoulders of priests, carts were sometimes employed. These cars were little more than platforms mounted on small wheels, and it is likely that the cart prepared by the Philistines for the ark, and subsequently that in which David first attempted to remove it to Jerusalem, were of the same kind. In the latter case its construction will explain the anxiety of Uzzah lest it should be displaced when the cart was jolted by the oxen. 2 Sam. vi. 6. Among the sculptures of the Assyrians we do not find any instance of sacred objects being borne on carts, although wheeled vehicles were in use among them, but there is one piece where the images of the gods are borne on the shoulders of men. With these instances of mixed usage, even among the Israelites, the Philistines may, perhaps, have been doubtful as to the right mode of conveying the ark—at least they would not have been aware that it was wrong to transport it in a cart. But we must recollect that they had actually seen it borne on the shoulders of the Levites, and we therefore think that they chose this mode partly because they were reasonably afraid to carry it, and partly because this mode of conveyance was essential to the experiment they meant to try. They provided a *new* cart, in the proper feeling that this sacred object required a vehicle which had not previously been employed for meaner uses.

The experiment to be tried was this:—To the cart were attached two kine, which had never yet been under the yoke, and which, therefore, were not likely to exhibit much docility in being thus first put to draught. These kine had also calves, which were shut up at home; and from the well-known impatience of such animals in being separated from their young, it was certain that they would naturally be altogether disinclined to go away from the place where their calves remained. Then, again, the cows, thus indisposed for, and unused to, the service to which they were put, were not to be driven or guided. They were to be left entirely to

their own impulses. If they took the direct course to the land of Israel, instead of turning back to their calves, or proceeding in any other direction, it was to be concluded that it was the hand of the God of Israel which had been so heavy upon the Philistines; but if not, they had been visited in the ordinary course of events—"it was a chance"—an entirely fortuitous set of circumstances. The Lord condescended to respond to an appeal which, from a people that knew him, would have been unbecoming, although something of the same essential nature had been tried by Gideon. The kine proceeded quietly along; lowing, indeed, at being separated from their calves, and thereby showing the restraint that was laid upon their nature. And, more than this, they proceeded straight away from their young, taking no other road but the direct one to the nearest point of the land of Israel, followed by the Philistine lords, who, doubtless, beheld these things with great admiration.

The name of the first place to which the ark, by this road, came, was Beth-shemesh. The people were at work in the fields, it being harvest-time, when they caught the first sight of the approaching ark. Their delight and exultation at the return of that glory which had departed from Israel, may be well imagined, but cannot well be described. Beth-shemesh, it may be observed, was a city of the priests, and some of them, with Levites, formed a part of the population. In such places the public grief for the loss of the ark may well be supposed to have been of peculiar intensity. In the transports of their joy the Bethshemites—or, say the priests and Levites there—supposed that on an occasion so extraordinary they might allow themselves to dispense with the ordinary law regarding sacrifices, which forbade any to be offered, save on the one altar in the court of the tabernacle. They therefore took down the ark from the cart, near a great stone, which might serve for an altar. The cart they broke up to serve for fuel, partly because there was no other so ready at hand, and partly in order that, since it had borne the ark, it might not afterwards be used for any less noble

service. They then slew the kine which had drawn the cart, and offered them up upon the great stone for a burnt-offering. One who has studied the laws regulating sacrifices, perceives in this other irregularities, besides the one just pointed out. By offering the sacrifice here, they necessarily dispensed with the sacred fire, originally kindled from heaven; and, moreover, in holocausts, or sacrifices wholly consumed upon the altar, only the male animal could be used, though the female was allowed in peace offerings, when parts only of the victims were consumed upon the altar. It may be conceived that the Bethshemites were led into this last irregularity—if they knew that it was such, and they ought to have known it—by their wish to prevent these kine from being thereafter engaged in any less sacred service. These facts are not, in themselves, imputed to the Bethshemites as a fault, in the sacred narrative. But with a view to what subsequently occurred they are important, as showing the beginnings of an encroaching and disorderly spirit, regardless of some of the plainest directions of the law, which being thus far, in tenderness to them, unrebuked, led to further encroachments, by which a terrible judgment was brought upon them. Many, from insufficient reference to these circumstances—from not considering how much had previously been overlooked, are inclined to feel that the punishment which fell upon them for a further and more audacious encroachment, was too sudden and too severe; but we now see that it was to repress a growing evil, which might, if altogether unpunished, end in the entire subversion of the ritual service, which the wisdom of God had established, as the fittest for this people. There is no knowing to what lengths the matter might have gone, if the next encroachment had been left without signal chastisement.

The offence was, that they *looked into the ark*. To do this it must have been handled very irreverently, and the lid with the cherubim removed. For this there was no possible occasion or excuse, but the merest and idlest curiosity; and a painful sight to a well-regulated mind it must have been,

to see this sacred object, never approached even by the priests, without the most profound reverence, and never but by them beheld unless enveloped with veils,*—exposed in the open fields, with the sacred cover removed—and a tumultuous rabble flocking from far and near to view its mysteries exposed to the light of day. Even the Philistines had been less irreverent. They had not dared to open the ark—even to insert therein their golden offerings, but had placed them in a casket which they laid upon the top of the ark. This it is expressly stated, that the Bethshemites “took down;” and it is very possible that the intention of placing this casket in the ark, supplied them with the excuse for removing the cover.

They were heavily punished. A large number of them were smitten dead upon the spot. There is some doubt about the number. In the authorized version we read,—“He smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men.” To this it is objected, that a place like Bethshemesh, of no figure in history, and which Josephus calls a village, could hardly have had so many inhabitants altogether. But it must be remembered that the great news of the arrival of the ark would spread rapidly, and bring together in a very short time a large multitude from all the neighboring places. There is, therefore, no real objection as to the presence of such a number of people as might sustain this loss. Still, one is willing to suppose there is some mistake in this high number, and the mode of expression in stating the number is so peculiar, as to suggest that it has been misunderstood. It is to be noted that Josephus, with the same text before him for authority, makes the number to be seventy—the very number which is stated *above* fifty thousand. It is the same in the Septuagint. It is therefore reasonably conjectured,

* The ark lay in the innermost sanctuary, only entered by the high priest once a year. In its removals, the priests entered and covered it up—and only after this was done, the Levites came in and bore it away. It was not lawful even for a Levite to touch it, on pain of death.

that these authorities read not “fifty thousand,” but “fifty of a thousand,”—which, by a kind of decimation of the number of offenders, whatever was the actual population, would make the whole number concerned not exceed 1400— which seems so suitable a population for such a place as Bethshemesh, as may suggest that this transaction occurred before any considerable number of people had time to gather from the neighboring parts. The supply of the particle *of* in such a case, is not only admissible, but is often required by the construction of the Hebrew language. This often occurs in every version—and among other and very numerous instances, the reader may refer to Exod. xix. 12; xxxvi. 8, 19, 34. Josh. x. 13. 2 Sam. xxiii. 24. 2 Kings xvii. 25.

TWENTY-NINTH WEEK—THURSDAY.

ISRAEL AT MIZPEH.—I SAMUEL VII. 1-6.

AFTER the death of Eli and his sons, there was no one in Israel who stood before the people, with any claims to attention comparable to those of Samuel. His constant presence at the tabernacle had made the Israelites familiar with his person and history from childhood. The vision of the Lord with which he had even in early youth been favored, followed by subsequent communications, which enabled him to speak for warning, for reproof, for counsel “in the name of the Lord,” pointed him out as a commissioned prophet—a character rare and occasional before his time, but which henceforth becomes conspicuous and frequent in the history of Israel. After the account of that remarkable denunciation upon Eli and upon his house, which we have already considered, the historian, before proceeding to the public transactions, carries forward the history of Samuel to the point where he means to take it up again, by the remark—“And Samuel grew; and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the

ground. And all Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba, knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord." These words may indicate the nature of the influence which Samuel exerted during the twenty years following the subjugation of Israel by the Philistines. During this period, we cannot doubt that he continually lifted up his voice against the corruption of the times, and strove to rouse the people to a sense of the duty they owed to their country and their God. His exhortations were greatly needed. The abominations of the sons of Eli had corrupted the people, and brought discredit upon the worship of God. Under these circumstances, idolatry had reappeared and become prevalent, while the ark lay neglected by the nations at Kirjath-jearim, whither it had been removed from Bethshemesh, and deposited in the house of a man named Abinadab, who probably was, as Josephus affirms, a Levite—though in that case, he could only have been a sojourner at Kirjath-jearim, which was not a Levitical city. This man's son, Eleazer, was set apart to the charge of the ark; probably to keep things clean and orderly about it, to guard from intrusion the place where it lay, and to prevent it from being used or touched irreverently. It was thus the ark remained for nearly half a century, until it was removed by David. It would seem from Jer. vii. 12, 14; xxvi. 6–9, that Shiloh, so long the seat of the ark and the tabernacle, had been destroyed by the Philistines, which may account for its not having been restored to that place; and may have tended in no small degree to increase the disorders of the times, by inducing much neglect of, and irregularity in, the performance of the ritual services and sacrifices.

During the same period, the Israelites seem to have submitted in hopeless despondency to the dominion of the Philistines. The numbers of that people were too small to allow them to think of occupying the country they had conquered; nor did they at any time evince much disposition to spread themselves inland. They were content with their position on and near the coast, and seem only to have attached a few

border towns to their own territory ; the rest—or more properly speaking, the southern part of the land—they held simply in military subjection by means of garrisons established at different strong points in the country. The Israelites were of course made to defray the heavy expense of these garrisons ; and this, with the tribute exacted by their uncircumcised masters, could not but form a heavy burden upon an agricultural people like the Israelites, and must have been a serious check upon their temporal prosperity, if it did not keep them in an impoverished condition.

By the time that the twenty years had expired, the exhortations of Samuel, and probably some other righteous men, had brought the Israelites round to a better state of feeling and judgment ; and, convinced that their best course to prosperity and health would be secured by placing themselves under the guidance of a man so wise and holy as Samuel, he was formally recognized by them as their judge—although most of the essential functions of that office had already come insensibly into his hands, and been exercised by him.

The first act of Samuel as judge, was to extirpate idolatry ; and he hesitated not to promise the people, that, at this cost, God would not fail to deliver them from the yoke of the Philistines. He then called an assembly of the people at Mizpeh, on the borders of Judah and Benjamin (not the Mizpeh beyond the Jordan), to engage with him in a solemn act of prayer and humiliation before the Lord, as a suitable commencement of a new and more prosperous career. Mizpeh seems to have been chosen as a known place of concourse to the tribes on high national occasions. It was here that the tribes gathered together, when the injured Levite called them to vengeance. Judges xx. 1.

The ceremonies, being not at the tabernacle, and not under the regular ordinance of the law as administered by the priesthood, offer some peculiarities which may well be noticed. They fasted that day, and began it by *drawing water and pouring it out before the Lord*, and said—“ We have sinned against the Lord.” We find no such ceremonial as

this prescribed in the law, or exhibited in any former instance; yet it must have had a very distinct and intelligent signification to the people. Some have explained it by reference to the custom at the feast of tabernacles (in a later age), of drawing water from the pool of Siloam, and pouring it out before the Lord. But there is no trace of this custom in the law, or indeed in the Old Testament. It seems to have come into use after the captivity, and it was an act of rejoicing,—not, like this, of humiliation. There is an allusion to it in John, vii. 36, 37. It is related by Jerome as a tradition of the Jews—that, as in the water of jealousy, curses were cast into the water, by being written and the writing washed off into it, and that idolaters were tried by drinking of it. If any idolater denied the worship of idols and tasted it, his lips became immediately so glued together that they could not be separated, and he thus became known, and he was put to death. In answer to this it is sufficient to remark, that the water was not drunk, but *poured out*. Some say it was a symbol of the pouring out of their hearts in humiliation before the Lord, and of the atonement and expiation of their sins, which passed away as water, to be remembered no more. Others make this act a sign of their renunciation of idolatry, so that as of water entirely poured out, nothing of it should remain. Josephus makes it a libation; but it does not appear that water was used by the Jews in their libations. Another opinion, enforced by some of good judgment, is, that the Israelites, to render the fasting more resolute, and in evidence of its intensity, drew forth, and cast away from the wells and reservoirs, all the water to be found in the place. They might have been led to this, by considering that the indiscretion of one person might neutralize the intended effect of this solemnity. But in case this were done, how did they get water to quench their thirst in the evening after the fast, and what were the fixed inhabitants likely to say to this exhaustion of their store of water? There is something or other wrong in all these *special* interpretations. We take this act to have been the sign and symbol, or rather

confirmation of an oath—a solemn vow. To pour out water on the ground is an ancient way of taking a solemn oath in the East—the words and promises that had gone forth from their mouth, being as “water spilt upon the ground, that cannot be gathered up again.” Mr. Roberts well illustrates this by an anecdote from the Hindu mythology: “When the god Vishnu, in the disguise of a dwarf, requested the giant Maha-Ville (Bali), to grant him one step of his kingdom, the favor was conceded, and CONFIRMED by Maha-Ville pouring out water before the dwarf. But in that ancient work, the Scanda Purana, where the account is given of the marriage of the god Siva with Paravati, it is said of the father—He placed the hand of the goddess Paravati, genetrix of the world, in the hand of Parama Easuran (Siva), and *pouring out the water*, said, ‘I give her to thee with all my heart.’” This, therefore, was done in confirmation of the compact.

TWENTY-NINTH WEEK—FRIDAY.

EBENEZER.—I SAMUEL VII. 7-14.

It is easier to gain a battle than to retain in long subjection the nation by whom the battle has been lost. The Philistines, however potent in the field, seem to have been consciously weak for occupation—their small territory being but ill able to afford the number of warriors, constantly in arms, which were required to maintain permanent garrisons in a country much larger and far more populous than their own. This feeling would make them more jealous and suspicious than a greater power would have been; and they would be led to exercise severer measures of repression and safeguard, by the consciousness of wanting an overwhelming force, immediately available for the putting down of any overt act of revolt that might occur. The strong endures and tolerates much, in the consciousness that his power, whenever he

chooses to put it forth, is sufficient to redress all that may have gone wrong. The weak is watchful to prevent or smother all that bears the possibility of danger, in order to prevent a trial of strength, of the issue of which any doubt can be entertained. Of this class were the Philistines, who were under much alarm when they heard of the great assemblage of the tribes at Mizpeh—apprehending that such a gathering, under one so well known as Samuel, boded no good to their dominions, and might be intended to organize the nation's assertion of its own independence. They therefore, without waiting for precise information, hastened to advance in military force towards the place of assemblage. The Israelites had at the time no such immediate designs as were imputed to them, although they doubtless looked forward to eventual deliverance from the sway of their neighbors. They were greatly distressed when this news came to them, being wholly unprepared for action against the Philistines. Probably the actual impulse of the moment would have led them not to offer battle to their oppressors, but to tender submission to them. But now was the time for Samuel to show himself equal to the exigency imposed upon him, and worthy of the leadership of the people, to which he had been appointed. It is true that he was a man of peace, whose habits and associations were far different from those of persons who, like David, have been "men of war from their youth." But his heart was full of patriotism and faith; and he shrunk not from encouraging the people to stand up against the approaching host, nor from leading them himself to the battle.

The steps taken by him were, however, peculiar, and deserve attention. First, Samuel "took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt-offering wholly unto the Lord." By this it is usually understood, that he offered it entire, without taking off the skin, which was the perquisite of the priest, and without dividing the carcass into parts, as usual, and separating the head, the tail, the feet, and the internal fat. Samuel could not be unacquainted with the proper ceremonies, but there was probably no time for their exact ob-

servance. Samson's former case had now become his—the Philistines were upon him. At the first view there appear also other irregularities—equal, seemingly, to such, as before and after, drew down the Divine displeasure. First, Samuel erected an altar for this sacrifice; although nothing is more distinct in the law, than that there were to be no altars or offerings but at the great altar at the place of the tabernacle. Samuel did the same thing on other occasions, as did, at a later period, Elijah on Mount Carmel. It would also appear that Samuel himself, at this as at the other times, offered the sacrifice, although this was a function peculiar to the priesthood, and Samuel was only a Levite. This, also, is parallel to the case of Elijah. That they committed no offence, but rather did what was well-pleasing to God, appears from their sacrifices being most signally accepted. In the case of Elijah, this was shown by the descent of fire from heaven upon the sacrifice, which was consumed thereby; and this made that sacrifice less irregular than that of Samuel, for it was not lawful to offer sacrifice with any fire but that originally kindled from heaven, and which was preserved for the use of the great tabernacle altar. It is clear that Samuel's sacrifice must have been offered with common fire.

The difficulty is to reconcile the severe judgments denounced and inflicted for irregularities in the ritual service, with not only the complete impunity, but the direct sanction and approval, which attended the irregular actions of Samuel and other prophets with regard to the ritual observances. The point is of importance; for it is the action of the prophets from this time forward upon public affairs which gives to the history of the Jews much of its *peculiar* character—for which reason we mean to bestow especial attention upon their proceedings, without a clear apprehension of which the history itself can never be well and clearly understood.

It would appear, then, that the prophets, as men divinely authorized and inspired, were regarded as having a right to dispense with the strict requirements of the law on special and extraordinary occasions; and that as prompted by the

Spirit, it was lawful for them to do that which would be most criminal in persons not so authorized, and would bring down condign punishment upon them. And this authorized departure, when occasion demanded, from the strict requirements of the law, could not but operate beneficially upon the public mind. The rigid enforcement of every jot and tittle of the law, on ordinary occasions, might eventually, without the presence of a corrective and counteracting influence, have created a sort of idolatry for the mere letter of the law, and of every ritual detail, as in itself a divine thing. But the permitted departures therefrom by the prophets corrected this tendency, by directing attention more to the spiritual essence of those observances—teaching, as Samuel himself expressly declared on one occasion, that “obedience was better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of lambs.” The diligent reader of Scripture is aware that this upholding of the spirit above the mere letter of the ritual service was a peculiar function of the prophets, appearing with more and more distinctness as the time advances, until at last the prophets declare with great plainness of speech, that the mere ritual service in all its parts, and the most sacred solemnities prescribed by the law, were, in the nakedness of their literal truth—apart from the spiritual influences which should be connected with them—not only unacceptable to the Lord, but abomination in his sight. Thus a most important part of the prophetic office was to maintain the spiritual character of the Hebrew worship, and to prevent the degeneracy of the people into such mere ritualism as they had fallen into at the time our Lord appeared. Indeed, it is important to notice, that this character of Judaism, as then existing, followed, and was no doubt in a great degree the effect of, the long discontinuance of the prophetic office. Would not a man like Isaiah, for instance, have lifted up his voice, day and night, against such a state of religion as prevailed in the time of our Saviour?

Still, these remarkable departures from the regular course of ritual observance, were only resorted to when that course

could not well be followed. It was clear that if, in this case, there was to be any sacrifice to seal the covenant which Israel had taken, it could only be then and there, as soon as it appeared that the Philistines were advancing. Besides, as it appears that Shiloh had been destroyed, it is doubtful whether the tabernacle and the altar, although preserved, had yet been set up elsewhere, or the regular service maintained. So, in the case of Elijah, a more regular sacrifice than that which he offered at Mount Carmel would have been impossible; for there was in fact no authorized altar of the Lord in the kingdom which was the scene of his labors and his mighty deeds. The temple and altar were afar off in the neighboring kingdom of Judah.

Strengthened by these religious acts, the Israelites stood their ground when the Philistines appeared in battle array against them. They had only to stand still; for the Lord had put their enemies into such confusion by a tremendous thunder-storm, that they soon fled in dismay, and were pursued with great slaughter by the triumphant Israelites. The thunder was no doubt attended with lightning, which probably, as Josephus says, flashed in their faces, and struck their weapons out of their hands. He adds, also, that there was an earthquake, which caused great gaps in the earth, into which they fell. At the place where the pursuit ceased, and where it was seen that the Philistines were utterly beaten, and that Israel once more was free, Samuel set up a great stone, and called it Eben-ezer (the stone of help), saying, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." Now it is a memorable fact, which gave a touching emphasis to this memorial, that this was the very place where, twenty years before, the Israelites were defeated, and the ark of God was taken. The stone of help thus became a two-fold monument.

TWENTY-NINTH WEEK—SATURDAY.

CORRUPTION OF JUSTICE.—I SAMUEL VII. 15.—VIII.

It is remarkable how little is related of Samuel calculated to throw light upon his character and position during the twenty years in which he was the sole ruler of the Hebrew state. We hear more of him before he attains that high distinction, and more after he had been reluctantly constrained to resign much of his authority into other hands. Peace and prosperity are, however, seldom fruitful in materials for narrative; and the inference from the silence of the history is, that the people enjoyed ease and security under his rule. It is related, that his usual residence was at Ramah, his native place, whence he proceeded, in yearly circuit, to administer justice to the people,—at Mizpeh, Gilgal, and Bethel,—all of them places of sacred interest in the ancient history of the Israelites, and selected, probably, for that reason. We do not find that any writer has thought it needful to inquire, why, if the object of Samuel was, as in the circuits of our own judges, to carry justice to the people, and to render it of more easy access to them, the circuit was confined to places so near to each other—all in fact lying within the narrow limits of the small tribe of Benjamin. We should rather expect that, with that object in view, one of the towns would have been away in the north, another in the south, and the third in the country beyond the Jordan. We can only explain this by supposing that in reality it is only in the territory of the southern tribes that Samuel's authority was *practically* acknowledged, or that had any concern with the part of his history we have gone through. The northern and central tribes seem to have been little affected by the triumphs or defeats of the Philistines, who do not appear to have ever manifested much solicitude to push their dominion to any distance from their own country. Supposing they had remained unaffected by these circumstances, their internal government

must be conceived to have proceeded under the authority of their own tribunal chiefs and elders, without any further reference to the government of Samuel, than to recognize it as a fact existing in the south, and as, perhaps, in conjunction with his prophetic character, giving him a claim to consideration in case he should have occasion to bring forward any matter affecting the general interests of all the tribes. The probability of this limitation of Samuel's practical authority to the southern tribes—we may say Judah, Benjamin, Dan, and Simeon—is confirmed by the fact that when Samuel made his sons his assistants in the administration of justice, he did not send them north or east, but only south, fixing their stations at Beersheba on the southernmost border of the land.

This appointment was made in the latter part of the period under our survey. It may be doubted whether Samuel acted wisely in making this appointment—especially if, as seems to have been understood, the nomination in his lifetime of his sons, to exercise the functions he had hitherto discharged alone, was an intimation that he meant them to be regarded as his successors in such government as he exercised. Nothing of the kind had ever been done before. No son had hitherto succeeded his father as judge; and Gideon, for one, had nobly declined to nominate any one of his sons as his successor. Besides, no judge had hitherto taken office but at the special appointment of God, or at the spontaneous call of the people. Whether his intentions were justly interpreted or not, his integrity of purpose is beyond all suspicion; and his proceeding, however mistaken, or biased by fatherly partialities, could only have been founded on a sincere regard for the welfare of the people, and a deep anxiety to carry out the principles which had guided his own administration, and which he believed to be essential to the abiding prosperity of the nation. He might naturally suppose that sons trained up by him, and introduced to office under his eye, would be better qualified than any other persons to carry out his views, and to walk in his steps. There might be others as well or

better able to do this, and qualified to hold the reins of the state with even a firmer hand ; but he could not know them so well, or trust them so fully ; and thus, almost unconsciously, perhaps, he was led to give a kind of sanction to the hereditary principle of government, which was soon to be turned against himself.

It does not appear that this appointment was at first regarded with any discontent ; and it cannot be said what results might have ensued had the sons been like their father, and had their conduct given satisfaction to the people. But this was not the case ; and Samuel is not blameworthy for not knowing his sons better, for the misconduct into which they fell was of a nature which could only have been developed by the possession of power. Uncertain, as they must have felt, of their tenure of office, and lamenting, as they probably did, that their father had, after such long possession of power, done so little to enlarge the patrimony of his family, they made haste to be rich, and in doing this they fell into the temptation and the snare which ever attends the inordinate pursuit of worldly gain. The most easy way of doing this was to sell justice, and they sold it. "They took bribes, and perverted justice." It is highly creditable to the law, and its administration among the Hebrews, that from this offence, so common throughout the ancient and modern East as scarcely to excite any of the abhorrence and indignation with which it is regarded among ourselves, their history is signally and memorably free, though it crept in at a later and more corrupt age, and is sometimes rebuked by the prophets. It must, at this time, have appeared particularly heinous, as contrasted with the spotless administration of Samuel himself, who, in the grand address in which he laid down his power, could call upon the assembled people to avouch the cleanness of his hands. "Behold, here I am ; witness against me before the Lord, and before his anointed : whose ox have I taken ? or whose ass have I taken ? or whom have I defrauded ? or whom have I oppressed ? or of whose hand have I received any bribe, to blind mine eyes

therewith?" The loud and ready answer of that one-voiced multitude was, "Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand."

The corruption of justice throughout the East impresses an emphatic value upon this testimony in behalf of Samuel, scarcely credible to us who regard the matter as scarcely ground for commendation in a judge, being points of ordinary and common duty which it would be gross dishonor to neglect; and although the administration of justice was, for the East, singularly pure among the Israelites, the fact that, although its corruption was deemed to be an offence and a wrong, in their judgments it was not a *disgraceful* offence or a *shameful* wrong, as with us, appears to be shown in the credit attached to exemption from it. Men are not held in distinguished honor for conduct which it would be ignominious *not* to exemplify.

Speaking of the administration of justice in Egypt, Mr. Lane says, "The rank of a plaintiff or defendant, or a bribe from either, often influences the decision of the judge. In general the Naib* and Mooltee † take bribes, and the Ckadee ‡ receives from his Naib. On some occasions, particularly in long litigations, bribes are given by each party, and the decision is awarded in favor of him who pays highest. This frequently happens in difficult law-suits; and even in cases respecting which the law is perfectly clear, strict justice is not always administered; bribes and false testimony being employed by one of the parties. The shocking extent to which bribery, and the suborning false witnesses, are carried on in Moslem courts of law, and among them in the tribunal of the Ckadee at Cairo, can be scarcely credited." § Matters are in this respect still worse, if possible, in the further East. Mr. Roberts, illustrating Isaiah v. 23, from Indian customs says: "Not a man in a thousand will hesitate to give or receive a bribe, when there is the least chance of its being kept

* Deputy of the judge.

† Chief Doctor of the Law.

‡ Chief Judge—usually written *Cadi*.

§ *Modern Egyptians*, i. 136.

secret. Nearly all the situations which are at the disposal of the native chiefs, are acquired by *ki-cooly*, i. e., 'the reward of the hand,' and yet there are numerous proverbs against this system." *

Thirtieth Week—Sunday.

THE HOLINESS OF GOD.—I SAMUEL V. 10.

WHEN the Lord visited with his awful judgment the men who trespassed in regard to the ark, the men of Bethshemesh cried,—“Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?” This judgment was therefore not without its fruit, since it impressed upon them a more lively conviction than they had been wont to entertain of the holiness of God. But it may be asked, What is this holiness? In the general notion of it, it is his moral perfection—that attribute by which all moral imperfection is removed from his nature. The holiness of the will of God is therefore that by which he invariably and necessarily chooses that which is morally good, and refuses that which is morally evil. This attribute implies, that no sinful or wicked inclination can be found in God—that it is abhorrent to his very nature. Hence he is said to be incapable of being tempted to evil; † and to be light, and without darkness ‡—that is, holy and without sin. It further implies, that he never chooses that which is deceitful and false, but only that which is truly good—what his perfect intelligence recognizes to be such.

This attribute is, to our own apprehension, so essential to the mere idea of God—is in itself so obvious and self-evident,—that we may at times be inclined to wonder at the frequency with which it is stated and enforced in the Scriptures.

* *Oriental Illustrations*, p. 402.

† James i. 13.

‡ 1 John iii. 8.

But the view of the Divine character out of which this feeling arises, is itself the creation of those Scriptural declarations on the subject; and the formation of this high conception of God, was the use they were designed to serve, and which we thus find that they have served.

It may also be remembered, that to the Hebrews the enforcement of this doctrine was of an importance which it is scarcely in our power to understand or appreciate fully. The surrounding heathen—indeed all the heathen, had very different and inferior notions of the gods they served. Holiness was not their attribute. They were very capable of sin; and the choice of good in preference to evil, was not essential to their nature. These were above man in their essence and in their sovereign powers; but in character they were men, and not always good men. The popular mythologies of every nation ascribed to the gods acts which would have been vile even in men. There was no one attribute by which Jehovah was so pointedly distinguished from the gods of the nations as by this. Its maintenance, its constant assertion, was therefore of the utmost importance among a people whose tendencies so often were to merge the worship of their own Lord in that of the neighboring idols. This attribute set a great gulf between them, which could not be overpassed so long as its presence was constantly kept before the mind of the people. So long as they retained in remembrance the essential and distinctive holiness of God—so long as they did not allow themselves to think God was altogether such a one as themselves (Psalm l. 21), it was impossible for them to compare Him with other gods, still less to prefer any of them to Him.

Such was the special use of this doctrine to the Israelites; but there was another, and a more general use in it, of which we share the benefit with them. It is a check to sin, and an incitement to righteousness. It seems impossible for any one to realize a clear and distinct idea of the holiness of God—that sin, that whatever defiles, is abhorrent to his pure and holy nature, without hearing his voice crying to us—“O, do not that abominable thing which I hate!” When sin entices,

and when temptation is near, we cannot doubt that he hates it, for he is holy; and if we are strongly persuaded of his holiness, we can never be in doubt respecting the things which he, a holy God, must hate. It will then be impossible for us to sin but in the presence of an offended God, a crucified Saviour, a burning world, and a judgment to come.

This use of the holiness of God in promoting the holiness of those that love him, is constantly enforced in Scripture. In the New Testament, no less than in the Old, that God is holy, is urged as a reason why we should be holy, that we may be like him—that is, in a state of unison with him and conformity to him—in a state of fitness for his presence. Surely that attribute which, of all others, is proclaimed in the courts of heaven continually by the cherubim, and by saints made perfect in glory, is one of most exalted importance, and claims our most careful thought—not abstract thought, but thought evidenced in, and having a wholesome influence upon, all our conduct in the church and in the world. Indeed, we are told, that “without holiness no man shall see God.”—Heb. xii. 14. It is therefore of supreme importance for us to consider what this holiness—a reflection of God’s holiness—is, seeing that it becomes so essential to our welfare. We apprehend, indeed, that without holiness, not only will no one see God, but will have even *no real desire to see him*. There are thousands who desire a place in heaven—not because they love God, not because they, being made partakers of his holiness, long for more perfect union with him and conformity to him—but because they dread hell, and know no other way of escaping from it but by going to heaven. But of such is not the kingdom of heaven. They would be as miserable as in hell, in the immediate presence of ONE with whose holiness their souls have not been brought into unison. Let us believe that it is impossible for the soul of man to be happy with God, till it has become holy like him.

Seeing, then, that to be holy is to be like Him, it behoves us to count holiness as our highest attainment and most glorious distinction. And, instead of imitating the ignorant

Bethshemites, in putting away the ark of God from us, because we cannot stand before his holiness, let us rather strive after this assimilation to him, that we may be enabled to keep the ark among us. But that, indeed, we are commanded to be holy as he is holy, it might seem presumption to aspire so highly. It is a glorious privilege, and it becomes us to regard it as such, while it is not the less an essential duty. Here our ambition may have free scope; and our highest aspirings to a greater degree of that holiness which brings us nearer to God, by making us more and more like him, meets no rebuke. To stand before a holy God in holiness like his, may indeed seem difficult to flesh and blood; but there is a way, a safe, a certain, and a pleasant way, known of those to whom Christ is revealed as a Redeemer, and to whom the Spirit has come as a Sanctifier.

What this holiness in God is, has been pointed out. In man it consists in that blamelessness of feeling and conduct which at once constitutes and adorns the Christian character; and also in the habitual *abhorrence* of sin and love of goodness.—1 John, iii. 7; Rom. vi. 18. In this way the Christian becomes like God, and loves him from similarity of disposition, and in return is loved by God, as a dutiful son who resembles his father is loved by him. Man is destined by God for holiness, and for the happiness which is invariably connected with it; and hence, when any one is admitted to the communion of saints, holiness becomes the great object of his pursuit. Without this, his admission into the church, and his fellowship with the saints, would avail him little; indeed, his condemnation would be the greater on account of these privileges, for of him to whom much is given, much will be required. Holiness is therefore justly stated by theologians as at once the result and the evidence of conversion, or of repentance and regeneration. Let no one cherish vain delusions. He who is destitute of holiness, or who is remiss in the pursuit of it, has not been converted, has not repented, has not been born of the Spirit, has not been sanctified.

THIRTIETH WEEK—MONDAY.

A CHANGE DEMANDED.—I SAMUEL VIII. 4-7.

No nation, perhaps, can render so noble a testimony to the integrity and public spirit of its ruler, as when, in the conviction that he will do right, they call upon him to lay down his own power for the public good, and leave to him the organization of the new government and the choice of the ruler who is to supersede him. This was what the elders of Israel did when they appeared before Samuel one day at Ramah, and requested of him the establishment of a regal government. It does not appear to us that the solemnity of this great circumstance has been adequately apprehended. The demand was not the outcry of an ignorant and deluded rabble, but the grave and deliberate application of the *elders* of Israel—of those whose years or high standing in the nation gave to it the utmost weight and importance. It was not made from mere impulse of the moment, but was the result of previous deliberation and conference; for the elders repaired to Ramah *for the purpose* of proposing the matter to the prophet; and beyond all doubt they had met together and considered the matter well before they took a step so decided. It seems to us that the subject was set forth with considerable respect for and delicacy to Samuel. The elders were careful to show that their movement arose from no discontent with him. But they intimated that he was now advancing in years, and his sons evinced no disposition to tread in his steps—by this implying that had it been otherwise they would have been content to let matters take their natural course, and to see his power consolidated in the hands of his sons, and inherited by them. But since this was not the case, they were anxious to avert the evils likely to ensue upon his demise, by having the secular government established on a permanent basis during his lifetime, and under the sanction of his authority.

It is true that they went so far as to limit his action in this great matter by declaring the form of government they desired to see established. They must "have a king to rule them like the nations." It is far from unlikely that this preference for a regal government, at this time, was suggested by circumstances with which we are unacquainted. It is possible that there were already signs of movement against Israel among the Philistines on the west, and the Ammonites on the east, which suggested that they would soon be called upon to engage in a severe military contest, without their having any one before the public qualified by his position or prowess to take the command of their armies, and lead them to battle. Samuel himself, besides being advanced in years, was a man of peaceful pursuits, and his sons had forfeited, or rather had not won, the respect and confidence of the people; while, as Levites, they were scarcely the class of persons to be looked to for the performance of such duties. We do not indeed lay too much stress on this sort of disqualification, for in those days there was no military profession, and almost every man was more or less qualified to wield the sword and the spear. But still, as the results of military conflicts were then often determined by the prowess and experience of individuals, it was a natural subject of anxiety that they saw no one with pre-eminent claims, from fitness or station, to be their leader in the conflicts that seemed to be at hand. They were then led to regard as enviable in this respect the condition of the neighboring nations, each of which had a king who relieved his subjects from all anxiety in this matter, being naturally, as his chief office, the leader in war; and, from the necessities of his position, trained from his youth up in all martial exercises. To him belonged the consideration and decision of all matters of peace and war; and his people were spared the trouble of deliberation and decision. They had nothing to do but to obey his orders and follow him to battle.

It may also appear, from previous indications, that the Israelites craved to have an earthly sovereign, surrounded with

the usual attributes of power and state, and representing to the eyes of those around them, the power and dignity of the nation. Besides, the eastern mind is so essentially and pervadingly regal, that to be without a sovereign is scarcely an intelligible state of things to an oriental; and they must have had occasion to feel that the absence of a king gave them an appearance of inferiority in the eyes of their neighbors, incapable of understanding or appreciating the special and glorious privileges of their position. The want of a royal head must often have been cast in their teeth by their neighbors, as a kind of stigma; and they would in time come to regard it as such themselves, and long to be in this respect on a level with other nations. Even good men—able to appreciate the advantages of existing institutions, would eventually become weary of a peculiarity which the nations would obtusely persist in regarding as discreditable.

This principle, which has not been before urged as contributing to the explanation of this transaction, does not want such confirmation as historical illustration might supply. We remember to have read some years ago, in Harris's Collection of Travels, that when the English and Dutch were competing for power and influence in the East, the English, in order to damage their rivals, industriously circulated the dangerous secret that the Dutch HAD NO KING. The oriental mind was astonished and perplexed by the indication of a condition so utterly beyond the scope of its experience and comprehension; and the Dutch, alarmed for the effect of this slur upon their respectability, stoutly repelled the charge, as an infamous calumny, affirming that they had a very great king, and exalting for the nonce their stadtholder to that higher rank.

The magnates of Israel—who are the parties we behold moving in this matter—may also have considered that although a form of government had been organized by Moses, in which the presence of a human king was not recognized, he had clearly contemplated the probability that a regal government might eventually be adopted, and had even laid down certain

rules involving principles by which the conduct of their future king was to be guided. Deut. xvii. 14–20. This, it might be urged, was inconsistent with any absolute interdiction of the erection of the state into a temporal monarchy, and that the time had now, if ever, come, which the wise and far-seeing lawgiver had contemplated.

Such seem to us the considerations by which the elders of Israel were influenced in the important step which was now taken by them. They were not satisfactory to Samuel, who, it is clear from the words in which the Divine will was presently made known to him, deemed himself personally affronted by what he could not but view as a requisition to abdicate the authority which he had so long and efficiently exercised. There may have been something of human infirmity in his displeasure. As men grow older in the possession of power, it becomes dearer to them, and the more reluctant they are to part with it; and in this case Samuel could not but see that, whatever consideration he might retain, from the deference of the people and of the king, it would be rather a concession than a right, and the most essential powers of the government would and must go into the hands of the new sovereign.

But hurt and displeased as Samuel was, under this keen sense of a nation's ingratitude, he is not stated to have expressed any opinion till he felt authorized from the Lord to do so. His resource was that which has been the resource of the servants of God in all ages: "Samuel prayed unto the Lord." The answer to his prayer was not delayed. He was told to act as the people desired, but to do so under a strong and decided protest, that in this they had forsaken the wiser and happier course, and would involve themselves in greater troubles than those from which they sought to be freed. Samuel thought they had rejected him. But the Divine Voice directed him to a broader view of the question: "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected ME, that *I* should not reign over them."

If the reader bears in mind the explanation which has

been already given of the principles of the theocracy as established under the institutions of Moses,* he will be at no loss to see the grounds on which the course which the people were bent upon, and which they were allowed under protest to follow, was regarded with disapprobation. Jehovah was their king, and from past experience they had no reason to doubt that so long as they remained true to him, he would not fail to do all things well and prosperously for them. He would, as he had done, raise up from time to time faithful men, abundantly qualified for the public service, whether in peace or war. They, not knowing the hearts and qualities of untried men, might not see the man or men then qualified for such service. But HE knew; and in the appointed time and place would not fail to call out from among the thousands of Israel the man best suited for the work there was to do.

It may be suspected that the Israelites had grown weary of a system of government which made their welfare entirely dependent upon their right conduct; and were partly led to desire this change under some vague impression that a permanent government, under a king, would relieve them from some of this distinct responsibility for their conduct to an infallible authority which could not be mistaken, and against which they had no right to murmur; and they may have dimly fancied that their well-being might henceforth be more connected with the character of their government and the qualities of their king. But as the Lord did not mean to abandon the Israelites to their own devices, or to allow the great objects of his dealings with them to be frustrated, it became important that the same principle of national responsibility to him should be preserved under any form to which the government might be altered.

* See Fourteenth Week—Sunday.

THIRTIETH WEEK—TUESDAY.

MONARCHIAL INSTITUTIONS.—I SAMUEL VIII. 9-22.

GOD had promised to Abraham that kings should come from him;* and Jacob had foretold that the sceptre should not depart from Judah until Shiloh came.† Taking this with the directions laid down in the law respecting the principles which should guide the nation in the appointment of a king, and those which were set down for the regulation of the king's conduct, the Israelites might reasonably have inferred, that it was the Divine intention that a monarchial government should be established eventually among them. More than this—we apprehend, that they were right in this conclusion, not only for the same reasons, but because it must from ancient times have been determined that the ancestry of the Messiah should be illustrated and distinguished by royal rank in the house of David. But if this were the view of the Israelites, their course was to wait the appointed time, when God should see fit to establish a monarchy under such forms as might not have obscured, but illustrated, the great principles of the theocratical government, and with such restrictions as might have secured the rights and privileges of the chosen and peculiar people. The least they could have done, was to apply respectfully to ascertain the Lord's will in the matter, by the means which He had appointed. They might thus, not unknowingly, have expressed their wishes; and had they done so, they would probably have been told, that the time for the accomplishment of their desires was not far off; that the man was already born who was destined to reign over them.

We cannot but think, that had the matter been left, as it might have been, entirely in the Lord's hands, the monarchial government would have been established, and David would have been the first king. How we know not; but the crown

* Gen. xvi. 6.

† Gen. xlix. 10.

was eventually secured to him through greater difficulties than need have occurred, had not the monarchy been prematurely established. It is easy to suppose, for instance, that in the one case as in the other, he might have been brought into public notice by the overthrow of Goliath, which, from the feeling of the people in favor of monarchy, would probably have resulted in the offer of the crown to him; and as this would have been in accordance with the purposes of God, he would have become king, under such circumstances, and with such conditions, as would have secured the true doctrine of the Hebrew government from being thrown into the shade.

It is said, indeed, by Hosea, xiii. 11, that the Lord "gave them a king in his anger." But this does not militate against the view we have taken; for it is quite true, from the history, that in answer to their unreasonable and unbecoming demand, he did give them their first king in his anger; did concede the premature establishment of the regal government in his wrath. But it does not therefore follow that it would not ere long have been established with his favor, in the person of "the man after God's own heart."

The grievous error of the elders of Israel was, that instead of taking counsel of their Divine King, as they were bound to do, they made a peremptory demand in a manner in which, according to the principles of the constitution, they had no right to determine. And there was another error, scarcely inferior to this, that instead of manifesting any anxiety to secure the liberties and invaluable public rights which they enjoyed under their present government, they wanted to have a king to rule them as the nations around were ruled. If this mean anything, it means, that in exchange for their present mild government, they were willing to subject themselves to the rule of a despotic sovereign, invested with absolute power over their substance and their lives. O foolish people and unwise! How wonderful it is that the Lord endured their perverse manners so long, not only in the wilderness, but in the promised land!

That there might be no misapprehension in this matter,

the prophet, in the audience of the people, drew a graphic picture of the kind of government to which, in desiring to be governed like the nations, they wished to be subjected. There can be no question that in this picture, the monarchical governments of the time and country are correctly represented; and, in fact, the details agree in every essential point with the existing despotisms of the East. "This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your men-servants, and your maid-servants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. And he will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. And ye shall cry out in that day, because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day."

The conditions of regal power thus described, are, and always have been, so familiar to the oriental mind, that we know not anything which gives to ourselves a more strong and distinct idea of the immunities and peculiar privileges which the Israelites practically enjoyed, than the fact, that the prophet knew the condition in which they lived to be so different from that which he described, as to be not without hope, that the picture which he drew might have some effect in changing their purpose, especially when they were also aware that the course they were taking was not regarded with favor by their divine King. In this reasonable expectation the prophet was disappointed. They had, it seems,

counted the cost, and were willing to pay it; or rather, the love of change blinded their eyes, and they were inclined to fancy that the advantages they imagined themselves to perceive in the kingly government, especially as to their standing among the nations, would more than counterbalance the disadvantages the prophet set before them. Their answer therefore was—"Nay: but we WILL have a king over us, that he may judge us, and go out before us to fight our battles."

On this, Samuel sorrowfully dismissed them to their homes, that he might have time to take the necessary measures for effecting this great change. But although the people thus, with criminal disregard of their rights as men, and their privileges as the Lord's peculiar people, declared their willingness to bend their necks to the yoke of regal despotism—instead of waiting until the Lord should arrange the matter for them in unison with their rights and his own laws—it was not the wish of the prophet to leave them to all the consequences of their infatuation. With wise and noble patriotism, it was henceforth his solicitude, while accomplishing their wishes, to save them, as far as possible, from the consequences they declared themselves willing to incur. And if, in the result, we find the Hebrew monarchy less absolute than generally among eastern nations—if the people retained possession of more of their natural and social rights than in other eastern kingdoms—and if the strong exertion of kingly power was in after ages resented by them as a wrong instead of being recognized as a just prerogative—it is entirely owing to the sagacious care and forethought of Samuel, acting under Divine direction, in securing from utter destruction at the outset, the liberties which the people so wilfully cast into the fire. In fact, the more deeply we contemplate the character of Samuel, the more its greatness grows upon us; and the more distinctly we recognize the most truly illustrious character in Hebrew history since Moses.

THIRTIETH WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

TALLNESS.—I SAMUEL IX. 2.

IF, as we have ventured to infer from facts and circumstances, it had been the Divine plan that a monarchy should be established in Israel, and that it was in any case to have been established in the person and family of David—and if, as we also suppose, this intermediate action of the people did not retard or hasten the accomplishment of that design for one hour, it follows that the king whom God gave in his anger, had the function merely of filling up the interval to the time appointed for the son of Jesse to take the throne. This being the case, it was necessary that the king to be appointed should, on the one hand, possess such qualities as would recommend him to the choice and admiration of the people; and that, on the other hand, his career should manifest such dispositions as would gradually alienate from him the respect and confidence of the people, and lead them so to repent of the step they had taken, that they would acquiesce with pleasure in his dynasty being eventually set aside for that of David. This was precisely the case with Saul, the first king of Israel; and the view we have taken completely meets the doubt which some have ventured to express, whether the Lord did really concur in the appointment of Saul, seeing that He to whom all hearts and dispositions are open, must have known from the first how unfit Saul was to reign. But the Scripture distinctly states, that the Lord did concur in the selection of this particular man; and, according to our view, the unfitness which his career at length developed, and which disqualified him from establishing a permanent dynasty upon the throne of Israel, constituted, in conjunction with his *apparent* qualifications, his peculiar fitness.

This person was Saul, the son of Kish, a person of consideration in the tribe of Benjamin, described as “a mighty man of power,”—from which we must take the correct impression

concerning this family—the humble designations which Saul himself afterwards applied to it, being obviously such expressions of formal humility as orientals are wont to use. Saul himself was “a choice young man and a goodly; there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he; from his shoulders and upwards he was higher than any of the people,”—by which it would appear, that he could not have been much less than seven feet high. Great stress is laid upon this, because this distinguished stature, with the impression of bodily prowess which it conveyed, helped much to recommend him to the choice of the people. When from long peace there was no man of distinguished renown among the people; and when in battle much less depended upon military skill than upon the bodily prowess of the chief in single combats, or in the partial actions with which most battles commenced—it was natural enough that the people should take pride in the gigantic proportions of their leader, as calculated to strike terror into the enemy, and confidence into his followers; besides, that it was no mean advantage that the crest of the leader should, from his tallness, be seen from afar by his people. The prevalence of this feeling of regard for personal bulk and stature is seen in the sculptures of ancient Egypt, Assyria, and Persia, and even in the modern paintings of the last named nation, in which the sovereign is invested with gigantic proportions in comparison with the persons around him. Even Samuel, man of peace as he was, and, from his habits and character, necessarily more disposed than most of his contemporaries to regard the inner more than the outer man, was not free from the influence of this feeling. We might not be entitled to infer this from the mere fact of his recommending Saul to the attention of the people, on the ground of his physical qualifications,—as that might have been done in condescension to the known infirmity of the unreasoning populace,—but we are enabled to see that he spoke from real feelings of admiration; for in a case where his own judgment only was concerned, in the choice of a future king among Jesse’s sons, he, if left to himself, would clearly have

chosen the tallest and best looking. He no sooner saw the fine young man, Eliab, than he internally pronounced,—“Surely the Lord’s anointed is before me,” which drew down upon him this rebuke—“Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature, because I have refused him; for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.” 1 Sam. xvi. 7. In this, as we take it, there was an implied rebuke to Samuel, not only as to this case, but for his former and grievously mistaken appreciation of Saul, on account of his being a head taller than any of the people. Even we want not experience of this in the involuntary respect with which tallness of stature and powerful physical endowments are regarded among ourselves by uncultivated individuals—and indeed by persons not wholly uncultivated, if we may judge from the not unfrequent sarcasms which we may meet with in the most “respectable” monthly, weekly, and daily publications, upon the shortness, by yard measure, of some of the most eminent and highly gifted public men of this and a neighboring country.

There is certainly, however, more of this appreciation of stature in ancient than in modern literature. It appears to have been usual with the ancient orientals, as well as with the Greeks and Romans, to choose persons to the highest offices of the magistracy, who made a personal appearance superior to others, and this is what ancient writers often take notice of as a recommendation of them as princes. Herodotus, after recounting the numbers of men in the army of Xerxes, makes the remark, that among this vast host, there was not one who appeared, by his comeliness and stature, more worthy than he to fill the throne.* The same writer also informs us, that the Ethiopians deemed the man who was tallest of stature fittest to be their king.† In Virgil, Turnus is another Saul, in the superiority of his person to others, whom he by a whole head overtops.‡ It is not surprising that, as Quintus

* *Polymnia*, ch. 187.

† *Thalia*, ch. 20.

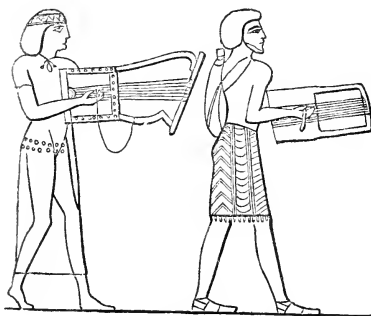
‡ “Catervis vertitur in mediis, et toto vertice supra est.”

—*Æneid*, xi. 682.



GIGANTIC PROPORTIONS OF SOVEREIGN, FROM THE EGYPTIAN SCULPTURES.

Page 126.



ANCIENT LYRES

Page 201.



Curtius * remarks, barbarians made part of the royal majesty consist in the outward form and goodly figure of their princes; but it does excite some surprise to hear a man so cultivated and refined as Pliny the Younger, naming qualities of this sort among those which entitled his hero, Trajan, to the supreme rank to which he had been elevated.† There is a curious passage in Homer, where, in order to secure greater respect for Ulysses from the Phæacians, upon whose island he was cast—

“Pallas o’er his head and shoulders bread
Diffusing grace celestial, his whole form
Dilated, and to statelier height advanced,
That worthier of all reverence he might seem
To the Phæacians.”—*Odyssey*, viii. 20, 21.

He had before been announced as—

“A wanderer o’er the deep,
But in his form majestic as a god.”

This latter intimation lets us into the secret of the extraordinary estimation of stature among at least the Gentiles. They had a notion, that such persons came nearer to the deities, and looked more like them. So Diana is described in Ovid,‡ as superior in stature to the nymphs and inferior goddesses by whom she is surrounded.

Something of this has passed away, but not all; and the time is probably not yet near, when in this respect man will see as the Lord seeth—looking less to the outward appearance, and more to the heart.

THIRTIETH WEEK—THURSDAY.

STRAYED ASSES.—I SAMUEL IX. 3.

THE circumstances of Saul’s first interview with Samuel are very remarkable and interesting, not only in themselves,

* Q. Curtius, lib. vi. † *Panegyric. Trajani*, iv. 22. ‡ *Metam.* iii. 2.

but from the indications of ancient usages which they afford.

The future king of Israel had hitherto known no other employment than such as the charge of his father's estate, and particularly the superintendence of the cattle, afforded. This, however, was an occupation held in much esteem. It was regarded as the proper office of a son, and by no means implies the smallness of Kish's possessions, or the want of servants by whom such duties might have been discharged. Men were in those days in the habit of thinking that the affairs were best looked after which they attended to themselves, and, therefore, persons of substance and consideration were in the habit of discharging in their own persons, or in the persons of their sons, duties which, in a more refined age, are entrusted to slaves or hired servants.

Among cattle in the East at all times—and especially in times ere horses were in use for riding, asses were of very much importance; and when, therefore, it was found one morning that some of Kish's asses were missing, Saul himself, accompanied by a servant, at once set out in search of them. If such an incident now happened in Palestine, it would be at once concluded that the animals had been stolen; and it speaks well for the state of society in the time of Samuel, that this suspicion never crossed the mind of Saul or his father. It was simply concluded that the asses had strayed.

A long and weary chase they had after the asses—so long, that Saul, with a tender regard for his father, which impresses us with a favorable idea of his character, began to think of abandoning the pursuit, and returning home, lest Kish should from such protracted absence suppose that some evil had happened to his son.

By this time they were near the town in which Samuel resided. The servant mentioned this circumstance, and advised that he should be consulted before they abandoned the search. The terms in which the man described the prophet are remarkable enough—"Behold, there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honorable man; all that he saith com-

eth surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can show us the way that we should go." Considering that Saul belonged to Benjamin, within the small territory of which tribe Samuel constantly abode, and to which his circuits were confined, it is somewhat surprising that Saul should need this information concerning Samuel—for it seems clear that the servant speaks under the impression that his master knew nothing of him. It shows, at least, that Saul had too much occupied himself with his father's affairs, to take much heed to public matters. It might, indeed, seem that there were few public matters to engage attention; and that the office of Samuel being to decide differences between man and man, Saul, having no such differences with his neighbors to decide, had no occasion to become acquainted with the person or character of Samuel. Even in our assize towns, how little is known or thought of the judges of assize, except by those who have matters before them for judgment. But one would have thought that the recent agitation for a king, must have stirred all the tribes, and would have drawn general attention to Samuel, who was required to take so important a part in their transactions, and upon whose further movements in the matter, we should suppose that the attention of all Israel, or at least of the southern tribes, would with deep anxiety be fixed. Yet Saul seems to have been quite uninformed on these matters, or to have had only some vague impression that the people wanted a king. And if it be said, that although he must have known Samuel as judge, he did not know him as a prophet; it is answered, that it was not only as judge but as prophet that he had in this great matter been applied to by the people, and the result had shown that he had access to the sacred oracles of God. The ignorance of Saul as to Samuel is further shown by the fact, which presently appears, that he was altogether unacquainted with his person, which we should have supposed to have been well known to almost every man in Benjamin. We cannot solve this further, than to see that it proves how little interest in public matters had hitherto been

taken by the man who was destined to become the first king in Israel.

The manner in which the servant brings Samuel to the notice of Saul, is also very remarkable. The character he gives of the man of God is correct so far as it goes ; but one would scarcely collect from it, that he is speaking of the man who was the acknowledged ruler of the land. The practical conclusion also surprises us—that seeing he was a man of God whose word failed not to come to pass, he was the person to be consulted respecting the lost asses. We may fancy that the man and his master either entertained a very high sense of the importance of their asses, or a very low one of the prophetic office ; but the man would scarcely have reached this conclusion unless it were notorious that Samuel had often been consulted respecting things lost or stolen. We may therefore infer that at the commencement of the prophetic office in the person of Samuel, it was usual, in order to encourage confidence in their higher vaticinations, and to prevent that dangerous resort to heathenish divinations to which people are in such cases more than in any other addicted—for the prophets to afford counsel, when required, in such matters of private concernment.

Saul was willing to follow the suggestion of his servant, but a difficulty occurred to him, which strikes those imperfectly informed of eastern customs somewhat strangely. Then, as now, in the East, it would have been the height of rudeness and indecorum for any one to present himself before a superior or equal, especially if he had any request to make, without some present, more or less, according to his degree—not by any means as a fee or bribe, but in testimony of his homage, his respect, or his compliments. Of the numerous examples of this custom which have occurred in our reading, or have come under our own notice in the East, the one which has most impressed itself upon our minds, is that which Plutarch records of the Persian king, Artaxerxes Mnemon. One time a poor husbandman, seeing every one give the king a present of some sort or other, as he passed by them, but

having nothing at hand that seemed proper to give, ran to a stream that was near, and filling both his hands with water, came and offered it to the king, who was so gratified with the inventive spontaneity of this act of homage, that he ordered to be given to the man a thousand darics, and a cup of massive gold. This same "king of kings" always received with satisfaction the smallest and most trifling gifts which evinced the zeal and attention of the offerers; and in a country where we have ourselves bought six of the finest possible pomegranates for a penny, he evinced the utmost pleasure on receiving from a man named Romises the finest pomegranate his garden yielded. A present equally small would have enabled Saul to pay his respects to Samuel; but it would be as impossible for him to appear empty-handed, as it would be for us to enter a gentleman's parlor with covered heads. He lamented that owing to the length of the way they had been led, there was not a morsel left of the bread they had taken with them, clearly intimating that one of the small cakes or loaves into which eastern bread is made, would in his view have been a suitable offering. The servant informed him, however, that he had sixpence* in his pocket, which could be applied to this purpose. Here is another difference from our ideas. With us, to offer a small sum of money to a superior or a public man, or even to an equal, would be a gross affront. Even we might take a small matter—an orange, a flower, or a little book, with satisfaction and acknowledgment; but money—*that* must not be named. All this is different in the East, where a small coin is as acceptable as a mark of respectful attention, as its value in any other shape. Travellers in the East might spare the solicitude they often evince to provide or select suitable presents for the persons to whom they have to show respect. Money is quite as acceptable as anything that money could buy. It is often more acceptable; and it is not uncommon for a stranger to be desired to retain his present, and give the value of it in money. This was the general practice of no less a personage than Futteh Ali Shah

* A quarter of a shekel—rather more than a sixpence.

—not many years ago king of Persia—who, when the customary presents were offered to him, would often, in his later years, ask:—"What may these things be worth?" and, on being told, would answer:—"Keep them, and give me the money." Had there been any feeling in the mind of Saul, that aught else would have been better than money as a present to the man of God, it would have been easy for him to have spent his sixpence in the town for the purchase of something more suitable as an offering; but that this did not occur to him shows that money had then, nominally as well as really, that universal fitness for all such purposes which it still possesses in the East; and which indeed it possesses really, but not nominally, in the West also.

THIRTIETH WEEK—FRIDAY.

THE SEER.—I SAMUEL IX. 9.

THE further progress of the narration of Saul's visit to Samuel, brings before us a very curious piece of information, which is introduced in the way of a parenthesis—"Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he spake, Come, let us go to the Seer: for he that is now called a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer." Some have argued from this, that the book was written at a later period than is commonly ascribed to it, since it refers to a custom of language existing in the time of Samuel, but extinct in the time of the writer. Others allege that these words might have been written by Samuel himself towards the close of his life, when he might with propriety notice that in his younger days, and quite down to the anointing of Saul—"when there was no open vision," and afterwards when there was scarcely any that had it but himself, he used to be called "the seer;" but that in his latter days, when there were many that had the vision of prophecy, and schools of the prophets had been

established, it was more common to call them "prophets." In this explanation it seems, however, to have been overlooked, that the name Seer continued in use long after the death of Saul, and that with a pointed discrimination. Thus, down to the time of Solomon, we have Gad and Iddo the seers, while their contemporary Nathan is always called a prophet, never a seer. We therefore think there is more probability in the opinion, that this verse is an explanation inserted by a later hand. There are many such explanations of archaic customs and names to be found in the early books of Scripture, and their introduction is usually ascribed to Ezra; and we would not willingly regard even these incidental illustrations interwoven with the sacred text, as the work of any hand less than inspired, as Ezra's was. The distinction between seer and prophet is intelligible enough. The seer was one who "beheld things invisible to mortal sight," visions of God; and it is expressly said of Iddo, the last to whom the name of seer is given, that "he saw visions of God against Jeroboam." 2 Chron. ix. 29. Elisha, though never called a seer, was no less so, when he beheld the chariots and horses of fire, that his servant saw not until his eyes were opened. Nor less a seer was Ezekiel, so eminent for his frequent and elaborate visions. In later times, however, the utterances of the prophets, and the vision on which these utterances were founded, embraced a wider scope into the future, and the *predictive* character of their disclosures becoming proportionally more prominent and signal, they came to be more universally designated as "prophets,"—that is, in the primary sense, foretellers of things to come.

As Saul and his attendant went up the hill to the town, they met some maidens coming out to draw water, the wells being usually outside the towns in Palestine. Of them they inquired—"Is the seer here?" In reply to this a long recital was given; so unusually long for maidens to give to a simple question from a stranger, as to have suggested to some Rabbinical commentators, that the damsel who acted as spokeswoman was charmed by the personal graces of the

tall traveller, and sought by this means to detain him and engage his attention. Her communication is interesting to us, whatever Saul may have thought of it. The purport of it was, that Samuel had come that day to the city; for there was to be "a sacrifice of the people to-day in the high place;" and if they made haste, they might come up with him before he got thither and sat down to eat with the people; for if not, they would scarcely be able to see him, and speak with him of their private matters for some time, if at all that day. The people would not, it was added, sit down to meat until Samuel came "to bless the sacrifice." That a feast was to be made of the sacrifice, implies that this was some holy festival occasion, upon which peace-offerings were sacrificed, and afterwards eaten by the people. With regard to the fact of sacrifice being offered in this manner under the sanction of the prophet, we shall add nothing here to what we have lately had occasion to state on that point; and as to the sacrificing in high places, we are content to note, that the practice has here the sanction of Samuel's example, intending to look into the matter more fully hereafter. The blessing the sacrifice must mean the asking of a blessing upon the food before the meal—an old and universal practice among the Israelites, which we, as a nation, have but imperfectly adopted. This was done at every common meal, and much more at a solemn festival like this. The present, however, is the first *recorded* example of the custom. The Jewish commentators give us what they apprehend to have been the "blessing" used on such occasions as this: "Blessed be thou, O Lord our God, the King of the world, who hath sanctified us by commandments, and commanded us to eat the sacrifice."

With this information Saul hastened on, and on his way met Samuel himself. The prophet, though virtually the ruler of Israel, and about to preside at a high festival, was undistinguished—such were the simple manners of these ancient times—by his dress, or by the presence of attendants or disciples, from an ordinary townsman; and as such Saul

addressed him, and inquired the way to the seer's house. Now Samuel had previously received a Divine intimation, which enabled him at once to recognize in the stranger the man whom the Lord had chosen to meet the demands of the people for a king, and to deliver them from the hands of their enemies. Having received this intimation, and being now conciliated by the noble carriage and ingenuous aspect of the man, the generous-hearted prophet threw himself with cordiality and kindness into his interests, subject always to his higher duty to the supreme interests of the Hebrew commonwealth, until, and even after, the career of Saul had developed the qualities which rendered him unfit to reign.

In answer to Saul's question, Samuel answered—"I am the seer," and proceeded to invite him to the feast, and to remain with him until the morrow; and to reconcile him to the delay, assured him that the lost asses had been found,—and now, said the prophet, "On whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on thee, and on all thy father's house?" Little interest as Saul had taken in the matter, he could not misunderstand this. But he replied as one who, having no doubt that some person of high standing and character would be appointed king, had no suspicion that Samuel could be in earnest in thus speaking to a man so obscure as himself.

Without any further explanation, Samuel conducted him to the feast. There, in the presence of the chief men of the town, he assigned to this travel-worn but noble-looking stranger, the place of honor, which we know was the right-hand corner, and directed the cook to set before him the most distinguished portion of the meat. This was the shoulder; and it seems to have been, under Samuel's direction, reserved for this purpose. We apprehend that this was the right shoulder, which, as the due of the sacrificer, had been assigned to Samuel, and which he had thus directed to be prepared for the expected guest. We rather think this, as we are aware of no distinction belonging to the left shoulder; whereas the assignment of the right shoulder, the

priestly joint, to the stranger, was a most remarkable distinction and honor, well calculated to draw general attention to him, and, together with his remarkable figure, and the honorable place assigned him, to lead to the expectation of some remarkable disclosures respecting him.

No disclosures were then, however, made. The time was not come. Samuel took Saul home with him after the feast, which seems to have been held towards the close of the day; and, before retiring to rest, communed with him privately as they walked together upon the flat roof of the house.* The subject of this conversation is not stated; but from what took place the next morning, there can be little doubt that the prophet apprized him more fully of the high destinies that awaited him, and tried to impress upon him the true position which he would occupy in a state so peculiarly related to the divine King as that of Israel. Doubtless that memorable night was a wakeful one to both of them; and in the morning Samuel called Saul very early to his journey, and walked forth with him some way on his homeward road. When they had got beyond the town, Samuel desired Saul to send his servant onward, and when they were alone, the prophet drew forth a vial of oil, and consecrated him to his future office, by pouring the contents upon his head. We shall have a future occasion of illustrating this old custom of anointing kings; and it suffices to remark here, that the oil could hardly have been the holy anointing oil of the tabernacle, first used in the consecration of Aaron to the high-priesthood; and that the vessel was not a horn, but a vial, which held but a small quantity, and was brittle. The Rabbis point out the analogy between this and the anointing of Jehu, and note, superstitiously, that the reigns of Saul and Jehu, who were anointed from a vial, were comparatively short; whereas those of David and Solomon, who were anointed from a horn, were long.

Having anointed Saul, Samuel kissed him. Subjects of rank were wont to kiss a new king in token of homage and subjection—just as among us the HAND of the sovereign is

* Concerning such flat roofs and their uses see vol. ii. pp. 228.

kissed now. There was no doubt something of this in the kiss of Samuel; but, under the peculiar circumstances, there must have been something more. It was also the kiss of congratulation upon the dignity to which he had been raised; and, while it indicated the dignified respect of Samuel to the man appointed to reign over the house of Israel, it also testified his cheerful acquiescence in the appointment, and his willingness to hand over the government to him. There is nothing churlish or reserved in the conduct of Samuel under these trying circumstances. It is noble, generous, and open—in all respects worthy of the man “asked of God” before his birth as a blessing, and from the womb consecrated to the Lord under the holy sanction of a mother’s vow. No man ever resigned the first power of the state into other hands with so much courtesy, tenderness, dignity, and grace. Samuel was truly a great man.

THIRTIETH WEEK—SATURDAY.

A CONSTITUTIONAL KING.—I SAMUEL X. 17–25.

It was very important for the fair fame of Samuel that the nomination of a king should not seem to be determined by any partial favoritism on his part. It was necessary that respect should be secured for the new king, by his appointment being manifestly under the Divine direction and control. In due time, therefore, the tribes were convened at Mizpeh for the choice of a king by lot. The same process sufficed for the detection of a criminal and for the choice of a king. Achan was convicted, and Saul was chosen, by precisely the same process*—tribes, families, and individuals were successively taken by lot, until the right person was reached. In this case the tribe indicated was that of Benjamin, the family that of Matri, and the individual Saul the son of Kish. That

* See Vol. ii. pp. 265.

individual, feeling from his previous conference with Samuel assured of the result, was yet so little ambitious to undertake this trying though honorable office—so desirous to avoid the responsibilities it involved—so attached to the peaceful rural life he had hitherto led—that he withdrew himself from notice, and remained among the baggage away from the place of assemblage. He perhaps hoped, that if he were not forthcoming when inquired for, they would proceed with the lot for the election of some one else. But so solemn a decision was not to be thus trifled with. He was sought and found, and on his being produced to the people, Samuel pointed with pride to his noble stature, towering head and shoulders above all that assembled multitude. “See ye him,” cried Samuel, “whom God hath chosen, for there is none like him among all the people.” The qualification to which Samuel directed attention, was so physically evident that the people responded to it by an enthusiastic shout of recognition, “Long live the king !”

But whatever good opinion Samuel himself may by this time have conceived of Saul, he remembered that this was not merely the election of a king, but the foundation of a monarchy, and that it was his duty to care not only for the present but future generations. He saw that the entire character of the monarchy would be determined by the steps which might now be taken ; and that this or never was the time to subject the sovereign authority to such conditions, and place it on such a basis, as might prevent it from becoming a mere secular despotism, such as the neighboring nations exhibited. On the first establishment of the monarchy—on the free election of a sovereign who had no natural claim whatever to the crown—it was possible to make conditions and to impose restrictions, to which any future king, royal by birth, and on whom the crown devolved by hereditary right, would not very willingly submit. There can be no doubt that the people, under the infatuation which now possessed them, would have put themselves under the monarchy without any conditions whatever ; and it is entirely

owing to the wise forethought of Samuel, acting under Divine direction, that this great evil was averted, and the kings of Israel did not become absolute and irresponsible masters of the lives and properties of their subjects. Some of the future kings indeed advanced far enough towards making themselves such: but they did so under such evident violation of the principles of the monarchy as established by Samuel, as always gave their subjects the right of protest and complaint, and even of resistance, as against an unlawful exercise of power.

Samuel then addressed the people, explaining to them "the manner of the kingdom," setting forth that the king was not to possess unlimited authority, and expounding the royal rights and privileges, and the limitations to which they were to be subject. Although institutions thus promulgated, in the presence of many witnesses, and accepted by all the parties concerned, were binding ordinances in an age before seals and writings were required to give validity to every transaction, Samuel neglected nothing which might give security to the people; and instead of setting up a stone as a witness, as would have been done in a somewhat earlier age, he committed the whole to writing, and laid up the manuscript "before the Lord"—by which we may suppose he consigned it to the keeping of the priesthood, to be deposited with the most sacred muniments of the nation. Thus, under Divine sanction, and amidst the despotisms of the East, arose the earliest example of a constitutional monarchy,

It may be regretted that we are not acquainted with the precise terms of the limitations and responsibilities under which the crown was accepted by the first Hebrew king. But the real conditions may without much difficulty be collected from the subsequent history itself, and from the writings of the prophets. It is also to be borne in mind that the idea of such limitation did not originate with Samuel, although it devolved on him to give them practical effect, and probably to enforce them by new conditions. Moses himself had laid down the principles of the Hebrew mon-

archy, whenever it should be established—and whatever other conditions were added when the time came, there can be no doubt that these essential principles were included.

It had been foreseen that the time would come when the Israelites would insist on having a king. To resist this wish absolutely might tempt them into open rebellion against the authority which opposed the attainment of their desires—and having accomplished their object in distinct opposition to the declared will of God, and thrown themselves into rebellion against their divine King, they would feel that they had cast themselves loose from the theocratical institutions, and would no longer recognize their obligations to it, or submit to the restrictions it imposed. This would have been to ruin the entire object for which the nation had been established, preserved, and made a peculiar people. This could not be allowed. It was therefore provided, even from the time of Moses, that their wishes should be so met as to keep the management of the whole operation in the hands of the Lord's servants, and so guided as that the new government should, as far as possible, be interwoven with, and rendered subservient to, the great theocratical institutions.

As a clear view of this matter is essential to the correct understanding of many points in the history of the Hebrew monarchy, we shall devote a day to its consideration.*

Thirty-First Week—Sunday.

SAUL AMONG THE PROPHETS.

It is well that this day we should seek some matters of profitable thought in the portion of Israel's history over which we have during the last week passed.

To some it has seemed strange that the Lord should, in

* See Thirty-First Week.—Monday.

yielding (so to speak) to the demand of the people for a king, have allowed a step which met not his approbation. The policy of this we have explained. But it may now be pointed out that God does often thus act in his dealings with nations and individuals. He often grants when he is angry, and refuses when he is pleased. Of the former, we have seen that God granted Balaam leave to go to the land of Moab, but at his peril; and he granted quails to Israel in the wilderness, but it was in his wrath. So foolish are we and ignorant, that we often desire things that would be our bane, and often deprecate things which would prove our chiefest blessings. It therefore behoves us, to prefer our supplications in reliance upon his perfect knowledge of what is best for us, in every circumstance. Even our Saviour, in uttering a wish to his Father to be relieved, "if it were possible" consistently with the great object for which he came into the world, from the most appalling agony that earth ever witnessed—even he felt it needful to add a clause of limitation and dependence—"Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." And even his prayer was not granted. The cup did *not* pass from him; but an angel was sent to comfort and sustain him, and to enable him to drink it even to the dregs. How much more, then, should we subject our suits to the same dependence—not in a form of words only, but in truth, upon the will and high judgment of God, knowing that his love may often be no less shown by a refusal than a compliance with our requests: for "this is the confidence we have in him—that *if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us.*"* And if that which is asked be not according to his will, it is a fatherly favor and mercy in him not to grant it. It is nevertheless true that when the mind and heart have been brought under the influence of divine grace, a growing conformity to the will and purposes of God is produced, and a quick perception as to what it is fit to ask of him is awakened, so that he who walks in the Spirit seldom errs in that which he asks; and his prayer is generally granted, because, being taught by

* 1 John v. 14.

the Spirit of God what to ask, he usually asks aright. Thus, "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do that which is pleasing in his sight."* Many who do not truly enjoy any spiritual life, though they observe the decencies of prayer, and have even a conviction of its efficacy (for all who pray have not that conviction), and many who are yet in the infancy of their spiritual being, have not their petitions granted, not merely because they ask what might be injurious to them, but because they ask not from truly spiritual motives: "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."† This form of danger in prayer is connected with a lower stage of inner life than that which leaves the petitioner merely open to mistake in his judgment as to what may be good for himself and others—and which requires the supplication to be accompanied by the conviction and the faith that although the Father will not give his son a stone when he asks him for bread, he will often refuse a stone when asked, that he may give bread instead. But if he be angry at our obduracy and self-will, he may give us the stone we seek, that by the disappointment of our expectations we may be punished, or brought to repentance, or learn better the wisdom and blessedness of living in complete dependence upon him.

When Saul had parted from Samuel, and was on his way home, he fell in with "a company of prophets," with their instruments of music—persons belonging to one of those "schools" or "colleges" of the prophets which Samuel seems to have instituted, and which we shall have hereafter to notice fully. Then happened to Saul what Samuel had predicted to him before they separated: "The Spirit of the Lord shall come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and be turned into another man. And let it be, when these signs are come upon thee, that thou do as occasion serve thee." 1 Sam. x. 6, 7. It will occur to most readers that, although these words describe Saul as being turned into *another man*,

* 1 John iii. 14.

† James iv. 3.

they do not declare that he was turned into a *new* one; and although they have reference to a lesser work of the Holy Spirit than his regenerating and sanctifying work, they are remarkably typical or adumbrative of that larger and greater work of God in the soul of man.

It is observable that this coming of the Spirit of God upon Saul, and turning him into another man, was properly his introduction to the kingdom, and constituted his fitness for it. It was the proper sequel to, and completion of, the operation commenced by his anointing, and by it he acquired all the fitness he ever possessed for the kingdom. In like manner no one is fit for the kingdom of heaven until the Spirit of God has come upon him, and turned him, not only into another, but into a new man—so that with him old things have passed away, and all things have become new. The change is greater than that of Saul—for having received this anointing from the Holy One, we become not only subjects of Christ's kingdom, but indeed "kings and priests unto God."

We also see that the lesser change wrought in the heart of Saul, was the work of the Spirit of God. How much more, then, the great change by which man becomes a new creature, and the subject of a new kingdom—by which he passes from outer darkness into that inner light which shines through the realm where God abides—and which transfers the liberated soul, captive so long, from the power of Satan unto God. All is the work of the Spirit. There is no other power in the universe but his that can make any real change in the least atom of the human heart. None else can furnish, nor any hand but his pour in, the wine and oil by which the soul's deadly wound is healed, and from which it receives new life, new perceptions, new powers, new strength—so that they who lay sunk, lost and exanimate, in the valley of the shadow of death, are enabled to mount up with wings like eagles, to run, and not be weary, to walk, and not faint.

Saul, when this change had passed upon him, had new privileges which belonged not to him before. Till then Samuel had told him everything that should happen to him

by the way, and every step that he should take. But at the point when the Spirit of God had come upon him, when he is changed into another man, the prophet gives no further directions—he simply says, “Do as occasion serve thee, for God is with thee.” When light had come to him from heaven, the lamp of the prophet was no longer needful to guide his steps, and if he followed that light in the simplicity of faith, it would guide him safely home. He who has God with him, has a sufficient guardian, counsellor, and guide, and he may walk freely and fearlessly in his appointed path. But he must take care that God *is* with him—he must be sure that the light he follows *is* light from heaven. That light—the true light that lighteth every one that really enters the spiritual world—never led astray or left in darkness any that followed it. The only danger is that the candles which men hold up, should be taken for the light of God; but the children of the kingdom possess a Witness with their spirits which will not suffer them to make this mistake, if they but heed His testimony.

With regard to the change that was wrought in Saul, we apprehend that it was rather a civil than a sanctifying change. God gave him not that free and noble spirit that David prayed for and attained (Psalm li. 12), but only common gifts of princely parts, prudence, courage, and conduct. The change, however, although not the greatest, was very great; inasmuch that it became thenceforth a common proverb among the people—“Is Saul also among the prophets?” when they beheld any rude person raised up and ranked among men of eminence, far above his birth and breeding. Thus the people wondered at the change in Saul, whom they deemed more fit to feed his father’s asses, than to take part in the holy exercises of the prophets. But they knew not yet that this very man was to be their king.

THIRTY-FIRST WEEK—MONDAY.

THE LAW OF THE KINGDOM.

IF we turn to Deuteronomy xvii. 14–20, we shall find certain principles laid down, which were destined to form the standing law of the Hebrew monarchy.

It is first of all clearly laid down, that the nomination of the man to be king was to be left to Jehovah himself. The regular mode of ascertaining the Lord's will, would have been by Urim and Thummim through the high-priest; but the intimation could also be given through prophets, or by the sacred lot. Saul, David, and Jeroboam, all received the promise of the throne from prophets. Saul was further designated by the sacred lot; and David was elected by the elders of Israel to the throne, on the express ground that God had promised the kingdom to him. The same may be said of Jeroboam, whose elevation to the throne of the ten tribes, must at least have been materially influenced by the fact of his previous nomination to the throne by the prophet Ahijah. These divine interpositions were well calculated to remind the kings of Him on whom they were dependent, and to whose appointment they were indebted for the throne. "As monarchs, called kings of kings, were accustomed to appoint sub-kings or viceroys in the several provinces of their dominions, so was the king of the Hebrews to be called to the throne by Jehovah, to receive the kingdom from him, and in all respects to consider himself as his representative viceroy and vassal." * In fact, it seems to us that his position with respect to the Lord, as supreme king, bore much external resemblance to that which the Herodian kings of Judea bore to the Roman emperor. There can be no doubt, that this point in the Hebrew constitution was fully and plainly expressed by Samuel, when he showed to the people "the manner of the kingdom;" and in the sequel we shall find that the Lord himself

* Jahn's *Biblische Archæologie*, b. i. sect. 25.

failed not to enforce on all occasions, by rewards and by punishments, the responsibility of the sovereigns to him. The best and most prosperous kings were such as had the truest conception of this essential condition of their power.

It was farther ordained that the king should be one of themselves—a native Israelite. Not a foreigner, not one born such, even though a proselyte. The reasons for this restriction are obvious in a state so peculiarly constituted as that of the Hebrews, not only from the high estimation in which the descent from Abraham was held, but because all other nations were wholly given to idolatry. This, however, had respect only to free elections, and was by no means to be understood, as interpreted by Judas of Galilee,* and by the zealots, during the great war with the Romans, that the Hebrews were not to submit to those foreign powers to which, in the providence of God, they were from time to time subjected. On the contrary, Moses himself had predicted such events, and Jeremiah and Ezekiel had earnestly exhorted their countrymen to submit themselves quietly to the rule of the Chaldeans. As to proselytes, the lapse of generations and a Hebrew mother, did not render even them capable of reigning in Israel—they were not of the chosen people, nor “brethren” of the descendants of Abraham. To indicate this purity of descent, the name of the mother of a new king is often mentioned.† But this occurs only in the kingdom of Judah, where the law of Moses was held in higher respect than in the other kingdom. To be born of a foreign mother was not indeed an obstacle to the attainment of the throne, if the descent had been unbroken on the side of the father from one of the families of Israel. Rehoboam succeeded Solomon, although his mother was an Ammonite; ‡ but it may in this case be remembered that, so far as we know, he was the only son of the possessor of a thousand

* Acts v. 37.

† 1 Kings xv. 3-10; xxii. 42. 2 Kings viii. 26; xii. 1; xiv. 5; xv. 2, 33; xviii. 2-20.

‡ 1 Kings xiv. 81. 2 Chron. xii. 13.

wives. The Idumeans counted among their ancestors Abraham and Isaac ; but seeing that they came from Esau rather than from Jacob, they were not beyond this proscription of the law ; and although Herod the elder, who possessed this character, was king of Judea, he never possessed the cordial sympathies of his subjects, and certainly never would have attained his monarchy, but by the irresistible will of the mightiest of conquerors.

Females are not *expressly* excluded from the throne ; but their disqualification seems to be assumed. It appears never to have entered the contemplation of the legislature that they might be called to reign. The exclusion is, indeed, traced in the text, by Jewish writers, from the exclusive use of the masculine noun in referring to the contingencies of sovereign power.* It is true that Deborah was judge in Israel, but she wore not a diadem. Athaliah did ; but that was by usurpation, in the teeth of the law, and from her the crown passed to the head of the rightful heir.† The same character, in a form somewhat mitigated, applies to the nine years' reign of Alexandra, wife of king Alexander Janneus, who, after his death, assumed the throne.‡ There can be no reason to question that the Hebrew theory of government, like that of other Oriental nations, was unfavorable to the rule of females, although women did occasionally reign. This may be traced even in the prophets—"As for my people," says Isaiah, "children are their oppressors, and women rule over them." Isaiah iii. 12. Those ancient times and distant nations wanted the experience furnished under our milder manners and more matured institutions—that a female reign may be as vigorous as that of any man, and not less prosperous and happy.

The Talmudists held the opinion that these were not the only disqualifications—but that various professions or trades precluded a man from becoming king in Israel. At the head

* *Melek*, masc. not *Malkah*, fem.—" *Regem*, dit le Deut. xvii. 15, et non pas *Reginam*."—PASTORET.

† 2 Kings xi. 1, 21.

‡ Josephus, *Antiq.* iii. 16, 2.

of this list are physicians, who, say these sages, live too proudly, without fear of disease, and with hearts unhumiliated before God—and are often guilty of the blood of their poor brethren, by refusing to them the succor of their skill.* We might be astonished to see the noblest of secular professions thus unfavorably estimated, and mixed up with some of the coarsest of the arts, did we not read in the history of antiquity, that the profession of medicine was for the most part abandoned to slaves. Other disqualifying employments are those of butchers, barbers, bathmen, weavers, tanners, grooms, and camel-drivers. They apprehended, it seems, that an Israelite could not have exercised such employments without contracting low and ignoble sentiments, and it was believed that the remembrance of his former condition, would cause him to be held in contempt by his subjects. The same professions equally debarred an Israelite from the high-priesthood. Other employments which, to our notions, are scarcely of higher consideration than these, did not disqualify a man from being king. Saul had the care of asses, and David of sheep—but the asses and the sheep were those of their fathers, in a country where pastoral employments were long held in high respect. The son of a slave, or even of a captive, was also by usage excluded from the throne. Most readers will remember that the priest-king, Alexander Janneus, was once pelted with citrons when he stood at the altar about to offer sacrifice, and reviled as the descendant of a captive, and therefore unfit to sacrifice. This charge, founded on a false report that his grandmother had been a captive in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, Alexander resented so highly, that his wrath was scarcely appeased by the blood of six thousand Israelites, whom he slew in his rage.†

Certain exterior advantages—or rather the absence of certain bodily imperfections, seem also to have been regarded as essential to the possessor of the throne. We have seen

* This exclusion of the physicians is not stated in Maimonides' Treatise upon the Kings. But Maimonides was himself a physician.

† Josephus, *Antiq.*, xiii. 13, 5. See also *De Bell. Jud.*, i. 4, 3.

in the case of Saul, that his eminent stature materially contributed to his nomination and acceptance; and in the account of the appointment of David to the throne, the beauty of his person is emphatically indicated. The Scripture itself, as we have already seen, is far from sanctioning this class of ideas, and some of the most eminent men of ancient times were subject to infirmities: Moses had a stammering tongue; Jacob was lame; Isaac was blind—yet they were not the less chiefs of Israel, and men honored of God.

Looking to the position which the Hebrew king occupied, it was of course impossible for him to possess the power of introducing any new mode or object of religious worship. The kings of other nations performed the functions of priests on great occasions; but although more than one Hebrew king evinced a disposition to assume this power, this was entirely unlawful, except the king were of the family of Aaron, as was the case with the Maccabæan or Asmonæan sovereigns, who, therefore, rightfully discharged the functions of the priesthood.

So far from being allowed to make any alteration in the religious worship of the people, the king was required, as the servant and minister of the Lord, to be watchful in all respects over its conservation, and to repress all tendency to change. He was to be the champion of the law against the encroachments of idolatry, and he was deeply responsible for any neglect of this high and solemn duty. He was required to be himself most strict in his observance of the law—and that he might be well acquainted with it, he was required to make a transcript of the authentic copy in the possession of the priests, and to “read therein all the days * of his life,

* It has been questioned whether the king was to copy the whole of the law entire, or only the abstract of it given in the book of Deuteronomy. The latter is the sense given in the Septuagint and the Vulgate, as well as by some Jewish commentators of authority; but the prevailing opinions among the Rabbis, and, we think, among Christian writers, is in favor of the whole law being understood. In Schickard's learned work *De Jure Reg. Hebræorum*, theor. v. p. 9, et seq.,

that he might learn to fear Jehovah his God, to keep all the words of the law, *that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren;*" that is, that he should be no arbitrary despot, whose only law is his own pleasure.

That his heart might not be lifted up in kingly pride, it was further directed, that he should eschew the pernicious luxury to which Oriental monarchs have in all ages been prone. An effectual check upon this was provided, and at the same time a powerful motive to oppressive exactions upon his subjects, was cut away by the interdiction of the accumulation of large treasures; neither was he to adopt that usual accompaniment of eastern state—a numerous haram. Besides the other and obvious disadvantages of such establishments, many of the women in such cases are always foreigners, and it was to be feared that the servant of God might be led to regard idolatry with favor through their influence. This actually happened in the case of Solomon.

Furthermore, as the object of preserving the Israelites as a separate people in Canaan, was incompatible with views of extended empire, the king was forbidden to maintain large bodies of cavalry, which were in that age chiefly used in such undertakings. In fact, to strike at the root of the danger, the breeding and possession of horses may be said to have been discouraged. This could be no great hardship in Palestine, the mountainous character of which, and the difficult passes which continually occur, render, even to this day, the horse of less use and value there than in the neighboring countries.

It will be seen that some of those wise regulations were more or less neglected by many of the kings; and it will also be seen that by this neglect, they brought down upon

ample details may be found from the Rabbinical writers, as to what was understood to be the manner in which this royal copy of the law was to be made, the characters, the pages, the lines, the dimensions, the divisions, the material of the volume, its covering, the preparation of the ink, the inscription of the name of Jehovah, the copying of the poetry contained in these sacred books, and various other matters.

themselves and their people, the very dangers and evils which they were designed to avert.*

THIRTY-FIRST WEEK—TUESDAY

THE KING AROUSED.—I SAMUEL XI. 1-8.

IN the choice of representatives for our own senate, it is remarkable that not generally, nor perhaps in the majority of cases, is the impulse of popular excitement, as manifested by the show of hands at the nomination, sanctioned by the result of the election. We need not, therefore, be surprised to learn that, notwithstanding the enthusiasm with which the appearance of Saul had been hailed, there was so wide-spread a dissatisfaction at his appointment, that he was suffered to withdraw to his own house, and almost to return into private life. It had been quite so, but that a few kindly disposed and faithful men attached themselves to his person, and remained with him; and these he seems to have been able to maintain, by means of the "presents" which some of the people brought in testimony of their homage and respect. But a very considerable proportion of the people—a large minority, if not a majority—said, "How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no presents." The source of their discontent is not difficult to trace to the obscurity of the person on whom the crown had fallen, with the absence of tried character and experience which they thought themselves entitled to look for in an elected king;

* On the subject of this day's Reading, the following works have been looked into, and may be consulted with advantage by the reader. Schickard, *Jus Regium Hebræorum e tenebris Rabbincis erutum*, Leipzig, 1674. Jahn, *Biblische Archæologie*, Wien, 1805; Pastoret, *Legislation des Hebreux*, Paris, 1817; Salvador, *Histoire des Institutions de Moïse et du Peuple Hebreux*, Paris, 1828; Hullman, *Staatsverfassung der Israeliten*, Leipzig, 1834.

and something of it may have been due to the sheepish and unregal deportment of Saul in hiding himself "among the stuff," instead of meeting, with manly dignity, the call of God and the people.

It is emphatically remarked, that "Saul held his peace." *That* was kingly. He was content to bide his time. He knew that the state of affairs around must soon afford him an opportunity of acquiring the personal consideration he yet lacked; and he felt that any show of resentment, and bald assertion of his authority till then, would only expose him to derision.

The opportunity he must have greatly desired, was very soon afforded. The Ammonites began to move beyond the Jordan. This people had ere this recovered the effects of the terrible overthrow they sustained in the time of Jephthah, and, feeling their own strength, and beholding the apparent weakness of Israel, they judged the time to be favorable for the sharp avengement of that never-forgotten blow, and for the recovery of those territories east of the Jordan, which they still regarded as rightfully their own, notwithstanding the ability with which, first by arguments and next by blows, Jephthah had of old disposed of their claim.

They appeared suddenly in great force before the town of Jabesh-gilead. The inhabitants were in no condition to make any effectual resistance, and therefore offered to surrender on terms. This the Ammonite king, whose name was Nahash, refused on any other conditions than that he should put out all their right eyes—not only that he might thereby disqualify them for the use of arms, but, avowedly, that the fact might remain as a brand of infamy upon the whole nation. Appalled by this barbarous stipulation, yet not seeing how to resist, they begged and obtained a truce of a week, at the expiry of which they would accept of these hard terms, unless some relief in the meantime arrived. Some surprise has been felt, that he who breathed nothing but disgrace and ruin against the Israelites, should have yielded to the Jabeshites even this short respite, and have thus subjected himself to

the risks of delay. But here we may avail ourselves of the probable information of the Jewish historian,* that the besieged had already sent to implore the assistance of the two and half tribes beyond the Jordan, and that none had dared to stir a hand for their relief. So, there being little likelihood that the ten tribes west of the river, who were at a still greater distance, and less immediately affected than the nearer tribes, could bring any aid in so short a time, Nahash might in that confidence, and as a further manifestation of his scorn, the more easily grant the beleaguered Jabeshites the respite they required. But we may quite as well, or even better, suppose, that Divine Providence thus far restrained his hands, by a sort of infatuation, in order to give to the new monarch an opportunity of affording such signal proof of his capacity, decision, and military conduct, as might win for him the general admiration of his subjects, and secure his full possession of the royal power to which he had been appointed.

Saul had by this time returned to his old employment, which shows how little in fact was the support or attention he received as king. It may be doubtful indeed if the "band of men," who had followed him in the first instance, had till now remained with him. The inattention to him is further indicated by the fact that the persons who brought the tidings of this affair to Gibeah did not seek him out as one who had any peculiar interest in the matter; and it was only when he came home from the field, following the herd, and *in answer to his inquiries*, when he witnessed the lamentations of the people, that he was apprized of the event. This news awoke all the patriot and the king within him. Like Samson aroused from slumber, he "shook his invincible locks," and stood up in the fulness of his strength. The time was come to *use*, in behalf of the people, the office to which he had been chosen, and to make that office a truth in their eyes, and in the eyes of their enemies. He did not hesitate one moment to call the people to arms, and that not with uncertain voice, but commandingly as their king, whose summons it was their

* Josephus, *Antiq.*, vi. 5.

duty to obey. He took a yoke of oxen, and hewing them in parts, sent the pieces by swift messengers through the country, to declare the event, and say, "Whosoever cometh not after Saul, and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen."

There has been occasion to refer to this custom in connection with the similar act of the Levite,* and it therefore need not detain us here. There are, however, so many points of interest in this summoning of the tribes, and so much has been questioned as to some of the particulars, that it is well worth while to examine the circumstances with some attention. Most of the objections which have been felt or urged turn upon the difficulty of imagining how all the recorded operations could have been accomplished within the time specified. The case may be thus stated. The besieged city of Jabesh-gilead was not much less than sixty miles from Gibeah, the place of Saul's residence, by direct distance, and considerably more if we take into account the mountainous character of the country, and the windings and turnings of the roads. Thus allowing that the seven days' respite had been granted to the besieged very early in the morning, the persons who brought the tidings could hardly have reached Gibeah till the evening of the next day. It was certainly the evening when Saul first heard the intelligence, as he was then bringing home his cattle from the field. There remained then but five days more to summon the tribes to arms, some of which were a hundred miles north from Gibeah, and as far south from Bezek,† the place appointed for a general rendezvous; where, nevertheless, upon a review of the whole army, there were found to be 330,000 effective men. From Bezek they had still about eight miles to Bethshan, where they were to cross the Jordan, and from thence ten miles more to reach the camp of the Ammonites, which, considering the vastness of the army, and the mountainousness of Gilead, could hardly

* Twenty-Sixth Week—Friday.

† Seventeen miles from Shechem, on the road to Bethshan on the Jordan.

take less than one day more. If this be allowed, it will follow that Saul's summons must have reached the ten tribes, and these must have armed and assembled themselves under their respective standards within the short space of four days. We may even count it as less; for the text expressly says that the forces assembled at Bezek in time to be reviewed by the king, which must have taken some considerable time; after which he had still his messengers to send to Jabesh-gilead with assurance of effectual relief by the next morning's dawn, before he could decamp from Bezek to their assistance. All these things being duly weighed, and the distance considered between Gibeah, from which the message was despatched, to the remotest tribes north and south, and from those again to Bezek, the place to which they were to repair, in some cases by a march of a hundred or a hundred and fifty miles, through wildernesses, over craggy mountains, and along narrow and difficult defiles, it is very hard to understand—some insist it is incredible—that it could have been performed in so short a space of time. For, allowing Saul's messengers to have travelled night and day, with the utmost despatch, not less than a day and a half must be allowed them to reach the more distant tribes; so that they could have but two days and a half more to equip themselves, to provide themselves with victuals, to assemble under their chiefs, and to reach the place of rendezvous over roads so difficult and retarding. This transmission of messages—this raising of an army (and not only simply calling into action troops standing ready for service)—this march of that large army by difficult roads—this review of it—and the final march to meet the enemy—and the complete and sudden victory within so short a time, far surpasses anything we find in modern warfare. An experienced general, with all the modern advantages of intercommunication and travel, would not be able to get together an army of 20,000 or 30,000 men in as many weeks as Saul—a raw and inexperienced monarch and commander—took days only to raise a force of ten times the number, from ten different tribes, several of them at a serious distance. Such

are the difficulties and objections ; and we have stated them, because the answering them to-morrow will enable us to throw some light upon sundry matters involved in these considerations.

A further and preliminary objection we may dispose of now. Was it at all likely that a people who so contemned their king as to leave him to resume his pastoral avocations—should all at once, and so professedly “as one man” have obeyed his call, and flocked in such immense numbers to his standard ? But the news which accompanied this summons, was surely likely to animate the hearts of a brave people, with the same indignation and zeal as that which it had kindled in the bosom of Saul ; and if they were to move at all for the relief of their brethren, and to save Israel from the threatened disgrace, Saul, whatever they might think of him, was the only person authorized to lead them against the enemy. Besides, if a similar mandate even from a Levite, formerly, was not to be neglected or despised, much less could it be so, when it came from their anointed king. It deserves notice that the very name of Jabesh-gilead was enough to warn them of the peril of disobedience—for it was notorious that the people of that place had perished by the sword of Israel, for neglecting to appear in arms upon the like, but less authoritative, summons sent forth on that former occasion to which reference is made.

THIRTY-FIRST WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

THE CALL OF THE TRIBES.—I SAMUEL XI. 1-8.

THE difficulties which have been found in the first transaction, by which the new king won to himself honor in Israel, were stated yesterday, and we may now see what evidence can be afforded of the probability of the Scriptural account, and the feasibility of the transaction.

There being at this time no military profession among the Israelites—none who were actually *soldiers*; but the men were to be called from the flocks and the fields to march against their enemies—the case has no parallel among ourselves, with whom anything like this would imply the necessity of some previous training of the raw levies to the use of their weapons before they could be trusted to face the enemy in battle. This, however rapidly and imperfectly done, would necessarily consume considerable time. But it was not so among the Israelites. With them, as is still the case in most eastern nations, every man was familiar with the use of weapons from his youth, and was at all times ready and qualified to take his part in such martial operations as the simple tactics and rude discipline of that age required. Besides, all the men between the ages of twenty and sixty were deemed liable to the call for military service, and were, in their several tribes, registered for it. There was no confusion when they were called out by a competent authority. A man had only to take down the weapons he possessed—and every one possessed some sort of weapon—and hasten to the place of rendezvous in his own tribe, where he put himself under the orders of the officers, who, in their various grades, were well known to him, being the chiefs of the tribes and families. The admirable order of encamping large bodies of men, and of marching them under their banners, which had been established in the wilderness, was, no doubt, retained for military purposes, and must materially have contributed to facilitate their movements and to prevent confusion.

All the men took the field at their own expense, providing their own food; for the cause was their own, and they looked for no pay, save the spoil of their enemies, beyond the acquisition of a national advantage, the redress of a general wrong, or the resistance of a public aggression. The difficulty of provisioning so large a host is therefore imaginary. Every man provisioned himself—taking with him a few days' supply of light and portable food—some bread, some cheese, some olives, some hard dried dates, some dried figs and raisins, and

other matters of this description. If detained in the field longer than expected, one man in ten was appointed to provide food for the rest, as was done when Israel was out to avenge the Levite. Judges xx. 10.

The difficulties presented by the state of the country to the rapid passage of messengers and the march of armies, are altogether imaginary, and founded upon the present neglected state of the same land. It is entirely forgotten by most persons, that the presence of unexampled facilities of communication throughout the country was ensured by the law respecting the cities of refuge, to which the innocent man-slayer might flee from the pursuit of the avenger. Every facility for their flight was to be provided. "The way was to be prepared" (Deut. xix. 8), not only, as the Jewish writers explain, to those six cities on either side Jordan, but to the forty-eight cities of the Levites, which were places of sanctuary; and if, as we have reason to believe, the ways were "prepared" in the manner described by the old Jewish writers, there could have been no ancient country better provided with wide and commodious roads for messengers and travellers. All these roads, which, from the manner in which the cities were dispersed, must have intersected the country in all directions, were kept wide, level, dry, and plain, with convenient bridges over rivers, with posts, the indications on which, directing travellers from place to place, were so plainly written that those who ran might read;* and with every possible contrivance for rendering travelling as easy and expeditious as possible. It is not unlikely that traces of those ancient ways still exist in the well-made roads which travellers sometimes fall in with in parts now forsaken, and which, in ignorance of these circumstances, they set down for Roman roads. The utmost care was bestowed on this matter by the local authorities, because it was deemed that the nearest town or village incurred the burden of blood-guiltiness, if, through any obstruction upon the road, the course

* Whence the phrase in Hab. ii. 2, "Make it plain, that he may run that readeth it."

of the fugitive manslayer were so retarded as to enable the avenger of blood (*goel*) to overtake him and wreak his vengeance upon him.

Although the use of swift camels (dromedaries) is difficult in the present state of the country, they might well be used on such roads as these ; and in the absence of saddle-horses, which were not at this time in use, they might be, and doubtless were, employed on extraordinary occasions like this ; and those of the right breed, trained for the saddle, travelling without baggage, and with only a single rider, have been known to go as much as two hundred miles in twenty-four hours. We may be sure that no available means of expediting the message were neglected ; and if dromedaries were at all known in Palestine, as they were, and if the state of the roads allowed of their being used, as was the case, there can be no doubt they were employed ; and by these means the summons might have been transmitted to the uttermost parts of the land in an incredibly shorter space of time than has been imagined.

Again, throughout the East there are trained runners who can, for a long time, accompany a horse at full speed, and who do habitually attend on foot the princes and great men, when they ride out. There were, doubtless, such men in Israel, for in the next generation we find men employed to run before Absalom's chariot ; and how much this accomplishment of swift running was valued and cultivated, even among young men of station in Israel, for the sake of the swift transmission of intelligence in time of war, is seen in the case of Ahimaaz,* the son of the high-priest Zadok ; of Cushi, and of Asahel, king David's nephew, who was "light of foot as a wild roe."† It is quite likely that the message should have been taken from town to town by such swift runners in turn, one after another, until it reached the utmost limits of the land.

There is yet another resource, which there is much reason to suppose was employed on this, as we know that it was on

* 2 Sam. xv. 27 ; xviii. 19, 23, 27.

† 2 Sam. xviii. 21.

many other occasions. It is very possible that the alarm, or summons for a general armament, was conveyed by beacons, or fiery signals kindled upon the tops of the hills, so that when the human messenger arrived they would find the people ready assembled in arms at the several towns of their tribes in which they were wont to assemble on such occasions. Such signals were particularly available in Canaan, by reason of the mountainous nature of the country, and by the absence of any plains of great extent in which no eminences occur. By this means the calls to arms, transmitted from post to post, would reach the utmost bounds of the land in the course of a few hours. These beacons are often mentioned by the prophets,* and were in use not only among the Hebrews but among all nations inhabiting hilly countries; and being easily perceived at a vast distance from each other, especially in the night-time, and being, moreover, distinguished by some well-known differences, according to the notice or order intended to be conveyed, were immediately answered by the sound of the trumpet in the valleys below. By such means not a city or village, whether in a low or high situation, but would in less than the space of one night, be roused by the general alarm, and receive some intimation of its object, either from the nature of the signal, or from the difference in the sound of the trumpets. When, therefore, the signal was for a general armament, all men able to bear arms were bound to repair at once, with weapons and provisions, to their respective standards, where they put themselves under the orders of their tribal commanders, and were mustered by the chiefs or captains of hundreds, of thousands, and at last by the chief or prince of the tribe, after which they had only to await orders from the king or general-in-chief, as to when they were to commence their march, and to what point their course was to be directed.

It will thus be seen that the couriers, bearing the parts of the oxen, and charged with the urgent mandate of the king,

* See, *inter alia*, Isa. v. 26; xi. 10; *seq.* xiii. 2; xviii. 3; xxx. 17; xlix. 22; lxii. 10. Jer. iv. 6; 1, 2; li. 12, 17. Zech. ix. 6.

had only to repair to the places known to be those where the several tribes usually assembled within their own territories, where they would find them under arms, ready to march, and awaiting the orders which they brought. This statement incidentally meets the puerile objection of some, that the two oxen must have been cut up into mince-meat in order that a small portion might be sent to all the towns and villages of Israel; and we can see that if, as Josephus affirms, the legs only of the animals were thus employed, these would have sufficed. In confirmation of this view it may be observed that the Levite separated the dead body of his concubine into twelve parts, one for each of the tribes of Israel. This was all that he felt to be necessary, and doubtless all that was required now; and assuredly for the same reason—that each portion was sent direct to the place which was recognized as the centre of union in each of the tribes.

THIRTY-FIRST WEEK—THURSDAY.

RELIEF OF JABESH-GILEAD.—I SAMUEL II. 9-15.

THE objections which have been urged to the raising and bringing into action so large an army in so short a time, have, we trust, been satisfactorily disposed of. But there remain other objections, as to the final movement and result, which likewise deserve our attention.

The objections against the probability of the respite granted by the Ammonites to the besieged, have been also considered; but it has, moreover, been urged as altogether unlikely, that king Nahash would, during the interval of respite, keep so bad a lookout, as to remain wholly in ignorance of what was passing on the other side the Jordan, and to suffer his camp to be surprised and surrounded by Saul and his army, on the very morning of the day he expected the city to be delivered up to him. But, surprising and uncommon as this oversight

may appear, we meet with similar instances of apparent neglect, not only in sacred and ancient history, but even among modern and warlike nations. It was the maxim of the greatest of modern generals, never to despise an enemy; and most of the failures of this kind have arisen from inattention to this principle. There is the remarkable instance of the French general, Count Tallard, who, when he might easily have opposed the confederate army under Marlborough, and prevented them from passing the Rhine to come at him, yet suffered them to pass that rapid river unmolested; alleging, that the more that came over, the more there would be to be killed or taken—the consequence of which egregious oversight was the total defeat of the French army at Hochstadt, the taking of their insolent general prisoner, with a prodigious number of other officers of distinction, and the preservation of the German empire from the most impending danger. How much Nahash despised the Israelites has already been indicated; and supposing him apprized of their movements, the probability is that he would, under the influence of such feelings, keep his army in its cantonments till the enemy came up, without taking the trouble to meet them, or of resisting their passage of the Jordan.

Considering the strange neglect of ancient armies, and indeed of modern oriental armies, in sending out scouts for intelligence, in maintaining advanced picquets, and in keeping strict watch—of which neglect we have many examples in Scripture—it does not appear to us by any means incredible, that the Ammonites were unapprized of these movements among the Israelites. But without taking advantage of this resource, and again supposing that they did know that the Israelites were bestirring themselves west of the Jordan, it is more probable, considering the shortness of the time, that they supposed all this movement was intended to resist their further progress into Palestine, than that it was destined for the relief of the besieged. And, further, whatever martial precautions they may have taken, yet several seeming accidental circumstances, such as often occur in warfare, may,

through the policy of the Hebrew monarch, have rendered them ineffectual, if not, indeed, contributory to that fatal security and indolence which their contempt of the enemy was calculated to induce. It is quite likely that Saul and some of the tribes might take advantage of their proximity to the place of rendezvous, to secure all the passes and defiles leading from the Jordan to the enemy's camp, and thereby intercept all intelligence of his approach from reaching them, and they would think themselves the more secure on that very account. It may also be suggested, as far from improbable, that they may have been confirmed in their security by the very messengers whom Saul sent, the night before his arrival, to encourage the Jabeshites, by informing them of his intention to be present for their relief the next morning; for, while they were bearing this cheering intelligence to the besieged, it is probable that they spread a contrary report through the enemy's camp, through which they passed, making them believe that Saul and the tribes on the other side the Jordan, had not the power or the spirit to come to their relief. But that which appears most to have contributed to the fatal security of the Ammonites, was the subtle message sent out by the Jabeshites, that having in vain implored the help of their brethren beyond the river, they had now no resource left but to march out the next morning, and cast themselves upon the mercy of the Ammonitish king. This news, once spread through the camp, could not fail to render the guards and sentinels still more remiss and negligent.

There was still another stratagem, so common in these early times, and still so characteristic of eastern warfare, that Saul was not likely to neglect the advantage which it offered; for, from the nature of the country among the mountains of Gilead, it might be used with peculiar advantages, and with much assurance of success—this was to fetch a compass, instead of marching directly upon the enemy, and so fall upon them unawares, and from a quarter least suspected. This Saul might the more easily accomplish, as it appears that he marched his army in three divisions. It might be done under

the guidance of the Jabeshites who originally brought the intelligence to Gibeah, who, as belonging to this region, may be assumed to have been well acquainted with the situation of the enemy's camp, and with all the passes that led to it. Thus, by continuing the march all that night, and with as little noise as possible, the Hebrew army might with ease come upon the Ammonites, unperceived and unexpected, until their warlike outcries aroused them, perhaps out of a profound sleep, and the growing daylight disclosed them on all sides of the camp, and ready to rush upon them in all their might. In the confusion which could not but ensue in the host of the besiegers, the Jabeshites may be conceived to have made good their promise of "coming out" in the morning—not, indeed, to yield themselves up, but to fall upon their rear, while their front and flanks were belabored by Saul's three powerful corps.

With all these advantages, there is nothing hard to believe in the fact stated, that the Israelites gained so signal and easy a victory, and made so fearful a slaughter of their enemies. This dreadful execution lasted from morning until the heat of the day compelled them to give over; by which time the survivors were so completely scattered, that two of them were not left together.

It is stated by Josephus, and is in itself probable enough, though not recorded in Scripture, that Saul, not content with this signal victory, and the complete deliverance of Jabesh-gilead, carried the war into the country of the Ammonites, which he laid waste, enriched his army with the spoil, and brought back his victorious troops safe to their homes, laden with glory and plunder. He adds, that king Nahash was killed in the battle. However this may be, it is certain that the Ammonites were so humbled by this great overthrow, that we do not read of any further hostilities between them and the Israelites during the remainder of Saul's reign, nor indeed until the latter end of that of David; when Hanun, their newly crowned monarch, did, by an unheard of affront

offered to his ambassadors, provoke that warlike prince to use them with much greater severity.

The reader will recollect several instances of this favorite course among the Hebrews, of surprising the enemy by swift marches. In fact, it is the distinguishing feature of the first military operation on record—Abraham's pursuit and overthrow of the five invading kings. It was also by the very method described, that Joshua won many signal victories over the combined forces of the Canaanites. There is, particularly, that celebrated action against the five confederate kings, who had brought together their numerous forces against the Gibeonite allies of the Hebrews, Josh. x. 4; and the still more remarkable victory which he gained, with a small flying army, over the king of Hazor, at the waters of Merom, although the Canaanitish force consisted of chariots, and horsemen, and foot, as numerous "as the sand of the sea." Against this formidable host, he marched with the choice of his troops, with such long and rapid strides, that he came unexpectedly upon them, and falling upon them, according to custom, in three or four distinct bodies, gave them a total defeat, seized all their camp, burned all their chariots, hamstringed their horses, and having totally dispersed them that escaped the sword, became, by that single action, master of a wide tract of country, and of so large a number of cities, as it would doubtless have taken a long time to reduce by regular siege.

THIRTY-FIRST WEEK—FRIDAY.

THE INAUGURATION.—I SAMUEL XII.

It must not escape our notice that in his summons to the tribes, Saul called the people in the joint names of himself and Samuel—"Whoso cometh not after Saul and after Samuel," etc. Was this use of Samuel's name authorized by the prophet? We incline to think that it was not. It is

true, that Samuel's residence was not so distant from that of Saul, that any very serious delay would have been occasioned by any actual application to Samuel. Yet, to such excited urgency as that on which Saul acted, the delay of a few hours would seem intolerable; and from what later events disclose of Saul's character, the probability is, that he *assumed* the concurrence of Samuel as a matter of course, and acted accordingly. It was the fault of this man's temper—the ruinous fault, which proved his destruction—to have such proud reliance upon his own judgment, or rather upon his impulses, that he continually assumes the approbation and sanction of those he was bound to consult—whether it were the Lord, or whether it were Samuel. These were not only acts of great disrespect, and involving the assumption of powers not committed to him, but left him open to errors of conduct which might have been avoided, had he availed himself of the mature experience of Samuel, or had he sought counsel of God by the appointed means. In this case it is probable, therefore, that, without consulting the prophet, he coupled his name with his own—not only in seeming deference to Samuel, but as conscious that he had not yet himself been fully inaugurated as king, and as aware that many would come forward at the call of Samuel, who might not pay the same attention to his own, unsupported by the authority of the prophet. We cannot help thinking, from some expressions which occur in Samuel's farewell address to the people in laying down his power, that he had from this, or some such circumstance, gained some insight of the true character of Saul, and began to discern the dangers that might flow from it. Yet for the present he held his peace, not willing to damp the general satisfaction—fearing, perhaps, to be premature in his judgment, and being anxious to take advantage of the enthusiasm which Saul's exploit had awakened, to secure the general recognition of his authority.

So strong now ran the tide of public opinion in Saul's favor, that the people hinted to Samuel (who had, by this time, joined the army) that those who had contemned the election

of Saul should be brought to punishment. This motion was with prompt and graceful magnanimity put down by Saul himself, whose kingly style on *this* occasion became him well:—"There shall not a man be put to death this day; for to-day the Lord hath wrought salvation in Israel."

Availing himself of the good disposition of the people, Samuel then proposed that they should go and "renew the kingdom at Gilgal,"—the old camping ground of the tribes, and the place where the twelve stones of memorial, taken out of the bed of the Jordan, were set up. This was probably, at this time, the nearest to them of the places where the Israelites were wont to assemble on great national occasions. Arrived at that place, Saul was there solemnly inaugurated and hailed as king, and the act was confirmed by peace-offering sacrifices. The rejoicing at this consummation was general, and no doubt sincere. In the midst of these exultations, Samuel arose to address the people, and every voice became mute that his might be heard. Then followed that great oration to which we have already had occasion to refer. He commenced by pointing out the completeness with which he had given effect to their wishes in setting a king over them, although avowedly in opposition to his better judgment:—"And now, behold, the king walketh before you, and I am old and gray-headed; and behold my sons are with you; and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day." All the parties concerned were there: the king, in the fulness of his power; the people, triumphant in the apparent sanction to their judgment, which the late victory under their new king afforded; Samuel himself, too old to be expected much longer to exercise any remaining control over the movements of the government; and his sons, of whom they were jealous, were there present like themselves, as subjects of Saul. In that audience, he appealed to them to testify whether or not there had been aught in his administration, to call for the change they had demanded. Having obtained their cordial recognition of the integrity of his government, he proceeded, in a rapid glance over the past history of the

nation, to show that the government as originally established, and as illustrated by the special interposition of the Divine King, in raising up public servants equal to every emergency, had been quite adequate to the wants of the nation. In laying down the power which he had so long exercised for the benefit of his people, it became him not to let them go away with the impression, that the performance of the official acts necessary to the establishment of the new government, were to be taken as expressions of his satisfaction with their conduct. It was far otherwise. It was wickedness, it was sin; for which they would not fail to be deeply punished—unless they and their king continued to walk in the fear of the Lord, and remembered that their prime obedience was due to his commandments. “But if ye still do wickedly,” he concluded, “ye shall be consumed—both ye and your king.” Samuel paused; and to show that his words were in conformity with the will of God, he lifted up his hand to heaven, and called for thunder and rain, which came in abundance, although such phenomena were never witnessed in Canaan at that season of the year, it being the time of wheat harvest. The people were quite satisfied of the supernatural character of this visitation; and the result was salutary, for “they feared the Lord and Samuel.”

It has been questioned whether it were right in Samuel, or fair to Saul, to set forth such a view of the case, as, if he won the attention to which he was entitled, it was calculated to excite disaffection to the new government. Supposing his view right—as no doubt it was; was it in good taste or judgment to produce it on this happy occasion? But we must remember that Samuel had not only been the governor of Israel, but was still a prophet, who lay under a solemn responsibility to make known the mind of God without such prudential reserves as might influence the conduct of other men. The occasion, however awkward it might seem, was proper. It was the closing act of his administration; and in laying down his power in the presence of the assembled states, it surely became him to declare the principle of the

Divine government—to vindicate his own administration—to pronounce his view of the present condition of the nation—and give solemn cautions and warnings as to the future. He spoke only as he had always spoken; and he might now finally, and once for all, declare his mind the more freely, seeing that the authority of the king was now fully established, and that the monarchy was to be taken as an accomplished fact—a fact accomplished through his own instrumentality. His object was not to lead them to recall the step they had taken, but to ensure their good conduct and their proper subservience to Jehovah, as still not only their spiritual, but their political Lord, under the new institutions.

But although this vindicates Samuel, it is more than probable that this strong remonstrance was displeasing to Saul—coming as it did in the moment of his highest exaltation, when his mind was highly excited by the keen perception of his own high service to the state. It is, as already hinted, not unlikely that the discourse owed some of its touches to the perception Samuel had been already enabled to obtain of Saul's real character; which he had soon occasion to learn that he had too truly judged. Thus it is probable, that the seeds of future disagreement between the king and the prophet were already sown, before the great assembly at Gilgal broke up.

THIRTY-FIRST WEEK—SATURDAY.

ISRAEL DISARMED.—I SAMUEL XIII. 1-4, 19-22.

THE narrative may have suggested to many that Saul was a young man at the time of his nomination to reign over Israel. Yet on reflection, it would appear as unlikely that the disadvantage of youth, and consequently of inexperience, should have been added to the other disqualifications, for

winning the confidence of the people, under which he had labored. In the course of hereditary succession, the occasional youth of the sovereign at the time of his accession is accepted as an inevitable consequence and necessity of that form of government; but in the first establishment of a dynasty—in the choice of a first king—we remember no instance of a young man being preferred. David himself was thirty years old when he began to reign, and had thus arrived at full maturity of years, and still greater maturity of character and experience. We are, therefore, not surprised when it transpires that Saul had already a son entering upon manhood, and fit to take a military command, and to act with valor and conduct in it. This son was JONATHAN—a worthy name—a name dear to every student of Scripture history. The possession of such a son at the commencement of his reign, implies that Saul could not well have been much less than forty years of age.

Although under the necessity of disbanding the army when the great service for which it was brought together had been accomplished, Saul was so well aware of the dangerous attention his exploit and deliverance would awaken on the part of the remaining enemies of Israel, that he deemed it expedient to keep a small body of men under arms. There was this need of his doing so—that the Philistines in fact still retained, or had in the later years of Samuel's government acquired, possession of some posts in Israel, which they held by their garrisons at the time of Saul's anointing. In dismissing him from Ramah, Samuel had indicated that on his way home he would pass by a place, where there was "a garrison of the Philistines." This being the case, the election of a king by the Israelites could not but have engaged the earnest attention of this people, and the military resources and decision evinced by that king in the splendid action against the Ammonites, must have made them feel that their own position in regard to the Israelites would not long remain unquestioned. In fact, the recent victory of Saul must have stimulated him to the purpose of gaining possession of

these Philistine posts, and of confirming himself in the regards of the people, by ridding the country entirely of these inveterate enemies of Israel. Thus the parties stood watching each other—the Philistines looking for some overt act, which might afford them cause for bringing their full power into the field; for being already in possession of such superiority over Israel as they desired, they had nothing to fight for, until the Israelites should manifest a purpose of shaking off their yoke. That yoke was heavier than we should have conceived from anything that has transpired in the history; for it appears eventually that the Philistines had in fact disarmed the population, and had even removed the smiths—so that the people had even to take their agricultural implements to the Philistine garrisons to be sharpened—that is, to have the edge beaten out on the anvil. They were not, as some imagine, compelled to go to the Philistines by any direct order, but they went because smiths only were to be found there. Hence, probably, they managed as well as they could to make their tools work without this resource, by the aid of the files which we are told they possessed for common sharpenings. The extent of this disarmament may appear from the fact, that in the action which eventually came on, no one of the Israelites had a sword or spear save the king and his son Jonathan.

It may be, and has been, urged as an objection to this statement, that it is scarcely credible that a vast army of men should have taken the field against the Ammonites, not long before, without weapons; or that the Ammonites should have been defeated by an unarmed multitude. But this would equally apply to the ensuing engagement with the Philistines themselves, with reference to which this statement is expressly made. They were not unarmed, although deprived of those usual weapons of warfare, and the means of obtaining them, which only a smith could make. There were bows, there were slings, there were ox-goats, which had once been so efficient against this very people in the days of Shamgar. In fact, there were a hundred things which

might be turned into efficient weapons in the hands of brave and resolute men, before the use of fire-arms was known. The Benjaminites—Saul's own tribe—were, we know, especially expert in the use of the sling; and it is far from unlikely that the privation of other customary weapons caused this to be especially cultivated, which was destined ere long in the hands of David to lay the great champion of the Philistines low.

It has been ingeniously suggested that, seeing that in and after the Mosaical, as well as the Homeric period, spears and swords of "brass"—that is, a mixture of copper and tin, very hard but also brittle—were in common use, and seeing that the Hebrews, even to a late period of their history, received their iron from abroad—the object of the restriction imposed by the Philistines was to retain in their own hands at this time the use of *iron* weapons, which gave an indisputable advantage to those who exclusively possessed them. By their position they would be enabled to realize this superiority; for, by blocking up access to the maritime traffic on the one hand, and to Egypt on the other, they could keep iron from the use of the inland tribes near their border—not permanently, for no advantage of this nature can long remain exclusive, but undoubtedly for a considerable length of time.

Ancient history is not without analogous examples of these restrictions. A like condition was imposed upon the Romans by Porsenna, king of the Etrusci, at a time and under circumstances when it was far more difficult to enforce. In the covenant contracted with the Romans on the expulsion of their kings, he made it a condition of peace with them that they should use no iron *except in husbandry*.* The same policy occurs again indeed in Scripture itself; for Nebuchadnezzar was careful to remove "the craftsmen and the *smiths*"—the latter obviously that the poor people whom he left behind might be in no condition to rebel.

The force which, under these circumstances, Saul deemed

* Plin. *Hist. Nat.* 31-34.

it expedient to retain in arms, did not exceed three thousand men. This strikes us as a large rather than a small number for him to reserve as a sort of body guard about his person. The absence of a standing army—compensated by the great facility of calling large bodies of the people into prompt action—was adverse to the keeping any large numbers of men in arms; and the *profession* of a soldier was confined to the royal guards, who alone remained constantly on duty. This body was of course composed of picked men, and formed the efficient nucleus of an army, when the militia (so to speak) were called out. Their commander was thus the only officer of rank on permanent service; and this gave him such advantages, that the same person was usually the general-in-chief of the whole army (under the king) when the levies were raised. Of the three thousand, which Saul probably thought sufficient as an army of observation till an opportunity should be found of striking a blow against the Philistines, he kept two thousand with him, and committed the other thousand to the charge of his son Jonathan, who was stationed in closer observation upon the Philistine post at Geba. The impetuous valor of this young man—stimulated by his more acutely susceptible, if not deeper, sense of the shame and dishonor to Israel, from the presence of hostile strangers in the sacred land—precipitated matters to a crisis, sooner perhaps than the cooler judgment of Saul would have dictated. Although, however, startled one day to receive intelligence that his son had smitten and cut off the Philistine garrison at Geba, he saw that the time for observation was past, and that of action come. It will be noted that he did not attempt anything further with the force in hand. He saw that it was his duty not to waste time in petty actions; but, being assured that the intelligence of this affair would bring the whole force of the Philistines into the field, he once more summoned the tribes to his standard.

Thirty-Second Week—Sunday.

FOOLISHNESS.—I SAMUEL XIII. 13.

LOOKING back to the interview between Saul and Samuel, after the first public transgression of the former, we cannot fail to be struck by terms in which the prophet administers his rebuke: "Thou hast done *foolishly*: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee."

Now it probably may strike many readers that "foolishness" is not exactly the term they would have employed in characterizing the conduct of the king. They would have thought of "presumption," of "self-will," of "distrust," and other like terms—but scarcely of "foolishness." But the prophet's word is the right one after all. It goes to the root of the matter. Saul *had* acted foolishly. And why? Because he had not obeyed the voice of the Lord his God. The prophet knew very well that there are many foolishnesses in the heart of man; but in his view, and in that of all the sacred writers, the lowest depths of human foolishness—its most astonishing and incredible manifestation—was in disobedience to the Lord's commandments. There are two kinds of fools prominently noticed in Scripture—the fool who denies that there is any God—"the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God," a text which suggests the remark that if he is a fool who says this "in his heart," how much greater fool is he who utters that foolish thought. This is one. There is another—the fool who does not obey God, though he does not deny his existence. And yet, after all, these are but one. If we probe the matter closely, we shall find that there is scarcely more than an impalpable film of real difference between the foolishness of the man who says in his heart there is no God, and that of the man who does not render him obedience. One may as well believe there is no God, as not to obey him. Indeed, the man who does not

render him true and heartfelt obedience, has no such real—no such practical—belief in his existence, as is of any use or value, or as will aught avail him at the last day. There are few, perhaps, who really believe all they suppose themselves to believe. There are none of us who distrust the existence of God—not one who would not shudder at the thought of saying, even in his heart, that “there is no God.” This is well. Granted that this is believed—what then? Devils also believe this, and are not saved—they only tremble. That which even devils believe without profit, will be of small advantage to us, if we believe it as devils do. Theirs is a cold and barren—barren, or fruitful only in fears—assent of the understanding. If ours be no more, we believe just as the devils do. In religion nothing is accounted real that is not vital. Men, no less than trees, are known by their fruits, and if a man’s belief in the existence of God be a real and living thing, it will be manifested by the fruit of obedience. It is impossible for any one to realize a distinct, and therefore a vital, and because vital true, conviction “that God is, and that he is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him,” without the understanding, the will, and the active powers being brought into a condition of submission and obedience to his will. The reality of our conviction must be tested by the degree of our anxiety to ascertain the will of the Lord, by our patience in awaiting its disclosure, and by the entireness of our obedience to it.

The foolishness of the man who denies that there is a God, is therefore more nearly allied than people are apt to think, to the foolishness of the man whose spirit is not in a state of obedience to his will.

To appreciate the intense foolishness of the disobedience of Saul, we should bear in mind the peculiar position in which the Lord stood to Israel. Whoever was king or judge—so long as the Mosaical constitution lasted, and so long as recognized means existed, whether by prophet, by priest, by Urim and Thummim, of learning his will on every national matter—He was the real sovereign of Israel. Now there were few,

if any, ancient monarchies, the sovereign of which did not exact implicit, unreasoning obedience to his mandates. They might be obviously preposterous or mischievous—yet they were to be obeyed. Now, if a human king—a fallible mortal—expected this, if the ideas of the East acknowledged his right to this degree of submission—how much more might the Divine King of Israel expect in everything the most ready and cheerful obedience. There was here nothing to try or render difficult the obedience which wise and conscientious men must often have felt in rendering submission to earthly kings. The Lord could not, like them, have any special objects or interests to promote. It was impossible for him to have any other object in view than the essential welfare of his people. *That* might be true of many human kings, but they might err greatly in the measures taken to carry out their good intentions; and a well-meaning monarch, by his blunders in execution, might do more serious mischief than one of evil purposes and dispositions. But the Israelites had, or ought to have had, under all circumstances, the conviction not only that the Lord's purposes towards them were good, but that his power of effecting these purposes was boundless, and that he could not err in the measures dictated by his infinite wisdom in giving them effect. There could be no ground for doubt, hesitation, or questioning, in regard to any of his counsels or mandates. They must be good—they could not be otherwise than best; and obedience became not only an imperative duty, but a most exalted and happy privilege, and distrust or disobedience beyond all conception "foolish." Hence the great stress which is laid on the necessity of implicit obedience to the Lord's commands, on the privileges of entire submission, and on the absurdity and wickedness of disobedience. The most eminent men in Scripture are those who entered most into this spirit. Look at the obedience of Abraham, of Moses, of Joshua, of whom it is emphatically remarked,—“As the Lord commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua; *he left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses.*” Josh.

xi. 15. Look also at David. Eminent as were among men his personal qualities, it was not these, but his disposition to entire reliance upon the Lord, and of carrying out the designs and true principles of the government, by the most implicit obedience to his declared will—that rendered David “the man after God’s own heart.” He, more perfectly than any in high place, before or after, realized in his public, and indeed in his private capacity, the true duty and real privilege of submission and obedience; and it was on account of this more than with regard to his private character, which, with all his faults, was very lovely, that he was honored with this high distinction. The difference between him and Saul was that his heart was right—his public principle was right—though more than once, being still but dust, he fell into crime, and committed grievous mistakes; whereas Saul was wrong in public principle—wrong at heart, although his career was not altogether wanting in honorable actions, just sentiments, and heroic deeds.

But let us not think that obedience is less imperative to us, than it was under the old law. It is far more so; and disobedience, passive or active, is still greater foolishness than it was in the time of king Saul. God has now evinced the unfathomable depth of his love towards us, by yielding up his own dear Son to die upon the cross for our redemption. In this we have the pledge—the complete assurance—that he who spared not his own Son, will not fail to bestow upon us freely all things that are for our good, that he will forbid nothing but what would harm us, and command nothing really hard or difficult—nothing but what we should ourselves most intensely desire, were our eyes wholly purged of earth, to see as he sees. Let us, therefore, with willing hearts obey all his commands, and cheerfully submit to all his appointments. In the annihilation of self-will, and in the temper of implicit devotedness, may we, as to every duty, say, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” And as to every event,—“Here I am; let him do what seemeth him good.”

THIRTY-SECOND WEEK—MONDAY.

SAUL'S TRANSGRESSION.—I SAMUEL XIII. 4-15.

WHEN Saul "blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying: Let the Hebrews hear," he had a right to expect that they would hear. The alacrity which had been evinced by the tribes in following him to the relief of Jabesh-gilead, evinced a degree of spirit and zeal on which he had reason to calculate. But he was mistaken. There was a *sentiment* in that affair, which was wanting in this. Then, the transaction to which their attention was called, was in the highest degree stimulating; and the people against whom they marched on that occasion, were those whom they had more than once signally defeated in battle. But in the present case the people generally were filled with terror when they heard that the Philistine garrison had been smitten. By the Philistines they had repeatedly been brought low in battle, and to them they had long and often been under subjection. As a dog which had dared in a moment of irritation to snap at the hand of his master, cowers in terror of, or flees from the look of punishment—so cowered, so fled, the Israelites when they heard that Saul had drawn his sword against the Philistines. Many of the people fled for safety to the land beyond the Jordan, which river the Philistines had never yet crossed. Others abandoned their houses, and hurried off to the mountains and rocky wildernesses. Some resorted to the caverns in which certain parts of the country abound; some retired to the woods, and many even sought shelter in pits, that is, in the capacious cisterns prepared to hold rain water for the use of the inhabitants, and which are often in a dry state, either from not having been filled in the last season of rain, or from the preserved waters having become exhausted. They may also have been subterranean granaries. In both the orifice was small, and may be easily closed. We have one instance of this in the cistern wherein the messen-

gers sent to David from Jerusalem—when that city was in the power of Absalom—were hid from their pursuers by a friendly woman, who covered the mouth with corn, so that the existence of this refuge was unsuspected.

The rendezvous was at Gilgal, and to that place some men did repair, albeit with heavy hearts and misgiving spirits. In fact, the Philistines were already in the field with an immense army, the presence of which filled the Israelites with dismay; and even the stouter-hearted men who had come to Gilgal, began gradually to steal away from the camp. The king beheld this with dismay, and it seemed to him that all would be lost unless he took some decided steps before he was altogether deserted. This he was precluded from doing by the absence of Samuel, who had promised to be there within seven days, and had intimated that nothing was to be done before he had come and offered the proper sacrifices. As he could not but know that Samuel would be able to make known to him the will of the Divine King, whose viceroy he officially was, and as he had no reason to doubt that from that source counsels and aids equal to the most extreme emergency would be provided, it was the duty of Saul to have awaited patiently the arrival of the prophet; and although his men did leave him, it behooved him to evince the same noble and pious confidence which Gideon had manifested under the like circumstances, who was content that the Lord should have all the glory, by the inadequacy of the means employed, and who contentedly beheld his men go away from him by thousands, knowing that it was the same to the Lord to save by many or by few. He had his reward; and Saul would not have failed of his, had he profited by this great example. This was in fact a test of his obedience to the principles on which he had accepted the crown; and it was, doubtless, to render it such, that Samuel delayed his coming to the very close of the period he had appointed. Saul, however, looked at these matters merely in a human point of view. He looked at them as a king and a soldier, and not as "an Israelite indeed." It must not be concealed, that he

was a vain-glorious man, covetous of military renown, and impatient of restraint from autocratic power. There is reason to suspect that he was far more desirous that the power of his own arm, the success of his own combinations, should be evinced in this transaction, than the might of the Lord's right hand; and there is cause for more than a surmise, that he was jealous that the Lord should possess, or too manifestly share, the glory of Israel's deliverance. That he was a patriot king, after a certain blind fashion of his own, cannot be denied; and as little can it be doubted, that self was so mixed up with his patriotism, that Israel's deliverance would scarcely have been a joy to him—certainly not an unmingled joy, unless *he* had the whole credit of its accomplishment. This view of his temper, which is derived from the whole of his career, may well be brought forward now to illustrate his position under the present circumstances.

To the faithful servant of Jehovah, which Saul was officially required to be, this trial ought not to have been a hard one. It would not have been so to David, who was great in that very reliance upon Jehovah wherein Saul so signally failed. It must be admitted, however, that the trial *was* a hard one to flesh and blood. It was hence hard to Saul. But it was most important that he should be subjected to it. He was the first king, and his acts would form precedents for his successors. The very nature of the kingdom depended upon his conduct. It was therefore essential that his way should be hedged about, and his steps determined, whether willingly or not, according to the conditions of the monarchy. He was either to be forced into the proper position belonging to him, or, by refusing to fill it, subject himself to the high penalties of disobedience. The people would then know that his measures were not to be taken as the precedents of the Hebrew regal constitution, seeing that they were taken in known contrariety to the will of Jehovah, as declared by prophet and by priest. Saul might have done well enough (for he had fine heroic qualities), in a line of hereditary kings, under whom the principles of the government had been established;

but he was unfit for the responsibilities attached to the founder of a kingdom, whose acts required to be weighed with regard to their influence on the political rights of unborn generations.

Samuel had promised to join the king in seven days. The seventh day had commenced, but he was not yet come. Seeing, probably, that many of his men had taken their departure over the night, and that not more than six hundred men remained to him, Saul determined not to lose another day in waiting for Samuel, who might not arrive till the evening. He himself offered the sacrifices; not only burnt-offerings but peace-offerings. This was a two-fold offence—it was not only disobedience to the word of the Lord, and the proceeding of an independent king, but the mode of action was in itself a crime. Among the nations, kings indeed offered sacrifice, combining the offices of priest and king, but it was not to be so in Israel. Priests only might offer sacrifice—the only exception being in the case of the prophets, who occasionally claimed that right for the honor of God, by whose spirit they were moved. This, therefore, was another assumption of autocratic power, of a nature most offensive and dangerous under the theocratical institutions. The priesthood formed the constitutional check, on behalf of Jehovah and the people, upon the power of the crown, and to assume the most important of their functions was nothing less than, with a high hand, to cast down the barrier which the wisdom of God had reared up to secure the safety of the chosen people against the encroachments of regal ambition. It has been said, indeed, that Saul did not himself offer the sacrifice, but ordered a priest to do so. It has, however, all the appearance of a personal act, and the character of Saul suggests that he would be likely to take the opportunity of indicating his possession of the same functions as belonged to other kings. “Bring *hither* a burnt-offering to me, and peace-offerings; and he offered the burnt-offerings.” There even seems to us an emphasis in the last clause, the burnt-offerings being, as wholly consumed on the altar, the holiest of all

sacrifices—this, even this, he offered—leaving, perhaps, the peace-offerings to be offered by other hands.

Samuel came before the sacrifices were completed. He evinced the deepest concern and displeasure; and although received by the king with respect and attention, he plainly told him that by this deplorable failure of obedience, by this utter forgetfulness of his true position, he had placed his crown and dynasty in peril.

THIRTY-SECOND WEEK—TUESDAY.

HONEY AND BLOOD.—I SAMUEL XIV.

ABOUT seven miles north by east from Jerusalem is a steep, precipitous valley extending east and west. North of this valley, which is called in 1 Samuel xiii. 23, "the passage of Michmash" (now Wady es-Suweinit), lay the Philistine host, which had established a garrison, or advanced post, upon the high promontory or angle formed by the intersection of another valley extending north and south. Upon the heights about a mile on the southern side of the same passage of Michmash, stood Geba, from which Jonathan had lately expelled the Philistine garrison, and which Saul and Jonathan now occupied with not more than six hundred men. Michmash (now Mukhmas), which gave name to the passage, and where the Philistine outpost was stationed, and Geba (now Jeba), therefore, were separated by this valley, and were then, as now, in sight of each other. In this "passage," near by the point where the other valley intersects it, are two hills of a conical, or rather spherical shape, having steep rocky sides, with small wadys running up behind each, so as almost to isolate them. One is on the side towards Jeba, and the other on the side towards Mukhmas. These are apparently the two mentioned in connection with the circumstances to which our

attention is now directed, and which these particulars will better enable the reader to understand.*

We may be sure that the movements of the Philistine force, stationed on the height at Michmash, were watched with much attention and solicitude from Saul's head-quarters at Geba. This attention may have been reciprocal. One morning an extraordinary commotion was discovered among the Philistines. Its nature could not well be discovered in the gray of the morning, and in the want of telescopes. It is clear there is a conflict of some kind going on; and see, the host gradually melts away, as if the men were beating down one another. What could it be? The Philistines had no enemies but the Israelites. Was it some broil among themselves, or had some of the garrison undertaken, without orders, a wild and desperate enterprise? When the latter thought crossed the mind of Saul, he hastened to muster his small army, or rather troop, to see if any were absent, and then he found that all were there except Jonathan and his armor-bearer, and knowing the chivalrous and daring character of his son, he had no doubt but that his hand was in this affair. It was so, indeed. That heroic young prince, strong in the true old Gideonic faith—that, as he said, “There is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few,” had privately prevailed upon his armor-bearer to scale the rock and penetrate to the Philistine garrison. Now, it is stated, in conformity with the above description, that “between the passages by which Jonathan sought to go over to the Philistine garrison, there was a sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other side: and

* To prevent confusion, it is necessary to mention, that in 1 Sam. xiii. 15, 16, xiv. 5, where we read Gibeah in the authorized version, the original has Geba, which is important as identifying it with the plain from which the Philistine garrison had been expelled. It is true that in 1 Sam. xiv. 16, the original itself has Gibeah, but as the same place, so repeatedly mentioned before as Geba, is evidently denoted, this must be taken as an error of transcription, the more easily accounted for by the fact that Gibeah, in Hebrew, is but the feminine of Geba, which has, indeed, led some to suppose that the two names applied to one place.—See *Bibliotheca Sacra*, ii. 503–602.

the name of the one was Bozez, and the name of the other Senez. The forefront of the one was situate northward, over against Michmash, and the other southward, over against Geba." It seems to us that Jonathan chose to make the attempt here, by the hill Bozez, not only because of some facility afforded, but because the projection of the hill would conceal his advance till a good part of the ascent had been made.

When at length the two men were discovered by the sentinels scrambling up the rock, it was supposed that they were of those who had hid themselves in caverns, and who had no doubt come as deserters to the Philistines. This seems to us the obvious inference from the words,—“Behold, the Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they had hid themselves.” This was a reasonable conjecture; for, in fact, a little way further down the valley there are caverns in the cliffs, particularly one great cavern called Jaihah; and it was not to be imagined that two men could be coming with hostile intentions. This explains also why no attempt was made to hinder their ascent after they were discovered, but they were rather invited to come up. Had their hostile purpose been suspected, nothing could have been easier than to destroy them, by casting down stones or other missiles upon them. As soon as Jonathan and his armor-bearer had gained a footing upon the top of the cliff, their intentions were at once evinced. The scouts or sentinels were speedily struck down, and on the two heroes marched, destroying all who opposed them. By the time they had slain twenty men, the alarm spread to the garrison, and created a general panic and confusion. Those who had seen how the assailants got up were dead. It was not known how they had got there, nor that there were only two of them; and those who did see but two, would scarcely conceive that there were no more, but must have supposed that these two belonged to a larger number, perhaps to Saul’s entire force, which had gained possession of the post: for where but two had ascended, it was clear that more could come. In their blind fury and fear they ran against each other, and slew all they

met; while those who fled, hastened to the main army, carrying their own terrors to it. Their tale no doubt conveyed that the strong post at Michmash, believed to be inaccessible, had been seized by a large force of the Hebrews, who were in close pursuit, and might soon be expected. And, in fact, the crests of the Hebrews soon appeared in sight; for Saul no sooner discovered the fact from Geba, than he put his force in motion to take advantage of the panic that appeared to have been raised among the Philistines, his troop being at every step augmented by the fugitive Israelites, who, now the tide had turned, flocked—such of them as were near enough—to his standard, as eager to join in the pursuit of an enemy already defeated by his fears, as they had sunk appalled from the aspect of his strength. There is a curious statement, that “moreover, the Hebrews that were with the Philistines before that time, which went up with them into the camp from the country round about, even they also turned to be with the Israelites that were with Saul and Jonathan.” This shows that there were some Israelites with the Philistines, being, as we conceive, deserters, who had betaken themselves for safety and subsistence to them as the stronger party. This fact strengthens the probability we have ventured to suggest, that Jonathan and his armor-bearer were taken for deserters by the sentries who saw them scaling the cliffs.

The pursuit was hot and bloody, as it was likely to be under the circumstances; for the Hebrews had many ancient and recent wrongs to avenge, and they would not fail to exact retribution for their late fears.

Saul was so apprehensive lest any part of this great opportunity of effectually humbling the Philistines should be lost, that, in the hearing of the troops, though not in that of Jonathan, who was not near at the moment, he laid an anathema upon any one who should taste food until the evening. The people, in consequence, were greatly distressed, being prevented from taking even such refreshments as offered in the way, although greatly needed. Jonathan, with one of the pursuing parties, was passing through a wood, which

so abounded with honey, that it dropped upon the ground. But no man ventured to touch it except Jonathan, who, being ignorant of his father's ban, put the end of his staff into a honey-comb, and raised it to his mouth. This fact is of some interest, as a perfectly incidental illustration of the phrase, so frequent with Moses, describing Canaan, as "a land flowing with milk and honey." To ourselves, the fact of wild bees thus fixing their combs in the woods upon the trees, to the extent here intimated, seems somewhat strange, although the tendency of these insects to do this is shown by the frequency with which the swarms of our hive-bees alight upon trees. Although we never kept bees, nor did our immediate neighbors in the country, we have had swarms repeatedly alight upon the trees of our garden, where they would probably have established themselves in some way, if not captured for the hive. We should like to have the experiment tried of letting them alone, to see how they would manage their own affairs. We very much doubt if bees were kept by the ancient Hebrews in hives. The woods, we apprehend, so abounded in the settlements of wild bees, that honey was too abundant and cheap to be worth private attention. It was the property of whoever collected it; and as all who wanted it could not do that, doubtless many poor persons earned a subsistence by collecting it in the woods, and selling it in the towns at such a price as would just pay them for this trouble. "Bees in the East," says Mr. Roberts, "are not, as in England, kept in hives; they are all in a wild state. The forests literally flow with honey; large combs may be seen hanging in the trees as you pass along, full of honey. Hence this article is cheap and plentiful." It is true, that this writer has a tropical country (India) in view; but the statement is applicable to many other countries in which bees and the materials for their wax and honey abound, as was the case in the land of Canaan. Probably, as population increased, and the soil became more densely occupied by men, the product of honey decreased, and then the bees were reared in hives. Hence, in the time of Christ, we read of "wild honey," im-

plying that there was some *not* wild ; but this distinction is not to be found in the Old Testament.

Another remarkable consequence flowed from this unwise restriction which Saul imposed. No sooner had the sun gone down, than the famishing people flew upon the spoil of cattle, and in the rage of their hunger hastily slew them, and began to eat, if not the raw flesh, as we apprehend, yet at least flesh so imperfectly exsanguinated, from improper slaughtering and imperfect dressing, that the law against the eating of meat with any blood remaining in it was visibly transgressed. The importance attached to this law by the Hebrews has always been most remarkable, and continues even to the present day, when a Jew will not touch meat that has been killed by a Christian, chiefly from the belief that the blood has not properly been discharged ; and during a journey he will abstain from animal food altogether, except when he comes to places where he can obtain that which has been killed by Jews—or has himself been so well instructed in the proper usages as to have obtained a license to slay for himself—in which case he can kill a fowl occasionally for his own use. These customs are well illustrated in the *Orphans of Lissau*, in which we find it stated, that the Jews of Ramsgate formerly got all their meat from Canterbury, having among themselves no one qualified to kill in the proper manner.

When Jonathan's transgression in regard to the honey became known to Saul, he was for putting his son to death, according to the tenor of his vow. But this the more enlightened consciences of the people forbade. With generous enthusiasm they cried,—“God forbid : as the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground ; for he hath wrought with God this day.” These remarkable words should be meditated upon in connection with those addressed by Jonathan himself that morning to his armor-bearer,—“It may be the Lord will work for us.” The Lord did work for him ; and truly he wrought with God. It was a great day for Israel, and from the beginning to the end, Jonathan was the hero of that day.

THIRTY-SECOND WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

THE PUBLIC ENEMY.—I SAMUEL XV.

THERE is hardly any nation which has not had some especial public enemy—generally a near neighbor, which it was held to be a peculiar duty of patriotism to hate and to destroy. We need not name instances. It were difficult to find exceptions; and the reading and observation of every one will supply examples. Such sentiments between nations have generally their origin in bitter wars and ancient wrongs. Israel had many ordinary enemies, but the one marked out in this distinctive manner as *the* public enemy, were the Amalekites. This people had some kinds of settlements in the Sinai peninsula, and in the country south of Palestine and west of Edom; and being a people of semi-nomade habits, they appear to have been in the habit of wandering with their flocks over the intervening countries. With this location they came much in contact with the Israelites, always hostilely, during the forty years' wandering. They opposed the Israelites after they had crossed the Red Sea, on their march to Sinai. They opposed and repulsed them also when they advanced to enter the Promised Land on the south; and, besides these recorded instances, there was probably a long succession of aggravating petty contests between them during the long intervening period of wandering, respecting which we have no account. It is, therefore, not wonderful that, according to ancient usage, the people of Israel solemnly doomed the Amalekites to utter destruction, whenever they should be able to wreak upon them all the fierce wrath which fired their hearts. This was in fact the same doom upon a nation, which we have formerly seen inflicted upon a town in the case of Jericho.

This doom, incurred by the Amalekites in presence of the miracles, and the manifest tokens of the Divine presence which attended Israel's march of mystery through the wilder-

ness, had been not only unprovoked assaults upon Israel in the time of their weakness, but such acts of defiance of the Power by which they were seen to be protected, that the honor of his own great name, no less than his official guardianship of the chosen people, procured the Lord's sanction of this devotement. It had not yet been executed. The Amalekites still kept up their ancient hostility to the Israelites; they had not by repentance sought to avert the execution of the sentence which hung over their heads, but rather derided the impotent hatred which had so long left unexecuted the threatened doom. They had thus kept their sentence alive—had not suffered it to sleep by lapse of time. The silence of the Scripture, which is, from great conciseness, confined in all that relates to foreigners to great demonstrative results, conveys an aspect of harshness to the seeming revival of an old and forgotten quarrel, and the punishment of ancient crimes upon new generations. It is more than probable, and more natural, that the Amalekites themselves had never suffered this hostility to sleep, or their doom to be forgotten. That they were forward, on every occasion that offered, to join in any aggressive warfare against Israel, we know. It is also easily understood that they allowed little peace to the southern Israelites settled on their borders, or to those who travelled, or were out with the flocks. Observation upon the occasional meetings and intercourse of adverse races in the East, will also suggest with all but the absolute certainty of written fact, that an Amalekite and Israelite seldom met without aggravating altercations. It seems to us as if we heard the Amalekite launching forth into such language as this: "Five hundred years ago, ye doomed us to utter destruction. Yet here we are. We are still alive—still we flourish under this terrible doom. Where is the great God of whom ye boast? His arm, it seems, is too short to reach unto us. We have not done aught to turn His fierce wrath aside. We have not bent the knee to you or to Him. We have done nothing to mollify you; rather we hate you, as much now as of old, and are as ready now

as then to root you up. Think ye to appal by your curses the strong men your arms cannot subdue. We do defy you and your idle doom. Do it, do it."

The time of long-suffering—in this case very long-suffering—had at length passed, and the time of accomplished doom was come. It might have been executed by famine or pestilence; but although the Israelites might have ascribed this form of judgment to the proper source, the neighboring nations would not, and therefore judgment of extermination was committed to the sword of Saul, who, as king, would at once be recognized as the authorized fulfiller of the ancient devotement.

Some years had passed during which Saul had distinguished himself in the field by a series of always successful operations against the hostile nations around, whom he taught to respect the power of Israel, though he did not bring them under subjection. It would appear that in all these proceedings he acted much as an independent sovereign, without the required indications of his dependence upon the Divine King of Israel.

One trial more was to be afforded him—one more test of his obedience, before the sentence of exclusion from his dynasty was finally pronounced. He was commanded, through Samuel, to march against the Amalekites, and execute to the letter the ancient doom of devotement—of utter extermination—against them and theirs. If he had power to execute it—and power was given to him—whatever was spared became, according to the tenor of the old vow, as much "an accursed thing," as in the days of Jericho. Saul undertook the task: but he executed it entirely according to his own judgment of what was expedient and proper. He felt no objection as to any cruelty in the command, for he executed it fiercely upon all the people of the Amalekites who came within the scope of his expedition. He destroyed them utterly with the edge of the sword. But the king Agag, who fell into his hands, he spared—being the very person most obnoxious to destruction, as being, officially at least, the

chief offender ; and this assuredly not from any sentiment of pity, but for the vain-glory of possessing and displaying so illustrious a captive. So of the spoil : whatever was worthless or immovable was destroyed, but the best and choicest of everything, especially of the flocks and herds, was spared. In this conduct, however otherwise interpreted, Saul assumed to himself such large discretion in the execution of a positive commandment, and was so much in accordance with all his conduct—so manifested the fixed bias of his mind towards autocratic power, that his unfitness to become the founder of a line of theocratic kings could no longer be disputed, and his own doom was sealed.

The vain-glorious character of Saul was further evinced in his homeward march, by his setting up a monument of his exploit at Carmel—thus appropriating to himself all the honor of the success, a thing most offensive under the peculiar principles of the Hebrew government, and such as no other king ever ventured to do. Compare the spirit which this evinces with the constant and heartfelt dependence upon God, and the formal ascription of all honor and glory to Him, evinced in the Psalms and the history of David—a far greater conqueror than Saul.

Yet when Samuel came to join him at Gilgal, on his return, Saul had the confidence to meet him with the assurance that the task committed to him had been perfectly accomplished. “What meaneth then,” asked Samuel, “this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?” Without awaiting the answer, the prophet, who saw through the whole transaction, and had received his commission before he set out, proceeded to denounce his conduct, reminding him that “when he was little in his own sight,” he had by the Lord’s free appointment been made head over all the tribes, and anointed king over Israel. Yet he had become exalted in his own esteem, and in this and other instances had forgotten his fealty to Jehovah, and acted in disobedience to his express commands. But Saul persisted that he *had* obeyed, seeing that, as he now insinua-

ted, the spoil had only been reserved for sacrifice to Jehovah. This we take to have been a gross attempt to bribe the Lord, under a most offensive misconception of his nature and character, to acquiesce in the exemption he had made. For, although stated as an original motive, it is palpably an after-thought suggested by the stringency of Samuel's rebuke. This is proved out of Saul's own mouth; when the prophet met this subterfuge by the indignant and noble rebuke: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams;" the king shifted his ground, and urged that the army would not consent to the destruction of the spoil—that is, would not forego the beneficial interest they had in the distribution of it, which is quite different from the reason previously given. But, had it been a truth, it would, on the view taken by Samuel, have been no extenuation of the offence. The prophet then pronounced the irrevocable sentence: "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king." This brought Saul down from his high tone. He confessed that he had sinned, and without remonstrating against the sentence passed upon him—the justice of which his conscience probably admitted for the moment—he implored Samuel not to suffer the fact of their disagreement to appear, but to turn and take part with him in a public act of solemn worship. Samuel refused, and when the king took hold of his mantle to detain him, and it rent in his hand, the prophet, with great readiness, turned the incident into an illustration of his doom: "The Lord hath rent the kingdom from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbor of thine that is better than thou." Satisfied, however, that he had discharged the painful duty committed to him—for it *was* painful, as he had much personal feeling in favor of Saul—he did turn, and worshipped the Lord with him.

Samuel then felt that he had another stern duty to perform. When the Lord's sentence had passed, it was not for

the future kings of Israel to think that they possessed a dispensing prerogative, and the neighboring princes had to learn that there was in Israel a Power higher than the throne, to which even the kings were accountable. This had been far from the thought of king Agag. Since the king had spared him, he thought there was nothing more to fear—the bitterness of death had passed with him. So he intimated, when he was brought before Samuel, who, as judge and commissioned prophet, took upon himself the stern and terrible duty of exacting the long-stored vengeance for Israel which the king had wilfully neglected. Samuel answered: “As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women.” He was then forthwith stricken down and slain by the sword. The text would intimate that this was done by Samuel’s own hand, and although it is rightly alleged that in Scripture men are often described as doing what they ordered to be done, it is not improbable—having due regard to the habits of the East and the notions of ancient times—that the common interpretation is the right one. Samuel might deem it an honor to execute with his own hand the full judgment which had been neglected by the man to whom the sword had been intrusted. If it be urged that this act is contrary to the idea of Samuel’s character which his previous history has conveyed, the answer is, that mild natures like his are often, when thoroughly roused into high excitement, capable of stronger deeds than men of habitually harsher temper.

Samuel then repaired to his home, and he and Saul never met by agreement again. Saul was left alone from that time. His doom was FIXED; and he was left to work it out. Alas, for him!

THIRTY-SECOND WEEK—THURSDAY.

SAMUEL AT BETHLEHEM.—I SAMUEL XVI. 1-13.

Who was that "neighbor," better than he, who was destined to succeed Saul, and at whom Samuel hinted in his rebuke? It does not appear that the prophet himself knew this at the time his words were uttered. But he knew that another dynasty was to be provided, and that its founder would doubtless be a man after God's own heart, since it would be a man not forced (so to speak) upon him, not selected with regard to a temporary exigency, but chosen freely by Himself from among the thousands of Israel, as the man best suited, by the qualities of his mind and spirit, to be the father of a race of kings over his people.

It is a remarkable fact, that while Saul thus incurred Divine displeasure for the wilfulness of his conduct, there is no reason to question that his popularity was great with the people, and his power continually increasing. He had many qualities which the multitude admired; and even the very qualities which drew down the anger of the Divine King upon him, were not such as an oriental people regard with much disfavor in their sovereign,—or deem to be unbecoming the kingly character. It was while thus powerful and popular, his throne sustained by the consummate military talents of his cousin Abner, and the continuance of his race guaranteed by several noble sons, at whose head was Jonathan—whose fine qualities and pious temper opened large promise for the time to come, even to those who had sufficient discernment to regard the father's principles of government with displeasure:—it was at such a time, in his pride of place, that the hand of the prophet, in the sentence which he declared, wrote "Ichabod" upon all that he had and all that he hoped for. The king knew that this was no vain word. He seemed to take it lightly at first; but, nevertheless, the iron entered his very soul, rankling and cankering there. He brooded over his

doom in his saturnine mind. He became irritable, suspicious, despairing—and occasionally fell into a gloom of mind bordering close upon madness.

Samuel, on his part, was deeply concerned at what had passed. Let those who ascribe all this to the ill-will of the prophet at Saul's not proving that subservient tool to him which he had calculated on finding him—let them consider his manifest reluctance at every step which he was *constrained* to take. So now, even after sentence had gone forth, "he mourned for Saul," and interceded urgently and perseveringly for him. So far from the act of deposition being his, it is clear that it was most grievous in his eyes, and if it had been left to himself nothing of the kind would have taken place. He liked *the man*; and although compelled to reprove *the king*, he would probably have been willing to have let him run his course, looking forward to the succession of Jonathan as a sufficient remedy for the errors of his father's reign.

It is important to bear this in mind—and not only was the deposition of Saul's dynasty not Samuel's act, but the appointment of a successor was against his inclination, and the choice of the person was far from being that which he would have made. Eventually this adverse state of his feeling even subjected him to a gentle rebuke from the Lord he served; and he was ordered to go to Bethlehem and anoint, for the throne of Israel, one of the sons of Jesse (descended from Boaz and Ruth), who would there be indicated to him. Even then, Samuel shrank from this task, which added all that was wanting to confirm the doom of Saul. He sought to shun the duty by expressing apprehensions for his safety, should Saul hear of the transaction. This was overruled, and the prophet went to Bethlehem. Yet he took such steps as appeared requisite to avert suspicion. He took a heifer with him to offer a sacrifice, for which there must have been some apparent ground not precisely stated. Some Jewish writers supposed there had been a man slain in the neighborhood, and as it was not known by whom the act had been committed, Samuel, to whom such a case would naturally be re-

ferred, went to sacrifice a heifer according to the law, as laid down in Deut. xxi.

To the feast which followed the sacrifice, and to which the offerer invited whom he pleased, Samuel called Jesse and his sons. These sons were eight in number, but the youngest, David, was considered by his father too insignificant to be included, and he therefore remained in the field, tending his father's sheep. When Jesse's sons passed before Samuel, he was struck by the noble presence of Eliab, the eldest, and at once concluded that the Lord's anointed was before him. For this he was rebuked as formerly described; and, surprised, at the absence of the expected indication from above, he asked Jesse whether he had any more children. Then it was that Jesse seemed first to remember that he had another son, and he answered, "There remaineth yet the youngest, and he keepeth the sheep." David was then sent for, and no sooner did he appear than the word for which the prophet waited came: "Arise, anoint him, for this is he!" Samuel then did anoint him, but whether in the presence of his brethren or of Jesse only, does not appear. The latter is most probable, for the brethren of David do not subsequently evince any recognition of his high destination; and it is little likely that Samuel, who anointed Saul secretly, when there was no direct danger to apprehend, should have anointed David in the presence of several persons, when there was much to be apprehended from the wrath of Saul. Had the transaction been in any way public, it could scarcely, under the circumstances, have been kept from the knowledge of the king at a time when, had a word been breathed to that effect, it had been death both to David and to Samuel. There were those at Saul's court who were well acquainted with David and his family, and he at length came to have at that court enemies not a few; yet no one seems to have been aware of the fact of this anointing. The conviction that David was the man appointed to succeed him, seems to have gradually dawned upon the mind of Saul from circumstances, and to have been confirmed beyond question when David

eventually fled to Samuel. At that time the fact of the anointing may have become known to him, but then Samuel was on the borders of the grave, and David beyond his reach. It may be doubtful that David himself clearly understood the purport of the act. It does not appear that Samuel declared its object, and prophets were anointed as well as kings. We rather think, however, that a young man of so quick apprehension could not but have understood what was meant by this anointing; and we ascribe the apparent unconsciousness of the destinies awaiting him, which his earlier history exhibits, and his declared and often acknowledged loyalty to Saul, simply to that excellent disposition which enabled him to see that it ill became him to take any steps to hasten the purposes of God, but that it rather behooved him to pursue the even path of his duty, leaving Him whose choice had fallen upon him to accomplish, in His own good time, the purposes of His will.

Now, it is clear that if this important matter had been left to Samuel, he would have taken no step at all towards carrying out the sentence he had been compelled to pronounce; and being at length obliged to do so, it is equally clear that, had it been left to himself, the choice would have fallen upon Eliab, not on David; and had the choice been left to Jesse, any one of his seven other sons would have been preferred to the youngest. It is altogether most evident that the designation of David to the kingdom was the immediate act of Providence, without the least intervention of human wisdom or contrivance.

THIRTY-SECOND WEEK—FRIDAY.

DAVID.—I SAMUEL XVI. 12.

PRIOR to his appearance on this occasion, nothing is distinctly stated of the history and character of David, who

was destined to make so important a figure in the history of Israel. There are, however, as we go on, a few retrospective intimations regarding his youthful life, and he has himself left materials in his divine songs, from which some particulars may be gleaned, and some circumstances inferred.

In his person, he does not appear to have been of commanding stature, but he was eminently handsome. In a country and race, where any exceptions to darkness of complexion are rare, this young man was distinguished by a fair and ruddy complexion, and as the beauty of his eyes is particularly noticed, they were probably blue or gray, as belongs to this complexion. In them the fire of genius shone, and from them beamed that enchanting expression of kindliness and generous warmth, by which the hearts of men and women were drawn to him as by a charm. Altogether he was "goodly to look to." The eyes of men rested upon his engaging and happy countenance with pleasure, and withdrew from it with regret. The rare combination in him of all that was gentle, tender, and mild—with the most exalted enthusiasm, the most noble aspirations, the most generous sentiments, the most manly deportment, the most heroic daring, and the most invincible prowess—joined to his invariable consideration for others, his open-heartedness, his humbleness, and the entire absence of all pretension in him, made men feel better when they looked upon him, and it exalted their hearts to know that they were sharers of the nature which, under divine grace, became capable of such impressive development. He was known to be a man of God, and to be much in communion with him—and this diffused an ineffable grace over his demeanor and conversation, to which, beyond question, much of the extraordinary influence he possessed over the minds and hearts of others must be ascribed.

To these personal qualities, David added all the accomplishments of his age and country. His age was not one of scholarship or books. Yet such scholarship as was valued among his countrymen, he possessed—and the books that

were found among them, he well knew. Above all, he had deeply studied such parts of the sacred Scripture as then existed. His writings continually evince his close acquaintance with it—his admiration of it—his intense appreciation of its value—his LOVE for it. This shows that he had attained the same state of grace, had been subject to the same teachings of the Divine Spirit, by which all true, that is, all vital, spiritual knowledge must be imparted—as we are bound to realize under a more perfect system, and with more ample materials, and broader revelations. There has been but one Spirit from the beginning; and David was taught of him. We know this, because he *loved* God's law and rejoiced in it. It is easy to know that law, as it existed in his time, and as it exists in ours, externally, as a body of words—easy to admire it and value it. But for *love* to it, the Spirit's teachings were necessary; and David loved the law of God, with an ardency of affection which puts to shame the cooler appreciation, often seen among us, of the more ample and demonstrated treasures of wisdom and knowledge which we possess. Now, love is a sign of grace; and undoubtedly David possessed in the highest degree that grace of which love is a sign. His psalms abound in such declarations as these:—"O how I love thy law; it is my meditation all the day. Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee. I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. Thy testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart. Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it." Mark, that to love the law of God for *that* reason—to love it *because* it is pure—to love its purity—is an undoubted sign of the highest degree of grace.

His pursuits were pastoral, and the pastoral life has been regarded in all ages as favorable to poetry and music. David

was a poet. The frequency with which rhythmical utterances, from all sorts of people, occur in the Scripture—shows that the poetical faculty existed largely among the Hebrews, and was much cultivated by them. The genius of their language, and the spirit of their institutions, were favorable to it, inasmuch as it drew out and cherished the higher sentiments which find in verse their most congenial expression. Hence, throughout the Scripture, the higher moods of spiritual feeling—whether from man or woman, from king, or priest, or prophet, or warrior, or shepherd, or husbandman, fall naturally into high-toned verse. David was, in the highest sense of the word, a poet. He has left us elegies, odes, triumphal songs, descriptive pieces, and sacred lyrics, in which every chord of the human heart—every emotion of the soul—every aspiration of the spirit, is touched with a master hand. So deeply does he sound the depths of man's nature, so loftily does he soar to the gates of light—that no poet has ever lived whose ideas have become so much the common property of nations—none in whose beautiful words the hopes, the fears, the joys, the griefs, of the spiritual man have found such adequate expression. Manners, costumes, outer forms of life, forever change; but the unchanging character of that which is really man, is by nothing more strikingly evinced than by the fact, that for three thousand years, and in many different lands and languages, the words of David have given voice to the pious thoughts and devout feelings of millions—and are no less appropriate, at this day, in the mouth of the weaver at his loom, and the cordwainer at his stall, than they were of old to the men who sat beneath the fig-trees and the vines of Canaan. Most of David's poems that remain to us, were probably composed after, through many trials, he had attained to greatness. Most of them have that plaintive tone which his adult experiences and trials were calculated to impart; but among them there are some which breathe the free air of the fields, and the cheerful fragrance of green pastures, and may well have been composed while he yet followed the sheep.

Poetry was in those ages more strictly allied to music than it is now. The poet was also a musician, and he sang to his instrument of music the verse which he composed. This we see constantly in the poems of Homer, no less than in the Bible. David was hence a musician as well as a poet. His instrument was a "harp," so called, but not such as the ponderous instrument of that name with us—but a light and portable stringed instrument, more like a lyre, such as we see it figured in ancient sculptures and coins, and which seems to have been in about as common use with the Hebrews as the violin with ourselves. With this instrument, he solaced the hours spent in watching his flock. His skill therewith was even then notorious to all the neighborhood, and became the means of his introduction to the court of Saul.

Not less had the youth been able to approve his prowess and dauntless courage in his pastoral pursuits. We must not draw our ideas of such pursuits from the exhibitions on Dresden china, nor from the descriptions of western poets: we must not conceive of him merely as an innocent youth, harping under the trees, while his flock fed quietly before him. The pastoral life was in those ages full of perils and hardships which we wot not of. A shepherd needed to be a man of powerful hand, firm nerves, and great presence of mind. If he went into distant pastures, he had to protect his sheep from the depredations of Bedouin tribes; sometimes, especially in being led over the mountains, a sheep or two, if not the whole flock, would get into difficulties, from which it required much agility and hardihood to rescue them. Sometimes the flock would be assailed by fierce beasts of prey, lions, wolves, and bears—with whom the shepherd had to fight in defence of the sheep. It is set down by our Saviour as the character of the hireling shepherd to flee when he saw the wolf coming, leaving his flock to his mercy. But the owner, the true shepherd, would rather lay down his life than abandon his sheep. This was the point of honor among shepherds. Now David was a true shepherd, and is known to have in his youth performed memorable exploits for the

protection of his flock. One of his exploits of this nature he himself related once to Saul, to show that he did not altogether lack that experience of deadly strife which the king supposed, when he offered to fight the gigantic Philistine:—
“Thy servant kept his father’s sheep; and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock, and I went out after him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by the beard (probably *mane*), and smote him, and slew him.”

Even in relating this incident, David evinced the difference between him and Saul, which constituted his fitness and Saul’s unfitness to reign in Israel. Saul wished to appropriate the credit of everything to himself—David habitually, and in all the sincerity of a truly religious spirit, referred everything to the will and providence of God. So on this occasion he adds:—“The Lord who delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, will also deliver me out of the hand of the Philistine.”

In this most engaging person, this pious man, this poet, this minstrel, this hero, this Israelite indeed, behold the anointed of the Lord, the man after God’s own heart!

THIRTY-SECOND WEEK—SATURDAY.

MUSIC.—I SAMUEL XVI. 15-23.

JESSE the Bethlehemite was one day astonished, and perhaps alarmed, to receive a somewhat peremptory command from the king—“Send me David, thy son, who is with the sheep.” What could the king know of his son? What did he want with him? If Jesse knew—and if any one knew, he was the most likely to know it—the true purport of the anointing which that son had received, his first thought must have been, that the fact had come to the knowledge of Saul, and that this summons to his presence boded no good

to David. However, as they say in the East, to hear was to obey. It behooved that the young man should not appear before the king empty-handed; and his father therefore provided a suitable present in testimony of homage and respect. It consisted of a live kid, a quantity of bread, and a skin of wine. This was carried by an ass; and it is a pleasant picture to conceive the future king of Israel stepping lightly along behind the animal, with his shepherd's staff and scrip, and entertained as he went by the gambols of the kid. His light harp was no doubt slung to his back; and it is likely that he now and then rested under a tree, and solaced his soul with its music. His fearless temper would not allow him to look forward to the result of his journey with misgivings; or, if a doubt crossed his mind, he found sufficient rest in his confidence in God.

There was nothing really alarming when the facts became known.

When the king had leisure to reflect, the denunciation of Samuel sank deep into his soul. The more he thought of it, the more terrible that doom appeared. What, in comparison, mattered it to him, that he was still to reign, if the higher hope of leaving a race of kings to Israel was to be taken from him—from him who had sons well worthy to be kings? The Hebrew mind so linked itself to the future by the contemplation of posterity, that it is scarcely possible to us, with our looser attachment to the time beyond ourselves, to apprehend, in all its intensity, the deep distress of mind with which any Hebrew, and much more a king, regarded the prospect that there would be

“No son of *his* succeeding.”

Besides, there was ground for personal anxiety, even for himself. From lapse of time it might be inferred, that his doom was not, as regarded himself, to be immediately executed. But who knew what might come to pass when the threatened rival should appear? Was he in his lifetime to yield up his

kingly power to that rival; or was his sun to go down suddenly in blood to make room for him?

The mind of this prince, not in his best fortunes strong, gradually gave way beneath the terror of these thoughts,—the certainty of his doom, and the uncertain shapes in which it appeared. He sunk into a deep melancholy, which being regarded as a Divine judgment, it is said that “an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him.” “What more may be meant by this than that God, for Saul’s hardened impenitence, withdrew his restraining and guiding grace, I cannot say,” observes Dr. Delaney; * “this only I am sure of, that no man living needs a heavier chastisement from Almighty God, than the letting his own passions loose upon him. The consequence to the mind would, I apprehend, in that case, be much the same as it would be to the body, if the restraining pressure of the air were removed, and all the muscles, vessels, and humors left to the full freedom of their own powers and tendencies.”

After many other remedies had no doubt been tried, it was suggested that something might yet be hoped from music, the power of which over the diseases of the mind was well understood in times of old. The king caught eagerly at this idea, and directed that the services of some accomplished minstrel should be secured. It would seem, that although music was much cultivated, the *profession* of the musician did not exist; for if it did, some one of professional fame would no doubt have been named. This was not done; but some one present remembered that he had not long since seen “a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite,” whom he then mentioned by that designation, not only as one “skilful in playing,” but also as a youth of great abilities and acknowledged valor; nor was his handsome person forgotten, nor the still more important fact, that “the Lord was with him,”—a phrase denoting a religious man, whom the Lord seemed to have favorably distinguished in his providence and grace.

* “*An Historical Account of the Life and Reign of David, King of Israel.*” Lond. 1745.

This was the cause which led Saul to summon David to his presence. The distance was not great, about ten miles; and the youth reached Gibeah the same day that he left his home. He delayed not to present himself before the King, who little thought, as he looked upon the comely youth who stood before him, that he beheld in him the unknown rival who haunted his repose, and the destined heir of his sceptre. It was, as we have stated, the faculty of David to win, with unconscious ease, the hearts of all who were brought within the sphere of his influence. Even the austere and troubled Saul was no exception. "He loved him greatly," and speedily sent back to Jesse the message,—“Let David, I pray thee, stand before me, for he hath found favor in my sight.” So David remained at court; and when one of Saul's fits came upon him, he took his harp and played before him, and gradually the king's spirit yielded to the sweet sounds which the master hand drew from the wires, and “he was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.”

This remarkable instance of the power of music over the mind, especially in soothing its perturbations and allaying its disorders, is in conformity with the experience of physicians, and with various intimations which may be found in ancient authors. More or less so are those other scriptural instances, which evince the power of music over the moods of even the sanest minds, as in the case of Elisha, who called for the aid of a minstrel to bring his mind into the frame best suited to receive the impulses of the prophetic spirit. One would almost think, that there was some power in ancient music, which has since been lost, or that there existed, amid the simple manners of ancient times, a susceptibility to the influence of sweet and solemn sounds, which has been lost in the multitudinous business and varied pursuits of modern existence. But in truth, the wonderful effects so often described, resulted from the concurrence of masterly skill in the minstrel, with a peculiar sensibility to the influence of sweet sounds in the patient. And that, where this concurrence is found, it will

still produce the same effect as of old, one or two "modern instances" may be cited to show.

In the *Mémoires* of the French Royal Academy of Sciences, for 1707, are recorded many accounts of diseases, which, having obstinately resisted the remedies prescribed by the most able of the faculty, at length yielded to the powerful impression of harmony. One of these is the case of a person who was seized with fever, which soon threw him into a very violent delirium, almost without any interval, accompanied by bitter cries, by tears, by terrors, and by an almost constant wakefulness. On the third day, a hint that fell from himself suggested the idea of trying the effect of music. Gradually, as the strain proceeded, his troubled visage relaxed into a most serene expression, his restless eyes became tranquil, his convulsions ceased, and the fever absolutely left him. It is true, that when the music was discontinued his symptoms returned; but, by frequent repetitions of the experiment, during which the delirium always ceased, the power of the disease was broken, and the habits of a sound mind re-established. Six days sufficed to accomplish the cure.

It is stated by Thaurus, that after the massacre of St. Bartholomew, the sleep of Charles the Ninth was wont to be disturbed by nightly horrors, and he could only be composed to rest by a symphony of singing boys.

At the first grand performance in commemoration of Handel at Westminster Abbey, Mr. Burton, a noted chorus singer, was immediately, upon the commencement of the overture of Esther, so violently agitated, that after lying in a fainting fit for some time, he expired. At intervals he was able to speak; and but a few minutes before he drew his last breath, he declared, that it was the wonderful effect of the music which had operated so powerfully upon him. Dr. Halifax, then bishop of Gloucester, was so greatly affected during one of the performances of the Messiah, at this commemoration, that he greatly wished to quit the place, fearing that he should be entirely overcome.

More remarkable, as well as more truly parallel, is the case

of Philip the Fifth of Spain and the musician Farinelli, in the last century. The king was seized with a total dejection of spirits, which made him refuse to be shaved, and incapable of appearing in council or of attending to any affairs. The queen, after all other methods had been essayed, thought of trying what might be effected by the influence of music, to which the king was known to be highly susceptible. We have no doubt that the experiment was suggested to her by this case of Saul and David. The celebrated musician Farinelli was invited to Spain; and on his arrival, it was contrived that there should be a concert in a room adjoining the king's apartment, in which the artist should perform one of his most captivating songs. The king appeared surprised at first, then greatly moved; and, at the end of the second air, he summoned the musician to his apartment, and, loading him with compliments and caresses, asked him how he could reward such talents, assuring him that he could refuse him nothing. Farinelli, previously tutored, answered, that he desired nothing but that his majesty would permit his attendants to shave and dress him, and that he would endeavor to make his appearance in the council as usual. The king yielded, and from this time his disease gave way, and the musician had all the honor of the cure. By singing to his majesty every evening, his favor increased to such a degree, that he came to be regarded as first minister, in which capacity he conducted himself with such propriety and discretion, that the proud Spanish nobles about the court, instead of envying his prosperity, honored him with their esteem and confidence. This favor he did not forfeit under Philip's successor (Ferdinand VI.), who made him a knight of Calatrava, and employed him in political affairs.

Thirty-Third Week—Sunday.

“THE LORD LOOKETH ON THE HEART.”—I SAMUEL XVI. 7.

THESE words, in the Lord's rebuke to Samuel at Bethlehem, are very full of solemn and encouraging matter to every one who will pause to meditate upon them. Knowing, feeling as we do, what the heart of man really is, the declaration that “the Lord looketh on the heart,” might seem most appalling and almost discouraging, were it not that our vigilance and care must be alarmingly and profitably quickened by the knowledge that there exists One “to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid” (Heb. xii. 4.), who judges not as man, by inference and induction, but who sees at once the most latent operations of the whole machine of mind, every minute bias and propensity, every secret spring of inclination and action, which even escapes our own self-consciousness and penetration, and all the intricate and complicated mechanism which connects human motive with human action; and all this he beholds in its real and undisguised essence, without any intervening mists of passion or prejudice, such as distract human judgments.

These things are very wonderful to us—very difficult to *realize*, although the understanding is ready enough to assent passively to them. Yet, wonderful as this is—difficult as it is to apprehend clearly—there is nothing more true, more real in the commonest things around us, than that “all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do,” and that in his great account not less all our thoughts and impulses than all our actions, are written down. There is nothing hidden from him. Even our actions are not measured by the aspect they present before men, but by the intentions in which they originate; and these are far better known to him than they can be to ourselves, without the aid of his Holy Spirit to seek and search them out. “Discern-

ing of spirits” is a gift from God—discerning our own spirit is eminently his gift.

To deceive others as to the condition of our heart, and as to the motives of our actions, is not difficult; and still more easy—fatally easy—it is for us to deceive ourselves; but there is no deceiving Him who “looketh on the heart.” It is, therefore, our most imperative and essential duty to look there ourselves, to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith, to pray for God’s Holy Spirit—that Spirit who searcheth all things—to guide us in this inquiry—and to remember that the Scripture has put us on our guard against self-deceit, by telling us that “the heart is deceitful above all things;” * by warning us “to keep the heart with all diligence,” since “out of it are the issues of life;” † and that “he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.” ‡

Serious, and even awful, as is to a reflecting mind the thought that the most secret counsels of the heart—counsels often at the time secret even to ourselves—appear in broad daylight before the searching eye of “the Father of spirits,” there is no reason why we should be so overwhelmed with this reflection as not to remember that God, while he views our infirmities, is most compassionate and merciful; and although he cannot tolerate or endure the sinfulness even of thought, so abhorrent to the purity of his nature, he has, for our sakes, provided a most efficient remedy, a most safe resource, a most powerful means of purification.

With this consideration in view, there is not in all the Bible a truth more consolatory to the true Christian than that which assures us that the hearts of all men are open to the Lord. If this were not the case, we must depend for all our happiness upon the judgment of man, who can look no farther than the outward appearance. How often, in the judgment of man, are our kindest and best intentions misconstrued, our purest motives questioned, and our best actions maligned? But this need not affect us greatly; we can yet be of good cheer. The soul, shrinking from the world’s un-

* Jer. xvii. 9.

† Prov. iv. 32.

‡ Prov. xxviii. 26.

gentleness, finds rest and comfort in the thought that our merciful Father has looked upon our heart—has seen all—knows all, and will be our witness, our advocate, our vindicator, in that day when the thoughts of all hearts shall be revealed; when that which has been spoken in darkness shall be heard in light; when that which has been spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops; and when He who seeth in secret, shall reward us openly, for much in our hearts that man has misunderstood or despised.

The reflection that we ourselves have often been misunderstood and misrepresented, even in matters in which we know that our conscience is most void of offence towards God and towards man; the consideration that this has often arisen not from evil-minded or unfriendly men, not from intentional wrong or malignity of purpose, but merely from want of caution and proper reflection upon such means as we do possess of understanding the character and purposes of each other; and the recollection that even so good and religious a man as Samuel, honored with prophetic gifts, was grievously mistaken in his judgment from outward appearances, ought to make us careful to exercise towards others the forbearance and the candor which we claim for ourselves. “Judge not, that ye be not judged,” is an awful sentence, which has a deeper and larger meaning than we usually assign to it as the words pass over our tongues. It teaches that in the absence of all knowledge of the heart, in the necessity of going much, if not entirely, by the outward appearance, it is not only a moral obligation but a Christian duty to be kind and lenient in our judgment of the actions and motives of others, and in our appreciation of their characters. It may be doubtful whether, in fact, it does not forbid all judgment of *motives*, as a matter beyond the scope of our limited view, and which God alone can truly estimate. The maxim of the world is to trust no man till you have tried him; but the true rule of Christian conduct in this world is to distrust no man till you have tried him—that is, until his unworthiness has been evinced by conduct concerning which even human judgment

cannot well be mistaken. Knowing what evil there is in the world, it is not, indeed, any part of our duty to commit the lives or welfare of ourselves or others into the hands of strangers, in the supposition that they will prove faithful, but in our dealings with others it is our duty to put the best possible construction upon all their actions; and our manifest incapacity of viewing the hearts of men, should restrain us from all curious speculation upon the characters of those with whom we have no concern. Could we even see their hearts as clearly as we observe their outward conduct, we should still be inexcusable in passing judgment upon our brethren—our judgments may be as false as they are cruel and criminal. Like Jesse, nay, like Samuel, we may despise those whom God has not despised—we may condemn as reprobate and unconverted those to whom God will give the kingdom of heaven—and we may draw comparisons favorable to ourselves where “the Lord, who looketh upon the heart,” may judge far otherwise.*

THIRTY-THIRD WEEK—MONDAY.

GOLIATH'S ARMOR.—I SAMUEL XVII. 1-7.

It would seem that Saul, while under the process of cure from his grievous malady, contracted great regard for David. “He loved him, and made him his armor-bearer,”—the latter a mere honorary mark of consideration and attachment, at a time when there was no actual war.

By degrees the intervals of his phrenzy became more distant, and eventually he seemed to have been altogether cured. The services of David being then no longer required, he went home to his father, and again resumed the care of the sheep. By this it would seem, that the king's affection towards his healer cooled, as soon as the cure had been effected. The

* See the Rev. Henry Thompson's *Davidica*. London, 1827.

probability of this, most physicians can vouch from their own experience. Besides, it is likely that, from the peculiar nature of his complaint, Saul cared not to be continually reminded, by the presence of his healer, of the sufferings he had gone through, and of paroxysms which it humbled his proud mind to think had made him an object of compassion in the eyes of his subjects. He therefore made no opposition to the application for his son's return home, which Jesse probably made when he found that David's services were no longer necessary.

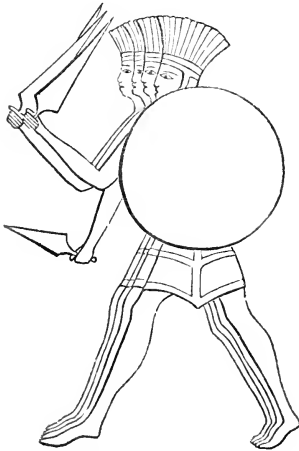
An interval passed—how long we know not, but probably about two or three years—when we again behold David traversing the road from Bethlehem, nearly in the same condition as before. But his appearance is considerably altered. You would scarcely know him for the same person that you saw some three years ago. He was then a growing youth; but he has now attained to greater fulness of stature and to more firmly knit limbs. Above all, his beard has grown; and to those who, like us, remove the beard as soon as it appears, the great difference produced by the presence of this appendage on the face of one who a year or two ago was a beardless youth, is scarcely conceivable. The ass, also, is more heavily laden than it was formerly with Jesse's present for Saul. It now bears an ephah of parched corn, ten loaves, and ten cheeses. There is war with the Philistines; the three eldest sons of Jesse are with the camp; and the anxious father sends the youngest to inquire of their welfare. The corn and bread are for their use, and the cheeses are a present for the colonel of their regiment.

When David came to the borders of the camp, he left the provisions in charge of the servant who accompanied him, and went to seek out his brothers. He made his way through the host to the standard of Judah, and soon found his brethren. He was conversing with them, when a general stir and shudder through the camp drew his attention to what was going on around him. The two armies were drawn up fronting each other, on opposite sides of the valley of Elah.



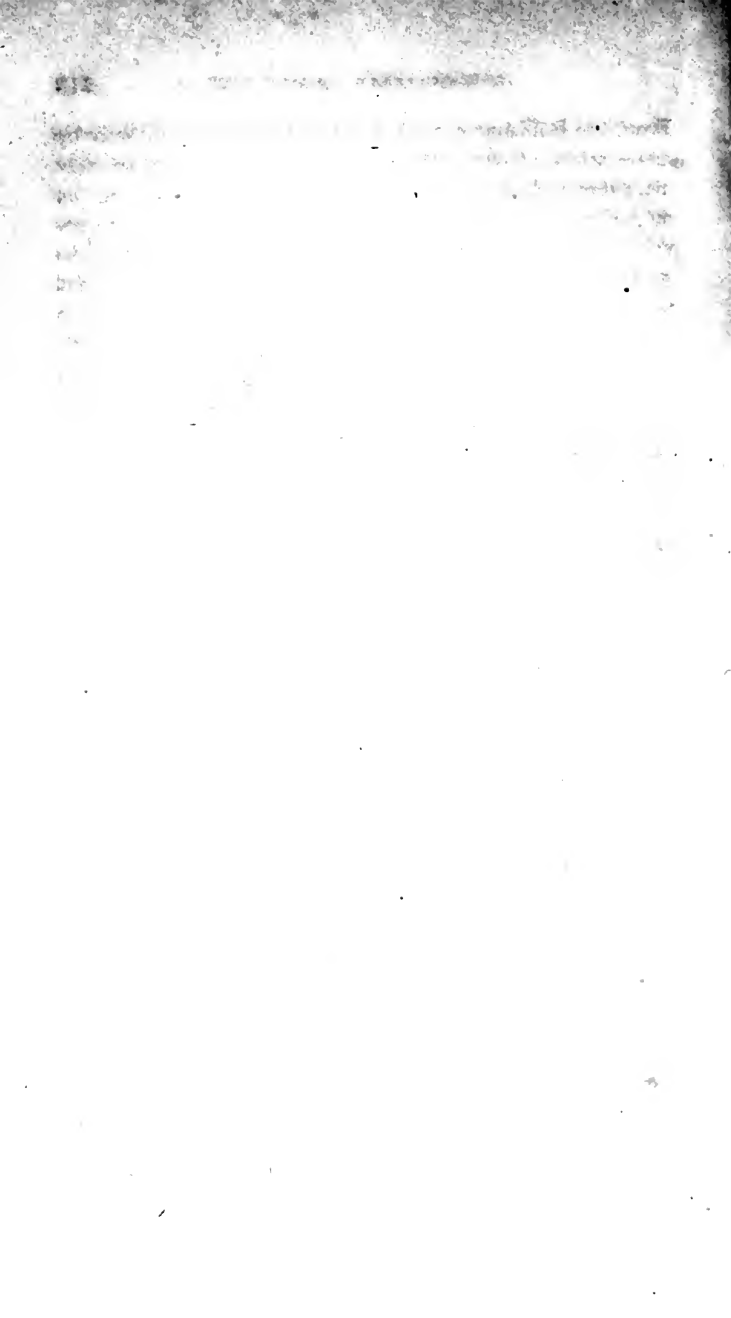
DIFFERENT APPEARANCE FROM GROWTH OF BEARD.

Page 212.



ANCIENT PHILISTINES, FROM EGYPTIAN SCULPTURES.

Page 213.



From the Philistine camp stalked forth a giant, Goliath by name, whose stature, little short of ten feet, inspired scarcely more terror, than the formidable weapons he bore, and the magnificent accoutrements, and seemingly impenetrable armor, with which he was invested. The particulars may be worthy our attention:—"There went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, whose height was six cubits and a span. And he had a helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of his coat was five thousand shekels of brass. And he had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders. And the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam; and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron; and one bearing a shield went before him." Taking into account the enormous stature of this man, and his dreadful clanking tramp under two hundred weight of metal, it is scarcely wonderful that the very sight of him filled the Israelites with terror, and that no one was found very ready to engage in the single combat with him, which, with terrible shouts and thundering voice, he invited, as a mode of settling the contest between the two nations.

But let us look more closely at his equipment, this being the earliest particular description of warlike panoply which we meet with in the Bible. But first a word of the Philistines, who have now become a people of much interest in the history of the Bible. Mr. Osburn seems, in his *Ancient Egypt*, to have identified this people among the foreign nations represented, in all the peculiarities of person, arms, and costumes, in the Egyptian sculptures. He says,—“The personal appearance of the Philistines differed very little from that of the Egyptians, to whom they were allied by blood. Like them, they are represented to have been a tall, well-proportioned race, with regular features and complexion somewhat lighter than in Egypt. Like the southern Canaanites, they shaved the beard and whiskers. Their arms and accoutrements very conspicuously distinguished them from all other nations to the east of Egypt. They wore a head-

dress or helmet of a peculiar, and far from inelegant, form. It has the appearance of a row of feathers set in a jewelled tiara or metal band, to which were attached scales of the same material, for the defence of the back of the neck and the sides of the face." The helmet of Goliath may have been probably of this sort, seeing that the race of giants to which he belonged, had been for some generations settled among the Philistines. In that case, we learn from the text, that this curious helmet was of brass. The gigantic race, however, was that of the Anakim, whose presence in and about Hebron terrified the spies who explored the land in the time of Moses, and the remnant of which, on their defeat and expulsion, found refuge among the Philistines. It is not unlikely that they preserved the kind of arms and weapons in use in the quarter from which they came, particularly as that would distinguish them from the ordinary Philistine warriors; and we find that people of gigantic stature are fond of adding a distinction of dress to that which their stature creates—their peculiar equipments concurring with their stature in drawing attention to them, and indeed, making their stature the more conspicuous. The marked manner in which this giant's equipments are mentioned, may strengthen the suspicion, that they were not such as the Philistines themselves wore. In that case, the war costume of the Hittites probably exemplifies that worn by the Anakim before they went among the Philistines. This people, if Mr. Osburn has correctly identified them, used in war a helmet or skull-cap extending far down the neck behind, and cut out high and square above the ear, so as to expose the bald place and long lock, which they deemed a personal ornament.* Sometimes a metal scale defended this part of the head. It was secured under the chin by a strong band or clasp-string, probably of metal like the helmet. The badges of distinction

* "They (the Hittites) had a hideously unsightly custom of shaving a square place just above the ear, leaving the hair on the side of the face and the whiskers, which hung down in a long plaited lock."—OSBURN, p. 125.



PHILISTINE HELMET.

Page 214.



HITTITE HELMETS, OR SKULL-CAPS.

Page 214.



were one or two ostrich feathers, which were worn* drooping.

Goliath's "coat of mail" was, like his helmet, of brass. The Philistines, as represented in the Egyptian sculptures, wore in war "a kind of corselet, quilted with leather or plates of metal, reaching only to the chest, and supported by shoulder-straps, leaving the shoulders and arms at full liberty."* The terms describing the giant's coat of mail, however, literally mean "harness of scales," denoting a scaled coat of mail, consisting of small plates like scales. An excellent authority † thinks it to express armor in which the pieces of metal were sewed upon cloth, and not hinged into each other as in the kind of "tilted armor," such as Ahab appears to have worn, when the random arrow smote him between "the joints of his harness." This corresponds well to the *description* of the Philistine corselet, though we are unable to recognize the squamous arrangement of the pieces of metal in the figures of this or *any other people* represented in the Egyptian sculptures, except in the broad military girdle of one of the gods. This, however, shows the very ancient use of this species of armor, and recently this fact has been further attested by the discoveries at Nineveh. In these the warriors who fought in chariots, and held the shield for the defence of the king, are generally seen in coats of scale armor, which descend either to the knees or to the ankles. A large number of the actual scales were discovered in the earliest palace of Nimrud. They are generally of iron, slightly embossed or raised in the centre; and some were inlaid with copper. They were probably, Layard thinks, fastened to a shirt of felt or coarse linen. ‡ Such is the armor always represented in the most ancient sculptures. At later periods other kinds were used, the scales were larger, and appear to have been fastened to bands of iron or copper.

Of the greaves, such as Goliath wore for the defence of

* Osburn, p. 138.

† Col. C. H. Smith, in *Cyclop. of Biblical Literature*, Art. ARMOR.

‡ *Nineveh and its Remains*, ii. 335.

his legs, there is no example among the Egyptian representations of their own and foreign warriors. Their form is, however, well known from other ancient sources. They consisted usually of a pair of shin-covers, of brass or strong leather, bound by thongs round the calves and above the ankles. The Assyrian sculptures represent greaves as being worn both by spearmen and slingers, and they appear to have been laced in front. "They were perhaps of leather," says Layard, "or like the boots of the Bœotians, of wood, or even of brass, as the greaves of Goliath."

The shield in use among the Philistines was large and circular, exactly resembling that of the Greeks in a later age. This, indeed, was the form of the shield among the Phœnicians, while we see shields square, oblong, and escutcheon-shaped among the inland natives of Canaan. The form of an Assyrian shield, is also quite similar to that of the Philistines. The Assyrians had other forms; but this is the most ancient. It was either of hide or of metal, perhaps, in some instances, of gold or silver. It was held by a handle fixed to the centre. Layard says: "The archers, whether fighting on foot or in chariots, were accompanied by shield-bearers, whose office it was to protect them from the shafts of the enemy. The king was always attended in his wars by this officer; and even in peace one of his eunuchs usually carried a circular shield for his use. This shield-bearer was probably a person of high rank, as in Egypt. On some monuments of the later Assyrian period, he is represented carrying two shields, one in each hand." In a note this explorer refers to the instances in the *Iliad* of the same practice,* and also to this of Goliath, who had "one bearing his shield who went before him."

The "spear" of the Philistines and other people of Canaan was not such a long reed-like instrument as we find in use among the modern Arabs, and which has been accepted as the type of the oriental spear. It does not seem to have been quite five feet long, and might be also used as a javelin,

* *Iliad*, viii. 319, 327.



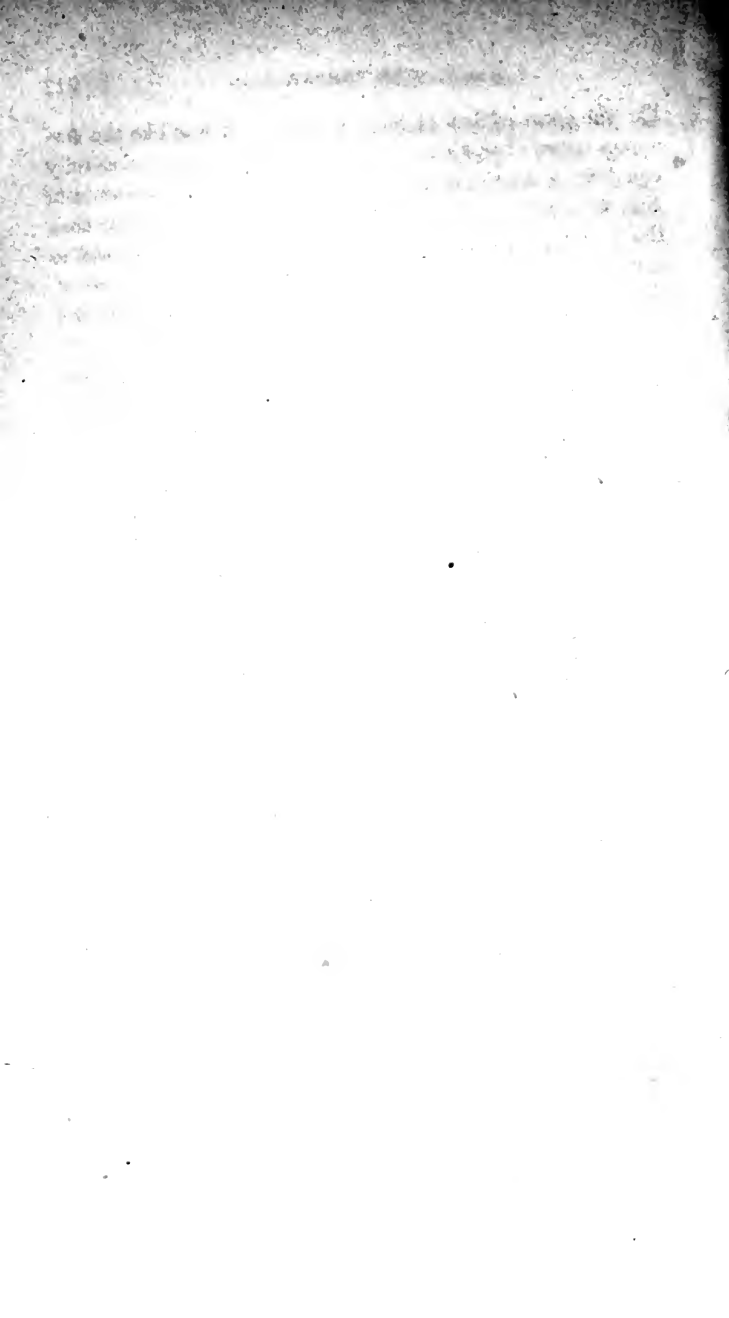
ASSYRIAN WARRIOR IN COAT OF SCALE ARMOR.

Page 215.



ASSYRIAN SPEARMAN.

Page 216.



like the spear of Saul (1 Sam. xix. 10). It was like the Assyrian spear, except that it was shorter, the latter being fully equal to a man's height. The *iron* head of a spear from Nimrud is in the British Museum, and it is remarkable that this is the only part of Goliath's accoutrement that is said to have been of iron, though his sword was also doubtless of this metal. The shaft of the Assyrian spear was probably of some strong wood, as that of Goliath certainly was.

These facts may help the reader to some idea of the appearance which the giant presented to the host of Israel, as he strode forth in his panoply of burnished brass.

THIRTY-THIRD WEEK—TUESDAY.

THE COMBAT.—I SAMUEL XVII. 8-52.

WE may be sure that it was not without burning indignation that David beheld the gigantic and proud pagan stand forth to defy the host of Israel, nor without astonishment and grief that he witnessed the consternation his presence inspired. Judging by his own fearless spirit, he reckoned that some valiant man would stand forth, to repay him scorn for scorn, and blow for blow. But it was not so. None moved, except to tremble in dismay. Not even the valiant Saul, nor his daring son, durst undertake this adventure. David then learned that this scene had been repeated several days, that the king had vainly sought to stimulate the courage of some bold man by offering the hand of his daughter in marriage, and other advantages, to the man who should bring that vast champion low.

The son of Jesse felt the spirit of patriotism and heroic daring work within him; and he began to make such pointed inquiries, as drew down the ungracious sneers of his elder brother—the tall and handsome Eliab. Regardless of this, he pursued his inquiries in such a manner that the matter at

last reached the ears of the king, who, willing in his despair to catch at what seemed little better than a straw, caused him to be brought before him. Taking into account the change wrought in his appearance by the lapse of time, and by the growth of his beard—as well as from his appearing in the guise of a shepherd with the usual implements connected with that employment, it does not seem to us very surprising that the king did not know him again; besides, it is likely that Saul's memory had been somewhat impaired by his disease, whilst the constant variety and change of persons presented to the notice of a king, would tend to reduce any slight recollection he might have entertained to a vague and dim impression that he had at some former period seen some person of whom this young man reminded him. Seeing this to be the case, David did not then attempt to make himself known, neither did he make any studied concealment, but left the disclosure to circumstances.

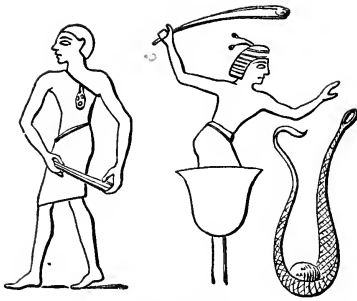
In the presence of the king, David spoke as one ready to undertake this enterprise, and as assured that the victory in this strange combat would be his. The king was pleased with his spirit, but kindly pointed out that the antagonist with whom he proposed to wage mortal strife was not only a man of gigantic proportions and enormous strength, but also a skilled man at arms—practised in war from his youth. David humbly related the story of the lion and the bear, which he had aforetime slain in defence of his flock. This he did, not in vain ostentation of his own exploits, though in the East more self-praise of this sort is allowed than would be considered becoming among us; but to point out the source of his confidence—"The Lord who delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." Saul could not fail to be impressed by this; for his self-consciousness must have apprized him at that moment that *this* was the true heroic confidence for Israel, and that in which of all others he was most deficient. This impression doubtless disposed him, without further demur, to consent to risk the

lot of Israel upon the issue of a conflict between this young man and the enormous Philistine. He said at once—"Go, and the Lord be with thee." Nevertheless, he insisted that the heroic youth should be suitably equipped for the conflict in complete armor. But when thus arrayed, David felt himself embarrassed rather than strengthened by this heavy panoply, and quickly casting it off, stood forth, light and agile in his simple shepherd's dress. The weapon he chose was his own sling, much used by shepherds in repelling the assailants of their flocks, and in the use of which they often, like David, possessed extraordinary expertness. It was also formerly used, and is still much employed, by husbandmen in driving away birds from the cornfields. It was, however, also much used in war; and, in skilled hands, delivered stones with the force almost of a shot against the enemy. Saul's own tribe of Benjamin was famous for its left-handed slingers, who could cast stones at a hair and not miss. Slings were also used in war by both the Egyptians and the Assyrians. Among the latter, the sling consisted of a double rope with a thong, probably of leather, to receive the stone; it was swung round the head. The slinger held a second stone in his left hand, and at his feet is frequently seen, in the sculptures, a heap of stones ready for use. The Persian slingers also, as we learn from several passages in Xenophon, were very expert in casting unusually large stones, and could annoy their enemies when out of the reach of their darts or arrows. The sling of the ancient Egyptians, which probably was of the same sort as that of David, was a thong of leather or string plaited, broad at the middle, and having a loop at one end, by which it was fixed upon and firmly held by the hand; the other extremity terminated in a lash, which escaped from the fingers when the stone was thrown; and when used, the slinger whirled it two or three times round his head to steady it and to increase the impetus. Leaden plummetts were sometimes thrown from the sling by the Greeks, who often added insult to injury, by inscribing them with some such word as *ΑΓΩΝΙΣ*, or *ΛΕΞΑΙ*,—"Take this;"

but simple pebbles found on the sea-shore or in the brooks were usually employed ; the Egyptians used round stones for this purpose, which they carried in a small bag or scrip hanging from a belt over the shoulder. So David selected five smooth pebbles from the brook, and put them into his shepherd's bag.

The use of the sling was, however, rather despised by regular heavy armed troops—and Goliath opened his great eyes with disdain and astonishment, when he beheld this light shepherd spring forward to confront him, armed only with his pastoral sling. His pride was grievously affronted that this simple implement should be deemed adequate to a conflict with one so strong and so terribly arrayed,—“ Am I a dog,” he roared, “ that thou comest against *me* with staves ?” * He then cursed the young man “ by his gods,” and poured forth insulting threats upon his head—“ Come to me,” he said, “ and I will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field !” In the single combats of the East—even in those preceding and bringing on general actions, the opposed champions are still wont thus to kindle each other's wrath by mutual abuse, and the reader of Homer will recollect many examples of the same practice. These often extend to long addresses, and each party waits as patiently as he can till the other has done, without allowing himself to be provoked to cut short the harangue by force of arms. The staple of these harangues usually consists of boastings of their own exploits, with abuse of the opponent, and threats of what shall be done to him. In the present case, we seem to have only an abstract of Goliath's harangue—for it is not stated in what terms he cursed the son of Jesse by his gods. But David's speech is given in

* By this it is probable that David had a staff in one hand, and that, not discerning the sling in his other hand, Goliath conceived that *this* was the intended weapon of conflict. Mrs. Postans states, that “ the shepherds of the East always carry a staff, which they hold in the centre, the object of its use not being as a support, but to beat bushes and low brushwood into which flocks stray, and where snakes and other reptiles abound.”—*Journal of Sacred Literature*, iv. 51.



EGYPTIAN SLINGERS.

Page 220.



EGYPTIAN PRINCES.

Page 360.



full, and it beautifully manifests the spirit by which he was animated, and which is evinced in all his subsequent career. He assumes nothing to himself—his trust is not in the might of his own arm—it is to the Lord he looks for victory—and it is to Him he beforehand ascribes all the glory which may flow from it. He said to the Philistine—“Thou comest to me with a sword and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord’s, and he will give you into our hands.”

The giant then strode forth to meet the young Hebrew, who stood still, but taking from his bag one of the stones, he fitted it to his sling, which he whirled around his head, and discharged with such force, and with so true an aim, that it smote the Philistine in almost the only exposed part of his person, the middle of his forehead, and crunched through the strong bone deep into his brain. His vast frame sunk to the ground, with a heavy crash which cast terror into the hearts of the Philistines; while David stepping lightly forward, drew the giant’s own great sword from its sheath, and therewith separated his head from his body, and bore it triumphantly away. Taking advantage of the consternation into which the Philistines were cast by this downfall of their champion, the Israelites arose with a triumphant shout—the hearty utterance of which was in full proportion to their previous dismay—and pursued the Philistines, who fled before them, with such earnestness and zeal, that they gave not over the chase until the fugitives who escaped their swords, had reached the very gates of their own towns.

THIRTY-THIRD WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

CLOUDED TRIUMPH.—I SAMUEL XVII. 53; XVIII. 12.

DAVID has now at once become a public man. There is no more obscurity—no more sweet solitude of private life—no more feeding of sheep, for him. If we look to the deep depression into which the Israelites had fallen, so that the most daring spirits, under the stimulus of the highest rewards, had not ventured upon the enterprise which the son of Jesse had so nobly and so piously achieved, we may form some notion of the admiration and gratitude with which this exploit was regarded, and the enthusiasm which it excited. It was the one great act by which some men are enabled, in one little hour—or even in the time of a passing thought—to illustrate and adorn their whole career, presenting to the public view one illustrious deed, the memory of which becomes in every mind inseparably connected with their name, and goes down with it to future ages. It was impossible for any Israelite thenceforward in David's lifetime to behold him, or in the ages to come to think of him, without remembering this great exploit, with its antecedents and its consequences. How naturally, even in David's old age, the remembrances of this rise freshly to the minds of the people—"The king delivered us out of the hands of the Philistines."

Glorious spoil had the Israelites when they returned to the camp, from the abandoned tents of the Philistines. It was then that David was brought before the king, bearing the enormous head of Goliath in his hand. The king's words evince that he had not the slightest recollection of David. At the time Goliath fell, Saul had asked Abner, "Whose son is this youth?" a natural question, seeing that in those days a man was more known by his father's name than by his own, as is still the case in Arabia, where a man is generally called *the son* of such a person. Thus David is quite as frequently, when spoken of by others, called "the son of

Jesse" as by his proper name. Saul had a farther interest in the inquiry, as he had promised that the conqueror of Goliath should become his son-in-law, and he would naturally wish to know something of the parentage of the youth on whom this honor had fallen. Abner was unable to answer the question; for he too failed to recognize the son of Jesse, or, very probably, he had not been at Saul's court during David's previous residence there, his services being little needed in time of peace. It is now Abner who brings David before Saul, that he may answer the question for himself. Saul asked,—“Whose son art thou, thou young man?” The answer is,—“I am the son of thy servant Jesse, the Bethlehemite.” It strikes us that the form of expression implies that David felt that Saul would recognize him and his father by this description, thus corroborating the account of their previous connection. We may also note two things in this answer—that David does not give his own name, which was not indeed asked, his father's name being a sufficient designation; and that he does not say, “thy servant is the son of Jesse”—but “I am the son of thy servant Jesse”—the latter form expressing more profound homage, seeing that one to whom David owed filial respect and obedience, was himself thus described as the king's servant.

How Saul received this intimation we are not told. He was probably too much astonished to say anything, and kings conceive that their dignity requires them to be men of few words. He, however, intimated that he was to remain at court, and from that day “would let him go no more home to his father's house.” It was at this interview that the young prince Jonathan found his heart drawn towards David, in whom, as the hero, he recognized the congenial spirit which he had overlooked in the minstrel. He soon made known his sentiments of deep admiration to the object of them, and the two young men soon entered into covenants of a friendship strong as death, which was in the highest degree honorable to both, and which, in the case of Jonathan, constitutes his chief claim to our admiration and regard. We

read that Jonathan, to evince his regard and admiration, "stripped himself of the robe that was on him, and gave it to David." In the East this mode of showing regard or approval is still very general. "I recollect," says Mrs. Postans, "a tiger-hunting party, held by Meer Alli Moorad in Upper Sindh, where that chief sat in a small tower with his personal friends to see the sport. A Sindhian behaved most valiantly, killing a tiger and her cubs, and the hero was brought up on the tower, when Meer Alli Moorad took from his neck a muslin scarf, and bestowed it on the man, who felt himself distinguished above all honor, and remunerated beyond all price." *

Thus far all was favorable to David; but, on the homeward march from the camp, matter arose which first awakened in the mind of Saul that suspicion and dislike, which never after left his mind, and which perhaps gave to him the first dim notion that in Jesse's son he had at length found the long threatened and long dreaded inheritor of his throne.

As they went along the damsels came out of their towns and villages to hail their deliverers with songs and music. And this was the burden of their song:—

"Saul hath slain his thousands—
David hath his ten thousands slain."

Saul was keen enough to see that this expressed the popular appreciation of their respective merits; and his morbid craving for the pre-eminence and for the sole glory in all things, caused him to be deeply mortified at this preference of David's share of the exploit before his own. Perhaps, as since then has been common, he held that all the honor won by subjects merely went to fill up the measure of his own renown. At all events he was greatly displeased. "They have ascribed unto David," said he, "ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands; and what can he have more but the kingdom." These last were dangerous

* *Journal of Sacred Literature*, iv. 51.

words; full of evil omen to David, as indicating a line of thought in the king's darkening mind, which was destined to spoil his own peace and that of David for many years. It is added that "Saul eyed [invidiously] David from that day and forward." Indeed, it was but the next day that these rankling thoughts brought back upon the king a strong paroxysm of his former disease. David, who was present, and whose experience detected the symptoms of the gathering cloud, seized his harp, and once more sought by its powerful strains to soothe the troubled mind. But at that moment the king, before the softening influence could be felt, launched from his hand the short spear or javelin which he bore as the symbol (equivalent to a sceptre) of regal power, at the son of Jesse, with the full purpose of pinning him to the wall. Had he succeeded, the act would have been ascribed to his madness, and he would have been more pitied than blamed. But he was not to enjoy the advantage of this construction of his acts, for David shunned the stroke at the critical moment, and left the presence. This happened more than once, and Saul began to be terrified, thinking that his arm had become powerless, or that (as was true) the son of Jesse bore a divinely protected life. He began to be "afraid of David, *because the Lord was with him.*"

THIRTY-THIRD WEEK—THURSDAY.

SNARES.—I SAMUEL XVIII. 13-30.

SAUL, under the first influence of good feeling towards David, had "set him over his men of war," by which it is understood that he made him captain of his guard, and this post he appears to have occupied at the time the attempts were made upon his life. That this attempt should twice have failed when the object was so near, and when a hand so strong and skilful aimed the stroke, must have seemed to Saul a di-

vine interposition in favor of Jesse's son. Such an interposition it was natural to think had some extraordinary object; and what object so likely as his designation to the kingdom? When this impression arose, all the circumstances which Saul could recollect must have tended to confirm it; and it would be no satisfaction to him to find that the object of this preference over himself was in all respects worthy of it. By whatever means his elevation was to be brought about, it was clear that it would not be attempted through any such disloyal acts or low intrigues as might give the king an advantage over him, and enable him to effect his destruction with a show of public justice; and as yet Saul's mind was not so steeled in wrong-doing, or so indifferent to public opinion, as openly to destroy without apparent cause, and by his mere arbitrary act, a man who was daily growing into higher favor with the nation, which owed to him such essential benefits.

Alarmed to see the progress David was making in the affections of the notable persons at court, and that even his son Jonathan had become entirely subject to the fascination by which the son of Jesse gathered to him the hearts of men like summer fruits, he deemed it wise to remove him from this sphere of influence by sending him into a sort of honorable exile. He was intrusted with the command of a thousand men, and sent upon the dangerous service of guarding the frontier, in the hope that his daring spirit would lead him into such hazardous enterprises as would soon accomplish his destruction by the sword of the Philistines. But this only afforded David the better opportunities of showing that he possessed not only the qualities of a champion, but the talents, the sagacity, and prudence of a military leader, while he was thus also enabled to gather that experience in war which availed him much in later years. Still further dismayed at the rapid growth of David's popularity with the people, Saul next thought of making him a prop to his family by uniting him to his eldest daughter Merab. The hand of the king's daughter had been promised beforehand to the conqueror of Goliath, but Saul had conveniently forgotten this promise,

and David had been too discreet to press for its fulfilment. Now the king proposed it as a new matter, and caused it to be intimated to David that such an alliance was not beyond his hopes, in case he proved himself worthy by renewed exertions against the enemies of his country. The manner in which he received this intimation is well worthy of attention. He did not decline the honor proposed,—both prudence and respect forbade that; but he was careful to make it appear that not only did he not claim or accept it as a matter of right, but disavowed all pretences to it on the score of merit. Such greatness as David possessed is but little conscious of its own deservings; and we have reason to suppose that David spoke with no less sincerity than prudence when he said, “Who am I? and what is my life, or my father’s family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?”

By what increased exertions David showed his worthiness of this honor, and by what escapes from the perils into which his daring spirit threw him, he defeated the king’s secondary, no longer primary, object of effecting his destruction, we do not learn; but we know that when the time for the fulfilment of the promise arrived, Saul shamefully violated his word, and bestowed his daughter upon another man. This harsh indignity and disappointment must have been deeply felt by David. Many men would have been exasperated by it into some act of outrage or some indiscreet expressions. Perhaps the act was intended to produce this effect, that advantage might be taken of David’s indiscretion to effect his ruin. But from this snare he was delivered. It was well that it thus happened, and that his submission under injuries is so much more apparent than his resentments, as to have caused it to be questioned whether he might not well have manifested a little more of what is very *improperly* called “proper spirit.” But it has been acutely remarked by an old writer, that retired students are not always the best judges of what best becomes a truly heroic spirit. We are glad that David’s conduct took this direction, for had it been otherwise—had he, even under strong temptation, swerved from his loyalty to the right hand

or to the left, much would have been made of it to the discredit of his rectitude in these latter days, when the whole of his conduct has been so searchingly and unsparingly investigated.

Some time after this—and it is a loss to us that the intervals of time are not distinctly marked—it came to the knowledge of Saul that his daughter Michal cherished a tender regard for David. It might have displeased him to hear that the heart of another of his children had gone over to one whom he had by this time learned to hate and to dread. But it happened to please him; as he hoped to be able to use her as an instrument for his destruction. We all know that in the East, the husband is expected in some sort to *purchase* his bride, by a payment to her father. One who cannot pay this in money, may do it by his services, as Jacob did, or by some exploit fixed by the father, as was done by Othniel. David had a clear claim to one of Saul's daughters; but this, as a matter of right, he did not urge, and his family was not in such circumstances as to afford such "gift and dowry," as a king had a right to expect when he gave a daughter. To meet this difficulty, the king was graciously content to accept some great exploit against the public enemy, as a sufficient equivalent for his daughter's hand. Thus understood, that which Saul required was not, as the difference of manners has led many to take it, a gratuitous task, the real object of which might have been even at the first view very obvious; but it was in appearance a generous and considerate mode of enabling the son of Jesse to contract this match on somewhat equal terms, by the acceptance of a service that he could render, in lieu of payments beyond his power. For Saul to give his daughter without any consideration, would have been a slur upon her; and to accept her on such terms would have been, according to eastern notions, dishonorable in David. It was, therefore, not without the appearance of generosity on the part of the king, that he offered to accept a public service in lieu of a private benefit; and it was right that he should make that service bear some

proportion in hazard and difficulty to the value he set upon his daughter. This, as we take it, was the aspect in which Saul intended the transaction to appear, and in which it probably did appear in the eyes of all, but the few who were prepared to see through it the deeper design to compass the ruin of Jesse's son. Whether David himself was of the number is not clear—probably not, if we may judge from the alacrity with which he undertook the proposed enterprise; and if we consider that, to his heroic spirit, there were few achievements which would seem difficult or dangerous.

This enterprise was, that he should, probably within a given time, destroy with his own hand a hundred of the Philistines, and bring to the king such proofs of their deaths, as might assure him that they were Philistines and no others who had been slain. This demand, so much in unison with the spirit of the age, and of which we have a subsisting example in the scalps which the North American Indians take from their slaughtered enemies as trophies of their valor—was undertaken by David, and when the time expired, he appeared before the king with not only an hundred, but with two hundred, such proofs of his prowess as the king had required. This was another great exploit—far more arduous, although less renowned, than the overthrow of Goliath. It must, however, have attracted great attention at the time, and have conduced in no small degree to the public estimation in which David was held. Thus, whatever the as yet concealed aversion of Saul devised for his destruction, led only to his greater honor, and materially advanced the results which the king desired to avert. So shall it be with every one who blindly and foolishly endeavors to frustrate the counsels of God.

THIRTY-THIRD WEEK—FRIDAY.

TERAPHIM.—I SAMUEL XIX. 1-17.

DAVID was now still more conspicuously brought before the view of the people, and his consequence in their eyes much enhanced by his alliance with the royal family. Aware of this—and perceiving that his underhand devices only tended to raise the son of Jesse to higher credit, and but gave him opportunities of achieving greater distinction, the king's dislike ripened fast into mortal hatred. He also found that his daughter really loved her husband, and could not in any way be made instrumental in bringing his safety into danger. These things made him wild. He began among his intimates to throw aside the mask which had hitherto veiled, however thinly, the motive of his proceedings; and he hinted, that a removal of David by any means would be a service most acceptable to him. Providentially, he mentioned this to Jonathan among the rest. That faithful friend said nothing at the time, but went up and apprized David of his danger, and directed him to a place of concealment; and he promised to lead Saul the next day in that direction, so that his friend might overhear what passed when he interceded for him. He arranged this, probably, that in case his father broke forth into violence or proved inexorable, David might be aware of it, and escape without incurring the danger of further personal communications.

In this conversation with his father, Jonathan took a strong and decided tone. He plainly told him that he was about to commit a great sin, in thus seeking the destruction of a valuable public servant, who had rendered great services to the state, and all whose conduct towards him had been most true and loyal. "Wherefore then," he said with vehemence, "wilt thou sin against innocent blood, by slaying David without a cause?" The king—a man of impulses, and in whom the impulse to right feeling was not yet ex-

tinct, was moved by this earnest appeal; and he pledged himself by an oath to Jonathan, that he would no longer seek the life of Jesse's son.

David then left his concealment, and resumed his usual duties; and soon after he went again to the wars, and acquired still further renown, so that his praise was in the mouth of all the people. This was wormwood to Saul. His former malignity, suspicion, and hatred, all revived; and when David came back to court, his old paroxysms of madness returned with such violence, that the harp of David, who had now a place at the king's table as his son-in-law, had no longer the power over him it once possessed. He could no longer heed the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely. One day his pent-up passion so overmastered him, that he again threw his javelin at David. With such force was it thrown, that it stuck into the wall and remained there, for David had evaded the stroke, and immediately withdrew from the king's presence. But now that he had committed himself by this act, Saul was determined to carry his purpose out, and he set a guard to watch David's house all night to prevent his escape. We may guess that only the fear of alarming the town, and of rousing the populace to rescue their favorite hero, prevented him from directing them to break into the house, and slay David there. It was so providentially ordered; for he was thus, at the suggestion of his wife, enabled to escape through a back window, by which she let him down.

David having thus escaped, the remaining anxiety of Michal, then, was to protract the time as much as possible, that he might be far enough off before the pursuit commenced. She "took an image, and laid it in the bed, and put a pillow of goats' hair for a bolster, and covered it with a cloth." The object of this was to convey the impression, on a cursory view, that some one was lying in the bed. The "image" is, in the original, "teraphim." There is much difficulty about these teraphim. They are first mentioned as things that had been secreted by Rachel when her husband

fled from Padanaram, and about which Laban made so much uproar when he overtook them. That they were held in superstitious regard, partaking of idolatry, is manifest; but that they were not looked upon by those who used them as interfering with the worship of Jehovah, but of being auxiliary to it, seems to appear from their being found in families which professed to be true worshippers of the Lord. It seems to us that they were superstitious symbolical figures, which were regarded as bringing peculiar blessings and as securing peculiar protections—essentially the blessings and protections of Jehovah—to the houses in which they were found, like, in some degree, the tutelary and household gods, the Penates and Lares of the Roman; or, as we take it, still more like the pictures of St. Nicholas or of the Virgin, which one sees in every Russian shop, before which a lamp is kept continually burning, and which every one who enters the place reverently salutes.

Of their evil there can be no question, from their tendency to lead into more direct idolatry, and the deficient appreciation, which the use of them evinced, of the spiritual worship which God, who is a Spirit, required, and which is most acceptable in his sight. It was a form of worshipping God, but being an unscriptural and dangerous form, was evil in his eyes, and was commandatorily put down, along with other forms of idolatry, by Joshua;* yet it is nowhere denounced and suppressed with the same rigor as the worship of Moloch or of Baal. It is observable that women were particularly addicted to the use of these teraphim. First, there was Rachel who had them without the knowledge of her husband, and now here is Michal, who has a teraph, doubtless without the privity of David. That may have been easy in the case of Rachel, seeing the images appear to have been small, from the facility with which they were concealed; but this of Michal seems to have been as large as a human body; and it may be asked, Was it possible that David should have

* 2 Kings xxiii. 24, where the word "images" is in the original "teraphim."

been ignorant of its existence in his house? It is very possible under the arrangement of eastern habitations, which assigns a separate part of the house to the women; and particularly so in the case of David, who, as being now a high military commander, and especially as having married the king's daughter, doubtless dwelt in a large house, and showed to her all the consideration in these matters which a lady of her rank was entitled to expect.

There has been some difference of opinion as to the form of the teraphim. The passage before us would seem to intimate that it had the human shape, being intended, when lying in the bed and covered with the bed-clothes, to be taken for David, ill in bed. This is not, however, conclusive, seeing that almost anything of sufficient bulk might be made to suggest that idea in a darkened room, and in the dim of the morning, so long as the head was not visible.

There is a very prevalent notion among the Jewish writers that the teraphim were figures of brass, constructed under certain horoscopic and astrological aspects; and that, a plate of gold being placed under the tongue, they were, on being invoked with ceremonies of divination, enabled to deliver oracles. To state this is to refute it.

The mention of a pillow of goats' hair in the present passage, leads Josephus astray into the odd fancy, that Michal put in the bed the lungs of a goat recently killed, the palpitations of which would impart the motion caused by a man's breathing in bed. Then how as to the form of a man in bed, which the teraph must have presented? and how long do the lungs of a slain goat continue thus to palpitate? The thing is absurd. Nevertheless, we are not very sure that we understand this matter of "the pillow of goats' hair." The hair of a Syrian goat might form a good stuffing for a pillow-case; but how were the persons to be deceived to know that the pillow was filled with goats' hair? We incline to think the pillow was of goats' skin, with the hair outside, and that such a pillow was then regarded as having a sanative property in some diseases; whence to see such a

pillow in a bed would strengthen the illusion that a sick man lay there. Although this is a conjecture of our own, it seems to us more probable than the notion of some interpreters, that Michal made a kind of wig for the teraph, with the goat's skin, to produce a passable resemblance to David's head.

THIRTY-THIRD WEEK—SATURDAY.

THE SCHOOL OF THE PROPHETS.—I SAMUEL XIX. 18-22.

DAVID had not now to evade merely the sudden paroxysms of Saul's wrath, but his fixed and avowed purpose of effecting his destruction, in the face of the oath which had been made to Jonathan. Any step he might now take was of the utmost importance to David, and might be pregnant with ulterior consequences. He, therefore, wisely resolved to repair to Samuel at Ramah, to obtain the advantage of his counsels and experience. Whether there had been any intercourse between them during the years which had passed since the anointing of David, we do not learn. On account of the suspicious character of Saul, and the probability that too close an intercourse would have led him to suppose that some collusion existed between them, and that Samuel was preparing to bring the son of Jesse forward, as the worthier man destined to fill the throne, it is probable that there had been little, if any, communication between him and David. It was not needed. They knew enough of each other without it. David knew that Samuel had relinquished all part in public affairs, and was solely occupied in his religious duties as prophet, and in the superintendence and instruction of the college of religious young men, which he had established at the rural hamlet of Naioth, in the vicinity of Ramah. There they were instructed in sacred learning and religious exercises, and were led to cultivate, especially by

psalmody and music, the devotional feelings which might fit them, when occasion called, to become the messengers of God and teachers of the people. Samuel, on his part, could not have been ignorant of the public history of David ; and we may conceive the interest with which he beheld the providence of God gradually leading this young man forward in his appointed path and to his destined station. The purposes of God were ripening every hour ; and he was content to wait, knowing well what the end must be.

David not only sought counsel of Samuel, but probably thought that with him he might find safety and protection. The school at Naioth formed a sanctuary which even Saul, he might think, would not be likely to invade. Besides that, the presence of Samuel alone must surely be a sufficient protection from outrage. It is true this step might confirm the suspicions of Saul as to his being the man Samuel had announced as the heir of his throne. Yet the movement would not be in itself conclusive, seeing that it was no doubt still the practice for every one who was in great perplexity, to repair to the venerable prophet for counsel and advice.

At Ramah David reported to Samuel all the particulars of Saul's conduct towards him ; and on hearing this, the prophet took him to his college at Naioth, as if to put him into sanctuary there. At this place the son of Jesse remained some time before Saul learned where he was. These were no doubt happy days with him. Here he was in an atmosphere congenial to his best feelings, his highest tastes, and holiest aspirations ; and here his accomplishments, in sacred minstrelsy and song, had ample scope and exercise, enabling him to join heart and soul in their harmonious "prophesyings," and doubtless endearing him greatly to the good men who had their quiet dwelling there. There were probably moments when, feeling sick of the turmoils of public life, and tired of the persecutions and suspicions which followed him, he had been content to abandon his high career for the peaceful and holy life he was now allowed to share. It may even be possible that such was his intention, and that

he hoped this voluntary retirement would abate the suspicions of Saul, and mollify his hatred.

But it was not so to be. When Saul learned to what place David had retired, he sent a body of men to apprehend him. These men, however, no sooner came to the sacred place, and beheld the prophets engaged in their sacred exercises, led by the venerable Samuel, than their hearts were smitten. They felt that they dared not attempt any violence, and they stood contentedly, swelling by their voices the loud chorus of praise to God.

This occurred to two other sets of emissaries—three in all; and at last Saul determined to go himself, and execute on the spot the fell purposes of his will. So forth he went. On his approach to Ramah, he came to the great well of Sechu, and finding there a number of people who had come from the town for water, he inquired of them where Samuel and David then were. On hearing that they were at Naioth, he turned his steps in that direction; but he had proceeded only a little way, when the spirit which had moved his messengers, fell upon him also,—with this difference, that they had not thus been moved till they reached the presence of Samuel and his pupils; whereas Saul felt the spirit come upon him while he was on the road, giving him, for the time, the heart of another man. This is very remarkable; the messengers, as Saul himself on a former occasion, may be supposed to have been influenced by a sympathy with what they saw and heard, when they came into the presence of the prophets; but now the heart of Saul is moved in the absence of all such associations, as if purposely to show, that the change wrought in him was the immediate work of Him who holds the hearts of all men in his hand. It showed, also, that this power was not confined to place or persons, and that the prophesying at Naioth were owing to no influence of example—to no intoxicating vapors, or to the temperature of the air, as was suspected of some of the heathen oracles of old.

Thus the king went on, singing in high excitement the

praises of God; and when he came to Naioth, and entered the presence of Samuel—between whom and him an angry scene might have been expected but for this Divine intervention—he cast off his weapons, and the outer robes which belonged to his rank, and stood among the sons of the prophets as one of themselves, taking his part in their holy chaunts. Thus disarrayed of all that marked the king or the warrior, Saul, when the “prophesyings” were ended, lay down exhausted or entranced all the remainder of that day, and all the ensuing night. It is said that “he lay down naked,” which we have interpreted to mean, that he divested himself of his outer raiment, which from its looseness could be easily slipped off, and remained in his closer inner vesture and girdle. This is not the only instance in which the term “naked” is thus applied in Scripture. We have another in the order to the prophet Isaiah to put off his sackcloth and “go naked and barefoot” for three years. This was to denote, that the Egyptians and Arabians were to be carried away captives in the like guise by the Assyrians. It was not, however, the custom to strip captives altogether naked; but only to deprive them of good clothes and flowing vestures, and to give them others more sordid and shorter, that they might be the more fit for service. Apart from this, no one who reflects on the matter will imagine that the prophet literally remained three whole years without any covering, in a climate the winter cold of which is much more severe than we are apt to think. The same employment of the term “naked,” may be recognized among other ancient nations. Thus Aurelius Victor relates, that those who were sent to summon L. C. Cincinnatus to assume the dictatorship, found him “naked,” ploughing on the other side of the Tiber. This can hardly mean that he was entirely naked; and that it does merely signify that he wrought with no clothing but his inner garment, is intimated by Livy, who, in relating the same occurrence, says that, on being thus summoned, Cincinnatus called to his wife Ruca for gown or toga, that he might appear fit to accompany them.

Indeed, we need not go far to look for illustrations of this limited signification of the word “naked;” for it is common enough with ourselves, especially among women, to say that one is “naked” who has not adequate clothing.

It will appear, then, that Saul’s being naked consisted in his being without the outer robes which he usually wore in public; and this is the same sense in which David was “naked” when he played on his harp before the ark of God.

Thirty-Fourth Week—Sunday.

THE SLING AND STONE.—I SAMUEL XVII. 1.

AMONG the events which have, during the past week, been considered, the combat of David with Goliath stands forth most prominently; and to some of the circumstances of that great deed, our attention may this day be profitably directed.

Although we do not, with some, think that “*these* things are an allegory,” or that this great combat was a type of our Lord’s victory over Satan, or even of man’s combat with the enemy of his soul—it is impossible for the experienced Christian to read it without being reminded of eventful passages in his own spiritual history. There is no doubt some mysterious connection between even the external things of scripture history, and the inner things of our spiritual life, which “the wise” are enabled, by the Spirit’s teaching, to discern, and which renders the seemingly least spiritual parts of the holy writ richly nourishing to their souls.

The reader will remember the feelings with which the son of Jesse undertook this combat. It is with precisely the same feeling that we should advance to the contest with the enemy of our souls. He is far more powerful than we; and those who have not faith to oppose to him the invincible weapons of the Spirit of God, waver and tremble as he ad-

vances. But the experienced Christian, whose faith is unshaken, looks around him, and beholds with wonder so many of his brethren tremble before the defier of God's sacramental host. Their fear is unknown to him. He inquires with David—"What shall be done to the man who takes away the reproach from Israel?" And the answer is—"The man that killeth him, the king shall enrich with great riches,"—the "riches of the glory of his inheritance." "He that overcometh," saith the Lord, "shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."* Faith in this promise, and hope to attain the reward, determine him to exertion. He heeds not the reproaches of the fearful brother who dares not resist the enemy; he will not listen to those who would persuade him that his strength is not equal to the enterprise; for he knows that the strength on which he relies is not his own, but that of the All-strong—the Strengthener. Firmly, therefore, he advances to the conflict, exclaiming—"I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, whom thou hast defied."

This, and no other, is the spirit with which we must struggle with all the temptations of the world, the devil, and the flesh. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God."† With this sufficiency we can do everything required of us. "I can," says Paul, "do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." So can we. But we must remember, that from the moment we renounce His strength and rely upon our own, we are no longer to be compared to the commissioned servant of God, executing his purposes upon the evil and impious; but are rather like the simple unguarded youth which David would have been, had he acted on no other confidence than his own.

Although the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, yet we must use such weapons as we have—such as we best know how to use. The power and courage which David possessed would have availed him little without his sling

* Rev. xxi. 7.

† 2 Cor. iii. 6.

and his stone ; and the powers of resistance which God has graciously consented to afford us, will be equally useless unless we apply them through the appointed means—these are prayer, watchfulness, resistance to sin, resolutions of holiness, and a frequent participation of the means of grace. The gifts of God avail us nothing without the disposition to use them, and this disposition is also his gift, which will not be refused to any that diligently seek it. So God gives the sun, the rain, the soil, the seed—but man must till the field and sow the ground, or else there will be no harvest. It is God that gives the increase ; but yet Paul must plant and Apollos water. It is God who gives the talents ; but man must put them out to the exchangers, or else Christ at his coming will not receive his own with usury. The grace of God is an invincible weapon ; but we must employ it, or it will rust—will no more fight our spiritual battle, than a sword will defend us while we delay to draw it, or than the stones of the brook could avail David while they only lay in the sling. Again, the sling and the stone would both have been useless, had not the Spirit of God guided the hand of David ; and in like manner must the Christian be convinced that the means which are given to him of contending with sin, are only efficacious because “it is God that worketh in us to will and to do.” Phil. ii. 12. The certainty that all our strength is from above, and the determination actively to employ that strength, must go together ; neither will effect anything without the other ; but the two combined will, by the blessing of God, finally beat down Satan under our feet.

If there be any who, like Eliab, are not only afraid to engage in the contest themselves, but are ready to reproach us with “pride and naughtiness of heart,” because we have determined to follow the Lord wholly, and to subject our conversation to a rule of severer holiness than they can bring themselves to bear—let us answer with David, “Is there not a cause?” There is every conceivable cause. “There is gratitude for love which eternity could never repay ; there is love which eternity could never satisfy ; and there is even

private interest, which is more effectually promoted by the service of God than by any other assignable means."*

There may, again, be some who, like Saul, will tell us that we are too weak to contend with all the difficulties which lie before us—and they will offer us, as Saul offered David his armor, a panoply of worldly precepts and maxims for the conduct of life, taken from their own experience, and adapted to persons like themselves; but which, not being founded on the strict and undeviating model of Christ's law, are no more fitted to our use, than the massive and cumbersome armor of Saul became the slender and unaccustomed David. Our answer must be, we "cannot go with these." We "have not proved them;" and did we prove them, we should find them useless indeed. We must go in the might of the Lord, and in that alone; and with this, we shall go forth conquering and to conquer the enemies of our peace, till we receive the end of our faith—the salvation of our souls.

THIRTY-FOURTH WEEK—MONDAY.

THE FAREWELL.—I SAMUEL XX.

IN the remarkable turning of the heart of Saul—so full when he set out of fell, and probably bloody, purposes, and the long entrancement in which he lay, several objects may be discerned—first, to magnify the power of the Lord over the hearts of men; then, to protect Samuel and his college from the king's wrath, for we must not reckon too much upon his forbearance even towards the aged prophet, when we consider what was afterwards done to the priests at Nob for the shelter they gave to David; and, lastly, it was designed to frustrate all the king's objects, and to give the son of Jesse an opportunity of escaping to a safe distance before he became himself again.

* Rev. H. Thompson's *Davidica*.

David now saw clearly that his life at Saul's court was ended, and that it only remained for him, thenceforth, to keep himself beyond the reach of Saul, and await in patience the progress of events. This was probably also the purport of the advice that he received from Samuel.

Yet he took advantage of Saul's state to return to Gibeah, wasting, as some may deem, the precious time which might have served him well for his escape. But every generous heart will appreciate his motive in subjecting himself to this risk—it was to see once more his beloved Jonathan, the friend and brother of his soul, and to obtain his sanction to the step he was about to take. The interview between these two generous and high-minded young men, is deeply interesting; and although there are longer speeches in the historical Scriptures, there is no *conversation*—with the natural changes of interlocution—reported at equal length. The object of David was to convince his friend of the reality of the danger he was in, and the necessity for his departure. This was opposed by Jonathan, partly from the love he bore to David, and the pain he would feel in being for a long indefinite period separated from him, and partly from the charity that thinketh no evil, rendering him reluctant to judge harshly of his father. He could not bring himself to believe that, after the oath which Saul had taken to make no attempt against David's life, he had any real intention to destroy him. He urged, that he was in his father's confidence, and would surely have known had any such intention existed. The reader will do well to note the admirable delicacy of David's reply to this—"Thy father certainly knoweth that I have found grace in thine eyes, and he saith, *Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved*; but truly, as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but one step between me and death." To avoid giving pain to Jonathan, he avoids implying or expressing that his father had any mistrust of him, and gives it quite another turn, as if Saul concealed his designs upon David from his son only to spare his feelings.

Jonathan could not, however, be satisfied without further

proof of his father's present state of feeling towards David. He probably hoped, from David's account, that whatever had been his intentions, a more effectual change had been wrought in him at Ramah, than his friend supposed. To satisfy him, David agreed to defer his flight. It was arranged that he should visit his family at Bethlehem, and return in three days to his former place of concealment, near the stone of Ezel, where, by a concerted signal, Jonathan was to apprise him of the result, it being uncertain but that he might be so watched, as to render another interview unsafe. The next day was the feast of the new moon, when the king was wont to entertain the high officers of his court; and David, as his son-in-law, and a high military officer, had a seat at his table. Saul knew that David had been seen at Gibeah, and concluded that the change which he had seen come over himself at Naioth, had led him to think that there was nothing more to fear. He therefore expected he would appear in his place at the feast; but his place remained empty. The king made no remark then, supposing that some accident prevented his attendance, and that he would doubtless be present the following day; for that day also was a feast for the new moon being proclaimed, according to its actual appearing; and the appearance being uncertain, sometimes in the evening, at noon, or at midnight, two days were observed as a feast in honor of the occasion. Still David was absent, and Saul asked Jonathan, with all the indifference he could assume—"Wherefore came not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday nor to-day?" Jonathan answered, that he had asked for, and obtained, his permission to attend a family celebration at Bethlehem. On hearing this, the king could restrain himself no longer. Looking upon his son as one who was infatuated by his love for David, into madly throwing away his own prospects and those of his house, he broke forth into violent and insulting abuse of him. To any oriental, nothing is so grievously insulting as a reproach cast upon his mother—so Saul, to sting his son to the uttermost, spoke contemptuously of his mother, regardless of the fact, that Jonathan's

mother was his own wife,—“Thou son of the perverse, rebellious woman,” etc. There are some traces of this form of abuse, in principle, among the least refined portion of our own population; but in the East, no man is too high or too refined to be above it. Even a son will abuse his brother by casting contumely upon *his* mother, regardless of the fact that she is also his own mother, and whom, as such, he venerates and loves.* The mother herself is not held to be affronted in such cases, but the son who hears such words applied to her is insulted, and is meant to be insulted, beyond expiation. Jonathan, however, remembered that the man who spoke was his father, and that the lot of his friend was in the balance; so he restrained himself, and the king went on to tell him that while the son of Jesse lived, the prospect of his own inheritance of the crown was nothing worth. This is the first time Saul had expressed that conviction, showing that the previous flight of David to Samuel had turned into certainty the suspicions he had before entertained. Even this did not move the firm friendship of Jonathan, who seems to have himself, before this, reached the conviction that David was indeed the man chosen of God to reign—according to the announcement of Samuel, which must have been known to him—and to have brought his mind to acquiesce in it, seeing that the man so chosen was one whom he loved as his own soul. It was in the recollection of this, among the other manifestations of his deep and self-sacrificing affection, that David, in a later day, characterized Jonathan’s regard for him in the memorable words, “Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of woman.” So now, in this trying moment, Jonathan ventured to speak for his friend, urging justly that a man was to be judged by his acts and intentions, and those of David were laudable and pure. “Wherefore,” he asked, “shall he be slain? What hath he done?” The answer was from the javelin of the infuriated king, which this time he cast

* So Antar to his uterine brother: “Thou base-born! thou son of a foul mother! thou didst instigate my master to beat me.”—*Journal of Sacred Literature*, v. 25.

at his own son. He missed; and his son, regardless of the insult and danger to himself, but seeing from this that his father was determined to slay David, arose from the table and went out "in fierce anger," leaving his food untasted.

Early the next morning he went out with his bow into the field, where David was concealed, attended by a boy, the words used to whom, in directing him to find the arrows, which his master shot, as if at a mark, formed the signal previously agreed upon. The signal was that of danger. But the lad having been sent back to the town with the arrows, and there being no one in sight, the two friends could not refuse themselves the satisfaction of one more farewell interview. It is, and was, the custom, in approaching a sovereign or prince, to pause, and bow at regulated intervals. Xenophon ascribes the origin of the practice to Cyrus,* but it was of earlier date, although he may have first introduced it among the Persians. David thus testified the respect due to Jonathan's high station, in advancing to meet him; but when they came near, everything but their heart-brotherhood was forgotten: "They kissed one another, and wept one with another until David exceeded." But time was precious, and delay dangerous, so bidding each other hastily farewell, they separated, to have but one more stolen interview in life.

THIRTY-FOURTH WEEK—TUESDAY.

DAVID AT NOB.—I SAMUEL XXI.

THE tabernacle was at this time at Nob. This place must have been in the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives, or a continuation of this ridge, a little north of the summit and north-east of the city; but no trace of it has yet been discovered. This may be taken to have been not more than five miles south from Gibeah, and it was to

* *Cyropædia*, l. viii. c. 23.

this place that David repaired after his separation from Jonathan. As the Sabbath—or the sunset of Friday, had already commenced when he reached Nob, and as it was not lawful to travel on the Sabbath day, it seems to us that, seeing it was not safe for him to remain at Gibeah, and that the little time which remained before the commencement of the Sabbath would preclude further travelling, he had concluded to go to Nob as a place of safety till the termination of the holy day should enable him to resume his journey. At that place he would be safe, because, supposing his presence there were known, no one could travel thither after him on the Sabbath day, neither could any one who might be at Nob when he came, go to Gibeah to give intelligence of his arrival. It seems to us, therefore, that David went to Nob first, because it was just at a sufficient distance for him to reach before the commencement of the Sabbath; and being such, he would prefer it to other places equally within reach, not only from its being, as a sanctuary, a place of greater safety than any other, but from the natural desire, that the last Sabbath he was likely for some time to enjoy in the land, should be spent in that holy place, and among the servants of God.

It seems to us, that from the time of his parting with Jonathan—if not, indeed, from the time of his leaving Naioth—David had lost some of his trust and confidence in God. In contemplation of the implacable hatred with which he was pursued, and the dangers which beset all his movements; and in the face of the now publicly avowed intention to destroy him—his heart failed him, and he no longer rested secure in the confidence of the Lord's all-sufficient protection. He felt that his position was altered. Hitherto he had to meet, or rather to evade, what had been the private, unreasoning, and fluctuating antipathy of Saul. But *now*, the king no longer had any reserves or restraints; he had publicly denounced him as marked for slaughter—publicly declared his belief that he was a traitor who aimed at the crown, and with whom no terms were any longer to be kept. The fact, that he had been anointed by Samuel was now

publicly known—even the Philistines knew it; and David could not but feel, that the public knowledge of that fact laid upon him heavy responsibilities, from which he had been before exempt; and that it was impossible now to hope for any reconciliation with a prince of Saul's temper, or to expect any safety within his reach. He might have reflected, that all these things did but tend to bring his claims and destination into public notice; and that the pursuing hatred of the king was in fact but the means of working out the plan of the Lord's providence towards him, and offered no real ground of discouragement or fear to one who believed that He was well able to accomplish all the purposes of his will. His plain course had been, "by patient continuance in well-doing," to put to shame the calumnies of malicious men; and, while taking all reasonable care for his own safety, to honor the Lord by the confidence evinced in the sufficiency of his protection. But it was not so. He began to look to the matter in its simply human points of view,—and *then* he began to despair—to be afraid. He who had subdued the lion and the bear—he who stood up against the giant, whose very presence dismayed the armies of Israel, now at last quailed at the fear of Saul; and having lost his shield of faith, he became, like the shorn Samson, "weak as other men," and has left us a memorial of what the best of men may become when left to themselves.

This is the view we take of the transactions now immediately before us. We have indeed met with elaborate and ingenious vindications of David's proceedings throughout, in which very learned and worthy men have labored to show in what degree it is lawful to lie and to deceive,—thereby compromising the sacred interests of truth and righteousness, in order to vindicate the character of Jesse's son. Now, the character of David is very dear to us, and he has ever been the object of our sympathy, our admiration, and our love. But truth is dearer to us than even the character of David; and we must not consent to call evil good, and to put darkness for light, because the evil was David's and the darkness

David's. If we were to set about to prove that all David did was right, and the best that could be done, we should not only contradict the Scripture, but have work enough upon our hands. Far be it from us to claim for him that which belongs to One only of all who ever walked the earth. Let us admit the errors and weaknesses of David, as they occur, and our task becomes easy, and his history becomes consistent and clear; but let us uphold him through good and evil, through "the bitter and the sweet," and we soon find ourselves "in wandering mazes lost," and our perceptions of the broad landmarks between truth and error very painfully disordered.

Then, we regard David as under a spiritual cloud from the time he left Jonathan, onward to a point which we shall in the proper place indicate. This cloud, we first trace distinctly in his declaration to Jonathan, that there was but "a step between him and death." Now there were as many steps between him and death then as at any other time; but an excessive fear had come upon him, which for the time made him forgetful of God, and urged him to seek his safety by any feasible means, whether right or wrong.

So, first he comes to Nob, with not only a lie, but with a whole nest of lies, in his mouth—the more heinous when we consider the place in which, and the person to whom, they were used—and when we recollect the danger into which they were calculated to bring that friendly and venerable person, and *did* bring him and his, even unto death; whereas, had he been sincere and candid with the high-priest, there can be little doubt that he would have found means of discharging the duties of hospitality and assistance, without any apparent compromise of his duty to his sovereign. As it was, David, aware that the priest would be astonished to see a person of his rank arrive alone—without the usual guard and attendants, with whom he had usually been seen at that place—prepared an ingenious tale to delude the pontiff. He told him that he was upon most urgent and private business for the king, citing the very words which, as he

said, Saul had used in intrusting this secret mission to him ; and his servants, he alleged, had been directed to meet him at a certain place. This, of course, left the high-priest to understand, that whatever aid or assistance was rendered to him, would be advancing the king's service.

The unsuspecting high-priest, whose name was Ahimelech, finding David wanted bread, went so far as to give him some of that which had just been taken (at the commencement of the Sabbath) from the table of the shew-bread in the tabernacle, when the new bread had been laid on, and which, in strictness, it was not lawful for any but the priests to eat. There was no other ; and we might be surprised at this, did we not know that bread was prepared from day to day. On any other day, bread might have been baked to meet any want that arose ; but this could not be done on the Sabbath, and there was hence no bread to be had but the shew-bread, which would have sufficed for the use of the priests themselves on that day.

Having been furnished with bread, David intimated that in his haste he had left the court without a sword, and expressed a wish that one might be provided for him. He was told there was no sword but that of Goliath, which was wrapped up in a cloth, and laid up in the tabernacle. This David claimed, and it was given to him. This fact seems to prove, that in Israel swords were not worn even by military men when not on actual service or a journey.

David was not the only person detained at Nob over the Sabbath day. There was also present one Doeg, a proselyte of Edom, high in the confidence of Saul, and holding the post of chief herdsman, that is, having the management of this branch of the king's property. He was arrested, by the arrival of the Sabbath, on his way to Gibeah, and not therefore aware of the recent occurrences, and did not find any ground for question or interference. He knew, however, that David was in growing disfavor with his master, and he watched narrowly all that passed. David himself was well acquainted with the malignant temper of this man, and him-

self confessed afterwards, that the time he was misleading the-high priest, he was aware that the attention shown to him at Nob, would, through the presence of Doeg, bring them to ruin. "I knew it," he says, with bitter remorse, "I knew it that day when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul; I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house." Yes, it was no less. They did perish. When Saul was inquiring about David, and was lamenting that none would or could tell whither he had gone, Doeg related that he had seen him cherished by the priests at Nob, but he did not state the representations from David under which that assistance had been given. On hearing this, the king sent for all the priests, and on their arrival vehemently accused Ahimelech of being in a conspiracy with David against him. The high-priest repelled the charge with dignity and force, declaring that he was, at the time, utterly ignorant of there being any cause of complaint against him. But the king would not be convinced; and his dreadful words were, "Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, thou and all thy father's house." And forthwith he ordered the guard to fall upon them, condescending to give a reason, "Because their hand is also with David, and because they knew that he fled, and did not show it me." But for once he was not obeyed. No hand moved against the priests of the Lord. If the king had been wise, he would have seen from this the danger of proceeding with this horrid purpose. But he was *not* wise; he would not be instructed. In his obstinate ferocity, he told Doeg to execute his purpose; and that person, assisted probably by his men, and not awed by the considerations which weighed upon the minds of native Israelites, turned upon them, and slew in that one day no fewer than "four score and five persons that did wear a linen ephod."

From that day Saul was a doomed and ruined man. The atrocious massacre filled every human and religious mind with disgust and horror, and it made the priestly body throughout the whole land, and in all its departments, invet-

erately hostile, and led them to look towards David as the instrument of their security and vengeance. Abiathar, the son, and virtual successor, of the murdered high-priest, escaped to him, and by his presence, with the means of officially consulting the Lord, gave weight and dignity to his position, so that the public attention became more and more directed to him, while Saul declined daily in public estimation, and sunk more and more, day by day, into the deepest glooms of horror and despair.

THIRTY-FOURTH WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

DAVID AT GATH.—I SAMUEL XXI. 10-15.

THE next step which David took on leaving Nob, seems to us equally objectionable with his conduct there, and was equally the result of the unworthy fears which now oppressed his spirits. HE WENT OVER TO THE PHILISTINES. He probably argued that there was no safety for him in the dominions of Saul, unless he assumed an attitude of self-defence, which would look like hostility and rebellion. He must therefore leave the country. But where was he to go? The neighboring states were at peace with Saul, and would not probably provoke his anger by affording shelter to one whom he regarded as his enemy. The Philistines being at war with Saul, would not be likely to give him up. But he should also have considered what aspect the act would bear in the eyes of Israel on the one side, and of the Philistines on the other. The Israelites could not but view it as a desertion of their great general to the enemy, whose protection could only be secured by services *against* his own country. The Philistines, on their side, if they agreed to afford shelter to one who had done them so much harm, would expect him to employ his experience and talents, for their advantage, against Israel. In the desire to stand well with both, he

could not have maintained his position without a degree of double-dealing adverse to all truth and honor. It could not, therefore, be of God that this step was taken; and it was thus a further manifestation of that *distrust* of the sufficiency of the Lord's protection, a confidence in which had been hitherto, and was to be hereafter, the crowning glory of his great career.

By the good providence of God, David was spared—through what seemed at first a trial and a danger—from the tremendous perils of this position.

It must be confessed to have been a bold step, so far as human confidence is concerned, for him to put himself into the hands of those whom he had so often humiliated. But, on the other hand, he might reckon with confidence upon the protection which the eastern people invariably extend, and the hospitality they show, even to an enemy who claims shelter from them; and there was room to think that the satisfaction of the Philistines in seeing the Israelites deprived of their most renowned warrior, would preponderate over their resentment at the injuries he had inflicted upon their nation. In fact, it seems that Achish the king of Gath, to which place he went, was in the first instance well enough disposed to receive him; but presently strange and dangerous murmurs passed among the lords and princes. "Is not this David, the *king of the land*? Did they not sing to one another of him in dances, saying, Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?" By this we see how perfect the intelligence of the Philistines was, as to what passed among the Israelites. They knew of this special point in the songs of the Hebrew maidens; and they were even already aware of what had so recently transpired, as to his having been anointed as the future king of Israel. Even David was surprised to find them in possession of this fact. He saw at once that the treatment he might expect as one recognized as being destined, by his position, to become the public enemy of the Philistines, might be very different from that which might have been afforded to him as a fugi-

tive general. He was greatly dismayed. He probably saw that the king himself changed countenance at this intelligence. What was he to do? This we cannot answer, as we are not sufficiently acquainted with all the minute circumstances which might help to a conclusion. We can, however, see that what David decided to do under the influence of instant apprehension, is not by any means entitled to our approbation. It was an *acted* untruth, and such untruths are not more innocent than oral ones. It would have become him much better, if he conceived himself in such great danger, to have prayed in his heart to the Lord, and then waited for the seemly and becoming means of deliverance, which He would without doubt have opened for his imperilled servant. But "he feigned himself mad," or perhaps to fall into a fit of epilepsy, which was in ancient times regarded as a madness. This character he acted to such disgusting perfection, that the court had no doubt of the reality of his affliction. He not only "scrabbled upon the wall," but let his slaver fall down upon his beard. This last was convincing. Considering the regard in which the beard is held, the care taken of it, and the solicitude of the owner to protect it from insult and pollution, who could possibly doubt the abject and absolute madness of the man who thus defiled his own beard! On the other hand, a sort of respect for the persons thus afflicted, as if they were under some kind of supernatural influence, has always existed, and does now exist, in the East, so that David knew his personal safety, and even his freedom, were guaranteed by the belief in his madness. Such was the case. The king was not, perhaps, sorry to be thus relieved from the difficulty which he saw to be gathering round the question. He therefore turned in seeming, or real wrath, to his servants, rebuking them for admitting a madman to his presence. "Lo, ye see the man is mad: wherefore have ye brought him to me? Have I need of madmen, that ye have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?" The Jewish writers think there was more

emphasis than we are aware of in Achish's asking if *he* had need of madmen. They tell us that the king's wife and daughter were both mad, and that while David was simulating madness without, they were exhibiting the reality within, so that poor Achish might well think he had already quite enough of this.

We should like to be able to entertain the belief that the epileptic madness of David was real and not feigned. Some, in their anxiety to vindicate his character, have labored hard to prove that this was the case. Both the Septuagint and the Vulgate versions intimate that it was real: and the curious in these matters know that the question whether the madness of Hamlet was assumed or real, has not been more ably, earnestly, or ingeniously discussed than the truth or simulation of David's madness. To us it seems that the plain meaning of the text is, that the madness was assumed; but we are ready to admit that were the text less explicit we should see no improbability in a sudden attack of real epilepsy under such circumstances. There is an anecdote which shows this in the life of St. Bernard. This renowned abbot once went into Guienne, to set right some matters which in his judgment had gone wrong through the advice of William X., Duke of Aquitaine and Count of Toulouse, to the court of the anti-Pope Anacletus II. Having celebrated mass, Bernard stood forth, with the host in his hands, and uttered a most terrible denunciation against the duke, who was present. He had no sooner ended than the prince fell to the ground trembling and powerless. The soldiers lifted him up, but his countenance was altogether changed; he regarded no one, nor could any coherent words be drawn from him. He heaved forth profound sighs, and presently fell into epileptic convulsions, letting his saliva fall upon his beard. A striking instance this, of the effects which strong terror may produce upon even resolute minds. It is the reality of that which David feigned.

THIRTY-FOURTH WEEK—THURSDAY.

DAVID IN THE WILDERNESS.—I SAMUEL XXIV.—XXV.

WITH the necessity of returning into the land ruled by the man who sought his life, David recovered the strength of character and the resources which lay in his dependence upon the guidance and protection of God. He felt that it would not be wise for him to go into any town. He could not venture even to his native town of Bethlehem. But he was aware that about six miles south-west from that town there was a large natural cavern, called the cave of Adullam, and in this he determined to take shelter for the present, until his further course should be made plain to him. The cave was well suited for the purpose. The mouth of it can only be approached on foot, along the side of steep cliffs; and it runs in by a long, winding, narrow passage, with small chambers or cavities on either side. With reasonable vigilance it was impossible that he could here be discovered or surprised by any pursuers.

He soon contrived to make his retreat known to his own family, the principal members of which came to him there. Among these were Abishai, the son of his beloved sister Zeruah, and probably his brother Joab—both afterwards the valiant and devoted upholders of their uncle's cause. Zeruah must have been one of the eldest of Jesse's children, for her renowned sons seem not to have been much, if anything, younger than her youngest brother. Nor did these alone come; for no sooner did it transpire that he was in the neighborhood, than a number of daring men of various characters flocked to him. Many, especially his near relatives, went out of regard to his person; many, because by this early adhesion to one whose future had become known, they expected to advance their eventual interests; many because their circumstances were so bad that they could not but be bettered by placing themselves under so successful and valiant a leader;

many because they were so immersed in debt that their best chance against being made bondmen by their creditors must be found in joining the fugitive ; and many who were "bitter of soul" (as the original has it)—whether from private affliction or from dissatisfaction with the state of affairs under Saul, were naturally drawn towards one whose position served to render him the proper organ and representative of public discontents and private wrongs.

The adhesion of four hundred of such men seemed to point out to David the course he had to take. It was no longer necessary that he should skulk about privately from one hiding-place to another—from house to house, and from cave to cave. He was enabled to take a stand upon the defensive, and to assume such a position before the public eye as would engage the interest of the people in his person and movements, and prevent his claims, his services, and his wrongs from passing out of mind. It was not his purpose to set himself forth as a competitor for the crown—that his sworn friendship for Jonathan, no less than his determination to await the course of the Lord's providence, forbade. But still as an oppressed man, in a public position, who had rendered great services to the state, and whose life was unjustly pursued, the notions of the East would account it just and laudable, that while abstaining from any offensive acts against the government, and shunning rather than seeking occasions of collision, he should organize such a power around him, in a body of attached and hardy followers, as might insure his safety, and even bring the royal oppressor to some conditions of peace. We constantly meet with this in eastern history. It necessarily arises from the absence of adequate checks upon the extravagances of the royal power on the one hand, and from the want of a lawful outlet for the expression of public discontent on the other. With us, opposition to the government is a recognized part of the public system, and therefore safe to all parties. It is parliamentary, it is legal, it is oral. In the East it of necessity takes a more demonstrative shape—the shape of organized bands, of weapons of war, of mili-

tary action. David became in fact the leader of the opposition in the reign of king Saul, without more personal animosity to the sovereign, or more immediate design upon the crown—except in that he knew it would in the course of time come to him—than any leader of our own parliamentary opposition may be supposed to entertain. It is true that all the opposition leaders of the East have not been so forbearing as David in this respect. This was the peculiar merit of his faith—of his real loyalty to Saul—and of his fixed determination that his own conduct should afford no justification to the king for the inveterate hatred with which he sought his destruction.

David knew that when he took this position, Bethlehem was no longer a place of safety for his parents, while, on the other hand, he was unwilling to expose them, in their old age, to the hardships and anxieties of the life he was to lead. He therefore took them over the river, and left them in charge of the king of Moab. The Moabites seem for a long time to have kept up a friendly connection with the Israelites; and David being now known as one anointed to be hereafter king in Israel, the fact would not be forgotten in Moab, and was probably dwelt on with national gratification, that he was a descendant of Ruth the Moabitess. It may be asked, why he did not stay there himself—and why he had not in the first instance gone thither, instead of to the Philistines? But it is probable that the king of Moab, although ready enough to render any service that he could without danger, was not at all willing to involve his people in a war by harboring David. But in point of fact, David was commanded by “Gad the seer,” of whom we now first hear, to return into the land of Israel. This Gad, it is likely, was an esteemed member of Samuel’s college of the prophets, and had probably joined David at the instance of the aged prophet, who was now very near the close of his days. Abiathar, also, the son of the murdered high-priest Ahimelech, had fled to him after the massacre at Nob. He was virtually the high-priest, and the recognized official medium of ascertaining the will of the Lord. The presence of both the high-priest and the seer with David,

must have given great importance to his movements and position in the eyes of the people; and he was by no means unmindful of the advantages he thus possessed, for he consulted the sacred oracle as to all his movements, and implicitly followed the indications it afforded.

Two hundred more like-minded men joined him after his return to the land of Judah, and it must have become a matter of much consideration to him, how to employ and sustain so large a body of men, consistently with his purpose of not taking a hostile attitude towards the king, nor of giving the people any cause of complaint against him. He found the means of employing them chiefly, it seems, in protecting the cattle in the wild and open border country, into which the great sheep-masters sent their flocks for pasture, from the depredations of their marauding neighbors, such as the Arabs, the Amalekites, the Jebusites, the Hittites, and others. This species of service creates a claim for a kind of tribute, from the wealthy persons thus so essentially benefited, of food and other necessaries, which is almost invariably most willingly and even thankfully rendered, and when not so, is enforced as a matter of right. This part of David's history affords an example of this in the case of Nabal of Carmel, whose insulting refusal to afford any supplies to David's troop, by which his flocks had been protected in the wilderness, had brought destruction upon his head, but for the prudent intervention of his wife Abigail, who, without apprizing her husband, hastened to meet the incensed hero, with a most acceptable offering of provisions, and mollified his wrath by her prudent and persuasive words—which, no less than her comeliness, so engaged his esteem that he eventually made her his wife, for her husband shortly died heart-stricken, when he was made acquainted with the danger which his churlishness had well-nigh brought upon him.

THIRTY-FOURTH WEEK—FRIDAY.

THE BROTHERLY COVENANT.—I SAMUEL XXIV. 16-18.

It is not to be supposed that, while in the wilderness, the sole care of David was the protection of other people's cattle. Such daring spirits as he commanded, were not to be restricted to such narrow bounds. His fell purpose against Nabal—every soul belonging to whom he intended to destroy for the churlish words of their master—shows that he assumed the right of dealing in a very summary manner with his personal enemies, or those by whom he conceived himself to be wronged; and it is likely that if Doeg, or other obnoxious persons, had been travelling their way, they would have been subjected to very rough treatment by this troop of outlaws.

Again, his expedition to the relief of Keilah when besieged by the Philistines, shows that he was ever ready to employ his force against the public enemies of Israel—thus at once rendering a service acceptable to the people, and obtaining supplies for the use of his troop. The necessity of keeping them employed, and of procuring them a maintenance, without doubt occasioned other expeditions which are not recorded—sudden forays when opportunity offered, into the territories of the various ancient enemies of Israel with whom there was no active war. This continually occurs under the like circumstances, and was the mode in which Jephthah in a former age employed his men, and acquired the reputation and experience which led to his being called to lead the armies of Israel. Of the expedition to relieve Keilah, which was the very first operation performed by David when his troop was organized, it may be remarked that it must have been of signal service to his character—for, involving as it did the defeat of a Philistine force, its effect must have been to rectify in public estimation, the error he had committed in going over to the Philistines.

The proceedings of David, and the position he had assumed, were regarded by Saul with alarm and unmitigated hatred. He probably thought that the present moderation of Jesse's son, would last no longer than till his force should become strong enough to enable him to strike for the crown, by meeting the royal forces in arms. He might well judge that if his cause were suffered to gather strength by time, the issue of a contest might be doubtful. It would not be difficult for David to render his troop fully equal to that which the crown kept in constant service, and the rest would depend upon the result of a call upon the tribes, the success of which, for an expedition against a man so eminent and so popular as David, and whose cause was so strong in at least the great and powerful tribe of Judah, he might well have reason to doubt. The king, therefore, determined to hunt down and crush the son of Jesse with his household troops at once, without allowing him time to become more formidable.

From all that appears, David's men were eager for the fray, and were with great difficulty kept by their leader within the bounds he had prescribed to himself. His policy was to avoid, by all the means in his power, a rencounter with the royal forces. For this, his position among the mountains, cliffs, narrow ravines, and caverns of the rocky wilderness west of the Dead Sea, offered peculiar advantages—and many a weary chase did he lead king Saul through this wild region. Yet Saul was, from time to time, supplied with good information respecting David's movements; and once was, without knowing it, so close upon him, had in fact hemmed him in, that he must have been taken or driven into the armed conflict with the king, which he was so anxious to avoid, had not, most providentially, a messenger arrived at the moment to apprise Saul that the Philistines had invaded the land, which obliged him immediately to turn his steps to another quarter.

Jonathan was not present at any time with the force in pursuit of David. Under all the circumstances, it was best that he should be absent. His heart, however, yearned after

his friend. This was not an age of epistolary communications ; and letters, as well as messages, would have been dangerous. Having, therefore, heard that David was in the forest of Ziph, he resolved to pay him a secret visit—from his own home at Gibeah—seemingly before Saul had commenced his personal pursuit of David. This was the last time the two friends met in this world ; and the interview was of deep interest to both. The object of the generous prince was to “strengthen his hand in God ;” to encourage him in his faith and hope—and to prevent him by his friendly counsels from sinking into despair :—“Fear not,” he said, “for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee.” This was a faith as strong as David himself ever expressed—and stronger than even he was enabled always to maintain. More than this, he now avowed, without reserve, his clear knowledge that David was to be king ; and—in his submission to what he knew to be the Divine appointment, and in his intense admiration of his friend’s high qualities—his most cheerful acquiescence in that arrangement. He even contemplated it with pleasure, looking forward to the many happy days they should spend together, when David should be king,—and he next to him, his uncrowned equal. “Thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next to thee ; *and that also Saul my father knoweth.*” Alas, for him—it was not so to be : and perhaps, upon the whole, it was well that it was not ; for looking at what afterwards took place in regard to Jonathan’s son—a son worthy of such a father, it may be feared that in the position which his imagination pictured as one of perfect happiness to his generous heart, difficulties which he saw not would have arisen, to mar that picture which we now possess of the most perfect friendship the world ever witnessed. Yet who can tell but the presence of such an influence as that of Jonathan—the possession of such a refreshment to his spirit, as the perfect love of such a friend would have supplied—might have had such salutary operation upon David’s temper, that his great name would have come down to us without spot.

Before they parted, “the two made a covenant before the

Lord." It was no doubt to the same purport as that previously taken, and which was thus confirmed—amounting to this, that David should, not only while Jonathan lived, "show him the kindness of the Lord," but should do so by himself and his heirs to Jonathan's descendants forever. This was not much for David to promise, to one who gave up all that men most prize for him. But we must not forget, that if in this beautiful friendship Jonathan shines more than David, this was the necessary result of the great difference in their position. Jonathan could make actual sacrifices such as few men have ever made; but Jesse's son had nothing to give up that could be of any avail to Jonathan. Had their positions been reversed, there is no reason to suppose that David would have been less generous than the prince. But he could only promise; and promises seem but small coin to give in exchange for golden sacrifices.

These covenants of brotherhood are rather common in the East; they are for the most part, like this, contracted under a religious sanction, and are of a very binding nature. In China they are especially frequent; and that country, notwithstanding its remoteness, affords more materials for Scriptural illustration than is usually expected. We find repeated instances of such covenants in Chinese histories and fictions. Here is one from the *Rambles of the Emperor Ching-Tih*. "Your kindness," said Yung to To Gaon, "cannot be forgotten through the lapse of ages. I have ventured to form the desire to contract an alliance with you which death shall not be able to dissolve." To Gaon was delighted with the proposal; on which they inquired each other's age. Gaon being twenty-eight, and Yung no more than twenty-three, the former received the honors due to the elder. After this they knelt, he on the left, and Yung on the right; and worshipped in the face of heaven, while the latter declared their engagement in the following terms: "I here, Chou-Yung, and my senior kin, engage by oath to be devoted brothers. Though our surnames be not the same, we shall be to one another as if we were children of one mother. Our friendship is for no

purpose of wickedness, or for mutual aid in crime ; but the resolute intention of us both is to delight in justice, and not to give way to feelings of unrighteousness. We will encourage each other in what is good, and warn each other of what is evil ; thereafter, should we find our way to the court, we shall together become pillars of the empire, that we may leave a fragrant memorial for the historian, and our names be together magnified before the people. Should riches and honor hereafter fall to the lot of either of us, he shall share the glory with the other. If either be false to this agreement—may the gods mark him ! ”

THIRTY-FOURTH WEEK—SATURDAY.

MAGNANIMITY.—I SAMUEL XXIV.—XXVI.

WHEN Saul had repulsed the Philistines, he resumed his designs against David. The opportunity seemed favorable ; for, although for various reasons he may have hesitated to call out the national force, in addition to his body-guard, expressly against David, it would be in his power to retain for this service a portion of the men who had joined him in his march against the Philistines. Thus it is mentioned, that the force with which he returned to the pursuit of the fugitive band, amounted to no less than three thousand men.

The king obtained intelligence that David had meanwhile retreated into the wilderness of Engedi, and abode “among rocks of the wild goats,”—that is, among the high rocks and precipices, in which these animals delight. This wilderness is everywhere of limestone formation, with a large mixture of chalk and flint. The surface is broken into conical hills and ridges, from two hundred to four hundred feet in height, and gradually sloping towards the Dead Sea. Some stunted shrubs are found in the highest part of this wilderness ; further down, occasionally a little grass is seen, and then, to

a great extent, the aspect of the region is one of utter sterility and desolation. Here the *beden*, or mountain goat, still starts up on the approach of the traveller, and bounds along the face of the rock before him. On all sides the country is full of caverns, which might well serve as lurking places for David and his men, as they do for outlaws at the present day.

One day, when closely pursued by Saul, David and his men lay in the innermost darkness of one of the largest of these caverns, when, to their great amazement, they beheld Saul enter there (his people remaining respectfully in the vale below), and composed himself to the usual short rest during the afternoon heat. Being between them and the light at the entrance of the cave, they could observe all the king's movements, while they were themselves screened from view by the inner darkness. Now, then, was the opportunity of vengeance for great wrongs—of turning against Saul's own life the sword which he aimed at theirs—of ending by one stroke all these hardships and wanderings—and of removing what seemed the sole obstacle between David and his promised throne. So the men viewed it. As the king slept, they whispered eagerly to their leader—"Behold the day of which the Lord said to thee, I will deliver thine enemy into thy hand, that thou mayest do to him as shall seem good unto thee." We read of no such promise, nor should we have known of it, had it not been thus incidentally mentioned. It did not indicate to David what he should do, when this opportunity was placed in his hands. It gave him the power of doing whatever his heart prompted; but *what* he did, would show what manner of man he was. It was an occasion afforded him of vindicating the Lord's choice of him, by showing to all Israel his faith, his patience, his nobleness—by once more bringing forth the true greatness of his character, and proving his exemption from all vindictive feelings, and all low ambitions. So *he* viewed it. The Lord had delivered his enemy into his hands, not that he might destroy him, but that he might forgive him. "The

Lord forbid," he said, "that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord." This rightness of feeling, so frequent in the history of David—this spontaneous, undeliberating truthfulness of expression and action, only possible to the man whose heart is essentially right, falls refreshingly upon the sense, like the gush of waters to one who plods thirstily along the dry and dusty ways of life.

To the comparatively coarse minds of his followers, the relinquishment of so signal an advantage must have seemed, and did seem, like madness; and it needed all the authority he had established over their rough natures, to compel their submission to his view of the case. Yet this conduct of David was not only noble and true in feeling, but, although he then thought not of that, it was politically wise. Indeed, that which is in feeling truest, is always wisest in the long run; and this is so clearly shown in the history of David, that some have perversely argued from it as if the spontaneous impulse of a generous and noble spirit were the results of sagacious political calculation. But the sole and simple maxim of David was, do right, and leave the results to God; and that the results thus left to God were so generally favorable to him, was not because of his political astuteness, but because his spirit, under Divine enlightenment, so generally led him the right way. Many men, while wishing to do right, often hesitate and deliberate as to what is right. But it was not so with David. He at once, as by an inspiration, saw what was right, best, and truest; and without hesitating—with all the confidence which experience gives, committed himself to the instant impulse of that truthful spirit, which never, when heeded, led him wrong, and seldom suffered him to stray.

It is not the less true, that had David suffered the king to be slain under these circumstances, the result could not but have been most discouraging to himself. Would the people willingly have consigned the sceptre to the hands stained

with the blood of Saul? Would not Jonathan himself have been stung into open war against the slayer of his father; and, instead of submitting to the exultation of his friend, would he not rather, with the approval and sympathy of all Israel, have stood up for his own rights? Besides, by this act, David would set an example of disregard for the character and condition of the "Lord's anointed," which might be turned most dangerously against himself when exalted to the throne.

But although, under the influence of the master-hand which held back the fierce outlaws, Saul was suffered to escape unscathed from that dangerous cave, David was willing to secure some evidence of the fact, that Saul's life had been in his power. He therefore approached him softly as he slept, and cut off the skirt of his robe. No sooner, however, did Saul arise and leave the cavern, and his men began to laugh at the ridiculous figure the sovereign presented in his skirtless robe, than David's heart smote him for the indignity he had been instrumental in inflicting on the royal person. Yielding to the impulse of the moment—which again was right, though it might have been in common calculation most dangerous, he went boldly forth to the entrance of the cave, and called to the king as he descended into the valley,—“My lord, the king!” Well did the king know that voice. A thunderclap could not have struck him more. He looked up; and David bowed himself very low, in becoming obedience to his king. He spoke. In a few rapid and strong words, he told what had happened—he described the urgency he had resisted—he held up the skirt in proof how completely had been in his hand the life he spared—saying, “I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my life to take it. The Lord judge between me and thee; and the Lord avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.” Behold, how that stern heart is melted. The hard wintry frosts thaw fast before the kindly warmth of that generous nature. He weeps; the hot tears—the blessed tears, fall once more from those eyes,

dry too long. "Thou art more righteous than I," he cried, in the agony of his self-conviction—"for thou hast rewarded me good, when I have rewarded thee evil.The Lord reward thee for the good that thou hast done unto me this day." Nor was this all. In the presence of the man whom he recognized as worthier than himself, his proud heart yielded for the moment to acknowledge him as destined to inherit his crown, and he humbled himself to ask of him—to make him swear, that in the coming time he would spare his family, and not doom it to extirpation. This request painfully reminds us of the antiquity of the eastern custom, which has subsisted to our own time, for a new ruler to destroy all those of the previous family, whose claims might by any possible circumstances be brought into rivalry with his own.

Although relieved from the immediate pursuit of Saul, David was too well acquainted with his character to forego the safeguards which his present mode of life afforded. Nor had he miscalculated; for, after an uncertain interval of time, during which occurred the affair with Nabal, we find the king again upon the track of David, in a different part of the wild regions towards the Dead Sea. This relapse of Saul into his old inveteracy, this forgetfulness of that noble forbearance which had once so deeply impressed him, would have thrown many men—even right-minded men, off their guard of patience and moderation. It was a hard test, but David stood it. He lost not one jot of heart or hope; and would not consent that the wrong of Saul should make him wrong also. An opportunity was again afforded him of showing the invincible truth of his character, and his immeasurable superiority to the man who hunted his life through the mountains.

Having received from his scouts certain intelligence of Saul's movements, David went down one night to the place where the royal party had bivouacked, accompanied by two faithful friends, one of whom was his nephew, Abishai. They found the whole troop sunk in sleep—the king in the

midst, with Abner and the men round about him. The position of the king was clearly marked in the dimness of the night to the visitants, by the spear stuck into the ground—a practice by which the tent of the chief, or his place in the open air, is still marked among the Arabians. This precluded all mistake as to the person, and Abishai begged David's permission to pin Saul's body at once to the earth on which he lay. "I will not," he whispered, with ferocious significance, "smite him a second time." But David withheld his hand. There was, besides the spear at the king's head, a pitcher of water within his reach, from which he might drink, if he awoke athirst. These things—the pitcher and the spear—David was content to remove as proofs of his visit. When they had got to the top of a hill at some distance, David shouted to Abner by name, and taunted him for the lax watch he had kept over the king's safety, telling him to look for the spear and the pitcher which had stood at the king's head. David had not declared himself; and in the darkness and distance his person could not be recognized. But the king knew his voice—and called out, with returning admiration, "Is this thy voice, my son David?"—the first time that, as far as we know, he had ever bestowed that tender name upon him. By this David knew the frame of mind to which he had been brought, and remonstrated with equal force, but with even more tenderness and respect, than on the former occasion. He delicately supposed that all this persecution was owing to the malicious misrepresentations of others; he demanded to know what evil he had done, and appealed to the undoubted proofs he had given of his respect for the king's life and person. Saul was greatly impressed. Pride and hatred fled his heart for the time, and his confession of wrong-doing was most humble: "Behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly." He also promised that he would no more do him harm; and said finally, "Blessed be thou, my son David; thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail."

His prophecy was true. How great the pity that the

beams which now and then penetrated thus through the rents of his ruined spirit, had no abiding for light or warmth in the darkened chambers of his heart!

Thirty-Fifth Week—Sunday.

CUSH THE BENJAMITE.—PSALM VII.

IF we turn to the seventh Psalm, we find from the superscription * that it was composed or sung by David unto the Lord, "concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite." This person is not mentioned in the history, nor are his words recorded. But from the Psalm it may be collected that this man, having won the confidence and friendship of the unsuspecting David, used it only to entrap him into the power of Saul, whose then slumbering hostility he roused by misrepresenting his motives and intentions to the king. There is indeed so much similarity between the words which David addressed to Saul in the last interview with him, under the circumstances recorded yesterday, and those of this Psalm, as to show that this sacred song belongs to that occasion. This Cush, then, was the person to whom he alluded as having by his treacherous malignity incited the king to this renewed pursuit. It may also not be difficult to collect that the purport of his unjust accusation was that David sought the life of the king, in order to clear his own way to the throne. Hence the special value of the opportunity of practically refuting this calumny, which had been afforded to him. Seeing the frame of mind to which Saul had been thus brought, we shall not feel prepared for the step David next took—of going over again to the Philistines, in the apprehen-

* The authority of the titles to the Psalms is a matter of some doubt, but there is no reason to distrust the one which the present Psalm bears.

sion that he should yet one day perish by the hand of Saul, unless we add the conduct of Cush the Benjamite to the influence which wrought his mind to this conclusion. Indeed, this was the *primary* influence; for, in his words to Saul, he indicates it as a conclusion already for that reason formed: "If the Lord hath stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering; but if they be the children of men, cursed be they before the Lord; for *they have driven* me this day from abiding in the inheritance of the Lord." It was therefore not so much the blind fury of Saul, as the chilling effect upon a confiding spirit like David's, of the feeling that his worst enemies contrived to worm their way into his confidence, and that he was betrayed and calumniated by those he trusted most. In the open violence of Saul there was something he could meet and understand; but throughout his career there was never anything that grieved his generous spirit and crushed it down so much as the treachery and ingratitude of those he loved and trusted. His own open-heartedness rendered this exquisitely painful to him. Here he was all nerve; and it was here that he was most often wounded.

The case being as stated, it becomes deeply interesting to contemplate that full development of his feelings which the seventh Psalm affords. His sense of the wrong done to him is very keen, and his repudiation of the accusations brought against him, becomingly warm and indignant. He did not feel it any part of his duty to rest under such imputations without an attempt to clear his character. It is necessary that the character of the servant of God should, for his Master's honor, be free from even "the appearance of evil." His faith does not require him to lie passive under injurious imputations. He will do all that becomes him to clear his character, but he will not be over-anxious respecting the result, knowing that his character is in God's keeping, and that a great day of unclouding is coming, when his righteousness shall in these matters be made manifest to men and angels. Those clouds that hang darkly upon the horizon now, shall

presently, when the sun arises, be lit up with unutterable glory; and that which seemed a spot in the face of heaven, becomes a radiance and a renown. It is under the influence of such feelings that David speaks:—"O Lord my God, if I have done this, if there be iniquity in my hands; if I have rewarded evil to him that was at peace with me (yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy); let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it; yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honor in the dust."

In express reference to the adversary by whom he had been thus wronged and betrayed, he says:—"Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the pit which he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing upon his own pate." A close observation of the course of God's providence, as well as in conformity with the principles of Judaism which led to the expectation of the demonstrated results of retributive justice in this life, assured David that this must happen; and it would appear that in some measure it had already happened in this particular case. In saying that Cush had fallen into the pit which he had made, he seems to refer to some calamity which had befallen him, or to some disgrace which he had already incurred, in consequence of his treachery; but what that may have been we cannot, in the absence of all facts, conjecture. Although the Gospel of Christ carries our views for the final adjustment of all things to the great day of decision, it is still often true in our own time, as of old, that righteousness is, even in this life, vindicated from injurious aspersions, and treachery and wrong-doing brought to shame.

The present effects of such conduct on the part of others—the calumnious treacheries of some, and the violence of others—were, however, distressful and disheartening to David; and he could only find comfort in the assured conviction that the Lord could and would deliver him from the trials which made life a calamity to him, and vindicate his

integrity by bringing his wicked persecutors to condign punishment. For this he with great earnestness supplicates:—“O Lord my God, in thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me. My defence is of God, who saveth the upright in heart. The Lord shall judge the people: judge *me*, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to my integrity that is in me.” None knew better than David the fallen nature of man, none knew better than he—for alas, he knew it experimentally—man’s utter weakness when he ceases to lean upon the staff which God puts into his hand. But in this particular matter—in all his conduct towards Saul, he could assert his integrity, his entire freedom from all sinister and underhand designs; and it was his hope and belief that God would judge, though man did not, according to his righteousness.

Surrounded by enemies, slandered by the tongues of evil men, sickened by treachery, it was at times hard to wait the day of complete vindication. He was assured that the Lord could justify him before the people; he was confident that he would eventually do it. But the time was long—very long, to one to whom a good name is dear; and at times the thought could not be resisted, that perhaps God had forgotten to be gracious, or was at least too slow in assuming the robes of judgment. “Arise, O Lord, in thine anger. Lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies; and awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded. So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about; for *their sakes*, therefore, return thou on high.”

He is convinced of the ultimate establishment of righteousness; he is grieved lest the present triumph of wrong-doing and oppression of truthfulness, should lead the people to distrust the great fact that “there is a God that ruleth in the earth.” This he will not allow himself for one moment to suppose. That were a greater treachery against his Lord, than any which man had committed against David. No. “God judgeth the righteous, and is angry with the wicked every day. O let the wickedness of the wicked come to an

end ; but establish the just ; for the righteous God trieth the reins and the heart.”

The view which we thus are enabled, from his own words, to obtain of the state of David's mind at this trying period of his career, will enable us to contemplate with advantage the further steps of his progress.

THIRTY-FIFTH WEEK—MONDAY.

A FALSE STEP.—I SAMUEL XXVII. 1-6.

DAVID was quite justified, from past experience, and from his perfect knowledge of the man, in reposing no confidence in the declarations and repentance of Saul. The king certainly had no intention to deceive him,—certainly he expressed what he felt at the time ; but David knew that all the good impression which had been made would soon pass away, and that his heart would become all the more inveterate against him, for the humiliation in which he—so proud of spirit, had stood before the moral dignity of Jesse's son. It is in the nature of such hearts as his to resent as wrongs, the rebukes which their pride receives from men better than themselves. Angry in the recollection of what they deem a weakness, the persons who have witnessed their humiliation, and who oppressed them by their real superiority, become more and more hateful in their eyes, and it is no longer to be borne, that the man capable of exercising this intolerable mastery over their spirits, should tread the same earth with them.

Allowing due weight to this consideration, we were never yet able to understand the step taken by David in going over once more to the Philistines, until we took into account the further influence exercised upon his most susceptible temper by the treachery of the man he had trusted. This was likely to make him feel for the time, that he was continually in the

power of spies and traitors, who might gain his confidence only to destroy him. How could he know but that the men who had hitherto been most faithful to him, and in whom he most trusted, might one day desert him to win the favor of a king, or betray him, at unawares, to his undoing. It was under the influence of such depressing feelings, that he resolved to put an insurmountable barrier against the further pursuit of the king, by going over to his enemies. He did so: and the immediate result was such as he expected; for when Saul heard of this step taken by David, he abandoned all further designs against him. But although we can account for this step, we cannot justify it. Indeed, there was a certain consciousness in his mind which prevented him from asking counsel of the Lord in this matter, as he had habitually done in affairs of less real importance. Instead of this, he reasoned the matter "in his heart"—in his own heart, in this manner, "I shall now one day perish by the hand of Saul; there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines." But instead of there being nothing better for him, there could really have been nothing worse for him; and had the Lord's pursuing mercy not followed his chosen servant, even in this his wandering from steadfast faith, and averted from him, by his shielding hand, the perils he brought upon himself by this step, there is no knowing what the result might have been. "The overlong continuance of a temptation may easily weary the best patience, and may attain that by protraction, which it could never do by violence," says Bishop Hall. Knowing, therefore, what is in man, we do not wonder that David at length began to bend under his trial; but we do wonder that he went over to the Philistines under this influence. It was not only a wrong—it was a mistake, which politicians say is worse than a wrong. It is true that it was most effectual, as a human means, for safety from Saul—which was the immediate object in view. But it is lamentable that such a man as David, should have made that the primary consideration in such a movement; and had not his naturally courageous

spirit been for the time utterly prostrated by personal apprehensions, it is scarcely credible that the political error of the step should have escaped his penetration. That he had a latent misgiving as to its religious fitness, is shown by his refraining to seek counsel of God. The considerations which belong to this matter, have already passed under our notice in contemplating his first lapse of the same kind; but, so far as the political influences of the movement are in question, the present step was far more dangerous than the former, as this time he goes not alone, but takes with him a strong band of resolute and daring men; and it must be apparent that they would be received only in the expectation, that they might be employed to the detriment of the Israelites—and this employment of them would have been a slur upon his name all the rest of his life, if it did not prevent or retard his recognition as king. In fact, so much was he eventually aware of this, that he was reduced to a series of low contrivances, and degrading falsehoods, to avert the natural consequences of the step he had taken.

Nevertheless, David entered the land of the Philistines in a far different attitude from that in which he had before appeared there. The inveterate hatred of Saul, now so well known, was his recommendation, and no distrust could be entertained of a man who fled for his life to the enemies of his country—exasperated by wrongs, and willing, it might be supposed, to avenge them. Won by these considerations, and by the assurance that this able leader and valiant troop were withdrawn from the defensive force of Israel, and added to the strength of the Philistines—David found a most friendly reception from the king of Gath, in whose presence he had some years before so egregiously played the madman. It is, indeed, not unlikely that Achish—acting upon the hint of the previous attempt of David to find refuge with him, had sent to offer him an asylum from the wrath of their common enemy; and there can be little doubt that, as Josephus suggests, David had at least taken care, previously, to ascertain the footing on which he would be received.

We may be sure that the redoubted son of Jesse, the slayer of Goliath, and the overcomer of so many Philistines, was beheld with great admiration at Gath. Some close commentators, whose knowledge of life and man is rather a matter of excogitation than of experience, marvel that he did not find himself in personal danger among a people he had so much aggrieved; indeed, that he was not torn in pieces by the mob. But in reality there was no danger. Prowess is respected among a military people; and a great general, when he comes as a fugitive among them, is liked none the less for his skill and courage having been manifested at their expense. In fact, he is rather liked the better for it.

Nevertheless, David found himself in an embarrassing position at Gath. It must have been obviously difficult for him and his men to be living there among idolaters without giving or taking offence; and there was constant danger lest, with so many strong and reckless men moving about among their old enemies, some affray might arise on religious or national grounds, which might have a fatal and ruinous termination. Besides, they lived under constant observation; and the mere presence of so many strong and daring men, would be of itself likely to suggest the employment of them against the Israelites—a result which David regarded with such dread and apprehension as probably left him little of the repose he had expected to find among the Philistines. He, therefore, at length ventured to ask the king to assign to him some town in the land, where he might live apart with his men; and where, as seems to be adroitly implied, they might provide for themselves, and be no longer burdensome as guests in the royal city. This was a large and bold request. But it was met in an open and generous spirit; and David was at once raised almost to the dignity of an independent prince, by having the fortified town of Ziklag assigned to him—in such absolute and free possession, that it remained attached to the house of David ever after.

Understanding the wishes of Achish, and being also desirous to maintain and exercise his men, he led them, from time

to time, in forays against the neighboring nations. But these nations were friends of the Philistines; and as he wished it to be believed, and indeed positively affirmed, that these expeditions were against the Israelites, the troop made it their constant practice to put to death every living soul of the places they assaulted, that there might be none left to apprize the Philistines of the truth. The delight the king felt in the assurance that by these alleged operations against Israel, David had made himself odious to his own people, and must, therefore, remain attached to his interests, clearly shows the nature of the danger he incurred by the step he had taken, and indicates the deplorable error into which he had fallen, seeing that he could only evade the consequences by bloodshed, by falsehood, and by making a dupe of the confiding protector by whom he had been treated so generously. Bishop Hall, who excuses the slaughter on the ground that these people were of the doomed nations, whom the Israelites held a commission from God to extirpate, yet finds no excuse for this dealing with king Achish: "If Achish were a Philistine, yet he was David's friend, yea, his patron; and if he had been neither, it had not become David to be false. The infirmities of God's children never appear but in their extremities. It is hard for the best man to say how far he will be tempted. If a man will put himself among the Philistines, he cannot promise to come out innocent."

"Ah, what a tangled web we weave,
When first we venture to deceive!"

THIRTY-FIFTH WEEK—TUESDAY.

REINFORCEMENTS.—I SAMUEL XXVII. 1, 2; I CHRONICLES
XII. 1-22.

AT Ziklag David's power received constant increase. The position he now occupied, in a strong town on the frontier

towards Judah, no longer a wandering exile, but a great lord, able to find rewarding employment for the swords of resolute men, and the hopes of whose great future began to loom distinctly in the horizon, caused his force to be greatly increased by accessions from various quarters. In 1 Chron. xii. 1-22, a long list is given, of persons of more or less consideration in their tribes, who, through disaffection with the government of Saul, made themselves voluntary exiles, and staked all their prospects in David's cause. The list opens with members of the tribe of Benjamin, "Saul's own brethren," at which we might wonder, did we not recollect that the influence of Samuel had been very strong in that tribe, and that the seat of Saul's government being therein, it had probably been more annoyed than more distant tribes, by some of his unpopular acts. This body of Benjamites were "armed with bows, and could use both the right hand and the left in hurling stones, and shooting arrows out of a bow." They were therefore invaluable for breaking and discouraging an enemy's force before coming to close quarters.

During the reign of Saul the tribes beyond the Jordan had taken a very independent part, and had gained great accessions of power and territory by wars waged on their own account with the neighboring nations. This, with their separation by the river from their brethren, and the greater separation effected by their pastoral habits, rendered very loose the connection between them and the agricultural tribes of the west, and it would seem that they acknowledged little, if any subjection to Saul. Indeed, it may appear that there was something like a small harassing civil war between them and Saul, for a strong party of Gadites, who crossed the Jordan at the time of flood, and marched through the country to join David at Ziklag,* are described as having chased away the inhabitants of the river valley, on both banks, in their course. The names of their leaders are given, eleven in number, and they are described as "captains of the host:

* Compare 1 Chron. xii. 12-22; v. 10, 18-22.

one of the least was over a hundred, and the greatest over a thousand"—not that they brought such numbers with them, but that they were such men as were, from their rank and military worth, entitled, when Israel was under arms, to act as centurions and chiliarchs in the army; but yet that they were in considerable force is shown by their exploit in the valley of the Jordan. It is said of these auxiliaries, that they were "men of war, fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains." These were, then, trained and well-armed soldiers, of the kind most valued in ancient warfare, being most formidable in close action.

Not long after came over to him a large number of men, headed by persons of distinguished valor, from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. As this large force appeared before him, David was somewhat suspicious of their intentions, perhaps owing to the presence of the Benjamites, who might naturally be supposed attached to Saul, who was of their own tribe. He therefore went out to them, not only as an act of civility, but to ascertain their intentions before they were admitted into the fortress. This anecdote, found in an obscure place,* is interesting, as everything is that illustrates David's position at this time, and as the leader of a troop so variously composed, and so difficult to manage, except by the influence of personal regard and high military character. The words in which David addressed the newly arrived force are striking, and well illustrate the kind of oratory by which he spoke to the hearts of men: "If ye be come peaceably unto me, to help me, mine heart shall be knit unto you; but if ye be come to betray me to mine enemies, seeing there is no wrong in mine hands, the God of our fathers look thereon and rebuke it." These words awoke the enthusiasm of the strangers, whose sentiments found expression in the voice of their leader Amasai:† "Thine are we, David, and on thy

* 1 Chron. xii. 16-18.

† Perhaps the same as Amasa, son of David's sister Abigail—at a

side, thou son of Jesse. Peace, peace, be unto thee, and peace be to thine helpers; for thy God helpeth thee." They were then most gladly received—the leaders remaining in command of those they had brought over with them.

The king of Gath beheld these accessions to David's force with satisfaction, reckoning upon their services in the approaching campaign against Saul. This expectation he declared to David. After the recent impositions practised upon him, he had no reason to doubt that this intimation would be most acceptable to David, and it is clear that he meant it as a mark of his confidence rather than as an exaction. So David was obliged to receive it, after the pretences he had made, and with seemingly cheerful acquiescence, said, "Surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do." Upon this, Achish, in testimony of his satisfaction, appointed him "keeper of his head"—that is, captain of his body-guard—a post of high honor and confidence, but which further embarrassed David's position, by obliging him to be near the king in the approaching action, so that all his movements would be under the eye of his royal protector. Under this arrangement it would seem that some Philistines were added to his force, who, with his own band, might act as the royal guard; and the men thus added probably formed the Gittite (Gathite) troop under Ittai, which afterwards followed his fortunes, formed his own body-guard, and remained most faithfully attached to him under all the changes of his career, a striking instance of his extraordinary power of attracting the hearts of even foreigners to himself.

How David might eventually have deported himself, it may be difficult to conjecture. It is hard to believe that he would really have fought against his own nation, and quite as hard to suppose that he would have betrayed the generous confidence which Achish reposed in him. It may be that he would have confined himself to the duty which his new office imposed, of defending the person of the Philistine later period Absalom's general-in-chief, and designed by David to be his, but that he was slain by Joab.

king. God was pleased, however, to release him from the embarrassment which his own false step and his disingenuousness had occasioned, by awakening the jealousy and alarm of the Philistine princes, who were startled to behold the large body of Hebrews in the rear, under the orders of David, when the army was drawn up near Jezreel, and deemed it possible that there might be a secret understanding between Saul and his son-in-law, or at least that David might intend to purchase forgiveness by betraying the Philistines. An incident that occurred at this moment, and which we learn from 1 Chron. xii. 20, may have tended to confirm this suspicion. A troop of Manassites deserted from Saul, and went over to David, which might very well, in the eyes of the Philistines, look like a concerted movement to strengthen David, when, at some appointed signal, he should fall on the rear of the Philistines, while Saul contended with them in front. The chiefs of the other Philistine states, therefore, insisted they should withdraw; and, notwithstanding the remonstrances of the confiding Achish, they absolutely refused to allow David's force to take any part in the action. Thus happily relieved from a most difficult position, the son of Jesse marched his men slowly back to Ziklag.

THIRTY-FIFTH WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

THE WITCH OF ENDOR.—I SAMUEL XXVIII.

WITH the east alienated, with the south disaffected; compelled to witness from a distance the rising power and popularity of David, and the defection from himself of many noted men in person, and the hearts of many more—Saul beheld the storm of war approaching with a misgiving spirit. The counsels of God, of which he made so light in the day of his pride, he vainly seeks in the time of his distress. He craves a token for good, and none is vouchsafed to him. His

crimes now bear their fruit; and the burden of old sins press heavily upon his soul. The blood of God's slaughtered priests cries not to heaven in vain—he gets no answer from the sacred oracle; Samuel had been contemned, and the prophets have no message of encouragement for him; precious gifts of God he had made light of, and now no heavenly visions point out the path he ought to take, or give assurance of victory. What resource has he left? Samuel is dead. Had he been living, stern and awful truths might have been expected from his lips—but still Saul would have sought him, for any certainty was better than these terrible doubts. But was there indeed no access to *his* counsels? Were there not powers which might for one brief moment call him from his rest, to give the required answer, be it for good or evil? The general belief was that such powers did exist, and were held by those who possessed mysterious knowledge, and were versed in the practice of the diabolical arts. All these knowledges and arts, real or pretended, were sternly forbidden by the law, and the profession of them declared a capital offence. This law had been enforced by Saul, so that none of these wizards and necromancers were known to exist in the land. When, therefore, the king, repulsed from every lawful means of acquiring the knowledge he craved, thought of this secret and forbidden alternative, he yet feared that none could be found to gratify him. By diligent search, it was at length ascertained that there was a woman living in retirement at Endor, near Mount Tabor, who had eluded the search of Saul's officers, and was believed to possess these forbidden powers. To her he repaired, disguised, with two faithful servants. The pythoness at first refused to listen to the proposal, alleging her fear that it should come to the knowledge of the king. But Saul pledged himself by oath that no arm should befall her—and as it is not clear how this assurance from a stranger could be of any value to her, we cannot but think that from this she suspected who her visitor was. His distinguished stature also—impossible to be disguised, and notorious to every one in Israel, even to those

who had never seen him, might alone have disclosed him to a less "cunning woman" than the witch of Endor. However, she was too sagacious to betray the discovery she had made. Satisfied, apparently, she asked whom she was to summon. We are not called upon to inquire what trick she meant to play upon the king, what art to practise—for the name of SAMUEL had scarcely passed the king's lips, than to the amazement of the woman herself, Samuel himself appeared. It was not to be borne, that since Samuel was really to be permitted to appear, it should even seem to be at the command of this miserable woman—and thus, therefore, her incantations were anticipated. The apparition appeared at the demand of Saul, and not at the woman's invocation. This, with perhaps some indication from the spectre, confirmed her suspicion that the tall stranger was no other than the king, and she uttered a loud cry, and said, "Why hast thou deceived me, for thou art Saul?" The king pacified her, and eagerly demanded what she saw. She answered, that she beheld a great and venerable personage—like the gods, or judges and civil magistrates, to whom that title was sometimes given. It is thus that we understand her declaration, that she saw "gods ascending out of the earth." Either this took place in her inner room, or the object had not yet become visible to Saul, for he asked, "What form is he of?" and she said, "An old man cometh up, and he is covered with a mantle." There could be no doubt that this was Samuel—and the king looking closely at the place to which the woman's fixed regards were turned, discerned the figure she described condensing into visibility before him. It has been thought, and we once thought so, that the king did not see the shade, but merely judged it was Samuel from the woman's description; but on looking more closely at the text, it becomes more emphatic than at first appears. It is really stated that "Saul perceived (knew, or assured himself) that it was Samuel *himself*." This is not what the woman saw, but what Saul saw; and as the sacred writer gives us the authority of his own declaration for the fact, that

it was "Samuel himself" that Saul perceived, we do not feel at liberty to suppose that it was anything else—that it was a fiend, or a confederate personating Samuel; or that there was in fact nothing—the woman only saying she saw this, and Saul taking her word for it. The narrator all along says it *was* Samuel, which is better authority for the fact, than the assertion of the woman, or the impression of Saul. The latter, indeed, forthwith bent himself low in humble obeisance, which he was not likely to have done unless he saw the figure visibly before him, and felt assured that it was Samuel. He might, indeed, be imposed upon, and without much difficulty, under the circumstances; but the historian says that he was not—that it was Samuel whom he saw, Samuel to whom he spoke, Samuel who spoke to him. All the circumstances agree with this, and are unaccountable under any other hypothesis; the woman had no time for collusive arrangements; the answer given by the apparition was true, was fulfilled to the letter, and was anything but such as the woman would be likely to have given by ventriloquism (as some suppose), or through a confederate, but was altogether such as Samuel would have been likely to deliver had he been alive. It foretold not only the defeat of the Israelites by the Philistines in the coming battle—but that Saul himself, and his sons (such of them as were present) should perish. It might by human sagacity be foreseen that the Philistines might be victorious; but it could not so certainly be predicted by human calculation that Saul would perish—he might, even if defeated, withdraw with part of his forces, to make another stand against the enemy; still less could it be predicted that of several persons, Saul and his sons, all would perish. The chances, on which alone an impostor could calculate, were altogether against it. It would have been entirely the interest of an impostor to predict success. If success were foretold, the prediction if fulfilled would bring her credit—if falsified, there would be none to bring her to account. But if the calamity predicted came not to pass, she would be sought out and punished as a deceiver.

One cannot help being affected by the words in which the unhappy king addressed the shade of Samuel. "God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets nor by dreams: therefore have I called thee, that thou mayest make known to me what I shall do." Neither had he been answered by Urim, as we have before learned, which was the more important, as the regular mode of obtaining an answer from God. Why does he not mention that? The omission is probably significant. It may fairly be supposed, that he shrunk from naming to Samuel that which could not but bring to mind his slaughter of the priests at Nob. The answer of Samuel was impressively terrible. "Wherefore dost thou ask of me, seeing the Lord hath departed from thee, and is become thine enemy? The Lord hath done as he spake by me, and hath rent the kingdom out of thy hand, and given it to thy neighbor, even to David. The Lord will deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines; and to-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me,"—that is, dead like him. Those refine too nicely who speculate whether this phrase were more proper in the mouth of Samuel, or of a demon, or of a confederate of the woman speaking in his name. The poet has interpreted them rightly—

"And when shall sink
In night to-morrow's day, thou and thy sons
Shall be with me in death." *

These dreadful words laid Saul prostrate upon the ground as one void of life. Exhausted by long abstinence ("for he had eaten no bread all that day, nor all the night"), and worn out by anxiety, this announcement, which left him without hope, and assured him that all was lost, and his doom accomplished, laid him in the dust. Revived by the kind solicitude of the woman and his attendants, and prevailed upon to refresh exhausted nature with some food, the king departed ere the

* "*The Fall of Saul. A Sacred Epic Poem.*" By John Gunning Seymer, M. A. London, 1836.

morning dawn, with a riven heart, but with composed and resolute demeanor—to meet his doom.

THIRTY-FIFTH WEEK—THURSDAY.

THE WORTHIES.—II SAMUEL XXIII. ; I CHRON. XI.

DAVID, on his return to Ziklag, was joined by seven more chiefs of Manasseh. They are called “captains of thousands;” and as they must have come over from the camp of Saul, they doubtless brought some of their men with them. This accession of force proved to be most opportune; for, on arriving at Ziklag, it was found that the place had been burned with fire, and that, together with all the portable substance, the women and the children had been carried away captive. It seemed that the Amalekites had taken advantage of David’s absence to retaliate his ravages of their country by an attack upon Ziklag. There was none to resist them, and they had shed no blood—not, we apprehend, from any humane consideration, but simply because David’s supposed detention in the camp permitted them to remove the women and the children alive, and when that was the case they were valuable property, to be retained or sold as slaves. David’s two wives, for he now had two, were among the captives.

The men were outrageous when they beheld what had taken place, and were not sparing of reproaches against their general, for having left the place without defenders. There were even sinister murmurs about stoning him. Probably the presence of the Manassites, who had joined him in the field and on the road, served him in good stead. They had lost nothing, and naturally would side with David against the murmurers. It seems to have been they who suggested the wisdom of a pursuit after the marauders, for it was clear that, being under no apprehension of David’s return, they

would make a leisurely retreat, especially when encumbered with so many women and children; and it appeared by the heat of the still smouldering ruins, and by the freshness of their camel-tracks, that the attack had been very recent, and they could not yet have got to any great distance. David himself had lost more than any; but his faith in God was not shaken, and his self-possession and decision under this calamity, and the present outbreak of his own men, is worthy of high commendation, and tended rapidly to restore confidence. "He encouraged himself in Jehovah his God," and calling for Abiathar, desired him to consult the Lord by the sacred Urim, whether he should pursue the enemy or not. The answer was favorable, and he set out with extreme rapidity, coming upon them when they were encamped, encumbered with spoil, and enjoying themselves at their ease, supposing David, whom alone they had any reason to fear, afar off with the Philistine host. Thus surprised, they offered little resistance; but some of them betook themselves to their camels and escaped. Not only was every thing and person taken from Ziklag recovered safe, but all the rich spoil which the band had collected in a wide marauding excursion fell into the hands of David and his men. This incident was likely to have created another misunderstanding, which was averted by the discretion of their leader. Many of the men having been from weariness unable to pursue the march, had been left on the way by the brook Besor, and it was suggested that these had no right to any of *this* spoil, but only to have their own property and families restored to them. But David decided that they should all share alike; and this thenceforth became established as a law in the Hebrew army, and has been adopted into the practice of modern warfare. The policy of this regulation is obvious; for, were every man at liberty to retain what he could take, or were the spoil to be appropriated only by the actual combatants, there must be at least great discontent among those detained by garrison or other duties from the immediate scene of action.

A considerable portion of the spoil fell to the share of the commander; and this he, with his usual open-handed liberality, employed in sending presents to the elders of various towns and villages in Judah, and to all the places where he had received encouragement and support during his wanderings. This came to them with the message—"Behold a present for you of the spoil of the enemies of the Lord." The natural effect of his success, of his discreet liberality, and of the admiration in which he was held, was, that men came over to him in great numbers. "From that time," says the writer of Chronicles (xii. 22), "day by day there came to David to help him, until it was a great host, like the host of God."

It seems to have been while at Ziklag that David, in the lack of means of affording more substantial marks of his regard and admiration for valiant deeds, and marks of attachment to his person, devised something that looks exceedingly like an order of knighthood, or, on a small scale, a legion of honor, which has scarcely received all the attention it deserves. Out of the general body of his followers, he organized a band of worthies or knights, answering very much, we suspect, to the three degrees in the Order of the Bath, in which we have Grand-Crosses, Knight-Companions, and Companions. In David's band there were *three* chief heroes, *three* second in prowess, and *thirty* inferior to these—thirty-six in all. It is also very likely that they were distinguished from the general band, and the different degrees from each other, by insignia of honor. It is a great mistake to suppose the use of such insignia a modern invention. The modern decorations, crosses, medals, and stars, are in principle but the revival of an ancient practice. It is known to have existed among the Romans, who had *phialæ* and *phaleræ* of honor—terms which have been supposed to signify bracelets and medals; but all opinion on the subject was only conjectural, previously to the discovery on the borders of the Rhine of a monumental bas-relief, raised by the freedmen of Marcus Cælius Lembo, tribune of the (XIIX) 18th Legion, who fell

in the disastrous overthrow of Varus. This effigy is of three-quarter length, in a full suit of armor, with a laurel crown on the head, a Gallic twisted torque around the neck, and from the lion-headed shoulder-clasps of the cuirass hang two embossed bracelets, having beneath them a locket with three points, from which are suspended five medals of honor; one large, on the pit of the stomach, representing a head of Medusa; and two on each side, one beneath the other, and all, as far as can be seen, charged with lion's faces and lion's heads in profile. This monument is now in the University of Bonn.*

The exploits which won for some of David's illustrious band their high distinction are recorded; but some of them seem to have been performed after David became king, showing that he kept up this body during his reign, probably by supplying vacancies as they occurred; this also accounts for our finding in the list such names as that of Benaiah, who, seeing that he was it seems in the prime of life at the end of David's reign, could hardly have been one of the worthies before its commencement. The three chiefs who formed the first class, were Jashobeam the Hachmonite, Eleazer son of Dodo, and Shammah son of Agee. The first, according to one account,† lifted up his spear against 800 men, whom he slew at one time—but another account makes the number *three* hundred,‡ a difference which some reconcile by supposing that he slew 800 men in one action and 300 men in another. However interpreted, this exploit well entitled the valiant Jashobeam to his place as "chief among the captains." Eleazer was one of those three who, with David, maintained the ground against a Philistine force, when their people had retreated, and at length routed them, so that when the men returned for very shame, there was nothing for them but to divide the spoil of their enemies. On that occasion Eleazer "smote the Philistines till his hand clave unto his sword."§

* Col. C. Hamilton Smith, Art. ARMS, ARMOR, in *Cyclop. of Biblical Literature*.

† 2 Sam. xxiii. 8.

‡ 1 Chron. xi. 11.

§ This reminds one of the case of the Highland serjeant at Waterloo,

This seems to have occurred during the period when David acted as Saul's general against the Philistines. So, seemingly, does the exploit of Shammah, who defended a field of barley against a troop of Philistines, and compelled them to retreat. These were the three men who formed the first class of David's worthies. The three next, who formed the second class, were renowned for a deed of truly chivalrous devotion to David—so that opposing hosts could not prevent them from fulfilling his slightest wish. When he was in the cave of Adullam, the Philistines had a garrison in Bethlehem; and he was unmindful of this circumstance when, suffering from thirst, and remembering the pleasantness of the water from the well of his native town, he expressed a longing for a draught thereof. The words had no sooner passed his lips than these three men took their departure, and going boldly through the Philistine host, drew water from the well, and brought it to their chief. Touched by this proof of hardihood and strong attachment, he refused to drink the draught so hardly won: "he poured it out before the Lord," declaring that he would not drink the blood of his men. Alexander did something like this, only not so striking, at Gerodasia.* A vessel of water was offered him when under extreme thirst, but he refused to take it, because he could not bear to drink it alone, and the small quantity could not be divided among all those who were about him.

The chief of this second class of three was Abishai, nephew of David and brother of Joab. He was also celebrated for putting to rout three hundred adversaries, and this two-fold distinction gave him the first place in this second rank of

whose basket-hilted sword had, after the battle, to be released from his hand by a blacksmith (SIMPSON'S *Visit to Flanders in July*, 1815); and of the incident in the life of the celebrated Colonel Gardiner, who, when lying severely wounded on the field of battle, to secure his gold from being plundered, placed it in his hand, which he smeared with his blood to prevent his grasp relaxing in the event of his fainting from weakness. In the same way the hand of Eleazer may have been in a manner glued to his sword by his own blood.

* Curtius, *Hist. lib. vii. cap. 5.*

heroes. To this rank, but probably at a later period, was Benaiah, whose exploits were very remarkable. It is said that he "had done many acts," and three of them are mentioned as examples of their quality—in fact there is more recorded of this man than of any others. First, "he slew two lion-like men of Moab"—next, "he went down and slew a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow." Why the snow is mentioned is not clear, though it had no doubt some connection with the exploit—perhaps its lying on the ground had caused the lion to fall into the pit. Josephus understands that the lion having fallen into a pit where there was much snow, got covered with it, and there making a hideous roaring, Benaiah went down and slew him. So read, it seems no great exploit. It has been very much outdone of late by Mr. Cumming—though, to be sure, Benaiah had no gun. Altogether, the exploit would have been more signal apparently had the lion *not* been in the pit—although there may be something not altogether agreeable in such close quarters with a lion. Upon the whole, it is likely Bochart may be in the right in his notion that Benaiah went into a *cave* for shelter from a snow-storm, and was there attacked by a lion, which had also sought shelter there, and which he overcame and slew.

The third recorded exploit of this valiant man is in some respects comparable to David's combat with Goliath. The opponent was an Egyptian giant about eight feet high, and armed with a spear. But Benaiah went down against him with no weapon but his staff, and plucking the spear out of his hand, slew him with his own spear. The man distinguished by these romantic feats eventually became captain of David's guard—a post which he retained under Solomon.

Of the thirty who formed the third class, we possess only the names. Few of them are historically known; but we find in it, with a feeling of painful surprise, the name of *Uriah the Hittite*. That this man had been deemed worthy of this high honor, given only to the brave and the devoted,

gives a still deeper dye to the crimson of David's sin against his life and honor.

In this list also occurs the name of Joab's armor-bearer, Naharai by name ; and yet the name of Joab himself does not occur in either class. This is difficult to account for, but by supposing that his position was too eminent, as commander-in-chief, to need the distinction which the belonging to this order conferred on other men. Or, as this high place was of later acquirement, it may be that Joab was the unnamed *third* of the second trio of worthies.

THIRTY-FIFTH WEEK—FRIDAY.

THE SONG OF THE BOW.—II SAMUEL I.

THERE are two accounts of the death of Saul. One is that of the sacred historian himself, the other that of an Amalekite who brought the tidings to David. The former is of course the true account. According to both, the Israelites were put to flight by the Philistines in the battle of Gilboa. Saul and his three valiant sons (of whom Jonathan was one) disdaining to flee with them, were all slain upon the field. The regular narrative says, that being sore wounded by an arrow, Saul begged his armor-bearer to run him through, that he might not fall alive into the power of the Philistines. The armor-bearer declined ; whereupon the king took a sword, and cast himself upon it—dying, probably, with some such sentiments as the poet ascribes to him :—

“ My kingdom from me rent, my children slain,
 My army lost, myself from hope cast out,—
 The seer hath spoken well. All is achieved.
 David, thou art avenged.”

It would seem that the Amalekite had, from a distance, witnessed this transaction, and approaching, took the royal

insignia from the body. These were, the bracelets—a most ancient, and still subsisting, insignia of royalty in the East—which we recognize in the ancient monuments of Egypt, Persia, and Assyria, and among the existing regalia of Persia, India, China, and other lands. Also his crown, which, being worn in battle, was probably some kind of diademed helmet, such as we find in ancient monuments. It was, no doubt, a question with the man whether he should not make off with this precious spoil; but, on second thoughts, he fancied it would be better to take them to David, who, flattered by this recognition of his claims, would not fail to reward him beyond their intrinsic worth. To enhance his merits, he also determined to claim the credit of having, at Saul's request, slain him with his own hand. How could David fail to load with honors and wealth the hand which had laid his great enemy in the dust? Never was human sagacity more at fault. David was affected with most sincere grief at the tidings which the man brought; but he burned with indignation that an Amalekite should have dared to shed the blood of the Lord's anointed, whose life had heretofore been so precious in his eyes. After, therefore, reproaching him for the deed, he commanded that he should be put to death—a hard measure, scarcely justified by the higher standard of feeling which Christianity has introduced, but which was, without doubt, highly applauded in that day.

The touching and beautiful lamentation which David composed on receiving tidings of the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, remains to bear witness to his grief, and to that delicate susceptibility which made tears for a fallen rival natural to him, but which few like him are able to retain so freshly amidst constant association with men of coarse natures and wild manners, such as had been his mates in the wilderness. Here is the song, in a somewhat more correct form than that of the authorized version :

On thy heights, O Israel, is the Gazelle slain!

*How are the mighty fallen !**

* The lines in *italics*, it will be readily seen, form the chorus.

Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon,
 Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,
 Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.

Hills of Gilboa, no dew, no rain, come on you, devoted fields,
 For there was stained the bow of the mighty,
 Saul's bow, never anointed with oil.

From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty,
 The bow of Jonathan turned not aside,
 And the sword of Saul came not back empty.

Saul and Jonathan! lovely and pleasant were ye in life,
 And in death ye were not divided.
 Swifter than eagles, stronger than lions, were they.

Daughters of Israel, weep ye for Saul:
 He arrayed you pleasantly in scarlet;
 He put ornaments of gold on your apparel.

*How are the mighty fallen in the midst of battle.
 O Jonathan, slain in thy high places.*

O Jonathan, my brother, I am grieved for thee:
 Very pleasant wast thou to me—
 Wonderful was thy love, passing the love of woman.

*How are the mighty fallen, *
 And the weapons of war perished!*

In the authorized version, this noble elegy is introduced by a strange parenthesis: "And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son (also he bade them teach the children of Judah *the use of* the bow; behold it is written in the book of Jasher)." The words *the use of*, are interpolated, to give the sense that the clause refers to instruction in archery; and it must be admitted that this sense is given to it by divers Jewish and Christian commentators. Without these words the clause stands, "He bade them teach the children of Judah the Bow"—suggesting that this was the title given to the lamentation itself, from the repeated mention of the bow in it—an explanation quite conformable to the Hebrew practice in giving titles to

their sacred songs, and which supplies to the parenthesis a close connection with, instead of an abrupt and harsh transition from, what precedes and follows.

It may well be asked, had the men of Judah yet to learn the use of the bow? It was the common weapon. The Hebraism for "bow" is like that for "bread." As the latter includes all food, so does the former include all weapons. The argument on which the current interpretation is founded is weak indeed—that because Saul and Jonathan fell before the arrows of the Philistines, therefore the children of Judah should be taught the use of the bow. But no deficiency in this weapon appears among the Judahites, and Saul and Jonathan themselves were excellent archers. In the elegy itself it is said, "The bow of Jonathan turned not back."

The coherence is quite spoiled by this interpretation. The author of the book brings in David as about to commence an epicedium on the death of Saul, and immediately breaks off with an utterly irrelevant order that the men of Judah should be taught to handle the bow. And why is it that for *this* we should be referred to the book of Jasher, which, from the quotation given from it here and in Joshua x., seems to have been rather a book of national songs than a military order-book?

That "The Bow" should be the title assigned to this lamentation, will not surprise those who look to the titles of some of the Psalms, such as "Hind of the Morning,"* the "Mute Dove among Strangers,"† the "Lilies,"‡ and others, having some kind of reference to the contents, besides others which have reference to the instruments whose music accompanied them. It is easy to see why this poem should bear the name of *Keseeth* or the Bow. First, probably, because it was occasioned by the Philistine archers (1 Sam. xxxi. 3); and also, it would seem, with special reference to the bow

* *Aijeleth Shakar*, Ps. xxii.

† *Jonath-elem-rechokim*, Ps. lvi.

‡ *Shoshannim*, xlv., lxix., lxxx., and in lx., the same in the singular *Shushan*, the lily.

of Saul and that of Jonathan, both of which are emphatically noticed in this lament. And the reference to the bow of Jonathan, which turned not back from the blood of the slain, could not but suggest to David another recollection of *that* bow, out of which, in a day tenderly remembered, was shot the arrow which was to be to him the signal of safety or of danger. At that time it was that the brotherly covenant was made, and that affection expressed between them which was greater than the love of woman. In fact there is not one of the Psalms, the contents or occasion of which afford so much reason for the title it bears as this elegy does.

It is observable that the translation of the Septuagint, and of the older editions and manuscripts of the Vulgate, are quite conformable to this, and not to the now current interpretation. It is the same in Tyndale's translation, which forms the basis of the authorized version. In that we read: "And David sang this song of mourning over Saul and over Jonathan his son, and bade to teach the children of Israel the staves thereof."

THIRTY-FIFTH WEEK—SATURDAY.

DAVID IN HEBRON.—II SAMUEL II. 1-7; I SAMUEL XXXI.
11-13.

THE death of Saul with his three eldest sons in the fatal battle of Gilboa, fully authorized David to advance his own claims without the reserve he had hitherto maintained. He was king by right. He had been anointed for the reversion, and he was now entitled to possession. By the same right under which Saul had held his crown, David was now entitled to claim it. Saul had been appointed on certain well understood conditions, which he had violated, and on certain principles, which he had contravened. The forfeiture of the

succession of his descendants was the penalty; and that he had incurred. The Lord, therefore, acting on the right reserved from the first, and under which Saul had become king, declared that forfeiture, and nominated David to the succession, and had caused him to be anointed to it by his prophet. This was now known to all Israel; Saul's heir had acquiesced in it; and Saul himself had acknowledged the constitutional validity of this deposition, although he persecuted the individual on whose head the lapsed crown was to fall. It is useless to argue anything here with reference to the principles and practices of other monarchies. The Hebrew monarchy had a definite constitutional principle of its own, and it is by this that we must judge—that we must call a thing fit or unfit, right or wrong. According to that constitution, David was *de jure* king; nor was there ever any one by whom, or in whose favor, the *jus divinum* might with so much truth be urged. The hereditary principle had no application here. But allowing for a moment that it had—the true heir of the house of Saul was Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, who had expressly renounced all claims for himself and his heirs in favor of David.

Still it was not the object of the Divine nomination to force an unacceptable king upon the chosen people. Even Saul had waited until his nomination had been confirmed by the choice of the nation. The claim was good as against any other candidate—but was not intended to be good for military or other compulsory enforcement upon the people. This was very well understood by David, who acted with commendable delicacy and discretion in the somewhat trying position in which he now found himself. He sought not to force himself into the vacant throne by his armed bands—but he presented himself to the choice of the people, clothed with the honor of the Lord's nomination, for which, by several years of conspicuous triumphs and trials, he had been enabled to show himself worthy.

The crisis was too important for a man like David to move in without taking counsel of God. His first question was,

if he could now go into the land of Judah? and this being affirmatively answered, he asked to what place? and Hebron was named. This ancient city of Abraham, was the capital of the tribe of Judah, and the strongest and most important place within its limits. It was also one of the Levitical cities, and therefore strong in the interests of David, not only from the keener perception the priestly tribe would have of the validity of his nomination to the crown, but from their sympathy with the man whose cause, since the massacre at Nob, had been indentified with their own.

To Hebron, accordingly, David marched his now considerable army, entering the town with the *élite* of his force, and stationing the rest with their families in the neighboring villages and towns. He was here welcomed with joy by his own tribe, and with little delay the crown of Judah was tendered to him by the leaders of the tribe, and was accepted by him. They could not offer him more. They had no right to offer him the dominion over other tribes than their own. But that was no reason why they should delay to declare their own sentiments. Their rank among the tribes—the pre-eminence which only Ephraim ventured to question, gave them a right to take the initiative, and they had reason to expect that it would be followed by other tribes.

It seems to have been felt that very much would depend on securing the adhesion of the loosely attached tribes beyond the Jordan. David had reason to think his cause popular there, by reason of the parties from Gad and Manasseh which had joined him, and remained attached to his person. An opportunity of gracefully inviting attention to his claims, was afforded by the men of Jabesh-gilead, which belonged to Manasseh.

After the battle of Gilboa, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, they found the bodies of Saul and his three sons. The head of Saul they cut off, that they might carry it about in triumph—a custom too general to need illustration, and which David himself had exemplified when he slew Goliath. The king's rich armor they removed, and sent to

be hung up as a trophy in the temple of Ashtaroth. David in like manner had given the sword, and probably the armor, of Goliath, to be laid up before the Lord. This was a mode in which the ancients acknowledged that their victories were due to the gods they worshipped, or at least as becoming offerings of thanksgiving for such victories. It was especially the custom of the Greeks and Romans—whose usages we know better than those of other nations—thus to adorn their temples. Virgil, who is scarcely greater as a poet than as an antiquary, describes it as an ancient custom of the Latins :—

“ Around the posts hung helmets, darts, and spears,
And captive chariots, axes, shields, and bows,
And broken beaks of ships, the trophies of their wars.”

DRYDEN.*

We have ourselves retained what is essentially the same custom, in hanging up in our churches the banners taken from the enemy. In fact, one who is careful to trace the analogies of customs and usages, does not expect to find many that are peculiar to any people.

The trunk of Saul, and the bodies of his sons, not being available as trophies, were gibbeted by way of insult and intimidation, on the walls of Bethshan—a place not far from the field of battle, towards the Jordan. To the Jews, whose law forbade such exposure of a dead body beyond the sunset of the first day, this dreadful spectacle was far more disgusting and horrible than it would, until recently, have been to us, whose roads and shores, and solitary places, have within the memory of living men been defiled with corpses similarly exposed. It is possible that the knowledge of how adverse this practice was to the customs of the Israelites,

* *Multaque præterea sacris in postibus arma,
Captivi pendent currus, curvæque secures,
Et cristæ capitum, et portarum ingentia claustra
Spiculaque, clypei que, erepta que rostra carinis.*

Æn. vii. 183, *seq.*

and how revolting it must seem to them, was among the inducements of the Philistines to treat the body of Saul thus ignominiously.

Shocked as the Israelites were, none ventured to interfere save the men of Jabesh, whose grateful remembrance of their deliverance by Saul at the commencement of his reign, impelled them to undertake the bold and dangerous enterprise of rescuing the remains of their benefactor and his sons from this disgrace. They travelled at least ten miles, and having crossed the Jordan, stole away the bodies by night, in the face, as it were, of a hostile garrison. Returning the same night to Jabesh, they there burned the bodies, and having gathered up the bones, buried them under a tree—and mourned and fasted seven days for their fallen king. It was not the custom of the Jews to burn the dead—as among the Greeks and Romans. There must, therefore, have been some special reason for the men of Jabesh burning the remains of these princes. It was probably to prevent the possibility of the Philistines again maltreating the dead bodies, in case that, finding they had been taken away, they should search after them, and discover the place in which they had been deposited.

This act of devoted attachment was well calculated to impress the susceptible heart of David, especially as one of the corpses thus rescued from disgrace was that of his beloved Jonathan. He wished the men of Jabesh-gilead to feel, that although Saul had treated him as an enemy, and although he had reaped advantage from his death, such proofs of attachment to the fallen prince were not displeasing to him, but were entirely in unison with his own sentiments. He notified that the tribe of Judah had anointed him king, and intimated that in case they also adhered to him, they might expect his special consideration and protection. This, as we take it, was the purport of his message: "Blessed be ye of the Lord, that ye have showed kindness to Saul your lord, and have buried him. Now, may the Lord show you kindness and truth, and I also will requite your kindness. There-

fore, let your hands be strong, and be ye valiant; for though your master Saul is dead, yet the house of Judah hath anointed me king over them."

This was a very kind and considerate message. It must be admitted that in sending it, David assumes a certain right to acknowledge, officially, a public service, and invites them to recognize his authority. Such an acknowledgment from persons who had evinced so much attachment to Saul, could not but have much weight with others. But what rendered it the more proper was, the probability that the Philistines might attempt to call them to account for the deed they had achieved, in which case he encourages them to hold out, in the assured expectation, notwithstanding his recent connection with the Philistines, that they should receive the same assistance and support from him as they had formerly received from Saul. If this assurance be, as we apprehend, involved in the message of David to the men of Jabesh-Gilead, it must have been full of significance to a wider audience than that to which it was addressed, as it assured the people that his duty to the nation was, in his view, superior to all considerations of recent obligation to the Philistines, and that he should, notwithstanding this, be ready to take arms against them if their conduct presented an adequate reason and provocation. Such an assurance could not, under the circumstances of the time, have been more openly expressed; but if taken in the sense we have defined, it could not but have conveyed a most satisfactory intimation to the people, that he was not at all disposed to reign by mere sufferance of the Philistines, or as their tool or instrument, a suspicion of which might naturally have been engendered by his late intercourse with them, his protection by them, his obligations to them, and the apparent willingness he had manifested to fight under their banners against his own people.

Thirty-Sixth Week—Sunday.

THE CHANGE.

ONE most observable matter, which the course of the Lord's providence frequently manifests in his dealings with his people, is strikingly illustrated by that portion of David's history which has passed under our survey. It is that afflictions and trials are often allowed to accumulate, one after another, without rest or pause, for a certain time, until a point of such accumulated wretchedness is reached, that it seems as if the last point to which human endurance can stretch—the utmost pitch to which even heavenly sustainments can uphold this earthy essence, has been attained, and that it needs but one atom more added to the accumulated burden of our troubles, to break the back on which it has been piled up. Then, at what seems to us the last moment, He who knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are but dust—He who will never suffer us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear, appears as a deliverer. With his strong hand he lifts the burden from the shoulder, and casts it afar off; tenderly does he anoint and bind up the deep sores it has worn in our flesh, and pours in the oil and the wine—and graciously does he lead us forth into the fresh and green pastures, where we may lie down at ease under the warm sunshine of his countenance, till all the frightful past becomes as a half-remembered dream—a tale that is told.

In David's case, the long misery of the first stage of his public career seems to have reached its culminating point, when, on his return to Ziklag, he found his pleasant home burnt up with fire—his wives and children borne away into captivity, he knew not whither—surrounded by men who were the sharers in this calamity, and who, in the bitterness of their spirits, mutinied against their leader and placed his very life in peril.

This was the trial. It was, as Joab said of another trial,

many years after, the worst to him "of all the evil that had befallen him from his youth until now." This was a sign that relief was at hand. When things are at the worst, as the common proverb says, they must mend. And they mended with David from that hour. And this was not *because* things were then at the worst with him, but because being at the worst, he fought that great fight of affliction well. "HE ENCOURAGED HIMSELF IN THE LORD HIS GOD;" and he found that his encouragements in God, exceeded beyond all measure his discouragements in man, although friends combined with enemies to discourage him then. From that moment, when he believingly cast all his dependence upon the Lord his God only, whom he had found faithful in all his promises, and whose providence had never failed him in his deepest dangers—from that moment he was safe—from that moment he was prosperous. "God loves (as David knew)" says an old writer,* "to reserve his holy hand for a dead lift in behalf of his servants in covenant with him, when there is a damp upon their hopes, and a death upon their helps."

Now that the time of change was come, all things went well with him, and his prosperity increased like a river, gathering strength and fulness in its course, until, long after, a great crime stayed its course, and overwhelmed him with tides of trouble and grief, compared with which the trials of his early days were light. This Ziklag is laid in ashes—but no sooner is he left shelterless than God provides him a better city, even Hebron, a city of refuge, and most truly a refuge to him. Saul even dies at this time to give him room. "Now doth David find the comfort," says Bishop Hall, "that his extremity sought in the Lord his God. Now are his clouds for a time passed over, and the sun breaks gloriously forth. David shall reign after his sufferings. So shall we, if we endure to the end, find a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give us at that day." With reference to his taking with him his companions, to be the sharers of his better fortunes, while their mutiny was yet

* Christopher Ness.

fresh and green, the same writer beautifully remarks, "Thus doth our heavenly Leader, whom David prefigured, take us to reign with him, who have suffered with him. Passing by our manifold infirmities, as if they had not been, he removeth us from the land of our banishment, and the ashes of our forlorn Ziklag, to the Hebron of our peace and glory."

Nor do these observations find application only to temporal prosperities. The same is observable in the higher matters of spiritual life. It is, perhaps, the general rule, that we are seldom admitted to the fulness of God's presence, and to the enjoyment of that peace which passeth all understanding, until we have gone through great throes of spirit, and groanings that cannot be uttered, in the conviction of our forlorn and miserable condition. It is then that the Comforter comes to reveal Christ to our hearts, as a Redeemer and a Healer—and then, to us, old things are passed away, and all things are become new. We are not healed, till we feel how desperately we have been wounded—not redeemed, till we know how utterly we have been enslaved—not saved, till we know how entirely we were lost.

And again, how often do we, in our spiritual course, have seasons, sometimes long, of darkness and gloom of spirit, during which our Lord seems to hide his face from us, and has forgotten to be gracious to us; and then, at the moment of most extreme despondency and discouragement, when the gloom is deepest—the agony most intense, and we gasp as in the throes of spiritual death—the cloud rolls away, the sun shines out upon it, and all the fair fields and gardens of our inner paradise again look green—the drooping flowers of the heart revive—and all that is not earthly in us exults in the enlivening rays.

These considerations are most proper to the history of David, for there is no human history in which those transitions are more distinctly marked; while his Psalms are full of passages which may be, and are, continually cited to illustrate these contrasted aspects of our spiritual condition.

THIRTY-SIXTH WEEK—MONDAY.

THE FIRST BLOW.—II SAMUEL II. 12-32.

It seems to us highly probable, that the whole of the tribes would have invited David to reign over them, had they been left to follow their own convictions and impulses. Even those most indifferent to his cause would have shrunk from the responsibility of setting up a rival, and of thereby dividing the realm into two kingdoms, and that must have been the result; for although they might assert the right of appointing over themselves another king than David, they had no right to interfere with the choice which Judah had made, or to say that David should not be its king. Besides, there was no motive for opposition to one who came before them under the highest sanctions known to their institutions. He was untried as a king; there was hence nothing of which complaints could be made against him; and nations are always disposed to hope more from an untried man than from one whose worst and whose best they know. But it was only as a king that David was not tried;—as a public man, as a general, as one chosen of God, he was already well known and eminent; and what was thus known must have led to the expectation that his reign would be beneficent and glorious.

The natural result which might have been expected to flow from these considerations was, however, prevented by Abner, the first cousin of Saul, and who had long been chief captain of his host. This man was held in high respect throughout Israel, and his influence with the tribes was very great. This he determined to exert in upholding the house of Saul; and he acted with the promptitude and decision which evince the great abilities for which he had credit, and insured his success. From what eventually transpires, it is indeed clear, as was but too natural under the circumstances, that views of personal ambition, and an unwillingness to sink into an inferior position to that which he had hitherto occupied, sway-

ed him against his own convictions that David ought to reign, and that it was for the good of the country that he should do so. Besides, he was aware there were great men about David, whose claims, by services and nearness of blood, upon his consideration, were greater than any he could produce; and seeing that David's character had not yet been tried by the possession of power, he may have doubted the safety of so eminent, and possibly dangerous, a member of Saul's family as himself.

Abner, not less than David, seems to have attached great importance to the adhesion of the tribes beyond the Jordan, and therefore he crossed into the land of Gilead with Ishbosheth, the only surviving son of Saul, and proclaimed him king at Mahanaim. This step was not miscalculated. The western tribes successively gave in their adhesion, and David was, for the present, shut out from the expectation of establishing his authority over the whole nation. It was adverse to his policy, and would in itself have been fruitless, to attempt to coerce the tribes to accept him; he was therefore content to await the course of the Lord's providence, assured that not one of the things which had been promised him would fail to be realized. There is no appearance that he sought to enter into any conflict with the house of Saul. This did indeed arise; but it seems to have arisen rather through some attempt of Abner upon the kingdom of Judah, than of David upon that of Ishbosheth. As a general rule, the military aggressor is he who marches an armed force towards the territory of the other; and we find that Abner concentrates a large force at Gibeon, close upon the frontier of Judah. This had a threatening aspect, whatever was its intention; and a corresponding force advanced from David, to observe its movements. It was under the command of Joab, whose valor, whose military capacity, and the rough energies of whose character, had already given him that power with David, which he managed to maintain during his reign. Two such forces could not long remain apart; nor could two men of such fiery spirits as Abner and Joab, long

stand in presence of each other with folded hands. Very shortly, a proposal came from Abner, that twelve picked men on each side should fight the matter out for the rest. This had the show of a wish to avoid the needless effusion of brothers' blood, and was therefore a decency suitable to both parties on the commencement of such a conflict; although both sides must have been aware, from repeated experience, that nothing could in this way be conclusively settled. Twelve men stood forth on either side, out in the midst, between the two armies, and assailed each other with an inveteracy only known in civil conflicts. Each of the twelve on the opposite sides seized his opponent by the beard, and the whole twenty-four fell to the ground, slain by contrary wounds. A pregnant instance this of the inconvenience of beards in warfare, and an apt illustration of the saying of Alexander, of whom it is related by Plutarch in his *Apophtegms*, that when all things seemed ready for action, his captain asked him whether he had anything else to command them? He answered—"Nothing, but that the Macedonians shave their beards." Parmenio expressed his wonder at this, when the monarch added—"Know you not, that in fight there is no better hold for the enemy than a beard?"

This result, as almost always happens in such cases, whatever be the original intention, brought on a general action, in which Abner's troop was, after a severe struggle, obliged to give way, and fled before that of Joab. Abner himself was pursued by Joab's swift-footed brother, Asahel, who, having formed the purpose of possessing himself of the spoils of this great chief, suffered not himself to be diverted to any other object. Eventually they were both far away from their companions, Abner fleeing and Asahel pursuing. Perceiving this, and knowing himself to be a far more powerful man than the light and agile pursuer, he begged him to desist from the pursuit, being anxious, as he said, that a brother's blood should not lie between him and Joab, which would create a deadly animosity, where only a generous rivalry in arms existed now. This reasoning was not likely to have much

weight with one who believed himself a match for the other ; for, had he not so believed, he would not have pursued him. Finding this to be the case, and that Asahel followed close upon his steps, Abner gave a backward thrust with the heel of his spear, which was sharpened in order to its being stuck into the ground when the army was in cantonments. There needed no second stroke ; the brother of Joab had received his death-blow, and lay weltering in blood upon the ground. The body was laid aside in the wood by some that came up after, so that when Joab came on he was not aware of what had happened.

At length, as the evening approached, Abner, being joined by some Benjamites, no longer fled. He stood on a vantage-ground upon the top of a hill, and made an earnest appeal to Joab's better feelings against farther bloodshed. " Knowest thou not," he said, " that it will be bitterness in the latter end,"—a point he might well have considered before he provoked this disastrous conflict. Joab, however, felt the force of the appeal, and he forthwith recalled his men from the pursuit by sound of trumpet. Abner, on his part, afraid probably that Joab might change his mind when he knew that his brother had been killed, marched all the night, and rested not until he had passed the Jordan, and found himself once more at Mahanaim.

The combat of twelve on each side, at the pool of Gibeon, may call to mind many similar transactions in history. Such affairs are frequent in Arabian warfare. Roman history affords a familiar instance in the combat of the Horatii and Curiatii. Not less familiar *now* is the incident in Scottish history on which Scott founded his tale of " The Fair Maid of Perth." We may adduce this in the version of a German traveller (Kohl), for the sake of his closing remark :—" In this year (1390) reigned in Scotland King Robert III., who, perceiving that the wild refractory clans would annihilate one another in their endless contentions, proposed to the two hostile clans, clan Chattan and clan Kay, that they should settle their differences in the following manner. They were

each to select their doughtiest men, and appear with them upon the Inches of Perth. These were to fight together in the presence of the king and his court; the victors were to be declared to have been in the right, and the vanquished were to forget and forgive. Thirty chosen warriors, children of the Kays, and the same number of Chattans, came down. . . . In the fight the clan Chattan triumphed; all the children of the Kay were slain but one, who leaped into the river Tay, and fled to the hills. Although we have all read this narrative in the Fair Maid of Perth, yet we cannot abstain from thinking once more of the circumstances, when upon the very spot, especially if the Tschergisses of the Caucasus, and the ancient Bible histories of the Philistines, Carmelites (?) and the other inhabitants of the mountains, occur to the memory, who agree altogether so remarkably in their manners, and when we again discover in these clans, clan feuds and clan fightings, and that in a similitude so exact, that they coincide in almost the slightest particular."

The parley at the end of the day, between Abner and Joab, may remind one of that between Hector and Ajax in the seventh book of the Iliad. Hector had been the challenger at the commencement, and it is he who, like Abner, makes the motion for the cessation of the combat.

"Now let the combat cease. We shall not want
 More fair occasion; on some future day
 We will not part till all-disposing heaven
 Shall give thee victory, or shall make her mine.
 But night hath fallen, and night must be obeyed."

THIRTY-SIXTH WEEK—TUESDAY.

ABNER.—II SAMUEL III. 1-16.

ABNER was the sole stay of the house of Saul; and although all Israel knew this, there was no man in Israel half

so conscious of the fact as Abner himself. He behaved accordingly. Ishbosheth, whom he had made king, and whose throne he, for his own purposes, sustained, was a good, easy, imbecile man, and Abner cared not that he should feel that he was nothing without him—that it was not because of his rights, but because he was sustained by Abner, that he reigned. This character in a king is favorable to the pretensions of a great subject, in enabling him to fix upon himself the consideration and real influence which should belong to the crown. We have seen this in our own history; and we see it to-day in the great rajahs and nawaubs of the East. But the final result is damaging to the real strength of the crown; and it was so in the case of Ishbosheth.

The people could not behold the feeble character of Ishbosheth without contrasting it with the brilliant qualities of David, his firm and beneficent government, the success which crowned all his enterprises, and the attachment of his people to him. All this was damaging to the cause of the house of Saul; nor less so the fact, that in the small conflicts which arose in the course of years between the two parties—for both avoided bringing the matter to the decision of any great engagement—the issue was usually favorable to David. Under these various influences, concurring with the doubt which must have haunted the minds of many, whether, in upholding the condemned house and refusing the son of Jesse, they incurred not the awful responsibility of setting themselves in opposition to the known purposes of God, it came to pass that the cause of Ishbosheth became weaker every day, while that of David daily gathered strength. Abner himself was too sagacious a man not to perceive this—indeed, the observations of every day must have made him feel it most acutely, and he could not but know that it would not much longer be even in his power to uphold the tottering throne which he alone supported. When things were in this state, it would want but little to bring about a revolution. We are continually mistaking in assigning great effects to small and inadequate causes. There is never any effect without an adequate

cause, although the circumstance which brings the already existing causes into operation, and which is so often mistaken for the cause itself, may be of small or trifling importance, and only one of a hundred other circumstances which might equally have brought them into operation. The fuel is laid, and anything that has fire in it will equally serve to kindle it up; whether it be a lighted candle, a match, a rag, a bit of paper, or a straw—it matters little.

From the time that Abner perceived that it was impossible for him to carry on much longer the high game he was playing, he must often have turned over in his mind the possibility of going over to David, and of acquiring power with him by some signal service in his cause. Pride, some sense of honor, and a lingering wish to retain possession of a more independent power than he could hope for under such a king as David, and with such rivals as the sons of Zeruah, restrained him for the present; but he was prepared, if occasion should offer, to take the lead in the national movement towards David in preference to becoming the victim of it. Occasion enough for him soon did offer.

King Ishbosheth, feeble as he was, had something of manly and royal spirit in him, and when he heard that Abner had appropriated to himself a woman named Rizpah, who had been Saul's secondary wife or "concubine," and had borne him children—he was shocked and indignant at what the usages of the East rendered an act of gross disrespect to himself and to the memory of his father, if it did not indicate the same disposition to establish a claim to royal power in his own person, which, in the next generation, Solomon detected in the application of Adonijah for leave to espouse the virgin concubine of his deceased father. Whether the charge were well-founded or not, is not very clear; but the presumption of the king in daring to call *him* to an account in such a matter, or even to hint disapprobation, threw Abner into a towering passion, and he swore a fierce oath to cast down the throne he had reared up. "So do God to Abner, and more also, except as the Lord hath sworn to David, even so do I

to him—to translate the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan to Beersheba.” Abner is self-convicted by these words. He knew that the Lord had sworn to give the throne to David, and yet he had resisted—consciously resisted—to the best of his power, the fulfilment of that high decree. He now reaps his reward in this—that his return to what was really his duty, bears the aspect of treachery, meanness, and dishonor. It is well, however, to remember that what he did now was his duty, had always been his duty, and was not the less his duty because he had intermediately rebelled against it. But that rebellion placed him in this invidious position—that it now devolved upon him to undo his own work, whereas at the first it was in his power to have subsided into graceful and honorable acquiescence in a decree which, although distasteful to him, he could not and ought not to resist. Had he done this, his acknowledged abilities could not have failed to secure for him no second place among the worthies of David, and the end might have been very different.

It may occur to many readers that the rage of Abner was as much affected as real, and that he was not sorry that the poor king had given him a pretext for turning away from him. As it was, Ishbosheth answered not a word to this outburst of his haughty kinsman—he was so greatly terrified. Afterwards he probably reflected that Abner’s interests were too visibly bound up with his own to allow him to execute his threats; and that he abstained from any immediately demonstrative action, must have confirmed him in this impression.

But Abner’s were not idle words. He sent faithful messengers to David, to make terms for his assistance in bringing over the other tribes to his cause. The king of Judah was alive to the importance of this intimation, yet he manifested no unbecoming eagerness to seize the opportunity. He knew that the Lord’s purposes for him were in visible process of accomplishment, and he who had waited so long

in patient faith, could, if need were, afford to wait a little longer. He therefore made it an essential preliminary to all negotiation that his wife Michal should be restored to him. There is no law in any state, and there was certainly none among the Hebrews, which allows a father to divorce his daughter from her husband, and give her in marriage to another. But this Saul had done, having given Michal in marriage to Phaltiel the son of Laish. David's claim to her therefore remained intact. She was his first love; and although he had now other wives, his heart yearned towards this one in the keen and fresh remembrance of early affection; he had also purchased her dearly at the risk of his life, and he might not be unwilling thus to bring to the remembrance of the people his old exploits against the Philistines, and to evince at this time the value he set upon his connection with the house of Saul. It might be very important that it should now appear that the members and partisans of that house were not beyond the scope of his clemency and favor.

Abner used this demand as a means by which he might accomplish his ulterior object. It was in itself so reasonable, that he made it known to Ishbosheth, who readily consented that Michal should be taken from Phaltiel, and that Abner himself, as her natural protector, should conduct her to David. There has been much idle talk about the cruelty of taking her away from a man with whom she had lived some years, and who for all that appears was a good husband, seeing that he followed her, weeping and lamenting, until he was compelled to desist by those who bore her from him. But this was the fruit of his own wrong, which a man always reaps in the long run. He had coveted another man's wife, and had wrongfully possessed himself of her, knowing well that she belonged to another; and Phaltiel was not the first man, nor the last, who has lamented to be deprived of that which did not belong to him. Michal was David's wife—she was his *purchased* possession. Scarce a week passes in which our own law does not in the like case take the woman from

the second husband, and assign her to the first—declare her living with the second to have been a state of adultery—and even subjects her to punishment for having married a second husband while the first lived. In the present case, there is every reason to suppose that Michal had been reluctantly coerced into this marriage; and although Phaltiel lamented her departure, there is no indication that she felt any sorrow in going. It is more probable that she rejoiced to be called to the side of her true husband, saying: “I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now.” Hos. ii. 7.

THIRTY-SIXTH WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

BLOOD REVENGE.—II. SAMUEL III. 17–39.

IT may be easily conceived that the passage through the country of so great a man as Abner, on such a business as that of conducting Saul's daughter to the king of Judah, attracted very general attention, and necessarily excited much speculation. Abner, on his part, regarded it as affording him a suitable opportunity for opening his views to the tribe of Benjamin, in which the strength of Saul's family lay, aware that few would be found to stand up for the cause abandoned by those most nearly interested in its support. To the elders of that tribe, and of such other tribes as came in his way, he plainly said that the Lord had chosen David to be king, and that David was the man whom the exigencies of the time demanded. There appears to have been some movement of the neighboring enemies of Israel at this time, which might impart a freshness and a present interest to his tardy admission that it was through David the Lord had promised to deliver Israel from its adversaries. He confesses his knowledge that they had wished to have David for their king; *he* chiefly had interposed to prevent it, but he now

graciously consents that they should have the king they desired. "Ye sought for David in time past to be king over you—now, then, do it."

Abner had no reason to complain of his reception by David, who entertained him and his guard of twenty men in a most princely style. The result of the conference was highly satisfactory to Abner, who took his departure with the promise of gathering deputies from Israel who should publicly acknowledge David for their king. This was certainly no more than he was able to perform. He had only to permit what he had hitherto striven to prevent, but which, as he knew well, it would not be even in his power much longer to hinder.

Joab had at this time been absent on a military expedition, and as neither David nor Abner would desire his presence, it is likely that this visit of Abner had been timed accordingly. But Joab returned immediately that Abner had left. He was greatly moved when he heard of this visit. He feared for himself. He subscribed to the influence which his abilities, age, and long experience gave to Abner, by the dread he entertained of him. There can indeed be little doubt that Abner would have become the second man in David's enlarged kingdom, and commander of the armies of Israel. There is also no reason to question that Joab really felt the apprehensions he expressed—that Abner was after all deceiving David, and only sought an opportunity of effecting his ruin. He hurried to the king, and with the roughness and freedom which their near relationship and their old companionship in trouble seemed in his eyes to warrant, he sharply rated him for his easiness, and affirmed that Abner could have no other object than to betray him. That such was his real belief, goes somewhat to relieve his next step of some portion of the blackness which belongs to it when regarded merely as the effect of individual jealousy and apprehension. He sent to call Abner back, under the pretence that some important communication had been forgotten. Abner accordingly returned, and was met without the gate

by Joab, who saluted him in a friendly manner, and taking him aside as if to speak privately with him, smote him suddenly with his sword under the fifth rib, so that he died.

This, he chose to allege, and his brother Abishai upheld him in that view, was done in his right of blood revenge for his brother Asahel, whom Abner had slain. The question is not whether this was the true reason, but whether the excuse was so sound and valid as to justify him in the eye of the law, so as to protect him from the legal consequences of this assassination. In short, whether public opinion would or would not bear him out in this excuse.

The law was, that when a man slew another by what we should call manslaughter or justifiable homicide, the nearest relative had a right to exact vengeance—to put him to death wherever he could find him. This was an old custom of the pastoral tribes, too deeply rooted to be abolished by the Mosaical law, but the manifest evils of which that law sought to neutralize, by providing certain cities throughout the country within whose walls the man-slayer was safe from the sword of the avenger, who was dealt with as a murderer if he slew him there, but was not called to account if he met with him and slew him anywhere beyond the verge of the asylum. The real question therefore is, whether Abner was responsible to Joab for the blood of Asahel, shed in self-defence, under the circumstances lately described, and sorely against the wish of Abner himself. It is urged that it was most unreasonable that Abner should be held accountable for this. The unreasonableness may be granted. The question is not, what was reasonable, but what was the custom. The custom was, in its very essence, unreasonable, and the law had striven as much as possible to mitigate what it could not do away with altogether. The act of Abner was justifiable homicide; but it was precisely to such cases that the rule applied, not to those of murder, against the penalties of which no sanctuary afforded protection. Besides, unless the right of avengement for blood did apply to such cases as this, whence the deep anxiety of Abner to avoid slaying

Asahel? Those expressions used by him on that occasion have no meaning, unless they show his knowledge of the fact that the death of his pursuer would establish a blood feud between him and Joab. In further confirmation of this view of the case, it may be noted that the other brother, Abishai, who had no direct hand in this bloody and barbarous deed, yet adopted and maintained it on the same grounds, as an act of avengement for a brother's blood. It may be admitted that a case of this nature may have come upon the border of a doubt as to the application of the rule to it, and very likely it was not, in such cases, often enforced. But where any room for doubt existed, Joab and Abishai might interpret it in their own favor, as their justification for an act the true motives of which durst not be alleged, and as a ground on which they might claim exemption from the punishment due to murder. That the case stood on this doubtful ground, which did not render it an imperative duty of the next of kin to exact retribution, when in his power to do so—which did not, as among the Arab tribes at this day, leave him disgraced if he neglected to avenge a brother's blood, seems probable from the fact, that Abner went so readily aside with Joab, which he would hardly have done had he not supposed that his offence was one which might be, and had been, forgiven. It was in the assurance that public opinion, however shocked, would, upon the whole, sanction the deed when placed on this ground, that this reason was produced; and as it was highly important, even for the king, that it should appear as an act of private revenge, rather than of political jealousy (in which he might have seemed to be implicated), there was abundant reason why David should not, by subjecting Joab to punishment for murder, give to the act a different complexion. It is usually said that Joab was too powerful to be brought to justice. We do not know that his power had *already* become so great as this implies, and we cannot but think that David would have found means of subjecting him to disgrace or punishment, but for the considerations we have stated—that public opinion would allow

the deed to stand on the ground upon which the brothers placed it, and that, in the existing state of affairs, it was as well that it should rest upon that footing, the reason alleged being well calculated to relieve the king from any suspicion of having connived at this mode of ridding himself of a powerful and dangerous rival.

In corroboration of this view—which is the one advanced by the sacred historian, and which, on that ground alone, we ought to prefer, we may look back to Gideon's slaying the captive kings, Zebah and Zalmunna, on the express ground that they had slain his brothers at Tabor, in the course of the recent engagement. "He said, they were my brethren, the sons of my mother. As the Lord liveth, if ye had saved them alive, I would not slay you." And as it had thus become a case of blood revenge, he slew them with his own hand, after his eldest son, Jether, had shrunk from the task. If more confirmation be needed, we may refer to the existing practice of the Arab tribes, in the frequent engagements between whom, blood revenge is exacted for every life taken, if the person who inflicted the mortal stroke is known. It is this which renders the combats between the tribes so protracted and so comparatively bloodless, as every one dreads to subject himself to the pursuing sword of the avenger. These considerations do not, of course, operate in engagements with foreigners; and in Israel, warfare between the tribes had hitherto been too infrequent to bring their results out of the common laws of blood revenge, and into the usages of general warfare. When the tribes became permanently divided into two realms, after Solomon, the right of private blood revenge could not exist as between the subjects of the two kingdoms, though it doubtless still subsisted between the tribes of which these kingdoms were severally composed.

David, who did not share Joab's suspicions of Abner's truth, was deeply concerned at a crime which not only marred all the expectations he had conceived from that great chief's adhesion, but threatened to widen the breach more

than ever. As well, therefore, from real concern at the untimely end of a man so illustrious, and natural horror of the deed, as from policy, he was anxious that it should appear how deeply he lamented the event. He ordered a general fast and mourning, and the body of the unhappy Abner was honored with a public funeral, at which the king himself appeared as chief mourner, and followed the corpse with loud lamentations to the grave, where, amid his own tears, and the tears of the people, he, as was natural to him under strong emotion, gave vent to his feelings in this poetical utterance:—

“Should Abner die as a villain dies ?

Thy hands—not bound,

Thy feet—not brought into fetters :

As one falls before the sons of wickedness so didst thou fall.”

To explain this, it should be observed that Hebron was a city of refuge. If one fled to such a city, he was subjected to a sort of trial to ascertain his claim to the right of sanctuary. If found to be a murderer, he was delivered up, bound hand and foot, to the avenger, to deal with him as he pleased. Although Abner had left the city of refuge, not thus delivered up as a murderer, but free, he had no sooner left its gates than he had met a murderer's doom from the hands of the avenger. The idea of the lamentation is founded upon Abner's being slain as soon as he had quitted a city of refuge—a most unusual circumstance to one not found guilty of murder, seeing that those entitled to protection were not sent away.

THIRTY-SIXTH WEEK—THURSDAY

TREACHERY PUNISHED.—II SAMUEL IV.

AT the first view, the death of Abner may seem to have been disastrous to the cause of David; but it may be

doubted whether it was not eventually an advantage to him. Abner had been the chief, if not the sole, obstacle to the union of the tribes under Jesse's son. His consent had already removed that obstacle, and his death did but the more effectually remove it. Besides, had he lived, he was likely to have claimed all the merit of David's exaltation, and it would have been difficult to recompense him adequately, to his own sense of his deservings. The command of the army he must have had, and this was probably the first of his stipulations; and a man of his temper, and in his position, would have been likely to vaunt (like our Earl of Warwick, under Edward IV.), on any occasion of discontent, that he could make and unmake kings at his pleasure, and might want but little inducement, from pique or ambition, to make further trial to establish the reality of that pretension. The high position which must have been given to him, could not but have excited discontent among the brave men who, in the dark day, had cast in their lot with David, and would have exposed him to the bitter taunt which Joab, at a later day, ventured to utter: "Thou hatest thy friends and lovest thine enemies!" Upon the whole, it seems well for David's peace that Abner was removed at this time, however the mode of his removal may be abhorred.

When Ishbosheth heard of Abner's death he gave up all for lost—not knowing that his death could not be more dangerous to the crown than his life would have been. The tribes were for the moment perplexed, less, it would seem, from any doubt as to the result, than because the conduct of their negotiation with David had been committed to Abner. They might also be under some doubt how to act with reference to Ishbosheth, who had been acknowledged as their king, and whose very feebleness of character prevented him from having any enemies, and rendered him an object of compassion. It is very probable that, unless some other strong man had risen up to maintain his cause, Ishbosheth would in a short time, when he came to comprehend the real state of the people's mind, have made a voluntary resig-

nation to David. But while men were talking together about these things, the news spread rapidly through the land that Ishbosheth also was dead.

It was even so. At his own court, his cause was despaired of, and men began to consider how to do best for themselves. Two officers of his guard, named Rechab and Baanah, formed the notion, that their advancement under the future king would be essentially promoted by their sweeping from his path the feeble life which seemed to lie between him and his destined throne. They therefore conspired to slay their master. In the heat of the day, when the king and most of the persons about were taking the repose customary in eastern lands, they entered the palace as if to procure some corn from the royal stores; and, penetrating to the private apartment in which Ishbosheth slumbered, they smote off his head, and bore it away undiscovered, probably placing it in the bag among the corn they had pretended to require. They posted away to Hebron with their prize, and presented the ghastly trophy of their crime to David, with the words,—“Behold the head of Ishbosheth the son of Saul, thine enemy, who sought thy life: and the Lord hath avenged my lord the king, this day, of Saul and of his seed.” These words were artfully concocted, to put David into a frame of mind favorable to their views. But it was in vain. The king was, for a moment, mute with horror and detestation. It was dreadful, that men should thus continually seek to win his favor by crimes which his soul abhorred. He spoke at last, and terrible were his words,—“As the Lord liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity, when one told me, saying, Saul is dead, I took hold of him and slew him in Ziklag; who thought I would have given him a reward for his tidings. How much more, when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house, in his bed? Shall I not therefore require his blood at your hands, and take you away from the earth?” He then immediately commanded them to be slain, and their hands and feet, the instruments and messengers of murder,

to be cut off and hanged up over the pool in Hebron, as monuments of the condign punishment of such frightful treachery. The head of Ishbosheth was honorably deposited in the tomb which had been prepared for Abner.

We have quoted at length the words of David, that we may be enabled to invite the reader to observe how finely his indignation is painted in that hurry and impetuosity of language, which carries him directly to the execution of the Amalekite, without waiting to mention any of the circumstances which tended to alleviate his guilt; and yet he adds, as if he had mentioned them all at large,—“How much more, when wicked men have slain a righteous person!” etc. If he had put the Amalekite to death for merely saying that he had slain Saul, even at his own command, and when he despaired of his own life, how much more would he take signal vengeance of their united treachery and murder? The Amalekite might have some ground of vengeance against Saul, in respect of the destruction he had wrought upon his nation; but what had they—the trusted servants of Ishbosheth, the appointed guardians of his life—what had they to allege against their master?

The conduct of David towards the murderers of one who was, at least officially, his chief public enemy, may well be compared with that of Alexander to the slayer of Darius, and contrasted with that of Antony to the assassins of Cicero. In the former case, when Darius found that Bessus was plotting against his life, he did his great enemy the credit of believing, that the traitor would fail to win from the generous conqueror the approbation and reward he expected. Nor was he mistaken in this. Alexander sternly and terribly rebuked the assassin,—“With what rage of a wild beast was thou possest, that thou durst first bind and then murder a sovereign to whom thou wast under the highest obligations?” and, rejecting his attempted extenuation of his crime with abhorrence, gave him over to the torture and death of the cross. On the same principle it was that Cæsar put to death the murderers of Pompey; and that the Romans sent

back the Faliscian schoolmaster under the lashes of his own scholars.

With all this, and especially with the conduct of David, contrast the behavior of a man of far meaner spirit, though of immortal name. Mark Antony caused Cicero to be most cruelly murdered, and commanded his head and right hand to be cut off and brought to him. When these melancholy memorials of that eloquent tongue and gifted intellect—able, one would think, to move the sternest enemy to tears—were laid before him, Antony beheld them with visible and avowed satisfaction, and even broke forth into peals of exulting laughter; and after he had fully satiated his indecent joy with the sight, he ordered the head to be placed upon the rostra of the Forum, to insult him yet more after his death.

The cutting off the murderers' hands and feet, is clearly intended as a real, though somewhat metaphorical, application of the *lex talionis*—the crimes which the hands or feet have committed, being punished by the excision of these members. It is remarkable that in our own law,—that is, in the letter of it,—such mutilation only remains as a punishment for offences against the majesty of the sovereign; the loss of the hand being ordained for striking within the limits of the king's court, or in the presence of his judicial representative. In the Book of Moses the *lex talionis*, "eye for eye, and tooth for tooth," is distinctly laid down; but we find no examples of its literal enforcement, unless in the instance of Adonizedek,* and in the present case, in which it is executed upon the dead body, as superadded to capital punishment. We infer from this, that, as among the Arabs of the present day, mutilations were generally commuted for pecuniary fines, so much being the assigned value of an eye, so much of a tooth, and so on. In fact, there is no history of ancient times, nor any of the modern East, in which we read so little of mutilations as in the Bible. At the present day, mutilating punishments are frequent among Orientals; and are inflicted, according to no definite rule, upon those

* Twenty-Second Week—Friday.

whose situation in life renders them subject to the immediate operations of arbitrary power. But in other cases, where the law is left to its regular action, the excision of the hand is usually for offences of the hand, as theft, forgery, etc. In some Mohammedan nations, as Persia, robbery and theft are punished with death, though the Moslem law directs only mutilation; and this law was formerly so much observed in Moslem countries, that, as the readers of the Thousand and One Nights will recollect, the loss of the hand was a permanent stain upon a man's character, as evincing that he had been punished for robbery or theft.

THIRTY-SIXTH WEEK—FRIDAY.

THE BLIND AND THE LAME.—II SAMUEL V. 1-10.

DAVID had reigned seven years and a half in Hebron, as king of Judah only, when a large concourse from all the tribes repaired thither to offer him the crown. There is a list of the numbers in 1 Chron. xii., by which the remarkable fact appears, that the remote northern tribes, and the tribes beyond the Jordan, among whom Ishbosheth had reigned, sent the largest numbers to this great assembly. The two and half tribes beyond the river, sent above a third of the whole number; and the two tribes of Zebulon and Asher nearly a fourth of the whole. This was natural, as the distant tribes could only be represented by the numbers they sent; whereas the nearer tribes might be regarded as present in their stationary population. This accounts for the fact, that the number assigned to the tribe of Judah, in which the cause of David was really most strong, is but small compared with many of the other tribes.

It is interesting to notice the grounds on which the elders offered him the crown.

He possessed the general but requisite qualification of

being one of themselves—"Thou art our bone and our flesh."

He had been in former times their leader, and had proved himself worthy to be their king: "In time past, when Saul was king, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel."

But above all, the Lord had nominated him to the kingdom: "The Lord said to thee, thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be captain over Israel." They knew this seven years ago, as well as they knew it then, and their acknowledgment is somewhat tardy. It is, however, satisfactory to find them so distinctly placing his nomination on this footing; and the acknowledgment of the constitutional validity of his claim to the throne is important.

David then "made a league with them in Hebron before the Lord." They had no intention of placing their rights at the disposal of the king. Certain conditions were agreed to on both sides, defining his rights and theirs; and where such conditions exist, the monarchy is constitutional, not absolute. The conditions were doubtless such as had been established by Samuel, forming something like a coronation oath—which all future kings seem to have taken at their accession, although the limitations it involved do not appear to have been very exactly observed by all of them—the tendency of all power in the East, however formally limited, being towards absolutism.

David was then anointed king over all Israel—being the third anointing he had received.

The king soon found that Hebron, although a very suitable capital for a realm confined to the tribe of Judah, was too far south to be a proper metropolis for a kingdom which embraced all the tribes. Yet he was reluctant to remove to a distance from his own tribe, on which he could most entirely rely. He, therefore, fixed upon Jerusalem (then called Jebus) which lay close upon the northern border of the tribe, but within the territories of Benjamin. Even this was scarcely central enough for the capital of all the tribes—but it was a naturally strong

situation, and the best that could be selected with regard to the limitation in view, and was far more accessible than Hebron to the northern and eastern tribes. We see something similar in Persia, where the political metropolis is of recent establishment, in a remote and unpleasant situation northward, while much finer sites, far larger towns, and old metropolitan cities, have been avoided—and this solely that the sovereign may be near his own tribe, and able to throw himself among his own people in time of peril. Considering, however, that this place was to become ere long the capital of a southern kingdom—it was no doubt the providence of God which directed a choice of a site suited to this ulterior destination.

But first Jerusalem was to be won. It was still in the hands of the Jebusites—at least the upper and fortified part, comprising Mount Zion. In the lower part, or the town as distinguished from the citadel, the Jebusites and Israelites (chiefly of Benjamin) seem to have lived intermingled. The fortress was so strong, and had been so long retained in their possession, that the Jebusites regarded it as impregnable, and derided all attempts to take it. This view of the case is conveyed in two verses, which have engaged much curious speculation. “The inhabitants of the land spake unto David,” saying, “*except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither. . . .*” And David said on that day, Whosoever getteth up to the gutter, and smiteth the Jebusites, and *the lame and the blind, which are hated of David’s soul*, the same shall be chief and captain; wherefore they said, *the lame and the blind shalt not come into the house.*” The question is, What is meant by “the blind and the lame?” A very common interpretation is, that these were actually blind and lame persons, to whom, in derision, the Jebusites gave the defence of the walls, as quite sufficient to protect them from the impotent assaults of David. This seems to us to leave much unexplained. Supposing the case so, why should David express such hatred and abhorrence of the poor creatures who were forced into this service? How does the act of *taking away* apply to such persons or any

persons—to kill them would have had a more obvious meaning. And again, citadels are not usually encumbered with useless hands—how, then, came there to be such blind and lame persons in the stronghold of the Jebusites? Upon the whole, in the presence of these objections to the other interpretation, we incline to accept that of the best Jewish commentators, who hold that idols were intended—idols of *brass* they say. This explains all—David's abhorrence—the taking of them away—and their presence in the fortress. But why called "the blind and the lame?" It is a fact that the sacred writers do in derision apply these terms to idols, because "they had eyes, but saw not; and feet, but walked not."

The meaning then will be, that the Jebusites relied so strongly upon the protection of their consecrated images, that they defied David to take the place until these should be removed—that is, never. They probably brought them forth, and placed them on the walls, for greater confidence, declaring they should not again be "brought into the house" of idols, so long as the enemy remained before the walls.

But it may be asked, What were the images in which so much faith was reposed by the Jebusites? It may be possible to answer this question.

The founders of ancient cities and fortresses, were wont to cause the astrologers to find out a fortunate position of the heavens under which the first stone might be laid. "The part of Fortune," fixed by this first figure, was made the "ascendant" of another. The first had respect to the continuance or duration of the place, and the second regarded its outward fortune and glory. Under the influence of the latter configuration, an image of brass was erected, *into* which this fortune and genius of the city was to be drawn and fixed by the powers of alleged occult arts. When imbued with this secret power, the image was set up in some eminent or retired place in the city, and was looked upon by the inhabitants as *embodying* the special power and protecting influence, on which the destiny and welfare of the place and its inhabitants depended.

Such ceremonies, and for such objects, are known to have taken place at the foundation of Alexandria by Alexander the Great, at the foundation of Antioch by Antiochus, of Apamea by Seleucus, as well as at the foundation of Rome, and of Byzantium, afterwards Constantinople.

It would seem that these solemnities were not completed without bloody rites. In the instance of Antioch, and this was probably the case elsewhere, a virgin was offered in sacrifice. A statue of this virgin was then set up, upon which the new and secret name of the city was imposed, and then sacrifice offered to this image.

The substance of this practice was retained in the East by both Moslems and Christians. The foundation of the city was still laid under astrological calculations—but its horoscope was not embodied in an idol but in a talisman, and the human sacrifices were discontinued. When old Byzantium was revived under the name of Constantinople, the statue of the emperor was set up, “holding in his right hand the fortune of the city.” A sacrifice was also offered, but not one of blood, nor to the fortune of the city, but “to God himself.”

These facts will remind the reader of the Palladium of Troy. It is also related by Olympiodorus, that while Valerius was governor of Thrace under the Emperor Constantius, certain silver images were laid up under the border line, between Thracia and Illyria, talismanically consecrated against the incursions of the barbarians.

Some curious examples of analogous practices of comparatively modern date, occur in quarters where we should least expect to find them. Thus, at the instauration of Rome in the time of Pope Paul the Third, Gauricus drew the figure of the heavens, while Vincentius Campanatius observed the time by his astrolabe, and at the proper moment cried out—“*Ecce, adest hora, præcisa decima sexta fere completa,*”—whereupon the Cardinal Ennius Verulannus immediately laid the first stone.

The exploit proposed by David was accomplished by Joab, who seems to have found his way into the fortress through

an aqueduct. Thus the stronghold which had been so long coveted by the Israelites fell into the hands of Joab, and the latter became chief commander of the armies of all Israel, as he had previously been of Judah alone. This was fortunate for him, as it is by no means certain that in his present frame of mind David would have given this large command to Joab ; and it is very likely that he had hoped in this way to supersede the claim of that brave and devoted, but rude and unscrupulous, man.

THIRTY-SIXTH WEEK—SATURDAY.

THE ARK.—II SAMUEL VI. ; I CHRON. XV.

DAVID having established himself at Jerusalem, was anxious that it should become the sacred city of all Israel, and as such, the centre of real union to all the tribes, who would have to repair thither periodically at the great yearly festivals. David knew that the Lord had of old promised to indicate a city which he should choose "to put his name there;" and David might from circumstances infer, that this was the intended city, if, indeed, he had not already received some intimation to that effect. This was certainly distinctly made known to him afterwards.

For the accomplishment of this object, it was necessary that the ark should be removed thither from Kirjath-jearim, where it had so long remained. David was careful to take measures that this removal should be accomplished with such high and solemn state as befitted the occasion, and as marked his own sense of its importance. Thirty thousand men, chosen out of all Israel to represent the tribes, were present, together with numerous musicians, and David himself was there playing upon his harp. It seems surprising that, instead of the proper and ancient mode of removing the ark, by

its being borne on the shoulders of the Levites,* the same mode was adopted as that followed in a former day by the Philistines, who had not the same means of correct information. It was placed on a new cart, which was drawn by oxen. They had not proceeded far, not farther than to Nachon's threshing-floor, than the ark received a jolt that endangered its overthrow; on which Uzzah, in whose charge it had been, and still was, during its removal, hastily put forth his hand to steady it, and immediately fell dead on the spot. This seems a hard judgment upon him for a well-meant and natural movement. David himself seems to have felt it to be such at the moment, and till he had leisure to reflect upon it. He was, indeed, so greatly distressed and alarmed, that he for the time abandoned his intention, and caused the ark to be deposited in the nearest house, which happened to be that of Obed-edom the Gittite—that is, of Gath, and the lately exulting thousands dispersed themselves, sad and downcast, to their homes.

We have already explained our impression† as to the essential necessity, that, for his own honor, for the welfare of his people, and for the integrity of the institutions he had committed to them, the Lord should rigidly exact a proper and ordained reverence for the sacred symbols. If at all necessary, there was never an occasion in which it could be more so than on this great public solemnity; and when, moreover, the due ordinances of Divine worship were about to be re-established and enforced with greater state and honor, than had been known since the twelve tribes, in their innumerable hosts, encamped around the tabernacle in the wilderness. Now, Uzzah being a Levite, ought to have known that it was altogether irregular, and against the ritual law, to remove the ark in this manner, which the entire absence of carriage roads

* The Levites were not allowed to *touch* the ark, but after the priests had covered it up, the Levites might carry it by the staves. The priests could also, of course, carry it, and did so at times, but it was not their regular duty.

† See Thirty-First Week—Monday.

rendered peculiarly unbecoming. It is very likely that the responsibility of this matter had been left by the king to him—as having been so long in charge of the ark, he might naturally be supposed to have made himself particularly acquainted with the observances connected with it. The priests and other Levites had been long separated from the ark, and not having had charge of it for two generations, might be supposed to have less carefully acquainted themselves with what belonged to the occasion. It is also probable, that they were not consulted, nor knew of the arrangements made by Uzzah, until they came with David to take part in the procession. There might then be a natural hesitation in objecting, even on the part of the few who knew or suspected the irregularity of the proceeding. We may, therefore, regard this irregularity as part of the error for which this man was punished—a very essential part of it also—for had not this irregularity been allowed, the accident which followed could not have taken place.

There is reason to suspect that Uzzah had allowed his mind to regard the ark in too familiar a point of view, during the years it had been in his charge in a private house, and was not suitably impressed with the reverence exacted by a symbol, with which the Divine presence was so closely connected. From the example of one who had been so long in charge of it, this familiarity would gather strength, if not at once and decisively checked, and becoming reverence to the ark of the Lord enforced. Such familiarity he indicated by laying his hand upon the ark to steady it when the oxen stumbled. By the ritual ordinances, it was forbidden to the simple Levite to touch the ark under pain of death—and Uzzah was only a Levite. He either knew this, or he did not know it. If he did not know it, he was punishable for his ignorance of a restriction so important; and which belonged so directly to his official duties; if he did know it, he was punishable for his irreverent disobedience of so stringent an injunction.

But it may be urged, the ark might have fallen if he had not steadied it. We think not so. He thought so, and that

also was another of his errors, in supposing that God was not able to protect and insure from falling his own ark, before which Dagon had fallen. But supposing that it had been overturned, would not Uzzah have been as liable to punishment for suffering that, as for taking forbidden means of preventing it? Surely not. He might have been punishable for adopting a mode of conveyance which exposed the ark to such an accident, but not for omitting what he was forbidden to do, in order to prevent that accident.

This is not all that might be said to show that there was a painful necessity that this judgment should be inflicted. When the act, light as it seems, is considered in all its consequences, and when we reflect what an encouragement the impunity of this offence might have been for the introduction of other innovations, it is not to be wondered at that the Lord should manifest his displeasure at this offence, by inflicting the punishment he had denounced against it, thus discouraging any future attempts to make alterations in the theocratical institutions which he had established.

In time David came to view this matter in its proper light, and having, three months after, heard that the household of Obed-edom had been greatly blessed since the ark had been deposited with him, he was encouraged to resume his design. This time everything was conducted in a proper manner—"None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites," said David, "for them hath the Lord chosen to carry the ark of God; and to minister unto him forever." And so again, in directing the chief Levites to prepare themselves for this service, he said, "Because ye did it not at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, because we sought him not after the due order." The marred solemnity of the former ceremonial was magnificently exceeded by this. The concourse was greater, the musicians in greater and better organized force, and the king himself divested of his royal raiment, and wearing a linen ephod, such as the Levites wore, headed with his harp the sacred choir, accompanied by

those movements of the body which are called "dancing" in the East.

The ark was placed in a tent which David had prepared to receive it, and burnt-offerings and peace-offerings were then largely offered, for the first time in Jerusalem. When these religious solemnities were performed, the king "blessed the people in the name of the Lord;" and then himself superintended the distribution to the assembled thousands of the bountiful fare he had provided for them. Every one, man and woman, receiving a "loaf of bread, a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine." He then went home "to bless his own house also." But there a discordant element had found entrance. Saul's daughter Michal had witnessed the proceedings from a window, and when she saw that David had laid aside his royal state altogether, that he might take an active part in the proceedings, "she despised him in her heart."

In the East, women have not much the gift of concealing their sentiments; and Michal hid not hers. David kindled at her sarcasms; he detected the affected superiority of the "king's daughter," and the artificial exaltations of royalty in the words she uttered; and with grave and solemn warmth he said: "It was before the Lord, who chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel; therefore will I play before the Lord, and will yet be more vile than this, and will be base in my own sight." He thus plainly gave her to understand that it was possible she took too much upon her—that it was not to her, or to the influence of her house, that he owed his crown, but to the simple gift of Jehovah, whose he was, and whom he served. This sort of spirit evinced by Michal on this occasion, was punished by her having no children, through whom, as it might have happened, the line of Saul would again attain to sovereign power. Whether this result is to be interpreted as a special judgment from God, or is to be referred to the displeasure which this unseemly altercation left on the mind of David, we are not informed.

It has been questioned why David provided a new tent for the ark at Jerusalem, when the old tabernacle (together with the altar of burnt-offerings) was not far off at Gibeon, and might easily have been brought to Jerusalem. It is conjectured that the once-splendid hangings of the wilderness tent had become old and faded, and David hence deemed a new one more becoming. But it is incredible that the hangings of a tent, open to the air, had so long remained in use. They had probably been more than once renewed. It is, therefore, more probable that since David had now two high-priests, neither of whom he could depose—the one, Abiathar, who had been attached to his person from the commencement of his troubles, and the other, Zadok, who had been set up by Saul, and who was really of the elder line—the king found it expedient to keep up the establishment at Gibeon, to afford the latter the opportunity of exercising his functions without interfering with the other, who superintended the new establishment at Jerusalem. This state of matters remained during all the reigns of David. The king, probably, could not remove Zadok, had he been so minded, without displeasing the ten tribes, who had been accustomed to his ministrations. But he had probably no wish to do so, as we soon find Zadok very high in his favor and esteem.

Thirty-Seventh Week—Sunday.

THE ENTRANCE SONG.—PSALM XXIV.

It is universally admitted that the twenty-fourth Psalm was composed, and, as we now say, set to music, to be used on the occasion of the removal of the ark, and sung in the procession. The tenor of this noble canticle renders this purpose of it very manifest; and a closer examination may

enable us to understand it better, and to appreciate it more distinctly.

It will be seen that it is written to be chanted in responsive parts, with two choruses. To comprehend it fully it should be understood that Jerusalem, as the city of God, was by the Jews regarded as a type of heaven. It so occurs in the Apocalypse, whence we have adopted it in our poetical and devotional aspirations. The court of the tabernacle was the quarter of the Lord's more immediate residence—the tabernacle his palace, and the ark his throne. With this leading idea in mind, the most cursory reader—if there be such as cursory readers of the Bible—cannot fail to be struck with the beauty and sublimity of this composition, and its exquisite suitableness to the occasion.

The chief musician, who seems to have been in this case the king himself, appears to have begun the sacred lay with a solemn and sonorous recital of these sentences :

“The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof;
The world, and they that dwell therein.
For he hath founded it upon the seas,
And established it upon the floods.”

The chorus of vocal music appears to have then taken up the song, and sung the same words in a more tuneful and elaborate harmony ; and the instruments and the whole chorus of the people fell in with them, raising the mighty declaration to heaven. There is much reason to think that the people, or a large body of them, were qualified or instructed to take their part in this great ceremonial. The historical text says, “David, and *all Israel with him, played upon all manner of instruments,*” etc.

We may presume that the chorus then divided, each singing in their turns, and both joining at the close—

“For he hath founded it upon the seas,
And established it upon the floods.”

This part of the music may be supposed to have lasted until the procession reached the foot of Zion, or came in sight of it, which, from the nature of the enclosed site, cannot be till one comes quite near to it. Then the king must be supposed to have stepped forth, and begun again, in a solemn and earnest tone—

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?
Or who shall stand in his holy place?”

To which the first chorus responds—

“He that hath clean hands and a pure heart,
Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.”

And then the second chorus—

“He shall receive the blessing from the Lord,
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.”

This part of the sacred song may, in like manner, be supposed to have lasted till they reached the gate of the city, when the king began again in this grand and exalted strain—

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates,
And be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors,
That the King of Glory* may come in!”

repeated then, in the same way as before, by the general chorus.

The persons having charge of the gates on this high occasion ask—

“Who is this King of Glory?”

To which the first chorus answers—

“It is Jehovah, strong and mighty—
Jehovah mighty in battle,”

which the second chorus then repeats in like manner as before, closing with the grand universal chorus,

* That is, “Glorious King.”

“He is the King of Glory! He is the King of Glory!”

We must now suppose the instruments to take up the same notes, and continue them to the entrance to the court of the tabernacle. There the king again begins—

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates,
And be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors,
That the King of Glory may come in!”

This is followed and answered as before—all closing, the instruments sounding, the chorus singing, the people shouting—

“He is the King of Glory!”

“How others may think upon this point,” says Dr. Delany, “I cannot say, nor pretend to describe; but for my own part, I have no notion of hearing, or of any man’s ever having seen or heard, anything so great, so solemn, so celestial, on this side the gates of heaven.”

Christian preachers and poets have delighted to apply this noble psalm to our Lord’s ascension; and in this application there is certainly much force and beauty. None has produced this application with more triumphant energy, than Young, whose “Night Thoughts” is, with all its faults, a wonderful poem, which will, we doubt not, in no long time, recover more than all the popularity it once possessed. This is the passage, which he who has read once, forgets not soon—

“In his blessed life
I see the path, and in his death the price,
And in his great ascent the proof supreme,
Of immortality. And did he rise?
Hear, O ye nations! hear it, O ye dead!
He rose! he rose! he burst the bars of death,
Lift up your heads, ye everlasting gates!
And give the King of Glory to come in.
Who is the King of Glory? He who left
His throne of glory for the pangs of death.

Lift up your heads, ye everlasting gates !
 And give the King of Glory to come in
 Who is the King of Glory ? He who slew
 The ravenous foe that gorged all human race.
 The King of Glory, He whose glory filled
 Heaven with amazement at his love to man,
 And with divine complacency beheld
 Powers most illumined 'wildered in the theme."

There is yet another application, and which, indeed, as Hengstenberg remarks, is not so much an application as a translation. The Psalmist addresses the gates of Zion, and commands them to open that the glorious King may enter in. What in the first instance was only a poetical figure, becomes within the spiritual domain a reality. What the *external* gates would have done, if they had been endued with reason, will in reality be performed by *hearts* which are capable of comprehending the majesty and glory of the approaching King. Here the doors and gates will in reality open. They will give to the King that wide and ready entrance, which once they gave to the world and to sin. Happy they who have heard the summons, and who have been able to open wide the portals of the heart, that the King of Glory might come in and take possession of it wholly—saying,

“ Welcome, great Guest ; this house, mine heart,
 Shall all be thine ;
 I will resign
 Mine interest in ev'ry part :
 Only be pleased to use it as thine own
 Forever, and inhabit it alone.”—QUARLES.

THIRTY-SEVENTH WEEK—MONDAY.

COMMERCE AND ARTS.—II SAMUEL V. 11-13.

IN the measures taken by David to render his new conquest of Jerusalem a metropolis worthy of the importance of his

kingdom, he became sensible of the deficiency of his subjects in the arts of construction and design. The position of the Israelites had not been favorable to the progress of such arts. Dwelling-houses ready to their hands, they had acquired by conquest—sufficient to meet the wants of the two or three first generations; and those that were subsequently required, were doubtless built after the same models. This was the case also with fortresses—the Israelites probably gaining possession of more than they found it necessary to maintain, and had certainly no occasion to build new ones. These were the only public buildings of which we read. In fact, there was never any people who had less need of public buildings than the Israelites, down to the time of David. They were precluded from having any temples, like other nations in almost every town—by the regulation which restricted the solemn ritual worship to one place. Palaces there could be none in the absence of any great princes, lords, and sovereigns, having power beyond the narrow limits of the several tribes; the power of the “judges” being merely personal, precluded them from building palaces for themselves, and the office being only occasional, the state would find no inducement to build grand residences for them. Besides, they were men of simple habits; and even the great chiefs of the tribes were eminent rather from their position than for their wealth—large possessions in land being prevented by the manner in which the territory was divided among all the families of Israel. These circumstances, together with the simply agricultural habits of the population west of the Jordan, and the pastoral habits of those to the east, were highly unfavorable to any progress in the constructive arts; and we do not see any indications of advance in them, until some time after the monarchy had been established.

Thus it is that David found himself in danger of being stopped in his intended improvements by the inability of his subjects to carry out his designs. From this difficulty he was relieved by the establishment of a friendly intercourse with the Phœnicians of Tyre, which proved of great advantage

to both parties. The Phœnicians excelled in the arts in which the Israelites were deficient; and a good understanding with their neighbors of the interior was very important to them. Their narrow slip of maritime territory, full of cities, and their preference for the more lucrative pursuits of commerce and manufacture, left them but little opportunity or inclination for agricultural pursuits; while the wants of their dense population rendered the corn, wine, and oil which the interior so abundantly afforded, a most important source of supply to them. For this, they could furnish the Hebrews with the various products of their large commerce, and the commodities of their own manufacture. The possession of so valuable a market for their surplus produce was no less important to the Israelites. This kind of intercourse had probably existed almost from the first, and it accounts for the remarkable fact that the Phœnicians are the only neighboring nation with whom the Israelites never had any war. The frequently depressed state of the country, and its repeated subjection to foreign powers, had seemingly prevented the adequate development of this interchange of advantages until the time of David, when the establishment of a powerful general government, and the impulse given to industry by continued peace (after the neighboring nations had been reduced), gave a great impulse to the productive industry of the people, which was much stimulated by the easy access to so excellent a market as that of Tyre—always ready and glad to take, at amply remunerating prices, whatever raw produce their neighbors could raise. This enabled the Israelites to possess themselves in large abundance of the various foreign commodities which abounded in the Phœnician markets, while their diffusion through the land produced a marked change for the better in the attire, the arms and armor, the dwellings, the furniture, the domestic utensils, and probably the agricultural implements, of the Hebrews. Of this we find frequent indications in the later historical books of Scripture, and in the writings of the prophets. We call this a change for the better, for whatever

be said in favor of simple and rude habits, it will hardly at this day be disputed, that whatever stimulates the industry of the people, urges them to make two stalks of corn grow where but one grew before, and enlarges their social comfort by bringing* to them the products of other lands, and furnishing them with the appliances of human ingenuity and art—is a real advantage to them.

What was a convenience to the Hebrews, became in time a vital necessity to the Phœnicians, and always continued to be such. So late as the time of the Acts of the Apostles, we find the Phœnicians of Tyre taking the most earnest and even humiliating means of overcoming some resentment that Herod Agrippa had conceived against them, and why? "Because their country was nourished by the king's country," Acts xii. 20. Their joy indeed was so exuberant at the restoration of a good understanding, so important for this reason to them, that, being heathens, they scarcely stopped short of rendering him divine honors, for accepting which with complacency he was, in the righteous judgment of God, smitten with the terrible disease of which he died.

From this the reader will understand the anxiety which the Phœnician princes always showed to cultivate friendly relations with the Israelitish kings. It is not until David becomes king over all Israel that this is brought into prominent notice. While he was king only of Judah, his power was too limited to the south to offer much advantage to this people; but his authority is no sooner extended northward, than a friendly mission of congratulation is sent to him by Hiram king of Tyre. No doubt there had been previous relations between them and the northern tribes, and we think we can trace the existence of such an intercourse with Saul in the fact that he, greatly to the disgust of the Israelites, gave to a son the name of Eshbaal (man of Baal), and to a grandson the name of Meribaal (strife of Baal), which Baal was the chief god of the Phœnicians. The disgust of the people with these names may be conceived from the fact, that in order to avoid pronouncing the name of this idol,

they ordinarily changed the first into Ishbosheth (*man of shame*), and Mephibosheth (perhaps *mouth of shame*). These names might indeed open ground for more inquiry into the nature of Saul's religious sentiments, after his rupture with Samuel, than we can now enter into.

The messengers of king Hiram were well received by David, and when the former understood the nature of the difficulty the king of Israel labored under in the prosecution of his improvements, he agreed to furnish cedar wood from Lebanon, which was highly valued as a timber for building, with an adequate supply of skilled artificers—masons and carpenters—under whose hands soon arose on Mount Zion a royal palace for the habitation of the king, being such as had not hitherto been seen in Israel. A similar arrangement at a later period, in regard to the temple, will enable us to look more closely into the nature of this treaty.

THIRTY-SEVENTH WEEK—TUESDAY.

THE PHILISTINE WARS.—II SAMUEL V. 17-25; VIII. 1.

THE Philistines had kept themselves quiet so long as David was king of Judah alone, and found sufficient employment for his resources in upholding himself against the designs of Abner. But when he became king over all Israel—when he reigned without a rival, and all the resources of the nation were in such strong hands, they became alarmed. Still they moved not until after the success of his attempt to gain possession of Jerusalem. This they seem to have interpreted as an indication of aggressive policy, not to be by them regarded with indifference—especially as it is highly probable that the dispossessed Jebusites were allies of theirs. Seeing that war would in no long time be inevitable, they deemed it best to take the initiative, and to march against Jerusalem at once, without, by longer delay, allowing the

king to consolidate a power which would, as they supposed, be eventually employed for their destruction. Military men will say this was a wise policy, seeing that in war the offensive attitude has many advantages over a defensive one.

The Philistines then appeared in great force upon the high plain of Rephaim to the south, or rather south-west, of Mount Zion, where they encamped. David could not behold this sight unmoved, and he was deeply sensible of the importance of the occasion. It was a question with him whether to remain in Jerusalem, until the force of the tribes could be brought into operation, or at once march out against them. He inquired of the Lord by the usual means, and being assured of victory, he marched against the embattled host of the Philistines, with all the confidence which such an intimation was calculated to awaken in the breast of a man of his unwavering faith. Apprized of this movement, the Philistines advanced to meet him, and were repulsed by David, who obtained possession of the images of their gods, which they left behind them, and which were committed by his orders to the flames. From this it would appear that these idols were of wood, and were probably attached to the standards, like the Roman eagles. By this, as well as by the expression of his abhorrence of the "blind and lame" idols of the Jebusites, David afforded sufficient evidence that he regarded hostility to idolatry as belonging to the functions of his office, being the only indication of practical hostility against the gods of the heathen, when not introduced for worship among the Israelites, that has hitherto appeared. The Philistines had dealt very differently with the ark—which they regarded as the God of the Israelites—having, as being themselves polytheists and idolaters, no objection on principle to recognize it as a god. But, apart from the true Mosaical dislike to all idolatrous images, the step taken by David was one of great prudence, as it might be feared that the Israelites, from their deplorable propensity to adopt the worship of foreign idols, might themselves be ensnared by such dangerous trophies, if allowed to be preserved.

David called the name of the place where this transaction occurred *Baal-perazim*, "Lord of breaches," for the reason which is assigned—"God hath broken in upon mine enemies by my hand, like the breaking in of waters," 1 Chron. xvi. 11; or, as in 2 Sam. v. 20, "The Lord hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters;" or rather, perhaps, as this may be translated, "God hath broken or divided mine enemies as waters are broken." This is as fine an image, perhaps finer, than any in Homer. It is familiar with David to consider a host of enemies as a great flood or sea, ready to break in and overwhelm him with its waves: thus—"The sorrows of death compassed me, the floods of ungodly men made me afraid;" "They came round about me like water, and compassed me together on every side;" "The floods are risen, O Lord; the floods have lift up their voice; the floods have lift up their waves."* But in the present instance, an army coming up in one vast body, broken in upon by a brave enemy, put to flight, and in their flight scattered into a great many broken parties, is finely compared to a vast flood or body of water broken or dispersed into many streams. Nothing is more common with Homer than to describe an army under the image of a flood of waters, wave impelling wave. Many instances of this might be indicated, but one will suffice:

"As when the waves, by Zephyrus up-heaved,
 Crowd fast towards some sounding shore, at first,
 On the broad bosom of the deep, their heads
 They curl on high, then breaking on the land
 Thunder, and o'er the rocks that breast the flood,
 Borne turgid, scatter far the showery spray;
 So moved the Greeks successive, rank by rank,
 And phalanx after phalanx."—ILLIAD, iv. 78.

But Homer has nowhere painted, like David, the rout of an army under the image of a flood of waters, broken and dispersed by a storm.

* Psalm xviii. 4; lxxxviii. 17; xciii. 3.

Although repulsed, the Philistines were not discouraged. After an interval of uncertain duration, they re-appear in the plain of Rephaim, probably with increased force, for all David's language in reference to this incursion implies that their numbers were great. Once more the sacred oracle was consulted, and this time he was forbidden to go out and assail them in front, but to fetch a compass, and to come out secretly behind them over against a certain mulberry plantation, which it would seem stood in the rear of the enemy's camp. He was to remain quiet till he heard "the sound of a going upon the tops of the mulberry trees"—a sound probably like the rush of a mighty host to battle—which was to be a signal to him that the Divine power was moving forth to destroy and defeat his enemies; and then he was to march out against them. It was, doubtless, to assure his faith that the Lord wrought for him, that this sensible token of the Divine assistance—which he was always ready to acknowledge—was graciously afforded to him.

The king followed these directions most implicitly, and the enemy hearing, it would seem, the sound of a mighty army in their rear, which they might easily imagine to be even more numerous and formidable than that led by David, and which appeared at the very moment these sounds were heard, fell into panic and confusion, and were easily put to the rout. The victors pursued them hard for many long miles, even to the frontier of their own territory. From this the Philistines learned that they were not able to contend with the king of Israel single-handed, and however they might dread the increase of his power, they had no means of keeping it in check. They found that it would therefore be their wisest policy to remain quiet in future. But after a time David himself became the aggressor in his turn, by invading Philistia. That he was entirely successful we know; but the exact character of his success we are not told. He probably left them under tribute, retaining in his hands some frontier fortresses to hold them under control. The fortress called Metheg-Ammah, or Bridle of Ammah, is particularly named,

the acquisition of it being probably the most important result of the expedition. This is explained in Chronicles to denote, "Gath and her towns."

THIRTY-SEVENTH WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

THE THRONE ESTABLISHED.—II SAMUEL VII.

DAVID, dwelling in the new, and for the age magnificent, palace built by the Phœnician craftsmen, was one day struck with compunction at his thought that the ark of God was still much worse lodged than himself. It still remained within curtains, as in its wilderness state; and surely it was by this time proper that it should have a fixed abode. He mentioned this notion to Nathan, who, seeing that it redounded to the glory of God, at once expressed the warmest approbation of it.

It is remarkable, that although, as the result shows, this was no more than his private opinion, he spoke with great confidence, as if in his capacity of a prophet.—"Go, do all that is in thine heart, for the Lord is with thee." He had to learn, however, that even the obviousness of a thing to human conception, did not excuse a prophet from the duty of consulting the Lord before he declared an authoritative opinion. The very next night the word of the Lord came to him with a message for David. It was declared that his intention was commendable and highly pleasing to God. Yet, as he had been a man of war from his youth, and had shed much blood, it was not intended that he should build this temple; but the undertaking was to be reserved to glorify the peaceful reign of his successor. This is not, indeed, the reason assigned in the leading accounts; but it is mentioned by David in his dying address to the people,* and by Solomon at the dedication of the temple.† Nevertheless, the

* 1 Chron. xxviii. 37.

† 1 Kings v. 3.

laudable zeal for the Lord's honor, in which this conception originated, was highly approved, and received the rich reward of a promise of a succession to the throne in his house, and an eternal kingdom for his posterity. This promise referred, doubtless, in the first instance, to the temporal kingdom; but it also looked beyond the spiritual reign of Christ, and, from the value David set upon this promise, it is clear that he had some conception, not only of its immediate, but of its more extensive import. Indeed, the Jews have since then always believed that the Meſſiah was to come of the line of David. They believed it in the time of our Lord, and they believe it now. Even in its merely temporal expectation, the promise was of the utmost importance to David. It assured him of the perpetuity of his dynasty as kings over Israel. Saul had sinned, and had been cast out; but if David's children sinned, they were not to incur this penalty, but should receive the chastisement of children from a Father's hand. Practically, then, all the succeeding kings of the line of David were chosen and appointed by the Divine King, and ascended the throne under the sanction involved in this covenant with their father, which is often referred to in later times, and which the kings strove, very properly, to keep before the minds of the people as the best security of their own power. But although the Lord, in order to show his favor to David, and to glorify the family from which his ANOINTED was to come, gave up, so to speak, the right of changing the *dynasty*, the imperial right of nominating the *individual* was reserved. The heir by primogeniture might in general succeed to the throne; but in case the Lord saw fit to indicate any other member of the family, the individual so nominated acquired the right to the throne. To show that this was to be the rule of the kingdom, the Lord saw fit to exercise the right so reserved in the very first instance,—Solomon, one of David's younger sons, being preferred to his elder brothers. But the principle having been in this case established, the succession was afterwards allowed to follow the usual course. This right of interference with

what, according to our notions, would be the just claim of the first-born, had not any of that harshness which to us it may seem to bear. The law of primogeniture is by no means so rigid in Western Asia as it is in Europe; nor does the first-born hold any right, which the will of the father may not take away and assign to another son. Hence, although the first-born does commonly succeed, it is not unusual in oriental history for the eldest to be passed over, and a younger but more able, or more favored son, to be recognized as the heir. We have seen this instanced in our own time in countries no less important than Persia and Egypt. The father appears to have possessed this right—which, indeed, is inherent to kingly power in the East—under the Hebrew monarchy, except where the Divine indication of a successor had been afforded. That indication the king was bound to enforce; and it is probable, that the necessary subjection of any change in the order of the succession to the approval of the Divine King, was the cause that, although the abstract right of the sovereign to appoint any of his sons to the succession subsisted, it was much more rarely exercised than in most other monarchies of the East.

The gracious promise thus given to David filled his heart with irrepressible joy and gratitude. “He went in and sat before the Lord,” to give vent to his strong emotions. It was to the tabernacle, of course, that he went; and his “sitting,” which to our notions may seem scarcely an adequately reverent posture, which was no doubt that position between kneeling and sitting—kneeling first upon the ground, and then sitting back upon the heels, which is counted a very respectful posture in the East, as in fact one of the attitudes of Mohammedan worship. The words are very beautiful, and we cannot refrain from citing a few of them, that mark the sentiments with which the heart of this good and pious king received a promise of such great interest and importance to him. “Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was but a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; but thou

hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come. And what can David say more unto thee? for thou, Lord God, knowest thy servant. . . . And now, O Lord God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant and concerning his house, establish it forever, and do as thou hast said. . . . For thou, O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee. . . . Therefore let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue forever before thee; for thou, O Lord God hast spoken it; and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed forever."

Dr. Delany says of this: "To my eye, the workings of a breast oppressed and overflowing with gratitude, are painted stronger in this prayer than I ever observed them in any other instance. It is easy to see that his heart was wholly possessed with a subject which he did not know how to quiet, because he did not know how to do justice to the inestimable blessings poured down upon himself and promised to his posterity; much less to the infinite bounty of his Benefactor."

THIRTY-SEVENTH WEEK—THURSDAY.

THE DECIMATION OF MOAB.—I SAMUEL VIII. 2.

SEEING David had formerly been on such terms with the king of Moab, that he felt he could with confidence commit his parents to his care, we are somewhat unprepared to find him turning his hand against the Moabites, and treating them with great severity.

The Jewish writers imagine, that the king of Moab had put the parents of David to death. But this is of no authority, being a mere conjecture devised to meet the exigencies of the

case. No cause is stated. An occasion may have existed, or may not—for a real or ostensible *casus belli* is by no means so essential to oriental warfare as it is in the West. Every sovereign is held justified in aggrandizing his power at the expense of his neighbors, whenever a suitable opportunity offers; and if he feels strong enough, and sees that they are weak enough, to afford him a prospect of success. This was the rule on which all the neighboring powers acted towards Israel; and there is no reason why we, with our later, our western, and our christian notions, should exact from Israel alone an adequate cause of war—adequate in our view, for all its military enterprises. The silence of Scripture does not, however, prove that no justificatory cause existed. It is more than probable, that the relations of the tribes beyond the Jordan with their neighbors had become complicated, and needed the interposition of the sovereign power. If Dr. Delany is right in assigning to this period the Eighty-third Psalm, which is usually ascribed to the time of Jehoshaphat, there had been a confederacy of all the neighboring nations to put down the rising power of Israel, which the king resents, and punishes by assailing, one after another, all the states which belonged to this confederacy. Certain it is, that all the hostile powers which David reduced, even the Philistines, are named in the confederacy described in that Psalm. The campaign against Moab is very concisely related, and in words which have excited much speculation. “He smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; even with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive. So the Moabites became David’s servants, and brought gifts.”

There have been many translations of, and criticisms on, this text, with the view of finding an interpretation less harsh than that generally received, and which is conveyed in the authorized version—that David put to death a large proportion of his prisoners of war. We have repeatedly examined this text with much attention, and have always been led to conclude, that the real meaning of it is conveyed by our ver-

sion, and that no new translation of it is needed. There may still be some question about the form in which this judgment was executed. Some think the line marked out the sections of the country whose inhabitants were to be destroyed; but others conceive that the prisoners of war were made to lie down, and a line extended so as to mark off about two thirds of the whole mass, and these were to be devoted to destruction, and the remainder spared. This was merely a rough substitution for counting them off, which probably their great numbers would have rendered a tedious and slow operation; but, that they might not suffer by the roughness of this mode of marking them out, the line was so drawn as palpably to make the proportion marked off to be spared by much the largest of the three thirds, which is doubtless the meaning of the "full line to save alive." Now this is undoubtedly a shocking transaction, as most of the usages of ancient warfare are, when we come to look on them closely, and as our own war usages will, we doubt not, appear when our posterity comes to look upon them through a much shorter interval of time than has elapsed since the wars of David. The question is not, whether this conduct of David to the Moabites was shocking, barbarous, and cruel,—seeing that this is true of all ancient warfare, and is, although in a less degree, true of even modern warfare, and in fact of all warfare,—but it is, whether this conduct of his was conformable to the war usages of the time in which he lived, and of the people with whom he had to do? and whether this measure which seems to us so terrible, was or was not shocking in the eyes of David's contemporaries? In reference to a case in which *all* the prisoners except the female children were destroyed by the express order of Moses himself,* we have shown that the necessity existed, that unless the Israelites chose to wage war at disadvantage and with maimed hands, it was necessary that they should wage it on the principles recognized by the nations with whom they were brought into conflict, and deal out to them the same measure which they received from them.

* Twentieth Week—Monday.

In the first wars, the conquerors gave no quarter at all, but destroyed all their enemies, without distinction of age or sex. Prisoners were also destroyed in the same manner. This was the ancient war law. But by the law of Moses, the Israelites were forbidden to enforce it except in aggravated cases, like the one to which reference has just been made, and except as regarded the devoted nations of Canaan. In process of time, men began to perceive that they might safely gratify the natural impulse to spare helpless women and children, and even secure an advantage in so doing, by retaining them for the discharge of servile offices, or selling them to those who had need of their services. At first, this degree of mercy was limited to women and female children, as it was considered that the boys might grow up to avenge their fathers, or at least to prove troublesome; but eventually the male children also were spared. It was to this point that men had come in the time of David, of Homer, and even of Moses. It had been probably the practice of Egypt to spare the male prisoners, owing to the great demand for servile labor in that country; and Moses, in enforcing it with respect to all but the devoted nations, probably went beyond the practice of Syria and Arabia, in which the old custom still prevailed. In expeditions against all nations but these, the whole were to be spared if they submitted without fighting, and consented to tribute. But in case they resisted, and were taken in arms, the men so taken were to be put to death. Now, the Moabites were not of the devoted nations, and came therefore under the general law, as laid down by Moses, in conformity with the usages of the time. That law was certainly transgressed by David in the present case, but it was on the side of leniency, not of severity; and we are fully persuaded that it is for the very purpose of marking his humane consideration for the Moabites, contrary to all the rules of warfare in that age, the fact is mentioned, which has been fastened upon by thoughtless persons as a proof of his harshness. There can be no doubt, we think, that every man among the Moabitish prisoners fully expected to be put to

death; and that the exemption of a large third was received as an act of unparalleled grace and mercy on the part of David.

It may indeed be asked, Why, since he had made up his mind to save one third of the prisoners, he might not as well have saved the whole? Nothing is easier than to ask, Why, if a person does one thing, he does not also do another. There is no end of such questions; for they may be applied to any case in which an alternative is possible. David intended his war to produce a certain result—to be effectual not only for the present, but with reference to future undertakings. This result, he thought, might not be compromised by his sparing a portion of the prisoners, but might be so to a serious extent if, by sparing the whole, the enemies he had yet to subdue were led to presume upon his leniency, and to expect from him a degree of forbearance which was not known in that age, and which they were not themselves in the habit of showing to those whom they overcame. The war usages of this part of the world, were in ancient times notoriously barbarous, and retained their severity long after they had been considerably mollified among other nations. Thus the Carthaginians, who were of Canaanitish origin, and retained the usages of Canaan, were reprobated for their severities to prisoners by the Romans, although the latter were themselves, according to our notions, by no means the most gentle of conquerors.

THIRTY-SEVENTH WEEK—FRIDAY.

THE GREAT WAR.—I SAMUEL VIII. 3-12.

ALL the enemies with whom David had been hitherto engaged, have been of the small neighboring nations, well known to us from the frequency with which their names have occurred in the sacred history. But we next find the king of

Israel leading his forces against a more distant and formidable enemy than any against which his arms had been hitherto directed. The particulars given are few, and such as rather excite than satisfy our curiosity. The inferences deducible from the facts stated, are, however, very important and interesting to those who like to explore the precious fragments of foreign history preserved in the amber of the sacred pages.

Hadadezer king of Zobah—by which we are, perhaps, to understand the Zobathites, as no such place as Zobah is known—had established a great power in Syria, which extended into northern Mesopotamia, if indeed it did not originate there, and spread thence westward. This power was achieved apparently by the subjection of the various small states which lay between Lebanon and the Euphrates. It is questioned where the metropolitan seat of this power lay. The Syrian writers, followed by Christian commentators, say, it was at Nisibis, beyond the Euphrates; while the Jews place it at Helbon, the modern Haleb or Aleppo—Damascus was absorbed in this realm, but was not its metropolitan seat. The object of this conquering and aggressive power must have been to push westward to the sea, and that being done, the south-west—forming the dominion of David, would not long have been left unmolested. Against this westward progress, were opposed the double chain of the Lebanon mountains, and the arms of Toi, king of Hamath. The city of Hamath which gave name to this kingdom, still known by this name, was, in a later age, called by the Greeks Epiphania. It lay away north upon the river Orontes, about midway between Aleppo and Damascus—but the dominion extended southward through the great plain, called the Hollow Syria (Cœlesyria), which lies between the ranges of Lebanon and Ante-Lebanon. Its southern frontier thus touched the northern frontier of the Hebrew dominion, the limit of which, in this direction, is often described as being at “the entrance of Hamath.” Hence Israel and Hamath were neighboring powers, though their capitals lay far apart; and they had a common interest in repressing the inroads of the

king of Zobah. The name of Toi does not, indeed, occur till after David's expedition has been recorded; but from the nature of the case, they had probably acted together from the first; and as the king of Hamath's danger was more immediate than that of David, it is highly probable that the latter engaged in this war upon his representations. It must have been clear to David that Hadadezer and himself must come eventually into conflict, and it could not but appear to him wiser to act at once, than to wait until the power of the king of Zobah should be strengthened by the acquisition of Hamath. In any case, he must have seen the better policy of supporting Hamath, as interposed between him and this aggressive power, than of remaining quiet until its territories impinged upon his own frontier.

The forces of Hadadezer consisted chiefly of chariots of war—which, however well suited to the warfare in which he had hitherto been engaged upon the high plains of Syria, were but ill suited for action in such mountainous territories as those of David and Toi. Hence the power of infantry—of which the Hebrew army entirely consisted, against chariots in such regions; and the good policy of the law which discouraged the use of horses, and therefore compelled the chosen people to rely upon the kind of force best suited to the nature of the country. On the other hand, this infantry was ill suited to conflict with chariots in the open plains; and as David was too experienced a general to throw away any advantages, it is probable that he sought in his repeated engagements with this new kind of force, to meet them on ground unsuited to their operations. Matters eventually came to the decision of a great battle, in which Hadadezer was totally defeated, and his power for the time broken; and Damascus, with the other small states to the great river, which beheld in the event merely a change of masters, received without any visible repugnance the king of Israel as a conqueror. Thus were realized for the first time the ancient promises, that the dominion of Abraham's seed should extend to the Euphrates.

The troops of Hadadezer seem to have brought something like Assyrian magnificence from beyond the Euphrates. There were not only the chariots and horses, but some of the troops had golden shields, which of course came into the hands of David. He found also valuable spoils of brass in some of the captured cities. All this, as well as the metallic spoils of his other wars, David appropriated, not to his own enrichment, but to the object he had most at heart,—the future temple of the Lord. He was forbidden to build it himself, but there was nothing to prevent him from gathering materials for it; and this he did to such an extent—not only by the treasure he accumulated, but by leaving a plan of the building, and by organizing the sacred ministrations—that a careful consideration of the matter may leave it doubtful, whether much more of the credit of the undertaking is not due to him than to Solomon.

To the same object were appropriated the costly presents which king Toi sent by his own son Joram (for the greater honor) in acknowledgment of the essential services which had been rendered to him, amounting to little less than the preservation of his kingdom. These presents consisted of various articles in gold, silver, and brass—which last we find now continually mentioned along with the precious metals. Some kinds of it were probably little inferior in value to silver, and we know that some qualities of brass were even more precious than gold. Thus, even under David, began that influx of precious metals, which came to its height in the next reign. This must have wrought a great change in the land, where these metals had hitherto been scarce. This we may appreciate by the great changes which have been produced in Europe by the discovery of the South American mines, and the consequently great abundance of the precious metals. We do not afterwards find any apparent scarcity of such metals in Palestine. We must consider that *all* the wealth acquired in these wars, was not locked up for the future temple. David was not the man to take from his soldiers their fair share of the spoil. What he dedicated to the Lord, was

such as accrued to him as king; this was a large share, no doubt—perhaps a tenth, besides which, there were probably certain articles of spoil which were in all cases considered to belong to the crown—and the men themselves certainly devoted a portion of what they obtained to the same object. But still a large proportion of the metallic spoil must have belonged to the soldiers, and soon passed from their hands into the general circulation of the country, thereby producing the effects at which we have hinted.

David was not unmindful of the law against the multiplication of horses in the hands of the king; and his clear military judgment could not but appreciate the reasons on which this prohibition was founded. He had now a large spoil of horses and chariots; but he caused the former to be destroyed, and burned the latter. He reserved a hundred of the chariots, with a proper number of horses,—but as this was for state purposes, and not for use in war, the measure seems not to have deserved any blame, nor did it incur any.

THIRTY-SEVENTH WEEK—SATURDAY.

HADAD.—II SAMUEL VIII. 14; I CHRON. XVIII. 13; I KINGS XI. 15-21.

THE employment of the force of Israel in the north seemed to afford to the Edomites an opportunity of encroaching upon the south of the Hebrew territory. It is indeed very likely that they acted upon an understanding with the Syrians for the purpose of making a diversion in their favor. The superscription of Psalm lx. indicates that the main army of David was still occupied in the Syrian war, when Abishai was detached to oppose the Edomites. Certainly, an expedition against them would not have been spontaneously undertaken at such a time, and nothing but the most urgent necessity of resisting the very alarming aggressions, could

have constrained the king thus to weaken an army engaged in the most important campaign of all his wars. The Edomites were therefore the aggressors, and by that aggression brought down upon their heads the ancient doom of eventual subjection to the house of Jacob. On the approach of Abishai, the Edomites retired before him into the valley of Salt, at the southern extremity of the Dead Sea, or it may be, that he met them there in their march upon Israel. A most bloody battle was fought between the two armies, and the desperateness with which the Edomites contested the victory, may be judged from the fact that they left twelve thousand of their number slain upon the battle-field.

As soon as Joab was released from the Syrian campaign, he marched to this new scene of action, in order to settle the conquered country. He remained there six months, with the bulk of the Hebrew army. Joab's mode of settling the country was after the oriental fashion—of making a desolation, and calling it peace. Having a keener thirst for blood than his brother, and his higher command making him more exasperated at the attempt of the Edomites, which might have endangered the large operations in the north, he seems to have considered that Abishai had but half accomplished his work. He caused the male Edomites to be hunted out and put to death, wherever they were found; and established Hebrew garrisons in the strongholds and principal towns of Edom. Many Edomites escaped, and of these no doubt the greater part returned when the fierceness of the storm had blown over; but the blow was so terrible that it was a hundred and fifty years before the nation recovered such strength as to be able to make any strenuous endeavor to shake off the Hebrew yoke. Thus Edom became subject to David. Hitherto Selah, called by the Greeks Petra, whose curious remains, entombed among the rocks, have been within the present century brought to light, and have engaged much attention, had been the chief seat of the Edomite power, as it seems to have been in the time of Moses; but now, the population, driven from the heart of the country far a-field,

concentrated in continually retiring upon the borders, and it is from this time Teman on the east, and Bozrah on the north of Edom's frontier, rise into importance.

In the account given in the first book of Kings (xi. 15-21) of the enemies who disturbed the latter years of Solomon, there occurs a most interesting and suggestive anecdote respecting this transaction, which is not to be found in the leading narrative. The king of Edom seems to have been slain in the battle. He left a son, a child, named Hadad, for whose safety no apprehension appears to have been entertained until the terrible Joab came into the country, and gave signs of the tiger-like spirit by which he was at that time animated. Some faithful servants of the royal house then carried off their young master, and being joined by other fugitives on the road, went down into Egypt. The king of that country received the young prince with truly royal hospitality and consideration. He assigned to him and his followers a suitable provision: "he gave him a house, appointed him victuals, and gave him land;" and when Hadad grew up, he bestowed upon him the sister of his queen Tahpenes in marriage. By her he had a son, Genubath, who as soon as he was old enough to be separated from his mother, was removed to the royal palace, where he was weaned by the queen, and brought up with the royal children. Of Genubath we hear nothing more; but Hadad himself will again come under our notice hereafter. The particulars given tantalize our curiosity, under the interest with which every historical fact respecting Egypt is now regarded. We are here brought to the very threshold of the haram of Pharaoh, but are not permitted to enter, and view the interior life of the Egyptian court. The attention with which Hadad was received, his marriage with an Egyptian princess, and the admission of his son into the royal family, remind us of facts in the histories of Joseph and Moses, and do not bear out the impression transmitted to us by the Greek writers, respecting the antipathy of the Egyptians to foreigners. The royal rank of Hadad, and the alliance

which he had contracted with the court, affords a special reason for the consideration with which his child was treated. But on other grounds, it appears not to have been unusual in Egypt for strange children to be taken into the royal household and brought up with the king's sons. It is related that the father of the great Sesostris ordered all the male children of Egypt who were born on the same day with his son to be brought to him, and having appointed nurses and proper persons to take charge of them, he gave instructions that they should be educated and treated in every respect like the young prince; being persuaded that those who were his constant companions in childhood and youth would prove his most faithful adherents and affectionate fellow-soldiers. They were abundantly furnished with everything needful: as they grew up they were by degrees inured to robust and manly exercises, and were even forbidden to taste any food till they had performed a course of 180 stadia, or nearly twenty-three Roman miles. By this severe training of the body, and by a corresponding cultivation of the mind, they were equally suited to execute and to command.

It would, in fact, appear, that the privilege of being brought up with the royal princes was by no means a privilege of royal luxury and self-indulgence, the discipline to which they were subjected being unusually exact. The duties of children have always been more severe in the East than among any European people; and to the present day a son, even when grown up to manhood, is not expected to sit in the presence of his father, without express permission. Those of the Egyptian princes were rather more than less austere. One of their offices was that of fan-bearers to the king; and they were also obliged to carry the monarch in his palanquin or chair of state. As fan-bearers, they stood by him while seated on his throne, or in processions to the temples; and in this capacity they followed his chariot on foot as he celebrated his triumphant return from battle. The distinguishing mark of their princely rank was a badge dependent from the side of the head, intended seemingly to cover and enclose the lock

of hair which was left in shaving the head, and which among the Egyptians was the sign of youth.

These facts may illustrate the nature of the privilege which Genubath probably shared with others, of being brought up with the sons of Pharaoh.

Thirty-Eighth Week—Sunday.

A DEAD DOG.—II SAMUEL IX. 8.

WHEN the son of Jonathan received the assurance of kindness and protection from David, he said, "What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?" This, according to Jewish notions and phraseology, is the strongest expression of humility and unworthiness, nay of vileness, that could be devised, or that the language could express. On account of its various unclean habits, the dog was abhorred by the Hebrews, and became the type of all that was low, mean, and degraded—although, by reason of its usefulness, its presence was endured in certain capacities—chiefly in the care of flocks and in hunting. To be called a dog, was therefore the height of ignominious reproach and insult, and for a man to call himself a dog, was the depth of humiliation and self-abasement. The reader will call to mind many instances of this, which it is therefore not needful to point out. Now, if such were the disesteem in which the living animal was held—if to be called "a dog" merely was so shocking—for one to be called, or to call himself, not merely a dog, but "a dead dog," is the strongest devisable hyperbole of unworthiness and degradation, for in a dead dog the vileness of a corpse is added to the vileness of a dog.

And who is it that uses this expression? One who was by his birth a prince, of whom we know nothing but what is good—whose sentiments, whenever they appear, are just,

generous, and pious—whose private character appears to have been blameless, and his public conduct without spot. Yet this man calls himself a “dead dog”—that is, the most unworthy of creatures—the vilest of wretches. The phrase “I am a worm, and no man,” is nothing to this. Allowing for the hyperbole, it may thus seem that Mephibosheth abused himself far more than he needed, and confessed himself to be that which he really was not.

This raises a question of wider meaning than the particular instance involves, and which concerns us very deeply. It touches upon one of the things that are foolishness to the wisdom of the world, and which its philosophy cannot apprehend, because it is spiritually discerned. The world sees men like Mephibosheth, not only “decent men,” as they call them in Scotland, and “respectable men,” as they are called in England—men not only of stainless moral character, but men of distinguished piety, jealous in every work by which God may be glorified and mankind advantaged—men ready, if need be, to suffer the loss of all things, and to give their bodies to be burned for conscience’ sake, and who, like Count Godomar, would “rather submit to be torn to pieces by wild beasts than knowingly or willingly commit any sin against God;” the world sees this, and yet hears these very men speak of themselves in terms which seem to them applicable to only the vilest of criminals—the offscourings of the earth. This is a case the world’s philosophy has never yet been able to fathom. It sees but the alternative of either taking these men at their own valuation, and holding that whatever fair show they present, they really are what they say, and therefore unfit for the company of honest men—unfit to live upon the earth; or else, that they speak with a disgusting mock humility, in declaring themselves to be what they know that they are not; and there is, perhaps, a general suspicion in the world that these persons would not like to be really taken for such “dead dogs” as they declare themselves to be.

How does this matter really stand? The obligations of truth are superior to all others. A man must not consciously

lie, even in God's cause, nor even to his own disparagement, nor to express his humility. He has no more right to utter untruths to his own disparagements than to his own praise. Truth is absolute. It is obligatory under all circumstances, and in all relations. There is nothing in heaven or on earth that can modify the obligation to observe it. Yet such is the tendency to think well of ourselves, that although it is counted ignominious and contemptible for a man to utter a falsehood, or even a truth, to magnify himself, it is not observed to be in the same degree dishonorable for him to speak in his own disparagement. Perhaps it might be so, were it supposed that he spoke the truth, or what he believed to be true; for so intense is the degree of self-love, for which men give each other credit, that perhaps no man is ever believed to be sincere in whatever he says to his own disadvantage; and it is because nobody believes him—because it is concluded that he either deceives himself, or says what he knows to be untrue, that self-disparagement is not regarded as dishonorable in the same degree with self-praise. Yet it is not less the fact, that if self-disparagement be knowingly untrue, it is not less culpable than self-praise.

Yet Mephibosheth calls himself a "dead dog;" Agur calls himself "more foolish than any man," Prov. xxxi.; and Paul declares himself "the chief of sinners," 1 Tim. i. 13. Nevertheless, Mephibosheth was a worthy man—and there were far more foolish men than Agur—far greater sinners than Paul. What, then, did they lie? By no means. The man of tender and enlightened conscience knows that in God's sight the very heavens are not clean, and that he chargeth even his angels with folly. The more advanced he is in spiritual life the more clear is the perception which he realizes of the holiness of God, the more distinctly he feels how abhorrent all sin, of thought, word, or action, must be to Him, and how it separates the soul from Him. He knows not the heart of others, and he does not judge them. But he knows something of the evil of his own heart; he knows that he is to be judged according to his light—according to

what he has, and not according to what he has not; and judging by that measure, considering how much has been given to him, he knows, he feels, that a doubt, a misgiving, an evil thought, a carnal impulse, involves him—with his light, and with the proofs of God's love in Christ towards him, which have been brought home to his heart, in far greater sin than belongs to the grosser offences of less instructed men. He reasons also that if he, with eyes blinded by self-love, is able to see so much of the plague of his own heart, what must be the sight presented to the view of the pure and holy God, who sees far more of defilement in the best of our duties, than we ever saw in the worst of our sins. What man of wakeful conscience is there, who, when he looks well to the requirements of God's holy law—meditates upon the essential holiness of the Divine character—considers his own neglected means and mercies—sees how the remaining depravities of his nature have defiled his holiest things—and knows how unthankful, how wayward, how rebellious, his heart has often been, is not compelled to smite upon his breast and cry out, "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee?" Ah, it is well for him that he is not required to answer. Through the cloud of sin and grief, he hears that Voice which it is life to hear, "Son of man, be not afraid." This is He who has taken the burden not only of his cares but of his sins. This is his Beloved; this is his Friend. All is well.

THIRTY-EIGHTH WEEK—MONDAY.

MEPHIBOSHETH—II SAMUEL IX.

KNOWING, as we do know, that Jonathan had left a son, it is not without some misgiving that we have beheld him so long neglected by David, who owed so much to his father. We remember the brotherly covenant, and begin to be fear-

ful that David has forgotten it. It has, however, been perhaps too hastily assumed, that the king was aware of the existence of Jonathan's son. The probability seems to us to be that he did *not* know it.

Let us look unto this matter somewhat more closely.

Mephibosheth was a child, five years of age, at the time of his father's death. At that time, it was at least six years since David had fled the court of Saul. At the birth of this son he was wandering about in the wildernesses, and was not in the way of receiving the information; and at any considerably later period, when the fact was no longer new, and was not brought under notice by any public transactions, no one would think of reporting to David the circumstance, but would suppose that it was already known to him.

When the intelligence came to Gibeah that the Philistines were victorious, and that Saul and Jonathan were slain, the nurse supposing the Philistines close at hand, and that all belonging to Saul would be sought for and rooted out, hastened to flee with the young child, and as his speed was not equal to her fears, she seems to have carried him in her arms. In her extreme haste she either let him fall, or stumbled and fell with him, by which his feet were so badly injured that he remained lame for life. He was taken for safety beyond the Jordan, and was brought up in the house of the generous and wealthy Machir, the son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar, in Gilead. There he remained, probably in such obscurity as left few aware of his existence, for it could not have consisted with the policy of Ishbosheth or Abner, to bring him conspicuously into notice, and David could have had little opportunity of becoming acquainted with a fact, shrouded from view in a quarter so remote, and in the dominions of his rival. Besides, if David had ever heard of his existence, it had been by his rightful name of Meribaal, and he would hardly recognize him under the altered name of Mephibosheth. This nickname was not at all a pleasant one for any man to be called by, but having got into use it would be preferred by those anxious for his safety on the one

hand, and by those whose interest it was to keep him out of mind on the other. When Ishbosheth was slain, and all Israel went over to David, Mephibosheth was about twelve years old, and there were obvious reasons why the friends who had taken charge of him should desire his existence to be forgotten. Thus Mephibosheth lived a quiet and peaceful life among his friends at Lo-debar; and when he grew to manhood, he married and had a son.

When David was well established on his throne, and all his enemies were subdued around him, he inquired one day of those about him, "Is there yet any left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" This confirms the opinion we have advanced, that he did not *know* that Jonathan had a son living; and we think it shows that he did not even suspect such to be the case. Had it been so, and seeing that the inquiry arose out of his tender regard for the memory of his friend, he would surely rather have inquired whether Jonathan himself had any children remaining.

The obscurity in which Mephibosheth had been kept, is further shown by the fact that those of whom the king inquired were unable to give him the information he desired. They knew, however, of one Ziba, an old and trusted servant of Saul, now a prosperous man with fifteen sons and twenty servants, and supposed that he could acquaint the king with that which he desired to know. This man was sent for. The king asked: "Is there yet any of the house of Saul, *that I may show the kindness of God unto him.*" Ziba then told him of Mephibosheth, and where he was to be found; on which the king forthwith sent messengers to bring him to Jerusalem. They were probably charged not to disclose the king's object; for when the lame youth appeared before the king, and prostrated himself in humble reverence, some trepidation seems to have been visible in his manner, as we may gather from the kind and assuring words which David addressed to one in whose countenance he probably found some traces of the friend he had loved so well. He called him by

his name, and said to him, "Fear not: for I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake." He then proceeded to state that he meant to restore him the private estate of Saul—for the maintenance of his household—but as for himself, he said: "Thou shalt eat bread at my table continually." Here was comfort, independence, and the highest honor the king could bestow, conferred with most paternal and kingly grace upon this afflicted man. What more could David do for one incapacitated by his infirmity for the employments of active life? and it was done, not grudgingly nor with cold reserve, but with the heartfelt tenderness which made him desire to have always near him this living memorial of his lost friend. A less noble mind might have shrunk from thus keeping before the public eye, in connection with himself, the true heir of the house of Saul; especially as, though lame himself, Mephibosheth had a son who would eventually inherit whatever claims his father might be supposed to possess. But in the large heart of David there was found no room for such low suspicions and mean misgivings. God had promised to perpetuate the royal power in his house,—and what had he to fear? Mephibosheth was the son of his heart's friend,—what could he suspect?

It is to be observed that the estate now made over to Mephibosheth, was assigned for cultivation to Ziba, who, with his sons and servants, was to devote himself to it, and was to retain one half the produce in recompense for his expense and labor, paying the other moiety as rent to the owner of the land. The numerous land-owners in Israel so generally cultivated their own grounds, that there is scarcely another instance which enables us to see on what terms farming was conducted. It was probably on some plan like this, which is indeed a very common one in the East. It is found to be in most soils a very equitable arrangement, especially when, as is usually the case, the land-owner supplies the seed.

Mephibosheth was thus enabled to keep up a becoming establishment for his family in Jerusalem, while habitually taking his principal meals at the royal table, and associating

with the king's sons, some of whom were nearly of his own age. As men do not sit down at table with their wives and children in the East, this constant dining at court was a distinction unaccompanied by any of the drawbacks it would bring to us.

THIRTY-EIGHTH WEEK—TUESDAY.

THE SHAVEN AMBASSADORS.—II SAMUEL X.

THE reader will not have forgotten Nahash, king of the Ammonites, and his intended barbarities upon the men of Jabesh-Gilead. This man had, however, been friendly to David in the time of his troubles. How, we know not; but the wilderness history of David must have had many more incidents than the few which have been recorded. When, therefore, he heard that Nahash was dead, and that his son Hanun had mounted the throne of Ammon, he sent an honorable embassy of condolence and congratulation. This is not the first instance of an embassy in Scripture, but it is the first for such a purpose. There was that of the king of Tyre to David on his accession to the throne of Israel; that which king Toi of Hamath sent to congratulate him on his victories; and earlier still, that sent by Moses to the kings of Edom, and to other kings, to ask a passage for Israel through their territories; that sent by the king of Moab to Balaam; that of the Gibeonites to Joshua, pretending to have come from a far country; and that sent by Jephthah to the king of Ammon, remonstrating against his aggressions upon Israel. These instances illustrate nearly all the various occasions out of which embassies could arise. All of them, and indeed all ancient embassies, were what we call embassies extraordinary, that is, embassies sent on particular and extraordinary occasions; embassies in ordinary, or resident embas-

sies at foreign courts, being altogether a modern European invention, not more than two hundred and fifty years old.

The rights of ambassadors—the peculiar privileges belonging to their office, as representing the power from whom they came, and as being still under its protection in a foreign land, were already however well understood. They were then, as now, invested with a sacred character, which protected them from any offensive action in a foreign land, whatever might be their conduct. They were not amenable in any respect to the king or laws of the country to which they went. If they gave cause of complaint, the king might refuse to receive them, or might send them away, or request the power from whom they came to recall them; but to subject them to molestation, or injury of any kind, was an affront as severely resented in ancient as in modern times. We may therefore conceive the indignation of David when he heard that his ambassadors—men of rank and station—had been treated with the most gross indignity by the king of Ammon, under the pretence that they had come to spy the nakedness of the land. The courtiers of Rabbah persuaded Hanun to believe this; and although we have no doubt that the suspicion was sincerely entertained, and may admit that it may have been in some measure justified by the recent subjugation of the neighboring and kindred nations, nothing can excuse or justify the gross indignity with which the ambassadors were treated. They might have been sent away; but this was not enough for the Ammonites. They sent them not away till they had shaved off half their beards, and cut off the skirts of their robes, so as to leave half of their persons bare. The object was clearly to make them ridiculous and contemptible. To shave off one side of the beard only, was even more ignominious than to remove it altogether, although *that* among the ancient and modern eastern nations that cultivate the beard, was an offence not to be named without horror. It is very difficult to us to realize the intense appreciation of, and respect for, the beard, which is entertained among the Persians, Arabians, and other bearded nations. This is

truly to them the seat of honor. They treat their own beards with respect, suffering no defilement to come near them, and handling them with deliberate care. They bury with solicitude any stray hairs that come from it; to lose it by accident were worse than the loss of the head itself, which would, in their esteem, become ridiculous and useless without this essential appendage. For any one else to touch a man's beard irreverently, to speak of it lightly, to cast a reproach upon it, were an offence never to be forgotten or forgiven; but to cut or remove it by violence or stealth, were an affront, a disgrace, a horror, which scarcely the heart's blood of the offender can expiate.

All these notions respecting the beard doubtless had their origin in its being the grand mark of distinction between the male and the female face, whence it became the symbol of manly dignity and strength, and the want of it the sign of weakness and effeminacy. Conceive the ecstasies of mirthful derision which attended the progress of David's unfortunate ambassadors through the country in their way home, with half their faces shaven, and their garments cut far too short for decency or comfort. In smiling at the idea of the awkward figure these illustrious and worthy persons presented, one cannot help feeling indignant that it should be in the power of foolish men, by anything they can do, to render ridiculous and contemptible the persons of men entitled to veneration or respect. It *is* really in their power; for, let us say what we will, few of us would be able to repress a laugh at beholding even a great and good man in a ridiculous position; nor must we be too confident that we should have been able to keep our countenances, had the disfigured ambassadors presented themselves to our view. Truly, the sense of the ridiculous, which seems peculiar to man, is often a very great misfortune.

King David was very well aware that his ambassadors would never again be able to face those who should once see them in this absurd and wretched plight. He therefore, with a tender consideration for their feelings, which they

must have prized most highly, sent a messenger to meet them, releasing them from the duty of coming to the court, and permitting them to remain at the first town on this side the Jordan, at Jericho, until the growth of their beards should enable them again to appear in public.

Fully persuaded that David could not overlook this grievous insult, the Ammonites prepared for war. With the terrible result in view, it is well to note that David, although naturally quick tempered, was slow to move in this matter; or rather the Ammonites were so prompt in taking the initiative, that they appeared in the field against him before he manifested any disposition to move. They were most entirely and most unprovokedly the aggressors in this war. Reposing in conscious power, the king's lion-like wrath was but slowly awakened, but when fairly aroused, it was irresistible and terrible.

There is a very noticeable circumstance that meets us here. The Ammonites, sensible that they were not able to encounter the might of David in their own strength, *hired* the aid of various Syrian princes, being the first recorded example of mercenary warfare. Under the circumstances, these powers were probably but too willing to join the coalition, and it speaks much for the wealth and influence to which the Ammonites had by this time attained, that they were able to organize this powerful confederacy, and to bear its expenses. The expense amounted to a thousand talents of silver, which would be of the present value of £360,000; but of much greater worth at that time, when silver seems to have borne a much higher value than it does now; but even at the present value, it would not be less than at the rate of a thousand pounds for each of the chariots employed during the campaign, with the horses and men belonging to it. The writer of the book of Chronicles states the number of chariots at 32,000, and it has been thought that this may be an error of transcription, as it is seen that the numbers of that book often differ from those of the books of Samuel and Kings, and are always in excess. One must be wrong, and in most

cases the accounts in Chronicles are not preferred. In this case, however, there is no contradiction, as the numbers are not stated in Samuel. Such a force in chariots is certainly unparalleled. Yet the circumstances agree with it. The thousand talents would have been an incredibly exorbitant sum for any materially smaller number, and it is stated that the force of a large extent of country, in which chariot warfare prevailed, was engaged in this enterprise, and that the chariot forces of four kingdoms were brought together on this occasion.

David beheld not this confederacy with indifference. He called out the military force of Israel; and when he learned that the Syrians had marched to join the Ammonites, he dispatched Joab to take charge of the war. This great commander decided to prevent the intended junction. With the flower of the army he went himself to meet the Syrians, and gave to Abishai the easier task of engaging the Ammonites, with the understanding that the one should help the other in case either were distressed by his opponents. The words of Joab to his brother, before they separated to their respective tasks, were altogether worthy of the commander of the armies of Israel, and appear to indicate that, with all his faults, and even crimes, he possessed more real piety, and truer theocratical views, than he usually had credit for. "Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God; and the Lord do what seemeth him good."

The result of an engagement, undertaken in this spirit, could not be doubtful. The hired army of chariots soon gave way before the steadfast front of Joab's indomitable infantry; and when the Ammonites beheld this, and saw that Joab was coming to join his brother against them, they lost heart and fled. They shut themselves up in their strongholds, and labored to incite the Syrians again to take the field. They probably urged that they had not obtained the worth of their money; and although the lesser princes seem to have declined any further action—the greatest of them,

Hadadezer of Zobah, who had had a sufficient case of his own against the Israelites, was effectually roused, and collected forces from every available source for another struggle. Even his troops beyond the Euphrates were brought over for this service. This force, worthy to decide the fate of an empire, took the field under a renowned general named Shobach; and David deemed the occasion of sufficient importance for him to command in person. The result was as before. The Syrians were beaten, and the power of Hadadezer so entirely broken, that he no more appears in history. The Syrian tributary princes, who had been obliged to join him, made their own terms with David, and left the Ammonites to their own resources.

THIRTY-EIGHTH WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

SIN AND SORROW.—II SAMUEL XI.—XII.

THE Ammonites, who, although beaten, were not wholly reduced, having retired to their fortified towns, held out with much obstinacy. The next campaign against them was conducted by Joab, who, after ravaging the country, laid siege to the metropolitan city of Rabbah.

It was while the army was engaged in these distant operations that David fell into those deep sins, which have left a dark blot upon his name, that all his tears have not been able to expunge from the view of man, nor all his griefs to make man forget. It is indeed profitable that they should be held in remembrance, in their causes and results, that the sad fall of so distinguished a saint—a man so near to God—should teach us not to be high-minded, but fear.

The facts are so well known to every reader, that it will suffice to indicate them very briefly.

David, when walking upon the roof of his palace, after having risen from his afternoon rest, obtained a view of a beau-

tiful woman, of whom he became most passionately enamored. Her name was Bathsheba, and she was the wife of Uriah the Hittite, who, notwithstanding his Canaanitish origin, was one of the king's most distinguished officers, and a member of the illustrious band of "worthies." After gratifying his criminal passion, and finding that it would not be much longer possible to conceal a fact which would expose Bathsheba to the death punishment of an adulteress, David did not shrink from sending orders to Joab so to expose her valiant husband in battle, as to ensure his destruction by the sword of the Ammonites. Joab obeyed this order to the letter, and Uriah perished. Bathsheba was then free, and David barely suffered the days of her mourning to pass (probably a month) before he added her to the number of his wives.

Here is adultery : here is murder. O, David, David, how art thou fallen ! To our minds, there is nothing in all that man has written so terribly emphatic as the quiet sentence which the historian inserts at the end of his account of these sad transactions.

"BUT THE THING THAT DAVID HAD DONE DISPLEASED THE LORD."

His high displeasure was made known to David by the prophet Nathan, in a parable of touching beauty, applied to the case with a degree of force, which at once brought conviction home to the heart of a man not hardened in guilt by a course of petty unrepented sins, but who had plunged headlong into one great and complicated crime. The awful words "Thou art the man," at once brought David to his knees. He confessed his guilt. He deplored it with many tears. He was pardoned, in so far as that God hid not his face from him forever. But seeing that this deed, in a man so honored, had "given great occasion for the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme," it became necessary that God should vindicate his own righteousness, by testifying, in the punishment of his servant, his abhorrence of that servant's sin. The sentence pronounced upon him—"Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house," furnishes the key to David's

future history and career, which was as unprosperous and troubled, as the earlier part of his reign had been happy and successful. There was in all things a great change—even in the man himself. Broken in spirit by the consciousness of how deeply he had sinned against God and against man; humbled in the eyes of his subjects, and his influence with them weakened by the knowledge of his crimes; and even his authority in his own household, and his claim to the reverence of his sons, relaxed by his loss of character—David appears henceforth as a much altered man. He is as one who goes down to the grave mourning. His active history is past—henceforth he is passive merely. All that was high, and firm, and noble in his character, goes out of view—and all that is weak, and low, and wayward, comes out in strong relief. Of the infirmities of his temper and character, there may have been previous indications, but they were but dimly discernible through the splendor of his worthier qualities; now that splendor has waxed pale—the most fine gold has become dim, and the spots become broad and distinct. The balance of his character is broken. Still he is pious—but even his piety takes an altered aspect. It is no longer buoyant, exulting, triumphant, glad; it is repressed, humble, patient, contrite, suffering. His trust in the Lord is not less than it had been, and that trust sustains him, and still gives dignity to his character and sentiments. But even that trust is different. He is still a son—but he is no longer a Joseph, rejoicing in his father's love, and proud of the coat of many colors which that love has cast upon him; but rather a Reuben, pardoned, pitied, and forgiven, yet not unpunished, by the father whose honor he has defiled. Alas, for him! The bird which once rose to heights unattained before by mortal wing, filling the air with its joyful songs, now lies with maimed wing upon the ground, pouring forth its doleful cries to God.

The change we have indicated furnishes the key to David's subsequent career, and unless it be borne in mind, the incidents of that career will not be thoroughly understood.

As this was a turning point in the history of David, it would be interesting to know at what period of his life it occurred. The common computation places it in the twentieth year of his reign, and the fiftieth of his age. But David lived to the age of seventy, and reigned forty years; and as Solomon his son was not born till a year or two after these events, he must, according to that account, have been twenty-one or twenty-two years of age when he succeeded his father. The impression conveyed by the narrative of his accession, and particularly by his request to the Lord for wisdom on account of his extreme youth and inexperience, is, that he was not near so old as this. We apprehend that, on the other hand, the learned Lightfoot goes a little too far, in fixing the date to the twenty-sixth year of David's reign, and the fifty-sixth of his life. The middle between these extremes, is probably nearer the truth; and David may with sufficient probability be supposed to have lived fifty-three years, and to have reigned twenty-three, when this base unrighteousness rent from his head the honor due to his gray hairs.

Of Bathsheba we would wish to know something more than appears in the narrative. She is said to have been the daughter of Eliam. A person of that name occurs in the list of the worthies—2 Sam. xxiii. 34—and is supposed by some to have been her father. This person was a son of Ahithophel the famous counsellor of David, and his eventual defection from his cause, when Absalom raised the standard of rebellion, is fancied to have risen from his disgust at this dishonor done to his grand-daughter. It must be allowed, that the fact that this Eliam was of the same body to which Bathsheba's husband belonged—his companion in arms and honor, is much in favor of this supposition. In 1 Chron. iii. 5, the father of Bathsheba is called Ammiel, which is the same name as Eliam reversed. This form of the name leads Lightfoot to identify Ammiel of Lo-debar beyond the Jordan. In that case, Bathsheba was sister of that Machir, son of Ammiel of Lo-debar, in whose house Mephibosheth had been brought up, and who afterwards signalized his loyalty to David, by the bountiful

contributions which he furnished for the subsistence of the court, when the king sought refuge beyond the river. 2 Sam. ix. 5 ; xvii. 27.

THIRTY-EIGHTH WEEK—THURSDAY.

TORTURES.—II SAMUEL XII. 26—31.

To bring the crime and punishment of David into one view, we omitted an intermediate circumstance of much interest. It was stated, that at the time of David's two-fold sin, Joab was engaged in reducing the metropolis of the Ammonites. The siege must have been of some duration, for Bathsheba, who was not known to David till after it had been commenced, had borne to him two children before it was taken. The first of these, the child of their infamy, died soon after its birth, just subsequent to the rebuke from the prophet; the other, begotten and born in the days of his contrition—was Solomon. This cannot well mark a shorter interval than two and a half or three years.

Soon after the birth of this son, David received a message from Joab stating that he had taken the lower city of Rabbah, distinguished as "the city of waters," from its situation among the streams, and that as the upper city, or citadel, could not hold out much longer, the king had better come in person, with fresh troops, and secure the honor of closing the war. This has the appearance, and probably the reality, of magnanimity on the part of Joab, in thus devolving the actual capture upon the king; but he also knew that David was somewhat covetous of military renown, and that it might not be prudent to awaken his jealousy by adding the glory of the conquest of Ammon to that which he had won as the conqueror of Edom; and it appears that sovereigns had not yet reached the refinement of appropriating the glory of the exploits performed by their generals in their absence. The

phrase is remarkable, "Lest I take the city, and it be called after my name." This alludes to a custom which frequently occurs in ancient history, of giving a name to a city with regard to particular occasions, or changing it with reference to some extraordinary event. This we find instanced in the names of Alexandria, Constantinople, and other places. The same practice is prevalent in India, where such names as Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, and Arungabad, perpetuate the memory of the founder or conqueror.

The city of Rabbah was easily taken when David reached the camp. The crown of the Ammonitish kingdom was with all due form set upon his head, and the treasures of the city made public spoil. It would appear that by causing himself to be crowned, David meant to assume the direct sovereignty of the Ammonites, which was not his usual policy, although the peculiar circumstances of this war seemed to call for and justify it. This crown is stated to have been of gold enriched with jewels, and seems to have been the most splendid thing of the kind that had yet been seen by the Israelites. It is said to have weighed a talent of gold. This would be equal to 114 pounds, and as this seems to be too great a ponderosity for mortal head to bear, it has been suggested that the worth of the crown was *equivalent* to, rather than the crown was actually *equipollent* with, or contained, a talent of gold. We object to the former interpretation, chiefly for two reasons—that not gold but silver was the measure of value in the time of David, so that the mere value of anything in gold was not likely to be stated; and that the *value* of a talent in gold seems scarcely adequate for a crown of gold set with precious stones. It would not have been more than £5,475, which would seem but a small sum when we recollect that (as we happen to know) our George IV. gave £10,000, being ten per cent. on its value, for the mere making and temporary use of the crown used at his coronation—the crown being immediately after the ceremony returned to the jewellers. If, therefore, we assume the weight only to be intended, we must conclude that it was used only

for a short time on great state ceremonials. Crowns are only so used in the East, or indeed anywhere else; and they are generally of such weight that they cannot long be borne without inconvenience. The "weight of a crown" is not only a figurative truth, but a material fact. Sir Harford Jones Brydges, who had an opportunity of examining the Persian regalia at leisure, describes the crown of state as excessively heavy. The same ambassador relates, that, happening to look back, on quitting the audience chamber, he saw the king lifting his crown from his head, as if anxious to relieve himself from its oppressive weight. But the ponderous ancient crowns were not always even worn upon the head, but were sometimes suspended over it, or attached to the top of the throne. Several crowns, of great size and weight, thus used, are mentioned by Athenæus and by Pliny. Among them one is described by the former writer, as being composed of 10,000 pieces of gold, and placed *on the throne* of king Ptolemy. Benjamin of Tudela speaks of a crown of gold and gems suspended over the throne of the emperor Commenes. Some of the Rabbins have a curious conceit, that the Ammonitish crown was kept in suspension by a loadstone, as if the loadstone attracted gold as well as iron.

The question respecting the crown is, however, of less interest than that regarding the treatment to which the Ammonites themselves were subjected. It is said, "He put them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick kiln." And it is added that he did this, not only to the defenders of Rabbah, but "thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon."

The common, and as it seems to us the true, interpretation of this is, that they were put to deaths of torture. We would very gladly, were it in our power, agree with Dantz,* who, followed by Delany, Chandler, and other writers, contends that David merely condemned his Ammonitish captives to severe bodily labors, to hewing and sawing wood, to

* In his Dissertation *De Mitigata Davidis in Ammonitas Crudelitate*.

burning of bricks, and to working in iron mines. But this interpretation has little real foundation. It does much violence to the Hebrew words, which it takes in an unusual and previously unimagined acceptation. Some of the alleged labors are also wholly unsuited to the age and country, or the people. Firewood is, for instance, so scarce in Palestine, that the people of so many cities could not have found employment as hewers and sawyers of wood ; and the only public want in this respect, that of the tabernacle and its altar, was already provided for by the services of the Gibeonites ; while the people generally used stubble and dried dung for fuel. Then, for building, stone has always been more used than brick in Palestine, and it is therefore marvellous that the more laborious work of quarrying stone is not named, if penal labors were really intended ; and as to iron mines, there is not the least evidence that any were ever worked in the territories over which David had sway.

Besides, if David thus dealt with the Ammonites, he would have been far less severe to them than the war law of the age authorized, and far less so than to the Moabites and Edomites, of whom a large proportion of the males in the first case, and all who could be caught in the other, were destroyed. And is this credible in regard to a people whose aggravations had been so much greater ?

The practice of putting prisoners to death has lately been explained.* The only question, therefore, is, why the Ammonites should be handled with such peculiar severity ? To ascertain this, the special circumstances of the war should be considered. Without going back to ancient enmities, it is to be understood how flagrantly the Ammonites had, in the first instance, violated the law of nations, by their treatment of David's friendly ambassadors ; how they had once and again striven to organize a coalition of the nations against him—and had even brought troops from the far-off regions beyond the Euphrates ; and finally, how obstinately they had held out to the last extremity, which alone was, by the war laws of

* Thirty-Seventh Week—Thursday.

the age, a sufficient cause for putting them to death. A "vexatious defence" is to this day punishable upon an enemy both by military and by civil law.

Still, we incline to think that these causes alone would not have led the king of Israel to put the Ammonite captives to death with torture, for this was not a war custom of the Hebrews, whose legislation is remarkable beyond that of any other people for the absence of torturing punishments. We have, therefore, no doubt, these punishments were retaliatory for similar treatment of Jewish and other prisoners, taken by the Ammonites. It is like the case of Adonizedek, the mutilation of whom would have come down to us as a gratuitous barbarity, had it not accidentally transpired from the lips of the man himself, that *he* had been in the habit of so treating *his* prisoners. That case has a distinct bearing upon this, because it shows that the Hebrews were accustomed to deal out to their enemies the same measure which they received from them. And this was quite necessary, it being the only way in which other nations could coerce such offenders into an adherence to the established usages of war. Although the fact is not stated (as it is only incidentally done in the case of Adonizedek), that the present severity was retributive, the certainty that it was so is sufficiently indicated by sundry dispersed facts, which bring out the peculiarly savage character of this people. Look, for instance, at their refusal of any other terms than the loss of their right eyes, to the men of Jabesh-Gilead, who were inclined to surrender without resistance. This is quite of a piece with their treatment of David's ambassadors; and the character thus manifested they still show in a later age, when they are reproached by the prophet for ripping up the pregnant women of Israel, not in the heat of a storm, but deliberately, in order to lessen the number of the Israelites, and thus to enlarge their own borders. Amos i. 13.

Now, to an enemy of this description, it could not have appeared unjust to treat them according to their dealings with others. Severe that treatment was, no doubt, and was

meant to be so ; but to call it more than this, is to confound the ancient with the modern law of nations, or with the law of nature itself. This severity has, however, always appeared as a stain upon the character of David, in the view of those who are unable to discern the arbitrary character of the law of nations, and who judge of it according to the comparatively mild war laws of modern times. We are not competent to pass judgment in this matter, until we have carefully considered whether, considering the times in which David lived, the character of the enemy, and the proof they had given of the atrocities to which their malignant disposition against the Israelites would have carried them had they been victorious, he was not justified by *the public opinion of his own time*, for his treatment of the Ammonites. Why, after all, should we judge this ancient Hebrew king by a different measure from that which we apply to the comparatively more modern, and professedly more civilized, Romans? We call Titus just and humane, and yet he, at Jerusalem itself, crucified his prisoners around the city until crosses enough could not be found for the bodies, nor places on which the crosses could stand. Thousands, also, were after the close of the war thrown to wild beasts, for the amusement of the people, and thousands compelled to slay each other in the amphitheatres. These “just” Romans were also wont, even to the days of Cæsar, to massacre their prisoners in cold blood, whenever they happened to survive the disgrace of the triumph ; and they *very frequently* put to death the magistrates and citizens of conquered cities, *after* making them undergo a flagellation, the slow torture of which was probably greater in physical pain than that which the Hebrews on this peculiar and exceptional occasion inflicted. It may also not be inappropriate to remark, that it is not long ago that, throughout the continent of Europe, the sentiment of public justice was not satisfied with the simple death of robbers and other offenders, but they were broken alive upon the wheel.

THIRTY-EIGHTH WEEK—FRIDAY.

THE WAGES OF SIN.—II SAMUEL XIII.

THE most nobly born of David's wives was Maacah. She was the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur, whose territory bordered on those of eastern Manasseh. David had sought the hand of this princess soon after his accession to the throne of Judah in Hebron, when, probably, the connection was, on public grounds, of much importance to him. By this lady he had two children, a son named Absalom, and a daughter called Tamar, both of them remarkable for their beauty. With the beauty of Tamar the heart of her half-brother Amnon—David's eldest son, by Ahinoam of Jezreel—was deeply smitten. So hot was his passion, that he fell into great depression of spirits, and pined away. The impossibility of any happy result from a love so unlawful, had doubtless much to do with this melancholy, though the obstacle thus created may not have seemed to him so insuperable as it does to us, knowing as he did that it was common in some of the neighboring countries—in Egypt for instance—for princes to espouse their sisters, and remembering that the practice had the sanction of Abraham's example. Probably, therefore, the first cause of his melancholy was the difficulty of getting access to her without witnesses, living as she did in her father's haram. For although the regulation respecting the separation of women from intercourse with men was less strict in those times than it has since become, it was such, at least in the royal haram, as to preclude a half-brother from the chance of being alone in her company. Had that been possible, he would probably have urged her to concur with him in persuading their father to consent to their marriage, notwithstanding the legal objections to which it lay open. But this was impossible; and in that age epistolary correspondence was so little thought of, that even lovers do not seem to have found out the advantages of this

mode of communication. Besides, it is very likely that Tamar could not read.

The cause of Amnon's trouble was discovered by his cousin Jonadab, a very subtle man, who pointed out a mode in which he might obtain an unrestrained interview with Tamar. It is remarkable that in disclosing his passion, Amnon called not Tamar his sister, but "my brother Absalom's sister." In the harems of the East, where there are many children by different mothers, the children of the same mother become knit in a peculiar manner to each other, and if any of them be females, they come under the special care and protection of their brother, who, as far as their special interests are concerned, and in all that affects their safety and honor, is more looked to than the father himself. We have had an instance of this in the vengeance taken by Simeon and Levi for the wrong done to their full sister Dinah.

Tamar added to the fame of her beauty that of being a maker of very nice cakes—no mean recommendation for even a princess in the East. So, in conformity with Jonadab's advice, Amnon put himself to bed, and pretended to be ill; and when his father paid him a visit, he begged, that in consideration of his delicate appetite, his sister Tamar [it is now "my sister"] might be allowed to come and make him a few cakes—there, in his presence, that he might receive them hot from her hand. This seemed to the king not unreasonable as the fancy of a sick man, and knowing, as he did, the dainty quality of his daughter's cakes. So Tamar came, and prepared the cakes there in his presence, which she might easily do, according to more than one of the existing modes of baking cakes in the East; and, proud of her skill, and gratified by the compliment which his demand had paid to it, she took them to him. Greatly was she shocked to find that he not only refused to eat, but pressed her to sin, and notwithstanding her abhorrence, her resistance, and her declared belief that David would not refuse to bestow her on him, he accomplished her ruin. It seems probable

that he had been carried by the rage of his guilty passion beyond his first intention, and now that the wretched act was accomplished, all the terrible consequences—the sin, the danger—rushed upon his mind, and all his love was in one moment turned to hate of the innocent object, whose fatal beauty had been the instrument of drawing this sin upon his soul. He spurned her from his house, and she hurried through the streets in tears, with her robe rent and ashes upon her head, to the house of her brother Absalom. It is said that the rent robe was “of divers colors; for with such robes were the king’s daughters that were virgins apparelled,” in which case her rending the robe which was the distinction of the king’s virgin daughters, had a meaning beyond the mere ordinary significance of mourning. It also reminds us of the precious coat of many colors with which Jacob invested his favorite son; and the present instance enables us to discern that dresses of variegated patterns were still costly and distinctive, and had not yet come into general use. When Absalom saw this robe rent, he at once understood what had happened: and his manner of receiving it is conformable to the character this young man finally discloses, rather than that which might have been expected from his position and spirit. He told Tamar to rest quiet—to remember that Amnon was their brother, and not needlessly proclaim abroad his crime and her own dishonor. He took her, however, to his own house thenceforth, and there she remained secluded and desolate.

The king, when he heard of this thing, was “very wroth;” and yet he did nothing. He saw that he had begun to reap the harvest he had sown, and the evils threatened by the prophet were coming fast upon him. How could he who had himself sinned so deeply, call his son to account for his misconduct? and with what an awful retort, drawn from the example he had set to his children, might not his rebuke be met? Being also passionately fond of his children, to a degree of infatuation which rendered him unable to punish their offences, or even to find fault with them, he was con-

tent to let the matter pass, the rather as Absalom, whose honor it touched so nearly, seemed to take no notice of it. Of him it is said that "he spoke not a word to Amnon, neither good nor bad." He "hated" him for the wrong he had done to his sister; but he was too proud to "speak good" to one who had brought this dishonor to him, and too wary to put Amnon on his guard by expressing the hatred he nourished in his heart. He intended to make his revenge effectual, and to use it for clearing his way to the throne. We cannot but think that he had already taken up the design upon the kingdom which he eventually carried out, and that as Amnon was his elder brother, and the heir-apparent, he meant to use his private wrong as the excuse for removing so serious an obstacle from his path. But to this end it was necessary that the king, as well as Amnon, should be lulled into the conviction that he had no thoughts of revenge, and that the matter had gone from his mind. Yet two years passed before he felt it prudent to show any civility to Amnon; but then the occasion of holding a great sheep-shearing feast on his estate, eight miles off at Baal-hazor, enabled him to realize his object. He first invited the king with his court to attend, which his father declined on the ground that he was not willing to subject him to so heavy an expense. This he expected, and was then able to intimate his wish that since the king himself could not go, his eldest son Amnon might represent him, and with the other sons of the king, grace the feast. Unwilling to mortify him, and hoping this might bring about a perfect reconciliation between the brothers, David consented, though not without some misgivings.

Great was the feast, and it was in the very height of the enjoyment, "when Amnon's heart was merry with wine," that Absalom gave the preconcerted order to his servants, who immediately assailed the heir of the kingdom, and slew him with many wounds. On this the other sons of the king hastened to their mules, and hurried in great affright to Jerusalem. Absalom also fled, but it was to his maternal

grandfather, the king of Geshur, who was more likely to praise than to blame the deed he had committed.

We may note here that this is the first undisputed mention of *mules* in Scripture—the instance in Genesis xxvi. 24, being of doubtful interpretation. We here find them in use at the same time that horses also begin to be named among this people. It appears that in this age, while a few horses were kept for state, mules were employed for riding by persons of distinction, both in peace and war. The ass, however, continued to maintain a respectable position, and never wholly gave place either to the mule or the horse. At this time the taste seems to have been decidedly for mules. Eventually we find Absalom possessed of chariots drawn by horses; but he was mounted upon a mule in the great action which he fought with his father for the crown; and it transpires still later, that the king himself had a mule known to be his—a mule of state, which he rode on high occasions. 1 Kings i. 33. The combination in the mule of the useful qualities of both the horse and the ass—its strength, activity, steadiness, and power of endurance, are characteristics of peculiar value in the East; and therefore, although the Jews were interdicted the *breeding* of mules, they did not find it convenient to consider that the *use* of them was forbidden.

David's declining to attend Absalom's feast on account of the expense which would thus be occasioned to his son, is the first instance history offers of the ruinous cost of royal visits to those who are honored with them. A comparatively modern instance of this has just met our view in a useful periodical.* It is stated that the decay of the Hoghton family is locally ascribed to the visit of king James I. to Hoghton Tower, near Blackburn, Lancashire—the following characteristic anecdote being cited in corroboration of the current opinion: "During one of his hunting excursions, the king is said to have left his attendants for a short time, in order to examine a numerous herd of horned cattle, then

* *Notes and Queries* for October 19, 1850.

grazing in what are now termed the Bullock Pastures, most of which had probably been provided for the occasion. A day or two afterwards, being hunting in the same locality, he made inquiry respecting the cattle, and was told, in no good-humored way, by a herdsman unacquainted with his person, that they were all gone to feast the beastly king and his gluttonous company. 'By my saul,' exclaimed the king, as he left the herdsman, 'then 'tis e'en time for me to gang too;' and accordingly, on the following morning, he set out for Lathom House."

THIRTY-EIGHTH WEEK—SATURDAY.

ABSALOM'S HAIR.—II SAMUEL XIV.

ABSALOM was David's favorite son. His remarkable beauty, his engaging manners, and his more exalted birth, must have contributed to this. But it is also true, that the peculiarly loving temperament of David rendered him incapable of fully enjoying life without some special object on whom to bestow the *utmost* tenderness of his affection. Hence we always find some one in the enjoyment of his special favor and regard throughout his whole career. It is now Absalom. Three long years the king endured his absence, and in that time his grief for the loss of Amnon was assuaged, and his horror in the remembrance of Absalom's crime became less keen. He longed to have the young man back, but on many grounds feared to call him home. Joab discerned the struggle in the king's mind, and although he seems himself to have had no liking for Absalom, he devised the means of impressing upon the king, that he might gratify his own wishes without giving offence to public opinion, which he seems to have much dreaded. He employed a clever woman of Tekoah, to appear as a mourner before the king, and tell him a fictitious tale of distress, well calculated to awaken in

him the feelings of paternal affection towards his absent son. The application of the recital which she made was less striking than that of Nathan's parable, but it ended by imploring David to "fetch home his banished." The king began to perceive that Joab was at the bottom of this matter, and glad to have the sanction, thus delicately conveyed, of that rough and influential soldier, he authorized him to go to Geshur and bring Absalom home.

If the reader looks through the chapter which records these transactions, he will perceive in this cautious mode of proceeding, in the manner of the woman, and in that of Joab himself, that the kingdom was even, in the hands of David, assuming much of the character of an eastern despotism, notwithstanding the conditions on which the royal power was held in Israel. We are not, however, disposed to build so much on this as some have done. We see the king chiefly in his own court, and the court is always despotic in the East; that is, the king's power is absolute over all who take employment under him, while the people may be comparatively free, and their franchises respected. What a difference, accordingly, always appears between the intercourse of the king with his own courtiers and officers, and that with the great land-owners and sheepmasters in the country! This distinction is not sufficiently attended to by European travellers, who, in their views of eastern nations, are too much in the habit of estimating the condition of the kingdom from what they see of the state of the court. But it is quite possible that there may be a considerable degree of freedom among the people, while the sovereign is absolute and despotic in his court, and over all who come within the sphere of his personal influence. We do not therefore regard the absolutism which appears in the Hebrew court, during this and subsequent reigns, as at all implying that the substantial liberties of the people were in any way compromised.

But although Absalom was allowed to return to Jerusalem, two whole years passed before he was admitted to his father's presence; and, considering how deeply that father loved him,

and had not beheld his face for three years, David is entitled to much credit for this self-restraint. That he was not admitted into his presence was a sign well understood, far more significantly in the East than it would be even with us, that he was still under disgrace. It in fact compelled him to live as a private person, and to lead a retired life; for it would have been outrageously scandalous for him to have appeared in public, or to have assumed any state, until he had appeared at court. The courtiers were also constrained to avoid him, and he could not even obtain an interview with his uncle Joab, until by a rough stratagem—that of causing his barley field to be fired—he drew him to make complaint of a wrong; and having thus got within reach of his ear, easily prevailed upon him to persuade the king to admit him to his presence.

In the chapter whose contents we have thus scanned, it is stated that—"In all Israel there was none so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him. And when he polled his head (for it was at every year's end that he polled it; because the hair was heavy on him, therefore he polled it); he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels after the king's weight." By this it would appear, that this vain young man let his hair grow as long as he could bear it without much inconvenience; and when it was cut, caused it to be weighed in evidence of its abundant growth. "From year to year,"—implying, that he had his hair cut every year, does not convey the meaning of the original, which signifies that he cut it "from time to time"—occasionally; that is, as the text explains, when it became heavy, which may have been, and probably was, at longer intervals than a year. The fact would imply, that long and abundant hair was fashionable at this time; although, in a later age, we find it counted as an effeminacy in a man. There are passages in Solomon's Song which confirm this; and it is stated by Josephus, that the picked men who formed the body-guard of Solomon, wore their hair in long flowing tresses, which

they anointed and sprinkled with gold dust every morning. This loading of the hair with unguents and gold dust, may, perhaps, lessen the surprise, that an unusually ample head of hair should be so heavy. Two hundred common shekels would be about 112 ounces troy; but less if, as is usually supposed, "the king's shekel" was not so much as the common shekel. The use of this denomination clearly implies that there was *some* difference, and no one has supposed the difference to have been in favor of "the king's shekel." One great authority (Bochart) makes the weight not to exceed 3 pounds 2 ounces; and even that is not the lowest estimate, for others bring it down to little more than two pounds. Some, indeed, by supposing one Hebrew letter to have been taken for another very like it,* reduce the weight to four shekels or two ounces; but this weight is too little remarkable to have been mentioned with such distinction. The hair of men will grow as thick as that of women, and perhaps thicker; and if we may judge from the queues of the Chinese, which sometimes reach to the ground, it will grow as long; and such hair, if of proportionate bulk, must, one would think, weigh at least three or four pounds. Indeed, we have read the well-known case of a lady whose hair reached the ground, and weighed, upon her head, and therefore without including the weight of the parts nearest the scalp, upwards of four pounds, which is close upon Bochart's weight for the hair of Absalom.

Some, as in the case of the Ammonitish crown, suppose value, not weight, to be meant. But, was the king's eldest son likely to sell his hair for five pounds, and what was the use of it? Hardly to make wigs of; for although wigs were known among the Egyptians, there is no probability that they were in use among the Jews; and to meet the suggestion, that persons might be employed to buy up hair for the use of the Egyptian barbers, it may suffice to remark, that such wigs as have been discovered seem to have been made of horse hair or goat's hair, like those worn by our barristers.

* \aleph , which as a numeral stands for 200, for \daleth , which represents 4.

Thirty-Ninth Week—Sunday.

THE SPILT WATER.—II SAMUEL XIV. 14.

IN the wise woman of Tekoah's address to David, this beautiful and touching passage occurs—"For we must needs die, and are as water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again." Joab could scarcely have found an advocate better suited than this woman to make the desired impression upon the king's mind. What could be better calculated to gain the attention of a poet like David than the beautiful images which she employs, and which are fully equal to any that he himself ever uttered. There is scarcely anything in all literature finer than the image we have quoted; and if we, with our comparatively dull intellects, are impressed at once by the exquisite beauty and pathos of this expression, how keenly must it have been appreciated by him—the great master of solemn thought and poetical expression? We conceive that we behold him start upon his throne when these words fall upon his ear—and he feels at once that no common woman is before him. She had previously used another image, fine, indeed, and striking, but eclipsed by this. She had compared the prospective death of her only surviving son to the quenching of her last live coal—"They shall quench my coal that is left, and shall not leave to my husband neither name nor remainder upon the earth:" and now, again, death is compared to water, which being once lost upon the ground can be gathered up no more. The idea is, that there is no recovery of the life once lost, no return from the cold desolations of the grave. This idea is common in the Old Testament, though nowhere else expressed by the same image. It occurs, however, less frequently in the Psalms than might be expected, whereas, the instances in the book of Job are numerous, and some of them very striking. The following have considerable analogical, but not literal, resemblance to the one which now engages our attention.

“As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away; so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more. He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more.”*

“Man dieth, and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up; so man lieth down and riseth not.”†

“The eye also which saw him shall see him no more; neither shall his place any more behold him.”‡

The most striking of the analogous passages which occur in the writings of David himself, is in Psalm lxxviii. 39. “He remembered that they were but flesh; *a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.*”

Even this image is in Job—“O remember that my life is wind.”§

Beautiful as these images are, appealing as they do to our sympathies and consciousness—*are they true?* That is, are they in conformity with the later revelation, in which no such passages as these are to be found, and in which the restoration of the body is distinctly declared? Do they not rather express the obscurity of that earlier light, which, although it eventually grew on to the perfect day of the Gospel, was in many things obscure at the beginning, and although it faintly disclosed the immortality of the soul, is thought scarcely to have revealed the resurrection of the dead? If revealed, it is certainly revealed obscurely. The mere question, whether it be revealed at all, or not, shows this. It was, therefore, probably one of those doctrines which were purposely left obscure until the fulness of time should come—until the risen Redeemer had become the first-fruits of them that slept. We think that this doctrine is to be found in several passages of the early books of the Old Testament Scriptures, which were not so understood by Jews themselves, but which we are enabled so to understand by the later light of the Gospel—as in that word of the Lord to Moses, from which Christ

* Job vii. 9, 10.

† Job xiv. 10–12.

‡ Job xx. 9.

§ Job vii. 7.

himself declares that this doctrine might be inferred. Matt. xxii. 32. And in the more certain light of later prophecy, this comfortable doctrine, though not very distinctly declared, is so clearly *indicated*, that the Jews themselves believed nearly all that we believe in this great matter, by the time our Lord appeared, although there were those by whom it was still denied. It was drawn from the completed canon of the Old Testament, and was not, perhaps, a matter of ancient popular belief, like the immortality of the soul. The belief existed—and that belief must have been drawn from the Old Testament—must have been a revelation; for there was no other source from which the Jews could derive a doctrine (seeing that it was a true doctrine) not held by any other people, not discoverable by the human understanding, and one at which indeed philosophy curled its lip in proud disdain.

It therefore may be, that the woman of Tekoah meant what her words literally indicate, and expressed the popular belief of her time—that life returned not to the dead. But, blessed be God, it is not so. The very contrary to what she said is the fact. We must needs die—but are *not* as water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. It shall be gathered up—

“Wherever slept one grain of human dust,
Essential organ of a human soul,
Wherever tossed, obedient to the call
Of God’s omnipotence, it hurried on
To meet its fellow particles, revived,
Rebuilt, in union indestructible,
No atom of his spoils remained to Death.”

Again—

“Each particle of dust was claimed: the turf
For ages trod beneath the careless foot
Of men, rose organized in human form;
The monumental stones were rolled away;
The doors of death were opened; and in the dark

And loathsome vault, and silent charnel house,
Moving, were heard the mouldering bones
That sought their proper place. Instinctive every soul
Flew to its clayey part: from grass-grown mould,
The nameless spirit took its ashes up."—POLLOCK.

Yet in returning to the words of the woman of Tekoah, it must be confessed that such expressions being in their very essence poetical and figurative, must not be pressed too closely for matters of doctrine. They may prove the existence of a doctrine or belief—but not the absence of a doctrine or belief. They take the lower and obvious sense of facts as they appear, and go not into the higher sense of unseen and unexperienced things. Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard," supplies a case very much in point. The poet certainly knew and believed in the immortality of the soul—he knew the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, and probably believed in it. Yet in his poem, the subject of which might seem naturally to suggest the production of these doctrines, there is not one word bearing the slightest reference to either; and if, in a distant age, inferences as to the belief of the British people, were drawn from that poem alone, it might, with as much probability as in the case before us, be inferred that they possessed no knowledge or belief of either doctrine. But the fact is, that the poet had only to deal with the external and social aspect of his subject; and although he knew there were higher and remoter aspects, his pointed object did not require him to extend his view to them. In a great variety of phrases and images he illustrates the idea that man shall no more return to the relations he has filled, and the position he has occupied—shall never recover the very form of life which he has laid down.

Indeed, all Gray's images and illustrations, so much admired and so often quoted, are but expansions and variations of the words of Job: "He that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more. He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more." Here, on the

words "shall come up no more," an elaborate old commentator* remarks,—“No! That is sad news indeed, to go down into the grave and come up no more. Are all the hopes of man shut up in the grave? And is there an utter end of him when this life ends? Shall he come up no more? . . . What he saith, it is not a denial of a dying man's resurrection to life, but of his restitution to the same life, or to such life as he parted with at the grave's mouth. They who die a natural death do not live a natural life again; therefore he addeth in the next verse, *He shall return no more to his house.* He does not say absolutely he shall return no more, but he shall return no more to his house: he shall have no more to do with this world, with worldly businesses or contentments, with the labors or comforts of the creature, or of his family; he shall return *no more to his house.*”

A portion of this fine old expositor's remarks upon the next clause, might make one persuaded that Gray had read his ponderous volumes, with which he might certainly have employed himself to much more advantage than by reading Crebillon's romances upon a sofa, which was *his* idea of supreme enjoyment. The words are, “*Neither shall his place know him any more.*” On which Caryl observes, “When a man lives and comes home to his house, his house (as it were) welcomes him home, and his place is glad to entertain him. As in the psalm, the little hills are said to rejoice at the showers, so when a man comes home, his house and all he hath have, as it were, a tongue to bid him welcome, and open arms to receive and embrace him; but when he dies he shall return no more, and then his place shall know him (that is, receive him) no more.”

* Joseph Caryl, *Exposition, with Practical Observations on the Book of Job.* London 1676. A work in two immense and closely-printed folio volumes, of about 4700 pages together, now very scarce.

THIRTY-NINTH WEEK—MONDAY.

FILIAL INGRATITUDE.—II SAMUEL XV. 7; XVI. 14.

WHEN Absalom had gained permission to appear at court, and consequently acquired the right to show himself in public, and mingle freely in society, he adopted a line of conduct which enables us, by the light of subsequent events, to see that he had already formed the design of depriving his father of his crown.

It may occur to many to ask, what motive he could have had to take a step so premature? There is, at the first view, a want of adequate *motive*, seeing that he was the eldest living son of the king,* and as his father was now advanced in life, the lapse of a few years more would, in the course of nature, place the crown upon his head. But if our previous statements have been understood, it must be clearly seen that under the Hebrew constitution the fact of his being the eldest son by no means insured the succession to him. No one had yet succeeded to the kingdom by right of primogeniture, and the principle of such succession was not as yet, therefore, established by a single precedent. Besides, David could not have failed to make his sons clearly understand that, although the crown was assured to his family, the nomination of the individual was with the Lord, and they needed not him to teach them that in the absence of any such nomination the power rested with himself of bequeathing the crown to any one of his sons he pleased. This alone was enough to make Absalom's prospects in the future somewhat precarious. The Divine nomination of another might at any time be interposed; and he had probably seen enough to feel that he was not to calculate too surely even upon his father's preference. He knew, indeed, that he had no second

¹ Chileab, the son of David by Abigail, was born before him, but he appears to have died ere this time, for nothing is reported of him but the fact of his birth.

place in his father's heart, but enough had passed to satisfy him that he held no high place in that father's judgment. More than this, it is our impression that David already knew that Solomon was, by the Lord's appointment, to be his successor on the throne. In the promise made to David through Nathan, it was clearly indicated that a son not yet born was to sit upon his throne, and when Solomon was born he could not but understand that this applied to him. If he had any doubt of this, it must have been removed by his knowledge that the "Lord loved him," and had, through Nathan, bestowed upon him the new name of Jedidiah (*beloved of the Lord*). 2 Sam. xii. 24, 25. It is even probable that he had long before the present time, if not from the first, received those more distinct intimations of the Lord's will in this matter, which he mentions in 1 Chron. xxviii. 5-7; but this alone could not but have been enough to enable one so anxious as David to trace and act upon the Divine indications. Besides, we learn from 1 Kings i. 17, that the king had pledged himself to Bathsheba, who must have been aware of all this, that her son should be his successor, or, in other words, that his choice should enforce these intimations, and that no impulses of affection or preference for any other son, should induce him to contravene them. Whether this pledge had been already given, is not clear; but as Solomon was now about fourteen years of age, and as the intimations we have traced were long before afforded, it is likely that the pledge which was founded on them had not been so long delayed.

Now, if David had not yet made this designation of Solomon publicly known, enough may have transpired, or have been surmised, to lead Absalom to think his succession, by right of primogeniture, to be in danger, and to feel that the danger would increase by lapse of time: and thus we perceive that, to a man of Absalom's temper, there were motives for immediate action which do not at the first sight appear.

Absalom did not, however, plunge at once into open rebellion. He began, by assuming a semi-regal magnificence, to

assert his rank as heir-apparent. He procured for himself chariots and horses—then a new, and therefore striking, luxury in Israel—and appeared abroad in much state, with fifty out-runners. The dignity thus assumed, rendered the more persuasive the blandishments by which he strove to seduce from their allegiance the suitors who repaired from all parts of the land to Jerusalem, and gave emphasis to his seditious insinuations, and his promises of redressing all public wrong. These people spread through the country, on their return home, glowing accounts of the inexpressible beauty of the king's son, his gracious condescension, his sympathy with the poor and the oppressed, and the advantages that might be expected from his reign. In the striking words of the sacred historian, "So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel"—stole the hearts that belonged to his father.

When all appeared ripe for action, Absalom repaired to Hebron with 200 men, and after seizing that strong town—the metropolis of David's first kingdom—he caused himself to be proclaimed king by sound of trumpet in several parts of Israel at once. The king was confounded and dismayed at the suddenness of the outbreak, and apparently wide disaffection to his government and person which its extent implied. As news came to him that one place after another had proclaimed Absalom, he felt as if all were falling away from him, and that he could rely only upon the foreign guards, whom, under the names of Gittites, Cherethites, and Pelethites, he had in the course of years gathered around his person. With these he marched out of Jerusalem, purposing, if need were, to proceed to the country beyond the Jordan, and there collect his resources and watch the progress of events. From the people beyond the river he had received many proofs of attachment, and his wars had brought him much into connection with them, and had materially advanced their prosperity; and he thought that he might count on their fidelity. The geographical position was also well suited to his purpose, and the step seems to have been,

under all the circumstances, the best that could have been taken.

Even in departing the king received many proofs of attachment, which must have refreshed his heart. Some, indeed, might be supposed to serve his cause better by remaining at Jerusalem than by going with him. Among them was Hushai, an esteemed friend, who was prevailed upon to return, for the express purpose of endeavoring to neutralize the counsels of Abithophel, a crafty but most able man, who had been high in the councils of David, and whose defection seems to have disturbed him more than any single incident of this melancholy affair. Such faith had he in this man's sagacity, that he apprehended Absalom's chief power lay in the possession of such a counsellor; and hence his anxiety to prevent his advice from being followed. This dangerous mission was undertaken by Hushai, who performed it well.

The sympathy of the priestly body was also entirely with David. Both the high-priests, Abiathar and Zadok, were not only prepared to go with him, but they caused the ark of the covenant to be brought out, to be borne away with the king. David was deeply affected at this sight; but he declined to avail himself of the advantage which the presence of the ark and of the high-priests would have given to his cause. He directed them to take it back, and to remain themselves in the city,—“Carry back the ark of God into the city,” he said; “if I shall find favor in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it and his holy habitation.”

It was, nevertheless, a hard thing thus to be compelled to wander forth in his old age from his beloved city, his pleasant home, and the place of the Lord's tabernacle; and to find himself thus forsaken by his own subjects, who owed so much to him, and by the friends in whom he had trusted; and all this at the instance and by the contrivance of the son whom he loved so well. No wonder that he departed as a mourner,—“David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered; and

he went barefoot; and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up." No more striking picture of a great man under adversity was ever drawn than these simple words portray. The conduct of David throughout—his goodness, resignation, and patience, is clearly evinced in all these trying scenes. This, as Dr. Chalmers observes, "marks strongly his subdued and right spirit; partly induced, we doubt not, by the humility of his own conscious transgressions. He fell, but it was the fall of the upright, and he rose again; submitting himself meekly, in the mean time, to the will of God."

His patience had a further trial on the way. As he went on by the pass of Bahurim, one Shimei, a near relation of Saul, cast stones and bitter curses at him, as one whom vengeance had at last overtaken, for all the evil he had done to the house of Saul. The indignation of Abishai was naturally roused at this; and with the instinctive impulse of the sons of Zeruiah towards blood, he begged David to let him go over and take off the venomous scoundrel's head. But David saw the hand of God even in this, and he refused. "Behold, my son seeketh my life, how much more now may this Benjamite do it? Let him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him. It may be that the Lord will look upon mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day." This was the true spirit which makes chastisement profitable. David is always great in affliction. His soul is prospering largely amid these circumstances of mental trial and personal suffering.

So David pursued his sorrowful way until he reached the plains of Jericho and the banks of the Jordan, where he awaited such tidings as might direct his further course.

THIRTY-NINTH WEEK—TUESDAY.

TWO HANGINGS.—II SAMUEL XVI. 15; XIX. 8.

SOON after his father's departure, Absalom marched into Jerusalem, and took possession of the palace and the treasures of the crown. Absalom knew how relentless his own purposes were towards that father, whose love without measure he possessed; he knew how firm was his own resolve to reign. Yet he gave the people credit for not believing how black his own heart was,—for supposing that there were yet in his breast some sense of filial duty, some gleams of filial tenderness. But, instead of being gratified that people thought better of him than he deserved, he was disturbed by it. He feared that, in contemplation of possible circumstances which might bring about a reconciliation between him and his father, and leave his supporters open to the resentment of David, many would be afraid to commit themselves to his cause. He was therefore ready to adopt any means, however atrocious, which might convince those inclined to support him, that they would never be compromised by any reconciliation between him and his greatly wronged father. The means suggested by the Satanic "wisdom" of Ahithophel were most effectual, but most atrocious. It was, that Absalom should take public possession of the "concubines" whom David had left behind in charge of the palace. His *wives* he had probably taken with him. This counsel was followed, and the people were satisfied that this deed had rendered all reconciliation between him and David impossible.

The next step was to endeavor his father's destruction, in the conviction that the throne of Absalom would never be secure so long as he lived. The son had no relentings. He had knowingly subjected himself to the inevitable necessity of taking his father's life, and he only desired to learn how that object might be most effectually secured. A council

was held on this question. and it is the first cabinet council to which history admits us. It was, doubtless, conducted in the same form as other royal councils ; and from the instance before us, it appears that the members who had anything to suggest, or rather such as the king called upon for their opinion, described the course they thought best suited to the circumstances. The council at large then expressed its collective opinion upon the advice thus offered, and recommended that course to the king. It does not appear whether or not the king was regarded as bound to follow the advice so tendered ; but it seems to have been generally followed,—the king probably disliking to take the responsibility of acting on his individual opinion in opposition to the collective wisdom of his council. This “collective wisdom” is seldom other than the wisdom of one man, who devises the course of action, and gets the others to concur in his views. In this case the choice lay between the “wisdom” of Ahithophel and the wisdom of Hushai. The former sagaciously advised immediate action, before David should be able to collect his resources. Hushai was not a member of this council ; but he had been well received by Absalom, whose greater treachery against his father, made him give ready credence to the treachery of his father’s friend. It was at Absalom’s suggestion that he was called in, and being informed of the course Ahithophel had advised—he saw at once the danger that this course threatened to David ; and, in fulfilment of his mission to defeat this man’s counsel, he advanced divers reasons against it, all tending to delay—reasons so specious that the council with one voice declared his advice to be better than that of Ahithophel. Mortally offended at this disrespect to that sagacity which all Israel admired, and convinced, in his clear-sighted scope of “things before and after,” that the cause of Absalom would be lost by the delay Hushai recommended, he saddled his ass, rode home to his house in Gilon, and having deliberately set his affairs in proper order, hanged himself. Ahithophel is not probably the first man who hanged himself, but he bears the unenviable distinction

of being the first whose hanging himself is recorded; and society would have little reason to complain if all, who have since sentenced themselves to this doom, were as worthy of it as this father of self-suspenders. Bishop Hall quaintly remarks of him, that though mad enough to hang himself, he was wise enough to set his house in order before he did it.

Hushai seems not to have been too sure that his counsel would be followed, for he sent trusty messengers to apprise David of what had passed, and advised him immediately to cross the river. This the king did, and went to reside at Mahanaim, where Ishbosheth had formerly reigned—a circumstance which probably dictated his choice of that place. Here he received abundant supplies of all necessaries for himself and his followers from three men whose names are mentioned with honor in the sacred narrative. We are somewhat surprised to find that the first of these is Shobi, son of Nahash, king of Ammon, and therefore brother of Hanun—whose people had been dealt with so severely by David. Nothing is known with certainty of him, but it is by some reasonably enough conjectured that he was believed to have disapproved of his brother's conduct, and had in consequence been made governor of Ammon by David, after the land had been subdued. The second was that Machir of Lo-debar, whom we have already had occasion to mention as the person who had acted as host and father to Mephibosheth, until David had taken notice of him, and as being by some regarded as the brother of Bathsheba. The third was the old and blind Barzillai of Gilead—in whose hearty adhesion to his king there is something peculiarly affecting. The catalogue of the commodities which these and other like-minded men supplied, at probably an all but ruinous expense to themselves, is curious, as showing the nature of the articles considered in that age to be necessary for the comfort and subsistence of the king and his people: "Beds, and basins, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched corn, and beans, and lentiles, and parched pulse, and honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine." It will

be perceived that in this pastoral land, unusual prominence is given to the produce of flocks and herds, and the agricultural produce is confined to prime necessities. There is no mention here of wine, or oil, or raisins, or figs, or dates, or in fact of various articles which would have been very conspicuous in a list of commodities supplied in the countries west of the Jordan. Here in this pastoral region, where there was little commerce, the wealth of the people consisted chiefly in flocks and herds, and in the prime articles of food. Here brave and hardy men, attached to their family-chiefs, abounded, and were ready at the call of their leaders to gather around their king, who, although without treasure, thus found himself in a short time at the head of a considerable army.

Their services were speedily required, for Absalom soon crossed the Jordan also, his army being under the command of his cousin Amasa, a son of David's sister Abigail, who probably felt discontented at having been kept in the shade by the sons of Zeruiah, and hoped to exercise under Absalom the same authority that Joab wielded under, or rather over, David.

A battle—bloody and decisive, was now inevitable; and David, finding that the soldiers would not allow him to risk his own person in the engagement, divided his force into three brigades, severally under the command of Joab, Abishai, and Ittai (the commander of the foreign guards), the general command being with Joab. The battle was fought in what was called the Forest of Ephraim; and as it was not the Lord's purpose that *this* chastening should proceed any further, the cause of David triumphed. Absalom himself fled for his life upon his mule, but as he rode in unguarded haste through the wood, the long hair in which he so much gloried, caught in the low branches of an oak, and the escape of his mule from under him left him dangling in the air. When Joab got news of this, he hurried to the spot, and settled all further questions by sending three darts through the body of the guilty prince. This was contrary to the orders of Da-

vid, who that morning, as the troops defiled before him at the gate of Mahanaim, had strictly enjoined the soldiers to respect the life of Absalom for his sake. There was probably a true regard for the king and kingdom in this act of Joab. He knew that Absalom could not with safety be suffered to live; and that it would be difficult to rid the state of so foul a member at any other time than now, when a just right to slay him had been earned in open battle. This is by no means to be classed with Joab's assassinations. It had nothing in common with them. Nothing can be alleged against him in this matter but his disobedience to the king: but he, in his position, felt that he dared to disobey him for his own good; and that he was quite prepared to vindicate and maintain this deed. He did so, and when the king, in the bitterness of his grief, on receiving the tidings that his son was dead, bewailed him aloud in cries that go to one's heart—"O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"—Joab went in to him, and reprimanded him in strong language for thus discouraging the men who had risked their lives in his cause, by making them feel as if they had committed a crime in delivering him from his enemies. David felt the force of this, and presented himself with a cheerful countenance to the people. But it is evident that for this act he abhorred Joab in his heart, even to his death-bed.

THIRTY-NINTH WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

THE RESTORATION.—II SAMUEL XIX. 9-15, 41-43; XX.

ABSALOM is dead. David is victorious. What more has the king to do but to cross the Jordan, march to Jerusalem, and take possession of his throne! This had been ill speed—it had been too abrupt. David is much to be commended for the delicacy with which he acted. Seeing that the de-

fection of the people, and the preference of Absalom, had been so general among the tribes west of the Jordan, he feared even the appearance of forcing himself upon them, or seeming to recover possession of his throne as a conqueror. He therefore tarried beyond the river, waiting to be invited back. There was some delay in giving this invitation, perhaps because the king's wish and his motive in delaying to move westward, were not at first understood. When these were understood, and that the king seemed thus voluntarily to throw back the option into their hands, his delicacy was not so generally appreciated as it deserved. There was a strife of parties—and some seemed inclined to accept the option he appeared to offer, by declining to receive him; and it appears to us not unlikely that if any acceptable candidates had appeared, the division of the realm into two, if not into three kingdoms, might then have taken place. David's power was safe beyond the Jordan, and in any event he would have reigned there—and so far the promise to him would have been accomplished. But on this side the river, the seeds of disunion between the great tribe of Judah and the other tribes had already so far ripened, that they would scarcely have concurred in the choice of a new sovereign unconnected with the house of David, and thus the disruption, which after another reign took place, would then have been consummated. As it was, the strife of parties ended in the general, but scarcely unanimous, determination to recall David; and it is remarkable that the initiative was taken by the ten tribes, which, it is important to observe, already in these discussions are, for the first time, called Israel, as distinct from Judah. But it is likely that, although it now first appears, this distinction had actually grown up while David reigned over Judah only, and Ishbosheth over the other tribes. Ishbosheth's kingdom must have had some name to distinguish it from that of Judah, and what so likely as that it should have been the name of Israel, at least among the populace? As both the kings considered themselves entitled to the sole dominion, they may have avoided the appearance of

limiting their claim, by calling themselves, respectively, kings of Judah and of Israel; and the fact is, that in the history they are never so designated. But the populace, in every age and country, will have names for things, whether they be appropriate or not; and there can be no doubt that the people of Israel had a short and easy name, free from ceremonial circumlocution, for the the realm of Ishbosheth.

When David became acquainted with the desire of the ten tribes to recall him, he felt himself in a new difficulty. It was a separate decision of the ten tribes, in which his own tribe of Judah had not concurred. Some may think that he might have *assumed* the fact of that tribe's attachment to him; but it seems to us that the facility with which Absalom had been hailed as king at Hebron, and been joined by such numbers as enabled him to move at once upon Jerusalem, might well justify David in suspecting that the procrastination of the Judahites arose from some disinclination to receive him. The step he did take is, however, of questionable discretion. There was great danger in adopting a course which might indicate to the other tribes that he took a separate interest in Judah; as it was too well remembered that he belonged to it, and that it had for some years been his separate kingdom. He, however, recognized their tribal interest in him by treating with them separately. He sent the two high-priests to incite them to hasten to escort him home, and not to be the last in the general movement. They did so. Though the last to call him, they were the first to escort him; and when they sent to conduct him home, he at once moved forward, without waiting till the other, and more distant tribes, arrived to take part in this great public act. The dangerous impolicy of this is apparent. The least he could have done was to have waited until the other tribes arrived to concur in this procedure, aware, as he must have been, of the importance which all Orientals attach to such points of ceremony. But it is plain to us that, being aware that eventually the main interest of his house lay in Judah, he was determined to

reign there at all hazards, whatever became of the rest of his kingdom.

The result that might be anticipated ensued. When the other tribes came to conduct the king home, they were affronted to find that they had been anticipated, and that Judah alone had assumed the right and honor of bringing the king back. There then arose a hot contention between Israel and Judah. The former contended, with reason, that as they "had ten parts in the king," and Judah but one, the latter had taken too much upon it in bringing the king back upon its own authority; in reply to which the Judahites used the argument, dangerous for David's house, but which his own part in the matter had distinctly sanctioned, that they had a right to act as they had done, because the king was peculiarly their own—"was near of kin to them." David must have smiled to witness this eager contention among the tribes, as to which had the best right to bring back the sovereign whom they had all concurred, but lately, in driving forth.

The argument of the Judahites was by no means calculated to conciliate the ten tribes; and there can be no doubt that the king himself incurred a share in their displeasure for the part he had taken in this matter, for it was certainly on his distinct invitation that the men of Judah had acted. Here, as Chalmers aptly describes it, "was a festerment that broke out at a future day." Even now, as he remarks, this feeling, on the part of Israel, "came to a formidable eruption." Among the watchers of events was one Sheba, the son of Bichri, who, perceiving the disgust of the ten tribes at the arrogance of the men of Judah, thought that the contention of the other tribes for ten parts in David, might easily be turned into a disavowal of any part in him. He therefore raised the seditious cry, "We have *no part* in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tents, O Israel." This cry, in the present state of feeling, acted like magic. Nearly all the men of Israel left the king to the Judahites, and he was, by them, escorted from the Jordan to Jerusalem.

Here was a perilous emergency. David had no hesitation that this outbreak was to be treated as sedition. But whom was he to employ? Considering that this recall was like the commencement of a new reign, which vacated the warrant by which all offices were previously held, he had offered to Amasa (the late commander of Absalom's forces) the lure of making him commander-in-chief, in place of Joab—a step which we cannot view with satisfaction, involving, as it did, the sacrifice of the long-trying devotion of Joab and Abishai (who would not be likely to overlook this affront to his brother), regardless of the high services they had often and lately rendered to the king and the state, for the purpose of purchasing the allegiance of one who had but yesterday been in arms against him, and who had certainly not acquired much military reputation in the campaign. He was to have the rewards of Albermarle, without the services of Monk. The truth is, no doubt, that the king thought that he might thus, by a side blow, rid himself of the inconveniently overpowering influence of Joab, and relieve himself from the presence of the man who had slain Absalom, but whom he durst not ostensibly punish on *that* account. He was, however, greatly mistaken in his calculation, and much overrated his own strength. Joab was not thus easily to be disposed of.

Amasa was, however, made commander-in-chief, and it was to him that David committed the charge of putting down Sheba's dangerous insurrection. He was ordered to collect the forces of Judah within three days, and appear with them at Jerusalem. The rapid Joab would hardly have required even three days for this service; but this time passed and Amasa appeared not. This fact is significant. The men did not approve of the step which the king had taken, and were reluctant to follow this new leader, so that he could not get the required force together in the time assigned. This might have convinced David that he had again erred; and, himself sudden and quick in his military operations, and accustomed to the sharp, rapid, and decisive action of Joab, he could little brook this tardiness. Still, however, reluctant to call

Joab again into service, yet aware of the danger of delay, he commissioned Abishai to put down this dangerous conspiracy. He only had been commissioned, but Joab went with him, and, doubtless, became the actual commander. They had got no further than Gibeon, where they halted, than Amasa, with such forces as he had got together, overtook them. On his approach, Joab went to meet him, and so contrived that his sword should fall out of its sheath to the ground, as he drew near to him. Snatching it hastily up, without pausing to sheath it, in the polite zeal of his attention to Amasa, he took hold of his beard, to impress upon it the kiss of affectionate respect, saying, "Art thou in health, my brother?" and as the words passed his lips, and the beard was in his hand, he buried the naked sword in the body of Amasa, under the fifth rib. This was almost exactly as he had before dealt with Abner, and from almost entirely the same motives. This, however, is by much the more villanous act of the two, seeing that it stood more entirely on the ground of personal objects. In Abner's case he had the excuse, at least, of vengeance for a brother's blood, as well as of a real or pretended belief that Abner designed to betray David. But here there was nakedly nothing but the desire to fling a formidable rival from his path. One knows not whether most to be astonished at the atrocity or the hardihood of the deed. It was no less than the murder of a general at the head of his troops. But Joab knew his own influence. One near him cried, "He that favoereth Joab, and he that is for David, let him follow Joab." And such was the power of that name, and the wonderful ascendancy the owner of it had acquired over the troops, that the men of Amasa forthwith joined the others in following Joab in pursuit of Sheba. The advantage of this unexpected promptitude appears in the fact, that the rebel leader, being allowed no time to gather strength, shut himself up in the strong town of Abel Beth-maachah, where the people, to escape a siege, after some parley with Joab, cut off Sheba's head, and threw it to him over the wall.

Thus ended this dangerous commotion, and although the result was the establishment of David's power over all Israel, some damage had been sustained by all the parties concerned. The king himself had committed some serious political indiscretions, tending to establish an ill-feeling between Israel and Judah; while the high-handed manner in which Joab had resumed his command had satisfied David that he could not be displaced, and must materially have deepened his now settled hatred of the high officer to whom he was obliged to intrust the military power of the state, while his horror at the murder of Amasa was not lessened by his inability to call the assassin to account, or by the consciousness that his own untoward proceedings had been the exciting cause of this frightful crime.

In going through these sad passages, the question continually recurs—How is it we no more hear of David asking counsel of the Lord? The time was, when the sacred oracle was consulted on matters of comparatively small importance; but since he became king over all Israel, we have had only one instance of his resort to this sure guidance, and that was at the beginning of his reign. We shall not be far wrong in ascribing to this neglect the serious mistakes into which he appears to have fallen.

THIRTY-NINTH WEEK—THURSDAY.

INCIDENTS.—II SAMUEL XX. 16–40.

YESTERDAY we surveyed the political incidents connected with the restoration of David to his throne; and we proceed now to regard some remarkable lesser circumstances which are interwoven therewith in the sacred narrative.

A great surprise met David as soon as he had crossed the Jordan on his return. Who shall be the first to meet him—to proffer his allegiance and devotion—but that very Shimei

who had so bitterly insulted him on his mournful retreat from Jerusalem! He fell at the king's feet, confessed his error, and pleaded for pardon on the ground of his contrition, and of his being the first of the tribe of Benjamin to come forward on this happy occasion. This was important; for he came at the head of a thousand men of the same tribe, all probably, like himself, warm partisans of the house of Saul, and whom he seems to have induced to take part with him in this decided act of adhesion. An appeal thus made could not be resisted; and besides David was, both from policy and inclination, in a forgiving temper, and felt that it would ill become him at such a time to avenge or remember former wrongs. He therefore rebuked the vengeful suggestion of Abishai, and pledged himself by oath to Shimei that he should not die. It is to be regretted that our knowledge of later circumstances prevents us from ranking this forbearance with acts of christian forgiveness.

The good old blind chief Barzillai went to the Jordan with the king, and took leave of him when he was about to cross the river. David pressed him to proceed with him to Jerusalem, and remain there with him, that he might have the opportunity of manifesting his gratitude for the great and costly services he had rendered. But the prospect of a life at court had no charms for this great pastoral chief. There is something very touching in his words. "I am this day fourscore years old: and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? wherefore, then, should thy servant be yet a burden to my lord the king?" He would, he said, go a little way beyond the Jordan with the king; but he added, "Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and my mother." This touch is affecting, and true to universal nature—but particularly to oriental nature. The tendency of our civilization is to put us above—or perhaps below—these things;

and in so far as it does so, it makes us less wise than we think. We do not say,

“Perish the lore that deadens young desire,”

but we do say there is much in this modern atmosphere of ours which narrows life by deadening—or rather, by concentrating in the present—that imagination which, in younger and more vernal times, extended the vitality of existence into the future also, if not into the past.

Among the first to meet the king at the Jordan was Ziba, “the servant of the house of Saul,” with his fifteen sons and twenty servants. This person had good cause to come. On David’s retreat from Jerusalem, he had met him with an acceptable supply of bread, wine, and summer fruits; and when the king inquired what had become of his master Mephibosheth, he said that he had remained at Jerusalem in the expectation that the turn of events might lift him up as the heir of the house of Saul. On hearing this David, stung by such ingratitude, told Ziba he might have for himself the estate he had hitherto farmed for Mephibosheth. This was a hasty step; and one cannot but feel that a little delay and inquiry would have become David in regard to the son of Jonathan. At Jerusalem, Mephibosheth soon presented himself before the king, who asked him sternly why he had not gone with him. In reply, he touchingly alluded to his lameness. He had ordered an ass to be saddled, on which to follow the king, but Ziba had interfered, and had gone and slandered him to David. Although he did not himself mention it, his haggard and forlorn appearance bore witness to the fact that during the king’s absence he had passed his time as a mourner, and had not dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes. But, while vindicating his character, and knowing how the king had disposed of his property, he intimated his indifference to that part of the matter—“Do what is good in thine eyes . . . What right have I yet to cry any more unto the king?” Reluctant to think that he had been too hasty,—having a royal aversion

to admit that he could err, and had been duped,—and being, in his present humor of overlooking and pardoning everything, indisposed to the task of calling to account a man of such influence as Ziba, who had been forward in his cause, when many tried friends forsook him, the king's answer was something less than generous, and much less than kind to the son of Jonathan—"Why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I have said, thou and Ziba divide the land." The injustice of this is obvious. If he disbelieved Mephibosheth, it was unjust to Ziba to deprive him of the land, which had been the reward of his fidelity when his master forsook what seemed to be a falling cause: whereas, if he believed Mephibosheth, escape from punishment had been sufficient grace for Ziba. The matter is not, however, perhaps so bad as it looks. The king reverts to what he had said, which carries the mind back to his first arrangement, which was that Mephibosheth should be proprietor, and Ziba his tenant, dividing the *produce* of the land with him. It may therefore be, that the king meant to be understood as restoring this arrangement—thus depriving Ziba of the advantage which his treachery acquired, without ejecting him from his tenancy under Mephibosheth. Even this would be hard enough for the son of Jonathan, to be thus still connected with a steward who had betrayed him. But the student of history knows that at a restoration the rules of right and wrong are seldom strictly carried out, and the king having two parties to satisfy, feels obliged to act upon compromises, which give to all something less than their due. Nothing can however excuse the tart manner of David in answering Mephibosheth. If he was not then at leisure to attend to his representation, why decide the matter—and that to his disadvantage—until he had time to inquire fully into the case? The tone of the afflicted man's reply to this sharp answer, gives us reason to fear that the worst interpretation of David's decision may be the right one—"Yea, LET HIM TAKE ALL, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house." Oh noble heart! Let us fain hope that David was touched

by this, and could once more say, "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan."

THIRTY-NINTH WEEK—FRIDAY.

FAMINE AND PESTILENCE.—II SAMUEL XXI., XXIV.

WHEN Saul was disclosing to his courtiers at Gibeah his suspicions against David, he used these remarkable words: "Hear now, ye Benjamites; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields, and vineyards, and make you captains of thousands and captains of hundreds?" 1 Sam. xxii. 7. That is—Whether they fancied that David would do for them what he had done, or meant to do? But the question comes, where did Saul get lands and vineyards to distribute among his servants? Not by conquest from the neighboring nations. The domains of the Amalekites were too distant, and it does not appear that he retained them in possession. At home all the lands were appropriated among the tribes and families of Israel, and could not be acquired even by purchase. This was the first reign in Israel, and there had been no treasons which could have placed at his disposal the forfeited estates of traitors. His own property does not seem to have been considerable; and he could hardly yet have ventured to take the private estates of his subjects by force from them. There was only one available source that we can see, and from what now transpires, it is likely that he availed himself of it. The Gibeonites having filched a covenant of peace and safety from Joshua, were, out of regard to the oath that had been taken, secured in the possession of their towns and lands, on condition of their discharging, by certain of their number, all the menial services of the tabernacle. It would seem that Saul viewed their possessions with a covetous eye, as affording him the means of rewarding his adherents, and of enriching his family, and hence, on some pretence or other, or without any

pretence, slew large numbers of them, and doubtless seized their possessions. It is said that he did this "in his zeal for Israel and Judah," and this cannot be explained but on the supposition that the deed was done in order to give the tribes possession of the reserved territories of the Gibeonites. And there is no doubt this would be, and was designed to be, a popular and acceptable act. From the first, the people murmured greatly at the covenant that had been entered into, mainly, it would seem, because they were thus deprived of the spoil of the Gibeonites, and of cities and lands situated in the most desirable part of the country. This feeling, in all probability, strengthened as the population of Israel increased, and land, especially in this quarter, acquired increased value. As one of the towns of this people was in Judah, and three in Benjamin, when they were destroyed out of their cities, none but persons of these tribes could pretend to any right to them, and they no doubt originally had them, and probably willingly undertook the task of turning out the Gibeonites at the point of the sword. Thus, Saul's zeal for Israel (Benjamin) and for Judah appears; and thus also, by their complicity in this gross breach of ancient covenants with a now harmless and faithful people, who for many ages had been Israelites in faith and practice, they laid themselves open to punishment from Him who abhors iniquity and broken faith, and to whom the innocent blood cries not in vain. It would seem that Saul's own family must have been active in this cruel wrong, and had a good share of the spoil—for we find them all, when reduced to a private station, much better off in their worldly circumstances than can else be accounted for, especially as Saul's own estate had gone with the crown, until assigned by David to Mephibosheth.

But the punishments of a just God for wrong-doing, whether in nations or individuals, though often delayed, come at last—often when, from lapse of time, the wrong-doers think themselves secure in the possession of their blood-stained gains, and that all danger is past. It was so in this case, if, as some suppose, the transactions which fol-

low did not take place at an earlier period of David's reign, and are set down here with other miscellaneous matters, as a sort of appendix, interposed before the account of the close of David's life.

There came a famine of three years' duration. If the time be indicated by the place which the chapter occupies, David may reasonably have ascribed it at first to the recent commotions, during which the labors of the field had been neglected, or less sedulously pursued; and probably, the well-stored granaries he had established throughout the country, prevented the scarcity from being very severely felt during the first and second years. But when a third year brought matters to a famine point, David began to see something extraordinary in this succession of bad seasons, and, as became him, consulted the oracle of the Lord. He was answered, that it was because of the wrongs done by Saul to the Gibeonites. "Because of Saul and his bloody house"—a phrase which seems to show that the family of Saul was particularly active in this evil matter, and had stimulated him to it in expectation of the benefits they might derive from the spoil, seeing that three fourths of the property of the Gibeonites lay in their tribe.

On hearing this, David applied to the remnant of the Gibeonites to learn what atonement would satisfy them for the cruel wrongs they had sustained. Their answer was vindictive—blood for blood—the blood of Saul's house. The price of blood—no silver or gold, would they accept. They would have life for life, as avengers of the blood of their own slain. The claim of blood revenge holds good for any lapse of time, or into new generations, and is never cleared till the representatives of the offenders—the next of kin, have paid the fatal price. We have seen that the law of Moses retained this ancient principle of rough natural justice, while striving to ameliorate some of its evils; but, among these Gibeonites and the other persons of Canaanitish origin, the practice seems to have lost less of its original severity than among the Hebrews, and to have been as rigidly carried out as it is at this

day among the Caucasian mountaineers, or among the Arabians—although the latter do more frequently accept “the price of blood” than the former. The answer of the Gibeonites implies their feeling that the Hebrew nation, as such, by its sympathy and concurrence with Saul, had sinned against them—and they seem to regard it as an act of moderation on their part, that they waived their claim as against the nation, and restricted it to Saul in the persons of a few of his representatives. “We will have no silver nor gold of Saul, nor of his house; *neither for us shalt thou kill any man in Israel.* . . . The man that consumed us, and that devised against us, that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel, let seven men of his sons be delivered up to us, that we may hang them up before the Lord at Gibeah.” The Gibeah which they proposed to make the scene of this tragedy, was the very town in which Saul had held his residence; and which was no doubt chosen by them, to make this act the more monumental. David dared not refuse their demand. He gave them seven of Saul’s descendants. They were two sons of Saul by Rizpah, the same concubine respecting whom Abner had offended Ishbosheth, and five sons of Merab the daughter of Saul. David was determined to save Mephibosheth and his sons for Jonathan’s sake, and it was probably out of respect to this feeling, that the Gibeonites did not insist upon the inclusion of these—the rightful heirs and representatives of Saul. One would think this fact a sufficient answer to those who venture to suspect, that the whole matter was a contrivance between David and the priest to get rid of the remnant of the house of Saul, of whose remaining influence in the land, the late commotion had made him apprehensive. If this were the case, how came he to cut off only collateral branches, and spare all those in the direct line of succession to the throne? In this point of view, Mephibosheth and his son Micah, and his four sons (perhaps already born) were those from whom there was most danger to apprehend. Yet these were spared by preference, when there was actually an accusation of treason

lying against Mephibosheth, which, however unfounded, might, if David had wished to get rid of him, have furnished, even without the intervention of the Gibeonites, a plausible ground for cutting him off. If the reader turn to 1 Chron. viii. 33, 34, he will find an enumeration of the descendants of Meribaal or Mephibosheth, heirs of the house of Saul—exhibiting, perhaps, the most numerous descent from any one person of the age in which David lived.

If it be asked—and it has been asked—Why vengeance was exacted rather for this slaughter of the Gibeonites, than for Saul's greater crime, the massacre of the priests at Nob? the answer is, that the people, and even the family of Saul, had no sympathy with or part in this latter tragedy, which none but an alien could be found to execute. But both the people and Saul's family had made themselves parties in the destruction of the unhappy Gibeonites, by their sympathy, their concurrence, their aid—and above all, as we must believe, by their accepting the fruits of the crime.

Yet, although this be the intelligible public ground on which the transaction rests, it is impossible to withhold our sympathy for these victims of a public crime in which it is probable that none of them had any direct part. They were hanged up at Gibeah: and the Gibeonites, contrary to the practice of the Hebrews themselves, left them upon the gibbets till their bodies should waste away. This was bad policy in them, to say the least, as it could only exasperate the Israelites, who, however, under the circumstances, dared not interfere between them and their allowed vengeance. But there was one whose true womanly, motherly heart, would not allow her to quit her sons on this side the grave's brink. This was Rizpah, the mother of two of them. She fixed her abode upon the rock, under the shadow of these dangling, blackening corpses, and watched them with vigilance, and “suffered neither the birds of the air to rest upon them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night.”

It seems to have been some time before this touching instance of maternal devotion came to the knowledge of David.

When he heard of it, he felt himself bound to interfere to prevent the continuance of a scene so distressful, and so revolting to the feelings of the Israelites. He caused the remains to be removed; and, obtaining the bones of Saul and Jonathan from Jabesh-gilead, had the whole deposited, with becoming respect and honor, in the sepulchre of the family at Zelzah. The reader who recollects the strong desire of the Israelites, that their bones should rest with those of their kindred—as lately instanced in the case of Barzillai—will appreciate this mark of attention on the part of David, which must have been most gratifying to all Israel, and especially to the friends and connections of the house of Saul.

The last chapter of the Second Book of Samuel, is the recital of a most destructive pestilence. It is scarcely correct to say, as is usually said, that this was on account of David's causing his people to be numbered. That was the *immediate* cause,—for the procedure, innocent and even laudable in itself, and such as had in former times been undertaken by Divine command, originated in motives which the Lord condemned. But the *ultimate* and *real* cause is to be found in the verse which introduces the narrative, and which is almost invariably lost sight of in the common accounts of this transaction. It is, that “the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.” Now the anger of the Lord could only be awakened by unfaithfulness and evil-doing; and that, whatever its precise nature, was the real cause of the calamity that followed, and relieves the case of the apparent harshness, of which so much has been said, of making the people suffer for the offence of their king.

On *this* account “the Lord moved David to number Israel.” What? Did the Lord move David to offend, and then punish him for the offence? By no means. Let us turn to the parallel phrase in 1 Chronicles, xxi. 1. “Satan stood up against Israel, and incited David to number Israel.” Now if we carefully consider these texts together, we shall see the meaning to be, that for the sins of the people, the Lord permitted the great enemy of mankind to have an advantage

which would not otherwise have been allowed him. Still David was under no compulsion to yield to the incitement; and that he so readily yielded, even when such a man as Joab could see the heinousness of the offence, and remonstrate against it, shows the evil state of his heart at that time. As usual with him, and indeed with most of us, calamity brought him to a sounder mind; and we cannot but sympathize in the piety and wisdom of his decision, when the choice of punishments was offered him through Gad the seer, of preferring three days' pestilence to three years of famine, or three months of defeat and loss before his enemies. "I am in a great strait," he said: "Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord, for his mercies are great, and let me not fall into the hand of man."

THIRTY-NINTH WEEK—SATURDAY.

THE LAST DAYS.—I KINGS I. 1-11; I CHRON. XXVIII.—XXIX.

MEN get old at different ages; David was older at seventy than Moses at a hundred and twenty—and older than many persons are now at eighty and upwards. As the vital heat departed from his blood, it became manifest that his eventful life was drawing to its close. It is lamentable that the quiet of his departing days should have been disturbed by a new rebellion of another beloved son—not, in this instance, against his person and authority, but against his appointment in regard to the succession.

It was by this time well and generally known, that Solomon was the nominated successor. But Adonijah, the eldest surviving son of David, a very comely man, and much beloved by his father, formed the resolution of securing the crown for himself. He must have been as old again as Solomon; yet had David lived until the latter had come to fuller years, and become better known to the people, it is likely that Adonijah would have acquiesced; but finding his father

at the point of death when Solomon was scarcely out of his nonage, seems to have encouraged his hopes, that by prompt and decisive measures he might secure the crown for himself. He felt strong in his riper years, in his right of primogeniture, in the absence of any evil design against his father, in the supposed good feeling of the people towards his claim, and in the support it had from many old servants of the state, who had been faithful to David in all his troubles. Among these were persons of no less weight than Joab, the commander of the army, and Abiathar, one of the high-priests, who, indeed, are named as his chief abettors. His policy was to anticipate Solomon, by causing himself to be proclaimed king before his father's death. It was probably calculated that David was too far gone to interfere to any purpose, and that, when the thing was done, and in favor of a son he loved so well, he would acquiesce in it as a fact accomplished.

So Adonijah made a great sacrificial feast in the gardens outside Mount Zion, in which lay the fountain of En-rogel, and invited to it all the king's sons except Solomon, and all the king's servants and officers, except those known to be in the interests of his young rival. Among the latter are particularly named Zadok the high-priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah the captain of the guard, and the "mighty men," or select band of "worthies," which we have had repeated occasion to mention. The necessity for such exceptions, of which he was himself aware, was ominous for the cause of Adonijah. Not to speak of the "worthies," the influence of Zadok in the church was at least equal to that of Abiathar; and although the name of Joab seems more than a counterbalance for that of Benaiah, yet its immediate value was probably less, as the body-guard, which the latter commanded, constituted the main part of the army constantly under arms, and doubtless the only part then present at the capital.

Intending to assume the honors of royalty, Adonijah proceeded to the feast in high state, with chariots and out-run-

ners, like Absalom. He was hailed with enthusiasm as king by the assembled guests.

These proceedings had not passed unobserved. The friends of Solomon saw that no time was to be lost. Nathan, in particular, who had been the means of making known the Lord's will to David, felt that his office and character required him to interfere. Fearing to agitate the king too abruptly in his present feeble state, he went to Bathsheba, and induced her to go and break to him a matter that so nearly concerned the interests and even safety of her son. She accordingly went to the chamber of David, and "bowed, and did obeisance unto the king." Knowing that she had not come unbidden without some important cause, he inquired her errand,—the etiquette which had by this time grown up at court requiring that she should not speak until the king had spoken. The manner of the thing was much the same as when Esther appeared before the king of "a hundred and seven and twenty provinces." Thus permitted to speak, Bathsheba performed a mother's part well. She repeated what she had learned, and reminded the king of his promise that Solomon should be king after himself. When she had finished, and before David could answer, the prophet Nathan was announced, as had been arranged between him and Bathsheba, and the latter then withdrew, but remained within call. Nathan confirmed Bathsheba's statement by a more particular recital of what was going on outside the city, and asked if this was done by his authority and with his concurrence. The greatness of the exigency roused the king to clear-minded and decisive action. His body was bowed down for death by age, and feebleness; but his mind could go forth freely and vigorously into all the circumstances, and apprehend all that so great an occasion required. He desired Bathsheba to be called in; and at once, without any question or circumlocution, pledged himself by oath to see his original intentions carried out. His words were solemn and impressive,—“As Jehovah liveth, that hath redeemed my soul out of all distress, even as I swear

unto thee, by the Lord God of Israel, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne in my stead, *even so will I certainly do this day.*"

Accordingly, she had no sooner departed, gladdened by the assurance, than he sent for Zadok, Nathan, and Benaiah, and directed them at once to mount Solomon upon his own mule of state, and to escort him, with all the royal servants and the guards, down to Gihon, which lay in the valley on the west side of the city, Adonijah's party being in the valley to the north-east. There Zadok was to anoint him king, with the sacred oil from the tabernacle, and with a royal flourish of trumpets they were to proclaim, "Long live king Solomon." This was a sagacious and most effective movement, exactly suited to the circumstances, and shows, that while the king's natural strength was prostrated, his intellect remained quick and unclouded to the last.

All was done as the king had directed. The open march of so stately a procession, with the official sanction which the presence of the royal guards, and the king's own mule, conferred, together with the engaging youth of the prince, drew a large and popular concourse with the train to Gihon, where the inauguration took place, as David had directed. The operation was so sudden, that the city had scarcely been aware of it till the procession returned, with Solomon as king. He was then hailed by the citizens with intense acclamation. "The people piped with pipes, and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth rung with the sound of them." The joyful uproar in the city even reached the ears of the banqueters at En-rogel. They were not left long in doubt as to the purport of this joyous clamor; for Abiathar's son, Jonathan, came with a full account of the proceedings in the city and at Gihon. His first words must have filled them with dismay,—“Our lord king David hath made Solomon king!” The transactions lost nothing in Jonathan's report, which he carried down to what followed the return of the coronation procession into the city. “Solomon sitteth on the throne of the kingdom. Moreover the king's servants came

to bless [congratulate] our lord king David, saying: God make the name of Solomon greater than thy name, and his throne greater than thy throne." At this, according to Jonathan, the king bowed upon the bed and said,—“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath given one to sit upon my throne this day, mine eyes even seeing it.”

On hearing this successful master-stroke, by which their fine plan was at once blown to pieces, the banqueters dispersed in dismay. Adonijah himself, in dread of Solomon's vengeance, hastened to the tabernacle, and put himself in sanctuary by taking hold of the horns of the altar, which he refused to quit unless Solomon should swear not to slay him. Solomon, who was now really and *de facto* king, David being but a dying ceremony, behaved himself in this initiatory act of power with a dignity and discretion beyond his years. He tacitly declined to take an oath, but said,—“If he will show himself a worthy man, there shall not a hair of him fall to the earth; but if wickedness shall be found in him, he shall die.” On this assurance Adonijah quitted his asylum, and “came and bowed himself to king Solomon,” who coldly bade him, “Go to thine house,”—thus remanding him for the present to the retirement of private life. The eastern mind is familiar with such transactions and contrasts, and does not pay much heed to them; but as Adonijah does not seem to have been a wicked man, or to have had any other design than the assertion of what he conceived to be his rights, in which he was supported by the oldest friends of his father, we must confess to some sympathy for him, a man of little less than forty years old, standing in this position before his brother—a boy in comparison with him. Still, keeping hard to the principles of the Hebrew institutions, our *judgment* is with Solomon.

In the two last chapters of the First Book of Chronicles, there is an account (not given in the First Book of Kings) of a farewell address delivered by David in the presence of the assembled people and of Solomon. It was his last public appearance, and his last regal act. It took place, doubtless,

between the events last noticed and his death. He had probably been so invigorated by the excitement which he had gone through, that he felt himself equal to this proceeding, which appears to have been in the presence of the people, and therefore in the open air, and not to a few in the privacy of his chamber. It may be added, that the appearance of a sick or dying man in the open air is by no means so unusual or dangerous a procedure as it would be in such a climate as ours. But David was past all danger, for he knew he was to die. This noble address, full of striking passages, has regard chiefly to Solomon's nomination by the Lord, from among all his sons, as the one to reign, and to build the temple. He described his own exertions, and the liberal contributions of the people towards that object. For himself he took no credit—all he had was the Lord's, and he had but given him his own. He ended with an impressive prayer, and then called upon his audience to bless the Lord, which they did with bowed heads. There was then a great sacrifice—a thousand each of bullocks, rams, and lambs—to supply a feast for the people. It was on this occasion, seemingly, that Solomon, while his father yet lived, was in the presence of the people assembled from all parts, anointed "a second time," in a more regular and formal manner. This mention of a *second* anointing in a narrative that does not record the first, and description of the *first* in a narrative that takes no notice of the second, is an incidental corroboration of great value.

In several passages of this address, the dying king and father spoke directly to Solomon, in words worthy of his high character and illustrious name, showing that the lamp of his inner life—the life of his soul—burned up brightly before he expired. These are golden words:—"And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts. If thou seek Him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake Him, he will cast thee off forever." More

nearly at the point of death, David had another and final interview with his son, in which he delivered to him another and more private charge, introduced with the remarkable words:—"I go the way of all the earth; be thou strong therefore, and show thyself a man."

There was nothing now left for David but to die. So "he died, in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honor; and Solomon his son reigned in his stead."

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